



Africa

Benin and Togo photography with Richard I'Anson



trip highlights

Travel in a small group led by Canon Master Richard I'Anson, with expert guidance and photographic insight throughout

Witness the Vodun Festival in Ouidah, the spiritual tradition we know as "voodoo," where rituals honour supernatural forces in colour, drums and chants

Explore mud architecture villages, the stilt town of Ganvie and UNESCO listed Tamberma Valley

Meet artisans and traditional craftspeople - weavers, blacksmiths, potters and palm wine makers

Conclude in Lome, Togo's vibrant coastal capital, with Atlantic breezes and sunset cocktails by the sea



Trip Duration	13 days	Trip Code: RIBT
Grade	Adventure touring	
Activities	Photography, Festivals, Cultural Immersion	
Summary	12 nights hotel	

welcome to World Expeditions

On a World Expeditions adventure you can expect great value, high quality, active, expedition style adventure travel experiences on all seven continents. Our story began 50 years ago, when the mountains of Nepal inspired our first trek. Since then, we've pioneered many adventure travel firsts, all driven by our goal to provide active and adventurous travellers with BIG adventures that leave a small footprint on the people and places we visit. If you're curious to wander down the paths less travelled, we invite you to join us on our Benin and Togo photography with Richard I'Anson.

why travel with World Expeditions?

Our extra attention to detail and seamless operations on the ground ensure that you will have a memorable experience in West Africa. Our adventures have always sought to benefit the local peoples we interact with, safeguard the ecosystems we explore and contribute to the sustainability of travel in the regions we experience. You will be accompanied by trip leader throughout whose knowledge and passion for West Africa will add a unique dimension to your trip.



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Single travellers are required to pay a single supplement when joining this adventure. Please refer to our website for the additional cost.

Our team will be happy to quote on airfares, travel insurance and additional hotel nights either side of the tour if you wish.

the trip

Led by Canon Master, author and internationally acclaimed travel photographer Richard I'Anson, this photography journey through Benin and Togo offers rare insight into two of West Africa's most visually compelling countries. Over 13 days, you'll document a wide range of subjects, from early morning fishing scenes and vivid markets to the powerful Vodun Festival and remote village rituals. The itinerary includes canoe trips through swamp forests, encounters with traditional weavers and blacksmiths, and striking examples of West African mud architecture. With Richard's guidance and support, you'll deepen your photographic skills and leave with a diverse portfolio of images that capture the region's cultural and visual richness.

PLEASE NOTE

This itinerary is a guide only. Our aim is to make the most of photographic opportunities as they arise, especially during festivals and local ceremonies, which may shift in timing and location.

The Vodun Festival is not a single set event but an expression of culture, celebrated across many villages and communities over several days. We'll adapt as we go, guided by local knowledge and real-time access, to ensure the richest experiences and best photographic chances.

There will be some longer travel days, but we break these up with rest stops and roadside moments of interest. Accommodation is varied, from comfortable hotels to a more basic guesthouse stay in Ganvié, where the experience of photographing life in a floating village is unlike anywhere else.

In West Africa, flexibility and an open mind are essential - this is a truly adventurous destination, and that's part of what makes it so rewarding.

about your leader/escort

This photography adventure will be led by one of the world's most acclaimed travel photographers. Richard is a Canon Master Photographer, has published thirteen books, including five editions of the best-selling Lonely Planet Guide to Travel Photography, and is featured in the first series of the documentary series Tales by Light, on Netflix. He has built an enviable career on his twin passions for travel and photography and over the past 40 years has travelled the world, amassing a substantial and compelling collection of images of people and places - in more than 100 countries on all seven continents. Richard has a Master of Photography awarded by the Australian Institute of Professional Photography (AIPP).

at a glance

DAY 1	05 JANUARY: JOIN COTONOU, BENIN
DAY 2	06 JANUARY: TO GANVIE
DAY 3	07 JANUARY: TO OUIDAH
DAY 4	08 JANUARY: VODUN FESTIVAL IN AND AROUND OUIDAH
DAY 5	09 JANUARY: TO ALADA AND ABOMEY
DAY 6	10 JANUARY: IN ABOMEY
DAY 7	11 JANUARY: TO POSSOTOME
DAY 8	12 JANUARY: IN POSSOTOME
DAY 9	13 JANUARY: TO SOKODE, TOGO
DAY 10	14 JANUARY: TO KARA
DAY 11	15 JANUARY: TO LOME
DAY 12	16 JANUARY: IN LOME
DAY 13	17 JANUARY: TOUR CONCLUDES LOME, TOGO

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trip dates

2027 05 Jan - 17 Jan

fast facts

Countries Visited:
Togo, Benin

Visas:
Please check visa requirements with your reservations consultant*

Vaccinations:
Please consult a travel vaccination specialist for up to date information

Singles:
A single supplement is available for this trip*

Leader:
Expert Local Leader & Escort

adventure travel

By its very nature adventure travel involves an element of the unexpected. Remote areas are sometimes unpredictable and itineraries may be altered, as such this itinerary should be seen as a guide only. The itinerary may change due to inclement weather, forces of nature and other circumstances beyond our control. To get the most out of your adventure it is important that you are flexible, positive and eager to take on all the challenges that arise.

additional deposits required

This tour requires an additional deposit in order to secure accommodation during the popular festival times. The price of your trip includes these accommodations, and so this should be viewed simply as prepayment, not an additional cost.

We encourage our travellers to have their travel insurance in place as soon as they pay monies towards their holidays, including this tour deposit.

what's included

- Hosted by master photographer Richard I'Anson
- 12 breakfasts, 11 lunches and 12 dinners
- All sightseeing, activities and entrance fees as listed in the itinerary
- Private air-conditioned transportation throughout
- English-speaking local guide
- Airport transfers on Day 1 and Day 13
- Exclusive small group of maximum 9 participants
- Bottled water

what's not included

- International flights
- Airport and departure taxes
- Visa fees
- Travel insurance (compulsory)
- Meals not listed as included
- Single supplement
- Bottled water, aerated and alcoholic drinks
- Personal expenses such as phone calls and laundry
- Additional airport transfers other than Day 1 and Day 13
- Tips and gratuities
- Any items not listed as included

detailed itinerary

DAY 1 05 January: Join Cotonou, Benin

Welcome to Cotonou, Benin's largest city, located on the Atlantic coast between Lake Nokoue and the Gulf of Guinea. While not the capital (that's nearby Porto Novo), Cotonou is the country's commercial hub - fast paced, energetic, and filled with contrasts. You'll be met on arrival and transferred to the hotel. In the evening, we gather for a group meeting to discuss the photographic focus of the trip, go over gear checks and meet our local team.

Overnight: Hotel du Lac, Cotonou

meals: D

DAY 2 06 January: To Ganvie

As we depart Cotonou, we'll pause to photograph two landmarks - the vibrant Mural Wall, showcasing contemporary West African street art, and the Amazone Statue in honour of the legendary Agodjjié: the all-female warrior army of Dahomey. Then on to Ganvie, a remarkable stilt village set in the shallow waters of Lake Nokoue. Founded by the Tofinu people in the 17th century to escape slave raids, the village remains home to around 40,000 residents who live, trade and travel entirely by boat. It's one of the largest floating communities in Africa. We travel by wooden

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pirogue through the narrow canals of Ganvie to photograph daily life on the water, and explore the various neighbourhoods, schools and shops, returning again late afternoon to photograph sunset over the lake.

Overnight: Auberge Chez M, Ganvie

meals: B,L,D

DAY 3 07 January: To Ouidah

The morning is spent at Ganvie's floating market, where locals trade everything from fresh fish to firewood from their dugout canoes. We then journey south toward the coast, travelling to Ouidah, a town with a complex history and deep spiritual roots. Once a key point in the transatlantic slave trade, Ouidah is now recognised as a centre of Vodoun culture. We'll also visit Ouidah's Temple of Pythons, where sacred snakes are revered, and the Sacred Forest of Kpassé with its centuries old trees and shrines and statues that represent Vodoo deities or spirits. We plan to attend our first Vodoun ceremony in the late afternoon. In preparation for tomorrow's festival. Please keep in mind that the most intriguing ceremonies are not planned or shown openly, and we learn about them through a network of guides. The best experience is to be very flexible during these days when Benin celebrates its voodoo days.

Drive: 2 hours

Overnight: Awale Plage, Grand Popo

meals: B,L,D

DAY 4 08 January: Vodun Festival in and around Ouidah

Today we immerse ourselves in one of West Africa's most extraordinary cultural celebrations, the annual Vodun Festival, held each January in Ouidah. Vodun (known internationally as "voodoo") originated here in Benin and is still practised by millions, blending ancestral worship, music, dance and ritual. The day involves processions along Ouidah's streets: costumed devotees, priests and priestesses, and dancers in vivid dress carrying offerings to shrines. At the heart of the festival are the Egungun masquerades, towering figures draped in layers of brightly coloured cloth who whirl and spin as the crowd sings and drums.

Overnight: Awale Plage, Grand Popo

meals: B,L,D

DAY 5 09 January: To Alada and Abomey

As the sunrise rises over the Atlantic, we drive to a nearby beach to watch fishermen haul in their nets and prepare their boats for the day's work. We call in to a smaller, more local vodun festival taking place in the town of Alada which allows more intimate access and freedom to photograph. We then continue inland to Abomey, the former capital of the Dahomey Kingdom. On arrival, we visit the Royal Palace Museum, a UNESCO World Heritage Site that preserves the history, art and architecture of one of West Africa's most influential empires. The afternoon is free to explore Abomey's surrounding streets and markets.

Drive: 3 - 4 hours

Overnight: Chez Sabine, Abomey

meals: B,L,D

DAY 6 10 January: In Abomey

We explore the artisan heritage of Abomey, visiting local workshops where traditional crafts are still practised. We watch weavers at their looms, creating vivid textiles with intricate patterns, and blacksmiths working by hand. Later we drive to

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the Lokoli Swamp Forest, a biodiverse wetland near the Zou River. Here, we board dugout canoes, moving through narrow waterways beneath dense raffia palms. This is a habitat rich in birdlife, including kingfishers, bee eaters, and egrets. Vodun festivities take place in and around Abomey also, so we'll be keeping our ear to the ground for local events.

Overnight: Chez Sabine, Abomey

meals: B,L,D

DAY 7 11 January: To Possotome

Leaving the royal history of Abomey behind, we descend southwest toward Lake Aheme, one of Benin's most scenic and culturally rich freshwater lakes. Dotted with fishing villages and deeply tied to Vodun traditions, the lake offers a different pace and feel to the highlands. On the way to Possotome, we stop at the village of Se, renowned as a women-led pottery hub where artisans shape beautiful, functional works from local clay. In the afternoon, we explore the Lake Aheme, visiting small communities where daily life revolves around fishing, farming, and ritual. At the village entrances we find the Legba shrines, distinctive clay figures that serve as spiritual guardians.

Drive 2 - 3 hours

Overnight: Chez Theo, Possotome

meals: B,L,D

DAY 8 12 January: In Possotome

We spend the day immersed in the Vodun celebrations of Possotome. The centrepiece of the day is the Zangbeto Festival, honouring the traditional night guardians of the Vodun world. Towering, haystack-like figures covered in raffia or colourful fibres, the Zangbeto whirl, sweep and spin through the village in an energetic dance. These masked figures are believed to cleanse, protect, and reveal hidden truths, their sudden movements and swirling forms an expression of unseen forces at work.

Overnight: Chez Theo, Possotome

meals: B,L,D

DAY 9 13 January: To Sokode, Togo

On our longer drive today we will make stops to make it as comfortable and interesting as possible. We'll take time at Faille d'Aledjo, a mountain pass where the road threads through a narrow break in the rock. Towering stone walls rise on either side, part of the Togo Mountains that shape the landscape of northern Togo. We'll stop in at local villages and roadside markets with time witness daily life in Sokode as well. In the evening we attend a fire dance ceremony performed by the Tem people, a powerful ritual involving rhythmic drumming, chanting, and dancing.

Drive: 7 hours

Overnight: Hotel L'Amirelle, Sokode

meals: B,L,D

DAY 10 14 January: To Kara

We head to the villages surrounding Mount Kabye. The Kabye people are known for their pottery and iron smelting in open air forges. In the Tamberma Valley, home to

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the Batammariba people, we learn about their remarkable Takienta dwellings - multi-storey mud structures with conical roofs and fortified walls. These UNESCO World Heritage listed homes are both architectural and cultural landmarks.

Drive: 2 hours

Overnight: Hotel St Brigitte, Kara

meals: B,L,D

DAY 11 15 January: To Lome

On our way to Lome, Togo's capital, we'll stop at the weaving town of Bafilo, known for its traditional looms and bold textile patterns. Lome is a lively port town, with palm lined boulevards and faded colonial buildings, a blend of West African and French influences. Lomé is known for its striking mix of colonial architecture, vibrant craft markets, and white sand beaches, but also as Togo's culinary capital. You'll see local women pounding yams into fufu, open-air maquis serving bowls of spicy palm fruit soup (deku desi), and vendors dishing up grilled meat, tropical fruit, or fried dough on street corners.

Drive: 8 hours

Overnight: Petit Bruxelles, Lome

meals: B,L,D

DAY 12 16 January: In Lome

Today we visit Davedi, a traditional Ewe village. We learn about palm wine tapping, wooden twin doll carvings (known as venavi, significant in Ewe spiritual traditions), and the distillation of local palm spirits. In the afternoon, we return to Lome with time to unwind, or explore the Palais de Lomé, a restored colonial era governor's residence now serving as a contemporary arts and cultural centre. We'll enjoy a farewell dinner before our West African tour comes to an end.

Overnight: Petit Bruxelles, Lome

meals: B,L,D

DAY 13 17 January: Tour concludes Lome, Togo

After breakfast, our West African photography journey comes to an end.

If flight services suit you better from Accra, Ghana, we can arrange a transfer to share with any other group members. The drive is around 5-6 hours including stops.

meals: B

This itinerary is subject to change with any change in Community regulations as well as Governmental changes and natural circumstances beyond our control.

climate

January falls in the dry season across Togo and Benin. Days are generally hot and sunny, with daytime temperatures often around 30C (86F) or more, dropping slightly at night. This is also the period of the harmattan winds – dry air blowing south from the Sahara that can carry a fine dust haze. The harmattan cools the evenings and mornings (sometimes dipping below 20C / 68F). Travellers should be prepared for dusty air, warm sunshine, and occasional cooler nights. The upside is that rainfall is very unlikely and road travel is usually straightforward – making January an excellent time to experience festivals, and cultural life in West Africa.

dietary requirements

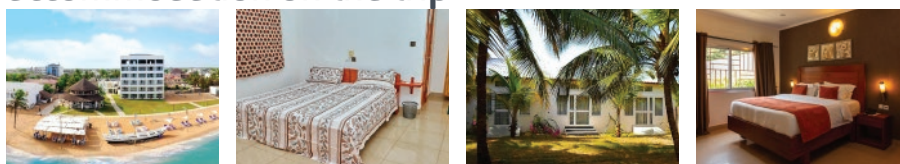
We are able to cater for vegetarian diets and can assist with medically recommended diets (allergies and intolerances). Please ensure you discuss your requirements with us well in advance.

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Options are likely to be limited in very remote locations or alternatives may be unavailable. We are unable to guarantee a peanut-free or allergen-free trip, and therefore, we strongly encourage that travellers with life-threatening or severe allergies take all necessary medical precautions to prepare for the possibility of exposure. Passengers must travel with all necessary medications for food allergies and be capable of self-administering these medications.

accommodation on the trip



Our intended accommodations are provided to help you understand the style of accommodation, however please note these are subject to change, in which case a property of equal standard will be provided.

Aside of our very basic stay in the floating village of Ganvie, all accommodations are ensuite and air conditioned, many with pools.

We will travel in a spacious 22 seater air conditioned bus.

visas

Please bear in mind that visas may be required for countries you are visiting en route or transiting through on the way to your destination. It is important that you check the requirements of all countries you will visit. Visa costs and requirements do change regularly.

Visas are required and more information will be provided in the tour pre departure information.

how to book

Bookings can be made online at www.worldexpeditions.com

A non refundable deposit is required at the time of booking. This is higher than our standard deposit due to deposits paid in advance to secure the accommodation.

We are very happy to quote on airfares, along with additional hotel nights and travel insurance.

Festival season in West Africa is popular and flights should be booked as soon as the departure is guaranteed with 8 participants booked.

GETTING THERE

Trip starts in Cotonou, Benin and ends in Lome, Togo.

Flights ex Australia are overall best with Qatar or Emirates. Lome, is better serviced via Europe and North Africa given it's French ties.

It is possible to arrange a group transfer from Lome, to Accra which is serviced by Emirates & Etihad. This is a 5-6 hour drive with stops, and would possibly require an overnight in Accra before onward travel.

eg

Sydney – Abu Dhabi – Addis Ababa - Cotonou

Lome – Casablanca - Abu Dhabi – Sydney

or

Sydney – Dubai – Addis Ababa - Cotonou

Vehicle Transfer Lome to Accra (on request – additional cost)

Accra - Dubai – Sydney