

Safely navigating Antananarivo – advice for attendees of IPS Madagascar 2025

A collection of tips and advice from IPS members with experience of living and working in Antananarivo, shared with the aim of helping attendees of IPS Madagascar 2025 to stay safe during their stay.

At the Airport (Ivato)

- Since the opening of the new international terminal, the flow for landing, purchasing a visitor's VISA, passport control, going through customs, getting bags, and finding a taxi is much improved. Airport announcements and signage are typically in Malagasy, French and English.
- Upon landing, visitors without a visa can purchase one while in line for passport control (for **1–15 day visa**: €10 / \$10; for **16–30 day visa** : €35 / \$37 - see conference website). There are baggage carts freely available. Porters are also available to help you carry your luggage, but if you can handle it yourself, it is okay to politely refuse them. It may be useful to have some small dollar or euro bills/coins upon arrival, if you wish to tip someone.
- Please note that Madagascar does not offer an e-visa service. The visa must be paid upon arrival at the airport.
- Once you pass through customs, and depending on the time of day, many services will be available in the Terminal. SIM cards from local companies (Yas, Orange, Airtel) are available to purchase, but only during local business hours (8.30am to 5pm). If possible, it may be advisable to obtain a global SIM ahead of arrival. Note that most of the International hotels (e.g., Novotel/Ibis) should have wifi and SIM cards might not be necessary for most visitors.
- There is an ATM to withdraw local cash, and a change kiosk where you can exchange USD, Euro, British Pounds and other major currencies into local Malagasy currency (Ariary). This rate isn't necessarily the best, but it is convenient! Some hotels may also offer a change service at the concierge desk or accept credit cards. Novotel, the Congress Venue has an ATM for all guests. We do advise having some Malagasy cash, as many local establishments and local transportation will not accept credit cards.
- There are also official airport taxis outside the terminal (identifiable as white cars in a taxi parking area). If you tell them which hotel you are going to, they will give you a predetermined fare. IPS volunteers will be present at the airport starting July 18 to assist congress participants with visa and passport control, as well as transportation to taxis. They will be easy to recognize by their IPS T-shirts.

In and around the conference venue (neighborhood of Ankorondrano-Ivandry)

- The conference venue and many suggested hotels are in the neighborhoods of Ankorondrano and Ivandry (they are next to each other). This area is not downtown, but is still part of the urban center. There are suggested restaurants, grocery stores, etc. on the conference website (under accommodation section). There are ATMs at many local banks in the area and in La City (the nearby mini-mall), and some hotels may also exchange cash at

the front desk. Visit the IPS website to discover more:

<https://ipsmadagascar.org/madagascar/dining-and-services/>

- Walking around this neighbourhood during the day is relatively safe, though we do advise wearing backpacks on your front and keeping phones/cash tucked safely away.
- It is not advisable to go out alone after dark. If you do, try not to walk more than a couple of blocks, even with others. Have your hotel find you a taxi to go any further at night. Negotiate with the driver to wait while you eat or come back for you at an agreed time. It will be challenging to find a taxi by chance at night.
- For your travel within the city, we recommend the following services (apart from the normal beige taxis) :
 - **PIQLA** – www.piqla.com
 - **e-VTC** - <https://e-vtc.esanandro.com>
 - **Rapide App** : <https://rapideapp.net>

Their applications are available for download on both Google Play and the App Store.

The local organizing committee is currently finalizing a partnership with PIQLA to offer discounted rates and ensure availability from midday to evening throughout the congress.

Going downtown or visiting historical sites

- To get from the conference venue to downtown, we suggest a taxi and we suggest asking your hotel concierge to arrange this for you. In particular, it is expected to negotiate prices (in Malagasy) based on time of day and distance. You can ask the hotel to ask the taxi to stay with you until you return, or you can ask the hotel to recommend a reasonable fee to return, if you wish to find a local taxi on your own.
- Traffic jams are part of the Tana experience. Expect significant delays during the working day and budget extra hours to move around. We do not suggest going downtown “for a quick lunch” between conference sessions!
- Many souvenir markets come with an expectation of haggling, which can be uncomfortable/tiring. We suggest the Lisy Art Gallery in Antanimora for a nice experience (traffic dependent, could be a 15-40 minute taxi ride from the conference venue). Prices are fixed, no one follows you around, and there is a wide selection of lovely items to bring home.

General Safety tips:

- Police stops for document checks may happen. They are more frequent at night and in downtown tourist areas. Police officers only accept original passports (some accept notarized color copies). It is a personal choice to carry your passport with you. Depending on your country of origin and available consular services in Madagascar, you may not be able to easily replace your passport. Our general recommendation, if you want to go out for dinner downtown, is for the hotel to arrange a taxi to take you there and pick you up, and bring your original passport stored safely.

- While moving around the city, be mindful of your possessions. Keep your phone, money, and passport tucked away. Do not walk around looking at your phone. This also applies when you are in a taxi.
- Most hotels, high-end restaurants, and supermarkets (and Lisy Art Gallery) accept major credit cards. If you want to withdraw cash from an ATM, be careful leaving machines. The local currency is the Malagasy Ariary and bills range in size from 100 Ar (0.02 USD) to 20,000 Ar (~4.5 USD). If you plan on withdrawing large amounts of local currency, we suggest bringing a backpack to carry stacks of bills, or do it at the Conference Venue.
- Places with tourists tend to be magnets for people asking for financial assistance. Sadly, too many people and children live in poverty in Antananarivo and children are often exploited to solicit money. Depending on where you are, people may try to sell you items on the street. Both unhoused people and merchants can be persistent and may follow you for blocks. It is up to you if you want to give money; if they insist, you can politely refuse. If you decide to give someone money, we suggest small amounts (~500 Ar).
- Pickpocketing is fairly common in crowds, including children pickpockets. Fanny packs or backpacks worn on the front are useful. Be aware of your surroundings if you go into very crowded markets or areas.
- Traffic is generally busy so it can take upwards of two hours to get across the city. Make sure to plan accordingly, especially if travelling late in the day.
- Most of the recommended hotels are very close to the conference venue and within walking distance. If your hotel is further away, then taxis are one way to move around town. Your hotel concierge can help negotiate prices. It can be difficult to negotiate with local taxi drivers, in Malagasy, without knowing what's typical/reasonable.
- The IPS Local Organizing Committee has informed the national security agency (Police Nationale) in Antananarivo about the upcoming IPS Congress and is working closely with the authorities to ensure the safety of all participants and the smooth running of the event.
- Evening shuttles will be available to drop participants off at their hotels or near their homes. The shuttle routes, including stops and schedules, will be shared one week before the congress. A dedicated shuttle desk will also be available at the congress venue for bookings and additional information.