



PEOPLE GROUPS: HAUSA

The Hausa are the largest people group in West Africa. For hundreds of years, commerce, fuelled by a network of trade routes across the Sahel, Sahara and Sudan, has spread Hausa culture and language far and wide.

Islam arrived in Hausaland with the trans-Saharan caravans. By the fifteenth century, Islam was widespread, and independent Hausa kingdoms later became emirates, led by emirs. They remain strong today and hold cultural influence and power.

Sharia Law was instituted in 12 northern Nigerian states in late 1999. This has made daily life increasingly difficult for Christians and churches in the north. Less than one per cent of Hausa are Christians.

One of the most famous festivals in Nigeria is the Durbar of Kano. This annual four-day event is a time to express unity in their cultural heritage and loyalty to the emir. It includes a grand parade, displays of horsemanship, music, and hundreds of turbaned men on adorned horses.

Hausa is spoken by up to 150 million people, largely in Nigeria and Niger, and as a trade language throughout West and Central Africa. Hausa has more first-language speakers than any other African language.¹ It can be written using Arabic script or a Latin-based script called Boko. (The militant sect Boko Haram derives its name from the words *Boko* and *haram*, the latter referring to things forbidden by Islamic law. The name is commonly inferred to mean “Westernization is sacrilege”. Both Hausa and other ethnic groups are among the Boko Haram.)

Traditional Hausa attire for men is the *baban riga*, a robe decorated with embroidery. Women wear the modest *abaya* robe or a wrap-around skirt with colourful blouses. Tailors for both men and women come up with many unique designs in style, fabric choice, and embroidery.

The Hausa are skilled at textile production, which dates back 12 centuries. Other Hausa crafts include leatherwork, blacksmithing, coiled-grass basket weaving, and pottery.

At a Glance

- The Hausa are known for their dyed indigo cloth. The oldest dye pits are in Kano and date back 600 years.
- The Hausa diet includes yams, okra, porridge, jollof rice, river fish, and many stews and soups such as egusi soup.
- The Hausa and Fulani people have lived side-by-side for centuries, and non-nomadic Fulani share much in common with the Hausa.

Pray

- For more workers to live and serve among the Hausa.
- For mental, spiritual and physical protection for mission workers in areas at high risk of terrorist activity.
- For courage for new believers and for the Lord to lead them to others who can help them grow in the Word and be disciplined.

¹https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hausa_people



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