

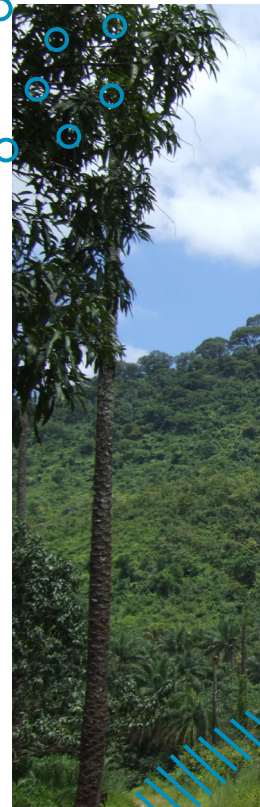
# 10 Welcome to Guinea



7<sup>th</sup> WORLD YOUTH CONGRESS  
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Guinea is a country that has shaped the history of post-Colonial Africa while maintaining its own unique identity. It dominates the geography of the region of West Africa and is the source of the mighty Niger, Gambia, Senegal and Manu Rivers, earning it the title: "Water tower of West Africa." Guinea has four distinct natural regions: the coast, the mountains, savannah and the forest - each with their own distinct sub-culture and natural beauty.

Between the 11<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, Guinea was part of different West African empires: the Ghanaian / Ashanti Empire, the Mali Empire, the Songhai Empire and the Theocratic



Empire of Fouta and Wassoulou. Its people were involved in the Slave Trade - and several slave ports survive to this day.

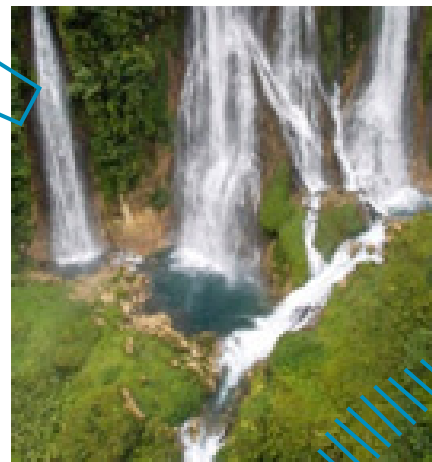
The French defeated the Theocratic Empire of Fouta and Wassoulou, and incorporated the Country into French West Africa for 60 years. Guinea declared independence in October 1958 and Sekou Touré became President, ruling dictatorially, with support from first the USSR and then the USA for 24 years. Lansana Conté took power in another military coup and ruled a one-party state until his death in 2008. After a brief hiatus with another military coup, President Alpha Conde - who had been imprisoned by Lansana Conté - won what is considered to be Guinea's first free and fair election.

President Condé's Rally of the People of Guinea (RPG) declared on his election that "Guinea's Back - and open for business!" His vision is to unite all Guineans to work together for democratic stability that will improve the lives of all Guineans. Conde's vision is based on five priorities:

- National unity in the pursuit of democracy and fundamental freedoms
- Food self-sufficiency in 3 years
- Education and Health for All
- Economic development of agriculture + a productive informal sector, structural reforms
- Increased foreign investment and regional integration

At 245 800 km<sup>2</sup> (310 sq mi), Guinea is roughly the size of the United Kingdom and slightly smaller than the U.S. state of Oregon. There are 300 km (190 mi) of coastline and a total land border of 3,400 km (2,100 mi). Its neighbours are Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast), Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Senegal and Sierra Leone.

The population of Guinea is estimated at 10.2 million. Conakry, the capital and largest city, is the hub of Guinea's economy, commerce, education, and culture. The official language of Guinea is French. Islam is the majority religion. Approximately 85% of the population is Muslim, while 8% is Christian, and 7% holds traditional animist beliefs.



Like other West African countries, Guinea has a rich musical tradition. The group Bembeya Jazz became popular in the 1960s after Guinean independence.

Guinea has abundant natural resources including 25% or more of the world's known bauxite reserves. Guinea also has diamonds, gold, and other metals. Because of its great rivers, the country has great potential for hydroelectric power. Bauxite and alumina are currently the only major exports. Other industries include processing plants for beer, juices, soft drinks and tobacco. Agriculture employs 80% of the nation's labor force. Guinea is a major exporter of minerals, bananas, pineapples, coffee, peanuts, and palm oil.

It is a beautiful country and superb holiday destination which, once visited, demands many returns.

