
I. GENERAL

History

Cameroon has been inhabited since prehistoric times and there are now more than 210 diverse tribal and linguistic groups. The country's earliest known trade was with neighbouring African countries in the North — Egypt, the Fezzan, Libya and Chad.

The first Europeans in the area were the Portuguese. In 1472, Portuguese navigator Fernando Po sailed up the estuary of what is now called the Wouri River. He had named the river Rio dos Camarões and this name, transformed in English to Cameroon (Cameroun in French), became the name of the country.

Germany established a protectorate in Douala in 1884 and in 1916, the country was divided between France and Britain. This arrangement was confirmed in June 1919 by the Treaty of Versailles.

The country became independent on January 1, 1960, and the Federal Republic of Cameroon (English Cameroon and French Cameroon) was created on October 1, 1961. Eleven years later, the federal system was dismantled and a united republic was formed with a predominant French influence and a strong English-speaking minority. Since January 25, 1984, the country has been called the Republic of Cameroon.

Geography

The country, with an area of more than 475 000 km² lies at the junction of Western and Central Africa. It is bounded on the west by Nigeria, on the east by the Central African Republic, on the north by the Republic of Chad, and on the south by the People's Republic of the Congo, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea.

In the southwest, Cameroon has a narrow (500 km) outlet to the Atlantic coast on the Gulf of Guinea; in the north, it opens on Lake Chad.

Climate

Cameroon has a humid equatorial climate in the south and a Sahel-type climate in the north. The mountainous western region enjoys a fairly temperate climate and is