

West African Kingdoms: The Ultimate Tour

Ivory Coast-Burkina Faso-Benin-Togo-Ghana-Sierra Leone-Guinee-Senegal-Gambia.

October 31 – November 30, 2019

With Ashanti Royal Festival (Akwasidae) and Abissa N’Zima Festival



C ÔTE D'IVOIRE

Oct 31 Day 1 Arrive Abidjan / Azalai Hotel Marcory Estate

Transfer to hotel.

Nov 1 Day 2 Abidjan / Azalai Hotel Marcory Estate (B,L)

We start with a visit to the north-western part of town, Abobo, where Africa's largest outdoor launderette (laundry) is located. Here you will witness an unforgettable spectacle, hundreds of Fanicos (washer men, no women), jam together in the middle of a stream to wash clothes. They work all day every day, frantically rubbing garments on huge stones held in place by old car vehicle tires then spreading the clothes over rocks and grass in a large drying area. Despite the look of confusion, they never get their clients clothes mixed or missing.

We continue 45 minutes or so depending on traffic, to visit to metropolitan Abidjan including Treichville, one of the areas where the masses live. We pass by a few colorful markets; then over one of the major bridges to Le Plateau, the high-rise commercial area where we stop for a visit to the National Museum of Abidjan. The museum focuses on Ivorian art showcasing statues, masks, jewelry, tools, carved doors, tom-toms and musical instruments from every region of the country.

Lunch at a local restaurant around Le Plateau. We can stop in Cocody, the upscale residential section and browse the Cocody arts and crafts market after lunch. Transfer to the hotel, approx. 1 hr.

Nov 2 Day 3 Abidjan-Grand Bassam – attend Abissa N'Zima Festival / Afrikland Hotel (B,L,D)

Depart at 8 am this morning for the 3 hour drive to Grand Bassam. Grand Bassam is the first capital of Cote d'Ivoire and remains an important seaside resort. The first trading houses were built here.

On arrival we visit the old quarter built by the French during time of colonization and tour the Museum of Costumes, the Wickerwork Center, the Ceramics/Crafts Center.

Lunch at a local restaurant.

This afternoon we attend the Abissa N'zima Festival, 4:30-6:30 pm.

Abissa is the pre-eminent festival for the N'zima people. It is a celebration of the ancient N'zima culture, history, royalty, and religion. The festival is a cultural concept embracing the music, dance and spiritual life of the Nzema people. It is also a time when the entire community comes together and lets loose.

The week-long Abissa festival is powered by drummers, whose infectious beats drive its many dances and rituals. During Abissa, the beat of the cosmic drum releases the N'zima from their customary restraints and allows them to speak candidly to their leaders and to one another. Airing truths during Abissa allows the truth-tellers to forgive and those who have strayed from the proper path to be forgiven. It is a time of collective catharsis that leads to renewal and a spiritual re-birth of the entire community.

The Nzema are an Akan People (migrated from Ghana) numbering about 328,700, of whom 262,000 live in southwestern Ghana and 66,700 live in the southeast of Cote D'Ivoire. The Nzema are mostly farmers. They have a matrilineal kinship system with descent and property passed through the maternal lines. A number of Akans were taken as captives to the Americas. as wars culminated in the region the capture and sale of Akan people into the slave trade peaked (as both sides sold a large number of their captives) as prisoners of war. Akan conflicts led to a high number of military captives being sold into slavery known then as Coromantee. These soldiers and other Akan captives were

notorious for a large number of slave revolts and plantation resistance tactics. Today, this festival bears a striking resemblance to global Carnival celebrations.

Afterwards, dinner at a local restaurant.

Nov 3 Day 4 Abidjan / Azalai Marcory Estate Hotel (B,L)

This morning return to Abidjan. This afternoon lunch in the city center and more time to explore the metropolitan city as well as leisure time at the hotel.

BURKINA FASO

Nov 4, Day 5 Fly to Ouagadougou, Capital of Burkina Faso / Hotel Laico Ouaga 2000 (B,L)

Depart at 10 am and transfer to the airport for the flight Air Cote d'Ivoire 730, departing Abidjan 12:40, arriving 14:15. Lunch will be late today so do take snacks from the breakfast buffet to tide you over. On arrival we will have lunch (it may be 3 pm).

After lunch, we'll visit the Grand Market and the crafts markets at the Artisans' Center, where you will find basketry, batik fabrics, wooden statues and masks, jewelry, leatherwork and bronze castings; and a short walk around the city.

Nov 5, Day 6: Excursion to Tiebele Village (6 hrs rnd trip) / Hotel Laico Ouaga 2000 (B,LD)

Today we travel to the village of Tiebele to visit the traditional Royal Kassena Kingdom. We'll see magnificent mud-brick & colorfully hand painted with traditional motifs designed fortress-like houses built as a defense system to protect themselves from slave dealers during the days of slavery in the region. We will also see the Royal Palace.

We will order sandwiches the night prior and pick up in the morning to take on our excursion and picnic after the village visit.

There will be one security guard traveling with us today in the bus for safety precaution as we are traveling to the northeastern part of Burkina Faso where there were reported incidences of crime in September 2018.

Return to Ouagadougou. Dinner tonight at Gondwana, one of the best restaurants in the region.

Nov 6, Day 7: Drive Ouagadougou - Bobo Dioulasso / Hotel Residence Sisima (B,L)

Depart the hotel at 8 am and drive to 4-5 hours to Bobo Dioulasso. Check into hotel.

We'll have lunch at a local restaurant and tour Bobo Dioulasso ("house of the Bobo merchants"), Burkina Faso's second largest city.

We'll visit the old mosque of Dioulassoba, traditional music instruments museum, and the old Kibidouwe artisans' district.

Nov 7, Day 8: Excursion to Banfora (4.5 hrs rnd trip.)/ Hotel Residence Sisima (B,L)

We will depart at 8 am and embark on an excursion to visit the Domes of Fabledougou (2 hr drive) and then drive 30 minutes through a sugar cane plantation to the Falls of Kafiguila. We can walk up the falls for a short visit. Those who don't wish to walk can relax at the bottom and enjoy the beauty.

Then drive 30 minutes to lunch at a French restaurant, Cane a Sucre. Return to Bobo Dioulasso. (1 hr 30 min drive). We will probably arrive back at about 4 or 4:30 pm. Evening at leisure.

Nov 8, Day 9: Excursion to Lobbi Fetish Villages / Hotel Laico Ouaga 2000 (B, L, D)

We depart at 8 am to visit the villages of Borodougou and Kokorowe, two Bobo and Lobbi tribal villages known for their traditional fetish practices. Lobbi people are among the few left of the most isolated tribes today in the region. In these communities, locals practice animism as their religion. You will have the opportunity to see real African tradition and visit a fetish practitioner, called "Fetish men."

First stop will be Borodougou Village, 14 km/45 min from Bobodioulasso. After our visit here, we drive an hour to Kokorowe where we see local village life, a school, a village market and more fetish men.

After visiting Kokorowe, we continue the drive, 1.5 hrs to Boni Village to visit a Christian/animist church. Then another 1.5 hr drive for lunch in a local restaurant at Boromo, half way between Bobodioulasso and Ouagadougou.

Continue 3 hr drive to Ouagadougou, Transfer to Laico hotel. Dinner in a city center restaurant.

TOGO

Nov 9, Day 10: Fly to Lomé, the capital city of Togo / Hotel Mercurie Sarakawa 5*(B,L)

Transfer to Ouagadougou airport at 7:30 am to board flight Air Burkina 558 departing at 10 am; arrive Lome 11.15 am. Upon arrival in Lome, we will have lunch at a local restaurant.

This afternoon, we embark on an insightful city tour of Lomé, a city where tradition and modernism overlap. Discover this metropolis with its Musee National, Place de l'Independence, fishing harbor, and the Grand Marche - the realm of the famous "Nana Benz. "

Visit the Art Street with its craft vendors, the Artisans' Village and the Marche des Feticheurs (fetish market) - the heart of voodoo cult. Transfer to hotel for an evening at leisure. Dinner on your own.

Nov 10, Day 11: Lomé - Excursion to Togoville / Mercury Sarakawa (B,L)

This morning, an excursion to Togoville, located on the north shore of Lake Togo. We drive 30 min to Aneho, where you embark on a local paddle boat to cross lake Togo into Togoville (a boatman paddles the boat). Visit the old German built cathedral, the colonial area and the traditional quarter of the town.

Drive back one hour to Lomé and visit the Akodessewa Fetish Market.

BENIN

Nov 11, Day 12: Drive Lomé-Cotonou-Excursion Ganvie / Hotel Azalai de la Plage (B,L)

We depart at 7 am and drive 3 hours to Cotonou, the capital city of Benin on a newly constructed highway.

We continue a half hour to Abomey Calavi, where we will cross Lake Nokoué by motorized covered boat (20 minutes), to visit Ganvie (the second largest stilt village in West Africa), commonly referred to as the Venice of West Africa. The residents here are members of the Tofinou ethnic group. They live in huts built on teak stilts and get around in dug-out canoes. You will observe the people of Ganvie going about their daily routine as vendors in dugout canoes make transactions with one another and with tourists. Try shopping amongst the local vendors in the floating market while on a relaxing canoe ride on the waterways of this exotic 300-year-old village.

After the visit, we cruise back on the same boat to Abomey Calavi and have lunch at a restaurant nearby. Then it's a 30 minute drive to hotel Azalai in Cotonou.

Nov 12, Day 13: Cotonou: Excursion to Porto Novo / Hotel Azalai de la Plage (B,L)

We will depart our hotel at 9 am for a 2 hour drive to Porto Novo, the former capital city of Benin. Our visit includes the Ethnographic Museum, Honme Museum (Royal Palace), Great Mosque of Porto Novo, Cathedral de "Notre Dame" and other important colonial buildings in the town.

We will have lunch in a local restaurant and drive back to Cotonou, for a brief visit of the city center, mainly the Dan Togba central market. Dinner on your own.

TOGO

Nov 13, Day 14: Ouidah / Casa Del Papa Resort & Spa (B,L)

This morning we drive one hour to the historic town of Ouidah, considered the capital of voodoo (UNESCO Cultural Site, 1996). We tour the temple dedicated to the sacred Python, which is believed to give vitality and protection. We may attend morning worship prayers with locals of the village. We will also visit the sacred forest, 10 minute drive from the temple, which houses many shrines dedicated to various deities.

Next, a 10 minute drive from the forest, we visit the Port of No Return; a monument built by the Benin Government to commemorate the Africans that were taken from the Dahomey Empire during the Slave Trade.

Lunch at a local restaurant in Ouidah. After lunch, we will visit a traditional voodoo shrine where we will witness voodoo ceremony. Then visit the historical Museum of Ouidah located in an old Portuguese fort built in 1721. This museum portrays Benin's role in the Atlantic Slave Trade.

Afterwards, we drive 30 minutes/7km on a sandy road to reach the hotel.

Rest of afternoon/evening at leisure at the resort. Dinner on your own.

GHANA

Nov. 14, Day 15: Accra / Kempinski Gold Coast hotel (B,L)

We depart at 7:30 am and drive 2.5 hours to the Ghanaian border (via Lomé). There are four border formalities: Benin exit (30 min), Togo entry (30 min), Togo exit (30 min), Ghana entry (1 hour).

After entering Ghana, we will have lunch in Aflao a town on the Ghana side of the border.

Afterwards, we continue 3 hours to Accra, the capital city of Ghana. Distance is short but we can expect police stops along the way which will slow us down.

Nov. 15, Day 16: Accra / Kempinski Gold Coast hotel (B,L)

This morning, a city tour of Accra including National Museum, Osu Castle, Coffin builders at Teshi township, Makola central market, Kwame Nkrumah Mausoleum and the arts & craft market.

Afternoon at leisure. Dinner on your own.

Nov. 16, Day 17: Drive to Kumasi (approx. 4.5-5 hrs) / Golden Bean hotel (B,L)

Depart at 8 am to Kumasi, the seat of the Ashanti Empire. We will stop in the Central Market of Konongo, approx 2 hours from Accra. We will have lunch at the Linda D'or restaurant, about 1-1.5 hour drive further.

We will divert at (Ejisu junction) which is 25 km from Kumasi, for a 30 minutes drive to Bonwire - the Kente weaving village. Local weavers make Ashanti traditional "kente cloth" for Ashanti dignitaries. After this visit, we will drive another 30 minutes to Ntonso Adinkra wax stamp funeral clothing ateliers, made by the locals of Ashanti tribe.

Continue one hour to Kumasi; check into hotel. Evening at leisure at the resort. Dinner on your own.

Nov. 17, Day 18: Attend Ashanti Royal Festival + Tour Kumasi / Golden Bean hotel (B,L)

Visit Royal Palace Museum of the Ashanti kingdom (opens at 9 am).

Next, attend the Ashanti Royal festival (Akwasidae); next in importance only to the National Day celebrations. The festival begins at 10:30 or 11 am and lasts three or four hours; sometimes longer. At the later part of the festival, more dignitaries arrive. You will stay a maximum of 2.5 hours.

Akwasidae is celebrated approximately every six weeks, on a Sunday (*Twi* in Kwasidae), in accordance with the official Calendar of Ashanti. The Akan annual calendar is divided into nine parts, each lasting approximately six weeks but varying between 40–42 days in a period; the celebration of this period is called the Aday Festival. The Aday Festival has two celebration days: the Akwasidae Festival is celebrated on the final Sunday of the period, while the Akwasidae Festival is celebrated on a Wednesday within the period. The Friday preceding 10 days to the Akwasidae is called the *Fofie* (meaning a ritual Friday).

During the last Akwasidae of the year, which coincides with the Aday Kese Festival, special attention is given to make food offerings and donations for helping people. On this day, the Asantehene (King of Ashanti) meets his subjects and subordinate chiefs in the courtyard of the Manhyia Palace. The Golden Stool (throne) is displayed at the palace grounds in the presence of the king, and people visit in large numbers, singing and dancing.

Lunch at the hotel restaurant. After lunch, visit the Kejetia Central Market, one of the largest markets in West Africa.

The rest of this day is devoted to visiting the three craft villages in Ashanti (one hour drive from Kumasi): Ahwiaa - the wood carvers' village, Ntonso - the home of Adinkra, and Bonwire - the Kente weaving village. You will see how African sculptures are carved, how Adinkra wax prints are made and how the famous kente cloth is woven using an amazing local technology. There is an opportunity to buy directly from the artisans who make each craft.

Nov 18, Day 19: Elmina / Coconut Grove Resort (B,L)

Drive 4 hrs to Elmina. Again, we expect police security stops. After 2.5 hours driving, we stop at Besease to see the traditional shrine of the Ashanti.

After check-in, we embark on a tour of the infamous Forts, Castles and Slave Dungeons of Ghana and learn about the slave trade in West Africa.

Begin with visiting Elmina Castle. Built by the Portuguese in 1482, it is also known as St. George's Castle. This castle was the first European structure built in Sub-Saharan Africa and is the oldest castle in Ghana on the West African slave trade route. The colorful harbor nestled below the Elmina Castle, full of pirogues preparing to go to sea offers one of West Africa's greatest photo opportunities.

Next, visit the Cape Coast Castle. The largest of its kind, this castle was built by the Swedes in 1653 and was later taken over by the British. Walk the path of slaves as your guide takes you through each section. This castle also houses the West African Historical Museum established by the Smithsonian Institute in collaboration with the Ghanaian Government in 1994. It is filled with artifacts, stories, photos and more.

Stop to visit Assin Manso, the site of the "last bath" where slaves were taken for bathing before being shipped to the new world. It is also the burial place of two former slaves whose remains were returned to Ghana from the US and Jamaica.

SIERRA LEONE

Nov. 19, Day 20: Accra - Fly to Freetown / Radisson Blu Hotel Mammy Yoko 5* (B,L)

We depart at 6:30 am to transfer to the airport for the flight to Freetown, Kenya Airways 504 departing 12:15, arriving 14:40 pm. You will be provided breakfast box from the hotel. We will have an early lunch at airport snack bar.

The airport and Freetown are separated by the Sierra Leone River. On arrival we take a sea coach (ferry) to Lumley Beach Harbor and then transfer by bus to the hotel. The ferry ride can be a bit bumpy.

Sandwiched between the Atlantic Ocean and the mountains, Freetown is the lively capital of Sierra Leone, steeped in history and culture. A British colony in the late 1700s, Freetown became the principal base for the suppression of the slave trade and 1200 freed slaves from Canada came here in 1792 to join the original settlers.

With its rich history, stunning scenery and vibrant city center, Sierra Leone's charismatic capital is perfect to explore on foot.

There are countless beautiful beaches within a short drive from the city centre, and a journey to the hilltops that surround the city provides truly breathtaking views.

On arrival check into the hotel.

Nov. 20, Day 21: Excursion to Taccugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary / Radisson Blu Hotel Mammy Yoko (B, L)

Depart at 7:30 am to visit one of the few chimpanzee villages in the region and drive around the Freetown peninsular beaches of John Obey, Black Johnson, York, Kent. The drive is 3 hours round trip.

Return to Freetown at about 12:30 pm and lunch in a local restaurant.

This afternoon we embark on a three-hour tour to visit Freetown city center. We will visit: Victoria Park Market, Law Court building, the cotton tree (emblem of the city; more than 550 years old), Parliament Building, State House building, King Jimmy Market and the Arts Market at Big Wharf.

Overnight at Radisson Blu Hotel Mammy Yoko

GUINEA

Nov. 21, Day 22: Drive to Conakry /hotel Palme Camayenne (B,L)

We will depart at 7 am for the 5.5 hour drive to Conakry, capital city of Guinea. The road to the Guinee border is newly built (160 km). We'll change buses at the border.

Continuing we will have multiple stops along the way including one for lunch. Don't be surprised, though Guinee became a democratic country only five years ago, the roads are full of pot holes.

Nov. 22, Day 23: Conakry / hotel Palme Camayenne (B)

We'll depart at 9 am on a city tour of Conakry: Central Mosque, Sekou Toure's Mausoleum, fish market of Bolobineh, and the French Cathedral.

Enjoy the rest of the afternoon at leisure. Lunch and dinner on your own.

SENEGAL

Nov. 23, Day 24: Conakry-Dakar /Radisson Blu (B,L)

Early lunch at local restaurant and transfer to the airport for the flight to Dakar Emirates Air 795 depart 3 pm, arrive 4:25 pm.

We will head into the city center for lunch and start our tour with a visit to the French Cathedral, the President's Palace and the Parliament House.

Drive through the picturesque district of Medina and the residential district of Fann.

This evening we visit the various markets: Kermel, Sandaga, and the handicraft market of Soumbédioune and the Tilen market famous for its medicinal herbs and its traditional healers.

Nov. 24, Day 25: Goree Island & Retba Lake /Radisson Blu (B,L)

We depart the hotel at 9 am to visit the National Museum.

Afterwards, we embark on a cruise to the historic island of Goree.

Just thirty minutes from Dakar Port, the ferryboat that arrives at Goree Island carries the heavy burden of 300 years slave trading in West Africa. The island ranks today among the classified monuments of the World Patrimony. We will visit the House of Slaves (Maison des Esclaves) and its "Door of No Return," a former prison for slave trade and said to be the final exit point of the slaves from Africa, now a museum and memorial.

We will also see the canons built by Portuguese navigators. Lunch at a restaurant on the island.

Afterwards, return to Dakar and a one hour drive to Lake Retba, also known as the "Pink Lake" located 30 km northeast of Dakar, north of Cap Vert Peninsula. This lake is considered an anomaly as it boasts one of the rarest natural phenomenon in the world. The lakes pinkish hue is as a result of the excessive amount of Dunaliella salina algae in the water that produces a red pigment used to absorb light, which in turn than provides the algae with life-energy. The pink color is particularly visible during the dry season.

The lake is losing its color because of local salt miners who have been digging salt for over 50 years. The lake could be brownish pink and not real pink as it used to be. But the sand dunes are fun to drive and local village visits around the lake makes it worthy to go.

You will see the “salt harvesters” with their colorful tackle, and interact with the Fulani ethnic groups living in the surrounding villages.

Return to Dakar for overnight.

Nov. 25, Day 26: Drive to St. Louis / Hotel de la Residence (B,L)

Depart at 8 am, heading north through the Sahel to the old colonial city of St. Louis, which was formerly the capital of French West Africa.

We stop at the Norflaye Turtle Conservation Farm, en-route. (155 miles north of Dakar)

Saint-Louis was founded in 1659 and named after the French King Louis XIV in the 1700s, it is the oldest city to be created by Europeans on the western coast of Africa and served as the capital of Senegal from 1872 to 1957. It played an important cultural and economic role in the whole of West Africa, a stroll around the Ville (as the cab drivers know it) quickly reveals the French colonial influence. Many of the buildings hold their old character with many brightly colored buildings and beautiful balconies to be seen all around the Island. The Island was named a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2000.

On arrival, check in to the hotel and lunch at a local restaurant.

This afternoon, we visit the Langue de Barbarie Peninsula. It is a short walk to Guet Ndar, the fishing village that is located on the Langue de Barberie and watch the fisherman bring in their catch. Local people carry the fish in baskets on their neck and on their heads. Women can be found smoking and drying fish next to the beach in vast cauldrons. Nearby very colorful pirogues are always under construction. It is possible to see nearly every stage from the first carvings to the final painting.

This evening, explore the colonial quarters of St. Louis.

Nov. 26, Day 27: Excursion to Djoudj National Park-Drive to Toubacouta / Hotel Keur Saloum (B,L)

We depart at 7 am for the 1.5 hour drive to Djoudj National Park (UNESCO), the third largest pelican sanctuary in the world. It is known for its large pelican migration and many other species of birds. We cruise for 1.5 hr through the mangroves of the river in a spacious motorized open-air boat to see where the pelicans hatch their eggs each year.

Disembark, and after driving two hours, we stop in the town of Kaolack for lunch.

Continue the drive to Toubacouta (2 hours). Enjoy a sunset boat ride & bird watching tour on the Sine Saloum Delta (UNESCO World Heritage site).

THE GAMBIA

Nov. 27, Day 28: Juffureh- James Island –Banjul / Kairaba Beach Resort (B,L)

This morning we depart at 7:00 am and drive approx. 30 minutes to The Gambia border. Border formalities may take about an hour on each side. You will step out of the vehicle and walk about five minutes across.

From the border, it is a two-hour drive to the historic village of Juffureh where we have a short tour. Juffureh became famous in the 1970s following the film release of the bestselling book, "Roots" written by the African-American author Alex Haley, a descendant of Kunta Kinte. The film told the story of Kunta Kinte's capture in Juffureh by slave traders and his subsequent enslavement in America around 200 years ago.

Afterwards, it is a 30 minute motorized boat ride from Juffureh to James Island (aka Kunte Kinteh Island), the colonial period ruins of a slavery station and the 'Portuguese chapel' of San Domingo which later came to be known as Sandi Munko Joyo. The boat is an open top (no awning or cabin), with an outboard engine. November is not a windy month so the ride will be pleasant.

Nearby there are also the old ruins of Maurel Freres and the CFAO trading post. Visit the island.

After the visit, we return to Juffureh and lunch in a small river view restaurant. From Juffureh, it's a one hour drive to the ferry port and a one hour ferry ride.

Then it is a one hour drive to our hotel in the Kombo resort area, commonly known as Senegambia (30 km from Banjul).

[Nov. 28, Day 29: Makasutu Forest & Banjul / Kairaba Beach Resort \(B,L\)](#)

Depart at 8 am this morning driving one hour south to Brikama where we turn to the east coast and continue 7 km into the Makasutu Forest.

Makasutu Forest, on an island facing the south bank of the Gambia River, is a tropical 1000 acre reserve encompassing five different eco systems, including gallery forest, savannah, mangroves, palm forest and wetland. Wildlife is plentiful with many bird species, baboons, vervet and red colobus monkeys and even the occasional odd mongoose.

On arrival, we begin with a nice stroll to the Baobab Restaurant, where we are greeted and given a brief history of the area. On the way, we will see some tree stumps carved into by sculptors. These are the remnants from the time when locals were chopping down trees.

After the talk, we hop aboard a pirogue, a traditional wooden boat, to experience nature as we cruise on the Gambia River through the mangroves lined with oyster shells. The boat ride will last a little over 1 hour. When we return, we'll then enjoy lunch at the Baobab Restaurant followed by some traditional entertainment.

Afterwards, we drive 30 minutes to Banjul for a city tour.

Banjul is one of the best examples of urban Africa. The sand-blown streets play host to colorful markets and fading colonial buildings, and a sense of history permeates every district. The Gambian capital may be one Africa's smallest cities, but it has a big personality not soon forgotten by travelers.

Built in celebration of the 1994 military coup, Arch 22 is the country's tallest building. The Senegalese-designed gateway contains a small museum about the coup d'etat and a cozy cafe, but the real draw is the view from the top-floor balconies.

Just outside the city lies the Tanbi Wetland Complex, established in 2001 as a protected wildlife area that spans more than 4,500 hectares. Nearly 80 percent of the reserve is made of numerous species of mangroves, but the natural vegetation also includes salt marshes, grass woodlands and bare flats. Tidal creeks and lagoons cut through the reserve in a patchwork fashion, and locals make good use of the water by fishing for shrimp, diving for oysters and growing rice. Wildlife abounds throughout the

site, including crocodiles, lizards, small monkeys, manatees and over 360 species of birds. The best way to spot these creatures and explore the wetlands is to hire a local guide from the center of Banjul.

Visitors can also get up close and personal with Banjul's crocodiles at the Kachikally Museum and Crocodile Pool, used by locals for fertility rituals. About 80 Nile crocodiles call the pool home, and some are allowed to freely roam around the grounds. Visitors can even touch some of the creatures and dip their feet in the sacred waters for a small fee.

The Royal Albert Market is the bustling heart of Banjul. Named after the husband of Queen Victoria, the market is an extensive emporium that comes alive with pungent aromas, lively scenes and the hum of shoppers and sellers haggling over prices on everything from vivid, shimmering fabrics and shining silver jewelry to fresh produce and the latest electronics. Packed to the brim, the market's labyrinth of alleys are a great place to immerse yourself in Gambian culture. Visitors should not hesitate to bargain; most goods can be purchased for just half the asking price!

Drive 30 minutes to Kairaba Beach Resort. Evening at leisure.

SENEGAL

Nov. 29, Day 30: Kairaba Hotel-Saly Portugal/ Lamantin Beach Resort & Spa (B,,D)

We depart at 8 am crossing by 30 minute ferry to Barra and drive three hours to the resort town Saly (80 km south of Dakar). Enjoy relaxing for the rest of the day. Dinner at the resort.

If you have a night departure you have a day room and transfer to the airport (1 hr drive). OR for morning departures, overnight.

Nov 30, Day 31: Depart Dakar (DKR) (B)

Transfer to the airport for your flight home.

Price: \$10,950 per person based on min 6 people. Single Room Supplement: \$2245

Extra night Abidjan: \$127 per person twin share; Single Room: \$207

Transfer if not on day 1: \$26 per car

Includes:

Accommodations with daily breakfast

Abidjan: Azalai Hotel Marcory 4* <http://www.azalaihoteles.com/en/azalai-hotel-abidjan>

Grand Bassam: Afrikland Hotel 4* <http://www.afrikland-hotel.com/>

Ougadougou: Hotel Laico Ouaga 2000 5* <http://www.laicohotels.com/laico-ouaga-2000/>

Bobo Dioulasso: Hotel Residence Sissima 4* <http://www.villafortuna.ba/index.php/en/>

Cotonou: Azalai Hotel de la Plage 4* <http://www.azalaihoteles.com/azalai-hotel-de-la-plage>

Ouidah: Casa Del Papa Resort & Spa 4* <http://casadelpapa.com/>

Lomé: Mercury Sarakawa 5* <http://www.sarakawa-hotel.com/fr/hotel-togo>

Accra: Kempinski Gold Coast Accre 5* <https://www.kempinski.com/en/accra/hotel-gold-coast-city/>

Elmina: Coconut Grove Resort 4* <http://coconutgrovehotelsghana.com/beachhotel/>

Kumasi: Golden Bean Hotel 4* <http://www.goldenbeanhotel.com/>

Freetown: Radisson Blu Hotel Mammy Yoko 5* <https://www.radissonblu.com/en/hotel-freetown>

Conakry: hotel Palme Camayenne 5* <http://www.palmcamayenne.com/en/hotel-overview.html>

Dakar: Radisson Blu Sea Plaza 5* <https://www.radissonblu.com/en/hotel-dakar>

St. Louis: Hotel de la Residence 3* colonial style renovated by French owners.
<http://www.hoteldelaresidence.com/>

Toubakouta: Hotel Keur Saloum 3* (superior river front bungalow room). <http://keursaloum.com/>

Banjul: Kairaba Hotel 5*standard room (garden view) <http://kairabahotel.com/>

Saly: Lamantin Beach Resort & Spa 5* <http://www.leramantin.com/en/>

Meals: 31Breakfasts, 26 Lunches, 5 Dinners. Bottled water during drives and sightseeing.

Guide: One Professional Tour leader/Guide. Plus a local English speaking guide during sightseeing, as required, in Bobodioulasso, Banfora, Kampti, Koutamankou, Quidah, Freetown, Saint Louis, Ganvie, Juffureh and James Island, Jan jan Bureh,

Our Tour Leader: Mr Mohammed Traore (Momo). Momo is from Bamako and has twenty years experience as a guide and tour logistics organizer. Besides being experienced and knowledgeable, he is a wonderful warm personality that our clients will enjoy getting to know.

Local guides: There will be local guides in each city as required by regulations. Momo will be giving enhanced talks before the group reaches a site and handles all arrangements to ensure a smooth trip.

Entrance fees: All entrance fees into all sights listed; River cruise & boat rides.

Airfare: Abidjan to Freetown & Conakry to Dakar.

Vehicles

We will change vehicles at each of the land border crossings which avoids delays when using vehicles from the country we are entering.

Toyota HIACE ac mini bus, 14 seat for 5-7 people

Toyota or Nissan Coaster, 25 seats for 8-12 people

Toyota Land Cruisers Prado (4 people per car) for excursions to Taccugama village/ Freetown and Conakry.

Does Not Include: Visas fees, tips to driver, guide, meals not listed, personal expenses such as laundry, phone calls, drinks even when meals are included.

Sequence of activities and time schedule subject to change.

Drive time stated do not include time spent touring en-route or time at border crossings which are unpredictable. Flight schedules are subject to change.

Abissa N'Zima Festival subject to cancellation or date reschedule by the local government