



WEST AFRICA IN FOCUS

20 Days Comfortable Tour: Benin – Togo –

Ghana – Ivory Coast

Ganvié – Ouidah – Abomey – Natitingou – Kara – Kpalimé – Accra –

Atimpoku – Kumasi – Elmina – Abidjan – Grand Bassam – Abengourou

Yamoussoukro – Sassandra

Day 1: Arrival in Cotonou

Fly to Cotonou, the largest city of Benin. On arrival, you will be met and transfer to your hotel. *D*

Destination Information:

Cotonou: Cotonou is the biggest city of Benin, in fact it is the economic heart of the country with its port, markets and banks.

Day 2: Ganvié – Ouidah – Bohicon

Today, go on a half day trip to Ganvié and explore the history of these stilt villages. In the afternoon, drive to Ouidah, the capital of the Voodoo religion. Spend the afternoon visiting the Temple of pythons, one of the most notable sights of Ouidah. The temple hosts about 50 different pythons that are fed and taken care of by designated locals. These snakes are an important part of Voodoo worship in the area. Visit also the Museum of History, follow the slavery route and go through the Door of No Return and understand an important part of the country history. Overnight in Bohicon. *BLD*

Destination Information:

Lake Ganvié: The Venice of Africa, the largesse stilt village of the region of Calavi, where 12,000 fishermen live. They were created over three hundred years ago when the local tribes moved into the shallow Lake Nakoué to avoid capture and enslavement.

Ouidah: In the past popular with the slave traders because it was the route that was used to take the slaves to the boat. Nowadays, Ouidah is the capital of the voodoo religion, where all the believers and voodoo worshippers will convert on the every 10th January for the voodoo festival.

The Museum of History: A basic museum, which holds the remnants of a very dark time of human history: the slave trade, when thousands of West African men and women were shipped to America.

The Door of No Return: A monument, designed like a door symbolising the last place the slaves will see before embark on the slave boats that will take them away from the land of their ancestors.

Day 3: Bohicon – Abomey – Natitingou

Journey to Abomey; on arrival, visit the 12 palaces of the Royal Palaces of Abomey, your visit will include a tour of the royal enclosure, museums, the King's tomb and Jewel Room. After the visit, drive to Natitingou; on arrival, check in at the hotel for the night. *BLD*

Destination Information:

The Royal Palaces of Abomey: The palaces are spread over 99 acres of land in the heart of Abomey, former capital of the ancient Kingdom of Dahomey and have a capacity of about 8000 people and the one belonging to the king included a two-storey structure called the "cowrie house" or akuehue. The Royal Palaces of Abomey have been recognized by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site in Africa.

Day 4: Natitingou

Have an early start today for a morning trip to the Chutes du Kota (Kota Falls), 15km from Natitingou. Spend the half day relaxing and discovering one of the most beautiful places of Benin; there is even a possibility of a nice swim. In the afternoon drive 1 and half hour to the village of Koussou for 2 hours visit in the heart of the village. Discover the way of life of the Ditamari tribe and their exceptional know-how in the design and construction of Tatas: these small castles are a harmonious marriage of aesthetics and functionality. *BLD*

Destination Information:

Natitingou: Also known as Nati, Natitingou is a small town in the North-Western part of the country. One of the most popular places with the tourists because of its landscape.

Les Chutes de Kota: They are a string of water falls cascading from the East of the Atakora Mountains. A great place to have a day trip in Natitingou and a possibility to swim in the pool at the bottom.

Koussou: Koussou is rich in tradition with its centuries-old heritage, culture and linguistic diversity. It remains a land to be discovered.

Day 5: Natitingou – Boukoubé - Dapaong

Depart early morning for Boukoubé and bid farewell to Benin and cross the border into Togo. Drive to the city of Dapaong for the night. *BLD*

Destination Information:

Dapaong: The city of Dapaong is nestled in the hills. It is the territory of the Moba and is blessed with many historical sites. The region is traditionally characterised by the predominance of basketry, leather goods and weaving.

Day 6: Dapaong – Kara

This morning, visit the Nok Caves where you will have the most beautiful view in Togo with a very enriching history. You will learn a lot about Moba Warriors. In the afternoon, drive to Kara. On the way, stop to in the Tamberma Valley and visit the remarkable Tamberma mud tower-houses, a UNESCO heritage. The evening is at leisure. *BLD*

Destination Information:

Nok Caves: Horizontal crevices open to the last upper quarter of their height; difficult to access, they served, for a very long time, shelter and refuge to the native populations, the Moba tribe, during periods of various insecurities that occurred in the region of the seventeenth to the nineteenth century.

Tamberma Valley: The Tamberma Valley is 80 Km of Kara in the North of Togo; it is also the valley of the mysterious Batammariba tribe with its beautiful landscape of grassland and small trees scattered around a baobab tree.

Tamberma Mud Tower-Houses: Are fortified houses built in the 17th century by the Batammariba people in order to protect themselves from the German invaders. The houses have a striking architecture and are built with mud, branches and straw.

Day 7: Kara

Enjoy a day trip to Parc Sarakawa today, immerse yourself in the parc and see antelopes, Zebras, buffaloes....

In the evening, visit the blacksmith village of Wyamde. *BLD*

Destination Information:

Kara: Kara is the capital of the Kara region in the North of Togo, a popular tourist destination of its cultural, tourist sites and its landscape.

Le Parc Sarakawa: A relaxing park spreading out 607 hectares, it is habituated by various species of antelope, buffaloes, ostriches and zebras.

Day 8: Kara – Kpalimé

This morning, journey towards Kpalimé, the greenest city of Togo; on route, stop in a weavers' village to see them at work. In the village you may assist in the evening to a voodoo dance ceremony demonstration. *BLD*

Destination Information:

Kpalimé: Kpalimé is about 1h30 drive from Lomé. It has a beautiful landscape and is located in the heart of the coffee and cocoa region.

Day 9: Kpalime - Aflao - Accra

Visit of Vial castle built in 1953 with an amazing view. Visit of the local art centre where you can buy souvenirs. Back to Lomé and stop at Aflao border by 2 pm and cross into Ghana. Drive to Accra; on arrival, embark on a city tour visiting Nkrumah Monument, Independence Square, National Culture Center. *BLD*

Destination Information:

Vial Castle: A German styled castle built in 1947 is located on Kpalimé hills with a panoramic view. In 1979, its name was changed to Presidential Castle, where numerous ministerial meetings were held under the regime of General Gnassingbé Eyadéma.

Accra: Is the capital of Ghana, located on the coastline of West Africa; it is the economic and administration hub of the country but also a great tourist city to visit.

Day 10: Accra – Aburi - Atimpoku

Depart for Aburi Botanical Gardens and Aburi craft market in the Akuapem highlands. Stop at a glass bead workshop near the Volta River to see this traditional handcraft. Motorboat ride on the Volta River to the Akosombo dam. *BLD*

Destination Information:

Aburi Botanical Gardens: Located 45mn drive from Accra, the Aburi Botanical Gardens have an impressive variety of fauna and flora. It is a great place to learn about different trees, have a peaceful walk or enjoy a picnic under a 160 years old Kapok tree.

Akosombo Dam: Also known as Volta Dam, located in the south-eastern Ghana, was built between 1961 and 1965 to provide electricity to the aluminium industry. The construction of the dam subsequently created the Volta River and displaced 80000 farmers.

Day 11: Atimpoku – Kumasi

In the early morning, drive 4 and half hours to the seasonal Akaa Falls and take 250 concrete steps to the bottom of the falls. Onward to a number of villages showcasing traditional Asante handcrafts: Kumasi Kente cloth weaving, Adinkra cloth stamping, wood carving. Also visit a cocoa farm. *BLD*

Destination Information:

Akaa Falls: This spectacular seasonal waterfall is situated in the Eastern Region of Ghana, about 17km Northeast of Koforidua, the regional capital of the Eastern Region. It is accessible by 250 concrete steps to the bottom where the water can fall around you from three different sides if the pressure is good.

Kumasi: The ancient capital of the Ashanti or Asante kingdom, Kumasi is still the heart of the Ashanti country. The king palace is in Kumasi, hence centre of the cultural and traditional activities of the kingdom.

Day 12: Kumasi

This morning, visit the National Cultural Centre, one of Ghana's best museums; the home of the Ashanti King, Manhyia Palace and the Komfo Anokye Sword Kumasi. Shopping experience at West Africa's largest outdoor market, the vast Kejetia market. *BLD*

Destination Information:

National Cultural Centre: Kumasi's major attraction is a complex of artisan workshops, performance centre, museum, library, and a craft shop. There are workshops on the centre grounds for various Ghanaian crafts such as ceramics, drum making, wood carving, brass casting, kente cloth weaving, and Adinkra cloth printing. Various types of performances take place in the afternoon on public holidays.

Manhyia Palace: The Manhyia Palace is the seat of the Ashanti King also known as the Asantehene, as well as his official residence. It is located at Kumasi, the capital of the Ashanti Kingdom and Ashanti Region.

Komfo Anokye Sword site: Situated on the grounds of the Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital, this site is important in Asante history. A 333-year-old sword wedged in the rockface is one of the centre artefacts and legends of the rich history of the Asante nation. On a good day you may run into the Asante king who regularly comes to pay his respects at this important and sacred site.

Day 13: Kumasi – Elmina

In the morning, depart along the Slave Route, and drive 4 hours to Elmina; stopping at the Slave River in Assin Manso. Tour the oldest European structure in Africa, Elmina castle, a World Heritage site. Explore the Posuban Shrines, Ft. San Jago and fishing lagoon in central Elmina. In the late afternoon, watch a special cultural performance. *BLD*

Destination Information:

Elmina: Elmina, which means in Portuguese "The Coast of the Gold mines", is a popular fishing port. In the past, the port was used by the slave traders to ship the captured Ghanaians to the New World.

Elmina Castle: Built by the Portuguese in 1482, it is believed to be one of the oldest European buildings south of the Sahara. The trade settlement that grew up around the castle originally dealt in gold as its primary export, but by the 17th century, the castle was a key holding station for slaves captured in West Africa. From there, they were shipped off to captivity throughout the New World.

Posuban Shrines: Posuban shrines are found in the coastal areas of the Fante people. These shrines can be anything from simple statues to elaborate concrete structures with life-size figures, fantasy creatures and other strange objects. Long ago these were the posts for local Asafo companies, or tribal militias.

Ft San Jago: It was built by the Dutch in 1652 to protect the castle from attack. In 1872, the fort and the entire Dutch Gold Coast were ceded to the British, who carried out several fortifications of the original structure. Today, the fort remains in relatively good condition.

Day 14: Elmina – Elubo – Abidjan

Early morning at the beach to watch fishermen pulling nets with their catch and drive west along the coast. Quickly visit the smaller Ft. San Sebastian in Shama. Drop in Elubo at the border crossing into Côte d'Ivoire.

After crossing into Côte d'Ivoire, drive to Abidjan. On arrival, after checking in at the hotel, relax during the evening. *BLD*

Destination Information:

Ft. San Sebastian: The third oldest fortification. Fort San Sebastian is a historical architectural delight, reflecting the distinctive styles and preferences of both its Portuguese and Dutch sculpturing. Fort San Sebastian was built by the Portuguese from 1520 to 1526. Its original purpose was to serve as a deterrent to English sailors interfering in Shama trade.

Abidjan: The largest city and the economical capital of the Ivory Coast, Abidjan holds the position as the most important commercial and banking centre in the country. Known as the "Paris of Africa", it is one of the largest populated cities in Western Africa with a major French speaking population.

Day 15: Abidjan – Grand Bassam – Abidjan

Start the day with a half day city tour, visiting the St Paul Cathedral, the Musée des Civilisation, the Craft Centre of Abidjan before paying a visit to the "Fanicos du Banco" the laundrymen going by their daily job of washing clothes. In the afternoon, drive 45mn to Grand Bassam for a city tour. On arrival, visit the National Museum of Costume, the district called Quartier France and its vestiges. Drive back to Abidjan for the night. *BLD*

Destination Information:

St Paul Cathedral: Is a Roman Catholic Cathedral in Abidjan, designed by architect Aldo Spirito and is one of the largest cathedrals in the world.

Musée des Civilisations: The museum has a good collection of displays about the cultural diversity of the country. It holds exhibits including Neolithic implements, masks from all over Cote d'Ivoire, fetish figurines, and kings' objects.

The Fanicos: Are men who earn their living by washing people clothes in the Banco Rivers. Seeing them at work is a very dazzling display.

Grand Bassam: Also known as Bassam, it is a resort town not far from Abidjan and was built as a colonial city being the 1st capital of the country. The world heritage site covers the historic colonial part of town, where all the vestiges can be visited such as Quartier France.

National Museum of Costume: It is an old colonial mansion filled with costumes of various types representing different tribes and roles; feticheuse, king etc. The museum also has a collection of photographs from the days of the French colony.

Day 16: Abidjan – Abengourou

This morning, drive 3 hours to Abengourou. Make a stop in the village of Aniausse, known as the village for féticheurs before driving to the hotel. In the afternoon, visit the residence of the King of the Agni tribe. *BLD*

Destination Information:

Abengourou: Is a city in the eastern part of Ivory Coast. Abengourou is traditionally ruled by the Anyi paramount chief who is also the current king of the Kingdom of Indenie. The residence of the king was built in 1992 and is a sight to behold. The residence is decorated with the best of Indenie relics and tapestries.

Aniausse Village: Home of a feticheuse who runs a centre, mostly for women, where trance-inducing dances are part of the ritual (the Komians) and the trance allows divination through the arrival of the spirit.

Day 17: Abengourou - Yamoussoukro

This morning, drive 4h: to Yamoussoukro; make a stop in village of Toumodi to witness a rhythmic performance of the talking drums. Spend the afternoon touring the spectacular Basilica Our Lady of Peace, before visiting the city, which will include a trip to the Lake of the Sacred Caimans. *BLD*

Destination Information:

Yamoussoukro: A sleeping town also known as Yakro, Yamoussoukro is the political capital of the country and also the birthplace of the 1st President of the country, Mr Felix Houphouët-Boigny, whose former palace has a lake filled with Sacred Caimans.

Basilica Our Lady of Peace: The largest church in the world, the basilica was designed by a Lebanese architect, Pierre Fakhoury and inspired by St Peter Basilica of Rome. The cornerstone was laid on 10 August 1985, and it was consecrated on 10 September 1990 by Pope John Paul II, who had just formally accepted the basilica as a gift from Félix Houphouët-Boigny on behalf of the Catholic Church.

Day 18: Yamoussoukro – Sassandra

Depart early in the morning for the small resort city of Sassandra, located in the South East of the country. On the way to Sassandra, make a stop to another small coastal city, Grand-Lahou for lunch. Upon arrival in Sassandra, check in at the hotel for a night at leisure. *BLD*

Destination Information:

Sassandra: Located in the western part of the country, Sassandra is an unexploited resort town with its sandy beaches, palm-trees forest and quiet and relaxing atmosphere.

Day 19: Sassandra

Spend the whole day discovering this sleeping resort town. Visit of the Residence of the Commander of District; the rest house of the Governor Binger; the mosque grotto of the late patriarch Yacouba Sylla; the vestiges of one of the biggest banks of the West Africa of the colonial era; the war memorial erected in memory of the castaways of the English ship torpedoed December 25, 1943 off the coast of Sassandra; the pier with a jetty on the sea of nearly 170 meters; the wharf from the lighthouse then continue to the hotel terrace. After lunch, continue the exploration to this sleepy town, view the vestiges of the colonial occupation of Groudou district; the ballet of canoes equipped with engines; the fish market; sacred monkeys; Sassandra lighthouse and cathedral. Go on a boat trip on the river and learn about all the islands by the mouth of the Sassandra river. *BLD*

Day 20: Sassandra – Abidjan

After breakfast, checkout, drive 6 hours back to Abidjan and transfer to the airport for your flight home. *BL*