

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
- 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
- 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 - Lac Rose

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 drive to the Monument de la Renaissance Africaine, a 49-meter bronze statue commissioned by the former president of Senegal, Abdoulaye Wade. Then we'll visit Independence Square and the Karmel Market, famous for the women who sell flowers there. From here we go to the old harbor wharf where we'll take a 20 minute boat trip to Goree Island, which was first settled by Europeans in the 15th century. We explore the interior of the island, which served as a center for the slave trade for a period of 300 years. We visit the Slave House, with the infamous "door of no return". The church of St. Charles de Boromee, the museum and other interesting sites designated as World Heritage by Unesco will also be the subject of this tour. After returning to Dakar, continue to Lac Rose. (approx. 40 km).

(B/D), Overnight at Lac Rose

Day 3: Lac Rose - Saint-Louis

The Pink Lake, Lac Rose, is 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. This morning, 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. Then, 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. 240 km)

(B/D), overnight at St. Louis

Day 4: 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 5: Saint Louis - Lompoul

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 form 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. Later this morning, 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. This afternoon, we'll continue to the desert of Lompoul, a sea of dunes on the coast. At sunset, you can take a walk or a short ride on a dromedary into the dune field made famous by the Paris - Dakar rally (optional). Today you will spend the night under a fantastic starry sky. (approx. 150 km).

(B/D), overnight in a desert camp (nicely furnished tents with shower and toilet en suite).

Day 6: Lompoul - 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, This afternoon, we will have a 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. (approx. 280 km).

(B/D), overnight at Kaolack

Day 7: Kaolack - Tendaba (The Gambia)

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 - Banjul

After breakfast, you will continue to the tranquil and picturesque fishing village of Tanji. Here you will find the largest fish market in the country right on the beach. Hundreds of small fishing boats are crowded together in the shallow water. There is a lively hustle and bustle on the beach: the freshly caught fish is directly cooled or processed. Fishermen, traders and buyers haggle over the best prices, seabirds circle above the scenery, waiting for a favorable moment to secure themselves a few morsels. 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 also visit the National Museum and have a photo stop at the Arch 22, a Triumphal Arch, built to commemorate the coup of July 22, 1994.(approx. 150 km).

(B/D), overnight at Banjul

Day 9: 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 10: Toubacouta: Boat ride in Saloum Delta NP

In the morning you can experience a special adventure in Fathala: lions live in the private park and you can walk with them (optional). Afterwards, you will have the opportunity to explore the small village of Toubacouta or relax by the pool of your hotel. In the afternoon, we will take a pirogue excursion on

the Saloum River. Sine Saloum National Park, Senegal's second largest national park, was established in 1976 and was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2011. We enter into river arms, the so called bolongs, with dense mangrove groves growing on their banks. From the boat we can observe numerous water birds. On a shell island we marvel at a huge sacred baobab. Finally, we see a small island where numerous bird species gather depending on the season.

(B/D), overnight at Toubacouta

Day 11: Toubacouta - Ndangane

This morning we continue to the northern part of the Sine Saloum delta, to the small village of Ndangane. Here you can relax by the hotel pool, explore the town by horse-drawn carriage or take a boat trip to Ile de Mar Lodj or Bolong de Palmarin (optional).

(B/D), overnight at Ndangane

Day 12: Ndangane - Saly Portudal

This morning, we'll drive through Senegal's biggest palm grove to Joal Fadiouth, birthplace of the country's first president, Léopold Sédar Senghor. On the way we see the largest baobab in the country with a diameter of 27 m! 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. In the afternoon another highlight is waiting for you: we will drive to the private Bandia Reserve. You will go on an exciting game drive in search of different animals like monkeys, gazelles, buffalos, giraffes, antelopes and rhinos. The German forester Christian Dehring founded the park in 1997 with the aim of restoring the original savannah landscape. Some animal species were introduced from South Africa such as impalas, zebras, ostriches, and giraffes. The reserve is about 3.500 ha. and offers very good chances to spot the animals. Huge baobabs and the thorn bush savannah give authentic safari feeling. From a terrace you can see very well crocodiles and different bird species, sometimes also warthogs, antelopes, different primates come to the pool. Afterwards we continue to Saly Portudal, where wonderful sandy beaches are waiting for us. (approx. 80 km).

Day 13: Saly Portudal – End of Tour

Day at leisure. You may relax on the beautiful beach, of the Petite Coast. In the evening transfer to the airport.

(B), day use rooms

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