



Stuttaford Van Lines Country Guide for

Nigeria



Country Guides: Courtesy of Overseas Moving Network International (OMNI)

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1 CONTACT ADDRESSES

Location: West Africa.

Time: GMT + 1.

Nigeria Tourism Development Corporation

Old Secretariat, Area 1, Garki, PMB 167, Abuja, Nigeria Tel: (9) 234 2764. Website: www.nigeriatourism.net

High Commission for the Federal Republic of Nigeria in the UK

9 Northumberland Avenue, London WC2N 5BX, UK Tel: (020) 7839 1244. Website: www.nigeriahc.org.uk Opening hours: Mon-Fri 1000-1200 (visa submission); 1530-1630 (visa collection).

Nigerian Consular Section in the UK

56-57 Fleet Street, London EC4 1BT, UK Tel: (020) 7353 3776. Website: www.nigeriahc.org.uk Opening hours: Mon-Fri 1000-1200 (visa submission); 1530-1630 (visa collection).

Embassy of Nigeria in the USA

3519 International Court, NW, Washington, DC 20008, USA Tel: (202) 986 8400. Website: www.nigeriaembassyusa.org

Nigerian Consulate General in the USA

828 Second Avenue, 10th Floor, New York, NY 10017, USA Tel: (212) 850 2200. Website: www.nigeria-consulate-ny.org

2 GENERAL INFORMATION

Area: 923,768 sq km (356,669 sq miles).

Population: 130.2 million (UN, 2005).

Population Density: 140.9 per sq km.

Capital: Abuja. Population: 403,000 (1999).

GEOGRAPHY: Nigeria has borders with Niger to the north, Chad (across Lake Chad) to the northeast, Cameroon to the east and Benin to the west. To the south, the Gulf of Guinea is indented by the Bight of Benin and the Bight of Biafra. The country's topography and vegetation vary considerably. The coastal region is a low-lying area of lagoons, sandy beaches and mangrove swamps, which merges into an area of rainforest where palm trees grow to over 30m (100ft). From here, the landscape changes to savannah and open woodland, rising to the Central Jos Plateau at 1800m (6000ft). The northern part of the country is desert and semi-desert, marking the southern extent of the Sahara.



Government: Republic since 1963. Gained independence from the UK in 1960. Military regime from 1983-1999. Head of State and Government: President Matthew Olusegun Obasanjo since 1999. Recent history: Olusegun Obasanjo and the People's Democratic Party (PDP) came up for election again in April 2003. The election was a tense one since, if concluded successfully, this would be the first time since Independence that Nigeria had held two consecutive elections without military intervention. Despite allegations of widespread fraud and ballot-rigging, both the PDP and president Obasanjo were returned with comfortable majorities. (Obasanjo's main opponent was yet another ex-military dictator, Mohammed Buhari.) Under the provisions of the constitution announced by the Government in late 1998, executive power is vested in the President of the Republic. Legislative responsibilities are entrusted to the bicameral National Assembly, comprising the 360-member House of Representatives and the 109-member Senate. Members of both houses serve a four-year term.

Language: The official language is English. A variation of English (Pidgin English) is also spoken. The three main Nigerian languages are Yoruba, Ibo (also spelt Igbo) and Hausa; another 400 languages are also spoken in the country.

Religion: 50 per cent Muslim (mainly in the north and west of the country), 40 per cent Christian (mostly in the south) and 10 per cent traditional beliefs.

Electricity: 240 volts AC, 50Hz. Single phase.

SOCIAL CONVENTIONS: Shaking hands with everyone is customary on meeting and departing. In Yorubaland, it is a sign of respect for women to curtsy when introduced and to enquire after relations, even if this is a first meeting. Unless the visitor knows someone well, it is unusual to be invited to a Nigerian's home. Most entertaining, particularly in Lagos, takes place in clubs or restaurants. A small gift of appreciation is always welcome and business souvenirs bearing the company logo are also acceptable. Casual wear is suitable and a lightweight suit and tie are only necessary for businesspeople on formal meetings; on most other occasions men will not need to wear a jacket, although a tie might be expected. Women should dress modestly, and respect local customs regarding dress, particularly in the Muslim north. It is inadvisable for women to wear trousers. There are over 250 tribes in Nigeria, the principal groups being the Hausa in the north, the Ibo (or Igbo) in the southeast and the Yoruba in the southwest. The larger of the minor groups are the Fulani, Idoma, Igala, Igbirra, Kanuri, Tiv and Nupe in the north; the Efik, Ekoi, Ibibio and Ijaw in the east; and the Edo, Itsekiri, Ijaw and Urhobo in the west. A result of this ethnic variety is the diversity of art, dance forms, language, music, customs and crafts. Nigerians have a very strong sense of ethnic allegiance.

Passport/Visa

	<i>Passport Required?</i>	<i>Visa Required?</i>	<i>Return Ticket Required?</i>
British	Yes	Yes	Yes
Australian	Yes	Yes	Yes
Canadian	Yes	Yes	Yes
USA	Yes	Yes	Yes
OtherEU	Yes	Yes	Yes
Japanese	Yes	Yes	Yes



PASSPORTS: Passport valid for a minimum of six months beyond the date of departure required by all.

VISAS: Required by all except the following: (a) nationals of Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo for stays of up to 90 days; (b) transit passengers continuing their journey by the same or first connecting aircraft, provided holding valid onward or return documentation and not leaving the airport, except for nationals of the USA who require a transit visa.

Note: Children under 16 years of age accompanying their parents residing in Nigeria (provided the name of such a child is entered in the passport of one of the parents) do not require visas, but must, however, complete one application form accompanied by a photo. All children holding their own passport must have separate visas or re-entry permits.

Types of visa and cost: Tourist, Business: £40 (single-entry); £70 (six-month multiple-entry); £90 (one-year multiple-entry); £120 (two-year multiple-entry). Transit: £40. The prices quoted are for UK nationals; visa costs depend on nationality. Nationals of some African countries receive visas free of charge. Contact High Commission or Consular section at Embassy for further information.

Application to: Consulate (or Consular section at Embassy or High Commission); see Passport/Visa Information.

Application requirements: (a) One completed application form. (b) Valid passport. (c) One passport-size photo. (d) Fee, payable by postal order or credit/debit card. (e) Onward or return ticket for Tourist visas. (f) Paid and registered return-postage envelope if applying by post. (g) Letter of invitation from Nigeria, addressed to Visa Section, Nigeria High Commission, London, accepting full immigration/evidence of sustaining self while in Nigeria. (h) Photocopy of Inviter's passport. Business: (a)-(f) and, (g) Letter of introduction from a company or a resident of Nigeria, accepting immigration responsibility for applicant; any Nigerian inviting a visitor must attach photocopies of the first five pages of his/her own passport, while a resident must enclose a copy of his/her residence permit. Note: In addition to the normal visa requirements, minors must also provide: original birth certificate plus one photocopy; a letter of consent from parents; and photocopies of parents' passports.

Working days required: Two if applying in person; 10 for postal applications.

Passport/Visa Information: High Commission for the Federal Republic of Nigeria in the UK9 Northumberland Avenue, London WC2N 5BX, UK Tel: (020) 7839 1244. Website: www.nigeriahc.org.uk Opening hours: Mon-Fri 1000-1200 (visa submission); 1530-1630 (visa collection). Nigerian Consular Section in the UK56-57 Fleet Street, London EC4 1BT, UK Tel: (020) 7353 3776. Website: www.nigeriahc.org.uk Opening hours: Mon-Fri 1000-1200 (visa submission); 1530-1630 (visa collection). Embassy of Nigeria in the USA3519 International Court, NW, Washington, DC 20008, USA Tel: (202) 986 8400 (ext 1005 for Consular and immigration section). Website: www.nigeriaembassyusa.org Nigerian Consulate General in the USA828 Second Avenue, 10th Floor, New York, NY 10017, USA Tel: (212) 850 2200. Website: www.nigeria-consulate-ny.org



3 MONEY

Currency: Naira (NGN) = 100 kobo. Notes are in denominations of NGN500, 200, 100, 50, 20, 10 and 5. Coins are in denominations of NGN1 kobo 25, 10, 5 and 1.

Currency exchange: The Government of Nigeria has fixed an artificially high rate for local currency (the Naira) in terms of its value in exchange for foreign currencies. However, trading on the black market is extremely dangerous and could lead to arrest. Therefore, visitors are advised to exchange currency at the official rate and at approved exchange facilities, which often include major hotels. Inter-bank transfers are frequently difficult, if not impossible, to accomplish.

Credit & debit cards: American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa are rarely accepted in Nigeria and, because of the prevalence of credit card fraud, their use is ill-advised.

Traveller's cheques: Facilities for changing traveller's cheques are limited to Abuja and larger towns.

Currency restrictions: Import of local currency is limited to N20 in notes and must be declared on arrival. Export of local currency is restricted to N20 in notes. Import of foreign currency is unlimited, but it must be declared on arrival; export is limited to N100 per adult over 16 and must be declared. Penalties for black market transactions are severe.

Exchange rate indicators

Date At time of publishing £1.00=NGN226.37 \$1.00=NGN130.50

Banking hours: Mon 0800-1500, Tue-Fri 0800-1330. The Government owns a large percentage of all foreign banks.

4 DUTY FREE

The following goods may be imported into Nigeria by persons over 18 years of age without incurring customs duty: 200 cigarettes or 50 cigars or 200g of tobacco; 1l of spirits and 1l of wine; 284ml of perfume; gifts to the value of N300 (excluding jewellery, photographic equipment, electronics and luxury goods).

Note: (a) If more than each of the above is imported, duty will be levied on the whole quantity. Heavy duty will be levied on luxury items such as cameras or radios unless the visitor's stay is temporary. (b) It is forbidden to buy or sell antiques from or to anyone other than the Director of Antiquities or an accredited agent; visitors should obtain a clearance permit from one of the above before presenting antiques, artefacts or curios at the airport.

Prohibited items: Champagne, sparkling wine, beer, mineral water and soft drinks; fruits, vegetables, cereals and eggs, whether fresh or preserved; jewellery and precious metals; textile fabrics and mosquito netting.



5 PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Below are listed Public Holidays for the January 2006-June 2007 period. Jan 1 2006 New Year's Day. Jan 10 Eid al-Kabir (Feast of the Sacrifice). Apr 11 Mouloud (Birth of the Prophet). Apr 14-17 Easter. May 1 Workers' Day. Oct 1 Independence Day. Oct 23-25 Eid al-Fitr (End of Ramadan). Dec 25-26 Christmas. Dec 31 Eid al-Kabir (Feast of the Sacrifice). Jan 1 2007 New Year's Day. Apr 6-9 Easter. Mar 31 Mouloud (Birth of the Prophet). May 1 Workers' Day.

Note: Muslim festivals are timed according to local sightings of various phases of the moon and the dates given above are approximations. During the lunar month of Ramadan that precedes Eid al-Fitr, Muslims fast during the day and feast at night and normal business patterns may be interrupted. Many restaurants are closed during the day and there may be restrictions on smoking and drinking. Some disruption may continue into Eid al-Fitr itself. Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Kabir (Eid al-Adha) may last anything from two to ten days, depending on the region. For more information, see the World of Islam appendix.

6 HEALTH

	Special Precautions	Certificate Required
Yellow Fever	Yes	1
Cholera	Yes	2
Typhoid and Polio	3	N/A
Malaria	4	N/A

1: A yellow fever vaccination certificate is required by travellers over one year of age arriving within six days from infected areas. Travellers arriving from non-endemic zones should note that vaccination is strongly recommended for travel outside the urban areas, even if an outbreak of the disease has not been reported and they would normally not require a vaccination certificate to enter the country. The risk of contracting yellow fever is highest in Lagos and Kaduna states. Contact Embassy/High Commission for exact details of vaccination requirements prior to travel.

2: Following WHO guidelines issued in 1973, a cholera vaccination certificate is not a condition of entry to Nigeria. However, evidence of cholera vaccination is required by certain nationals before they may enter the country (check with the nearest Nigerian Embassy) and vaccination is therefore advised. Cholera is a serious risk in this country and precautions are essential. Up-to-date advice should be sought before deciding whether these precautions should include vaccination, as medical opinion is divided over its effectiveness; see the Health appendix for further information.

3: Polio and typhoid both occur.

4: Malaria risk exists all year throughout the country. The predominant falciparum strain has been reported to be resistant to chloroquine.

Food & drink: All water should be regarded as being potentially contaminated. Water used for drinking, brushing teeth or making ice should have first been boiled or otherwise sterilised. Milk is unpasteurised and should be boiled. Powdered or tinned milk is available and is advised, but



make sure that it is reconstituted with pure water. Avoid dairy products which are likely to have been made from unboiled milk. Only eat well-cooked meat and fish, preferably served hot. Pork, salad and mayonnaise may carry increased risk. Vegetables should be cooked and fruit peeled.

Other risks: Bilharzia (schistosomiasis) is present. Avoid swimming and paddling in fresh water; swimming pools which are well chlorinated and maintained are safe. Hepatitis A, B, C and E are present; precautions should be taken. Meningococcal meningitis, leishmaniasis, trypanosomiasis and onchocerciasis (river blindness) occur. TB and Dengue fever also occur and HIV is a risk. Rabies is present. For those at high risk, vaccination before arrival should be considered. If you are bitten, seek medical advice without delay. For more information, consult the Health appendix.

Health care: The government-provided health care facilities are of a poor standard and are subject to shortages of drugs, equipment, materials and even electricity. It is advisable to take a sufficient supply of drugs or medication to meet personal needs. However, there are some adequate private facilities where the standards approach those of Europe. Doctors and hospitals often expect immediate cash payment for health services. There is no reciprocal health agreement with the UK. Medical insurance is essential.

Travel - International

AIR: The national airline is Virgin Nigeria (website: www.virginnigeria.com); flights began in June 2005 and operate between Lagos, London, Accra (Ghana), Johannesburg (South Africa) and Doula (Cameroon).

Approximate flight times: From Lagos to London is seven hours 25 minutes and to New York is 12 hours 10 minutes.

Main airports: Lagos (LOS) (Murtala Muhammed) is 22km (13 miles) north of Lagos (travel time 40 minutes). To/from the airport: Taxis to the city are available. Facilities: Restaurant, bar, snack bar, bank, post office, bureau de change and duty free shop and car hire. Kano (KAN) is 8km (5 miles) north of Kano (travel time 25 minutes). To/from the airport: Taxis are available. Facilities: Restaurant, bank, post office, duty free shop and car hire. Abuja (ABV) is 35km (22 miles) from the city. To/from the airport: Taxis are available.

Note: Pickpockets and confidence tricksters, some posing as local immigration and other government officials, are especially common at Murtala Muhammed Airport.

Departure tax: None.

SEA: Main ports: Lagos, Port Harcourt and Calabar. Other important ports include Warri and Sepele.

ROAD: Links are with Benin, Cameroon, Chad and Niger. The principal trans-Saharan routes pass through Nigeria from Niger. The principal link with Benin is via the Idoroko border point along the good coast road to Lagos.

Travel - Internal

AIR: The former national carrier, Nigeria Airways, has now been liquidated but the new airline Virgin Nigeria (website: www.virginnigeria.com) operates domestic flights to Abuja and Port Harcourt. Charter facilities are available in Lagos from Aero Contractors (website: www.acn.aero). It is advisable to book internal flights well in advance. There is often



considerable delay in internal air services. Lack of fuel sometimes disrupts internal commercial air travel and flights may be cancelled at short notice.

SEA: Ferry services operate along the south coast and along the Niger and Benue rivers. For timetables and prices, enquire locally.

RAIL: The two main routes are from Lagos to Kano (via IbadanOyoOgbomboshoKadunaZaria); and from Port Harcourt to Maiduguri (via AbaEnuguMakurdiJos). These two lines link up Kaduna and Kafanchan. There is also a branch line from Zaria to Gusau and Kaura Namoda. A daily service runs on both main routes. Sleeping cars are available, which must be booked in advance. There are three classes and some trains have restaurant cars and air conditioning. Trains are generally slower and less reliable than buses, but cheaper.

ROAD: Traffic drives on the right. The national road system links all the main centres, although in some areas secondary roads become impassable during the rains. Reports of armed robberies in broad daylight on rural roads in the northern half of Nigeria have been reported and appear to be increasing. Buses and taxis (or 'bush taxis' in the shape of Ford Transit vans) run between the main towns. Car hire is not difficult to obtain in Lagos and Abuja, but it is best to go through hotels. Chauffeur-driven cars are advised. Documentation: An International Driving Permit is required, accompanied by two passport-size photos.

URBAN: Public transport in Lagos operates in rather chaotic conditions. The city suffers from chronic traffic congestion, which makes it impossible for buses and taxis to operate efficiently, especially during the rush hours. There are many private bus companies and several thousand private minibuses. Taxis in Lagos are yellow and both fares and tip should be agreed in advance. A ferry service runs to Lagos Island.

7 ACCOMMODATION

HOTELS: There are first-class hotels in Lagos and in the major towns, but they are heavily booked and advance reservation is essential. Lagos is one of the most congested cities in Africa, and the majority of good hotels are on Lagos Island. Hotels are generally very expensive, but there is a variety of alternative accommodation. Further information can be obtained from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (see Top Things To Do).

CATERING REST-HOUSES/CHRISTIAN MISSIONS/GUEST HOUSES/SPORTING CLUBS: Government-run catering rest-houses are scattered throughout the country and offer accommodation in colonial-style rest-houses. In many towns, Christian missions are able to offer good basic accommodation at a reasonable price. The universities have guest houses for visiting academics, but may be able to accommodate other visitors. Most of the big towns have sporting clubs which offer cheap accommodation and eating facilities, and can be used by visitors who take temporary membership. Port Harcourt is the centre of the national oil industry and offers a large selection of accommodation to the industry, which is also available to tourists.

The South

LAGOS: Lagos is a busy and overcrowded city, reputed to be the most expensive in the world. Its commercial and administrative centre is on Lagos Island at the heart of the city, linked to the mainland by two road bridges. Ikoyi and Victoria islands are also connected to Lagos Island, and both have wealthy residential areas and beautiful gardens. The National Museum at Onikan on



Lagos Island houses numerous exhibits of Nigeria's ancient civilisations and has a craft centre which sells examples of Nigerian craft at fixed prices. In the Jankara Market on Lagos Island you can bargain for locally dyed cotton and handwoven cloth, herbs and leather goods.

THE SOUTHWEST: Ibadan is famous for its university and its market (one of the biggest in Nigeria). It is a convenient base for trips to the other, more traditional, old towns of the Western State. The large, traditional town of Oyo has some old Portuguese-style houses and is the site of the capital of the old Yoruba Empire. Oshogbo is the founding centre of the internationally renowned school of Oshogbo art and home of the shrines and grove of Oshun, the Yoruba goddess of fertility. The famous Oshun Shrine is to be found here. The Oshun Festival takes place towards the end of August each year. Ile-Ife, the ancient name of the town of Ife, is the cradle of Yoruba culture, and includes the Ife Museum, which has many fine bronze and terracotta sculptures dating back to the 13th century. The university here is a centre for batik-dyeing. Akure is a good base from which to explore the seven Olumirin Waterfalls.

THE MOUTH OF THE NIGER: Modern Benin City is a rapidly developing metropolis, but there are a few reminders of its long Yoruba history. The old city's moat and wall survive in places and the National Museum houses an interesting collection of Benin royal art. The Oba's Palace is worth visiting, although permission needs to be obtained in Lagos. Many of the villages in Cross River State are of interest for their handicrafts and traditions of magic, but may only be accessible by foot or canoe. Abaraka, Auchi, Sapele, Sapoba and Warri however, can be reached by road. Calabar is a pleasant town in a beautiful setting, high on a hill above the Calabar River. Ikot Ekepne is the centre for beautiful baskets and carvings, and at Oron there is a museum renowned for its exhibits of Ibibio and Efik carvings. Ikom, on the road to Cameroon, has curious carved monoliths set in circles. Port Harcourt has long been an important merchant port and is today the centre of Nigeria's oil industry.

The North

Abuja, the new federal capital since 1991, is as yet undeveloped for tourism. It has a beautiful setting which gives magnificent views across the savannah.

KANO: Formerly the largest of the ancient Hausa cities, Kano is today Nigeria's third-largest city. The walled old town still remains and gives the city a medieval atmosphere, although the city was founded at least 1000 years ago, being of strategic importance on the trans-Saharan trade routes. Kurmi Market has many tourist souvenirs, including the richly embroidered Fulani horse blankets and decorations used at festivals. The famous dye pits (Kofar Mata), still in use and apparently some of the oldest in Africa, are interesting, as is the Grand Mosque. The Emir's Palace is an outstanding example of Hausa architecture. The city has many colonial-style sporting clubs and good restaurants and nightlife.

JOS: Jos is a favourite holiday centre on account of its location (1200m/3900ft above sea level) and pleasant climate. The Jos Museum has a large collection of pottery from all over the country, and the nearby Museum of Traditional Nigerian Architecture holds a collection of full-size replicas representing different styles of Nigerian architecture, including the Kano Wall, Katsina Palace and Zaria Mosque. There is also a small zoo and easy access to such sights as the Assob Falls.

ELSEWHERE: Kaduna is a government town laid out by the British and has fine buildings and modern amenities. The ancient walled city of Zaria to the north retains much of its old character and has a fine mosque and Emir's Palace. Outside Katsina, on the border with Niger, are some old Hausa burial mounds and the city is the site of spectacular Sallah festivals (see Special Events in the Social Profile section). At Maiduguri, the Sallah festival is held three months after the



festival of Eid al-Fitr, during which Borno horsemen demonstrate their equestrian prowess. The town also has a palace, park, zoo and museum. The area around Lake Chad is flat and prone to flooding during and after the rains. The whole region is of special interest to the ornithologist and nature enthusiast. In contrast, some of the most striking and fascinating mountain scenery can be enjoyed around Biu and towards the Cameroon border.

8 SPORT & ACTIVITIES

Watersports: The numerous beaches offer bathing, although many have strong currents and bathers should not swim far from the shore, especially in Lagos. Many of the better hotels have pools. Good river and sea angling is available throughout the country.

Wildlife: Yankari National Park in the eastern half of the country is particularly good for birdwatching. Animals which can be viewed here include elephants, crocodiles and monkeys. The park has accommodation, restaurants and a swimming pool. Nigeria's most scenic national park, the Gashaka Game Reserve near Yola, also provides opportunities to view birds and animals. It is home to some highly endangered species.

Entertainment

Food & Drink: There are restaurants of all varieties in Lagos and the major towns. European and Oriental food is readily available. Although there are self-service cafes, mainly in department stores, most restaurants have table service. Nigerian food is typical of that found throughout West Africa, with regional variations. In the north, meat is more popular than in other areas. Spirits are expensive. Larger hotels and clubs have bars and cocktail lounges. National specialities: Yam. Sweet potatoes. Plantain and pepper soup. Suya (barbecued liver and beef on sticks) and kilishi (spiced dried meat). In the east egussi soup (stew of meat, dried fish and melon seeds). In the south, goat meat and bush meat - particularly antelope - are considered a delicacy. National drinks: There are many brands of locally brewed and bottled beer which are very good. Nigerian brewed Guinness is available. Tipping: Unless a service charge has been included, 10 per cent is expected for most services. Note that for taxi drivers the fare including a tip should be agreed before the journey. Airport porters are usually tipped per case.

Nightlife: There are nightclubs in many of the hotels in Lagos and in the Surulere district. There is nightlife in other towns, however, due to socio-cultural and religious differences, some areas have a more subdued nightlife. Some clubs have live entertainment, details of which are given in the local newspapers. North of Oyo in Ogbomoso, there is a lively market, particularly in the evenings. Local festivals which generally take place in the summer months provide a good opportunity to see dancing, music and traditional costumes.

Shopping: Markets are the most interesting places to shop. Special purchases include adire (patterned, indigo-dyed cloth), batiks and pottery from the southwest, leatherwork and kaduna cotton from the north and carvings from the east. Designs vary greatly, many towns having their own distinctive style. Other purchases include herbs, beadwork, basketry and ceremonial masks such as those of the Ekpo. Shopping hours: Mon-Fri 0800-1700, Sat 0800-1630.

Business

Economy: GDP: US\$65.2 billion (2004). Main exports: Petroleum and related products, cocoa and rubber. Main imports: Machinery, chemicals, transport equipment, manufactured goods and



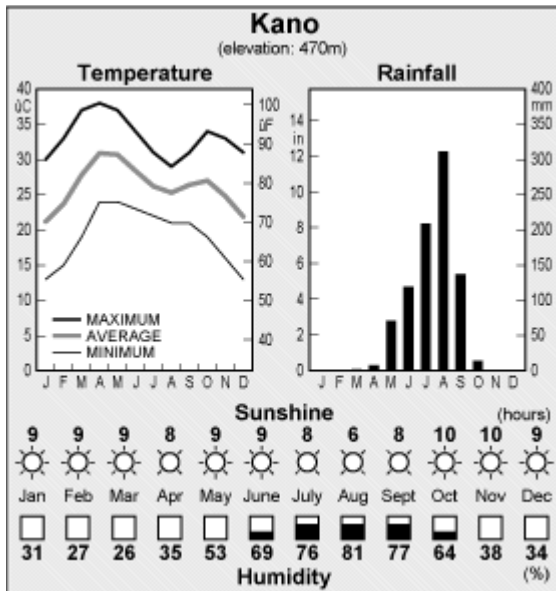
food and live animals. Main trade partners: USA, Brazil, China (PR), the UK, Spain, The Netherlands, France, Germany and Italy. **ECONOMY:** Nigeria is Africa's largest oil producer; the industry earns 90 per cent of the country's export income and has underpinned its economy for decades. Nigeria also has commercially viable quantities of tin, coal, iron ore, zinc and some uranium, plus substantial but as yet largely untapped reserves of natural gas and coal. Agriculture occupies well over half of the population, who produce rice, maize, cassava, sorghum and millet as staples, as well as groundnuts, cocoa, palm oil and rubber as cash crops. Timber and livestock rearing have both developed during the last 20 years. Nonetheless, successive governments have failed to restore Nigeria's one-time self-sufficiency in food. Manufacturing was established during the 1960s, principally with oil money, and now includes food processing and the production of vehicles, textiles, pharmaceuticals, paper and cement. Despite its abundance of natural resources, Nigeria has suffered an almost permanent economic crisis during the last 10 years, due to political instability, mismanagement and corruption. Per capita GDP is around US\$650 annually, which is improved but still not desirable. The country is weighed down by a massive foreign debt. Reduction negotiations have been completed with the 'Paris Club' of leading creditors. As a condition of the rescheduling, the new civilian Government has begun to put into effect economic reforms, including the sale of major state-owned industries. Recent economic performance has been determined mainly by the state of the world oil market. Governmental deregulation of fuel prices and the privatisation of Nigeria's four oil refineries in 2003, coupled with the rise in oil production, meant that recent GDP growth has been good, estimated at around 4.6 per cent in 2005. Nigeria is the dominant member of the West African economic cooperation organisation, ECOWAS, as well as a leading member of the oil producers' cartel, OPEC.

Business Etiquette: English is spoken in business circles. It is common for business meetings to take place without a prior appointment, although these should be made for government visits. Business deals will often progress at a slower pace than is common in Europe. Owing to the prevalence of commercial fraud targeting foreigners, business travellers should contact both their local Nigerian Embassy and Chamber of Commerce before travelling to Nigeria. Office hours: Mon-Fri 0800-1600 (Government offices); 0830-1700 (private businesses). However, offices in the northern States may close at 1300 as Muslim workers take part in Jumat services at 1400: business resumes after this.

Commercial Information: Nigerian High Commissions' Nigerian Information Service Center 9 Northumberland Avenue, London WC2N 5BX, UK Tel: (020) 7839 1244. Website: www.nigeriahc.org.uk



9 CLIMATE



Varies from area to area. The southern coast is hot and humid with a rainy season from March to November. During the dry season, the Harmattan wind blows from the Sahara. The north's rainy season is from July to September. Nights can be cold in December and January.

Required clothing: Lightweight cottons and linens are worn, with a warm wrap advisable in the north. Rainwear is essential during the rainy season.

10 HISTORY AND GOVERNMENT

History: The states of Kanem and Borno, which flourished on the shores of Lake Chad from about AD 10 onwards, were the first imperial states in the region. Their wealth was founded on control of trans-Saharan trade routes. From the 11th to 14th centuries, the Islamic Hausa city-states were also a dominant influence, while in the southwest, the Yoruba cities of Ife, Oyo and Benin became major trading centres. In the 15th century, the Portuguese began trading first for spices, later for slaves. The Portuguese were then supplanted by other European trading nations. The slave trade disrupted the balance of power in the region, as did the southward expansion of the Islamic faith and the arrival of Christian missionaries in the 18th century. At the end of the 19th century, the British conquered the territory of present-day Nigeria. After World War II, the first step towards decolonisation was the introduction of a federal system of government. A Muslim northerner, Alhaji Abulbakar Tafawa Balewa, became the first prime minister. After a period of internal self-government, full independence from Britain was achieved in 1960. The first post-independence government was a coalition of members of the Northern People's Congress and the eastern-based National Council for Nigeria and Cameroon. Since then, the country has endured numerous changes of government, in which the most important factor has almost always been the influence of the military. Concerned that ethnic and religious differences could split the country apart, the army has chosen to intervene on several occasions to thwart a perceived threat to the integrity of the nation. The greatest crisis came about in the mid-1960s,



when the eastern part of the country styling itself the 'Republic of Biafra' attempted to secede. A three-year (1967-70) civil war followed, at the end of which the secessionists were defeated and the federal government under General Gowon reasserted control, albeit at a heavy price in lives, especially in the former Biafran territories. Gowon was overthrown by fellow army officers, led by General Murtala Mohammed, in 1974. Mohammed himself was assassinated in 1976, replaced by army chief of staff General Olusegun Obasanjo. The new leader fulfilled the military's oft-repeated promises to restore civilian rule (Obasanjo himself would return as a civilian president a quarter-century later). And so in 1979, Alhaji Shehu Shagari was elected to represent the National Party of Nigeria a coalition of parties that had existed prior to the 12-year-long ban on political activity. Shagari was re-elected for a second term in 1983. However, after a few months, the military citing mismanagement and corruption on the part of the civilian government launched another coup under army chief Mohammed Buhari. Rivalries in the armed forces proved to be just as potent as before. Buhari lasted less than two years before being overthrown by General Ibrahim Babangida, who himself survived several attempted coups led by rival army officers. This time the military were determined to stay in power, despite heavy domestic and international pressure. When finally forced mainly by economic factors to concede civilian elections in 1993, the military did their utmost to ensure victory for their preferred candidate. The plan went awry when the poll was comprehensively won by Moshood Abiola, a former publisher who had been put up as a purely token opposition candidate. The military annulled the elections and returned the country to military rule. Sani Abacha, a senior aide to the former president, Babangida, emerged as the new military strongman and, over the next five years, presided over an increasingly oppressive regime. Abiola was put under arrest and other opponents of the regime were jailed or exiled. The regime attracted particular criticism for its treatment of the Ogoni people, located in the oil-rich southeast of the country. Their leader, the renowned writer Ken Saro-Wiwa, was executed on trumped-up charges along with eight colleagues. Thereafter, the Abacha government suffered increasing diplomatic isolation, much of it orchestrated by Nelson Mandela, then president of South Africa. Abacha, it later transpired, was also busily defrauding the Nigerian exchequer of huge sums, estimated at around \$1 billion. Then, in June 1998, Abacha suddenly died. Another member of the military junta, General Abdulsalam Abubakar, took over and moved quickly to shed the country's pariah status by organising elections. These were contested by several manufactured parties of broadly centrist persuasion claiming allegiance from constituencies based on geography, ethnicity and religion. The victor in the February 1999 presidential election, standing for the People's Democratic Party (PDP), was the former military ruler of the 1970s, Olusegun Obasanjo, who drew his support from the mainly Christian south and east. The PDP also secured an absolute majority in both houses of the newly established parliament. Shadowed by a military all too keen to intervene on the slightest pretext, the inexperienced civilian government faced a formidable task. Apart from the dire economic situation, compounded by extensive and routine corruption, the Obasanjo government had to deal with growing religious conflict. A particular problem was the decision of several local and regional governments in the mainly Muslim north of the country to introduce a version of Islamic Shari'a law. This was very unpopular amongst non-Muslim minorities. Hundreds were killed in inter-communal clashes in 2000 and again in 2002. Tensions have been so high that almost any dispute can set off a spate of violence. In November 2002, many deaths followed protests over a plan (admittedly ill-conceived) to hold the 'Miss World' pageant in the northern city of Kaduna. There have also been outbreaks over Shari'a court judgements, such as the execution (by stoning) of a woman found guilty of adultery. Yet, for all its domestic difficulties, Nigeria remains the major regional power and its troops have intervened in a number of conflicts throughout West Africa during the 1990s. The Nigerian-led ECOMOG force played an important role in the decade-long conflict in Liberia. And in September 2002, it despatched troops to support the government of Cote d'Ivoire, which was then threatened by rebel forces. Regional stability of the West African region has become a major international issue in recent years since the discovery of new oil and gas deposits in West African waters, and recent events in the Middle



East. Obasanjo and the PDP came up for election again in April 2003. The election was a tense one since, if concluded successfully, this would be the first time since independence that Nigeria had held two consecutive elections without military intervention. Despite allegations of widespread fraud and ballot-rigging, both the PDP and president Obasanjo were returned with comfortable majorities. (Obasanjo's main opponent was yet another ex-military dictator, Mohammed Buhari.)

Government: Under the provisions of the constitution announced by the government in late 1998, executive power is vested in the president of the republic. Legislative responsibilities are entrusted to the bicameral national assembly, comprising the 360-member House of Representatives and the 109-member Senate. Members of both houses serve a four-year term.

Travel Advice

All travel to the Bakassi Peninsula is advised against. All but essential travel by boat and road to the riverine areas in Rivers, Bayelsa and Delta States is also advised against. Localised outbreaks of civil unrest can occur at short notice. Violent crime is prevalent in the south of the country, including Lagos. Travellers should be aware of the threat from terrorism in Nigeria. A statement issued by Usama Bin Laden in February 2003 called for an uprising by Muslims in a number of countries including Nigeria. Travellers should be aware of the global risk of indiscriminate terrorist attacks, which could be against civilian targets. This advice is based on information provided by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in the UK. It is correct at time of publishing. As the situation can change rapidly, visitors are advised to contact the following organisations for the **latest travel advice:** British Foreign and Commonwealth Office Tel: (0845) 850 2829. Website: www.fco.gov.uk US Department of State Website: <http://travel.state.gov/travel>

Top Things To See & Do

In the predominantly Muslim north, the most important festival is Sallah, celebrated three months after the feast of Eid al-Fitr (End of Ramadan), particularly in the towns of Kano, Katsina, Maiduguri and Zaria. Every family is required to slaughter a ram and festivities last for several days, with horseback processions, musicians and dancers. Featured also in northern communities are Durbars, long lines of horsemen led by a band, the horses in quilted armour with the riders wearing quilted coats and wielding ceremonial swords. Watch out for Nigeria's wonderful selection of homemade crafts. The National Museum at Onikan on Lagos Island houses numerous exhibits of Nigeria's ancient civilisations and has a craft centre which sells examples of Nigerian craft at fixed prices. In the Jankara Market on Lagos Island, you can bargain for locally dyed cotton and handwoven cloth, herbs and leather goods. In the southwest, meanwhile, Ibadan has a market that is reputedly one of the biggest in Nigeria. Many of the villages in Cross River State at the Mouth of the Niger are of interest for their handicrafts and traditions of magic, but may only be accessible by foot or canoe. Abaraka, Auchi, Sapele, Sapoba and Warri, however, can be reached by road. Ikot Ekepne is the centre for beautiful baskets and carvings, and at Oron there is a museum renowned for its exhibits of Ibibio and Efik carvings. In the north in Kano, Kurmi Market has many tourist souvenirs, including the richly embroidered Fulani horse blankets and decorations used at festivals. The famous dye pits (Kofar Mata) are still in use and apparently some of the oldest in Africa. Walk where the capital of the Yoruba Empire once was, and admire Oyo's old Portuguese-style houses. Worship the Yoruba goddess of fertility in Oshogbo, the founding centre of the internationally renowned school of Oshogbo art and home of the shrines and grove of Oshun. The famous Oshun Shrine is to be found here. The Oshun Festival takes place towards the end of August each year (at the end of the rainy season, during which, thousands of childless women seek the help of the Yoruba goddess of fertility. Ile-Ife, the ancient name of the town of Ife, is another recess of Yoruba culture, and includes the Ife Museum, which



has many fine bronze and terracotta sculptures dating back to the 13th century. Modern Benin City is a rapidly developing metropolis, but there are a few reminders of its long Yoruba history. The old city's moat and wall survive in places and the National Museum houses an interesting collection of Benin royal art. The Oba's Palace is worth visiting, although permission needs to be obtained in **Lagos. Marvel at some of Nigeria's magnificent views:** Akure is a good base from which to explore the seven Olumirin Waterfalls; Calabar is a pleasant town in a beautiful setting, high on a hill above the Calabar River; Abuja's outlook across the savannah; and the striking and fascinating mountain scenery enjoyed around Biu and towards the Cameroon border. Journey through the Cross River National Park. The best base from which to do so is the town of Ikom, on the road to Cameroon, which has curious carved monoliths set in circles, believed to be ancient monuments assembled in reverence to ancestors. The Cross River National Park piques a curiosity in nature, rather than humanity. In the Rainforest Conservation area, this is a place of majestic mountains and rolling hills, with wildlife including leopards, buffaloes, chimpanzees, gorillas, baboons and elephants. Elsewhere, the Yankari National Park in the eastern half of the country is particularly good for birdwatching. Animals which can be viewed here include elephants, crocodiles and monkeys. The park has accommodation, restaurants and a swimming pool. The title of Nigeria's most scenic national park might also go to the Gashaka Game Reserve near Yola, which provides opportunities to view birds and animals and is home to some highly endangered species. Circumnavigate the walled old town of Kano, formerly the largest of the ancient Hausa cities, and soak up its lingering medieval atmosphere. Despite this atmosphere, reinforced by the wall, Kano was founded at least 1000 years ago, being of strategic importance on the trans-Saharan trade routes. The Emir's Palace remains an outstanding example of Hausa architecture. Picnic without breaking a sweat in Jos, a favourite holiday centre on account of its location (1200m/3900ft above sea level) and consequent pleasantly cool climate. Its nearby Assob Falls and many streams and dams make this an extremely pretty area.

Tourist Information: Nigeria Tourism Development Corporation Old Secretariat, Area 1, Garki, PMB 167, Abuja, Nigeria Tel: (9) 234 2764. Website: www.nigeriatourism.net

Overview II

The history of the Nigerian people is a long and involved one. The states of Kanem and Borno, which flourished on the shores of Lake Chad from about AD 10 onwards, were the first imperial states in the region. Their wealth was founded on control of trans-Saharan trade routes. From the 11th to 14th centuries, the Islamic Hausa city-states were also a dominant influence, while in the southwest, the Yoruba cities became major trading centres. In the 15th century, the Portuguese began trading but, by the end of the 19th century, the British had conquered present-day Nigeria. After gradual internal self-government, full Independence was achieved in 1960. Since then, the country has endured numerous changes of Government. Since then, Nigeria's army has chosen to intervene on several occasions to thwart a perceived threat to the integrity of the nation. The greatest crisis came about in the mid-1960s, when the eastern part of the country styling itself the 'Republic of Biafra' attempted to secede. A three-year (1967-70) civil war followed, at the end of which the secessionists were defeated. Nevertheless, military overthrow, coups and assassination followed over many years. After the annulled 1993 elections, Sani Abacha emerged as the new military strongman and presided over an increasingly oppressive regime. Then, in 1998, Abacha suddenly died. Another member of the military junta, General Abdulsalam Abubakar, took over and moved quickly to shed the country's pariah status by organising elections. The victor, standing for the People's Democratic Party (PDP), was the former military ruler of the 1970s, Olusegun Obasanjo. The inexperienced civilian Government faced a formidable task. Apart from the dire economic situation, there was growing religious conflict. A particular problem was the decision of several local and regional Governments in the mainly Muslim north to introduce a version of Islamic Shari'a law, very unpopular amongst non-



Muslim minorities. Hundreds were killed in inter-communal clashes in 2000 and again in 2002. Tensions have been so high that almost any dispute can set off a spate of violence. Yet, for all its domestic difficulties, Nigeria remains the major regional power and its troops intervened in a number of conflicts throughout West Africa during the 1990s. Regional stability of the West African region has become a major international issue in recent years since the discovery of new oil and gas deposits in West African waters, and recent events in the Middle East. As has been illustrated, Nigeria's greatest asset its wealth of native races and religions, its vibrant population, the largest of any country in Africa have also proven its downfall on countless explosive occasion. It is a shame that Nigeria is not currently able to entice visitors other than those seeking a slice of the oil dollar. After all, this country is blessed with hundreds of miles of coastline, national parks and fascinating ancient sites.

Communications

Telephone: Full IDD is available. Country code: 234.

Mobile telephone: Roaming agreement exist with some international mobile phone companies. Coverage is average.

Internet: Internet and e-mail services are available in Internet cafes in Lagos.

Post: Airmail to Europe is unreliable and takes up to three weeks. Delivery may be more reliable through international couriers who are represented in major towns.

MEDIA: Nigeria's media scene is one of the most vibrant in Africa. State-run radio and TV services reach virtually all parts of the country and operate at a federal and regional level. All 36 states run their own radio stations, and most of them operate TV services. Despite high levels of violence, the private press still occasionally criticises the Government. Press: English-language newspapers include the the Daily Times, the Guardian, New Nigerian, This Day and the Vanguard. TV: Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) is state-run and operates national and regional stations; Degue Broadcasting Network (DBN) is a commercial station, as are AIT (which broadcasts in Lagos and Abuja via satellite), Minaj TV (serves eastern Nigeria), Galaxy TV (serves western Nigeria) and Channels TV. Radio: This is the main medium of information for most Nigerians. The state-run Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria operates Radio Nigeria stations in Abuja, Lagos, Ibadan, Kaduna and Enugu. Ray Power is commercial and mainly music- and speech-based.