

**West African Kingdoms: The Ultimate Tour**  
Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Sierra Leone

**January 24- February 7, 2024**



## GHANA

### Jan. 24, Day 1: Arrive Accra/ Movenpick Ambassador

On arrival transfer to the hotel. The rest of the afternoon/evening is at leisure; lunch and dinner on your own, pay direct.

### Jan 25, Day 2: Accra/ Movenpick Ambassador Accra (B, L)

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

Lunch at a local restaurant. Afternoon at leisure to enjoy hotel facilities.

### Jan 26, Day 3: Drive Accra-Kumasi / Golden Bean Hotel (B, L)

Departing at 8 am, we drive approx. 4.5 hrs to the town of Ejisu, where we stop for lunch.

Afterwards, we visit the three craft villages in Ashanti: 30 min drive to Bonwire - the Kente weaving village, where you will see how the famous Ashanti traditional kente cloth is woven for Ashanti dignitaries using an amazing local technology; 30 min drive to Ntonso, home of the Adinkra Ashanti tribe wax stamp funeral clothing ateliers; 15 min drive to Ahwiaa, the wood carvers' village where you will see how African sculptures are carved. There is an opportunity to buy directly from the artisans who make each craft.

A one hour drive brings you to Kumasi. Transfer to our hotel.

### Jan 27, Day 4: Kumasi / Golden Bean Hotel (B, L)

Depart at 8 am to visit of the Royal Palace Museum of the Ashanti Kingdom, Okumfor Anotchi Sword Museum and the Kumasi Cultural Center Museum.

Lunch at a local restaurant. This afternoon, visit the Kejetia Market, one of the largest markets in Africa. Transfer to hotel. Dinner on your own, pay direct.

### Jan. 28, Day 5: Elmina / Coconut Grove Resort (B, L)

We depart at 730 am for the 5 hour drive to Elmina. Today we shall tour the infamous Forts, Castles and Slave Dungeons of Ghana and learn about the slave trade in West Africa.

After 3 hours driving, we stop to tour 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.

Continuing, a 1.5 hour drive to the Cape Coast where we have lunch at an ocean view restaurant.

Afterwards, tour Cape Coast Castle. The largest of its kind, the Cape Coast 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.

Then, a 15 minute drive to Elmina. Time & energy permitting, we can visit the busy fish harbor and see the town's pursubans--Asafo tribal shrines (an idol used for traditional worship by the fishermen) located along the road to the fish harbor. Transfer to hotel. Dinner on your own, pay direct.

### Jan. 29, Day 6: Kakoum National Park & Elmina Castle / Maha Beach Resort (B, L)

Today is a full day with several interesting stops along the way.

We depart at 8 am and stop at the lively Elmina Fish Market for some fun photography. Then we drive 1 hour to visit Kakoum National Park which is famous for its amazing canopy walkway. This road, formerly very rough, has been newly paved. Our walking tour inside the park begins at 10 am.

The uniqueness of this park lies in the fact that it was established at the initiative of the local people and not by the State Department of wildlife who are responsible for wildlife preservation in Ghana. It is one of only 3 locations in Africa with a canopy walkway which is 350 metres (1,150 ft) long and connects seven tree tops which provides access to the forest. We will walk 2 hours in total including the climb up to the canopy 30 minutes on steps; not steep.

Departing the park at 12 noon, we drive 1 hour to Elmina and have lunch at a local restaurant.

Afterwards one hour tour of 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.

Continue about 2 hrs., a short bathroom stop in the picturesque Axim fishing village. You will see from the outside Fort San Antonio, the second oldest fort in Ghana built by the Portuguese in 1515.

Afterwards, we continue about 2 hrs. to Anokyi Village; arrival approx. 7 pm. Transfer to our hotel. Evening at leisure; dinner on your own, pay direct.

### Jan. 30, Day 7: Excursion: Nzulezu Stilt Village / Maha Beach Resort (B, L)

We depart at 9 am driving about 30 minutes to the Beyin Visitors Center and walk approx. 5 min to the wooden pier, where we take a one-hour motorized boat trip to Nzulezu stilt village passing through a pristine series of marshes, swamp forest (the largest stand left in Ghana) and open pools rich with wildlife, including crocodiles, egret, heron and kingfishers. This natural area has been designated as an Important Bird Area based on criteria from Birdlife International. The ride is safe and lifejackets are available.

Nzulezu, located at the far western side of Ghana, near the border with Cote d'Ivoire, is one part of the Amasuri Wetland, a Ramsar site and the largest inland swamp forest in Ghana. Spectacular scenery of the 400-year old stilt propped water settlement of Nzulezu, a unique village built on stilts in Lake Tadane, which is home to hundreds of people in the Western Region.

Nzulezu is a Nzema word meaning 'surface of water.' The inhabitants of the village are said to have migrated from Walata, a city in the ancient Ghana Empire, the earliest of the Western Sudanese States. According to tradition, ancestors of the village were brought to their present place by a snail. The serene ambiance of the surrounding landscape, coupled with the general activities of life on stilts points to a dynamic relationship between man and nature. It is essentially one long pier, called Main Street by the locals, with buildings constructed on both sides. One side of the 'street' are living quarters while the other side of the street has businesses, the school, a community center and other commercial ventures. Village life is adapted to the unique environmental conditions, and all activities such as the pounding of fufu (a traditional meal), schooling, worship, baptisms and burials are carried out on the lake. It is said that the lake averts possible disasters such as fire outbreaks.

The people of Nzulezu still adhere to traditional norms and taboos. For instance, Thursday is a sacred day on the lake, and on this day, the villagers do not engage in any strenuous activity.

The Nzulezu stilt village is not connected to electricity, but there are a significant number of television poles attached to almost every home in the village. These are powered by car batteries. For source of light in the night villages use lantern, flash light or rechargeable lamps to move about. To the amazement of visitors, villagers carry on daily life as if they don't live on stilts.

Note: The beach adjacent to the visitor center was once the site of a sea turtle conservation project in cooperation with the Ghana Wildlife Society. The project's goal was to protect three endangered turtle species that nest on the beach. However, it is no longer in existence.

Lunch at a local beach front restaurant. Then visit Apolonia Fort, one of the smaller of Ghana's many historic coastal forts. Located in a picturesque setting on the beach, it is newly restored.

Afterwards, return to the hotel. Enjoy the rest of the afternoon/evening at leisure. Dinner on your own, pay direct.

**NOTES:** We have included two visits to two different stilt villages. The first one we visit, Ganvie, is wealthier than the isolated Nzulezu. In Nzulezu you have an opportunity to walk around and have interactions with the residents. In Ganvie, you can only get off the boat to shop in one stilt building.

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## CÔTE D'IVOIRE

**Jan 31, Day 8: Beyin-Grand Bassam- Abidjan / Azalai Marcory Estate Hotel (B, L)**

We depart at 7 am and drive one hour to the Ghana/Ivorian Coast border. There is a stop at the border towns of Elubo (in Ghana) and Noe (in Cote d'Ivoire) to do the immigration formalities (approx. 2-3 hrs.). Then cross the border and drive another 2.5 hours to reach 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.

This afternoon we enjoy lunch at a local restaurant and 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.

Drive 30 minutes to Abidjan and check-in to hotel. Dinner on your own, pay direct.

**Feb 1, Day 9: Abidjan / Azalai Marcory Estate Hotel (B, L)**

Departing at 8:00 am, we drive 30 minutes to the north-western part of town, Abobo, where Africa's largest outdoor laundrette (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.

Afterwards 45 minutes or so depending on traffic to visit 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. Dinner on your own, pay direct.

### Feb. 2, Day 10: Day Excursion to Yamoussouko / Azalai Marcory Estate Hotel (B,L)

We depart at 8 am for a 3 hour drive to Yamoussoukoro, the second capital city of Cote d'Ivoire. We drive on a well-maintained roads and pass through villages where we see local vendors selling fruit and meats. Three hours is the drive each way without stops, but we do have time to stop as the group wishes for photos, bathroom etc.

Yamoussoukro owes its good fortune as the birth place of Cote d'Ivoire's first president, Houphouët-Boigny who spent lavishly on his native village. Virtually no traditional African houses are left; Houphouët-Boigny replaced them with concrete middle class structures.

Félix Houphouët-Boigny, affectionately called Papa Houphouët or Le Vieux, was the first President of Ivory Coast, serving for more than three decades until his death. A tribal chief, he worked as a medical aide, union leader and planter before being elected to the French Parliament.

Upon arrival, we will visit the dazzling Basilica of Notre Dame de la Paix, the second largest cathedral in the world (1.5 hr tour).

Afterwards, view the Palace of the former president (exterior view only, government no longer permits tourists to enter) and see the sacred crocodiles in the palace moat. Then enjoy lunch in a local restaurant.

We can see from the outside only, "Foundation Felix Houphouet Boigny," a UNESCO World Heritage site. Created in 1973 under the name of Foundation Félix Houphouët-Boigny, in 1997 it became the Foundation Félix Houphouët-Boigny for the search for peace. He is at the origin of the International Congress on Peace in the Minds of Men in 1989 and of the Yamoussoukro Declaration for Peace in 1997, both placed and organized under the auspices of UNESCO: United Nations Educational Scientific & Cultural Organization.

On December 5, 1997 in Yamoussoukro, the keys to the Félix Houphouët-Boigny Foundation for the search for peace were handed over to Federico Mayor, Director General of UNESCO. This project is the culmination of ten years of work orchestrated by the architect Olivier-Clément Cacoub, for a budget of 35 billion CFA francs.

An effort has been made for access to current or historical information, to improve the efficiency of researchers. Thus, 8,800 square meters are devoted to equipment for the collection, storage and consultation of documents, books, computers and museums. The paper documents occupy one floor of the central building over 5,200 square meters of library including reading room, storage and meetings, administration, workshop for the restoration of works. IT occupies the 3,600 square meters of the lower floor. The Foundation, connected to the Internet, can organize discussions between researchers and distribute the digital documents of its collection; collect documents of interest to the Foundation, - physical or digital - then collect and manage the various donations. Permanent or temporary exhibitions are planned in the Peace Museum and, on the second floor of the main building, an exhibition hall of 530 square meters. Please note that the building was under renovations on our last visit to Yamoussoukro.

Return to Abidjan at approx. 5:45-6 pm. Evening at leisure. Dinner on your own, pay direct.

**NOTE:** The Basilica is a must see site for some folks, while others may not like the idea of 3 hr drive each way for today's excursion. If you do not wish to go on this excursion, you can feel safe remaining in Abidjan independently.

## **GUINEA**

### **Feb. 3, Day 11: Fly to Conakry / hotel Palme Camayenne (B)**

Enjoy a leisure morning. We depart at 11:30 am and transfer to the airport to board flight Air Senegal, departing Abidjan at 3 pm and arriving Conakry at 5:45 pm. (Suggest buy lunch at the airport).

Upon arrival, transfer to hotel. The Guinea airport is very slow and Conakry is one of the more traffic congested cities. We anticipate reaching the hotel at about 6:30 pm.

Enjoy an evening at leisure. Dinner on your own, pay direct.

### **Feb. 4, Day 12: Conakry / hotel Palme Camayenne (B,L)**

At 9 am we embark on a city tour of Conakry visiting the Central Mosque, Sekou Toure's Mosoleum, fish market of Bolobineh, French Cathedral.

Lunch in a local restaurant. This afternoon at leisure. Dinner on your own, pay direct.

## **SIERRA LEONE**

### **Feb. 5, Day 13: Drive to Freetown / Radisson Blu Hotel Mammy Yoko (B,L)**

We depart at 7 am for the 6 hr drive to Freetown. Take some snacks from breakfast buffet. There are no decent restaurants along the way. There will be stops for bathroom breaks of course.

The border formalities by the Guinean and Sierra Leonean authorities, which may take 2 hrs.

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. Rest of afternoon is at leisure. Dinner on your own, pay direct.

### **Feb. 6, Day 14: Taccugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary/Radisson Blu Hotel Mammy Yoko (B, L, D)**

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. The visit is 2 hours.

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

This afternoon we embark on a tour of 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.

Enjoy our last meal together at a local restaurant.

### **Feb. 7, Day 15: Depart Freetown (B)**

Check out of hotel by 12 noon. You can put luggage into hotel security. The beach and shops/restaurants are an easy walk from the hotel. Transfer to Lungi International Airport. The airport and Freetown are separated by the Sierra Leone River. We transfer by bus to the Lumley Beach Harbor (10 min) and then take a sea coach/ferry (1 hr crossing and 15 minutes from disembarkation to airport). The ferry ride can be a bit bumpy.

**Price:** \$6385 per person based on min group size 8. Single room supplement: \$780  
Transfer if not on day 1: \$50 per car.

**Tour Includes:**

Accommodations based on availability, with daily breakfast:

Accra: Movenpick Ambassador Accra, superior room

<https://www.movenpick.com/en/africa/ghana/accra/moevenpick-ambassador-hotel-accra.html>

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

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

Beyin: Maha Beach Resort standard sea view rooms <https://maaharesort.com/>

Abidjan: Azalai Hotel Marcory <https://www.azalai.com/azalahotelabidjan/>

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

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

**Meals:** 12 Lunches, 1 Dinner. Bottled water 3 litres per day per person during drives & sightseeing.

**Our Tour Leader:** Mr Mohammed Traore (Momo) is from Bamako. He has been a guide and tour logistics organizer since 1998. He has been leading Original World tours since 2017. Besides being experienced and knowledgeable, he is a wonderful warm personality that our clients will enjoy getting to know.

**Local guides:** in certain cities 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.

**Vehicle:** Toyota Hiace 14 seats for 6-7 people; Toyota or Nissan Coaster, 25 seats for 8-12 people  
Two Toyota Land Cruisers Prado for excursion to Taccugama village/outside Freetown

**Entrance fees:** All entrance fees for sites listed; and all activities listed

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

**NOTES:**

Hotel star ratings listed here cannot be compared to the same rating of hotels in the US or Europe. A 5\* here is not equal to a 5\* in the US. There is no authority in West Africa that oversees the ratings. Hotel websites and various booking sites give differing ratings. We have removed any mention of star ratings. View the hotel websites to see the quality. In our opinion these are excellent quality and best available in some of the areas we visit.

Sequence of activities and time schedule subject to change.

Drive times stated do not include time spent touring en-route, bathroom stops or time at border crossings which are unpredictable. Security check points can take an extra 1-1.5 hours.

Flight schedules within the tour are subject to change.

Festival dates subject to cancellation or date reschedule by the local government