



Madagascar

Biodiversity and Natural Resource Management

Credits 17

Program Base Fort Dauphin (Tolagnaro)

Language Study French, Malagasy

Homestay Fort Dauphin, 4 weeks

Rural Visit/Homestay Faux Cap Region, 1 week

Educational Excursions Spiny Desert, Central Highlands, protected areas in diverse ecosystems, Ranomafana rainforest, Ankarana, Tuléar barrier reef

Independent Study Project 4 weeks

Environmental Components Community-based forest management, conservation policies, sustainable livelihood, lemur ecology, coastal and coral reef ecology, humid tropical and dry “spiny” forest ecosystems, cultural beliefs and human impacts on the environment

Prerequisites Previous college-level coursework in environmental studies, ecology, biology, or related fields, as assessed by SIT. Three recent semesters of college-level French or equivalent, as assessed by SIT.

Biodiversity and Natural Resource Management Seminar

ENVI 3000 / 4 credits / 60 class hours

An interdisciplinary course conducted primarily in French, with required readings, analyzing the environmental challenges and conservation and development strategies in Madagascar across scales, from local to global. The focus is on Madagascar’s southern region. Resources utilized in the delivery of course content include international and local environmental nongovernmental organizations such as WWF and Azuay as well as the Department of Natural Sciences at the University of Antananarivo and the Marine Studies Institute of the University of Tulear. Lectures and discussions for this course generally include the following topics:

Biodiversity and Natural Resources

Geography; humid and dry forest ecosystems; national, private, and community-based protected areas management; impact of economic development and tourism on the environment; animal behavior and ecology; ethnobotany with an emphasis on medicinal plants; southeastern marine ecosystems.

Malagasy Society and Cultural Values

Education; traditional belief systems and their relationships with the environment; ethnicity and ethnic identity; celebration of *razana* (the ancestors); gender roles in Malagasy society; traditional values and contemporary influences in society.

Educational Excursions

The program includes excursions to Ranomafana rainforest; the Spiny Desert; Andasibe, Andringitra, Andohahela, Isalo, and Ankarana National Parks; community-managed reserves at Anja and Ifofaka; Mandena conservation site, a mining biodiversity offset; fishing villages; and the barrier reef of Tuléar. These excursions provide students with direct knowledge of specialized ecological zones, rural conservation and development issues, and

challenges of promoting conservation alongside sustainable development.

Rural Visit

To afford direct knowledge of Malagasy rural issues, participants live for one week in a rural setting. Village conditions are very basic, with no electricity or running water. The rural visit provides an invaluable opportunity to observe and participate in the daily activities of rural Malagasy, and to work with Malagasy students of environmental management to gain a deeper understanding of pressing environmental and social issues.

Intensive Language Study: French

FREN 2000-3000 / 3 credits / 45 class hours
Emphasis on speaking, reading, and writing skills through classroom and field instruction. Based on in-country oral evaluation, students are placed in intensive intermediate and advanced classes, with further language practice in homestays, lectures, and field visits.

Intensive Language Study: Malagasy

MALA 1000 / 2 credits / 30 hours
Emphasis on beginning speaking and comprehension skills through classroom and field instruction. Formal instruction is augmented by language practice with homestay families.

Environmental Field Study Seminar

ENVI 3500 / 4 credits / 60 class hours
Conducted primarily in English, this is a course in social and natural sciences research methods. The focus is on learning how to collect, analyze, integrate, and report social and ecological data to critically understand and evaluate program-related environmental issues. Introduction to the Independent Study Project. Field study ethics and the World Learning/SIT Human Subjects Review Policy. Field studies, depending on program site and focus, may include designing a research project; writing a proposal; interviewing; surveys; maintaining a field journal. Specific ecological field

study methods may include habitat surveys; biotic sampling and analysis; fauna and flora identification; biodiversity monitoring; population censusing; and animal behavior.

Independent Study Project

ISPR 3000 / 4 credits / 120 class hours
Conducted primarily in southern Madagascar or other appropriate locations. Sample topic areas: reforestation; coral reef conservation; medicinal plants in the marketplace; ecotourism; carbon sequestration and financing; land tenure reform and agricultural production; conservation assessments of endangered species; sacred forests; community-based resource management; behavioral ecology of lemurs in Berenty Reserve; sustainable land use techniques.

Homestay

Four weeks in Fort Dauphin (Tolagnaro) and one week in a rural village. Other accommodations during the program include hostels, campsites, or small hotels.

Learning Partnerships

SIT Study Abroad students gain important cultural knowledge, build research skills, and develop meaningful relationships when they partner with Malagasy peers from the Libanona Ecology Center, a primary program partner, to work on a preliminary environmental management plan for a rural area. After conducting interviews and participating in daily village life, including planting or harvesting crops, doing chores, and socializing, students work together to create a culturally appropriate plan for the community. The experience increases students’ confidence and practical skills in preparation for the ISP.