



From their perch on the riverbank, visitors watch the Nile's quiet theatre unfold. Between moments of still reflection, an occasional fishing boat comes into view, its simple silhouette a reminder of the river's enduring role as both sustainer and spectacle. PHOTOS/TREVOR LUTALO

Arra: Where the Nile rests between rock and life

For travellers willing to endure the long road north, Arra offers more than scenery. It offers contrast. It reminds visitors that Uganda's tourism narrative does not end in the west with gorillas or in the east with mountain peaks. In the north, beauty lies quieter, less marketed but no less compelling.

BY TREVOR LUTALO

Heading to Uganda's West Nile sub-region is not for the faint of heart. It is a journey that demands patience, good company and a willingness to surrender to the road. From Kampala, the drive to Adjumani stretches beyond eight hours, depending on traffic, weather and how often temptation forces you to stop. And temptation comes often.

By the time you pass through Luwero, the aroma of roast chicken and gonja (plantain) drifts through roadside trading centres. Vendors move swiftly between parked vehicles, balancing trays of golden plantain and charcoal-grilled meat wrapped in old newspapers. Fresh pineapples, sliced with theatrical speed, offer relief from the rising heat. Further along, the famous stop at Kafu beckons

with goat meat and roasted cassava, soft and smoky, served hot from makeshift grills. The road north unfolds in long stretches of tarmac and dust, occasional sunflower fields giving way to open savannah, then to rockier terrain. The air grows hotter, drier. The landscape shifts quietly, as if preparing you for something entirely different from the bustle you left behind.

The culinary temptations

By the time one approaches Adjumani, the sun hangs heavy in the sky. Temperatures here often range between 30 and 35 degrees Celsius on any given day. The grass wears a golden-green blend, like a painter could not decide between seasons. Scattered trees stand tall between massive rock formations that rise unexpectedly from the earth. Some rocks ap-



The river spills beyond its usual course forming a lake-like expanse.

pear layered like storeys of an unfinished building; others lean precariously, as though they might tumble at the slightest nudge, yet they remain firm, immovable, older than memory.

It is here, tucked into a peninsula shaped by water and time, that Arra Fishing Lodge reveals itself.

The lodge sits where the Albert Nile gently separates Arra village from the districts of Adjumani and Moyo. The geography alone feels like a quiet marvel. A bridge connects Arra to Adjumani, with water splashing softly underneath. But to cross toward Moyo district, you rely on a ferry stationed at the end of the tarmac road, a reminder that here, the Nile still dictates movement and rhythm.

A calmer Nile

Unlike the dramatic rapids associated with

other parts of the Nile, this stretch feels calm, almost contemplative. The river widens into what appears like a lake, its blue surface reflecting the relentless African sun. Along the edges, rocky beaches replace sandy shores. Green patches spread generously across the terrain, interrupted by whimsical rock formations that double as natural seats for visitors seeking to cool off after a long day.

The first evening at Arra feels surreal. The silence whizzes softly with distant bird calls and the occasional splash of water against stone. The air carries the scent of dry grass and river breeze. In the distance, a lone fisherman paddles across the water in a narrow canoe, drawing in his nets with practised ease. Tilapia and other fish species are common in these waters, forming part of the local economy and daily diet. Fishing here is not a spectacle; it is life. The