

4 easy-to-use sections

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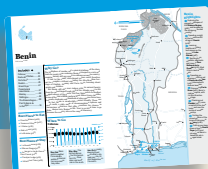


ON THE ROAD

Your complete guide

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2



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Get more from your trip

Learn about the big picture, to make sense of what you see.

3

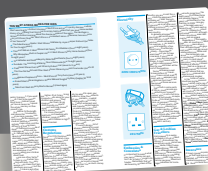


SURVIVAL GUIDE

Your at-a-glance reference

Vital practical information for a smooth trip.

4



How to Use This Book

Look for these symbols to quickly identify listings:

- Sights
- Beaches
- Activities
- Courses
- Tours
- Festivals & Events
- Sleeping
- Eating
- Drinking
- Entertainment
- Shopping
- Information & Transport

All reviews are ordered in our authors' preference, starting with their most preferred option. Additionally:

Sights are arranged in the geographic order that we suggest you visit them and, within this order, by author preference.

Eating and Sleeping reviews are ordered by price range (budget, midrange, top end) and, within these ranges, by author preference.

These symbols give vital information for each listing:

- Must-visit recommendation
- Sustainable or green recommendation
- FREE** No payment required
- Telephone number
- Opening hours
- Parking
- Nonsmoking
- Air-conditioning
- Internet access
- Wi-fi access
- Swimming pool
- Vegetarian selection
- English-language menu
- Family-friendly
- Pet-friendly
- Bus
- Ferry
- Tram
- Train

For symbols used on maps, see the Map Legend.

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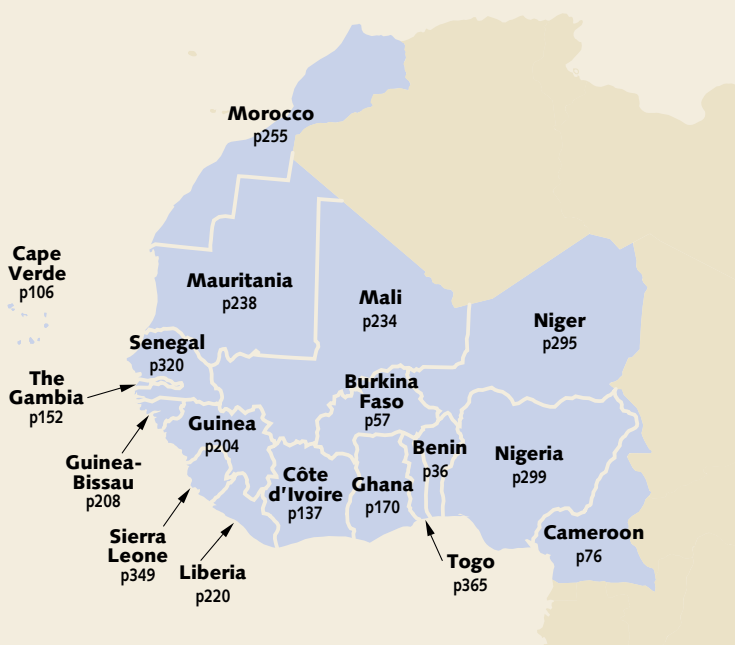


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West Africa



THIS EDITION WRITTEN AND RESEARCHED BY

Anthony Ham,

**Jean-Bernard Carillet, Paul Clammer, Emilie Filou, Nana Luckham,
Tom Masters, Anja Mutić, Caroline Sieg, Kate Thomas,
Vanessa Wruble**

PLAN YOUR TRIP

Welcome to West Africa ..	6
West Africa Map	8
West Africa's Top 17	10
Need to Know	18
If You Like.....	20
Month by Month	23
Itineraries	26
Countries at a Glance ..	32

ON THE ROAD

BENIN.....	36	BURKINA FASO.....	57
Cotonou	38	Ouagadougou	60
Route des Pêches.	43	The Southwest	64
The South	43	Bobo-Dioulasso & Around	64
Porto Novo	43	Banfora & Around	68
Ouidah	45	Sénoufo Country	69
Grand Popo	47	Gaoua & Lobi Country....	69
Possotomé & Lake Ahémé	47	The South	70
Abomey	48	Pô	70
The North.	49	Réserve de Nazinga.....	70
Natitingou	49	Tiébéle & Kassena Country	71
The Atakora Region	50	Understand	71
Parc National de la Pendjari ..	51	Survival Guide.....	73
Understand	51		
Survival Guide.....	53		



MAURITANIA P238

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BOBO-DIOULASSO,
BURKINA FASO P64

Contents

CAMEROON..... 76

Yaoundé..... 77

Western Cameroon..... 83

Douala..... 83

Buea..... 86

Mount Cameroon..... 87

Limbe..... 87

Bamenda..... 90

The Ring Road..... 90

Bafoussam..... 92

Foumban..... 92

Southern Cameroon..... 93

Kribi..... 93

Ebolowa..... 94

Campo & Ebodjé..... 95

Northern Cameroon..... 95

N'Gaoundéré..... 95

Garoua..... 97

Maroua..... 97

Mandara Mountains..... 99

Parc National du Waza..... 99

Eastern Cameroon..... 100

Bertoua..... 100

Garoua-Boulai..... 100

Understand..... 100

Survival Guide..... 103

CAPE VERDE..... 106

Santiago..... 107

Praia..... 108

Cidade Velha..... 111

São Vicente..... 111

Mindelo & Around..... 112

Santo Antão..... 117

Porto Novo..... 118

Ponta do Sol..... 118

Ribeira Grande..... 118

Paúl..... 119

Tarrafal..... 120

Fogo..... 120

São Filipe..... 122

Sal..... 124

Santa Maria..... 124

Espargos..... 125

Boa Vista..... 126

Other Islands..... 128

Brava..... 128

Maio..... 128

São Nicolau..... 129

Understand..... 130

Survival Guide..... 133

CÔTE D'IVOIRE..... 137

Abidjan..... 138

The Eastern

Beaches..... 143

Grand Bassam..... 143

Assinie..... 146

The West Coast..... 146

Sassandra & Around..... 146

San Pédro..... 146

The Centre..... 146

Yamoussoukro..... 146

The North..... 147

Man & Around..... 147

Understand..... 148

Survival Guide..... 149

THE GAMBIA..... 152

Banjul..... 154

Serekunda & the

Atlantic Coast..... 156

Western Gambia..... 164

Abuko Nature Reserve..... 164

Makasutu Culture

Forest & Ballabu

Conservation Project..... 164

Tanji, Brufut & Around..... 164

Gunjur..... 165

Lower Gambia River... 165

Jufureh & James Island..... 165

Upper Gambia River... 166

Janjangbureh & Around..... 166

Understand..... 166

Survival Guide..... 168

GHANA..... 170

Accra..... 171

The East..... 181

Akosombo..... 181

Amedzofe..... 182

Tafi Atome & Tafi Abuipe..... 182

Wli Falls..... 182

The Coast..... 183

Kokrobite..... 183

Anomabu..... 183

Cape Coast..... 183

Kakum National Park..... 186

Elmina..... 186

Takoradi..... 187

Busua..... 188

Akwidaa & Cape

Three Points..... 189

The Centre..... 189

Kumasi & Around..... 189

Lake Bosumtwi..... 193

The North..... 194

Tamale..... 194

Mole National Park..... 195

Bolgatanga..... 195

The Northwest..... 196

Wa..... 196

Wechiau Hippo

Sanctuary..... 196

Understand..... 197

Survival Guide..... 200

GUINEA..... 204

History and culture..... 205

GUINEA-BISSAU... 208

Bissau..... 209

Arquipélago dos

Bijagos..... 213

Ilha de Bolama..... 214

ON THE ROAD

Ilha de Bubaque	214
Orango Islands National Park	214
The Northwest	215
Quinhámel	215
Varela	215
The Northeast	215
Bafatá & Gabú	215
The South	215
Buba	215
Jemberem & Parque Natural de Cantanhez	216
Understand	216
Survival Guide	218

LIBERIA 220

Monrovia	221
The Coast	226
Marshall	227
Robertson	227
Buchanan	227
North of Monrovia	228
Gbarnga	228
Mount Nimba	228
The Southeast	228
Zwedru	228
Harper	228
Understand	229
Survival Guide	231

MALI 234

History and culture	235
---------------------------	-----

MAURITANIA 238

Nouakchott	239
The Atlantic Coast	243
Nouadhibou	243
Parc National du Banc d'Arguin	245
The Adrar	245
Atâr	245
Terjît	246



DAKAR, SENEGAL P321

Chinguetti	247
Ouadâne	247
Tanouchert	248
The Road to Mali	248
Oualâta	248
The Road to Senegal	249
Parc National Diawling	249
Understand	249
Survival Guide	251

MOROCCO 255

Mediterranean Coast & the Rif	258
Tangier	258
Chefchaouen	290
The Atlantic Coast	262
Rabat	262
Casablanca	266
Essaouira	267
Agadir	269
Western Sahara	272
Laâyoune	272
Dakhla	272
Imperial Cities & the Middle Atlas	272
Fez	273
Meknès	276
Central Morocco & the High Atlas	279

Marrakesh	279
High Atlas Mountains	284
Ait Benhaddou	285
Drâa Valley	285
Merzouga & The Dunes	286
Understand	287
Survival Guide	290

NIGER 295

History and culture	296
---------------------------	-----

NIGERIA 299

Lagos	302
Southern Nigeria	308
Abeokuta	308
Ibadan	309
Oshogbo	310
Benin City	310
Calabar	310
Northern Nigeria	312
Abuja	312
Jos	312
Yankari National Park	313
Kano	313
Gashaka-Gumti National Park	314
Understand	315
Survival Guide	316

Contents

UNDERSTAND

SENEGAL..... 320

Dakar & Around 321

Île de Gorée..... 333

Lac Rose 334

Petite Côte & Siné-Saloum Delta 334

Mbour & Saly 335

Joal-Fadiout..... 335

Palmarin..... 335

Ndangane & Mar Lodj ... 335

Toubakouta & Missirah ... 336

Northern Senegal..... 337

Saint-Louis 337

Parc National des Oiseaux du Djoudj 340

Central Senegal 340

Tambacounda 340

Parc National de Niokolo-Koba..... 340

Casamance 340

Ziguinchor 341

Oussouye..... 341

Elinkine & Île De Karabane 343

Cap Skiring 343

Understand 345

Survival Guide..... 346

SIERRA LEONE 349

Freetown & Around ... 350

Beaches 356

Banana Islands..... 357

Bunce Island..... 358

Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary 358

The North..... 358

Makeni 358

Mt Bintumani 358

Outamba-Kilimi National Park 359

The South 359

Bo 359

Turtle Islands 359

Tiwai Island 359

Kenema 360

Understand 360

Survival Guide..... 362

TOGO 365

Lomé..... 367

The South 371

Agbodrafo & Togoville ... 371

Aného..... 371

Kpalimé 342

Atakpamé 373

The North..... 374

Kara 374

Koutammakou 375

Dapaong..... 375

Understand 376

Survival Guide..... 377

West Africa Today..... 382

History 384

Culture & Daily Life ... 394

Literature & Cinema .. 400

Religion 405

Music 411

Arts & Craftwork 420

Peoples of West Africa 429

Environment 437

SURVIVAL GUIDE

Safe Travel..... 450

Directory A-Z 452

Transport 467

Health..... 481

Language 490

Behind the Scenes.... 502

Index..... 505

SPECIAL FEATURES

Culture & Daily Life... 394

Music..... 411

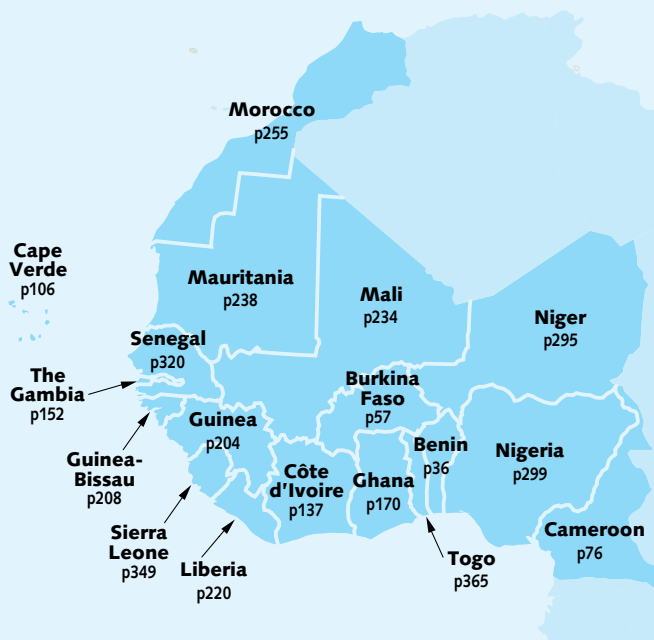
Arts & Craftwork 420

Environment..... 437

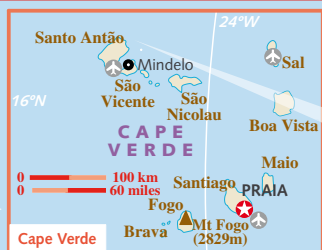
Safe Travel 450



On the Road



West Africa



Mauritania's Saharan Oases

Remote palm villages (p245)

Gambian Coast

Nature sanctuaries, wildlife and art (p156)

Dakar

West Africa's cultural heartbeat (p321)

Arquipélago dos Bijagós

Uninhabited slice of coastal perfection (p213)

Freetown

Sierra Leone's coastal paradise (p356)

Sindou Peaks

West Africa's weirdest rock formations (p69)

Sapo National Park

Remote and wildlife-rich Liberian park (p228)

Grand Bassam

Languid, history-rich tropical town (p143)

Santo Antão

Hike a Cape Verdean volcano (p117)

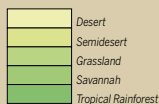
Cap Skirring

Fishing villages and five-star resorts (p343)





VEGETATION



(Does not apply to inset maps)

Mole National Park

Elephants in the savannah (p195)

Marrakesh

The world's most
beguiling city? (p279)

Atakora Region

Stunning highlands and cultural mix (p50)

Lagos

Afrobeat and a revolutionary's shrine (p302)

Ring Road

Cameroon's rainforest
villages time forgot (p90)

Ghanaian Coast

Evocative coastal
slave forts (p183)

Kpalimé

Lush highlands ripe
for hiking (p372)



Nana Luckham

Guinea, Niger Born in Tanzania to a Ghanaian mother and an English father, Nana started life criss-crossing Africa by plane and then bumping along the roughest of roads. After working as an editor in London and as a United Nations press officer in New York, she became a full-time travel writer. Since then she has hauled her backpack all over Africa researching guidebooks to destinations such as Algeria, Kenya, South Africa, Malawi, Ghana and Benin.

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Tom Masters

Cameroon Tom is a Berlin-based writer and photographer whose work has taken him to some of the strangest and most challenging countries on earth. Having covered Liberia and Niger for the last edition of *West Africa*, Tom was very happy to head to the equator for the relative ease of Cameroon. This time round Limbe, the Ring Road villages and sticky Douala all worked their magic on him. Tom can be found online at www.tommasters.net.

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Anja Mutić

Cape Verde Croatian-born, New York-based Anja swayed to the infectious rhythms of Cape Verdean music long before she ever visited the archipelago. For this book, she spent several weeks braving prop planes, scary volcano climbs and rough ocean crossings to find the islands' best-kept secrets. She left the country charmed with the *morabeza* (hospitality) of its people and finally understood *sodade*, the bittersweet longing that Cesária Évora sang about. Anja is online at www.everthenomad.com.

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Caroline Sieg

Gambia, Senegal Caroline is a half-Swiss, half-American writer, editor and digital content manager based in Berlin. Her relationship with Africa began when she first visited Senegal years ago and fell in love with *mbalax* music and the architecture of Saint-Louis. She was delighted to return, wear her travel writer's cap and cover it for Lonely Planet.

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Kate Thomas

Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Sierra Leone After Kate's first trip to Liberia in 2007, she was so taken by the destination that she left her job and moved there for two years. Since then she's combined travel writing with reporting on Africa, covering the fallout of conflicts in Mali and Libya and exploring rainforests, cities and lonely islands. While researching this edition, she ate oysters on the beaches of Guinea-Bissau and experienced music, dancing, thirsty taxi rides, hungry political debate and popped tyres. After six years in the region, today Kate is mostly based in the seaside city of Dakar.



Vanessa Wruble

Nigeria When not writing for Lonely Planet, Vanessa runs Okayafrica, a website and lifestyle company started by the legendary hip-hop band The Roots, which showcases new African music, art and culture. She has previously been a freelance writer, a humanitarian aid worker, a TV correspondent/producer, an interactive artist and, of course, a world traveller. She holds two (somewhat useless) master's degrees (Psychology and Interactive Media), and dreams of living on a

tropical beach. You'll currently find her in Brooklyn.

Contributing Authors

Jane Cornwell is an Australian-born, UK-based journalist, author and broadcaster, who wrote the African Music chapter. After graduating with a master's degree in anthropology, she left for London. She currently writes about arts, books and music – most notably world music – for a range of UK and antipodean publications, including the *Times*, *Evening Standard* and the *Australian* newspaper. She regularly travels about the planet interviewing world musicians.



OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Melbourne, London and Oakland, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

OUR WRITERS



Anthony Ham

Coordinating Author Anthony has been travelling around Africa for more than a decade. A writer and photographer, his past Lonely Planet guidebooks include *Kenya, Botswana & Namibia, Africa, Libya* and three previous editions of *West Africa*. Anthony has written and photographed for magazines and newspapers around the world, among them *Travel Africa* and *Africa Geographic*. When he's not in Africa, Anthony divides his time between Madrid and Melbourne, where he lives with his wife and two daughters. Anthony wrote the Plan Your Trip, Understand and Survival Guide chapters.

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lonelyplanet.com/members/Anthony_Ham



Jean-Bernard Carillet

Benin, Togo A Paris-based journalist and photographer, Jean-Bernard has travelled the breadth and length of Africa for more than two decades and has been thoroughly enlightened by 23 of its amazing countries. Highlights while researching this edition include investigating voodoo culture in Ouidah and Abomey, learning fishing techniques on Lake Ahémé and looking for photogenic waterfalls near Kpalimé. Jean-Bernard's wanderlust has taken him to six continents and inspired numerous articles and his writing of some 30 guidebooks, including Lonely Planet's *Africa* and *Ethiopia, Djibouti & Somaliland*.



Paul Clammer

Mauritania, Morocco Paul has contributed to more than 25 Lonely Planet guidebooks, including several editions of *Morocco*, where he's also worked as a tour guide. He arrived in Nouakchott for his second stint as a Mauritanian author and was researching during the uncertain period after the accidental shooting of the president. Find him at www.paulclammer.com; he tweets at @paulclammer.

Read more about Paul at:
lonelyplanet.com/members/PaulClammer



Emilie Filou

Burkina Faso, Ghana Emilie first travelled to Africa at age eight to visit her grandparents who had taken up a late career opportunity in Mali. More visits ensued, including an epic family holiday in Togo and Benin, the highlight of which was the beautiful and amusingly named town of Grand Popo ('big poo' in French was simply hilarious when you were aged 10). Emilie is now a freelance journalist specialising in business and development issues in Africa. Her website is www.emiliefilou.com; she tweets at @EmilieFilou.

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OVER MORE PAGE WRITERS

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Itineraries



2
WEEKS

Best of the West

If you're wondering why Francophone Africa gets under the skin, begin in cosmopolitan **Dakar** (p321), in particular visiting the outstanding **Musée Théodore Monod** (p321) by day then diving into the city's vibrant nightlife after dark. After excursions to the World Heritage-listed architecture of **Saint-Louis** (p337) and offshore to tranquil **Île de Gorée** (p333), fly to **Ouagadougou** (p60) in Burkina Faso. One of West Africa's more agreeable cities, Ouaga has excellent places to stay and eat as well as a happening cultural scene. Take a bus to languid **Bobo-Dioulasso** (p64) and then continue on to the otherworldly **Sindou Peaks** (p69), one of West Africa's most remarkable landscapes. Travel through **Gaoua** (p69) in the heart of Lobi Country then cross the border into northern Ghana and enjoy some of West Africa's best wildlife-watching at **Mole National Park** (p195). Depending on how long you linger, there should be just enough time to stop off in **Kumasi** (p189) to absorb a little Ashanti culture en route to buzzing **Accra** (p171).

8
WEEKS

Atlantic Odyssey

From the arid coastlines of the northwest to the palm-fringed tropics of Cameroon, West Africa's coastline has it all. Senegal's capital **Dakar** (p321), with its African sophistication and role as regional air hub, serves both as a starting point and a base for the first part of your journey. To the north, **Saint-Louis** (p337) is like stepping back into precolonial Africa. Other Senegalese excursions include enjoying some of Africa's best birdwatching in the **Parc National des Oiseaux du Djoudj** (p340) and drifting through the **Siné-Saloum Delta** (p334). From Dakar, fly to the Cape Verde islands with their soulful musical soundtrack, unspoiled beaches, mountainous interior and laid-back locals; **Santiago** (p107), **São Vicente** (p111) and **Santo Antão** (p117) are particularly beautiful. Returning to Dakar, head south to The Gambia, which may be small, but its beaches, especially those around **Serekunda** (p156), make a good (English-speaking) rest stop for taking time out from the African road. From **Banjul** (p154), consider flying to **Freetown** (p350) in Sierra Leone – the nearby beaches are beautiful and utterly undeveloped. Attractions such as **Tiwai Island Wildlife Sanctuary** (p359) with its fabulous wildlife concentrations should not be missed.

You could continue along the coast through Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, but most travelers fly over them to agreeable **Accra** (p171) in Ghana. From there excursions to the old coastal forts, **Cape Coast Castle** (p183) and stunning beaches at **Kokrobite** (p183), **Busua** (p188) and **Dixcove** (p188) never disappoint. Don't fail to detour north to **Kumasi** (p189) in the Ashanti heartland. There's plenty of onward transport to the fascinating markets and fine museum of **Lomé** (p367), and don't miss an inland hiking detour around **Kpalimé** (p372). Not far away is Benin, with Ouidah, the evocative former slaving port and home of voodoo, the history-rich town of Abomey and the stilt-villages of Ganvié. **Cotonou** (p38) has all the steamy appeal of the tropics; from here fly to **Yaoundé** (p77) in Cameroon, which has a distinctive Central African feel. **Limbe** (p87) has distinctive black-sand beaches and sits in the shadow of **Mt Cameroon** (p87), West Africa's highest peak. **Kribi** (p93), an idyllic tropical beach, is the perfect place to laze on the sand and consider just how far you've travelled.



Unknown West Africa

The westernmost extremity of Africa's bulge has, until recently, been off-limits to travellers. But while peace has come, the same can't be said for tourists – you could have these destinations all to yourself. Begin in **Nouakchott** (p239), the dry-as-dust capital of Mauritania. The Mauritanian Sahara is one of the safest corners of the world's largest desert and the three oases – **Chinguetti** (p247), **Terjît** (p246) and **Ouadâne** (p247) – are everything you dreamed the Sahara would be. **Ben Amira** (p246) and the birdwatcher's paradise of **Parc National du Banc D'Arguin** (p245) are other worthy detours. Across the border in Senegal, pass through **Dakar** (p321) to catch the ferry to **Ziguinchor** (p341), capital of Casamance, home to fine beaches, labyrinthine river systems and lush forests. Guinea-Bissau has a village-like capital, **Bissau** (p209). The **Arquipélago dos Bijagos** (p213) is isolated, rich in wildlife and like nowhere else on the coast – it could just be West Africa's most pristine slice of paradise.

Continuing along the coast, pass through Guinea en route to Sierra Leone. After lingering in **Freetown** (p350) and the nearby beaches, head inland to remote **Mt Bintumani** (p358) and the unknown gems of **Outamba-Kilimi National Park** (p359) – which will call to mind Graham Greene's 1930s exploration of inland Sierra Leone – and **Gola Forest Reserve** (p360). On your way to Liberia, stop at **Tiwai Island Wildlife Sanctuary** (p359). Liberia is slowly emerging from the shadows and is well worth exploring – begin in **Monrovia** (p221) and don't miss **Sapo National Park** (p228), **Robertsport** (p227) and **Harper** (p228). By now, you've almost fallen completely off the travel map but it's easy to rejoin the trail – from Harper, it's a short hop across the border into Côte d'Ivoire and **Sassandra** (p146), a glorious fishing village with great beaches. Security permitting, head north to the rainforests of the **Parc National de Taï** (p147), then on to **Man** (p147) in the heart of Dan country. From there, head for **Yamoussoukro** (p146) and its improbable basilica, then on to **Abidjan** (p138), the still-sophisticated one-time 'Paris of Africa'.

8
WEEKS

Nigeria & Cameroon

Nigeria is one of those destinations that suffers from bad press, although it must be said that most of the horror stories are told by those who've never set foot in the country.

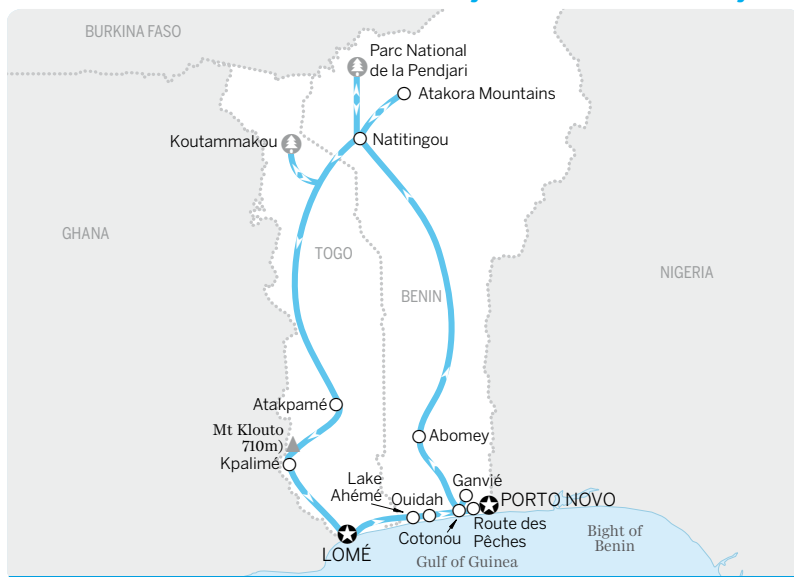
Lagos (p302) may be in-your-face, high-volume and logistically confronting, but it's also Africa's most energetic city, awash with pulsating nightlife, clamorous markets and a terrific museum. **Osun Sacred Forest** (p310), in Okumu Sanctuary, and the Oba's Palace in **Benin City** (p310) are worthwhile stopovers as you head across the south en route to **Calabar** (p310), which is likeable for its old colonial buildings, fish market and lovely setting. Close to Calabar, don't miss **Afi Mountain Drill Ranch** (p311), the focus of an outstanding primate project, and then continue northeast to the remote but terrific **Gashaka-Gumti National Park** (p314) for some of Nigeria's best wildlife-watching. On your way north, check the security situation and if all's well stop off in **Zaria**, then on to **Kano** (p313), West Africa's oldest city and one of the Sahel's most significant cultural centres.

From Kano or (if you've been forced to backtrack) from Lagos, fly to **Maroua** (p97), a pleasant base for exploring the weird-and-wonderful landscapes of the **Mandara Mountains** (p99) and **Parc National du Waza** (p99), one of West Africa's finest wildlife parks. From **N'Gaoundéré** (p95) you can either head deep into the utterly un-touristed rainforests of the southeast, which offer a verdant taste of Central Africa, or take the train through the country's heart, all the way to **Yaoundé** (p77), the country's steamy capital set amid lush green hills. After longish detours to see the sea turtles at **Ebodjé** (p95) and to climb **Mt Cameroon** (p87), West Africa's highest peak, head for **Bamenda** (p90) which serves as a gateway to the villages of the **Ring Road** (p90), a deeply traditional area of Cameroon that feels untouched by time; **Bafut** (p92) is one of our favourite villages in the region. Later, head for **Fomfan** (p92) for a slice of traditional West Africa.



The Heart of Morocco

Casablanca (p266) is one of the most convenient air gateways to West Africa. Before you take one of the Royal Air Maroc flights that fan out across West Africa, spend a couple of weeks exploring Morocco. From Casablanca, make tracks for **Marrakesh** (p279), one of the great African cities where the nightly spectacle in the Djemaa el-Fna is one of world travel's greatest experiences. **Essaouira** (p267) on the coast is the charming evocation of some bohemian fairytale, and it serves as a launch pad for a journey into the **High Atlas** (p279), home of the Berbers and West Africa's most beautiful mountain range with numerous hiking opportunities. **Aït Benhaddou** (p285) is a glorious mud-brick fortress village, while away to the south, the **Drâa Valley** (p285), **Erg Chebbi** (p286), **Erg Chigaga** (p286) and **Merzouga** (p286) are simply magnificent places to experience the Sahara. From Merzouga it's a long ride (though utterly worth it) to the ancient imperial city of **Fez** (p273), home to West and North Africa's finest medina.



Benin & Togo

Sassy and steamy, **Cotonou** (p38) is one of West Africa's most underrated cities. It's also a good base for excursions to **Ganvié** (p44) and the beaches of the **Route Des Pêches** (p43). **Porto Novo** (p43) is Cotonou's tranquil alter ego, with superb architecture, good museums and a palpable tropical languor. Travelling north, **Abomey** (p48) is the one-time site of the ancient civilisation of Dahomey. Make for **Natitingou** (p49), gateway to the spectacular **Atakora Mountains** (p50) and wildlife-rich **Parc National de la Pendjari** (p51).

Across the border in northern Togo, **Koutammakou** (p375) is one of West Africa's least-known treasures, with remote clay-and-straw fortresses set amid stunning scenery. On your way south, you'll pass through some striking mountain and forest landscapes. **Atakpamé** (p373), **Mt Klouto** (p372) and **Kpalimé** (p372) are all worth sampling as you make your way to the fascinating melting pot of **Lomé** (p367), Togo's capital. On your way back to Cotonou, visit the powerful voodoo strongholds of **Lake Ahémé** (p47) and **Ouidah** (p45).

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