

Madagascar

Geography

Location: Southern Africa, island in the Indian Ocean, east of Mozambique

Area:

total area: 587,040 sq km

land area: 581,540 sq km

Land boundaries: 0 km

Coastline: 4,828 km

Maritime claims:

contiguous zone: 24 nm

continental shelf: 200 nm or 100 nm from the 2,500-m isobath

exclusive economic zone: 200 nm

territorial sea: 12 nm

Climate: tropical along coast, temperate inland, arid in south

Terrain: narrow coastal plain, high plateau and mountains in center

Natural resources: graphite, chromite, coal, bauxite, salt, quartz, tar sands, semiprecious stones, mica, fish

Land use:

arable land: 4%

permanent crops: 1%

meadows and pastures: 58%

forest and woodland: 26%

other: 11%

Irrigated land: 9,000 sq km (1989 est.)

Environment:

current issues: soil erosion results from deforestation and overgrazing; desertification; surface water contaminated with raw sewage and other organic wastes; several species of flora and fauna unique to the island are endangered

natural hazards: periodic cyclones

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

People

Population: 13,862,325 (July 1995 est.)

Age structure:

0-14 years: 47% (female 3,231,647; male 3,265,715)

15-64 years: 50% (female 3,511,699; male 3,413,564)

65 years and over: 3% (female 225,205; male 214,495) (July 1995 est.)

Population growth rate: 3.18% (1995 est.)

Birth rate: 44.82 births/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Death rate: 12.99 deaths/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Net migration rate: 0 migrant(s)/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Infant mortality rate: 86.9 deaths/1,000 live births (1995 est.)

Life expectancy at birth:
total population: 54.45 years
male: 52.47 years
female: 56.48 years (1995 est.)

Total fertility rate: 6.62 children born/woman (1995 est.)

Nationality:
noun: Malagasy (singular and plural)
adjective: Malagasy

Ethnic divisions: Malayo-Indonesian (Merina and related Betsileo),
Cotiers (mixed African, Malayo-Indonesian, and Arab ancestry -
Betsimisaraka, Tsimihety, Antaisaka, Sakalava), French, Indian,
Creole, Comoran

Religions: indigenous beliefs 52%, Christian 41%, Muslim 7%

Languages: French (official), Malagasy (official)

Literacy:
total population: 80%
male: 88%
female: 73%

Government

Names:

conventional long form: Republic of Madagascar

conventional short form: Madagascar

local long form: Republique de Madagascar

local short form: Madagascar

former: Malagasy Republic

Type: republic

Capital: Antananarivo

Independence: 26 June 1960 (from France)

National holiday: Independence Day, 26 June (1960)

Constitution: 19 August 1992 by national referendum

Suffrage: 18 years of age; universal

Flag: two equal horizontal bands of red (top) and green with a vertical white band of the same width on hoist side

Economy

Overview: Madagascar is one of the poorest countries in the world, suffering from chronic malnutrition, underfunded health and education facilities, a 3% annual population growth rate, and severe loss of forest cover, accompanied by erosion.

Industries: agricultural processing (meat canneries, soap factories, breweries, tanneries, sugar refining plants), light consumer goods industries (textiles, glassware), cement, automobile assembly plant, paper, petroleum

Agriculture: accounts for 31% of GDP; cash crops - coffee, vanilla, sugarcane, cloves, cocoa; food crops - rice, cassava, beans, bananas, peanuts; cattle raising widespread; almost self-sufficient in rice

Illicit drugs: illicit producer of cannabis (cultivated and wild varieties)
used mostly for domestic consumption

Transportation

Railroads:

total: 1,020 km

Highways:

total: 40,000 km

Inland waterways: of local importance only; isolated streams and
small portions of Canal des Pangalanes

Ports: Antsiranana, Mahajanga, Port Saint-Louis, Toamasina,
Toliaria

Airports:

total: 138

Defence Forces

Branches: Popular Armed Forces (includes Intervention Forces, Development Forces, Aeronaval Forces - includes Navy and Air Force), Gendarmerie, Presidential Security Regiment