

Taita Taveta District profile

Taita Taveta is one of the seven districts in Coast Province and is situated to the southwest. It borders Tana River, Kitui and Makueni Districts to the north, Kwale and Kilifi Districts to the east, Kajiado District to the northwest and the Republic of Tanzania to the south and southwest.

The district lies between 2° 46' South and 4° 10' south and longitudes 37° 36' east and 30°14' east. However, the district has recently been divided into two (Taita and Taveta) and the government is assembling the personnel to run the new district.

The district covers an area of 17,128.3km² and is composed of six divisions namely, Voi, Mwatate, Wundanyi, Tausa, Taveta and Mwambirwa with a total number of twenty-seven locations and seventy-seven sub locations as indicated in Table 1.1

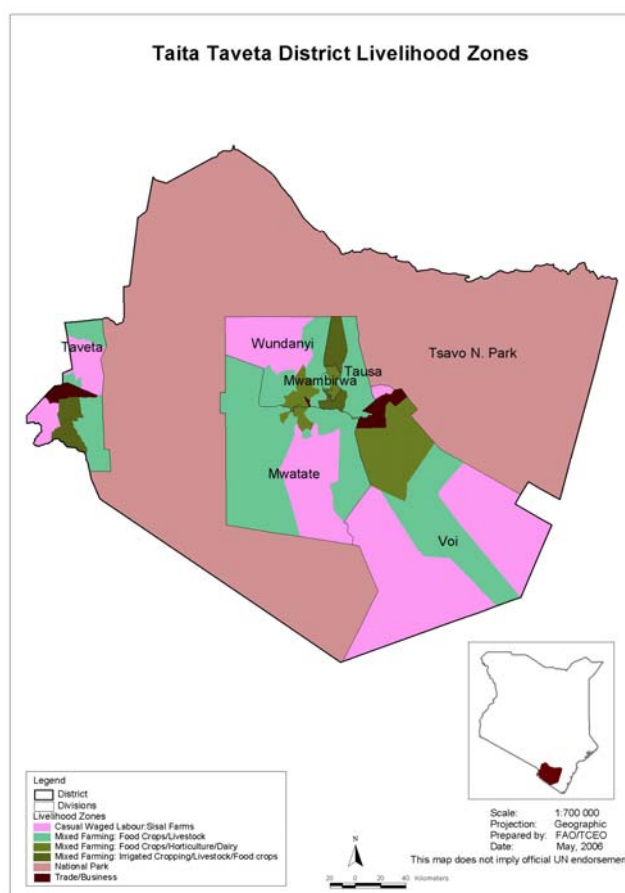


Table 1.1 Area of District by Division

Division	Area (km ²)	Locations	Sub locations
Wundanyi	701.9	7	23
Mwatate	1,776.1	7	21
Voi	2,972.0	4	11
Tausa	318.9	3	8
Mwambirwa	43.3	1	3
Taveta	645.4	5	11
Tsavo National Park	10,680.7	-	-
Total	17,128.3	27	77

Source: District Statistics Office, Wundanyi, 2007

There are four constituencies in the district. The boundaries of Wundanyi and Taveta constituencies follow the divisional boundaries while Mwatate constituency covers Mwatate and Mwambirwa divisions. Voi Constituency covers Voi and Tausa Divisions. There are three local authorities in the district. These are Voi Municipal Council, Taveta Town Council and Taveta County Council, with a total of thirty-four electoral wards as indicated in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2 Local Authorities

Name of Local Authority	No. of Wards
Voi Municipal Council	8
Taveta Town Council	6
Taita Taveta Town Council	20
Total	34

Source: Electoral Commission, Wundanyi, 2007

Taita Taveta is classified as a semi arid district. Out of the total area of 17,128.3 Km² covered by the district, 10,680.7 km² or 62 per cent is occupied by Tsavo East and West National parks, 4,100.7 km² or 24 per cent is range land suitable for ranching and dry land farming, while only 2,055.4 km² or 12 per cent is available for rain-fed agriculture. Of the 2,055.4 km² arable land, 1,774.5 km² or 74 per cent is low potential agriculture land, receiving an annual mean rainfall of 650mm.

Physiographic and natural conditions

The altitude of the district varies between 481m above sea level in the lowlands to 2,200m above sea level for highlands, giving two distinct climatic characteristics, with the hills experiencing lower temperatures (as low as 18.2⁰C) compared to the lower zones with an average temperature of 24.6⁰C. The average temperature in the district is 23⁰C.

The district is divided into three major topographical zones. These are the upper zone, lower zone and volcanic foothills. The upper zone is suitable for horticultural farming. Precious gemstones are found and mined in the lower plain, while the volcanic foothills, covering Taveta Division have potential for underground water and springs emanating from the Taita hills and Mt. Kilimanjaro.

The major rivers in the district are Tsavo, Voi and Lumi. Small springs and streams in the district include Njuguni, Sainte, Njoro kubwa Kitobo, Maji Wadeni, Humas Springs and Lemonya Springs. There are two lakes, Jipe and Challa both found in Taita Taveta Division. Lake Challa is a crater lake with little economic exploitation, while Lake Jipe is slightly exploited through small-scale irrigation and fishing. Both lakes are served by springs emanating from Mt. Kilimanjaro.

The district is dry, except for high catchment areas in the hills. The effect of the south – easterly winds influences the climate of the district. The hilly areas have ideal conditions for condensation of moisture, which results in relief rainfall.

The district experiences two rain seasons the long rains between the months of March and May and the short rains between November and December. The rainfall distribution is uneven in the district, with the highlands receiving higher rainfall than the lowland areas. This, coupled with cooler temperatures, makes the highlands have more potential for the production of horticultural crops, maize and beans.

The lowland areas, which are mainly ASAL, are only suitable for planting crops with short maturing period like sorghum, cowpeas, green grams, cashew nuts, sunflower, millet and dry land hybrid maize varieties. Also these areas are suitable for a variety of ASAL activities

such as ranching and sisal growing. Tsavo East and Tsavo West national Parks, home to various types of wild animals, occupy a large portion of the lowlands. The presence of these National Parks has improved the welfare of the people, particularly those engaged in tourism activities.