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KAKUM NATIONAL PARK

Assin Attandaso Reserve, Odumase Abrafo

The Kakum National park located in the Central Region of Ghana covers an area of 375 square kilometers. It is located near the town of Abrafo. The park is named after the Kakum River which flows through the park. The park is surrounded by approximately 33 villages and its inhabitants mostly engage in farming activities which include the planting of cocoa. It was given the status of a reserve in 1931 and then given the status of a national park in 1992. The area is covered with tropical forests with different types of flora and fauna spread across the park.

The vegetation type of Kakum park is mostly wet forest and has many plant species, including 57 trees, 10 shrubs, 9 climbers, 17 herbs, and 12 grass plants. Some of the trees include *Entandrophragma cylindricum* (sapele mahogany), *Milicia excels* (Odum tree), and *R. liriiodendron heudelotii* (wama). Many animals call the forest their home. This includes many animals like elephants, tortoises, leopards and primates such as the ursine colobus monkey and other animals such as the long-tailed pangolin.

The park has a special feature which is a canopy walkway. It is a system of walkways suspended in the air being supported by trees. This provides a stunning view of the park from an elevated height of 40 meters above ground level. There are 7 canopy walkways in total. Built with wire rope, aluminum ladders and wooden planks, it is secured by a series of netting for safety purposes. The ropes which hold the canopy walkway to the trees are also changed every six months. The Canopy Walkway was built by two Canadian engineers from Vancouver with the assistance of five (5) Ghanaians - the latter (staff of Ghana Heritage Conservation Trust- managers of the Kakum National Park Visitor Centre) have been maintaining the facility ever since.

There are also other attractions such as a children's play area and a Tree House which houses 25 visitors and groups of people can also spend the night viewing the wildlife at night.

Cape Coast Castle

Victoria Road, Cape Coast

The Cape Coast Castle was initially built as a trading post for the Portuguese in 1555 and was called “Cabo Corso”. The Dutch seized the fort from the Portuguese in 1637, after an unsuccessful attempt in 1596, and took over all of the Portuguese Gold Coast in 1642. In 1872, the Dutch Gold Coast, including the fort, became a possession of Great Britain. During the time of the Dutch and Portuguese, the castle was not only used for the trade of timber and gold but for the capture and the sale of slaves. The castle acted as a depot where enslaved Africans were brought in from different Kingdoms in West Africa. The Africans, often captured in the African interior by the slave catchers, the captives were sold to Portuguese and Dutch traders in exchange for goods such as textiles and horses.

As early as the 1500s, the settlers’ interest turned to the slave trade in light of the growing demand for human labor in the New World (the Americas and the Caribbean). From holding gold, ivory, and other wares, the castles gradually imprisoned slaves, who were reduced to yet another commodity. Many slaves were captured from many places and were brought to the castles on the coast. Many died from the journey from the interior parts of the country after being captured by the slave catchers and made to walk for as long as 336 miles before reaching the Coastal slaveholding castles. Many died as a result of hunger, thirst, and weakness, as they received very little rest and food and were virtually naked and barefooted as they walked leaving them to the mercy of the weather and wild beasts along the way. Upon reaching the castle the men were separated from the women, and the captors regularly raped the helpless women. The slaves were thrown into the dungeons and left for as long as 3 weeks to 4 months in the dungeons.

The slaves were kept in horrible and inhumane conditions in dark, dump smelly, and poorly ventilated dungeons with absolutely no form of sanitation and the cramped dungeons. With no space to lie down and with the stench and build-up of human fecal matter from about 500 slaves in a single dungeon. The castle also featured confinement cells — small pitch-black spaces for prisoners who revolted or were seen

as rebellious. The rebellious men were starved or beaten to death to set an example for the rest who would try to rebel as they would meet a similar fate and the women were whipped and raped to break their spirit, to deter them from trying to rebel. When the ships came they were led up to the ship in shackles and led out of the castle doors unto the waiting ships sailing to the New World never to return home again. The Slave trade was abolished in the mid-1800s but by this point, the irreversible and immeasurable damage was done, and from West Africa alone it is estimated that six million slaves had been shipped to other countries.

Till today these establishments remain as a painful reminder about humanity's shameful past and set as a daily reminder to never again allow such atrocity to ever be done to the human race again.

Assin Manso Slave Market

Assin Manso, Central Region

The Assin Manso Slave market was one of the largest slave markets where captured people were gathered to be sold into slavery in the trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. Many of the captured people were forced to trek barefoot, through the harsh bush and over rough terrain for sometimes hundreds of miles headed to the Gold Coast Dungeon. They suffered abuse, were starved, and beaten into compliance by the hired drivers of the slave merchant. They were often attacked by wild animals, but unable to fight or run because they remained shackled and chained. Many lives were lost along this hazardous journey. The slave market was where the best able-bodied slaves both men and women were selected by buyers. Once the slaves had been selected and paid for they were made to bathe in the river DONKOR NSUO as their last bath as they were often dirty and sweaty from the journey from the interior areas of the country. The undesirable ones were killed and buried. Still shackled with heavy chains and cannonballs they bathed often rubbing each other's backs with their bodies to make an effort to get clean. Later bamboo branches were introduced as some sort of sponge for the slaves. This bamboo was very rough and caused cuts to develop on the slaves' backs. They were then smeared with shea butter to appear presentable for the buyers. After buying the slaves they were branded with the initials of their master and then they were then transported to the coast to the various slave castles.

There is also a memorial where people from the diaspora go and write their names indicating that they truly returned home to their roots. Some also even give themselves African names as a symbol that they have reconnected with the lost culture and language of their ancestors.

Also, there is a "River of Return" side of the river where the people from the African diaspora go and stand in the river to reconnect with their ancestors and feel the place their ancestors once were. In 2005 a group of traditional leaders who were performing some traditional rites came across a chain and a ball used to tie the slaves in the river. Also in 2019 the remains of unknown African slaves were buried at the site.

