



# Operation Wallacea 2026, Madagascar

## Terrestrial Only - Research Assistant Kit List

### INTRODUCTION

This document is a guide to the expedition kit you will need for your expedition based on what you will be doing in Madagascar and the experience of previous expeditions.

When packing you need to be thinking of the minimum amount you can take whilst remaining comfortable and safe. Check your airlines baggage and hand luggage allowance and ensure to weigh your bag before you go. You want to be aiming for light, compact, durable, quick-drying and versatile equipment. The list below is essential kit – unless stated as optional. If you have any questions about the information below please do not hesitate to contact your nearest Opwall office or email [madagascar@opwall.com](mailto:madagascar@opwall.com).

### SUMMARY CHECKLIST

Summary Checklist	Tick off once you have gone through each section of your kit list.	Tick Box
Kit list video	Ensure you watch the kit list video that accompanies this pack	
Documentation	What documentation you are required to bring on site.	
Hand luggage	What to include in your hand luggage.	
Core Kit	What core kit to bring for your expedition.	
Clothing essentials	Clothing that you will require on site.	
Terrestrial Kit	What specific kit you will need for the terrestrial part of your expedition.	
Organising, packing & added extras	Top tips for packing and organising all your expedition gear and some added optional extras for you.	
Toiletries	Guide to the toiletries you will require.	
Medical Kit	Essential medical kit for the expedition.	
Helpful Resources	Suggested resources to learn more about the region before your expedition, or to help you with your expedition prep	
Money	What money you need and the easiest way to bring it to site.	
Food	What food to expect on site.	
Washing facilities	What are the washing facilities like on-site.	

### DOCUMENTATION

Documentation	We would recommend bringing a physical paper copy of the following documentation.	Tick Box
Insurance documents	Bring a copy of your personal insurance documentation.	
Photocopy of passport	This is incase your passport gets lost so keep it in a separate location to your passport itself.	
ID Guides	Bring a copy of your ID guides included in this pack.	
Internal Travel Documentation	Bring a print out of your travel documents, along with any information for required VISAs.	

### HAND LUGGAGE

Hand luggage	Unfortunately, working in such remote locations often involving numerous flights and forms of transport, luggage can be delayed. It is best to be prepared just in case, so here is what we recommend you pack in your hand luggage.	Tick Box
Valuables	Think passport, money, camera, phone etc. If completing your dissertation you will most likely wish to bring your laptop and this should be taken in your hand luggage.	
Personal medicine	Extremely important to bring your personal medicine in your hand luggage!	

Change of clothes	Including spare underwear. You might want to wear your fleece/hoodie to save space.	
Head torch	Essential for your expedition, so this is not something you want to lose. Small headlamp models can be ineffective at spotting wildlife such as herpetofauna so keep that in mind when browsing for one. Don't forget spare batteries!	
Toiletries	Toothbrush and wet wipes.	
Sleeping bag liner	If you have to borrow a sleeping bag its nice to have your own liner to use.	
Walking boots	Wear these on the plane, reduces space and makes sure you don't lose them.	
Travel adapter & power bank	Pack these so you can keep your devices charged and usable during transit and unexpected delays. There are a few different plugs at our Madagascar sites. In the forest we have extension cords for UK plugs and also European 2 round pin plugs. Bringing a universal adaptor is a great idea, as well as a power bank!	

## CORE KIT

Core kit	These are things you will need no matter which expedition site you are going to.	Tick Box
Rucksack	Please do not bring a suitcase. Whilst you will not have to personally carry your rucksack long distances, you still need to move it to and from your tent at the forest site, and it needs to be able to fit on the Zebu carts. Minimum 50 litre capacity.	
Day bag/Small rucksack	Needed for field work for carrying water, paper, pens, binoculars, cameras etc.	
Sleeping Bag	It will be fairly warm at night so we recommend a 1-2 season sleeping bag. Occasionally it can feel a little cooler so you might want to bring a sleeping bag liner as well for added comfort. It is also much colder for your nights in Antananarivo so make sure you have some warm layers!	
Roll mat or Thermarest	Necessary for comfort when sleeping in a tent in the forest so please do bring one. Roll mats can be purchased very cheaply, whereas Thermarests are more of an investment (be sure to buy a repair kit).	
Water bottle/platypus	A combination of leak-proof plastic bottles (minimum 2 litres) is imperative. The 'hydration systems' on the market (Platypus, camelback, Ortileb) have the advantage of packing flat when not in use.	
Travel towel/Sarong	Don't bring a big thick towel as it won't dry quickly enough.	
Watch with alarm	It doesn't have to be anything technical. A travel alarm clock will also do.	
Notebook and pencil	Essential for all projects!	

## CLOTHING

Clothing	These are the general items of clothing you will need for your expedition. We have included rough quantities for each item but please feel free to bring more or less, it's personal preference and up to you...as long as it fits! For the forest, you should bring clothes that you don't mind getting dirty! Synthetic (wicking) fabric is the best as it is quick drying, but cotton is kinder to the skin. Don't forget to buy your Opwall t-shirt(s)! Please note the quantities are based on a 2-week expedition, if you are on-site for longer you might want to consider bringing more!	Tick Box
Walking boots	Make sure your boots have firm ankle support, a semi-flexible sole with good grip and dries relatively quickly. Wear these on the plane to save space.	
Waterproof Jacket/Poncho	Whilst it very rarely rains in Madagascar, a lightweight rain jacket is still invaluable just in case. Expensive heavy Gore-Tex raincoats are not recommended as they are very hot. A very lightweight jacket or even a poncho will do the trick.	
T-shirts (6-8)	You will get sweaty at the forest site so it's worth bringing plenty. Due to mosquitoes, please do not bring crop tops.	
Long sleeved shirts (3-4)	Insects are quite prevalent so you'll need to cover up on survey, and also protect yourself from any rough vegetation. You will be asked to wear long sleeves on evening surveys!	
Lightweight long baggy trousers/walking trousers (3)	These can be worn more than once but you will need long trousers for surveys in the forest. Looser is better as insects can bite through skintight fabric. Even better if they zip off to form shorts!	
Shorts (3)	Useful for wearing in camp at the forest site. Due to mosquitoes, please do not bring short shorts.	

Fleece/Hoodie/Jumper	For flights and the long travel days. It can also be slightly cooler in an evening so you might be grateful for the extra layer.	
Nightwear/Pyjamas	Something comfortable to sleep in. Bear in mind you will be sharing accommodation with others throughout your expedition.	
Underwear, socks and bras	We recommend you bring enough underwear for 2 weeks. You will want to put a clean pair of socks on every day on the forest site, so aim for 5-6 pairs. Hiking socks are good to prevent blisters and provide extra comfort. Bring multiple bras.	
Hat with brim/Bandana	It can get very hot in the day and there is not always any shade available, this will help prevent dehydration/sunstroke which is a potential risk. Bandana can double up as a face-cover to protect against the dust.	
Sunglasses	A good pair are useful to protect your eyes from the sun.	
Sandals or reef booties	Teva/Reef type. You need footwear that will stay securely on your feet, as some trekking routes involve crossing water and mud.	
Comfortable shoes//sandals	1 pair - it's nice to have a comfy pair of shoes for wandering around camp in the forest site. In the forest you will want something slightly more secure that covers your toes, something like a pair of Crocs is a very popular middle ground.	
Additional clothes	One set of 'regular' style clothes for when you are at any hotels during your transfers or for travelling back at the end of the expedition.	

### TERRESTRIAL ONLY

Terrestrial only	Below you will find equipment specific to the terrestrial portion of your expedition.	Tick Box
Head torch	Essential for the expedition as previously mentioned.	
Laptop - for dissertation students only	You will need a laptop to work on and to analyse your data, but make sure you also discuss any project-specific equipment that you might need to bring with your supervisor.	

### ORGANISING, PACKING & ADDED EXTRAS

Organising, packing & added extras	Top tips for packing and organising all your expedition gear and some added optional extras for you. Label your baggage, clothes and kit; there are many volunteers, and some may have the same or similar items to you.	Tick Box
Waterproof plastic/zip lock bags/dry bag/bin liners	In Madagascar we luckily do not have to worry about our gear getting wet from the rain. But it's still useful to organise your equipment and using dry bags or equivalent is a great idea!	
Pillow	A small travel pillow is highly recommend for the long travel days to and from the forest site. It also provides added comfort at the forest site. Alternatively, bring a pillowcase and stuff it with clothes.	
Camera	If you have one bring it, you will come back with some amazing pictures! Underwater ones can be great if you are diving.	
Binoculars	These are really useful to see much of the wildlife in the forest. 8x42 are the best to bring but any you may have at home will suffice.	
Earphones/cards/book	Coach journeys can be long so bring something to keep yourself entertained.	
Language/phrase book	This is a recommendation stressed by previous volunteers. Also worth noting many translating apps allow you to download language packs you can use offline	
Folding fan	You will be glad you brought one when the midday heat hits.	
Handheld mirror	You will have no access to mirrors in the forest so it may be useful to bring one.	
Earplugs/eye mask	If you are someone that generally struggles to sleep, you may find that the lively sounds of the forest or people walking by with their torches on keeps you awake. Also useful for a long plane and coach journey!	
Nail clippers/tweezers	If you are staying in camp for a long amount of time these will be very useful.	
Snacks & condiments	Cereal bars, protein bars or things to spice up your meals!	

## TOILETRIES

Toiletries	<b>Please bring 'green' or biodegradable toiletries to minimize the impact on the environment. Most biodegradable soaps are multiuse. Most shops now sell biodegradable/environmentally friendly toiletries, or alternatively there are lots of options online.</b>	Tick Box
Toiletries bag	How are you storing your toiletries? Makes it easier to take things to and from the showers.	
Toothbrush & Toothpaste	Avoid bringing an electric toothbrush as you may struggle to charge it in the forest. We would recommend bringing a case to keep it clean.	
Hair and Body Wash	Biodegradable if possible, small travel sizes or bars rather than liquids to save space (make sure you have a tin if you have bars).	
Insect repellent	Malaria and dengue does occur in Madagascar. 'Mosi-Guard' is an effective, environmentally friendly insect repellent that does not contain DEET, as is 'Skin so soft' by Avon. We ask that participants bring a mixture of DEET and non-DEET products, this is so we can minimise our impact on the environment where possible, and you will be asked not to wear products containing DEET for many of the surveys where it poses a risk to the wildlife encountered. See: <a href="http://www.alternativeinsectrepellent.co.uk/">www.alternativeinsectrepellent.co.uk/</a> .	
Sun cream	SPF30 minimum!	
Washing detergent - optional	You will get chance to wash some of your clothes if you wish, but make sure it is biodegradable. Ecover is perfect! It is also useful to bring a nailbrush for scrubbing hard to remove dirt off clothing.	
Sanitary towels/tampons	Please bring a supply even if you do not expect to use them as travel can disrupt your cycle.	

## PERSONAL MEDICAL KIT

Personal Medical Kit	<b>The medical provision on site is excellent and there are medics based at all camps. However, there are some items listed below you should carry yourself (as appropriate).</b>	Tick Box
Antihistamine tablets	For insect bites. It's useful if you can bring both drowsy and non drowsy	
Antihistamine cream	Bite/sting cream. Can be very beneficial for reducing itching and swelling of insect bites.	
Paracetamol/aspirin	For headaches etc.	
Ibuprofen	For swelling etc.	
Rehydration salts	Essential! Rehydration salts kept in camp do not have the most appetising taste so please bring your own. We utilise purified water which contains a low concentration of beneficial minerals found in normal spring water. Because of this, we recommend you take a dosage of rehydration salts every day. Don't forget to read the correct dosage to ensure you are absorbing the salts correctly	
Antiseptic wipes	Cleaning cuts or grazes	
Plasters (assorted sizes)	May also be worth adding a couple of blister plasters as well as normal ones.	
Personal Medication	It is vital that you bring any prescribed medications. This includes any anti-malarial medication you have been prescribed by your GP or Travel Clinic; <b>make sure you consult your GP or Travel Clinic for a comprehensive list of any travel vaccinations or medications you need!</b>	
Vitamins	If you normally take these.	
Hand sanitizer (optional)	Great for extreme cleanliness and hygiene, especially during the long travel days.	
Eye drops (optional)	If you are prone to dry eyes.	
Travel sickness tablets	In case you need these.	

## HELPFUL RESOURCES

Helpful Resources	<b>Below you will find a selection of helpful resources for your expedition</b>	Tick Box
Top Eco-Friendly Kit Ideas	<a href="https://www.opwall.com/article/top-eco-friendly-kit-ideas/">https://www.opwall.com/article/top-eco-friendly-kit-ideas/</a>	
Beginner Fieldwork Equipment	<a href="https://www.opwall.com/article/beginner-fieldwork-equipment/">https://www.opwall.com/article/beginner-fieldwork-equipment/</a>	
What Equipment to Borrow or Buy	<a href="https://www.opwall.com/article/the-festive-guide-to-gearing-up-for-your-expedition/">https://www.opwall.com/article/the-festive-guide-to-gearing-up-for-your-expedition/</a>	
Top 10 Must Have Items!	<a href="https://www.opwall.com/article/lets-find-out-what-you-couldnt-live-without/">https://www.opwall.com/article/lets-find-out-what-you-couldnt-live-without/</a>	

Hair & Skin Care at an Expedition Site	<a href="https://www.opwall.com/article/hair-and-skin-care-at-an-expedition-site/">https://www.opwall.com/article/hair-and-skin-care-at-an-expedition-site/</a>	
Ecological Apps to Download	<a href="https://www.opwall.com/article/ecological-apps-so-you-can-identify-appsolutely-everything/">https://www.opwall.com/article/ecological-apps-so-you-can-identify-appsolutely-everything/</a>	
BBC Documentaries	Island of Marvels	
Books	The Aye-Aye and I, by Gerald Durrell. Thank You, Madagascar. Conservation Diaries of Alison Jolly. Birds of Madagascar and the Indian Ocean Islands (Helm Field Guides)	

## MONEY

Spending money is an optional extra to cover personal on-site expenditure only, this may include snacks and souvenirs you may wish to purchase. The local currency, Malagasy Ariary, is a closed currency and you will need to make sure you exchange or withdraw any cash whilst you are in Antananarivo as there are no opportunities to withdraw cash after this. (NB. Mastercard is not widely accepted at ATMs in Madagascar).

If you want to bring cash there is a changing office at the airport that can change US dollars, Euros, or GBP. The most popular place to exchange cash is at the hotel in Antananarivo, the Chez Jeanne. **Our personal recommendation is to bring euros in cash to Madagascar and then exchange these at our partner hotel.**

Unfortunately, the ATMs or currency exchange typically only give large denominations (notes of either 5,000 or 10,000 MA), and so if you are planning on buying any snacks or gifts when you pass through the villages on the way to and from the site, you will need small change. The cost of a soft drinks and snacks (crisps, chocolate, cheese) on site is between 1,500 Ar to 4,000Ar. (NB. that any meals/snacks/drinks outside of the start and end point of the expedition is an extra cost).

## FOOD

When on expedition 3 meals a day are provided, please be aware that due to the remote location of the sites and the basic facilities the food can be very basic, with limited fruit and vegetables, but is always plentiful. You may want to bring some condiments to spice up your meals, although the food is tasty it can get repetitive.

Special dietary requirements are catered for as much as possible, we would suggest if you are a vegetarian or particular about certain foods that you bring cereal bars/snacks/vitamins with you to site. It may be a good idea to bring cereal bars/snacks regardless of dietary requirements as these are sometimes helpful during long surveys and breakfast options in particular are limited. There is opportunity to buy snacks at camps if you get particularly hungry between meal times, however this will be at your own expense. We can highly recommend the samosas in the forest site, they are absolutely delicious and only 1,000 Ar per samosa!

If there is anyone with food allergies you must let us know as soon as possible via the online portal.

## WASHING FACILITIES

There is the option to have your clothing washed at the terrestrial, for an added cost. If you are on a 2-week expedition option we would advise participants to bring enough clothes to last them the entire expedition, and maybe hand wash a few items personally instead. This is because the wait times to have your clothes washed can vary massively, and can sometimes take a number of days. If you are at camp for slightly longer, you have more flexibility to wait a few days for clean clothes!

It is a good idea to keep one set of clothing clean for your flights to and from country, this makes your travel and the people around you more comfortable.