



VISITORS' GUIDE TO THE

Parliament of Sierra Leone

ADMISSION TO THE PARLIAMENT BUILDING:

Do you intend to experience a memorable tour of the Parliament of Sierra Leone? If this is your first visit to the Legislative Arm of Government, be assured that this Guide will help you get the most of your trip.

Sierra Leone's Parliament has a rich history, and you will discover several other aspects of interest when you get there. An officer from the Public Relations Office will walk you through the House of Parliament. But first, what does it take to access Parliament?

Section 73(1) of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone establishes Parliament and states that "there shall be a legislature of Sierra Leone which shall be known as Parliament, and shall consist of the President, the Speaker and Members of Parliament".

Admission to the House of Parliament is free. However, there are simple procedures to be followed as captured below:

- Apart from the President, Speaker, and Members of Parliament, other persons are regarded or referred to as "strangers". Therefore the revised Standing Orders 79 (2006) of Parliament states "strangers shall be admitted to witness debates in the Chamber and Committee sittings under such rules as Mr. Speaker may make from time to time for that purpose, provided that where it is necessary the deliberations be held "in camera" Mr. Speaker or the Chairman shall put forthwith the question "that strangers do withdraw" without permitting any debate or amendment. Notwithstanding anything in this order, Mr. Speaker or the Chairman may, whenever he thinks fit, order the withdrawal of strangers from any part of the House."

- One of the pre-requisites of your visit to Parliament is to ensure that you are decently dressed, and put your phones off or in silence during the course of parliamentary proceedings. You sit at the **Gallery** which is reserved for members of the public to observe the proceedings in Parliament without recourse to any action that may disrupt the business of the House. Therefore you are to be seen and not heard; otherwise the Speaker may direct the Sergeant-at-Arms to maintain decorum at the public galleries.

Please come along with a recognized identification such as National Identity Card, Voter's Identity Card, or Passport and present it at the Police Post/Reception Desk. The Police/Receptionist will issue to you a visitor's card before you can gain access to the building.

- For the purpose of group visits, a written request should be sent to the office of the Clerk of Parliament prior to your visit, stating your intention, date, time, and number of intended visitors to the House.
- With due regard to the calendar of events taking place in the House, the Public Relations Office, and your group leader will agree on the appropriate date and time for your visit as will be stated in the response to your request.

EN ROUTE TO HOUSE OF PARLIAMENT

There are two main routes to Parliament. The House can be reached from Model Junction at Circular Road, via SALWACO, Rokel Secondary School, 50/50 office, Jesus is Lord Ministry along the driveway to the Parliament of Sierra Leone.

The other route is to travel via the State Avenue at Tower Hill where State House is located, Ministry of Defence, Civil Service Training College, Vice President's Office, National Electoral Commission, Political Parties Registration Commission, National Public Procurement Authority, Sierra Leone State Lottery, Audit Service Commission, Office of National Security, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Sierra Leone Investment, Export and Promotion Agency, and finally your destination-House of Parliament strategically located on the crest of Tower Hill overseeing Freetown, Sierra Leone's Capital. The panoramic views below represent the House and the routes to Parliament.



The Chamber/Well of Parliament

WINGS IN THE BUILDING

The Parliament Building, a monumental structure, was built by the Israelis. Its Chamber was opened by His Royal Highness, the Duke of Kent on the 26th April 1961, the eve of Sierra Leone's Independence. It is divided into four wings:

The West Wing: This wing houses the Chamber of Parliament, Members' Lounge, Committee Rooms, and some political offices such as for the Minority Leader and Whips.

The South Wing: The significance of this area cannot be over-emphasized as it houses the offices of the Speaker and Deputy Speaker, Majority Leader, Clerk and Deputy Clerk of Parliament, advocacy resource centre and Westminster Foundation for Democracy office and at the back of the main building is the newly constructed Administrative Building done by the Chinese.

The North Wing: This wing houses the State Hall of Parliament, Pigeonholes, Library, and Canteen.

The East Wing: This is the main entrance to the House of Parliament.

INSIDE THE CHAMBER

The **Chamber** is the most pertinent room in the House of Parliament. It is where the Speaker and Members of Parliament meet to transact the business of the House during the **plenary**. Note that the two corridors adjacent to the **Chamber** are known as division lobbies.

The Speaker's Chair is black in colour and exclusively reserved for the Speaker who presides over sittings in the House. At the back of the Speaker's chair is a seat reserved for the President (who does not sit as a regular Parliamentarian, but occupies it to address the House once a year), beneath the **Coat-of-Arms**, is the **President's photograph**, with the **National Flag** on both sides of the **Speaker's chair**.

The **Governing Party** sits on the Speaker's Right, whilst the **Opposition Party** sits on his Left.

Also note that Parliament is composed of **132 Ordinary Members of Parliament** directly elected, and **14 Paramount Chiefs** indirectly elected to represent the 14-Districts in the country.

The Mace: This is an ornamental staff crafted in brass, and symbolizes the power and authority of Parliament. It is laid at the centre of the table of Parliament. Following its history in medieval times, particularly the history and tradition of the British Parliament, the mace was used as a first level weapon of defence for the Speaker to carry out the orders of the Speaker and to maintain decorum within the precincts of Parliament.

During Committee of the Whole House, the Mace is covered and uncovered afterwards. When the Mace is covered, Mr. Speaker is addressed as Mr. Chairman.

Ceremonial **maces** in the United Kingdom began as lethal weapons of medieval knights, evolving into ceremonial objects carried by sergeants-at-arms, and now represent a monarch's authority in **parliaments** and councils, and at the State Opening of **Parliament** and **British** coronations.

The mace in Parliament is the symbol of authority and without it neither House can meet or pass laws.

The Gowns and Wigs: The Gowns and Wigs are worn traditionally by the Speaker, the Clerk of Parliament and the Table Clerks who record the proceedings of Parliament. They are set apart as distinctively neutral embodying formality and solemnity during the course of proceedings in the House. This tradition is gradually fading out, starting with the current Speaker of the British Parliament, John Bercow. The Speaker of Parliament is currently not using the regular wig, except on special occasions in Parliament such as State Opening of the Parliament of Sierra Leone; but he is using the gown.

The Public Gallery: In this section of the Chamber, members of the public are allowed to sit and observe the proceedings of Parliament. It is partitioned into **Lower and Upper Galleries** with audio-visual facilities.

OUTSIDE THE CHAMBER:

The Pigeonholes: the above picture represents the **pigeonholes** that are individually compartmentalized for proposed bills, letters and other documents which are to be delivered to Members of Parliament.

Members' Lounge: this is an important area in the West Wing of Parliament exclusively reserved for Members of Parliament with DSTV facilities to keep MPs abreast with events taking place around the world. The Speaker's entourage (Sergeant-at-arms bearing the Mace, Speaker, Clerk of Parliament, Principal Table Clerks) uses this route to enter and exit the Chamber. It has a wider space with over 100-seats where Members converge to discuss issues of importance.

Committee Room One: This is the largest Committee Room where important committee meetings are held before Reports are prepared and presented to the plenary for debate and approval. Notably among the committees are the Legislative and the Committee on Appointments and the Public Service.



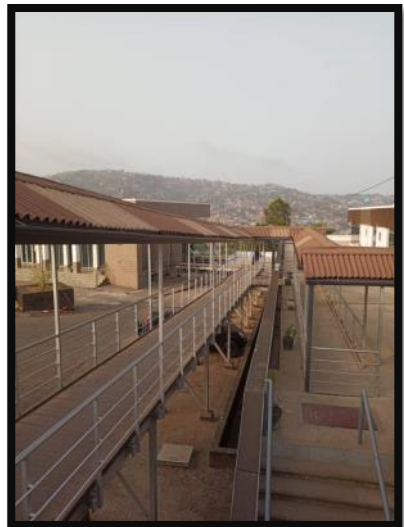
Water reservoir

The State Hall of Parliament: It is a vast area in the North Wing of Parliament which serves as the main reception to the House. If it rains during State Opening, the President may inspect the **Guard-of-Honour** at the State Hall, where also the mortal remains of entitled Sierra Leoneans are laid for public viewing before they are finally buried.

The Grave Site: the grave site can be found in the East Wing of Parliament where the First Prime Minister and the First Executive President of Sierra Leone, **Sir Milton A.S Margai**, and Dr. **Siaka P. Stevens** respectively were buried.



The Pigeonholes



Disabled ramp

INDIGENOUS SPEAKERS OF SIERRA LEONE PARLIAMENT

Name	Period
Sir Henry Lightfoot Boston	1957-1962
Sir Banja Tejan-Sie	1962-1967
Sir Emile Fashole Luke	1968-1973
Justice Percy Davies	1973-1977
Justice Singer Betts	1977-1986
William N. Stephen Conteh	1986-1992
Military Junta	1992-1996
Justice Sheku M.F Kutubu	1996-1997
Military Junta	May 1997-February 1998
Justice Sheku M.F Kutubu	1998-2000
Justice Edmund Cowan	2000-2007
Justice Abel Nathaniel Bankole Stronge	2007-2014
Hon. Sheku Badara Basiru Dumbuya	2014-2018
Hon. Dr. Abass Chernor Bundu	2018-Present

COMPOSITION OF THE FIFTH PARLIAMENT AS AT APRIL 2022

Political Parties	Number of Seats Won
Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP)	58
All People's Congress (APC)	58
Coalition for Change (C4C)	08
National Grand Coalition (NGC)	04
Independent MPs	03
Paramount Chiefs (14-Districts) (PCMP)	14
Vacant Seat	01
Total	146

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is Parliament?

Parliament is the supreme legislative organ of governance that comprises of directly and indirectly elected representatives who meet to debate, amend, and pass laws for the good governance of the country.

What is the life span of Parliament?

Section 85 of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone states that “Parliament shall stand dissolved at the expiration of a period of five years; commencing from the date of its first sitting after a general election”.

Does the President have a seat in Parliament?

The President is a Member of Parliament and therefore has an exclusively reserved seat in Parliament. This is entrenched and clearly spelt out in section 73 sub-section 1 of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone.

When is the President expected to address Parliament?

The President is by law expected to address Parliament once in a year with the State of the Nation’s Address at the beginning of a Parliamentary Session. In the event of any issue which warrants national importance, the President may request or be invited to address Parliament.

Who is the Speaker of Parliament?

The Speaker of Parliament is the third in line in the governance architecture of the Republic of Sierra Leone; Chairman of the Parliamentary Service Commission; and presides over the proceedings of Parliament with an impartial lens; and is elected by two thirds of votes cast by Members of Parliament in the first sitting of Parliament; except otherwise for a period of five years after the conduct of a general election.

What is a bill?

A bill is a proposed legislation that has been presented to Parliament either by Government, or by a Member of Parliament through a Private Member’s Bill.

Who is the Clerk of Parliament?

The Clerk of Parliament is the Administrative Head of the Parliamentary Service and Secretary to the Parliamentary Service Commission, which is chaired by the Speaker. He is the Accounting Officer of the House, and the principal adviser to Mr. Speaker and the Leadership on matters of procedure in Parliament.

What is a Statutory Instrument?

A statutory instrument is part of the laws of Sierra Leone subject to publication in the gazette, tabling in Parliament and maturing after a period of 21-Days; except otherwise annulled by two thirds of votes cast by MPs. A notice of motion could be given for it to be debated and decision reached by Parliament either for its annulment or passage into law.



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