

# INTERESTING FACTS about VODZA

## Location & Overview

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Vodza is a coastal village in the Keta Municipal District of the Volta Region of Ghana, and approximately 140 kilometres (87 miles) from Lome, Togo. Part of the Anlo state, Vodza's culture is deeply intertwined with the broader Anlo Ewe identity, and history of migration and colonial trade.

## Historical Highlights

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Vodza became a part of the early coastal settlements of the Anlo people following the Anlo migration from Notsie (in present-day Togo) around the 17th century. Although not as prominent as Keta or Anloga, Vodza was part of the network of towns engaged in trade and commerce with European traders and other West African merchants during the pre-independence era.

## Economic Activities

**Fishing:** With easy access to the Atlantic Ocean and the Keta Lagoon, fishing is a major occupation in the Vodza-Adzido-Kedzi area. However, sea erosion continues to pose significant threats to fishing livelihoods, including reduction in fish catch.



**Salt Production:** The Vodza-Adzido-Kedzi area used to be one of the key salt-mining areas in the Volta Region, with mining activities in the Keta Lagoon occurring during the dry season. Constant flooding of the Lagoon due to sea erosion, however, has destroyed the mining of salt, which was historically important for food preservation and trade, thus depriving communities in the area of an important source of income.

**Loss of Other Commercial Activities:** Sea erosion displaced most of the population and led to the loss of a large portion of land, including farm lands and coconut plantations. Other commercial activities, including the docking of ships carrying merchandise, were also affected.



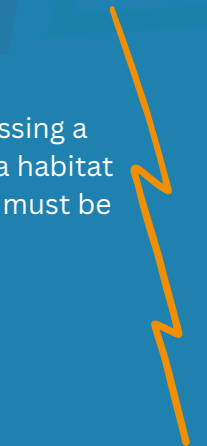
## Natural Environment

**Water Bodies:** The Atlantic Ocean and Keta Lagoon, Ghana's largest lagoon, constitute the main water bodies in the Vodza-Adzido-Kedzi area. Encompassing a large area of open brackish water, floodplain and marshland, the Lagoon is a habitat for a wide range of plant and animal life, including endangered species that must be protected and conserved.



## Flora and Fauna

The Keta Lagoon Complex Ramsar Site is considered one of the most important coastal wetlands and water birds site on the Gulf of Guinea Coast. Dominated by scrubland and extensive mangrove forest, it attracts more than 72 species of resident and migratory birds with an estimated population of over 100,000 birds. The Lagoon is also home to several species of rodents, Nile monitor lizards, African royal pythons, sea turtles, manatees, invertebrates such as crabs and shrimps as well as raffia plants. In 1992 the Keta Lagoon was placed on the list of Wetlands of International Importance by the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

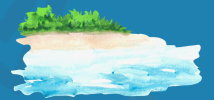


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**The Keta Lagoon** The effects of sea erosion, first recorded in 1907, remains a constant challenge for residents of Vodza and neighbouring communities. The problem was exacerbated by the construction of the Akosombo hydroelectric dam (1961-1965), which put the entire Eastern Coast of the Volta Region at risk from flooding. Sea erosion and flooding has destroyed many historical places, such as Geraldo de-Lima's Slave Holding House in Vodza, schools, churches and many beautiful buildings.



**The Keta Sea Defence Project:** In 1999, the Government of Ghana constructed a Sea Defence Wall from Keta to Hlorve to prevent erosion and flooding. Land was also reclaimed by dredging the Lagoon to create an extended shore line from the sea, and a canal built between the Lagoon and the sea to regulate the flow of water.



## Cultural Vibes

**03 Festivals:** The Vodza-Adzido-Kedzi communities are endowed with cultural elements such as festivals, food, music, dance, traditional beliefs and practices. The people take part in the annual Hogbetsotso Festival, which commemorates the escape of the Anlo Ewe people from Notsie to their present location. Highlights of the festival include a durbar of chiefs, colorful regalia and traditional dress, music, drumming, dancing and a reenactment of the migration story.



**Religion:** While Christianity is widely practiced in Vodza, traditional beliefs and practices, including those linked to the sea and ancestral spirits, remain significant in the community.



## Famous People

**04 Philip Gbeho:** Vodza has produced many accomplished sons and daughters, the most famous being Philip Gbeho, composer of Ghana's national anthem. Born on Saturday, 14 January 1904, in Vodza, his father, Doe Gbeho, was a fisherman. His mother, Ametowofa, from the Gadzekpo family, was a trader reputed to have musical talent, and a leader of the female singers drumming and dancing group in the village. Philip Gbeho was a pianist and violinist as well as an accomplished indigenous musician who played nearly all the drums of the Ewe Agbadza orchestra and taught traditional Anlo songs.



**James Victor Gbeho:** James Victor Gbeho, the son of Philip Gbeho, is a distinguished career diplomat and politician who has served in various capacities at Ghana's diplomatic missions abroad. The highlights of his career include serving as Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Ghana to the European offices of the United Nations in Geneva (1978-80) and Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York City from 1980 to 1990, with concurrent accreditation to Cuba, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago. From 2010 to 2012 he was President of the ECOWAS Commission. He was also Ghana's Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1997 to 2001 and Member of Parliament for the Anlo Constituency between 2001 and 2005.



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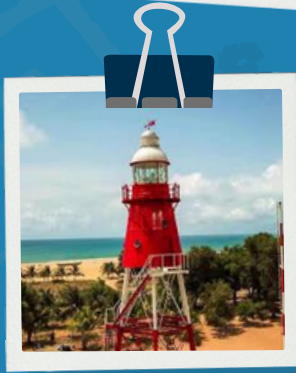
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## Must-See and Do Attractions



**Vodza Easter Regatta:** The Vodza Easter Regatta is fast becoming a must-do Easter activity in Ghana, attracting scores of visitors from within and outside the Volta region as well as the diaspora. It started in 2022 as a collaboration between the Vodza Ecotourism Initiative (VEI), a community based Non- Governmental Organization, and residents and indigenes of Vodza.

The Regatta is a canoe racing competition showcasing several male and female boating teams from Vodza and neighboring communities in the Volta region. The day also features a swimming competition, a sampling of the best of Anlo cuisine at a food fair, and a health screening exercise. The Regatta weekend kicks off on Good Friday with a Woezor (welcome) Night and climaxes with a Grand Musical Concert on the night of the Saturday Regatta and Swimming competitions.



**Proximity to Keta:** Vodza is close to the historical town of Keta, once a major trading post during colonial times, and known for landmarks such as **Fort Prinzenstein**, **Cape St. Paul Lighthouse** and the **St. Michael Co-Cathedral Church**.

**Pristine Beaches:** There are beautiful sandy beaches along the coast of the Vodza-Adzido-Kedzi areas, some created when groynes, which were constructed as part of the sea defence, trapped sand sediments from the sea.



**Islands:** There are four Islands on the Vodza stretch of the Lagoon, which are a habitat for exotic species of flora and fauna, many of which have yet to be identified and documented. The Islands, which are accessible by boat, emerged from deposited sand from the dredging of the Keta Lagoon. Visitors to the islands may be lucky to view some migratory birds between December and April every year. For conservation and sustainability of the islands, tree planting by visitors is encouraged.





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## About the Vodza Ecotourism Initiative (VEI)

The Vodza Ecotourism Initiative (VEI) is a community based non-governmental organization whose goal is to transform the ecological and cultural resources of Vodza and neighbouring communities into an iconic sustainable tourism destination.

VEI was established in 2021 with a 10-year tourism development plan and has since 2022, organised the annual canoe racing festival, dubbed the Vodza Easter Regatta, and other related activities such as a Swimming Competition, Food Fair, Health Screening, Cultural Night, Drumming and Dancing and a Grand Concert.

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