

EXPLORE!



The Ivory Coast

13 days

- Trip code IVC

The Ivory Coast

After years of isolation, Ivory Coast is finally opening up to travellers and on this trip we will be exploring remote villages; untouched by the western world where the spirit gods and ancestral traditions are king. We will visit bustling markets in Abidjan, cross liana bridges in the rainforest, meet hunter-gatherer tribesman and explore a national park on the Atlantic. Ivory Coast has a wealth of different cultures and we aim to embrace the colours, songs and secrets that make up this fascinating country. Due to local customs, most hotels will not allow travellers of the same sex to share a room, so all customers who would normally book on a twin share will automatically receive a single room, with no additional charge.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Mask Ceremonies** - See the stilt dancers from the hill villages of the Yacouba
- ★ **Sacred Warriors** - Meet the chiefs of the Dozo people, sacred guardians who watch over the local villages
- ★ **Rainforest** - Explore rainforests throughout the country and look for monkeys, baboons and birdlife
- ★ **The Spirit World** - Learn about the power of Poro; the initiation of local men into secret societies
- ★ **Ghost city** - Discover the remnants of the Ivorian dream and find a life size replica of St Peter's in Rome

ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

Standard

Our standard, mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service, often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en suite facilities.

TRIP PACE:

Moderate

Moderate pace tours are ideal if you want a holiday which combines exciting activities and experiences with plenty of time to relax and unwind. Typically you'll be active and busy for part of the day but then also have time to rest and recharge your batteries.

GROUP SIZE:

8 - 14

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

DAY 1 - Trip starts in Abidjan

Our trip starts in Abidjan this evening. As some group members will be arriving on different flights, we will have our introduction briefing tomorrow morning, however our Explore Leader will be around this evening to recommend somewhere to eat dinner locally.



Accommodation: Hotel Detente (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - Explore Abidjan on foot and by ferry, and sample attieke

This morning we will have our group briefing before heading out on a city tour of Abidjan. We start by taking a ferry across the lagoon; these ferries are popular for local people which will give us our first taste of the people of the Ivory Coast. We will see colourfully clad women in traditional dress and businessmen in dapper suits on their daily commute to different parts of the city. As we cruise across the lagoon we can see the skyscrapers and the modernity of Abidjan, ever growing and always buzzing with life. We visit the lively African market of Treichville, this is one of the main markets of the city where locals come to barter, hawk and catch up on local gossip. Our next stop is the peaceful neighbourhood of Cocody, a residential area which house the Prime Minister's office and many old French colonial buildings. For lunch today we will have a local speciality called attieké, a kind of cassava couscous that is generally accompanied by grilled meat or meat with sauces and greens. We take in the National Museum and then visit the Youpugon neighbourhood, famous locally for the birth of Coupé-Décalé, which is the Ivory Coast's contribution to global music.



Accommodation: Hotel Detente (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 3 - Drive to Yamoussoukro to see the Basilica and discover the capital

We leave Abidjan and make our way to Yamoussoukro, the capital city and one of the most surreal urban areas in Africa. The first post-independence President of the Ivory Coast was Houphouët-Boigny and he was from Yamoussoukro; his dream was to create a city that could rival the best in Europe and as we arrive in the city after our four hour drive, we see the remnants of his vision. Our first stop will be the Basilica of the Virgin of Peace, an exact replica of St Peter's in Rome. It is hard to really believe that you are in West Africa as we walk around this mind boggling building; the basilica has 7000 seats and space for over 11,000 standing worshippers, though it only attracts a few hundred on most Sundays. We will see the other excesses of the former President, including huge government offices, 14 storey hotels and an artificial lake with crocodiles. Though this is an unmissable stop of any trip to the Ivory Coast, it is hard to not feel utter sadness at the incalculable waste of money, given the country's current level of poverty.



Accommodation: Royaume de Yamoussokro (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 4 - Explore villages of the Baulé people

From today our trip gets out into the villages of the country and sees how the majority of the local people live their lives. As soon as we leave the madness of Yamoussoukro, we are driving through green forest, punctuated by small villages and settlements, populated by the Baulé people. The Baulé are known for the fine production of handicrafts that represent the spirit world; here it is possible to see fantastic examples of wooden masks and statues. We should also be able to take part in Atté, a local game similar to marbles which is played by everyone here. After spending the day meeting local villagers and learning about their customs and beliefs, our night stop is Bouake, the second largest city in the country.



Accommodation: Mon Afrik (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 5 - Drive to Korhogo and meet the artistic Senoufo people

This morning we have a long drive of around 6 hours, heading north along bumpy roads as we make our way to Korhogo, the main city of the north; along the way our Explore Leader will provide local information and stop at any particular points of interest. After arriving in Korhogo we will spend the afternoon visiting villages of the Senoufo, local people who are renowned for their art and

sculpture work. The villages have sacred houses decorated with bas-reliefs and large clay granaries that we can explore. We will be some of the first westerners to visit these villages so can expect a warm but sometimes wary welcome, as they are just not used to foreign visitors. However hospitality is an integral part of their culture and they are proud to share their stories and show off their artistic skills. We will spend two nights in Korhogo.



Accommodation: Le Rose Blanche (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 6 - Discovering Senoufo villages and watching the 'panther dance'

We will spend the whole day exploring more Senoufo villages, learning more about their art culture and secretive rituals. The Senoufo have a complex and secretive initiation ritual called Poro, which involves their young men spending time in a sacred forest. This secret sect of the Senoufo has allowed their culture to flourish, even in times of war and persecution. After the young men have spent time in the forest they will emerge as men and have to perform traditional mask ceremonies, known locally as the panther dance. We plan to see a panther dance this afternoon in one of the villages, however this cannot be guaranteed as these rituals are connected with the spirit world and the local shamans might decide that the signs are not perfect for a ceremony.



Accommodation: Le Rose Blanche (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 7 - Walk to a sacred shrine and meet the Fulani nomads

This morning we will take a walk to a sacred shrine just outside of Korhogo, the walk will be around two hours in total, and apart from the humidity will be relatively easy. For those not wanting to participate, it is possible to wander around Korhogo or just relax in the hotel. We will then board our bus and drive to Boundiali, a small town two hours away. After lunch we will meet the Fulani people, a pastoral nomadic society who are easily recognised by their conical straw hats. When we visit their villages we will mainly meet women and children as the men are with their cattle; the women wearing colourful fabrics with abundant jewellery in their hair. The ladies here are very welcoming and we will spend the afternoon in their houses, seeing their family heirlooms and intricately decorated pumpkins!



Accommodation: Hotel le Paysan (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 8 - Meet the hunter-gatherer Dozo people

From Boundiali we drive for around four hours to the small town of Odienne, in the north-west of the country. The region is populated by the Malinké people, descendants of the former empire of Mali and in this community there are the Dozo, a hunter-gatherer sect who are feared and respected for their courage on the battlefield. We will spend the afternoon with the Dozo, as they take us on a walk through the bush and teach us about plants and their importance for medicine in local culture. After our walk we will witness a fire ceremony, which will involve hunters dancing to the beat of the drum, known locally as the tam-tam, as certain warriors show their immunity to fire and pain.



Accommodation: Hotel les Frontieres (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 9 - Drive to Man, witness a stilt dance by the Yacouba people

Today is a long drive of around 7 hours to the town of Man, our home for two nights. On the drive we will travel through the lands of the Yacouba people, often known as the Dan. The area is fertile with green rolling hills and we will visit villages built on the slopes, characterised by big round mud huts with thatched roofs. Often the houses are decorated with frescos made by the women; during our trip here we will witness a mask dance. In these villages the mask dancers are called from the forest by the beat of the tam-tam; as they approach the whole village will start to sing traditional songs. The dancers enter the circle on long stilts and spend the next few minutes entertaining us with incredible acrobatics, all the time spinning to the sound of the tam-tam. Each mask has its own dance and song, steeped in local culture and this promises to be a highlight of the trip.



Accommodation: Hotel les Cascades (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 10 - Cross a liana bridge and see a Guéré mask dance

This morning we take a short drive to Danane to find some of the famous liana bridges that are found in this forest that stretches from Ivory Coast to Liberia. The bridges, like many things in the country are shrouded in mystery and secrecy, as they are built by young men who are being initiated in the ways of the forest, similar to Poro. The initiates create these river spanning bridges in one night and we may be able to cross one too, providing the spirits are happy! This afternoon we will enter the Gbepleu forest, this a sacred forest to the Guéré people who we will meet and hope to see one of their ceremonies. They believe that their god communicates to them through only a couple of humans - the masquerades; we will watch the dance where the masquerades interact with their god.



Accommodation: Hotel les Cascades (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 11 - Drive down to the Atlantic, stopping at a cocoa plantation

Our long drive today takes us to the south of the country and back to the Atlantic Ocean, as we make our way to Grand Lahou, a small fishing village and our base for the next two nights. Ivory Coast once built its economy on the exportation of cocoa and we will stop at a plantation en route, to learn about the cultivation of the crop and its importance today. Depending on the driving times today, we hope to stop at a local 'maquis', an open air restaurant which serves Ivorian stew, consisting of chunks of meat or fish served in an aubergine, peanut or okra sauce. Our drive today will be around 8 hours.



Accommodation: Hotel le Ravin (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 12 - Pirogue trip and walk in Assagny National Park, free time on the beach

Today we are going to explore Assagny National Park, starting with a trip on a local pirogue through the forest. We will continue on foot and take a three hour guided walk through the dense forest which makes up the park. Assagny contains a small population of forest elephants and a large range of birds, which our guide will help us to spot. This afternoon we will be on a beautiful sandy beach, with some time to relax. This evening will be our last dinner all together which will hopefully involve some fish, freshly caught by a local fisherman.



Accommodation: Hotel le Ravin (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 13 - Trip ends in Abidjan

This morning we drive the couple of hours back to Abidjan, our trip officially ends at the airport, but for those who have booked extra nights in Abidjan, we will take you to your hotel.



Meals Provided: Breakfast



Why book this trip

Explore hasn't operated in the Ivory Coast before so join us for an intrepid journey across the country as we experience the colours, sights and sounds for the first time together

What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 12



Transport

Bus



Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader
Driver(s)
Local Guide(s)



Accommodation

12 nights standard hotel

Trip information

Country information

Budgeting and packing

Clothing

Clothing should be lightweight but a warm jumper is also advisable, as nights can be cool. Don't forget your swim gear as some of the hotels may have a swimming pool. A scarf is also recommended as protection against dust whilst driving in the drier areas.

Footwear

Lightweight walking/hiking boots with good ankle support, plus trainers or sandals for relaxing and travelling in.

Luggage

15Kg

Luggage: On tour

Take a tough soft bag or holdall (or rucksack with detachable frame) suitable to be carried by 4WD vehicle. Also take a day sack for items needed during any walks (20- 30 litre). The limit does not include your camera equipment.

Equipment

A torch, sunhat, sun cream and insect repellent are essential. Bottled water is readily available throughout the tour. Binoculars are useful for bird watching. We recommend bringing a malaria net as we cannot be 100% confident that the nets provided at the hotels are competent.

Tipping

Explore leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognized part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour. Accordingly you should allow approx. £40 for gratuities for local staff.

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bus

Accommodation notes

Booking a Single Room

All of our group tours are planned and operated on a twin-share basis, meaning that the standard cost is based either on individual travellers sharing accommodation with another group member of the same sex, or people who book together sharing accommodation. Please refer to the tour notes where the single room option availability is detailed on a night by night basis for this tour, and the price for the available nights is detailed on the dates & prices tab by departure date. For Self-Guided trips the Single Room supplement offers the option of a single room each and is charged per person. The Single Room supplement also applies to the third person in a party of three that will be accommodated in a single room.

Tourism is very much in its infancy in the Ivory Coast so it is recommended to travel with an open mind and not to expect European standards of accommodation. That being said, the majority of the hotels on this trip have a swimming pool, air conditioning and a restaurant on site. Due to local customs, most hotels will not allow travellers of the same sex to share a room, so all customers who would normally book on a twin share will automatically receive a single room, with no additional charge.

Essential information

FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice [click here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, [click here](#)

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Essential Information

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

Visa Information

Ivory Coast - Visas are required for British, Australian, American and Canadian passport holders. These can be obtained from the Cote d'Ivoire Consulate in London, or via an e-visa service which must be requested online prior to arrival in the Ivory Coast. You will be provided with a confirmation document that permits you to travel and to obtain your visa on arrival at Abidjan International Airport: <http://www.snedai.ci/en/index.php> For all entries into the Ivory Coast, your passport must have at least six months validity. All other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our Essential Information and Booking Conditions.

Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. [Read more about them here.](#)

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.