



Rediscover the
meaning of travel

Tour Notes

Senegal and Guinea Bissau Explorer

Tour Duration – 14 Days



Tour Highlights

- ✓ Explore Goree Island and its slave heritage with its 'Point of No Return'
- ✓ Explore the charming old town of Saint Louis
- ✓ Visit the Djoudi National Bird Sanctuary
- ✓ Discover tiny Guinea-Bissau, one of Africa's least visited nations
- ✓ Travel to the stunning Bijagos Archipelago, one of the most traditional regions of the continent

Tour Rating

Fitness ●●●○○ | Off the Beaten Track ●●●●○ | Culture ●●●●● | History ●●●○○ | Wildlife ●●○○○

Tour Pace

Busy





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Tour Map



Tour Essentials

- Accommodation:** Mix of comfortable hotel accommodation with private bathrooms
Included Meals: Daily breakfast (B), plus lunches (L) and dinners (D) as shown in the itinerary
Group Size: Maximum of 12
Start Point: Dakar – you can arrive any time on day 1
End Point: Bissau – you can depart any time on day 14
Transport: Minibus, 4x4 vehicles, international flight from Dakar to Bissau, boat
Countries: Senegal and Guinea-Bissau



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Senegal and Guinea Bissau Explorer

A great opportunity to see the best of Senegal and Guinea Bissau. We start our adventure in the Senegalese capital Dakar and explore this bustling city before immersing ourselves in the slave history at Goree Island. We then head Travel north through Senegal, reaching the border with Mauritania and the Djoudj National Park, a natural oasis composed of hundreds of miles of partially flooded land. Our next stop is the holy city of Touba where we visit its Grand Mosque. Our adventure continues as we explore the Saloum Delta by canoe and visit some villages of the Sérère ethnic group.

After travelling back to Dakar, we continue by air on an afternoon flight to Bissau, capital of tiny Guinea Bissau - one of West Africa's truly 'undiscovered' destinations. Few western travellers make it to this former Portuguese colony, but those that do return full of incredible experiences and memories of a stunning part of the continent. From Bissau, we travel by boat to the magnificent Bijagos Islands – a group of islands where traditional culture is at its strongest and ancient customs still hold sway. We visit local communities to learn about their lifestyles, some of the most traditional on the continent. The joy of this trip is the fact that you will be visiting an almost untouched corner of Africa; expect truly genuine encounters with local people and feel privileged to be one of the very few to have travelled here.

Tour itinerary notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested and on occasions alternative accommodation, of a similar standard to that named below, will be used.

Tour Guide

Our guides are a key strength, chosen for their knowledge of and passion for the areas in which they work. All of our guides are carefully hand-picked, and are not just passing through these countries, but are usually locally born. Unlike some companies it should be noted we do not send a guide or tour leader from Undiscovered Destinations in the UK as we have every confidence in our locally appointed representative who is responsible for operating the tour on our behalf. Where possible you will have the same guide throughout your trip but on occasions it may be necessary to change the guide at one or more points during the tour.

Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival in Dakar (62km, approx. 1hr10m)

Arrive in Dakar and transfer to your hotel. Overnight at Ibis Dakar or similar (D)

Dakar

Located on the Cap Vert peninsula and Africa's westernmost city, Dakar is thriving, colourful, and lively providing the first real experience of urban West Africa on this trip. Brash and often uncompromising, it was once one of the major cities of the French Empire and today is home to over a million people. With busy traffic and street vendors everywhere, Dakar is a world away from the rest of Senegal. Nearby is Gore Island, in contrast a peaceful sanctuary with well-preserved colonial buildings, giving it an almost Mediterranean feel. Gore is best known for its associations with the slave trade, although there is some controversy about how much of a role it actually played.





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Day 2: Dakar City Tour – Goree Island – Pink Lake – Langue de Barbarie (25min Ferry + 275km, approx. 5hr50m)

This morning, we take a city tour of Dakar. Highlights include the Presidential Palace, Republic Square and Soweto Square to see the National Assembly. We then drive to the Cathedral du Souvenir Africain and the train station, with its elegant and inspiring façade, and is the region's oldest major transit hub. Visit the Museum of Black Civilizations, the museum is dedicated to African civilizations, a place of civilizational encounter and dialogue between cultures before we catch a ferry to Goree Island. On arrival we visit the house of slaves, a living testimony of the times of slavery, where you see the 'door of no return' where slaves were allegedly sent through to board boats. Continue to visit the town square and Catholic Church before stopping at the historical museum.

Return to Dakar for the second part of the city tour, visit of the Great Mosque Massalikoul Djinaan, University "Cheikh Anta Diop", the monument of the African Renaissance, the divinity Mosque on the West Corniche, on the edge of the Atlantic Ocean, the "Village des Arts" composed of fifty-two artist's studios (ateliers).

Next depart to Retba Lake, also nicknamed Pink, nestled between white sand dunes and the Atlantic Ocean. Tour of the lake and see how women harvest the salt from the depth of the lake. Lunch at a local restaurant and continue to Ocean et Savane Lodge located in Langue de Barbarie National Park in front of the river. Enjoy a beautiful sunset in front the river. Dinner and overnight in Ocean et Savane Lodge or similar (BLD)

Day 3: Langue de Barbarie – Saint Louis (35Km / approx. 1h)

Spend the morning at leisure. After lunch we head to St. Louis, Senegal's first capital, and today a UNESCO World Heritage Site. After lunch at a local restaurant, before enjoying a horse-drawn carriage ride around the city. Visit the fisherman's district, the lively fishing community of Guet N'Dar in the "Langue de Barbarie", a magical place with dozens of pirogues used for local fishing as well as the Cathedral, situated next to the Governor's Palace, an 1828 building. with a neoclassical facade and one of the oldest churches in Senegal. Dinner and overnight at Hotel La Residence or similar (BD)

Day 4: Djoudj National Bird Sanctuary

Today visit Djoudj National Park, the third largest bird reserve in the world and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. A living sanctuary, situated in the Senegal River Delta, with a wetland of 16,000 hectares and 1, 5 million migratory birds. It is a lush setting with wetlands comprising lakes, streams, valleys, and pieces of sand. Bird watching in a pirogue, with particular emphasis on the white pelican, cormorants, Gambian geese, ospreys, crocodiles, among other species. Return to St. Louis for lunch and spend the afternoon at leisure. Overnight at Hotel La Residence or similar (BLD)

Day 5: Saint Louis – Touba – Palmarin (340Km / approx. 6h30m)

Depart to Saloum Delta. Along the slopes, you will have chance to meet the Peuhls breeders at the time of the regrouping of the zebus' herds for the milking of animals. Then visit the holy city of Touba and its famous mosque. After lunch we continue our journey on the Saloum Delta in Senegal. Dinner and overnight at the eco-lodge of Palmarin or similar (BD)

Day 6: Palmarin – Mar Lodj (30Km / approx. 45min + 30min boat trip)

We take a canoe to cross to the picturesque island of Mar Lodj, just opposite Ndangane. Visit the villages of Mar Lodj and Marfafaco, home of the Sérère ethnic group. Lunch at the Essamaye camp on the edge of the lagoon before returning to Palmarin in the afternoon. Dinner and overnight at Ecolodge of Palmarin or similar (BD)





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Day 7: Palmarin – Joal Fadiouth – Dakar Departure for Guinea Bissau (80Km / approx. 2hrs)

Depart for Joal Fadiouth where we drive into a palm tree and baobabs forest. Stop at Fadiouh Village to admire one of the biggest baobab trees in Senegal then continue to Joal – Fadiouth. Drive through the forest of Samba Dia and charming “Serere” villages with traditional huts. Visit Fadiouth Shell Island by foot. Highlights include the cemetery for Muslims and Christians, the market, the church, and the white alleys where shells are ubiquitous. After lunch at the restaurant of Taverne du Pêcheur of Joal, transfer to Dakar’s international airport for a late afternoon flight to Bissau, the capital of little visited Guinea Bissau. Upon arrival you will be and transferred to your hotel. Overnight Dunia Hotel or similar (D)

Please note that you will travel unaccompanied, without a guide, on the short one hour flight from Dakar to Bissau.

Bissau

Guinea-Bissau’s capital is a small and fairly unassuming place, with old colonial buildings and a generally easy-going pace – although that changes at the time of the annual carnival. It is a pleasant place to wander around to witness everyday scenes of life but does not offer much in the way of traditional sightseeing – rather the attraction is to experience a slice of urban Africa that is much easier to deal with than some other African capitals. Some of the traditional crafts to be found here are particularly excellent.

Day 8: Bissau – Orango National Park by boat (approx. 3hrs)

This morning take a short city tour of Bissau before departing by boat for Orango National Park in the heart of the Bijagos Archipelago. Overnight at Orango Parque Hotel or similar (BLD)

Bijagos Islands

The Bijagos Archipelago is made up of around forty different islands and has been declared a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve due to their ecological importance and rare and endangered species including turtles and the unique saltwater hippo, which swim between some of the islands. Their distance from the mainland has meant that local culture here has remained far less affected by modern influences than elsewhere, and most islanders live a very traditional life, with a different language, Bijago, spoken here.

Day 9: Orango – Village of Eticoga (5km / approx. 3hrs walk)

Take a walk in the forest with a local eco-guide to the village of Eticoga, known for its sanctuary where Queen Okinka Pampa and her family rests. As a place of veneration, it regularly hosts rituals in the company of her descendants and villagers. We visit the women’s association and their handicraft and horticultural work. Overnight at Orango Parque Hotel or similar (BLD)

Day 10: Orango – Lake Anor (20km / 2hr boat and approx. 2hr of walking)

Beach to beach boat trip in the presence of eco guides then continue by foot through the mangrove and savannah to Anor Lake and its freshwater pockets. Spend some time at the lake with a picnic lunch before returning to our hotel. Overnight Orango Parque Hotel or similar (BLD)

Day 11: The sacred village of Ambuduco (4hr boat and walking)

A large palm grove announces the arrival at the oldest part of the National Park, where the most important ceremonies on the island take place. Enjoy the traditional dance “Canhocan”, characteristic of the young bijagós warriors, in a perfect combination of their culture with nature where these people live their everyday life. After lunch we head to Ponta Anchaca Lodge. Overnight Ponta Anchaca Lodge or similar (BLD)



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Day 12: Joao Viera and Poilao Islands National Park - (October to January)

Excursion to Joao Vieira, the island of orchids. During the crossing, we may be lucky to spot some dolphins. Continue to the uninhabited Island of Poilao, the first nesting site for green turtles on the entire West African coast. Overnight at Ponta Anchaca Lodge or similar (BLD)

Day 13: Ponta Anchaca – Bissau (approx. 2hrs by boat) – (October to January)

After a leisurely morning, we transfer back to Bissau by boat. Overnight Dunia Hotel or similar (BD)

Day 12: Ponta Anchaca to Ilha sul de Canhabaque (February to September)

After breakfast leave the Ponta Anchaca Lodge by boat for the Anchaca Sud Lodge on the island of Ilha sul de Canhabaque. After check-in enjoy the fine location, on a 22km stretch of beach. Dinner and overnight at the lodge. (BD)

Day 13: Inhoda Village and return to Bissau (February to September)

After breakfast we leave the Anchaca Sud Lodge and visit some local rice paddies and hope to see some migratory birds. We also visit the small village of Inhoda before travelling back to Bissau by boat. Overnight Dunia Hotel or similar. (BLD)

Day 14: Bissau Departure

You will be transferred to Bissau's airport for your departure. (B)

End of services.

Tour inclusions/exclusions

Inclusions:

Arrival and departure airport transfers
All accommodation
Transport as described
One-way economy class flight from Dakar to Bissau, including a luggage allowance of 20k
Services of English-speaking local guide / tour leader
Meals as listed (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner)
Entrance fees for sites listed as part of the itinerary
Mineral water in the car/bus during visits

Excluded:

International flights (except from Dakar to Bissau)
Any airport taxes (included on the flight from Dakar to Bissau)
Travel Insurance
Visas
Drinks
Tips (discretionary)
Items of a personal nature



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Important Information

Foreign Office Travel Warnings

We constantly monitor the advice posted by the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). In particular we will always advise clients of any travel warnings. At the time of writing the FCDO has no travel warnings in place for Senegal or Guinea Bissau. Please feel free to contact us should you have any specific concerns or if you would like to know in detail what measures are being taken to ensure visits remain trouble free and without incident.

It should be noted that this information applies to British citizens. Other nationals are asked to check the current position of their respective government.

Accommodation and Meals

Hotel Check-in Times

As a general rule most hotels will allow guests to check-in from 2pm. Please note that the price of your tour does not include guaranteed early check-in. Therefore, please advise us if you would like to ensure that your room is available for an earlier arrival. This is particularly relevant on the first day of the tour and for early morning arrivals. One option is to pre-book and pay for an extra night at the beginning of your tour which will guarantee your accommodation is available irrespective of what time you arrive. Please contact us for information and costs.

It should also be noted that on many of our tours we have set-aside Day 1 of the itinerary as an 'arrival day'. For this reason and because tour participants are likely to be arriving at different times, and often from different countries, guided sightseeing or other activities are not included. If you are arriving early or before the start date of the tour and would like to organise some extra arrangements on a private basis, please contact us.

Accommodation Rating

The majority of this tour stays in comfortable mid-range accommodation, and you can expect to have private bathrooms throughout. In general, you will find that hotels have a restaurant and/or bar.

Service Standards

Please note that standards of service in much of Africa are not comparable to those of more developed countries, especially in the more off the beaten track locations. Service is often slow and lacks the same attention to detail, and your patience and understanding will be appreciated.

Food & Drinks

The daily meal basis is shown in the tour itinerary; breakfast (B), lunch (L) and dinner (D). Please note that lunch may be a picnic. Drinks are not included and will be payable locally in cash.

Dietary Requirements

If you have any special dietary requirements, you must notify us at the time of booking. While we will make every effort to cater for you, we cannot guarantee that this will be possible.



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Budgeting for your Tour

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the tour price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs, and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Food

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Lunch £8 / Dinner £12

Drinks

The prices for drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general, you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive.

Bottle of Beer £1 / Water £1

Tipping – Guide and Drivers

Tipping is common practise throughout the region. If your local guide has been helpful, then you could think about tipping. This amount can obviously be left to you. When tipping a driver, a guide or hotel staff a few dollars will always be gratefully received.

Foreign Exchange

ATM Availability: We do not recommend that you rely entirely on ATM machines as they can be unreliable.

Credit and Debit Card Acceptance: Cards are accepted fairly widely in Senegal, but less so in Guinea Bissau and especially on the islands, where we recommend you take sufficient cash.

Local Currency: CFA

Recommended Currency for Exchange: Euro

Where to Exchange: Your guide will advise you.

Joining your Tour

Flight Information

Our advertised prices do not include the cost of international flights. Please contact us if you would like a quotation to book a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Joining Your Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will receive a free airport transfer, both on the advertised start and end dates of the tour. In addition, arrival and/or departure transfers will be provided in conjunction with any pre and/or post tour accommodation that has been booked through Undiscovered Destinations. In all other cases charges may apply for airport transfers. Please advise the date, time, and flight number for your arrival/departure. If we have not been advised of this information at least 2 weeks before travel, then you will be required to make your own way to the hotel on Day 1 of your tour.



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Travel Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Undiscovered Destinations that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses (including Covid-19 conditions) and emergency repatriation to your home country and be valid for the entire duration of your holiday.

Visa Information

At the time of writing British and US nationals do not require a visa for a short-term tourist visit to Senegal. Australian nations will require a visa. A visa will be required by British, US and Australian nationals for entry to Guinea Bissau but in some cases, this can be issued on arrival.

As it is the travellers' responsibility to ensure that they meet all entry requirements it is essential that you check the rules and any other conditions at the time of booking and again when making your balance payment. In addition, we would strongly advise that you make a final check around two weeks before your arrival. This is important as requirements can change at short notice. Undiscovered Destinations, when possible, will provide guidance about entry rules, but in the first instance please contact the relevant authorities, including the applicable embassy or consulate for assistance. Contact details can be found by visiting the following websites.

British Nationals - www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice

US Nationals - <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel.html>

Australian Nationals - www.smartraveller.gov.au/

Other nationals should check the latest requirements with the authorities in their home country, or with the nearest embassy or consulate for the destination.

Passports

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, valid for at least six months after the date of return to the UK. We strongly advise that your passport contains a minimum of two blank pages, as this may be a requirement of the local immigration authorities.

In addition, certain countries will stipulate that the two blank pages are opposite each other. If you are unable to meet these requirements you may be refused boarding by your airline or denied entry by the immigration authorities.

For specific information about the requirements for your destination please check with the country's embassy or consulate. Alternatively, UK citizens can visit www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice

Vaccinations & Protection

As with travel to most parts of the developing world, we strongly recommend that you contact your doctor's surgery or a specialist travel clinic for up-to-date information, advice, and the necessary vaccinations.

For a visit of less than one month, almost certainly you will be advised to have immunisations against the following: Diphtheria and Tetanus, Hepatitis A, Typhoid, Meningitis. Anti-malaria medication will also be required, and the use of a DEET-containing insect repellent is highly recommended.



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The legal status and regulation of some medicines prescribed or purchased in your home country can be different in other countries. If you are travelling with prescription or over-the-counter medicine, read this guidance from NaTHNaC on best practice when travelling with medicines. For further information on the legal status of a specific medicine, you will need to contact the embassy, high commission or consulate of the country or territory you are travelling to.

Preparing for your tour

Climate

The best time to visit the region is between October and March – outside of this time it can be very hot. Rainfall is rare at this time but cannot be ruled out. From June to September the region experiences most of its rainfall.

Clothing

When it comes to clothing it is usually recommended that lighter clothes are worn through the day and warmer ones at night, although you should not expect it to be cold here. A hat is also advised to be worn through the day to protect from the sun. Senegal and Guinea-Bissau are fairly relaxed in terms of clothing, but you should bear in mind that these are Muslim countries. There is no dress code, and you should also bring a bathing suit. Shorts are generally acceptable for men but not worn by local men. You should make sure that you have sufficient long-sleeved tops and trousers for entering any mosques.

Equipment

The first thing on your list should be a first aid kit. Whilst there is no undue cause for alarm, travellers are best advised to travel well-prepared: adequately immunized, with sufficient supplies of prescription drugs, along with a medical kit. If you suffer from motion sickness, then tablets for this are advisable for the Bijagos Archipelago and for the night on board the ship. If you are bringing a digital camera, it is also advisable to bring a spare battery, as there will be occasions when electricity is not available. A torch/flashlight or head torch may also be useful for any unexpected electricity outages or dimly lit areas.

Footwear

Footwear is a main priority on this tour. Comfortable walking shoes are recommended but also take lighter shoes such as sandals for general travelling

Luggage on tour

Your luggage should not exceed 20kgs (44lbs). Due to the nature of the itinerary with many boat rides, the maximum weight allowed per luggage per person is 20 kg and we advise you to travel with a soft bag.

Electric Supply & Plugs

Electrical supply is 220V and plugs usually have two round pins.

Tour Itinerary Versions

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour, but small changes may just be added to these tour notes. These tour notes were prepared 26 February 2024.