



FLYING DOCTORS NIGERIA

# A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE FOR EXPATS COMING TO NIGERIA

By  
Flying Doctors Nigeria

Revised Edition  
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## Foreword

This handbook is a comprehensive guide created by Flying Doctors Nigeria, a leading health and emergency medical response service company. It aims to provide expatriates with valuable insights on how to easily adapt into the rich culture of Nigeria, whether they are visiting for business or leisure.

With over a decade of hands-on experience, we have closely collaborated with foreign communities, witnessing the challenges faced by individuals adjusting to the marked differences and unique aspects of living in Africa.

This firsthand experience has been the driving force behind our decision to pen this book. Our goal is to assist expatriates in transitioning seamlessly into the new culture by offering a fundamental introduction to Nigeria, including its history, safety guidelines, and suggestions for recreational activities.

We sincerely hope that this handbook proves to be a helpful companion, enabling expatriates to not only adapt but also to fully embrace the vibrant and diverse culture of Nigeria. Happy reading!





## Introduction

Welcome to Nigeria, the heartbeat of West Africa, home to over 200 million people and a tapestry of vibrant cultures. From diverse ethnic groups to being Africa's economic powerhouse, Nigeria dazzles with its rich heritage and thriving sectors like oil, agriculture, telecommunications, and services. As the continent's top oil producer, Nigeria's energy fuels not just its economy but also the spirit of this dynamic nation.



Furthermore, Nigeria has emerged as an increasingly alluring haven for expatriates, enticed by its expanding economic vistas, vibrant urban hubs, and cultural opulence. The nation's multifaceted economy extends a broad spectrum of employment possibilities, particularly in high-profile sectors such as the dynamic realms of oil and gas, telecommunications, and cutting-edge technology.

# WELCOME!

**'Nnoo'**    **'Sannu da zuwa'**    **'Ekabo'**





## A Quick Primer on Nigerian History

Nigeria achieved republic status in 1963 but underwent a transition to military rule three years later due to a coup. The formation of the Biafran Republic in 1967 led to the Nigerian Civil War. The country returned to republic status in 1979 through a new constitution, yet experienced another military takeover four years later, marking a recurring pattern of political transitions.



President Bola Ahmed Tinubu (GCFR)  
[2023-Date]

In 1999, a new chapter unfolded in Nigeria's history. After a period of military rule, the country embraced democracy, marking a turning point towards self-governance. Olusegun Obasanjo, a former general, became the first elected president of this new era, tasked with healing a nation burdened by economic hardship and a weakened democratic framework.

Umaru Yar'Adua took the helm in 2007, with Goodluck Jonathan by his side as vice president. Sadly, Yar'Adua's time in office was tragically cut short by illness. Jonathan stepped up, assuming the duties of acting president and later winning the 2011 elections in his own right.

The year 2015 saw a change in leadership as General Muhammadu Buhari, a veteran politician, was elected president. After two terms, he peacefully transferred power to Bola Ahmed Tinubu in 2023, solidifying the democratic process and showcasing Nigeria's commitment to self-governance.





## Nigeria at a Glance

### Culture

Nigeria's culture is a rich blend of over 1,150 dialects and 527 languages, shaped by numerous ethnic groups. The major ethnic clusters include the Hausa and Fulani in the north, the Igbo in the southeast, and the Yoruba in the southwest. Geographically, the South is predominantly Christian, while the North is mostly Muslim, with some states adhering to Sharia law, particularly in areas with Islamic prevalence, where modest attire is advised for women.

Respect for elders is a cornerstone of Nigerian culture, notably emphasized in Yoruba traditions. This cultural aspect holds significant importance, especially in the workplace, where age gaps carry weight.



### Social Amenities

When you are greeting someone, it is proper for both men and women to stand. Usually, people will shake hands, but be aware that there is a large Muslim population in Nigeria and the opposite sex may refrain from shaking hands. It is socially polite to ask about a person's health and also about their immediate family. Nigerians are very friendly and open to meeting new people, and if you take the time to get to know the local population, you will be richly rewarded.





## Weather

Nigeria, entirely within the tropical zone, exhibits diverse climatic variations. Along the coast, seasons lack sharp definition, with temperatures rarely exceeding 32°C (90°F), yet high humidity and warm nights prevail. Inland, two distinct seasons emerge: a wet season (April to October) with lower temperatures, and a dry season (November to March) featuring midday temperatures surpassing 38°C (100°F) but cooler nights.

## Urban Challenges and Social Dynamics in Nigeria's Metropolises

Navigating Nigeria's largest cities, Lagos, Kano, Port Harcourt, Ibadan and Abuja, poses challenges in congested and bustling environments. Local drivers are reputed for aggressiveness, while residents can be assertive. Westerners may attract attention, often encountering requests for money.

## The 'Owambe' Experience

A notable cultural difference is the vibrant 'owambe' culture, where celebrations are grandiose, from birthdays to weddings. The exuberant nature of these events may stand out for expats, offering a unique cultural immersion into Nigeria's lively social scene. Dancing is a popular pastime in Nigeria, which is understandable as Nigerians do it very well; nightclubs are usually full of people who really just go to dance and have a good time. When out socializing, Nigerians will drink a lot less than is consumed in many Western countries. Drinking until drunk is incomprehensible to Nigerians and will be frowned upon.





## Food

Traditional Nigerian food is hot and spicy especially in the southwest, eaten accompanied by Nigerian palm wine or beer. In the big cities, western food is available in supermarkets like Spar, Shoprite, Goodies and Hartley's, for continental dishes you can get in top hotels and restaurants you can also find KFC and Domino's, but surprisingly, no McDonalds.





## Places to visit

Nigeria's tourism boasts of a vibrant tapestry of cultures, breathtaking landscapes, lively traditions, historical landmarks, natural wonders, and vibrant cities await your exploration.

From the iconic Zuma Rock, standing majestically as the "Gateway to Abuja," to the scenic beauty of the Obudu Cattle Ranch, nestled in the serene Obudu Plateau, Nigeria's diverse attractions promise to captivate your senses and leave an indelible mark on your travel memories.

In the bustling city of Lagos, the Lekki Conservation Centre stands as a testament to Nigeria's commitment to preserving its natural heritage. With a canopy walkway and a serene environment, it provides a perfect haven for wildlife enthusiasts and nature lovers.



**Zuma Rock**



**Lekki Conservation Center**



**Obudu Cattle Ranch**





## Singing the “Expat Blues”



Moving to a new country can be thrilling! But let's be honest, it can also be tough, especially if you are not the one directly involved in work or studies. It's normal to feel overwhelmed by new surroundings and customs, maybe even a bit down initially. It is simply your brain adjusting to change, even though it is exciting change!

Instead of seeing this as a negative phase, think of it as an opportunity to explore. Embrace the unfamiliar! Dive into local activities, whether it's browsing the markets, joining a language class, or sipping coffee with new friends. Engaging with your surroundings helps you build a sense of connection and routine, giving you a base to navigate through the adjustments. Remember, small steps can make a big difference!

It is also important to be kind to yourself. Be honest about your feelings, talk to your partner, and don't hesitate to seek support from others who have been in similar situations. There is no need to go through this alone. By proactively exploring and practicing self-compassion, you can turn this initial phase into a springboard for a fulfilling experience in your new home.

## Before You Go

- Check out Facebook for “Expats in.....” groups. This is a great way to ask questions about your new environment, and also to start networking for when you arrive. This is also a good place to find out what sort of things you should bring with you that are not locally available.





- <http://www.expatexchange.com/nigeria/liveinnigeria.html>. This is an international exchange for expats to ask questions and exchange ideas. It is another good way to start to learn about the practicalities of living in the country. If you can't find your answers on the Nigeria board, check other African expat community forums for non-specific country questions.
- Have your country-of-origin friends and family set up Facebook, WhatsApp or Skype accounts for internet calling, rather than paying through the nose for regular long-distance phone calls.
- If you get homesick, you can go online and "call home." You might want to make test calls to make sure non-tech savvy parents, relatives and friends know how to use the system.

The internet is your best friend when you want to learn about a new place and conditions.

## Things That Help

- Keep an open mind—Expect the good, and conversely, expect some negatives, and deal with things as they come. Don't dwell on the "what if's." Perceived "worst case scenarios" rarely happen.
- Once you arrive in Nigeria, continue to build your social network—people you can call for advice, help, or a shoulder to cry on. Your family is thousands of miles away, and the expat community will become your new "family."
- Try to learn something new about your surroundings each day.
- Stick to your routines; modify them to meet local conditions.
- Teach—Are you a yoga or aerobics instructor, or have a skill or hobby you can teach others? Find like-minded people in the community and set up activities. Give back to the community you live in.

Keep reminding yourself that this is another adventure in life and you will be much richer for having had it.





## Traveling Safely in Nigeria

Motor vehicle crashes rank as the leading cause of death for healthy U.S. citizens abroad, and Nigeria stands among the countries with the highest number of road traffic accidents globally.

When traveling in Nigeria, be prepared for significant differences compared to your home country, notably in the following aspects:

- In Nigeria, cars, buses, large trucks, rickshaws (known here as keke napep/maruwa), bikes, people on foot, often share the same lanes of traffic, especially in rural areas. This increases the risk for crashes.
- Roads in Nigeria are often under-maintained. Potholes make the roads more difficult to navigate.
- Emergency services outside Lagos and Abuja are sparse, so in the event of an accident, emergency response may be delayed or nonexistent.

The following tips in line with recommendations will help you stay safe on Nigerian roads:

### Choose a safe vehicle

- Choose official taxis or public transportation, such as trains and buses. Uber and Bolt are the most popular ride-sharing apps; available in Lagos, Abuja and Port Harcourt.
- Avoid riding on motorcycles or motorbikes, especially motorbike taxis (known in Nigeria as Okada). Many crashes are caused by inexperienced motorbike drivers.
- Choose newer vehicles—They may have more safety features, such as airbags, seat belts and they are more reliable.
- Choose larger vehicles, which may provide more protection in crashes.





## Pick a driver

Do not drive after drinking alcohol or ride with someone who has been drinking. Some drivers in Nigeria drink a traditional alcohol drink that they believe increases their concentration when driving. This is very unsafe. If you suspect your driver has been drinking, politely request an alternative driver. Consider hiring a licensed, trained driver familiar with the area.

## Follow basic safety tips

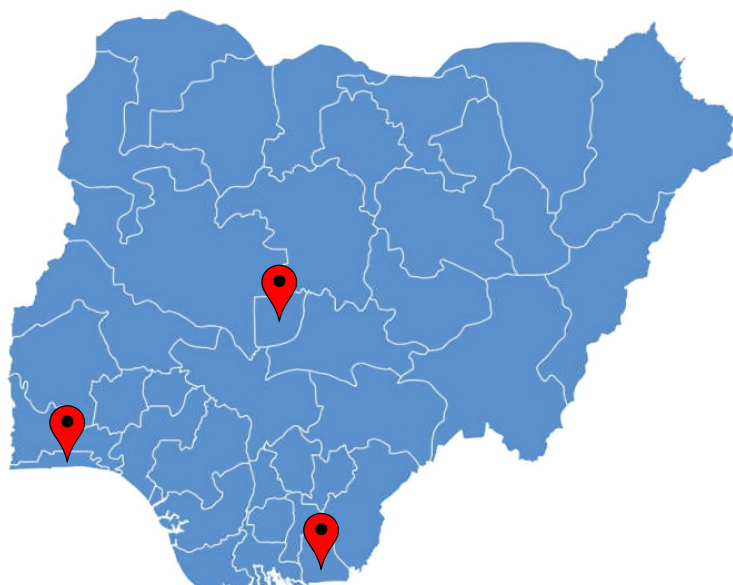
- Wear a seatbelt at all times.
- Sit in the back seat of cars and taxis.
- When on motorbikes or bicycles, always wear a helmet. (Bring a helmet from home, if needed.)
- Avoid driving at night; street lighting in certain parts of Nigeria may be poor, plus security risks are increased especially outside Lagos and Abuja.
- Do not use a cellphone or text while driving, this is dangerous and illegal in Nigeria.
- Travel during daylight hours only, especially in rural areas.
- If you choose to drive a vehicle in Nigeria, learn the local traffic laws and have the proper paperwork including 3rd party insurance.
- Get any driving permits and insurance you may need. Get an International Driving Permit (IDP). Carry the IDP, and a US-issued driver's license at all times. However, after a few months in Nigeria, you will need to obtain a Nigerian driver's license.





## Healthcare in Nigeria

Contrary to general opinion, Nigeria boasts of top medical facilities (domiciled in Lagos, Abuja and Port Harcourt), that are also equipped to provide specialist care within the country. You thus can put your mind to rest that access to quality care within the country is possible when the need arises.



### HOSPITAL HUBS IN NIGERIA

- ABUJA
- LAGOS
- PORT HARCOURT

Some of the facilities to visit when in this areas:

**Lagos:** Duchess international hospital, Redington hospital lekki, Evercare hospital.

**Abuja:** Nizamiye hospital, Cedarcrest hospital, Diff medical center.

**Port Harcourt:** Prime medical center, Save a life mission hospital.

## Basic steps to follow when selecting a Clinic, Hospital or Specialist.

**Do your research:** Research the reputation of local hospitals and clinics, considering factors such as accreditation, patient reviews, and available services.

**Utilizing Online Resources:** Leverage online platforms and healthcare directories to identify reputable local healthcare providers.

**Engaging with Expat Communities:** Connect with local expatriate communities, where members often share personal experiences and recommendations for healthcare providers.





## Malaria prevention and prophylaxis



Malaria poses a rapid and potentially fatal threat if not promptly diagnosed. Prevention follows the ABCD approach:

- A: **Awareness of Risk:** Expats in Nigeria and Sub-Saharan regions face higher malaria risk compared to locals due to lacking acquired immunity.
- B: **Bite Prevention:** Utilize repellents, wear protective clothing during mosquito-active periods, employ insecticide-treated bed nets, window screens, and maintain a clean environment.
- C: **Chemoprophylaxis:** Adhere to prescribed antimalarial medications, with personalized advice considering factors like job, gender, health condition, age, and duration of stay. Prophylactic measures are crucial in high-transmission regions.
- D: **Diagnosis and Treatment:** Swift diagnostic tests are essential; some doctors may initiate treatment immediately, especially in children. Diagnostic blood tests should follow promptly.





## Conclusion

This e-book has hopefully covered some of the important things to bear in mind when moving to Nigeria as an expat.

For more information, please read our collection of articles for expats on our website: [www.flyingdoctorsnigeria.com](http://www.flyingdoctorsnigeria.com)


**See you around!**







 [www.flyingdoctorsnigeria.com](http://www.flyingdoctorsnigeria.com)

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