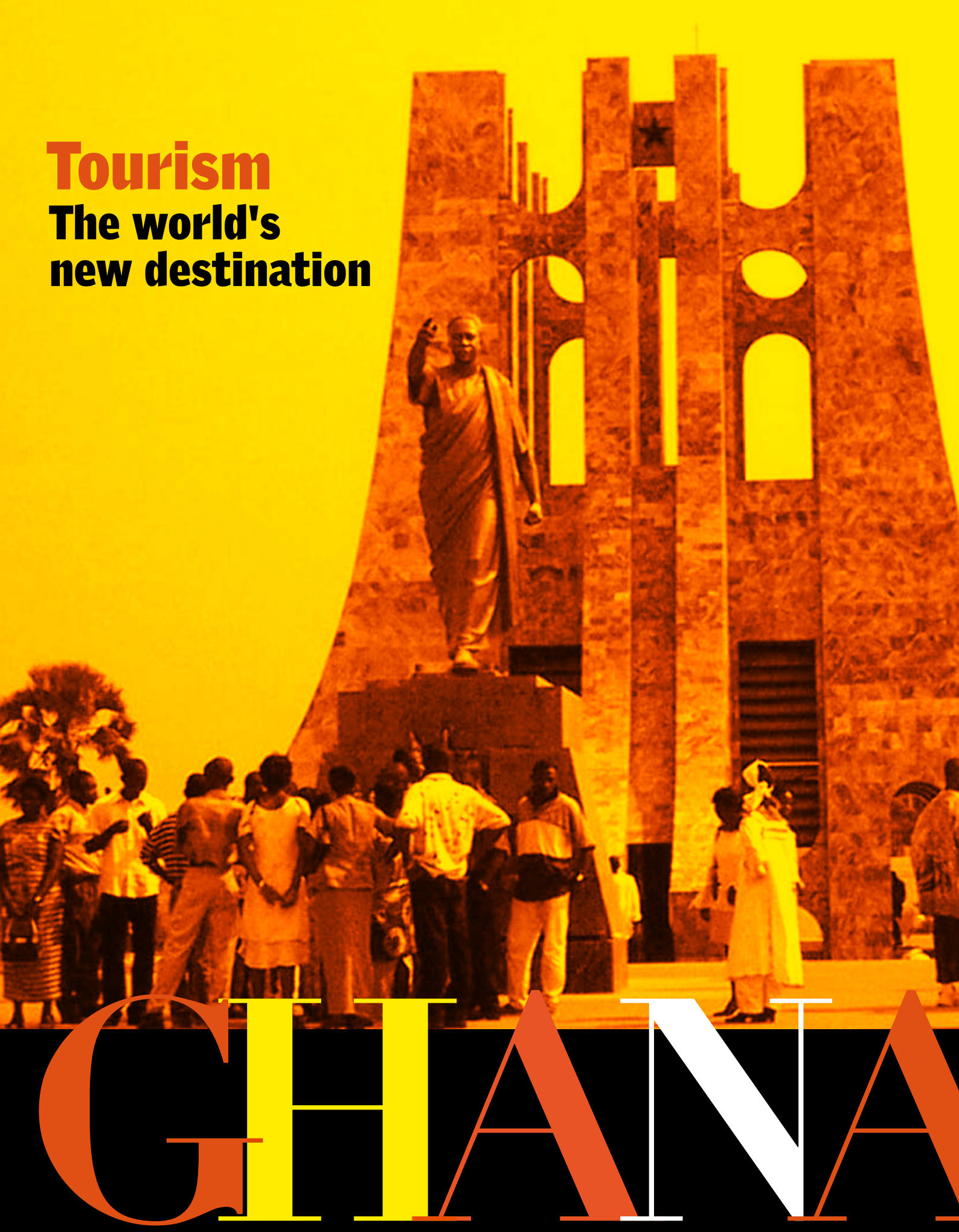


Tourism

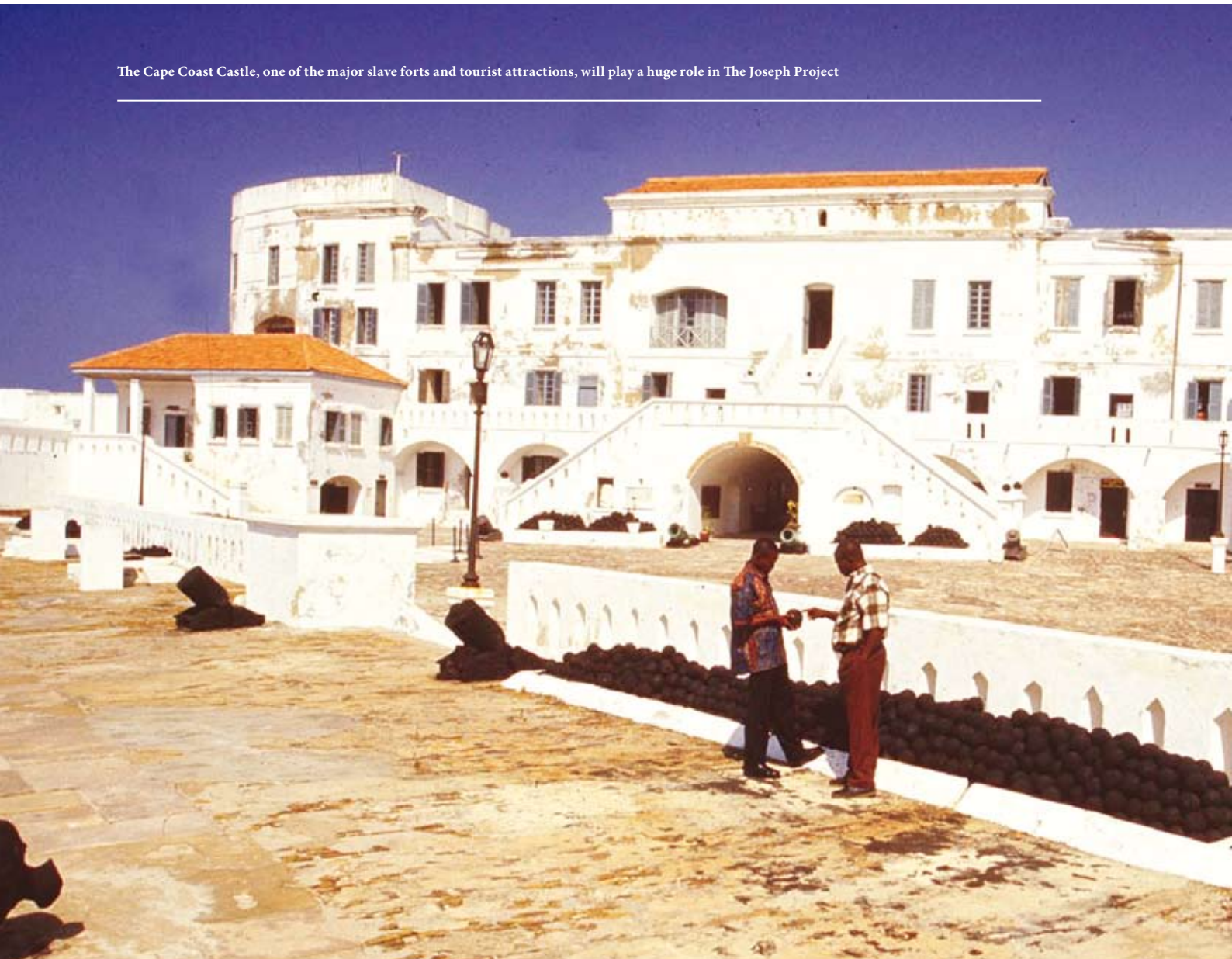
The world's new destination



GHANA

Joseph Project Calling all Diasporan Africans

The Cape Coast Castle, one of the major slave forts and tourist attractions, will play a huge role in The Joseph Project



Diasporan Africans who have yearned for years to return to the motherland but have not been able to do so, can now have no more excuses to stay back. An innovative programme launched by the Ghanaian government, called *The Joseph Project*, is all that they need to return home. *Prince Dennis Klintings reports from Accra.*



The Ministry of Tourism and Diasporan Relations (MOTDR) has drawn an elaborate plan to establish Ghana as the homeland for Africans in the Diaspora

via an innovative *Joseph Project*, which takes inspiration from the story of the Biblical Joseph who was sold into slavery in Egypt by his brethren but triumphed over all adversity.

Joseph became a noble man in the courts of the Pharaohs, forgave his brethren for selling him into slavery, and helped them in their times of troubles. His people, who later lived in captivity in Egypt, finally returned home in triumph as free men and women.

The Joseph Project was initiated by the Ghanaian government through the Ministry of Tourism and Diasporan Relations in collaboration with the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) and the United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organisation (UNESCO). The project is being jointly funded by the Ghana government, UNWTO and UNESCO.

Its benefits are enormous, as it seeks to turn a painful past into a World Heritage Property and a major tourism attraction. Statistics show that colonial castles and forts are one of the most sought after tourism attractions in the world. *The Joseph Project* is basically Ghana's lead role in re-enacting the sordid chattel slavery and its devastating effects on mankind, especially Africans at home and in the Diaspora.

Millions of Africans were taken from the motherland into slavery in the Americas, many of them going through the slave castles dotting the Ghanaian coast. Their descendants are part of what we now call the African Diaspora. *The Joseph Project* is, therefore, Ghana's invitation to Diasporan Africans to return to the land of their ancestors.

The project was formally launched on 15 February 2007 during a meeting of African tourism ministers in Accra. It is the lead activity in the Akwaaba, Anyemi programme of the Ghana Ministry of Tourism and Diasporan Relations (MOTDR) aimed at reestablishing the African nation as one for all Africans – whether living at home or in the Diaspora.

The project is built around the pan-Africanist foundations laid by Ghana's first president, Osagyefo Dr Kwame Nkrumah and his outreach to Africans in the Diaspora to return to the mother continent and help in its development.

In 1994, the government of President Jerry Rawlings took these ideas a step further when it launched "Emancipation Day" to be celebrated annually in commemoration of the day when African slaves in the Americas, the Caribbean and elsewhere got their freedom.

The Joseph Project aims to reconcile and unite the African peoples so that their positive spirit and strengths would be released in a focused manner to help rebuild Africa and the image of Africans worldwide.

Over the four centuries of slavery, African peoples everywhere were conditioned by their slave masters to be self loathing, to see everything African as negative, and to believe that Africa was a definition of failure and ugliness.

The time has come to put an end to the negative and embark on the positive. The Ghana government, therefore, intends to use the 50th anniversary of the country's independence, which coincides with the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade, to celebrate "African excellence".

Transatlantic slavery was quite harsh on Africa and its peoples, as the following lamentations of





slavery victims, put together by the International Slavery Museum, in Liverpool, show:

“They tore off my clothes, bound me with ropes, gave me a heavy load to carry, and led me to the town of Bonduku, and from there to the town of Kumasi ... from there through Asikuma and Ajumako in the land of the Fante. There they sold me to the Christians” – *Abu Bekr al Siddik, kidnapped 1804.*

“They will remember that we were sold but they won’t remember that we were strong. They will remember that we were bought, but not that we were brave” – *William Prescott, former slave, 1837.*

“I came close to my ancestors and the hard reality of slavery. It made me cry and tremble. I am Cuban, I am black, I am proud” – *a visitor to the Transatlantic Slavery Gallery in Liverpool, 1994.*

The Joseph Project, thus, recognises that while it is true that there are many Africans (at home and in the Diaspora) held down by the legacy of their chains, it is also true that there are many, like the Biblical Joseph, who have risen above their captivity and are shining examples of the best of the human spirit.

History is replete with the names of Africans who rose, not only above their chains, but also above those who sought to chain them. Ghana proved

The last bath: The Slave River at Assin Manso where slaves were allowed their last bath before reaching the coast

this beyond doubt when it became the first African colony south of the Sahara to gain its independence in 1957.

The Black Star of Africa drew inspiration from the fight for full emancipation of Africans worldwide, especially the Civil Rights struggle in America (1896-1970s). Ghana continues to fight for the full emancipation of all Africans in every corner of the world.

THE ACTIVITIES

There can be no African century without unity of the African people, which means healing of wounds and feelings. One of the major components of *The Joseph Project* is Healing and Rapprochement, an event to be mounted in June 2007. It will assemble traditional rulers from across West and Central Africa in a meeting with recognised leaders of Africans in the Diaspora. There will be expiation based on the recognition that great evil was done. And like the story of the Biblical Joseph, there will be forgiveness of one another.

A PILGRIMAGE

As every Muslim must visit Mecca at least once in their lifetime, *The Joseph*

Project wants to establish a pilgrimage to Ghana, one that every African in the Diaspora must undertake at least once in their lifetime. This pilgrimage will be the introduction of the Diasporan African to the homeland. Its route will include:

The slave forts: Ghana has over 40 slave lodges, forts and castles still in place dotted along its coastline, all the way from the east to the west. Their condition ranges from well-preserved, through deterioration, to mere remnants. These are hallowed memorials of an agonised past which must be preserved for posterity and to keep the memory of the period alive.

THE LAST BATH

Captives or their way to the coast for shipment to the Americas were allowed to have their last bath in what became known as the Slave River at Assin Manso, where the Ministry of Tourism and Diasporan Relations (MOTDR) is developing a Garden of Commemoration for meditation, an inter-faith prayer hall, and a wall of return on which pilgrims could etch their names to proclaim their return.

The Ghana government intends to convert one of the slave forts, James Fort in Accra, which was used to keep slaves and then prisoners in later years, into what is billed as an African Excellence Experience. A museum dedicated to Africans who have triumphed in all walks of life, and who continue to triumph, will be built here.

Says the MOTDR: “We will build a monument to the ‘True Josephs’ – the Josephs of today and new ones yet to be born. It is our intention to form a nominating committee of Africans both at home and in the Diaspora to select the men and women who qualify to become Josephs. These would then be enrobed and featured in the African Excellence Experience.”

According to the MOTDR, *The Joseph Project* is not just about visits from Diasporan Africans, it also seeks to woo Ghanaians in the Diaspora to invest in all sectors of Ghana’s economy. ■

Over one million tourists targeted this year

Any tourist worth his salt will have to visit Ghana this year or forget about his salt. 2007, being Ghana's golden jubilee year, has more in store for all visitors. *Prince Dennis Klintings reports.*

Tourism has proven over the years to be an emerging sector with great potential. The sector has manifested major growth as it keeps churning out impressive results in both visitor numbers and revenue.

For example, this year the sector expects to attract over one million tourists, generating over \$1.5bn in revenue and creating more than 9,000 direct and 300,000 indirect jobs, besides the multiplier effects on other sectors such as poverty alleviation and rural-urban migration.

However, despite these great potentials, there are still challenges such as product development to contend with. Strategic marketing is another problem.

This year is very important and strategic to the Ministry of Tourism and Diasporan Relations (MOTDR), the Ghana Tourist Board, the Ghana Tourist Development Company and other tourism industry stakeholders in several senses.

First, it is Ghana's golden jubilee year and also marks the end of the MOTDR's 2003-2007 Strategic Action Programme that seeks to attract over one million tourists into the country. Tourist arrivals increased by 8% between January and June 2006 over the same period in 2005.

Second, the Ministry will participate in five major international fairs and exhibitions this year to promote Ghana as a tourism destination.

Third, the Ministry will organise a week-long Paragliding Festival to boost both domestic and international tourism at Atibie in the South Kwahu District of the Eastern Region during the Easter celebration. The Kwahus have traditionally celebrated Easter as a big festival, and the Ministry is encouraging it to become an international festival to attract more tourists.

The Paragliding Festival at Atibie will attract foreign pilots and domestic tourists. It is expected that the festival will stimulate growth and wealth creation in the Kwahu South District.

The 2007 "Emancipation Day" and "Panafest" celebrations are also scheduled to start from 21 July to 5

August. These two festivals will attract thousands of visitors, the majority of whom will be Diasporan Africans. The MOTDR and its allied agencies will launch Phase Two of the Strategic Action Programme by the end of the year, which would span a period of eight years, covering 2007-2015. The Ministry will also complete the preparation of 20 cadastral plans for identified sites along the country's coastline, together with completed orthophoto maps, and hold a tourism investors' conference by December 2007.

The Ministry will also develop five more tourist reception facilities and five iconic museums. The projects will start this year and be completed next year.

The Hand and Paragliding festival at Atibie is fast becoming a major fixture on the tourist calendar. The maiden festival was organised in 2005, and was a huge success and helped to boost tourism in the area. The 2006 festival was even better. In view of the success of the last two years, the MOTDR is considering holding the festival more than once in a year.

The MOTDR has also identified new tourist attractions in the country, including the Presbyterian Cemetery at Osofoman, Mayera, the Samsam Cave and Sacred Groove at Achiotu, and the Guoko Sacred Groove at Pokuase, near Accra. The Ministry, in collaboration with the Ghana Investment Promotion Centre, has also developed a new comprehensive tourism policy which is to be submitted to cabinet for approval and implementation in 2007. ■

Fort Apollonia at Beyin in the Western Region is another interesting place to visit



Gates of return

Once upon a time, the gangways of the castles and forts leading to the slave ships appeared to be "the doors of no return", but thanks to the new spirit of reconciliation, the gates have now become "a new Akwaaba" (welcome) for the African Diaspora, the "Gates of Return" into their second home, their real home, in Africa.

The saga of European fort-building in Ghana spans three centuries from 1482 to 1787. Although several of these have fallen into a state of decay or have totally disappeared, many others have been conserved and adapted to new usages.

The castles and forts have now been elevated by UNESCO to the status of World Heritage Monuments, which must be preserved for posterity and for world cultural development

The original purpose of the castles and forts was to protect their occupants and their business enterprises from the attentions of hostile European rivals and "African intruders".

For their part, the local chiefs and elders regarded the fort and factories essentially as revenue paying units. The Europeans were obliged to pay annual ground rent and various "taxes" and "gifts" on a regular basis.

For instance, in 1650, the Swedish African Company paid 323,712 dambas in gold to the chief of Afutu as rent for the company's fort. In 1659-72, the Danish Company paid over two million dambas in gold to the Accra and Afutu chiefs for their three trading stations.

Also, it was expected that in return for the territory leased to the European companies to build the forts, their garrison and guns would come to the

aid of the African towns and villages whenever it was attacked by a hostile force.

Essentially, this was expected to be a partnership of positive symbiosis. Unfortunately, in several cases, individual selfish interests held sway and neither Europeans nor their African partners could be trusted to respect the terms of the land contracts.

In a dispatch to his superiors in the Netherlands, in 1717, the director-general of Elmina Castle, Engelgraaf Robbertsz, expressed dissatisfaction with the fickleness of the African partners in settlements at Commany, Sekondi, Cormantin, Butre, Mouri and Accra. The Dutch debated whether or not some non-viable forts should be closed down:

"The natives have founded special crows under each fort, depending on the profit they expect from either us or the English and each has its Caboceer who maintains with other natives in the interior and who brings these, to whom he feels most inclined, to the forts to sell their gold, slaves and tusks.

"If we were to abandon such forts, it would be regarded as a sign of impotence of the company and those under our protection would join the remaining nation. The English would also regard this as an opportunity to make themselves masters of the entire

coast and its trade because we have often seen that all our contracts and agreements with the Africans hold only as long as they see advantage in them.

"The Fantyn natives at Cormantyn would not allow us to go because of their annual claim of ships gifts. Long experience has taught us that the Negroes are by nature slavish and that they want nothing but to submit themselves to a mighty yoke and to serve only those who have the power to put loads on their backs and spurs into their sides."

The reasons for this situation in the early 18th century in which a policy of mutual mistrust seemed to be the order of the day appear to be that:

(1) Originally, in the 15th and 16th centuries, the African-European relationship was viewed as a partnership solely between the Portuguese and some particular coastal African states for mutual benefit through monopolistic trade.

(2) Over the decades, as a large number of rival official European companies (including the numerous "ten percenters") entered the coastal trade, the coast increasingly crystallised into a "frontier of opportunity". By the mid-17th century, the coastal society had assumed the character of a "middleman" society sandwiched between the Europeans on the coast and the hinterland African states such as Denkyira, Wasa, Aowin, Sefwi, Akyem, Adanse etc. The coastal "middleman" societies gradually developed, it seems, an insatiable taste for "consumerism".

(3) However, the coastal African societies also depended on the hinterland states, (in whose lands the bulk of the gold deposits were actually located), to provide the gold that facilitated exchange for imported European goods.

As more and more gold was exchanged for materials (that could be built into capital) and military hardware, as the hinterland states equipped themselves militarily and





Elmina Castle is the oldest and largest of all the slave castles and forts in Ghana

economically and also developed a taste for “consumerism”, there was bound to be a confrontation between the African hinterland and the coastal Africans and their European allies. This was the situation by the early 18th century when Asante emerged as a powerful hinterland state.

From well-documented European sources, there were three major classes of people among the coastal Akan:

The upper class was comprised of nobility (afahene, awuranom), politico-military stalwarts (ahenfo, abrafo), mercantile group (abirempon, batafo), priests-ideologists (asafo, obsosomfo, asumanfo).

This group engrossed public, political and socio-economic power. It

was of “noble birth” or had acquired a nobility status. It alone could buy, own and sell slaves, retainers and bonded commoners.

An Afahene had slaves, servants and retainers engaged in some 20 different services and functions at his beck and call. As Jean Barbot noted in the 17th century: “Slaves are one part of the Afahene’s riches and property, a commodity in this country.”

The authority of the Abirempon seemed limitless: they had the know-how of trade routes, caravans, commercial transactions, movements of goods, prices of goods, lingua franca; they mediated in disputes, drew up treaties and agreements etc. They had large mansions, very expensive

clothing, costly jewellery and enjoyed varieties of imported food. On the other hand, the commoners or lower class (Anihumanifo, Adofo, Adwumafo) had relatively few material possessions. Yet they served as the artisans, farmers, traders, military men, labourers, fishermen, shiploaders and canoe men.

Thirdly, there were the slaves, who were bonded to the upper class.

By the mid-17th century, the gold trade was giving way to the slave trade. The Dutch West-Indian Company director Rademacher wrote in February 1730 to Holland: “The Gold Coast has



now virtually changed into a pure Slave Coast. The great quantity of guns and gunpowder which the Europeans have brought there has given cause to terrible wars among the kings, princes and caboceers of those lands who made their prisoners of war slaves.

“These slaves are bought at steadily increasing prices. Consequently, there is now very little to get among the coast Negroes except in slaves. The English send every year hundreds of ships and the French, Danes and Portuguese send many too.”

During the 18th century peak

period of the Atlantic slave trade, the figures for Gold Coast export of slaves were:

1700-1740 – 230,000

1741-1770 – 220,000

1771-1800 – 227,000

Total – 677,000

It is estimated that the male-female ratio of the slave exports from West Africa was 51.3% for males and 48.7% for females. Moreover the slaves exported were largely those in the 16-30 age bracket. This means that the majority of the slaves exported were those who were in the reproductive age-

groups. Thus, the export slave trade had a depressing effect on birth rates during the period that it lasted.

In centuries and decades past, many scholars and non-scholars alike have tried to apportion blame for the atrocities and evils of the slave trade, one way or the other. It may be argued that the Europeans constituted the “senior partner” in the African-European partnership in terms of the apparent superiority they had in know-how, possession of material culture, goods and technology. Thus the attitudes and behaviour patterns of the



“senior partner” were emulated by the “junior partner”.

This issue came up when the law abolishing the slave trade was passed. No fewer than two important kings of West Africa protested against unilateral abolition.

In the 1720s, Whydah became Dahomey's major port of trade. Records show that by the 1750s, it alone was exporting more slaves than all the trading stations of the Gold Coast put together.

The King of Dahomey was reported to have remarked to Governor Abson of the African Company's fort at Whydah: “What hurts me most is that some of your people have maliciously represented us in books that never die, alleging that we sell our wives and children for the sake of a few kegs of brandy. No. We are shamefully belied.

“Tell posterity that we have been abused. We do indeed sell to the white men a part of our prisoners and we have a right so to do. Are not all prisoners at the disposal of their captors? And are we to blame if we send delinquents to a far country? I have been told you do the same!” (A. Dalzel: *The History of Dahomey*. London. 1793, p219).

In another dialogue with Joseph Dupuis, the British consul in Kumase, the Asantehene Osei Bonsu is reported to have stated:

“The white men do not understand my country or they would not say the slave trade was bad. But if they think it bad now, why did they think it good before? Is not your law an old law, the same as the Crammo (Moslem) law? Crammos say the law is good because the great God made the book, so they buy slaves.

“You must put down in my master's book all I shall say and then he will look to it now he is my friend. And when he sees what is true, he will surely restore that trade. I cannot make war to catch

(Opposite page) Ghanaian festivals, involving chiefs and queenmothers, are increasingly becoming a major pulling power for tourism. (Above) Tourists at the entrance of the slave dungeon of the Cape Coast Castle



slaves in the bush, like a thief. My ancestors never did so. But if I fight a king and kill him when he is insolent, then certainly I must have his gold and his slaves and the people are mine too. Do not the white kings act like this?” (J. Dupuis, *Journal of a Residence in Ashantee*, London 1824).

However negative the slave trade may have been, through its instrumentality the native African cultural traditions were transplanted to the New World. For instance, wherever slaves of Akan origin had the opportunity, they revived the Akan cultures of Ghana.

The maroons or “Bush Negroes” of Surinam, the maroons of Haiti, Jamaica, Santo Domingo, South Georgia and the Gulla Islands provide illustrations of transplanted Akan culture in the New World.

Among the Bush Negroes of Dutch and French Guiana, we find Fante-Asante Ghanaian culture in its purest form, in terms of language, art, folklore, masks, religion, instruction, social organisation, economic life and technology.

The naming custom using the list of “day-names” as applicable among the Akan of Ghana is exactly paralleled in the Guianas. They name their people “Conachi, Codio, Couamina, Couacou, Yao, Cofi, Couami”.

Among the Gullahs of Carolina, the 18th century African slaves were named by the Akan system. In Jamaica there is worship of Akan Onyame; the “ancestors” are venerated, and the Cormantin cult worship has been practised for generations.

Miss Nancy, the trickster featured in Jamaican folktales, is none other than the shrewd trickster Kweku Ananse of Akan folkloric narratives.

Many African-American forms of dance such as the “Charleston”, show influence from the Akwasidae festival of Asante. In St. Lucia, the Akan yam festival has been observed annually among the Negroes and, in Barbados, Asante funeral customs have been observed in recent times.

Such is the legacy of the African-European relationships established on the Gold Coast as these two peoples met at the castles, forts and lodges between 1482-1880.

If the castles and forts' gangways leading to the slave ships once appeared to be “the doors of no return”, thanks to the new spirit of reconciliation and the UNESCO institutionalisation of the Castle and Fort culture, now it has become a new “Akwaaba” (welcome) for the African Diaspora, the “Gates of Return” into their second home, their real home, in Africa! ■

Ghana: Ecotourism is becoming a major revenue earner

Neglected for a long period, ecotourism is now fashionable in Ghana. Tourists are encouraged to visit unique and interesting destinations, to have fulfilled cultural exchanges, and contribute to the conservation and sustainable development of the environment.

The Ghana Tourist Board (GTB), the regulator of the tourism industry in the country, has drawn up land use plans to guide investors to lands around 21 selected attraction spots as priorities for development.

According to Frank Kofifah, GTB's planning and business development manager, the land use plans are meant to ensure and control the judicious use of land around the attraction spots. The objective is to guide investors as to what projects are acceptable in order to avoid unplanned development around the attractions.

GTB also seeks to establish land banks around the attractions for investors. This is to avoid land litigation cases which often come about through double sales and ownership disputes. The GTB will establish ownership of these lands, pay adequate compensation to their owners, and acquire them for investors.

The GTB has been praised for its highly successful "Domestic Tourism Awareness Drive" which has hugely enhanced its Community-Based Ecotourism Projects (CBEPs).

Ecotourism or the conservation and preservation of natural resources,

is a new discovery on the tourism scene. Ecotourism seeks to create wealth in the indigenous communities and reduce poverty. It attempts to provide an alternative livelihood to the host communities, whilst conserving and preserving the natural and cultural resources. It combines the experiences of the natural environment with the culture and lifestyle of the host communities..

The GTB, in collaboration with foreign partners – the Nature Conservation Research Centre, SNV Netherlands Development Organisation, and Peace Corps-Ghana – has 15 ongoing CBEPs around the countryside. They are being funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

These selected attraction destinations boast of unique natural endowments against the backdrop of interesting cultures, in basically rural communities. They range from picturesque views of landscapes, lush vegetation and waterfalls, hikes through tropical rain forests, mountain-climbing, encounters with endangered species of monkeys, crocodiles, hippos and elephants, as well as interactions with friendly village folks.

To ensure the sustainability

of the CBEPs, there are Tourism Management Teams (TMTs), composed of representatives of the host communities, GTB, the host district assemblies and other interested groups at each destination. They have all been involved at every stage of the projects, from planning to marketing.

The TMTs have been trained to manage these projects at the ground level to ensure the continuity. Income raised from the attractions are used in developing the communities by providing basic amenities such as extension of electricity supply, boreholes, scholarships for brilliant schoolchildren, community centres, markets, libraries, classroom blocks and many others.



The tourism gurus: Martin Mireku of GTB, Mrs Bright Katriku, chief director, MOTDB, and Joe Baidoe Ansah, deputy minister, MOTDB



President Kufuor on the sky-bridge at the Kakum National Park in the Central Region. (Below) The Mistry Rock at Amate in the Eastern Region



Tourists are also encouraged to visit these unique and interesting destinations, to have fulfilled cultural exchanges, and contribute to the conservation and sustainable development of the environment.

Statistics available indicate that the CBEPs have already exceeded their targets. For example, instead of a target of 20,000 visitors per day, the CBEPs recorded 50,482, who contributed \$142,250. The GTB is the torch-bearer of the tourism industry in Ghana. It has achieved a lot in recent years, especially in the area of domestic tourism promotion and awareness.

In collaboration with the private sector, the GTB initiated an elaborate awareness programme aimed at sensitising groups such as schools, churches, workplaces and the general public, to take more interest in the many attractions in the countryside.

The programme has succeeded in encouraging many Ghanaians to travel around the countryside, know the country better, and appreciate the many unique tourist attractions and natural endowments in the country.

GTB's domestic tourism promotion seeks to inspire a sense of national identity, unity and cultural integration. It also seeks to provide a learning opportunity for visitors to know more about the country, and contribute to the local economy. So far, the GTB and its collaborating agencies have established about 164 tourism clubs with a membership of 10,161 spread across the 10 regions of the country. More of these clubs will be inaugurated in the next few months. The main activities of the tourism clubs are seminars, workshops, radio and discussion programmes on domestic tours meant to win more souls for tourism. ■



All you need is love



The minister of tourism and diasporan relations, Jake Obetsebi-Lamprey, at the Osu Children's Home after launching the National Chocolates Day

Lovers of Valentine's Day, which is a big hit in Ghana, have a new treat in store. The Ghana Ministry of Tourism and Diasporan Relations has just launched its alternative to Valentine's Day called National Chocolate Day. Sweet, isn't it?

In an attempt to make use of Ghana's rich cocoa, especially the health benefits of consuming cocoa products, the Ministry of Tourism and Diasporan Relations has instituted Ghana's own version of Valentine's Day, "National Chocolate Day" to be observed every year. The maiden event was launched in Accra on Valentine's Day, 14 February.

Surprisingly, the day was overwhelmingly patronised! Thousands of Ghanaians who normally do not

have a chocolate-eating culture – even though the country produces the best quality cocoa beans in the world and for many decades was the world's largest producer of cocoa beans – took to the brown stuff, so much so that there was an immediate shortage of chocolate across the country.

As part of the activities marking the day, the minister of tourism and diasporan relations, Jake Obetsebi-Lamprey, presented varieties of cocoa products to inmates of the Osu Children's Home. These included

cartons of Milo, Choco Milo, Pebbles, Bournvita, Richoco, Chocolim and Golden Tree chocolate. They were donated by the Cocoa Processing Company, Nestlé Ghana Limited, and Barry Callebaut, in a programme dubbed "Show Love to the Orphanage".

In an address, the minister said there was the need on National Chocolate Day to show love to all who needed it, especially inmates of the Osu Children's Home. According to him, love should not only be a carnal affair, hence the best way to get love was to show it to others.

The chocolate companies reported a sharp rise in sales, and the minister hoped that next year's Chocolate Day celebration would be even better. He, therefore, appealed to the cocoa companies to improve their products not only for local consumption but also for export "to entice chocolate lovers to Ghana".

Receiving the gifts on behalf of the children, the acting director of social welfare, John Nii Ankrah, said: "The presentation, coming at a time when the nation is celebrating 50 years of independence, has made the chocolates even more enjoyable as this is the season of love, and love has been shown to these vulnerable children."

The CEO of the Cocoa Processing Company, Isaac Osei (the former Ghana high commissioner to the UK), disclosed that the company produces "the only 100% cocoa product in the world", and that the essence of cocoa was not only the business it offered, but the love it brought among consumers. ■



Hohoe, where tourism makes sense

If prizes were to be given for the most forward-looking district assembly in Ghana in terms of tourism development, the Hohoe District Assembly will have a clean sweep. It is, without a doubt, the most progressive, tourism-oriented district in the whole country. Prince Dennis Klintings report.

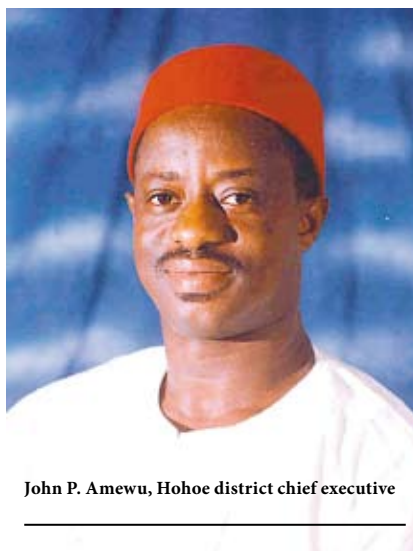
The Hohoe District is located in the Volta Region of Ghana. Over the last three years, tourist numbers to the district have more than quadrupled. Encouraged by this success, the district assembly is pulling out all the stops in building a model tourism industry.

The seriousness the assembly attaches to its tourism potential and development is demonstrated in some far-reaching policies undertaken in recent years. It was the first to inaugurate a district tourism committee in 2004, and also to launch the “Hohoe 2015 Tourism Development Agenda”.

Under the programme, the district will explore and exploit all natural resources within its jurisdiction in a sustainable manner to create wealth, which it is hoped, will elevate the district to municipal status by 2015.

The district’s tourism development agenda include the institution of an annual hand gliding and paragliding festival, building a district tourism museum, a first-class tourism and hospitality training institute, hotel and restaurant chains, and a national park with a sky-bridge, like the one at the Kakum National Park in the Central Region.

The district will soon launch an investment policy to woo investors.



John P. Amewu, Hohoe district chief executive

To help achieve its goals, the district is constructing a mini hydro electricity project on the Wadjaklli Falls at Alavanyo to boost its energy base.

Hohoe’s tourism development initiatives have been recognised both nationally and internationally, winning it the Ghana Tourist Board’s District Tourism Initiative Award in 2004, and the Topworld Adventure award in 2006.

Hohoe’s forward-march was largely influenced by an appeal made by the Ministry of Tourism and Diasporan Relations’ (MOTDR) to district assemblies to exploit the numerous untapped tourism attractions within

their jurisdictions. So far, the Atiwa District Assembly in the Eastern Region and the Komenda Edina-Eguafo Abrem District Assembly in the Central Region are the ones that come near to Hohoe in embracing the MOTDR challenge holistically.

Atiwa’s tourism endowments include the Tinni Waterfalls at Adasewase, a giant tree near Adasewase said to have existed for many centuries, and the Atiwa forest which covers an area of over 2,590 sq km. There is also the Royal Mausoleum at Banso, the resting place of kings and other royals of Akyem Abuakwa.

Also found at Asaman is the shrine of the celebrated traditional priest, Okomfo Anokye of Asante fame. It houses his sword and magical leather garment.

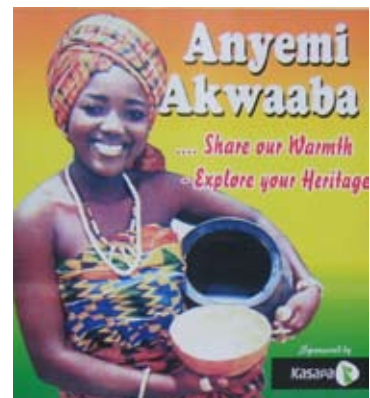
The Komenda-Edina Eguafo Abrem District Assembly is another one seriously pursuing a policy aimed at tapping the potential of its tourism sector. The district was a focal area during the colonial era, and as such its attractions are dominated by colonial legacies such as the Cape Coast and Elmina castles, both UNESCO Heritage sites.

The district assembly has launched the “Elmina 2015 Heritage Project”, with tourism as its priority, under the theme “building on the past to create a better future”. ■





(Above) Ghana's flagship tourism programme, The Joseph Project, was formally launched in Accra on 15 February 2007 by the minister for tourism and diasporan relations, Jake Obetsebi-Lamprey (centre) assisted by the visiting deputy prime minister of Britain, John Prescott (right) and the UNESCO director general, Koichuro Matsuura, both of whom were in the country to attend a conference of African tourism ministers organised as part of the Joseph Project launch. (Left) A Mona monkey at the Tafo Adome Sanctuary; (below) there is always a warm welcome in Ghana for visitors to Ghana, even moreso under *The Joseph Project*



Mountain Gemi at Amedzorfe, home to the hand and paragliding events



Hohoe hosts gliding festival

The Hohoe district has concluded feasibility studies for a joint hang-gliding and paragliding festival in the district.

The Hohoe district, rated by analysts as a tourism fountain, stands tall as one of the most endowed tourism-oriented district assemblies in Ghana. It will soon add hang-gliding and paragliding to its menu of tourist attractions.

John Peter Amewu, the district chief executive, says everything is on course for Hohoe's twin-gliding festival to take off this year. Like the one at Atibie, Hohoe expects its festival to attract both local and foreign enthusiasts in their thousands.

This, being the golden jubilee year of the country, the district plans to showcase its tourism investment opportunities to potential investors during the anniversary celebrations. It will hold exhibitions and investment fairs as part of the year-long package.

One of the major attractions in the district is the Afadjato eco-tourism forest and festival, which is similar to the Wli Falls festival (see story on opposite page). It is celebrated annually in September. Tourists coming to these festivals can also visit Mount Afadjato-Agumatsa, the highest habitation point in Ghana.

The Afadjato festival is celebrated by the chiefs and people of the Gbledi Traditional Area, comprising Gbogame, Tseyebi Dzigbordi, Toglo and Agumatsa communities. ■



Wli Falls, the wealth of Hohoe

Wli Falls is steadily establishing Hohoe, in the Volta Region of Ghana, as one of the preferred tourism destinations in the country.

Visitors started to come to Wli Falls on a regular basis as early as 1973. This encouraged the Hohoe District Assembly to develop a district-wide community-based ecotourism initiative in 1997, using Wli as the pilot site.

A year later, the villagers of the four adjacent communities founded a Tourism Management Authority (TMA) to mobilise the people and resources in the area in order to derive maximum benefits from them. To achieve this goal, the TMA sought the active collaboration of the District Assembly, the Ghana Tourist Board, the Department of Wildlife and several NGOs.

Wli Falls is located in the Agumatsa Wildlife Sanctuary, a 45-minute walk from Agumatsa town. The sanctuary covers an area of 35sq km. The Wli traditional area consists of three main communities: Afegame, Agorvieve and Todzi (and one settler community Dzogbega).

Wli is by far the most popular tourist attraction in the area. It is the highest waterfall in West Africa, though specifications of its real height vary considerably with estimates ranging from 50 metres to 400 metres. The falls consists of two separate waterfalls; a Lower Fall which is easily accessible, and an Upper Fall which is more difficult to reach. The Lower Fall

is about 50 metres high.

To reach the falls, visitors walk on a footpath through a thick, semi-deciduous forest, fording two rivers nine times along the way. Over 220 bird species and 400 butterfly species, as well as monkeys and antelopes, are found in the forest. Some trees around the footpath have been marked with the intention of creating a nature education trail.

At the falls, thousands of straw-coloured fruit bats nest on the adjacent cliffs. The large pool at the foot of the falls is so inviting that visitors cannot resist taking a swim.

There are several other activities that visitors can also participate in. Most importantly, the villages offer 18 home-stays with 43 beds, so guests may have a real village life experience.

Recently, university researchers and NGOs have introduced several alternative farming activities in the area, such as snail farming, mushroom farming, ostrich farming and “grass-cutter” farming (a local big rodent-type animal served as a delicacy in restaurants). Interested visitors have the chance to visit these projects.

The current tourist reception centre is located next to the start of the footpath leading to the waterfall. It gives information about the attractions as well as other sites in the Hohoe district, and two small shops for souvenirs. A new visitor centre is under



The charms of the Wli Falls

construction. This much bigger facility will accommodate a reception area, a conference centre, a restaurant, 12 craft shops, a museum, and a library that will function as an information centre.

There are several options for accommodation, and visitors are allowed to camp at the base of the Lower Fall. Other facilities include the Waterfall Lodge, Blue House Guesthouse and a government rest house at nearby Likpe Todome.

There are equally first-class hospitality facilities located in Hohoe, the district capital, as well as Ho, the regional capital. Notable among these are: Galaxy Lodge, Taste Lodge, Afegame Guest House, Gelud Hotel, Matvin Hotel, Evergreen Hotel, Grand Hotel, Chaces Hotel, Woezor Hotel, Freedom Hotel, and Friend Hotel. ■

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