

Travel Guide



Republic of Madagascar

The following general outline offers practical information, suggestions and answers to some frequently asked questions. It is not intended to be the definitive guide for your trip.
Be sure to check the reading listing included here for more information.

Travel has a way of stretching the mind. The stretch comes not from travel's immediate rewards, the inevitable myriad new sights, smells and sounds, but with experiencing firsthand how others do differently what we believed to be the right and only way.

-- Ralph Crawshaw

WEATHER

The climate is tropical along coast, temperate inland, arid in south. The best season to visit is from May to October, Malagasy winter, to take advantage of the lowest temperature and sunniest weather.

ANTANANARIVO, MADAGASCAR												
Elevation: 4185 feet			Latitude: 18 48S			Longitude: 047 29E						
Average Temperature												
°F	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
	71	71	70	69	65	61	59	61	64	67	69	70
Average Precipitation												
in.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
	11.3	10.3	7.6	2.3	0.7	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.6	2.4	6	11.4

TIME ZONES & FLIGHT TIMES

Madagascar is EST plus 8 hours, or Greenwich Mean Time plus 3 hours throughout the year. There is no summer / winter clock change.

Flight times: There are no direct flights from North America. Flying time from Nairobi to Madagascar is 6 hours, and from Johannesburg 3 hours. Flying time to Nairobi is generally 16 hours (8 hours to Europe from the East Coast and 8 hours from Europe to Nairobi), plus layover time between flights.

PASSPORTS & VISAS

Passports: For international travel, a U.S. passport valid for at least six months from date of departure, containing at least two blank pages is necessary.

Visas: Many countries require that travelers obtain visas prior to arrival. Big Five Tours & Expeditions has appointed Zierer Visa Service (ZVS) to process required visas for our passengers. The Visa Application Kit is included with your pre-trip confirmation packet. You can also download the necessary forms from the website: <http://www.zvs.com>. Click on the "members" section to log in. For user name, enter **bigfive**, and the password is **55509**. You will enter the visa section for Big Five Tours & Expeditions. Here you will find a list of country-specific forms. You will also discover useful hints such as how to obtain a passport, adding passport pages, and other tips.

Important: Please look at your passport before you submit it to ZVS to insure that:

- 1) Your passport is valid for at least six months after the date of travel.
- 2) You have sufficient blank pages for visa stamps that will be added as you travel in and out of various countries.

Please note: Pages reserved for amendments and endorsements cannot be used for visas.

AIRPORT FORMALITIES

The domestic airline serves most the country's town with the exceptions of a few in the central highlands. A small departure tax is charged on all flights.

Departure & Airport Taxes, which are subject to change without notice, are about \$US 20.

CUSTOMS

Duty-Free Items: 500 cigarettes and 1 liter of alcohol.

Prohibited Items: All narcotics. International penalties for possession, use or trafficking in illegal drugs are strict, and convicted offenders can expect jail sentences and heavy fines.

U.S. CUSTOMS

Returning U.S. residents are allowed to bring back \$800 worth of merchandise duty-free. Regulations frequently change. For current information you can go to the homepage for Customs & Border Protection: www.customs.gov/xp/cgov/home.xml, write the U.S. Customs Service, Box 7407, Washington, DC 20044, or you can contact your nearest Customs office.

GETTING AROUND

Please be forewarned that roads overseas will not compare to our system of roadways. Be prepared for rough and dusty roads. A traveler's attitude of exploration and understanding is a necessity.

Air Madagascar serves 60 domestic airports and landing strips around the island. Road conditions are very poor, some are impassable during heavy rains. Internal flights are the best option for travel in country because of long distances and poor road conditions.

Bush Taxis and mini-buses are the main form of transport. Some larger buses run between Antananarivo and Toliara. Most vehicles are in very poor condition and very crowded.

CURRENCY

The Malagasy currency is called Malagasy franc or *Franc Malgache*, MGF. Bills and coins are denominated either in francs or in a popularly-used unit called ariary, or both. One ariary equals five francs. MFG are bought only at banks and approved exchange booths in hotels and at Ivato airport. Hotels' exchange rate is a little bit less favorable than banks.

Foreign currency must be declared on arrival. Take cash and/or travelers checks, in British pounds, US dollars, German marks or French francs. You can exchange hard currency at the airport, at Malagasy banks and certain hotels. Malagasy money may not be taken out of the country and cannot be exchanged back into hard currency, ***so change your money in small amounts, rather than all at once.***

Some instances require foreign currency; generally air travel and first-class train travel require payment in foreign currency

The Ivato exchange window is opened when international flights arrive or leave. On arrival, immigration officers give you forms to declare the exact amount of foreign money you are bringing into the country. Keep a signed copy, and each time you change money, the bank or hotel clerk verifies your identity and notes on the form how much you have exchanged. When you leave the country, you give back the form to the emigration officer, who may ask to see and count the remaining foreign money: what you have declared on the way in, minus what was exchanged according to the form, should equal what the officer is counting. *Any missing amount might be construed as having been exchanged outside the legal system.* The officer may ask you to surrender what you have left over. Therefore, do not buy more FMG that you are planning to spend. But do set aside about 30,000 MGF for that last-minute expenses and airport tax.

Credit Cards: Few hotels accept credit cards, but they are slowly gaining acceptance. Usage is still far from widespread. Major hotels, major travel agencies, Air Madagascar and some stores accept one or more of the following cards: Master Charge, Visa, American Express, Diner's Club, and Carte Blanche.

COMMUNICATION

Language: The official languages are Malagasy and French. The acts of governments are published both in Malagasy and French. Many Malagasy speak French. Local newspapers in French are available in most important towns. Few people as yet speak English, although more and more are found in the tourism industry.

LUGGAGE

Traveling light is always the first and best rule! We recommend passengers limit their luggage to one medium-sized soft bag per person or two small

duffle bags. In this security conscious era, airline luggage restrictions may change without notice. Also, luggage limits vary depending on ticket class, plane size, destinations, etc. It is always best to confirm with airlines for specific limitations.

Generally speaking, from the US, economy class passengers are allowed to check in two (2) normal size pieces of luggage (each piece measuring no more than about 62 linear inches, which means length plus width plus height), and not exceeding 70 pounds per bag.

Scheduled flights from other countries and within foreign countries generally limit luggage to 44 pounds total, plus one carry-on personal item. Further restrictions apply for charter flights. For charter flights on small planes in Costa Rica and Southern Africa, for example, the total **including** carry-on is usually 11 to 15 pounds, depending on the destination. We will advise you of those restrictions in your final documents.

Most airlines now allow only one carry-on bag in addition to one personal item such as a laptop or handbag. Most bags within the 22 x 14 x 9 (or, a total of 45 linear inches) size restriction will be considered legal carry-on size by major domestic U.S. airlines. Many US airlines check-in desks have sizing boxes within which your bag must fit. Obviously, no knives or cutting instruments are allowed in carry-on baggage.

All luggage should have identification inside as well as secure baggage tags on the outside.

Please note that the US National Transportation and Safety Board now suggests that you do not lock your checked luggage. If a screener has to open your bag, the locks may have to be broken. This applies to flights within the US and international flights originating in the US. This, however, does not address other international travel issues. We suggest that you lock your luggage and bring a couple of spare locks in the event one or more are cut off. But the choice is up to each individual traveler to make.

BUSINESS HOURS

Banks: 8:00 am - 11:00 am and 2:00 - 4:00 pm.

Stores: 8:00 am to noon, and 2:00 to 6:00pm. Stores and businesses are closed during lunch hours and for the following holidays.

January 1st	New Year's Day.
March 29th	Martyrs' Day.
May 1st	Labor Day.
June 26th	Independence Day.
November 1st	All Saints' Day.
December 30th	Anniversary of the Republic.

Moveable holidays: Good Friday, Easter Monday

HEALTH

Inoculations: There are no required immunizations, unless you are coming from a yellow fever infected area. Malaria prophylaxis, however, are **strongly recommended** as Madagascar is a malarial region. Avoid insect bites by wearing long sleeves and trousers, and use an effective insect repellent, particularly at dusk. Cholera is present.

Visitors to Africa should be in generally good health. Talk with your personal physician about any shots or boosters that are recommended, depending on your personal health profile. Tetanus and polio vaccines should be up to date.

Be prepared to take precautions against sunburn with sunscreen and lip protectant.

*Please check the latest regulations with your local health office or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747); fax: 1-888-CDC-FAXX (1-888-232-3299), or their main telephone number in Atlanta, 404-332-4559. Or, visit the CDC Internet home page at <http://www.cdc.gov>. **Health insurance is strongly advised during any foreign travel.***

NOTE* If you are on medication, be sure to bring enough for the duration of the trip. Prescription medicines should always be carried in their original containers in your hand luggage.

SAFETY

Common sense safety precautions you normally observe when traveling anywhere should be followed to minimize the risk of personal injury or property loss. Leave jewelry at home! Do not leave cash, traveler's checks, airline tickets, etc. in an unattended room, even in a locked suitcase. **Many accommodations have safe-deposit facilities at the front desk or in each room for your valuables: use them. During the day, it is reasonably safe to walk, but there are large crowds of people on the streets.** Be careful when carrying purses or cameras. Do not carry large amounts of currency or valuables. Do not walk around unfamiliar cities alone at night. Be wary of entering into conversation with unknown people on the street. These are the same precautions a visitor would observe in North American cities. Common sense is the best defense.

Pamphlets addressing safety issues abroad are available from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402, or at Bureau of Consular Affairs' home page:
<http://travel.state.gov>.

MEASUREMENTS

1 inch = 25.417 millimeters; 1 foot = 0.305 meters; 1 mile = 1.609 kilometers; 1 acre = 0.405 hectare. 1 gallon = 4.546 liters; 1 pound = 454 grams. A kilometer is a bit over 1/2 mile (.62 miles), and a kilogram equals 2.2 pounds.

ELECTRICITY

10 to 220V; assume 220V when in doubt. Plugs are generally two-pin

CAMERAS & FILM

Photography – Madagascar is a photographer's dream. Many people, especially children, will ask you to take their picture, even if they never see the results. A Polaroid camera would be handy if you wanted to give back the picture on the spot. There are also many people, however, especially older persons in the countryside, who do not want their picture taken; some might even shy away if they see you aiming a camera at them. *Always ask permission* before taking photographs of people. The same rule of thumb also applies to photographing places of worship, religious festivals, and rural homesteads.

Equipment – Bring cameras and lenses you are comfortable using. If you get new equipment before you go, do so as far in advance as possible. Shoot and develop at least a dozen rolls before departure to work out problems. And, don't forget your camera operation manual, filters, and a flash unit. *Cameras should be packed with good cushioning.* The roads are sometimes rough, and constant vibration can do damage. Keep your camera with you as much as possible. Roads in the wildlife parks and reserves are gravel or dirt and dusty. Make sure you have lens caps for all your lenses. Clean your equipment frequently. Bring along a puffer brush and lens cleaning tissues.

Lenses – A combination of fixed and/or zoom lenses with focal lengths from 28 mm to 200 mm is good for general travel photography, although you can take excellent photographs with only a 50 mm lens. Zoom lenses such as 35-80mm, 70-210 mm, or 100-300 mm will help you capture the sights in a variety of different settings. Many times, however, animals are very close and you will not need high-powered zoom lenses. But serious photographers will want them handy. A macro lens is helpful for shooting close-ups, but a good set of extension tubes will work very well. A 2x converter is also a handy. Point and shoot cameras are nice for a group or indoor shots, but leave something to be desired when photographing animals on a safari. Bring a small cleaning kit and blower brush to keep equipment clean.

Film – It is always best to bring along whatever you need with you. Film is generally more expensive abroad and it may be hard to locate. You'll be surprised at how much film you use when you are trying to capture all those special moments. Even those not all that interested in photography will probably shoot a couple of 36-exposure rolls per day, and enthusiastic shooters will easily shoot much more. Be sure film is fresh when you buy it (check expiration dates on boxes), and, when

possible, keep it refrigerated. A film speed of ASA/ISO 64 is an excellent choice for color slide film. Use this speed when possible rather than higher speed films. There is a noticeable difference in quality that it is worth the extra effort to keep your camera steady at a somewhat slower shutter speed than you would otherwise use. For color prints, there are several good choices, including Kodak and Fuji films (ASA/ISO 100 & 200) for daylight photography, ASA/ISO 400 & 1000 are good for lower light and nighttime situations.

It is helpful to set up a numbering system for your film, marking each roll with masking tape and numbers or letters, before leaving home. This way you can code the rolls of film and where they were shot. It's quite a job to sort through hundreds of pictures with no clue where or when they were taken.

Avoid airport x-ray machines whenever possible, and request a hand search of your film only. While security people are often obliging, some are not, so allow a little extra time. X-rays are cumulative on exposed and unexposed film so the more times film is x-rayed, the more risk of damage. This is especially true with older machines found in many countries. Lead bags for film are available for purchase and are worth the small investment. Do not have film in your camera because it may be opened for inspection.

If you are planning to shoot video on a safari, be sure to bring plenty of tape and batteries with you. Do not plan to buy videotape. Videotape is not affected by airport x-ray; only magnetic fields or prolonged exposure to heat will damage videotape. Your battery charger should be capable of automatically adjusting to 240 volts. You will probably have no problem finding a plug in most of the lodges and larger tented camps, but be prepared with plenty of batteries.

NOTE: Recent news reports warn that new explosive detectors used in more than 100 US airports to scan checked baggage will ruin unprotected, unexposed film. This technology will eventually be in place at all airports worldwide. Experts suggest either carrying your film in your carry-on luggage and/or placing film in safety, lead-lined bags to prevent X-ray damage

Batteries ~ Put fresh photo-quality batteries in your camera and other electric equipment before you leave and bring at least two sets of spare batteries with you. Your camera will be useless without them batteries tend to be expensive.

FOOD & DRINK

Drinking Water ~ *Drink only bottled or boiled water, or carbonated drinks in cans or bottles. Avoid tap water, fountain drinks, ice cream, yogurt and ice cubes. Eat only thoroughly*

cooked food or fruits and vegetables you have peeled yourself.

Foods: Centers for Disease Control's first rule when eating unfamiliar foods abroad: *Remember, boil it, cook it, peel it, or forget it.* It is always advisable to eat carefully when away from home. To be safe, eat only well-cooked meat and fish, preferably freshly prepared and served hot. Vegetables should be cooked and fruit peeled.

Island Cuisine: Rice is the staple of the Malagasy diet. The resourceful natives have developed literally dozens of delicious preparatory techniques for this plentiful grain. Rice is served with *zebu*, an excellent local beef, as well as pork, chicken, crab, fish, corn, peanuts, and potatoes. Fresh fruits and vegetables abound. Spicy curries are popular, as are the numerous exquisite French dishes served at the island's finest restaurants and hotels.

When in Madagascar, you'll be urged to try the national snack: Koba, a pate of rice, banana, and peanut. Unless you're a fan of that peculiar combination of flavors, skip the Koba and order one of the island's famous seafood salads. You'll be handed a heaping plateful of luscious ginger-and-lime flavored crab and lobster meat, resting on a bed of fresh greens. *Akoho sy voanio*, a chicken dish prepared with rice and fresh coconut, is also quite delicious, as is the *Foza sy hena-kisoa*, a stir-fried crab, pork, and rice dish.

SHOPPING

Throughout the island, you will find a wide and wonderful variety of hand-made objects in wood, leather, metal, stone, mineral, clay, and cloth. Other items to consider include musical instruments, embroidered fabric, wood carvings, wooden inlay boxes and *antaimoro* paper, which incorporates flower petals into the paper itself. Look for good deals on semiprecious stones, if you know what you're doing. Local spices and fragrances -- ylang-ylang, vanilla, sandalwood, cloves -- make compact souvenirs. Several sections of the Zoma market in Antananarivo (behind the former City Hall, for instance) are devoted to Malagasy crafts.

Don't buy orchids, items made from tortoise, lemur and crocodile, authentic antiques or rare cultural items -- they won't be allowed out of the country. Exportation of gems and quantities of certain other products, such as vanilla or coffee beans, may require special certificates. The Hilton and Colbert Hotels in Antananarivo have the latest information about exporting.

When buying anything of significance (say, more than \$US5), ask the merchant to give you a "certificat de vente," this is a form describing the products sold and signed by the merchant. The Customs officer may ask you to show the form when you leave the country.

Tipping: Tipping is not the norm except in expensive hotels in Tana and Nosy Be. It is

generally discouraged by local tourist authorities. But rounding up a restaurant bill to avoid carrying worthless change around, or tipping for exceptionally good service is not a bad idea.

Bargaining: Prices are low. Bargaining is a way of life, except in the places where it is normal to tip. The concept of a fixed price is virtually unknown, except in mid to top-range hotels, and in smaller shops and markets you should never pay the first price asked. You won't be able to get things as cheaply as the locals can, but if you don't bargain you'll be helping to put the price of goods out of the reach of locals. There are not many tourists here yet, so it is a buyer's market. ***Please keep in mind, however, that the average wage in Madagascar is somewhere around \$250 per year!***

OVERVIEW

A note about names: *Malagasy* (noun and adjective) is the name of the people (not *Madagascar*) and of the language. *Madagascar* is the name of the island in English, French, and a number of other languages. *Madagasikara* is the name of the island in Malagasy. *Malgache* is French for *Malagasy*.

GEOGRAPHY

Natural History note: *Almost half of the world's chameleon species live on the island of Madagascar. This chameleon community is not only the world's largest, it is also the world's most unique; with 59 different species existing nowhere outside of Madagascar.*

Larger than California and Oregon combined, Madagascar is the world's fourth largest island, after Greenland, New Guinea and Borneo. Located 250 miles off the south-east coast of Africa, the island extends 1,000 miles in length and 360 miles at its largest width.

Madagascar separated from mainland Africa more than 150 million years ago and evolved as a continent apart: the isolation allowed for both the survival of primitive forms and the development of new and unique ones. The protection of its outstanding variety of animals and plants is a primary purpose of the international community for the planet preservation.

Each climatic region is matched by a different vegetation: the eastern coast is covered by a tropical rainforest, with more than 170 species of palms, many kinds of fern, bamboos, a thousand different species of orchids (vanilla is among these), and medicinal plants.

The southwest of the island has a dry climate and is home to a very different but equally fascinating flora: baobabs which take on bizarre forms (six of the eight species of the world live only in Madagascar), spiny plants reminiscent of columnar cacti and *Pachipodium* (elephant food genus), which seems a "bonsai" baobab.

Madagascar, also known as the "Great Red Island," is a developing island nation off the east coast of Africa.

Antananarivo, the capital, enjoys a temperate climate, but the island has a wide range of microclimates ranging from rain forests in the northeast to desert in the southwest.

Exactly how and when the early Malagasy discovered and settled the island is not known. They have a dual Indonesian and African origin, attested by their physical features, language, agricultural practices, and customs. In spite of their diversity, they are united by a common language, rooted in the ancient Malayo-Polynesian, ancestor of the tongues spoken in the vast area bounded by Hawaii, the Tuamotu and Madagascar. The modern language has been enriched by words imported from Bantu tongues, Swahili, Arabic, English and French.

Note: world's fourth-largest island; strategic location along Mozambique Channel

ECONOMY

In 2000, Madagascar embarked on the preparation of a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) under the Heavily Indebted Poor countries (HIPC) Initiative. The boards of the IMF and of the World Bank concurred in December 2000 that the country is eligible under the HIPC Initiative, and Madagascar has reached the decision point for debt relief. On March 1, 2001, the IMF Board granted the country \$103 million for 2001-03 under the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGR). Resources freed up from HIPC will be directed toward improving access to health, education, rural roads, water, and direct support to communities. In addition, on March 7, 2001, the Paris Club approved a debt cancellation of \$161 million. On February 28, 2001, the African Development Bank (ADB) approved under the HIPC a debt cancellation of \$71.46 million and granted in June 2001 an additional credit of \$20 million to fight against AIDS and poverty.

Partly as a result of these credits but also as a result of previous reforms, average GDP growth exceeded the population growth rate of 2.8% in 1997 (3.5%), 1998 (3.9%), 1999 (4.7%) and 2000 (4.8%). Madagascar's appeal to investors stems from its competitive, trainable work force. More than 200 investors, particularly garment manufacturers, have organized under the country's Export Processing Zone (EPZ) system since it was established in 1989. The absence of quota limits on textile imports to the European market under the Lome Convention has helped stimulate this growth. In addition, there is evidence that Madagascar's recent eligibility for AGOA is significantly increasing Malagasy exports and foreign investment.

In the short and medium terms, considerable economic growth can arise from greater efficiency in the allocation and use of

resources. Since the mid-1980s, Madagascar has run sizeable balance-of-payment deficits. The current account deficit as a percentage of GDP averaged in excess of 6% during the last 6 years and registered nearly 4% in 1999. Madagascar's debt ratio, which had reached 46% in 1996, is estimated at 15.4% in 2000. Within an overall framework of poverty reduction, the HIPC Initiative would enable the country to reduce its debt service ratio to 5.5% in 2003, and remain at around 5% throughout the projection period of 2000-19.

An optimistic high-growth scenario is predicated on recovery of private investor interest and a continuing drop in inflation. From more than 60 % in 1994, the inflation rate dropped to 6.4% in 1998, before rising again to 14.4% in 1999 and 8.7% in 2000. The government hopes to bring this down to 5.8% by the end of 2001. In 2000, real GDP growth reached 4.8% and was forecast to accelerate to 6% in 2001. Tax revenues increased to more than 11% of GDP in 2000 and in 2001, the government forecasts a rate approaching 12%.

from *CIA World Factbook 2002*

HISTORY

Madagascar's population is predominantly of mixed Asian and African origin. Recent research suggests that the island was uninhabited until Indonesian seafarers arrived in roughly the first century A.D., probably by way of southern India and East Africa, where they acquired African wives and slaves. Subsequent migrations from both the Pacific and Africa further consolidated this original mixture, and 18 separate tribal groups emerged. Asian features are most predominant in the central highlands people, the Merina (3 million) and the Betsileo (2 million); the coastal people are of African origin. The largest coastal groups are the Betsimisaraka (1.5 million) and the Tsimihety and Sakalava (700,000 each).

The Malagasy language is of Malayo-Polynesian origin and is generally spoken throughout the island. French also is spoken among the educated population of this former French colony.

Most people practice traditional religions, which tend to emphasize links between the living and the dead. They believe that the dead join their ancestors in the ranks of divinity and that ancestors are intensely concerned with the fate of their living descendants. This spiritual communion is celebrated by the Merina and Betsileo reburial practice of famadihana, or "turning over the dead." In this ritual, relatives' remains are removed from the family tomb, rewrapped in new silk shrouds, and returned to the tomb following festive ceremonies in their honor.

About 45% of the Malagasy are Christian, divided almost evenly between Roman Catholic and Protestant. Many incorporate the cult of the dead with their religious beliefs and bless their dead at church before proceeding with the traditional burial

rites. They also may invite a pastor to attend a famadihana.

A historical rivalry exists between the predominantly Catholic masses, considered to be underprivileged, and the predominantly Protestant Merina aristocrats, who tend to prevail in the civil service, business, and professions. A new policy of decentralizing resources and authority is intended to enhance the development potential of all Madagascar's provinces. Provincial Council members were elected by popular vote in December 2000. In March 2001, the new Provincial Council members joined mayors and communal council members in each province in electing Senators to represent them in the national parliament. Governors were elected by Electoral College in June 2001. Transfer of duties and establishments of budgets are in progress.

The written history of Madagascar began in the seventh century A.D., when Arabs established trading posts along the northwest coast. European contact began in the 1500s, when Portuguese sea captain Diego Dias sighted the island after his ship became separated from a fleet bound for India. In the late 17th century, the French established trading posts along the east coast. From about 1774 to 1824, it was a favorite haunt for pirates, including Americans, one of whom brought Malagasy rice to South Carolina.

Beginning in the 1790s, Merina rulers succeeded in establishing hegemony over the major part of the island, including the coast. In 1817, the Merina ruler and the British governor of Mauritius concluded a treaty abolishing the slave trade, which had been important in Madagascar's economy. In return, the island received British military and financial assistance. British influence remained strong for several decades, during which the Merina court was converted to Presbyterianism, Congregationalism, and Anglicanism.

The British accepted the imposition of a French protectorate over Madagascar in 1885 in return for eventual control over Zanzibar (now part of Tanzania) and as part of an overall definition of spheres of influence in the area. Absolute French control over Madagascar was established by military force in 1895-96, and the Merina monarchy was abolished.

Malagasy troops fought in France, Morocco, and Syria during World War I. After France fell to the Germans, Madagascar was administered first by the Vichy government and then in 1942 by the British, whose troops occupied the strategic island to preclude its seizure by the Japanese. The Free French received the island from the United Kingdom in 1943.

In 1947, with French prestige at low ebb, a nationalist uprising was suppressed only after several months of bitter fighting. The French subsequently established reformed institutions in 1956 under the Loi Cadre (Overseas Reform Act), and Madagascar moved peacefully toward

independence. The Malagasy Republic was proclaimed on October 14, 1958, as an autonomous state within the French Community. A period of provisional government ended with the adoption of a constitution in 1959 and full independence on June 26, 1960. - **U.S. Department of State resources**

PRINCIPAL AREAS / TOWNS

Ambohimanga

Ambohimanga ("Blue Hill"): the former royal capital, located 14 miles north of Antananarivo. An old, sacred village on a steep hill culminated by the rova which contains an historical museum.

Montagne d'Ambre National Park

National Park near Antsiranana, 45,500 acres. Rain forest, tree-ferns, orchids. Lemurs, birds, harmless reptiles. Crater lakes, water falls, sweeping views towards the sea. No entrance fee, but a permit must be obtained at the "Direction des Eaux et Forets" in Antananarivo.

Andasibe (Périnet)

A small jungle town located along the Antananarivo-Toamasina railroad. Fauna reserve; visiting permits delivered by "Direction des Eaux et Forêts" in Antananarivo; ask for a guide at the Hôtel de la Gare in Andasibe to see the Indri-indry (largest lemur) and other lemur species.

Antananarivo

Antananarivo ("The City of a Thousand Warriors"): the capital and the first stop for passengers arriving by plane. The city is built on a Y-shaped granite mountain surrounded by rice fields. The rova ("royal fort") sits atop the highest point and houses an historical museum of the ancient Malagasy queens and kings. A jumble of houses cover the steep slopes. A maze of narrow alleys and stairs crisscross the town. One such stairway, climbing 600 feet, is named Tsiafakantitra ("Old folks can't make it").

The city of Antananarivo is divided into neighborhoods or quarters with names more readily used by taxi drivers and local inhabitants than street names. For instance, the US Embassy is in Antsahavola, the topographic map service in Ambanidia, and the zoo in Tsimbazaza.

In the center of town, the Zoma is the largest open air market in the world. Exotic fruits, vegetable, meat, flowers, hardware, toys, furniture, handicrafts, potteries, carved stones, clothes are laid out over a central plaza and many adjoining streets. The wares are protected from the sun by enormous white umbrellas. Hawking and haggling are animated but conducted in a dignified manner, without yelling. Many localities derive their name from the day of the week the market is held. The Wednesday market is held in places called Alarobia, the Thursday market in Alakamisy. For Friday shopping, you go to Zomà, though Antananarivo's Zoma is now held daily.

Tsimbazaza ("They are not children") is a botanical and zoological garden with many specimens of the very peculiar Malagasy flora and fauna: lemurs, extraordinary chameleons and insects, birds. There is a skeleton of a giant extinct bird, the aepiornis, standing ten feet tall over its nine-quart egg (an ostrich egg measures a quart and a half).

Antsirabe

Antsirabe ("Plenty of salt"): a charming resort and hot-springs town, 100 miles south of Antananarivo. The legendary lake Tritriva fills an extinct crater nearby. Lake Andraikiba offers boating and swimming.



Isalo

[pronounced eeshall] National park in the south-west of the country. 203,900 acres. 150 miles from Toliary. Canyons, cliffs, gorges and other striking geological features, due to wind and rain erosion. Exotic flora, native palm trees, giant cactus. Lemurs, harmless reptiles.

Camping and visiting permit delivered by the "Direction des Eaux et Forets" in Antananarivo, by the "Service Provincial des Eaux et Forets" in Fianarantsoa, or by the Forestry Ranger in Ranohira.

Nosy Be

Along the north-west coast lies a number of islands, the largest of which is Nosy-Be. Marvelous beaches and coral reef in a protected national zone, natural lemur reserve, wonderful fishing, numerous nearby desert islands, all awaits the lucky traveller.

Nosy Boraha (Sainte Marie)

A tropical paradise of beaches, sea shells, coconut trees; quiet island, with very few cars; mopeds can be rented to circulate around this 36-mile long island. Historical traces of occupation by pirates in past centuries.

Taolanaro (Fort Dauphin)

Beaches, lemur reserve at Berenty, Mahafaly tombs, Malagasy special flora such as baobabs. Clement weather. This spot is almost the antipode of San Francisco.

Toamasina (Tamatave)

A pleasant town and the most important port in Madagascar. Departure point for excursions by car, boat, train or plane. Forest station and flora laboratory at Ivoloïna (7 miles north of town). Rain forest and virgin beaches north towards Mahavelona.

Toliary (Tuléar)

Scuba-diving and snorkeling in a coral reef second only to Australia's Great Barrier Reef.

Good starting point to see baobabs, giant cactuses and thorny trees of the semi-arid Malagasy South-West.

DEALING WITH JET LAG

With the joys and adventures of international travel come certain unavoidable inconveniences such as occasional lost luggage or bouts of jet lag. In fact, studies reveal that as much as 90% of long distance travelers experience a degree of jet lag.

Jet lag describes that out-of-sorts feeling associated with long flights, particularly those across time zones. Symptoms and severity vary but may include drowsiness, fatigue, irritability, difficulty concentrating, headaches, insomnia, and swelling of the extremities.

The number of time zones crossed affects the severity of jet lag. The internal body clock follows circadian rhythm, which is controlled by the

hypothalamus that processes nerve signals. That clock is designed for regular cycles of light and darkness. Depending on the number of time zones crossed, it may take several days for that rhythm to be restored.

But that is not the only influence. Other factors include cabin pressure, stale air, lack of humidity, and your overall physical condition at the beginning of your trip.

Although jet lag can not be completely avoided, there are some simple things you can do to help minimize its affects. Consider the following for your next scheduled trip.

- Start your trip well rested with a good night's sleep prior to departure. Getting adequate rest before starting on your journey will help minimize the amount of catching up you'll have to do when you arrive at the destination. Once home, try to schedule a day of rest before returning to work.
- Drink plenty of fluids -- water and juices will help you to stay well hydrated. Seasoned travelers recommend that you carry a bottle of drinking water with you and drink eight ounces every hour.
- Avoid alcohol and caffeine just before and during flights. Both possess diuretic properties that promote dehydration. Alcohol also causes drowsiness and contributes to feeling sluggish.
- Once settled onboard, reset your watch to the time zone to which you are traveling. This small act helps you begin adjusting to your destination's local time.
- As much as possible, create a dark environment during flight. Studies have shown that bright lights strongly affect individuals' body clocks. If necessary, try eyeshades and earplugs to help block distractions and convince your body that it is nighttime. Closing window shades and turning off overhead lights may also help. Sleep on the plane if your flight has an early morning arrival time.
- Wear loose-fitting clothing and comfortable shoes that will help in the event you experience mild swelling. Experienced travelers often bring lightweight slippers to wear during flights.
- Although not always feasible, look for opportunities to walk around while in flight. Do simple isometric exercises (contracting and relaxing as many muscle groups as possible) in your seat. These will improve circulation, help promote increased alertness, and reduce chances of swelling.
- If you arrive in the morning, plan to stay awake. If possible, wait until the local bedtime to sleep.

Many people swear that this is key in determining how quickly they adapt to local conditions. You will sleep better and will be less likely to suffer insomnia than if you nap upon arrival.

- During extended stopovers, showers are sometimes available. If you have the opportunity, shower. Trans-Pacific pilots report that taking a shower in Hawaii helps them recover more quickly from the general effects of jet lag after the flight.

Suggested Reading List

In addition to the many comprehensive and readily available guides produced by Lonely Planet, Fodor, Insight, The Rough Guide, and others, there are many books relating to the Galapagos Islands and Ecuador. Here are a few selections we thought might

Birds of Madagascar: A Photographic Guide

Peter Morris, Frank Hawkins, Pete Morris

From the Publisher ~ Isolated for at least 120 million years, Madagascar has developed a unique flora and fauna. The fourth largest island in the world, Madagascar has 260 species of birds, no fewer than 108 of which are endemic and a further 25 of which are endemic to the Malagasy Region (Madagascar, the Comoros, Mauritius, Reunion, and their outlying islands). This book is a photographic field guide to the avifauna of Madagascar. The text for each species describes all known plumages likely to be encountered in Madagascar, vocalizations (many of which have not been previously described), habitat and behavior, range within Madagascar and worldwide, status (including taxonomic notes where relevant, subspecies, and global conservation status), and where to locate the species in Madagascar. There is also an invaluable section that summarizes distinctions from similar species. The introduction gives an overview of the birds found on Madagascar and the habitat zones where they are most likely to occur. There is also a short gazetteer to the major bird-watching locations on the island that, together with the "where to watch" section of species accounts, should enable prospective visitors to plan their itineraries to can see nearly all the Madagascan endemics and regularly occurring species.

Madagascar Wildlife: A Visitor's Guide

Hilary Bradt, Derek Schuurman, Nick Garbutt

Synopsis ~ This guide for visitors and natural history enthusiasts features descriptions of animals of Madagascar and their behavior and gives information on where best to see them, as well as hints for photographing them. Some 250 species are described, illustrated with some 200 color photos. This second edition updates information on national parks and reserves, and on ecology and conservation. Bradt has led tours in Madagascar since 1982, and has written travel guides about the country.

Over the Lip of the World:

Among the Storytellers of Madagascar

Colleen J. McElroy

From the Publisher ~ Gifted travel writer, poet, professor of English, and insightful observer of human nature, Colleen McElroy journeyed to Madagascar to undertake a Fulbright research project exploring Malagasy oral traditions and myths. In *Over the Lip of the World* she depicts with equal verve the various storytelling traditions of the island and her own adventures in trying to find and record them.

McElroy's tale of an African American woman's travels among the people of Madagascar is told with wit, insight, and humor. Throughout it she interweaves English translations of Malagasy stories of heroism and morality, royalty and commoners, love and revenge, and the magic of tricksters and shape-changers.

Digging for Bird Dinosaurs:

An Expedition to Madagascar

Nic Bishop

Age Range: 8 to 12

From the Publisher ~ The story of Cathy Forster's experiences as a member of a team of paleontologists who went on an expedition of Madagascar in 1998 to search for fossil birds.

The Eighth Continent: Life, Death, and Discovery in the Lost World of Madagascar

Russell A. Mittermeier, Peter Tyson- Foreword

From the Publisher ~ Since the age of dinosaurs, Madagascar has thrived in isolation off the east coast of Africa. Hundreds of animal and plant species, most famously the lemurs, have evolved here and only here, while other creatures extinct elsewhere for tens of millions of years now vie with modern man for survival.

Notes