

**OFFICIAL NAME:** Republic of Cameroon

**CAPITAL:** Yaounde

**SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT:** Unitary Multiparty Republic

**AREA:** 457,439 Sq Km (183,568 Sq Mi)

**ESTIMATED 2000 POPULATION** 15,863,900

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**LOCATION & GEOGRAPHY:** Cameroon is located in Central West Africa. It is bound by Equatorial Guinea to the southwest, Gabon to the south, Congo to the southeast, the Central African Republic to the east, Chad to the northeast, Nigeria to the northwest and the Gulf of Guinea to the west. The country can be divided into four topographical zones. (1.) A low coastal plain in the south which has equatorial rain forests and swamp lands along its edges. (2.) A savannah covered plateau in its center which is known as Adamaoua Plateau. (3.) A mountainous area in the west which is covered in forests and has an active volcano called Mount Cameroon. (4.) A rolling sub arid savannah in the north. The northern zone is drained by the Logone and Chari Rivers which flow into the Lake Chad Basin. The other principal rivers are the Wouri, Sanaga, Dibamba and Nyong all of which flow into the Gulf of Guinea. Major Cities (pop. est.); Douala 810,000, Yaounde 649,000, Garoua 142,000, Maroua 123,000 (1987). Land Use; forested 77%, pastures 4%, agricultural-cultivated 15%, other 4% (1993).

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**CLIMATE:** Cameroon has a tropical climate which varies from equatorial in the south to sahelian in the north. The sahelian climate in the north has a wet season between April and September while the rest of the year is dry. Average annual precipitation for this region is between 1,000 and 1,750 mm (39 to 69 inches). The equatorial south has two wet seasons and two dry seasons with one wet season between March and June and the great wet season between August and November while one dry season is between June and August and the great dry season is between November to March. Average temperature ranges in Yaounde are from 18 to 29 degrees Celsius (64 to 84 degrees Fahrenheit) with an average annual precipitation of 4,030 mm (159 inches).

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**PEOPLE:** Cameroon's ethnic composition is diverse with approximately 200 ethnic groups. The principal ethnic groups consist of the Cameroon Highlanders who account for 31% of the population, the Equatorial Bantu for 19%, the Kirdi for 11%, the Fulani for 10%, the Northwestern Bantu for 8% and the Nigrific for 7%. Ethnic aliens include African tribal groups such as the Hausa, Ibo, Ewe, and Europeans which include French, German, American, British, Canadian, Greeks, Syrians, Cypriots and Lebanese.

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**DEMOGRAPHIC/VITAL STATISTICS:** Density; 26 persons per sq km (68 persons per sq mi) (1991). Urban-Rural; 42.4% urban, 57.6% rural (1990). Sex Distribution; 49.9% male, 50.1%

female (1991). Life Expectancy at Birth; 51.0 years male, 54.0 years female (1990). Age Breakdown; 46% under 15, 24% 15 to 29, 15% 30 to 44, 9% 45 to 59, 6% 60 and over (1990). Birth Rate; 47.5 per 1,000 (1990). Death Rate; 14.9 per 1,000 (1990). Increase Rate; 32.6 per 1,000 (1990). Infant Mortality Rate; 94.0 per 1,000 live births (1990).

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**RELIGIONS:** Around 25% of the population follow local native tribal beliefs while Christians account for 53% and 22% are Muslims.

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**LANGUAGES:** The official languages are French and English with French being the dominant. However, some 80 major African languages are spoken by the diverse ethnic tribal groups.

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**EDUCATION:** Aged 15 or over and having attained: no formal schooling 51.1%, primary 41.7%, secondary 5.9%, higher 0.5% (1976). Literacy; literate population aged 15 or over 54.1% (1990).

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**MODERN HISTORY - WWII TO 1993:** On Jan. 1, 1960 French Cameroon became the independent Republic of Cameroon with a presidential system of government and on June 1, 1961 British Cameroon was divided into the North and South. The northern part of British Cameroon joined with Nigeria, while the southern part joined the independent Republic of Cameroon and from then until 1972 Cameroon operated as a federation of two states East and West Cameroon. In May 1972 Cameroon adopted a new constitution that eliminated the two separate states and Cameroon was declared the United Republic of Cameroon. In 1982 Ahmadou Ahidjo resigned after 22 years as President and was replaced by Paul Biya. In 1983 Ahidjo fled to France after leading an unsuccessful coup attempt against Biya due to the fact that Ahidjo was a Muslim from the north and Biya a Christian from the south. In 1984 the Biya government crushed a coup attempt by Muslim officers from the north which resulted in the execution of around fifty officers. Later the head of state gained control over the military by delegating the Defense Ministry to his office. In 1986 some political prisoners were released and in 1987 Biya carried out economic reforms which included the reform of the public sector. In 1990 there were numerous demonstrations as well as strikes by lawyers, teachers and students in protest for democratic reforms. The protests resulted in the deaths of six marchers which forced Biya to endorse multi-partyism. In July 1990 a national conference called for the legalization of opposition parties, human rights legislation and freedom of the press. By the close of 1990 nearly all political prisoners were released. In 1991 some 25 opposition parties were legalized, although Pres. Biya refused to allow a national conference or new elections. In May 1991 after mass civil disobedience the military took control of seven provinces. In Sept. 1991 Pres. Biya suspended all political parties and

closed five newspapers which resulted in a coalition of opposition leaders embarking on an international mission to convince the US, Canada and EU to withdraw support for the governing regime. Also during 1991 there were continued border clashes with Nigeria over a long-standing dispute. On Mar. 1, 1992 the RDPC won the first multiparty elections in 32 years while Pres. Biya was narrowly reelected in presidential elections held on Oct. 11, 1992, with his nearest rival John Fru Ndi being placed under house arrest immediately after the elections. Following the elections there were accusations of fraud and some violent demonstrations while the US suspended \$14 million of aid. On Nov. 27, 1992 Pres. Biya reshuffled the cabinet and reappointed Simon Achidi Achu, who had become the country's first Anglophone prime minister in April 1992. In Mar. 1993 antigovernment protesters were arrested in three cities while demonstrations considered potentially violent were banned by the government. In June 1993, unpaid civil servants demonstrated while in the same month Pres. Biya government outmaneuvered their political opponents by convening a Grand National Debate on Constitutional Reform rather than opposition demands from John Fru Ndi's SDF for a Sovereign National Conference. On Aug. 10, 1993 a joint Cameroon-Nigeria border commission met in an attempt to resolve long-standing border conflicts. Also during 1993 the economic condition remained in crisis despite government curtailed budgets and civil service salary cuts.

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**CURRENCY:** The official currency is the CFA Franc (Communiante Financiere Africaine-CFAF) divided into 100 Centimes.

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**ECONOMY:** Gross National Product; USD \$9,663,000,000 (1993). Public Debt; USD \$5,683,000,000 (1993). Imports; CFAF 650,610,000,000 (1991). Exports; CFAF 788,300,000,000 (1993). Tourism Receipts; USD \$47,000,000 (1993). Balance of Trade; CFAF 249,700,000,000 (1993). Economically Active Population; 4,740,000 or 40.0% of total population (1991). Unemployed; N/A.

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**MAIN TRADING PARTNERS:** Its main trading partners are France, the USA, Germany, Japan, Italy, the Netherlands and the former USSR.

**MAIN PRIMARY PRODUCTS:** Bauxite, Cassava, Cocoa, Coffee, Cotton, Ground Nuts, Gold, Iron Ore, Livestock, Maize, Millet, Oil and Natural Gas, Palm Oil, Plantains, Rubber, Sorghum, Sweet Potatoes, Timber, Tin, Yams.

**MAJOR INDUSTRIES:** Agriculture, Aluminum Smelting, Beverages, Food Processing, Forestry, Mining, Shoes, Textiles, Tourism.

**MAIN EXPORTS:** Aluminum, Cocoa, Coffee, Cotton, Petroleum, Rubber, Timber.

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**TRANSPORT:** Railroads; route length 1,104 km (686 mi) (1988), passenger-km 469,600,000 (291,796,000 passenger-mi) (1988), cargo ton-km 595,500,000 (407,858,000 short ton-mi) (1988). Roads; length 52,214 km (32,444 mi) (1987). Vehicles; cars 78,272 (1987), trucks and buses 43,868 (1987). Merchant Marine; vessels 43 (1990), deadweight tonnage 38,602 (1990). Air Transport; passenger-km 580,000,000 (360,000,000 passenger-mi) (1985), cargo ton-km 111,000,000 (76,000,000 short ton-mi) (1985).

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**COMMUNICATIONS:** Daily Newspapers; total of 2 with a circulation of 35,000 (1994). Radio; receivers 1,500,000 (1994). Television; receivers 15,000 (1994). Telephones; units 57,200 (1993).

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**MILITARY:** 14,600 (1995) total active duty personnel with 89.0% army, 8.9% navy and 2.1% air force while military expenditure accounts for 2.1% (1993) of the Gross National Product (GNP).