

FREETOWN TO ACCRA



An epic 35 day trip between Freetown, Sierra Leone and Accra, Ghana. Experience the best of West African culture, music & dance ceremonies, vine bridges, wildlife, pristine beaches and traditional architecture on this off the beaten track adventure!

Trip: Freetown to Accra (FTN-ACC)

Start Date: 30 November 2020 (at 09:00 am)

Finish Date: 04 January 2021 (at 08:00 am)

Joining Instructions: Meet at 09:00 am on 30 November 2020

NB: All trip itineraries are subject to change!

Summary & Key Highlights

- Visit to **Tiwai Island Wildlife Sanctuary**, home to the rare and elusive pygmy hippo
- Witness a **stilt dancer** in action at a beautiful traditional village in **Ivory Coast**
- Free time for trekking in the beautiful **Mount Nimba** nature reserve in **Liberia**
- Visit the **slave forts** along the Ghanaian coastline
- Trek to see **wild chimpanzees** in Guinea Forestiere (optional extra)
- Hike to a **vine bridge** in Guinea Forestiere - walking on it is at your own discretion!
- Camp at the beautiful **Kpatawee waterfalls** in northern Liberia
- Visit the surreal capital of Ivory Coast - **Yamoussoukro** - and marvel at the basilica!
- Overnight in a village in eastern **Sierra Leone** learning about the peoples culture, traditions and everyday life, topped off with story telling from the village elders and music and dance performances!
- Soak up the beaches, nightlife and music of **Freetown**, the buzzing atmospheric capital of 'Sweet Salone'!
- Free time for optional visits to **Tacaguma Chimpanzee Sanctuary, Charlotte Falls** or **Banana Island** whilst in Freetown
- Explore the crumbling grandeur of **Monrovia**
- Marvel at the modern architecture, skyline and museums of Abidjan, and party until dawn to **coupé-décalé** or Ivorian reggae!
- See artisans at work and wander amongst the colonial buildings in **Grand Bassam**
- Learn about the rain-forest ecosystem in **Ankassa National Park**, Ghana
- Walk high above the rain forest on the walkways at **Kakum National Park**, Ghana
- Explore the **Ashanti** stronghold of Kumasi, Ghana and the vast Kejeita market.
- Visit the world famous **coffin makers** in Accra, Ghana

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Challenges: Is This Trip For Me?

This unique trip is one of our most exciting – and we're proud to be the first overland truck-based company to take groups into Sierra Leone in 2012 and Liberia in 2013!

This is truly off the beaten track overlanding – travelling through a stunning part of West Africa few others get to see. This trip will therefore, at times, 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 at times 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. **At times 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!

Delays at borders and checkpoints are commonplace. It can be tiresome but also quite comical sometimes – you just have to play the game!

The Itinerary: A Weekly Summary

Week 1: Sierra Leone

We start this leg of our journey in Freetown, where you'll have time to look around and soak up the atmosphere in Sierra Leone's capital. You could take a speedboat to **Banana Island** with its breathtaking views of the coastline, visit **Charlotte Falls** and/or the [Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary](#), or simply beach hop along the peninsula. When the sun goes down Freetowners like to party - so if that's your thing you'll find plenty of beach bars and nightclubs to dance in until dawn!

From Freetown we'll head east towards **Bo** and onto [Tiwai Island Wildlife Sanctuary](#). This beautiful reserve is home to 11 species of primates as well as the rare and elusive pygmy hippo. Here you can explore the island by foot, motor boat or dugout canoe, enjoying the river and forest wildlife whilst searching for signs of the secretive and highly elusive pygmy hippo!

Nearby we'll have the chance to cool off in the river, take fishing trips, learn about local customs and agriculture, and visit a neighbouring community for a music and dance performance.

Leaving Tiwai Island behind we'll spend some time in **Kenema**, a town made famous by the diamond dealing trade. The tar runs out here as we head south on some of the most challenging roads on the entire trip as we journey south towards the border with Liberia. **It will be slow going at times, and pretty muddy if it's been raining - so this is where the true spirit of overlanding kicks in as we all need to pull together to get Aminah (our truck) through on the challenging roads!**

Weeks 2 & 3: Liberia & The Forest Region of Guinea

The roads from the east of **Sierra Leone** to the border with **Liberia** are in a poor state (though they are working on it in places), so our progress will be slow going at times as we begin the second week of the trip. It's a beautiful drive through the jungle as we travel through a part of West Africa few other travellers get to see. As we cross into Liberia the road improves for the journey into the capital, **Monrovia**.

We will spend time in and around Monrovia as we apply for visas for later on in the trip. Despite being in a varying state of repair after so many years of upheaval, the city is very much moving on and building for the future. The people in Monrovia are particularly welcoming and always curious and pleased to see tourists coming to their city! Here you can marvel at what remains of the **Masonic Lodge**, the crumbling and abandoned **Ducor Hotel**, as well as other reminders of Monrovia's most intriguing history.

Whilst we wait for visas we will stay at an Eco-Lodge along the coast. Here you will have the chance to enjoy the beaches and recharge after the challenging drive in from Sierra Leone!

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With visas in hand we'll head north towards **Gbarnga** before continuing on to the border with **Guinea**. This is a totally **flexible** part of the trip and we will take it as it comes! The roads are in a varying state of repair and could slow us down, so we have built spare days into the itinerary 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 walking up the river to see a number of falls rising up the hillside.

In the **Nimba** region we'll spend some time in the nature reserve where we'll have some free time for trekking. Basing ourselves close to an abandoned mine, the views of the surrounding area are absolutely stunning, forming the perfect backdrop as a camp site!

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

We intentionally keep this part of the itinerary vague due to the nature of the area we will be travelling through. Northern Liberia and the forest region of Guinea are relatively remote, and receive far fewer visitors than other parts of the region. It's definitely one of the most naturally beautiful parts of West Africa, but ultimately a challenging one due to varied road conditions and limited tourist infrastructure.

As a very rough guide, we hope to do some or all of the following during our time in the forest region of Guinea:

- Hike to an incredible vine bridge - walking on it is at your own discretion!
- Optional trekking to visit the wild chimpanzees the area is famous for
- Overland towards the Ivory Coast border taking in the views of Mount Nimba
- Explore the markets of Nzerekore and perhaps look around the Musee Ethnographique, home to a selection of masks and fetishes.

To reiterate and impress upon you: this section of the trip is totally flexible and nothing is set in stone, though our aim is to have journeyed from the forest region of Guinea to the west of Ivory Coast by the end of week 3.

Week 4: Ivory Coast

We plan to cross from **Guinea** into **Ivory Coast** close to the Liberian border, and head east towards **Yamoussoukro**. On our way we'll spend the night in a traditional village where we'll get to witness an evening of dancing and festivities. This village is in a wonderful setting with some of the friendliest people we'll meet on the entire trip. With luck the traditional dance will include a **stilt dancer**

After hopefully having witnessed a stilt dance ceremony (see the video close to the top of this page), we head east to one of Africa's anomalies - **Yamoussoukro**. The capital of Ivory Coast in name alone, Yamoussoukro was the hometown of long serving post-

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independence **President Felix Houphouet-Boigny**, who spent huge amounts of money to make it the new spectacular capital.

During our time here we'll have the chance to look around and marvel at the **Basilique de Notre Dame de la Paix**, as well as the grand hotel with sweeping panoramic views over the cities dramatic skyline.

Despite such a low percentage of the population actually being Catholic, the President spent hundreds of millions of dollars on a grand Basilica, almost an exact replica of **St Peter's in Rome!** The town itself also boasts 6 lane highways that lead nowhere, grand hotels and various monuments, but all in a relatively small settlement of approximately just under 300,000 people. **A surreal place that has to be seen to be believed!**

On our Freetown to Accra trip we make a donation to an NGO called **C.R.E.E.R** (Centre de Reinsertion et d'Education pour les Enfants de la Rue), based in the town of Abengourou not far from the border with Ghana. This project has been set up to help trafficked children who have been forced to work in the cocoa plantations, gold mines and domestic service. The project is currently in the process of constructing their new premises, a hugely exciting time for all involved, and we hope we can make a positive contribution to such a worthy cause. We will make a financial donation to the project as well as bringing various supplies out from the UK/France on the truck.

Next we head south to Ivory Coast's bustling economic capital, **Abidjan**, with its stunning skyline and modern architecture, which may come as quite a shock after our journey through more remote areas over the past few weeks! In 'Babi' are some interesting buildings and museums to visit as well as the chance to stock up on luxuries. Abidjan really comes to life at night, and we will, **depending on how we do for time**, spend a night here to sample some of the great local music, including Ivorian reggae and **coupé-décalé**.

From the capital a short drive east brings us to **Grand Bassam**, the former French colonial capital in Ivory Coast. This sleepy town feels a world away from the hustle and bustle of Abidjan, where you can wander around the grand old colonial buildings, visit local artisans at work or simply kick back and relax on the golden sand beach.

Week 5: Ghana

A full day's drive and a border crossing sees us leave French speaking Cote d'Ivoire for a chance to speak English again in Ghana. Our first stop, **Ankassa National Park**, boasts the greatest biodiversity of any reserve in Ghana with over 800 plant species, 190 bird species and 70 resident mammal species. We'll have a chance to go walking amongst the dense rain forest here on the lookout for some of the elusive wildlife that call this reserve home.

Heading further east along the coast we'll visit St George's castle at Elmina. Originally built by the Portuguese as a trading post, it later turned into a holding fort ready to ship slaves across the Atlantic. A beautiful place yet one with such a tragic history. We'll also have a chance to wander around the bustling fish market below the castle.

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During our time along the coastline of Ghana we'll stay at a beautiful sandy palm tree lined beach, just set back from the sea - a truly wonderful spot to unwind!

From here we'll visit Cape Coast castle, once the residence of the British governor until Accra became the capital of Ghana. Again, the beautiful setting of such an impressive building pales into insignificance when you learn about the suffering that went on within the walls during the time of the slave trade.

Next stop is **Kakum National Park**, where we'll get to walk on the famous canopy walkways above the rain forest and the opportunity to see some of the elusive wildlife within the reserve.

A full day's drive takes us north to the Ashanti stronghold of Kumasi, where we'll spend two nights, offering you a chance to do any of the following:

- 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**

The trip finishes after a final days drive into the Ghanaian capital of Accra. It's well worth visiting the coffin makers just outside of the city, where the workers 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!

If time permits, it's worth joining a tour of Accra with the excellent local guide **Charles Sablah**. The impoverished suburb of Nima in Accra is his base and where he started his walking tours a few years ago, offering a chance to visit the kind of places that most other tourists miss out on.

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