

EXPLORE!

TRIP NOTES



Cradle of Voodoo (BWA 2017)



TRIPDURATION
14
DAYS



Tour Style: Classic

Tour Pace: Full On

Tour Type: Small Groups

Accommodation

Grade: Standard

Trip Code: BWA

Trip Highlights - Cradle of Voodoo

- ✓ Voodoo - A unique opportunity to witness the intriguing and esoteric rituals of West Africa.
- ✓ Tamberma - Remote fortified dwellings in the Atakora mountains.
- ✓ Kloto - Scenic highlands and walks in the tropical forest.
- ✓ Abomey - The impressive Royal palace, a UNESCO Heritage site.
- ✓ Ganvie - A remarkable stilt village on Lake Nokwe.
- ✓ Village Life - Experience the diversity of cultures and traditions in West Africa.
- ✓ Lomé - Togo's vibrant capital and the fetish market.

Trip Essentials

Accommodation: 9 nights Standard Hotel
1 night Simple Auberge
2 nights Simple Hut
1 night Simple Guesthouse

Included Meals: 13 breakfasts, 9 lunches, 2 dinners

Start Point: Join trip: Lome

End Point: Trip ends: Lome

Transport: 4WD, Bus, Boat

Countries: Benin, Togo

Cradle Of Voodoo

On this journey across Togo and Benin we discover tribal cultures, ancient voodoo traditions and colonial architecture. We witness traditional rituals, walk through the Atakora Mountains and stay in a stilt village. We also trek through pristine rainforest, meet the chiefs of the Bassari tribes, witness a fire-dance and a mask ceremony.

Why Book this trip

This tour through the incredible countries of Togo and Benin has been created for travellers who want to get off the beaten track and visit a part of the world rarely touched by tourism. The colourful dresses, the drumming, the voodoo ceremonies and the friendly people are what bring these fascinating places to life.

Suitability

We've given each of our tours a comfort rating and a tour pace, walking or cycling grade to give you a general idea about the level of activity on each tour and the standard of accommodation you will be staying in at the end of your day's adventure.

Often you'll stay in different styles of accommodation during your tour; so we make an average rating across the entire tour. For more information on where you'll stay each night, please refer to the day by day tour itinerary.

Accommodation Grade: Standard

Our mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en-suite facilities.

Tour Style: Classic

Packed with adventure, these tours offer inspiring destinations and authentic travel experiences at a reasonable price. Using all kinds of transport and accommodation, we'll take you off the beaten track to discover the true heart of the people and places you visit.

Tour Pace: Full On

These fast paced tours move on quickly from place to place and with lots of early starts and long busy days, they're packed with experiences.

Your trip itinerary

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.

Your Tour Leader

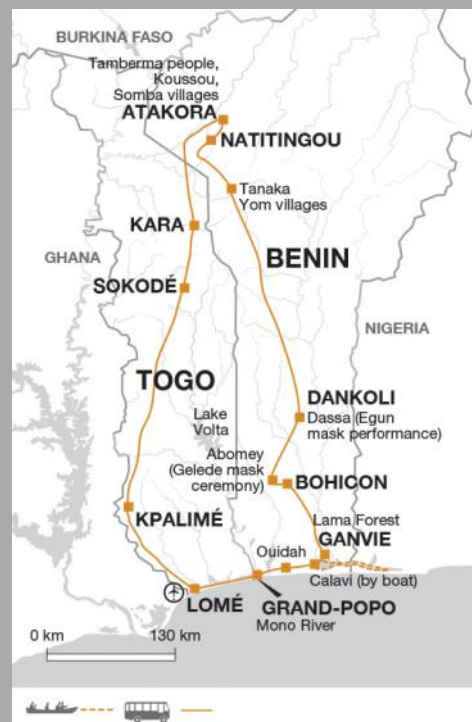
A Tour Leader is an integral part of any Explore tour and your tour will be led by one of our experienced Tour Leaders who have been handpicked and expertly trained. We believe that our Tour Leaders are the key to the success of our tours; they are passionate travellers who are bursting with first-hand local knowledge which they love to share. Your Tour Leader will also take care of all the planning and organisation throughout your journey. Their passionate approach will make this tour fun and inspiring, bringing the destination to life whether you're travelling alone or with others.

DAY 1 Join trip in Lome

Join trip in Lome, the lively capital of Togo. This afternoon our trip starts with a sightseeing tour in Lome, the vibrant capital of Togo. Being the only capital city that has been colonized by Germans, British and French and because of its position bordering Ghana, Lome has developed a peculiar identity which is reflected in its culture and architecture. We visit the central market, the colonial building and administrative quarter and the fetish market.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Swimming Pool Available 



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 **Included Meals:** None

DAY 2 Head to Kpalime, walk in the rainforest with butterfly expert and jungle ceremony

We then transfer to Kpalime, surrounded by tropical forest and visit the centre artisanal where local artisans produce interesting artefacts. This afternoon we spend a half day hiking in the rainforest accompanied by butterfly expert. We admire the majestic trees and flora of the forest, meet the local people living in the area and listen to the echoes of animals. We will also take part in a jungle initiation ceremony rarely seen by foreigners as we are painted using natural colours obtained from the flowers and trees.

Overnight: **Simple Auberge**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 3 Drive to Sokode through villages and markets; fire dance in the evening

Today we head north to Sokode. On our drive we get a good insight into the country's culture as we visit local villages and experience the smells and sounds of the colourful markets. In the evening we witness a traditional Fire Dance. Dancing to the hypnotic beat of the drum, the dancers eventually leap into the glowing embers. They then pick up burning coals and pass them over their body and mouth without showing any pain or injury. Whether it is a matter of courage, magic or auto suggestion, witnessing these rituals is a real privilege and a truly interesting experience.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available


 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 4 Drive to the Bassar region. Visit the clay houses and learn about the iron production

Today we drive further to the West and enter the region inhabited by the Bassar people. The Bassar live in traditional large clay houses with conical roofs and produce iron following an old traditional procedure. Strict rules have to be followed: only old women should provide the coal needed, which they collect from the mountains surrounding the villages. According to their belief, the iron would only melt under particular circumstances and if a strict code of conduct is observed. We also meet traditional chiefs who will talk to us about their role in the society.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available


Swimming Pool Available 

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 5 Visit the Kabye region and meet the Tamberma people in the Atakora mountains

We start our day visiting villages and markets in the Kabye region where we meet blacksmiths and women who produce traditional pottery. In the afternoon we reach the Atakora Mountains, a chain of mountains that starts in south east Ghana and cuts through Togo and Benin and have offered a refuge for the Tamberma people for generations. The Tamberma live in fortified dwelling and still hunt with bows and arrows and practice traditional initiation rituals. With phallic shaped fetishes adorning the entrance to their houses and surrounding wall representing the spirits of their ancestors, these isolated homesteads could feasibly hold out in a siege situation for some time and certainly represent some of the most beautiful examples of traditional African architecture left. We cross the Benin border late in the afternoon and arrive in Koussou where we spend the night.


Overnight: **Simple Hut**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 6 Visit the Somba in traditional houses in the Atakora Mountains

We spend today walking in this remarkable region, discovering some of the villages in the Atakora mountains, cultures and traditions. We meet the Somba (this word means nude in the traditional language) whose traditions have not yet been changed by outsiders, due to their geographic isolation. In certain isolated villages people only wear a simple cloth and women are covered with amulets. Similar to the Tamberma architecture, the Somba architecture is characterised by dwellings that resemble a three storey castle. These beautiful fortifications are separated from the others depending on the ownership of fertile land.

Overnight: **Simple Hut**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 7 Drive to Natitingou; discover the town with its museum and market and then relax by the pool

Today we drive to Natitingou where we have time to discover the town or relax by the pool in the hotel. The town hosts a market and an interesting museum about the people living in the Atakora mountains. The museum is located in a French colonial house built in 1915. Our hotel this evening is built in the style of the Tamberma people, though it does have the modern feature of a swimming pool!

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Swimming Pool Available 


 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 8 Walk on the Taneka plateau visiting the Yom people and the fetish village of Dankoli

This morning we meet the Fulani people, a pastoral community who are renowned for their beauty and their tattoos. We will visit a Fulani camp and spend time with them as they go about their day. We will then walk for approximately four hours over the plateau of Taneka, to discover the ancient villages of the Yom. People live in round huts covered with conical roofs and decorated with terracotta vases. The upper part of the village is inhabited by fetish priests, dressed in a goatskin and their young initiates. The first settlement in the region dates back to the 9th Century A.D. when the Kabye people built the first village. In the afternoon we transfer to the South and stop at the fetish village of Dankoli which is the gateway to the voodoo world. They often accompany the rituals with the sacrifice of a goat, a chicken or a cow. We transfer to Dassa where we spend the night.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Swimming Pool Available 

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 9 Visit the town of Dassa and then the Royal Palace of Abomey

We start our day at Dassa, which used to be the capital of an ancient kingdom in 1385. We then move to the town of Abomey, and visit the Royal Palace to discover the ornate majesty that was once the Dan-Homey dynasty. Now a museum, the Palace walls are still decorated with bas-reliefs representing the symbols of the Dahomey kings and its halls and rooms hold the thrones and altars, statues and arms of a kingdom that lived in a perpetual state of war and built its greatness on the slavery of its neighbours. In the centre of the royal courtyard is the House of Pearls, a temple built by king Glele to honour his father's spirit, the walls made from a mixture of clay and human blood!

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 10 Beautiful Egun and Gelede mask ceremonies

This morning we are lucky enough to witness an Egun mask performance. According to the local tradition, people perform the rituals not only to represent but also to embody the spirits of the ancestors. Dressed in bright, colourful costumes, they emerge from the forest and form a procession through the village streets. This afternoon we also have the opportunity to visit a Gelede mask ceremony. A cult to the great divinity Oudua, the earth mother, Gelede is a cult, a secret society and a type of mask all at the same time. The brightly coloured masks represent the bridge between the society and the ordinary villagers and are comprised of a head with large eyes and sensual lips over which are an animated collection of characters and objects that tell stories, to the accompaniment of a choir and an excited audience. This is a really special day as we encounter contrasting ceremonies, both incredible but very different and memorable.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 11 Drive to incredible stilt village of Ganvie. Overnight in a stilt guesthouse

Today we reach Ganvie, the largest stilt village in Africa. Settled by the Tofinou people, fleeing the slave traders of the 16th century, the village today is an atmospheric setting of thatched huts, balanced on stilts of teak, where daily life is still very much conducted on the waters of the lake. Fishing is still the principal activity for the inhabitants and every day the men go about their business, whilst women deliver their goods to the floating market and children go to school and play from the backs of open pirogues. But even amidst this tranquil aquatic idyll voodoo plays its part and this evening we will meet a local Bokono oracle, a village soothsayer who guides the lives of these traditional people through the drums and dancing of voodoo's haunting rhythm.

Overnight: **Simple Guesthouse**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 12 Visit Ouidah, the spiritual home of Voodoo; drive to Grand Popo

Returning to shore we make for the town of Ouidah, considered to be the spiritual home of voodoo. Once an infamous part of the old slave route, Ouidah was the site of one of the largest trading posts, supplying slaves to Europe and its outlying colonies. The echoes and ghosts of those infamous days still reverberate today, in its Afro-Portuguese architecture. We aim to spend some of our time here visiting the museum at the old Portuguese Fort and taking a walk along the slave route to the beach, where the unfortunate victims were loaded aboard the slave ships. We will also visit the remarkable Python Temple, where Ouidah's ancient snake cult is still very much in evidence. Snakes are still an important feature of many voodoo rituals, believed to be able to imbue vitality and protection. Later we head east to the shores of the Gulf of Benin at Grand Popo.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Swimming Pool Available 

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 13 Zangbeto dancing mask ceremony and afternoon voodoo ceremony

We head out by boat this morning to attend our last mask ceremony, this special ritual is by the Zangbeto dancing mask and represents the spirit of divinities. Heading west towards Lac Togo and the high grasses of the Savannah, today we have the privilege to attend a real Voodoo ceremony and to see traditional dancers falling into a deep trance at the hypnotic rhythm of drums. After the ceremony we meet a traditional healer who treat the patients with voodoo rites and herbs. We continue our drive to Lome.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Swimming Pool Available 

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 14 Trip ends in Lome

Our tour ends this morning after breakfast. You should be aware that many of the flights from Lome depart very early in the morning, and will mean an early start, often before breakfast is served at the hotel.

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

Accommodation and Meals

Food & Drink

Included meals: 13 breakfasts, 9 lunches, 2 dinners included in the price of this trip. Please be prepared to pay for non-included meals. Please note that costs for drinks and meals can vary depending on location.

Budgeting for your Trip

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the trip 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.

Benin

Lunch £: 6.00

Dinner £: 14.00

Togo

Lunch £: 10.00 - 14.00

Dinner £: 12.00 - 16.00

Drink

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.

Benin

Bottle of Beer £: 1.55

Water £: 1.50

Togo

Bottle of Beer £: 1.30

Water £: 0.50

Tipping - Tour Leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Tipping - Local Crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognized part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

Accordingly you should allow approx. £50 for gratuities for local staff.

Foreign Exchange

Benin

ATM Availability: Limited to Lome and very unreliable.

Credit Card Acceptance: Credit cards are of little use in the rural areas visited on this trip, though take one along anyway as they can be used in bigger hotels and large shops in the cities. Be warned though that Mastercard is not currently accepted in Benin.

Travellers Cheques: It is very hard to change Travellers Cheques and we don't recommend them.

Local Currency: Comunaute Financiere Africaine Franc (commonly known as CFA). The responsible authority is the Central Bank of the West African States.

Recommended Currency for Exchange: We suggest you take the majority of your spending money in mainly Euros cash. Take mixed denomination bills in good condition.

Where to Exchange: Your Tour leader will advise you where Euros cash can be exchanged.

Togo

ATM Availability: Limited to Lome and very unreliable.

Credit Card Acceptance: Credit cards are of little use in the rural areas visited on this trip, though take one along anyway as they can be used in bigger hotels and large shops in the cities.

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Joining your Trip

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found on our website at www.explore.co.uk, in the tour specific dates and prices section.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer. For more information please refer to <https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers>.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour,

and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer please refer to <https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers>.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Important Information

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore 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. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

EXPLORE!
The Adventure Travel Experts

CAMPBELL IRVINE
DIRECT TRAVEL INSURANCE



Travel Insurance is essential. If you have not already arranged cover, please contact our recommended Travel Insurance providers www.campbellirvinedirect.com/Explore who offer Travel Insurance specifically designed to cover travel with Explore or call **Campbell Irvine Direct** on Tel: 020 7938 1734

Explore Worldwide is an Introducing Appointed Representative of Campbell Irvine Ltd who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

Travel Aware

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Advice follow the link at www.explore.co.uk/travel-safety

We strongly advise that you register with the FCO to receive updates to the travel advice for your chosen destination. A hard copy of the current FCO Travel Advice for your chosen destination is available by contacting cr@explore.co.uk or 01252 379438.

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Visa Information

Benin: A single entry visa is required by UK, New Zealand, Australian, US and Canadian citizens and must be obtained prior to departure, from your embassy of residence. You will need an accommodation letter from Explore which is provided within your confirmation pack. UK passports must be valid for a minimum period of six months from the date of exit from Benin. Togo: A multiple entry visa is required by UK, New Zealand, Australian, US and Canadian citizens and must be obtained prior to departure, from your embassy of residence. You will need an accommodation letter from Explore which is provided within your confirmation pack. Your passport must be valid for a minimum period of one year from the date of exit from Togo. Togo visas can be obtained from the Togo Consulate in London in person. Please ensure you download the visa application form, required supporting documents guide and the visa tariff document from the Togolese Consulate website: <http://togoembassylondon.com/consulate/>, in order to complete your application. Please note that visa fees can only be made in cash, the exact amount only. Please enclose a pre-paid addressed registered delivery envelope large enough for your passport for postal returns. Benin visas can be obtained from the Benin Consulate

in London either in person or by post (the consulate advise to use a courier company or registered delivery for postal applications). Information for visa applications, supporting documentation and a downloadable visa application form can be obtain from the Benin Consulate website: <http://beninconsulate.co.uk/>, in order to complete your application. Please note that credit and debit cards are not accepted. For postal applications please enclose a pre-paid addressed registered delivery envelope large enough for your passport.

For both visas you will need to have four blank pages in your passport. In order for you to arrange your visas in time we recommend you to submit your visa applications at the earliest possible time of 2 months before the start date of the holiday as visas take at least 25 working days to process for both countries. Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

Vaccinations & Protection

Benin

Although rarely checked, a Yellow Fever vaccination and certificate is a compulsory requirement for entry into Togo and Benin. We recommend protection against malaria, hepatitis A, diphtheria, tetanus, typhoid and polio. You may also want to take immunisation against meningococcal meningitis and cholera. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on different prophylaxis available against malaria. Take all your vaccination certificates with you as they may be requested on entry to any of the countries visited. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure.

Togo

Although rarely checked, a Yellow Fever vaccination and certificate is a compulsory requirement for entry into Togo and Benin. We recommend protection against malaria, hepatitis A, diphtheria, tetanus, typhoid and polio. You may also want to take immunisation against meningococcal meningitis. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on different prophylaxis available against malaria. Take all your vaccination certificates with you as they may be requested on entry to any of the countries visited. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure.

Preparing for your Trip

Climate

Benin

The climates in Togo and Benin are mostly tropical with two main rainy seasons in the central and southern regions - May to June and September to November. This should not adversely affect the trip as the tour operates outside the main seasons. Average temperatures range from the mid to high 20s Centigrade, with little change at night. Additional information and climate charts can be accessed at <http://www.explore.co.uk/weather>. Seasonal weather patterns can be unpredictable. Up-to-date information on the weather worldwide can be found by following the BBC weather link on this page.

Togo

The climates in Togo are mostly tropical with two main rainy seasons in the central and southern regions - May to June and September to November. This should not adversely affect the trip as the tour operates outside the main seasons. Average temperatures range from the mid to high 20s Centigrade, with little change at night.

Clothing

Clothing should be lightweight but a warm jumper is also advisable, as nights can be cool. Don't forget your swim gear. Although we strongly advise against swimming in the ocean, some of the hotels have a swimming pool. A scarf is also recommended as protection against dust whilst driving in the drier areas.

Please note: Some areas we travel through have strong Muslim influences and people may be offended by shorts or revealing dresses, which can attract unwelcome attention. Therefore you should dress with respect for local sensibilities. Women should also cover their heads when entering a sanctuary, though in general, mosques are forbidden to non-Muslim.

Equipment

Bring as a minimum a sleeping sheet or lightweight sleeping bag. The Stilted village and simple huts provide mosquito nets (additional tents if required at the simple huts have sewn-in mosquito screens) so nets are not required. A torch, sunhat, sun cream and insect repellent are essential. Bottled water is readily available throughout the tour. Binoculars are useful for bird watching. Foam sleeping mats and eating utensils are provided. You may consider bringing swimwear for the occasional hotel pool. Please note that tents and sleeping mats will be provided as and when required.

Footwear

Lightweight walking/hiking boots with good ankle support, plus trainers or sandals for relaxing and travelling in.

Luggage: On Tour

Take a tough soft bag or holdall (or rucksack with detachable frame) suitable to be carried by 4WD vehicle. Also take a day sack for items needed during any walks (20- 30 litre). The limit does not include your camera equipment.

Luggage allowance on trip: 15Kg

General Information

Country details

Benin

Population: 8,791,832

Size of Country: 112,622 sq km

Major Language: French

Religion: Christian, Roman Catholic, Celestial Church of Christ, Methodist,

Time Difference to GMT: +1

Togo

Population: 6,619,000

Size of Country: 58,785 sq km

Major Language: French

Religion: The majority of the Togolese Republic have indigenous beliefs.

Electric Supply & Plugs

Benin

2 Pin Round

Togo

2 Pin Round

Why Choose Explore

We've been creating award-winning pioneering adventure holidays for over 30 years, earning the trust of thousands of delighted customers, who feel safe in our hands. Our tour leaders have expert local knowledge and our tours are designed to take you off the beaten track to see the most exotic, inspiring and dramatic places in the world.

- With over 30 years' experience, we are passionate about what we do.
- Pioneering small group adventures, self-guided, private journeys & tailor-made holidays.
- Award winning tour leaders who you can trust.
- Responsible travel is and always has been one of the driving principles of Explore.

Our adventure holidays are full of exciting things to see and do, exploring in small groups travelling by bus, boat, plane, rickshaw, camel, or any number of unusual forms of transport. Often you will stay in family run hotels and village houses and enjoy authentic local cuisine. In this way, it's easy to discover the true heart of the people and the place you travel to – and make some new friends along the way. Each tour is uniquely different, so please feel free to browse through our tours to see what may whet your appetite.

Cool Earth

Explore are proud to support Cool Earth in their effort to reduce global carbon dioxide levels through the prevention of deforestation in the South America rainforest. Cool Earth focus on areas in immediate danger of deforestation, supporting local communities to be forest guardians. To date 350,000 acres of rainforest has been protected. Saving rainforest also protects rare animals and plants, allows local forest communities to maintain their way of life, and protects a major source of oxygen and fresh water. When you travel on an Explore holiday we make a donation to Cool Earth that exceeds the impact of our customers flights each year.

Earth Matters

We are passionate about sustainable travel and work hard to create tours where your holiday delivers real benefits to the local communities. We minimise our impact by travelling in small groups, respecting local cultures, reducing waste and offsetting 100% of the CO2 from our flights.

When you travel with Explore, you are directly contributing to local economies and helping empower the people you meet. We currently support a range of charities and good causes, including: Toilet Twinning (helping to flush away poverty), Lone Buffalo Foundation (a community project based in Laos providing creative skills for young people) and have recently supported women's cooperatives in Borneo and Morocco. We are a member of Tourism Concern's Ethical Tour Operator Group

(www.tourismconcern.org.uk) and support their campaign for fair and ethical tourism. We also care passionately about the world's wildlife and actively support and promote the Born Free Organisation and Mahouts Elephant Foundation.

Booking Your Holiday

Peace of mind - book with confidence

You can book your Explore holiday with confidence, as all monies paid to us for your trip are fully protected. Explore is a fully bonded tour operator licensed by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and by ABTOT.

The air holiday packages (Tours including flights) that we advertise are ATOL protected, since we hold an Air Travel Organiser's Licence granted by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is ATOL 2595. In addition, As a member of the Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust Limited (ABTOT), Explore has provided a bond to meet the requirements of the Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992. Please note that packages booked outside the UK are only protected when purchased directly with Explore.

Reserving your place

To reserve your place on this tour you will need to check availability on the Explore website or through our dedicated call centre based in the UK where you can. Our tours can fill up quickly so you are advised to book as early as possible. If your chosen date is 'Available' or 'Guaranteed' we will be able to provisionally hold you a space for up to 48 hours.

For Self-Guided holidays and Private Journeys simply choose your date of travel and let us know so we can confirm all ground services.

The easiest way to confirm your booking is through our website. When you are ready to book, we normally require a 10% non-refundable deposit, but for some holidays this may be more to cover such items as permit fees, internal flights or other non-refundable services. If your travel starts within 60 days of booking, full payment will be required at the time of booking

100% No Surcharge Guarantee

The price paid for our holidays is no longer subject to change. Once booked and confirmed we will guarantee the price you pay will not increase, whatever the circumstances. You will not be approached to pay fuel surcharges unlike the vast majority of other adventure tour operators. The price guarantee applies to all new bookings departing between 1st January 2016 and 31st December 2017.

Trip Itinerary Versions

Itinerary details may vary depending on departure date and alternative itineraries for this tour may exist. Please refer to the dates and prices page on our website to check which itinerary operates on each departure date.

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.

Please note: 2017 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 2017. 2018/19 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 2018.

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