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Located on the shores of the Gulf of Guinea and bordered by Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Benin, Nigeria is Africa’s most populous country. With 250 different ethnic groups and over 500 different languages, it’s famous for its cultural diversity; and for the booming economies of megacities like Abuja and Lagos. Lagos in particular is synonymous with exploding tech, culinary, music, and arts scenes. Outside its major cities, Nigeria’s rural areas are just as extraordinary. From sun-soaked Atlantic beaches to teeming river deltas and sacred waterfalls, natural beauty abounds in this unique corner of West Africa. 01 of 10 Copyright NadimC / Getty Images Nigeria’s biggest city is one of the fastest-growing urban areas in the world, with some estimates putting its population as high as 21 million people. Although many of its residents live in poverty, Lagos is also oil-rich and boasts a dizzying collection of world-class restaurants, galleries, and nightclubs. Watch artists at work while shopping for fine Nigerian paintings and sculptures at Nike Art Centre. Join the crowds patronizing the waterfront bars and street food stalls at Elegushi and Oniru Beaches; or experience fine dining in restaurants that run the gamut from West African to Italian to Japanese. Victoria Island is known for its nightclubs, with Quilox being the most iconic haunt for fashionistas, major music acts, and celebrities. 02 of 10 Fabian Plock / Getty Images Address GJR8+X86, Gashaka, Nigeria Located in the mountains on the Cameroonian border, Gashaka Gumti National Park is the largest national park in Nigeria. It incorporates roughly 2,000 square miles of dense rainforests, highland plateaus, and woodland savannah, in addition to soaring mountain peaks that include Nigeria’s highest. The diversity of its habitats allows for an incredible variety of wildlife. Look out for leopards, golden cats, and chimpanzees in the rainforests and elephants and lions on the savannah. The park is also designated as an Important Bird Area with more than 500 avian species recorded within its borders. You can buy permits and find accommodation in Serti, the main gateway to the park’s southern sector. Access is easiest during the December to March dry season. 03 of 10 Denis Smolin/500px/Getty Images Covering 870 square miles in northeastern Nigeria, Yankari National Park is often labeled as the country’s most rewarding wildlife destination. Upgraded to national park status in 1991, it includes open grassland, river floodplains, and vast tracts of impenetrable bush. It’s best known as the home of Nigeria’s largest surviving elephant population and as one of four remaining strongholds for the critically endangered West African lion. Buffalos, hippos, and roan antelope are also frequently spotted. In between game drives, unwind in the naturally clear Wikki Warm Springs which stay at a balmy 88 degrees F (31 degrees C) all year round. If you plan on renting a car, you can self-drive through Yankari with a hired guide. Otherwise, the park offers twice-daily safari truck tours. 04 of 10 In the past, sacred forests existed on the edge of many Yoruba settlements. Most have now disappeared due to extensive urbanization, with the exception of the Osun Sacred Grove, located along the banks of the Osun River on the outskirts of Osogbo. Believed to be the dwelling place of the Yoruba goddess of fertility, Osun, the grove is dotted with sanctuaries and shrines where traditional priests and priestesses host daily worship ceremonies. The forest also showcases the sculptures of Austrian Susanne Wenger, who is credited with helping to save the grove when its existence was threatened in the 1950s. Travel during the 12-day Osun-Osogbo Festival (usually held in July or August) to witness religious celebrations and authentic Yoruba music and dancing. Continue to 5 of 10 below. 05 of 10 Halley Pacheco de Oliveira / Wikimedia Commons / CC BY-SA 3.0 Address Ife, Nigeria Also located in Osun State, the ancient city of Ile-Ife is believed by the Yoruba people to be the birthplace of civilization. According to Yoruba legend, it was founded by Oduduwa on the orders of supreme god Oludumare and continues to be a stronghold for worshippers of the traditional deities. The Yoruba gods and goddesses are honored with frequent religious festivals held at sacred sites throughout the city. At Ile-Ife’s heart is the Ooni’s Palace, home of the spiritual ruler of the Yoruba kingdom. Pay a small fee to view inside the palace and discover the royal shrine and the staff of Oduduwa. The palace is also home to Ife Museum with its famous collection of medieval bronze and terracotta sculptures. 06 of 10 Address Calabar, Nigeria Located in the extreme southeast of the country, Calabar enjoys a picturesque location on the hillside above the Calabar River. Once an important port for ships trading goods across the Gulf of Guinea, the city is infamous as one of the continent’s biggest slave trade centers. It is estimated that as many as a million Africans departed from Calabar as slaves, as explained by exhibits in the Slave History Museum. The city was also a capital for the British Protectorate established in the 19th century and its oldest neighborhoods are characterized by the dilapidated grandeur of their historic colonial buildings. Every year throughout the month of December, the Calabar Carnival brings colorful parades, dancing, and international musicians to the city’s streets. 07 of 10 Address Muhammadu Jega Rd, 110122, Adzho, Nigeria Olumo Rock is a huge granite outcrop that overlooks the city of Abeokuta in southwest Nigeria. In the 19th century, the rock served as a natural shelter and fortress for the Egba people during periods of inter-tribal warfare. Now it’s regarded as an important symbol of protection. It’s also spiritually significant, with religious ceremonies held annually at the Olumo Shrine. At its highest point, the rock stands 450 feet above sea level. You can climb it (with the assistance of stone-carved steps if necessary) or ride a glass elevator to the top. Hire a guide to explain the engravings, shrines, and wartime hideouts you’ll see along the way. Guides cost approximately 1,000 naira and the site is also home to a museum and restaurant. 08 of 10 Fabian Plock / EyeEm / Getty Images Drive five hours north of Calabar to reach Afi Mountain Drill Ranch, the field site for primate rehabilitation project Pandrillus. Founded in 1991, the project rescues endangered drill monkeys and chimpanzees that have been orphaned by the illegal poaching trade and rehabilitates them so that they can eventually be released back into the wild. At Afi Mountain, the monkeys are kept in huge enclosures that closely mimic their natural environment, giving you the opportunity for up-close encounters on a guided conservation tour or rainforest canopy walk. The project also enriches the local community by employing young Nigerians who might otherwise have turned to poaching to survive. The ranch is open 365 days a year and has guest cabins for overnight stays. Continue to 9 of 10 below. 09 of 10 Also known as the Olumirin Falls, Erin-Ijesha Waterfall is located just outside the town of the same name in Osun State. Believed by the Yoruba to have sacred powers, the falls are a nature photographer’s dream with water cascading down seven distinct tiers. The physically fit can hike all the way to the top, then cool off with a swim in the serene pool at the bottom of the falls. Pack a picnic and plan to make a day of it, or divide your time with an afternoon visit to another natural phenomenon, Ikogosi Warm Springs. Located roughly an hour’s drive away, the springs consist of one warm spring and one cold, flowing side by side through Ikogosi town. Legend has it that the warm spring possesses curative powers. 10 of 10 Jean-Marc Giboux / Getty Images Address Kano, Nigeria The capital of northern Kano State, Kano is the second-largest city in Nigeria and the oldest city in West Africa. Founded approximately 1,400 years ago, it came to fame as a crossroads on the trans-Saharan trade route and was renowned as a center for Islamic scholarship during medieval times. Today Kano is famous for historic landmarks including its 12th-century city wall, the 15th-century Emir’s Palace, a series of elaborate mosques, and Makama’s House. The latter is home to a museum of Hausa and Fulani artifacts. Before planning a trip to this region of Nigeria, make sure to check the latest travel advisories. Current advice from the U. S. Department of State warns against all but essential travel due to frequent terrorist attacks by Boko Haram. ...but your activity and behavior on this site made us think that you are a bot. Note: A number of things could be going on here. If you are attempting to access this site using an anonymous Private/Proxy network, please disable that and try accessing site again. Due to previously detected malicious behavior which originated from the network you're using, please request unblock to site.