

Climbing the Mountains to Sacred Lake Bosomtwi



There were five of us storytellers from The National Association of Black Storytellers who went to Kumasi from Accra, Ghana, West Africa. Vanora, Queen Nur, Arthuretta, Debra, and myself. We initially travelled to Accra, Ghana for participating in the 2015 Panafest Festival. Our leader, Queen Nur arranged a side trip to Kumasi. In visiting this part of the homeland, it was like going from one mountain top to another. I live at the top of Backbone Mountain in West By God, West Virginia. Mountain folks around the world have many things in common.



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The Chief, Nana Oti Aware, had us stop beside the road and shows us some of the sacred plants and places for the Ashanti people.

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The mountains reminded me of home. My West Virginia hills.

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When we come to a village there were stands of fruit trees and coffee. Slowly people became aware of our arrival – visitors and the their chief.

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We follow the village leader, Seth, our translator and liaison, and Chief

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Lake Bosumtwi is the only natural lake in Ghana. It is situated within an ancient impact crater that is about 10.5 kilometres (6.5 mi) in diameter.[2] It is about 30 km (19 mi) south-east of Kumasi, the capital of Ashanti, and is a popular recreational area. There are about 30 villages near the crater lake of Lake Bosumtwi, with a combined population of about 70,000. The most popular amongst the villages where tourists usually settle is Abono.

The Ashanti consider Bosumtwi a sacred lake. According to traditional belief, the souls of the dead come here to bid farewell to the goddess Asase Ya.

The legends say that in 1648 an Ashanti hunter named Akora Bompe from the city of Asaman was chasing an injured antelope through the rainforest. Suddenly, the animal disappeared in a small pond. It was as if this body of water wanted to save the animal's life. The hunter never got the antelope, though he settled close to the water and started catching fish. This place he named "Bosomtwe", meaning "antelope god". This story suggests that at that time the lake level was very low. The large dead trees standing offshore in the lake also evidence this, for they are over 300 years old.

The Abrodwum Stone is held to be the spiritual centre of the lake. Here, when there is such poor fishing it is considered a bad omen, the lake people sacrifice a cow. This act is celebrated in the presence of the Ashanti king, the Asantehene. In the ceremony, the cow's innards are given to the stone and the rest is thrown into the lake. The crowd rushes into the water with cutlasses and axes to take their share of the meat.

There is a traditional taboo against touching the water with iron and modern boats are not considered appropriate. The padua, a wooden plank requiring considerable skill to maneuver, is the legitimate method. Other taboos such as not washing, bathing or throwing effluents into the Lake that were formerly strictly observed, aided in maintaining the purity and health of the Lake.[4] However, these taboos are not observed by residents or visitors due to their weak implementation by the Abono Traditional Council.

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fish species in the lake is the endemic cichlid *Hemichromis frempongi*, and the near-endemic cichlids *Tilapia busumana* and *T. discolor*

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Our Driver - Eric

