

West African countries – Mali

Mali is a large country in West Africa. It has 18 million people.
It is a big country – as big as Angola or South Africa.

Some of the country of Mali is in the Sahara desert – there is a lot of desert sand in the north of the country. It is very hot there and no plants can grow. Mali is one of the hottest countries in the world.
In the south of Mali, there is a little rain from June to December. In the north, there is no rain.

It is a very old country. People lived here thousands of years ago.
It was part of the Ghana Empire and the Mali Empire.

People

The people of Mali come from different groups – the Bambara group is the biggest. Other groups are the Mandinka, Soninke and Khassonke. In the north are other

There are many different languages in Mali. The official language is French and most people can speak Bambara. But there are another 40 languages in Mali – including Bomu, Soninke, Tamasheq and others.

History

In the year 1300 AD, the Mali Empire was very big – it was bigger than modern Mali. It continued all the way to the Atlantic Ocean.

In history there was a lot of trade in gold and salt. People from many countries bought and sold things in Mali. Mali still has a lot of gold and uranium, and salt. Today Mali sells a lot of cotton, rice, vegetables and tobacco – as well as gold - to other countries.

Tourism

Mali has a very famous city – called Timbuktu. The name of Timbuktu is famous everywhere in the world. But not many people go there as tourists.

The cities of Timbuktu and Djenné were centres of learning.
People in Mali studied mathematics and astronomy. The experts in Mali wrote many books hundreds of years ago. These old books are still in Timbuktu.

There are interesting places for tourists to visit in Timbuktu and Djenné.
In Timbuktu there are many old buildings, mosques and madrasahs. It was a very important city in history.

In Djenné there are many old buildings and a lot of traditional houses. The city started in 250 BC – over 2000 years ago. The city was rich and sold gold to other countries.

Culture

The culture of Mali is very interesting.
There are famous musicians like Ali Farka Toure (1939-2006)
He is famous outside Mali and made music in the USA too. His music is popular with people who like Blues music. A band from the north, Tinariwen, is also very popular in Europe and USA.

There are many writers from Mali, like Yambo Ouloguém. Many stories are told by the 'griots' as well, people who tell spoken stories.

Cuisine

Malian food is very good. It uses rice, millet, meat like chicken and beef, and vegetables like spinach and baobab. In Mali they make a special sauce from tomatoes and peanuts. They make 'fufu' from cassava and plantains. They make 'jollof rice' with rice, tomatoes, onions, chili and sometimes vegetables. They make 'maafe' from peanuts with chicken and tomatoes. These dishes are very popular in Mali.

Sport

Sport is very popular in Mali. The most popular sport is football. The most popular teams are Stade Malien, Djoliba AC and Real Bamako. Basketball is also very popular and the women's basketball team went to the Olympics in 2008.

New words for this article

1	desert	a land with no water, and only sand
2	trade	business of buying and selling
3	astronomy	the study of stars and planets
4	griot	storyteller

Comprehension questions

- 1 Where does it rain in Mali?
- 2 Which is the biggest group of people?
- 3 What is the most famous city in Mali?
- 4 When did the city of Djenné start?
- 5 What is in jollof rice?

Answers

Comprehension questions -

- 1 In the south
- 2 The Bambara people
- 3 Timbuktu
- 4 About 250 BC – 2000 years ago
- 5 They make 'jollof rice' with rice, tomatoes, onions, chili and sometimes vegetables