

Title:

An Overview of Libya For Travelers

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Summary:

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Article Body:

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An Overview of Libya For Travelers

Libya is located on the northern coast line of Africa. It is surprisingly large country, covering over 1.7 million square miles. Much of the land, however, is arid desert and unused. 90 percent of the population lives along the coast line while the interior of the country has little or no population to speak of. The capital of the country is Tripoli, also the largest population center by far.

The people of Libya are called Libyans. Total population is believed to be 5.6 million and growing at a rate of 2.3 percent a year. Ethnic groups break down as Berber and Arab. Sunni Muslim is the dominant religion and Arabic is the primary language. The literacy rate is 82 percent. Life expectancy is 74.1 percent for men and 78.58 percent for women. In an odd twist, roughly 50 percent of the population is believed to be under the age of 20.

Historically, Libya has been a country ruled by foreign powers. From the Phoenicians to the Carthaginians to the Greeks and Romans, the country has seen little independence. The primary reason for this is the strategic location of Tripoli in relation to shipping lanes in the Mediterranean. Regardless, the country is home to a vast collection of ancient structures and ruins including a near copy of the Coliseum in Rome. For travelers who enjoy historical

sightseeing, Libya presents a treasure chest of relatively unexplored finds.

Libya is ruled by Mu'ammr Abu Minyar al-Qadhafi who came to power in 1969 in a military coup. At the time, he was only 28 years old. During his rule, Libya has been known as a hotbed of terrorist activities, particularly with the bombing of Pan Am flight 103 over Scotland. The country has recently taken major steps to renounce its past and more or less has seen its diplomatic status restored.

From a traveler's perspective, Libya is still a bit of an adventuresome area. Using common sense, one should have no problems traveling in the country. Further, the country is making a major effort to attract tourist dollars, and an accepting attitude towards foreigners seems to have come along with this approach.

Much like Cuba, Libya is a country dominated by one man. Although Libya has moved to rejoin the international community, one must wonder what will happen when Qadhafi is gone.