Facts about Democratic Republic of Congo

Population (2010 est.): 70,916,439

History
The Democratic Republic of Congo is a different country from the Republic of the Congo. They are located next to each other and have similar names, but they are different countries.

There were probably people living in the area that is today known as the Democratic Republic of Congo as far back as 8000 BC. They were herders and farmers and tribal peoples. In the 600’s AD the Bantu people came to the area and settled.

The first Europeans to come to the land were the Portuguese. Explorer Diego Cao arrived in 1482. Many years later, in the late 1800’s, British journalist and explorer Henry Morton Stanley would travel through much of the area. In 1885 the area became a colony of Belgian King Leopold II and would become a Belgian possession in 1907. In the 1960s the Belgian Congo gained full independence. The first prime minister of the Democratic Republic of Congo was Patrice Lumumba and the first president was Joseph Kasvubu.

Culture
The Democratic Republic of Congo is known for its art and music. Traditional art includes masks and wooden statues and traditional music includes sui generis and soukous, a blend of Cuban rumba, and merengue.

Food
People gather wild fruit, mushrooms, and honey, etc; hunt and fish. The country’s farmland is the source of a wide variety of crops. These include maize, rice, cassava (manioc), sweet potatoes, yam, taro, plantain, tomatoes, pumpkin and varieties of peas and nuts. These foods are eaten throughout the country, but there are also regional dishes. The most important crops for export are coffee and palm oil.

Malaria
The Democratic Republic of Congo accounts for 11% of all the malaria cases in Africa. Twenty-three million people are at risk of contracting malaria. Malaria is the number one killer of children in the country, accounting for approximately 40% of child deaths. Close to 70% of all outpatient health care visits and an average of 30% of hospital admissions are malaria-related.

Climate and Geography
The Democratic Republic of Congo, in west-central Africa, is bordered by the Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic, the Sudan, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania, Zambia, Angola, and the Atlantic Ocean. It is one-quarter the size of the U.S. It straddles the Equator, with one-third to the North and two-thirds to the South.

As a result of its equatorial location, the country has the highest frequency of thunderstorms in the world. The annual rainfall can total upwards of 80 inches in some places, and the area sustains the Congo Rainforest, the second largest rain forest in the world (after that of the Amazon).
Population (2010 est.): 24,339,838

History
Ghana’s rich history centers on the once-great Ashanti Empire, which rose to power during the late 1600’s. By this time, the Ashanti Empire had conquered the majority of the other tribal states and turned its attention to controlling trade routes to the coast. The trade in gold, ivory, and slaves made the Ashanti, and later the Europeans, very rich. The Portuguese were the first of a long line of European powers to arrive in Ghana, then called ‘the Gold Coast’. The British invaded in the 1870s, although warfare with the Ashanti lasted until the 1900s.

In the 1920s and 1930s, a number of political parties arose, dedicated to achieving independence from British Colonial rule, but it was not until 1951 that a general election was held. The election was won by Kwame Nkrumah, and in 1957, Ghana became the first African country to gain its independence from Europe.

Climate and Geography
Ghana is a country bordered by the Ivory Coast to the west, Burkina Faso to the north, Togo to the east, and the Gulf of Guinea to the south, only a few degrees north of the Equator. The climate is tropical. The eastern coastal belt is warm and dry, the southwest corner is hot and humid, and the north is hot and dry.

Culture
Ghanaians value family, respect for the elderly, honoring traditional rulers, and the importance of dignity and good behavior. Individual conduct effects the entire family, and community; therefore, everyone is expected to be respectful and dignified in every aspect of life.

Food
There are very different traditional dishes from each ethnic group, tribe and clan from the north to the south and from the east to west. Foods also vary according to the season, time of the day and occasion. Ghanaian main dishes unlike other cultures are organized around a starchy staple such as rice, fufu, banku / etew, kenkey/dokonu, tuozafi, dzidzii, akplidzii, yakeyake, eto, akyeke, with which a sauce or soup made with fish, snails, meat or mushrooms is served.

Malaria
Malaria is the cause of 22% of child deaths in Ghana every year. Malaria is a chief factor in low productivity and subsequent poverty, especially in the northern region. Close to half of all outpatient visits to health care facilities are malaria-related.
Population (2010 est.): 3,685,076

History
Africa’s first republic, Liberia was founded in 1822 as a result of the efforts of the American Colonization Society to settle freed American slaves in West Africa. In 1847, it became the Free and Independent Republic of Liberia. Today, we know it as Liberia.

The government of Africa’s first republic was modeled after that of the United States, and Joseph Jenkins Roberts of Virginia was elected the first president.

Climate and Geography
Liberia’s coastline is composed mostly of forests while the inland opens to a plateau of drier grasslands. Liberia’s climate is hot, with a lot of rainfall from May to October and harsh winds the remainder of the year.

Culture
The religious practices, social customs and cultural standards of the Liberians had their roots in the American South. The settlers wore top hat and tails and modeled their homes on those of Southern slaveowners.

Liberia has a long history in fabric making and quilting, as the settlers brought with them their sewing and quilting skills. Additionally, Liberia has had a rich tradition of authors and poets for more than a century.

Food
Liberian food consists of rice, the country’s staple food. Other ingredients include cassava, fish, bananas, citrus fruit, plantains, coconut, okra and sweet potatoes. Heavy stews spiced with peppers are popular and eaten with fufu. Liberia also has a tradition of baking imported from the United States that is unique in West Africa.

Malaria
Malaria is widespread in Liberia, with 56% of the country exposed to infection. It is leading cause of death among children under five years old. Pregnant women are at extreme risk of death, due to the lack of health care facilities.
Population (2010 est.): 12,056,923

History
Zambia was originally inhabited by hunter-gatherer tribes thousands of years ago. In the 15th century Bantu speaking tribes people migrated into the area.

It wasn’t until the middle of the 1800s that Europeans began to explore the area. David Livingstone visited in 1855 and found the waterfalls on the Zambezi River. He named them Victoria Falls. In 1924 Zambia, which was called Northern Rhodesia at the time, came under British control. In 1953, it combined with Southern Rhodesia and Malawi to form the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. In 1964, Zambia became its own country.

Climate and Geography
Zambia is a landlocked country, about one-tenth larger than Texas. It is surrounded by Angola, Zaire, Tanzania, Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Botswana, and Namibia. The country is mostly a plateau that rises to 8,000 ft in the east.

The climate of Zambia is tropical and there are two main seasons, the rainy season (November to April) corresponding to summer, and the dry season (May/June to October/November), corresponding to winter. The average monthly temperatures remain above 68 °F over most of the country for eight or more months of the year.

Culture
Traditional culture is very visible through colourful annual Zambian traditional ceremonies. Popular traditional arts mainly consist of pottery, basketry, stools, fabrics, mats, wooden carvings, ivory carvings, wire craft and copper crafts. Most Zambian traditional music is based on drums (and other percussion instruments) with a lot of singing and dancing. In the urban areas foreign genres of music are popular, in particular Congolese rumba, African-American music and Jamaican reggae.

Food
The Zambian staple diet is based on maize. It is normally eaten as a thick porridge, called Nshima (Nyanja Word), prepared from maize flour commonly known as mealie meal. This may be eaten with a variety of vegetables, beans, meat, fish or sour milk.

Malaria
Zambia had one of the highest incidences of malaria-related deaths in the world, responsible for 40% of the deaths among children under age five and 20% of the deaths of pregnant women. Due to increased national focus on prevention and nets, malaria deaths among children decreased by 24% in 2007.