

## Sierra Leone | Practical Information

### Accommodation

In Sierra Leone we sleep in simple but clean hotels and guesthouses. Doha's Hotel in Bo is a comfortable hotel with a swimming pool. Most hotels and guesthouses have their power supply from a generator, which is only switched on in the morning and in the evening for some hours. The guesthouses on the Banana Islands and in River No. 2 are located directly at the sea. The rooms have their own shower and toilet, there is no hot water and no air conditioning.

Here is a selection of the hotels used on our tour:

<http://daltonsbananaguesthouse.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/Ericonsonguesthouse>

[https://www.facebook.com/dohashotel/?\\_\\_xts\\_\\_\[0\]=68.ARDDZn30LxWf8Dp](https://www.facebook.com/dohashotel/?__xts__[0]=68.ARDDZn30LxWf8Dp)

### Airlines

Airlines with scheduled flights from Europe to Freetown include Air France and Brussels Airlines. For more information please consult the following websites:

Air France: [www.airfrance.com](http://www.airfrance.com) and Brussels Airlines: [www.brusselsairlines.com](http://www.brusselsairlines.com).

If you book a tailor-made trip with us you can fly the airline of your choice and we can coordinate your flight arrangement with the land itinerary. We will be pleased to provide you with our consultation and support.

### Clothing

Light short-sleeved cotton clothing is recommended for the days and a long-sleeved shirt and trousers for the evenings which will help you to fend off mosquitoes. In the rainy season you need a waterproof jacket and/or an umbrella. (see chapter "when to go"). In some hotels there is a laundry service on offer, so you can get your washing done. As for footwear, you should carry with you a good pair of walking shoes for our hiking tours and a pair of sandals. Thongs are useful in shower and pool areas. Don't forget your swimwear! You will have the opportunity to swim in the sea, relax on beautiful beaches and bathe in the pools of magnificent waterfalls or in the swimming pool of your hotel.

### Communication

International and national calls can be made from post offices and hotels. The prefix for UK is 0044, for USA and Canada 001, for Sierra Leone 00232. In major cities you can make phone calls with your mobile phone, however, the coverage is not very good. For detailed information please contact your provider

prior to departure. If you have a GSM phone and it has been „unlocked“, it is possible to buy a local SIM card for about 2 US-\$ and buy top-ups.

Internet access is widely available in Freetown and prices not expensive, although connections are often slow. Outside Freetown, you will find only few internet cafés and they are more expensive than in Freetown.

### **Electric Supply & Plugs**

220-240V AC, 50 Hz. Sierra Leone's power supply facilities suffered damage during its civil war and have not been properly maintained since. As a result power supply situation is very poor and unreliable all over the country. Only bigger hotels in Freetown and in some bigger towns have a generator. Remember to charge your batteries wherever you have the opportunity. Sierra Leone mostly uses British-style three-pin plugs (D and G). If you need an adapter it is best to bring it with you as you may not find any in the shops in Sierra Leone. You will need to bring a good torch with you

### **Food and Drinks**

In the itinerary we state which meals are included on each day.

Food included in the breakfast varies according to hotel standard. Most hotels serve bread, butter, jam, sometimes honey and processed cheese or omelette for breakfast. It also includes tea or coffee.

Upmarket hotels usually serve buffet breakfast. Dinner we usually take in the restaurants of our hotels or in clean, thoroughly selected restaurants in town. In many places international cuisine is served.

Sierra Leone's main staple is rice and, to a lesser extent, maize and cassava that is generally cooked until the root has turned into a paste. The dishes are served with spicy sauces usually containing meat or fish. The main ingredients of the sauces are leaves like cassava and sweet potato leaves, but also ladies' fingers, groundnut and vegetables. Gari – grated cassava – is popular in Bo. Potatoes are also very popular.

The coast is great for delicious fish and seafood dishes. Here you will find prawns, lobster, crayfish or octopus, as well as barracuda, grouper and snapper on the menus.

Tap water should be boiled or filtered before you drink it. In all bigger cities you can buy mineral water in bottles. In the rural areas and villages homemade palm wine also known as poyo is sold everywhere. Soft drinks like Coca cola and Fanta are available throughout the country

### **Health**

A Yellow Fever vaccination and certificate is a compulsory requirement for entry into Sierra Leone (see visa requirements). You should always carry the certificate with you while being in Africa.

Immunisations against tetanus, diphtheria, polio and hepatitis A are recommended by the World Health Organization, regardless of your destination. For other vaccinations and prophylactic measures please consult your doctor, travel clinic or tropical medical bureau before departure. For further information please consult our Infoportal.

To prevent traveller's diarrhoea, peel fresh fruits before eating them and avoid fresh salads and ice cubes in basic restaurants. Be careful and very selective when eating or drinking in street stalls and make sure that meat is always well cooked and plates and serving utensils are clean. Don't drink hastily ice-cold drinks. Consult your doctor before departure for appropriate medication and rehydration mixtures.

The best prevention of malaria is to avoid being bitten. The evening wear clothes covering your entire body and use mosquito repellent. Sleep under a mosquito net and/or turn AC or fan on. For further prophylactic measures consult a specialist for tropical diseases.

Keep away from street dogs, monkeys and other mammals that could carry rabies. Avoid bathing in standing bodies of water because they are high-risk areas for bilharzia.

## Literature

### Travel guides:

- West Africa, Lonely Planet, 9th edition, published September 2017
- Sierra Leone, Bradt Travel Guide, 1st edition, published May 2009
- The Rough Guide to West Africa, 5th edition, published June 2009

### Novels and biographies:

- Heart of the Matter, Graham Greene, Vintage 2001
- Last Harmattan of Alusine Dunbar, Heinemann International, 1990

### Civil war:

- A Long Way Gone; Memoirs of a Boy Soldier, Ishmeal Beah, Sarah Crichton Books 2007
- Soldiers of Light, Daniel Bergner, Penguin Books, 2005

## Money

Sierra Leone's currency is the leone (SLL). Exchange rates are 1 € = 12.056 SLL, 1 \$ = 10.155 SLL, 1 CAD = 8.156 SLL, 1 AUD = 7.600 SLL and 1£ = 14.110 SLL (as of July 2021).

Notes are in denominations of 10,000, 5,000, 2,000 and 1,000; coins come in 500, 200, 100 and 50.

Please note that finding change can be very difficult at times, particularly in small shops, restaurants, taxis and street stalls, so you should always have a good supply of cash money in small denominations or coins.

You can change cash money in banks, some hotels and foreign exchange bureaus in Freetown and other major cities. Normal banking hours of the branches of Rokel Bank and Sierra Leone Commercial Bank are from Monday to Friday from 08.30 to 15.30, Sierra Leone Commercial Bank opens on Saturdays from 09.30 to 13.30. However, banks exchange money usually at a lower rate than foreign exchange bureaus. In foreign exchange bureaus all widely used currencies like euro, US dollar, Swiss franc, British Pound Sterling are easy to be exchanged. Please note, that only new dollar bills (with the "big heads") are exchanged. "Small heads" or bills of 1996 or before or one-dollar bills won't be accepted. The larger the denomination, the better the rate. International credit cards are practically not accepted, you cannot use them as a means of payment and there are no international ATMs in Sierra Leone to withdraw money. Rokel Commercial Bank in Freetown with its branches in Makeni, Bo, Kono and Kenema is the only bank to give you cash advance on your credit card. You don't need your PIN code but will need your passport. However, this procedure is time consuming, and commission is very high. Travellers' cheques are accepted, but only in banks. Commission is extremely high and you will get a low exchange rate. You will be asked to produce both your passport and the receipt you get from your bank when purchasing them.

## Photography

Sierra Leone is a real treasure trove for passionate photographers. Whether the primates on Tiwai Island, the diamond excavations near Kenema, the pristine beaches in Sierra Leone or the chimps of Tacugama: there are countless photographic subjects. Before you snap people please ask permission. A small friendly conversation can help you to break the ice and win your subject's sympathy. Taking pictures is not allowed inside the museums. It is strictly forbidden to take pictures of military buildings and people wearing uniforms, airports, dams, bridges, power plants, police stations, control posts along the roads and border posts!

## Safety

The danger most likely to affect a tourist is pick-pocketing, particularly in busy markets, bus stations, in crowds in the streets or in shared taxis. Bag snatchers are few, but can occasionally strike, speeding past on mopeds. Do not wear expensive jewellery or carry large amounts of cash or expensive items such as cameras. You should keep belongings close when walking down streets. We recommend you to keep your documents, cash money, credit card and cheques in a skin-hugging hidden money-belt or a button-up chest pocket. Always travel with photocopies of your documents and keep them in a separate bag. Avoid walking around the streets at night, especially alone. During late evening or around/after midnight, we recommend you to use a taxi.

For up-to-date information and safety and security advice about your destination please check your government's travel advisory: [www.fco.gov.uk](http://www.fco.gov.uk), [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov), [www.voyage.gc.ca](http://www.voyage.gc.ca).

In case of emergency please contact your embassy or representation in Sierra Leone:

### For UK citizens:

- **British High Commission**

6 Spur Road

Freetown, Sierra Leone

Tel: +232 (0) 99801493 / +232 (0) 76912606 /+232 (0) 99912606 during office hours

Tel: +44 (0)1908 516 666 or +232 (0) 76780713, Consular assistance (24 hour)

e-mail: [freetown.consular.enquiries@fco.gov.uk](mailto:freetown.consular.enquiries@fco.gov.uk)

For further information click here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/world/sierra-leone>

### For US-citizens :

- **Embassy of the United States of America, Consular Section**

Southridge-Hill Station

Freetown, Sierra Leone

Telephone: +232 76 515 000 ext. 5086, 5084, 5080, 5085

e-mail: [consularfreetown@state.gov](mailto:consularfreetown@state.gov)

For further information click here: [www.freetown.usembassy.gov](http://www.freetown.usembassy.gov)

### For Canadian citizens :

All inquiries and emergency-related requests should be directed to the

- **High Commission of Canada in Accra, Ghana**

**High Commission of Canada**

42 Independence Avenue, Accra, Ghana

P.O. Box 1639, Accra, Ghana

Telephone: +233 (302) 21 15 21 or 22 85 55

Fax: +233 (302) 21 15 23 or 77 37 92

E-Mail: [accra@international.gc.ca](mailto:accra@international.gc.ca)

For further information click here: [www.canadainternational.gc.ca/ghana/](http://www.canadainternational.gc.ca/ghana/)

## Time Zone Difference

Sierra Leone's time zone is UTC/GMT + 0. As they do not observe daylight saving time they are one hour behind in summertime

## Tipping

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognized part of life in Africa. In the more well-to-do restaurants you can tip 5 – 10% if you were satisfied. For hotel tipping guidelines are as follows: for porters in Sierra Leone 4000 - 5000 SLL, for housekeeping per person per night 5000 to 6000 SLL. At your discretion you might also consider tipping your driver, tour guide and local guides in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

## Visa Requirements

You may choose to use a visa service or send your application to the representations listed below.

Please note, that for this trip you need to have 2 empty pages in your passport.

Please note that a Yellow Fever vaccination and certificate is a compulsory requirement for entry into all three countries (see chapter "Health"). The certificate is often checked upon arrival.

All visa information is subject to change. You should confirm all visa related issues with the relevant embassy or consulate prior to departure.

Visas are required by all nationalities. Passports valid for a minimum of six months beyond date of departure are required by all. Visas are issued in countries with Sierra Leone representation or at the border.

### For UK citizens:

- **Sierra Leone High Commission**  
41 Eagle Street  
Holborn, London, WC1R 4TL  
Tel.: +44 (0) 207 404 01 40; fax: +44 (0) 207 430 9862  
E-Mail: [info@slhc-uk.org.uk](mailto:info@slhc-uk.org.uk)  
For further information click here: [www.slhc-uk.org.uk](http://www.slhc-uk.org.uk)

### For US citizens:

- **Embassy of Sierra Leone in the United States**  
1701 19th Street NW  
Washington DC 20009-1605  
Tel.: +1 202 939 9261, 62, 63 (Consular service)  
[info@embassyofsierraleone.net](mailto:info@embassyofsierraleone.net)  
For further information click here: [www.embassyofsierraleone.net](http://www.embassyofsierraleone.net)

### For Canadian citizens:

There is no Embassy of Sierra Leone in Canada. Canadian passport holders are required to contact the Embassy of Sierra Leone in USA (see above).

## What to take

- Passport
- Air ticket
- International yellow vaccination card
- Photocopies of your documents (it's good to keep them in a separate bag)
- Cash money, credit card
- Hard top suitcase or tear resistant travel bag + day bag

- Protective cover for your suitcase
- Swimwear
- A pair of flip flops (for shower and pool etc.)
- A pair of sandals
- Comfortable footwear, non-slip hiking boots
- Long lightweight trousers, shorts, long-sleeved shirt for the evening, light thin cotton clothing
- Sunhat and sunglasses
- Suncream
- Umbrella and/or waterproof jacket
- Towel
- Toilet paper, tissues, wet wipes
- Torch with spare bulb and batteries
- Swiss knife
- Personal first-aid kit
- Insect repellent
- Photographic equipment, memory cards/film rolls, batteries
- Binoculars

## When to go

### Climate

The climate in Sierra Leone is tropical and wet all year round. The country has one rainy season from May to October and one dry season that runs from November to April. In the rainy season the relative humidity is high, it reaches up to 90%. Sierra Leone's coast is one of the wettest areas in West Africa with an annual rainfall of more than 5000 mm. Average daytime temperatures rise to around 28°C to 30°C, at night temperature can drop to roughly 23°C. In the dry season temperature generally exceeds 30°C, the hottest months being February, March and April when average temperatures reach or top 35°C. In December and January the harmattan winds blow, bringing dust from the Sahara.

**Best period for this trip:** from November to March/April

## What you should know before you go

... Sierra Leone is a wonderful country to visit, but remember that Africans have a different perception of time. A trip through West Africa requires a high degree of flexibility, patience and tolerance, western standards regarding service, punctuality, comfort and hygiene cannot be applied here. Although we thoroughly choose our vehicles and use only vehicles in good condition, flat tires or other car breakdowns can happen. The road conditions in African countries can change unexpectedly due to heavy rainfalls requiring a detour or bridges can suddenly become impassable. We do our utmost best to ensure a smooth journey but please understand that delays may occur. Technical defects or service inconveniences in the hotels such as the lack of towels can often be rectified within a few minutes. In case of any inconvenience please contact your tour guide!

All information, opinions and advice contained on our Website are provided without any guarantees, conditions or warranties as to its accuracy and for general information only.