

BENIN



Country Dialing Code (Tel/Fax): ++229

Ministere du Commerce et du Tourisme: BP 2037 Cotonou Tel 307 014/5 Fax 307 031

Capital: Porto Novo Time: GMT + 1

Background: Dahomey gained its independence from FRANCE TEL: in 1960; the name was changed to Benin in 1975. From 1974 to 1989 the country was a socialist state; free elections were reestablished in 1991.

Location: Western Africa, bordering the North Atlantic Ocean, between Nigeria and Togo

Map References: Africa

Area: total: 112,620 sq km land: 110,620 sq km water: 2,000 sq km

Climate: tropical; hot, humid in south; semiarid in north

Terrain: mostly flat to undulating plain; some hills and low mountains

Natural Resources: small offshore oil deposits, limestone, marble, timber

Population: 6,395,919

Nationality: noun: Beninese (singular and plural) adjective: Beninese

Ethnic Groups: African 99% (42 ethnic groups, most important being Fon, Adja, Yoruba, Bariba), Europeans 5,500

Religions: indigenous beliefs 70%, Muslim 15%, Christian 15%

Languages: French (official), Fon and Yoruba (most common vernaculars in south), tribal languages (at least six major ones in north)

Economy: The economy of Benin remains underdeveloped and dependent on subsistence agriculture, cotton production, and regional trade. Growth in real output has averaged a sound 4% in 1990-95 and 5% in 1996-99. Rapid population growth has offset much of this growth in output. Inflation has subsided over the past three years. Commercial and transport activities, which make up a large part of GDP, are vulnerable to developments in Nigeria, particularly fuel shortages. The Paris Club and bilateral creditors have eased the external debt situation in recent years. The government, still burdened with money-losing state enterprises and a bloated civil service, has been gradually implementing a structural adjustment program since 1991.

Industries: textiles, cigarettes; beverages, food; construction materials, petroleum

Currency: 1 Communaute Financiere Africaine franc (CFAF) = 100 centimes

Railways: total: 578 km (single track) narrow gauge: 578 km 1.000-m gauge (1995 est.)

Highways: total: 6,787 km paved: 1,357 km (including 10 km of expressways) unpaved: 5,430 km (1997 est.)

Waterways: navigable along small sections, important only locally

Ports and Harbors: Cotonou, Porto-Novo

Airports: 5 (1999 est.) Airports - with paved runways: total: 2 2,438 to 3,047 m: 1 1,524 to 2,437 m: 1 (1999 est.) Airports - with unpaved runways: total: 3 1,524 to 2,437 m: 1 914 to 1,523 m: 2 (1999 est.)

Visa: required by all. A return ticket is also required.

Duty Free: goods permitted: 200 cigarettes or 25 cigars or 250g of tobacco, 1 bottle of wine and 1 bottle spirits, 500ml of eau de toilet and 250ml of perfume.

Health: a yellow fever vaccination certificate is required from all visitors over 1 year of age. Malaria is a risk throughout the year. All water should be regarded as potentially contaminated.

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