

ACCRA TO OUAGADOUGOU



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!

Trip: Accra to Ouagadougou (ACC-OUA)
Start Date: 07 January 2019 (meeting at 09:00 am)
Finish Date: 04 February 2019 (trip finishes at 08:00 am)
Joining Instructions: Meet at 09:00 am on 07 January 2019

NB All trip itineraries are subject to change!

Summary & Key Highlights

- 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
- Kick back on the beach at **Grand Popo**, go looking for **turtles** or witness an impressive **voodoo ceremony**
- Visit numerous sites and artifacts dedicated to **Voodoo** like the Python Temple in **Ouidah**, Benin, and learn about the tragic history of the transatlantic slave trade
- Visit the famous bustling stilt village at **Ganvie, Benin**
- Explore the **Banfara** region of **Burkina Faso** spending time at the Karfiguela waterfalls, the Domes of Fabledougou and the Sindou Peaks
- 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**
- Explore the bustling market in **Cotonou** with traditional batiks, wax cloth, fetishes and much more
- Marvel at the impressive adobe mosque and grand market in **Bobo Dioulasso**
- Learn about the history of the **Dahomey Kingdom**, visit voodoo fetishes, and see artisans smelting bronze figurines in **Abomey**

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- Visit the iconic **Aledjo Fault**, artisans, weavers, and a blacksmith's village in **Togo**
- Throw yourself into **Ouagadougou's** vibrant musical and cultural scene

Challenges: Is This Trip For Me?

Though this is our shortest trip in terms of the distance covered, the roads in places are a mixture of broken tar and dirt, so we have built extra time into the itinerary in case we are slowed down.

We like 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 strongly advise 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'll obtain visas for later on in the trip. Whilst here you could explore the famous fishing harbour, lighthouse, colonial fort in historic **Jamestown** or take a guided tour of one of Accra's impoverished yet vibrant neighbourhoods.

It's well worth visiting the world-famous **coffin makers** just outside of the city, where men 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-on souvenir hunting!

With visas in hand we'll drive north east to the stunning **Lake 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 Waterfalls**, 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.

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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** as well as unique flora and fauna. Here you'll have the opportunity to go hiking in the mountains for the day, and 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 **artisan centre** to see the crafts people at work with the chance to buy their 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 **Akodessewa fetish market** in Lome is believed to be the largest in the world with all manner of traditional ingredients and fetishes on offer. Here you'll find piles of heads, limbs, skins, bones and teeth, making 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 of Hilla Condji 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 (if necessary), offering you the 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 such a huge bustling market place! One of the most intriguing places to visit in Cotonou is the **Fetish** 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!

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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 processed on the Mono River, or visit **Bouche du Roi**, 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, where you'll spend an incredible couple of hours listening to **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 to the town of **Ouidah**, widely considered the spiritual home of **Voodoo**. 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's 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 people's 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 drive north to the town of **Abomey**, the old capital of the **Dahomey Kingdom**. The town prospered between the 16-1800's under a succession of powerful kings who built impressive **Royal Palaces** and **walled**

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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.

From here we'll cross back into Togo, heading north to 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'll spend several days in this area which straddles the Togo-Benin border, with the chance to visit the villages of the **Batamariba** people in Togo. The Batamariba live in mud 'tower-houses' known as '**Takienta**', which make for an impressive sight against the surrounding landscape.

Next we'll journey across the border back into Benin and the area around **Koussoukoingu** in the **Atakora Hills**. Here we'll 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. 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. Their houses are fortified dwellings, built to guard against slave raiders from the Dahomey Empire in the 17th century, Germans in the 19th century as well as slave raiders from North Africa. To this day many of the Tammari remain animists.

Our next stop is [Pendjari National Park](#) considered one of the best reserves in all of West Africa for spotting wildlife. This park, combined with **W National Park** in Niger and **Arli National Park** in Burkina Faso 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 amount 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 the chance to see some of the wildlife.

Pendjari 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!

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Week 4: Burkina Faso

Our journey continues as we cross into eastern **Burkina Faso**. Due to security considerations we won't spend much time in this part of the country, so will instead drive for a couple of days across the country to the **Banfora region**. This is perhaps the most beautiful part of Burkina Faso where we'll take the time to explore this stunning area.

Possible excursions include:

- **Tengrela Lake**, famed for its resident **hippo** population, and set against a beautiful backdrop
- **The 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

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.

From here we'll spend a night or two in funky **Bobo Dioulasso**, the second city of Burkina Faso and home to the Sudanese style grand **adobe mosque** and a superb market, not to mention some great nightclubs. Time permitting you could also visit nearby villages like Koumi and Koro famed for their **mud architecture**.

The trip finishes in the capital city of **Ouagadougou**, where we'll camp within the grounds of a hotel on the outskirts of the city. There are some fantastic museums and music workshops in Ouaga, offering you a great chance to throw yourself into the musical and cultural scene!

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!**