
Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Terrorism; Oil & Energy; Political Violence; Crime; Maritime; Natural Disasters

Africa > Nigeria; Africa > Nigeria > Lagos

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Overall Crime and Safety Situation
U.S. Consulate Lagos does not assume responsibility for the professional ability or integrity of the persons or firms appearing in this report. The ACS Unit cannot recommend a particular individual or location and assumes no responsibility for the quality of service provided. THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE HAS ASSESSED LAGOS AS BEING A CRITICAL-THREAT LOCATION FOR CRIME DIRECTED AT OR AFFECTING OFFICIAL U.S. GOVERNMENT INTERESTS. Please review OSAC’s Nigeria-specific webpage for proprietary analytic reports, Consular Messages, and contact information.

Crime Threats
Crime is a risk throughout the country. Economic gain motivates most crime directed toward Americans and U.S. private-sector entities in southern Nigeria. Common crimes include violent armed robberies, kidnap for ransom, and fraud. The mainland of Lagos has experienced periodic, violent clashes among localized street gangs known as “Area Boys.” U.S. visitors and residents experienced armed muggings, assaults, burglaries, carjackings, rapes, kidnappings, and extortion. Home invasions remain a serious threat with armed robbers threatening even guarded compounds by scaling perimeter walls, following residents/visitors, or subduing guards to gain entry. Armed robbers in Lagos have invaded waterfront compounds and businesses by boat, using the Lagos waterway as a means of escape. U.S. citizens, Nigerians, and other expatriates have been victims of armed robbery at banks and grocery stores and on airport roads during all hours. Armed robbers have targeted occupants in vehicles; smash-and-grab robberies are common with thieves canvassing stopped vehicles for valuables. Thieves will...
break the vehicle’s window or simply reach in and grab items while a vehicle is stopped. Expatriates should cooperate if approached by an armed robber/carjacker. Individuals should be wary of business offers promising large payoffs for little/no investment. Visitors are also advised not to use personal checks, credit cards, or ATMs. Due to the proliferation of identity and financial fraud, individuals should not carry unnecessarily detailed information about themselves and their finances.

Transportation-Safety Situation

Road Safety and Road Conditions

Traffic laws are generally not obeyed. Enforcement by local traffic officials is limited and ineffective. Scooters and motorcycles generally do not follow the rules of the road and often use sidewalks to get around vehicles. Red lights, traffic lanes, and highway divisions are not followed where they exist, and traffic police officers routinely seek bribes. U.S. citizens, Nigerians, and expatriates have experienced harassment and shakedowns at vehicle checkpoints and during other encounters with officials, particularly the military and vigilante groups. Always slow down and politely acknowledge police or military at checkpoints. Police and military are authorized to shoot if you fail to stop at checkpoint.

Roads are not maintained to Western standards, and flat tires are highly common. Most roads are not illuminated at night, and pedestrian traffic is present on the roadside at all hours. Few major routes connect cities, so accidents and rush-hour traffic cause traffic jams (go-slows). Cars should be parked in an area that is protected by a security guard or through significant access control. When going through traffic areas with stop lights, vehicles should always be locked and windows rolled up. Hawkers sell goods in between the lanes of traffic during rush hour, and indigent people beg aggressively at car windows at major intersections. Accidents are frequent and often involve fatalities. Many traffic accidents go unreported, and no reliable statistics exist on traffic fatalities due to the lack of centralized reporting. Even minor collisions routinely draw large crowds that may become confrontational. The lack of medical response and adequate trauma facilities is a major concern. Never leave identifying materials or valuables in a vehicle. Traveling outside of major cities after dark is not recommended because of crime and road safety concerns. Keep vehicles well maintained. Drivers should try to remain a safe distance behind the vehicle ahead to allow space for avoidance maneuvers. Be alert for suspicious persons when exiting or approaching your vehicle.

Public Transportation Conditions
All public transportation is considered unsafe and is discouraged. Motorcycle taxis (okadas) are of particular concern. Okadas present a significant nuisance and danger to other motorists with unpredictable driving and lack of compliance with traffic rules. Okada drivers and even passengers often become confrontational and violent when involved in accidents. Okada drivers are known to engage in crime, either as active participants or as means of escape. Taxis are usually yellow or white vans that are filled beyond their capacity with riders. Occasionally, they are lures for robberies where the occupants of the vehicle work as a team to rob an unsuspecting passenger after they enter the vehicle. The occupant is usually assaulted and then dropped nearby.

Aviation/Airport Conditions

Security at Murtala Muhammed International Airport (LOS) has improved in recent years, and airport officials comply with Transportation Security Administration (TSA) security standards. TSA conducts regular security assessments at LOS. Travelers can expect to be approached by transients asking for money, sometimes aggressively, immediately after exiting the terminals. Reports of extortion and bribery solicitation attempts by airport officials have also receded but remain a concern.

Due to fuel shortages and a lack of capability to maintain aircraft in late 2016 and early 2017, delays and cancellations plague domestic travel. Occasionally, flights by national airlines en route to one city land in another to refuel before continuing to the intended destination. The Nigerian government announced in 2016 that major repairs were needed on its runways at the international airport in Abuja. These repairs are scheduled for a two-month period in early spring of 2017. The operational effect of these repairs is expected to be significant for businesses and diplomats in Lagos, as all international flights will land in Lagos. Travelers will take domestic flights to cities surrounding Abuja and then travel by road to the capital.

Terrorism Threat

THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE HAS ASSESSED LAGOS AS BEING A HIGH-THREAT LOCATION FOR TERRORIST ACTIVITY DIRECTED AT OR AFFECTING OFFICIAL U.S. GOVERNMENT INTERESTS.

Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

A significant terrorist threat exists, particularly in northern Nigeria. Boko Haram is suspected of or has claimed responsibility for most of the terrorist activity in Nigeria. Boko Haram carried out kidnappings, killings, bombings, and attacks on civilian and military targets, resulting in over 6,000 deaths, injuries, and significant destruction of property in 2014 and 2015. Boko
Haram is widely believed to be the group responsible for a December 2014 prison break in Ekiti State and a bomb attack at an oil depot in Apapa, Lagos State. In 2016, Boko Haram divided into two factions. One faction affiliated itself with ISIS in West Africa, and the other remained loyal to its historical leadership. In the areas surrounding Lagos, news outlets reported the arrest of several Boko Haram members, but no attacks. The threat of terrorism continues to challenge business activity and travel throughout Nigeria. Throughout the Niger Delta region, several militant groups actively target oil pipeline infrastructure and personnel of international oil companies, including those of several major American companies.

Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence
THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE HAS ASSESSED LAGOS AS BEING A HIGH-THREAT LOCATION FOR POLITICAL VIOLENCE DIRECTED AT OR AFFECTING OFFICIAL U.S. GOVERNMENT INTERESTS.

Nigeria’s 2015 elections were considered generally peaceful despite several reported isolated incidents of violence. State elections were held in several states in 2016. International election monitors, NGOs, and Nigerian citizens reported instances of harassment, intimidation, and theft of ballot boxes in several states, but most elections remained relatively peaceful.

Civil Unrest
Large areas of southern Nigeria experience civil unrest due to endemic poverty, poor education, youth unemployment, and significant inflation. In addition, many individuals struggle on a daily basis to access clean water, reliable power, and basic healthcare. Government, international, and corporate social welfare programs aimed at addressing these issues occasionally create claims of injustice among neighboring populations divided by ethnic identity. Demonstrations against the government related to these issues occasionally leads to protests and outright sectarian violence. Multiple reports of street fights involving weapons and leading to deaths and beheadings were reported in several city centers including Anambra state in the fall of 2016 and Port Harcourt in late 2016.

Post-specific Concerns
Environmental Hazards
Lagos ranks among the cities with the highest air and noise pollution levels globally, largely due to rapid urbanization, limited infrastructure, and a rapidly growing population. These conditions lead to an increased number of vehicles on the road, poor quality gasoline, and the extensive use of loud generators.
Nigeria has two rainy seasons: March-August, September-mid-October. Road travel is virtually impossible under these weather conditions.

National disaster management is not effective or functional. The civilian sector’s disaster management capabilities are poor to nonexistent. The military provides crowd control during disasters but no systemic medical response.

Critical Infrastructure

Despite Nigeria’s hydrocarbon wealth, it lacks the ability to refine oil. Nigeria exports extracted crude and imports refined fuel. Fuel shortages in mid-2016 led to large crowds and lines around fuel stations. These occasionally erupted into instances of civil unrest as crowds became agitated while waiting throughout the day.

Kidnapping Threat

Kidnap for ransom (KFR) continues to be a security concern nationwide and is a lucrative industry. Criminal organizations target affluent, high-profile Nigerians and expatriates throughout southern Nigeria. In 2016, as the economy declined, security personnel tracked an increase in the targeting of middle-class Nigerians previously immune to the threat of kidnapping. Targeting of average Nigerians for smaller monetary gains has increased. In late 2016, kidnappers abducted 11 students and their teacher in Lagos. All victims were released following a ransom payment, but no kidnappers were arrested.

Kidnapping incidents are under-reported, and the rate of unconfirmed kidnappings continues to grow. These usually result in the release of the victim without harm, but security personnel protecting high-level expatriates have been killed in several attempts.

Seven kidnappings involving U.S. citizens were reported in 2015. While none of these incidents resulted in loss of life, substantial resources were used in their recovery. In 2016, a Nigerian American was murdered near Owerri in an incident in which he was kidnapped for a brief period before being murdered. Another American died under suspicious circumstances that indicated the possibility that he has been held for ransom. No suspects were arrested in either incident.

Kidnappings have also occurred in the more affluent areas of Lagos. In September 2014, two American expatriates were reported kidnapped in the Niger Delta.

Most KFR’s last for two to three days. Some have extended into multiple weeks, but most of the events in southern Nigeria are short term. Criminals know that police are rarely contacted during a kidnapping and that families are quick to pay ransoms for the release of relatives.

The methodology involves extensive planning by the kidnappers who often have a social or familial connection to the victim and are aware of the victim’s movements and habits.
In early 2017, Lagos state strengthened the penalty for kidnapping. Convictions for kidnapping now carry a life sentence. The penalty rises to execution if a kidnap victim dies in captivity.

Police Response
Despite a visible police presence in large cities, police assistance does not have a wide reach. Police response to incidents involving the diplomatic and consular community, although well intentioned, often relies upon transport provided by an embassy or consulate staff to crime scenes. Law enforcement authorities usually respond slowly or not at all and provide little/no investigative support to victims. The Rapid Response Squad’s policing capacity and emergency response capabilities continue to grow but remain in a nascent state. A serious lack of resources (communications equipment, vehicles, skilled leadership, training) continues to undermine the effectiveness of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF). Usually, victims must maintain close contact to move an investigation forward. Crime laboratories and facilities to process evidence do not exist. Most Nigerians do not perceive the NPF as an effective law enforcement body and have little faith in the criminal justice system. A call to police for assistance may result in the solicitation of bribes. Criminal groups do not fear arrest or prosecution for their crimes. Local police and neighborhood associations, including vigilante groups, generally do not deter or disrupt crimes and seldom apprehend or detain suspects. NPF personnel do not patrol residential neighborhoods and numerous NPF officers assigned to private security details for either businesses or individuals routinely ignore any requests for assistance not directly associated with their assignments.

Visitors should always be polite and respectful of police officers and soldiers. Vigilante justice is common. Perpetrators of crime are often beaten or burned to death by mobs before police arrive.

Crime Victim Assistance
There is no reliable national emergency communication number. The ACS unit at the U.S. Embassy or U.S. Consulate General should be the first point of contact for assistance. While in Lagos state, travelers may attempt to obtain police assistance by calling 767 or 112. Individuals should inquire at the nearest police station about the contact telephone numbers for that particular station.

Police/Security Agencies
Expatriates and affluent Nigerians employ their own security and utilize armored vehicles for travel. Police officers and other law enforcement agents are frequently hired by businesses and individuals to provide private security. Most businesses employ guard services and many companies offer varying quality of service. As Nigerian law prohibits the arming of private
security personnel, police often supplement guard forces. These arrangements can be made by your local guard company or at a local police station.

Medical Emergencies
The best health care is available in private and nonprofit medical facilities. However, even these facilities typically fail to meet U.S. standards. The availability of dependable and safe over-the-counter and prescription medications is a concern. Although local pharmacies are abundant, counterfeit products, including medications, have affected many Nigerians. Visitors should consider bringing a sufficient supply of needed medication. For more information, please refer to OSAC’s Report, “Traveling with Medications.”

All private hospitals and clinics require cash payments before receiving any care. Prices can be quite high, and it is often difficult to withdraw the required amount of money in a single bank transaction. Hospitals may detain patients who have not paid in full or deny services, even during exigent circumstances.

Contact Information for Recommended Hospitals/Clinics

International SOS Clinic
23 A Temple
Ikoyi Island – Lagos
Dr. Pierre Bentresque
08035352559
Pierre.bentesque@internationalsos.com
Tel: +234 1 4625 600, 01-4617710, 01-4613608/9, +234-1-775-6080
Allyn Rogers (Business and Administrative Manager), allyn.rogers@internationalsos.com

Lagoon Hospital
Modupe Dada, Clinical Manager, dupe.dada@lagoonhospitals.com
8 Marine Road, Apapa
Tel: 08023113522; 07029175512; 08087183137
Dr. Onakoya, Medical Director
Cell: 08034020277
Office: 01 870 7011, 01 628 3812-4

Reddington Multi Specialist Hospital

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Dr. Neil Davidson, Dr. Lawani, and Dr. Owabowale
12 Idowu Martins Street
Victoria Island, Lagos
Near Mega Plaza
Tel: 234 0 806 004 5651 or 271 5340-3

Atlantic Medical Centre
8A Maroko Close
Off Oyinkan Abayomi Drive
Ikoyi, Lagos.
Dr. El-Harake
Cell: 0803 400 2400 01 7753838

First Cardiology Consultants
20A Thompson Avenue
Next to the British Council
Off Glover Road
Off Old Kingsway Road
Ikoyi, Lagos
Dr. Adeyemi Johnson
Tel: +234 (0)803 5250205; (0)17406284; (0)17406285; (0)8082114266

The Children’s Practice
25 Raymond Njoku Street
Off Awolowo Road, Ikoyi, Lagos
Dr. A.L. Anga
Tel: +234 (0)1-460-1941; (0)1-893-0723; (0)8022235834

Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance
The CDC offers additional information on vaccines and health guidance for Nigeria.

OSAC Country Council Information
Nigeria’s OSAC Country Councils are located in Abuja and Lagos. General membership meetings of the Lagos Country Council occur on the last Thursday each month at Consulate General’s Guest Quarters (GQ) facility (6 Queens Drive, Ikoyi, Lagos, Lagos State). Abuja Country Council meetings also occur on the last Thursday of every month at the Sheraton
Hotel (Ladi Kwali Way, Abuja, FCT). Access to both is restricted to active OSAC members only, so please contact the RSO at the Embassy in Abuja or the Consulate General in Lagos before attending the meeting. Please reach out to OSAC’s Africa team if you have questions about OSAC’s other Country Council programs.

U.S. Consulate Location and Contact Information
Consulate Address and Hours of Operation
U.S. Consulate General Lagos
2 Walter Carrington Crescent
Victoria Island, Lagos, Lagos State, Nigeria
Consulate Contact Numbers
Regional Security Office: (234) 1-460-3514
Consulate Operator: (234) 1-460-3400
Marine Security Guard at Post One: (234) 1-460-3410
Duty Officer: (234) 807-550-0167
Website: https://ng.usembassy.gov/embassy-consulates/lagos/

Nearby Posts
Embassy Abuja: https://ng.usembassy.gov/

Consulate Guidance
U.S. citizens traveling in Nigeria are encouraged to register in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP). STEP is a free service that helps the U.S. Embassy disseminate information about safety conditions and contact travelers in an emergency.

Additional Resources
Nigeria Country Information Sheet