

ALFRED GRANDIDIER BIOGRAPHY

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Grandidier, Alfred (1836–1921)—wealthy, French naturalist, that in his younger years traveled in search of the wonders of the world—devoting the principal portion of his career to Madagascar.



Born to a wealthy family in Paris, France on 20 December 1836, Alfred Grandidier became a self-taught naturalist, geographer, ethnologist, ornithologist, and traveler of the world. He studied botany under Dr Henri Ernest Baillon (1827–1895) ending up with a bachelor of arts and sciences (a high school diploma) and frequented the Sorbonne and the Collège de France, Paris from 1854 to 1857 that gave him a college Bachelor of Science degree.

At the age of 20, he and his older brother, Ernest Grandidier (1833–1912), undertook a voyage around the world—at first with the astronomer and physicist Pierre Jules César Janssen (1824–1907), but after 6 months Janssen became sick and had to return to France. The Grandidier brothers visited South America in 1858 and 1859 — the Andes, Peru, Chile, Bolivia, Argentina and Brazil gathering various specimens for study. Ernest went on to China while Alfred ended up in India by 1863. Due to an attack of fever, Alfred went down the east coast of Africa to recuperate in Zanzibar. After visiting the island of Réunion, he made his way in 1865 to Madagascar. Here is where his interest became apparent, revisiting the island a couple more times, Jun-November 1866 and June 1868 into July 1870—collecting mammals, birds, reptiles, fish, insects, crustaceans, plants, fossils, shells, minerals and ethnographic objects. By the end of that time Alfred returned permanently to France—devoting the rest of his life to the pursuit of interest in the island of Madagascar—starting out with the production of a map of the island, used for future expeditions by other people.

In France, Alfred started on his greatest work, *L'Histoire physique, naturelle et politique de Madagascar*. With the help of others, Alfred published 32 volumes of this work during his lifetime—with another 7 volumes continued after his death, by his son Guillaume Grandidier (1873–1957), who followed in the footsteps of his father with various exploratory trips to Madagascar.

For the interested succulentists, the genus *Didierea* from Madagascar was named in the honor of Alfred Grandidier by Dr Baillon in 1880. At the same time Dr Baillon described species *Didierea madagascariensis*.

Four species from Madagascar were also named in his honor:

Adansonia grandidieri — described by Dr Baillon in 1893.

Cynanchum grandidieri — described by Dr Sigrid L Liede (1957–) and Dr Ulrich Meve (1958–) in 2001.

Harpagophytum (Uncarina) grandidieri — described by Dr Baillon in 1887 (transferred to *Uncarina grandidieri* by Dr Hans-Dieter Ihlenfeldt (1932–) and Dr Herbert Karl Straka (1920–2009) in 1962).

Kalanchoe grandidieri — described by Dr Baillon in 1888.

Alfred Grandidier died near Paris, France on 13 September 1921 at the age of 84.

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