

MALI

The Republic of Mali is a landlocked country in West Africa located southwest of Algeria. Mali is the eighth-largest country in Africa, with an area of over 1,240,000 square kilometers (480,000 sq.m). Mali is bordered by Algeria to the north, Niger to the east, Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire to the south, Guinea to the south-west, and Senegal and Mauritania to the west.

The population of Mali is 14.5 million. Its capital is Bamako. Mali consists of eight regions and its borders on the north reach deep into the middle of the Sahara Desert. The Mali Empire was founded by Sundiata Keita. The country's economy centers on agriculture and fishing. Mali's population encompasses a number of sub-Saharan ethnic groups.

The Bambara are by far the largest single ethnic group, making up 36.5 percent of the population. The varied everyday culture of Malians reflects the country's ethnic and geographic diversity. Most Malians wear flowing, colorful robes called boubous that are typical of West Africa. Kora is the most popular instrument in Mali. A famous festival in Mali is the festival in the desert for 3 days which has traditional Tuareg dances and music, camel races, but the festival really gets exciting at night when modern Malian music is played. Rice and millet (grass) are common Malian food, which is based on cereal grains. Malians make a handmade cotton fabric dyed with mud and has become a symbol of Malians cultural identity.