

Senegal/Gambia: Land between the Rivers

On this journey through Senegal and The Gambia we discover the stunning birdlife and the natural beauties of two of West Africa's most fascinating destinations. A large number of nature reserves, national parks and river landscapes offer optimal conditions for viewing local species of antelopes and primates, as well as mammals introduced from other parts of Africa. Senegal's outstanding Djoudj Bird Sanctuary is one of the best places for birdwatching in the world. As for the countries' history, it is no less interesting. We'll learn more about the history of the slave trade visiting the Island of Gorée and Juffureh, the birthplace of the famous "Roots" character Kunta Kinteh. Walking around Saint-Louis we'll be taken back to the old days of the French colonies. Beyond that, enjoy the serene beaches of the Grande Côte and the Petite Côte, relax on the shores of the colourful Pink Lake and watch the sun go down behind the baobab trees of the West African savanna!

Tour Highlights:

- Lompoul: Fascinating ocean of dunes
- Gandiol: Boat ride in Langue de Barbarie NP
- Gueumbeul: Rare antelopes
- St. Louis: The jewel of West Africa
- Djoudj: Bird paradise in the Senegal Delta
- Touba: Great Mosque of the Mourides
- Kaolack: Bustling market
- Tendaba: Boat ride through the mangroves
- Makasutu: 5 eco-systems
- Juffureh: The story of Kunta Kinteh
- Sine Saloum: Boat ride across the NP
- Joal Fadiouth: Unique island built on shells
- Bandia: Wildlife viewing
- Pink Lake: Stunning blaze of colour
- Isle de Goree: Slave history
- Dakar - Banjul: two contrasting capital cities

Day 1: Arrival at Dakar

Meet and greet with your tour leader at the new Blaise Diagne Airport and transfer to the hotel (approx. 65 km).

(-/-), Overnight at Dakar

Day 2: Dakar - Thiès - Lompoul Desert

This morning we explore Senegal's vibrant capital. Dakar was founded in 1857 by the French as a military post on the lands of the Lebou community. Due to its fast development it became the capital of French West Africa in 1902. We'll visit Independence Square, the Cathedral and the Grand Mosque and we'll see the Presidential Palace and the National Assembly with its modern glass façade. Later today we'll head north to the Lompoul Desert. On our way we stop in Thiès to visit the town which is the third largest city in Senegal with a population officially estimated at 320,000. Thiès is a major industrial city and important business site. We take a stroll through the old town center visiting St. Anne cathedral with its unusual architecture. The town is famous for its high quality tapestries which we possibly may see. We then continue to the Lompoul Desert, where we spend the night in the stunning sand dunes. (approx. 190 km).

(B/D), Overnight in Moorish tents in the Lompoul Desert

Day 3: Lompoul - Gandiol

We start the day with a walk or a camel ride across the dunes stretching from the ocean far inland. Heading north we'll arrive at the fishing village of Gandiol, gateway to the Langue de Barbarie National Park where we board a motorised pirogue to explore this bird paradise in the estuary of the Senegal River, home to many different species of water birds. We'll spend the night in a *campement* on the river banks. (150 km).

(B/D), overnight at Gandiol

Day 4: Gandiol - Saint-Louis

Early this morning we head to Gueumbeul Reserve, It covers an area of 720 hectares where we'll spend two hours of game viewing. The park is home to some endangered species and is also the center for reintroduction programs of the Dorcas gazelle, Addax antelope and the scimitar oryx. The reserve is also inhabited by wild boars, monkeys and African spurred tortoises. We continue north to St. Louis, former capital of the French colony of „Afrique occidentale française“ and considered by many as the jewel of West Africa. Despite population growth to estimated 175.000 inhabitants Saint-Louis has retained its charme. This afternoon we will explore the beautiful old town with its well-preserved and restored colonial buildings by a typical horse-drawn carriage. The old quarters on the Island of Saint-Louis at the mouth of the Senegal River were inscribed a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2000. We'll also discover the thriving fishing community of Guet N'Dar situated on the Langue de Barbarie peninsula. (approx. 30 km).

(B/D), overnight at St. Louis

Day 5: Saint-Louis: Excursion to Djoudj NP

Near Saint-Louis the Senegal River pours into the ocean forming a large delta. In this wetland, about 60 km from the town's center, lies the world's third-largest bird sanctuary, the Djoudj National Park designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1981. This morning we will board a motorised pirogue to explore the waterways of this natural paradise in search for aquatic birds and other birds belonging to

the 400 species living in the park. We return to Saint-Louis. The afternoon is left free for you to relax on the beach or stroll on your own through this bustling town. (approx. 140 km).

(B/D), overnight at St. Louis

Day 6: Saint-Louis - Touba - Kaolack

Today we drive to Kaolack, center of the Senegalese groundnut industry. En route we'll visit the holy town of Touba, stronghold of Senegal's most famous Mouride Sufi brotherhood. Touba is a sacred place and the Mourides have strict rules indicating that the consumption of alcohol and tobacco is prohibited and respectful behaviour is demanded. There is no police in town and nobody needs to pay taxes. We'll explore the Great Mosque with the tomb of Cheick Amadou Bamba, founder and spiritual leader of the Mourides. In the afternoon we continue to Kaolack (approx. 280 km).

(B/D), overnight at Kaolack

Day 7: Kaolack - Tendaba (The Gambia)

This morning we will have a quick tour of Kaolack's market, one of the largest covered markets in West Africa, surrounded by oriental arcades. The goods sold in the market range from meat, fruit and vegetables to clothing and Chinese mobile telephones. On our way to the Gambian border we'll visit one of the mystic stone circles of the Sine-Saloum region. At Farafenni we cross into The Gambia. This afternoon we'll arrive at Tendaba. On arrival we'll have a two hours' boat trip through the complex channels called bolongs to discover the local plant life and birdlife. (approx. 160 km).

(B/D), overnight at Tendaba Camp

Day 8: Tendaba - Kiang West NP - Banjul

This morning we take a game drive in Kiang West National Park situated on the southern bank of the mighty Gambia River. We may see crocodiles, birds and mammals such as warthog, various species of antelope and monkeys. Even leopard is said to still exist in this mangrove area on the border to Senegal. On our way to Banjul we'll stop to visit a Mandinka village. (approx. 150 km).

(B/D), overnight at Banjul

Day 9: Banjul: Excursion to Makasutu

This morning we'll visit the Makasutu cultural forest, a nature reserve of 1000-acres encompassing five different eco-systems. We will spend the afternoon on a site-seeing tour of Banjul, the country's economic and administrative centre formerly called Bathurst. This small capital of only 60.000 inhabitants lies on a peninsula. We'll explore the central market and the fish market as well as the craft center, a good opportunity to buy some Gambian souvenirs. A wide range of locally-produced crafts are available, including leather goods, puppets, woodcarvings, gold and silver jewelry. We'll visit the National Museum and see the Half-Die Mosque which was built in 1926 in honour of the victims of a cholera epidemic in 1869. It was restored in 1950. (approx. 80 km).

(B/D), overnight at Banjul

Day 10: Banjul - James Island - Toubacouta

Today we cross the river once more to Barra and later take a boat ride to James Island, 30 km from the river mouth. We'll visit the ruins of Fort James, designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2003 and explore the history of Kunta Kinteh, famous character in the novel Roots, born in the Mandinka village of Juffureh only 4 km north of the island which was renamed to Kunta Kinteh Island in 2011.

This afternoon we cross the border into Senegal heading for Toubacouta, The rest of the day will be at your leisure to relax and enjoy the beautiful sunset. (approx. 110 km)

(B/D), overnight at Toubacouta

Day 11: Toubacouta: Boat ride in Saloum Delta NP

This morning we'll take a boat ride to explore the Sine-Saloum Delta, once the area of the Serer pre-colonial kingdoms of the same name. The Saloum Delta is Senegal's second-largest national park, created in 1976 and inscribed a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2011. We wind our way through a labyrinth of channels, past mangroves and small villages. We may see fishermen at work and view many species of waterbirds. This afternoon is free for relaxation at the hotel's swimming pool or a walk to the nearby village. (approx. 160 km).

(B/D), overnight at Toubacouta

Day 12: Toubacouta - Ndangane

This morning we continue to Foundiougne, where we get a ferry to cross the river. Then we'll drive through Senegal's biggest palm grove to Joal Fadiouth, birthplace of the country's first president, Léopold Sédar Senghor. Joal is an important center of the Senegalese fishing industry. Here we'll visit the unique village of Fadiouth, entirely built on an island artificially made of oyster and clam shells. The village can only be reached by a solid wooden bridge. Another bridge leads to an unusual cemetery, where both Muslims and Christians are buried in the same place. The granaries for millet and groundnuts built on stilts in the water are also worth a visit. We continue our trip heading to Ndangane, where deserted sandy beaches and a stunning sunset are waiting for us. (approx. 200 km).

(B/D), overnight at Ndangane

Day 13: Ndangane

Day at leisure. You may relax on the beautiful beach, take a walk or an optional boat ride. You can also explore the place by horse-drawn carriage.

(B/D), overnight at Ndangane

Day 14: Ndangane - Bandia - Pink Lake

Leaving the beach of Ndangane we make our way to the Pink Lake. En route we'll visit the private wildlife reserve of Bandia. We will head out on a game drive in search of wild animals including patas monkeys, gazelles, antelopes, giraffes, zebras and even rhinos. Several species that have been extinct or never have inhabited West Africa have been introduced to the park. In the afternoon we'll arrive at the Pink Lake also called Lake Retba, famous for having been the finishing point of the Dakar Rally. The lake is also known for its high salt content. We'll see the local salt production. The Pink Lake is named for its pink waters, a blaze of colour, particularly visible during the hours before sunset. (approx. 150 km)

(B/D), overnight at Lac Rose

Day 15: Pink Lake - Goree - Dakar - end of tour

Our last day sees us heading back to Dakar where we'll take a ferry to Isle de Goree. The Europeans were the first to settle in the 15th century. We'll take a walking tour across the island which was a center of the Atlantic slave trade for 300 years. In the Slave house, "Maison d'Esclaves" we'll see the „Door of no return“. On our walk we'll also discover the church of St. Charles Boramee, the Historical Museum of Senegal and many other interesting sites. The island was designated a UNESCO World

Heritage Site in 1978. Back to the mainland we should have time for a last-minute shopping. In the evening transfer to the airport. (approx. 100 km)

(B)

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