

Central African Republic

Country name/State title¹	Central African Republic
Name of citizen	Citizen of the Central African Republic
Official languages	French (fra) and Sango (sag) ²
Country name/State title in official languages	République centrafricaine (fra) Ködörösêse tî Bêafrîka (sag)
Script	Roman script
Romanization System	Not required
ISO-3166 code (alpha-2/alpha-3)	CF/CAF
Capital (PCGN recommended name)	Bangui (4°22' 24" N, 18° 33' 46" E)
Capital in official languages	Bangui (fra) / Bangî (sag)
Area / Population	622,984 km ² / 5,552,228 (2023 est.) ³

Introduction

Central African Republic (C.A.R.) is a landlocked country in central Africa. It has land boundaries with Cameroon, Chad, Sudan, South Sudan, Congo and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It gained independence from France in 1960. The country's borders were established by France, which ruled the country as a colony starting in the late 19th century. During the colonial era, the area was known as Ubangi-Shari (French: Oubangui-Chari), a name derived from the Ubangi River and the Chari River. Two-thirds of the C.A.R. is within the Ubangi River basin (which flows into the Congo), while the remaining third lies in the basin of the Chari, which flows into Lake Chad.

Geographical names policy

For HMG use, geographical names should be taken from official C.A.R. sources, which will be written in Roman script in a French style. All diacritical marks, apostrophes and hyphens should be retained.

Both Sango and French are official languages in C.A.R. Sango-language names do not tend to be used on official sources, but such names can be included for reference when available. Sango is also written in Roman script.

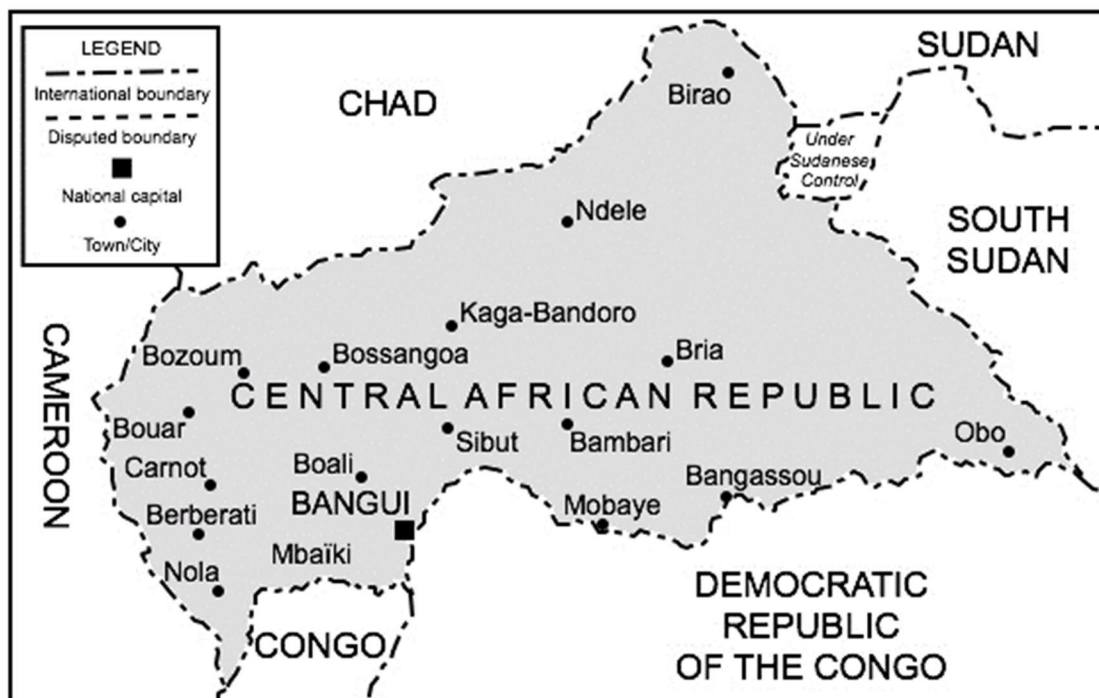
Official C.A.R. mapping is the primary source of names. Online government sources such as [Institut centrafricain des statistiques](#) may also be used. In the absence of C.A.R. sources, United Nations mapping or French [Institut national de l'information géographique et forestière](#) (IGN) mapping may be used.

¹ Most countries have a short and long form of their name, either of which can be used as required, e.g. United Kingdom (full state title: United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland). Central African Republic has just this single name to be used in all contexts. The abbreviation C.A.R. may also be used.

² ISO 639 codes are given for languages mentioned in this Factfile.

³ <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/central-african-republic/summaries>

Map of the Central African Republic



Map produced by PCGN for illustrative purposes only, and is not to be taken necessarily as representing the views of the UK government on boundaries or political status.

Languages

French and Sango are the official languages of C.A.R. Sango is also described in the constitution as the “national language.”⁴ Both French and Sango are written in Roman script, with some additional diacritics in addition to the standard English alphabet. French is the language of writing and formal situations.

Sango⁵ (also known as Sangho) is the primary language spoken in C.A.R. and functions as a *lingua franca* across the country. Sango is a Ngbandi-based creole. It is also spoken in southern Chad and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Although it has borrowed many words from French, it retains its Ngbandi structure. Sango was first written by Christian missionaries, who published Sango translations of the Bible and other religious texts in the 1960s. An official Sango orthography was introduced in 1984. In addition to the standard Roman alphabet, digraphs are used to represent some sounds. The digraphs kp, gb, mb, mv, nd, ng, ngb and nz are pronounced [k^hp], [g^hb], [m^hb], [(^h)mv], [nd], [ng], [n^hgb] and [nz], respectively.

⁴ https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Central_African_Republic_2016

⁵ <https://www.omniglot.com/writing/sango.php>

Sango is a tonal language. This is indicated in orthography with diacritics on the vowel characters as follows:

Low tone	- no diacritic	e.g.	e
Mid tone	- diaeresis	e.g.	ë
High tone	- circumflex	e.g.	ê

Dozens of other languages are also spoken, most of which belong to Ubangian group of languages⁶. These languages, along with French and Sango, may all influence the toponyms found in Central African Republic.

Inventory of Characters (and their Unicode encodings)⁷

French contains the following letter-diacritic combinations in addition to the unmodified letters of the basic Roman script:

Upper-case character	Unicode encoding	Lower-case character	Unicode encoding
À	00C0	à	00E0
Â	00C2	â	00E2
Ç	00C7	ç	00E7
È	00C8	è	00E8
É	00C9	é	00E9
Ê	00CA	ê	00EA
Ë	00CB	ë	00EB
Î	00CE	î	00EE
Ì	00CC	ì	00EC
Ï	00CF	ï	00EF
Ô	00D4	ô	00F4
Œ	0152	œ	0153
Ù	00D9	ù	00F9
Û	00DB	û	00FB
Ü	00DC	ü	00FC
Ÿ [#]	0178	ÿ [#]	00FF

[#] rarely encountered

⁶ Ethnologue states that there are 66 living indigenous languages in C.A.R.
<https://www.ethnologue.com/country/CF/>

⁷ See www.unicode.org.

Sango contains the following letter-diacritic combinations in addition to the unmodified letters of the basic Roman script:

Upper-case character	Unicode encoding	Lower-case character	Unicode encoding
Â	00C2	â	00E2
Ä	00C4	ä	00E4
Ê	00CA	ê	00EA
Ë	00CB	ë	00EB
Î	00CE	î	00EE
Ï	00CF	ï	00EF
Ô	00D4	ô	00F4
Ö	00D6	ö	00F6
Û	00DB	û	00FB
Ü	00DC	ü	00FC

Administrative structure

Since 2020 Central African Republic has been divided into 20 préfectures at first-order administrative level (ADM1). Many of the prefectures are named after rivers, e.g. Mbomou and Kotto, with the French terms Haut or Basse referring to up- or downstream respectively. The préfectures are subdivided into sous-préfectures at second-order (ADM2) level and communes at ADM3 level.

It is quite common for the names of C.A.R. administrative divisions to consist of two words. These are usually connected by a hyphen, although the hyphen is not always consistently included. Where a hyphen is included in names found on official sources it should be retained.

Alternative spellings that may be encountered have been included in brackets for information. There is no official source of the Sango names for the prefectures. These are not recommended for HMG use but are included for information in the table below. *Sêse tî kômândâ-kötä* is the Sango generic used for the ADM1s.

Please note that full details of the newest prefectures are not available.

Administrative Divisions of the Central African Republic

Préfecture (ADM1) Short form	Préfecture (ADM1) Long form	Sango- language name	ISO 3166-2 code	Administrative centre PPLA (Location)	Sous-préfectures (ADM2s)	No. Communes (ADM3)⁸
Ombella Mpoko (Ombella-M'poko)	Préfecture de l'Ombella Mpoko	Ömbělä-Pökö	CF-MP	Boali (04° 48' 02" N, 18° 07' 39" E)	Boali Damara Bogangolo Bossembélé Yaloké	5
Lobaye	Préfecture de la Lobaye	Lobâye	CF-LB	Mbaïki (03° 52' 04" N, 17° 59' 21" E)	Mbaïki Mongoumba Boda Boganangone Boganda Mobomba-Loko	13
Sangha-Mbaéré	Préfecture de la Sangha-Mbaéré	Sangä-Mbaere	N/A	Nola (03° 31' 38" N, 16° 02' 24" E)	Nola Bambio Bayanga	5
Mambéré-Kadéï ⁹	Préfecture de la Mambéré-Kadéï	Mambere- Kadei	CF-HS	Berberati (04° 15' 30" N, 15° 47' 18" E)	Berberati Gamboula Sosso-Nakombo Dedé-Mokouba	8
Mambéré	Préfecture de Mambéré	Mambere	N/A	Carnot (04° 56' 27" N, 15° 51' 59" E)	Carnot Amada-Gaza Gadzi Senkpa	5
Nana-Mambéré	Préfecture Nana- Mambéré	Nanä- Mambere	CF-NM	Bouar (05° 56' 03" N, 15° 35' 46" E)	Bouar Baoro Baboua Abba (or Aba)	17

⁸ See <https://icasees.org/index.php/prefectures/> for details of the communes.

⁹ Formerly Haute-Sangha (sag: Tö Sangä)

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Préfecture (ADM1) Short form	Préfecture (ADM1) Long form	Sango- language name	ISO 3166-2 code	Administrative centre PPLA (Location)	Sous-préfectures (ADM2s)	No. Communes (ADM3)⁸
Ouham-Pende	Préfecture de Ouham-Pende	Wâmo-Pendë	CF-OP	Bozoum (06° 19' 10" N, 16° 22' 48" E)	Bozoum Bossemtélé Bocaranga Koui	10
Lim-Pende	Préfecture de Lim-Pende	N/A	N/A	Paoua (07° 14' 34" N, 16° 26' 26" E)	Paoua Ngaoundaye Ndjim (Ndim) Kodi Talé (Taley)	14
Ouham	Préfecture de l'Ouham	Wâmo	CF-AC	Bossangoa (06° 29' 33" N, 17° 27' 19" E)	Bossangoa Nana-Bakassa Markounda Nangha-Boguila (Nanga-Boguila)	9
Ouham-Fafa	Préfecture de l'Ouham-Fafa	N/A	N/A	Batangafo (07° 18' 03" N, 18° 17' 00" E)	Batangafo Bouca Kabo Sido	11
Kemo	Préfecture de la Kemo	Kemö	N/A	Sibut (05° 43' 05" N, 19° 04' 26" E)	Sibut Dekoa Mala Ndjoukou	8
Nana-Gribizi	Préfecture de la Nana-Gribizi	Nanä-Gïrībīzī	N/A	Kaga-Bandoro (06° 59' 23" N, 19° 11' 15" E)	Kaga-Bandoro Mbrés Nana-Outa	6
Bamingui- Bangoran	Préfecture de la Bamingui- Bangoran	Bamĩngĩ- Bangoran	CF-BB	Ndele (08° 24' 39" N, 20° 38' 50" E)	Ndele Bamingui	3
Ouaka	Préfecture de la Ouaka	Wākä	CF-UK	Bambari (05° 46' 05" N, 20° 40' 32" E)	Bambari Bakala Grimari Kouango Ippy	16

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Préfecture (ADM1) Short form	Préfecture (ADM1) Long form	Sango- language name	ISO 3166-2 code	Administrative centre PPLA (Location)	Sous-préfectures (ADM2s)	No. Communes (ADM3)⁸
Haute-Kotto	Préfecture de la Haute Kotto	Tö-Kötö	CF-HK	Bria (06° 32' 32" N, 21° 59' 11" E)	Bria Ouadda Yalinga	6
Basse-Kotto	Préfecture de la Basse-Kotto	Do-Kötö	CF-BK	Mobaye (04° 19' 08" N, 21° 10' 43" E)	Mobaye Alindao Kembé Mingala Zangba Satema	15
Mbomou	Préfecture du Mbomou	Mbömü	CF-MB	Bangassou (04° 44' 29" N, 22° 49' 06" E)	Bangassou Ouango Gambo Rafaï Bakouma	10
Haut-Mbomou	Prefecture du Haut-Mbomou	Tö-Mbömü	CF-HM	Obo (05° 23' 59" N, 26° 29' 13" E)	Obo Bambouti Zemio Djémah Mboki	5
Vakaga	Préfecture de la Vakaga	Vakaga	CF-VK	Birao (4°22' 24" N, 18° 33' 46" E)	Birao Ouadda-Djallé Ouadija Amdafock	15
Bangui	Préfecture de Bangui	Bangî	CF-BGF	Bangui (4°22' 24" N, 18° 33' 46" E)	Bangui is sub-divided into 8 arrondissements, plus Bimbo and Bégoua	?

Other Significant Locations

PCGN Recommended Name	Variant Names/Spellings	Location	Feature Type
Oubangui*	Ubangi	00° 30' 37" S, 17° 42' 24" E	River (CAF, COD, COG)
Chari*	Shari	12° 54' 34" N, 14° 33' 54" E	River (CAF, TCD, CMR)
Mbomou	Bomu, M'Bomou, M'Bounou	04° 7' 44" N, 22° 26' 10" E	River (CAF, COD)
Kotto	Kota, Koto, Kouta	04° 14' 00" N, 22° 02' 00" E	River (CAF)

* Ubangi and Shari are spellings reflecting an anglophone pronunciation. PCGN recommends using the French-style names, as these rivers flow through Francophone countries.

Useful references

- BBC Country Profile: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13150040>
- CIA World Factbook: <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/central-african-republic/>
- Ethnologue: www.ethnologue.com (for information on languages)
- FCDO Geographical Names Index (GNI): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/geographical-names-and-information>
- FCDO Travel Advice: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/central-african-republic>
- French Institut national de l'information géographique et forestière (IGN): <https://ign.fr/>
- Institut centrafricain des statistiques: <https://icasees.org>
- International Organization for Standardization (ISO): www.iso.org
- ISO Online Browsing Platform (OBP): <https://www.iso.org/obp/ui#home>
- Omniglot: www.omniglot.com (for information on languages and scripts)
- PCGN Country Names list: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/country-names>
- Unicode: www.unicode.org
- US Board on Geographic Names GEOnet Names Server: <https://geonames.nga.mil/geonames/GNSHome/welcome.html>

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