

# TimeOut

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THE INSIDER'S GUIDE TO  
THE PERFECT BREAK  
2014/15

# Accra

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Where Ghana Shops

# Accra in Focus



## African Superheroes

From a small studio in Accra new comic book stars have emerged, the African Legends. And they're at the forefront of Africa's digital revolution

*"Long ago, Ananse, the god of Wisdom, is banished onto Earth by Odumankoma, Ruler of the Skies, for treason. Fast-forward to today, fate brings Ananse and an innocent boy, Selasi Rockson, together."*

**T**hus starts a remarkable story, not just for the legendary character of Ananse on the digital page, but for Ghana's most exciting digital arts companies. Leti Arts was started in 2009 by three friends in Accra as a video game development studio. It has since created a range of remarkable digital comics and interactive mobile apps, as well as the continent's first superheroes: Africa's Legends.

*Time Out Accra* chatted with Leti Arts' Kobby Owusu to understand the origins of Africa's Legends and the full story.

### How did Leti Arts start?

"Leti Games was founded in

2009 by three friends brought together by their passion for innovation, creativity and change. We identified opportunities in entertainment-related content, especially African-themed content, and went from there."

### Can you explain the genesis of Africa's Legends?

"Africa's Legends is our flagship superhero series. It is influenced by folklore and myths from across Africa. We're reimagining the characters from African folklore as elite superheroes fighting crime in present-day Africa.

### Did The True Ananse come out of that?

"The True Ananse is the first individual series in which we're reimagining the story of Kweku Ananse, the trickster, and

depicting him as a god-turned-superhero in modern Africa. It's set both in the ancient Sky Kingdom and modern Ghana, where Ananse possesses a high-school boy, Selasi, and bestows god-like powers on him."

**Ananse is the god-turned-superhero in modern Africa**

### What are you trying to say with Africa's Legends?

"It's simply our way of saying African culture is cool! The continent has a diverse and rich culture, which until now has been presented in very uninteresting formats. Africa's Legends is a catalyst – these

superheroes can power the next phase of African entertainment. We want to show that world-class entertainment can be made for the world from Africa."

Visit [www.letiarts.com](http://www.letiarts.com) for details.

## Wellbeing in Accra

A new yoga studio is just one of a host of wellbeing therapy centres being offered in Ghana

**Y**oga, we know, is not all about the mind. Nor is it all about physical exercise. It's about something much more fundamental and encompassing: wellbeing. Many may be put off by the idea of the downward dog or sun salutations until they try it. And once it's been tried, most carry on for a lifetime. Now there's a new opportunity in Accra to get some world-class yoga teaching. In an airy and light room overlooking the Mövenpick's beautiful gardens, Nana at Bliss Yoga Accra leads the most soothing and life-affirming hour in Accra. All levels feel welcome (even us!), in fact, it's impossible not to feel anything but the warmest welcomes from the New York-trained Nana.

Nana also runs the yoga classes at Kaya (see p56) that also offers a full detox programme at their luxurious colonial house and a personalised fresh juice detox programme 'created to clear and ease the mind'. You can also find yoga teaching at Accra Shala Yoga ([www.accrashalayoga.com](http://www.accrashalayoga.com)). To delve a bit deeper, RIMA Thera Touch ([www.rimatheratouch.com](http://www.rimatheratouch.com)) offers reflexology, physiotherapy, taichi and dozens of other therapies. Bliss Yoga Accra (0509546723, [www.blissyogaaccra.com](http://www.blissyogaaccra.com)).



Bliss Yoga Accra

## Ghanaian tapestries

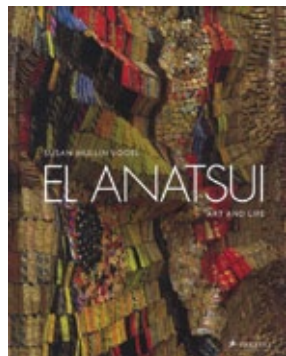
El Anatsui appointment to the Royal Academy marks a seachange in Ghanaian art



BENEDICT JOHNSON

In April 2014, Ghanaian artist El Anatsui was the first African to be appointed a Honorary Royal Academician at the Royal Academy of Arts. A year earlier he had won the prestigious Charles Wollaston Award for his breathtaking (in the truest sense) *TSIATSIA – searching for the connection*, that covered the entire façade of the Royal Academy with bottle tops, printing plates and roofing sheets. His creations are unerringly beautiful, yet have a poignancy that is hard to pinpoint.

El Anatsui emerged from the flourishing post-independence art movement in Ghana which reflected a similar, but bigger, scene in Nigeria. Using mostly found materials, from cassava graters to printing plates often taken from the obituary columns of newspapers, he created a language of sculpture that is at once undeniably West African but is understandable around the world. His work has also appeared at British Museum (where you can still see his work), Centre Pompidou in Paris and the Smithsonian Institution in Washington. In London, he is represented by the October Gallery and there was a sumptuous book: *El Anatsui: Art*



and *Life* by Susan Vogel recently published. The author has also just released a documentary about the artist called *Fold Crumple Crush: The Art of El Anatsui*, distributed by Icarus Films. In the film El Anatsui told Susan: "One thing that I have grown into is working with things

which have been used before – things which link people together. I don't know about DNA, but if you touch something, you leave a charge on it and anybody else touching it connects with you in a way – and the fact that anything that has been used by humans has a history, so

those properties I think help whatever I do to gain some meaning."

Robert Storr, the curator of the Venice Biennale in 2007, said: "This is all the detritus of everyday life in Africa. This is the recycling of industrial production into something that is completely transcendental made out of junk. This is not pop art, but it is an aesthetic that reaches back into the whole series of things in the postwar period, but it has a kind of exaltation I have not seen before."

Quote from El Anatsui, from *Fold Crumple Crush: the Art of El Anatsui*, a film by Susan Vogel, 2011. Online transcript viewed at [susanvogel.com/Anatsui](http://susanvogel.com/Anatsui) June 2014.

## Sex in the (African) City

A new YouTube series following six returnees back to Accra has become the TV event of the year

Unabashedly recognised as Ghana's ode to *Sex and the City*, *An African City* has accrued its own avid fan base with an average of 100,000 Youtube hits per episode since its launch earlier this year. Set in Accra, the series follows the social lives of five women in their late 20s who have, for various reasons, returned to Ghana after having been educated and raised abroad. MaameYaa Boafo plays the Carrie Bradshaw character, Nana Yaa, an attractive and self-assured woman, whose true love is close by but unavailable. She struggles to acclimatise in her new surroundings, being the last of the group to arrive 'home'. Complaints about poor customer service, her lack of 'Africaness' and plenty of sexual escapades provide the kind of knowing

nods the show's writer, Nicole Amarteifio, felt was missing from African TV. In an interview with CNN, Amarteifio explained, "I wanted a TV show about modern, beautiful, educated African women. I was tired of the sole narrative of the African woman being about poverty and disease. I wanted to see another narrative – one of beauty, glamour and intelligence."

The five actresses involved in the series are indeed beautiful and glamorous – all have chiselled features and cosmopolitan backgrounds. Marie Humbert, who plays Makena, the sophisticated lawyer, spoke to *Time Out Accra* about her role. "Makena is a character who is a divorcee from London now living with her uncle and aunt in Accra. Nicole [Amarteifio] called me in and I accepted, after all, I too am a returnee, I could relate. I agree with Nicole in that it is time to show these fantastic women to

the world. And the show is opening people's eyes as we deal with problems that everyone faces: corruption, power shortages, real estate, AIDS. It's also about sex and about independent women. *An African City* is realistic – it shows the realities of these women living in Accra."

Fashion plays a big part too, with wardrobe cameos from the likes of Christie Brown and Afrodesiac. Ghanaian prints, stylish hair and expensive bags make for a luxe viewing and drool-worthy escapism, an aspect for which the show is both praised and critiqued. Designer dresses and chauffeured driven cars which feature in the characters' lives are not perhaps a realistic snapshot for most Ghanaians, however the show does pick up on the

daily realities which were certainly not issues for our favourite Manhattan socialites (was Carrie's electricity sporadic; did Samantha have to negotiate intimidating police road blocks?).

Amarteifio's determination to create the series led her to forgo the route of negotiating with TV producers, opting instead to air it directly from YouTube. It was the right move in a country where social media is the main means of reliable communication. Viewers can easily access each episode unedited and with full content. The show's success has proven Amarteifio's hunch was spot on, that African viewers wanted this narrative and that it could be done. The show's second series has already been filmed and surprise – meetings are now underway to bring *An African City* to Ghanaian TV. To watch *An African City*, go to [www.youtube.com/user/AnAfricanCity](http://www.youtube.com/user/AnAfricanCity)

“It's the reality of women living in Accra”



An African City

## Wheel to reel

A group of talented Ghanaian BMX riders are about to be launched onto the international stage, thanks to a forthcoming crowd-funded film



BikeLordz

"I think everyone who gets off the plane at Kotoka for the first time has a wide-eyed curiosity, and I was one of them," American filmmaker Tobias Arturi tells *Time Out Accra*. "Bikelordz has definitely become much more than it was originally envisioned to be."

This could be a tad of an understatement. Tobias moved to Accra in 2007 to work on a musical project with John Collins, Kofi Ghanaba (who has since died) and the palm-wine legend Koo Nimo. The idea was to archive and learn about the roots of Ghanaian music. One day in a traffic jam, however, Tobias got out to see the cause of the hold-up: a group of riders performing outside a football stadium.

"Coming from the DIY and bike community in New York City, we (myself and Bikelordz co-conspirator Sam Feather-Garner) were immediately curious."

The pair were entranced not only by the feats of bikemanship being performed, but also the characters in the saddle. "We made a short version at first, which was just an edit of footage I'd grabbed by borrowing handheld DV tape cameras from folks. But as I got to know the Ghanaian BMX scene and the guys involved, I realised that there was a story that needed to be shared with a wider audience. Seeing BMX in a new context – the Ghanaian context – threw up themes like perseverance, dedication to a dream, and individualism.

"The determination that the riders in Accra show is really

remarkable. They train in extreme heat, on dirt roads and with cobbled-together equipment, for years without much reward except their own pride and community respect. Additionally, where BMX fits – or doesn't – within Ghanaian culture is really interesting. In Ghana, BMX is a show, or a performance for an audience, more than a competition. The riders perform at street parties, festivals, funerals, really any sort of public event. It's like BMX-dance with massive Ghanaian swagger, a one-of-a-kind spin on an art form that has few roots in Ghana itself."

After the short film was successfully touted around some festivals, it became clear there



was an appetite for a longer film. Tobias and Sam used the short to promote a crowd-funded Kickstarter project that meant they could return to Accra for two months.

“Want to see BMX tricks on the top of a tro tro? Watch this!”

"The first thing we had to adjust to when we arrived was how personal everything is. Making plans can be hard, and we didn't always end up with the shoot that we expected. But that uncertainty, while sometimes frustrating, often led to spontaneous, beautiful

opportunities." And seeing the rushes of the final film, we can vouch for the vibrant cinematography and emotional connection with the riders.

"We realised shortly after arriving that we were making a portrait film – a snapshot of Ghana through the lens of BMX."

"The movie's definitely focused around BMX as an art and its place in Ghana, but there are also plenty of scenes where we take some time to focus on the environment that they're riding in. It's integral that the film highlights Ghana's cultural heritage, to convey how improbable and exciting it is that BMX is such a thriving scene here."

"And you want to see someone do bike tricks on top of a tro tro? Watch our movie!"

Bikelordz is currently in post production, but a teaser trailer will be out soon. Keep an eye on their Facebook page for news... and a Ghanaian premiere?

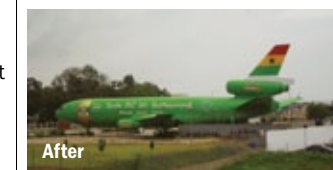
## Aeroplane food

There's a restaurant coming in on the DC-10 tonight

The derelict Ghana Airways plane, in a field just beyond the end of the runway of Kotoka Airport, has always been a bit of a poignant sight. It partly symbolised the demise of the national carrier (although it was there long before Ghana Airways folded), and partly a reminder of the fragility of the economy. Not any more. The poor old DC-10 now has a sparkling new green dress and is a statement of Ghana's ambitious entrepreneurialism, standing boldly opposite the equally confident Marina Mall. It has now been converted into the La Tante DC-10 Restaurant (see p48). Climb the stairs, sit down in one of the reclaimed seats, and order a meal of Ghanaian classics. Stewards bring the food along in the surprisingly spacious interior. It's a gimmick for sure, but it's still great to see a gleaming plane full of people there, than a mass of steel.



Before



After

## Digital banking

A bank in Ghana has become the first in West Africa to be entirely digital



What no teller? The Ecobank Digital Centre in Labone, Accra, is the first West African

bank to open a branch without any cashiers. Instead, all banking transactions and financial services are carried out using touch-screen tablets, interactive flat screens and video-conferencing technology. "Universal Relationship Managers" are on hand to give advice on financial services. Ecobank is one of the biggest banks in Africa.



# Dates for your diary



## A year in Ghana

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

There are a huge amount of cultural events, parties and sporting dates. Listed here are the regular events we know about well in advance. Stalwarts such as the Ghana Music Awards and the Ghana Fashion and Design week are well attended and well organised. We've also listed traditional events. The majority of events, even high profile ones, are not very well promoted, or not until the last minute. The best bet is to go to [www.timeout.com/accra](http://www.timeout.com/accra) for the most up-to-date listings. Online we list regular nights and one off events of all kinds. Also follow our Facebook page and Twitter account (@TimeOutAccra).

### 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. Held at the Silverbird Cinema. [www.indiahc-ghana.com](http://www.indiahc-ghana.com)

### February

#### Zdawuwu 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. The 2014 awards saw 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 Shatta Wale and Sarkodie. [www.ghanamusicawards.com](http://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 Nkawkaw on the Kumasi-Accra road. [www.ghanaparagliding.com](http://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.

### 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.

#### 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. A good source of information is [accradotalttours.wordpress.com](http://accradotalttours.wordpress.com).

## 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. [www.aimghana.com](http://www.aimghana.com)

#### 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-see event.

## 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.ghanafashiondesignweek.com](http://www.ghanafashiondesignweek.com)

## December

#### Accra Polo Open

Taking place at the Accra Polo Club, this annual event attracts teams from around the world. Check out its Facebook page for details.

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# Smile: you're in Ghana!

Welcome to the most joyous country in West Africa – it's a delight, and here are 51 reasons why...



**01 THE WELCOME** Akwaaba! Welcome! You're in Ghana. The sun's shining, the pool's waiting, the cocktails are being mixed. There's a country out there waiting for you, and it's in a good mood.



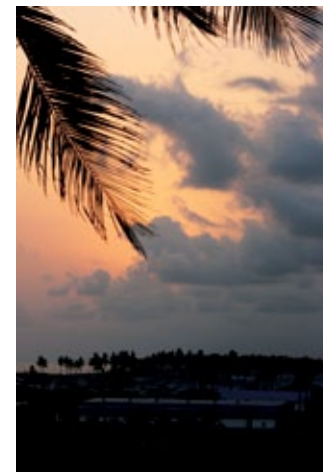
**02 BEER SAP AT REPUBLIC** Take one cold pint of Club beer and add a little bitter Bissap concentrate – you're left with one of the most refreshing drinks known to man. Available at Republic Bar & Grill (see p35).



**03 TAKE OFF IN THE AEROPLANE RESTAURANT** It was a derelict plane. Now it's a shiny, and very green, restaurant. Cool! It may not boast the most groundbreaking menu, but that doesn't matter when the interior of La Tante DC 10 Restaurant is so quirky. See p9.



**04 THE WORLD'S QUINTEST FOOTBALL SONG** "Arose, Arose, Arose/be quiet and don't be silly/We are the famous Hearts of Oak." Join in with the rabble at the Ohene Djan Stadium (www.acraheartsofoak.com).



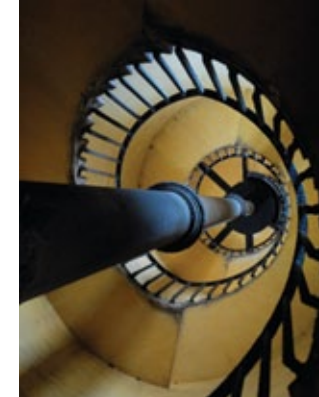
**05 BIG THUNDERSTORMS** KAABOOOM. That's the sound of life getting a little cooler. When the clouds roll in at the beginning of the rainy season it's time to wallow and welcome the dramatic thunderstorms.



**06 WATER THAT COMES IN A BAG...** Why doesn't the rest of the world sell clean, cold water in a bag? They cost 10 pesewas, provide sterile drinking water for millions and are much cheaper to produce than bottles.



**07 BAD SIGNS/GOOD SIGNS** Is it the best sign ever, or the worst? We can't make up our mind.



**09 CLIMBING JAMESTOWN LIGHTHOUSE** Although it's not an official tourist destination, Jamestone lighthouse is a curiosity. For between GH\$5-10 the family who live under it will take you up. It's a bit rickety and not for vertigo sufferers, but the views from the top are amazing. See p29.



**08 BEAUTIFUL KENTE CLOTH** Few visitors resist picking up a colourful example of this intricately woven, quintessentially Ghanaian, material. One of the best places to get it is at the Nubuke Foundation (see p61). A recent project saw them working with Kente cloth-makers who, with the foundation's help, now make pieces with commercial and international appeal.



**10 A KICK BOXING LESSON AT PIPPA'S** Steven Kofi Yeboah is one of Africa's best kickboxers, so don't miss the opportunity to train with him. The lessons are for all ages and all levels. See p69.

**11 THE CUNNING HAWKERS ON OXFORD STREET**

"Hey brother, what's your name?" "It's Daniel." "Welcome to Ghana, Daniel!" and off he walks. Half an hour later you'll get a weaved bracelet with your name on it. It's hard to say no, mostly because it's rather nice. A bit cheeky, but fun. If you claim your name's Friedrich von Trampleklein, they're stumped.



**12 AN ICE COLD BEER**

It's hot. Really hot. Which means there's little more inviting than a large bottle of ice cold Star or the slightly hoppier Club. Watch Accra go by on the patio of Lizzy's (see p35) or Republic (see p35).



**13 'TIA' "This is Africa"**

There's a goat in the passenger seat of a taxi, the food's just taken an hour to turn up and the Oxford Street traffic is static. "TIA man, TIA". Relax and get on Ghana time.

**14 CATCHING A GIG AT ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE**

This is the best place in Accra to see live music. Whether it's French beatboxers, afrobeat legends from Nigeria or one of Ghana's homegrown talent, there's always something interesting on. Check www.timeout.com/accra for details. And then get...

**15 THE 'AN AFRICAN CITY' TV SHOW**

Accra now has its very own Sex in the City, and we love it. This story of returnee women adjusting to life in Accra is intelligent, moving and very funny. And it's free on YouTube. See p8.

**16 MULTI-COLOURED SCHOOL SHIRTS** If only they sold these. The school uniform for older kids is often made from a fabric, colourfully printed with the school logo. Very cool.



**17 PLAYING SPOT-THE-BIZARRE-FOOTBALL-SHIRT** Scunthorpe United, Notts County's third kit. We've spotted an amazing array of football shirts. Still waiting for a Dukla Prague Away Kit though.

**18 THE MOHAMARA AT YASMINA** Yasmina is one of Ghana's culinary highlights. It serves incredibly flavoursome authentic Lebanese cuisine. The meatballs, the bread and hummus are untouchable, but it's the mohamara (spicy walnut spread) that always lingers in the memory.

**19 HIGHLIFE AT +233** The only place in Accra where you're pretty much guaranteed to regularly hear highlife live. It's a cleverly designed venue with an inside stage that can be seen and heard from the outdoor patio. Settle in, grab a large Star beer, order half a dozen delicious meaty kebabs and hear some of Ghana's best music.



**20 PIZZA AT NICOLINO'S** The best pizza in Accra? Could be. Nicolino's is on an airy covered terrace in the leafy gardens at the Alliance Française. The bubbling pizza appears from a fiery oven under the eagle eyes of an Italian chef. See p48.

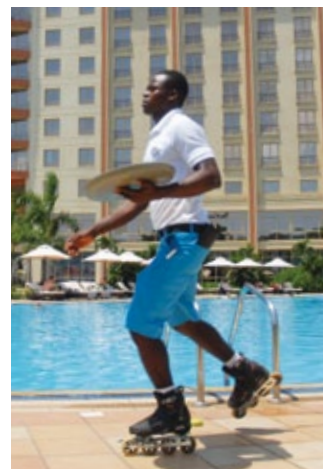
**21 HUNTING OUT THE GOLD WEIGHTS AT THE NATIONAL MUSEUM** Brass gold weights were used to weigh gold-dust currency between the 15th and 19th century in the Asante Kingdom. Some original ones still survive – but you'll need to know what you're looking for. Go to [www.timeout.com/accra](http://www.timeout.com/accra) for a full feature.



**22 KONTOMIRE STEW AT BUKA** Buka is one of the best places to feast on authentic West African cuisine. Our current favourite (and by this we mean we eat it at least once a week) is the kontomire stew, cooked with cocoyam leaves, meat, smoked fish and a spinach tomato sauce. Amazing. See p40.



**23 GHANAIAN COFFIN ART** 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. See p61 to order yours!



**24 A LAZY DAY BY THE MÖVENPICK POOL** An oasis in the middle of the city. The shallow pool is one of the city's more inviting sights on a hot day. Order a smoothie from one of the rollerblading waiters and sit back with a book, taking a dip when it gets too hot.



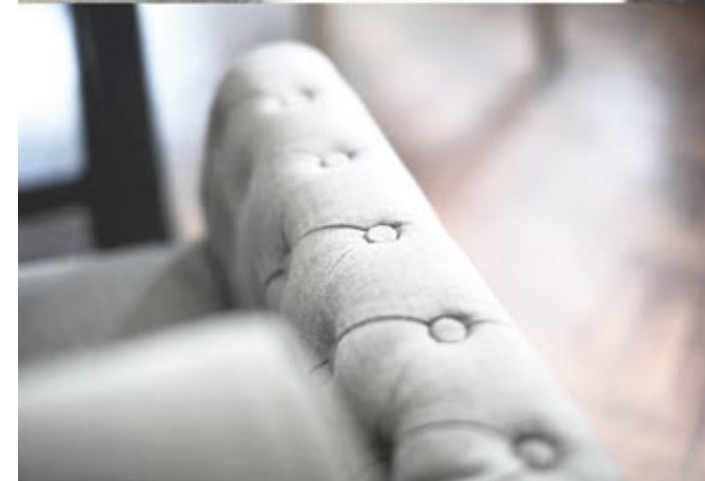
**25 GHANA'S ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT** The entrepreneurial spirit in Accra is strong. Whether it's a new shop selling bespoke handbags or a vendor touting fried plantain chips through your taxi window, everyone's out to make a cedi or two. In fact, many of the essentials will come to you. Need phone credit? Cold water? Ice-cream? A football shirt? A sacrificial goat? They're all by the side of the road.



**26 ...AND IS THEN RECYCLED BY TRASHY BAGS** What Trashy Bags does is amazing. It employs more than 60 of people and pays a legion of litter-pickers, then recycles water bags, colourful yoghurt wrappers and large canvas banners to produce practical fashion items reminiscent of Freitag bags. Beautiful objects that tick just about every green/sustainable box. See p54. [www.trashybags.com](http://www.trashybags.com).

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**27 WAAKYE AT KATAWODIESO** Don't leave Accra until you've taken a seat in the courtyard of Katawodieso and eaten waakye, 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. Delicious. See p44.

**28 VIBRANT FABRICS FROM WOODIN** Woodin and its sister store Vlisco sell fantastically vibrant material. Get it turned into clothing in Accra, or bring it home and reupholster that chair. See p44.



**29 BIKELODZ IN JAMESTOWN** The Bikelordz are cycling superheroes. Track the guys down in Jamestown if you can, but certainly watch the forthcoming documentary about them. See p9.

**30 THE SUNDAY LUNCH BUFFET AT THE 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 a multitude of traditional dishes. We'd recommend the goat soup, the groundnut soup and – well, everything else too.



**31 GOING ALL THE WAY TO KUMASI FOR DINNER AT THE VIEW** The View has a modern menu that wouldn't seem out of place in an upmarket London gastropub. And in its lounge, you can tuck into small bites including dry-fried pork and risotto croquettes with homemade relish. See p83.



**32 A SUNSET PARTY AT KAYA** How's this for a sunset cocktail? Zacapa rum, Morgan Spiced Gold, orange and lime, ginger, maraschino sour cherry liqueur, agave and Angotura bitters, topped with white beer. Drink it swinging in a wicker chair in Kaya's chilled-out gardens, to the sound of Balearic beats as the sun goes down. See p36



**34 A DRUMMING LESSON AT KINGY DRUMS** The infectious smile of Mensah welcomes drummers of all abilities at his workshop in Osu. It's a great way to pass an hour, and you may well be throwing a drum in your luggage on the way home – they're surprisingly affordable. See p56.



**35 A SMOKY EVENING AT THE SHISHA LOUNGE** One of Accra's newest hotspots is the fun-loving Shisha Lounge, so named for the pipes that are smoked in the patio. It really starts bouncing around 1am. See p35.



**37 PAIN AU CHOCOLAT AT BREAD & WINE** Nom, nom, nom. Sitting alongside one of Ghana's best restaurants is the Bread & Wine deli and bakery. The pastry chef is French, as is the all-important flour. He turns out flavourful bread and pastries – and, wow, those pains au chocolat. Amazing. See p42.



**33 HAGGLING AT THE ARTS CENTRE** Walking through the Arts Centre can often have an element of the pushy-haggler scene in Monty Python's The Life of Brian. The best tip is to head straight through the tumult at the entrance and make a beeline for the quieter stalls at the back. Have a price in mind, start low and enjoy the friendly haggling.



**36 THE HOMEMADE BURGER AT SPIN BREAK** The patty, the bun, the relish – it's all juicy. See p48.



**38 RENTING A WATERFRONT LODGE AT AQUA SAFARI** This is a beautiful spot on the estuary of the Volta River. Its luxury lodges are well-appointed with appealing lounge areas – the best of them overlook the river. See p84. They're the making of a perfect getaway, especially one that involves...

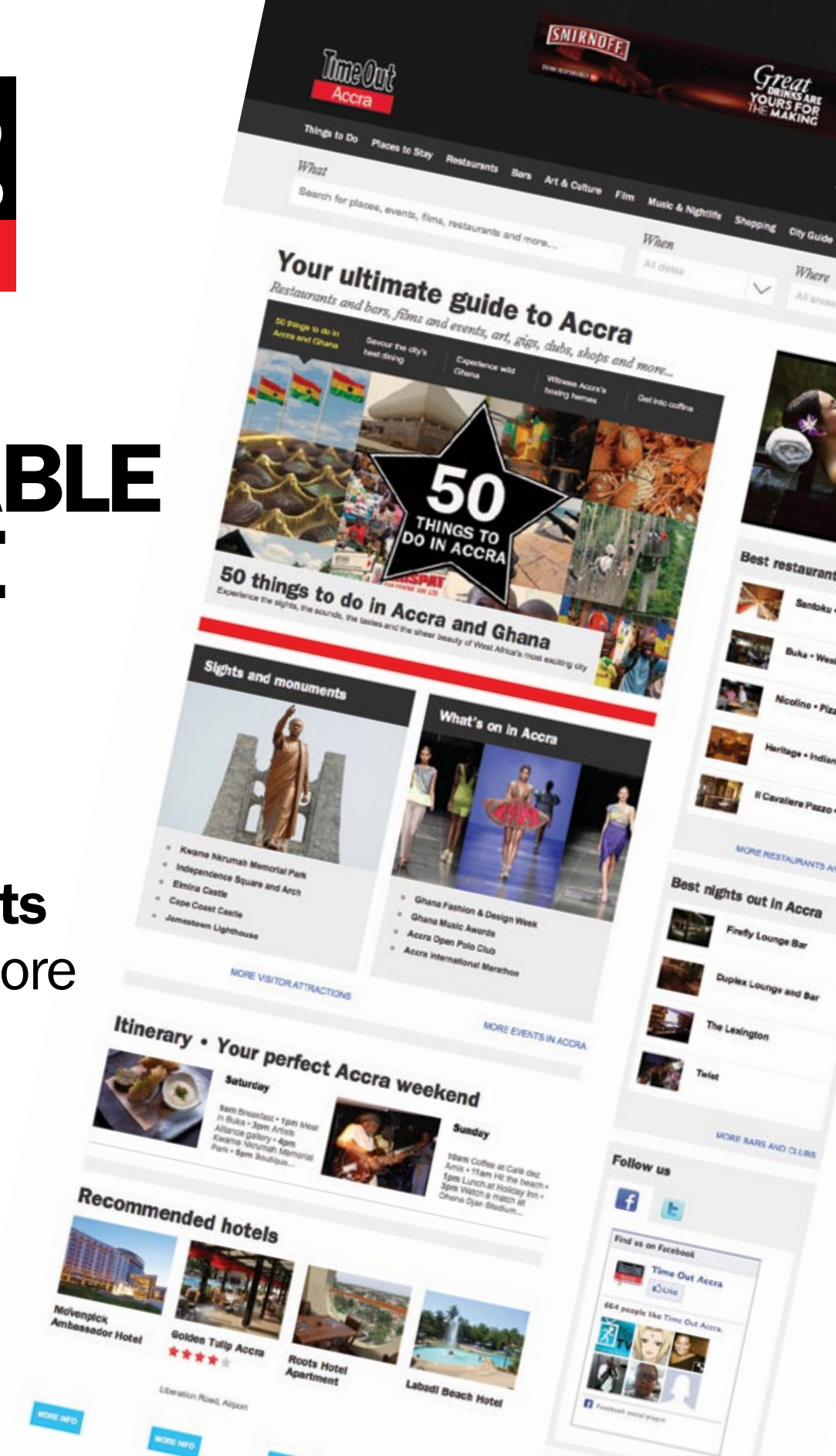
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**39 VERY OLD TAXI** It's a shell of a car. The lining is hanging off the roof, the dials on the dashboard remain unmoving and the rear window is clinging on for dear life. The driver is smiling and gospel music is blasting. TIA! You're in Africa.

**40 RELAXING WITH A GHANAIAAN NOVEL** Inspector Darko Dawson of Accra police has another murder to solve in Kwei Quartey's latest novel (see p22) while Taiye Selasi's Ghana Must Go tells the story of a Boston family of six – the mother Nigerian, the father Ghanaian – whose mixed-up lives reshape and retract like a rubber band.

**41 YOU CAN SURF!** If you're heading west, don't miss Mr Brights. At Kangaroo Pouch Beach Resort on Busua Beach, lifelong devotee Brett Davies can teach you how to catch a wave. (www.mrbrights.com).

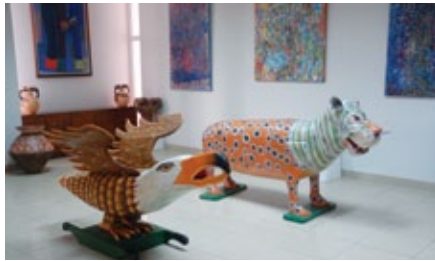
**42 SPLASH OUT AT SANTOKU** Mixologists will knock you up a Tsuyayaki (Zacapa and sake with cardamom, shiso leaves and lemon grass syrup) before you dig into effortlessly elegant dishes such as crunchy soft shell crab with chilli garlic mayo, black cod with den miso, or tea-smoked salmon with truffle oil and capers.



**43 EXPERIENCING THE FISH MARKET IN ELMINA** Our favourite place outside Accra. The clatter and chatter of the fish market is a world unto itself and truly a sight to behold. Don't miss the chance to see the 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.



**44 SEEING A BOXING BOUT** Boxing is a part of life in Ghana. Any bout involving a local boxer can draw headlines for days, and a win by a big-name fighter is treated, understandably, as a national victory. For a chance to catch a bout, ask a taxi driver. The big fights are at the National Stadium, where you'll be rewarded with one of Accra's most memorable nights.



**46 SPENDING AN AFTERNOON IN THE ARTISTS ALLIANCE GALLERY** There are three large floors of art in the cool marble galleries here, giving the perfect way to while away an afternoon. Many of Ghana's most important artists are represented here, including Owusu Ankomah, George Hughes and the gallery's patron and founder, Ablade Glover. It's all for sale.

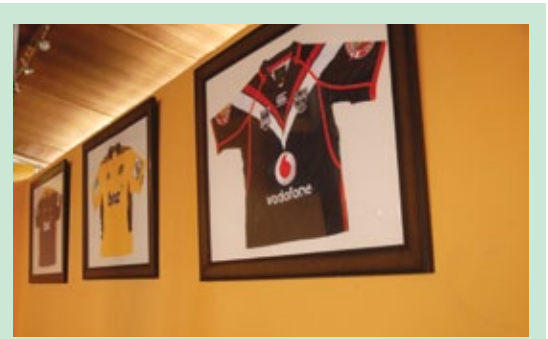


**48 A LUXURY BREAK AT ROYAL SENCHI** Need a break from the city? Give Royal Senchi a go. It's one of the most professionally run resorts in the country: the rooms are wonderful, the pool's welcoming and there's top-notch food. We like. See p84.



**49 ...FROLICKING ON THE VOLTA ESTUARY** Take out one of the boats or jet-skis at Aqua Safari and explore the islands of the estuary.

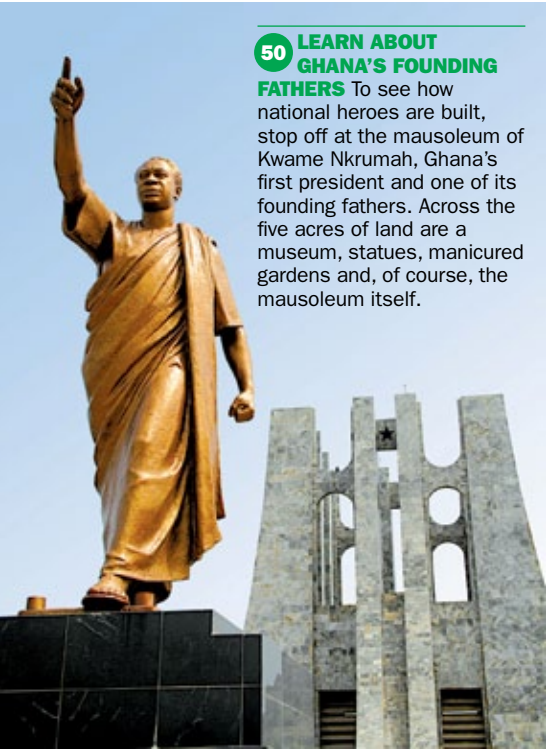
**51 THE SMILES** Ghana is smiling at you. Smile back!



**45 THE RUGBY AT CUZZY BROS** Sport, sport, sport. The numerous TVs at Cuzzi Bros are tuned to all manner of sports, but it's rugby that rules at this South African-run bar. See p34.



**47 A DAY BY THE BEACH AT KOKROBITE** An hour or so out of Accra is Kokrobite, the small beach town that's become a destination for sun-lovers and pleasure-seekers. The long-established Big Milly's (see p79) is something of a backpackers' classic – a laid-back hostel with an open bar. There's a great vibe to the whole beach – and it's easy to pop along and enjoy the day. You'll also find an exclusive resort, White Sands (see p79) along here too.



**50 LEARN ABOUT GHANA'S FOUNDING FATHERS** 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.

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# NOTHING PLAIN ABOUT JANE

Celebrity songstress Jane Awindor, a.k.a, Efyā, has been Ghana's belle of the ball since her debut in 2006. Teasing the paparazzi with her good looks and dazzling audiences with her soulful sounds, she has a top-of-the-game status that still stands strong. What's more, her much anticipated new album *Love Genesis* includes collaborations with some of the music industry's big boys. Taking a breather over a cocktail, she opened up to *Time Out* about her musical influences, the new album and Accra's hotspots. *Photography by Olivia Tan*

**TOA: Which venues do you enjoy playing in?**

Efyā: The Republic is always a nice place to perform at because of the crowd, especially when you're doing indie stuff – it's a great place to express yourself because they don't judge you. The same goes for the Alliance Française, because it's all about putting on good music and something different. And the National Theatre is up there, with the stage that goes up and down.

**TOA: Who have you collaborated with and which was the best experience?**

Efyā: Among Ghanaian musicians, it would have to be Kwame Yeboah, D Black, SonniBalli, M.anifest, J-Town and J-Soul. We all work really well together. I've not really done any female collaborations yet, 'cause you know how it is [laughs]! International artists? I've done songs with Wizkid, Black Magic, Lynx and Waje, but I think the best would have to be Sarkodie. We've done a lot of music together and it always hits out – we work so well together.

**TOA: Which Ghanaian and international legends would you like to collaborate with?**

Efyā: From Ghana, I'd love to work with Amachi Dede – I love him. Rama Brew too, because her voice is amazing, and also her sister, Bibi Brew. As for old cats – Rex Omar! It's nice to know that these guys know what I do now – I really appreciate the support they give me when I want to express myself or talk to them about new ideas. As for internationally, Erykah Badu and Jill Scott for sure – and Jay Z of course.

**TOA: How has Ghanaian music been influential to your sound?**

Efyā: Highlife is a great influence because it shows where I'm from.

Putting a little Ghanaian music into my set always helps.

**TOA: When did you start singing?**

Efyā: I've been singing since I was six years old, so that is a long time!

**TOA: What are the principal subjects you sing about?**

Efyā: Most of the time it's about love and peace and parties. I mean, I'm young and still experiencing things. I don't want to get too confused about stuff, but I do understand love, so I sing about love a lot!

**TOA: What can people expect from *Love Genesis*?**

Efyā: There's going to be a lot of different music on there. There's some soul. There's funk, neo-soul, techno. And it's great, because the new era of music which we have now is all about mixing different kinds of music.

**TOA: Is it exhausting touring so much?**

Efyā: You need to tour to expand your horizons, to expand your levels. Yes, it's exhausting, but it's what we do.

**TOA: Can you explain the renaissance of Ghanaian music?**

Efyā: We had to get there one day! I'm grateful to be part of it. People aren't rejecting it, it's a different kind of African music hitting the stores and people like it! We gotta keep the levels high.

**TOA: Where do you go out to party in Accra?**

Efyā: I'll go to the Shisha Lounge and we'll eat some pizza, then maybe to Mövenpick and have some fun in the bar. Sometimes we go to Excel if we have a show there, and a lot of the time we go to Shaka Zulu, which is a great before Twist. We always end up in Twist. Django we also go to a lot.

“**Highlife is a great influence. It's where I'm from**”



## Ghana's new essential cuts

**Eazyzy**

Something of a Ghanaian Nikki Minaj, rapper/singer Eazyzy (born Mildred Ashong) has had a number of successful hits and collaborations. Fusing urban dance, rap and pop music, Eazyzy pushes the envelope when it comes to both image and song. Most households got to know her via the Big Brother TV show in 2012, where her many talents shone through (including having sex with TV fling Keita under the covers). She was nominated for best Hiplife/ Hip Hop artist of the year at the GMAs 2014 but lost out to Sarkodie.

**Biggest Hit:** *Wengeze*

**Similar to:** Nikki Minaj

**Listen:** In the car with friends

**Sarkodie**

Rap artist Sarkodie (Michael Owusu) has won a catalogue of awards for his infectious songs, often rapped in Twi, his native language. He is considered Ghana's leading talent, being the first Ghanaian to win 'Best International Act' at the BET Awards in 2012 and won 'Best Hip Hop Act' at this year's MTV Africa Music Awards.

**Biggest Hit:** *You Gon Kill Me*

**Similar to:** Dizzee Rascal

**Listen:** When you have time to be inspired

**Stonebwoy**

Dancehall's go-to boy for radio-friendly hits, Stonebwoy has songs that keep coming. Over the last few years he's worked with international artists from Europe and Jamaica. He's heavy on the auto-tune but has lively themes in his songs and videos, meaning his musical CV gets more impressive each year.

**Biggest Hit:** *Give it to 'Dem*

(Kwenaamu)

**Similar to:** (A young Beenie Man, Usher

**Listen:** When getting ready to go out for the weekend

**Y'Akoto**

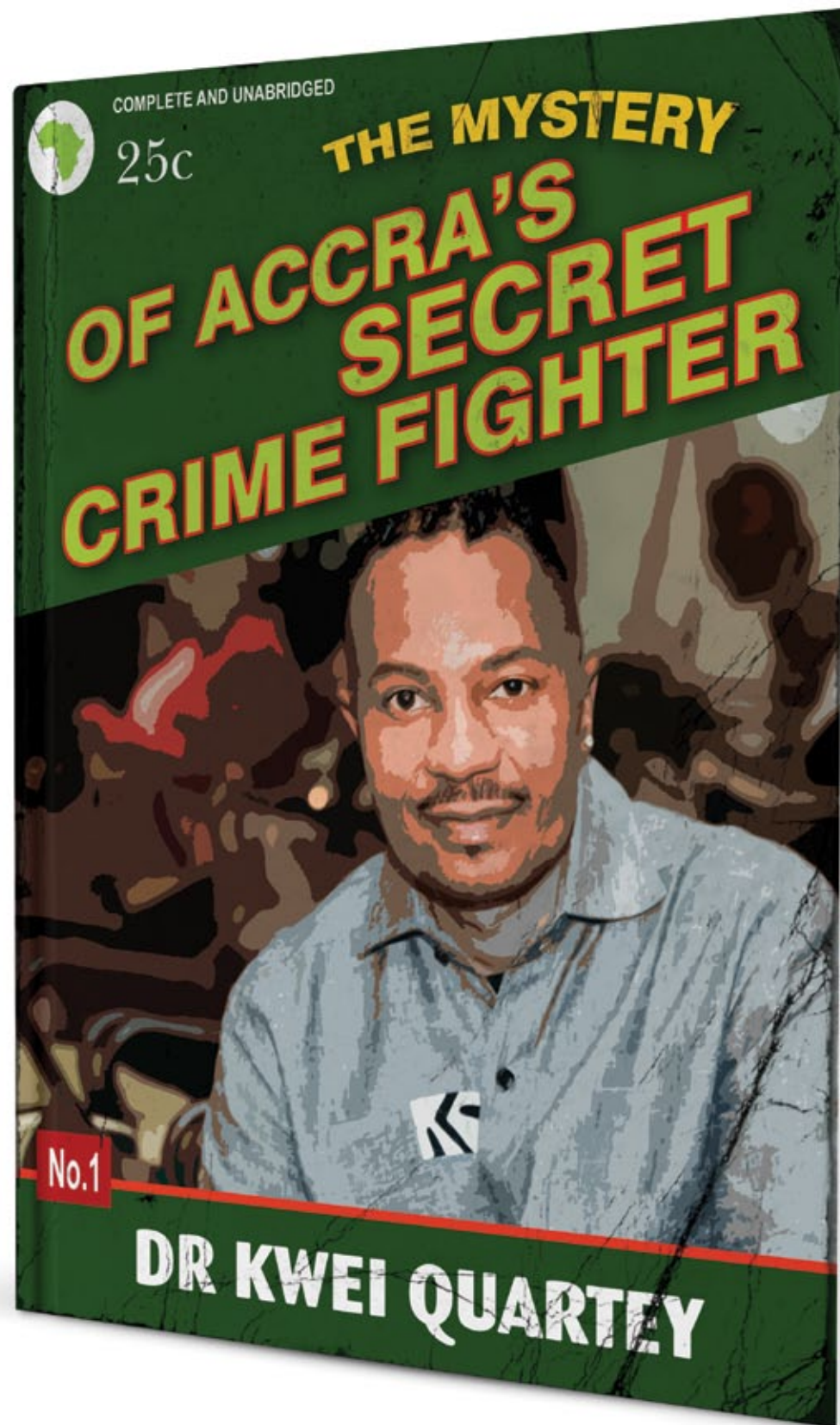
This German-Ghanaian Afro-soul songstress has been compared to Billie Holiday and Amy Winehouse. Her latest album, *Moody Blues*, has received critical acclaim in Europe, Africa and North America. Particularly listenable is 'Perfect Timing', a stylish slow groove number with attitude to the max. Her appeal is wide ranging from hipsters to jazz fans. Both talented and stylish Y'Akoto's name is about to go worldwide, well worth checking out.

**Biggest Hit:** 'Without You'

**Similar to:** Amy Winehouse/

Corinne Bailey Rae

**Listen:** On a hot muggy evening



Inspector Darko Dawson's latest mystery finds himself embroiled in the oil industry. *Ben Lerwill* tracks down the author Dr Kwei Quartey in LA to solve how his detective fiction became a best seller stateside

All writers have their specialities. Dr Kwei Quartey deals in mysteries, and perhaps the biggest one of all is how a medical practitioner finds the time to write best-selling crime fiction. The Ghana-born California resident, a full-time doctor, has just released the third in his series of Inspector Darko Dawson mystery novels. Titled *Murder At Cape Three Points*, it sees the detective delving into a controversial but topical area: something the blurb describes as the "greed and corruption of Ghana's brand new oil industry".

If you've not yet come across Inspector Darko Dawson, here's a brief introduction. He's a CID detective in Accra. He has a weakness for marijuana, an anger management problem and a son with a congenital heart defect. He also has a mean eye for crime-solving. In short, he's the kind of complex central character that every successful detective novel needs. So much so, in fact, that the first Darko Dawson novel, *Wife of the Gods*, made the *Los Angeles Times* bestseller list. The second and third in the series have both drawn positive reviews too.

And despite the super-human time management involved in juggling crime-writing and medicine (he gets up very early, apparently), it appears there's actually a

natural symbiosis between the two disciplines. "Oh, sure," Quartey says, speaking to *Time Out Accra* from his home in Pasadena. "The detection that you're doing in medicine is very similar to the work a police detective would do. When you have a patient come in with a set of complaints, that's basically your mystery staring you in the face. You have to start investigating, and asking questions. As a doctor, you look for clues just as a detective would."

The son of university lecturers, Quartey grew up in Ghana surrounded by books, devouring works by the likes of Arthur Conan Doyle and Enid Blyton. He lived in Ghana until the age of 18, when he moved with his mother to the US. Today, he writes his novels in the States but sets them in Accra, researching the material on annual month-long visits to the country of his birth.

"On my first research trip, I hadn't been in Ghana for some 15 years or so," he explains. "It's a much more exciting place to write about than, say, Pasadena or Los Angeles, because of the rapid change going on right now in Accra, both economically and socially. It's been great for me to follow the change through each

novel. You couldn't do that in LA – there's not so much change."

And why did he choose to focus his new Darko Dawson mystery on a murder in the oil industry? "Oh, oil has crime written all over it," he says. "There's greed, there's jealousy, all of that good stuff. But on my trips it's the research itself that's the most enjoyable – going to different places, discovering new things I hadn't discovered before. Things I didn't know about when I was living there as a kid. When I come to Ghana, I've usually chosen the subject so I know what things I'm specifically looking for. Little details like street names, injecting a bit more flavour into some of the scenes."

Whenever he's back in town, there are certain things he makes a point of enjoying. "For me, there are definitely some must-eat meals. I'm a huge fan of *fufu* – I always have to have some of that. And I like hanging out at Accra Mall. But coming to Ghana is always a chance to see friends and relatives too."

He admits that there are aspects of his personality in Darko's character, but stops short of calling him an alter ego. If he possessed the same levels of mental insight as his fictional creation, however, he might have been able to figure out which country to cheer for when Ghana met the USA in the World Cup. "Yeah", he recalls, still sitting on the metaphorical fence. "Oh, that was a horrible day for me..." [www.kweiquartey.com](http://www.kweiquartey.com)



## It's about greed and corruption of Ghana's oil industry

Excerpt – opening paragraphs of *Murder at Three Points*

"Cape Three Points, the southernmost tip of Ghana, is beautiful and wild. Verdant forest covers the three finger-like peninsulas that jut into the Atlantic Ocean. Dizzying cliffs overlook the cyan waters. As waves strike the slate grey rocks and burst into gossamer spray, the roar of the sea crescendos like the sibilant clash of cymbals.

At dusk, the brightness of the sky melts and softens. The dying sun lays a wide band of gold across the sea. A full moon rises and imparts a silver gloss to the dark ocean, silhouetting fishing canoes gliding along silently like ghosts.

The forests and mangrove swamps of the coast are flora and fauna sanctuaries. In the Gulf of Guinea too, wildlife flourishes, but not without threat. Frolicking bottlenose dolphins and humpback whales would do well to avoid an alien creature in their midst. Afloat on powerful, squat limbs, its gangly crane booms resemble tentacles. From the derrick, its drill descends like a proboscis and penetrates the seabed to extract as much oil as possible. The creature is the Thor Sterke."

## Three other great novels set in Ghana

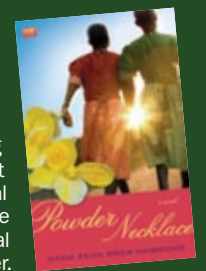
**Adwoa Badoe**  
– *Between Sisters*  
A teenage girl, after producing a poor set of exam results, is sent to work as a nanny, with dramatic consequences.



**Taile Selasi**  
– *Ghana Must Go*  
Set only partly in Ghana, this is a heart-rending story of a family torn apart – it's a poetic, poignant read.



**Nana Ekua Brew-Hammond**  
– *Powder Necklace*  
The tale of a young girl from London sent to school in rural Ghana, where more than the occasional shock awaits her.





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# Explore

Museums, galleries and great days out

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# Sightseeing



Independence Arch

## Discover Accra

Welcome to West Africa's most exciting city

So here you are. You've negotiated the airport (and the taxi drivers outside), you've had a good night's sleep (no doubt after a welcome bottle of Club Beer), and the morning has dawned clear and hot. So how to experience the best of Accra? Dive into the sights in these pages such as the **National Museum** or the **WEB Du Bois Memorial Centre**, and you'll find out how Ghana became the 'Black Star of Africa', praised by President Obama when he visited for its stable, democratic and entrepreneurial spirit, how the nation's disparate tribes came together under one flag, and how the country broke away from the British under the watchful eyes of the country's controversial hero, Kwame Nkrumah, and the father of the Pan-Africanism movement, WEB Du Bois.

But you'll also uncover the vibrant arts scene at the chaotic but endlessly fascinating **Centre for National Culture** (which despite its name is essentially a large energetic craft market, or the

more relaxed **Artists Alliance Gallery**, where you'll see the best works from well established and upcoming Ghanaian artists.

The neighbourhood of Jamestown, the oldest part of the city, offers an earthy but friendly experience, plus one of the best viewpoints of the city – if you dare scale the wobbly steps to the top of **Jamestown Lighthouse**. Osu, and in particular Cantonments Road (known as Oxford Street), is the liveliest part of the town, full of hawkers, beeping taxis, street stalls, bars and restaurants. The accolade for the fastest-growing district, meanwhile, goes to the area around the airport – at least to judge by the cranes building ever more high-rises. There's also plenty of development north of the airport in East Legon.

Accra is a thrilling city to discover. It's chaotic, loud, fun and thoroughly West African, although not at the expense of offering up luxury and world-class amenities. Step out of your hotel and into Accra with an open mind and you'll be amply rewarded.

## Accra centre

Along the traffic-choked arteries of High Street and 28th February Road, which run parallel to the Atlantic Coast, you'll find major banks, multinational offices and the High Court. The road then opens out and whisks past the **Kwame**



Independence Square

**Nkrumah Memorial Park** and the **Centre for National Culture (Arts Centre)** before reaching **Independence Square** and **Independence Arch** – behind the square is a long expanse of beach (although it's not overly inviting for leisure use). The Centre for National Culture is a maze of hundreds of stalls selling crafts, textiles, instruments and antiques from all over West Africa. Elsewhere, the former home of the government, Osu Castle, is located along the beach road and included in this section. It's been empty since the President moved to **Flagstaff House**, although there are tentative plans to turn it into a museum – at time of writing, there was no sign of work.

### Kwame Nkrumah Memorial Park & Mausoleum

This national park was opened 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 well-tended land – full of flowers – and holds a museum tracing Nkrumah's life. There are various personal items on display, although the centrepiece is the mausoleum, the final resting place of Nkrumah and his wife. 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 here 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;*



## Critic's choice

- 1 Artists Alliance Gallery.** Still the best venue for Ghanaian art. *See p31.*
- 2 WEB Du Bois Memorial Centre.** Bringing context to Accra's story. *See p30.*
- 3 National Museum.** The history of Ghana in a nutshell. *See p30.*
- 4 Arts Centre.** Pick a souvenir, but be ready to haggle. *See p27.*
- 5 Kwame Nkrumah Memorial Park.** Ghana's founding father. *See p26.*

*non-Ghanaian adult GH¢6 (subject to change); extra charge for cameras.*

### Independence Square and Independence Arch

The stands around Independence Square, bearing modernist and Soviet-influenced design, can seat 30,000 people. The vast area, built under Kwame Nkrumah, was constructed to host huge events and military marches, but it's usually empty save 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, however, it's worth



Oxford Street in Osu

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 proud status as the 'Black Star of Africa': it was an inspiration to other African countries 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 camera use – we strongly suggest that you don't take photographs of any part of the area

### Arts Centre (Centre for National Culture)

Also 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, covered by 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. It's best to run further into the complex, which is not only much quieter but holds more interesting treasures such as metal ornaments, drums, wood furnishing, antique pieces and leather goods. 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.*

### Osu Castle

Osu Castle is still closed to the public, despite lying empty. The chequered history of the building 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 – then smaller than the current construction –

repeatedly changed hands between Portugal, Sweden and Denmark. 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 even now remain symbolically in the possession of the Akwamu. After it fell into disrepair, the British rebuilt most of the fort in 1824, after which it became the seat of the Gold Coast colony, remaining so until independence in 1957. Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana's first president, moved there in 1960. Today the

## ORIENTATION

### Navigating Accra



With its main port moving 10 miles (16 kilometres) east to Tema, 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. Continuing this theme, the city's latest developments are also moving further inland. But the shape of the town remains largely the same: 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, 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 for drivers. Although loosely split into various districts, the area within the Ring Road is generally known as the 'Centre', which is how it's referred to throughout this guide. Almost plum in the middle of the city, meanwhile, is Makola Market – a shopping hub that's become famous for its domination by women traders. It's well worth a visit.

Outside the Ring Road are the wealthier districts of Cantonments and Airport Residential. The biggest current expansion is around Airport Residential, the area surrounding Kotoka International Airport and Accra Mall (see p49). Condominiums, plush hotels, and of course the mall itself, make this a notable area. It's certainly a good place to stock up on international goods. Airport Residential is also home to various embassies and consulates, as well as some good cafés and restaurants, with more opening soon.

## TOP TIP!

**Online maps**  
For mapped locations of all the sights and more, be sure to go to [www.timeout.com/accra](http://www.timeout.com/accra) where you'll find them pin-pointed

castle stands as a poignant reminder of the slave trade that was largely administered from the building – indeed, it was often used to house slaves before they were shipped to the Americas. There are plans to turn it into a museum, although nothing concrete has been announced so far. The road is often blocked off by soldiers and photography is still forbidden – this may be relaxed soon.

### 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



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painted shops and busy houses. Wandering chickens negotiate between open drains and life-endangering potholes, while washing-cobwebbed courtyards act as pitches for spontaneous football games.

It wasn't always quite like this. Prior to the city becoming the capital of the British Gold Coast in 1877, the Jamestown district was once the hub for a succession of Portuguese governments. Amid today's ramshackle streets, 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 deep 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 of interest as a peeling, whitewashed memento of days past.

Also of historical interest (and also pretty dodgy photo-wise) is the nearby colonial-era **Jamestown 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¢10 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.

Inland from the harbour is another remnant of the British era – the **Methodist Church**, built from imported bricks.

Of further 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. Local boxer Azumah Nelson is a descendant of one of the returnees.

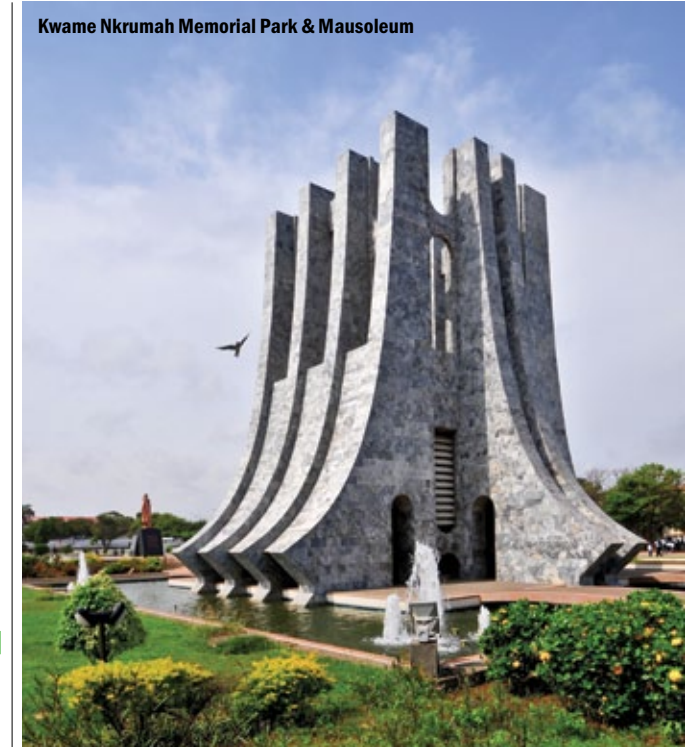
Jamestown, unsurprisingly, is also one of the most densely populated areas of the city. Ghanaian tradition stipulates that funerals should be held in the deceased's place of birth, and, as such, wakes can be witnessed almost every weekend. They tend to be admirably upbeat occasions to witness.

#### USHER TOWN

##### Ussher Fort Museum

Towards the centre of Accra is Ussher Town, which links seamlessly with Jamestown along High Street. Ussher Fort Museum is the most important sight in this area. It was built by the Dutch (who named it Fort Crevecoeur in 1649, only for it to be later christened Ussher Fort after a British administrator).

A former slave-holding area like Jamestown Fort, it was used as a prison until the 1990s but has now undergone a UNESCO-funded restoration to preserve it as a reminder of Ghana's past. The story of the slave industry's



development and impact is told inside the museum through wall paintings, as well as displays showing articles once used by the captors and their victims. Exhibits include shackles, weaponry, clay drinking cups and large grinding stones. There's also a model of a slave vessel, in addition to murals depicting the coming of the Europeans and their subsequent treatment of slaves.

Tours can currently be taken of the building, including a look at where Ghana's national hero, Kwame Nkrumah, was held. *High Street, 500m east of Jamestown Fort (0302 664 268). Open 9am-4.30pm Mon-Sat. Admission Ghanaian adult GH¢1.50; non-Ghanaian adult GH¢9; extra charge for cameras.*

##### Makola Market

Buffering Ussher Town and the city centre is one of Accra's most pulsating experiences: Makola Market. Almost anything you could hope to buy can be found within this sprawling maze. Like a contemporary souk, a network of passageways, roads, buildings and paths weave through the area, where vendors, mostly women, sell an impossibly large array of produce, clothes and home supplies. Surprisingly, you're unlikely to be hassled much, this being a marketplace predominantly for the city's residents. Not all tourists visit the area, but we'd certainly advise spending some time soaking up its sights, sounds and scents.

#### 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, pubs & clubs**), restaurants (see pp39-48, **Restaurants & cafés**) and shops (see pp49-56, **Shopping**) are based here. Stalls line the street and hawkers hover in the hope of selling personalised wristbands and fake football shirts.

##### Oxford Street

Cantonments Road, between Lokko Road and the busy Danquah Circle, might be known as Oxford Street, but it shares little with London's shopping hotspot. The only similarity, perhaps, is the volume of people and traffic. It's probably the busiest street in Accra, and the site of countless bars, clubs, restaurants and boutique shops. It has no specific tourist sights as such, but a constant bustle makes it an essential part of any visit.

Expect some friendly hassle at the northern end of the street (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 gets 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

**TOP TIP!**  
**Photography**  
 Taking photographs of many of the public sights we've here can often get unwanted attention. Be subtle or, better, avoid completely.

## RECOMMENDED

### National Museum of Ghana



Cantonments Road is the busy Danquah Circle (a roundabout on the Ring Road), which takes its name from one of Ghana's founding fathers, JB Danquah. It's generally crowded day and night.

#### CANTONMENTS & LABONE

Further north on the Cantonments Road, over the Danquah Circle, you'll reach 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 area, although somewhat dispersed. It has several good restaurants and cafés.

#### Flagstaff House

There is, quite simply, no other building on earth like Accra's new(ish) presidential palace and government seat, Flagstaff House. The unique architecture is said to be based on the sacred Asante Golden Stool, emblematic of the birth of the kingdom, although the cost of construction has inspired a passionate debate. It was completed in 2009, but the president and staff only moved there in early 2013. *Liberation Road.*

#### 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 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 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.*

The National Museum is home to some of Ghana's most absorbing historical relics. It was opened by the Duchess of Kent in 1957, and it gives an opportunity to travel through the country's past 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 exhibits include Asante gold weights, currency, instruments, textiles and leatherwork. Slightly hidden away is the chair used in Kwame Nkrumah's inauguration, as well as the chair of the last British governor, rescued from Christiansborg Castle. The section of the museum dedicated to the slave trade is essential viewing, outlining its brutal history and exhibiting poignant reminders of the era. The attraction as a whole is a tired-looking place, certainly, (and the staff were more absorbed in WWF wrestling last time we visited) but it's somewhere that helps give a broader understanding of this complex society. Hopefully the new director will breathe more life into the museum.

*Barnes Road, Adabraka (0302 221 633). Open 9am-6pm Tues-Sun. Admission GH¢12 (plus GH¢20 photography permit).*

*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 centered around the Nkrumah Circle. This area is a mish-mash of offices, street stalls and commercial buildings. Towards the centre from the ring road are the

**National Museum of Ghana** and the **National Theatre**.

#### TOP TIP!

##### Safety

Accra is a remarkably safe city by African standards, but always take care after dark. It's best to travel with someone in taxis too.

#### National Museum of Ghana

See picture review right.

*Barnes Road, Adabraka (0302 221 633). Open 9am-6pm Tues-Sun. Admission GH¢12 (plus GH¢20 photography permit).*

#### National Theatre

The unmistakable architecture of the National Theatre deserves to be seen – it's been described as representing either a ship or, more abstractly, a seagull spreading its wings. Chinese developers built the theatre and its 1992 opening saw it become the centrepiece for cultural life in Ghana. Today it's home to the National Symphony Orchestra, the National Theatre Players, the National Dance Company and three youth groups. Its 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).*

#### LABADI

Further east in Labadi you'll find the city's most popular beach – 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** there's a cost of GH¢3 from Mon-Fri and GH¢5 on Sat and Sun, between



Labadi Beach

Jamestown Lighthouse



5am-7pm. Bars, restaurants and a few shops are on offer. Expect loud music and flying footballs, but it's not the cleanest beach, so best not to swallow too much water.

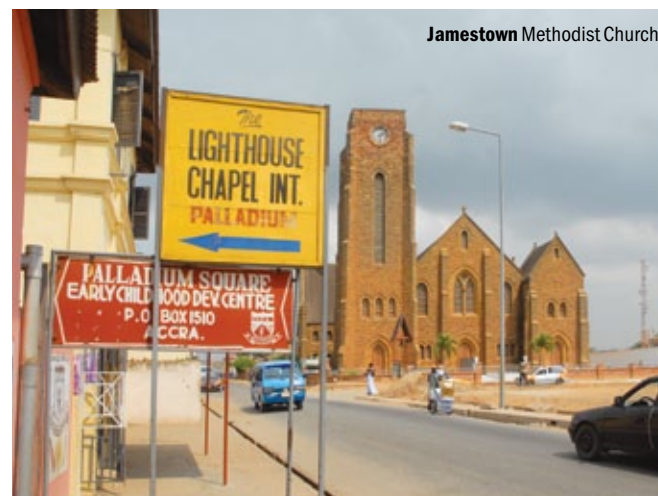
It's also home to the excellent resorts of **Labadi Beach Hotel** (see p76) and **La Palm Royal Beach** (see p76). Both have good pools to enjoy, as does the **Mövenpick** (see p75).

#### Artists Alliance Gallery

This three-storey gallery exhibits works by a large range of Ghanaian artists and sculptors, among them Augustine Gokah, Betty Acquah, Nii T Mills, Ebenezer Borlabie, Kofi Setorji and Gabriel Eklou. The

venue was conceived in the 1960s by Ablade Glover, one of Ghana's most respected artists. He saw the need for a showcase for fine arts in Ghana, to act as a driving force to gain recognition around the world. Today you'll find not only contemporary arts but some real collectors' pieces: beautiful, fragile Asafo flags with appliqué and embroidered symbols, and ancient strip-woven Kente cloths. It sells art directly from the artist. There's a good gift shop with miniature coffins, Kente cloth and other quality souvenirs.

*Omanye House, Accra-Tema Beach Road, Labadi (0302 762 576, www.artistsallianz.com). Admission free.*



Jamestown Methodist Church

## GUIDED TOURS

### Follow the lead of an expert



Global Mama's cooking tour

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 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 neighbouring Togo, Benin, Mali and Burkina Faso. The tour options 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 discount 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 covering many areas. *(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 to Ghana. 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. Great fun and very worthwhile. *14th Lane, off Cantonments Road (Oxford Street), behind Koala Supermarket, Osu (0244 530 467, www.ghanaxpeditions.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).*

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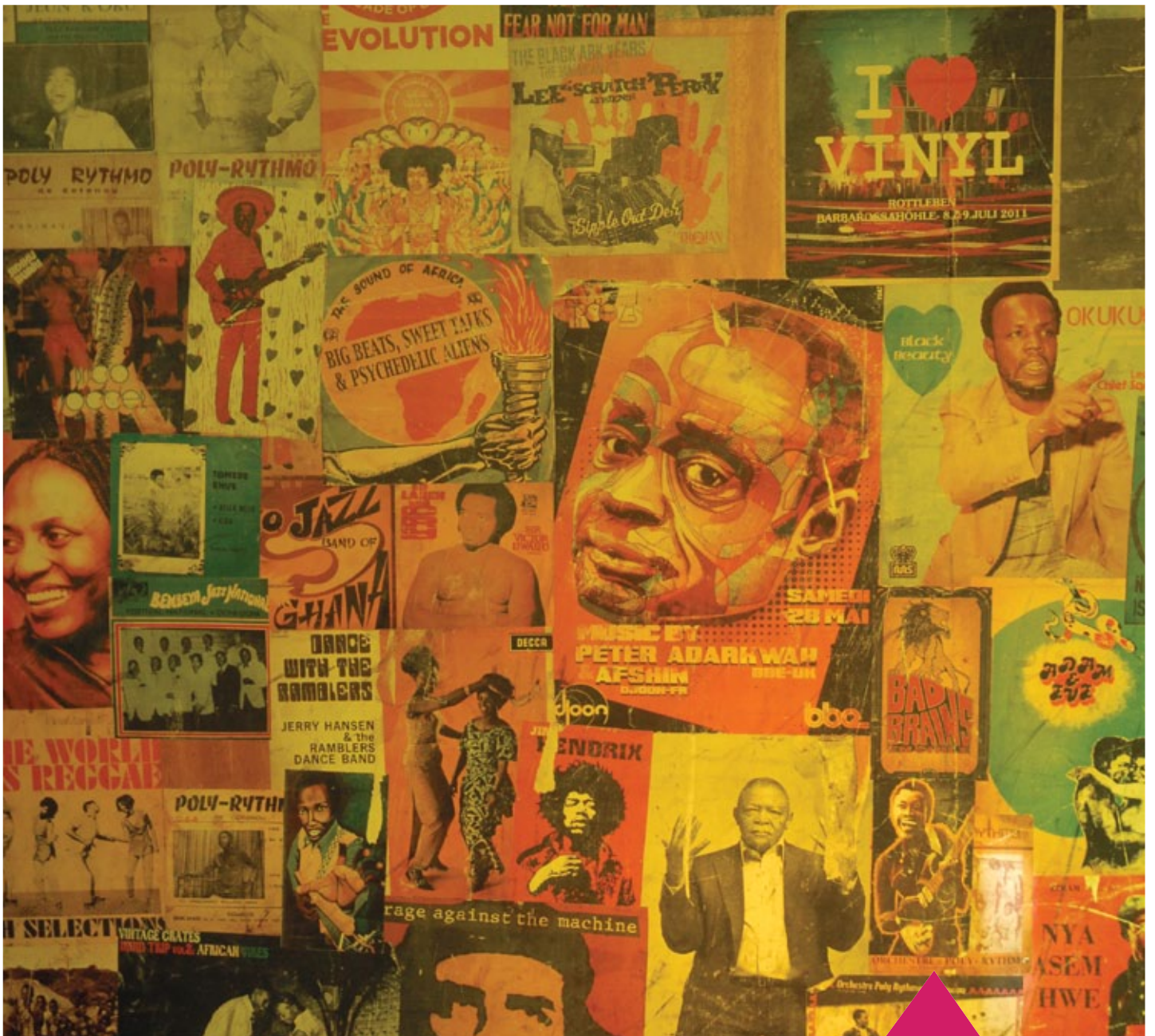
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# Consume

All the best restaurants, cafés, bars and shops

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Bars, Pubs & Clubs	34
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# Bars, Pubs & Clubs



Kaya

## Mixing your drinks

Get ready for one almighty party

Nightlife in Accra moves faster than a mixologist's stirrer. What's hot one week will be in the doldrums the next. It's a fickle but fun scene, whether you're in the mood for a cocktail mixed from Tanqueray 10 and a lavender and rose liqueur (head to **Kaya**) or an ice-cold imported beer in front of the rugby (that's **Cuzzy Bro's**). In between the expat sports bar and the candlelit, bespoke-blend cocktail club, however, there's plenty to discover. One of the most recent high-profile openings is the **Shisha Lounge** in Osu – its heady blend of top DJs, generous cocktails and shisha pipes has quickly created a real buzz. And to complicate listings matters, some of the best cocktails – and vice – can also be found at restaurants such as **Santoku** and **Bread & Wine** (see p42).

Falling through the categories is **Republic**, arguably Accra's most happening bar. People either love it or hate it. Little more than a roadside bar in Osu by day, by night the DJs turn up the tunes

and a lairy crowd spills onto the road to party. It's an earthy place, and the better for it. In other news, the much-loved **Champs Sports Bar** has returned under its original name after a brief spell as the Lexington. Fortunately, the excellent burgers remain, but the vibe is back to a sports bar full of TVs, pool tables and karaoke nights. It's hugely popular. Nightclubs haven't fared quite so well, thanks largely to the quality of the weekend parties run by late-night restaurants such as **Kaya**, **Bread & Wine** and **Santoku**. Elsewhere, there's a good number of highly creative take-over nights and pop-up bars which are very much worth checking out. They're usually announced a couple of days before the event. We list them at [www.timeout.com/accra](http://www.timeout.com/accra), and publish them on Facebook and Twitter (@TimeOutAccra).

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 included 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.

## Bars, Pubs & Clubs

### OSU

#### Bella Roma

Even in the face of stiffened competition, Bella Roma remains a popular nightclub, especially when there's a guest DJ (Tim Westwood showed up last time we were there). It combines 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. The venue itself teeters somewhere between a bar and nightclub – walking into the joint, to the left is a partially open-air dancefloor with a DJ usually spinning crowd-pleasing dance and hip hop. Inside is banquet seating and another dancefloor. This is a fun place to hang out, especially when there are special events happening.

Off Cantonments Road (Oxford Street), behind Frankie's (024 7474 007, [facebook.com/bellaroma.accra](http://facebook.com/bellaroma.accra)). Open 6pm-late.

#### Cuzzy Bro's

While Ryan's Bar (the former occupant of this site) was a much loved venue, Cuzzy Bro's instantly filled the gap for expats looking for quality beer, good food and sport on the telly. The focus for Cuzzy Bro's is outdoors in the large grounds: there are two al fresco bars selling, thank heavens, an interesting selection of beer, including Erdinger, Chimay, Fuller's London Pride and ESB. It's a lively place to hang out on a weekend evening, especially when there's live music – jazz is popular. The food is solid pub grub, with all the meat imported from South Africa; the home-ground burgers are our choice. There's a 'spit braai' (spit roast) on Wednesday evenings and Sunday lunchtimes (GH¢70). The inside area is basic, but refreshingly cool, and the many TVs cater mainly to sports fans – rugby is a theme across the pub. You'll see Super 12 team shirts on the wall, in a nod to the owners' South African heritage.

Troas Street, off Cantonments Road (Oxford Street) (026 608 6003, [cuzzybro.com.gh](http://cuzzybro.com.gh)). Open noon-11pm Mon-Thur; noon-midnight Fri; 10pm-midnight Sat; 10am-6pm Sun.

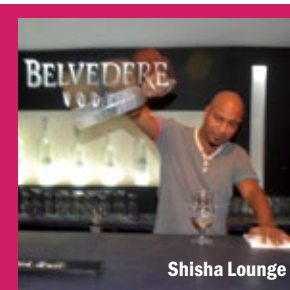
#### Duplex Lounge and Bar

The ever-popular Duplex has moved location within Osu and, if anything, is now more popular. The décor is brighter and more upmarket, and the small outside terrace fills up quickly on balmy nights. It has an easy-going attitude and manages to feel exclusive without being in the least bit snobbish. It's popular with the young expat crowd.

Off Kuku Hill, near NDC Headquarters, Osu (0245 999 999). Open noon-late daily.

#### Firefly Lounge Bar

Firefly is a confident nightclub and one of the city's most popular bars – the industrial chic of its whitewashed brickwork, dim lighting and edgy beats attracts a preened international clientele. A back-lit bar glows with premium blends, and cocktail aficionados, spirit lovers and wine drinkers alike pull up stools to confer with chatty staff sporting black shirts, braces and the odd jauntily angled hat. Food ranges from light nibbles to three-course meals, with a silver



## Critic's choice

- 1 Kaya.** Unbeatable outdoor location and unbeatable cocktails. See p36.
- 2 Republic.** The street bar is one of the liveliest venues in Accra. See p35.
- 3 Champs.** It's back! And it's better. Beer, burgers and footie. See p38.
- 4 Shisha Lounge.** One of the hottest new places in the city. See p35.
- 5 Santoku.** The food is amazing, but so are the cocktails. See p36.

chainmail curtain gesturing a divide between drinkers and diners. 11th Lane, Embassy Road (0302 777 818, [Facebook page](http://Facebook page)). Open 5pm-3am Tue-Sun.

#### 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. Cantonments Road (Oxford Street), opp Papaye (0302 783 278). Open 10am-late Mon-Sat; 6pm-late Sun.



## RECOMMENDED Republic Bar & Grill



One of the most happening bars in Accra right now, thanks to its relaxed, music-forward approach to the good things in life: alcohol, fried food and really great music. It's a tiny space that tumbles out onto the street when things really kick off late on a Friday or Saturday. Album covers and black-and-white photos of music stars adorn the walls as Ghana's best music blasts out (often live on the terrace; check out the Facebook page and Twitter account for details – highlife legend Ebo Taylor has even played here). Even the cocktails use great ingredients not found anywhere else: the Republic is a caipirihna made from traditional palm wine. On a sunny day (and yes, it's always sunny), try one of their 'Wild Beers': the Beer Sap has bissap concentrate added to it. Fittingly, the food is good beer fodder too – the cassava chips are a fabulous drinking accompaniment, while the Fire Go Burn You pepper soup and Ye Ye Goat curry, for around GH¢12, are superb value for something this tasty. 3rd Lane, off Oxford Street (024 631 4044, [@TheRepublicGH](http://facebook.com/RepublicBarGH)). Open noon-2am Mon-Sat; 4pm-2am 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. The air conditioning is usually set to 'arctic' – worth that alone. Cantonments Road (Oxford Street) (0302 773 567, [www.frankies-ghana.com](http://www.frankies-ghana.com)). Open 7am-11.30pm daily.

#### Monsoon

Some of the lustre has worn off this Oxford Street venue in light of new competition. That said, it's still a fairly popular choice for the expat community, who come to enjoy its broad street-facing terrace. 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.

#### Republic Bar & Grill

See picture review above.

#### Shisha Lounge

The Shisha Lounge is Osu's newest hotspot, filled well into the night with partygoers attracted by its laidback vibe, outdoor seating, superb DJ roster and some very fine cocktails. It's a small, but well-designed space with a series of patios, outdoor lounge seating areas,

plus an indoor bar and lounge. They turn out great pizzas from the bespoke oven, plus sharing platters. There are, of course, shisha pipes to hire if you'd like to indulge. It's a classy well-thought out joint that steamed to the top of the Accra VIP list. This is a place that is all about the good times! 14th Lane, Osu (023 355 1515, [www.facebook.com/pages/Shisha-Lounge](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Shisha-Lounge)). Open daily from 6pm to very late.

#### Venus

The leafy courtyard at Venus remains a popular spot by day for young travellers tapping away on MacBooks, enjoying a coffee or ordering a bite to eat from the reasonably-priced Lebanese-inspired menu. The air-conditioned bar also seems a world away from the busy intersection outside. By night, the cocktails and beer consumption ramp up and Venus becomes a lively bar. Also in the same area is an outlet of D-Café and a kebab bar (also run by Venus). 11th Lane, off Cantonments Road (Oxford Street), (0302 782 250, [www.bybloshtelghana.com](http://www.bybloshtelghana.com)). Open 9am-1am Mon-Thur; 9am-3am Fri, Sat; 4pm-1am Sun.

### ADABRAKA & ASYLUM DOWN

**Champs Sports Bar**  
See picture review, p38.

### LABONE

#### NEW Shakes-N-Flavours

This new little smoothie and milkshake bar is a very welcome place to be on a hot day. Ice-cool air con, delicious drinks and wifi all help. The fresh ingredients shine through and there are some nice combinations – we can vouch for the Banberry, a banana, nutmeg, pineapple and strawberry blend. There are also a few snacks such as burgers, sandwiches and, of course, chicken and rice.

Josiah Tongogari Road, Labone (0302 797 541, [facebook.com/ShakesNFlavors](http://facebook.com/ShakesNFlavors)).

**TOPTIP!**  
Late nights  
Nightlife in Accra starts late and ends late. Many of the bars don't get going until around 11pm and continue long into the morning.

#### Robi's Dutch Pub

There's no chance of missing Robi's Dutch Pub. Its bright orange façade (what other colour could it be?) shines like a beacon for homesick Dutch – as well as pretty much anyone 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](http://www.dutchpub.com)). Open noon-10am Mon-Thur; noon-midnight Fri; 3pm-midnight Sat.



## OUTDOOR IMBIBING

Best places to drink under the sun



Yes, the city's hot. Really hot. Whether it's a quick cold beer in the sun or, more agreeably, enjoying an ice-cool cocktail as the sun goes down, the venues below are the best drinking spots to head for. Balmy nights on terraces or in gardens are becoming a stock in trade in Accra – restaurants in particular are looking to their outdoor spaces to continue the party, by the pool, on the roof or wherever fits. Some of these offer fantastic settings: Bread & Wine has a stunning pool area with an amazing modernist bar, while Yasmina will be opening a luxury roof-top bar overlooking the airport at Marina Mall. These aren't your average beer gardens. Also checking out [www.timeout.com/accra](http://www.timeout.com/accra) for outdoor events such as Roof on Fire ([www.facebook.com/Roofonfiregh](http://www.facebook.com/Roofonfiregh)) and Live on the Terrace ([www.facebook.com/VillaMonticello](http://www.facebook.com/VillaMonticello)) at Villa Monticello.

### 1. Kaya

No bar in Accra has a lovelier location. The gorgeous gardens of this quiet colonial residence are a peaceful place, but when you throw in some swinging wicker furniture, lamps hanging from the sprawling tree (soon to be a real centrepiece of the venue), candle-light and chilled beats, you've got an unbeatable Ibiza sunset-vibe. See p36.

### 2. Bread & Wine

As well as being home to one of Accra's best restaurants, Bread & Wine's setting is impressive in itself. It's another large house hidden away from the bustle of Osu with immaculate gardens. There's an inviting pool and a wonderful modernist bar structure – grab a glass of cold French white and relax. See p42.

### 3. Republic

In the early evening, this Osu bar comprises little more than a couple of plastic tables and chairs outside to watch the world roll by, but by night the energy cranks up along with the volume and there's dancing on the street. See p35.

### 4. Cuzzy Bro's

When the new owners took over, they had plans to start with the interior – before they realised everyone wanted to be outside. The patio has two bars, TVs, a stage and a good time vibe. See p34.

### 5. Soho Bar & Soho Terrace at Yasmina

Although it wasn't quite open when we went to print, we've had a sneak peek and this is going to be a seriously impressive luxury rooftop venue, with the added thrill of planes flying overhead from the airport. See p38.

### CANTONMENTS

#### NEW Kaya Terrace Bar

Kaya meaning 'home' in both Japanese and Zulu and "pure" in Greek, and wellbeing lies at the heart of this multi-experience. See p43 for the restaurant review, p54 for the design shop and p56 for the wellbeing activities. Here, we care about the beautiful outdoor bar. Kaya is at its most alluring at night, when the sparkling terrace is illuminated and transformed into one of Accra's best party venues. The vibe is soulful sounds and jazz. On Fridays it becomes resident to one of Accra's most renowned DJs, who draws a younger crowd to the very buzzy cocktail bar. The cocktails are unmissable, with hyperactive mixologists using inventive ingredients to create masterpieces. 1-10 Link Road, Cantonments, near US Embassy (0540 109 501).

### EAST LEGON

#### Lizzy's Sports Complex

This is footballer Marcel Desailly's impressive sporting complex and its sports bar attracts the big names who live in East Legon, as well as members of the corporate league who play here on Friday and Saturday nights. The outdoor bar overlooks a pool and a couple of the five-a-side pitches, but eyes are just as likely to be found on the screens for the big games. And don't be surprised if you see the hands-on

Monsieur Desailly himself wandering about the complex when he's in Ghana. Cotton Street, East Legon (0302 521 851, [www.lizzysportscomplex.com](http://www.lizzysportscomplex.com)).

### AIRPORT CITY

#### Rhapsody's

Rhapsody's is close to both the airport and its surrounding hotels, ensuring the South African chain draws 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. It's popular for business meetings. Shops 66-68, Accra Mall, Spintex Road (0302 823 148, [www.rhapsody.co.za](http://www.rhapsody.co.za)). Open noon-midnight Sun-Thur; noon-2am Fri, Sat.

#### Santoku

Since opening, the bar here at Japanese restaurant Santoku is fast establishing itself as a drinks destination in its own right. Alongside its amazing menu (see p45) is one of Accra's best cocktail lists, retaining the same international standard as the food. While the



Shakes-N-Flavours

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mixologists can turn their spinning hands to the classics, it's the venue's own signature cocktails that are of real interest – original creations worth sampling include Santoku Spicy, Pom-Fashioned (featuring Havana Añejo Especial rum and pomegranate molasses mixed with apple and lychee juice and a dash of Angostura bitters, then shaken and served short over ice). Other drinks include award-winning sakes, Japanese whiskies and one of the best wine lists 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.*

**Silver Lounge**

Silver Lounge is very silver indeed. Above the boutiques and homeware outlets of Accra Mall, this is a cocktail haunt clad in a vast array of metallic shades. Where drinks are concerned, one of the more pungent is Income Tax, a heady mix of gin, martini rosso, dry martini and orange juice. *First floor, Accra Mall, Tetteh Quarshie and Spintex Road (0302 823 040, www.silverbirdghana.com). Open 9am-10.30pm Mon-Thur; 9am-2am Fri, Sat.*

**NEW Soho Bar & Soho Terrace**

After a sneak peek of the nearly complete room above Yasmina we can see its impressive potential. It's described as a restaurant lounge, and will be a classy affair – it's by the same owners of Yasmina (see p41). There's a very long bar and then seating around the large circular room. Upstairs will be a terrace nightclub with great views. *Marina Mall, Airport Bypass Road, Airport City (www.facebook.com/Yasminarestaurant). Open 11am-11pm daily.*

**Clubs**

**Aphrodisiac**

On Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays, this place is usually pumping. Music varies from night to night: 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. *35 Nii Badu Street, Dzorwulu (0302 766 738, www.clubaphro.com, Facebook page).*

**Club 11**

Formerly Cinderella's, Club 11 has upped the stakes a little now. It's located right next to another Accra hotspot, Django Bar (which itself was formerly Rockstone's Office – see review below), and has a sometimes raucous, and always pretty sexy, atmosphere. *Osu Avenue, off Ring Road behind Police HQ, Cantonments (0244 430624, www.facebook.com/Club11GH). Open from 10pm*

**RECOMMENDED**  
*Champs Sports Bar & Grill*



**Champs is back. After a brief but enjoyable flirt as The Lexington, the sports bar vibe has been reinstalled at the Paloma Hotel Complex on the Ring Road. The pool tables are back (one of the few places in Accra you can play), as are the many TVs, the karaoke nights (Friday) and the Thursday quiz evenings. You'll still be able to enjoy disc-spinners such as DJ Black, DJ KillerFingers and DJ Vision, as well as live music at weekends. There's also a new menu with the usual sports bar fare, including chicken wings, excellent sliders, steaks and fish and chips. Expect all major sporting events to be shown here on the eight large screens and four projector screens. 40 Ring Road, Paloma Hotel Complex (024 095 9406, www.champafrika.com). Open 5pm to late Mon-Thur; 11am to late Fri-Sun.**

*Thur-Sat. Admission GH¢15 after midnight, ladies free.*

**Django Bar/Grand Papazz**

This bar is owned by 'Godfather of Hiplife' Reggie Rockstone (and was previously called Rockstone's Office

– ask taxi drivers for this name). 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, as well as art exhibitions. Things really get going late. His Grand Papazz, a VIP-only area, is next door. *Osu Avenue Extension, behind Police HQ and Japanese Embassy, Cantonments (054 945 0543, facebook.com/pages/Rockstones-OfficeGrandPapazz). Open 5pm-midnight Mon-Thur; 5pm-5am Fri-Sun.*

**Twist**

Twist remains a fairly popular joint, despite much more competition. The bar caters to a set who loiter around the outdoor patio of the large garden before returning back into the fray. *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.*

**NEW Whisky Mist at Icon House**

Run by the people behind Santoku, Icon House opens its doors in autumn 2014. This luxury lifestyle food and beverage concept spans three floors, with a café and cocktail lounge, a restaurant (Urban Grill, see p45) and Whisky Mist is a nightclub with members' bar. Located on the top floor, and straight from London, Whisky Mist has a rooftop chill-out terrace and JW Blue private members area. The venue was designed by award-winning architects Graven Images. For more on the retail offering, which so far includes La Maison, see p54. *Whisky Mist, Icon House, Stanbic Heights, Corner of Independence and North Liberation Link, Airport City (www.yoloxperiences.com).*



# Restaurants



Bread & Wine

## Ghana on a plate

A wealth of new openings is making Ghana West Africa's culinary hotspot

There's never been a more exciting time to eat out in Accra. The restaurant scene across Ghana is booming, with new restaurants, cafés and delis opening all the time. Since the last issue, new Accra restaurants such as **Bread & Wine** and **Yasmina** are serving food that would garner plaudits in London or New York; the same can also be said for **The View** (see p83) in Kumasi. **Bread & Wine** is a defiantly French restaurant, with (big smile) great service. It's also home to the most impressive bakery set-up we've seen in Accra, not least because there's a French pastry chef just to turn out the amazing bread and croissants.

The **View Bar & Grill** in Kumasi, meanwhile, is a very welcome addition to a city not, ahem, overly known for its culinary diversity. It's also one of the loveliest-looking restaurants in the country. It's from the same stable as **Santoku** in Accra, which is, of course, easily one of the top five eateries in the country.

**Icon House** opens in late 2014

and promises to be one of Ghana's most high end destinations. It's a 'luxury lifestyle food & beverage concept' that spans three floors, with a café and cocktail lounge **The Coco Lounge**, the **Urban Grill** restaurant and the **Whisky Mist** nightclub (see p38) with members' bar. Each destination has its own dedicated level, plus there are a few high end retail spaces on the ground floor, one of which will house the latest branch of **La Maison** (see p54). **Icon House** is by the team that set up the excellent **Santoku** restaurant.

Elsewhere **Kaya** promises to be an interesting place to eat (it's already a great place to get a cocktail). But however welcome this influx of high end places, it's still Ghana's home-grown dishes and ingredients that get our tongues dancing.

The seafood alone is fabulous and plentiful. Alongside tilapia are barracuda, shrimp, lobster and langoustines. Ghanaian dishes like red-red (a tasty bean stew served with fried plantain) and

jollof rice are delicious – and you won't even need to wash your fingers afterwards.

A consistently 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**. A more upmarket place to get some excellent traditional food is **Buka**.

Street food can sometimes be a calculated risk, although the level of cleanliness is reasonably good – vendors are always washing their hands. What should definitely be fine is grabbing a coconut – they'll chop the top off so you can drink the milk there and then, then they'll open it so you can eat the meat. A coconut should cost GH¢1 – as a guide, avocados are also GH¢1 and 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 GH¢1. A sachet of water is 10p from a street vendor.

A new initiative in Accra is Hello Food, an online delivery service for more than 40 restaurants across the capital. Londoners will recognise the model from Just Eat. Simply go to [www.hellofood.com.gh](http://www.hellofood.com.gh) to order.

## Osu

### EXPENSIVE

#### Au Grand Ecuyer French

**Au Grand Ecuyer** is primarily a French restaurant. Gallic-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¢25-70.*

#### NEW Bread & Wine French

See picture review p42.

*13th Lane, off Cantonments Road (Oxford Street), behind Venus, Osu (57 651 9799, [facebook.com/pages/BreadWine](https://www.facebook.com/pages/BreadWine)). Open 9am to 10.30pm daily. Main courses GH¢65-180.*

#### NEW Gusto Italian

Italian chef Roberto Farumi has been working for more than 35 years in his homeland, and now he's brought his expertise and good taste to **Gusto**, a new restaurant linked to the excellent **La Villa Boutique Hotel** (see p74). The menu is reassuringly Italian-focused (not sullied by other 'continental' options on the menu), as is the wine list. Speaking to Farumi, it's clear the ingredients are key and he spends time sourcing the best Ghanaian produce (fish is a great option) and importing the essentials (parmesan, olive oil).

*13th Lane, Osu (0302 730 3336; [info@lavillaghana.com](mailto:info@lavillaghana.com); [www.lavillaghana.com](http://www.lavillaghana.com)). Open noon-3pm, 6.30-11pm daily. Main courses GH¢30-80.*

#### Le Magellan Restaurant French

**Le Magellan** is a good dining-out choice, particularly in the evenings when business colleagues, friends and couples convene to wind down at the end of a day. Service is polite and well practiced, and the menu reflects the fact this is one of the more upmarket options for a meal out in Accra.

*Ring Road, East Accra, near Osu's Danquah Circle (0302 777 629). Open noon-11pm daily. Main courses GH¢30-80.*

## MID-RANGE

**Arlecchino Gelateria Italiana Ice cream**

With the arrival of Pinocchio (see p41), ice cream competition in Accra has stiffened up – thankfully Arlecchino appears to have raised its game again. There are more than 20 flavours that are sumptuous. 674/2 Cantonments Road (Oxford Street), opp Shell petrol station (024 541 0403, [www.arlecchinoicecream.com](http://www.arlecchinoicecream.com)). Open 6am-midnight Mon-Sat; 11.30am-midnight Sun.

**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, it gives a sense of escape from the throng, with lively music and wraparound wooden trellises adding to the ambience. The food itself hinges largely on Ghanaian and Nigerian specialties – dishes include okra stew and eba (a dough ball eaten with stews). Try and avoid peak lunch hours. 10th Lane, near the old American Embassy (0302 782 953/024 484 2464, [www.thebukarestaurant.com](http://www.thebukarestaurant.com)). Open noon-10pm Mon-Sat; noon-6pm Sun. Main courses GH¢20-40.

**NEW Burger & Relish**

Located in central Osu and launching in November, Burger & Relish will be Ghana's first gourmet burger restaurant and cocktail bar. The interior will bring vintage



Le Magellan

industrial design, urban art and curiosities together to create an eclectic East London/Soho New York style vibe. It's a day and evening venue for families, and has a play area and baby changing room. It will also be a hot spot in town for late night revelers with DJs and bands playing vintage funk, soul and blues. B&R serves favourite classics, as well as signature burgers such as Smokin Joe (secret house BBQ marinade, cheese sauce, crispy smoked bacon and homemade pickles with rosemary salt fries), Seoul Burger (soy sauce glazed beef patty, gochujang mayonnaise, asian coleslaw and shichimi seasoned tempura vegetables) and Thai Chicken Burger (ginger, coriander & chilli with homemade sweet chilli sauce and lime mayo). The bar focuses on signature cocktails, specialising in rums and there's a broad range of beers, as well as milkshakes and floats. 14th Lane, and Dadebu Road, Osu (0544 347 538, [www.burgerandrelish.com](http://www.burgerandrelish.com), [facebook.com/burgerandrelish](https://www.facebook.com/burgerandrelish)). Open noon-11pm Tue-Wed; noon-2am Thur-Sat; noon-10pm Sun. Main courses GH¢35-70.

**Chase El Paso**

Chase El Paso serves pretty much what you'd expect from a Tex-Mex style restaurant outside of Mexico,

with tacos, burritos and fajitas, but there are also pizzas, steaks and whopping burgers (GH¢35). Coming soon is continental, Japanese and Lebanese fare. 14th Lane, off Cantonments Road (Oxford Street), behind Koala Supermarket, Osu (0302 763 220054 633 3444, [facebook.com/Chaseelpaso](https://www.facebook.com/Chaseelpaso)). Open 11am-11.30pm Mon-Thurs, Sun; 11-1am Fri-Sat. 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. The main appeal, however, is hearty home cooking that remains true to Ghanaian classics. The atmosphere is as relaxed as the staff are, but the food is freshly cooked – *fufu*, *banku* and jollof rice all come with a choice of chicken, beef, mutton or fish, usually 'red fish'. The larger grilled tilapia comes with *banku*. 2nd Ringway, Roberto Road (0302 229 107). Open 7.30am-9.30pm daily. Main courses GH¢9-25.

**Dynasty Restaurant Chinese**

For almost 25 years, Dynasty has dominated Osu's fancier eating scene. This upmarket and highly

regarded Chinese restaurant attracts a steady flow of businesspeople and wealthy young couples with its authentic cuisine and slick service. Alongside the usual suspects on an extensive menu are some interesting dishes, such as 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 alongside its premium spirits. A selection of tapas offers tasty and swift fuel for barflies, as does the selection of Middle Eastern dips (GH¢16), with crisp slices of French bread for ladling fresh hummus, baba ghanoush and labne. The goat's cheese covered in roasted pine nuts (GH¢20) and artichokes with gorgonzola sauce (GH¢20) are both good options. 11th Lane, Embassy Road (0302 777 818, <http://fireflyghana.com>). Main courses GH¢20-40. Open 5pm-late Tue-Sun.

**Frankie's International**

An Oxford Street institution, Frankie's passes its long opening 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 small restaurant and bar serving a slightly different menu of continental dishes to the main eatery. Cantonments Road (Oxford Street) (0302 773 567, [www.frankies-ghana.com](http://www.frankies-ghana.com)). Open 7am-11.30pm Mon-Thurs, Sun; 7am-midnight Fri, Sat. Main courses GH¢15-45.

**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, being authentic and spicy. Service is attentive, but relaxed. 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, part of the same complex as Pippa's Health Centre, sells tangy jerk chicken and other Jamaican classics such as curried goat and beef patties, as well as a good selection of veggie food. Eat in (ping the bell for service!) in the tiny courtyard, or opt for take-away or delivery.

*The Health Bar, Pippa's Health Centre, 5th Ringway Link, Ringway Estates, (020 605 9985). Open Tue-Thur 9am-7pm; 9am-10pm Sat. Main courses GH¢17-25.*

**Leonardo da Vinci's Italian**

This Italian bistro specialises in delicious pastas, also boasts a range 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 dozens of different varieties in all, and portions are generous. As well as its salads (split into seafood, vegetarian and chicken categories; all around GH¢25), there's also an assortment of curries and wraps that are very popular with expats. New this year is a sumptuous cake counter in an air-conditioned atrium. The lemon mousse cheesecake is good. 11th Lane (0302 780 599). Open 9am-5pm Mon-Sat. Main courses GH¢25-30. Credit V.

**NourishLab Smoothies Café**

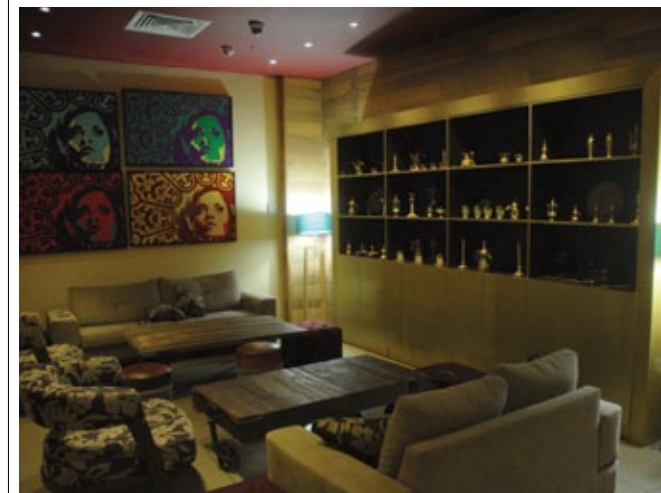
This long-standing smoothie bar in the heart of Osu is good for health-conscious folk, or those who haven't seen a piece of fruit for a couple of days. It has a wide selection of smoothies made with milk and yogurt – they take a couple of minutes to arrive and come thick and full of goodness. Particularly notable 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. Behind Eye Emporium, Off Cantonments Road (Oxford Street) (0243 939 855). Open 8.30am-10pm daily.

**Mamma Mia Italian**

Set around an agreeably rustic courtyard some five minutes' walk



Mamma Mia

RECOMMENDED  
Yasmina

**This much-talked about new venture, on the same complex as Marina Mall, is rightly recognised for the quality of its Lebanese food. There's incredibly flavourful cuisine on offer here. The highlights on our last visit were the mohamara (spicy walnut spread), the manek sausages and the hummus. It's all authentic with good, balanced use of spices and top-quality ingredients, although the bill does add up after a few dishes – most are between GH¢20-55. One option is to go for the set menu, which for two is GH¢160. The venue itself is a dramatic circular room with banquet seating around a stunning chandelier. Soon to open above the restaurant is Soho (see p38) and Soho Terrace. Marina Mall, Airport Bypass Road, Airport City ([www.facebook.com/Yasminarestaurant](http://www.facebook.com/Yasminarestaurant)). Open 11am-11pm daily. Main courses GH¢40-70.**

from Oxford Street, Mamma Mia combines quality thin-crust, wood-fired pizzas with an attractive setting, making it one of Accra's best options for Italian food, despite increased competition. The outside area has a trattoria-like feel, with rough-hewn paving, terracotta tilework and warm, simple decor. Air-conditioned dining is also available inside. Behind SSNIT Trust Hospital (024 426 4155). Open noon-10.30pm Tue-Sun. Main courses GH¢30-60.

**Monsoon International**

Three eateries in one, all of which are likely to leave you happily replenished. Monsoon's centrepiece is its bar, a reasonably plush spot that wouldn't look out of place in any city, and its main à la carte selection offers a good choice of seafood and meat options. On the outside terrace, meanwhile, 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's affiliated with the equally popular Heritage Indian, and both are known for their good service. Both also blend their cuisines, so you'll find Indian dishes too in Noble House's telephone book-sized menu. A new branch has also opened in Kumasi. Near Ebenezer Presby Church, Salem Road, Kuku Hill (0302 785 151, 0243 439035). Open noon-3pm, 7-11.30pm daily. Main courses from GH¢15.

TOPTIP!  
TAKE your time

Service isn't known for its speed in Accra. It's best to go with plenty of time to spare and without too much hunger! Avoid midday too.

**NEW La Piazza & Pinocchio Italian**

One of the newest spots in Osu is La Piazza and Pinocchio, a pleasant complex that encompasses an ice cream parlour, an outdoor seating area for pizzas and an inside restaurant. The parlour has plenty of different ice cream flavours – we can vouch for the double chocolate – but it's also a nice place to sit with a coffee and check your emails. The outdoor courtyard is a lovely little space, with a full view of the wood-fired oven that produces a range of topping-laden pizzas –

request a thin crust. There's also a selection of pastas, meat and fish dishes. If it's a bit too warm, head inside to the air-conditioned restaurant with a separate menu. 11th Lane, Osu (024 442 2188, [facebook.com/lapiazza.ghana](https://www.facebook.com/lapiazza.ghana)). Open 10.30am-11pm Mon-Thurs, Sun; 10.30am-1am Fri, Sat. Main courses GH¢25-45.

**Zion Thai Thai**

You'll find fragrant Thai dishes cooked by a talented Thai chef at this lively little eatery. The menu offers various Far Eastern staples – from spring rolls and chicken satay to stir fries, noodle soup and a selection of curries – and there are plenty of vegetarian options too, 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, while 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](mailto:zionthairestaurant@yahoo.com)). Open noon-11pm Tue-Sat; 4pm-11pm Sun. Main courses GH¢15-25.

## BUDGET

**Chicken Republic Fast food**

Offering rotisserie and fried chicken pieces, as well as jollof rice and salads. It's basic fried chicken, but not a bad one. Cantonments Road (Oxford Street) (0302 767 268, [www.chicken-republic.com](http://www.chicken-republic.com)). Open 7am-11pm Mon-Thurs; 7am-midnight Fri-Sun. Main courses GH¢5-8. Other locations Spintex (0302 817 094); Ring Road (0302 233 869).

EXPENSIVE  
Labone & Cantonments

## EXPENSIVE

**NEW Bosphorus Turkish**

The newly-opened Bosphorus is a restaurant serving traditional Turkish food along with a few nods to international cuisines. Things start early in the day with the 'Pasha' breakfast, which, as any visitor to Istanbul knows well, is an expansive affair with a variety of cheeses, olives, honey, sausage, fries, salad and more (GH¢35). The menu then runs through sandwiches, pitas and kebabs and meat dishes. There are pastas and other international dishes, but it's the authentic Turkish cuisine you'll enjoy the most. The restaurant itself has a large covered patio area, as well as two floors of indoor seating. Note that at the time of going to press it didn't serve alcohol. Shisha pipes are available for a post-meal smoke. No 127, sector 18, Labone. Call 0200 300 123/727 for details.

## RECOMMENDED Bread & Wine



### Bread & Wine Bakery & Delicatessen

This bakery is a serious operation. There was already a queue at the counter when we last visited, and that was during the soft opening. All the equipment and grain is imported from France (as is the pastry chef), and all the bread and patisserie is freshly baked each day. The croissants are a highlight, obviously, but the cakes are fabulous too. The breads on offer include classic French baguettes, as well as brioche, walnut and raisin bread and whatever else takes the chef's fancy. You'll also find quiches and pizzas.

Over in the deli, the city's most impressive selection of cheeses and cold cuts can be bought by the gram – or layered in one of the aforementioned baguettes for a sandwich. Outside, meanwhile, there's a relaxing seating area in the gardens, overlooking the colonial house and the pool – just the spot to eat your purchase or drink a perfectly-pulled espresso.

13th Lane, off Cantonments Road (Oxford Street), behind Venus, Osu ( 57 651 9799, [facebook.com/pages/BreadWine](https://www.facebook.com/pages/BreadWine)). Open 9am to 10.30pm daily.



Epicureans rejoice! Bread & Wine is open. Great French food, a wine cellar, a beautiful location, real croissants made by a French pastry chef – what's not to like? This is a serious set-up. The bakery alone will no doubt be marked out as the best in Ghana – pop in for a real Parisian baguette, a slice of cake and a good coffee. And by the time this guide is out the deli will be open too, offering outdoor patio seating among the greenery and flowers. Elsewhere in this quiet Osu setting, a fabulously appointed dining room sits inside a colonial building and shows real attention to detail – the tables and light fittings are from an old French railway station bistro, a cooler keeps the wines at the perfect temperature and the bar mixes great classic cocktails. Bread & Wine is even open for breakfast. Thought you couldn't get a good eggs benny in Ghana? Think again! Alongside the classic and salmon versions of Eggs Benedict, there's a full English, various cereals and superb buttermilk pancakes.

The all-day menu (served between 9am-5pm) has salads and sandwiches, as well as steak frites, fish and chips and a very good club sandwich. But it's the à la carte menu where it excels: entrées include stuffed aubergine with smoked salmon (GH¢78) and scallops with hazelnuts, mashed carrots with orange and cumin (GH¢125), while seafood options range from grouper spiced with tarragon and baby onions (GH¢90) to golden-crusted cassava fillet with coconut butter (GH¢95). The meaty mains offer delights such as magret de canard with curry plantain gnocchi (GH¢95) and French filet with peppercorns and potato gratin (GH¢215). There are vegetarian options too. And as you'd expect from having a well-regarded French pastry chef in the kitchen (and bakery, see above), the ever-changing dessert menu is amazing. Service is impeccable. It's not cheap, but Bread & Wine is easily among the best eateries in Ghana. Oh, and ask to see the chilled wine cellar – it's one impressive room (there are plans for cheese and wine tastings there in the future).

13th Lane, off Cantonments Road (Oxford Street), behind Venus, Osu ( 57 651 9799, [facebook.com/pages/BreadWine](https://www.facebook.com/pages/BreadWine)). Open 9am to 10.30pm daily. Main courses GH¢65-180.

### Captain Hook's Restaurant Seafood

Located in Cantonments near the Goethe-Institut, Accra stalwart Captain Hook's is a popular, upmarket seafood restaurant. The decor is inevitably nautically themed, but tastefully done. 4 Kakramandu Street, Cantonments (0302 762 228). Main courses GH¢60-80. Open 11.30am-2.30pm, 6pm-midnight Mon-Sat. Credit AmEx, MC, V.

### NEW Kaya

Kaya is a fascinating proposition that includes a spa and detox, cocktail bar, grill, restaurant and design gallery. It is set in a beautiful colonial building and a large, lush tropical garden. There are two dining options, plus a terrace snack bar (see p36). The Lobster & Champagne Grill (launched in October) will be in a newly-refurbished summer hut. Inside the house, there will be a fine dining restaurant and will serve a delicate menu based on organic delicacies, fresh seafood, depending on seasonal and local produce availability. During the day, lunch or afternoon tea is served and draws heavily on an organic garden for vegetables, herbs and spices. There's also a wellbeing centre that can provide healthy and drink food options.

1-10 Link Road, Cantonments, near US Embassy (0540 109 501).

### Le Must French

For 20 years, Le Must has been a force among Accra's upmarket eateries, with diners including Jacques Chirac, Will Smith and Stevie Wonder. For a while it 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, still a fixture. It's also the place to find your Baron

## 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

**Abenkwin** 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

P de Rothschild bottles, 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 new private dining rooms.

28 Orphan Crescent, (0302 785 731, [www.lemust-france.com](http://www.lemust-france.com)). Main courses GH¢30-65. Open noon-3pm, 6pm-11pm Mon-Sat. Credit AmEx, MC, V.

### MID-RANGE

#### Chase International

Popular Labone destination Chase recently changed its Japanese restaurant into a sports bar and lounge with banquet seating, a large projector and a stack of TVs.

There's now a teppanyaki bar indoors. It also has a pleasant outdoor patio and an indoor restaurant. The food in the café area starts from 7am with breakfast, and it's open until late serving salads, fajitas, all manner of chicken dishes and Lebanese platters.

Olooti Lane, off Josiah Tongogari Road, opp Labone Coffee Shop (0302 778 477, [www.chasefastfoods.com](http://www.chasefastfoods.com)). Open 9.30am-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 alongside other activities that will keep most ages entertained. Parents, meanwhile, can hide in a restaurant serving Ghanaian dishes, fried chicken and other items. There's a juice bar and coffee shop. 27 Orphan Crescent, North Labone (0302 763525). Open call for details.

### D-Café Café

The DeliFrance chain is now called D-Café and has branches across the city in Marina Mall, Accra Mall and now Labone, on which outlet this review is based. D-Café's offering was actually quite rare in Accra when it opened a few years back: namely good coffee, pastries and lunch-time sandwiches. The baked goods have always been of a decent quality and freshly made. Time has also been spent on training the staff to make a good coffee. Panini or baguette sandwiches include salmon or bresaola, and the Labone branch also makes pizzas, pasta, salads, wraps and crepes. There's a nice seating area outside and an air-conditioned bar inside. Next to Metro TV, North Labone (0544 338 084). Open 6.30am-8pm daily.

### 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. Little changes here – it's a relaxed place, half indoors and half out (the terrace overlooks a car park). It's 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 its 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¢20-40. Open noon-2pm, 7pm-1am Mon-Fri; 7pm-1am Sat.

### Maquis Tante Marie African

There are three branches of Maquis Tante Marie. There's one in Accra Mall and another fast-food-style place in Marina Mall, although the original Labone branch is, by some distance, the most atmospheric. All

the seating is open-sided and the tasteful bamboo furniture and bright yellow tablecloths give the place an exotic vibe. The menu is definitively African, with authentic dishes predominantly from Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. These include tilapia and banku, *nyama choma* (grilled, spiced meat, usually mutton) and fish *yassa* (fish grilled in a tangy lemon marinade).

5th Norla Link near Metro TV (0302 778 914, [www.maquistantemarie.com](http://www.maquistantemarie.com)). Open 11.30am-11pm daily. Main courses GH¢25-40. 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, 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.

#### NEW Shakes-N-Flavours

This new little smoothie and milkshake bar is a very welcome place to be on a hot day. Ice-cool air con, delicious drinks and wifi all help. The fresh ingredients shine through and there are some nice combinations – we can vouch for the Banberry, a banana, nutmeg, pineapple and strawberry blend. There are also a few snacks such as burgers, sandwiches and, of course, chicken and rice.

Josiah Tongogari Road, Labone (0302 797 541, [facebook.com/ShakesNFlavors](https://www.facebook.com/ShakesNFlavors)). Open 10am-10pm Mon-Sat; 1-10pm Sun.

#### Zanzibar International

Located in the residential area of Labone, Zanzibar is a small restaurant that specialises in dishes from the region after which it takes its name (although there's also an incongruous mix of India, French and Thai dishes). It's a good location for a relaxing meal in pleasant surroundings. There's a leafy outdoor area.

Dade Street (0244 890 990). Open 11am-3pm, 5pm-11.30pm daily. Main courses GH¢25-40.

#### BUDGET

##### Katawodieso Ghanaian

More of a street stall than a restaurant, Katawodieso is semi-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



D-Café

jollof rice, although the speciality here is *waakye*. Walk in and take a seat if there's room, or order in the kiosk from one of the waitresses and see what arrives. The restaurant has been at this location for a quarter of a century and is well known across the city. *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. It shares premises with the Thai Island, Café dez Amis and Toros Tapas Bar, but is nonetheless mostly based in its own pleasant garden (and despite being next to a busy road, it does seem pretty tranquil). There's an outdoor bar that also serves barbecued

chicken, although most people come for the wood-fired pizzas. On weekend evenings there's frequent live music, but there are often tunes 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 to it. Under low bamboo ceilings, and with African motifs painted on the walls, the place has a relaxed family atmosphere, and while the small menu is 100 per cent Ghanaian it's also one of the most authentic in Accra. The banku and tilapia are particularly good here, but almost all dishes are a decent bet. For the

uninitiated, the water bowls and liquid are to wash your hands after digging in with your fingers. *Ring Road, next to Bus Stop Restaurant and Bar* (0302 220 930). Main course GH¢10-30. 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. Given its location, what you find is surprisingly charming. A thatched dining area overlooked by trees shades tables clad in green-and-white tablecloths, while in the adjacent open-fronted kitchen hut the Indian owners sizzle up an abundance of South and North Indian cuisine.

Behind the ENGEN filling station, *Kojo Thompson Road* (0275834282, [www.khanakhazanaghana.com](http://www.khanakhazanaghana.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 a central location make it a popular choice with the embassies, and now the president has moved into Flagstaff House soon business should rocket. The service is casual and friendly. It's a good place for a brunch in the breeze, a long lunch with friends, a sunset supper or a work meeting with colleagues. There is often live music.

98 Independence Avenue (0302 782 937, [cafede zamis@gmail.com](mailto:cafede zamis@gmail.com), [Facebook page](https://www.facebook.com/cafede zamis)). Open 6.30am-10pm Mon-Sat; 10am-10pm Sun.

##### 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 soups including asparagus, pumpkin and mushroom. It's well known for a wide variety of sweet and savoury crêpes and an excellent

array of pastas and fresh seafood. It also offers homemade ice cream and freshly baked bread and rolls.

*Farrar Avenue, and Nsawam Road* (0302 232 988). Open 10am-10pm Mon-Sat. Main courses GH¢20-35.

##### 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, although that said, a thatched roof and palm trees offer shade during the day. The menu includes Ghanaian dishes such as jollof rice and red red alongside Lebanese cuisine, kebabs and chicken and chips, with large pizza to share. *Paloma Hotel, 40 Ring Road* (0302 228 700, [www.palomahotel.com](http://www.palomahotel.com)). Open 6.30am-10.30pm daily. Main courses GH¢8-20.

##### NEW Tam-Tam African

This is another new place in the Afrikiko complex, following last year's addition of Toros Tapas Bar. It's a wholeheartedly African experience, with a menu broken down into different regional cuisines, including Nigerian and Senegalese dishes and a good range of Ghanaian classics. *98 Independence Avenue* (0244 613 677). Open 11m-10pm daily. Main courses GH¢20-40.

##### 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 has finally hit Accra, and with customary Latin style. This is a lovely if unsubtle space (it's 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, up to GH¢32 for Iberian pork. Pile them up and away you go. The menu is classic tapas: croquetas, meatballs, chorizo in red wine, patatas bravas, octopus salad, calamars, prawns in chili and garlic. There's also paella, including an authentic version (with chicken). It also hosts occasional live performances of flamenco and Spanish music.

*Afrikiko Leisure Complex, Liberation Road* (020 094667, 024 288 0163, [www.torotapas.com](http://www.torotapas.com)). Open noon-11pm daily. Main courses GH¢16-32.

## 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 every day – no wonder the past few years have seen people travelling fair distances to pick up their breakfast goods. It serves crêpes and waffles, alongside more substantial lunchtime paninis. *Osu Badu Street* (020 9130 655, [facebook.com/pages/CHOCOPAIN/](https://www.facebook.com/pages/CHOCOPAIN/)). Open 6am-9pm Mon-Sat; 7am-7pm Sun. Other location *Melcom Plus Complex, 2nd Palace Link Road, off Dadeban Road, North Industrial Area* (020 913 0655).

## Airport Residential

#### EXPENSIVE

##### NEW Coco Lounge at Icon House

The Coco Lounge opens in Icon House, a new three-storey building with some of Ghana's most high end restaurants, retail spaces and the Whisky Mist's nightclub (see p38) all under one roof and launching in autumn 2014. The ground floor is the setting for The Coco Lounge, a café-style environment and cocktail lounge-bar, open for breakfast, throughout the day and into the night for relaxed dining, coffee and cakes, cocktails, wine and draught beers. The double-volume space includes dramatic features such as a long bar and hanging art displays (all by award winning architects Graven Images), and the ground floor area also offers inspirational shopping at La Maison, an interior lifestyle boutique (see p54). *The Coco Lounge, Icon House, Stanbic Heights, Independence, North Liberation Link, Airport City* ([www.yoloxperiences.com](http://www.yoloxperiences.com)).

##### Santoku Restaurant & Bar Japanese

Launched in 2012, Santoku is still leading the way for fine dining in Ghana, with a blend of well-executed and inventive dishes, excellent service and well-designed surroundings by interior architect Hubert de Givenchy. The team from Nobu London helped open Santoku and executive chef Rafael Serrano (Coya London and Nobu), head-chef Angel Perez (Nobu London), all recently joined. The menu offers a contemporary Japanese sharing concept, with signature dishes including Black Cod den Miso plus extensive sushi and sashimi selections. It also serves superb cocktails. There's a private dining room that seats 18. *Ground Floor, Azure, Villagio Vista, Tetteh Quarshie Interchange* (0544 311 511, [www.santoku-restaurant.com](http://www.santoku-restaurant.com)). Bar open 5pm-1am daily; Lounge open 5pm-midnight;



Santoku Restaurant &amp; Bar

*Restaurant from 6.30pm to 9.45pm Monday to Wednesday; 6.30pm to 10.45pm Thurs to Sat. Main courses GH¢25-100. Credit MC, V.*

##### NEW Urban Grill at Icon House

Urban Grill will open in Icon House, a new three-storey building with restaurants, cafe lounge, and club (see p38) and some retail. It's the flagship restaurant at Icon House and from the team that brought you Santoku, so promises to have unique dishes and impeccable service. Urban Grill has renowned New York chef Andrew DiCataldo who designed the menu and he has fused on trend Nuevo Latino cuisine with African flavours. The wine list has been devised by Brazilian Master of Wine Dirceu Vianna Jr. *Urban Grill, Icon House, Stanbic Heights, Independence, North Liberation Link, Airport City* ([www.yoloxperiences.com](http://www.yoloxperiences.com)).

##### NEW Yasmina Lebanese

See picture review, p41. *Marina Mall, Airport Bypass Road, Airport City* ([www.facebook.com/Yasminarestaurant/](https://www.facebook.com/Yasminarestaurant/)). Open 11am-11pm daily. Main courses GH¢40-70.

#### 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 the Saturday Texas. Food can also be eaten around the pleasant pool outside. It's reasonably priced for a hotel restaurant, with burgers and pasta around GH¢30. *Golden Tulip Hotel, Liberation Road, Airport* (0302 213 161, [www.goldentulipaccra.com](http://www.goldentulipaccra.com)). Open 6.30am-10pm daily. Main courses GH¢21-36.

##### NEW ci gusta

The ci gusta franchise that specialises in frozen yogurt, ice cream, smoothies, coffee, soup and pizza, has opened in Accra. It's a lovely little spot, air conditioned and relaxed inside. There's also an outdoor seating area. *Patrice Lumumba Road, Koala Shipping Centre, Airport Residential* (054 010 1333, [www.cigusta.com](http://www.cigusta.com)). Open 11am-8pm.

##### D-Café Café

The D-Café is the new name for the recently rebadged DeliFrance franchise. There are branches across Accra, including in the Marina Mall. Each is slightly different.

This is a lovely little place for a coffee, with some excellent pastries, although 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. There are also salads and pizzas. These cafés provide little air-con-fresh pockets of calm across the city. Next door to this branch is the D-Café Deli (see p53). *Volta Street* (302 770 233). Open 7am-8pm Mon-Sun.

##### Escapade Café/Bistro International

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

##### Holiday Inn Accra Airport

The Holiday Inn's location, right by the airport, makes it a key contender for a quick lunch or a business meeting – you're more or less guaranteed 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 (think pizza and 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 sandwich in five minutes, also offers enticing dishes such as grilled calamari and Lobster Newburg. The Wiase Restaurant, meanwhile, puts on an impressive buffet every breakfast, lunch and dinner time, but it's the Sunday lunch spread that holds the most appeal, treating diners to a wide range of well-cooked traditional dishes. *Plot 19 & 20 Airport City* (0302 740 930, [www.holidayinn.com](http://www.holidayinn.com)). Main courses GH¢30-50.

##### Il Cavaliere Pazzo Italian

Set 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 one of the most impressive buildings in Accra, making effective use of wood both on the interior and

# TWO CITIES, TWO GREAT HOTELS

The Ultra Modern Best Western Plus Atlantic Hotel has opened in Takoradi to great reviews, while the Holiday Inn in Accra continues to be one of the best foodie destinations

## BEST WESTERN PLUS ATLANTIC HOTEL



The Gulf of Guinea is a vast impressive sight. It is a gulf of riches, full of delectable fish and full of oil, especially off the coast of Takoradi, in the western region of Ghana. The town, which jointly with its 'twin' Sekondi, has become the third biggest city in Ghana. It's an exciting place to be right now. And now, on the coast, overlooking the Gulf, is an astonishing five-star residence; the Best Western Plus Atlantic Hotel.

It is a stunning place from the moment you set eyes on the nine-storey hotel. It's a fully contemporary structure; white against the blue Ghanaian skies. But that's nothing compared to the surprise when

you appear again through the reception area and bar. Before you is Ghana's best pool area. This multi-level complex has incredibly inviting pools, beautiful flower gardens, its own bar, restaurant and grill, and simply flawless views across the pristine Takoradi Golf Club, the white beaches and then the Atlantic.

Beyond the pool are luxury chalets and family bungalows – a true escape. In the main hotel, five-star rooms – or the penthouse suites – beckon. The rooms are stylish with clean lines and subtle touches of luxury. And a seriously comfortable bed. A great night's sleep is always guaranteed.

There are six conference and event suites, for all sizes of conference or banqueting. They are highly customizable, and fully equipped with the latest technological equipment. There is also a wide range of business services.

It is, however, the food that is one of the main draws. Head Chef Leslie Quarmyne has added his trademark flavours to the Ocean View restaurant and the Canoe Bar and Restaurant located by the three swimming pools. He has come from the highly-acclaimed Holiday Inn in Accra. All of the dishes in from the wide-ranging buffet and a la carte menu are packed with flavour, whether it is the traditional African flavours of Okro Soup or the international perfection of the steak. And wait until you get to dessert!

Then it's time to relax in the bar with a cold beer, or perhaps by the pool with an expertly made cocktail.

The Best Western Plus Atlantic Hotel is the newest and best equipped hotel in the Western Region.



**DTD, Beach Road Area - Takoradi**  
+ 233 312 002700  
reservations@atlantichoteltakoradi.com  
www.bestwestern.com

## HOLIDAY INN, ACCRA



Holiday Inn Accra is one of the very best accommodation options Ghana has to offer the discerning visitor. Here's six reasons why the Holiday Inn is a great hotel:

### 1. The location.

This 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.

### 2. The rooms.

These are superb – a sizable 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.

### 3. The service.

Good service, as regular visitors will know, is hard to come by in Accra, but at the Holiday Inn, you can expect it to match American standards, with an added dose of African charm and a big 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.

### 4. La Cabana Pool Bar.

La Cabana Pool Bar & Restaurant is by the amazingly inviting pool. Great for a quick dip followed by an ice cold beer, and maybe the Seafood Jambalaya or a Steak Sandwich (with a truly great Virgin Mary tomato relish – we want the recipe). But



the specials board is where the chef really has fun. Picking the fish hooked from the Atlantic each morning, depending on what looks good. On Friday nights, the Pool Bar is buzzing – come early to get a seat.

### 5. The Safari Lounge Bar.

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. What of the menu? Well, there's Grilled Mini Calamari, Oak Smoked Salmon, or Tiger Prawns in garlic, olive oil, lemon juice and caper butter.

### 6. Wiase Restaurant.

Everyone loves a buffet, but there's nothing quite like this at your usual Holiday Inn. Sure, 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. 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 the Spicy Kelewele and the Red Red.



**Holiday Inn**

ACCRA AIRPORT

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exterior. It's also refreshingly understated. Its menu is unwaveringly Italian, with genuine risottos, gnocchi and ravioli with spinach and ricotta.  
*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¢50-80.*

**Josie's Cuppa Cappuccino Café**

This café serves light lunches and brunches. Its sandwiches are popular, especially the calorific chicken, cheese, bacon and avocado version. Apart from these, the menu also contains rice and chicken dishes, lots of salads, some burgers and a breakfast menu. The salads make it a favoured spot for those who prefer a healthy approach to their lunch.  
*6 3rd Close Ringway, off Volta Street, Off Partrice Lumumba, Airport Residential (030 295 3989, www.cuppacappuccino.com). Open 7.30am-7pm Mon-Sat.*

**La Chaumiere French & African**

La Chaumiere's sophisticated French dishes have been catering to Accra's discerning diners for more than a decade. It offers 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.  
*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¢20-45.*

**NEW La Tante DC-10 Restaurant Ghanaian**

There's no missing this remarkable restaurant project: it's set inside a DC-10 aeroplane that long stood derelict opposite Marina Mall. It's now been given a brand new lick of paint (in green Club Beer branding) and a complete overhaul inside. Climb the steps and get ready for take-off. It's been tastefully done using real airline seats and feels remarkably spacious – you certainly wouldn't confuse it for being on the red-eye to Heathrow. The menu is Ghanaian: grilled tilapia, garden egg stew, palm nut stew and the like, but at around GH¢35 a main it's not the cheapest – you do pay for the novelty.  
*Opposite Marina Mall, Airport By-Pass Road. Main courses GH¢25-40.*

**Nicolino's Italian**

The best pizza in town? Quite probably, despite stiff competition from Mamma Mia, which has upped its game recently. The wood-burning oven at Nicolino's – not to mention a super tasty crust – help the matter. The set up is professional too, with efficient and courteous staff, but it's the head



chef Humberto Dettori who brings the place real eminence – his previous posting was under two Michelin-starred chef Douglas Santi in Rome. Nicolino's couldn't have a better location – it's in a breezy, open-sided spot in the pleasant grounds of the Alliance Francaise (see p62). Pizzas such as the Toscana with spicy sausage (GH¢32) arrive on artfully rustic pieces of wood. A recent addition to the restaurant, and the menu, is grilled food – the super fresh lobster and sticky ribs are our favourites. There's an expanded range of pasta dishes too.  
*Alliance Francaise, Liberation Link, Airport Residential Area behind Opeibia House (0244 629 656). Open 7am-10.30pm Mon-Fri; noon-10.30pm Sun. Main courses GH¢30-50.*

**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 quality café/bar in a pleasant courtyard in the A&C Square complex. And despite the cheesy name, it's a tasteful place to enjoy pizza, pasta or a sandwich.  
*14 Jungle Road (0547 08921, www.ancsquare.com, Facebook page). Open 10am-1am Mon-Thu; 10am-3am Fri, Sat; 10am-1am Sun.*

**The Venue International**

The Venue isn't the easiest place to find – unfortunately, as it's one of the best restaurants in the city. Seafood is a particular forte, with a strong selection of fresh fish and shellfish dishes pretty much straight from the beaches. The pizzas here are also particularly well done.

*Adjiringanor Road, left after first bridge, house number 3 (024 3323425, 0302 505 111, resthvenue@gmail.com). Open 5pm-11pm Mon-Fri; noon-11pm Sat and Sun. Main courses GH¢15-35.*

**Accra Mall & Spintex Road**

**EXPENSIVE**

**Rhapsody's International**

As part of an established South African/Lebanese chain, Rhapsody's has the stylised decor that have become the hallmarks of a modern international bar. There's a separate dining area with a menu offering a range of salads, burgers, steaks, snack platters and the like.  
*Shops 66-68, Accra Mall, Spintex Road (0244 337 825, www.rhapsody.co.za). Open 10am-midnight Sun-Thur; 10am-2am Fri, Sat. Main courses GH¢25-42. Credit V.*

**NEW Yard Bird American**

Yard Bird mixes American-style diner food with Ghanaian spice within a funky environment in a new restaurant concept (just opened in August 2014). The menu will feature chicken, fried and blended with Yard Bird's very own spice shake, accompanied by sides such as spicy rice, cornbread, crispy fried okra and Creole black-eyed peas, plus house cocktails ranging from fresh lemonade to alcoholic Moonshine milkshakes. In a fun twist, guests can enjoy games of table football and make use of the Yard Bird photo booth to have pictures placed on the Wall of Memories or text the Secret DJ app to hear their favourite track played on the juke box. This will be the first of two branches. This restaurant is from the same developers as Santoku so we'd imagine it will also have the same quality service and ingredients.  
*Yard Bird, 21 Spintex Road, near Coca Cola Roundabout (0540 888 000, www.yoloxperiences.com).*

**MID-RANGE**

**Maquis Tante Marie African**

This is the second Maquis Tante Marie branch and lacks the vibe of

the Labone outlet. Happily it 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¢25-40. Other location 5th Norla Link near DDB Media 1, Labone (0224 322 5181).*

**NEW Spin Break American**

This new joint along the Spintex Road is wholeheartedly aiming for an American diner-style feel: big tasty burgers, thick milkshakes and juicy, juicy hotdogs. The red and white décor, the classic motorbike by the door and the open kitchen add to the vibe. Alongside the Stateside staples there are jalapeño peppers, tacos and quesadillas, as well as barbecued meat and pasta and pizza. There are plans to extend the outdoor seating area and add a bar there too.  
*Spintex Road, before Manet Junction, next to Compu Ghana (054 922 2226, www.facebook.com/spinbreak). Open 7am-10pm daily.*

**BUDGET**

**Barcelo's Fast food**

Think Nando's and you're pretty much there. The food here at Barcelo's is broadly comparable: the chicken's juicy, the jollof rice has a bite, and there's a selection of pepper and peri-peri sauces ranging from mild to steam-coming-out-of-your-ears cartoon-style.  
*Tetteh Quarshie and Spintex Road, looking onto central courtyard (0302 933 784). Open 7am-11pm Mon-Thu; 7am-midnight Fri, Sat; 7am-10.30pm Sun. Main courses GH¢8-16.*

**Beach**

**EXPENSIVE**

**Ghanaian Village at La Palm Royal Beach Hotel African**

Situated at the back of La Palm Royal Hotel's expansive grounds, this attractive thatched restaurant with beachside tables is a winning spot to sample some distinctive Ghanaian flavours. Its buffet is easily the best place to eat in the hotel – try the simple but much-loved red red (bean stew).  
*Labadi Beach (0245 353 610, www.gbghana.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 properties, with a reputation for smooth service. The dining venues are still reliably good. There's a buffet at lunch and dinner and a nice open bar by the pool.  
*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



## Queens of fashion

The fashion scene in Ghana is expanding like never before. Get shopping!

Luxury fashion has arrived in Ghana. For the last decade, local designers have been slowly infiltrating the international design scene. *Time Out Accra* has long supported many of them: breakthrough designers such as **Christie Brown**, **RenéeQ** and jewellery-maker Elizabeth Dankoro, whose beautiful items at **Tebazile** are sold to A-list celebrities in the US.

Also gaining serious attention is Nelly Hagan Aboagye. She was preparing to show her collection (under the name Duaba Serwa) on the catwalks at AltaRoma, Italy's biggest fashion show, when we caught up with her. Although an art school graduate and trained nurse, Nelly has always been drawn to fashion. "I started off with jewellery, and then moved to clothing," Nelly told *Time Out Accra*. "Jewellery is still an influence." Nelly talks about the inspiration from her grandmother, and the importance of jewellery in traditional cultures, and taking that work and making it modern. Nelly is also clear that this follows

through to the clothing.

Her first break was through the British Council's Young Enterprise scheme that allowed her to show in London. After trips to South Africa and further afield, she is now about to embark on her biggest ever show in Italy. Duaba Serwa can now count among the most important design brands coming out of Ghana, but Nelly is cautious. "It's a burgeoning movement and a growing fan base for Ghanaian fashion, but there's still a long way to go. There are so many good designers in Nigeria for example." Another flash, and another outfit to be photographed and we leave Nelly to prepare for one of the most important stages of all.

### Designer shopping

If you're interested in purchasing the latest Ghanaian styles yourself, try browsing the rails at one of Accra's increasing number of designer boutiques. In shiny Accra Mall, you'll find glitzy shoes and accessories in **Jil Boutique**, as well as fun and flirty designs

at **Kiki Clothing**. Over in Osu, meanwhile, the popular Christie Brown label celebrated the opening of its first boutique last year, filled with statement jewellery and bold African prints. And for an all-out deluxe retail experience, the shopping centre at the **Mövenpick Ambassador Hotel** (see p75) 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**, many of whose products are made by 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**, which sells the likes of ceramics, textiles and furniture.

Elsewhere, a very welcome addition is the new **Trashy Bags** boutique in Osu. It recycles material from the streets into wonderful bags and accessories. The initiative has become one of Ghana's biggest success stories.

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

Credit cards aren't widely accepted in Ghana, especially out of major hotels and supermarkets. Visa is the most commonly used. In the markets only cash is used and it's best to have a few smaller denominations as change can be scarce.

## Shopping centres

### Accra Mall

There's been a bit of a resurgence in Accra Mall recently, with nearly all the units now open. Clothing boutiques, global sports brands and high-end jewellery outlets populate the ground floor of Ghana's largest shopping centre. Glamorous African-inspired fashions fill the racks of Kiki Clothing, and a branch of African fabric specialists Woodin and Flisco has a range of beautiful prints. Also on the ground floor are familiar brands like Levis, Puma and Swatch. Italian outlet Adolof Dominguez is new this year. A small food court includes fried chicken eatery Barcelo's and upmarket bar and restaurant Rhapsody's (see p48), and a central play area allows kids to let off steam with a bouncy castle. There's also a new frozen yogurt store called Nominom. Upstairs is the territory of Silverbird which runs a well-stocked book and music store, and it's also where you'll find Ghana's only multiplex cinema, showing blockbusters, Nollywood and Ghanaian films.

*Tettah Quashie and Spintex Road (0302 823 040, [www.accramall.com](http://www.accramall.com)). Open 9am-9pm Mon-Sat, noon-6pm Sun.*

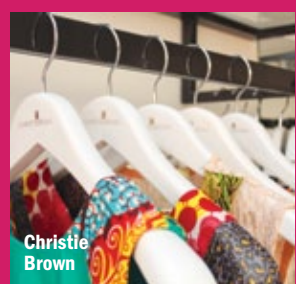
### A&C Square

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 (see p69), which has a swimming pool. The square also has a children's play area, pleasant coffee shops and a good fruit and veg stall.  
*Block 232, Jungle Rd, East Legon (0302 515 055, www.ancsquare.com). Open 10am-8pm Mon-Sat; noon-18.30pm Sun.*

**NEW Icon House**  
 Icon House will open in autumn 2014 and will span three floors. It's been described as a 'luxury lifestyle concept' and will house retail space, a relaxed café and cocktail lounge, restaurants (see p45) and nightclub (see p38). It's from the team that set up the excellent Santoku. There's a retail space with a branch of La Maison (see p54), and more planned.  
*Icon House, Stanbic Heights, corner of Independence and North Liberation Link, Airport City (www.yoloxperiences.com).*

**Marina Mall**  
 Marina Mall is made up of three floors of shops, with a food court taking up the top level. There's a welcome branch of D-Café, as well as fast food outlets including Marinas, which sells burgers and kebabs, and KFC. A large balcony overlooks one of the more bizarre sights in Accra, a DC-10 plane that has been recently converted to a restaurant (see p9). Also forming part of the mall is Yasmina's (see p41), one of Accra's best new



Christie Brown

## Critic's choice

- 1 La Maison.** The best design and interiors shop in Accra. See p54.
- 2 Trashy Bags.** Flawless ethical story, very cool bags. See p54.
- 3 Vilisco.** Stunning African-inspired materials and clothing. See p53.
- 4 Christie Brown.** Beautiful clothing from one of the best designers. See p52.
- 5 Global Mamas.** Where to get your souvenirs sorted. Nice story too. See p53.

restaurants. Elsewhere, big names in the complex include Benetton, the French franchise Façonnable and fashion boutique Viva. Most of the ground floor is given over to a large supermarket, one of the best for foreign goods in Accra, and a technology store and pharmacy called Compu-Ghana (054 916 3695). Also in the mall is a branch of All Pure Nature, as well as plenty of men's and women's fashion stores. There's a children's play area, although the video games make more of a racket than the kids.  
*Airport Bypass Road, Airport City, near Holiday Inn (www.marinamallghana.com). Open 8am-9pm Mon-Sat; 9am-9pm Sun.*

### Melcom Plus Complex

See picture review, p52.  
*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.*

### Oxford Street Mall

It's surprising there's not been a mall on Oxford Street, Osu's main thoroughfare, until now. Although it was still filling up space when *Time Out Accra* went to press, the Shoprite supermarket was bustling. Less so were the other stores, which include a shoe shop, an upmarket opticians, a large electronic store and a few other outlets. There's a couple of cafés on the top floor (worth checking out for a decent view out towards the ocean) and a casino, but Shoprite, full of international goods, remains the principal reason for going. There's also an underground car park.

*Cantonments Road (Oxford Street), opp Tigo (244 779 577, www.shoprite.co.za). Open 9am-9pm daily.*

## Supermarkets

### Game Department Store

Americans have compared this place to Target. There's no clothing but it's a very comprehensive department store selling just about everything else, from wines to flatscreen TVs, plus household appliances, home gym equipment and children's toys. It's pretty cheap for most things, something 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 a

handy Osu location – there's a car park outside. It also offers you basic foodstuffs, bakery, glassware, linens, cookware, electronics and lots more. There's a branch in Airport Residential, off Volta Road.  
*Danquah Circle, Osu (0302 765 665, www.koalashop.com.gh). Open 7.30am-9pm Mon-Sat; 9am-8pm Sun. Credit MC, V.*

### TOP TIP!

**International goods**  
 Craving your Marmite or candy bars? Most of the major supermarkets stock international goods, although usually at a premium price.

### 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. On the second is a small selection of bedding, glassware, candles and picture frames. There's also a branch 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-9pm Mon-Sat, 10am-9pm Sun.*

### Shoprite

The Shoprite Group of Companies, Africa's largest food retailer, operates in the Accra Mall, as well as from a new, large, outlet in Oxford Street Mall. In both shops you'll find a wide selection of foods – similar to any major UK supermarket – including imported meats from South Africa. There's also a deli counter, a large selection of wines and household goods.  
*Accra Mall, Tetteh Quarshie and Spintex Road (021 765 372, www.shoprite.co.za). Open 9am-8pm Mon-Sat; 11am-7pm Sun (Oxford Street Mall: 9am-9pm daily). Credit MC, V.*

### Woolworth's

Woolworth's is Ghana's answer to Marks & Spencer. Like the British store, the South African-owned Woolworth's focuses on quality clothes (including a good children's section) and homewares. It's a good place to pick up a last-minute slacks and shirt outfit for the golf course, or a reasonably priced suit and shoes. The main attraction for coming, however, is the selection of international foods and wines, which includes good muesli, frozen foods, teas and hard-to-find soya and rice milk and other foodstuffs.  
*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 leading west out of Accra. In character 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're keen to see a market purely for the experience (and it really is an experience), Makola 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

### SyTris

As we went to press, we heard that this excellent bookshop is opening again, this time in the new Oxford Street Mall. The last store – in a nearby mall that never quite got finished – had a pretty sizable collection, with bookcases shelving 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 big-sellers – and that copy of Marie Claire or Esquire you've been quietly pining for.  
*Oxford Street Mall (0302 501 931, www.sytris.net).*

### 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 shelving. Music-wise, it has the city's biggest

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assortment of international releases as well as a great selection of highlife, hiplife and other African genres. DVDs make up an increasing amount of shelf space, as does the machinery to play them. *Accra Mall, Tetteh Quarshie and Spintex Rd (0505 57444204, www.silverbirdghana.com). Open 9am-9pm Mon-Sat; 1am-9pm Sun. Credit V.*

#### Vidya's Bookstore

Vidya's Bookstore is probably the best bookshop in Accra if you just 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 titles on Ghana. You'll also find books for kids of all ages. There's another 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 only celebrated the official launch of its first boutique in Accra in February 2012. The 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. The label itself 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 both in Africa and abroad. *1st Lane, Osu (0244 418 477, www.christiebrownonline.com). Open 9am-6pm Mon-Fri; 10am-3pm 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.

## RECOMMENDED

### Melcom Plus



**Happy Birthday Melcom! In 2014, this Accra favourite celebrates 25 years in business, although the company's roots stretch before Ghana's independence. It's expanded and morphed along with the nation's history – it's now the country's largest chain of retail complexes, with some 28 up and running. The biggest of these is in the North Industrial Area, where the mall's three floors contain 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 bookstore. The rest is dominated by aisles of food, clothing, furniture, household and domestic goods. There is also a 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, which can arrange tour packages to any destination. Contact the tour company at Melcom Plus, Kaneshie (Otublohom Street, North Industrial Area, PO Box GP56, 0302 252 984, 024 907636, travels@melcomgroup.com). La Maison, 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).**

*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's previously been hard to find. Most of the clothing carries the Eleanor's Closet label, and it's hoped that growth will continue in the same way H&M and Zara have expanded in Europe. The shop stocks a lively selection of options for a woman's wardrobe, from elegant dresses to day-to-day basics, as well as accessories such as sunglasses, bags and belts. A superb little store. *1st Ringway Estates, opp. Alexander Plaza Hotel, Osu (0206 123 680, www.eleanorscloset.com, 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 – garments are brightly coloured and made from top quality regional print fabrics. *551/3 Asafaotse Netley Road, between GPO Wato Roundabout and Palladium (0302 664 129). Open 7.30am-5pm Mon-Fri; 8am-1pm Sat. Credit MC, V.*

#### Jil Boutique

Now in new, brighter premises on 11th lane, 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. It also stocks accessories such as necklaces and matching brooches. *23/11th 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. Titi 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. The boutique has a good selection of children's clothes too, with colourful batik designs. The 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

The designer Kwesi Nti is the Prada or Gucci of Accra, known for his muted colours in linen and silks with subtle borderings in a range of fabrics and materials. He also designs a range of footwear, and quite rightly has a reputation 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 influence. 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 for sale 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 you'd expect. *Accra Mall, Tetteh Quarshie and Spintex Road (0244 366 205). Open 10am-10pm Mon-Fri; noon-7pm Sat.*

#### Renée Q

Having moved full-time 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. Her clothing line quickly caught our attention, in particular her bespoke T-shirts, which can be custom-made – choose your colour and ruffle and she'll put it together. The RenéeQ label – for now – is exclusively in Accra, but internet orders (www.reneeq.com, www.facebook.com/

RenéeQstyle) continue to flow in and purchases can be shipped worldwide. The shop sells her jewellery accessories too – freshwater pearls, crystals, custom-made couture pieces and contemporary and traditional beads. *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.com/pages/ROYAL-DENNIS-DESIGNS). Open 8am-7pm Mon-Sat.*

#### TM Lewin

Selling smart clothes for smart guys, the London-based brand TM Lewin is a men's fashion shop with good off-the-shelf suits and accessories such as cufflinks and colourful retro ties, as well as more casual polo shirts. *Shop G38, Accra Mall, Tetteh Quarshie (0302 823 106, www.acramall.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 being showcased. 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 also has a branch in Marina Mall. *809 11th Lane, Osu (0302 776 629). Open 10am-7pm Mon-Fri; 10am-5pm Sat. Credit MC, V. Other location Marina Mall, Airport Bypass Road, Airport City, near Holiday Inn. Open 10am-7.30pm Mon-Sat; 2-7pm Sun.*

#### Woodin

One of four Woodin stores in Accra, this Oxford Street branch is hugely popular and forever filled with shoppers choosing from its kaleidoscopic range of fabrics. Dominated by bold African wax prints, the brand is highly regarded by professional fashion designers and seamstresses. While it's the fabrics that dominate floor space, you'll also find a wide selection of clothes for men, women and children – all cut from the cloth. The branch in Accra Mall is more focused on simply designed clothes, but it stocks fabrics too. A new store has also opened at the Mövenpick that sells a select range of fabrics and clothing.

*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, it sells clothing and bags, but the appeal is really all about the fabrics, which tend to be louder and more colourful than Woodin's comparatively muted offerings. Of the two stores, the Accra Mall is the flagship outlet. *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. Her 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 all prominent. *Accra Mall, Tetteh Quarshie and Spintex Road (0248 557817). Open 10am-7.30pm Mon-Sat. Credit V.*

#### Fifth Avenue

The various stores of this mini-chain – found at Accra Mall, Mövenpick Ambassador and Osu Mall – are reminiscent of the

high-end watch boutiques in airports. You'll find Mont Blanc pens, Tag watches and Le Tanneur handbags. *Accra Mall, Tetteh Quarshie and Spintex Road (030 393 2131, facebook.com/fifthavenueghana). Open 10am-7pm Mon-Sat. Credit MC, V.*

#### Hakim Jewellery Jewelart

Tucked away behind 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 of them sporting African motifs. This little showroom is a far cry from a glossy, well-lit jewellery store, but there are some really beautiful pieces – everything is priced by weight.

*Oxford Street (0245001414). Open Mon-Fri 10am-5pm; 10am-4pm Sat.*

#### Tebazile

Elizabeth Dankoro specialises in beautiful statement jewellery pieces, with choice for all budgets – pay GH¢30 for a simple piece, and then upwards, and upwards. That Halle Berry and Cameron Diaz are fans probably tells you all you need to know. The Tebi brand is funky, chunky and colourful, although some of her other ranges are more refined. *6th Street, off Oxford Street, Osu (0302 919 458, www.tebazile.com).*

## Food and drink

#### Chocolate Avenue

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

#### D-Deli

This delicatessen stocks a variety of organic products including eggs, fruit, vegetables, spices, olive oil, honey, jam, herbs, ground coffee, wine and... Nutella! It also has a full range of imported cheeses from France, Italy and Switzerland, among other places. You'll also find cold meats, fresh pastas, preserves, yoghurts, tapas and some imported fresh meats. When you need to treat yourself come here. *4th Volta Street, Airport Residential (302 770 233). Open 9am-6pm Mon-Sat.*

## Traditional crafts

#### AACD African Market

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

#### Arts Centre Market (Centre for National Culture)

A one-stop-shop for arts and crafts, this is a popular location with tourists. 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 holding more interesting treasures such as metal ornaments, drums, wood furnishings, antiques and leather goods. You'll encounter 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 then sell them at a fair price, this NGO has a wide range of objects for sale. They include furniture, jewellery, bags, wooden kitchen items and Kente cloth, in both contemporary and traditional styles. Its items are also for sale in small outlets in Elmina Castle, the shop at Kakum National Park and the Centre for National Culture in Kumasi. *Artists Alliance Gallery, Omanyeh House, Accra-Tema Beach Road, Labadi (0302 771 375, www.artistsalliance.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). Everything sold here is fairly traded and made in Ghana, mostly by women. The range of goods is a tribute to the creativity of the female co-operatives around the country – there are tote bags made from old flour sacks, home decoration items, even body butter and soaps made from shea. However, it's the clothes for men, women and children of all ages that are really a pull – most garments use colourful batik designs, tie-dye or prints. If you need presents for home, come straight here.

14th Lane, off Cantonments Road (Oxford Street), behind Koala Supermarket, Osu (0244 530 467, [www.globalmamas.org](http://www.globalmamas.org)). Open 9am-8pm Mon-Sat; 1-8pm Sun.

#### Sun Trade

Set up in 1996 by 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](http://www.suntradebeads.com)). Open 9am-6pm Mon-Fri; 9am-5pm Sat.

#### NEW Trashy Bags

An Osu store is an extremely welcome addition to the remarkable success story that is Trashy Bags. The initiative 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 – more than 20 million plastic sachets have since been collected. The refuse is washed and treated before being stitched together to form bags and accessories. The project 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 – the range includes everything from shoulder bags and backpacks to rain macs and briefcases. They also use large old canvas banners to produce bags reminiscent of the recycled Freitag products. 6th Street, Osu (054 434 9857, [www.trashybags.com](http://www.trashybags.com)). Open 10am-7pm Mon-Sat.

#### Wild Gecko Handicrafts

This multi-faceted workshop-cum-art-shop emporium is foremost a workshop employing artisans for the production of characteristically Ghanaian goods: emblematic Adinkra collectibles, beautifully finished wooden furniture, ceramics, bespoke textiles and jewellery wrought of silver and bull horn. It's brimming with handmade art objects, collectibles, homewares, furniture, handbags, musical instruments and other design products, many from humanitarian projects in Ghana. Behind Gulf House, Okponglo (0302 508 500, [www.wild-gecko.com](http://www.wild-gecko.com)). Open 10am-5pm Tue-Sat.

## Design and home accessories

#### Absolute Furnishings

Absolute Furnishings offers high-quality furniture for homes,

## RECOMMENDED La Maison



A design savvy edit of home accessories, furnishings, art and decorative items can be found inside this vast 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. More than 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, and a successful combination, and the building itself, one of the most original in Accra, makes it a worthwhile destination. There's a branch of La Maison in Accra Mall, as well as a third La Maison opening inside Icon House in late 2014. Keep an eye out for exhibitions too, especially if Ghanaian artists are involved. La Maison, Annexe, 6th Street, Osu (030 278 1074, [www.lamaisonghana.com](http://www.lamaisonghana.com)). Open 9am-7pm Mon-Sat. Other locations: Accra Mall (0302 823043) and Icon House, Stanbic Heights, Independence, North Liberation Link, Airport City).

offices, hotels and schools in materials that include wood, wrought iron, rattan and cane. It also provides 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 Adabraka neighbourhood complex as the Orangery crêperie is this remarkable furniture shop. The workers at Art Deco make custom furniture to a high standard – for 15 years they've mixed functionality and solidity of Scandinavian design and fused them with African accessories. Farrar Avenue, and Nsawam Road (0302 232 988, [artdeco275@yahoo.com](mailto:artdeco275@yahoo.com)). Open 10am-6pm Mon-Sat.

#### Casa Trasacco

After its sojourn in Accra Mall, Casa Trasacco has moved to huge premises just a little further up the Spintex Road. The showroom leads you around, IKEA-style, through lounge, kitchen and bedroom. It holds a wide variety of Ghanaian-made hardwood furniture and accessories, as well as a range of imported Italian furniture and

kitchens from brands such as Stosa and Ariston. Other objects include all manner of design-led items, from trinkets and wall hangings to furniture and a rather marvellous fridge painted in the colours of the Ghanaian flag. There are plans for an art gallery-type space on the same complex. Behind Accra Mall (Shoprite), Tetteh Quarshie Interchange (021 823 322, [www.casatrasacco.com](http://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 on upmarket interior design for kitchens, bathrooms and offices. They use well-known European materials and fittings in their work. On Kwame Nkrumah motorway, after Abeka Lapaz and Kata Hotel (0302 410 151, [www.hallinteriordesign.com](http://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 Mövenpick Ambassador Hotel. Many of the elegant and creative pieces on show

are bespoke, and adapted by Kukua herself, incorporating the rich cultural influences of West Africa. A key range comprises her elegant metal flowing sculptures, partly polished, partly left to gather the natural colours of metal. Beautiful. A great place for a classy souvenir. Mövenpick 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).

#### NEW Design Gallery at Kaya

As well as being a restaurant, bar and wellbeing centre, Kaya also showcases some wonderful design. Whether it is furniture or jewellery, home furnishings or lighting, a distinctive design aesthetic based on natural forms underpins the collection. Here, bespoke furnishings rub shoulders with locally handcrafted artifacts, all highlighting organic textures and patterns. 1-10 Link Road, Cantonments. Near US embassy. (0540 109 501). Open 9am-5pm daily.

#### Jungle Flower

Jungle Flower is the most innovative floral arranger in Accra. As well as working on arrangements in properties, it also offers delivery. You can pick up flowers in its shop too. Roman Ridge Arcade, No9 Sir Arku Korsah Road (0302 784 252, [rebeccaakufoaddo@yahoo.com](mailto:rebeccaakufoaddo@yahoo.com)). Open 9.30am-6pm Mon-Sat.

#### La Maison

See picture review, above. Annexe, 6th Street, Osu (030 278 1074, [www.lamaisonghana.com](http://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, for both the home and the office. There are good quality soft furnishings, decorations, kitchenware and toys. 4 Graphic Road, Toku House (0302 220 782, [www.orcatendances.com](http://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 Mövenpick, African Regent and the Villagio complex. It also provides designs and products for residential properties, and 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](mailto:info@watercomfortghana.com), [www.watercomfortghana.com](http://www.watercomfortghana.com)). Open 8am-5.30pm Mon-Fri; 9am-3pm Sat.

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High Street: 0540 115247 / 0302 677540, Kasoa: 0540 101378. North Industrial Area: 0540101365, Osu Oxford Street: 0540 101361, 0540 101377, 0302 771907, Spintex Rana Plaza: 0540101364, Trade Fair: 0540 101370, Achimota: 0540 101368, 0289 553268, Adenta: 0540 101369, Tema Comm 2: 0540 101366, Adum Kumasi: 0540 101373, Asokwa Kumasi: 0540 101374, Tamale Taxi Rank: 0540 101376, Takoradi Liberation Road: 0540 101375.

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Trashy Bags

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 you'll find here is made in Ghana, including well-known local body products such as shea butter and black soap. The shop also stocks a range of other soaps, candles, bath salts (with scents ranging from lemongrass to jasmine) and oils for aromatherapy and massage, as well as oil burners. For GH¢10 customers can get a 15-minute head, neck, shoulders, back and arms massage. There's also a 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](http://www.allpurenature.com)). Open 8.30am-7.30pm Mon-Sat; Marina Mall branch open 1-8.30pm Sun.

### 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. Its pampering possibilities are manifold: from skin therapies and manicures to pedicures and massages, and more. Ring Road East, Effiasaba House, near Labone Junction (0302 971 1611, [www.allurespainthecity.com](http://www.allurespainthecity.com)). Open 9am-7pm Mon-Fri; 29pm-8pm Sat.

### NEW Kaya Spa & Detox

Kaya is a multi use space with a design studio (see p54), a restaurant (see p43) and a bar (see p36), but underlining all of it is a sense of wellbeing. It's certainly a tranquil spot, set in an old colonial house. Alongside yoga by Nana at Bliss (see p7), there's a personalised fresh juice detox programme. 1-10 Link Road, Cantonments. Near

US embassy. (0540 109 501). Open 9am-5pm daily.

### Lajen Beauty Shop

This upmarket unisex 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](http://www.facebook.com/lajensalon)). Open 8.30am-6pm.

### Marie Noelle's Salon and Spa

This full-service salon and spa in Osu is a 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. It also offers tattoos and piercings. House F81/1, Kuku Hill, Osu (0302 764 154, [www.marienoellespa.com](http://www.marienoellespa.com)).

### Pippa's Health Centre

Located in Ringway Estate, this centre has a beauty spa with manicures, pedicures and massages, among other treatments. Among its wide range of other services are dance and Taekwondo lessons, personal trainers and, of course, top-end fitness equipment. Ghana's Paralympic athletes also train at this well-equipped and friendly establishment. Also see p69. 5th Ringway Link, Ringway Estate (0302 224 488, [www.pippasfitness.com](http://www.pippasfitness.com)). Open 5.30am-9pm Mon-Fri; 7am-5pm Sat.

### SO Aesthetic

A beauty salon offering make-up consultation, eyebrow-shaping, eyelash application and facials. It stocks the natural SO Aesthetic products, which include foundation, powder, lip gloss, lipstick, blush and anything else beauty-centric. Owner

and stylist Sacha Bruce-Adjetej runs a tight ship. Viva Court, 809, 11th Lane, Osu, next to the old American embassy (0243 201 803, [www.soaestheticgh.com](http://www.soaestheticgh.com)). Open 10am-6pm Mon-Fri; 10am-2pm Sat.

## Opticians

### Eye Emporium Optician

Professional opticians with modern eye-testing equipment. 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

Offering a wide selection of frames, as well as state-of-the-art 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 Akufo 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 here, as well as a medical and dental centre. Services include travel health, psychological services and cosmetic dentistry. It's experienced and tidy, so should probably be one of the first points of call for any problems or international medicines. Accra Mall, Tetteh Quarshie (0302 823 064, [lifehealthcare.com.gh](http://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. A bespoke drum will set you back around GH¢200 – a reasonable sum if you can get it home. Take a turn on a Djembe drum, a Kpanlogo drum, maracas, xylophone or bells. The owner, Mensah, also runs popular drumming workshops for individuals and groups, as well as other music workshops. It's well worth dropping in to say hello. Oxford Street (0275 081 462, [www.kingymensah.com](http://www.kingymensah.com)). Open 8am-9pm daily.

## Electronic goods

### Apple iShop

Ghana's only Apple store also runs a repair service for poorly Apple products. There's also a wide range of accessories and computing products. The staff are very friendly and helpful here. Accra Mall, Tetteh Quarshie (0302 823282) Open 10am-7pm Mon-Sat; 1-7pm Sun.

### Bang & Olufsen

This Bang & Olufsen showroom has all the top-end equipment you would expect from the international audio-visual brand. F893/2 Ring Road East, Danquah Circle, Osu (0302 785 757, [www.bang-olufsen.com](http://www.bang-olufsen.com)). Open 8am-6pm Mon-Sat.

### Somovision

This large chain of stores sells all manner of electronic goods, with a particularly emphasis on the LG brand. It's somewhere to 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](http://www.mysonycentre.com)). Open 9am-7pm Mon-Fri 9am-3pm Sat.

## Visitors' services

### Amazing-U

Amazing-U is an image management and coaching company offering help for individuals, businesses and event organisers. 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](http://www.amazing-u.net), [jagyeman@amazing-u.net](mailto:jagyeman@amazing-u.net), Facebook page).



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# Melcom shops & their locations



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0800 23456

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Opera Square, Accra  
P.O. Box 3920, Accra Ghana  
Tel: 0302 - 669156  
E-mail: accra@melcomgroup.com



**Swedru Branch**  
0800 23456

**SWEDRU**  
Opp. Charles Bush, Near Mandela  
Market  
P.O. Box C0 133, Swedru  
Tel: 03320 - 21749  
E-mail: swedru@melcomgroup.com



**Afllao Branch**  
0800 23456

**AFILAO**  
Aflao Border  
Opp. GT Bank-Aflao  
Tel: 0362 - 530550  
E-mail: aflao@melcomgroup.com



**Kumasi Tanoso Branch**  
0800 23456

**KUMASI TANOSO**  
Opp. Yan Asantewaa SIES  
Sunyani Road - Tanoso  
E-mail: kumasi3@melcomgroup.com



**Cape Coast Branch**  
0800 23456

**CAPE COAST**  
Old Kingsway Bldg, Kotokroba Street  
P.O. Box 315, Cape Coast  
Tel: 03321 - 34118  
E-mail: capecoast@melcomgroup.com



**Ho Branch**  
0800 23456

**HO**  
Stadium Road  
Tel: 036 2027891  
E-mail: ho@melcomgroup.com



**Dansoman Branch**  
0800 23456

**DANSOMAN**  
Former G.N.T.C Building,  
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# Arts & Entertainment

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# Art & Film



Ablade Glover's artwork

## Investing in Ghana

Why now is the best time to buy Ghanaian art

African art is a good investment. *New World Map* by El Anatsui, a Ghanaian artist recently appointed as the first African Royal Academician, sold in 2012 for £541,250, a record for contemporary African art. The works by Nigerian painters are also fetching hundreds of thousands, while Ghana's Ablade Glover, who had a recent solo retrospective at the October Gallery in London, has long gained acclaim internationally. And of course, Ghana's now famous "coffin art" has understandably captured attention throughout the world; works can be seen in the British Museum in London.

Yet locally, the art scene is only just beginning to get off the ground. This has been disappointing to some, although others have seen it as an opportunity – quality is getting better all the time. If you're looking to purchase, aim for those works that aren't mere copycats.

Commercial galleries in Accra are great places to pick up quality art at a decent price. One new gallery,

which also offers a "consultation service", is **Tiga African Art** – it's a good place to buy paintings and, not so commonly, sculptures.

**Loom Gallery** owner Frances Ademola, doyenne of Accra's art scene for decades, has been spotting emerging artists in Ghana for more than 40 years. She cites Gabriel Eklou, Gordon Amponsah, Seth Clotey and his eldest son Serge Clotey as the artists to watch out for. Samuel Agbenyegah (also known as Samkobe) is also a young and highly-regarded artist. "He came to me when he was 12 with two wonderful paintings," explains Ademola. "I said 'who did these?' He said 'me'. I didn't believe him and told him to go and do another one. He came back with four more."

The biggest gallery in Ghana is the **Artists Alliance**, founded by Ablade Glover. Everything on its walls is for sale. The Aid to Artisans shop, also in the same building, is a great place to pick up crafts, as is **Joe's Perspective**, which sells beautiful bespoke art commissioned and designed by

Kukua Ampah. If you dare take on the touts, meanwhile, you'll also find a bargain at the **Arts Centre**. If you head towards the back of the centre, you'll find the most interesting stuff. Finally, you're assured of seeing something wonderful at the **Nubuke Foundation**. It works towards an admirable cause and is one of the principal advocates of Ghanaian art. Don't miss it.

## 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: you'll find 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), but it offers serious artworks too. Friendly (and numerous) staff will

advise on the provenance of each item. Come here for relaxed souvenir shopping – although don't expect to find that exclusive painting. *Abebresem Street, Osu (0302 778 105). Open 9am-6pm Mon-Sat.*

### 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 the two cultures in terms of language, education and artistic programming. There's 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

Aid to Artisans Ghana is a craft shop selling souvenirs, chairs, bags, textiles, wooden gifts and jewellery. It has a handful of outposts around the country, including in Kakum National Park and Elmina Castle, but the most accessible and largest store is located within the Artists Alliance Gallery. 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 displayed in cool marble galleries. Some are by established artists, such as Owusu Ankomah and George Hughes, whose paintings are reminiscent of Jean Michel Basquiat and Willem De Kooning, while others are by new and upcoming artists like Ebenezer Borlabie. Market, rural and urban scenes are interspersed with political satires – and naturally, there are also the shrouded figures and staccatoed crowd scenes of Glover himself. There are collectors' pieces too: Asafo flags with appliquéed and

embroidered symbols; ancient strip-woven Kente cloths by the Akan and Ewe; African masks of the type that inspired Picasso; and intricately carved furniture. Also on show are 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 location overlooking the fishing vessels fishing out on the Gulf of Guinea.

*Omanye House, Accra-Tema Beach Road, Labadi (0302 762 576, www.artistsalliance.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 carvings, baskets, drums, bags, beads, fabrics, sandals, sculptures, stools, rugs and occasionally antiques. It's a place to unearth some incredible finds and gifts. The best bet is to head past the hassle which you'll inevitably encounter at the entrance and make your way towards the back of the complex, where it's a bit more relaxed. Haggling 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, named after African-American civil rights activist William Edward Burghardt Du Bois) was set up by Joe Nkrumah, formerly of the National Museum, and Australian artist Virginia Ryan. It exhibits work by up-and-coming artists in interesting ways, such as its Art in the Garden projects. Its growing library, now with more than 800 books about visual arts, 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, fcaghana.org). Open 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri; 11am-4pm Sat.*

### Goethe-Institut

The cultural offering at the Goethe-Institut just keeps getting better and better (see [www.timeout.com/accra](http://www.timeout.com/accra) for events). The German cultural centre has now been established in Ghana for more than 50 years and offers an impressive array of musical events, art exhibitions, dance and film nights. Links between German art and that of Ghana are given precedence, whether through sound installations, mixed media pieces, performance art, photography or painting. There's also a pleasant bar in the grounds.

*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. Bar 5-9.30 Mon-Fri; 3-9pm Sat.*

### Joe's Perspective Art Boutique

This luxury art boutique set up by Kukua Ampah has recently opened a branch at the new Mövenpick Ambassador Hotel. Many of the elegant and creative pieces here are bespoke, adapted by Kukua herself, who incorporates the rich cultural influences of West Africa into



Arts Centre

modern works of art. A key range comprises her elegant metal flowing sculptures, partly polished, partly left to gather the natural colours of metal. Beautiful. A great place for a classy souvenir.

*Mövenpick Ambassador Hotel, Independence Avenue, Ridge (0204 311 125). Open 8.30am-7pm Mon-Sat; noon-7pm Sun. Other location Labadi Beach Hotel (0204 311 126). Open 10am-8pm Mon to Fri; 10am-7pm Sat; 2pm-6pm and Sun.*

**TOP TIP!**  
Online listings For the latest art, cultural and film event and listings, be sure to look at [www.timeout.com/accra](http://www.timeout.com/accra) for up-to-date information.

### Loom

Loom's Frances Ademola has a popular gallery that exhibits 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's delightful company, chatting exuberantly about artists such as Seth and Serge Clotey 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.*

### 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. Caskets shaped as birds, fish, aeroplanes, shoes, beer bottles, cars and anything else that stretches the imagination are displayed as pieces of art, and sometimes sold as miniatures. Many examples are featured in the book *Going into Darkness* by Thierry Secretan. The thinking behind the



Artists Alliance Gallery





Joe's Perspective Art Boutique at the Mövenpick

coffins is that they reflect the life or personality of the deceased. If you're a farmer, you might be buried in an onion or tomato. If you're a fisherman, it might be a tuna. Surprisingly, the caskets were only first built in 1957, but have now become well-known artworks, with appearances in European galleries. You'll find a couple of good examples in the British Museum in London, along with other Ghanaian artefacts. More good examples of coffin art can also be seen at the Artists Alliance gallery. *Teshie-Tema Road (0244 114 719, Facebook Page).*

**NEW Tiga African Art**  
Goldsmiths-trained Lily Sefa-Boakye runs this small new Labone gallery and consultancy. It represents some of the biggest names in Ghanaian art, such as Larry Otoo, who paints vibrant street scenes, Seth Clotey, who makes evocative paintings of Accra, and Betty Acquah, who creates pointillist oil and acrylic pictures. There's also a good range of sculpture, flags and Kente cloth. Lily should also be able to advise in exporting art. A wonderful addition to the art scene in Accra, and professionally run. *Labone (0302 797158, www.tigafricanart.com). Open 10am-7pm Mon-Fri; 10am-5pm Sat.*

**Wild Gecko Handicrafts**  
This multi-faceted workshop-cum-art-emporium is the joint brainchild of Poem, a Dutch woman who has lived in Ghana nearly all of her life, and Elizabeth Vardon. It's foremost a workshop, employing artisans for the production of 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, collectibles, homewares, tables, handbags, musical instruments, soaps, Ghanaian children's books, bangles and other design products. The items available tend to be slightly left of centre due to Poem's keen eye for ambitious design. And 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, and it really is a world unto itself. It's unmissable if you need a unique souvenir, and makes for a pleasant shopping experience to boot. *Behind Gulf House, Okponglo (0302 508 500, www.wild-gecko.com). Open 10am-5.30pm Tue-Sat.*



Wild Gecko Handicrafts

## Film

**Alliance Française d'Accra**  
With networks dotted throughout the world (it has presence in over 130 countries in addition to its network in France), the Alliance Française has an Accra-based outpost that it uses to screens films in French. It also has a library of films, 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 during seasonal festivals or to tie in with the visits of 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**  
Accra's German cultural centre has regular screenings of films by

German and international directors. They often run on Thursday nights in themed seasons. The Institut also hosts workshops and film festivals, and was 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 and festivals. *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 multiplex cinema experience in town is this large-scale offering at the Accra Mall. It has five theatres, the largest offering a seating capacity of 300 and the smallest able to take around 180. Films screened include Hollywood, Bollywood, Nollywood and local films of high quality and production. It's mainly for well-heeled Accra cinemagoers. It's amazing to think this is one of the only dedicated movie theatres in Ghana, but it's fulfilling its role well, with a great selection of films. A new Silverbird cinema has also opened in Weija (0507 242 685). See [www.timeout.com/accra](http://www.timeout.com/accra) for up-to-date cinema listings and times. *Accra Mall (0302 823 271, www.silverbirdghana.com). Open 10am-9pm daily.*

### TOP TIP!

#### Fair souvenirs

Many of the places listed here offer the artist a fair price for their work, or actively promote their handiwork through the shop.

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# Children



## Roaming with the rugrats

Relax, there's plenty to keep the little ones entertained

A Ghanaian family is often a big family. Having five or six siblings is no rarity and tending to the little ones becomes second nature, giving Accra a child-friendly atmosphere that can come as a pleasant surprise to visiting parents. The city isn't without its obstacles, of course: the traffic can be choking, pedestrians aren't given right of way and, well, that's a very big ditch full of effluence below you. But you'll find a love for good old-fashioned outdoor fun, and more and more kid-focused spots are popping up in Accra. **Baran Play Garden**, popularly known as 'Play Garden', probably offers the most adventurous outdoor playground in the city – it's somewhere kids can burn off loads of energy while parents relax under canopies with a cold drink or two.

As well as the dedicated outdoor venues, **La Palm Royal Beach Hotel** (see p76) has an excellent play area, while **Labadi Beach Hotel**, where there's always lots going on (see p76), remains a

firm family favourite. The larger hotels generally always provide a safe bet for fun days out by the pool – especially for short-stay visitors; see p68.

If the heat gets too unbearable – or indeed if parents fancy a bit of retail therapy – all the city's shopping malls have some kind of play area. Good options include the modern **Marina Mall** (see p50), which has the newest children's shops and attractions.

### Activities

#### Baran Play Garden

The high-energy outdoor facilities at this popular play centre include two bouncy castles, a trampoline, bumper cars and a bungee trampoline. There's also an on-premises restaurant serving pizzas, burgers and fries. *Plot No 82, Osu Badu 2nd Street, Dzorwulu (0202 631 631). Open 9am-8pm daily.*

#### Churchesees

Sitting by the Morning Star School

off the Danquah Circle, this restaurant-cum-play place provides a handy stop-off for families. The main attractions for children are a bouncy castle and games room. There's also a restaurant. *27 Orphan Crescent, North Labone (0302 763525). Open call for details.*

#### Kids Planet

A lively, state-of-the-art venue with a fancy entrance, arcade games and, for more technophobic children, a more traditional entertainment area. Creative kids will love the face-painting, arts and craft classes and dancing lessons (Zumba and HipHop), and other features include a puppet show, karaoke, a bouncy castle and basketball hoops. *Marina Mall, Airport Bypass Road, Airport City, near Holiday Inn (054 550 0000, www.marinamallghana.com). Open 10am-8pm Mon-Fri; 10am-7pm Sat; noon-7pm Sun.*

#### Kidz Cottage

For children under 12 who love to be pampered rotten, this is a good bet – there's a beauty parlour that goes down well with little girls, while a

large safety-conscious play area makes a great place for all kids to expend energy. There are also activities such as bead-making. *No 133 Noi Fetrika Street, Airport Residential (0302 765 616, www.kidzcottagegh.com). Open 9am-5.30pm Tue-Fri; 8.30am-5.30pm Sat; 11am-8pm Sun.*

#### Marvel's Minigolf

This is an impressive minigolf course that holds appeal for fun-loving adults as much as children (there's a bar, after all). The 18-hole course has the usual challenges and tricks. You'll also find a clubhouse, serving snacks. *Forest Avenue, Abelenkpe traffic lights, Dzorwulu (0302 915 400, www.marvelsghana.com). Open 6.30am-10pm Mon-Thur; 10am-10pm Fri-Sun. Admission GH¢10.*

## Shopping

#### Chicco

This international outlet is ideal not only for clothes and toys shopping (0-5 years) but as a retailer of hair, body and baby bath-time products, as well as furniture and car. *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, resplendent in a vivid lime green and white colour scheme, stocks smart clothes such as blazers alongside casualwear 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

Selling toys with an educational twist, which ranges from sewing and embroidery kits to puzzles. *Behind the Netherlands Embassy, No 9 Nima Avenue, TV3 Road, Osu (0302 270 040). Open 8am-5.30pm Mon-Fri.*

#### Toy Mania

Stocking international brands such as Clementoni, Faro, Barbie, Hello Kitty, Playgo and MacMillan, Toy Mania has arts, crafts, electronic toys and scooters for boys and girls. *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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## Art Deco

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

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# Music



Highlife at +233

## Musical youth

A new generation of musicians are looking to their Ghanaian roots again

Six years since the first issue of *Time Out Accra*, and what a change there's been in the music scene. Back then it sometimes seemed you'd be more likely to hear Ghana's highlife and cutting-edge sounds in the clubs of London and New York than on the streets of Accra. No longer. Across its bars and clubs, Accra has found its voice. Up and coming

stars, such as those in our feature (see p20), are not only spreading their wings abroad but returning to their home city for gigs as well; something that previously wasn't so common. There's a bounce in the stride of Ghanaian musicians again. And that's very good news.

**+233** remains the best place in the city to see highlife. It's a thoughtfully designed club with

music most nights, and always of a high standard. Indoor and outdoor seating mean it's also a good place to hang out with friends. Elsewhere, **Chez Afrique** is another popular option with highlife fans.

Surprisingly, perhaps, even **La Palm Royal Beach Hotel** (see p76) often has highlife in its outdoor African Village restaurant during lunch

and dinner service, although in terms of key venues, the **Alliance Française** is of more note for its impressive regular roster of musicians and highlife. On a similar note, the **Goethe-Institut** is continuing to expand its own live music programme – it seems every time we roll up there's some band playing. **Cuzzy Bros** (see p34) is also becoming an important venue with a jazz vibe.

Something entirely different? Churches are major centres for

music in their own right, so gospel performers 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. In terms of one-off performances, touring bands tend towards the Alliance Française or, for bigger bands, the **Accra Conference Centre**. The woefully underused **National Theatre** will occasionally have shows.

Highlife, it seems at times, is a continuation of the horn-blasts, stallholder shouts 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 are in the big band sound, but it's also melded with Caribbean Tropicana and deeply inspired by traditional Ghanaian music. Its modern 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 modern 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 Reggie Rockstone, the so-called 'Godfather of Hiplife,' who began to rap in Twi, a local language.

Today, on the streets of Accra, from the bars and taxi stereos, it's hiplife that's 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, meanwhile, all of Ghanaian descent, blend the musical legacy of their parents' home with 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.

To hear the latest Ghanaian music, listen to the Spotify playlist at [www.timeout.com/accra](http://www.timeout.com/accra).

### TOP TIP!

#### Latest events

For all the latest music concerts, gigs and cultural events visit [www.timeout.com/accra](http://www.timeout.com/accra) for full details of the line-ups and timings.



Traditional music at the Goethe-Institut

## Venues

### +233 Jazz Bar & Grill

+233 (named after the Ghanaian dialling code) is the best place to see live music in Accra. It's an intelligently designed club with live bands most days of the week – nearly all of a very high calibre, and many reaching 'legendary status', such as highlife stars Gyedu-Blay Ambolley & the Sekondi Band (pictured left), who have a regular Sunday night show from. Inside, there are two floors. The band play on a small stage downstairs, but can also be seen from the U-shaped upstairs. The clever bit is that there's ample seating outside too, looking 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 and a Star and you've got 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 deservedly so. *North Ridge (023 323 3233, facebook.com/pages/233-jazz-bar-and-grill). Open 5pm-2.33am Mon-Thur; 5pm-4am Fri; 2.33pm-4am Sat, Sun.*

### Alliance Française

See picture review right.

### Big Milly's Backyard

Set on a lovely beach, Big Milly's has live music – often reggae – on Friday and Saturday nights. The venue itself is an intimate hidey-hole to get away from it all. Wanlov the Kubolor can be seen here sporadically, although you're more likely to find a band performing Bob Marley covers. On Fridays there's 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. *Kokrobite Beach, west of Accra (0287 288 889, www.bigmilly.com).*



Jazz at Cuzzy Bros

## RECOMMENDED

### Alliance Française



The Alliance Française masterfully promotes Francophone culture, and on Wednesdays plays host to musicians from Ghana and across the globe, including Spain and, naturally, France. With a sizable garden and two outdoor stages, it's definitely one of the leading live venues in Accra. **Seun Kutí**, son of Afrobeat luminary Fela Kutí, has played here, as have a selection of leading 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 throughout the year, meanwhile, there's often highlife music. Its larger stage is used for bigger events, such as album launches by local stars, or visits by French artists such as Under Kontrol (pictured). The premises also has a good open bar and Nicolino's pizza (see p48). *Liberation Link, Airport Residential Area behind Opeibia House (0302 773 134, www.afaccra.com).*

### Bywell Bar

On Thursday nights here, 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 tends to be a good mix of Ghanaian locals and internationals, while the long bar is perfect for imbibing local beers and chatting. There's a low-key energy but the band, considered by many to be the new wave of highlife music, are a must-see. The venue also has live music on Saturdays, and occasionally theatre on Fridays. It can get a little rowdy later on the weekend evenings.

*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 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

Although the German cultural centre isn't as well set up for live music as its French counterpart, the institute does hold music events, usually in the courtyard behind the building. You might catch 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. There's a bar on the premises. *30 Kakramadu Road, PMB 52, Cantonments (0302 776 764, www.goethe.de/accra). Open 1pm-5pm Mon-Thur; 10am-2pm Fri. Bar 5-9.30 Mon-Fri; 3-9pm Sat.*

## International Conference Centre

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

### Labadi Beach

Reggae DJs play the beach on Wednesday nights, near an open bar stocked with local and imported beers. There are occasional live bands too, as well as acrobats and other entertainers. Groups come from around Accra as well as neighbouring countries, so the standard's 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. It makes for a worthwhile trip from town. You might also catch music on Sundays, when 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 representing either a ship or, more abstractly, a seagull spreading its wings. Chinese developers built the theatre and its 1992 opening saw it become the centrepiece for cultural life in Ghana. Today it's home to the National Symphony Orchestra, the National Theatre Players, the National Dance Company and three youth groups. Its events calendar is getting better all the time, and major touring acts are slowly but surely being included in the programme. There's a main auditorium, a dance hall, an exhibition hall, a Chinese garden and FolkSpace, an open-air theatre. The box office inside the building has a list of events. Its website is also getting updated more regularly, but your best bet for listings 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](mailto:publicrelations@nationaltheatre.com.gh).

*Liberia Road and Independence Avenue, Adabraka (0302 663 445, facebook.com/NationalTheatreofGhana).*

### Next Door

There's live music here on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays from 8.30pm, and you can catch some traditional song and dance performances as well. The evenings sometimes see old-school highlife musicians and singers coming together for reunions. *Beach Road, Teshie, opposite the Military Academy (0302 713 961, www.next-door.com). Open 10am until late daily.*

# Sport



Football shirts on sale at a roadside vendor

## Sporting chances

Football, boxing and polo reign in Ghana. There's plenty to keep you fit too

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, even Scunthorpe United shirts. Usually, the badge on the shirt doesn't matter - the wearers are supporters of any football. And then some.

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 at AC Milan, is the best known Ghanaian football player. Known

as 'The Bison', 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 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 24. 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 - one of the poorest neighbourhoods 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 big bout involving 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 fight, 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 the city's schools and colleges.

## Spectator sports

### FOOTBALL

For visitors who want to watch a live match 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 stadium itself or through a friendly concierge at your hotel. Violence is thankfully rare at games in recent times.

### 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.accrheartsofsoak.com](http://www.accrheartsofsoak.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 the country'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, well-maintained grass, scoreboard). Kumasi ([www.asantekotokofc.org](http://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 right here. There is no other area of the world with this quantity of boxing schools, and no other single place that has produced so many world champion boxers in the last 75 years. You can try the Greater Accra Boxing Association (0302 760 892) for details on bouts - they are usually fairly well publicised on billboards.

### 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 moneyed 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 simply to turn up - occasionally there's a charge, especially for the big matches. Several national teams visit Accra every season.

## Participation sports

### FOOTBALL

#### Lizzy Sports Complex

The eponymous Lizzy is Marcel Desailly's mother. In 2011, the famous former pro 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), which also entitles you to use the floodlit football pitches in the evenings. There are football training programmes for youngsters between five and 16, as well as a hugely successful Corporate Football League. If Marcel is in town, he'll often be around. Near the A&C Shopping Mall, East Legon (0302 521 851, [www.lizzysportscomplex.com](http://www.lizzysportscomplex.com)).

### GOLF

One-on-one lessons can be booked for those looking to improve their swing during their trip. There are



Pippa's Health Centre

several reasonable courses, although they are not always up to international standards.

#### Achimota Golf Club

It's been 80 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](http://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 401176, 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 feel the need to do a bit of exercise in Accra (and if standing outside and sweating won't do the trick) then there are a couple of excellent gyms listed below. Upmarket hotels usually also 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

Pippa's is one of the best gyms in Accra, with a wide range of Life Fitness equipment, air-con, satellite TV and a modern music system. It has a wide 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 by one of Africa's best Taekwondo fighters -

the walk-in rate is GH¢70 a class. The on-site Mandy Fouracre Dance Academy has a programme for children between three and seven, and jazz and ballet for ages seven to 18. There's a variety of beauty treatments available, with a full range of pampering options. 5th Ringway Link, Ringway Estate (0302 224 488, [www.pippasfitness.com](http://www.pippasfitness.com)). Open 5.30am-9pm Mon-Fri; 7am-5pm Sat.

#### Mövenpick Ambassador Hotel

The Mövenpick Ambassador Hotel has the best sports facilities in the city right now. Its hugely 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. The pool itself is large, with a good shallow end for children, and wide enough to do a few token lengths. It's

in the middle of the city, but you'd barely realise the fact. Further round the manicured lawns you'll find 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



Hearts of Oak score at the Ohene Djan Stadium

comprehensive range of membership packages depending on the level of access you want. Platinum includes access to the gym, pool, tennis courts, sauna, and one massage a month. One-off sessions are possible too. It's a great place to spend the day relaxing.

Independence Avenue, Ridge (302 611 000, [www.moevenpick-hotels.com](http://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. It offers 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 (024 427 5463, [facebook.com/Totalfitnessgh](http://facebook.com/Totalfitnessgh)). 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¢10-30, 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](http://www.african-regent-hotel.com)).

#### Golden Tulip

Liberation Road, Airport (0302 213 161, [www.goldentulipaccra.com](http://www.goldentulipaccra.com)).

#### La Palm Royal Beach

By Labadi Beach (0302 771 700, [www.gbghana.net](http://www.gbghana.net)). GH¢30 adults; GH¢15 children.

#### Labadi Beach

Labadi Beach (0302 772 501, [www.labadibeach.com](http://www.labadibeach.com)). GH¢30 adults; GH¢15 children; under fours free.

#### Lizzy Sports Complex

Cotton Street, near A&C Mall, East Legon (0302 521 851, [www.lizzysportcomplex.com](http://www.lizzysportcomplex.com)).

Mövenpick Ambassador Hotel Independence Avenue, Ridge (302 611 000, [www.moevenpick-hotels.com](http://www.moevenpick-hotels.com)).

#### Novotel Accra

Barnes Road (0302 667 546, [www.novotel.com](http://www.novotel.com)).

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# Hotels

Accra's best beds: budget, boutique and blowout

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# Hotels



Mövenpick Ambassador Hotel

## Going up?

Hotels in Ghana continue to improve, becoming destinations in themselves

What makes a great hotel? A comfy bed? A pillow menu? A gastronomic restaurant? A high-tech gym? Well, all of the above (ok, maybe not the pillow menu) – but the list could go on. A concierge who knows your name the second time you come in? And that you take the Tribune in the morning? Getting factors like this right is something that actually few hotels possess. In Accra, until recently, the level of service has been playing catch-up – even checking in and out could take an age. But we're definitely seeing a turn around. At places like the **Mövenpick Ambassador**, **La Villa Boutique**, **Holiday Inn**, Takoradi's **Atlantic Hotel** (see p82) and some others, service standards are nearly at European levels. And it's this investment in the people, not just the pillow menu, which makes for a good stay. Great hotels are also inclusive destinations in themselves – they might have a good lobby bar (with free WiFi please), a pleasant pool or a set of tennis courts, often all open to non-residents.

All eyes at the moment are on the **Kempinski Hotel Gold Coast City**, which despite some big delays is set to open in 2014. The building itself is inspired by a traditional compound house – the type commonly built by tribal chiefs across West Africa – with residences built around a central courtyard with shaded seating areas and a performance pavilion. It certainly looks gorgeous on paper, and has the chance to establish itself as a complete luxury destination.

Among existing properties, **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. **Roots Hotel Apartment** in Osu, is also excellent. It's a mid-range hotel, a rarity in Accra, with a small well-equipped kitchen in each room, and plenty of space in most of the rooms. It's a great and increasingly popular option. Some of the best hotels in

Ghana, however, are out of the city. Along with the **Atlantic Hotel** in Takoradi, **Planters' Lodge** (see p82) is also very good. And to the east are the superb destination resorts **Royal Senchi** (see p84) and **Aqua Safari** (see p84) – both worth the trip out of town.

### 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 many businesses and, of course, the airport. Both the Novotel and the new Mövenpick are in central Accra – again, good for business contacts. Elsewhere, La Palm Royal Beach and Labadi Beach have seafront locations perhaps 10 minutes from central Accra, or up to 40 minutes from the airport when the traffic is particularly bad.

### Prices and classification

Another important piece of news is that, in a bid to halt the declining Cedi against the US Dollar, the government has forced hotels to charge in Cedi only. In this issue, therefore, all the prices are in Ghanaian Cedis. The exchange rate is fluctuating considerably at the moment, however, so expect these rates to change as well. Just use as a guide instead.

The time of the rack rate is over, with many international chain hotels now basing pricing on the model used by the aeroplane industry. However, our listings loosely follow these categories albeit in Cedi: Expensive (over US\$200); Mid-range (US\$100-\$200); Budget (under US\$100), each for a double room per night. The lowest price we've given in the range is for a basic double, while higher prices refer to larger rooms and suites rather than expensive top-end rooms such as presidential suites. Bear in mind that if you shop around, 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've indicated which ones here accept credit cards, but like everywhere in Ghana, make sure they're accepted when you arrive.

## Airport Residential

### EXPENSIVE

#### African Regent Hotel

It's telling that the lobby at the African Regent has become a frequented spot for informal meetings. Its popularity 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 Mukyia Restaurant offering a range

### TOP TIP!

**Cedi vs Dollar**  
By law, hotels in Ghana now have to charge in Cedis. Check the exchange rate carefully before paying. Expect fluctuations.

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 more accomplished than most in Accra. **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](http://www.african-regent-hotel.com)). Rates GH¢828 double. Rooms 109. Credit AmEx, MC, V.

#### African Sun Amber Hotel

This is a very new addition to the Accra hotel scene. At the time of going to press, we hadn't fully investigated any of its 200 rooms. It's very close to the airport (next to the Holiday Inn). There's a gym, a business centre, a restaurant and a small bar. **Plot 24, Airport City Area (0302 742 747, [www.africansunhotels.com](http://www.africansunhotels.com)).**

#### Golden Tulip

The Golden Tulip is one of the most popular hotels in Ghana, thanks to its sizable rooms, its conference facilities and its location near the airport. The pitched-roof lobby is among the most spacious in the city (there's a life-size wooden giraffe greeting arrivals), the pool area is



### Critic's choice

- 1 Mövenpick.** Good service, great pool, a nice gym and spa. See p75.
- 2 Holiday Inn.** Handy location, top buffet, spacious rooms. See p73.
- 3 Roots Hotel.** Great mid-range hotel in the heart of Osu. See p75.
- 4 La Villa Boutique.** Lovely little space with rustic rooms & pool. See p75.
- 5 Royal Senchi.** Impressive place a couple of hours east of the city. See p84.



Kempinski Hotel Gold Coast City

seriously inviting and the staff are more alert than most. The hotel also has five meeting rooms and a business centre, with wireless throughout, and its accommodation options range from suites and apartments to chalets and regular rooms. It's worth checking online for cheaper rates and longer term discounts. There's a large casino (open Sun-Thur 1pm-4am; Fri, Sat 1pm-5am) immediately next door, and it's a pretty grand affair – one of the two biggest in Accra, along with the one at La Palm Royal Beach Hotel – with roulette, stud poker and blackjack set over three adjoining levels. **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](http://www.goldentulipaccrahotel.com)). Rates GH¢736 double. Rooms 238. Credit AmEx, MC, V.**

#### Holiday Inn Accra Airport

This hotel is a cut above the standard 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 – an 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 similarly priced

Deluxe. There's a wide food offering from the pool-side bar (hugely popular on Friday evenings for the sunset), a bar in the lobby and the Wase Restaurant, which does a superb buffet, especially on Sunday afternoons when locals flock to enjoy a vast Ghanaian spread. If you want to try all the Ghanaian food in one go, come here and stock up. The same hotel group has just opened the Atlantic Hotel in Takoradi (see p82). **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](http://www.holidayinn.com)). Rates GH¢980 double; GH¢1064 suite. Rooms 168. Credit AmEx, MC, V.

## North Dzorwulu

### EXPENSIVE

#### Fiesta Royale

The Fiesta Royale has smart rooms, efficient service and a good bar and restaurant, making it an ideal bet for business travellers and families. Its location, no more than 15 minutes from the airport, is superb. The rooms are large – choose between standard, executive suite or chalet – and all are kitted out with DSTV, free wireless, ample wardrobe space and a safe. A large breakfast buffet is also included. The hotel pool is on the small side, but a backdrop of Italian-style gardens makes it a picturesque and



Holiday Inn Accra Airport

clean area for unwinding. All in all, it would pass as a reliable and well-run hotel anywhere in the world: the service is a cut above many of its competitors. Its Mansonia restaurant has a private dining area for groups and parties, and the bar and restaurant are also becoming very popular with non-residents, thanks to a menu of well-cooked Ghanaian, African and international specialties. Elsewhere, the Ceiba terrace offers a range of snacks and food.

*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 GH¢692 double. Rooms 100. Credit AmEx, MC, V.*

#### MID-RANGE

##### Nogahil Hotel

The three star Nogahil Hotel offers clean and modern lodgings around 15 minutes drive from the airport. It's an intimate arrangement – just 10 double rooms and two suites – but sits in easy reach of city attractions. The 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. An 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 GH¢361. Credit MC, V.*

## East Legon

#### EXPENSIVE

##### Royal Richester

Far from being a conventional hotel, Royal Richester is a series of 'Boston-style' townhouses for long term stays or short holidays. Each of these townhouses has three bedrooms, two bathrooms, a living area, a kitchen, a dining room, a lounge and a laundry room. They also have backyards. The standard and superior versions only have single beds, so couples will need the deluxe, executive or premium suites. There are also two apartments, as well as a luxury penthouse. Services include a recently refurbished spa, a gym, a small shop and a 'rent-a-chef' service for private dining, alongside a bar, lounge and restaurant.

*Bar. Business centre. Gym. Internet. Parking. Pool (outdoor). Restaurant. Room service. Spa. TV.*

*5 Richester Lane, East Legon, opp*

## RECOMMENDED La Villa Boutique Hotel



**This gorgeous boutique hotel is a quiet and stylish escape close to the centre of Osu. It continues to expand – they've recently added another eight rooms to the complex, including two apartments. Bedrooms have large beds and muted tones of chocolate and cream. The hotel itself is an immediately relaxing place. A modest plant-fringed pool is overlooked by a high terrace perfect for parties and event – in fact, it's a great place to spend a lazy Sunday (shhhh) – and the whole place basks in a classy European feel. 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. Just as importantly, 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. The overall appeal is topped off by an onsite Italian restaurant, Soprano, open 6am-11.30pm, and a new high-end eatery called Gusto (see p39). It's cosy, welcoming and has a menu brimming with classic pool-side Mediterranean favourites.**

*Bar. Internet. Pool (outdoor). Restaurant. Room service. TV. 13th Lane, Osu (0302 730 3336; info@lavillaghana.com; www.lavillaghana.com). Rates GH¢957 standard; GH¢1,120 suite. Rooms 30. Credit AmEx, MC, V.*

*East Legon police station (0302 520 784, www.royalrichester.com). Rates call for details and prices. Credit AmEx, MC, V.*

## Cantonments

#### EXPENSIVE

##### Midindi Hotel

Sitting close to the US Embassy in East Cantonments, this relatively 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 even 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 also a small outdoor swimming pool, a restaurant and a basement conference room. The bar is an excellent space, with a large outdoor terrace, a few TVs showing sport and a comfortable seating area. Overall, it's 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.midindahotel.com). Rates GH¢692 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's also a small bar. The most pleasant place to eat and drink in the hotel is along the arched Delia terrace. There is

also a gift shop for souvenirs. For business visitors, the Kpehe conference room has reasonable facilities, but you'll need to contact the general manager first.

*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 GH¢557 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 GH¢692. 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 GH¢495 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 (although it could do with a bit of TLC in some rooms). The accommodation is generally spacious (they differ, 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, although 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 special - head instead to nearby Asanka (see p44).

*Bar. Business centre. Internet (wireless, free shared terminal). Parking. Pool. Restaurant. TV. 70 Mango Tree Avenue (0302 233 315, www.highgatehotel.com). Rates from GH¢481 double. Rooms 33. Credit V (5 per cent charge).*

##### Paloma Hotel

The Paloma Hotel has benefited from a recent update, although it's still a simple, mid-priced two-star option with 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, both of which offer the standard range of international cuisine, and a tour agency eager to show visitors around the area. Also on site, Champs Sports Bar (see p38) is back is with a good menu, while a conference centre seating 150 is available too. There is an internet café nearby and guests can also tap into the wireless in the hotel. 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 GH¢390 double. Rooms 65. Credit MC, V.*

## Central

#### EXPENSIVE

##### 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

## RECOMMENDED Roots Hotel Apartment



**This tower of self-catering apartments is a fantastic and convenient base in central Accra, just a block from Oxford Street. The standard apartments are good, although it's definitely worth 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 suites, unsurprisingly, have more space and light than the rooms. Some of the suites are in fact duplexes, with two double rooms and a separate seating area – 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 ready-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 pricey, source of drinks and snacks. Those looking to stay for a while can negotiate a monthly rate. All told, it's a great addition to Accra's accommodation portfolio and puts some of the more expensive hotels to shame – its prices make it one of the only mid-priced options in Accra full stop. Highly recommended.**

*Bar. Gym. Internet. Restaurants. Room service. TV. 15th Lane (0302 701 3276; info@roots-hotel.com; www.roots-hotel.com). Call for rates. Rooms 37. Credit MC, V.*

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. An onsite luxury shopping centre is filled with high-end goods, from catwalk fashions at Fifth Avenue (see p53) to Afrocentric art at Joe's Perspective (see p54). Elsewhere, Sankofa restaurant pleases with an array of international flavours, and the one2one cocktail lounge expertly whips up any requested tippie. There's a great little deli by the shopping galleries, and the restaurant is becoming popular too. It's also worth saying that the breakfast is one of the best in the city right now. For more details on the (excellent) spa, tennis courts, sauna, and fitness centre. Don't miss the massage here, whether you're staying or not!

*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 GH¢1,069 double. Rooms 260. Credit AmEx, MC, V.*

##### Kempinski Hotel Gold Coast City

Soon to be competing for top billing with Ghana's very finest hotels is the Kempinski Hotel Gold Coast City. The Kempinski group has a global reputation for doing things in style, this will doubtless be no exception. Scheduled to open in 2014, the property will mark the brand's West African debut and has the potential to be the city's most dazzling hotel yet, with a complex spread over 35 hectares and comprising 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 in size, including a pair of seriously snazzy presidential suites. Guests can also enjoy an extensive spa with 10 treatment rooms, a hammam, yoga studios and a fully kitted-out beauty salon. Other hotel features include an organic food bar, a cocktail bar, tennis courts and a flashy outdoor pool. There's a

host of on-site dining options, and a downtown location makes it a convenient base for accessing the city's restaurants, night spots and business centres. One of the hotel's key markets will be business people, and they can expect an excellent range of services: there will be a fully equipped business centre, indoor parking and a car and limousine service. In addition, there are seven meeting rooms with the latest audio-visual equipment, a number of 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 newer places – the outside could do with a lick of paint – 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) and sunshades and loungers line the small outdoor pool, while tennis courts and a fitness centre keep exercise fiends happily active. The hotel has several mealtime options, including an international menu and buffet, and its 190 air-conditioned rooms range from standard and superior rooms to larger suites with two bedrooms. The lobby's Sangav Bar has some interesting historical flags from Ghana's colonial past. However, once you've added in the GH¢56 second person supplement, the hotel's prices aren't very competitive.

*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 GH¢1,008 double, GH¢1,031 suite. Rooms 190. Credit AmEx, MC, V.*

## Osu

#### EXPENSIVE

##### La Villa Boutique Hotel

See picture review p74.  
*Bar. Internet. Pool (outdoor). Restaurant. Room service. TV. 13th Lane, Osu (0302 730 3336; info@lavillaghana.com; www.lavillaghana.com). Rates GH¢957 standard; GH¢1,120 suite. Rooms 30. Credit AmEx, MC, V.*

#### MID-RANGE

##### La Paradise Inn

You'll find a selection of apartments and a swimming pool at this friendly establishment, within easy reach of the hubbub of Osu. Self-catering options include one- and two-bedroom apartments, all with living areas and kitchens, and there are





La Palm Royal Beach

also cheaper studio apartments without cooking facilities. A bar and a restaurant are on hand, and there are relevant facilities for business travellers.

*Bar. Internet. Pool.*

*4th Ostwe Street (302 762085, [www.laparadiseinn.com](http://www.laparadiseinn.com)). Rates GH¢352 double. Rooms 9. No credit cards.*

#### Roots Hotel Apartment

See picture review, p75.

*Bar. Gym. Internet. Restaurants. Room service. TV.*

*15th Lane (0302 701 3276; [info@roots-hotel.com](mailto:info@roots-hotel.com); [www.ROOTS-hotel.com](http://www.ROOTS-hotel.com)). Call for details. Rooms 37. Credit MC, V.*

## Beach

### EXPENSIVE

#### Labadi Beach

Labadi Beach is a well-maintained high-end resort that has retained its colonial cool – the lobby alone is all ceiling fans, dark leather sofas and gold-coloured standing lamps. And while the hotel's tropical gardens, turquoise pool and spotless accommodation do come at a cost, this has long been a top pick for quality accommodation in Accra (although competition is becoming fierce, especially given the eye-watering rack rates of these rooms – keep an eye on promotions). The property's pristine rooms and luxury suites, all renovated, all come with a private balcony, while the outdoor area features a sizable swimming pool alongside 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.

*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](http://www.labadibeach.com)). Rates GH¢1,201 double. Rooms 164. Credit AmEx, MC, V.*

#### La Palm Royal Beach

This hotel was once one of the best in Accra, but has been eclipsed by the new front-runners. With this in mind, it is going through a needed refurbishment process – when we last visited the main reception area had moved to a temporary base. The rooms have always been pretty good, however: all 159, when 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 flatscreen TVs, safes, wi-fi, air con and comfy beds. It also still has one of the best pool complexes in Ghana, an ideal place to spend a lazy Sunday. The La Palm Kids Theme Park is a pleasant and safe enclosed park right by the main pool (see p64), and there's also a shallow pool well suited to kids. All pool facilities are open to non-residents for GH¢30 for adults and GH¢15 for children, and it's well worth taking up this opportunity. Other hotel features include a casino, fitness centre and spa and sauna. There are several restaurants,

including the Royal Dragon Chinese and the Continental – we'd avoid those and head to the open-sided and thatched Ghanaian Village (0302 215100). It overlooks the beach, and makes 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. Meals can also be taken in the hotel bar.

*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.gbghana.net](http://www.gbghana.net)). Rates GH¢1,053 standard double. Rooms 159. 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 the ideal location for those wanting to easily access city life, but if you're

after a good dose of relaxing by the pool, taking in sea views or even hopping on a hire 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](http://www.africanroyalbeachhotel.com)).*

*Rates GH¢361 double. Rooms 70.*

*Credit AmEx, MC, V.*

#### Ramada Resort

Beach views, tropical gardens and vibrant weekend entertainment from an array of performers combine to give guests at the Ramada Resort a pretty enticing package. The hotel's 75 accommodations 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 dedicated children's pool, a play area and a 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.*

*Accra-Tema road (0302 717 235,*

*[www.ramadaresortaccra.com](http://www.ramadaresortaccra.com)).*

*Rates GH¢527 double. 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, opened in 2010, 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. Behind Ghana Telecom and Anglican Church, off High Street; Ushertown (0244 315 416, [www.magicbeachresort.com](http://www.magicbeachresort.com)). Rates GH¢64-79 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 reception. This beachside complex is made up of the Afia Beach Hotel's 29 rooms (nine rooms face the ocean), Tribes Bar and Restaurant, which offers Ghanaian and international cuisine, and the Afia Gallery – actually a shop – which sells fabrics, jewellery and an assortment of wooden masks and carvings. The complex is a little way out of the city centre, although it's close to Black Star Square, Jamestown and, of course, the beach.

*Bar. Internet (shared terminal).*

*Parking. Restaurant.*

*2 Liberia Road, Extension Osu (024*

*775 8685, [www.afiavillage.com](http://www.afiavillage.com)).*

*Rates GH¢400-569 double. Rooms*

*30. Credit AmEx, MC, V.*

## TOP TIP!

### Open doors

Most of the hotels allow visitors to the pool for a small(ish) charge of around GH¢30 a day. It often includes the use of other facilities.



# Trips Out of Town

The best of Ghana

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# Trips Out of Town

Mr Bright's Surf School



## Exploring Ghana

Leave the city and see the best that Ghana has to offer

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, 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. The north, with its mud-sculpted buildings and heavy Islamic influence, is completely different to coastal Ghana, while the national parks that colour the countryside are high in potential for adventure.

There's a cluster of sights and attractions west of Accra, 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 off-shore 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, though slightly more pricey, are the buses that ply the routes between major centres. And 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

Aburi is only an hour or two's drive from downtown Accra, but once you head past the Tetteh Quarshie Circle and Accra Mall, the city feels far away as you climb up into the cooler and wetter hills. The biggest attraction here is the Aburi Botanical Gardens, although 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 horticultural school and consists of ten lawns with more than 375 varying plant types, as well as more than 100 acres of natural forest with nature trails. It's 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, Akwapim (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 Antimachus', 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 Tetteh Quarshie himself in 1879. Three original trees remain. 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. Contact the caretaker at the Mampong Chief's Palace for entry.

*Mampong, Akwapim, 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 justice to the location here. This smart new villa complex in the lush folds of the hills around Aburi isn't somewhere you'd stumble across – it's only accessible via a long and winding road, and that's just how the owners want it. Judging by the Range Rovers lined up outside, it's pretty exclusive. It takes around an hour to reach from Accra (although road improvements mean this time will reduce), but it's worth the drive. You'll find eight villas, each with three bedrooms, a living area, jacuzzi and patio – they're well-appointed and tastefully decorated. The price, at \$400 for two people, is reasonable too – it's not expensive for the sake of being expensive. The property also has a conference suite seating around 24 (corporate groups being one of the main income streams 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 sounds 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. Near Peduase Lodge, Kitase on St Johns Road Brekusu (026 960 1541, www.lansdownaburi.com). Villa \$400 for two people.*

### 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. It's home to 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, a members-only property with gorgeous chalets, an excellent beachside restaurant and an infinity pool.

The lively fishing harbour of Winneba, with its sizable beach and European and Royal cemeteries, is a worthwhile stop-off too. Elsewhere, turn south at Akamu for another pretty fishing harbour, Apam, where you can 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.

At Saltpond there's an attractive beach and a striking shrine, as well as fine views from Fort Amsterdam, the first British fort to be built on the Gold Coast and sitting a couple of kilometres from the town. Alternatively, 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

#### Big Milly's Backyard

Those unwinding in Kokrobite can enjoy fresh and tasty meals at Big Milly's onsite restaurant. The menu



Elmina Castle

includes fresh seafood such as lobster and barracuda, as well as a wide selection of vegetarian options. It's also open for breakfast. There's good, basic accommodation here too. Double huts with a fan cost US\$20, and self-contained huts with air conditioning are US\$30. Single rooms are US\$13 a night (US\$27 with bathroom and AC), dorm rooms are US\$13. Houses are available to rent for groups too. *Kokrobite (024 999 330, 0242 206 961, www.bigmilly.com). Main courses GH¢14-30.*

#### Tills No 1 Hotel

For quality seafood to accompany Fetteh's idyllic beach setting try the restaurant at Tills No 1 Hotel. The jambalaya's good and the king prawns and red snapper are 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 this deluxe private members' 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](mailto:info@whitesands.com.gh) before even seeing prices. However,

non-members can visit between Mon-Fri. The accommodation is in suites and chalets. *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. For Kokrobite, the turning is around 22 kilometres (14 miles) from the city. For Fete and Senya Beraku, the turn-off 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 later, 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 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.

On a lighter note, it's also somewhere to try one of the regular half-day drumming and dancing workshops from Women in Progress ([www.womeninprogress.org](http://www.womeninprogress.org), 0244 530 467, US\$16). 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¢18-35.*

##### Baobab Vegetarian Restaurant

This little place is the base for the fundraising arm of the Baobab Children Foundation. There's 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 own organic farm. And in addition to the handful of cheap rooms here, 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 singular property lies around 10 minutes along the road to Kakum National Park. It's notable chiefly 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. You'll find a wide mixture of chalets, double and family rooms. There's also a gift shop, restaurant and bar (main courses GH¢6-18).

*On road to Kakum National Park (042 91456, www.hansbotelghana.com). Double from GH¢75; chalets GH¢75-220.*

##### 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. A restaurant serves breakfast, lunch and dinner – room service is available too. There's also a bar, gardens, a conference suite, wheelchair access and internet. *E.30 A/3 Aboom Close (042 30135, www.mightyvictoryhotel.com). Doubles US\$25-55.*



Stumble Inn

##### Sanaa Lodge

This is probably the most upmarket hotel in Cape Coast. 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¢15. 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 offers a whirl of sights, sounds and smells – the frenetic morning fish market, in particular, is jaw-dropping to see.

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 was once a key port in the African gold trade and 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, its 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. It was founded in 1482, making it 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) place to 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 also ask for a tip of around 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.

Ghana Ecotours (208 8159369, [www.ghanaecotours.com](http://www.ghanaecotours.com)) offers a guided walk around Elmina that lasts about one and a half hours and takes in the fort and the fish market. It costs GH¢20 if there are between two and five adults.

#### WHERE TO EAT & STAY

As a general rule, the best places to eat in Elmina tend to be found out of town. 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, and is now a hotel 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 GH¢165.*

##### Coconut Grove Beach Resort

This hotel, found just three kilometres west of Elmina itself, is widely considered one of the top high-end accommodation spots on the coast. The Ocean View Restaurant has quite a guestbook: previous diners include Serena Williams, Jesse Jackson and Will Smith. The dishes range from GH¢35-35 and there's an emphasis on

seafood. The hotel is 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, a swimming pool and tennis courts, as well as access to a delightful strip of beach. There are several family units and suites. All rooms have air conditioning, showers, TV and WiFi facilities.

*Mbofra Akyinim Street, Bantuma-Elmina, Elmina (042 91213, www.coconutgrovehotelsghana.com). Double GH¢425, suite GH¢525.*

##### Stumble Inn

This is a cute little place outside Elmina, very close to Elmina Bay Resort. Accommodation is in little rondavels or dormitories (with mosquito nets). En suite bathrooms, including showers, are outside under the stars. The whole property is built from sustainable materials and, although very basic, has its charms. There's a lovely little bar and restaurant as well. A reasonable budget option.

*Next to Elmina Bay Resort (054 146 2733, www.stumbleinnghana.com). Double rooms GH¢55, chalet GH¢65, dorm bed GH¢12.*

##### 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, notable for their cleanliness and bright style. All have sea views, DSTV, Wi-Fi, fridges and air-con, and beach access is excellent. There's also a pool and a restaurant, making it the best bet around Elmina. *By Coconut Grove Beach Resort (054 161 4812, www.elminabayresort.com). Double GH¢345-400.*

#### 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 its naughty big brother a couple of miles inland, 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 Twin City emerges after miles of plantations and roadside vendors (selling freshly killed or cooked savanna cane-rat, known locally as grass-cutter – they're around GH¢25 for lunch on the go!).

Tadi, as the city is generally

called collectively, has lately entered into the consciousness of the international community because of its oil trade. Up to three billion barrels of light oil are estimated to be off the coast here. 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 and noise. Lorries full of yams are unloaded, machete-wielding vendors lop off coconut-tops and a bewildering array of goods are

paraded past on head-tops: sunglasses, dried fish, flip flops and colanders. Further into the centre, meanwhile, an almost exclusively female sales force hawk colourful vegetables, chilli peppers, fish and meat.

#### WHERE TO EAT

##### Captain Hook's

Popular with expats, the German-run Captain Hook's focuses on pizza, with some seafood. Next door, the connected Hemingway's Bar (what else would it be called?) is a popular nautically-themed pub, with a central bar propped up by regulars

night after night. *Beach Road (031 20 27085). Main courses GH¢30-60. Open 6pm-1am. Credit MC, V.*

##### Champs Sports Bar & Restaurant

Located adjacent to Stellar Lodge is Champs

Sports Bar & Grill, an international bar popular with both expats and locals. It has large screens showing major international sports fixtures. On the menu is a selection of Ghanaian and international dishes – particularly good are its prime South African beef and the other deli options. The customer service, food and reasonable prices make it a great option. Various events are held throughout the week to look out, with karaoke on Fridays and Saturdays. *3 Longshore Close, Chapel Hill, Takoradi (03120 32777/23808, info.lodge@stellar-africa.com). Open 5am-late daily.*

##### North Sea Restaurant

A cheaper option is North Sea Restaurant, renowned for its



seafood. The dishes at this German-owned eatery (yes, another one) include lobster provençal and grouper fish gratin, as well as pizza. There's 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¢25-40. Open 10am-11pm daily.*

#### WHERE TO STAY

##### Africa Beach Hotel

A moderately priced waterside option. The accommodation comprises chalets around a large pool and a thatched bar, with air-con, satellite TV, radio and tea and coffee facilities. The rooms are basic and a little dated, but comfortable. Three have views over a rocky beach and the Gulf of Guinea, which would be our choice. A swimming beach is



Planter's Lodge

nearby, as is a poorly kept 18-hole golf course. *Beach Road (031 20 25148, www.africabeachhotel.com). Contact for details.*

#### NEW Atlantic Hotel

There's no missing the Atlantic Hotel, a huge white monolith overlooking the ocean around Takoradi. About half of the 200 rooms were open when we visited in May 2014, but it was already an impressive-looking complex. It shares owners with the Holiday Inn in Accra, and offers a similar experience. The rooms in the main building are modern and well-appointed – ask for one with ocean views. There are also 12 chalets, with single and family rooms among the leafy paths. The highlight, however, is the pool area – a ridiculously inviting sight on a hot day. Combine it with a seafood platter from the outdoor Canoe Bar and you have the makings of a lovely afternoon. The main Ocean View Restaurant & Bar offers a large buffet with the chance to try some flavourful Ghanaian cuisine. Like much in Takoradi, the hotel will cater mainly for the many oil workers who pass through the town – you can see one of the rigs being built in the Bay of Guinea from the terrace. There's a vast conference and event suite, plus a smaller function space. A private golf course sits in front of the hotel. *Beach Road Area, DTD Takoradi (028 526 8420, www.atlantichoteltakoradi.com). Contact for rates.*

#### Ezile Bay

This resort is set on a beautiful little stretch of beach west of Sekondi-Takoradi. It has five basic bungalows – each equipped with fans and mosquito nets – as well as a dormitory and a family room. There's a bar and restaurant too. *Ezile Bay (024 317 4860, http://ezilebay.com). Double US\$93.*

#### Planter's Lodge

This is one of the finest residences in Takoradi. Set among acres of green lawns, the colonial-style house is filled with heavy dark antique furniture, a throwback to its past life as a Royal Air Force lodge for flying officers in the 1930s. The rooms, especially the executive suites, continue this theme – some have four-poster beds. A short walk from the main house, the six bungalow suites are more modern, and all rooms have flatscreen TVs and wireless. The restaurant is good, with dishes such as smoked black peppered prawns in a fusion sauce, and beef with pistachio oil and raspberry vinegar. All told, this is one of Ghana's best, and most relaxing, hotels. Access to the pool for non-residents is GH¢40. *(031 20 22233, www.planterlodge.com). Double GH¢681; suite GH¢1,049.*



Atlantic Hotel

#### Raybow International Hotel

Another superb option in Tadi is the large Raybow International Hotel. Modern art from some of Ghana's best artists, in particular Kobina Nyarko, hangs around the 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's a small pool next to an open-sided bar, and a thatched seating area. *Beach Road Residential Area (031 20 22072, www.raybowhotel.com). Double GH¢514-685.*

#### Stellar Lodge & Apartments

Run by the Stellar Group, this lodge and apartment complex is only a couple of minutes from the airport. Each of the 52 en suite rooms (30 in the Lodge itself, plus 22 new fully equipped apartments) have HD plasma screens, satellite TV, air con, safes and secure wireless internet access. There's also a laundry service, 24-hour reception, 24-hour room service, a gym and a swimming pool. *3 Longshore Close, Chapel Hill, Takoradi (03120 32777/26998, www.stellarlodge.com). Double GH¢310 (inc. breakfast).*

#### GETTING THERE

STC and VIP (www.vipbusgh.com) buses travel between Takoradi and Accra several times a day. The quick service takes around four hours. Buses leave Accra from the main STC bus station and arrive next to the North Sea Restaurant (see p81) in Takoradi.

Although the only airport in Takoradi is the military air base, it has regular direct flights to Accra and the number 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's a 35-minute flight. Antrak Air (0302 782 814, www.antrakair.com) also has daily flights from Accra.

## Beyond Takoradi

The one very good reason to go beyond Takoradi is Mr Brights Surf School (Kangaroo Pouch Beach Resort, Busua Beach (www.mrbright.com). Open: everyday 6am to 6pm). British national Brett Davies (aka Mr Brights) has devoted his life to surfing. After leaving a top job at the Rip Curl head office several years ago, he decided to take the plunge and open up his own surf school in Ghana (the second love of his life). He's a formally trained surf coach and lifeguard, meaning surfers can't be in better hands. Beginners to advanced are welcome, as are children, with boards and equipment provided. The school has been so successful since its inception last year that Mr Brights is opening a second school in Accra at Kokroboite. Bookings are taken via the website with prices on enquiry.

## 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 heat of the coast (033 21 302 265, www.kakumnationalpark.info, 8am-4pm). Its 607 square kilometres (234 square miles) of protected rainforest play

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 you're 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 has various viewing platforms offering spectacular, if vertiginous, views of the park, although it's unlikely much wildlife will be seen. There's a simple but informative visitors' centre with information on the flora and fauna, a café, and a decent gift shop administered by the Ghana Heritage Conservation Trust and also sells art by the excellent Aid to Artisans charity that also has a branch at the Artists Alliance.

#### 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's also accommodation in the park itself. Another option is Hans Cottage Botel (see p80), located four kilometres from Cape Coast and 12 kilometres from Kakum – it provides an array of guest houses, suites, private rooms and dorms.

#### GETTING THERE

Signposts to 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.

Central to Kumasi 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. A maze of open lanes and covered alleyways spreads and curves in every direction, selling almost everything imaginable: soap and shoes, beads and underwear, pans and drums, hens and yams, fish and footballs and shea butter.

The market itself has hazy borders, so spills out into the surrounding streets and neighbourhoods, making central Kumasi a kind of ongoing flow of life, noise and trade. It's a hugely absorbing place to be.

But the city 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, 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 to fool the British into thinking they had the real item. Close 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 Aday. 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. 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, of course, the Kumasi region has various different faces. While the city itself runs along at a breathless pace, the countryside surrounding it is a haven of peace by comparison. The fertile green landscapes around the city are still home to many of the states and settlements initially brought together under the Asante banner in the 17th century. This means 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, there's much to investigate.

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 makes it easy 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 are dished up at the Quick Bite Fast Food, a local favourite in the centre of town (Permpheh 11 Rd, Adum), or head to The Dish (6th St, off Hudson Rd, 032 20 30 355) for a laid-back

atmosphere and reasonably priced fare. The Kentish Kitchen at the Centre for National Culture offers a selection of authentic dishes.

#### NEW The View

The View Bar & Grill is almost reason alone to go to Kumasi, with an inspired Anglo-French menu. Mains are delectable. How about crispy pork belly, bubble & squeak croquettes, braised cabbage and bacon with spiced apple? Or slow-cooked guinea fowl leg, roasted breast, butternut mash, redcurrant and rosemary? There's also a variety of steaks, all served alongside sides such as triple-cooked chips and French beans with chilli and garlic. It's a modern menu that wouldn't seem out of place in an

upmarket London gastropub. In the lounge you'll find small bites including dry-fried pork spare ribs, chilli, garlic and ginger and risotto croquettes and homemade relish. Cocktails are excellent. The wine list has a good variety, with some great French whites in particular. The space is brilliantly designed too – think Eames Eiffel Base Shell Chairs and dark hardwood floors. And yes, there's a leafy view. There are plans for live bands, DJs and a cigar menu – all to enjoy on a rooftop terrace. *Top Floor Akuafu Adamfo, 39 Melcom Road, Ahowdjo (0244 668880, facebook.com/theviewbarandgrill). Main courses GH¢40-60.*

#### WHERE TO STAY

##### Golden Tulip Hotel

Set in tropical gardens in the centre of Kumasi's business district is the elegant 160-room Golden Tulip Hotel. It's the only truly international-standard hotel in the city and popular with conference visitors, who make use of the many function spaces – the main meeting room can take 450 delegates. There are also several apartments, each with a kitchenette and living room. Other facilities include a bar and restaurant, tennis courts, a shop, a casino and two lovely pools, including one for children. It's about a 20-minute drive from the airport. *Rain Tree Street (032 20 83 777, www.goldentulipkumasicity.com). Double GH¢551-848.*

##### 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 village tours. *Abono, near Kuntanase, Lake Bosomtwe, 032 2020 164. Double US\$55-65.*

## Volta Region & Eastern Highlands

Once you head east out of Accra and pass the industrial zone of Tema, the land turns greener, the villages become quieter and there's a hint of adventure about the land. Rocky outcrops jut out of the savannah, slowly turning to hill ranges. On the route between Tema and Akosombo, 31 miles (50 kilometres) from Accra, is the Shai Hills Resource Reserve, 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, supplying much of the country with electricity. It covers 8,502 square kilometres (3,275 square miles) and has only existed since 1965. It's a wonder of modern Africa, and as well as being a remarkable engineering feat it's also now an essential part of Ghana's natural history.

The southern end of Lake Volta is a popular weekend destination for visitors escaping the city. The very new and impressive Royal Senchi Resort (see p84) will no doubt become a popular destination, but there are options for budget travellers too. Adventure tourism is taking off in the region, with activities such as canoe trips and a multitude of water sports. The heel of the lake and the town of Akosombo are a couple of hours from Accra, also offering activities such as bird-watching. From Akosombo, ferries can be taken across the Volta, while longer trips can be taken on the Yapei Queen that runs the length of the lake twice a week, from Akosombo to Yeji in around 24 hours.

#### 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. After the heat of the coast or the dusty aridity of the north, the region's soft green hills and fertile fields make 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



Aqua Safari Resort

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 its 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 developed into a popular spot for locals and tourists alike. In contrast, the upper part of the waterfall is more strenuous to reach, but more intimate and solitary as a result. The way up is steep and narrow, and the humidity can make the hike exhausting. Fortunately, a 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), 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, as well as parts of the lake. Little-visited, it's home to colobus monkeys, antelopes, clawless otters, crocodiles and the

park's emblem, the manatee. Digya means black rhinoceros – 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 basic resort is a good budget alternative. With nights from GH¢100, it's a decent bolthole and a pleasant enough place, despite being nothing like resorts such as Big Milly's to the west of Accra. 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 the resort's location overlooking a river and hills. *Akosombo, on road to dam (0244 543 635). Rooms GH¢100.*

**NEW Aqua Safari Resort**

We were rather taken aback by Aqua Safari. With the drive there best described as 'unpromising', once through the doors a frankly lovely resort opens out. It faces out to the estuary of the River Volta, a mile or so upstream from the ocean. From an open-sided restaurant and bar you can see Ghana's island-dwelling folk crab-fishing and clam-diving in the water. The forward-thinking owners offer guided tours to the islands for boat-building and basket-weaving workshops – there's also a lot of water to play around in on a jet-ski or one of the pontoons. Game-fishing excursions can be arranged too. Best of all is the option to spend a lazy couple of hours exploring one of the most beautiful areas of Ghana by boat. The whole river environment gives a

relaxing and slower pace of life; a stark contrast to Accra two hours away.

The rooms are well-appointed, and six large chalets all have sizable and impressive common areas and kitchens. There's also a small pool if you don't fancy a dip in the river, and a conference area for up to 60 people.

Still being built on a nearby island is a dining area, a beach bar and juice shack, among other additions. Highly recommended for a relaxing break from Accra *Ada Foah (0540 110 190, www.aquasafariresort.com). Contact for rates.*

**NEW The Royal Senchi**

This is a delightfully relaxing place under two hours' drive from Accra. Wood, thatch and polished concrete dominate the scene, but it's the Volta River that's the focal point for the resort. All 84 rooms and suites look over the often mirror-flat river, and the rooms are quirky too. The beds face large patio doors, which give onto small terraces or balconies not overlooked by anyone else. Above and behind them are large baths, with screens that can be pulled back if you want a soak with a view. Each room also has a shower and the usual amenities as well as – get this – a reliable internet connection (smiley face). Suites also have large lounge areas. The main restaurant serves a Ghanaian-heavy buffet (GH¢60) in the evenings alongside a more international à la carte menu – there's some quality cooking going on, and the service is refreshingly keen. You'll find two bars, one overlooking an inviting pool and Jacuzzi. There's also a spa, a small shop and a business centre.

**TOP TIP!**  
**Transport**

Some resorts outside of Accra have a hotel shuttle – check when booking. Otherwise they should be able to arrange transport.

Much of the trade comes from conferences, but for leisure getaways from Accra, it's an excellent option. *Senchi Ferry Road, Senchi (0303 409 170, www.theroyalsenchi.com). Standard GH¢660, suites GH¢1600.*

**Mountain Paradise Biakpa**

Unfortunately we haven't yet visited this mountain resort, but we've heard good things and decided it was worth including. It sits among Ghana's highest peaks, near the Mount Gemi Range. There are only two basic bungalows with several rooms in each, but there's also a campsite. *Old Govt. Rest House, Biakpa, Avatime (0244 166 226, www.mountainparadise-biakpa.com). Rooms from \$55 double.*

**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 (on which elephants tend to be the main draw), or 4x4 tours much deeper into the Mole Park. Despite the hotel and park office, there's very little in the way of tourist infrastructure. This is seen by many as a positive thing, and one consequence is that it's 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. In Tamale pre-trip, try Saam Hotel (071 24200).

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High Street: 0540 101360 / 0302 677540, Kasoa: 0540 101378. North Industrial Area: 0540101365, Osu Oxford Street: 0540 101361, 0540 101377, 0302 771907, Spintex Rana Plaza: 0540101364, Trade Fair: 0540 101370, Achimota: 0540 101368, 0289 553268, Adenta: 0540 101369, Tema Comm 2: 0540 101366, Adum Kumasi: 0540 101373, Asokwa Kumasi: 0540 101374, Tamale Taxi Rank: 0540 101376, Takoradi Liberation Road: 0540 101375.

Service Centres: Accra: 0302 247770 / 247771 / 245661, Kumasi: 03220 40064 / 42484, Tamale: 03720 25672, Takoradi: 03120 24115

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# 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. 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 or visit [www.gacl.com.gh](http://www.gacl.com.gh).

Accra Airport has undergone renovations in recent years, but it can still be 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 can take some time on the way in. 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 carefully 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](http://www.alitalia.com)  
**Air France** [www.airfrance.com](http://www.airfrance.com)  
**British Airways** 0302 214 996/7, [www.britishairways.com](http://www.britishairways.com)  
**Delta Air Lines** 0302 213 111, [www.delta.com](http://www.delta.com)  
**Emirates** 0302 213131, [www.emirates.com](http://www.emirates.com)  
**KLM** 0302 214 747, [www.klm.com](http://www.klm.com)  
**Lufthansa** 0302 243 893, [www.lufthansa.com](http://www.lufthansa.com)  
**Middle East Airlines**, 0302 230 867, [www.mea.com.lb](http://www.mea.com.lb)  
**Turkish Airlines**, 0302 765 880, [www.turkishairlines.com](http://www.turkishairlines.com)  
**Virgin Atlantic** 0302 215 200, [www.virgin-atlantic.com](http://www.virgin-atlantic.com)

#### African airlines

**Antrak Air** 0307 015300/1, 0307

025300, [www.antrakair.com](http://www.antrakair.com)  
**Ethiopian Airlines** 0302 664856/7/8, [www.ethiopianairlines.com](http://www.ethiopianairlines.com)  
**South African Airways** 0302 783 676/7/8, [www.flysa.com](http://www.flysa.com)

#### Domestic flights

**Starbow** (0245 000 000, [www.flystarbow.com](http://www.flystarbow.com)) links Accra, Kumasi, Tamale and Takoradi. **Antrak Air** (0307 015300/1, 0307 025300, [www.antrakair.com](http://www.antrakair.com)) serves Accra, Kumasi, Tamale, Takoradi and Sunyani. The new carrier, **Africa World Airline** (024 243 8888, [www.flyafriaworld.com](http://www.flyafriaworld.com)) flies to Kumasi, Tamale and Lagos. New routes are planned for Monrovia, Freetown, Dakar and Abuja.

### 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.

The only competition is V.I.P. bus service (024 832 3667) that currently can only manage a Facebook page, despite a modern fleet of buses.

#### 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¢10-15. 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 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](http://www.avisghana.com)

#### Europcar

12th floor, Heritage Tower, West Ridge, 0302 665 544, [www.europcar.com](http://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

## 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.smartraveller.gov.au](http://www.smartraveller.gov.au)

#### New Zealand

[www.safetravel.govt.nz](http://www.safetravel.govt.nz)

#### UK

[www.fco.gov.uk/travel](http://www.fco.gov.uk/travel)

#### Canada

[www.voyage.gc.ca](http://www.voyage.gc.ca)

#### Republic of Ireland

<http://foreignaffairs.gov.ie>

#### USA

<http://travel.state.gov>

duties: 0.5kg of tobacco, 375ml 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](http://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](http://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.fco.gov.uk/en](http://www.ukinghana.fco.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](http://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](http://www.ambafrance-gh.org)). Open 8.30am-noon Mon-Thur.

#### German Embassy and Consulate

6 Ridge Street, North Ridge (0302 211 000, [www.accra.diplo.de](http://www.accra.diplo.de)). Open 7am-4pm Mon-Thur; 7am-1pm Fri.

#### The Netherlands Embassy

89 Liberation Road, Ako Adjei, Interchange (0302 214 350, <http://ghana.nlembassy.org/>). Open 9am-4.30pm Mon-Thur; 9am-3pm 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.



### 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. For the first time in half a decade, the exchange rate is fluctuating wildly after a period of great stability. As of July 2014 GBP:£1 = GH¢5.83 and US\$1 = GH¢3.41. 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.

## GHANA ONLINE

### Useful web links

#### www.timeout.com/accra

Time Out Accra's own website has the latest events, updated information and inspiration. Keep an eye on @TimeOutAccra and our Facebook page too.

#### www.noworriesghana.com

A comprehensive guide to retail and services in Ghana and advice.

#### www.accraexpat.com

A site linking Accra's large expat community.

#### 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.

**Gold Star Forex Bureau**  
Kokomlemle (030 2227409).

#### Yasole Forex Bureau

Accra Mall, Tetteh Quarshie ([www.accramall.com](http://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](http://www.dhl.com.gh))

#### North FedEx

Headquarters, Mango Tree Street Asylum Down (0302 257 921, [www.fedex.com/gh](http://www.fedex.com/gh)).

#### TNT

5 Agbaamo Link, Airport (0302 953 531, [www.tnt.com](http://www.tnt.com))

### Services

#### Correct Plumbing

(027 868 2232, 054 144 7158, [www.correctplumbinggh.com](http://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](http://www.mtn.com.gh)), Vodafone ([www.vodafone.com.gh](http://www.vodafone.com.gh)) and Tigo ([www.tigo.com.gh](http://www.tigo.com.gh)). 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 common to have a tour around Elmina and Cape Coast forts where tips would be expected insist on organising the money and even tips beforehand.

## Time

The time in Ghana is the same as GMT, except during UK summer time (GMT-1).

## Tourist information

Tourist information centres in Ghana are few and far between. 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](http://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 States can get visa information here: [www.ghanaembassy.org](http://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 at the airport providing they have previously informed the Director of Immigration. The costs as of July 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](http://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

## 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. PO Box AD330, Adabraka (0302 815299, [www.dreamrealty.com.gh](http://www.dreamrealty.com.gh)).

#### ELM Developments

This company focuses on real estate, initially residential, but recently commercial and retail. 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](http://www.elmdevt.com)).

#### Trassaco

Trassaco are the developers behind Trassaco Valley, a 600-acre luxury development based on the principles of a garden city located in East Legon, just off the Accra-Tema motorway. As well as a residential area, it will include shops, restaurants and educational facilities. PO Box 117, Accra (030 701 2332, [www.trasaccovalley.com](http://www.trasaccovalley.com)).

### AGENTS

#### Domani Properties

This successful real estate agency has more than 15 years experience in Accra and remains family run. They work with embassies, organisations and companies helping people to buy, sell, let or invest in property. 221 Christman House

(020 202 7467/0302 768 934, [www.domaniproperties.com](http://www.domaniproperties.com)).

#### H Wagner

Leading real estate agents with a wide portfolio across Accra. North Labone Avenue, PO Box 3090 (0302 774 228/0208 504 630, [rampah@gmail.com](mailto:rampah@gmail.com)).

#### Signature Properties

Signature Properties is a boutique real estate company dealing in the rental and sale of well-appointed residential and commercial properties that meet international standards and are situated in the prime areas of Accra. It partners with an established group of brokers to provide a carefully selected choice of suitable properties. Signature Properties also offers bespoke, value-added services including interior design, creating or sourcing artwork and providing relocation support. P.O. Box 16478, Airport, Accra (0244 457 185, [www.signatureproperties.com.gh](http://www.signatureproperties.com.gh)).

#### Clifton Homes

Clifton Homes is one of the largest residential developers in Ghana, having completed hundreds of contemporary homes in Central Accra. The homes tend to be fresh, light and built by their in-house construction team. One-Bed Apartments in Cantonments or by Accra Mall, start from \$100,000. Rental options start from \$1,500 per month in Cantonments and East Legon. Clifton Homes Ltd, 34 Senchi Street, Airport Residential, Accra (020 222 467 7033, [www.cliftonghana.com](http://www.cliftonghana.com)).

## 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.

### 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](http://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

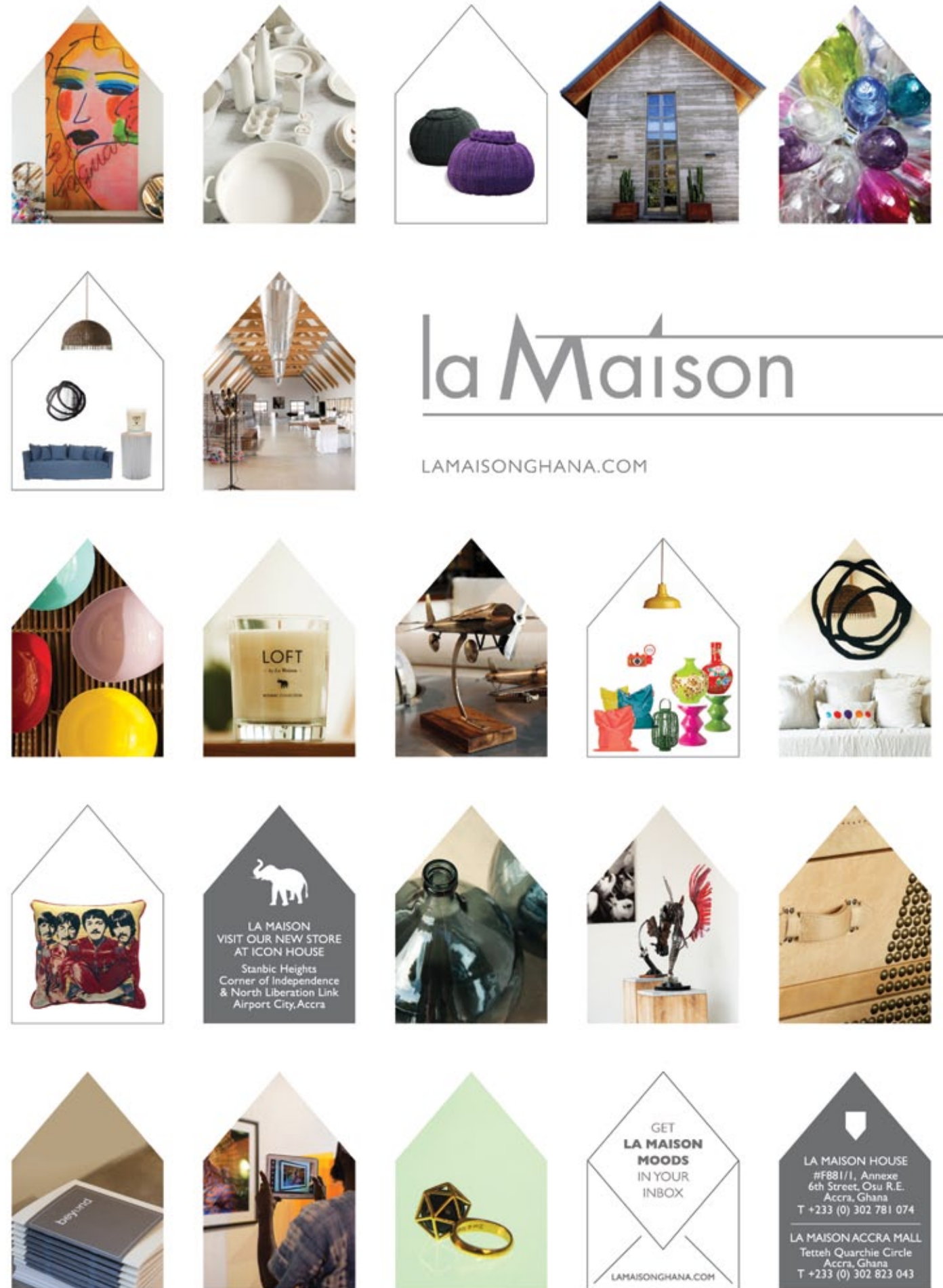
Obourwe Building, Torman Road, Fishing Harbour Area, PO Box 8800, Community 7 (022 218 700).

### 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.otl.com](http://www.otl.com))



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