

## By Anonymous traveler (2023)

I recently had the opportunity to board on a captivating journey through Ivory Coast, a country brimming with vibrant culture, breathtaking scenery, and warm-hearted people. From the bustling city of Abidjan to remote villages nestled amidst picturesque landscapes, my trip was filled with unforgettable encounters and eye-opening experiences.

My adventure began in Abidjan, the vibrant economic hub of Ivory Coast. The city's modern skyline, with its lofty 14-story high hotels and government buildings, is a testament to the country's rapid development. Amidst this urban landscape, the Basilica of Notre Dame de la Paix, also known as Our Lady of Peace, stands tall, exuding a sense of tranquility and grandeur.



As I approached the basilica, I was struck by its magnificent presence. The gleaming white exterior seemed to glow under the African sun, radiating a captivating aura. Its towering structure, reminiscent of the grand cathedrals of Europe, was a stunning contrast to the surrounding buildings. As I entered the basilica, a wave of serenity washed over me. The interior was adorned with beautiful stained glass windows, casting a colorful mosaic of light across the vast space. The high ceilings and intricate sculptures only added to the sense of awe and reverence.

I strolled through the basilica, marveling at the architectural beauty that surrounded me. The tranquil atmosphere provided a welcome respite from the hustle and bustle of the city outside. It was a place of quiet reflection and spiritual connection.

After exploring the main hall, I climbed the spiral staircase, eager to reach the observation deck. From there, I was treated to a breathtaking view of Abidjan. The city sprawled out before me, a buzzing metropolis that seemed to stretch on forever. The juxtaposition of the old and the new, the traditional and the modern, was striking.

My time at the Basilica of Notre Dame de la Paix was a reminder of the richness and diversity of Ivory Coast. It was a symbol of the country's progress and prosperity, showcasing its commitment to both



development and spirituality. Standing there, surrounded by the grandeur of the basilica, I couldn't help but feel a deep appreciation for the culture and history of Abidjan.



Leaving the basilica, I continued my journey through Abidjan, eager to discover more of the city's hidden gems. But the images of the Basilica of Notre Dame de la Paix would forever be etched in my memory. It was more than just a religious site; it was a testament to the power of human achievement and the beauty that can be found in unexpected places.

Leaving the bustling cityscape behind, I embarked on a voyage towards Yamoussoukro, a city that held the promise of an awe-inspiring spectacle: the Basilica. As I entered the grand gates and laid my eyes upon this monumental structure, I couldn't help but feel a surge of amazement. Its sheer size and commanding presence were nothing short of breathtaking.

Walking through the doors, I was greeted by the intricacies of the Basilica's architecture. The delicate marriage of Gothic and Renaissance styles with Côte d'Ivoire's local influences created a mesmerizing blend. Every corner seemed to hold a story, with ornate carvings and detailed mosaics adorning the walls. The air was filled with a sense of tranquility as I explored the nave and admired the artistry that had gone into every inch of this sacred place.

Outside, the serene surroundings of the Basilica offered a respite from the noise and chaos of everyday life. The vast courtyard seemed to stretch for miles, with perfectly manicured gardens and peaceful fountains. As I strolled along the pathways, I couldn't help but feel a sense of humility in the presence of such remarkable beauty.

Continuing my journey further into the heart of Côte d'Ivoire, I found myself in the vibrant city of Bouaké. Known for its cultural richness and deep-rooted traditions, this city held a promise of immersion into the life of the Baulé people.

One of the highlights of my visit was the opportunity to venture into one of the Baulé villages. Stepping into their world, I was welcomed with warmth and openness. The Baulé people, renowned for their craftsmanship and artistic talents, showcased their cultural heritage with immense pride. It was during my visit that I had the privilege of witnessing the Zaouli Mask Dance, a spellbinding spectacle of vibrant masks and rhythmic music. As the powerful beats of the drums echoed through the air, the masks came alive, telling stories of the Baulé ancestors and their traditions. I was mesmerized by the graceful movements of the dancers and the hypnotic energy that filled the space.

Another captivating experience awaited me as I witnessed the Dance of Goli Masks. This ritualistic display depicted the spirits of the ancestors, evoking a sense of wonder and reverence. The brilliantly colored masks seemed to embody the wisdom and strength of those who came before, leaving an indelible mark on my soul.



Leaving Yamoussoukro and Bouaké behind, I continued my journey through Côte d'Ivoire, forever grateful for the humbling encounters with the Basilica

and the cultural richness of the Baulé people. These experiences not only expanded my understanding of this diverse country but also served as a reminder of the timeless beauty that lies beyond the confines of the city.

As I arrived in Korhogo, I was immediately struck by its rustic charm and warm hospitality. The village, inhabited by the Senufo people, unveiled a world steeped in history and culture. It was here that I encountered the awe-inspiring concept of "tribal technology." This unique blend of ancient techniques and contemporary ideas showcased the inventive spirit of the local artisans. The craftsmanship displayed in Korhogo was nothing short of remarkable. With skilled hands and meticulous attention to detail, the Senufo people crafted intricate objects that spoke volumes about their heritage. The Boloy Mask Dance, a mesmerizing performance passed down through generations, left me in awe. It was a spectacle where ancient rituals harmoniously merged with contemporary expressions, creating an unforgettable experience.



Eager to delve deeper into the village's rich heritage, I ventured to Niofoin, a neighboring village within the Korhogo region. Here, I found myself enchanted by the enchanting sights and sounds that greeted me. The sight of clay granaries, tall and elegant, spoke of a time-honored tradition of preserving food. Walking through the village, I sensed the sacred presence of a house that held deep spiritual significance for the locals.

One of the highlights of my visit to Niofoin was witnessing the captivating "Dance of the Virgin girls." This ritualistic dance, performed by young women adorned in radiant costumes, transported me to a realm of mystique and elegance. The synchronized movements and rhythmic beats, accompanied by heartfelt chants, created an atmosphere of pure enchantment.

Adding to the cultural tapestry of the region were the nomadic Fulani people. Their presence lent an extra layer of depth to my exploration. I had the extraordinary opportunity to witness their traditional way of life, observing the skillful artistry of their intricate tapestries and the harmonious simplicity of their daily routines. Through cultural exchanges and mutual respect, I gleaned insights into their centuries-old customs, broadening my understanding of this vibrant corner of the world. As I bid farewell to Korhogo, I couldn't help but be grateful for the eye-opening experiences I had encountered. The village's captivating blend of ancient traditions and modern innovations left an indelible imprint on my soul. Korhogo and its surrounding villages will forever remain in my heart as a testament to the power of cultural diversity and the enduring spirit of humanity.



Continuing on my journey, I found myself venturing into Odienne, a captivating town that revealed the fascinating world of the Malinké people. As descendants of the ancient Mali Empire, the Malinké have managed to preserve their rich cultural heritage and traditions throughout the centuries.

Upon my arrival in Odienne, I was immediately enthralled by the vibrant atmosphere that filled the air. The town buzzed with life

as locals intricately weaved the stories of their ancestors into their everyday lives. Eager to delve deeper into the local customs, I had the privilege of joining the Dozo, a revered group of traditional hunters.

Together with the Dozo, I embarked on a remarkable journey through the savannah, where the astounding beauty of nature harmoniously blended with the vibrant traditions of the Malin ké people. As we traversed the vast expanse of land, I marveled at the sight of the Dozo adorned in their traditional attire. What caught my attention immediately were their costumes crafted from "bogolan" fabric. This unique textile, created through a painstaking process of mud-dyeing, showcased intricate patterns and symbols that held significant cultural meaning. Each stroke of pigment seemed to tell a story, connecting the present-day Malinké community to their ancestors and the Mali Empire's illustrious past.

As we continued our journey, I couldn't help but be captivated by another remarkable aspect of the Dozo's attire: their shotguns adorned with amulets. These exquisite and ornate weapons not only served as tools for hunting but also carried deep symbolic importance. Intricately carved and embellished, these shotguns were believed to possess spiritual powers that safeguarded the hunters on their quests.

Walking alongside the Dozo, I couldn't help but feel an overwhelming sense of respect for the Malinké people and their commitment to preserving their cultural traditions. Each step I took alongside these traditional hunters deepened my appreciation for their way of life, their connection to the land, and their profound reverence for their heritage.

Odienne, with its enchanting landscapes and awe-inspiring traditions, provided a gateway for me to step into the world of the Malinké people. It allowed me to witness firsthand how they continue to honor their history, embrace their identity, and preserve the legacy of the Mali Empire. This unforgettable experience in Odienne will forever hold a special place in my heart, reminding me of the power of culture, tradition, and the resilience of a community's spirit.

A visit to Man, a charming town nestled amidst breathtaking natural landscapes in Ivory Coast, proved to be an incredibly enriching experience. The allure of this place lies not only in its mesmerizing surroundings but also in its captivating Yacouba culture. From sacred ponds inhabited by venerated catfish to vibrant displays of ancient rituals during the Yacouba Mask Dance, Man offers a unique glimpse into the rich tapestry of Ivory Coast's cultural heritage.

One of the most captivating features of Man is its sacred pond, believed to be the abode of the revered catfish. These fish are regarded as the custodians of the ancestors and play a significant role in the religious and spiritual practices of the Yacouba people. As I stood by the pond, I couldn't help but feel a deep sense of reverence and awe. The tranquil waters, surrounded by lush greenery, offered a serene setting for reflection and contemplation.

Another unforgettable experience in Man was witnessing the awe-inspiring Yacouba Mask Dance. The mesmerizing dance movements, accompanied by



rhythmic drumbeats and spirited chants, transported me back in time. It was a spectacular celebration of the Yacouba culture, showcasing their deep-rooted traditions and their strong connection to their ancestors.

My exploration of Man continued with a visit to Mount Tonkpi, a majestic peak that offers panoramic views of the city below. As I ascended the mountain, I was greeted by a breathtaking vista, stretching as far as the eye could see. It was a reminder of the awe-inspiring natural beauty that surrounds this town.

While in Man, I also had the opportunity to explore the rainforests that envelop the area. The ingenious liana bridges, crafted by the resourceful local communities, were a testament to their ingenuity and adaptability. Walking across these natural bridges was an adventure in itself, and it allowed me to truly appreciate the harmony between humans and nature in this region.

Delving deeper into the remote forests surrounding Man, I stumbled upon isolated settlements inhabited by the Guéré ethnic group. This encounter provided a rare opportunity to immerse myself in their unique way of life. From witnessing their traditional ceremonies to learning about their customs and traditions, I gained a deeper understanding of the Guéré culture and their strong bond with the natural environment.

Continuing my journey through Ivory Coast, I arrived in the vibrant city of Daloa. This city proved to be a microcosm of the country's ethnic diversity, offering a multi-faceted experience. From the bustling "Abidjan Plateau" to the serene Ebrié Lagoon, the contrasting landscapes of Daloa fascinated me. Each corner of this city brought a new blend of tradition and progress. The magnificent Saint Paul's Cathedral stood as a testament to Daloa's colonial past, while the vibrant quarter of Youpugon, fondly known as "Fanico," showcased the fusion of modernity and traditional elements.

Before bidding farewell to Ivory Coast, I made sure to visit the National Museum, which offered a captivating journey through the nation's rich heritage. The exhibits and artifacts showcased the diverse ethnic groups, historical events, and artistic expressions that shape the cultural tapestry of this beautiful country. It served as a reminder of the unique stories and traditions that define Ivory Coast, leaving me with a deep appreciation for its rich and vibrant cultural heritage.

A visit to Man and Daloa in Ivory Coast transported me to a world of enchantment and cultural immersion. The captivating Yacouba culture in Man, with its sacred ponds and ancient rituals, left a lasting impression on me. Exploring the natural wonders of Mount Tonkpi and the rainforests and delving into the distinct way of life of the Guéré people offered a rich and immersive experience. In Daloa, the fusion of tradition and progress provided a fascinating snapshot of Ivory Coast's diversity. And the National Museum served as a poignant reminder of the nation's rich heritage. Ivory Coast truly captivates the soul with its breathtaking landscapes and vibrant cultural tapestry.

In conclusion, my journey through Ivory Coast was an extraordinary odyssey, filled with captivating encounters, sceneries, and cultural immersion. From the bustling cities to remote villages, Ivory Coast revealed its intricate cultural fabric, leaving an everlasting impression in my heart.

