



Travel Warning: Nigeria

Travel Health and Safety

Africa > Nigeria > Abuja; Africa > Nigeria > Lagos

12/21/2012

The Department of State warns U.S. citizens of the risks of travel to Nigeria, particularly during the holiday season, and continues to recommend that U.S. citizens avoid all but essential travel to the following states because of the risk of kidnappings, robberies, and other armed attacks: Bayelsa, Delta, Edo, Plateau, Gombe, Yobe, Kaduna, Bauchi, Borno, and Kano states. The Department also warns against travel to the Gulf of Guinea because of the threat of piracy. Based on safety and security risk assessments, the Embassy has placed further restrictions for travel by U.S. officials to all northern Nigerian states (in addition to those listed above); officials must receive advance clearance by the U.S. Mission for travel as being mission-essential. U.S. citizens should be aware that, in light of the continuing violence, extremists may expand their operations beyond northern Nigeria to the country's middle and southern states. This Travel Warning replaces the Travel Warning for Nigeria dated June 21, 2012.

In 2012, Boko Haram claimed responsibility for many attacks, mainly in northern Nigeria. Boko Haram is responsible for killing or wounding thousands of people. Multiple Suicide Vehicle-borne Improvised Explosive Devices (SVBIED) targeted churches, government installations, educational institutions, and entertainment venues in Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Kaduna, Kano, Plateau, Taraba, and Yobe states.

On October 1, 2012, more than 50 students were killed in attacks in Adamawa State. Several drinking establishments were attacked in Bauchi, Taraba, and Kaduna in September and October 2012. Churches were targeted in Bauchi, Kaduna, and Kogi in July and August 2012. There were also attacks against police stations and markets in Sokoto in July 2012. From July 6 to 8, sectarian violence claimed over 100 lives in the Jos metropolitan area and villages in Plateau State. In July, an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) exploded in the parking lot of an Abuja shopping center, and in June, an IED exploded outside a nightclub in Abuja. The June 17, 2012, attacks on three churches in the state of Kaduna led to violence throughout the state. At least 10 people were killed and an additional 78 injured in the ensuing riots, as groups barricaded roads, burned mosques, and used machetes to attack and kill. In response to the violence, the Kaduna state government imposed a 24-hour curfew and deployed additional security forces to restore peace; however, violence between



Christians and Muslims continued throughout the week. In April, assailants attacked Theatre Hall at Bayero University, Kano, with IEDs and weapons. Also in April, VBIEDs simultaneously exploded at the offices of "This Day" newspaper in Abuja and Kaduna. In December 2011, the President of Nigeria declared a state of emergency in 15 local government areas in the states of Borno, Niger, Plateau, and Yobe. This State of Emergency remains in effect, although with modification in some areas. According to the Government of Nigeria, the declaration of a state of emergency gives the government sweeping powers to search and arrest without warrants. Several states in the north are under various curfews, which change frequently. All U.S. citizens should remain aware of current situations including curfews, travel restrictions, and states of emergency in the areas they are in or plan to visit. This information is commonly announced via the news media, but at times it can change with very little notice. Please take the time to find out this information for your area.

Boko Haram also claimed credit for the June 2011 bombing of the Nigerian Police Headquarters building and the August 2011 suicide bombing at the United Nations building, both in Abuja.

Kidnappings continue to be a security concern that exists throughout the country. In the first six months of 2012, five foreign nationals, including two U.S. citizens, were kidnapped in Kwara, Imo, Enugu, Delta, and Kano states. Criminals or militants have abducted foreign nationals, including U.S. citizens from offshore and land-based oil facilities, residential compounds, and public roadways. Nine foreign nationals have died in connection with these abductions, including three who were killed by their captors during military-led raids. Local authorities and expatriate businesses operating in Nigeria assert that the number of kidnapping incidents throughout Nigeria is underreported.

Crime is a risk throughout the country. U.S. citizen visitors and residents have experienced armed muggings, assaults, burglaries, car-jackings, rapes, kidnappings, and extortion. Home invasions also remain a serious threat, with armed robbers accessing even guarded compounds by scaling perimeter walls, following residents or visitors or subduing guards to gain entry to homes or apartments. Armed robbers in Lagos have also accessed waterfront compounds by boat. U.S. citizens, as well as Nigerians and other expatriates, have been victims of armed robbery at banks and grocery stores and on airport roads during both daylight and evening hours. Law enforcement authorities usually respond slowly or not at all and provide little or no investigative support to victims. U.S. citizens, Nigerians, and other expatriates have experienced harassment and shakedowns at checkpoints and during encounters with Nigerian law enforcement officials. Traveling outside of major cities after dark is not recommended because of both crime and road safety concerns. Attacks by pirates off the coast of Nigeria in the Gulf of Guinea have increased in recent years. Armed gangs have boarded both commercial and private vessels to rob travelers. The Nigerian Navy has limited capacity to respond to criminal acts at sea.



Beginning in September 2012, extremists attacked cellular telephone towers in Northern Nigeria, damaging over 50 towers and degrading cellular telephone and internet communications nationwide. Additional attacks could further weaken the ability of citizens to communicate through cellular telephones and the internet. Land line telephone communications in Nigeria remain extremely limited. U.S. citizens should attempt to arrange for multiple means of communication during emergencies.

The situation in the country remains fluid and unpredictable. The U.S. Department of State strongly urges U.S. citizens in Nigeria to consider their own personal security and to keep personal safety in the forefront of their planning.

U.S. citizens who travel to or reside in Nigeria are strongly advised to enroll in the State Department's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP). U.S. citizens without internet access may enroll directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. The U.S. Embassy in Abuja is located at: Plot 1075 Diplomatic Drive, Central District Area. The Embassy is open Monday - Thursday 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and Friday 7:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. The U.S. Consulate General in Lagos is located at: 2 Walter Carrington Crescent, Victoria Island. The consulate is open Monday-Thursday from 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and Friday 7:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

U.S. citizens should contact the U.S. Embassy in Abuja or the U.S. Consulate General in Lagos for up-to-date information on any restrictions. The U.S. Embassy in Abuja can be reached by telephone, including after-hours emergencies, at +234(9) 461-4000. The U.S. Consulate General in Lagos can be reached by telephone, including after-hours emergencies, at +234(1) 460-3600 or +234 (1) 460-3400.

Current information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada, or a regular toll line at-1-202-501-4444 for callers from other countries. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays). You can also stay up to date by bookmarking our Bureau of Consular Affairs website, which contains the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts as well as the Worldwide Caution. Follow us on Twitter and the Bureau of Consular Affairs page on Facebook as well.