

# FREETOWN TO DAKAR



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

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

**Start Date:** 08 April 2024 (at 09:00 am)

**Finish Date:** 06 May 2024 (at 08:00 am)

**Joining Instructions:** Meet at 09:00am on 08 April 2024

**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 the stunning beaches dotted along the Freetown peninsula
- Overnight at the beautiful Saltinho rapids/waterfalls in Guinea Bissau en route for the border with Guinea
- Time permitting stop off at Lac Rose in Senegal to see the salt collectors
- Spend a week overlanding through the 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'

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## 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 few days of the trip will be spent in the more developed parts of Sierra Leone and Guinea as we journey close to the Atlantic coastline between Freetown and Conakry. Stopping en route you'll get to experience the 'assault on the senses' that West Africa is so famous for.

Once we leave Labe and head towards the border with Guinea Bissau 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!

The last two weeks of the trip will be pretty easy-going, with relatively short drive days on reasonable roads. We will have quite a relaxing paced itinerary with time to relax as we journey through the Casamance region of Senegal and into Gambia.



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## Weeks 1-2: Freetown & The Fouta Djallon (Guinea)

After meeting the group in **Freetown** you'll have time to explore this fascinating city. Most people like to visit the beautiful beach-lined peninsula just a short drive from where we base ourselves, one of which was the setting for the '**Bounty: A Taste of Paradise**' adverts in the 1980's. We're sure you'll agree with that sentiment too!

You could also take a speedboat across to **Banana Island** with its breath-taking views of the coastline, visit [Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary](#) and/or **Charlotte Falls**.

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.

Heading out of Freetown we say goodbye to English speaking Sierra Leone and bonjour to French speaking Guinea. Expect a long day of travelling as we head towards a town just outside of Conakry for the night.

We'll spend two nights in a town just outside of Conakry at a beautiful campement set amongst the foothills leading to the Fouta Djallon. We base ourselves here to enable us to get visas for later on in the trip.

From the Conakry area we head north towards Mamou via Kindia, climbing into the Guinean highlands and a stunningly beautiful part of Guinea known as the **Fouta Djallon**.

We will spend best part of a week traversing the Fouta Djallon, the traditional lands of the Fula people of Guinea. The highland climate here is cooler than the rest of the country and 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:**

- 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 cost – but don't worry, the costs are relatively small. The exception is during our 2 night stay in a traditional Fula

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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!**

## **Week 3: Guinea Bissau & Casamance (Southern Senegal)**

Heading north west from the Fouta Djallon towards **Guinea Bissau**, the roads will start to get more challenging in places as we drive through the Guinean highlands between Labe and Koundara. We'll bush camp on the way, stop to shop in local markets and fill up Aminah's water tank and take in the **stunning scenery** that this part of West Africa is so famous for.

Guinea Bissau has had 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 spend just a few days traversing the country. Once into Guinea Bissau we will spend a night at the beautiful **Saltinho Waterfalls** near Mampata to wash away the dust from the roads. Here we'll camp in the grounds of a beautiful posada offering stunning views over the falls. With luck you will get the chance to see the fishermen casting their nets into the rapids and women doing their laundry amongst the rocks!

From here we'll head west to the capital **Bissau** where you'll have a chance to explore one of Africa's most relaxed capital cities! **Bissau Velho**, the old Portuguese colonial centre of Bissau, is noted for its faded 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 see the great range of wooden products on offer in the artisan's market.

## **Week 4: Gambia & Senegal**

Leaving Bissau we'll drive north into the southern part of Senegal known as the **Casamance**. This southern part of the country is quite a contrast to the rest of Senegal - both topographically and culturally speaking (the people are mainly Jola or 'Diola' and non-Muslim). 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.

This section of the trip will be pretty relaxed. Most drive days will be relatively short, with chances to stop along the way to take photos of this stunning part of Senegal. We will spend best part of a week staying at various campements all situated in the most beautiful parts of this region.

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There will be a number of different options for things to do, including:

- Pirogue rides along the river looking for the rich variety of birdlife
- Boat ride to l'île 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!

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!

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

From Casamance we continue north into **Gambia**. Once across the border we will stop for the night at either **Bintang Bolong Lodge** (on the Bintang Bolon river) or **Marakissa Rivercamp** (on the River Allahein), where there'll be options for boat trips and wildlife watching – or to simply kick back and take in the beautiful surroundings.

Our journey continues as we follow the southern side of the river Gambia and head east to [Tendaba Campement](#). We'll stay two nights at this tranquil riverside camp to relax with the option to take boat trips to spot wildlife in the **Baobolong Wetlands** and the **Kiang West National Park**. This protected reserve of mangroves boasts an outstanding wealth of birdlife, 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.

Here's a short video of our Freetown to Dakar trip at Tendaba as the village join us all for an evening of dancing and music!

Heading north we'll take the ferry or drive on the impressive new bridge over the river Gambia to the town of Farafenni, where we'll cross the border into the northern part of Senegal. Making for the capital **Dakar**, we'll have to break the journey with a bush camp en route. Time permitting we'll stop at Lac Rose, which is 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. If we can squeeze in a stop here you can take quad bikes out into the sand dunes or a boat trip onto the lake.

All being well we should arrive into Dakar in time for the chance to explore this cosmopolitan and vibrant city. Take the opportunity to wander and visit some of the sights. Absorb yourself in art galleries and markets, enjoy the nightlife, visit the famous 'African Renaissance Monument', or take in some of the troubled history of the slave trade on the **Île de Gorée** as we end our trip from Sierra Leone to Senegal!

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

