



Côte d'Ivoire

📍 225 / POP 23.4 MILLION

Includes ➔

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Best Places to Sleep

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Why Go?

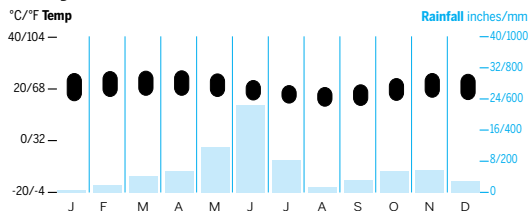
Côte d'Ivoire is a stunner, shingled with starfish-studded sands, palm-tree forests and roads so orange they resemble strips of bronzing powder. This is a true tropical paradise, and a country that is striding towards economic progress – it's a nation that is fast modernising its lifestyle and culture, but managing to do so without losing its identity.

In the south, the Parc National de Taï hides secrets, species and nut-cracking chimps under the boughs of its trees, while the peaks and valleys of Man offer a highland climate, fresh air and fantastic hiking opportunities through tropical forests.

The beach resorts of low-key Assinie and arty Grand Bassam were made for weekend retreats from Abidjan, the capital in all but name, where lagoons wind their way between skyscrapers and cathedral spires pierce the blue heavens.

When to Go

Abidjan



Nov–May Dry season and best time to visit; beaches are best during this time.

May–Jul Rainy season in the south, along with October to November.

Oct–Jun Best time for hiking in the north. Parc National de Taï is best outside wet season.

ABIDJAN

📍 20, 21, 22, 23 / POP 4.5 MILLION

Côte d'Ivoire's economic engine is strapped between lagoons and waterways, overlooking the crested waves of the Atlantic. At first glimpse, you wonder if these shiny skyscrapers can really be West Africa, but once you walk around Abidjan's neighbourhoods, local life comes alive and the city's vibrant tropical mood is revealed.

Abidjan is a challenging city to move around – it's vast and connected by mini-motorways – and you'll have to get in the swing of hailing taxis, negotiating fares and buzzing down the busy roads in order to get from one spot to another. But each neighbourhood's distinct feel gives you an insight into the vast scope of Abidjan's character and contradiction; it's quite common for sharp luxury to exist right next to painful poverty.

Make sure to dip into the markets, street-food stops, art galleries and sleek bars.

Sights

★ Galerie Cécile Fakhoury

GALLERY

(Map p242; 📍 22-446677; www.cecilefakhoury.com; Boulevard Latrille, Cocody; 🕒 10am-7pm Tue-Sun) **FREE** An absolute trove of African contemporary art, this cubical, 600-sq-metre gallery features the best of the continent's artists, from sculpture and painting to photography. Check the website for individual exhibitions or just explore what's on at the time. A real gem of a place.

Hôtel Ivoire

HISTORIC BUILDING

(Map p242; 📍 22-482626; www.sofitel.com; Blvd Hassan II, Blokosso) Every middle-class Abidjanian holds a dear memory of Hôtel Ivoire. Built in 1963 by Israeli architect Moshe Mayer, it was the place in town to go ice skating and see a movie (the cinema still stands, though the ice rink, unfortunately, does not). Even if you don't stay here, it's worth visiting this hotel for its unique retro African decor.

La Pyramide

NOTABLE BUILDING

(Map p244; cnr Ave Franchet d'Esperey & Blvd Botreau-Roussel) Some of the buildings of Le Plateau are as breathtaking up close as from a distance. La Pyramide, designed by the Italian architect Rinaldo Olivieri and built between 1970 and 1973, was the first daring structure and is considered a highlight of African modernism in architecture. A concrete pyramid striped horizontally with balconies, it rests upon a gigantic cubic pillar, lifting itself over the city's skyline.

Marché de Cocody

MARKET

(Map p242; Blvd de France; 🕒 9am-4pm) The super lively Marché de Cocody is a labyrinth of stalls that offer every type of souvenir you can possibly imagine, including wooden sculptures and dishes, antiques, jewellery and traditional decorations. Bargain hard.

Cathedrale St Paul

CHURCH

(Map p242; Blvd Angoulvant, Le Plateau; 🕒 8am-7pm) **FREE** Designed by Italian architect Aldo Spirito, the Cathedrale St Paul is a bold and innovative modern cathedral. The stained glass is as warm and rich as that inside the Yamoussoukro basilica (p249).

Musée National

MUSEUM

(Map p242; Blvd Nangul Abrogoua, Le Plateau; CFA2000; 🕒 9am-5pm Tue-Sat) The national museum houses a dusty but interesting collection of traditional art and craftwork, including wooden statues and masks, pottery, ivory and bronze.

Sleeping

La Nouvelle Pergola

HOTEL \$

(Map p242; 📍 21-753501; www.hotelnouvellepergola.com; Blvd de Marseille, cnr Rue Pierre et Marie Curie, Zone 4; d CFA30,000; 📞 📺 📺) For reasonable rooms on a budget, La Nouvelle Pergola is an OK bet. There are over 130 rooms in this complex, which includes a pool, a nightclub and wi-fi – though it has none of Côte d'Ivoire's traditional charms.

★ Bushman Café

BOUTIQUE HOTEL \$\$

(📍 88-358508; Riviera 4, Ciad, Cocody; r from CFA60,000; 📞 📺) French-Ivoirian couple Alain and Pascale run this fusion of hotel and restaurant, which offers impeccable style, local art and artists, the most exquisite decor, lush rooms and gourmet food. Every corner of this three-storey townhouse is spoken for with antiques and art collected by Alain, who also commissioned Ivoirian artists to adorn the walls.

★ La Licorne

BOUTIQUE HOTEL \$\$

(Map p242; 📍 22-410730; Rue des Jardins, Deux Plateaux Vallons; r CFA65,000-90,000; 📞 📺 📺) La Licorne is a pretty boutique hotel run by a friendly French family. Rooms are individually decorated, and there's wi-fi, a bar, a hot tub, a book exchange and a decent restaurant.

Le Griffon

BOUTIQUE HOTEL \$\$

(Map p242; 📍 22-416622; Rue des Jardins, Deux Plateaux Vallons; r CFA45,000-75,000; 📞 📺 📺) This boutique hotel offers beautifully deco-