



# Nigeria

📍 234 / POP 186 MILLION

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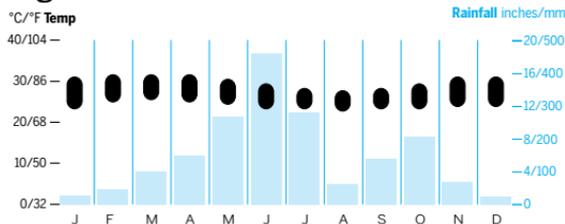
## Why Go?

Nigeria is a pulsating powerhouse: as the most populous nation on the continent – nearly every fifth African is Nigerian – it dominates the region. Recently, though, the boom has shown a few signs of bust: the economy has been hit by the drop in crude oil prices. But Lagos, the main city, is resurgent: with burgeoning tech industries, posh restaurants and clubs, and an exploding arts scene, this megacity is the face of modern Africa.

Outside Gidi (as Lagosians call their city), you may feel as if you're a lone explorer getting a glimpse of the raw edges of the world, immersing yourself in deep and layered cultures. From Yoruba shrines to the slave ports, from the ancient Muslim cities of the north (currently out of bounds for security reasons) to the river deltas, and among stunning natural environments – there are plenty of wonderful antidotes to a sometimes exhausting journey.

## When to Go

### Lagos



**Nov–Feb** Dry season; many events, such as carnival in Calaba and Felebration in Lagos.

**Apr–Sep** Rainy season; heavy rainfall particularly in the south

**Mar & Oct** Shoulder season; some rain in the south but dry in the north.

## LAGOS

📍01 / POP 21 MILLION

The economic and cultural powerhouse of the country thanks to an influx of oil money, Lagos has an exploding arts and music scene that will keep your *yansh* engaged far past dawn. If you're headed to Nigeria, you'll have no choice but to jump right in.

As well as brilliantly buoyant culture, Lagos has bumper-to-bumper cars, noise and pollution beyond belief, a high crime rate, and maxed-out public utilities. Elevated motorways ringing the island city are jammed with speed freaks and absurd traffic jams ('go-slows') on top, and tin-and-cardboard shacks underneath. It's a divided city, but an undeniably exciting one.

Named after the Portuguese word for lagoon, Lagos has been a Yoruba port, a British political centre and, until 1991, Nigeria's capital.

### 👁 Sights

On Lagos Island look out for examples of old Brazilian architecture in the distinctive houses built by former slaves and their descendants who returned from Brazil.

★ **Terra Kulture** GALLERY  
(Map p286; www.terrakulture.com; Plot 1376 Tiamiyu Savage St, VI) **FREE** Close to Bar Beach, this welcoming arts centre with a high bamboo roof has a traditional restaurant which is one of the best and most attractive places to eat in town: try the catfish with pounded yam and spicy soup. There's an art gallery, a bookshop with funky crafts, literary readings and events, and a theatre.

★ **Nike Art Gallery** GALLERY  
(📍0803 4096 656; www.nikeart.com; 3rd Roundabout, Epe Expressway, Lekki; ☺10am-6pm) **FREE** One of Nigeria's most important artists, Nike Okundaye, runs this enormous gallery full of contemporary and traditional Nigerian arts. Nike herself is like an incarnation of love and beauty, which is reflected in this astonishing four-storey space. If you're lucky she'll be there and may grace you with a new Yoruba name. There's a small cafe in the grounds.

★ **Lekki Conservation Centre** WILDLIFE RESERVE  
(📍01 264 2498; www.ncfnigeria.org; Km 19, Lagos-Epe Expressway; N1000; ☺8.30am-5pm Mon-Sat, 8.30am-noon Sun; 🚩flag down a bus on VI along Maroko Rd) **FREE** Run by the Nigerian Conservation Foundation, this centre has a huge tract of wetlands set aside for wildlife

viewing. Canopy walkways enable you to see monkeys, crocodiles and various birds; early morning is the best time to visit. There is a conservation centre and a library.

★ **Kalakuta Republic Museum** MUSEUM  
(Map p282; 7 Gbemisola St, Ikeja; N500; ☺10am-5pm) Legendary musician Fela Kuti's former house and revolutionary headquarters is now a fascinating museum with everything intact from Fela's bedroom to his (very small) underwear. Breath deep and you may even catch a high. And hang around on the rooftop terrace and you might catch a band rehearsal or performance.

★ **Lekki Market** MARKET  
(Elegushi Market; off Epe Expressway, Lekki) A rich variety of crafts from all around Nigeria and West Africa: this is a brilliant place to wander and look for affordable gifts. You can also buy fabrics and get clothes run up on the spot here.

**African Artists' Foundation** GALLERY  
(Map p286; www.africanartists.org; 3b Isiola Oye-kan Close, VI; ☺10am-5pm Mon-Fri, noon-4pm Sat) **FREE** An organisation supporting young African and international artists with a great gallery of contemporary Nigerian art.

### 🛏 Sleeping

**Peerage Retreat** HOTEL \$  
(Map p286; 📍805 633 2902; peerageretreat@yahoo.com; 1 Olabode George St, VI; r N10,000; 📞) The best option for the money on the island, this family-run hotel is clean, friendly and well run. Given the deal, it fills up fast. Just make sure the electricity is working.

**Ritz Hotel** HOTEL \$  
(Map p284; 📍01 263 0481; King George V Rd; r with fan & without bathroom N2000, with air-con N2900-4000; 📞) The name's a bit of a misnomer, but this hotel is a reasonably decent budget option. Rooms are fine in a grubby 'by the hour' sort of way, but they're secure and management is friendly.

**Hotel Victoria Palace** HOTEL \$\$  
(Map p286; 📍01 262 5901; victoriapalace@gmail.com; 1623 Sake Jojo St; r N14,000; 📞📞) Basic rooms and friendly staff; a good budget-ish choice on Victoria Island.

★ **Bogobiri House** BOUTIQUE HOTEL \$\$\$  
(Map p286; 📍706 817 6454; www.bogobiri.com; 9 Maitama Sule St, Ikoyi; r from N50,000; 📞📞📞) This charming boutique hotel, beautifully decorated with paintings and sculptures by local artists, serves as the hub of the vibrant