

Language

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WHO SPEAKS WHAT WHERE?

Madagascar

Madagascar has two official languages: Malagasy and French. Malagasy is the everyday spoken language while French is often used for literary, business and administrative purposes, and in many of the more upmarket sectors of the tourism industry. Unless you travel on an organised tour, stick to big hotels in major towns or speak Malagasy, it'll be essential to speak at least basic French in order to get by comfortably in cities and towns. In rural areas, where knowledge of French is less widespread, you'll almost always find someone who speaks enough French to allow communication, but you may need to learn a bit of Malagasy also.

Although more Malagasy are learning English, relatively few people speak it and you shouldn't rely on English unless you are using middle- to top-range hotels and restaurants in Antananarivo, Nosy Be and Île Sainte Marie. If your French is poor, it

isn't difficult to find someone in the major towns who is willing to try out whatever English words they might have picked up at school or elsewhere.

Comoros

Arabic and French are both official languages of the Comoros, but the most commonly spoken language is Shimaswi (also known simply as Comorian), a dialect of Swahili. There are several variations, but they are all mutually understood. The local language on Anjouan is known as Shinzuani; on Mohéli, it's Shimwali; on Grande Comore, it's known as Shingadzija; and on Mayotte, it's called Mahorais. Very little English is spoken and visitors without at least a smattering of French may find themselves at a loss in the Comoros.

FRENCH

An important distinction is made in French between *tu* and *vous*, both of which mean 'you'; *tu* is only used when addressing people you know well, children or animals. If you're addressing an adult who isn't a personal friend, *vous* should be used unless the person invites you to use *tu*. In general, younger people insist less on this distinction between polite and informal, and you will find that in many cases they use *tu* from the beginning of an acquaintance.

For a more comprehensive guide to the language, pick up a copy of Lonely Planet's *French Phrasebook*.

PRONUNCIATION

- j** as the 's' in 'leisure' (**zh** in our pronunciation guides)
- c** before **e** and **i**, as the 's' in 'sit'; before **a**, **o** and **u**, it's pronounced as English 'k'. When underscored with a 'cedilla' (**ç**), it's always pronounced as the 's' in 'sit'.
- r** pronounced from the back of the throat while restricting the flow of air

Most other letters in French are pronounced more or less the same as they would be in

Can I pay by ...?	<i>Est-ce que je peux payer avec ...?</i>	es-ker zher per pay-yay a-vek ...
credit card	<i>ma carte de crédit</i>	ma kart der kray-dee
travellers cheques	<i>des chèques de voyage</i>	day shek der vva-yazh

more	<i>plus</i>	plew
less	<i>moins</i>	mwa
smaller	<i>plus petit</i>	plew per-tee
bigger	<i>plus grand</i>	plew gron

I'm looking for ...	<i>Je cherche ...</i>	zhe shersh ...
a bank	<i>une banque</i>	ewn bonk
the hospital	<i>l'hôpital</i>	lo-pee-tal
the market	<i>le marché</i>	ler mar-shay
the police	<i>la police</i>	la po-lees
the post office	<i>le bureau de poste</i>	ler bew-ro der post
a public phone	<i>une cabine téléphonique</i>	ewn ka-been tay-lay-fo-neek
a public toilet	<i>les toilettes</i>	lay twa-let

TIME & DATES

What time is it?	<i>Quelle heure est-il?</i>	kel er e til
It's (8) o'clock.	<i>Il est (huit) heures.</i>	il e (weet) er
It's half past ...	<i>Il est (...) heures et demie.</i>	il e (...) er e day-mee

in the morning	<i>du matin</i>	dew ma-tun
in the afternoon	<i>de l'après-midi</i>	der la-pray-mee-dee
in the evening	<i>du soir</i>	dew swar
today	<i>aujourd'hui</i>	o-zhoor-dwee
tomorrow	<i>demain</i>	der-mun
yesterday	<i>hier</i>	yair

Monday	<i>lundi</i>	lun-dee
Tuesday	<i>mardi</i>	mar-dee
Wednesday	<i>mercredi</i>	mair-krer-dee
Thursday	<i>jeudi</i>	zher-dee
Friday	<i>vendredi</i>	von-drer-dee
Saturday	<i>samedi</i>	sam-dee
Sunday	<i>dimanche</i>	dee-monsh

January	<i>janvier</i>	zhon-vyay
February	<i>février</i>	fayv-ryay
March	<i>mars</i>	mars
April	<i>avril</i>	a-vree
May	<i>mai</i>	may
June	<i>juin</i>	zhwun
July	<i>juillet</i>	zhwee-yay
August	<i>août</i>	oot
September	<i>septembre</i>	sep-tom-brer
October	<i>octobre</i>	ok-to-brer
November	<i>novembre</i>	no-vom-brer
December	<i>décembre</i>	day-som-brer

TRANSPORT

Public Transport

I want to go to ...	<i>Je voudrais aller à ...</i>	zher voo-dray a-lay a ...
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What time does ... leave/arrive?	<i>À quelle heure part/arrive ...?</i>	a kel er par/a-reev ...
the boat	<i>le bateau</i>	ler ba-to
the bus	<i>le bus</i>	ler bews
the minibus taxi	<i>le taxi-brousse</i>	le tak-see broos
the plane	<i>l'avion</i>	la-vyon

I'd like a ... ticket.	<i>Je voudrais un billet ...</i>	zher voo-dray un bee-yay ...
one-way	<i>simple</i>	sum-pler
return	<i>aller et retour</i>	a-lay ay rer-toor

the first	<i>le premier (m)</i>	ler prer-myay
	<i>la première (f)</i>	la prer-myair
the last	<i>le dernier (m)</i>	ler dair-nyay
	<i>la dernière (f)</i>	la dair-nyair
ticket office	<i>le guichet</i>	ler gee-shay
timetable	<i>l'horaire</i>	lo-rair

Private Transport

I'd like to hire a/an...	<i>Je voudrais louer ...</i>	zher voo-dray loo-way ...
car	<i>une voiture</i>	ewn vva-tewr
4WD	<i>un quatre-quatre</i>	un kat-kat
motorbike	<i>une moto</i>	ewn mo-to
bicycle	<i>un vélo</i>	un vay-lo

Is this the road to ...?	<i>C'est la route pour ...?</i>	say la root poor ...
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Where's a service station?	<i>Où est-ce qu'il y a une station-service?</i>	oo es-keel ya ewn sta-syon-ser-vees
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Please fill it up.	<i>Le plein, s'il vous plaît.</i>	ler plun seel voo play
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I'd like ... litres.	<i>Je voudrais ... litres.</i>	zher voo-dray ... lee-trer
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petrol/gas unleaded	<i>essence sans plomb</i>	ay-sons son plom
leaded	<i>au plomb</i>	o plom
diesel	<i>diesel</i>	dyay-zel

I need a mechanic.	<i>J'ai besoin d'un mécanicien.</i>	zhay ber-zwun dun may-ka-nee-syun
The car/motorbike has broken down (at ...)	<i>La voiture/moto est tombée en panne (à ...)</i>	la vva-tewr/mo-to ay tom-bay on pan (a ...)

The car/motorbike won't start.	<i>La voiture/moto ne veut pas démarrer.</i>	la vva-tewr/mo-to ner ver pa day-ma-ray
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I have a flat tyre.	<i>Mon pneu est à plat.</i>	mom pner ay ta pla
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I've run out of petrol.	<i>Je suis en panne d'essence.</i>	zher swee zon pan day-sons
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I had an accident.	<i>J'ai eu un accident.</i>	zhay ewn un ak-see-don
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MALAGASY

Malagasy belongs to the Austronesian family of languages; its closest linguistic relative is a language spoken in southern Borneo. Over the centuries it has incorporated numerous other influences, including Bantu (particularly in some of the west coast dialects) and Arabic. The influence of Arabic is most evident in the names of the days of the week.

Malagasy was first written using a form of Arabic script (see boxed text, right), and then only in very limited areas in southeastern coastal Madagascar. It wasn't until the early 19th century during the reign of Radama I that Malagasy developed its current written form when missionaries from the London Missionary Society began devising the modern Latin-based alphabet. This 'standard Malagasy', which is based on the Merina dialect, has since served as the national language.

If you're serious about learning Malagasy, it'll be worth investing in one of the dictionaries or instructional textbooks that are available in Antananarivo bookshops.

PRONUNCIATION

When King Radama I sent out a request for missionaries from the London Missionary Society to help with the education and development of Madagascar, two of those sent were Welshmen David Jones and David Griffiths. Together with the king himself, they set about romanising and transliterating the Malagasy language. Despite this early effort, written Malagasy bears remarkably little resemblance to today's spoken language. Syllables seem to evaporate and vowels aren't pronounced the way English (or even French) speakers might anticipate. The general advice is to 'swallow as many

SORABE

The Sorabe (Great Writings) are sacred manuscripts written in Malagasy using a form of Arabic script. The earliest of these were made sometime after the 8th century under the influence of stranded Arab traders who wanted to reproduce pages of the Quran. The Sorabe were later expanded to include histories and genealogies, astrologers' predictions and various works on traditional medicine. Knowledge of the script used in writing the Sorabe was primarily the preserve of specially trained scribes known as *katibo*. Most Sorabe are in the possession of the Antaimoro and Antambohoaka tribes in southeastern Madagascar.

syllables as you can and drop the last one'; vowels at the end of most words are dropped in pronunciation.

The Malagasy alphabet has 21 letters; the English letters 'c', 'q', 'u', 'w' and 'x' don't exist in Malagasy. In words borrowed from English, French or other languages, the 'c' is replaced by an **s** or **k**, the 'q' is replaced by **k** and the 'x' by **ks**. When **k** or **g** are preceded by an **i** or a **y** (which are pronounced more or less the same), the **i** is pronounced both before and after the **k** or **g**.

The letter **o** is usually pronounced like a double **o**; thus *veloma* (goodbye) emerges as 've-loom'. The letter **a** is pronounced as the 'u' in 'cut'.

You only have to glance at a map of the country and you'll notice that Malagasy place names generally contain lots of letters. Similarly, people's surnames can be a mouthful. In the interests of avoiding embarrassment or possible offence through mispronouncing family names, you may want to accept invitations to address people by their Christian names, which are often biblical.

CONVERSATION & USEFUL WORDS

Greetings/Good day.	<i>Salama.</i>
Welcome!	<i>Tonga soa!</i>
Come in.	<i>Midira.</i>
How are you?	<i>Manao ahoana ianao.</i>
I'm fine.	<i>Salama tsara aho.</i>
Very well, thank you.	<i>Tsara fa misaotra.</i>
What's new?	<i>Inona no vaovao?</i>
Nothing much.	<i>Tsy misy.</i>

DIALECTS

Despite the linguistic unity of Malagasy, regional differences do exist, and in some coastal areas, standard Malagasy is shunned. The three broad language groups are those of the highlands; the north and east; and the south and west. However, even within these areas there are local variations. The following table indicates a few of the lexical and phonetic differences between standard Malagasy and some of the regional dialects.

English	Highlands	North & East	South & West
Greetings. (in response)	<i>Manao ahoana.</i> <i>Tsara.</i>	<i>Mbola tsara anarô.</i> <i>Mbola tsara.</i>	<i>Akore aby nareo.</i> <i>Tsara/Soa.</i>
What's new?	<i>Inona no vaovao?</i>	<i>Ino vaovaonao?</i>	<i>Talilio?</i>
Nothing much.	<i>Tsy misy.</i>	<i>Ehe, tsisy fô manginginy.</i>	<i>Mbe soa.</i>
Where?	<i>Aiza?</i>	<i>Aia?</i>	<i>Aia?</i>
Who?	<i>Iza?</i>	<i>La?</i>	<i>La?</i>
spouse	<i>vady</i>	<i>vady</i>	<i>valy</i>
ancestor	<i>razana</i>	<i>raza</i>	<i>raza</i>

Goodbye.	<i>Veloma/Manorapihaona.</i>
See you soon.	<i>Vetivety.</i>
See you later.	<i>Mandram pihaona.</i>
Yes.	<i>Eny/Eka.</i>
No.	<i>Tsia.</i>
Please/Excuse me.	<i>Azafady.</i>
Thank you (very much).	<i>Misaotra (indrindra).</i>
You're welcome.	<i>Tsy misy fisaorana.</i>
My name is ...	<i>... no anarako.</i>
Bon appetit!	<i>Mazoto a homana!</i>
Bon voyage!	<i>Tongava soa!</i>
Cheers!	<i>Ho ela velona!</i>
Sir/Madam	<i>Tompoko</i>
I don't understand.	<i>Tsy azoka.</i>
Alright/OK.	<i>Ekena.</i>
Show me.	<i>Atoroy ahy.</i>
How much is it?	<i>Ohatrinona?</i>
It's too expensive.	<i>Lafo loatra, lafo be.</i>
It's very cheap.	<i>Tena mora be.</i>
Please give me some.	<i>Mimba omeo aho.</i>
Where is ...?	<i>Aiza ...?</i>

chief	<i>lehibe</i>
driver	<i>mpamily</i>
father/mother	<i>ray/reny</i>
friend	<i>sakaiza</i>
man/woman	<i>lehilahy/vehivavy</i>
name	<i>anarana</i>
traveller	<i>mpandeha</i>

bad	<i>ratsy</i>
beautiful	<i>mahafinaritra/tsara tarehy</i>
big	<i>be</i>
deep	<i>lalina</i>

dirty	<i>maloto</i>
easy	<i>mora</i>
good	<i>tsara</i>
good	<i>tsara</i>
interesting	<i>mahasondriana</i>
little	<i>kely</i>
lost	<i>very</i>
more	<i>mihoatra</i>
slow	<i>votsa</i>

accommodation	<i>zavatra ilaina</i>
bed	<i>fandriana</i>
breakfast	<i>sakafo maraina</i>
food	<i>hanina</i>
kitchen	<i>lakozia</i>
lunch	<i>sakafo antoandro</i>
room	<i>efitra</i>
tariff	<i>tarify</i>
water	<i>rano</i>

time	<i>fotoana</i>
today	<i>androany</i>
tomorrow	<i>rahampitso</i>
yesterday	<i>omaly</i>
beach	<i>morona</i>
beside	<i>akaiky</i>
boulevard	<i>arabe, araben</i>
to buy	<i>mividy</i>
danger	<i>loza</i>
entry/exit	<i>fidirana/fivoahana</i>
forest	<i>ala</i>
guide	<i>mpitarika</i>
help	<i>fanampiana</i>
island	<i>nosy</i>
lake	<i>farihy</i>
left/right	<i>havia/havanana</i>

CITY & TOWN NAMES

Although most people continue to use French place names in Madagascar, since the time of independence, cities, towns and places have been officially known by their Malagasy names. The following list may help alleviate some of the confusion:

Malagasy	French
Ambohitra	Joffreville
Andasibe	Périnet
Andoany	Hell-Ville
Antananarivo	Tananarive
Antsiranana	Diego Suarez
Fenoarivo	Fénériver
Iharana	Vohémar
Mahajanga	Majunga
Mahavelona	Foulpointe
Nosy Boraha	Île Sainte Marie
Anantsogno	St Augustin
Taolagnaro	Fort Dauphin
Toamasina	Tamatave
Toliara	Tuléar

Pronunciation can be difficult; one general rule for Malagasy names is to drop word-final vowels.

map	<i>sarin tany</i>
market	<i>tsena</i>
sea	<i>ranomasina</i>
station	<i>gara</i>
street	<i>lâlana</i>
to swim	<i>milomano</i>
to walk	<i>mandeha</i>
town/village	<i>tanana/vohitra</i>
waterfall	<i>riana</i>

COMORIAN

The following is a list of useful Comorian words and phrases. Unfortunately, Comorian spelling isn't standardised so you may see several different transliterations for these words.

CONVERSATION & USEFUL WORDS

Hello.	<i>Salama.</i>
Good day.	<i>Bariza.</i> (Grand Comore)
Good day. (in response)	<i>M'bona.</i>
Welcome.	<i>Karibu.</i>
How's it going?	<i>Njeje?</i> (Anjouan) <i>Ndje?</i> or <i>Habare sa?</i> (Mohéli & Mayotte)

Fine. (in response)	<i>Ndjema/Sijouha.</i>
Goodbye.	<i>Kwaheri.</i>
Good night.	<i>Lala ha unano.</i>
Please.	<i>Tafatvali.</i>
Thank you.	<i>Marahaba.</i>
Yes.	<i>Aiwa.</i>
No.	<i>Uh uh.</i>
I don't understand.	<i>Ntsu elewa.</i>
I don't speak Comorian.	<i>Mimi tsidji ourogowa shimasiawa.</i>
My name is ...	<i>Mi opara ...</i>
I'm from ...	<i>Mi tsila ...</i>
How much is this?	<i>Ryali nga?</i> or <i>Beyi hindri?</i>
That's expensive/inexpensive.	<i>Ngohouzo anli/Rahisi.</i>
It's beautiful.	<i>Udjisa.</i>
I'd like to go to ...	<i>Ngamwandzo nende ...</i>
Where?	<i>Ndahu?</i>
shady dealings	<i>makarakara</i>
Sir	<i>monyé</i>
Madam	<i>bueni</i>
mother	<i>mama</i>
father	<i>baba</i>
grandmother/elderly woman	<i>koko</i>
grandfather/elderly man	<i>bakoko</i>
European/foreigner	<i>mzungu</i>

road/street	<i>pare</i>
beach	<i>mtsangani</i>
to drink	<i>hunua</i>
to swim	<i>huyeleya</i>
boat	<i>markabu</i>
to fish	<i>mulowa</i>
fisherman	<i>mulozu</i>
mosque	<i>mukiri</i>
the top/peak	<i>liju</i>
town	<i>mjini</i>
post office	<i>poste</i>
paradise	<i>pevoni</i>
mosquito	<i>dundi</i>

It's hot.	<i>Ina moro.</i>
It's cold.	<i>Ina baridi.</i>
night	<i>uku</i>
day	<i>mtsana</i>
today	<i>leo</i>
tomorrow	<i>meso</i>
yesterday	<i>jana</i>

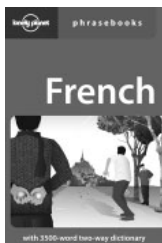
FOOD & DRINK

I'm hungry/thirsty.	<i>Ngamina ndzaya/nyara.</i>
Do you have food available?	<i>Kamtsina bahidrou ya houla?</i>

I'm looking for a place to eat/sleep.	<i>Tamtsaho pvahanou nililye/nilale.</i>
Do you have ...?	<i>Ngagina ...?</i>
It's good.	<i>Ya djema.</i>
to eat	<i>houla</i>
market	<i>shindoni or bazari</i>
banana	<i>masindza or ndrovi</i>
coconut (fresh/dried)	<i>idjavou/nadzi</i>
orange	<i>trundra</i>
sugar	<i>muwa</i>
coffee	<i>kafe</i>
milk	<i>dziwa</i>
rice	<i>tsohole or mayele</i>
bread	<i>mkatre</i>
meat	<i>nyama</i>
tea	<i>kayi</i>
chicken	<i>kuhu</i>
shark	<i>papa</i>
lobster	<i>kamba diva</i>
water	<i>madji</i>
fish	<i>fi</i>

NUMBERS

1	<i>montsi, moja</i>
2	<i>mbili</i>
3	<i>ndraru</i>
4	<i>nne</i>
5	<i>ntsanu</i>
6	<i>sita</i>
7	<i>nfukare</i>
8	<i>nane</i>
9	<i>shenda</i>
10	<i>kume</i>
11	<i>kume na mwedja</i>
12	<i>kume na mbili</i>
20	<i>shirini</i>
30	<i>mengo-mi-raru</i>
40	<i>mengo-mi-ne</i>
100	<i>djana</i>
200	<i>majana mbili</i>
300	<i>majana mi-raru</i>
1000	<i>shihwhi</i>



Also available from Lonely Planet:
French Phrasebook

Glossary

For a glossary of food and drink terms, see p43.

- Agate** – Agence d'Accueil Télécom; telephone office
aloalo – elaborate woodcarvings used to adorn tombs
andevo – traditional underclass
andriana – noble
Angap – Association Nationale pour la Gestion des Aires Protégées (National Association for the Management of Protected Areas), the organisation that administers most of Madagascar's parks and reserves
Antaimoro – east coast tribe from the region around Manakara; also the name given to a type of handmade paper
Antakàrana – tribe from northern Madagascar
arabe/araben – avenue
ariary – Madagascar's unit of currency
aye-aye – rare nocturnal lemur
- bâché** – small, converted pick-up truck
baie – bay
banga – colourful temporary dwelling built by bachelors in the Comoros
bangwe – village or town square
bao – a popular game in the Comoros and elsewhere in Africa, played by dropping polished seeds into a series of holes in a wooden board
baraza – stone bench found in the Comoros
Basse-Ville – lower town
bazary – market; often designated Bazary Kely (small market) or Bazary Be (big market)
be – 'big' in Malagasy; denotes larger parts of a town
betsa-betsa – an alcoholic drink made from fermented sugarcane juice
Betsileo – Madagascar's third-largest tribe after the Merina and the Betsimisaraka
Betsimisaraka – Madagascar's second-largest tribe
Boina – Sakalava territory in the area around Mahajanga
boutre – single-masted dhow used for cargo
buxi – local term for minibus in Fianarantsoa and some other areas of Madagascar
- camion-brousse** – large truck used for passengers
cassava – root vegetable also known as manioc, or *mhogo* in Comorian
CFPF – Centre de Formation Professionnelle Forestière (Centre of Professional Forestry Training)
chambre d'hôtes – B&B-style accommodation, often in a family home
chiromani – cloth wrap worn by Comorian women

- coelacanth** – prehistoric fish, still living off the Comoros and southern Madagascar
collectivité territoriale – French overseas territory; status of Mayotte
Comorian – English term for a person from the Comoros; also spelt Comorien or Comoran
côtier – literally 'person from the coast'; the term is usually used to describe someone who is not a member of the Merina tribe
coua – bird belonging to one of nine species of coucou
- fady** – taboo, forbidden
Famadihana – exhumation and reburial; literally 'the turning of the bones'
familiale – a synonym for *taxi-be* (big taxi)
Fihavanana – conciliation or brotherhood
fijoroana – a ceremony invoking the ancestors
fosa – a puma-like animal and the largest of Madagascar's carnivores (not to be confused with the *fossa*)
fossa – local name for the striped civet
- galawa** – Comorian dugout canoe
gare routière – bus station
gargote – cheap restaurant
gasy – Malagasy (pronounced 'gash')
gîte – rustic shelter
Grands Mariages – Comorian wedding ceremonies
- hajj** – pilgrimage to Mecca
hasina – a force that flows from the land through the ancestors into the society of the living
Haute-Ville – upper town
hauts plateaux – highlands; the term is often used to refer to Madagascar's central plateau region
hira gasy – music, dancing and storytelling spectacles
hôtel de ville – town hall
hotely – small roadside place that serves basic meals
hova – commoners
- Id-ul-Fitr** – Muslim festival at the end of the fast of Ramadan; also spelt Eid-el-Fitr
Imerina – region ruled by the Merina
immeuble – building
indri – largest of Madagascar's lemur species
- kabary** – discourse performed by a highly skilled orator
kely – 'small' in Malagasy; often used to denote a township or satellite town
kianja – place or square; also known as *kianjan*

lac – lake
lakana – dugout canoe; synonym for *pirogue*
lalana – street
lamba – white cotton or silk scarf
lamba mena – literally ‘red cloth’; used as a burial shroud, but is rarely red

Mahafaly – southern tribe
maki – Malagasy and Comorian term for a lemur
malabary – long gowns worn by dancers
masonjoany – face pack made from ground wood and water
medina – old Arab quarter of a Comorian town
Merina – Madagascar’s largest tribe, centred in Antananarivo
metropole – continental France (as opposed to French overseas possessions)
mihrab – niche in a mosque indicating the direction of Mecca
minaret – tower of a mosque, from where the call to prayer is issued
mofo – bread, usually baked as baguettes
mora mora – ‘slowly, slowly’ or ‘wait a minute’; often used to mean the Malagasy pace of life
Mosquée de Vendredi – Friday mosque
mzungu – foreigner or white person; mostly used in the Comoros

nosy – island
Nouvelle-Ville – new town

ombiasy – highly respected healers who not only prescribe herbal cures, but also carry out rituals to secure assistance from the ancestors, to balance out negative *vintana*, or to communicate with a *tromba* that has possessed a person

paositra – post office
parc marin – marine national park
parc national – national park
petit marché – small market
pic – peak
pirogue – dugout canoe
pisteur – untrained guide, often speaking Malagasy only
pousse-pousse – rickshaw

Ramadan – Muslim month of fasting from sunrise to sunset
ramba-ramba – noisy cart used for transporting produce between villages; powered only by human sweat and toil
rangani – marijuana; pronounced ‘roungoun’
ranovola – drink made by adding boiling water to the residue left in pots used to cook rice; also known as *ranon’apango*
ravinala – literally ‘forest leaves’; also known as travellers’ palm, the most distinctive of Madagascar’s palm trees
Réseau National des Chemins de Fer Malgaches (RNCFM) – Madagascar’s rail system
réserve forestière – forest reserve

réserve spéciale – special reserve (often similar to a national park)
resto – commonly used abbreviation for restaurant
rhumerie – bar selling varieties of rum
RN – route nationale; national road (often still no more than a track)
rova – palace

Sakalava – western tribe
salegy – Kenyan-influenced music of the Sakalava tribe
salon de thé – tea room
sambatra – mass circumcision ceremony
sambos – samosas
Sava – region comprising Sambava, Andapa, Vohémar (Iharana) and Antalaha
sifaka – a type of lemur, known in French as a *propitèque*
sigaoama – a type of music similar to black South African popular music
stationnement de taxi-brousse – bush-taxi station

table d’hôtes – fixed menu or set meal
tapia – small red berries that taste similar to dates
tavy – Malagasy term for the slash-and-burn method of agriculture
taxi-be – literally ‘big taxi’; also known as a *familiale*
taxi-brousse – bush taxi; generic term for any kind of public passenger truck, car or minibus
taxi-spécial – charter taxi
taxi-ville – literally ‘town taxis’; used for shorter distances
tenrec – small mammal resembling a hedgehog or shrew
THB – Three Horses Beer, Madagascar’s most popular beer
tilapia – freshwater perch (fish)
tromba – spirit
tsapika – a form of music that originated in the south
tsingy – limestone pinnacle formations; also known as karst

valiha – a stringed instrument that is played like a harp
vary – rice (Malagasy)
vazaha – foreigner or white person
Vezo – nomadic fishing subtribe of the Sakalava, found in the southwest
vintana – destiny
voay – crocodile

WWF – World Wide Fund for Nature

ylang-ylang – bush with sweet-smelling white flowers used to make perfume

Zafimaniry – a subgroup of the Betsileo people who live in the area east of Ambositra, and are renowned for their woodcarving skills
zebu – a type of domesticated ox found throughout Madagascar; it has a prominent hump on its back and loose skin under its throat

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