



Guinea-Bissau

📍 245 / POP 1.7 MILLION

Includes ➔

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Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Oysters on Quinhámel beach (p362)
- ➔ O Bistro (p358)
- ➔ Afrikan Ecologde Angurman (p361)

Best Places to Sleep

- ➔ Ponta Anchaca (p362)
- ➔ Afrikan Ecologde Angurman (p361)
- ➔ Ecocantanhez (p363)
- ➔ Ledger Plaza Bissau (p357)
- ➔ Africa Princess (p360)

Why Go?

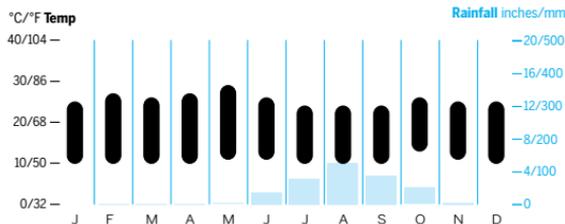
Like a microcosm of Africa, this tiny nation contains multitudes – of landscapes, peoples, cultures and plant and animal life. All of it within reach of the capital, Bissau. Faded colonial-era houses sag, from tropical decay and the weight of history. Decades of Portuguese colonisation were followed by a long painful liberation struggle and then cycles of civil war and political chaos.

Despite hardships and poverty, Bissau-Guineans persevere. The jokes, like the music, are loud but tender. The bowls of grilled oysters are served with a sauce spicy enough to give a kick, but not so strong as to mask the bitterness.

The jewel in the country's crown is the labyrinth of tropical islands that make up the Arquipélago dos Bijagós. Long white-sand beaches are lapped by waters brimming with fish. Hippos, monkeys, chimps and buffaloes thrive in protected reserves and hundreds of bird species call its vast mangroves and wetlands home.

When to Go

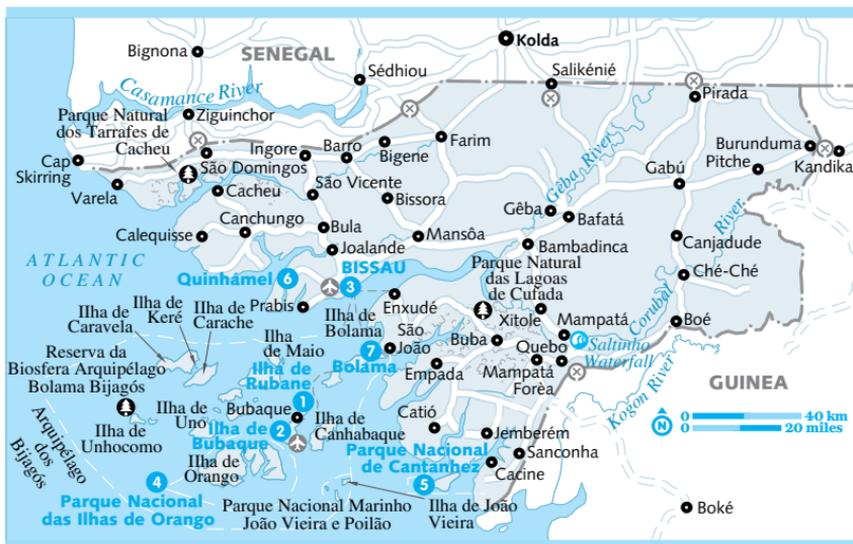
Bissau



Dec–Feb The coolest, driest months, when sea turtles emerge from their nests.

Mar–Jul Hot, humid and sweaty; travel with plenty of water and sunscreen.

Jul–Oct The rainy season.



Guinea-Bissau Highlights

- 1 Ilha de Rubane** (p362) Relaxing amid world-class facilities and natural splendour.
- 2 Ilha de Bubaque** (p360) Experiencing village life, a short walk from your island getaway.
- 3 Bissau Velho** (p357) Tangoing in cobbled streets by candlelight, after a dinner of salty *bacalau* and red wine in the capital.
- 4 Parque Nacional das Ilhas de Orango** (p361) Locking eyes with hippos as they emerge from the warm saltwater lagoons.
- 5 Parque Nacional de Cantanhez** (p363) Following chimpanzee, elephant and buffalo trails through dense forests.
- 6 Quinhâmel** (p362) Dipping oysters in hot lime sauce after a day in the water.
- 7 Bolama** (p360) Sitting on the steps of the abandoned town hall, with its crumbling Greek-style pillars.

BISSAU

☑ 20, 21 / POP 492,000

Built on a low-lying estuary where the Gêba River flows into the Atlantic, apart from the hectic traffic, Bissau is a low-key, unassuming capital. In the early evening, the fading sunlight lends the crumbling colonial facades of Bissau Velho (Old Bissau) a touch of nostalgic glamour. Generators set parts of the town trembling at night, although, street lights or not, people get out of their homes and gather at ramshackle bars.

👁️ Sights

Bissau Velho, a stretch of narrow alleyways and derelict buildings, is 'guarded' by the **Fortaleza d'Amura**. The rebuilt neoclassical **presidential palace** (Praça dos Heróis Nacionais) and brushed-up **Assembleia Ministério da Justiça** (cnr Avs Francisco Mendes & do Brazil)

are architectural expressions of the country's hopes for order and democracy.

🌟 Festivals & Events

Carnaval

CARNIVAL

Bissau and Bubaque's Carnaval are the country's biggest parties. It takes place every year in February or early March during the week leading up to Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent. Music, masks, drinking and dancing are the order of the day.

🛏 Sleeping

★ Ledger Plaza Bissau

HOTEL \$\$

(☎ 245 955 577007; www.laicohotels.com; Av Combatentes Liberdade da Pátria; r from CFA60,000; 📍 @ 📞 📧) Bissau's most luxurious hotel, the Ledger (known to taxi drivers by its former name Lybia Hotel) is where politicians, businesspeople and the small expatriate community congregate – the latter primarily on