

Madagascar

Biodiversity and Natural Resource Management

Explore environmental challenges, conservation, and development strategies in Madagascar, an island nation that has been isolated from other landmasses for more than one hundred million years.

Coursework

Biodiversity and Natural Resource Management Seminar

ENVI 3000 / 4 credits / 60 class hours

An interdisciplinary course conducted primarily in French with required readings and relevant educational excursions. The focus is on Madagascar's southern region. Lecturers are drawn from international and local environmental nongovernmental organizations such as WWF and Azafady as well as the Department of Natural Sciences at the University of Antananarivo and the Marine Studies Institute of the University of Tuléar.

Seminar topics typically include:

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; southern 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 Ifotaka; 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 the challenges of promoting conservation alongside sustainable development.

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. Depending on program site and focus, field studies may include designing a research project, writing a proposal, interviewing, conducting surveys, or 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.



Credits 17

Program Base Fort Dauphin (Tolagnaro)

Language Study French, Malagasy

Homestay Fort Dauphin, 4 weeks

Rural Visit/Homestay Faux Cap Region, 1 week

Other Accommodations Hostels, campsites, or small hotels

Independent Study Project 4 weeks

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.



A lemur in Ankarana National Park, which students visit as a part of the program.