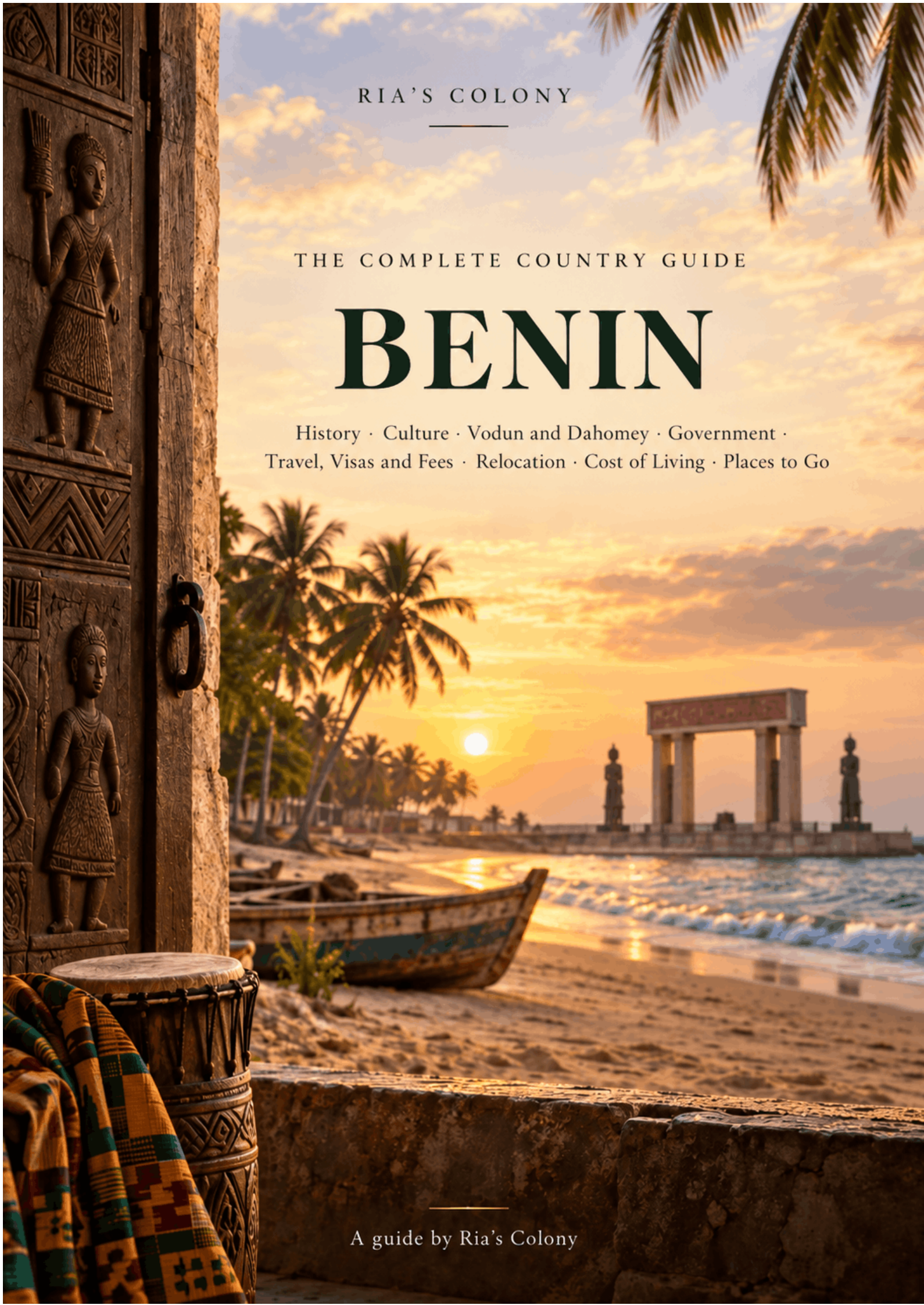




RIA'S COLONY

THE COMPLETE COUNTRY GUIDE

BENIN

History · Culture · Vodun and Dahomey · Government ·
Travel, Visas and Fees · Relocation · Cost of Living · Places to Go

A guide by Ria's Colony

RIA'S COLONY

For the life you are becoming.

THE COMPLETE COUNTRY GUIDE

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*History · Culture · Vodun and Dahomey · Government · Travel, Visas and Fees · Relocation · Cost of Living ·
Places to Go · The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*

A guide by Ria's Colony

Companion to the article “Benin: History, Culture, Vodun and the Kingdom of Dahomey”

riascolony.org/blog/benin-history-culture-vodun-dahomey

*Compiled September 2026. Facts, fees and figures change — always confirm with the official sources linked throughout before you
travel, relocate or invest.*

Before you dive in

This guide exists because we kept noticing the same gap: people fall in love with a country's story — its history, its music, its festivals — and then hit a wall the moment they try to actually go there, or move there, or do business there. The visa page is confusing. The fee nobody agrees on. The safety information is scattered across three government websites. This guide is our attempt to close that gap for Benin, the way we try to close it for every country we cover.

Everything here is written to be read start to finish or dipped into section by section — whichever you need. Every factual claim that can change (a fee, a name, a law, an advisory level) is sourced and linked, because we would rather send you to the primary source than have you rely on our word for something as important as a border crossing or a residency application.

***Ria's Colony remark** — Fees, visa rules, exchange rates and political appointments in Benin (and everywhere else) shift. Treat every number in this guide as a snapshot taken in September 2026, and re-check the official links before you book, pay or apply for anything.*

Benin at a glance

Official name	Republic of Benin (République du Bénin)
Former name	Dahomey (to 1975), People's Republic of Benin (1975–1990)
Capital	Porto-Novo (official/constitutional capital); Cotonou (seat of government, largest city and economic hub)
Government type	Presidential republic
Head of State	President Romuald Wadagni (in office since 24 May 2026)
Independence	1 August 1960, from France

Population	≈ 14.5 million
Official language	French
Widely spoken languages	Fon, Yoruba, Bariba, Fulfulde, and other regional languages
Currency	West African CFA franc (XOF), pegged to the euro
Time zone	West Africa Time (WAT), UTC+1 — no daylight saving
Religions (2013 census)	≈49% Christian (25.8% Catholic + other denominations), 28% Muslim, 11.6% Vodun, 2.6% other traditional, 5.9% no religion
Neighbours	Togo (west), Burkina Faso and Niger (north), Nigeria (east)
Coastline	Atlantic Ocean / Bight of Benin, roughly 121 km

Source: [Ria's Colony — Benin: History, Culture, Vodun and the Kingdom of Dahomey](#)

Source: [Wikipedia — President of Benin](#)

Source: [CIA World Factbook / CountryReports — Benin Government](#)

Where the story begins: Dahomey, Vodun and a name that changed twice

Benin's modern story cannot be told without the Kingdom of Dahomey, the powerful precolonial state that rose on the Abomey plateau in the 17th century among the Fon and Aja peoples. Under kings like Agaja and later rulers, Dahomey built an organised government and a formidable army — including the Mino, the all-female military corps Europeans nicknamed the "Dahomey Amazons" — and grew into one of the most influential states on the West African coast.

Dahomey's power became entangled with the Atlantic slave trade after it took control of the port of Ouidah in 1727. More than a million enslaved people are estimated to have been forced through Ouidah alone, carrying Aja-Fon, Yoruba and other West African religious traditions across the Atlantic — traditions that would go on to shape Haitian Vodou, Brazilian Candomblé and Cuban Santería in different, related ways.

France conquered Dahomey in the 1890s, and the country that emerged at independence in 1960 was still called Dahomey. Political instability followed — several coups between 1960 and 1972 — until Mathieu Kérékou seized power in a 1972 coup, adopted Marxism-Leninism in 1974, and renamed the country the People's Republic of Benin in 1975, partly to move away from the Fon-royal association of the Dahomey name.

Benin later became a rare African success story of peaceful democratic transition: the 1990 National Conference led Kérékou to accept multiparty elections, which he lost in 1991 and then won again, fairly, in 1996. Under President Patrice Talon (2016–2026), that democratic reputation grew more complicated — Freedom House currently rates Benin "Partly Free" — and in 2026 Romuald Wadagni, Talon's former finance minister, was elected president with over 94% of the vote and inaugurated on 24 May 2026 for a newly extended seven-year term.

Ria's Colony remark — *This is the short version. For the full story — the Mino, Gelede masquerade, appliqué art, Vodun Days in Ouidah, and how all of it is still practised today — read the complete piece on riascolony.org. We're not going to repeat all thirteen sections of it here; go read it, it's worth your time.*

→ [Read the full article: Benin: History, Culture, Vodun and the Kingdom of Dahomey](#)

Source: [Ria's Colony — Benin: History, Culture, Vodun and the Kingdom of Dahomey](#)

Source: [Freedom House 2026 assessment \(as cited in Ria's Colony article\)](#)

Government and politics today

Benin is a presidential republic where the president is both head of state and head of government (there is no prime minister). The president is elected by absolute majority in up to two rounds of voting. Following a 2025 constitutional reform, presidential and legislative terms were extended from five to seven years, though the two-term limit for presidents remains in place.

Who runs the country now

- President: Romuald Wadagni — a former Deloitte consultant and Benin's Minister of Economy and Finance for a decade (2016–2026), elected in April 2026 with more than 94% of the vote and inaugurated on 24 May 2026.
- Vice President: Mariam Chabi Talata.
- Predecessor: Patrice Talon, president from 2016 to 2026, who stepped down after two constitutional terms and now serves as the first President of Benin's newly created Senate.\

The 2026 political overhaul

Ahead of the 2026 election, Benin's National Assembly voted (90–19) to extend presidential and legislative terms from five to seven years and to create a new Senate of roughly 25–30 members, including former presidents and presidential appointees. The changes took effect after the 2026 election.

The honest picture

For years Benin was cited as one of West Africa's clearest examples of a peaceful shift from military rule to multiparty democracy. That reputation has become more complicated. Under the Talon administration, changes to electoral rules, tighter candidate-eligibility requirements, and the prosecution of opposition figures drew concern from rights groups; Freedom House currently classifies Benin as "Partly Free." President Wadagni is broadly seen as a continuity candidate for Talon's economic reform agenda, and his 94% election margin followed an opposition landscape that had been significantly narrowed by the revised electoral code.

Source: [*BTI 2026 Benin Country Report*](#)

Source: [*Face2Face Africa — With 2026 election looming, Benin adopts major political overhaul*](#)

Source: [*Wikipedia — 2026 Beninese presidential election*](#)

Source: [*Africanews — Former finance minister Romuald Wadagni sworn in as Benin's new president*](#)

People, languages and religion

Benin's population is built from several major ethnic groups, each with a distinct regional home and history. The Fon dominate the south and centre, historically tied to the Dahomey kingdom. The Yoruba are concentrated in the southeast, sharing language and heritage with communities across the border in Nigeria; Porto-Novo itself has a strong Yoruba character. The Bariba are prominent around Nikki in the northeast, with their own separate royal traditions and historic cavalry forces. Fulani communities, largely pastoralist, are spread across the north and connect Benin to wider Sahelian Fulani networks. In the northwest, the Betammaribe are known for the tata somba — fortified, multi-storey earthen houses built for defence and everyday life.

French is the official language, a legacy of colonial rule, but it sits alongside Fon and Yoruba in the south and Bariba, Fulfulde and other languages in the north. Most Beninese move between languages depending on family, community and context.

On religion, the 2013 national census recorded Islam as the largest single affiliation (28%), Catholicism at 25.8% (with other Christian denominations bringing the Christian total to about 49%), Vodun at 11.6%, other traditional religions at 2.6%, and 5.9% reporting no religion. Benin is officially secular, and January 10 is a national holiday for traditional religions — closely tied to the Vodun Days festival in Ouidah.

Source: [*Ria's Colony — Benin: History, Culture, Vodun and the Kingdom of Dahomey*](#)

Culture: food, music, art and festivals

Food

Pâte — a smooth dough made from maize, cassava or yam depending on the region — is Benin's everyday staple, eaten with a sauce, stew or soup. Akassa (fermented maize dough) and amiwo (red maize dough cooked with tomato, onion, pepper and oil) are everyday dishes that also appear at celebrations. Along the coast, fish is grilled, smoked or cooked in tomato-and-palm-oil sauces; further north and inland, meals lean on grains, millet, sorghum and tubers suited to a drier climate. Palm wine is widely drunk in the south and is distilled into sodabi, a spirit that also appears in libation rituals, where a small amount is poured as an offering to ancestors.

Music, dance and art

Gelede — a Yoruba-Nago performance tradition combining carved masks, elaborate costume, music and dance that honours the social power of women, especially elders — is inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (2008). Appliqué textile art, historically tied to the royal court of Dahomey, continues to be produced around Abomey, while Abomey's metalworking tradition — once used for royal regalia — now also inspires contemporary sculptors like Calixte and Théodore Dakpogan, who build figures from salvaged car parts and scrap metal. Internationally, Cotonou-raised singer Angélique Kidjo remains Benin's best-known cultural ambassador, blending Beninese and West African traditions with funk, jazz and Afrobeat.

Clothing and textiles

Wax-print fabric is everyday wear across Benin, made into boubous, skirts and dresses for both daily life and ceremony. Pagne, the broader term for wrapper cloth, carries meanings that shift with occasion and community — it's worth asking, not assuming, what a particular fabric or colour signifies before you wear or gift it.

Festivals and rites

- Vodun Days (Ouidah) — National Vodun Day on January 10 has grown into a multi-day festival of ceremonies, drumming, performance and public celebration. The 2026 edition ran January 8–10; the next is scheduled for January 2–9, 2027.

- Zangbeto ceremonies — nighttime guardian-spirit performances among Ogu communities, historically tied to community patrol and protection as well as spiritual practice.
- Royal ceremonies in Abomey — descendants of the Dahomey court continue songs, dances and offerings connected to the kingdom's historic rulers, without implying any political restoration.

Ria's Colony remark — *If you plan your trip around Vodun Days, this is a living religious festival, not a staged show for visitors. Dress modestly, ask before photographing ceremonies or participants, and follow the lead of a local guide on what is and isn't appropriate to film.*

Source: [Ria's Colony — Benin: History, Culture, Vodun and the Kingdom of Dahomey](#)

Source: [UNESCO — Gelede oral heritage, Intangible Cultural Heritage List](#)

Visiting Benin: visas, fees and entry routes

Since 2018, Benin has run its tourist and short-stay visa process entirely online through a government e-Visa portal. As of September 2026, the official, government-operated portal is evisa.bj — the only site where you pay the government fee directly with no service mark-up.

e-Visa types and official fees

Visa type	Entries	Official government fee*
e-Visa, 30 days	Single entry	€50 (≈ \$55)
e-Visa, 30 days	Multiple entry	€75 (≈ \$82)
e-Visa, 90 days	Multiple entry	€100 (≈ \$110)

**Government fee only, paid directly on evisa.bj. Third-party visa-agency websites (not affiliated with the Benin government) commonly add a service fee on top — some quote a combined total of roughly €115–€165. You are never required to use a third-party site; applying directly on the official portal costs only the government fee above.*

What you need to apply

- A passport valid for at least 6 months beyond your arrival date, with at least one blank page
- A recent passport-style photo on a white background
- Proof of onward or return travel
- Proof of accommodation (hotel booking or a signed invitation letter)
- Evidence of sufficient funds for your stay
- A yellow fever vaccination certificate — required for entry into Benin regardless of visa type
- A valid credit or debit card for online payment

How the process works

- Complete the online application form at evisa.bj with your personal, passport and travel details.
- Upload your scanned passport bio page, photo and supporting documents.

- Pay the applicable fee online.
- Processing typically takes 2–5 business days; the approved e-visa arrives by email — you do not need to print it, but carrying a copy is sensible.
- You must have your e-visa approved and in hand before you travel — Benin's border officials will not admit travellers without a pre-approved e-visa.

Applying via embassy instead

If you prefer not to apply online, you can apply in person at a Beninese embassy or consulate, though this generally costs slightly more than the self-service online fee (roughly €60–€110 depending on visa type) and takes longer.

Visa-free and regional arrangements

Nationals of ECOWAS member states (which includes Nigeria, Togo, Ghana, Senegal and others) can enter Benin without a visa for stays of up to 90 days, reflecting the free movement protocol of the Economic Community of West African States.

Ria's Colony remark — Only use evisa.bj. If a site is not on the .bj government domain and asks for a materially higher fee without clearly disclosing it as a paid convenience service, treat that as a red flag and verify before you pay.

Source: [Official Benin e-Visa portal](https://evisa.bj)

Source: [Benin e-Visa Guide 2026 — fees, documents, processing](#)

Source: evisaguides.com — [Benin eVisa 2026 fee and requirement breakdown \(verified against evisa.bj\)](#)

Source: evisa-benin.info — [Benin e-Visa: Complete Guide](#)

Getting there and getting around

Arriving

Most international travellers fly into Cardinal Bernardin Gantin International Airport in Cotonou, Benin's main international gateway and economic capital. Land borders connect Benin to Togo (west), Nigeria (east), and Burkina Faso and Niger (north) — though see the safety section below on the northern border areas.

Moving around the country

- Cotonou–Parakou (north-central hub): roughly 2,500–4,000 XOF by shared intercity transport
- Cotonou–Abomey (historic Dahomey capital): roughly 1,500–2,000 XOF
- Cotonou–Natitingou (gateway to the Atacora region and tata somba country): roughly 4,000–5,500 XOF

Roads are generally in poorer condition outside the main southern corridor, and travel times can extend significantly in the rainy season. Shared taxis, zemidjan (motorcycle taxis) and intercity buses are the common ways to move between towns; renting a car with a driver is the most comfortable option for longer, multi-stop itineraries.

Source: [*Africarrieres — Cost of living in Benin: transport prices*](#)

Source: [*U.S. State Department — Benin Travel Advisory \(road conditions\)*](#)

Health and safety: the honest picture

Official travel advisory

As of the U.S. State Department's most recent update (January 7, 2026), Benin sits at Level 2: Exercise Increased Caution, citing crime, terrorism, unrest and kidnapping risk indicators.

Do-not-travel zones

The U.S. State Department advises against all travel to the areas of Benin bordering Burkina Faso and Niger, and the Nigerian states of Kebbi, Niger and Kwara, due to crime, terrorism and kidnapping risk linked to Sahel-based armed groups. This effectively covers Benin's far northern and northeastern border strip, including parts of the Alibori, Atacora, Borgou and Donga departments, and — notably for travellers — the Pendjari and W National Parks and surrounding hunting zones.

Away from the border zone

Most of coastal and southern Benin, including Cotonou, Porto-Novo, Ouidah and Abomey, is assessed as considerably safer, though petty and opportunistic crime happens in crowded spaces — the State Department specifically flags Cotonou's Dantokpa Market and its city-centre beaches as areas to be cautious in, particularly between dusk and dawn.

Practical safety notes

- Do not physically resist a robbery attempt.
- Avoid displaying visible signs of wealth (watches, jewellery, phones) in crowded public areas.
- Swimming along Benin's Atlantic coastline is genuinely dangerous — strong tides, waves and rip currents cause several drownings a year; check conditions before swimming, and prefer beaches with sea walls or supervised sections.
- It is illegal to bring marijuana, guns or ammunition into Benin, and violations can lead to lengthy arrest and detention.
- Keep an itinerary with a friend or family member and have an exit plan that doesn't rely on outside government assistance, especially if you travel beyond the south.

Health and vaccination

A yellow fever vaccination certificate is required for entry into Benin. Malaria is present throughout the country, so prophylaxis and mosquito precautions are strongly advised — talk to a travel health clinic before you go. There are no known HIV/AIDS-related entry restrictions for visitors.

Ria's Colony remark — A Level 2 advisory does not mean 'don't go' — it means 'go with your eyes open.' Coastal, southern Benin — where the great majority of travellers spend their time — is a fundamentally different risk picture from the northern border strip. Plan your itinerary with that distinction in mind, and if a tour or safari operator wants to take you into the Pendjari or W National Park region, ask directly how they're managing the current advisory.

Source: [U.S. Department of State — Benin Travel Advisory](#)

Source: [OSAC — Benin Country Security Report](#)

Money matters: currency and cost of living

Benin uses the West African CFA franc (XOF), shared across the eight-country West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA/WAEMU) and pegged to the euro at a fixed rate of 655.957 XOF = €1. This peg makes budgeting from euros straightforward and gives Benin's currency more macroeconomic stability than many of its neighbours' floating currencies.

What things cost (Cotonou, 2026 estimates)

Single person, comfortable budget	≈ \$600–\$900 / month (rent, food, transport, some dining out)
Single person, frugal/local-style budget	≈ \$320–\$480 / month
Family of four, expat lifestyle	≈ \$1,400–\$1,900 / month including rent
1-bed furnished apartment, city centre	≈ €185 / ≈ 120,000–150,000 XOF per month
3-bed furnished apartment, city centre	≈ €320 / month
Basic lunch menu with a drink (business district)	≈ 2,500–4,600 XOF
Domestic beer (supermarket, 0.5L)	≈ 500–590 XOF
Monthly public transport	≈ €15
Home internet (basic package)	≈ 17,500 XOF / month

Rule of thumb: Cotonou runs noticeably cheaper than Lagos or most European capitals, but imported goods, reliable electricity/internet and Western-style housing carry a real premium over local-market prices. A budget built entirely on local markets and shared transport can come in well under \$400/month; a Western-comfort expat lifestyle in central Cotonou realistically runs \$700–\$1,000+ for a single person.

Source: [Expatisan — Cost of Living in Cotonou / Benin \(2026\)](#)

Source: [Livingcost.org — Cost of Living in Cotonou](#)

Source: [wheretoemigrate.io — Benin Cost of Living Breakdown 2026](#)

Relocation: from visitor to resident

Moving to Benin long-term is a staged process, and the rules differ depending on your nationality and purpose of stay. Here is the route most non-ECOWAS foreign nationals will follow.

Step 1 — Entering legally

Even a long-term move starts with legal entry: either the tourist e-visa above, or — if you already have a job offer, study placement or long-stay purpose lined up — a long-stay visa applied for in advance through a Beninese embassy or consulate.

Step 2 — The residence permit (Carte de Séjour)

Anyone staying in Benin longer than 90 days must obtain a Carte de Séjour (residence permit), issued by the Ministry of the Interior and Public Security through the Office of Emigration and Immigration (Direction de l'Émigration et de l'Immigration), based in Cotonou or Porto-Novo. Applications can be initiated through Benin's national public-services portal.

Typical documents required

- Valid passport (minimum 6 months validity remaining)
- Completed application form and recent passport photos
- Certificate of residence in Benin
- Medical certificate (no more than 3 months old) from an approved health centre
- Police clearance / criminal record extract from your country of origin or last residence (no more than 3 months old)
- Proof of employment, study enrolment, or membership of a recognised professional/religious body
- Proof of financial means
- Yellow fever vaccination certificate
- Application fee — commonly cited around 100,000 XOF (≈ €150) for a standard permit, though fees vary by permit type and should be confirmed at application

Types and duration

- Short-stay / temporary permit — typically valid 1 year, renewable

- Ordinary residence permit — for those with an established basis to stay (work, study, family)
- Long-term residence permit — available after 2 years on short-term permits; valid for 10 years
- Privileged Resident Card — for those with 5+ consecutive legal years of residence who can demonstrate financial self-sufficiency

Working in Benin

A work permit application generally requires a valid passport, photos, a signed employment contract or letter of intent, proof of qualifications, a medical certificate, a recent criminal record extract, a CV, proof of financial means and a yellow fever certificate. ECOWAS nationals benefit from a simplified regime with fewer administrative hurdles.

Naturalisation

Naturalisation generally requires a general residence period of around 3 years (this residency requirement does not apply to a foreign spouse of a Beninese citizen or someone born in Benin), good character, good health, no criminal record over the past year, and French or Beninese language ability.

Ria's Colony remark — Rules like this change and vary by nationality — a Nigerian citizen (ECOWAS, visa-free for 90 days) has a meaningfully different path from a European or North American applicant. Before you commit to a relocation plan, confirm current requirements directly with a Beninese embassy/consulate or the Direction de l'Émigration et de l'Immigration — don't rely solely on third-party relocation blogs, including this one, for your final paperwork.

Source: jarniascyril.com — [Complete Guide to Moving to Benin as an Expatriate](https://jarniascyril.com)

Source: adavia.com — [Privileged Resident Card \(Carte de Résident Privilégié\) requirements](https://adavia.com)

Source: visitworld.today — [Residence Permit process for foreigners in Benin](https://visitworld.today)

Source: benin-e-visa.com — [Residence Permit for Benin overview](https://benin-e-visa.com)

Where to go: places, culture and experiences

Ouidah

The historic coastal town where the Route des Esclaves (Slave Route) — a roughly four-kilometre memorial path — leads to the Door of No Return on the Atlantic shore. Also home to the Python Temple and, every January, Vodun Days, the country's most significant living religious festival.

Abomey

Former seat of the Dahomey royal court. The Royal Palaces of Abomey are a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and the town remains a centre for appliqué textile art and metalworking traditions that once served the monarchy.

Porto-Novo

Benin's official capital, with a strong Yoruba cultural presence, colonial-era architecture, and the Ethnographic Museum (Musée Honmè).

Cotonou

The de facto capital and economic heart of the country — Dantokpa Market (one of West Africa's largest open-air markets), the main international airport, and the country's main business and nightlife district.

Pendjari and W National Parks

Two of West Africa's most significant wildlife reserves, home to lions, elephants and other savanna wildlife — but currently within the U.S. State Department's do-not-travel zone (see the Health & Safety section). Check the current advisory status before planning a visit here.

Ganvié

A stilt village built on Lake Nokoué, often described as the "Venice of Africa," originally settled by the Tofinu people as a refuge from Dahomey-era slave raids.

The Atacora region and tata somba country

In the northwest, around Natitingou, the fortified earthen tata somba houses of the Betammaribe offer a striking, still-lived-in architectural tradition.

Source: [Ria's Colony — Benin: History, Culture, Vodun and the Kingdom of Dahomey](#)

Source: [UNESCO World Heritage — Royal Palaces of Abomey](#)

The good, the bad and the ugly

The good

- A genuinely unique cultural depth — Benin is one of the true historical homelands of Vodun, with living traditions, not museum pieces.
- Political and economic stability relative to much of the wider Sahel, with strong recent GDP growth (around 7% projected in 2026, per IMF figures cited in reporting on Wadagni's inauguration) and low inflation.
- A fully digital, relatively fast e-visa system compared with many neighbouring countries.
- Low cost of living relative to Western countries and even relative to nearby Lagos.
- A currency (XOF) pegged to the euro, giving more predictability than many regional alternatives.

The bad

- Democratic backsliding under the Talon years — restricted opposition participation, a heavily managed electoral code, and Freedom House's "Partly Free" rating — are real and worth knowing about before you assume Benin is a straightforward liberal democracy.
- Infrastructure gaps outside the south: road quality, healthcare access and reliable electricity/internet all decline the further north and inland you go.
- A meaningful north–south development gap rooted in colonial-era policy that has narrowed since independence but not closed.

The ugly

- Jihadist violence spilling south from the Sahel (linked to groups such as JNIM) has made Benin's border areas with Burkina Faso and Niger a genuine do-not-travel zone, with real kidnapping and attack risk — this is not overcaution on the part of Western governments.
- Benin's role as one of the most active ports in the transatlantic slave trade is a difficult, central part of its history, not a footnote — the Route des Esclaves and Door of No Return in Ouidah exist specifically to hold that history rather than obscure it.
- Dangerous coastal swimming conditions cause real, repeated drownings each year and are frequently underestimated by visitors.

Ria's Colony remark — None of this cancels out the other. Benin can be a country worth deep cultural engagement and also a country with a serious northern security problem and a democracy under real strain — both things are true, and a good traveller or relocater holds both at once instead of picking the version that's convenient.

Practical remarks before you go

- Language: French will get you further than English almost everywhere outside major hotels — a phrasebook or translation app is genuinely useful.
- Money: XOF is cash-dominant outside major hotels and supermarkets; carry cash for markets, taxis and rural areas, and notify your bank of travel to avoid card blocks.
- Photography: ask before photographing people, ceremonies, and especially anything connected to Vodun practice — this is lived religion, not a photo backdrop.
- Dress: modest dress is appreciated at religious sites and in rural/northern communities; swimwear is for the beach only.
- SIM cards: local SIMs (MTN Benin, Moov Africa) are inexpensive and widely available at the airport and in Cotonou for data and calls.
- Electricity: 220V, European-style two-round-pin plugs (Type C/E) — bring an adapter if you're travelling from the UK, US or elsewhere.
- Best time to visit: the dry season (roughly November–February) is generally the most comfortable for travel, and includes Vodun Days in January; the rainy season (April–July, with a shorter rains in September–October) can make northern roads difficult.

Full source list

Everything in this guide is drawn from the sources below, current as of September 2026. We've linked each one so you can verify anything before you rely on it for a booking, an application or a decision that matters.

Source: [Riq's Colony — Benin: History, Culture, Vodun and the Kingdom of Dahomey](#)

Source: [Official Benin e-Visa portal](#)

Source: [Benin e-Visa Guide 2026 \(Saiga Tours\)](#)

Source: [evisaguides.com — Benin eVisa 2026](#)

Source: [evisa-benin.info — Complete Guide to the Electronic Visa](#)

Source: [U.S. Department of State — Benin Travel Advisory](#)

Source: [OSAC — Benin Country Security Report](#)

Source: [BTI 2026 Benin Country Report](#)

Source: [Wikipedia — President of Benin / Romuald Wadagni / 2026 Beninese presidential election](#)

Source: [Face2Face Africa — Benin's 2026 political overhaul](#)

Source: [Africanews — Wadagni sworn in as Benin's new president](#)

Source: [jarniascyril.com — Complete Guide to Moving to Benin as an Expatriate](#)

Source: [adavia.com — Privileged Resident Card requirements](#)

Source: [visitworld.today — Residence Permit process for foreigners](#)

Source: [Expatistan — Cost of Living in Cotonou / Benin](#)

Source: [Livingcost.org — Cost of Living in Cotonou](#)

Source: [UNESCO — Gelede oral heritage](#)

Source: [UNESCO World Heritage — Royal Palaces of Abomey](#)

About Ria's Colony

Africa is one continent. Moving across it should be easier.

Ria's Colony is a trade and tourism company that helps people understand other African countries, travel between them and do business across their markets — because right now, all three are often harder than they should be.

People across Africa still know surprisingly little about many other parts of the continent. There are businesses that could be selling into markets they've never considered. Travellers who could be visiting places they know almost nothing about. Destinations that could be reaching people who would genuinely value what they offer. The opportunities are there — finding the right information, people and way in is often the harder part. Ria's Colony works across those gaps, using media, travel information, learning, research, business development and connections to make it easier for people and organisations to move across African countries with better understanding.

What we commit to

- Equip — practical courses and resources that help people build useful skills and participate more confidently in opportunities across Africa (Style Vault).
- Reflect — original stories that help people understand Africa's countries, cultures, economies and the issues that matter there (Style Mirror).
- Explore — travel information, destination stories and selected experiences that help people know what to expect and find useful local support (Aerial View).
- Connect — helping businesses enter and expand across African markets, connecting them with customers, partners and local knowledge before they invest heavily (Aerial Connect).

Our values

- Curiosity — staying open to new ideas, cultures, people and possibilities.
- Courage — celebrating the brave decision: speaking up, starting something, taking the trip, sending the proposal.
- Care — respecting people's stories, cultures, trust and time.
- Integrity — trust earned through honesty, consistency and keeping our word.
- Belonging — community is not something we add, it's who we are.

- Joy — learning should inspire, stories should move us, travel should excite us.

Who we're for

Travellers planning a trip and wanting better information before they go. Businesses looking to understand a new African market. Tourism boards, ministries, hotels and event organisers wanting to reach the right people. Readers and learners who want to understand African countries, cultures and opportunities beyond the headlines. If that's you, this guide is exactly the kind of thing we exist to make.

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For the life you are becoming.