



## 7 Day Togo and Benin Tour for the Yale Alumni Service Corps

**Price based on dual occupancy:**

\$1,630 per person

\$610 single room supplement

Togo and Benin are some of Africa's smallest countries and very popular as a multi country tour destination due to their size. Both are exceptionally friendly and stable countries with so much to offer travellers wanting to experience West Africa. They have a rich, vibrant cultural identity waiting to be discovered. Togo is full of diverse cultures, there are nice beaches, attractive colonial towns and fishing villages. Benin oozes the exotic with its glittering palaces, floating villages and python-filled temples. During our 6 day Multi-country tour of Togo and Benin we visit the grand Marche the big market and German Cathedral in Togo, Ganvie stilt village and Ouidah-the Sacred Forest and the Temple of Pythons in Benin. Visiting these areas and mixing with the local communities is a major highlight of any visit.

## Tour Overview

**Duration:**

7 days and 6 nights

**Vehicle type:**

Air conditioned 4x4, minibus or bus depending on group size.



Map of Ghana, Togo and Benin

**Why you should book with Ashanti?**

There are always other options when travelling, however we firmly believe our guides and tour leaders are the finest in West Africa. We employ all of our staff on permanent contracts and do not use free-lance guides which enables us to ensure the quality of service our clients receive. Ashanti African Tours are registered with the Ghana Tourism Authority (a legal requirement) our operating licence number is T-04/CR/11, our company and vehicles are comprehensively

insured, our guides are registered in addition to our services and tour leaders being of the highest standard. In addition to the above we practice ethical and responsible travel which can be seen through our conservation and community development projects. We were also proudly awarded “Tour Operator of the Year 2014” by the Ghana Tourism Authority to go alongside our current “West African Tour Operator of the Year Award”

**Focus of this tour:**

The main focus on this tour is the rich culture, traditions and history of these wonderful countries.

**Tour leaders and guides:**

This will be subject to availability when booking your tour, all of our guides are the finest in the country with years of experience in leading highly enjoyable quality tours of Ghana, Togo and Benin. When booking a tour with Ashanti you get more than just a local guide, all are of an international standard, know the history, culture and nature of West Africa.

**What is included in the price?**

This will depend on the number of participants, however our prices are the lowest for a tour to Ghana so please contact us for up to date information on cost

**Accommodation-** This will be pre-determined prior to your booking and will depend on your budget. We offer the choice from the highest standard to mid-range and budget options for all our tours.

**Food-** Breakfast, lunch and dinner, we also have fruit and biscuits on all our vehicles, if you see any additional snacks you would like to try just inform your guide and they will be happy to purchase for you.

**Mineral water-** Unlimited mineral water is available to every participant for the duration of your time with us.

**Transportation-** In a fully air conditioned vehicle for the duration of your tour, vehicle type will depend on the group size and all our vehicles are comprehensively insured.

**Driver-** All our drivers are highly experienced and employed on a full time basis by our company, their focus is on safety and comfort.

**Fuel-** All fuel is included in the tour price.

**Entrance fees-** All excursion fees are included in the tour price.

**Guide fees-** All guide fees are included in the price for your tour. In addition we tip site guides and also hotel staff at all of the locations and accommodations we visit.

**Additional services-** Our company offers 24/7 professional, care, attention and office support to all our clients.

**What is not included?**

International flights

Visas

Travel insurance

Soft and alcoholic drinks



# Detailed Itinerary

## **Day 1 (29<sup>th</sup> July, 2015) Arrival and transfer to Hotel**

Our expert guides will meet with you on your arrival at the Kotoka International Airport Accra, which is situated on the beautiful gold coast of Western Africa. Look out for the Ashanti African Tours sign board when you leave the main terminal building after passing through customs. Make yourself known to your guides who will be accompanying you for the duration of your time in Ghana and they will take care of you from here.

After boarding our air conditioned vehicle, which will be your mode of transport for the duration of your tour, we transfer you to your hotel which is situated in Accra. Once we have checked you in, our experienced guides will offer you Akwaaba (welcome) and brief you on all aspects of your trip. You can enjoy your evening meal at the hotel restaurant whilst acclimatizing yourself to Africa.

## **Accommodation – Tulip Inn Accra**

## **Day 2 (30<sup>th</sup> July, 2016) Depart for Togo and visit grand marche, and Akodessewa fetish on arrival**

An early start around 08:00 am, as we depart Ghana for Lome–Togo for about 196km approximately 3 hours 30 minutes' drive. After breakfast, we spend about 1 hour 30 minutes for immigration checks at Togo Border, on arrival we check into our hotel and have lunch. We will take an hour rest before we start our sightseeing in Lome. The first place we will visit is the grand Marché or big market which is one of the highlights in Lomé. Initially, it seems chaotic but you will be surprised at the orderliness of the hectic pace of this incredibly vibrant and beautiful example of real African market experience not to be forgotten quickly. Though it is supposed to be an indoor market, the three storey building and all the surrounding streets overflow with vendors selling everything imaginable. The Sacred Heart or German Cathedral is next on our agenda after the exhilarating experience of the big market. Built in 1905, this imposing Gothic piece of architecture is one of the most beautiful legacies of the Germans. We have two more places of interest to visit on today's itinerary. To be in Lome and not visiting the witches market (marchefetiches) at Akodessewa and the artisanal village will not make your trip complete, so after lunch we will visit these two places. The Akodessewa fetish market is an interesting collection of dried animal parts and skins of reptiles, mammals and birds with a compliment of dried herbs. The vendors usually double as soothsayers claiming the ability to predict your future and at the same time forestall any mishap. It is an eye brow raising experience. Last but not the least is the artisans' village where we will see artisans weaving cloth, carving statues, making baskets and lampshades, sewing leather shoes and many more.

It is fascinating to watch the artisans doing their own thing with such skills and dexterity and always with a smile. We return to the hotel, refresh and have dinner whilst we recap the day's activities.

## **Accommodation - Ibis Hotel - Togo Lome**



**Day 3 (31<sup>st</sup> July, 2016) Visit the National Museum and Lake Togo**

This morning, our first point of call is the national museum we will start around 10:00 am; the museum houses mostly costumes, musical instruments and historical artefacts including pottery. The place of independence is next from where we do a tour of Lome's commercial hub. We return to our hotel for lunch and an afternoon siesta. Having rested we will take it easy as we take 45 minutes drive to visit Lake Togo, we will get a local boat man to give us a ride on the shallow waters of the lake, we can try our hands at fresh water fishing, hoping to catch our dinner. We return to our hotel, have dinner and go over the next day's agenda.

**Accommodation - Ibis Hotel - Togo Lome****Day 4 (1<sup>st</sup> August, 2016) A visit to Togoville, Maison Royal and Chief of Mlapa III**

This morning we will set off for Aneho, which is 48km east of Lome, close to an hour drive from the capital, which was the colonial capital of Togo until 1920. On arrival, we check into our hotel before we take a pirogue to Togoville which is on north eastern side of Lake Togo. Togoville is historically known as the centre of Voodoo in Togo. Many voodoo practitioners were taken as slaves from here to Haiti. The chief's house known as Maison Royal has a room that houses the old King's throne which dates back to 1884. It is in this room that in 1884 the then chief Mlapa III signed a peace treaty given all of what was then known as Togoland to Germany. There is also a shrine that commemorates the appearance of Virgin Mary in the late 1970s. After a visit to this shrine we return to Aneho where we will spend the night.

**Accommodation - Napoleon Lagune - Togo Aneho****Day 5 (2<sup>nd</sup> August, 2016) Visit Dahomey and the grand marche of Dantokpa**

After breakfast, we depart Aneho for Cotonou in Benin we will drive approximately 30 minutes to the Benin Border and spend approximately 1 hour 30 minutes for Immigration checks. Until 1972, Benin was then known as Dahomey which literally means Dan's stomach in the local dialect. On arrival and having checked in, we have lunch, a short rest and then visit the lively grand marche of Dantokpa with the wax print section being top of our list. From here, we do a walking tour of the commercial area before returning to our hotel for dinner.

**Accommodation - Novotel Hotel - Benin Cotonou**

## Ganvie The Venice of Africa



### **Day 6 (3<sup>rd</sup> August, 2016) Visit the Ganvie village**

One of the main attractions near Cotonou is the stilts village of Ganvie, with population of 30,000. Ganvie is the largest habitation on water in West Africa, it is known as the Venice of West Africa. This is our main item on today's agenda after breakfast. As we will be travelling by pirogue on open water, we will have to leave early so that we can arrive at Ganvie before the sun gets uncomfortable. We will have lunch at a local hotel, 2 metres above the water level. We may try our hands at fishing under the tutelage of a local fisherman. If we are lucky and get a sizeable catch then our lunch will be fresh fish grilled a local way. We return to Cotonou in the late afternoon when the sun has lost some of its force. This will be approximately close to an hour drive from our hotel to Ganvie and approximately 45 minutes cruise to the village and spend close to 2 hours on the water with them. We will enjoy our evening meal and relax.

### **Accommodation - Novotel Hotel - Benin Cotonou**

### **Day 7 (4<sup>th</sup> August, 2016) A visit to the Sacred Forest and the Temple of Pythons and depart for Accra**

We are in for an interesting morning, after early breakfast around 7:30 a.m. we check out of our hotel and join the throngs going to visit the two most visited sites in Ouidah-the Sacred Forest and the Temple of Pythons which is approximately a 50km drive from Cotonou. Most people will not go near snakes but the snakes in the temple are pythons which are non-venomous. These reptiles are sacred revered and traditionally they are objects of worship. In the temple we will be given the history and their links to ancestral worship and the origins of voodoo. You may drape one or two of them around your neck if you are adventurous. The snakes are usually seen in the cool of the evening in the town and the people are expected to feed them or return them to the

temple. The next place of call is the sacred forest where all the trees are held in awe but the biggest one is the most sacred. This tree is supposed to be the founder of Ouidah who was fleeing from his enemies on seeing that he could not outrun them he changed into the tree. This place is filled with a small collection of legendary deities in the form of sculptures and carvings a fascinating and intriguing story.

We have lunch after which we set off on our 350km journey back to Accra arriving in the evening where the tour finishes; there will be two immigration checks in Benin and Togo, which will take close to 3 hours. We transfer you to your hotel upon arrival and join other Yale volunteers the next day to travel to Yamoransa for your volunteer programme.

**Accommodation – Holiday Inn - Accra or Airport for departure**

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