



OPTIMA JURIS

AFRICA

As a developing continent Africa can be a tricky region to conduct depositions. It has seen drastic changes and areas that were once peaceful and prosperous are now in civil turmoil. With this in mind it's important to know exactly what it takes to conduct a deposition in Africa.

Our Regional Guides are the perfect accompaniment for setting up a deposition abroad. In it you'll find tips and tricks, resources, recommendations, and visa information that will help you feel confident and secure with your international deposition. Enjoy!

Ian Hardy

The Lowdown on Depositions in Africa

by Ian Hardy

Depending on your deposition country, Africa can be among the most challenging destinations for deposition work. The situation varies widely from country to country, and can shift over time; so please contact us for country-specific details. But don't worry: depositions do happen here and we organize a great many of them every year. Here is the Optima Juris lowdown you won't find anywhere else, based on our extensive experience in Africa:

Relative Scarcity of Reporters and Videographers

Currently, the level of U.S. deposition activity in Africa is modest. We expect this to change in the coming years as Africa's economy grows and trade with American firms expands, resulting in growing levels of U.S. litigation. At present, the relatively low demand means that there are no U.S. certified court reporters or legal videographers based in Africa (if you happen to be a

freelance U.S. reporter or videographer currently in Africa, please let us know – we'd love to get in touch with you).

Official court reporters in nominally English-speaking countries like South Africa or Kenya are typically employed full time with the local courts and are barred from performing freelance work. Even if they could work freelance, official reporters in Africa would not have the experience nor the certifications necessary for conducting U.S.-style depositions. Occasionally, international delegations such as the United Nations bring in their reporters for special trials, but those professionals do not usually stay in the region long afterwards due to the relative paucity of work.

Our Recommendations

We typically recommend that our clients fly court reporters and videographers in from Europe or the Middle East. We have excellent professionals with experience working in Africa – if you're going to bring people in from abroad, make sure they've worked in Africa before. Reporters and

videographers with strong experience traveling and working in the developing world will be a huge advantage for your deposition.

Other Resources

Other resources, such as videoconferencing facilities, conference facilities, and deposition interpreters, do exist in Africa and can be sourced locally. Quality and availability varies widely from country to country. In Africa, where highly trained people and world-class resources are relatively scarce, it's not unusual to pay a premium for them. In general, you can expect to pay more in Africa than you would for comparable services or facilities in the U.S.

Tips and Tricks

The easiest countries for depositions in Africa tend to be those with the most advanced economies: South Africa is a big favorite, due to its highly developed infrastructure and availability of world class English-language services. In the north, Morocco, Tunisia, and Egypt also boast advanced infrastructures and a friendly attitude



over-emphasize the importance of paying close attention to the security situation, which can change rapidly in many countries. The Côte d'Ivoire, for example, was considered a wealthy and stable destination until just a few years ago, when a violent civil war broke out which forced many foreigners to flee. If you research the security situation and plan carefully ahead, there's really no need to fear: Africa is a wonderful destination, with all the resources you need to conduct your deposition successfully.

Visas and Formalities

Many African countries require visas – do your homework and make sure you provide enough time (ideally a month) in advance to get all the paperwork done and visas processed. Get business visas, with signed invitations from your local witness or client's company, whenever possible. Letters of invitation from political figures or large companies can be helpful in a jam. Sometimes those same individuals or organizations can send delegations to the airport to assist you through customs – take advantage of that kind of help whenever possible. When arriving at the airport, try to minimize the visibility and size of your baggage in order to avoid scrutiny from customs officials. Videographers should bring an ATA carnet with them in order to keep from getting gouged for customs duties for their gear. If that's not

possible, eliminate the unnecessary items and try to make your kit look as "touristy" and non-professional as possible. The general rule of thumb is to travel light and keep a pleasant and smiling attitude with airport officials. Remember: they're in charge, and like most government employees, the best way to get results from officials is to show them respect and to keep things friendly and non-confrontational.

Lodging and Transport

Always stay at the best, business-class hotels available in your deposition city. Use the hotel car service to pick you up and drop you off at the airport – this will avoid having to run the sometimes risky gamut of taking street taxis. Your hotel driver should be waiting for you in the airport holding a placard with your name on it. As an added security precaution, you can ask the hotel to be sure to indicate your exact name on the placard, or to include a code word on it to ensure that your driver is the correct one. Try to avoid situations where a driver is holding a placard with just the hotel name, or just a business name, for example, as there have been instances of kidnappers using such ruses in Nigeria on unsuspecting visitors. If your client is a large company or organization, they may be able to send you their car and driver for use during your stay.

Keep a Friendly but Low Profile

The trick for conducting depositions successfully in developing regions such as Africa is to arrange for the best facilities possible, and to keep a friendly but relatively low profile. If possible, conduct the depositions within your hotel conference center to avoid having to move around (and confront traffic) too much. We encourage going out to explore on your free time, but when you do so it's best to stick to the better neighborhoods (your hotel concierge can advise you), to avoid going too far by foot, and to avoid establishing daily patterns which can be easily observed and noted by criminal elements. Don't draw attention to yourself – dress down and be confident but low-key with the people you meet. A great way to go out and explore is to do so accompanied by your local witness or African client – they'll know the best places to go and will be sensitive to local conditions for you.

Further Updates on Our Blog

For additional information, please subscribe to our blog, Global Deposition Experts, where we often publish region and country specific tips and tricks for conducting depositions abroad. We also encourage you to contact us for free and immediate assistance with arranging your deposition in Africa.

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