

Madagascar for Real

Trees of the Didieraceae (tall plants at right), a family found almost exclusively in Madagascar, dominate much of the southern spiny forest region. This forest is remarkably similar to spiny forests in Baja California even though the species composing the communities are unrelated.



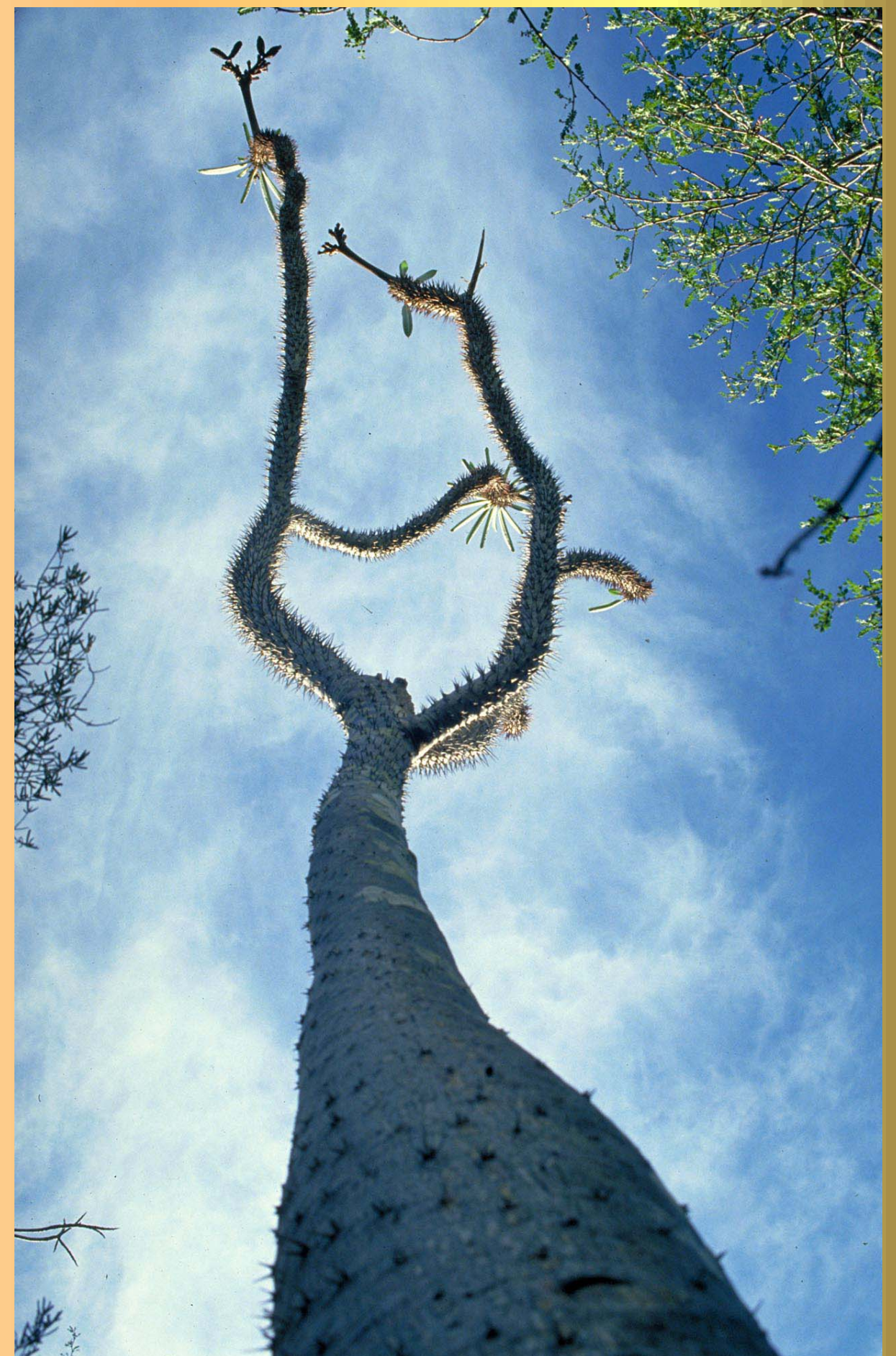
Arborescent *Euphorbias* in the spiny forest near Ranomainty. (David Parks photo)



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The spiny forest includes a variety of species with no close relatives outside Madagascar as well as species with close relatives in southern Africa. The paper-barked *Euphorbias* (left) are members of a huge genus with representatives worldwide.

This *Pachypodium* (right), one of 20 *Pachypodium* species found only in Madagascar, helps the spiny forest live up to its name.



Pachypodium lamerei in spiny forest near the village of Ranomainty. (David Parks photo)



Hissing cockroach from spiny forest in Andohahela National Park. (David Parks photo)

When removed from his hideout in a hollow Baobab tree, this large and strong Hissing Cockroach did hiss loudly. The "horns" are used in male-male fighting. In some species hissing is used in courtship, and a male prevented from hissing will not be accepted by females.