1. the second largest continent, south of Europe and between the Atlantic and Indian Oceans.

about 30~300~000 km²

Summary Article: Africa
From Geography of the World

The second largest continent, Africa is a land of contrasts. To the north lies the great Sahara, the largest desert in the world. The central parts, which the Equator runs through, are covered in dense tropical rainforests, while further south a series of grassy plateaux (areas of flat highland) give way to narrow coastal plains. Major mountain ranges include the Atlas in the north and the Ruwenzori range on the Uganda-Democratic Republic of Congo border.

Africa's highest mountain is Kilimanjaro, a dormant volcano in Tanzania. To the east is the Great Rift Valley, which contains several huge lakes. Some of the world's longest rivers drain the continent, including the Nile, Niger, Congo, and the Zambezi.

Great Rift Valley
The Great Rift Valley stretches from Mozambique in the south, through east Africa and the Red Sea, into Syria. In most places the valley is 30–100 km (19–62 miles) wide, with steep sides rising up to 2,000 m (6,562 ft). The valley was formed as blocks of land sank between faults in the Earth's crust. In east Africa, the valley has two main branches. The Rift Valley is marked by volcanoes, hot springs, and a long chain of lakes.

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Lake Victoria

Lake Victoria is Africa's largest lake and the second largest freshwater lake in the world. Lying on the Equator, between Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda, it covers about 69,484 sq km (26,828 sq miles) and reaches 82 m (269 ft) at its deepest point. The River Nile flows out of the northern end of the lake. Lake Victoria is rich in fish, which provide an important source of income for the large numbers of people living along the lake shores.
Millions of flamingos flock to Lake Turkana and other Rift Valley lakes to nest and feed on tiny water plants.

**Deserts**

Africa has three huge deserts. The vast Sahara is the world’s largest desert, and dominates the northern third of the continent. Thousands of years ago, the Sahara had a moist climate. Today, the path of wet winds blowing in from the sea is blocked by other winds blowing outwards from the desert. The Namib and Kalahari deserts cover large areas of southwest Africa. Although it lies along the coast, the Namib Desert, is particularly barren and dry.

**Rainforests**

The world’s second largest rainforest, after the Amazon, lies in central Africa. It teems with plant and...
animal life, including rare creatures such as okapis. It was also the home of several groups of pygmies, but many now live in settled villages, as vast areas of forest have been destroyed for logging and farming. One group, the Bambuti, still live in the northeast forests of Democratic Republic of Congo.

**Drakensberg mountains**

The highest mountains in southern Africa are the Drakensberg. They form part of the rim of a saucer-shaped plateau of high land, called the Great Escarpment. In the local Zulu language, the mountains are known as Quathlamba, which means the “barrier of pointed spears”. The highest peak, Thabana Ntlenyana, rises 3,482 m (11,424 ft) above sea level, and is capped with snow in winter.

**Facts about Africa**

- **Area**: 30,131,536 sq km (11,633,846 sq miles)
- **Highest point**: Mt. Kilimanjaro, Tanzania, 5,895 m (19,341 ft) *Map I9*
- **Longest river**: Nile, Egypt/Sudan/Uganda, 6,738 km (4,187 miles) *Map H3*
- **Largest lake**: L. Victoria, Tanzania/Uganda/Kenya, 69,484 sq km (26,828 sq miles) *Map I8*
- **Largest island**: Madagascar, 587,040 sq km (226,660 sq miles) *Map K11*
- **Highest temperature**: Al’Aziziyah, Libya, 58°C (136°F)
- **Lowest temperature**: Ifrane, Morocco, -24°C (-11°F)
The Niger river

The Niger is Africa’s third longest river. From its source in Guinea, it flows some 4,180 km (2,597 miles) across west Africa to its delta in Nigeria. Along its long course, the Niger drains a river basin almost three times the size of France. The Niger’s water is used for irrigation and hydroelectric power, but its usefulness for transport is limited by its many waterfalls and rapids.

Wildlife

Africa has an amazing variety of wildlife. Huge herds of zebra and wildebeest roam the grassy plains, preyed on by lions and cheetahs. There are elephants, ostriches, and long-necked giraffes. Hippos wallow in rivers and swamps. In the rainforests live chimpanzees and gorillas, among the rarest animals on Earth.

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