



Fact Sheet

Destination Madagascar

Population:	19.5 million
Language:	Malagasy, French, English
Time:	GMT/UTC + 3
Electricity:	220V, 50Hz
Dialing Code:	261
Currency:	Ariary = of five iraimbilanja

General

The Republic of Madagascar is an island nation in the Indian Ocean off the southeastern coast of Africa. and is home to 5% of the world's plant and animal species, of which more than 80% are native to Madagascar. The most famous of course are lemurs. It is also the world's largest producer of vanilla. Madagascar has two seasons, a hot, rainy season from November to April, and a cooler, dry season from May to October.

History

It is believed that human settlement of Madagascar began between 200 and 500 A.D., when seafarers from southeast Asia arrived by canoe. Settlers also crossed the Mozambique Channel to Madagascar at about the same time. The first Europeans to sight Madagascar were the Portuguese in 1500 who then commenced a trading relationship. By the beginning of the 17th Century, there were a number of small Malagasy kingdoms who developed relationships with the British who assisted in stopping the slave trade. In 1883 the French bombarded the island and in 1885 they established a protectorate over Madagascar, which was recognized by Great Britain in 1890. Madagascar gained full independence on June 26, 1960 and in 1975, a new constitution was approved that renamed the Malagasy Republic the Democratic Republic of Madagascar but in the ensuing years a number of coups and contested presidential elections have made recent history uneasy and the economy compromised.

Visa Requirements

Please note that visas are the responsibility of the traveller. The visa requirements vary depending on where you are from and where you are going. We keep the following information as up to date as possible, but rules do change. It is important that you check for yourself.

All foreign visitors to the Republic of Madagascar require entry visas. For information and to down load visa application forms please see:

www.madagascar-consulate.org/visainfo.html#tourism

Please ensure that your passport has at least a further 6 months validity and spare pages for any visa stamps.

Travel Insurance

It is mandatory for you to organise travel insurance prior to your departure and we will ask for details of your insurer and the emergency contact details before you leave home.

Health and Medical

Inoculations are not required unless you are travelling from an infected location. If you come from a country where diseases such as cholera and yellow fever are prevalent, you will have to show a certificate of inoculation at your point of entry into Madagascar. Although not required, it is preferable to have preventative shots against polio, tetanus and typhoid. Malaria is present in Madagascar and we strongly advise you to consult your own medical practitioner for specific personal advice. Medical facilities are limited, although there are a number of foreign-trained medical specialists in Antananarivo. Outside Antananarivo, acceptable medical care may be difficult to find. Serious medical problems will require air evacuation to a country with state-of-the-art medical facilities. You should carry prescriptions of any medications you may need, making sure you have the generic name as your specific brand may not be available. If you wear glasses, bring a spare pair and a copy of the prescription as well.

Safety and Security

As we travel only with professional, licensed guides we have a high degree of safety however, like anywhere else you need to be aware of your surroundings and ensure the safety of your personal belongings.

Telecommunications

As long as you have global roaming on your mobile telephone you will have no problem connecting to the providers in Madagascar, however, email devices such as Blackberry are problematic due to the data infrastructure. There are internet cafes in the largest cities.

Useful Travel Information

Currency: The Ariary is divided into 5 iraimbilanja. Foreign currencies can be exchanged at banks and official bureaux de change, but the ariary cannot be changed back into hard currency. Some banks will only accept US dollars or Euro. Travellers cheques can be exchanged at most banks and in major hotels, but some banks refuse to accept them. ATMs are available in Antananarivo. As a guide only 100MGA = US\$ 0.06, £ 0.03, C\$ 0.06 A\$ 0.06, R 0.46, € 0.04, NZ\$ 0.08

Credit Cards: Most major credit cards are starting to be accepted in top hotels and major travel agencies in the capital and other major towns, but have limited usage elsewhere, we advise bringing cash for majority of your transactions.

Religion and Culture

A belief in the existence of close ties between the living and the dead constitutes the basis of all traditional beliefs and the foundation for Malagasy religious and social values. Traditional beliefs are augmented by imported organized religions. Statistics regarding religious affiliations do not exist, however, it is estimated that approximately 55 percent of the total population adhere to the traditional beliefs, and 40 percent are Christian, about evenly divided between Roman Catholics and Protestants, the remaining 5 percent being Muslim.

The culture of the Malagasy people centre around their very great respect for their ancestors, they believe in and pray to them and their houses have only one room where the front door is faces east in order to respect their ancestors.

Electrical

Electricity supply is 220v and sockets are mostly of the European two pronged variety, although some places have English style plugs. We suggest you bring a universal adaptor.



European circular plug with two metal pins



South African plug with two circular metal pins above a large circular grounding pin

Alcohol

Alcohol is freely available in Madagascar and the locally brewed beer is widely available. All the hotels have bars serving a variety of wine, beer and cocktails.

Cuisine

Rice is the staple of the Madagascar diet, served topped with 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.

Try the national snack: Koba, a pate of rice, banana, and peanut but the island's famous seafood salads will have you coming back for more, luscious ginger-and-lime flavored crab and lobster meat, resting on a bed of fresh greens.

What To Bring



Important Items to Include:

- USA\$ or €EU for exchange – remember you will need a lot of small notes for tips
- Your passport
- Travel Insurance Policy
- Copies of your documentation e.g. passport, credit cards etc
- Sunscreen
- Camera (a large zoom can be valuable addition)
- Wide brim hat
- Torch/Pen light
- Waterproof jacket
- Binoculars
- Insect repellent
- Waterproof shoes/sandals
- Hiking boots or comfortable well worn sturdy shoes
- Luggage locks
- Medicines and prescriptions
- Glasses, sunglasses and items of a personal nature
- Swimmers
- First aid kit

Things to Consider

- Pack light - Leave empty space in your suitcase to buy souvenirs.
- Consider a small backpack to carry water and personal items so your hands are free
- Ensure you have mobile telephone global roaming agreement
- Some email devices may not work. Check with your provider

Notes

- Check your airline's policy on luggage allowance and what is allowable in the cabin and what must go into your hold baggage. Many airlines will not allow duty free over the amount of 100 ml on board so check this before stocking up.
- Ladies should be aware that not all feminine hygiene products may be available and are advised to bring a supply with them.
- Travelling with a group will provide you with the pleasure of new friendships and perhaps some frustrations. Your fellow travellers may be from around the world, differing cultures and likely a range of age groups. We ask you to be understanding and patient with your fellow travellers for the benefit of everyone's travel experience. Remember too that you have responsibilities to the group. If you are requested to be at a place at a certain time, ensure that you don't keep the rest of the group waiting.

