

We envision global friendships and partnerships with a flourishing Diocese of Toliara, fulfilling God's mission in Madagascar and around the world. ¶

Table of Contents for a Short-Term Mission Trip to the Diocese of Toliara

Welcome and Introduction	2
Madagascar Country Information.....	3
Diocese of Toliara Information & Contacts	4
Group Orientation Suggestions.....	5
Inventory of Skills, Talents, Gift and Passions	6
Questions for Mission Team Members	7
Rule of Life/Ethics/Missioner's Covenant	8
Miaraka Community: Rule of Life	8
Miaraka Community: Code of Ethics.....	8
Missioner's Covenant	9
Short Term Mission Trip Information (to be stored by trip leader).....	10
Prayer Partners.....	11
Emergency Contact, Health, and Insurance Information.....	12
Personal Health History	12
Medical/Hospitalization Insurance Coverage Information.....	13
Assumption of Risk, Release and Participation Agreement	13
Financial information	14
Fundraising Suggestions	16
Fundraising Template for Communicating Key Information.....	17
Passport / Visa / Airport Information	18
Flights, Ground Transportation & Scheduling your trip	19
Packing and Other Travel Suggestions	20
Debriefing Suggestions	25

Welcome and Introduction

Welcome to a potentially life-changing opportunity to see how God is at work in the unique country and island of Madagascar! If you join with others on a short-term mission trip, you will likely personally experience the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of many people, including yourself. We hope that some or all of this document will help you as you consider a short-term mission trip to Toliara.

A mission trip like this is not for everyone. There will be logistical challenges, unplanned schedule interruptions, and significant diet, climate, and cultural differences. As the first Bishop of the Diocese, Bishop Todd McGregor said, if Jesus walked today on the shores of Madagascar, calling the fishermen and their families to Him, He would likely state “I am the RICE of life!” Such a trip is for those who are open to learning from the Malagasy people, who have few material possessions, but are filled with joy. It is for those who want a glimpse of God’s eternal plan for the inhabitants of planet Earth. And it is for those who desire to grow in their own personal faith journey. A sense of adventure, flexible spirit, and openness to change will also be helpful qualities!

You will be introduced to a world that is quite different than life in the west. In fact, after a visit to southern Madagascar, you may have a better sense of the world that Jesus walked in than if you embarked on a tour of modern Israel.

In the following sections of this short-term mission kit, you will find many resources and much information to help you plan for a trip. However, do note that specific details and information can become dated quickly, with no warning or obvious reason. This adds to the sense of adventure as travelers become more dependent on God’s provision and direction rather than their own planning. It also extends one’s cross-cultural comprehension. While this does not negate careful planning and coordination beforehand, it does call us to hold these plans lightly and be willing to adjust as needed.

Whether you travel alone or with a large group, a key to the success of your trip will be the prayer support you experience. So, begin now by asking the Lord Jesus Christ to allow His Spirit to guide you as consider joining this trip. Pray that others will support you with their prayers before, during, and after the trip. And pray that through this opportunity, God’s will be accomplished in your life and the lives of those who travel with you.



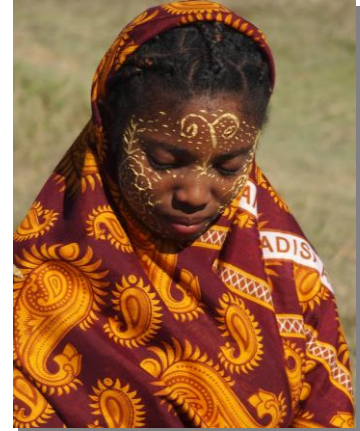
Madagascar Country Information

It is difficult to keep information on Madagascar current, but we have added a number of links that should provide helpful information as you plan. In general, note that Madagascar is a very poor country, with little infrastructure outside the capital city of Antananarivo (often abbreviated as Tana).



It is also a beautiful country with many species of plants and animals unique to this island. Lemurs and chameleons are the most well know endemic animals.

The people wear colorful Malagasy clothing (lambas) although western dress is becoming more common.



The U. S. Department of State offers relatively current information about Madagascar with background country information and specific information for those who plan on traveling there. This helpful website is located [here](#).

Travel Madagascar contains a thorough travel guide for tourists. With sections on planning your trip, places of interest, and parks and reserves, it offers both historical information and practical tips for travelers. Access this resource at <https://travellersworldwide.com/africa/madagascar/>

Some of these sites are likely to mention crime rates and political unrest. These are present realities. However, in comparison with many other African countries or with large cities in the United States, Madagascar remains relatively safe. One would be wise to stay with your group when on the streets and keep valuables in secure locations

There are various travel books on Madagascar are available. Hilary Bradt's ones are recommended, but may now be dated.

More information can be found on the Diocesan website, particularly the following pages:
<https://dioceseoftoliara.org/en/friends-of-toliara/come/>
<https://dioceseoftoliara.org/en/friends-of-toliara/why-visit-madagascar/>

The resources pages listed under the Friends of Toliara tab on the Diocesan site has links to the Bible in Malagasy, the liturgy, the language, and more.

Please feel free to email friendsoftoliara@gmail.com with any questions you have, and we will do our best to help you.



Diocese of Toliara Information & Contacts

The Diocese of Toliara was founded by Rt. Rev. Dr. Todd and Rev. Dr. Patsy McGregor, who served in Madagascar from 1991 to 2020, with five-years in Kenya for part of that time. They reached people for Jesus Christ through economic development, educational opportunities, and evangelistic missions.

The Diocese is now very ably led and shepherded by Bishop Samitiana Razafindralambo, assisted by other clergy and laity. Here are some email addresses which may be of help to you as you prepare to visit the Diocese:

Bishop Samy: bishopsamy.toliara@gmail.com

His wife, Neny Holy (Norosoa Raholiniaina): raholiniainan@yahoo.com

Rev. Osoro Victor (Head of Communications and Partnership): seraseratoliara@gmail.com or vickosoro86@gmail.com

Ialy Cael (Head of Economic Development): eem601ced@gmail.com

Fiadanana (Coordinator of Child Sponsorship program): diocese_toliarachild@gmail.com or fiadanana4@gmail.com

The address of the Cathedral complex in Toliara is:

BP: 408, 601 Toliary, Andranomena-Toliara II

Group Orientation Suggestions

Establishing a common goal and building community among participants prior to the mission trip is essential for the success of the trip. Team-building exercises may be helpful, depending on the previous interactions and relationships.

It is very helpful to know beforehand as much about the people, culture and climate of your destination. Travel information found in books, brochures and on the internet are a good start. Patsy McGregor's books on Madagascar provide an eyewitness account of life and ministry in those regions. Traditional African life is quite different than many Western ways. An understanding of these differences and their origins helps participants adjust more readily during the journey and may provide the basis for a deeper appreciation for the strengths and weaknesses of each culture.

Many logistical questions will need to be discussed and are often the first questions that emerge during orientations. While these are important details and careful planning and background information leads to more realistic expectations, keep these details in perspective with the overall goal and purpose of the mission trip. Travel dates, travel documents, transportation options, possible expenses, financial plans, housing arrangements, dietary information, appropriate clothing and behavior, potential side trips or excursions, and other aspects of the trip are likely to be covered. As questions arise for which answers are unknown, feel free to contact friendsoftoliara@gmail.com who will try to help you. But understand that there are always unknowns and a certain level of ambiguity in places that are not constrained by standardization.

We have provided some tools which may help you in building community:

Inventory of skills, talents, gift and passions

A possible way to build community is identifying and discussing the various gifts, skills, talents, and experiences possessed by each participant. A major part of building community results from how the various members of the body of Christ can serve each other, using spiritual gifts, skills, and previous experiences. This information shared prior to departure can reduce stress during the actual mission trip. Furthermore, communication of these gifts, skills, abilities and experiences with the Diocese will aid in their preparation for your group's activities and ministry once in Madagascar.

Six Questions for Mission Team Members

If the participants are already quite familiar with each other, it may be helpful to share responses to these six questions with each other.

Rule of Life/Ethics/Missioner's Covenant

Considering and committing to the community rule of life and code of ethics which Todd and Patsy McGregor sought to live in their community in Toliara, may be a helpful model for your mission trip.

Fundraising Strategies

Discussing fundraising ideas, strategies, and contacts can be encouraging for those who are less experienced in this. Crafting prayer letters can be part of the exercise as well as praying for courage and clear communication of the trip to others.

Then there are various forms to be completed so health and contact information can be safely stored in case of need.

Inventory of Skills, Talents, Gift and Passions

The purpose of this inventory is to create a conversation among team members in order to build the profile of the team. Through this process we will be able to identify the skills, talents, and gifts the group can offer as a mission team. Bring this completed form to the appropriate team meeting.

Name: _____

What is your ability in languages other than English? (rudimentary, functional or conversant)

Check any that pertain to your skills and gifts. Give further explanation if helpful.

MEDICAL

- Physician (specialty?)
- Nursing
- Dentistry
- Nutrition
- Other (name it)

CONSTRUCTION

- Carpentry
- Masonry
- Plumbing
- Electrical
- Other (name it)

TECHNOLOGY

- Programming
- Multi-media
- Word Processing, spread sheets
- Other (name it)

BUSINESS

- Accounting
- Management
- Marketing
- Other (name it)

List type of Computer:

PERSONAL MINISTRY

- Bible Study Leader
- Evangelism
- Singing
- Musical Instrument (name them)

- Other (name it)

OTHER

- Agriculture
- Arts/Crafts
- Food Service

- Horticulture
- Other (name it)

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

- Wisdom
- Prophecy
- Speaking in tongues
- Interpretation of tongues

- Healing
- Discerning spirits
- Knowledge
- Faith

Please identify any other skills, gifts, talents or passions that you can offer to the team:

Questions for Mission Team Members

Please write responses to each of these questions and be ready to share your printed/written answers at a designated short-term mission trip team meeting.

1. Describe your past and present journey with Jesus Christ and His Church.
2. Why do you hope to participate with this short-term mission team?
3. What short-term experience or teams have you served on before? Where and when?
4. Describe your leadership roles in your church, professional life, volunteer groups, etc.
5. What cross-cultural encounters have you experienced? Where? What did you learn from them?
6. What experiences have you had in sharing your faith with others?

Rule of Life/Ethics/Missioner's Covenant

The following two pages describe the community rule of life and code of ethics that reflect how a short-term mission team might ideally function. This was how Todd and Patsy sought to live in their community in Toliara and is thus being used as a model for future mission trips.

Read the Missioner's Covenant, and if in agreement, sign and return it to the trip leader. It is not to be taken lightly as it helps establish a commitment that enhances the effectiveness of the entire community involved in the mission trip.

The application and forms that follow are also to be completed and handed in to the trip leader.

Miaraka Community: Rule of Life

Rule of Life I: We affirm that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the foundation for the Community and ultimately guide our beliefs, values, attitudes and behaviors.

Rule of Life II: We will seek to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace, and in gentleness, patience and humility, accept one another in love.

Rule of Life III: We will seek to become involved in ministering and serving the needs within and beyond our own community in the areas of evangelism, education and economic development.

Rule of Life IV: We participate in disciplines and behaviors that will lead us closer to God, including: 1) daily devotions 2) giving 3) obedience 4) fasting 5) discipleship and 6) evangelism.

Rule of Life V: We will seek to practice an attitude of hospitality, recognizing that at times our personal rights and preferences must be put aside for the sake of others and the good of the community.

Miaraka Community: Code of Ethics

Code of Ethics I: We will seek to foster the development of spiritual maturity through maintaining a personal prayer and devotional life, continuously worshiping together and studying the scriptures through small discipleship groups throughout the week.

Code of Ethics II: We will seek to respect and encourage our uniqueness in Christ, which includes our diversity of race, culture, experience, passion, talents, gifts and goals.

Code of Ethics III: We base our attitudes on the most important commandment: "To love the Lord God with all our heart, all our soul, all our strength and all our mind and love our neighbor as ourselves" (Luke 10:27) regardless of race, gender, academic or socio-economic status.

Code of Ethics IV: We renounce behaviors that oppose the Scriptures including deception, falsehood, adultery, fornication, quarrelling, drunkenness and stealing.

Code of Ethics V: We will seek to encourage the cultivation of such spiritual attitudes as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Missioner's Covenant

I, as a member of the Short-Term Mission Team, covenant the following:

1. To prepare for the experience by participating in team orientation sessions.
2. To prepare spiritually for such a mission.
3. To represent my church as honorably as I can.
4. To uphold group spirit by cooperating with group decisions and by obeying the few, necessary directives of the team leader.
5. To participate in daily devotions with team members.
6. To share my faith in an appropriate manner while on the mission.
7. To prepare myself physically for the mission.
8. To return to church and community and give as freely as I can of my time in interpretation of the mission experience to our church members who were unable to go on the mission.

I, in return, as part of the covenant, expect:

1. To grow in my Christian experience and commitment.
2. To experience life as other people live it.
3. To make a valid contribution to those who need help.
4. To share joy of service with a group of Christians.
5. To feel the support of the other members of the mission team.
6. To enjoy the mission experience.
7. To appreciate my church, my home and my community.

Add any other expectations you have with respect to the mission:

Name (Please Print)

Date

Signature

Short Term Mission Trip Information (to be stored by trip leader)

Destination: _____

Dates: _____ Approx. Individual Cost: _____

Trip Leader(s): _____

Trip Leader Contact Info: _____

PERSONAL INFORMATION

NAME _____

(First)

(Middle)

(Last)

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

HOME PARISH _____ CITY _____

PHONE HOME (____) _____ PHONE WORK (____) _____

CELL PHONE (____) _____

PRIMARY EMAIL _____ SHIRT SIZE _____

DATE OF BIRTH _____ AGE _____ GENDER _____

MARITAL STATUS: Single ____ Married ____ Divorced ____ Separated ____

PARTNER'S OR OTHER EMERGENCY CONTACT'S NAME: _____

EMAIL: _____ Cell Phone (____) _____

CHILDREN'S NAMES: _____

PASSPORT# _____ COUNTRY & PLACE OF ISSUE: _____

EXPIRATION DATE: _____ NUMBER OF BLANK PAGES IN PASSPORT: _____

DO YOU HAVE A YELLOW FEVER IMMUNIZATION CARD, IF NEEDED? _ Y / N

(required for travelers aged 9 months or over arriving from countries with risk of yellow fever transmission and for travelers having transited more than 12 hours through an airport of a country with risk of yellow fever transmission)

PRAYER PARTNERS' NAMES & EMAIL ADDRESS & CELL PHONES (see page 10)

1.)

2.)

3.)

Prayer Partners

Prayer is the foundation for any and every mission trip that has as its purpose glorifying God. Spiritual warfare is real and often more visible in places where the spirit world is a major part of the culture. It is essential that each mission trip participant is supported by spiritual mentors and prayer partners who will pray frequently and fervently for you. These prayers begin long before the departure date, extend through the actual mission trip, and continue after the return. With this prayer support, you will be better prepared and able to face the unknown elements of the trip, will be more dependent on the Lord each day of the experience, and the impact and growth will extend further into your life after returning.

With this in mind, prayerfully identify at least three individuals that can support you in this way. Keep them informed of how they can pray for you before leaving. As you are able, and have access to technology while on the trip, provide brief updates so they can continue to pray for specific needs.

After the experience, their prayers will help you process the experience and your sharing will likely encourage them, too.

Include the names of these three people on the information form.

Emergency Contact, Health, and Insurance Information

Participant's Name (print): _____

Date of Birth: (Please use 3 letter abbreviation for month) _____

Address: _____
(street address) (city) (state) (zip code)

Emergency Contact Name: _____

Relationship to Participant: _____

Contact Telephone (daytime): _____ (night): _____

Contact Primary Email: _____

Personal Health History

To be completed, signed and submitted to team leader. A copy will be sent to the relevant person in the Diocese so they will be prepared for health situations that may arise during the mission trip.

1. Do you have any physical impairments or learning disabilities that might restrict your mobility or require special facilities or assistance while you are on an off-campus program? Please be as specific as possible:

2. Are you presently, or have you been in the last twelve months, receiving medical treatment of any kind? If so, please specify: _____

3. Do you have any significant chronic medical conditions requiring ongoing medical supervision or treatment, or have you had in the past any significant condition that is currently in remission? If so, please describe: _____

4. Do you have any emotional, physical, or medical conditions, past or current, that would cause discomfort or problems during travel, change of climate, change of diet, or strenuous activity? If so, please explain:

5. Do you have allergic reactions to any of the following?

Aspirin Bee sting Codeine Penicillin Sulfa Drugs Other: _____

Do you need to carry an: Epi pen Inhaler Other:

6. Please list any special dietary needs you have (i.e., intolerances, vegetarian, etc.): _____

7. Have you consulted with a knowledgeable physician on the immunizations and any recommended medications required for travel to this part of the world? _____

Date of last Tetanus shot: _____

Have you received all necessary immunizations? _____ If not, why? _____

8. Are you currently receiving, or have you received in the last two years, treatment for any emotional problem, eating disorder, drug addiction, alcoholism, or psychiatric condition? Please specify: _____

9. What physical, emotional or other conditions do you presently have, or had in the past that would be critical or helpful for the mission team leader to know? (include considerations such as personal/family illnesses or losses, or other family history that might be significant): _____

Medical/Hospitalization Insurance Coverage Information

I understand that I must hold health insurance for the duration of the mission trip, and that this **must** include **medical repatriation insurance**. Please check to verify that your health policy covers you outside the United States and for the entire length of the mission trip.

My insurer(s) are as follows:

Name of Policyholder: _____ Policy Number: _____

Group number, if applicable: _____ Policy Period: _____

Insurance Company: _____

Insurance Company Emergency phone number(s): _____

Assumption of Risk, Release and Participation Agreement

I certify that all the responses made on this Health Information are true and accurate, and I will notify the team leader of any relevant changes in my health that occur, either prior to the start of the mission trip or during it.

While the Diocese of Toliara will do all they can to reduce foreseeable risk, I understand that international travel can be risky. I accept responsibility for any personal loss due to travel risk, whether through personal insurance, personal funds, or other personal sources. I agree that the Diocese of Toliara has no liability for such loss.

(Signature of Participant)

(Date Signed)

(Signature of Witness)

(Date Signed)

(Signature of Parent/Guardian if Participant is a minor)

(Date Signed)

Financial information

Transportation costs: Madagascar is located away from many heavily traveled international routes, therefore flights to and from Madagascar tend to be expensive. Online research as well as travel agencies that specialize in international travel can be helpful for specific flight options. Check on flights through South Africa as well as through Europe to explore different routes that can vary in pricing. The flights over and back are the largest expense for the mission trip.

Ground transport in Madagascar varies widely. While in-town taxis and between-town buses are relatively inexpensive, your group may prefer to rent a vehicle and driver for trips beyond the major cities. This is a more expensive, but safer option. You should not try driving yourself.

See page on Flights and Ground Transportation for more information.

Fundraising: Fundraising can be an important faith-building experience. Experiencing the provisions of the Lord through His people is both humbling and thrilling. See later pages for ideas for fundraising along with some sample fundraising letters.

Record Keeping: Depending on the size of your group and other factors, your trip leader may provide some assistance to track funds that are donated or provided on your behalf.

Payment and Exchange Information

Remember to take your PIN number for your bank and credit card. Also, you should notify your bank, credit card and phone companies that you will be traveling abroad (Madagascar and any countries you pass through in your air travel).

Visa debit and credit cards are accepted in major cities and businesses. MasterCard is often not accepted in Madagascar, so don't rely on it. Many cards may charge a foreign transaction fee. Outside of the capital, some hotels and even fewer restaurants accept credit cards, or their machines may be broken, or their internet may be down. You may need to pay in the local currency - ariary.

US Dollars or Euros can be exchanged at money change kiosks at Antananarivo Airport. ATM machines are located at many banks and other locations. There is a limit of 40 banknotes which you can take out on one withdrawal. So, the maximum you can take out is 40 x 10,000 ariary = 400,00 ariary. If the machine has run out of 10,000 ariary notes, you might be limited to 40 x 5,000 ariary = 200,00 ariary. We find it helpful to try to take out 395,000 ariary a time, as this gives you some small notes for tips.

Check with your home bank how much you can take out each day. This will determine how many times you can use ATMs in any one day.

Ariary can be taken out with most Visa cards at a bank counter e.g. in Toliara. The amount approved per day can be higher – up to 2,000,000 ariary depending on the bank and card issuer. This takes time to queue, and some visitors have found their Visa card was not accepted. Foreign exchange fees on top of the exchange rate/margin may apply, and cash withdrawals may start incurring interest immediately. Check in advance with your credit card company.

For your information, in 2024, minimum daily wage in Madagascar is roughly equivalent to 7,600 Malagasy Ariary, so 5,000 or 10,000ar would be a BIG tip! You will find people very willing to carry your bags etc, as this is their way of earning a living. Tipping is appropriate.

Ministry Fee & Wiring Funds: Consider making a donation of at least \$USD50 per participant to the Diocese. These funds will help cover incidental costs in assisting you in your preparations and trip, and support the administration of the ministry in Madagascar. Contact friendsoftoliara@gmail.com to obtain information on how to wire funds to the Diocese.

Translator: If the translator traveling with you is not a paid staff member of the Diocese, it may be appropriate to pay them a daily fee (around 10,000 ariary). Check with the Diocesan person with whom you are arranging this trip.

Lodging: If staying at a hotel in the Diocese, such as the Victory Hotel in Toliara, the Diocese may be able to make the reservations for you. You will be responsible for paying the hotel for your lodging and any hotel meals. Visa cards are accepted by some hotels, but not all. You may need to pay in ariary – see payment notes above.

If a member of the Diocese is traveling with you, you will need to pay for their accommodation and food too.

When booking your hotel rooms, you will also need to arrange rooms and meals for your driver, if you are traveling away from their hometown. Some hotels provide these for free, others charge, but you must always ask in advance for such accommodation.

Meals: Rice, rice, and rice. The hotel restaurants serve a variety of Malagasy dishes and depending on the location, other restaurants may be in the area. Food is substantially less expensive than in the United States. Typically, each person pays for his/her own meals. Generally, payment must be made in ariary.

Excursions or Prearranged Side Trips: Suggestions can be obtained for excursions and side trips. It is a wonderful country to explore! Contact friendsoftoliara@gmail.com

Fundraising Suggestions

As stated earlier, fundraising can be an important faith-building experience. As a participant in a short-term mission project that is traveling almost half-way around the world to share with the body of Christ, others may appreciate the privilege of supporting you in this endeavor.

Churches: Many churches have funds designated for missions and specifically for short-term missions. They tend to be more supportive of members of their own congregation or parish that are involved in these ministries, so this is an excellent place to start.

Individual Donations: Friends, family members, co-workers and others in your community may be receptive to an invitation to participate in your trip through supporting you in prayer and through finances. Of the two, prayer is more important! Communicate with individuals and groups that can be invited to consider joining you in these ways. A template of important aspects to communicate is included on the next page.

Communication can be through phone calls, formal letters, emails, social media (Facebook, LinkedIn, blogs), texting, etc. Consider your audience and preferred communication styles. Some churches will manage designated donations, providing receipts to the donors and using the donated funds to underwrite the cost of your trip.

Grants and Foundations: Check with businesses and organizations that offer grants for employees, volunteers, and community members and others. Sometimes they will match donations or provide a one-time grant to help underwrite the cost of a trip such as this. Other organizations have funds designated for similar purposes but may end up not allocating the funds because no one asks for them. So do not hesitate to request sponsorship.

Personal Donations & Resources: If you are in the financial position of being able to pay your entire trip expenses with your personal resources, consider raising funds to help others on your team who will have difficulty paying for the mission trip. This investment helps build community and interdependence on the short-term mission team. Also consider raising funds for the ministry in Madagascar. These donations are leveraged to build new churches, train church leaders, and support economic development in the economically-challenged country of Madagascar.

Fundraising Template for Communicating Key Information

In communicating with others about your participation on the mission trip, keep in mind the preferred communication media or style of those with which you share. Some would love to hear about your plans while sipping a cup of coffee in a local coffee shop. Others prefer reading about it on your Facebook or blog. Still others may prefer a letter or phone call. Regardless of how you communicate, some essential components should be included:

Why are you going?

Why would you take personal or vacation time to travel to one of the poorest countries in the world, thousands of miles away from home? Your motivation may include serving others, learning from others, seeking to understand how God is working elsewhere, worshipping with the world-wide Anglican communion, seeing the Diocese of Toliara in action, visiting your parish link, or many other possibilities (including seeing this amazingly beautiful country and its spectacular wildlife). But clearly explain why you are taking the time and utilizing the resources to do this audacious trip!

What will you be doing?

This relates to the first question, but is often more difficult to answer. Some of you may be teaching English or working on a specific economic project. For others it may be more of an introduction to the work and mission in another part of the world. Be confident of this, the Diocese will find ways in which you can serve others and be a help to their ministry! It may be through mundane tasks or through sharing your spiritual journey through a translator. Your skills, gifts, and experiences will be offered and through the discernment of God's spirit, they will be used for His glory. This is difficult to articulate to people who are task oriented and bound by lists of things to do. The African way of life is quite different. People are more important – being with each other is so important. So, accept the ambiguity of what you may do and anticipate more being and less doing.

Who is going with you?

Describing the group helps communicate the credibility of the trip, whether a church group, family, or professional group. Depending on your audience, sharing how you came together is sometimes an interesting development in itself.

What else?

While not trying to overwhelm others with all the particulars of the trip, it is important to share when you will be on this trip, the expected cost, noting the high air fares to this part of the world, and any other particulars that would be relevant to the one with whom you are communicating.

Can they help support you?

Finally, ask them if they would be willing to support you in prayer and if possible, with financial support. Explain how this can be accomplished. You may need to get their contact information so you can communicate and report on the trip as it unfolds and upon your return. Feel free to refer them to the Diocese of Toliara web site <https://dioceseoftoliara.org>.

Passport / Visa / Airport Information

Passport: A valid Passport is required for all international travel to Africa. Check what current requirements are but currently, your passport must be valid for six months from your date of entry and have at least three blank pages.

The U. S. Department of State handles passports for U.S. citizens and their on-line passport information is found here: <http://travel.state.gov/passport/> Allow a number of weeks if you do not currently have a passport.

Entry Visa: All foreign passport holders need a tourist visa to enter Madagascar. There are no visa exemptions, and (at the time of writing in December 2024) all nationalities and passport holders can get their document online <https://www.visiting-madagascar.com/> This website also has advice on culture and etiquette.

- **Maximum visit:** Up to 60 days
- **Cost:** 15 days \$10, 30 days \$37 or 60 days \$45 (these costs may change).
- **Multiple entries:** No
- **Processing:** 7 days
- **Requires:** Passport, Return flight ticket, proof of yellow fever vaccine if you come from a high-risk region.

It may be possible to get a tourist visa (for a stay less than 60 days) upon arrival at the airport/port regardless of the nationality, but don't rely upon doing so.

Check ahead to see if any of your other destination countries require a visa in advance.

The Madagascar Consulate carries more information on <https://us-madagascar-embassy.org/>.

Airport Information: The main international airport of entry is Ivato, in the capital, Antananarivo.

French is the official language of business but some English may be spoken. Security varies but avoid delays by packing wisely. If you are flying through to places in the Diocese of Toliara, you'll need to pass through security again for your internal flight.

If you are staying in Tana, taxi cabs can take you to the main hotels. Many, including Manga Guesthouse offer airport pickups. Find out the cost of the ride to your destination before getting into the vehicle. Bartering is typically part of the culture, although in the capital city, fares can be more standardized than in areas beyond the capital.

USD or Euros can usually be exchanged at the airport into Malagasy Ariary. Ariary can be obtained from the ATM on arrival. This is recommended so that you can pay for your taxi fare etc!

Flights, Ground Transportation & Scheduling your trip

Be aware that time visiting the diocese is demanding -unfamiliar heat, roads, meals, language etc all take their toll. If planning a visit of more than a few days, consider scheduling some down-time - eg a couple of nights at the beach at Ifaty just north of Toliara. Please feel free to email friendsoftoliara@gmail.com for suggestions.

International Flights: Online research as well as travel agencies that specialize in international travel can be helpful for specific flight options. Check on flights through Turkey and South Africa as well as through Europe to explore different routes that can vary in pricing.

Domestic Flights: As at December 2024, internal flights are operated by Tsaradia (beautiful day), a wing of Madagascar Airlines <https://madagascarairlines.com> Note that the name of the airline has changed frequently in the last few years, and may do so again!

Important: Be aware that Tsaradia frequently changes the domestic flight timetable at short notice. The flight may leave, but the time of day may change, and could be several hours earlier than you expected. This change may happen on the day of your flight if there is any operational issue.

If flying domestically on Tsaradia, we strongly recommend scheduling at least 1 day layover in Antananarivo between your return domestic flight to Tana and your international departure flight. At worst it may give enough time to arrange travel by road from Toliara to Antananarivo, which is a 22 hour drive!.

Similarly, it is unwise to book a very tight transfer/turnaround between international arrival and onward domestic flight - allow minimum half a day.

A much more reliable, but also more expensive, alternative for domestic flights is to fly with Mission Aviation Fellowship, <https://maf.org/> This may be needed if your arrival does not coincide with the timing of flights to Morondava, for example, or you wish to fly directly to places like Ambovombe.

Ground Transportation:

Ground transport in Madagascar varies widely. While in-town taxis and between-town buses are relatively inexpensive, your group may prefer to rent a vehicle and driver for trips beyond the major cities. This is a more expensive, but safer option. You should not try driving yourself.

Transmalala Transport run by church member Mr Alain Ravelomanantsoa (transmalala@gmail.com) has provided reliable car with driver in both Antananarivo, Toliara Diocese and the drive to the south. You can ask for a driver who speaks English (or French if you are fluent in that). They are also good at finding nice restaurants in Antananarivo and on the drive south. There is an office (French speaking) next to the Victory Hotel in Toliara.

You can also arrange with Alain to collect your extra bags in Antananarivo and drive them to Toliara, via his private taxi brousse service, which is cheaper than taking them on domestic flights. In 2023, it cost 20 000ar for 20kg bag; plus a collection charge of 50 000 ar from Manga Guesthouse.

Packing and Other Travel Suggestions

These are suggestions based on numerous past trips to southwest Madagascar. Circumstances and conditions may change, so check with the trip leader and the Diocese for more current suggestions.

Consider packing everything in plastic bags inside your suitcase, in case the suitcase is left on the runway in rain.

Baggage: Check on your airline's website to see luggage limitations and fees. If your airline allows two checked pieces of luggage, bring one with your personal items, while the other has items for Diocesan use.

If you are traveling with a companion, put some of each of your clothing in each other's bags (in case of baggage delays).

Your name/identifying information should be clear on each piece of luggage.

Note that weight/size allowances on international flights are probably greater than on domestic Madagascar flights. Domestic Business class has a higher baggage allowance than domestic Economy class, so is worth paying for. It is not a huge increase. See <https://madagascarairlines.com/en/plan-your-trip/baggage.html> for more information.

Clothing: You may want to bring older clothes that you can give away when you leave. Choose colors or outfits that are interchangeable so they may be worn in multiple combinations. This reduces the number of items you need to bring. Consider light fitting clothes UV protection providing clothes that cover a majority of your skin. This area of Madagascar is warm to hot, dry, and sunny. Find weather forecasts for that area to help you as you pack. If you are driving through the highlands, note that they are cold at night and hotel rooms may not be heated.

Electricity: Please note that there are often power outages in Madagascar, and hotels often switch off electricity from 10pm to dawn. Try to minimize your dependence on electrical items therefore!

Health advice: Consult a travel clinic or physician for advice on specific requirements and suggestions for when you travel. Your regular doctor may not have enough information. <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/madagascar> is helpful.

Make sure you are up-to-date on all routine vaccines before every trip. Plan these well in advance of the date of travel, as some need boosters. CDC suggests:
MMR vaccine, DTP vaccine, Hep. A, Hep. B, Typhoid, Polio, Shingles, Covid, Rabies

Yellow fever:

Vaccination is required if you travelled from an infected area.

Cholera:

Vaccination is recommended for travelers of over six months of age, when coming from an infected area. The certificate must be valid for a period of six months beginning six days after the vaccination date, or the same day in case of revaccination during the initial six month period.

Malaria:

CDC recommends that travelers going to certain areas of Madagascar take prescription medicine to prevent malaria. Depending on the medicine you take, you will need to start taking this medicine multiple days before your trip, as well as during and after your trip. Talk to your doctor or travel clinic about which malaria medication you should take.

Consider taking long sleeved shirts/trousers and insect repellent (preferably not DEET based). Anti-mosquito vapour mats are useful. If you don't already own one with a French-style plug, they are probably best bought locally.

Travelers' diarrhea:

You should take steps to avoid this! See <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/travelers-diarrhea>

Choose food and drinks carefully: Eat only foods that are cooked and served hot. Avoid food that has been sitting on a buffet. Eat raw fruits and vegetables only if you have washed them in clean water or peeled them. Only drink beverages from factory-sealed containers, and avoid ice because it may have been made from unclean water.

Bring travelers-diarrhea antibiotics (eg ciprofloxacin) to be taken if over-the-counter medications are not adequate.

Your carry-on bag:

should contain anything that you cannot lose, such as devices, prescription drugs, documents, essential toiletries, and if possible, one change of clothes. Consider what you should have with you if your luggage is lost or delayed for a day or two. You might also want to carry insect repellent for use when the plane lands.

Essentials:

Passport, with photocopies of your passport in each checked suitcase

Entry Visa

Global Entry card – gives TSA pre-check access & speeds return through customs

Driver's license for additional identification purposes

Trip itinerary or documents (health information, overseas contacts, emergency info)

Contact information of your supporters

Yellow Immunization card, if applicable

Small Bible & journal & writing instruments (there may not always be power to charge your phone or other devices, so you cannot rely on them for access to Bible etc)

Small flashlight or head lamp along with extra batteries (again not always power to charge phone to depend on that as source of flashlight)

Sunglasses and hat for sun

Zip lock bags for separating items or packing small things

Inexpensive watch

Money Belt for carrying cash/credit cards, passport securely)

Small backpack, or shoulder bag, or man bag, or fanny pack for day trips – (to carry toilet paper, mosquito repellent; hand sanitizers, pills etc)

Book or reading material for long flights

Water bottle (and carrier) – see water filter note in “optional” section

Portable power bank / portable charger

Toiletries:

Prescriptions (including anti malaria pills) in original containers – put in hand luggage
Brush/comb
Deodorant and soap
Small bottle of anti-bacterial gel for hand sanitizing
Skin moisturizer or hand cream
Tissues / Kleenex packets or handkerchiefs
Small towel and/or washcloth (Malagasy hotels do not provide washcloths)
Toothpaste & brush
Shaving razor or shaver with adaptor (remember there may not be electricity)
Shampoo & conditioner
Sunscreen
Your choice of anti-diarrheal tablets eg Imodium or Pepto-Bismol
Your choice of antihistamines eg Benadryl, Claritin, Zyrtec
Your choice of painkillers eg: Tylenol, Motrin or Advil
Probiotics are good to take daily. Florastor is a good make which doesn't need refrigeration
Travelers-diarrhea antibiotics eg Cipro
Motion sickness pills or & pressure bands (the roads are bumpy!)
Antacid tablets
Insect repellent eg Sawyer Products Picaridin
Hydrocortisone ointment (for insect bites etc)
Anti-bacterial gel

Optional:

Camera w/ extra batteries
Means to store photographs (Cloud may not always be accessible, so SD cards, USB drive etc)
Binoculars
Cell phone (check on international service beforehand and let provider know which countries you will be traveling in) & charger
Other electronic devices and chargers
Ear plugs (useful if there is a wake in progress) eye mask for sleeping
Prescription glasses, extra contacts & solution
Laundry soap for washing clothes in sinks
For electronic devices, converter for 220-240 Volt, 50 cycle, 2 pin Europlug - Also known as a type C plug, this plug has 4.0 mm pins and fits into a variety of European sockets – particularly French sockets) As voltage can differ from country to country, you may need to use a voltage converter or transformer whilst in Madagascar.
Surge protector recommended (one with USB ports also can help)
Mosquito plug and tablets / refills
1 roll of toilet paper (in zip lock bag)
Extra Kleenex packets
Family or home pictures
Prunes (or equivalent) for fiber, to help counteract the rice diet
Gel-filled cooling neckties that can be soaked in water
Covid masks & Covid tests
Inflatable neck pillow and seat cushions for flights
Grayl water bottle/filter (makes tap water drinkable, and saves buying bottled water)
<https://grayl.com/collections/ultrapress-filter-purifier>

Items that should be packed for the group, but not needed individually:

Small sewing kit

Small First Aid kit with assortment of band aids and antibiotic cream etc

Instant ice packs that can be triggered by squeezing

Clothing – Men (n.b. hotels do laundry at little cost):

2 pairs of comfortable pants (khaki works well!)

1-2 pair comfortable shorts (cargo pants with zip-off legs work well)

Belt

Swimsuit (modest, please)

4-5 pr underwear & socks (can be hand washed and dried fairly easily)

Sleepwear

3-4 T-shirts

2 long-sleeved shirts

1 tie (just in case)

1 pr comfortable walking/tennis shoes

1 pr dress shoes (optional)

1 pr sandals / Teva / Croc

2 light weight sweater, jersey or fleece

1 light jacket for cool mornings or evenings. Waterproof advisable

Clothing – Women (n.b. hotels do laundry at little cost):

1 church outfit- conservative skirt & blouse or dress

2-3 comfortable pants / capris/ khakis / skirts

1 pr modest shorts (can be worn under lamba; may not be appropriate otherwise)

Belt

4-5 tops/shirts that can be used interchangeably with the pants/capris

1-2 long-sleeved shirts

4-5 pair underwear and bras and socks (can be hand washed and dried fairly easily)

Pajamas or nightdress (modest, please)

Bathrobe (lightweight, optional)

Swimsuit (modest, please)

1 pr comfortable walking/tennis shoes

1 pr comfortable dressier shoes

1 pr sandals / Teva / Croc

2 light weight sweater, jersey or fleece

1 light jacket for cool mornings or evenings. Waterproof advisable

Make-up and jewelry should be kept to a minimum. Keep it simple. If you must bring a hair dryer or curling iron, be sure to bring or share an appropriate adapter, too.

If you need to take more than the allowed 2 bags out with you, you may want to purchase folding, rolling duffels which can then be folded and put into other bags for the return journey, eg

<https://www.walmart.com/ip/seort/495102963>

<https://www.walmart.com/ip/seort/561833831>

<https://www.walmart.com/ip/Protege-32-Compactible-Rolling-Duffel/446246921>

Check ahead with the Diocese for other ideas of what might be helpful to bring.

Debriefing Suggestions

Upon your return, the value of the mission trip can be maximized through one or more debriefing sessions with the trip's participants. Deeper understanding emerges from thoughtful reflections and interactions with other travelers on your journey. Those of us who have traveled before find these sessions to be helpful in making sense of what we've seen or experienced. These are also times to celebrate God's faithfulness, His answers to prayers during the trip, and updates from Madagascar and trip participants since returning to one's home.

Reviewing the trip goals and purpose is a strong starting point.

- How did the team work together toward these goals?
- To what extent were these goals realized?
- Were the goals realistic?
- What information would have better prepared us for the trip?

Consider sharing responses to individual questions such as:

- How did God reveal Himself to you before and during the trip?
- What have you learned about God since returning?
- What did the trip teach you about yourself?
- What was the hardest part of the trip for you and why?
- What part(s) of the experience brought you the most joy?
- How might this experience impact your life now that you have returned?

For further follow-up, keep in mind how you might support each other in maintaining new perspectives, attitudes, and habits. Also consider how you might continue to be involved in the ministry of the Diocese of Toliara.