

DAKAR TO FREETOWN



A 28 day trip between Dakar, Senegal and Freetown, Sierra Leone, offering incredible trekking, waterfalls, music, beaches and wildlife mixed with West African traditions and culture on this off the beaten track adventure!

Trip Name: Dakar to Freetown (DKR-FTN)
Start Date: 05 November 2018 (meeting at 09:00 am)
Finish Date: 03 December 2018 (trip finishes at 08:00 am)
Joining Instructions: Meet at 09:00 am on 05 November 2018

NB: All trip itineraries are subject to change!

Summary & Key Highlights

- Spend a week traversing Guinea's **Fouta Djalon region** taking in the stunning scenery; trek to forested ravines, pristine **waterfalls**, traditional **Fula villages**, escarpments and craggy mountainsides in this most beautiful part of West Africa
- Witness a traditional '**Koumpo**' dance, watch a Djembe troupe performance, take drumming lessons, or relax on the beaches in the northern Casamance
- Absorb yourself in the old **colonial port** city of **Bissau** and experience the arts and handicrafts scene
- Camp on the banks of the **Gambia River**, take boat trips to spot wildlife in the **Baobolong Wetlands** and the **Kiang West National Park**, and watch a **Gambian Griot** give a **Kora performance**. You can even try playing the Kora yourself!
- Relax on some of the best **beaches** in the world dotted along the Freetown peninsula
- Overnight at the beautiful Saltinho waterfalls en route for the Guinea Bissau/Guinea border
- Spend a week overlanding through the beautiful Casamance region of Senegal - take a Pirogue ride along the creeks and mangroves, visit the beautiful islands dotted along the river, join the locals on a fishing trip, or hire a bike and take to the pistes around the villages of the estuary - a relaxing time in a part of Senegal few others visit
- Explore cosmopolitan Dakar with its excellent arts and crafts scene, live music, museums, galleries and mosques, or take a trip to Ile de Goree
- Soak up the nightlife, music and unique atmosphere of Freetown, the buzzing capital of 'Sweet Salone'

DAKAR TO FREETOWN



Challenges: Is This Trip For Me?

In 2012 we were, to the best of our knowledge, the **first ever truck-based overland company** to devise, market, sell and operate a trip along this route, and the **first ever** company to take an overland truck-based trip through both **Guinea Bissau** and **Sierra Leone**. We're pleased to say it was a huge success!

The first two weeks of the trip will be pretty easy-going, with relatively short drive days on reasonable roads - but once we cross the border from **Guinea Bissau** into **Guinea**, the tarmac ends for a while as we go off-road for some fun driving in the Guinean highlands!

Though the Chinese have begun to grade and pave some of this road, they are still some way from completion and driving through the Guinean highlands could get pretty interesting i.e. muddy if the rainy season is still in swing or bumpy if the road has dried out! It will be a challenging drive for short stretches but you'll be rewarded with some truly incredible scenery. There will be one or two ferry crossings en route, and if bridges are down or damaged we will have to ford rivers.

Be prepared for a true overland adventure along a route rarely travelled!

Week 1: North Senegal & Gambia

The trip starts in the Senegalese capital of **Dakar**. We'll have two nights to explore this cosmopolitan and vibrant city whilst we apply for visas - so plenty of opportunity to wander and visit some of the sights. Absorb yourself in art galleries and markets, enjoy the nightlife or take in some of the troubled history of the slave trade on the **Île de Gorée**.

Leaving the capital we'll make our way towards the border with **Gambia** where we'll take the truck on a ferry across the Gambia River and head west to Tendaba Campement. We'll spend two nights at this tranquil riverside camp with time to relax and the option to take boat trips to spot wildlife in the **Baobolong Wetlands** or a vehicle safari the **Kiang West National Park**. This protected reserve of mangroves boasts an outstanding wealth of bird life, impressive enough to excite even the non-bird watcher! We also hope the village will turn out for a lively evening of dancing and music around the truck.

From Tendaba we then drive west, following the river and stopping for a night at the compound of a Griot family which serves as a school of music. Griots are praise singers, historians, story tellers, entertainers and musicians, whose traditions are passed down between generations. We hope to witness a Kora performance, and have the chance to try our hand at playing a variety of local instruments.

DAKAR TO FREETOWN



From here we'll get back on the road and make our way through Southern Gambia and cross the border into the Casamance region of Southern Senegal.

Week 2: Casamance (Southern Senegal)

This week will be spent overlanding through the **Casamance** region of southern **Senegal**. This part of the country is quite a contrast to the rest of Senegal in terms of the topography and the culture (the people are mainly Jola or 'Diola' and non-Muslim).

In northern Casamance we'll spend a couple of nights in a small village known for its music and drumming. We hope to see a traditional Koumpo dance and also a Djembe troupe performance. Drumming lessons will be available for those that want to learn from the experts, and there will be time to relax on the stunning beach close by. We will also visit a nearby coastal town, famous for its enormous fish market and smoke houses, which makes for an incredible sight!

We will obtain visas for later on in the trip in the laid-back regional capital of **Ziguinchor**, where we'll have a free afternoon to look around the **colourful market** and kick back amongst the **old colonial architecture**.

We then head west through the southern Casamance, spending best part of a week staying at various campements, all situated in the most beautiful parts of this beautiful region.

This part of the trip will be pretty relaxed with relatively short drive days, with the chance to stop along the way to take photos of this stunning part of Senegal.

There will be a number of different options to explore, including:

- Pirogue rides along the creeks and mangroves looking for the rich variety of birdlife that the area is famed for
- Climb above the forest canopy on rope ladders for incredible views of the Casamance
- Boat rides to small islands
- Walks in the rice fields and forests
- Bike rides around the pistes and traditional villages of the estuary
- Visit markets where artisans are selling their arts and crafts
- Take a fishing trip - and maybe bring back some fish for dinner!

Or you can simply relax on the beach, watch the fishermen bringing in their catch and mending their nets, wander into nearby villages to observe artisans at work, or maybe call in at the bar for a glass of the local brew!

DAKAR TO FREETOWN



This part of Senegal has seen a large slump in tourism since the troubles of the late 1980's and 1990's, so the local people are most welcoming to travellers that venture this way.

Week 3: Guinea Bissau & Fouta Djalon

Guinea-Bissau has experience a turbulent past, but in recent years relative stability has returned and the number of travellers visiting this little known country is growing. Whilst lacking the quantity of 'attractions' that neighbouring countries can boast of, **Guinea-Bissau** will charm you with its **off the beaten track** feel and welcoming people.

We'll spend just a few days traversing the country stopping off in the capital **Bissau** where you'll have a chance to explore. **Bissau Velho**, the old Portuguese **colonial centre** of Bissau, is noted for its **pastel-coloured** buildings and backstreet cafes. The **fishing port** at dawn is an incredible sight as the boats launch into the **Atlantic** and return with their catch at sunset, a must see! You can take the opportunity to enjoy some of the luxuries on offer before the journey ahead, and haggle for some of the wooden products on offer in the artisan's market.

Leaving Bissau we'll drive east towards the Guinean border, spending the night at **Saltinho Waterfalls** en route. Here we will stay at a campement with stunning views over the falls close by!

Once we cross the border into **Guinea** the roads will start to get more challenging. We will be driving though the Guinean highlands between Koundara and Labe, bringing us into a region known as the **Fouta Djalon**. This area is considered one of the most beautiful in the whole of West Africa. The drive can be rough at times but there are plenty of small rivers en route where we can stop to wash away the mud and dust!

Week 4: Fouta Djalon & Sierra Leone

Guinea is building a stable future following a volatile transition period after the lengthy Presidencies of Sekou Toure and Lansana Conte. Even now with the countries first elected President (Alpha Conde), Guinea seldom makes it onto the 'traditional' overland route through West Africa, and for the most part remains unspoiled.

Most of our time in Guinea on this trip is focussed upon an area known as the **Fouta Djalon**. Here we'll spend around a week traversing this **stunning region** in the highlands, considered the traditional land of the **Fula** people. The highland climate here is cooler than the rest of the country, making it ideal for walking and hiking.

DAKAR TO FREETOWN



Basing ourselves between a number of different towns over the course of the week, we'll have plenty of time to take in the wonders this beautiful region is famous for. Highlights include:

- Great trekking with stunning scenery: canyons, escarpments, waterfalls and mountains
- Visit small villages to watch local people ply their trades and see the Fula people in traditional dress
- Cool off under pristine waterfalls and swim in beautiful lakes
- 2 nights in a Fula village in the surrounding mountains, a perfect base for some awesome trekking or a relaxing time exploring the village!

The roads off the main 'highway' are often impassable for a truck of Aminah's size - so a mixture of hiking and taxi rides are the best way to travel around the area whilst we base ourselves at camp in one of the towns.

With so many different options available over the week, we'll leave it up to you to decide what you want to do. Paying entrances to waterfalls, any necessary guides, or getting a taxi to local areas of interest will be at your own cost - but don't worry, the costs are relatively small. The exception is during our 2 night stay in a traditional Fula village, where the English-speaking guide who we stay with will take us on a variety of optional treks, while his wife cooks us great local food. This is included in the kitty price.

All trekking options are relatively easy, varying from one or two hours up to a full day. The choice is yours!

From the **Fouta Djallon** we'll descend towards Mamou and head southwest towards the **Sierra Leone** border via Kindia. If you're not too tired from trekking in the Fouta Djallon, and time permitting, a few hours could be spared to climb up to the top of Mount Gangan for a wonderful panoramic view of Kindia and the surrounding countryside.

Next we say au revoir to French speaking Guinea and hello to English speaking Sierra Leone (or *kusheh-o* in Krio). Expect a long couple of days travelling as we get back on the road and head towards **Freetown**, crossing a busy border with some of the most inquisitive officials on the whole trip!

Our last day will see us drive into Freetown. If you're leaving the trip here you should spend some time to look around and soak up the atmosphere in Sierra Leone's dazzling capital city. You could take a speedboat to **Banana Island** with its breath-taking views of the coastline, visit the [Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary](#) and/or **Charlotte Falls**, or simply beach hop along the peninsula. When

DAKAR TO FREETOWN



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.

Please Note: This trip can be combined with our [Freetown to Accra](#) and/or our [Accra to Ouagadougou](#) trips to make the ultimate **West Africa Overland** adventure!

