

# Accra to Ouagadougou Overland Adventure Trip Through Ghana, Togo, Benin & Burkina Faso

A 28 day trip between Accra, Ghana and Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. Experience incredible West African culture, traditional architecture, voodoo ceremonies, slave history, music, beaches and wildlife on this off the beaten track adventure!

**NB All trip itineraries are subject to change**

## Summary & Key Highlights

- Take a trip to see the coffin makers at work in Accra, or explore the lighthouse, fort, and markets of Jamestown on a walking tour
- Trek to Ote Falls and climb Mt Gemi by Lake Volta, Ghana, see Kente cloth weavers ply their trade, or visit a sacred monkey sanctuary
- Free time to hike around Mount Klouto, home to beautiful waterfalls and an impressive array of butterflies
- Visit the fetish market, Grand Marche, and museums in Lome, Togo
- Kick back on the beach at Grand Popo, go looking for turtles, or witness an impressive voodoo ceremony
- Visit numerous sites and artefacts dedicated to Voodoo like the Python Temple in Ouidah, Benin, and learn about the tragic history of the transatlantic slave trade
- Explore the bustling market in Cotonou with traditional batiks, wax cloth, fetishes and much more!
- Visit the incredible bustling stilt village at Ganvie
- Learn about the history of the Dahomey Kingdom, visit voodoo fetishes, and see artisans smelting bronze figurines in Abomey
- Visit the iconic Aledjo Fault, artisans, weavers, and a blacksmith's village in Togo
- Trek in in the stunning Tamberma Valley and explore fortress-like villages in Koutammakou, Togo

- Spend time in Somba country, Benin, and visit the unique 2 storey fortified houses of the Tata Somba people
- Guided walking safari in Pendjari National Park, home to elephants, hippos, and impressive birdlife
- Free time for hiking to explore the caves, waterfalls, crocodile pools, and vulture colonies around 'La Falaise De Gobnangou' (Cliffs of Gobnangou), Burkina Faso
- Visit the thriving cattle market drawing herders from all over the region in Fada N'Gourma, Burkina Faso
- Throw yourself into Ouagadougou's vibrant musical and cultural scene

## Challenges

This is our shortest trip in terms of the distance covered, so most days should be pretty relaxed.

The roads in the south east of Burkina Faso and northern Benin are a mixture of broken tar and dirt, so we have built extra time into the itinerary in case we are slowed down.

Some of the places we intend to visit on this trip are as new to us as they are to you. We want to explore as much as possible and try and visit a number of places that there simply is little or no up to date information about. As a result, some patience will be needed when the trip arrives at a new place (i.e. finding somewhere to camp or sourcing a guide to show us around).

Ghana, Togo, Benin, and Burkina Faso are all *relatively speaking* used to travellers and tourists, so we do not expect any significant challenges on this trip. However, despite being a relatively well travelled part of West Africa, it is still a more challenging area to travel in than other more 'touristy' parts of Africa. Therefore we urge you to read our [What To Expect](#) page before booking this trip.

## Week 1: Ghana Into Togo

The trip starts in the Ghanaian capital Accra where we will obtain visas for later on in the trip. You could explore the famous fishing harbour, lighthouse, and colonial fort in historic Jamestown and learn about the history of the slave trade, or take a guided tour of one of Accra's impoverished yet vibrant neighbourhoods.

It is well worth visiting the coffin makers just outside of the city, where they chisel timber into all kinds of objects to give people a final send off in style (cars, animals, rockets, you name it!) In addition, the artisans market has a superb array of masks, statues, clothing, jewellery, chess boards, and chairs for sale if you feel the urge for some souvenir hunting!

With visas in hand we drive north east for the stunning Volta region. Arguably the most picturesque part of Ghana, we'll base ourselves near the town of Amedzofe for a chance to explore the surrounding countryside.

We'll leave it up to you to decide what you want to do on the free day, but some highlights include the chance to climb Mount Gemi, trek to Ote Falls, visit a sacred monkey sanctuary, watch Kente cloth weavers at work, or simply kick back and relax taking in the views of Lake Volta.

From Ghana we head east and cross into Togo, the second country on this trip. A beautiful drive brings us into the town of Kpalime nestled in the mountains near the Ghanaian border.

We'll base ourselves close to Mount Klouto, which on a clear day offers great views of Mount Agou, Togo's highest peak. The surrounding area is a protected nature reserve and home to countless butterflies and unique flora and fauna. You'll have the opportunity to go hiking in the mountains for the day to take in the natural beauty of the area. If you fancy it there are numerous waterfalls in the vicinity allowing for a refreshing dip after a day out hiking!

You could also visit the bustling market in Kpalime, drawing fruit sellers from far and wide, or you could swing by the artisanal centre to see craftsmen at work with the chance to buy their products, including wooden sculptures, masks, pottery, and batik.

From Kpalime, we'll drive south to the coast to visit Lome, the capital of Togo. Voodoo and fetishes are integral to Togolese beliefs and culture, and the fetish market in Lome is believed to be the largest in the world with all manner of traditional ingredients and fetishes on offer. Piles of heads, limbs, skins, bones and teeth make for a grizzly but fascinating sensory experience. While it can be upsetting to see various protected species for sale, this market is a must see for gaining an insight into the local culture.

Other sites in Lome include the vast and colourful indoor market overflowing into the surrounding streets. This is home of the 'Mama Benz', women who made their riches selling wax cloth and named after their car of choice. It is the place to buy wax cloth, although almost everything imaginable can be found!

## Week 2: Togo Into Benin

The border town on the coast between Togo and Benin is the main crossing between the two countries, and can be very busy, so expect to spend a few hours completing formalities.

Our first stop is the city of Cotonou, the capital of Benin in everything but name (the official title goes to Porto Novo). We'll spend a few hours in the city to apply for visas, offering you a chance to visit the famous Grand Marche of Dantokpa, one of the most impressive in all of West Africa. You'll need your wits about you as you navigate your way around the tightly packed stalls and the hive of activity that comes with a bustling market place! One of the most intriguing places to visit in Cotonou is the Fetish Market section within the Grand Marche of Dantokpa. Dozens of stalls display a mixture of animal parts that are used for everything from treating disease to enhancing a particular skill to warding off evil spirits.

You could also visit the highly regarded and world famous Fondation Zinsou museum, promoting some incredible contemporary African art.

From Cotonou a short drive west brings us to the beautiful beach at Grand Popo. We'll spend 2 nights at this tranquil spot, camping right on the seafront in the grounds of the old colonial customs building. A great chance for some R&R!

With a bit of luck there will be the chance to go on a guided walk along the beach to watch the turtles hatching and scurrying off into the ocean. You could take a boat trip to visit fishing villages, see salt being produced on the Mono River, or visit Bouche du Roy, a beautiful spot where the river meets the ocean.

There is also the option to go and watch a spectacular whirling dervishes voodoo ceremony not far from Grand Popo. It's an incredible couple of hours listening to the hypnotic music and dancing, all topped off with colourful dervishes kicking up the dust!

From Grand Popo a short drive along the coast brings us into the town of Ouidah, widely considered the spiritual home of the Voodoo religion. Originally known as Glewe during the reign of the Xweda kingdom, Ouidah later came under the control of the Dahomey kingdom. As the Portuguese, French, Danish, Dutch, and British all gained a foothold along the Gulf of Guinea, Ouidah became one of the most significant centres of the appalling slave trade that blighted West Africa for so many

years. It is estimated around one million slaves were shipped from Ouidah to Brazil and the Caribbean between the 1600's and 1800's. A truly tragic history.

There are many sights to see in Ouidah, including the Temple of Pythons, Fort of São João Baptista de Ajudá, the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception, numerous monuments and temples in the Sacred Forest of Kpasse, and the Caso Do Brazil.

After visiting the sights in the town, we will drive down to the seafront along a road known as "La Route des Esclaves" (route of slaves). This road is lined with statues and monuments relating to both the slave history and voodoo traditions of Ouidah. The road ends on the beach where there is a large memorial built in remembrance of all those who were sold as slaves and forced onto the waiting ships to never see their homeland again. This monument represents the Point Of No Return and is surrounded by a number of statues of people in shackles. There is another monument close by called the Gate of Salvation dedicated to the catholic missionaries who first arrived in Dahomey.

From the coast we drive north to the impressive stilt village of Ganvie. The village was originally built by the Tofinu people on Lake Nokoue in order to escape from the Fon tribe in the 15/1600's. It's an incredible place, bustling with activity, with people punting their pirogues out onto the lake full of produce for sale. Some even refer to Ganvie as the 'Venice of West Africa!'

As with all places we visit on our trips, we are guests in other peoples surroundings, so it's always polite to ask to take photos rather than just pointing a camera at people and their homes.

### Week 3: Northern Benin & Togo

The trip continues as we visit the town of Abomey, the old capital of the Dahomey Kingdom. The town prospered between the 1600's and 1800's under a succession of powerful kings who built impressive Royal Palaces and walled fortifications. Much of Abomey was destroyed when the French attacked the town in the late 1800's, but fortunately a decent amount has been rebuilt and preserved. The palaces have been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1985.

We'll have a free day in Abomey for a chance to visit the numerous sites of the old kingdom, including the royal compound, numerous palaces, temples, and fetish shrines. There is also the opportunity to visit the artisans at work in and around Abomey, making everything from metal work and wood work to weaving and textiles.

Having seen the best of southern Benin, we cross back into Togo and travel to the north of the country and visit the iconic Aledjo Fault, an incredible sight which the road we will be driving along passes through. We will stop at an artisanal co-operative to see cloth weavers at work, and visit a traditional blacksmiths village that

was the birthplace of long standing former president, General Eyadéma Gnassingbé. At his time of death Eyadéma was the longest serving president in Africa.

Heading further north we arrive in the Tamberma Valley to see the UNESCO World Heritage listed region of Koutammakou. We will spend several days in this area which straddles the Togo-Benin border, with the chance to visit the villages of the Batammariba people in Togo. The Batammariba live in mud 'tower-houses' known as 'Takienta', which make for an impressive sight against the beautiful surrounding landscape.

We will then make a short journey across the border to the area around Koussoukoingu in the Atakora Hills, Benin. From here we will visit the villages of the Tammari people, also known as Somba, which roughly translates as 'good masons'.

The traditional Somba homes are constructed from clay, wood and straw, using no tools. Many of the homes are two storeys high with a grain storage area on the upper level. The doors open to the west as the Somba believe life comes from this direction. The houses are fortified dwellings, built to guard against slave raiders from the Dahomey Empire in the 17th Century, Germans in the 19th century, and slave raiders from Islamic North Africa. To this day many of the Tammari remain animists.

We will have a full free day on each side of the border to explore this fascinating area.

Our next stop is Pendjari National Park which is considered one of the best reserves in all of West Africa for spotting wildlife. This park, combined with W National Park and Arli National Park, forms part of the W.A.P complex. Together they form the largest contiguous protected natural area in West Africa.

Most big animals have been hunted to extinction throughout much of West Africa, but Pendjari retains a decent variety of wildlife, including elephants, hippos, various antelopes, plenty of birdlife, warthogs, baboons, and also Lions! We'll have a free day for wildlife safaris in the park for a chance to see some of the wildlife.

The park is dominated in places by a series of hills known as the Atakora range, forming a dramatic backdrop in this beautiful area. With luck there'll be a chance to cool off under the refreshing waterfall not far from the camp site we'll base ourselves at in the park!

#### **Week 4: Burkina Faso**

Our journey continues as we cross into eastern Burkina Faso and an area known as 'Le Falasie de Gobnangou' (the Gobnangou cliffs). En route we will visit a crafts centre and a museum on the natural history of the area. The escarpment extends for approximately 50kms through parts of the Arli and W National Parks, and is dominated by caves and canyons, as well as a number of streams and small

waterfalls which help irrigate the surrounding land. As a result the area around the escarpment is a relatively fertile and beautiful part of the Sahel.

We'll spend a couple of days based at one of the remote villages around the cliffs for a chance to go trekking around the escarpment and the local villages. There are vulture and falcon colonies, crocodile pools, and a village of furniture makers and sculptors whose work is of such quality that they supply the Gourmanche royal family! Not many travellers venture this way so you can be sure of a warm welcome from the people who live in this remote part of Burkina Faso!

It may be possible to hire vehicles to explore the vast Arli and W National Parks from here should you wish to do so. The wildlife includes lions, elephant, buffaloes, many different antelope and, it is believed, a pack of highly endangered hunting dogs. The infrastructure within the parks is extremely basic, but has been considerably improved in recent years with the investment of EU funds.

Our next stop will be the town of Fada N'Gourma, the centre of Gourmanche heritage. There is a honey centre where we can learn about apiculture in the region, with a range of beeswax products on offer, much of which is made from honey from the Shea tree. We will also try to visit a 1000-year old sacred baobab tree, and hope to witness the spectacular cattle market, one of the biggest in Burkina Faso. This market draws hundreds of cattle herders from across the Sahel, sometimes as far afield as Mali and Niger, including the famous Fulani group. The cattle are exported to neighbouring coastal countries such as Togo, Benin and Ghana.

The trips finishes in the funky named capital city of Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. We will camp within the grounds of a hotel on the outskirts of the city. The hotel has a swimming pool and a superb restaurant and bar, the perfect opportunity to catch up with some R&R! There are some fantastic museums and music workshops in the city, offering you a great chance to throw yourself into the musical and cultural scene in Ouagadougou!

You could also take a taxi ride out of the city to the Laongo Sculpture Park. Since the late 1980's, local artists have sculpted all manner of objects from the surrounding granite formations, creating a landscape dominated by everything from tribal people to animals to historical scenes.

Please note: This trip can be combined with our [Dakar to Freetown trip](#) and/or our [Freetown to Accra trip](#) to make the ultimate West Africa Overland Adventure!