

Where People Live and What They Do

Africa has four main climates. Within each climate is a way of life specific to those people. The densest populations are located in cities near a significant water source, either fresh or salt. As water resources shrink in an area, so does the population. The climates of the Sahel, savannas and rainforests are hospitable and so more people live there than in the Sahara.



Word Definition

subsistence farming:

farming that provides for the basic needs of the farmer's family, with little or nothing left over to sell

Population Map of Africa



As the physical characteristics of an area change, so do the people. When an area can support logging and farming, people stay. When the trees and soil are gone, the people leave. Africa has many people in many places in a variety of environments. But some common elements link the peoples of the continent.

While agriculture produces some commodities to export, **subsistence farming** is the standard in most areas. About 33 percent of the population now lives in cities. Many city residents drive cars, but the number of cars in Africa is still relatively small compared to western standards.



Map Skills

Study the population map of Africa.

What city has the highest population? _____
In what country is that city located? _____

In the Sahara

Sahara means desert in Arabic. Because of the scarcity of water, the Sahara Desert is thinly populated except in northern Morocco, Algeria and Egypt along the Mediterranean coast. It has roughly one person per square mile, making it one of the lowest population densities on Earth.



kasbah

Egypt has a thriving tourist industry with sea resorts, international conferences, and art and cultural destinations. Likewise, Morocco is a tourist hotspot with exotic markets, kasbahs, and the famous city of Casablanca. The service industry employs tour guides, hotel staff, and restaurant workers, while the local people benefit from selling their famous rugs and other merchandise.

The majority of the people in the Sahara are nomads, who walk through the desert looking for an oasis for their herds. In the important salt trade, trucks are replacing camels. Airplanes and trucks specially equipped to handle sand are primary modes of transportation.



Word Definition

kasbah: *a traditional fortress in pre-colonial northern Africa with high walls and usually no windows*

In the Sahel

The Sahel is the transition zone from the Sahara to tropical rain forests. This region has only 4-8 inches of rain per year, which falls from May to September. It is becoming more of a desert every year. Most residents live as subsistence farmers or herd livestock. Some people work in the iron ore and uranium mines. The persistence of drought forces herders to keep moving south, closer to the rainforests.

Unique to the Sahel, the baobab tree is important to its people, supplying food, shelter, clothing, and medicine as well as materials for hunting and fishing. People in the Sahel live in trade areas along the eastern Atlantic coast and along the Nile. The primary transportation mode is walking, followed by bicycling. People also use animal-drawn carts, plus some cars, trucks, and rail service.



baobab trees

In the Savanna

The savanna features rolling grasslands with scattered trees and shrubs. This is the part of Africa you usually see in movies, with grazing herds of zebras and giraffes alongside coffee plantations. The savannas average 30 to 50 inches of annual rainfall divided between a wet season and a dry season. Basically, it's either soaking wet or parched there. Taking advantage of available water, most of the people live along the coast, as well as along the Nile River. Most of the agriculture is subsistence farming and nomadic herding. People walk and ride bicycles alongside animal-drawn carts and cars. Trains and buses operate in urban areas.

In the Rainforest

The rainforest has a lush plant life and a wide variety of animals. It has more than 90 inches of rainfall annually, with constant warm temperatures. Many residents of the rainforest live around Lake Tanganyika to enjoy access to water. Native peoples in the rainforest earn their living by hunting and selling the meat. Many who live in Nigeria work for the government or in the thriving telecommunications business. The oil industry in Nigeria and Equatorial Guinea also employs people. Agriculture mainly consists of subsistence farming and nomadic herding. People here usually walk or bike. There are cars in cities as well as buses and trains for public transportation.



On your postcard:

The front should have a picture of the environment, animals, weather, etc. of the climate zone you are assigned.

In your message, include: the type of work you do, how you travel, the weather, & specifically where you live (on the coast? near a river?) based on the reading.