

Africa's Remotest Safari

Join us for a spectacular tour to Chad, through remote and breathtaking lands that sums up our ethos, and takes you to places few western travellers have ever been. Starting from N'Djamena we visit Zakouma National Park, possibly Africa's most successful conservation story. We then fly deep into the Sahara ar Ennedi, a vast collection of sandstone mountains sculpted by the wind and sand over millennia into stunning rock formations. Here we enter the land of the Tubu, one of Africa's most traditional, and least known, people and our excellent local connections give us good opportunities to meet these rather shy and secretive people. We look for rock art dating back thousands of years, and walk into the Guelta d'Archei where the Tubu bring huge herds of camels to drink at the only waterhole for miles around, in the company of one of the last populations of Saharan crocodiles, which we hope to see.

March 4+5 Arrive N'Djamena, Chad

Arrive N'Djamena and transfer to the Hilton hotel.

Formerly known as Fort Lamy, Chad's capital sits on the banks of the Chari River facing Cameroon and is the largest city in the country. Founded by the French at the turn of the 20th century, it has grown from a town with a population of around ten thousand in the 1930s to something approaching a million now. Over the years it has seen its fair share of conflict, largely destroyed during the civil war of the 80s and stormed by rebel forces in 2008. Its wide boulevards were once flanked with trees, but these were cut down to deprive attackers of covers, and only in recent years did its dusty streets become paved. Rather devoid of traditional sights, N'Djamena is home to a large and sprawling central market which is interesting to explore, and also contains the National Museum with a collection of prehistoric artefacts. 2 Overnights with dinner at **THE HILTON, N'DJAMENA**

March 6-12 - Fly for two hours to Zakouma National Park, 7 NIGHTS CAMP NOMADE

ZAKOUMA NATIONAL PARK IS 3045 km² of untamed African wilderness in south-eastern Chad. Located near the town of Am Timan in the Salamat Region, Zakouma National Park is one of the last remaining intact Sudano-Sahelian ecosystems in Africa. Due to its close proximity to the centre of the Chadian Basin, the terrain of the park is almost exclusively flat with the exception of the beautiful granite inselbergs found in the south-west near Ibir. As one of three national parks in Chad, Zakouma forms an integral part of the conservation of flora and fauna in the region, as well as being the only game viewing destination offering guest accommodation in the country. The Chadian government has been committed to protecting this natural heritage even through many years of conflict. Today Zakouma is one of the most important protected areas in Central and West Africa. Zakouma is an area of contrasts and like many parts of Africa, the ecosystem has two very distinct seasons, the wet season and the dry season. There are however very few areas where the contrasts between the two seasons are so dramatic; affecting fauna, flora and terrain alike. Between June and November Zakouma receives an average of 850mm of rain resulting in the majority of the park becoming completely inundated with water. It is during this time that the park sees a strong seasonal outward migration of many species; mainly the elephant and tiang and to a lesser extent roan antelope and hartebeest, to the drier areas further north. The dry season in comparison, lures the wildlife back to the heart of Zakouma, where pans surrounded by fertile floodplains and pools in the main river systems (Bahr's Salamat, Korom and Dikere) provide drinking water and grazing throughout the dry months. Large herds of animals as well as thousands of birds congregate at these pools from February to June making for spectacular game viewing. Although the free roaming African elephant is the better known species, the park is an important refuge for numerous other species, many of which are threatened elsewhere within this eco-zone, which stretches as a band across the breadth of Africa to the south of the Sahara Desert. The fauna of the park includes 44 mammal species

of which 16 are large mammals. Species such as the Kordofan giraffe, lion, Lelwel's hartebeest, pale fox and red-fronted gazelle are of continental importance.

March 13: 3 hour charter flight North to Ennedi. 5 NIGHTS CAMPING IN THE SAHARA

We spend our time exploring the numerous rock formations; made of sandstone, the wind and sand have eroded them into weird and wonderful shapes. We also visit a number of rock art sites, hidden over overhanging rocks and depicting cows, camels and warriors, and may see ancient burial sites about which almost nothing is known. This is the domain of the Tubu, and we expect to meet nomads on their way to pasture with the camels or drawing water at wells, and pass their small groups of tents. The highlight of these few days is undoubtedly the Guelta d'Archei, the only permanent waterhole in the region situated amidst a dramatic and towering gorge, where one can often see hundreds of camels drinking, their bellowing echoing around the rock walls. The guelta is also home to one of the last populations of Saharan crocodiles, and with a bit of luck we should be able to see them. The landscape in this region is truly spectacular and we pick our campsites in the prettiest areas.

The Tubu

The Tubu people make up the bulk of the population in Chad's northern desert regions, and are something of a Saharan legend. Reputedly the toughest desert dwellers of all, there are numerous stories of their prowess in eking a living out of such an unforgiving place, including one that involves a warrior making his way over 500 miles of desert with little more than a handful of dates and a goatskin of water. The Tubu are split into two main clans; the Teda, based in the Tibesti, and the Daza who are based in the Ennedi and the plains. Their spiritual leader is the Dardai, the leader of the Teda, but in practice the Tubu are highly individualistic and their principal allegiance is to the sub-clan or family group. Ties between clans are strengthened by the practice of marrying from a different clan, as well as trading camels. The Tubu are also something of an ethnic conundrum, with dark skin but almost European features, and while researchers have yet to come to any sort of definitive conclusion the current best guess is that they are descended from both Berbers to the north and Bantu Africans to the south. Spread between Niger, Libya and Chad they total around 200,000 in number and were the last group to be pacified by the French colonial authorities; even after independence the French were asked to stay on and maintain order in the Tubu regions, as they were thought to be almost ungovernable. During the war with Libya Tubu forces fought on both sides, both with and against Gadaffi. Traditionally the Tubu have been nomadic, moving to find pasture for their livestock; although most still follow traditional ways, some have settled in towns like Fada and Faya. Based in some of the farthest regions of the Sahara, traditionally they have had very little contact with outsiders and as a consequence can be quite wary of visitors; in particular they are averse to photography and so we ask that you respect this and follow your tour leader's guidelines to avoid any problems.

The Ennedi Mountains

In the north east of Chad lie the stunning Ennedi Mountains, a red sandstone massif that has been sculpted into a multitude of fascinating rock formations by the wind and sand over the millennia. This is one of Chad's most beautiful areas, with natural arches, deep gorges and isolated waterholes which makes it a real joy to explore. The Ennedi is also rich in rock art with numerous examples being found in caves and under overhanging rocks. Perhaps surprisingly it is also rich in wildlife; species to be found here include gazelles, baboons and patas monkeys, as well as porcupines and honey badgers, and in remote parts leopard and cheetah make their homes. The last lion was shot here in the 1940s; supposedly this was the last lion in the whole of the Sahara; but local legend has it that an unknown species, the Ennedi tiger; still survives, although no conclusive evidence has been found. The Guelta d'Archei is home to one of the last surviving populations of Saharan crocodiles, which live in a small waterhole; the only permanent source of water in the massif. Reduced to around 8 or 10 now no young crocodiles have been seen for many years, leading to speculation that the population is entirely male or female and thus doomed to extinction in the near future. This is

a truly stunning part of the Ennedi and used by the Tubu nomads to water their camels; the sight of five or six hundred camels drinking and bellowing at this isolated patch of water is one you are unlikely to forget.

March 15+16 Fada, Mourdi

We drive down from the plateau to Fada, the only real town in the Ennedi, where we need to complete formalities and stock up on supplies before heading northwards. Fada is a dusty little town which serves as the main centre of the Ennedi region. Centred around a main square, Fada contains an old colonial fort now used by the military and a small and modest market with a limited selection of wares, reflecting the remoteness of the town; small onions, dried chillies and a few tomatoes and peppers are about as much fresh food is usually on offer, as well as rather tough dates. There is little here to see but the explorer Wilfred Thesiger stayed here on his travels through the region, staying in the fort as guests of the French; sadly it is not permitted to take pictures of the fort though.

From here we head back into the wilderness, climbing onto a plateau of red rocks before descending to the last rocks of the Ennedi. From here we enter the Mourdi Depression, an area of vast sand dunes that can be difficult to traverse but are incredibly beautiful. We follow the ancient caravan route that is still used by camel caravans taking salt from Demi and Teguedeï to the Fada and beyond. At Kora, while crossing dunes and entering an area that saw fighting during the war with Libya; in some places the remnants of tanks and other military hardware can be found, slowly being reclaimed by the desert. The dune crossing can be tough in parts and we can expect to get out and push.

March 17; Demi; Teguedeï ; Ounianga Lakes

We visit the small village of Demi, located at the foot of a mountain and on the edge of a salt pan, where men and women dig the red earth for salt to be transported across the desert to market, exchanged for goods like millet, sorghum and other foods; this is an incredibly isolated settlement and completely reliant on the trade. Nearby is the salt lake of Teguedeï, situated amidst lush palm groves and seasonally inhabited for the date harvest; one can also see piles of salt drying on the shores of the lake. From here we head to the lakes of the Ounianga oasis. Emerging from the desert this is spectacular site; lakes surrounded by dunes and palms with multi-hued mountains behind them. The lakes themselves are different colours, a result of the minerals in the ground as well as algae. We explore the lakes, visit the village of Ounianga Serir, and take the opportunity of a bath in Boukou, the only freshwater lake in the oasis. We also stop in the town of Ounianga Kebir for supplies and formalities. Until recently this was a critical hub on the trade route with Libya, but that country's troubles have reduced traffic to a trickle. Wildlife around this region is good, and you can expect to see dorcas gazelles as well as jackals, bustards and perhaps the pretty fennec fox.

March 18: Fly charter back to N'Djamena, o/n HILTON

Reluctantly we leave the Ennedi and fly 3 hours to N'Djamena. (eta 1600hrs)
OVERNIGHT THE HILTON, N'DJAMENA

March 19: Depart

SOME ADDITIONAL NOTES:

Fitness:

You don't need to be especially fit to join our trips in Chad, but there will sometimes be instances when we do explore on foot; in particular when we walk to the Guelta d'Archei. The walk into the guelta involves a one and a half hour walk each way over rocky ground, with ascents and descents, and you should be prepared for this. If however you would prefer

to miss this out, the guelta can also be accessed via an easier route, although it doesn't have the same spectacular views. There is no other forced hiking.

Culture language and religion:

Chad has two official languages; French and Chadian Arabic, which is slightly different from the Arabic spoken in other countries. In addition to this the various different ethnic groups will also have their own languages. Almost no-one will speak English, although of course your guide will, and you will find it easier to communicate with people if you know at least a smattering of French. Roughly half of the population are Muslim, and the country is split along a north / south divide, with Islam holding sway in the north, and both Christianity and indigenous beliefs in the south.

Eating and drinking:

Chad doesn't have much a distinctive cuisine, and typical meals in a village will usually consist of rice and stew, either vegetable or meat. However on our trips to Chad you will be accompanied by a cook who will provide a little more variety than this. Breakfast will usually consist of bread, jam, biscuits and coffee or tea, while lunches usually take the form of a salad, sometimes with pasta or tuna and usually with bread and fruit. Evening meals will be a mix of European and African cuisine and a typical meal could be pasta, stew or spaghetti. There is not a huge variety of foodstuffs to be bought, especially once we leave N'Djamena, but your cook will provide tasty and wholesome meals. You should advise us when you book if you have any special dietary requirements. We will try to accommodate you as much as possible, but we cannot always guarantee this.

Luggage and packing:

Most people are surprised at how little they actually need to bring, (especially in the desert here literally two sets of clothes can suffice) and it's normally possible to get laundry done at Camp Nomade. It doesn't matter whether you bring a suitcase, rucksack or holdall, but please don't bring more than 20kg of luggage as this may be difficult to accommodate in the vehicles we use. You'll also need a day pack. Chad is a reasonably conservative country and you should dress accordingly. Women, and also to a certain extent men, will find that the way they dress will often determine the degree of respect they receive from both men and women. Women should keep their upper arms and legs covered in public and in Ennedi.

It does not really get cold in most of Chad, but early mornings can sometimes be a little chilly in the desert and so a light fleece is recommended.

You will also need to bring two passport photos with you so that we can register you with the local authorities when you arrive.

Local conditions:

When travelling to some of the destinations we offer you need to bear in mind that things won't always work here as we are used to them working at home. Travelling in underdeveloped and untouristed destinations requires both patience and a sense of humour. There may be problems with infrastructure, attitudes may be different, and maintenance may not be as high a standard as we would always like, but this is very much part and parcel of travelling in such a place. We aim to resolve any issues as quickly as possible, and thank you for your patience. The schedule planned cannot always be fulfilled and last minute changes may be necessary.

Chad is one of our most pioneering destinations. Not only is there very little tourism here but the nature of the destination means that you should be prepared for challenging conditions. Outside of the capital very few hotels or accommodation options exist – in the desert these are non-existent. There are few opportunities to buy supplies en route and so we carry the

majority of these with us, stocking up on fresh vegetables and fruit in the small towns that we travel through, where possible.

There are no formal bathroom facilities in Ennedi, although on many nights you will be provided with water for washing, depending on how far we are from any wells and how much water we have used that day. Priority is given to drinking water which is drawn from wells and treated with a sterilizing agent to make it safe to drink.

Our trips in Ennedi travel to some of the most remote parts of the Sahara, and it is essential that you appreciate what this entails before booking a trip. We cannot promise home comforts or luxuries and if you expect these, then Chad probably isn't the right destination for you. However if you are prepared for sometimes challenging conditions, then Chad offers an adventure that is difficult to match through some of the most untouched, traditional and isolated corners of Africa.

It's really very hot and dry (Approx daytime in the shade 115F/46C, luckily minimum nighttime is closer to 70F - so comfortable sleeping.) - Humidity 10-20%.

The wildlife is very shy as it has seen so few foreign faces, and the local tribes really do not like their photo's being taken under any circumstances (for both religious and traditional beliefs), so one needs to be patient, understanding, resourceful, and most of all respectful to their wishes.

In the Ennedi region, the mode of travel it's very simple - we move daily, up with the dawn, a light breakfast and on the road, driving the Saharan wilderness. A siesta at lunchtime in the shadow of a rock formation and only stopping at dusk to again sleep out under the stars (mosquito nets unnecessary) or in pup tents (for some limited privacy).

The bathroom facilities in Ennedi are a long walk the nearest bush or rock (in some places not always easy to find). And instead of a gushing shower at the end of a long day, you have to survive 5 nights on a 2 pint (1 litre) kettle of cold water. To wash yourself, maybe your clothes, but probably not enough for both. Water as you can imagine is a real luxury in this desert, and is usually saved for drinking. At Camp Nomade in Zakouma each tent has private facilities which include camping style bucket shower and short drop loo.