

Mr. Faltinoski
Ceramics II

Nigeria

British influence and control over what would become Nigeria and Africa's most populous country grew through the 19th century. A series of constitutions after World War II granted Nigeria greater autonomy; independence came in 1960.

Following nearly 16 years of military rule, a new constitution was adopted in 1999, and a peaceful transition to civilian government was completed. The government continues to face the daunting task of reforming a petroleum-based economy, whose revenues have been squandered through corruption and mismanagement, and institutionalizing democracy. In addition, Nigeria continues to experience longstanding ethnic and religious tensions. Although both the 2003 and 2007 presidential elections were marred by significant irregularities and violence, Nigeria is currently experiencing its longest period of civilian rule since independence. The general elections of April 2007 marked the first civilian-to-civilian transfer of power in the country's history. In January 2010, Nigeria assumed a nonpermanent seat on the UN Security Council for the 2010-11 term.

Nigeria is easily the most populous nation in Africa and one of the fastest growing on earth. The inhabitants are divided into about 250 ethnic groups. The largest of these groups are the Hausa and Fulani in the north, the Yoruba in the southwest, and the Igbo in the southeast. English is the official language, and each ethnic group speaks its own language. About half of the population, living mostly in the north, are Muslim; another 40%, living almost exclusively in the south, are Christian; the rest follow traditional beliefs. Religious and ethnic tensions have at times led to deadly violence in which hundreds of Nigerians have died.



We shouldn't beat about the bush: Nigeria has an image problem. It dominates West Africa economically and politically, and has produced music and literature whose influence spreads far beyond the continent. But for all this clout, mention the country's name to the person on the street and they're more likely to come up with a litany of woe: corruption, ethnic violence and email scams. As a travel destination, Nigeria seems more a place to avoid than to book a flight to.

And yet, Nigeria is an exciting country. Getting around can sometimes be a little tough, and it's certainly a challenging destination for first-timers to Africa, but you shouldn't believe all the scare stories. Lagos is one of the most exuberant cities in Africa, while port city Calabar makes for an enjoyable stopover for travellers on their way to Cameroon. Across Southern Nigeria, old kingdoms





carry on their customs, from creating elaborate brass sculptures to venerating the ancient gods. More modern traditions include one of the world's pioneering primate conservation organizations. In the north, where the land dries out as it stretches towards the desert, Muslim Nigeria thrives in dusty trade cities where memories of the Saharan trade routes still linger. Don't miss West Africa's oldest city Kano, and Yankari National Park, the best in the country.

Nigeria is a country of extremes. Great wealth and great poverty sit cheek by jowl, and tensions between different communities can boil over into civil strife. While a few parts of the country remain problematic, the vast majority is as warm and welcoming to visitors as anywhere in Africa. Challenging yet exuberant, this is Africa in the raw – there's nowhere quite like it on the continent.



Udu Drums

