

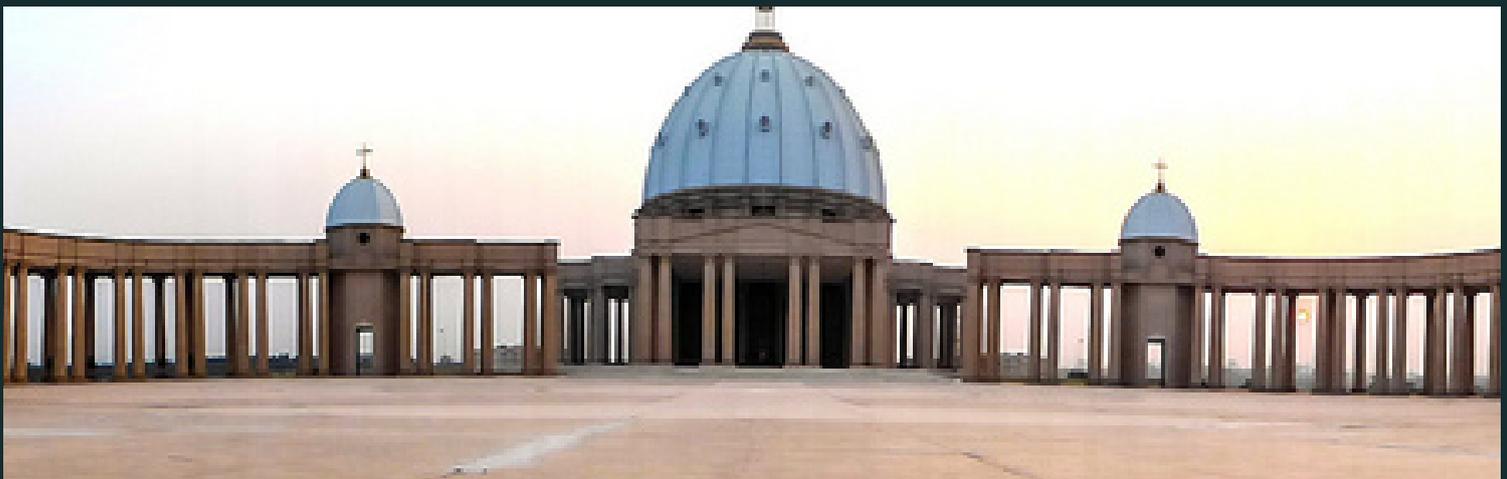
# ARCHITECTURE

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



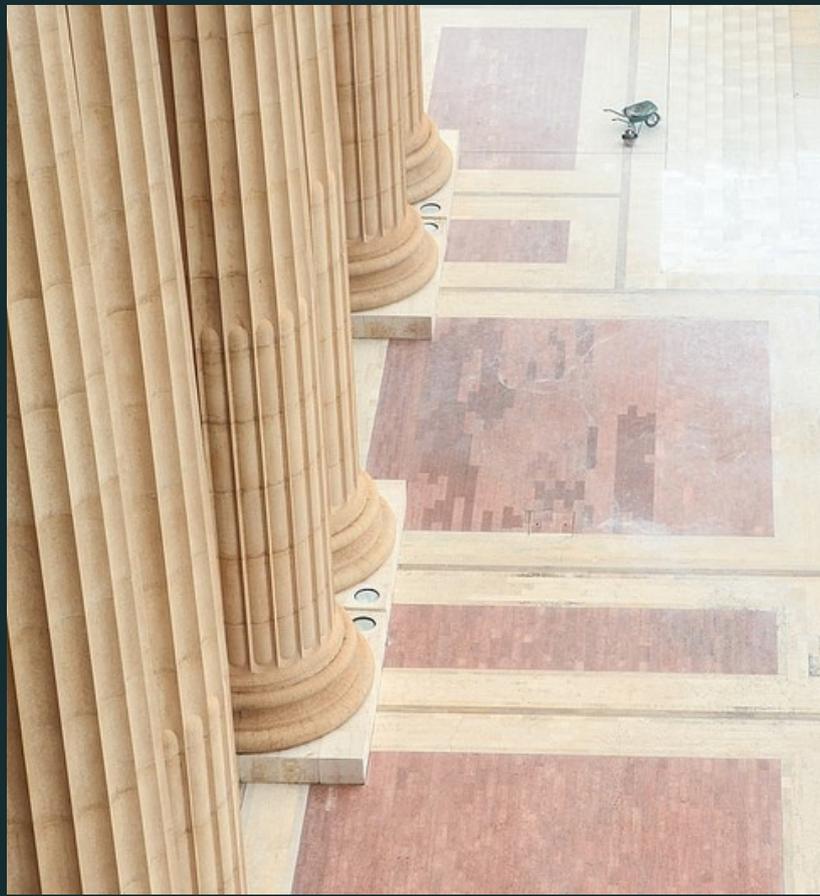
Nic Bothma—epa/Corbis

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.**

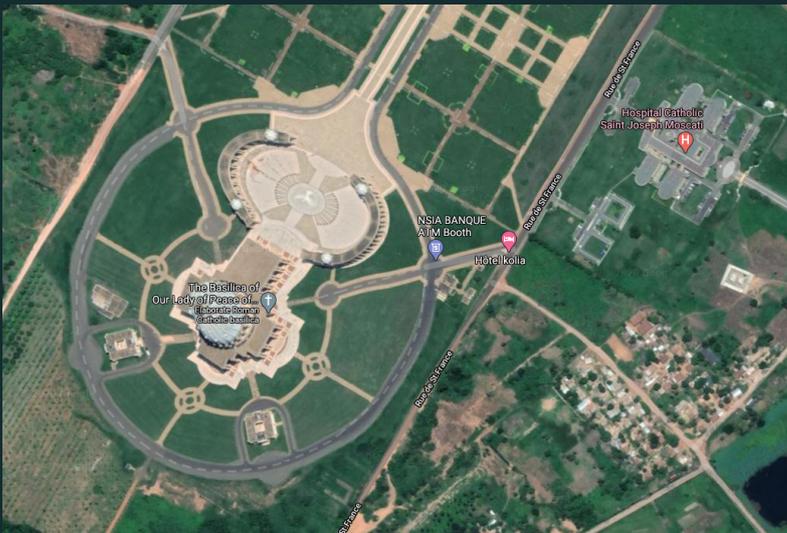


**AFTER IMPORTING 30  
ACRES OF MARBLE FROM ITALY AND 23,000 SQUARE FEET OF CONTEMPORARY  
STAINED GLASS FROM FRANCE---  
WHEN ASKED ABOUT THE DETAILS OF THE CHURCH'S FINANCING, HE SIMPLY REPLIED  
"A DEAL WITH GOD HAS BEEN DONE".  
(ALL 7000 SEATS ARE ALSO INDIVIDUALLY AIR-CONDITIONED).**



(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*