Tsingy is the Madagascar term for the razor sharp pinnacles produced by the surface erosion of limestone massifs. Over a prolonged period, acidic rains have carved caves beneath the surface, and narrow canyons have been created by cracking of the rock mass. Petit-tsingy refers to areas of low, relatively uniform pinnacles; “grand-tsingy” describes huge, jagged rock masses that tower up to 50 meters above the surroundings. There are numerous areas of tsingy in Madagascar, but the Ankarana and Bemaraha reserves are most accessible to tourists. For succulent lovers, the tsingy is unique. It harbors succulent and pachyform plants found nowhere else, some of which are coveted by collectors and others barely yet in cultivation. The tsingy is also of special importance because it is largely protected, either officially within parks, or passively because, aside from being largely inaccessible, it offers nothing in terms of arable land to Madagascar’s burgeoning population.

Reserve Naturelle Integrale (RNI) des Tsingy de Bemaraha, Euphorbia viguieri, growing on the grand-tsingy at Bemaraha Reserve, looks very cactus-like with its vertical, spiralling spines on a bright green stem. It has an unusually vibrant (for a euphorbia) red and green inflorescence.