Malawi

Location

Malawi is a landlocked country no larger than Pennsylvania located in the southeast on the continent of Africa. Countries surrounding Malawi are Zambia, Tanzania, and Mozambique. Also, Lake Malawi covers most of the country’s boarders to the east. The area of Malawi makes up 118,484 square kilometers or 45,735 square miles. 94,080 square kilometers is the land area for the country and 24,400 square kilometers of water. The capital of Malawi is Lilongwe, The geographical coordinates are 13 30 S and 34 00 E and is about 830 kilometers long and about 160 kilometers wide.

Geography

The country of Malawi has three different regions: an upland central plateau, lowland area to the south, and a mountainous region to the north. The country also has different capitals in the different regions: The northern (capital Mzuzu), the central (capital Lilongwe) and the southern (capital Blantyre). Most of the country is a narrow elongated plateau shaped by the African Rift Valley with plains and hills and some mountains. The lowest point in the country is in the Shire river and the boarder with Mozambique which is 37 meters. Lake Malawi occupies much of the Rift Valley floor (about \( \frac{2}{3} \) rds) The highest point is at Sapitwa part of the Mount Mlanje at 3,002 meters. The country makes up most of the African Rift Valley which on the average is about 81 kilometers across. The central region of the country is a 1000 meter plateau.
that is used mainly for agricultural production. Most of the southern part of the country is low lying with the exception of the 2,100 high Zomba plateau and the 3,002 meter Mulanje Massif which is the highest mountain is south-central Africa. The surface of Lake Malawi is located about 460 meters above sea level and has a depth of about 700 meters making it below sea level at some points.

**Climate**

Malawi is a tropical climate with a rainy season from December thru April which receives about 90% of the precipitation for the year. There are two different dry season in Malawi one cool dry season from Mid April thru August, and a warm dry season from September thru November. Depending on where you are in Malawi determines the type of weather you will experience. With many different types of environments in this country you could experience cooler temperatures in the mountainous regions. In the lowlands you would experience more rainfall and warmer temperatures (tropical climate).

The various altitudes in the region moderate the type of climate that would normally be more equatorially. At an elevation of 1134 kilometers the average temperature does not get below 55 degrees Fahrenheit and the minimum temperatures do not go below 40 degrees Fahrenheit. The worst parts of the season where the rains and thunderstorms reach their peak in late March where you can expect almost 8 inches of rain. This can coincide with the higher temperatures for the year reaching an average temperature of around 86 degrees Fahrenheit.
History

Remains of the first settlements in Malawi are believed to have been found as far back at the late Stone Age and the beginning of the Iron Age from 8000 B.C thru 2000 B.C. It's also mentioned in early Arab and Portuguese writings of the 17th and 18th centuries. In 1891 Britain declared the country to be a British Protectorate governed by the Nyasaland African Congress. In 1966 after many years of struggle to make Malawi into their own country it became a republic with Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda as President. The new Constitution of Malawi gave the President widespread powers including Commander In Chief of the armed forces along with the minister of External affairs and Agriculture. The new country also became a one party system with the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) as the sole party of the region.

The one party system caused a tremendous uprising from Democratic groups in the end of the 1980’s. In the first half of 1992 thousands were arrested due to the Democratic uprising as well as many student demonstrations, strikes, and riots. The first major impact of the Democratic movement occurred in May of 1992 when western donors showed their support for the multiparty governments with the suspension of non-humanitarian aid to Malawi. 78% of the adult population voted for the referendum to the one party system on June 14, 1993 with 63% of that population in support of the multiparty system. The last important step to the freedom for the people of Malawi happened through laws passed by the National Assembly in November of 1993 that included freedom of expression, and a Bill of Rights. Many restrictive laws that were previously part of law were dropped in the new Constitution.
Important Dates

Important dates for the country of Malawi include: July 6, 1964 when Nyasaland became an independent nation which is celebrated as the national independence day or Republic Day; May of 1994 was the country’s first free elections ending Banda’s 30 year rule of the country through the one party system. Some National Holiday dates for the 2009-2010 year are: January 15th is Chilembwe Day; March 3rd is Martyrs Day; June 14th is Freedom Day; October 13th is Mothers Day; and also showing their British roots they observe Boxing Day on December 26th.

Population

The population of Malawi estimated in 2008 was 13,931,831 with a growth rate of 2.3%. Some of the rates for the country are the birth rate at 41.7/1000, the infant mortality rate of 90.5/1000, and the life expectancy is 41 years. The estimate in 2003 for the population in the capital city of Lilongwe was 499,200 with only 17% of the population living in towns. 50% of the population lives in the southern region and only 11% in the north. There are many ethnicities to the region including: Chewa, Nyanja, Tumbuko, Yao, Lomwe, Sena, Tonga, Ngoni, Ngonde, Asian, and European. Lastly the amount of the population below the poverty line is 65.3%. Malawis labor force was estimated in 2001 was said to be about 4.5 million strong with 90% of the population involved in Agriculture and the other 10% in services.

Currency

The currency of Malawi is known as the Malawian Kwacha (MWK). This new system came into effect in 1971 to replace the pound and the lingering remembrance of
a once English ruled country. Coin denominations are in 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, and 50 Tambala and 1 Kwacha. Paper bills come in denominations of 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200, and 500. To try and put it in perspective 1 Kwacha is like one U.S dollar bill. One American dollar bill is equivalent to about 138.99 Kwacha or 1 MWK is equivalent than $0.70 American. One Euro is equivalent to about 177.53 Kwacha and One British Pound is equivalent to about 256.28 Kwacha. 1 Kwacha is equivalent to 100 Tambala and the currency and exchange rates are overseen by the Reserve Bank of Malawi.

**Education**

Malawi has an 8-4-4 education system with primary school which is equivalent to our schools in the U.S Kindergarten thru 8th grade. Then they have Secondary school which is the U.S version of high school. Lastly they have University Education which is just like is sounds for the U.S which is college. Malawi has a high illiteracy rate due to a high percentage of the population living in rural areas out of range for a school or formal education. Those 2,887,107 children that do make it to the 3,706 Primary Schools outnumber the 49,138 teachers 59 to 1. Secondary schools are just as crowded with 141,911 students to the 3,172 teachers. Due to the school situation in the country the illiteracy rate in the country is 39.7%. Breaking it down further 25.5% of males and 53.3% of females are illiterate. In 1999 the expenditure for education was 4.6% of GDP.

**Language**

The country of Malawi is a very diverse region which is reflected in the amount of languages that inhibit the country. Most of the population (57.2%) speak the language Chichewa which is the official language of Malawi. The rest of the languages in the
region are Chinyanja which 12.8% of the population speak. Down from there is Chiyao at 10.1%, Chitumbuka at 9.5%, Chisena at 2.7%, Chilomwe at 2.4%, Chitonga at 1.7%, and some tribal languages that are only used in that specific culture at 3.6%. Most of Malawi belongs to the Bantu language family which covers most of the country with the exception of the southern area of the country. The southern part is a mixture of languages where most of the tribal communities are located.

Religion

Most of the population of Malawi is Christian at about 70% with the largest groups being Roman Catholic and Presbyterian with the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP). About 20% of the population is composed of Muslims, specifically of the Sunni persuasion. About 3% of the country’s religious affiliations are Tribal in nature. A small portion of the population in the country consist of Anglicans, Baptists, Evangelicals, and Seventh-Day Adventists with a few Baha’is and Hindus.

Agriculture

The agriculture that makes up the country of Malawi is highly drought prone with wide spread droughts in 1979-1981, 1992 and 1994. Most of the land, about 77%, is “owned” by the heads of village and is subject to allocation by traditional rights of succession by descent which is known as customary tenure. About 21% of Malawi’s land mass is able to be used for agriculture and is used as about 90% of the export earnings. Most of the agricultural product that comes out of the country is in the form of tobacco around the central region. About 95% of the country’s tobacco that is produced
is exported and generated about 70% of all the foreign earnings. Tea is another major product coming out of Malawi and is grown mostly on estates. Other cash crops produced are sugarcane, peanuts, and cotton seed. Most of the food crop in the country is devoted to corn production which was unable to meet domestic demands in the 1990’s due to late rains and floods. Other food crops consist of cassava, potatoes, pulses, sorghum, plantains, bananas, and paddy rice.

**Trade**

Trade as mentioned in the “Agriculture” section is mostly Tobacco with 95% of that produced being exported. Most of the product exported from the country goes to South Africa, then the United States and Germany, and the smallest portion going to the Netherlands. The largest portion of Malawi’s imports come from South Africa, then some from Zimbabwe, and the smaller portions coming from Zambia, and Japan. A downfall of the country is their complete dependence on imported oil making the recent influx in oil prices especially hard for the country.

**Food**

Most of Malawi’s foods include some sort of corn based meals since it is the most produced food in the country. Their diet is very simple since the country is still under developed. Their food consists of white maize with vegetables, and on occasion fish and meat. For desserts they have a type of banana bread, sweet potato cookies, peanut puffs, and banana fritters. As you can see all their food is derived from their local crops.

**Landmarks**
The most prominent landmark of the country is the African Rift Valley which is what the country of Malawi is mostly made up of. Also Lake Malawi makes up most of the Eastern boarder of the country making 2 of the most known natural landmarks of the country. There are many national parks in the country including game reserves. Cape Maclear national park which is a lake shore reserve; Kasungu national park and Lengwe national park which are for woodland inhabitants; Liwonde national park which is for Savannah, lake and river inhabitants; Majete game reserve and Mwabve game reserve are for Savannah preservation; Nkhotakota game reserve is for lakeside plain inhabitants; Nyika plateau national park which is a high plateau setting; and the Vwaza marsh game reserve which is obviously a marsh area.