

maasai

Geographic Overview

Where do the Maasai live?

The Maasai live in Africa in the countries of Kenya and Tanzania. These countries are made up of low plains along the coast, plateaus farther inland, and highlands that are cut in half by the Great Rift Valley. The Great Rift Valley is an enormous valley that runs across Africa from Syria in the north to Mozambique in the south. The Earth's crust underneath it is spreading apart very slowly, and creating lakes and volcanoes like Mount Kilimanjaro as it goes.

What is Maasailand¹ ?

Maasailand refers to the land occupied by the Maasai since they migrated south from northern Africa hundreds of years ago. Maasailand once covered thousands of square miles stretching from the interior of Kenya far into Tanzania. It included [Mount Kilimanjaro](#)², a very famous dormant volcano and the highest mountain in Africa. It is the highest mountain in Africa. Very tall mountains reach up into the colder parts of our atmosphere, so Kilimanjaro is covered in glaciers.

What is Maasailand now?

Today, a lot of this land has become national parks and wildlife preserves, safe havens for lions, elephants, rhinos, cheetahs, antelope, and giraffes. The Maasai still have the right to graze their cattle on some of the land, which is very important to their way of life.

Compare how much the **National Parks** of [Kenya](#)³ and [Tanzania](#)⁴ overlap with historical Maasailand. The governments of the two countries made a lot of historical Massailand into parks and wildlife preserves because of the animal diversity there.

Several names of **famous places in Kenya** come from [Maa](#)⁵, including the capital of Kenya!

| | |
|-----------------|----------------------|
| Nairobi | The capital of Kenya |
| Kijabi | A famous school |
| Amboseli | A park |
| Kajiado | A market center |
| Naivasha | A lake |
| Nakuru | A city |
| Narok | A city |
| Enoosaen | Kimeli's village |

The Maasai people are really several different groups, each with its own style of dress, customs, leadership and [Maa language dialect](#).⁶ The different Maasai tribes each speak different dialects of Maa, but all Maa speakers can understand each other.

There are lots of other groups living in Kenya and Tanzania with the Maasai. This [language map](#)⁷ gives us an idea of how many different languages there are in Kenya.

¹ <http://14cowsforamerica.com/images/map/jpg>

² [http://www.openstockphotography.org/image-licensing/Kilimanjaro/Kilimanjaro_\(paulshaffner\).jpg](http://www.openstockphotography.org/image-licensing/Kilimanjaro/Kilimanjaro_(paulshaffner).jpg)

³ http://www.hmnet.com/africa/kenya/ke_tourist/kenyatmap.html

⁴ http://www.tanzaniaparks.com/tanzania_map.html

⁵ <http://maps.google.com/maps/ms?ie=UTF8&hl=en&vps=1&jsv=164e&oe=UTF8&msa=0&msid=105047823377649317260.00046d43d43ef9a6ed541>

⁶ http://www.pliafrica.org/img/maps/map_maasai.gif

⁷ http://www.blissites.com/kenya/dialect_map.jpg