

Fact Sheet

Nigeria



Welcome



Where is Nigeria?

Located in Western Africa, bordering the Gulf of Guinea, between Benin and Cameroon.

Capital city is Abuja.

There are more than 250 ethnic groups: Hausa and Fulani 29%; Yoruba 21%; Ibo 18%; Ijaw 10% and other minorities.

Muslims make up half the population, Christians 40% and indigenous religions 10%. The local currency is the naira.



Time difference

WAT (West Africa Time) UTC/GMT +1 hour



Population

135-million



Economy

Nigeria has the largest economy in Africa. It is an emerging market with growing financial, communications, technology, service and entertainment sectors.



Language

English is the official language, but more than 500 languages are spoken in Nigeria.



Nigerian manners

'Hello' is universally accepted as a form of greeting. Never begin your conversation with a Nigerian guest without greeting them first.

A great deal of emphasis is placed on the greeting. You are expected to enquire after the other person's health, studies, work, family and so on.

Many enquiries are translated from local languages: 'How was the night?' 'How work?' 'How body?' 'How enjoyment?' and the phrase 'Well done', which is sprinkled liberally throughout the conversation.

Women greeting women: handshakes formally, kiss on the cheek between family members.

Men greeting men: handshake with the right hand. Hold that hand with the left hand during introductions. Juniors should bow slightly.

Men greeting women: a man should wait for a woman to offer her hand first. In the north, which is more Muslim, physical contact between sexes is discouraged.

Handshake and a smile are most common. Men may place their hand on the other person's shoulder while shaking hands.

Never rush a greeting; take time to enquire after the person's family and their health.

Nigerians wait for a woman to extend her hand before the handshake. Observant Muslim men do not usually shake hands with women.

Wait until invited before using a person's first name. Rather call them Miss, Mrs, Mr, Dr, etc.

When greeting someone who is your elder, bow your head to show deference and respect.

If you are entertaining business people, select a top restaurant. Your level of hospitality indicates the seriousness of your wish to do business.

Avoid using the left hand during meals with Nigerians, either for eating or for passing things at the table.

Many Nigerians are Muslim and do not drink alcohol. If you usually offer wine, check with them first.

Since Nigeria is largely cash-based, Nigerians often don't pay with a credit card. They may pay you entirely in cash.

Nigerians have the same tipping rules as South Africans.

Business entertainment is an important part of the business deal, and you are expected to participate with enthusiasm. If you are invited by a trusted contact, you should accept. If you are invited by someone you don't know well, be extremely cautious.

Business cards are exchanged using two hands or the right hand only – never use the left hand. You should look at any business card before putting it away, and don't write on your business card. If details have changed, send a new one at a later stage.

Keep relations formal and polite until your guest has got to know you well. Take your cue from any other Nigerians present regarding a lapse into a more informal approach.

Avoid exaggerated claims when making a proposal – Nigerians are naturally suspicious of deals that sound too good to be true.

If you are part of a team, ensure that you all carry the same message. Any disconnect will be viewed with suspicion.