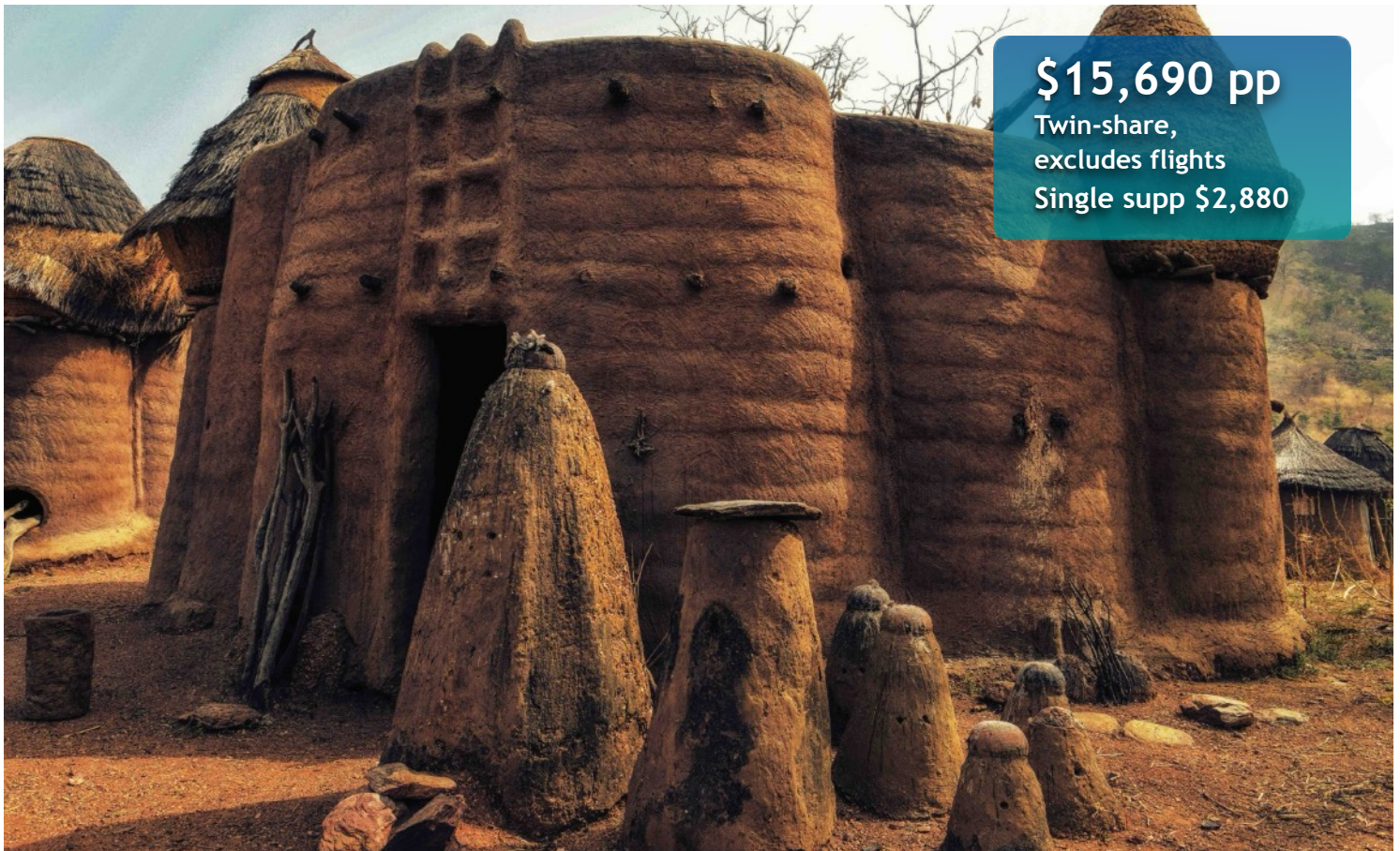


West Africa Ghana, Togo, Benin, and Senegal

Departs 3rd
November 2024

Blue Dot Travel





\$15,690 pp

Twin-share,
excludes flights

Single supp \$2,880

WEST AFRICA — GHANA, TOGO, BENIN AND SENEGAL

The Republic of Ghana is an economic success and the most politically stable country in the region. It was the first Sub-Saharan country to gain independence from a European power when it separated from Britain in 1957, and UNESCO-listed buildings from this period still remain. About the same size as Victoria, the population of Ghana is around 23 million. There are more than 100 different languages spoken. However, luckily for us, English is the official language and most widely used. The capital city, Accra, sits on the South Atlantic Ocean and is a mix of modern glass and steel facades, with sleepy villages on the outskirts.

Togo is a tiny country, smaller than Tasmania, with a population of around 6 million. The capital Lome, sitting on the coast, has almost 20% of those. Togoland was originally part of Ghana however the Germans colonised it in the late 1800s. In the 1920s “the League of Nations partitioned this region between France and U.K/Britain, with France taking over what is now called Togo. Despite its colonial history, ancient traditions remain, making it a fascinating melting pot of cultures. Bordering Togo to the East is Benin, also located on the Guinea Gulf. It used to be known as the Kingdom of Dahomey up until the late 1800s.

The French colonised Benin in the early 1900s; however, it became independent in 1960. Benin is the ideal travel destination, with its world heritage-listed mini-fortified castles and its interesting history of Voodoo. Senegal is a land of contrast and one of the West’s culturally diverse countries. Its combination of African and French cultures provides a mix of sophistication and rawness. Its slave past is evident, with many monuments dotting the nation. The locals love their music, which is evident with bars on nearly every corner of the capital Dakar. If you’re a birdwatcher, it happens to be one of Africa’s best places to visit, as it sits on the migration path between Africa and Europe.

This fascinating itinerary offers diverse countries which represent the best West Africa has to offer. So grab your camera and your sense of adventure!



Departure - Sunday 3rd November
AUSTRALIA

Depart Sydney or Melbourne for your flight to Accra, the capital city of Ghana (all flights to be confirmed).

Day 1, Monday 4th November
ARRIVE ACCRA

Welcome to Ghana

Akwaaba (Welcome) to Ghana! On arrival at Kotoka International Airport, we'll meet our guide and transfer to the hotel. Once checked in, we'll be briefed on what to expect during our stay in Ghana. Celebrate the start of the journey with a welcome dinner. Accommodation for two nights is at the Labadi Beach Hotel (or similar). *D*

Day 2, Tuesday 5th November
ACCRA

Our first full day in Accra will be immersed in the history and day-to-day life of the local people of Accra. The local Ga Tribes were the original custodians of the current modernised city of Accra, and our first visit takes us to Jamestown, one of Accra's most historic neighbourhoods. Visit the

lighthouse, where we will have a panoramic view of the Jamestown fishing community. We'll continue to Makola Market, the biggest open market in Accra and a fascinating reflection of Ghanaian culture. Take in this important trading hub's frenetic mix of sights and smells.

Then, visit the newly renovated Kwame Nkrumah Memorial Park, celebrating the first president's life. Our day tour ends at the La Township, where we learn about the uniquely designed special caskets in the Teshie Nungua area, which reflect the beliefs of the people in life after death. Overnight at Labadi Beach Hotel. *B/D*



Day 3, Wednesday 6th November
ACCRA — CAPE COAST — ELMINA

Today, we depart for the coastal lands of Ghana - Elmina and Cape Coast, approximately 150km). En route, explore the old quarter (Mankessim) with its unique Posuban shrines, made by the traditional 'Asafo' societies once responsible for local defence. Upon arrival in Elmina, we will visit Elmina Castle

(also known as St. George's Castle), built by the Portuguese in 1482. The castle was the first European structure built in Sub-Saharan Africa and is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. In the afternoon, enjoy the sights of the many colourful fishing boats bringing their daily catch into the harbour and take the opportunity to mix with the locals. A short distance from the market, we'll visit the boat builders, still building colourful fishing boats using traditional tools and methods spanning centuries. You'll have time to stroll through the markets. Accommodation for two nights is at the Ridge Royal Hotel, Elmina (or similar). *B/D*

Day 4, Thursday 7th November ELMINA — CAPE COAST

After breakfast, we will head to the fish markets to walk amongst the locals to see their catch and watch them bargain. It's loud, colourful and chaotic but not to be missed! Then, we will visit Cape Coast Castle, a UNESCO world heritage site. The castle is a thought-provoking monument to a harrowing period in the region's history. You will take an emotional journey through the castle, which held more enslaved Africans than any other in the region. A significant history museum is inside, explaining the castle's heritage and Cape Coast. Stop off next door for refreshments, coffee, or some souvenirs before returning to the hotel for some downtime before dinner. *B/D*

Day 5, Friday 8th November ELMINA — ASSIN MANSO — KUMASI

After breakfast, drive through the forest zone to Kumasi, the seat of the Ashanti Empire, to explore the legends of the famous Ashantis, whose legacies are still evident today, with a stop at Assin Manso. We'll visit the "Donkor Nsuo" site, the



former Slave River and market and the final transit point for many enslaved Africans. Kumasi may surprise you, being the most dynamic marketplace in

West Africa and the second-largest city in Ghana, with a population of almost three million. It is a vibrant commercial centre visited by traders from all over. Kumasi has quite a collection of British colonial buildings and is the heart of the Ashanti culture. We will enjoy a drive through the city with monuments dedicated to the memory of the great Ashanti people. End the day at the National Cultural Centre, which features the Prempeh II Jubilee Museum and the studios of brass makers, potters and batik artists. Accommodation for two nights at the Oak Plaza Suites (or similar). *B/D*

Day 6, Saturday 9th November KUMASI AND SURROUNDS

We'll spend the day in and around Kumasi, taking in the Manhyia Palace Museum to obtain first-hand knowledge of the legacies of the Ashanti kingdom. A regal history from 1700 is told with relics and artefacts. We will end our day of exploration by visiting some of the surrounding lush countryside craft villages. We'll see the weaving of the famous Kente cloth, the making of the Adinkra, a type of fabric worn at funerals and prized for its intricate hand-printed symbols, and the work of woodcarvers -- stools, fertility figures, drums, etc. We will also have the opportunity to visit the ancient Ejisu Ashanti Shrine, a World Heritage Site. *B/D*

Day 7, Sunday 10th November KUMASI — KROBO ODUMASE — AKOSOMBO

We'll depart early this morning for a scenic drive to a beautiful village on the splendid Volta River. We will continue visiting a small village called Krobo Odumase to witness the experience of beads made from specially crafted glasses- Cedi Beads Factory. We can design our beads using the traditional Krobo technique. The bead-making craft has a long history in Ghana. Beads have been used in ceremonies of birth, coming of age, marriage, or death for the past 400 years. You will watch and participate in the whole bead-making process from beginning to end. Dinner and overnight at the Royal Senchi Hotel (or similar), where we stay for two nights. *B/D*

Day 8, Monday 11th November AKOSOMBO — TORGOME — AKOSOMBO

After breakfast, we will drive to Torgome to visit the paramount chief and elders amidst traditional drumming and dancing by the villagers. We will also participate in a naming ceremony to be honoured with a traditional African name. We will view a demonstration of pottery making, which is the main occupation of the women in the village, and experience the traditional Kente weaving process. We'll return to the hotel and then take a boat cruise on the Volta River and lake in the afternoon in the Akosombo Gorge. The lake formed with the construction of the hydroelectric dam and is the largest man-made lake in Africa. *B/D*





**Day 9, Tuesday 12th November
AKOSOMBO — LOME**

Today, we'll depart for Lome, following the coast dotted with villages.

Welcome to Togo

Lomé, with an urban population of around 840,000, is Togo's capital and largest city. Located on the Gulf of Guinea and its chief port, Lomé is the country's administrative and industrial centre. The city exports coffee, cocoa, copra, and palm kernels. It also has an oil refinery. The city was founded in the 19th century by German, British, and African traders and became the capital of Togoland in 1897. Upon arrival, we will have a scenic drive of Lome: an ocean drive, market area, public buildings, main boulevards and the new International Museum of the Gulf of Guinea. We'll tour the city, including the Museum of the Gulf of Guinea. Check in to the Hotel Petite Brussels (or similar). Dinner at the hotel. *B/D*



**Day 10,
Wednesday
13th November
LOME —
ATAKPAME —
SOKODE**

Today, we head towards Northern Togo to Sokode,

with a stopover in Davedi village for a typical rural experience. We'll learn about the Bobo, an energetic local dance style performed by the woman. Here. We'll also witness the twin doll ceremony, where two elderly women who still hold on to local "twin culture" traditions will care for their wooden dolls. They will bathe, dress, and feed them according to local tradition. Then, we'll drive to the town of Atakpame, built amongst picturesque hills. The town is synonymous with weaving; you will see brightly coloured fabric everywhere called Kente. On arrival in Sokode, we will be transferred to the hotel for dinner before heading out for a demonstration of the fire dance. See how the local men dance and work themselves into a hypnotic state, touching and even placing burning coals in their mouths without showing any sign of pain. Truly hard to explain! Your hotel is the Hotel Central – very basic - but fine for a one-night stay. *B/D*



**Day 11, Thursday 14th November
SOKODE — KABY MOUNTAINS — KARA**

After breakfast, we will cross into Benin and visit Tata Somba, the home of the Tamberma people straddling the border with Togo. The group will visit a traditional village where each mud house is built as a fortress. You will have time to visit several of these magical and enchanting structures and meet

the Tamberma people, some of whom still wear headgear made from the horns of gazelles. Their miniature fortified castles are UNESCO World Heritage cultural landscape sites, the Koutammakou. You will also see potters who use prehistoric methods and have no ovens but produce ceramic goods covered with straw that are baked. We'll continue towards Kara stopping along the way at village Tchare, a blacksmith community nestled in the valley of Mount Kabye. Check into the basic Hotel Kara (or similar) for one night.

Welcome to Benin

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**Day 12, Friday 15th November
KARA — NOTSE BORDER — ABOMEY**

Today is a long transfer day, with a full day of driving, heading south through Benin (approximately 340 km). Check into the basic but charming Chez Sabine (or similar) at the end of the afternoon. We will stay here for two nights. (There is a possibility that we can locate a voodoo event this evening). *B/D*



**Day 13, Saturday 16th November
ABOMEY**

Our journey today continues in Abomey, the ancient capital of the Dahomey Kingdom. This area used to be known as the "Slave Coast" in history, which was in parallel with the "Ivory Coast" and "Gold Coast". We will visit the intriguing Fetish Temple and meet one of the officiating priests. Hopefully, the villagers will perform a Zangbeto Performance for us also. This is a spectacular part of the voodoo culture. Upon arrival, visit the Royal Palaces of Abomey, a history museum of Abomey, listed as UNESCO World Heritage since 1985. Then proceed to Allada, the birthplace of Toussaint Louverture's parents. Toussaint Louverture is the Haitian Revolution's leader and the greatest man in

Haiti's history. In Allada, a sculpture was built in memory of Toussaint. Return to the hotel for the evening at leisure. Dinner at the hotel. *B/D*

 **Day 14, Sunday 17th November**
ABOMEY — GANVIE — COTONOU

After breakfast, we'll further explore the Abomey-Calavi fetish market, the most authentic in the



region. Then, on to Ganvie, "the African Venice", one of the highlights of any trip to West Africa. In ancient times people took refuge on Lake Nokoue from the

attacks of the feared Dahomey warriors, who were forbidden by a deep belief to fight on water. Over time, the Ganvie people developed this unique lake culture and way of life, making them famous. Our boat cruise takes us along tranquil waterways and fish farms to the lake community of Ganvie. We discover these curious built-on-stilt dwellings, small floating markets and different aspects of local daily life. We'll continue to Cotonou, where we will stay for two nights (approx. 130 km). Our accommodation is at the Golden Tulip Diplomate (or similar). *B/D*

 **Day 15, Monday 18th November**
COTONOU — PORTO NOVO — COTONOU

Following breakfast, we travel the short distance to Porto Novo, the official capital of Benin and the second-largest city. Porto Novo, named by the Portuguese in the 1500s, still shows significant Portuguese influence today. The group will visit the market and the old colonial town with its ancient mosque. The Great Mosque of Porto Novo is a unique and perhaps the most colourful building in West Africa- the 19th-century Brazilian-style church has now been converted into a mosque. We also visit Palais Royal du Roi Toffa. This former



residence of King Toffa is now officially called Musée Home. This well-maintained, rather simple palace is a nice look into how African royalty

really lived. 1883 was the year King Toffa signed the treaty with the French, agreeing to hand over land. The kingdom of Porto Novo was one of the longest-lasting in Africa, lasting up until 1976. After lunch (own cost), we return to Cotonou and enjoy a city tour before returning to the hotel. We will visit the following sites: The 'Esplanade des Amazones',

a public square located which is home to the 'Amazon', a 30-metre high statue built in homage to the world's only all-female army. These Amazons belonged to the Kingdom of Dahomey, a West African empire from 1625 to 1894. The Remembrance Square reveals the splendour and fascinating historical works of the city. We will also visit the Wassangari warrior Bio Guéra statue, demonstrating the bravery with which the warriors fought to stop the colonial invasion. *B/D*

Day 16, Tuesday 19th November
COTONOU — DAKAR — SALY

After breakfast, we will be transferred from our hotel to the airport for the flight to Dakar (flights to be confirmed).

Welcome to Senegal

Upon arrival, we'll drive to Saly (about an hour's drive from the airport), check in at the Hotel Neptune (or similar) where you will stay for three nights. Upon arrival, drive to Saly and check in at the Hotel Royam (or similar). *B/D*

 **Day 17, Wednesday 20th December**
SALY — JOAL FADIOUTH — SALY

After breakfast, visit the oldest baobab tree in West Africa which is believed to be 1500 years old. We then continue to the twin villages of Joal/ Fadiouth, where we will visit the traditional Serere village and observe the cathedral, the marketplace, and the famous multireligious cemetery. Joal Fadiouth is a sleepy twin village with Joal on the mainland, and Fadiouth, linked by a narrow 400-metre wooden bridge, lies on an island built entirely of seashells. We will visit the shell islands of Fadiouth, a symbol of tolerance, where Muslims, Christians and animists are living together and buried side by side in an unusual mixed cemetery. Return to your hotel in the afternoon for downtime. *B/D*

 **Day 18,**
Thursday
21st November
SALY — BANDIA
PARK —
SOMONE — SALY

This morning, drive to Bandia for a short safari. This



reserve is a real ecological jewel in Senegal. It has succeeded in reintroducing much of the marvellous native flora and of some of Africa's best-loved animals: buffalos, antelopes, impala gazelles, monkeys, tortoises and crocodiles in addition to white rhinoceros, kudu, elands, cape moose, giraffes, ostriches, zebras. Stop by the crocodile pool where animals come to drink, and buffalos wallow in the mud. We'll then drive to lunch at one

of the restaurants at “la lagune de Somone” (own cost) before taking a motorised canoe trip amongst the mangroves to admire nature and to spot some river birds. Return to your hotel later in the afternoon. **B/D**



Day 19, Friday 22nd November
SALY – TOUBA – ST. LOUIS

After breakfast, the group will drive to Touba, the holly city. Visit the Grand Mosque, the largest and most magnificent structure in West Africa. You will learn about Cheikh Ahmadou Mbacke, the founder of Mouridism, and the history of Touba, one of the



most significant cities in West Africa. Touba is an autonomous city, much like the Vatican in Italy. Continue on to St. Louis, stopping in Fulani and Wolof

villages along the way. Arrive in the island city of St Louis late in the afternoon. The island is distinguished by its colonial houses with verandas and wrought iron balconies and is one of the tour's highlights. Transfer to the hotel La Residence, where you'll stay for two nights. Freshen up and meet for dinner. **B/D**



Day 20, Saturday 23rd November
ST. LOUIS – DJUODJ NATIONAL PARK – ST. LOUIS

After breakfast, we'll visit the Djoudj National Park (a UNESCO World Heritage site), one of the world's most important bird sanctuaries. This park is a paradise for bird enthusiasts on a major Palearctic migratory route. Some of the world's greatest concentrations of white pelicans and flamingos can be seen here. Enjoy a pirogue ride to better view the many species of cormorants, pelicans, ducks, flamingos, various songbirds and more. You may also see crocodiles, boats and other wildlife. When you return from the sanctuary, you'll complete your city tour of Saint Louis with a guided walk around town. **B/D**



Day 21, Sunday
24th November
ST. LOUIS — PINK LAKE — DAKAR

After breakfast, depart to Dakar, the capital of Senegal. This is a

long day's drive, which will mean you are on the road driving for about 6 hours. En route, a stop at the Pink Lake, a rare natural phenomenon caused

by a unique combination of microorganisms and high concentrations of salts, giving the lake its pink hue. We'll meet the women working harvesting the salt. Next, we will visit the Fulani village and then continue to Dakar to the Djolof Boutique Hotel (or similar), where we will stay for two nights **B/D**



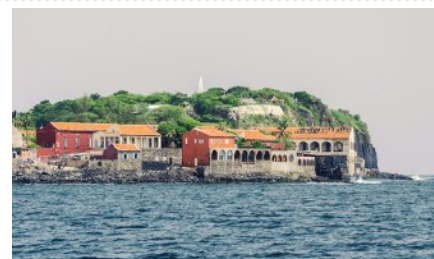
Day 22, Monday 25th November
DAKAR

After breakfast, the group will take a city tour of Dakar and its surroundings. From Independence Place, the city's heart, we will pass the presidential palace and the main cathedral before continuing by the seafront drive towards Soumbédioune market and the Mosque de la Revelation. The tour of Dakar will show you the contrasts between upscale residential areas and popular neighbourhoods. We will also visit popular hotspots such as Kermel or Tilem Market. Next, we'll visit the Renaissance Monument, a 164-foot-high monument overlooking Dakar that is taller than the Statue of Liberty. The once-controversial bronze statue is a popular attraction among locals and visitors. Then, to Africa's most modern museum, the Museum of African Civilisations, a massive four-story complex that fulfilled the dream of Senegal's first president, Leopold Sedar Senghor. Late in the afternoon, we'll drive to the suburb of Almadies, where there are some nice shops and a concept store. You'll then have the chance to walk out to the causeway to see where the small boats cross to Il de Ngor. Tonight, we'll celebrate our tour with a farewell dinner to trace our journey and discuss the highlights. **B/D**



Day 23,
Tuesday
26th November
DAKAR — GOREE — DAKAR

After breakfast, we'll drive to the port and board the ferry for a 20-minute ride to visit the charming yet infamous Goree Island, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Explore the usually quiet streets lined with pastel-coloured colonial-era buildings. Among the most famous buildings is the House of Slaves, which records the history of Goree's past. Grab some lunch at one of the many cafes and restaurants. You'll be back in the afternoon and transferred directly to the airport for your flight home. **B/D**



Day 24, Wednesday 27th November
DAKAR

In transit.

Day 25, Thursday 28th November

Arrive home



Icon indicates a day where there is **moderate physical exertion**. A basic level of fitness is required: eg. A trek over 'mostly flat' terrain or climbing several flights of steps without the support of handrails or elevators.



Icon indicates a day where there is a **particularly active section**. A good level of fitness is required: eg. A longer trek over non-groomed, uneven terrain, or ascending to reach a panorama. May also include exposure to higher altitude. **An alternate activity may be offered if you choose to sit out an active section.** Please call - we are happy to discuss each tour in more detail.