

LEADED BY ALBERTO NICHELI

WEST AFRICA, GRAND EXPEDITION

35 DAYS IN: SENEGAL, GAMBIA, GUINEA BISSAU, GUINEA CONAKRY, SIERRA LEONE, LIBERIA, IVORY COAST, GHANA, TOGO AND BENIN.

- From Dakar December 3th, 2020. Ends in Cotonou January 6th, 2021.
- From Cotonou February 26th, 2021. Ends in Dakar April 1st, 2021. Reverse Itinerary

Prices from 8.758 Euro

Or joint us for part of the Expedition: itineraries from 6 to 30 days



PRESENTATION

Starting from Cap d'Almadine in Dakar, the western point of African continent. Going South and East: Gambia and his birds, Casamance and the animistic mask dances, navigating to Bijagos remote Archipelago, discovering the less known part of Guinea Bissau with a "tribal concert" of the Griot: descendent of traditional musician and story tellers lineage uninterrupted from 12th century. Following the coast and inland of Guinea Gulf, between pristine shores and islands. Experience remotes forests where foreigners don't arrive: mountains, liana bridges, isolated villages house of Bird Men initiates, dancing masks, secrete animistic rituals and diamonds seekers. Witness the highest concentration of ancient trade and slave castles. Discover the African origins of Voodoo: trance rituals still practiced in the largest stilt village of the continent.

Participate to the contemporary African vibe: stroll in the intense city life of Dakar, Freetown, Monrovia, Abidjan and Accra, feel the exciting mix of modernity, culture, music and fusion cuisine.

The Grand Traverse across West Africa will be adventurous and enjoyable. Transport in in comfortable air-conditioned 4WD vehicles and minibuses. On Ocean and lagoons: speed boats for major navigations and local boat for short sails.

Accommodations: in the capitals, 4 stars hotels with possibility to upgrade to 5 stars. In the inland the best available: mainly new 3 stars hotels with self-contain and air-conditioned rooms. One night at a fix and cosy camp in the luxuriant vegetation of an island.

Lagos extension:

To complete the expedition we can arrange, on request, an extension to Nigerian capital: speed boat navigation to join Lagos via the lagoon. With is 21 million inhabitants, Lagos is the largest metropolis south of Sahara, a terrific melting-pot of contemporary Africa.



[Join for part of the expedition:](#)

- **28 days DAKAR - ABIDJAN** Departure: Dakar December 3rd, 2020.
- **28 days ABIDJAN - DAKAR** Departure: Abidjan, Grand Bassam 5th March 2021
From 6893 Euro

- **20 days DAKAR - MONROVIA** Departure from Dakar December 3rd, 2020.
- **20 days MONROVIA - DAKAR** Departure from Monrovia March 13th, 2021
From 5740 Euro

- **9 days DAKAR – BISSAU** Departure from Dakar December 3rd, 2020.
- **9 days BISSAU – DAKAR** Departure from Bissau March 24rd 2021.
From 2153 Euro

- **30 days BIJAGOS – COTONOU** Departure from Bissau December 8th, 2020.
- **30 days COTONOU – BIJAGOS** Departure from Cotonou February 26th, 2021.
From 7872 Euro

- **23 Days BIJAGOS ARCHIPELAGO – ABIDJAN** Departure from Bissau December 8th, 2020.
- **23 Days ABIDJAN – BIJAGOS ARCHIPELAGO** Departure from Abidjan, March 5th, 2021.
From 5949 Euro

- **20 Days BISSAU – ABIDJAN** Departure from Bissau December 11th, 2020.
- **20 Days ABIDJAN – BISSAU** Departure from Abidjan, March 5th, 2021.
From 5173 Euro

- **15 Days BIJAGOS ARCHIPELAGO – MONROVIA** Departure from Bissau December 8th, 2020.
- **14 Days MONROVIA – BIJAGOS ARCHIPELAGO** Departure from Monrovia March 13th, 2021.
From 3883

- **12 Days BISSAU – MONROVIA** Departure from Bissau December 11th, 2020.
- **12 Days MONROVIA - BISSAU** Departure from Monrovia March 13th, 2021.
From 3196 Euro

- **21 Days FREETOWN – COTONOU** Departure from Freetown December 17th, 2020.
- **21 Days COTONOU - FREETOWN** Departure from Cotonou, February 26th, 2021.
From 6381 Euro

- **17 Days FREETOWN – ACCRA** Departure from Freetown December 17th, 2020.
- **17 Days ACCRA – FREETOWN** Departure from Accra March 2nd, 2021.
From 4995 Euro

- **14 Days FREETOWN – ABIDJAN** Departure from Freetown December 17th, 2020
- **14 Days ABIDJAN – FREETOWN** Departure from Abidjan, March 5th, 2021
From 4270 Euro

- **6 Days FREETOWN – MONROVIA.** Departure from Freetown December 17th, 2020
- **6 Days MONROVIA – FREETOWN.** Departure from Monrovia, March 13th, 2021
From 2184 Euro

- **13 Days MONROVIA – ACCRA** Departure from Monrovia December 21st 2020

- **13 Days ACCRA – MONROVIA** Departure from Accra, March 2nd, 2021

From 3384 Euro

- **10 Days ABIDJAN – COTONOU** Departure from Abidjan December 28th 2020

- **10 Days COTONOU – ABIDJAN** Departure from Cotonou February 26th, 2021

From 2487 Euro



ITINERARY



Day 1 SENEGAL December 3rd, 2020

Arrival to Dakar Airport and transfer to Lake Rose
Dinner and overnight at Trarza Hotel, facing lac rose.



Day 2 DAKAR, AFRICAN METROPOLIS Senegal

Lac Rose, also known as Lac Retba, is a shallow saltwater lake surrounded by dunes. Due to the high concentration of salt the lake often shimmers in pink; swimming in the lake gives the sensation of floating. More than 600 people work collecting salt from the lake, in the traditional way. Arrival
Arrival to Dakar, start the visit of the town: Dakar became an important centre of political, artistic and intellectual “renouveau” during the independence, and is still a lively African metropolis. Visit of the “Plateau” district, the Presidential Palace a typical market and an interesting museum.

Ferry to Gorée Island: The right times to enjoy Gorée is at sunset when all tourists are gone or in the morning before the crowd arrival.

Dinner in a typical restaurant and overnight at “Maison Municipal” or similar. A comfortable Guest house in an ancient, restored building, Air-conditioned self-contain rooms.

Day 3 – GOREE Senegal

In Gorée island slaves were crammed, waiting to be shipped to the Americas. Totally restored remain to bear witness of those times. Today its breezy climate, history and ancient architecture, together with nice restaurants and boutiques, make Gorée an interesting and trendy destination for local and foreign visitors. Ferry to Dakar and visit of the town.

Dinner and Overnight at the comfortable air-conditioned bungalows of Relais de Kaolak or Kabacoto Safari Lodge, facing a lake and lagoons ***, or similar.

Day 4 GAMBIA, BETWEEN ARCHEOLOGY AND CONTEMPORANEITY Senegal - Gambia

Early departure, the region between the north bank of Gambia River and Senegal have hosted one of the largest megalithic civilisations on earth . Sine Ngayene is the richest Megalithic site with 1102 erected stones. Border of Gambia and a “very local” ferry crossing of the large Gambia River estuary to reach Banjul, the capital. Visit of the town centre, and the interesting national museum. Optional: music in town.

Dinner and overnight at Kairaba Beach hotel ****, swimming pool.

Day 5 DANCING MASK Gambia – Casamance (Senegal)

Morning, brief but intense guided bird watching experience.

Departure for the border with Casamance, the southern region of Senegal.

Late afternoon we will join the ritual dances of Diola sacred mask. The masks belong to a secret society and the identity of the dancers is not revealed, it is said that the mask is animated by the spirits. Drums, dances and a colourful crowd will enliven the tiny village in the shade of larges kapok trees.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zp6x2rlNXA>

Dinner and overnight at the comfortable Kadiandoumange hotel ***, located on the bank of Casamance large river, swimming pool. An interesting example of local managed charming hotel. Or similar.

Day 6 ANCESTORS CULT Senegal – Guinea Bissau December 8th, 2020.

Crossing of Guinea Bissau border. The Manjaco ethnic group calls the traditions “Gendiman”. We will visit tiny villages hidden in the forest to discover the sculptured wooden poles called “Pecab” that represent the spirits of their ancestors, in a sanctuary known as “Cab Balugun”. After asking permission to the villagers, we will have the opportunity to see different generations and styles of sacred wooden sculptures; one of the last chances to enjoy tribal art in its original cultural context. Arrival at Bissau .Dinner and overnight at Azalai Hotel ****. Or similar

Day 7 - BIJAGOS SACRED ARCHIPELAGO: THE GHOST CAPITAL Guinea Bissau

We will start a three days spectacular navigation on a speedboat to discover the Bijagos Archipelago, his fascinating nature and isolated tribes. The Archipelago, composed by 88 islands and islets, is located at an average of 40 miles from the coastline. Bijagos is a “geographical jewel”.

Bolama was the former capital of the Portuguese Guinea from 1871. In 1941 the capital was moved to Bissau. When the Portuguese left, native people came to live in this town which is now falling apart, partly invaded with tropical vegetation. Built following the plans of a «Castrum Romane» (roman citadel) the town is made of straight large avenues, sunny and lethargic empty squares, dry fountains, bush-like gardens, imposing administrative buildings in neo Palladian style. In the shade of the columns at the former governor palace goats graze peacefully. Although inhabited, this capital town is plunged in the fairy-tale atmosphere of a ghost town.

Dinner and overnight at **Ponta Anchaca Resort ****** in comfortable air-conditioned wooden bungalows, hidden in the vegetation and facing the ocean. Restaurant on stilts with refined French and tropical cuisine. This lodge will be our base for two days.

Day 8 VACA BRUTO DANCING CEREMONY Guinea Bissau

Short navigation to Bubaque island, the “capital” of Bijagos Archipelago, his market and the tiny museum.



Afternoon: due to the remoteness, the lack of transports and the deep attachment of the locals to their traditions, the Bijagos tribes have been little influenced by the external world. Life in the villages is characterized by initiations rites and secret ceremonies. In some villages, the young men must go through a seven-year initiation rite living in a “convent” with no contact with women. With its wild and idyllic landscapes, and a genuine tribal culture, Bijagos Archipelago is a “geographical jewel”. In Bijagos Archipelago life is still ruled by the “cycle of seasons”. During the long dry season, when harvest is over, the main ceremonies take place. Vaca Bruto (wild bull) is the most spectacular mask in the islands, the

dancers convey the mask a realistic presence by bowing and facing the ground. With eyes of frosted glass, real

horns, leather ears and a rope through the nostril. All convey the idea of a real untamed animal, representing a man in full possession of his physical strength but still with an immature behaviour as he has not yet undergone the final initiations. All the villagers attend this fascinating ceremony.

Return to our comfortable Ponta Anchaca Resort **** in comfortable air-conditioned wooden bungalows, hidden in the vegetation and facing the ocean. Restaurant on stilts with refined French and tropical cuisine.

Day 9 – ISLANDER LIFE Guinea Bissau. December 11th, 2020

Morning relax at Ponta Anchaca wild beaches, and swimming pool, or walking excursion in the island.

Afternoon navigation to Bissau.

On request (not included) Early morning departure for an excursion to Orango Island in search of a residual fauna of Hippos that has acclimatised with the life on islands. Mainly living in fresh-water swamps, some time they could swim in the ocean. Local guide will lead the visitors, hippos are not granted.

A vehicle will be waiting us for a brief city tour. Bissau is a tiny but intriguing capital town with old Portuguese architecture and a huge fort, a reminder of the slave trade era.

Overnight hotel Azalai, international standard ****

Day 10: GRIOT: THE AFRICAN TROBADORS Guinea Bissau

Early morning departure. After lunch we leave the main road for a small village in the Malinké region.

The Malinké are the descendants of the ancient Mali Empire and are spread on the current territory of Mali, Guinea Conakry Ivory Coast, Senegal and Guinea Bissau. Griots are a cast of musician-story tellers dating from the Mali Empire. The village we visit is known for the Griot families that have maintained these traditions from the time of the Empire. Well-known also for their skill in producing musical instruments, they will perform a concert for us., Arrival at Gabu. Dinner and overnight at the new hotel Karsa ***, air-conditioned self-contained rooms.

Day 11: THE LARGEST MOUNTAIN MASSIF Guinea Bissau – Guinea Conakry

A human-drawn barge will allow us to cross Rio Corubal, the natural border between the two Guineas and bring us to the small border posts of Guinea Conakry in a region inhabited by the Malinké and the Fulla (Peul) tribes; stopover in villages where the arrival of foreigners is a very rare event.

Join the main road we will start to penetrate Fouta Djallon massif. Thanks to the fresh and salubrious climate was the preferred place by the French for their holidays during the colonial era. Wood of conifers is left as memory of that time. Considered the most spectacular area of Guinea: mountains, plateau and savannah are alternated with deep humid valleys. This large mountain massif is the “water reservoir”, from Guinea starts 3 rivers that give name to four nation: Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Gambia. On this territory live the Fulani, famous for their beauty and considered the greatest stockbreeders of cow of the West Africa. We will visit isolated villages, composed of large clay houses decorated with bas relief, high conical roofs with several layers of straw.

Evening arrival to Labe and overnight at the basic but comfortable and clean Hotel Tata, self-contained bungalows with A/C.

Day 12: FOUTA DJALON Guinea Conakry

Full day dedicated to discovering Fouta Djallon where the mountains meet the savannah, deep valley, highest



waterfalls framed by the forest make the landscape of a pristine beauty. Peul ethnic group, (called also Fula's) come from this area; Peul are known for their 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 and are the largest group in sub-Saharan savannas. A very large clay round hut with a decorated grass roof is where the main council sits and where were nominate the traditional chiefs of all Fouta Djallon, thanks to our connections we will ask to be received by chiefs and dignitaries sitting in council.... Arrival at Dalaba at 1200 m. (3900 Ft.) altitude. Dinner and overnight at a new and comfortable hotel, Safitel ***. Air-

conditioned self-contain rooms.

Day 13: AFRICAN BAS-RELIEF Guinea Conakry

Visit to Dalaba small and quiet town. Of an interest is the "casa a palabra" (the house of words) with fine bas-relief in a pure Peul architectural style. Here the chiefs used to gather 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 anti-colonials; he refuse any cooperation with French and linked Soviet Union bloc and tide friendly relationship 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 a today ruined villa Miriam Makeba met and married Stokley Carmichael, an exile from the US who was among the inspirators of the armed wing of Black Panter.

We will live Dalaba following the southern slope of the massif to reach Mamou an interesting trading town and his market.

Hotel Balys , or similar. Basic comfort Air-conditioned Self-contain rooms.

Days 14 and 15 MASKS IN THE FOREST Guinea Conakry - Sierra Leone Day 15: December 17th, 2020

A tiny small track will bring us to a small border with a remote area of Sierra Leone, arrival at the village of Kamakwie, in this region, where foreigner are rare, if lucky we will assist to traditional dances and the exit of sacred masks, called here "devils".

Next day drive in the direction of Freetown peninsula.

Day 6 Dinner and overnight at the White House hotel or similar, (built by a local that live in the USA in the shape inspired to the White House) Basic comfort, self-contain rooms.

Day 7 Dinner and Overnight in Freetown at the comfortable Swiss Hotel ****, international standard.

DAY 16 FREETOWN PENINSULA Sierra Leone

Freetown origins: in 1786 the first 308 freed slaves came to Sierra Leone from America where they have fought in the independence war on the side of 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 fight with the locals, who hardly stand them. Few years after during a Napoleonic war, Freetown has been attacked by seven vessels of the French navy and destroyed. Few survivors escape on the pirogues sent by... the slaves' traders... From 1807, due to the abolition of the slave trade by the British Empire, the ships of the slave's traders caught by the British navy freed the slaves in Sierra Leone.

In 1808 Freetown became the capital⁴⁵ of the first British colony in tropical Africa. At that time Krio, or ex slaves, were more than 50.000 creating an elite who put pressure on the colonial administration for a better education. In 1845 was built Fourah Bay the first University in west Africa. During Colonial time Freetown was known as the "Athens of West Africa". Drive along the coast at the slopes of the Freetown peninsula mountains... only the yellow of the beaches divide the green of the lush vegetation from the blue of the ocean. The country has been named after these mountains, the mountains of lion. A local boat will bring us to Banana island. Dinner and Overnight at

the cozy Bafa Lodge that will be our base for two nights: fix tents hidden in the forest facing the sea. Fine cuisine based on the catch of the day (other meals available, ask in advance).

Day 17 BANANA ISLAND Sierra Leone

Full day dedicated to circumnavigating, explore, walk and discover this pristine island with mountains in large primary forests, villages and remote beaches. For the more adventurous a half day walk to explore the forest or continue the circumnavigation of the island. Lunch picnic, dinner and overnight at our unique Bafa Lodge fix camp.

Day 18 BUNDO: FEMALE MASKS Sierra Leone

Brief navigation, to joint our vehicles and departure in direction north east.

In most parts of Africa, the masks are male's prerogative, however among the Mende people and 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. Dinner and overnight at comfortable hotel Dohas, rooms with A/C and en-suite, or similar.



Day 19: DIAMONDS Sierra Leone – Liberia 21 December 2020



Diamond searching is as addictive as gambling at least, the possibility of finding a “fortune” can become true for most lucky. Diamonds have played an important role in the recent troubled history of the country and the quantity and quality of “stones” to find is important. We will take a track to reach a village with huts made by clay and straw. After asking permission to the chief some villagers will take us to the site where we can meet the diamonds’ seekers. The local person will explain us the technics of artisanal mining and “sand washing”. A spectacular road in the forest will bring us to the Mano River the natural border with Liberia. After the border formality we will continue to reach Monrovia in the evening. Diner and overnight at the comfortable Cape Hotel **** international standard, at Mamba Point, in the best area of

Monrovia. Or similar

DAY 20 LIBERIA: THE LAND OF FREEMEN **Liberia**

Liberia is the only African country which has never been either a colony or a protectorate; Liberia was founded by Krio, the freed slaves who came back to Africa from America, for this reason was named "Liberia". Krio are 5% of the population and they are the main actors of the economy and 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 American English "Pidgin".

Our ocean-view hotel is the best starting point to visit town. Freemasonry had a great impact on the history of Liberia and Krio culture, visit of the Grand Masonic Temple imposing building. A symbol of Monrovia is what left of the Ducor Palace Hotel, inaugurated in 1960 was one of the first five stars in Africa. Located on a rocky hill in the highest point of Monrovia, dominate the whole town and the gulf. The hotel hosted social events and parties of the African political elite at the time of independence. In the large swimming pool facing the ocean Idi Amin used to swim carrying his gun at the belt while his friend Miriam Makeba was singing. After the civil war the building was looted several times, the hotel is now abandoned and closed, but seeking the right permission, we may be able to visit it.

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.

The building of the National Museum his himself a display of Krio traditional architecture, inside we discover a large collection of ancient masks and ritual objects and a photographic show about the civil war which took place between 1989 and 2003. Old colonial buildings, stone Krio churches will be also part of this intriguing town visit. Lunch and departure for Gbarnga. Dinner and overnight at Passion 2 Hotel ***, or similar.



DAY 21 AFRICAN WILD FORESTS **Liberia – Guinea Conakry**

Early morning departure for a day of driving to the northern part of Liberia and to the greatest forest region in Guinea Conakry. Crossed the border we will continue through larges rubber plantation (hevea) to reach Nzerekore and Macenta in a hilly and luxuriant landscape. After dinner we live the hotel to join a village and participate to a spectacular dance: the masks will live the forest and dance at the light of a large fire.... Dinner and overnight at the comfortable and new Hotel Macenta *** fully air-conditioned, self -contain rooms, swimming pool. Or similar.

DAY 22 BIRD MEN, TOMA MASKS & LIANA BRIDGE **Guinea Conakry**

A small track in the lush vegetation will bring us to a remote village to assist at one of the more spectacular, and les known, sacred dances of West African forests. The Bird Men with the face painted in Kaolin and totally dressed in feathers belong to a special initiation, that has passed secretly from father to son during centuries. Believed to have magical powers that can make him invisible, the bird men are during tribal wars, the best messengers, able to cross the enemy lines. Tom-tom drummers and all the village will participate to the event. Toma locally called Loma have also different masks living in the sacred forest...



This region hides many secrets. The liana bridges are masterpiece of an authentic "tribal technology" and can measure 70-meter length. They are built exclusively with vegetal materials, as wood and lianas without the use of nails or rope nor other materials foreign to the forest. Only the initiated can harvest the liana and wood and leave it in the forest, is believed that a powerful spirit will build the bridge in

one night. During the preparation of a new bridge needier women nor not initiated are allowed in the forest, to guarantee the secrecy of this "magic technology".

Arrival to Nzerekore after an intense day. Dinner and Overnight at hotel Bethanie, self-contain air-conditioned rooms.

DAY 23 PRIMATES Guinea Conakry – Ivory Coast

Early morning departure from Nzerekore, the main settlement of the Forest Region. We reach Bossou village in time for a walk to discover a forest, where a group of chimpanzees (Pan Troglodytes) lives. 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 approach.

The road will bring us to Ivory Coast border. When mount Tonkpi with its pic comes into view we are close to our destination. The small town of Man, surrounded by 18 green mountains is the capital of the We, Dan and Guéré ethnic groups known for the mask considered between the masterpiece of African Art. We will spend two nights at our hotel in Man. Dinner and overnight at hotel Les Cascades, air-conditioned self-contain rooms ***, swimming pool. Or Similar

DAY 24 DAN MASKS Ivory Coast

Full day dedicated to Man region. In a nearby tiny village, masks will emerge from the forest towards us. In the cosmogony of the Dan 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. Dan Masks are one of the finest tribal mask thanks to the delicate balance of shapes that symbolize beauty.

Man, market is an important market with villagers coming from the region and from the neighbours countries. It will be possible to find a wild choice of handicraft and, with some luck, authentic tribal masks and ritual objects. Dinner and overnight, return to hotel Les Cascades, air-conditioned self-contain rooms ***, swimming-pool. Or similar.



Day 25 MAGIC TRADITIONS Ivory Coast

Full day dedicated to discovering masks and magic traditions.

Only 4x4 vehicles drive at remote villages in the forest to encounter the Guere ethnic group, where the arrival of foreigners is a rare event. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4-vPJqtxyA> We will discover the powerful Guéré Mask dances, and (if we are lucky) the rare "Jugglers" performances. Girls initiatory Juggling is an ancient tradition now vanishing and we have been able to discover one of the last villages where is still practiced.

If Dan's masks are considered among the more refined example of beauty and aesthetic, Guéré masks are known for the powerful and rough aspect. Return to the main road to reach the town of Daloa in the evening. Diner and overnight at the recent Hotel La Grace, self-contain airconditioned rooms ***, or similar.

Day 26 CATHEDRAL IN THE SAVANNAH Ivory Coast

Day of drive in south-east direction. We continue our journey across coffee and cocoa plantation, dotted only by small villages. Ivory Coast is the world's

main cocoa producer, the second is Ghana and together, they represent more than half of the world production.

In a village we attend the Zaouli dancing masks. **Zaouli** is a traditional dance of the Guro tribe. The Zaouli mask, was created in the 1950s, probably inspired by a girl named "Djela Lou Zaouli". However, stories on the origins are varied, and each mask can have its own symbolic history. The uniqueness of Zaouli dance is the fine and sophisticated movement of the legs and the fits.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dDYN2D4MvOM&list=PL3fWcyxhXJem5SB-CrAPiBevgzyVhSKWV&index=44>

Afternoon arrival to Yamoussoukro, the country's formal capital since 1983, is the native village of Houphouët-Boigny, the first President of the Ivory Coast. Here the Ivorian dream of the 1970s and 1980s has come true, the dream of a country that, despite its shortage of major natural resources, has create the largest economy in French west Africa.

We visit the Basilica of the Virgin of Peace, inspired of St Peter's in Rome, is the largest building of Christianity on earth, unique the high colourful glass windows. We see wide boulevards where the few cars try to avoid the big potholes, Zebus and chickens. The huge government buildings, the lofty hotels up to 14 floors high, and even an artificial lake inhabited by crocodiles have a feeling of abandoned.

Dinner and overnight at the comfortable Royal Hotel, swimming pool, *** air-conditioned self-contain rooms, or similar.

Day 27, ABIDJAN, SKYSCRAPERS AND LAGOONS Ivory Coast December 29th, 2020

Motorway departure for Abidjan that we will reach late morning. 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 recovered 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 public boat, and to the east by the silhouette of Saints Peter & Paul Cathedral. Chaotic traffic is the negative result of the fast-economic development of this country that after the civil war has some time reached the 6% of the GDP. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XpvcvYRQbhA>

31st December, great gala dinner and dances at the hotel, celebrating new year in the typical Abidjan's way! Overnight at the comfortable and new Azalai **** hotel, international standard, or similar.

DAY 28 GRAND BASSAM Ivory Coast December 30th, 2020

Drive to Grand Bassam: 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 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 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. Continuation in direction East to the small town of Aboisso.

Dinner and overnight at Hotel le Rochè***, Self-contain airconditioned rooms, or similar.

DAY 29 GOLD COAST Ivory Coast – Ghana December 31st 2020

Early departure, drive to the Ghana border. In Axim visit fort St Antonio built by the Portuguese in 1515 at the estuary of Ankobra River in a region rich in Gold. The coast of Ghana is unique in whole Africa for the concentration of ancient castles and forts. More than 80 fortifications were built by Europeans during three centuries, to trade in gold, ivory and slaves. The name of this region, from the first Portuguese navigator that discover it navigators in 15th century to the independence in 1957 was named Gold Coast from the abundance of the gold traded. Evening arrival at Anomabu Beach resort where we will spend two nights. Air-Conditioned self-bungalows near the ocean. 31decemberv Gala dinner, in the African joyful stile.

DAY 30 ELMINA UNIQUE ATMOSPHERE Ghana

Full day dedicated to discovering ancient slave trade castles and syncretic animistic shrines.

After a stop at Cape Coast we will visit Elmina Castle, the oldest European building in Africa. Sao Jorge da Mina was erected by the Portuguese in 1482. At different times the castle has been used as a warehouse to trade gold, ivory,



and eventually slaves. The castle we visit today is the result of successive extension works and is recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage site. Facing the castle, the fishing harbour with hundreds of colourful and large fishing wooden canoes. In the old town and neighbours, we will discover the Posuban, shrines of the "Asafo companies" where the Asafo "warriors" still pour libations. The alleys in the old town have a unique atmosphere, bringing us back long time before the colonial era when Elmina was the first place of fix exchanges between Europeans and Sub Sahara Africa. Dinner and

overnight: return to our bungalows at Anomabu Beach Resort, or similar.

DAY 31: ACCRA "THE CAPITAL" Ghana January 2nd, 2021

The capital of Ghana has maintained its special identity despite the fast-paced development currently underway in this intriguing African vibe. We explore the old of James Town area, inhabited by the local population known as the Ga. Our tour ends with the visit of a workshop where they specialize in building fantasy coffins. These special handcrafted coffins can take on any shape: fruit, animals, fish, cars, airplanes.... the only limit being imagination! Dinner and overnight in the town central district at Villa Boutique *** self-contain air-conditioned rooms, or similar. Optional, swinging Accra: evening at one of the more typical music club in town.

DAY 32: LOME: COSMOPOLITAN AND STYLISH CAPITAL Ghana - Togo

Morning drive to Togo border.

Lome, the vibrant capital of Togo, is the only African city which has been ruled a ruled by Germans, British and French and has attract traders from different African countries. It is also one of the rare capitals in the world bordering another nation. These elements have developed a unique lifestyle of its inhabitants, of is multi facet cuisine and is the architecture. Lome is a meeting point for people, trade and cultures, a cosmopolitan, but still in human size capital. We will visit: the central market with its famous "Nana Benz", women who control the market of the expensive "pagne" (colourful cloths) sold all over West Africa the colonial buildings and the largest "fetish market" in whole Africa, where we can find an eclectic assortment of all the necessary ingredients for love potions and magical concoctions.

Overnight at the recent Onomo Hotel***, or similar.

DAY 33 VOODOO Togo -Benin

Voodoo is the main religion in the coastal area of Togo and Benin and authentic ceremonies are common: the frenetic rhythm of drums and the chants of the adepts "call" the Voodoo spirits who takes possession of some participants. The possessed falls into a deep trance: eyes rolling back, grimaces, convulsions, insensitivity to fire or pain. Sakpata, Heviosso, Mami Water are just some of the voodoo divinities who can manifest... Surrounded by the magic atmosphere of the ceremony, we will understand what people mean when they say: "In your Churches you pray God; in our Voodoo shrine we become Gods!".

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YuZlf-iyqM8> Border with Benin and arrival to the small town of Grand Popo. Dinner and overnight at the charming Auberge dev Gran Popo, ocean front ancient colonial building totally restored. Air-conditioned self-contain rooms. Or similar.



DAY 34: OUIDAH, AFRO-BRASILIAN CULTURE Benin

Between lagoons and ocean, we will discover Zangbeto cult. Zangbeto Mask Is very tall and covered with coloured straw. It represents wild, non-human spirits (the forces of nature and of the night that inhabited the Earth before human). The mask wearers belong to a secret society and keep their identity hidden as the non-initiated cannot know who they are. When Zangbeto dances is an event for the village. Its performance guarantees protection against bad spirits and witchcraft. The spinning movement of the mask symbolizes the spiritual cleaning of the village and Zangbeto also performs « miracles » to prove it powers.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LUKuOSTTXIY>

Drive to Ouidah, this small town was conquered by the Dahomey Kingdom during the 18th century to become one of the main slave ports. We the start visit following the "slave road" to the beach, the point of "no return" where slaves were shipped to the "new world". Ouidah enjoys a rare Afro-Brazilian architecture, where the python temple faces the Catholic Cathedral. The laid-back attitude of the locals blends in harmoniously with the thunder of the distant waves and the rhythm of the drums - a timeless atmosphere well described by Bruce Chatwin in his book "The Vice-Roy of Ouidah". On foot we visit the Python Temple and the Portuguese Fort, now a small but interesting museum on the history of Ouidah and the transatlantic slave trade and the links that this trade have created between Guinea Gulf countries and the Caribbean.

Dinner and Overnight at Hotel Casa del Papa **** or similar, ocean front bungalows, wild beaches, swimming pool. (Air-conditioned bungalows en suite).

Day 35: THE STILTS VILLAGE Benin January 6th, 2021

Drive for miles on the fisherman track between endless yellow beaches, tall palm trees straw huts and colourful pirogues. We will leave our vehicles and cross Lake Nokwe on a motorized boat to reach Ganvié, the largest and most beautiful African village on stilts. The approximately 25,000 inhabitants are part of the Tofinou ethnic group and build their wooden houses on teak stilts. Breeding fish with an ancient tribal technology is their main activity. Ganvié has managed to preserve its traditions and environment despite the long-lasting human presence in a closed setting; and the lake is not over-fished. Daily life unfolds in the dugout canoes that adults and children row with ease using brightly coloured paddles. From these canoes men fishing, women expose goods at the “floating market”, children go to school and play, in Ganvie children are said to learn to swim first than to walk. Day room available in Cotonou and transfer to the airport.

Technical sheet



EXPEDITION LEADER: Alberto Nicheli, has been travelling in West Africa since 1975. He has led more than a hundred expeditions in West Africa and sixty-four Sahara expeditions, including solo crossing of the desert, ethnological research on Tuareg and rock art. He has organized the logistics of a documentary film for Discovery Channel on the Caravans of the Niger and has assisted in numerous research projects on West Africa with Angela Fisher and Carol Beckwith from National Geographic, as well as in different television programs on West Africa. He has an expertise in Tribal Art and security in West Africa.

EXPLORATORY ITINERARY: This itinerary is an expedition; participants must be flexible and ready to enjoy the unique encounters but also some unexpected situations that are part of the “African Experience”.

VISAS:

Senegal: visa not needed for many nationalities including US, Canada and European Union. For other nationality the visa is request, please check.

Gambia: For some nationality visa not request, for other visa obtainable at the border, for others invitation letter require.

Guinea Bissau: single entry visa require, we can obtain the visa during the tour. Please prevent us in advance.

Guinea Conakry: multi-entry visa (two entries needed)

Liberia, Ivory Coast and Ghana: single entry visa required. The Ivory Coast E-Visa is not valid for entry by land borders, needed visa from the embassy.

Sierra Leone: visa available at the border (cost 100 USD).

Togo: visa available at the border, please confirm with us before.

Benin, E-Visa: www.evisa.gouv.bj/en/

Ghana: Single entry visa required; the visa is issued only at the embassy competent with the country of residence.

Note: Guinea Conakry, Liberia and Ivory Coast has diplomatic representations in Dakar, that can issue visas.

Lagos Extension: Nigerian single-entry visa required; the visa is issued only at the embassy competent with the country of residence.

VACCINATIONS: Yellow fever – compulsory; malaria prophylaxis highly recommended. Cholera now don't request, please check prior departure.

LUGGAGE: due to the exploratory itinerary, please to be contained in 20 kg (45 Lbs.) suggested duffle bags.

TRAVEL INSURANCE: Not included. Mandatory for medical assistance, repatriation, material and physical damages.

TRANSPORT: 4x4 vehicles and minibuses, speed boats, local boats.

MEALS: lunches: cold meals (picnics or sandwiches and fruit) or at restaurants. Dinners: at the hotel restaurants (pre-select menu). Included one bottle of water each day during the visits.

NOTICE: The itinerary is designed to discover fascinating places, where the visit of a foreigner remains an exceptional event. Participants need to be cooperative, tolerant and flexible to fully enjoy their tour and appreciate the unique nature, as well as the spontaneous hospitality of the local populations, African magic and mystery, its metaphysics, ceremonies, life philosophies and religious beliefs that people are willing to share with us.

Itineraries, visits and overnight accommodations are subject to change or modification by the organizer due to force majeure and can be modified or adapted to local conditions.

Prices

Full Expeditions from Dakar to Cotonou:

35 Days ACROSS WEST AFRICA

- From Dakar December 3th, 2020. End in Cotonou January 6th, 2021
- From Cotonou February 26th, 2021. End in Dakar April 1st, 2021 (Reverse itinerary).
 - 6 or more participants: sharing a double room, each 8.758 Euro
 - 4 or 5 participants: sharing a double room, each 10.860 Eur
 - Single room supplement : 1194 Euro

Join us for part of the expeditions:

28 days DAKAR - ABIDJAN . Senegal, Gambia, Guinea Bissau and Bijagos archipelago, Guinea Conakry, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ivory Coast.

Starts from Dakar on December 3rd, 2020. Ends in Abidjan the evening of December 30th, 2020

28 days ABIDJAN - DAKAR -. Ivory Coast, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea Conakry, Guinea Bissau and Bijagos Archipelago, Gambia, Senegal.

Starts from Abidjan on March 5th, 2021. Ends in Dakar the evening of April 1st, 2021

- 6 or more participants: sharing a double room, each 6893 Euro
- 4 or 5 participants: sharing a double room, each 8686 Euro
- Single room supplement : 782 Euro

20 days DAKAR - MONROVIA. Senegal, Gambia, Guinea Bissau and Bijagos archipelago, Guinea Conakry, Sierra Leone, Liberia.

Starts from Dakar December 3rd, 2020. Ends in Monrovia the 22nd December afternoon.

20 days MONROVIA - DAKAR. Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea Conakry, Guinea Bissau and Bijagos Archipelago, Gambia, Senegal.

Starts from Monrovia March 13th, 2021, Ends in Dakar the evening of April 1st, 2021.

6 or more participants: sharing a double room, each 5780 Euro

- 4 to 5 participants: sharing a double room, each 6894 Euro.
- Single room supplement : 748 Euro,

9 days DAKAR – BIJAGOS ARCHIPELAGO. Senegal, Gambia, Guinea Bissau and Bijagos Archipelago.

Starts from Dakar December 3rd, 2020. Ends in Bissau the evening of December 11th, 2021

9 days BIJAGOS ARCHIPELAGO - DAKAR. Bijagos Archipelago and Bissau, Gambia, Senegal.

Starts from Bissau March 24th, 2021. Ends in Dakar the evening of April 1st, 2021

- 6 or more participants: sharing a double room, each 2153 Euro.
- 4 to 5 participants: sharing a double room, each 2747 Euro.
- Single room supplement : 300 Euro,

30 days BIJAGOS – COTONOU. Guinea Bissau and Bijagos Archipelago, Guinea Conakry, Sierra Leone, Liberia Ivory Coast, Ghana, Togo, Benin.

From Bissau December 8th 2020. Ends in Cotonou the evening of January 6th, 2021.

30 days COTONOU – BIJAGOS ARCHIPELAGO. Benin, Togo, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea Conakry, Guinea Bissau and Bijagos Archipelago.

From Cotonou February 26th, 2021. Ends in Bissau the evening of March 27th, 2021

- 6 or more participants: sharing a double room, each 7872 Euro.
- 4 to 5 participants: sharing a double room, each 9887 Euro.
- Single room supplement : 1134 Euro.

23 Days BIJAGOS ARCHIPELAGO – ABIDJAN. Guinea Bissau, Bijagos Archipelago, Guinea Conakry, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ivory Coast.

From Bissau December 8th, 2020. Ends in Abidjan in the afternoon of December 30th, 2020

23 Days ABIDJAN – BIJAGOS ARCHIPELAGO. Ivory Coast, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea Conakry, Guinea Bissau and Bijagos Archipelago.

From Abidjan, March 5th, 2021. Ends in Bissau the evening of March 27th, 2021

- 6 or more participants: sharing a double room, each 5949 Euro.
- 4 to 5 participants: sharing a double room, each 7234 Euro.
- Single room supplement 879 Euro

20 Days BISSAU – ABIDJAN. Guinea Bissau, Bijagos Archipelago, Guinea Conakry, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ivory Coast.

From Bissau December 11th, 2020. Ends in Abidjan in the afternoon of December 30th, 2020

20 Days ABIDJAN – BISSAU. Ivory Coast, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea Conakry, Guinea Bissau and Bijagos Archipelago.

From Abidjan, March 5th, 2021. Ends in Bissau in the evening of March 24th, 2021

- 6 or more participants: sharing a double room, each 5173 Euro.
- 4 to 5 participants: sharing a double room, each 6368 Euro.
- Single room supplement 765 Euro

15 Days BIJAGOS ARCHIPELAGO – MONROVIA. Guinea Bissau and Bijagos Archipelago, Guinea Conakry, Sierra Leone, Liberia.

From Bissau December 8th, 2020. Ends in Monrovia in the afternoon of of December 22nd, 2020
15 Days MONROVIA - BIJAGOS ARCHIPELAGO. Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea Conakry, Guinea Bissau and Bijagos Archipelago.

From Monrovia March 13th, 2021. Ends in Bissau in the evening of March 27th, 2021

- 6 or more participants: sharing a double room, each 3883 Euro
- 4 to 5 participants: sharing a double room, each 4990 Euro
- Single room supplement : 511 Euro

12 Days BISSAU – MONROVIA. Guinea Bissau, Guinea Conakry, Sierra Leone, Liberia.

From Bissau December 11th, end in Monrovia in the afternoon of December 22nd, 2020.

12 Days MONROVIA - BISSAU . Guinea Bissau, Guinea Conakry, Sierra Leone, Liberia.

From Monrovia March 13th, 2021. Ends in Bissau the evening of March 24th, 2021

- 6 or more participants: sharing a double room, each 3196 Euro.
- 4 to 5 participants: sharing a double room, each 3992 Euro.
- Single room supplement : 416 Euro.

21 Days FREETOWN – COTONOU. Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Togo, Benin.

From Freetown December 17th, 2020. Ends in Cotonou January 6th, 2021

21 Days COTONOU - FREETOWN –. Benin, Togo, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Sierra Leone.

From Cotonou February 26th, 2021. Ends in Freetown in the evening of March 18th, 2021

- 6 or more participants: sharing a double room, each 6381 Euro.
- 4 to 5 participants: sharing a double room, each 7993 Euro.
- Single room supplement : 974 Euro.

17 Days FREETOWN – ACCRA. Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ivory Coast, Ghana.

From Freetown December 17th, 2020. Ends in the evening of January 2nd, 2021

17 Days ACCRA – FREETOWN. Ghana, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Sierra Leone.

From Accra March 2nd, 2021. Ends in Freetown in the evening of March 18th, 2021

- 6 or more participants: sharing a double room, each 4995 Euro
- 4 to 5 participants: sharing a double room, each 6470 Euro
- Single room supplement : Euro 833

14 Days FREETOWN – ABIDJAN. Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ivory Coast.

From Freetown December 17th, 2020. Ends in Abidjan in the afternoon of December 30th, 2020

14 Days ABIDJAN - FREETOWN . Ivory Coast, Liberia, Sierra Leone.

From Abidjan, March 5th, 2021. Ends in Freetown in the evening of March 18th, 2021

- 6 or more participants: sharing a double room, each 4270 Euro
- 4 to 5 participants: sharing a double room, each 5297 Euro
- Single room supplement : 678 Euro

6 Days FREETOWN – MONROVIA. Sierra Leone, Liberia.

From Freetown December 17th, 2020. Ends in Monrovia in the afternoon of December 22nd, 2020

6 Days MONROVIA - FREETOWN –. Liberia, Sierra Leone.

From Monrovia March 13th, 2021. Ends in Freetown March 18th, 2021

- 6 or more participants: sharing a double room, each 2184 Euro.
- 4 to 5 participants: sharing a double room, each 2487 Euro.
- Single room supplement : 296 Euro.

13 Days MONROVIA - ACCRA. Liberia, Guinea Conakry, Ivory Coast, Ghana.

From Monrovia, 21st December 2020. Ends in Accra in the evening of January 2nd, 2021

13 Days ACCRA - MONROVIA Ghana, Ivory Coast, Guinea Conakry, Liberia.
From Accra March 2nd, 2021. Ends in Monrovia in the evening of March 14th, 2021.

- 6 or more participants: sharing a double room, each 3384 Euro.
- 4 to 5 participants: sharing a double room, each 4873 Euro.
- Single room supplement: 694 Euro 8

10 Days ABIDJAN – COTONOU Ivory Coast, Ghana, Togo, Benin.
From Abidjan 28 December 2020. Ends in Cotonou in the evening of January 6th, 2021

10 Days COTONOU - ABIDJAN Benin Togo Ghana Ivory Coast.
From Cotonou February 26th, 2021. Ends in Abidjan in the evening of March 7th, 2021

- 6 or more participants: sharing a double room, each 2487 Euro.
- 4 to 5 participants: sharing a double room, each 2991 Euro.
- Single room supplement : 565 Euro.

NOTE: the different portion of the expedition will be confirmed when the Full Expedition will be confirmed.

Included:

- Assistance and transfer from the airport upon arrival the first day and departure the last day of the tour.
- Transfers and tour in 4WD vehicles, minibus and boats.
- Tours and visits as per the programme
- Accommodation in standard rooms, as per itinerary
- All meals, from breakfast of day 2 to breakfast of the last day of the tour.
- 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 last day) transfers from and to airport
- Visa fees
- Any meal or sightseeing tour other than those specified
- Mineral water and drinks.
- Portage
- Fees for personal photos and videos
- Personal and holiday insurance (compulsory)
- Tips for drivers, guides and hotel staff
- Costs related to delayed program 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 day.

