

Gulf of Guinea: Forests, Masks and Ocean

Exploratory itinerary in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone

16 Days

Scheduled departure dates
From Conakry

2021

November 12, 2021; December 26, 2021.

2022

February 4, 2022; March 11, 2022; November 4, 2022; December 26, 2022.

A new, intense, adventurous and refined itinerary in pure TransAfrica's style will bring us at the heart of the African continent. We will discover lost villages, clay bas-relief, high waterfalls within the steep savannah of Fouta Djalon and the largest mountain massif in West Africa. We will drive down forgotten tracks and cross the longest liana bridges in the forest that hide the mystery of the birdmen and the longest liana-bridges of Africa.

Masks and tam-tam echoes across the sacred woods while we will discover a villa revealing a forgotten part of "History" and ancestors reincarnated in chimpanzees. In Monrovia we will admire a rough coastline. Monrovia is the capital of Liberia: "*Land of freemen*", the only country that has never been either a colony or a protectorate.

The freed slaves coming from the Americas developed the powerful Krio culture. Between Liberia and Sierra Leone, we will discover the discover the Krio culture's places where the power lays, the metaphysical symbols of the unique architecture of wood and stone.

The trip ends with the visit to the intriguing Freetown peninsula and with some relax on Banana Island, the most spectacular island of the Gulf of Guinea; isolated beaches, sun and coves surrounded by a lush vegetation.

ITINERARY

Day 1 CONAKRY

Arrival and transfer to hotel Onomo.

Day 2 THE CAPITAL 140 Km , 4 hours

Brief visit to the capital and to the interesting small museum. After leaving the traffic jam, we will head to the first mountains of Kindia village. Overnight in comfortable bungalows with A/C at hotel Moringa, or similar. B-L-D

DAY 3 DALABA 280 Km, 8 Hours

The road will bring us at the heart of the Fouta Djalon massif. Arrival at our hotel and lunch at Dalaba. In the afternoon visit to Dalaba small and quiet town. Of an interest is the “casa a palabra” (the house of words) with fine bas-relief showing a Peul style. Here the chiefs used to get together to meet the colonial administration.

Visit to the villa built by the colonial governor and later used by the first president of independent Guinea. The leader of the independence was Sekou Touré, one of the most radical activists against the colonialism; he kicked out the French and joined the Soviet Union’s side aligning with Ceausescu. Under Sekou Touré, the country became more and more isolated and the government turned into a dictatorship. Some villas used by the ministers and by the guests of Sekou Touré are reminiscences of that time. In these villas Miriam Makeba met and married Stokley Carmichael, an exile who was among the inspirators of the armed wing of Black Panther in the US.

Overnight in hotel built in the 20s, it witness the Neo-Sudanese architecture of that time. Hotel du Fouta ,or similar. Air-conditioned rooms with facilities. B-L-D



DAY 4 FOUTA DJALON 130 Km, short drives

Today we discover the largest massif of West Africa: Fouta Djalon where the mountains meet the savannah and the deep valleys hosting rice fields and forests. Here the highest waterfalls make the landscape more beautiful and site the “water basin” of West Africa. Thanks to a fresh climate, this region has been the most beloved holiday site during the colonial time. Peul people come from this area; Peul are known for their stunning beauty and for being the best zebu breeders of West Africa.

In the XVII century the Fula's (Peul) Jihad started from these mountains and they led the Peul to conquer the majority of savannah till Cameroun.

Visit to the small villages, after a 1.30H walk in the forest we will discover the Ditin waterfall which are the highest of the region (100mt). Arrival in Mamou, overnight at hotel Baylis, rooms with A/C and en-suite, or similar. B-L-D

DAY 5 STONE GODS 320 Km, 7 hours

Transfer day. Once in Mamou, we leave the mountains to cross arboreal savannah. Kissi cultural group is known for praying stone gods called Pomo which have been mysterious found in the forest. Kissidougou (the city of Kissi) had a small but interesting museum which shows the ritual objects of the region.

Dinner and overnight at the new Hotel Fritz. Rooms with A/C and en-suite. B-L-D

DAY 6 MARKETS 170 Km, 5 hours

Due to the very poor road conditions we will move on slowly, even while driving on 4X4.

This region is rich in markets, the Guekedou one, on the border with Sierra Leone, has been considered one of the largest of Africa, surely it is the most crowded and sadly the starting point of Ebola epidemic till 2016.

Dinner and overnight at the Hotel Macenta (in Macenta). Rooms with A/C and en-suite. B-L-D

DAY 7 MYSTERS AND MASKS IN THE FORESTS 180 Km, 6 hours, various drives.

The region of Ziama forest is inhabited by Toma people. If we will be lucky, we will witness the "bird-men" coming out from the forest. When this happens, the entire village participates. While crossing the forests along forgotten tracks, we might need to cut and move trunks from the way. We will leave our 4X4 and we will take a walk guided by a local ranger. We walk along a path in an emeraldine light which will take us to the high part of the mountain.

Once we reach 1.000mt above the sea-level, we will discover the "villa Kinandou" hidden in a wild and lush vegetation. This villa tells the history of a century. It has been built in the colonial time by the governor of AOF (French West Africa) whose headquarter was in Dakar and used to come to these lands for short visits. Sekou Touré was a supporter of the Pan-Africanism and funder of the OUA (organization for the unity of Africa) together with Nasser and Kwame Nkrumah, the leader of the independency of Ghana. In 1966 with the degradation of the economical situation a military putsch overthrew the president of Ghana and Sekou Touré secretly hosted Nkrumah in this villa till 1972. Once the regime of Sekou Touré ended, the population of Guinea decided to get over of the past, so the dramatic time have been forgotten as the villa. The forest progressively covered the villa, the balcony is wrapped in lianas and the Soviet Union's helicopters' landing pad disappeared in the thick vegetation as much as the history of this time.

Dinner and overnight at the Hotel Macenta (in Macenta). Rooms with A/C and en-suite. B-L-D



DAY 8 LIANAS BRIDGES 150 Km , 5 hours, various drives

The forest hides many secrets. The liana bridges are masterpiece of "tribal technology" and can measure 70-meter length. They are realized exclusively with vegetal materials, such as wood and lianas without the use of nails or rope nor other foreign materials to the forest. Only the initiated can build them, during the realization and the installation of the bridges neither the women nor not initiated are allowed in the forest, to guarantee the secrecy of this "magic engineering".

In this magic world we will attend the spectacular dance of birds masks.

Nzerekore is the capital of the forest region.

Hotel Prince. Rooms with A/C and en-suite. B-L-D



DAY 9 PRIMATES 200 Km, 7 hours , various drives.

We will go to Bossou, where the small community of chimpanzee (Pan Troglodytes) lives in the forest. The inhabitants consider them the reincarnation of their ancestors and therefore hunting them is forbidden. The chimpanzee are constantly monitored by the researchers and therefore they are easy to meet.

Drive to the border with Liberia and arrival in Ganta. Alvino Hotel, rooms with A/C and en-suite. B-L-D



DAY 10 LIBERIA: THE LAND OF FREEMEN 270 Km, 7 hours,

Liberia is the only country which has never been either a colony or a protectorate; it has been founded by Krio, the freed slaves who came back to Africa from US, here comes the name "Liberia: the country of freemen". Krio are 5% of the population and they are in control of large part of the economy and the politics, they are considered the creator of the nation and of the modern economy. 80% of the population speaks the Krio language, a sort of "Pidgin" English.

In the early afternoon, arrival in Monrovia. Our ocean-view hotel within the West Point is the best starting point to visit the city. Visit to the National Museum; it displays the Krio architecture, large masks and ritual objects collection and a show about the civil war which took place from 1989 till 2003. A symbol of the city is what is left of the Ducor Palace Hotel, the extremely luxurious hotel with a swimming-pool facing the ocean. The hotel has hosted the local political elite and its parties.

According to the legend, Idi Amin used to swim carrying a gun in his belt while his friend Miriam Makeba was singing. After being looted several times, the hotel is now abandoned.

In 2008 the government made a deal with Ghaddafi to rebuild this hotel, however the project, as many other Libyan development projects, never came to conclusion thanks to the war that Europe and America made to overthrow Ghaddafi.

Cap Hotel B-L-D

DAY 11 NATURE AND HISTORY

By foot, we will visit another main symbol of the town: the temple of the Masonic Lodge. The temple is the most significant symbol of the Krio culture and of its economic power. If lucky, we will be met by the Great Master who will explain us the history of this Lodge and of its crucial role in the history of the nation. In the afternoon we attend dancing masks

Cap Hotel. B-L-D

DAY 12 DIAMONDS 310 Km , 8 hours

Early departure.

We cross the border with Sierra Leone, a new road will take us to the regions known for the diamonds which has made this country known. We will take a track to reach a village with huts made by clay and straw. In the village we will encounter a local who will take us to a place where we can meet the diamonds' seekers. The local guide will explain us the technics of artisanal mining and "sand washing". We go further to the lively town of Bo where, other than the market, we will visit a "diamond shop".

Dinner and overnight at comfortable hotel Dohas, room with A/C and en-suite, or similar.

B-L-D

DAY 13 BUNDO: FEMALE INITIATION RITE MASKS 260 Km , 8 hours

In most parts of Africa, the masks are male's prerogative, however among the Mende people and among the neighbours populations the masks Bundo are a female's domain and they have crucial role in the initiation rites. We reach a tiny village to assist at the exit of these masks, an event that calls for the participation of a colourful crowd.

In the afternoon, we drive to the coast to reach Kent village where a boat will take us to Banana Island.

Dinner and overnight in a fixed tented camp: the Bafa Resort, beautifully situated among a lush vegetation and the ocean; this will be our base for two nights. B-L-D



DAY 14 BANANA ISLAND 30 Minutes boat.

After 13 days of tracks, mountains, savannah and forests, we will enjoy a day of relax at the beach on one of the most mythical islands of Sierra Leone.

Bafa Resort, permanent camp in the lush vegetation and wild beaches of Banana island.

B-L-D



DAY 15 FREETOWN 30 minutes navigation plus 50 Km drives , 2 hours

Once we reach the continent, we will drive along the coast at the slopes of the rocky Freetown peninsula, the country has been named after it, the Sierra of Lions: the mountains of lions.

Short stop at the wild beaches of Bureh and of River number two, before arriving in Freetown. In 1786 the first 308 freed slaves came to Sierra Leone from US where they have fought the against independent war supporting the British, after having lost the war the British sent them to Sierra Leone. Few months after their arrival, the newcomers were starving, got new and unknown diseases and they fight with the locals, who hardly stand them.

Freetown (the town of the fried peoples) has been funded in 1792 by the United Kingdom and just two years after, during the Napoleon wars against the British, it has been attacked by seven military French ships who destroyed it. Few survivors escape on the pirogues sent by the slaves' traders. In 1807, due to the abolition of the slave trade in Great Britain, the ships of the slave's traders caught by the British navy started to free the slaves and sent them in Sierra Leone.

In 1808 Freetown became the capital of the first British colony in tropical Africa. At that time Krio, or ex slaves, were around 50.000 and they made up an elite who pushed for a better education from the colonial administration; the cultural level reached, had led Freetown to be known as the "Athens of West Africa".

Nowadays, maybe to forget about the dramatic origins, the civil war and Ebola, Freetown is a lively town known for its parties and where the nightlife goes on till the sunset. By foot we visit the interesting museum which contains the masks and the objects of the different ethnic groups; the Cotton Tree inhabited by thousands of bats near the luxurious palace of the Supreme Court; the nice cathedral of Saint George and the market are the town centre. We will have dinner in the lively quarter of Lumley, you will be amazed by the numerous restaurants of this quarter facing the ocean. Overnight at Swiss Hotel**** , or similar. B-L-D

DAY 16 SLAVES ISLAND 2 hours navigation plus 20 Km drives

Outboard sailing to discover Bunce Island. The island lays in the large estuary of the Rokel river that creates a gulf which used to be the preferred shore point by the slave traders' ships. On the island we will visit the reminiscent of a large fortress, one of the main points where slaves used to be gathered together before being shipped to the Americas in the years between 1668 and 1807. The history witness by this fort makes the visit impressive. End of sailing at Tagrin where we recover our vehicles bringing us to Lungi, rooms in day-use and transfer to Lungi international airport. B-L

Technical Sheet

Vehicles: comfortable 4X4 with A/C. The sailing at Banana Island will depend on the weather condition.

Distances and Time: distances and journey times are approximate and may vary. Travel times do not include stops and visits and indicate periods spent in vehicles.

Vaccinations: Yellow fever: Mandatory, the vaccination has been declared lifelong by the World Health Organization.

Cholera: it is not mandatory at the time of setting this itinerary, anyway it is recommended to verify it before the departure

Prophylaxis anti-malaria: highly recommended.

Visa: Guinea Conakry: mandatory

- **Liberia: mandatory**
- **Sierra Leone:** mandatory. It can be obtained at the border, costs: 100 USD

Lunch: cold meals (picnic) or at restaurants. Dinner at the hotels, touristic menu

Accommodations: in the main cities, international standard hotels, in the countryside, the best hotel available, mostly have rooms with A/C and en-suite. At Banana Island fixed tented camp.

Insurance: mandatory for medical assistance, repatriation and damages. TransAfrica is not responsible for diseases, accidents, damages that might occur during or after the trip, whatever the cause might be and whoever might be responsible. The bill from the insurance must be delivered to us before the departure

Participants: max 16

Notes: Due to the nature of this journey, the itinerary, visits and overnights might be modified based on the unquestionable decision of the tour leader who will do his utmost best to stick to the program. The itinerary is made to discover places where foreigners are not yet common. Understanding and flexibility are necessary for a trip "outside the known tracks". Thanks to the right attitude we will profit from a unique experience and appreciate the beauty of the landscapes, the hospitality of the locals, and the ceremonies which will be shared with us by the local people.



PRICES
Validity: 2020

Number of Participants	Published Rate PER PERSON
Based on 6+ guests	4 210 Euro
Based on 3/ 5 guests	5 230 Euro
Based on 2 guests	6 248 Euro
Single Supplement	673 Euro

Prices might change in case of an unseen rising of the logistic costs which do not depend on the organizers' will.

Included:

- Assistance at airport upon arrival (day 1) and departure (day 16)
- Transfers and tour in 4WD vehicles. Arrival transfer only on day 1 and departure transfer only on day 16th.
- Local guide (languages spoken: English, French, German)
- Tours and visits as per the programme
- Accommodation in standard rooms, as per itinerary
- All meals as described: B = breakfast, L = lunch, D = dinner
- One bottle of mineral water each participant each day in the car during the visits.
- Entrance fees to parks, concessions, protected areas and cultural sites
- Pass for carnival when applicable
- First Aid box
- All service charges and taxes

Not included:

- International flights
- Earlier (prior day 1) and/or later (after day 16) transfers from and to airport

- Visa fees and any airport departure taxes
- Any meal or sightseeing tour other than those specified
- Mineral water and drinks at meals and hotels.
- Porterage
- Fees for personal photos and videos
- Personal and holiday insurance (compulsory)
- Tips for drivers, guides and hotel staff
- Costs relating to delayed or lost luggage
- Any item of personal nature such as phone calls, laundry, etc.
- Whatever is not mentioned as included

Terms of payment

PAYMENT POLICY

A deposit of 30% is required at the time of confirmation and the balance is due not less than 60 days before the arrival of guests at the destination.

You must have trip cancel insurance to protect your investment for unforeseen circumstances. This is good for North America only.

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