

LIBERIAN PROFESSIONAL NETWORK “DEMYSTIFY LIBERIA” PROJECT – TRAVELING TO MONROVIA, LIBERIA

## LPN **Liberian Professional Network**

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### Traveling to Liberia

*“The Liberian Professional Network “Demystify Liberia” project aims to simplify difficult to understand processes by engaging members and leveraging lessons learned from previous experiences.”*

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*Furthermore, this guide contains no paid advertisements. The guide was developed as the Liberian Professional Network (LPN) way of helping to “Lift Liberia”.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Despite commendable advances in administration and development in the past half decade, Liberia remains a country of bureaucracy and complication – understanding simple processes and procedures within ministries and government as a whole can be a daunting and sometimes rigorous task which tends to frustrate foreign investors, visitors and businesses, with a detrimental impact on the country’s rapidly-recovering economy.

Processing documents can take far too long; procedures which are outlined on paper may not always be followed. At times, the rule of law itself can be weak. Although major improvements have been registered by the likes of the World Bank and Transparency International, Liberia remains a state recovering from the civil crisis.

The Liberian Professional Network “Demystify Liberia” project aims to simplify difficult to understand processes by engaging members and leveraging lessons learned from previous experiences. LPN’s hope is that this will mitigate some of the confusions and difficulties and encourage more engagement and investment in Liberia for the benefit of all.

This Traveling to Monrovia, Liberia guide is a part of LPN’s Demystify Liberia series and will assist visitors on how to prepare for a visit and have an efficient, safe, enjoyable stay. From obtaining your visa, to partaking in Monrovia’s budding nightlife, this guide helps readers become comfortable with this fascinating and fast-moving country, while continuing to overcome the stigma of a war-torn, dangerous country.

We look forward to further feedback from our members and readers. Please visit <http://www.liberianprofessionalnetwork.org/> or email [info@liberianprofessionalnetwork.org](mailto:info@liberianprofessionalnetwork.org). The link to this guide is [here](#).

## BACKGROUND

### A Brief Introduction to Liberia

Liberia is situated on the West Coast of Africa, and serves as the shortest link to the Americas. It is bounded on the west by Sierra Leone, on the north by the Republic of Guinea, on the south by the Atlantic Ocean, and on the east by Cote D'Ivoire. Liberia has an area of 43,000 square miles and a coastline of 350 miles. It roughly compares in size with the state of Ohio or Pennsylvania, and has a mostly undulating terrain, from rolling plains along the coast to a hilly plateau and low mountains in the northeast.

Monrovia is the capital, chief seaport, and principal financial center. The vast majorities of visitors to Liberia enters and exit via Monrovia, and often visit Monrovia only.

Liberia is enriched with iron ore, timber, rubber, diamonds, gold, and has enormous potential for hydropower. The country has a tropical climate with average temperatures ranging between 68° F – 85° F. There are two seasons of approximately six months each: Wet (rainy) from May to October, and Dry (sunny) from November to April. Monrovia is reportedly one of the rainiest capital cities in the world.

Liberia's population is officially estimated a 3.5 million as of the latest census, but given its large diaspora, the world may be home to as many as 5 million people of Liberian descent. Within its borders, there are reportedly 28 tribes, including Kpelle, Bassa, Gio, Kru, Grebo, Mano, Krahn, Gola, Gbandi, Loma, Kissi, Vai, Dei, Bella, Mandingo and Mende, and 18 local languages –with English as the official language. Liberians speak a rapid, thickly-accented dialect, Liberian English, which can initially seem unintelligible to foreigners, can be quickly learned.

Liberia is has no state religion, but is a very religious society. Christianity abounds, but Islam has many followers –especially in the north of the country– and tribal religions are practiced in some rural areas. The major Christian denominations are Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Protestant Episcopal, Lutheran, Roman Catholic and Seventh Day Adventist. The oldest of these is the Baptist Church, established in 1822.



FIGURE 1: MAP OF LIBERIA

## Orientation

Monrovia is by far Liberia’s largest city, accounting for nearly a quarter of its population. The city is Liberia’s chief port and its most important business and financial center.

The city is situated on a long peninsula, Cape Mesurado. At the very end of this strip of land lies the center of Monrovia: the old dock area of Waterside, now the country’s busiest market zone, and above this on a steep hill lies the historic Broad Street section of town, the commercial center of the country and the location of many government offices. Near to here are the leafy diplomatic and hotel quarter of Mamba Point, and to the south the political center of the nation, Capitol Hill, with the three branches of government facing each other. From here, the multilane Tubman Boulevard begins.

Further south along the peninsula lies the Sinkor section of town. Sinkor begins where Monrovia City Hall faces the Pan African plaza tower, currently UNMIL’s headquarters. Originally Monrovia’s first suburb, today Sinkor acts as the city’s bustling midtown, its grid of numbered streets home to a great many of the city’s hotels, restaurants, embassies, supermarkets and businesses.

Sinkor is divided by the runway of the Spriggs-Payne airfield, around which one of the city’s principal entertainment areas, commonly known as Airfield. Past this landmark is the Old Road section of town, mostly a residential area but also the location of several businesses and NGO offices. After Sinkor lies Congo Town, an historic settlement which is a separate township from Monrovia, but acts as another district of the capital, home to the Nigerian and Chinese embassies, among other landmarks.

Tubman Boulevard then meets the Robertsfield highway at the busy ELWA Junction, in the town of Paynesville, which is today Monrovia’s largest suburb and the second-largest city in all of Liberia. Paynesville is home to a number of beachside hotels and entertainment areas, and is also the location of the massive Red Light District, which is Liberia’s largest marketplace. The road through Red Light connects the north-central section of the country to the capital.

On the north side of the metropolitan area, the Waterside district is connected to the Freeport area, which is the industrial and logistical center of the entire country. The Freeport is connected to the Red Light district by Somalia Drive, which also links the suburbs of New Georgia, Barnersville, and other towns. This side of the region is often referred to as “Across.” From here, roads lead west into Bomi County, eventually connecting the northwestern part of Liberia and linking to Sierra Leone.



FIGURE 2: MAP OF GREATER MONROVIA

## YOUR FIRST LIBERIAN ENGLISH LESSON

Liberian English	Interpretation	Example/Usage
Bah	Respectful word for “Friend”	“Bah, come lets go” could be interpreted as “Let’s go my friend”
Da	The	“You watching da muppet show” could be interpreted as “Are you watching cartoons?”
Eh	Is	“Where da cartoon eh?” could be interpreted as “Where is the cardboard box?”
Dah	That	“Dah funny man oh!” could be interpreted as “That’s a funny guy”
Balance	Remainder/The Rest	“Put the balance here” could be interpreted as “Place the rest here”
Boss Man/Boss Woman/ Chief	Respectful word	“I got your newspaper oh boss man” could be interpreted as “I have your newspaper”
Ma/Old Ma/Ol’ Ma	Respectful word for a woman, like “Maam”	“Old ma, where is my weekend?” could be interpreted as “Maam, can I have a tip?”
Pa/Pa pay	Respectful word for a man	“I comin to check your generator oh Pay pa..ok?” could be interpreted as “I will stop by to check your generator”. The “Ok” is only seeking approval.
Craw Fish	Shrimp	“Put small craw fish here nah” could be interpreted as “Could I have some shrimp?”
Craw Craw	Rash	“The peekin got craw craw oh” could be interpreted as “The little boy has a rash”
Yaw	Your/You	“Yaw nah ready ye” could be interpreted as “You are not ready yet or You all are not ready yet”
Vex	Annoy or Upset	“I am vex with you oh” could be interpreted as “I am upset with you”
Try/Trying	Well/Way to signal that something or someone is ok	“I am trying old ma” could be interpreted as “I am doing well maam”
Small-small	Small/A little bit	“I am trying small-small” could be

		interpreted as “I am not too well”
Dis/Dos/Dees	This/Those/These	“Dis peekin better make haste” could be interpreted as “This little boy should hurry up”
Haste	Hurry Up	“Dis peekin better make haste” could be interpreted as “This little boy should hurry up”
Palaver	Trouble	“I don’t want any palaver” could be interpreted as “I don’t want any trouble”
Oh/O	Liberians use “Oh” or “O” at the end a sentence to emphasize a point.	“The peekin got craw craw oh” could be interpreted as “The little boy has a rash”
My Weekend/ Small Thing	Tip/Some extra cash	“Old ma, where is my weekend?” could be interpreted as “Maam, can I have a tip?”
Peekin	Little Boy	“Dis peekin better make haste” could be interpreted as “This little boy should hurry up”
Nah	Not/Isn’t/Now	“Put small craw fish here nah” could be interpreted as “Could I have some shrimp?”
Cartoon	This refers to a cardboard box.	“Where da cartoon eh?” could be interpreted as “Where is the cardboard box?”
Muppet	Cartoon Show	“You watching da muppet show” could be interpreted as “Are you watching cartoon?”
Cuss	Means curse	“I cuss ha peekin” could be interpreted as “I cursed the little boy”
For true	Really/Actually/ Is that so?	“Is dah for true?” could be interpreted as “Is that for real” or “Is that so”

## SAFETY & SECURITY

Despite its reputation, dominated by the scourge of decades of violent civil war, Liberia is today a safe and stable country. This is true of Monrovia, where violent crime is rare. Anecdotes of crimes against foreigners are nearly unheard-of; petty street crimes like pick-pocketing are only occasionally reported.

Monrovia remains a small, relatively quiet city. Foreigners walk about the city freely, both alone and in groups. Driving and parking of cars, whether during the day in the busy market section, or after midnight in the entertainment areas, is commonplace for non-Africans and usually incurs no issues, although it is not recommended to wander the streets alone at night (the same advice for most American cities).

Normal precautions should be taken to be friendly in general but guarded when approached. Protect money and personal property, do not leave mobile phones on bars, counters, or tabletops where they can be quickly swiped, or purses or bags behind you when sitting down. Females should not carry a purse or excessive jewelry for the sake of fashion, but would be better to carrying possession in pockets.

Be smart. Be aware of your surroundings, your situation, and be familiar with the people you are with. It can be very unusual for Liberians to see, talk to, or be in proximity to non-Africans. Many may approach out of simple pleasure to chat or curiosity, but others might perceive foreigners as wealthy and may try to take advantage of a visitor. Do not leave with an unknown person, whether male or female, and do not let an unknown person into your house or hotel room. Do not leave valuables in an automobile, visible to the outside.

The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and the Liberian National Police provide security in Liberia. Crimes, and corruption of authorities, remain as serious challenges. Always carry identification, and always carry a valid US or Liberian driver’s license when operating a vehicle. As of writing, a United States driver’s license provides visitors the privilege of driving in Liberia. Obey police instructions whether on foot or in a car, and never solicit, offer or pay a bribe, no matter how small. Proof of vehicle registration is required for all cars, but auto insurance is not.

For US citizens traveling to Liberia, you can take advantage of the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP). STEP is a free service provided by the U.S. Government to U.S. citizens who are traveling to, or living in, a foreign country.

STEP allows you to enter information about your upcoming trip abroad so that the Department of State can better assist you in an emergency. STEP also allows Americans residing abroad to get routine information from the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate. Visit <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/> for more details.

In case of emergency, please contact your consulate.

Embassy or Consulate	Address/Contact Info
Embassy of United States	111 UN Drive Mamba Point P. O. Box 98 Monrovia, Liberia

	<p>Phone: +231 77054826</p> <p>Fax: +231 7710370</p> <p>Web Site: <a href="http://monrovia.usembassy.gov">http://monrovia.usembassy.gov</a></p> <p>Office Hours:</p> <p>Monday - Friday 8:00 am - 5:00 pm</p>
Spanish Consulate	<p>56 Broad Street</p> <p>P.O. Box 1413</p> <p>Monrovia, Liberia</p> <p>Phone: +231 222631 / 222632 / 226489</p> <p>Fax: +231 226067</p>
Belgium Consulate	<p>45 Coconut Compound</p> <p>Monrovia, Liberia</p> <p>Phone: +231 (0) 391122</p> <p>Fax: +231 391611</p>
Embassy of France	<p>11th St. (Beach Side)</p> <p>Sinkor, Monrovia, Liberia</p> <p>Phone: +231 6579373 / 5821281</p>
Chinese Embassy	<p>Congo Town Back Rd</p> <p>Oldest Congo Town, Monrovia, Liberia</p> <p>Phone: +231 6 533248 / 555556</p>
German Embassy	<p>Congo Town</p> <p>Monrovia, Liberia</p> <p>Phone: +231 6438365</p>
Swedish Consulate	<p>Carey &amp; Johnston St</p> <p>Monrovia, Liberia</p> <p>Phone: +231 6518276</p>
Indian Consulate	<p>P.O.Box 10-3717</p>

	Monrovia, Liberia  Vaitown, Bushrod Island  Phone: +231 228000 / 228001
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## MEDICAL

All travelers should visit either their personal physician or a travel health clinic 4-8 weeks before departure to get your shots and start taking anti-malaria medication. There are a few to choose from, and they work differently for everyone. Consult your family and medical provider before you make your decision.

Malaria Medication – Read or Pros and Cons of Malaria Medication	Recommended for all travelers
Hepatitis A Vaccination	Recommended for all travelers
Typhoid	Recommended for all travelers
Yellow fever	Required for all travelers greater than one year of age
Polio	One-time booster recommended for any adult traveler who completed the childhood series but never had polio vaccine as an adult
Hepatitis B	For travelers who may have intimate contact with local residents, especially if visiting for more than 6 months
Rabies	For travelers who may have direct contact with animals and may not have access to medical care

Here are some ‘pros & cons’ that for Malaria pills to help you before you step into the doctor’s office:

### Hospitals, Medical Centers & Doctors in Liberia

If you do get sick while in Liberia, you can visit one of the following doctors or medical centers that are location in Monrovia. The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) will assist American citizens in life threatening injuries or on a referral basis only.

Names	Contact Info
John F. Kennedy Medical Center	Dr. Wannie Scott McDonald, Administrator  Monrovia  +231-6-602-286

St. Joseph Catholic Hospital	Dr. Lilly Sanvee Medical Director/Urological Surgeon Sinkor, Monrovia +231-6-550-617
ELWA Junction Hospital	Dr. Richard A. Sacra Family Practitioner Paynesville, Liberia +231-5-663-131
Dr. Salman Clinic	Dr. Marwan Salman H. Mattar Building 85 Randall Street, Monrovia +231-6-511-818
Island Clinic	Dr. Walter Brumskine Private Consultant, Urologist 135 Tubman Boulevard +231-6-520-543
Dental Clinic	Hassan Ezzedine, DDS Randall Street, by DITCO +231-6-510-565
ELWA Dental Clinic	Keith Chapman, DDS ELWA Dental Clinic +231-77-229-552 Liberia

Medication Name	Pros	Cons
Mefloquine/Lariam (weekly)	Most cost-effective option. Highly effective and is only taken	The side effects can include weird dreams and feeling a little off the

	once a week.	day you take Mefloquine (some people had severe effects).  Can cause depression, hallucinations or panic attacks in those with a history of mental illness.
Doxycycline (weekly)	Taken once a day, we found it to be comparable to Mefloquine in effectiveness, without the harsh side effects.	Can cause yeast infections in women.  May reduce the effectiveness of oral contraceptives.  Skin may be more sensitive to sunburn. Remember, Liberia can be pretty HOT!
Malarone (daily)	No side effects like Mefloquine or Doxycycline.	Most expensive medication.  Tends to be less effective than the other two, often the result of forgetting to follow the pill’s strict schedule of taking one every day at the same time.

## GETTING YOUR VISA

An entry visa must be obtained prior to arrival in Liberia for all non-Ecowas persons. Both the Liberian Embassy in the United States in Washington, D.C. and the Liberian consulate at the Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York City offer direct visa services. There are also numerous private expediting services which can obtain visas on behalf of travelers.

Per the Liberian Embassy and Consulate, there is a waiting period of five (5) working days for visa processing. The fees for visa expedition are as follows:

- Same Day Processing an additional \$75.00 per document (Must submit in the morning before 12pm and pick up at 2pm. If you submit after 12pm, please note that pick up will be the next day),
- Next Day Processing or less than 5 days an additional \$50.00 per document.

Even with a five (5) working day visa processing time, the Liberian Embassy advice that applicants apply within three (3) weeks of their travel date. Applicants need not apply in person. They must send a USPS self-stamped addressed envelope (EXPRESS MAIL-\$18.30) together with the requirements in order to ensure the return of the ready document(s).

Visit <http://www.liberiaconsulateny.org> or <http://www.liberianembassyus.org/> for more information.

## Requirements

1. Passport must be valid at least six (6) months when applying for Visa
2. One (1) passport size photos.
3. Copy of Airline ticket or itinerary. If in transit, Visa for ultimate destination
4. Processing FEES: Please See Chart Below payable in Money Order only to Liberia Consulate
5. Completion of Application Form.
6. Yellow Fever vaccination is REQUIRED. (Yellow Book)
7. **For Business Visa Only:** Any person(s) traveling for business must present a letter assuming financial responsibility from the company or organization. For all other Visa (Non Tourist Visa), applicants need an invitation letter stating who you are visiting, and purpose for trip

### Visa Fees – Payable in Money Order ONLY

Document/Service	Validity	Fee (\$US)
Visa – US Citizen	1-3 months	131.00
Visa – US Citizen	1 year Multiple	200.00
Visa – US Citizen	2 Years Multiple	300.00
Visa – US Citizen	3 Years Multiple	400.00
Visa – ECOWAS Citizen	Unlimited	Gratis
Visa – Other countries	1- 3 months	70.00
Visa- Other countries	1 Year Multiple	150.00
Visa – Other countries	2 Years Multiple	250.00
Same-Day Rush service	n/a	75.00
Next Day Rush Service	n/a	50.00

### Additional requirements for Minor (17 Yrs. Old and below)

- Copy of Birth Certificate
- Copy of Vaccination records
- Notarized letter from both parents requesting for the issuance of visa. (Parents must sign) If only one parent/guardian is traveling with minor, explain in the letter. If parent have full custody, attach copy of custody papers. If parents are not traveling with minor, state in letter who will be responsible for the minor.

## GETTING TO LIBERIA

While it is possible to enter Liberia overland from all neighboring countries, the vast majority of foreign travelers arrive via air.

Liberia’s principal gateway is Roberts International Airport, commonly called RIA or Robertsfield. It is located some 40km east of central Monrovia, and therefore is a significant distance from the center of town. While services are still limited, a number of airlines have expanded to serve Liberia in the last few years. Mostly recently Delta Air Lines added Monrovia as its seventh African destination in September, 2010.

Today, there is at least one international connection every day of the week from RIA. The most common route is between Robertsfield and Accra, Ghana, with four airlines operating multiple weekly flights. This competition has brought airfares down by nearly 50% in two years, and it is possible to purchase advance purchase roundtrip fares to or from Accra for around \$250 at times.

In the experience of the LPN network, the lowest coach fares between the United States and Liberia are between \$1,200 and \$1,400, with roundtrip fares of \$1,800 to \$2,200 being common. High-season fares can soar above \$3,000 for economy class. Discounted airfares are still rare, even for advance-purchase.

**NOTE:** Kotoka International Airport in Accra, Ghana is a larger global hub than Robertsfield. Accra is served non-stop daily by Delta from both New York-JFK and Atlanta, as well as from Washington Dulles by United Airlines, as well as daily flights by Lufthansa, KLM, British Airways and Virgin Atlantic. Cost-conscious travelers should consider purchasing an intercontinental itinerary via Europe or direct from the United States to Accra, and connecting to Monrovia via a separate carrier.

It is also important to note that Monrovia is the only city in Africa to have two international airports. Spriggs-Payne airfield, located in the Sinkor section of Monrovia, currently features scheduled services by Lome-based ASKY Airlines, a division of Ethiopian Airlines. Weekly non-stops include Banjul, Accra, and Abidjan, with connections to all major cities in West Africa.

Note that all airlines flying to Liberia have ticket offices in Monrovia, and changes and ticket purchases in Liberia generally must be made by visiting such offices. Brussels Airlines office at Randall and Ashmun Street offers a city check-in service, so travelers can drop their bags and get seat assignments in-town the day of their scheduled departure.

The following airlines fly to Liberia as of the time of writing. Generally, US-based LPN members now take the Delta Airlines flight from Atlanta when flying to Liberia for convenience and ease of travel, but large numbers continue to make use of Brussels Airlines for the flexibility of its multi-week, widebody flight from Brussels Airport. Brussels Airlines codeshares with alliance partners United/Continental and USAirways for transatlantic services to major US hubs.

Airlines	Services
	<p>Arik Air, a rapidly-expanding Nigerian carrier, connects Monrovia to Accra and Lagos, with a dense network within Nigeria, and long-range A340 services from Lagos to New York-JFK and London-Heathrow.</p>
	<p>Air France announced a twice a week service to Freetown and Monrovia. The flight will leave from Paris Charles de Gaulle. The 207-seat aircraft operated by Airbus 330-200 includes 40 in Business class, 20 in Premium Voyageur and 147 in Voyageur (Economy) class.</p>
	<p>Brussels Airlines flies to and from Brussels four times a week with A330 jets. From this hub, the airline serves dozens of European cities, and connects with partner airlines on transatlantic services to New York, Chicago, and Washington, Philadelphia, Newark, etc.</p>
	<p>Royal Air Maroc flies to Freetown and Casablanca, where it has connecting service to New York-JFK and Montreal, as well as several dozen European connections.</p>
	<p>Kenya Airways has several weekly flights from Monrovia to Accra, with continuing service to Nairobi. From Nairobi, Kenya has a global network, including London, Johannesburg, Hong Kong, Bangkok, Mumbai, and Dubai, so is the preferred option for trips to China or elsewhere in Asia.</p>
	<p>Air Nigeria, formerly Virgin Nigeria and Nigerian Eagle, flies new Embraer jets between RIA and Accra, with onward connections to Lagos, and elsewhere in Nigeria.</p>

	<p>Delta flies once-weekly from Atlanta to Monrovia via Accra on Saturdays (as of time of writing, passengers are not able to fly Delta from Accra to Monrovia only).</p>
	<p>ASKY Airlines, part of the Ethiopian Airlines network, currently serves the Spriggs-Payne Airfield in Sinkor, Monrovia, connecting once a week each to Accra, Abidjan, and Banjul, with regional connections to Lomé, Cotonou, Ouagadougou, Douala, and a number of cities in Nigeria, and also connects to the global network of Ethiopian Airlines to Addis Ababa and across Africa, the Middle East, and Asia.</p>

## PACKING LIST

### Clothing

Pack lightweight clothing - linen, cotton and nylon are the best fabric options. If it doesn't breathe, leave it at home! Prior to departure, visit stores like Old Navy, Target, or American Apparel to stock up on basic cotton tanks, tees, and frocks. Bring a supply of bandanas or hankkerchiefs to address perspiration. Pants with many pockets are recommended as visitors may be carrying multiple wads of differing currencies, which may need to be accessed easily, such as in a market setting.

Raingear is essential for most months of the year, especially from May to October. A lightweight, breathable rain jacket that is both completely waterproof but releases heat is ideal. Quality umbrellas, raincoats, and boots are not available in Liberia; consider packing these. Otherwise, don't forget your bathing suit and a beach towell!

**IMPORTANT:** Please note that Government buildings have rules regarding clothing especially for women. Packing a business outfit (suit, ties, scarves, dress shoes, etc) is strongly advised. It is important that women be conservative when making official visits to ministries. When packing, please remember that all laundry is by hand. Slippers and Sandals are the best option for footwear.

### Recommended Business Wear

Liberians are generally careful and conservative in their personal appearance, and formal attire is in many settings more common than in the United States or Europe. Travelers with meetings with government officials or within Ministries, or who are invited to a formal evening affair or daytime function, should prepare to dress in formal business attire. Informal attire is strongly frowned upon for initial meetings, although the dress code may relax once business or governmental relationships are more established.

**Women:** Skirts, Business Suits (Black, Blue, or Gray), Dress Shoes, Dress Shirts or Blouses. Note that some government ministries mandate that women wear skirts.

**Men:** A lightweight summer business suits (Black, Blue, or Gray) is ideal. Lightweight cotton dress shirts, and leather dress shoes are essential.

### **Shoes**

Outside of business, comfortable sandals (like Reef or Rainbow) are a must. Most Liberians wear flip-flops (“slippers”) or athletic shoes (sneakers) in daily activity, and these are recommended both for Monrovia’s sandy streets as well as farther afield. Also bring a pair of dressy (but still comfy!) sandals or shoes for evenings.

### **Toiletries/First Aid/Etc**

Many basic personal products such as toothpaste, shampoo, and soap are available in Monrovia’s markets and supermarkets, but many common household items are not, and prices of imported goods are more expensive in Liberia.

It is a good idea to buy unscented products. Make sure you are well-stocked on mosquito repellent of all kinds: sprays, wipes, SPF lotion. Repellents like OFF will keep the bugs away. In terms of shampoo, conditioner, face/body wash, and lotions, stock up on products from home - particularly if you are loyal to certain brands - because they are not too easy to find and incredibly expensive in Liberia. For females, bring any feminine products you need, as well as makeup.

- Basic toiletries: shampoo/conditioner, liquid body soap, deodorant, toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, contact lens solution (if necessary)
- Hand sanitizer and/or antibacterial hand wipes
- Travel roll of toilet paper and/or Kleenex facial tissues (These are not always provided in public bathroom facilities)
- Insect repellent, with high level of DEET. Available at speciality camping stores (eg REI).
- Sunglasses (with UV protection) and Sunscreen (at least SPF 30)
- A small first aid kit with the following key items: Band-Aids and anti-bacterial cream like Neosporin, Imodium AD, Pepto Bismol, Tylenol or other pain reliever/fever reducer, Benadryl and/or any allergy medicine you might need.
- Anti-malarial medications.
- Emergen-C, Airborne, or similar product (A great way to get an extra boost of Vitamins and reduce the likelihood of getting sick!)
- Travel alarm clock.
- Batteries for any and all needs. Batteries are sold in Liberia but can be of questionable quality.
- Converter and adaptor \*Note: Electricity is not always available, so it is somewhat inadvisable to bring appliances such as hairdryers or electric razors that require current. Personal electronics and cameras are fine.
- Sheets and Towels are suggested (to be sure of cleanliness and comfort)

## ARRIVAL PROCEDURES

The arrival procedures for all passengers are:

1. Before landing, complete a Landing Card aboard the plane
2. After landing, proceed to Immigration with your Passport and the completed Landing Card. There are separate queues for Liberians and foreigners.
3. After Immigration, proceed to Baggage Claim to retrieve your baggage(s)
4. After retrieving your baggage(s), present your Baggage Sticker(s) to the Passenger Service Agent(s)
5. After clearance by the Passenger Service Agent, proceed to Customs & Excise
6. After clearance by Customs & Excise, exit the terminal

## UPON ARRIVAL

### Getting from Roberts International

Roberts International Airport (RIA) is located 40 miles east of Monrovia. Payment in US dollars between \$20.00 and \$40.00 is expected for the 90 minute taxi ride into town. Negotiate the fare in advance of entering the car and beginning the journey. Arranging a pickup in advance is highly recommended, particularly at night. If you are staying in a hotel, ask you hotel to recommend a reliable driver.



### Directions from RIA to Monrovia

Exit the airport and approximately 3 quarters of a mile ahead turn left at the intersection Firestone Plantation onto Robertsfield Highway. Continue for approximately 26 miles and the Robertsfield Highway comes to an end where it intersects with Tubman Boulevard. At that intersection, turn left (south) to Monrovia or Right (North) to Paynesville and other destinations.

## WHAT TO EXPECT

### Money

- **Currency:** Liberia uses both the Liberian (LRD) and the US Dollar (USD). Payment at many supermarkets, and at most all hotels and restaurants, is normally conducted in US Dollars.
- The Liberian dollar fluctuates on a daily basis against the US Dollar, but has over the last two years generally settled in the range of 1USD = 70 LRD.
- All major cities in Liberia have abundant currency exchange services, both inside banks but also on the street. Street vendors often have a more favorable exchange rate, and foreigners and locals alike exchange money on a daily basis this way, but many vendors may not be able to convert more than US\$100 at a time. Many of the larger such traders conduct transactions involving the British Pound, Euro and CFA Franc.
- **Credit/Debit Cards:** Liberia continues to be almost exclusively a cash-only economy, and visitors should not expect to be able to use credit or debit cards for purchases. However, some larger hotels may accept payment with VISA and Mastercard, and both businesses and banks are working actively to expand credit card acceptance in the capital.
- **ATMS:** EcoBank has in the past year expanded its ATM network in Liberia to allow non-Ecobank customers to use VISA debit card at ATMS. Currently, there is a \$5.00 transaction fee and a maximum per-transaction limit of \$250.00.
- **Wire services.** Western Union and MoneyGram are widely available at major banks and stand-alone outposts in major cities throughout Liberia. This is an important outlet for currency access when in Liberia; visitors are recommended to prepare with a friend, family member or colleague to anticipate an emergency. Amounts of several thousand US Dollars can be transmitted instantly, but may only be received during banking hours. In LPN's experience, Western Union has a more economical fee schedule for wiring money from the United States to Liberia.

### People & Sociability

Liberians are friendly, talkative and sociable people, and often interact with foreigners with polite decorum. As stated previously, non-Africans are often an unusual curiosity, even in central Monrovia, but only more so farther afield. Do not be unduly alarmed when people, especially children, call out or approach. Please make sure to respond to all greetings, even if only with a smile. It is important to be avoid being considered "rude" - a major insult to Liberians, who are generally self-respecting. Perfunctory engagement will be appreciated and will engender comity.

Be prepared that there may be some requests for money, especially among the handful of beggars and cripples that commonly loiter outside major banks, hotels, and restaurants. Generally they are not dangerous and can usually be avoided. Most major establishments have amicable private security guards who can escort patrons to their vehicles.

Liberians tend to be animated, gregarious people, who speak with passion whether in business or social life, alone or in groups. Raised voices, gesticulating, and spirited discourse is quite normal, and it would be a mistake for a traveler to perceive a loud tone or a lengthy diatribe as particularly aggressive or argumentative.

The Liberian handshake is a hand shake followed by a finger snap. Liberians take pride in their local customs and will definitely appreciate the gesture, especially among males. Most Liberian interactions, from the casual to the business, will typically end with an exchange of business cards.

## Communications

- **Phone:** There are no fixed land lines in Liberia, and all telephone service is by mobile providers. Nonetheless, even first-time visitors can obtain and use a Liberian number readily upon arrival. The main cellular phone providers in Liberia are Cellcom, Lonestar, LiberCell and Comium. It is necessary to have a GSM phone, although it is easy to purchase models on the street or inside shops in major cities. It is desirable to have a model that can hold multiple SIM cards, as calling within provider networks is much cheaper than between networks. All providers sell SIM cards for US\$10. To load the account with minutes, purchase pay-as-you-go 'scratch cards' in \$1, \$5, and \$10 denominations from street vendors, at the airport, along the streets, or inside the telecom offices. The Country Code for Liberia is 231.
- **Internet:** Internet access is limited in Liberia, and where available it relies upon satellite connection, and is therefore painfully slow by global standards. Do not expect to be able to use high-bandwidth applications like Skype or any streaming video, or transmit or upload large files while in the country.
- Free access to the internet is available at some cafes and establishments like Boulevard Café, Ro-Zi's, and most hotel restaurants, although many such as the Royal Hotel and Mamba Point have begun charging diners for access.
- Longer-term visitors should consider the mobile internet products available from the telecom companies, especially Lonestar, Cellcom, and Comium.

## Electricity

Municipal electricity is not available in Liberia, except in some parts of Monrovia. Most establishments use generators. Liberia uses both 120V/60Hz USA & European plugs, with newer construction using European voltage.

## WHERE TO STAY IN MONROVIA

LPN recommends the follow hotels in greater Monrovia. It is highly advisable to book in advance, as quality hotel rooms are often in high demand in Monrovia. Rooms can generally be booked by telephone but can often be confirmed by email.

Hotel Name	Address/Location	Contact Info
Krystal Oceanview Hotel	Mamba Point, Monrovia, Liberia	Tel: +231-6-510-424
Cape Hotel	Mamba Point, Monrovia, Liberia	Tel: +231-77-006-633 or +231-6-832-700
Bella Casa	3rd Street Sinkor, Monrovia, Liberia	Hotel: 077692 272 Restaurant: 077 444 110

		www.bellacasalberia.com
Royal Hotel	Tubman Blvd, Sinkor, Monrovia, Liberia	Tel: +231-6-554-444, +231-5-654-444, +231-77-776-925 Email: royalhotelliberia@yahoo.com
Mamba Point Hotel	Mamba Point, Monrovia, Liberia	Tel: +231-6-544-544 Email: reservations@mambapointhotel.biz
Renaissance Hotel	14th Street, Sinkor, Monrovia, Liberia	Tel: +231-6-552-200 Email: mickey06urban@yahoo.com
RLJ Kendja Resort (Bob Johnson)	Robertsfield Hwy, Kendeja, Paynesville, Liberia	Tel: +231-6-657-222,
Golden Key Hotel	Robertsfield Highway at ELWA Junction, King Grey, Paynesville, Liberia	

## BANKING/MONEY IN LIBERIA

The banking industry is booming and it accounts for a major part of the private sector in Liberia. From Ecobank to LBDI, from Western Union to Money Gram to ATM services, Liberia has it all.

The exchange rate from US to Liberia dollar is 1USD = 70 LRD. Money can be exchanged via petit street traders or at any major banks.

Bank Name	Contact Info	Commentary
ECOBANK	Ashmun & Randall Streets 5 <sup>th</sup> Street, Sinkor Waterside P.O. Box 4825 1000 Monrovia 10 Liberia E-Mail: ecobanklr@ecobank.com Website: WWW.ECOBANK.COM Telephone: (231) 226428, 226978 Fax Number: (231) 77012290	Commercial Banking.  This is one of the only banks with external-network ATM service in Liberia. You can take your VISA bankcard and withdraw money.  Note that there is a \$5.00 fee and you can only withdraw up to \$250.00. However, think about it. Why not do this instead of having your family send you Western Union?

INTERNATIONAL BANK LIBERIA LIMITED (IB)	64 Broad Street Monrovia 1 <sup>st</sup> Street, Sinkor, Monrovia  Telephone: (231) 226505 customercare@ibliberia.com www.ibliberia.com	Commercial Banking & Money Gram Transfer Services
THE LIBERIAN BANK FOR DEVELOPMENT & INVESTMENT (LBDI)	Ashmun & Randall Streets, Monrovia Tubman Boulevard at 9 <sup>th</sup> Street, Sinkr E-Mail: lbdi.mails@lbdi.net Website: www.lbdi.net Fax Number (231)226359/226939/226160/14432762777 Telephone No: (231)7140/226366	Checking & Savings Account, Letters of Credit, etc
UBA Bank	Broad and Nelson Streets	
Guaranty Bank	Benson and Randall Streets	
First International Bank (FiBank)	Broad Street at Johnson Street	
Access Bank	Rock Building, Crown Hill, Monrovia	

## WHAT TO DO IN LIBERIA/MONROVIA

Monrovia offers many leisure options for the visitor. The city is blessed with a gorgeous natural setting on a long peninsula, with wide mangrove marshes of the river on one side, and wide, orange-sand beaches on the other, culminating in the craggy basalt cliffs of Mamba Point. Travelers to Liberia should not miss a stroll on one of the city’s many beaches, especially the tended areas such as Bernard’s beach Sinkor or ELWA beach in ELWA junction. Farther out of town are dozens of beach access spots, such as Thinker’s Village or the deserted stretches of Marshall.

Swimming should only be undertaken with the utmost caution, due to Liberia’s legendary undertow. This powerful ocean force also provides Liberia with its other watersport fame: Surfing. Liberia has some of the finest surfing waves in the world, and surfing can be undertaken at beaches around town, particularly around the Kendeja resort.

Visiting the National Hall is one of the other things to do in Monrovia in Liberia. The National Hall is that place in Liberia where the presidents were sworn in. The National Hall houses several copies of the Declaration of Independence in Liberia. The National Hall is the burial ground of long time president William Tubman.

Visiting the Firestone Rubber Plantation fields is also one of the major things to do in Monrovia. This was the largest rubber plantation in the world at one point of time. The natural beauty of this place is awesome and that is why tourists come to this plot in large numbers.

For some other things to do in Monrovia, go to the other tourist attractions of Monrovia like the Liberian National Museum, the now ruined Masonic Temple, the Waterside Market and the city zoo. Also, you can go to the biggest sports stadium in Africa. This sports stadium seats for 40,000 people.

Enjoying the nightlife in Monrovia is one of the things to do in Monrovia. A travel to Monrovia is incomplete without nightlife in Monrovia. Nightlife in Monrovia is extensive with a whole lot of nightclubs, discos and bars. The streets of Monrovia remain crowded till the early hours of the next day. Also, the bars, discos and nightclubs remain open till late hours of the night.

## Eat & Drink

Eating Liberian food can be enjoyable and easy on the pocketbook. Liberian meals like palm butter, cassava leaf, potato greens, chock rice, and jollof's rice will barely leave a dint in your budget (US\$8-10 with a soda). Portions are usually enormous. Another popular local dish is fufu (fermented dough made from the casava plant) and soup (the most common are goat soup and pepper soup).

Fried or roasted fish, especially snapper, can be delicious. And for those who like to eat on the go, fruit and snacks can be bought from street vendors throughout Monrovia. Peanuts, fried plantain chips, roasted ears of corn or plantains, bananas, mangos, and other fruits can be had for LD\$5-20 (or US\$0.10-0.30). Especially delicious are the various breads sold freshly baked in the morning. Some bread resemble banana bread, other breads are more like corn bread. All are delicious although somewhat oily.

Club beer and Soda (soft drink) are the staple drinks, served everywhere. Want to try something local, ask for some Palm Wine or some Cane Juice (be prepared!!!).

**Helpful Hint:** *Tipping* is customary in Liberia. As a matter of fact, with a country where most survive on less than a dollar a day, tipping is almost required. The average tipping amount is 20-30% and you probably want to give the **TIP TO YOUR SERVER** instead of placing it in the checkbook.

### Some places to eat

Restaurant	Location/Contact Info	Commentary
Ro-zi's - N'yla Café	Bestman road, Airfield, Liberia Reservation: +231 077-51 6500 <a href="http://www.ro-zi.com">http://www.ro-zi.com</a>	Ro-zi's cuisine is a blend of all American favorites and creative Liberian fusion. Excellent menu, charming and quaint New York City feel meets West Africa" decor.
Boulevard Café (Jamal's Pizzeria)	14th Street and Tubman, Sinkor Phone: 06969969, 05677776	Very reasonably priced, pizza and Mediterranean cuisine. Popular for lunch and its bar area is happening

	<a href="http://www.facebook.com/pages/Monrovia-Liberia/Boulevard-Cafe/110384215775">http://www.facebook.com/pages/Monrovia-Liberia/Boulevard-Cafe/110384215775</a>	at night. Sinkor’s de-facto internet café, with fast, free Wifi.
The Living Room (Royal Hotel Sushi Restaurant).	Between 14th and 15th Streets in Sinkor on Tubman Boulevard.	Perhaps Liberia’s most stylish restaurant, famous for its Salmon Salad. The Royal Hotel also has a large Western/Lebanese restaurant in the back of the compound. Try the chicken burger.
P.A.’s Rib House	Near Spriggs-Payne Airfield, (231) 077-766-555, (231) 06-899-998, (231) 06-599-322 <a href="http://www.pasribhouse.com/">http://www.pasribhouse.com/</a>	Liberia’s finest steaks and burgers, with quality American-style barbeque ribs. Large function areas and free Wi-fi.
Great Wall	Tubman Boulevard, Sinkor	Large menu of standard Chiense food. Hot pot (shabu shabu) available in the front room. Back room available for karaoke parties.
Garden Restaurant	Tubman Boulevard near SD Cooper Road and SKD Boulevard Junctions, Congo Town.	Considered by many to be Monrovia’s best Chinese food.
Tides	Waterside (between Glamour and the garage) <a href="http://www.facebook.com/pages/Tides/109091902471108">www.facebook.com/pages/Tides/109091902471108</a> .	Excellent location overlooking the water, good cheap food, huge range of cocktails.
Taaj Indian Restaurant	5th St, Sinkor, Monrovia, Liberia Tel: 07 777 6666	Great Indian Food, in a relaxing atmosphere.

## Play & Chill

Some great clubs and lounges to check out while in Liberia

Club/Lounge	Location/Contact Info	Commentary
Deja Vu	Airfield Shortcut Rd, Sinkor +231 5555000	One of the hottest clubs in Monrovia these days. Great on Thursday nights and over the weekends.  Expect to see a great variety of

		locals and expats jamming to some Afro beats.
Club 69	Warren St +231 77444444 <a href="http://www.club69liberia.com">www.club69liberia.com</a>	Club 69, even though renamed, is still dishing out some great music.
Terminal One	Tubman Blvd, Old Road Junction	Still finding its voice but Terminal One is an eclectic club with a great atmosphere.
Palm Spring Resort (Casino)	Congotown, +231 5100200 <a href="http://www.palmspringliberia.com">www.palmspringliberia.com</a>	Lovely casino. Many will simply tell you that they are going to “Casino”.

## Shop

Shopping in Monrovia can be fun and exciting. Here are some items you may want to pick up while in Liberia. As stated above, there are some things or brands you will not find in Liberia and the same holds true that some items you find in Liberia cannot be found in your local US stores, like raw Shea butter, so stack up....besides, you will be supporting the local economy.

- Art: paintings, sculptures.
- Wood carvings: masks, wall hangings, and cool things like elephant bookends, sling shots, huge salad tongs, or animal ash trays.
- Kente and Lapa cloth: Single strips or they make great scarves when sewn together.
- Clothing: Local seamstresses or tailor offer custom African garment for all of your clothing needs. It is best to bring in a sketch or photo of what you want them to create, or you can bring an existing article of clothing to use as a model for the style.
- Shea and cocoa butter: very inexpensive at the markets.
- Jewelry: you can buy anything from amber beaded necklaces to inexpensive strands of seed beads “in town” near Broad St.
- Musical instruments: small drums, guitars, and many other musical instruments are handmade and usually inexpensive for how beautiful they are.
- Woven baskets.
- Leather goods: you can get bags and wallets from vendors or allow them to customize what you need
- Fashion: support local Liberian designers.
- CDs and tapes: all remixes of great Africa music
- DVDs: Great selection of African movies

## Give Back

While in Liberia, contact one of these local NGOs and support the work they are doing. Many simply need General Technical Assistance like proposal writing, reviewing of business or strategic plans, or volunteering at some level. Contact ONE Liberia for further information - [volunteer@oneliberia.com](mailto:volunteer@oneliberia.com) on volunteering while in Liberia.

The list below is by no means exhaustive. Certainly contact the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs for more information on other local NGOs.

It's always great to give back while in Liberia.

Name of NGO	Acronym	Point of Contact	Contact #	Volunteer Needs/Comments
Rights & Rice	RRF	James Yarsiah		Technical Assistance with Annual Report and IT assistance (get rid of bugs/viruses)
West Point Women for Health and Development	WPW	Nelly Cooper		Organize Project Documents and basic computer skills.
Touching Humanity In Need of Kindness	THINK	Rosana	6558492	Plan activities for the girls
Liberia NGOs Network	LINNK	Atty. John Y .Jukon	6524189	Technical Assistance with Financial Management and project design
Women of Liberia Peace Network	WOLPNET	Una Thompson	6538933	General Technical Assistance
ECOWAS Women in Liberia	EWIL	Roselyn P.G. Parker	6565828	Technical Assistance with proposal writing, office Management
Action for Genuine Democratic Alternative	AGENDA	G.Jasper Cummeh	6542933	Technical Assistance with Policy, Research & Advocacy
Association of Female Lawyers	AFELL	Cllr.Zeor Bernard	6684481	Technical Assistance with Proposal writing
Angie Brooks International Center	ABIC	Cllr. Yvette Chesson -Wureh	6514451	Technical Assistance with report writing, women issues, * volunteer must be willing to do field work & late hrs
Commission for the Blind	CFB	Mr. B. Cooper	6510354	Technical Assistance with proposal writing
Equip Liberia	EQUIP	Roland T. Suomie	6532291	Technical Assistance with M&E, background in health& protection, water & Sanitation, psychosocial Counseling
Center for Justice and peace Studies	CJPS	Joseph D. Howard	6526151	Technical Assistance with the background in Peace building & psychosocial counseling
Crusaders for	CFP	Amb. Judi Endee	6512389	General Technical Assistance

Peace				
Obaa’s Girls Education Outreach	OGEO	Miatta Fahnbulleh	6461802	General Technical Assistance. Preferably a female
Sirleaf Market Women’s Fund	SMWF	Sekou Konneh	6519779	Technical Assistance with program skills & Financial Backgrounds
Tiyaten Health Inc	TH	Christina Becky	880745167	Technical Assistance with general office secretarial skills
Minor River Women’s peace network Liberia	MARWOPENET	Amelia Ward	6511554	General Technical Assistance
Medical Emergency & Relief Cooperatives	MERCI	Dr. Tete Brooks	6511590	General Technical Assistance
West Africa network for peace building	WANEP	Lindora Howard-Diawara	6519187	General Technical Assistance
New African Research & Development Agency	NARDA	Lancedell Matthews	77020338	General Technical Assistance
Development Education Network-Liberia	DEN-L	Zubahyea S.Joejoe	6558696	General Technical Assistance
Center for Transparency and Accountability	CENTAL	Thomas Doe Nah	6511142	General Technical Assistance
Family Planning Association of Liberia	FPAL	Miatta K. Kiawu	-	General Technical Assistance
Macadella Cooper Foundation	MCF	Tom Jeffery	-	General Technical Assistance
Muslim Congress of Liberia	MCL	Haddin Sheriff	6678956	General Technical Assistance
Youth in Action International	YAI	Kimmie Weeks	6811222	General Technical Assistance

**Enjoy Liberia**