

AKOSOMBO BROCHURE



INTRODUCTION

It was called *Nkonson-konson-bo* (a chain of rock). That was the name given to the little known settlement by its inhabitants, who in 1733, had settled at the foot of the gorge formed by the Akwapim and Togo mountain ranges. *Nkonson-konson-bo* soon became strategically a frontline safe haven of the militant Akwamus, who in retreat after two hundred years of conquest and imperial rule, had sought refuge in the safety provided by the hills and the river Volta. It is said that the Chief of the Akwamus made his nephew headman of the community to keep a lookout for their enemies from the north of the river.

For nearly two centuries the Akwamus enjoyed the protection, security and peace of the gorge, cultivating the rich fertile land and harvesting the abundance of fish from the river Volta, without any intrusion so to speak, until Sir Albert Kitson, an Australian geologist, who first discovered bauxite in Ghana in 1915, noted *Nkonson-konson-bo*, as a future hydro-electric dam site. This name later became corrupted to Akosombo.

With this remarkable discovery began the gradual but steady transformation of Akosombo into pre-eminence. World leaders, industrialists, engineers, surveyors and international celebrities from across the globe began to take express interest in what was seen as one of the biggest projects on the African continent.

Ghana's first President, Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah made the implementation of the Volta River Project the cornerstone of his vision for the development and prosperity of the newly independent nation. This gave a fresh impetus to the Volta River Project which got under way in 1961, 46 years after the potential of the gorge was first identified.

The period of construction saw a steady stream of visitors arriving in Akosombo from all parts of the world. Engineers and surveyors, industrialists and financiers, government leaders and international celebrities, either came to contribute to the implementation of the multi-purpose scheme or to get a feel of such a world famous project.

Akosombo has been carefully planned and developed with modern infrastructure and recreational facilities. The services of the world renowned architectural and engineering firm, Dioxides Associates, who had completed a master-plan for Tema, Ghana's modern sea port, were obtained to supervise the implementation of the Akosombo township project.

Decades after the township of Akosombo was built it has earned an international reputation not only as the home of one of Africa's most successful development schemes but also as an important and popular tourist destination. Its scenic beauty with undulating chain of mountains and valleys hold a breathtaking fascination for tourists and residents alike.

The construction of the Akosombo Dam has resulted in the formation of the largest man-made lake in the world in terms of surface area(8502sq.km). The Akosombo Dam and the Volta Lake together with the gigantic Hydro-Electric Power Station reveal the wonders of nature, science and technology which hold spell-bound fascination for tourists.

Today, with the introduction of a 15-year national tourism development plan, to exploit the nation's tourist potential, Akosombo is uniquely positioned to play a significant role in the realization of this programme. A systematic integrated development plan which involved the development of electric power, lake transportation, hotels and pleasure activities, as well as fishery, has offered tourism a new fillip to further exploit the vast resource base of Ghana's sovereign river, the Volta.

THE VOLTA RIVER

James Moxon, an Englishman, who lived in Ghana for many years writes about the River Volta :

“The River Volta is very far from being all Ghana's. Indeed its waters spring from no less than six West African states and almost two thirds of its 150,000 square mile basin is outside Ghana-in Upper Volta, Togo and Dahomey and to a lesser extent in the Ivory Coast and Mali. But the 61,000 square miles of it that lie within the boundaries of Ghana is the crucial part; it is there that the combined waters of the White, Black and Red Volta together with the Oti join forces to form that massive flow that, with the construction of the Akosombo dam had, in a matter of two years, filled a lake the size of Lancashire and, by the time that Lake Volta had fully filled in 1968, had doubled its area to the size of

Kent, Surrey and Sussex combined. The lake now covers 3,275 square miles – the largest man-made lake in the world in area, though with a capacity of some 120 million acre feet of water, fourth in terms of volume, admitting precedence to Kariba, Bratsk (USSR), and Aswan.

“The main stream of the Volta, which is about 1,000 miles in length, rises in the Kong Mountains about 25 miles out of the Upper Volta town of Bobo-Dioulasso, and after flowing first north-east and then due south for some 320 miles as the Black Volta it enters Ghana. It continues due south down Ghana’s western boundary for a further 200 miles before it passes through a narrow gorge at Bui where a second hydro-electric project may in due course be sited. From Bui, after a southwards curve, the Black Volta winds north-east and east again until it joins the White Volta (another Upper Volta offspring) and together they combine to flow southwards for the remaining 300 miles to the sea.

“For its part the White Volta starts life only a few miles across the hills that separate it from one of the watersheds of the Black Volta but, combining with its sister river the Red Volta to form a pincer movement around the capital city of Ougadougou (Upper Volta), it then flows across the Ghana border to join the senior triplet, the Black Volta.

“One other major tributary is the Oti which, though comprising only some 18 per cent of the total catchment area of the Volta Basin, nevertheless contributes between 30 and 40 per cent of the annual flow of water. One reason for this is that the Oti, as the Pandjori, rises in the heart of Dahomey’s (present-day Republic of Benin) rainy Atakora Mountains. Tumbling down from the hills first northwards and then west and then south the Oti, as it now becomes, flows across the north of Togo and then down its Ghana border imbibing vast quantities from the streams of the Togo Mountains before proceeding southwards in loops and contortions for a distance of 200 miles to join the Volta at a point which is now about half way up the lake.

“Akosombo dam is situated within the river’s only gorge – other than Bui – 68 miles from its mouth, at the point where the river cleaves the Akwapim-Togo range of hills. This is the first time that a river system of such size has been artificially controlled so near its estuary and the consequent economic advantages are obvious.”

THE AKOSOMBO DAM

The Akosombo Dam is of the gravity rock-fill type. The reason for this type of dam was a practical one, that is, the materials were available. The rock in the

Akosombo gorge was very hard and could be broken into workable boulders. Additionally, there was plenty of lighter rocky material for compacting purposes and unlimited quantity river sand and adequate deposits of good clay for the impervious dam core.

The dam, 2,200 ft. in length from bank to bank along its crest is 1200 ft. wide where it sits on the river bed. The maximum height from bedrock is 374.00 ft. and the height at axis from bedrock is 364.17 ft.

An inconvenient valley, just half a mile away from the main dam which would act as a permanent overflow from the lake had to be blocked. A second dam of similar design, known as the saddle dam was therefore built simultaneously to check the expected overflow. The saddle dam measured 1200 ft. in length, 500 ft. at its widest and 120 ft. high.

Power House

On the west bank, adjacent to the main dam is sited the six unit power house with a total installed capacity of 912MW. All the six units are now consecutively being replaced with technologically superior state –of-the-art turbine runners. After the retrofit project, it is expected that the installed capacity will increase from 912 MW to 1020 MW by the year 2004.

Spillways

On the east bank of the river, and also adjacent to the dam itself are twin spillways, each comprising six 38 x 45 foot steel gate, designed to carry away flood surplus to prevent damage to the dam. The dam's designers made allowance , in calculating the capacity of the twin spillways for the flood that could be expected.

The Lake

The Volta lake was created as a result of the dam built at Akosombo. The 250 mile (400) kilometer lake is 3275 sq. miles. It is the largest man-made lake in the world in terms of surface area (8502 sq. km.).

Generators

The 36 ft. diameter generators are wound with coils containing some 2.7 miles of copper wire. The rotor is 34 ft in diameter and the total weight of the rotating parts, including the shaft weigh 500 tons. The shafts are 46 inches in diameter.

Penstocks

The penstocks are 24 feet in diameter and 360 feet long. The 15-20 foot sections weigh up to 50 tons.

Turbines

The new 85 ton each six runners are the wheels which are spun by the water falling through the penstocks. The design is such that it utilizes the energy of the motive water efficiently.

Transformers

The power at Akosombo is generated at 14.4 kilovolts and is then, stepped up by step-up transformers to 161 kilovolts which is ideal for the purpose of transmitting the power to other areas of the nation.

At selected points, the high tension electricity has to be reduced to required voltage and these accounts for the series of sub-stations at key distribution points round the network.

Transmission

The VRA operates a nationwide transmission system comprising 102 kilometers of 69 kilovolts lines, 2480 kilometers of 161 kilovolts lines and 217 kilometers of 225 kilovolts lines connecting Ghana, Togo/Benin and Cote d' Ivoire to the national grid.

LOCATION, SIZE & POPULATION

Located 100 kilometers north east of the national capital, Accra, the township of Akosombo spreads through valleys and hilltops, covering an area of over twenty-six square kilometers. It is accessible via a first class asphalt road that passes by the harbour city of Tema to the east of Accra, and north through the flat plains of the countryside, which are broken only by the peculiarly shaped hills known as inselbergs.

Akosombo is the home of a predominantly migrant population of about 15,000 from all parts of Ghana and beyond. The Volta River Authority is the largest employer with most of the working population mainly engaged in its power generation and other activities. Banking and telecommunication services, as well as numerous small businesses provide a variety of essential services in the township.

TERRAIN AND CLIMATE

Towering over the township are the rolling hills of the Akwapim and Togo ranges, which converge to form one of the narrowest gorges along the river. The Akwapim range sweeps across the southeastern part of Ghana while the Togo range stretches northeast through Togo into Benin. The hills attain a maximum height of 1000 meters, the highest in the country. It is in this gorge, located 110 kilometers from the estuary of the Volta river that the dam was built and with it the complete transformation of the little hamlet of *Nkonson-konson-bo*.

The hills are broken by wooded trails covered by a striking mix of trees, and shrubs typical of the rainforests of West Africa. The surrounding forest is home to a variety of small apes, and other mammals as well as reptiles, especially the fascinating agama lizard. Bird life is diverse and plentiful with species ranging from the large birds of prey, to the cheerful brightly coloured robin, whose songs are most musical.

Bright tropical sunshine is abundant through most of the year giving the area a lovely warm weather all year round. The highest temperatures occur during the peak of the dry season between the months of March and April, while the lowest temperatures are recorded in the wet months lasting from May to August. The rainy season holds its own unique attraction, beginning and ending with spectacular tropical storms, characterized by lightning, illuminating the hills in a kaleidoscope of dazzling colour.

TOWNSHIP LAYOUT

The main approach to the township is dominated by the striking expanse of the Akosombo Textiles Limited, one of the nation's largest and most successful textile factories. Beyond the factory the road winds uphill again, past the township's very modern hospital perched on the crest of a hill, before starting the descent into a valley. Here the breathtaking panorama of the sprawling township comes into full view, never failing to impress.

This is community two which is the home of the bulk of the population and where most of the commercial and business activities take place. Key services like postal, telecom and banking services are conducted in this community. The township's police station and fire services as well as a delightful variety of small stores are also to be found here.

As the road winds up the hill heading to community one the river is visible to the right until it reaches the point where the dam suddenly comes into view straddling the famous gorge in all its magnificence.

Community one which is mostly residential is built on the hilly slopes from where some of the houses have a commanding view of the dam and surrounding area. Most of the administrative offices of the Volta River Authority are located in this part of the township.

The community also has excellent recreational facilities such as a swimming pool, lawn tennis courts and many others. The popular Akosombo Hotel is located here. The Akosombo Hotel Ltd. runs a 50 room 3-Star hotel with restaurants, modern conference/seminar facilities and pleasure activities and promotes tourism. Every VIP of note who has ever visited Akosombo, from

Queen Elizabeth II to Valentina Tereshkova, the Soviet woman astronaut, and from the late President Gamel Nasser of Egypt to the UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, have also visited the Volta Hotel. Various significant international agreements have also been signed here, notably the Akosombo Accord of 1995, which sought to broker peace among the warring factions during the Liberian Civil War. In Ghana very significant seminars are held at the hotel because of its superb conference facilities, serene atmosphere and congenial setting.

The Volta River Authority runs a leisure boat, MV Dodi princess on Sundays and public holidays. Tourists are taken on a four-hour cruise on the lake accompanied by a live band music to Dodi Island, an ever-green hilly island. Dishes and drinks of every kind are served. The Volta Hotel also operates a night club called “adowa” and other exciting programmes such as ‘Happy Hour’ where various types of music are played on every Saturday, to the early hours of Sunday. The hotel has won several laurels in tourism, and so has the Akosombo township itself. The Ghana Tourist Board has adjudged the hotel three times consecutively the best in its category while the Akosombo Township has been declared the cleanest in Ghana.

MARKET

Akosombo has a modern market which has assumed greater importance over the last few years as it expands to accommodate the growing population both within the township and smaller communities.

Mondays and Thursdays are market days during which the market appears to burst at the seams as sellers and shoppers converge for the day’s buying and selling. Foodstuffs are most predominant on such days, as trucks arrive with the market mammals from the outlying farming communities and beyond. The variety of foodstuffs is enormous and likely to fascinate visitors who are unfamiliar with the elaborate mix of ingredients required to produce typical Ghanaian dishes. The market has the potential to grow further in response to the growing demand of both new residential developments and commercial facilities, in the hospitality industry like restaurants and hotels that are being developed on the area.

HEALTH SERVICES

A clean environment and the practice of sound hygienic conditions are key to good health. The quality of health services in the Akosombo Township is typified by the high standards maintained at the hospital and the reputation it has acquired after nearly four decades of successful operations. The hospital, run by the Volta River Authority, is one of the best in the country and provides public health training for the University of Ghana Medical School.

POST AND TELECOMMUNICATION SERVICES

Posts and telecommunication services in Ghana have seen significant modernization and improvement in the last few years. Ghana Post, the national mail service, with extensive mail and courier services worldwide, has a branch in Akosombo serving the township and its environs.

Ghana Telecom, also a national operator, provides reliable international direct dial telephone and fax communications, while small private internet cafe operators provide access to the world wide web.

Some cellular phone operators have also extended services to cover the township and surrounding areas.

WHERE TO STAY

Akosombo is a destination of choice for many visitors to Ghana. Each year thousands of visitors arrive to see the great Volta Lake taking advantage of guided tours conducted throughout the week. Many love to spend a few days to enjoy the natural beauty, tranquility and panorama. The 3-star Volta Hotel built in the early sixties offers top of the line accommodation and superb conference facilities with a stunning view of the Volta Lake and the Akosombo Dam. Other facilities include Aylos Bay, Adomi Hotel, Senchi Riverside Resort, Lakeside View and Backyard Guest House.

WHERE TO EAT AND DRINK

The township has a variety of continental and local style eating and drinking places. The 3-star Volta Hotel provides a mix of French cuisine, continental and Ghanaian dishes with the added attraction of a terrace bar overlooking the dam and the Volta Lake. The romantic ambience of the Maritime Club, perched at the edge of the lake is excellent for those with yearning for outdoor freedom.

The Akosombo area is attracting new eating places and offers both continental and oriental dishes as well as fast foods. The Senchi Riverside Resort, Aylos Bay, Akosombo Continental Hotel and the Adomi Hotel, all located by the Volta River each with its own unique atmosphere are highly recommended.

A selection of traditional eating places, known as chop bars offer a variety of tasty local dishes for those visitors with a passion to sample the delights of Ghanaian cooking. Among the leading places serving local dishes are Hollywood Café, Tiger Bay, Vat 69 and Moo Hills.

HOW TO GET TO AKOSOMBO

Regular passenger bus services to Akosombo are available from the major bus terminals in Accra and Tema. Koforidua to the west and Ho to the east also

have direct bus services to Akosombo, while visitors from other parts of the country can get reliable connections from these terminals.

A number of travel and tourist agencies in Accra also operate group tours to Akosombo in comfortable air-conditioned buses. Details of available services may be obtained from the Ghana Tourist Board and the many travel agents operating in Accra and other regional capitals.

NEWSPAPERS, MAGAZINES

With excellent access road from the capital, national newspapers and magazines may be obtained from the news stands at the crack of dawn, especially those around the township's central business area, near the main bus and taxi terminals. International newspapers and magazines are available at the Volta Hotel.

BANKS, FOREX BUREAU

The main bank in the Township, Ghana Commercial Bank, opens from 0830hrs to 1400hrs providing the full range of banking services including foreign exchange transactions. All the major currencies can also be exchanged at the Volta Hotel.

Further information about Akosombo may be obtained from the Akosombo Reception Centre, P.O. Box 77, Akosombo +233-251-20550.

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