



18-day round-trip Togo & Benin with Savalou & Savè festivals

Experience colorful Togo & magical Benin, small group journey

dates: 02-19 August 2020

group size: 4-8 pax

rooms: based on double occupancy of rooms

Visiting vibrant markets and getting to know the daily life of different ethnic groups are part of this round-trip through Togo and Benin. We set out on a journey, inviting us to meet the past and present of two extraordinary West African countries with an open mind and to gather insights about other cultures, traditions and religions. One of the highlights of our trip is the annual Savalou yam festival.



We start our trip in the South of Togo and Benin; the coastal area, where the voodoo religion has its roots, and is visible all around. Continue to the green and fertile Southwest of Togo and the pretty Plateau de Danyi. In the North we visit the castle houses of the Tamberma and Somba, along the border of Togo and Benin. We go off the beaten paths to visit the Fulani and the Taneka, where it may feel like we've stepped back in time. We visit the King and the Spiritual Leader, who play an important role in the Taneka community and learn about the simplicity and complexity of daily life in the villages with thatched roofed mud huts. We visit the unknown Ola-Obé festival, and the annual festival celebrating the yam. Via the sacred hills of Dassa and the history of the Dahomey Kingdom the journey goes back to the South for an overnight boat-trip on Lake Nokoué, to get to know the Tofinu people and to learn about their life on the water and in the stilt villages.

In short

- Day 1 arrival Cotonou
- Day 2 Cotonou - Ouidah
- Day 3 Ouidah - Grand Popo
- Day 4 Grand Popo - Aného
- Day 5 Aného - Mono river
- Day 6 Aného - Kpalimé
- Day 7 Kpalimé - Dzogbegan
- Day 8 Dzogbegan - Kara
- Day 9 Kara - Tamberma country
- Day 10 Tamberma country - Natitingou
- Day 11 Natitingou - Taneka country
- Day 12 Taneka country - Dassa
- Day 13 Oba-Olé festival
- Day 14 Savalou yam festival
- Day 15 Dassa - Abomey
- Day 16 Abomey - Nokoué Lake
- Day 17 Nokoué Lake - Porto-Novo



Day 18 Porto Novo - Cotonou - departure

Day-to-day itinerary

day 1: 2 August

The day is dedicated to the journey to Benin. Arrival at Cotonou international airport, where we're welcomed by the warmth of the African continent. After having taken care of the custom formalities, we are being transferred to the accommodation.

night in: Cotonou

meals included: -

travel distance and time: -

day 2: 3 August

Before setting out to explore the country, the morning is used to get to know the guide and fellow-travelers, to take care of practical issues, such as exchanging money, to go through the itinerary and to get an impression of Cotonou, the country's economic capital.

In the afternoon we travel the 'Route de la Pêche'. The lovely coastal road takes us through fishermen villages and along the ocean, where - with a bit of luck - we can see the fishermen collecting the nets and pick the catch of the day.

Today's destination is Ouidah, a town with the doubtful honor of having been involved in slave trade in times past. Nowadays it is known for the annual voodoo festival, taking place on January 10th, which is national voodoo day in Benin.

A late afternoon visit is made to a nearby village, where we can see the traditional process of salt extraction.

night in: Ouidah

meals included: B-L-D

travel distance and time: 45 ks - 1.5 hours

day 3: 4 August

We explore the history and culture in Ouidah, with visits to the museum, to the pythons' temple and the sacred forest. We walk the slave road, the final 4 ks, people had to walk before boarding vessels to far away destinations. Along the way we see the landmarks, that played an important role in the last moments, the people spent on African soil, such as the Tree of Forgetfulness and the well, where the people had to wash off their African impurities. The slave route ends at the Door of No Return at the ocean; a place where fate took a turn and changed many lives forever.

We continue to Grand Popo in the late afternoon.

night in: Grand Popo

meals included: B-L-D

travel distance and time: 45 ks - 1-1.5 hours

day 4: 5 August

Grand Popo, situated at the beach, is a peaceful haven. In the morning we go on board for a trip via the Bouche du Roi to the lagoon and mangrove forest.

We visit a small private owned sea turtle conservation project, before getting on the road to Aného in Togo.

night in: Aného

meals included: B-L-D

travel distance and time: 25 ks - 1 hour



day 5: 6 August

Today we are offered insights into daily life along the River Mono, which in this part of the country is the border between Togo and Benin. The South of Togo has a rich voodoo culture, picturesque villages with colorful markets and a range of crafts to explore. We visit a place where palm oil is produced, go to a local sodabi brewery, where we can taste the strong liquor and visit a potter. We come along voodoo idols and sacred places.

night in: Aného

meals included: B-L-D

travel distance and time: 60 ks - 2 hours

day 6: 7 August

The morning road-trip takes us to Lomé, the capital of Togo, where we visit the largest fetish market of the region. Our local guide explains about the uses of the objects and the ingredients for ceremonies.

We continue to the Northwest of the country; a hilly and fertile area with cacao and coffee plantations, waterfalls and an abundance of fruit.

The late afternoon is used to explore Kpalimé and its handicraft markets.

The night is spent at the compound of a local family.

night in: Kpalimé

meals included: B-L-D

travel distance and time: 195 ks - 3-4 hours

day 7: 8 August

A hike is made on Mount Kloto this morning, to learn about natural dyes and to visit the coffee roasting women's collective. Today's destination is the Danyi Plateau. A road surrounded by trees and plants, takes us through villages to Dzogbegan. If still open at the time of our arrival, we visit the monastery and the shop. The local monks master the art of making - amongst other things - jams and essential oils, all of which are for sale in their shop.

night in: Dzogbegan

meals included: B-L-D

travel distance and time: 85 ks - 2 hours

day 8: 9 August

The day starts early for the road-trip to the North. Along the road we stop for lunch. A sauce with wagasi may be on the menu. Wagasi is a cheese made by the Fulani women; only available in the North of Togo and Benin.

During the day the scenery changes to Savannah, with more rocks and stunning panoramic views. Visits are made to Bafilo's weavers and to the death rock at Aledjo. Photo stops can be added to our liking.

The night is spent in Togo's second capital.

night in: Kara

meals included: B-L-D

travel distance and time: 335 ks - 7 hours

day 9: 10 August

We set out on a morning hike on nearby Mt Kabyé. On the way we visit a potter and a blacksmith, both of them working in the traditional way. The smith works the hot iron with heavy stones, which can weigh up to 20 kilos.

In the afternoon we continue to Tamberma Country, situated on the border with Benin. The Tamberma or Batammariba are well-known for their architecture. The castle-like houses are called tatas.



We visit a tata and spent the night in style, staying on the rooftop terrace of a local family.
night in: Tamberma country
meals included: B-L-D
travel distance and time: 85 ks - 1.5-2 hours

day 10: 11 August

If a new tata is being built, it's well-worth getting up early and visiting the building site. The theme "many hands make light work" is being practised; the mason is assisted by a crowd of volunteers, who mix the mud and provide him with it.

We explore the area; our guide shares about the history and the rich traditions of the Tamberma, which are still in use today. The tatas got their shape in times past, based on the need to protect families against wild animals and hostile tribes. Even though these threats are no more around, the tatas still have the same shape and function. Only when a young man has taken care of the primary needs of a family - by building his own tata - a marriage can take place.

We cross the border to Benin, where the rest of the day is dedicated to meeting the Somba people, who - like the Tamberma - live in tatas. A Somba guide takes us on a walk exploring the area. He explains about the culture - including facial decorations - and takes us to a traditional tata for a visit.

night in: Natitingou
meals included: B-L-D
travel distance and time: 50 ks - 1 hour

day 11: 12 August

We spend the day in Natitingou and surroundings. We set out on a hike - of approximately 5 hours in total - through the surroundings to visit the Fulani, the herders' tribe. This population group lives a (partly) nomadic life and has a rich culture with many traditions, which are still being practised. The hike ends at the Kota falls, a perfect place for a well-deserved refreshing bath / swim. A bit further South we visit not yet widely known Taneka Country. The people in this area have well-preserved their culture and traditional way of living.

We start the visit at the cultural bank, which looks like a museum. The objects on display belong to the inhabitants of Taneka villages. Each object serves as a pledge for a micro loan granted to the owner. Once the loan is paid-off, the owner has the right to reclaim his possessions. While the microloan gives the villagers a chance to earn a living, the cultural bank benefits of an ever-changing collection.

Leaving the asphalt road we step into a different world; one where time seems to have stood still and where life is lived by the rhythms of seasons and days. The picturesque Taneka villages give us a chance to get in touch with the people and their traditions. The King and Spiritual Leader are highly respected by the villagers. Both men play a significant role in the community. Visits are made to both, to pay respect and to receive blessings for your stay and journey. We spent the night in a village.

night in: Taneka country
meals included: B-L-D
travel distance and time: 60 ks - 1-1.5 hour

day 12: 13 August

We explore more of the Taneka village in the early morning, say goodbye to our hosts and continue further South. We stop in Djougou to visit some craft workshops, including a forge, where metal is being recycled, a leather workshop and a weaving workshop.

On our way to Dassa we stop at the Dankoli fetish. This voodoo fetish is considered as one of the most powerful fetishes in the country, and thus frequented by followers of the voodoo religion, to offer to the idols.

night in: Dassa

meals included: B-L-D

travel distance and time: 295 ks - 4.5-5 hour

**day 13: 14 August**

Today we learn about a not well-known part of Benin: Shabè country, a zone, where in times past migrants coming from all directions, settled; including Yoruba, Nagot, Bariba, Fon, Mahi, Ashanti, Fulani, Haoussa, Ditamari and Adja. They live together in harmony and Shabè has become the cradle of a rich multi secular culture. We are privileged to learn about several of the aspects of the Shabè culture today.

night in: Dassa

meals included: B-L-D

travel distance and time: 110 ks - 2-2.5 hours

day 14: 15 August

Passing through Savalou yesterday, we may already have gotten a glimpse of the Yam festival. Today is the final and most important day of the annual celebrations. Yams are widely consumed in Benin, and much appreciated. The festival in honor of the yam is based on the idea that ancestors and divinities need to taste the yams, before humans. Offering ceremonies are held.

We mingle with the colourful crowd of locals, celebrating the yam.

night in: Dassa

meals included: B-L-D

travel distance and time: 70 ks - 1.5 hours

day 15: 16 August

While Dassa is surrounded by many more, the holy voodoo number of 41 is used for the hills, many of which were once inhabited. They provided a safe haven to those wanting to escape the slave hunters. Remains of old settlements, which were protected by voodoo rituals, can be seen. Voodoo palaces in the hills are still in use for ceremonies and voodoo dolls can be seen there. We climb one of the hills and visit the voodoo palace.



We continue to Abomey, once the capital of the famous Dahomey Kingdom. From 1645 each King built his own palace, reaching a total of 12 at the time of the French invasion. King Gbehazin didn't want any of the palaces to fall into the hands of the colonizers and set all of them on fire, before fleeing town. Only one palace was spared. We visit the palace and the historical museum, which has an impressive collection on display.

In the vicinity of Abomey we visit a so-called voodoo village, to learn more about the religion.

night in: Abomey

meals included: B-L-D

travel distance and time: 75 ks - 1-1.5 hour

day 16: 17 August

Before traveling further South we visit Agongointo underground village, which was discovered in 1998, when an entire truck disappeared into the ground during road constructions. Extensive investigations led to the discovery of a very well-hidden underground town. It's still unknown who built and inhabited the town, which is now a museum.

We continue to Abomey-Calvi at the shore of Noukoué Lake, where we go on board for a trip on the lake to visit its stilt villages - of which Ganvié is the most well-known. We get an impression of life on the water and of the different types of fishing practised on the lake and spend the night in a stilt village.

night in: stilt village Lake Noukoué

meals included: B-L-D

travel distance and time: 125 ks - 2 hours

**day 17: 18 August**

Our lake trip takes us to villages where tourists are rarely seen. The locals row their traditional wooden canoes (some of them with colorful sails); the common means of transport for young and old both on the lake and in the villages, where shopping is done at the stilt shops or the floating market. In the late morning / early afternoon we set foot ashore again and continue by road to Porto Novo.

The afternoon is dedicated to Benin's capital, where the old town, the herbal market and the palace of the 9-headed phantoms are amongst the interesting places to visit.

night in: Porto-Novo

meals included: B-L-D

travel distance and time: 20 ks - 30 minutes

day 18: 19 August

The last day of our trip has arrived. Before returning to Cotonou, we make a side-trip to nearby Adjarra, a village known for its art workshops, where beautiful crafts made by local artists are for sale.

We travel back to Cotonou for a visit to the Dantokpa market, the largest market of West Africa. Farewell dinner and transfer to the airport.

shower before departure in: Cotonou

meals included: B-L-D

travel distance and time: 45 ks - 1 hour

Take a look at the [photo album of this trip](#) at Papillon Reizen's website.

book this journey

Trip dates

02-19 August 2020

Price 2020 trip

Per person, based on double occupancy of rooms

€ 1,875

Single supplement

€ 236

Individual extensions possible. Also available as a tailor-made trip.

Included

- **private transport:** for the group, including all costs related to the transport, such as driver, fuel, road taxes
- **guide:** accompanying English-speaking guide, traveling with the party and local guides and assistants
- **activities:** all costs related to the activities mentioned in the above itinerary, including entry fees, tourist taxes, tokens of respect to village chiefs and elders, as well as transport if applicable
- **accommodation:** as described above, based on double occupancy of rooms
- **meals included:** breakfast, lunch and dinner day 2-18
- **fair payment:** for products and services to all we do business with

Exclusive

- air fares and / or transport to the start of the journey and from the end
- visa, vaccinations
- personal insurances, such as travel, cancellation and medical insurances
- additional and optional side trips and/or excursions
- upgrade for rooms and/or accommodations
- additional days
- drinks and other meals
- tips, souvenirs and personal expenses

Group size

4-8 pax

Suggested accommodations

| place | accommodation | room type |
|------------------|-----------------------|---|
| Cotonou | Maison CanelYa | AC room |
| Ouidah | Hotel La Joie | Fan room |
| Grand Popo | Auberge de Grand Popo | Fan room |
| Aného | Coté du Soleil | Fan room |
| Kpalimé | Homestay | Basic, shared facilities |
| Dzogbegan | Hotel Belair | Fan room |
| Kara | Hotel La Douceur | Fan room |
| Tamberma country | Homestay | Night on the rooftop terrace, basic and shared facilities |
| Natitingou | Le Bélier | Fan room |
| Taneka country | Auberge villageoise | Room with shower, shared toilets |
| Dassa | Chez Armand | Fan hut |
| Abomey | Chez Sabine | Fan room |
| Noukoué Lake | Homestay | Basic, shared facilities |
| Porto-Novo | Centre Songhai | Fan room |
| Cotonou | - | Shower before departure |

Accommodations mentioned above are suggestions. If any of the above-mentioned accommodations is not available, the best possible alternative is chosen.

Comfort level of the journey

Being healthy, open-minded and flexible as well as having an adventurous attitude are necessary for

this journey, in which facilities will be simple in several places.

Payment conditions

Down payment upon booking: 25%.

Payment of the remaining sum six weeks prior to the start of the trip.

Full payment upon booking, when six or less weeks are left to the start of the trip.

Required visa(s)

Benin multiple entry visa

Togo single entry visa

Invitation letters for visas

If embassies request an invitation letter with the visa application, these are provided after receipt of the (down) payment.

Trip organization

The organization of your trip, including reservations for accommodation, transport and guides, starts as soon as the (down) payment of the minimum requested number of participants has been received.

Insurances

It is the travelers' responsibility to take care of personal insurances, such as health insurance, travel insurance and cancellation insurance. Insurances cover and limit unexpected costs, e.g. in case of a medical treatment during the trip or when you have to cancel or change an existing reservation.

Cancellation by the traveler

In case of cancellation of the trip by the traveler, the following costs apply:

- till six weeks prior to the start of the trip: the down payment
- six weeks till two weeks prior to the start of the trip: 70% of the costs of the trip
- less than two weeks prior to the start of the trip: 100% of the costs of the trip

General conditions

Papillon Reizen's [general conditions](#) apply to this offer.

Responsible travel

Papillon Reizen values taking her responsibility. That is why we pay a fair price for goods and services. Besides all our activities contribute to the [Papillon funds](#).

practical information

Brief information on [Togo](#) and [Benin](#) is available on our website. After booking a confirmation e-mail with extensive travel information, practical information and a baggage checklist is sent.

[book this journey](#)