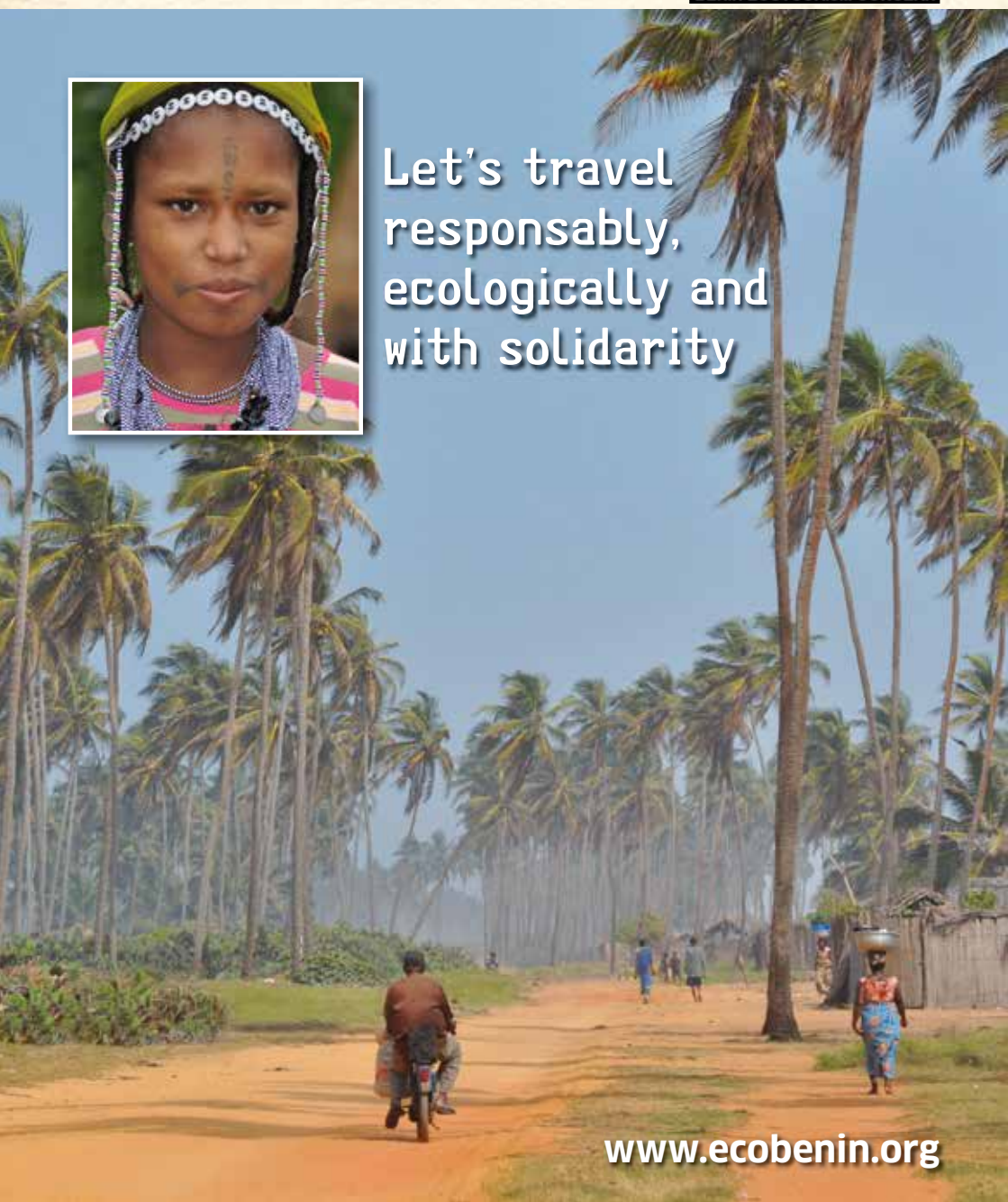


# BENIN

2016/2017



Let's travel  
responsably,  
ecologically and  
with solidarity



[www.ecobenin.org](http://www.ecobenin.org)



## Welcome to Benin

Benin, a true melting-pot of ethnic groups, is a destination to be discovered, a country attached to its traditions and ancient beliefs such as voodoo. Its typical tropical flora and fauna and its warm hospitality await you.

Benin is a peaceful democratic country since 1990 and has a periodic change of power. Freedom of movement and of press are complete. Local as well as national administrations have good relations with foreign and international institutions.



## Ecological and Fair travel



Traveling responsibly, ecologically, and fair: it is the pleasure to discover a charming country, its people and their environment. Dive into another culture, a different daily schedule, and interact with the locals. This different way of life meets the expectations of those who for a while, wish to escape from the virtual world and

re-discover real encounters in a natural scenery. The itineraries are linked with conservation of biodiversity and improvement of the standard of living of local populations. Thus, these experiences make sense and offer win/win situations. The travels are not about charity or humanitarian aid !

### Highlights

- A legendary welcome
- Life of music and rhythm of festivals
- A 100% natural destination
- Traditions and beliefs are alive
- Renowned historic sites
- Pleasant temperatures
- A feast of colours, aromas, tastes
- Unforgettable experiences
- Choice for biodiversity and fairness



## Organization Eco-Benin



Eco-Benin is the pioneer of ecological and fair tourism of West Africa, and has a 15 years experience in offering ecotouristic itineraries to encounter the country and its inhabitants, combined with local development and preservation of biodiversity.

Eco-Benin uses ecotourism as a lever for economical development of the local communities that manage themselves. It offers technical collaboration, from the start-up of projects to their extension, with the help of about 20 professionals of diverse disciplines.

From South to North, about fifteen ecotouristic villages were developed where villagers give us a warm welcome, and offer lodging, food, guided tours, and sales of handicrafts and local products. These activities complement their income. Over three hundred villagers have already benefited from this. Eco-Benin is also active in environmental protection. Key projects

include the planting of mangroves to create a biological reserve of 10,000 hectares in the South, and the promotion of fuel-saving 'Wanrou' cooking stoves in the North.

Eco-Benin is an active member of the 'International Society for Ecotourism', and of 'Altervoyages' (a Belgian network for alternative travels). Eco-Benin is a founding-member of the 'Beninese Federation of Organizations for Ecological and Fair Travel' which has instituted the certificate for 'Benin Fair Tourism'.

Ecological and fair travel with Eco-Benin allows you to discover the welcoming country and its people while respecting its nature and culture. We immerse in another world, meeting the others. An unforgettable human experience.

## Sustainable development



Established by Eco-Benin, ecotourism generates a large number of projects which aim at biodiversity conservation. Strategies have been developed to promote environmental awareness and to combat global warming, in collaboration with national and international organizations. Moreover, the funds generated by tourism are distributed in three parts: (1) to the local enterprise or association for managing

the site, (2) for services rendered such as guiding, lodging, catering, entertainment, handicraft; and (3) for a fund for local development to finance construction of wells, electricity for schools, protection of heritage, support of local products... for the common interest.

The result is a marked improvement of living standards of the population, with creation of employment and income improvement ranging 40-300%. When we add the protection of natural and cultural heritage, the preservation of tradition and religion, it is a combination of tradition and progress.

Generally the emphasis is on stimulation of activities that can generate income for women, strengthen their leading role and their entrepreneurship, alphabetization and micro-credits.



## The actions for climate



Started by Eco-Benin in the South, planting of mangroves favours the reproduction of fish in lakes and lagoons, strengthens the banks and reduces the emission of greenhouse gases. Presently:

- ▶ 44 hectares of mangrove were planted in 2014
- ▶ 12 tonnes equivalent CO<sub>2</sub>/hectare/year stored in the mangrove
- ▶ 15 hectares plantation of fuel wood
- ▶ 145 persons learned planting
- ▶ 170 beneficiaries of micro-credits
- ▶ 3 posters for public education on sustainable management
- ▶ 10,000 hectares being developed as Biological Reserve of the 'bouche du Roy' (mouth of river Mono)

Developed by Eco-Benin in the North, the fuel-saving 'Wanrou' cooking stove help to fight deforestation and desertification:

- ▶ 10,000 Wanrou stoves brought into more than 4000 households of 47 villages
- ▶ 3 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub> saved per household annually
- ▶ More than 450 women trained to install these stoves
- ▶ 60% saving of fuel wood
- ▶ 50% saving of time for the women
- ▶ decrease of respiratory diseases related to smoke



## Ecovolunteers and internships



Each year, persons of all ages and competences wishing to help in development projects, come to strengthen the Eco-Benin team while discovering the beauty of Benin!

A combination of usefulness and pleasure. Despite what people think, the first beneficiary of this experience is ... the volunteer or intern who can apply

professionalism while acquiring human values in particular.

Examples of missions: in Kpétou in the Mono valley, the issue is the sustainable forest management and the protection of the Mona monkeys. A map has been drawn, trees were planted, valuable information was obtained ... in Possotomé and Grand-Popo, ecovolunteers assist in market gardening and planting of mangrove, an essential ecosystem for farmers and fishermen. In Avlo, they take part in the establishment of the Biological Reserve by creating awareness of the local population, data collection, monitoring and inventoring flora and fauna ... Moreover, Eco-Benin welcomes students who wish to do a study task related to development, ecotourism, biodiversity, management, marketing, logistics ... in short, the topic must be of interest to both parties. An internship supervisor accompanies the student during the research and a final evaluation is made.

### Why not you?

Your turn to take action? Meet us at:  
[www.ecobenin.org](http://www.ecobenin.org)



## What travel options?

**Itineraries, standard or tailor-made,** accessible for all, with accompaniment from airport to airport and local guides.

**Accommodation:** unpretentious hotels, inns, ecolodges, guesthouses, houseguest, bivouac ...

**Transport:** public transport, private car, fourwheeldrive in the parks, canoe, bicycle, hiking.

**Food:** made from local products (rice, maize, cassava, fonio, avocado, yam ...) accompanied by greens, meat, local cheese, fish, eggs, and seasonal fruit (pineapple, orange, banana, mango, coconut, pawpaw ...)

**Beverages:** 2 bottles of mineral water per day per person included in the price; beer, softdrink, "tchouk" or sorghum beer, "sodabi" or palm wine spirit are not included.

**Included in the price:** local transport, meals (breakfast, lunch, dinner), accommodation, visits and excursions listed in the programme, 'carbon action' (reforestation of mangrove or production of fuel-saving stoves), guide and accompanist.

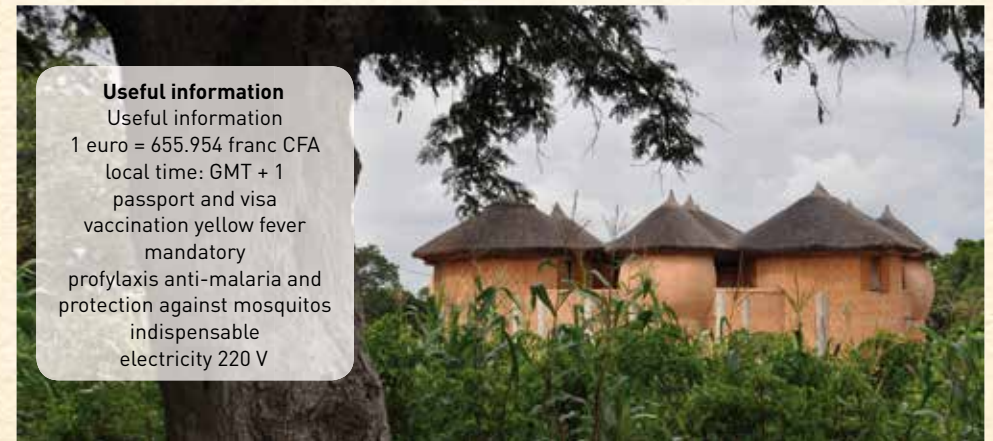
**Not included:** air ticket, personal expenses, beverages (other than mineral water), excursions not mentioned in the programme, supplementary meals.

Travelling with Eco-Benin means meeting the local people and admiring the splendour of the scenery and the riches of the African cultural heritage, and also to act for the climate! In all itineraries, Eco-Benin suggests your participation (included in the price) in a 'carbon action' to compensate the CO<sub>2</sub> emission caused by the travel.



### Useful information

Useful information  
1 euro = 655.954 franc CFA  
local time: GMT + 1  
passport and visa  
vaccination yellow fever  
mandatory  
prophylaxis anti-malaria and  
protection against mosquitos  
indispensable  
electricity 220 V



# Colours of South Benin



**We will share the daily life of Beninese families to discover their life style and the rich culture of South and Central Benin. Between the encounters with fishermen and aspects of the history, your stay will offer several surprises, without the usual stress...**

## **Day 1: Cotonou**

Evening arrival at the airport of Cotonou and welcome by staff of Eco-Benin. Transfer to the hotel.

## **Day 2: Cotonou-Ganvié**

Discover the workshop of an artist or an exposition in the gallery of the Zinsou foundation for contemporary African art. Transfer by car and canoe to Ganvié, the 'Venice of Africa'. Dinner and accommodation in an inn, sleep at the sounds of the water of the lagoon.

## **Day 3: Ganvié-Abomey**

Before sunrise, we discover the floating

market of Ganvié, an indescribable mix of sounds and images illuminated by candles and kerosene lamps. We will continue to Abomey, the town of Kings, and we will visit the surprising underground village of Agongointo. Dinner and accommodation at the hotel.

## **Day 4: Abomey-Possotomé**

Guided tour of the ancient royal palace of Abomey listed as a UNESCO world cultural heritage. Transfer to the shore of lake Ahémé. After the lunch at Possotomé beach, we discover the traditional use of plants for medicinal and food purposes. Evening programme with legends, stories, and accommodation at the eco-guesthouse.

## **Day 5: Possotomé**

We make a boat trip on lake Ahémé with its changing colours, to take part in the daily life of fishermen and to practise throwing a net. During the voodoo hike, we will learn

about the deities of the village. Evening with music, and accommodation at the eco-guesthouse.

## **Day 6: Possotomé-Kpétou-Possotomé**


We will track the Mona monkeys in the sacred forest of Kpétou. You are invited to participate in replanting mangroves, a 'carbon action' that contributes to the fight against global warming and facilitates the reproduction of fish. We will join the local women's activities such as mat-weaving and market gardening. Return to Possotomé. Dinner and night.

## **Day 7: Possotomé-Avlo**

Travel to Avlo, magnificent fishing village enclosed between the river Mono and the Atlantic ocean. Boat ride to the 'boca del rio', where the river meets the ocean. Enjoy a swim. Afternoon village tour. Night at the ecolodge at Avlo beach.

## **Day 8: Avlo-Ouidah-Cotonou**

We make our way to the famous town of Ouidah, where captured slaves started their journey to the New World. In the museum – the old Portuguese fort – we will be brought back to one of the most striking moments in history. We will follow the slave road that was walked by chained men, women and children to the 'Gate of No Return'. Continuation to Cotonou, visit the enormous market of Dantokpa and the Center of Promotion of Artisan work. Transfer to the airport and hope to see you again!



**8 days/ 7 night - 750 €/person**  
From 4 persons



# Safari to Somba Land



**We discover the exceptional history, traditions and habits of the Otammari people. But this is not all. We also watch the great African wildlife in the Pendjari park and we will have some unforgettable moments... with Beninese rhythm!**

## Day 1: Cotonou

Evening arrival at the airport of Cotonou and welcome by staff of Eco-Benin. Transfer to the hotel.

## Day 2: Cotonou-Tanéka Béri-Natitingou

Travel to the North to Nati (Natitingou), nestled between the hills of the Atacora. The stop at Tanéka Béri is special: this village with huts nestled under baobab trees is still authentic: the traditional healers are clad in animal skins and smoke a 'holy' pipe. Continuation to Nati, dinner and night at the hotel.

## Day 3: Natitingou

Visit the regional museum offering archeological remains, beliefs, home and socio-economic life of the inhabitants of the Atacora. After visiting the market filled with activity, colours and aromas and the artisan's village, we have a rest near the waterfalls of Kota, with a splendid panoramic view. Night at the hotel.

## Day 4: Natitingou-Pendjari Park

Departure for the National Pendjari Park for a safari with the likelihood of photographing elephants, antelopes, lions, cheetahs, baboons, buffaloes, hippos, warthogs, exotic birds... Picnic lunch and swim in the pool before continuing the safari. Night at the hotel in the park.

## Day 5: Pendjari Park-Tanongou

A final ride through the savanna, and you continue to Tanongou, a mountain village known for its magnificent waterfalls that ask for a swim or dive... it is spectacular.

Next, we will witness some traditional dances related to fishing or hunting. Certainly you will be invited to participate. Night in a village home.

## Day 6: Tanongou-Koussoukoingou

We will help with making improved Erythrean cooking stoves that are cheaper and environment-friendly. Less fire wood is needed and less smoke reduces smoke-related respiratory diseases. We discover Koussoukoingou, an Atacora village reputed for its tata's, fortified clay castles. Accommodation at the Otammari Lodge or on the roof of a tata, and that really is a 1000-star hotel!

## Day 7: Koussoukoingou

Hike to the river and the granaries where ancestors had their hiding place during invasions. Discover the lifestyle of the Bètammaribé people and their surprising know-how of constructing tata's, which are remarkable fusions of esthetics and functionality. Night at Otammari Lodge or at the tata-roof.

## Day 8: Koussoukoingou-Dassa

Near Dassa, we will hike towards the summit of Kamaté Shakaloké to view the landscape of granite hills and learn about the history of the Shakaloké, a people of traditional healers. Accommodation at the CPN (nature study and protection center) guesthouse, dinner under the grass roof and night at the cabin.

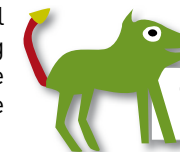
## Day 9: Dassa-Cotonou

Discover traditions and local life, the deities, the tree-fetish and medicinal plants. We will observe women making soap, breaking stones, working the field ... Return to Cotonou, night at the hotel.



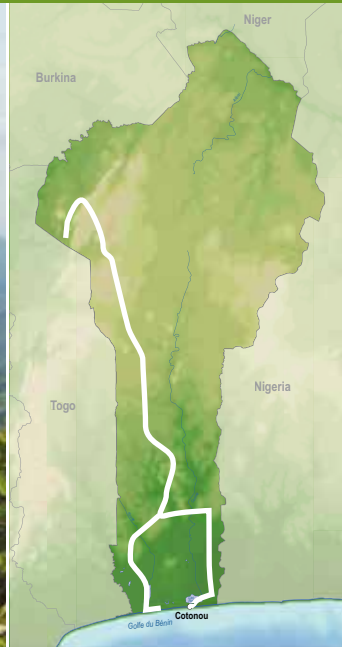
## Day 10: Cotonou

City tour of the economic capital of Benin, with a visit to the Zinsou foundation of contemporary African art. We will lunch in Beninese style at a 'maquis' (local restaurant) and discover the enormous market of Dantokpa, and the Center of Artisan Promotion. Transfer to the airport and see you next time!



10 days/ 9 nights - 900 € /person  
From 4 persons

# Benin between mountains and marvels



**From South to North, Benin offers unforgettable sceneries and the encounter with some of its 40 ethnic groups. With the hills of Dassa, the surprising wildlife of the Pendjari park, the Tata Somba's, the fishermen, the coconut trees, the journey is fantastic.**

## Day 1: Cotonou

Evening arrival at the airport of Cotonou and welcome by staff of Eco-Benin. Transfer to the hotel.

## Day 2: Cotonou-Dassa

Breakfast. Departure for Dassa, the town of 41 hills. Lunch. Stop at OKUTA, a natural site of granite offering a great place where artists from Africa and beyond express themselves on the local rock. Transfer to CPN (nature study and protection center) 'Les Papillons'. Created in 1995, this association aims at public environmental education with special

reference to ecotourism. Dinner and night at CPN.

## Day 3: Dassa

Breakfast. To learn more about the history of the Shakaloké, a people of traditional healers, we have to get to the top of the hill. Lunch. Visit the villages Kamaté and Shakaloké to discover their traditions and culture. Dinner under the fresh and pleasant thatched roof and night at CPN.

## Day 4: Dassa-Natitingou

Breakfast. Depart for Natitingou; in local language meaning 'the village of Nanto'. Lunch along the way. Arrival, dinner and night at the hotel.

## Day 5: Natitingou-Koussoukoingou

Breakfast. Visit of the regional museum of Natitingou. Transfer to Koussoukoingou (Koussou), magnificent place nestled in the heart of the Atacora chain where

panoramic views are fantastic. Lunch. In the afternoon we will visit the village and learn about the lifestyle of the Bètammaribè and their exceptional know-how of Tata Construction. These small fortified 'castles' form a harmonic fusion of beauty and functionality. Dinner and night in the Otammari lodge or in a tata.

## Day 6: Koussoukoingou

Breakfast. Three hours hike to discover the hidden beauties in the valley near Koussou: the river where women come to fetch water, granary of the ancestor people, tata's scattered on the savanna. Lunch made from local ingredients by the caterers of the local association 'Pearl of Atacora'. Afternoon at leisure. Dinner and night at the Otammari lodge or in the tata.

## Day 7: Koussoukoingou-Natitingou-Abomey

Early breakfast and departure to Abomey, the city of Kings and the hotspot of the voodoo culture. Lunch along the way. Meet the history of the Kingdom of Danxomè founded in 1645, during a visit to the history museum of Abomey, the former royal palace now listed as UNESCO world cultural heritage. Return to Bohicon for dinner and night at the hotel.

## Day 8: Bohicon-Possotomé

Breakfast. Visit the mysterious underground village of Agongou into at Bohicon. This open air museum has 56 of the 1600 underground houses that have been recorded on the Abomey plateau. Travel to Possotomé to meet the Adja and Sahouè people. Lunch along the way. Dinner at the campsite 'Prefet's place' a restaurant at the shores of lake Ahémé. Night at the guesthouse of Possotomé.

## Day 9: Possotomé

Breakfast. We will make an excursion



'way of the water'. During this boat trip on the Ahémé lake, the guide will explain the different fishing techniques used by the villagers and the kind of fish they can catch with it. He will also explain about the voodoo water spirits and the function of the protected places that are consecrated to the fetish Avlékété, and will tell also the history of the lonely hippo of the lake. A swim is possible. Lunch at Prefet's place. Afternoon at leisure. Dinner at Prefet's place and night at the guesthouse.

## Day 10: Possotomé

Breakfast. During the hike 'bestowal of the senses' we discover the use of medicinal plants in community life. Lunch. In the afternoon we will make a walk 'tradition and culture' through Possotomé and the villages Okomè and Séhomi. Highlights are the explanations of the voodoo deities and their shrines, the role of the Tolegba, the



# The solidarity caravan



rituals and ceremonies, and the importance of the sacred forest. We will also see the bartering market of Séhomi, where the women meet at the end of the afternoon to exchange their products. Dinner at Prefet's place. Sleep at the eco-guesthouse.

## Day 11: Possotomé-Kpétou-Possotomé

Breakfast and transfer to Kpétou. We spend the morning in the sacred forest to find the colony of Mona monkeys. Lunch in a village house. Participate in a 'carbon action' to partly compensate our generated greenhouse gas. Return to Possotomé, dinner and night at the guesthouse.

## Day 12: Possotomé-Avlo (Grand Popo)

Breakfast. Transfer to Avlo beach, a village situated between the river Mono and the Atlantic ocean. Lunch. We make a 1-hour walk to discover the village, the history, the traditions, cultures and characteristic voodoo cult of the Plah and Pédah people.

## Day 13: Avlo

Breakfast. Hiking or by canoe, go to the

'bouche du Roy', the place where the river meets the ocean. Lunch under the sunshades of the ecolodge. Afternoon at leisure at the beach. Dinner and night at the Avlo ecolodge.

## Day 14: Avlo-Ouidah-Cotonou

Breakfast. Departure to Ouidah lest we forget. Ouidah was one of the most important slave trade centers during the 18th century. We will visit the museum in the old Portuguese fort and we will walk the Slave Road to the Gate of No Return, a monument that is also on the UNESCO world heritage list.

Lunch and return to Cotonou. Visit the Zinsou foundation of contemporary African art, or the Center of Artisan Promotion to get some last souvenirs. Dinner and transfer to the airport.



14 days/13 nights - 1 165 €/person  
From 4 persons



**The discovery of ecotourism initiatives is a unique experience to travel in West Africa. This kind of 'mobile laboratory' brings us to Bénin, in Avlo, Possotomé, Tanongou and Koussoukoingou, to Togo, in Kpalimè, Sokodé, Mango and Dapaong and to Burkina-Faso, in Tiébé-lé, Bobo and Ouagadougou.**

It is an alternative way of ecological and solidary travelling: it participates in the conservation of biodiversity in the regions visited and the improvement of income of the persons encountered. Many sites will be visited, but the programme also offers workshops on challenges such as the preservation of heritage, environment protection, sustainable energy, water and waste management, and the key role of

women especially in income generating activities. To reduce the impact on the production of greenhouse gases, several measures are taken such as transport by minibus, planting of mangroves and production of fuel-saving stoves that will capture CO<sub>2</sub>.



# Way of the Water



**In the middle of villages and beaches of the West-Beninese coast we will discover the way of life and the daily chores of fishermen. From the lagoon village Ganvié to Avlo, via lake Ahémé we will appreciate the ingenuity of the people, and the natural and cultural richness.**

## Day 1: Cotonou

Evening arrival at the airport of Cotonou and welcome by staff of Eco-Benin. Transfer to the hotel.

## Day 2: Cotonou-Possotomé

Leave for Possotomé at the shores of lake Ahémé. After having experienced the gastronomy at 'Prefet's Place', we will go around some picturesque lake-side villages and meet fishermen, farmers or cattle shepherd and voodoo practitioners. Accommodation at the eco-guesthouse.

## Day 3: Possotomé

At the lake we throw the casting net and discover the role of the deity Avlékété in the protection of areas where fish reproduces. During the afternoon we discover the use of medicinal plants and this will be topped by a fortifying drink. Accommodation at the eco-guesthouse.

## Day 4: Possotomé-Kpétou-Avlo

At Kpétou, we will observe the Mona monkeys in the sacred forest. We will go to the mythologic island Mitogbodji with tropical birds and participate in a 'carbon action': we will assist in planting mangroves as part of the fight against the global warming. Transfer to Avlo beach, a village situated between the lagoon and the Atlantic ocean.

## Day 5: Avlo

A hike towards the 'bouche du Roy' where

the river Mono meets the Atlantic ocean, on the rhythm of birdsong and lapping waves. We can swim in the lagoon and have a picnic lunch on the beach. Return to the ecolodge for a rest and night.

## Day 6: Avlo-Ouidah

We go to Ouidah, once the starting point for slaves transported to the New World. Now a museum, the old Portuguese slave fort brings back the striking moments in that history. We follow the famous Slave Road to the Gate of No Return, listed as a world cultural heritage by UNESCO. Next we will participate in the making of salt by the villagers. Accommodation at the hotel.

## Day 7: Ouidah-Adouanko

The Fishermen's Road brings us to Adouanko where we enter the mangroves that are essential for biodiversity but are fragile, too!. Silence is broken only by bird calls. The hike 'tradition and culture' lifts a little the veil around the voodoo, it's deities and shrines. Dinner and night in a village home.

## Day 8: Adouanko-Zinvié

Travel to the natural reserve of Sitatunga at Zinvié, a wetland that shelters rare animals and plants. We will discover an animal farm (rabbits, ducks, chicken), fish pond, research in the middle of the swamp, Sitatunga antelopes that are on the verge of extinction, dwarf crocodiles, and we visit the 'green museum'. From the top of 350-year old trees we can admire the luxurious vegetation. Accommodation in bungalow or bivouac.

## Day 9: Zinvié-Ganvié-Cotonou

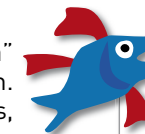
Discover the famous 'Venice of Africa' where we visit the market on the lagoon. We go round the village with its houses, schools and religious monuments built on



stilt, and sailing canoes. In Cotonou we plunge into the Dantokpa market with its lively colours and activities. Accommodation at the hotel.

## Day 10: Cotonou

In the fish harbour we will see the ships coming and going, the minding of nets and sales of fish. Lunch and city trip with a stop at the Artisan Promotion center. Transfer to the airport and end of journey.



**10 days / 9 nights - 765 €/person**  
From 4 persons

# Gourmet side of Benin



**With the help of a local caterer, we will test our cookery skills... and smile at our unusual efforts. From North to South, we will try to prepare the local dish from its 100% natural and 'bio' ingredients.**

## Day 1: Cotonou

Evening arrival at the airport of Cotonou and welcome by staff of Eco-Benin. Tasting of typical Beninese food. Night at the hotel.

## Day 2: Cotonou-Natitingou

Travel to the North to Natitingou (Nati), situated in the hills of the Atacora range. Visit the regional museum. Dinner and night at the hotel.

## Day 3: Natitingou-Koussoukoingou

Leave for Koussoukoingou, a village in the Atacora well-known for its 'tata's', fortified clay castles of the Bètammari. After the lunch, we will go on a hike of the village to discover the tata's. Accommodation at the

Otammari Lodge or the roof of a tata which actually is a 1000-star hotel.

## Day 4: Koussoukoingou

Brush up your cookery talent with a try at local cuisine! With the help of a local 'seasoned' caterer we will prepare a good traditional dish. In the afternoon we plunge into Otammari culture and participate in the brewing of Tchoukoutou, a sorghum-based beer. Dinner and accommodation at the Otammari Lodge or the Tata roof.

## Day 5: Koussoukoingou-Natitingou

Hike towards the river and the granaries where the ancestors hid during invasions. Lunch and return to Natitingou (Nati). Visit the always busy market. Dinner and night at the hotel.

## Day 6: Natitingou-Abomey

Departure for Abomey, city of Kings. Lunch. Meet with the history of the kingdom of

Danxomé founded in 1645, in the historical museum of Abomey, housed in the former royal palace which is listed as a UNESCO cultural heritage. The aspects of territorial struggles, resistance, colonialism, culture, and tradition will be explained in order to better appreciate the present situation. We will encounter the remains of an era that was thirsty for power and extension of territory and opposed the colonials. Dinner and sleep at the hotel.

## Day 7: Abomey-Possotomé

Visit of the underground village Agongointo and continuation to Possotomé, at the shore of lake Ahémé. Lunch. The hike 'tradition and culture' unveils the secrets of the village deities and passes along the barter market of Séhomi, where we participate in the exchange of products. Musical evening and night at eco-guesthouse.

## Day 8: Possotomé

During a boat trip on the Ahémé lake, we will attempt the casting net ('épervier') and the guide will explain the role of the deity Avlèkèté. In the afternoon, we will discover the rich local cuisine and take part in the preparation of our lunch, step by step. We will have our hands in the dough! Accommodation in the eco-guesthouse.

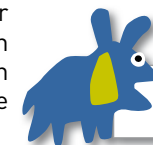
## Day 9: Possotomé-Avlo

Transfer to Avlo, a village hemmed in between the river Mono and the Atlantic ocean. Departure to the 'bouche du Roy', the place where the river meets the ocean. Wake up your culinary talent when we try the local cuisine! With the help of a caterer we will put together a traditional dish with exciting aroma that we will taste with delight. Accommodation at the ecolodge of Avlo.



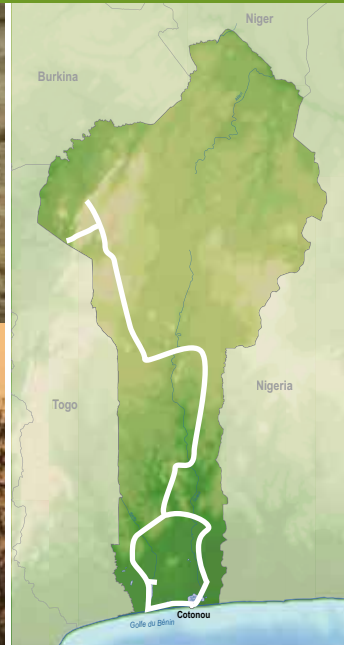
## Day 10: Avlo-Ouidah-Cotonou

Departure to Ouidah lest we forget. Ouidah was one of the most important slave trade centers during the 18th century. We will visit the museum in the old Portuguese fort and we will walk the Slave Road to the Gate of No Return, a monument that is on the UNESCO world cultural heritage list. Lunch. The walk of Djèssinou brings us to the center of the salt village of Djègbadi, where we will learn how salt is made. Visit the artisan promotion center at Cotonou and transfer to the airport.



**10 days / 9 nights - 810 €/person**  
From 4 persons

# Meet the birds of Benin



**We will travel through a large diversity of biotopes to observe a multitude of birds. 376 species, as many as in the whole of France! From North to South, the songs, dances, and colours will charm our soul as naturalists, artists and/or photographers.**

## Day 1: Cotonou

Evening arrival at the airport of Cotonou and welcome by staff of Eco-Benin. Transfer to the hotel.

## Day 2: Cotonou-Ganvié-Cotonou

After an introduction into the culture, a transfer by car and canoe to the marshlands of Sô Ava and Ganvié, the 'Venice of Africa'. Discover the local bird life. Lunch and return to Cotonou. Dinner and night at the hotel.

## Day 3: Cotonou-Parakou

Departure for Parakou, check-in, and af-

ternoon walk to view some birds of prey (goshawk, black-winged kite, black kite). Dinner and night at the hotel.

## Day 4: Parakou-Tanongou

We will rise early to witness the awakening of the mountain birds. Departure for Tanongou and visit of the splendid waterfalls of this village. Dinner and night in a village home.

## Day 5: Tanongou-Pendjari Park

Departure for the luxuriant Pendjari Park. We will discover the local wildlife including several species of antelopes, elephants, buffaloes, African marabout storks, crowned cranes, Abyssinian ground hornbills, giant kingfishers and many passerines. Dinner and night in the park.

## Day 6: Pendjari Park

We will spend the day discovering the regional birds. Dinner and night in the park.

## Day 7: Pendjari Park- Koussoukoingou

Go to Koussoukoingou for a cultural excursion: we will discover the famous Tata Somba, fortified clay castles of the Bètammaribè. Dinner and night at the Otammari Lodge or in a tata, a real 1000-star hotel!

## Day 8: Koussoukoingou-Dassa

After having enjoyed the morning chant of the birds, we will have our breakfast. We will depart for Dassa, the town of 41 hills. Afternoon hike amidst the hills around the CPN (nature study center) to discover some other aspects of nature and exchange knowledge with the enthusiastic local guides. Dinner and night at the CPN.

## Day 9: Dassa-Possotomé

Morning observation of the birds in the hills and on our way to Possotomé, situated at the shore of Ahémé lake. Along the way we will stop frequently to direct our binoculars and identify the diverse birds. Lunch. Walk along the shore of the lake: enjoy the preening by the cormorants sitting on the branches.

## Day 10: Possotomé-Kpétou

We will enjoy the excursion on the water; during the boat ride on lake Ahémé the eco-guide will explain the fishing techniques used by the villagers. Lunch and departure for Kpétou where we will plant mangroves to contribute to the reproduction of fish and the fight against global warming. Dinner and night at a village home.

## Day 11: Kpétou-Avlo (Grand Popo)

We will rise early to follow a bird viewing hike at Kpétou. Breakfast and departure for Avlo, a village nestled between the river Mono and the Atlantic ocean. Dinner and night at the ecolodge where we will sleep at the sound of the surf.

## Day 12: Avlo

At sunrise, we depart for the 'bouche du Roy', the place where the sweet water of the river Mono meets the salty water of the Atlantic ocean. A unique opportunity to observe the birds of this wet zone. Lunch. The afternoon will focus on 'tradition and culture'. Dinner and night at the ecolodge.

## Day 13: Avlo-Ouidah

A very early departure by hiking in a silent boat moved with a paddle to view the birds in the mangrove, an exceptional environment. Lunch and then travel to Ouidah. We will visit the museum in the old Portuguese fort and we will walk the Slave Road to the Gate of No Return, a monument that is on the UNESCO world cultural heritage list. Lunch. The walk of Djèssinou brings us to the center of the salt village of Djègbadi, where we will learn how salt is made. Dinner and night at the hotel.

## Day 14: Ouidah-Adouanko-Cotonou

Departure to Cotonou along 'fisheries road' with a stop at Adouanko where we have the opportunity to see several bird species. In Cotonou, visit the Dantokpa market. Lunch and visit the artisan promotion center. Dinner and transfer to the airport.



**14 days/13 nights - 1 600 €/person**  
From 4 persons

# Benin, cradle of Voodoo



**Voodoo will lift some of its veil for us. During the events taking place during daily life as well as the exceptional ceremonies, we will discover this poorly understood ancestral cult. We participate in the great voodoo celebration, which is held at several locations, each year, January, 10.**

## Day 1: Cotonou

Evening arrival at the airport of Cotonou and welcome by staff of Eco-Benin. Transfer to the hotel.

## Day 2: Cotonou-Zinvié-Cotonou

Breakfast. Transfer to Zinvié where we visit the Pantodon aquaculture farm situated deep in a wet valley (valley of the Siatunga) at Kpotomey. This center organizes training, demonstrations and various activities. It is managed in an integrated manner

involving the population. Our programme consists of a canoe ride in the marsh, and watching wildlife and vegetation. Return to Cotonou, dinner and night at the hotel.

## Day 3: Cotonou-Ouidah

Breakfast. Transfer to Ouidah, the capital of voodoo. Visit to the history museum in the ancient Portuguese fort. Lunch. We will follow the Slave Road to the Gate of No Return, a monument that is on the UNESCO world cultural heritage list. The hike of Djessinou brings us to the center of the salt village of Djègbadi, where we will learn how salt is made. Dinner and night at the hotel.

## Day 4: Ouidah

After breakfast, we participate with the preparations of the traditional celebration of religions and cults. Visit to the hall of

the superior chief of cults and indigenous traditions (Daagbo Hounon), visit the python temple and the sacred forest of Kpassè. Dinner and night at the hotel.

## Day 5: Ouidah: Voodoo celebration

Breakfast. Day of the celebrations. The day will be devoted to discovering voodoo traditions and culture. January 10th is a public holiday in Bénin since 1992 as decreed by former President Nicéphore Soglo. This is to support the rehabilitation of the voodoo cult, a traditional religion for the majority of the Beninese and for many emigrated African people. We will take part in the dances and rituals at Ouidah beach. Return to the hotel in the evening for dinner and night.

## Day 6: Ouidah-Possotomé

Breakfast and departure for Possotomé at the shore of lake Ahémé. Lunch. In the afternoon a walk focused on 'tradition and culture' will bring us to picturesque villages, a sacred forest and the barter market of Séhomi. Dinner at the campsite of "Prefet's Place" and night at the eco-guesthouse of Possotomé.

## Day 7: Possotomé

Breakfast prepared by Léon. A boat ride 'way of the water' brings us to the calm waters of lake Ahémé where the ecoguide explains the different fishing techniques and may tell us the legend of the lonely hippo of the lake. Lunch. Afternoon at leisure. Dinner at "Prefet's Place" and night at the eco-guesthouse.

## Day 8: Possotomé-Avlo

Breakfast, and we go to Avlo situated between the river Mono and the Atlantic ocean. Lunch. We will hike to the center of the village of Avlo-beach for more 'tradition and culture' to learn how voodoo



determined the history of this place. Dinner and night at the ecolodge.

## Day 9: Avlo

Breakfast. Depart for the 'bouche du Roy', the place where the river meets the ocean. You can swim here. Lunch under the sunshade of the lodge. Leisure at the sea side. Dinner and night at the ecolodge.

## Day 10: Avlo-Cotonou

After breakfast, we participate in the ritual of the return of the fishermen. Lunch and return to Cotonou. Visit the Zinsou Foundation and the Artisan Promotion Center to buy some souvenirs. A hotel room is available to take a shower if you wish. Dinner and transfer to the airport.



From 7 to 16 January 2016 - 900 €/Pax

From 4 persons

# Yam Festival



**This itinerary takes us to Savalou in the heart of the kingdom of yams, an edible tuber of importance to the Beninese food consumption, and of which the cultivation has several aspects. We will immerse in the habits and the way of life of the populations of Central and South Benin.**

## Day 1: Cotonou

Evening arrival at the airport of Cotonou and welcome by staff of Eco-Benin. Transfer to the hotel. Dinner and night at the hotel.

## Day 2: Cotonou-Porto Novo

After breakfast, an introduction of the culture before we depart to Porto Novo, where we visit the Ethnographic Museum Alexandre Adandé where cultural artifacts are exhibited (weapons, tools, musical instruments) from all over Bénin. Exhibitions on childbirth, life and death. After lunch, we will visit the Songhai centre

just outside Porto Novo, well-reputed for vocational training, production and extension in integrated agriculture. Dinner and sleep at the Songhai center.

## Day 3: Porto Novo-Kétou-Abomey

Breakfast. Departure to Kétou, the legendary Yoruba kingdom of Benin. We visit the history museum of Kétou, a living witness of the past and of mystics of the present. Lunch. Departure to Abomey, the city of kings. Visit the center of dried tropical fruits. Dinner and night at the hotel in Abomey.

## Day 4: Abomey-Dassa

Breakfast. Meet the history of the kingdom of Danxomè founded in 1645 during the visit to the history museum of Abomey, former royal palace and nowadays listed as a UNESCO world cultural heritage. Lunch and departure to Kamaté Shakaloké. Check-in the CPN (nature study center)

guesthouse and visit a farm of yams to discover this tuber that is widely grown in the central and northern regions of Benin. Dinner and night at the guesthouse.

## Day 5: Kamaté Shakaloké-Savalou

Breakfast. Hike to the hills of Kamaté Shakaloké to learn more about the past of the Shakaloké. Lunch and departure to 'Savalou the Beautiful'. Visit the palm tree with 7 trunks, more than 70 years old. The local guide will tell us more about the yam festival. Dinner and night at the hotel at Savalou.

## Day 6: Savalou

Breakfast. Visit the pantheon, a monument to remember that Savalou was a central location during the period of slave trade. We leave to meet high officials of Savalou to witness the preparation of the yam festival. At lunch we will taste yam in all its variations. Continuance of the festivities. Return to the hotel in the evening. Dinner and night at the hotel.

## Day 7: Savalou-Bohicon-Possotomé

Breakfast. Transfer to Bohicon and visit of the underground village Agongouinto. This open air museum has 56 of the 1600 underground houses that have been recorded on the Abomey plateau. Travel to Possotomé at the shores of lake Ahémé. Lunch along the way. Dinner at the campsite 'Prefet's place' a restaurant at the shores of lake Ahémé. Night at the guesthouse of Possotomé.

## Day 8: Possotomé

Breakfast. We will make an excursion 'way of the water'. During this boat trip on the Ahémé lake, the guide will explain the different fishing techniques used by the villagers and which types of fish they can catch with it. Lunch at Prefet's place. In the



afternoon, we will make a hike 'tradition and voodoo culture'. Highlights are the explanations of the voodoo gods and their shrines, the role of the Tolegba, the rituals and ceremonies, and the importance of the sacred forest. Dinner and night at the eco-guesthouse of Possotomé.

## Day 9: Possotomé-Avlo

Breakfast. Departure for Avlo, a village situated between the river Mono and the Atlantic ocean. We will go by motor boat to the 'bouche du Roy' the place where the Mono river meets the ocean. Lunch. We will make a 1-hour hike to discover the village and its history marked by the voodoo cult, the way of life of the Plah and Pédah peoples, their tradition and culture. Dinner and night at the ecolodge.

## Day 10: Avlo-Ouidah-Cotonou

Breakfast. Departure for Ouidah lest we forget. We will visit the museum in the old Portuguese fort and we will walk the Slave Road to the Gate of No Return, a monument that is also on the UNESCO world cultural heritage list. Lunch. Return to Cotonou along the fisheries road. Visit the promotional center of the artisans at Cotonou to get some souvenirs. Stop at the hotel to shower and change. Dinner and transfer to the airport.

**9 to 18 August 2016 - 800 €/person**

From 4 persons

# Benin, Togo, Ghana without borders



**Situated at the Bight of Benin, Benin, Togo and Ghana can be considered as the heirs of the great kingdom of Danxomè. During this bordercrossing journey we will immerse in the history and the famous and always living culture of these three countries.**

## **Day 1: Cotonou**

Evening arrival at the airport of Cotonou and welcome by staff of Eco-Benin. Transfer and night at the hotel.

## **Day 2: Cotonou-Ouidah**

Breakfast. Immerse in the Beninese culture, art and contemporary handiwork viewed at the Zinsou foundation in Cotonou. We continue to Ouidah, lest we forget: one of the places from where slaves were shipped to the Americas. The museum,

housed in the ancient Portuguese fort has much to show. We will next take the Slave Road towards the Gate of No Return, a monument listed as a UNESCO world cultural heritage. Night at the hotel with beach and swimming pool.

## **Day 3: Ouidah-Possotomé**

We go to Possotomé at the shores of lake Ahémé to meet the Adja and Houéda peoples. A local guide will tell us about the voodoo deities, shrines and rituals of the village, and introduce us to the artisans and the barter market. Dinner at 'Prefet's place', a real Chef, and night at the eco-guesthouse.

## **Day 4: Possotomé**

We make a boat ride on lake Ahémé to experience the fishing techniques of the

villagers, get close to the deity Avlékété who guards the areas where fish reproduces, and maybe ... we will encounter the lonely hippo of the lake. Swimming is possible. Lunch at a village home. Leisure time at the shore or near the hot springs. Dinner and night at the eco-guesthouse.

## **Day 5: Possotomé-Kpétou-Possotomé**

Breakfast. Transfer to Kpétou. The morning will be spent exploring the sacred forest to discover the population of Mona monkeys. Lunch. Participate in a 'carbon action' with planting of mangroves. Return to Possotomé. Dinner and night.

## **Day 6: Possotomé-Grand Popo**

By car to Avlo beach. Through the mangrove we will arrive at the 'bouche du Roy' where the river Mono meets the ocean. Lunch under the thatched roof of the ecolodge. A hike to Avlo village will reveal family life, income generating activities, and voodoo cult. Night at the ecolodge.

## **Day 7: Avlo-Yondocondji-Togoville-Lomé (Togo)**

Breakfast. Departure to Lomé. Stop at Yondocondji and visit of the market garden. Another stop at Togoville, a town of rich traditions and (mystic) history of the countryside. Visit of the palace of king Mlapa. Lunch along the way. Arrival, check-in, dinner and night at the hotel in Lomé.

## **Day 8: Lomé**

Breakfast. Visit of the great market of Lomé (Assiganmè) also called 'market of Nana Brenz' (rich Togolese business women) and the fetish market. Lunch and city tour. Dinner and night at the hotel.

## **Day 9: Lomé-Kpalimé**

Breakfast. Departure to Kpalimé, meaning



'cross-roads' in the local Ewé language, that is popular for its natural green ambiance and for its artists and artisans who work there. It is a small, cosy, welcoming and active town. Lunch along the way. Arrival, check-in, dinner and night at the hotel in Kpalimé.

## **Day 10: Kpalimé**

Breakfast. We reach the summit of mount



Agou, the highest point of Togo. Lunch. In the afternoon we visit the magnificent palm groves at the foot of mount Agou. Dinner and night at the hotel in Kpalimé.

**Day 11: Kpalimé-Accra (Ghana)**

Breakfast. We travel to Accra in Ghana. Lunch along the way, check-in, dinner and night at the hotel in Accra.

**Day 12: Accra-Cape Coast Castle-Elmina**

Breakfast. Visit the castle of Cape Coast, listed as world cultural heritage by UNESCO. This Ghanese fort was an important slave-trading centre. From here, thousands of Africans started their 'voyage without return', to the Americas. Lunch. In the afternoon, visit the castle of Saint George of Elmina, unique in its type in Africa for the number of its forts and ancient castles that were built by several European nations, first by the Portuguese, and later by the Swedes, the Dutch, the Danes, the English and the Germans. Dinner and night at the hotel.

**Day 13: Elmina-Accra**

Breakfast. Visit the market of Elmina that is busy each morning. Return to Accra and lunch along the way. Depending on the time available, we visit the Independence square, also called 'black star square' because of the big black star on top of the Independence Arc, and Abadi beach, one of the popular beaches where we can relax until evening. Dinner and night at the hotel.

**Day 14: Accra**

Breakfast. City tour and lunch. Leisure. Dinner and transfer to the hotel and then to the airport.



**14 days/13 nights - 1 500 €/person**  
From 4 persons

**The ten commandments of ecotourism**



- 1-Only leave footprints, take only pictures
- 2-Respect the fragile environment and realise that both residents and visitors must participate for its conservation
- 3-Enrich your travel by taking time to get informed about habits, language, behaviour and culture of the region; during your stay ask many questions, take the opportunity to discuss and exchange with local people, get home with some words and stories that represent the local atmosphere
- 4-Be friendly and patient with the guides, the servants and other tourists assistants and maintain a quiet and warm atmosphere

- 5-Respect and support the indigenous cultures (religion, tradition, artisans, gastronomy, tourist services) and the private life and dignity of all. Always ask permission before taking pictures
- 6-Don't throw your garbage anywhere. Take a small garbage bag with you. Leave your place behind properly
- 7-Do not buy artefacts made from protected or endangered animals or plants
- 8-Cooperate with the ecoguides and always follow their instructions and recommended itineraries. Conserve wildlife and vegetation.
- 9-Support the nature conservation programmes initiated by Government, NGO's and environmental protection agencies.
- 10-Walk, or use public transport as much as possible. Encourage drivers to stop the engine when standing still.







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