

Geography of Africa

Number of Countries - 54, 1 transcontinental and 3 disputed

The continent occupies nearly 11.7 million square miles, encompassing the adjacent islands as well. The Mediterranean Sea separates Africa and Europe while the Isthmus of Suez joins Africa and Asia. Africa is surrounded by the Red Sea and the Suez Canal to the northeast, the Indian Ocean to the southeast, the Mediterranean Sea to the north, and finally the Atlantic Ocean to the west. The distance between the most southerly point at Cape Agulhas and the most northerly point at Ras ben Sakka, Tunisia is an estimated 5,000 miles. The distance between the most easterly points at Ras Fun, Somalia to the most westerly projection in Cape Verde is approximately 4,600 miles. The continent straddles the equator, and it is home to multiple climate areas.

North Africa

North Africa refers to a group of countries and territories occupying the northerly region of the African continent. In most cases, the term defines to the portion of the continent that is encompassed by the Red Sea to the East, the Suez Canal, and the Atlantic shores of Morocco to the West. The people of North Africa are predominantly Muslim, and their primary language is Arabic. The Sahara Desert cuts across the southern portion of the region, separating the North from other Sub-Saharan African countries. The countries include Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt (5 countries).

West Africa

This region, which has a total of 16 nations, is the second largest region in the continent after Eastern Africa. Of these 16, only three countries, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Mali, are landlocked with the rest having access to a major water body. Only one country, Cape Verde, is an island nation. The remaining 12 countries are Benin, the Ivory Coast, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Guinea, Liberia, Mauritania, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo (16 countries).

East Africa

The term East Africa describes the easterly part of the African Continent. This region is also known as Eastern Africa, and it is made up of 20 countries. The nations traverse the continent from north to south, with Egypt being the northernmost country while Mozambique occupies the southernmost position (19 countries).

Regions of East Africa

East African Community

The East African Community (EAC) refers to an intergovernmental partnership formed by six states in Central East Africa. They include Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Burundi, and Rwanda, and South Sudan. The first five are also included in the African Great Lakes region. Burundi and Rwanda are at times also considered to be part of Central Africa. (6 countries).

Horn of Africa

The Horn of Africa is a collective term used to refer to four countries in Northeast Africa. The four nations are Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia, and Djibouti (4 countries).

Nile Valley

The Nile Valley lies in the northeastern portion of Africa. It is made up of Sudan (1 country).

The Southern Region of East Africa

Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia, and Zimbabwe are part of East Africa, but they are also often included in Southern Africa (5 countries).

The Small Island Nations of Africa

The small island nations of East Africa include Comoros, Seychelles, Mauritius (3 countries)

Central Africa

This region is the heart or the core zone of the continent. In total, there are nine countries that fall within this region under the classification of the United Nations. Of the nine countries, only one of them, Chad, is landlocked. One of them, the Democratic Republic of São Tomé and Príncipe, is an island. The rest of the countries are Angola, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and the Republic of the Congo (9 countries).

Southern Africa

Most of the time, in the nation of South Africa, a different geographic definition is used to represent the region of Southern Africa. This delineation views Southern Africa as the region of Africa that is situated to the south of the River Zambezi and Cunene. This description is mainly used for educational purposes and not in any official usage since it divides Mozambique into two.

In the UN scheme, there are only five countries in the region namely Botswana, South Africa, Lesotho, Namibia, and Eswatini(Swaziland) (5 countries).

Transcontinental Countries

Egypt has most of the landmass in Africa and only the Sinai Peninsula is located on Asia

Disputed

Western Sahara, the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, and Somaliland (3 countries).

Area - 11.7 million square miles

Largest by area

1. Algeria, 2. Democratic Republic of the Congo, 3. Sudan, 4. Libya, 5. Chad, 6. Niger, 7. Angola, 8. Mali, 9. South Africa, 10. Ethiopia

Smallest by area

1. Seychelles, 2. Sao Tome and Principe, 3. Mauritius, 4. Comoros, 5. Cape Verde, 6. Gambia, 7. Eswatini, 8. Djibouti, 9. Rwanda, 10. Burundi

Population

The current population of Africa is 1,313,787,228 as of Wednesday, September 4, 2019, based on the latest United Nations estimates.

Africa population is equivalent to 16.72% of the total world population.

The population density in Africa is 44 per Km² (114 people per mi²).

43.4 % of the population is urban (567,387,619 people in 2019)

The median age in Africa is 19.4 years.

Largest by population

1. Nigeria, 2. Ethiopia, 3. Egypt, 4. Democratic Republic of the Congo, 5. Tanzania, 6. South Africa, 7. Kenya, 8. Uganda, 9. Algeria, 10. Sudan

Smallest by population

1. Seychelles, 2. Sao Tome and Principe, 3. Cape Verde, 4. Comoros, 5. Djibouti, 6. Mauritius, 7. Equatorial Guinea, 8. Eswatini, 9. Guinea-Bissau, 10. Gabon

Major Cities

1. Lagos, Nigeria - 21 million, 2. Cairo, Egypt - 20.4 million, 3. Kinshasa, DR Congo - 13.3 million, 4. Luanda, Angola - 6.5 million, 5. Nairobi, Kenya - 6.5 million

Major bodies of Water

Atlantic Ocean, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean Sea, Red Sea, Lake Victoria (largest freshwater body in Africa), Lake Tanganyika (longest freshwater lake in the world)

Major River

The Nile River - The Nile River, or the Nile-Kagera, is Africa's longest river at 6,853 km in total. Kagera is an East African river which forms an upper part of the river Nile's headwaters. It is also responsible for carrying water from the Nile's furthest source. Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, Rwanda, Burundi, Egypt, Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan

Congo-Chambeshi - Stretching 4,700 km, the Chambeshi River finds its source in the Congo River. The Chambezi starts as a stream from the mountains located in the Northeastern part of Zambia, right next to Lake Tanganyika and flows into Bangweulu swamps. It has numerous channels in countless wetlands. Chambeshi passes through multiple countries including Rwanda, Burundi, Cameroon, Zambia, Angola, Congo, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Niger River - Extending over 4,200 km, the River Niger is the principal river in West Africa whose drainage basin is approximately 2,117,700 square km. The source of the River Niger is in the highlands of Guinea, and it flows in a crescent through Nigeria, Benin's border, Niger, and the Niger Delta before flowing into the Atlantic Ocean. Niger is the third longest African river whose main tributary is River Benue.

Zambezi River - The Zambezi is the fourth longest river in Africa and the largest east flowing river that drains into the Indian Ocean. The 2,693 km river originates in Zambia and then flows through numerous nations including Zimbabwe, Zambia, Botswana, Namibia, and Angola before emptying into the Indian Ocean. Some of the crucial features of the Zambezi River include Ngoye, Chavuma, and Victoria Falls. The Zambezi has two hydroelectric power sources which power Zimbabwe, South Africa, Mozambique, and Zambia.

Ubangi-uele River - The Ubangi-uele is the most significant tributary of the Congo River. It is located in central Africa, where it rises from the convergence of Uele and Mbomou rivers and flows through Congo and the Democratic republic of Congo (DRC) before joining the Congo River in Liranga. Ubangi is 1,060 km long, but with Uele which is 1,210 miles long, they form the most extended branch which is approximately 2,270 km long.

Major Mountain Ranges

Atlas Mountains - Western Sahara, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia

Drakensberg Mountains - South Africa, Lesotho

Ethiopian Highlands - Ethiopia

Rwenzori Mountains - Uganda, DR Congo

Semien Mountains - Ethiopia

Notable Mountains

Kilimanjaro, Tanzania - 19,349ft tallest in Africa

Mt. Kenya, Kenya - 15,058ft

Mt. Stanley, Uganda/DRC - 16,762ft

Ras Dashen, Ethiopia - 14,872

Major Islands

Madagascar, Mauritius, Reunion, Sao Tome and Principe, Canary, Cape Verde, Comoros, Seychelles

Desert Regions

Sahara, Namib, Kalahari