

# ACCRA TO FREETOWN



A 42 day trip between Accra, Ghana and Freetown, Sierra Leone. Experience incredible West African culture, dance ceremonies, trekking, vine bridges, wildlife, beaches, traditional architecture and great music on this off the beaten track adventure!

**Trip:** Accra to Freetown (ACC-FTN)  
**Start Date:** 25 February 2019 (meeting at 09:00 am)  
**Finish Date:** 08 April 2019 (trip finishes at 08:00 am)  
**Joining Instructions:** Meet at 09:00 am on 25 February 2019

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

## Summary & Key Highlights

- Visit the slave forts along **Ghana's Cape Coast** with a chance to relax on the stunning beaches
- Walk high above the **rainforest** on the canopy walkways at **Kakum National Park**
- Spot wildlife on guided walking safaris in **Mole National Park** in northern Ghana
- Visit the ornate and intricately decorated **Gurunsi** houses in **Tiebele, Burkina Faso**
- Spend time in the **Banfora** region of Burkina Faso, visiting small villages famed for their traditional mud architecture. Also time to visit the **Karfiguela waterfalls, Domes of Fabledougou** and the **Sindou Peaks**
- Visit the weird and wonderful capital of Ivory Coast - **Yamoussoukro** - and marvel at the **Basilica**
- Overnight at a beautiful traditional village in Ivory Coast and see a **stilt dancer** in action!
- Trek to see **wild chimpanzees** in Guinea Forestiere (optional extra)
- Trek in Guinea Forestiere to find the **vine bridges** the area is famed for - walking on them is at your own discretion!
- Spend 2 nights at **Tiwai Island Wildlife Sanctuary** - this unique reserve will give us the chance to see some of the best wildlife Sierra Leone has to offer including the rare Pygmy Hippo
- Soak up the beaches, nightlife, music and unique atmosphere of **Freetown**, the buzzing capital of 'Salone'
- Explore the **Ashanti** stronghold of **Kumasi** and **Kejeita Market**, one of the biggest in West Africa

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- Overnight stay at the beautiful **Kintampo Waterfalls**
- Throw yourself into **Ouagadougou's** vibrant musical and cultural scene
- Marvel at the impressive adobe mosque and grand market in **Bobo Dioulasso**
- Watch the artisans ply their trades in **Korhogo, Ivory Coast**
- See the rusting skeletons of old abandoned mining machinery close to a modern purpose-built mining town in the foothills of **Mount Nimba, Liberia**
- Visit and overnight stay at the beautiful **Kpatawee waterfalls** in northern Liberia
- Explore the crumbling grandeur of **Monrovia**
- Stay at a Liberian surf retreat in **Robertsport** and explore the architecture of the early settlers
- Overnight in a village in eastern **Sierra Leone** learning about the people's culture, traditions, and everyday life, topped off with storytelling from the village elders and music and dance performances!

## Challenges: Is This Trip For Me?

This unique trip is perhaps our most exciting. This is truly off the beaten track overlanding - travelling through a stunning part of West Africa few others get to see.

In 2012 we were, to the best of our knowledge, the first ever truck-based overland company to devise, market, sell, and travel this route, and the first ever company to take an overland truck-based trip across Sierra Leone. We are pleased to say it was a huge success!

Our Freetown to Accra trip in late 2013 was the first visit to Liberia for us, and for any truck-based overland company (as far as we know). We are pleased to say it was a huge success! This trip will be exploratory in nature with a flexible itinerary to take into account any unforeseen challenges we may be presented with en route.

**Road conditions** will inevitably slow us down so we have built extra time into the itinerary to account for this. It will be tough going for short stretches as we journey between Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea and Ivory Coast. We'll be driving through remote areas where there simply is no tourist infrastructure – so we'll be bush camping off the truck for a few days at a time. Team work is the key to keeping the truck moving and group morale high!

**Corrupt officials** are part and parcel of travel in this region. Delays at borders and checkpoints are commonplace. It can be tiresome but also quite comical sometimes – you just have to play the game!

**Security note:** We will be monitoring the Foreign & Commonwealth Office travel advice before we set off and when we are on the road. We also have contacts on the ground who will let us know if the situation changes further ahead and we can re-

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route accordingly. We are happy to say that there have been no travel restrictions in place for any of our route for some time now.

## Week 1: Ghana

We start the trip in Ghanaian capital of **Accra** where we will apply for certain visas for later on in the trip. 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 early souvenir hunting!

Heading out of Accra we will drive west along the beautiful **Atlantic Coastline**. We will stop at **Cape Coast Castle** to visit what was once the residence of the British governor until Accra became the capital of Ghana. Further west we will also visit **St George's Castle** in **Elmina**. Originally built by the Portuguese as a trading post, it later turned into a holding fort to ship slaves across the Atlantic - a beautiful place yet one with such a disturbing and tragic history. We will camp for the night at a beautiful beach and hopefully make it there in time for sunset!

Our next stop is **Kakum National Park**, where we'll have a chance to walk on the famous canopy walkways above the rainforest and hopefully see some of the wildlife within the reserve.

The journey continues north to the **Ashanti** stronghold of **Kumasi** where we'll spend two nights. Things to see and do include:

- Explore the sprawling **Kejetia market** - one of the biggest in West Africa
- Look around **Manhyia Palace museum** to admire the exhibits and learn about the history of the Ashanti royal family
- Stroll around the grounds of the national cultural centre and witness the crafts people at work making everything from drums to weaving textiles and crafting jewellery
- Take a day trip out to the sacred **Lake Bosumtwi**

Leaving central Ghana we head further north for a long days drive to the beautiful **Mole National Park**. To break up the long drive we will spend the night at the enchanting **Kintampo falls** for the chance to have a refreshing swim to cool off.

We'll arrive into Mole the following afternoon. The road into the park is in varied condition so it can be quite a bumpy ride at times - strap yourselves in!

**We have a whole day at Mole for guided walks through the park.** The camp site we stay at is perched above a watering hole where many of the animals congregate, making it an ideal spot for **game viewing**. The camp site also has a swimming pool, offering a refreshing afternoon dip after a long walk through the park looking for wildlife. On leaving the park we'll stop at the famous **adobe mosque** at **Larabanga**.

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## Week 2: Burkina Faso

The trip crosses from Ghana into Burkina Faso as we head north for the village of **Tiebele**, home to the **Kassena** people. The Kassena are part of a wider ethnic group called the **Gurunsi**, which is also made up of other groups in both Ghana and Burkina Faso such as the Nuna, Lela, and Sisala. They are considered one of the oldest groups who settled in present day Burkina Faso as they migrated from the Lake Chad area.

The name Gurunsi also refers to a particular style of architecture the group developed over the centuries. In Tiebele we will see some of the best examples of the Gurunsi style when visiting the village. The buildings are made up of clay/straw/soil/dung, which is then decorated with wonderful **colours** and **designs** passed down through the generations. The surface is then sealed with a varnish made from **Nere** (African locust bean). The Kassena people and their buildings have to be seen to be truly appreciated, a wonderful place we are privileged to be able to visit on this trip!

From here we continue north to the capital city of **Ouagadougou**, where we'll 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 Ouaga!

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.

Next we travel south west to funky **Bobo Dioulasso**, home to the Sudanese style grand **adobe mosque** and a superb **market**, not to mention some great nightclubs. You could also visit nearby villages like Koumi and Koro famed for their **mud architecture**.

Leaving 'Bobo' we will spend the next few days visiting the surrounding **Banfora** region. This is perhaps the most beautiful part of Burkina Faso and we will take the opportunity to explore this stunning area. Possible excursions include:

- **Tengrela Lake**, famed for its resident **hippo** population, and set against a beautiful backdrop
- **Domes of Fabledougou**, an area dominated by limestone rocks that have been formed into all manner of intriguing shapes by the wind
- The beautiful **Karfiguela Waterfalls**, offering a chance to cool off in the pools below and take in the spectacular views of the surrounding countryside
- Villages of **Niansongoni** and **Sindou**, popular for their laid back village life set amongst dramatic cliffs and traditional architecture

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With so many options on offer we will leave it for you to decide what you want to do when we get to the Banfora region.

## Week 3: Ivory Coast

The northern town of **Korhogo** is our first stop in Ivory Coast, famed for cloth weaving, jewellery and antiques. Visiting the surrounding area will give you a fascinating insight into the life of the **Senoufo** people. It's worth hiring a guide for the day and exploring the villages around Korhogo to see the craftspeople at work. **Le Quartier des Sculpteurs** in Korhogo is definitely worth a good look around for souvenirs - be prepared to haggle!

Next we drive south to one of Africa's anomalies - **Yamoussoukro** - the capital of Ivory Coast in name alone. Yamoussoukro was the hometown of long serving post-independence **President Felix Houphouet-Boigny**, who spent exorbitant amounts of money to make it the new spectacular capital city of the country.

We'll spend two nights just outside of town - giving you a chance to marvel at the **Presidential Palace** (where the late President was buried), and his showpiece, the **Basilique de Notre Dame de la Paix**.

Despite such a low percentage of the population actually being Catholic, the President spent hundreds of millions of dollars on the grand **Basilica**, which is almost an exact replica of St Peter's in Rome! The town itself boasts 6 lane highways that lead nowhere, grand hotels, and monuments on par with any other capital city of the world, yet all situated in a relatively small settlement of 250,000 people. **A surreal place that has to be seen to be believed!**

From Yamoussoukro we drive west towards the town of **Man** and onto the border with **Guinea**. This is perhaps the most beautiful part of Ivory Coast, situated near the borders with Guinea and Liberia. The surrounding mountains and tropical vegetation make for a spectacular back drop, with opportunities to stop off and witness local festivities, mask and stilt dances, and wildlife.

All being well we will spend a night in a beautiful village in the west of Ivory Coast, where we'll have the chance to watch a traditional dance ceremony with a **stilt dancer!**

## Weeks 4 - 5: Guinea Into Liberia

This week's itinerary is left deliberately vague due to the nature of the area we will be travelling through. Guinea Forestiere (Forest Region) and much of Liberia is **remote**, and receives far fewer visitors than other parts of the region. It's one of the most naturally beautiful parts of West Africa, but travel in the region is somewhat challenging due to varied road conditions.

As a very rough guide, we hope to do some or all of the following during this week:

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- Overland from the Ivory Coast border into Guinea taking in the views of Mount Nimba
- Optional trekking to visit the wild chimpanzees the area is famous for
- Explore the markets of Nzerekore and perhaps look around the Musee Ethnographique, home to a selection of masks and fetishes
- Hike in the Guinea Forestiere to find the vine bridges the area is famed for - walking on them is at your own discretion!

We will stop in small towns and villages to stock up on food and water as we journey between Guinea and Liberia. The roads can be very narrow, sometimes with deep ruts and corrugations. We will have to ford rivers if the bridges are not strong enough for the truck.

This is truly off the beaten track travel - overlanding through a remote part of West Africa few others get to see!

**To reiterate - this section of the trip is totally flexible. Whilst we hope to see some of the above, no guarantees can be made, and we may have to adapt the itinerary depending upon conditions when we arrive.**

Either way, by the end of week 4/start of week 5, we will have driven from the Ivory Coast-Guinea border and arrived onto the coast of Liberia. **A true overland adventure you will never forget!**

## **Weeks 5 - 6: Liberia into Sierra Leone**

Liberia is very much new to travellers after being closed for so long. **We will take it as it comes!** The roads are in a varying state of repair, and can slow us down, so we have built spare days into the itineraries to account for this. We will visit **Kpatawee waterfalls** en route, one of Liberia's most beautiful spots, where if you wish you can spend a few hours trekking up the river to see a number of falls rising up the hillside.

In the **Nimba** region, we hope to visit the huge rusting relics of a long **abandoned mine**, against the backdrop of a modern purpose built mining town.

You will be travelling through a **remote** part of West Africa, an area not accustomed to seeing a large group of overlanders before, so expect quite a **welcome** as we journey through this beautiful part of **Liberia!**

Arriving onto the Atlantic coastline of Liberia we will spend time in and around the capital **Monrovia**. The city is in a varying state of repair after so many years of trouble, but is very much moving on from a tragic past. The people in Monrovia are particularly welcoming and always pleased to see tourists coming to their city! Marvel at what remains of the **Masonic Lodge** and other reminders of Monrovia's most intriguing history.

We will spend time at a surf retreat in the sleepy coastal town of **Robertsport**. Here you will have the chance to enjoy the beaches, or explore the interesting architecture from some of Liberia's early settlers.

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Leaving Monrovia we journey west towards the border with **Sierra Leone**. The road on the Sierra Leone side is pretty awful, so progress will be slow and we will have to find a bush camp in the **tropical rainforest** en route. Another hard day's drive will bring us into the diamond dealing town of **Kenema** in the east of Sierra Leone. We will spend some time here to recharge and clean up after the drive through the forest from the border with Liberia.

Our next stop is the **Tiwai Island Wildlife Sanctuary**. This unique reserve is an adventure to reach involving some dirt roads and a boat ride to the island. Once there, we'll have the chance to see some of the best wildlife Sierra Leone has to offer, including 11 species of primate and, with luck, the rare **Pygmy Hippo!**

Leaving Tiwai Island, we head west towards the capital city of **Freetown**, where you'll have an opportunity to explore and soak up the atmosphere in Sierra Leone's dazzling metropolis. You could take a speedboat to **Banana Island** with its breathtaking views of the coastline, visit **Charlotte Falls**, the **Tacaguma Chimpanzee Sanctuary** or simply beach hop along the peninsula. Sierra Leone has some of the best beaches in the world - one of the famous 1980's adverts for the Bounty chocolate bar entitled "A Taste of Paradise" was filmed here!

When the sun goes down Freetowners' like to party - so if that's your thing you'll find plenty of street parades, beach bars and nightclubs to dance in until dawn, a great way to end our adventure from Ghana to Sierra Leone!

**Please Note:** This trip can be combined with our **Freetown to Dakar** trip for the ultimate **West Africa Overland** adventure!

