

### **Tourist Sites:**

The Borgu Sector of Lake Kainji National Park was set up as a Federal Game Reserve and is one of the largest in West Africa. The area was uninhabited and the idea for the park was conceived in 1960. It is in the northern guinea vegetation zone which is characterized by tall grasses and savanna woodland. The park retains a robust animal population including antelope, lion, hippopotamus, buffalo, roan antelope, jackal, baboon, monkey and crocodile. The park is usually open from December to June, with the best time to visit towards the end of the dry season, when the grass has dried out and the animals move closer to the water. Tourist should expect Harmattan (dry wind) from December to mid-February. The best times for game viewing are in the early morning or evening, and trips can be arranged from 6:00 am, either in park vehicles or visitor's own vehicle. Bird life is abundant, especially near the river. Visitors should call the Wawa Game Warden's office (11 miles from New Bussa) for a briefing and to also reserve a game guide. The entrance to the reserve is approximately 19 miles from Wawa along a laterite road, and the oil river camp is a further 32 miles from the entrance. Many Nigerians and foreigners make day trips to Kainji or pass by it on their way to other parts of the country. Despite the provisions at Kainji and New Bussa, hotel accommodation is insufficient to encourage many people to stay for long periods.

### **DURBAR.**

The Durbar festival dates back hundreds of years to the time when the Emirate (state) in the north used horses in warfare. During this period, each town, district, and nobility household was expected to contribute a regiment to the defense of the Emirate. Once or twice a year, the Emirate military chiefs invited the various regiments for a Durbar (military parade) for the Emir and his chiefs. During the parade, regiments would showcase their horsemanship, their preparedness for war, and their loyalty to the Emirate. Today, Durbar has become a festival celebrated in honor of visiting Heads of State and at the culmination of the two great Muslim festivals, Id-el Fitri (commemorating the end of the holy month of Ramadan) and Ide-el Kabir (commemorating Prophet Ibrahim sacrificing a ram instead of his son). Of all the modern day Durbar festivals, Katsina Durbar is the most magnificent and spectacular. Id-el-Kabir, or Sallah Day, in Katsina begins with prayers outside town, followed by processions of horsemen to the public square in front of the Emir's palace, where each village group, district, and noble house take their assigned place. Last to arrive is the Emir and his splendid retinue; they take up their place in front of the palace to receive the *jahi*, or homage, of their subjects.

The festival begins with each group racing across the square at full gallop, swords glinting in the sun. They pass just few feet away from the Emir, then stop abruptly to salute him with raised swords.

The last and most fierce riders are the Emir's household and regimental guards, the *Dogari*. After the celebrations, the Emir and his chiefs retire to the palace, and enjoyment of the occasion reigns. This fanfare is intensified by drumming, dancing and singing, with small bands of Fulanis performing *shadi*, a fascinating sideshow to behold.

### **Coconut Beach**

Coconut Beach is a beautiful beach in the coastal town of Badagry, west of Lagos. The beach is attractively set in an area surrounded by coconut trees. About 20 miles towards the border of Nigeria and the Republic of Benin, Coconut Beach is accessible through the Lagos-Badagry expressway. Visitors will find a friendly relaxed atmosphere.

### ***Bar Beach***

Bar Beach, also known as Victoria Beach, is the most popular beach among Nigerians. The main beach on Victoria Island is located along Ahmadu Bello Way opposite the Federal Guest House. It is usually crowded with Nigerians on public holidays.

### ***Tarkwa Bay***

Tarkwa Bay is a sheltered beach along the Lagos harbor. It is accessible by a 'trazan' boa from Maroko or 'fiki' boat from under Falu Bridge on Victoria Island. This beach provides a pleasant outing with safe swimming conditions, even for small children. Tourist may obtain deck chairs and an awning on the beach, for relaxed, casual comfort. Local vendors sell delicious pineapples, coconuts and variety of other delightful treats.

### ***Calabar Beach***

This superb beach, at the mouth of the new Calabar River, is about 2 miles long and 500 feet wide, uninhabited save for a solitary fisherman's hut. The beach is virtually isolated and lends visitors the luxury of privacy in a beautiful setting off the beaten path. Since the beach is flanked by a swamp and can only be reached by boat or canoe, getting there is half the fun and enhances one's fascination with this enchanted locale.

### ***Lekki Beach***

There are several beaches along the Lekki Peninsula, the foremost being Lekki Beach, located a few miles from the city center. Lekki Beach is another of Lagos' attractive beaches and remains popular with foreign tourists. Beach shelters made of palm fronds and umbrellas, available for rent, keep the sun at bay, as well as provide a place to enjoy snacks or refreshments sold by local traders.

### ***Eleko Beach***

Opened in 1989, Eleko is the newest of Lagos' Beaches, down the Lekki Peninsula about 30 miles from Lagos. There are no traders and no distractions on Eleko Beach, just peace and tranquillity, ideal for those seeking privacy.

### ***The Obudu Ranch***

The Obudu Ranch is a popular holiday destination for adventurous tourists wishing to explore the remote corners of Nigeria. Situated in the northeast corner of Cross River State, only 45 miles from the Cameroon border, a tourist can enjoy the countryside of both Nigeria and Cameroon at the same time.

The Obudu Plateau is spread over an area of 40 sq. miles. It is 5,200 feet above sea level. The climate is cool and pleasant with no mosquitoes. The landscape is spectacular, with rolling grasslands, deep-wooded valleys and waterfalls. It is best to visit Obudu in the dry season since during the rainy season much of the ranch may be covered in mist and low clouds and there are thunderstorms. Between Dec. and Feb. the harmattan is heavy; therefore, the best times for a visit are the end of Oct. to Dec. and March to May before the rainy season.

### ***Attractions:***

Gorilla Camp, 13 km from the hotel, is accessible either by vehicle or on foot, where one can take a long, picturesque walk to the camp, and observe gorillas in their natural habitat. Guests may also ride horses or embark on hiking trips into the wild (comfortable shoes and a guide are recommended). Birdwatching here is unparalleled and there is a pleasantly shaded natural swimming pool near the Ranch House. If visitors accept the challenge of a three-hour hike,

they'll be rewarded with a stop at the waterfall, nestled amid captivating scenery. In spite of the altitude, it can get quite hot in the day, with five sunshine hours in the dry season (Oct. - April) and roughly two during rainy season (July to Aug.). Other activities include: golf, badminton, lawn tennis, squash and horseback riding. The latest attraction at the Obudu Ranch is a cable-car (similar to Europe's) that runs from the foot of the hill to the top, easing transportation and providing spectacular sceneries.

***Accommodation:***

The Ranch Hotel maintains 33 chalets and boasts a friendly staff, superb restaurant and bar, and laundry/dry cleaning services. Chalets provide exquisite comfort with a large sitting room, color TV, VCR, cocktail bar, kitchen & spacious bedroom with double bed. The Ranch Hotel operates 24-hours during peak periods, Sept.-Dec., reservations should be made at the Cross River State House in Lagos. Or, by mail to: Hotel Manager, Obudu Cattle Ranch, P.O. Box 87, Obudu, Cross River State, Nigeria.

***Route:***

The sights are spectacular on the drive east, through rolling mountains and the dense forest with trees so high their branches form a canopy, shading out the sun entirely. This phenomenon has led to the area being called "Nigeria's Amazon," and is not to be missed. However, should one prefer to fly, they can do so from any major city to Calabar then proceed by car over the five hour route via Ikom.

**ARGUNGU FISHING FESTIVAL**

This colorful annual festival takes place in Arugungu, a riverside town in Kebbi State, about 64 miles from Sokoto. The leading tourist attraction in the area, the festival originated in Aug. 1934, when the late Sultan Dan Mu'azu made an historic visit. In tribute, a grand fishing festival was organized. Since then, it's become a celebrated yearly event held between Feb. and March. During the festival, hundreds of local men and boys enter the water, armed with large fishnet scoops. They are joined by canoes filled with drummers, plus men rattling huge seed-filled gourds to drive the fish to shallow waters. Vast nets are cast and a wealth of fish are harvested, from giant Nile Perch to the peculiar Balloon Fish. Furthermore there's canoe racing, wild duck hunting, bare-handed fishing, diving competitions and naturally, swimming. Afterwards, there is drinking, singing and dancing into the night.

**EYO FESTIVAL**

Eyo Festival is unique to Lagos area, and it is widely believed that Eyo is the forerunner of the modern day carnival in Brazil. On Eyo Day, the main highway in the heart of the city (from the end of Carter Bridge to Tinubu Square) is closed to traffic, allowing for procession from Idumota to Iga Idunganran. Here, the participants all pay homage to the Oba of Lagos. Eyo festival takes place whenever occasion and tradition demand, but it is usually held as the final burial rites for a highly regarded chief.

**SHARO/SHADI FESTIVAL**

The Fulani culture presents a complex system, involving age-old initiations. The most important is the Sharo or Shadi (flogging meeting), believed to have originated among the Jaful Fulani, whose ranks are still considered the finest. During the Sharo festival, bare-chested contestants, usually unmarried men, come to the center ring, escorted by beautiful girls. The crowd erupts in thunderous cheers and drumming. After some time, a challenger, also bare-

chested, comes out brandishing a whip, trying to frighten his opponent. The festival proceeds with lively drumming, singing, cheers and self-praises from both competitors and challengers. When the excitement is at a fevered pitch, it is the time for flogging. The challenger raises his whip and flogs his opponent. His opponent must endure this without wincing or showing pain, lest he be branded a coward.

### **THE ATILOGWU DANCE**

The Atilogwu dance has been elevated to a dazzling art form, particularly by the Igbos in Anambra State. Atilogwu is a vigorous dance which literally means “Is this magic?” and combines elements of gymnastics with foot-stomping rhythms and brilliant colors. It’s performed by young men and women who undergo rigorous training before presenting the dance in public. Once approved, the dance is performed during important festivals and great social occasions. In fact, Atilogwu has become a celebrated signature of Nigerian culture, performed around the world.

### **NATIONAL MUSEUMS**

The National Museum at Onikan, Lagos provides one of the largest collection of art and artifacts in Nigeria. Of great importance to anyone seeking a deeper understanding of African art and the rich cultural heritage of Nigeria, the artifacts in the museum date from 500 BC-200 AD, including the Nok terracotta heads. Its interior is majestic in scope, and retraces the development of various cultures through centuries of Nigerian history. Operated by the National Commission for Museums and Monuments, the museum here, like —others in Benin, Jos, Ife, Esie, Kano and Kaduna, plus many smaller ones, consistently draws thousands of tourists and historians each year to view its rich collections.

### **OSUN FESTIVAL**

Osun was one of the wives of Sango, the god of Thunder and former king of Oyo. She is widely worshipped in Yorubaland, particularly in the countryside through which the river Osun flows. The water of Osun is said to have the power of making barren women fertile. Her most important sanctuaries are in Oshogbo, which is contracted from ‘Oso Igbo’, or spirit of the forest, centered around a palace shrine where the chief priest performs rites and rituals.

### **KANO DYE PITS**

The Kano indigo-vegetable dye pits are one of the most fascinating aspects of this old city. Various designs are folded into the material before dyeing, and the fabric is often beaten to achieve the shiny, iridescent appearance. The techniques employed to obtain this look are unmatched around the world. And although the methods they use are ancient, these lush works of art on fabric always remain extremely popular and continue to be in great demand.

### **LEATHER WORK**

Nigeria is a veritable treasure trove of beautiful handmade crafts. Drawing from ancient traditions, Nigerian artisans create marvelous wood carvings, metal castings, exotic jewelry, traditional clothing, intricately decorated calabashes and finely-crafted leatherwork. Visitors are amazed at the quality and value of these unique creations, each made with a perfectionist’s skill and attention to detail.