

Landlocked Countries: Central African Republic

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The Central African Republic is located a bit north of Equator and borders Chad, Sudan, South Sudan, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the Republic of the Congo, and Cameroon. It has navigable rivers connecting with the river Congo, and into Lake Chad.

The country has an area of 240,535 square miles and a current population of around 5.5 million.

The country was known as Ubangi-Shari before 1959, reflecting the two river basins, Ubangi and Shari.

Slave traders operated in the region during the 16th and 17th centuries. During the 18th century, a native kingdom was established along the Ubangi River. Late 19th century, a Sudanese sultan governed the area.

In 1889 France established a presence at Bangui, today the country's capital city, and got hold of the whole of Ubangi-Shari in 1894 and started colonizing it. The centenary of Bangui was marked with four 1989 stamps.



Centenary of Bangui 1989 issue (Sc. 945B-E)

A separate colonial administration for Ubangi-Shari was established in 1903, but in 1906, it was merged with Lake Chad settlements and became Ubangi-Shari-Chad, but Chad was separated again in 1920.

In 1910, France established French Equatorial Africa combining Chad, Ubangi-Shari, Middle Congo (today's Republic of the Congo), and Gabon.



Left to right, 1915 first issue, overprinted on Middle Congo (Sc. 1); 1922 additional value (Sc. 18); 1922 "Oubangui Chari" overprint (Sc. 40)

The first civilian post offices in Ubangi-Shari used stamps of Middle Congo from 1907. Middle Congo stamps overprinted "Oubangui-Chari-Tchad" were introduced in 1915, replaced by Middle Congo stamps overprinted "Oubangui Chari" in 1922.

These again were additionally overprinted "Afrique Equatoriale Francaise" in 1924. Middle Congo stamps overprinted "Oubangui-Chari" and "Afrique Equatoriale Francaise" then continued in use until 1936, when

general issues for French Equatorial Africa replaced them.

There were a few exceptions: French postage due stamps overprinted "Oubangui-Chari" and "A.E.F." (for French Equatorial Africa), and distinct postage due stamps for Ubangi-Shari were issued in 1930.

In 1931, four stamps for the Colonial Exhibition in Paris were inscribed "Oubangui-Chari" only.



Ubangi-Shari and French Equatorial Africa, above, 1924 (Sc. 41), right, 1928 (Sc. 67)



1931 Colonial Exhibition (Sc. 82, 85)

Stamps of French Equatorial Africa were used until 1958. The 1936 first stamps of French Equatorial Africa were stamps of Middle Congo and Gabon with the Congo or Gabon inscription obliterated and overprinted "Afrique Équatoriale Française".



Left, Gabon issue with 1936 overprint (Sc. 1); right, Middle Congo with 1936 overprint (Sc. 11)

In 1937, six stamps were issued for the international exhibition in Paris. A definitive series for French Equatorial Africa was issued between 1937 and 1942.



1937 International Exposition Paris (Sc. 27-32)



1937-1942 Definitives, Sc. 33, 72

A 1956 stamp depicted waterfall and power station at Boali in Ubangi-Shari.



1956 Boali waterfalls and powerplant (Sc. 189)

Ubangi-Shari was made an autonomous state within the French Community December 1, 1958, and was renamed the Central African Republic. It became independent August 13, 1960.

The first two stamps of the Central African Republic were issued December 1, 1959, and both showed a portrait of Barthélemy Boganda (1910-59, first Prime Minister of the republic) and the national flag of the new state. Boganda had died in a plane crash March 29, 1959. In 1967, Boganda was honored on an airport stamp issued for the 9th anniversary of the Republic.



Left, 1959 Premier Barthélemy Boganda (Sc. 2); right, 1967 Presidents Boganda (left) and Bokassa (right) for 9th anniversary of Republic (Sc. C50)

When Central Africa became independent August 13, 1960, Boganda's cousin David Dacko became the country's first President. Two 1962 stamps portrayed him. He was also portrayed together with the Presidents of Chad, Congo and Gabon on a 1964 airport stamp issued for the fifth anniversary of the conference of the Presidents of the equatorial states.



Left, 1962 President David Dacko (Sc. 22); right, 1964 President Dacko (upper right) with the other presidents of the equatorial states of Africa for the 5th anniversary of their conference (Sc. C19)

Dacko was overthrown December 31, 1965, in a coup d'état led by Colonel Jean-Bédel Bokassa. Bokassa then became President and was portrayed on a single 1967 stamp as well on an airport stamp with portraits of him and Boganda, on a 1968 airport stamp, on two 1970 stamps as well on an airport gold stamp, on a 1971 single for the 12th anniversary of independence and on an airport stamp together with the Presidents of Congo-Kinshasa and Chad, together with his whole family on the 1972 Mothers' Day stamp and another 1972 stamp showing him planting cotton, on a 1973 definitive series of eleven stamps including two airport stamps, and together with the Presidents of Cameroon, Congo and Gabon on two 1974 stamps.



Left to right, 1968 President Jean Bedel Bokassa (Sc. C51); 1970 President Bokassa gold stamp (C78); 1972 Bokassa planting cotton (Sc. 161)



Left, 1971 12th Anniversary of Independence, with Bokassa (Sc. 153); right, 1972 Bokassa with family for Mothers' Day (Sc. 160)

In 1972 he declared himself President for Life, a title reflected on the 1973 definitives, and on 1975 stamps showing his saber, baton, and two airport stamps with himself in Marshal's uniform.

In 1976 he was portrayed together with French President d'Estaing on two airport stamps for d'Estaing's visit to Central Africa.



1973 Bokassa definitive air post (Sc. C118) 1977 Coronation of Emperor Bokassa I (Sc. C189a)

On December 4, 1976, he declared himself Emperor and renamed the country the Central African Empire.

For his coronation 1977 six stamps and a souvenir sheet were issued showing him with the Imperial crown. For the first anniversary of the coronation, 1978 stamps showing Empress Catherine and Emperor Bokassa I were issued. There were also two souvenir sheets, one portraying them both and one showing Bokassa I only.

France forced an overthrow of Bokassa in September 1979 and restored Dacko as President. A set of six 1981 stamps celebrated

the downfall of the Empire.

President Dacko restored the official name of the country to the Central African Republic. Dacko was once again overthrown by a military coup, this time led by General André Kolingba on September 1, 1981.



Left, 1983 President André Kolingba (Sc. 620-21); right, 1985 Kolingba and French President Mitterrand (Sc. 769-70)

Kolingba was portrayed on two 1983 stamps for the second anniversary of the coup, and on three 1985-86 stamps with French President Mitterrand

for the latter's visit to Central Africa. The tenth anniversary of his rule was marked with a 1992 stamp with his portrait.

In 1988, the 30th anniversary of the Central African Republic was celebrated on three stamps.

1988 30th anniversary of the Central African Republic (Sc. 909A-C)





Left to right: 1994, President Ange-Félix Patassé, 1st anniversary of inauguration (Sc. 1065-67); 2006, President François Bozizé definitive (Sc. 1498); 2018 President Faustin-Archange Touadéra

After much pressure, Kolingba agreed to free elections in 1993 which were won by Ange-Félix Patassé. He was portrayed on three 1994 stamps, issued for the first anniversary of his inauguration. Patassé won a second term as President in 1998. There was an unsuccessful coup against him in May 2001, but in March 2003, General François Bozizé succeeded in overthrowing Patassé.

During 2005-06, a definitive series of 14 values portraying President Bozizé was issued. He fled the country in March 2013 after much unrest and a civil war ongoing. Michel Bjotodia took over as interim president but resigned in January 2014.

Presidential elections were finally held in December 2015 with a second round February 14, 2016 which was won by Faustin-Archange Touadéra. He was portrayed on a 2018 stamp and re-elected in 2020.

The Central African Republic is one of the world's ten poorest countries, where most people are dependent on farming, herding and fishing (in Lake Chad), but there is also a primarily export industry based on timber, oil and minerals, including uranium, gold, diamonds, and cobalt.

The timber industry accounts for around 60% of exportation income, gold for 17%, and diamonds 8%.

A 1975 set of six stamps promoted the Central African tree industry. Two 1984 stamps displayed the country's forestry resources. The national arbor day was celebrated with three stamps in 1988, and in 1989, a single stamp was issued for the "Save the Forests" campaign. A stamp showing tree planting was included in a 1993 biodiversity set.



1979 Husbandry Farming (Sc. 387)

Husbandry farming was honored on three 1979 stamps, and agricultural development was highlighted on one of four 1980 stamps on Europe-Africa cooperation. A 1965 airpost stamp featured a cotton picker, and in 1984, three stamps promoted cotton planting. Palm oil production was the theme of four 1986 stamps. The harvest festival in Bambari was marked with two stamps in 1989, one of which displayed agricultural products. Vegetables and fruits were displayed on one of the two 1993 stamps promot-



Left, 1989, Bambari Harvest Festival (Sc. 933)

1986, Palm oil (Sc. 810-02)

Right, 2015, vegetables



ing environmental awareness and on a 2015 issue for the 40th anniversary of the economic community of the East African States (CEDEAO).

Fishing resources were highlighted on five 1983 stamps, and three 1984 stamps illustrated various fishing traps.



1983 fisherie resources: Breeding farm, basket trap (Sc. 626, 30)

The Central African diamond industry was the theme of two 1991 stamps. The country's oil industry was featured on one of the 2015 CE-DEAO stamps.



Clockwise from above left: 1966 diamond cutter (Sc. 62); 1991 diamond industry (Sc. 984A); 2015 oil drilling



From 1996, few Central African stamps displayed local themes, with most on international themes meant for an international collector community.

When the agency Stampera took over the production of Central African stamps, the number of annual stamp issues rocketed to over 800 new issues, and in addition, agencies in Britain and Russia produced even more, but, illegal issues with similar themes and marketed as legal issues on online platforms.

There are a few exceptions to the general picture of no stamps with local themes since 2017, when Stampera started producing what they call 'local stamps'.

In 2017 this included stamps showing a section of the capital Bangui,

the Bangui Cathedral, and the Bool waterfall.



Clockwise: 2017 Bangui city,
2017 Bangui Cathedral,
2017 Bool Waterfall



Left, 2019 Ubangi River;
Right, 2019 Mboko River



2019 Lion, Elephants, Gorilla

2019 stamps show the Ubangi and Mbokorivers, and typical animals of the country like lion, elephants and gorilla, as well as a typical vegetation.

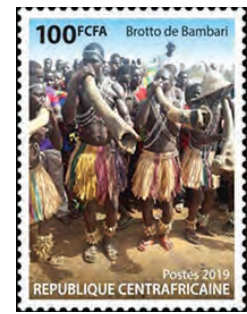
There were also stamps featuring the festival Brotto celebrated by the Bambari people, as well as a postal terminal. In 2015 there was also a World Wildlife Fund issue with four stamps showing gorillas.



2015 World Wildlife Fund Gorillas



2019 Brotto festival



2019 Post terminal



2020 welcome to Bangui

In 2020 a signpost announcing Bangui the Beautiful and farmers harvesting okra (gombo) were issued, whereas one 2021 stamp pictured bananas.



2020 harvesting okra (gombo)
2021 bananas

In 2022 four stamps devoted to cattle farming and three stamps showing a monument in the city of Bouar dedicated to the victims of the civil war were issued.

In 2012 there were stamps honoring the humanitarian health work of the Central African Caritas and the work of the Red Cross in Central Africa was honored in 2021 and 2022 issues.



2012 Caritas in Central Africa



2021 Red Cross

2022 Red Cross