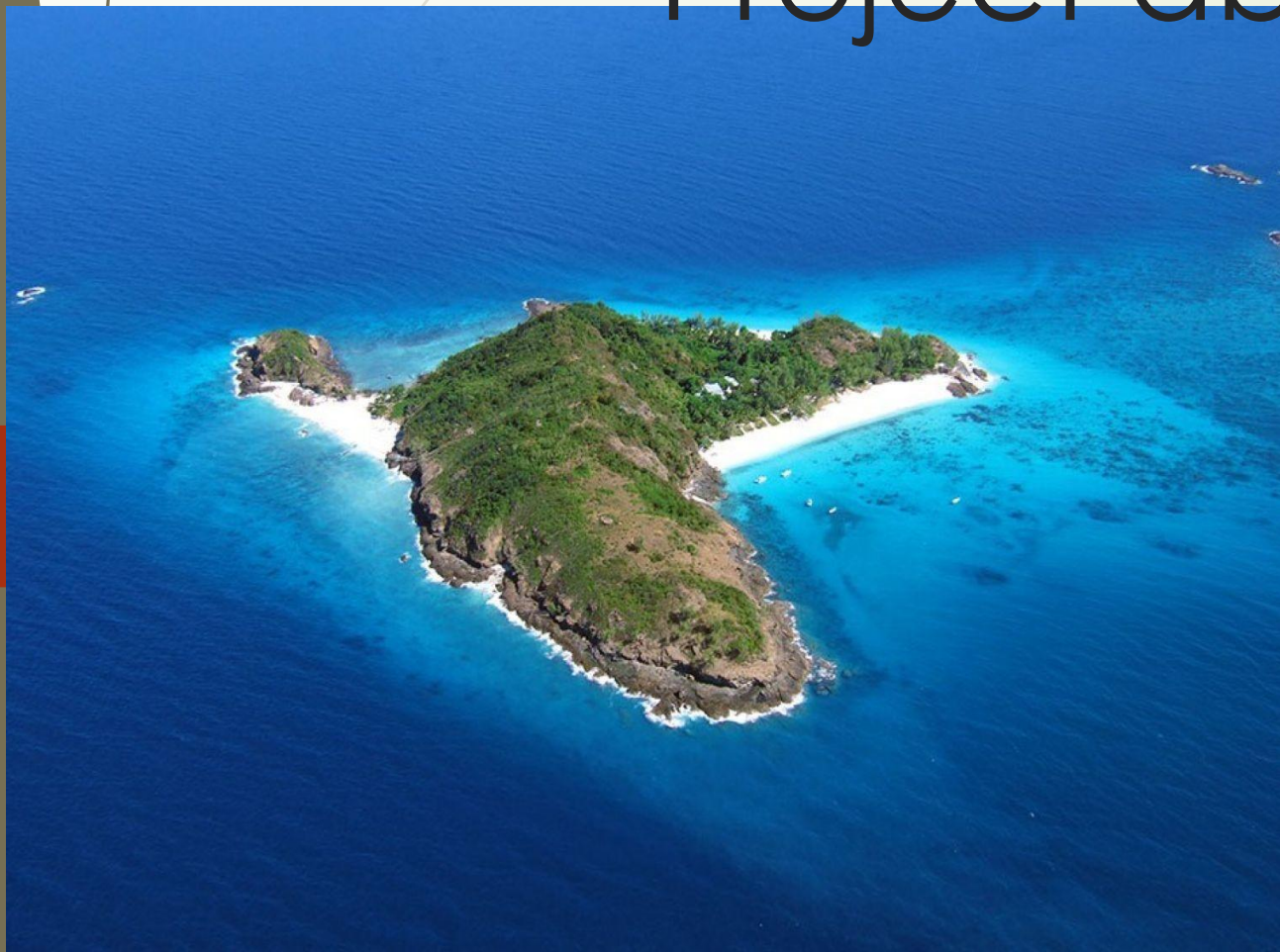
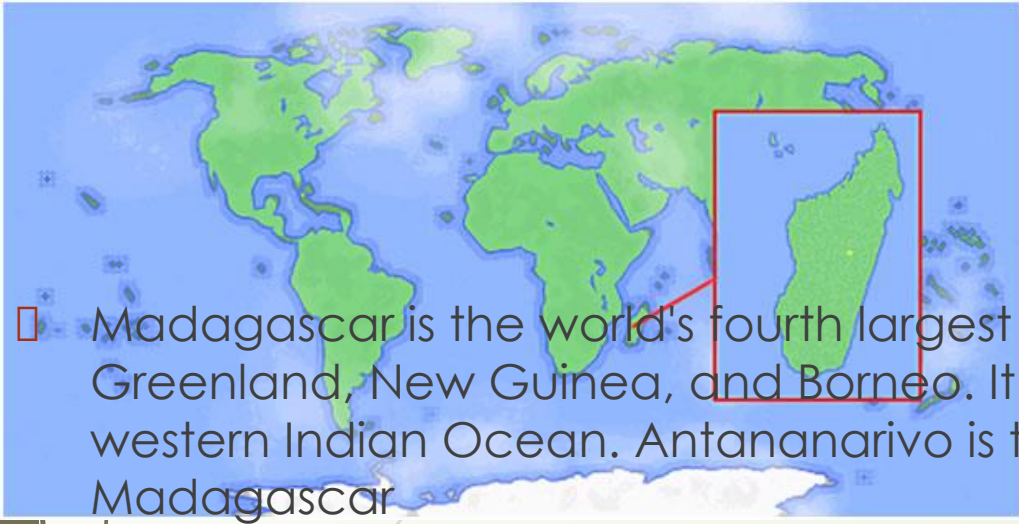


Project about Madagascar



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GEOGRAPHY

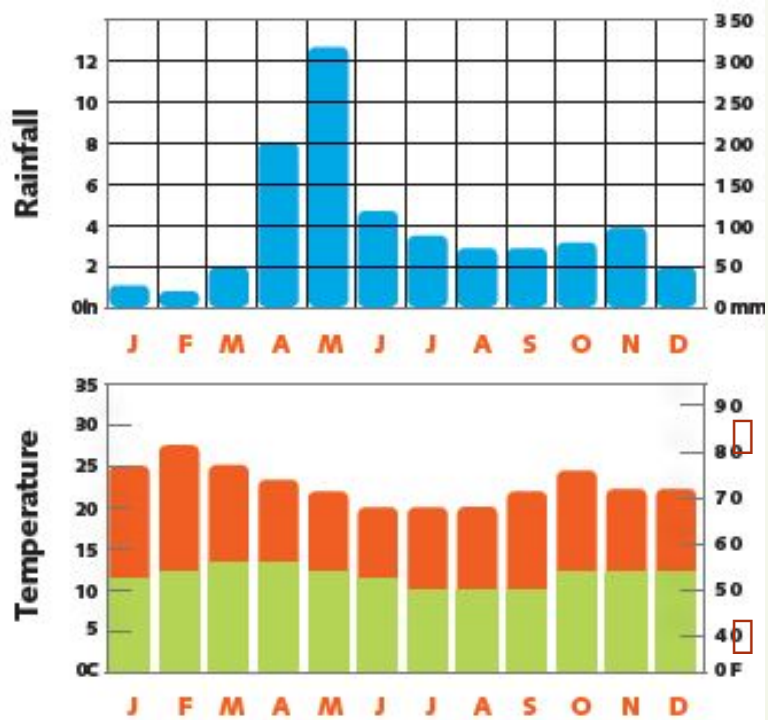


Madagascar is the world's fourth largest island after Greenland, New Guinea, and Borneo. It is located in the western Indian Ocean. Antananarivo is the capital of Madagascar.

Madagascar can be divided into five geographical regions: the east coast, the Tsaratanana Massif in the north, the central highlands, the west coast, and the southwest. The central highlands run the length of the island and range from 800 to 1,800 meters in altitude. The Tsaratanana Massif region at the north end of the island has the highest mountain on the island.

Madagascar is often called the "Great Red Island" because of its red soils, which are generally poor for agriculture.





MADAGASCAR'S CLIMATE



Because of its geography, Madagascar's climate is highly variable. Generally, Madagascar has two seasons: a hot, rainy season from November to April and a cooler, dry season from May to October.

The east coast is the wettest part of the country and it is home to the island's rainforests. This area is also hit periodically by devastating tropical storms and cyclones.

- The central highlands are cooler and drier, and are the location of Madagascar's agriculture, especially rice.
- The west coast is home to dry deciduous forests. Deciduous trees lose all their leaves during the 6- to 8-month dry season.

When rains return, these forests erupt in a sea of bright green leaves. The southwest of Madagascar has the island's driest climate. Parts of this area can be considered desert because so little rain falls.

Native People



- There is some debate over who first settled Madagascar. Some anthropologists believe it was first settled 2,000 years ago by Indonesians, not black Africans, and Africans did not arrive until a later date.
- Others suggest that the people of Madagascar descended from Indonesians and Africans who had mixed before their arrival on the isolated island. Regardless, most experts agree that Madagascar's inhabitants arrived relatively recently and that following migrations have brought other groups (like Arabs and Indians) into the mix.
- Within the country, people's physical appearance, religious practices, and traditions are highly regional. Today there are more than 20 ethnic groups in Madagascar from the Indonesian-looking people of the highlands to the African-looking in western coastal areas to the Arabic on the eastern coast.
- Madagascar is a land of extraordinary cultural richness. It's a place where in many areas taboo and tradition takes precedence over the law;
- Today Madagascar is home to around 18 million people.



MADAGASCAR'S ECONOMY

- ❑ Madagascar is one of the world's poorest countries. The country's economy is based largely on agriculture, mining, fishing, and clothes production. One of Madagascar's best known products is vanilla, it is used for flavoring. Vanilla beans take a minimum of two years to grow so they are quite expensive.
- ❑ Despite relatively high vanilla prices, the average Malagasy makes around \$1 US per day, while 70% of the people live below the world poverty line. Nearly half of Madagascar's children under five years of age are not eating enough.
- ❑ However, all is not lost. In 2005 Madagascar announced it had found large amounts of oil. Oil will probably be a key part of Madagascar's economic future along with mining, gemstone production
- ❑ There is hope that ecotourism, a form of tourism that minimizes impact on the environment, can help grow Madagascar's economy while protecting its natural areas and wildlife.



MADAGASCAR WILDLIFE

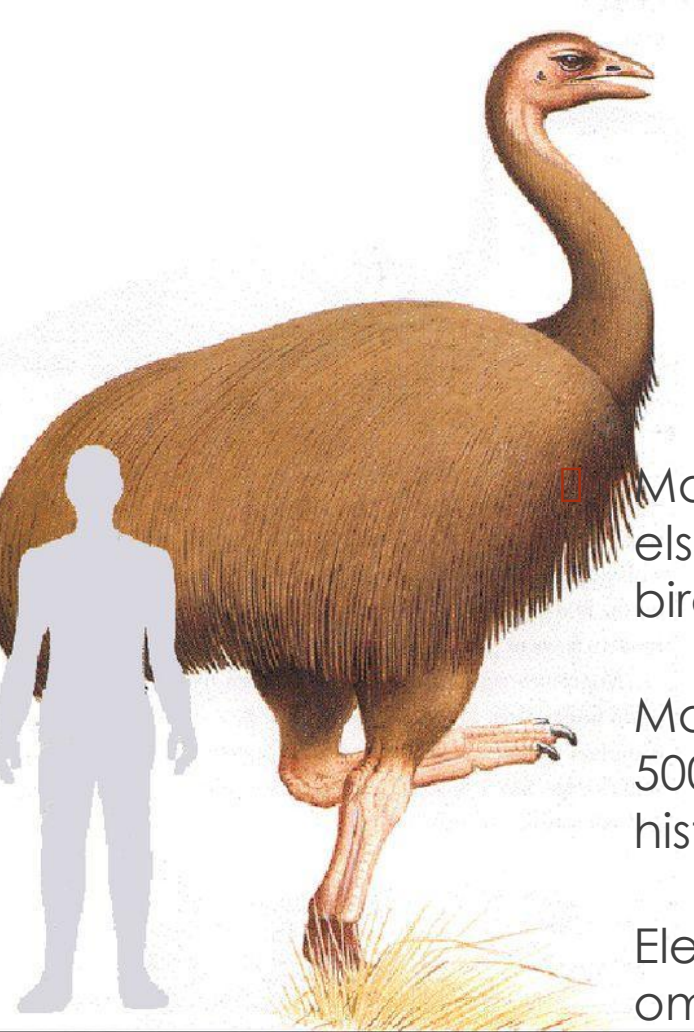
- ❑ Madagascar has some of the highest biodiversity on the planet.
- ❑ Of roughly 200,000 known species found on Madagascar, about 150,000 are endemic -- meaning they exist nowhere else. Unique to the island are more than 50 types of lemurs, 99% of its frog species, and 36 genera of birds. Madagascar houses half of its chameleon species, and 6% of its frogs
- ❑ Some species found in Madagascar have their closest relatives not in Africa but in the South Pacific and South America.
- ❑ Madagascar does not have apes, monkeys, elephants, zebras, giraffes, lions, hyenas, rhinos, antelopes, buffalo, camels, cats or dogs that you might expect to find in Africa. Because it is an island, many groups of mammal never made it to Madagascar.

Some species

- ❑ The fossa is a carnivore that is related to a mongoose and looks like a cross between a puma and a dog. Fossas are nocturnal creatures that hunt almost any animal including insects, reptiles, rodents and lemurs. They also eat chickens. They are hunted by local people as vermin. Fossas are active both in trees and on the ground and are excellent hunters.
- ❑ Streaked tenrec: Tenrecs are unusual insectivores that have radiated into ecological niches filled in other lands by hedgehogs, mice, shrews, opossums, and even otters. While some tenrecs are found in Africa, they are most diverse in Madagascar which has around 30 species.



MADAGASCAR BIRDS



Madagascar is home to 258 bird species of which 115 are found nowhere else in the world. Many people travel to Madagascar specifically to see its bird life.

Madagascar once had giant land birds, the largest of which weighed over 500 kg and stood 3m tall. Elephant birds were driven to extinction in recent history by human hunting, introduced species, and habitat loss.

Elephant bird eggs weighed roughly 9 kilograms and could make an omelette to feed 150 people.





© WildMadagascar.org

MADAGASCAR FROGS

- Madagascar is thought to have more than 300 species of frogs, 99% of which are endemic. Frogs are the only amphibians found in Madagascar -- there are no toads, salamanders, or newts.

Tomato frog

The Tomato frog releases a sticky, glue-like secretion that protects it against colubrid snakes, cats, and dogs. This secreted substance can produce an allergic reaction in humans as well.

Mantella frogs

Mantella are among the most popular of Malagasy frogs in the pet trade. These strikingly beautiful frogs fill a similar ecological niche to the poison-dart frogs of South America in that both use bright color to advertise their toxic skin secretions to predators



© John White

Reptiles

- ❑ Madagascar is home to more than 300 species of reptiles of which over 90% are endemic. Madagascar's reptile fauna includes lizards, snakes, turtles and crocodiles.
- ❑ The uniqueness of the island's reptiles has resulted in widespread collecting for the exotic pet trade
- ❑ There are more than 210 species of lizards in Madagascar. Some of the better known are chameleons, geckos, skinks, and iguanids.
- ❑ Madagascar is home to more than 80 species of snakes, none of which are overtly dangerous to humans.



MADAGASCAR FLORA

- ❑ Madagascar is home to as many as 12,000 plant species -- 70-80% of which are endemic -- making it one of the most diverse floras on the planet.
- ❑ One of Madagascar's most famous plants is the baobab tree which looks like a tree growing upside down. Baobabs usually inhabit the drier parts of Madagascar. They have adapted to their environment by storing large amounts of water in their bulbous trunks ecosystem. Local Malagasy take advantage of this water reservoir when they are thirsty



Madagascar's flora

- ❑ Madagascar is also home to a totally unique ecosystem -- one that is found nowhere else on Earth. Found in the dry southwestern part of the island, the spiny forest is notable because virtually every species of plant is covered with sharp spines. While these plants look a bit like cactus, they are not related. About 95% of the species found in the Spiny Desert are endemic.
- ❑ Madagascar has nearly 1000 known species of orchids, of which 85% are endemic.
- ❑ One of Madagascar's plants is used as a cure for cancer. The rosy periwinkle has been used to treat Hodgkin's lymphoma and



MADAGASCAR'S ENVIRONMENT PROBLEMS

- While Madagascar is known for its strange animals and beautiful forests, much of the country has suffered severe environmental damage. Because Madagascar is among the world's poorest countries, people's day-to-day survival is dependent upon natural resource use. Most Malagasy must live off the land that surrounds them, making use of whatever resources they can find.
- Madagascar's major environmental problems include:
 - Deforestation and habitat destruction
 - Agricultural fires
 - Erosion and soil degradation
 - Overexploitation of living resources: hunting and over-collection of species
 - Introduction of alien species



SAVING MADAGASCAR'S ENVIRONMENT

- While Madagascar has environmental problems, many people are working very hard to save its forests and native species.
- Today Madagascar has one of the best park systems in Africa and the country is trying to attract ecotourists. Ecotourists are travelers who are interested in nature and local culture, and want to minimize their impact on the environment.
- Ecotourism is helping the economy of Madagascar by providing work opportunities for local people as guides, cooks, and porters while providing money for conservation efforts