

# 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:** Dakar to Freetown (DKR-FTN)

**Start Date:** 06 November 2023 (at 09:00 am)

**Finish Date:** 04 December 2023 (at 08:00 am)

**Joining Instructions:** Meet at 09:00am on 06 November 2023

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

## Summary & Key Highlights

- Spend a week traversing Guinea's **Fouta Djallon** region taking in the stunning scenery. Trek amongst forested ravines and escarpments, below pristine waterfalls and visit traditional Fula villages in what is arguably the 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 Casamance region of Senegal.
- Absorb yourself in the old colonial port city of **Bissau** and experience the arts and handicrafts scene
- Camp on the banks of the **River Gambia**, take boat trips to spot wildlife in the **Baobolong Wetlands** and/or the **Kiang West National Park**, and watch a Gambian Griot give a Kora performance (subject to availability). 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 rapids/waterfalls in Guinea Bissau** en route for the border with Guinea
- Spend an hour or so at **Lac Rose in Senegal** to see the salt collectors hard at work
- Spend a week overlanding through the beautiful **Casamance region of Senegal**. Take a boat trip to **L'île de Carabane**, join the locals on a fishing trip, or walk to small villages around 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'

## 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**

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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 in Senegal and Gambia will be pretty easy-going, with *relatively* short drive days on reasonable roads. 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! It will be a challenging drive for short stretches but you'll be rewarded with some truly incredible scenery. If any of the bridges are down or damaged we will have to ford rivers, so be prepared for a true overland adventure along a route few other travellers get to experience!



## Week 1: Northern 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. Starting in the Senegalese capital of Dakar, we'll have two nights to explore this cosmopolitan and vibrant city, so plenty of opportunity to explore and visit some of the sights. Absorb yourself in art galleries and markets, visit the recently opened Massalikul Jinaan mosque, experience the nightlife, visit the African Renaissance monument for sunset or take in some of the troubled history of the slave trade on the beautiful UNESCO listed Île de Gorée.

Leaving the capital we'll drive the short distance to **Lac Rose** (or Lake Retba). Famous for its pink waters caused by *Dunaliella salina* algae, it's also known for its high salt content, which numerous people dredge by hand from the bottom of the lake every day. Depending on how the group feel we'll either spend the day here to relax, take

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quad bikes out into the sand dunes or a boat trip onto the lake - or we'll continue to Popenguine on the coast for the rest of the day. We'll take it as it comes!

Continuing south east here we'll cross the border close to Farafenni and over the river Gambia (either by ferry or the new bridge), 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 in 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! With some luck the village may turn out for a lively evening of dancing and music around the truck (see the video below).

From Tendaba we'll drive west, following the river Gambia and stopping for a night at either **Bintang Bolong Lodge** (on the Bintang Bolon river) or **Marakissa Rivercamp** (on the River Allahein), where there'll be options for more boat trips and wildlife watching - or to simply kick back and take in the beautiful surroundings.

From here we'll make our way to the border with southern Senegal and cross into the Casamance region.

## Week 2: Casamance (Southern Senegal)

This week will be spent overlanding through the **Casamance** region, a part of Senegal that is quite a contrast to the rest of the country 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 should 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 try and 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 some free time to look around the colourful market and explore the streets with some old colonial architecture.

The next few days will be pretty relaxed with relatively short drive days, as we head to **Elinkine** and the **Cap Skirring** area, 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 river looking for the rich variety of birdlife
- Boat ride to l'ile de Carabane
- Walks to surrounding villages to see the fish smoking houses
- Visit markets where artisans are selling their arts and crafts
- Take a fishing trip - and maybe bring back some fish for dinner!

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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!

Tourists have slowly been returning to this part of Senegal since the troubles that deterred visitors in the late 1980's/90's - so the local people are most welcoming to visitors that do venture this way.

## Week 3: Guinea Bissau & Guinea's Fouta Djallon

Guinea-Bissau has experienced 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 (in places). We will be driving through the Guinean highlands between Koundara and Labe, bringing us into a region known as the **Fouta Djallon**. This area is considered one of the most beautiful in the whole of West Africa. The drive can be rough going at times but the spectacular scenery more than makes up for it!

## Week 4: Fouta Djallon & Sierra Leone

Almost all of our time in Guinea (on this particular trip) is focussed upon an area known as the **Fouta Djallon**. 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.

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:

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- Great trekking with stunning scenery: canyons, escarpments, waterfalls and mountains
- Cool off under pristine waterfalls and swim in beautiful lakes
- Visit small villages and markets to watch local people ply their trades and see the Fula people in traditional dress
- 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 expense - but don't worry, the costs are relatively small. The exception is during our two 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 - so there should be something for everybody. The choice is yours!**

From the **Fouta Djallon** we'll start our descent from the highlands towards Mamou, and turn southwest towards the **Sierra Leone** border via Kindia and Coyah, where we'll stay in a pretty campsite by the river.

Saying au revoir to French speaking Guinea and hello to English speaking Sierra Leone (or *kusheh-o* in Krio), expect a long day of travelling as we 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 breathtaking views of the coastline, visit the [Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary](#) and/or **Charlotte Falls**, 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 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 Accra](#) trips to make the ultimate **West Africa Overland** adventure!