

# *Senegal and Guinea Bissau, an extraordinary cultural and natural discovery*

*An amazing journey across an incredible variety of landscapes and experiences.*

*A comfortable expedition in a crescendo of spectacular natural environments such as desert dunes, mangrove swamps, sacred forests, savannah, river estuaries, ocean beaches and remote islands.*

*An encounter with the “powerful” cultural milieu of West Africa: the largest religious brotherhood, contemporary vibrant local art, animistic religions, tribal kings and dancing masks.*

*Timeless people and historical sites like the ex-capital of former French West Africa, the slave-trade island of Goré, the ancient Portuguese capital of Bolama and the contemporary intellectual melting-pot Dakar.*

*A journey for travelers seeking beauty, culture and variety.*

## **Senegal, history in West Africa**



*Saint Louis, the charming ex-capital of French West Africa - the unique atmospheres and the narrow lanes of the Old Town are best discovered by calash, just as locals do! Overnight in the town historic hotel (1895) where all the pilots of the “Aereopostale” (airmail service) used to stay, including Saint Exupéry - the famous author of “The Little Prince”.*

## Senegal, nature & wildlife at Djoudj National Bird Sanctuary



*A natural oasis formed by hundreds of miles of partially flooded lands which has been declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site.*

*This “humid paradise” lies on the southeastern bank of the Senegal River and is the best habitat and nesting site for over a million of migratory and resident birds. Out of over 400 species, pelicans and flamingos are the most common. Apart from birds there is also a wide range of wildlife.*



## Senegal, the holy town of Touba



*Touba is a rarely visited town but worth the stop. Its inhabitants follow Mouridism - a brotherhood founded by a Sufi named Amhadou Bamba Mbake - and the town itself is a sort of theocratic “state within the state”, ruled by a Caliph. Great is its social and economical impact and it is thanks to its peaceful (and African) vision of Islam, that Mouridism has become the bastion protecting Senegal from radicalisms.*

*The annual festival gathers four million pilgrims.*



**Senegal, Casamance**





*Through a labyrinth of water and mangroves, we discover the animistic region of **Casamance** - a complete change of landscape, climate, natural environment and culture.*

*Massive and luxuriant trees, “sacred forests” and adobe-fortified buildings inhabited by large patriarchal Diola families. It is one of the best examples of **traditional African “sculptural architecture”**: these large clay and wooden houses, where light comes from a central hole in the roof, are known as “impluvium houses” - an African variant of the ancient roman house – and in the past they had the function to protect its dwellers from outside attacks. Encounter with the king of a Diola Kingdom who holds both political and mystical power.*

*We also witness the **celebration of two tribal masks**: the **Mandingo mask dance** and the **Diola mask dance** ... a unique experience that involves the participation of the entire village in an intense mix of magic, music and dances.*



*Casamance is also synonymous of trendy sea destination known for its excellent beaches.*

## Senegal ... places



We meet “timeless” men and women, we encounter nomadic Fulani watching over their herds of zebu, we visit “historical” sites such as Saint Louis and Goré - the former slave-trade island -, we stop at remote villages in Casamance, we discover contemporary Dakar - a metropolis and intellectual melting pot of Independent Africa - and its incredible “Village des Arts”, the best place to connect with the finest artists and young talents of today’s vibrant Senegalese art scene.



**... and people**



## **Guinea Bissau, Bijagos Islands**



*The The Bijagos Archipelago is located approximately 40 miles off-shore and, with its 88 islands (only 21 inhabited), is the largest archipelago in Africa. With its pristine landscapes, its unique fauna and its genuine tribal culture, it is an exceptional “geographical jewel”.*

**Guinea Bissau, Orango Island in Bijagos**



*Orango Isl. is a national park and, among the many protected species living here, there is a distinctive mammal: the rare “saltwater hippo” which mainly stays in the island mangrove forests but sometimes likes to go for a swim in the ocean!*

**Guinea Bissau, Bolama Island in Bijagos**



*The former capital of Portuguese Guinea was built following the plans of a roman citadel. When the Portuguese left, native people moved in. Today although inhabited, it is plunged in a unique fairy-tale atmosphere of a ghost town: falling apart buildings, large sunny lethargic avenues, empty squares, dry fountains, bush-like gardens and charming administrative buildings in neo Palladian style ... surrounded by peaceful goats!*



## Guinea Bissau and its Wild Carnival



*Carnival is the main festivity in Guinea Bissau. In the capital Bissau the great carnival finale goes wild in the afternoon when, along the main avenue, groups from all over the country start their intense parade: sacred traditional masks, warriors dressed in a crocodile skin and armed with arrows, initiated girls wearing only strings of glass beads, modern papier-mâché masks ... An unforgettable experience, a real “fiesta popular” combining Portuguese influence with cheerful African spirit.*





