

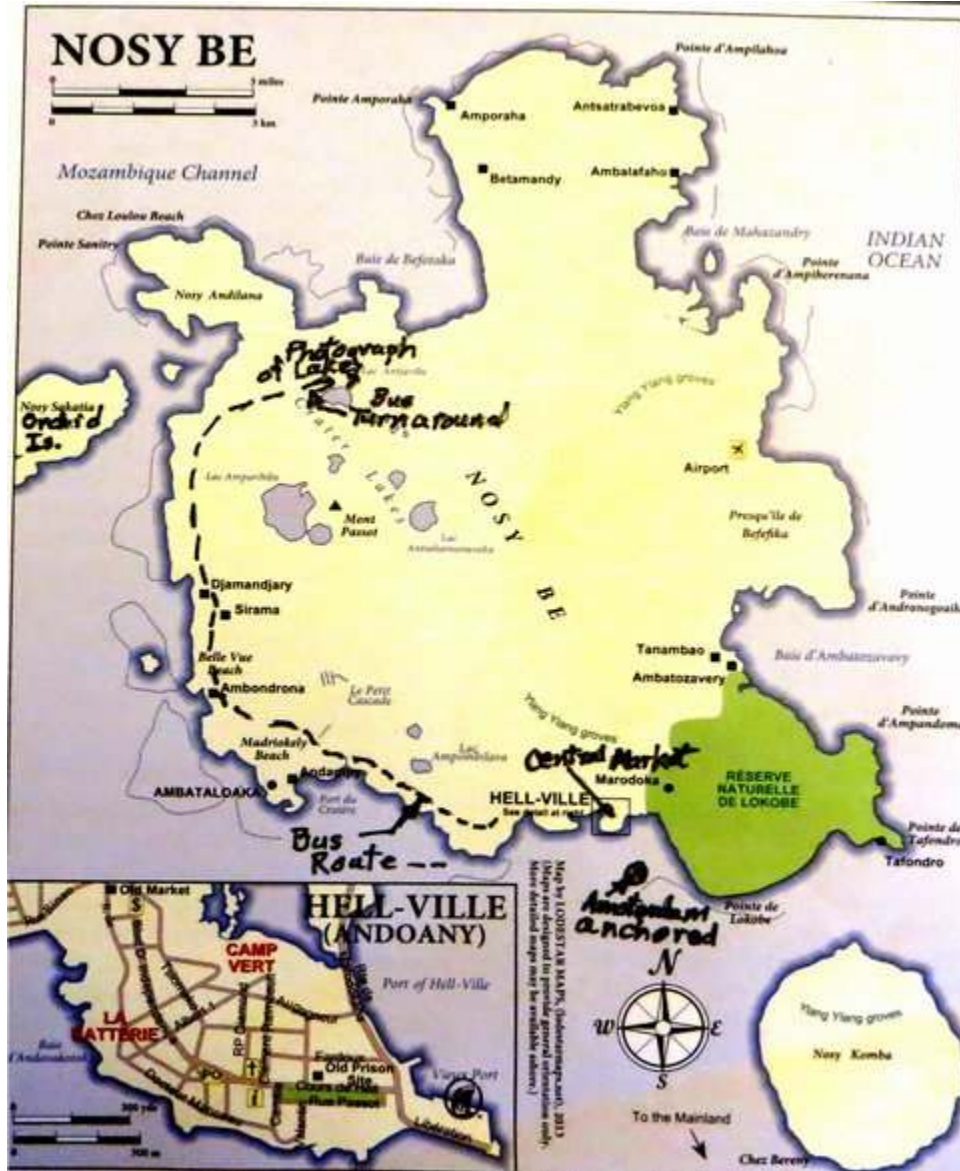
**3/30/13 - Day 83–Nosy Be Island, Madagascar:** Nosy Be (pronounced “no-see bay”) is an island just a few miles off the northwest coast of the main island of Madagascar. In the Malagasy language the name Nosy Be means “Big Island” and it turns out that except for the main island, Nosy Be is the biggest island in the Republic of Madagascar. Malagasy is the language spoken by about 60% of the islanders as their first language. The main city on Nosy Be is Hellville. The name Hellville, is derived from the name of an early French Governor, Admiral de Hell. Hellville also has an official name of Andoany but that name is seldom used by the people of Madagascar. The location of Hellville (aka Andoany) is shown in the map on the right.

About 9am the Amsterdam anchored a mile from the Hellville dock. We had signed up with Cruise Specialists International (CSI) for a 4 hour tour of Nosy Be. We met with our tour group and caught a tender boat in to the dock at Hellville. Our first impression of Hellville was that of an impoverished old city. The tour about the countryside today would confirm that first impression.



The CSI tour group was fairly large and occupied 4 buses like the one shown on the left. The buses were not air conditioned and the seats were a little small and close together for the comfort of our expansive backsides. However, with a little effort we coped with the situation and settled in for our tour.

Our tour guides name was Leontina. She spoke good English and was very knowledgeable about Nosy Be geography, culture and history. A map of Nosy Be and the route of the tour we would take along the southwest coast of the island is shown below.





Leontina first took us to the center of Hellville where we walked through the Central Market. The Central Market was where everything happened in Hellville. Not only was it a source of food and hard goods but the front steps, shown on the right, were the site of important political and social events.

Today was a Saturday and the Central Market was super crowded. Our tour group filed in between the various food items, as shown in the following photos.



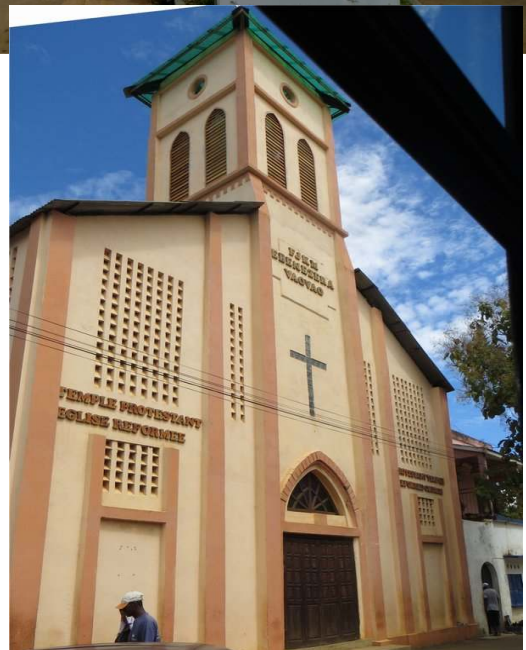




Near the Central Market was a Shell gas station where we were able to check out the posted price of gas, as shown on the right. Regular gas was selling for 2150 Madagascar Ariary per liter. The conversion rate was 2200 Ariary per \$1USD so a liter of gas cost the equivalent of \$0.98 USD. At 4 liters per gallon that works out to \$3.90 per gallon, about the same as in many places in the US. The super 95 octane leaded gasoline was selling for 3370 Ariary per liter or about \$6 USD per gallon.



Near the Central Market there was also a Muslim Mosque, as shown on the left. Leontina said that most of the people in Madagascar were Christian and most of those were Catholic. During the tour we saw a scattering of Protestant and Catholic churches.







She said that this picturesque building, perched high on a hill was a Catholic chapel.

Our bus rolled out of Hellville past the cemetery, shown on the right.



The two lane road we were on was smooth asphalt in good repair but relatively narrow. Madagascar is a right hand drive country so the flow of traffic seemed normal to us.



We passed a cow in a field, as shown on the left. Leontina said that they were called Cebo. The Cebo has been very important in Nosy Be culture with a person's wealth often measured in the number of Cebo that he owned. However, with more people moving into towns from the countryside the care and feeding of Cebo was a problem and wealth tended to be measured in accumulated money nowadays.



As we drove along the highway we passed many stalls with clothing, souvenirs and other goods for sale, as shown below.



One of the shops provided a good opportunity to document the visit of Barbara's library card to Madagascar, as shown on the left.

We stopped at a plantation where there was a grove of Ylang Ylang trees, as shown on the right. The Ylang Ylang tree has a yellow blossom that is harvested and processed to produce a liquid that is exported for use in making expensive perfumes.





While we were stopped a young man with a lemur on his shoulder showed up. He was offering his lemur for photo opportunities at a charge of \$2 USD per photo. We figured that this may be our only chance to photograph a lemur. We made the transaction and with a somewhat tentative Barbara the results as shown on the right.



Another famous Madagascar animal that we wanted to see was a chameleon. The



chameleons here are particularly colorful. In an amazing display of observational skill our driver saw a chameleon in the roadside brush as he was driving along. He stopped and backed up so we could take pictures. We got a nice shot of the chameleon as shown on the left. This one didn't change colors for us while we were there.

Much of the housing we saw in the countryside had thatched roofs but some had more substantial metal roofs. We took some pictures as shown below. The general impression was one of poverty but the people appeared to be well fed and dressed.







Many places had laundry hanging out to dry. In some cases we saw clothes being washed in a stream like the one shown on the right.



The tropical scenery along the roadside was beautiful. At one point there was an opportunity to photograph the island of Nosy Sakatia that was on our map. Leontina said the island, shown in the photo on the right was called Orchid Island by the local people.



There were also rice fields that looked very lush, as shown on the left. Leontina said that the typical person here eats a meal of rice three times a day. She said that farming was very hard work and most young people were looking for employment in the tourist industry which was almost as important as fishing in the local economy.

We came to a stop at Lac Antjavibe which was a lake situated in an ancient volcano crater. Unlike, the solid granite Seychelles geology we learned about a couple days ago, this island has a volcanic history. We took a photograph of Leontina with the lake in the background, as shown on the right.



At this point our bus turned around and we headed back down the road towards Hellville.



We stopped at more souvenir shops along the way. At several places today we had seen ladies with elaborate face painting. At one of the souvenir shops for a couple dollars we got a photograph of one of the ladies with some nice face painting, as shown on the right. She was carrying a baby on her back and the little feet can be seen at her waist.



We bought some of the decorative strings of nuts and seeds that were for sale. We even got a couple whole seed pods that held the super large (2 inch diameter) seeds that were used. One fellow was selling a

musical instrument that was made from bamboo. The bamboo had intricate images

carved on the surface and it was strung with guitar strings. We bought the instrument that was called a Valiha. A photograph of our collection that we took back in our Amsterdam stateroom is shown on the left.

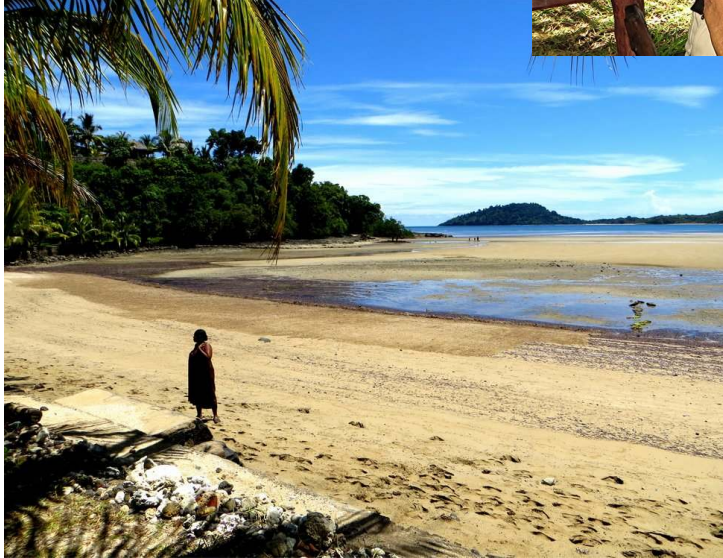






About 10 miles north of Hellville we pulled into the parking lot of a very nice resort called Ravintsara Hotel.

We had some refreshments there along with Rosemary and June shown on the right. Then we explored their beaches and tropical grounds.



The bar was particularly impressive with the trunk of a large tree dominating the central part of the room as shown on the right.







After about 45 minutes at the Ravintsara Hotel we boarded our bus and headed back to Hellville.

While driving through Hellville we caught a fleeting sight of the library and got this photo on the left.

We were soon at the pier and confronted with a massive line of fellow Amsterdam

passengers waiting for tender boats, as shown on the right. It turned out that most of the tours from the ship had arrived back in port at about the same time. We were dreading a long wait in the hot afternoon sun and humidity. However, thanks to vigorous work by the tender boat operators and Amsterdam staff on the dock, the wait



was much shorter than we anticipated. We were soon back on board our air-conditioned "oasis on the sea".

News of the arrival of the Amsterdam in the harbor had traveled far and wide and a bunch of young men and boys in their outrigger canoes had collected around the ship, as shown on the left.



Amsterdam passengers had gathered along the rail of Deck 3 and were taking photographs of the boaters. The people in the boats had souvenirs to sell but their primary aim was to coax the Amsterdam people into tossing down paper money, hats and



other clothing items. The people in the boats didn't know any English and we didn't know any Malagasy so all the information was passed back and forth with impromptu hand signals and body language. Our contact and transactions with people of Nosy Be today had been done without the benefit of a common language. Leontina was the only Nosy Be person we met who knew English. It seems clear that if the tourist business with English speaking people is going to flourish in Nosy Be there will have to be a big increase in English speaking capability.

The Amsterdam pulled up anchor about 5pm and we sailed out of the harbor at Nosy Be. We were headed for Maputo, Mozambique on the African continent. It is about 1200 miles away. We expect to arrive there after two days at sea.