

ACCRA TO ACCRA



A 28 day trip that starts and finishes in Accra, Ghana. 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 Accra (ACC-ACC)

Start Date: 03 January 2022 (at 09:00 am)

Finish Date: 31 January 2022 (at 08:00 am)

Joining Instructions: Meet at 09:00 am on 03 January 2022

NB: All trip itineraries are subject to change!

Summary & Key Highlights

- Spend time in northern Benin visiting the unique two-storey fortified houses of the **Tata Somba** people
- Spot wildlife on guided walking safaris in **Mole National Park** in northern Ghana
- Kick back on the beach at **Grand Popo**, go looking for **turtles** or witness an impressive **voodoo ceremony**
- Take a tour of the **Taberma Valley** in Togo, a UNESCO world heritage site
- Spend time around Lake Volta with options to visit **Wli waterfalls**, the **Akosombo dam**, **Ote waterfalls**, climb **Mt Gemi**, see **Kente cloth** weavers ply their trade, or visit a sacred monkey sanctuary
- Visit numerous sites and artifacts dedicated to **Voodoo** in **Ouidah**, Benin, and learn about the tragic history of the transatlantic slave trade
- Visit the famous bustling stilt village at **Ganvie, Benin**
- 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
- Free time to hike around Mount Klouto in Togo, home to an impressive array of butterflies and where we'll enjoy an evening of music and dance
- Learn about the history of the Dahomey Kingdom and see artisans smelting bronze figurines in Abomey
- Explore the Ashanti stronghold of Kumasi and Kejeita Market, one of the biggest in West Africa
- Overnight at Kintampo waterfalls in Ghana

Challenges: Is This Trip For Me?

Ghana, Togo and Benin 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's still a more challenging area to travel in than other more 'touristy' parts of the continent, especially in the north of these three countries. Therefore we strongly advise you to read our [What to Expect](#) page before booking this trip.

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 if we decide to visit a new place (i.e. finding somewhere to camp or sourcing a guide to show us around).



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.

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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 towards the stunning **Lake Volta region**, where we'll spend the rest of this first week of the trip. Arguably the most picturesque part of Ghana, we'll travel short distances over the next 4 or 5 days along the south eastern edge of the lake, basing ourselves between **Aylos Bay, Rootsyard, Amedzofe** and **Wli**.

We'll leave it up to you to decide what you want to do on these days, but some highlights include the chance to climb **Mount Gemi**, trek to both **Wli Waterfalls** and **Ote Waterfalls**, visit a sacred **monkey sanctuary**, take a tour of the **Akosombo dam**, visit a **drumming workshop**, watch **Kente cloth weavers** at work or simply kick back and relax taking in the views of Lake Volta.

From Ghana we'll drive east and cross into **Togo**, the second country on this trip, and make for the town of **Kpalime** nestled in the mountains near the Ghanaian border.

Week 2: Togo Into Benin

Once over the border into Togo 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 the Togolese capital of Lome. **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!

From the capital we make for the border town of Hilla Condji on the coast between Togo and Benin, the main crossing between the two countries which can be very busy, so expect to spend a few hours completing formalities.

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Once over the border 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 processed on the Mono River, or visit **Bouche du Roi**, a beautiful spot where the river meets the ocean.

During our time here we hope to be able to witness 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.

Depending on how we do for time, we may visit **Cotonou**, the capital of Benin in everything but name (the official title goes to **Porto Novo**). If possible we'll spend a few hours in the city 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 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

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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: Into 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 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 some free time in the town 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.

Stopping en route for a bush camp, we continue north from Abomey to **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.

Crossing back into Togo 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 **Batammariba** people in Togo. The Batammariba live in mud 'tower-houses' known as '**Takienta**', which make for an impressive sight against the surrounding landscape.

Week 4: Togo Into Ghana

Once over the border and back into Ghana we'll head west, making for the northern city of Tamale where we'll do some shopping for supplies, before continuing to the beautiful **Mole National Park**. 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.

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Leaving the park we'll stop at the famous **adobe mosque** at **Larabanga**, built in a West Sudanese style similar to those found in parts of Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso and Ivory Coast. Picking up the main highway south we'll spend the night at the enchanting **Kintampo falls** for the chance to have a refreshing swim to cool off.

The journey continues south to the **Ashanti** stronghold of **Kumasi** where there are a number of things to see and do, including:

- 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. If you have the time 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 [Freetown to Accra](#) trip to make the ultimate **West Africa Overland Adventure!**