Liberia

Location

Liberia, or the Republic of Liberia, is a small country located on the continent of Africa; it is located on the North Western portion of the continent resting on the upper half of the absence left by South America and Africa splitting. The country shares borders with three other nations and the Atlantic Sea: Sierra Leone to the North West, Guinea to the North, Cote d’Ivoire to the East and the Atlantic to the South. Falling at 6°N and 9°W, Liberia covers more than 40,000 square miles with roughly 360 miles of coastline.

Geography

Liberia is located in West Africa. This southern region where the country borders with the Atlantic Ocean consists largely of costal plains which are flat and contain swamplands and beaches. Further inland there are forests and wooded hills. The northern regions are mostly plateaus and low mountains especially in the north east. These areas are filled with tropical rainforests.

The three largest rivers in Liberia include the St. Paul, the St. John, and the Cestos rivers which all flow into the Atlantic Ocean. The Cavalla River creates Liberia’s southwest border and is also the longest river in the country.
Liberia’s highest point is Mount Wuteve which is located in the northwestern area of the West African Mountains. Mount Nimba is taller than Mount Wuteve but is shared between Liberia and Guinea therefore not considered the tallest in Liberia.

**Climate**

Liberia’s climate is tropical. It contains approximately 40% of West Africa’s rainforest. Winters in Liberia are dry with hot and humid days and cold nights. Dust storms during the winter months cause hazards for Liberians. Liberia typically has wet summers during which they experience a significant amount of rainfall especially during the months of May to October.

**History**

The indigenous people of Liberia can be traced back as far as the 12th century. It is believed that these people migrated to Liberia from north and east to settle in this area. Early agreements were made between Liberians and Portuguese, Dutch, and British traders who set up trading ports in Liberia. Many of these ports of were later used for slave trade. In the 1820s, Liberia was established by the American Colonization Society as a place to send people who were formally enslaved. This also attracted the migration of the Americo-Liberians who were not formally enslaved but began immigrating to the area from America. These settlers brought their culture and traditions with them much of which came form the southern United States.

During the 20th century Liberia began to make efforts to modernize their economy. The United States began offering them technical and economic assistant
during World War I. In return, they offered support to the Allies in both the first and second world wars.

Liberia has experienced two civil wars. The First Liberian Civil War lasted from 1989-1996. The Second Liberian Civil War lasted from 1997-2003. On August 18, 2003 a peace treaty was signed and a transitional government was established. In 2005, democratic elections were held in Liberia. Though there was no majority winner, the elections were peaceful and after a second round a winner was named in the end of November and took office the following January. Today, Johnson-Sirleaf remains the current president of the Republic of Liberia as the country struggles to recover after many years of war.

**Important Dates**


**Population**

The current population of Liberia is about 3.5 million people. The indigenous population is composed of 16 ethnic groups. Ninety-five percent of the this population are the indigenous African tribes of the Kpelle, Bassa, Gio, Kru, Grebo, Krahn, Vai,
Bella, Gola, Gbandi, Loma, Mano, Kissi, and Mandingo. The Kpelle is the largest ethnic
group and can be found in western and central Liberia. There are also approximately
2.5% Amerio-Liberians who are descendants of United States Immigrants, and 2.5%
Congo people who are descendants of immigrants from the Caribbean. A small
percentage of the population is also of European descent. Liberia has the third highest
population growth rate in the world at approximately 3.66%. Liberians have a life
expectancy of about 40 years. The country also has a relatively high death rate and
infant mortality rate when compared to the rest of the world.

**Currency**

The currency of Liberia is the Liberian dollar and has been the
official currency since 1943. The Liberian dollar can be divided into
100 cents and coins come in denominations of 5, 10, 25, 50 cents or 1
dollar. The notes available are 5, 10, 20, 50, and 100 dollars. The
symbol for their currency is L$ and their central bank is called the
Central Bank of Liberia. The current exchange rate is £1=L$ 83.4351
or $1= L$65.

**Education**

Liberia has a literacy rate of approximately 60%. A large percentage of the
population attends primary school but percentages are low for secondary school age
children. Liberia has seen an increase in the enrollment among these age groups in
recent year along with an increase in older children returning to school. The University of Liberia, located in Monrovia, is one of Africa’s oldest colleges and has been open since 1862. Cuttington University is another well known university and has been open since 1889 just north of Monrovia. It was established by the Episcopal Church of the United States of America.

**Language**

The official language of Liberia is English. There are also many indigenous languages that are used by the different ethnic groups throughout the country. Many of these languages can also be written and are used for communication within these tribes.

**Religion**

The Liberian Constitution allows for freedom of religion and approximately 40% of Liberians are Christian or practice Christianity in combination with aspects of traditional indigenous beliefs. About 40% of the population practice traditional indigenous religious beliefs and approximately 20% are Muslim. Many foreign missionary groups also live and work throughout the country.

**Agriculture**

Liberia’s location, available water, climate, and resources make it a country rich in agriculture. Its main agricultural products include livestock including goats, pigs, and cattle, coffee, cocoa, rice, cassava, sugarcane, bananas. These crops are produced
primarily by small farmers. Fish are also raised and caught by Liberians. Prior to the civil war agriculture was a main source of livelihood for most Liberians and farming methods were primitive. Liberia has high tree crop agriculture as a result of the rich rain forest soils. Rubber is the leading cash crop in the country.

**Trade**

The principle exports of Liberia include rubber, timber, diamonds, iron, coffee, and cocoa. They export these products to Malaysia, Poland, Germany, the United States, Spain, and Norway.

Liberia imports fuels chemicals, transportation equipment, manufactured goods, and some food products. The countries they typically import these products from include South Korea, Singapore, Japan, and China.

**Food**

Most Liberians grow many of their own foods including rice, sugar cane and cassava. Rice is considered a staple food for Liberians and is eaten at least twice a day. Cassava leaves are often boiled and eaten like spinach. Many Liberian foods have been adapted from African American culture. Fufu is a common doughy food that accompanies most meals. Liberians use hot peppers in dishes as favoring and a preservative. They also eat a lot of fish since it can often be caught from nearby waterways.
**Landmarks**

The capital of Liberia is Monrovia and is also the largest city. It is named in honor of United States President James Monroe. The Liberian National Museum is located in Monrovia. It is also home to the National Complex Sports Stadium which is one of the largest in Africa. The city is filled with art and culture. Most experts do not recommend traveling outside of Monrovia independently because it is not considered safe.

Liberia is also filled with many natural attractions such as its widespread rainforests and abundant rivers. The West African Mountains also run through Liberia and Mount Wuteve, the tallest mountain in Liberia, is located within them.

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