Guinea

Location

Guinea is a country that lies in West Africa. The country is almost 94,981 square miles in size. One way to describe its size is that it is slightly smaller than the state of Oregon. The exact location of Guinea is a latitude of 11 degrees North and a longitude of 10 degrees West.

Geography

The western border of Guinea lies on the Atlantic Ocean. The inland portion of Guinea borders Senegal on the northern border and Mali to the north and north-eastern portion. The Southern countries that border Guinea are Cote d’Ivoire and Liberia. The total amount of land border that Guinea has is 2,112 miles long.

When discussing parts of Guinea, it is important to know that it is split into four major regions: The Basse-Cote lowlands is the western region that lies along the coast. The second area is the Fouta Djalon, which is a cooler, more mountainous section that basically runs from north to south through the middle of Guinea. The third region, Sahelian Haute-Guinea is the northeastern section of the country. The last area, which is a very forested section containing many jungles, is in the southeastern part of Guinea. This is not distinguished by a name, just described by the natives as the forested southeastern region.
The highest point in Guinea is Mont Nimba, which climbs to an elevation of 5748 feet. This area is peculiar because it is a Nature Reserve, yet the area has been mined for decades and there had been significant damage to the wildlife that inhabits the area.

**Climate**

Guinea has varying climates depending on which area you are in. The coastal region, as well as a lot of the inland region of Guinea, has a more tropical climate with a very extended rainy season that lasts nearly 6 months. This area also has a high and constant temperature year round as well as a high humidity index. The yearly average temperature is 84 degrees F, with a low of about 73 degrees F. The average rainfall is 169 inches per year. April is the hottest month, which can average over 90 degrees F. In Upper Guinea, there is a drastic change in temperature throughout the day. On average, the daily fluctuation of temperatures in these highlands is 32 degrees F.

**History**

The Ghana Empire, which began around 900 AD, was the first set of people to inhabit the Guinea area. Since then, there have been multiple empires that have taken over the lands. The next civilization to take over was the Sosso Kingdom, followed by the Mali Empire. The Europeans began inhabiting the area in the fifteenth century and this also began the slave trade in Europe. In 1890, France colonized Guinea and set up a solid government there. The French signed a new constitution and this allowed Guinea to become many different colonies. In 1958, Guinea gained its independence.
on the understanding that they will not have any assistance from the French if invaders were to come in and try to establish dominance in the land.

**Important Dates**

January 1st- New Year’s Day, March 20- Mouland (Birth of the Prophet), March 24- Easter, May 1st- Labour Day (French Spelling), October 2nd- Independence Day, November 1st- All Saints’ day, December 9th- Feast of Sacrifice, December 25- Christmas Day.

**Population**

The population in Guinea, as of 2005, was estimated to be 10,211,437 citizens. The total area for Guinea is about 94,926 square miles. Using these two facts, I calculated the density of Guinea to be about 98 citizens per square mile. Guinea is known as a very diverse population. By this I mean that some areas are quite urbanized, while other sections are in the jungle. One key factor to describing Guinea is that the education programs have been increased dramatically in the past couple centuries. When France was in charge they set up some programs in Guinea to help with the education of the children. This is greatly attributed to the success Guinea has been having since their independence from France. There are even universities in the country that will offer scholarships to native children.

The ethnicity of Guinea comprises of about 24 ethnic groups, but there are three that dominate the most. The Fula, which makes up about 40% of the population,
Mandinka which is 30%, and the Soussou which is 20%. The rest of the population is spread out fairly evenly with many different ethnicities.

**Currency**

The official currency of Guinea is the Guinean Franc. This is abbreviated with GNF. The exchange rate is very high when compared to the American dollar. It is estimated that one American dollar is equivalent to 4,923.03 Guinean Francs. Guineans use mostly a coin system for currency as opposed to a paper currency.

**Education**

Schooling in Guinea is based largely on what France had started when they were in charge of Guinea. They set up many free education courses and schools throughout the country to help the children. They have also been able to set up a few Universities in the country which has been an amazing benefit to the people because they have a higher education than a high school diploma. Once the natives have finished with their college degrees they often travel throughout the world and are able to represent their native country with a high esteem. As of 1998, there were 674,732 pupils and almost 14,000 teachers in grade schools and high schools throughout the country. This is a 49 to 1 teacher to pupil ratio which is larger than the United States, but still a fairly good number.
Language

The official language of Guinea is French. This is because the French did an excellent job of implementing their culture into Guinea Society. Since their independence from France, Guinea has become more diverse in their languages, however, French is still the dominate language. Other significant languages are Pular, Maninka, Susa, Arabic, and Loma.

Religion

In Guinea, it is legal to follow any religion you choose. The official religion, however, is Islam. Islamic beliefs do not completely dominate the Guinea land, because Christianity is a fairly close second in the overall population’s religion.

Agriculture

Guinea’s land is not a very good place for agriculture. It is estimated that only 2.6% of the land is cultivated. Agriculture only accounts for 24% of GDP and the agricultural economy in Guinea has been as flat as a plateau since their independence from France. Even though Guinea has some areas of rainforest, they had a significant drought during the 1970’s which has greatly hindered agricultural production. Since that drought, there has been a very slow but steady increase in exports of agricultural goods from Guinea.

The principal crops in Guinea are manioc, rice, sweet potatoes, yams, and corn. The manioc crops can produce p to 812,000 tons of product while rice is a close second
with 750,000 tons annually. In 2001, the agricultural products trade deficit was nearly $128 million.

Trade

Most of Guinea’s trade is very limited. Their main exports are that of manioc and rice. Some trades that help increase the economy are sugarcane, citrus fruits, bananas, pineapples, and coffee. These are called cash crops because they are extremely cheap for guinea to produce and they can produce them in such high numbers that they will commonly gain quite a bit of profit for the country.

When Guinea first gained their independence from France, they had difficulty with many exports because the French would refuse to do business with them. After about a decade, trade options between the two countries have opened up and now Guinea’s trade is on an uphill swing.

Food

Food in Guinea has changed very much throughout the years. When Guinea was controlled by France, they had many French restaurants and a lot of the food prepared at home consisted of French recipes. Since their independence, Guinea has been known for their national specialties. Some of these specialties are Jollof rice, which is a rice dish that has a very distinct flavor. Also stuffed chicken with groundnuts, Maize soup, and Brochettes. Fish is commonly eaten in Guinea because of how easily the product is obtained. For beverages, the national drink is beer.
Landmarks

The most common landmark to visit while in Guinea is Conkary, which is the capital city. It is a calm city with coconut palm trees that shade the area and is near the water. There is also a Cathedral that was built in the 1930’s in town that attracts many tourists. The next most commonly known landmark is the National Museum, which hosts many amazing artifacts and artworks found in the country. There are Kakimbon caves, which are not only beautiful for tourists to see, but also have religious significance to the Baga people. This will attract both tourists and natives. There are some beautiful waterfalls known as the Kinkon falls which produce 492 feet of falling water and this is one of the better waterfalls in any of the neighboring countries. The last landmark, which is arguably one of the greatest sights in Guinea, is the highland area of the rainforest and the old pre-Islamic tribes from the southern area of Guinea used to live here. This region is known as the Guinea Forestiere.

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