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Pope Leo XIV attends the Celebration of the Passion of the Lord in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican on Catholic Good Friday, Friday, April 3, 2026 (AP Photo/Andrew Medichini)

by The Associated Press

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April 10, 2026

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Pope Leo XIV’s four-nation, 11-day trip to Africa is so dizzying in its complexity it recalls some of the globetrotting odysseys of St. John Paul II in his early years.

Themes Leo is expected to raise include Christian-Muslim coexistence, the over-exploitation of the region's natural and human resources, corruption and migration.

Here’s a country-by-country look at each destination and highlights of the itinerary:

ALGERIA: April 13-15

The Algeria stop clearly carries the most personal importance for Leo, given his ties to St. Augustine, the inspiration of his religious order who lived and died there. Leo will visit Annaba, the modern-day Hippo where the 5th century saint was a bishop.

Migration and Christian-Muslim coexistence are expected to be other top themes in Algeria, a former French colony which is a majority Sunni Muslim nation on North Africa’s Mediterranean coast. Leo will pay homage to migrants killed in shipwrecks trying to reach Europe and will visit the Great Mosque in Algiers.

Last year, Algerian legislators voted to declare France’s colonization of the North African country a crime, approving a law that calls for restitution of property taken by France during its 130-year rule, among other demands seeking to redress historical wrongs.



A map showing the pope's planned travel through Africa. (AP)

CAMEROON: April 15-18

One of the highlights of Leo’s visit to Cameroon will be a "peace meeting" he will lead in the north-west city of Bamenda on April 16, featuring testimony of a Mankon traditional chief, a Presbyterian moderator, an imam and a Catholic nun.

Cameroon’s western regions have been plagued by fighting since English-speaking separatists launched a rebellion in 2017 with the stated goal of breaking away from

the French-speaking majority and establishing an independent English-speaking state. The conflict has killed more than 6,000 people and displaced over 600,000 others, according to the International Crisis Group, a think tank.

The country is also plagued by fighting involving Boko Haram militants in the north, as the Islamic extremist group's insurgency in neighboring Nigeria has spilled over into Cameroon.

Cameroon sits atop significant reserves of oil, natural gas, cobalt, bauxite, iron ore, gold and diamonds. The extractive sector accounts for nearly a third of the country's exports, according to the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative.

But rights groups and the Catholic Church have raised alarms that revenues from extraction rarely reach the rural and indigenous communities that live closest to mining and drilling operations, while foreign companies and a small national elite capture most of the profits.

While French and English companies have long dominated the extraction industry in Cameroon, Chinese companies have moved heavily into the country in recent years, particularly in the gold mining regions of the east.

Last year, United Nations experts reported severe human rights and environmental harms resulting from mercury use in gold mining operations in eastern Cameroon.

The gold mining rush in eastern Cameroon has also led hundreds of children to abandon school to dig for gold, risking their lives at makeshift mines for a dollar's worth of ore sold on the local black market, according to UNICEF.

ANGOLA: April 18-21

In Angola, where around 58% of the population is Catholic, Leo will pray at the Sanctuary of Mama Muxima, a Marian shrine that has become one of the most important Catholic pilgrimage sites in Angola.

The church was first built around the end of the 16th century by the Portuguese after they established a fortress at Muxima. It became a key point in the Portuguese trans-Atlantic human trade as a place where enslaved people were baptized before they were sent on ships to the Americas.

Angola today is the fourth largest oil producer in Africa and among the world's top 20 producers, according to the International Energy Agency. It's also the world's third biggest diamond producer and has significant deposits of gold and highly sought after critical minerals.

But despite its varied natural resources, the World Bank estimated in 2023 that more than 30% of the population lived on less than $2.15 a day.

The country of around 38 million gained independence from Portugal in 1975, but still bears the scars of a devastating civil war that began straight after independence and raged on and off for 27 years before finally ending in 2002. More than half a million people are believed to have been killed.

In Angola, Leo will address young people especially to offer a message of hope and healing, the Vatican said.

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EQUATORIAL GUINEA: April 21-23

The discovery of offshore oil in the mid-1990s transformed Equatorial Guinea's economy virtually overnight, with oil now accounting for almost half of its GDP and more than 90% of exports, according to the African Development Bank.

Yet more than half of the authoritarian petrostate's population still live in poverty, the World Bank reported last year.

The former Spanish colony is run by Africa's longest-serving president, Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, who has been in power since 1979 and is accused of widespread corruption and authoritarianism.

Several rights groups, including Human Rights Watch, have documented how revenues have enriched the ruling Obiang family rather than the broader population, where at least 70% of the country's nearly 2 million people live in poverty.

The country's government also faces rampant accusations of harassment, arrest and intimidation of political opponents, critics and journalists.

In addition to the negative impacts of the extraction industries, Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni said Leo would raise issues of corruption and the proper role of governing authorities during the trip.

This story appears in the **Leo XIV in North and Central Africa** feature series. View the full series.