Kenya

Location

The nation of Kenya (Republic of Kenya) is located in the middle of the eastern portion of Africa, and covers approximately 582,646 square km (224,961 square miles). Kenya lies on the geographic coordinates of 1° N and 38° E. Kenya’s length from east to west is about 550 to 560 miles, and from north to south, its length is about 640 to 650 miles. Kenya is bordered on the east by Somalia and the Indian Ocean, and on the west by Uganda and Lake Victoria. To the South, Kenya is bordered by Tanzania and to the North; it’s bordered by Ethiopia and Sudan.

Geography

The highest point in Kenya is on the snow-topped Mount Kenya, which is approximately 5,200 m high, and the lowest point in Kenya being the Indian Ocean, which is at sea level. Kenya is also covered with volcanic rock that is split by faults, especially in Western Kenya. Over the past centuries, however, no volcanic activity has taken place. Kenya is mostly formed by The Great Rift Valley and the Central Highlands, which is where most of the beautiful, very scenic places in Kenya are located. The Rift Valley divides the central (Kenya) highlands into east and west, with Mount Kenya being on the east. The central highlands are a very cool place that is rich in agricultural productivity. The central highlands are rich enough in agricultural production that they are actually one of the most successful agricultural production areas in Africa. Kenya also has a fertile plateau in the west. With Kenya being a country that does not get a lot of rainfall each year, they are commonly having droughts. However, in the late 1990’s, Kenya was hit with very violent weather which caused dangerous landslides that were destructive enough to wash away some of Kenya’s major highways.
Climate

The climate of Kenya is very tropical. The coast is usually humid and hot inland and extremely dry in the north and the northeast parts of the country. The Marsabit District is probably one of the driest (if not the driest) districts in Kenya. Marsabit District usually gets less than ten inches of rainfall each year. The mean annual rainfall in Kenya each year is well under 508 mm (20 inches), except in the highland area which could get as much as 20 to 40 inches of rainfall per year. Most of Kenya’s rainfall is characterized by small total amounts, strongly seasonal distribution, and high temporal and spatial variation from year-to-year and from season-to-season. Temperatures in the lowlands average 82° F, but can often reach over 100° F by midday, while in the highlands temperatures can be chilly, such as 66° F. Drought has occurred every four to five years since 1968, compared to the first half of the century, which saw above average rainfalls. There are two seasons of rainfall, a long rain, which is between the months of March and May, and a short rain, which is between the months of October and November. The rainfall pattern is usually determined by seasonal winds around the equator, which bring dry high-pressure air in the winter and moist low-pressure air in the summer.

History

The very first of Kenya’s history dates back to 2000 BC, when nomadic tribes arrived from Ethiopia, with a second group of Ethiopian people arriving in 1000 BC. These two groups from Ethiopia occupied much of the central part of Kenya. The rest of the ancestors of Kenya came from several different areas of the African continent between approximately 500 BD and 500 AD. Beginning in the 15th century, Portuguese came into Kenya and by the end of the 16th century, they had taken control over Kenya in search of spices and money, to make them very wealthy and famous. Beginning in the mid 19th century European explorers started mapping parts of Kenya’s interior and Kenya soon became a British protectorate beginning in 1895 and a colony after 1920.
The first president of Kenya was Jomo Kenyatta (Johnstone Kamau). Kenyatta spent a lot of time under house arrest until 1961 when he was freed and became the leader of Kenya. During his time as president, Kenya developed into one of the prosperous and very stable nations in Africa. On December 12, 1963, Kenya, the colony and the protectorate became independent. In 1964, Jomo Kenyatta became president. Jomo Kenyatta remained in power until his death on August 22, 1978. At this time, Vice President Daniel Arap Moi became the president of Kenya. Moi has been in power ever since Kenyatta’s death. Through Moi’s presidency, the country has been in turmoil. Moi is the type of president that took criticism very badly. With the next century coming, Moi will have to bow out gracefully and end his presidency.

Population

The population of Kenya in 1989 was 21.4 million, and for 1998 was projected to be about 29.6 million. The literacy rate is 69.5%. As of 1989, there were currently forty-two tribes living in the Republic of Kenya. Kenya’s population is a reflection of agricultural lands. The average district densities are over two hundred people per square km, and often in individual locations there are densities of over 500 people per square km. The national population growth rate approaches around four percent per year, yet some urban areas have growth rates exceeding 10 percent per year according to the Central Bureau of Statistics. The economy has also been growing very vigorously at the rate of three to five percent per year since the 1960’s and 1970’s. The birth rate is 44 births per 1000 people and the death rate is at eight deaths per 1000 people. The infant mortality rate is 68 deaths per 1000 people. The total fertility rate is around 6.2 children born per woman. Life expectancy at birth for females is 64 years, and for males is 60 years.
Currency

The official currency used in the Republic of Kenya (Kenya) is the Kenyan Shilling (Ksh). Twenty Kenya shillings equal one Kenya pound. Kenyan shillings are divided into one hundred cents. The current (2002) exchange rate is approximately $1.00=16 Ksh.

Education

Schooling in Kenya has a very wide range. The majority of the schools would be divided into primary and secondary schools, yet there are also some pre-primary schools such as nursery schools. Other types of institutions or schools include colleges and adult educational centers. These educational institutions however are not spread out very evenly. They are based on the areas that have more money, or higher potential areas (areas where children will learn better). The institutions are also concentrated in areas with better economic benefits and a larger percentage of the population. Education is also available through things such as geography clubs, 4-H clubs, wildlife clubs, and scouting clubs.

The government provides most primary school materials, although the provision of supplies may be delayed due to management and communication problems. There are also some problems with the education in Kenya. The first problem is having trained teachers for schools. A lot of schools have untrained teachers teaching the children. The other problem is school attendance among children varies. An extremely large number of the students for both primary and secondary schools are absent during the harvest seasons, such as in the months of September and November. There are other problems. Students might have to travel very far to get to a school, and the roads to the schools are not always easily accessible. Schools are plagued with a high dropout rate, especially in the low potential areas.
Language

The official (national) language spoken in Kenya is Kiswahili. So this means that the government and education are supposed to be in English, while everything else would be in Swahili, but in actuality, most of the government is in Swahili also. Other languages called “mother tongue”, which is basically the language that they were speaking when they were growing up. There is approximately over 30 languages or dialects that are spoken in Kenya.

Religion

The first missions were established in the 1890’s, the most important being the African Inland Mission that had stations at Nzaui, Kangundo, Mumbuni, and Mbooni. The majority of Kenyans (60 %) call themselves Christians, while 50% call themselves Protestant, with 11% claiming to be Roman Catholic. Kenyans also believe that Christianity made accepting change and even planning for the future socially, much easier.

Agriculture

In Kenya, agriculture accounts for about a third of the gross domestic product. More than 80 percent of the labor force is engaged in agriculture, 70 percent of merchandise exports are agricultural, and 33 percent of manufacturing sector output is based on agricultural products. Exports from Kenya include products such as hides and skins, pineapples, tea, coffee and even beer. The imports for Kenya are products such as motor vehicles, food and manufactured goods, iron, and industrial equipment. The gross domestic product produced by Kenya was about $32 billion in United States dollars; Kenya also has an inflation rate of 11-12%. Trading partners of Kenya are basically Tanzania and Uganda.
Food

The foods in the country of Kenya are primarily cereals (such as rice, grains, whey, etc.), sugar, fruits, vegetables, and oils. Kenya does not have a very high quality of food. One of the very common food crops is maize. Maize is a crop that is good for low rain producing areas such as some of the areas in Kenya. Most of the country of Kenya raises cash crops instead of food crops, and Kenya is also still poor enough to the point where they have food brought into their country.

Landmarks

There are several sites to visit and tour in Kenya, along with several attractions. The capital of Kenya is Nairobi. This city is a very lively, interesting and pleasant place to visit. Kenya is known for its wildlife and famous for its big game associated with the African savanna. Big game species in Kenya include animal such as zebras, lions, giraffes, and elephants. Even though these animals are protected in national parks and game reserves, hunters have reduced the number of animals in Kenya.

Kenya is best known for its tourism and attractions of wildlife animals. With hunters reducing the number of animals, the animals could become extinct and reduce the amount of food for Kenyans.