



Madagascar



Background Madagascar was one of the last major habitable landmasses on earth to be settled by humans. While there is some evidence of human presence on the island in the millennia B.C., large-scale settlement began between A.D. 350 and 550 with settlers from present-day Indonesia. The island attracted Arab and Persian traders as early as the 7th century, and migrants from Africa arrived around A.D. 1000. Madagascar was a pirate stronghold during the late 17th and early 18th centuries and served as a slave trading center into the 19th century. From the 16th to the late 19th century, a native Merina Kingdom dominated much of Madagascar. The French conquered the island in 1896 and made it a colony; independence was regained in 1960.

Free presidential and National Assembly elections were held in 1992-93, ending 17 years of single-party rule. In 1997, in the second presidential race, Didier RATSIRAKA, the leader during the 1970s and 1980s, returned to the presidency. The 2001 presidential election was contested between the followers of RATSIRAKA and Marc RAVALOMANANA, nearly causing half the country to secede. In 2002, the High Constitutional Court announced RAVALOMANANA the winner. He won a second term in 2006 but, following protests in 2009, handed over power to the military, which then conferred the presidency on the mayor of Antananarivo, Andry RAJOELINA, in what amounted to a coup d'etat. After a lengthy mediation process, Madagascar held UN-supported presidential and parliamentary elections in 2013. Former de facto finance minister Hery RAJAONARIMAMPINANINA won in a runoff and was inaugurated in 2014. In 2019, RAJOELINA was declared the winner against RAVALOMANANA. In 2023, RAJOELINA won another term in an election that most of the opposition boycotted, including RAJAONARIMAMPINANINA and RAVALOMANANA, who claimed it was rigged in favor of RAJOELINA. International observers, however, saw no evidence of systemic fraud, leading the international community to accept the election results.

Capital	name: Antananarivo
Government type	semi-presidential republic
Area	total : 587,041 sq km land: 581,540 sq km water: 5,501 sq km
Climate	tropical along coast, temperate inland, arid in south
Natural resources	graphite, chromite, coal, bauxite, rare earth elements, salt, quartz, tar sands, semiprecious stones, mica, fish, hydropower
Population	total: 29,452,714 (2024 est.)
Population growth rate	2.18% (2024 est.)
Ethnic groups	Malayo-Indonesian (Merina and related Betsileo), Cotiers (mixed African, Malayo-Indonesian, and Arab ancestry - Betsimisaraka, Tsimihety, Antaisaka, Sakalava), French, Indian, Creole, Comoran
Religions	Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar/Malagasy Lutheran Church/Anglican Church 34%, Roman Catholic 32.3%, other Christian 8.1%, traditional/Animist 1.7%, Muslim 1.4%, other 0.6%, none 21.9% (2021 est.)
Languages	Malagasy (official) 99.9%, French (official) 23.6%, English 8.2%, other 0.6% (2018 est.)
Executive branch	chief of state: President Andry RAJOELINA (since 16 December 2023) head of government: Prime Minister Christian NTSAY (since 6 June 2018)
Legislative branch	legislative structure: bicameral
Diplomatic representation in the US	chief of mission: Ambassador Lantosoa RAKOTOMALALA (since 13 January 2025)
Diplomatic representation from the US	chief of mission: Ambassador Claire PIERANGELO (since 2 May 2022)
Economic overview	low-income East African island economy; natural resource rich; extreme poverty; return of political stability has helped growth; sharp tax revenue drop due to COVID-19; leading vanilla producer; environmentally fragile
Real GDP (purchasing power parity)	\$52.968 billion (2024 est.) \$50.833 billion (2023 est.) \$48.782 billion (2022 est.)
Real GDP per capita	\$1,700 (2024 est.) \$1,600 (2023 est.) \$1,600 (2022 est.)
Exports	\$4.689 billion (2022 est.) \$3.362 billion (2021 est.) \$2.589 billion (2020 est.)
Exports - partners	USA 16%, France 15%, Japan 8%, China 6%, S. Korea 6% (2023)
Exports - commodities	garments, nickel, vanilla, cloves, gold (2023)
Imports	\$6.041 billion (2022 est.) \$4.769 billion (2021 est.) \$3.718 billion (2020 est.)
Imports - partners	China 19%, Oman 13%, France 10%, India 8%, South Africa 5% (2023)
Imports - commodities	refined petroleum, rice, fabric, cotton fabric, wheat (2023)

Population Pyramid

