

Understanding the Horn of Africa

<http://understandingthehorn.org/>

An online curriculum project of the Center for African Studies
University of California, Berkeley

This material was developed under a Title VI [International Research and Studies](#) grant from the U.S. Department of Education. However, the content does not necessarily represent the policy or views of the U.S. Department of Education, or imply endorsement by the Federal Government.

HORN OF AFRICA: SURPRISING AND FUN FACTS

Objective: Learn about aspects of countries in the Horn of Africa that go beyond the most common notions of these countries. Explore how our knowledge of these countries is constructed.

Suggested Activities:

1. Before reading through this document, students individually or in groups should write down three to five things they ‘know’ about each of these countries.
2. Read through the facts and select a few that are the most surprising and interesting.
3. As homework, update, add, correct and dispute these fun ‘facts’. Carefully record sources.
4. Explore a particular ‘fact’ further. Is there a bigger, more complicated story behind the ‘fact’? Are there other facts that contradict this fact?
5. Discuss how we gain knowledge about particular countries.
6. Discuss credible sources of information.
7. Edit Wikipedia articles with new and verified information.*

*For using Wikipedia in the classroom, see:

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HORN OF AFRICA: SURPRISING AND FUN FACTS



DJIBOUTI- named for the capital city, which some claim to come from the Afar word 'gabouti', a type of doormat made of palm fibers. It is also known as "Land of Tehuti" after the Egyptian Moon God.¹

- Geographic coordinates: 11 30 N, 43 00 E. Is slightly smaller than Massachusetts²
- Currently hosts the only US military base, Camp Lemonnier, in Sub-Saharan Africa³
- Was once known as French Somaliland from 1888 to 1967⁴
- Currently, the main port for Ethiopian commerce⁵
- One of the least populous countries in Africa. Pop. 818,159 from 2009 census⁶
- Plans in effect to connect Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East with the Bridge of Horns, a suspension bridge linking Djibouti and Yemen. The bridge would be 17 mi/ 28 km long and would suspend about one-fourth of a mile or 400 meters above sea level.⁷
- Lac Assal (Lake Assal) is the lowest point in Africa and is the most saline body of water in the world.⁸
- Has invested \$19.6 million in the development of geothermal power.⁹

ERITREA- derives from "Sinus Erythraeus" the name the Greeks gave to the Red Sea¹⁰

- Geographic coordinates: 15 00 N, 39 00 E. Is slightly larger than Pennsylvania¹¹
- Within its territory (about 48,000 square miles or 125,000 square kilometers), there is a variety of topographical features, including mountains, deserts, highland plateaus, lowland plains, and about 150 coral islands.¹²
- The capital city Asmara gets its name from Arbaete Asmara which literally means, in the Tigrinya language, "the four are united" and refers to the unification of 4 villages.
- Russian poet Alexander Pushkin is said to be 1/8 Eritrean.¹³ His great-grandfather, Abram Petrovich Gannibal, is believed to have been born in present-day Lagon, Eritrea.¹⁴
- In the 1930s, Italian colonizers developed Asmara in the Art Deco genre. These features have been virtually untouched since then.¹⁵ View examples of Eritrean Art Deco on [Flickr](#).
- Eritrea is the second youngest African country, seceding from Ethiopia to become an official republic in 1993.¹⁶
- The Tour of Eritrea, an internationally accepted bicycle competition which began in 1946, is approximately 550km long.¹⁷

ETHIOPIA- derives from Greek word "ethio" meaning burned and "pia" meaning face¹⁸

- Geographic Coordinates: 8 00 N, 38 00 E. Is almost twice as big as Texas.¹⁹
- Believed to be where coffee originated from.²⁰
- With the exception of the 1936-41 Italian occupation during World War II, Ethiopia is one of two African countries that maintained its freedom from colonial rule. The other country is Liberia.²¹
- Believed to be the final resting place of the Ark of Covenant in the province of Axum.²²

-First Black African man to win an Olympic marathon was Ethiopian Abebe Bikila, who did so barefoot in 1960. He also was the first to win two Olympic gold medals in the marathon while breaking the world record.²³

-The 3.7 million-year-old skeleton of “Lucy” or “Dinknesh” one of the earliest ancestor of modern humans, was found in Ethiopia.²⁴

-The region of Lalibela is home to 11 monolithic churches (churches hewn from a single block of stone) constructed in the 12th century.²⁵

KENYA- named after Mt. Kenya from the term Kere-Nyaga meaning “Mountain of Whiteness”²⁶

-Geographic coordinates: 1 00 N, 38 00 E. Slightly more than twice the size of Nevada.²⁷

-Home to Africa’s first woman to win a Nobel Peace Prize, Professor Wangari Maathai in 2004 for her contribution to sustainable development, democracy and peace.²⁸

-There are more than 65 national parks and wildlife preserves and Kenya has introduced wildlife conservation into the public school curriculum.²⁹³⁰ Read more at the [George Wright Forum](#).

-Jomo Kenyatta National Airport is the biggest airport in Central and East Africa.³¹

-Kenya is the world's largest exporter of black tea.³²

-In 1905, Nairobi replaced Mombasa as capital of the British protectorate.³³

-Nairobi is also home to the largest ice rink in Africa: the Solar Ice Rink at the Panari Hotel. The rink, opened in 2005, covers 1,393m² or about 15,000 square feet and can accommodate 200 people.³⁴

SOMALIA- named for the legendary father of the Somali people, Samaal (or Samale).³⁵

-Geographic coordinates: 10 00 N, 49 00 E. Is slightly smaller than Texas.³⁶

-Somali, which has 10-12 million speakers, has gone through multiple waves of script changes. In 1972, it changed from Arabic-based scripts to a Latin-based alphabet, which it maintains today.³⁷

-Upholds the reputation of being a land of poets.³⁸

-Has one of the lowest HIV infection rates in Africa.³⁹

-Has the cheapest cellular calling rates in Africa.⁴⁰

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