

GOLDEN ARROW

December 2015 Official Newsletter Of The West Africa Tour Guides Association Vol 24



Adinkra Symbol:
The Ram's Horn



Visit West Africa In 2016

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WATGA/ AGTAO are initials for the **West Africa Tour Guides Association** and its French version is **Association des Guides Touristiques de l'Afrique de l'Ouest**. The official languages of our dear association are French and English. **Our logo means:** "quality tour guiding services in West Africa". The colour gold connotes our quality and our arrow pointing left represents west on the compass. The colour black represents us, the proud African tour guides.

COVER: The Ram's Horn (An Adinkra Symbol which represents "strength of purpose")

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THE LIGHTER SIDE



Enjoy the lighter side of life as we share with you African poetry, parables, folklore or jokes.

YOU EAGLE

O why chicken all this while
O why chicken all this while
All this while: All this while?

When man destroys he does so without a second thought
When man speaks he does so without a second thought
Men who destroy with their speeches are thoughtless
“O come off it” he says. “Look at you” they laugh out loud (LOL)
The recipient is eaten-up; within his spirit hurts so bad
He gets better but man offers even more mockery
The almost destroyed soul is saved by one woman
Believing; obviously zealous of my achievement

So why chicken all this while
So why chicken all this while
All this while: All this while?

When fear enters your domain he destroys completely
When fear strikes a soul he breaks that soul in totally
Fear striking your soul’s domain completely breaks you
It finds you disbelieving in yourself till you have no clue
What is going on in your relationship and your business
It leaves you feeling sad, lonely and ultimately useless
Life seems worthless as drug over dose beckons at you
But the eagle in you arose; tore that chicken and you wonder

Ah! why chicken all this while
Ah! Ah!! why chicken all this while
All this while? All this while I was an EAGLE!!!

- A poem by Samua Kuturuku
- From: The Son Of African Thunder Collection®

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MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT

END OF YEAR MESSAGE

As we compiled this month's issue of the Golden Arrow especially for you, our cherished reader, two things came to mind. This was the end of the year 2015 and secondly this was also the 24th month since Golden Arrow was born. A newsletter which sought to keep both tour guides and all other persons abreast with trends in our global tourism industry. Entertainment has been minimal with folklore and poetry occupying that space.



Herbert N K Allotei-Cofie

This year has been a hard one for West Africans as the deadly Ebola Virus Disease EVD struck Guinea, Sierra-Leone and Liberia. Mali and Nigeria were not spared from this misfortune as small numbers of cases were recorded there also. Some medical staff from Europe and the United States of America USA lost their lives as they gallantly fought to save the lives of many. Medicin San Frontier was there in the thick of things and has earned our admiration and respect as well. Good news is that the EVD has been eradicated and all West Africa is now Ebola-Free.

This year 2015 saw a rise in internet based sales in West Africa's tourism industry. More hotels received direct hits from clients via the internet. Tour operators received requests for mostly transport and tour guiding services only. This is going to get better next year as more tourism service providers in West Africa are opening websites and making themselves visible on the worldwide web. The West Africa Tour Guides Association is working on a new interactive website which will make our members more visible to the international tourism market. We look forward to receiving more direct requests from visitors in the coming year.

We cannot re-count this year's activities without celebrating our acceptance as affiliates into the prestigious World Federation of Tourist Guide Associations WFTGA. We have enjoyed fantastic relations with their hard working Executives. Our relationships with the South-East Asia Tour Guides Association SEATGA and the Guides Association of New York City have been mutually beneficial so far. We however look forward to further strengthening these relationships in the near future.

To our 40,000+ readers around the globe, we will continue to listen to your feedbacks and do as you say where possible. To all tourist guides on our planet, we look forward to a better relationship with you in the coming year. And to all tourist guides and tour managers in West Africa we encourage you to continue marketing our region as one destination as we build the foundation for a true world-class tourism industry in West Africa.

West Africa is ready to thrill you in 2016. And our association is well represented in Benin, Ghana, Mali, Sierra Leone and Togo. We can facilitate tourist guide and tour management services in these countries.

We look forward to serving your tour groups in 2016.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Herbert N K Allotei-Cofie'.

Herbert Nii Kpakpo Allotei-Cofie

Founder and Interim President, WATGA/ AGTAO

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FEATURE

10 MOST POPULAR DESTINATIONS ON PLANET EARTH

Culled From Travel & Tour World; November 24, 2015

DESTINATIONS that dominated the headlines for all the wrong reasons in 2015 are now considered to be the must visit hotspots for travelers in 2016.

From Bali, to Greece and some home grown favorites like the Northern Territory, Flight Centre's team of experts has issued a medley of 10 must-visit destinations for 2016.

Flight Centre's head of leisure travel Tom Walley said the top 10 destinations for 2016 have been selected based on previous years' booking data, key factors such as what customers are enquiring about and what the travel industry has to offer in 2016.

"Event based travel and up-and-coming destinations are high on the priority list for customers and we expect these trends to continue," Mr. Walley said. "Old favourites such as Vanuatu and Bali will continue to be popular regardless of the events of 2015 and we expect Australian destinations will also be high on the list as travelers choose to explore our own backyard due to uncertainties surrounding the dollar."

1. BALI



Despite suffering under a harsh media glare in 2015, the popular holiday destination is a resilient Aussie favourite that can't be matched. Numbers don't drop even during intense media scrutiny, which just proves that Bali can't be beaten. Flight Centre expects it to remain a popular destination in 2016 with the island consistently the number one destination for customers. The choice of flights has never been wider or more competitively priced with Tigerair boosting allocation, Air Asia X entering the market with new direct flights from Sydney and Qantas meeting the demand for a premium option to the island.

2. GREECE

Greece's financial woes may have dominated the news headlines in 2015 but Australian travelers were not deterred, with Flight Centre bookings up more than 52 per cent. Greece's default notice and resulting referendum was a major, world-wide news event with economist worried about the future of the Euro and travel companies concerned about the impact to bookings. Despite this, Flight Centre bookings surged with the uplift expected through 2016. Greece is also often found to be a cheaper entry point to Europe than London, Paris or Rome; when it comes to Greece, Flight Centre believes the question really is why shouldn't you go?

3. TASMANIA

It might be small but Flight Centre is predicting big things in the way of travel for Tasmania in 2016. Interest in the small island state is increasing and Flight Centre has seen a 24 per cent increase in bookings to Launceston while Hobart is up 27 per cent year-on-year.

Tasmania's unique wilderness, art and culture, focus on food and nod to its colonial history make it a big draw card and the state is perfect for driving holidays attracting families and grey nomads alike. Back in early 2016 is MOFO Festival from Hobart's MONA which is an ever growing event on the scene for art lovers and music fans while the winter festival Dark MOFO has a cult following that's set to increase.



4. VANUATU

Vanuatu has experienced a surge in popularity in recent months, despite the region's recent cyclone devastation. Recovery efforts have moved at a significant pace, with 85 per cent of hotels and resorts open and welcoming guests and more than 90 per cent of tours and activities operating as normal. This tourism resurgence is showing no signs of slowing down, with 2016 set to be a big year for bookings.

Offering a diverse range of island activities and some of the most authentic cultural experiences in the South Pacific, Vanuatu is perfect for families with children who don't want to give up their dream of an overseas island getaway. The island is also great for those who enjoy being a bit more adventurous. Vanuatu is home to one of the world's most accessible active volcanoes, Mt Yasur, where you can stand on the rim and look into the bubbling lava below. You can also snorkel at the underwater post office at Hideaway Island, river kayak, take a buggy tour to the famous Mélé Cascades Waterfalls and dive for ship wrecks with the world's largest wreck, SS President Coolidge, in Vanuatu's waters.

5. THE NORTHERN TERRITORY AND TOP END

Flight Centre has seen a 25 per cent year-on-year increase in bookings to Uluru and the Northern Territory is anticipated to be even more popular with tourists in 2016 thanks to recent hotel refurbishments and the introduction of some unique touring options.

Next year will see the launch of scenic flights over Australia's Red Centre, taking in Uluru and Mt Conner, and some unique on the ground tours such as a bush tucker trail and an overnight option to neighbouring Kings Canyon. Nearby, Darwin is also growing in popularity and is brimming with new products including accommodation, touring, restaurants and quirky bars. For the ultimate "Top End" Aussie adventure Flight Centre suggests travelers combine a trip to the red centre with some time in Darwin as well.

6. BRAZIL

It barely seems like yesterday that Brazil played host to FIFA football fans and now the country is gearing up for the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro. A total of 7.5 million tickets have been made available for the 16-day sporting event and a further 1.8 million tickets have been released for the 12-day Paralympics Games, creating what is expected to be Brazil's biggest and busiest tourism influx in history.

Flight Centre is anticipating a big surge in multi-stop fares ahead of the Games that are an economical way for savvy travelers to get there, plus increased bookings to other areas of Brazil and South America as travelers make the most of their long-haul holiday. As the largest country in South America, Brazil is jam-packed with things to see and do. It's one of the sexiest destinations in the world, known for its samba music, soccer stars and supermodel exports.

7. PORTUGAL

An up-and-coming European river cruise region with the next generation of ships on its way, Flight Centre believes 2016 is Portugal's year. Many travelers have already cruised the major rivers of Europe, including the Rhine and Danube, making Portugal's Douro River a less travelled alternative that is high on the wish list.

The increased interest has sparked rejuvenation in the industry with Scenic Tours leading the charge with a new luxury vessel launching in April, while Uniworld and Viking also present a high standard of cruise accommodation. Because it is still developing, travelers can get an authentic taste of life in Portugal as they port in rural villages that are unaccustomed to tourists. Cruising during harvest season in September and October is a great option for wine lovers while spring is also a picturesque time to cruise.

8. HONG KONG

Hong Kong is no longer just a stopover destination and Australians can't seem to get enough, with 60 per cent of travelers to the culturally diverse Chinese territory return visitors. Best known as a shoppers' paradise, Flight Centre believes Hong Kong will be a Mecca for travelers in 2016 with food, nightlife, attractions, sporting events, outdoor activities and the culture all big draw cards for Australian travelers.

Whether it's riding the Peak Tram to The Peak for a breathtaking view over the city and Victoria Harbour, experiencing a day of non-stop fun at Hong Kong Disneyland, riding with the locals on Star Ferry from Hong Kong island to Kowloon, enjoying the world's best dim sum or shopping at the countless malls and markets; there is something for everyone in this dynamic metropolis.

9. NEW CALEDONIA

Why New Caledonia for 2016? Because the country is one of the most overlooked beach destinations in the world. 2015's bookings have been up 178 per cent and this time Flight Centre won't let it slip under the radar.

A French country stranded on one of the world's largest lagoons, so very far from Paris but right on Australia's doorstep, New Caledonia is a unique destination not to be missed. Boasting the glamour of France with the hospitality of the South Pacific, New Caledonia is steeped in French colonial history yet has the beach vibe and culture of an exotic paradise. Key to its growing popularity among Australians is its proximity to Australian soil with Noumea a short two hour flight from Brisbane and less than three hours from Sydney.

10. NEW ZEALAND

Another Aussie favourite, New Zealand is a much-loved destination by Australians of all ages with the popular country just a hop, skip and jump from our shores. New Zealand has something for everyone and with increased competition for flight pricing between Air New Zealand and Jetstar and the dollar back in our favour, Flight Centre is confident Australians will continue to visit. New Zealand's magnificent landscape and coastline has been a backdrop to famous films and is rich in history and culture, has thousands of kilometres of walks and trails, spectacular islands and not to mention the geothermal areas and volcanoes; this small country is filled to the brim with things to do.

TOURISM TRENDS

Chinese Tourists Expected To Spend 1bn In UK By 2020



With overwhelming number of Chinese tourist coming to Britain, the country is hoping to capitalize on the surge from the largest outbound tourists coming to the UK. According to official statistics a 28 per cent rise was seen from 2014 with 90,000 Chinese tourists visiting the country in the first half of 2015. The government wants to create opportunities of increasing the spend capacity of Chinese tourists to £1bn by 2020. The number of Chinese visitors is increasing year on year with the numbers rising to 112 per cent since 2009, contributing revenue of £500 annually.

Chinese visitors are spending an average of £2,688 each per visit. The spending is likely to increase by 77 per cent according to the Oxford Economics. The Chinese middle class also happens to hold a large market for Europe. Britain is relaxing visa rules for them next year.

Tourists from China are also helping in generating jobs in the UK. Every 22 Chinese tourists can create additional jobs for the country. More than 70 UK hotels, retailers, tour operators showcased Britain and Chinese buyers at the annual 'Destination Britain China event' in Beijing starting from 25 November.

British travel suppliers showcased their destination and forge valuable business connections with China. This event will inspire more Chinese to come to Britain and explore the tourism potential of the nation.

Tourism And Business Affected As Brussels Remain Shut Fearing Terrorism Attack



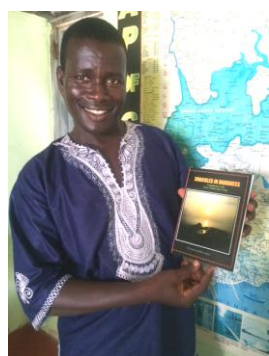
The companies that are taking part are: Real Gap, STA Travel, Hilton Worldwide, SKAL/Heathrow Academy and The Belgian and European Union capital locked down over authorities' concerns about a "serious and imminent" attack similar to the one in Paris. Recent events in Paris led the officials in Brussels to tighten security measures: the city locked down. Subway, schools, malls, museums, cinemas, restaurants and many shops are closed since Saturday. The decision led to concerns about how it could affect the country's economy. Tourist attractions have been so far the most affected points in the city. Foreign tourist began calling off their visits here, as 40 per cent of bookings were canceled.

Olivier Willocx, head of the Beci chamber of commerce, stated about the current situation: *"It's worse than the economic impact the attacks had on Paris itself. It's the psychological effect, people are anxious; they are expecting something to happen. "In Paris, they want to show they have survived, that their lives go on. Here it is the opposite: it didn't happen and people fear it will."*

The Christmas Eve is a vital period for the city tourism. The 150 hotels in the city usually open their gates for guests on November 27th, when the season is supposed to begin. But in this moment, Brussels faces an unprecedented situation. *"If it only is Saturday-Monday, the businesses can handle it. If you can't get your jeans today, you will get them next week. Museums will have a worse day or two but it will be manageable in the end. But if it goes on for several more days or weeks – it'll become very problematic"*, **Sanderijn Vanleenhove**, spokeswoman for the **UNIZO association**, declared.

According to Brussels' tourism office, the recent recovery after the financial crisis led to 3.3 million visitors in 2013, with a significant growth in 2014. Now, the city experiences another crisis that hurts the tourism sector.

Books Authored By WATGA Tour Guides



Felix Nguah-Author

SHACKLES IN DARKNESS

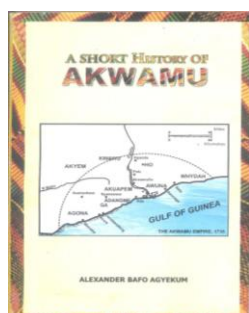
Shackles In Darkness is authored by Mr. Felix Nguah, Communications Director of the West Africa Tour Guides Association. An intellectual with B.A. Hons. French & Russian and M Phil in Tourism. Two times award winner of Best Tour Guide in Ghana and the CEO of Ghana Eco-Tours Ltd.

This easy to read book at US\$10.00 makes easy absorption of its content within less than 3 hours has enriched my research library and will definitely be re-visited each time I have to talk, guide or teach a group on the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade.

A SHORT HISTORY OF AKWAMU

Akwamuman, a great empire which stretched from the present day Volta lake area in Ghana to Ouidah in Benin at its peak is captured in this book by Mr. Alexander Bafo Agyekum a retired educationist and an author of great repute. Mr. Bafo discussed how he spent the last 40 years of his life researching into Akwamuman. This book is only part of the research and he hopes to produce the voluminous work eventually if he receives publishing contract. Costs US\$8.00

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Media And Tourism Stakeholders Gather In Tunisia To Enhance Cooperation



Mr. Taleb Rifai, Secretary-General of The UNWTO

More than 300 participants convened in Tunis for the 4th UNWTO International Conference on 'Tourism and the Media'. The event, held in cooperation with the Ministry of Tourism and Handicrafts of Tunisia, counted with the support of CNN International.

Over twenty countries were represented at the 4th UNWTO International Conference 'Tourism and the Media' that took place in Tunis under the patronage of the Ministry of Tourism and Handicrafts of Tunisia. The creation of new partnerships between tourism and media is an excellent opportunity for dialogue. Tourism, as does the media, has the noble mission of making people travel around the world, bringing cultures closer together and promoting the values of tolerance and solidarity” said the Minister of Tourism and Handicrafts of Tunisia, Salma Elloumi Rekik.

“Media constitute major stakeholders for the tourism sector, not only in terms of disseminating information, but also with regard to connecting with the public to promote a better understanding of the sector and the principles of sustainable tourism development.” said UNWTO Secretary-General, Taleb Rifai, opening the Conference. Talking about Tunisia he added “Tunisia is an example to the world in the way it is consolidating its democracy, as recognized by the recent award of the Nobel Peace Prize to the National Dialogue Quartet. Tunisia is also a destination of excellence and a long-term leader in the region and the world. We at UNWTO are fully confident in the ability of Tunisia’s tourism sector to overcome the current challenges and regain momentum”.

“Accuracy, responsibility and transparency are the framework in which we, the journalists, should operate,” said Jim Bittermann, CNN anchor and key note speaker at the Conference.

Bridging the gap

Sanam Shantyaiei, from France24, emphasized that “journalists need to be approached by those working in the tourism sector in an appropriate manner and with adequate resources as media constitutes the main channel to the general public.” In that sense, the impact of media was underlined by most of the speakers, like Taieb Zahar, Director of the Tunisian magazine ‘Réalités’ who stated that “the work of journalists currently has a great impact in the image and positioning of countries.”

Communicating in times of crisis was also addressed during the Conference with participants stressing the need for professional coverage but also access to information and facilitation of resources from tourism authorities in a timely manner. In that regard, Mr. Richard Barnes, Editor-in-Chief at Cleverdis gave some recommendations to parties involved in the tourism sector. “Tourism authorities should look to the different channels to reach media, not only through press releases, for instance. If they communicate with the tourism agencies, they will reach also the general public and this will be a great plus for the country,” he said.

As the Conference aimed at fostering a new framework of interaction with the media, a number of recommendations were emphasized through the different debates and exchanges. Among those, “be credible, close, on target, available, transparent, realistic, a facilitator, useful to and respectful of the media angle” were underlined.

“Media is the best partner that you can have, so do not be afraid of the media as journalists are the best catalyzer of your work”, concluded Mr. Taleb Rifai, UNWTO Secretary General closing the event



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