



MADAGASCAR

Madagascar is an island located off the eastern coast of southern Africa in the Indian Ocean. As the world's fourth largest island, Madagascar is a little larger than France but slightly smaller than Texas.

Madagascar has been isolated from Africa for over 150 million years. For this reason, most of the plants and animals found on the island exist nowhere else on Earth.

THE PEOPLE OF MADAGASCAR

Due to its remoteness, Madagascar was not settled by humans until around 2000 years ago. The first Malagasy -- the name for the people of the island -- are descended from Indonesians who made their way across the Indian ocean. Arabs and Africans arrived later and made important contributions to the unique cultural practices found on the island.

After a period marked by the presence of pirates along the eastern coast, Madagascar was colonized by the French in the late 19th century. Madagascar won its independence in 1960 and today is a democratic state.



There are around 20 tribal groups in Madagascar, each with its own cultural practices. Rice is the staple food for all Malagasy regardless of tribal background and Madagascar consumes the highest per capita amount of rice in the world. Baobab trees in western Madagascar (bottom). Madagascar has 7 species of these odd-looking trees.



MADAGASCAR WILDLIFE

About 75% of Madagascar's species are endemic. The island is home to strange animals including lemurs (group of primates), tenrecs (similar to spiny hedgehogs), brightly colored chameleons, the puma-like fossa, and a variety of other creatures. Sadly, due to habitat destruction and hunting, many of Madagascar's unique animals are today threatened with extinction.

You can learn more about Madagascar and its wildlife at

WildMadagascar.org

Madagascar's wildlife: Sifaka lemur (right), Tomato frog, Ring-tailed lemurs, Indri lemur (top row); Boophis tree frog, Day gecko, Tenrec (middle row); Leaf-tailed gecko, Panther chameleon, Sportive lemur (bottom row).