

Djibouti

Country name	Djibouti
State title	Republic of Djibouti
Name of citizen	Djiboutian
Official languages	French (<i>fra</i>); Arabic (<i>ara</i>) ¹
Country name in official languages	Djibouti (<i>fra</i>); Jībūtī (<i>ara</i>)
State title in official languages	République de Djibouti (<i>fra</i>); جمهورية جيبوتي (Jumhūrīyat Jībūtī) (<i>ara</i>)
Script	Roman (<i>fra</i>) and Arabic (<i>ara</i>) scripts
Romanization System	Not required (see below)
ISO-3166 code (alpha-2/alpha-3)	DJ/DJI
Capital	Djibouti
Area / Population	23,200km ² / 976,143 (2023 est.) ²

Introduction

Djibouti lies in the Horn of Africa. It became independent in 1977 and adopted the name of its capital city as the country name. Prior to independence, Djibouti was a French overseas territory, known as French Somaliland, until 1967, and subsequently the French Territory of the Afars and Issas. The country occupies a strategic location at the intersection of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, sharing land boundaries with Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia.

Geologically rich in spite of its small size, Djibouti is characterised by its many salt lakes, volcanoes, depressions and limestone chimneys.

Geographical names policy

For HMG use, geographical names should be taken from official sources if they can be acquired and all diacritical marks, apostrophes and hyphens should be retained. The national mapping agency is believed to be *Service de la Géomatique*, though PCGN has not been able to acquire recent mapping from this body.

Though Djibouti has two official languages, French and Arabic, and official sources might appear in either of these, it is PCGN policy to use the spellings as found on French official sources, rather than romanizing Arabic sources (which will lead to a different Roman script result than a French source³).

¹ ISO 639 language codes are used for languages mentioned in this Factfile.

² <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/djibouti/>

³ For example, as seen in the table above, the Roman-script name Djibouti is romanized from Arabic as Jībūtī.

If no French sources can be found, Arabic names can be used, though please consult PCGN for further guidance.

A number of commercial companies are involved with making geospatial products over Djibouti, such as ‘Djib Carto’, and sources from these producers can be used as a supplement to any official sources. Additionally, the [Africa Geoportal](#) may be used as a helpful source of geospatial data and names⁴ and the US Board on Geographic Names (BGN) [Geographic Names Server](#) can also be used as a source for names. Pre-independence French mapping from the *Institut National de l’Information Géographique et Forestière* (IGN) can also be used to supplement names information.

Languages

French (*fra*) and Arabic (*ara*) are the official languages in Djibouti, though Somali (*som*) and Afar (*aar*) are the most widely spoken as a first language (by some 60% and 35% respectively). As noted above, official names sources are likely to be written in the official languages, though cross-reference can be made to Somali and/or Afar spellings should they be encountered. Somali and Afar are both written in the Roman script: Somali in an alphabet with 23 letters (as English except p, v and z) and no diacritics (though an apostrophe is used and 3 digraphs: kh, sh and dh), and Afar with 22 letters (as English except j, p, v and z).

Inventory of Characters (and their Unicode encodings)⁵

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	0178	ÿ ⁶	00FF

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.

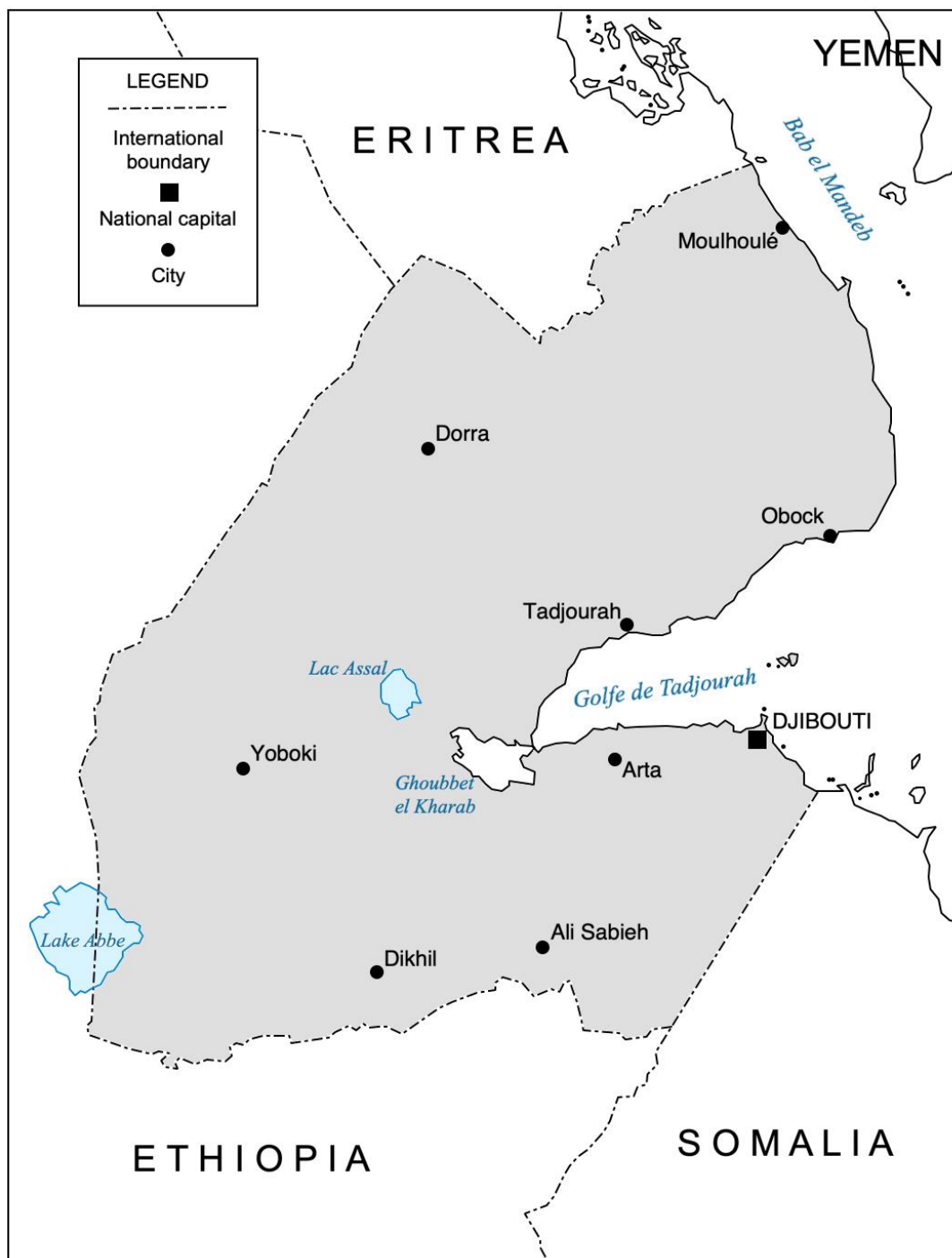
⁵ See www.unicode.org.

⁶ Rarely encountered.

The [BGN/PCGN Romanization System for Arabic](#) 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
‘	2018 or 02BB	’	2019 or 02BC
Á	00C1	á	00E1
Ā	0100	ā	0101
Ḍ	1E10	ḍ	1E11
Ḩ	1E28	ḥ	1E29
Ī	012A	ī	012B
Ş	015E	ş	015F
Ṭ	0162	ṭ	0163
Ū	016A	ū	016B
Ẓ	005A+0327*	ẓ	007A+0327*

Map of Djibouti



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.

Administrative structure

Djibouti comprises 6 divisions at the first-order administrative level (ADM1). 5 régions and 1 ville (city): Djibouti. As noted above, PCGN recommends that French-style names be used in Djibouti; these are shown in the first column, with the Arabic script⁷ and romanizations shown in grey in columns 2 and 3 for information.

ADM1 name	ADM1 name (Arabic)	ADM1 name (romanized Arabic)	ISO 3166-2 code	Administrative centre	Location of centre
Ali Sabieh	علي صبيح	'Alī Ṣabīḥ	DJ-AS	Ali Sabieh	11°09'14"N 42°42'18"E
Arta	عرتا	'Artā	DJ-AR	Arta	11°31'35"N 42°51'07"E
Dikhil	دخيل	Dikhīl	DJ-DI	Dikhil	11°06'16"N 42°22'11"E
Djibouti	جيبوتي	Jībūtī	DJ-DJ	Djibouti	11°34'53"N 43°08'49"E
Obock	أوبوك	Awbūk	DJ-OB	Obock	11°58'01"N 43°17'18"E
Tadjourah	تاجورة	Tājūrah	DJ-TA	Tadjourah	11°47'16"N 42°52'56"E

Other Significant Locations

PCGN Recommended Name ⁸	Variant Names/Spellings	Location	Feature Type
Bab el Mandeb	باب المنذب (<i>ara</i>) [<i>Bāb al Mandab</i>] ባብ ኣል ማንዳብ (<i>tir</i>) [<i>Bab Al Mandab</i>]	12°35'00"N 43°20'00"E	Strait
Golfe de Tadjourah	Gulf of Tadjoura	11°41'48"N 43°00'00"E	Gulf
Grand Barra		11°14'06"N 42°36'36"E	Depression
Lac Assal	بحيرة عسل (<i>ara</i>) [<i>Buḥayrat 'Asal</i>]	11°39'00"N 42°25'00"E	Lake (lowest point in Africa (-155m))
Lake Abbe	Lac Abbé (<i>fra</i>)	11°10'00"N 41°47'00"E	Lake (Ethiopia, Djibouti)
Les Sept Frères	Seven Brothers Islands; جزر السوابع (<i>ara</i>) [<i>Juzur as Sawābi'</i>]	12°27'38"N 43°25'27"E	Volcanic island chain in Bab el Mandeb

⁷ Though these are subject to some variation.

⁸ PCGN usually recommends conventional English names for international features, unless national variants are specifically required, or the relevant countries share an official language.

PCGN Recommended Name ⁸	Variant Names/Spellings	Location	Feature Type
Monts Goda	Goda Mountains	11°51'36"N 42°47'24"E	Mountains
Moussa Ali		12°28'07"N 42°24'15"E	Mountain (Djibouti's high point (2021m) at tri point of Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea)

Useful references

- Africa Geoportal: <https://www.africageoportal.com/>
- BBC Country Profile: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13231761>
- CIA World Factbook: <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/djibouti/>
- 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/djibouti>
- ISO Online Browsing Platform (OBP) Djibouti entry: [DJ - Djibouti \(iso.org\)](https://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 \(nga.mil\)](https://www.nga.mil)

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