

the essential guide to
customs & culture

CULTURE SMART!

NIGERIA



CULTURE SMART!

guides will help you to deal confidently with unfamiliar situations abroad. They tell you about the beliefs, attitudes, and behavior of people in different countries, so that when you arrive you are aware of local manners and sensitive issues, and are well equipped to make friends and enter into successful business relationships. Practical advice on what to expect and how to behave enables you to avoid embarrassing gaffes, establish a rapport with your hosts, and make the very best of your visit.

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CULTURE SMART!

NIGERIA

Diane Lemieux

·K·U·P·E·R·A·R·D·

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Map of Nigeria



introduction

Nigeria is not, yet, a tourist destination. The potential is there. A large country, it has everything from sandy beaches and lush tropical jungles to fertile plains, beautiful mountains, and arid desert—but there is little tourism infrastructure. Most foreigners who visit the country do so purely for reasons of employment. Indeed, Nigerians themselves tend to travel within the country only for business reasons or to visit family. Few people take the time to appreciate the most exceptional aspect of Africa's most populous country: the vibrancy and cultural sophistication of its people.

The sheer cultural variety to be found within Nigeria is impressive, with around two hundred and fifty distinct ethno-linguistic groups. That said, three large groups dominate the cultural and political scene. The culture of the mainly Muslim Hausa-Fulani in the north is rooted in the once opulent city-states of the famed trans-Saharan trade routes. The Yoruba culture of the southwest has given rise to some of Africa's best-known art forms and has influenced religions and traditions in many countries through the out-migration of its people during the slave trade. Finally, the Igbo of the southeast have decentralized, republican traditions that have produced a culture of talented traders and businesspeople.

Competition for scarce resources during Nigeria's short history as an independent nation

has fostered ingenuity and perseverance on the part of its ambitious citizens. They are natural entrepreneurs, and intelligent and shrewd negotiators. They are also proud. Acutely aware that they have been considered second-class people by Westerners for more than two hundred years, they are deeply aggrieved by their country's reputation for violence and corruption. Most are devout, gregarious, hardworking, and intensely critical of the culture of patronage and self-enrichment that grips much of the public sector.

Those who come to Nigeria to explore its economic potential cannot hope to be successful without the assistance of their Nigerian counterparts. Nigerians are not easy to get to know, however; their daily lives are extremely busy, with arduous commutes, long work hours, and many religious and family responsibilities. Furthermore, they are extremely sensitive to condescension—but to those who show a genuine desire to understand their culture, they offer warm hospitality and steadfast cooperation.

This book provides a snapshot of Nigeria today, a brief introduction to the ancient and complex systems of behavior, values, and attitudes that underlie the country's vibrant social and business life. It also opens the door to a fascinating culture that will undoubtedly play an increasingly important role in global affairs.

Key Facts

Official Name	Federal Republic of Nigeria	Member of the OAU, OPEC, and the Commonwealth
Capital City	Abuja	
Main Cities and Towns	Lagos, Kano, Calabar, Katsina, Port Harcourt, Enugu, Kaduna, Warri, Ibadan, Benin City, Jos, Zaria, Maiduguri, Bauchi	
Area	356,669 sq. miles (923,768 sq. km)	Divided into 36 states and 1 Federal Capital Territory
Terrain	Desert plains in the north, hills and plateaus in the middle belt, and tropical forests and a large delta basin in the south, along the coast	
Climate	Varies from arid in the north to tropical in the center and equatorial in the south	
Currency	Naira (N), divided into 100 kobo	USD1 = N117 GBP1 = N240 EUR1 = N220 (2011 est.)
Population	150 million (est.)	Africa's most populous country
Ethnic Makeup	There are more than 250 ethnic groups. The most populous and politically influential are Hausa and Fulani (29%), Yoruba (21%), Igbo (18%), Ijaw (10%), Kanuri (4%), Ibibio (3.5%), and Tiv (2.5%).	

National Languages	There are more than 500 languages; the most common are English (official), Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, Fulani, and Pidgin.	
Religions	Sunni Muslim (50%), Christian (40%), indigenous beliefs (10%)	
Government	Federal republic; consecutive democratic elections since 1999	President is both chief of state and head of the government, elected for no more than two four-year terms. The three tiers of government are federal, state, and local.
Media	Private and state cable television networks available; DSTV is the main satellite TV provider. Many public and private radio stations in English and local languages	A variety of national and local newspapers are available, including <i>Guardian News</i> , <i>Business Day</i> , and <i>234 Next</i> (all also available online).
Electricity	220 volts, 50 Hz	3-flat-prong plugs. Adaptors required for US appliances; surge protectors and UPS battery packs advised.
Video/TV	PAL	
Internet Domain	.ng	
Telephone	Country code: 234	Several cell phone providers give good coverage.
Time Zone	GMT +1 throughout the year	

LAND & PEOPLE

GEOGRAPHY

Nigeria is located in the elbow of western Africa, just before the coast shoots south. It is a large country—nearly one and a half times the size of the state of Texas or the country of France. Its southern border is the Atlantic Ocean; to the west is Benin, and to the east is Cameroon. In the north it shares a border with the Republic of Niger, and in the northeastern corner is Lake Chad.

Nigeria's territory—roughly 700 miles (1,125 km) wide and 650 miles (1,045 km) long—contains a rich and diverse geography. Along the coast the tropical forests and agricultural lands of the west gradually change to the lush mangrove swamps of the Niger Delta in the east. The middle belt is dominated by hills and plateaus, and mountains in the east. In the north, dry savanna gradually gives way to the Sahel desert area.

The country is effectively divided into three by the Niger and Benue rivers, which create a “Y” slightly south of the territory's center. The Niger enters the country in the northwest and flows southeast; the Benue flows in from the east. The two meet south of the capital, Abuja, and flow south to the Niger Delta and into the Atlantic.

The territory contains many natural resources. Petroleum reserves and natural gas are its most plentiful resource, found both offshore and in the Niger Delta. In terms of minerals, Nigeria has coal, iron, tin, columbite, lead, copper, and zinc, most of these located in the hills of the middle belt. Agricultural lands are most abundant in the middle belt and the north; fishing and forestry are prevalent along the southern coast.

Climate

Nigeria's climate is hot and tropical all year round, ranging from around 71°F to 97°F (22°C to 36°C). The main variable in climate is the amount and frequency of rain. The coast has an equatorial monsoonal climate with little variation in seasonal temperatures, high humidity, and the highest amount of rainfall. The central region has a tropical humid climate, while the north is dryer and has the least rainfall. Throughout the country there are two seasons: the dry and the rainy. The duration and strength of the rains decrease as you go north. On the coast, the rains begin in

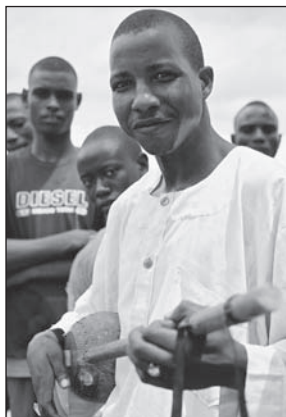


February and peter off by August or September. In the northern regions, the rains fall from June or July to August. These regions also experience the largest range in temperatures: from around 110°F (43°C) in the dry months to the low 70s Fahrenheit (low 20s Celsius) during the rains.

From September to November, most of the country experiences clear skies, moderate temperatures, and lower humidity. From December through February, strong, dry northeasterly winds known as the harmattan blow fine dust from the Sahara into a dense fog that coats windows and cars with sand. While the harmattan reduces the humidity, this period is also known as flu season, during which there are increased incidents of allergies and respiratory and eye irritations.

THE PEOPLE

Nigeria is Africa's most populous country. Its estimated population of about 150 million people is made up of more than two hundred and fifty different ethno-linguistic groups, each with its own history, culture, traditions, language, and identity. The three largest groups are: in the north, the Hausa-Fulani, who account for 29 percent of the population; in the southwest, the Yoruba, who account for roughly 21 percent; and in



the southeast, the Igbo (pronounced “ee-boh”), who account for around 19 percent.

Other large groups include the Fulani, a pastoral people of the northern savannas; the Ijaw of the Niger Delta region; the Kanuri of the Lake Chad region; the Ibibio in the southeast, around the major city of Calabar; and the Nupe and Tiv of the middle-belt region.

There is also a large immigrant community, particularly from neighboring West African countries, as well as an important Syrian and Lebanese community that has been established for generations. Among the newer immigrant groups are significant numbers of East Indians, Chinese, and white Zimbabweans and South Africans.



Nigerians often find themselves hard-pressed to describe exactly what it is to be Nigerian: given the fact that the country was artificially created only a little more than seventy years ago, the concept of being Nigerian is relatively new. Furthermore, there is a significant difference in the cultural experiences of rural Nigerians (approximately 52 percent of the population), those of the lower and middle classes who work in the cities, and Nigeria’s small wealthy elite, many of whom have lived and been educated abroad.

Language

It is estimated that there are five hundred and ten living languages in Nigeria, most of which fall within three major families: the Niger-Congo languages of the south, which include Yoruba and Igbo (both tonal languages); Hausa in the north, a Chadic group within the Afro-Asiatic family; and Kanuri, spoken in the northeast. English has been the official language of the country since independence in 1960 and is used in education, for business transactions, and in government. It is not spoken at all in some rural areas, however.

During the nineteenth century, Christian missionaries put indigenous languages such as Yoruba and Igbo into writing for the first time. They also developed the first written dictionaries in these languages and translated the Bible into local languages. In the 1930s the British colonial administration introduced a Latin-based alphabet called *boko* for the writing of Hausa. Hausa is itself a regional language as it is spoken in northern Nigeria and Niger, and in regions of Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Eritrea, Ghana, Sudan, and Togo.

Most Nigerians are multilingual. They speak at least one native language (but most often they will know more than one) and English, as well as Pidgin (a combination of indigenous languages and English that is recognized as a separate language).

Religion

Around 50 percent of the population are Sunni Muslim. Most northerners, and approximately one-