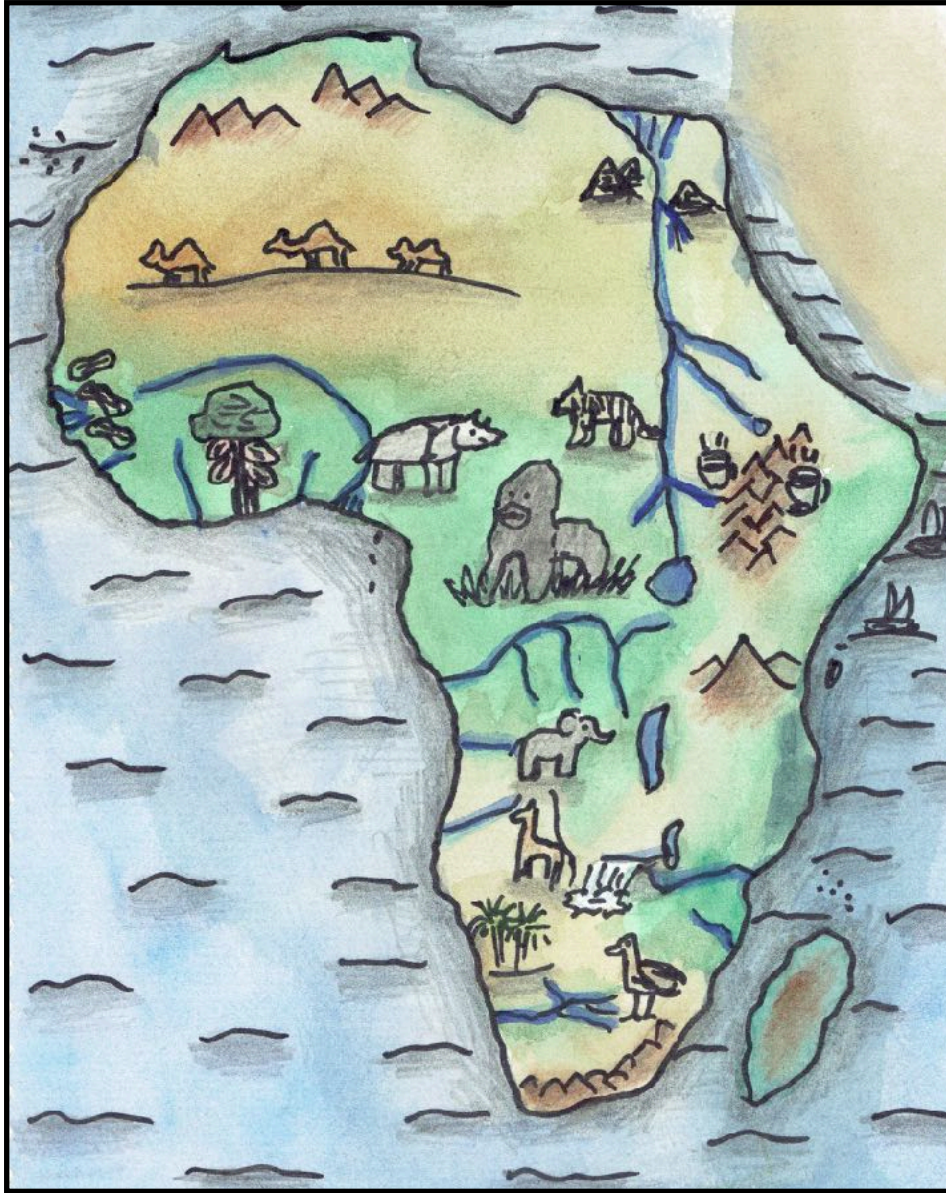


# The Geography of Africa for Kids



By Rachel Bubb

Growing up I knew hardly anything about Africa; it was the continent I knew the least about. In teaching my own kids about geography, I wanted them to learn more about Africa than I did as a kid. I couldn't find a good book for it so I thought I'd research a bit and put something together. I hope it helps your family and helps make geography a very interesting and fascinating class. It's a great idea to use this book as a spine book and read picture books that go with each country as you go through the book (or watch documentaries about the places). When I was putting this book together, I used a number of atlases. One great atlas online (you can print out pages from it instead of looking at the computer) is World Atlas.  
-Rachel

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# Introduction

When you think of Africa, what comes to mind? If you would've asked me when I was a kid, I would've said "hot weather" and "animals like the zebra, tiger, giraffe, and elephant." I recently talked with someone who was from the middle part of Africa. He told me that in geography class growing up they would sometimes play a game where they would go through the alphabet and each student would have to name one country that started with that letter. On the map on the next page, count how many countries there are in Africa. There are also islands close to Africa, the biggest one being in the southeastern part of the country: Madagascar.

Look at the map of the world below and notice how Africa has the most countries of all the continents. Sadly, most of Africa was controlled by different countries over history (like South America and other parts of the world). Many people in Africa grow up speaking two to three languages and it's very unusual to find anyone that speaks just one language there. Some of the more common languages you might hear in Africa are French, English, and Arabic. Print out one copy of the following maps (on the next two pages). On one map we'll be coloring in the countries as we go through them (you can also put a star for where the capital of the country is and write the name of the city next to it) and the other map we'll be writing down the geographical features of Africa as we go through them.







We'll be going through Africa region by region. We'll first do Northern Africa, then Eastern Africa, Western Africa, Middle Africa, and finally Southern Africa. Northern Africa, as well as part of Western Africa and the north part of Middle Africa, has the great Saharan Desert, but Southern Africa also has a large desert, which we'll talk about more when we get there. We'll also talk about both the tropic of Capricorn (on this map) and the tropic of cancer (which isn't on this map but we'll mention it when we get there).



When many people think of Africa, the first thing that comes to mind are the animals. Africa has some very unique animals like giraffes, ostriches, wildebeests, crocodiles, cheetahs, lions, gorillas, elephants, chimpanzees, scorpions, springboks, meerkats, camels, sheep, oryxes, foxes, snakes and many other animals. Of course, not all of these animals live in the same place! We'll talk about the animals that live in specific parts of Africa as we go through Africa. Today in Africa there are safaris, which are huge nature reserves to both protect the animals but also allow tourists to drive through on special trucks to see the animals. Some of them are just about making money while others really are trying to help the animals. As cities in Africa have grown, there is less and less room for animals to roam around freely.

Many animals have been taken away from Africa to zoos around the world. Some animals were taken from Africa so long ago that they've had babies in zoos and their babies have had babies in zoos. We say that if an animal lives in a zoo, it lives in captivity. Zoos are overall much better than they used to be. Nowadays, most zoos (hopefully) are really trying to make the lives of the animals that live there better. Many zoos are also working together to protect endangered species. There's actually a whole network that connects zoos and tries to bring together different endangered animals so that they could have babies and help their species increase so they won't become endangered anymore. This has worked for a few endangered animals and these animals have happy endings.





Good zoos also try to make the lives of the animals that live there interesting. They might hide food for the animals in some kind of toy or places where the food normally isn't put to encourage the animals to find it or figure out ways to get the food out. Animals can sometimes get bored in cages all day, even in big cages. One of the biggest jobs animal caretakers in zoos have is cleaning out the animal cages. It's a smelly, gross job (imagine scooping out all the poo from animals!), but someone has to do it and it's good for the animals. If their cages are never cleaned, the animals could easily get sick. The better zoos also try to make their cages similar to what they might have in the wild so the animals feel more at home. Some zoos also have animal rescue programs, where people can bring in injured wild animals. If the wild animals get better, they are set free but if they can't be released into the wild, they find homes for these animals in zoos or other nature areas where they could be looked after.

Sometimes zoos have big buses that drive through cages where the tigers, lions, and other more dangerous animals are. I've been to a zoo in Asia where they have little holes in windows so people can put sticks out with meat (raw meat) on them for the tigers, bears, and lions to eat as you drive by. The driver pounds on the top of the bus to encourage the animals to come close to the bus. This made me very sad because these animals are normally shy of people. They'd have to be hungry in order to come to eat such small pieces. It would be like if you never got a full meal but always ate nuts, raisins and popcorn- day after day. You'd be hungry too!

