IVORY COAST:
AT THE HEART OF WEST AFRICA

13 DAYS / 12 NIGHTS

Scheduled arrival dates ( = day 1) to Abidjan
2020

January 18th (11 days, program 2019)
February 29th
April 11th
November 7th
December 26th

Special Itinerary and Rates Available:
August 5th: Festival du Pagne

And any date upon request

Minimum 2 – Maximum 16 participants

A journey to a country that only very recently has again become accessible to travellers.

An itinerary for real “pioneers” wanting to discover multi-faced Africa:
from liana bridges to cathedrals, from tribal masks to initiation dances,
from tribal chiefs to sacred monkeys, from traditional hunters’ villages to the skyline of Abidjan,
from savannah to forests and the Ocean wild beaches.

Every day will be filled with surprises and will take you to genuine, vibrant and colourful traditional ceremonies.

For travellers who like unfiltered journeys in Africa
ITINERARY

DAY 1
Abidjan (Saturday)

Arrival in Abidjan and transfer to the hotel.

Meals free
Overnight Hotel Azalai or similar (all rooms en-suite and with aircon; swimming-pool)

DAY 2 – Domestic flight to Bouake
Akan lineage

Transfer to the airport and picnic.

Domestic flight to Bouake. Arrival and transfer to the hotel.

We meet the Baulé people from the Akan lineage originating from Ghana. The Baulé share with their cousins, the Ashanti of Ghana, a complex social hierarchy but they also have enriched their cultural traditions by taking cues from their neighbours. Their complex craftsmanship shows this rich heritage: fine statues representing the world of spirits, sculpted weaving-loom pulleys and beautiful masks.

Visit of some villages.

We attend the dance of Goli masks, that can be performed for both entertaining and celebrating the funeral of a person of high rank. The Baulé tribe adopted this ritual from their neighbours, the Wan tribe, after 1900. While celebrating peace and joy, the participants will sing, dance and drink palm wine.

Goli mask on Youtube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6og4Ql9C1Cc

Meals B – L - D
Overnight Hotel Mon Afrik or similar (all rooms en-suite and with aircon; swimming-pool).

TRIPS DETAILS

Length: 13 days
Arrive: Abidjan
Depart: Abidjan
Domestic flight from Abidjan to Bouaké
Lodging: 12 nights in hotels
Meals: All meals included, except on the arrival day and dinner on the departure day

HIGHLIGHTS

Tribes: Baulë, Fulani, Malinkè, Senufo, Yacouba, Guerè, Guro

Culture: Goli masks, Boloy masks, Zauli masks, Jongleurs, Ngoro: virgin girls

Architecture: Yamoussoukro, Abidjan, Grand Bassam, Sudanese architecture
**DAY 3**

**Sudanese architecture**

Heading to the north, we leave the main road for a track which will take us to the old town of Kong. The landscape changes: Kong is located in sub-Saharan Sahel, a dry savannah with trees such as the baobab.

The origins of Kong date back to the XII century. This ancient kingdom emerged as a trading centre when the merchants from the Mali Empire began trading within the territory of the Senufo people. Tradition wants Kong to be the origin of the Mandé ethnic group, merchants known all over West Africa as “Diola”. The Diola transformed Kong into an important trading point, halfway between the Sahara salt caravans and the exports from the southern forests (cola nuts, gold and slaves). The mosque of Kong is the best example of traditional Sudanese architecture in the country.

**Meals**  
B – L - D

**Overnight**  
Auberge de Kong or similar (all rooms ensuite and with aircon)

**DAY 4**

**Iron Age**

Drive to Ferkessedougou, main crossway to Mali and Burkina Faso. Its development started in 1895 when the first part of the Abidjan-Niger Railway was completed and Ferkessedougou became its southern terminal. Today the town is known as a cattle trading centre of Zebu cows and its market is worth a stop. From Ferkessedougou we drive to a remote village to witness the old technique of **iron melting** carried out by some old blacksmith, a very rare example of traditional iron metallurgy in Africa. This “tribal technology” will bring us back to the first **Iron Age** in Africa, referring to the prehistory and protohistory of Afro-Eurasia, the time when the dominant tool making material was iron.

The iron ore comes from some local mines in the shape of deep pits and it is milled manually. The traditional “adobe bellows furnace” is loaded with layers of charcoal and layers of ore then the fire is set - we can now leave the furnace since the fusion will take till the following morning. Iron smelting techniques are secret and always associated to taboos and initiations. The blacksmith is endogamous, meaning that only those born into blacksmith families are eligible for the long apprenticeship into the craft. They are feared by the tribe since they possess obscure magical powers, are in contact with evil spirits, are capable to transform stones into iron and can transform a solid piece of iron into liquid and again into solids. They are considered “masters of the fire”, capable of calling upon the “spirits of the earth” with their powerful hammers. Due to their scaring magical powers, blacksmiths often must live outside of the villages. They are a highly powerful cast: the fabrication of iron tools and iron weapons allows extensive agriculture, efficient hunting and successful warfare.

Arrival in the evening to our comfortable hotel in Korhogo where we will spend two nights.

**Meals**  
B – L - D

**Overnight**  
Hotel Olympe or similar (all rooms ensuite and with aircon; swimming pool).

**DAY 5**

**The Panther Dance**

In the morning return to the village to see the result of the fusion. The sealed base of the clay furnace will be broken to extract the iron bloom and the blacksmith will pound part of it. Afterwards, with the aid of a bellows, he will heat the metal powder obtained until it melts in a crucible and he will pour it into a mould. The metal is later heated once again and hammered on the forge to the required shape, which finally will be polished from imperfections and bumps. We have witnessed the whole process leading to the creation of
an object. Traditional iron metallurgy is a rare example of an ancient “tribal technology”. For more than 80 years it was believed that this technique had disappeared ... up to the discovery of this village!

The town of Korhogo is a must for any traveller visiting Ivory Coast northern regions. Its history dates to the XIII century and today it is the capital of the Senufo, the tribe that has produced some of the greatest artworks of Africa, in almost every field: sculpture, weaving, painting and blacksmiths. Visit of the interesting craft market to discover wooden sculptures and textiles showing the traditional Senufo patterns. It is these patterns that have inspired modern artists like Pablo Picasso who also personally travelled to Senufo country to meet and exchange experiences with local artists.

The Senufo are renowned for their complex initiation rites. Poro, the male initiation rite, is a long process which takes 21 years to be completed. It is the passage from youth to adulthood and it consists in learning the social and religious secrets that turn a boy into a genuine Senufo man.

Their most spectacular mask dance is the Boloy, known as panther dance, performed by initiated – we will attend it later in the afternoon.

Panther dance on YouTube : https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2OAD5LiJi2Jo

We spend two days in the Korhogo region and if a traditional funeral will occur, we will not miss the opportunity to look at the sacred masks dance performed during this special ceremony.

Meals

B – L - D

Overnight

Hotel Olympe or similar (all rooms en-suite and with aircon; swimming pool).

DAY 6
The virgins’ dance

We will leave the main road to discover the village of Niofoin with its clay granaries, decorated with symbolic bas-reliefs, and with a unique sacred house boasting a tall conical roof. The house has painted decorations and sacred objects belonging to the animistic cults, still practiced by Senufo people.

Later in the day, encounter with the unmistakable Fulani nomads, constantly in search of pastures for their herds of zebus. The Fulani can be easily recognized by their conical straw huts, the walking stick they always carry over their shoulders, the water bottle hanging around their neck, the machete in their hands and their proud posture. These nomads seem to come from nowhere and head nowhere. Accustomed as they are to a hard life, they look perfectly fine with the little they carry. They are the true gentlemen of these endless savannahs. Visit of a village, mostly inhabited by women and children. We will be invited into their huts to see old family photos, dowry presents etc. Women wear beautiful coloured fabrics and, around their necks and in their hair, very special tribal jewellery (Baltic amber, pearls of Bohemia, old Venetian “murrines”, stones, buttons and any other plastic object they may like).

Late in the afternoon, we attend the dance of the virgin girls - called Ngoro, performed by the Senufo and part of the Poro Initiation. The young initiates spend months together in secluded sacred groves where they learn the social and religious secrets that turn a girl into a genuine Senoufo. After seven years there is a big celebration for those who have undergone all stages of initiation, in particular the dance of the virgin girls is performed at the end of the first stage of initiation.

Meals

B – L - D

Overnight

Hotel Le Paysan or similar (all rooms ensuite and with aircon)
DAY 7
Sacred warriors

In the region of Odienne we will meet the Malinké, descendants of the old Mali Empire. The history of this ethnic group includes Samory Touré, a leader and slave hunter who became famous for his war against the French colonial army which was able to defeat him only after many years of fighting. His army included the Dozo (initiated hunters) known for their courage and mystic powers. Although there are no longer wars to fight, this lineage continues to get unabated respect and their mystic powers are still passed on through a long initiation process. Today they are considered a sort of local police, guardian angels watching over villages, mediators of disputes and of course great healers. Brave and with a perfect knowledge of the territory, they are employed by the government to secure the northern borders of the country.

We will encounter the Dozo and walk in the savannah with them - dressed in their traditional costumes made of “bogolan” fabric and carrying their shotguns covered with amulets. They will give us an interesting introduction to traditional herbal medicines and will take us to a sacred site where, to the growing rhythm of tam-tams, they will dance and give proof of their strength.

Meals B – L - D
Overnight Hotel Les Frontières or similar (all rooms ensuite and with aircon; swimming-pool)

DAY 8
Acrobatic masks

The day is dedicated to the encounter with the Yacuba, also known as the Dan. We visit villages built on hillsides and characterized by big round huts with thatched roofs - some of the houses are decorated with frescos made by women during ceremonial periods.

Amid scented branches of coffee plantation and in the shadow of an enormous Iroko tree, we visit a large pond inhabited by venerated catfish, custodians of ancestors. Soon the echoes of tam-tams and the shouts of the initiated tell the masks that it is time to leave the sacred forest … so they appear and offer us unforgettable emotions.

Yacuba dances by YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DdFswalN9ek

We move southwards and when Mount Tonkpi with its “tooth” comes into view we know we are close to our destination: Man. Man was developed at the bottom of 18 extremely green mountains and is the capital of the We and Guéré ethnic groups.

Meals B – L - D
Overnight Hotel Les Cascades or similar (all rooms en-suite and with aircon; swimming-pool)
DAY 9
Liana bridges

The rainforest that stretches between Ivory Coast and Liberia is famous for its long liana bridges. Its is shrouded in mystery – tradition says that they are secretly built by young initiated men over the course of only one night! The crossing is not difficult, taboos are respected and no heavy load or babies are carried along.

In a nearby tiny village, masks will emerge from the forest towards us. In the cosmogony of the Guéré people, there is a creator god that communicates with humans only through its intermediaries, the masks: during the mask dance the distance between the human and the spirit worlds disappears, the cosmic and the social orders are restored, and gratitude is expressed to the gods and the ancestors.

Meals  B – L - D  
Overnight  Hotel Les Cascades or similar (all rooms en-suite and with aircon; swimming-pool)

Day 10
Rituals in the forest

Vehicles 4x4 will be necessary to discover the remote forest region where the arrival of foreigners is a rare event. The track crosses wooden bridges before reaching the more isolated settlements inhabited by the Guéré ethnic group. The sacred and spectacular masks will dance for the village. Drumming will announce the rare “Jongleurs” performances. Jongleurs are an ancient tradition now vanishing. Initiated girls with their face painted in white Kaolin perform a unique acrobatic dance… In the afternoon we continue to Daloa.

Meals  B – L - D  
Overnight  Hotel La Grace or similar (all rooms with A/C, swimming pool)

DAY 11
A basilica in the Savannah

In Daloa region we attend Zaouli dancing masks. Zaouli is a traditional dance of the Guro people. The Zaouli mask, used in the dance, was created in the 1950s, reportedly inspired by a girl named “Djela Lou Zaouli”. However, stories about the origins of the masks are varied and each mask can have its own symbolic history.

In the afternoon arrival in Yamoussoukro, the country’s capital since 1983. It is the native village of Felix Houphouët-Boigny, the first President of the Ivory Coast and one of the greatest independence leaders. He
implemented agricultural developments which created a wealthy middle class of planters and farmers. Economic success attracts immigrants from neighbouring Sahel countries and western foreign investors, thus making the Ivory Coast the giant economy of French speaking West Africa. In Yamoussoukro, the formal political capital, and in Abidjan, the economical capital, the Ivorian dream of the 1970s and 1980s has come true. The dream of a country that has managed to rival European capitals in terms of architecture and size of buildings. With the death of Houphouët-Boigny, the town of Yamoussoukro has remained the formal capital however the president, ministries, government and administration are in Abidjan. After a period of crisis that degenerated in a long civil war, Ivory Coast has again found peace and stability, and it has achieved one of the fastest economic booms in Africa with a spectacular 8.2% growth of its Gross Domestic Product.

A “child” of the economic boom of 1980s is the Basilica of Notre Dame de la Paix (Our Lady of Peace). According to the 1989 Guinness Book of Records, its width of 150 m. made it the largest Christian religious building in the world (Saint Peter’s in Rome is “only” 115 m. wide). And with its 7,763 square meters of stained glass it also boasts the biggest stained-glass section in the world. Its architecture was inspired by St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome and today the Basilica is still a fervent place of worship in Catholic Africa. In Yamoussoukro cars drive in wide boulevards constantly trying to avoid big potholes and free roaming chickens! During the visit our attention will also be caught by the huge government buildings, the lofty 14-floor high hotels and the artificial lake which is inhabited by caimans. And yet, among all this, what mostly strikes our imagination is the feeling of emptiness, the nothingness that surrounds what has become a bygone dream.

Meals  B – L – D  
Overnight  Hotel Le Président or similar (all rooms en-suite and with aircon; swimming-pool)

DAY 12  
African metropolis: skyscrapers & lagoons

Drive to Abidjan

We enter in town by the new quarter of Youpugon, not far from the Banco River forest and the “Fanico”, the famous clothes washers. If we look beyond the lagoon, the “plateau” (the City District) is growing very fast, not horizontally as in most African towns but vertically, with its large modern buildings and skyscrapers. Not much land is available and the little available must be continually extorted from the waters of the Ebrié Lagoon. The modern City District is defined to the west by the harbour and its endless queues of people waiting for a ferry, and to the east by the incredible silhouette of Saints Peter & Paul Cathedral. When we admire the skyline, only the Statue of Liberty seems to be missing, however this is Black Africa, not Manhattan! The visit begins with a short ferry trip for a general view of the “plateau”, a waters perspective. Then from the extremely lively market of Treichville we move to the peaceful and quiet “Cocody”, an elegant residential area hosting the Prime Minister’s office and some white colonial buildings. Drive to Grand Bassam

Meals  B – L – D  
Overnight  Hotel Afrikland or similar (all rooms en-suite and with aircon; swimming-pool)

DAY 13  
Gran Bassam, old colonial atmosphere

Grand Bassam is an old town built on a sand bank between the lagoon and the ocean. It was the former capital of the French Ivory Coast colony and now is a maritime leisure resort for the Abidjanese. Thanks to its
calm avenues shaded by tall trees, large bougainvillea and well-preserved colonial buildings, Grand Bassam has a magic atmosphere. The old post office is a jewel of French colonial architecture. The Costume Museum, in the former governor’s palace, with its large outer staircase is a true architectural gem and its unique collection of tribal costumes, masks, ornaments and ethnographic photographs gives an interesting perception of the country history and culture. Transfer to the airport for the flight out. End of our services.

**Meals**  B – L  
**Day-use**  rooms till 18h00

**EXTENSION, ON REQUEST**
**Assinie: Between Ocean and Lagoon**
Less than one-hour drive from Abidjan, between the wild Assinie Mafia Beach and the Aby Lagoon, lays the Coucoue Lodge. Indeed, the best way to end one’s experience of the Cote d’Ivoire: beach, swimming-pool, golf, tennis, outboard excursions, or... just relax. Comfortable bungalows, good international cuisine, 2 restaurants, 2 swimming pools, free outboard boat to the private beach on the sand strip between the ocean and the lagoon. [www.coucoue-lodge.com](http://www.coucoue-lodge.com)
Technical sheet

- **VISAS**: Ivory Coast - single entry visa. It is possible to obtain an E-visa authorisation directly online at [http://snedai.com/e-visa/](http://snedai.com/e-visa/)

- **VACCINATIONS**: Yellow fever – compulsory; malaria prophylaxis - highly recommended.

- **ACCOMMODATION** in standard rooms, as per itinerary. **TWIN ROOMS (WITH 2 BEDS) ARE NOT AVAILABLE**

- **MEALS**: lunch, picnic or at local restaurants (tourist menus); dinner at the hotel restaurant (tourist menu)

- **LUGGAGE**: due to the itinerary please contain the weight in 20 kg (45 Lbs), preferable use duffle bags.

- **TRAVEL INSURANCE**: Not included. Mandatory for medical assistance, repatriation, material and physical damages. We are not responsible for any material and physical damage during the tour

- **TRANSPORTATION**: microbus or minibus or 4x4 vehicles, domestic flight Abidjan - Bouaké

- All our trips are designed to be flexible so that we can adapt to weather conditions, focus on the group’s interests and take advantage of opportunities that arise once there.

- Considering the special nature of the journey, some parts may be modified due to unpredictable factors and are based on unarguable decisions of the local guide. Costs originating from such variations will be sole responsibility of the participants. Of course, the guide will do his/her utmost to adhere to the original program.

- Prices could change in case of major changes in services costs, beyond the organizer’s will

- In the event of cancellations, changes or delay in the schedule of the domestic flight, the organizers shall not be held responsible for any change, delays or disagreements and the costs that they may incur. It is understood that the organizers will do their utmost to find solutions to any problems inherent the journey

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**Rates per person in sharing double**

**Validity 2020**

*All departures are confirmed with minimum 2 people, when booking occurs at least 60 days prior to departure.*

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<tr>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Published Rate (Recommended Selling Rate)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Based on 6+ guests</td>
<td>3 020 Euro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Based on 2 / 5 guests</td>
<td>3 991 Euro</td>
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<td>Single supplement</td>
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EXTENSION - Assinie: Between Ocean and Lagoon
Cocoué Lodge
Rates of rooms and transfers on request

**Included:**
- Assistance at airport upon arrival (day 1) and departure (day 13)
- Transfers and tour in minibuses/microbuses and/or 4WD vehicles
- Flight from Abidjan to Bouake (economy class)
- English-speaking local guide – on request also in French, German, Italian and Spanish.
- Tours and visits as per the programme
- Accommodation in standard rooms, as per itinerary
- All meals as described: B = breakfast, L = lunch, D = dinner
- Mineral water in the bus/car during the visits
- Entrance fees to parks, concessions, protected areas and cultural sites
- First Aid box
- All service charges and taxes

**Not included:**
- International flights
- Earlier (prior day 1) and/or later (after day 13) transfers from and to airport
- Visa fees and any airport departure taxes
- Any meals or sightseeing tours other than those specified
- Mineral water and drinks at meals
- 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 no less than 14 days before the arrival of guests at the destination.