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YEARS OF
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FESTIVAL

2025

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NOTE TO PARENTS

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Saturday, April 5 & Sunday, April 6, 2025,
when accompanied by one paying adult.

Columbia International Festival

Global Education Day

PASSPORT

April 4, 2025

WELCOME!

Name: _____

School: _____

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Country of origin: _____

Signature: _____

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WELCOME

South Carolina has grown to be a very multicultural state. Foreign-born people from more than 200 countries now call South Carolina their home. These foreign-born South Carolinians enrich our lives culturally, educationally, economically and socially. Columbia International Festival, which began in 1996, has completed 30 successful years and has grown from 3,000 visitors in its first year to 15,000 last year. It is a colorful event in every sense of the word and is the largest event of its kind in our state.



To accommodate the large crowds, the festival has reserved both the Cantey and Goodman buildings at the State Fairgrounds. As in 2024, ALL food vendors, eating areas, exhibits and entertainment will be indoors.

I am looking forward to our 30th festival the weekend of April 5 & 6, with an anticipated attendance of more than 20,000 people. The festival is a great place to enjoy more than 100 cultures, authentic cuisine, cultural entertainment, national exhibits, an international bazaar and an Olympic-style flag ceremony – all under TWO roofs.

I want to thank all of our sponsors and volunteers, especially the national/cultural exhibitors, who work very hard to make this event possible for you to enjoy. Thank you for coming.

Raj Aluri, Ed.D.
Festival Director



Africa

Africa is located in all four hemispheres: Northern, Southern, Eastern and Western. It is connected to the continent of Asia at the Isthmus of Suez in Egypt.

Over 1,000 separate languages are spoken by Africa's many tribal groups. Swahili is the most prominent native language. However, English is also widely spoken in many African countries.

The Sahara desert, the world's largest desert (over 9,400,000 sq. km.), dominates much of Africa's northwest – comparable to the area of the continental United States (9,826,675 sq. km.). The Sahara is still expanding due to overgrazing. Drought and desertification is a challenge in many parts of the continent as lack of water makes it difficult to sustain crops and livestock.

Benin



Area: 114,763 sq. km
Capital: Porto-Novo
Population: 13,743,000
Official Language: French
Main Religion: Christianity, Islam, Vodun (Voodoo)
Currency: West African CFA Franc (XOF)
Government: Unitary Presidential Republic

Benin, located in West Africa, is known for its role in the history of the Dahomey Kingdom and as the birthplace of Vodun (Voodoo). The country features the UNESCO-listed Royal Palaces of Abomey and the vibrant city of Cotonou.

Botswana



Area: 581,730 sq. km
Capital: Gaborone
Population: 2,630,000
Official Language: English, Setswana
Main Religion: Christianity, Indigenous beliefs
Currency: Botswana Pula (BWP)
Government: Unitary Parliamentary Republic

Botswana is famous for its vast wildlife reserves, including the Okavango Delta and Chobe National Park, which are home to large populations of elephants and other African wildlife.

Burkina Faso



Area: 272,967 sq. km
Capital: Ouagadougou
Population: 22,100,000
Official Language: French
Main Religion: Islam, Christianity, Indigenous beliefs
Currency: West African CFA Franc (XOF)
Government: Unitary Presidential Republic

Burkina Faso, a landlocked West African country, is known for its rich cultural traditions, including music, dance, and film festivals such as FESPACO, the largest African film festival.

Burundi



Area: 27,830 sq. km.
Capital: Gitega
Population: 13,590,102
Official Language: Kirundi, French, Swahili
Main Religion: Christianity, Islam
Currency: Burundi francs
Government: Presidential Republic

The Republic of Burundi is a country in Central-East Africa bordered by Tanzania, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Lake Tanganyika. one of the smallest countries in Africa, Burundi has an equatorial climate. Burundi is a part of the Albertine Rift, the western extension of the East African Rift. The country lies on a rolling plateau in the center of Africa.

Cameroon



Area: 475,440 sq. km.
Capital: Yaoundé
Population: 30,966,105
Official Languages: English, French
Currency: Central African CFA Franc
Religions: Indigenous, Christianity, Islam
Government: Presidential Republic

The Republic of Cameroon lies in Central Africa, bordering the Central African Republic, Chad, Republic of Congo,

Central African Republic



Area: 622,984 sq. km
Capital: Bangui
Population: 5,990,855
Official Language: French, Sango
Main Religion: Christianity, Islam, Indigenous beliefs
Currency: Central African CFA Franc (XAF)
Government: Unitary Presidential Republic

The Central African Republic is home to diverse wildlife and the Dzanga-Sangha National Park, known for its forest elephants and western lowland gorillas.

Democratic Republic of Congo



Area: 2,344,858 sq. km.
Capital: Kinshasa
Population: 105,800,000
Official Languages: French, Kingwana
Currency: Congolese Franc
Religions: Christianity, Kimbanguist, Islam
Government: Semi-Presidential Republic

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly Zaire) is a country in Central Africa, bordering the Central African Republic and South Sudan to the north; Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and Tanzania to the east; Zambia and Angola to the south; and the Republic of the Congo to the west. It is slightly smaller than one fourth of the U.S. Its climate is hot and tropical along the river basin and cooler in the southern highlands. Natural resources include copper, diamonds, uranium, gold and silver.

Egypt



Area: 1,002,450 sq. km.
Capital: Cairo
Population: 114,500,000
Official Language: Arabic
Main Religion: Islam, Christianity
Currency: Egyptian pounds (EGP)
Government: Presidential Republic

The republic of Egypt is located at the northeast corner of the African continent. Egypt is the most populous country in the Arab world and the third most populous country in Africa. Egypt's population and economic activity is concentrated in a narrow strip of fertile land along the Nile River. The country has one of the longest histories of any country and is home to the famous pyramids of Giza and other ancient ruins that attracts millions of tourists.

Equatorial Guinea



Area: 28,051 sq. km.
Capital: Malabo
Population: 1,795,834
Official Languages: Spanish, French
Currency: Central African Franc (CFA)
Religions: Roman Catholic
Government: Presidential Republic

Equatorial Guinea gained independence in 1968 after 190 years of Spanish rule. It is one of the smallest countries in Africa consisting of a mainland territory and five inhabited islands. Major oil reserves were discovered offshore in the late 1990s, but systemic corruption has hindered economic development.

Eritrea



Area: 117,600 sq. km
Capital: Asmara (Asmera)
Population: 3,470,000
Official Language: Tigrinya, Arabic
Main Religion: Islam, Christianity
Currency: Nakfa (ERN)
Government: Presidential Republic

The State of Eritrea is multi-ethnic country in the Horn of Africa, with nine recognized ethnic groups. The country name derives from the ancient Greek appellation "Erythra Thalassa" meaning Red Sea, which is the major water body bordering the country in the northeastern and eastern regions. Eritrea holds a strategic geopolitical position along world's busiest shipping lanes.

Ethiopia



Area: 1,104,300 sq. km.
Capital: Addis Ababa
Population: 12,870,000
Official Languages: Amharic, Oromo, Somali, Tigrinya
Main Religions: Christianity, Islam
Currency: Birr
Government: Federal Republic

The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, located in Eastern Africa, west of Somalia, is slightly less than twice the size of Texas. The country is mountainous with desert lowlands in its eastern portion. It is Africa's oldest independent nation with a long recorded history of over 2,000 years. Unlike other African countries, Ethiopia was never an European colony.

Ghana



Area: 238,533 sq. km.
Capital: Accra
Population: 33,079,000
Official Language: English
Main Religions: Christianity, Islam
Currency: Ghana Cedi
Government: Presidential Republic

The Republic of Ghana is a former British colony and is about the size of Oregon. In 1957 it became the first African nation to achieve independence from colonial rule. Grasslands cover the northern area, farms and forests cover the south. Africa's largest man-made lake, Lake Volta (520 km long), dominates the center. Its main agricultural products are cocoa and timber, and along with gold and tourism, are the main sources of revenue. Ghana has nearly 100 ethnic groups and many languages.

Ivory Coast



Area: 322,563 sq. km.
Capital: Yamoussoukro & Abidjan
Population: 31,170,000
Official Language: French – 60 native dialects
Main Religion: Islam, Christianity
Currency: Communauté Financière d'Afrique Francs (CFA)
Government: Presidential Republic

The Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, is a country located on the south coast of West Africa with two capitals and lush tropical mountains. The country is the largest exporter of cocoa beans and is home to the largest church in the world The Basilica of our Lady Peace.

Kenya



Area: 580,367 sq. km.
Capital: Nairobi
Population: 55,340,000
Official Languages: English, Kiswahili
Main Religions: Christianity, Islam
Currency: Kenyan Shilling
Government: Presidential Republic

The Republic of Kenya is located on the equator on the eastern coast of Africa and has a warm, humid climate along its Indian Ocean coastline and a wildlife-rich savannah grasslands inland towards the capital. Kenya has considerable land area devoted to wildlife habitats, including the Masai Mara. The "Big Five" animals of Africa can be found in the Masai Mara in particular: the lion, leopard, buffalo, rhinoceros and elephant. A significant population of other wild animals, reptiles and birds can be found in the national parks and game reserves in the country.

Liberia



Area: 111,369 sq. km.
Capital: Monrovia
Population: 5,493,000
Official Language: English
Main Religions: Christianity, Islam
Currency: Liberian Dollar
Government: Presidential Republic

The Republic of Liberia is a country in West Africa bordered by Sierra Leone to its west, Guinea to its north and Ivory Coast to its east. The climate is hot and equatorial, with significant rainfall during the May–October rainy season and harsh harmattan winds the remainder of the year. The country possesses about forty percent of the remaining Upper Guinean rainforest. It is the only country in Africa founded by United States colonization while occupied by native Africans.

Madagascar



Area: 587,041 sq. km.
Capital: Antananarivo
Population: 31,200,000
Official Language: Malagasy, French
Currency: Malagasy Ariary
Main Religions: Indigenous beliefs, Christianity, Islam
Government: Semi-Presidential Republic

The Republic of Madagascar is an island country in the Indian Ocean off the southeastern coast of Africa and is about the size of Texas. The nation comprises the island of Madagascar (the fourth-largest island in the world), as well as numerous smaller islands. Its people are of mixed Malay-Indonesian and African-Arab origin. Madagascar is a biodiversity hotspot; over 90 percent of its wildlife, such as lemurs, is found nowhere else on Earth.

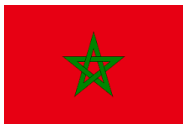
Malawi



Area: 118,484 sq. km
Capital: Lilongwe
Population: 18,091,000
Official Language: English, Chichewa
Main Religion: Christianity, Indigenous beliefs
Currency: Malawian Kwacha (MWK)
Government: Unitary Presidential Republic

Malawi, often referred to as the “Warm Heart of Africa,” is known for its scenic landscapes, including Lake Malawi, one of the largest freshwater lakes in the world.

Morocco



Area: 446,550 sq. km.
Capital: Rabat
Population: 37,710,000
Official Language: Arabic, Berber Languages, French
Main Religion: Islam
Currency: Moroccan Dirhams (MAD)
Government: Parliamentary Constitutional Monarchy

The Kingdom of Morocco is a country located in North West Africa. The country's coast overlooks the Mediterranean Sea to the north and the Atlantic Ocean to the west. On a clear day, you can easily see Morocco from Spain. The country's Mediterranean climate is like that of southern California. Morocco is home to the Atlas Mountains and portion of the Sahara Desert. Its cities Casablanca and Medina of Marrakesh are famous tourists destination.

Mozambique



Area: 801,590 sq. km
Capital: Maputo
Population: 28,861,000
Official Language: Portuguese
Main Religion: Christianity, Indigenous beliefs
Currency: Mozambican Metical (MZN)
Government: Unitary Presidential Republic

Mozambique is famous for its Indian Ocean coastline, with pristine beaches, coral reefs, and the Bazaruto Archipelago, a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Nigeria



Area: 923,768 sq. km.
Capital: Abuja
Population: 227,900,000
Official Language: English, Hausa, Yoruba
Main Religions: Islam, Christianity
Currency: Naira
Government: Federal Presidential Republic

The Federal Republic of Nigeria is a country in Western Africa, bordering the Gulf of Guinea, between Benin and Cameroon. The climate varies; equatorial in south, tropical in center, arid in north. The terrain consists of southern lowlands that merge into central hills and plateaus; and mountains in the southeast, plains in the north. Natural resources include natural gas, petroleum, tin, iron ore, coal, limestone, niobium, lead, zinc and arable land. Nigeria has Africa's largest economy.

Niger



Area: 1,266,700 sq. km.
Capital: Niamey
Population: 26,160,000
Official Languages: French, Hausa, Djerma
Main Religions: Islam, Animism
Currency: West African CFA Franc
Government: Semi-Presidential Republic

The Republic of Niger is a landlocked country in Western Africa bordered by Libya, Chad, Nigeria, Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali and Algeria. It is slightly less than twice the size of Texas. The climate is mostly hot and dry with tropical area in the far south. The terrain consists of mostly desert plains and sand dunes with flat and hills in the south. Natural resources include uranium, coal, iron ore, tin and petroleum.

Republic of Congo



Area: 342,000 sq. km
Capital: Brazzaville
Population: 5,240,000
Official Language: French
Main Religion: Christianity, Indigenous beliefs
Currency: Central African CFA Franc (XAF)
Government: Unitary Presidential Republic

The Republic of Congo is known for its vast rainforests, wildlife, and the Odzala-Kokoua National Park, which is part of the Congo Basin.

Rwanda



Area: 26,338 sq. km.
Capital: Kigali
Population: 13,950,000
Official Language: Kinyarwanda, Swahili, French, English
Main Religion: Christianity, Islam
Currency: Rwandan Francs (RWF)
Government: Presidential Republic

The republic of Rwanda is a country in Central and East Africa and the fourth smallest country on the African mainland after Gambia, Eswatini, and Djibouti. It is slightly smaller than Maryland. The entire country is at a high altitude and experiences two rainy seasons (February to April, November to January). The climate is mild in the mountains with frost at times. The greatest diversity of large mammals is found in the three National Parks, which are designated conservation areas. Akagera contains typical savanna animals such as giraffes and elephants, while Volcanoes is home to an estimated one-third of the worldwide mountain gorilla population.

Somalia



Area: 637,657 sq. km
Capital: Mogadishu
Population: 15,900,000
Official Language: Somali, Arabic
Main Religion: Islam
Currency: Somali Shilling (SOS)
Government: Federal Parliamentary Republic

Somalia, located on the Horn of Africa, is known for its ancient culture, historical sites, and coastline along the Indian Ocean.

South Africa



Area: 1,219,090 sq. km.
Capital: Kigali
Population: 63,210,000
Official Language: isiZulu, isiXhosa, Afrikaans
Main Religion: Christianity, ancestral
Currency: Rand (ZAR)
Government: Parliamentary Republic

The Republic of South Africa is the largest country in Southern Africa and the 25th-largest country in the world by land area with a long coastline that stretches more than 2,500 km (1,553 mi) along two oceans (the South Atlantic and the Indian). South Africa is a multiethnic society encompassing a wide variety of cultures, languages, and religions. It is the world's 24th-most populous nation. The nation is also home to extraordinary wildlife; to the world's largest visible craters and major platinum deposits.

Tanzania



Area: 947,300 sq. km.
Capital: Dodoma
Population: 66,620,000
Official Language: Swahili, English
Main Religions: Christianity, Islam
Currency: Tanzanian Shilling
Government: Presidential Republic

The United Republic of Tanzania is a country in Eastern Africa bordered by Kenya and Uganda to the north; Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the west; Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique to the south; and the Indian Ocean to the east. The climate varies from tropical along the coast to temperate inland. The terrain consists of coastal plains; a central plateau; and highlands to the north and south. Tanzania's economy is based on agriculture, primarily maize.

Togo



Area: 56,785 sq. km.
Capital: Lome
Population: 9,304,000
Official Languages: French
Main Religions: Islam, Christianity
Currency: West African CFA Franc
Government: Presidential Republic

The Togolese Republic is a country in Western Africa bordering the Bight of Benin between Benin and Ghana. It is slightly smaller than West Virginia. The climate is tropical, hot and humid in the south and semi-arid in the north. The terrain features rolling savanna in the north, central hills and low coastlands with lagoons and marshes.

Uganda



Area: 241,038 sq. km.
Capital: Kampala
Population: 48,660,000
Official Language: English, Swahili, Arabic, Luganda
Main Religion: Christianity, Islam
Currency: Ugandan shillings (UGX)
Government: Presidential Republic

The Republic of Uganda is one of the Nile basin countries in East-Central Africa. The nation is home to one of the youngest and most rapidly growing populations in the world. The country is landlocked and has a modified equatorial climate. Its forests are home to the largest gorilla population in the world and soccer is the national sport of the country.

Zanzibar



Area: 2,654 sq. km
Capital: Zanzibar City
Population: 1,360,000
Official Language: Swahili, English
Main Religion: Islam
Currency: Tanzanian Shilling (TZS)
Government: Part of Tanzania

Zanzibar is a semi-autonomous region of Tanzania, known for its historic Stone Town, spice plantations, and beautiful beaches.

Zimbabwe



Area: 390,757 sq. km.

Capital: Harare

Population: 16,340,000

Official Language: Shona, Ndebele, English

Main Religion: Christianity, Islam

Currency: Zimbabwean Dollars (ZWD)

Government: Semi-Presidential Republic

The Republic of Zimbabwe is a rich landlocked country in southern Africa with most of the country being in higher elevation, consisting of a central plateau. The climate is tropical with many local variations. Victoria Falls, one of the world's biggest and most spectacular waterfalls, is in the country's extreme northwest and is part of the Zambezi river. The noise of the Victoria Falls can be heard as far as 40 kilometers away. Zimbabwe has the largest platinum and diamond reserves in the world.

Asia

Asia is the largest continent in both population and size. It covers almost one third of the world's land area. It is larger than North America, Europe and Australia combined.

At least half of the world's population can be found in Asia. However, vast expanses of the land are barren and uninhabited. It stretches from the Arctic to the equator. Asia has a large variety of land features.

It is the most mountainous continent with many of the world's tallest mountains. It also has very fertile plains and valleys along rivers, rainforests in the southeast and deserts in the center. Many rivers flood annually and leave fertile deposits in the flooded areas.



Afghanistan



Area: 652,230 sq. km
Capital: Kabul
Population: 40,121,552
Official Language: Dari
Main Religion: Islam
Currency: Afghan Afghani (AFN)
Government: Theocratic

Afghanistan, officially the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, is a landlocked country located at the crossroads of Central Asia and South Asia.

Armenia



Area: 29,743 sq. km
Capital: Yerevan
Population: 2,976,765
Official Language: Armenian, Kurmanji
Main Religion: Armenian Apostolic Christianity
Currency: Armenian Dram (AMD)
Government: Semi-Presidential Republic with a Parliamentary system

Armenia, officially the Republic of Armenia, is a landlocked country in the Armenian Highlands of West Asia. It is part of the Caucasus region and is bordered by Turkey to the west, Georgia to the north, Azerbaijan to the east, and Iran and the Azerbaijani exclave of Nakhchivan to the south.

Azerbaijan



Area: 85,900 sq. km
Capital: Baku
Population: 10,650,239
Official Language: Azerbaijani (Azeri)
Main Religion: Muslim
Currency: Azerbaijani manat (AZN)
Government: Republic, Unitary state, Presidential system, Constitutional republic, Semi-presidential system

Azerbaijan, a nation and former Soviet republic, is bounded by the Caspian Sea and Caucasus Mountains, which span Asia and Europe. Its capital, Baku, is famed for its medieval walled Inner City. Within the Inner City lies the Palace of the Shirvanshahs, a royal retreat dating to the 15th century, and the centuries-old stone Maiden Tower, which dominates the city skyline.

Bangladesh



Area: 148,460 sq. km.
Capital: Dhaka
Population: 171,500,000
Official Languages: Bengali
Main Religions: Islam, Hinduism
Currency: Taka
Government: Parliamentary Republic

The People's Republic of Bangladesh is located in Southern Asia, bordering the Bay of Bengal, between Burma and India. It is slightly smaller than Iowa. Bangladesh is tropical with mild winters (October to March), hot, humid summers (March to June) and humid, warm rainy monsoons (June to October). The land is mostly a flat alluvial plain with hills in the southeast.

Cambodia



Area: 181,035 sq. km.
Capital: Phnom Penh
Population: 17,420,000
Official Languages: Khmer
Main Religions: Buddhism, Islam
Currency: Riel
Government: Parliamentary Constitutional Monarchy

The Kingdom of Cambodia borders the Gulf of Thailand between Thailand, Vietnam and Laos. Its climate is tropical with a rainy, monsoon season (May–November) and a dry season (December–April). The terrain is mostly low, flat plains with mountains in the southwest and north. This land of paddies and forests is dominated by the Mekong River and the Tonlé Sap lake–river system. Many houses are built on stilts to protect them from flooding. The Cambodian alphabet is the longest in the world, with 70 letters.

China



Area: 9,596,960 sq. km.
Capital: Beijing (formerly Peking)
Population: 1,416,043,270
Official Language: Mandarin
Main Religion: Non-religious, Buddhist
Currency: Renminbi (Yuan)
Government: Communist Party-led State

The People's Republic of China is the third largest country in the world, about the size of Europe, and home to one-fifth of the world's population. It has a written history of over 4,000 years and invented the compass, paper, printing and gunpowder. The Great Wall of China is 21,196 km. long and took 1,700 years to complete. China's topography is very diverse with vast deserts, plains, jungles, fertile farmlands and sub-polar mountainous regions. Mount Everest, the highest mountain in the world, is part of the Himalayan mountain range and straddles the border of Nepal and Tibet (politically part of China).

India



Area: 3,287,263 sq. km.
Capital: New Delhi
Population: 1,409,128,296
Official Languages: Hindi, English
Main Religions: Hinduism, Islam
Currency: Indian Rupee
Government: Federal Parliamentary Republic

The Republic of India, in South Asia, is the second most populated country in the world. About one out of every six people in the world lives in India. It is also the most ethnically diverse nation – with over 2,500 distinct groups. India has great varieties and differences in both its land and its people. The land includes a desert, jungles and one of the world's rainiest areas. In addition, India has broad plains, powerful rivers, the tallest mountains in the world and tropical lowlands.

Iran



Area: 1,648,195 sq. km
Capital: Tehran
Population: 90,610,000
Official Language: Persian
Main Religion: Muslim
Currency: Iranian Rial
Government: Theocratic Republic

Mostly arid or semiarid, subtropical along Caspian coast, Iran is home to one of the world's oldest civilizations, beginning with the formation of the Elamite kingdoms in the fourth millennium BCE. It was first unified by the Iranian Medes in the seventh century BCE, reaching its greatest territorial size in the sixth century BCE, when Cyrus the Great founded the Achaemenid Empire, which stretched from Eastern Europe to the Indus Valley, becoming one of the largest empires in history.

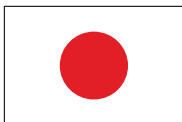
Israel



Area: 20,770 sq. km.
Capital: Jerusalem
Population: 9,757,000
Official Languages: Hebrew, Arabic
Main Religions: Judaism, Islam
Currency: Israeli New Shekel
Government: Parliamentary Democracy

The State of Israel borders the Mediterranean Sea between Egypt and Lebanon. It is slightly smaller than New Jersey. Israel has a temperate climate and is hot and dry in the southern and eastern areas. The Negev Desert is in the south; there are low coastal plains and central mountains. The lowest point in Israel is the Dead Sea, which is 1,400 feet below sea level; the sea is nine times as salty as the ocean. Israel was founded in 1948 as a homeland for exiled Jewish people.

Japan



Area: 377,915 sq. km.
Capital: Tokyo
Population: 124,500,000
Official Language: Japanese
Main Religions: Buddhism, Shintoism
Currency: Yen
Government: Parliamentary Constitutional Monarchy

The Japanese call their country Nippon which means "Land of the Rising Sun." It is located in Eastern Asia and is an island chain between the North Pacific Ocean and the Sea of Japan, east of the Korean Peninsula. It is slightly smaller than California. The four large islands are called Honshu, Hokkaido, Shikoku and Kyushu. Only 13% of the land's mountainous terrain can be cultivated, yet Japan is one of the world's most developed, export-oriented economies.

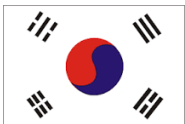
Kazakhstan



Area: 2,724,900 sq. km.
Capital: Astana
Population: 20,330,000
Official Languages: Kazakh, Russian
Main Religions: Islam, Christianity
Currency: Tenge
Government: Presidential Republic

The Republic of Kazakhstan is located in Central Asia, northwest of China. It is roughly four times the size of Texas and has vast natural resources: enormous fossil fuel reserves and a large agricultural industry. Its climate is continental, cold winters and hot summers, arid and semi-arid. Cities in medieval Kazakhstan served as stops along the Silk Road, an extensive trade network across Asia to China, made famous by Marco Polo's travels.

Korea



Area: 100,363 km² (38,750 sq. mi)
Capital: Seoul
Population: 51,710,000
Official Language: Korean,
Main Religion: Christian and Buddhism
Currency: Korean Won
Government: Constitutional Democracy

South Korea tends to have a humid continental climate and a humid subtropical climate, and is affected by the East Asian monsoon, with precipitation heavier in summer during a short rainy season called jangma, which begins end of June through the end of July. South Korea can be divided into four general regions: an eastern region of high mountain ranges and narrow coastal plains; a western region of broad coastal plains, river basins, and rolling hills; a southwestern region of mountains and valleys; and a southeastern region dominated by the broad basin of the Nakdong River.

Kyrgyzstan



Area: 199,951 sq. km.
Capital: Bishkek
Population: 7,100,000
Official Language: Kyrgyz
Main Religion: Muslim
Currency: Kyrgyzstani Som
Government: Republic Democratic

Dry continental to polar climate in high Tien Shan Mountains; subtropical in southwest (Fergana Valley); temperate in northern foothill zone. In addition to celebrating the New Year each 1 January, the Kyrgyz observe the traditional New Year festival Nowruz on the vernal equinox. This spring holiday is celebrated with feasts and festivities such as the horse game Ulak Tartish. The traditional national sports reflect the importance of horse riding in Kyrgyz culture.

Lebanon



Area: 10,400 sq. km.
Capital: Beirut
Population: 5,773,000
Official Language: Arabic
Main Religions: Islam, Christianity
Currency: Lebanese Pound
Government: Parliamentary Republic

Located in the Middle East, between Israel and Syria on the Mediterranean Sea, the Lebanese Republic was known even in biblical times for its vast cedar forests, remnants of which still exist today in the mountains. In modern times it has become known as a financial and banking center. However, a lengthy civil war from 1975-1990 devastated the country and its financial position. It is seeking to stabilize its political situation and rebound economically.

Mongolia



Area: 1,564,116 sq. km
Capital: Ulaanbaatar
Population: 3,200,000
Official Language: Mongolian
Main Religion: Tibetan Buddhism, Shamanism
Currency: Mongolian Tugrik (MNT)
Government: Unitary Parliamentary Republic

Mongolia is a landlocked country with vast steppes, the Gobi Desert, and a history shaped by Genghis Khan. It's also known for its nomadic culture and traditional festivals like Naadam.

Myanmar



Area: 676,578 sq. km.
Capital: Naypyidaw, Rangoon
Population: 54,130,000
Official Language: Burmese
Main Religion: Buddhism, Christianity
Currency: Kyat
Government: Parliamentary Republic

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar is located in Southeast Asia, bordering the Andaman Sea and the Bay of Bengal, between Bangladesh and Thailand. It is slightly smaller than Texas. Its climate is tropical with a monsoon season in the summers and a drier season in winters. The terrain in the central lowlands is ringed by steep, rugged highlands. Dense tropical forests cover over 49% of the country. Trees include teak, acacia, bamboo, ironwood and Magnolia champaca.

Nepal



Area: 147,181 sq. km.
Capital: Kathmandu
Population: 29,690,000
Official Language: Nepali
Main religions: Hinduism, Buddhism
Currency: Nepalese Rupee
Government: Federal Parliamentary Republic

The Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal is a landlocked sovereign state located in South Asia. It is located in the Himalayas and bordered to the north by China, and to the south, east, and west by India. The mountainous north of Nepal has eight of the world's ten tallest mountains, including the highest point on Earth, Mount Everest, called Sagarmatha in Nepali.

Pakistan



Area: 796,095 sq. km.
Capital: Islamabad
Population: 247,500,000
Official Languages: English, Urdu
Main Religion: Islam
Currency: Pakistani Rupee
Government: Federal Parliamentary Republic

The Islamic Republic of Pakistan is a sovereign country in South Asia. It is the sixth most populous country in the world. Located at the crossroads of the strategically important regions of South Asia, Central Asia and Western Asia, Pakistan has a 1,046-kilometre (650 mi) coastline along the Arabian Sea and the Gulf of Oman in the south and is bordered by India to the east, Afghanistan to the west and north, Iran to the southwest and China in the far northeast. It is separated from Tajikistan by Afghanistan's narrow Wakhan Corridor in the north.

Philippines



Area: 300,000 sq. km.
Capital: Manila
Population: 114,900,000
Official Languages: Filipino, English
Main Religions: Christianity, Islam
Currency: Peso
Government: Presidential Republic

The Republic of the Philippines is an archipelago made up of 7,107 islands located in Southeastern Asia between the Philippine Sea and the South China Sea. Its total land area is slightly larger than Arizona. The climate is tropical marine with monsoons. The terrain is mostly mountains with coastal lowlands. The Philippines are located on the Pacific Ring of Fire, so volcanic activity and earthquakes are common. Famous Filipinos include 2015 Miss Universe winner Pia Alonzo Wurtzbach and world boxing champion Manny Pacquiao.

Russia



Area: 17,098,242 sq. km.
Capital: Moscow
Population: 143,800,000
Official Language: Russian
Main Religions: Christianity, Islam
Currency: Ruble
Government: Semi-Presidential Federation

The Russian Federation is located on two continents, Europe and Asia. It is the world's largest country (almost twice the area of Canada, the second largest.) It is located in North Asia bordering the Arctic Ocean, extending from Europe (the portion west of the Urals) to the North Pacific Ocean. The Ural Mountains bisect Russia into an European part in the west (where most major cities like Moscow and St. Petersburg are located) and Siberia to the east. Russia is famous for its colorful "onion"-domed cathedrals.

Sri Lanka



Area: 65,610 sq. km.
Capital: Sri Jayewardenepura Kotte, Colombo
Population: 22,040,000
Official Languages: Sinhala, Tamil
Main Religion: Buddhism, Hindu, Islam
Currency: Sri Lankan Rupee
Government: Presidential Republic

The Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka is an island country located in Southern Asia in the Indian Ocean. It is slightly larger than West Virginia. Its climate is tropical with a monsoon season. The terrain is mostly flat to rolling plains and mountains in the south-central interior. Its signature export is Ceylon Tea.

Taiwan R.O.C.



Area: 35,980 sq. km.
Capital: Taipei
Population: 23,420,000
Official Language: Mandarin
Main Religions: Buddhism, Taoism
Currency: New Taiwan Dollar
Government: Semi-Presidential Republic

Taiwan is an island in eastern Asia, north of the Philippines, off the southeastern coast of China. It is slightly smaller than Maryland and Delaware combined. The climate is tropical and marine with a rainy season during the southwest monsoon (June to August). The eastern two-thirds is mostly rugged mountains with flat to gently rolling plains in the west. It has recently developed its ecotourism sector and has become quite popular as a destination for tropical excursions and vacations.

Tajikistan



Area: 143,100 sq. km
Capital: Dushanbe
Population: 9,500,000
Official Language: Tajik
Main Religion: Islam (Sunni and Shia)
Currency: Tajikistani Somoni (TJS)
Government: Presidential Republic

Tajikistan is known for its mountainous landscapes and the Pamir Mountains, which are sometimes called the "Roof of the World." It has a rich Persian cultural heritage.

Thailand



Area: 513,120 sq. km
Capital: Bangkok
Population: 69,800,000
Official Language: Thai
Main Religion: Buddhism
Currency: Thai Baht (THB)
Government: Constitutional Monarchy

Thailand is famous for its tropical beaches, royal palaces, ancient temples, and vibrant culture, including the iconic Thai cuisine and festivals like Songkran and Loy Krathong.

Turkey



Area: 783,562 sq. km.
Capital: Ankara
Population: 85,330,000
Official Languages: Turkish
Main Religion: Islam
Currency: Turkish Lira
Government: Parliamentary Republic

The Republic of Turkey is located in Southeastern Europe and Southwestern Asia. It borders the Black Sea between Bulgaria and Georgia, and the Aegean Sea and the Mediterranean Sea between Greece and Syria. It is slightly larger than Texas. Turkey has a high central plateau (Anatolia), a narrow coastal plain, and several mountain ranges. Istanbul (formerly Constantinople), Turkey's largest city, is the world's only metropolis situated on two continents: Europe and Asia. It is a historic city with much of its medieval architecture still preserved today.

Uzbekistan



Area: 447,400 sq. km
Capital: Tashkent
Population: 33,000,000
Official Language: Uzbek
Main Religion: Islam
Currency: Uzbek Som (UZS)
Government: Presidential Republic

Uzbekistan, known for its historical cities like Samarkand and Bukhara, is a key part of the ancient Silk Road and has a rich heritage of Islamic architecture and culture.

Vietnam



Area: 331,210 sq. km.

Capital: Hanoi

Population: 100,400,000

Official Language: Vietnamese

Main Religion: Buddhism

Currency: Vietnamese Dong

Government: Communist State

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam is the easternmost country on the Indochina Peninsula. It is bordered to the north by China, Laos to the northwest, Cambodia to the Southwest and the South China Sea to the east. The land is 40% mountainous and 42% dense tropical forests. It is the world's 15th most-populous country. Since 2000, Vietnam has experienced high economic growth.

Caribbean



The Caribbean is a region of The Americas that consists of the Caribbean Sea and its islands. The region is southeast of the Gulf of Mexico and the North American mainland, east of Central America, and north of South America.

Situated largely on the Caribbean Plate, the region comprises more than 700 islands, islets, reefs and cays. These islands generally form island arcs that delineate the eastern and northern edges of the Caribbean Sea. The Caribbean islands, consisting of the Greater Antilles on the north and the Lesser Antilles on the south and east are part of the somewhat larger West Indies grouping, which also includes the Lucayan Archipelago.

In a wider sense, the mainland countries, regions, and territories of Belize, Nicaragua, the Caribbean region of Colombia, Cozumel, the Yucatán Peninsula, Margarita Island, the Guyanas are often included due to their political and cultural ties with the region.

Barbados



Area: 178.91 sq. km.
Capital: Bridgetown
Population: 282,336
Official Language: English
Main Religion: Christian
Currency: Barbadian dollar
Government: Constitutional monarchy

The country generally experiences two seasons, one of which includes noticeably higher rainfall. Known as the “wet season,” this period runs from June to December. By contrast, the “dry season” runs from December to May. Barbados is host to four species of nesting turtles (green turtles, loggerheads, hawksbill turtles, and leatherbacks) and has the second-largest hawksbill turtle breeding population in the Caribbean. The driving of vehicles on beaches can crush nests buried in the sand and such activity should be avoided in nesting area.

Cuba



Area: 109,884 sq. km
Capital: Havana
Population: 11,200,000
Official Language: Spanish
Main Religion: Christianity
Currency: Cuban Peso (CUP), Convertible Peso (CUC)
Government: Communist Republic

Cuba is famous for its revolutionary history, vibrant culture, music, and dance, as well as its beautiful beaches and cigar production.

Dominica



Area: 750 sq. km.
Capital: Roseau
Population: 66,510
Official Language: English
Main Religion: Christian
Currency: Eastern Caribbean Dollar
Government: English

Dominica is largely covered by rainforest and is home to the world's second-largest hot spring, Boiling Lake. Dominica has many waterfalls, springs, and rivers. The Calibishie area in the country's northeast has sandy beaches. Some plants and animals thought to be extinct on surrounding islands can still be found in Dominica's forests. The island has several protected areas, including Cabrits National Park, as well as 365 rivers. Dominica, known as "The Nature Island of the Caribbean" due to its spectacular, lush, and varied flora and fauna, which are protected by an extensive natural park system; the most mountainous of the Lesser Antilles, its volcanic peaks are cones of lava craters and include Boiling Lake, the second-largest, thermally active lake in the world possesses the most pristine wilderness in the Caribbean.

Grenada



Area: 344 sq. km.
Capital: Saint George's
Population: 17,081
Official Language: English
Main Religion: Christianity
Currency: East Caribbean Dollar
Government: Parliamentary Democracy;
Commonwealth Realm

Grenada is an island located in the Caribbean between the Caribbean Sea and Atlantic Ocean, north of Trinidad and Tobago. The climate is tropical; tempered by northeast trade winds and its terrain is volcanic in origin with central mountains. Natural resources include timber, tropical fruit and deepwater harbors.

Haiti



Area: 27,750 sq. km.
Capital: Port-au-Prince
Population: 11,640,000
Official Language: French, Creole
Main Religion: Christianity
Currency: Haitian Gourde
Government: Semi-Presidential Republic

The Republic of Haiti is a country occupying the western three-eighths of the island of Hispaniola in the Caribbean Sea. It shares the island with the Dominican Republic to the east. It is slightly smaller than Maryland. The climate is tropical and its terrain rough and mountainous. Natural resources include timber, tropical fruit and deepwater harbors.

Jamaica



Area: 10,991 sq. km.
Capital: Kingston
Population: 2,840,000
Official Language: English
Main Religion: Christianity
Currency: Jamaican Dollar
Government: Parliamentary Democracy under a Constitutional Monarchy

Jamaica is an island country situated in the Caribbean Sea and is the third-largest island of the Greater Antilles. Jamaica is a Commonwealth Realm with Queen Elizabeth II as its monarch and head of state. Its climate is tropical; hot, humid; temperate interior. Major sectors of the Jamaican economy include agriculture, mining, manufacturing, tourism, and financial and insurance services. The musical genres reggae, ska, mento, rocksteady and dub all originated in the island's vibrant, popular urban recording industry.

Montserrat



Area: 102 sq. km
Capital: Brades
Population: 5,000
Official Language: English
Main Religion: Christianity
Currency: East Caribbean Dollar (XCD)
Government: British Overseas Territory

Montserrat is a volcanic island in the Caribbean, known for its beautiful landscapes and as a British overseas territory.

Puerto Rico



Area: 9,104 sq. km.
Capital: San Juan
Population: 3,206,000
Official Language: Spanish, English
Main Religion: Christianity
Currency: U.S. Dollar
Government: Presidential Democracy; a Self-Governing Commonwealth in Political Association with the U.S.

The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico was a Spanish country until the 1890's when the United States acquired it as a territory. Its peoples are typically of Spanish and African descent. Puerto Rico has a mild tropical climate, but hurricanes can be a threat from June to November. Many tourists visit Puerto Rico each year. The rainforest of El Yunque on the eastern end of the island is a popular tourist destination.

Republica Dominicana



Area: 48,671 sq. km
Capital: Santo Domingo
Population: 11,000,000
Official Language: Spanish
Main Religion: Christianity
Currency: Dominican Peso (DOP)
Government: Presidential Republic

The Dominican Republic shares the island of Hispaniola with Haiti and is famous for its beaches, resorts, and rich colonial history.

St. Maarten



Area: 87 sq. km
Capital: Philipsburg
Population: 39,000
Official Language: Dutch, English
Main Religion: Christianity
Currency: Netherlands Antillean Guilder (ANG)
Government: Dutch Overseas Territory

St. Maarten is known for its stunning beaches, luxury resorts, and being part of the dual-nation island shared with French St. Martin.

The Bahamas



Area: 13,880 sq. km
Capital: Nassau
Population: 389,000
Official Language: English
Main Religion: Christianity
Currency: Bahamian Dollar (BSD)
Government: Constitutional Monarchy

The Bahamas is a group of islands known for its crystal-clear waters, luxury resorts, and vibrant tourism industry.

Trinidad & Tobago



Area: 5,128 sq. km.

Capital: Port of Spain

Population: 1,368,000

Official Language: English

Main Religions: Christianity, Hinduism

Currency: Trinidad & Tobago Dollar

Government: Parliamentary Republic

The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago are islands located in the Caribbean between the Caribbean Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean, just 11 km northeast of Venezuela. They are the southernmost islands in the Caribbean. Together, they are slightly smaller than Delaware. The islands gained independence from Great Britain in 1962. Trinidad is the home of the folk music calypso and the limbo dance. The steel pan originated in Trinidad and is the country's national musical instrument.

Central America

Central America (Spanish: América Central or Centroamérica) is the central geographic region of the Americas. It is the southernmost portion of the North American continent, which connects with South America. When considered part of the unified continental model, it is considered a subcontinent.

Central America consists of seven countries: Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama. Central America is part of the Mesoamerican biodiversity hotspot, which extends from northern Guatemala through central Panama. It is bordered by Mexico to the north, the Caribbean Sea to the east, the North Pacific Ocean to the west, and Colombia to the southeast.



Belize



Capital: Belmopan
Population: 411,106
Official Language: English
Main Religion: Christian
Currency: Belize Dollar
Government: Constitutional Monarchy

Belize has a rich variety of wildlife because of its unique position between North and South America and a wide range of climates and habitats for plant and animal life. Belize's low human population and approximately 8,867 square miles (22,970 km²) of undistributed land make for an ideal home for the more than 5,000 species of plants and hundreds of species of animals, including armadillos, snakes, and monkeys. Belize is also a leader in protecting biodiversity and natural resources. According to the World Database on Protected Areas, 37% of Belize's land territory falls under some form of official protection, giving Belize one of the most extensive systems of terrestrial protected areas in the Americas. By contrast, Costa Rica only has 27% of its land territory protected.

Costa Rica



Area: 51,100 sq. km
Capital: San José
Population: 5,300,000
Official Language: Spanish
Main Religion: Christianity
Currency: Costa Rican Colón (CRC)
Government: Democratic Republic

Costa Rica is known for its rich biodiversity, ecological tourism, and stable political environment, being one of the most peaceful countries in Latin America.

El Salvador



Area: 21,041 sq. km.
Capital: San Salvador
Population: 6,310,000
Official Languages: Spanish
Main Religion: Christianity
Currency: U.S. Dollar
Government: Presidential Republic

The Republic of El Salvador is the smallest and the most densely populated country in Central America. It is bordered by the Pacific Ocean on the south, Guatemala to the north and Honduras to the east. El Salvador was inhabited by numerous sophisticated Mesoamerican nations, predominantly the Cuzcatlecs, Lenca and Maya, prior to the European colonization of the Americas. It has a tropical climate with pronounced wet and dry seasons.

Guatemala



Area: 108,889 sq. km.
Capital: Guatemala City
Population: 18,120,000
Official Language: Spanish
Main Religion: Christianity
Currency: Quetzal
Government: Presidential Republic

The Republic of Guatemala is located in Central America neighboring Mexico, Belize, El Salvador and Honduras. The Mayan civilization flourished throughout much of Guatemala and the surrounding region long before the Spanish arrived. But it was already in decline when the Mayans were defeated by Pedro de Alvarado in 1523-24. The current capital, Guatemala City, was founded in 1776.

Honduras



Area: 112,090 sq. km.
Capital: Tegucigalpa
Population: 10,640,000
Official Languages: Spanish
Main Religion: Christianity
Currency: Lempira
Government: Presidential Republic

The Republic of Honduras is located in Central America, between Guatemala, Nicaragua and El Salvador, and is about the size of Virginia. It is subtropical in the lowlands and temperate in the mountains. Its chief natural resources are minerals, timber and fish; additionally it produces and exports clothing, cigars, tropical fruit and palm oil. The Maya are one of the many historic indigenous cultures of Honduras and elsewhere in Central America.

Nicaragua



Area: 130,370 sq. km.
Capital: Managua
Population: 6,824,000
Official Language: Spanish
Main Religion: Christianity
Currency: Córdoba
Government: Presidential Republic

The Republic of Nicaragua is Central America's largest country, with nearly one fourth of its population living in its capital. Nicknamed La Tierra de Lagos y Volcanes (The Land of Lakes and Volcanoes), nearly a fifth of its land is designated as protected areas: national parks, nature reserves and biological reserves. This country's rich biological diversity, warm tropical climate, and active volcanoes make it a popular destination for tourists, surfers, biologists, and volcanologists.

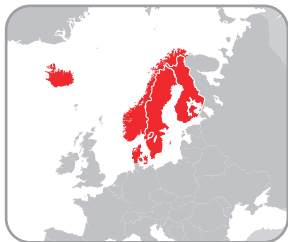
Panama



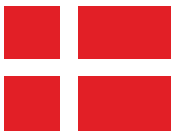
Area: 75,420 sq. km.
Capital: Panama City
Population: 4,459,000
Official Language: Spanish
Main Religion: Christianity
Currency: Balboa, U.S. Dollar
Government: Presidential Republic

The Republic of Panama is located on the Isthmus of Panama that joins North America to South America. The Panama Canal connects the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans. Panama has a tropical climate modified by altitude. Most of the country is covered with dense tropical forest and animal life, including anteaters, armadillos, tapir, small tigers and monkeys. Bananas, coffee and sugarcane are some of its exports.

NORDIC COUNTRIES



Denmark



Area: 43,094 sq. km.
Capital: Copenhagen
Population: 5,947,000
Official Languages: Danish, Faroese, Greenlandic, German, English
Main Religion: Christianity
Currency: Danish Krone
Government: Parliamentary Constitutional Monarchy

Denmark is located in Northern Europe, bordering the Baltic and the North Sea, on a peninsula north of Germany (Jutland); it also includes two major islands (Sjælland and Fyn). It is slightly less than twice the size of Massachusetts. The climate is temperate and humid, with mild winters and cool summers. The terrain is low and flat to gently rolling plains. About one-quarter of the population lives in Copenhagen. Hans Christian Andersen, a famous children's author who wrote stories such as *The Ugly Duckling* and *Thumbelina*, was from Denmark.

Finland



Area: 338,145 sq. km.
Capital: Helsinki
Population: 5,584,000
Official Languages: Finnish, Swedish
Main Religions: Christianity
Currency: Euro
Government: Parliamentary Republic

Finland is located in Northern Europe between Sweden and Russia, and is slightly smaller than Montana. Finland has a cold temperate climate; it is potentially subarctic but comparatively mild because of the moderating influence of the North Atlantic Current, the Baltic Sea and over 60,000 lakes. Helsinki is the northernmost national capital on the European continent. Northern Finland, Norway and Sweden are home to the nomadic Sami (Lapp) people, known for herding reindeer. The Finnish language is distantly related to Hungarian and Estonian.

Iceland



Area: 103,000 sq. km.
Capital: Reykjavik
Population: 393,349
Official Language: Icelandic
Main Religion: Christianity
Currency: Icelandic Króna
Government: Parliamentary Republic

Iceland is an island in the North Atlantic Ocean, northwest of the UK, and is the westernmost European country. It is slightly smaller than Kentucky. Although Iceland is near the Arctic Circle, the climate is moderated by the North Atlantic Current. The terrain is a plateau interspersed with mountain peaks and ice fields. Iceland has more land covered by glaciers than in all of continental Europe and contains many active volcanoes and hot springs. Its capital, Reykjavik, is the world's northernmost national capital.

Norway



Area: 323,802 sq. km.
Capital: Oslo
Population: 5,520,000
Official Languages: Norwegian (Bokmål / Nynorsk)
Main Religion: Christianity
Currency: Norwegian Krone
Government: Parliamentary Constitutional Monarchy

Norway is located in Northern Europe on the North Atlantic Ocean, west of Sweden. It is slightly larger than New Mexico. The climate is temperate along the coast, modified by the North Atlantic Current, and colder in the interior with Arctic tundra in the north. Norway has many glaciers with rugged mountains broken by fertile valleys and scattered plains. The coastline is deeply indented by fjords. Norway was the homeland of the Vikings.

Sweden



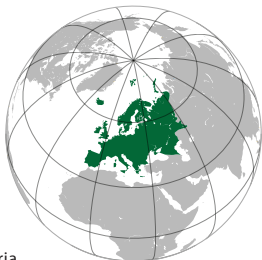
Area: 450,295 sq. km.
Capital: Stockholm
Population: 10,540,000
Official Language: Swedish
Main Religion: Christianity
Currency: Swedish Krona
Government: Constitutional Monarchy

Sweden is located in Northern Europe, bordering the Baltic Sea and the Kattegat and Skagerrak straits, between Finland and Norway. The climate is temperate in the south with cold winters and cool summers, and is subarctic in the north. The terrain is mostly lowlands with mountains in the west on the Norwegian border. Sweden is a peaceful country and has not participated in any war in almost 200 years. It is famous for its midsummer night's festivals when the sun never sets.

Europe

The eastern side of Europe borders Asia. Because Europe and Asia are not completely separated by water, Europe is sometimes said to be part of a giant continent called Eurasia.

Europe has several mountain ranges, such as the Alps, the Apennines, the Balkans, the Carpathians and the Urals. As a natural consequence, skiing is a popular sport, particularly in the Alps.



Europe's ten landlocked countries are Andorra, Austria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, San Marino, Slovakia, Switzerland, and Vatican City. Europe's smallest country is the Vatican City, the headquarters of the Roman Catholic Church. It is only 0.44 sq. km.

Belarus



Area: 643,801 sq. km.

Capital: Paris

Population: 9,178,000

Official Language: French

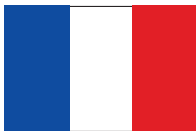
Main Religion: Christianity, Islam

Currency: Euro

Government: Semi-Presidential Republic

The traditional Belarusian dress originates from the Kievan Rus' period. Due to the cool climate, clothes were designed to preserve body heat and were usually made from flax or wool. They were decorated with ornate patterns influenced by the neighboring cultures: Poles, Lithuanians, Latvians, Russians, and other European nations. Each region of Belarus has developed specific design patterns. One ornamental pattern common in early dresses currently decorates the hoist of the Belarusian national flag, adopted in a disputed referendum in 1995. Belarusian cuisine consists mainly of vegetables, meat (particularly pork), and bread.

France



Area: 643,801 sq. km.

Capital: Paris

Population: 68,290,000

Official Language: French

Main Religion: Christianity, Islam

Currency: Euro

Government: Semi-Presidential Republic

The French Republic is Western Europe's largest country, bordering the Bay of Biscay and English Channel, between Belgium and Spain, southeast of the UK; bordering the Mediterranean Sea, between Italy and Spain. It is slightly more than four times the size of the state of Georgia. The climate is generally cool winters and mild summers, but mild winters and hot summers along the Mediterranean. France has many well-known writers, philosophers and artists, and is known around the world for its scientific discoveries.

Germany



Area: 357,022 sq. km.
Capital: Berlin
Population: 84,119,100
Official Language: German
Main Religion: Christianity
Currency: Euro
Government: Federal Parliamentary Republic

Located in Europe, the Federal Republic of Germany is surrounded by nine countries. It has coastlines along the North and Baltic Seas. The Black Forest and Bavarian Alps are in the southern region where there are lots of hills; the northern region is very flat and has much farmland. The German celebration of Oktoberfest has become popular in American culture. Germany is also well known for many famous composers, its beers, bratwurst, hot dogs or frankfurters, and hamburgers (named after the cities of Frankfurt and Hamburg).

Hungary



Area: 93,028 sq. km.
Capital: Budapest
Population: 9,592,000
Official Language: Hungarian
Main Religion: Christianity
Currency: Forint
Government: Parliamentary Republic

Hungary is located in Central Europe, east of Austria, and is slightly smaller than Indiana. The terrain is mostly rolling plains with low mountains on the Slovakian border. The Carpathian Mountains in modern Romania were once a natural barrier to transportation and the former border of Hungary. It is internationally renowned for its gulyás (goulash) soup, its paprika spice and its famous horsemen on the plains who still put on shows with impressive stunts for tourists today.

Italy



Area: 301,340 sq. km.
Capital: Rome
Population: 58,990,000
Official Language: Italian
Main Religion: Christianity
Currency: Euro
Government: Parliamentary Republic

The Italian Republic is located in Southern Europe, a peninsula extending into the central Mediterranean Sea, northeast of Tunisia and includes Sardinia and Sicily. It is slightly larger than Arizona. The climate is predominantly Mediterranean; alpine in far north; hot, dry in south. Its terrain is mostly rugged and mountainous; some plains, coastal lowlands. Italy is known for its rich cultural heritage. Museums in Florence and Rome contain some of the world's best-known art.

Moldova



Area: 33,851 sq. km.
Capital: Chisinau
Population: 2,458,000
Official Language: Macedonian
Main Religions: Christianity
Currency: Macedonian Denar
Government: Parliamentary Republic

The Republic of Moldova is a landlocked country located in Eastern Europe, the central Balkan peninsula in Southeast Europe. It is bordered by Romania and Ukraine. It is slightly larger than Maryland and boasts moderate winters and warm summers. The terrain is flat grasslands giving way to a gradual slope in the south.

Poland



Area: 312,685 sq. km.
Capital: Warsaw
Population: 36,690,000
Language: Polish
Main Religion: Christianity
Currency: Złoty
Government: Parliamentary Republic

Located in Central Europe, east of Germany, the Republic of Poland is somewhat smaller than New Mexico. The terrain is mostly flat plains with mountains along the southern border. Internationally acclaimed Poles include composer Fredrick Chopin and Marie Curie, a pioneer in radioactivity research and the first woman to win the Nobel Prize. Pope John Paul II was the second longest serving pope in history (1978-2005) and, as a Pole, the first non-Italian pope in over 400 years.

Romania



Area: 238,391 sq. km.
Capital: Bucharest
Population: 19,060,000
Language: Romanian
Main Religion: Christianity
Currency: Romanian Leu
Government: Semi-Presidential Republic

Romania is located in Southeastern Europe, bordering the Black Sea, between Bulgaria and Ukraine. Its slightly smaller than Oregon. Its climate is temperate; cold, cloudy winters with frequent snow and fog; sunny summers with frequent showers and thunderstorms. Natural resources include petroleum, timber, natural gas, coal, iron ore, salt, arable land and hydropower. Transylvania, in central Romania, was popularized by English writer Bram Stoker as the homeland of Count Dracula.

Spain



Area: 505,370 sq. km.
Capital: Madrid
Population: 48,350,000
Official Language: Castilian Spanish, Catalan, Galecian, Basque, Aranese
Main Religion: Christianity
Currency: Euro
Government: Parliamentary Constitutional Monarchy

Spain is located in Southwestern Europe, southwest of France, bordering the Bay of Biscay, Mediterranean Sea and Pyrenees Mountains. It is slightly more than twice the size of Oregon. The climate is temperate; hot summers and cold winters in the interior, and more moderate along the coast. Spain is well-known for its bullfights, flamboyant dancing, colorful costumes and classical Spanish guitar music.

Scotland



Area: 77,910 sq. km
Capital: Edinburgh
Population: 5,460,000
Official Language: English, Scots Gaelic
Main Religion: Christianity (Church of Scotland)
Currency: Pound Sterling (GBP)
Government: Devolved Parliamentary System

Scotland is known for its rugged highlands, historic castles, cultural festivals like the Edinburgh Fringe, and contributions to literature, science, and philosophy.

Switzerland



Area: 41,277 sq. km.
Capital: Bern
Population: 8860574
Official Languages: Swiss German, French, Italian, Romansch
Main Religion: Christianity
Currency: Swiss Franc
Government: Federal Republic

The Swiss Confederation is a small, landlocked country in Central Europe, a member of the United Nations, but not the European Union. It maintains its own currency, the Swiss Franc. With no known natural resources, Switzerland depends on worldwide trade through its merchant marine fleet. Switzerland is a world-class tourist destination also known for precision tool making, universities and banking. It is headquarters to many big and famous multinational companies and nongovernmental organizations; like Nestle and the International Red Cross. Principal cities include Bern, Basel, Geneva, Lucerne and Zurich.

Ukraine



Area: 603,550 sq. km.
Capital: Kiev
Population: 37,730,000
Official Languages: Ukrainian
Main Religion: Christianity
Currency: Ukrainian Hryvnia
Government: Semi-Presidential Republic

The Ukraine is a country in Eastern Europe. It is bordered by the Black Sea to the south; Poland and Slovakia to the west; Romania and Moldova to the southwest; and Russia to the east. It is slightly smaller than Texas. The Ukraine's climate is temperate continental. Winters vary from cool along the Black Sea to cold farther inland. Summers are warm across the greater part of the country, hot in the south. Kiev is one of Europe's oldest cities in Eastern Europe and celebrated its 1,500th anniversary in 1982.

United Kingdom



Area: 243,610 sq. km
Capital: London
Population: 66,650,000
Official Language: English
Main Religion: Christianity
Currency: Pound Sterling (GBP)
Government: Constitutional Monarchy

The United Kingdom, composed of England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, is known for its historical landmarks, iconic royal family, and cultural contributions in literature, music, and film.

North America



Mountains, plains, deserts, rainforests, tundra and rugged coasts are all part of the vast areas making up North America. The continent extends from the frigid Arctic Ocean in the north to the lush, tropical regions of Central America in the south. That includes Canada and Alaska towards the polar north and the tropics of Mexico and the Caribbean.

The North American continent includes Central America. Central America is connected to South America by the Isthmus of Panama. The isthmus is a narrow strip of land that forms a land bridge that connects the two continents.

The five Great Lakes (Superior, Huron, Michigan, Erie, Ontario) form a natural border between Canada and the United States. They contain an estimated 20% of the world's fresh water and are said to have the largest area of fresh water in the world.

NATIVE AMERICANS

Native Americans are represented by the Beaver Creek Indians of Orangeburg County, South Carolina. Their mission is to preserve, promote, protect, and respect the heritage, culture, traditions and rights of the Beaver Creek Indians for generations to come.

Canada



Area: 9,984,670 sq. km.

Capital: Ottawa

Population: 40,100,000

Official Languages: English, French

Main Religion: Christianity

Currency: Canadian Dollar

Government: Federal Parliamentary

Democracy under a Constitutional

Monarchy; a Commonwealth Realm

Canada is the second largest country in the world. It is divided into ten provinces and three territories. With snow-capped mountains, rolling prairies and modern cities, Canada has a rich and diverse land and people. Its name is derived from the Huron Indian word *kanata* meaning "small village". The flat lands in the south are good for crops; the provinces of Manitoba and Saskatchewan are a major wheat-growing region and are known as the Breadbasket of Canada.

Mexico



Area: 1,964,375 sq. km.
Capital: Mexico City
Population: 129,700,000
Official Language: Spanish
Main Religion: Christianity
Currency: Mexican Peso
Government: Federal Presidential Republic

The United Mexican States are located in the North American continent, south of the United States, and north of Guatemala and Belize. It is located between the Pacific Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico. Its climate varies from tropical to desert and terrain is a mix of high, rugged mountains, low coastal plains, high plateaus, and desert. It's \$2.4-trillion economy is the 11th largest in the world.

United States



Area: 9,833,517 sq. km.
Capital: Washington, D.C.
Population: 340,100,000
Languages: English, Spanish
Main Religion: Christianity
Currency: U.S. Dollar
Government: Constitutional Federal Republic

The United States of America is a country in North America, bordering both the North Atlantic Ocean and the North Pacific Ocean, between Canada and Mexico. Its climate is mostly temperate, but tropical in Hawaii and Florida, arctic in Alaska, semi-arid in the great plains west of the Mississippi River, and arid in the Great Basin of the southwest. The terrain of the United States is very diverse with land features that include swamps, deserts, mountains, forests, coastlines, canyons and volcano craters. The United States is known as a melting pot of nations and a land of immigrants from all over the world.

USA: Native American



Area: Varies by tribe
Capital: Varies by tribe
Population: Approximately 6.7 million (total Native American population)
Official Language: English, Native languages
Main Religion: Christianity, Native American beliefs
Currency: United States Dollar (USD)
Government: Federal Republic

Native American tribes, recognized by the U.S. government, are the original inhabitants of North America, each with its own distinct culture, language, and government.

South America



South America has a land surface similar to North America. It has tall mountains in the west, highlands in the east, and plains that cover much of the central area. Three of its prominent features are the Andes mountains, the Amazon rain forest and the Amazon River (longest in the world).

The Andes mountain range is about 7,000 kilometers long. It is the world's longest mountain range and is three times longer than the American Rockies.

The Amazon rain forest is the largest rain forest on Earth. It contains more plant and animal species than any other place in the world.

The Amazon river is the longest river and contains almost one fifth of all the freshwater on Earth. It carries more water than any other river, greater than the freshwater in the Nile, Yangtze, and Mississippi rivers combined. The river runs through Peru and Brazil before it flows into the Atlantic Ocean.

Argentina



Area: 2,780,400 sq. km
Capital: Buenos Aires
Population: 44,100,000
Official Language: Spanish
Main Religion: Christianity (Roman Catholic)
Currency: Argentine Peso (ARS)
Government: Federal Presidential Republic

Argentina is famous for its vast plains (pampas), tango music, soccer culture, and stunning landscapes, including Patagonia and Iguazu Falls.

Bolivia



Area: 1,098,581 sq. km
Capital: Sucre (constitutional), La Paz (seat of government)
Population: 11,500,000
Official Language: Spanish, Quechua, Aymara
Main Religion: Christianity
Currency: Bolivian Boliviano (BOB)
Government: Unitary Presidential Republic

The Federative Republic of Brazil is the world's fifth largest country and represents half of South America's land area and population. It borders every South American country except Chile and Ecuador. In its southern region where most of the major cities are located, the climate is temperate. The northern region is tropical, covered almost entirely by the world's largest rain forest, the Amazon.

Brazil



Area: 8,515,770 sq. km.
Capital: Brasilia
Population: 211,100,000
Official Language: Portuguese
Main Religion: Christianity
Currency: Real
Government: Federal Presidential Republic

The Federative Republic of Brazil is the world's fifth largest country and represents half of South America's land area and population. It borders every South American country except Chile and Ecuador. In its southern region where most of the major cities are located, the climate is temperate. The northern region is tropical, covered almost entirely by the world's largest rain forest, the Amazon.

Chile



Area: 756,102 sq. km.
Capital: Santiago
Population: 19,660,000
Official Language: Spanish
Main Religion: Christianity
Currency: Peso
Government: Presidential Republic

The Republic of Chile is a country in South America bordered by the Pacific Ocean to the west, Argentina to the east, Peru to the north, and Bolivia to the northeast. It is slightly smaller than twice the size of Montana. The climate changes from desert in the north to, Mediterranean in the middle, to cool and damp in the south. The terrain features low coastal mountains giving way to a fertile central valley and the Andes mountains in the east.

Colombia



Area: 1,138,910 sq. km.
Capital: Bogotá
Population: 52,320,000
Official Language: Spanish
Main Religion: Christianity
Currency: Colombian Peso
Government: Presidential Republic

The Republic of Colombia is the only South American country with coastlines on both the North Pacific Ocean and Caribbean Sea. It is slightly less than three times the size of Montana. It is tropical along the coast and eastern plains, cooler in the highlands. The landscape has striking contrasts from the Andes mountains to the hot coastal and eastern lowlands. When the Spanish conquistadors visited Colombia in 1499, they spread tales of a place called El Dorado, which was full of gold. The gold was never found, but Colombia has large deposits of oil, emeralds and nickel.

Ecuador



Area: 283,561 sq. km.
Capital City: Quito
Population: 17,980,000
Official Languages: Spanish, Quechua
Main Religion: Christianity
Currency: U.S. Dollar
Government: Presidential Republic

Located in the western part of South America, the Republic of Ecuador borders the Pacific Ocean at the Equator, between Colombia and Peru. It is tropical along the coast and in the Amazonian jungle, and cooler inland at higher elevations. Cotopaxi in the Andes is one of the highest active volcanoes in the world and has erupted more than 80 times. It also has one of the few glaciers found in the tropics. Ecuador's capital, Quito, is the highest capital city in the world (9,350 ft.).

Guyana



Area: 214,969 sq. km
Capital: Georgetown
Population: 770,000
Official Language: English
Main Religion: Christianity, Hinduism
Currency: Guyanese Dollar (GYD)
Government: Unitary Semi-Presidential Republic

Guyana is known for its rainforests, wildlife, and the Kaieteur Falls, one of the largest and most powerful single-drop waterfalls in the world.

Peru



Area: 1,285,216 sq. km.
Capital: Lima
Population: 33,850,000
Official Languages: Spanish, Quechua, Aymara
Main Religion: Christianity
Currency: Nuevo Sol
Government: Presidential Republic

The Republic of Peru extends for nearly 1,500 mi. along the Pacific Ocean. Colombia and Ecuador are to the north and Chile to the south. Peru is divided into three sharply differentiated zones by the Andes Mountains: an arid western coastline, a central mountainous area with peaks over 20,000 ft. and a heavily forested slope in the east. Peru has a long history of Spanish colonial rule and once contained the great Inca civilization. The famous ruin city of Machu Picchu is located in the Peruvian Andes at 14,000 ft.

Uruguay



Area: 176,215 sq. km
Capital: Montevideo
Population: 3,300,000
Official Language: Spanish
Main Religion: Christianity (Roman Catholic)
Currency: Uruguayan Peso (UYU)
Government: Unitary Presidential Republic

Uruguay is known for its beaches, the historic city of Colonia del Sacramento, and its progressive social policies. It also has a strong soccer culture.

Venezuela



Area: 912,050 sq. km.
Capital: Caracas
Population: 28,300,000
Official Languages: Spanish
Main Religion: Christianity
Currency: Bolívar Fuerte
Government: Federal Presidential Republic

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is a country on the northern coast of South America. It is bordered by Colombia to the west, Brazil to the south and Guyana to the east. It is roughly two times the size of California and considered a state of very high biodiversity. Its terrain consists of the Andes mountains in the northwest, central plains (Llanos) and highlands in the southeast. Angel Falls, the highest uninterrupted waterfall in the world, is located in the Canaima National Park. Water plunges 2,648 feet!

Oceania

Oceania is a group of island nations in the Pacific. Sometimes Australia alone is considered the seventh continent. However, many references now group several thousands of islands in the Pacific Ocean, along with Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and others as a continent and refer to it as Oceania. This passport refers to that region as Oceania and lists Oceania as a continent in these pages.



Oceania includes islands of the southern, western, and central Pacific Ocean. These islands are grouped into Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia.

Melanesia (Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, New Caledonia, Tuvalu, Bismarck Archipelago, Admiralty Islands, Fiji, New Guinea)

Micronesia (Carolina Islands, Marshall Islands, Northern Marianas Islands, Guam, Gilbert Islands, Nauru)

Polynesia (Hawaiian Islands, Samoa, Tonga, French Polynesia)

Australia is the sixth largest country in the world. It was named after Terra Australis, a Greek mythological southern continent which the ancient Greeks imagined.

American Samoa



Area: 199 sq. km.

Capital: Pago Pago

Population: 47,521

Official Languages: Samoan, English

Main Religion: Christianity

Currency: U.S. Dollar

**Government: Presidential Democracy;
a Self-Governing Territory of the U.S.**

The Territory of American Samoa is an unincorporated territory of the United States located in the South Pacific Ocean. It consists of five main islands and two coral atolls. The largest and most populous island is Tutuila, with the Manu'a Islands, Rose Atoll and Swains Island also included in the territory. StarKist tuna cannery exports several hundred million dollars worth of canned tuna to the United States each year from American Samoa.

Guam



Area: 544 sq. km.
Capital: Hagåtña
Population: 166,506
Official Languages: English, Chamorro
Main Religion: Christianity
Currency: U.S. Dollar
**Government: Presidential Democracy;
a Self-Governing Unincorporated
Territory of the U.S.**

The Territory of Guam is an organized, unincorporated territory of the United States in the Western Pacific Ocean. The Chamorros, Guam's indigenous people, first populated the island approximately 4,000 years ago. The island has a long history of European colonialism, beginning with its discovery for Europe by Ferdinand Magellan during a Spanish expedition on March 6, 1521.

Marshall Islands



Area: 181 sq. km
Capital: Majuro
Population: 58,000
Official Language: Marshallese, English
Main Religion: Christianity
Currency: United States Dollar (USD)
**Government: Unitary Presidential
Republic**

The Marshall Islands is made up of over 1,000 islands in the Pacific Ocean and is known for its beautiful atolls and rich culture.

Micronesia



Area: 702 sq. km
Capital: Palikir
Population: 105,000
**Official Language: English, indigenous
languages**
Main Religion: Christianity
Currency: United States Dollar (USD)
Government: Federal Republic

The Federated States of Micronesia consists of four states spread across the Pacific Ocean, with rich traditions and coral reefs.

Northern Mariana Islands



Area: 464 sq. km
Capital: Saipan
Population: 51,118
Official Language: Philippine languages, Chamorro
Main Religion: Christianity, Roman Catholic
Currency: United States Dollar (USD)
Government: US; Republican form of government

The Northern Mariana Islands are a U.S. commonwealth in the Pacific Ocean. Saipan, the largest island, is known for its sandy shores and mountainous landscapes. In clear waters off its west coast is the tiny, coral-fringed Mañagaha islet. On Saipan's northeast coast, turtles inhabit the Grotto, a cavern dive site. Nearby, memorials mark Banzai Cliff and Suicide Cliff, sites from WWII's Battle of Saipan.

Palau



Area: 459 sq. km
Capital: Ngerulmud
Population: 18,000
Official Language: Palauan, English
Main Religion: Christianity
Currency: United States Dollar (USD)
Government: Presidential Republic

Palau is an island nation known for its pristine beaches, clear lagoons, and vibrant marine life.

Samoa

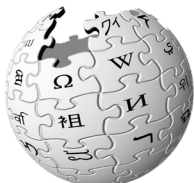


Area: 2,842 sq.km.
Capital: Apia
Pop.: 216,663
Languages: English and Samoan
Main Religion: Christianity
Currency: t l (Samoan for dollar)
Government: Unitary Dominant-party parliamentary democracy with a trace of aristocracy

Samoa, officially the Independent State of Samoa and, until 4 July 1997, known as Western Samoa, is a country consisting of two main islands, Savai'i and Upolu, and four smaller islands. The Lapita people discovered and settled the Samoan Islands around 3,500 years ago. They developed a unique Samoan language and Samoan cultural identity.

INTERNET RESOURCES

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