



# Swaziland



- **Full name:** The Kingdom of Swaziland
- **Population:** 1.1 million
- **Capital:** Mbabane
- **Area:** 17,364 sq km (6,704 sq miles)
- **Major languages:** Swazi, English (both official)
- 76,000 people in the country speak Zulu
- Tsonga is spoken by about 19,000 people
- **Major religions:** Christianity and indigenous beliefs
- **Life expectancy:** 40 years (men)  
39 years (women)
- **Monetary unit:** 1 Lilangeni = 100 cents
- **Main exports:** Sugar, wood pulp, minerals
- **GNI per capita:** US \$2,580 (World Bank, 2007)
- **King:** Mswati III



## The Flag

Each of these colors has a meaning: Red: Stands for the battles of the past. Blue: Stands for peace and stability. Yellow: stands for the resources. The flag also has a picture shield and spear. These two symbols stand for protection of our country from enemies. The shield is black and white to show that black and white people live together peacefully in Swaziland.

## Location

Swaziland is a landlocked country in Southern Africa, bordered to the north, south, and west by South Africa, and to the east by Mozambique. The nation, as well as its people, are named after the 19th century king Mswati II.

## Economy and living

Thousands have lost their jobs as garment and sugar export industries have lost trading concessions. Many Swazis live in chronic poverty and food shortages are widespread. AIDs and HIV are taking a heavy toll with more than 40% of the population believed to be infected. Swaziland recently surpassed Botswana as the country with the world's highest known HIV/AIDS prevalence rate. The virus has killed many workers and farmers and has created thousands of orphans. Life expectancy has plummeted.

## Monarchy

The kingdom of Swaziland is one of the world's last remaining absolute monarchies. Its king rules by decree over his million subjects, most of whom live in the countryside and follow traditional ways of life. The power of the throne, however, has not gone unchallenged. King Mswati III was crowned in 1986 at the age of 18, succeeding his long-serving father King Sobhuza II, who died at the age of 82. The king, who is known as Ngweyama - "the lion" - often appears in public in traditional dress and has many wives. He rules by decree and has been criticised for the heavy-handed treatment of opponents. The king has also been criticised for requesting public money to pay for new palaces, a personal jet and luxury cars. Street protests led him to abandon the aircraft purchase.



## History

- Artifacts as evidence of human activity have been found dating back to the early Stone Age 200,000 years ago. Prehistoric rock paintings date from 25,000 B.C and continue up to the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- Autonomy for the Swazis of southern Africa was guaranteed by the British in the late 19th century; independence was granted in 1968. Student and labor unrest during the 1990s pressured King MSWATI III, the world's last absolute monarch, to grudgingly allow political reform and greater democracy, although he has backslid on these promises in recent years.
- A constitution came into effect in 2006, but political parties remain banned.

## Landscape



- Swaziland lies across a geological fault boundary, which runs from the Drakensberg Mountains of Lesotho, north through the Eastern highlands of Zimbabwe, forms part of the Great Rift Valley and peters out in present day Turkey.
- It is a small country, roughly the size of Wales but contains four separate geographical regions. These run from north to south and are determined by altitude.
- There is a huge diversity in the landscapes present, from the mountains along the Mozambican border to savannas in the east and rainforest in the northwest.

- Several rivers flow through the country, such as the Great Usuthu River.

### **Seasons**

Rainy (December to April), winter (May to August), drier and cool (September to November).

### **Current environmental issues**

Like many African countries there are limited supplies of potable water. Wildlife populations are also rapidly being depleted because of excessive hunting. Overgrazing and overstocking of game reserves has a negative impact on the equilibrium of the environment and can lead to soil degradation and soil erosion. Much of the infrastructure put in place by private game reserves owners needs to be funded, mainly by tourism. As a result reserves are overstocked in order to fulfill the idyllic tourist perception gained from holiday brochures and television documentaries. This can lead to local communities resenting the presence of the reserves, the result of which is that invaluable conservation areas and their wildlife are at risk of destruction.

### **Culture**

The most important cultural event in Swaziland is the Incwala ceremony. It is held on the fourth day after the full moon nearest the longest day, December 21. Incwala is often given in English as 'first fruits ceremony', but the King's tasting of the new harvest is only one aspect among many in this long pageant. Incwala is best translated as 'Kingship Ceremony': when there is no king, there is no Incwala. Swaziland's other most well-known cultural event is the annual Reed Dance or Umhlanga. It features a dance unique to Swazi women, who cut reeds as part of a five-day ceremony. They then present them to the queen mother and then dance. This is done in late August or early September.



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