

## Côte d'Ivoire: In the Land of Cocoa

Our 12-day tour to Ivory Coast offers a unique opportunity to discover the country's historical, cultural, and scenic diversity. In the south, huge oil palm, rubber and cocoa plantations predominate the vegetation, while in the north drier savannah determines the landscape. The coastal towns influenced by French colonial history, such as Grand Bassam, form an interesting contrast to the contemplative capital Yamoussoukro, which is overthrown by the Basilica of Notre Dame de la Paix, a replica of St. Peter's Basilica. Experience mask and initiation dances of the Baoulé, Senoufo and Dan people, walk over mystical vine bridges, discover the secret of the fetish houses, and visit untouched fishing villages.

Once you have travelled to Ivory Coast, you will always want to come back.

### Tour Highlights

- Grand Bassam: Colonial charm and beach
- Yamoussoukro: Impressive basilica
- Spectacular mask dances
- Odienné: Fetish houses and mud mosques
- Man: Vine bridges and sacred monkeys
- Sassandra: Hippo viewing
- Grand Lahou: Azagny NP and stilt village
- Colourful fishing villages in the south
- Korhogo: Handicraft and mud architecture
- Abidjan: Modern city skyline lifestyle

### Day 1: Arrival at Abidjan - Grand Bassam

Meet and greet with your local tour guide and transfer to the hotel at Grand Bassam (30 km).

(-/-), overnight at Grand Bassam, Hotel Etoile du Sud or similar

### Day 2: Grand Bassam - Yamoussoukro

Grand Bassam, some 30 km east of Abidjan, was the first Ivorian capital under French rule. Since 2012, it has been enlisted as World Heritage site as a typical colonial town with separate quarters for commerce, administration, housing for Europeans and housing for Africans. Your guide will show you the colonial-era buildings, most of them in different stages of decay, as well as the Governor's Palace, now housing the National Costume Museum. A quite interesting collection of traditional clothing, models of Ivorian architecture, fascinating old photographs and a quality selection of masks will provide you a good overview of the rich culture in the region you will visit. Around noon you leave Grand Bassam and the coastal area and drive on the only "real" highway of West Africa to Yamoussoukro. (approx. 280 km)

(B/D), overnight at Yamoussoukro, Hotel Le Rocher or similar

### **Day 3: Yamoussoukro - Bouaké**

This morning we'll explore Yamoussoukro, the administrative capital of Côte d'Ivoire. Being the birthplace of former president Félix Houphouët-Boigny, this small agricultural town became the country's capital in 1983 and was rebuilt according to a master plan to glorify the president and his family and ancestors. Today, Yamoussoukro boasts a population of more than 250,000 and high-profile vanity projects like the stunning *Basilique de Notre Dame de la Paix* (bearing a deliberate resemblance to St. Peter's Basilica), six-lane highways bordered by more than 10,000 street lights or the seat of the Félix Houphouët-Boigny Foundation. On our city tour, we soak up the special atmosphere of these places - the basilica, the conference halls and the stunning views over the surrounding urban landscape.

This afternoon we'll continue on to Bouaké, the Ivory Coast's second largest city. and visit the village of Kondeyaokro, where you will experience an unforgettable Goli mask dance by the Baoulé. These traditional dances are believed to protect against mischief and to connect people with supernatural powers and gods. (approx. 100 km)

(B/D), overnight at Bouaké, Hotel Résidence Eléphant or similar

### **Day 4: Bouaké – Korhogo**

After breakfast this morning we depart from Bouaké to make our way to Korhogo, historic stronghold of the Senoufo people. Skilled farmers living in tight-knit communities, the Senoufo hold on to their pre-Islamic animistic beliefs, and their artisans are well known for their fascinating craftwork. In the vicinity of the city, we watch woodcarvers, beadmakers, potters and weavers at work. Attend a traditional „panther“ dance, the Boloï, in the evening, another splendid experience of local cultural heritage. Several young men in panther costumes entertain the crowd with incredible acrobatics to the sound of the tam-tam. (approx. 320 km)

(B/D), Overnight at Korhogo, Hotel Complexe Olympe or similar

### **Day 5: Korhogo - Odiénné**

After breakfast, continue your journey via Boundiali, the country's cotton center, heading west to Odiénné. This area is inhabited by animists and Muslims alike. En route, visit fetish houses in Niofouin and get an insight into the mystical world of animist Senoufo. You'll reach Odiénné in the early afternoon. The picturesque town lies in the middle of a valley surrounded by orchards at the foot of the mountain Dien Quélé (800 m). Later today we'll drive to the small village of Samatiguila. Here you'll visit a beautiful 17th-century-built clay mosque in Sudanese-Sahel architecture style. (approx. 320 km).

(B/D), Overnight in Odiénné, Hotel des Frontières or similar

### **Day 6: Odiénné - Man**

Via Toubia we embark on a road trip to Man, called “city of 18 mountains”, a reference to its scenic location at the base of lush green hills on the eastern edge of the Guinea highland. The whole region is rich in traditions, crafts and natural attractions. En route, passing the mountainous area inhabited by the Malinké and Dan people, where few Dan villages still practice the tradition of ritual stilt dances, we are lucky to witness another authentic and spectacular dance performance in which the whole community takes part: White dressed women sing and dance by the beat of the drums while young men perform acrobatic dances that evoke unforgettable emotions. (approx. 270 km).

(B/D), Overnight at Man, Hotel Les Cascades or similar

### **Day 7: Man: Excursion to Lieupleu**

In the morning, visit the Cascade waterfall on the outskirts of Man and a sacred forest populated by a troupe of Campbell's monkeys. According to local tradition, a beautiful royal princess was once sacrificed to attract spirits of glamour and vigour to the empire. After her death, the princess turned into a monkey. Ever since, monkeys have been revered locally. After lunch, we make an extended excursion to one of the country's largest and last remaining vine bridges near the village of Lieupleu, where you will be challenged to check the bearing capacity of liana vines, suspended over the Cavally River. There is a stretch of cocoa and coffee plantations on the other side. The vine bridge may only be walked on barefoot and it is said that the forest spirits had a hand in its construction and that no one was allowed to watch it being built. (approx. ca. 260 km).

(B/D), Overnight at Man, Hotel Les Cascades or similar

### **Day 8: Man - San Pedro**

This morning you'll begin the long drive south. Along the way there will be some stops to stretch our legs and to learn about cocoa processing. In the evening you'll arrive at San Pedro, the second largest port city of the country. You'll stay at a nice beach resort. (approx. 410 km)

(B/D), overnight at San Pedro, Hotel Les Jardins d'Ivoire or Enotel or similar

### **Day 9: San Pedro - Sassandra**

We depart San Pedro on the journey to Sassandra. Founded by the Portuguese on a river estuary, Sassandra was an important outlet of timber until the construction of the modern port at San Pedro. Today

Sassandra is a bustling fishing village, with scores of rainbow-coloured boats lined up on the beach. We'll arrive in Sassandra in the late morning, and after a chance to get lunch we will begin our tour of this colourful small town. Later in the day, we visit a plant for the production of red palm oil. before we embark on a 2-hour hippo-tracking boat trip on the pristine Sassandra River, flanked by thick gallery forest. (approx. 80 km).

(B/D), overnight at Sassandra, Hotel Le Pollet or similar

### **Day 10: Sassandra - Grand Lahou: Azagny NP**

This morning we will drive to Grand Lahou. After lunch, take on a beautiful boat ride to the mouth of River Bandama, the country's largest watercourse. Visit the fishing village of Ancien Lahou and the Assagny National Park, whose western entrance is only accessible by waterway. Accompanied by a park ranger, we will set off for a one-hour walk through the forest and savanna reserve, home to a small population of forest elephants and a large variety of birds. (approx. 150 km)

(B/D), overnight at Grand Lahou, Hotel Le Ravin or similar

### **Day 11: Grand Lahou - Grand Bassam**

Departing after breakfast, we continue the journey east driving to Grand Bassam. En route, we'll visit Tiégba, a lagoon village built on stilts and accessible only by pirogue. The village's 6,000 people are followers of six religions who live in peaceful co-existence. Later today, we'll arrive in the economic capital Abidjan, for a long time the most modern and cosmopolitan city of the whole region. Passing the famous skyline of Le Plateau, Abidjan's financial district, and after a short visit to the modern, elephant-shaped St. Paul's Cathedral, we cross the Ebrié lagoon into the popular districts and southern outskirts of town. We expect to arrive in Grand Bassam in the early evening.

(B/D), overnight at Grand Bassam, Hotel Etoile du Sud or similar

### **Day 12: Grand Bassam - end of tour**

During the last breakfast on your trip, you can plan your time until departure. A visit to the beach, for example, is recommended. In Grand Bassam, you will have a day room available until your departure to the airport, which allows you to leave your luggage at the hotel to do your own exploration of the city. In the late afternoon, you'll be taken to Abidjan International Airport where our trip ends. (approx. 30 km).

(B), Day-use rooms at Grand Bassam

Please note that from time to time our itineraries may be amended.