

Ilorin State Capital

Ilorin, City of Lawyers (An Article From This Day's Newspaper)

Serene, simple and secure, it is devoid of those construction cranes clinging to heaven-kissing complexes of concrete and metals usually visible in the skylines of Lagos and Abuja. Yet, it has new structures springing up daily. It is a city on the move, although seemingly motionless. And, for the first time visitors, Ilorin's sleepy outlook belies the vitality and dynamism of its ever-increasing population.

Easy Transportation

Ilorin's central location makes it easily accessible to all parts of the country by air, road transport or rail.

Although the Ilorin International Airport has been re-designated and equipped as International Cargo Airport, there are scheduled commercial flights to and from Ilorin by Over land and Capital Airlines. Current destinations include Lagos, Abuja and Jos.

By road, Ilorin is equidistant to all major population centers north and south of Nigeria. The city offers reliable road transport services to Lagos, Ogun, Osun, Ondo, Oyo Ekiti, Kogi, Niger, Kaduna and Plateau States. Similar services are available to and from Onitsha, Port Harcourt, Abuja, Aba and others.

Air, road or rail, whichever way you choose to come to Ilorin, you will be welcomed by streets kept spic-and-
–span through a private sector participation daily street cleaning programme.

The major roads in this city are generally good with relatively well-developed in-tra-city public transportation. Other roads that need repairs are gradually receiving the attention of the Kwara State Government.

There are three modes of transiting from place to place in the city – the most popular being the conventional taxis. Of course, car hire service providers are available in major hotels.

There are the commercial motorbikes commonly called “Express” in this place and the more recent addition on Ilorin roads, “Keke NAPEP”; imported commercial tricycles given on loan to beneficiaries in the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) introduced by the government of President Olusegun Obasanjo.

Compared to other cities and state capitals in Nigeria, transport fares in Ilorin are cheap. While taxis charge N20 per drop, a ride on the tricycle currently costs N10 per drop. The commercial motorbikes charge more but would take you to the nooks and cranny of the city that the taxis and tricycles would not.

Culture

The city is a confluence of cultures, populated by Yoruba, Hausa, Fulani, Nupe, Baruba, Igbo, other Nigerians and foreign nationals, its native cultures are struggling to survive with Christianity and Islam on the driving seats. Located on

the fringes of the elite GRA, the degree-awarding Unite Missionary Theological College (affiliated to the University of Ibadan) produces many church ministers, teachers and theologians of all denominations. The College of Arabic and Islamic Legal Studies in Adeta Area, trains Muslims in various Islamic, Arabic and social science disciplines.

Many ceremonial activities, some with religious aspects, take place in parts of the city throughout the year.

Ilorin presents the visitor with an impressive number of evocative tourist attractions such as the imposing Sobi Hill that was said to have offered protection to natives during inter-tribal wars in ancient times.

The Okuta Ilorin is located in Asaju's compound, Idi-Ape Quarters. It is the stone on which Ojo Isekuse, one of the founders of the city, used to sharpen his metal tools. It was actually called "Okuta ilo irin" (meaning stone for sharpening metals) and Ilorin is said to have derived its name from there. The stone was a deified object of worship and sacrifice offerings in the past.

Alfa Alimi's Mosque and residence is said to have been built in 1831. It was the first Juma'at Mosque in Ilorin.

Pottery is big business in Ilorin. The city boasts the biggest traditional pottery work-shops in Nigeria. They are located in Dada area of Okelele, Eletu in Oju Ekun, Okekura, Oloje, Abe Emi and Ita Merin.

Alive and vibrant also is the traditional textile industry. In various parts of the city, Aso-Oke, the wonderful textiles and hand-woven on simple looms are made in large quantities. Aso-Oke is patronized by traders and fashion designers from Kwara State, other parts of Nigeria and from abroad.

The cultural center houses the Kwara State Council for Arts and Culture, its performing troupe, and a gallery with artistic objects and antiquities. Souvenirs of cultural and historical values are also available.

Ilorin has a creation park formerly Amusement Park, now renamed Metropolitan Park is located on Unity Road, next to Guaranty Trust Bank. The Kwara State Stadium Complex has an Olympic-sized swimming pool with facility for diving among others. The only purpose-built Baseball Park in Nigeria is located in the Adewole area of the city.

The National Commission for Museum and Monuments has one of its centers in Ilorin with interesting cultural and ethnographic objects from Nigeria's many cultures.

Golf's popularity has been on the ascendancy here with more and more of the "big men" catching the bug. Since golf and business go hand-in-hand, membership of the Ilorin Golf Club comprise of professionals, businessmen and bureaucrats for whom the premises of one of the better golf courses that this nation has is an ideal rendezvous.

Two years ago, the First Kwara Open Golf Championship drew the largest turnout of golfers ever recorded in any such tournament in Nigeria.

City of Lawyers

Ilorin is a city in love with the wig and gown; its sons and daughters bestride Nigeria's bench and bar. The city has families who have produced lawyers and judges. Indeed the first lawyer to be given the silk in the whole of Nigeria's North is an indigene of this expanding city: Alhaji A.G.F. Abdulrazaq (SAN). He too has at least two lawyers in his family. One of the most respected judicial officers in the history of the Court of Appeal, Justice Mustapha Akanbi, who now heads the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC), is from Ilorin. He retired as President of the Court of Appeal. His son is also a lawyer. The Belgore family has made notable contributions to the profession especially with Justice Alfa Belgore of the Supreme Court and Justice Babtunde Belgore, retired Chief Judge of the Federal High Court. Another judicial officer from the Belgore family is currently serving in the judiciary of The Gambia.

Ilorin's Emir, Alhaji Ibrahim Sulu Gambari is a retired Justice of the Court of Appeal. Justice Saidu Kawu, retired Justice of the Supreme Court and Alhaji Aliyu Alarape Salma (SAN) are from Ilorin.

The Economy

The city's economic development is sprinting forward and the banking sector is responding to its breath-taking pace with more and more banks opening shops in the city.

The proliferation of bank branches has enabled improved bank services to reach more people and the many small-scale enterprises that are opening for business. It is also multiplying the amount of savings mobilized by the banking sector.

Banks with branches in Ilorin include:

- Gulf Bank
- Guaranty Trust Bank
- Chartered Bank
- Diamond Bank
- Standard Trust Bank
- First Bank
- Union Bank
- Afribank
- UBA
- Oceanic Bank
- Intercontinental Bank
- Equity Bank
- WEMA Bank
- City Express Bank
- Bank of the North
- Trade Bank
- Zenith Bank
- First Atlantic Bank

- Inland Bank

Key Industries

- Lubcon Limited
- Global Soap & Detergent
- United Foam
- Dangote Flour Mills
- Panat Feed Mill
- Tuyi Pharmaceuticals
- Biomedical Limited
- Padson Industries
- MOS-NAK Foods & Beverages
- Kwara Furniture Company
- RajRab Pharmaceuticals
- Coca-Cola
- Seven-Up Bottling Company

Night Life

Ilorin's sleepy outlook notwithstanding, nightlife thrives relatively here. For those who love night life, various interesting hangouts spread across the city would provide good entertainment, including hot sizzling pepper soup prepared with any of fresh fish, smoked fish, goat meat, snake meat, bush meat, snail and chicken. Eateries and hangouts in the city include the following:

- Mr Biggs Taiwo Road
- Tourist Kitchen – Ahmadu Bello Avenue, GRA
- Peacocks – Fate Road,
- Friends – GRA
- Gomola – Unity Road
- NUJ Press Center – Ahmadu Bello Avenue, GRA
- The Niche – Adewole Housing Estate.
- Mama Gaddafi Spot – Adewole Estate
- ITC Club House Gaa-Imam.
- Friends – New Yidi Road
- Gangan Spot – Jebba Road

- Sister Biggs & Jebba Road
- Iya Yusuf Food Canteen-Gaa-Akanbi Junction
- Temitope Food Canteen & Ajase-Ipo Road
- 2S Restaurant & Balogun Fulani Road

Institutions

- University of Ilorin
- Kwara State Polytechnic
- Colleges of Education
- College of Arabic and Islamic Legal Studies
- United Missionary Theological Seminary.
- School of Nursing and Midwifery
- National Centre for Agricultural Mechanization
- Agriculture and Rural Management Training Institute
- Michael Imoudu Institute for Labour Studies
- Federal training Center

Places of Interest

- Sobi Hill
- Okuta Ilorin
- Traditional Pottery workshops
- Alfa Alimi's Historical Mosque
- National Museum
- Ilorin Golf Club
- Baseball Park
- Kwara Stadium Complex
- Kwara Cultural Centre
- Bekandims
- Recreation Park
- Asa Dam
- Agba Dam
- International Cargo Airport.
- Kwara Hotel
- Henry George Restaurant

