

African Geography: People First

How can we tell the story of the geography of Africa
through the experiences of **people**?



Boston University Frederick S. Pardee School of Global Studies
African Studies Center

Vocabulary & Concepts

climate

weather

ecoregion

annual rainfall

highlands

rainforest

savanna

semi-arid

desert

coast



But first, what can a satellite picture tell us about **climate**?

Look at the colors and textures. How many climate zones can you identify?

What do you think it is like for **people** to live in these zones?

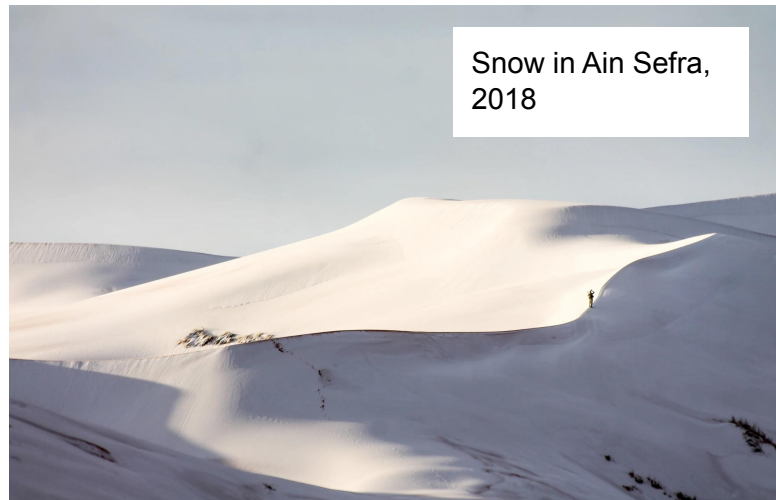


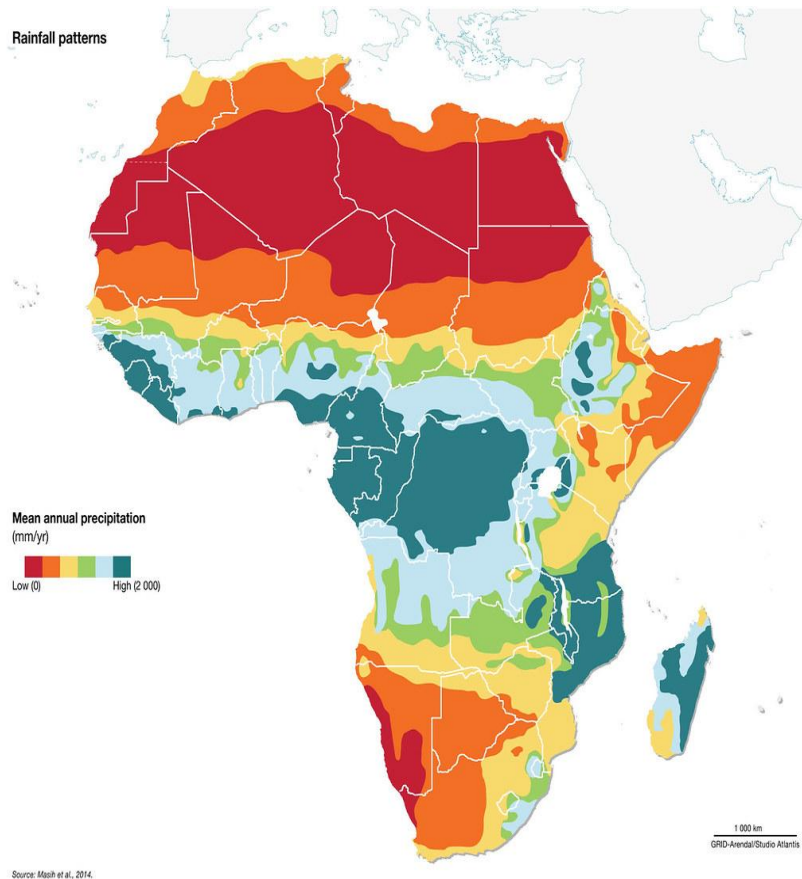
What's the difference between **climate** and **weather**?

If it snows in Ain Sefra, what can you conclude about the difference between climate and weather?

How do you think the **people of Ain Sefra** live the difference between climate and weather?

[Read more: Snow in Ain Sefra](#)





What are Africa's climate zones based on this map of annual rainfall?

Can you identify six of Africa's climate zones based on annual rainfall?

Climate zones are ecoregions

What is an ecoregion?

Read more: [find the section of climatic regions](#)

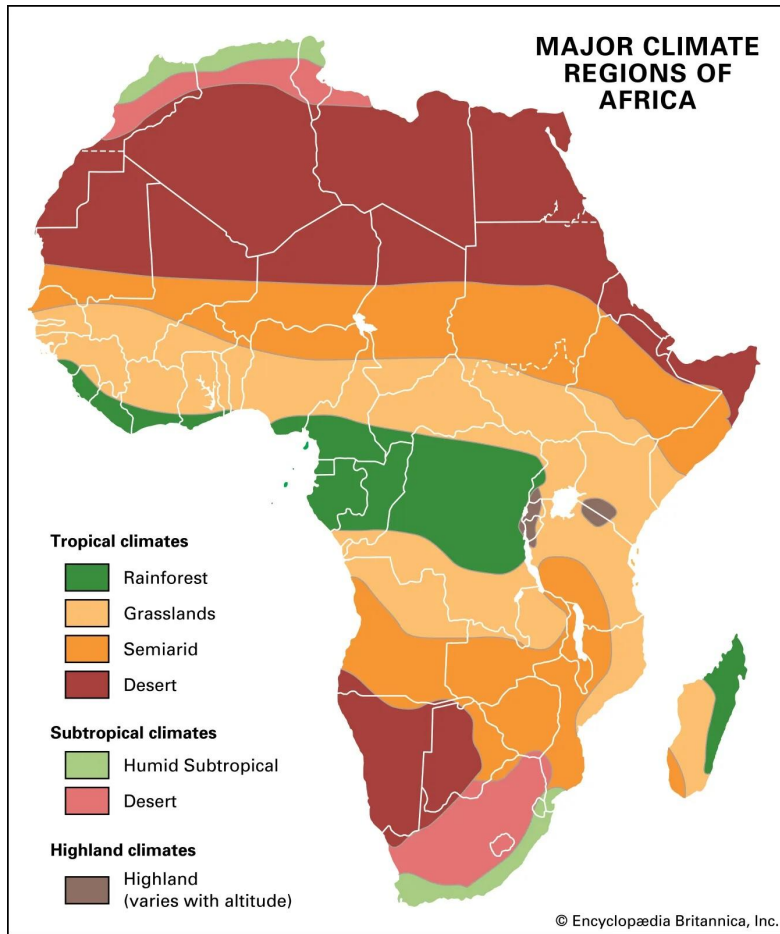


Image Source: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Africa/Climate>

Addis Ababa, capital of Ethiopia

Ethiopian Highlands Ecoregion: the city of Addis Ababa

Here you are viewing the capital city of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa. It is the 5th highest capital in the world and located in the Ethiopian Highlands which are a plateau (a large, elevated, flat surface) that forms the largest contiguous elevated area in Africa. This is why the Ethiopian Highlands are often called the “Roof of Africa”. Two out of the top three male marathon runners in the world are Ethiopian (2020). Pictured here is marathon champion Kenenisa Bekele. How might altitude affect his performance?

Learn more: [Untold stories: why we should know more about East African runners | Running | The Guardian](#)



Image source: Wikipedia

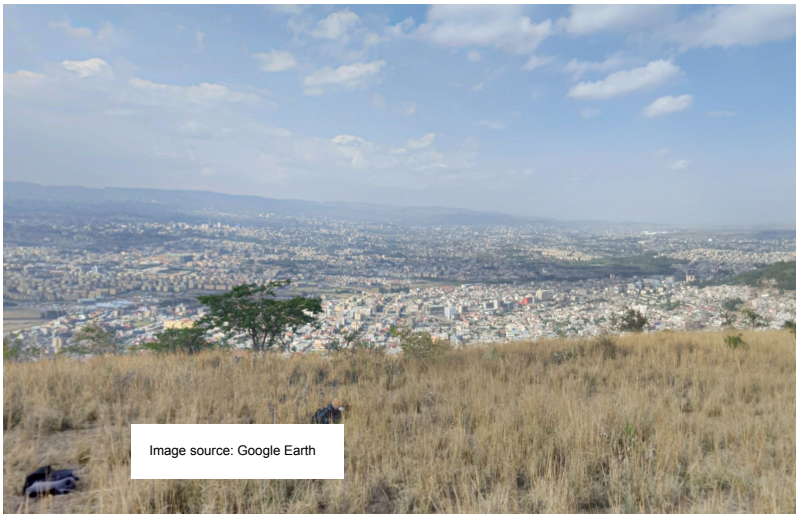


Image source: Google Earth



Image Source <https://use.metropolis.org/case-studies/sustainable-transport-in-addis-ababa>

Congo River

Rainforest Ecoregion: people's use of Congo River

The rainforest ecoregion is home to the Congo river basin, the second longest river in Africa, where many other rivers (tributaries) flow into. **How is the river a resource to people in the rainforest ecoregion?**

Learn more: [On The Congo, A Floating Marketplace For A Nation : NPR](#)

[Congo River Pulses Life Into African Nation : NPR](#)



Image source: Wikipedia



On the Congo, a Floating.
Image Source: [NPR](#)



Image Source <https://use.metropolis.org/case-studies/sustainable-transport-in-addis-ababa>

Madagascar

Savanna Ecoregion: the meaning of Baobab trees for people in Madagascar

The savanna is a grassland area that has fewer trees than the rainforest region. The Baobab is an important tree that can be found throughout savanna ecoregions, including the island of Madagascar.

How is the Baobab tree a resource for people in the savanna region? How do people in the savanna region of Madagascar use the Baobab tree? Learn by clicking on the image links.

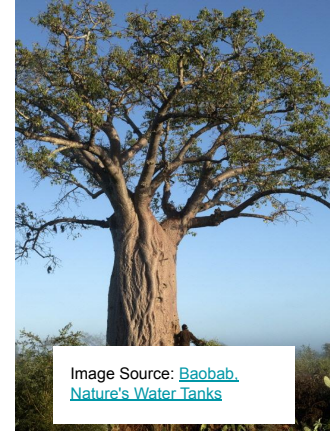
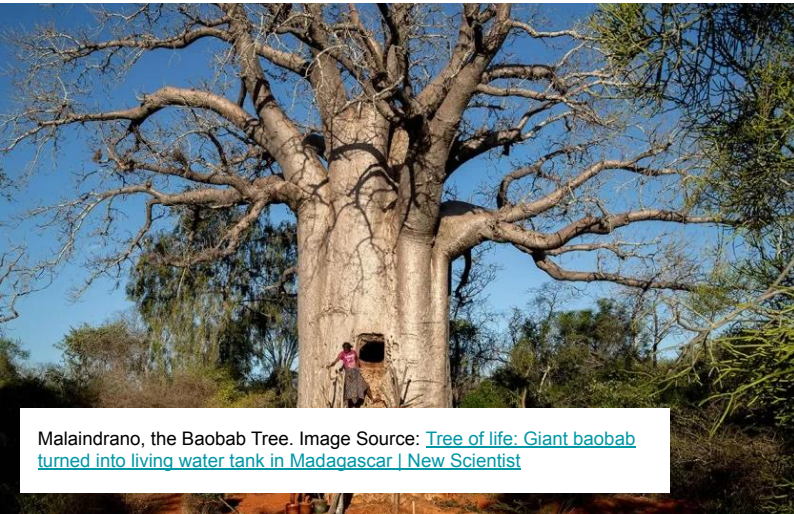


Image Source: [Baobab, Nature's Water Tanks](#)



Malaindrano, the Baobab Tree. Image Source: [Tree of life: Giant baobab turned into living water tank in Madagascar | New Scientist](#)



Image Source: [Baobab, Nature's Water Tanks](#)

Djenne, Mali

Semi-arid Ecoregion: people and the great mosque of Djenne in Mali

The Sahel ecoregion is characterized by low average annual rainfall, and fewer trees and grasslands. This is why it is semi-arid. Here, you see the town of Djenne in modern day Mali. The Great Mosque is the center of life and prayer in Djenne.

How is this mosque an example of people building with materials from the semi-arid region?

Learn more:

[Djenné | Britannica Kids](#)
[Great Mosque of Djenné \(Khan Academy\)](#)



Image Source: [Replastering Mali's Great Mosque of Djenné – in pictures](#)



Djenne Mosque. Image Source: Wikipedia

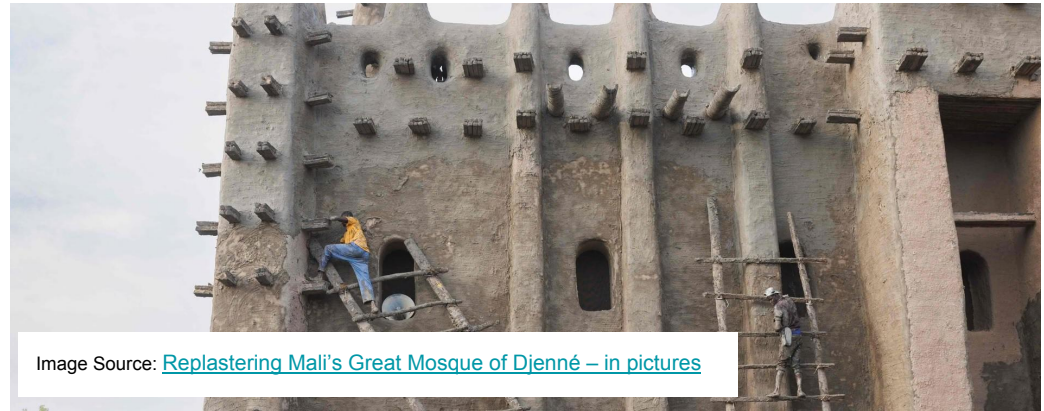


Image Source: [Replastering Mali's Great Mosque of Djenné – in pictures](#)

Parc Lala Fatna, Algeria



Desert ecoregions: Date Palm and its importance to people

This is the park of Lala Fatna in the Sahara desert in Algeria. What are these trees? In what ways could they be of importance to people living in desert ecoregions?

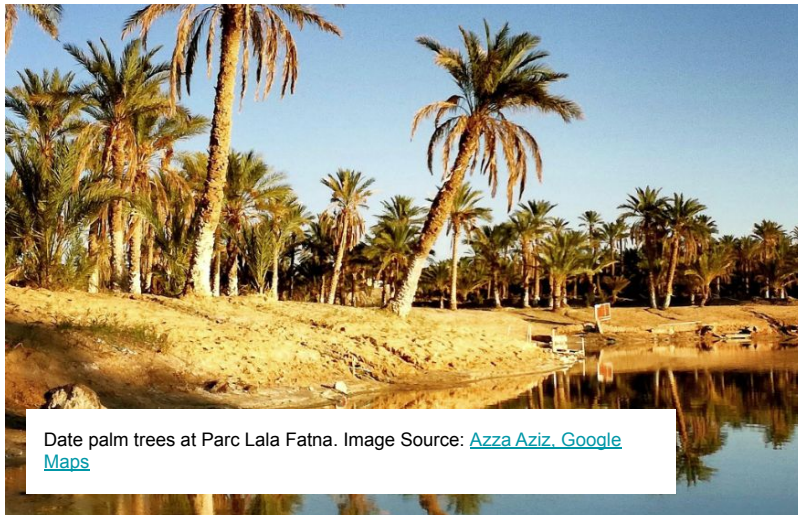
Learn more:

Learn how dates are cultivated in Morocco(video)

Dates: the stick history of a Sweet Fruit



Image Source: Wikipedia

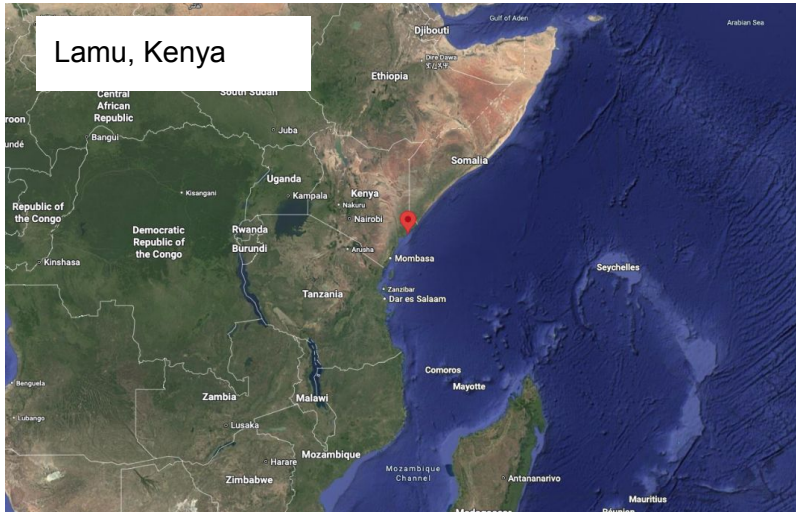


Date palm trees at Parc Lala Fatna. Image Source: [Azza Aziz, Google Maps](#)



Date palms at Parc Lala Fatna. Image Source: [Hadjadi Dirar, Google Maps](#)

Lamu, Kenya



Mangrove forest in Lamu, Kenya. Image source [Mangrove forest, Lamu, Kenya | GRID-Arendal](#)

Swahili coast ecoregion: Lamu Island, Kenya

This is a view of mangrove forests on the island of Lamu, in Kenya, on the long Swahili coast, which stretches from Somalia to Mozambique. Mangroves are trees with roots that arch above and into the water that can be found on tropical coastlines. Look at the pictures of the buildings from the Swahili coast. Look at the picture of the ceiling of the Swahili house in Lamu, Kenya. Why is it so narrow? How might the environment of the Swahili coast determine how people made houses?

Swahili House Museum, Lamu
Kenya

[Life in Lamu's Mangroves](#)



Man grove wood ceiling. Image source:
Mangrove forest in Lamu, Kenya.
Image source [mangrove-timber house in Lamu | THE WORLD OF INTERIORS](#)