

Africa



Factfile

Size



Africa is the second largest continent in the world. Only Asia is bigger.

Size



It is about three times the size of Europe with a population of about 1.25 billion people.

Countries



There are 54 countries on the continent of Africa. They are all fully recognised sovereign states and are all members of the United Nations (UN) and the African Union.

Countries



The largest country in Africa is Algeria and the smallest is the Seychelles. Nigeria is the most populated African country with a population of about 200 million people.

History



In the 1800s/1900s many European countries controlled African countries as “colonies”. Great Britain, France, Netherlands, Spain, Italy, Belgium, Germany and Portugal all held African colonies.

History



In the second half of the 20th century, most African countries campaigned for, some fought for, and gained independence from their Colonial Power. By the end of the 20th century, European colonialism in Africa had ended.

Religion



Millions of Africans practise a local religion associated with their tribe or ethnicity. Millions more practise other religions like Islam, Roman Catholicism and various Protestant religions.

Languages



More than 1000 different languages are spoken on the Continent of Africa including Arabic, Zulu, Swahili, French and English.

Climate



Most of Africa has a warm or hot climate. The equator runs through the middle of Africa giving high temperatures almost all the year round.

Sahara



The Sahara, the largest hot desert in the world and the third largest desert overall, is located in Africa. It covers about one third of the continent.

Tropics



Most of Africa lies within the Tropics. To the north is the Tropic of Cancer and to the south is the Tropic of Capricorn.

Mountains & Rivers



The highest mountain in Africa is Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania. The longest river in Africa is the Nile which touches ten different countries.

Largest Lake



The largest lake in Africa is Lake Victoria which borders the countries of Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania.



African Animals

Africa is home to many native animals including aardvark, chimpanzee, cheetah, baboon, giraffe, ostrich, warthog, zebra and many others.

Suez Canal



The Suez Canal runs through Africa and links the Mediterranean Sea to the Red Sea.

Grasslands



Grasslands make up about one third of Africa.

Elephants, giraffes, lions, zebras and many other animals live in these vast grasslands.

Mineral Wealth



Africa has great mineral wealth including huge deposits of copper, diamonds, gold and petroleum. It also has valuable forests.

Agriculture



Farming is the main occupation in many African countries as about two thirds of the population live in rural areas. Tea, coffee, cocoa and palm oil are some of the agricultural products produced.

Fruit & Vegetables



Many fruits and vegetables are grown in Africa. Examples are bananas, pineapple, dates, figs, papaya, watermelon, mango, sweet potato, peppers, okra, eggplant and plantain.



Africa & Ireland

Ireland has had close links with Africa for many years. Irish missionaries and charities like Concern, Trocaire and GOAL have worked in Africa in the fields of healthcare and education.

Challenges



Africa has had many challenges in modern times – disease, famine, poverty and civil war. These issues, coupled with small, underdeveloped economies, contribute to difficult times for some African countries.

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- *World Book Student*, World Book online