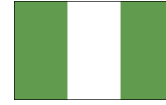


# Nigeria



Situated in tropical West Africa, the oil rich state of Nigeria is the regional superpower. However, despite its abundant natural resources, it remains one of the world's poorest countries, with a per capita GDP of just US\$300 per annum.

The country is made up of over different 250 tribes. This explosive mix, combined with tensions between Muslims in the north and Christians in the oil-producing south, is blamed for Nigeria's decades of civil war, famine, military dictators, and rampant corruption. Despite recent democratic elections (April 2003) there remains a real risk of renewed civil war.

The capital city is Abuja, but the largest economic centre and chief port is Lagos, located on the Bight of Benin in southwestern Nigeria. Lagos was formerly the capital but this was moved to Abuja in the heart of the country in 1991, largely in a bid to curb the frenetic migration to Lagos not only from rural Nigeria, but neighboring countries as well. This sprawling overcrowded industrial metropolis is already home to more than 14 million people.

With 500 miles (805km) of coastline, Nigeria has all the raw ingredients to make for a top tourist destination, and the new government has pledged to improve infrastructure and attract investment to tap the country's tourism potential. Meanwhile, this varied land of sandy beaches, lagoons, tracts of tropical forest, magnificent waterfalls and fascinating historic sites is being enjoyed by only the most adventurous travelers.

The vast majority of visitors to Nigeria come for business. Regular flights from Europe and North America are packed with oil executives looking for their slice of Africa's largest oil producer.

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa and the eighth most populous country in the world. With a population of over 148 million, it is the most populous 'black' country in the world. It is a regional power, is listed among the "Next Eleven" economies, and is a member of the Commonwealth of Nations. The economy of Nigeria is one of the fastest growing in the world, with the International Monetary Fund projecting a growth of 9% in 2008 and 8.3% in 2009. However, the majority of the population of the country lives in absolute poverty.

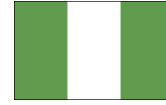
- [Politics](#)
- [Geography](#)
- [Health](#)
- [Customs](#)
- [Money](#)
- [Warnings](#)
- [Food and Drink](#)
- [Getting Around](#)
- [Facts about Nigeria](#)
- [Websites of Interest](#)

## Politics

People's Democratic Party (PDP) has dominated since the return to civilian rule in 1999. President Yar'Adua is under pressure to fulfill promises to fight corruption. After lurching from one military coup to another, Nigeria now has an elected leadership. But it faces the growing challenge of preventing Africa's most populous country from breaking apart along ethnic and religious lines. Political liberalization, ushered in by the return to civilian rule in 1999, has allowed militants from religious and ethnic groups to express their frustrations more freely, and with increasing violence. Thousands of people have died over the past few years in communal rivalry. Separatist aspirations have been growing, prompting reminders of the bitter civil war over the breakaway Biafran republic in the late 1960s.

The imposition of Islamic law in several states has embedded divisions and caused thousands of Christians to flee. Inter-faith violence is said to be rooted in poverty, unemployment, and the competition for land. The government is striving to boost the economy, which experienced an oil boom in the 1970s and is once again benefiting from high prices on the world market. But progress has been undermined by corruption and mismanagement.

# Nigeria



## Geography

Nigeria, one-third larger than Texas and the most populous country in Africa, is situated on the Gulf of Guinea in West Africa. Its neighbors are Benin, Niger, Cameroon, and Chad. The lower course of the Niger River flows south through the western part of the country into the Gulf of Guinea. Swamps and mangrove forests border the southern coast; inland are hardwood forests.



## Health

When travelling to Nigeria, an international vaccination certificate against yellow fever is required. A Cholera vaccination certificate is also required if coming from an infected area. As a precaution against cholera, visitors should drink or use only boiled or bottled water and avoid ice in drinks. Anti-malaria prophylaxis and TB inoculation are recommended. At present there is a high risk of polio infection in northern Nigeria and inoculations are advised. Visitors should seek the latest medical advice on inoculations at least three weeks prior to departure. Private clinics are found even in the smallest towns. In major cities, private hospitals offer good facilities. As in many countries, costs for medical services or hospital care must be shouldered by the traveller. There are government hospitals throughout the country, but apart from emergencies, the hospitals are more geared to serving the local population. Individuals needing specialised treatment for acute illness or severe injury are usually evacuated to Europe or South Africa. Good, comprehensive insurance is strongly advised, and should include evacuation. Pharmacies abound in Nigeria, even in supermarkets and are

open during normal trading hours. Some open even on Sundays in supermarkets.



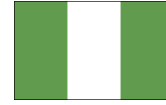
## Customs

Nigeria has a relatively formal society and it is appropriate to address Nigerians by their surnames until you know them very well. Beachwear is only appropriate for the beach. Nigeria has the largest Muslim population in Africa, living mainly in the north. Women should dress modestly, and avoid wearing trousers, and all visitors should exercise discretion in behaviour and dress, especially when visiting religious sites, and during the holy month of Ramadan. Time has a different concept in West Africa than in Europe or North America. Being 'on time' to a Nigerian could easily be a couple of hours after an agreed start-time. Evening social events tend to start late and often continue into the small hours. Photography in airports may lead to arrest. Homosexuality is illegal.

## Meeting People

- The most common greeting is a handshake with a warm, welcoming smile.
- Men may place their left hand on the other person's shoulder while shaking hands. Smiling and showing sincere pleasure at meeting the person is important.
- As in the rest of Africa, it is rude to rush the greeting process.
- You must take the time to ask about the person's health, the health of their family, or other social niceties.
- Close friends and family members often kiss and hug when meeting.

# Nigeria



- A Nigerian generally waits for the woman to extend her hand.
- Observant Muslims will not generally shake hands with members of the opposite sex.
- Address people initially by their academic, professional, or honorific title, and their surname.
- Friends may address each other in a variety of ways: the title and the first name, the first name alone, the surname alone, or a nickname.
- Always wait until invited before using someone's first name.
- When greeting someone who is obviously much older, it is a sign of respect and deference to bow the head.

## Gift Giving Etiquette

- If invited to dinner at someone's home then bring fruit, nuts, or chocolates for the host.
- A gift for the children is always a nice touch.
- Gifts should be given using the right hand only or both hands. Never use the left hand only.
- At Ramadan, it is customary for Muslims to give gifts of food and fruit.
- Gifts from a man to a woman must be said to come from the man's mother, wife, sister, or other female relative, never from the man himself.
- Gifts should be wrapped, although there are no cultural taboos concerning paper color.

## Money

The unit of currency is the *naira*. Bring only US dollars cash to Nigeria – travellers cheques are useless, although ATMs are becoming more widespread in cities. Avoid using a credit card in Nigeria because of fraud.

There are banks aplenty, but virtually none offer currency exchange – you'll have to change on the street. Moneychangers are almost always Hausa, so it's usually a safe bet to ask around at the town's mosque. In our experience, the moneychangers are among the most honest in

Africa. Western Union branches are everywhere if you need to get money wired to you.

## Warnings

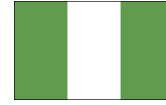
Nigeria has a poor reputation for safety and civil unrest and yet, for the traveler, it can seem like the friendliest and most welcoming country in western Africa. Navigating these apparently contradictory states is the key to getting the most out of your visit.

Consistently the most troubled region of the country is the Niger Delta, due to the long-running grievances between the local population and the big oil companies, where the kidnapping of Western oil employees is a continued threat. In the north, communal disturbances between Muslims and Christians periodically spill over into bloody violence. Stay clear of demonstrations and areas where you suddenly see large numbers of police or army troops. Lagos has a terrible reputation for violent crime, not always undeserved.

As a traveler you're unlikely to have trouble with corruption and bribery. Police roadblocks are common, but fines and bribes are paid by the driver. Caution should be exercised on the major highways into Lagos, where armed robbery is a problem, although almost always at night.

The U.S. Department of State warns U.S. citizens of the risks of travel to Nigeria and recommends avoiding all but essential travel to the Niger Delta states of Bayelsa, Delta, and Rivers. Violent crime is a problem in Lagos and other large cities as well as on the roads between cities. Tension between some Muslim and Christian communities, and between ethnic groups, occasionally results in violence, but is not directed specifically against American citizens. This replaces the Travel Warning for Nigeria dated October 30, 2007, noting restrictions on travel to the Delta region due to violence and to clarify regions of concern. See current travel warnings at this US State Department site:  
[http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/tw/tw\\_928.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_928.html) .

# Nigeria



## Food and Drink

There are many types of traditional cuisine to enjoy. For example: Okra soup, plantain (fried, boiled, roasted), pepper soup, amala, eba, efo, pounded yam (iyan - Yoruba for "pounded yam"), jollof rice, ground nut soup, ogbono soup, isi ewu (goat's head stew), egusi soup, suya (kebab), moi moi, ewedu, edikangikong, ground-rice, puff-puff, chin chin, ikokore, owerri soup (ofe owerri), which is the most expensive African soup in Nigeria. Not to forget 404 pepper soup - it will make you act like Oliver Twist. You must realise that 404 means "dog meat".

Nigeria is one of the places where Guinness is brewed outside of Ireland. And they do it pretty well, although it's not the same product. The Guinness-brand (with logo and copyrights where they should be) is also used to brew both an alcohol-free malt version of the black stuff, and an extra strong (about 7.5%) version of Guinness in Kenya (in the case of the latter) and Tanzania (in the case of the former).

Beer is actually big business in Nigeria, although the move toward evangelism and Islamic law is making its mark. Lagos is relatively unaffected due to its cosmopolitan nature. Heineken, Star, Harp, Gulder and other international beers are available. Malt beverages (non-alcoholic) are very common in Nigeria. The other cheap drink of choice is gin, which is locally made. Some locals will swear to it making their step-uncle's dog blind, though, so be careful.

Never drink the water sold in plastic bags. It probably hasn't been boiled, and may carry some nasty diseases. The bottled water and other soft drinks are safe.



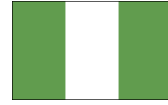
## Getting around

It would be best to travel around in your own car or a hired one but there are various other modes of transport. The road systems in Nigeria are relatively poor compared with North American and European countries. The "okada" (motorcycle) is not for the faint-hearted (no helmets) and should only be used for short distance journeys. "Okadas" will get you to where you want to go quickly and you will get there in one piece. In Lagos, there are lots of buses and taxis. There are two main types of buses, the molue and the danfo. Most smaller cities have more taxis than buses, and they are quite affordable. For travelling from one city to another, you go to the "motor park", find the taxi that's going to your destination, and wait until it "fills up". The price is fixed, you don't have to negotiate. Some drivers may have a risky driving style, however.

## Facts about Nigeria

- **Full name:** The Federal Republic of Nigeria
- **Population:** 151.5 million (UN, 2008)
- **Capital:** Abuja
- **Largest city:** Lagos
- **Area:** 923,768 sq km (356,669 sq miles)
- **Major languages:** English (official), Yoruba, Ibo, Hausa
- **Major religions:** Muslim 50%, Christian 40%, indigenous beliefs 10%
- **Life expectancy:** 46 years (men), 47 years (women) (UN)
- **Money:** 1 Nigerian *naira* = 100 *kobo*
- **Main exports:** Petroleum, petroleum products, cocoa, rubber
- **GNI per capita:** US \$930 (World Bank, 2007)
- **Internet domain:** .ng
- **International dialing code:** +234

# Nigeria



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