

THE BLAXIT FORWARD BLUEPRINT FOR MADAGASCAR

PART TWO

The Purge & The Plan

Shall It Stay or Shall It Go?

The emotional and practical guide to letting go — and bringing only what matters.

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Part Two: The Purge & The Plan

Shall It Stay or Shall It Go?

Nobody tells you that the hardest part of moving internationally isn't the logistics. It's the stuff. The things you've accumulated over decades of living — the furniture, the gadgets, the clothes that almost fit, the boxes in storage you haven't opened since 2011. Before you can build a new life, you have to reckon honestly with the one you're leaving behind.

This section is not about minimalism for its own sake. It's about making intentional decisions so that when you land in Madagascar, you arrive light, clear-headed, and ready — instead of haunted by a storage unit you're paying \$200 a month to avoid thinking about.

The good news: you don't have to do it all at once.

The Blaxit Box: The Daily Practice That Starts Everything

Here's how The Purge actually works in practice. You don't wake up one Saturday and sort through everything you own. That path leads to paralysis, nostalgia spirals, and a nap.

Instead, you get a box. One box. You put it somewhere visible — near the front door, in the bedroom, wherever you move through daily. And every single day, from the moment you decide to Blaxit until the moment you leave, you put something in it.

One item. A shirt you haven't worn. A kitchen gadget you forgot you owned. A book you've been meaning to read for six years. A throw pillow. A phone charger for a phone you no longer have.

When the box fills up, you empty it — donate, sell, or trash — and start again. Monthly at minimum. More often as your departure date gets closer and the urgency gets real.

Mama Leeza's Tip: *The Blaxit Box is not about speed — it's about consistency. One item a day for a year is 365 fewer things you have to deal with in the final frantic weeks before your flight. Start now. Today. Whatever is nearest to you that you don't actually need.*

Your "Why": The Anchor for Hard Days

There will be a day — probably more than one — when you pick up an object and cannot put it in the box. Maybe it was your mother's. Maybe it was yours at a chapter of life you loved. Maybe it's just comfortable, and comfort is hard to release.

On those days, you need your Why.

Your Why is the reason you are doing this. Not the practical reason (lower cost of living, safety, adventure) — the deep one. The one that surfaced when you first let yourself imagine what a different life could look like. Write it down. Put it somewhere you'll see it.

Because when the going gets hard — and packing up a life always gets hard — the Why is what gets you back to the box.

Reflection prompt: In one sentence, finish this: "I am Blaxiting because I deserve to live in a place where ____." Write it. Keep it. Return to it.

The Madagascar Effect: Plan for the Body That's Coming

Here is something nobody warned me about before I moved to Madagascar: I lost weight. A lot of it. Within the first year.

This is not unusual. It's so common among expats here that I call it the Madagascar Effect. The food is fresher and less processed. The heat naturally reduces appetite. You walk more — to markets, to the waterfront, through the neighborhood. There is no DoorDash, no drive-through, no mindless late-night snacking because the kitchen is too far from the couch.

What does this have to do with packing? Everything.

Do not fill your suitcases with clothing sized for your current body. Bring enough to be comfortable for two to three months, prioritize lightweight fabrics that breathe in tropical heat, and plan to replenish your

wardrobe locally — or via care packages — once you see how your body adjusts.

Mama Leeza's Tip: *Madagascar's frip markets and local tailors mean you can rebuild a functional, flattering wardrobe for a fraction of what you'd spend at home. Leave room in your luggage budget. The Madagascar Effect is real, and your future self will thank you.*

The Decision Matrix: What to Do With the Big Stuff

The Blaxit Box handles the small decisions. But then there are the big ones — the house, the car, the furniture, the heirlooms, the things that have a dollar sign or a heartstring attached.

Here is a framework for thinking through each major category:

SELL IT	Your home, car, large furniture	Will it cost more to store/ship than replace?	Large items, appliances, vehicles, duplicates of anything	List it before you announce your move. Prices drop once word gets out.
RENT IT	Your home (if you own)	Could this generate income AND give you a safety net to return to?	Real estate you own, especially in appreciating markets	A good property manager is worth every penny. Vet them carefully.
DONATE IT	Clothes, books, housewares, linens	Would someone else get more use from this than a storage unit will?	Anything you haven't touched in a year. Anything that doesn't fit the new you.	Madagascar has limited donation infrastructure. Donate locally before you leave.
STORE IT	Heirlooms, sentimental items, documents	Is this irreplaceable AND something you may genuinely want someday?	Family photos, legal documents, true heirlooms only	Storage costs add up fast. Be ruthless. If you'd survive without it, you probably should.

Mama Leeza's Tip: *The matrix looks clean on paper. Real life is messier. Give yourself grace — and a deadline. Indecision is its own kind of decision, and it usually costs money.*

BRING IT: The Non-Negotiables

After years of international moves — including Madagascar — here is what I have learned actually belongs in your suitcase:

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Your electronics	Laptop, backup drives, universal power adapters (Madagascar runs 220V/50Hz). As for phones — bring yours, but don't be surprised if you end up replacing it locally. Electronics are cheap here, especially Android phones from brands like iTel and Techno you've never heard of. A high-end Gasy phone runs about \$150. Used iPhones are available; repairs on any phone are easy and inexpensive.	You will NOT find new iPhones here. If you're an Apple loyalist, bring yours and a good case. If you're open to Android, you may buy locally within months and never look back.
Medications & supplements	Bring a 2-3 month supply to get settled, but don't panic-pack a year's worth. No prescriptions needed in Madagascar. Pharmacies are on nearly every corner, pharmacists are knowledgeable and happy to find comparable medications, and many drugs come from Germany (Denk brand) at a fraction of U.S. prices. Most 'prescription' medications are available OTC.	A few U.S. OTC standbys like Pepto-Bismol can be hard to find — those are worth including in care packages. But you may be surprised how much your medicine cabinet needs shrink once you're here.
Specialty food items	Your comfort-food non-negotiables: specific spice blends, hot sauces, nutritional yeast (if you're plant-based), specialty items unavailable locally. Think small, high-value, irreplaceable.	A small stash goes a long way psychologically. The care package system handles restocking. See the full food section below for what you'll actually find — and what to prepare for — on the ground.
Quality shoes	Mahajanga streets are uneven, dusty, and wet-season muddy. Bring broken-in walking shoes, sandals, and at least one pair of closed-toe shoes for formal occasions.	Good shoes are hard to find in larger sizes here. Bring what you need.
Professional clothing (minimal)	One or two outfits appropriate for meetings or formal occasions. The rest of your wardrobe will be lightweight and casual.	You will sweat. Bring fabrics that breathe. Leave the wool blazer at home.
Important documents (originals + copies)	Passport, birth certificate, Social Security card, medical records, insurance documents, bank letters. Originals stored safely; copies accessible.	Keep digital backups in the cloud. Losing documents here is a significant ordeal.

LEAVE IT: The Traps

And here is what you will be tempted to bring, and should leave behind:

Most of your wardrobe	You will lose weight. Your clothes will fit differently within months. Bringing a full closet to Madagascar is bringing a closet to a bonfire.	Bring enough to be comfortable for 2-3 months, then replenish locally or via care packages.
Bulky bedding & towels	Heavy, space-consuming, replaceable. Madagascar has markets. You will find what you need.	Lightweight travel towels for the first week, then buy locally.
Large appliances	They run on different voltage, they're heavy, and they cost more to ship than to replace. Let them go.	Your blender is not worth \$400 in shipping fees.
Sentimental items you'd be devastated to lose	Theft, humidity, mold, and travel accidents happen. If losing it would break your heart, leave it with someone you trust.	I learned this one the hard way. Leave irreplaceable things with people, not in boxes.
Half your shoe collection	See the Bring It table. Quality over quantity. You will live in sandals. Bring two or three great pairs and call it done.	The closet space you free up will seem silly in retrospect.
Anything you're keeping out of guilt	If the only reason it's in your suitcase is because it was a gift, or because you've had it forever, or because you might need it someday — leave it.	The Blaxit Box (see below) was invented exactly for this category.

DISCOVER THERE: What Madagascar Will Give You

Part of the magic of Blaxiting is discovering that many things you thought you needed to bring — you can find there, often better, always cheaper, and with a story attached.

Madagascar in particular has a few discoveries that tend to permanently change expat shopping habits:

Frip (secondhand) markets	Madagascar's frip markets are a goldmine. Clothing, shoes, housewares, fabrics — at prices that will make you laugh. Most expats who have been here more than a month are devoted frip shoppers.	Go with a local friend your first time. They know which vendors have the good stuff.
Local tailors	For a fraction of what you'd pay at home, a skilled Malagasy tailor will make you something custom and beautiful. Bring a photo or a piece you love and let them work.	This is one of the great joys of living here. Budget accordingly — you will become a regular.

Gemstones	Madagascar is one of the world's most important sources of gemstones — sapphires, rubies, tourmalines, garnets, and more. The variety and quality available here, at local prices, is extraordinary.	Buy from reputable dealers. Ask questions. And yes, you will probably buy a sapphire. Everyone does.
Vanilla (your new currency)	Madagascar produces some of the world's finest vanilla. It is widely available, inexpensive locally, and extraordinarily valuable to people back home. See The Vanilla Deal below.	Stock up. Seriously.
Fresh tropical produce	Mangoes, lychees, coconuts, jackfruit, passion fruit — at prices and quality that will permanently ruin your relationship with American supermarkets.	Eat seasonally. The mango season alone is worth the move.

Food in Madagascar: What to Expect

Let's talk about food — because it will be one of the biggest adjustments, and also one of the greatest pleasures.

Eating With the Seasons (For Real This Time)

Madagascar grows essentially all of its own produce. There is no importing avocados from Mexico in January. What's in season is what's in the market, and when the season ends, it ends. You will learn to make hay while the sun shines.

In April, for instance, you'll find pineapples, avocados, persimmons, and oranges in abundance. By June, they're largely gone. This is not a hardship — it's a rhythm. You'll find yourself anticipating seasons the way your grandparents did, and appreciating things more because they don't last forever.

Mama Leeza's Tip: *Learn what grows when. Ask your housekeeper, your neighbors, your market vendors. Within a year you'll know the seasonal calendar by heart, and you'll plan your cooking around it naturally.*

A Note for Vegans: Come Prepared

If you are vegan, Madagascar can be done — but it requires preparation and flexibility. Here is the honest picture:

- Fresh fruits and vegetables are abundant and exceptional — when in season.
- Dry and canned beans come in great variety. Quinoa is available.
- Soybeans are sold at local markets. I make my own tofu and vegan mayo/aioli from scratch.
- Vegan cheese is available — limited selection, but you'll find it at Score and Shoprite/Super U.
- Most other vegan specialty products have been eliminated by Shoprite's new ownership. The selection that used to exist is largely gone.

- Nutritional yeast is not locally available — I have mine shipped in care packages.

The bottom line for plant-based eaters: you will cook more from scratch, lean on legumes and seasonal produce, and need a care package system for specialty items. It's doable, and many vegans here find they eat better than they ever did at home. But walk in with eyes open.

Fresh Meat and Fish: The Open-Air Market Reality

Most people in Mahajanga buy their fresh meat and fish at open-air markets. Unrefrigerated. Flies present. No plastic wrap in sight.

For Americans, the first encounter with this can be genuinely jarring. But consider the logic: you are not eating any of this raw. Proper cooking eliminates the risk. Malagasy people have been eating this way for generations. The turnover at a busy market is fast — that meat was moving, not sitting.

If that is still a hard no for you, supermarkets carry meat in plastic-wrapped packages, refrigerated, just like you're used to at home. Both options exist. Neither is wrong. Go with what lets you actually enjoy your meals.

Mama Leeza's Tip: *If you do buy from open-air markets — and I encourage you to try it — go in the morning when the selection is freshest and the market is most active. Bring a local friend the first few times. They know the good vendors.*

The Care Package System: Your Stateside Anchor

No matter how well you settle in, there will be things you cannot find in Madagascar. Specific medications. Particular spice blends. Your favorite brand of something that exists only in America. Good socks. (Don't underestimate good socks.)

The solution is a Care Package System — a reliable network of people back home who will ship you what you need, on a regular or as-needed basis. Building this network before you leave is one of the most practical things you can do.

Who's in Your Network?

You need at least one person — ideally two or three — who are willing to be your Stateside Anchor. This is someone who:

- Is organized and reliable
- Has access to your preferred stores or Amazon
- Understands international shipping (or is willing to learn)
- Will not disappear six months after you leave

Family members, close friends, a trusted former colleague — whoever you choose, have the conversation before you go. Make it explicit. Make it mutual.

The Vanilla Deal: Making It Mutual

Here is the secret to keeping your care package network strong and willing: make it a trade, not a favor.

Madagascar produces some of the finest vanilla in the world. Real, fragrant, extraordinary vanilla — the kind that costs \$15 for two beans at a U.S. grocery store. Here, I can buy it cheaply in quantity and ship it for very little.

So here is the deal I make with my Stateside Anchors: I ship them Madagascar vanilla. They ship me what I need. Everybody wins. They get a product they genuinely want and cannot easily source at home. I get my medications, my seasonings, my specific things that make life comfortable. The relationship stays reciprocal, not transactional — and reciprocity is what makes it sustainable over years, not just months.

Mama Leeza's Tip: *You don't have to use vanilla — find what Madagascar produces that your people back home would love. Vanilla happens to be universally wanted and easy to ship. The principle is what matters: make the relationship a fair exchange, and it will last.*

Shipping FROM Madagascar: The Good News

Shipping packages out of Madagascar via Malagasy Post is inexpensive and — perhaps surprisingly — quite reliable. I have shipped many packages to the U.S. and have never lost one. Delivery typically takes about three weeks.

The one thing you give up: tracking. There is no tracking on outbound packages from Madagascar. You ship it, you trust it, and it arrives. That's the deal. For vanilla and other low-stakes items, it's a perfectly fine deal.

Shipping TO Madagascar: The Whole Truth

Now for the less cheerful side of the equation. Shipping from the U.S. to Madagascar is expensive — genuinely, surprisingly expensive. Here is what you need to know before your Stateside Anchors send their first package:

- **Tracking:** Pay for it if it makes you feel better, but know that tracking information ends the moment the package leaves the United States. After that, it's in the system and the system does not report back.
- **Routing:** Packages destined for Madagascar take creative routes. I have received packages that traveled through Moldova. I have received packages that detoured through Malaysia. They arrived. Eventually. But "three weeks" can become "three months" depending on what path your package decides to take across the planet.
- **Electronics:** Do NOT ship electronics via USPS. Computers, phones, tablets — these packages have a troubling habit of going missing entirely. For anything electronic, use DHL. It costs more, but it arrives.
- **The address:** Make sure your Stateside sender addresses packages to "Madagascar, AFRICA." Yes, really. The USPS occasionally needs geographic assistance. Omitting "AFRICA" has caused packages to be misrouted. Include it every time.

The Best Option for Electronics: The Peace Corps Network

If you need to receive something valuable — a laptop, a phone, anything you'd be devastated to lose in

transit — the best option isn't DHL. It's human hands.

Contact the American Corner Mahajanga and ask about reaching Peace Corps staff or volunteers who may be traveling to Madagascar. PC staff and volunteers travel between the U.S. and Madagascar regularly, and they are often willing to bring items for expats in their luggage. This is common, it is trusted, and it bypasses the postal system entirely.

Once your item reaches Antananarivo (Tana), getting it to Mahajanga is straightforward: courier companies operate reliable, affordable, safe delivery services between cities. Hand it off in Tana, receive it in Mahajanga.

Mama Leeza's Tip: *Build this Peace Corps contact before you need it urgently. Introduce yourself at the American Corner, let Andry know you're an expat who may occasionally need this kind of connection, and establish the relationship while things are calm. The middle of a laptop emergency is not the time to be making introductions.*

Running Cost Tally: Start Tracking Now

Everything in The Purge has a financial dimension — what you'll get for selling items, what you'll pay for storage, what shipping costs, what care packages run monthly. These numbers feed directly into Part Seven of this Blueprint, where we build out your full Madagascar budget.

Don't wait until Part Seven to start tracking. Every decision you make during The Purge is a data point. Start a simple spreadsheet — or a notes app, or the back of an envelope — and log the following as you go:

- Items sold and amounts received
- Storage costs committed to (monthly fee x estimated months)
- Estimated shipping costs for items you plan to bring
- Estimated monthly care package budget

By the time you reach Part Seven, you'll already have half the work done. That's the point.

Mama Leeza's Tip: *The Purge is not just emotional work — it's financial planning in disguise. Every item you let go of is money back in your pocket or weight off your shipping bill. Keep the tally. It will motivate you on the hard days.*

You Are Not Your Stuff

I want to close this section with something I wish someone had told me before my first international move.

The objects you are sorting through are not your memories. They are not your identity. They are not proof that your life has been well-lived. The proof of that is in the people who love you, the experiences that shaped you, and — if you're doing this right — in what comes next.

The Purge is an act of faith. You are making room — physical room, financial room, emotional room — for a life that doesn't exist yet. That takes courage. Don't mistake the discomfort of letting go for a sign that you're doing something wrong.

You're doing something right. Keep going.

In Part Three, we get into the practical mechanics of the move itself — visas, flights, shipping, and your first 30 days on the ground.

THIS WAS ONE DESTINATION.

The BDE covers 120 countries.

Madagascar is where I live. Your destination may be Portugal, Costa Rica, Colombia, Thailand — wherever the BDE says you will thrive, belong, and be safe.

Every section you just read gets rebuilt from scratch, for your country.

Your neighborhoods. Your banks. Your cost of living. Your life.

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