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DISCOVERING WEST AFRICAN TRIBAL CULTURES
SAFARI THROUGH TOGO, BENIN AND BURKINA FASO
16 March - 30 March, 2009



West Africa is vibrant with heritage, culture, tradition and ceremonies. On this 15-day expedition we'll explore the countries of Togo, Benin and Burkina Faso where we'll learn about the religion of voodoo and attend a genuine voodoo ceremony where the participants will go into trance. Our travels will take us to remote areas where life has changed little over the centuries. We'll see how these societies are responding to the pressure of encroaching "civilization" and witness ceremonies and dancing masks in celebration.

You will have the opportunity to meet the [Indigenous Dogon of Mali](#) by extending your safari for an additional five days.

Maximum Participants: 12

Photographer and Tour Leaders: [David Anderson](#) and [Annie Birch](#)

OUR ITINERARY

Monday, 16 March 2009

LOME

We arrive from Europe in Lomé, the capital of Togo, which stretches along the coast for about 8 miles between the Ghana border and the new Port de Lomé. Togo, independent since 1960, is a former French colony. Lomé is a pleasant city, where you can walk freely between low houses, through bustling crowds of market traders and goods carriers and stop at the stalls or at the artisan's workshops to watch them craft iron and wood. A visit to the different levels of the central Grand Marché is often characterized by the lively discussions you are bound to have with the Togolese 'Nanas' or female market traders. In the evenings, cooled by a pleasant breeze, you can take a stroll along the seaside road accompanied by the wind rustling through the palm trees.

Hotel Sarakawa

Tuesday, 17 March 2009

LAC

Today we'll enjoy a tour of Lome, including a visit to some colorful and vibrant local markets. We'll also have the opportunity to witness an authentic voodoo ceremony. Voodoo, a religion that pre-dates Christianity, originally began in the south of Togo and Benin and it is still firmly embedded in the local culture; exemplified by the ubiquitous presence of temples, altars and fetishes. In the village, whenever there is a special occasion, often more than a hundred people gather to offer collective praises and sacrifices followed by dances, chanting and drumming which becomes more and more frenzied until some participants fall into a deep trance. On a physical level they are in fact in a catatonic state, with very strong muscular tension and insensitivity to pain. During their trances, in this very unique state of altered consciousness, the participants come into direct communion with the spirits.

Hotel Le Lac (BLD)

Wednesday, 18 March 2009**GRAND POPO**

Today we'll cross the border into Benin where we'll search for the Zangbeto masks. We'll take a boat excursion to a remote village where, if we're lucky, we'll find this amazing spectacle where masks whirl according to an otherworldly source of motion.

Local Auberge (BLD)

Thursday, 19 March 2009**BOHICON**

We begin our journey northward away from the coast where we travel by pirogue to the lake village of Ganvié, a large village of huts resting on bamboo stilts perched above the water level. The village is spread out; with houses scattered about seemingly at random several metres apart. We'll admire the ingenuity of the unique construction and get a feel for the nuances of village life. The fishermen are welcoming and like to show off their fishing skills and the ovens where they smoke their fish. Later today we'll search for another mask ceremony, the Gelede. These masks depict spiritual as well as every-day events and often are cause for much laughter among the large audiences that gather at their spontaneous appearance.

Hotel Dako (BLD)

Friday - Saturday, 20 - 21 March 2009**NATITINGOU**

We'll have a long travel day eventually following the mountain range of the Atakora, to eventually find ourselves in Somba country, the home of several separate but related tribes. The thing they have in common is the 'tata'- their dwellings built in the shape of small clay castles several storeys high. The definition of a man in Somba country is a male who has followed a long route of initiation rites and who owns his own traditional 'tata'. The hills of the region are dotted by these clay and thatch buildings that so enchanted the great Swiss architect Le Corbusier. Centuries ago the peoples of these villages chose to take refuge in this inaccessible area as they wanted no outside influences to interfere with their way of life. The villagers still hunt with bows and arrows and adhere to strict rites of initiation. The beautiful scarification on their faces and their bellies clearly shows the price that these people pay in order to reach adulthood. In order to experience the area thoroughly, we'll base ourselves for two days at a hotel that has been creatively constructed to mimic the local architecture.

Hotel Tata Somba (BLD)

Sunday, 22 March 2009**DAPAONG**

We continue our explorations while making our way through remote villages toward the Burkina border. We may see some demonstrations by the Somba men wherein they play games with whips to demonstrate their strength. We'll note how the decorations on the houses often match the scarification on their bodies and we may have an opportunity to purchase exquisite clay utensils fired in the raku fashion.

Overnight Camping (BLD)

Monday, 23 March 2009**OUAGADOUGOU**

Today we cross the Border into Burkino Faso. Our destination is Ouagadougou where we'll spend some time learning about this new country and exploring the city. Burkina is a country of small villages with traditional white buildings composed of straw and clay mixed with water. Here and there one sees clay mosques and churches decorated with local religious symbols and colorful peasants and marketplaces. Each ethnic group has different architectural styles which, in both line and color, adapt well to the countryside.

OK Inn (BLD)

Tuesday - Wednesday, 24 - 25 March 2009**BOBO**

We head west to the Bobo and the village of Bobo Dioulasso, the second largest village of the country, showing a touch of France in Africa. Here we'll base ourselves for two nights so we can explore the area fully. In certain seasons there are large festivals throughout the region where young and old, women and children all unite to dance, drink millet beer, and talk about the masked ones who come dancing and jumping accompanied by the sound of tom-toms and flutes. The polychrome masks represent animals, buffalos, antelopes, monkeys, and birds. There is also a large flat mask of a butterfly that is at least two meters in length. All of the masks embody spirits of which fertility and health are asked, and to which thanks are given after the harvest.

Local Auberge (BLD)

Thursday, 26 March 2009**BANFORA**

We drop southward so that we can visit Banfora and the surrounding area.

Hotel Canne a Sucre (BLD)

Friday, 27 March 2009**GAOUA**

Today we visit the Lobi, a people who have preserved and maintain their animist beliefs. In front of their fortified homes one can see protective fetishes to which the Lobi offer drinks and sacrifices of chickens and goats. Their famous "bouthida", small amulet-statues, are placed in the interior rooms to protect the soul of each Lobi, both living and deceased. The beliefs of their ancestors give form to the basis of their current culture and everyday life.

Hotel Hala (BLD)

Saturday, 28 March 2009**OUAGADOUGOU**

We make our way back to Ouagadougou. The Mossi, a war-like people who built a great empire between the 15th and 19th centuries and didn't lose their autonomy until the arrival of the French, inhabit the central plain surrounding the capital city of Ouagadougou. Their descendants, fierce but peaceful people, live in round clay houses and grow sorghum, millet, and peanuts which they store in granaries made from braided straw.

OK Inn (BLD)

Sunday, 29 March 2009**OUAGADOUGOU**

Today we venture out for one last masked celebration, that of the Nunuma Mask festival.

OK Inn (BLD)

Monday, 30 March 2009**OUAGADOUGOU - HOME**

Today we'll depart early to see the famous painted houses of the Gurunsi people of the Kassena tribe. These fortified houses of the Tiebele region on the border of Ghana and Burkina Faso are beautifully decorated with traditional African designs. The women paint their mud huts with natural colors of red, black, white and ochre. This local architecture was another inspiration for the Swiss architect Le Corbusier who traveled the region finding inspiration in the simple, functional and beautiful work of these people. We return to the hotel to freshen up and prepare for our flight home through Europe.

PHOTOGRAPHIC EXPEDITION PRICE
(Per Person, Double Occupancy)

Retail Price: \$5,995 per person

Photographer's Price: \$4,995 per person

Non-Photographer Traveling with a Photographer: \$4,995 per person

Single Room Supplement: \$800

Deposit to Secure Participation: \$1,000 per person

Early Booking Bonus: Deduct \$400 if Booked by 30 July 2008

SMALL GROUP PREMIUM

6 - 7 Participants: Add \$750 per person

8 - 9 Participants: Add \$500 per person

SAFARI OPTIONS
(Per Person)

The Indigenous Dogon of Mali

Safari Price Includes:

- Professional photographer and local escort
- Airport transfers
- Transportation in private vehicle with local English-speaking guide
- Full board accommodation from breakfast on day 2 to lunch on day 15
- Excursions with photographic opportunities and tribal visits as described
- Comprehensive safari preparation

Not included:

Not included are international airfare and personal expenses such as personal insurance; excess baggage fees; phone calls; laundry; gratuities to drivers and guides; airport departure taxes; passport and visa fees, mineral water and beverages, and any additional nights, which are not noted in itinerary. Dinners on days 1 & 15.

Carbon Offsets:

[Focus on Planet Earth](#) understands that air travel contributes to increased green house gases and global warming. Therefore, we encourage our expedition participants to assist us in making each Focus on Planet Earth expedition carbon neutral. You can offset your air transportation carbon impact by purchasing carbon off-sets. As an incentive for you to do this, we will deduct 50% of the amount of your purchase from your final invoice. To offset the emissions from your flights go to [Carbon Off-Set Calculator](#).

International Air Transportation:

You are responsible for booking your own international air transportation. To assist you, we will provided you with the airport codes and the dates you need to arrive or depart.

For the lowest airfares, we recommend you visit: www.davidanderson.worldventures.com

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