

TimeOut
Accra for visitors and the best of Ghana 2013/14

TimeOut

Accra

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THE INSIDER'S GUIDE TO THE PERFECT BREAK
2013/14

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ACCRA FOR VISITORS
and the best
of Ghana

Special 5th Edition

SPECIAL 5th EDITION

THE TOP

Restaurants | Bars | Shops | Hotels

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Soul music

Ghanaian musicians are becoming recognised across the world thanks to innovative musicians such as Jahwi and enthusiasts inspired by Accra's beats. Ben Lerwill investigates

The homegrown talent...

"Each song sort of breathed itself into being," says Jahwi, the Accra musician whose debut full-length album, *Ancient Soul Cries*, gives as clear a picture as any of the kind of inventive underground music currently coming out of the city. Its blend of laid-back beats, Ghanaian patois, firebrand subject matter and layered instrumentation draws on a mix of different genres – from rock and reggae to afrobeat and hip-hop – and touches on everything from war to sex. Jahwi himself, also a photographer, poet and painter, has been a well known name on the local cultural scene for years. Tellingly, he draws his song-writing influences from a whole host of sources. "My first encounters with music were hundreds of vinyl records that my father had collected over his travels. I began DJing his parties from the age of six – it was a disco and funk era, but some of the most influential forces in my music are people like Fela Kuti, Nina Simone, Sizzla Kalonji and Bob Marley. I could sing *Redemption Song* before I could speak English."

Jahwi's paintings have been exhibited everywhere from South Africa to Australia, and given the right exposure his album has the potential to reach a similarly wide international audience. At a time when so much street-level music seems throwaway, *Ancient Soul Cries* has a more mature sound than most. "It sounds dark sometimes," he says, "but its main objective is healing."

Ancient Soul Cries is out now on Maddrenegade Music

...and the London boys inspired by Ghana's beat

At time of writing, the video for *Friday Night* – a high-tempo tune by London producers The Busy Twist – has clocked up close to 40,000 views on YouTube. It's not hard to see why it's popular. The music merges Ghana's tropical hustle with flavours of the UK bass scene, while the video itself, shot in Accra, captures the shuffling, goodtime vibe of the capital in the sun.

The two 22-year olds behind the project, Gabriel Benn (aka Tuesday Born) and Ollie Smith (aka Ollie Twist), have so far released two EPs under The Busy Twist name, with an album set to emerge soon.

They've collaborated with various Ghanaian musicians. So how did two young Brits, childhood friends in London from the age of 10, come to be working with the locals in West Africa?

"I had a placement teaching English in Ghana a few years ago and met so many talented musicians," explains Gabriel.

"When I got back home, I persuaded Ollie we should go out to record them. We formed such a tight unit with the musicians out there that we realised there was

really something in it. The Busy Twist was born from there. We've been going back and forth from Ghana for the last three years."

And what is it about the sound of Ghana that inspires them? "It's the energy, the vibrancy, the way that

the music is just so ingrained in people's blood, in their everyday lives. Ghana is somewhere we love."

Friday Night EP is out now on Soundway Records

Five more to know about

R2Bees

The duo won the main prizes at the 2013 Vodafone Ghana Music Awards

Fuse OGG

A British hip-hop artist of Ghanaian descent who has collaborated with Wyclef Jean

M.anifest

A rapper of real pedigree with a CV that includes work with Damon Albarn and Erykah Badu

Kaakie

A female dancehall-reggae singer from Accra, named Ghana's best new artiste in 2013

Sarkodie

A rapper hailing from the coastal town of Tema, nominated for a MOBO award in 2012.



It sounds dark, but its main objective is healing



Surf lesson at Mr Brights

Surf's up

What better place to learn to surf than along the laid-back west coast of Ghana

British national Brett Davies (aka Mr Brights) has devoted his life to surfing. After leaving a top rung job at the head office of Rip Curl several years ago, he decided to take the plunge and open up his own surf school in Ghana (the second love of his life). As a formally trained surf coach and lifeguard, it means surfers can't be in better hands to try out Ghana's exhilarating waves. Beginners to advanced are welcome, as are children, with boards and equipment naturally provided. The school has been so successful since its inception last year that Mr Brights is opening a second school in Accra at Kokorobite. Bookings are taken via the website with prices on enquiry. *Kangaroo Pouch Beach Resort, Busua Beach (www.mrbrights.com). Open everyday 6am to 6pm.*

Casket culture

One of Ghana's best coffin makers is now the subject of new film after a residency in the UK

These days, the world knows where to come for a designer death-casket. Fantasy coffins have become one of Ghana's most talked-about exports, featuring in international exhibitions, being written about in glossy magazines and being cooed over by the culturally curious. But the riotously colourful creations, which can take the form of anything from Nike trainers to mobile phones, represent far more than just whimsical woodwork, with each piece taking up to six weeks to make and requiring expert craftsmanship.

Overseas interest in the coffins has resulted in increased exposure for Accra's leading coffin sculptors, in particular 66-year-old Paa Joe, who together with son Jacob was invited over to the UK in mid-2013 to take up a month-long artists' residency at a stately home open to the public in Nottinghamshire. Working together, father and son used the time to carve and construct a full-size example of their trademark lion coffin.

But there was more to the project than simple creativity. The man behind their trip to England was British filmmaker Benjamin

Midgley, who became aware that Paa Joe had been forced out of his Accra workshop to a roadside shack 90 minutes out of the city, due to a lack of funds. "To me he seemed like a fallen giant," Benjamin tells *Time Out Accra*. "Here was this pioneer, someone who had been making fantasy

coffins for 50 years, who had been visited by US presidents, but who had fallen on hard times. He gets minimal passing trade in his current location. I visited Ghana in 2011 and we came up with the idea of organising a residency in the UK for Paa Joe as a way of raising awareness."

It was only Joe's second trip outside of Ghana, and his son Jacob's first. Benjamin documented their stay and will release a feature-length documentary film, *Paa Joe & The Lion*, in 2014. "Joe's art is unusual in that the majority ends up under the ground, so he wants something to be remembered by," Benjamin continues. "But above all, he wants to leave a legacy for his family. The ideal situation is that the final scene of the documentary will be Joe's move back to his workshop in Accra."

Unsurprisingly, this is a sentiment echoed by 25-year-old Jacob, who breaks off from creating a guitar-shaped coffin ("it's for a collector in California") to share his thoughts with *Time Out Accra*. "The dream is that we'll be able to move back home to Accra and earn a better living," he says. "The key agenda for coming to England was to find sponsors and people who might donate. Now, we're just hoping." A story with a happy culmination in sight? It's reassuring to think so. <http://paajoe.artdocs.co.uk>



Paa Joe & The Lion finale

Ghana on film

Football Fables

An award-winning documentary about young Ghanaians looking to break into the international soccer circuit.

The Sakawa Boys

Documenting the local bands of internet fraudsters who combine phishing emails with witchcraft.

Coz ov Moni

A 'pidgin musical' tracing a fictional but entertaining day in the life of Accra hiplife stars M3nsa and Wanlov the Kubolor.

Ghanaian Edmund Kugbila now playing for Carolina Panthers



It's not just football...

Ghana's showing at the 2010 FIFA World Cup – not to mention the continuing success of big names such as Michael Essien and Kevin-Prince Boateng – mean Ghana now has international renown as a football nation. But away from the soccer pitch, the country has plenty more sporting talent. These are some of the biggest names.

American Football: 6ft 4in Edmund Kugbila (pictured) is now an NFL player, having been selected at the 2013 draft by the Carolina Panthers. He was born, and grew up, in Ghana.

Athletics: Long jumper Ignisious Gaisah is a former Commonwealth Games gold medallist and all-African champion – he also featured at the London Olympics.

Boxing: Accra-born flyweight boxer Duke Micah continued Ghana's boxing heritage with a strong showing at London 2012. He is nicknamed 'Mayweather'.

Paralympics: Wheelchair athlete Anita Fordjour was another to star at London 2012, having previously medalled at the Commonwealth and All-Africa Games.

Swimming: Young swimmer Kweku Addo made history in early 2013 when he broke the national 50m freestyle record at the age of just 16.

Ghana in numbers

25

numbers in millions of Ghana's population (2011)

1957

year when Ghana became independent

238,533

total area of Ghana in square kilometres, slightly smaller than the UK

number of government sponsored languages in Ghana

9

percentage of energy Ghana gets from damming Lake Volta, the largest reservoir in the world

97

percentage of energy Ghana gets from damming Lake Volta, the largest reservoir in the world

2nd

position of Ghana in world cocoa production

2

number of seasons in Ghana: wet (Apr-Nov) and dry (Dec-Mar)

Reading up in Ghana

Cat Scully investigates the ever-growing literary movement in the West African country

Carving its way out of the 'West African literature' hold all category and emerging as a genre in its own right, Ghanaian fiction has received due credit in recent years with young authors taking the reigns from the likes of Kofi Awoonor (*This Earth, My Brother*, 1971), Ama Ata Aidoo (*Our Sister Killjoy*, 1977) and Ayi Kwei Armah (*The Healers*, 1979). Ghana's new generation of writers includes poets, successful bloggers, authors of young adult fiction, crime fiction and strong contenders on 'recommended new novelist' tables in bookstores across the globe.

Probably this year's most talked about novel of this realm is *Ghana Must Go*, by Taiye Selasi. It leaves readers with plenty to chew on, with its unusual narrative style and complex characters. The intelligent Ms Selasi has certainly stepped into the literary world with a grand entrance (her fan base includes Toni Morrison and Salman Rushdie). The story revolves around a Boston family of six – the mother Nigerian, the father Ghanaian – whose mixed up lives repel and retract like a rubber band. Accra is referred to more as a backdrop to the storyline, however it is obvious the city and Ghana are familiar territory for Selasi with descriptions such as "lush Ghana, soft Ghana, verdant Ghana, where fragile things die" and "the smell of Ghana, a contradiction, a cracked clay pot: the smell of dryness, wetness, both, the damp of earth and dry of dust." Selasi enjoys flitting between hot, slower paced Accra and crisp, snow covered Boston to contrast characters old and new/ past and present / child and adult.

Another writer to look out for is Mamle Kabu (aka Martina Odonkor), whose poetry and short stories have won her several prestigious literary awards, including the Burt Award for African Literature in 2009. Born and raised in Ghana, it is apparent



Taiye Selasi

from her writing that Ghana is a key source of inspiration. Take for instance her poem 'Orange Juice' which describes a person's dying wish to enjoy the taste of fresh orange juice "from oranges that are yellow/Not orange, Oranges from the forests of Ghana/Grown wild in cool shade/And careless beauty'."

Making waves in young adult fiction is Sophia Acheampong, whose *Growing Yams* in London (2006) depicts a 14-year-old Ghanaian girl, Makeeda, who tries to balance her Ghanaian upbringing and family expectations with typical teenage London life. The story is funny and very readable for young readers and their parents.

Ghanaian literature seems to be having a revival moment, with young authors rivalling their forefathers and mothers of the 1970s. Today's strong army of writers means the country is getting recognition from around the world and encouraging more young writers to put ideas onto paper. Annual literary festivals such as the Ghana Association of Writers Book Festival) grow every year. This year's Yari Yari symposium (The Organisation of Women Writers of Africa) was held in Accra and featured female authors including playwrights and poets including Sapphire, Dorothea Smartt and Janet Badjan-Young.



Dates for your diary

Music events at the Alliance Française



A year in Ghana

Sporting events, traditional celebrations and creative festivals pepper Ghana's social calendar

January

Bugum Chugu (Fire) Festival

The Fire Festival coincides with the lunar calendar and commemorates prince Naiyul-Lah Mohammed's exile in AD658. It is an Islamic tradition that has grown into a night procession of lighted torches, drumming and dancing.

Indian Film Festival

The Indian High Commission brings a bit of Bollywood glamour to Accra for a few days each year. Known for their vivid costumes, cheesy love plots, song and dance, Bollywood movies may not be the best cliff hangers, but they sure are fun. Subtitles will help those not fluent in Hindi and children are more than welcome. Held at the Silverbird Cinema. www.indiahc-ghana.com

February

Dzawuwu Festival

Agave people's thanksgiving festival. Chiefs and tribesmen of the Volta region also pay homage to their fallen ancestors and praise present leaders.

March

Damba Festival

This festival originates from Islamic tradition to mark the birth of the prophet Mohammed. Celebrated around Tamale and

offers a colourful pageant of gong-gong drummers and dancers.

April

Ghana Music Awards

The highlight of the Ghanaian music industry's year is this heady event showcasing the country's most popular talent. 2013 saw the awards' most lavish night to date, complete with red carpet, strobe lighting and a packed line up of live performances. Nominees are shortlisted from the year's releases of hiplife, hip-hop, reggae, gospel and Afro-pop. Recent big winners were R2BEES. www.ghanamusicawards.com

Ghana Paragliding Festival

Easter weekend sees a football field in Accra fill with musicians, media crews and scores of festively-clad spectators as aspiring paragliders take to the skies. In less than a decade, the Ghana Paragliding Festival has become very popular. It also works closely with the Couldbase Foundation which is an NGO working for children in West Africa. It takes place in Nkawka on the Kumasi-Accra road. www.ghanaparagliding.com

May

Aboakyer (Deer Hunt) Festival

One of the highlights of Ghana's festival calendar, Aboakyer is held in the township of Winneba on the

southern coastal side between Accra and Cape Coast. The festival takes place on the first Saturday in May.

June

Environmental Film Festival of Ghana

Run by a non-profit organisation, this internationally acclaimed festival aims to educate the public about our troubled environment. Though the focus is the environment, but it's not all doom and gloom. Films screened are selected to suit both a young audience and old, as well as encourage filmmaking. Genres include animation, documentary and drama. The festival is one week long with film screenings in various venues including open air. The 2013 title was 'Health and the Environment'. For more information and contact details see www.effaccra.org. It's usually held around the end of June and beginning of July.

July

Chale Wote Street Art Festival

Artists take to Jamestown's streets for this vibrant alfresco art festival that spans acrylic street

painting, stencil work, side walk painting, chalk art and vast murals. Past events have also featured large art installations and photography displays, as well as live music, DJ sets and theatre and spoken word performances.

August

Asafotu-Fiam Festival

Celebrated by the people of Ada in Greater Accra, this festival commemorates the warrior. Victorious and fallen are remembered with re-enactments and traditional costume.

September

Accra International Marathon

The Accra International Marathon attracts hundreds of spectators and participants to its course that runs from the beach town of Prampram, through Tema – a port city east of the capital – and on to the baked sands of Labadi Beach in Accra. The marathon supports the Longevity Project – an initiative dedicated to increasing the life expectancy of Ghanaians.

Fetu Afahye Festival

On the first Saturday in September, the communities in the Cape Coast area converge with processions of chiefs and warriors strutting in their finest gear. The costumes and finery witnessed at this festival are dazzling. For anyone interested in dress and show, this festival is a must.

October

Ghana Fashion and Design Week

As Ghanaian designers become ever more prominent on the international stage, this week of catwalks, models and frantic buying, is the showcase for new talent. There are dozens of events throughout the week, including forums, talks, and of course, shows. www.facebook.com/Ghanafashionweek



December

Accra Polo Open

Taking place at the Accra Polo Club, this annual event attracts teams from around the world. Previous competitors have come from New Zealand, Colombia, Egypt and Argentina. There are other events throughout the year. Check out its Facebook page for details.



Accra is a party town, but it pays to know where the action is. So to save you valuable partying time, Time Out Accra has timetabled your perfect weekend in the city. You'll shop, watch sports, relax, eat and drink well, and dance to live music and the country's hottest DJs. It's 9am on Saturday morning – hail a cab, buckle up for a roller-coaster ride through the Black Star of Africa.

SATURDAY

9am

Breakfast, swim, massage

You're going to need to be fortified for this weekend, so we suggest a relaxing, and filling, start to proceedings. The Mövenpick Ambassador Hotel has the best, and biggest, buffet in Accra. Smoked salmon, pastrami, fresh croissants, full English, eggs cooked to your liking, endless coffee – oh and some healthy stuff too – make this is the breakfast of kings. Once you've eaten, roll out the door and spend a couple of hours dozing and dipping in what's also the city's loveliest pool. And if it couldn't get any better, follow our example and get a massage too. Bliss.

5pm

Get a party frock

That's enough culture. Time to think about tonight. The world, it seems, is raving about Ghana's fashion scene. Updates on African prints and Ghanaian Kente cloth are brightening the catwalks from London to New York. Two of the best places to pick up prints and fabrics are in Woodin (see p53) and Vlisco (see p53), handily opposite each other in Accra Mall. However, don't forget to stop off at Renée Q (see p52) – it's on the way – for some fabulously lively clothes. Luxury women's clothing with a vibrant African twist is the mainstay of international success Christie Brown (see p52), a rapidly expanding fashion label by designer Aisha Obuobi. And for accessories, no question: Tebazile (see p53) – Cameron Diaz seems to agree.

Midnight

Mix it up at the Lexington

It's cocktail hour. And that means The Lexington. Sure, they mix a perfect martini or cosmopolitan, but tonight is about fun so order their Tea Pot Punch – a rum punch for four, served in a tea pot with cups and saucers. There'll be a live band or DJ on the decks. It's about to get lively.

2am

Flirt around Accra's hottest spot

On a dusty side street off Oxford Street in Osu is Accra's liveliest night haunt: Republic (see p36). It'll be heaving by now, spilling across the street and beyond. Two DJs will have a spin-off on the outside veranda, while beautiful people flirt, drink, dance and party into the night. Grab a cocktail made from local palm wine and some cassava chips.

1pm

Traditional meal in Buka

You may not be that hungry, but Ghana does food very well – there's a lot to sample. Order a lunch of tilapia and banku at Buka (see p40). A gorgeously grilled fish and a starchy, gooey banku, made from pounded cassava, to sup up the hot sauce, is delicious. It is an authentic Ghanaian culinary experience, but go easy on the red sauce: it'll blow your tongue right out of your mouth.

3pm

Take in a bit of culture at the Artists Alliance Gallery

The best place to find an overview of Ghanaian art right now is the Artists Alliance. It's a vast undertaking by Ablade Glover, Ghana's most well known painter, in a vast building full of the finest art, all for sale. You'll find large colourful depictions of market life, and of Ghana's rich fishing trade. It's also a good place to see some older art, as well as the fantasy coffins (see p8). Everything is for sale. See p61.

4pm

Learn about Nkrumah

Pay attention, you'll be quizzed. To see how national heroes are built, stop off at the mausoleum of Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana's first president and one of its founding fathers. Across the five acres of land are a museum, statues, manicured gardens and, of course, the mausoleum itself. Look out for Independence Square here too. See p27.

9pm

Splurge at Santoku, Accra's finest restaurant

This restaurant and bar was recently opened in the Villaggio complex in Airport Residential and is, by some way, the best restaurant in Ghana. Think Nobu and you are there – in fact some ex-Nobu staff had a hand in it. Mixologists will knock you up a Tsuyayaki (Zacapa and sake with cardamom, shiso leaves and lemon grass syrup), before digging into effortlessly elegant dishes such as crispy oysters with creamy wasabi, black cod with den miso or, the signature dish, pan fried scallops with foie gras and orange tobiko.



SUNDAY

10am

Coffee and pastry at Café dez Amis

Feeling OK? Let's start the morning off gently with a coffee and croissant in the leafy surrounds of Café dez Amis. When it gets a bit warm, hop in a taxi to...

11am

A swim at La Palm Royal Beach Hotel

This is a great pool for mindlessly swimming in circles and cooling down. Alternate with reading those weekly news magazines you only buy on holiday and jumping into the deep end of the pool. Drinks and nibbles will be brought to your sun lounger. If you fancy a wander, head to nearby Labadi Beach to watch Ghana in Sunday mode (football, Star beer, and football).

1pm

Tuck into a traditional buffet at Holiday Inn

Here's your chance to try all of Ghana's culinary delights in one go. The Holiday Inn's Sunday lunch is a vast affair, with many traditional dishes. We'd recommend the goat soup, groundnut soup and, well, anything.

3pm

Cheer on the Hearts of Oak

All together now: "Arose, arose, arose. Be quiet and don't be silly. We are the famous Hearts of Oak! We never say die!" Get practising what may be the world's quaintest football song for a game at the Ohene Djan Stadium. Football, as you'll have noticed, is huge in Accra. The Hearts of Oak is the biggest team in the city, and when they are playing their arch-rivals from Kumasi, Asante Kotoko, the noise from the stadium can be heard far away.

11pm

See live highlife at +233

This is the only place in Accra where you are pretty much guaranteed to see brilliant live music, often highlife. The party ethos is strong at this club. It's a cleverly designed venue with an inside stage that you can see and hear from the outdoor patio. Grab a large Star beer, order half a dozen delicious meaty kebabs, hear some of Ghana's best music – join the party.

The best weekend escapes

From a blast of dock-side action along the coast, to a dizzying tree-top walkway above a national park, Time Out Accra presents the best ideas for a great weekend out of the capital

Colour and culture in Cape Coast and Elmina

Elmina, we're reasonably confident in saying, must be one of the most colourful places in Ghana. Everything about this town revolves around fishing and most of the town comes out twice a day to see off the fishermen and sailors and greet them again as they return with their load. Brightly painted boats, everyone wearing football shirts, the flip-flopping catch being sold on the dockside: it's an overwhelming sight.

By the beach at Big Milly's

An hour or so out of Accra is Kokrobite. This small beach town has become a destination for sun-lovers and pleasure-seekers. The long-established Big Milly's (see p80) has become something of a backpackers classic – a laid-back hostel with an open bar. Nearby is Bah'doosh (see p80), an Australian-owned bar and restaurant where there always seems to be someone strumming a guitar.

Flora and fauna at Kakum

Kakum National Park is a hugely popular day trip from Accra. A short walk up from the visitors' centre and you start embarking on a series of vertiginous walkways suspended high in the canopy. It offers a fabulous view of the park, and a bit of an adrenalin rush to boot – not bad for a short day out a couple of hours from Accra.

Bojo Beach

First-time visitors pulling up to Bojo Beach's powdery sands are often taken aback that this easily accessed beach, just 25 minutes' drive from the frantically beating and dusty heart of Accra, feels more like a remote stretch of the Caribbean. After paying a small entrance fee, beachgoers hop into little boats that glide across a small and flat stretch of water to Bojo's gleaming strip of sugar-white sand. Thatched umbrellas stud the shoreline, looking out over the area's characteristically crashing waves.

Focus on Africa

Three photographers with very different styles are documenting Africa in the 21st century. Art historian and photographer Adam Monaghan talks to the auteurs



It is widely assumed that photojournalism is dead in the water. The heyday has passed, the great magazines and supporters of the genre are either long gone or are too swayed by slick advertising to take on hard news stories. On top of that, screen grabs and man-in-the-street smartphone pictures have taken over more of the space typically allocated to stills photography.

But look a bit harder and it's quickly apparent that far from being dead, the genre is still producing world class images. To paraphrase Mark Twain, reports of its demise have been greatly exaggerated.

Not only is its practice continuing but its punchy aesthetic has jumped out of the magazine page and onto the gallery wall. In the past ten years, photojournalism has,

at least on the surface, become indistinguishable from fine art practices.

However, some differences still do remain. While fine art photography is visually similar, it is conceptually different. Photojournalism must always tread a fine line with the exploitation of its subject. (Some practitioners have even been accused of deliberately trying to beautify suffering). Photojournalists also have to balance a neutral, witnessing eye with an empathetic viewpoint towards their subjects. The best photojournalists allow their humanity to shine through – a fact often absent from coldly presented, intellectually aloof and deliberately trendy works in galleries. In nearly every sense of the word, photojournalism is not cool: it is impassioned, engaged and empirical.



Above
Mama Walet Mohamed (21), who is expecting her fourth child, waits at the Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) health centre at the Mbera camp for Malian refugees in Mauritania on 3 March 2013. By Nyani Quarmyne

Left
A man in a food distribution queue at the M'Berra refugee camp for Malian refugees in Mauritania on 1 March 2013. By Nyani Quarmyne

Bottom right
Ghanaian sunset by Nii Obodai

Across Ghana at the moment there are some stunning representations of the best of these qualities, proving the discipline is truly alive and kicking.

Nyani Quarmyne

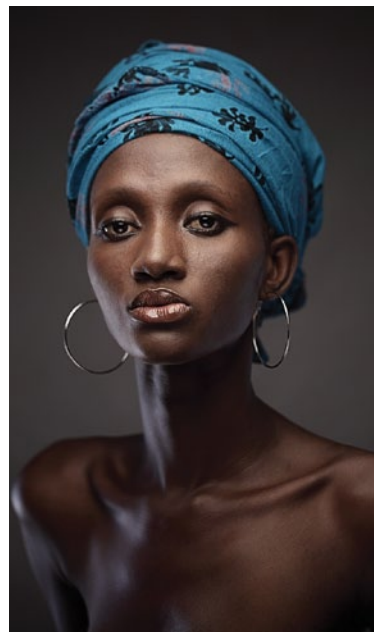
Nyani Quarmyne is a great example of the talent that exists in Ghana. Even the briefest glance across his work quickly tells you that you're looking at something quite special. Quarmyne has worked for a string of international clients, from the *Guardian* and the *New York Times* to UNICEF and Save the Children, and his work has covered hard-hitting stories.

Quarmyne has a distinctly multi-cultural background and, having lived in four continents, regards himself as somewhat of a 'rootless' individual. One permanent, however, has always been his deep belief in the importance of human relationships.

He prides himself on his humane approach to his work and, as he puts it, recognises "the sameness in all of us".

"I met a guy on a plane once whose business card simply had his name followed by the words 'Human Being'... That works for me!"

This sense of humanity is immediately evident in both the nature of the projects he has undertaken and the individual images within them. Quarmyne says: "It is hard sometimes... when you're intruding on a painful or private moment. You can't help but think 'How would I feel about someone sticking a camera in my face?' But you have to weigh up your intrusion against what you're trying to achieve." This achievement is, of course, to make



► people outside of a situation connect with what is happening in front of his lens.

He is unapologetic about his making strong, 'artful' images of distressing situations and cleverly cites the peculiarity of following such an illogical stance to its conclusion: "Should I only take good photos in happy situations and bad ones in unhappy situations?"

To take, for example, his series focusing on mental health in Ghana. In their subject matter, these photos are daunting reminders of both our human frailty and society's often pragmatic if none too sensitive treatment of those who suffer mental disorders. Artistically, these works are almost painterly in their perfect lighting and subtle hues. Their beauty draws you in and once caught you are compelled to see what these pictures have to say.

Quarmyne says he is not keen on labels and categorising his work since, quite rightly, images can appear in so many contexts and can be seen by so many different people. He admits though that the world of professional photography is changing and adaptability and openness are one of the keys to success.

Nii Obodai

Nii Obodai's work is another strong example of Ghanaian documentary photography and unlike many photographers working today, Obodai still uses 35mm film with a combination of classic Leica lenses and Voigtlander bodies.

Obodai has an admirable attitude to his work, neither becoming deluded by the grandeur of the art world nor limiting the opportunities that making photographs gives him. "Photography has helped me find myself. And I learned that it's not the photograph itself that creates joy, but the people, the land, the moment... photography is only part of the journey;

the rest is the connection." Obodai uses photography to focus his thoughts, but the resulting questions are often more pertinent than the answers. When we reach the point of being receptive to an answer, we have already accepted it.

Like many before him, Obodai sees no issue with striving to create beautiful things even while making critical images.

"In a recent project I documented the demolition of a slum community in Accra.

"When one of my friends saw the images he expressed his frustration at how they look beautiful... Indeed there was an aspect of beauty to the recorded sequence of events and when I first

showed the work at a climate change forum it had a very strong response.... But maybe that's what beauty does; it allows us to be affected in such a way that we naturally become engaged with the communication without being superficial."



Above
Portraits by Emmanuel Bobbie

Below
A 6X6 Duotone picture by Nii Obodai

Emmanuel Bobbie

Emmanuel Bobbie's photographs immediately grab you with their sense of life and action. They have a positive and celebratory energy, even when showing harsh subjects. He benefits from his ability to capture a diverse range of styles that work well in allowing his pictures to appear historic in one glance and entirely modern in the next.

Although Bobbie views his work as fitting more strongly within a fine art context such as galleries, coffee table books and high quality prints, his work is not self-consciously trendy like much fine art photography. It carries the best elements of photojournalism while maintaining a sense of timelessness that means it would sit happily in any gallery.

Bobbie acknowledges a quite diverse range of people who have inspired him in his journey into photography. Some, like Cartier-Bresson and Yousuf Karsh, hark back to classic black-and-white photography. But more recent influences, such as Tim Tadder and Dean Bradshaw, indicate more contemporary, promotional photographic ideas. Strangely, these polemic influences are actually strongly linked; defined lighting, strong compositions and powerful representations of a person's character. They are all, in their own way, perfect examples of Bobbie's biggest passion: portraiture. "There is a way I can sometimes see a person's character in their face and sculpt their faces with either natural or artificial lighting."

In his series *The Working Classes*, Bobbie also shows a great sense of story-telling and strong compositional awareness.

These are pictures that are comfortably at home with the history of classic photojournalism and could proudly hold their own in any such overview of the genre.

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★ FOOD ★ FIGHT ★

HOW TO START AN ARGUMENT IN GHANA? ASK WHICH RESTAURANT SERVES THE BEST JOLLOF RICE (WE'LL EXCLUDE 'MUM' FROM ANY DISCUSSIONS).

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JOLLOF RICE

BUKA VS COUNTRY KITCHEN

Jollof rice is the classic Ghanaian dish. The rice is cooked in a spicy sauce, lending it a fragrant and piquant flavour. Not all jollof rice is equal, however. Some will knock your taste buds for six while others will have a great depth of flavour. It's also important to take into account the chicken, pepper sauce and the salad it comes with. The jollof rice at Country Kitchen (see p40) is a more refined assemblage, with succulent chicken and decent rice. Buka's (see p40) may look as though it's thrown on a plate, but the rice has a deeper flavour, the blackened chicken brings out the taste of the skin and the fiery sauce will knock your socks off.



Country Kitchen



Buka

WINNER: BUKA

PIZZA

NICOLINO'S VS BELLA ROMA

A newcomer is here. For a good while, the pizza debate was between long-timers Mamma Mia (see p41) and Bella Roma (see p40), but now Nicolino's (see p44) is on the scene at Alliance Francaise, flush with a wood-fired oven and an Italian chef with Michelin-star pedigree. We're fans of both really – they are quite different offerings. Bella Roma's has a thin, but pleasantly chewy, base, good quality toppings – it wins on tomato sauce – and is pleasingly rustic. Not all of Nicolino's topping options work, but the pizza, blasted in the hot oven arrives crisped, slightly blackened and full of flavour. It just pips it on this.



Nicolino's



Bella Roma

WINNER: NICOLINO'S (JUST)

WAAKYE

KATAWODIESO VS AUNTIE MUNI'S

Everyone in Accra has an opinion which of these venerable traditional road-side eateries serves the best food. TOA's taxi driver almost refused to take me to Auntie Muni's (see p44). Waakye is the key dish at both: an ungainly mélange of dark black-eyed beans and rice, with meat and some fish, usually eel. The hub of the waakye assemblage is shitor, a peppery condiment made of chilli, dried shrimp and ginger. And, my taxi driver was right. Katawodieso's (see p44) tastes fresher, service is friendlier, and waakye is served everyday (only weekends at Auntie Muni's).



Katawodieso



Auntie Muni's

WINNER: KATAWODIESO

TILAPIA & BANKU

ASANKA VS ORANGERY

You'll always see tilapia and banku on the menu – it's a wonderful dish. Banku is a sticky bulbous ball of steamed corn dough to be ripped and dipped into the main dish. It's most commonly served with grilled tilapia, an incredibly tasty river fish of the region, and alongside a super spicy sauce. When you walk out of a restaurant with your lips still softly stinging from spices, you know you've been banku'd. Orangery's (see p45) dish (pictured here with kenkey) offers well-grilled fish, but its Asanka's (see p44) offering that beats all in Accra for taste, size and all-round tastiness.



Asanka



Orangery

WINNER: ASANKA

FRIED CHICKEN

KFC VS CHICKEN REPUBLIC

The fight of the fried chicken, the dual of the drumsticks, the war of the wings (you get the idea). Everyone has an opinion. Fried chicken is huge in Ghana. When the ghost of Harland (Colonel) Sanders arrived in Accra, there were queues down the street. Chicken Republic (see p43) quaked in its erstwhile dominant position. In some ways it's an unfair fight. The world's second largest restaurant chain versus a local upstart, but it's a technical knockout for KFC (see p43). Chicken Republic's may come with jollof rice, but KFC's coating is crispier, a more flavoursome bled and, ahem, toilets cleaner.



WINNER: KFC

BEER

STAR VS CLUB

You'll be an expert too before long in this battle of the beers. Both are hugely popular and both seem the greatest thing in the world when served ice cold by a pool on a scorching day. They are also usually served in large bottles (to share right?!). Star is probably the nearest to Budweiser and the sweeter American offerings and rightly popular for that, but for TOA, Club's slightly hoppier offering is a crisper and more balanced drink.



WINNER: CLUB

ICE CREAM

FRANKIE'S VS ARLECCHINO

Time for dessert. And on a hot day, that has to be ice cream. These two Osu favourites have been going head-to-head since Arlecchino Gelateria Italiana (see p40) arrived on Oxford Street some year's ago. Frankie's was the place to go. Although the new sheen has been lost from Arlecchino (there were less flavours and slow service on our last visit), the ice cream is simply better. Frankie's (see p41) is sweet and cloying, with not the greatest tasting flavourings, whereas Arlecchino's was fresh and interesting – they just need to get back on the pulse.



Frankie's

Arlecchino

WINNER: ARLECCHINO

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Francophone road trip

Ghanaian-based Nigerian Anita Ibru takes a road trip to explore Ghana's fascinating neighbours of Togo and Benin... and gets more than she bargained for

Ghana is an island of English language culture perched among the French-speaking countries of the Ivory Coast, Togo and Benin. Many Ghanaians don't get a chance to visit these countries rich in local and French culture and, of course, food. So when friends expressed an interest in visiting Benin, I persuaded them we should take a road trip to find out what we'd been missing out on. We only had three days and three nights to drive from Accra to the Beninese city of Cotonou, passing through Togo en route, but we made number of memorable stops, taking in colonial buildings, some local history and a series of natural landscapes unlike Ghana. It was a long journey, but enough time to get a true taste of Benin and Togo. We chose not to rough it, finding a good balance between fine dining, three-star accommodation and sightseeing.

ACCRA TO LOMÉ

To reach Togo's capital, Lomé from Accra, we first had to drive across a wide stretch of savannah east of Accra, followed by a narrower road between the sea and Lake Volta, to reach the village of Aflao on the Ghanaian side of the Ghana-Togo border. It was a smooth journey,

passing the industrial surrounds of Tema before we got a glimpse of the Songaw Lagoon, the biggest salt mining area in Ghana. The salt lakes were an early highlight of our journey; the salt harvesting in the area make it a protected zone. It's also a potentially popular eco-tourist destination, being home to some rare species of flora and fauna, including sea turtles. Continuing on, we made our way through the Volta region to Sogakope, which I instantly christened 'the bread village'. Loaves were everywhere. It transpired that the place was in fact famous for its bread and clay bread ovens. It's also home to the Holy Trinity Spa, which we passed near the Volta Lake bridge crossing. Food hawkers dished out local fare such as *abolo* and dried fish to passing vehicles, ours included.

At the border, the experience on the Ghana side was markedly more official than when we crossed over to the Togo side. To leave Ghana you need to have passports and money ready – i.e. a dash (or bribe) – for the immigration officers to stop them keeping you there any longer than necessary (it should only take about fifteen minutes). If you have an Ecowas passport, the rules are a bit sporadic, but the general advice for foreigners is to obtain a seven-day visa, issued on the spot for \$15 (10,000 CFA), which works out much cheaper than getting a visa at the embassy beforehand. Once you reach the other side, there are passports to receive and, again, money to leave your pocket. After a little drama we were greeted by the beautiful beachfront of the Togo border (a quite surreally relaxed setting, with the border control officers' tables outside) and we were finally on our way, enjoying the coastal drive to Lomé.

THE PARIS OF AFRICA

We could see why Lomé was once colloquially known as the 'Paris of Africa'. In spite of its political problems it still kept its Gallic charm, albeit a little tired. It had colourful houses, grand boulevards, squares and pleasantly green gardens. Lomé also retains traces of its colonial

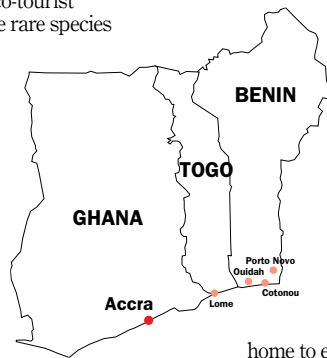
architectural style, visible in some of the city's arcades and other old buildings such as the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart. We didn't have much time to linger but we couldn't leave Lomé without visiting its historic hotel, Sarakawa (Boulevard du Mono, BP 2232, 0 Lomé +228 22 27 65 90) which is located on Lomé Beach and close to the city centre. We dined at the restaurant Le Mercure which offers gourmet French cuisine.

Onward, we headed to Togo's Grand Market where we found local food, souvenirs and artefacts (including some rather scary ones) followed by a quick visit to Togo National Museum. As well as getting across the context of Togo's history, it was home to everything from preserved musical instruments, weapons and dolls to collections of traditional pottery and jewellery. The city's Botanical Gardens would be another ideal stop for those in search of nature, providing an alternative to the beach views and attractions. But the biggest surprise to be found in Lomé, reminiscent of its former Paris-chic glory, is Le Beluga (Rue de L'Entente, Ex Rue de L'Ocam, Lomé +228 22 20 97 96) a high-end fusion restaurant where chef Soupany Khampraseuth serves up fine French food and wine.

LOMÉ TO COTONOU

Beyond Togo is the Republic of Benin. Europeans first engaged in trade and commerce with the nation as early as the 16th century, with the slave trade of the Bight of Benin commencing soon after. But the hour was late as we crossed the border, so we drove straight to the country's largest city, Cotonou, to stay at its newest hotel Azalai Hotel de La Plage (05BP347 Cotonou, +229 21 31 72 00, azalaihotels.com/hotel-benin) and instead woke up early the next day to do our Benin sightseeing on the way back to Lomé.

The following morning we headed to Ouidah from Cotonou. This stretch of our journey offered the most fascinating sites and places of the trip. We headed first to The Point of No Return, a

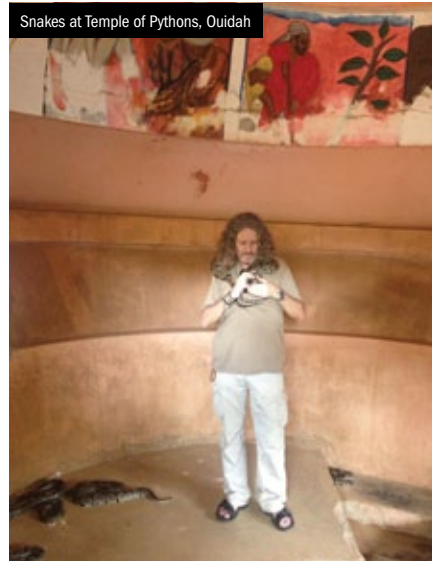


The Point of No Return near Ouidah, Benin

The beach at Casa del Papa in Ouidah



Snakes at Temple of Pythons, Ouidah



handsome and poignant commemorative monument that was erected to remind visitors and locals about the country's dark slave trade history. Even though the title denotes 'no return' there is some superstitious hope surrounding the monument – that the captives will someday return, at least in spirit. The ocean backdrop was breathtaking, and it was painful to reflect on the fact that this would have been the last view the slaves would have had of their homeland before their voyage to hell. The slave trade was at its most rampant here in the early 18th century, although the entire trade era went on for three centuries.

As well as its slave trade history, Ouidah is also well known as the birthplace of Black Magic

(Voodoo) and the town hosts a Voodoo Festival each January, attended by people from all around the world. Its other attractions include the Slavery Museum (located at the former Portuguese slavery port) and The Temple of Pythons. We managed to stop at the latter. It was not for the faint-hearted. There were about 40 pythons in the cavernous temple, and visitors were welcome – in fact encouraged – to wrap one round their neck! The guide was French-speaking, so some people might need a translator, but if you don't catch any French at all, the main message is: 'pythons rule the town'. They're known as 'Royal Pythons' and considered so sacred that the temple entrance is left open at night to allow them to roam the town. There's an unwritten rule that if people find the pythons in the town in the morning they should return them to the temple. Unbelievable. We visited further sites connected to the slave trade history, including The Tree of Forgetfulness. Captured slaves would walk around the trunk hoping to forget their past lives and identities before being put onto the boats for America). Men used to walk around the tree nine times, women seven times. The tree itself has now been replaced by a statue of a mermaid, representing the sea and the journey to a new life of slavery. Nearby was the Monument of Repentance, erected in 1988 by the elders of Ouidah to ask for forgiveness for their ancestors' collaboration in the slave trade.

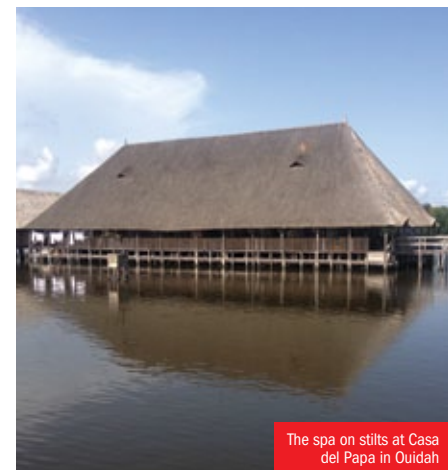
Ouidah is also home to Hotel Casa del Papa (Casa del Papa, Ouidah Plage, Ouidah, Benin, ask for Mr De Souza on +229 95 95 12 50, www.casadelapapa.com), which was to be our last stop before heading back to the Benin-Togo border. We certainly saved the best for last: this is the Cote d'Azur of West Africa in terms of its coastline. The resort even has an extra touch of the exotic by being located between the sea and the lagoon. It was a stunning sight: a red-earth dirt track juxtaposed by hot pink and salmon-coloured

bougainvillea on the driveway, and the resort's banana yellow chalets standing out against an azure sea in the distance. The resort also had a spa on stilts and great pools (for both adults and children), as well as watersports and mini golf.

OUIDAH TO LOMÉ (and home)

During the last stretch of the journey from Benin back to Togo we made one last stop – at Hotel le Lac, Abgodrafo. It's a great place to call in for a swim, with a lovely clean pool (or a lake if you're feeling adventurous). It also offers watersports (you can hire jetskis and pedalos). We didn't have a night to spare so had a meal – which was quite pricey – before continuing back to Lomé.

We drove the same stretch of road back, although this time passed through Vume, known for its wonderful Ghanaian pottery, much of which was displayed for sale by the roadside, and finally reached Accra, 70 hours after first leaving.



The spa on stilts at Casa del Papa in Ouidah

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Sightseeing

Take a tour of the Black Star of Africa

A tour through Ghana's history

Many of the most important events in Ghana's past happened around Accra. Take a tour in chronological order

Pre-colonial history

The best place in Ghana to get an insight into life before the colonial era is in the National Museum (see p30). The museum gives an opportunity to travel through the country's history from both an archaeological and ethnographic perspective. Much of the display is given over to indigenous art and crafts.

1482

The Colonial era

The Portuguese erect first trading fort, Elmina Castle (São Jorge da Mina); see p81. Like its Cape Coast equivalent, it has strong links with the slave years and is registered as a World Heritage Site. Elmina Castle (also known as St George's) is the oldest extant European building in sub-Saharan Africa. In 1637 the Dutch seize Elmina Castle and within a few years take over the Portuguese Gold Coast. Today, tours can be taken around the fort.

1957

Ghana's independence movement

Ghana becomes independent from the United Kingdom. On March 6 1957 Kwame Nkrumah declares Ghana 'free forever'. Kwame Nkrumah becomes prime minister and Queen Elizabeth II monarch. Independence Square and Independence Arch, built to mark the event, are better known as Black Star Square, after Ghana's inspirational lead in a free and stable Africa.



1960

Nkrumah becomes president

Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah is elected president as Ghana becomes a republic. His legacy is almost impossible to avoid in Accra – there's an Nkrumah Avenue, an Nkrumah Circle and an Nkrumah Memorial Park & Mausoleum that can be visited (see right). His heavy-handed ways eventually led to widespread disaffection, and during a state visit to China in 1966, a military coup in Ghana ousted him from power. He would never set foot in his homeland again.



2009

US president Barack Obama visits Cape Coast Castle

Obama visits Cape Coast Castle, a place instrumental in the West African slave trade. In his first state visit to Africa he says: "I've come here to Ghana for a simple reason: The 21st century will be shaped by what happens not just in Rome or Moscow or Washington, but by what happens in Accra, as well."



2013

The president (finally) moves to Flagstaff House

What president wouldn't feel the majesty of his position in a literally 'stool-shaped' seat of power? Well the previous president, the late John Atta Mills for one, who chose to stay at Osu Castle. Three years after completion, president John Dramani Mahama has decided to move to this remarkable building.

Critics' choice Sights

1 Arts Centre An intense introduction to market life, but a fun one nevertheless. Pick up the perfect souvenir in this large covered complex. See p27.

2 WEB Du Bois Memorial Centre The former residence of African-American civil rights activist, is a library, museum and mausoleum. See p30.

3 National Museum of Ghana The best museum in Ghana has an impressive display of life in this country. Gold weights, textiles and stools are highlights. See p30.

4 Artists Alliance Gallery This huge art gallery – where everything is for sale – has the best art collection in Ghana. See p31.

Accra centre

Along the traffic-choked High Street and 28th February Road, which run parallel to the Atlantic Coast, are many of the major banks, international offices of multinationals and the High Court. The road then opens out and whisks past the Kwame Nkrumah Memorial Park and the Centre for National Culture (Arts Centre), then into Independence Square and Independence Arch.

Behind the square is a long expanse of beach, although it's not the best for bathing. The Centre for National Culture is a maze of hundreds of stalls selling crafts, textiles, instruments and antiques from all over Western Africa. And although strictly in the Osu neighbourhood, the beach-bound Osu Castle, also known as Christianborg Castle, is along the beach road and included in this section – it was still the seat of the government until it recently moved to Flagstaff House. Locals generally refer to Osu as Oxford Street, the vibrant area a couple of kilometres inland.

Kwame Nkrumah Memorial Park & Mausoleum

A national park erected in memory of Osagyefo (the Messiah) Doctor Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana's first president and one of its founding fathers. Built on a former British polo field, it was the point where Nkrumah declared independence in 1957. The park consists of five acres of land and holds a museum tracing Nkrumah's life. There are many personal items on display, but the centrepiece is the mausoleum, Nkrumah and his wife's final resting place. Tours in English can be taken.

Kwame Nkrumah is an essential part of Ghana's history and a good half-hour here will fill you in on most of the details. Events are held on on 6 March for Independence anniversary celebrations, and on 1 August to mark Emancipation Day. *High Street (0302 671 610). Open 10am-6pm daily. Admission Ghanaian adult GH¢0.50; non-Ghanaian adult GH¢1.50; extra charge for cameras.*

Independence Square and Independence Arch

The stands around Independence Square, with modernist and Soviet-influenced lines, can seat 30,000 people. The vast area, built under Kwame Nkrumah, is designed for huge events and military marches, but is usually empty except for a few soldiers sheltering from the sun. The only times the square comes alive are at commercial events such as concerts and fashion shows, which take place sporadically throughout the year. Even if there's not much happening it's worth wandering around just to marvel at the sheer audacity of it all.

The Independence Arch, at the centre of the busy roundabout, is also known as Black Star Square, thanks to the motif that dominates the arch. The sculpture is a nod to Ghana's acclaim as the 'Black Star of Africa': it was an inspiration to other African countries

TOP TIP!

Photography
Don't take any pictures of public buildings without permission.

vying for independence and the Flame of African Liberation, lit by Nkrumah, still burns strongly nearby. Please note that there are (seemingly unwritten) laws about taking photographs and we strongly suggest that you don't take photographs of any part of the area.

Arts Centre (Centre for National Culture)

Also occasionally known as the Centre for National Culture, this is a popular location for visitors looking to pick up bargain crafts and souvenirs. The main part of the market, under a large roof, is full of stall after stall crammed with textiles, carvings, bags, clothing, instruments and jewellery. This part of the market can be quite intense – expect to be followed around by guys touting poor quality masks. Further into the complex, however, is the outdoor market that holds more interesting treasures such as metal ornaments, drums, wood furnishing, antique pieces and leather goods – also the hassle decreases somewhat. Bargaining is a way of life here, so have fun and have in mind what you want to spend first. *28th February Road, near Kwame Nkrumah Monument, Accra Centre (0302 662 581). Open 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri; 9am-3pm Sat-Sun.*





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Osu Castle

Osu Castle is still closed to the public while the seat of the government moves to Flagstaff House – although this has taken four years already. The chequered history of Osu Castle reflects the history of the Ghanaian nation. Initially called Christiansborg Castle, it was built by Danish colonialists in 1659 on land bought from a tribal chief in Accra. Over the following hundred years the fort, smaller than the current construction, was juggled between the Portuguese, Swedish and Danish. Sometimes it was taken over by force; other times it was bought. In one incident in 1693, the Akwamu ethnic group occupied the fort for several months before their canny leader, Assameni, sold it back to the Danish for 50 marks of gold, around US\$350,000 today. However, the keys were never officially returned to the Danish and remain symbolically in the possession of the Akwamu even now. After it fell into disrepair, the British rebuilt most of the fort in 1824 and it became the seat of the British Gold Coast, remaining so until independence in 1957. Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana's first president, moved there in 1960. At the beginning of 2009 the seat of the government was supposed to move to Flagstaff House, however, only a couple of departments have made the move. Osu Castle is a constant and poignant reminder of the slave trade that was largely administered from the building and was often used to house slaves before they were shipped to the Americas. There are plans afoot to turn it into a museum, but there is nothing concrete so far. The road is often blocked off by soldiers but this may be relaxed as the government moves.

JAMESTOWN

The oldest, and poorest, area of Accra is also one of the most alive. Jamestown is vibrant, smelly and noisy, sound-tracked by the clatter of pans, the babble of radios and the roar of exhausts. Low corrugated-iron roofs stand over painted shops, shacks and houses. Wandering chickens negotiate open drains and life-endangering potholes, while washing-cobwebbed courtyards play host to spontaneous football games.

It wasn't always quite like this. The district was once the hub for a succession of Portuguese governments, before the city became the capital of the British Gold Coast in 1877. Amid the ramshackle streets of today's Jamestown, the colonial handiwork can still be seen. And despite the apparent poverty, the quarter still makes for a safe and friendly place through which to wander during the day. More than anywhere else in Accra, there's an evident sense of community.

Two buildings dominate the waterfront skyline. Fort James, built by the British in the 17th century, commands views over the Atlantic from a perch above the fishing harbour. It served as a prison until recently and there's no chance of entering, but it's still compelling as a peeling, whitewashed memento of days past.

Also of historical interest (and also pretty dodgy photo-wise) is the nearby colonial-era lighthouse, built in the 1930s. It's not a tourist attraction in the usual sense – no gift shops or ticket offices here – but stray within twenty metres and you'll inevitably be accosted by a 'guide' offering to take you to the top for a few *cedi* (usually around GH¢5

each). If you're willing to part with the cash, there's a good panoramic view from the top of the (possibly not overly safe) spiral staircase. A road from the lighthouse leads down to the harbour and fishing port, a superb spot to witness the riotous colours thrown up by the endless flotillas of traditional pirogues. Head down at daybreak to watch the beefy fishermen haul in their nightly catches (partly the reason that Jamestown, and the shanty of Bukom in particular, produces such good boxers). A security officer may insist on a bit of money – we suggest going with a guide.

Inland from the harbour is another eye-catching remnant of the British era – the Methodist Church built from imported bricks.

Also of note is Brazil House (0208 173 143, Brazil Lane), a restored empire-era house that has been transformed into a museum chronicling the history of Ghana's Afro-Brazilian returnees. Known as the Tabom people (the reply to 'how are you?' in Portuguese is '*ta bom*'), they returned to Accra as a 70-strong group on the British government's SS Salisbury in 1836. The boxer Azumah Nelson is a descendant of one of the returnees.

Jamestown, unsurprisingly, is also one of the most densely populated areas of the city. Ghanaian tradition stipulates that funerals should be held in the deceased's place of birth, and, as such, wakes can be witnessed almost every weekend.

ORIENTATION

The lay of the land

The main port has moved 10 miles (16 kilometres) east to Tema, and Accra has seemingly turned its back on the Atlantic Ocean. Even the great Independence Square faces inland, ignoring the beach and expanse of water behind it. It's also true that the latest developments are moving further inland.

As a broad overview, Central Accra lies mostly within the Ring Road that arches from the eastern part of downtown to just beyond Jamestown in the west. The Ring Road is an essential part of Accra's infrastructure and is constantly used to hop from one neighbourhood to the next. Roundabouts such as Nkrumah Circle in Asylum Down, and Danquah Circle near the shopping and eating centre of Osu and Labone, are essential travelling references. Although loosely split into various districts, the area within the Ring Road is generally known as the 'Centre', which is how it is referred to throughout this guide. Almost in the middle of the city is Makola Market, which is well worth a visit. It's a shopping hub that's become famous for its domination by women traders.

Outside the Ring Road are the wealthier areas of Cantonments and Airport Residential. The biggest current expansion is around Airport Residential, surrounding Kotoka International Airport, and Accra Mall (see p49). Condominiums, plush hotels and, of course, the Accra Mall itself, all make this a worthwhile area to stock up on international goods. Airport Residential is home to embassies and consulates, as well as some good cafés and restaurants, and many more soon.

They tend to be admirably upbeat occasions to witness.

USHER TOWN

Towards the centre of Accra is Usher Town, which links seamlessly with Jamestown along High Street. Ussher Fort (High Street, 500m east of Jamestown Fort, 0302 671 014) is the most important sight in this area. It was built by the Dutch who named it Fort Crevecoeur in 1649. It was later renamed Ussher Fort

after a British administrator at the time. A former slave-holding area like Jamestown Fort, it was used as a prison until the 1990s. But now the former prison (and garrison) is undergoing a UNESCO-funded restoration to promote the area's local heritage,

develop new space for small businesses and increase tourism to the area, as well as preserving a reminder of Ghana's past – that said, there's nothing to show yet.

Tours can currently be taken of the building, including a look at where Ghana's national hero, Kwame Nkrumah, was held.

Buffering Usher Town and the city centre is one of Accra's most pulsating experiences: Makola Market. Almost anything you could hope to buy is within this sprawling maze. Like a contemporary souk, a network of passageways, roads, buildings and paths weave through the area. Hawkers, mostly women, sell an impossibly large array of produce, clothes and home supplies.

Independence Arch



TOP TIP!

History
The National Museum is the best bet to get a historical overview of Ghana and Accra.

Surprisingly, you are unlikely to be hassled much, this being the market place for the city’s residents. Not all tourists visit the area, but we certainly advise spending some time wandering this fascinating market.

OSU
Osu is probably the most happening part of town. The busy Cantonments Road, known to virtually everyone as Oxford Street, is a hub of activity 24 hours a day. Many of Accra’s best bars (*see pp34-38*, Bars & cafés), restaurants (*see pp39-48*, Restaurants) and shops (*see pp49-56*, Shopping) are in Osu. Stalls line the street and hawkers hound tourists, selling personalised wristbands, fake Rolexes and football shirts.

Oxford Street
Cantonments Road, between Lokko Road and the busy Danquah Circle, might be known as Oxford Street, but shares little with London’s shopping hotspot. The only similarity is the volume of people and traffic. Probably the busiest street in Accra, it’s the site of bars, clubs, restaurants and boutique shops. There are no specific tourist sights, but its constant bustle makes it an essential part of any visit.
Expect some friendly hassle at the northern end (one scam is to ask your name and then appear 20 minutes later with it embroidered on a wristband), but this dissipates further down. The area is even busier during the evenings when revellers hit the bars. Many of the shops and restaurants are actually off Cantonments Road, on the quieter numbered lanes. At one end of Cantonments Road is the busy Danquah Circle, a roundabout on the Ring Road, named after one of Ghana’s founding fathers JB Danquah. The circle is generally crowded day and night.

CANTONMENTS & LABONE
Farther north on the Cantonments Road, over the Danquah Circle, is the neighbourhood known as Cantonments. It’s one of the wealthiest areas of Accra, home to embassies, consulates and heavily-guarded houses. The highlight here is the WEB Du Bois Memorial Centre. Labone, to the east of Osu, is a pleasant and quieter



National Museum

GHANAIAN STORIES

A potted history of Accra

The Accra area was first settled in the 15th century by the Ga people (lending their name to Ghana when it became independent in 1957) who called the town Accra – ‘ants’ in Nkran – because of the quantity of large anthills that still dominate the region. From the beaches of the Atlantic the Ga traded with the Portuguese, who soon became colonisers and built the first fort in Jamestown (*see p29*). Despite initial resistance – the fort was soon razed to the ground – a succession of other colonial intruders used Accra as one of the gateways to West Africa and its riches; namely gold and slaves. British, Dutch and Danish settlers constructed forts along the coast and soon began to settle beyond the walls. By the time Accra became the capital of the British Gold Coast in 1877, it was one of the largest cities in Africa and the centre of the region.

Two earthquakes in 1862 and 1939 destroyed much of the early colonial architecture but remnants can still be seen, particularly around the neighbourhoods of Jamestown and Ushertown. Osu Castle (*see p29*), Fort James (*see p29*) and Ussher Fort (*see p29*), are the most important edifices still in use today.

Since independence from Britain in 1957, when it became the second African country to emerge as a nation state, Ghana has been held as a twinkling example of stable democracy in the continent. It was Ghana’s first Prime Minister, Kwame Nkrumah, who popularised the concept of ‘the Black Star of Africa’. Reinforced on the flag, in the name of the football team, and in the central square of Accra, the Black Star is a powerful symbol of the country’s independence.

Although the country’s 55 years of independence have not been without their troubles, Ghana remains one of the continent’s success stories. Accra in the early 21st century is a sprawling urban city splashed with a free-for-all range of architecture that horrifies and delights in equal measure.

There are museums and art galleries to browse, as well as important buildings from Ghana’s colonial past offering an insight into the country’s remarkable history, from a region of tribal societies, through colonisation and the horrors of the slave trade, to become the ‘Black Star of Africa’, a heroic example of one of the first sub-Saharan independent states.

Today, with a burgeoning tourism industry and, yes, all that oil off the coast of Takoradi, now seems the time for Brand Ghana to make the most of its stock around the world. And where Accra is concerned, it is the atmosphere of Accra will reside in most people’s memory long after the souvenirs have been lost or stored in the attic.

area, although somewhat dispersed. There are several good restaurants and cafés.

Flagstaff House
There is, quite simply, no other building on earth like Accra’s new-ish presidential palace, and seat of the government, Flagstaff House (formerly Golden Jubilee House). The



unique architecture is said to be based on the sacred Asante Golden Stool, emblematic of the birth of the kingdom, but the cost of construction has inspired a passionate debate. Although completed in 2009, the president and staff only moved there in early 2013. What will happen to the previous seat of government, Osu Castle, is still unknown, but there is talk of turning it into museum.

WEB Du Bois Memorial Centre
William Edward Burghardt Du Bois was an African-American civil rights activist who became a citizen of Ghana in the 1960s. He was known as the ‘Father of Pan-Africanism’. The centre, where he and his wife once lived, and where they are now buried, houses his personal library and a small museum with a handful of personal effects such as his graduation robes. The couple’s mausoleum is surrounded by Asante



Ussher Fort

stools, a seminar room, a restaurant, a gallery, an amphitheatre and a research centre for Pan-African history and culture.
Off 2nd Circular Road, Cantonments (0302 776 502, www.webdubois-gh.org). Open 9am-4.30pm Mon-Fri; 10am-4pm Sat. Admission GH¢3 for a tour (GH¢1 for camera).

ADABRAKA & ASYLUM DOWN

North of Jamestown and just within the Ring Road are the neighbourhoods of Ridge and Adabraka – two lively communities around the Nkrumah Circle and Asylum Down. This area is a mish-mash of offices, street stalls and commercial buildings. Towards the centre are the National Museum of Ghana and the National Theatre.

National Museum of Ghana
The National Museum is home to some of Ghana’s most absorbing historical finds. The museum, opened by the Duchess of Kent in 1957, gives an opportunity to travel through the country’s history from both an archaeological and ethnographic perspective. Much of the display is dedicated to indigenous art and crafts: there are regalia, musical instruments and the all-important royal Asante stools. Other displays include Asante goldweights, currency, instruments, textiles and leatherwork. Slightly hidden away is the chair used in Kwame Nkrumah’s inauguration and the chair of the last British governor, rescued from Christiansborg Castle. An

exhibition about the slave trade is essential viewing, outlining the era’s brutal history and showing poignant relics such as shackles. There’s also a gallery with pieces by Ghanaian artists. This is an area we have heard will undergo some improvement soon.
Barnes Road, Adabraka (0302 221 633). Open 9am-6pm Tues-Sun. Admission GH¢7.

National Theatre
The unmistakable architecture of the National Theatre deserves to be seen – it has been described as either a ship, or, more abstractly, as a seagull spreading its wings. Chinese developers built the theatre and it opened in 1992 as the centrepiece for cultural life in Ghana. It’s home to the National Symphony Orchestra, the National Theatre Players, National Dance Company and three youth groups. The events calendar is getting better all the time, but it still seems seriously under-used.

Liberia Road and Independence Avenue, Adabraka (0302 663 449, facebook.com/NationalTheatreofGhana). Admission GH¢1, extra charge for cameras.

LABADI

The city’s most popular beach is further east in Labadi. At weekends the place is filled with families frolicking in the surf and

youngsters playing football. If you go through the main entrance by Labadi Beach Hotel, it costs GH¢3 Mon-Fri and GH¢5 Sat, Sun between 5am-7pm. There are bars, restaurants and some shops down there. Expect loud music and flying footballs. It’s not the cleanest beach, so best not to swallow too much water. It’s also home to the excellent resorts of Labadi Beach Hotel (*see p76*) and La Palm Royal Beach (*see p76*), both have good pools to enjoy, as does the Mövenpick (*see p74*).

Artists Alliance Gallery
This three-storey gallery is home to a large array of Ghanaian artists and sculptors such as Augustine Gokah, Betty Acquah, Nii T Mills, Ebenezer Borlabie, Kofi Setorji and Gabriel Eklou. Ablade Glover, one of Ghana’s most respected artists, conceived the Artists Alliance Gallery in the 1960s. He saw the need for a showcase for fine arts in Ghana

to act as a driving force to gain recognition around the world. There are not only contemporary arts, but also collectors’ pieces: beautiful, fragile Asafo flags with appliquéd and embroidered symbols, and ancient strip-woven Kente cloths. It sells art directly from the artist. There’s a good gift shop with minature style coffins and Kente cloth.
Omanyé House, Accra-Tema Beach Road, Labadi (0302 762 576, www.artistsallianz.com). Admission free.

GUIDED TOURS

Follow the lead of an expert

If you really want to push the boat out on a trip to the region, there are a range of public or private tours – many of them themed – that can make a visit to Accra, or any other part of Ghana. Highly recommended are Charles Sablah’s Ghana Nima Tour and Global Mama’s.

Abacar Tours
Set up by a Ghanaian/French couple, this tour agency is recommended by the Ghanaian Tourist Board. Its main tours are either one- or two-week itineraries, although bespoke tours can be booked. The guides are also Francophone.
39 Bobo Street, Tesano, Accra (0249 574 691, www.abacar-tours.com).

Apstar Tours
Founded in 1987, Apstar is a member of the Tour Operators Union of Ghana (TOUGHA), and has a focus on history. There are standard day tours and bespoke longer tours for all group sizes.
36 Forest Road, Accra (0302 519 931, www.apstartours.travel).

BLASTours
A Ghanaian-owned tour operator specialising in cultural tours. It offers a bespoke service for tourists and business travellers and can organise transport, hotel accommodation, home-stays, guides and conference equipment for large-scale meetings.
Sakumono, Tema (0302 404460, www.blastours.com).

ConnectWorld Travel Services
ConnectWorld is licensed by the Ghana Tourist Board and holds membership to ASTA. It offers tours across Ghana and also in Togo, Benin, Mali and Burkina Faso. The tours can cover culture, history, adventure, eco-tourism and recreational travel.
PO Box CT 1946, Cantonment, Accra (0244 363 360, www.connectworldgroup.com).



Ghana Nima Tours
With his infectious smile and boundless sincerity, Charles Sablah is a reliable and safe guide, and you leave feeling someone has given you privileged insight. He charges just GH¢5 per hour per person, and offers a special price for groups.
(024 627 0095, http://ghana-nima-tours.yolasite.com)

Ghana Safari Tours
Ghana Safari Tours was set up by Swedish nationals and their Ghanaian partner who has first-hand experience of Ghanaian safaris and other adventure tours. There are a wide range of existing and bespoke tours for reasonable prices.
(www.ghanasafaritours.com).

Global Mamas
The tours offered by Global Mamas, an NGO dedicated to fostering women-owned enterprises, are likely to tick the right boxes for most visitors. In Accra, there is the day-long ‘Market & Spice’ tour and a ‘Drumming & Dancing Workshop’ – GH¢17 for three or more, or GH¢21 for two people. In Cape Coast, Global Mamas offers cooking, batik and headwrapping workshops.
14th Lane, off Cantonments Road (Oxford Street), behind Koala Supermarket, Osu (0244 530 467, www.ghanaexpeditions.com).

Royal Derby Tours
Part of a large company that has tours across West Africa, Royal Derby is a well-established firm. The Ghanaian tours tend to be five days or more.
(244 949 225, www.royalderbytours.com).

Sunseekers Tours
Sunseekers offers the whole gamut of tours, from multi-day adventures to city tours.
9 Farrah Avenue, (0302 225 393, www.sunseekerstours.com).



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Consume

Where to eat, drink and shop

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Bars, Pubs & Clubs section
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Bars, Pubs & Clubs

OSU

Bella Roma

The popularity of Bella Roma shows no sign of abating, thanks to its combination of good cocktails, good music and good vibes. It's set just off Oxford Street behind Frankie's, but on weekend evenings you'll hear the music first. It teeters somewhere between a bar, nightclub and restaurant (see p40 for food details), and the bar area has been recently expanded. Walking into the joint, to the left is a partially open-air dancefloor with a DJ spinning crowd-pleasing dance and hip hop. Cocktails and beers are the drinks of choice. There's good food using quality Italian ingredients. *Off Cantonments Road (Oxford Street), behind Frankie's (024 7474 007, bellaromaaccra@yahoo.com, Facebook page). Open 6pm-late.*

Cuzzy Bro's

Ryan's Bar is dead. Long live Cuzzy Bro's. The good times are still rolling in this large Osu bar, with even more live music, barbeques and excellent food. Its owners, a South African restaurateur and a Polynesian Kiwi opened the place in June 2013, to much acclaim from Accra's expat community. Along with a Kiwi chef, they've also brought a jukebox, a children's play area and a love of rugby (of course). *Troas Street, off Cantoments Road (Oxford Street) (026 608 6003, cuzzybro.com.gh). Open noon-11pm Mon-Thur; noon-midnight Fri; 10pm-midnight Sat; 10am-6pm Sun.*

Don's Place

This centrally located Osu hideaway is locally regarded as the spot to

convene for delicious grilled chicken, thick pork chops and good company for a drink. It has a worn old-school vibe, which is accentuated by the clientele who tend to be Accra's old timers and expats. Don's has a solid reputation for good jazz and other live music as well as high-quality meat-oriented fare. Visit on a weeknight for a hefty chop, grab a beer and mingle with the locals. It's a relaxing place for a well-rounded meal and intimate conversation. There's a huge HD TV showing all the football games, a wide range of single malts and a dartboard. When it's busy, the action moves outside. *30 Ajoatse Street, Nyaniba Estate (0302 769 152). Open noon-midnight daily.*

TOP TIP!

Tall order
Order a beer and more often than not you'll get a litre. Spirit measures in cocktails also tend to be strong.

Duplex Lounge and Bar

The ever-popular Duplex has recently moved location within Osu, and if anything is more popular. The new premises is bigger than the former although occupies only one floor. The décor is brighter and more upmarket than the last and the small outside terrace fills up quickly on those balmy nights. It has an easy-going attitude and manages to feel exclusive without being in the least bit snobbish. It is popular with the young expat crowd. *Off Kuku Hill, near NDC Headquarters, Osu (0245 999 999). Open noon-late daily.*

Firefly Lounge Bar

Industrial chic has arrived in Accra. As if plucked from the streets of Manhattan, this confident nightclub has effortlessly slid to the forefront of the city's social scene; its whitewashed brickwork, dim lighting and edgy beats attracting a preened and international crowd. A lit backbar glows with premium blends, and cocktail aficionados, spirit lovers and wine drinkers alike pull up stools to confer with chatty



Firefly Lounge Bar

Pick and mix

A great cocktail can (finally) be found in Accra as a new generation of bars are spending serious time training the next great mixologists

The cocktail resurgence in London and New York has truly arrived in Accra, smartly dressed, with a little black book of mixes and silver shaker. Before this year, we'd never seen barman taste a drink in a straw before serving it, let alone pander to requests for a smoky martini and serve a perfect example. Heck, we even commissioned our own cocktail from The Lexington. Next time ask for the 'Time Out Accra! It is The Lexington, alongside Firefly and Santoku at the forefront of the cocktail revolution in Accra. And a bar that takes its time over an Old Fashioned and a Bloody Mary is one that also invests time

Combine that with a serious and flexible DJ, live music, good and friendly service and some moreish bars snacks (we recommend the sliders at The Lexington and the cassava chips at Republic), you have one seriously fun, and decadent, night out.

It's not all about the chi-chi cocktails. A cold Star or Club in a roadside bar like Lizzies can offer the best insight into nightlife in Accra. Other favourite drinking establishments include Bella Roma, +233 and Monsoon. Categorising bars in Accra, however, is no easy task. Many of the establishments here also offer food (the best of these are listed in the

Restaurant section; see pp39-48), so the ones we've listed here are the best places in the city where you can order a beer or cocktail without feeling obliged to order a meal as well.

These are the most exciting bars in Accra

staff sporting black shirts, braces and the odd hat set to a jaunty angle. Food spans light nibbles and three-course meals, with a silver chainmail curtain gesturing a divide between drinkers and diners. *11th Lane, Embassy Road (0302 777 818, Facebook page). Open 5pm-3am Tue-Sun.*

Honeysuckle Pub and Restaurant

Based on a regular local boozer, the Honeysuckle in Osu is appeals to the odd homesick Brit, but mainly a local crowd enjoying the pool table or Premiership football. It's decked out in kitsch red velvet chairs and striped wallpaper with framed pictures of old British pubs, and football teams next to scarves and the inevitable 'dogs playing snooker' prints. The central bar serves a good selection of international spirits and beers, including local beers on draft. *King Tackie Tawiah Overpass (027 555 6006). Open noon-12.30am Sun-Thur; 1pm-1.30am Fri, Sat.*

Lizzy's

Ahh, Lizzy's. There's a little place in our heart for Lizzy's. Little more than a few plastic chairs on a street corner, flanked by some very big speakers, this beer-fuelled spot is an edifying experience. Away from the pretence of some Accra nightspots, it's reassuringly down-to-earth and one of the best places to mix with Accra residents. Fridays and Saturdays are when it really swings, and the mood and music both step up in tempo around 10pm. Order a large Star and watch Accra swagger by. *Cantonments Road (Oxford Street), opp Papaye (0302 783 278). Open 10am-late Mon-Sat; 6pm-late Sun.*

Lounge @ Frankie's

Situated on the second floor of Frankie's is this surprising little lounge and bar. While the rest of the Frankie's complex feels like the fast food restaurant that it is, through the frosted glass doors is a much more sophisticated area. *Cantonments Road (Oxford Street) (0302 773 567, www.frankies-ghana.com). Open 7am-11.30pm daily.*

Monsoon

The lively Oxford Street venue Monsoon continues to succeed in drawing the crowds. It's a popular choice for the expat community, and its broad street-facing terrace remains a hive of activity at weekends. It's not the cheapest place in town, but when you see the icon-heavy interior design, the impressively stocked bar and the cut of the clientele, you'll understand why. DJs play Friday and Saturday night. With three restaurants on site (including a Teppanyaki kitchen and a sushi outlet), there's good food to be had too. *41 Cantonments Road (Oxford Street), above Osu Food Court (0302 782 307). Open 6pm-late Mon-Sat.*

Cocktail culture

A man walks into a bar... and asks for a Moscow Mule and a Mixed Berries and Basil Splitter. The first you may have heard of, but The Lexington's very own mixologist designed the latter. They are two very different drinks, with one aspect in common: Smirnoff vodka. The Moscow Mule, a mix of Smirnoff, ginger beer and lime, came out of the US in the 1940s. It was invented by John G Martin, Jack Morgan (who owned a company that produced ginger beer) and Rudolph Kunett, president of Pierre Smirnoff (as it was called then) in 1941. Jack Morgan told the New York Times: "We three were quaffing a slug, nibbling an hors d'oeuvre and shoving toward inventive genius." Quite. The Mixed Berries and Basil Splitter, however, was born in the bars of Accra. It may not have a snappy name, but it's popular at The Lexington – a brilliantly refreshing drink, perfect to cool down in the stifling heat of Ghana's capital. Below are recipes for all of them, but first a chat with two of Accra's best mixologists right now.

Q&A: James Teye Oloko

James, 29, has been a barman at Rhapsody's for five years and previously worked at Citizen Kofi.

Favourite cocktail?

Rhapsody's Blue. This is one of our signature cocktails. Its made up of sour mix, Smirnoff vodka, gin, blue curacao and topped with Sprite. Served in a long island glass over ice and garnished with cherry. This blue cocktail is mostly enjoyed by the ladies!

Best cocktail outside Rhapsody's?
The Lexington, I had the espresso martini.

Favourite spirit base?
Definitely Vodka. Vodka mixes with just about anything, but can also be enjoyed neat or on the rocks.



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James



Tapatheo

Favourite non-alcoholic ingredient?

Passion fruit cordial. It has a sweet fruity taste and pleasant smell.

Best cocktail you've designed?

One of the best cocktails I personally made is the Spintex Train. It is made from vodka, cranberry juice and blue curacao over ice in a highball glass with orange slice as garnish.

Best classic cocktail?

Margarita. This much-loved Mexican drink consist of the finest silver tequila, Cointreau or triple sec and sour mix and gives you the option of plain, frozen with salt rim and fresh lemon wheel or slice, as a garnish.

Q&A: Tapatheo of The Lexington

Tapatheo, 28, is the barman at The Lexington, and worked from being a cleaner at Champs Sports Bar to a mixologist with his own company training bar staff from Accra in mixology. His international CV is impressive, having worked at the Smirnoff Experience in New York, Ghana Rocks and Ludacris 02 Live. He's also worked on TV in Ghana making cocktails.



Favourite cocktail?
Moscow Mule

Best cocktail outside The Lexington?
Santoku Restaurant

Favourite spirit base?
Smirnoff Vodka

Favourite non-alcoholic ingredient?
Fresh mixed berries

Best cocktail you've designed?
Mixed Berries and Basil Splitter – see recipe.

Best classic cocktail?
Margarita

Moscow Mule – The Lexington

50ml Smirnoff Vodka
25ml lime juice
25ml ginger syrup
3 dashes of Angostura bitters
- Add all in Boston shaker then shake for 15 sec and strain into a Copper Mug filled with sold cubes of ice then top up with ginger beer then garnish with infused flamed lime wedge and light to give it good aroma.

Mixed Berries and Basil Splitter – The Lexington

50ml mixed berries
50ml Smirnoff Vodka
25ml simple syrup
25ml fresh lime juice
6 big basil leaves
- Serve in a coupette glass
- Add all the Ingredients in a Boston shaker then shake for 15 sec and double strain into a coupette glass and garnish with basil leaves.

Rhapsody's Rainbow Recipe – Rhapsody's

- Pour 25ml grenadine in a Long Island glass and fill the glass with ice cubes.
- Add 25ml Bacardi Light Rum, 25ml Smirnoff Vodka, 25ml Southern Comfort on top of the ice.
- Pour 25ml Blue Curacao and 25ml Lime Cordial in a blender, add ice, enough to fill the blender one third. Blend all together until the ice in nice and smooth.
- Pour the blended concoction in the Long Island glass. Add two straws and garnish with a orange wheel.

NEW Republic Bar & Grill

Music is the defining factor at this fairly new little bar that has seen highlife legend Ebo Taylor pass through its doors. Album covers and black and white photos of music stars adorn the walls as Ghana's best music blasts out – live too on the terrace; check out the Facebook page and Twitter account for details. But the food is making waves as well – the cassava chips are a fabulous accompaniment for a caipirihna made from traditional palm wine, and the Fire Go Burn You pepper soup and Ye Ye Goat soup for GH¢18 is superb value for something this tasty. One of the most happening bars in Accra right now.
3rd Lane, off Oxford Street (024 631 4044, facebook.com/RepublicBarGH, @TheRepublicGH. Open noon-2am Mon-Sat; 4pm-2am Sun.

Venus

Quite a transformation at Venus bar. It's always been popular, but the recent refurbishment shows it has seriously upped its game. It's now a hotspot by day for young travellers tapping away on MacBooks, enjoying a coffee, or a bite to eat from the reasonably-priced Lebanese-inspired menu in the air-conditioned bar, or outside on the comfortable and leafy terrace – both seem an age away from the busy intersection outside. By night, the cocktails and beer consumption ramp up and Venus becomes a really lively bar.
11th Lane, off Cantonments Road (Oxford Street), (0302 782 250, www.bybloshotelghana.com). Open 9am-1am Mon-Thur; 9am-3am Fri, Sat; 4pm-1am Sun.

ADABRAKA & ASYLUM DOWN

The Lexington
See picture review.

LABONE

Robi's Dutch Pub

There's no chance of missing Robi's Dutch Pub – its bright orange façade (what else?) shines like a beacon for homesick Dutch, and pretty much



Recommended

The Lexington

The Lexington is billed as 'Accra's hottest concept bar and restaurant', and the early buzz has further compounded this view – this is a place that knows good living. One of the key reasons to go here is (halleluiah) great cocktails. You'll find a well-made dry martini, plus a wide array of creative mixed drinks, such as the tequila, pineapple, and black pepper infused Lucky Lilly. The bar snacks are very, very good indeed. They include a mini cheeseboard with cornichons – see these guys know how to run a cocktail bar, but it's hard to pick these out when the sliders with handmade buns made in-house are so good. On the main dinner menu are fillet steaks (with good-quality meat sourced from South Africa) and rack of lamb. Its Friday evening half-priced happy hour (6-9pm) is a popular post-work meet up. Popular at The Lexington are the fortnightly quiz nights, intimate concerts featuring Africa's leading artists, and the big-screen, HD projectors that show all the major sports fixtures from around the world. It's also open for breakfast, and who couldn't love a place that has a breakfast cocktail menu. 40 Ring Road, Paloma Shopping Arcade (0240 959 406, 0544 346 911, www.thelexingtonaccra.com; Facebook page). Open 5pm-close Mon-Fri; 10am-close Sat & Sun.

anyone else with a nose for a drink in pleasant surroundings. The eponymous Robi amiably presides over the drinking. Upstairs is a more relaxed affair, where the open kitchen cooks authentic Dutch snacks such as bitterballen (meatballs), sausages and chips.
Dade Street, Labone (024 526 3582, www.dutchpub.com). Open noon-10am Mon-Thur; noon-midnight Fri; 3pm-midnight Sat.

EAST LEGON

Lizzy's Sports Complex

This is Marcel Desailly's impressive sporting complex. The sports bar will likely attract the big names who live in East Legon, as well as members of the corporate league who play on Friday and Saturday nights. The bar overlooks a pool and a couple of the five-a-side pitches, but eyes are more likely going to be on the screens for the big games.

And don't be surprised if you see hands-on manager Marcel Desailly wandering about the complex when he's in Ghana.
Cotton Street, East Legon (0302 521 851, www.lizzysportscomplex.com).

ACCRA MALL & SPINTEX ROAD

Rhapsody's

Rhapsody's is close to both the airport and surrounding hotels, ensuring the South African chain gets a steady supply of expats and moneyed locals to sample its extensive drink and cigar selection. There are two halves to the interior – an informal lounge, complete with panel-lit horseshoe bar and football on widescreen TVs, and a white-tableclothed restaurant with padded wall fabrics. Things crank up a notch on Fridays and Saturdays when DJs spin tunes: expect sizeable crowds, and be aware that you'll have to pay if you arrive post-11pm. This is also a popular place for business meetings.
Shops 66-68, Accra Mall, Spintex Road (0302 823 148, www.rhapsody.co.za). Open noon-midnight Sun-Thur; noon-2am Fri, Sat.

Santoku

See picture review, page 38.

Silver Lounge

Silver Lounge is very silver indeed. Gleaming above the boutiques and homeware outlets of Accra Mall, the latest offering from Silverbird entertainment is a stylish cocktail haunt clad in a vast array of metallic shades. One of the more pungent is Income Tax, a heady mix of gin, martini rosso, dry martini and orange juice. For classic fizz, there's a good selection of champagne, including a bank-account-emptying Ace of Spades for GH¢1,500. And, of course, no self-respecting Accra bar would be seen dead without the obligatory flat screen showing the football.
First floor, Accra Mall, Tettah Quashie and Spintex Road (0302 823 040, www.silverbirdghana.com). Open call for details.

Sweetie's

Although a bit of a distance beyond Accra Mall, this multifaceted venue is the perfect location for a quiet sophisticated drink in the downstairs bar. There is also a quiet VIP area, with modern African soft furnishings. The musicians, when they are in, are often of the jazz or traditional highlife ilk.
Off Spintex Road, just before the Airport Hills entrance near the Lister Hospital. Open from 5pm until late Tue-Sat.

Clubs

Aphrodisiac

The Dzorwulu venue has been open since late 2009 (it was previously in Airport Residential) – Thursday,



The Orangery

Private dining, tapas bar & creperie

Farrar Avenue, Central Accra
Tel: 0302 232 988, 0243 265 607, 0277 326 690, 0278 947 555







Art Deco

Farrar Avenue
(0302 232 988). Open 10am-6pm Mon-Sat.






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Venus



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Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights are free for 'suitably attired ladies' (b)efore 1am. Music varies from evening to evening: there's rock and ragga on Thursdays, R'n'B and bashment on Fridays and highlife/hiplife on Sundays. Saturday is 'Old Skull Nite'. DJs are on rotation. Check the website for details. 35 Nii Badu Street, Dzorwulu (0302 766 738, www.clubaphro.com, Facebook page).

Cinderella's Being located right next to another Accra hotspot, Rockstone's Office, Cinderella's sports a cosy VIP and sometimes-raucous atmosphere. The management are very open to takeover nights. *Osu Avenue, off Ring Road behind Police HQ (0262 686 852, cinderellasclubaccra@live.com, Facebook page). Open from 8pm Wed-Sat. Admission GH¢5-10.*

Rockstone's Office

This bar is owned by 'Godfather of Hiplife' Reggie Rockstone. Reggie has succeeded in creating a kind of hip hop casual environment, so alongside the white leather sofas and bum-grinding beautiful people there's a relaxed outside terrace and an easy-come dress code. There's often live music on Wednesdays and it occasionally hosts the Bless the Mic collective (Facebook page).

But it's at weekends when things really get going, with booming hiplife carrying the crowd through to 6am. His GrandPapazz is next door – a VIP only area. But most people will end up on the terrace at some point. *Near Police HQ, behind Japanese Embassy (244 679 057). Open 5pm-late Wed-Sun.*

Twist

Twist has been extended to include a dancefloor and DJ booth inside. The bar caters to an upmarket set, who loiter around the outdoor patio of the large garden.

Number 8, 5th Circular Road, opposite Alisa Hotel, Cantonments (0302 772 179, www.headlines.gh.com). Open 4pm-12am Tue-Thur; 4pm-2am Fri-Sat.

Exel

Exel is an upmarket club for the baller set – come heavy or not at all. The club cultivates an air of exclusivity. There's a pleasant atmosphere throughout the weekend. *Near Nyaho Clinic, Airport Residential. Open from 9pm-late Fri-Sat.*

Smirnoff's picks

The best places in Accra to get a perfectly mixed cocktail

1 The Lexington Why? Expertly trained mixologists blend inventive house cocktails as well as perfectly mixed classics. They use only the finest quality ingredients. It's worth mentioning the bar snacks here are very, very good.

What's the vibe? The Lexington is a bar of two halves – a chilled out bar area with banquette seating where you can grab a good meal, or a glitzy area where the tables are moved as the dancing fire up.

What to order? Mixed Berries and Basil Splitter: berries, lime, Smirnoff, syrup and basil.



2 Santoku Why? Not only is it the classiest bar in Accra, it's also home to the best restaurant. But we care about the drinks – there are some astonishing blends here using sakes and champagne mix by master mixologists.

What's the vibe? The bar area and terrace is a classy and relaxed place for a pre-dinner drink, or somewhere to come just to enjoy a really superb drink.

What to order? Asian Collins: Cardamom-infused bourbon, citrus, mango, served long over crushed ice and finished with cracked black pepper.



3 Firefly Why? Not only is its Osu location handy for a night out, this dark, classy bar is small and perfectly formed. The international team behind the bar have put its cocktails at the forefront of its bar scene.

What's the vibe? DJs spin an eclectic mix of lively music from around the world. Either sit back and enjoy excellent burgers, or hang around the bar.

What to order? A Moscow Mule



4 Rhapsody's Why? Well-trained staff conjure up some fabulous house drinks, as well as all the classics.

What's the vibe? A well-mannered sports bar. There's a quiet dining area to enjoy the excellent South African meats on offer, but most congregate around the horseshoe bar sipping on cocktails.

What to order? Rhapsody's Blue made up of sour mix, Smirnoff vodka, gin, blue curacao and topped with sprite.



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Recommended

Santoku

Since opening, the bar at Santoku is fast establishing itself as a drinks destination in its own right. Alongside the amazing food (see p41), is one of Accra's best offerings of cocktails. They retain the same international standard as the food. While the mixologists can turn their spinning hands to the classics, it's the signature cocktails that are of real interest. Original creations worth sampling include Pom-Fashioned (featuring Havana añejo especial rum, pomegranate molasses mixed with apple and lychee juice, a dash of Angostura bitters shaken and served short over ice). Other drinks include award-winning sakes, Japanese whiskies, and the best wine list in the city.

Ground Floor, Azure, Villagio Vista, Tetteh Quarshie Interchange (0544 311 511, www.santoku-restaurant.com). Bar & lounge open 5pm-1am daily; restaurant 6.30am-midnight.

Restaurants & Cafés

The spice of life

Ghanaian food is fabulous. From grilled fresh fish with spicy sauce to the West African classic jollof rice, you'll never tire of eating your way through the great Ghanaian menu. Here are a few dishes to get you started

Groundnut soup & fufu

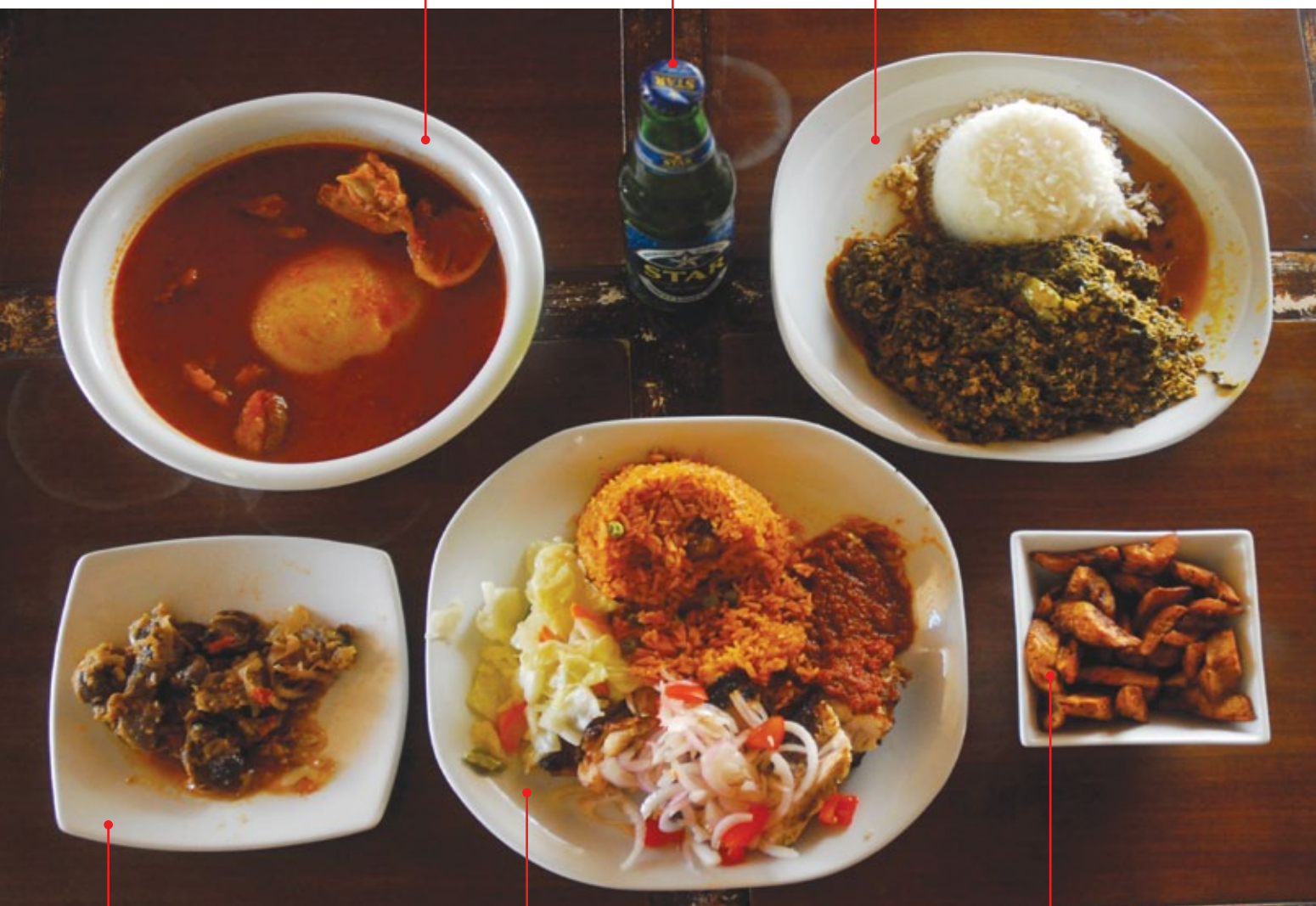
The nuts ground in this dish are peanuts (if you want to do it at home – that's a lot of peanut butter), but that's not the overwhelming flavour. This is a delicious blend of ginger, garlic, tomato, hot pepper, chicken, or guinea fowl (as in this picture). It comes in a huge bowl, like this one pictured at Buka, with fufu, a sticky, starchy ball made from pounded cassava, yams or plantains. Take a small bit in your hand and dip in.

Star beer

Along with Club, Star beer is the taste of Ghana. No meal is complete without an ice cold beer.

Kontomire & rice

This is a truly delicious dish, bursting with peppery flavour. There's usually the choice between beef or fish that is heavily seasoned and cooked until meltingly tender. It's then mixed with loads of spinach (the key ingredient), fried onion, dried ground shrimps (a common seasoning), and meat stock, then simmered. Served with rice or boiled yam.



Peppered Gizzard

This side dish is popular in Nigeria and Ghana. It is essentially marinated chicken gizzards, grilled with onion, hot peppers, parsley and lots of spices. Cooked well, it's one of the surprise dishes of a Ghanaian menu. Make sure to order a side.

Jollof rice

In a previous issue of Time Out Accra, one food author described jollof rice as 'the little black dress of Ghanaian cuisine'. Few doubt it's the most popular. So ubiquitous is it, they serve it in fried chicken joints instead of chips. The rice is cooked in a spicy sauce (rather like a paella), and it's the sauce's ingredients that give it a lip-tanging flavour.

Kelewele

Nom, nom, nom. Salted and peppered plantain chips. Can there be anything else so moreish? These are a delicious addition to any Ghanaian meal. And the good news is, there's a vast menu left to try.

Osu

EXPENSIVE

Au Grand Ecuyer **French**

Au Grand Ecuyer is primarily a French continental restaurant. French-African owned and operated, it serves continental cuisine with a profound twist of local flavour. The seafood-laden menu has various simple recipes prepared and presented like home cooked meals. Try the grilled lobster or the popular grilled tilapia.

Off Ring Road, near Danquah Circle, Osu (0302 768 643, 0244 153 975). Open 11am-midnight daily. Main courses GH¢10-25.

Le Magellan Restaurant **French**

Le Magellan is a good dining-out choice, particularly in the evenings when it seems that business colleagues, friends and couples enjoy winding down at the end of a day. Service from polite staff is well practiced, and the menu reflects the fact this is one of the more upmarket options for dining out in Accra. *Ring Road, East Accra, near Osu's Danquah Circle (0302 777 629). Open noon-3pm, 6.30pm-11pm Mon-Fri; noon-3pm Sat. Main courses GH¢12-30.*

MID-RANGE

Arl ecchino Gelateria Italiana

This ice cream outlet and snack bar is probably the best place to get a decent ice cream in the city. There are more than 20 flavours that look sumptuous in the cabinet (although there's often a few empty spaces). The Italian owner has also added specially made ice cream for diabetics as well as interesting flavours such as cookie and tiramisu, mango and sesame. At GH¢8 for two scoops, it's not as cheap as nearby Frankies, but better. *674/2 Cantonments Road (Oxford Street), opp Shell petrol station (024 541 0403, www.arlecchinoicecream.com). Open 6am-midnight Mon-Sat; 11.30am-midnight Sun.*

Critics' choice Restaurants

1 Santoku Astonishing Japanese dishes in the finest of surroundings. See p41.

2 La Chaumiere Great French food. See p48.

3 Buka The best place to get a traditional meal. See p40.

4 Heritage Authentic Indian food, with good service. See p41.

5 The Lexington How to make bar snacks gourmet. See p36.

EATING OUT IN ACCRA

Where and what to eat in Accra

Eating out in Accra can be as cosmopolitan an affair as you desire, with the city's growing assortment of nationalities making their mark on its culinary scene. Prominent Asian and European influences in particular give plenty of choice – from aromatic South Indian sauces to freshly made crêpes. But however welcome this influx of foreign flavours, nothing comes close to outshining Ghana's home-grown dishes and ingredients, devoured in abundance everywhere from fine restaurants, such as the fabulous Nobu-styled Santoku (see p41), to roadside shacks.

A very popular lunchtime dish is *waakye*, a medley of refried beans, rice, meat, fish and spicy sauce best sampled at long-established street stalls such as Katawodieso (see p44) and Auntie Muni's (see p44). More upmarket places to get some excellent traditional food are the relaxed and quiet Asanka (see p44) and Buka (see p40). Street food can be lively. Although the level of cleanliness is reasonably good – vendors are always washing their hands – it remains a calculated risk. What should be fine, however, is grabbing a coconut. They'll chop the top off so you can drink the milk there and then, and then they'll open it so you can eat the meat. A coconut should cost GH¢1. Avocados are also GH¢1. Bananas are around GH¢1 for 4. Another popular lunchtime dish you'll see on the roadside is kenkey, with fried fish and hot pepper sauce. Vendors will put it in a plastic bag for you. It costs between 50p to GH¢1. A sachet of water is 10p.

Many Ghanaians have their main meal at midday, meaning the Western habit of rushing out for a quick sandwich or salad is only just beginning to be popular through places like Little India Sunshine Bar (see p41), and cafés such as Deli France (see p48) and Café des Amis (see p44). Eating out in the evenings, Ghanaians tend to head to restaurants at around 8.30pm – however, by 11.30pm most places will have closed their doors or will be turfing you out.

Bella Roma **Italian**

Fresh and bold Mediterranean flavours reign at this friendly Italian eatery. It's recently been expanded, and diners have a choice between an indoor restaurant area, outdoor patio, or lounging on the banquettes in the bar area. Patrons devour Italian staples packed with combinations of smoky black olives, rich cheese, tender artichokes, full-bodied passatas and cured meats. Mains include tagliata with parmesan and rucula (GH¢45), but most people opt for the pizzas (GH¢28 on average), which are superb – giant bubbling discs liberally topped. For a loaded treat, the Quattro Stagioni has mushrooms and artichokes aplenty, and the piquant Diavolo is a simple pleasure of salami drizzled with chili oil. *Off Cantonments Road (Oxford Street), behind Frankies (024 7474 007). Open 6pm-late. Main courses GH¢9-20.*

Buka **Ghanaian & Nigerian**

Conveniently situated close to the centre of Osu, Buka is, without question, one of the best lunch spots in the city. More often than not it has the full tables to show for it. Set on the first floor, there's a sense of escape from the throng, with lively music and wraparound wooden trellises adding to the ambience. The food itself hinges largely on



the folks at Chase (see p43) put this right in December 2012. The Osu location should see it become pretty popular. Chase have done a professional job at their Labone location and this seems to have carried through to El Paso with the service. It's pretty much what you'd expect from a Tex-Mex style Mexican restaurant outside of Mexico – tacos, burritos, fajitas, but there's also pizzas, steaks and whopping burgers (GH¢35). It's not that cheap, but there are some good lunch specials.

14th Lane, off Cantonments Road (Oxford Street), behind Koala Supermarket, Osu (0302 763 220054 633 3444, facebook.com/Chaseelpaso). Open 11am-11.30pm Mon-Thurs, Sun; 11-1am Sat, Sun. Main courses GH¢20-35.

Country Kitchen **Ghanaian**

You would have thought, judging by its clientele of government officials, the occasional tribal leader and even the Reverend Jesse Jackson (whose picture in the restaurant hangs in pride of place) that Country Kitchen is an upmarket joint. However, the main appeal here is hearty home cooking that remains true to Ghanaian classics. The atmosphere is as relaxed as the staff, but the food is freshly cooked. *Fufu, banku* and jollof rice each come with a choice of chicken, beef, mutton or fish, usually 'red fish'. The larger grilled tilapia comes with *banku*, a bowl of water, washing up liquid and a lack of cutlery. It offers a take-away and delivery service.

2nd Ringway, Roberto Road (0302 229 107). Open 7.30am-9.30pm daily. Main courses GH¢9-25.

DeliFrance **Café**

Previously One More, this location is now a new branch of the excellent café and bistro DeliFrance. See p48 for a full review. *11th Lane, off Cantonments Road (Oxford Street), Osu, immediately adjacent to Venus. Open 9am-midnight daily.*



Little India Sunshine Salad Bar

Dynasty Restaurant **Chinese**

For almost 20 years, Dynasty has dominated Osu's fancier eating scene. This upmarket and highly regarded Chinese restaurant attracts a steady flow of business people and young wealthy lovers with its authentic cuisine and slick service. Alongside the usual suspects on an extensive menu are some interesting dishes including Shu Maid Peking dumplings and braised sea cucumber with seafood hotpot. *Oxford Street, and 5th Lane (0302 775 496). Open noon-3pm, 7-11pm daily. Main courses GH¢12-30. Credit MC, V.*

Firefly Lounge Bar

International

While the dim lighting and pumping tunes advertise it as a drinkers' hangout, Firefly Lounge Bar also has a comprehensive international menu to accompany its premium spirits. A selection of tapas is a tasty and swift re-fuel for barflies, as is the selection of Middle Eastern dips (GH¢18-28), with crisp slices of French bread for ladling fresh hummus, baba ghanoush and labne. Mains include steaks and Spanish classics such as saltimbocca. The fries are the perfect alliance of crisp and fluffy, and the goat's cheese croquettes are as wonderful as they sound. As a sophisticated nightspot, Firefly is faultless; as a restaurant, it has some real strengths and sophisticated flavours, but the menu could benefit from a couple of tweaks to back up the price tag. *11th Lane, Embassy Road (0302 777 818, Facebook page). Main courses GH¢20-40. Open 5pm-late Tue-Sun.*

Frankie's **International**

An Oxford Street institution, Frankie's passes its hours drawing in a steady supply of snack-seeking locals. It's ideally placed to cater for those gotta-grab-something moments – whether that's a mid-morning ice cream, a lunchtime mixed grill or a post-bar burger. In a separate section is The Lounge, a little lounge and bar serving a slightly different menu of continental dishes to the main restaurant. It's a quiet place for a reasonable sandwich or chips with a beer in the afternoon, when the cold air-conditioning offers respite. *Cantonments Road (Oxford Street) (0302 773 567, www.frankies-ghana.com). Open 7am-11.30pm Mon-Thur, Sun; 7am-midnight Fri, Sat. Main courses GH¢9-25.*

Heritage Indian Restaurant **Indian**

The Ghanaians are fans of Indian food, and Heritage often gets pointed to as one of the best curry houses in the capital. The atmosphere inside is elegant and quiet, with some fabulously detailed Indian carvings on display. The food is equally pleasing, authentic and spicy. Service is attentive, but relaxed.



New

Santoku Restaurant & Bar **Japanese**

Santoku is the best restaurant in Ghana right now. There are other pretenders to the throne opening up soon, but the blend of incredible food, effortless service, and truly well-designed surroundings make this a cut above the rest. Firstly, the food. Think Nobu, and you're just about there. In fact the team from Nobu London helped head chef Mohammed Ayres with the menu, and the results are excellent. Japanese chef Daisuke Yoshizaki creates beautiful-looking plates of food that deliver on the taste front too. Santoku's signature dish is pan-fried scallops with foie gras and orange tobiko – a stunning plate filled with the decadent flavour of the ingredients, yet fresh and light. The prawn tempura is light, allowing the prawn flavours to come through, and the tuna and salmon sashimi with ginger, garlic and hot olive oil that just lightly cooks parts of the sashimi deepens the depth of flavour. Add in expertly mixed cocktails, design by Hubert de Givenchy (it's all about the details), a seductive terrace bar that mixes some of the most inventive drinks in Accra (including the only place you can get sake), and it's a heady and hedonistic combination. There's also a private dining room that seats 18. Santoku is an innovative restaurant, especially for Ghana, and we look forward to the team's next development. Ground Floor, Azure, Villaggio Vista, Tetteh Quarshie Interchange (0544 311 511, www.santoku-restaurant.com). Bar & lounge open 5pm-1am daily; restaurant 6.30am-midnight. Main courses GH¢25-100. Credit AmEx, MC, V.

Off Salem Road, near Papaye (0243 255 705, 0302 785 252). Open from 6pm daily. Main courses GH¢9-20.

Island Spice

Jamaican

Is there any better dish than a true Jamaican jerk chicken? Island Spice are purveyors of fine Jamaican food, catering for Ghana's sizable Jamaican population and those who love the food, such as curried goat, beef patties, as well as a good selection of veggie food. Eat in (ping the bell for service!), take away or delivery.

The Health Bar, Pippa's Health Centre, 5th Ringway Link, Ringway Estates, (020 605 9985). Open Mon-Fri 11am-7pm; bookings only Sat&Sun. Main courses GH¢15-20.

TOP TIP!

Hands on
In traditional restaurants, dishes are often eaten with the right hand. Water bowls are provided.

Leonardo da Vinci's **Italian**

This Italian bistro specialises in delicious pastas, a variety of meats and a fully stocked bar. The menu is varied. *Danquah Circle, Fourth Floor, Black Caesar Building (054 283 5055). Open noon-3pm, 7.30pm-11.30pm Wed-Mon. Main courses GH¢8-30.*

Little India Sunshine Salad Bar **Indian & salads**

It's tempting to say that Little India does the best salads in Accra. There's little doubt that it has the broadest selection – there are 29 different varieties in all, and portions are generous. As well as its salads (split into seafood, vegetarian and chicken categories), there's also an assortment of curries and wraps that are very popular with expats. *11th Lane (0302 780 599). Open 9am-5pm Mon-Sat. Main courses GH¢8-15.*

NourishLab Smoothies **Café**

This smoothie bar in the heart of Osu is good for health-conscious folk, or those who haven't seen a piece of fruit for a couple of days. There's a wide selection of smoothies made with milk and yogurt. It only takes a couple of minutes to get one and they come thick and full of goodness. Particularly good is the new selection of guava and passion fruit options. The bar also offers basic snacks: there are salads in take away boxes and quiches and pies. There is free wireless access. *Behind Eye Emporium, Off Cantonments Road (Oxford Street) (0243 939 855). Open 8.30am-10pm daily.*

Safari French Restaurant & Pizzeria **French & pizzas**

The Livingstone Safari restaurant is now in bespoke premises lifting its status as one of Accra's best French restaurants even higher. The new terracotta building is light and airy, with a bar area and tables at spacious intervals. The menu sits alongside daily specials, which can include dishes such as roasted figs with goats cheese and honey scallops in provençal sauce, onion soup (of course), and for mains moules et frites and boudin noir de campagne. There are also pizzas from the kitchen's wood-fired oven, as well as pasta dishes. *Off Cantonments Road (Oxford Street), opp Koh-i-Noor Indian restaurant (024 648 5135, livingstonesafari@hotmail.fr). Open noon-3pm, 6pm-11pm Tue-Fri, Sun; 6pm-11pm Sat. Main courses GH¢16-35. Credit V (3.5 per cent surcharge).*

Mamma Mia **Italian**

Set around an agreeably rustic courtyard some five minutes' walk from Oxford Street, Mamma Mia combines quality thin-crust pizzas cooked in a wood oven with an attractive setting, making it one of Accra's best options for Italian food – there's a selection of pastas. The outside area has a trattoria-like feel, with rough-hewn paving, terracotta tilework and warm, simple decor. Inside dining is also available. *Behind SSNIT Trust Hospital (024 435 5000). Open 6pm-10.30pm Tue-Fri; noon-10.30pm Sat-Sun. Main courses GH¢16-37.*



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Monsoon International

Three upmarket eateries in one, all of which are likely to leave you happily replenished. Monsoon's centrepiece is its swanky bar – a plush spot that wouldn't look out of place in any city. The main à la carte selection offers a good choice of seafood and meat options, while on the outside terrace there's access to two smaller eateries – a sushi parlour and a teppanyaki restaurant. *41 Cantonments Road (Oxford Street), above Osu Food Court (0302 782 307). Open 6pm-late Mon-Sat. Main courses (from à la carte menu) GH¢16-35.*

Noble House Chinese Chinese

Noble House is one of the longest-serving and most popular Chinese restaurants in Accra. It is affiliated with the equally popular Heritage Indian, and both are known for their good service. Both also blend the cuisines, so you'll find Indian dishes too in its telephone book-sized menu. There's a new branch that has opened in Kumasi. *Near Ebenezer Presby Church, Salem Road, Kukuhiill (0302 785 151, 0243 439035). Open noon-3pm, 7-11.30pm daily. Main courses from GH¢15.*

Supreme International

Supreme is the lightest and airiest café and restaurant in Osu, but it can lack atmosphere. This is a continental café that does a little bit of everything. There's a patisserie and also an ice cream counter. The bar in the centre serves the usual array of drinks, but most visitors choose to sit down to a menu of salads, burgers, pizzas and pastas. *11th Lane, off Cantonments Road (Oxford Street), Osu (0249 993 993). Main courses GH¢10-30. Open 7am-11.30pm daily.*

Zion Thai Thai

Find fragrant Thai dishes cooked by a talented Thai chef at this lively little eatery. The menu offers all the Thai classics – from spring rolls and chicken satay to stir fries, noodle soup and a selection of curries – and there are plenty of vegetarian options, including a tasty starter of tofu triangles with sweet and sour sauce and crushed peanuts. The sweet and silky red curry sings with coconut and aromatic basil leaves, and a refreshing selection of tangy Thai salads offer accompaniment. The *praa gung* in particular has a great kick, with its steamed shrimp and kaffir leaves doused in lemon juice, fresh onion and chilli. *Mission Street, Osu Papaye Down (0243 610 108, zionthairestaurant@yahoo.com). Open noon-11pm Tue-Sat; 4pm-11pm Sun. Main courses GH¢10-20.*

BUDGET

Barcelo's Fast food

This branch of Accra's favourite chicken chain also has a bakery and an ice cream parlour. Think Nando's

WHAT'S ON THE MENU

Navigating the Ghanaian food

The basics

Aduane Food
Akawadu Banana
Amadaa Fried plantain
Ampesi Plantain and yam
Banku Corndough
Bodie Plantain
Borodo/Panu Bread
Enam Meat
Gari Cassava dried or grated
Momone Sun-dried fish
Nsuomnam Fish
Ode Yam

Breakfast & snacks

Boflot Doughnut
Ekwei bemi Boiled sweet corn kernels
Koko Corn or millet porridge with milk or sugar
Nuhuu Cocoyam porridge
Rice water Rice pudding

Dishes

Abenkwain Palm nut soup
Fufu Pounded yam, cassava or plantain

Gari foto A cassava and egg dish mixed with other ingredients
Groundnut soup Spicy stew with meat or fish
Jollof rice Spicy rice with meat or chicken
Kelewele Spicy fried plantain
Kenkey Steamed fermented cornflour balls
Klako Deep-fried plantain dough
Kokonte Cassava dish
Kontomire Cocoyam leaves
Kyinkyinga Beef with vegetable sauce
Omo tuo Mashed rice balls with stew or soup
Palava sauce Spinach or leaf sauce
Red red Spicy bean stew
Shito Hot pepper sauce, sometimes with prawn or fish
Suya Spicy kebab
Tatale Pounded and fried plantain
Waakye Rice and red beans, often with meat, fish and spicy sauce

KFC Fast food

Yes, this is a KFC. But as KFCs go, it's one of the more eye-catching – largely owing to a gigantic bargain bucket on a pole out front that glows well into the night. The franchise has been a huge success and there are now branches in the Melcom Plus building in the North Industrial Area and Marina Mall (*see p49*). *Oxford Street (0302 963 086). Open 11am-11pm Mon-Thurs; 10am-1am Fri-Sun. Main courses GH¢10.*

TOP TIP!

Taking time
Service in Accra can be pretty slow. Make sure to go with plenty of time, and not to arrive hungry!

Osu Food Court International

Sitting directly below Monsoon, Osu Food Court provides a more family-focused and less smoky alternative to its upstairs neighbour. Take your pick from Galito's Flame Grilled Chicken, Pizza Inn, Chicken Inn and Creamy Inn. *41 Cantonments Road (Oxford Street) (0302 783 444).*

Labone & Cantonments

EXPENSIVE

Captain Hook's Restaurant Seafood

Located in Cantonments near the Goethe-Institut, Captain Hook's is Accra's most popular seafood restaurant for well-heeled residents. The decor is inevitably nautically themed, but tastefully so. Appetisers include lobster tail with smoked salmon and dill sauce, and snail *facon du chef*. Mains include sole

meunière, red snapper and lobster, as well as steaks and other well known international dishes. *4 Kakramandu Street, Cantonments (0302 762 228). Main courses GH¢29-45. Open 11.30am-2.30pm, 6pm-midnight Mon-Sat. Credit AmEx, MC, V.*

Le Must French

For 20 years, Le Must has been a force in the upmarket eateries of Accra, with diners including Jacques Chirac, Will Smith and Stevie Wonder. For a while Le Must was losing out to some of the newer high-end restaurants, but its recent refurbishment should put it back firmly on the business/diplomatic circuit. The food remains as good as it ever was, with its signature dish, the Lobster Thermidor (GH¢54), still a favourite. It's also the place to find your Baron P de Rothschild bottles (GH¢115), along with a fairly reasonable selection of wines at more affordable prices. Also updated in the refurbishment are the outdoor seating areas (with barbecue), and two private dining rooms seating up to eight and 14 respectively. There's a decent quality fast food outlet next door too. *28 Orphan Crescent, (0302 785 731, www.lemust-france.com). Main courses GH¢30-54. Open noon-3pm, 6pm-11pm Mon-Sat. Credit AmEx, MC, V.*

MID-RANGE

Chase International

Chase is split into three areas: an outdoor patio, an indoor restaurant and the Lounge – an upmarket restaurant and sushi bar. The food in the café area starts from 7am with breakfast, and it's open until late serving salads, sandwiches, burgers (GH¢18), pizzas and Ghanaian chicken dishes. The best bets are the Lebanese platters. The lounge has a separate, and more expensive, menu with pasta dishes and mains including lamb brochettes and a seafood platter. Alongside is a wide range of sushi and sashimi. *Olooti Lane, off Josiah Tongogari Road, opp Labone Coffee Shop (0302 778 477, www.chasefastfoods.com). Open 7am-12.30am Mon-Thur, Sun; 7am-2.30am Fri, Sat. Lounge noon-11.30pm Mon-Thur, Sun; noon-12.30pm Fri, Sat. Main courses GH¢12-25.*

Churchese International

This restaurant and play place, by the Morning Star School, off the Danquah Circle, is a handy stop-off for families. For the children there's a bouncy castle and expansive games room, plus other activities that will entertain most ages, while the parents can hide in the restaurant that serves Ghanaian dishes, as well as fried chicken and other items. Healthy options include a juice bar, or a drink in the coffee shop. *27 Orphan Crescent, North Labone (0302 763525). Open call for details.*

Headlines Hospitality African
The restaurant in Headlines Hospitality centre (there's also a function room, bedrooms and a salon nearby) is a popular lunchtime spot. The buffet includes Ghanaian classics, as well as dishes from across West Africa such as yam, plantain and *fufu* with a variety of stews. By night, there is a bar and nightclub called Twist (*see p38*). *Number 8, 5th Circular Road, Cantonments (0302 772 179, www.headlines.gh.com). Open 12.30-4pm Mon-Fri. Buffet GH¢40.*

Labone Coffee Shop Café
Stick around long enough and you become a landmark in Ghana. Since opening in 1995, Labone Coffee Shop has been the point from which other Labone shops and restaurants base their directions. This is a relaxed place, half inside and half outside on a terrace (overlooking a car park), and is a common meeting point for a quick beer and a snack before moving to more upmarket establishments. *Olooti Lane, off Josiah Tongogari Road (0302 761 491). Open 9am-11pm Mon-Sat; 9am-11pm Sun.*

Le Tandem Restaurant French
It's always a good sign when restaurant staff look upbeat and happy. Le Tandem, with its amiable service and slightly hidden-away East Cantonments location, seems to be a popular choice for politicians, diplomats and similarly high-profile diners. The restaurant, with its warm red interiors, sits at the upper end of the scale in terms of the French-influenced menu. Imported options include beef with marrow and sautéed potatoes, confit of duck and veal escalope. *6 Mankralo Street, East Cantonments (0302 762 959). Main courses GH¢10-25. Open noon-2pm, 7pm-1am Mon-Fri; 7pm-1am Sat.*

Maquis Tante Marie African
There are two branches of Maquis Tante Marie. The newer is in Accra Mall, but the original Labone branch is the most atmospheric. All the seating is open-sided and the tasteful bamboo furniture and bright yellow tablecloths add to the exotic vibe of the place. The menu is definitively African with authentic dishes predominantly from Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, such as tilapia and *banku*, *nyama choma* (grilled, spiced meat, usually mutton) and fish *yassa* (grilled in a tangy lemon marinade). *5th Norla Link near Metro TV (0302 778 914, www.maquistantemarie.com). Open 11.30am-11pm daily. Main courses GH¢10-22. Other location Accra Mall (0224 322 5181).*

Melting Moments Café
A pleasant café in Labone, Melting Moments has excellent pastries, bread and coffee. Although it's an established place for a long brunch,



Recommended

Nicolino's **Italian**

The best pizza in town? Despite stiff competition from Bella Roma and Mamma Mia, the wood burning pizza oven at Nicolino's and a super tasty crust pip the other two. The set up is professional too, the staff are efficient and courteous, but it's the head chef Humberto Dettori (who will be cooking at a new opening soon) that has come to Ghana with real provenance – his previous posting was under two Michelin-starred chef Douglas Santi in Rome. Nicolino's couldn't have a better location – it's in the pleasant grounds of the Alliance Francaise (see p61), in a breezy, open-sided area. Pizzas such as a Libanese with halloumi and zaatar, or Toscana with spicy sausage arrive on an artfully rustic piece of wood, but if you're really hungry, try the Nicolino's burger – a beef patty enveloped in pizza crust. Soon opening is a small terrace bar with a barbecue. It's also open for breakfast, which is Lebanese style. Alliance Francaise, Liberation Link, Airport Residential Area behind Opeibia House (0244 629 656). Open 7am-10.30pm Mon-Fri; noon-10.30pm Sun.

there's a good selection of light lunches and snacks throughout the day. More conventional menu items include chicken and chips and jollof rice. There are also sandwiches, wraps, paninis, fajitas and salads. *Number 78/5 1st Norla Street, Labone (0302 770 834). Open 7am-9pm Mon-Sat.*

meat and some fish, often eel. Customers queue up at a netted bar to pick from ingredients. Stringy noodles, hard-boiled eggs, various vegetables and hunks of steamed meat tumble in the *waakye* (only available on weekends) like an ungainly salad. The hub of the assemblage is *shitor*, a peppery condiment made of chilli, dried shrimp and ginger. On our last visit we saw a Bentley outside. Is it better than Katawodieso? See Food Fight, *p18* to find out. *Orphan Crescent Road (no phone). Open from noon daily. Main courses GH¢3-15.*

Katawodieso Ghanaian
More of a street stall, Katawodieso is almost legendary in Accra. It serves excellent traditional Ghanaian food – and the queues at lunchtime attest its success. Within a courtyard are bubbling pots of *banku*, *fufu* and *jollof* rice. The speciality here, however, is *waakye*. Walk in, take a seat if there is room, or order in the kiosk from one of waitresses and see what arrives. The restaurant has been at this location for a quarter of a century and is known by everyone in Accra. See Food Fight, *p18*.

Labone Junction (0244 365 868). Open from 7am daily. Main courses GH¢3-10.

Adabraka, Ridge & Asylum

MID-RANGE
Afrikiko Ghanaian & pizza
This is a hard place to define. On the premises is also the Thai Island, Café dez Amis and Toros Tapas Bar but the Afrikiko Restaurant is mostly based in a pleasant garden (despite being next to a busy road, it does seem pretty tranquil). There's an outdoor bar that also serves barbecued chicken, but most people come for the pizzas baked in a bespoke wood-fired oven. On weekend evenings there's frequent live music, but there's often music blasting out at any time. *Liberation Road (0302 229 997). Open 11am-9pm Mon-Thur, Sun; 11am-midnight Fri, Sat. Main courses GH¢8-20.*

Asanka Restaurant Ghanaian
This small restaurant has an upmarket local feel about it. Under low bamboo ceilings and with African motifs painted on the walls, the place has a relaxed family atmosphere. The small menu is 100 per cent Ghanaian and one of the most authentic in Accra. The *banku* and tilapia are particularly good here, but most dishes are a decent bet. For the uninitiated, the water bowls and liquid are to wash your hands with once you have finished digging in with your fingers. *Ring Road, next to Bus Stop Restaurant and Bar (0302 220 930). Main course GH¢7-20. Open 8am-9pm daily.*

Khana Khazana Indian
In keeping with Accra's penchant for hiding away great eateries and bars, Khana Khazana is literally sat behind a petrol station. What you find really is surprisingly charming. A thatched dining area overlooked by trees shades tables clad in green and white checked table cloths, while the Indian owners sizzle up an abundance of South and North Indian cuisine. There are some Chinese and Thai options too, but as they do such justice to their native dishes, it seems a travesty to opt for anything but. For an affordable lunchtime fill, there is a large selection of *dosas* – savoury pancakes with crispy edges and spongy centres filled with the likes of paneer cheese and fresh onion. *Behind the ENGEN filling station, Kojo Thompson Road (0275834282, www.khanakhazanaghana.getafricaoonline.com). Open 9am-10pm Mon-Sun. Main courses GH¢6-12.*

Café dez Amis Café
Everything at Café Dez Amis is prepared from high quality ingredients. Reasonable prices and its central location make it a popular choice with the embassies, and when the president moves into Golden Jubilee House soon business should rocket. The service is casual and friendly. It's a good place for a brunch in the breeze, a sunset supper or a long lunch with friends, having meetings with colleagues or absorbing a book by yourself. Café Dez Amis offers live music, usually on Sundays. *98 Independence Avenue (0302 782 937, cafedezamis@gmail.com, Facebook page). Open 6.30am-10pm Mon-Sat; 10am-10pm Sun.*

Lexington International
On the former location of Champs, The Lexington is a swish new 'concept bar and restaurant'. It specialises in (excellent) cocktails, but it also does some fine food, including breakfasts. The dinner menu (from 5pm) has several salad and sandwich options, but the mains are more impressive with dishes including the classic of British gastropubs, such as beer battered sole fillet and seared beef fillet which has been sourced from South Africa – the burger is fantastic. The light bites menu is also very good – the dishes are GH¢12 each and a couple would suffice. You'll find a mini cheese board with cornichons (perfect with that expertly-mixed dry martini), and spicy chicken wings, but the small sliders are sensational – a juicy beef patty in a bun made in house. Wow. We're also pretty excited about the breakfast menu that has a Eggs Benedict (or Florentine) and Huevos Rancheros, plus some 'breakfast cocktails'. The Lexington is a very welcome option. *40 Ring Road Central, behind Paloma Hotel (024 095 9406, www.thelexingtonaccra.com). Open 5pm-midnight Mon-Fri; 10am-late Sat-Sun. Main courses GH¢12-30.*

Orangery Crêpes and Salad Bar International
Situated on Farrar Avenue, one of the oldest and most charming parts of Accra, the Orangery offers excellent fresh salads and freshly made soup including asparagus, pumpkin and mushroom. It's well known for a wide variety of sweet and savoury crêpes and excellent array of pastas and fresh seafood. It also offers home made ice cream and freshly baked bread and rolls. *Farrar Avenue, and Nsawam Road (0302 232 988). Open 10am-10pm Mon-Sat. Main courses GH¢4-15.*

Pataase International
Set in a multilevel open courtyard, the Paloma Hotel's restaurant is a pleasant place for an early evening meal once the sun has gone down. However, a thatched roof and palm trees offer shade during the day (there are some pretty odd life-size



statues to keep you company). The menu includes Ghanaian dishes such as *jollof* rice and *red red*, but also some Lebanese cuisine, kebabs and chicken and chips, with large pizza to share. The breakfast buffet is GH¢20. It is on the same complex as the Grill restaurant, which serves steak in a sports bar-style setting, but Pataase is the choice here. *Paloma Hotel, 40 Ring Road (0302 228 700, www.palomahotel.com). Open 6.30am-10.30pm daily. Main courses GH¢8-20.*

Thai Island Thai
This cosy restaurant is at the far end of the Afrikiko Complex, offering a garden bar and restaurant with outdoor seating. Inside, however, it's another world. Lit only by lights within bamboo dividers, this intimate restaurant is calm, cool and quiet. Duck is the most expensive item on the menu, but there's a wide range of other meats, and tofu. The food is of high quality and justifiably popular. *Afrikiko Leisure Complex, Liberation Road (0244 613 677). Open noon-10pm Mon-Sat. Main courses GH¢22-45.*

Toros Tapas Bar Spanish
The tapas revolution finally hits Accra, and with customary Latin style. It's a lovely, if uns subtle space (all red and black with pictures of bulls on the wall), that lends itself to a jovial atmosphere. There's a wide range of dishes costing between GH¢8-12, plus larger raciones from GH¢14 and up to GH¢32 for Iberian pork. Just pile them up and away you go. The menu is classic tapas: croquetas, meatballs, chorizo in red wine, patatas bravas, octopus salad, calamares, prawns in chili and garlic.

There is also paella – including the authentic version (with chicken). There are occasional live performances of flamenco and Spanish music. *Afrikiko Leisure Complex, Liberation Road (020 094667, 024 288 0163, www.torotapas.com). Open noon-11pm daily. Main dishes GH¢14-32.*

BUDGET
Heavy Do Ghanaian
Heavy Do chop bar is a well respected Ghanaian establishment best known for its hefty portions of *fufu* and palm nut soup. Situated just off of the hectic Kwame Nkrumah Circle, Heavy Do is an often-frenzied lunch spot well loved by Ghanaians and foreigners alike. The wide deep bowls of spicy soup, filling *fufu* and steamed meat are excellent options to fill yourself up. *Off Kwame Nkrumah Circle (024 608 1545). Open from noon daily. Main courses GH¢3-15.*

Dzorwulu

Choco'Pain Café
Choco'Pain is a lovely little café with pastries, sandwiches and sundaes. All its cakes are freshly baked on the premises everyday – no wonder the past few years have seen people travelling fair distances to pick up their breakfast. It serves crêpes and waffles, alongside more substantial lunchtime paninis. *Osu Badu Street (020 9130 655, facebook.com/pages/CHOCOPAIN/). Open 6am-8pm Mon-Fri; 7am-8pm Sat; 8am-7pm Sun. Other location Melcom Plus Complex, 2nd Palace Link Road, off Dadeban Road, North Industrial Area (020 913 0655).*

Airport Residential

MID-RANGE
Branche International
Branche, at the Golden Tulip hotel, is the kind of chic, understated hotel restaurant (or bar, lounge, call it what you will) that wouldn't feel out of place in any global five-star property. There's a full choice of Ghanaian dishes, as well as a large international buffet, and from 6pm the à la carte selection includes the likes of French onion soup, beef tenderloin and Atlantic lobster. There are also regular themed nights, such as Texas BBQ on Saturdays. Food can also be taken around the pleasant pool outside. It's reasonably priced for a hotel restaurant with burgers around GH¢25 and pasta around GH¢30. Its layout makes it a good place for a business dinner.

Golden Tulip Hotel, Liberation Road, Airport (0302 213 161, www.goldentulipaccra.com). Open 6.30am-10pm daily. Main courses GH¢21-36.

Holiday Inn Accra Airport
The Holiday Inn's location, right by the airport, makes it a key consideration for a quick lunch or a business meeting, where you're guaranteed a decent service. There are three eating options at the hotel: La Cabana Pool Bar & Restaurant, the Safari Lounge Bar and the Wiase Restaurant. The pool bar is a decent spot with a menu of snacks – pizza, chicken wings – but it's the fish specials that are the best bet. On Friday nights it gets busy. The Safari Bar, as well as guaranteeing a

Local flavours, international service

Whether President Obama dived in the pool here, ate half a grilled spicy guinea fowl with vegetables and enjoyed a fine cocktail, we can't be sure. But it is where the leader of the free world chose to stay on his 2009 visit to Ghana. This is a Holiday Inn by name, but not by nature. The Holiday Inn Accra is one of the very the best accommodation options Ghana has to offer the discerning visitor. There are many reasons for this. Its location is unbeatable – it sits within minutes of the airport, a swiftly developing area that is, whisper it, the centre of both business and pleasure in Accra. The rooms are superb – a cut above Accra's usual offering. They're clean, spacious and fitted with all the

technological advances you'd expect from a five-star hotel – there's a room for your bodyguard if you take the presidential suite, you know, just in case. But there are two areas that set the Holiday Inn apart from the rest: service and food. Good service, as regular visitors will know, is hard to come by in Accra (and that's being diplomatic), but at the Holiday Inn, you can expect it to match American standards, with an added dose of African charm and a very wide smile. The staff here are quick, friendly and discerning. That draft beer will arrive quickly, and your meal will be there in a shot – they also promise a sandwich in five minutes in the Safari Bar if you need something quick. But chances are you'll want to linger over the food. It's goooood.



Good food, good times

There are three places to eat at the Holiday Inn: La Cabana Pool Bar & Restaurant, the Safari Bar and Wiase Restaurant. Each has a different vibe, and different menu, but all have something interesting and focus on quality.

La Cabana Pool Bar & Restaurant

The Holiday Inn pool is a ridiculously inviting sight at any time of day, but as the sun is setting over the Black Star of Africa, a quick dip followed by an ice cold beer around the pool is almost perfection. The Pool Bar has its own snack menu

and light meals designed for picking at on a balmy evening. On the menu, there's always a seafood jambalaya, a steak sandwich (with a truly great Virgin Mary tomato relish – we want the recipe), crispy pizzas and chicken wings, the latter trumping those at Hooters! But the specials board is where the chef really has fun. Picking the fish hoicked from the Atlantic each morning, depending on what looks good, Head Chef Leslie Quarmyne then decides the specials.: they might include grilled barracuda steak, grouper, or a Ghanaian favourite, snapper. Or perhaps the astonishingly good grilled spicy guinea fowl. On Friday

nights, the Pool Bar is buzzing – come early to get a seat.

The Safari Lounge Bar

Stay in Accra long enough, and you soon get to know the best bars. Take speedy service, combine it with soccer on the TV, live but unobtrusive music from the grand piano of an evening and a top-notch food selection, and you get a busy bar and the perfect place to hold a meeting. The place means a lot when you're conducting business – we'd trust the Holiday Inn every time. What of the menu? Well, there's a sandwich in under five minutes if you're in a rush,



Holiday Inn recipes from Head Chef Leslie Quarmyne

Chicken/goat light soup

- Ingredients**
(Soup can be made with either chicken or goat)
- 500g diced goat or half a chicken, diced
 - 6 whole tomatoes
 - half a kpakpo shito (or hot pepper)
 - 10g ginger
 - 10g garlic
 - 2 onions
 - 50g tomato puree
 - salt
 - 1 garden egg (substitute with an aubergine)
 - fufu, banku or rice

- Method**
1. Wash ginger, garlic, chilli, one of the onions and three of the tomatoes, drain, place in blender, season, and blend to a paste.
 2. Place the mix on the meat and marinade for 10 minutes
 3. Place the meat in a pan and cook gently for 10 minutes
 4. Add tomato puree cook and cook for 10 minutes, then add 500ml of water and simmer until the meat is tender
 5. Dice and add the remaining three tomatoes, the diced aubergine, and the last chopped onion. Cook for 30 minutes.
 6. Remove onions and tomatoes and pass it through the blender, then add to soup again and bring to a simmer. Season to taste.
 7. Serve with fufu/banku or rice

Yam oto

- Ingredients**
- 1/2 piece medium yam
 - 50ml palm oil
 - 1 onion, chopped
 - roasted ground nuts
 - boiled eggs
 - seasoning

- Method**
1. Peel yams, cut into 1/2 inch cubes and wash.
 2. Boil yam in salted water until cooked, strain, season and mash until smooth.
 3. Add palm oil.
 4. Add chopped onion and seasoning, then mash again.
 5. Serve with roasted ground nuts and boiled eggs.



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but you may want to tuck into the grilled mini calamari, oak smoked salmon, or tiger prawns in garlic, olive oil, lemon juice and caper butter. But to be honest, the Lobster Newburg is our favourite: poached lobster with madeira and sherry reduction, finished with cream liaison. Well, that and the Chicken Ballotine Chasseur.

Wiase Restaurant

Everyone loves a buffet, but there's nothing quite like this at your usual Holiday Inn. At every mealtime, the hotplates and tables groan under the weight of beautifully presented food from

around the world. You'll find international classics such as a great Steak Diane, lobster and fish and chips, but the real treat is the Ghanaian food where you'll find a wider selection across one mealtime than anywhere else in Accra. This is especially true of the Sunday lunch offering, where you'll find a huge array of Ghanaian and West African dishes. And the best thing? You can just keep going back and trying all the food. If you want to try some traditional dishes – and you should – this is the place to do it. May we suggest the taste bud-popping goat soup (see recipe right), the spicy kelewele and the red red.

sandwich in five minutes, offers some enticing food such as grilled calamari and Lobster Newburg. The Wiase Restaurant puts on an impressive buffet every breakfast, lunch and dinner time. It's the Sunday lunch, however, that is really interesting with a very wide range of traditional, and well cooked dishes. If you want to try the best of Ghanaian cooking in one go, come here on a Sunday lunchtime. The buffet is quite an experience. *Plot 19 & 20 Airport City (0302 740 930, www.holidayinn.com). Main courses GH¢30-50.*

Il Cavaliere Pazzo Italian

In one of the most prestigious spots in the city, overlooking the Polo Club's field, Il Cavaliere Pazzo rises to the occasion. It's also one of the most impressive buildings in Accra, making effective use of wood, both on the interior and exterior. It's refreshingly understated – the polo field is the focal point. The menu is unwaveringly Italian, with genuine risottos, gnocchi and ravioli with spinach and ricotta – and it is consistently good. The service is among the best in city. *Accra Polo Club, Liberation Road, Airport (0302 823 131, Facebook page). Open 12.30-3.30pm, 7.30-11.30 Mon-Sat; 7.30-11.30 Sun. Lounge open 3.30-7pm Mon-Sat. Main courses GH¢18-40.*

La Chaumiere French & African

La Chaumiere's sophisticated French dishes have been catering to Accra's discerning diners for more than a decade. There's a smattering of North African flavours for good measure – dishes such as grouper with harissa and mint yoghurt – but the mainstay is classic French cuisine, from a crispy Nicoise salad to a wonderfully thick and sticky onion soup au gratin. Lighter options include lobster tails in ginger butter. For dessert it has to be *crème brûlée*. *215 Liberation Road, opp Woolworths (0302 772 408). Open noon-2.30 and 7.30pm-11.30pm Mon-Fri; 7.30pm-11.30pm Sat. Main courses GH¢14-35.*

NEW Santoku Restaurant & Bar Japanese

See picture review p41.

MID-RANGE

DeliFrance Café

DeliFrance are seemingly slowly taking over Accra – there are now branches everywhere, including in the Marina Mall, Supreme in Osu (see p43) and next to Venus, also in Osu. Iced cupcakes, golden pastries, crunchy baguettes and bulging paninis are the staples at this very European of cafés. Baguette fillings include the likes of bresaola, parmesan and olive oil. These cafés are little air-con-fresh pockets of calm all over the city. *Volta Street (302 770 233). Open 7am-8pm Mon-Sun.*



Josie's Cuppa Cappuccino

Escapade Café/Bistro International

All the food on the menu at this new café and bistro is prepared by the chef using the freshest local ingredients. There's a mid-week special menu offered alongside the à la carte choice on Wednesdays and Thursdays. Delivery available. *Roman Ridge shopping arcade (0244 262 146). Open 7-11.30am, noon-3pm, 6-10pm.*

Josie's Cuppa Cappuccino Café

This café serves light lunches and brunches. Sandwiches are popular, especially the calorific chicken, cheese, bacon and avocado version. Apart from sandwiches, the menu contains rice and chicken dishes, lots of salads, burgers and a breakfast menu. The salads make it a favourite for those who prefer a healthy approach to their lunch. *3rd Close Ringway, off Volta Street, Off Partrice Lumba, Airport residential area (024 820 4441, www.cuppacappuccino.com). Open 7.30am-7pm Mon-Sat.*

NEW Nicolino's Italian

See picture review p44.

Osteria Michelangelo Italian

Situated in a converted personal home-like environment between the Airport Residential neighbourhood and Dzorwulu, Michelangelo's Restaurant can be difficult to locate. The affable owner scours markets for the freshest ingredients. *House No 3, Nortei Abadio Street, opp Centre for Democratic Development (0302 762 792, 0302 762 791). Open from 6pm daily. Main courses GH¢10-30.*

East Legon

MID-RANGE

Luscious Temptation

This is a superior café/bar in a pleasant courtyard in the A&C

Square complex. And despite the cheesy name, it's a tasteful place to relax and enjoy pizzas, pastas, or some good sandwiches.

14 Jungle Road (0547 08921, www.ancsquare.com, Facebook page). Open 8am-late Mon-Sat; 11am-10pm Sun.

La Terrasse French

This simple, rustic eatery in East Legon whips up a wonderful array of authentic French crêpes – with sweet and savoury options stuffed with all manner of fillings. Savoury combos include bacon, *crème fraîche* and mushrooms, and a simple but moreish egg, cheese and ham. *Near the MJ Grand Hotel (302 544 176, www.laterrasse-creperie.com). Open Tue-Sun noon-11pm. Main courses GH¢10-20.*

The Venue International

The Venue is not the easiest place to find. Unfortunately, as its one of the best restaurants in the city. Seafood is a particular forte, with a popular selection of fresh fish and shellfish dishes, pretty much straight from the beaches. Pizzas here are also particularly well done, baked in the outside pizza oven. *Adjiringanor Road, left after first bridge, house number 3 (024 3323425, 0302 505 111, resthevenue@gmail.com). Open 5pm-11pm Mon-Fri; noon-11pm Sat and Sun. Main courses GH¢15-35.*

Accra Mall

EXPENSIVE

Rhapsody's International

As part of an established South African/Lebanese chain, Rhapsody's has the stylised decor and contemporary trimmings that would suggest, from flat screen sport to design-led bar stools. The menu offers an array of salads, burgers, steaks, snack platters and the like. There is a separate dining area. One great option is Rhapsody's Chicken

Espetada which is deboned chicken thighs skewered with spicy jalapenos and a sweet-chilli sauce. *Shops 66-68, Accra Mall, Spintex Road (0244 337 825, www.rhapsody.co.za). Open noon-midnight Sun-Thur; noon-2am Fri, Sat. Main courses GH¢16-42. Credit V.*

MID-RANGE

Maquis Tante Marie African

The Accra Mall branch is the newer of the two (the other is in Labone), but serves the same food, although some of the prices are slightly more expensive. The menu is African, with authentic, and mostly delicious, dishes predominantly from Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. *Accra Mall (0224 322 5181). Open 11.30am-11pm daily. Main courses GH¢10-20. Other location 5th Norla Link near DDB Media 1, Labone (0224 322 5181).*

BUDGET

Barcelo's Fast food

Specialising in chicken, this popular fast food joint was the second Barcelo's to open in Accra. The other is in Osu. It serves all manner of chicken and rice combinations, as well as burgers. *Tetteh Quarshie and Spintex Road, looking onto central courtyard (0302 933 784). Open 7am-11pm Mon-Thur; 7am-midnight Fri, Sat; 7am-10.30pm Sun. Main courses GH¢8-16.*

Beach

EXPENSIVE

Ghanaian Village at La Palm Royal Beach Hotel African

This attractive thatched restaurant with beachside tables at the back of La Palm Royal Hotel's expansive grounds make a delightful place to sample some of Ghana's most distinctive flavours. The buffet is easily the best place to eat in La Palm Royal. Try the simple but much-loved *red red* (bean stew) and delve into a bowl of chicken and peanut soup. There is often highlife music at weekends. *Labadi Beach (0245 353 610, www.gbghghana.net). Open 12.30pm-late daily. Main courses GH¢20-40.*

Labadi Beach Hotel International

The Labadi Beach Hotel is one of Accra's nicest hotels, with a reputation for smooth service. Its restaurants, although having undergone some changes recently, are still good. There's a buffet at lunch and dinner in the main restaurant (but the open bar overlooking the pool is much nicer). The à la carte options include some superb fish options including whole lobster at GH¢48, up to a fillet steak at GH¢52. *No 1 La Bypass, Labadi Beach Hotel (0302 772 520, www.legacyhotels.co.za). Open 7.30am-10.30pm daily. Main courses GH¢20-52.*

Shopping



La Maison

Fashion and design

The Ghana Fashion & Design Week showcases the depth of Ghana's exploding fashion scene

Accra's shopping scene has been evolving at a truly impressive pace in recent years, and this transformation is largely thanks to a burgeoning community of world-class clothing designers who've been tantalising the city's increasingly fashion-savvy population with bold, contemporary designs and glitzy new boutiques.

Nothing showcases the Ghanaian fashion industry's latest leaps and bounds more clearly than the runaway success of last year's inaugural Ghana Fashion & Design Week (www.ghanafashiondesignweek.com) – a wonderfully stylish sartorial celebration that is gearing up for a second helping this year on 11th-13th October.

"GFDW launched last year with a focus to put the emerging fashion and creative industry in Ghana on the international map," said a spokesperson for the event. "We had some great support from the international fashion industry, including VOGUE ITALIA coming on board as a partner for the first time in African history."

The 2013 event is promising to be just as dynamic and exciting as the last, with internationally-based designers joining celebrated Ghanaian-based fashion labels

such as the oh-so-sophisticated creations of Christie Brown, glamorous Brigitte Merki and up-and-coming Love April for a series of glammed-up shows.

"We aim to give Ghana's fashion industry an international voice and presence that it's not had before. And as the industry develops, and as Ghana develops as a country, we hope to create new opportunities for training and promotion within the fashion and design scene."

Designer shopping

To purchase your own personal collection of Ghanaian styles, browse the rails of one of Accra's increasing number of designer boutiques. In shiny Accra Mall, you'll find glitzy shoes and accessories in Jil Boutique (see p52), as well as the fun and flirty designs at Kiki Clothing (see p52). Over in Osu, the popular Christie Brown label celebrated the opening of its first boutique last year, filled with its statement jewellery and bold African prints (see p52). For an all-out deluxe shopping experience, the shopping centre at the Mövenpick

Ambassador Hotel (see p74) is stacked with designer names and exclusive boutiques. Colourful designs can also be found online at Afrodesiac Worldwide (<http://afrodesiacworldwide.com>).

Traditional souvenirs

Shoppers in Accra can also stock up on affordable, well-made souvenirs, such as the socially responsible offerings from Global Mamas (see p53), many of whose products are from women-led cooperatives around Ghana. Items include bold batik clothing for all ages and colourful jewellery made from recycled beads. For larger artisan pieces there's Wild Gecko

Handicrafts (p54), selling the likes of ceramics, textiles and furniture.

High-end treats for the home can be found in the decidedly luxurious selection on show at the Joe's Perspective Art Boutiques in the Mövenpick Ambassador Hotel (see p54) and Labadi Beach Hotel (see p76). But for those who fancy a full-on, no-frills Ghanaian shopping experience, delve into the heady and intense frenzy that is Makola Market (see p50).

Vogue Italia is a partner for the first time

Shopping centres

Accra Mall

Clothing boutiques, global sports brands and high-end furniture outlets populate the ground floor of Ghana's largest shopping mall. Glamorous African-inspired fashions fill the racks of Kiki Clothing (see p52) and a branch of African fabric specialists Woodin and Vlisco have a good range of prints. Also on the ground floor are familiar brands such as Levis, Puma and Swatch. A small food court includes fried chicken outlet Barcelo's and upmarket bar and restaurant Rhapsody's, and kids can let off steam in a central play area with a bouncy castle. Upstairs is the territory of Silverbird (see p62), which runs a well-stocked book and music store, as well as Ghana's only multiplex cinema showing blockbusters, Nollywood and Ghanaian films, and now a new bar Silver Lounge (see p36). *Tettah Quashie and Spintex Road (0302 823 040, www.accramall.com). Open 9am-9pm Mon-Sat; noon-6pm Sun.*

A&C Square

Set in Accra's prestigious East Legon residential community, A&C Square offers a mix of shopping, dining and entertainment – plus access to banking, health clinics and other services. There's a modern health club, Total Fitness Health Club (see p69) which has a swimming pool and children's play area, pleasant coffee shops and a good fruit and veg stall in the square. *Block 232, Jungle Rd, East Legon (302.515055, www.aancsquare.com). Open 9am-9pm Mon-Sat; 1-7pm Sun.*

NEW Marina Mall

The newest shopping centre in Ghana is Marina Mall in the ever-expanding Airport City area. There are three floors of shops, and a food court on the top level. There's a welcome branch of Delifrance, as well as fast food outlets including Maquis Tante Marie (see p44), a KFC and Marinas, which sells burgers and kebabs. A large balcony overlooks one of the more bizarre sights in Accra, a derelict Ghana Airways plane. Big names in the mall include Benetton and the French franchise Façonnable. Most of the ground floor is given to a large supermarket, one of the best for foreign goods in Accra, as well as Compu-Ghana, a technology store and pharmacy (054 916 3695), and kid's international clothing brand Chicco. Also inside is a branch of All Pure Nature (see p54), a pharmacy, and plenty of men's and women's fashion stores. There's a children's play area, but the video games are the source of most of the racket. This is already a popular mall.

Airport Bypass Road, Airport City, near Holiday Inn (www.marinamallghana.com). Open 8am-9pm Mon-Sat; 9am-9pm Sun.

Melcom Plus Complex

Across the three floors of this mall are dozens of concessions and individual stores that somehow meld into one. Distinct stores include Sony, Gracefield sports store, First Choice beauty salon and a small branch of Vidya bookshop. The rest is dominated by aisles of food, clothing, furniture, household and domestic goods. There is also Choco'Pain for a coffee and pastries. Children can be entertained on the mall's bouncy castle.

Melcom have added branches in Tema (Post Office Road, Traffic Light Meridian, opposite Vodafone Tema Community 1, 026 4922 600) and Kumasi (Prempeh 2nd Street, Adum, 322 045 578). A recent addition to the group is Melcom Travel and Tours Ltd. It can arrange tour packages to any destination. Contact the tour company at Melcom Plus, Kaneshie (Otublohum Street, North Industrial Area, PO Box GP56, 0302 252 984, 024 907636, travels@melcomgroup.com). *2nd Palace Link Road, off Dadeban Road, North Industrial Area (0302 221 784, www.melcomgroup.com). Open 8am-5pm Mon-Fri; 8.30am-3.30pm Sat.*

Supermarkets

Game Department Store

Americans have compared this place to Target. There's no clothing but it's a very comprehensive department store with just about everything else, from wines to flatscreen TVs, plus household appliances, home gym

Critic's choice
Accra's best shopping

1 Tebazile Unique jewellery with an A-list following, now in a new Osu location. See p53.

2 La Maison A carefully-curated selection of homeware, art and furniture is a lovely, airy space in Osu. See p54.

3 Woodin Gorgeous African fabrics available by the yard or in ready-made garments. Make sure to pick up a souvenir of this cloth. See p53.

4 Marina Mall The latest addition to Accra's malls has attracted more international brands to the country. See p49.

5 Christie Brown Sophisticated clothing and accessories fuse bold African prints with high-end design. See p52.



equipment and children's toys. It's pretty cheap for most things, helped by the fact much of the perishables are sold in large quantities. *Plot C11, Accra Mall, Tetteh Quarshie and Spintex Road (021 740 000, www.game.co.za). Open 10am-8pm Mon-Fri; 9am-8pm Sat; 11am-7pm Sun.*

Koala Shopping Centre

Koala is a large supermarket, popular with expats thanks to its range of international goods and handy Osu location – there is a car park outside. It also offers you basic foodstuffs, bakery, glassware, linens, cookware, electronics and lots more. There's a new branch in Airport Residential, off Volta Road *Danquah Circle, Osu (0302 765 665, www.koalashop.com.gh). Open 8.30am-9pm Mon-Sat; 11am-8pm Sun. Credit MC, V.*

Maxmart 37

All manner of modern luxuries – from global groceries to electrical goods – can be found at this three-storey supermarket. A good bakery and a large deli counter filled with cold meats and cheeses sit to the side of the downstairs food aisles, alongside stands generously stacked with slabs of well-known chocolate brands. On the first floor there's perfume, watches, jewellery, phones, TVs and a little coffee shop, and on the second is a small selection of bedding, glassware, candles and picture frames. Also at Maxmart East Legon (A&C Mall, 0302 518 881). *37 Liberation Road, opposite Golden Tulip Hotel (302 783 750, www.maxmartghana.com). Open 8.30am-8.30pm Mon-Sat, 11.30am-8.30pm Sun.*

Shoprite

The Shoprite Group of Companies, Africa's largest food retailer, operates in the Accra Mall. There's a wide selection of foods, including imported meats from South Africa. There's also a deli counter, a reasonable selection of wines and household goods. Where to look for those hard-to-find items.

Accra Mall, Tetteh Quarshie and Spintex Road (244 779 577, www.shoprite.co.za). Open 10am-8pm Mon-Sat; noon-6pm Sun.

Woolworth's

Woolworth's is Ghana's answer to Marks and Spencer. Like the British store, the South African-owned Woolworth's focuses on quality clothes (including a good children's section) and homewares. This is the place to pick up a last-minute slacks and shirt for golf or a reasonably priced suit and shoes. The main attraction for coming, however, is the selection of international foods and wines, including good muesli, frozen foods, teas and hard-to-find soya and rice milk. *Horizon Plaza, 60 Liberation Road, Woolworths Building, Airport Residential (024 913 8568). Open 9am-8.30pm Mon-Sat; 11am-8pm. Other location High Street, near City Car Park, Central Accra (0302 679 890). Credit MC, V.*

Markets

Kaneshie Market

Kaneshie Market is on the road out west of Accra. It's very much like Makola Market – a sprawling chaos of stalls, shops and street vendors. Everything you could possibly imagine can be bought here. It's also an important transport hub with *tro tro* and regional buses picking up and dropping off passengers.

However, if you wanted to see a market for the experience (and it really is an experience), Makola Market is more accessible. *Graphic Road and Ring Road West. Open approx 6am-7pm daily.*

Makola Market

The loosely defined borders of Makola Market enclose what might be seen as Accra's most dynamic commercial hub. It's certainly one of the most entertaining. Hot, noisy and insistent, it's an initially bewildering sprawl of kitchenware, jewellery, textiles, shoes and anything else

your cedi might conceivably buy, hawked from floors, racks, shelves, ceilings and head-perched baskets. Evangelical bands play on stairwells, clothes-filled alleys channel you down dead-ends, sea snails fill plastic buckets and rainbows of peppers lie in towering heaps. Forget the camera, it's best to just slip into the flow and enjoy it for what it is – a colourful open-air department store spread over several blocks. *Kojo Thompson Road and Independence Avenue. Stalls open approx 6am-7pm daily.*

Books and magazines

Mayan Book Centre

A good selection of reference books, particularly from the Oxford University Press. There's also a collection of classic novels. *4 Bamako Road, East Legon (0302 501 599). Open 9am-5pm Mon-Fri.*

Silverbird

Silverbird remains one of the city's best music and magazine stores – there's also a reasonable selection of books relating to Ghana, including many self-published titles. Bestsellers and business books make up much of the other shelves. It has the biggest assortment of international music releases as well as a great selection of highlife, hiplife and other African music. DVDs make up an increasing amount of shelf space, as does the machinery to play them. Magazines such as the *Economist*, *Time* and *Newsweek* are in the store on the same day as the rest of the world. *Accra Mall, Tetteh Quashie and Spintex Rd (0302 823 040, www.silverbirdghana.com). Open 9am-9pm Mon-Sat; 1am-9pm Sun. Credit V.*

Sy Tris

This airy bookshop overlooking Oxford Street claims to be able to procure any book from anywhere in the world so long as it is in print. The in-store collection is pretty sizable as it is though, with its lines of bookcases offering popular fiction, children's books, classic literature and teen novels – as well as indulging the Ghanaian affection for self-motivating how-to-get-filthy-rich-and-make-your-neighbour-proper-jealous books. You'll find the latest blockbuster and that copy of Marie Claire or Esquire you've been quietly pining for. Pull up a chair at one by floor-to-ceiling windows for views of the city below. There are sometimes comedy nights on here. *MarkCofie House, Oxford Street (0277 300 800, www.sytris.net). Open 9am-9pm Mon-Thur; 9am-12am Fri; 9am-9pm Sat.*

Vidya's Bookstore

Vidya's Bookstore is probably the best bookshop in Accra if you just

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want to pop in and find something interesting. There's an excellent selection of travel books, novels, non-fiction and international magazines, and some good books about Ghana. There are also books for all ages of children. There's a branch at the Melcom Plus Complex. *18th Lane, off Oxford Street, next to Ivory Coast Embassy, Osu (0302 781 005, www.vidyabookstore.com). Open 9.30am-6pm Mon-Sat.*

Fashion

Billabong

The international surfwear brand, originally from Australia, is now expanding through Africa. The emphasis is on T-shirts, shorts and swimwear for men and light summer tops, dresses and beachwear for women. *Horizon Plaza, 60 Liberation Rd., Woolworths Building, Airport Residential (0302 764 974). Open 10am-8pm Mon-Sat; 11am-6pm Sun. Credit V.*

Christie Brown

While the Christie Brown label has been exciting fashion folk for a while, it celebrated the official launch of its first boutique in Accra in February 2012. This high-design store is a sophisticated shopping venue where ladies with an eye for the stylish things in life can browse premium clothing and accessories. Christie Brown specialises in incorporating African prints into wearable high-street trends. Think statement jewellery, business chic and cocktail elegance. Since the brand was launched in 2008 the label has appeared on international runways and been stocked in boutiques in both Africa and abroad. *1st Lane, Osu (0244 418 477, www.christiebrownonline.com). Open 9am-6.30pm Mon-Fri; 10am-2.30pm Sat.*

Dreams by Nana

Self-billed as selling ‘modern clothing with the African touch’, Dreams does pretty much just that, and does it well. All the clothes are designed by Swedish owner Nanna Nilson – if you make a prior appointment, garments can be custom-made – and her carefully presented stock ranges from the traditional to the outré. There's also a notable array of hand-finished jewellery pieces for sale. *3rd Street, Osu, opposite the old American Embassy (024 403 3664). Open 11.30am-6.30pm Mon-Fri; 11.30am-4.40pm Sat.*

Eleanor's Closet

The simple idea behind Eleanor's Closet is to provide affordable quality clothing in Ghana (and soon elsewhere in Africa), something that has actually been hard to find. Most of the clothing carries the Eleanor's Closet label, and it's hoped it will continue its growth in the same way



H&M and Zara have done in Europe. This Osu shop stocks a lively selection for a woman's closet; from dresses for day and night to all the basics, as well as accessories such as sunglasses, bags and belts. *1st Ringway Estates, opp. Alexander Plaza Hotel, Osu (0206 123 680, www.eleanorscloset.com, [facebook.com/pages/Eleanors-Closet](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Eleanors-Closet)). Open 10.30am-7.30pm Mon-Sat.*

House of Damaris

The collection in House of Damaris is traditionally African, but with superb embroideries. The store sells both menswear and womenswear and garments are brightly coloured and made from top quality African print fabrics. *551/3 Asafoatse Nettoy Road, between GPO Wato Roundabout and Palladium (0302 664 129). Open 7.30am-5pm Mon-Fri; 8am-1pm Sat. Credit MC, V.*

Jil Boutique

This ‘lifestyle boutique’ has an abundance of colourful African-print dresses as well as a nice selection of stylish Italian shoes and sparkly accessories. The shop offers kaleidoscopic racks of individually designed long dresses, many adorned with stones. There are accessories such as necklaces with matching brooches and bracelets. Shoes by Italian designer Silvana are also stocked. *6th Lane, off Cantonments Road (Oxford Street) Osu (0244 436 9781, www.jilboutique.com). Open 9am-7pm Mon-Sat. Other location Shop G57, Accra Mall.*

Kiki Clothing

Run by the delightful Titi Ademola, this boutique sells dresses, traditional kaftans, bags and shoes. She has demonstrated her prowess on the international stage with bold yet wearable designs that sculpt traditional African designs into confident contemporary styles. She takes much of her inspiration from the amazing array of fabrics available in Makola Market. There is a good selection of children's clothes too, with colourful batik designs. Kiki-branded T-shirts are good

quality and go beyond a simple logo on the chest, but it's her own designs that you come for. *Accra Mall, Shop G39a, Tetteh Quarshie (020 817 4362, www.kikiclothing.com).*

Kwesi Nti

Kwesi Nti is the Prada or Gucci of Accra, with his muted colours in linen and silks with subtle borderings and edges in a range of fabrics and materials. He also designs a range footwear. He is quite rightly regarded as one of Accra's most sought-after designers. *25 Abebrese Street, Osu (024 437 8771, kwesinti@yahoo.com).*

MKO.GH

After working in the swanky shops of London's Mayfair and Bond Street, Mawuli Kofi Okudzeto returned to Ghana to open up his own store with an African angle. Taking inspiration from Ethiopia, Sudan, Ghana, Mali and the Songhai Empire, his clothes are gaining a hot reputation. Stevie Wonder and Don King happen to be fans. *2nd Ridge Link, Tabon Street, near Ecobank Development Centre, North Ridge (0302 974 166, www.mkogh.com). Open 8am-8pm daily.*

Puma

Puma make the shirts of the Black Stars – Ghana's national football team. While you'll see the jerseys all over Accra, mostly by the side of the road, this is where to pick up the original. There's also the usual array of trainers and sports clothing. *Accra Mall, Tetteh Quarshie and Spintex Road (0244 366 205). Open 10am-10pm Mon-Fri; noon-7pm Sat.*

Renée Q

Having gone from the corporate world to one of cutting edge fashion, Renée Q Boateng has expanded from the back of her car to a boutique by the Trade Fair. Renée's clothing line quickly caught our attention, in particular her bespoke T-shirts. The shirts can be custom made – choose your colour and ruffle and she'll put it together. For now the RenéeQ label is exclusively in Accra, however internet orders (www.reneeq.com,

www.facebook.com/ReneeQstyle) continue to flow in and purchases can be shipped worldwide (we recently saw her clothing on the streets of Toronto). The shop also sells her jewellery accessories – freshwater pearls, crystals, contemporary or traditional beads and custom-made couture pieces. She is also a talented make-up artist. *Trade Fair Road, opp Kpogas Furniture (0302 777 926, www.reneeq.com). Open 9.30am-7pm Mon-Fri; 10am-4pm Sat.*

Royal Dennis

This fashion designer's most interesting designs are based on Ghanaian kente cloth. His jackets, which fit together like a patchwork, are particularly attractive, but there are lots of other innovative designs, many of them leaning towards the party end of the spectrum. *Opp Presbyterian Church, Adabraka (0244 226 767, Facebook Page, www.royaldennisdesigns.com). Open 8am-7pm Mon-Sat.*

Stellar Deluxe

Another great addition to the Mövenpick's already pretty good retail scene is Stellar Deluxe, a very high-end outlet from the South African company. The store on the upstairs gallery is an intimate venue for trying on a pair of the latest Jimmy Choo styles. Need a statement handbag from Gucci or Dolce and Gabbana? This is the place. And if you want to make a splash in the fabulous Mövenpick pool, they have swimwear covered too.

Mövenpick Ambassador Hotel, Independence Avenue, Ridge (054 4337 433, www.stellar-africa.com). Open 10am-6pm Mon-Sat; 11am-6pm Sun. Credit AmEx, MC, V.

TM Lewin

Selling smart clothes for smart guys, the London-based brand TM Lewin is a men's fashion shop along the lines of Gap with well-designed off-the-shelf suits and accessories such as cufflinks and colourful retro ties, to more casual polo shirts. *Shop G38, Accra Mall, Tetteh Quarshie (0302 823 106, www.accramall.com). Open 10am-8pm Mon-Sat; 1pm-7pm Sun. Credit V.*

Viva Boutique

Viva has been supplying high-end clothes and accessories to the label-conscious urbanites of Accra for more than two decades. There's good reason for the boutique's continued success, primarily in the form of the broad selection of haute couture designs it incorporates. The top floor has an extensive range of shoes and bags from the likes of D&G to coo over. There's also a small menswear section. Viva has a new branch in Marina Mall. *809 11th Lane, Osu (0302 776 629). Open 10am-7pm Mon-Fri; 10am-5pm Sat. Credit MC, V.*

Woodin

One of four stores in Accra, this original Woodin store is hugely popular and forever filled with shoppers buying from its kaleidoscopic range of fabrics. Dominated by bold African wax prints, Woodin is highly regarded by professional fashion designers and seamstresses. While the fabrics dominate this branch, there is also a wide selection of clothes for men, women and children that are cut from the cloth. The branch in Accra Mall is more focused on simply designed clothes, but they stock fabric too. A new store has also opened at the Mövenpick. *Cantonments Road (Oxford Street), by Barclays (www.woodinfashion.com). Open 8am-7pm Mon-Fri; 9am-7pm Sat, Sun. Other locations Accra Mall (0302 823 066), A&C Mall.*

Vlisco

Dutch-owned Vlisco was established in 1846, and has since spread its colourful Dutch wax fabric designs across the world. Like Woodin they sell clothing and bags, but it's really all about the fabrics. And they tend to be louder and more colourful than Woodin's more muted offerings. Of the two stores, the Accra Mall is the flagship store, but there's a good selection in the Mövenpick store too. *Accra Mall, Tetteh Quarshie (www.vlisco.com). Open 8.30am-8.30pm Mon-Sat; noon-8.30 Sun.*

Fashion accessories

Amanda's Jewellery

These lovely handcrafted gold and silver traditional designs are showcased at the Novotel Hotel. *Novotel, Kojo Thompson Road and Castle Road, Adabraka (0302 220 803). Open 10am-5pm Mon-Fri; 10am-2pm Sat.*

Bags by Bernice & More

Bernice Ot-Ankra began making her own bags in 2002 and such was their popularity that she eventually opened her own shop. All the bags and accessories are unique using only Ghanaian handmade fabrics. The range also includes tablecloths, place mats, scarves, skirts and shirts. *Number 85, 4th Ring Way Estate, Osu (244 504 462, bagsbybernice@hotmail.com, Facebook page).*

Caliente

Aimed squarely at the high-end buyer, Caliente opened in September 2009 showcasing a range of the world's most prestigious goods. From the moment you step in, there's an appealingly moody vibe – the central floor is of tempered iron, dark-wood cabinets ring the room and metal flames lick the walls. The emphasis is on watches, fashion accoutrements and cigar accessories, and there's a strong Italian designer

influence, with names such as Versace, Moschino and Roberto Cavalli among the most prominent. *Accra Mall, Tetteh Quarshie and Spintex Road (0248 557817). Open 10am-7.30pm Mon-Sat. Credit V.*

Hakim Jewellery Jewelart

Tucked at the back of a white building on Oxford Street, Jewelart could easily go unnoticed. And for anyone wishing to pick up a unique piece of handcrafted silver or gold jewellery, that would be a shame. In the back room you'll find Georgette, a Lebanese lady who started the business with her late husband, and still mans several tables laden with crafted silver and gold pieces, many sporting African motifs. This little backroom is a far cry from a glossy, well-lit jewellery store, but there are some really beautiful pieces, and everything is priced by weight and crafted by three silversmiths in the workshop just next door. You may even be offered a Lebanese coffee as Georgette shows off her photo of when President Clinton visited the shop. Jewelart also has a jewellery cleaning service, and will make something up to a desired design. *Oxford Street (0245001414). Open Mon-Fri 10am-5pm; 10am-4pm Sat.*

Tebazile

Elizabeth Dankoro specialises in beautiful statement jewellery pieces, no matter what your budget. That Halle Berry and Cameron Diaz are fans probably tells you all you need to know. The Tebi brand is funky, chunky and colourful, but there are also more refined ranges available. *6th Street, off Oxford Street, Osu (0302 919 458, www.tebazile.com).*

Food and drink

Cave of Marina

Next door to Don Emilio (right), the Cave of Marina offers more budget options, but it still has a reasonable selection of higher-end international

wines. There's a good selection of international spirits and beers. *14th Lane, off Cantonments Road (Oxford Street), opp side of Koala Supermarket (0302 774 961). Open 9am-9pm Mon-Sat; 1-8pm Sun.*

Chocolate Avenue

There's plenty of the dark sweet stuff at this delightful chocolaters. The chocolate's all from Ghana. A huge selection is on offer, although it's not all edible – there is even a wide range of chocolate-based cosmetics. *75 North Ridge, opposite the Ghana Broadcasting House (0242 557 766). Call for details.*

Don Emilio

There are two branches of this purveyor of wine, directly opposite each other. However, from Oxford Street, the one on the right is by far the bigger. There is a wide choice of wines from across the globe. Alongside the wines is a superb selection of international spirits, including single malt whiskeys, vodkas and gins. *14th Lane, off Cantonments Road (Oxford Street), opp side of Koala Supermarket (0302 773 366, donemilio@4u.com.gh). Open 8.30am-9pm Mon-Sat; noon-8 Sun.*

S. Salis Wines and Chocolate

Pick up a box of homemade flavoured Ghanaian chocolates at this tiny store on a side road off Oxford Street. Boxes of pre-prepared flavours (the ginger is popular), start at six pieces for GH¢15, or order any flavour that takes your fancy – from martini to Irish cream. For extra indulgence, they also have a selection of champagne, wine and spirits. *Miami Street (also called Anumansah Street) (0277592017). Open Mon-Sat 8am-8pm.*

Stellar Catering

At Stellar Foods customers can find a variety of quality meat cuts and a wide range of imported meats from



South Africa. Products range from prime beef and deli meats to free-range chicken, lamb and pork. If you're having a barbecue, this is where to come. Also available at the shop are imported wines, condiments and international food brands. Stellar Foods also have a branch in Takoradi (0312 195 435) and an outlet in Tema opening soon. *5 Agbaamo Link, Airport Residential (0302 961 907, stellar.foods@stellar-africa.com, www.stellar-africa.com). Open 8am-5pm Mon-Fri; 9am-5pm Sat.*

Traditional crafts

AACD African Market

After the chaos of the Arts Centre, this shop in Osu is a bit of a relief. Much of the same items can be found in the many rooms of this large building, but the prices are fixed. All the usual Ghanaian knick-knacks can be browsed, alongside some older items, textiles and some pretty jewellery from recycled beads. *Abebresem Street (0302 778 105, aacdafricanmarket@4u.com.gh). Open 9am-6pm Mon-Sat. Credit MC, V.*

Arts Centre Market (Centre for National Culture)

This is a popular location for tourists wanting a one-stop-shop for arts and crafts. The stalls are crammed full of textiles, carvings, bags, musical instruments, clothing and jewellery. The stalls continue through the main hangar, and into an outdoor market which holds the more interesting treasures such as metal ornaments, drums, wood furnishing, antiques and leather goods. There is less hassle at the back of the market. All prices are negotiable. *28th February Rd, near Kwame Nkrumah Monument. Open 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri; 9am-3pm Sat; some stalls open Saturdays.*

Aid to Artisans Ghana

The main branch of Aid to Artisans Ghana is within the Artists Alliance Gallery. Set up to help local artisans create high-quality crafts and sell them at a fair price, this NGO has a wide range of objects for sale. These include furniture, jewellery, bags, wooden kitchen items and Kente cloth, both in contemporary and traditional styles. Items are also for sale in Elmina Castle, Kakum National Park shop and in the Centre for National Culture in Kumasi. *Artists Alliance Gallery, Omanyé House, Accra-Tema Beach Road, Labadi (0302 771 375, www.artistsallianz.com). Open 8am-5pm Mon-Sat; noon-5pm Sun.*

Global Mamas

This wonderful store is run by the NGO Women in Progress (see www.womeninprogress.org for more

details). Everthing here is fairly traded and made in Ghana, mostly by women. Anything the creative women in co-operatives around Ghana can come up with is brought here. There are tote bags made from old flour sacks, home decoration items, even body butter and soaps made from shea. There are clothes for men, women and children of all ages. Most garments use colourful batik designs, tie-dye or prints.
14th Lane, off Cantonments Road (Oxford Street), behind Koala Supermarket, Osu (0244 530 467, www.globalmamas.org). Open 9am-8pm Mon-Sat; 1-8pm Sun.

Sun Trade

Set up in 1996 by the Hungarian-born artist Kati Torda Dagadu, who regularly has bead exhibitions in Accra, Sun Trade has a large selection of necklaces, bracelets and earrings made of bronze, coconut shell, bull horn and other materials. Kati also gives lessons to individuals and groups in creating jewellery out of beads.
C522/3 Mango Tree Avenue, Asylum Down (0302 235 982, www.suntradebeads.com). Open 9am-6pm Mon-Fri; 9am-5pm Sat.

Trashy Bags

A remarkable success story, Trashy Bags was set up in 2008 as a means of recycling and reusing the endless plastic water and yoghurt wrappers deposited on the streets of Accra – they have since collected more than 20 million plastic sachets. The refuse is collected, washed and treated, before being stitched together to form bags and accessories. It employs a full-time staff of around 60, as well as paying a legion of litter-pickers for their efforts. Given the nature of high-sugar food packaging, the products themselves tend to be extremely colourful, and the range includes everything from shoulder bags and backpacks to rain macs and briefcases. They have just started using old, large canvas banners to produce bags reminiscent of Freitag bags. There's a good stand at the African Regent too.
C 8 Dzorwulu Road, Dzorwulu (054 434 9857, www.trashybags.com). Open 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Sat (workshop Mon-Fri).

Wild Gecko Handicrafts

This multi-faceted workshop-cum-art-shop emporium is foremost a workshop employing artisans for the production of characteristically Ghanaian emblematic Adinkra collectables, beautifully finished wooden furniture, ceramics, bespoke textiles and jewellery wrought of silver and bull horn. It is brimming with handmade art objects, collectables, homewares, furniture, handbags, musical instruments, and other design products. Although Wild Gecko sources from across Africa, many of the items are from humanitarian projects in Ghana.



Recommended

La Maison

A charmingly edited selection of home accessories, furnishings, art and decorative items can be found inside this cool and airy space, curated by Nada Moukarzel. You'll find chunky sofas, gilded mirrors, reclaimed leather chairs, eye-catching artwork and some fabulous African-themed ornaments (some by local artists), all wonderful to browse. Over 40 brands are on offer at La Maison, with highlights including architecturally designed tulip vases, hand-blown chandeliers from Damascus, and china tea sets. There's also a selection of jewellery and fragrances. It's an eclectic collection, but is a successful combination, and the building itself, one of the most original in Accra, makes it a worthwhile destination. There's a new branch in Accra Mall. Keep an eye out for exhibitions too, especially if Ghanaian artists are involved.

Behind Gulf House, Okponglo (0302 508 500, www.wild-gecko.com). Open 10am-5pm Tue-Sat.

Design and home accessories

Absolute Furnishings

Absolute Furnishings offers high-quality furniture for homes and offices, hotels and schools in materials that include wood, wrought iron, rattan and cane. Absolute Furnishings also offers a carpentry and upholstery service.
YMCA building, by Accra psychiatric hospital, Asylum Down (0244 320 067). Open 8am-5pm Mon-Fri; by appointment on weekends.

Art Deco

Within the same complex as the Orangery cr perie in the Adabraka neighbourhood, is this remarkable furniture shop. The workers at Art Deco make custom furniture to a high standard. For 15 years they have mixed Scandinavian functionality and solidity and fused it with African accessories.
Farrar Avenue, and Nsawam Road (0302 232 988, artdeco275@yahoo.com). Open 10am-6pm Mon-Sat.

Casa Trasacco

A new opening in Accra Mall is this distinctive interior design shop – there are two other branches, in Italy. It's a large space packed with all

manner of design-led objects from trinkets to wall hangings, from furniture to a rather marvellous fridge painted in the colours of the Ghanaian flag. Much of the designs you'll have seen before (waving Chinese cats and Julian Opie, erm, prints), especially from the 'kitsch' thing that was happening a few years ago, but there are still some excellent pieces among the rest. We'd like to see more African designs, but for an interesting gift or to deck out your new place it's a good place to start. There's a much bigger showroom behind the mall for kitchens, and large furniture.
Store G39, Accra Mall, Tetteh Quarshie (0302 823 322, www.casatrasacco.com). Open 10am-7.30pm Mon-Sat; noon-7.30pm Sun.

Hall Interior Design

If you're looking to upgrade the inside look of your home, Hall Interior Design offers bespoke fittings for upmarket interior design for kitchens, bathrooms and offices. They use well-known European materials and fittings in their work.
On Kwame Inkrumah motorway, after Abeka Lapaz and Kata Hotel (0302 410 151, www.hallinteriordesign.com). Open 9am-6pm Mon-Sat.

Joe's Perspective Art Boutique

This luxury art boutique set up by Kukua Ampah has recently opened a branch at the new M venpick Ambassador Hotel. Many of the elegant and creative pieces here are bespoke and adapted by Kukua.

Modern works of art incorporating the rich cultural influences of West Africa are created, customised and commissioned by Kukua's clients. A key range is her elegant metal flowing sculptures, partly polished, partly left to gather the natural colours of metal. Beautiful. This is the place for a classy souvenir.
M venpick Ambassador Hotel, Independence Avenue, Ridge (0204 321390). Open 9am-7pm Mon-Sun. Other location Labadi Beach Hotel. Open 8.30am-9pm Mon, Tue, Thur, Fri; 10am-8pm Wed; 8.30am-7pm Sat; noon-6pm Sun(0204 311 126).

Jungle Flower

Jungle Flower is the most innovative floral arranger in Accra. It can work on arrangements in properties and deliver, but you can also pick up flowers in its shop.
Roman Ridge Arcade, No9 Sir Arku Korsah Road (0302 784 252, rebeccaakufoaddo@yahoo.com). Open 9.30am-6pm Mon-Sat.

La Maison

See review left.
Annexe, 6th Street, Osu (030 278 1074, www.lamaisonghana.com). Open 9am-7pm Mon-Sat. Other location Accra Mall, Tetteh Quarshie and Spintex Road (0302 823043).

Orca

Orca is a department-like store that has some of the best furniture in the country, whether for the home or the office. There are good quality soft furnishings and decorations, kitchenware and toys.
4 Graphic Road, Toku House (0302 220 782, www.orcatendances.com). Open 9.30am-7pm Mon-Sat; 1-6pm Sun.

WaterComfort

WaterComfort has supplied high-end bathroom products to hotels including Labadi Beach, the new M venpick, African Regent and the Villagio complex. It also provides designs and products for residential properties. It stocks Schell, Missel Schwab, Kaldewei and Philippe Starck designed products for Duravit and Hansgrohe. There's now a second large showroom.
4 Safo Link, Abelenkpe (0302 763 592, 0265 650 462, info@watercomfortghana.com, www.watercomfortghana.com). Open 8am-5.30pm Mon-Fri; 9am-3pm Sat. Other location Yaa Asantewaa House, Roman Ridge Shopping Arcade, Shop no. 203 (0302 763 900). Open 8.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri.

Health and beauty

All Pure Nature

Everything here is made in Ghana, including body products that are well-known to locals such as shea butter and black soap. The shop also



Metris

Introducing the Metris range of bathroom mixers. They've been innovatively crafted to suit a range of different uses. Our product designers started by working out how high a basin mixer must be to provide the perfect space for your application. And they ended up with **ComfortZone**, which lets you select the height of mixer that's best for you. Choose from our 26cm-tall **Metris** 260, perfect for filling vases, right down to the 10cm-tall **Metris** 100 to rinse your hands or toothbrush.

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stocks a range of soaps, candles, aromatherapy, massage and burning oils, bath salts with scents ranging from lemongrass to jasmine, as well as oil burners. For GH¢10 customers can get a 15-minute head and neck, shoulders, back and arms massage. There's a new branch at Marina Mall, Airport Bypass Road, Airport City, near Holiday Inn. *10th Lane Ringway East, Osu (green building almost opposite Citizen Kofi) (0302 786 487, www.allpurenature.com). Open 8.30am-7.30pm Mon-Sat.*

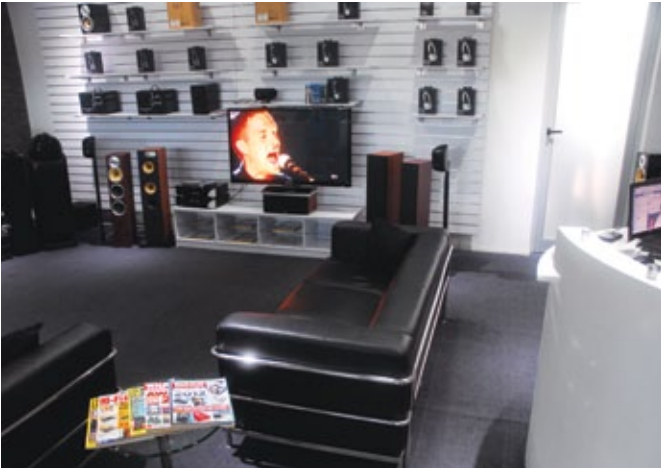
Allure Spa in the City
It might not look like much from the outside, but once you enter through the inconspicuous front door here and give in to the gods – or devils – of vanity you may never want to leave. The pampering possibilities are endless: skin therapies, manicures, pedicures and massages. *Ring Road East, Effiassaba House, near Labone Junction (0302 767 000, www.allureghana.com). Open 8am-8pm Mon-Sat; 2pm-7pm Sun.*

Gift Shop
Selling gifts such as Peggy Sage make up and cosmetics, hair accessories and false eyelashes, the shop can also do a mani or pedi for just GHC20. For kids: hair accessories and bags. *Ground Floor, Marina Mall, Airport Bypass Road, Airport City, near Holiday Inn (www.marinamallghana.com). Open 9am-8pm Mon-Fri; 9am-9pm Sat; noon-8pm Sun.*

Lajen Beauty Shop
This upmarket male and female salon is one of the nicest looking in Accra. Separated by a wall of glass tiles, the boys can have a cut by professional barbers while the girls can have their nails done. Massages and waxing are in private rooms. *14th Lane, off Cantonments Road (Oxford Street), behind Koala Supermarket, Osu (0302 777 837, www.facebook.com/lajensalon). Open 8.30am-6pm.*

Marie Noelle's Salon and Spa
This full-service salon and spa in Osu is the premier destination for fast, economical beauty services. Not only is the decor chic, but ten full spa-pedicure stations flank the far wall and eight manicure stations take up half of the floor. There are also tattoo and piercing services. *House F81/1, Kuku Hill, Osu (0302 764 154, www.marienoellespa.com).*

Pippa's Health Centre
The Pippa's Health Centre in Ringway Estate centre has a beauty spa with manicures, pedicures and massages, among other treatments. Among the wide range of other services are dance and Taekwondo lessons, personal training, and of course, top-end fitness equipment. Ghana's paralympic athletes also train at this well-equipped and friendly establishment.



Recommended

Stellar Sounds

Need something to blow you away sonically? Stellar Sounds is the place. It's a purveyor of very fine audio gear that helps music sound as crisp as it was recorded, but the speakers, sound systems, TVs and headphones look incredible too. There are also laptop speakers, docking stations, projectors and screens, and Blu-ray players. The shop sells equipment from Bowers & Wilkins and Marantz among other top brands.
Ground Floor, Emporium Shopping Centre, Mövenpick Ambassador Hotel, Independence Avenue, Ridge (0302 971 621, stellar.sounds@stellar-africa.com, www.stellar-africa.com). Open 10am-6pm Mon-Fri; 11am-6pm Sat; 11am-4pm Sun. Credit AmEx, MC, V.

5th Ringway Link, Ringway Estate (0302 224 488, www.pippasfitness.com). Open 10am-9pm Mon, Tue, Thurs, Fri; 10am-6pm Wed; 9am-2pm Sat.

SO Aesthetic
A beauty salon which offers make-up consultation, eyebrow shaping, eyelash application and facials. It stocks the natural SO Aesthetic products, which include foundation, powder, lip gloss and lip stick, blush and anything else beauty centric. Owner and stylist Sacha Bruce-Adjetey runs a tight ship. *Viva Court, 809, 11th Lane, Osu, next to the old American embassy (0243 201 803, www.soaestheticgh.com). Open 10am-6pm Mon-Fri; 10am-2pm Sat.*

Opticians

Eye Emporium Optician
Professional opticians with modern equipment to test all eye problems. Designer frames, lenses and sunglasses can all be ordered here. *39 Cantonments Rd (Oxford Street), above Woolworths (024 339 3655). Open 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat.*

Innes Eye & Vision Care Centre
Find a wide selection of frames and all the modern equipment. *A&C Shopping Mall, East Legon (0302 519 384). Open 9am-6pm Mon-Fri; 9am-3.30pm Sat.*

Pharmacies

37 Military Hospital
Open 24 hours a day, this well-stocked pharmacy is linked to the Military Hospital. *Liberation Road near Akuafio Circle and 37 Station (0302 776 111). Open 24 hours daily.*

Adepa Pharmacy
7 Patrice Labumba Road, Airport Residential Area (0302 765 486). Open 9am-9pm Mon-Sat; 2pm-9pm Sun.

Bedita Pharmacy
Blohum Road, adjacent to the SID Theatre Dzorwulu (0302 778 375). Open 8.30am-10.30pm Mon-Fri; 9.30am-10pm Sat.

Bernswett Pharmacy
North Labone Road, near Morning Star School, Labone (0302 776 794). Open Mon-Sat 8am-10pm; 10am-8pm Sun.

Life Health Care
There's a pharmacy and also a medical and dental centre on the premises. Services include travel health, psychological services and cosmetic dentistry. This experienced, tidy pharmacy should probably be one of the first calls for any problems and international medicines. *Accra Mall, Tetteh Quarshie (0302 823 064, lifehealthcare.com.gh). Open 9am-9pm Mon-Sat; 10am-8pm Sun. Credit V.*

Music

Kingy Drums
An array of drums and percussion instruments fill this shop on Oxford Street. Take a turn on Djembe drum, Kpanlogo drum, maracas, xylophone and bells. The owner Mensah also runs popular drumming workshops for both individuals and groups, plus other music workshops. *Oxford Street (0275 081 462, www.kingymensah.com). Open 8am-9pm daily.*

Electronic goods

Apple iShop
Ghana's only Apple store has a 'café' and terminals offering broadband access (GH¢ 1.25 for 30 minutes). The store also runs a repair service for poorly Apple products. *Accra Mall, Tetteh Quarshie (0302 823282) Open 9.30am-8pm Mon-Sat; noon-8pm Sun.*

Bang & Olufsen
This Bang & Olufsen showroom has all the top-end equipment you would expect. *F893/2 Ring Road East, Danquah-Circle, Osu (0302 762 654, www.bang-olufsen.com).*

Somovision
This large chain of stores sells all manner of electronic goods, particularly goods from LG. Find TVs, washing machines, microwaves and air conditioning units. *Northern Industrial Area (0302 245 326); Osu Oxford Street (0302 771907); Spintex Rana Plaza (0302 811270); Trade Fair (0206 713338).*

Sony Centre
This small Sony outlet offers reliable electrical goods on Oxford Street. There's another branch at the Melcom Plus Complex. *Oxford Street (0302 765 094, www.mysonycentre.com). Open 9am-7pm Mon-Fri 9am-3pm Sat.*

Stellar Sounds
See review left.

Visitors' services

Amazing-U
Amazing-U is an image management and coaching company offering help for individuals, businesses and at events. Services include colour analysis, image consulting, NLP coaching and event solutions. It's also a branding, business etiquette, communication and event consultancy. *(026 5502977, www.amazing-u.net, jagyeman@amazing-u.net, Facebook page).*



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D Coffee Shop



- ▶ 4 Volta Street - Airport residential Area
- ▶ Food Court Marina Mall
- ▶ Oxford Street Osu Mall
- ▶ Byblos Hotel Osu (Venus Bar)
- ▶ D Pizza – Spintex Raod Goli Fuel Station



Arts & Entertainment

Live music, Ghanaian art and the beautiful game

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Good foundations

Ghanaian photographers, painters, sculptors and filmmakers are finally getting the international recognition they deserve. Here’s where to find the best, and the next generation

“We felt that there was something missing in Ghana,” Odile Tievie tells *Time Out Accra* from the leafy terrace in front of the Nubuke Foundation, of which she is director. “We needed to speak for artistic expression. There has been a lot of upheaval in Ghana and artistic expression suffered. We needed to talk about it, and show the world that there is higher quality in Ghana.”

The Nubuke Foundation’s home is an airy building in East Legon. When we last visited, there was an exhibition by visiting Nigerian artists looking to collaborate with Ghanaian ones. It was one of many shows put on every year. Also on display are works from its growing permanent collection. The

Nubuke Foundation was started in 2006, but without a home – working around the country where the art took them. But in 2009, they moved to this space. “It means we have consistency now,” explains Odile. It has also seen cultural events, including a monthly poetry night. But the work continues outside the walls and into the heart of Ghana. A recent project saw them working with Kente cloth makers who already make beautiful cloth, but with Nubuke Foundation’s help, now make pieces with commercial and international appeal. If you want to take some of this weaving

work home, come here. Its success reflects a wider interest in Ghanaian art. To see this burgeoning artistic confidence in Accra is not hard – head to the packed Loom gallery or the wonderful beachside

Time-old skills and traditions remain integral

Artists Alliance, created by revered painter Ablade Glover, to relish examples. As well as Accra’s galleries, there are exhibition spaces at several hotels, such as Novotel (see p75) and Fiesta Royale (see p73). Consulates promote the arts with film screenings, dance shows, local art and photography exhibitions, and the likes of the Foundation for Contemporary Art

have become indispensable to the arts scene.

While the contemporary arts scene continues to grow and evolve, Ghana’s rich and deep-rooted heritage of traditional craftsmanship is certainly not being eclipsed. These time-old skills and traditions remain integral to the culture of communities across the country. Here, the line between art and craft has always been a blurry one, with beautifully crafted and decorated functional objects highly sought after. At places such as Wild Gecko (see p62), Joe’s Perspective (see p61), Aid to Artisans and the Arts Centre art and souvenirs can often be one and the same. Finding a wonderful gift in Ghana is never tricky.

Galleries

AACD African Market

If the Arts Centre seems a little too hectic – and it certainly can do – this three-storey shop is full of much the same kind of goods, albeit with fixed prices. There are dozens of rooms, each representing a different medium: woodwork, beads, Kente cloth, clothing, painting, sculpture and a handful of antiquities. There’s definitely a fair amount of tat (keyrings, flags, Ghana T-shirts) mixed in, but there are also serious artistic items. Friendly (and numerous) staff will advise on the item’s provenance. Come here for relaxed souvenir shopping – although not that exclusive painting. *Abebressem Street, Osu (0302 778 105). Open 9am-6pm Mon-Sat.*

TOP TIP!

Souvenirs

Foundations and shops in hotels are often good places to find high quality art in Accra.

Alliance Française d’Accra

The Accra-based arm of the French cultural centre offers a large range of artistic activities every week. It particularly excels in live music events, but there are also regular art displays and talks from international artists. The obvious focus is on French and Ghanaian artists (often working together), which forms an artistic bridge between both cultures in terms of language, education and artistic programming. There is always something interesting on; be sure to look at the website before arriving in town. *Liberation Link, Airport Residential Area behind Opeibia House (0302 773 134, www.afaccra.com). Open 10am-5pm Mon-Fri.*

Aid to Artisans Ghana

Although there are a handful of these outposts around the country, including in Kakum National Park and Elmina Castle, the most accessible and largest is located within the Artists Alliance Gallery. Aid to Artisans Ghana is a craft shop that sells souvenirs, chairs, bags, textiles, wooden gifts and jewellery. The organisation was set up to help local artisans create high-quality crafts and sell them at a fair price. It’s a worthy idea and combines well with the Artists Alliance Gallery, even if it is tricky to know where one ends and the other starts. *Omanye House, Accra-Tema Beach Road, Labadi (0302 771 375, www.aidtoartisans.org). Open 8am-6pm Mon-Sat; noon-6pm Sun.*

Artists Alliance Gallery

The hugely respected Ghanaian artist Ablade Glover established this renowned arts venue, which has become one of the most important of its kind in Ghana. There are three expansive floors of art in the cool marble galleries. Some are by

established artists, such as Owusu Ankamah and George Hughes, whose paintings are reminiscent of Jean Michel Basquiat and Willem De Kooning, and others by new and upcoming artists like Ebenezer Borlabie. Market, rural and urban scenes are interspersed with political satires and of course there are the shrouded figures and staccatoed crowd scenes by Glover himself. There are also collectors’ pieces: Asafo flags with appliquéd and embroidered symbols; ancient strip-woven Kente cloths by the Akan and Ewe; masks from around the continent of the type that inspired Picasso, and intricately carved furniture. There are also some full-sized coffins in the shapes of crabs, running shoes and eagles. Everything is for sale. There are ambitious plans for a restaurant that would take

advantage of a spectacular position overlooking the Gulf of Guinea and the fishing vessels that bounce along it. *Omanye House, Accra-Tema Beach Road, Labadi (0302 762 576, www.artistsallianz.com). Open 9am-6pm Mon-Sat; noon-6pm Sun.*

Arts Centre (Centre for National Culture)

Just next door to the National Museum is the Arts Centre. Hawkers attack from all sides as soon as you arrive, but if you’re not exhausted by the scrum you can find cloths, carvings, baskets, drums, bags, beads, sandals, sculptures, stools and rugs, and occasionally antiques. It’s a place for some incredible finds and gifts. The best bet is to head past the hassle which you’ll inevitably encounter at the entrance towards the back of the complex where it’s a bit more relaxed. Hagglng is expected. There’s also an art gallery, which sells prints and paintings at reasonable prices. *28th February Road, near Kwame Nkrumah Monument, Accra Centre (0302 662 581). Open 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri; 9am-3pm Sat-Sun.*

Berj Art Gallery

Run by the painter Betty Acquah, this gallery represents Larry Otoo and other well-established artists. It also offers a good framing service. *245/3 Ringway Link opp Video Mart, Ringway Estates (0302 764 606). Open 9am-6.30pm Mon-Sat.*

British Council

This British cultural centre is not as proactive as the Goethe-Institut or Alliance Française d’Accra in exhibiting arts, but it has some cultural events. Check the website for details. There is also an office in Kumasi (Bank Road, 051 37197). *Liberia Road (0302 610 090, www.britishcouncil.org/africa-gh-contact-us.htm). Open 8am-4pm Mon-Fri.*



Foundation for Contemporary Art (FCA)

The Foundation for Contemporary Art at the WEB du Bois Centre (a research centre for Pan-African history and culture, and named after African-American civil rights activist William Edward Burghardt Du Bois) was set up by Joe Nkrumah, formerly of the National Museum, and Virginia Ryan, an Australian artist. It exhibits work by up-and-coming artists in interesting ways, such as its Art in the Garden projects. But it’s the growing library,

with more than 800 books about visual arts, that is one of the organisation’s most important projects. It’s also developing a debating forum and a public database of artists, organisations, galleries and patrons. *Off 2nd Circular Road, Cantonments (0302 776 502, http://fcaghanablog.wordpress.com; Facebook page). Open 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri; 11am-4pm Sat.*

Goethe-Institut

The Goethe-Institut is the German cultural centre and has been established in Ghana for more than 50 years. It has an impressive array of events and art exhibitions. Links between German art and that of Ghana are given precedence, whether through sound installations, mixed media pieces, performance art, photography or painting. The National Film and Television Institute is next door. Be sure to check the website or pick up a programme of events. *30 Kakramadu Road, PMB 52, Cantonments (0302 776 764, www.goethe.de/accra). Open 1pm-5pm Mon-Thur; 10am-2pm Fri library and information centre.*

Joe’s Perspective Art Boutique

This luxury art boutique, set up by Kukua Ampah now has its biggest



Recommended

Nubuke Foundation

The Nubuke Foundation has been in this pleasant building in East Legon, its first permanent location, since 2009. It’s one of the most interesting art galleries in the city. It was set up to provide an artistic space for Ghanaian artists (often in collaboration with artists from other countries) and show off their talents. It also has a philanthropic aim to support artisans around the country. One successful project was with Kente cloth weavers in Tsiamé, in the Volta Region, teaching them how to make more commercially appealing cloth (tableware and bedding for example) as well as improving techniques such as colour fastening. The results, available at its shop, are beautiful pieces of work (between GH¢100-600 for two yards). Its vibrant cultural offering includes poetry evenings, Saturday workshops, art walks, film and music. Keep an eye on the website for details. 7 Adamafo Close, East Legon, near Mensvic Grand Hotel (028 910 2163, 0277 445 596, www.nubukefoundation.org).

store at the Mövenpick Ambassador Hotel (and there'll be another one at the Kempinski). Many of the elegant and creative pieces here are bespoke and adapted by Kukua from artisans across West Africa. Modern works of art incorporating the rich cultural influences of the region are created, customised and commissioned by Kukua. Every piece is distinctive. This is very much an exclusive shopping experience, where old and new West Africa meet. Best sellers include lithe bronze figures accentuating the male and female form, often mid-dance. *Mövenpick Ambassador Hotel, Independence Avenue, Ridge (0204 321 390). Open 9am-7pm Mon-Sun. Other location Labadi Beach Hotel (0204 311 126).*

Loom
Loom's Frances Ademola has a popular gallery that continues to exhibit paintings and sculptures by a good selection of Ghana's foremost artists, with a smattering of expressive Nigerian pieces. The modest space has been here since 1969, and is bursting at the seams with the work of nearly 100 artists. If Ademola is around, she is delightful company, chatting exuberantly about the artists, such as Seth and Serge Clotney and Gabriel Eklou, and happily offering her great knowledge of the Ghanaian art scene, past and present. Loom is regarded as one of Ghana's premier galleries. *Samlotte House, 119 Kwame Nkrumah Avenue, south of Nkrumah Circle, Adabraka (0302 224 746). Open 10am-5pm Mon-Sat.*

National Museum
A new director may be bringing changes to the National Museum. In the past, the gallery in the museum has hosted surprising exhibitions such as the excellent *South Meets West* that brought artists like Jane Alexander, Fernando Alvim, Meschac Gaba, Tracey Rose and Yinka Shonibare to Ghana. But it can often be a little lacklustre. The new director, we hear, is looking to improve the contemporary art offering. Still, you'll find ethnographic items from the royal courts, goldweights, beads, textiles, stools and pottery, as well as Senufo and Zulu figures, Ife heads and Bushongo carvings. *Barnes Road, Adabraka (0302 221 633). Open 9am-5pm Tues-Sun. Admission GH¢7 (GH¢2 for camera).*

Kane Kwei Carpentry Workshop
This is the original workshop for the fantasy coffins that are now collected and exhibited as contemporary art all over the world. Coffins shaped as birds, fish, aeroplanes, shoes, beer bottles, cars and anything else that stretches the imagination are exhibited as pieces of art and sold as miniatures. Many have been featured



in the book *Going into Darkness* by Thierry Secretan. The coffins are still used for their primary purpose, albeit in more creative ways than the norm. If you're a farmer, you can be buried in an onion or tomato, or in a tuna fish if you're a fisherman. Surprisingly, the caskets were only first built in 1957, however they have become artworks with appearances in European galleries. There are also a couple of good examples in the British Museum in London, along with other artefacts. See page 8 for more on coffins and the artisans that make them. *Teshie-Tema Road (0244 114 719, Facebook Page).*

Wild Gecko Handicrafts
This multi-faceted workshop-cum-art-emporium is the brainchild of Poem, a Dutch woman who has lived in Ghana nearly all of her life, and Elizabeth Vardon. Wild Gecko is foremost a workshop, employing artisans for the production of characteristically Ghanaian emblematic Adinkra collectables, beautifully finished wooden furniture, ceramics, bespoke textiles and jewellery wrought of silver and bull horn. Particularly popular are sculptures made from recycled metal



from the artist Massimo. It's brimming with handmade art objects, collectables, homewares, furniture, handbags, musical instruments, soaps, Ghanaian children's books, bangles and other design products. Items available at Wild Gecko tend to be slightly left of centre due to Poem's keen eye for ambitious design. Although Wild Gecko sources from across Africa, many of the items are local, and often from humanitarian projects in Ghana. It's off a long dusty road in North Dzorwulu, but Wild Gecko really is a world unto itself. It's unmissable if you need a unique souvenir, and a pleasant shopping experience to boot. *Behind Gulf House, Okponglo (0302 508 500, www.wild-gecko.com). Open 10am-5.30pm Tue-Sat.*

Film

Alliance Française d'Accra
With networks dotted throughout the world (over 130 countries as well as its networks in France), the Accra-based outpost of the Alliance Française screens films in French and has a library of films and documentaries, children's films and French television channels. *Liberation Link, Airport Residential Area behind Opeibia House (0302 773 134, www.afaccra.com). Open 5am-5pm Mon-Fri.*

National Film and Television Institute
The National Film and Television Institute (NAFTI) was set up in 1978 by the government as a Higher Education Institute and runs courses in film and television production. It also has workshops for the general public on composition, writing, art direction, cinematography and sound. Screenings mostly take place with seasonal festivals and visiting

filmmakers. NAFTI hosts its own biennial film and television festival called ANIWA, in which documentary features and animation films are shown. *Kakramadu, by Goethe-Institut, Cantonments (0302 777 616, nafti@4u.com.gh).*

Goethe-Institut
The German cultural centre has regular screenings of films by German and international directors. They often run on Thursday nights in themed seasons. There are also workshops and film festivals at the Institut. They were heavily involved in *Who is Highlife?*, a documentary about the rise of burgher highlife – a fusion of traditional highlife played by the Ghanaian diaspora in Germany that became big in the 1970s. Check the website for details. The National Film and Television Institute often uses the screening room here for shows. *30 Kakramadu Road, PMB 52, Cantonments (0302 776 764, www.goethe.de/accra). Open 1pm-5pm Mon-Thur; 10am-2pm Fri library.*

Silverbird Cinema
The most luxurious (and only!) multiplex cinema experience in town is the Silverbird Cinema at the Accra Mall. It has five theatres, the biggest with a seating capacity of 300 and the smallest with a capacity of around 180. Films screened include Hollywood, Bollywood, Nollywood and local films of high quality and production. With tickets priced at around GH¢15, the Silverbird is mainly for well-heeled Accra cinemagoers. It's amazing to think this is the only dedicated cinema in Ghana, but it's fulfilling its role well, with a great selection of movies. *Accra Mall (0302 823 270, www.silverbirdghana.com). Open 10am-9pm daily.*

Surfers Inn
The Surfers Inn in East Legon is a German-run restaurant with a games room with two pool tables and a rentable screening room that can seat up to 25 people. The restaurant and games room have 50- and 42-inch screens on which sports events are shown and the screening room has a 130-inch cinema screen. The room can be booked for GH¢25 from 2pm until 9pm and has more than 700 DVDs to choose from. Watching a scheduled movie costs GH¢2. The restaurant has an eclectic array of dishes from Germany, Italy, France and Greece, including smoked pork chops, and pizza made in a firewood oven – perfect to go with a movie. *East Legon near American House (0302 505 111, www.surfersinn.com). Open noon-11pm daily.*

TOP TIP!
Haggling
At the markets, it is expected that bartering will go on, so the initial price is adjusted accordingly.

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62 Time Out Accra for visitors and the best of Ghana 2013/2014

Children



Kids just want fun

Whether it is a cooling swimming pool, or last-minute supplies, Accra meets every need

There's definitely more to entertaining kids in Accra than iPads. In spite of the blazing heat – sometimes up to 38C – they still love a good bit of old-fashioned outdoor fun and more and more spots are popping up in Accra to accommodate their urge to break out into sweat. Baran Play Garden, popularly known as 'Play Garden' probably offers the most adventurous outdoor playground in the city and the kids can burn off loads of energy while parents relax under canopies with cool drinks.

As well as the new outdoor options, La Palm Royal Beach Hotel (see p76) has a brand new, and excellent, play area, and Labadi Beach Hotel, where there's always lots going on (see p76), remain firm favourites. The larger hotels are generally always a safe bet for fun days out by the pool – especially for short stay visitors.

When the heat is far too unbearable or whenever parents fancy a bit of retail therapy, all the shopping malls have some kind of play area; some soft and cuddly, others loud, brash and with video games blowing up tanks. Good options include the new Marina Mall which has the newest children's shops and attractions (see p49).

The kids are bound to burn off loads of energy

There's certainly something for everyone – both parents and children – and with planning, creative field trips and lots of ice cream, you can keep the little ones amused while relaxing in the knowledge they're safe. The British High Commission Club (0302 7010 650) has a playgroup for little ones.

Finally, the Dwenesie Music Institute is worth looking into for mini-Mozarts. Contact director Dinah Reindorf on 021 228 615, 0208 179 323, quashienovskyy@gmail.com.

Activities

Baran Play Garden

This play centre has high-energy outdoor facilities such as two bouncy castles, a trampoline, bumper cars and a bungee trampoline. Luckily there is also an on-premises restaurant that serves pizzas, burgers and fries, as well as Turkish kebabs that can replenish energy. The parents may be watching with raised heartbeats as some of the activities are not for the faint-hearted.

Plot NO 82, Osu Badu 2nd Street, Dzorwulu (0202 631 631). Open 9am-8pm daily.

Churcheese

This restaurant and play place, by the Morning Star School, off the Danquah Circle, is a handy stop-off for families. For the children there is a bouncy castle and games room. There's also a restaurant serving Ghanaian dishes.

27 Orphan Crescent, North Labone (0302 763525). Open call for details.

Kids Planet

This is a rather state-of-the-art venue with a fancy entrance, arcade games and an entertainment arena for more technophobic children. For creative kids, there's face-painting, arts and craft classes, dancing classes (Zumba and HipHop), a puppet show, karaoke, a bouncy castle and basketball hoops for the most energetic. There's a crèche for children between 10 months and three years which is open on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 10am-noon.

Marina Mall, Airport Bypass Road, Airport City, near Holiday Inn (www.marinamallghana.com). Open 10am-8pm Mon-Fri; 10am-7pm Sat; noon-7pm Sun.

Kidz Cottage

This is a remarkable place for children under 12 who love to be spoiled rotten. The large safety-conscious play area is great to expend energy, but the part the little girls tend to love is inside the beauty parlour. There's a play area outside and video games, books and toys. No 133 Noi Fetrika Street, Airport Residential (0302 765 616, www.kidzcottage.biz). Open 9am-5.30pm Tue-Fri; 8.30am-5.30pm Sat; 11am-8pm Sun.

La Palm Kids Play Theme Park

'Theme park' may be pushing it a little, but this new play area at La Palm Royal hotel is an excellent addition to the hotel's family-focused offering. There's a nautical theme, with a big boat to climb up and a shallow paddling pool. A bouncy castle occasionally makes an appearance. It is right by the pool. La Palm Royal Hotel (0264 967 926, 0208 152 078, www.lapalmroyalbeachhotel.com). Open 9am-5.30pm daily.

Marvel's Minigolf

This is an impressive minigolf course that will attract fun-loving adults as much as children (there's a bar after all). The 18-hole golf course has the usual challenges and tricks. The clubhouse serves snacks. Forest Avenue, Abelenkpe traffic lights, Dzorwulu (0302 915 400, www.marvelsghana.com). Open 11am-9pm Mon-Thur; 10am-10pm Fri-Sun. Admission GH¢8, children under 12 GH¢6.

Shopping

Benetton

This popular Italian brand caters for nine-month-old babies through to 14-year-olds and there is a stylish range of attire. But the best thing about the store is its particularly wide selection of accessories from swimwear, to flip flops, belts, shoes and ruck sacks. Marina Mall, Airport Bypass Road, Airport City, (www.marinamallghana.com). Open 9.30am-9pm Mon-Sat; noon-8.30pm Sun.

Chicco

This international brand is not only ideal for clothes and toys shopping (0-5 years) but a good retailer of hair, body and baby bath-time products, and furniture including car seats. Ground Floor, Marina Mall, Airport Bypass Road, Airport City, (0544 355 368, www.marinamallghana.com). Open 10am-9pm Mon-Sat; noon-8pm Sun and public holidays.

Coco Angel







This very brightly decorated store with its vivid lime green and white colour scheme stocks smart clothes such as blazers and casualwear by Spanish labels such as Mayoral and Pablosky for 0-14 year olds. Marina Mall, Airport Bypass Road, Airport City (0264 603 995, www.marinamallghana.com). Open 10am-8pm Mon-Sat; noon-8pm Sun.

Happy Minds Ghana

Toys with an educational twist: keep children's minds active while having fun with a range of durable and interactive toys, from sewing and embroidery kits to puzzles. Behind the Netherlands Embassy, No 9 Nima Avenue, TV3 Road, Osu (0302 270 040 happymindsgh@gmail.com). Open 8am-5.30pm Mon-Fri.

Toy Mania

Stocking international brands Clementoni, Faro, Barbie, Hello Kitty Playgo and MacMillan, Toy Mania has arts and crafts and electronic toys and scooters for boys and girls starting from three months to adult. This is also an ideal place to stock up on party-bag gifts and fillers. Marina Mall, Airport Bypass Road (0246 070 070, www.marinamallghana.com). Open 9am-7pm Mon-Fri; 9am-8pm Sat; 12.30-8pm Sun.

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Jahwi at Alliance Française

City sounds

There’s never been a better time to see live music in Ghana. Join the party

There are times when highlife, Ghana’s most famous musical export, almost seems a continuation of the horn-blasts, shouts of stall holders and general hum of the streets of Accra. The frenetic, polyrhythmic, slightly discordant charms of Ghana’s trademark genre could have only emerged from this city. The origins of the music is in the big band sound, melded with Caribbean Tropicana, and is deeply inspired by traditional Ghanaian music. But its legacy is even more far-reaching. In 21st century Accra, hip hop, reggae, pop, funeral tunes and traditional music all mingle into one electrifying cacophony. Eighty years since its heyday, highlife and its precursors and off-shoots still

provide the soundtrack to the city. The biggest shift in Ghanaian music, however, came with the emergence of hip hop from the US. The country’s very own version, known as hiplife, was pioneered in particular by the ‘Godfather of Hiplife’, Reggie Rockstone, who began to rap in Twi, a local language. On the streets of Accra, from the bars and taxi stereos, it is hiplife that is most likely to be heard. Tic Tac, VIP Mensah and Batman, all of who mix hip hop with highlife and increasingly reggae, have brought Ghanaian music the full loop. UK acts such as Dizzee Rascal, Sway and Lethal Bizzle, all of Ghanaian descent, blend the musical legacy of their parents’ home, in grime and UK hip hop.

While they may no longer be heard be under the shade of coconut palms, Ghana’s hiplife stars, like the griots of the past, are telling their story. They are the poets of the 21st century Accra. **BEST VENUES** This all coincides with a clear upsurge in the amount of live music seen in Accra – more than last year even. To see highlife, +233 is the best place in the city right now. The thoughtfully designed club has music most nights, and always of a high standard. It’s also a good place to hang out with friends, with indoor and outdoor seating. Also popular is Chez Afrique. Another surprising venue which often has highlife is La Palm Royal Beach Hotel in its outdoor African Village restaurant during lunch and dinner service. The key venue, however, is the Alliance Française,

which has an impressive regular roster of musicians and highlife. Churches are a major centre for music, and musicians making gospel music are also very popular. And it’s hard to find a place outside of Jamaica where there is such high regard for reggae and dancehall, as the Wednesday reggae parties at Labadi Beach show. **AWARD WINNERS** The key event of the year is the Ghana Music Awards (www.ghanamusicawards.com), which is held in April of each year. There are more than a dozen categories, including the Highlife Contemporary Artist of the Year, Hiplife Artist and Afro-pop Song of the Year. The 2013 event saw wins for R2BEES and M.anifest, who recently collaborated with Damon Albarn, at the glitzy spring ceremony.

Venues

+233 Jazz Bar & Grill
See review right.

Alliance Française
The Alliance Française masterfully promotes Francophone culture, and on Wednesdays plays host to musicians from Ghana and across the globe – including from France and Spain. With a sizable garden and two outdoor stages, it’s definitely one of the leading live venues in Accra. Seun Kuti, son of Afrobeat luminary Fela Kuti, played here, as well as a selection of traditional and highlife bands. Every year there’s a month-long festival of music, loosely based around Francophone genres. Invited musicians from Europe often come over to play alongside Ghanaian artists. On Wednesday nights there’s often highlife music – one of the few places in Accra where you can see it. The larger stage is used for bigger events, such as a recent album launch by Jahwi (see picture right). There’s a good open bar and Nicolino’s pizza (see p44) at the premises. *Liberation Link, Airport Residential Area behind Opeibia House (0302 773 134, www.afaccra.com).*

Big Milly’s Backyard
Set on a lovely beach, Big Milly’s has live reggae on Saturdays and Sundays. The venue is an intimate hidey-hole to get away from it all. Wanlov the Kubolor can be seen here sporadically, although generally a live reggae band performs Bob Marley covers. On Fridays, there is a beach barbecue and drumming from a cultural group. And at any time there’s usually someone playing guitar. The food is excellent and the tiny nook of a restaurant makes a pleasant place to sit and while away an afternoon or evening. *Kokrobite Beach, west of Accra (0287 288 889, www.bigmilly.com).*

Bywell Bar
On Thursday nights the Alpha Waves Band, led by Desmond Ababio, plays highlife and reggae. Food and drink are available all night and dancing goes on until morning. The crowd is a good mix of Ghanaian locals and internationals while the long bar is perfect for imbibing local beers and chatting. The energy is low-key but the band, considered by many to be the new wave of highlife music, are a must-see. There is also live music on Saturdays and occasionally theatre on Fridays. It can get a little rowdy later in the evening. *Southern end of Cantonments Road (Oxford Street), Osu. Open 6pm-2am daily.*

Chez Afrique
This popular restaurant often has live bands, including highlife musicians. The food’s good, but the music’s better. Many sets start off



Recommended

+233 Jazz Bar & Grill

+233 (named after the Ghanaian dialling code) is the best place to see live music in Accra. It is an intelligently designed club that has live bands most days of the week – nearly all of a very high calibre, and many reaching ‘legendary status’, such as a regular Sunday night show from highlife star Gyedu-Blay Ambolley & the Sekondi Band (pictured). Inside, there are two floors. The band play on a small stage downstairs, but can also be seen from the U-shaped upstairs. However, the clever bit, is that there’s ample seating outside too, which looks onto a glass wall behind which the band play. And external speakers mean its almost as loud outside as in. Each section has its own bar with attentive servers. The food – burgers, hotdogs, chicken, chips, kebabs and pork chops – is mostly off the grill. Order a handful of kebabs, a Star and you have the makings of one of Accra’s best nights out. The music varies between highlife, blues, jazz (although rarely hip hop) and anything else good. There’s only an entrance charge (usually GH¢10) when the band merits it. It’s a hugely popular venue, and rightly so. North Ridge (023 323 3233, Facebook page). Open 5pm-2.33am Mon-Thur; 5pm-4am Fri; 2.33pm-4am Sat, Sun.

with a mixture of reggae, and other (random) hits before returning with a highlife set that gets everyone up and dancing. The musicianship is usually excellent. *Off Lagos Avenue, East Legon (21 911591). Open from 5pm daily.*

Goethe-Institut
The Goethe-Institut is the cultural institute of Germany and has just celebrated 50 years of work in Ghana. Although it’s not set up for live music as much as its French counterpart, the institute does hold music events, usually in the courtyard behind the building. It could be anything from visiting musicians from Germany, the

culmination of workshops held by avant-garde artists or simply a celebration. There are also regular film, theatre and dance events throughout the year. *30 Kakramadu Road, PMB 52, Cantonments (0302 776 764, www.goethe.de/accra). Open 1pm-5pm Mon-Thur; 10am-2pm Fri.*

International Conference Centre
The centre has played host to massive international stars like Jay-Z and Fat Joe but is also the venue for bi-annual highlife festivals and concerts. *Castle Road, opposite State House, Osu.*

Jazztone
Some of Ghana’s best musicians play here. There is live entertainment every Friday and Saturday from 8.30pm and poetry readings are held on Wednesdays. On weekends, catch owner Toni Manieson singing jazz standards accompanied by congas, piano and sax. *Phone for details. (0302 761 0820). Open varies.*

Labadi Beach
Reggae DJs play on Wednesday nights near an open bar that is stocked with local and imported beers. There are occasional live bands, as well as acrobats and other entertainers. The groups come from around Accra as well as neighbouring countries. The standard is very high and you’ll likely catch something that gets you moving. It draws a mix of international students, reggae lovers, rastafarians and the less pious ‘rent-a-dreads’ looking to hook up with a foreigner or at least sell some Rasta-styled wares. A worthwhile trip if you are in town. You may also catch some music on Sundays, during which half the city seemingly descends on the place. *Beach Road. Admission GH¢3.*

National Theatre
The unmistakable architecture of the National Theatre deserves to be seen – it’s been described as either a ship, or, more abstractly, as a seagull spreading its wings. Chinese developers built the theatre and opened it in 1992 as the centrepiece for cultural life in Ghana. It is home to the National Symphony Orchestra, the National Theatre Players, National Dance Company and three youth groups. The events calendar is getting better all the time, and major touring acts are slowly but surely being included in the programme. There is the main auditorium, a dance hall, an exhibition hall, a Chinese garden, and FolkSpace, an open-air theatre. The box office is inside the building and will have a list of events. Its website is also getting updated more regularly, but the best bet is its Facebook page. Tours can be taken around the building for a small charge. Call 0243 758 876 or email publicrelations@nationaltheatre.com.gh. *Liberia Road and Independence Avenue, Adabraka (0302 663 445, www.nationaltheatre.com.gh). Admission GH¢1, extra charge for cameras.*

Next Door
There is live music on Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays from 8.30pm, and you can catch some traditional song and dance performances as well. Some of the old-school highlife musicians and singers come together here. *Beach Road, Teshie, opposite the Military Academy (0302 713 961, www.next-door.com). Open 10am until late daily.*



Fighting fit

Cheer along the local heroes at a football game, watch the latest star of Ghanaian boxing, or get involved yourself. Accra loves sport – even polo

Accra is a colourful place. Stalls sell art and ripped-off CDs, bright taxis streak down the roads, and, seemingly, every male wears a football jersey. Arsenal, Chelsea and Manchester United are the most sought after, but we’ve seen Sheffield Wednesday, Burnley and Scunthorpe United shirts. Usually, the team on the badge doesn’t matter – they are supporters of football. And how.

You don’t need to be in Ghana long to appreciate that the country has a special relationship with the sport. Every bit of open land in Accra is a football pitch in waiting. It’s not uncommon to see groups of young boys playing a full-tilt game on the beach, even after the tide’s submerged more than half of the pitch. The Premiership, or EPL, gets huge audiences on Ghanaian TV and games are repeated endlessly until the next game is shown.

Michael Essien, currently on loan to Real Madrid from Chelsea, is the best known Ghanaian football player. He is known as

‘The Bison’, and he’s the kind of player who typifies the country’s sporting ethos: play strong, play solid, play to win, play to entertain. But while Essien may be the most expensive Ghanaian (indeed, African) player of all time, there are dozens of other names who have made it big in Europe after coming through the ranks of local clubs such as Hearts of Oak and Asante Kotoko.

The fact that almost all Ghanaian footballers of note ply their trade overseas makes the Ghana Premier League something of a curio. If you’re a sports fan, though – or a sociology student – you’ll find that the matches, and their attendant fans, reward first-hand experience. African football has a reputation for being dynamic and direct, and the GPL is no exception. The crowds, complete with ball-jugglers, drumming troupes and fierce tactical debaters, are usually just as watchable.

Despite there being 16 clubs in the top flight, there are only two dominant teams in the country: Accra’s majestically named Hearts of Oaks (whose supporters’ chant is surely one of the world’s quaintest: ‘Be quiet and don’t be silly/We are the famous Hearts of Oak’) and Kumasi’s Asante Kotoko, aka the Porcupine Warriors. Since the league’s inception in 1956, Hearts of Oak have won 20 championships, Kotoko 22.

Their nearest competitors have managed just three. If you’re looking to see a Hearts game in Accra, they play at the 40,000-seater Ohene Djan Stadium near Independence Square.

If you’re searching for the full, high-decibel match experience, snare a ticket for the Kotoko clash, which is the liveliest game of the year.

Ghana’s second sport (some say it should be its first) is, of course, boxing. The most famous

Ghanaian boxer of all time is Azumah Nelson, who has been inaugurated in the Boxing Hall of Fame. Ike ‘Bazooka’ Quartey also fought greats such as De La Hoya and Vargas, and among the current hopes is Joshua Clottey, a former IBF Welterweight Champion. The remarkable story of Ghanaian boxing is centred around Bukom, a small shanty town in Jamestown. There are more than 20 boxing schools in this area alone, more than the total found in the whole of many countries. Boxing is part of life in Ghana. Any bout with a Ghanaian boxer will dominate the media for days, and a win by someone like Clottey is treated, understandably, as a national victory. For a chance to catch a bout, either head to Bukom and ask around, or better still ask a taxi driver.

Basketball is also popular in Accra. A common way into the sport has been for tall locals to be plucked off the streets by agents and taught to shoot hoops, but it’s increasingly played in schools and colleges in Accra.

Spectator sports

FOOTBALL

For visitors who want to watch a live game while in Accra, the best chances are between August and April, which is the official football season. Regular domestic games at the Ohene Djan Stadium, to see Hearts of Oak for example, are generally safe for tourists. For spontaneous purchases, official tickets can be bought at the Ohene Djan Stadium or through a friendly concierge at your hotel. At the game violence is rare.

Ohene Djan Stadium

Up to FIFA standards, this venue hosts national team games and is the home of one of Ghana’s most popular teams, Hearts of Oak. Concerts and other public events are also held here. The stadium hosted the opening and closing games of the 2008 Africa Cup of Nations. *In front of Independence Square (0302 237 673, www.accraheartsofoak.com).*

Baba Yara Sports Stadium

With a capacity of 40,500, the Baba Yara stadium in Kumasi is Ghana’s largest. It is named after one of Ghana’s best footballers, a former star of the national team who played for Asante Kotoko (the stadium’s home team). It’s up to pretty good standards (floodlights, maintained grass, scoreboard). *Kumasi (www.asantekotokofc.org).*

BOXING

Boxing in Accra is a serious business, and nowhere more so than in the quarter of Bukom – one of the poorest neighbourhoods in Jamestown. There are more than 20 boxing schools here. Joshua ‘The Hitter’ Clottey, Ike ‘Bazooka’ Quartey and Azumah ‘The Professor’ Nelson (named because of his ability to ‘teach his opponents a lesson’) all felt the smack of a fist and the crunch of the deck in Bukom. There is no other area of the world with this quantity of boxing schools, and there is no other place in the world that has produced so many world champion boxers in the last 75 years. Try the Greater Accra Boxing Association (0302 760 892) for details on bouts, but they are usually fairly well publicised.

POLO

Anyone interested in hobnobbing with the city’s elite can head to the prestigious Accra Polo Club (Liberation Rd, Airport Residential Area, 0302 772 775), located behind the Woolworths building. Originally founded back in 1902, the club is still going strong, attracting monied expats from around the world. The polo season starts in September and runs until around Easter. Matches are held every Saturday and Sunday



from 3pm. It’s a good chance for anyone new to the sport to learn about polo – local spectators are talkative and will fill you in on the game’s rules and point system. The best bet is to turn up – occasionally there’s a charge, especially for the big games. Several national teams visit Accra every season.

Participation sports

FOOTBALL

Lizzy Sports Complex

The eponymous Lizzy is Marcel Desailly’s mother. In 2011 he opened up this world-class sporting complex in his native Accra. There’s one almost full-sized pitch, plus three all-grass five-a-side pitches. Alongside is a very inviting pool overlooked by a sports bar and grill, a basketball court and a children’s pool. The pool can be used for GH¢15 a day (GH¢10 for children) and this entitles you to use the floodlit football pitches in the evenings. There are football training programmes for youngsters between five and 16. The hugely successful Corporate Football League is an excellent idea. If Marcel is in town, he’ll be around. *Near the A&C Shopping Mall, East Legon (0302 521 851, www.lizzysportscomplex.com).*

GOLF

One-on-one lessons can be booked for those looking to improve their swing during their trip. There are several reasonable courses, although they are not always up to international standards.

Achimota Golf Club

It’s been 75 years since Achimota Golf Club was first opened. Just 10 kilometres outside of Accra city centre, this is a friendly club that is happy to host visitors. The course is an 18-holer with a par of 72. *Achimota, Accra (0302 400 220, www.achimotagolf.com).*

Celebrity Golf Club

Located in the city of Tema, this is a popular golf club among the workers at local logistics companies. There’s a good restaurant too. *Sakumono, Tema (022 4011 76, 0303 403 619).*

Tema Country Golf Club

This long-established club (founded 1957) is one of the most professional clubs in Ghana. It’s located on the way to Tema. *Mile 20 on Accra-Aflao Road, opp Free Zone, Tema.*

GYMS

If you should feel the need to do a bit of exercise in Accra (and if you won’t do the trick) then there are a couple of excellent gyms listed below. The upmarket hotels usually have a gym of sorts, but the best bet is to visit the couple listed below. All have walk-in rates, but if booked by sessions for a week or longer there are discounts available.

Pippa’s Health Centre

There are three outlets of Pippa’s Health Centre in Accra. The newest is at Lizzy Sports Complex, but the flagship gym is at the Ringway Estate branch. The third is in Tema. The equipment is all Life Fitness and all branches are air-conditioned with satellite TV and modern music systems. There are a variety of activities on offer, including body combat, spinning, pilates, zumba and modern African dance. For the little ones there’s a tumble-tots class. Taekwondo is an important element and classes are held in each of the branches. Pippa’s is also used by Mandy Fouracre Dance Academy. The main Ringway centre has a beauty spa where manicures and massages can be booked. *5th Ringway Link, Ringway Estate (0302 224 488, www.pippasfitness.com).*

Mövenpick Ambassador Hotel

The Mövenpick Ambassador Hotel has the best sports facilities in the

city right now. The ridiculously inviting pool is a great way to cool down on hot days (that’s to say every day), with comfy chairs and waiters on in-line skates to whizz you round a cold drink. It’s a large pool with a good shallow end for children, and wide enough to do a few token lengths. And despite being in the middle of the city, you barely realise the fact. Farther around the manicured lawns are two floodlit tennis courts. The gym, overlooking the pool on the second floor of the hotel, is well equipped with all you’d expect, and friendly personal trainers are on hand if you need a bit of advice or impetus. There’s a spa and two Thai massage treatment rooms, with outstanding masseurs, plus a sauna. It offers a comprehensive range of membership packages depending on the level of access you want. Platinum includes gym, pool, tennis courts, sauna, and one massage a month, or just a one off session. A great place to spend the day relaxing.

Independence Avenue, Ridge (302 611 000, www.moevenpick-hotels.com). Credit AmEx, MC, V.

Total Fitness Health Club

This excellent gym has the latest Life Fitness equipment. There are personal trainers on hand if needed, but you can just go in and use the equipment. There’s a nice 20m x 10m pool out back with seating around it – plus a poolside bar to undo all your good work. There’s a wide range of classes including zumba, boot camp training, aqua aerobics and circuit training, among others. *14 Jungle Road, A&C Square east Legon (0302 942 509, totalfitness@ancmall.com). Open 5.30am-9.30pm Mon-Fri; 7am-7pm Sat; 10am-5pm Sun. Admission GH¢25 one session.*

POOLS

For a small fee, usually around GH¢5-20, you can splash about in one of the many hotel pools for a day. The best pools are listed below.

African Regent Hotel

237/238 Airport West (0302 765 180, www.african-regent-hotel.com).

Golden Tulip

Liberation Road, Airport (0302 213 161, www.goldentulipaccra.com).

La Palm Royal Beach

By Labadi Beach (0302 771 700, www.gbghghana.net).

Labadi Beach

Labadi Beach (0302 772 501, www.labadibeach.com). GH¢30 adults; GH¢15 children; under four free.

Lizzy Sports Complex

Cotton Street, near A&C Mall, East Legon (0302 521 851, www.lizzysportcomplex.com).

Mövenpick Ambassador Hotel

Independence Avenue, Ridge (302 611 000, www.moevenpick-hotels.com).

Novotel Accra

Barnes Road (0302 667 546, www.novotel.com).



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Accra Offices:

Head Office (Accra),
Kaneshie Melcom Plus
 Location: Otublohum Street
 North Industrial Area,
 P.O Box GP56 Accra, Ghana.
 Tel:00233 0302252984
 Email:travelmanager@melcomgroup.com
 Direct Contact-00233 545186999

Accra Central Melcom

Location:Opera Square,
 Tel:00233 0302660478

Tema Office:

Tema Melcom Plus
 Post Office Road, Traffic Light
 Meridian Opposite Vodafone
 Tema Community 1
 Tel:00233 0303216363

Kumasi Office:

Kumasi Melcom
 Prempeh 2nd Street, Adum
 P.O. Box 161 Kumasi, Ghana
 Tel: 00233 0322045578

Kumasi Adiebeba
 Near Ahodwo Roundabout
 P.O. Box 5019, Adiebeba
 K Appiah Building, Ahodwo-Kumasi
 Tel: 00233 0322043566 / 7



Hotels

Rest and relaxation in Accra

Hotels



Designer digs

Hotels are being built all over Accra. And with every new opening, hotels are having to up their game. Great news for visitors

No matter how impressive a hotel looks from the outside, it's the details that really matter. Were the check-in and check-out fast? Was the concierge as helpful as he or she could have been? Were the food hours convenient? But also, was the room comfortable? Were the light switches easy to use (it sounds banal, but it can be infuriating)? More

“

The design of hotels in Accra is going to get better

often than not, if they weren't noticed, they were fine. It's when things go wrong, or become annoying, that can really affect a stay – just look at TripAdvisor! The design of a hotel (what will probably be called User Experience at some point) is so important: the bathroom, the lobby, the lighting (and those switches), the wardrobe placement, the sofa, even the pillows. A hotel is your home when visiting. Details.

These are areas that hotels in Accra have suffered with in the past, particularly the service, something that should be spot on given the price that many hotels are charging. Yet there are a few hotels that are concentrating on the details, and making a stay

homely, and doing it with panache.

All eyes at the moment are on the Kempinski, due to open in the first quarter of 2014. The building itself is based on a traditional Compound house, commonly built by tribal chiefs across West Africa, with the residences built around a central courtyard with shaded seating areas and a performance pavilion. US architects PageSoutherland

“

Page have built in 269 rooms, a retail space, lounges, restaurants, a large spa with ten treatment rooms, swimming pool and tennis courts, among other facilities in the complex. Connecting the main lobby to the ballroom and function spaces is the “Butterfly” building, named for its butterfly-shaped roof. Inside, Looney & Associates have melded contemporary West African design with internationally recognisable amenities.

Of the existing, however, it's the Mövenpick which is getting most attention. After opening last year, it quickly became Accra's hotspot for the well-heeled. A large airy lobby, restaurant and bar, and that pool – unmissable – make it a superb option. It should be said

service here is among the best in Accra. Another smaller hotel should also be mentioned for excellent design.

La Villa Boutique should be celebrated for creating a gorgeous retreat among the bustle of Osu. Its rustic chic look, while not ground-breaking, is certainly a refreshing change from the ‘could be anywhere’ style of many hotels. As we hear

“

Hotels are providing a service with panache

reports of new openings by Radisson Blu, Hyatt, Marriott, Hilton and Hotel Sun by the Villagio group, the standard of hotels in Accra is only going to get better.

Location

This is a major consideration in traffic-clogged Accra. Most of the major chain hotels have congregated around Airport Residential, which is close to the airport of course, as well as many businesses. The Novotel and new Mövenpick are in central Accra – again, good for business contacts. La Palm Royal Beach and Labadi Beach are both by the sea and are perhaps 10 minutes from central Accra or up to 40 minutes from the airport when the traffic is particularly bad.

Prices and classification

The time of the rack rate is over, with many international chain hotels now basing pricing on the aeroplane industry. However, our listings loosely follow these categories: Expensive (over US\$200); Mid-range (US\$100-\$200); Budget (under US\$100) for a double room per night. The lowest price we have given in the range is for

a basic double, higher prices will include larger rooms and suites, rather than expensive rooms such as presidential suites. Shop around and cheaper rates can almost always be

found on less popular days and at quieter times of year. The government has put a 15 per cent tax on all accommodation and our prices include this. Using credit cards shouldn't be a problem in the major international hotels, but many of the smaller hotels won't accept them. We have indicated which ones here accept credit cards, but like everywhere in Ghana, make sure they are accepted when you arrive. All prices are in US\$ and dollars are often preferred over cedis in the larger hotels.

Airport Residential

EXPENSIVE

African Regent Hotel

It's telling that the lobby at the African Regent has become a frequented spot for informal meetings. This is partly down to the hotel's location – the international airport is just minutes away by car – and partly down to its laid-back, upmarket ambience. Public spaces are stylish and manage to successfully fuse West African motifs with modern touches. There are some quality dining options too, with the Mukya Restaurant offering an array of African and international dishes. Standard rooms are pretty basic – don't expect too many frills when it comes to the bathrooms. There's a business centre with internet terminals and paid-for wireless in the rooms. A regular events schedule keeps things lively, and the modest but pleasant pool area sees all ages having fun in the sunshine. The service is also better than most in Accra. There's a 'Design Pop-Up shop' which is notable for selling very cool bags made from recycled litter by Trashy Bags (www.trashybags.org). *Bar. Business centre. Gym. Internet (wireless, shared terminal). Parking. Pool (outdoor). Restaurant. Room service. Spa. TV. 237/238 Airport West (0302 765 180, www.african-regent-hotel.com). Rates US\$340 double. Rooms 109. Credit AmEx, MC, V.*

Golden Tulip

The Golden Tulip is one of the most popular hotels in Ghana, thanks to its sizable rooms, conference facilities and location near the

Critics' choice Hotels

1 Mövenpick The most exciting development. Squeaky clean and new, with an alluring shopping area. See p74.

2 Labadi Beach Still one of the classiest options in Accra despite a lot of new competition. It's beachfront location is a winner. See p76.

3 La Villa Boutique Hotel The best small hotel in Accra. There's a modest pool, great terrace and an authentic Italian restaurant. See p75.

4 Holiday Inn A solid choice with a good pool and good options for eating and drinking. See p73.

5 Roots Hotel This surprising apartment hotel in the heart of Osu is one of Accra's best bargains. See p75.

airport. The pitched roof lobby is one of the most spacious in the city (there's a life-size wooden giraffe greeting arrivals), the staff are more alert than most and the pool area is seriously inviting. Its stylish lower ground floor restaurant, Branche (*see p45*), is a further selling point – dining spots this tastefully designed are rare in Accra. It's an unpretentious space, with unpretentious pricing too – it's not cutting-edge cuisine, after all. There are five meeting rooms and the hotel has wireless throughout, as well as a business centre. The accommodation comprises suites, apartments, chalets and regular rooms. And if US\$310 for a double seems not enough money to be ridding yourself of in a day, there's a large casino (open Sun-Thur 1pm-4am; Fri, Sat 1pm-5am) immediately next door. It's a pretty grand affair – one of the two biggest in Accra, along with the one at La Palm Royal Beach Hotel – and has roulette, stud poker and blackjack set over three adjoining levels. It's worth checking online for cheaper rates, and longer term discounts.

Bars (2). Business centre. Gym. Internet (wireless, free shared terminal). Parking. Pool (outdoor). Restaurants (2). Room service. TV. Liberation Road, Airport (0302 213 161, www.goldentulipaccrahotel.com). Rates US\$310-435 double. Rooms 238. Credit AmEx, MC, V.

Holiday Inn Accra Airport

This hotel is a cut above what you might have come to expect from the Holiday Inn brand elsewhere in the world, and the cluster of expensive suits usually found milling around in the bar area is an accurate sign of the property's popularity with the business world. The lobby is a stylish, airy space full of floral displays and modern African wood sculptures, but from a leisure aspect it's perhaps the Med-style pool – a ridiculously inviting sight on a hot day – that's the main draw (despite the building site of new hotels around it). The rooms are good, with all the amenities you'd expect. It makes sense to take the Superior over the Deluxe which are around the same price. There's a wide food offering from the pool-side bar – hugely popular on Friday evenings – a bar in the lobby and the Wase Restaurant which does a superb buffet, especially on Sunday afternoons with a vast Ghanaian spread, much loved by locals.

Bars (2). Business centre. Disabled access. Gym. Internet (wireless, free shared terminal). Parking. Pool (outdoor). Restaurants (2). Room service. TV. Plot 19 & 20 Airport City (0302 740 930, www.holidayinn.com). Rates from US\$220 double. Rooms 168. Credit AmEx, MC, V.



M Plaza Hotel

On paper, the M Plaza should be one of the area's top contenders: silver-service restaurant, cocktail bar, sauna, pool, hair salon, full gym and massage services; its location just five minutes from the airport also makes it a convenient stopover. But while the building's stately exterior gives an impressive introduction, the overall effect lacks atmosphere. The 100 rooms come with all the typical features to keep guests comfortable – internet access, minibar, tea and coffee – and each room has a balcony complete with table and chairs. However, when considering the pretty hefty price-tag, there are several areas in need of a little attention and the review websites seem to agree. It is, however, seen as a suitable bet for a conference, with several well equipped rooms.

Bar (2). Concierge. Business centre. Gym. Internet (wireless). Parking. Pool (1 outdoor). Restaurants (2). Room service. Spa. TV. Borstal Avenue (0302 763 417, www.mplaza-hotel.com). Rates US\$312 double. Rooms 100. Credit AmEx, MC, V.

North Dzorwulu

EXPENSIVE

Fiesta Royale

The Fiesta Royale has smart rooms, efficient service and a good bar and restaurant – the ideal accommodation for business travellers and families. Its location, no more than 15 minutes from the airport, is superb. The rooms are large – ranging between standard rooms, executive suites and chalets – and are each kitted out with DSTV, free wireless, ample wardrobe space and a safe. A large breakfast buffet is included. The Fiesta Royale would pass as a reliable and well-run hotel anywhere in the world: the service is a cut above many others. Its Mansonia restaurant has a private dining area for groups and parties. The bar and restaurant are becoming very popular with non-residents too, thanks to its well-cooked Ghanaian, African and international specialties. The Ceiba terrace offers a range of snacks and food. The pool is on the small side,

but its backdrop of Italian-style gardens makes it a picturesque and clean area for unwinding. *Bar. Business centre. Gym. Internet (wireless, free shared terminal). Parking. Pool (outdoor). Restaurant. Room service. Spa. TV. Motorway Extension, North Dzorwulu (0302 517 411, www.fiestaroyalhotel.com). Rates US\$340-440 double. Rooms 100. Credit AmEx, MC, V.*

MID-RANGE

Nogahil Hotel

The three star Nogahil Hotel offers clean and modern lodgings at around 15 minutes drive from the airport. This intimate arrangement – just 10 double rooms and two suites – is in easy reach of city attractions; staff are friendly and accommodating, and service, for the most part, is efficient. Internet access is available in the lobby, and satellite television in the rooms; the onsite restaurant offers a range of Chinese, international and local Ghanaian dishes, and the hotel frequently puts on live music to entertain its guests. Escape the heat by plunging into the swimming pool, or claim some shade at the pool bar area. *Bar. Internet (wireless, free shared terminal). Parking. Restaurant. Room service. TV. Tetteh Quarshie motorway extension (0800 7297 2900 UK, 1-888-790-5264 US, <http://nogahilhotel.com>). Rates US\$120-150. Credit MC, V.*

East Legon

EXPENSIVE

Royal Richester

Rar from a conventional hotel, Royal Richester is a series of ‘Boston-style’ townhouses for long term stays or short holidays (US\$700 daily, US\$3,000 weekly). Each townhouse has three bedrooms, two bathrooms, a living area, a kitchen, a dining room, a lounge and a laundry room. There is also a backyard. The standard and superior only have single beds, so couples will need the deluxe, executive or premium suites. There are also two apartments (US\$450 daily, US\$2,250 weekly) and a luxury penthouse. Services include a recently refurbished spa, gym, boutique shop, and a ‘rent-a-chef’ service for private dining, but there is also a bar, lounge and restaurant. *Bar. Business centre. Gym. Internet. Parking. Pool (outdoor). Restaurant. Room service. Spa. TV. 5 Richester Lane, East Legon, opp East Legon police station (0302 520 784, www.royalrichester.com). Rates US\$200-300 suite. Credit AmEx, MC, V.*

Cantonments

EXPENSIVE

Midindi Hotel

Located in East Cantonments, just by the US Embassy, this relatively



Recommended

Mövenpick Ambassador Hotel

Backed by 16 acres of palm-studded grounds and a sweeping azure pool, Accra’s newest luxury bolthole is certainly living up to its hype. Waiters on in-line skates glide across the gleaming patio, supplying fresh snacks and icy drinks to holidaymakers stretched out on loungers around the pool; the onsite luxury shopping centre is filled with high-end goods, from catwalk fashions at Stellar Deluxe (see p52) to Afrocentric art at Joe’s Perspective (see p61); Sankofa restaurant pleases with an array of international flavours, and the one2one cocktail lounge expertly whips up any favoured tipple. There’s a great little deli by the shopping galleries, and the restaurant is becoming very popular. It’s also worth saying that the breakfast is the best in the city right now. For more details on the (excellent) spa, tennis courts, sauna, and fitness centre; see p69. Bar. Business centre. Gym. Internet (wireless, shared terminal). Parking. Pool (outdoor). Restaurants. Room service. Spa. TV. Independence Avenue, Ridge (302 611 000, www.moevenpick-hotels.com). Rates from US\$320 double. Rooms 260. Credit AmEx, MC, V.

new and upmarket residence offers a cool and calm experience. All rooms have sizable beds, flat screen TVs, wireless internet access and good bathrooms (the suites have a separate shower). It’s probably worth splashing out on one of the very large suites if you need space. Some have balconies. There’s a small outdoor swimming pool, a restaurant and a basement conference room. The bar is an excellent space, with a large outdoor terrace, TVs showing sport and a comfortable seating area. Overall, a good option if you need to be in this area. *Bar. Business centre. Internet (wireless, shared terminal). Parking. Pool (1 outdoor). Restaurant. Room service. TV.*

15 First Circular Road, East Cantonments (0302 770 007, www.midindihotel.com). Rates US\$230-\$275 double. Rooms 27. Credit AmEx, MC, V.

MID-RANGE

Mahogany Lodge

The Mahogany Lodge is a small 14-room hotel in a quiet but central location near the German Goethe-Institut. There’s a choice of standard and executive rooms, as well as two- and three-bedroom apartments. The rooms are simple, and best described as homely rather than corporate, but not quite boutique – it won’t win awards for design. Nevertheless, they’re comfortable and perfectly adequate. The Mango

Room Restaurant serves an international menu as well as Ghanaian cuisine, including some interesting fusions such as chicken and mango tartlets. There is also a pretty small bar. The most pleasant place to eat and drink in the hotel is along the arched Delia terrace. The Kpehe conference room has reasonable facilities, but contact the general manager first. There is also a gift shop for souvenirs. *Bar. Business centre. Internet (shared terminal). Parking. Pool (1 outdoor). Restaurant. Room service. TV. 9 Kakramadu Link, East Cantonments, next to Philip’s Clinic (0302 761 162, www.mahoganylodge.com). Rates US\$185 double. Rooms 14. Credit AmEx, MC, V.*

Adabraka, Ridge & Asylum Down

EXPENSIVE

Alisa Hotel North Ridge

Split into three differently modelled residences – the Pegasus, the Landmark and the Heritage – Alisa is effectively a trio of separate hotels. Rates don’t differ from building to building, however, and the claim is that the facilities are identical throughout. As an accommodation choice it’s certainly an appealing enough option for getting away from the urban grind, with a birdsong-quiet pool area, a tennis court and a number of different restaurants and wine lounges. However, the property’s main marketing push is its conferencing facilities – there’s a lot of event space – so if you’re here during the week, there’s a good chance you’ll be sharing the hotel with a large number of delegates. *Bars (3). Business centre. Gym. Internet (wireless, shared terminal). Parking. Pool (outdoor). Restaurants (3). Room service. Spa. TV. North Ridge (0302 214 244, www.alisahotels.com). Rates US\$290-420. Rooms 173. Credit AmEx, MC, V.*

MID-RANGE

Coconut Grove Regency Hotel

Part of the same group that owns the acclaimed Coconut Grove Beach Resort outside Elmina, this decade-old city property isn’t quite as enticing as its coastal cousin but still has considerable appeal. It offers just 36 rooms but has the feel of a hotel far bigger than that, and an elevated pool terrace makes it a pleasant spot in which to unwind. Not all the red-brick exteriors are as aesthetically pleasing as they might be, it has to be said, but a location close to the city’s business and embassy quarter gives it an obvious pull and the rooms themselves are decked out with traditional Ghanaian designs. There’s a popular Sunday brunch from 10am to 4pm

every weekend. Wireless is available throughout the hotel and extensive conference facilities span three floors. There is a 50 per cent discount on weekends. *Bar. Business centre. Internet (wireless). Parking. Pool (outdoor). Restaurant. Room service. TV. 5 Mozambique Link (0302 225 155, www.coconutgrovehotels.com.gh). Rooms 36. Rates US\$135-195 double. Credit MC, V.*

Highgate Hotel

This is, in some ways, a great little find. Hidden away among the quiet backstreets of Asylum Down, the 33-room Highgate is a property with the kind of down-at-home character that many of its slicker, larger competitors lack. That said, it could do with a bit of TLC in some rooms. The accommodation is generally spacious (ask to see the rooms first), while the wood-panelled bar serves as a perfect refuge after a day in the heat. If you’re after internet access, there’s a cable hook up in each room, but the complimentary wireless is sporadic. Service is friendly but not particularly snappy or accomplished. A free shuttle bus service runs to and from the airport. The restaurant is nothing speical, instead head to nearby Asanka (see p44), or The Lexington (see p36). *Bar. Business centre. Internet (wireless, free shared terminal). Parking. Pool. Restaurant. TV. 70 Mango Tree Avenue (0302 233 315, www.highgatehotel.com). Rates from US\$160 double. Rooms 33. Credit V (5 per cent charge).*

Paloma Hotel

The Paloma Hotel has improved recently, with a major update. It’s still a simple, mid-priced two-star accommodation, offering 65 air-conditioned rooms and five chalets in the central Asylum Down area. Complimentary extras include breakfast, which can be taken in your room if preferred, and airport pick up/drop off. Sharing the hotel’s complex are two restaurants, which offer a standard range of international cuisine, and a tour agency eager to show visitors around the area. The fairly new Lexington (see p36) is becoming a particularly popular destination for Accra’s expat community and travellers, with its excellent menu and cocktail list. There is an internet café nearby and guests can tap into the wireless in the hotel; a conference centre seating 150 is also available. The Paloma Hotel rewards frequent visitors with substantial discounts, sometimes up to 30 per cent – ask at reception for details. There’s also a branch in the Industrial Area (0302 248 916). *Bar. Business centre. Internet (wireless). Parking. Pool (1 outdoor). Restaurants (2). TV. Ring Road Central (0302 228 700, www.palomahotel.com). Rates US\$135-150 double. Rooms 65. Credit MC, V.*



Recommended

La Villa Boutique Hotel

This gorgeous boutique hotel is a quiet and stylish escape close to the centre of Osu. Rooms invite relaxation with huge beds and muted tones spanning chocolates and creams, and a modest plant-fringed pool is overlooked by a high terrace perfect for parties and events. The whole place basks in a classy European feel, topped off by the onsite Italian restaurant, Soprano, open 6am-11.30pm. It’s cosy, welcoming and with a menu brimming with classic favourites. Style pervades every element – even the rate card comes in the form of a tiny brown scroll tied with string – and while the prices may seem high, they’re often cheaper than the big hotels – and the place couldn’t be more inviting. There is the possibility of negotiating on the price a bit, especially over stays of a few days. Bar. Internet. Pool (outdoor). Restaurant. Room service. TV. 13th Lane, Osu (0302 730 3336; info@lavillaghana.com; www.lavillaghana.com). Rates standard US\$275. Rooms 22. Credit AmEx, MC, V.

Central

EXPENSIVE

Mövenpick Ambassador Hotel

See Recommended box p74.

Kempinski Hotel Gold Coast City

Soon to be competing for centre stage with Accra’s very finest hotels is the Kempinski Hotel Gold Coast City: the hotel has a global reputation for doing things in style, and this will doubtless be no exception. Opening in 2014, the impressive Kempinski Hotel Gold Coast City Accra will mark the Kempinski brand’s West African debut, and it has the potential to be Accra’s most dazzling hotel yet. The complex will expand over 35 hectares and numerous buildings, including commercial and residential towers organised along a ‘broad boulevard and esplanade’. The hotel itself will have 269 rooms, all at least 50 sqm, including a pair of seriously snazzy presidential suites, and guests will bask in comforts such as an extensive spa with 10 treatment rooms and a hammam, yoga studios and a fully kitted-out beauty salon. The hotel also promises an organic food bar, a cocktail bar, tennis courts and a flashy outdoor pool. There is a host of onsite dining options, and the downtown location makes it a convenient base for accessing the

city’s restaurants, night spots and business centres. One of the key markets for the Kempinski Hotel Gold Coast City will be business people – no wonder then, that they have concentrated on an excellent range of services. There will be a fully equipped business centre, indoor parking and a car and limousine service. There are also seven meeting rooms with the latest audio-visual equipment, outside meeting areas and a conference centre measuring 1,750 sq m. *Bar. Business centre. Gym. Internet. Pool (outdoor). Restaurants. Room service. Spa. TV. (024 143 44711, kempinski.com/accra). Rooms 269.*

Novotel Accra

This four-star family-friendly hotel might lack some of the pizzazz of the beach resorts, but the Novotel’s selection of restaurants and facilities provides ample entertainment for holidaymakers of all ages. The walls are covered in local art, as part of a project to encourage arts in Accra. Sunshades and loungers line the outdoor pool, while tennis courts and a fitness centre will keep exercise fiends happily active. The hotel has several mealtime options including an international menu and buffet at the Garden Brasserie and freshly baked pizzas at La Terrasse. Those making the most of their holiday lie-ins can pick up a late breakfast at

Sangaw Bar. (There are also some interesting historical flags from Ghana’s colonial past to browse in the bar.) The hotel’s 190 air-conditioned rooms range from standard and superior rooms to larger suites with two bedrooms. *Bars (2). Concierge. Business centre. Gym. Internet (free wireless, shared terminal). Parking. Pool (1 outdoor). Restaurants (2). TV. Barnes Road (0302 667 546, www.novotel.com). Rates from US\$220 double. Rooms 190. Credit AmEx, MC, V.*

Osu

EXPENSIVE

La Villa Boutique Hotel

See Recommended box left.

MID-RANGE

Frankie’s

Perched above the bustling restaurants and bars of Frankie’s extensive complex is a 20-room hotel. Frankie’s Hotel – which oddly describes itself as a ‘2.5 star’ establishment – is aimed at budget travellers. Some rooms are basic but spacious – the two star? – while others are teeny tiny – the 0.5 star? – so it’s highly advisable to ask to see your appointed room before agreeing to anything. All have air-conditioning, television and a movie channel. Breakfast is also thrown in. The real appeal here is the location: bang in the middle of Accra’s Oxford Street. While many will rejoice at having busy city delights at their fingertips, there is the noise-factor to take into consideration, and light sleepers may wish to consider other options. The complex also has a fast food restaurant, lounge bar, bakery and ice cream parlour. *Cantonments Road (Oxford Street) (0302 773 567, www.frankies-ghana.com). Rates US\$85 double (plus tax). Rooms 20. Credit V. Bar (2). Internet. Restaurant (2). TV.*

La Paradise Inn

In easy reach of the hubbub of Osu, you’ll find a selection of apartments and a swimming pool at this friendly establishment. Self-catering options span one- and two-bedroom apartments, all with living areas and kitchens, and there are also cheaper studio apartments without cooking facilities. A bar and a restaurant are on hand, and business travellers will find the necessary facilities. *Bar. Internet. Pool. 4th Ostwe Street (302 762085, www.la-paradiseinn.com). Rates US\$90-110 double. Rooms 9. No credit cards.*

Roots Hotel Apartment

This tower of self-catering apartments is a comfortable and convenient base in central Accra, just a block from Oxford Street. The standard apartments are acceptable, if a touch basic. It is worth



La Palm Royal Beach

upgrading to a superior room if possible as the difference is quite pronounced. All are air-conditioned, with well-equipped kitchenettes including fridge, cooker, microwave and utensils. The suite, in fact a duplex, has two double rooms and a separate seating area. It is perfect for families who require a bit more space and like to be able to close the door on the sleeping kids. For those times when a pre-prepared meal is called for, there's a cosy 7th floor restaurant with fantastic city views. A café by the entrance downstairs is also a convenient, if somewhat steep, source of drinks and snacks. Those looking to stay for a while can negotiate a monthly rate. This is another great addition to hotels in the Osu area, especially given its price, which is one of the only mid-priced options in Accra full stop. *Bar. Gym. Internet. Restaurants. Room service. TV. 15th Lane (0302 701 3276; info@roots-hotel.com; www.roots-hotel.com). Rates from US\$120. Rooms 37. Credit MC, V.*

Beach

EXPENSIVE

Labadi Beach

Labadi Beach is a well-maintained high-end resort that retains its colonial cool – the lobby is all ceiling fans, dark leather sofas and gold-coloured standing lamps. While tropical gardens, a turquoise pool and spotless rooms do come at a cost, this has long been the top spot for quality accommodation in Accra. Competition is becoming fierce however – especially given the eye-watering rack rates of these rooms (keep an eye on promotions). Labadi's pristine rooms and luxury

suites, all renovated, each come with a private balcony, and the outdoor area features a sizable swimming pool, with a smaller children's pool and fountain. Sporty types will be more than satisfied with the gym, floodlit tennis courts, volleyball court and table tennis equipment; sauna and massage services are also available. The resort has two bars and a restaurant to choose from. A new health centre will be opening in August 2013.

Bar (2). Concierge. Business centre. Disabled-adapted rooms. Gym. Internet (wireless, free shared terminal). Parking Pool. Restaurants. Room service. Spa. TV. Labadi Beach (0302 772 501, www.labadibeach.com). Rates US\$475 double. Rooms 164. Credit AmEx, MC, V.

La Palm Royal Beach

This hotel was once one of the best in Accra, but is being eclipsed by the new front-runners. With this in mind, it is going through a needed refurbishment process. The rooms have always been good. The 152 rooms (when they are all open) are based in round 'chalets' – the idea is that it's a village complex. Standard rooms are large, clean and well laid out, with a flatscreen TV, safe, wireless, air conditioning, and have comfy beds. It's the lobby and bar that needs a bit of work – it's not the best introduction. This is a shame, because behind it is one of the best pool complexes in Ghana, an ideal way to spend a lazy Sunday. New is the La Palm Kids Theme Park, a pleasant and safe enclosed park right by the pool (see p64). Around the main pool there is also a shallow pool which is perfect for the kids. All pool facilities are open to non-residents for a small fee and it's well

worth taking up this opportunity. Facilities include a casino, fitness centre and spa and sauna. Meals can be taken in the bar. There are several restaurants, including the Royal Dragon Chinese restaurant and the Continental Restaurants – we'd avoid those and head to the open-sided and thatched Ghanaian Village (0302 215100). It overlooks the beach, and a great place to sample Ghanaian dishes such as *red red* (bean stew with plantain). As an added bonus there's often live highlife on weekend evenings – one of the few places to see it.

Bar (4). Concierge. Business centre. Disabled-adapted rooms. Gym. Internet (wireless). Parking Pool (2 outdoor). Restaurants (4). Room service. Spa. TV. By Labadi Beach (302 215 100, www.gbghghana.net). Rates US\$370 standard double. Rooms 152. Credit AmEx, MC, V.

MID-RANGE

African Royal Beach Hotel

Situated between Accra and the harbour town of Tema, African Royal Beach Hotel doesn't have an ideal location for those wanting to easily access city life. However, if one objective is for a good dose of relaxing by the pool, taking in sea views, and even hopping on a hotel bike to explore the nearby area, then this bright hotel could be just what you're looking for. The 70 rooms, which each come with a private balcony, have air-conditioning, satellite TV, fan and telephone. Some of the rooms were a little tired when we visited, but the service was excellent.

Bar. Concierge. Business centre. Internet (wireless, free shared terminal). Parking Pool (outdoor). Restaurant. Room service. TV.

51 Beach Drive (0302 711 1118, www.africanroyalbeachhotel.com). Rates US\$195-\$215 double. Rooms 70. Credit AmEx, MC, V.

Ramada Resort

Beach views, tropical gardens and vibrant weekend entertainment from an array of performers treat guests at the Ramada Resort a pretty enticing package. The hotel's 75 rooms are divided between 45 guest rooms and 30 garden chalets – some with great beach views. A hair salon, massage parlour and gym are available, and children are specifically catered for with a special children's pool, play area and kids' mealtime menu. The hotel also includes conference rooms and a business centre.

Bar (2). Concierge. Business centre. Disabled-adapted rooms. Gym. Internet (wireless, free shared terminal). Parking Pool (1 outdoor). Restaurant. Room service. Spa. TV. Awi Koomaa Street, off the Accra-Tema road (0302 717 235, www.ramadaresortaccra.com). Rates US\$170 double; US\$185 double chalet. Rooms 75. Credit AmEx, MC, V.

Rising Phoenix Magic Beach Resort

This beachfront resort offers an oasis of calm within minutes of central Accra. It was opened in 1997 and given a major refurbishment in 2007. The 11 basic rooms have only fans, but would appeal to backpackers and budget travellers. A new bar area was opened in 2010 and is used for evening parties and traditional shows. Other amenities include a vegetarian restaurant and a massage parlour where you can join in a programme of holistic therapies, spiritual retreats and yoga. Dormitory rooms are available for around US\$10.

Behind Ghana Telecom and Anglican Church, off High Street; Ushertown (0244 315 416, www.magicbeachresort.com). Rates US\$26 double. Rooms 11.

BUDGET

Afia African Village

If Afia African Village were any closer to the sea, staff would need to hand out scuba gear at the reception. This beachside complex is made up of the Afia Beach Hotel's 29 rooms (nine rooms face the ocean), Tribes Bar and Restaurant offering Ghanaian and international cuisine, and the Afia Gallery – which is actually a shop – selling fabrics, jewellery and an assortment of wooden masks and carvings. The complex is a little way out of the city centre, although it is close to Black Star Square and Jamestown and, of course, the beach.

Bar. Internet (shared terminal). Parking Pool (outdoor). Restaurant. 2 Liberia Road, Extension Osu (0302 681 465, www.afiavillage.com). Rates US\$100 double. Rooms 29. Credit AmEx, MC, V.

Trips Out of Town

Exploring Ghana

Take time to discover the colourful life outside the capital

Upper West Region

(capital: Wa)
Hugging the Burkina Faso border in the extreme northwest, the Upper West is almost certainly the corner of Ghana that sees the fewest tourists. There's much to fall for in its unrushed way of life and simple village architecture.

Brong-Ahafo Region

(capital: Sunyani)
Despite being slightly off the standard tourist radar, the large Brong-Ahafo Region nevertheless offers up some notable highlights including the 25m-high Kintampo Falls and the acclaimed Boabeng Fiema Monkey Sanctuary.

Asante Region

(capital: Kumasi)
Traditional Asante (Ashanti) culture has been of huge importance since the unification of tribes under the legendary Golden Stool in the 17th century. This region is where to explore the culture's fascinating roots through museums and historical sites. Kumasi itself is a rainbow-hued adrenaline rush of a city, and provides the perfect base for heading out to surrounding attractions such as the Owabi Wildlife Sanctuary.

Western Region

(capital: Sekondi-Takoradi)
As well as Sekondi-Takoradi, the Western Region has various other features in its cap. The Anas Conservation Area offers great hiking and birdwatching, the beaches are stunning and the old colonial forts and the remarkable stilt village of Nzulezo.



Upper East Region

(capital: Bolgatanga)
Those who travel as far north as the Upper East rave about it. It's well and truly off the beaten track, but all the more captivating because of its location. Capital city Bolgatanga – or 'Bolga' to its fans – is full of character, while the sacred crocodile pool at Paga also draws attention.

Northern Region

(capital: Tamale)
Some say that the further north you go, the more rewarding the travelling becomes. The easy-going Muslim city of Tamale bears this out. It's also home to Mole National Park, rich with elephants and offering arguably the cheapest walking safaris in Africa. Wildlife aside, the town of Larabanga is of interest for its whitewashed mud mosque built in 1421.

Volta Region

(capital: Ho)
Set to the east of the mighty Lake Volta, this surprisingly under-visited region is Ghana at its scenic best. As well as the lake itself – which offers cruising and sailing options – there's also the country's highest peak, the wonderful Wli Falls and a number of good nature reserves. It's also home to Kyabobo National Park, which borders Togo in the east. This recently created park shelters buffalo, warthogs and aardvark.

Eastern Region

(capital: Koforidua)
Situated just north of Accra, the confusingly named Eastern Region tends to be somewhere visitors travel through rather than to. That's not to say it's without its charms – the rolling, wooded landscape is a magnet for some, and its hills and waterfalls offer day-trip potential from Accra.

Central Region

(capital: Cape Coast)
The Central Region draws large numbers of visitors, chiefly thanks to Kakum National Park and the colour, history and vibrancy of two of its coastal towns: Cape Coast and Elmina. Both still have slave-era castles, at which guided tours are available.

Around Ghana

Ghana is often called 'Africa for beginners', and for good reason. While no-one's pretending that you're not going to encounter the odd bit of hassle here and there (particularly of the 'my friend, my friend, where you from?' variety, which can have the unfortunate effect of causing overwariness), the country offers markedly less logistical headaches than some of its regional counterparts. As a nation, it's also pretty damn friendly, as you'll be aware if you've spent a couple of days soaking up the smiles.

These two factors combined make Ghana a hugely inviting place to travel around. It's an eminently manageable size for exploration, being smaller than the UK, and offers a full gamut of different experiences. The north, with its mud-sculpted buildings and heavy Islamic influence, is effectively a completely different destination to coastal Ghana, while the national parks that colour the countryside are high in potential for adventure.

The majority of visitors will take the highway west out of Accra in this region. There's no shortage of attractions and sights to be seen along the coast, among them Cape Coast Castle, Kakum National Park, the almost overpoweringly colourful Elmina and the twin city of Sekondi-Takoradi, which has witnessed an influx of workers following the discovery of oil.

GETTING AROUND

It's relatively easy to get from A to B – all the country's main roads are well served by public transport – although countless hours in a sweaty, cramped *tro-tro* might not be everyone's idea of fun. Far better in terms of comfort (although slightly more pricey) are the buses that ply the routes between the major centres. And the travel pains are more than offset by the recompense of visiting outlying areas. Many parts of the country experience very few foreign travellers, so you're virtually guaranteed a memorable welcome. To come to Ghana and restrict yourself to Accra is to take just one bite of the buffet – far better to tuck into the whole country.

Aburi

There are a few places to visit that are worthy as a day trip. Aburi is only an hour or two's drive from downtown Accra. It's a small town 30 kilometres from the city centre, but once you head past the Tetteh Quarshie Circle and Accra Mall, the city feels very far away as you climb up into the cooler and wetter hills. The biggest attraction here is the Aburi Botanical Gardens, but if you want to escape the heat of the city for a few hours there are plenty of outdoor activities. Mountain bike



hire is available at Aburi Bike & Hike Tours (024 420 9587), located just outside the botanical gardens. They can provide tours, bikes and self-guided routes around the area.

Aburi Botanical Gardens

This national park, with the Accra plains to its south and forest to its north, was established in 1890. The park runs a school of horticulture and consists of ten lawns with more than 375 varying plant types and more than 100 acres of natural forest with nature trails. The park is popular with bird and butterfly watchers, and it's a great destination for picnics under the shade of 160-year-old kapok trees. *Aburi Botanical Gardens, Aburi, Akwipim (024 877 2227). Open 8am-4pm Mon-Fri. Admission GH¢3.*

Ateba-Atwirebu Butterfly Sanctuary

Just north of Kyebi is the home of Africa's largest butterfly, the 'Papilio Antimactus', making the forest a must for any butterfly watchers. The woods are alive with birdsong and there are more than 150 different species of flora and fauna.

Tetteh Quarshie's Cocoa Farm

This was the first cocoa farm in Ghana and the birthplace of Ghana's burgeoning cocoa industry. The original seedlings were brought from Fernando Po Island just off the coast of Equatorial Guinea by the eponymous farmer in 1879. There are three of the original trees. Contact the caretaker at the Mampong Chief's Palace for entry. There's little to see (don't expect a visitor centre or shop), but a guide will take you around the plantation for a few cedi – get the price first. *Mampong, Akwipim, a couple of miles north of Aburi Omanyeh House (0302 769 536). Admission GH¢4.*

WHERE TO STAY

Lansdown Ibru Heights
'Hidden away' doesn't really do the justice to the Lansdown Ibru

Heights' location. This new place is not somewhere you'll stumble across – it's down a long and winding road, but that's just how the owners want it. This is a smart villa complex in the lush folds of the hills around Aburi. Judging by the Range Rovers lined up outside, it's also pretty exclusive. It takes around an hour from Accra (although road improvements mean that time will reduce), but it's worth it. There are eight villas, each with three bedrooms, a living area, jacuzzi and patio. They are well-appointed and tastefully decorated. The villas are also pretty reasonably priced at \$400 for two people – it's not expensive for the sake of being expensive. There's a conference suite seating around 24 (actually one of the main businesses here), and a gorgeous pool overlooking the valley. The open club house and restaurant above the pool are lovely spots to watch the clouds roll out in the morning, or listen to the sound of the bush in the evening. It's all built on a hill, so you'll be working off the food from a menu that includes lamb tagine, T-bone steak, paella and traditional Ghanaian food. There's a spa and a tennis court too. *Aburi (026 960 1541, www.lansdownaburi.com). Villa \$400 for two people.*

TOP TIP!

Getting around
Flights can often be a surprisingly cheap option for travel to Kumasi, Tamale and Takoradi.

GETTING THERE

Taxis or private cars are the best ways to get to Aburi. Minibuses (*tro-tros*) leave from Odawna station near the Kwame Nkrumah Circle.

Accra to Cape Coast

While the 165 kilometres (103 miles) of road linking Accra's urban sprawl with historic Cape Coast may appear to hold little attraction – other than as an unsettlingly bumpy, and in places rather busy, route between the two cities – travellers willing to venture short distances from the main road will be rewarded

with attractive townships, picturesque beaches, and a scattering of forts worthy of a day, or in some cases a few days, of exploration. Just a mere 25 kilometres (15 miles) west of Accra, the palm-tree-strewn Kokrobite Beach seems light-years away from the frantic capital. The most important place here is the backpacker haven Big Milly's Backyard, which, as well as providing accommodation, keeps the party spirit in full flow with a beach bonfire and barbecue every Friday and live reggae on Saturday nights. Popular day-trips in the area include guided canoe trips through the Densu River and wetlands, and visits to Solo Forest Monkey Sanctuary (solo.forest@gmail.com), four kilometres from Kokrobite. Heading west along the coastal road, you'll find the turning to neighbouring dwellings Fete and Senya Beraku – set six kilometres apart – each with their own attractions. For a slice of history and cliff-top views head to Senya Beraku's 18th century Fort of Good Hope. The quiet fishing villages are a slice of unadulterated coastal Ghana.

Also along this road is the exclusive White Sands resort. This members-only property has gorgeous chalets, an excellent beachside restaurant and a bar by an infinity pool.

The lively fishing harbour of Winneba, with its sizable beach and European and Royal cemeteries, is also a worthy stop-off on the journey from Accra to Cape Coast. Turn south at Akamu for another pretty fishing harbour, Apam, and spend an extremely basic but undeniably novel night in Dutch-built Fort Leydsamsheid (Fort Patience). A further 30 kilometres (19 miles) towards Cape Coast is Mankessim – worth a quick look for its particularly large posuban shrine.

There's an attractive beach and a striking shrine at Saltpond, and fine views from Fort Amsterdam, the first British fort to be built on the Gold Coast, a couple of kilometres from the town. Stop off at Anomabu for Fort William, a sandstone church and a collection of shrines. The nearby fishing village of Biriwa has a stunning stretch of beach.

WHERE TO EAT & STAY

Bah'doosh Bar, Hostel and Restaurant

Bah'doosh is a bar and restaurant with recently opened accommodation facilities. It is owned by a friendly Australian, and serves basic breakfasts and a good selection of drinks right on the beach. The bar is open 24 hours a day, and plays chill-out tunes when someone isn't strumming a guitar. Most of the food comes off the grill, including the excellent Bah'doosh burger. There is also a wide fish selection, depending on what was landed that morning. Accommodation is mainly in bungalows.



Food on sale at Kokrobite Beach

Kokrobite (027 320 4425, www.bahdoosh.com). Main courses GH¢5-8.50.

Big Milly's Backyard

Those unwinding in Kokrobite can enjoy fresh and tasty meals at Big Milly's onsite restaurant. The menu includes fabulously fresh seafood such as lobster and barracuda, as well as a wide selection of vegetarian options, including apple and potato rosti, roasted pumpkin and sweet potato salad and mixed roast vegetables with couscous. It's also open for breakfast. There is good, basic accommodation at Big Milly's too. Double huts with a fan cost GH¢29, and self-contained huts with air conditioning are GH¢59. Single rooms are GH¢22 a night (GH¢59 with bathroom and AC), dorm rooms are GH¢12. Houses are available to rent for groups too. *Kokrobite (024 999 330, 0242 206 961, www.bigmilly.com). Main courses GH¢11-20.*

Tills No 1 Hotel

For quality seafood to accompany Fetteh's idyllic beach setting try the restaurant at Tills No 1 Hotel. There's a good jambalaya, king prawns and red snapper, all landed nearby. There's a barbecue for groups and a wide range of Ghanaian dishes. Accommodation is in one of 16 two-star rooms with phone, TV and air conditioning. You can hear the ocean from the rooms. There are discounts for long stays and breakfast is included. *Gomoa-Fetteh, off the Main Accra to Winneba road (027 755 0480, www.tillsbeachhotel.com). Double GH¢70-80.*

White Sands Beach Resort & Spa

Those willing to splash some cash for the millionaire treatment can stay at the deluxe private members White Sands Beach Club near Fetteh; slide into the infinity pool, sample the top-notch cuisine and enjoy some of the best service in Ghana. It's exclusive enough to require you to email info@whitesands.com.gh before even seeing prices. However, non-members can visit between Mon-Fri.

Gomoa-Fetteh, off the Main Accra to Winneba road (021 773 070, www.whitesands.com.gh).

GETTING THERE

Many of the destinations along the coastal road – including Kokrobite, Senya Beraku and Winneba – can be accessed via direct *tro-tros* from Accra's Kaneshie bus station on Winneba Road. If using private transport, take the coastal road west of Accra. The sign-posted Kokrobite turning is around 22 kilometres (14 miles) from the city. The turn-off for Fete and Senya Beraku is roughly 40 kilometres (24 miles) from Accra; the road then forks, heading left for Fete and right to Senya Beraku. The six-kilometre road to Winneba lies a further 18 kilometres (11 miles) west from the Fete/Senya Beraku turning; Saltpond, Anomabu and Biriwa can all be found directly on the coastal road, with Saltpond roughly 50 kilometres (31 miles) on from the Winneba turning, followed, less than ten kilometres along, by Anomaba and Biriwa.

Cape Coast

Cape Coast might be the former capital city, but when held up against Accra, it's the very picture



Cape Coast Castle

of serenity. You'll have to look elsewhere for your endless traffic jams. This isn't to say it doesn't feel lived in, but the atmosphere is more redolent of a coastal community than a big, bad metropolis. Pastel-hued fishing boats fringe the beaches, groups of schoolkids trip along in the sunshine and dinky shops and houses create a through-the-ages architectural mishmash. Past the lagoons on the edge of town, meanwhile, are some of the most enticing swathes of beach in the country.

All of which makes it unsurprising that Cape Coast is such a tourist draw. The centre is an appealing place in which to watch and wander – particularly down by the crescent-shaped harbour – but while there's an intoxicating feel to the pace of life here, it also has a sharply sobering history. You'll most likely be aware of Cape Coast Castle already (Barack and Michelle Obama visited in 2009 to much fanfare) – it was here that some of the worst atrocities of the slave trade era were committed. The city was founded by the Portuguese in the 15th century, and the solid white bulk of the castle acted first as a fortified base for overseeing the export of gold and other goods before 'market forces' initiated a move into human trafficking.

A tour of the site today makes for a harrowing, but undeniably salutary, visit. Thousands upon thousands of West African men and women were imprisoned within the castle's scratched dungeon walls – in truly horrific conditions – before passing the 'Door of No Return' and being shipped off to the Americas, the majority of them not surviving to reach their final destination. To establish a clearer understanding of the crushing reality of the period, the 45-minute guided tour (included in the ticket price) comes highly recommended. There's also a museum on site. The Castle is now listed as a World Heritage Site, and gazing down today from its old

ramparts at the late-afternoon hubbub of fishermen and red-dust footballers, it's hard not to be stirred by the human cost of its past.

To harness your inner musician, meanwhile, try the regular half-day drumming and dancing workshops from Women in Progress (www.womeninprogress.org, 0244 530 467, US\$11). The organisation – which supports fair-trade project Global Mamas – also offers workshops in batik-making (US\$16) and Ghanaian cookery (US\$11).

WHERE TO EAT

Castle Beach Restaurant

For location and ambience, it's hard to top the Castle Beach Restaurant adjacent to the castle. It's an atmospheric spot with dark-wood platforms and wide green bamboo screens, with several areas giving diners good sea views. There's a lengthy menu of coconut curries, stir-fries and seafood dishes. *Next to castle (028 729 0539). Main courses GH¢12-25.*

Baobab Vegetarian Restaurant

This little place is the base for the fundraising arm of the Baobab Children Foundation. There is an excellent little shop stocking all manner of eco-friendly, fair trade and recycled goods, including cosmetics, art works and fine kente cloth. It has an adjoining vegetarian snack bar with dishes of tofu, salads and fruits, many from its organic farm. The organisation also has five rooms in Cape Coast. *Commercial Street (0244 723 241, www.baobab-children-foundation.de)*

WHERE TO STAY

Hans Cottage Botel

This rather singular property lies around 10 minutes along the road to Kakum National Park. It's notable principally for the crocodiles that patrol its lake (and occasionally its bar-restaurant), but there's plenty of passable accommodation on offer, and its location makes it a haven for birdlife. There's a wide mixture of chalets, double and family rooms available to 'experience the joy and comfort of a sleep'. There's also a gift shop, restaurant and bar (main courses GH¢6-18). *On road to Kakum National Park (042 91456, www.hansbotel.com). Double from GH¢35; chalets GH¢75-200.*

Mighty Victory Hotel

The Mighty Victory Hotel is a decent option for those in search of mid-range accommodation – a double with fan goes for US\$25, while those with air conditioning are US\$40 a night. All rooms have a TV and shower. There is room service and a restaurant serves breakfast, lunch and dinner. There's also a bar, gardens, conference suite, wheelchair access and internet access. *E.30 A/3 Aboom Close (042 30135, www.mightyvictoryhotel.com). Doubles US\$25-40.*

Sanaa Lodge

This is probably the most upmarket hotel in Cape Coast since the closure of Eshu. Billed as three-star, it's a comfortable option with 29 air-conditioned rooms and cable TV. Four of the rooms are suites. There's also a swimming pool, restaurant, bar and grill, shops, internet café, business centre, fitness centre, secure parking and conference facilities. *Located near the Ministry of Health (042 32570, www.sanaalodge.com). Double US\$60-80.*

GETTING THERE

Four buses a day head to Cape Coast from Accra's main STC station on the Ring Road, costing around GH¢10. Those with private transport should drive west along the coastal road from Accra. The journey takes between two and three hours, slowed by umpteen speed bumps en route. Frequent *tro-tros* drive the few kilometres between Elmina and Cape Coast. When getting back from Elmina, hop into a shared taxi in the Chapel Square area.

Elmina

Is there a more colourful vision in Ghana than Elmina's fishing port on a clear morning? This masculine little town subjects the visitor to a whirl of sights, sounds and smells like nowhere else on the coast. The clatter and chatter of the fish market is a world unto itself and truly a sight to behold – a swarming rainbow palette of batik dresses and football shirts offset by great tubs of crabs, squid and mahi-mahi, all dominated by the painted hulls of newly returned pirogues, themselves strewn with flags and washing. When you factor in a supporting cast of goats, chickens and wheeling birds of prey, not to mention the oven-door heat blast, it's quite a scene.

With the salty Benya Lagoon on one side and the sealife-laden Atlantic on the other, Elmina had its key industries – salt and fish – handily laid out by Mother Nature. The town, once a key port in the African gold trade, is believed to have adopted its name from the Portuguese term for this section of coast: Da Costa de el Mina de Ouro (The Coast of Gold Mines). Today it might play second fiddle to nearby Cape Coast in the tourist stakes, but it's not always easy to see why.

From a historical perspective, the key attraction is Elmina Castle. Like its Cape Coast equivalent, it has strong links with the slave years and is registered as a World Heritage Site, although it tops Cape Coast Castle on age; founded in 1482, Elmina Castle (also known as St George's) is the oldest extant European building in sub-Saharan Africa. It's had a few facelifts over the years and little resembles the original structure, but still makes for a fascinating (not to mention hugely

disquieting) tour. For GH¢8, plus a little extra if you're taking photos, visitors can explore the dungeons and stairways of the interior (unlike Cape Coast Castle, guides here will ask for a tip of GH¢10). On a more upbeat note, the courtyard adjacent to the castle sees a local group going through drumming and dancing rehearsals each evening from around 5pm to 6pm – a diverting sight if you can make it.

The other skyline-dominating building you'll notice is the seventeenth-century fort on St Jago Hill. It was from this hilltop that the Dutch successfully bombarded the Portuguese-occupied castle – they built the fort to ensure no one would be able to dislodge them in the same way. Elsewhere in town, the remarkable Elmina-Java Museum is well worth investigating. It focuses on the more than 3,000 Ghanaians recruited by the Dutch in the 19th century to fight for the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army.

As elsewhere in the Fante region, Elmina is also noted for its posuban shrines – each of them dedicated to one of the quasi-military 'companies' formed by bands of young men – which generally take the form of concrete oddities surrounded by painted life-size figures.

WHERE TO EAT & STAY

As a general rule, the best places to eat in Elmina tend to be found at the best places to stay. In the town centre, there's affordable, delicious Ghanaian fare to be had at the Bridge House, which, as the name suggests, is next to Elmina's hugely important bridge.

Bridge House

The Bridge House is a no-frills property with a superb location. It was the first merchant house built by the Dutch. The hotel is owned by the same business as the Coconut Grove Hotel. Rooms four, six and eight all have great views of the harbour. Facilities include air-conditioned rooms, showers, wireless internet access and safes. The food is very good and can be taken on a terrace overlooking the bridge. *Elmina, by bridge (042 91261, www.coconutgrovehotelsghana.com). Double US\$40.*

Coconut Grove Beach Resort

This hotel is widely considered one of the top spots on the coast for high-end accommodation, and can be found just three kilometres west of Elmina itself. The Ocean View Restaurant here is best surmised by a look at its guestbook: previous diners include Serena Williams, Jesse Jackson, Will Smith and (wow!) John Prescott. The dishes range from GH¢15-35 and there's an emphasis on seafood. It's unlikely to disappoint. It's also home to Ghana's largest conference facility outside of Accra and – on a slightly more interesting note – a crocodile pond. There's an 18-hole golf course (flat and slightly



parched), a swimming pool and tennis courts, as well as access to a delightful strip of beach. There are 59 standard rooms, seven family units, three executive suites and four large family suites. All rooms have air conditioning, showers, TV and wireless internet facilities. (042 91213, www.coconutgrovehotelsghana.com). Double US\$162-262.

Elmina Bay Resort

A couple of minutes' drive farther out of town lies the secluded new Elmina Bay Resort, not to be confused with Elmina Beach Resort. There are 26 rooms available for guests, which are notable for their cleanliness and bright style. All have sea views, and beach access is excellent. All rooms have DSTV, Wi-Fi, a fridge and air-conditioning. There's also a pool and a restaurant – the best bet around Elmina. By Coconut Grove Beach Resort (054 161 4812, www.elminabayresort.com). Double US\$125-145.

HOW TO GET THERE

Elmina is located two kilometres off the main Takoradi-Accra road. It is connected to Cape Coast by frequent *tro-tros* and shared taxis.

Takoradi-Sekondi

The two towns of Sekondi-Takoradi are together known as the Twin City. In reality, they should be known as the triplets. Takoradi is split into two separate areas: a beachside area with hotels and restaurants and, a couple of miles inland, its naughty big brother, the frantic hub of life in the city, the centrepiece of which is a raucous circular market – one of the most colourful in Ghana. Situated an hour west of Elmina, the city emerges after miles of sugar and palm-oil plantations, circling vultures and vendors on the side of the road selling freshly killed, or cooked, savanna cane-rat (known locally as grass-cutter – they're around GH¢25 for lunch on the go). Takoradi (or Tadi, as Sekondi-Takoradi is generally called collectively) has entered into the consciousness of Ghana, and that of the international community, because of the oil trade. It's off the coast here that up to three billion barrels of light oil are estimated to be. Large-scale exploration is ongoing and the service industry in Takoradi is bracing itself for time as a fully-fledged boom town. Predictions of an endless throughput of oil workers are only just coming to fruition, but there are big plans. For sightseers, Sekondi has a Dutch fort and a colonial railway station in what is still known as 'European Town', but there's little cultural heritage in Takoradi, despite it being Ghana's fourth most populous city (445,205 – 2012

estimate). Most visitors here tend to be businesspeople, engineers and other oil workers, the upside of which is that there are some good hotels and restaurants, mostly around the quiet beachfront area. People do swim in the sea here but, as all along the coast, there's a strong undercurrent. The beach itself is clean and uncrowded. It's also from here that coast and sport-fishing boats can be hired. Book through Captain Hook's (Beach Road, 031 20 27085).

The difference between the serene beachfront and the commercial centre of Takoradi couldn't be starker. At the very heart of town is Market Circle, a disorientating frenzy of colour, noise and smells. Lorries full of yams are unloaded, machete-wielding coconut sellers lop off tops and stick in straws, and a bewildering array of goods are paraded past on head-tops: sunglasses, dried fish, flip flops and colanders. Farther into the centre, meanwhile, an almost exclusively female sales force hawk colourful vegetables, chilli peppers, fish and meat.

WHERE TO EAT

Captain Hook's

One of the most popular places for expats to eat is the German-run Captain Hook's, which at one time was related to the restaurant in Accra, but now, despite an almost identical menu, is autonomous. The restaurant focuses on seafood, with dishes such as sole meunière and lobster, but there are also steaks. Hemingway's Bar (what else would it be called?) is a popular nautically-themed pub, with a central bar propped up by Captain Hook's regulars night after night. Beach Road (031 20 27085). Main courses GH¢25-60. Open 6pm-1am. Credit MC, V.

Champs Sports Bar & Restaurant

Located adjacent to Stellar Lodge is Champs Sports Bar and Restaurant, an international bar popular with expatriates and locals. It has large HD screens showing major international sports fixtures and events. On the menu is a selection of Ghanaian and international dishes. Particularly good are its prime South African beef and its deli options. The good customer service, food and reasonable prices make it a great option in Takoradi. There are various events on throughout the week to look out for. Shippers Council Road (03120 32777/23808, info.lodge@stellar-africa.com). Open 5am-late daily.

North Sea Restaurant

A cheaper option, but also well-renowned for its seafood, is

North Sea Restaurant. The dishes at this German-owned restaurant (yes, another one) include lobster provençal and grouper fish gratin, as well as good pizza. There is also chicken with *jollof* rice and other Ghanaian dishes. It offers some imported beers on tap and a happy hour with half-price drinks between 6-7pm every Friday. Axim Road (031 29131 www.northsea-restaurant.com). Main courses GH¢14-30. Open 10am-11pm daily.

WHERE TO STAY

Africa Beach Hotel

A moderately priced option is the waterside Africa Beach Hotel. The accommodation comprises chalets around a large pool and thatched bar, with air-conditioning, satellite TV, radio and tea and coffee facilities. The rooms are basic and a little dated, but comfortable. There are three with views over a rocky beach and the Gulf of Guinea, which would be our choice. A swimming beach is nearby, as is a poorly kept 18-hole golf course. Beach Road (031 20 25148, www.africabeachhotel.com). Double US\$85-90.

Planter's Lodge

This is the finest residence in Takoradi, and one of the nicest in all Ghana. Set among acres of green lawns, this colonial-style house is filled with heavy dark antique furniture, a throwback to its heritage as a Royal Air Force lodge for flying officers in the 1930s. The rooms, especially the executive suites, continue this theme, some with four-poster beds. The bungalow suites, a short walk from the main house, are more modern, and all rooms have flatscreen TVs and wireless. The restaurant is very good, with dishes such as beef with pistachio oil and raspberry vinegar, and smoked black peppered prawns in a fusion sauce. This is one of Ghana's best hotels and certainly one of its most relaxing. The gardens are exceptionally quiet. (031 20 22233, www.planterslodge.com). Double US\$160-350.

Raybow International Hotel

Another superb option in Tadi is the Raybow International Hotel. Modern art from some of Ghana's best artists, in particular Kobina Nyarko, hangs around the large complex. The rooms are tiled and cool, with wicker furniture and colonial-style accessories. There are also larger chalets and villa apartments. All rooms have free wireless and satellite TV. There is a small pool next to an open-sided bar and a thatched seating area. (031 20 22072, www.raybowhotel.com). Double US\$186-195.

Stellar Lodge & Apartments

The Stellar Lodge is run by the Stellar Group (Lexington), and is only a couple of minutes from the airport. Each of the 52 rooms (30 in the first block and 22 new apartments) has HD plasma screens, satellite TV, air conditioning, a security safe and secure wireless internet access. There's also a laundry service, 24-hour reception, gym and swimming pool. Shippers Council Road (03120 32777/26998, www.stellarlodge.com). Double US\$145-278.

GETTING THERE

STC buses travel between Takoradi and Accra several times a day. They take around four hours for the quick service. The buses leave Accra from the main STC bus station and arrive next to the North Sea Restaurant (*see left*) in Takoradi.

Although the only airport in Takoradi is the military air base, there are regular direct flights to Accra, something that will certainly increase as the oil business picks up momentum. Fly STarbow (024 500 0000, www.flystarbow.com) flies to Takoradi from Kotoka International Airport in small Embraer 110 aircraft. It is a 35-minute flight. Antrak Air (0302 782 814, www.antrakair.com) also has daily flights from Accra.

Kakum National Park

Half an hour's drive from Cape Coast, Kakum National Park's verdant slice of semi-deciduous rainforest offers a fresh green alternative to the bustling cities and stifling heat of the coast (033 21 302 265, www.kakumnationalpark.info, 8am-4pm). The 607 square kilometres (234 square miles) of protected rainforest are home to an assortment of wild residents, including forest elephants, giant hogs, flying squirrels, leopards and various species of monkey. However, with much of the elusive wildlife buried deep in the forest's flora, there's little chance of seeing anything more than a millipede or two unless spending a night on an organised camping trip. For those content with gazing at the greenery to a soundtrack of birdcalls, try the canopy walk (Ghanaian GH¢14, *non-Ghanaian* GH¢40). Elevated 40 metres above the forest floor, the 350-metre-long wooden walkway and various viewing platforms offer spectacular, if vertiginous, views of the park, although it is unlikely much wildlife will be seen. There is a simple but informative visitors' centre with information on the flora and fauna, a café and decent gift shop administered by the Ghana Heritage Conservation Trust.

WHERE TO EAT AND STAY

Kakum National Park's onsite café

offers a range of local and international dishes. While the park can be easily visited in a day from Cape Coast and the surrounding area, there is accommodation in the park itself. Located four kilometres from Cape Coast and 12 kilometres from Kakum is Hans Cottage Botel (*see p80*) which provides an array of guest houses, suites, private rooms and dorms.

GETTING THERE

Signposts to the Kakum National Park are found along the Jukwa road, roughly 33 kilometres (20 miles) from Cape Coast. Jump on a *tro-tro* heading to Jukwa from any Cape Coast stop.

Kumasi

If you've ever wondered what it's like to have all five senses forcefully assaulted at the same time – and if the whirl of Accra isn't heart-pumping enough – hop on an STC bus and head five hours north to Ghana's second city. To describe Kumasi as hectic is an understatement. It's more crowded than the capital, more energised, and in many ways more intoxicating. That's not to decry Accra, of course, but simply to say that there are huge differences between the two cities.

Perhaps the main reason for Kumasi's reputation is the gargantuan sprawl of Kejetia Market, often described as the largest of its kind in West Africa. It occupies around 12 hectares in the very centre of the city and provides a place of work for some 10,000 traders. It is hot, raucous and endlessly colourful. You can wander it for hours, never tracing the same patch of ground twice. A maze of open lanes and covered alleyways spreads and curves in every direction, revealing specialist zones selling almost everything imaginable. Soap and shoes, beads and underwear, pans and drums, hens and yams, fish and footballs, spices and shea butter.

The market itself has hazy borders, so its energy spills out into the surrounding streets and neighbourhoods, making central Kumasi a kind of ongoing flow of life, noise and trade. Car radios boom out hipline tracks. Vendors with head-perched baskets wind through the pavement crowds. Strong-armed women pound *fufu* outside kitchens. Kumasi is a hugely absorbing place to be.

But the city, as you'll no doubt be aware, is about far more than simple street-level dynamism. Asante culture occupies a special place in national life, and Kumasi and its surrounds have provided its beating heart ever since a loose confederation of local tribes was banded into a single regional kingdom – the Asante – in the 1670s. It's said that a golden stool descended from heaven and fell into the lap of Osei Tutu,



Kakum National Park

who subsequently became the realm's first leader. The current Asante king is actually a direct descendant of Osei Tutu, and the fact that he not only still lives in Kumasi, but is considered by many locals to be a more important figure than the president, tells you all you need to know about how relevant the Asante culture remains today.

It's estimated that there are close to seven million ethnic Asante in modern Ghana, or a fifth of the country's population, and a visit to the region is by far the best way to explore the culture's roots. Kumasi itself was the scene of lengthy battles between British colonialists and early Asante tribesmen – the city was burnt to the ground as recently as 1874 – and the Prempeh II Jubilee Museum gives a good historical overview of this and other episodes. Among its exhibits is the fake golden stool that was handed over in an attempt to fool the British. Close by to the museum is the Okomfo Anokye Sword, which has stood half-submerged for 300 years, marking the spot where the golden stool is said to have first appeared.

If you really want to experience something to tell the folks back home though, time your trip to Kumasi to coincide with the Adae. Held every sixth Sunday, when the current king opens the gates of the royal palace to accept homage from his people, it showcases the Asante lifestyle at its most traditional. In its pomp, the Asante controlled several goldmines – and, rather more regrettably, several slave routes – so its wealth was at times enormous, a fact still evident in some of its rituals. Expect drumming displays,

elaborate dancing, ceremonial umbrellas, rainbow robes and a general air of fantasy: it's an event that perfectly encapsulates the culture's colourful vitality. Visitors are welcome to attend, and the experience is highly recommended. After all, how often do you get to call in on a king?

Like all areas of the country, the Kumasi region has various different faces. While the city itself runs along at a breathless pace and a one-minute walk can take you past roadside barbers, ranting evangelists and snarling traffic horns, the countryside surrounding it, by comparison, is a haven of peace. The fertile green landscapes around Kumasi are still home to many of the states and settlements initially brought together under the Asante banner in the 17th century. This means there are large numbers of

cultural sites to visit, almost all of them possible to incorporate as day-trips from the city itself. Attractions range from traditional Obosomfie fetish shrines (every bit as curious as they sound) to Asante art galleries and authentic Kente-weaving communities.

If you have a few days to spare, the region gives opportunity for unrushed investigation.

Towns and villages with good potential for cultural travellers include Effiduase, Ejisu – renowned as the birthplace of Yaa Asantewaa, a legendarily brave Asante Queen Mother – and Adanwomase, the latter being a good place to learn more about Kente and its production.

Kumasi's central location makes it a busy transport hub – almost all main roads in the south wind up there eventually – and it's similarly

well connected to Ghana's north. For travellers, this holds the obvious benefit of being able to include the city as part of a wider itinerary but, more than that, also makes it somewhere that, for all its proud Asante heritage, draws in copious influences from other areas of the country. If there's anywhere away from Accra and the coast that shows just how Ghana's evolving from year to year, this is the place.

WHERE TO EAT

Substantial platefuls of Chinese food can be acquired at the Quick Bite Fast Food, a local favourite in the centre of town (Permpeh 11 Rd, Adum), or head to The Dish (6th St, off Hudson Rd, 032 20 30 355) for a more laid-back atmosphere and reasonably priced fare. The Kentish Kitchen at the Centre for National Culture offers a selection of authentic dishes.

WHERE TO STAY

Golden Tulip Hotel

Set in tropical gardens and in the centre of Asante's business district is the elegant 160-room Golden Tulip Hotel. It's the only really international-standard hotel in the city. There are also several apartments, each with a kitchenette and living room. It's popular with conference visitors who use the many spaces, including conference room that can take 450 delegates. There is a bar and restaurant, tennis courts, shop, casino and two lovely pools, one for children. It's about a 20-minute drive from the airport. Rain Tree Street (032 20 83 777, www.goldentulipkumasicity.com). Double US\$150-330.

Lake Bosomtwe Paradise Resort Hotel

This is a relaxing lakeside stopover. Built in 2000, it has 20 simple and

stylish rooms overlooking the lake from the foot of the nearby mountains. Activities include boat rides and tours to villages. *Abono, near Kumtansa, Lake Bosomtwe, 032 2020 164). Double US\$55-65.*

Volta Region & Eastern Highlands

As you head east out of Accra, and pass the industry of Tema, the land turns greener, the villages quieter and there's just a hint of adventure about the land. Rocky outcrops jut out of the savannah, slowly turning to hill ranges, cut with valleys and rivers. On the route between Tema and Akosombo, 31 miles (50 kilometres) from Accra, is the Shia Hills Resource Reserve. It is the nearest wildlife reserve to the city. The 52 square kilometres of savannah that make up the park are home to at least 175 species of bird, 31 different species of mammal and 13 species of reptiles. Nearby are the Se Yo and Obonu Tem caves, located in hills around the area. The vestiges of the former Shai community, which was abandoned after its people were forced out over a century ago by the rulers of the time, can also be seen in some areas of the reserve.

Farther along is Akosombo, the gateway to the Volta Region and where the town's famous dam partly holds in the largest artificial body of water on the planet, Lake Volta, and supplies much of the country with electricity. This is the heart of Ghana. It covers 8,502 square kilometres (3,275 square miles) and, before 1965, didn't exist. It is, no doubt, a wonder of modern Africa. But while the engineering feats are remarkable, it is now an essential part of Ghana's natural history.

The southern end of Lake Volta is also a popular weekend destination for visitors escaping the city. The very new and impressive Royal Senchi Resort (see right) will no doubt become a popular destination, but there are options for budget travellers too. Adventure tourism is also becoming popular around the Volta, with activities such as canoe trips. The heel of the Lake and the town of Akosombo are a couple of hours from Accra, offering a multitude of water sports and activities such as bird watching. From Akosombo ferries can be taken across the Volta. Longer trips can be taken on the Yapei Queen that runs the length of the Volta twice a week, from Akosombo to Yeji in 24 hours – if you can hack it.

East of Lake Volta

The relaxed town of Hohoe constitutes the main transport hub for the area east of Lake Volta – it's also where the Wli Falls are situated



(see below). Leaving the heat of the coast or the dusty aridity of the north, the region's soft green hills and fertile fields are a refreshing sight. In Hohoe itself, the Taste Lodge (0935 22023) is the smartest accommodation option.

The smaller villages in the surrounding landscape make for captivating day-trips, and one of the highlights of the region is Wli-Afegame, a peaceful and charming village 17 kilometres (11 miles) east of Hohoe next to the Togo border. Its main attraction is, of course, the waterfall – Ghana's highest. The lower part of the falls can be visited easily by following a smooth, criss-crossing path through the forest, and has subsequently developed into a popular spot for locals and tourists alike. In contrast, the upper part of the waterfall is more strenuous to discover, but more intimate and solitary as a result. The way up is steep and narrow, and the humidity can make the hike exhausting. Fortunately, the rainbow shimmer of flowers and insects, coupled with stupendous views down to the villages and the pool itself, make it hugely rewarding.

If you're looking for somewhere to stay close by, the Wli Waterfall Lodge (289 547 459, bernhard.hagspiel@web.de) comes recommended for its views and location. The hospitable owners – a German couple – know a lot about the region and offer various guided hiking and cycling tours. It's also possible to rent mountain bikes for independent cycling trips, in which capacity Mount Afadjato makes a superb destination.

The Ghana Wildlife Society (www.ghanawildlifesociety.org) runs a small campsite at the base of the mountain and offers guided climbs to the top. Rangers explain the local flora and fauna on the way up. At 2900ft (880m) high it's technically Ghana's highest mountain.

There are three national parks around Lake Volta and the Volta region. Digya National Park, on the western shores of Lake Volta, comprises 3,478 square kilometres (1,342 square miles) of woodland and parts of the lake. This little visited park is home to colobus monkeys, antelopes, clawless otters, crocodiles and the park's emblem, the manatee. Digya means black rhinoceros, which is now extinct here.

WHERE TO STAY

Adi Lake Resort

While the Royal Senchi Resort (below) is by far the best accommodation in the region, this resort is a good budget alternative. With nights from GH¢100, it also makes a good bolthole. While nothing like the resorts such as Big Milly's to the west of Accra, it's still a pleasant enough place. The ten rooms are very basic (en suite bathroom, TV), but the real attractions are the garden filled with mango trees, the outside bar and restaurant and its position overlooking a river and hills.

Akosombo, on road to dam (0244 543 635). Rooms GH¢100.

Royal Senchi

The Royal Senchi Resort is a bold undertaking; a largely thatched 84-room complex with facilities for large conferences just west of the town of Akosombo. Its location by the river gives it a wild tropical feel, while still being within a 90-minute drive from Accra. The four-star hotel was still a couple of months away from being complete when *Time Out Accra* visited in late April, but what we saw was impressive. The rooms are broken into four blocks. The 74 standard rooms (called River View rooms, for obvious reasons) were sizable, with a private patio area and even a view from the bathtub. Ask for an upstairs room for the airy high ceilings. The nine suites are

large too, and the presidential suite has a private plunge pool. Those not willing to splash out quite so much can splash around the lovely pool that also overlooks the river. There'll be all the usual amenities: spa, shop, business centre, restaurant and lounge bar, while the conference suite with two break-out rooms and meeting areas is well equipped. There are canoes and launches for playing on the (crocodile-free) river. There are plans for a nine-hole golf course, a football pitch, basketball court and kids play area among other attractions. *Senchi Ferry Road, Senchi (0303 409 170, www.theroyalsenchi.com). Standard \$315, suites \$515.*

Mole National Park

Mole (pronounced Mo-lay) National Park is Ghana's biggest wildlife sanctuary. For practical purposes, the place to stay is Mole Motel (027 756 4444), the only hotel inside the park. Situated on the edge of an escarpment and looking out over a waterhole, it's somewhere where monkey-watching becomes just another part of breakfast, lunch or dinner. In the dry season, it's not uncommon for elephants to pay sneaky visits to the hotel's swimming pool. There are 93 mammal species in the park, including buffalo, warthogs, hippos and several antelope species.

The park office next to the motel acts as the meeting point for localised game walks, or 4x4 tours much deeper into the Mole Park. Bicycles can be rented, giving travellers a chance to explore the nearby area.

Despite the hotel and park office, there is very little in the way of tourist infrastructure. This is seen by many as a positive thing, and one consequence is that it has become an important place for scientific study, particularly in relation to poaching and sustainability.

Two hours from the motel by bike, Mognori is a friendly 'eco-village' offering canoe trips and village walks – these include encounters with weavers, local medicine men and the village chief. If requested a day in advance (via the Park office), the community will also showcase their traditional drum and dance performances. Some families provide basic overnight stays and, during the dry season, accommodation can also be found on top of the mud houses, directly under the stars.

The main hub from which to reach Mole National Park is Tamale, a calm and amenable town in northern Ghana. Orange Metro Mass buses leave daily heading for Mole Motel, although departure times should be checked in advance and tickets bought early. Staying overnight in Tamale pre-trip is the relaxing Saam Hotel (071 24200).

Directory



Getting around

Arriving and leaving

BY AIR

A direct flight from London to Accra is a seven-hour journey. British Airways runs a daily direct flight from London Heathrow, and Virgin Atlantic flies from Heathrow five times a week. KLM and Air France both fly to Accra via Amsterdam, and other European departures include Alitalia, which flies from Rome, and Lufthansa from Frankfurt, and most recently Turkish. In the USA, Delta flies direct to Accra from New York's JFK International Airport, and also from Atlanta, Georgia.

Kotoka International Airport

The airport is six miles (10km) north of the city centre. For flight information call 0302 776 171, www.ghanaairports.com.gh. Accra Airport has undergone renovations in recent years, but it can still be a bit of a headache, with keen porters trying to get your custom and taxi drivers descending upon blatant tourists like ants to a picnic. If you get hassled, say 'no thank you' assertively. Immigration is fairly quick on the way in and you will be given a 60-day visitor's stamp, providing you have arranged a visa in your home country before departure. They have started checking Yellow Fever Certificates before immigration, so be sure to have it in order. Queues can be huge leaving the country going through security, so go with plenty of time.

International airlines

Alitalia 0302 775865, www.alitalia.com
Air France www.airfrance.com
British Airways 0302 214 996/7, www.britishairways.com
Delta Air Lines 0302 213 111, www.delta.com
Emirates 0302 213131, www.emirates.com
KLM 0302 214 747, www.klm.com
Lufthansa 0302 243 893, www.lufthansa.com
Middle East Airlines, 0302 230 867, www.mea.com.lb
Turkish Airlines, 0302 765 880, www.turkishairlines.com
Virgin Atlantic 0302 215 200, www.virgin-atlantic.com

TRAVEL ADVICE

Where to find the latest official advice

For up-to-date information on travel to a specific country – including the latest news on safety and security, health issues, local laws and customs – contact your home government's department of foreign affairs. Most of them have websites packed with useful advice for would-be travellers.

Australia

www.smarttraveller.gov.au

New Zealand

www.safetravel.govt.nz

UK

www.fco.gov.uk/travel

Canada

www.voyage.gc.ca

Republic of Ireland

<http://foreignaffairs.gov.ie>

USA

<http://travel.state.gov>

African airlines

Antrak Air 0307 015300/1, 0307 025300, www.antrakair.com
Ethiopian Airlines 0302 664856/7/8, www.ethiopianairlines.com
South African Airways 0302 783 676/7/8, www.flysaa.com

Domestic flights

Starbow (0245 000 000, www.flystarbow.com) and *Fly 540 Africa* (0202 250 208, www.fly540africa.com) link Accra, Kumasi, Tamale and Takoradi. *Antrak Air* (0307 015300/1, 0307 025300, www.antrakair.com) serves Accra, Kumasi, Tamale, Takoradi and Sunyani. The new carrier, *Africa World Airline* (024 243 8888, www.flyafriaworld.com) flies to Kumasi and Tamale.

Public transport

BY BUS

Intercity buses, known as STC buses (State Transportation Corporation), are comfortable, run regularly and are safe for tourists. Buses heading west and north leave from Obetsebi-Lamptey Circle station, while Tudu station at the north end of Makola Market serves those going east. These buses usually have stops within the city centre, so it is possible to take them to get around.

BY TRO TRO

Accra city centre is a hectic one. Perilous for pedestrians, one way to get around is to hop on a *tro tro*, a shared mini van with a set route. Useful routes for travellers are Circle to Osu via Ring Road; Circle to the central post office via Nkrumah Ave; Tudu station to Kokomlemle; 37 Circle to Osu; Makola Market to Osu; and Circle

to the airport. However, the routes are pretty tricky to understand if you are not used to them. A guy hollers out the destination and route if it is not on a sign. But any other people waiting will be able to help.

The main *tro tro* stops are at Tema Station, Nkrumah Circle and 37 Circle. Locals use hand signals when flagging down a *tro tro*, such as making a circle with the index finger pointed to the ground for Nkrumah Circle. If you shout 'Accra', or point your finger up, drivers should understand that to mean central Tema Station.

Taxis

Taxis are equally plentiful, and are undoubtedly the best bet for people new to Accra. Most rides will cost around GH¢7-10, but can be between GH¢5 and GH¢15. Some will try it on with GH¢20+ rides which shouldn't happen for journeys within Accra, but be firm, or just get another taxi. There are plenty – as you will notice from the constant beeping.

Most importantly, agree the price beforehand, as drivers don't use meters. It's worth mentioning that some taxis will look more like health hazards than legitimate modes of transport. Check for a seat belt. A reliable driver we use regularly is Joseph Addo (0246 480676).

Most hotels will have taxi drivers working for them. They often use nice cars (or people carriers) with air-conditioning, but they are generally more expensive. Like normal taxis, be sure to agree a price first. If you walk away, they will often come back with a lower price. Companies such as EuroStar Global Limosine (30 Senchi Street, Airport Residential, 0302 736 161, <http://eurostarlimos.com>) provide luxury cars for airport pick ups, conferences and special occasions.

Driving

Accra's roads are chaotic. It seems to function on one huge game of 'chicken' and whoever has the wits, wins. Saying that, at rush hour (between 6am and 8am in the morning and 4-7pm in the afternoon), traffic grinds to a halt in most areas downtown.

Cars can still be hired, should you want to brave the roads. All the regular suspects are here and most have an office in the airport, and agents around the city. All major hotels will have an agent too. All hotels will also be able to recommend a trusted driver who will drive you around for the day or length of your stay. Expect to pay around GH¢15-20 an hour. Ghana is a left-hand drive country and a current international driving licence is required. Drivers bringing vehicles into Ghana require a 'carnet de passage' and international insurance.

Avis
199 Soula Loop, Labone, Accra 0302 761 752, www.avisghana.com
Europcar
12th floor, Heritage Tower, West Ridge, 0302 665 544, www.europcar.com

Walking

Accra isn't a particularly friendly city to wander around on foot. There are the immediate hazards such as open drainage and pot holes that seem to descend in to the centre of the earth. Looking down at your feet is important here. There's also a lack of pavements.

Resources

Addresses

Addresses. Tricky one. As you will have probably noticed in this guide that addresses are difficult to define. Relationships to landmarks (some unlikely) are the usual way of identifying locations. In this guide we have made use of these landmarks – this is what your taxi driver will use.

Age restrictions

Buying/drinking alcohol 18; driving 18; sex 16; smoking 18.

Customs

Visitors to Ghana can bring in the following without paying import duties: 200 cigarettes or 50 cigars or one pound of tobacco, 250ml of spirits or wine and 250ml of perfume. Those wishing to export handicrafts and antiques not exempt from duties must obtain a certificate from the Museums and Monuments Board; these are available from the main craft centre or the National Museum. Banned imports into Ghana include animals, firearms and ammunition, and explosives.

Disabled

The city is not well equipped for disabled tourists. If you are not mobile, the only way to get around Accra is by private charter taxi. However, if you hire a driver for the day, it is likely he will offer to drive you for your entire stay. Negotiate a price and by the end of your trip you will have made a good friend.

Embassies and consulates

American Embassy
No 24, Fourth Circular Road, Cantonments (0302 741 150, www.usembassy.state.gov).

Open 7.30am-5pm Mon-Thur; 7.30am-noon Fri.
Australian High Commission
2, Second Rangoon Close, Cantonments (0302 216 400, www.ghana.embassy.gov.au).

Open 8am-4.15pm Mon-Fri.
British High Commission
Osu Link, Abdul Gamel Nasser Avenue (0302 221 665, www.ukinghana.fc.gov.uk/en).

Open 7.30am-3.30pm Mon-Thur; 7.30am-1pm Fri.
Canadian High Commission
42 Independence Avenue (0302 211 521, www.canadainternational.gc.ca).

Open 7.30am-4pm Mon-Thur; 7.30am-1pm Fri.
French Embassy and Consulate
12th Road, off Liberation avenue (0302 214 550, www.ambafrance-gh.org).

Open 8.30am-noon Mon-Thur. 7am-1pm Fri.

Internet

Ghana is the best connected country in Africa. There is an abundance of internet cafés in Accra and they are cheap and usually fairly fast. All hotels will have a computer to use, although the wireless network in many leave a lot to be desired.

LONG STAY

Spending a bit more time in Accra

DEVELOPERS
Dream Realty
This real estate development company is the company behind the Octagon being built in central Accra next to the City Hall. It will house shops, a hotel and offices. It is also building the Riviera complex, two 17-storey buildings of apartments and a hotel. Of real interest is its development of Fort St Jago in Elmina.
PO Box AD330, Adabraka (0302 815299, www.dreamrealty.com.gh).

ELM Developments
This company focuses on real estate, initially residential, but recently commercial and retail. A key development is being planned around the Kwame Nkrumah Circle, it is also developing luxury serviced apartments. The Palladio and Charlotte's Place – both residential developments are already built.
No. 8, Dr. Amilcar Cabral Road, Airport Residential Area (021 770061-3, www.elmdevt.com).

Trassaco
Trassaco are the developers behind Trassaco Valley, a

Money

The Ghanaian currency is the cedi and is marked with a GH¢ sign. One cedi is divided into 100 pesewas. The latest cedi was introduced on July 3 2007 and is equal to 10,000 old cedi. The denominations for notes are 1, 2, 5, 10, 20 and 50. For coins it is 1, 5, 10, 20, 50 pesewa and 1 cedi. As of June 2013 GBP£1 = GH¢3.04 and US\$1 = GH¢2. It's an exchange rate that has remained remarkably stable over the last few of years. Changing on the black market isn't worthwhile.

Accra has plenty of ATMs, but it is always best to take out money from an ATM machine within a bank for security reasons. Barclays Bank, Standard Chartered Bank, Ecobank, SG-SSB, CAL Bank and Ghana Commercial Bank all have ATMs. Usually only local currency will be dispensed from these machines. It is a good idea to check with your home bank before you go, as to which Ghanaian banks they recommend because affiliated banks will have lower service fees. Taking money out in Ghana can set off alarms in banks and lead to your card being suspended until you call them. You can let them know before you go. Only change/withdraw the amount you need for a few days. Other options for changing money is at the bureau d'change – often signposted as Forex. A couple are listed below.

LOST/STOLEN CREDIT CARDS
Use your credit card as little as possible, as credit card fraud is a growing problem in Ghana, although it's not at Nigerian levels yet. Additionally, many hotels and restaurants don't accept cards for payment. For lost or stolen credit cards call these numbers:
Visa 410 581 9994 or 410 581 3836
MasterCard 636 722 7111
American Express 336 393 1111
Discover 801 902 3100

BUREAU D'CHANGE
Chase Bureau De Change
Opp. UNDP Office, Danquah Circle, Osu (0302 772 962).

Forbes Forex Bureau
3rd Lane, Off Oxford Street, Osu (0302 781 706).

Qwick Bureau d'Change
Cantonments Road (Oxford Street), opp Barclays (024 405 3705, 024 394 2197).
Trustworthy office on Oxford Street, with rates likely to be better than you'll find in a hotel. It is upstairs in a building opposite Barclay's Bank. There are signs outside and at the top of the stairs.

Gold Star Forex Bureau
Kokomlemle (030 2227409).

Yasole Forex Bureau
Accra Mall ,Tetteh Quarshie (www. accramall.com). Open 9am-7.30pm Mon-Sat; 10pm-7pm Sun.
A popular bureau d'change in Accra Mall.

Postal services

Your post will have a better chance of getting to its destination if sent from Accra, particularly at the airport. In Accra, the Central Post Office is located on the High Street on the Lutterodt intersection in Usher Town. Office hours are 8am-5pm Monday to Friday and 9am-2pm on Saturday.

DHL
(Ridge Crescent, behind KLM 0302 213 090, www.dhl.com.gh)
North FedEx
Headquarters, Mango Tree Street Asylum Down (0302 257 921, www.fedex.com/gh).
TNT
5 Agbaamo Link, Airport (0302 953 531, www.tnt.com)

Services

Correct Plumbing
(027 868 2232, 054 144 7158, www.correctplumbinggh.com).
A reputable Accra -based plumbing and engineering company. Services include maintenance, emergency work, piping, heating, ventilation for commercial, industrial and residential premises in Ghana.

Telephones

Making calls in Ghana is not complicated; every block has a call centre where you can call home at affordable rates. Most cities have numerous phone booths as well. Phone cards are easy to get your hands on, sold in kiosks and stores throughout cities. The most reliable cards are those from the main telephone companies, MTN (www.mtn.com.gh), Vodafone (www.vodafone.com.gh), Tigo (www.tigo.com.gh) and Expresso (www.expressoghana.net). For mobile users, before you go, check with your provider what the rates are.

DIALING CODES
The dialing codes across Ghana changed on May 1, 2010. But expect to see some of the older codes on websites and business materials. The dialling code used to be 021, however it is now 0302. It is then followed by a six-digit number. Many businesses may not have a landline and use a mobile. These are the numbers that usually begin with 024, as well as 020, 027 and 028. The international code is +233.

MOBILE PHONES
Most visitors buy a SIM card if the mobile is unlocked from its home network. Vodafone and MTN is one of the most popular and SIM cards can be picked up for GH¢1 from street vendors or one of the very many mobile phone outlets. Vodafone and MTN are the most popular ones.

CALLING HOME
To call home, dial 00 followed by your country code and then the number. If there is a zero at the start of the home number, omit it when dialling. For example to the UK: 00 + country code (44) + area code minus initial zero (1234) + number (123 456). Calls to the USA: 00 + country code (1) + area code (416) + number (555 1234).

Tipping

It's not too common to tip in bars and smaller eating establishments such as chop bars. In restaurants and where there is table service, a tip of between five and ten per cent is common. In restaurants a ten per cent service charge is often added to the bill. It's not necessary to tip taxi drivers. It's a little more complicated with guides out of town. It's common to have a tour around Elmina and Cape Coast forts for example, however in our experience in the more organised Cape Coast the tour was included in the admission price, but in Elmina the guide demanded a tip of GH¢10. It is always best to insist on organising the money and even tips beforehand.

GHANA ONLINE
Useful web links

www.noworriesghana.com
A comprehensive guide to retail and services in Ghana and advice.
www.accraexpat.com
A successful site linking Accra's large expat community. Up-to-date listings and events.
www.ghanatourism.gov.gh
A useful site with general tourism information.
www.touringghana.com
The official Ghana Tourism Site is a glitzy introduction to Ghana from the Ghana Tourist Board. It's most useful for a list of tour operators that are registered with the Ghana Tourist Board.
www.ghanaweb.com
Ghana Web provides an invaluable resource for all sorts of news and information about Ghana.
twitter.com/modernghanaweb
The most prolific tweeter in Ghana, Modern Ghana Web is an excellent source of news, whether

Time

The time in Ghana is the same as GMT, except during UK summer time (GMT-1).

Tourist information

Tourist information centres in Ghana, on the whole, are very welcoming and helpful – if you can find them. They are few and far between and tend to close down and move frequently. The most accessible is a desk in the Kotoka International Airport where you can get help with accommodation and other general information. Usually the best bet is the hotel concierge.

Accra Visitors Centre
Ring Road Central, opposite Kokomlemle Junction. Open 9am-5pm Mon-Fri.

Ghana Tourist Board
Nsawam Road, Tesano, near the police station. Open 9am-5pm Mon-Fri.

Visas

Visitors from the UK, USA, Europe, Australia and Canada need a visa to enter Ghana. UK citizens can now book the visa online (www.ghanahighcommissionuk.com), bypassing half of the tortuous process of having to go to the consular section of the High Commission on Highgate Hill, London N6 5HE (0208 3427500). There are also offices in Glasgow and Dublin. Residents of the United

sports, entertainment and business. Mostly national news, but with some international stories.
twitter.com/GhanaMusic
Ever improving tweets from the excellent Ghana Music website (www.ghanamusic.com). Best for keeping up with the latest Hiplife.
twitter.com/MensaMusic
M3nsa's entertaining Twitter charting the recording and promotion roundabout of one of Ghana's most promising hiplife stars.
twitter.com/talkaboutghana
A forum for Ghanaians to get together to discuss the future of the country.
twitter.com/GhanaNewsFeed
Another good regularly updated news feed with a mixture of politics, culture and sport, as well as links to some interesting ecological pieces.

States can get visa information here: www.ghanaembassy.org.
Visitor visas for Ghana are valid for three months, although visas for up to 12 months are granted in certain circumstances; visitors coming to Ghana on business need to present a letter of invitation on application. Visas for Ghana typically take at least seven working days to be processed, although there is a rapid processing service available. Those from countries that do not have a Ghanaian consulate can be issued visas in Ghana providing they have previously informed the Director of Immigration. The costs as of June 1, 2013 are £50 for a single entry three-month visa, £70 for a multiple entry six-month visa. Add another £20 for a 72-hour service and more for a 24-hour turn around.
NOTE: There is a new law in place that requires all permanent resident foreign nationals to have a national identity card issued by the National Identification Authority. Check the official immigration website (www.ghanaembassy.org) for details. It costs \$120 and at the moment can be bought from local banks. This also includes refugees – a move that has caused some criticism.

Emergencies

All available 24 hours

Fire 192
Medical emergencies
193 to call an ambulance
Police 191

Health

For assistance in finding a private doctor or dentist, contact your embassy for specific enquiries. Pharmacies are easy to come by and are also found within supermarkets. Here are friendly hospitals and medical clinics, and ones that are used by expats. For opticians, see Shopping, pp49-58.

37 Military Hospital
Liberation Road near Akuafio Circle and 37 Station (0302 776 111).
Akai House Clinic
Number 1, 6th Circular Road, Cantonments (0302 784 772/3/4).
Beaver Dental Clinic
7 Roman Road, Roman Ridge (0302 771 785).
Bernswett Pharmacy
Labone (behind Morning Star), Carpet House (Nkrumah Circle).
Ernst Chemist
Ring Road Central, near Sankara Overpass, Adabraka (0302 257140).
Medlab
17 Ridge Road, Opposite Roman Ridge School, Roman Ridge (0302 769 680).
North Ridge Clinic
Off Ring Road, next to Sedco House (0302 227328).
Nyaho Clinic
35 Aviation Road, Airport Residential Area (0302 775 341).
Life Health Care Medical and Dental Centre
Accra Mall, Tetteh Quarshie (0302 823 064, lifehealthcare.com.gh).
Open 9am-9pm Mon-Sat; 10am-8pm Sun. Credit V.

Police stations

Ghana Police Service, Headquarters
On Ring Road east of Ako, Adjei Junction (0302 228 112).
Information line 0302 761 250
Accra Central
Opposite NIB Headquarters 0302 662 290
Airport Police 0302 777 592
Greater Accra 0302 664 612

Logistics

Bollore SDV
Commercial Warehouse Area, PO Box 51, Tema (022 218 500).
Maersk Shipping
Obourwe Building, Torman Road, Fishing Harbour Area, PO Box 8800, Community 7 (022 218 700).
Maritime Business Solutions
Suite 17, Crystal Plaza, next to Evergreen Supermarket, Community 4, Tema (022 205 153/024 610 5050).
OT Africa Line
52 Charlotte Street, Birmingham, United Kingdom (0121 236 5046, www.otal.com).



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la Maison

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#F881/1, Annexe
6th Street, Osu R.E.
Accra, Ghana
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