TOPONYMIC FACTFILE

pcgn
The Permanent Committee on Geographical Names

Equatorial Guinea

Country name	Equatorial Guinea
State title	Republic of Equatorial Guinea
Name of citizen	Equatorial Guinean
Official language	Spanish (*spa*), French (*fra*), Portuguese (*por*)[1]
Country name in official languages	Guinea Ecuatorial (*spa*); Guinée équatoriale (*fra*); Guiné Equatorial (*por*)
State title in official languages	República de Guinea Ecuatorial (*spa*); République de Guinée équatoriale (*fra*); República da Guiné Equatorial (*por*)
Script	Roman script
Romanization System	Not required
ISO-3166 code (alpha-2/alpha-3)	GQ/GNQ
Capital	Malabo[2]
Area / Population	28,000km^2 / 1.7 million (2023 est.)[3]

Introduction

Equatorial Guinea, on the west coast of central Africa, comprises a mainland or continental region, known as Río Muni, and five inhabited islands. It gained independence from Spain in 1968 and shares land boundaries with Cameroon and Gabon. Despite its name, the equator does not pass through the country (all except the island of Annobón lies to the north of the equator).

Geographical names policy

For HMG use, geographical names should be taken from official sources from Equatorial Guinea, where these are available, though there is no known national mapping agency. The national statistics institute, *Instituto Nacional de Estadística de Guinea Ecuatorial* (INEGE), has a number of useful documents and lists available, such as:

https://inege.gq/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Guinea-Ecuatorial-en-Cifras-2023.pdf

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[1] ISO 639 codes are given for languages mentioned in this Factfile. Note that Spanish is recorded first amongst these languages throughout this document (see Languages).

[2] Malabo is on the island of Bioko. It has been agreed that a new capital, to be named Ciudad de la Paz, meaning 'city of peace' in Spanish, (an area formerly referred to as Oyala), is to be constructed on the mainland near Djibloho. It is understood that progress on this project has been slow due to funding problems, though this city is now operating as the administrative centre of Djibloho province.

[3] https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/equatorial-guinea/

If no national official sources can be found, maps produced by Spain's *Instituto Geográfico Nacional* (IGN) may be used. Post independence, IGN made an agreement with Equatorial Guinea to continue supporting map production, which continued for some decades after independence and IGN sources until the 1980s will therefore be of some use.

The Africa Geoportal may additionally be used as a helpful source of geospatial data and names[4]; the US Board on Geographic Names (BGN) Geographic Names Server (GNS) can also be used as a source for names.

Languages

Spanish, French and Portuguese are all official languages in Equatorial Guinea. Of these, Spanish is significantly the most widely spoken, understood by a reported 87% of the population.

French and Portuguese became official languages for reasons other than primarily linguistic. French became an official language in 1997: having French-speaking neighbours, this allowed the country to join the *Organisation internationale de la Francophonie*. Portuguese was added as a third official language in 2014, allowing the country to join the *Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa*, which includes its close neighbours: Angola, Sao Tome and Principe, Cape Verde, and Guinea-Bissau. Joining these organisations, while noting that Equatorial Guinea is the only Spanish-speaking country in Africa, enabled the country's greater economic integration with its neighbouring and close countries.

The official languages have been presented in the above order throughout this factfile, rather than in alphabetical order, due to Spanish being the most widely spoken.

In addition, five indigenous languages have recognised regional status: Fang (*fan*), Bube (*bvb*), Annobonese Creole (*fab*), Kombe (*nui*) and Kwasio (*nmg*). Amongst these, Fang, initially an official language post-independence, is the most widely spoken, being the language of the country's Fang ethnic majority (some 85%). Bube is widely spoken on Bioko island. There may be some use of local Bube-language names, though these are unlikely to appear on official mapping. Annobonese Creole, a creole form of Portuguese, is widely spoken is spoken on Annobón, which is geographically distant from the remainder of the country, and closer to Sao Tome and Principe, where the creole spoken, Forro (*cri*), is highly mutually intelligible with Annobonese Creole.

Inventory of Characters (and their Unicode encodings)[5]

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

Upper-case character	Unicode encoding	Lower-case character	Unicode encoding
Á	00C1	á	00E1
É	00C9	é	00E9
Í	00CD	í	00ED
Ñ	00D1	ñ	00F1

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[4] This is a source collated from multiple sources, including Esri, organisations working in Africa and crowdsourced information. It should be used as a supplementary reference.
[5] See www.unicode.org

Upper-case character	Unicode encoding	Lower-case character	Unicode encoding
Ó	00D3	ó	00F3
Ú	00DA	ú	00FA
Ü	00DC	ü	00FC

French contains the following letter-diacritic combinations in addition to the unmodified letters of the basic Roman script:
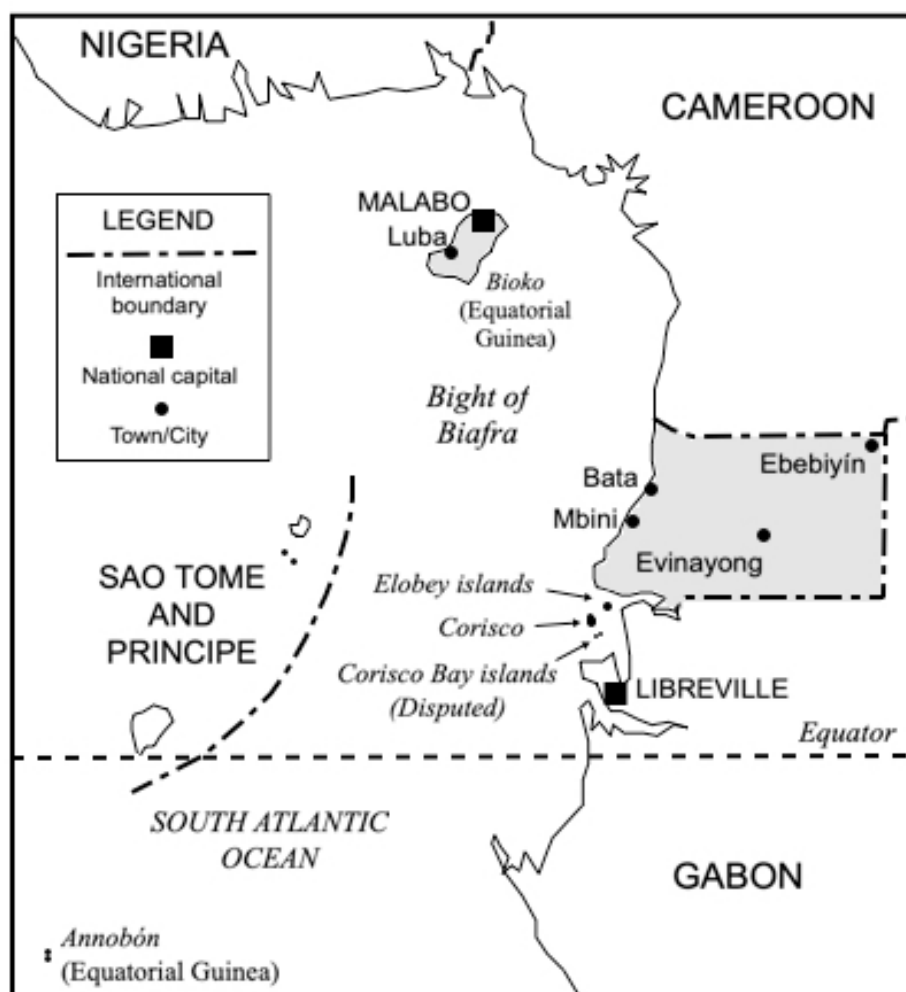
Upper-case character	Unicode encoding	Lower-case character	Unicode encoding
À	00C0	à	00E0
Â	00C2	â	00E2
Ç	00C7	ç	00E7
È	00C8	è	00E8
É	00C9	é	00E9
Ê	00CA	ê	00EA
Ë	00CB	ë	00EB
Î	00CE	î	00EE
Ï	00CF	ï	00EF
Ô	00D4	ô	00F4
Œ	0152	œ	0153
Ù	00D9	ù	00F9
Û	00DB	û	00FB
Ü	00DC	ü	00FC
Ÿ[6](U+0178)	0178	ÿ[6]	00FF

Portuguese 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
Á	00C1	á	00E1
Â	00C2	â	00E2
Ã	00C3	ã	00E3
Ç	00C7	ç	00E7
É	00C9	é	00E9
Ê	00CA	ê	00EA
Í	00CD	í	00ED
Ó	00D3	ó	00F3
Ô	00D4	ô	00F4
Õ	00D5	õ	00F5
Ú	00DA	ú	00FA

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[6] rarely encountered

Map of Equatorial Guinea

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.

Disputed areas

The boundary between Equatorial Guinea and Cameroon is not fully determined or agreed, provoking, particularly in the area around Kyé-Ossi, sporadic tensions and violence.

There is an outstanding dispute between Equatorial Guinea and Gabon over islands in Corisco Bay. This was submitted to the International Court of Justice in 2016, though there is as yet no ruling. The Corisco Bay islands are Mbañe/Mbanié (00°48'37"N, 009°22'45"E), Cocotiers/Cocoteros and Congas, located close to where the land boundary between Equatorial Guinea and Gabon terminates. UK products should not assign sovereignty to these islands. If the scale of mapping is appropriate, then a label: "Disputed between Equatorial Guinea and Gabon" can be added. In recognition of their disputed status the 'Corisco Bay Islands' is a separate entry in the US GNS.

Administrative structure

Equatorial Guinea is divided into two regions (*région (spa))*: Région Continental and Région Insular, each further subdivided into provinces. These provinces can be considered the first-order level of administration.

As the principal language, the Spanish-language spellings of the province names are shown in the table below. Should the French or Portuguese variants be required, please contact PCGN. If the full Spanish name is required these are in the form: *Provincia de xx*.

Province	ISO 3166-2 code	'Parent' region	Administrative centre	Location of centre
Annobón	GQ-AN	Insular	Palé	01°24'05"S 05°37'57"E
Bioko Norte	GQ-BN	Insular	Malabo	03°45'00"N 08°47'00"E
Bioko Sur	GQ-BS	Insular	Luba	03°27'25"N 08°33'17"E
Centro Sur	GQ-CS	Continental	Evinayong	01°26'12"N 10°33'04"E
Kié-Ntem	GQ-KN	Continental	Ebebiyín	02°09'04"N 11°20'07"E
Litoral	GQ-LI	Continental	Bata	01°51'52"N 09°46'06"E
Wele-Nzas	GQ-WN	Continental	Mongomo	01°37'39"N 11°18'48"E
Djibloho[7]	GQ-DJ	Continental	Djibloho	01°35'33"N 10°49'25"E

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[7] Created in 2017, the administrative centre of Djibloho, also termed Ciudad de la Paz, is intended ultimately to replace Malabo as the capital of Equatorial Guinea. The settlement was formerly Oyala.

Other Significant Locations

PCGN Recommended Name[8]	Variant Names/Spellings	Location	Feature Type
Annobón[9]	-	01°26'S 05°38'E	Island
Bioko	*Formerly* Fernando Pó; Ëtulá a Ëri (*bvb*)	03°30'N 08°42'E	Island
Corisco	-	00°54'57"N 09°19'06"E	Island
Crystal Mountains	Monts de Cristal (*fra*); Montes de cristal (*spa*)	05°30'S 13°30'E	Mountains (Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Angola)
Elobey Chico	-	01°00'01"N 09°31'01"E	Island
Elobey Grande	-	00°59'00"N 09°30'00"E	Island
Pico Basilé	-	03°35'N 08°46'E	Mountain, high point of Equatorial Guinea (3008m)
Río Benito	Mbini (local use)	01°31'17"N 09°55'03"E	River
Río Muni	Rivière Muni (*fra*)	01°01'10"N 09°35'20"E	Estuary (Equatorial Guinea, Gabon)

Useful references

- Africa Geoportal: https://www.africageoportal.com/
- BBC Country Profile: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13317174
- CIA World Factbook: https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/equatorial-guinea/
- 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/equatorial-guinea
- Instituto Nacional de Estadistíca de Guinea Ecuatorial: https://inege.gq/
- ISO Online Browsing Platform (OBP): GQ - Equatorial Guinea (iso.org)
- 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: GNS Search & Download WebApp (nga.mil)

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[8] PCGN usually recommends conventional English names for international features, unless national variants are specifically required, or the relevant countries share an official language.
[9] Briefly renamed Pagulu after independence, the name Annobón was restored (named for its European discovery on 1st January in 1473).