

# Webquest: Eco-tour of Madagascar

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Age Level: Middle School

## Overview

Students perform a webquest to gather information about Madagascar and lemur conservation. Their task is to design an eco-tour for tourists who want to learn more about conservation on the island of Madagascar.

## Objectives

Upon completion of this activity, students will be able to:

- Use the internet to gather information
- Understand issues affecting the survival of lemurs
- Describe the benefits of ecologically-based tourism
- Synthesize information from a variety of sources to complete a project

## Important Words

- Ex-situ
- In-situ
- Fauna

## Materials

Computer and printer, webquest instructions and grading rubrics, materials for note taking, poster board, glue

## Time Needed

120 - 180 minutes (2 - 3 class periods)

## Teacher Preparation

Read the webquest instructions. Look over the websites in order to be familiar with the resources your students will be using. Read the rubric and make changes based on what you would like your students to learn. Print out enough instructions and rubrics for the entire class.

## Background Information

The Saint Louis Zoo conducts a variety of field conservation programs around the world. They are grouped under a program known as the Saint Louis Zoo WildCare Institute. These programs have both ex-situ and in-situ components where the Zoo conducts research out in the field and also on Zoo grounds.

Lemur conservation in Madagascar is one of these programs. Lemurs are primates that only live on the African island of Madagascar. There are many different kinds of lemurs, but each species is

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threatened with extinction. Loss of habitat is the primary cause, but the animals face other threats to their survival.

The Madagascar Fauna Group is one organization addressing wildlife conservation in Madagascar; the Saint Louis Zoo is a leading member of this group. Among the Zoo's conservation activities in Madagascar are educational programs that teach farmers sustainable farming techniques and others that help children learn the importance of biodiversity and wildlife conservation.

## Activity 1: Complete the Webquest

60 minutes

1. Hand out copies of the webquest instructions and grading rubric to all students. NOTE: Students can work independently or in pairs, depending on their reading levels and the availability of computers. Some webpages on the webquest are on a high school reading level and will require students to be proficient readers. Pair students who need reading support with stronger readers. Also, if you don't have enough computers for the entire class, students can share. Students who master the basic information and complete the basics of the assignment can research actual hotels and restaurants and additional stops on the tour.
2. Let students spend the rest of the class gathering information.

## Activity 2: Design the tour/make the poster

60 minutes

1. Give students a copy of a map of Madagascar or have them print one out themselves.
2. Using their information, they should plan out their tour day-by-day. Their poster should have at least three items: a map showing the route and stops, a written day-by-day itinerary, and a list of information (10 key facts) that they think visitors should learn before the end of their trip. NOTE: This portion of the project can be completed out of school.

## Activity 3: Sharing information

60 minutes

1. Students display their posters with the map showing the route of the eco-tour, daily itinerary, and pictures of sights that might be seen along the way. Students should circulate around the classroom looking at all the possibilities for travel that their peers came up with.
2. Have a discussion with students to find out the similarities and differences among the various tours. Use the following list of questions to foster discussion either in small groups or as a large group. Whether circulating around the room to listen to small groups or listening to the large group discussion, keep track of student participation for the grading (see rubric). Here is a list of questions, based on Bloom's taxonomy. Possible answers are listed in italics.
  - a. What is the major threat to lemur survival? (*habitat loss*)
  - b. What are some of the characteristics of lemurs? (*primates, mammals, live in social groups*)
  - c. Explain in your own words some of the current conservation projects going on in Madagascar.
  - d. How have the farming practices of the Malagasy people (people from Madagascar) affected the survival of the lemurs? (*slash and burn farming, livestock grazing*)
  - e. How would you use your limited time with tourists to help them understand the importance of preserving habitat for wild animals?

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- f. What means would you use to find out whether taking your tour would have an impact on the tourists and affect their future behavior?
- g. Can you relate what you have learned about ecotourism, Madagascar and/or lemurs to your own practices when you travel or even when you stay at home (since other may travel to our part of the world as tourists)?
- h. Compare the conservation programs you learned about in Madagascar with programs going on in the U.S. Would the Madagascar programs work here? Why or why not?
- e. Now that you've seen and heard about the tours you and your classmates created, use these ideas to create the ultimate eco-tour. What would that look like?

### Conclusion

5 minutes

1. Congratulate the students on their work. Encourage them to do more research if they are interested. Ask them to summarize what they learned about Madagascar, lemurs and/or responsible traveling.

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## Student Worksheet

### Webquest Instructions

#### 1. Introduction

Madagascar -- an island off the east coast of mainland Africa -- is one of the Earth's most amazing places. It is home to some very unique animal species, including lemurs. The Saint Louis Zoo and other organizations study the fauna, or animal life, of Madagascar and work to conserve its resources.

#### 2. Your Task

Congratulations! You have just been hired by EcoTours of Madagascar to develop a new expedition for tourists focusing on lemur conservation. Visitors to Madagascar usually like to see as much of the island as possible, so you'll have to satisfy that requirement. But the real focus of this tour, "For the Love of Lemurs," is to teach tourists all about these unique animals, including the issues threatening their survival and what conservationists are doing to help them. The tour is one week long, and at least three days should be devoted to learning about lemurs.

Since you've just moved to Madagascar, you'll have to learn all about this island and about lemurs in order to accomplish your task. When you've finished your research, you will make a poster to present to your colleagues (a.k.a. classmates). The poster must include a map of Madagascar showing the route for your tour, a day-by-day itinerary describing the main activity or activities for each day, and a list of 10 key facts that you want visitors to learn by the time they leave Madagascar. You should also be prepared to discuss important issues in ecotourism and lemur conservation.

#### 3. The Process

Read the following web pages and take notes, keeping in mind your poster requirements. Feel free to explore links to and from these pages as well. They will teach you about Madagascar, lemurs, and ecotourism.

[www.stlzoo.org/wildcareinstitute/lemursinmadagascar.htm](http://www.stlzoo.org/wildcareinstitute/lemursinmadagascar.htm)

[www.stlzoo.org/animals/abouttheanimals/mammals/lemursmonkeysapes/](http://www.stlzoo.org/animals/abouttheanimals/mammals/lemursmonkeysapes/)

[msn.encyarta.com/encyclopedia\\_761551721/Lemurs.html](http://msn.encyarta.com/encyclopedia_761551721/Lemurs.html)

[msn.encyarta.com/encyclopedia\\_761568260/Madagascar.html](http://msn.encyarta.com/encyclopedia_761568260/Madagascar.html)

[www.savethelémur.org](http://www.savethelémur.org)

[www.ecotour.org](http://www.ecotour.org)

[www.ecotourism.org](http://www.ecotourism.org)

You may also consult other web sites to increase your understanding.

Once you have completed your research, work on your poster. Consult the rubric to make sure you have completed all the requirements for the project.

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## 4. Evaluation

<b>Requirements</b>	<b>Exceeds expectations</b>	<b>Meets Expectations</b>	<b>Needs Improvement</b>	<b>Unacceptable</b>
Poster	Neat and easy to read. Includes detailed map, list of 10 important facts and a well-designed itinerary. May include additional information or pictures.	Poster includes the three requirements. Map, itinerary and facts represent the basic information needed to complete this assignment.	Poster is missing some information or parts are incomplete.	There is no poster or it has minimal information on it.
Class discussion	Participated in discussion. Showed a thorough understanding of lemurs and the problems they face on Madagascar as well as issues surrounding ecotourism.	Participated in discussion. Showed a basic understanding of lemurs and conservation issues.	Participated in discussion. Showed minimal understanding of lemurs and conservation issues.	Did not participate in class discussion.
Grammar and spelling	There are no errors.	There are a few errors.	There are many errors, but the content is still readable.	There are many errors, making it difficult to understand the content.

## 5. Conclusion

Congratulations! You've completed your webquest and hopefully learned something new about ecotourism, Madagascar, lemurs and conservation. If you're interested in learning more about the Saint Louis Zoo's conservation programs around the world, go to the following webpage:

[www.stlzoo.org/wildcareinstitute/](http://www.stlzoo.org/wildcareinstitute/)