Malawi is a small country nicknamed “the warm heart of Africa.”

Malawi is a small nation in Southeastern Africa. It borders three larger countries: Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Tanzania. The capital city is Lilongwe — Lee-LONG-way. Although Malawi is a landlocked nation, its entire eastern border lies along Lake Malawi, the eighth-largest lake in the world. The tropical waters of Lake Malawi contain more different species of fish than any other freshwater body on Earth. Some parts of Malawi are mountainous. Mount Mulanje is the country’s highest mountain at nearly 10,000 feet. As the tallest peak in Central Africa, it is a popular spot for hikers.

Malawi is one of sub-Saharan Africa’s smallest and most densely populated countries. Many of its 15 million citizens are quite poor; most eke out a living through subsistence farming, which is difficult in a country where many have a hard time getting fresh water every day. The biggest export crop in Malawi is tobacco. Malawian farmers also illegally grow some of the world's strongest cannabis, or marijuana. This crop, which they call “chamba,” is another of the country’s biggest exports, along with tea, and tilapia fish taken from Lake Malawi. Malawi’s president is Peter Mutharika — moo-TAH-ree-kah. He was elected in 2014.

Although many Malawians face struggles, they are very warm and friendly. For this reason, the country's nickname is “The Warm Heart of Africa.” This reputation, as well as the country’s natural beauty and wonderful wildlife reserves, helps bring tourists from all over the world. Malawi has an interesting flag. The black on the flag stands for the native people of Africa, the red for the blood of their struggle for independence, and the green for nature. The red sun represents economic progress.
Malawi won its independence from Great Britain in 1964.

Bantu-speaking groups first started to move to this area in the 10th century C.E. In the 1600s, Europeans began landing in Africa and fighting to control its lands. Both Portugal and Great Britain wanted control of this region, but it eventually became a colony of Great Britain. In the 19th century, missionaries from Great Britain and other countries began coming to Malawi. Missionaries are people who go to poor countries to help people in those countries, and also teach people about their religion, usually the Christian religion.

In 1907, the area was made a British protectorate known as Nyasaland. More and more land was taken away from the locals. This led to a struggle for independence. In 1964, Malawi finally became independent, and Dr. Hastings Banda, one of the leaders of the movement, became president. Mr. Banda was a very strict leader. He did not allow people to criticize him or his government. And every public building had to have a large photo of him hanging on the wall. Finally, the Malawian people grew tired of living in fear, and Banda’s one-party system was dismantled in the early 1990s.

After some turbulent times a decade ago, Malawi has become a largely peaceful and unified country. It still needs to improve its educational and health-care systems, especially in light of its high rate of HIV and AIDS cases. But today the economy is growing, its people are internationally famous for their friendliness, and brighter times seem to be ahead.