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meaning of travel

Tour Notes

Sierra Leone - Forts, Chimps and Beaches

Tour Duration – 8 Days



Tour Rating

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

Tour Pace - Relaxed

Tour Highlights

- ✓ Relax on the spectacular Banana Islands
- ✓ Observe the chimpanzees at the Tacugama Sanctuary
- ✓ Visit the historical monuments and ruins which bear testimony to the history of Sierra Leone



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Tour Map - Sierra Leone - Forts, Chimps and Beaches



Tour Essentials

Accommodation:	A mix of a comfortable hotel, and camping in permanent camps.
Included Meals:	Daily breakfast (B), plus lunches (L) and dinners (D) as shown in the itinerary
Start Point:	Bo
End Point:	Freetown
Transport:	4 WD vehicle, small boat, canoe and motorboat.
Country Visited:	Sierra Leone



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Sierra Leone - Forts, Chimps and Beaches

Once occupying the pages of package holiday brochures, and attracting more sun and sand visitors than Gambia, Sierra Leone's beaches even offered 'a taste of paradise' in 1970s Bounty bar commercials. War changed everything. However, after UN and British military intervention civil conflict ended in 2002. Real economic, political and infrastructure progress was being made. Free and fair elections were held, electricity issued from wall sockets and water from taps. Skilled Sierra Leoneans, many refugees from the war, returned in their thousands to rebuild their country.

Then in 2014, from nowhere, came Ebola. Sierra Leone was finally declared free from the disease by the WHO in 2016. Exacting a tragic human cost, for many the economic effect was more profound. Airlines stopped flying, hotels closed, and the businesses collapsed. Today Sierra Leone is once more emerging, ever hopeful, working hard for a better future. The country has much to offer, more than just white sand beaches. An immensely important history intrinsically linked with the transatlantic slave trade and its abolition, combines with an energetic contemporary culture, wildlife-filled forests and idyllic offshore islands in a welcoming anglophone microcosm of West Africa. What are you waiting for?

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.

Itinerary

Day 1 – Arrival in Freetown

Arrive in Freetown and after travelling from Lungi Airport by boat, transfer to hotel accommodation. After time to freshen up, explore Freetown and visit some of the main sites, including the Maroon Church, Big Market and St George's Cathedral. Overnight at Sierra Palms Hotel or similar

Freetown

Sierra Leone's capital was founded back in 1792 by freed American slaves, one of the older sub Saharan African capital cities. Seeing much of the fighting in the country's vicious civil war, Freetown is today rather dilapidated and run down – but in the right light, delightfully so. The city is divided into a number of different areas, many of them named after the groups of emancipated slaves that settled there. A number of historical monuments dot the city, including the Cotton Tree, which predates Freetown and is where slaves were once sold, the Slave Gate, and several churches dating back to the early 19th century.

Day 2- Freetown - Bunce Island – Tacugama

This morning we take a boat to Bunce Island. The island was established as a major island slave port in 1670. Strategically located in the vast Freetown Harbour, approximately 32km upriver on the Sierra Leone River, the island is at the limit of navigation for ocean going vessels. A lone caretaker oversees the island's ruins; a manager's house, fortified castle, holding cells, and graves. Slavery for most Europeans is a dark period now





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of historic interest. For many West Africans the injustice of the trade remains raw. Unlike some other West Africa slave islands, Bunce is not yet protected by UNESCO. It should be. The island provides a powerful experience for anyone interested in the history of the country and the slave trade. Later, we return to Freetown and drive up from the city to Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary. The sanctuary is committed to the rescue and rehabilitation of orphaned and abandoned chimpanzees. Chimps enjoy a semi-wild life within the 40-hectare reserve. Overnight in Augusta Lodge in Tacugama (B)

Bunce Island

Constructed by the British, the slave fort at Bunce Island is one of the largest on the West African coast. During the 17th and 18th centuries it held tens of thousands of slaves destined to be shipped out to America and the West Indies.

Finally closed down by the British government in 1808, it remains a chilling place, and testament to the brutal trade that once haunted these shores. There are substantial ruins on the island including the remains of a factory, storehouse, prison and watchtowers.

Tacugama Chimp Sanctuary

The Tacugama Chimp Sanctuary was set up in 1995, and is committed to the rescue and rehabilitation of orphaned and abandoned chimpanzees. The chimps enjoy a semi-wild life within the 100-acre reserve. The overall aim of the programme is to provide a home for confiscated and rescued chimps, while helping to stop the cruel and wasteful trade of the species - thus securing a future for the wild population. Closely related to humans, chimpanzees live in large communities headed up by an alpha male. Although they eat mainly fruit, there have been cases of them hunting monkeys in groups as well as using tools to catch termites. Once widely spread throughout Africa, their habitat has been reduced by deforestation and the encroachment of human settlements, and chimpanzees can now be found in twenty-one countries.

Day 3 - Banana Islands

The Banana Islands lie south west of the Freetown Peninsula, a forty-minute boat ride from Kent. Trails crisscross the main islands of Dublin and Ricketts, linked by a stone causeway. Named for their shape rather than their fruit production, a forest village and a fishing village are as metropolitan as the islands get. There's ample time to explore, and swim and snorkel in the clear blue seas. Accommodation is provided by thatched beach chalets with modern, private bathroom. Overnight at permanent camp. (BLD)

Banana Islands

The Banana Islands are made up of three islands - Dublin Island, Ricketts Island and Mes Meheux, which is uninhabited. The scenery here is spectacular – think deserted beaches, lush rainforest and dramatic rock formations. The islands also host an array of historical monuments and ruins which act as testament to its murky past as a slaving station, including the remains of an old slave fort, colonial buildings, and ruined Anglican churches. The wildlife here includes a variety of reptiles, monkeys and birds, and the snorkelling here is superb, with excellent marine life and shipwrecks to explore.

Day 4 - Banana Islands

A leisurely day to take in the variety marine life, birds and flora the islands have to offer. People are friendly, and if you can track him down, the Paramount chief will relate the island's ancient and fascinating contemporary history. Perhaps investigate Banana Islands palm wine, much sought after on the mainland. Overnight at permanent camp. (BLD)

Day 5- Banana Islands - Tiwai Island Wildlife Sanctuary

Heading back to the mainland, we drive to Tiwai, a unique rainforest island reserve initially established to protect pygmy hippo. The reserve lies at the edge of the immense Gola forest, which extends to the Liberian border. The flora and fauna here is stunning. Though pygmy hippo are very difficult to see, troops of wild chimpanzees, together with diana and colobus monkeys are much more visible, noisily inhabiting the forest



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canopy. Over 135 bird species, including eight types of hornbill have been recorded too, in addition to 700 plant species. The reserve is managed in conjunction with the local community, providing employment that's an alternative to the diamond mines of Liberia. Overnight camping, at a permanent campsite. (BLD)

Please note: *Non-alcoholic drinks and camping gear (tents, bed sheets/blankets) are provided.*

Please note: *On occasion it may not be possible to visit Tiwai Island Wildlife Sanctuary. If this is the case the similarly impressive, Outamba-Kilimi National Park will be included instead.*

Tiwai Island

Tiwai, which in the local Mende language means 'big island' is Sierra Leone's first and so far only community conservation programme. It has an astonishing variety of wildlife with one of the highest concentration and diversity of primates in the world - 11 species including wild chimpanzees that use stones as hammers and tree roots as anvils to crack open hard nuts.

Tiwai is also home to other intriguing animals such as the rarely seen pygmy hippopotamus, colobus monkeys, otters and the rare white-breasted guinea fowl.

Day 6 - Tiwai Island

Today we have a full day exploring the reserve, walking in the forest accompanied by local guides, and taking to the river in canoes and motorboat. Overnight at a permanent campsite. (BLD)

Day 7- Freetown

This morning we drive back to Freetown for a final night in Sierra Leone. If you have the energy, and you think you can take it, head downtown for a last taste of Salone in one of the city's everchanging line up of nightclubs. Overnight at Sierra Palms Hotel. (B)

Day 8 - Departure from Freetown

This morning we explore Freetown. Visit some of the main sites including the Maroon Church, Big Market and St George's Cathedral. Transfer to the airport on due time for your flight home. (B)

Tour Inclusions/Exclusions

Inclusions:

All accommodation
Transport in a private vehicle throughout.
Services of English-speaking guide.
Meals as listed (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner)
Entrance fees for sites listed as part of the itinerary
Visa support (letter of invitation)

Exclusions:

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





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Important Information

Foreign Office Travel Warnings

We constantly monitor the advice posted by the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). 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/sierra-leone>. This includes important information such as latest immigration requirements, and details of any travel advisories.

We constantly monitor the advice posted by the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). In particular we will always advise clients of any travel warnings. At present there are no warnings against travel to the parts of Algeria that we visit on this tour. 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.

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

On this tour your accommodation will be in a mix of a comfortable mid-range hotel, an eco-lodge and some camping.

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.

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.



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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 water: £0.50

Bottle of local beer: £1.00

Tipping – Guide and Drivers

Tipping is commonly recognised as a way of rewarding guides and drivers for good service. A reasonable amount would be around £5 per day for the guide and £3 per day for the driver, between the group – this works out at just under £100 for a 120 day tour, split between however many group members there are.

Foreign Exchange

ATM Availability: Available in Freetown but they are not reliable.

Credit and Debit Card Acceptance: Cards are not widely accepted

Local Currency: Sierra Leonean Leone

Recommended Currency for Exchange: US Dollar

Where to Exchange: Your guide will advise you

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 Sierra Leone. The Government of Sierra Leone has advised that visitors from a number of countries including the UK can, as of 5 September 2019, get a visa upon arrival for US\$80. This must be paid in cash in US Dollars. For other countries a visa needs to be obtained in advance. Visa regulations can frequently change and 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.



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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. A yellow Fever vaccination certificate is compulsory.

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.

Preparing for your tour

Climate

Sierra Leone has a tropical climate with two distinct seasons. The dry season runs from November to April. The rainy season starts in May. Rains are heaviest between July and September. The country is warm all year round, typical temperatures range between 23°C and 30°C. December and January are the coolest and driest months to visit.

Clothing

When it comes to clothing it is usually recommended that lighter clothes are worn through the day, and warmer ones at night. A hat is also advised to be worn through the day to protect from the sun, along with at least one piece of waterproof clothing for any days that the weather may be wet.

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. Sun cream/sunblock is a must. Insect repellent, including a bite spray will also be useful to have. Please also take a torch or flashlight for poorly lit areas or for any unexpected electricity outages.

Footwear

Footwear is a main priority on this tour. Comfortable walking shoes are recommended, as well as a pair of sandals for general travelling days.

Luggage on tour

Your luggage should not exceed 20kgs (44lbs). One large suitcase/rucksack, and one small hand luggage rucksack is acceptable.

Service Standards

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.



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Electric Supply & Plugs

Electrical supply is 230V/50 Hz and plugs have three square pins as in the United Kingdom. It is recommended that you take an adaptor when you travel.

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 17 January 2020

