

# **HATMAN JOURNAL of HOSPITALITY and TOURISM**

publication of

HOSPITALITY and TOURISM MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIA (HATMAN).

Registered with the National Library of Nigeria

ISSN:2276-8297 eISSN:2756-4347

url:<https://hatman2010.org/journal/>

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Website: [www.hatman2010.org](http://www.hatman2010.org)

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## ECOTOURISM RESOURCES OF OLD OYO NATIONAL PARK AND THEIR LEVEL OF UTILIZATION

Okafor F. A.<sup>1\*</sup>  
Ogunjinmi A. A.<sup>2</sup>  
Oladeji, S. O.<sup>2</sup>  
Abokede, B.<sup>1</sup>  
Ajayi, G. O.<sup>2</sup>

### **Manuscript History**

Received: April, 2021

Revised: June, 2021

Accepted: September, 2021

<sup>1</sup>Old Oyo National Park, Oyo State, Nigeria

<sup>2</sup>Federal University of Technology, Akure, Nigeria.

\*Corresponding author: okaforaf@yahoo.com

### **ABSTRACT**

National Park was established in Nigeria to protect, preserve, conserve and manage representative samples of indigenous flora and fauna, and to promote ecotourism in the country. This study identified and mapped out the ecotourism resources of Old Oyo National Park and evaluated their level of utilization from 1997 to 2017. The study utilized remote sensing data, field observation, Geographic Information System Technology, interview and information from administrative records. Data collected from the study were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The study identified forty two (42) man-made and sixteen (16) natural attractions in the park. The study revealed that the Museum of Natural History was the most utilized facility within the period as it had the highest visitation record of 46,702 out of 97,453 tourists. This was followed by picnicking with a value of 20,224, while sport fishing had the least visit of 153 tourists, which represents 0.16% of total visits. This study indicates underutilization of some tourist attractions and facilities that are readily available. It is therefore important that the potentials of the Park as a tourist destination be better explored and widely publicized to further attract tourists, while efforts be made to remove constraints limiting ecotourism development and its utilization in the park.

**Keywords:** Ecotourism, potential, mapping, utilisation, national park.

### **To cite this article**

Okafor F. A., Ogunjinmi A. A., Oladeji, S. O., Abokede, B., & Ajayi, G. O. (2021). Ecotourism Resources of old Oyo National Park and their level of Utilization. 11(1), 1- 6.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Around the world, in countries at all development levels, many millions of jobs and businesses are dependent on a strong and thriving tourism sector. Tourism has also been a driving force in protecting natural and cultural heritage, preserving them for future generations to enjoy" (Pololikashvili, 2018), recreation and ecotourism are also expanding in the developing world (O'Connor *et al.*, 2009); visits to protected areas in Africa, Asia, and Latin America increased approximately 2.5 to 5% between 1992 and 2006 (Balmford *et al.*, 2009). Tourism is already the number one industry in many countries, in terms of foreign exchange earnings and job creation.

National Parks, aside from its primary role of conservation provides valuable revenue that is used to support wildlife research, education, livelihood of local communities close to the Parks and helps to generate international awareness of conservation issues (Ngoka, 2013). National parks, by preserving recreational attraction such as wildlife, archaeological sites, landscape/seascape, scenic sites, waterfalls, and geomorphologic sites provide

the potentials for a wide range of recreational activities which include; park viewing, mountain climbing, nature appreciation of flora, a landscape, warm spring bathing, boating, sport fishing, wilderness experience, bird watching, nature trails, nature refuge, hiking, excursion, adventure trips, and sporting activities.

Ecological tourism (ecotourism) refers to nature based tourism. Ecotourism is defined as "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education" (TIES, 2015). Although tourism generates wealth and employment, ecotourism has an added advantage of environmental conservation and management by having a lower impact on the environment compared to mass tourism / resort tourism. According to Ogunjinmi (2015), ecotourism as a sub-sector of global tourism, has become a growing phenomenon, particularly in developing countries.

National parks are large natural or near natural areas set aside to protect large-scale ecological processes, along with the complement of species and

ecosystems characteristic of the area, which also provide a foundation for environmentally and culturally compatible spiritual, scientific, educational, recreational and visitor opportunities (Dudley, 2008). Nigeria has seven national parks strategically located across five out of the six geo-political zones in the country (none in south east) with a diverse flora and fauna resources peculiar to the different zones. The total land area covered by Nigeria national parks is about 2.4 million hectares (Nigeria National Park Service, 2018). Ecotourism being an integral part of the objectives that led to the creation of the national parks, its tourism capacity and potentials are yet to be properly actualized. Also it has been debated that ecotourism activities sustain rural development and create considerable income for the park support zone communities. The long-term success of ecotourism is premised on the features and facilities available that could serve as anchors for sustainable tourism. Identifying tourism resources at Old Oyo National Park is very important to the overall development of tourism activities and policies necessary to improve the Park's tourism index and sustainability as well as tourism development planning and priority. Furthermore, studies on utilisation of the existing tourism resources is important for sustainability of the sites' goals as tourist destinations and conservation centre and could suggest innovative ways for increasing utilisation of the resources. Although, studies on tourism/ecotourism have been conducted in Old Oyo National Park (Oladeji *et al.*, 2012, Ogunjinmi and Braimoh, 2018, Ogunjinmi *et al.*, 2020), with focus on different aspects of ecotourism in the park, this study is germane for the identification of gaps in the utilisation of ecotourism resources and proffer solutions for increasing level of utilisation for sustained ecotourism development in the park. This study aimed to identify and map the ecotourism resources of Old Oyo National Park (OONP) and determine the level of utilisation of the ecotourism resources.

## METHODOLOGY

### Study Area

The study was conducted in Old Oyo National Park. Old Oyo National Park originated in two earlier administrative forest reserves; Upper Ogun established in 1936 and Oyo-Ile established in 1941. These were converted to game reserves in 1952, then combined and upgraded to a National Park by Decree Number 36 of 1991, which was later repealed

and- replaced with Decree (now Act) Number 46 of 1999 presently established by the National Park Service Act. Cap 65 of the law of the Federation of Nigeria (LFN) 2004. Old Oyo National Park (Figure 1) is geographically located between latitude  $8^{\circ}10'$  and  $9^{\circ}05'$  North and longitudes  $3^{\circ}35'$  and  $4^{\circ}21'$  and centred on North latitude  $8^{\circ}36'00''$  and East Longitude  $3^{\circ}57'05''$ . The Park covers a land area of approximately 2,512 sq Km making it the fourth largest National Park in Nigeria. The park is made up of six (6) administrative ranges, *Tede, Yemoso, Marguba, Sepeteri, Tessi, and Oyo-Ile* ranges.

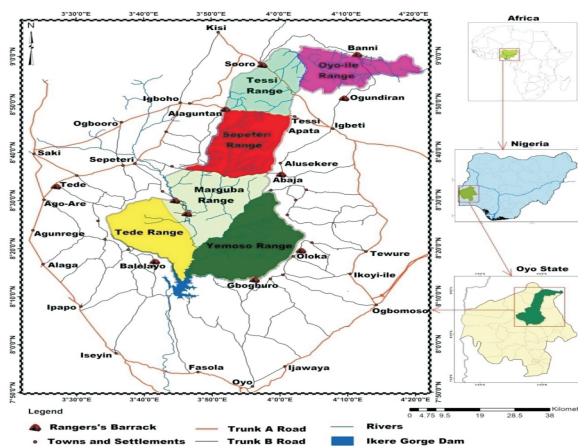


Figure 1: Map of Old Oyo National Park

### Data Collection and Analysis

Identification and mapping of recreational potentials of Old Oyo National Park were carried out using Olaniyi *et al.* (2016) method of mapping ecotourism resource of T. A. Afolayan Wildlife Park. This was carried out by collecting the spatial data of ecotourism resources in the locations using handheld Global positioning System (GPS) with their photographs using a digital camera. The park boundaries and some nature trails were tracked using the same equipment. The data obtained were uploaded into Quantum GIS software (QGIS 2.8) environment for interpretations. From these, the map of the ecotourism recreational potentials resources was produced using GIS overlap including geo-tagging each of the ecotourism resource locations with its photograph to generate an ecotourism resource map.

Reconnaissance survey was carried out in the park through field survey to assess, locate and determine the potentials and tourism features in the area. The researcher also went round to confirm the recreational potentials identified from the tourism official. Each potential was geo-referenced and

Garmin 32. A recreation potential map was developed from the geo-referenced data through GIS ArcMap 10.2 because it is vector based. Information on visitation of tourists was obtained from the administrative record of Old Oyo national park.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Recreation and Tourism Facilities and Resources in Old Oyo National Park

Ecotourism and recreational facilities are presented in Tables 1-4 and Figure 2. Results show that the tourism and recreational features are a mix of natural features and manmade features. At the head office (Table 1), the facilities are tourists' chalets, bar, restaurants, orphanage animals (Plate 1), multipurpose hall (event centre), and museum (Plate 2). In Marguba Range, the facilities available at Akoto Base Camp include Standard chalets, VIP Suite, restaurants, and bar, swimming pool, table tennis court, and Gymnasium fitness Hall, fitness equipment, and students' hostels. In Ibuya (Table 3), the facilities and resources are Ibuya pool (Plate 3), wild animals (Plate 4), tourist lodge, research centre, and wooden hide. The tourist facilities and resources at Oyo Ile are the ruins of the Old Oyo Empire and include Mejiro industrial grinding stone (Plate 5), mounds of house ruins, information Centre, Kosomonu hill, outer defence wall ruins, Agbaku cave (Plate 6), Koso rock (Plate 7) Ogun Jokoro (Plate 8), Oke-Agbele rock formation (Plate 9), Royal tomb of four Alafins located at Igbo-oba, Igboho, and Ikere Gorge Dam for water recreation. At Yemoso range, Oke Gbogun (Plate 10) is discernable. These are indications that the park is rich in natural and manmade facilities and heritage resources that are important for the development of tourism. These imply that Old Oyo National Park is home to natural, historical and cultural resources significant for ecotourism development and the resources are comparable with what obtains in Kure mountains national park, Turkey (Açıksöz *et al.*, 2010).

Table 1: Recreational facilities located at the Park head office, Isokun, Iseyin Road, Oyo.

S/No.	Features	Quantity	Type of Attraction
1	Chalets as Tourist Points	2	Human Made
2	Restaurant and Bar	2	Human Made
3	Event Centre (201 visitor's capacity) (Multi - Purpose)	1	Human Made
4	Museum of Natural History (Capacity: 32 visitors)	1	Human Made
5	Indoor game House	1	Human Made
6	Captive animal (Duiker)	1	Natural
7	Captive animal (Tortoise)	1	Natural
8	Lawns (A, B, C) for outdoor events, camping	3	Human Made
9	Oranyan Festival (Aafin) (Annual – September or October)		Human Made

Table 2: Ecotourism and recreational facilities at Akoto Base Camp

S/No.	Features	Range	Attractions
1	Akoto Base Camp Gate House	Marguba Range	Human made
2	Akoto Restaurant	Marguba Range	Human made
3	Akoto Reception complex	Marguba Range	Human made
4	Akoto Standard Chalets	Marguba Range	Human made
5	Akoto Swimming Pool	Marguba Range	Human made
6	Gymnasium Hall	Marguba Range	Human made
7	Suite A	Marguba Range	Human made
8	Suite B	Marguba Range	Human made

Table 3: Tourist features at Ibuya (Marguba Range)

S/No	Features	Quantity	Type of attraction
1	River Ogun		Natural
2	Tourist Lodge	2	Human Made
3	Ajaku-Ibuya Track		Human Made
4	Maha Tracks A, B for game viewing		Human Made
5	Ibuya Pool		Natural
6	Wooden Hide	1	Human Made
7	Yemoso Hill	1	Natural

Table 4: Recreation and tourism facilities and resources in Oyo-Ile of the Park

S/No.	Features	Range	Attractions
1	Inner Defence Wall 1	Oyo-Ile Range	Human made
2	Inner defence Wall 2	Oyo-Ile Range	Human made
3	Outer defence wall 1	Oyo-Ile Range	Human made
4	Outer defence Wall 2	Oyo-Ile Range	Human made
5	Mejiro Industrial Site (consisting of black smiting, Iron forgery and grain milling sites)	Oyo-Ile Range	Human made
6	Mejiro Rock	Oyo-Ile Range	Natural
7	A large water reservoir for dry season utilization	Oyo-Ile Range	Human made
8	Palace (Aafin) of Alaafin alongside the town hall.	Oyo-Ile Range	Human made
9	Akesan Market	Oyo-Ile Range	Human made
10	Agbaku rock Shelter	Oyo-Ile Range	Natural
11	Python Cave	Oyo-Ile Range	Natural
12	Kosomonu Hill	Oyo-Ile Range	Natural
13	Mounds of House Ruins	Oyo-Ile Range	Human made
14	Esu Shrine	Oyo-Ile Range	Human made
15	Idi Ara Cave	Oyo-Ile Range	Natural
16	Baara	Oyo-Ile Range	
17	Koso rock	Oyo-Ile Range	Natural
18	Ogun Shrine	Oyo-Ile Range	Human made
19	Ogun jokoro	Oyo-Ile Range	Human made
20	Grinding Stone	Oyo-Ile Range	Human made
21	Old earthen Pots	Oyo-Ile Range	Human made
22	Pot Shields	Oyo-Ile Range	Human made
23	Snags	Oyo-Ile Range	Human made
24	Mud walls	Oyo-Ile Range	Human made
25	Mounds of ashes	Oyo-Ile Range	Human made
26	Charcoal	Oyo-Ile Range	Human made
27	Oke Agbele	Oyo-Ile Range	Natural
28	Idi Are	Oyo-Ile Range	Natural
29	Mejiro Caves	Oyo-Ile Range	Natural
30	Information Centre	Oyo-Ile Range	Human made
31	Antete Shrine	Yemoso Range	Natural
32	Ikere Gorge Dam	Tede Range	Natural
33	Royal Cemetery, Igboho	Sepeteri Range	Human Made
34	Sango Deity	Oyo-Ile Range	Human Made

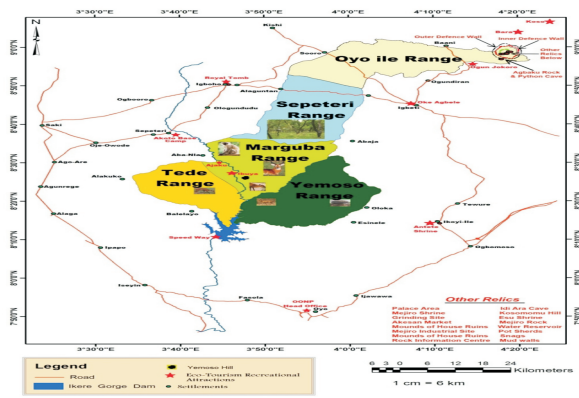


Figure 2: Map of Old Oyo National Park showing the recreation potentials and tourism facilities and resources in different locations of the Park



Plate 4: Kob (*Kobus kob*) at Marguba Range



Plate 1: Orphanage animals (Grey and Red Flanked Duikers)



Plate 5: Mejiro industrial Site 1



Plate 2: Museum of natural history

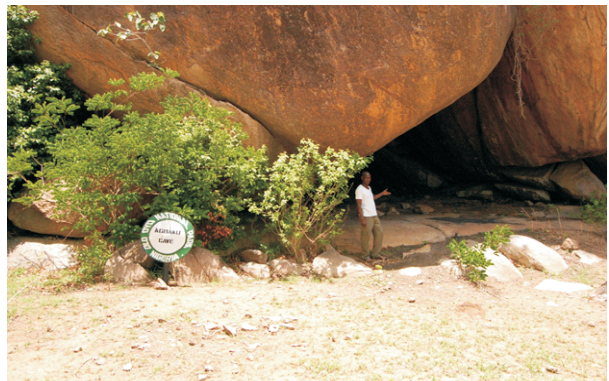


Plate 6: Agbaku Cave



Plate 3: Ibuya Pool in Marguba Range of the Park



Plate 7: Koso Rock



Plate 8: Ogun Jokoro at Jokoro village within Park environment



Plate 9: Oke-Agbele Rock Formation located at Igbeti



Plate 10: Oke Gbogun (Yemoso Range)

## Levels of Utilisation of Ecotourism Resources and Facilities in Old Oyo National Parks

Table 2 shows that total number of tourists who participated in utilisation of recreational attraction in Old Oyo National Park for tourism from 1997 to 2017 was 97,453. The number of tourists observed in this study is higher than what was reported by Olaoye *et al.* (2019) from 2009 to 2018 with 40,991 tourists at Kainji Lake National Park.

The study revealed that visitation of tourists in the park was highest in the Museum of Natural History (46,702). This was followed by picnicking with a value of 20,224, while sport fishing had the least (153). This may not be unconnected with the fact that Museum in Old Oyo National Park is located at the Park entry point (Oyo town) which allows patronage of the visitor/tourists within the urban and highly populated setting. This could also be as a result of the proximity of Oyo town to some major cities, thus greater access to the head office of the park where the museum of natural history is located.

**Table 5: Trends in utilisation of tourism activities in Old Oyo National Park**

Year	Park viewing	Hiking	Sport fishing	Tour of historical/ Archaeological site	Picnicking	Lodging	Gym/ Swimming	Education tours	Conference	Restaurant/Ba	Visit museum to
1999	257	0	20	122	0	34	0	0	0	32	0
2000	282	0	3	88	0	31	0	0	0	32	0
2001	97	24	10	77	358	45	0	0	0	38	326
2002	379	6	17	145	0	23	0	0	0	4	234
2003	158	13	6	176	167	45	0	0	0	3	157
2004	161	0	9	143	861	32	0	0	0	28	871
2005	75	0	8	241	845	49	0	0	0	53	875
2006	181	0	5	156	1637	31	0	0	0	29	1347
2007	502	0	12	77	1564	23	35	0	23	43	1714
2008	363	104	15	81	1977	46	300	96	32	52	1567
2009	750	0	0	45	3125	85	55	232	11	67	2895
2010	727	124	12	57	2733	76	167	615	6	68	3713
2011	807	6	14	100	256	89	87	382	10	76	4085
2012	1263	0	8	43	66	76	46	908	15	121	4194
2013	1031	0	3	12	407	59	345	1314	17	87	5619
2014	447	583	0	45	307	12	2366	72	23	58	6548
2015	759	386	0	28	2981	99	2266	940	12	123	2334
2016	1098	961	6	34	730	128	296	974	5	99	2123
2017	407	416	1	15	302	108	311	358	12	123	3428
2018	854	510	4	27	1910	79	0	167	17	107	4672
10598	3133	153	1713	20224	1172	6274	6058	183	1243	46702	
%	10.87	3.21	0.16	1.76	20.75	1.20	6.44	6.22	0.19	1.28	47.92

## CONCLUSION

This study identified various ecotourism resources, recreational facilities and tourists attractions in Old Oyo National Park. The resources were manmade and natural attractions consisting natural, cultural, archaeological, and historical resources. Museum was the resource utilised most from 1999 to 2019 by the tourists. Findings from the study suggest low level of utilisation of ecotourism resources and facilities in Old Oyo National Park and the need for innovative marketing to ensure increased utilisation of the ecotourism resources in the Park.

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