

Angola

Facts and Statistics

Location: Southern Africa, bordering the South Atlantic Ocean, between Namibia and Democratic Republic of the Congo

Capital: Luanda

Population: 12,531,357 (July 2008 est.)

Ethnic Groups: Ovimbundu 37%, Kimbundu 25%, Bakongo 13%, mestico (mixed European and native African) 2%, European 1%, other 22%

Religions: indigenous beliefs 47%, Roman Catholic 38%, Protestant 15% (1998 est.)

Language in Angola

Portuguese is both the official and predominant language in the black, mestiço and white populations. About 40% of Angolans speak Bantu languages as their first languages, many more as second language, although younger urban generations and some sectors of the Angolan society are moving towards the exclusive use of Portuguese. The most spoken Bantu languages are Kimbundu, Umbundu, and Kikongo (all of these have many Portuguese-derived words).

Angolan Society and Culture

The Angolan People

Although many people when asked may say they are Angolan, most of them will really have their primary sense of identity and loyalty to a tribe. The various tribes and ethnic groups tend to cluster in certain areas of the country each with their own customs, language and history.

The major ethnic groups are the Ovimnumdu, the largest, who live predominantly in the central highlands; the Mbundu who cluster around Luanda province; and the Bakongo who live in the northwest provinces. Other large groups include the Nganguela and the Lunda-Chockwe.

Religion

As you might expect in a country that was a Portuguese colony for over 500 years, the majority of the people are either Christian (Roman Catholic) or follow native beliefs. Most incorporate beliefs such as ancestor worship within a more formal religion.

The constitution guarantees freedom of religion. Religious leaders played an important role in the democratic resolution of the civil war and are ardent campaigners for social justice and human rights.

Spirit Worship

Traditional Angolan religions believe in a close connection with the spirit of dead ancestors. They believe that ancestors play a part in the lives of the living. Therefore, the spirits of dead ancestors remain prominent members of the community.

Ancestral worship is a common thread through many indigenous religions. It is considered that not revering the dead can jeopardize the living. It is thought that people must appease the ancestors so that they do not harm the living. It is believed that ancestors can bring famine, plague, disease, personal loss, and other catastrophes.

Ancestors are worshiped through ritual performances and ceremonies that often involve the sacrifice of animals.