



## Pre-Departure Information

TRIBAL GHANA, TOGO, AND BENIN



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# Reminders Before You Go

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## WELCOME!

We're delighted to welcome you on this adventure! This booklet is designed to guide you in the practical details for preparing for your trip. As you read, if any questions come to mind, feel free to give us a call or send us an email—we're here to help.

## PLEASE SEND US

- Trip Application:** Complete, sign, and return your Trip Application form as soon as possible if you have not already done so.
- Medical Form:** Complete, sign, and return your Medical Form as soon as possible if you have not already done so.
- Air Schedule:** Please forward a copy of your email confirmation, which shows your exact flight arrival and departure times. Refer to the Arrival & Departure section of the Detailed Trip Itinerary for instructions. Please feel free to review your proposed schedule with Wilderness Travel before purchasing your tickets if you have any questions about the timing of your arrival and departure flights or would like to confirm we have the required minimum number of participants to operate the trip.

## PLEASE CAREFULLY REVIEW

- Travel Documents & Medical Information:** Carefully review the Travel Documents and Medical Information sections of this booklet to familiarize yourself with Passport and Visa entry requirements for your destination, as well as any recommended inoculations.
- Optional Travel Insurance:** Review the Trip Cancellation & Transfer Fee Schedule included in the Detailed Itinerary. We recommend that all trip members purchase Travel Insurance.
- Extra Services:** Request any Extra Services (hotel nights, transfers, extensions) with your WT office contact using the Extra Services Request Form sent with your confirmation packet.
- Final Documents:** Approximately three weeks before your trip, we will send you final departure documents, including hotel and local contact information and rendezvous instructions.

## QUESTIONS?

Call: 1-800-368-2794, go to our **website** ([www.wildernesstravel.com](http://www.wildernesstravel.com)) or e-mail us at: [info@wildernesstravel.com](mailto:info@wildernesstravel.com).

# Travel Information

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## PASSPORT

Your passport must be valid for six months after your date of exit from West Africa. In addition, we recommend that your passport have at least two completely blank visa pages for every country you will be visiting. It is very important that the blank pages say “Visas” at the top. You can request a new passport through **US Passport Services**

**Office** ([http://travel.state.gov/passport/passport\\_1738.html](http://travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html)) (the service of adding pages for visas was discontinued as of January 1, 2016) or use a visa service agency, which can take care of your passport renewal and expedite the process, if needed. We recommend **Passport Visas Express** (<http://www.passportvisaexpress.com/?affId=2120>). Be sure to allow sufficient time to acquire this before your trip.

It is a good idea to carry photocopies of your passport’s photo page and any acquired visa pages for your trip (if applicable) in case your passport is lost or as an additional piece of identification, as well as two extra passport photos.

## VISAS

US citizens need a visa for Ghana, Togo, and Benin. Do not apply for the visas directly with the consulate, since you may encounter problems. Sixty days prior to your departure we will send you an email with instructions to help you fill out your forms and send them to our recommended passport and visa processing service, **Passport Visas**

**Express** (<http://www.passportvisasexpress.com/?affId=2120>) (PVE). On the PVE website, purchase the Ghana Tourist Single Entry Visa (valid for 3 months), the Togo Tourist Multiple Visa (valid for 3 months) and the Benin Tourist Single Visa (valid for only 30 days so applications should be submitted 1 week prior to departure). PVE can also be reached by phone at 888-596-6028. Let them know you are booked on a Wilderness Travel trip.

If you are a citizen of any country other than the US, check with a local consulate for entry requirements.

## MONEY

The currency in Togo and Benin is the CFA (the West African franc, linked to the Euro). In Ghana, it is the Cedi (GHS). We suggest you bring most of your money in USD and Euros cash (traveler's checks are not recommended as they can be difficult and time-consuming to cash). For US cash, new \$50 and \$100 bills get a higher rate than old \$1s and \$5s. It is important that your bills be clean and crisp; old, faded, ripped, or soiled bills will be rejected. Only a few hotels change Euros to CFA for free, and they would only have enough cash for one or two people. Your Trip Leader will assist you with exchanging money during the trip.

NOTE: USD bills need to be dated 2006 or newer.

It is very easy to obtain the local Ghanaian currency, the Cedi (GHS), at the airport, Accra City Hotel, or Forex bureau in Ghana (faster than at the banks). It is a little more difficult to change money for Togo and Benin. Wilderness Travel would like to offer you the opportunity to have your guide buy local CFA currency (for Togo and Benin) for you prior to your arrival (he will give you the CFA in Accra). You will pay Wilderness Travel (at the time of final invoice 60 days prior to departure) and we will wire the money to him. You can let us know how much you want to exchange (we recommend between \$100-250 per person). Note: for tipping, the guides and local staff will accept any currency (including USD, Euro, Cedis or CFA).

VISA is the only credit card accepted, and it is only accepted in a few hotels. If you plan to use your credit cards, inform your credit card company before your departure that you will be using the card abroad.

You will need to budget spending money for gratuities and personal items such as beverages, snacks, phone calls, etc.

## TIPPING

Tipping is completely discretionary, but over the years, clients have asked us for tipping guidelines to reward guides for outstanding service. A range of reference would be \$125-150 USD per trip member for the Trip Leader and \$75-100 USD per trip member for the staff (this is a pooled tip). Please use small bills (CFA or Euros) for use as tips because change is difficult to find on the trip. The Trip Leader takes care of gratuities for luggage handling, waiters at restaurants, and local guides or drivers who may be with the group for only a short time.

## SPECIAL DIETS

We will do our best to accommodate special dietary needs, however, please keep in mind that certain cultural differences or limitations due to logistics can make it extremely difficult and at times impossible to accommodate dietary restrictions. Please inform us at least eight weeks before your trip if you have a restricted diet. It is important to bring a flexible attitude and supplemental snacks.

## COMMUNICATIONS

### **Telephone**

The international dialing code for Ghana is 233, Togo is 228, and Benin is 229. Please contact your cell phone company for specific instructions for international use.

### **Email & Internet Access**

Most of our hotels have Wi-Fi or a lobby/computer room with internet access. Keep in mind that sometimes the internet may be very slow or not work at all. There are also internet cafes in towns.

## ELECTRICITY

West Africa has 220-volt current. Plugs usually have three rectangular prongs or two or three round pins. Electricity can be unreliable and subject to brownouts, even in the larger cities.

# Medical Information

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The following recommendations should be used as a guideline only; consult your physician for medical advice. It is vital that you let Wilderness Travel know of any medical problems, allergies, or physical limitations you may have. Please fill out and return the personal medical questionnaire, and feel free to consult us if you have any questions about your ability to undertake this particular trip.

Wilderness Travel is not a medical facility and has no expertise or responsibility regarding what medications or inoculations you and your physician decide are necessary for your safe participation in the trip.

Traveler's health information is available from the **Centers for Disease Control**. (<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/index.htm>)  
Medical travel products are available from **Travel Health Medicine** (<http://www.travmed.com>) and from **Magellan's Travel Supplies**. (<http://www.magellans.com>)

## INOCULATIONS

Entry requirements are subject to change; check with the Centers for Disease Control for updates. All shots should be entered on your International Health Card (yellow card), which is provided by the facility giving the shots. Keep it with your passport while traveling. This provides an important personal record for you to refer to when making future travel plans. We recommend you discuss the following with your physician:

### **Yellow Fever (Required)**

Proof of a Yellow Fever inoculation is currently required for Togo and Ghana. For most travelers, a single dose of yellow fever vaccine provides long-lasting protection and a booster dose of the vaccine is not needed. However, some travelers may require a booster dose. Also, certain countries might require a booster dose of the vaccine; visit the CDC Travelers' Health link (<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/>) for information on specific country requirements. Have proof of the shot recorded in your International Health Card and carry the card with your passport. Health officials at borders often (but not always) request proof of the shot. For more information, refer to the CDC website at [www.cdc.gov/travel/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/travel/index.htm).

Please note: According to the CDC, people 60 years or older may be at increased risk for serious adverse events following vaccination, compared with younger persons. This is particularly true if they are receiving their first yellow fever vaccination. If you are over 60, please discuss this with your physician. If you are advised to decline the vaccine, please get a written waiver from your physician or travel clinic in case you might need it during the visa application process.

### **Polio**

People who have received the primary series of at least three doses of polio vaccine are considered fully immunized. People who are unsure of their status should receive the vaccine (three doses spaced at intervals).

### **Hepatitis**

The vaccines HAVRIX and VAQTA (two injections, six to 18 months apart) give long-term protection against Hepatitis A and are worthwhile if you travel regularly to developing countries.

### **Tetanus Booster**

A booster is strongly recommended (effective for 10 years).

### **Typhoid**

The CDC recommends the shot or the oral vaccine, Vivotif Berna. You may not be able to take the oral vaccine simultaneously with mefloquine (for malaria prevention).

## INTERNATIONAL HEALTH CARD

A Yellow Fever vaccination is required for entry into West African countries. Have the shot recorded in your International Health Card and carry the card with your passport as proof of vaccination.



## MALARIA PREVENTION

Malaria is a serious but preventable disease spread by the bite of an infected mosquito. All travelers are urged to take antimalarial medications, available only by prescription. Please discuss antimalarial medication with your doctor, who will explain various antimalarials and their side effects and recommend a regimen for you. In addition to medication, a further precaution against malaria is to wear long sleeves and long pants at dusk. Thin clothing should be sprayed with insect repellent, especially around the elbows and ankles. Use repellent containing DEET.

If, after returning from your trip, you have a persistent fever with chills, muscle aches, and headache, report to your doctor the possibility of exposure to malaria.

For further malaria information, consult your doctor or the **CDC Malaria Hotline** (<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/malinfo.htm>): 888-232-3228.

## STAYING HEALTHY

At restaurant meals and our picnic lunches, there is always plenty of bottled water to drink, and bottled water is widely available for purchase. In hotels, don't brush your teeth with tap water; use bottled water. Don't use ice in your drinks unless you are sure it was made with treated water. When in doubt, ask your Trip Leader for guidelines.

# Helpful Information

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## PHOTOGRAPHY

### Camera Recommendations

With the many advances in digital technology, a simple compact digital camera or even your smartphone is capable of taking pictures suitable for the needs of most people. For higher quality images and the ability to use long lenses for closer wildlife pictures, a DSLR camera is well worthwhile, though heavier. Most digital cameras and phones have good video options, but you may want to consider a GoPro for a lightweight, waterproof option. Always practice ahead of time with new equipment and bring your manual with you. Camera equipment is available for rent from **Borrow Lenses** (<https://www.borrowlenses.com/discount/wildernesstravel>), with a 10% discount offered to Wilderness Travel clients. This is an especially good idea for renting large zoom lenses that you may need for just one trip.

### Camera Accessories

We recommend bringing at least two large capacity memory cards or a small digital storage unit (or tablet) to back up your photos, freeing space on your memory cards. Don't forget to bring a battery charger and a backup battery so one is always charged and ready to use. For trips where you may be away from power sources for multiple days, consider looking into a solar-powered battery charger or buying additional backup batteries, and check that you have the appropriate adapter for the electrical outlets in your destination.

### Sharing Your Images

We would love for you to share photos from your trip, and with your permission, may even use your photos in our marketing materials or on our photo blog. We request that you send us a small sample of your best images. Please email your photos to [wtphotoblog@gmail.com](mailto:wtphotoblog@gmail.com) or tag us **@WildernessTravel** on social media.

### Photography Etiquette

When taking pictures of local people, be aware of cultural considerations. Approaching people with a warm smile and using polite gestures or simple phrases to ask permission to photograph them usually works well. It is always recommended to engage people in conversation before asking to photograph them, but if people do not wish to have their photo taken, please honor their requests. We urge travelers to avoid giving money in exchange for photo opportunities, which makes it harder for future travelers to have a meaningful personal interaction with local people. Please always heed your Trip Leader's guidelines for what is appropriate.

## LEAPING STONE

Wilderness Travel supports the work of Leaping Stone, founded by WT traveler Natalie Huberman, a former teacher who traveled with us in West Africa, fell in love with its people, and was inspired to create an organization to provide sustainable primary education for girls and boys in West Africa. Wilderness Travel has helped fund the building of a primary school in the village of Tsati, Togo. Every donation counts and as little as \$25 will send a child to school for a year. To find out more, visit the **website** (<http://www.leapingstone.org>).

## BEING A CONSIDERATE TRAVELER

Please show respect for the cultures we are visiting by observing local customs concerning appropriate dress, particularly in sacred places. Your Trip Leader is always available to answer any questions that you may have regarding this. If it is necessary to use a cell phone during the trip, please do so privately. Smoking is rarely an issue these days, but if you do smoke, please do so only away from the group.

# Packing List

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## THE ESSENTIALS

- Air tickets (or E-tickets)
- Passport
- One other picture ID, such as a driver's license
- International Health Card ("Yellow Card") with proof of Yellow Fever inoculation within the last 10 years
- Expense money

## WT GEAR STORE

To help you prepare for your next WT adventure, we've put together a great collection of top brands including Patagonia, Outdoor Research, Eagle Creek, and more at our **WT Gear Store** (<http://wildernesstravel.newheadings.com>).

## LUGGAGE

Note: International flights have a baggage weight restriction of 44 lbs.

- Duffel bag or soft-sided suitcase, with a small TSA-approved padlock. Due to limited space in vehicles, all your clothing and gear must fit into this bag, without exception.
- Daypack for camera gear, water bottle, and personal items needed during the day.

## CLOTHING

We recommend loose, lightweight pants—synthetic “travel” fabric are good in very hot weather. Short-sleeved shirts can be worn during the day and evening. For city and hotel attire, we suggest long skirts or slacks for women, slacks and shirts for men. No jackets are required for men.

People in West Africa dress modestly and visitors should also take care to dress modestly. Men travelers can wear knee-length walking shorts. Local women wear long wrap skirts in colorful fabrics; women travelers may also find a wrap skirt or long skirt a comfortable option.

Ghana, Togo, and Benin have very hot, humid climates. Mid-day temperatures can be in the 90s, with little cooling in the evening. Be prepared for long, hot days. In the inland regions, the wind can sometimes stir up dust storms. Rain is unlikely in the areas we visit, but possible. There are limited opportunities to do laundry on the trip.

- Lightweight, quick-drying synthetic pants. Jeans aren't recommended because they are made of heavy cotton and are too hot for the climate.
- Loose, lightweight travel shorts for men. Shorts should be modest and knee-length.
- Lightweight batik sarong or below-the-knee travel skirt for women. West African women don't expose their legs. Shorts on women are frowned upon, so a comfortable long skirt is a great choice.
- T-shirts
- Underwear/socks. Synthetics dry faster
- Sleepwear
- Shade hat with a wide brim
- Tennis shoes or sturdy walking shoes with good traction and ankle support
- Sturdy sandals such as Tevas
- Bathing suit (for use in hotel pools where available)
- City/hotel attire
- Funeral attire (darker colors or black, no shorts, no white)

## EQUIPMENT

- Good quality sunglasses with case
- Strong flashlight or headlamp, spare batteries
- Compact umbrella or lightweight rain jacket

## PERSONAL FIRST AID SUPPLIES

Every trip member must bring a small kit for personal use. Your own experience will influence your choices.

- Sunscreen of SPF 30 or higher. We recommend mineral-based sunscreens with zinc oxide or titanium dioxide because they do not contain harsh chemicals that are harmful to the environment. Brands such as Honest Company, Badger, and Alba Botanica are found in most sporting goods stores and drugstores.
- Lip balm with sunscreen
- Aspirin, ibuprofen, or Tylenol, Tylenol PM for sleeping
- Topical antibiotic (such as Neosporin) for cuts, bites, or sores
- Insect repellent. Repellents with DEET are recommended. DEET content of about 30-35% is ideal (higher DEET content is not recommended). Wipe DEET off your hands before touching plastic surfaces (such as binoculars) because it can damage the plastic. Aerosol repellents are useful for spraying on clothes.
- Blister kit. Look for the long-lasting gel-type bandages that you can apply directly on blisters, such as Band-Aid Advanced Healing Bandages or Curad Gel Multi-Day Bandages. "Liquid band-aids," such as New-Skin, are useful because they dry rapidly to form a tough protective cover over a blister.
- Anti-bacterial gel for hand washing (at least 60% alcohol to be effective)
- Antihistamine such as Benadryl and cold remedy such as Sudafed
- Pepto Bismol tablets and Imodium for diarrhea. If you wish to bring an antibiotic for diarrhea prophylaxis, please consult your physician.
- Prescription medications properly labeled
- Spare contact lenses or spare prescription glasses

## OPTIONAL ITEMS

- Converter/plug adapter for appliance use in hotels
- Camera, spare batteries, spare flashcards
- Reading/writing material
- Gatorade-type powdered mixes or packets of ORS (oral rehydration salts) to add to your water bottle from time to time on really hot days
- Bandannas
- Toilet paper (Kleenex pocket packs are handy)
- Small tape recorder to record local sounds
- Reusable water bottle (optional, since bottled water is carried in our vehicles)
- Travel clock
- Money belt or neck pouch. Always carry your passport, credit cards, and cash with you in a money belt or neck pouch tucked down inside your shirt or blouse
- Travel laundry soap, clothespins, and line

# Reading List

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## ESSENTIAL READING

### **Rough Guide West Africa**

*Richard Trillo*

2008, 1312 PAGES

A comprehensive guide to all West Africa, including its history and culture. With its region-by-region descriptions, 172 maps and 12 pages of color photos, this guide covers from Mauritania south to Cameroon.

### **Africa North and West Map**

*Michelin*

2018

A fine regional map covering Senegal, The Gambia, Ghana, Mali, Mauritania and their neighbors as well as all the Mediterranean-bordering countries (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya) at a scale of 1:4,000,000.

### **Viceroy of Ouidah**

*Bruce Chatwin*

1988, 155 PAGES

Chatwin evokes in rich detail the rise to power of a wretched slave trader and the 19th-century court of Dahomey (Benin) in this slim novel.

## ALSO RECOMMENDED

### **Exploration of Africa, From Cairo to the Cape**

*Ann Hugon*

1993, 173 PAGES

This jewel of a book chronicles the 19th-century exploration of Africa with hundreds of contemporary paintings and prints, brief chapters on the expeditions, and a very useful chronology. Livingstone, Burton and others are featured in a series of journal excerpts.

### **Ghana Map (International Travel Maps)**

*ITMB*

2011

A colorful, folded map of Ghana at a detailed scale of 1:500,000.

### **National Audubon Society Field Guide to African Wildlife**

*Peter Alden*

1995, 988 PAGES

This comprehensive photo guide covers 850 birds, mammals and reptiles of Africa. With range maps and a good country-by-country overview of habitats and parks.

### **Togo and Benin Map (International Travel Maps)**

*IGN*

A shaded relief map of Togo, on a 1:500,000 scale.

**Bradt Guide Ghana**

*Philip Briggs*

2019, 528 PAGES

Complete with maps and town plans, this guide to Ghana features practical information on the country's history, culture and attractions.

**Captive Passage, The Transatlantic Slave Trade and the Making of the Americas**

*Smithsonian Inst.*

2002, 208 PAGES

A companion volume to the exhibition drawn largely from the collections of The Mariners' Museum.

**Saltwater Slavery, A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora**

*Stephanie E. Smallwood*

2008, 288 PAGES

Smallwood offers a clear, engaging study of Slavery and the Middle Passage, drawing upon journals, narratives and letters from slaves transported in harsh conditions across the Atlantic.

**The Race for Timbuktu**

*Frank T. Kryza*

2011, 352 PAGES

An engrossing account of imperial adventures in early 19th-century West Africa and the quest for fabled Timbuktu.

**Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa**

*Mungo Park*

2017, 210 PAGES

Park chronicles the culture, society and nature of West Africa before the colonial period in this classic account of a 24-year-old Scotsman exploring, often alone, in uncharted Africa. First published in 1799.

**Africa: Altered States, Ordinary Miracles**

*Richard Dowden*

2010, 592 PAGES

Africa editor of *The Independent* and *The Economist*, Richard Dowden draws on decades of experience in this multi-faceted, vivid portrait of contemporary Africa -- an Africa that, Dowden effectively argues, can only be developed by its own people.

**Faces of Africa, Thirty Years of Photography**

*Carol Beckwith and Angela Fisher*

2009, 356 PAGES

A portfolio of people and places in Africa by the remarkable team of Beckwith and Fisher. Published by National Geographic, it features 120 stunning color portraits.

**The Door of No Return**

*William St. Clair*

2007, 288 PAGES

St. Clair draws on correspondence, government records, artifacts and ship logs for this intimate, absorbing history of Ghana's Cape Coast Castle and its role in the Atlantic Slave Trade.

**African Vodun: Art, Psychology and Power**

*Susanne Preston Blier*

1995, 476 PAGES

A detailed study of West African vodun traditions, particularly in Togo and Benin. Blier compares the psychological and visual elements of Vodun with related voodoo traditions of Haiti and New Orleans.

**All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes**

*Maya Angelou*

1991, 208 PAGES

A candid memoir of Angelou's experiences in Ghana in the 1960s, just five years after the country's independence from Britain.



**French Lessons in Africa, Travels with My Briefcase Through French Africa**

*Peter Biddlecombe*

1994, 448 PAGES

A scandalously entertaining and useful introduction to Francophone Africa by the hilarious British writer and inveterate traveler. Organized geographically, he devotes a chapter each to Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Congo, Ivory Coast, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Togo and Zaire.

**Kwame Nkrumah, The Father of African Nationalism**

*David Birmingham*

1998, 142 PAGES

The tale of the remarkable life of Kwame Nkrumah, the African statesman who championed for independence, won Africans the right to vote and became the president of Ghana in 1960.

**Changes, A Love Story**

*Ama Ata Aidoo*

1995, 208 PAGES

A novel from the multitalented author and playwright, in which the independent Esi Sekyi confronts traditional values in marriage, love, career and family in contemporary Ghana.

**No Sweetness Here and Other Stories**

*Ama Ata Aidoo*

1995, 160 PAGES

A collection of eleven short stories about the lives of women and men in postcolonial Ghana and the tensions between traditional village and urban life; Aidoo's stories emphasize Ghana's prominent oral culture.

**Birds of Western Africa**

*Ron Demey*

2014, 592 PAGES

A compact field edition of Barrow and Demey's comprehensive handbook, covering nearly 1,300 species from Senegal to Congo and featuring 150 color plates. Now in a fully updated second edition.

**Journey Without Maps**

*Graham Greene*

2006, 272 PAGES

A classic account of a 1930s journey of discovery from Sierra Leone to the Liberian coast. No one captures local personalities and complicated morality better than Graham Greene, who had a particular interest in West Africa.

**Somebody's Heart Is Burning, A Woman Wanderer in Africa**

*Tanya Shaffer*

2003, 340 PAGES

Shaffer's vivid account of a year on the road in Africa, much of it in Ghana, where she worked on building schools and other volunteer projects.

**Middle Passage**

*Charles Johnson*

1998, 224 PAGES

Winner of the National Book Award, this historical novel, set in 1830, is the richly imagined tale of a recently freed slave in New Orleans who signs aboard a square-rigger bound for Africa.

**West African Folktales**

*Richard Spears*

1991, 229 PAGES

These 123 unembellished tales reflect the rich oral tradition of cultures throughout West Africa, particularly Ghana and Nigeria, where the pioneering Berry did much of his field work.

**Birds of Western and Central Africa, Collins Illustrated Checklist**

*Ber Van Perlo*

2002, 400 PAGES

An admirably compact, comprehensive guide to 1,500 species throughout Western and Central Africa featuring 109 color plates.

**Ghana—Culture Smart: The Essential Guide to  
Customs & Culture**

*Ian Utey*

2016, 168 PAGES

Entertaining descriptions of the complexities and nuances  
of Ghanaian society.

Revised: February 06, 2019