

# Cameroon

(La République du Cameroun /  
The United Republic of Cameroon)



Languages:	Official languages: French (ca. 80%) and English (ca. 20%), 230 local languages and dialects
Capital:	Yaoundé
Area:	475'400 sq.km. (11.5 x Switzerland)
Population:	18'175'000 (2006); cf. Switzerland: 7,7 m (2009)
Population density:	38 inhabitants / sq.km. (2006)
Population growth:	3.8% (2008)
GDP/capita:	990 US-\$ (2006)
HDI:	0.532 (2007/8; rank 144 of 177)
Life expectancy:	45.7 years (2005)
Literacy:	female: 60%, male: 77% (2005)
Birth rate:	39.3 ‰ (2005; world average: 25‰)
Death rate:	11.9 ‰ (2005; world average: 9.3‰)
Religions:	53% Christians: half Protestants, half Catholics (2008) 22% Muslims (2008) 25% local traditional (indigenous) religions (2008)

## Geography

Land boundaries: Cameroon is located in Central Africa and is bordered with Nigeria, Chad, the Central African Republic, the Republic of the Congo, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea.

Terrain: **Interior:** flat plateau (rises northward to the Adamawa highland)  
**Extrême-Nord:** depression towards Lake Chad, flood area of the Logone River  
**West:** volcanic mountains (Mount Cameroon)  
**Southern plateau:** tropical rainforest, coastal area



Climate: 3 climatic zones:

- North: rainy season from June until September (at time water until November), dry season from October until May
- Centre: ranges from savannah scrub in the North to rain forest in the South
- South: equatorial climate

## History

1472:	The Portuguese discover the coast of Cameroon (delta of the Wouri River) and name it „Rio dos Camaroes“ because of its abundance of prawns (that’s why the region was then called “Cameroon”)
From 1520: 16 <sup>th</sup> – 18 <sup>th</sup> century: Ca. 1840:	Active trade (slaves, ivory, and palm oil) in the coastal region Nation building (best known: Maoui-nation) Sugar plantations being set up, slave trade abandoned, begin of missionary activity in Cameroon and exploration of the hinterland (by the German Africa explorer Heinrich Barth)
1884:	Cameroon becomes a German protectorate, treaties with Britain and France as well as with local rulers, development of cocoa and oil palm plantations, creation of a functioning infrastructure, construction of a railway network for transportation
1918:	Cameroon becomes a League of Nations mandate territory and is split into French Cameroun (East) and British Cameroon (West)
10 <sup>th</sup> May 1957:	First national assembly in French Cameroun
1 <sup>st</sup> January 1960:	Independence of French Cameroun after many years of guerrilla warfare
5 <sup>th</sup> May 1960:	Ahmadou Ahidjo becomes first president
1 <sup>st</sup> October 1961:	East Cameroun and West Cameroon form the “Federal Republic of Cameroon”
1966:	The Union Nationale Camerounaise (UNC) becomes the sole legal political party
1982:	Premier Minister Paul Biya becomes president
Ca. 1990:	Attempted coup d’état by supporters of Ahidjo, economic and social crisis, strikes, demands for freedom of the press, creation of an opposition party
1992:	Presidential elections (Biya 40%, John Fru Ndi 37%)
1996:	New constitution comes into force
1997 / 2004:	Presidential elections, president Biya re-elected

## Government and Politics

Government type:	French type presidential republic (president appoints and dismisses the Premier Minister and government officials and determines the political agenda)
President:	President of the Republic: Paul Biya (since November 1982) (New constitution of 18 <sup>th</sup> January 1996 establishes 7 year term of office with a onetime re-election. President Biya was re-elected on 11th October 2004.)
Premier Minister:	Ephraim Inoni

## External Trade

Import:	Mineral and other raw materials, semi-finished goods, industrial consumer goods, food, beverages, tobacco and transport equipment
Export:	Crude oil, lumber, cocoa and coffee