

EXPEDITION EARTH

**[My Passport
to the World]**

by Cindy Horton



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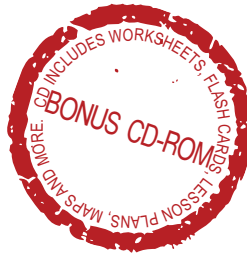
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by Cindy Horton

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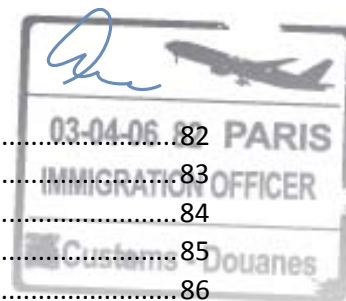
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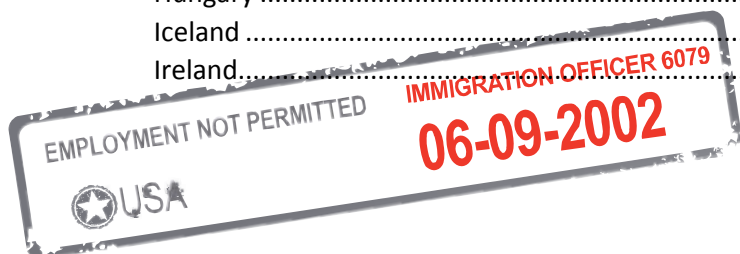
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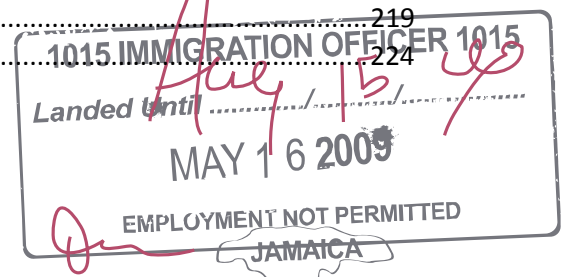
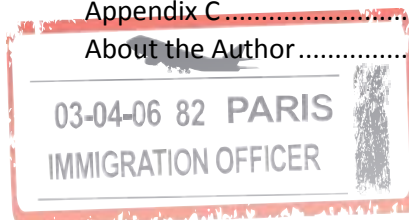
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Introduction

Traveling the world—who wouldn't like to do that? Our world has so much to offer. From beautiful landscapes to ancient ruins, from unique food to unusual music. You may not be able to visit another country, but this book will help you learn a little bit about the world around you. It might even help you feel like you've left your living room for a little while!

In these pages, you'll learn about the people, places, and history of the world's 195 countries. You'll learn about the foods enjoyed in different regions, and you can even try the recipes that are included. Maybe you'd like to add Irish soda bread or Lebanese tabbouleh to your family's menu.

Of course, one page can't possibly include everything there is to know about a country. As you read about the cultures and places in these pages, you may want to check out books from your local library to learn more about a topic.

What makes a country anyway?

The definition of a country is a tricky thing. In most cases, a country is an area of land that is ruled by its own people, not by an outside force. All of the countries in this book are sovereign, meaning that they govern themselves and aren't accountable to any other nations.

All of these countries are *not* recognized by every other country in the world, though, and international recognition goes a long way toward helping a nation gain stability and good relations with its neighbors.

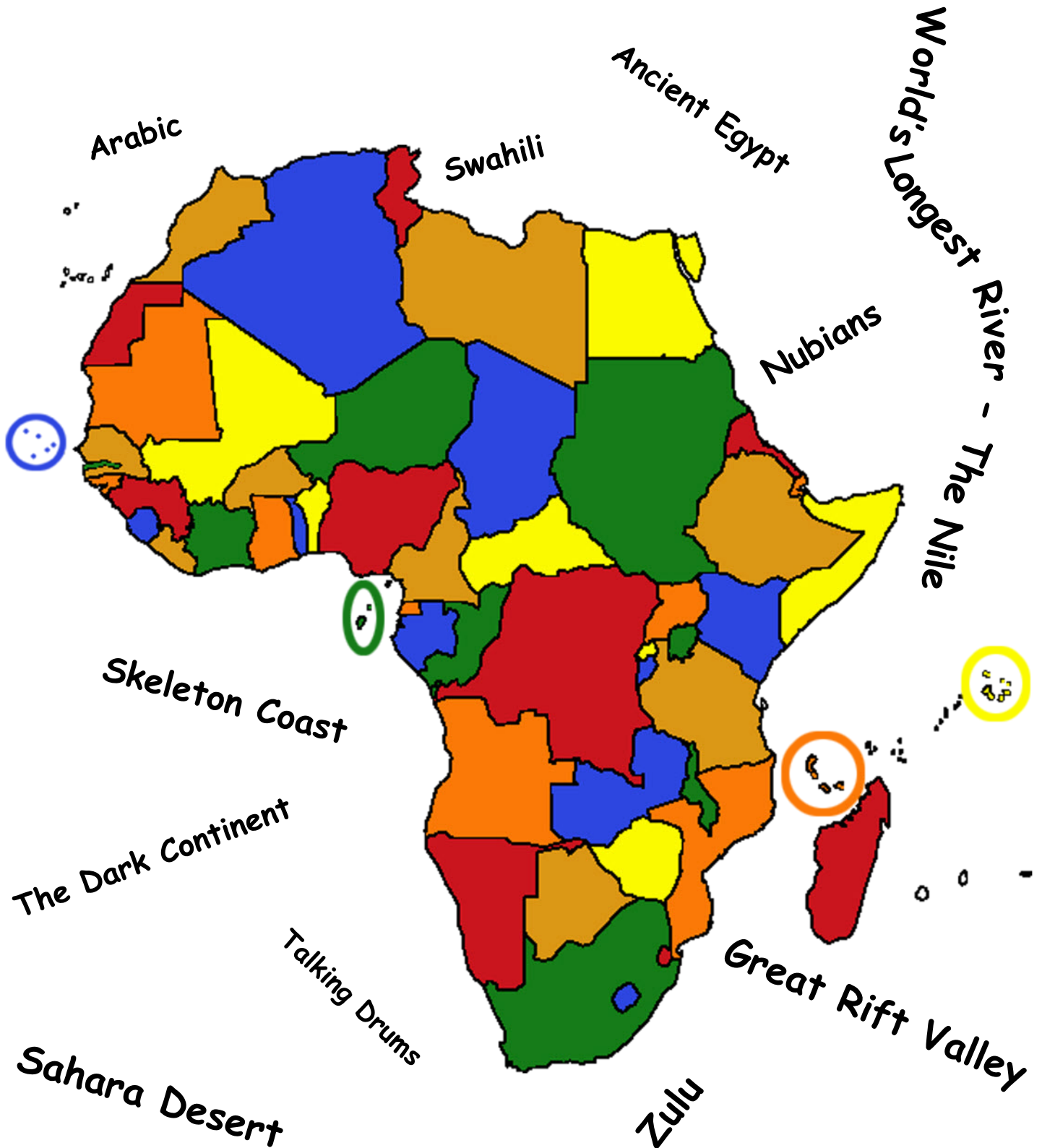
For example, Kosovo declared independence from Serbia in 2008 and was quickly recognized by the United States, Australia, and many other countries. Serbia, the United Nations, and most of the world's nations have not recognized Kosovo, however.

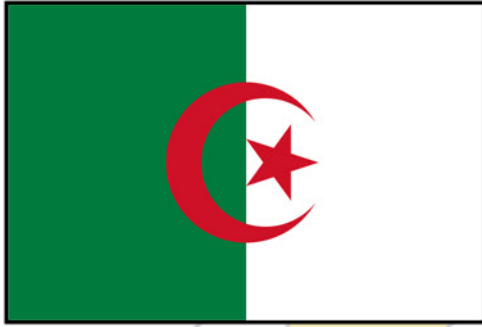
Sometimes, a country's ability to gain international recognition is influenced by politics. Taiwan has governed itself for more than 50 years but is not officially recognized by the United States, Canada, or most other nations. Though it once held a seat in the United Nations, the slot was taken from Taiwan and given to the People's Republic of China in 1971. Taiwan is often referred to as Chinese Taipei or as a province of China, even though it has been independent for decades.

Other areas of the world also govern themselves independently but are considered parts of other nations. They're typically called autonomous regions or autonomous provinces. In some countries, they operate with complete independence, though they receive some oversight from the central government in others.

Many countries also hold territories, which often govern themselves at least partially. Greenland and the Faroe Islands belong to Denmark, while the United States holds Puerto Rico, Guam, the Virgin Islands, American Samoa, and several other territories. In addition to its provinces, Canada includes three territories—Yukon, Nunavut, and the Northwest Territories.

Africa





Algeria

Capital City: Algiers

Language: Arabic



Did you know...?

- Algeria is primarily plateau and desert. Just three percent of the country's land can be used for farming.
- Algeria is the second largest country in Africa.
- Berber-speaking people have lived in Algeria throughout history. The language gave its name to the Barbary Pirates, who are known for attacking ships in the Mediterranean and Atlantic.
- On the Algerian flag, the green represents Islam, the white represents purity and peace, and the red represents liberty. Both the crescent and star are traditional Islamic symbols, and Algerians believe that the crescent will bring happiness.

My Algerian Fact Book

Full Name:

People's Democratic Republic of Algeria

Population: 34,586,184

Land Area: 919,595 square miles

Currency: Algerian dinar

Major Religion: Muslim (99%)

Highest Point: Mount Tahat (9,852 feet)

Lowest Point: Chott Melrhir (-131 feet)

Algeria is divided into 48 provinces.

Algerian History

The earliest known people of Algeria were called Numidians. Their lands were considered very fertile then, unlike the desert lands of today, and the Numidians were well respected as cavalymen.

This region of Africa has been ruled by a succession of outside powers including the Roman and Byzantine Empires, Berber and Arabic dynasties, Spain, and the Ottoman Empire. The northern boundaries of Algeria were set up by the Ottomans.

Ottoman corsairs, better known as Barbary pirates, attacked ships in the Mediterranean Sea, which led to the Barbary Wars with America in the early 1800s.

Oasis in the Desert

An oasis is a place where plants grow in the desert, usually around a natural spring or a well. Throughout history, oases have provided the water that people need for drinking, cooking, watering crops, and tending livestock. Villages and farms develop around an oasis even though the surrounding desert is barren.

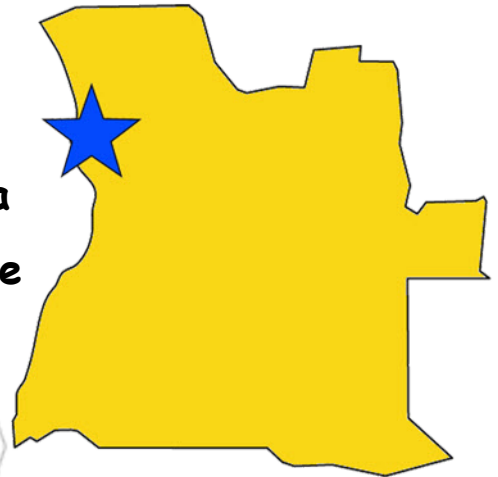
Caravans of traders frequently stopped at oases to water their camels, replenish their own water, and rest. In Algeria, the town of Adrar grew up near a group of oases called the Touat. The town was an important link in trade between North and West Africa. A huge gateway provides the only entrance into Adrar.



Angola

Capital City: Luanda

Language: Portuguese



Did you know...?

- Angola's natural resources include diamonds and petroleum, which is used to make gasoline and other fuels.
- The land that is now Angola was colonized and ruled by Portugal for 400 years. It was once part of a larger area called Portuguese West Africa.
- Angola was once an important producer of food for its own people and for other African nations. The country's civil war, which lasted for almost 30 years, left most of the farmland full of land mines and completely unsuitable for farming.
- Angola has just two seasons: dry and rainy. The rainy season lasts from November to April and is hotter than the dry season.

My Angolan Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Angola

Population: 13,068,161

Land Area: 481,354 square miles

Currency: Kwanza

Major Religion: Christian (53%)

Highest Point: Morro de Moco (8,596 feet)

Lowest Point: Atlantic Ocean (0 feet)

Angola is divided into 18 provinces.

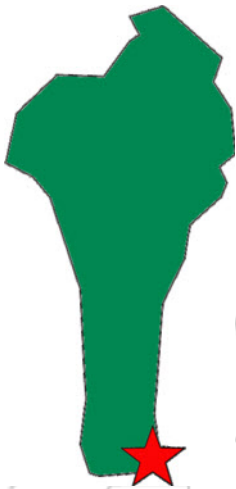
Angola Before Portuguese Colonization

When the Portuguese first came to Angola in the late 1400s, they met King Nzinga Nkuwu of the Kingdom of Kongo. The kingdom stretched across what is now northern Angola and other modern countries. Its army was made up of archers and infantrymen who carried swords and shields.

People of the kingdom spoke *Kikongo* and lived in villages called *vata* where they grew crops on shared land. No one owned private land, and the yearly harvests were divided among each family depending on number of members. The village chief, called *nkuluntu*, received an extra portion of the harvest.

The Kingdom of the Kongo traded goods with many of their neighbors and distant nations. They were known for providing ivory, copper, pottery, and cloth.





Benin

Capital City: Porto-Novo

Language: French



Did you know...?

- On the Beninese flag, green stands for hope, yellow for wealth, and red for courage.
- The nation has just 75 miles of coastline on the Atlantic Ocean. Large sandbanks make getting to the coast difficult, and Benin has no harbors for ships or even small boats.
- Benin is a little smaller than Pennsylvania.
- Benin has four seasons each year—two rainy, two dry.
- The country depends on agriculture for its livelihood. The Beninese people grow cotton, peanuts, cashews, corn, beans, and other crops.

My Beninese Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Benin

Population: 9,056,010

Land Area: 43,484 square miles

Currency: West African franc

Major Religions:

Christian (43%), Muslim (24%)

Highest Point: Mont Sokbaro (2,159 feet)

Lowest Point: Atlantic Ocean (0 feet)

Benin is divided into 12 departments.

Kingdom of Dahomey

The Kingdom of Dahomey stretched over the area that is now southern Benin from the early 1600s until 1902 when it became a French colony. It was the last African kingdom to be colonized by Europeans.

The kingdom maintained a strong army and warred almost continually with its neighbors. After contact with Europeans from France and Spain, the army was able to use modern weapons like rifles. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Dahomey kings would capture enemies in battle and sell them into slavery.

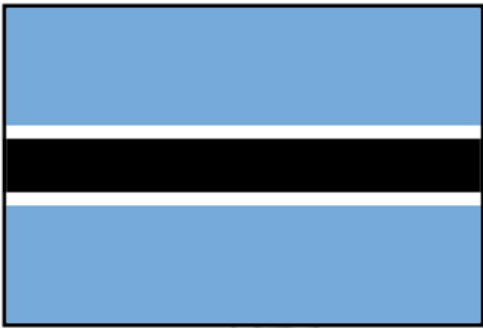
People of Benin

Forty-two different ethnic groups live in Benin. The three largest are the Fon, Adja, and Yoruba.

The Fon people live primarily in southern Benin and southwest Nigeria where they often dwell in houses made of mud with iron roofs. Many Fon were taken to North America as slaves prior to the end of the Atlantic slave trade in the early nineteenth century. Their descendents still live in North America today.

The Aja are believed to have settled in southern Benin in the 1100s where they established a kingdom. In the 1600s, the kingdom was divided between three brothers who set up their capitals in different cities. Today, Aja live in Benin and Togo.

An estimated 40 million Yoruba live in West Africa, most of them in Nigeria. The Yoruba have the highest rate of twin births among any people of the world.



Botswana

Capital City: Gaborone

Languages:
English, Tswana



Did you know...?

- Botswana's natural resources include diamonds, gold, coal, and copper.
- The Kalahari Desert covers almost three-quarters of Botswana.
- Unlike the drum music that is often associated with Africa, traditional Tswana music is primarily vocal or accompanied by stringed instruments.
- The blue color on the Botswana flag represents rain. The black and white represent racial harmony.
- Botswana is just a little smaller than Texas.
- Watermelons are thought to have originated in Botswana and are still grown there. Sorghum, beans, peanuts, and several vegetables are also grown in the country. Cereal grains, like wheat and rice, have to be imported from other countries.

My Botswana Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Botswana

Population: 2,029,307

Land Area: 224,610 square miles

Currency: Pula

Major Religion: Christian (70%)

Highest Point: Tsodilo Hills (4,885 feet)

Lowest Point: Limpopo and Shashe
River Junction (1,683 feet)

Botswana is divided into 16 districts.

Chobe National Park

In northern Botswana, land has been set aside as a wildlife refuge called Chobe National Park. Chobe is home to elephants, hippopotamus, leopards, lions, giraffes, cape buffalo, and many others. During certain times of year, as elephants migrate in search of vegetation and water, there are more elephants here than in any other part of Africa.

Visitors to Chobe National Park can take boat rides down the Chobe River to see the wild animals that come to drink there. Birds like ibis, spoonbills, and stork can also be seen.

Makgadikgadi Salt Pan

In the Kalahari Desert lies the Makgadikgadi Pan, one of the world's largest salt pans. This salty crust of earth was once Lake Makgadikgadi, which is believed to have been larger than Switzerland. Parts of the Makgadikgadi Pan are used for commercial salt production, and much of the area becomes a haven for wildlife during the rainy season.

Flamingos, ostriches, pelicans, ducks, and geese can all be seen around the Makgadikgadi. Antelopes, zebra, and wildebeest also migrate through the area when the rains bring fresh water.



Burkina Faso

Capital City: Ouagadougou

Language: French



Did you know...?

- Burkina Faso was once called Upper Volta because the upper part of the Volta River passes through it in three sections—Black Volta, White Volta, and Red Volta.
- The star on Burkina Faso's flag represents the guiding light of their fight for independence.
- Burkina is a Mòoré word, and Faso is from the Dioula language. Together they mean, "land of honest people."
- Burkina Faso has two seasons: rainy and dry. During the dry season, which lasts from October to April, a hot wind called the harmattan blows in from the Sahara Desert. It sometimes brings dust storms with it.

My Burkinabé Fact Book

Full Name:

Burkina Faso

Population: 16,241,811

Land Area: 105,869 square miles

Currency: West African franc

Major Religions:

Muslim (61%), Christian (23%)

Highest Point: Tena Kourou (2,457 feet)

Lowest Point: Mouhoun River (656 feet)

Burkina Faso is divided into 13 regions.

Mossi Kingdom

About 40 percent of the people living in Burkina Faso are part of the Mossi ethnic group. Historians believe, based on the oral tradition of the people, that the Mossi Kingdom began during the 1400s. Because their army rode on horseback, the Mossi were able to conquer much of the land that is now Burkina Faso.

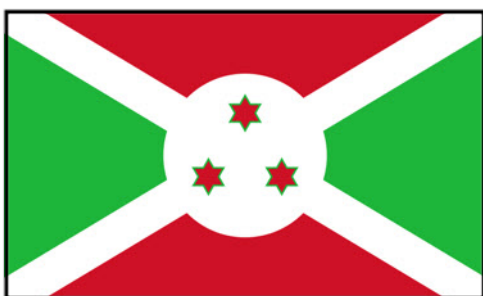
The kingdom kept expanding until the French conquered the city of Ouagadougou and made the area a French protectorate in 1896. The Mossi emperor, called the Mogho Naaba, was able to maintain limited authority while the French were in power. Today, the modern government of Burkina Faso still consults with the current Mogho Naaba on very important decisions.

The Mossi people value family above personal identity. Everything a person does is considered a reflection—good or bad—on his family.

Panafrican Film and Television Festival of Ouagadougou

The Panafrican Film and Television Festival of Ouagadougou (FESPACO) is held every other year in Burkina Faso's capital city. It's the largest event in all of Africa.

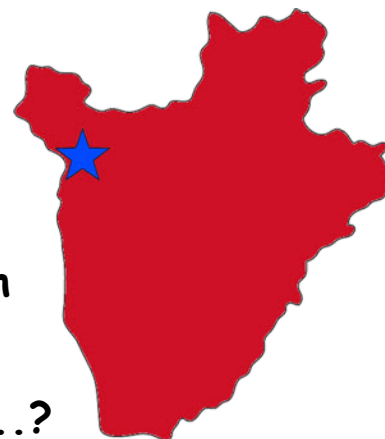
Filmmakers from all over Africa gather to showcase their work and to learn from one another. Several awards are given away each time the FESPACO is held. The highest award is called Stallion of Yennenga and is given to the film that judges feel best represents the realities of Africa.



Burundi

Capital City: Bujumbura

Languages: Kirundi, French



My Burundian Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Burundi

Population: 9,863,117

Land Area: 10,745 square miles

Currency: Burundi franc

Major Religions: Christian (67%),
Traditional (23%), Muslim (10%)

Highest Point: Heha (8,760 feet)

Lowest Point: Lake Tanganyika (2,533 feet)

Burundi is divided into 17 provinces.

Did you know...?

- Burundi was part of the Belgian colony called Ruanda-Urundi from 1916 to 1924. It became an independent nation in 1962.
- Burundi exports both coffee and sugar to other nations, and its natural resources include copper, platinum, and nickel. Even so, the country remains very poor.
- Most Burundians work in some sort of agriculture, and many families grow the majority of the food that they eat. Sweet potatoes, bananas, tea, and cotton are some of the crops that are grown commercially.

Drums of Burundi



Music is an important part of Burundian traditional culture, and drums are actually considered sacred instruments by most Burundians. The *karyenda* drum has been used for hundreds of years in ceremonies, especially those in which the king was involved. Drummers played the *karyenda* to send important announcements and messages across long distances.

A *karyenda* is made from a hollowed-out log that is covered on one side with a stretched animal skin. Both the sides and the top of the drum are played with sticks. The drums are sometimes decorated with the

Burundian flag, and some people dance or carry decorated shields and spears during drumming demonstrations. A group called the Royal Drummers of Burundi have visited countries around the world to share the sound of these traditional Burundian drums with others.



Cameroon

Capital City: Yaoundé

Languages: French, English



My Cameroonian Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Cameroon

Population: 19,294,149

Land Area: 183,568 square miles

Currency: Central African franc

Major Religions: Christian (40%),
Traditional (40%), Muslim (20%)

Highest Point:

Mount Cameroon (13,435 feet)

Lowest Point: Atlantic Ocean (0 feet)

Cameroon is divided into ten regions.

Did you know...?

- The word Cameroon comes from the Portuguese name given to the area in the late 1400s, *Rio dos Camarões*, which means "River of Shrimp."
- Many Cameroonian families are involved in agriculture to grow coffee, rice, sugar, and numerous other crops. It's common for women to stay at home to raise the foods that their families will eat while the men work at growing crops that can be sold.
- Cameroonian music uses numerous instruments including drums, bells, flutes, and xylophones.

Lake Nyos

In the northern part of Cameroon sits Lake Nyos, which has the unusual distinction of being saturated with carbon dioxide. The lake is believed to have formed around the sixteenth century when a violent volcanic eruption left a crater almost 6,000 feet across and 680 feet deep. The crater filled with groundwater, which is kept in place by a natural dam made of hard volcanic rock.

A large amount of magma remains beneath the lake. Though it doesn't erupt in the traditional sense, the magma releases gases like carbon dioxide, sulphur, and hydrogen through the soil and into the water. The cold water at the bottom of the lake, therefore, becomes saturated with these poisonous gases.

In 1986, for reasons that scientists don't fully understand, a huge volume of the poison gas was released from the lake along with a fountain of water 300 feet high. This cloud of primarily carbon dioxide moved away from the lake through a valley, displacing all of the oxygen in its path. As it passed over several villages, almost 2,000 people were killed and another 4,000 fled despite respiratory problems and burns on their skin.

The sudden eruption of carbon dioxide may have been caused by a nearby landslide, an earthquake, or a small volcanic eruption on the lake bed. Since the disaster, scientists have worked to find ways to prevent another eruption of carbon dioxide. Two other lakes in Africa, one in Cameroon and one in Rwanda, are also saturated with poison gas and vulnerable to similar eruptions.



Cape Verde

Capital City: Praia

Language: Portuguese

Did you know...?

- Because of emigration, more Cape Verdeans now live overseas than actually live in Cape Verde.
- Hurricanes sometimes form near Cape Verde and travel across the Atlantic Ocean toward North America.
- Cape Verde consists of ten islands. Three of them are sandy, while the rest are rocky.
- The Cape Verde islands were not inhabited by people before the Portuguese set up colonies on them in the 1400s.
- The Cape Verdean flag was adopted in 1992. Its ten yellow stars represent the ten islands, and the red and white stripes symbolize the road taken to construct the nation. The white color symbolizes peace, and the red symbolizes effort. The blue color represents the surrounding ocean and sky.

My Cape Verdean Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Cape Verde

Population: 508,659

Land Area: 1,557 square miles

Currency: Cape Verdean escudo

Major Religion: Christian (95%)

Highest Point: Mount Fogo (9,282 feet)

Lowest Point: Atlantic Ocean (0 feet)

Cape Verde is divided into 22 municipalities.

Pico do Fogo

Pico do Fogo is the highest point in Cape Verde and an active volcano. It last erupted in 1995 when a side vent covered the entire island with ash. An eruption in 1847 caused earthquakes across the island, but the last time that the main opening of Pico do Fogo erupted was more than 400 years ago in 1675.

A *caldera* is a round depression on a volcano that is formed when magma beneath the surface has been completely expelled. Without the magma beneath, the ground falls and creates the depression.

Pico do Fogo has a caldera near its top, and the village of Chã das Caldeiras is actually inside it. The people here grow grapes, apples, corn, peppers, and other crops.

Antonio de Noli

Italian Antonio de Noli discovered the Cape Verde islands in 1462 when he sailed in expeditions organized by Henry the Navigator, a Portuguese prince. King Alfonso V of Portugal named him the first governor of the new Cape Verdean colonies.

Information about de Noli's time as governor wasn't well documented, and no one knows how long he stayed in Cape Verde or even where and when he died.



Central African Republic

Capital City: Bangui

Languages: Sango, French



Did you know...?

- During its time as a French colony, the Central African Republic was called Ubangi-Chari after two of the country's rivers.
- The Central African Republic is just a little smaller than Texas.
- Most of the nation is covered by grassy savannas with a few hills and a plateau.
- Central African farmers grow peanuts, sesame, cassava, and a variety of other tropical crops.
- The country produces a large amount of diamonds every year.

My Central African Fact Book

Full Name:

Central African Republic

Population: 4,844,927

Land Area: 240,534 square miles

Currency: Central African franc

Major Religions: Christian (50%),
Traditional (35%), Muslim (15%)

Highest Point: Mont Ngaoui (4,659 feet)

Lowest Point: Oubangui River (1,099 feet)

Central African Republic is divided into 14 administrative prefectures.

Etienne Goyemide & The Eastern Slave Trade

One of the Central African Republic's most famous writers, Etienne Goyemide is known around the world for his novels *The Silence of the Forest* and *The Last Survivor of the Caravan*. Both were written in the French language in 1984 and 1985 respectively. *The Last Survivor* explores the sad and distressing story of the eastern African slave trade during the nineteenth century.

Perhaps not as well known as the Atlantic slave trade, people from central Africa were kidnapped by rival tribes and Arabic raiders and then taken north and east to Egypt and the Arabian Peninsula. It is estimated that more than a million people were taken away from the region of present-day Central African Republic in just a little more than 200 years.

Unlike the slaves taken to the Americas, those taken into the Muslim regions of Arabia were not often pressed into agriculture-related labor. Instead, they were made to act as household servants like porters, guards, and cooks.

Goyemide's novel is told from the perspective of a *griot* storyteller who recalls the early peaceful days of his village, the arrival of the Muslim Tuareg raiders, and the fighting and kidnapping that ensues. Though the novel is fiction, stories like it were played out across Central Africa in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.



Chad

Capital City: N'Djamena

Languages: French, Arabic



My Chadian Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Chad

Population: 10,543,464

Land Area: 495,753 square miles

Currency: Central African franc

Major Religions:

Muslim (54%), Christian (34%)

Highest Point: Emi Koussi (11,204 feet)

Lowest Point: Djourab (525 feet)

Chad is divided into 22 regions.

Did you know...?

- The people of Chad enjoy playing soccer, basketball, and a form of wrestling in which the participants wear animal hides and are covered in dust.
- Chad's landscape ranges from savannah in the south, the Sahelian belt in the central region, and the Sahara desert in the north.
- On the Chadian flag, blue stands for the sky and hope, yellow for the sun and desert, and red for unity and sacrifice. It combines colors from both the French and Pan-African flags.
- Chadians eat mostly millet and dried or smoked fish. They enjoy a beverage called *carcaje* that is made from the extract of hibiscus leaves.

Lake Chad

The country gets its name from Lake Chad in the western region. The word Chad means "a large expanse of water" in the native dialect, but less than half of Lake Chad stays covered in water throughout the year.

When Europeans first explored the area in the early nineteenth century, they thought Lake Chad was probably one of the largest in the entire world. A growing population has put a greater demand on water from the lake, however, and it has shrunk about 95 percent since 1960. Changes in rainfall from year to year affect the size of Lake Chad at any given time.

Today, Lake Chad is the second largest wetland on the African continent. It consists of swamps, bogs, marshes, and mud banks and is home to a variety of waterfowl, crocodile, and hippopotamus.

Bodélé Depression

The Bodélé Depression is an area in the Sahara Desert that produces frequent dust storms. The storms occur an average of one hundred days out of every year, and the depression produces over a million metric tons of dust every day during the winter months.

Nearby towns, including the city of Faya-Largeau, are often affected by these dust storms. The dust can blow for many miles. Scientists have discovered that Bodélé Depression dust reaches as far as the eastern United States and the Amazon rainforest.

Comoros

Capital City: Moroni

**Languages: Comorian,
Arabic, French**



Did you know...?

- The four stars on the Comoran flag represent the archipelago's four main islands, called Mwali, N'gazidja, Nzwani, and Mahore.
- One of the islands claimed by Comoros, Mahore or Mayotte, is actually governed by France as an overseas territory.
- The farms of Comoros produce coconuts, vanilla, coffee, ylang-ylang, and cocoa beans.
- Because the Comorian language never developed a written script of its own, both Arabic and Latin letters are used in different situations.

My Comoran Fact Book

Full Name:

Union of the Comoros

Population: 773,407

Land Area: 695 square miles

Currency: Comorian franc

Major Religion: Muslim (98%)

Highest Point: Karthala (7,743 feet)

Lowest Point: Indian Ocean (0 feet)

Comoros is divided into three islands and four municipalities.

Karthala

Grand Comore, Comoros' largest island, is dominated by a volcano called Mount Karthala. After 14 years of dormancy, Karthala erupted in both 2005 and 2006. The 2005 eruption was greater and led 40,000 people to evacuate their homes. A lake that had been formed after a 1991 eruption was completely evaporated during the 2005 eruption.

Karthala is covered by evergreen trees, though the forests are in danger of being decimated by logging. Some of the most remarkable wildlife on Karthala are four species of birds that are found nowhere else in the world. All four species are classified as endangered.

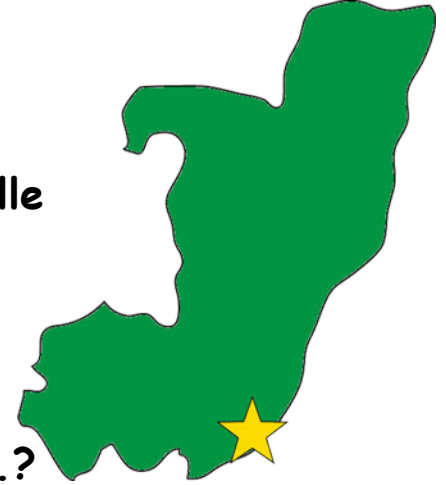




Congo

Capital City: Brazzaville

Language: French



My Congolese Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of the Congo

Population: 4,125,916

Land Area: 132,047 square miles

Currency: Central African franc

Major Religions:

Traditional (50%), Christian (48%)

Highest Point:

Mount Berongou (2,963 feet)

Lowest Point: Atlantic Ocean (0 feet)

Congo is divided into ten regions.

Did you know...?

- Congo is a little smaller than Montana.
- Almost three-quarters of the Congolese population lives in Brazzaville or a nearby city called Pointe-Noire.
- To differentiate itself from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the country is sometimes called Congo-Brazzaville.
- Congo was a communist nation called the People's Republic of the Congo from 1970 to 1991.
- Congo has only about a hundred miles of Atlantic coastline but stretches over 600 miles inland.

People of the Congo

The most common ethnic group in Congo are the Bantu people, primarily a branch called the Bakongo. These people have lived in the region for more than 2,000 years and led the powerful Kingdom of Kongo from 1400 until the early twentieth century. At its peak, the kingdom covered much of the east-central region of Africa.

Just like most peoples of the world, some Bantu people today work in the cities while others live on farms in the rural areas. Bantu farmers may grow bananas, coffee, and other items to sell as cash crops or hunt, fish, and grow staples like corn and sweet potatoes for their own families.

Another ethnic group in Congo are the Pygmy branches known as Aka and Mbuti. These groups are recognizable because of their short stature with the men typically reaching just four feet, 11 inches. Archeological findings show that the Pygmies were the first people to move into present-day Congo during ancient times.

When Bantu groups moved in, the Pygmy population decreased significantly but still makes up about ten percent of Congo's total population. Through their history together, Pygmies have often served as slaves to the Bantu, who consider this an important cultural tradition. The Pygmy work as laborers and hunters with sometimes no recompense from the Bantu. International human rights groups are working to end this situation and other inequalities that the Pygmies face.



Democratic Republic of the Congo

Capital City: Kinshasa

Language: French



Did you know...?

- The Democratic Republic of the Congo was known as Zaire from 1971 to 1997.
- To differentiate it from the Republic of the Congo, the country is sometimes called Congo-Kinshasa.
- The star on the Congolese flag represents the country's bright and brilliant future.
- An "arm" of Congo-Kinshasa stretches westward to touch 25 miles of Atlantic coastline.
- A common food in the country is called *fufu* and is made from boiled cassava, rice, corn, or plantains that are pounded into a paste with a mortar and pestle.

My Congolese Fact Book

Full Name:

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Population: 70,916,439

Land Area: 905,355 square miles

Currency: Congolese franc

Major Religion: Christian (70%)

Highest Point: Mont Ngaliema (16,765)

Lowest Point: Atlantic Ocean (0 feet)

Congo-Kinshasa is divided into ten provinces.

Katanga Cross



From the nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries, some people in Congo-Kinshasa used x-shaped pieces of copper as currency. The pieces are called Katanga Crosses and were cast using molds made of sand. Each Katanga Cross weighed about two pounds and could be used to buy 20 pounds of flour.

Congo Rainforest

The Congo Rainforest covers nearly all of Congo-Kinshasa and parts of other countries to the north and west. It is second only to the Amazon Rainforest in size and is home to elephants, gorillas, pygmy hippopotamus, okapi, and countless other animals.

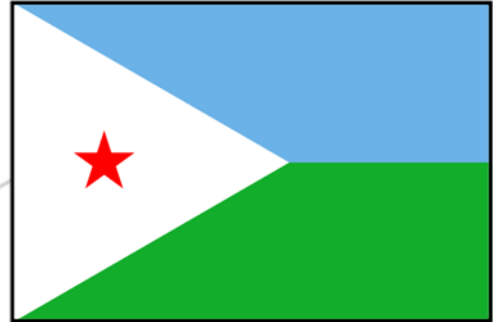
Thousands of plant species thrive in the rainforest as well, including palm oil trees and mahogany trees. The African mahogany is used for furniture and boats and is prized for its resistance to termites.

Djibouti



Capital City:
Djibouti

Languages:
Arabic, French



My Djiboutian Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Djibouti

Population: 740,528

Land Area: 8,958 square miles

Currency: Djibouti franc

Major Religion: Muslim (94%)

Highest Point: Moussa Ali (6,654 feet)

Lowest Point: Lac Assal
(509 feet below sea level)

Djibouti is divided into six districts.

Did you know...?

- Djibouti was once called French Somaliland. The people were given the option to join the newly independent Somali Republic but chose to remain affiliated with France. The country was given independence in 1977.
- Djibouti is one of Africa's smallest countries and has the smallest population of the continental nations.
- Lac Assal is the lowest elevation on the African continent.
- Djibouti is a little smaller than Massachusetts.
- Djibouti's landscape is covered mostly by dry and stony scrubland with some highlands.

Afar People

About 33 percent of the people in Djibouti are part of the Afar ethnic group, who have lived mostly as nomadic herders throughout their history. Today, the Afar raise cattle, goats, and sheep in the scrubland and desert of Djibouti, Ethiopia, and neighboring areas. They frequently move around in search of water and vegetation for their animals.

Afar homes are usually made of a stick frame and covered with mats of grass or animal hides. The people use camels for transportation as they move their dwellings and families around. Their diet consists mostly of meat and milk from their animals.



Egypt

Capital City: Cairo

Language: Arabic



My Egyptian Fact Book

Full Name:

Arab Republic of Egypt

Population: 80,471,869

Land Area: 387,048 square miles

Currency: Egyptian pound

Major Religion: Muslim (90%)

Highest Point: Mount Catherine (8,625 feet)

Lowest Point: Qattara Depression
(436 feet below sea level)

Egypt is divided into 29 governorates.

Did you know...?

- Cairo is the largest city in Africa.
- Egypt's fertile farmland surrounds the Nile River Delta in the north and the Nile River as it flows through the eastern part of the country. The population is concentrated in these fertile areas, and virtually no one lives in the desert of the south and west.
- Egypt's history extends over more than six thousand years, making it one of the world's longest-lasting civilizations.
- The Suez Canal was built in the nineteenth century to give ships direct passage from the Mediterranean Sea to the Red Sea and on to the Indian Ocean.

Pyramids of Giza

The most well known structures in Egypt, possibly in the whole world, are the Great Pyramids at Giza. The largest, where Pharaoh Cheops was buried, is believed to have been built around 2500 B.C. and stands 450 feet high. It is thought that the Great Pyramid once had a golden capstone at its peak.

There are more than 100 other pyramids in Egypt. They are the only structures among the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World that remain today.



Southern Egypt

The city of Aswan is at the southern-most end of Egypt, just before the border with Sudan. The city also once marked the most southern reach of the Roman Empire. For centuries, Aswan hosted passing caravans that traded their gold, spices, ivory, and even slaves in its marketplaces.

In modern times, the famous author Agatha Christie enjoyed Aswan and wrote most of her novel *Death on the Nile* while staying at a hotel there. Where would you go if you wanted to write a book?

Equatorial Guinea



Did you know...?

Capital City: Malabo

Languages: Spanish, French, Portuguese

- The portion of Equatorial Guinea on the mainland is called Rio Muni. The country also includes five islands in the Atlantic, and the capital city is located on the island called Bioko.



- The Equator does not actually pass through Equatorial Guinea.
- The country exports large amounts of crude oil each year.

➤ The native people of Bioko Island are called the Bubi. They first arrived on the island around the thirteenth century.

➤ Despite its small size, almost 20 languages are spoken in Equatorial Guinea.

My Equatoguinean Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Equatorial Guinea

Population: 650,702

Land Area: 10,830 square miles

Currency: Central African franc

Major Religion: Christian (93%)

Highest Point: Pico Basile (9,869 feet)

Lowest Point: Atlantic Ocean (0 feet)

Equatorial Guinea is divided into seven provinces.

Eritrea

Capital City: Asmara

Languages: Tigrinya, Arabic, English

Did you know...?

- The ancient culture called Punt, known primarily from Egyptian records, was located in modern Eritrea and surrounding areas.
- For about 300 years, the Greek Ptolemaic kings of Egypt took war elephants from the region of modern Eritrea. Today, there are about a hundred elephants left in the country.

➤ From 1890 to 1941, Eritrea was an Italian colony, part of Italian East Africa.

➤ Eritrea is home to a variety of ethnic groups. The culture has been influenced by sub-Saharan Africa, Arabia, Egypt, and Italy. Italian drinks and food remain popular in some areas.



My Eritrean Fact Book

Full Name:

State of Eritrea

Population: 5,792,984

Land Area: 45,405 square miles

Currency: Nakfa

Major Religions:

Christian (50%), Muslim (50%)

Highest Point: Soira (9,902 feet)

Lowest Point: Danakil Depression
(246 feet below sea level)

Eritrea is divided into six regions.





Ethiopia

Capital City: Addis Ababa

Language: Amharic



My Ethiopian Fact Book

Full Name:

Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

Population: 85,237,338

Land Area: 426,371 square miles

Currency: Birr

Major Religions:

Christian (63%), Muslim (34%)

Highest Point: Ras Dejen (14,872 feet)

Lowest Point: Danakil Depression
(410 feet below sea level)

*Ethiopia is divided into
nine administrative countries.*

Did you know...?

- The coffee bean originated in Ethiopia, and coffee remains one of the country's biggest cash crops today.
- More than 80 languages are spoken across Ethiopia.
- Ethiopia was called Abyssinia in ancient times.
- The current flag was adopted in 1996. The colors are all symbolic: green for the land, yellow for hope, red for strength, and blue for peace. The star in the center symbolizes the diversity and unity of Ethiopia.
- Ethiopia uses a unique calendar called the Ethiopian Ge'ez calendar. It has twelve months with 30 days each and a thirteenth month that has five or six days, depending on whether it is a leap year.

Abebe Bikila

Abebe Bikila was the first Ethiopian and the first black African to win a gold medal at the Olympics. Born into a shepherding family, Bikila first joined Ethiopia's Imperial Bodyguard before beginning his athletic training. He was able to go to the 1960 summer Olympics in Rome only because another athlete broke his ankle.

In Rome, Bikila wasn't able to find a pair of shoes that fit him well, so he decided to run the more than 26 mile long marathon barefoot. He won the gold medal when he finished the race 26 seconds ahead of the next runner.

In 1964, Bikila went to Tokyo to run in another Olympic marathon. This time he wore shoes and won a second gold medal when he set a new world record of two hours, twelve minutes, and eleven seconds.



Underground Churches

The town of Lalibela was once the capital of the Zagwe Dynasty, which existed during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The town is home to 13 churches, most of which are thought to have been built by the Zagwe king Gebre Mesqel Lalibela. The churches are known around the world because they were hewn out of the bedrock, and their roofs are level with the surrounding ground.



Gabon

Capital City: Libreville

Language: French



Did you know...?

- From 1910 to 1959, Gabon was part of French Equatorial Africa.
- Gabon's landscape includes savanna and coastline, but about 85 percent of the country is covered by rainforest.
- Gabon has abundant natural resources including petroleum, timber, manganese, and iron ore.
- As part of their traditional culture, some Gabonese ethnic groups wear masks during ceremonies like weddings, funerals, or to celebrate special occasions like the birth of a baby. Each group has a unique mask that represents its own distinct heritage.

My Gabonese Fact Book

Full Name:

Gabonese Republic

Population: 1,545,255

Land Area: 103,347 square miles

Currency: Central African franc

Major Religion: Christian (65%)

Highest Point: Mont Iboundji (5,167 feet)

Lowest Point: Atlantic Ocean (0 feet)

Gabon is divided into nine provinces.

My Gambian Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of The Gambia

Population: 1,824,158

Land Area: 4,007 square miles

Currency: Dalasi

Major Religion: Muslim (90%)

Highest Point:

An Unnamed Elevation (174 feet)

Lowest Point: Atlantic Ocean (0 feet)

Gambia is divided into five divisions.

Did you know...?

- Gambia is Africa's smallest country and is a little smaller than Jamaica.
- Other than 50 miles of Atlantic coastline, Gambia is completely surrounded by Senegal.
- The Gambia River flows through the center of the country from the eastern border to the Atlantic Ocean.
- One of Gambia's major exports is the peanut.
- Kunta Kinte, a main character in Alex Haley's famous novel *Roots*, grew up in Gambia.



Gambia

Capital City: Banjul

Language: English





Ghana

Capital City: Accra

Languages: English, Akan



Did you know...?

- Along with exporting cocoa, timber, rubber, and diamonds, Ghana is one of the world's top producers of gold.
- Ghana is home to the world's largest man-made lake. Lake Volta lies in the eastern part of the country and covers 3,275 square miles.
- Ghana consists of sandy coastline in the south, tropical rain forests in the central and eastern regions, and grassy savanna in the north.
- On the Ghanaian flag, red represents the blood shed for the nation's independence, yellow represents the wealth of mineral resources, green represents the forests and natural resources, and the black star in the center stands for African freedom.

My Ghanaian Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Ghana

Population: 23,350,927

Land Area: 92,100 square miles

Currency: Cedi

Major Religions:

Christian (69%), Muslim (16%)

Highest Point: Mount Afadjato (2,887 feet)

Lowest Point: Gulf of Guinea (0 feet)

Ghana is divided into ten regions.

History in Ghana

For centuries, western Africa was ruled by various African Kingdoms, including the Ashanti Empire and groups known as the Akwamu, Fante, Ga, and Ewe. Contact between these kingdoms and the Europeans began in the 1400s with the arrival of the Portuguese.

In 1874, the British Empire established a colony in present-day Ghana, which they called the Gold Coast because of its rich gold deposits. Wars against the British began early in the colony, and, in 1957, the Gold Coast became the first predominantly black African nation to gain independence from European colonialism.

The name Ghana, meaning "Warrior King," was chosen to honor the ancient Ghana Empire. The country's motto is "Freedom and Justice."

Football!



The Ghanaian people's favorite sport is football—what you would call soccer. The country has three national men's football teams that have competed in several international championships. Their team took the bronze medal by beating Australia during the 1992 Barcelona Olympic games. In 2009, Ghana became the first African country to win the Football World Cup when they beat Brazil 4 to 3.

Guinea-Bissau



Capital City: Bissau

Language: Portuguese

Did you know...?

- Almost half of the Guinea-Bissau population speaks Kriol, a language that combines Portuguese and native African languages.
- Guinea-Bissau exports a variety of agricultural items, such as cashews, peanuts, and fish.
- A popular instrument in traditional Guinean music is called the cabasa or calabash. It is often made from a dried gourd with beaded ropes looped around the outside. The musician plays the instrument by twisting and shaking the gourd with one hand and pressing on the beads with the other.

My Guinean Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Guinea-Bissau

Population: 1,565,126

Land Area: 13,948 square miles

Currency: West African franc

Major Religions:

Muslim (50%), Traditional (40%)

Highest Point:

An Unnamed Elevation (984 feet)

Lowest Point: Atlantic Ocean (0 feet)

Guinea-Bissau is divided into nine regions.

My Guinean Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Guinea

Population: 10,324,025

Land Area: 94,926 square miles

Currency: Guinean franc

Major Religion: Muslim (85%)

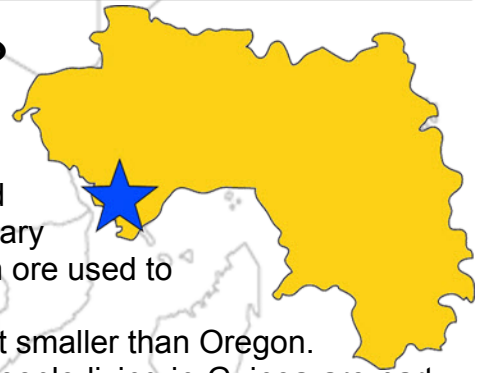
Highest Point: Mont Nimba (5,748 feet)

Lowest Point: Atlantic Ocean (0 feet)

Guinea is divided into 33 prefectures.

Did you know...?

- Guinea's natural resources include diamonds, gold, and iron ore, but its primary export is bauxite, an ore used to make aluminum.
- Guinea is somewhat smaller than Oregon.
- Almost half of the people living in Guinea are part of the Fula ethnic group. They were traditionally nomads who raised goats, sheep, and cattle, and a family's wealth was judged by the size of its herds. The people's diet consisted mostly of millet and vegetables, and meat was often saved for special occasions. Some Fula continue this way of life today, but many have chosen to move into towns and live a more modern life.
- The Niger River, one of Africa's most important, originates in Guinea.



Guinea

Capital City: Conakry

Language: French



Ivory Coast

Capital City: Yamoussoukro

Language: French



Did you know...?

- The country's official name, Côte d'Ivoire, is French for "coast of ivory."
- Many Ivoirians work in agriculture, and the country exports coffee and cocoa to many other nations around the world.
- Côte d'Ivoire has many festivals each year. Some of them are based on the Muslim or Christian religious observances, while others are based on traditional native beliefs. During the Festival of Masks, different villages compete to see which has the best dancers.
- The most commonly eaten meat in Côte d'Ivoire is goat.
- On the Ivoirian flag, orange symbolizes the savannah, white symbolizes the rivers, and green symbolizes forests.

My Ivoirian Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Côte d'Ivoire

Population: 21,058,798

Land Area: 124,502 square miles

Currency: West African franc

Major Religions:

Muslim (39%), Christian (33%)

Highest Point: Monts Nimba (5,748 feet)

Lowest Point: Gulf of Guinea (0 feet)

Ivory Coast is divided into 19 regions.

Akan

Most of the people living in Côte d'Ivoire are Akan, though they go by many different names including Baoulé, Anye, and Akye. The Akan mined gold and traded with neighboring people and European countries for nearly 500 years, from the 1400s to the 1800s.

They fought to remain independent for many years but had been fully colonized by France and England by the early twentieth century.

According to their oral history, the Baoulé people fled from the Ashanti, another Akan-speaking people, during the 1600s. Led by Queen Pokou, they moved into the area that is now Côte d'Ivoire, where they still live today.

Talking Drums



In Côte d'Ivoire and other West African countries, the music often includes an instrument called a talking drum. Known as a *dondo* in the local Akan language, the drum can make such a range of sounds that people say it 'talks.' Held under one arm, the drum is played with the fingers of one hand and a stick held in the other. It's used in both traditional and modern music.



Kenya

Capital City: Nairobi

Languages: Swahili, English



My Kenyan Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Kenya

Population: 39,002,772

Land Area: 224,080 square miles

Currency: Kenyan shilling

Major Religion: Christian (78%)

Highest Point: Mount Kenya (17,057 feet)

Lowest Point: Indian Ocean (0 feet)

Kenya is divided into eight provinces.

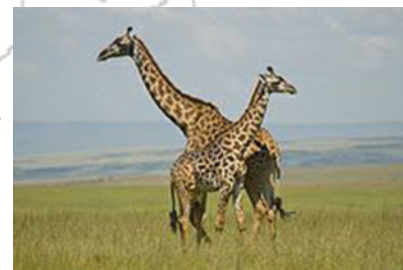
Did you know...?

- On the Kenyan flag, the traditional Maasai shield and spears symbolize the defense of the nation.
- Kenya produces a variety of crops including tea, coffee, corn, coconuts, cashews, and sugarcane.
- Because the equator passes through Kenya, the country is quite warm throughout the year. Kenyan summer is in February and March, and winter is in July and August with the coldest temperatures being around 53 degrees Fahrenheit.
- *Kenya* means "place with ostriches."
- Kenya's greatest industry is tourism. People from all over the world enjoy visiting Kenya's beaches on the Indian Ocean and taking safaris to see wild animals in the grasslands.

Kenyan Wildlife

Kenya's grasslands are home to a wide variety of wild animals and birds. Millions of migrating animals begin arriving in southwestern Kenya's Masai Mara wildlife preserve in July as they search for food and water. If you've seen a movie or television program showing animals on the grasslands of Africa, it was probably filmed at Masai Mara.

Elephants, zebra, gazelles, wildebeest, giraffes, cheetahs, hyenas, and many more make the Mara their home for part of the year. In the rivers that pass through the area, hippopotamus and crocodiles can be found. Birds in the Mara include ostriches, storks, cranes, and Kenya's national bird, the lilac breasted roller.



Plantains in Coconut Milk

Plantains, which are similar to bananas, have been a traditional food for Swahilis and other ethnic groups in Kenya. Why don't you try some plantains in coconut milk?

3 or 4 plantains, peeled and sliced

¼ tsp. salt

1 tsp. curry powder

½ tsp. cinnamon

1/8 tsp. cloves

1 to 2 C. coconut milk

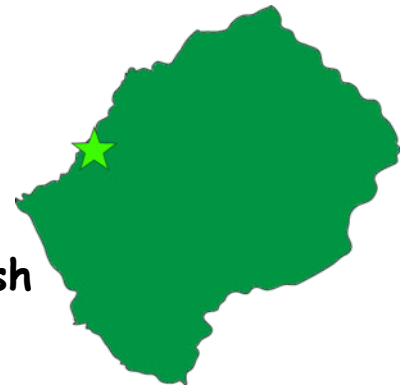
Stir plantains, salt, and spices together in a saucepan. Add 1 C. coconut milk and heat over low heat. Simmer until plantains are tender and milk has been absorbed. Add more milk if needed. Serve warm. Enjoy!



Lesotho

Capital City: Maseru

Languages: Sesotho, English



My Mosotho Fact Book

Full Name:

Kingdom of Lesotho

Population: 1,919,552

Land Area: 12,727 square miles

Currency: Loti

Major Religions:

Christian (80%), Traditional (20%)

Highest Point:

Thabana Ntlenyana (11,424 feet)

Lowest Point:

Orange and Makhaleng Rivers (4,593 feet)

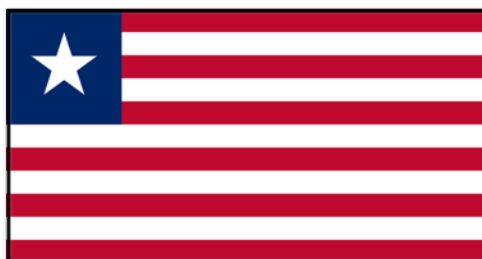
Lesotho is divided into ten districts.

Did you know...?

- Lesotho is surrounded on all sides by South Africa.
- One person from Lesotho is called a Mosotho, and several people together are called Basotho.
- On the Mosotho flag, blue represents rain, white represents peace, and green represents prosperity. The object in the center is a traditional Mosotho hat.
- Lesotho's lowest point of elevation is the highest of any country in the world.
- Lesotho's primary money-making industry is diamond mining. The country also collects and sells large amounts of water from its rivers to the dry regions of South Africa.

Did you know...?

- The region of Liberia was once known as the Pepper Coast and as the Windward Coast.
- Beginning in 1821, the American Colonization Society organized thousands of former slaves to colonize parts of Liberia. The Society purchased and annexed tracts of land in the area, and both former slaves from America and slaves freed from illegal slave ships settled here. The African-Americans were not readily accepted by the native Africans, however, and numerous battles were fought. Even so, the name Liberia comes from the English word "liberty," and the capital was named after American president John Monroe.



My Liberian Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Liberia

Population: 3,685,076

Land Area: 43,000 square miles

Currency: Liberian dollar

Major Religion: Christian (86%)

Highest Point: Mount Wuteve (4,528 feet)

Lowest Point: Atlantic Ocean (0 feet)

Liberia is divided into 15 counties.

Liberia

Capital City: Monrovia

Language: English



Libya

Capital City: Tripoli

Language: Arabic



My Libyan Fact Book

Full Name:

Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya

Population: 6,461,454

Land Area: 679,359 square miles

Currency: Dinar

Major Religion: Muslim (97%)

Highest Point: Bikku Bitti (7,438 feet)

Lowest Point: Sabkhat Ghuzayil
(154 feet below sea level)

Libya is divided into 22 states.

Did you know...?

- Over 90 percent of Libya's territory is covered by an arid desert landscape.
- In ancient Greece, the word Libya referred to the entire African continent.
- Libya, especially near the coast, has been ruled by the Phoenicians, Greeks, Romans, Ottomans, and Italians.
- Libya is about the size of Alaska.
- Libyan law forbids the use of the native Berber language.
- A popular food in Libya is the *bazeen*, a small cake made from barley flour and served with seasoned tomato sauce.

Libyan Desert

The Libyan Desert, part of the Sahara, lies in the eastern part of Libya and is one of the driest places on the entire planet. In most areas, rain falls about every seven years, but some parts of the desert go 20 to 30 years or longer without a single rainfall.

Ghadames

Because of its desert landscape, Libya's population is concentrated near the Mediterranean coast and around oases. One particular town in the western part of the country is called Ghadames and has been inhabited since at least the first century B.C.

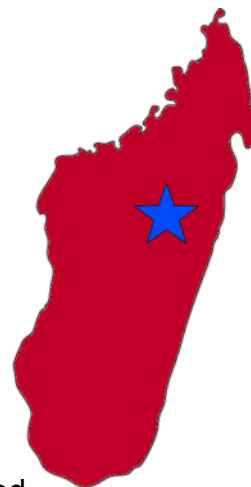
The town has been an attraction for many people throughout its history, including the Romans, Byzantines, and Arabs. Homes in Ghadames are built with thick mud and lime walls to keep out the desert heat. Covered walkways built between the different homes makes visiting neighbors comfortable even on the hottest days.



Madagascar

Capital City: Antananarivo

Languages:
Malagasy, French, English



My Malagasy Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Madagascar

Population: 21,281,844

Land Area: 226,597 square miles

Currency: Malagasy ariary

Major Religions:

Traditional (52%), Christian (41%)

Highest Point: Maromokotro (9,436 feet)

Lowest Point: Indian Ocean (0 feet)

Madagascar is divided into six provinces.

Did you know...?

- Madagascar is separated from the rest of Africa by the Mozambique Channel.
- It is believed that Madagascar was first settled by people from the east, from modern-day Indonesia more than likely, and later by people from the African mainland.
- The Malagasy language is very closely related to Ma'anyan language of Borneo.
- Madagascar was a French colony from 1883 to 1960.
- Most of the vanilla used around the world is grown in Madagascar. Malagasy farmers also grow rice, cloves, sugarcane, and coffee.

Robert Drury's Journal

When he was just 17 years old, a young British man named Robert Drury was shipwrecked on Madagascar's southern coast around 1704. Andriankirindra, the ruler of the local people, took Robert and the other sailors as his captives and then gave Robert, as a slave, to another king called Andriamivaro.

Robert lived as a slave for ten years, working as a farmer, herdsman, and butcher. War between the neighboring tribes gave Robert an opportunity to escape. He eventually made it to Madagascar's west coast where, after another five years, he received passage back to England.

Back home, Robert wrote out his recollections of the 15 years he spent in Madagascar, and he published them as *Robert Drury's Journal*. Some historians think that Robert made up some of the experiences that he wrote about, but historical and archeological facts suggest that most of his memoirs are true.

Elephant Birds

Madagascar is home to thousands of plant and animal species, many of them endemic to the island. One of the most amazing was the elephant bird, which was related to an ostrich but stood more than ten feet tall. A full grown male elephant bird weighed nearly 900 pounds, and the eggs were as much as three feet in diameter.

Though French colonists recorded the birds' population on Madagascar during the mid-1600s, the elephant bird became extinct less than 100 years later.

Malawi

Capital City: Lilongwe

Language: English



Did you know...?

- The Malawian flag was just adopted in 2010.
- As a British colony, Malawi was called Nyasaland.
- The vast majority of Malawi's income comes from exporting tobacco, though the nation also produces coffee, tea, and sugarcane.
- Malawian law provides for at least five years of free schooling for every child, but going to school is not mandatory.
- Though rival tribes fought one another in the region of Malawi throughout history, the people have developed a strong national unity today. They are bound by a common desire for peace and a conservative adherence to traditional beliefs about family and community.

My Malawian Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Malawi

Population: 15,447,500

Land Area: 45,747 square miles

Currency: Kwacha

Major Religions:

Christian (80%), Muslim (13%)

Highest Point: Mount Mlanje (9,849 feet)

Lowest Point: Shire River (121 feet)

Malawi is divided into 28 districts.

Chewa People

A people called the Chewa have lived in the area of present-day Malawi for hundreds of years and established a kingdom as long ago as the fifteenth century. Ritual dances at important events like births, weddings, and funerals has been important throughout Chewa history. The people have formed secret societies to pass knowledge of certain dances and rituals to their members.

Today, the Chewa frequently practice "slash and burn" agriculture to grow corn, sorghum, and other crops. The men also hunt and fish to provide for their families. Chewa families typically live in small villages that are surrounded by wooden stockade fences. The fences help protect the people from wild animals that live in southern Africa.

Great Rift Valley

Africa's Great Rift Valley runs north-south through Malawi. The rift is actually caused by a slow splitting of the tectonic plate called the African plate. Geologists have named the "new" plates Nubian (on the western side of the rift) and Somalian (on the eastern side). Look in Appendix B for a map that shows all of the world's tectonic plates.

The Great Rift Valley is defined by a series of lakes sometimes called the African Great Lakes. These include the well known Lake Victoria (Africa's largest), Lake Tanganyika (Africa's deepest), and Lake Malawi, which holds more fish species than any other lake in the world.



Mali

Capital City: Bamako

Language: French



Did you know...?

- Mali was once part of French Sudan.
- The southwestern “branch” of Mali is a fertile farming region fed by the Niger and Senegal Rivers, while the northeastern region is covered almost entirely by the Sahara Desert.
- Mali exports large amount of cotton to its neighboring countries. The nation is also Africa’s third-highest gold producer.
- Almost half of Mali’s population is under age 15.
- The brightly colored robes worn in Mali and throughout West Africa are called *boubous*.

My Malian Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Mali

Population: 13,796,354

Land Area: 478,839 square miles

Currency: West African franc

Major Religion: Muslim (90%)

Highest Point: Hombori Tondo (3,789 feet)

Lowest Point: Senegal River (75 feet)

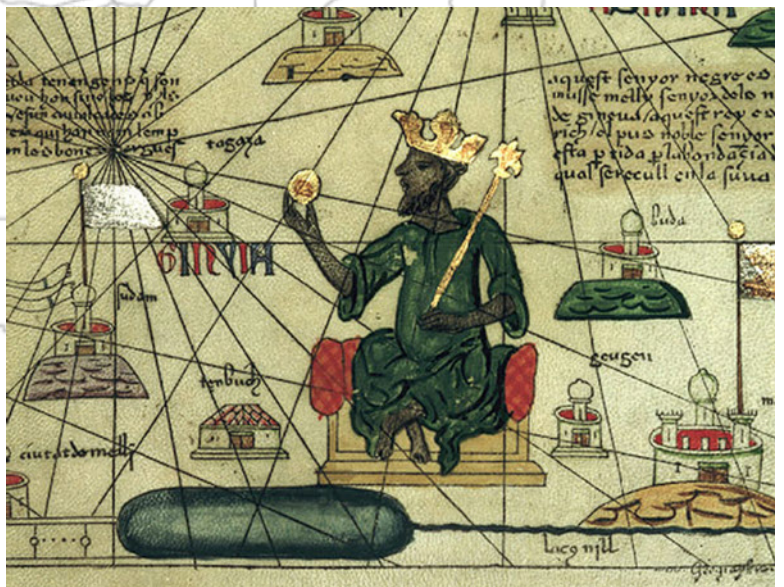
Mali is divided into eight regions.

Mali Empire

Having grown from a small state into a flourishing kingdom, the Mali Empire is believed to have been the second largest empire in the entire world during the fourteenth century, surpassed only by the Mongol Empire. During this time, the empire, led by Mansa Musa I, included a population of 20 million people and an army with 100,000 soldiers and 10,000 cavalymen.

Fourteenth century documents say that when Mansa Musa took an enormous entourage on a pilgrimage to Mecca, he spent so much money in so many cities that the value of gold decreased for more than a decade after his visit! This trip made Mansa Musa and the Mali Empire famous throughout eastern Africa, Arabia, and Europe.

An illustration of Mansa Musa I appears in the Catalan Atlas, which was published in 1375. The accompanying text reads, “This Negro lord is called Musa Mali, Lord of the Negroes of Guinea. So abundant is the gold which is found in his country that he is the richest and most noble king in all the land.”

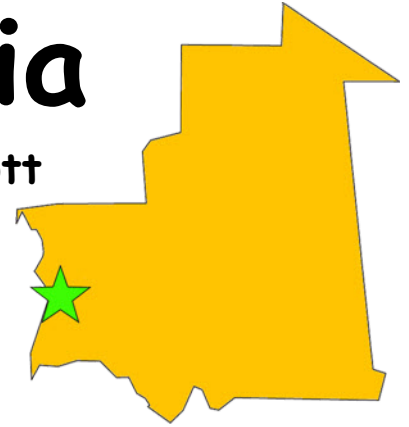




Mauritania

Capital City: Nouakchott

Language: Arabic



My Mauritanian Fact Book

Full Name:

Islamic Republic of Mauritania

Population: 3,205,060

Land Area: 397,954 square miles

Currency: Ouguiya

Major Religion: Muslim (100%)

Highest Point: Kediet Ijill (3,002 feet)

Lowest Point: Sebket Te-n-Dghamcha
(16 feet below sea level)

Mauritania is divided into 12 regions.

Did you know...?

- Around 75 percent of Mauritania's landscape is dominated by the Sahara Desert, which is actually expanding because of a prolonged drought.
- Mauritania's natural resources include iron, copper, gold, and fish in its coastal waters.
- The name Mauritania comes from the ancient Mauri tribe that lived in northern Africa.
- According to Mauritanian law, all citizens of the country must follow the Islamic faith.
- Though the government has officially banned slavery multiple times, it's estimated that a fifth of the population live as slaves today.

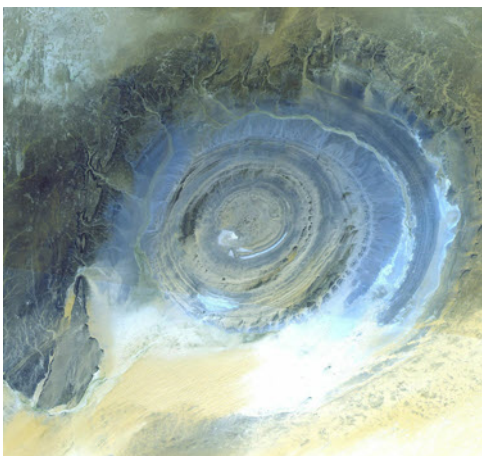
Marabouts

The word Marabout means "one who is garrisoned" in Arabic, and Marabouts have historically been Islamic religious teachers. In Mauritania and other West African countries, Marabouts study the Qur'an and travel around from town to town, teaching people about the Islamic faith. Some Marabouts live solely on the alms and gifts given to them by the people they meet. In most areas, Marabout men live a very simple, traditional lifestyle without many material possessions.

Guelb er Richat

Guelb er Richat, called the Richat Structure in English, is an unusual site in the Sahara Desert of central Mauritania. It's basically flat with exposed bedrock that gives a ring-like appearance. Geologists think the area was formed by erosion over a long period of time.

At 31 miles across, the Richat Structure can be seen from space and is often used as a landmark by astronauts.





Mauritius

Capital City: Port Louis

Languages: English,
Mauritian Creole, French



Did you know...?

- Though English is the official language and is used by the government, only about one percent of the people are able to speak it. Most people speak Mauritian Creole which combines French, the native languages, and a little English.
- Mauritius was known to sailors from Africa, Malaysia, and Arabia for hundreds of years but was uninhabited until the Dutch founded a colony there in 1638. The island was later ruled by the French and then the British before gaining independence in 1962.

My Mauritian Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Mauritius

Population: 1,294,104

Land Area: 787 square miles

Currency: Mauritian rupee

Major Religions: Hindu (48%),

Christian (32%), Muslim (17%)

Highest Point: Mont Piton (2,717 feet)

Lowest Point: Indian Ocean (0 feet)

Mauritius is divided into nine districts.

Dodo Bird

The dodo bird is probably the most famous extinct animal of modern times. Found only on Mauritius, the dodo was a flightless bird that was preyed upon by dogs, pigs, and other small animals brought to the island by European explorers. The dodo population had been completely decimated by the end of the seventeenth century.

In 2007, cave explorers found a very well-preserved and nearly complete skeleton of a dodo. This was the first complete skeleton ever found.





Morocco

Capital City: Rabat

Language: Arabic



Did you know...?

- Morocco was once part of the Roman Empire when it was called Mauretania Tingitana.
- The classic film *Casablanca* is set in Morocco's largest city.
- Oranges, lemons, and olives are all grown in Morocco.
- Moroccans' favorite drink is green tea with mint.
- In 1787, Morocco was the first country that publicly recognized the United States as an independent nation. The two countries have enjoyed the Moroccan-American Treaty of Friendship ever since.

My Moroccan Fact Book

Full Name:

Kingdom of Morocco

Population: 31,627,428

Land Area: 172,414 square miles

Currency: Moroccan dirham

Major Religion: Muslim (99%)

Highest Point: Jebel Toubkal (13,665 feet)

Lowest Point: Sebkhah Tah
(180 feet below sea level)

Morocco is divided into 16 regions.

Western Sahara



Western Sahara is a region of land just to the south of Morocco. Once a colony of Spain, Western Sahara doesn't currently have a government of its own. Both Morocco and an independent group called the Polisario Front claim rights over the region. Some nations around the world have recognized Morocco's claim while others have recognized the Polisario Front.

Because Western Sahara is covered almost entirely by desert, not many people live there. The population is estimated at only 500,000.

Getting Married in Morocco

Though Morocco has many modern cities and towns, some Moroccans still live in traditional ways and hold to customs and ceremonies that have been around for centuries. One of these customs is the "betrothal fair" held in Imilchil each year.

Nomadic Berbers shepherd their flocks in the Atlas Mountains during the spring and summer but return to the plains at Imilchil in September. Here, the young, single men and women mingle together and talk. The girls generally do the "picking," and then the families of the couple will discuss the marriage arrangements before the vows are exchanged in the evening.

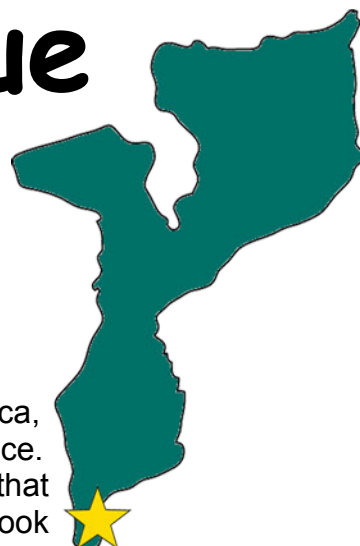
The festivities—complete with music and dancing—of the betrothal fair continue for three days. What would you think of finding your future husband or wife at a three-day party?



Mozambique

Capital City: Maputo

**Languages: Portuguese,
Swahili, Makhuwa, Sena**



Did you know...?

- On the flag of Mozambique, green stands for the land, black for Africa, white for peace, yellow for minerals, and red for the fight for independence. On the left side of the flag is a star that symbolizes Marxism, a hoe that represents agriculture, a rifle that represents defense, and an open book that represents education.
- Mozambique has a low elevation along its coast but higher elevation inland where there are mountains and plateaus.
- Mozambique produces coal, titanium, aluminum, and graphite that is used for pencil lead.

People of Mozambique

Most of the people living in Mozambique are part of the Bantu ethnic group. Though a third of all Africans are considered Bantu, the larger group is segmented into many smaller groups that speak related languages.

In Mozambique, the Bantu are known as Macua, Shona, Makonde, waYao, Swahili, and other names. About half of the people living in northern Mozambique are Macua, and the other groups are spread throughout the country.

The Makonde people are notable because they are one of the few African groups who avoided being taken as slaves during the time of the Atlantic slave trade. They also remained independent throughout the nineteenth century but were drawn under Portuguese colonial power in the 1920s.

Another ethnic group, known as the Shangaan, speak a language called Xitsonga. The Shangaan once ruled the Gaza Empire, which covered southern Mozambique and parts of Zimbabwe and South Africa. The empire lasted from its founding in 1819 until 1895 when its leader, Ngungunhane, was captured by the Portuguese.

General Soshangane was an officer in the Zulu army under King Shaka. He rebelled against Shaka and established his own empire in the land that is now Mozambique. His Gaza Empire absorbed weaker peoples who lived in the area and successfully repelled attacks by the Zulus. The empire even conquered Portuguese colonies as it spread through the region.

Soshangane died around 1856, and his successors—his son and grandson—weren't quite as capable in leadership. Ngungunhane was defeated and captured by the Portuguese, which ended the Gaza Empire.

My Mozambican Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Mozambique

Population: 22,061,451

Land Area: 309,496 square miles

Currency: Mozambican metical

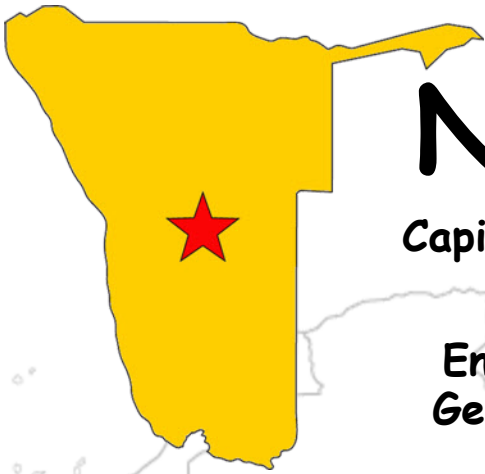
Major Religions:

Christian (50%), Muslim (28%)

Highest Point: Monte Binga (7,992 feet)

Lowest Point: Indian Ocean (0 feet)

Mozambique is divided into ten provinces.



Namibia

Capital City: Windhoek

Languages:
English, Afrikaans,
German, Oshiwambo



Did you know...?

- Namibia was part of Imperial Germany from 1884 until the end of World War I and then a part of South Africa until achieving independence in 1990.
- Namibia's natural resources include diamonds, gold, and silver.
- Namibia is Africa's least densely populated country with less than seven people per square mile.

My Namibian Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Namibia

Population: 2,128,471

Land Area: 318,696 square miles

Currency: Namibian dollar

Major Religions:

Christian (85%), Traditional (15%)

Highest Point: Konigstein (8,550 feet)

Lowest Point: Atlantic Ocean (0 feet)

Namibia is divided into 13 regions.

Bushmen

One of Namibia's native people groups is known as the Bushmen or San. The people have lived in southern Africa for over a thousand years and have traditionally been semi-nomadic hunter-gatherers. Today, some San continue this traditional lifestyle while some have settled into a life of farming.

Many San of Namibia speak a language called !Kung, one of only a few languages to use a "click sound" in its vocabulary. The click is usually represented in English by an exclamation point and can occur at the beginning of or within a word. Learning to make the click sound seamlessly as one speaks is very difficult or impossible for adults to learn.

Skeleton Coast

The northern coast of Namibia is called the Skeleton Coast because of the many wrecked ships, whale bones, and seal bones that have littered the beach for centuries. Rock outcroppings in the ocean and frequent dense fog have made both launching from and landing on the beach dangerous.

The Skeleton Coast is called "The Land that God Made in Anger" by the Bushmen and "The Gates of the Bad Place" by Portuguese explorers.



Niger

Capital City: Niamey

Languages:
French, Hausa



Did you know...?

- Niger's natural resources include iron, coal, gold, and one of the world's largest deposits of uranium.
- Niger's landscape is mostly desert with some savanna and farmland, primarily in the south and west.
- Niger has the world's highest birthrate with an average of eight children being born to every woman.
- Most Nigeriens raise their own food, such as millet, potatoes, onions, cowpeas, and peppers. Some families raise cows, sheep, or other animals as well.

My Nigerien Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Niger

Population: 15,878,271

Land Area: 489,678 square miles

Currency: West African franc

Major Religion: Muslim (80%)

Highest Point:

Idoukal-n-Taghes (6,634 feet)

Lowest Point: Niger River (0 feet)

Niger is divided into eight regions.

Hausa

More than half of Nigeriens are part of the Hausa ethnic group, and their ancestors have lived in the region for more than a thousand years. The early history of the Hausa is told in a document called the *Kano Chronicle*, which was probably written sometime during the sixteenth century. The chronicle is written in the Hausa language using Arabic script, which the people adopted around 1500.

Hausa have traditionally followed the Islamic religion since their rulers adopted the faith from Arab traders in the eleventh century. Islamic beliefs continue to play a strong role in the day to day activities of Hausa people today especially in the areas of clothing and food.

Rural Hausa typically live in small villages surrounded by protective fences or walls. The homes are usually made from mud or baked clay with thatched roofs, and men and women live in separate houses. Most larger settlements have a separate, defined area where foreign visitors are allowed to stay.

People in the rural areas grow their own food, such as corn, millet, and rice. They can trade with neighboring people to obtain meat, butter, and other items. In more urban areas, the men take additional jobs as well. They may become butchers, artisans, clerics, or merchants, but the job any man is able to take is dependent on his hereditary class.

Because of an Islamic belief called *purdah* in which women are kept secluded from people outside their close families, women in the cities aren't typically permitted to leave their houses. Many sew clothing or make food or decorative items that their husbands or children can sell for income.



Nigeria

Capital City: Abuja

Languages: English, Igbo, Hausa, Kanuri, Yoruba



Did you know...?

- Nigeria has the highest population of any country in Africa. It is estimated that one in four Africans is Nigerian.
- Exports of petroleum make up almost half of Nigeria's income.
- Over half of Nigerians work in agriculture, and they produce cocoa, citrus, coconuts, sugar cane, yams, and other crops.
- More than 250 ethnic groups live in Nigeria, and it's estimated that over 500 different languages are spoken in the country.
- In the 1996 Summer Olympics held in Atlanta, Nigeria won the gold medal in men's football (soccer).

My Nigerian Fact Book

Full Name:

Federal Republic of Nigeria

Population: 152,217,341

Land Area: 356,667 square miles

Currency: Naira

Major Religions:

Muslim (50%), Christian (48%)

Highest Point: Chappal Waddi (7,936 feet)

Lowest Point: Atlantic Ocean (0 feet)

Nigeria is divided into 36 states.

Nigerian Satellites

Beginning in 2003, Nigeria has had a series of satellites launched into space. Each satellite was launched by a different country on behalf of Nigeria: the first by Russia, the second and third by China.

The satellites have a variety of purposes. Among other tasks, they are designed to detect early warning signs of natural disasters, to enable distance learning education throughout Nigeria, and to help in the nation's future building plans.

Nok People

The Nok people lived in the Niger River Valley from about 1000 B.C. to 500 A.D. It's possible that the Nok became the Yoruba Kingdom at Ife. Early Yoruba art resembles the well-known terra cotta sculptures made by the Nok.

Several terra cotta artifacts were found at a tin mining operation near the village of Nok in 1928. The village's name was then given to the people who had created the sculptures. Since those first discoveries, miners and archeologists have found many more Nok artifacts. Most of them are broken fragments, but some complete pieces have been found.

Are any Nok sculptures on exhibit at a museum near your home?

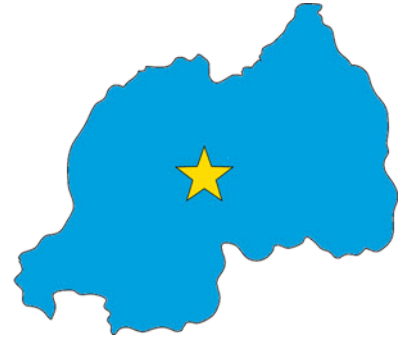




Rwanda

Capital City: Kigali

Languages: Kinyarwanda,
French, English, Swahili



Did you know...?

- Even though Rwanda is just south of the equator, its high average elevation makes the country cooler than most tropical countries. Its temperature averages between 60 and 70 degrees Fahrenheit throughout the year.
- Rwanda is about the same size as Maryland.
- About 90 percent of Rwandans work in agriculture. The country produces coffee, tea, bananas, potatoes, and beans.
- Almost 98 percent of Rwandans are under age 65.
- The three major groups in Rwanda are the Hutus, Tutsis, and Twas. They are considered social groups instead of ethnic groups because they share a common language, history, and culture. Together, they are called the Banyarwanda.

My Rwandan Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Rwanda

Population: 10,746,311

Land Area: 10,169 square miles

Currency: Rwandan franc

Major Religion: Christian (94%)

Highest Point:

Volcan Karisimbi (14,826 feet)

Lowest Point: Rusizi River (3,117 feet)

Rwanda is divided into five provinces.

Volcanoes National Park



Volcanoes National Park, created in 1925, was the first national park in Africa. It was first created to protect mountain gorillas from illegal poaching and continues today as a conservation refuge and tourist attraction.

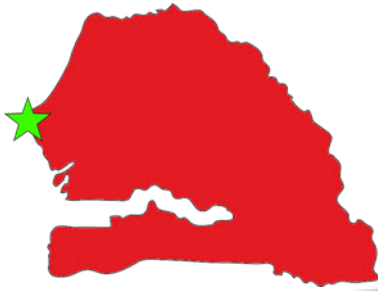
Besides the mountain gorilla, Volcanoes National Park is home to golden monkeys, spotted hyenas, and buffalo. The park consists of coniferous forests, bamboo forests, meadows, marshland, swamps, and lakes.

Visitors to Volcanoes National Park can spend time with the gorillas and monkeys, visit the caves and lakes, or even climb one of the volcanoes.

Intore Dancing

In the historical Rwandan kingdom, certain members of the nation's army were taught Intore dancing or warrior dancing. This style of dancing includes a jumping technique that allows the dancers to jump as high as 13 feet.

The Intore dance includes a ballet, which is typically performed by women, a portion called "the dance of heroes," performed by men, and drumming. The entire performance is choreographed to represent the celebration of a victory in battle.



Senegal

Capital City: Dakar

Languages:
French, Wolof, Soninke



Did you know...?

- Senegal's industry manufactures cement, fertilizer, textiles, and other items. The country also houses oil refineries where the people process crude oil that is imported from other nations.
- In Senegal, the people highly prize hospitality, which the Wolof call *teranga*. A welcoming hospitality is considered integral both at one's home and at the national level.

My Senegalese Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Senegal

Population: 12,323,252

Land Area: 76,000 square miles

Currency: West African franc

Major Religion: Muslim (94%)

Highest Point:

Unnamed Elevation (1,906 feet)

Lowest Point: Atlantic Ocean (0 feet)

Senegal is divided into 14 regions.

Wolof

About 40 percent of the Senegalese population is part of the Wolof group, which is thought to have originated in ancient Egypt at its foundation as a civilization. The modern Wolof language is similar to the Egyptian that was spoken at the height of the Pharaohs.

By about 1000 A.D., the Wolof had settled in modern-day Senegal, and they established a small empire around 1350. Though the Wolof Empire never spread far beyond the present borders of Senegal, its rule lasted for more than 500 years until it was overtaken by the French in the late nineteenth century.

Griots

Throughout Senegal and much of West Africa, griots keep alive the stories and oral heritage of the people. A griot may sing and play an instrument, recite poetry, or simply tell stories as he travels from place to place. Because most African languages did not historically have a written form, the role of a griot developed to preserve the history of the kingdoms and cultures so that the past would not be forgotten by future generations. Skilled griots can recite histories that stretch back hundreds of years without any mistakes on the names of people or the order of events.

São Tomé and Príncipe

Capital City: São Tomé

Languages: Portuguese, Forro



Did you know...?



➤ São Tomé and

My São Toméan Fact Book

Full Name:

Democratic Republic of
São Tomé and Príncipe

Population: 175,808

Land Area: 372 square miles

Currency: Dobra

Major Religion: Christian (78%)

Highest Point:

Pico de Sao Tome (6,740 feet)

Lowest Point: Atlantic Ocean (0 feet)

São Tomé and Príncipe is divided into two provinces.

Príncipe is Africa's smallest country.

- São Tomé was named after Saint Thomas by the Portuguese, who were the first to inhabit both islands beginning in the late fifteenth century.
- The country's primary export is cocoa. Coffee and palm kernels are also grown, but much food needs to be imported from other countries.
- Children in São Tomé and Príncipe are required to attend school for just four years.
- The population of the islands is made up of both Portuguese and African descendents, migrant workers from Angola, Cape Verde, and other African countries, and some Asian immigrants.

Seychelles

Capital City: Victoria

Languages:
Seychellois Creole,
French, English



Did you know...?

➤ On the Seychellois flag, the radiating colors are meant to represent the country's progress into the future. Blue stands for the sky and the ocean; yellow stands for the light and life of the sun; red stands for the determination, unity, and love of the Seychellois people; white stands for justice and harmony; and green stands for the islands' nature.

- The Seychelles were uninhabited until French colonists arrived in the late eighteenth century.
- One of the early names for the largest island was *Ile d'Abondance*, French for "Island of

My Seychellois Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Seychelles

Population: 88,340

Land Area: 174 square miles

Currency: Seychellois rupee

Major Religion: Christian (93%)

Highest Point:

Morne Seychellois (2,909 feet)

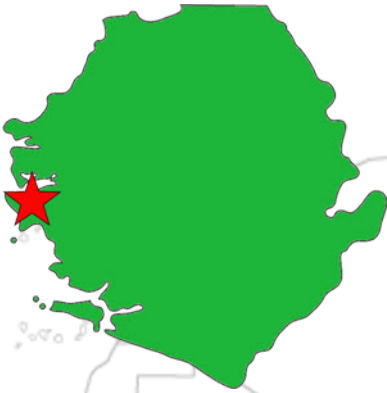
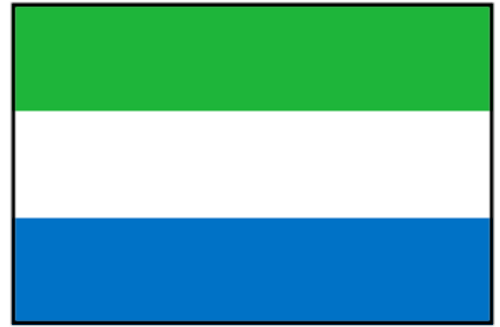
Lowest Point: Indian Ocean (0 feet)

Seychelles is divided into 23 administrative districts.

Sierra Leone

Capital City: Freetown

Languages: English, Krio



Did you know...?

- The name Sierra Leone comes from Portuguese words that mean “lion mountain range.”
- The nation has a varied landscape. Plateau and mountains cover the eastern portion, while the central region includes rainforests, farms, and grassy plains.
- Sierra Leone produces gold and titanium in large quantities.
- Sierra Leone is about the same size as South Carolina.

My Sierra Leonean Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Sierra Leone

Population: 5,245,695

Land Area: 27,699 square miles

Currency: Leone

Major Religions:

Muslim (60%), Christian (30%)

Highest Point: Loma Mansa (6,391 feet)

Lowest Point: Atlantic Ocean (0 feet)

Sierra Leone is divided into three provinces.

Sierra Leone Company

Sierra Leone’s capital, Freetown, was founded by the Sierra Leone Company in 1792. A group of British abolitionists organized a settlement of more than a thousand former slaves to colonize the new town. Most of the settlers had been freed from slavery by the British during the Revolutionary War in America.

Set backs and difficulties—including a French attack in 1794 in which the town was burned—plagued Freetown, but the settlers were determined to make the colony a success. They persevered through trials and invited new black settlers from America to join them.

Mende and Temne

The Mende and Temne are the two largest ethnic groups in Sierra Leone. The Mende live primarily in the south, while the Temne live in the north. Both groups farm the land, fish, and raise livestock. Rice is the most common crop, and coffee, cocoa, peanuts, and other foods are grown as well.

The 1997 film *Amistad* tells the true story about a group of Mende who were taken to Cuba as slaves. While being taken by ship to another island, they successfully took over the ship but were later re-captured and put on trial in Connecticut. The court ruled that the men were legally free, and they returned to their homes in Africa.



Somalia

Capital City: Mogadishu

Languages: Somali, Arabic



My Somali Fact Book

Full Name:

Somalia

Population: 10,112,453

Land Area: 246,200 square miles

Currency: Somali shilling

Major Religion: Muslim (99%)

Highest Point: Shimbiris (7,927 feet)

Lowest Point: Indian Ocean (0 feet)

Somalia is divided into 18 regions.

Did you know...?

- In ancient times, the people of Somalia may have been some of the first to domesticate camels.
- With 1,879 miles bordering the Indian Ocean, Somalia has the longest coastline of any country in Africa.
- Somalia's two major rivers are the Jubba and the Shabele. The Jubba River flows into the Indian Ocean, while the Shabele River flows into a swampy region that borders the desert southwest of the capital city.

Horn of Africa

The phrase "Horn of Africa" is used to describe the area of East Africa that borders the Indian Ocean and Red Sea because of its resemblance to a horn. The countries that make up the Horn of Africa are Somalia, Djibouti, Eritrea, and Ethiopia.

Most of the Horn's landscape is arid desert or scrubland, and drought is a frequent occurrence. Only in the western reaches of the Horn is there much green vegetation. Herds of cattle, goats, and other animals graze even in the arid regions, and groups of herdsmen work together to minimize overgrazing.

Wild animals that live on the Horn of Africa include the gazelle, antelope, baboon, desert warthog, and the Painted hunting dog, an endangered species that resembles a hyena.

Laas Gaal

In northern Somalia near Hargeisa, a series of caves exist in the Naasa Hablood hills. The caves have been used in recent times as shelters by the nomads who live in the area, and paintings inside the caves show that people have been seeking shelter there for thousands of years.

These paintings are amazingly well preserved and retain a variety of colors and distinct outlines. Using dating techniques, scientists believe that the paintings were made before 3000 B.C.

Written inscriptions have been found along with the paintings, but researchers haven't yet been able to decipher the language.



South Africa

Capital City: Pretoria

Languages: Afrikaans,
English, Zulu, Xhosa



My South African Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of South Africa

Population: 49,109,107

Land Area: 471,443 square miles

Currency: Rand

Major Religion: Christian (80%)

Highest Point: Njesuthi (11,181 feet)

Lowest Point: Atlantic Ocean (0 feet)

South Africa is divided into nine provinces.

Did you know...?

- South Africa's landscape includes sandy coastline, flat scrubland, and a very small amount of forest.
- South Africa is well known for its diamonds, but it also exports gold, corn, sugar, fruit, and wool.
- The Afrikaans language is closely related to Dutch with influences from Portuguese, French, Malay, and the African languages Bantu and Khoisan.
- South African surgeon Christiaan Barnard performed the first successful heart transplant in 1967.

Zulu

More than ten million people of Zulu heritage live in South Africa today, making them the country's largest ethnic group. The Zulu have lived in southern Africa for hundreds of years but were simply one clan among many until the establishment of the Zulu Kingdom in 1816. Their most influential king, Shaka, shaped the nation's men into powerful and driven warriors.

Under Shaka's leadership, the Zulu Kingdom conquered many neighboring tribes. After his mother's death, however, Shaka made a series of harsh rules intended to prove the grief of everyone in the kingdom. These rules led to Shaka's assassination by his half-brothers in 1828.

The Zulu Kingdom persisted until being defeated by the British in 1879. During apartheid in South Africa, which lasted from 1948 until 1994, the Zulu were denied many basic rights and privileges. More than five million were forced to move onto reservation-like areas of land called KwaZulu.

Zulu today live in both urban and rural areas, and most live a typically modern life in South Africa. Traditional clothing is sometimes worn during special events or ceremonies.

Cape of Good Hope

The Cape of Good Hope on South Africa's southern coast is very close to the place where the Atlantic and Indian Oceans meet and was an important milestone in the sailing journey from Europe to the Indies. Today, people can visit the Cape of Good Hope to enjoy the beautiful scenery, though the beach itself is quite rocky.



Sudan

Capital City: Khartoum

Languages: Arabic, English



My Sudanese Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of the Sudan

Population: 43,939,598

Land Area: 967,495 square miles

Currency: Sudanese pound

Major Religions:

Muslim (70%), Traditional (25%)

Highest Point: Kinyeti (10,456 feet)

Lowest Point: Red Sea (0 feet)

Sudan is divided into 25 states.

Did you know...?

- Sudan is the largest country in Africa.
- Eastern Sudan was the site of the Nubian Kingdom that was closely related to Egypt during ancient times.
- Sudan is rich in petroleum, gold, silver, copper, and many other mineral resources.
- Northern Sudan is primarily arid desert, while the southern region is covered by forests and farmland.
- More than 400 languages are spoken throughout Sudan.
- Sudanese culture has been influenced by African people, Egypt, Islamic traditions, and even traders from India.

The Haboob

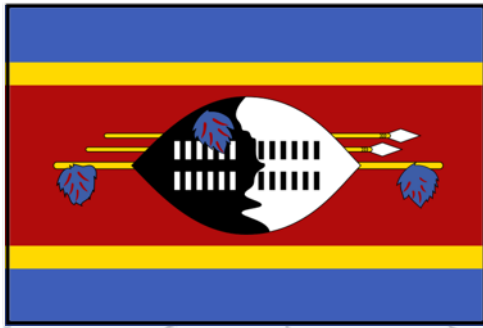
Because of its desert landscape in the north, many areas in Sudan suffer from a severe type of storm called *haboob*. Shifting winds caused by developing thunderstorms stir up sand and dust from the desert and then carry it over large distances. The winds literally create a towering wall of swirling sand that can reach more than four miles in height and 60 miles in width.

The sand makes it difficult to breathe and causes eye irritation. It's important for people and animals alike to take shelter indoors when a *haboob* approaches. These storms occur not only in Sudan but throughout the areas bordering the Sahara and in other arid, dusty regions as well. Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and the southwest American states of Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas all experience *haboob* storms at times.

The Nile Rivers

In the northeastern part of Sudan, in the busy capital city of Khartoum, the White Nile and the Blue Nile meet to form the famous Nile River the flows northward into Egypt and then into the Mediterranean Sea.

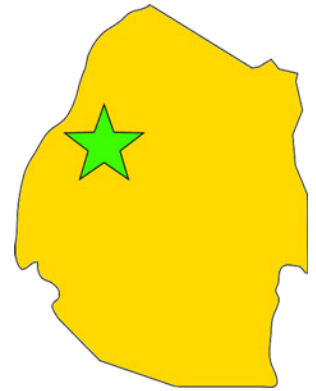
The Blue Nile originates in Ethiopia and curves south-east and then north from Lake Tana and then northward into Sudan. This White Nile, typically considered the continuation of the larger Nile River, begins at Lake Victoria in Uganda and flows in a almost due northward route to Khartoum. At different points through its route, the river is called the Victoria Nile, Albert Nile, and River of the Mountain or Mountain Nile.



Swaziland

Capital City: Lobamba

Languages: English, Swati



Did you know...?

- The spears, shield, and staff on Swaziland's flag represent protection from outside enemies. The colors on the shield represent black and white people living together in peace.
- About three-quarters of the Swazi population grows most of its own food, but the country also grows sugarcane and citrus fruits commercially for export. Other important exports include textile goods and timber.

My Swazi Fact Book

Full Name:

Kingdom of Swaziland

Population: 1,354,051

Land Area: 6,704 square miles

Currency: Lilangeni

Major Religions:

Zionist (40%), Christian (25%)

Highest Point: Emlembe (6,109 feet)

Lowest Point: Great Usutu River (69 feet)

Swaziland is divided into four districts.

Togo

Capital City: Lomé

Languages: French,
Ewe, Gen, Kabye

My Togolese Fact Book

Full Name:

Togolese Republic

Population: 6,587,239

Land Area: 21,925 square miles

Currency: West African franc

Major Religions: Traditional (51%),
Christian (29%), Muslim (20%)

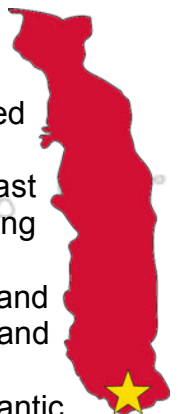
Highest Point: Mont Agou (3,235 feet)

Lowest Point: Atlantic Ocean (0 feet)

Togo is divided into five regions.

Did you know...?

- Beginning early in the twentieth century, Togo was ruled over by Germany, the United Kingdom, and then France. Togo achieved full independence in 1960.
- Togo was once called the Slave Coast because of its role as a trading center during the height of the Atlantic Slave Trade.
- Farms in Togo produce cocoa, coffee, and cotton, which are used both in the country and for export.
- Togo has 35 miles of coast on the Atlantic Ocean and is just 99 miles wide and 360 miles from north to south.
- Despite its small size, more than 40 unique ethnic groups live in Togo.





Tanzania

Capital City: Dodoma

Languages: Swahili, English



Did you know...?

My Tanzanian Fact Book

Full Name:

United Republic of Tanzania

Population: 41,892,895

Land Area: 364,898 square miles

Currency: Tanzanian shilling

Major Religions: Muslim (35%),
Traditional (35%), Christian (30%)

Highest Point: Mount Kilimanjaro (19,341 feet)

Lowest Point: Indian Ocean (0 feet)

Tanzania is divided into 26 regions.

- Tanzania's natural resources include gold, diamonds, iron, tin, platinum, coal, and Tanzanite gemstones.
- Tanzania became a nation in 1964 after the merger of two sovereign nations: Zanzibar and Tanganyika. Zanzibar is a group of islands off the coast of Tanganyika in the Indian Ocean.
- The flag of Tanzania is a combination of the flags that were used by Zanzibar and Tanganyika before their unification. The green symbolizes nature, the yellow symbolizes the gold and other natural resources, the black symbolizes the Tanzanians' skin color, and the blue symbolizes lakes, rivers, and the ocean.

Natural Beauty

Tanzania holds many records among African countries. It is home to Africa's tallest mountain, Mount Kilimanjaro, which is known around the world. Many climbing enthusiasts visit Tanzania each year to climb the mountain, though only 40 percent of those who make the attempt actually reach the summit—Uhuru Peak.

Africa's largest lake, Lake Victoria, sits partially in Tanzania, though it extends into Uganda and Kenya as well. Almost half of the lake's shoreline is within Tanzania's border. Lake Victoria is also the second largest freshwater lake in the world and the famous source of the White Nile, one of two tributaries that form the Nile River.

Lake Tanganyika is Africa's deepest lake and the world's longest lake. Over 40 percent of it lies inside Tanzania, and the rest is divided among three other nations. The lake is home to hundreds of cichlid species which are caught and sold for home aquariums around the world.

Kalambo Falls, on the southern end of Lake Tanganyika, is the second highest waterfall in Africa. It falls 772 feet in an uninterrupted drop.

Serengeti National Park was created in 1951 from a game reserve in northern Tanzania. It contains grasslands, savannah, forests, and rivers and is home to lions, leopards, elephants, rhinoceros, zebra, and other wildlife.





Tunisia

Capital City: Tunis

Languages: Arabic, French



Did you know...?

- Tunisia's Mediterranean coast is the northernmost point of Africa.
- Tunisian farms grow tomatoes, olives, almonds, figs, and citrus fruits.
- Tunisia's landscape includes desert in the south, pastures for graze animals in the central region, farmland in the north, and a mountainous area in the northwest.
- Tunisian athletes have won seven Olympic medals, including two gold medals in swimming and long distance running. A runner named Mohammed Gammoudi actually won four of these seven medals. Between 1964 and 1972, Mohammed competed in many long distance races and brought one gold, two silver, and one bronze medal home to Tunisia.

My Tunisian Fact Book

Full Name:

Tunisian Republic

Population: 10,589,025

Land Area: 63,170 square miles

Currency: Tunisian dinar

Major Religion: Muslim (98%)

Highest Point:

Jebel ech Chambi (5,066 feet)

Lowest Point: Shatt al Gharsah
(56 feet below sea level)

Tunisia is divided into 24 governorates.

Carthage

The city of Carthage on Tunisia's northern coast, was originally founded as a Phoenician colony early in the ninth century B.C. Some ancient Roman writings say that the city was founded by Queen

Elissa of Tyre. When her brother, King Pygmalion, assassinated her husband, Elissa fled across the sea to the North African coast. Queen Elissa appears in Virgil's *Aeneid*, though he calls her Queen Dido.

Carthage grew to be one of the largest cities and spheres of influence in the Mediterranean world. Independent of the rest of Phoenicia, they developed a strong army and a powerful navy that they often used in fighting their rivals, the Romans. The great military leader Hannibal was a lifelong Carthaginian who led his men on the famous crossing of the Alps during the Second Punic War.





Uganda

Capital City: Kampala

Languages: English,
Swahili, Luganda



My Ugandan Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Uganda

Population: 33,398,682

Land Area: 91,136 square miles

Currency: Ugandan shilling

Major Religions:

Christian (84%), Muslim (12%)

Highest Point:

Margherita Peak (16,765 feet)

Lowest Point: Lake Albert (2,037 feet)

Uganda is divided into 80 districts.

Did you know...?

- The White Nile runs basically southeast to northwest through the center of Uganda, and it serves as a general boundary between the country's different language groups. Luganda is spoken mainly in the south, while Swahili is spoken in the north.
- A severe epidemic of the so-called African sleeping sickness occurred in Uganda in the early twentieth century. This disease, caused by a microscopic parasite that is transmitted by the tsetse fly, has been present in sub-Saharan Africa for hundreds or thousands of years but began to spread more rapidly after traders and foreigners began visiting the area. Though it is fatal if untreated, modern medicines are very effective against the parasite.

Lake Victoria

Uganda's southwestern border is dominated by Lake Victoria, which also borders Kenya and Tanzania. Lake Victoria was the "unknown" source of the Nile River that was greatly sought after for hundreds of years. Even Emperor Nero sent explorers to search for the river's source, and the ancient Greeks wrote legends about its headwaters.

During the time of European exploration and colonization of Africa in the nineteenth century, the Nile's headwaters were considered the Great Prize, the crowning achievement for any great explorer. Many explorers tried to find this Great Prize, but probably the three most famous are David Livingstone, Richard Burton, and John Speke.

Livingstone's explorations took him deep into the jungle but too far west to find the Nile's source. Burton and Speke started out together in the south of Tanzania where they found Lake Tanganyika. Here, Burton stayed behind to recover from an illness while Speke moved further north. He became the first European to see Lake Victoria in 1858 and assumed it was the headwaters of the Nile without actually verifying that fact. Instead Henry Morton Stanley circumnavigated Lake Victoria in the 1870s to confirm its role as the source of the Nile River.

Of course, today we know that the Nile River is actually formed by the merging of two rivers—the White Nile and the Blue Nile. It is the White Nile which ultimately flows from Lake Victoria.



Zambia

Capital City: Lusaka

Languages: English,
Nyanja, Bemba



Did you know...?

- Zambia is a little larger than Texas.
- Zambia was once part of the British colony called Northern Rhodesia.
- The eagle on the Zambia's flag represents the Zambian people's ability to rise above problems in the nation.
- Zambia is warm, usually over 70 degrees Fahrenheit, all year round. The country has three seasons: Rainy, Cool Dry, and Hot Dry.

My Zambian Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Zambia

Population: 13,460,305

Land Area: 290,587 square miles

Currency: Kwacha

Major Religions:

Christian (60%), Muslim (35%)

Highest Point: Mafinga Hills (7,549 feet)

Lowest Point: Zambezi River (1,079 feet)

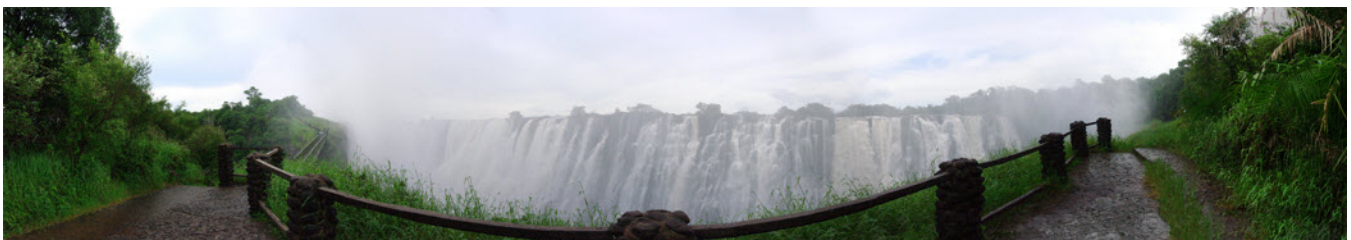
Zambia is divided into nine provinces.

Victoria Falls

At more than 5,600 feet wide and 354 high, Victoria Falls is one of the largest waterfalls in the world. The huge amount of water that pours over the falls causes a powerful mist that rises more than 1,000 above the river. This mist can be seen from 30 miles away and is likely the reason that the local people call the falls *Mosi-oa-Tunya*, which means "Thundering Smoke."

Located on the Zambezi River, Victoria Falls marks the border between Zambia and Zimbabwe. The Victoria Falls Bridge links the two countries just downstream from the falls. Though most of the river before the falls is turbulent, a small, natural pool exists near Livingstone Island that allows people to swim very close to the edge and even peer over without being swept over the falls.

Swimming in the so-called Devil's Pool is only safe during the dry season when the volume of water is at a fraction of its peak levels. The current is often still quite strong in the pool, but a natural rock wall beneath the water keeps careful swimmers safe.





Zimbabwe

Capital City: Harare

Languages:
English, Shona, Ndebele



Did you know...?

- Zimbabwe used the Zimbabwean dollar until 2009. A poor economy caused the currency's value to drop continuously until, during the summer of 2008, 50 *billion* Zimbabwean dollars were worth just 33 United States cents. The currency was abandoned completely in 2009. The country now uses foreign currencies like the U.S. dollar and South African rand instead.
- Though it remained a British colony, Zimbabwe—called Rhodesia at the time—began to govern itself in 1923. The country declared complete independence in 1965 but was not recognized by most other countries until 1980. During most of the twentieth century, Zimbabwe was governed by the white minority with very little representation given to the black majority.

My Zimbabwean Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Zimbabwe

Population: 11,651,858

Land Area: 150,871 square miles

Currency: None

Major Religions: Syncretic (50%),
Christian (25%), Traditional (24%)

Highest Point: Inyangani (8,504 feet)

Lowest Point:

Runde and Save Rivers (162 feet)

Zimbabwe is divided into eight provinces.

Shona People and the Great Zimbabwe

Most Zimbabweans belong to the Shona ethnic group, whose ancestors have lived in the region for hundreds of years. Throughout their history, the Shona have founded several kingdoms and empires, including the Mutapa which existed until the area was conquered by Europeans in the nineteenth century.

One of the most powerful Shona kingdoms was called the Kingdom of Zimbabwe and lasted from around 1100 to about 1500 A.D. Soon after the establishment of the kingdom, the people built a capital city called Great Zimbabwe in the central area of the present-day nation. This sprawling city was both a palace for the king and the home of nearly 20,000 people.

The Great Zimbabwe is built entirely of stones which were carefully fitted together with no mortar, and it is the largest stone structure built prior to European arrival anywhere in the Southern Hemisphere. The city was abandoned during the 1500s, and most of it is in ruins today. The most intact portion, called the Great Enclosure, may have been used exclusively by the king though no one knows for sure.



Quiz Time!

Africa

Africa is the world's hottest continent. Though some of the highest elevations get snow, most of the continent is hot and dry all year. Africa's landscape is covered by desert, savanna, and rainforest with beautiful waterfalls, sandy coasts, and picturesque islands.

Once carved up into numerous European colonies, Africa's people have asserted their independence and founded sovereign nations throughout the last century. As this book is being written, the people of Sudan are voting on allowing the southern part of the country to secede and form a new nation. Maybe the 54th African nation will already exist when you read this!

Where was the first successful heart transplant performed? (page 43)

Where can you see the Thundering Smoke? (page 49)

What country sometimes has thirteen months? (page 20)

What kingdom flourished in Angola during the 1400s? (page 5)

What is Africa's largest country? (page 44)

If you got married in Gabon, what might your guests wear to the wedding? (page 21)

Where was the Slave Coast? (page 45)

What African country was once called Nyasaland? (page 29)

How often does it rain in the Libyan Desert? (page 27)

Why is Lake Victoria famous? (pages 48 and 49)

What beautiful gemstones are mined in the Central African Republic? (page 12)

What region of Africa sometimes sends dust all the way to the Americas? (page 13)

Which country recently gave up its currency in favor of foreign currency? (page 50)

What is Africa's lowest elevation? (page 17)

What unusual event occurred at Lake Nyos in 1986? (page 10)

Name something notable about the Fon, Adja, and Yoruba people. (page 6)

What two types of letters do people use to write the Comoran language? (page 14)

Which dancers can jump 13 feet into the air? (page 38)

How far back does Egypt's history go? (page 18)

Where did dodo birds live before going extinct? (page 32)

Where did Liberia's capital get its name? (page 26)

How does Batswana music differ from that of most of Africa? (page 7)

What two people groups make up most of the Congolese population? (page 15)

Where can you hear talking drums? (page 24)

The story of which Nigerien people is told in the Kano Chronicle? (page 36)

What attracted settlers to the town of Adrar? (page 4)

What is a haboob? (page 44)

What two countries unified to form Tanzania? (page 46)

What is a karyenda? (page 9)

What flat structure in the Sahara Desert is used as a landmark by orbiting astronauts? (page 31)

What country's name means "Land of Honest People"? (page 8)

Which country's borders follow a river by the same name? (page 21)

What makes Lake Volta notable? (page 22)

Who are the Banyarwanda? (page 38)

Why is Namibia's northern coast called the Skeleton Coast? (page 35)

Who might tell you a story of West Africa's long history? (page 39)

What is Africa's smallest country? (page 40)

What is Masai Mara? (page 25)

What lasting structure did the Shona people build? (page 50)

Where did some Greek leaders get their war elephants? (page 19)

What great city was founded by Queen Elissa? (page 47)

Where might a friend offer you green tea flavored with mint? (page 33)

Which ethnic group took over the slave ship Amistad in the early nineteenth century? (page 41)

Which king of the Mali Empire appears in the Catalan Atlas? (page 30)

Where is the village called Chã das Caldeiras? (page 11)

What now-extinct Malagasy bird weighed as much as 900 pounds? (page 28)

Which country has the continent's highest population? (page 37)

Where could you spend a Katanga Cross? (page 16)

What instrument could you make from a dried gourd and beaded strings? (page 23)

What do the figures on the Swazi flag represent? (page 45)

Where can you find paintings made before 3000 B.C.? (page 42)

What island nation was once called "Island of Abundance"? (page 40)

Where did the Gaza Empire develop? (page 34)

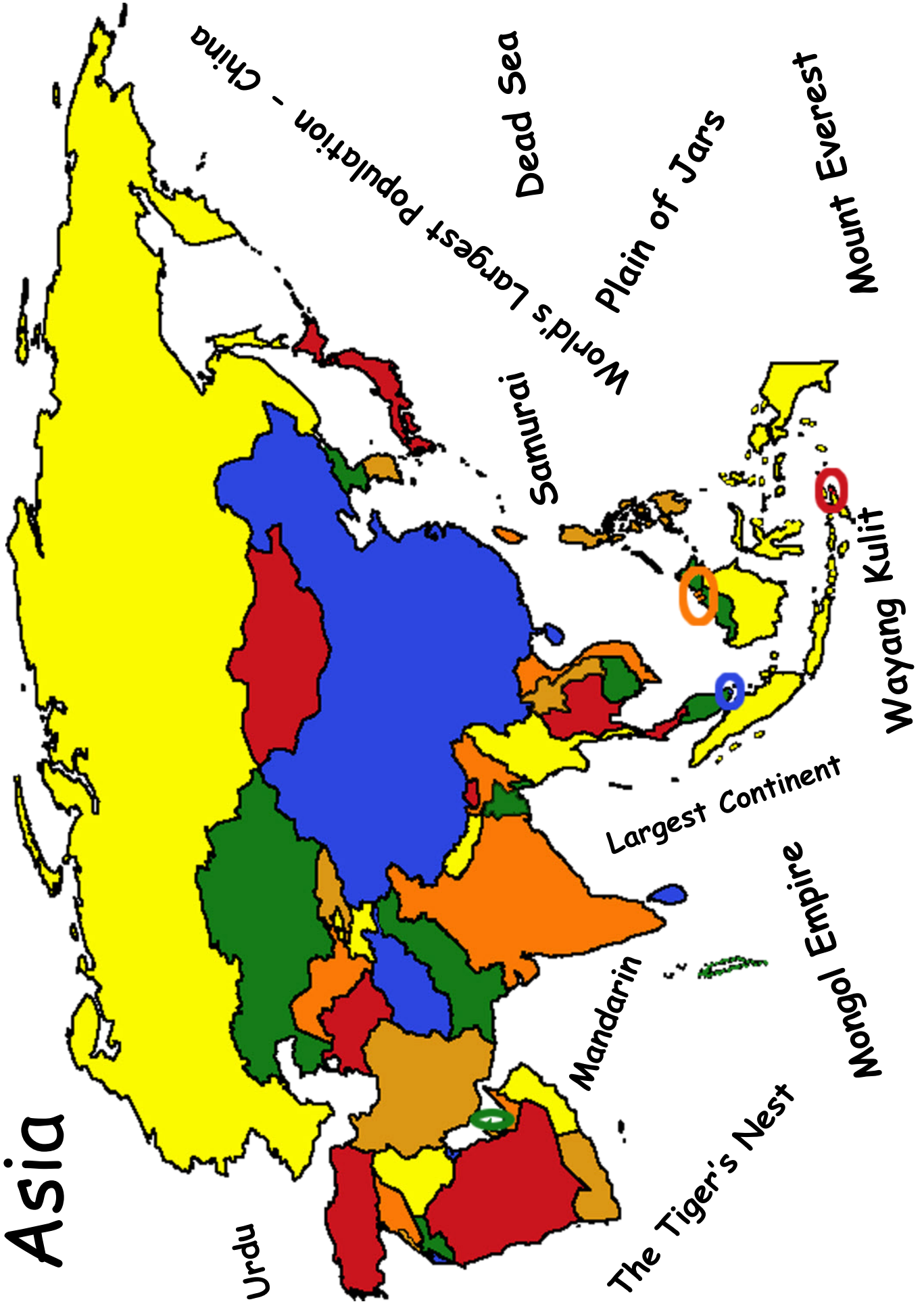
Where might you go to a party with your Basotho friends? (page 26)

If you could go to Africa, where would you visit first?

In which ancient African civilization would you like to spend a day if you had the chance?

Would you like to have helped build any of the structures you've read about? Such as the underground churches, pyramids, or the Great Zimbabwe?

Asia



Afghanistan

Capital City: Kabul

Languages: Dari, Pashto



Did you know...?

- The Dari language is also known as Persian. The language is called by several different names in various parts of Asia.
- Afghanistan is a land-locked country, which means that it doesn't border any ocean. Many parts of the country receive very little rainfall, and fresh water can be difficult to obtain.
- Emeralds, gold, and silver are all mined in Afghanistan.
- The Kabul Valley of Afghanistan was one of the countries conquered by the Persian king Darius I, and its name is inscribed on his tomb.

My Afghan Fact Book

Full Name:

Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

Population: 28,395,716

Land Area: 251,772 square miles

Currency: Afghani

Major Religion: Muslim (99%)

Highest Point: Nowshak (24,557 feet)

Lowest Point: Amu Darya (846 feet)

Afghanistan is divided into 34 provinces.

People of Afghanistan

Afghanistan is home to many ethnic groups, including the Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek, and Turkmen. You may recognize some of those names from other Asian countries like Uzbekistan.

Almost half of Afghan people are Pashtuns, but the ancient origin of the group is unknown. Different Pashtun tribes believe that they are descended from the Hebrew tribe of Joseph, the Muslim prophet Muhammad, or even invading Greeks.

Between two and three million nomads live in Afghanistan. These people move from place to place as they raise livestock from which they get both wool and meat.

Khushal Khan Khattak

Khushal Khan Khattak was an Afghan poet who lived during the seventeenth century when Afghanistan was ruled by the Mughal Emperors of India. He was called the Afghan Warrior Poet because he frequently wrote patriotic poems that stirred Afghan nationalism.

During his lifetime, Khattak wrote more than 45,000 poems, many of which have been translated into English and published in anthologies.





Bahrain

Capital City: Manama

Language: Arabic



Did you know...?

- Bahrain is the only independent island nation in the Persian Gulf.
- Bahrain includes more than 30 small islands along with the main one, called Bahrain Island.
- Over 90 percent of Bahrain's landscape is desert.
- The Bahraini have hosted several Grand Prix auto races on a Formula One racetrack.
- Bahrain's natural resources include petroleum, natural gas, and pearls. Commercial fishing is common, but very little farming takes place.

My Bahraini Fact Book

Full Name:

Kingdom of Bahrain

Population: 738,004

Land Area: 290 square miles

Currency: Bahraini dinar

Major Religion: Muslim (81%)

Highest Point:

Jabal ad Dukhan (400 feet)

Lowest Point: Persian Gulf (0 feet)

Bahrain is divided into five governorates.

My Bruneian Fact Book

Full Name:

Brunei Darussalam

Population: 395,027

Land Area: 2,226 square miles

Currency: Brunei dollar

Major Religions:

Muslim (67%), Buddhist (13%)

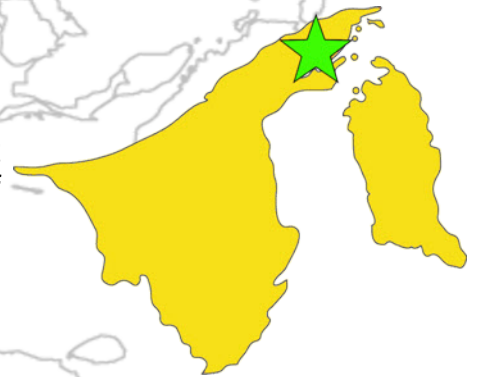
Highest Point: Bukit Pagon (6,070 feet)

Lowest Point: South China Sea (0 feet)

Brunei is divided into four districts.

Did you know...?

- Brunei is located on the north coast of the island of Borneo. Its territory is divided by a small region of Malaysia.
- The word *Darussalam* means "Abode of Peace" in the Malay language.
- The Malay dialect used in Brunei is almost completely unintelligible with the Malay spoken in Malaysia and Indonesia.
- Brunei was a British colony for nearly a hundred years, from 1888 to 1984.



Brunei

Capital City:

Bandar Seri Begawan

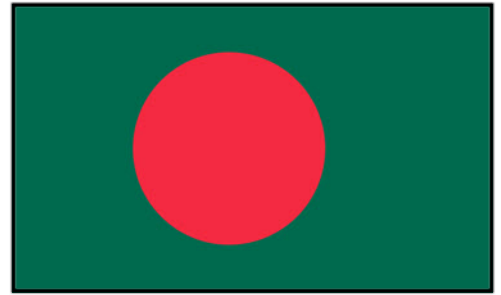
Language: Malay



Bangladesh

Capital City: Dhaka

Language: Bengali



Did you know...?

- Bangladesh was part of Pakistan from 1947 to 1971, but nearly 1,000 miles of India's territory separated the so-called East Pakistan from West Pakistan. This tremendous distance led to East Pakistan's being excluded from most political decisions in the dominant West Pakistan. Bangladesh gained independence after fighting the Bangladesh Liberation War.
- Because of its low elevation and numerous rivers, Bangladesh is vulnerable to frequent floods. In 1998, a devastating flood occurred that put two-thirds of the country under water.

My Bangladeshi Fact Book

Full Name:

People's Republic of Bangladesh

Population: 156,118,464

Land Area: 56,977 square miles

Currency: Taka

Major Religions:

Muslim (89%), Hindu (10%)

Highest Point: Keokradong (4,035 feet)

Lowest Point: Indian Ocean (0 feet)

Bangladesh is divided into seven divisions.

Somapura Mahavihara

Somapura Mahavihara is an ancient Buddhist monastery built during the ninth century in northwestern Bangladesh. Covering 27 acres, the monastery's structure seems to blend with the surrounding nature. The brown brick walls resemble earth, especially from a distance, and much of the roof has grass growing upon it.

The monastery contains 177 individual cells where Buddhist monks lived and meditated. Called a *stupa*, the larger, high-roofed room in the center of the structure houses artifacts like terra cotta artwork, coins, and sculptures.

Though Somapura Mahavihara was heavily used by monks from its founding until the twelfth century, its use declined and then ceased altogether by the 1400s. Today, people can visit the monastery to enjoy the natural beauty, to see the artifacts, and to imagine what Bangladesh might have looked like a thousand years ago.



Bhutan

Capital City: Thimphu

Language: Dzongkha



Did you know...?

- The name Bhutan means “Land of the Thunder Dragon.”
- Bhutan’s Gangkar Puensum has the highest elevation of any “unclimbed mountain” in the world. Climbing high mountains is actually illegal in Bhutan.
- Bhutan is home to the Bengal tiger, sloth bear, red panda, leopard, and an unusual animal called a takin.
- Bhutan exports electricity to its neighbors. Its natural resources include timber and gypsum for making drywall.

My Bhutanese Fact Book

Full Name:

Kingdom of Bhutan

Population: 699,847

Land Area: 14,987 square miles

Currency: Ngultrum

Major Religions:

Buddhist (75%), Hindu (25%)

Highest Point:

Gangkar Puensum (24,836 feet)

Lowest Point: Drangeme Chhu (318 feet)

Bhutan is divided into 20 districts.

Paro Taktsang, the Tiger's Nest



Bhutan’s *Paro Taktsang* in the western part of the country is built on the edge of a cliff around the mouth of a cave. The cave itself was considered a holy place by Buddhists beginning around the middle of the ninth century.

The monastery sits more than 2,000 feet above the valley below. The cliffs create a sheer drop all the way from the monastery to the valley. Getting to the monastery requires a two-hour trek up the mountain along stone paths and across wooden bridges.

Since its completion in 1692, *Paro Taktsang* has attracted Buddhists from throughout Bhutan. Some monks live in the monastery for three years, taking only rare trips into the valley below for supplies.

Because the monastery continues to be used as a religious site, not many tourists are allowed to visit. Those who do come are allowed to explore the entire monastery, though the cave is open to visitors just one day each year.



Cambodia

Capital City: Phnom Penh

Language: Khmer



My Cambodian Fact Book

Full Name:

Kingdom of Cambodia

Population: 14,453,680

Land Area: 69,898 square miles

Currency: Riel

Major Religion: Buddhist (96%)

Highest Point: Phnum Aoral (5,938 feet)

Lowest Point: Gulf of Thailand (0 feet)

Cambodia is divided into 23 provinces.

Did you know...?

- Cambodia was called Kampuchea from 1975 to 1989.
- Cambodia was part of a French colony, called French Indochina, from 1863 to 1953.
- Cambodia has just two seasons. One is very hot and dry, while the other is cooler and wet. The temperature rarely drops below 70 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Civil war in the early 1970s left Cambodia's rural fields littered with land mines. Though the number of injuries decrease every year, rural Cambodians remain at risk of stepping on unexploded land mines.

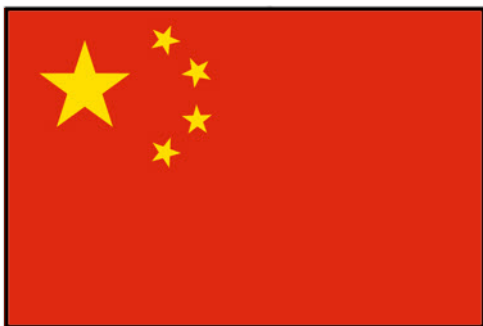
Angkor Wat

Undoubtedly Cambodia's most famous building, Angkor Wat was built in the 1100s as the capital and royal temple of the Khmer Empire for King Suryavarman II. It was originally intended as a Hindu temple but changed over to the Buddhist religion during the thirteenth century.

The complex is surrounded by a wide moat, which gives it the appearance of sitting upon a perfectly rectangular island when viewed from above. Bridges on the west and east sides connect the complex with the surrounding country.

Along with the central temple, the Angkor Wat complex includes libraries and galleries filled with bas-relief artwork, shrines, and treasures of gold. The temple continues to be used religiously but is also open to hundreds of thousands of visitors every year.





China

Capital City: Beijing

Languages:
Standard Mandarin,
Manchurian, Mongolian,
Tibetan, Uyghur



Did you know...?

- China is the world's most populous country, and almost 20 percent of the world's people live there.
- China includes two Special Administrative Regions that are almost completely autonomous—Hong Kong and Macau.
- Fifty-six different ethnic groups are recognized by the Chinese government. These include Tibetans, Mongols, Uyghur, Zhuang, Hui, Miao. Han people make up the majority of the Chinese population.
- Chinese law strongly discourages religious beliefs or activities of any kind, though Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism have historically been very important to the people.

Chinese Culture

China is recognized as one of the world's oldest civilizations, and its cultural traditions were founded on thousands of years of history. Strongly influenced by Confucian teachings from the fifth century B.C., Chinese culture has emphasized respect for elders and striving to honor one's family above virtually anything else.

A family's ancestors were greatly revered—almost worshipped—and every action of an individual person was considered a reflection on his ancestors and on his living family. Many generations of a family traditionally lived together in one home with the eldest man being in control of the household right up until his death.

Because sons remained with their birth families for life while daughters married and went to live with their husbands' families, girls were often raised as if they didn't actually belong to their birth families. Over the centuries, this led to an often degrading view of daughters while sons were—and still are—highly prized.

The fabric of Chinese culture includes opera, Ming pottery, kung fu, traditional medicine, Song paintings, jade carvings, silk gowns, acrobatics, and calligraphy.

During the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s, China's communist government attempted to destroy the "old" Chinese culture and replace it with a culture where the government replaced God, family, and even personal liberty in the hearts of the people. Today, however, the government has embraced much of the old culture as a vital aspect of the country's identity.

My Chinese Fact Book

Full Name:

People's Republic of China

Population: 1,330,141,295

Land Area: 9,671,018 square miles

Currency: Yuan

Major Religions: No Official Tracking

Highest Point:

Mount Everest (29,035 feet)

Lowest Point: Turpan Pendi

(505 feet below sea level)

China is divided into 23 provinces.



India

Capital City: New Delhi

Languages: Hindi, English



My Indian Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of India

Population: 1,173,108,018

Land Area: 1,269,219 square miles

Currency: Indian rupee

Major Religions:

Hindu (81%), Muslim (13%)

Highest Point:

Kanchenjunga (28,209 feet)

Lowest Point: Indian Ocean (0 feet)

India is divided into 28 states.

Did you know...?

- India is one of only two countries in the world with over a billion people.
- India's Bollywood produces more films each year than any other film industry in the world.
- Both Hinduism and Buddhism began in India.
- India was colonized by the United Kingdom during the nineteenth century. Beginning in 1915, Mahatma Gandhi worked toward Indian independence using non-violence, a very simple lifestyle, and fasting to protest the British government. His efforts succeeded in gaining independence for India in 1947, but Gandhi was assassinated in 1948 by a man named Nathuram Godse.

Mughal Empire

The Mughal Empire covered nearly all of modern-day India and areas to the north and northeast. Founded in 1526 by the military leader called Babur, the empire persisted into the eighteenth century when it was overtaken by the British. Babur actually came from the Central Asian area of modern Uzbekistan and was descended from both Timur and Genghis Khan.

The Mughals were initially Muslim and brought many aspect of the religion to the Indus Valley. As time passed, though, they became increasingly Hindu in their beliefs and traditions. The emperor Akbar the Great ruled from 1556 to 1605 and espoused a religion that combined Islamic and Hindu beliefs with mysticism, nature worship, and other religions. The empire expanded to its greatest extent under Akbar's reign.

Lasting influence of the Mughal Empire can be seen all over India. They are probably most famous for their gardens and architecture, both of which are very symmetrical in their design. Mughal gardens

typically include a long, narrow pool of water with a row of trees growing on each side. The reflection of the trees in the water is part of the gardens' beauty. On either side of the pool, manicured lawns stretch out and are dotted with bushes.



The Mughal rulers built many beautiful palaces, fortresses, temples, and tombs, but the most famous is Taj Mahal, located in northern India. Built in 1653 as a tomb for Emperor Shah Jahan's wife, the white marble building is considered one of the most beautiful structures in the entire world.



Indonesia

Capital City: Jakarta

Language: Indonesian

My Indonesian Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Indonesia

Population: 242,968,342

Land Area: 735,355 square miles

Currency: Rupiah

Major Religion: Muslim (86%)

Highest Point:

Puncak Jaya (16,503 feet)

Lowest Point: Indian Ocean (0 feet)

*Indonesia is divided into
30 provinces.*

Did you know...?

- Indonesia includes more than 17,000 islands with about 6,000 of them being inhabited. Its motto is *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, which means "Many, Yet One."
- Agriculture is Indonesia's most important industry. Farms here grow rice, coffee, tea, and spices like black pepper, nutmeg, and mace.
- Almost 750 languages are spoken in Indonesia by more than 300 unique ethnic groups.

Wayang Kulit

Throughout Indonesia, people enjoy the traditional shadow puppet theater called *wayang kulit* that has been performed in the country for over a thousand years. Flat characters are cut from leather and attached to sturdy bamboo sticks.

During a performance, a white sheet is hung between the audience and the *dalang*, the puppet master. A light (traditionally an oil lamp but commonly a light bulb today) casts the shadows of the puppets onto the sheet.

The *dalang* moves the puppets around as he uses different voices to tell a story. Stories may be traditional Indonesian tales, love stories, or hero epics from India. *Wayang kulit* performances often last through an entire night, and the best *dalangs* become famous across all of Indonesia.





Iran

Capital City: Tehran

Language: Persian



Did you know...?

- Iran's landscape includes mountains, rainforest, desert, plains, and lakes.
- Iran is a little larger than Alaska.
- Rice and yogurt are two of the staple foods in Iran. The people also enjoy plums, apricots, pomegranates, and other fruits.
- Many inventions and discoveries have been made in Iran, such as windmills and ethanol alcohol. Through history, Iranians have contributed to the development of modern algebra, medicine, astronomy, and chemistry.

My Iranian Fact Book

Full Name:

Islamic Republic of Iran

Population: 76,923,300

Land Area: 636,372 square miles

Currency: Rial

Major Religion: Muslim (98%)

Highest Point:

Kuh-e Damavand (18,606 feet)

Lowest Point: Caspian Sea

(92 feet below sea level)

Iran is divided into 31 provinces.

Medes and Persians

In ancient times, the area of modern Iran was ruled first by the Median Kingdom and then by the Persian Achaemenid Empire. The two together were often called the Medes and Persians after they became unified under Cyrus the Great in the sixth century B.C.



The Medes and Persians play a prominent role in the Bible's book of Daniel. It was King Darius the Great who signed the decree that sent Daniel to the lion's den, and the Bible says that once the king of the Medes and Persians made a law, it could never be changed.

The Persians, whose empire persisted well after the Median Kingdom declined, created beautiful gold artwork, jewelry, bowls, and utensils. Many of these artifacts have been preserved and are on display at museums around the world.

Persepolis, located in south-central Iran, was the capital of the Persian Empire beginning in the late sixth century. Bas-relief art adorned the walls and stairwells throughout the city. The city was destroyed by looting and fire after Alexander the Great conquered it in 330 B.C., but people can visit the ruins today.



Iraq

Capital City: Baghdad

Languages: Arabic,
Assyrian, Kurdish



Did you know...?

- The writing on Iraq's flag is Arabic for "God is great."
- The Tigris and Euphrates Rivers flow through Iraq, and the area between them has historically been called Mesopotamia, which means "land between the rivers" in Greek. This area is often called the Cradle of Civilization, and it's believed that both writing and the wheel were first used here.
- Islam first came to Iraq in the seventh century, and Islamic rulers built the capital city, Baghdad, during the eighth century.
- Iraq was conquered by the Mongols, the Ottomans, and the British before gaining independence in 1932. The government has changed several times since then. A new constitution was adopted in 2005 after the ousting of Saddam Hussein, who ruled as a dictator for over 20 years.

My Iraqi Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Iraq

Population: 29,671,605

Land Area: 169,234 square miles

Currency: Iraqi dinar

Major Religion: Muslim (97%)

Highest Point:

Unnamed Peak (11,847 feet)

Lowest Point: Persian Gulf (0 feet)

Iraq is divided into 18 governorates.

Kurds

One of Iraq's largest ethnic groups are the Kurdish people with a total population of about 29 million worldwide. Kurds are Muslim and have a culture similar to that of other Middle Eastern people. Unlike most of their neighbors, though, Kurdish women don't wear the head covering that is typical of most Muslims.

The famous Islamic military leader, Saladin, was a Kurd. He fought against the Christian Crusaders when they invaded Jerusalem during the twelfth century. Saladin successfully recaptured the city and other conquered areas, and his honorable deeds in battle garnered the respect of many European leaders.

The Kurds enjoy musical stories and have a long history of minstrels and bards. Most songs tell love stories or heroic tales of ancient battles. Dances are popular as well especially during special holidays and festivals.



Israel

Capital City: Jerusalem

Languages: Hebrew, Arabic



My Israeli Fact Book

Full Name:

State of Israel

Population: 7,353,985

Land Area: 8,522 square miles

Currency: Shekel

Major Religion: Jewish (76%)

Highest Point: Har Meron (3,963 feet)

Lowest Point: Dead Sea

(1,339 feet below sea level)

Israel is divided into six districts.

Did you know...?

- Since its declaration as an independent nation in 1948, Israel has faced military opposition from its neighbors. During the Six-Day War in 1967, Israel captured three territories from Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. These areas are classified as “occupied” by the United Nations, but the Israelis consider them “disputed.” All three are shown in light blue on the map above: The Golan Heights is in the northeast, the West Bank in the east-central region, and the Gaza Strip is on the southwestern area.
- Children in Israel are required to attend school from age three to 18.

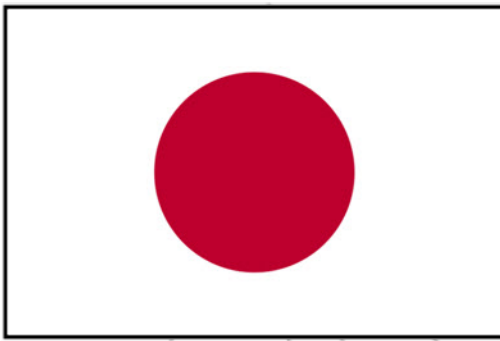
Bible Sites in Israel

The people and events of the Bible center around the location of present-day Israel. The modern nation's boundaries were drawn in part based on the description of the land that God promised Abraham in the book of Genesis. The entire region is rich with the heritage and history of both Jews and Christians. Since Muslims moved into the area around the seventh century, many Islamic mosques and buildings have been built here too.

Hundreds of ruins, roads, wells, and tombs told about in the Bible remain for people to visit today. Maybe someday you'll visit Israel!

Probably the most famous site in Israel is the Temple Mount in Jerusalem where Solomon's Temple stood. The temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D., but the Western Wall remains and is considered a holy site by Jews. The Islamic Al Aqsa Mosque was built on the Temple Mount in 720 A.D. and is considered one of the world's most beautiful mosques.

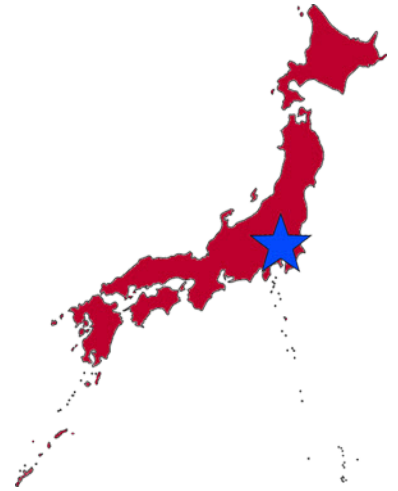
The Church of the Holy Sepulchre is built on the site where many believe Jesus was buried, and Calvary's hill is nearby. The Garden of Gethsemane is filled with olive trees today just as it was in Jesus' day. The trees were cut down by the Romans in the first century but have grown back from their roots. In the town of Haifa, a chapel is built around the cave where Elijah is believed to have hidden from Ahab and Jezebel.



Japan

Capital City: Tokyo

Language: Japanese



My Japanese Fact Book

Full Name:

Japan

Population: 126,804,433

Land Area: 145,925 square miles

Currency: Yen

Major Religions:

Shinto (84%), Buddhist (71%)

Highest Point: Fujiyama (12,388 feet)

Lowest Point: Hachiro-gata
(13 feet below sea level)

Japan is divided into 47 prefectures.

Did you know...?

- The Japanese people call their country *Nippon* in formal situations and *Nihon* in casual ones.
- There are over 100 active volcanoes in Japan. The country is vulnerable to severe earthquakes and tsunamis.
- The nation's language is related to Chinese with almost half of Japanese words having a Chinese origin.
- Japan includes almost 7,000 islands.
- Origami, bonsai trees, Japanese rock gardens, anime, karaoke machines, green tea, Nintendo, karate, judo, and sumo all come from Japan.

Samurai

Through much of Japanese history, the Samurai were the elite warriors who protected the emperor, his family, and other nobles. Being a samurai was a hereditary position, meaning that sons of samurai warriors became samurai themselves. Even so, all novice samurai trained under more experienced fighters.

The samurai fought with a type of sword called a katana, a two-handed club, a spear, a longbow, various knives, and other weapons. Some samurai fought from horseback. In later years, cannons came into use, especially during siege situations.

Between the twelfth and nineteenth centuries, powerful samurai clans established control over the government. The samurai leader was called a Shogun, and during these periods of samurai control, the hereditary emperor would act as a puppet of the Shogun.

In the 1870s, Emperor Meiji took away the samurai's rights as the only warrior class in Japan. The country began to build a modern army, and the traditional way of the samurai ended.





Jordan

Capital City: Amman

Language: Arabic



My Jordanian Fact Book

Full Name:

Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

Population: 6,407,085

Land Area: 35,637 square miles

Currency: Jordanian dinar

Major Religion: Muslim (92%)

Highest Point:

Jabal Umm ad Dami (6,083 feet)

Lowest Point: Dead Sea

(1,339 feet below sea level)

Jordan is divided into 12 governorates.

Did you know...?

- The Kingdom of Moab was located in the western part of modern-day Jordan.
- Jordan was ruled by Islamic caliphates and the Ottoman Empire, then later as a British mandate before its independence in 1946.
- Jordan is a rather dry country that experiences hot summers and cold winters with occasional snowfall.
- A favorite food in Jordan is called *mansaf* and is made from a combination of lamb, rice, and fermented yogurt that is spread over flatbread and then sprinkled with almonds, pine nuts, and parsley.

Dead Sea

Lying on Jordan's western border, the Dead Sea is the world's lowest elevation. Its surface sits at 1,339 feet below sea level, while the sea floor is more than 2,000 feet below sea level and getting lower. The Dead Sea rests upon a tectonic fault where the Arabian Plate and the African Plate are moving away from one another. (See Appendix B for a map of the world's tectonic plates.) As the plates keep moving, the floor of the Dead Sea keeps dropping lower. It's estimated that the sea falls about 13 inches each year.

The Dead Sea is also the saltiest body of water on the earth. Up to 35 percent of its volume is salt! One reason is that several rivers and streams flow into the Dead Sea, but none flow out of it. Furthermore, the region's hot climate causes about *seven million tons* of water to evaporate every single day. This means that all of the salt flowing into the sea is left behind when vast amounts of water evaporate.

Everything around the Dead Sea is covered by white salt, and no fish or other creatures live in the sea. All the salt makes things fun for swimmers, though—the high salt content makes everyone float with ease!



Kazakhstan

Capital City: Astana

Languages:
Kazakh, Russian



Did you know...?

- On the Kazakhstani flag, the sun's rays are shaped like wheat kernels to symbolize abundance and prosperity. The soaring eagle symbolizes freedom, power, and the future. The pattern on the left side is called *koshkar-muiz*, which literally means "horns of the ram."
- Kazakhstan was part of the Soviet Union and was the last member state to declare its independence in 1991.
- Kazakhstan is the world's largest landlocked country.
- About one third of Kazakhstan's landscape is covered by a dry steppe.
- Petroleum and natural gas are Kazakhstan's most plentiful natural resources. The country also exports copper, lead, diamonds, wool, leather, and wheat.

My Kazakhstani Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Kazakhstan

Population: 15,460,484

Land Area: 1,052,085 square miles

Currency: Tenge

Major Religions:

Muslim (47%), Christian (46%)

Highest Point:

Khan Tangiri Shyngy (22,949 feet)

Lowest Point: Vpadina Kaundy

(433 feet below sea level)

Kazakhstan is divided into 14 provinces.

Horse Games

Horses have been extremely important through the Kazakhstanis' history as nomadic herdsman. Today, the people still enjoy eating horse meat and playing a variety of games on horseback. Racing horses across open pastures and on dirt tracks is very popular, and the Kazakhstanis have developed a few unique horse games as well.

Kure is a sort of "horse wrestling" in which two riders try to wrestle one another off their mounts. Each rider typically goes shirtless and wears a colored sash tied around his waist. The two ride toward one another and bring their horses' heads very close. Each grabs hold of the other's sash, and struggle ensues!

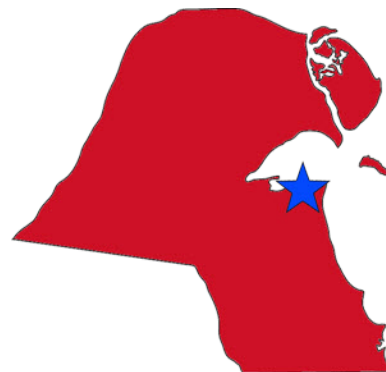
In the game called *kyu-kuu*, which means "kiss the girl," a young man and young woman compete to see who is the fastest rider. The man waits at a starting line while the lady gallops from behind and passes him. He then sets his own horse at a gallop and tries to catch the woman before she reaches the finish line. If he wins, he gets to give the girl a kiss. If she wins, she playfully beats him with a whip.



Kuwait

Capital City: Kuwait City

Language: Arabic



Did you know...?

- Kuwait's territory includes nine islands in the Persian Gulf. Only Failaka Island is inhabited.
- Kuwait does not grow much food. Instead, it imports nearly everything that the Kuwaiti people eat. Much of the drinking and cooking water needs to be imported as well.
- The country's economy depends almost entirely on crude oil, of which it has abundant reserves.
- Almost 70 percent of the people living in Kuwait are citizens of foreign nations.

My Kuwaiti Fact Book

Full Name:

State of Kuwait

Population: 2,789,132

Land Area: 6,880 square miles

Currency: Kuwaiti dinar

Major Religion: Muslim (85%)

Highest Point:

Unnamed Elevation (1,004 feet)

Lowest Point: Persian Gulf (0 feet)

Kuwait is divided into six governorates.

Failaka Island

Kuwait's largest island, Failaka Island has been inhabited since ancient times. When the Greeks under Alexander the Great arrived, they found a culture with established beliefs and rituals. Archeological findings suggest that the culture declined around the eighth century A.D. and that the island was uninhabited for a time.

By modern times, though, a culture closely related to neighboring Kuwait existed on Failaka Island. During the Persian Gulf War of 1990 to 1991, Iraqi troops forcibly removed most of Failaka's residents to mainland Kuwait and then set up military bases there. The island remains virtually uninhabited today with only a few families still living there. Efforts are underway to rebuild the cities and promote Failaka Island as a tourist destination.

Dewaniya

A popular gathering in Kuwait is called *dewaniya*. Only open to men, the *dewaniya* allows a group of friends or business associates to meet together for discussions and games. A host will open a room in his home to others, who are free to come and go during certain evening hours. Refreshments are typically available, but what goes on at a *dewaniya* depends on its particular focus.

A private *dewaniya* with family or friends often includes simple chatting and card games. During a business or political *dewaniya*, however, some guests may give speeches or important decisions may be made. These events are often open to anyone who is interested, while private *dewaniya* require an invitation.

Kyrgyzstan



Capital City:
Bishkek

Languages: Kyrgyz, Russian



Did you know...?

- The Mongol Empire, led by Genghis Khan, conquered the region of Kyrgyzstan during the thirteenth century.
- Most of Kyrgyzstan is mountainous, but the northern region has a small amount of lowland farms.
- A small Kyrgyz village called Barak lies entirely within Uzbekistan. Two Uzbek towns, two small regions, and two Tajikistani towns lie inside Kyrgyzstan.
- On Kyrgyzstan's flag, the markings on the sun are meant to represent the top of a yurt, a traditional round tent used by the Kyrgyzstani and other Central Asian groups for centuries.

My Kyrgyzstani Fact Book

Full Name:

Kyrgyz Republic

Population: 5,508,626

Land Area: 77,181 square miles

Currency: Som

Major Religions:

Muslim (75%), Christian (21%)

Highest Point:

Jengish Chokusu (24,406 feet)

Lowest Point: Kara-Daryya (433 feet)

Kyrgyzstan is divided into seven provinces.

Tian Shan

One of the major mountain ranges in Central Asia is called Tian Shan. The highest peaks in this range form the border between Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and China. Jengish Chokusu or Victory Peak in Kyrgyzstan is the highest in the entire Tian Shan range.

The slopes of the Tian Shan mountains are covered by wild walnut, apple, and peach trees at lower elevations and by a native species of spruce tree—called the Schrenk's Spruce—above 6,000 feet.

In northeastern Kyrgyzstan, nestled among the peaks of Tian Shan, lies a salt lake called Issyk Kul. It is fed by both hot springs and melting snow in the spring and is one of the world's largest mountain lakes, second only to South America's Lake Titicaca.

Lake Issyk Kul was an important stopping place for merchants and travelers on the Silk Road during the Middle Ages. Some researchers think that the Black Death originated at the lake before spreading eastward into China and westward into Europe.

Ancient Kyrgyz legends passed down for more than a thousand years say that Issyk Kul was formed when a terrible flood rose up and destroyed four cities there. Archeologists have discovered the remnants of city walls, battle axes, arrowheads, gold coins, and burial mounds on the lake's floor.



Laos

Capital City: Vientiane

Language: Lao



Did you know...?

- Laos is heavily forested and mountainous. The country has three seasons: Rainy, Cold, and Hot.
- About half of the people in Laos speak the official Lao language, while the other half speak indigenous languages.
- Most Laotians grow their own food, primarily rice. Thousands of different types of rice are grown in the country.

My Laotian Fact Book

Full Name:

Lao People's Democratic Republic

Population: 6,368,162

Land Area: 91,429 square miles

Currency: Kip

Major Religion: Buddhist (67%)

Highest Point: Phu Bia (9,242 feet)

Lowest Point: Mekong River (230 feet)

Laos is divided into 16 provinces.

Plain of Jars

The Plain of Jars in north-central Laos is an area of almost 100 different sites where huge stone jars are scattered around open fields. Some sites have hundreds of jars, while some have only a few. Jars range from three to ten feet in diameter and are believed to have been hewn from stone beginning around 500 B.C.

Archeological research between 1930 and today indicates that the jars were used as part of an ancient burial tradition. They may have been urns for holding cremated remains or may actually have been used to hold corpses between a person's death and burial or cremation.

The Laotian people have their own legend about why the jars were made. Their story says that a giant named Khun Cheung once lived in the area and made the jars out of clay so he could store rice wine. After battles, he would return to the Plain of Jars to celebrate.



Lebanon

Capital City: Beirut

Languages: Arabic, French



Did you know...?

- The cedar tree on Lebanon's flag is a symbol of the nation and symbolizes eternity and the traits of steadiness, happiness, and prosperity. Cedar trees from Lebanon were widely used for centuries to build ships and buildings in many kingdoms around the Mediterranean Sea.
- The Phoenician culture originated in modern-day Lebanon.
- Lebanon is a very fertile country. Farms here grow peaches, apples, and citrus fruits.

My Lebanese Fact Book

Full Name:

Lebanese Republic

Population: 4,125,247

Land Area: 4,035 square miles

Currency: Lebanese pound

Major Religions:

Muslim (60%), Christian (39%)

Highest Point:

Qornet es Saouda (10,131 feet)

Lowest Point: Mediterranean Sea (0 feet)

Lebanon is divided into six governorates.

Tabbouleh

One of the favorite foods in Lebanon is tabbouleh salad. It is made from vegetables, parsley, and fine bulgur wheat, which can be found in the grain or Middle Eastern section of most grocery stores.

½ C. fine bulgur wheat

3 diced tomatoes

½ C. fresh mint, chopped

Fresh lemon juice

6 green onions, sliced

romaine leaves

2 C. fresh parsley, chopped

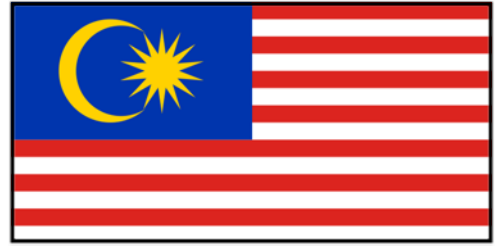
½ C. olive oil, virgin

salt

In a small bowl, soak bulgur in the fresh-squeezed juice from two lemons for about 20 minutes. The juice should be fully absorbed, and the bulgur should feel dry. Wash, dry, and carefully chop the parsley into small slivers. (This can be time consuming. Maybe your whole family can help!) Chop the mint as well.

Toss the bulgur, parsley, mint, tomatoes, and onions together. Squeeze the juice of three lemons over the mixture and toss again. Pour olive oil over all, salt to taste, and toss gently.

The Lebanese often use crisp romaine leaves to scoop up tabbouleh for eating. It's most often used as an appetizer before a main meal but can be eaten as a snack if you'd like.



Malaysia

Capital City: Kuala Lumpur

Language: Malay

My Malaysian Fact Book

Full Name:

Malaysia

Population: 28,274,729

Land Area: 127,354 square miles

Currency: Ringgit

Major Religions:

Muslim (60%), Buddhist (19%)

Highest Point:

Gunung Kinabalu (13,451 feet)

Lowest Point: Indian Ocean (0 feet)

Malaysia is divided into 13 states.

Did you know...?

- The Malaysian flag is often called *Jalur Gemilang*, which means "Stripes of Glory."
- Malaysia's head of state is a monarch elected by the people. Every five years, an election is held in which the people can vote for a new monarch from among the hereditary rulers of the Malay states.
- The Malay Peninsula was colonized by the Portuguese, Dutch, and British and then occupied by the Japanese during World War II. The area gained independence from the United Kingdom, and Malaysia was formed from the federation of four neighboring states.

Gunung Mulu National Park

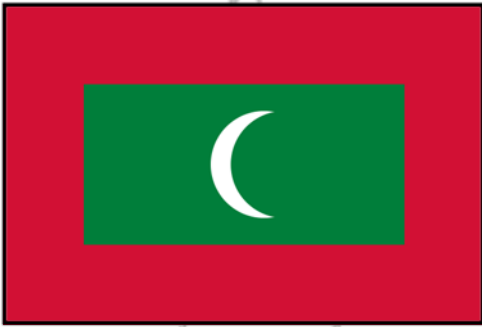
Malaysia is home to some of the largest caves in the world, part of an extensive network of caves and underground rivers in Gunung Mulu National Park. The largest chamber is called Sarawak and is more than 2,000 feet long and over 1,000 feet wide.

Besides the cave system, the park includes vast rainforest and three towering mountain peaks. Gunung Mulu National Park is accessible only by plane or boat, but several lodges and a resort offer places to stay while visiting the caves.

Hari Merdeka

Each year, Malaysians celebrate their nation's independence during the holiday called Hari Merdeka. A national parade is held in a different city every year to give all Malaysians a chance to enjoy the festivities.

A new theme is often chosen for the year's celebration. The first year Hari Merdeka was celebrated, the theme was Love and Unity. Other themes have been Culture is the Core of Unity, Honesty Brings Success, Together Towards Vision, and Our Country, Our Responsibility.



Maldives

Capital City: Malé

Languages: Dhivehi, English



Did you know...?

- Maldivian law forbids the practice of any religion other than Islam, and non-Muslims are not permitted to become citizens.
- Of Maldives' 1,192 islets, just 200 are inhabited.
- Maldives is the world's lowest country with its highest point just eight feet above sea level.
- Harvesting tuna from the surrounding ocean is a major part of Maldivian economy.
- There is concern that rising sea levels will cause the Maldives to submerge, and the country's president has considered purchasing land in India, Australia, or elsewhere if his people need to evacuate the islands in the future.

My Maldivian Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Maldives

Population: 395,650

Land Area: 115 square miles

Currency: Maldivian rufiyaa

Major Religion: Muslim (100%)

Highest Point: Unnamed Location (8 feet)

Lowest Point: Indian Ocean (0 feet)

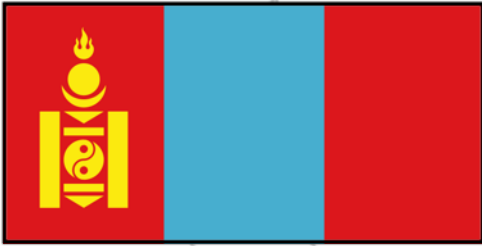
Maldives is divided into 19 atolls.

Copper Plates

Numerous inscribed copper plates have been found in the Maldives and give a peak at the ancient civilization that once thrived there. These plates are made of thin copper sheets that have been inscribed with words from a language that hasn't been used for centuries.

Most of the plates tell the history of the kings of Maldives, including King Koimala who ruled in the early twelfth century. He was the first ruler to unite all of the islands that make up the present-day country.

The oldest known plates date to 1194, but it is believed that even older copper plates existed which told the story of some of the earliest people to settle the Maldives. These were called the Maapanansa plates, and Maldivian history says that they were buried by a man called Al-Muhaddith Hasan after the islands' rulers converted from Buddhism to Islam. The buried plates have never been found.



Mongolia

Capital City: Ulaanbaatar

Language: Mongolian



Did you know...?

- The yellow symbol on Mongolia's flag is called a *soyombo* and represents, from top to bottom, fire, the sun, the moon, the earth, water, and yin-yang.
- Mongolia's natural resources include coal, copper, gold, and tin.
- Mongolia's largest annual festival is Naadam, which include competitions in archery, wrestling, and horse racing through open country.
- The nomads of ancient Mongolia developed a style of music called throat singing or *khoomi*. This unusual and beautiful style is still practiced in parts of Mongolia today.

My Mongolian Fact Book

Full Name:

Mongolia

Population: 3,086,918

Land Area: 603,909 square miles

Currency: Tögrög

Major Religion: Buddhist (50%)

Highest Point:

Nayramadlin Orgil (14,350 feet)

Lowest Point: Hoh Nuur (1,837 feet)

Mongolia is divided into 21 provinces.

Genghis Khan & the Mongol Empire

One of the most famous conquerors of all time, Genghis Khan founded the Mongol Empire during the twelfth century. He became a strong leader at a young age and successfully united many of the Mongol tribes for the first time. Under his leadership, the Mongol Empire spread eastward to the Pacific, south to the border with Tibet, and west to the Caspian Sea.

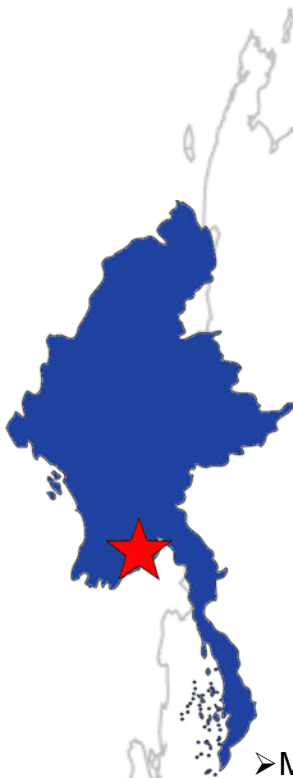
When Genghis died in 1227, control of the empire passed to his third son Ogedei. Genghis was buried secretly in an unmarked grave, and legends say that a river's course was altered so that it flowed over the burial site, hiding it forever.

Ogedei Khan led the Mongol army into even more territories. He fought against the Song Dynasty of China and against the Persians in the far-away Middle East. The empire reached its greatest extent under its fifth khan, Kublai Khan. It covered almost a quarter of the land in the entire world, stretching into almost 30 modern-day countries of Asia and eastern Europe.

By this time, though, Genghis Khan's descendents often fought among themselves over who should be the legitimate ruler. Civil wars divided the Mongol Empire into smaller Khanates, and some of the lands, especially in the west, reverted back to self rule. Kublai Khan continued to rule in the east where he established the Yuan Dynasty and ruled from Beijing in present-day China.

The writing on the left is Genghis Khan's name in the classical Mongolian script, which developed around 1200 as the first writing system for the Mongolian language. It is one of only a few world languages that are read from top to bottom and left to right.

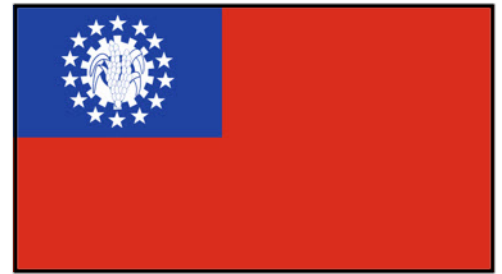




Myanmar

Capital City: Rangoon

**Languages: Burmese,
Thai, English**



Did you know...?

➤ Myanmar's name can be a source of confusion because it is frequently called Burma, which was its English name from colonial times. The government officially changed the nation's name to Union of Myanmar in 1989, but several world governments have rejected the new name because they reject the legitimacy of the Myanmar government.

My Myanma Fact Book

Full Name:

Union of Myanmar

Population: 53,414,374

Land Area: 261,227 square miles

Currency: Kyat

Major Religion: Buddhist (89%)

Highest Point: Hkakabo Razi (19,295 feet)

Lowest Point: Andaman Sea (0 feet)

Myanmar is divided into seven divisions.

Bagan Kingdom

The Bagan Kingdom ruled nearly all of modern Myanmar from the mid-ninth until the thirteenth century. The Burmese founders of the kingdom came from the Kingdom of Nanzhao in southern China. They slowly conquered the small kingdoms that they found throughout the fertile river areas.

Under the Bagan rulers, the Burmese language, culture, and religion spread through the region. Buddhism was the central focus of the culture, and more than 10,000 Buddhist temples were built in just 200 years during the Bagan Kingdom's peak of prosperity.

Eventually, in 1287, Mongols from the north invaded the Bagan Kingdom. Though they didn't bring the entire region under their direct rule, the Mongol attacks caused the kingdom to collapse.



Nepal

Capital City: Kathmandu

Language: Nepali



Did you know...?

- In the Nepali language, Mount Everest is called *Sagarmatha*.
- Nepal is a little larger than Arkansas.
- Siddhārtha Gautama, usually called the Buddha, was born in Lumbini, Nepal around the fourth century B.C. Most Nepalese follow both Hinduism and Buddhism without making much of a distinction between the two religions.
- Nepal remained a monarchy ruled solely by the king, until 2008.
- Nepal exports crops like tea and rice, clothing, leather items, and items like rope made from jute fiber.

My Nepalese Fact Book

Full Name:

Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal

Population: 28,951,852

Land Area: 56,827 square miles

Currency: Nepalese rupee

Major Religions:

Hindu (80%), Buddhist (11%)

Highest Point:

Mount Everest (29,035 feet)

Lowest Point: Kanchan Kalan (230 feet)

Nepal is divided into 14 zones.

Mount Everest

Called *Sagarmāthā* in the Nepali language, Mount Everest is the tallest mountain in the world at 29,035 feet. Almost 3,000 people have climbed to the summit since New Zealander Edmund Hillary and Nepali Tenzing Norgay first reached the peak on May 29, 1953.

Climbers face nearly 3,000 feet of Mount Everest in the so-called “death zone” above 8,000 meters. This is the altitude where the air becomes thinner with only one-third of the normal amount of oxygen. Temperatures drop very low, and frostbite is a constant danger. Climbers must wear special clothing to withstand the cold and wind, and many use portable oxygen bottles to compensate for the thinner atmosphere.



North Korea

Capital City: Pyongyang

Language: Korean



My North Korean Fact Book

Full Name:

Democratic People's Republic of Korea

Population: 22,757,275

Land Area: 46,528 square miles

Currency: North Korean won

Major Religion: No Religion (64%)

Highest Point: Paektu-san (9,003 feet)

Lowest Point: Sea of Japan (0 feet)

*North Korea is divided into
nine provinces.*

Did you know...?

- North Korea is a little smaller than Mississippi.
- Japan occupied the Korean Peninsula during World War II. After their defeat, the United Nations divided the peninsula between the Soviet Union, which took control of the north, and the United States, which took control of the south. The latitude line at 38 degrees north, called the 38th Parallel, is used as the dividing line between North Korea and South Korea.
- The people of North Korea have suffered from famine for two decades due in part to a period of failed crops in the mid-1990s caused by severe flooding in 1995 and drought in 1997.

Three Kingdoms of Korea

Beginning before 75 B.C., a kingdom called Koguryo ruled the area of North Korea. The Paekche and Shilla ruled in the southern part of the Korean Peninsula, and these three made up the Three Kingdoms of Korea that dominated the region for almost 700 years.

Koguryo was the first of the three to develop a strong government and social structure. An academy in Koguryo was both a center of learning and a library that housed the kingdom's historical records. At least a hundred volumes of history had been written by the time the Koguryo adopted Buddhism in 372.

Battles with the Chinese allowed Koguryo to take control of portions of Manchuria. King Gwanggaeto reigned from 391 to 413 and is considered one of Koguryo's greatest kings. He expanded the kingdom's territory well into Manchuria and southward toward modern-day Seoul, South Korea.

In the seventh century, Chinese forces retook Manchuria and Shilla conquered both Koguryo and Paekche to end the Three Kingdoms period.



Oman

Capital City: Muscat

Language: Arabic



Did you know...?

- Archeological findings show that people have lived in Oman for thousands of years. The area was ruled by the Persians, by a series of Islamic dynasties, and then by the Portuguese before achieving lasting independence in 1741.
- Two portions of Oman's territory are separated from the rest of the country by the United Arab Emirates.
- Much of Oman is covered by a stony desert, but the coastal regions enjoy vegetation like palms, dates, and citrus fruits. Most food has to be imported from other nations, however.
- Oman's natural resources include copper, limestone, petroleum, and natural gas.
- The traditional curved dagger used for hundreds of years in Oman is called a *khanjar*.

My Omani Fact Book

Full Name:

Sultanate of Oman

Population: 2,967,717

Land Area: 119,498 square miles

Currency: Rial

Major Religion: Muslim (80%)

Highest Point:

Jabal Shams (9,777 feet)

Lowest Point: Arabian Sea (0 feet)

Oman is divided into five regions.

My Qatari Fact Book

Full Name:

State of Qatar

Population: 840,926

Land Area: 4,416 square miles

Currency: Riyal

Major Religion: Muslim (78%)

Highest Point:

Tuwayyir al Hamir (338 feet)

Lowest Point: Persian Gulf (0 feet)

Qatar is divided into ten municipalities.

Did you know...?

- Qatar Peninsula was inhabited only sporadically until around 750 A.D.
- Qatar was ruled by Portugal, the Ottomans, and then the British until its independence in 1971.
- Almost all of Qatar's export income comes from oil and natural gas.
- About 75 percent of Qatar's population is made up of foreigners who have come to the country to work and to enjoy the high standard of living.

Qatar

Capital City: Doha

Language: Arabic

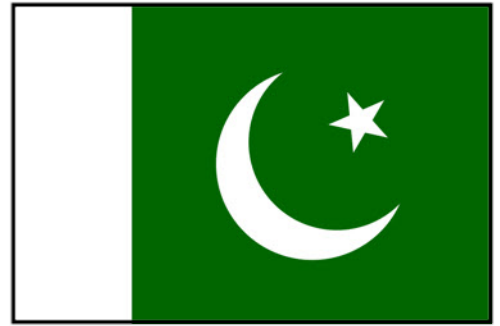




Pakistan

Capital City: Islamabad

Languages: Urdu, English



Did you know...?

- Pakistan's flag displays both the crescent of Islam and a white band to symbolize the country's religious minorities.
- In the Urdu language, Pakistan means "Land of the Pure."
- Pakistan's primary exports are clothing and other textiles, along with chemical items, iron, and food products.
- Pakistan's most popular sports are cricket, field hockey, and soccer.
- Pakistan's Badshahi Mosque, built in 1673, is one of the largest mosques in the world and can hold up to 5,000 Muslim worshippers at one time.

My Pakistani Fact Book

Full Name:

Islamic Republic of Pakistan

Population: 184,404,791

Land Area: 307,374 square miles

Currency: Pakistani rupee

Major Religion: Muslim (95%)

Highest Point:

Mount Godwin-Austen (28,251 feet)

Lowest Point: Indian Ocean (0 feet)

Pakistan is divided into four provinces.

Pakistani Wildlife



Pakistan's diverse landscape makes it home to a variety of animals, including deer, porcupines, hyenas, leopards, and jackals. An endangered goat, called a markhor, lives in the mountains of northern Pakistan. Its twisted horns give the markhor a distinctive appearance. In males, these horns can be more than five feet long. Himalayan bears, Ibex goats, and snow leopards also live in Pakistan's mountains.

The Indus River is home to a type of dolphin that is almost completely blind, though it may be able to distinguish varying levels of light. Only a little over 1,000 Indus dolphins are alive today. Their decline is due to many factors—over fishing, having its natural habitat segmented by multiple dams, and industrial runoff that has polluted the river. Today, local Pakistani governments work to preserve the remaining population of Indus dolphins.

In an effort to protect the numerous endangered species in Pakistan, the government has set aside land as wildlife reserves and outlawed hunting of any wild animals or birds.



Philippines

Capital City: Manila

Languages:
Filipino, English, Tagalog



My Philippine Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of the Philippines

Population: 99,900,177

Land Area: 115,831 square miles

Currency: Peso

Major Religion: Christian (89%)

Highest Point: Mount Apo (9,692 feet)

Lowest Point: Philippine Sea (0 feet)

*The Philippines is divided into
80 provinces.*

Did you know...?

- The people of the Philippines are called Filipino, but objects from the country are called Philippine.
- The country was named by Spanish explorers after King Philip II of Spain.
- The Philippines includes more than 7,000 islands. The landscape is dominated by tropical rainforest and sandy beaches.
- The Philippine islands experience frequent earthquakes and hurricanes, which are called *bagyo* in the Tagalog language.
- More than 170 different languages are spoken in the Philippines.

Halo-Halo

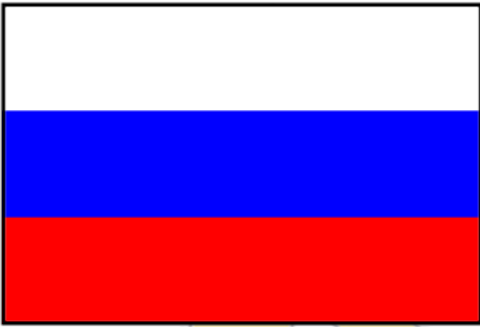
One of Filipinos' favorite desserts is called halo-halo and is made from a lively combination of shaved ice, milk, beans, fruits, and even vegetables. The ingredients are layered in a tall glass and then stirred together before eating. The different textures and flavors blend together to make a sweet treat that is quite refreshing on a hot summer day in the Philippines. Maybe you'd like to try halo-halo at your house!

Any or all of the ingredients listed below can be used. Simply layer them until there is just an inch or two left at the top of the glass. (It's fun to layer the ingredients in an order that will showcase their color differences.)

purple yam jam	jackfruit	sweet potatoes	sweetened coconuts
sweetened beans (mung, kidney, adzuki, garbanzo)			agar-agar
bananas	mango	cream corn	ice cream
cooked rice	tapioca	crispy rice cereal	sugar (use sparingly)

Add shaved or crushed ice to fill the glass to the rim. Slowly pour evaporated milk over the ice, filling up all the space left between the other ingredients. Dollop some *leche flan* on top and stir everything together. Serve cold, eat with a spoon, and enjoy!

Note: Fruit should be diced, and Filipinos sometimes cook bananas and other fruits in sugar before using them in halo-halo. Just about all these ingredients are available canned or bottled in the Asian section of most grocery stores.



Russia

Capital City: Moscow

**Languages: Russian,
Tatar, Ukrainian**



Did you know...?

- Russia is the world's largest country. It stretches almost 5,000 miles from east to west and covers nine time zones.
- Though most of Russia is in Asia, its western region is in Europe. About 25 percent of the country's land is considered part of Europe, and more than 75 percent of the nation's people live in this portion.
- Russia contains many seas, lakes, and more than 100,000 rivers, including the Volga, Europe's longest river. Lake Baikal is the world's deepest lake.
- Russian farms are a top producer of the grains eaten around the world. Rye, barley, oats, and wheat are all grown in vast quantities.

My Russian Fact Book

Full Name:

Russian Federation

Population: 139,390,205

Land Area: 6,592,800 square miles

Currency: Ruble

Major Religions:

Christian (22%), Muslim (15%)

Highest Point: Gora El'brus (18,481 feet)

Lowest Point: Caspian Sea

(92 feet below sea level)

Russia is divided into 46 oblasts.

Ural Mountains

In western Russia, the Ural Mountains run north to south for more than 1,500 miles and form part of the border between the European and Asian continents. The mountains are not particularly tall when compared to some of the world's other mountain ranges, but they are similar in elevation to the Appalachian Mountains of the eastern United States. The highest peak in the Urals, Mount Narodnaya, is 6,213 feet high, almost identical to North Carolina's Black Balsam Knob.

Some peaks in the Ural Mountain range are sharp with sheer sides, while others are gently rounded. The landscape varies greatly with the southern mountains including some desert areas and the far northern mountains being covered in snow most of the year. In the southern Urals, the forests are full of oaks, maples, elms, and other deciduous trees. As the climate changes toward the north, the forests become filled primarily with coniferous varieties like fir, pine, and spruce, though the most northern mountains have few trees at all.

Numerous gems and minerals are present in the mountains, including platinum, emeralds, jasper, diamonds, nickel, gold, and coal. The mountains have been mined for more than 200 years.

Saudi Arabia

Capital City: Riyadh

Language: Arabic



Did you know...?

My Saudi Arabian Fact Book

Full Name:

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Population: 25,731,776

Land Area: 830,000 square miles

Currency: Saudi Riyal

Major Religion: Muslim (100%)

Highest Point: Jabal Sawda' (10,279 feet)

Lowest Point: Persian Gulf (0 feet)

Saudi Arabia is divided into 13 provinces.

- The people of Saudi Arabia are called Saudi.
- The Arabic words on the Saudi Arabian flag mean "There is no god but God; Muhammad is the Messenger of God," which is called the Shahada Creed.
- Saudi Arabia is the birthplace of one of the world's major religions, Islam. Muhammad, Islam's founder, was born in Mecca and began his teachings there. The city is revered as a holy place by Muslims worldwide and is their destination during the *Hajj* pilgrimage, which each Muslim is supposed to make at least once. No non-Muslims are permitted to enter the cities of Mecca or Medina.

Saudi Meals

Most meals in Saudi Arabia include the traditional flatbread called *khobz*. This is a basic bread made with wheat flour, yeast, salt, and water or milk, rolled out into a large, thin circle and then baked. The bread may be eaten warm or cold and is often used to scoop up the meat and vegetables being eaten.

Another traditional bread called *fatir* is made from toasted barley flour. Bulgur wheat and rice are the other commonly eaten grains in Saudi Arabia. Along with these, the Saudi people enjoy chicken, lamb, dates, tomatoes, onions, fava beans, yogurt, and various spices and seasonings.

The milk used in Saudi Arabia typically comes from camels, sheep, or goats. Yogurt is often blended with cold water and then poured over ice cubes to make a refreshing drink. The Saudis call this drink *laban*—would you like to try it? Just mix about $\frac{1}{4}$ C. cold water with $\frac{1}{2}$ C. plain yogurt in a blender and enjoy!

Coffee, called *qahwa*, is another popular drink in Saudi Arabia. It is made from strong black coffee, seasoned with cardamom and saffron, and boiled a second time before serving. *Qahwa* has been an important part of Saudi hospitality for hundreds of years. Guests to a Saudi home are nearly always offered *qahwa*, and refusing a cup is thought to be extremely rude.

Singapore

Capital City: Singapore



Languages: English,
Malay, Mandarin Chinese, Tamil

Did you know...?

- The people of Singapore are called Singaporeans.
- Unlike most country's flags, the crescent on Singapore's flag doesn't represent Islam. Instead, it is meant to represent a waxing moon and to symbolize Singapore as a young, growing nation. The stars represent the characteristics of democracy, equality, justice, peace, and progress.
- Almost half of the people living in Singapore are non-citizen foreigners.
- Singapore was part of the Federation of Malaysia, but political difference led the other members to expel the city, which then became an independent nation.

My Singapore Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Singapore

Population: 4,701,069

Land Area: 274 square miles

Currency: Singapore dollar

Major Religions: Buddhist (43%),
Muslim (15%), Christian (15%)

Highest Point: Bukit Timah (545 feet)

Lowest Point: Singapore Strait (0 feet)

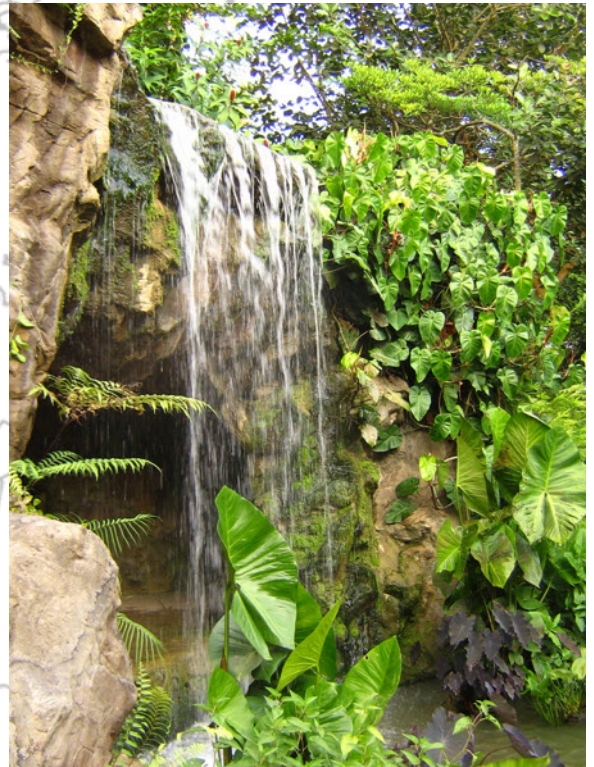
Singapore is not divided for government.

Singapore Botanic Gardens

Established more than 150 years ago, Singapore Botanic Gardens covers 157 acres and is a popular attraction for local people and foreign visitors. The gardens are well known for the National Orchid Garden where more than 3,000 types of orchids are grown.

Divided into several different sections, the gardens also contain the Ginger Garden, a rainforest, three lakes, a botany center, and a children's garden. The Jacob Ballas Children's Garden has a playground, a maze, tree houses, and a water area where kids can play.

Visitors to the Singapore Botanic Gardens enjoy its natural beauty, of course, along with the population of black swans. The park offers educational tours on edible and medicinal plants, orchids, the rainforest, and more.





South Korea

Capital City: Seoul

Language: Korean



My South Korean Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Korea

Population: 48,636,068

Land Area: 38,691 square miles

Currency: Won

Major Religions:

Christian (26%), Buddhist (23%)

Highest Point: Halla-san (6,398 feet)

Lowest Point: Sea of Japan (0 feet)

South Korea is divided into nine provinces.

Did you know...?

- The Korean flag is called *Taegukki*. The four black symbols are trigrams from an ancient book called *I Ching*, "Book of Changes." They represent the four elements: earth, water, wind, and fire.
- South Korea's territory includes around 3,000 islands. The largest is called Jeju-do and is home to about half a million people, but most of the islands are uninhabited.
- South Korea has the world's lowest birthrate with just 1.22 children born for every woman.
- Almost half of South Korea's population follows no religion.

Jikji

The world's oldest surviving book printed with metal moveable type is Korea's *Jikji*, written by a Buddhist monk named Baegun in 1377. The two-volume book, of which only the second volume has survived, contains the teachings of numerous Buddhist monks and was used for teaching novices about the religion. Both volumes of the book still exist in a wood print version that was also made hundreds of years ago.

Today, *Jikji* is held at the National Library of France.

Taekwondo

Taekwondo is a martial art that developed in South Korea during the middle of the twentieth century. It has spread rapidly across the world since then and became an Olympic sport in 2000. Taekwondo sparring usually emphasizes kicking techniques with the hands being used more sparingly. During competition sparring in the Olympics and other events, the participants wear protective gear and points are scored under specific rules.

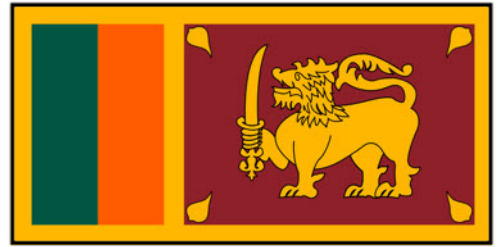
Taekwondo training focuses on self defense and meditation, along with the rules of competition. Students also learn to focus their strength to break wooden boards and concrete blocks.



Sri Lanka

**Capital City: Sri
Jayawardenapura-Kotte**

Languages: Sinhala, Tamil



Did you know...?

- The lion on the Sri Lankan flag symbolizes the nation's strength, and the sword it holds symbolizes Sri Lankan sovereignty. The leaves in the four corners represent the four virtues in Buddhism: kindness, friendliness, happiness, and equanimity.
- Sri Lanka was called Ceylon until 1972.
- This island nation has exported cinnamon around the world since ancient times. Farmers here also grow tea, coffee, rubber, and coconuts.
- The name Sri Lanka means "venerable island" in Sanskrit.

My Sri Lankan Fact Book

Full Name:

Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

Population: 21,513,990

Land Area: 25,332 square miles

Currency: Sri Lankan rupee

Major Religion: Buddhist (69%)

Highest Point: Pidurutalagala (8,281 feet)

Lowest Point: Indian Ocean (0 feet)

Sri Lanka is divided into nine provinces.

Sigiriya Rock Fortress

In central Sri Lanka stands the Sigiriya Rock Fortress, a huge rock made of hardened magma that rests on top of a large, steep mound of earth in the center of a plain. On top of this rock and around it, ancient Sri Lankans built a fortress and palace.

Today, the ruins of these structures can still be seen in the form of walls on the grounds surrounding the rock fortress and stone stairways on the summit. Though it's called a fortress, the structure on the summit was probably more of a palace meant for recreation. One area is thought to be a swimming pool that was built on a rooftop.

Around the base of the rock, a complex of gardens still exist, though surely without the beauty they once held. The water gardens, in particular, are intriguing because the various man-made pools are linked by an underground water system. This water system kept all the pools supplied with fresh, clean water when they were used by the Sri Lankan royal family over a thousand years ago.



Syria

Capital City: Damascus

Language: Syrian Arabic



Did you know...?

- The land of modern-day Syria has been ruled by numerous ancient kingdoms and empires including Canaan, Phoenicia, Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Rome, and Byzantine. In more modern times, the area was controlled by the Ottoman Empire for 400 years and, briefly in the twentieth century, by France.
- Three Roman emperors were from Syria.
- Syria lays claim to the Golan Heights region of Israel, which was captured from them during the Six Day War of 1967. The nation also claims an area of Turkey called Hatay, which they say was given to Turkey illegally when the French occupied Syria.
- The road to Damascus where the Bible says Jesus appeared to Saul is in Syria.

My Syrian Fact Book

Full Name:

Syrian Arab Republic

Population: 22,198,110

Land Area: 71,479 square miles

Currency: Syrian pound

Major Religion: Muslim (90%)

Highest Point: Mount Hermon (9,232 feet)

Lowest Point: Near Lake Tiberias
(656 feet below sea level)

Syria is divided into 14 provinces.

Ba'lawa

Ba'lawa, the Syrian version of baklava, is very popular in the country. It's very similar to the normal Greek baklava that you may have eaten before, but Syrians often enjoy using pistachios grown in their own country instead of walnuts. If you've never made baklava before, try out this recipe so you can enjoy some Syrian *ba'lawa*.

16 oz. phyllo dough

½ C. sugar

2 sticks butter, melted

1 Tbsp. cinnamon

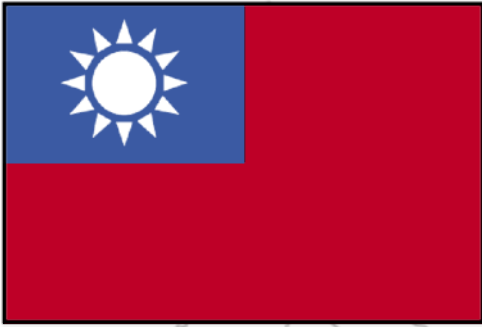
4 C. pistachios or walnuts, finely chopped

In a medium bowl, stir together the nuts, sugar, and cinnamon; set aside. Using some of the melted butter, grease the bottom of a 13x9" pan. Place one sheet of phyllo dough in the pan and brush with melted butter. Continue adding sheets of phyllo and buttering their tops until you've used half the sheets. Sprinkle the nut mixture evenly over the surface and then layer and butter the remaining phyllo sheets. Cut the layers into diamond shapes, and pour any remaining butter evenly over the pastry. Bake in a preheated 350°F oven for 50-55 minutes until golden brown.

½ C. sugar ¾ C. honey

¾ C. water 2 Tbsp. grated orange peel

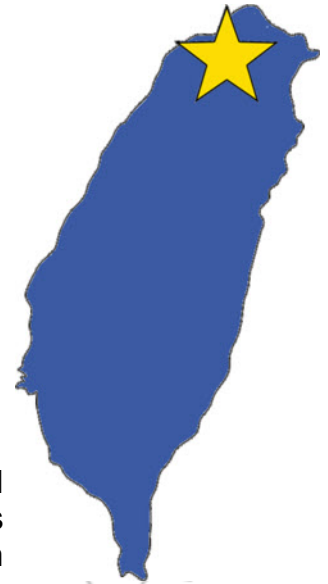
While the *ba'lawa* bakes, combine the sugar, water, and orange peel in a saucepan and bring to a boil. Boil for about 15 minutes, then gradually stir in the honey and boil for a few more minutes. Just after taking the *ba'lawa* out of the oven, pour the syrup evenly over the pastry. Cool before serving.



Taiwan

Capital City: Taipei

**Languages:
Mandarin, Taiwanese**



My Taiwan Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of China

Population: 23,024,956

Land Area: 13,892 square miles

Currency: Taiwan dollar

Major Religions: Buddhist & Taoist (93%)

Highest Point: Yu Shan (12,966 feet)

Lowest Point: South China Sea (0 feet)

Taiwan is divided into 18 counties.

Did you know...?

- Taiwan was once called Formosa, which means "Beautiful Island" in Portuguese.
- Taiwan is mountainous throughout its eastern region but has generally flat plains in the west.
- Most people in Taiwan practice both the Buddhist and Taoist religions.
- Taiwan's National Palace Museum holds over 650,000 Chinese artifacts, including paintings, pottery, jade, and calligraphy.
- Karaoke is extremely popular in Taiwan.

How Taiwan Came to Be

People have lived on the island of Taiwan for thousands of years. These people were mainly hunter-gatherers and didn't develop an organized political structure. Portuguese sailors gave Taiwan the name "Formosa," but Dutch and Spanish settlers in the seventeenth century were the first Europeans to move to the island. The Chinese then conquered Taiwan and brought it under their rule.

After the First Sino-Japanese War, China ceded Taiwan to the Empire of Japan. It remained part of Japan from 1895 to 1946. Meanwhile, the Qing Dynasty in China was overthrown by the Chinese Revolutionary Alliance during a war called the Xinhai Revolution. The Kuomintang then established a nationalist government in China, which they renamed Republic of China.

Later, communists in China fought and won a civil war against the Kuomintang. They established the People's Republic of China on the mainland, while the Kuomintang leaders fled to Taiwan where they reestablished their government.

For two decades, the Republic of China was a member of the United Nations and was internationally recognized as the legitimate government of all China. In 1971, however, recognition shifted to the People's Republic of China and the Republic lost its U.N. seat.

Today, the Republic of China continues to claim jurisdiction over mainland China. Likewise, the People's Republic claims jurisdiction over the island of Taiwan. In reality, the government of Taiwan holds sovereignty there and governs independently from the government of mainland China.

Internationally, the Republic of China is almost always called simply Taiwan or Chinese Taipei. Its independence as a nation is largely ignored by other countries—mostly out of deference to the People's Republic. Taiwan continues to push for international recognition of the sovereignty it has held for more than 60 years.



Tajikistan

Capital City: Dushanbe

Language: Tajik



Did you know...?

- On the Tajikistani flag, red represents the nation's unity, white stands for purity, and green stands for Islam and nature's bounty. The crown in the center stands for the Tajikistanis, and the seven stars above it represent the word "seven," which Tajikistanis believe symbolizes perfection and happiness.
- Tajikistan is a little smaller than Wisconsin.
- Tajikistan was part of the Persian Empire and the Soviet Union.
- A Tajikistani meal is typically spread on a carpet on the floor, and the family and guests sit on the floor to eat.

My Tajikistani Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Tajikistan

Population: 7,487,489

Land Area: 55,251 square miles

Currency: Somoni

Major Religion: Muslim (90%)

Highest Point:

Qullai Ismoili Somoni (24,590 feet)

Lowest Point: Syr Darya (984 feet)

Tajikistan is divided into two provinces.

My Timorese Fact Book

Full Name:

Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste

Population: 1,154,625

Land Area: 5,743 square miles

Currency: United States dollar

Major Religion: Christian (99%)

Highest Point:

Foho Tatamailau (9,721 feet)

Lowest Point: Timor Sea (0 feet)

East Timor is divided into 13 administrative districts.

Timor-Leste

Capital City: Dili

Languages: Tetum,
Portuguese,
Indonesian,
English



Did you know...?

- Timor-Leste, pronounced TEE-mor LESS-tay), is sometimes called East Timor because of its position on the east side of Timor Island.
- Timor-Leste was a Portuguese colony until 1975, but it was quickly invaded and annexed by Indonesia. The Timorese fought against Indonesia for almost 25 years before achieving independence in 1999. The nation was recognized as sovereign in 2002.
- An old Timorese legend says that the island was made from the body of a giant crocodile in ancient times. The people sometimes call their island Crocodile Island.
- Timor-Leste is part of the Coral Triangle, an area of ocean that contains about 500 different species of coral and is the object of worldwide conservation efforts.





Thailand

Capital City: Bangkok

Language: Thai



Did you know...?

- For hundreds of years, the kingdom was called Siam. Its name was changed to Thailand in 1939.
- Thailand is the only southeast Asian country that was never colonized by Europeans.
- Thailand has high, forested mountains in the north along its western border, fertile farmland and rivers in the central regions, and low hills and lakes in the east. Its southern peninsula is called the Isthmus of Kra and is home to sandy beaches and mangrove swamps.
- Siamese cats originated in southeast Asia and are known for being intelligent and very vocal.

My Thai Fact Book

Full Name:

Kingdom of Thailand

Population: 64,444,371

Land Area: 198,456 square miles

Currency: Baht

Major Religion: Buddhist (95%)

Highest Point: Doi Inthanon (8,451 feet)

Lowest Point: Gulf of Thailand (0 feet)

Thailand is divided into 76 provinces.



Tsunami

Popular beaches and resorts on the coast of Thailand's peninsula were devastated by a series of three tsunamis (tidal waves) on December 26, 2004. A powerful earthquake in the Indian Ocean rocked the sea floor and caused tsunamis in more than a dozen countries. In Thailand, more than 5,000 people died and over 8,000 were injured by the giant waves which reached 40 feet in height.

In the weeks after the tsunamis, elephants helped to move wreckage and clear roadways.

Thai Language

The Thai alphabet does not look anything like our English alphabet. The words "Kingdom of Thailand" look like this: ราชอาณาจักรไทย. The letters may look more like drawings to you, but they look just right to children in Thailand!

The Thai language does not use spaces between its words, only between each sentence. If you wanted to say, "I love to spend time with my family. Learning together is fun. Maybe someday we will visit Thailand," you would write ฉันชอบที่จะใช้เวลากับครอบครัวของฉัน การเรียนรู้ร่วมกันสนุก บางทีวันหนึ่งเราจะไปประเทศไทย. Give it a try!



Turkey

Capital City: Ankara

Language: Turkish



Did you know...?

- By most reckonings, Turkey is the westernmost Asian country.
- The ancient city of Troy was located in northwestern Turkey.
- The Byzantine capital of Constantinople, now called Istanbul, is located on the northern side of the Bosphorus Strait. The Bosphorus and Dardanelles, together known as the Turkish Straits, link the Sea of Marmara with the Black Sea to the north and the Aegean Sea to the south.
- The Turkish Straits are usually considered as one of the borders between Europe and Asia, which means that a small part of Turkey lies in Europe.

My Turkish Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Turkey

Population: 77,804,122

Land Area: 302,535 square miles

Currency: Turkish lira

Major Religion: Muslim (99%)

Highest Point: Mount Ararat (16,949 feet)

Lowest Point: Mediterranean Sea (0 feet)

Turkey is divided into 81 provinces.

Ottoman Empire

Modern-day Turkey was the center of the Ottoman Empire that existed from 1299 until 1923. This vast empire once stretched into three continents and included more than 40 modern countries. The first Ottoman ruler, Osman I, fought against the Byzantines, but it was his successors who greatly expanded the empire's borders.

The capture of Constantinople by the young leader Mehmed II gave the Ottoman Empire a great advantage in the Mediterranean. This allowed the leaders to easily send troops across the sea where they effectively conquered parts of both southern Europe and northern Africa.

Unlike some conquering empires, the Ottomans didn't try to impose their culture or religious beliefs on the people they ruled. Instead they gave a certain amount of autonomy to peoples with differing ways of life, and these groups were called *Millet*s. They retained their traditional lifestyles while being politically subordinate and paying tribute to the Ottomans.

The empire lost much of its territory after its defeat in World War I. Now confined to its modern borders and faced with an ever-changing twentieth century world, the Ottoman Empire faced a war among its own people. The Turkish War of Independence led to the end of the empire and the establishment of the Republic of Turkey.

Turkmenistan

Capital City: Ashgabat

Languages:
Turkmen, Russian



Did you know...?

- Turkmenistan is just larger than California.
- Turkmenistan was part of the Russian Empire and then the Soviet Union from 1894 until 1991.
- Turkmenistan has over a thousand miles of coast along the Caspian Sea.
- The country has one of the largest natural gas reserves in the world, and about half of its farmland is used to grow cotton.
- The traditional “shaggy” hat worn by Turkmen men is called a *telpek* and is made from black, brown, or white sheepskin. Men typically shave their heads and wear a skullcap under the *telpek*.
- Turkmen women have a centuries old tradition of weaving beautiful carpets that are prized around the world. Each tribe has its own unique design that is typically woven into their carpets.

My Turkmen Fact Book

Full Name:

Turkmenistan

Population: 4,940,916

Land Area: 188,456 square miles

Currency: Turkmen new manat

Major Religion: Muslim (89%)

Highest Point:

Gora Ayribaba (10,299 feet)

Lowest Point: Vpadina Akchanaya

(266 feet below sea level)

Turkmenistan is divided into five provinces.

Black Sand Desert

Almost three-quarters of Turkmenistan's landscape is covered by the Black Sand Desert. Though any desert often appears as a barren wasteland on the surface, the Black Sand Desert lies above abundant deposits of both natural gas and petroleum. Though these haven't been fully utilized by the country yet, they could be a very important part of Turkmenistan's economy in the future.

Two oases in the southern part of Turkmenistan provide water for cotton fields in the midst of this vast desert. Travelers on the Silk Road often stopped at these oases during the medieval period. Both the Trans-Caspian Railway and the Kara Kum Canal cross the Black Sand Desert. The railway, of course, was built to give people an easier way to travel across Central Asia. The canal was built for irrigation and provides water to cotton farms, grain fields, and livestock across the country.

Perhaps the most unusual feature of the Black Sand Desert is the burning gas crater near the village of Darvaza. When researchers drilled in this area to locate natural gas deposits during the 1970s, the ground collapsed and left a huge hole over 200 feet across.

This hole was filled with natural gas that began to spread into the surrounding atmosphere. The researchers set the gas on fire in an effort to prevent the poisonous gas from harming the local population. They assumed that all of the natural gas would be burned away in just a few days, but they were wrong. Amazingly, the natural gas in this crater continues to burn today.



United Arab Emirates

Did you know...?

- The United Arab Emirates is a little smaller than Maine.
- Each of the country's emirates is ruled by an emir.
- During the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries, the Emirates had a booming pearl industry. Natural pearls were harvested from the Persian Gulf and exported around the world. The industry declined and then ceased entirely, in part because the Japanese discovered how to culture round pearls in 1916.
- The Emirate's landscape includes coastline, sandy desert, oases, and salt pans.
- The country's native people are called Emiratis, but about 80 percent of the people are from foreign nations.



Capital City: Abu Dhabi
Languages: Arabic, Persian

My Emirati Fact Book

Full Name:

United Arab Emirates

Population: 4,975,593

Land Area: 32,278 square miles

Currency: Dirham

Major Religion: Muslim (96%)

Highest Point: Jabal Yibir (5,010 feet)

Lowest Point: Persian Gulf (0 feet)

United Arab Emirates is divided into seven emirates.

Dubai

The Emirati city called Dubai has a population of almost three and a half million people and is one of the world's most modern cities. It has experienced a tremendous building boom over the last few decades. In 1990, the city was little more than a handful of office buildings located in a wide expanse of desert. Today, Dubai includes hundreds of modern skyscrapers and architectural innovations.

Burj Khalifa, finished in 2009, is the world's tallest manmade structure at 2,717 feet. This building holds numerous world records, including most floors (160) and highest swimming pool on the 76th floor. Burj Khalifa also has the fastest elevators in the world. They move at 40 miles per hour!

Architects have built a number of artificial islands in the Persian Gulf just off Dubai's coast. The most famous are the Palm Islands, arranged in the shape of a palm tree, and the still-under-construction World Islands, a grouping of 300 islands arranged to look like the seven continents of the world.



Uzbekistan

Capital City: Tashkent

Languages: Uzbek, Karakalpak



Did you know...?

- The Silk Road passed through Uzbekistan, bringing wealth and many foreign merchants into the country. These visitors from East and West helped influence Uzbekistani culture.
- When Alexander the Great conquered Central Asia, he married the daughter of the chief of Bactria in modern Uzbekistan.
- Uzbekistan was part of the Soviet Union.
- Uzbekistan's primary export is cotton. Many people in the country are pressed into labor as slaves during the yearly cotton harvest.

My Uzbekistani Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Uzbekistan

Population: 27,865,738

Land Area: 172,742 square miles

Currency: Uzbekistan som

Major Religion: Muslim (88%)

Highest Point:

Adelunga Toghi (14,111 feet)

Lowest Point: Sariqamish Kuli
(39 feet below sea level)

Uzbekistan is divided into 12 provinces.

My Yemeni Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Yemen

Population: 23,495,361

Land Area: 203,849 square miles

Currency: Yemeni rial

Major Religion: Muslim (98%)

Highest Point:

Jabal an Nabi Shu'ayb (12,336 feet)

Lowest Point: Arabian Sea (0 feet)

Yemen is divided into 21 governorates.

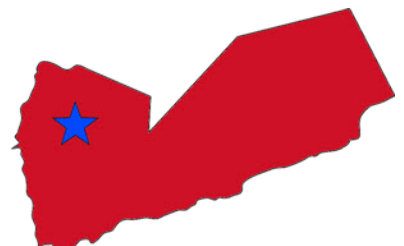
Yemen

Capital City: Sana'a

Language: Arabic

Did you know...?

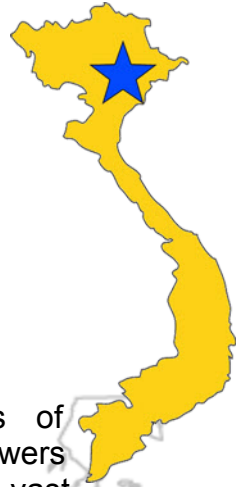
- Yemen includes more than 200 islands in the Arabian Sea and the Red Sea.
- Yemeni farms grow sorghum, cotton, mangoes, and grains like barley and wheat.
- North Yemen and South Yemen were united as a single nation in 1990.
- Nearly half of Yemen's population is under age 15.
- Yemen's landscape includes sandy coast, plains, highlands, and Arabian desert.
- The Sabaeen Kingdom existed in present-day Yemen around the first century B.C.





Vietnam

Capital City: Hanoi
Language: Vietnamese



My Vietnamese Fact Book

Full Name:

Socialist Republic of Vietnam

Population: 89,571,130

Land Area: 128,527 square miles

Currency: Đồng

Major Religions: None

Highest Point: Fan Si Pan (10,315 feet)

Lowest Point: South China Sea (0 feet)

Vietnam is divided into 58 provinces.

Did you know...?

- Vietnam has small numbers of Buddhists, Christians, and followers of traditional religions, but the vast majority of the population considers themselves irreligious.
- Vietnam has been part of China, the Khmer Empire, French Indochina, and the Japanese Empire. Communist forces established control in the northern part of the country and then fought the Vietnam War for 20 years before succeeding in uniting the entire country as the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.
- Vietnam produces more cashews and black pepper than any other country in the world.

Dong Son

The ancient Dong Son culture existed in present-day Vietnam and surrounding regions from about 1000 B.C. to 1 A.D. The people established a settled farming culture to grow rice and raise pigs and buffalo for meat. They were very skilled in casting bronze items especially drums and figurines.

The drums were amazingly diverse with some being more than six feet tall while others were just a few inches. The top and sides of most Dong Son drums were decorated with images from nature, animals, people, boats, and events like dancing, threshing grain, and going to battle.

The Dong Son people sailed along the rivers in dugout canoes and were possibly one of the first cultures to make paper.



Quiz Time!

Asia

Have you had fun reading about the countries of Asia? This largest of continents is an amazing place stretching across 17,212,000 square miles—about 30 percent of the earth's surface! With 45 countries and over four *trillion* people, Asia houses a wide range of cultures, lifestyles, music, and dinner menus. How much do you remember?

Emperors of what ancient empire came from Syria? (page 90)

Name some of the Bible sites that can be visited in Israel today. (page 68)

What famous conqueror married an Uzbek chief's daughter? (page 97)

Where might you see the Ginger Garden? (page 87)

Where were windmills invented? (page 66)

Where was the Sabaean Kingdom? (page 97)

Where was the Kingdom of Siam? (page 93)

What religion originated in Saudi Arabia? (page 86)

What beautiful building was built by the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan? (page 64)

Where was the capital of the Khmer Empire? (page 62)

What is the lowest point on the entire earth? (page 70)

What is the name of Bangladesh's most famous monastery? (page 60)

What is a khanjar? (page 82)

What huge stone items can be found in Laos? (page 74)

Which country's records were kept on copper plates? (page 77)

What types of weapons did a samurai warrior use? (page 69)

What is a burning gas crater? (page 95)

Where would you go to visit the Tiger's Nest? (page 61)

What language is "Sri Lanka" from and what does it mean? (page 89)

Which two Asian countries share the world's tallest mountain, Mount Everest? (pages 63 and 80)

According to legend, what island was once a crocodile? (page 92)

In what country could you enjoy games like Kiss the Girl and Horse Wrestling? (page 71)

Which country's name means "Land of the Thunder Dragon"? (page 61)

Which country is often called the Cradle of Civilization? (page 67)

What is the name of the dish that combines yam jam, bananas, sweet potatoes, and beans? (page 84)

In what country did the Koguryo Kingdom thrive? (page 81)

What industry thrived in the United Arab Emirates before 1916? (page 96)

Which southeast Asian country was never colonized by Europeans? (page 93)

What is the name of Kuwait's only inhabited island? (page 72)

What country's name means "Land of the Pure" in Urdu? (page 83)

What precious stones can be found in Afghanistan? (page 58)

What is pictured on Kyrgyzstan's flag? (page 73)

Where do most of the world's cashews come from? (page 98)

What empire thrived in Turkey for more than 600 years? (page 94)

Where could you ride an elevator that goes 40 miles per hour? (page 96)

Where would you go to enjoy a Wayang Kulit performance? (page 65)

If you went to Tajikistan, where would you eat? (page 92)

What does Formosa mean? (page 91)

Ulaan-baatar is the capital of which country? (page 78)

The Phoenician culture developed in which country? (page 75)

Which nation's flag is sometimes called Stripes of Glory? (page 76)

On what island is Brunei located? (page 59)

Which two Asian countries have more than a billion people? (pages 63 and 64)

Which country used to be called Burma? (page 79)

Where did Taekwondo originate? (page 88)

What mountain range divides Asia from Europe? (page 85)

What people enjoy drinking coffee seasoned with cardamom and saffron? (page 86)

Would you like to take a trip to Asia? Where would you go?

If you could meet any person from Asian history, who would you meet?

Europe





Albania

Capital City: Tirana

Language: Albanian



My Albanian Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Albania

Population: 2,986,952

Land Area: 11,100 square miles

Currency: Lek

Major Religions:

Muslim (70%), Christian (30%)

Highest Point: Maja e Korabit (9,068 feet)

Lowest Point: Adriatic Sea (0 feet)

Albania is divided into 12 administrative counties.

Did you know...?

- The land that is now Albania was once part of the Roman Empire. Parts of it were known different names: Illyricum, Macedonia, Dalmatia, and Pannonia. It became part of the Byzantine Empire after the year 395.
- The Albanians call their country Shqipëri.
- The double-headed eagle on the country's flag is a symbol that has been used by Albanians for centuries. It was on Gjergj Kastriot Skanderberg's coat of arms when he fought the Ottoman Empire for Albanian independence in 1443.

The Ancient City of Butrint

Butrint, Albania, was declared a World Heritage Site by the United Nations in 1992. Set on a hill above the Vivari Channel, the spot has been occupied since prehistoric times. Archaeologists have found artifacts from 900 B.C. Around 400 B.C., when the city was controlled by the Greek Empire, it included a public meeting place called an agora, a sanctuary, and a theater.

Later, the Roman Empire, under Emperor Augustus, made the city a place where soldiers could retire. People continued to live in Butrint, despite a devastating earthquake around 400 A.D., and it changed hands many times as empires rose and fell. From the Greeks to the Romans, Butrint was also controlled by the First Bulgarian Empire, the Byzantine Empire, the Republic of Venice, and the Ottoman Empire.

Butrint and the rest of Albania finally gained independence in 1912, but no one has lived in the city since the seventeenth century. Instead, archaeologists work to discover more about the site's history, and people can visit the Butrint National Park to see the ruins. The photo to the right shows the ruins of the Roman theater that was built during the second century A.D. on the site of the original Greek theater.





Andorra

Capital City: Andorra la Vella

Language: Catalan



Did you know...?

- Andorra lies entirely in the Pyrenees Mountains.
- Andorra la Vella is the highest capital city in Europe at 3,356 feet in elevation.
- Andorra is one of Europe's smallest countries and is nestled between Spain and France. The two larger countries bear the responsibility of protecting Andorra if it should ever be attacked.
- Andorra's primary business is tourism, and more than ten million people come to see the beautiful country each year.
- Most food has to be imported from other countries, but some farmers raise sheep. Small-scale industries produce tobacco products and furniture.

My Andorran Fact Book

Full Name:

Principality of Andorra

Population: 84,525

Land Area: 181 square miles

Currency: Euro

Major Religion: Christian (90%)

Highest Point:

Pic de Coma Pedrosa (9,665 feet)

Lowest Point: Riu Runer (2,756 feet)

Andorra is divided into seven parishes.

Ruling Andorra

Andorra has an interesting and unique system of leadership. It is technically a monarchy with two equal "co-princes," the President of France and the Catholic Bishop of Urgell in Catalonia, Spain. How did this come about? It's a somewhat complicated tale, but here goes: The Roman Emperor Charlemagne gave the land to the Andorrans but gave control of it to the Count of Urgell. The count then gave ownership of the land to the Catholic Diocese of Urgell in 988 as a trade for land in another area.

The Bishop of Urgell asked the Lord of Caboet for help protecting Andorra from potential enemies. The two signed an agreement that they would be co-princes of Andorra. Eventually, because of marriage, the Lord of Caboet's right to Andorra passed to the French Count of Foix. Because of changing powers in France, the countship and the role of co-prince passed first to the kings of Navarre, then to the kings of France, and finally to the elected president of France.

The bishop and president don't actively rule Andorra today, though. The country has an elected parliament called the General Council, which elects the Prime Minister. The General Council makes the laws, prepares the budget, and can have the Prime Minister removed from office. If the Prime Minister feels that the council should be changed, he can ask the co-princes to disband the current council and hold new elections.



Armenia

Capital City: Yerevan

Languages: Armenian, Russian



Did you know...?

- Though Mount Ararat is located just across the Turkish border, the Armenians consider it a symbol of their country. Mount Ararat is where the Bible says that Noah's ark came to rest after the Flood.
- Armenia was the first country to name Christianity as its official state religion.
- The most popular sports in Armenia are wrestling, weightlifting, and boxing.
- During World War I, a million Armenian civilians were killed during forced relocations ordered by the Ottoman Empire. The Armenians call this time the "Great Crime."

My Armenian Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Armenia

Population: 2,966,802

Land Area: 11,484 square miles

Currency: Dram

Major Religion: Christian (99%)

Highest Point:

Aragats Lerrnagagat' (13,419 feet)

Lowest Point: Debed River (1,312 feet)

Armenia is divided into ten provinces.



The Father of Armenia

According to Armenian tradition, the country was founded by a man named Hayk, who is said to be the great-grandson of Noah. According to a history written by Moses of Chorene, Hayk traveled in ancient times from Babylon to Mount Ararat where he founded a settlement.

The story says that a rival named Bel tried to force Hayk's settlers back to Babylon, but Hayk defeated him with a long bow. No one is sure how much of the story is actually true, but the Armenians enjoy telling about their patriarch. A statue of Hayk stands in the capital city of Yerevan.

Armenian Music

Traditional Armenian music uses unique instruments like duduk, a double reed woodwind instrument. The style is actually the oldest double reed instrument in the entire world, and 3,000 year old pieces have been found.

Most duduks are made from the wood of the apricot tree, and the Armenian word for the instrument, *tsiranapoh*, actually means "apricot pipe." The duduk is often accompanied by drums and other woodwind instruments.

Religious music frequently includes Armenian chants, which are hymns sung in a rhythmic cadence without any musical instruments.

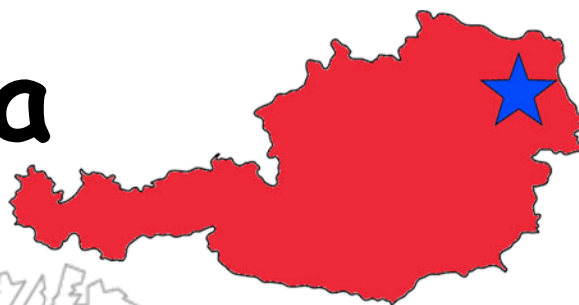




Austria

Capital City:
Vienna

Language: German



Did you know...?

- Innsbruck, Austria, was host to the Winter Olympics in 1964 and 1976.
- The assassination of Austria's Archduke Franz Ferdinand in 1914 led to the start of World War I.
- The Alps cover over half of Austria.
- A typical Austrian meal includes beef or pork, a variety of vegetables, and pastries that are filled with cream, marmalade, cheese, or fruit.
- The classic musical and film *The Sound of Music* is set in Austria and is based on the real life of the von Trapp family.

My Austrian Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Austria

Population: 8,214,160

Land Area: 32,383 square miles

Currency: Euro

Major Religion: Christian (78%)

Highest Point:

Grossglockner (12,461 feet)

Lowest Point:

Neusiedler See (377 feet)

Austria is divided into nine states.

Composers from Austria

Several famous composers of classical music were Austrian or studied in Austria. Both Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Ludwig van Beethoven lived in Austria during the eighteenth century, though it is not known whether the two ever met. Both men began playing musical pieces at very young ages and gave public performances before age ten. Mozart even composed pieces when he was just five years old.

The Habsburgs and the Holy Roman Empire

The Habsburgs were a family that ruled territory covering all or part of the land that now makes up 19 modern European countries. Their capital was usually located in Vienna, and the family's "hereditary lands" included what is now Austria, Slovenia, and parts of Germany and Italy. The Habsburgs' rule began in the early 1500s and continued until 1918.

Because of military battles and marriages, different members of the Habsburg family controlled lands in Italy, Spain, France, Hungary, and other regions at various times throughout the Middle Ages.

Beginning in 1440, a Habsburg was also the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, a kingdom made up of numerous Germanic states. The original purpose of the Holy Roman Empire was to bring all Christian peoples together into a single nation, but wars with France, Sweden, and the Ottoman Empire weakened the empire. In 1806, Emperor Francis II abdicated to Napoleon Bonaparte.



Azerbaijan

Capital City: Baku

Language: Azeri



Did you know...?

- The ethnic people of Azerbaijan are called Azeri.
- Azerbaijan produces oil, natural gas, gold, silver, copper, and other resources.
- On the Azerbaijani flag, blue represents the country's Turkic heritage, red represents progress, and green represents Islam. The star and crescent are associated with Islam also, and the star has eight points to signify eight branches of the Turkic people.
- Azerbaijan was the first successful democratic nation in the Islamic world.
- Azerbaijan borders the Caspian Sea, which is the largest landlocked sea in the world. The capital city, Baku, is the largest city on the Caspian's coast.
- The Caucasus Mountains are partially located in Azerbaijan.
- Chess is a very popular game in Azerbaijan.

My Azerbaijani Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Azerbaijan

Population: 8,303,512

Land Area: 33,436 square miles

Currency: Manat

Major Religion: Muslim (93%)

Highest Point:

Bazarduzu Dagi (14,715 feet)

Lowest Point: Caspian Sea
(92 feet below sea level)

Azerbaijan is divided into 59 rayons.

Novruz Bayram

Novruz Bayram is an ancient holiday that is still celebrated in Azerbaijan today. It marks the new year in the Iranian calendar and is held on March 20 or 21 each year. The event is celebrated for a month before the actual date, and people typically do not have to go to work or school on Novruz.

Leading up to Novruz, houses are carefully cleaned, new clothes are made, and everything is made fresh and new for the start of the year. On the day of Novruz, some people dress in traditional Azeri clothing and families have a large meal together. They often eat special pastries like baklava and have public dances, music, and other festivities.

Karabakh Horse

Having originated in Azerbaijan, the Karabakh horse is well loved in this country. They have compact, muscular bodies and are known for being strong, fast, agile, loyal, and good tempered. The breed was developed in the fifth century and has helped to develop several other breeds.

Today, Karabakh horses are endangered with fewer than 1,000 remaining, most of them in Azerbaijan.



Belarus

Capital City: Minsk

Languages:
Belarusian, Russian



Did you know...?

- The country is relatively flat with just 840 feet between its highest and lowest points.
- Belarus is a little smaller than Kansas.
- Belarus means “White Rus” or “White Russian” and may have first been used because of the snow-covered mountains in the area.
- The nation manufactures and exports a large number of tractors and other heavy machines every year.
- Almost 25 percent of Belarusians work in industrial factories.
- Belarus was one of the founding members of the United Nations.

My Belarusian Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Belarus

Population: 9,612,632

Land Area: 80,155 square miles

Currency: Belarusian ruble

Major Religion: Christian (90%)

Highest Point:

Dzyarzhynskaya Hara (1,135 feet)

Lowest Point: Nyoman River (295 feet)

Belarus is divided into six regions.

Brest Fortress



Brest Fortress in western Belarus was originally completed in 1842 by the Russian military. It was continually fortified and improved throughout the 1800s and early 1900s. During World War I, it was captured by German forces and was later the site of battles during the Polish-Soviet War.

Today, Brest Fortress is a war memorial and is most admired because Soviet soldiers successfully defended the site against a German attack in 1941 during World War II. This event gave the fortress its nickname of Hero Fortress.

Belarusian Food

A traditional Belarusian meal includes pork, vegetables, and rye bread. Breakfast is typically the lightest meal of the day, and dinner is the most filling. During the country's years as a Soviet state, the communist government introduced a “new Belarusian cuisine” with original recipes. Many traditional dishes were lost, but the Belarusian people are working to restore their mealtime heritage today.

An ancient custom among the Belarusians is the presentation of bread and salt to a special visitor. It's a symbol of hospitality, welcome, and friendship.



Belgium

Capital City: Brussels

Languages:
Dutch, French, German



Did you know...?

- About 90 percent of the raw diamonds mined worldwide are brought to Antwerp, Belgium, for processing and finishing.
- In Belgium, students must attend school until age 18, and all adult citizens are required to vote in elections.
- Both Belgian waffles and french fries originated in Belgium.
- The world's first printed newspaper was published in Antwerp.
- The town of Spa was the site of the first health resort where eighteenth century Europeans could come to be pampered.

My Belgian Fact Book

Full Name:

Kingdom of Belgium

Population: 10,423,493

Land Area: 11,787 square miles

Currency: Euro

Major Religion: Christian (80%)

Highest Point: Botrange (2,277 feet)

Lowest Point: North Sea (0 feet)

Belgium is divided into three regions.

History of Belgium

When the Romans first came into the area, they found a Celtic people called the Belgae. The Romans named the region Gallia Belgica after the people who lived there, and the name eventually turned in Belgium. After the Roman Empire left, Germanic Franks came to power and called the area the Merovingian Kingdom. King Clovis I became a Christian in the fifth century, but the different parts of the kingdom fought against one another after he died.

Over 200 years later, the lands were reunited by King Pepin III but he called his kingdom Carolingian. Pepin's son, the famous Emperor Charlemagne, was born in Liège, Belgium, around 742 A.D. After Charlemagne died, Belgium belonged to the early French kingdom, West Francia. Through the following centuries, the lands of modern Belgium passed from ruler to ruler. France, Spain, the Netherlands, and the Habsburgs of Austria all claimed the region at one time or another.

When the French Revolution started in 1789, the Belgians used it as an opportunity to rebel against their current rulers, the Austrians. They founded the United States of Belgium in 1790 but weren't completely independent for some time. They were more or less occupied by French troops until Napoleon's defeat in the early nineteenth century when the other European powers decided that Belgium should become a part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

It didn't take long for the fed-up Belgians to rebel against their new rulers. The uprising started in Brussels and spread across the country. The other European nations finally recognized Belgium as an independent, sovereign nation on January 20, 1831.

Belgium was again occupied, this time by the Germans during World War II, but their freedom was quickly restored at the end of the war.



Bosnia and Herzegovina

Capital City: Sarajevo

Languages:
Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian



Did you know...?

- Bosnia and Herzegovina was once part of Soviet Yugoslavia.
- The country has just 16 miles of coastline on the Adriatic Sea.
- The stars on the Bosnian and Herzegovinian flag are meant to continue on in infinity. They represent Europe. The points of the yellow triangle are said to represent the three ethnic groups in the country - Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs.
- A young Serb from Bosnia and Herzegovina assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo, thus provoking World War I.

My Bosnian and Herzegovinian Fact Book

Full Name:

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Population: 4,621,598

Land Area: 19,767 square miles

Currency: Convertible Mark

Major Religions:

Christian (48%), Muslim (40%)

Highest Point: Maglic (7,828 feet)

Lowest Point: Adriatic Sea (0 feet)

Bosnia and Herzegovina is divided into two administrative divisions.

Constituent Peoples

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the three main ethnic groups are called "constituent peoples." They are the Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs. The words Bosnia and Herzegovina actually refer to regions, not to any particular ethnic groups, and the country is divided into three districts that are governed separately.

Unlike most countries, Bosnia and Herzegovina has no central government. Instead, the "Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina" and "Republika Srpska" are two separate political entities. The third district is called Brčko District and is jointly governed by both of the others.

Great Illyrian Revolt

When the Romans spread into the region, a people called the Illyrians lived there. The people began fighting against the Romans early on, and, though the Roman army was the strongest in the world, the Illyrians fought them off for four years. They were eventually defeated, but their efforts were the most successful rebellion in the history of the Roman Empire.



Bulgaria

Capital City: Sofia

Language: Bulgarian



Did you know...?

- The Cyrillic alphabet was developed in Bulgaria during the tenth century.
- Bulgaria has been ruled by Alexander the Great, the Roman Empire, the Byzantine Empire, and the Ottoman Empire.
- Bulgaria's natural resources include gold, iron, copper, and coal. They also manufacture firearms and building materials like drywall.
- Bulgaria first sent an astronaut into space in 1979.
- Yogurt is a popular and traditional food in Bulgaria, and one of its active bacteria was first identified by a Bulgarian in 1905. The bacteria's Latin name is *Lactobacillus bulgaricus* in honor of his work.

My Bulgarian Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Bulgaria

Population: 7,148,785

Land Area: 42,823 square miles

Currency: Lev

Major Religion: Christian (84%)

Highest Point: Musala (9,596 feet)

Lowest Point: Black Sea (0 feet)

Bulgaria is divided into 28 provinces.

Bulgarian Empire

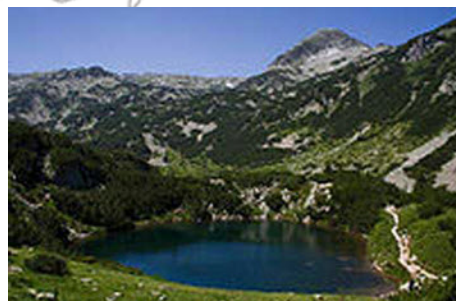
The Bulgarian Empire ruled the region beginning around 632 A.D. The kingdom was ruled by Tsars, one of whom declared Christianity the state religion in 864. During its Golden Age, the empire was the center of eastern Europe, and the Bulgarian language, literature, and other aspects of the culture spread outward to other regions.

Years of war with its neighbors resulted in the kingdom being made part of the Byzantine Empire in 1018, but the people rebelled and established the Second Bulgarian Empire after 167 years. This second empire also became a center of culture, especially in the areas of art and literature. The Bulgarians created beautiful murals, built monasteries, and illustrated books in a style known as "illuminated manuscript."

Pirin Mountain and Baikushev's Pine

The Pirin Mountains, located partially in the Pirin National Park in southwestern Bulgaria, is the country's second highest mountain range. It is known for its natural beauty and is home to a number of lakes, rivers, and waterfalls. The Bulgarians call the lakes the "eyes of the mountain."

Pirin is also home to one of the oldest trees in the world, the Baikushev's Pine. It's estimated to be around 1,300 years old.





Croatia

Capital City: Zagreb

Language: Croatian



My Croatian Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Croatia

Population: 4,486,881

Land Area: 21,851 square miles

Currency: Kuna

Major Religion: Christian (93%)

Highest Point: Dinara (6,007 feet)

Lowest Point: Adriatic Sea (0 feet)

Croatia is divided into 20 counties.

Did you know...?

- The Roman Emperor Diocletian, who reigned from 284 to 305 A.D., was born in Croatia near the city of Split.
- Over 11 million people visit Croatia each year as tourists.
- The necktie was first made in Croatia and is called a *cravat* there.
- One of the most popular sports in Croatia is handball, and the country's national handball team won Olympic gold medals in 1996 and 2004.
- Croatian Janica Kostelić is the only woman who has ever won four Olympic gold medals in alpine skiing events.
- During the Fourth Crusade of the early thirteenth century, crusaders from western European countries attacked several Croatian towns.

Croatian Islands

Croatia holds more than 1,000 islands in the Adriatic Sea. Most of them are very small, but some are large enough to have towns on them. Two of these larger islands in particular have a rich history going back more than 2,000 years.

Both Vis and Hvar were the sites of Greek colonies beginning in the fourth century B.C. At that time, Vis was called Issa and Hvar's colony was called Pharos, which means "lighthouse." Later, Hvar was the site of an important Venetian naval base. Its location in the Adriatic Sea made it a prime spot for ships to sail into the Mediterranean and to places like Greece, the Italian peninsula, and maybe even Spain and northern Africa.

Croats in Croatia

The ethnic Croat people began to settle in what is now Croatia in the seventh century. They established two dukedoms called Pannonia and Littoral Croatia, which were part of the Frankish territory for about a hundred years before uniting and gaining independence in 925.

Today, Croatia is a popular tourist destination and has had the honor of producing several modern inventions. Ink pens, the hot water bottle, and the torpedo were all invented or first conceived in Croatia.



Cyprus

Capital City: Nicosia

Languages: Greek, Turkish



Did you know...?

- Both the olive branches and the white color on the Cypriot flag symbolize peace. The orange color represents the copper resources in the country.
- Cyprus is the largest island in the Mediterranean that is also an independent nation.
- Part of northern Cyprus is claimed by Turkey, but no other nations recognize the claim.
- Cyprus was once part of the Hittite Empire.
- Cypriot cuisine often includes seafood like squid and octopus. The people also enjoy tomatoes, cucumber, okra, pears, grapes, and almonds.

My Cypriot Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Cyprus

Population: 1,102,677

Land Area: 3,571 square miles

Currency: Euro

Major Religions:

Christian (80%), Muslim (19%)

Highest Point:

Mount Olympus (6,401 feet)

Lowest Point:

Mediterranean Sea (0 feet)

Cyprus is divided into six districts.

Animals on Cyprus

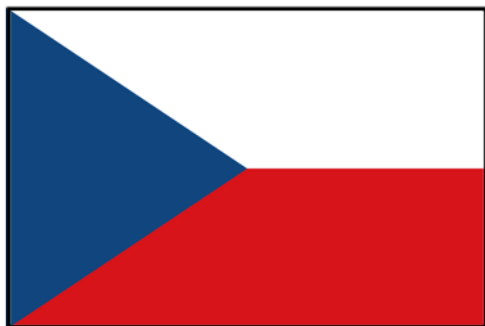
A variety of animals and almost 400 different types of birds live on the island of Cyprus, and the surrounding Mediterranean is host to a large number of fish and dolphins. At least two animals are known to live only on Cyprus - the Cypriot Mouflon, a type of big horned sheep, and the Cypriot Mouse.

Some of the birds that migrate through Cyprus include pelicans, herons, flamingos, and swans. More than half a dozen species of eagles live there too.

Aphrodite

According to Greek mythology, the goddess of love and beauty, Aphrodite, emerged from the sea onto the shore of Cyprus near Paphos. Aphrodite was said to be fully grown when she walked out of the water onto the beach. Many stories were written about Aphrodite, and she was one of the principal figures in Greek mythology.

During ancient times, the people of Cyprus built a temple for Aphrodite on top of Mount Olympus (not to be confused with the mountain of the same name in Greece). Later, the Romans called her Venus and the planet is named after her. Aphrodite remains a popular figure even today. The beach at Paphos is now a popular place for tourists to visit.



Czech Republic

Capital City: Prague

Languages:
Czech, Slovak



Did you know...?

- The Czech people call their country Cesko. Czech officials have suggested that English speakers could use the name Czechia, but this hasn't caught on.
- Parts of the Czech Republic were called Bohemia and Moravia for 1,000 years. The country was part of Czechoslovakia from 1918 to 1993.
- About ten percent of the people living in the area died from the Black Death between 1327 and 1352.
- It's estimated that 75 percent of the people in Czechoslovakia were either killed or sent to concentration or labor camps during the Nazi occupation of World War II. The country's Jewish population was almost completely destroyed.

My Czech Fact Book

Full Name:

Czech Republic

Population: 10,201, 707

Land Area: 30,450 square miles

Currency: Czech koruna

Major Religions:

No Religion (59%), Christian (29%)

Highest Point: Snezka (5,256 feet)

Lowest Point: Elbe River (377 feet)

Czech Republic is divided into 13 regions.

Dumplings with Vanilla Cream

A popular dish in the Czech Republic is a sweet dumpling, called *buchty*, that is served with powdered sugar, cream, or filled with jam or curd. Try this recipe for *buchtíčky se šodo*.

2 ¼ C. flour 1 Tbsp. yeast ¼ C. sugar

½ C. milk, lukewarm ¼ C. butter 2 egg yolks

Sift flour into a bowl. Combine 2 Tbsp. milk, 2 Tbsp. sugar, and yeast; stirring until yeast dissolves. Pour into the flour and stir to combine; cover and let rise for 15 minutes. Add remaining ingredients and beat well until dough is no longer sticky. Add more flour, a little at a time, if needed. Knead briefly. Cover and let rise for 30 minutes.

Knead dough on a floured surface and then cut into equal, tennis ball-sized pieces. Butter a 9x13 baking dish and sprinkle in enough sugar to cover the bottom. Place dumplings into the pan so that their sides are lightly touching; brush with melted butter. Cover and let rise for 15 minutes. Bake at 375°F for 30 minutes until golden brown.

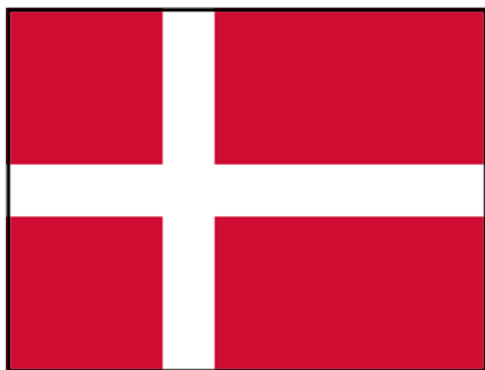
1 C. milk 2 egg yolks

6 Tbsp. Milk 1 Tbsp. cornstarch

1 Tbsp. sugar 1 tsp. vanilla extract

In a 2-quart saucepan over medium-low heat, bring 1 C. milk to a boil, stirring frequently to avoid scorching. In a bowl, combine 6 Tbsp. milk, sugar, egg yolks, cornstarch, and vanilla; stir well.

Pour egg mixture into saucepan and bring to a second boil, stirring constantly. Pour warm sauce over the fresh dumplings and serve. Sprinkle with cinnamon and sugar if you'd like.



Denmark

Capital City: Copenhagen

Language: Danish



Did you know...?

- The people of Denmark are called Danes.
- Denmark once held colonies in India, the Virgin Islands, and west Africa in what was known as the Gold Coast (now the nation of Ghana).
- Both Greenland and the Faroe Islands (between Iceland and Great Britain) are territories of Denmark.
- Almost 20 percent of the electricity used in Denmark is produced by wind turbines.
- Danes call their flag *Dannebrog*, and it has been used since at least 1370 making it the oldest, continuously-used flag of any nation on earth.
- During World War II, Denmark was occupied by Nazi forces but the Danes secretly helped more than 7,000 Jews escape into Sweden.

My Danish Fact Book

Full Name:

Kingdom of Denmark

Population: 5,515,575

Land Area: 16,640 square miles

Currency: Danish krone

Major Religion: Christian (97%)

Highest Point:

Mollehoj/Ejer Bavnehoj (561 feet)

Lowest Point:

Lammefjord (23 feet below sea level)

Denmark is divided into five regions.

Hans Christian Anderson

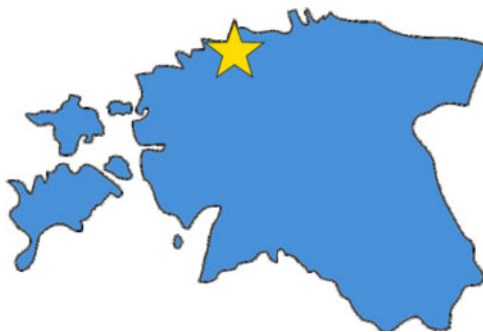
Born in 1805 in Odense, Denmark, Hans Christian Anderson wrote numerous stories and fairy tales that are beloved around the world today. His most famous stories include *The Little Mermaid*, *The Princess and the Pea*, *The Emperor's New Clothes*, *Thumbelina*, and *The Ugly Duckling*. Many of the tales have been translated into more than 150 languages.

In Denmark's capital, Copenhagen, the people erected a statue of Mr. Anderson after his death in 1875. Another statue, of the Little Mermaid, was finished in 1913 and now sits on a rock in Copenhagen Harbor.

Danish Vikings

Like its neighbors, Norway and Sweden, Denmark is a Scandinavian country and shares in the history of the Viking Age. Because they lived in the northern regions, the people were often called Norsemen by other Europeans. The term Viking comes from the Old Norse word *viking*, which means "an overseas expedition."

The Vikings are well known for sailing in their long boats across the sea to other lands. The Danish Vikings ventured into modern-day France and England, though archaeological evidence and surviving records suggest that the Vikings weren't as fierce and barbaric as some stories make them out to be.



Estonia

Capital City: Tallinn

Language: Estonian



My Estonian Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Estonia

Population: 1,291,170

Land Area: 17,413 square miles

Currency: Euro

Major Religions:

No Religion (40%), Christian (28%)

Highest Point:

Suur Munamagi (1,043 feet)

Lowest Point: Baltic Sea (0 feet)

Estonia is divided into 15 counties.

Did you know...?

- Estonia is home to over 1,000 small lakes, fens, and bogs.
- Estonians call their flag *sinmustvalge*, which simply means "blue black white."
- The Estonian people and their language are quite similar to their Finnish neighbors.
- During the Great Famine of Estonia, which lasted from 1694-1698, cold and rainy summers and extremely cold, lengthy winters caused a severe shortage of food in the country. Twenty percent of the population died in just two years.

Estonian Independence

Estonia has a long history of being ruled by other nations, beginning as long ago as the thirteenth century. The area has been ruled by Denmark, Sweden, Russia, and Germanic states. During a time called the Estophile Enlightenment Period, educated Estonians studied their people's history and became especially proud of the time when Estonians were free before the first Danish conquerors arrived.

This cultural pride led to the Estonian Age of Awakening, which began in the middle of the nineteenth century. Many Estonians began to believe their people deserved to rule themselves instead of being ruled by foreign nations. Estonia declared independence on February 24, 1918.

Their independence was short-lived, however. The Soviet Union annexed Estonia during World War II and established their communist government there. After almost 50 years, Estonia again gained independence in 1991.

Black Bread

A traditional and beloved staple food in Estonia is black bread, which is made with rye and wheat flours, a sourdough starter, and typically caraway seeds. The bread is begun by mixing the sourdough starter with yeast, flour, and warm water, and this mixture is left sitting at room temperature for two to four days. The longer the "pre-dough" sits, the more sour it becomes. After enough time has passed, more flour and other ingredients are added, the dough is kneaded, allowed to rise, and then baked - sometimes for an hour and a half. If you'd like to try some Estonian black bread, you'll find a recipe in Appendix A.



Finland

Capital City: Helsinki

Language: Finnish



Did you know...?

- The people of Finland didn't have a written language, and no written history of the region exists before the Swedes took control in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.
- In 1939 and 1940, Finland fought the Winter War against invading Soviet forces. At the end of this war, the Moscow Peace Treaty of 1940 forced Finland to give up three portions of its territory to the Soviet Union. Over 400,000 Finnish people - nearly everyone who lived there—voluntarily left these areas before the Soviets moved in.
- About 86 percent of Finland's land is covered by forest, and the country is home to thousands of lakes.
- Finland is actually getting larger as slowly melting glaciers expose more land area.
- In the Finnish language, Finland is called *Suomi*.
- In southern Finland, winter lasts about four months, but in northern Finland, it can last for seven months.
- At the village of Nuorgam, Finland's northern-most spot, the sun does not rise for 51 days in winter and does not set for 73 days in summer.

My Finnish Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Finland

Population: 5,255,068

Land Area: 130,596 square miles

Currency: Euro

Major Religion: Christian (81%)

Highest Point:

Haltiunturi (4,357 feet)

Lowest Point: Baltic Sea (0 feet)

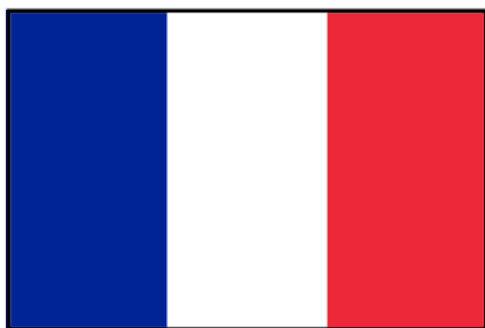
Finland is divided into 20 regions.

People of Finland

Most of the people living in Finland are of Finnish descent and speak Finnish as their first language. Traditionally, as well as today, the immediate family of mother, father, and children is the most important connection for the Finnish. Unlike some countries where extended families live closely, the Finnish tend to maintain distant relationships with grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins.

Today, Finnish people eat an international cuisine with pizza and hamburgers, but they still enjoy traditional Finnish dishes, especially on holidays. Moose and deer are often hunted and eaten at home, while reindeer can be ordered in some restaurants. Along with meat or fish, Finnish meals typically include wild berries, milk, and dark, whole grain breads. For dessert, they may have *pulla*, a sweet bread, fruit soups, or tarts.

The constitution of Finland protects the culture and language of minorities like the Sami, Romani, and Finns who speak Swedish as their first language. The Sami are indigenous to the northern parts of Finland, Sweden, Norway, and Russia's Kola Peninsula. About ten percent of Sami live a semi-nomadic life as they herd reindeer. Others fish along the coasts, herd sheep, or trap animals for fur.



France

Capital City: Paris

Language: French



Did you know...?

- France has both warm beaches on the Atlantic Ocean and Mediterranean Sea and high, snowy mountains of the Alps and Pyrenes.
- The Eiffel Tower in Paris was built for the 1889 World's Fair.
- France is home to some of the most beautiful castles and palaces of the world. The Palace of Versailles, Mont Saint-Michel, and Château de Chambord are some of the most enjoyed.
- France holds several overseas territories including French Guiana in South America, French Polynesia, Guadeloupe, New Caledonia, and Martinique.
- The people of France were once known as Franks.

My French Fact Book

Full Name:

French Republic

Population: 64,768,389

Land Area: 260,558 square miles

Currency: Euro

Major Religions:

Christian (67%), No Religion (24%)

Highest Point: Mont Blanc (15,771 feet)

Lowest Point: Rhone River delta
(7 feet below sea level)

France is divided into 26 administrative regions.

The Gauls

During the time of the Roman Empire, the area of modern-day France was known as Gaul. The people who lived there had probably had contact with the Greeks during ancient times, but it was the Romans who **first** called them Gauls. They called themselves Celts.

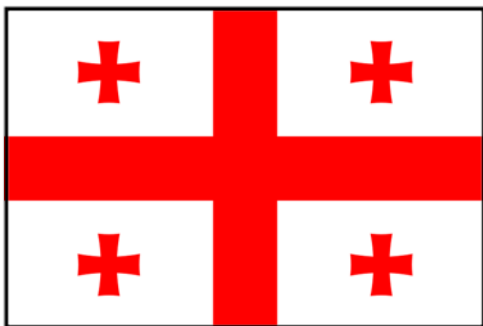
In the first century B.C., General Julius Caesar and his Roman army moved into Gaul and conquered nearly all of the tribes there. These battles are known as the Gallic Wars, and the Celtic-Gaul culture virtually disappeared after their conquest.

France through History

France has been an important European power since at least 1000 A.D. and an important world power since the sixteenth century. The country has been involved in virtually every major event that took place in Europe, including the Hundred Years' War and both World Wars.

After the French Revolution, Napoleon Bonaparte took control of France and tried—unsuccessfully—to establish the French Empire across Europe. During World War II, northern and western France was occupied by German forces and Italian forces occupied a small part of south-eastern France and its Mediterranean island, Corsica.

Food shortages, fighting, and curfews made life difficult during the occupation, but some French people worked secretly to save their Jewish neighbors—especially children—from being deported.



Georgia

Capital City: Tbilisi

Language: Georgian



Did you know...?

- Georgia is quite mountainous, and nearly half the country is covered with forest.
- During the time of the Greek and Roman Empires, the people of modern-day Georgia were called Iberians in the east and Colchians in the west.
- Greek mythology says that Jason and the Argonauts found the Golden Fleece in Colchis, western Georgia.
- The five-cross flag of Georgia was also the flag of the Georgian Kingdom but wasn't officially used from the sixteenth century until 2004.
- The Georgians call their country *Sakartvelo*.
- Making wine is a traditional occupation in Georgia, and more than 500 kinds of wine are made in the country today.

My Georgian Fact Book

Full Name:

Georgia

Population: 4,600,825

Land Area: 26,911 square miles

Currency: Lari

Major Religion: Christian (91%)

Highest Point: Mt'a Shkhara (17,064 feet)

Lowest Point: Black Sea (0 feet)

Georgia is divided into nine regions.

Krubera Cave

In north-eastern Georgia lies Krubera Cave, also called Voronya Cave, which means Crow's Cave in Russian. Krubera is the deepest known cave in the entire world and has been explored to a depth of 7,188 feet below the surface. Though the cave was first explored in the early twentieth century, this depth wasn't reached until 2007.

Great Church of Jvari

Near Mtskheta, the ancient capital of the Iberian Kingdom, stands the Great Church of Jvari, one of the world's oldest surviving Christian churches. In Georgian, the name Jvari Monastery means Monastery of the Cross.

The site held a pagan temple during ancient times, and it is believed that Saint Nino placed a wooden cross there as a proclamation against paganism. Christians came from throughout the region to see the cross and to worship at the site.

The Small Church of Jvari was built about 200 years later, and the current church was built by an Iberian ruler, Stephen I, in the late sixth century.

Throughout the medieval period, Christian pilgrims from Georgia and surrounding lands visited Jvari Monastery. Today, the church is once again used for services.





Germany

Capital City: Berlin

Language: German



My German Fact Book

Full Name:

Federal Republic of Germany

Population: 82,282,988

Land Area: 137,847 square miles

Currency: Euro

Major Religions:

Christian, (60%) No Religion (35%)

Highest Point: Zugspitze (9,721 feet)

Lowest Point: Neuendorf bei Wilster (12 feet below sea level)

Germany is divided into 16 states.

Did you know...?

- In German, the country is called *Deutschland*.
- The Danube, the second longest river in Europe, begins in Germany's Black Forest.
- The Protestant Reformation started in Wittenberg, Germany, when Martin Luther posted his *95 Theses on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences* on the door of the Castle Church in 1517.
- Germany borders nine countries, more nations than any other European country.
- Albert Einstein was born in Germany and lived there until he was a teenager. The famous composer Ludwig van Beethoven was also born and raised in Germany.
- The famous "fairy tale castle," Neuschwanstein Castle, is located in Bavaria in the southern part of the country.
- Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, better known as the Brothers Grimm, are famous for publishing collections of fairy tales during the nineteenth century.

A Divided Germany, Reunited

From the end of World War II until 1990, Germany and its capital, Berlin, were divided into East Germany and West Germany. Provisional control of the two countries was given to the victors of World War II. The United States, United Kingdom, and France took control of West Germany, and the United Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR) took control of East Germany.

A free economy was set up in West Germany, while a communist "planned economy" was set up in East Germany. This means that the government planned and controlled all aspects of business. As the years passed, the business and everyday life of people in West Germany became much better than those in the soviet-controlled portion.

Many people in East Germany moved into West Berlin to find freedom, and the government built the now-famous Berlin Wall all the way around West Berlin in 1961 to stop them. People who tried to cross the wall into West Berlin without permission were often arrested or shot.

Beginning in 1989, Hungary opened its borders to allow people to leave East Germany, and the East German government then relaxed its restrictions on who could cross directly into West Germany. On November 9, 1989, East Berliners tore down a section of the wall, signifying a new era.

Germany was fully reunited on October 3, 1990 when it formed an independent, parliamentary republic.



Greece

Capital City: Athens

Language: Greek



My Greek Fact Book

Full Name:

Hellenic Republic

Population: 10,749,943

Land Area: 50,944 square miles

Currency: Euro

Major Religion: Christian (98%)

Highest Point:

Mount Olympus (9,570 feet)

Lowest Point:

Mediterranean Sea (0 feet)

Greece is divided into 13 peripheries.

Did you know...?

- Greece is considered to have one of the healthiest diets in the world, and its cuisine is rich in olive oil, fish, tomatoes, and eggplant.
- Its extensive coastline means that Greece has a strong shipping industry with dozens of sea ports.
- Classical Greece is well-known for its detailed mythology that formed the basis for both historical and religious beliefs for the ancient Greeks. The country's highest point, Mount Olympus, was said to be the home of the mythological gods.
- The first advanced civilizations in Europe developed in Greece. The Mycenaeans and Minoans are some of the earliest known peoples to have lived in the region.
- After the decline of the Classical Greek civilization, modern-day Greece was ruled by the Romans, the Byzantine Empire, and the Ottoman Empire.

Classical Greece

Ancient Greece is probably one of the most renowned and recognized civilizations of the world, and it provides the basis for Western culture, law, art, and education. Greece was divided into a number of city-states that were largely independent but would bind together in times of war or other difficulties. The most well known Greek city-states include Athens, Sparta, and Corinth.

The Greeks held the first Olympic Games in 776 B.C. Just like today, the games were held every four years and athletes traveled from various regions to Olympia to compete. All the city-states called a truce during the Olympics so that athletes and spectators could travel in peace.

Two of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World were located in Greece. In Olympia, the statue of a seated Zeus was 43 feet tall and was sculpted from gold-plated bronze and ivory. The statue is believed to have been destroyed during a fire in the fifth century A.D.

The Colossus of Rhodes stood over the entrance to a Greek harbor and, at 107 feet high, was one of the tallest statues known in the classical world. The statue was built to celebrate a third century victory of the city-state over Cyprus, but it was destroyed by an earthquake in 226 B.C., less than 60 years after being built.



Hungary



Capital City: Budapest

Language: Hungarian

Did you know...?

- Dobos torte is a world famous desert that was created in Hungary by József C. Dobos in 1884. It's a five to seven layer cake that contains chocolate buttercream icing between every layer and caramel on top.
- The largest Jewish synagogue in Europe, called the Great Synagogue, is in Budapest.
- Hungarian Ernő Rubik invented the Rubik's Cube, which began selling in toy stores around the world in 1980.
- On the Hungarian flag, the color red is said to represent strength and the blood shed during the fight for independence, white represents faithfulness and freedom, and green represents hope and the land of Hungary.

My Hungarian Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Hungary

Population: 9,992,339

Land Area: 35,919 square miles

Currency: Forint

Major Religion: Christian (74%)

Highest Point: Kekes (3,327 feet)

Lowest Point: Tisza River (256 feet)

Hungary is divided into 19 counties.

Lake Hévíz and Thermal Baths

Europe's largest thermal lake, Lake Hévíz, is located in the western area of Hungary. Fed by hot springs, the water temperature of the lake averages about 89 degrees in the summer and 80 degrees in the winter.

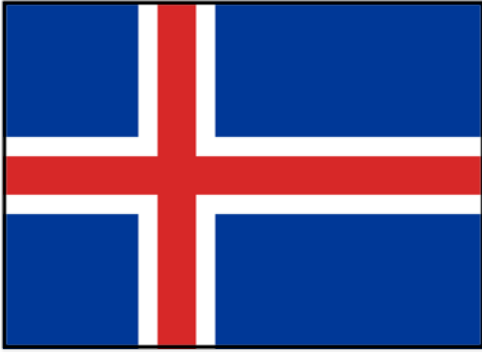
For hundreds of years, the water of Lake Hévíz has been sought out for its reputed healing benefits. The slightly sulphuric water is full of minerals and is considered highly therapeutic, while the mud around the edges of the lake is actually slightly radioactive and is used to treat disorders of the joints and nervous system.

Hungary has over 1,000 hot springs and about 450 public thermal baths scattered across the country. Historically, the people who have lived in Hungary, including the Romans, Greeks, and Ottoman Turks, have enjoyed the natural thermal lakes and have built bathhouses around them.

Louis the Great

Louis I of Hungary, Croatia, and Poland is considered one of the strongest kings of Europe during the late medieval period. Hungary flourished under his rule which lasted from 1342 until his death in 1382. During battles, like the first Ottoman attack on Europe, Louis fought alongside his soldiers and lived in camp with them, and Hungary remained one of the only peaceful nations of Europe during his reign. A statue of Louis the Great stands in Budapest today.

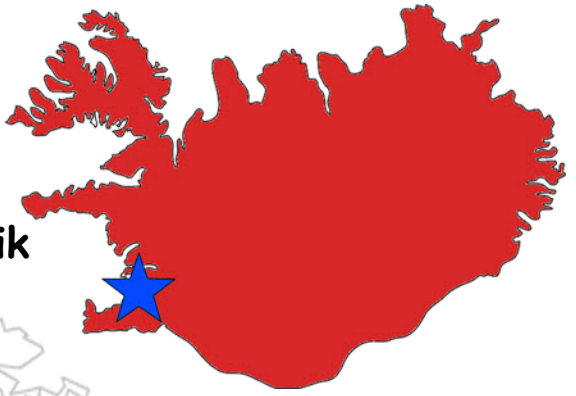




Iceland

Capital City: Reykjavik

Language: Icelandic



Did you know...?



- Besides the main island, Iceland includes 30 small islands. One of these islands, Surtsey, rose up from the ocean after an earthquake in the 1960s.
- Iceland is 178 miles from its nearest neighbor, Greenland.
- The first permanent settlers of Iceland came from Norway in the ninth century.
- The people of Iceland are called Icelanders.
- Half of Iceland's population perished from the Black Death two times in its history, both in the fifteenth century.
- About 64 percent of Iceland's population lives in and around its capital city, Reykjavik.

My Icelandic Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Iceland

Population: 308,910

Land Area: 39,770 square miles

Currency: Icelandic króna

Major Religion: Christian (89%)

Highest Point:

Hvannadalshnukur (6,923 feet)

Lowest Point: Atlantic Ocean (0 feet)

Iceland is divided into eight regions.

The Great Geysir

Iceland is home to many geysers, which are hot springs that occasionally spray their water high in the air. The Great Geysir, located in Iceland's Haukadalur Valley, was first described in writing in 1294. When Geysir erupts, the boiling hot water shoots as much as 230 feet in the air, but the eruptions are inconsistent and highly dependent on earthquake activity in the area.

When an earthquake occurs, Geysir begins to erupt frequently—sometimes every 30 minutes—but the eruptions become less frequent as time passes. Sometimes Geysir doesn't erupt for several years in a row, but the Icelanders can force an eruption on special occasions.

Icelandic Animals

Nearly all of the mammals that live in Iceland were brought there by humans. Only the arctic fox lived on the island when humans first settled it, and polar bears sometimes float on icebergs to Iceland but they don't stay long. Reptiles and amphibians don't exist in the Icelandic wild at all, though some people may bring them from other countries as pets.



Three distinct animal species have developed in Iceland over the centuries - Icelandic sheep, Icelandic sheepdogs, and Icelandic horses. All three animals are important to Icelandic culture. The sheepdogs, of course, help herd the sheep, which are used for meat, wool, and sheepskins. The Icelandic horse sometimes helps with sheep as well and is also used in races, horse shows, and for meat.



Ireland

Capital City: Dublin

Languages: English, Irish

Did you know...?

- In the Irish language, the country is called *Éire*.
- The country of Ireland does not cover the entire island. The north-eastern portion is called Northern Ireland and belongs to the United Kingdom.
- On the Irish flag, green symbolizes Irish nationality, orange symbolizes the House of Orange, and white symbolizes the peace between them.
- During the nineteenth century, Ireland suffered from the Great Famine caused in part by a potato blight that destroyed nearly all of the potato crop for several years. About a quarter of the country's population either died of starvation or left the country.
- Ireland has a very temperate climate. Its temperature doesn't usually get warmer than 72 degrees in summer or colder than 26 degrees in winter.
- English is actually the most common language in Ireland, and more than 60 percent of the people can't speak Irish at all.
- A number of well-known authors and poets have come from Ireland, including William Butler Yeats, James Joyce, and Maeve Binchy.

My Irish Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Ireland

Population: 4,622,917

Land Area: 27,133 square miles

Currency: Euro

Major Religion: Christian (92%)

Highest Point:

Carrauntoohil (3,415 feet)

Lowest Point: Atlantic Ocean (0 feet)

Ireland is divided into 29 counties.

The Blarney Stone at Blarney Castle

Known around the world, the Blarney Stone is one of Ireland's most well-known attractions. It was set into a wall of Blarney Castle when it was built in 1446, but no one knows exactly why it was put there. A old Irish legend says that anyone who kisses the Blarney Stone will receive the gift of clever speech and persuasive flattery.

People from many countries travel to Ireland every year so that they can kiss the the Blarney Stone at Blarney Castle. The positioning of the stone requires a person to lie on his back and hang over the edge of a wall in order to reach it.

Irish Soda Bread

Along with four leaf clovers, leprechauns, and Irish dancing, soda bread is a traditional part of Irish culture. This basic recipe would have been the daily bread of many Irish families.

4 C. all-purpose flour

1 tsp. baking soda

1 tsp. salt

1 $\frac{3}{4}$ C. buttermilk

Combine ingredients, stirring just until combined; knead very slightly. Shape into a round loaf and place on a greased pan. Slash an x into the top of the dough. Brush with melted butter if desired. Bake at 425°F for about 35 to 45 minutes until the bottom sounds hollow when tapped.



Italy

Capital City: Rome

Language: Italian



My Italian Fact Book

Full Name:

Italian Republic

Population: 58,090,681

Land Area: 116,346 square miles

Currency: Euro

Major Religion: Christian (92%)

Highest Point:

Mont Blanc de Courmayeur (15,577 feet)

Lowest Point: Mediterranean Sea (0 feet)

Italy is divided into 15 regions.

Did you know...?

- Rome was once the seat of the Roman Empire.
- Two of Italy's islands, Sicily and Sardinia, are the largest in the Mediterranean.
- Italy once possessed colonies in the African countries of Libya, Somalia, Ethiopia, and Eritrea.
- Italy has three active volcanoes: Vesuvius, Etna, and Stromboli. The eruption of Mount Vesuvius destroyed the city of Pompeii in 79 A.D., burying it under about 15 feet of ash.
- Pizza has been eaten for over 1,000 years. It wasn't until 1889 that a chef combined tomato sauce, mozzarella cheese, and basil to match the colors of Italy's flag.

Italian Art and Literature

Italians have contributed greatly to the art and literature that makes up the culture of the Western world. Italians Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci are considered among the world's great masters of art. Michelangelo painted inside the Sistine Chapel and created sculptures like David and *Pietà*, which he completed at just 24 years old. Da Vinci is known for his genius in many areas, and his paintings—especially *The Last Supper* and *Mona Lisa*—are recognized and admired by people all over the world.



The works of Roman authors like Pliny the Elder and Younger, Virgil, and Ovid have been read for 2,000 years. Dante wrote his epic poem titled *Divine Comedy* in the early fourteenth century. It was one of the first poems written in Italian instead of Latin. The writings of Niccolò Machiavelli have influenced—to a greater or lesser extent—almost all major political figures over the last 400 years.

Venice, Italy

The city of Venice, located in the north-eastern part of Italy on the Adriatic Sea, is built on 117 islands. Other than a few roads in the northern part of the city, all travel is by canal or on foot. Venice is famous for its gondolas, flat-bottomed boats that are rowed by a standing gondolier, but these are not the only boats used in the city. Motorized water taxis are more common now, especially among people who live in Venice. Tourists are the ones most likely to ride in gondolas, though Venetians sometimes use them for special occasions like weddings or funerals.



Kosovo

Capital City: Pristina

Languages:
Albanian, Serbian



My Kosovan Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Kosovo

Population: 1,815,048

Land Area: 4,212 square miles

Currency: Euro

Major Religion: Muslim (90%)

Highest Point: Gjeravica (8,714 feet)

Lowest Point: Drini i Bardhe (974 feet)

Kosovo is divided into 30 municipalities.

Did you know...?

- The six stars on Kosovo's flag stand for the six primary ethnic groups in the nation. They are the Albanians, Bosniaks, Gorani, Roma, Serbs, and Turks.
- Kosovo declared independence from Serbia in 2008 but is not yet recognized as sovereign by the United Nations or numerous other countries.
- Throughout its history, Kosovo has been a part of Greece, the Roman, Bulgarian, Serbian, and Ottoman Empires, and Yugoslavia.

Gračanica Monastery



In east-central Kosovo stands the centuries old Gračanica Monastery which was built during the reign of King Stefan Milutin. Inside the church, frescoes decorate the walls with scenes from the Bible and portraits of Serbian royalty from centuries past. The frescoes were all painted between 1321 and about 1600 and are extremely well-preserved. The colors and detail on most of the paintings remain nearly as vivid as they were when new.

The monastery has been damaged numerous times during its history often because of wars and battles being waged in the area. Wars between the Ottoman Turks and Christians and even World War II caused fires that destroyed manuscripts, art, and other treasures housed inside the monastery.

Today the monastery serves as a convent for a group of nuns and is also open to visitors.

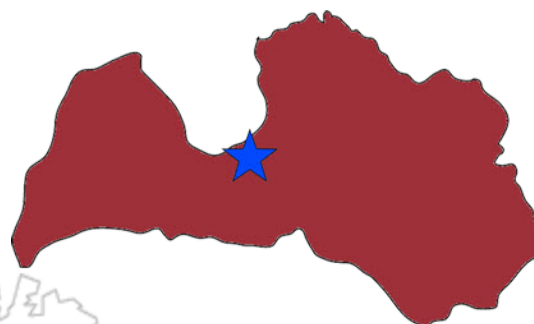




Latvia

Capital City: Riga

Language: Latvian



Did you know...?

- The Latvians of today are descendants of Baltic people who came to the area during ancient times and Germans who first entered the region during the twelfth century as crusaders intending to convert the native people to Christianity.
- Latvia was part of the United Soviet Socialist Republic from 1940 to 1991.
- Almost 60 percent of the people in Latvia are ethnic Latvians. Many Russians, Ukrainians, and Poles live there too.
- Latvians feel that an apple tree represents being an orphan, and they associate this idea with Latvia itself—perhaps because Latvia has spent so many centuries under the rule of others, without its own national identity.

My Latvian Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Latvia

Population: 2,217,969

Land Area: 24,938 square miles

Currency: Lats

Major Religion: Christian (36%)

Highest Point: Gaizina Kalns (1,024 feet)

Lowest Point: Baltic Sea (0 feet)

Latvia is divided into 109 municipalities.

Latvian Food

Latvians have many traditions and folklore surrounding their foods and mealtimes. Because most Latvians through history were farmers, the people had certain ceremonies that went along with the planting and harvesting seasons.

Bread, a staple food in Latvia as in so many other countries, is the center of much folklore. For instance, when they ate the first bread made from newly-harvested grain, Latvians would make a wish. Young, unmarried women like to eat the first slice cut from a loaf of bread, which they call the “farmer’s son” because they say they’ll be able to marry a farmer’s son if they eat it. They also say that if a dish is too salty, it means that the cook is in love.

Dairy products, like milk, butter, and cheese, have been very common throughout Latvia’s history. Traditionally, some kind of dairy was eaten at every meal of the day.

Milk Porridge

Try this milk porridge for a traditional Latvian breakfast. Latvian foods are typically quite bland, but you can add sugar or even cinnamon to please your palate.

4 Tbsp. flour

8 C. milk

salt, cream, and sugar to taste

Stir the flour into one cup of the milk until it is dissolved. Slowly add three more cups milk, stirring well. Place the remaining four cups milk into a saucepan and bring to a boil over low to medium heat, stirring constantly to prevent scorching. Salt to taste. Slowly pour in the flour and milk mixture while stirring briskly. Continue heating and stirring until mixture thickens into a porridge consistency. Serve warm and add cream and sugar to taste.



Liechtenstein

Capital City: Vaduz

Language: German



Did you know...?

- At its longest point, Liechtenstein is just 15 miles long. It is one of the smallest countries of the world and is sometimes called a postage stamp country.
- The men of Liechtenstein are called Liechtensteiners, and the women are called Liechtensteinerins.
- People in Liechtenstein must cross the borders of two nations before they reach open sea. This is called being doubly landlocked, and Uzbekistan is the only other country of the world with this distinction.

My Liechtenstein Fact Book

Full Name:

Principality of Liechtenstein

Population: 35,002

Land Area: 62 square miles

Currency: Swiss franc

Major Religion: Christian (83%)

Highest Point: Vorder-Grauspitz (8,527 feet)

Lowest Point: Ruggeller Riet (1,411 feet)

Liechtenstein is divided into 11 communes.

How Liechtenstein Was Born

Liechtenstein became a country because of the political desires of the Austrian Liechtenstein family during the early eighteenth century. This family lived in Castle Liechtenstein and owned much land throughout the region of modern Austria and the Czech Republic, but they did not have a seat on the Holy Roman Empire's *Reichstag*, its assembly of Imperial Estates.

To get a seat on the *Reichstag*, the Liechtenstein family needed to own land that wasn't also controlled by other feudal lords. They were finally able to purchase lands owned by the Hohenems family to satisfy the requirement, and Emperor Charles VI declared the newly-named Liechtenstein to be a sovereign state.

The new princes of Liechtenstein didn't actually come into the nation until 120 years after its formation! Now the ruling prince lives in Vaduz Castle in the capital.

The Alps

The Alps are a world famous mountain range that stretch over seven European countries. Liechtenstein lies entirely within the Alps, which stretch generally east to west just north of the Italian peninsula. The mountain peaks are higher in the Western Alps, but natural passes—valley areas—allow passage through the mountain range.

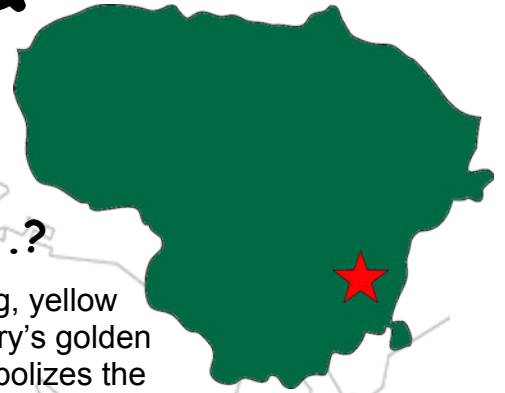
During the Second Punic War of the third century B.C., General Hannibal of Carthage took around 50,000 soldiers, 8,000 horses, and 37 elephants across the Alps to attack the Romans. Though no definite records exist, it's thought that thousands of the troops and horses and many of the elephants died during the crossing. Even so, it was an amazing feat.



Lithuania

Capital City: Vilnius

Language: Lithuanian



My Lithuanian Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Lithuania

Population: 3,545,319

Land Area: 25,173 square miles

Currency: Lithuanian litas

Major Religion: Christian (85%)

Highest Point: Aukštojas (965 feet)

Lowest Point: Baltic Sea (0 feet)

Lithuania is divided into ten counties.

Did you know...?

- On the Lithuanian flag, yellow symbolizes the country's golden fields, the green symbolizes the forests and countryside, and the red symbolizes the fight for independence.
- Basketball is very popular here, and the national team has won bronze medals at three Olympics.
- The Grand Duchy of Lithuania was the largest European nation in the fourteenth century.
- Lithuania is a little larger than West Virginia.
- A popular dish in Lithuania is Cepelinai, which is made from grated potatoes that are formed into dumplings and filled with mincemeat before being boiled.

King Mindaugas

The first king of Lithuania was Mindaugas, who was crowned in 1253. Virtually nothing is known about Mindaugas' heritage or how he came to be a duke. Through marriage and military battles, he strengthened his power throughout the region, and at least one contemporary source says he controlled the whole of Lithuania by 1236.

Around 1250, Mindaugas converted to Christianity and was declared King of Lithuania by Pope Innocent IV. Disagreements and battles between other noble Lithuanians persisted throughout King Mindaugas' short, ten year reign. Two of his rivals assassinated Mindaugas in 1263, and his three successors were each assassinated as well.

Mindaugas was actually the only official king that Lithuania ever had. Subsequent rulers were known as grand dukes with perhaps the greatest of them being Grand Duke Vytautas, who reigned from 1392 until 1430.

Šakotis

Šakotis is a well loved cake—served at weddings, birthday parties, Christmas celebrations, and other occasions—in Lithuania. The word *šakotis* means “branched” because the cake resembles tree branches. It's baked on a cone-shaped spit in front of an open fire. As the spit is turned, the cake batter is poured over it slowly. The layers bake slightly before all the batter has been added, and the bakers turn the spit more quickly as the process continues.

Most šakotis are several inches tall, but some are baked three feet or more in height. The slices are cut horizontally and may be served with chocolate.





Luxembourg

Capital City: Luxembourg

Languages: German, French,
Luxembourgish



Did you know...?

- The people of Luxembourg are called Luxembourgers.
- The Luxembourgish language is often used for speaking but is not often used in writing. Instead, German and French are used when things need to be written.
- Luxembourg is the last remaining Grand Duchy in the world.
- The Luxembourg American Cemetery and Memorial contains the graves of over 5,000 American soldiers, including General George S. Patton, Jr., who died during World War II. Each grave is marked by a white cross, and most of those buried at the cemetery died during the Battle of the Bulge. Nearly 11,000 German soldiers who died during the battle are buried at the Sandweiler German War Cemetery less than a mile away. Their graves are marked by gray stone crosses.

My Luxembourg Fact Book

Full Name:

Grand Duchy of Luxembourg

Population: 497,538

Land Area: 999 square miles

Currency: Euro

Major Religion: Christian (89%)

Highest Point: Buurgplätz (1,834 feet)

Lowest Point: Moselle River (436 feet)

Luxembourg is divided into three districts.

Luxembourg, Fort to Grand Duchy

A fort was built at present-day Luxembourg City to guard the intersection of two roads there during the Roman era. Over time, a town began to grow around the fort, and the region was ruled by the House of Luxembourg. Members of the Luxembourg family also led the Holy Roman Empire during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

Emperor Sigismund of the House of Luxembourg died in 1437 without a male heir to take his place. Rule of Luxembourg passed then to the Habsburg family—specifically to Philip the Good—but the name Luxembourg had already stuck.

Over the centuries, different nations ruled Luxembourg, including France, Prussia, the Netherlands, and even Germany during both World Wars. Wars and treaties diminished the Luxembourg lands to give the country its modern borders. Today, it's about 51 miles from north to south and 35 miles from west to east.



Macedonia

Capital City: Skopje

Language: Macedonian



My Macedonian Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Macedonia

Population: 2,072,086

Land Area: 9,779 square miles

Currency: Macedonian denar

Major Religions:

Christian (65%), Muslim (33%)

Highest Point: Golem Korab (9,068 feet)

Lowest Point: Vardar River (164 feet)

Macedonia is divided into 84 municipalities.

Did you know...?

- The sun on Macedonia's flag is called the "new sun of liberty."
- Macedonia was once part of Yugoslavia.
- The ancient Kingdom of Macedonia began around the eighth century B.C. and grew in power through the centuries. The famous conqueror Alexander the Great was king of Macedonia during the fourth century B.C. He established control over much of the Balkan peninsula and then moved eastward to conquer the Persian Empire of modern-day Turkey. Alexander, who could be a ruthless leader, conquered Syria, Tyre, Jerusalem, and Egypt. Before his 13 years as king were over, Alexander had captured modern-day Iran, parts of western China, and other areas in Asia minor. He famously pushed into India, but a mutiny among his soldiers forced him back. He died from a fever in Babylon, and the conquered lands quickly shattered.

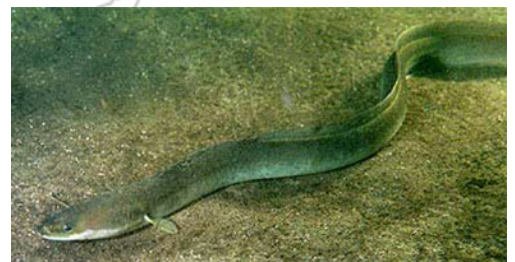
Lake Ohrid

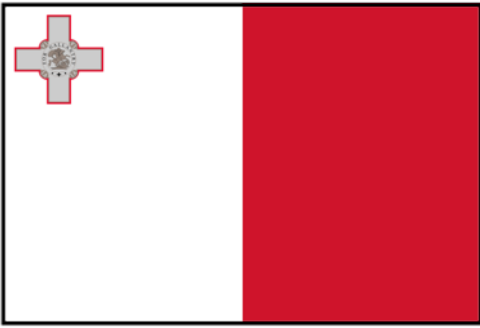
One of the oldest lakes in Europe, Lake Ohrid is 940 feet deep with an average depth of 508 feet. It's located on the border of Macedonia and Albania and is fed by springs and underground watercourses from nearby Lake Prespa. The Black Drin River flows out of Lake Ohrid and carries its water into the Adriatic Sea.

Lake Ohrid provides a habitat for numerous species of fish, snails, and other aquatic animals. Thousands of waterfowl, like pelicans, ducks, and swans, come to the lake each winter. Perhaps the most interesting animal to live at the lake is the endangered European eel.

The eel's eggs are laid in the Sargasso Sea region of the North Atlantic ocean, and the larvae drift in the ocean currents as they change into a second larval stage when they are known as "glass eels." After nearly a year, the eel larvae enter the Drin River of Albania and begin swimming upstream. The river's freshwater triggers another metamorphoses, and they change from larvae into small adult eels called elvers.

These elvers swim upstream for almost 200 miles before reaching Lake Ohrid, where they grow and feed near the bottom for an average of ten years - sometimes as long as 20 years. They then retrace their route back to the ocean where they lay eggs and die, so that the cycle begins anew.





Malta

Capital City: Valletta

Languages: Maltese, English



My Maltese Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Malta

Population: 406,771

Land Area: 121 square miles

Currency: Euro

Major Religion: Christian (98%)

Highest Point: Ta'Dmejrek (830 feet)

Lowest Point: Mediterranean Sea (0 feet)

Malta is not divided but is governed exclusively from the capital.

Did you know...?

- Over the centuries, Malta has been ruled by many outside powers, including the Greeks, Phoenicians, Romans, the Kingdom of Sicily, the Holy Roman Empire, Napoleon's French Empire, and the British Empire. The nation finally gained independence in 1964.
- Archaeologists have discovered several Megalithic Temples in Malta that are believed to have been built around 3000 B.C. Maltese legends say that giants built the structures.

The Apostle Paul at Malta

The island that Acts 28:1 calls *Melita* is Malta. The Apostle Paul, along with 275 others, was shipwrecked on the island, during the first century A.D. when Paul was a prisoner of the Romans. St. Paul's Bay marks the place where the ship is believed to have come aground. It's both a harbor and a popular tourist destination today.

According to the Biblical account, the Maltese people showed Paul and the others kindness after the shipwreck. This is the place where Paul was bitten by a venomous snake but not hurt, which amazed and intrigued the Maltese. Those from the ship spent three months on Malta, and Paul met many people, praying for them and teaching them about Christ.

The Maltese people believe that Paul's visit forms the foundation of their Christian beliefs today, and they celebrate St. Paul's Shipwreck every year on February 10. When Christianity was outlawed by the Romans, Maltese Christians met in underground catacombs and caves. Evidence of their meetings have been found by archaeologists.

Knights of Malta

A group of Catholic knights, originally called the Order of the Hospitallers, was organized around 1023 to care for Christian pilgrims who came to Jerusalem. After some time, the Catholic Church instructed the Order to also defend the Holy Land militarily. Because of conquests and battles, the Order was forced to move around Asia Minor and Europe before King Charles V gave Malta to them. Today, the Knights of Malta once again focus more on caring for the sick and hurting.



Moldova

Capital City: Chişinău



Languages: Moldovan Romanian,
Russian, Ukrainian

Did you know...?

- The Roman eagle on Moldova's flag holds a golden cross in its beak and an olive branch and a scepter in its talons. This coat of arms doesn't appear on the flag's reverse side.
- Moldova is a little larger than Maryland.
- Located in Moldova, the world's most extensive wine cellars, called Milestii Mici, hold around two million bottles of wine. The country has a rich wine heritage with many families having vineyards where they grow grapes from stock that has been passed down for generations.
- A thin strip of Moldova, known as Transnistria and located between the Dniester River and Ukraine, is governed by the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic. They consider themselves an independent country, but no nations of the world recognize that status. Moldova considers the area an autonomous region.

My Moldovan Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Moldova

Population: 4,317,483

Land Area: 13,067 square miles

Currency: Moldovan leu

Major Religion: Christian (98%)

Highest Point: Dealul Balanesti
(1,411 feet)

Lowest Point: Dniester (7 feet)

Moldova is divided into 32 raioane.



Moldavia

The Principality of Moldavia was founded by Bogdan I sometime during the fourteenth century and covered all of modern Moldova, part of eastern Romania, and part of Ukraine. Prince Stephen the Great, considered the greatest and most powerful Moldavian leader, reigned from 1457-1504.

Stephen successfully fought off invasions from Ottoman Turks, Poland, and Hungary. It's believed that by stopping the Ottoman invasion, Stephen protected all of Christian Europe from the Turks. Pope Sixtus IV called him "Champion of Christ," and the Romanian Orthodox Church made him a saint in 1992.

Gagauz

The Gagauz are an ethnic group who speak a Turkic language and follow the Christian faith. They are the only Christian Turks in the world. Gagauzes live primarily in southern Moldova but also in Ukraine, Greece, Turkey, Russia, and—to a much lesser extent—other nations. How exactly the Gagauzes came to Europe or how they became Christians isn't known.

In 1906, the Gagauz people rebelled against the Russian Empire and declared the Republic of Komrat, which lasted just five days. Today, Gagauzia is an autonomous district of Moldova.



Monaco

Capital City: Monaco

**Languages: French,
Monégasque, Italian, English**



Did you know...?

- The principality has four quarters, the most well-known of which is Monte Carlo.
- Monaco's flag has been used since 1339.
- A diverse mix of people live in Monaco with the native Monegasques making up about 20 percent of the population. Other nationalities include French, Italian, British, American, German, Swiss, and Belgian.
- Monaco is the world's second smallest country, covering less than one square mile.
- The Monegasque language, closely related to Italian, is spoken almost exclusively by the ethnic Monegasque minority and nearly became extinct during the 1970s.

My Monégasque Fact Book

Full Name:

Principality of Monaco

Population: 30,586

Land Area: .78 square miles

Currency: Euro

Major Religion: Christian (80%)

Highest Point: Mont Agel (459 feet)

Lowest Point: Mediterranean Sea (0 feet)

Monaco is not divided for governing.

Francesco Grimaldi and the House of Grimaldi

Francesco Grimaldi was the founder of the Grimaldi royal family that still rules Monaco today. In 1297, Francesco disguised himself as a monk and hid a sword beneath his robes before approaching the castle gates on the Rock of Monaco. Having gained the gatekeepers' trust, Francesco entered with a group of men—among them his cousin Rainier—and took control of the castle.

Here, Francesco controlled the castle and tried to solidify his power, but was driven out by rivals after just four years. Six years later, Francesco died and his cousin took his place. Rainier's son, Charles I, became the first ruler of Monaco beyond the castle walls.

Today's Prince Albert II is a direct descendent of Rainier I. The family gained international attention during the 1950s when Prince Rainier III married the popular American actress Grace Kelly.





Montenegro

Capital City: Podgorica

Language: Montenegrin



My Montenegrin Fact Book

Full Name:

Montenegro

Population: 666,730

Land Area: 5,019 square miles

Currency: Euro

Major Religions:

Christian (78%), Muslim (18%)

Highest Point: Bobotov Kuk (8,274 feet)

Lowest Point: Adriatic Sea (0 feet)

*Montenegro is divided into
21 municipalities.*

Did you know...?

- Montenegro means “black mountain” in the Italian Venetian language. The Montenegrin people call their country *Crna Gora*.
- Montenegrin is the official language but is spoken by only 22 percent of the population. The Serbian language is spoken by around 64 percent of the people. The two languages are very similar, and linguists tend to classify Montenegrin as a Serbian dialect.
- Montenegro is a little smaller than Connecticut.
- The double headed eagle on the Montenegrin flag represents the unity between church and state in Montenegro.
- Montenegro produces both aluminum and steel for export.
- Traditional Montenegrin storytellers sing epic tales of heroes while playing a single-stringed instrument called a gusle.
- Montenegro became an officially recognized independent nation in 1878 but became part of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1918.

Montenegrin Folk Dances

The Montenegrins have enjoyed folk dances for centuries. Typically, the men and women dance together - but not always in pairs. Sometimes the ladies dance together in a line or circle while the men dance separately. They often sing to one another throughout the dance.

In the popular Oro dance, groups of several men and women dance in circles. About half of the men stand on the shoulders of the others, and they link shoulders in a circle. The men on the bottom dance slowly, lifting first one foot and then the other, while they all sing.

Our Lady of the Rocks

An artificial island made primarily of rocks stands in Montenegro's Bay of Kotor near its southwestern coast. An old story says that Balkan sailors would put a rock in the bay each time they returned home, and a small island eventually emerged. Old ships that were loaded with rocks have also been found forming the isle.

The Church of Our Lady of the Rocks was built in 1632 and still stands today. Each year, people who live near the bay celebrate *fašinada* on July 22 - the day it is said that the first rock was thrown into the bay in 1452.



Netherlands

Capital City: Amsterdam

Language: Dutch



Did you know...?

- The people of the Netherlands are called Dutchmen and Dutchwomen. The country is sometimes called Holland.
- The Netherlands' highest elevation is actually on the Caribbean island Saba. The highest elevation on the country's mainland is Vaalserberg, which stands 1,056 feet.
- Half of the Netherlands is less than three feet in elevation, and about a quarter of the country actually lies below sea level.
- The Dutch national anthem is the oldest of any nation in the world. Titled "Het Wilhelmus," the song tells the story of William of Orange, who led the Dutch revolt against Spain in the sixteenth century. In an acrostic format, each stanza's first letter spells out William's name.
- Though Amsterdam is the country's capital, its government operates out of The Hague.

My Dutch Fact Book

Full Name:

Kingdom of the Netherlands

Population: 16,783,092

Land Area: 16,158 square miles

Currency: Euro

Major Religion: Christian (50%)

Highest Point:

Mount Scenery (2,828 feet)

Lowest Point: Zuidplaspolder
(23 feet below sea level)

Netherlands is divided into 12 provinces.

Flooding in the Netherlands

Because of the country's low elevation, flooding has been a constant threat for hundreds of years. To cope with this, the Dutch people have built dikes, dams, and other protections to prevent the waters of the North Sea and inland rivers from flooding the land.

Dikes are levees—raised areas of land—that are typically built along rivers to heighten the banks. This allows the river to rise significantly without spilling over.

Drainage ditches also help to shed water, and windmills have been used since the fifteenth century to pump water away from low lying areas. Today, modern pumping stations force water off the land in place of the traditional windmills.





Norway

Capital City: Oslo

Language: Norwegian



Did you know...?

- Because of its extensive coastline, traditional Norwegian dishes include salmon, herring, and codfish. For dessert, a *kransekake* is served at special events. It's made from 18 small ring-shaped cakes stacked on top of one another to form a conical tower.
- The European beaver is rather numerous in Norway but is endangered throughout the rest of Europe. Beavers from Norway have been sent to repopulate both Sweden and Finland, where they had become extinct.
- Norway declared neutral status during World War II but was occupied by Germany for five years.
- In total land area, Norway is just a bit larger than New Mexico.

My Norwegian Fact Book

Full Name:

Kingdom of Norway

Population: 4,676,305

Land Area: 148,746 square miles

Currency: Norwegian krone

Major Religion: Christian (90%)

Highest Point: Galdhopiggen (8,100 feet)

Lowest Point: Norwegian Sea (0 feet)

Norway is divided into 19 counties.

Vikings

Many of the Vikings, who famously sailed across the seas during the Middle Ages, came from Norway, Sweden, and Denmark. Over about 300 years, the Vikings sailed in their longships around virtually the entire European continent - over the North Sea to the far northern reaches of the Scandinavian Peninsula, around the islands of Great Britain and Ireland, along the coasts of France, Spain, and Portugal, and into the Mediterranean Sea where they sailed to Italy, Sicily, Greece, and into the Aegean Sea where they were then able to sail through the Bosphorus Strait into the Black Sea. They sailed up rivers into the interior of Europe and were even hired as guards by the Byzantine emperors in Constantinople.

Vikings, also called Norsemen, sailed westward across the North Atlantic Ocean. They settled permanently in Iceland and Greenland and established at least one temporary settlement, which they called Vinland, on the North American continent. Its exact location and extent is still somewhat a mystery, but archeological evidence has been found in Newfoundland, Canada. Visitors can see a recreated Viking settlement, complete with long house, there today.



Fjords

Norway is well known for its beautiful fjords. These are places where glaciers cut through the land during ancient times. Rivers now flow between the steep cliffs or sharply raised hills that were left after the glaciers melted away. One of Norway's most beautiful and most frequently visited is Geirangerfjord.



Poland

Capital City: Warsaw

Language: Polish



Did you know...?

- The people of Poland are known as Poles.
- The word for Poland's money, *złoty*, means "golden."
- Poland is home to about 10,000 lakes. Poland's landscape varies from high mountains to deserts to forests to sandy beaches.
- Nicolaus Copernicus, who first described the sun as being the center of our universe, was born in Toruń, Poland.
- Nobel Prize winner Marie Curie was born in Warsaw. She was the first woman to win the Nobel Prize and was given the prize in two fields, physics in 1903 and chemistry in 1911.
- Poland was unaffected by the Black Death that devastated most of Europe during the fourteenth century.

My Polish Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Poland

Population: 38,463,689

Land Area: 120,696 square miles

Currency: Złoty

Major Religion: Christian (92%)

Highest Point: Rysy (8,199 feet)

Lowest Point: Raczkі Elblaskie
(7 feet below sea level)

Poland is divided into 16 provinces.

Occupied Poland

During World War II, Poland was occupied by German troops in the west and by the Soviet Union in the east. The Polish government fled to London where they continued to command the Polish troops in areas like Italy and North Africa. Some Polish military divisions were commanded by the Soviets on the war's eastern front.

More than 400 Nazi prison camps were built in Poland between 1939 and 1945. Most of these were labor camps, but at least six were extermination camps, including Auschwitz and Treblinka. An estimated 90 percent of Poland's Jews died in these camps, along with scholars, Romani people (sometimes called gypsies), and other Poles. Six million people from Poland died during World War II, the greatest death toll of any nation.

In 1940, German troops built a brick wall around a portion of Poland's capital to form the Warsaw Ghetto. Here, Jews and some Romani were forced to live under extremely difficult conditions. Daily food rations in the ghetto averaged about 190 calories, and most people depended on smuggled food to survive. Young children would secretly crawl through weak places in the wall to the so-called Aryan side where they would sell items made by adults in the ghetto and buy food to take back. Some children crossed the wall many times each day.

In the spring of 1943, the Jews of Warsaw banded together to revolt against the Nazi soldiers and secret police. With smuggled handguns and homemade explosives, the people held out for almost four months before the rebellion was suppressed. This was the largest Jewish rebellion during World War II.



Portugal

Capital City: Lisbon

Language: Portuguese



Did you know...?

- The Kingdom of Portugal was founded in 1143, which makes Portugal the oldest nation in Europe.
- Portugal is about the size of Indiana.
- Around 40 percent of Portugal's electricity needs are supplied by renewable energy, including solar, wind, and water power. The first commercial operation in the world to use "wave power" from the ocean was built in Portugal in 2006.
- Portugal and Spain united to form the Iberian Union for 60 years from 1580 to 1640.
- Portuguese athletes have participated in every Summer Olympics since 1912.

My Portuguese Fact Book

Full Name:

Portuguese Republic

Population: 10,735,765

Land Area: 35,645 square miles

Currency: Euro

Major Religion: Christian (87%)

Highest Point: Ponta do Pico (7,713 feet)

Lowest Point: Atlantic Ocean (0 feet)

Portugal is divided into 18 districts.

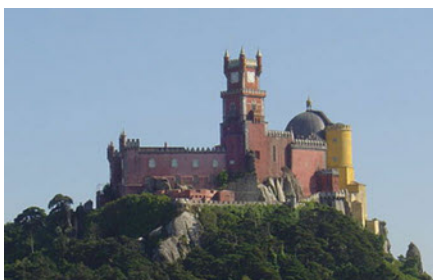
Portuguese Empire

Portugal was the first European nation to explore and establish colonies outside of Europe, thus beginning the Age of Discovery. Their first colony was at Ceuta on the North African coast. Then they established colonies on the previously uninhabited islands, the Azores and Madeira, which remain part of Portugal today.

Henry the Navigator, son of Portugal's King John I, sponsored many expeditions around the African coast and across the Atlantic Ocean. His patronage encouraged countless sailors to set sail in pursuit of new lands and rich trading opportunities.

Almost 60 years after Henry's death, Vasco da Gama guided the first fleet of ships that successfully sailed around Africa's Cape of Good Hope, all the way to India, and then back to Portugal. This voyage of 1498 gave Portugal direct access to the spices of India that were so desired throughout Europe.

The Portuguese eventually held colonies in South America, on the western and eastern coasts of Africa, on the Arabian and Indian coasts, and on islands and coasts of Southeast Asia. Their influence can still be felt today since Portuguese is the national language in Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, Mozambique, and a few other countries.



Seven Wonders of Portugal

In 2007, the Seven Wonders of Portugal were announced after voting by the Portuguese people. The list includes places of beauty and historical significance - two castles, three monasteries, a palace, and a tower. The photo shows Pena Palace, which was built in the nineteenth century for King Ferdinand and Queen Maria II.



Romania

Capital City: Bucharest

Language: Romanian



Did you know...?

- Association football (soccer) and tennis are the two most popular sports in Romania.
- Romanian gymnasts have won many medals at the Summer Olympic games. Romanian Nadia Comăneci was the first gymnast to receive a perfect ten in scoring.
- The Kingdom of Romania included Wallachia and Moldavia, which later merged with Bessarabia, Bukovina, and Transylvania.
- A traditional Romanian dish, called *mămăligă*, is a thick cornmeal mush that can be sliced like bread. It is often served with milk or with sour cream and cheese.

My Romanian Fact Book

Full Name:

Romania

Population: 21,959,278

Land Area: 92,043 square miles

Currency: Romanian leu

Major Religion: Christian (99%)

Highest Point: Moldoveanu (8,346 feet)

Lowest Point: Black Sea (0 feet)

Romania is divided into 41 counties.

Romanian Castles



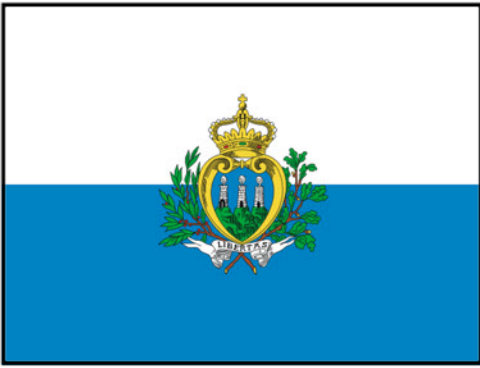
Romania is home to nearly 200 castles and fortifications that are scattered across the country. They are all considered historical monuments and are beloved for their architecture and historical significance. Some of the most frequently visited locations include Bran Castle, Hunyad Castle (shown in the photo) where it is said that Turkish prisoners dug a well 100 feet deep over 15 years, Mikó Castle which was used as an army barracks at different times through history, and Peleş Castle that has more than 170 rooms and 30 bathrooms.

During the Middle Ages up through the 1500s, fortified churches were also built in Romania. To protect it from invasion by Ottoman Turks or other enemies, a church would be built on top of a hill or in another easily defended area. Sometimes a stone wall or wooden fence would be built around the church building, and town buildings were always built on all sides of the church. If invaders did try to take the town, the church would be the most protected site.

Carpathian Mountains

More than half of the Carpathian Mountain Range, the second longest in Europe, lies in Romania. Not nearly as high as the Alps to the west, snow on even the highest peaks in the Carpathians melts completely in summer. In Romania, the Carpathians are home to Europe's great populations of brown bears, wolves, lynxes, and chamois, a type of mountain goat.

The Carpathian Mountains have deposits of gold, silver, iron, copper, and other mineral resources. The Romans mined both gold and silver from the mountains during the first century. Hot springs provide the water for numerous thermal lakes throughout the region.



San Marino

Capital City: City of San Marino

Language: Italian



My Sammarinese Fact Book

Full Name:

Most Serene Republic of San Marino

Population: 31,477

Land Area: 24 square miles

Currency: Euro

Major Religion: Christian (97%)

Highest Point: Monte Titano (2,457 feet)

Lowest Point: Torrente Ausa (180 feet)

San Marino is divided into 9 municipalities.

Did you know...?

- San Marino is located entirely within Italy.
- San Marino has never fought in a war and has remained virtually unscathed by the battles that have taken place in Europe.
- Because the Apennine Mountains cover nearly the entire country, any flat ground in San Marino is man-made.
- San Marino's constitution took effect in 1600, making it the world's oldest, continuously used constitution.
- San Marino is governed jointly by two Captains Regent.

Marinus the Stonemason, Founder of San Marino

According to Sammarinese tradition, the tiny nation was founded by a stonemason named Marinus early in the fourth century. Because he was a Christian, Marinus was persecuted in his homeland and forced to flee. He eventually came to Mount Titano where he built a chapel and a monastery which attracted other Christians to move into the area.



Within a hundred years, a community had grown up around Marinus' monastery and had taken the name San Marino after its founder. The Pope of the Catholic Church recognized San Marino as an independent and sovereign nation in 1631, and the country was allowed to remain independent while the rest of the Italian states united during the nineteenth century.

The Sammarinese people say that Marinus uttered the words "I leave you free from both men" just before he died. They take this to mean that he was free from both the Roman Emperor and the Pope. As time progressed, the phrase came to embody the idea that San Marino should remain free from control by any outside power.



Serbia

Capital City: Belgrade

Language: Serbian



My Serbian Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Serbia

Population: 7,344,847

Land Area: 34,116 square miles

Currency: Serbian dinar

Major Religion: Christian (92%)

Highest Point: Midzor (7,116 feet)

Lowest Point:

Danube and Timok Rivers (114 feet)

Serbia is divided into 67 municipalities.

Did you know...?

- Seventeen Roman Emperors, including Constantine, were born in what is now Serbia, and Serbia's city Sirmium was the Roman capital during the third century.
- Serbia was once part of Yugoslavia and, before that, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes.
- Since its 2006 independence, Serbia has participated in just three Olympic games but has won three medals - one silver and two bronze.



Church of Saint Apostles Peter and Paul

Built sometime around the eighth century, the Church of Saint Apostles Peter and Paul is Serbia's oldest church and a popular attraction for visitors. The inside of the church is filled with frescoes, painted between 900 and 1200, that depict Biblical figures and important church leaders.

Services were held in the church for about 1000 years, and it has been the location of the baptism and coronation of several Serbian monarchs.



Slovakia

Capital City: Bratislava

Language: Slovak



Did you know...?

- Slovakia was once part of Czechoslovakia.
- Slovakia's industry includes automobile manufacturing and the manufacture of televisions and computer monitors.
- Slovakia's landscape includes the Carpathian Mountains and the Tatras Mountains, which attract skiers each winter.
- One of Slovakia's national dishes is called *bryndzové halušky*. The dish includes potato dumplings—made by mixing grated potatoes with flour and water and then boiling—and *bryndza*, which is a cheese made from sheep milk. The potato and cheese mixture is typically served in a bowl and garnished with broken pieces of bacon.

My Slovak Fact Book

Full Name:

Slovak Republic

Population: 5,470,306

Land Area: 18,932 square miles

Currency: Euro

Major Religion: Christian (95%)

Highest Point:

Gerlachovsky Stit (8,710 feet)

Lowest Point: Bodrok River (308 feet)

Slovakia is divided into eight regions.

Great Moravia

The kingdom known as Great Moravia covered western Slovakia and portions of other modern-day countries from 846 to 902 A.D. Though it lasted for just 56 years and had only five monarchs, Great Moravia sent representatives to European kingdoms like France and traded extensively with Arabs from the southeast.



Slavic soldiers in Moravia used javelins and probably spears and axes during battles. Great Moravia had at least 41 castles, 30 of which were most likely within the borders of modern Slovakia. The castles were all intended primarily for defense and were often built on hills and surrounded by wooden palisades. The only surviving building built during the time of Great Moravia is a church in Kopčany, Slovakia.

Juraj Jánošík

A popular story in Slovakia tells of Juraj Jánošík who, like Robin Hood, steals from the rich and gives to the poor. Juraj, whose name is Slovakian for "George," was a real person who lived from 1688 to 1713. He became a forest robber in his early 20s and led a group of men who robbed wealthy merchants and shared their treasures with the poor.

Just a few years after his exploits began, Juraj was arrested and executed by the authorities, but his story lives on through poems, books, and even films that are popular in Slovakia and throughout eastern Europe.



Slovenia

Capital City: Ljubljana

Language: Slovene



Did you know...?

- The people of Slovenia are called Slovenes.
- The population of Slovenia is almost equally divided between urban and rural living.
- Slovenia's Vilenica Cave has been hosting tourists since 1633. It was the first cave in Europe to be shown commercially.
- Slovenia has competed in every Olympics since its 1992 independence. Slovene athletes have won three gold medals, in rowing, shooting, and men's hammer throw.
- Because of its Alpine landscape, skiing sports are very popular in Slovenia. The country's athletes have won five Olympic medals in Alpine skiing, ski jumping, and cross-country skiing.

My Slovenian Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Slovenia

Population: 2,003,136

Land Area: 7,827 square miles

Currency: Euro

Major Religion: Christian (61%)

Highest Point: Triglav (9,396 feet)

Lowest Point: Adriatic Sea (0 feet)

Slovenia is divided into 210 municipalities.

Predjama Castle



Built in 1570, Predjama Castle is an impressive sight situated in the mouth of a cave. The original castle was first built in the thirteenth century when the cave was selected to make the castle easier to defend, but it was actually destroyed during a siege around a hundred years later. The second castle built here was also destroyed, this time by an earthquake.

The current castle is the third one built and has stood for over 400 years. It has been a museum for decades and appeared in the Jackie Chan film, *Armour of God*.

Medenjaki

Because of the continuous influence that it has felt from surrounding nations, Slovenia has a varied mix of dishes that are eaten throughout the country. Medenjaki is one food that most Slovenes enjoy, however. These honey cakes are tasty little treats that you may enjoy too!

1 stick plus 2 Tbsp. butter	2 eggs, beaten	$\frac{3}{4}$ C. powdered sugar	4 C. all-purpose flour
1 tsp. cocoa powder	4 Tbsp. honey	$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. baking powder	$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. cinnamon

Sift together dry ingredients. In a separate bowl, cream butter and sugar until fluffy. Add flour mixture, eggs, and honey; stir until mixture forms a dough. Form tablespoon-sized balls and flatten before placing on a greased baking pan. Bake in a preheated 375°F oven for 6 - 9 minutes until lightly browned. Cool on a wire rack. Enjoy them plain, iced, or dusted with powdered sugar.



Spain

Capital City: Madrid

Language: Spanish



Did you know...?

- The people of Spain are called Spaniards.
- The colors red and yellow have been used for centuries to represent the Kingdoms of Aragón, Castile, León, and Navarre, which were the foundation of modern day Spain.
- Besides covering nearly all of the Iberian Peninsula, Spain holds territory in the Mediterranean and the Atlantic Ocean, two cities in North Africa, and a town called Llívia that lies six and a half feet across the French border.
- Spain's highest point, Pico de Teide, is on the Canary Islands which lie in the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of northwest Africa.
- The Romans called the Iberian Peninsula "Hispania."

My Spanish Fact Book

Full Name:

Kingdom of Spain

Population: 46,505,963

Land Area: 195,364 square miles

Currency: Euro

Major Religion: Christian (96%)

Highest Point:

Pico de Teide (12,198 feet)

Lowest Point: Atlantic Ocean (0 feet)

Spain is divided into 17 autonomous communities.

Al-Andalus

Early in the eighth century, Islamic people from North Africa conquered nearly the entire Iberian peninsula and established a kingdom called al-Andalus. The rest of Europe typically referred to them as Moors possibly from the Latin word *maurus*, meaning "from Mauretania."

A large number of people who lived on the peninsula converted to Islam, and about 85 percent of the population was Muslim by the year 1200. Minority numbers of Christians and Jews lived in al-Andalus in relative peace throughout the state's existence.

The city of Córdoba was a center of culture and education throughout the Islamic world. People from other nations—Christian and Muslim alike—frequently traveled to Córdoba to study in its educational institutions.

Almost immediately after the Moors gained control of the peninsula, small Christian kingdoms from the north began trying to regain control. It wasn't until the early thirteenth century that they managed to push the Moors out of the central region of the peninsula. Under the name Kingdom of Granada, the Moors held control of the southern-most region until 1492 when their leader surrendered to King Ferdinand II and Queen Isabella I.



Sweden

Capital City: Stockholm

Language: Swedish

My Swedish Fact Book

Full Name:

Kingdom of Sweden

Population: 9,074,055

Land Area: 173,745 square miles

Currency: Swedish krona

Major Religion: Christian (80%)

Highest Point: Kebnekaise (6,926 feet)

Lowest Point: Bay of Lake Hammarsjön
(8 feet below sea level)

Sweden is divided into 21 counties.

Did you know...?

- More than half of Sweden is forested, and about 15 percent of the country lies above the Arctic Circle.
- The ancient story *Beowulf* tells in part about the Swedish-Geatish Wars. Virtually nothing is known about these wars except what is told in the epic story.
- As a neutral country, Sweden has not officially participated in any war since 1814, though its soldiers did fight in various battles during World War II.
- People from Sweden are called Swedes.
- Sweden is a little larger than California.

Alfred Nobel

Famous as an inventor and the founder of the Nobel Prizes, Alfred Nobel was born in 1833 in Stockholm. Nobel was a scientist who invented hundreds of different items, including dynamite which he created by combining nitroglycerin with diatomaceous earth to make it safer and less volatile.

Though dynamite was safer than pure nitroglycerin, Nobel was criticized for the danger that it presented to people who worked with it. Partially because of this criticism, he decided to leave his entire fortune to the creation of five Nobel Prizes that are awarded annually. The prizes are given to top achievers in five fields: Chemistry, Physics, Literature, Physiology or Medicine, and Peace.

Knäckebröd

Knäckebröd is a traditional Swedish staple food or “poor man’s bread” that has been eaten for hundreds of years. It can stay fresh for a long time and is easy to carry, which has made it ideal for soldiers and travelers. It is thought that even Vikings carried *knäckebröd* on their ships. Traditionally, *knäckebröd* was made with just flour, salt, and water, but you might like this recipe better.

1 1/3 C. rye flour 3/4 tsp. sugar 1/4 tsp. salt 4 Tbsp. butter 1/3 C. Milk

Mix together dry ingredients; cut in butter. Stir in milk to make a stiff dough. Roll dough on a lightly floured surface until 1/8 - 1/4 inch thick. Cut dough into strips or squares; poke each section with a fork several times. Place pieces onto a lightly greased baking sheet and bake at 300°F for about 10 minutes. Cool and serve with cheese, milk, or fruit.

Switzerland



Capital City: Bern

Languages: German,
French, Italian



Did you know...?

- Switzerland is dominated by the Alps but is also home to a central plateau, hills, forests, pastures, and the Jura mountains in the north.
- Switzerland is home to several international headquarters, including the World Health Organization, the United Nations Human Rights Council, and the International Olympic Committee.
- The white Swiss cross has been in use since at least 1339.
- Switzerland was never invaded by either side during World War I or II.
- Russia's Vladimir Lenin lived in Switzerland from 1914 to 1917.

My Swiss Fact Book

Full Name:

Swiss Confederation

Population: 7,623,438

Land Area: 15,940 square miles

Currency: Swiss franc

Major Religion: Christian (89%)

Highest Point: Dufourspitze (15,203 feet)

Lowest Point: Lake Maggiore (640 feet)

Switzerland is divided into 26 cantons.

International Red Cross and Red Crescent

Swiss Henry Dunant founded the International Committee of the Red Cross in 1863 after he witnessed the complete lack of medical attention given to soldiers who were wounded at the Battle of Solferino in Italy. Dunant founded the Red Cross as a way to provide neutral medical care to all soldiers and civilians who were hurt during wartime.

Today, Red Cross organizations are active in virtually every country of the world. Volunteers provide emergency care, shelter, food, and support to people affected by war, natural disasters, house fires, and other distressing events. The symbol of the Red Crescent is used by organizations in Islamic countries where the cross may not be received as openly.

The Red Cross and Red Crescent are recognized around the world as symbols of peace and neutrality. Even during times of war, Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers are often allowed to enter war zones and provide needed care to civilians and soldiers from both sides.

The Matterhorn

The Matterhorn is an imposing Alpine mountain peak that stands 14,690 feet high on the border of Switzerland and Italy. It is one of the most dangerous, yet most beautiful, peaks to climb in the Alps.

In the nineteenth century, the Matterhorn was considered unscalable, but that didn't stop people from trying and dreaming. The first seven men to reach its peak in 1865 were led by Edward Whymper. Sadly, four of the men fell from the steep mountainside and died on the way back down. Today, determined mountaineers still attempt to scale the peak every year.





Ukraine

Capital City: Kiev

**Languages:
Ukrainian, Russian**



Did you know...?

- Not counting European Russia, Ukraine is the largest country in Europe.
- The colors on the Ukrainian flag represent golden fields of grain beneath a blue sky.
- Ukraine is a little smaller than Texas.
- Because of a low birth rate and high death rate caused by generally poor health choices across the country, the Ukrainian population drops by about 150,000 people every year.
- The Empires of Greece, Rome, and Byzantium all founded colonies in Ukraine.
- The Ukrainian tradition of creating colorful eggs, called *pysanky*, has been around for thousands of years.

My Ukrainian Fact Book

Full Name:

Ukraine

Population: 45,415,596

Land Area: 233,090 square miles

Currency: Hryvnia

Major Religion: Christian (96%)

Highest Point: Hora Hoverla (6,762 feet)

Lowest Point: Black Sea (0 feet)

Ukraine is divided into 24 provinces.

Sergey Korolyov

In 1907, Sergey Korolyov was born in Zhytomyr, Ukraine, which was then part of the Russian Empire. He was an aerospace engineer during the Space Race between the United States and Soviet Union in the middle of the twentieth century.

He was the organizer of the projects that sent the first satellite, *Sputnik*, into space in 1957 and the first man, Yuri Gagarin, into space aboard *Vostok 1* in 1961. Korolyov was given many honors by his country, including the Hero of Socialist Labor title, the Lenin Prize, and the Order of Lenin medal. A town, a street, an asteroid, and craters on the moon and Mars have all been named after him. He is also honored in the International Space Hall of Fame in New Mexico.

Korolyov died in 1966 while he was overseeing a new project to put a Russian cosmonaut on the moon.

Chernobyl Disaster

In 1986, several explosions occurred at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant in northern Ukraine, which was then part of the United Soviet Socialist Republic. A test of systems at the plant resulted in explosions and the rupture of a nuclear reactor. This caused nuclear radiation to spread through the atmosphere where wind and weather patterns carried it across almost all of Europe.

Thirty workers and rescue personnel died from radiation poisoning within just a few weeks of the disaster. The nearby town of Pripyat was evacuated and remains uninhabited to this day.

United Kingdom



Capital City: London

Language: English



My British Fact Book

Full Name:

United Kingdom of
Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Population: 62,348,447

Land Area: 94,060 square miles

Currency: Pound sterling

Major Religions:

Christian (72%), No Religion (23%)

Highest Point: Ben Nevis (4,406 feet)

Lowest Point: The Fens
(13 feet below sea level)

The United Kingdom is divided into England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, each of which are divided again into counties, council areas, or unitary authorities.

Did you know...?

- The United Kingdom's flag is often called the Union Jack.
- Writers and musicians from the United Kingdom have influenced all of Western culture and are known around the world. Works by William Shakespeare, Charles Dickens, and Agatha Christie have been read, studied, and enjoyed by generations of people. The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, and Elton John are some of the most popular and recognized British musical talents of all time.
- The saying "The sun never sets on the British Empire," was popular during the nineteenth century when British territories spread across all five continents.
- London has burned numerous times through history, most notably in 1666 when the homes of around 70,000 people burned down along with St. Paul's Cathedral, and over 100 other buildings.

A Royal History

The long history of England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland can literally fill volumes of historical books. The island of Great Britain was home to Celtic Britons and other minor tribes when the Romans arrived in the first century. When the Romans left 400 years later, Germanic people known as the Anglo-Saxons moved in and began establishing what would become the Kingdom of England.

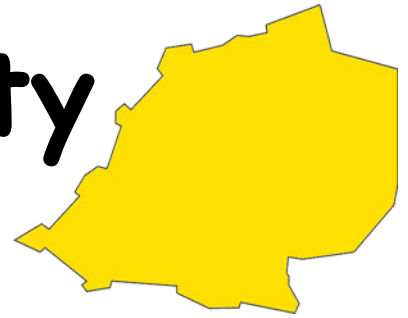
The legendary King Arthur is thought to have ruled around 500 A.D., but the first documented king is typically said to be King Egbert who ruled from 829 to 839. Matilda, daughter of King Henry I, was named heir to the throne by her father in 1141, which would have made her the first ruling queen of England. She was never crowned, though, and ruled for only a few months.

King Henry VIII, who reigned from 1509 to 1547, is the monarch who brought Protestantism to England, though it didn't become permanently established until the 45 year reign of his daughter, Queen Elizabeth I. Her successor, James I, was also King of Scots, which united England and Scotland for the first time, though the Kingdom of Great Britain wasn't officially created until 1707.



Vatican City

Languages:
Latin, Italian



Did you know...?

- The Holy See of the Catholic church lies within Vatican City, and the Church's leader, the Pope, is also leader of Vatican City. The city-state and the Holy See are considered separate entities, though.
- On the Vatican City's flag, yellow symbolizes the Pope's spiritual power and white symbolizes his worldly power. The emblem on the right side shows the keys of Saint Peter and a papal tiara.
- The Pope lives at the Apostolic Palace.
- Residents of the Vatican City don't have a special name; they are simply referred to by their nationalities such as Italian, French, or German.

My Vatican City Fact Book

Full Name:

State of the Vatican City

Population: 829

Land Area: 0.17 square miles

Currency: Euro

Major Religion:

Christian / Catholic (100%)

Highest Point: 246 feet

Lowest Point: 62 feet

Vatican City is not divided for government.

The Catholic Church

With over a billion members around the world, the Catholic Church is the largest branch of the Christian faith today. The Church grew from the meetings and loose organization of the earliest Christian apostles after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

By the second century, community churches were typically led by bishops and dioceses were being organized. Within another hundred years, the community bishops would bring disputes to the Bishop of Rome, who eventually became the pope. Historians aren't certain exactly when the Roman bishops were first called Pope, but it may have been as early as the third century.



A series of Ecumenical Councils met to work out church doctrine and beliefs, including which of the Apostles' writings to include in the Bible.

For centuries, the Pope crowned the kings and queens of most European countries. If the Pope didn't crown a ruler, his right to rule typically wasn't recognized by the other Christian kingdoms. Throughout the history of the Catholic Church, the Pope has been its spiritual leader and the head of all the clergy.

Catholicism has been a major thread in Western history for 2,000 years. Its influence can be felt in architecture, literature, music, and art throughout Europe, the Americas, and in many other regions.

Quiz Time!

Europe

With a history that includes both the Greek and Roman Empires, Europe has influenced cultures all over the Western Hemisphere and, to a lesser extent, the entire world. Countless peoples and civilizations have developed on the continent over thousands of years. With a climate that ranges from the mild Mediterranean to the frigid Arctic, Europe is also home to some of the world's most well-known mountain ranges. How much can you remember about this place?

What country is ruled by a Grand Duke? (page 131)

What city in Albania has been abandoned since the seventeenth century? (page 104)

Spain and Portugal lie on what peninsula? (page 146)

If you wanted to climb the Matterhorn, where would you go? (page 148)

Which country relies on water pumps and dikes to keep its lowlands from flooding? (page 137)

Where did french fries come from? (page 110)

Who founded the Red Cross? (page 148)

In what country can most people not speak the national language? (page 125)

How much coastline does Bosnia and Herzegovina have? (page 111)

What ancient kingdom thrived in Slovakia? (page 144)

How often does Iceland's Great Geysir erupt? (page 124)

What devastating disease did Poland escape? (page 139)

Name the Roman emperor who was born in Croatia. (page 113)

Where is Pena Palace? (page 140)

Who are the Gagauz people? What is unique about them? (page 134)

Where were Bohemia and Moravia? (page 115)

Which wonders of the ancient world existed in Greece? (page 122)

On which flag do you see the New Sun of Liberty? (page 132)

Where would you find a Karabakh horse? (page 108)

Who were the Gauls? (page 119)

What types of animals live in the Carpathian Mountains? (page 141)

How much of Sweden is within the Arctic Circle? (page 147)

Name two famous scientists who were born in modern-day Poland. (page 139)

What animal was taken from Norway to repopulate Sweden and Finland? (page 138)

What caused Estonia's Great Famine? (page 117)

Which country's own rulers didn't visit it for 120 years? (page 129)

Name some of the stories that famous Danish author Hans Christian Anderson wrote. (page 116)

What does an apple tree represent to the Latvian people? (page 128)

Name the two animals that are endemic to Cyprus. (page 114)

What are the Eyes of the Mountain? (page 112)

Where would you go to eat a tree cake called a sakotis? (page 130)

Which European countries are less than 100 square miles? (pages 105, 129, 135, 142, and 151)

What country is governed by the world's oldest continuously-used constitution? (page 142)

What is the largest country that lies entirely within Europe? (page 149)

If you visited Belarus, what might the people give to you as a symbol of welcome? (page 109)

Which country's people fled from regions that were ceded to the Soviet Union at the end of the Winter War? (page 118)

Name two famous composers who lived in Austria. (page 107)

In what country do musicians play the duduk? (page 106)

What is pysanky? (page 149)

What city is built upon 117 islands? (page 126)

For how many years did the Berlin Wall divide East Berlin from the rest of Germany? (page 121)

Where were Serbian monarchs once crowned? (page 143)

On what island did the Apostle Paul become shipwrecked? (page 133)

Where would you hear a gusle? (page 136)

According to Greek mythology, where did Jason find the Golden Fleece? (page 120)

Where could you relax in a warm sulphur lake? (page 123)

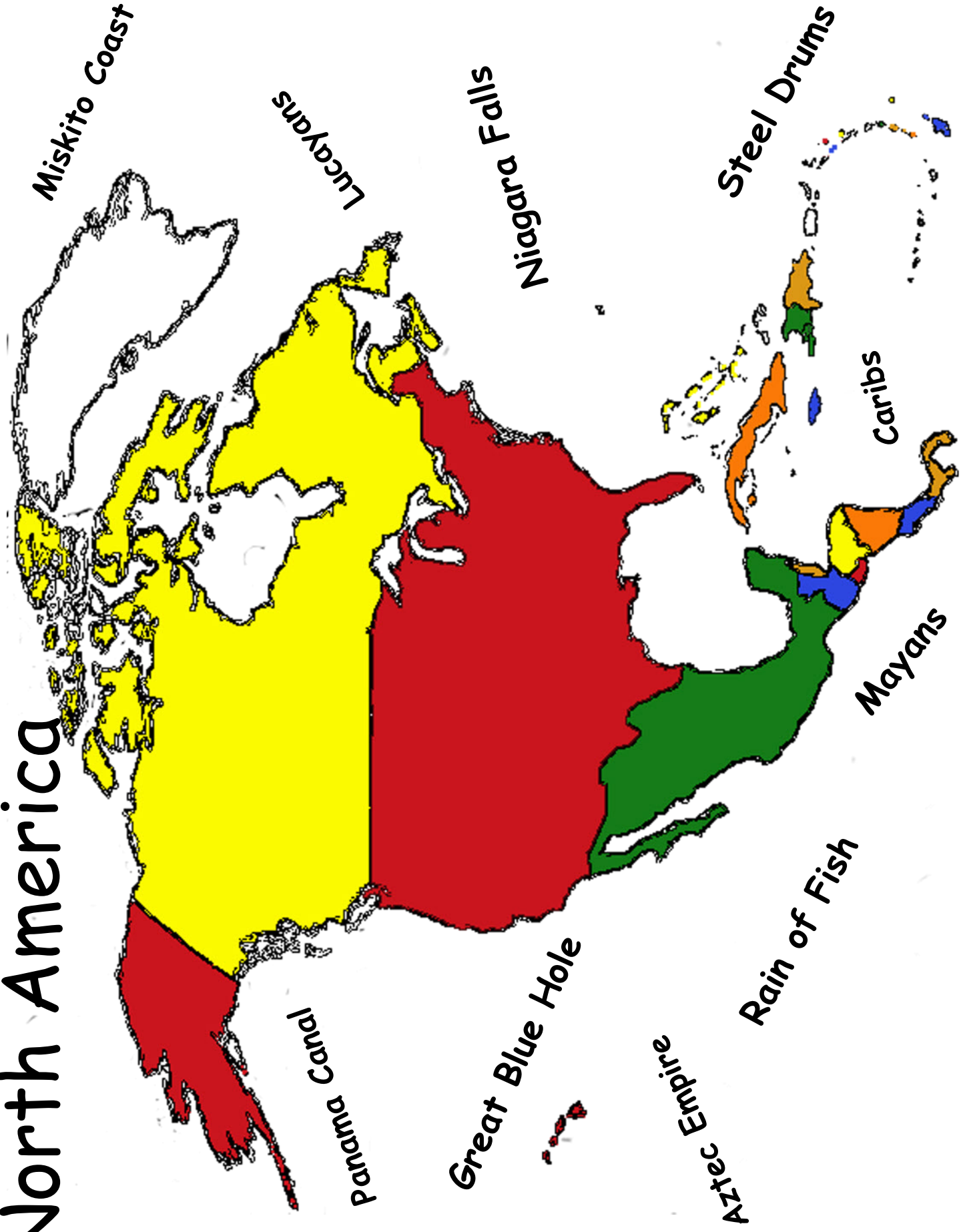
What was the first cave to offer commercial tours? (page 145)

Name the four former countries which make up the United Kingdom. (page 150)

How many countries use the Euro? Name them. (pages 105, 107, 110, 114, 117, 118, 119, 121, 122, 125, 126, 127, 131, 133, 136, 137, 140, 142, 144, 145, 146, and 151)

Where would you most like to visit in Europe and why?

North America

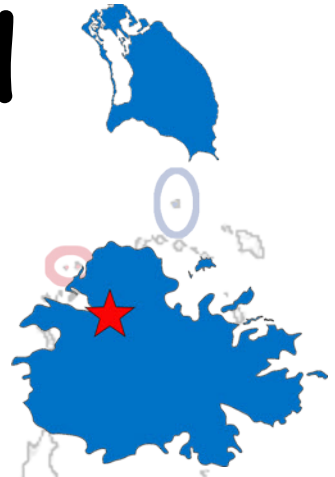




Antigua and Barbuda

Capital City: Saint John's

Languages:
English, Antiguan Creole



My Antiguan and Barbudan Fact Book

Full Name:

Antigua and Barbuda

Population: 86,754

Land Area: 170 square miles

Currency: East Caribbean dollar

Major Religion: Christian (92%)

Highest Point: Boggy Peak (1,319 feet)

Lowest Point: Caribbean Sea (0 feet)

Antigua and Barbuda is divided into six parishes.

Did you know...?

- Besides the two large islands, Antigua and Barbuda, the nation includes 34 other small islands.
- In Spanish, Antigua means "ancient" and Barbuda means "bearded."
- The people of Antigua often enjoy a food called *dukuna*, which is a steamed sweet potato dumpling.
- Beginning in the seventeenth century, Antigua and Barbuda were both British colonies. Numerous sugar plantations, worked by African slaves, existed on the islands. Most of the people living in Antigua and Barbuda today are descended from these slaves.

Did you know...?

- The Barbadian flag shows the sky and sea surrounding the golden sands of Barbados. The trident represents the nation's independence.
- Barbados lies at the far eastern edge of the Lesser Antilles island chain. Because of its location, Barbados doesn't typically experience the devastating hurricanes and tropical storms that the other Caribbean islands do.
- Every summer, Barbadians enjoy a festival called Crop Over. They have music, dancing, parades, and the crowning of the King and Queen of the Crop, an honor given to the man and woman who raised the most sugarcane in the last year.

My Barbadian Fact Book

Full Name:

Barbados

Population: 285,653

Land Area: 167 square miles

Currency: Barbadian dollar

Major Religion: Christian (75%)

Highest Point: Mount Hillaby (1,102 feet)

Lowest Point: Atlantic Ocean (0 feet)

Barbados is divided into 11 parishes.



Barbados

Capital City: Bridgetown

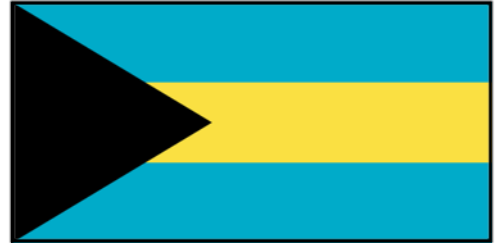
Languages: English, Bajan



The Bahamas

Capital City: Nassau

Language: English



Did you know...?

- The Bahamas are a popular tourist destination, and more than half of Bahamians work in tourism jobs.
- Most Bahamians are descended from Africans—both free and enslaved—who either freely settled on or were brought to the islands beginning in the seventeenth century. Slavery ended in The Bahamas in 1834.
- The first place Christopher Columbus' ships landed in North America was in The Bahamas.
- The temperature in The Bahamas has never been known to drop below freezing, and a snow-rain mix has been reported just one time, in 1977.
- A traditional Bahamian craft uses palm fronds to make baskets, bags, and hats.

My Bahamian Fact Book

Full Name:

Commonwealth of The Bahamas

Population: 310,426

Land Area: 5,358 square miles

Currency: Bahamian dollar

Major Religion: Christian (92%)

Highest Point:

Mount Alvernia on Cat Island (207 feet)

Lowest Point: Atlantic Ocean (0 feet)

The Bahamas is divided into 21 districts.

Lucayan People

When Christopher Columbus brought three Spanish ships to the New World, the first people they met were the Lucayans who called themselves *Lukku-Cairi*, which means “island people.” The Lucayans were descended from people who had come from Hispaniola and Cuba in canoes hundreds of years before.

The Lucayans lived in small villages led by a chief where they grew crops, fished, hunted small animals, and gathered wild foods. Their crops were mainly roots like cassava, sweet potatoes, and arrowroot. The people also grew cotton to make clothing, hammocks, and other items.

From Columbus' description and archeological findings, it seems that the Lucayan people were quite peaceful. They made spears from wood but primarily made tools for hunting and fishing. Columbus, Amerigo Vespucci, and other Spanish explorers began capturing Lucayans as slaves almost immediately.

Some were taken to Spain and others to the neighboring islands. They worked as laborers on farms or dived for pearls in the sea. By 1520, only 11 Lucayans still lived in The Bahamas. These few were taken to Hispaniola, and the islands of The Bahamas were left empty until the middle of the seventeenth century.



Belize

Capital City: Belmopan

**Languages:
English, Kriol, Spanish**



My Belizean Fact Book

Full Name:

Belize

Population: 314,522

Land Area: 8,867 square miles

Currency: Belize dollar

Major Religion: Christian (77%)

Highest Point:

Doyle's Delight (3,806 feet)

Lowest Point: Caribbean Sea (0 feet)

Belize is divided into six districts.

Did you know...?

- English is Belize's official language, but less than five percent of the population speaks it. Most people speak Spanish or Kriol.
- The first Europeans to settle in Belize were English buccaneers who attacked Spanish ships.
- Belize was known as British Honduras until 1973, and the nation gained full independence in 1981. The neighboring country of Guatemala claims to own part of Belize.
- More than half of Belize is forested.
- Off the country's coast lies the Belize Barrier Reef System, the second largest coral reef system in the world.

Kriols

The Kriol people of Belize are descendants of the English and Scottish buccaneers who first came to the area and the African slaves who were brought to Belize to work in the logwood industry. Kriol heritage includes many other groups as well—later European and African immigrants and people from neighboring countries. The Kriols are truly a blended ethnic group.

A traditional Kriol musical instrument is the jawbone of a donkey. A person moves a stick across the teeth to make a musical sound. The Kriol language is a mixture of English, west African languages, and native Caribbean and Central American languages.

Great Blue Hole

About 43 miles off Belize's coast lies the Great Blue Hole, a sinkhole 407 feet deep and almost 1,000 feet across. Inside the hole are numerous stalactites which means that the hole (or cave) formed when the sea level was lower. At some unknown time, the seas rose enough to flood the hole.

A few species of shark can be found in the Great Blue Hole frequently, and scuba divers from around the world enjoy diving into its depths to enjoy the crystal clear water and beauty of the plants and animals found there.





Canada

Capital City:
Ottawa



Languages:
English, French

Did you know...?

- Canada is the second largest country in the world.
- The word Canada is derived from an Iroquois word that means "village."
- Almost 25 percent of Canadians speak French as their primary language. The language is most common in Quebec, but French speakers live in many parts of Canada.
- The Inuit live in the northern regions of Canada where their ancestors have hunted walrus, whales, seals, and polar bears for over 1,000 years.
- Hockey is Canada's favorite sport, and their national team has won eight gold medals at the Olympic games.

My Canadian Fact Book

Full Name:

Canada

Population: 33,759,742

Land Area: 3,854,085 square miles

Currency: Canadian Dollar

Major Religion: Christian (70%)

Highest Point: Mount Logan (10,551 feet)

Lowest Point: Atlantic Ocean (0 feet)

Canada is divided into ten provinces and three territories.

Niagara Falls

Niagara Falls is a set of powerful waterfalls on the Niagara River along the border of Canada and the United States. The widest of the falls, Horseshoe Falls, are 2,600 feet wide, and six million cubic feet of water spills over the falls every minute during peak flow in late spring.

The falls have drawn admiring visitors for hundreds of years. Today, the Rainbow Bridge offers a view of the falls which are illuminated by colored lights after dark. Canada has two towers, Skylon and Minolta, that provide visitors with views of Niagara Falls. Visitors can also ride the *Maid of the Mist* boat cruise that traverses the river below the falls.





Costa Rica

Capital City: San José

Language: Spanish



My Costa Rican Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Costa Rica

Population: 4,516,220

Land Area: 19,653 square miles

Currency: Costa Rican colón

Major Religion: Christian (92%)

Highest Point: Cerro Chirripó (12,500 feet)

Lowest Point: Pacific Ocean (0 feet)

Costa Rica is divided into seven provinces.

Did you know...?

- Costa Rica means “rich coast” in Spanish.
- The constitution of Costa Rica, which was written in 1949, forbids the formation of an army. Instead, Costa Rica’s Public Force provides border security, law enforcement, and other protective functions.
- Almost one quarter of Costa Rica’s land lies within national conservation areas.
- Costa Rica has two seasons. The summer is very dry, and the winter is very rainy.
- Costa Rica is home to a variety of people including descendents of Spanish settlers and African slaves and immigrants from Europe, the United States, and other Central American countries.

Cocos Island

Cocos Island lies off the western coast of Costa Rica in the Pacific Ocean. Uninhabited except for park rangers, the island is covered by rainforests and is home to a wide variety of plants and animals, including 65 species of insect that are found nowhere else in the world. The abundance of life in the surrounding ocean draws scuba divers from around the world. Some of the largest creatures found here are yellowfin tuna, hammerhead sharks, and whale sharks.

At least two stories say that pirates buried treasure on Cocos Island during the nineteenth century. Several expeditions have tried to find the treasure and generally failed, though small amounts of buried gold *have* been found.

Corcovado National Park

Costa Rica has more than two dozen national parks, and one of the most biologically diverse is Corcovado National Park on the country’s Osa Peninsula. Sloths, spider monkeys, tapirs, and anteaters all live within the park’s rainforest along with numerous other tropical animals. More than 500 species of trees grow in the park, and they were once cut for commercial logging before the national park was established in 1975.





Cuba

Capital City: Havana

Language: Spanish



Did you know...?

- Cuba was a territory of Spain and then the United States before gaining independence in 1902.
- In 1958, Fidel Castro led an armed rebellion against Cuba's government and then succeeded in becoming the country's prime minister and establishing a communist government. Cuba is the only communist nation outside of Asia today.
- During the Spanish-American War of 1898, several battles were fought in Cuba including the important Battle of San Juan Hill. Future president Theodore Roosevelt and the Rough Riders played an integral role in many of these battles.

My Cuban Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Cuba

Population: 11,477,459

Land Area: 42,427 square miles

Currency: Cuban Peso

Major Religion: Christian (85%)

Highest Point: Pico Turquino (6,578 feet)

Lowest Point: Caribbean Sea (0 feet)

Cuba is divided into 14 provinces.

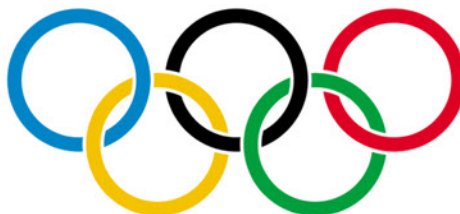
Cuban Music

An important part of the country's culture, Cuban music is a combination of influences from Spain, Africa, and the other Caribbean islands. The resulting musical styles, the instruments used, and the dances developed in Cuba have become popular all over the world.

Well-known styles of music and dance were developed in Cuba or owe much of their makeup to Cuban music. These include jazz, salsa, the mambo, and rumba, all of which remain popular in Cuba today.

Favorite Sports in Cuba

Across Cuba, baseball is the peoples' favorite sport and is played frequently in both professional and 'just for fun' games. Boxing is also very popular, and many Cuban amateur boxers compete in international competitions every year. Cubans have won 63 Olympic medals in boxing since 1968. Cuba holds the distinction of having won the most Olympic medals out of countries that have never participated in the Winter Olympics. Their athletes have brought home 194 total medals, 67 of them gold.





Dominica

Capital City: Roseau

Languages: English, French, Antillean Creole

My Dominican Fact Book

Full Name:

Commonwealth of Dominica

Population: 72,813

Land Area: 290 square miles

Currency: East Caribbean dollar

Major Religion: Christian (91%)

Highest Point:

Morne Diablotins (4,747 feet)

Lowest Point: Caribbean Sea (0 feet)

Dominica is divided into 10 parishes.

Did you know...?

- Christopher Columbus first saw the island on a Sunday and named it *Domenica*, which means "Sunday" in Italian. The spelling was changed, but the name has stuck.
- To preserve the island's natural beauty, its people discourage large-scale tourism.
- Boiling Lake in Dominica is the world's second largest hot spring.
- Dominica's economy is largely dependent on agriculture, and the country produces bananas, coffee, patchouli, and cut flowers.

Caribs

The Carib people were the natives whose name was used for the Caribbean Sea. They lived on several of the islands in the Lesser Antilles group when the Europeans arrived during the late fifteenth century. Caribs mined silver, built boats for sailing between the islands and the mainland, and were skilled warriors.

Carib culture was almost completely eliminated after the European arrival. Battles and European diseases killed many of the Caribs, but small numbers of their descendents remain. They live on various Caribbean islands and in South America. In Dominica, about 3,000 Caribs live in a territory set aside for their own use and elect their own chief.

The Carib language died out early in the twentieth century, but the people continually work to preserve other aspects of their heritage.

Whale Watching

The waters around Dominica abound with whales and dolphins, including a pod of sperm whales that live near the island throughout the year. Killer whales, humpback whales, bottlenose dolphins, and other species can be seen occasionally as well.

Sperm whales produce a substance called spermaceti that was once widely used to make candles, cosmetics, and other items. A full grown male sperm whale can provide as much as three tons of spermaceti, but the substance isn't used much today.



Dominican Republic



Capital City: Santo Domingo

Language: Spanish

Did you know...?

- Santo Domingo is the site of the first permanent European settlement in the New World.
- The Dominican Republic is located on the island of Hispaniola.
- The people of the Dominican Republic call their country The Dominica, and the people themselves were once called Dominicanos.
- On the Dominican flag, an open Bible has the Spanish words meaning "And the truth shall set you free."

My Dominican Fact Book

Full Name:

Dominican Republic

Population: 9,823,821

Land Area: 18,704 square miles

Currency: Peso

Major Religion: Christian (96%)

Highest Point: Pico Duarte (10,417 feet)

Lowest Point: Lago Enriquillo
(151 feet below sea level)

*The Dominican Republic is divided into
31 provinces.*

Lago Enriquillo

Lago Enriquillo is a saltwater lake in the southwestern region of the Dominican Republic, not far from the border with Haiti. It is the Caribbean's lowest point and its largest lake. The lake has three islands, and the largest, Isla Cabritos, is the site of a Dominican National Park. Cactus grow on the islands and around the lake, and flamingoes and saltwater crocodiles live here. The lake is home to one of the world's largest populations of American crocodiles.



Taínos

The Taíno people lived on Hispaniola and other Caribbean islands when Christopher Columbus arrived in 1492. The island was divided among five chiefdoms, and the people lived in round homes made of thatch while the chiefs lived in square homes. The people grew cassava, sweet potatoes, peanuts, and other crops on small farms. They also gathered wild foods, fished, and hunted small animals on the islands. The Taíno would catch animals like turtles, fish, and birds and then store them alive until they were ready to eat them.

Many Taíno were taken captive as slaves or killed during battles or by diseases, especially smallpox, introduced by the Europeans. No distinct Taíno population exists today, but many Dominicans have some Taíno ancestry.



El Salvador

Capital City:
San Salvador

Language: Spanish



My Salvadoran Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of El Salvador

Population: 6,052,064

Land Area: 8,124 square miles

Currency: United States dollar

Major Religion: Christian (78%)

Highest Point: Cerro El Pital (8,957 feet)

Lowest Point: Pacific Ocean (0 feet)

*El Salvador is divided into
14 departments.*

Did you know...?

- El Salvador is the only Central American country that doesn't touch the Caribbean Sea.
- The country is vulnerable to natural disasters like earthquakes, landslides, and volcanic eruptions.
- El Salvador was a Spanish colony from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century. It was briefly a part of the United States of Central America until gaining full independence in 1898.
- The Salvadoran Civil War lasted from 1979 until 1992.

Food in El Salvador

Both Spanish and native Central American foods have influenced what is enjoyed in El Salvador today. The people often eat fried plantains with cheese and cream for breakfast. For dinner, they enjoy fried cassava, turkey, sardines, and pork rinds along with cabbage, carrots, and other vegetables.

A traditional food called *pupusa* has been eaten in El Salvador since before the Spanish arrived. A sort of thick tortilla, *pupusas* are made with corn masa, a special type of corn flour that is sometimes sold in the international section of American grocery stores. The tortillas are filled with cheese, meat, squash, refried beans, or some combination of these. Give this recipe a try.

Pupusas

2 C. corn masa

1 C. warm water

1 C. filling

Mix together the corn masa and water to form a moist, firm dough. Knead well, adding a small amount of water if needed. Cover and let rest for 10 minutes. Divide the dough into 8 equal portions and roll each portion into a ball. "Clap" the dough between your hands to form a flat, yet thick, tortilla. Place two tablespoons of filling onto one tortilla and cover with a second tortilla. Pinch the edges together to form a seal. On an ungreased skillet over medium-high heat or on an electric skillet at 325°F, cook each tortilla for about 2 minutes on each side until lightly browned. Serve warm.

The filling typically consists of a grated soft cheese—usually *quesillo*, though other soft cheeses can be used instead—refried beans or chopped meat, especially pork. What kind of filling will you try?



Grenada

Capital City: St. George's

Languages: English, Patois



My Grenadian Fact Book

Full Name:

Grenada

Population: 107,818

Land Area: 133 square miles

Currency: East Caribbean dollar

Major Religion: Christian (100%)

Highest Point:

Mount Saint Catherine (2,756 feet)

Lowest Point: Caribbean Sea (0 feet)

Grenada is divided into six parishes.

Did you know...?

- Though Grenada has been independent since 1974, Queen Elizabeth II remains Head of State and is represented by a governor-general.
- Grenada is sometimes known as the Spice Isle because of the many spices produced there. Nutmeg is shown on the flag because the country exports one fifth of all the nutmeg used around the world.
- Languages spoken by the Grenadian people include French Patois and Grenadian Creole.

Cricket

Cricket, which originated in England during the sixteenth century, is one of the most popular sports in Grenada. It is similar to baseball in that it is played with a ball and a bat, though a cricket bat is flat and matches are usually played on an oval field. Players who throw the ball are called "bowlers," and the batters are called "batsmen."

Six matches during the 2007 Cricket World Cup were held at Grenada's National Stadium.

Anansy the Spider

A spider named Anansy is a popular character in Grenadian stories. *Anansi*, which means "spider" in the African Akan language, originated in the stories of West Africa and was brought to Grenada and the other Caribbean islands by slaves.

Some of the Anansy stories can be found in books like *A Story a Story* by Gail E. Haley, *Anancy and the Sky God: Caribbean Favourite Tales* by Ladybird Books, and *Anansi and the Box of Stories: A West African Folktale* by Stephen Krensky.



Guatemala

Capital City: Guatemala City

Language: Spanish



My Guatemalan Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Guatemala

Population: 13,550,440

Land Area: 42,042 square miles

Currency: Quetzal

Major Religion: Christian (95%)

Highest Point:

Volcan Tajumulco (13,816 feet)

Lowest Point: Pacific Ocean (0 feet)

Guatemala is divided into 22 departments.

Did you know...?

- The quetzal bird on Guatemala's flag represents liberty.
- Guatemala's landscape is divided into three distinct regions: the Pacific coast, the highlands, and lowlands in the northern Petén region.
- Guatemala is about the size of Tennessee.
- A civil war was fought in Guatemala for 36 years, from 1960 to 1996.
- Most Guatemalans have both Spanish and native Amerindian ancestry.

Mayan People

Mayan people once lived all over present-day Guatemala and throughout much of Mesoamerica where they built large cities and stepped pyramids. The leader of each city-state was called *ajaw*, and buildings were built around the central temple, which was often a pyramid, and the royal homes. Most buildings were built in "harmony with nature," taking advantage of and complementing the surrounding landscape.

Virtually every activity in Mayan cities revolved around the needs of the royal household. Farmers grew crops, artisans created beautiful pottery and murals, and merchants traded with neighboring peoples to garner the items needed for daily life and special ceremonies.

The Mayans were the only native people in the Americas to have a fully developed system of writing, which they developed as early as the third century B.C. Knowledge of the written script was lost after the Spaniards conquered the region, but researchers today have learned to read nearly all Mayan writings.



Volcanoes

Guatemala's Sierra Madre range includes numerous active volcanoes, including Pacaya which has erupted about two dozen times since the Spanish reached Guatemala. An eruption in May 2010 sent volcanic ash and debris 5,000 feet into the air.



Haiti

Capital City: Port-au-Prince

Languages:
Haitian Creole, French



Did you know...?

- Haiti is located on the western third of the island of Hispaniola.
- The French slogan on Haiti's flag means "Union Makes Strength."
- The name Haiti comes from the native Taíno word *ayiti*, which means "land of high mountains."
- Rice and beans are the most commonly eaten foods in Haiti. Chicken and goat meat are frequently enjoyed as well, and Haitians make numerous desserts including *piene patte*, which is made with sweet potatoes, cinnamon, and evaporated milk.

My Haitian Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Haiti

Population: 9,648,924

Land Area: 10,714 square miles

Currency: Gourde

Major Religion: Christian (96%)

Highest Point:

Chaîne de la Selle (8,793 feet)

Lowest Point: Caribbean Sea (0 feet)

Haiti is divided into 10 departments.

Earthquake

In 2010, southern Haiti was hit by a severe earthquake that measured 7.0 along with a series of more than 50 aftershocks. The earthquakes caused enormous damage to property and killed over 200,000 people. In some places, virtually every building was destroyed, and over a million people were left homeless.

Numerous organizations like the Red Cross and Doctors Without Borders sent volunteers to Haiti to offer medical care and food and to help build shelters for the homeless. Countries from around the world sent soldiers, volunteers, food, medicine, and other supplies to help stabilize and rebuild the country after the devastation.

The recovery process has taken a very long time and is nowhere near complete a year after the earthquakes occurred.

Haitian Independence

Haiti became a French colony in 1697, and slaves here worked on plantations to grow coffee, sugarcane, and indigo. The laws in Haiti were especially rigid and the rights of both slaves and free Africans were severely restricted. After the French Revolution, the free blacks and slaves began to work together to demand more rights. Their push for increased freedom led to a revolt in 1791 by the slaves against the whites of Haiti. Through many violent battles and the burning of plantations, the slaves gained control of nearly all of Haiti. The French abolished slavery and granted equal rights to blacks in an attempt to regain peace, but the rebellion continued. Haitian independence was finally achieved in 1804, making it the only nation to ever gain independence after a slave uprising.



Honduras

Capital City:
Tegucigalpa

Language: Spanish



My Honduran Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Honduras

Population: 7,989,415

Land Area: 43,278 square miles

Currency: Lempira

Major Religion: Christian (100%)

Highest Point:

Cerro Las Minas (9,416 feet)

Lowest Point: Caribbean Sea (0 feet)

*Honduras is divided into
18 departments .*

Did you know...?

- The varied Honduran landscape includes Caribbean coastline, a natural harbor on the Pacific, mountains, savannas, rainforest, cloud forest, mangrove, pine, and oak forests.
- Honduras has many natural resources like gold, silver, copper, coal, and iron. Timber from the mountains and fish and shrimp from the sea also contribute to the country's economy.
- More than 600 species of orchids grow in Honduras.
- Coconuts are used in many Honduran dishes.
- Hondurans celebrate *Día del Niño*, Children's Day, every September. Children enjoy parties, piñatas, and presents on this holiday.

Lencas

Though Mayan people once built a great city in present-day Honduras, they were long gone from the area by the time Christopher Columbus arrived in 1502. By then, a people called the Lencas lived in the area of western Honduras where they retain a significant population to this day.

Traditionally, the Lencas have been farmers who grow cotton, cocoa, coffee, corn, squash, and other crops. Lenca women have handcrafted pottery for hundreds of years, and the people once traded extensively with the neighboring Mayans. One trade item was a flowering shrub called *achiote*, which produces seeds that give a pigment called annatto. Annatto is used today primarily to give food items like rice and cheese an orange color.

Lluvia de Peces (Rain of Fish)

In the northern Honduran department called Yoro, an unusual phenomenon called the Rain of Fish occurs once or twice each year between May and July. A dark thundercloud moves into the area, and heavy rain falls for a few hours leaving behind hundreds of living fish all over the ground.

A traditional story in the area says that sometime around 1860 a Catholic missionary named Father José Subirana prayed for three days on behalf of the poor Honduran people who didn't have enough food to eat. The people say that God has sent the fish each year since then.

Scientists disagree on the natural explanation of why the fish appear after a storm every year. Some suggest that waterspouts carry the fish from the Atlantic Ocean. On the other hand, National Geographic researchers found that all the fish are blind and of a species that hasn't been found in any nearby water. These researchers think that the fish may live in an underground river and somehow surface during the storm each year.

Jamaica

Capital City: Kingston

Languages: English,
Jamaican Patois



My Jamaican Fact Book

Full Name:

Jamaica

Population: 2,847,232

Land Area: 4,244 square miles

Currency: Jamaican dollar

Major Religion: Christian (65%)

Highest Point:

Blue Mountain Peak (7,402 feet)

Lowest Point: Caribbean Sea (0 feet)

Jamaica is divided into 14 parishes.

Did you know...?

- On the Jamaican flag, green symbolizes hope and the country's agriculture, black symbolizes hardships that have been overcome, and yellow symbolizes the sun.
- Jamaica was once known as Santiago. The name Jamaica comes from the Taino word *Xaymaca*, which means "land of springs and water."
- Cricket is one of Jamaica's most popular sports. Jamaican athletes have won 13 gold medals at the Olympics, all of them in track and field competitions.
- Jamaica's national bobsled team first competed at the 1988 Winter Olympics and has since competed in many international competitions. The team won gold at the 2000 World Push Championship.

Reggae

Reggae music has grown popular around the world and is strongly associated with Jamaican culture. Jamaican musicians developed reggae music during the 1960s by blending and changing elements of the ska and rocksteady styles of music. Reggae uses a keyboard, lead and bass guitars, drums, and horns like trumpets and saxophones.

Reggae songs have been written on almost every topic: love songs, protest and social criticism, and Christian praise songs. Two of the most well known reggae bands are Bob Marley and the Wailers, who were Jamaican, and UB40, a band from the United Kingdom.

In some ways, reggae music has been closely associated with the Rastafari movement, whose followers believe that the late Haile Selassie I, Emperor of Ethiopia from 1930 to 1974, is the second incarnation of Christ. They believe that he will lead them and all of Africa to freedom by establishing a perfect "Zion." Selassie actually died in 1975, but many Rastafari say that this is a hoax and that he is actually living in a monastery.



Mexico

Capital City: Mexico City

Language: Spanish



Did you know...?

- Mexico was a Spanish territory, called New Spain, from the sixteenth century until gaining full independence in 1821.
- With 707 species identified, Mexico has more species of reptile than any other country.
- Europeans were first introduced to chocolate by the Aztecs of Mexico who drank a bitter chocolate drink called *xocolatl*.
- Some Mexican sports involve animals, such as *charreada*, or rodeo, and bullfighting. The bullring called *Plaza México* is the world's largest.

My Mexican Fact Book

Full Name:

United Mexican States

Population: 112,468,855

Land Area: 761,606 square miles

Currency: Peso

Major Religion: Christian (80%)

Highest Point:

Volcan Pico de Orizaba (18,701 feet)

Lowest Point:

Laguna Salada (10 feet below sea level)

Mexico is divided into 31 states.

Aztecs

The Aztec people lived in central Mexico where they established an empire in the early fifteenth century. The modern Mexican flag displays the country's coat of arms, which shows an eagle eating a snake. This image comes from an Aztec legend that says that the people wandered without a home until they found an eagle, sitting on a cactus and eating a snake. At that spot, they built their city called Tenochtitlan, now the site of Mexico City.

Aztec society was divided into nobles, priests, warriors, merchants, artisans, farmers, and slaves. Aztec slaves were often Aztecs themselves who had been enslaved due to a debt owed or as punishment for a crime. An enslaved person could actually own slaves himself.

The Aztecs are known for practicing human sacrifice, and this was a rather constant feature of Aztec life. The people believed that those who died as a sacrifice or during a battle would go to the second-highest heaven after death. By contrast, those who died peacefully in their sleep would go to the lowest underworld.

Mexican Food

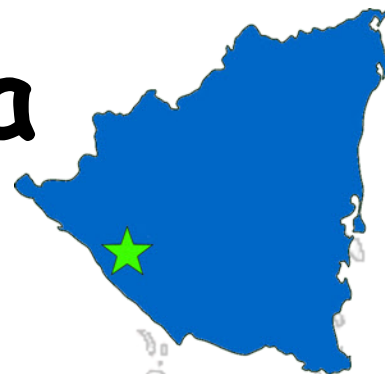
Mexican food is enjoyed throughout North America, though the dishes eaten in Mexico differ by region. Nationally, the cuisine combines rice, beef, and chicken from the Spanish conquerors with corn, tomatoes, and beans from the native people. Chicken is most popular in the southeast, seafood is frequently eaten along the Pacific coast, and ostrich, goat, and beef are often used in the north. Spices like cilantro and oregano, chili peppers, cheese, and onions are widely used as well.



Nicaragua

Capital City: Managua

Language: Spanish



Did you know...?

- Both the Aztecs and Mayas lived in modern-day Nicaragua.
- The first female president elected in any North or South American country was Nicaragua's Violeta Barrios de Chamorro who was elected in 1990.
- Nicaragua is about the size of Alabama.
- In Nicaragua, farmers grow coffee, sugar, bananas, and tobacco.
- Baseball and boxing are both very popular in Nicaragua.
- Some species of sea turtles visit Nicaraguan beaches every year to lay their eggs.

My Nicaraguan Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Nicaragua

Population: 5,995,928

Land Area: 50,193 square miles

Currency: Córdoba

Major Religion: Christian (81%)

Highest Point: Mogoton (7,999 feet)

Lowest Point: Pacific Ocean (0 feet)

*Nicaragua is divided into
15 departments.*

Miskito Coast

The Miskito Coast stretches along Nicaragua's Caribbean coastline except for a small portion at the southern edge of the country. Some people call it the Mosquito Coast, but this is a misspelling—the name actually comes from the Miskito people who lived in the region before the Europeans arrived.

Today, Miskito descendants, who often have a mixed heritage that includes African and European ancestors, live along the coast. Many of the men work as lobster fishermen or in other jobs that require them to spend most of their time away from their families. Daily life in Miskito villages usually includes women and young children since the men are typically gone as much as eight months out of every year.

Gallo Pinto

Nicaragua's national dish is *gallo pinto*, which is made from rice and beans that are often seasoned with onions, garlic, and peppers. The words *gallo pinto* actually mean "painted rooster." Nicaraguans eat *gallo pinto* during each meal, sometimes alone and sometimes accompanied by a meat dish and/or side dishes.

3 C. cooked rice

3 C. cooked beans

1 onion, diced

2 cloves of garlic, minced

1 red pepper, diced

Saute the onion, garlic, and pepper with a tablespoon of oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the rice and beans, stirring everything together until heated. Add salt and pepper to taste.



Panama

Capital City:
Panama City

Language: Spanish



Did you know...?

- Panama is located on a narrow strip of land called the Isthmus of Panama. The Atlantic and Pacific Oceans are separated by just 30 miles at Panama's narrowest point.
- Baseball is the favorite sport in Panama, and many Panamanians have moved to the United States to play Major League Baseball.
- Both balboa and the United States dollar can be spent anywhere in the country.
- On the Panamanian flag, white stands for peace, blue stands for honesty, and red stands for the country's authority.

My Panamanian Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Panama

Population: 3,410,676

Land Area: 29,157 square miles

Currency: Balboa

Major Religion: Christian (100%)

Highest Point:

Volcán Barú (11,401 feet)

Lowest Point: Pacific Ocean (0 feet)

Panama is divided into 11 provinces.

Panama Canal

Completed in 1914, the Panama Canal is an important part of modern sea trade and transportation. The canal was built by the United States with the help of workers from many regions, including Canada, India, Europe, the Caribbean, and Central America. Thousands of workers died from malaria, yellow fever, landslides, and machinery accidents.

A region on both sides of the canal was set up and known as the Canal Zone. The Canal Zone and canal were under the exclusive control of the United States until 1977 when Panama and the U.S. entered into a joint control agreement. In 1999, Panama took over complete control with the guarantee that the canal will remain neutrally accessible to ships from all nations forever.

It takes about eight to ten hours for a ship to pass through the canal's series of three locks, artificial channels, and artificial lakes. The canal is approximately 50 miles long, and ships that pass through save about 6,000 miles over sailing around South America's Cape Horn.

Ships are charged a toll depending on their size and cargo, and these tolls are a major part of Panama's economy. Tolls range from a low of \$1,300 to a record high of \$331,200 with a typical toll for cargo vessels being about \$54,000. In 1928, a man named Richard Halliburton swam through the canal and was charged 36 cents.



Saint Kitts and Nevis



Capital City: Basseterre

Language: English

My Kittitian and Nevisian Fact Book

Full Name:

Federation of Saint Kitts and Nevis

Population: 49,898

Land Area: 104 square miles

Currency: East Caribbean dollar

Major Religion: Christian (99%)

Highest Point:

Mount Liamuiga (3,793 feet)

Lowest Point: Caribbean Sea (0 feet)

Saint Kitts and Nevis is divided into 14 parishes.

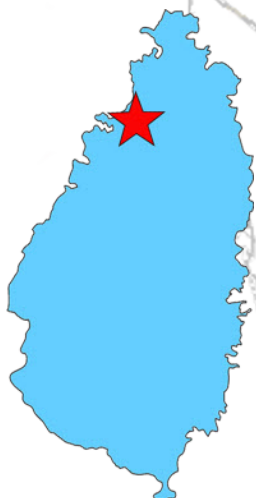
Did you know...?

- Saint Kitts is also known as Saint Christopher.
- The islands were the first in the Caribbean to be settled by British and French colonists.
- Alexander Hamilton, first Secretary of the Treasury for the United States, was born on Nevis.
- People say that Nevis looks like a baseball and Saint Kitts like a baseball bat.
- A popular food eaten in Saint Kitts and Nevis is goat water stew, a combination of goat meat, dumplings, papaya, breadfruit, and tomato juice.

Saint Lucia

Capital City: Castries

Languages: English, French Creole



Did you know...?

- Saint Lucia's annual carnival celebration is held in July, unlike most other countries which hold their carnivals in the winter.
- The banana is Saint Lucia's primary crop, though cocoa, avocado, and mango are grown as well.
- Saint Lucia gets its name from Saint Lucy, a Christian martyr who lived during the fourth century.

My Saint Lucian Fact Book

Full Name:

Saint Lucia

Population: 160,922

Land Area: 238 square miles

Currency: East Caribbean dollar

Major Religion: Christian (91%)

Highest Point: Mount Gimie (3,117 feet)

Lowest Point: Caribbean Sea (0 feet)

Saint Lucia is divided into 11 quarters.



Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

Capital City: Kingstown
Languages: English, Vincentian Creole

My Vincentian Fact Book

Full Name:

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

Population: 104,217

Land Area: 150 square miles

Currency: East Caribbean dollar

Major Religion: Christian (93%)

Highest Point: La Soufriere (4,049 feet)

Lowest Point: Caribbean Sea (0 feet)

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is divided into six parishes.



Did you know...?

- The native Caribs called Saint Vincent "The Land of the Blessed."
- The Grenadines are a chain of 600 islands. The northern two-thirds are part of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, while the southern third are controlled by Grenada.

Trinidad and Tobago

Capital City: Port of Spain Languages: English, Creole

My Trinidadian and Tobagonian Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Population: 1,228,691

Land Area: 1,981 square miles

Currency: Trinidad and Tobago dollar

Major Religions:

Christian (58%), Hindu (23%)

Highest Point:

El Cerro del Aripo (3,084 feet)

Lowest Point: Caribbean Sea (0 feet)

Trinidad and Tobago is divided into 14 corporations.

Did you know...?

- Steel drums, also called steelpans, were invented in Trinidad and Tobago. The British rulers outlawed drums in the eighteenth century, and the islands' slaves responded by turning the bottoms of 55-gallon oil drums into instruments. The surface of a steelpan is concave and covered with 'dimples,' each of which gives a unique note when struck with a panstick. The instrument's sound is widely associated with the Caribbean.





United States of America

Capital City: Washington, D.C.

Language: English



Did you know...?

- Hawaii's Mauna Kea is a mountain that stands six miles high from the ocean floor to its peak. It is taller than Mount Everest.
- The name America comes from explorer Amerigo Vespucci, and the District of Columbia is named after Christopher Columbus.
- Numerous modern innovations were invented by Americans such as the threshing machine, ice cream freezer, vacuum cleaner, telephone, light bulb, machine gun, radio, cotton candy, airplane, chocolate chip cookie, calculator, and the cell phone.
- More than 600 distinct native tribes, each with their own cultural traits, lived in the United States when Europeans arrived.

My American Fact Book

Full Name:

United States of America

Population: 310,232,863

Land Area: 3,794,101 square miles

Currency: United States dollar

Major Religion: Christian (77%)

Highest Point:

Mount McKinley (20,322 feet)

Lowest Point: Death Valley
(282 feet below sea level)

The United States of America is divided into 50 states.

The Great American Melting Pot

America has often been described as a "melting pot" because its population is made up of a diverse mix of people from virtually every nationality. All of these cultures have combined to create the unique American culture, which has, in turn, influenced the way of life in many other countries.

Many large cities like New York, Washington, D.C., and San Francisco are home to a variety of people who have recently immigrated to America. Since the nineteenth century, many immigrants have chosen to settle in areas where they can be near others who speak the same language. It's interesting to see how this defines the American population today.

The dominant ancestry in the northeastern states is English and Irish with French descents often living along the Canadian border and in southern Louisiana. The most common ancestry in most of the southeastern states is African with a mixture of Scottish, Irish, Welsh, and English being predominant in the mid-south. In the southwest, Mexican ancestry is most common, while Native American descendents populate northern Arizona, New Mexico, and parts of Oklahoma, Montana, and other states. The northern regions of North Dakota, Minnesota, and Montana are home to many Norwegian descendents, and Michigan's Upper Peninsula drew Finnish people whose descendents still live there today. The Great Lakes region, Midwest, and northwest states are primarily populated by those of German descent, which is actually the most common ancestry in America. See Appendix B for a detailed map of ancestry across the country. Can you find your county on it?

Quiz Time!

North America

From arctic Canada to tropical Panama, North America includes a range of climates, landscapes, and people. Once considered the New World, the countries of North America have attracted immigrants from all over the world. What have you learned about this continent?

Which two countries are located on Hispaniola? (pages 165 and 169)

Where could you go to attend the Crop Over festival? (page 158)

Where is the Miskito Coast? (page 173)

On what island might you find a pirate's buried treasure? (page 162)

Where did Christopher Columbus first land in the New World? (page 159)

What island is taller than Mount Everest? (page 177)

Which islands' names mean "ancient" and "bearded" in Spanish? (page 158)

Where is the Rainbow Bridge? (page 161)

What kinds of music and dance are popular in Cuba? (page 163)

What is Boiling Lake? (page 164)

What amazing event occurs in northern Honduras each year? (page 170)

Who is Anansy? (page 167)

Name the people who use a donkey's jawbone as a musical instrument. (page 160)

What type of animal does Mexico have more of than any other country? (page 172)

Which country's flag says "Union Makes Strength"? (page 169)

Which Central American country borders the Pacific Ocean but not the Caribbean Sea? (page 166)

Which country's name comes from a word that means "Land of Springs and Water"? (page 171)

Which large country gets its name from the Iroquois word for "village"? (page 161)

Which two countries are said to look like a baseball bat and ball? (page 175)

Which island group was completely emptied of people due to slavery and then weren't inhabited for over a hundred years? (page 159)

What amazing site lies off the coast of Belize? (page 160)

What ancient civilization flourished in Guatemala? (page 168)

What instrument was created after drums were outlawed by British rulers? (page 176)

Where did the Aztec Empire develop? (page 172)

Where was cotton candy invented? (page 177)

What is "painted rooster"? (page 173)

Where is Children's Day widely celebrated? (page 170)

How much might you pay if you wanted to swim or sail across the Panama Canal? (page 174)

Where did slaves successfully rebel against their owners to gain freedom and establish an independent country? (page 169)

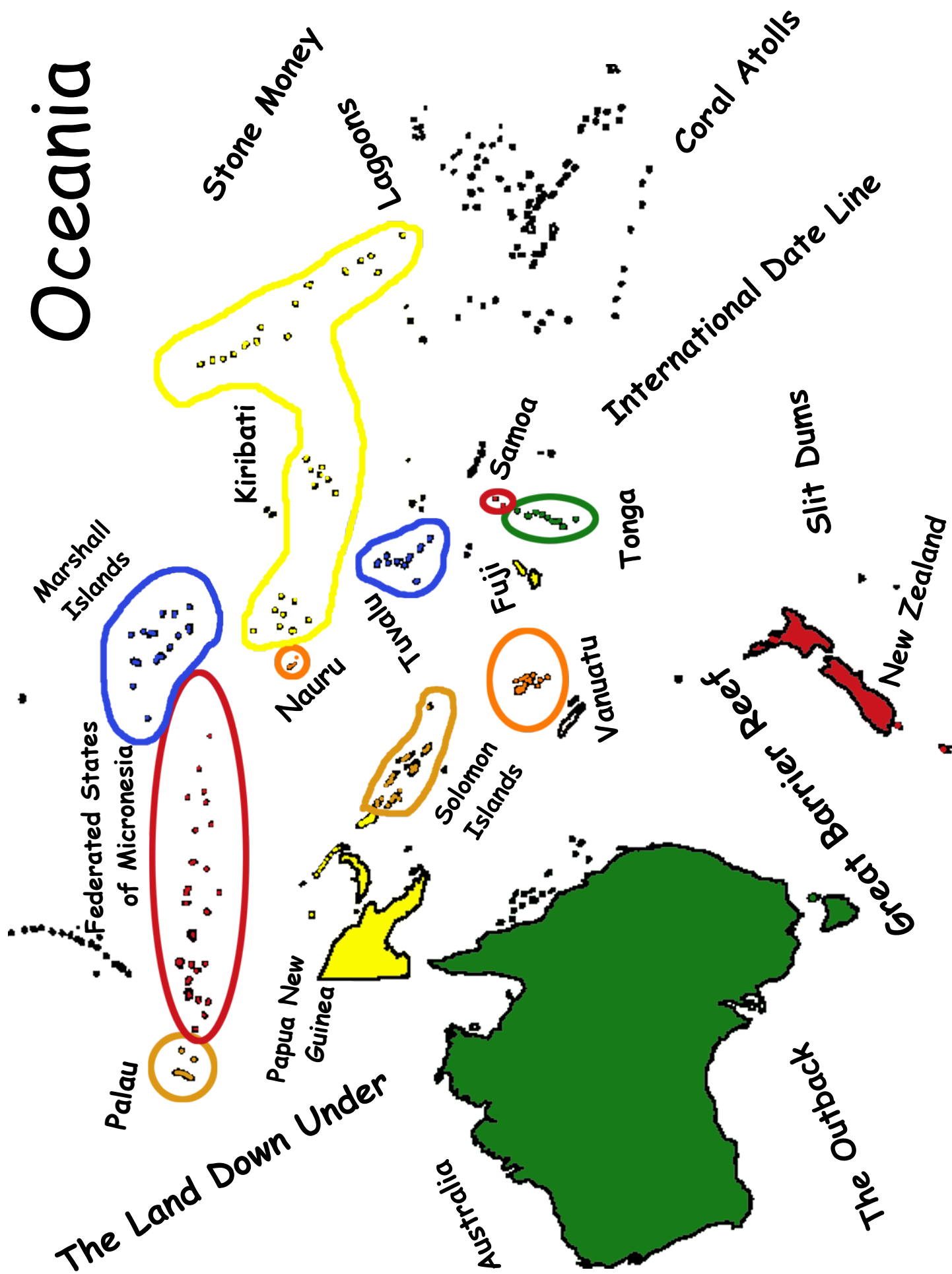
Which country's flag shows a nutmeg? (page 167)

What did the Caribs call Saint Vincent? (page 176)

Which geographical feature of North America would you most like to see? How far would you have to travel to get there?

What amazing fact did you learn about North America?

Oceania





Australia

Capital City: Canberra

Language: English



My Australian Fact Book

Full Name:

Commonwealth of Australia

Population: 21,515,754

Land Area: 2,941,299 square miles

Currency: Australian dollar

Major Religion: Christian (64%)

Highest Point:

Mount Kosciuszko (7,313 feet)

Lowest Point: Lake Eyre

(49 feet below sea level)

*Australia is divided into six states
and two territories.*

Did you know...?

- The people of Australia are sometimes called Aussies.
- Australia is just a bit smaller than the continental United States.
- The largest star on Australia's flag is called the Federation Star. Its seven points represent Australia's six states and all its territories. The stars on right side represent the Southern Cross constellation.
- Australia gained independence from the United Kingdom beginning in 1901, though the two governments remained partially linked until 1986.
- Australia includes numerous islands around the mainland, such as Tasmania and Christmas Island, where red crabs migrate each year in such large numbers that they completely cover the roads and beaches.

Indigenous Australians

When Europeans first came to Australia, native groups of people already lived there. They have been collectively referred to as Aborigines, but the people actually spoke more than 250 languages with each nation-group having its own distinct culture.

Across the continent, indigenous people were hunter-gatherers who relied on nature to supply their needs. Many of the groups practiced "burning off" the land periodically to reduce the likelihood of uncontrolled wildfires and to increase the growth of young plants.

A traditional instrument called the didgeridoo is popularly associated with Australia by people all over the world, but it originated and was played primarily by indigenous people in the northern part of the continent.

Great Barrier Reef

Just off Australia's northeastern coast lies the Great Barrier Reef, the world's largest coral reef. Made up of billions of living coral polyps, the Great Barrier Reef covers more than 133,000 square miles and can be seen from space.

Along with the living coral, the reef is home to sea turtles, stingrays, sharks, dolphins, whales, giant clams, sea snakes, hundreds of fish species, and numerous other creatures like frogs, snails, and seahorses. The reef supports one of the most diverse ecosystems on earth.

Federated States of Micronesia

Capital City: Palikir

Language: English



My Micronesian Fact Book

Full Name:

Federated States of Micronesia

Population: 107,154

Land Area: 271 square miles

Currency: United States dollar

Major Religion: Christian (94%)

Highest Point: Dolohmwar (2,595 feet)

Lowest Point: Pacific Ocean (0 feet)

The Federated States of Micronesia is divided into four states.

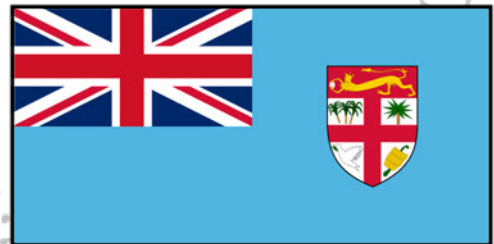
Did you know...?

- Over 600 islands make up the Federated States.
- The island called Yap was once the center of an empire that lasted for about 1,000 years before collapsing around 1500.
- Control of the islands has changed hands many times. Spain, Germany, Japan, and then the United States held control over the islands until their independence in 1986.
- Stone money is still sometimes used on Yap. These stone discs have a hole in the middle and may be up to 12 feet across. The largest may not be moved to a new place even when a new person takes ownership.

Fiji

Capital City: Suva

Languages: English, Bau Fijian, Hindi



Did you know...?

- On Fiji's flag, the shield shows sugarcane stalks, a palm tree, a white dove, and bananas.
- The earliest people known to have lived on the Fijian islands are called the Lapita. Archeological findings show that the Lapita traveled to other islands like Samoa and Hawaii.
- Through the nineteenth century, Fijian chiefs engaged in cannibalism and ritual killings, but Fijians today call this "the time of the devil."
- Only ethnic Fijians are called Fijians. Other people who live in the country are called Fiji Islanders.

My Fijian Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of the Fiji Islands

Population: 875,983

Land Area: 7,056 square miles

Currency: Fijian dollar

Major Religions:

Christian (65%), Hindu (28%)

Highest Point: Tomanivi (4,344 feet)

Lowest Point: Pacific Ocean (0 feet)

Fiji is divided into four divisions.

Kiribati

Capital City: Tarawa

Languages: English, Gilbertese



Did you know...?

- Kiribati's islands extend across both sides of the equator and border the International Date Line.
- Micronesian people have lived on the islands of Kiribati for thousands of years.
- Kiribati's land is literally disappearing as the ocean rises. Two of its uninhabited islands disappeared completely at the end of the twentieth century. Some researchers expect all of Kiribati's land to be covered by the ocean within a hundred years.
- Kiribati is the only nation to exist in all four of the world's hemispheres.
- On the country's flag, a frigate bird is shown flying over the setting sun above the Pacific Ocean. The three white stripes represent the nation's three island groups—Gilbert, Line, and Phoenix.

My I-Kiribati Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Kiribati

Population: 99,482

Land Area: 313 square miles

Currency: Kiribati dollar

Major Religion: Christian (91%)

Highest Point: Banaba (266 feet)

Lowest Point: Pacific Ocean (0 feet)

Kiribati is divided into three units.

Marshall Islands

Capital City: Majuro

Languages: Marshallese, English

Did you know...?

- Spanish explorers in the early sixteenth century were the first Europeans to see the Marshall Islands, but they were named after Captain John Marshall of Great Britain.
- The United States tested nuclear weapons on some of the Marshall Islands between 1946 and 1958. One island was completely destroyed, and people in the region still suffer from the long term health effects of the radiation.
- Historically, the Marshallese people sailed between islands in canoes using navigational charts made from sticks and seashells.

My Marshallese Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of the Marshall Islands

Population: 65,859

Land Area: 70 square miles

Currency: United States dollar

Major Religion: Christian (95%)

Highest Point: Likiep (33 feet)

Lowest Point: Pacific Ocean (0 feet)

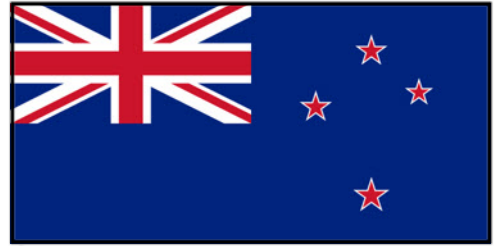
Marshall Islands is divided into 33 municipalities.



New Zealand

Capital City: Wellington

Languages: English, Māori



Did you know...?

- The Māori people call their country *Aotearoa*, which means "land of the long white cloud."
- New Zealand's two main islands are called North Island and South Island and are separated by Cook Strait.
- The stars on the New Zealand flag represent the Southern Cross constellation.
- New Zealand is about the same size as Colorado.
- Though New Zealand is an independent country, Queen Elizabeth II is its head of state. She doesn't exercise any direct leadership but works with the elected Prime Minister to appoint a Governor-General who acts as her representative.

My New Zealand Fact Book

Full Name:

New Zealand

Population: 4,252,277

Land Area: 103,483 square miles

Currency: New Zealand dollar

Major Religions:

Christian (54%), No Religion (32%)

Highest Point:

Aoraki-Mount Cook (12,316 feet)

Lowest Point: Pacific Ocean (0 feet)

New Zealand is divided into 16 regions and one territory.

Wildlife of New Zealand

Archeologists and researchers believe that the islands of New Zealand were some of the last large islands to be settled by man. Because of this, New Zealand has an amazing diversity of unique plants, birds, amphibians, insects, and other wildlife. Around 80 percent of the plants that grow in the country are endemic, which means that they don't grow anywhere else in the world.



One of the nation's most well-known birds is the kiwi, a small, flightless bird that lives only in New Zealand. All five kiwi species are endangered, but their forest habitat is now protected in national parks. The kiwi is considered a national symbol. Some people refer to New Zealanders as kiwis, and the country's money is even sometimes called the kiwi dollar.

Unfortunately, dozens of native New Zealand animals are now extinct because of the introduction of non-native animals, hunting, and deforestation. The moa—a large, flightless bird that grew up to 12 feet tall but didn't have any wings—is believed to have become extinct due to hunting before the Europeans arrived. A predatory bird called the Haast's eagle fed primarily on the moa and went extinct once that food source was no longer available.

Today, many non-native animals have been brought to New Zealand where they are an important part of the agriculture. New Zealand farmers raise cows, sheep, and pigs to produce meat, dairy products, and wool that is used in the country and exported around the world.

Nauru

Capital City: Yaren

Languages: English, Nauruan



Did you know...?

My Nauruan Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Nauru

Population: 9,267

Land Area: 8.1 square miles

Currency: Australian dollar

Major Religion: Christian (79%)

Highest Point: Plateau Rim (200 feet)

Lowest Point: Pacific Ocean (0 feet)

Nauru is divided into 14 districts.

- Nauru was a German protectorate for about 30 years during the nineteenth century, then became a trustee of Australia, New Zealand, and then the United Kingdom. The trusteeship was briefly interrupted when Nauru was occupied by Japanese forces during World War II, and the nation gained full independence in 1968.
- Nauru was once known as Pleasant Island.
- Next to Vatican City, Nauru is the world's smallest independent nation and has the smallest population.
- On the Nauruan flag, blue symbolizes the Pacific Ocean and the yellow stripe stands for the Equator. The position of the star shows Nauru's location just south of the Equator, and the 12 points represent Nauru's 12 original tribes.

Palau

Capital City: Melekeok

Languages: English,

Palauan, Japanese

Did you know...?

- The yellow circle on Palau's flag represents the moon, which the Palauans see as a symbol of peace, love, and tranquility.
- Since the nineteenth century, Palau has been controlled by Spain, Germany, Japan, and the United States in succession before becoming independent in 1994.
- The oceans of Palau are the world's only shark sanctuary where commercial shark fishing is completely banned. The sanctuary covers an area about the size of France.

My Palauan Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Palau

Population: 20,879

Land Area: 177 square miles

Currency: United States dollar

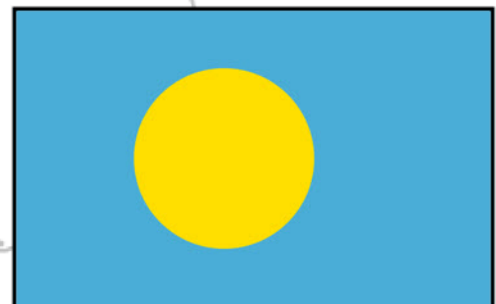
Major Religion: Christian (70%)

Highest Point:

Mount Ngerchelchuus (794 feet)

Lowest Point: Pacific Ocean (0 feet)

Palau is divided into 16 states.



Papua New Guinea

Capital City: Port Moresby

Languages: English, Tok Pisin, Hiri Motu



My Papua New Guinean Fact Book

Full Name:

Independent State of Papua New Guinea

Population: 6,064,515

Land Area: 178,703 square miles

Currency: Papua New Guinean kina

Major Religion: Christian (96%)

Highest Point:

Mount Wilhelm (14,793 feet)

Lowest Point: Pacific Ocean (0 feet)

Papua New Guinea is divided into 18 provinces.

Did you know...?

- Papua New Guinea is located on the eastern half of the island known as New Guinea. The western half is part of Indonesia.
- Elizabeth II is Queen of Papua New Guinea, and she is represented there by a governor general.
- The bird of paradise, shown on the country's flag, is endemic to New Guinea.
- Papua New Guinea has a varied landscape of sandy beaches, coral reefs, dense rainforest, and high mountains. The highest peaks experience snowfalls, though they are less than 500 miles from the Equator.

Samoa

Capital City: Apia

Languages: Samoan, English

Did you know...?

- Samoa is a little smaller than Rhode Island.
- On the Samoan flag, white represents purity, blue represents freedom, and red represents courage.
- The islands of Samoa were once called the Navigator Islands.
- Samoa gained independence from New Zealand in 1962.
- Samoa includes two large and eight small islands.
- Samoa's greatest enterprise is agriculture, and almost 70 percent of the population works in some kind of farming. The country produces coconuts, cocoa beans, bananas, noni juice, pineapples, and other crops.

My Samoan Fact Book

Full Name:

Independent State of Samoa

Population: 192,001

Land Area: 1,093 square miles

Currency: Tālā

Major Religion: Christian (98%)

Highest Point: Mount Silisili (6,093 feet)

Lowest Point: Pacific Ocean (0 feet)

Samoa is divided into 11 districts.



Solomon Islands

Capital City: Honiara

Language: English



My Solomon Islander Fact Book

Full Name:

Solomon Islands

Population: 559,198

Land Area: 10,965 square miles

Currency: Solomon Islands dollar

Major Religion: Christian (97%)

Highest Point:

Mount Popomanaseu (7,579 feet)

Lowest Point: Pacific Ocean (0 feet)

*Solomon Islands is divided into
nine provinces.*

Did you know...?

- Solomon Islanders enjoy rugby and several types of soccer including beach soccer and an indoor soccer called futsal.
- The five stars on the Solomon Islander flag represent the country's five main island groups.
- Queen Elizabeth II is the Solomon Islands' chief of state, and she is represented there by a governor general.
- The World War II Battle of Guadalcanal was fought on the Solomon Islands between the Allied Forces and Japan.
- The Solomon Islands gained independence from the United Kingdom in 1978 after 85 years of colonization.
- The country's islands stretch across 931 miles from east to west.

Tonga

Capital City: Nuku'alofa

Languages: Tongan, English

Did you know...?

- Only 52 of Tonga's 176 islands are inhabited.
- Tonga was once known as the Friendly Islands.
- On the Tongan flag, red represents the blood of Christ.
- In the early seventeenth century, Dutch explorers were the first Europeans to reach Tonga. The islands were never formally colonized, though, unlike most of their neighbors.
- Tonga's agriculture includes coconuts, vanilla beans, bananas, coffee, yams, and squash. Some farmers raise pigs, poultry, or cattle.
- Popular sports in Tonga include rugby, boxing, and juggling.

My Tongan Fact Book

Full Name:

Kingdom of Tonga

Population: 122,580

Land Area: 289 square miles

Currency: Pa'anga

Major Religion: Christian (81%)

Highest Point: Kao Island (3,389 feet)

Lowest Point: Pacific Ocean (0 feet)

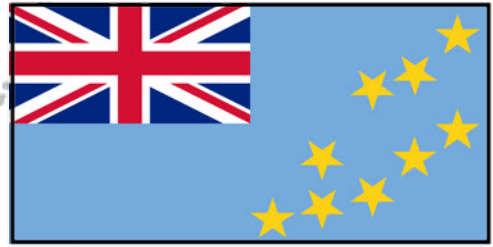
*Tonga is divided into
three island groups.*



Tuvalu

Capital City: Funafuti

Languages: Tuvaluan, English



My Tuvaluan Fact Book

Full Name:

Tuvalu

Population: 10,472

Land Area: 10 square miles

Currency: Tuvaluan dollar

Major Religion: Christian (98%)

Highest Point: Unnamed (16 feet)

Lowest Point: Pacific Ocean (0 feet)

Tuvalu is not divided for governing.

Did you know...?

- The Tuvaluan flag depicts a simple map of the nation with each yellow star representing one of the country's atolls.
- Tuvalu gained independence from the United Kingdom in 1978.
- Rising sea levels may make the Tuvaluan islands uninhabitable within 100 years.
- Elizabeth II is Queen of Tuvalu and appoints a governor general as her representative on the islands.
- Tuvaluans enjoy playing a game called *kilikiti* that is similar to cricket. The country was represented at the Olympics for the first time in 2008 when three Tuvaluan athletes competed in sprinting and weightlifting.

Vanuatu

Capital City: Port Vila

Languages: Bislama,
English, French

Did you know....?

- Volcanic activity and earthquakes are fairly common in the area.
- Vanuatu was once known as New Hebrides.
- On the ni-Vanuatu flag, the symbol on the left side shows a boar's tusk around two fern fronds. Together, these symbolize peace and prosperity. The yellow stripes on the flag represent the Gospel of Christ spreading through the Vanuatu islands.
- Ni-Vanuatu people have traditionally made an instrument called a slit drum by hollowing out a log and cutting a slit down the middle. The log is drummed on its sides with sticks.

My Ni-Vanuatu Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Vanuatu

Population: 221,552

Land Area: 4,710 square miles

Currency: Vanuatu vatu

Major Religion: Christian (83%)

Highest Point:

Tabwemasana (6,158 feet)

Lowest Point: Pacific Ocean (0 feet)

Vanuatu is divided into six provinces.



Quiz Time!

Oceania

Oceania is a continent of islands—some large but most very small! Even though it has more independent nations than South America, Oceania covers the least amount of land area of any continent and has the smallest population. Less than one percent of the world's people live in Oceania. The continent has often been called Australia, but the 13 other nations here make Oceania a more appropriate name. So what have you learned about these island countries?

Which nation lies in the Northern, Eastern, Southern, and Western Hemispheres? (page 186)

Where would you go to play futsal? (page 190)

Where could you buy something with stone money? (page 185)

Which people traditionally played an instrument called a didgeridoo? (page 184)

Which two island nations are most at risk of disappearing beneath the ocean? (pages 186 and 191)

What is a moa? (page 187)

What is Oceania's smallest nation? How big is it? (page 188)

Which countries have a constellation on their flags? What constellation is it? (pages 184, 187, 189)

Where could you learn how to play a slit drum? (page 191)

Which island group was never colonized? (page 190)

What does Palau's flag show? (page 188)

Where did the Lapita people live? (page 185)

The Navigator Islands are now called what? (page 189)

On what flag would you see the Federation Star? (page 184)

Which country's highest point is just 16 feet above sea level? (page 191)

Where is the world's only shark sanctuary? (page 188)

Where did the United States test nuclear weapons during the mid-twentieth century? (page 186)

What bird lives only on New Guinea? (page 189)

Where would you like to visit in Oceania? What would you do while you're there?

What part of traditional culture in Oceania do you like best?





Argentina

Capital City: Buenos Aires

Language: Spanish



Did you know...?

- The face in the sun on Argentina's flag is called the Sun of May and celebrates the first demonstration for independence in 1810 when the sun broke through heavy clouds.
- Argentina's length, over 2,000 miles from north to south, gives it a very diverse climate. The northern part of the country is subtropical while the far southern reaches are subpolar with extremely cold temperatures and very long days during the summer, which lasts from November to February, and very long nights during the winter.
- Like some other Western countries, Argentina is a melting pot of immigrants and their descendents from numerous countries, primarily Europe but also Asia.

My Argentine Fact Book

Full Name:

Argentine Republic

Population: 41,343,201

Land Area: 1,068,302 square miles

Currency: Peso

Major Religion: Christian (94%)

Highest Point:

Cerro Aconcagua (22,835 feet)

Lowest Point: Laguna del Carbon
(345 feet below sea level)

Argentina is divided into 23 provinces.

Mapuche People

Some of the first people that explorer Ferdinand Magellan encountered in modern-day Argentina were the Mapuches who had lived in the region for hundreds, if not thousands, of years. Archeological evidence shows that the Mapuche traded with the Maya in the far north and quite probably with the Polynesians across the Pacific Ocean.

The Mapuche were experienced coppersmiths when Magellan arrived, and they continue their metal-working tradition today. Along with copper, they create items from silver, iron, and other metals. Mapuche women have passed down great skill in weaving fabric from natural animal hair like wool. Traditionally, a young woman who was an excellent weaver was considered a "good catch" as a wife. Today, many Mapuche women continue to weave fabric for clothing that is often sold as a source of income for their families.

Tierra del Fuego & The Yaghans

Tierra del Fuego, which means "Land of Fire" in Spanish, is a group of islands at the southern tip of South America. The largest of these is called *Isla Grande* and is divided between Argentina and Chile. The Yaghan people lived on these islands for hundreds of years before the arrival of the Europeans. Despite the subpolar climate here, the Yaghans typically wore no clothes but instead spread animal grease over their bodies for warmth and built many small fires. European diseases killed virtually all of the people over time, and there is just one full-blooded Yaghan alive today, Cristina Calderón who was born in 1938.



Bolivia

Capital City: La Paz

Languages:
Spanish, Quechua, Aymara



My Bolivian Fact Book

Full Name:

Plurinational State of Bolivia

Population: 9,947,418

Land Area: 424,163 square miles

Currency: Boliviano

Major Religion: Christian (100%)

Highest Point:

Nevado Sajama (21,463 feet)

Lowest Point: Rio Paraguay (295 feet)

Bolivia is divided into nine departments.

Did you know...?

- Bolivia is home to the largest indigenous population in South America. More than half of the people in Bolivia are Quechua, Aymara, Chiquitano, or Guaraní. About 38 percent of the people speak a native language as their primary language.
- Lake Titicaca, which lies on Bolivia's northeast border with Peru, is the world's highest lake at 12,484 feet above sea level.
- The Quechua language spoken in Bolivia was also the official language of the Inca Empire which flourished in the region from the thirteenth to the early sixteenth century.

Carnaval de Oruro

Each year, usually in February, the Bolivian people hold a festival called Carnaval de Oruro, the largest celebration in the whole country. It combines elements of the Catholic faith and ancient Andean religious beliefs.

Over more than three days, parades and public dances are held, marching bands compete, and two plays are held. One tells the story of the Spanish conquest of Bolivia, and the other tells the age-old story of good versus evil with good triumphing in the end. The parade and dance participants often wear traditional clothing or elaborate costumes to represent different characters from history or legend.

Salar de Uyuni

Located in southwestern Bolivia, Salar de Uyuni is the largest salt flat in the world. Sodium, potassium, magnesium, borax, and even lithium are available for harvesting from the flat. Because of the high salt content, the region doesn't support much wildlife. Hundreds of pink flamingos descend on the flat each year to breed, though, lending some color to the almost endless white.



Brazil

Capital City: Brasília

Language: Portuguese



My Brazilian Fact Book

Full Name:

Federative Republic of Brazil

Population: 201,103,330

Land Area: 3,287,597 square miles

Currency: Real

Major Religion: Christian (89%)

Highest Point:

Pico da Neblina (9,823 feet)

Lowest Point: Atlantic Ocean (0 feet)

Brazil is divided into 26 states.

Did you know...?

- The native people of Brazil called their land *Pindorama*, which means "Land of the Palm Trees."
- Brazil is nearly the same size as the United States. It is South America's largest country and the only one with Portuguese as its official language. Brazil borders all but two South American countries.
- In Brazil, the right to vote is given to every citizen age 16 and older. Voting is mandatory for those ages 18 to 70, but those enlisted in the military do not vote.
- Most Brazilians are descended from a mixture of Portuguese, African, and indigenous ancestors.

Amazon River and Rainforest

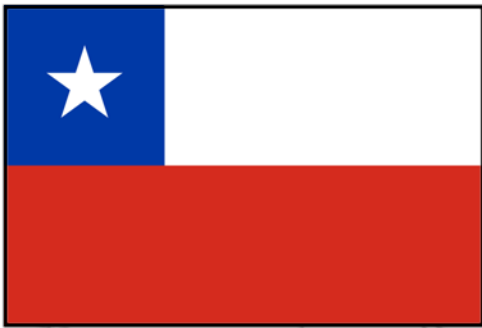
Over half of the Amazon Rainforest lies within Brazil, and the world's second-longest river, the Amazon, flows more than 4,000 miles through the rainforest. The Amazon Rainforest is thought to be the most biodiverse place in the world with more species of plants and animals than any other place on earth.



Animals such as macaws, jaguars, anacondas, tree frogs, and spider monkeys populate the rainforest. In the Amazon River, which is not crossed by a single bridge along its entire length, live piranha, electric eels, freshwater manatee, and numerous other marine species.

Native people have lived in the Amazon Rainforest, most often along the river, since long before Europeans discovered the area. One of the most populous native groups today are the Yanomami who live in the northern parts of the rainforest.

The Yanomami have traditionally been hunter-gatherers who gather the wild fruits and bananas of the rainforest, hunt animals, and fish in the Amazon River and its tributaries. Most Yanomami live on land that is protected by the government, but miners, ranchers, and others frequently operate on the land illegally.



Chile

Capital City: Santiago

Language: Spanish

My Chilean Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Chile

Population: 16,746,491

Land Area: 292,183 square miles

Currency: Peso

Major Religion: Christian (86%)

Highest Point:

Nevado Ojos del Salado (22,572 feet)

Lowest Point: Pacific Ocean (0 feet)

Chile is divided into 15 regions.

Did you know...?

- Chile is nearly 3,000 miles from north to south but just 265 miles from east to west.
- Chile was part of the Spanish Empire from the sixteenth century until achieving independence in 1818.
- The landscape of Chile includes the Atacama Desert in the north, the Andes Mountains along the eastern border, sandy beaches and rocky coasts along the Pacific, and icy glaciers in the far south.
- Chile's national dance is called *cueca*. A man and woman dance together without touching, and the dance is meant to resemble the courtship between a rooster and a hen.

Easter Island

Chile annexed Easter Island in 1888. The island lies in the Pacific Ocean more than 2,000 miles from Chile's coast and more than 1,000 miles from its nearest inhabited neighbor, Pitcairn Island. This makes Easter Island one of the world's most isolated places. Even so, archeological findings show that the island was first inhabited around the eighth century A.D.



It is believed that people from the Marquesas or Gambier Islands sailed to Easter Island on rafts or canoes. The language of Easter Island's native people is very similar to that spoken on the Gambier Islands, and a 1999 expedition successfully took Polynesian-style boats from one of the Gambiers to Easter Island in two and a half weeks.

Easter Island is most well-known for the 887 *maoi* statues that were created by the native people around the twelfth century.

Andes Mountains

Chile's eastern border is defined mostly by the Andes Mountain range, the longest in the world at 4,300 feet in length. The northern Andes experience less rainfall than the southern portions, and the entire range is home to about 1,000 animal species. Llamas, chinchillas, condors, hummingbirds, tapirs, spectacled bears, and a bird called the Andean cock-of-the-rock all live in these mountains.





Colombia

Capital City: Bogotá

Language: Spanish



My Colombian Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Colombia

Population: 44,205,293

Land Area: 440,831 square miles

Currency: Peso

Major Religion: Christian (95%)

Highest Point:

Pico Cristobal Colón (18,947 feet)

Lowest Point: Pacific Ocean (0 feet)

*Colombia is divided into
32 departments.*

Did you know...?

- Colombia has South America's second highest population.
- Colombia has been known by numerous names: *Gran Colombia*, Republic of New Granada, Grenadine Confederation, and United States of Colombia.
- Colombia's northwestern border touches the Pacific Ocean, Panama, and the Caribbean Sea.
- Colombia's natural resources include gold, emeralds, coal, and petroleum. The country's agricultural industry produces coffee, cut flowers, corn, and sweet potatoes.
- More than 85 native ethnic groups remain in Colombia today.
- The Colombian people typically eat a light breakfast and dinner with a larger lunch in the middle of the day.

Muisca

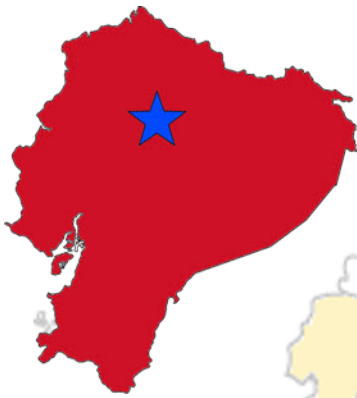
The Muisca Confederation once covered an area in central Colombia larger than modern-day Switzerland, and the people remain one of the largest ethnic groups in Colombia today. The confederation was made up of numerous tribes that united together for defense in times of war. One of the Muisca capitals, called Bacatá, was located on the current site of Bogotá.

The Muisca were the first known civilization to mine and trade emeralds, and Colombia continues to provide many of the emeralds circulating the world today. Muisca people also traded gold, copper, coal, salt, and other more basic items like food. Gold was actually so common that the Muisca tended to use it for crafts and decorative items instead of valuing it as a rare commodity the way most cultures have.



Day of the Little Candles

In early December each year, the people of Colombia celebrate *Día de las Velitas* in honor of the Virgin Mary. All over the country, people set candles and lanterns around their homes while cities set up larger displays of lights in public areas. Families go caroling and walk around their neighborhoods to enjoy the lights and see live nativity scenes.



Ecuador

Capital City: Quito

Language: Spanish



Did you know...?

- Ecuador gets its name from the Equator which passes through the northern part of the country.
- The Galápagos Islands, famous for their giant tortoises, are a province of Ecuador.
- Ecuador's landscape includes the Amazon Rainforest, Andes Mountains, and the Pacific coast.
- Ecuador exports large amounts of crude oil, shrimp, timber, coffee, rice, and many other items.

My Ecuadorian Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Ecuador

Population: 14,790,608

Land Area: 109,415 square miles

Currency: United States dollar

Major Religion: Christian (97%)

Highest Point: Chimborazo (20,561 feet)

Lowest Point: Pacific Ocean (0 feet)

Ecuador is divided into 24 provinces.

Valdivia

Between two and four thousand years B.C., a group called the Valdivia lived in modern-day Ecuador. Archeologists first discovered remnants of their civilization in 1956 and have since been able to determine that the Valdivia lived in permanent settlements where they fished along the coasts and grew cotton, corn, squash, beans, peppers, and other crops.

Beautiful pottery created by the Valdivia has been found in Ecuador along with small human figures made of ceramic. The reason for the disappearance of their culture isn't known.

Chimborazo

In the center of Ecuador stands a dormant volcano called Chimborazo that stands so high it can be seen from almost 90 miles away. Geologists believe that Chimborazo's peak is the surface's furthest distance from the center of the Earth. This is because the speed of the Earth's rotation causes it to bulge at the Equator, and Chimborazo stands just one degree south of the Equator. Measuring from the center of the Earth, then, Chimborazo is more than 7,000 feet further away from the core than Mount Everest.





Guyana

Capital City: Georgetown

**Languages: English,
Guyanese Creole**



My Guyanese Fact Book

Full Name:

Cooperative Republic of Guyana

Population: 748,486

Land Area: 83,000 square miles

Currency: Guyanese dollar

Major Religions:

Christian (56%), Hindu (28%)

Highest Point:

Mount Roraima (9,301 feet)

Lowest Point: Atlantic Ocean (0 feet)

Guyana is divided into ten regions.

Did you know...?

- Guyana has been a colony of the Dutch, French, Spanish, and British. It became an independent nation in 1966.
- Small portions of Guyana's territory are disputed by Suriname and Venezuela.
- The Guyanese flag is called "The Golden Arrowhead." Red symbolizes the country's dynamism, black symbolizes endurance, gold represents natural minerals, white stands for the rivers, and green represents both agriculture and the country's forests.
- Guyana's economy primarily depends on agriculture, gold, shrimp, and timber.
- Culturally, Guyana is more closely related to the Caribbean islands than to most of its South America neighbors.

Kaieteur Falls

In Guyana's eastern regions stands Kaieteur Falls with a height of 741 feet, a width of 371 feet, and a flow rate of more than 23,000 cubic feet per second. These features make Kaieteur Falls one of the tallest, most powerful waterfalls in the entire world.

Located in the rainforest of Kaieteur National Park, a nearby airstrip allows visitors to enjoy seeing the falls for themselves. Even with the access by plane, Kaieteur National Park is not heavily visited. Those who do venture into the area are often able to wander around completely alone with nature.

Most of Guyana, in fact, is not developed for tourism. Iwokrama Forest, in the center of Guyana, is considered one of only four pristine tropical forests in the entire world. The country's rainforest, evergreen forest, and mountains are also very pristine with almost no human development.





Paraguay

Capital City: Asunción

Languages:
Spanish, Guaraní



My Paraguayan Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Paraguay

Population: 6,375,830

Land Area: 157,048 square miles

Currency: Guaraní

Major Religion: Christian (97%)

Highest Point: Cerro Pero (2,762 feet)

Lowest Point:

Rio Paraguay and Rio Parana (151 feet)

Paraguay is divided into 17 departments.

Did you know...?

- Paraguay's landscape includes marshy plains, grasslands, and forested hills.
- Paraguay's population is concentrated in the eastern part of the country with less than two percent of Paraguayans living in the western half.
- Paraguay is one of South America's two landlocked countries.
- About 80 percent of Paraguayans speak both Spanish and Guaraní. A third language that mixes elements of these two is called Jopara.
- Foods made with corn, cornmeal, cheese, and a root crop called manioc are popular in Paraguay.

Guaraní

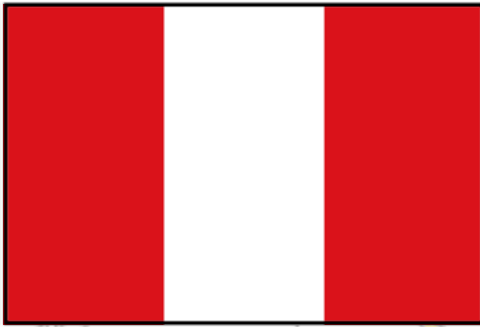
The Guaraní people live throughout Paraguay and many other South American countries. They have married with the Spanish and other Europeans since the sixteenth century and are often not "full blooded," but the Guaraní language and many of their cultural traits persist.

When Europeans first arrived, the Guaraní were no longer nomadic but grew crops like manioc and corn on small plots. They also used bows and arrows to hunt small animals and defend themselves.

Guaraní myths say that a creator named Tupã formed humans figures of a man and woman from clay and then breathed life into them to create the first living people. The man and woman had three sons and many daughters. One of their granddaughters was said to be the mother of seven monsters, each of which represented a different aspect of the world. Some Guaraní in isolated areas still believe in these myths today.

Many Guaraní, however, have become Christians. They were first visited by Jesuit missionaries in the early seventeenth century. The missions built by the Jesuits offered the Guaraní protection from slavers, which, of course, made them very attractive to the people.

Sadly, the slavers attacked and burned many of the missions to force the Guaraní out into the open. In this way, they kidnapped or killed nearly all of those who first sought shelter with the Jesuits. The ruins of some of the missions can be visited in Paraguay today.



Peru

Capital City: Lima

Language: Spanish



My Peruvian Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Peru

Population: 29,907,003

Land Area: 496,225 square miles

Currency: Nuevo Sol

Major Religion: Christian (94%)

Highest Point:

Nevado Huascaran (22,205 feet)

Lowest Point: Pacific Ocean (0 feet)

Peru is divided into 25 regions.

Did you know...?

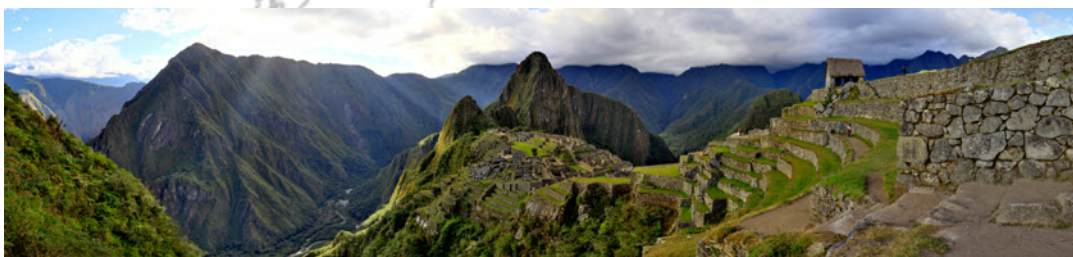
- A number of foods that are popular in Western dishes today were first brought to Europe from Peru: Beans, peanuts, tomatoes, and quinoa to name a few.
- One of Peru's most popular drinks is called *chicha morada*. It's a soft drink made from purple maize, cloves, sugar, and cinnamon.
- An instrument called the *charango* was invented in Peru during the eighteenth century. A small stringed instrument, a *charango* is made with wood and an armadillo shell. *Charangos* are frequently played in traditional music.

The Incas and Machu Picchu

The Inca civilization developed in Peru around the thirteenth century. The people had a very advanced culture with a sophisticated political structure. Instead of just conquering neighboring peoples through war, the Incas would send envoys to "desirable regions" with gifts of textiles and other goods.

The Incas promised these other peoples that they would be better off materially and culturally if they joined the Inca Empire. Most agreed, and those who didn't were conquered militarily. Eventually, the Inca Empire spread across nearly the entire Pacific coast of South America from just north of the modern Colombian border to almost the southern border of Chile. From the coast, the empire reached inland across the Andes Mountains. It is estimated that up to 13 million people lived under the empire's rule at its peak.

One of the most regarded Inca sites is Machu Picchu, which sits in the Andes Mountains almost 8,000 feet above sea level. The buildings were probably built as an elaborate home for the Inca emperor at that time, Pachacuti. The arrival of the Spanish in other regions of the empire, though, prompted the Incas to abandon Machu Picchu just over a century later.





Suriname

Capital City: Paramaribo

Languages:
Dutch, Sranan Tongo



Did you know...?

- The people of Suriname are called Surinamers.
- Suriname is South America's smallest country.
- Suriname was once called Dutch Guiana.
- The country's southern portion includes savanna and rainforest, but the population is very sparse here. Most of the people live in the northern 20 percent of the country, near the coast.
- Suriname's population is made up of the descendents of African, Indian, Indonesian, Middle Eastern, and Chinese workers who came or were brought to the area to work on crop plantations. Around 25 percent of the Surinamers still work in agriculture today.

My Surinamese Fact Book

Full Name:

Republic of Suriname

Population: 486,618

Land Area: 63,251 square miles

Currency: Surinamese dollar

Major Religions:

Christian (48%), Hindu (27%)

Highest Point: Juliana Top (4,035 feet)

Lowest Point: Coastal Plain (7 feet)

Suriname is divided into ten districts.

The People of Suriname

During the colonial period, the Dutch government attempted to unify Suriname and bind the foreign workers to the country through assimilation. The law emphasized Dutch language and culture while minimizing or making illegal native traditions and the cultural traits that immigrants brought from countries such as India and China.

Compulsory public education began in 1876 to enable the government to teach the Dutch language to children. Other languages were strongly discouraged, and children were sometimes punished if they spoke in their native languages.

The traditions and beliefs that the Asian and Middle Eastern workers brought to Suriname proved too strong to be easily assimilated into Dutch culture. By the 1930s, more freedom was granted to the various ethnic groups to continue their own ways, speak their own languages, conduct their own marriages, and generally live the way they had before coming to Suriname.

Today, though Suriname has a unified government and is an independent nation, its people remain fragmented into their unique ethnic groups. In the capital city, Paramaribo, virtually all of the groups are represented. Here, they often work together and interact on a daily basis.

Outside Paramaribo, though, villages are typically dominated by one ethnic group. One village may be predominately Hindoestanen (descendents of Hindustani from India) and feel more like India than South America, while another village may be Javanese or Lebanese.



Uruguay

Capital City: Montevideo

Language: Spanish



My Uruguayan Fact Book

Full Name:

Oriental Republic of Uruguay

Population: 3,510,386

Land Area: 68,037 square miles

Currency: Uruguayan peso

Major Religion: Christian (81%)

Highest Point: Cerro Catedral (1,686 feet)

Lowest Point: Atlantic Ocean (0 feet)

Uruguay is divided into 19 departments.

Did you know...?

- In the native Guaraní language, Uruguay means “River of the Painted Birds.” The country was given its full name, Oriental Republic of Uruguay, because it lies to the east of the Uruguay River. “Orient” comes from the Latin for “east,” *oriens*.
- Most of Uruguay’s population is descended from colonial settlers who came from all over Europe.
- One of the most popular drinks in Uruguay is *yerba mate*, made from an infusion of the *yerba mate* leaves. The drink is typically served in a hollow gourd with a metal straw.

Torta Frita

Torta Frita, fry bread, is enjoyed all over Uruguay and is often thought of as a “comfort food.” Try it for yourself!

2 Tbsp. butter

$\frac{3}{4}$ C. milk

1 Tbsp. salt

1 Tbsp. vegetable shortening

2 C. flour

1 Tbsp. baking powder

In a small saucepan, melt the butter and shortening together over medium heat. In another saucepan, heat the milk to about 120°F. Pour the melted fats into the milk and stir well.

Mix the dry ingredients in a large bowl. Add the milk mixture and stir slowly until thoroughly combined. Turn dough onto a lightly floured surface and knead well. Divide dough into 12 equal portions. Roll each portion into a ball and then flatten into a 1/4-inch thick circle. Poke a hole in the center of each circle with your thumb.

Over medium-high heat, melt enough shortening in a large frying pan to give a 1-inch depth of oil. Fry each *torta* for a few minutes on each side, until golden-brown. Drain on paper towels and serve warm.

Uruguayans enjoy their *torta fritas* with *dulce de leche* (found in the Mexican or Latin section of most grocery stores), fruit marmalade, or jam.



Venezuela

Capital City: Caracas

Language: Spanish



My Venezuelan Fact Book

Full Name:

Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

Population: 25,373,300

Land Area: 353,841 square miles

Currency: Bolivar

Major Religion: Christian (98%)

Highest Point: Pico Bolivar (16,427 feet)

Lowest Point: Caribbean Sea (0 feet)

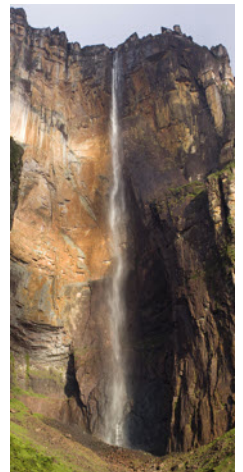
Venezuela is divided into 23 states.

Did you know...?

- Venezuela's motto is "*Dios y Federación*," which is Spanish for "God and Federation."
- Venezuela has just two seasons: Rainy and Dry. It is always hot there because the country is only slightly north of the Equator.
- The name Venezuela was given to this area of South America by Amerigo Vespucci and means "Little Venice."
- Lake Maracaibo in Venezuela is the largest lake in South America.

Angel Falls

Venezuela is home to the highest waterfall in the world, Angel Falls, which stands 2,421 feet and flows into the Kerep River. A group of native people, known as the Pemon, call the falls *Kerepakupai merú*, meaning "waterfall of the deepest place." The name Angel Falls comes from the first person to fly over the waterfall in an airplane, an American named James "Jimmie" Angel. The great height of Angel Falls causes most of the water to evaporate before it reaches the bottom.



El Libertador

Simón Bolívar was a military commander who helped Venezuela gain independence after almost 300 years as a Spanish colony. Bolívar and Venezuelan patriots marched into the capital city of Caracas to declare their independence from Spain in 1810. The Venezuelan War of Independence continued for ten years until the Spanish government recognized the nation's independence in 1821.

Along with Colombia and Ecuador, Venezuela was part of *Gran Colombia* (Republic of Colombia) until 1830 when it became a completely independent nation. General José Antonio Páez was the first president of independent Venezuela, but Simón Bolívar has always been called her liberator, *El Libertador*.

Quiz Time!

South America

Test your knowledge of South America, the land of rainforests, mountains, beaches, big cities, and jungle villages. This continent has fewer independent countries than any other but is full of diversity with a heritage rooted in native cultures, ancient civilizations, and settlements by Spanish, Portuguese, French, and Dutch explorers.

Which country was named after Venice, Italy? (page 207)

Where would you find maoi? (page 199)

How many countries use a currency called dollar? (pages 201, 202, and 205)

What musical instrument is made from an armadillo shell? (page 204)

Why is Uruguay called the Oriental Republic of Uruguay? (page 206)

Where is the world's largest salt flat and what is it called? (page 197)

Which country includes the Galápagos Islands? (page 201)

On what river would you find Angel Falls? (page 207)

Which country's flag has the Sun of May on it? (page 196)

Where is the Jopara language spoken? (page 203)

On what holiday do Colombians set out lanterns and go caroling with their neighbors? (page 200)

Which South American country has mandatory voting? (page 198)

Where do people drink yerba mate through a metal straw? (page 206)

What ancient empire flourished in Peru? (page 204)

How high is Lake Titicaca in the Andes Mountains? (page 197)

Would you like to go on a vacation to South America? Where would you go?

What is the most interesting thing that you learned about South America?

Appendix A

Recipes

One thing that makes a culture unique is the food that its people enjoy. Throughout the book, you've learned several different recipes. To help you find them easier, here they are with their pages numbers.

Plantains in Coconut Milk (from Kenya)—Page 25

Tabbouleh (from Lebanon)—Page 75

Halo Halo (from the Philippines)—Page 84

Ba'lawa (from Syria)—Page 90

Dumplings with Vanilla Cream (from Czech Republic)—Page 115

Irish Soda Bread (from Ireland)—Page 125

Milk Porridge (from Latvia)—Page 128

Medenjaki (from Slovenia)—Page 145

Knäckebröd (from Sweden)—Page 147

Pupusas (from El Salvador)—Page 166

Gallo Pinto (from Nicaragua)—Page 173

Torta Frita (from Uruguay)—Page 206

You'll find a few more recipes on the following pages. Have fun trying them out!

Kransekake (from Norway and Denmark)

2 C. butter, softened	2 C. powdered sugar	4 egg yolks
1 C. almond paste	1 tsp. almond extract	5 C. flour

Unless you have a set of kransekake pans, you'll need to form the dough into circles with your hands and bake the cakes on cookie sheets.

Grease baking sheets with butter. In a medium bowl, cream the butter, almond paste, powdered sugar, and almond extract together. Beat until smooth. Add egg yolks one at a time, beating well after each.

In a separate bowl, sift the flour and then add gradually to the egg mixture. Mix well until dough forms. Separate the dough into about 12 to 15 different pieces, each one a little larger than the last.

With your hands, roll each piece of dough into a "snake" and connect the ends to make a ring. (The center hole of each ring should be basically the same size so that they will stack nicely after they're done.) Lay each ring on a greased cookie sheet and bake at 350°F for about 15 minutes or until lightly browned.

Allow cakes to cool on pans about 10 minutes before removing to cooling racks. Cool completely.

Kransekake Frosting

1 ½ C. powdered sugar	1 egg white	1 tsp. vinegar
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Blend ingredients in a small bowl until stiff. Add more powdered sugar if needed. Spoon frosting into a pastry bag and attach a small tip.

Pipe a ring of frosting onto a plate and set the largest kransekake on it. Pipe the frosting in waves across the cake. Set the next ring on it and pipe more frosting on its top. Repeat this until you've stacked all of the rings. The frosting helps hold the rings together, but you might need to use toothpicks if your kransekake is very tall.

To serve, break the kransekake into small pieces.

Black Bread (from Estonia)

To make traditional black bread, you'll need a sourdough starter. If your family already has one, great! If not, use these instructions to make one. From making the starter to baking the bread actually takes a few days—be patient!

Sourdough Starter

Stir together 1 C. rye flour and 1 C. warm water in a glass jar. Cover loosely with a damp cloth. Set in a warm place and allow to 'sour' for 24 hours. Add 1 C. rye flour, stir gently and let sit another 24 hours. The starter should begin to bubble and froth. The longer it sits, the more sour the bread will be.

Black Bread Dough

sourdough starter	4 C. all purpose flour	6 C. rye flour
8 C. warm water	1 tsp. yeast	

In a very large glass or ceramic bowl, stir together starter and water. Add the flours and yeast, mix well. You may need to use your hands to mix everything together. Cover and let sit at room temperature about 6 to 12 hours.

10 C. rye flour	2 Tbsp. yeast	2 Tbsp. caraway seeds
2 Tbsp. sugar	2 Tbsp. salt	

Place the starter dough onto a clean, floured surface. Knead in the yeast, sugar, salt, and caraway seeds. Knead in the flour, about a cup at a time until it has been incorporated into the dough. Exactly how much flour you should add varies. Continue adding flour and kneading well until you have an elastic dough.

Let the dough rest while you wash, dry, and grease your mixing bowl. Place the dough in the bowl, turning once to grease all sides. Cover with a clean towel and let rise in a warm place for about 1 ½ hours.

Grease pans. This recipe makes five loaves that can be baked in standard loaf pans, Pullman pans, or shaped into loaves and baked on cookie sheets.

Punch down dough and knead briefly. Separate into five portions, shape, and place into prepared pans or lay on cookie sheets. Let rise for about 1 to 1 ½ hours.

Bake in a preheated 350°F oven for 1 to 1 ½ hours.

Imo Kenpi (from Japan)

These fried, sweetened sweet potatoes make a tasty treat for snack time. If you can find Japanese satsumaimo sweet potatoes, use them. Otherwise, an ordinary orange-fleshed sweet potato variety will do.

2 sweet potatoes, peeled and sliced into 1/4-inch sticks

4 Tbsp. water

4 Tbsp. sugar

1 tsp. ginger juice

In a medium bowl, soak the sweet potato sticks in water for about 5 minutes. Drain and pat dry. In a deep fryer or large, deep pot, heat cooking oil to 340°F. Use a candy thermometer to ensure proper temperature. Fry sticks for about 6 to 8 minutes, drain on paper towels. Heat oil to 375°F and fry sticks a second time until crispy, drain.

In a skillet, stir together the water, sugar, and ginger juice. Heat over medium heat, stirring until mixture thickens. Add the fried sweet potatoes and stir to thoroughly coat; lay pieces on waxed paper to cool.

Peanut Macaroons (from Sudan)

1 C. unsalted, raw peanuts

pinch of salt

½ tsp. vanilla

1 egg white

¾ C. Sugar

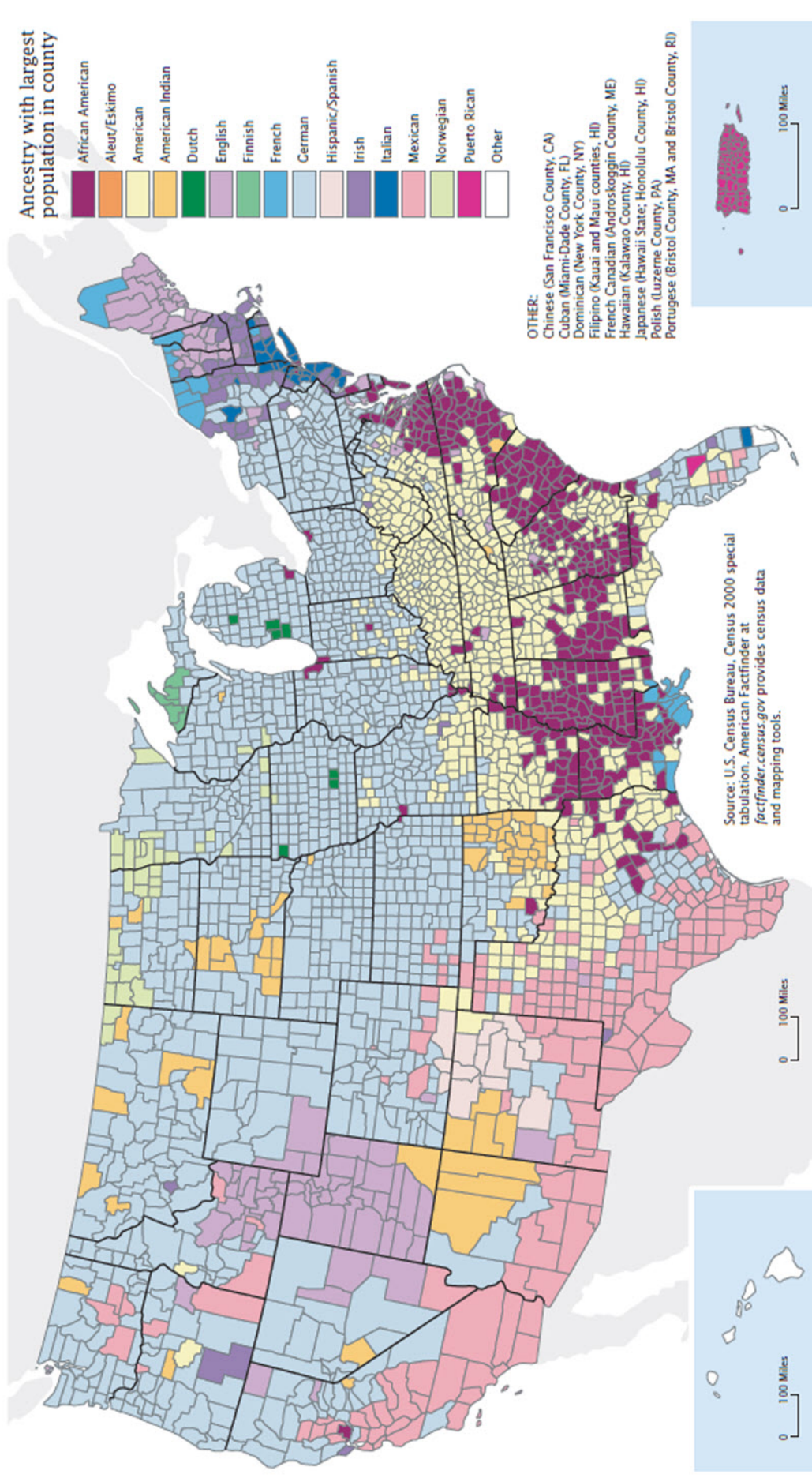
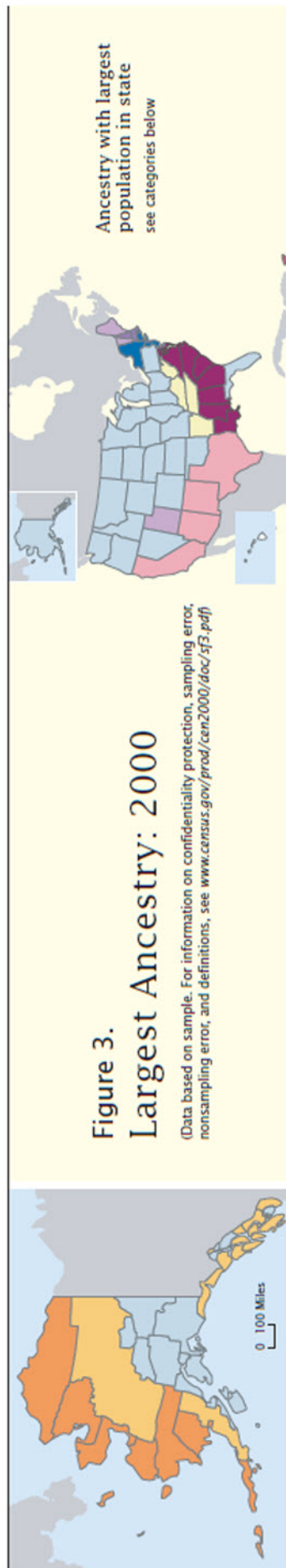
Spread the peanuts in a single layer on a baking sheet. Heat under your stove's broiler element until lightly browned. Remove peanuts from oven and crush with a meat mallet or rolling pin.

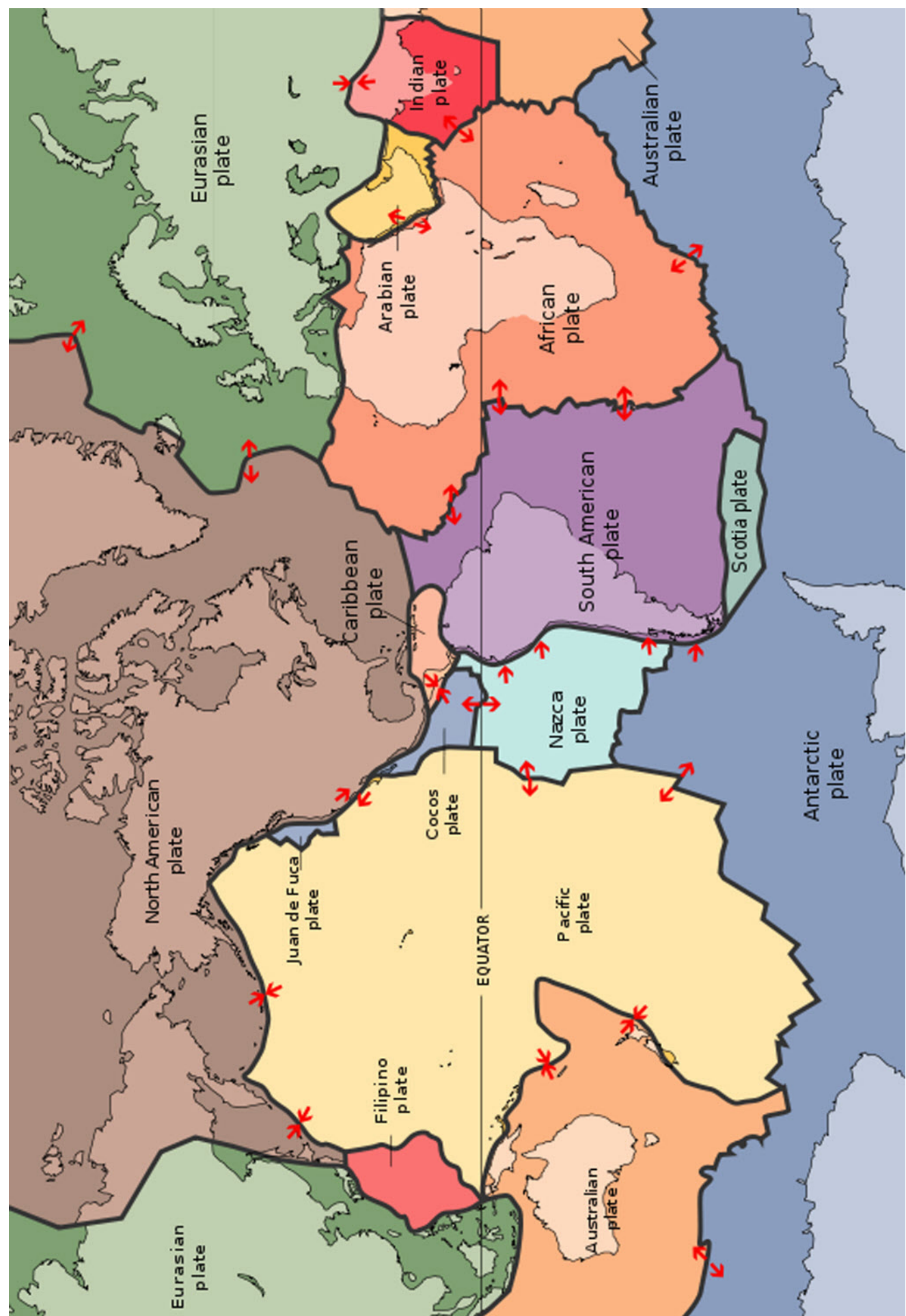
In a small bowl, beat together the egg white and salt. Add sugar; beat again. Stir in peanuts.

Line a baking sheet with waxed paper. Lightly grease with butter. Glob spoonfuls of the sugared peanuts onto the baking sheet. Bake in a preheated 250°F oven until golden.

Appendix B

Maps





Tectonic Plates

Appendix C

Image Credits

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Angola

Warriors of the Congo

JW Buel, 1890

Ethiopia

Church at Lalibela

photographed by: Giustino*

Comoros

Karthala Volcano, 2006

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Kenya

Giraffes at Masai Mara, 2007

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Democratic Republic of the Congo

Katanga Cross

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Mali

Mansa Musa I, Catalan Atlas

Abraham Cresques of Mallorca, 1375

Egypt

Pyramids at Giza, 2006

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Nigeria

Terracotta Nok sculpture, Deposit of the
Federal Republic of Nigeria

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Rwanda

Gorillas at Volcanoes National Park, 2005

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Tanzania

Serengeti National Park, 2005

photographed by: Gary*

Zambia

Victoria Falls, 2008

photographed by: Drsjlazar*

Zimbabwe

Great Enclosure of Great Zimbabwe, 1997

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Afghanistan

Khushal Khan Khatak

Muhammad Tahir Kanay

Bhutan

Taktshang Monastery

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Cambodia

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India

Taj Mahal

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Iran

Apadana Palace, Persepolis, 2006

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Japan

Samurai

Felice Beato, 1860

Pakistan

Markhor at the Los Angeles Zoo, 2006

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Singapore

Waterfall in Ginger Gardens, 2006

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United Arab Emirates

Burj Khalifa in Dubai, 2010

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Vietnam

Bronze Dong Son figurine at East Asian Art
Museum in Berlin, Germany

photographed by: PHGCOM*

Albania

Roman Theater at Butrint

photographed by: Marc Morrell*

Armenia

Statue of Hayk in Yerevan, 2005

photographed by: Eupator*

Duduk

photographed by: Chumwa*

Belarus

Brest Fortress, 2006

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Hungary

Statue of Louis the Great, Budapest, 2005

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Iceland

Icelandic horse

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Italy

Pieta, St. Peter's Basilica

Michelangelo, 1499

Kosovo

Gracanica Monastery, 2005

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Macedonia

European eel

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Norway

Geirangerfjord, 2007

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Portugal

Pena Palace

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Serbia

Church of Saint Apostles Peter and Paul

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Slovakia

St. Margaret's Church, 2007

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Slovenia

Predjama Castle, 2008

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Switzerland

The Matterhorn's east face, 2009

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Vatican City

Madonna and Child

Filippo Lippi, 1445

Ecuador

Chimborazo

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Canada

Niagara Falls, 2007

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Guyana

Kaieteur Falls, 2004

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Costa Rica

Corcovado National Park, 2010

photographed by: José R.*

Peru

Machu Picchu, 2009

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Dominican Republic

American crocodile, 2006

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Venezuela

Angel Falls

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Brazil

Pair of macaws, 2008

photographed by: Matthew Romack*

Simon Bolivar, oil painting

Ricardo Acevedo Bernal

Chile

Easter Island maoi, 2006

photographed by: Rivi*

Andean Cock-of-the-rock, 2007

photographed by: Jerry Thompson*

Colombia

Paper lanterns during Dia de las Velitas, 2004

photographed by: Koven.rm*



My Notes



About the author...



Cindy Horton lives in beautiful West Virginia with her husband, Jon, and their sons, Nick, James, and Robert. Her favorite moments are spent with her family snuggled up under blankets, camping, or just playing in the backyard. She also enjoys knitting, hanging clothes on the line, and baking - mostly brownies and cookies!

Cindy's writing career began at age 11 when she took an interest in poetry. Since then, she's written numerous fictional short stories and plays, hundreds of non-fiction articles, and several logic puzzles that have been published by Dell Magazine.



Expedition Earth is Cindy's first published book, and it combines all of her favorite topics - geography, history, and both ancient and modern cultures. Cindy and Jon have homeschooled their sons from the beginning and follow a relaxed, eclectic style. They like to learn together by reading great books as a family, working on projects, and taking field trips. You can visit Cindy and her family at www.fencedinfamily.com/blog/.