

Kenya



Where is Kenya?

The Republic of Kenya is a coastal country in east Africa near the equator. It spans from lowland plains by the sea to fertile highlands that include Mount Kenya – the second highest mountain peak in Africa.

It is surrounded by Ethiopia, Somalia, Tanzania, Uganda, Lake Victoria and Sudan.



What is the climate like?

Kenya has a tropical climate, although temperatures are uncharacteristically mild over much of the country due to high altitude. It is very hot and humid all year round at the coast. Rainfall is surprisingly low for a county that sits on the equator, with rains coming around April and October. The northern and north eastern parts are very dry. This unpredictable weather is bad for farmers and means that the country is more prone to heavy and often devastating floods on the parched ground.



Education

In 2003, primary education finally became free which meant that an extra two million children were able to enrol. However, regional inequalities still stand, particularly in the enrolment of girls in areas with a severe lack of available water. Due to more children attending schools and extra demand on teachers, educational standards have been an increasing concern.

Quick Facts

- Population: 39 million (UK 2009: 61.8 million)
- Area: 580,000 square km (UK: 242,900 square km)
- Life expectancy (years): 57.8 (men), 58.2 (women)
- Major languages: Swahili and English (both are official languages)
- On average, Kenyan women have 3 to 5 children.
- Kenya gained independence in 1963
- Major Religions: Christianity, Islam and local beliefs.
- Currency: Kenyan shilling.

People and Culture

Kenya's people are of diverse ethnicity, with the following groups: Kikuyu 22%, Luhya 15%, Luo 12%, Kalenjin 12%, Kamba 11%, Kisii 6%, Meru 6%, Maasai/Samburu 2%. The large majority of Kenyans are Christian (Protestant 45%, Roman Catholic 33%), with a Muslim population of about 10% and a further 10% follow indigenous beliefs, of which there are many.

In the cities, most people live in modern apartment buildings. In the countryside, typical housing styles vary from tribe to tribe. *Zaramo* houses are made of grass and rectangular in shape; *rundi* houses are beehive-like constructions of reed and bark; *chagga* houses are made from sticks; and *nyamwezi* are round huts with thatched roofs.

Some rural people have adapted their houses to modern building materials, using bricks or cement blocks and corrugated iron or tin for roofs.

Most Kenyans have adopted Western style dress. The Masai still wear traditional "kangas" and "kikoi".



Poverty

75% of the population rely on agriculture for a livelihood. Small scale farms are usually under one acre. Kenya has suffered a massive human and economic loss from HIV/AIDS, 6.7% of the population is believed to have HIV/AIDS.

Malaria is the main cause of deaths for children under 5 years, with a continuing need to widen the use of mosquito nets.

Economy

Kenya is the regional hub for trade and finance in East Africa. The main income is from tourism, followed by tea exports. Kenya is one of the major producers and exporters of horticultural products in the world. The primary export product is cut flowers, followed by fruit and vegetables. Kenya has been hampered by corruption and by a reliance upon several primary goods whose prices have remained low. Severe droughts, erratic rains, weak commodity prices, endemic corruption, and low investment have limited Kenya's economic growth.

Did you know?

- 70% of Kenya's electricity is generated by hydro power.
- The rose is the main cut flower export from Kenya.
- Nairobi was founded at the beginning of the twentieth century as a stop on the East African Railway.
- Kenyans like proverbs and sayings. The Swahili phrase "Hakuna Matata" means "Don't worry, enjoy life"
- Red clothing symbolizes power for the Masai.
- The national dish of Kenya is Ugali, a cornmeal porridge.



Self Help Africa in Kenya

- Distributing drought tolerant maize, beans and sorghum
- Promoting fruit tree production
- Improving access to markets for farm produce
- Bee keeping extension programme
- Technical training in livestock care and management
- Supporting diversification of farming activities