

GANVIE - THE TOWN ON STILTS



Ganvie in Benin is certainly worth visiting. The floating city is home to 30,000 people whose bamboo houses rest only on stilts. People have lived here for several centuries and have no intention of moving.

Ganvie is very often dubbed , the Venice of Africa'. **This unique city is built completely on water**, with the exception of a school, which is the only building set on dry land. Generations of Tofinu people have lived in simple bamboo houses on stilts and fully rely on the Nokoue Lake. **The only possible means of transport**, or leaving one's house as a matter of fact, **is simple wooden boats cut out of tree trunks**.

Historians are not sure about the exact date when the Tofinu people decided to build their homes on the Nokoue Lake, however, it is estimated they settled here sometime in the 1700s. Because the tribe had been threatened by an enemy tribe Dom-Homey and were in constant danger of enslavement, the chief came up with a plan. The Dom-Homey believed a water demon lived in the lake and feared it. This made the lake a safe haven for the Tofinu and they fully adapted to life on water.

Local families function more like basic economic units, where marriages are pre-arranged; most husbands fish and subsequently sell their catch to their wives who then try to sell the fish on. It is only the women who are responsible for looking after the children and providing food for their husbands.

While Ganvie is a true spectacle hard to find anywhere else on the planet, tourists should realize this part of the world is timeless. **Things have not changed much for generations and the concept of tourism means nothing to locals**. The lake is massively polluted and tourists may not be treated with full respect either. On the other hand, Ganvie is a proof of a man's will to live; in fact, Ganvie actually means 'we survived' and is truly worth a visit.

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