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meaning of travel

Tour Notes

Chad – The Gerewol Festival

Tour Duration – 8 Days



Tour Rating

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

Tour Pace - Relaxed

Tour Highlights

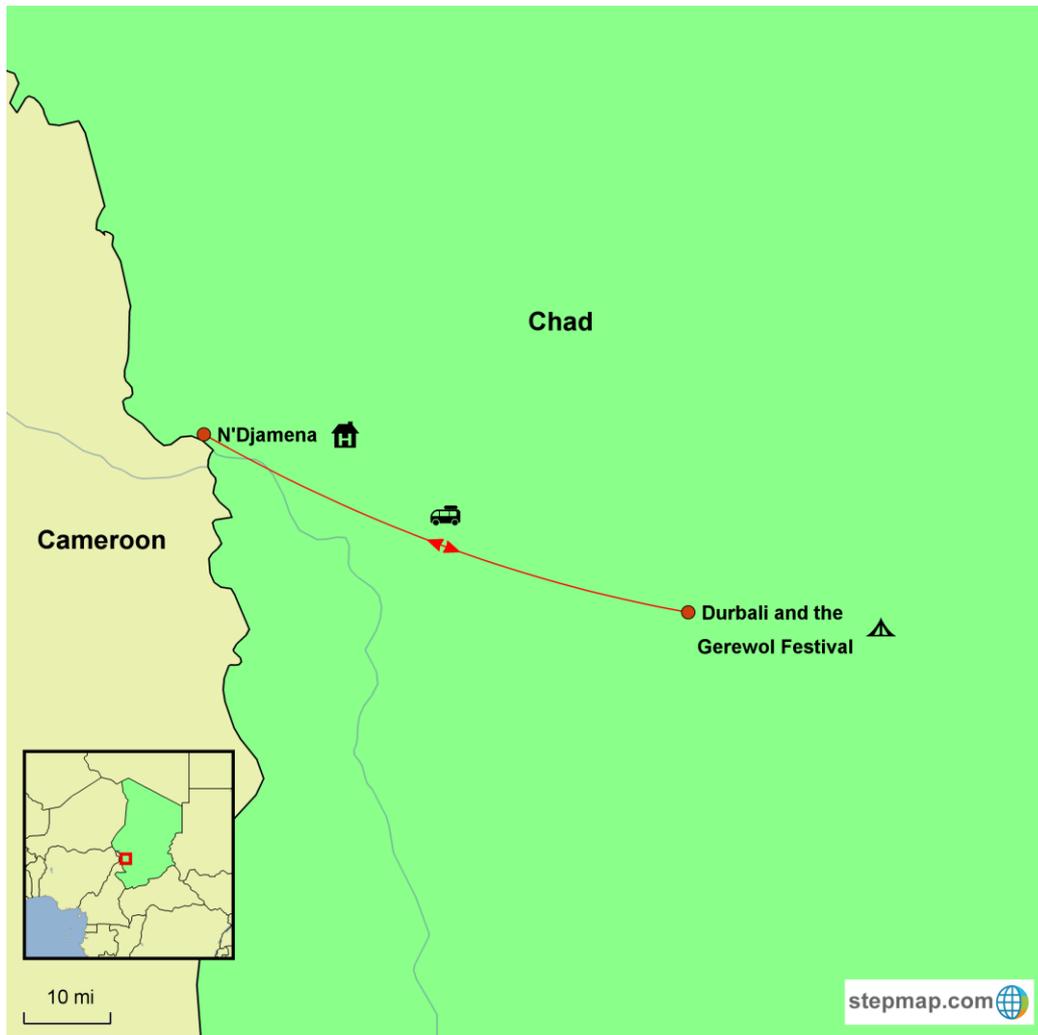
- ✓ An opportunity to witness a unique and truly off the beaten track cultural festival
- ✓ Get immersed in the local traditions of the Gerewol Festival
- ✓ Spectacular dress and personal decoration of the Mbororo people
- ✓ Camp wild in the Sahel
- ✓ Visit the market of Durbali, one of the most important in the Sahel





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Tour Map - Chad – The Gerewol Festival



Tour Essentials

- Accommodation:** Camping except in N'Djamena where you will stay in a comfortable hotel
Included Meals: Daily breakfast (B), plus lunches (L) and dinners (D) as shown in the itinerary.
Group Size: Maximum of 12
Start Point: N'Djamena
End Point: N'Djamena
Transport: 4WD
Country Visited: Chad





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Chad – The Gerewol Festival

After the annual rains, the nomadic Mbororo people gather for a unique celebration known as the Gerewol. This is a festival full of colour and has to be considered one of the most off the beaten track and fascinating cultural experiences in the whole of Africa. We will feel privileged to be able to travel to the remote region of Durbali to see the age old traditions of the Mbororo and join them as they celebrate the Gerewol Festival by feasting, singing, dancing and engaging in courtship. In particular, a real highlight is to witness the spectacular way in which the young Mbororo men decorate themselves with make-up and jewellery to impress a prospective partner. During our days at the festival we will immerse ourselves in the local traditions on what is sure to be a truly unique memorable African experience.

Tour itinerary notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, however with an expedition such as this 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 may 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. Our Chad tours normally operate with a European guide with a local crew. 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 - N'Djamena

Arrive in N'Djamena and transfer to hotel accommodation. Rooms are available for those arriving in the early morning. Relax for the rest of the day or explore the city. Overnight Mercure Hotel or similar.

N'Djamena

Chad's capital sits on the Chari River, opposite the Cameroonian town of Kousseri on the western bank. It's a relatively recent creation, having been founded in 1900 by the French and originally named Fort Lamy after an officer who had recently been killed 'pacifying' the region. It's quite a spread out city, with wide boulevards which are unfortunately now mainly devoid of the trees that they once sported, these having been chopped down to remove cover for rebel forces during the city's turbulent past. There are few specific sights in the city, but if you're arriving early or staying on after the tour you might want to have a wander through the central market, which is quite interesting.

Day 2 - N'Djamena – Durbali

Leave the capital and drive through the Sahel to the Durbali region where we join the Mbororo people in their celebration of the Gerewol festival. Overnight camping. (BLD)

Mbororo People

The Mbororo belong to the Fulani ethnic group (a distinction typically being made between the Mbororo and the Peul, who tend to live more settled lives), and are traditionally nomadic cattle-herders and traders in the Sahel, migrating between Chad, southern Niger, through northern Nigeria, north-eastern Cameroon, and the western region of the Central African Republic. Their lives are centred on the herds of long-horned Zebu





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cattle, and they migrate according to the seasons to find pasture. Groups of several dozen relatives, typically several brothers with their wives, children and elders, travel on foot, donkey or camel, and stay at each grazing spot for a couple of days. The Mbororo are very traditional; women plait their hair and often wear silver coins or discs into their hair, and sometimes have tattooed faces. The code of behaviour of the Mbororo emphasizes reserve and modesty (semteende), patience and fortitude (munyal), care and forethought (hakkilo), and loyalty (amana). They also place great emphasis on beauty and charm. Parents are not allowed to talk directly to their two first born children, who will often be cared for by their grandparents. During daylight, husband and wife cannot hold hands or speak in a personal manner with each other.

The Mbororo are largely but loosely Islamic. Although there are varying degrees of orthodoxy exhibited, most adhere to at least some of the basic requirements of the religion. Islam became important among Mbororo peoples during the 16th century when the scholar al-Maghili preached the teachings of Muhammad to the elite of northern Nigeria. Al-Maghili was responsible for converting the ruling classes among Hausa, Fulani, and Tuareg peoples in the region.

Days 3-7 - Gerewol Festival

Truly one of Africa's most unusual cultural events, the rituals and ceremonies associated with the Mbororo's Gerewol festival have remained unchanged for centuries. Young Mbororo men decorate themselves with makeup, feathers and traditional jewellery to display to young women; the Gerewol is an elaborate mass courtship ritual and a fascinating spectacle to observe. As well the main event we can expect to see traditional singing and dancing, and even camel racing. Beyond the festival there's time to explore the market of Durbali, one of the most important in the Sahel, and spend time with local people to learn aspects of their unique culture. Overnight camping. (BLD)

The Gerewol Festival

Every year, after the rainy season, the Bororo people meet in specific areas of the Sahel, straddling Niger, Chad and Cameroon, to celebrate. In a rather privileged region, with salted grazing grounds, Bororos settle down together with their herds both to treat them with salt and against parasites - la cure salee - and in order to organise important tribal gatherings. This feast is actually one of the few opportunities for these people, which are scattered over a large territory, to meet. While the animals are treated, the men devote their time to show off and celebrate. This is a crucial time to exchange news, make friends, and for love affairs. Bororos are in fact polygamous and only the very first marriage is fixed by the family according to tradition, while during the Gerewol festivals men and women can embark upon casual affairs to which no stigma is attached or develop stable relationships. In Bororo culture it is male beauty that is prized more highly, and young men will decorate themselves in their finest clothes and with elaborate make up in order to attract a partner.

Day 8 - Durbali - N'Djamena

Returning back to the capital, day use rooms are available to freshen up before a farewell dinner and transfers to the airport.

Important: *Please note that the exact date of this festival is usually determined around June each year, when the Mbororo elders have decided upon the best time to hold it. The Gerewol festival is held around the end of September (at the end of the rainy season) and so the precise date of this trip may move by a couple of days either side. You should not book flights until this date has been confirmed by us.*



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Tour Inclusions/Exclusions

Inclusions:

Arrival and departure transfers
All accommodation on a twin share basis
Services of English-speaking guide / tour leader
Meals as listed (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner)
Entrance fees for sites listed as part of the itinerary

Excluded:

International flights
Travel Insurance
Visa
Drinks
Items of a personal nature
Tips (discretionary)

Important Information

Foreign Government Travel Warnings

Before booking your tour please familiarise yourself with the country specific information provided by the UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) - <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>. This includes important information such as latest immigration requirements, and details of any travel advisories.

At present the FCO advises against travel to all parts of the country except N'Djamena. It is likely travel warnings will remain in place for some time to come, and we are only able to accept a booking on the basis that you are aware this is the case and confirm that you are still happy to travel irrespective of the current FCO advice.

We work very closely with experienced local contacts and are fully confident that it is safe to operate tours in Chad. Please feel free to contact us should you have any specific concerns or would like to know in detail what measures are being taken to ensure visits remain trouble free and without incident.

Furthermore, it is the clients' responsibility to ensure that they hold full travel insurance which includes medical repatriation.

You should check the validity of your insurance with your provider, given the travel warnings in place. We can however, help you organise insurance which will continue to be valid.

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

Non-UK nationals should check with their own government, as the information and advice may differ to that provided by British authorities.



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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

Whilst camping you should be aware that there are no facilities. We will spend our nights in wild camps chosen each night. There are no toilet facilities. You will be provided with a small amount of water each night to wash with (although on one or two occasions this may not be possible due to distance from wells).

We do not recommend Chad to anyone looking for a conventional holiday – comforts are few and far between and conditions are often challenging. It is not comparable to other countries in Africa that you may have travelled to, but the crew travelling with you will do their utmost to make this trip as comfortable as possible. However for those seeking a true adventure to one of the most remote parts of our world, Chad is hard to beat.

Food & Drink

While on tour in Chad you will generally be served a mixture of European and African cuisine. Local conditions and availability dictate that food is fairly simple, so do not expect gourmet cooking. Breakfast typically consists of bread, jam, biscuits and coffee, while lunch is normally some type of salad. For the evening meal you can expect pasta, couscous, meat and vegetable stews, soup, rice and other such food, depending on what is available at the markets along the way.

You may also like to take some snacks with you to vary your diet – energy bars, dried fruit or sweets are generally appreciated.

All meals are included while on our tour in Chad, apart from the first day, and the evening of the final day. Allow around €20 for an evening meal at the hotel in N'Djamena.

Water will be taken from wells along the way – it is not possible to take a supply of bottled water from N'Djamena. This is treated with a sterilising agent such as Micropur to render it safe to drink.

You might also like to take a bottle of alcohol for the evening – after leaving N'Djamena it is unlikely that you will be able to buy any.

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, on an expedition such as this 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 in N'Djamena

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 £10

Dinner £15

Drink in N'Djamena

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 £3-4

Water £1-2

Tipping – Guide and Drivers

Tipping is commonly recognised as a way of rewarding guides and drivers for good service. If you are happy with your guide and driver, please consider leaving a tip for them. We recommend that each member of the crew receive a tip of around €50 minimum (to be divided among all group members, not per person).

Foreign Exchange

ATM Availability: There are some ATM machines in N'Djamena but we do not recommend relying on them. ATM machines will not be available anywhere else on tour.

Credit and Debit Card Acceptance: Very few places outside main cities will accept cards.

Local Currency: CFA

Recommended Currency for Exchange: Euros. It is possible to exchange US dollars but it is more difficult to do

Where to Exchange: It is a simple procedure to change money in banks in Chad, although you should only rely on being able to do this in N'Djamena. It is also often possible to change money at hotels. Your guide will be able to give further advice on this. For our scheduled group tour, there is very little to spend money on once you leave N'Djamena

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 Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will receive a free airport transfer, both on arrival and departure. In order that the transfer can be arranged please ensure that you advise us of your flight information once available. 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 and emergency repatriation to your home country and be valid for the entire duration of your holiday.

Visa Information

Visitors from most countries, including UK, EU and US visitors require a visa for entering Chad. In addition to this, you will require an invitation letter, which we will provide for you. Please note that the embassy requires a copy of a Yellow Fever certificate to issue the visa – you must ensure that this is up to date before applying for the visa. You are also required to send the original copy of your travel insurance certificate. There is no Chadian Embassy in the UK, and applications must be made to the embassy in Paris or Belgium. There is however an embassy in the US.

Please remember to bring 2 photos for the immigration service.

Visa regulations can frequently change. Therefore, we recommend that you check with your nearest embassy for the most up to date details.

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 Africa, 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.

Vaccination against yellow fever is a compulsory requirement for entry into Chad, and you must bring your certificate with you. This may or may not be checked when you enter the country, but we strongly advise that you do not risk being denied entry.

The legal status and regulation of some medicines prescribed or purchased in your home country can be different in other countries. If you're 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'll need to contact the embassy, high commission or consulate of the country or territory you're travelling to.



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Preparing for your tour

Climate

Generally speaking, the best time to visit Chad is between October / November and March, when the temperature by day will be hot, but not uncomfortably so. Nights in the desert can be cool with temperatures sometimes dipping into single figures in Celsius. Chad's rainy season is from May to September and travel can be difficult during this time but as a rule we do not run our group tours at this time. At times it can also be very windy in the Saharan desert. The Gerewol festival normally takes place at the end of the rainy season.

Clothing

Chad is quite warm and so light clothes are generally a good idea. You should ensure that you bring warmer clothes for evenings in the north – it can get a lot cooler in the north once the sun goes down so a warm fleece is a good idea. Cotton fabric is best when travelling in the desert during the day. A light windproof/waterproof jacket is advisable. Please remember that Chad has a large Muslim population and conservative attitudes towards dress, and so women should bear this in mind and ensure that clothing is appropriate. Shorts and a t-shirt/ undershirt are not well accepted by the local people.

Equipment

Suncream/sunblock is a must. Insect repellent, including a bite spray will also be useful to have. As our tour in Chad involves camping, a torch (flashlight) is essential.

You should also bring a towel, a water bottle and toilet paper. You may also wish to consider bringing anti-bacterial hand lotion. You should also bring a lighter / matches (for burning toilet paper). Refreshing tissues and wipes will be a welcome addition to your kit list. If you wear contact lenses, you may wish to consider bringing a pair of glasses and/or a headscarf – it can get very dusty while driving and cause irritation to the eyes. You will also need to bring a sleeping bag. We would recommend a warm sleeping bag, as well as a sleep sheet for any hot nights. You may also like to bring an inflatable pillow, as these are not provided. Sleeping mats however are provided.

Footwear

Footwear is a main priority on this tour. Comfortable walking shoes/boots are recommended, as well as a pair of sandals.

Luggage on tour

Your luggage should not exceed 17kgs, and should have soft sides. One large holdall/rucksack, and one small hand luggage rucksack is acceptable.

Electric Supply & Plugs

Electrical supply is 220V/50 Hz and plugs have two round pins like most European countries.

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 updated 03rd April 2019.

