

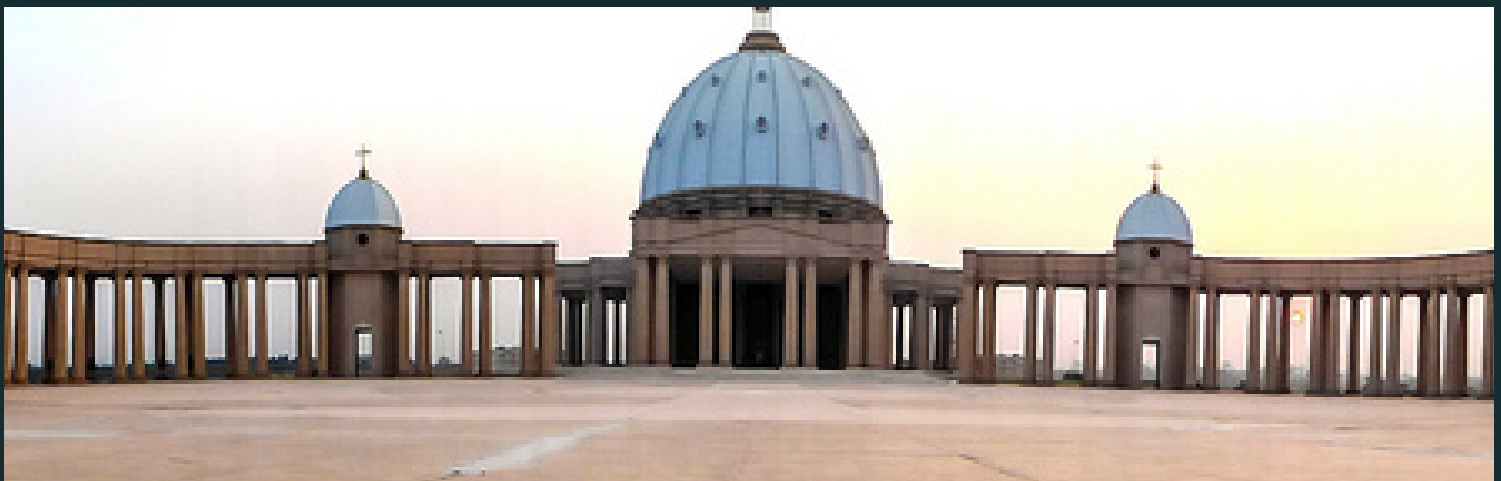
ARCHITECTURE

A VATICAN IN AFRICA?
IT'S THE WORLD'S LARGEST CHURCH AND A
COLOSSAL 1980 REPLICA



Nic Bothma—epa/Corbis

LIKE A MIRAGE IN THE DUSTY HAZE THAT SETTLES OVER THE AFRICAN BUSH, STANDS AN ALMOST EXACT REPLICA OF ST. PETER'S BASILICA IN THE VATICAN CITY. UPON ITS COMPLETION IN 1989, NOT ONLY DID THE LOOKALIKE STRUCTURE 'BORROW' THE DESIGN OF THE ROMAN RENAISSANCE DOME AND ENCIRCLED PLAZA, BUT MEASURING IN AT 30,000 SQUARE METERS, IT EVEN TOOK ST. PETER'S TITLE AS THE LARGEST CHURCH ON EARTH, SURPASSING THE GUINNESS WORLD RECORD. OH, AND THE WHOLE THING IS TOTALLY EMPTY.



FAMIL(C) GABYGBOUY

**BASILIQUE NOTRE-DAME DE LA PAIX DE
YAMOUSSOUKRO, ALSO KNOWN AS THE
“BASILICA OF THE BUSH”, IS THE ESTIMATED
\$300 MILLION INDULGENCE OF PRESIDENT
FÉLIX HOUPHOUËT-BOIGNY,**



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**THE IVORY COAST’S FIRST PRESIDENT AND THIRD
LONGEST-SERVING
LEADER IN THE WORLD AT THE TIME OF HIS DEATH
(AFTER
FIDEL CASTRO AND KIM IL-SUNG OF KOREA.)
PERHAPS YOU SEE WHERE THIS IS GOING!
DEMOCRAT OR DICTATOR (I’LL LEAVE THAT
ARGUMENT FOR A RAINY DAY), PRESIDENT FÉLIX
HOUPHOUËT-BOIGNY, THE IVORY COAST’S FIRST
PRESIDENT AND THIRD LONGEST-SERVING LEADER
IN THE WORLD AT THE TIME OF HIS
DEATH (AFTER FIDEL CASTRO AND KIM IL-SUNG OF
NORTHKOREA).**

Perhaps you see where this is going!



DEMOCRAT OR DICTATOR

(I'LL LEAVE THAT ARGUMENT FOR A RAINY DAY), HOUPHOUËT-BOIGNY WAS RULING A COUNTRY ALREADY IN DIRE FINANCIAL STRAITS WHEN HE DECIDED IT WOULD BE A GOOD IDEA TO BUILD A LUXURIOUS VATICAN CLONE IN THE OUTSKIRTS OF HIS HOMETOWN OF YAMOUSSOUKRO, SURROUNDED BY POVERTY.

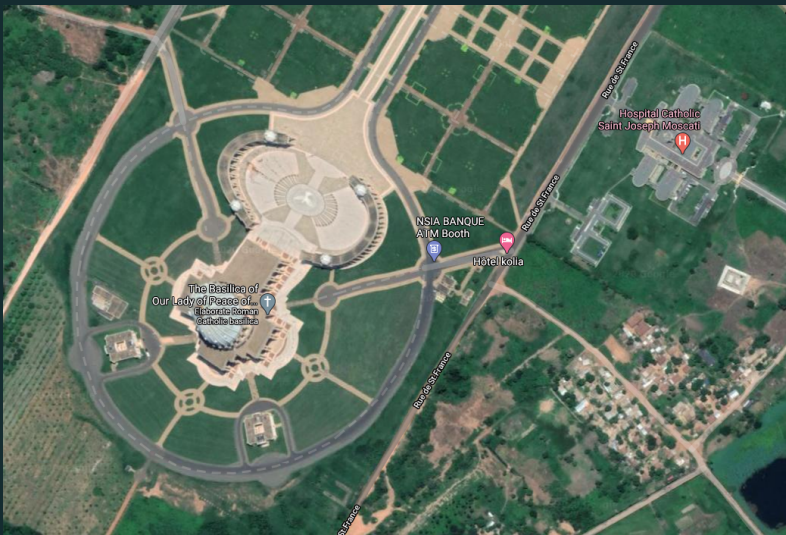


**AFTER IMPORTING 30
ACRES OF MARBLE FROM ITALY AND 23,000 SQUARE FEET OF CONTEMPORARY
STAINED GLASS FROM FRANCE---
WHEN ASKED ABOUT THE DETAILS OF THE CHURCH'S FINANCING, HE SIMPLY REPLIED
"A DEAL WITH GOD HAS BEEN DONE".
(ALL 7000 SEATS ARE ALSO INDIVIDUALLY AIR-CONDITIONED).**



(c) Jbdodanedd

**THE BASILICA TOOK
THREE YEARS TO BUILD, HEADED BY LEBANESE ARCHITECT, PIERRE
FAKHOURY, AND AN ARMY OF HARD LABORERS WHO WORKED SECRETLY BOTH DAY AND
NIGHT. WHEN THE VATICAN GOT WIND OF ITS COPYCAT DESIGN, POPE JOHN PAUL II
PERSONALLY REQUESTED THAT THE OBSERVATORY CROWNING THE DOME BE BUILT
SLIGHTLY LOWER THAN THE HEIGHT OF ST. PETER'S DOME. THE IVORIAN PRESIDENT
COMPLIED, BUT THEN WENT AHEAD AND TOPPED HIS DOME WITH A HUGE GOLD CROSS,
EARNING IT YET ANOTHER TITLE OF THE TALLEST CHURCH IN CHRISTENDOM.**



Aerial View via Google Maps



(c)A Al-MamunAdd a subheading

**IN FACT, THE WHOLE
THING IS ARGUABLY ONE BIG EMPTY AND OUTRAGEOUS CONTRADICTION. UP TO 18,000
PEOPLE CAN WORSHIP IN THE BASILICA (7,000 SEATED, 11,000 STANDING)
BUT
IN A NATION WHERE MORE THAN TWO THIRDS OF ITS PEOPLE AREN'T EVEN CHRISTIAN, IT
HAS A TOUGH TIME FILLING JUST A FEW SEATS. A RECENT VISITOR TO THE IVORY COAST
SAID THAT THERE COULDN'T HAVE BEEN MORE THAN THREE OTHER PEOPLE INSIDE WHEN
HE TOURED THE MASSIVE HOUSE OF WORSHIP. NEVERTHELESS, THE BASILICA IS
FLAUNTED IN THE COUNTRY'S TOURISM PROMOTION.
THIS (EVER SO SLIGHTLY DATED) TOURISM VIDEO SHOWS
THE BASILIQUE NOTRE-DAME DE LA PAIX DE YAMOUSSOUKRO
ALONGSIDE GOLF COURSES, HOTELS AND CASINOS.**

[LINK TO COTE D'IVOIRE-TOURISME](#)

[HTTPS://YOUTU.BE/9HUAisBbsKI](https://youtu.be/9HUAisBbsKI)

**IN REALITY, SEEMINGLY MISPLACED IN A BARREN AND POVERTY-STRICKEN LANDSCAPE, WHAT
WAS BUILT TO REPRESENT A COUNTRY'S POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC STABILITY, IS ANYTHING BUT
PERHAPS HOPING TO IMMORTALIZE HIMSELF AND HIS PRESIDENCY, DURING WHICH TIME THE
COUNTRY BRIEFLY PROSPERED FOLLOWING INDEPENDENCE FROM FRANCE, HOUPHOUËT-BOIGNY
COMMISSIONED HIS PORTRAIT BESIDE JESUS IN ONE OF THE STAINED-GLASS PANES INSIDE
THE BASILICA HE CALLED 'THE GREATEST CHURCH IN THE WORLD'. BUT THE PRESIDENT'S
LEGACY HAD LOST ITS SHINE, THE ECONOMIC PROSPERITY WAS SHORT LIVED AND
STABILITY WAS FLEETING. LESS THAN A DECADE AFTER THE GRAND MONUMENT WAS
COMPLETE, THE COUNTRY WAS PLUNGED INTO CIVIL WAR.**



**WHILE THE PEOPLE OF YAMOUSSOUKRO ARE LIVING IN SLUMS AND STRUGGLING TO SURVIVE,
THERE'S THE BASILICA, AN AFRICAN VATICAN TOWERING OVER THE HORIZON, WAITING TO
AIR CONDITION THE BOTTOMS OF SEVEN THOUSAND PEOPLE
WHO WILL PROBABLY NEVER COME.**

Source- *Messy Nussy Chic*