

Sierra Leone Encounters

Country(ies): Sierra Leone

Tour type: Small Group

Transport: A/C Minibus, speedboat, local ferry

Group size: Min: 4 | Max: 12

Days: 11 days

Start Location: Freetown, Sierra Leone

End Location: Freetown, Sierra Leone

Meals: Breakfasts - 10, Lunches - 9, Dinners - 10

Highlights:

Freetown, Sugar Loaf Hike and Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary, Makeni, Rogbonko Village, Kabala Heritage Trail, Tiwai and Banana Islands, Tokeh Beach, Bunce and Tasso Islands



Itinerary

Day 1: Arrive in Freetown. Transfer to city centre hotel by boat

Upon arrival at Lungi International Airport (FNA), you'll be greeted by the warm hospitality of Sierra Leone. Our friendly representatives will be waiting to meet you upon arrival.

From there, you'll embark on a scenic boat journey across the beautiful Sierra Leone River to Freetown, the vibrant capital city. This ferry ride offers stunning views of the coastline and a chance to get a first glimpse of this captivating country. The remainder of the day is free for you to settle in and begin exploring this West African capital.

OVERNIGHT: Hotel Barmoi (or similar)

MEALS: Dinner

EXTRAS: Extra day in Freetown - pre-tour Single room supplement (SLSGSE)

Day 2: Explore the sober history of Bunce Island before visiting the idyllic Tasso Island

Today, you'll delve into a poignant chapter of Sierra Leone's history with a visit to Bunce Island. Departing from Tokeh, you'll embark on a boat journey that takes you along the scenic Sierra Leone River to this once-infamous site.

Bunce Island holds a somber significance as the largest British slave castle on the West African Rice Coast. Established around 1670, this fortified trading post served as a major hub for the transatlantic slave trade. For over a century, tens of thousands of African captives were held here in horrific conditions before being transported across the Atlantic to North America and the West Indies. Walk through the ruins of the castle, where the stark remnants of slave quarters, dungeons, and trading houses paint a vivid picture of the island's dark past. Reflect on the profound human impact of the slave trade and its enduring legacy.

After your visit to Bunce Island, a wave of emotions likely washing over you, a change of scenery awaits. You'll journey to Tasso Island, a tranquil paradise offering a stark contrast to the somber history of Bunce Island. This idyllic island is known for its pristine beaches, lush vegetation, and laid-back atmosphere. Relax on the sandy shores, swim in the turquoise waters, and soak up the tranquility of this tropical haven. It's the perfect place to reflect on the day's experiences and find solace in the beauty of nature.

OVERNIGHT: Hotel Barmoi (or similar)

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

EXTRAS:

Day 3: Hike Sugar Loaf Mountain and visit Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary

Towering over Freetown is Sugar Loaf Mountain, a lush forested peak that forms a dramatic backdrop to the city. Reaching 727 meters above sea level, this natural wonder is part of the Western Area Forest Reserve, a

protected area that provides a haven for diverse flora and fauna. We'll take a hike up Sugar Loaf mountain this morning, which generally takes 3 to 4 hours. We recommend bringing along good hiking shoes/boots for this hike as the terrain can be steep in parts. Once you reach the top, you'll be rewarded with beautiful views of the surrounding landscape.

Later, venture to the Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary, nestled in the rainforest just 40 minutes from Freetown. Established in 1995, this sanctuary is dedicated to rescuing and rehabilitating orphaned and abandoned chimpanzees. Observe these incredible primates in their semi-wild habitat within the 100-acre reserve as they swing through the trees, play, and socialize. Learn about the sanctuary's conservation efforts and the importance of protecting these endangered animals.

For a truly unforgettable experience, you'll spend the night in one of Tacugama's eco-lodge chalets. These basic but charming chalets are nestled amongst the trees, offering a unique opportunity to immerse yourself in the rainforest and fall asleep to the sounds of nature. Wake up to the calls of the chimpanzees and enjoy breathtaking views of the surrounding landscape.

OVERNIGHT: Tacugama Eco Lodge Chalets

MEALS: Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner

EXTRAS:

Day 4: Explore Makeni before experiencing traditional village life in Rogbonko village

After breakfast overlooking the lush rainforest, bid farewell to the chimpanzees of Tacugama and embark on a journey to Makeni, a bustling city in the heart of Sierra Leone. As you travel through the countryside, observe the changing landscape, from rolling hills and verdant fields to vibrant villages and bustling market towns.

Upon arrival in Makeni, we'll have a city tour that unveils the unique character of this regional hub. Explore its lively markets, where vendors offer a colorful array of goods, from fresh produce and aromatic spices to handcrafted jewelry and traditional textiles and discover historical landmarks that tell the story of Makeni's past.

Next, we'll venture off the beaten path to the charming village of Rogbonko, a hidden gem nestled amidst the tranquil countryside. Here, you'll have the opportunity to experience authentic rural life in Sierra Leone. Receive a warm welcome from the village chief and engage in a traditional ceremony to pay your respects to the local customs.

Immerse yourself in the daily rhythms of village life, participating in hands-on activities that offer a glimpse into the local culture. Learn the art of traditional cooking, using fresh ingredients and time-honored techniques to create flavorful Sierra Leonean dishes. Discover the intricate skill of basket weaving, crafting your own unique souvenir to take home. Engage with the friendly villagers, as you gain a deeper understanding of their way of life.

As the sun begins to set, bid farewell to the welcoming community of Rogbonko and return to Makeni where you'll spend the night.

OVERNIGHT: Royal Hotel (or similar)

MEALS: Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner

EXTRAS:

Day 5: Visit the Wara Wara Mountain in Kabala. Evening cotton weaving experience and cultural dance performance

After breakfast, prepare to be awestruck by the natural wonder of the Wara Wara Mountains. Your journey takes you to Kabala, a town nestled amidst a landscape of breathtaking beauty. As you approach, the majestic Wara Wara Mountains rise before you. These imposing rock formations, sculpted by centuries of erosion, inspire awe and wonder. Explore the surrounding landscape, where hidden waterfalls cascade down rocky slopes and lush valleys cradle traditional villages. Hike through the foothills, breathing in the fresh mountain air and marveling at the panoramic vistas that unfold before you.

In the afternoon, delve into the rich cultural heritage of Kabala with a visit to a local cotton weaver. Witness the intricate process of transforming raw cotton into vibrant textiles, a tradition passed down through generations, maybe even try your hand at the loom.

We'll return to our hotel for dinner before a vibrant folklore and cultural dance performance. The rhythmic beats of traditional drums will fill the air as dancers, adorned in colorful costumes, tell stories of ancient legends and celebrate the spirit of Sierra Leone.

OVERNIGHT: Weindays Guesthouse (or similar)

MEALS: Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner

EXTRAS:

Day 6: Join the Heritage Trail with a stop in Boma Village, learn about the legend of a local giant

Today's journey takes you to Kabala, where the mighty Sewa River meets the Waanje, forming the Kittam River that eventually flows into the Atlantic. From there, you'll embark on a heritage trail, venturing deep into the heart of Sierra Leone's cultural heritage. Your destination is the unique village of Boma, situated along the Moa River near Nainiati (Sand Island).

Boma stands out among the villages on the heritage trail because it's led by a female chief. Legend has it that a genie prophesied Boma would only prosper under a woman's leadership. You'll have the chance to experience the daily life of this fascinating community, witnessing their dances and rituals firsthand.

Your visit to Boma includes an encounter with local folklore at the grave of a "giant," where you'll hear the captivating story of an ancient war between giants and dwarves. You'll also stand in awe of the Boma Cotton Tree, a towering symbol of the village's harmonious relationship with nature. This majestic tree, the last of its kind in the surrounding area, is believed to protect Boma from strong winds and storms.

Immerse yourself in the tranquility of rural life as you spend the night at a basic community guesthouse on the outskirts of the village.

OVERNIGHT: Boma Village Community Guesthouse

MEALS: Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner

EXTRAS:

Day 7: Hike to a mystical village, encounter local legends. Cruise to Tiwai Island for pygmy hippo & chimpanzee spotting

After breakfast, embark on a scenic walk to the neighboring village of Nainiahun, meaning "Sand Village." Your journey will take you along winding bush trails, through verdant rice paddies, and past fragrant cocoa and kola nut plantations. Along the way, you'll cross clear streams and observe the local way of life, gaining insights into the daily rhythms of rural Sierra Leone.

Nainiahun is known for its artisanal diamond mining, which draws together people from the Temne and Mende tribes, hoping to strike it rich in the surrounding swamps. Here, you'll visit "Kote Wulehun" (Large Stone Village), a fascinating cultural heritage site shrouded in mystique. Legend has it that during tribal wars, community members would seek refuge among these massive rock formations, where they could become invisible at will.

Before entering this mystical place, you'll remove your shoes as a sign of respect. Venture into the heart of Kote Wulehun, home to porcupines, bats, and other wildlife. Protected by traditional decree, this area serves as a testament to the community's commitment to conservation through their cultural beliefs. Listen as the Nainiahun elders share captivating stories of elves, invisibility spells, and powerful rituals. They will then perform a libation pouring ceremony, offering blessings for your onward journey.

After this enchanting encounter, enjoy a delicious meal prepared with locally sourced ingredients, savoring the flavors under the shade of swaying palm trees. Replenished and refreshed, continue your journey on foot to the banks of the Moa River. Here, a boat awaits to transport you to the secluded paradise of Tiwai Island.

As the day progresses, embark on a captivating boat ride upriver, keeping your eyes peeled for the elusive pygmy hippopotamus. Return as the sun dips below the horizon, painting the sky with vibrant hues. Throughout your boat trip, soak in the spectacular scenery of Tiwai Island and the neighboring mainland. Observe playful monkeys leaping through the trees, identify some of the 135 bird species that call this area home, and watch for the occasional crocodile basking in the sun.

In the late afternoon, venture into the depths of the rainforest with experienced guides to track chimpanzees and observe endangered monkey species in their natural habitat. This immersive experience offers a rare glimpse into the rich biodiversity of Tiwai Island and the importance of conservation efforts to protect this fragile ecosystem.

OVERNIGHT: Tiwai Island

MEALS: Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner

EXTRAS:

Day 8: Travel from Kent Beach to Banana Island. Explore the island and spend time relaxing on the beach

Leaving the wildlife haven of Tiwai Island, your journey continues to the captivating Banana Island. You'll first travel to Kent Beach, where a boat awaits to transport you across the shimmering waters to this idyllic island. Step ashore and discover a unique blend of history and natural beauty.

Banana Island offers a glimpse into the past, with remnants of Portuguese infrastructure from the 1800s and a rich cultural heritage shaped by the Krio people, descendants of freed slaves who settled here. Explore the vibrant local communities, where you'll encounter warm hospitality and a fascinating blend of traditions.

Your destination on Banana Island is Bafa Resort, a secluded haven nestled amidst lush greenery and pristine beaches. This eco-friendly resort provides a tranquil escape, allowing you to unwind and immerse yourself in the island's serene atmosphere. Accommodation here is in pre-erected teepee style tents.

OVERNIGHT: Tents at Bafa Resort

MEALS: Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner

EXTRAS:

Day 9: Leave Banana Island, time to relax at River No. 2

After a week of adventure and cultural immersion, it's time to unwind and soak up the sun at River No. 2. Depart Banana Island and head to this picturesque coastal destination, where golden sands and crystal-clear waters await.

Here, you have the option to simply relax and bask in the warmth of the tropical sun, or embark on a leisurely stroll along the pristine beach. Take a refreshing dip in the ocean, feel the soft sand between your toes, and let the tranquil atmosphere wash away any lingering stress.

Later, you'll check in to the Estuary Resort, your haven for the night. This charming resort offers comfortable accommodations and a relaxed ambiance, perfect for unwinding after a busy week of exploration.

OVERNIGHT: Estuary Resort (or similar)

MEALS: Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner

EXTRAS:

Day 10: Full day exploration of Freetown and evening cooking class

This morning, embark on a captivating exploration of Freetown, a city steeped in history and brimming with vibrant culture. Your journey begins at the esteemed Old Fourah Bay College, perched atop Mount Aureol. Founded in 1827, it holds the distinction of being the oldest Western-style university in Sub-Saharan Africa. Wander through its historic halls, where generations of scholars have pursued knowledge, and learn about its profound impact on education across the continent.

Next, descend into the heart of Freetown, where the iconic Cotton Tree stands tall. This majestic tree has witnessed centuries of history, serving as a symbol of hope and freedom since the arrival of freed slaves in the late 1700s. Pause for a moment of reflection at the nearby Peace and Cultural Monument, a poignant tribute to Sierra Leone's resilience in overcoming conflict and striving for unity.

Immerse yourself in the nation's captivating past at the Sierra Leone National Museum. Explore fascinating exhibits showcasing the country's diverse cultural heritage, from traditional masks and intricate carvings to historical artifacts that tell the story of Sierra Leone's journey through time. Continue your exploration at the Peace Museum, a testament to the power of reconciliation and the enduring human spirit. Discover inspiring stories of individuals and communities working together to build a brighter future after years of civil war.

Venture into the heart of the city's colonial past with a visit to the Gate Way to the King's Yard. This historical landmark offers a glimpse into the era when Freetown served as a key trading post and a refuge for freed slaves. Then, prepare to be swept away by the vibrant energy of Big Market, a bustling hub of local life. Wander through its labyrinthine alleys, where vendors proudly display their wares, from colorful fabrics and fragrant spices to fresh produce and handcrafted souvenirs.

As lunchtime approaches, savor the authentic flavors of Sierra Leone at Way Li Restaurant. Meaning "sweet" in the Fullah language, Way Li offers a delectable array of traditional dishes, each bursting with unique flavors and spices.

After lunch, you'll have a chance to see the impressive State House, the official residence and workplace of the President of Sierra Leone. Originally known as Fort Thornton, this stately building has played a significant role in the country's political history. Next, proceed to the Parliament Building, a striking architectural landmark constructed with assistance from Israel. Embark on a guided tour through its grand halls, including the well of parliament, and gain insights into Sierra Leone's democratic processes.

As evening descends, prepare for a truly immersive cultural experience. Head to Treat Food Concept, a culinary haven founded by Susan Senesi, a passionate chef and champion of women's empowerment. Join Susan for a hands-on home cooking class, where you'll learn the art of preparing authentic Sierra Leonean dishes from scratch. Under her expert guidance, you'll chop, stir, and simmer, discovering the secrets behind the country's rich culinary traditions. As you create your own delicious meal, Susan will share fascinating stories and insights into the cultural significance of each dish. Finally, gather around the table and savor the fruits of your labor,

enjoying a delightful dinner filled with flavor, conversation, and the warmth of Sierra Leonean hospitality.

OVERNIGHT: Hotel Barmoi (or similar)

MEALS: Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner

EXTRAS:

Day 11: Transfer back to Lungi Airport for departure

Today you'll have free time in Freetown until transferring to the sea-coach for your transfer back to Lungi Airport.

OVERNIGHT: N/A

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS: Extra day in Freetown - post-tour

Included:

- 3 nights in Freetown, 1 night in Makeni & 1 night in Tokeh hotels
- 1 night at Tacugama Eco-Lodge
- 1 night in Kabala guest-house
- 1 night camping in Boma Village (all equipment provided)
- 1 night on Banana Island & 1 night on Tiwai Island
- All transport and transfers
- 24-hour airport arrival & departure transfer service (on tour days)
- Services of a local tour leader throughout
- All sightseeing tours as per itinerary
- Entrance fees for visits included in the itinerary
- All meals (starting with dinner on day 1, ending with breakfast on day 11)
- Sierra Leone Entry Visa & Airport Security Fee

Excluded:

- International flights (available on request)
- Yellow Fever Certificate (Mandatory for entry to Sierra Leone)
- Travel insurance (compulsory)
- Meals not indicated in the itinerary
- Drinks, snacks and other personal expenses (e.g. laundry)
- Tips for tour leader & driver
- Any other items not mentioned above

Options

Our tours are designed to include all that you need to enjoy a really special time in the destination you're visiting. However, we do also offer some extra options to complement the tour and add some additional sightseeing or activities, or some extra time at either end of the tour.

All accommodation based options (e.g. Single supplements, extra nights, cruise upgrades) should be booked and paid for in advance so that we can make the appropriate arrangements. Other options may either be booked and paid for in advance or while you are on the tour, though we recommend booking in advance to ensure there are no issues with availability.

Many options are priced the same throughout the year, but some may incur single or high season supplements - full details are given on the tour reservation form or on request.

Extra day in Freetown - post-tour

Min numbers: 1

This option adds an extra day to the end of your tour, staying in the same hotel as the main tour itself (subject to availability). Your airport departure transfer is still included. Prices shown are per person and based on two people sharing.

Note: Single room and peak season supplements apply.

Extra day in Freetown - pre-tour

Min numbers: 1

This option adds an extra day to the start of your tour, staying in the same hotel as the main tour itself (subject to availability). Your airport arrival transfer is still included. Prices shown are per person and based on two people sharing.

Note: Single room and peak season supplements apply.

Single room supplement (SLSGSE)

Min numbers: 1

The tour price is based on 2 people sharing twin/double rooms. This option books a single room in all the accommodation throughout the tour. If you are a single traveller and would be happy to share a room, let us know and we will see if we can pair you up with another single traveller of the same sex. If a room share is not available when you book then we will add the single room supplement to your booking and it will be payable with your balance payment unless we have arranged a room share for you by then. If a room share is arranged after you have paid the supplement then we will refund it to you. Room shares are arranged in order of booking.

Note: Single supplement prices may vary seasonally.

1. Booking & Payment

If you would like to book a place on this tour, please complete the online reservation form on our website (via the Dates & Prices tab on the tour page). You may make a deposit or full payment online, or just hold a reservation if you prefer (full payments are due 8 weeks before departure). We will then contact you with more details about how to complete your booking. Payments may be made by debit or credit card (subject to a card processing fee), or by making a bank transfer, or posting us a cheque/bank draft. Full details will be provided in your booking confirmation email. Please [contact us](#) if you would like any more information or have any questions before making a booking.

2. Financial Security

We are a UK registered company and are committed to providing our customers with financial protection to provide peace of mind and to allow you to book with confidence.

We have therefore partnered with Trust My Travel Ltd., which provides financial protection services to over 2000 partners around the world. Funds paid to us by our customers are protected via an Insurance policy held by Trust My Travel. Each traveller and the description of services sold is declared against Trust My Travel's insurance policy directly against our financial failure. In the event of our insolvency, you will be refunded for any unfulfilled products and/or repatriation to the UK (where applicable). Please see [our website](#) or [booking conditions](#) for more information.

3. Responsible Tourism

It is impossible not to have an impact on the local environment, cultures and eco-systems when you travel. However, it is very possible to try and ensure that these impacts are as limited, or positive as possible. We are committed to ensuring that we try to leave our host countries in a better state than we found them and encourage and assist our travellers to help us with this.

The following are a few simple tips that require very little effort on your part but which will help ensure that any effect you have on the locations you visit is positive rather than negative.

- Don't prejudge: Things in different countries will almost certainly be different. That doesn't make them worse or inferior, just different.
- Communicate: Don't expect locals to speak your language. Take the trouble to learn a few words or phrases of the local language. Don't worry about sounding silly. Most locals are patient and accommodating and appreciate you making the effort to communicate in their language.
- Conserve energy: Be careful not to waste valuable resources. Use local resources sparingly. Switch off lights, air-conditioning and fans when you leave the hotel room and don't waste water. Remove superfluous packaging. Many countries have far less efficient waste disposal systems than ours. Remove packaging from newly acquired items before leaving home.
- Don't litter: No matter how untidy or dirty the country you're travelling in may look to you, avoid littering, as there is no need to add to the environment's stress. Many of the countries we visit have a tough challenge dealing with rubbish and waste. Please consider taking home as much plastic waste as you can (e.g. water bottles).
- Choose environmentally friendly products: By using environmentally friendly (bio degradable) sun creams, shampoos and detergents you can help reduce pollution.
- Respect local customs and traditions: As you are a guest in these countries, you should also comply with the local customs. If you are friendly and well mannered, the locals will reciprocate and it will only enhance your experience. It's important to follow dress and behaviour guidelines especially when visiting religious or sacred sites (your tour leader will advise you how best to do this).
- If a client commits an illegal act the client may be excluded from the tour and Encounters Travel shall cease to have responsibility to/for them. No refund will be given for any unused services.

All porters are employed and equipped following guidelines set by the International Porter Protection Group (IPPG).

4. Follow Us Online

You can stay in touch with us online by following us on Facebook and Twitter. We post updates on relevant travel news in our destination countries, special offers and discounts and other interesting travel related news and information.

www.facebook.com/encounterstravel

<https://x.com/encounterstravel> (yes, without the 'e')

5. Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is compulsory on all of our tours and needs to cover personal accident & liability, medical expenses and repatriation, travel delay & abandonment. We also strongly recommend that you take out cover against cancellation and lost/stolen baggage. Personal medical insurance does not normally provide sufficient cover and is generally not suitable for travel on our tours. You will not be able to join your tour if you have not provided us with details of your insurance or if you arrive without cover in place (no refunds will be due in this event).

Considering travel insurance for your trip? [World Nomads Travel Insurance](#) offers coverage for more than 150 adventure activities as well as emergency medical, lost luggage, trip cancellation and more.

If your tour includes car hire, or if you plan to arrange a hot air balloon flight locally or do some scuba diving during your tour, you should check the small print in your policy to make sure these are covered (these are covered in our policy). Please also check the maximum altitude that you will be reaching and that full cover including emergency evacuation is provided up to this altitude.

If you are taking expensive camera gear or other electronic equipment with you then please check the coverage and the fine print of your policy to ensure that you have sufficient cover.

IMPORTANT: We must have your travel insurance details (policy number and type of insurance) before you depart or you may not be allowed to join the tour. If you haven't told us already, please let us know the details when you can. You should take a paper copy of your insurance policy with you as you may be asked to show this at the start of the tour.

Covid-19

Before purchasing any travel insurance, please check the coverage provided for situations related to Covid-19, and for the rules about government travel advice. Your normal policy may not be suitable.

6. Before you travel

It is important when considering and preparing to travel anywhere in the world that you have a good understanding of the country you are visiting, its laws and customs, and the possible risks and situations that may occur. This includes specific risks related to your itinerary (eg. does it involve water & can you swim, are you fit enough for the activities included), as well as more general risks such as terrorism and natural disasters.

General details and links to more information about health risks, visa requirements, money, and travel insurance are given in these tour notes. We recommend that you re-read all these before your departure as well as the small print of your travel insurance policy so you know exactly what is covered and what is not.

You should take copies of your important travel documents with you and ideally also store them online securely as a backup. Make sure that you have given us your emergency contact details and told that person where and when you are travelling. Ensure you take enough money with you and that you have access to emergency funds.

Finally, you should read through and stay updated with the current [official government travel advice](#) for your destination. We are registered partners with the UK Foreign Office's ['Travel Aware' campaign](#) which provides further useful and invaluable information.

7. Reduce Plastic Waste with Water-to-Go Filter bottles

Traveling responsibly means minimizing plastic waste, but staying hydrated on the go is essential. At Encounters Travel we are committed to reducing single-use plastics, which is why we've partnered with Water-to-Go. Their portable filtration system removes over 99.9% of contaminants from any non-saltwater source, turning even questionable water sources into safe drinking water.

Given that tap water is un-safe to drink in many of the countries in which we operate, we recommend purchasing a Water-to-Go bottle prior to departure. This will help you avoid the use of single use plastic bottles and keep you hydrated on the go.

Save big! Get a huge 25% off your Water-to-Go bottle and other Water-to-Go products (such as filters, lids, and carriers). Use code **ENCOUNTERS25** at checkout (valid in the UK, USA and Canada).

How Water-to-Go Technology works:

- Their reusable, BPA free water bottles contain their own unique 3-in-1 filtration technology effectively providing clean safe drinking water from any non-salt water source around the world.
- Three different (1 traditional and 2 nano) technologies are combined in one filter cartridge to remove up to 99.9999% of microbiological contaminants in water.

The three technologies used in a Water-to-Go filter are:

- Mechanical filtration – A tiny pore size, so small contaminants can't fit through.
- Electrical – A positive charge reduces the pore size even further and attracts contaminants like a magnet, trapping them inside the filter.
- Activated Carbon – Unlike most carbon based filters, instead of using adhesives to glue the carbon particles together, (which vastly reduces the carbon's efficiency) it is contained within the membrane, helping to reduce contaminants whilst eliminating bad tastes and odours. Try filtering water from your tap at home and taste the difference!

Water-to-Go filter bottles deliver safe, healthy water worldwide

- Water-to-Go filters remove bacteria, viruses, waterborne disease, protozoa, heavy metals such as lead as well as harmful chemicals.
- Their filters remove Chlorine and Fluoride from tap water.
- The filter will eliminate harmful contaminants from the water but allow beneficial minerals such as sodium and magnesium to pass through leaving you with the healthiest water possible.
- Water-to-Go filters have been independently tested against internationally recognised standards by industry specialists including The London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (UK), BCS Laboratories (USA), Bangalore Test House (India) and IMI (China).

Use Water-to-Go products and you'll be healthier, wealthier and helping to make the world a better place!

- Depending on filter size, each Water-to-Go filter is able to replace 260 or 400 single-use plastic water bottles!
 - They ensure you have access to safe water anywhere in the world without ever having to buy environmentally damaging bottled water.
 - Their water bottles deliver safe, clean drinking water at just 5p per litre.
 - The filter membrane is biodegradable and the shrouds are recyclable.
 - The water bottles are used and approved by everyone from backpackers to commuters, gym users to expecting mums. Perfect for everyday, outdoor and travel.
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8. Private & Tailor-made Tours

While our group departures offer a fantastic way to explore with like-minded travellers, we understand that some guests prefer a more exclusive experience. Most of our group tours can be booked on a private basis, allowing you to enjoy the same expert-led routes with your own dedicated party. The primary advantage of choosing a private arrangement is the flexibility it provides; we can easily customise the itinerary to include your preferred style of accommodation or adjust the pace to suit your needs. Private tours can be run on the same start days as our group tours, or on other dates. However, some activities within our trips are restricted to particular days of the week - we will advise you on anything like this that we need to work around. Pricing will be based on the number of travellers in your party, and any customisations you may like to make.

For those seeking something truly unique, our specialist sales team is available to collaborate with you on a completely tailor-made tour, designed from the ground up to match your specific interests, accommodation level and requirements.

To request a quotation for a private or tailor-made tour, please [contact us](#).

9. Accommodation

Our tours in Sierra Leone feature a mix of accommodations, ranging from 3-star hotels in Freetown, to local guest houses, eco-lodges and pre-erected tents in other parts of the country.

As an emerging tourism destination, not all accommodations are able to provide the same level of comfort and facilities as hotels in Europe or North America and services such as wifi may not always be available. When outside of Freetown you may experience occasional power outages and poor internet connectivity.

Freetown, Makeni & Tokeh:

In these locations we use comfortable 2 to 3-star accommodations with private facilities. Due to the more remote location of Makeni, you should expect a lower level of accommodation here.

Takugama, Kabala, Boma Village, Tiwai & Banana Islands:

In these more remote parts of the country, there are fewer accommodation options, though the accommodations we've chosen to include we believe will add to your overall experience. In Tacugama you will stay in basic but comfortable eco-lodge chalets which are located within the jungle surrounding the Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary. In Kabala you will stay a local guesthouse, rooms here are clean and comfortable but basic. As part of the Heritage Trail, we have included 1 night close to Boma Village and 1 night on Tiwai Island where you will stay in tents or huts (tents, sleeping bags and sleeping mats are provided whilst camping). Finally, on Banana Island you will stay at the Bafa Resort which offers pre-erected tents which straddle the edge of the forest and shore line. These tents offer basic accommodation in a truly magical location.

On Tiwai and Banana Island, toilet and shower facilities are communal. In Boma Village, due to the nature of this stay, toilet facilities are basic and will be either shared community toilets or 'bush' toilets.

Please check the Accommodation tab on the tour page or download these Tour Notes for details of the normal hotels used. On our group tours, these hotels may change from time to time for other properties of a similar standard. If you would like to guarantee a particular hotel, please request a tailor-made tour.

Accommodation is based on twin, triple or double en-suite rooms/cabins with air conditioning. All couples will be given a private double room/cabin. Triple cabins are not available on Nile cruise boats.

Please check the Single Room Supplement option for details on room sharing options and charges for solo travellers on this tour.

10. Dates & Prices

We run regular small-group departures on this tour starting on Saturdays between November and April (we generally do not operate tours between May and October as the rainy season can make travelling in more remote parts of the country difficult). All departures are guaranteed to run with a minimum of 4 travellers and a maximum

of 12. Departure dates and prices are listed on our website and on a separate dates & prices sheet available on request.

11. Entrance Fees

The price of this tour includes the cost of entrance fees to visits included in the tour itinerary. Should you wish to visit any monument that is not included in the standard tour itinerary, the entry ticket for this is not included.

12. Group Size/Tour Leaders/Guides

We are committed to being a small group operator, as we feel this gives everyone in the group the best chance to get to know their fellow travellers and to hear and make the most of their guide. There's no point in us providing great guides if you've got to peer over 30-40 shoulders to see them! So, we won't ever put you in a 50-seater coach with 49 other people and just one guide. Instead, we set our Sierra Leone small-group departures to have a maximum of 12 travellers.

Specialist escorted tours and workshops may have different group sizes - please download the Tour Notes for details.

In Sierra Leone we provide fully trained, local English-speaking guides to run your tour and escort you during all of the sightseeing.

Guiding in other languages may also be available on private departures (eg. German, Italian, Spanish) - please contact us for details and quotations.

At Encounters Travel we only use local Sierra Leonean guides and reps. We feel this gives you the best experience of the country and the sites you are seeing.

13. Health and Vaccinations

You should ensure you are fully insured for medical emergencies, including emergency evacuation and repatriation.

Recommended vaccinations and health precautions vary depending on your travel history and health conditions. It's crucial to consult your doctor or a travel clinic for the most up-to-date information on vaccinations and health advice for Sierra Leone. Ensure your routine vaccinations are up to date, including those for occupational risks, lifestyle, and any underlying health conditions.

In addition, consider the following vaccinations for Sierra Leone:

Yellow Fever: A yellow fever vaccination certificate is required for entry into Sierra Leone.

Other recommended vaccinations: Tetanus, Typhoid, Hepatitis A, Polio, Diphtheria, Hepatitis B, Rabies.

Malaria is present in Sierra Leone and anti-malarial medications are recommended.

For the latest travel health information, consult your doctor or refer to reliable sources like the CDC or WHO websites.

14. International Flights

We want to give you as much flexibility as possible when it comes to booking your holiday with us. So, to take account of people with varying travel plans, we don't normally include international flights in the main tour price. We are however very happy to suggest flights to go with the tour. Please contact us with your preferred dates and departure airport and we'll give you a selection of airlines, times and fares to choose from.

Your airport arrival & departure transfers are included on the first and last days of the tour. Nearly all our Sierra Leone tours start and finish in Freetown. You can fly into Freetowns Lungi International Airport (FNA).

We do also sometimes advertise flight inclusive packages from selected airports. Where these are shown on our website, prices are correct at the time of quoting, but are subject to continued availability of the fare used. Prices will be reconfirmed at the time of booking, and we will also provide the flight times and airline details before tickets are issued.

Travel Zoo / Groupon Flight Inclusive Packages:

Encounters Travel occasionally offer flight inclusive packages - In this case, your international flights will be included as per the package you have purchased. Flight inclusive prices are based on the cheapest Economy ticket class available which is generally non-refundable and non-changeable. More flexible ticket options, as well as Premium Economy and Business Class tickets are available on request for an additional supplement. Any changes made to flight inclusive bookings will be subject to the airline rules on your ticket.

Flight CO2 Emissions:

Traveling by air is an amazing way to explore the world, but flights also contribute to carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions that impact the environment. By considering the airline's CO2 emissions when you choose your flight, you can help minimize your travel footprint. When selecting your international flights and airline, we do therefore recommend that you try and also take into account the flight CO2 emissions. Some airlines and flight search websites (eg. Google Flights, Skyscanner) do publish this information, so you can compare between your flight options and make an informed decision. Thankfully, many airlines are working towards sustainability efforts, and choosing a greener option allows you to contribute to positive change while still enjoying your incredible adventure.

15. Money - Sierra Leone

The local currency in Sierra Leone is the Leone (SLL). The Leone can fluctuate in value against the British Pound and the US dollar. You don't need to obtain Leones before your trip, as exchange facilities are available at the airport, banks, and some hotels. It's helpful to have small denomination notes and coins on hand for tips, restrooms, and small purchases. ATMs are available in major towns, and some shops accept VISA/Mastercard or Amex, but may add fees – it's wise to confirm before paying. Traveler's cheques are not recommended due to limited acceptance and potential high fees. You may find that some stores, particularly in Freetown will also accept USD.

While in Sierra Leone, you'll need money for drinks, snacks, souvenirs, tipping and personal expenses like laundry. These are generally paid for in Leones.

Personal spending needs vary, but as a guideline, we suggest budgeting at least USD 10-15 per person per day. If you plan on shopping or purchasing alcoholic drinks, you may want to allow more.

16. Passports and Visas - Sierra Leone

Visa:

The vast majority of travellers visiting Sierra Leone will require a visa and for most nationalities (including United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, European, British) we will arrange the visa for you free of charge prior to arrival. To facilitate this, our sales team will request a copy of your passport which will be used to issue your arrival visa.

Lungi Airport Security Pass:

The Lungi Airport Security Pass, officially called the "Securipass," is a mandatory fee for all passengers arriving at and departing from Freetown International Airport (FNA) in Lungi, Sierra Leone. We have included the cost of your arrival security pass in the price of your tour and proof of this will be sent to you prior to departure (your airport rep will also have a copy of this). When departing from Lungi Airport it is also necessary to pay for a second Securipass which can be paid in USD cash at \$25 per person (or can be prepaid online at - [Securipass](#)). For ease, we recommend paying in cash upon departure.

Please note that passports must be valid for a minimum of 6 months beyond your intended travel dates.

17. Time

Sierra Leone operates on Greenwich Mean Time (GMT). There are no daylight saving time adjustments in Sierra Leone, so the time remains consistent throughout the year.

It's worth noting that while your devices may automatically adjust to the local time, it's always a good idea to double-check and ensure your watch and devices are set to GMT to avoid any confusion with meeting times or tour schedules.

18. Tipping

Tipping in Sierra Leone is not compulsory, but it is a common practice to show appreciation for good service. While service charges are sometimes included in hotel and restaurant bills, small tips are also welcomed by staff. When tipping, consider the quality of service and the local context. A typical tip for services like baggage handling or a small act of kindness could range from 10,000 to 30,000 Leones. Remember to tip discreetly and with a smile.

It is customary to tip local guides and drivers for where good services has been received. We suggest coordinating tips as a group at the end of your tour. You should not feel obliged to tip any particular amount, and should consider your personal budget. We are often asked to provide a guide however, and can suggest that approx. USD 5-7 per person per day would be appropriate.

19. Transfers

Our Sierra Leone tours include a 24-hour airport meet & assist service in Freetowns Lungi airport, your arrival and departure airport-hotel transfers and all other transfers. Due to the location of Lungi Airport, part of your journey will include a ride onboard the sea-coach which links the airport to the city of Freetown.

Your airport transfers are only included on the first and last day of the set tour itinerary, plus on any additional days if you book your hotel room with us. If you make your own arrangements for additional accommodation at either the beginning or the end of the tour then you will need to arrange your own airport transfers on these days.

20. Transport

Our trips feature a mix of different transport options. We want you to feel like you're really experiencing the country you're travelling through, but at the same time we want you to finish journeys refreshed enough to enjoy the next stage of the tour. In Sierra Leone road journeys will be in minivans appropriate to the final group size. As we include a number of island visits on this tour (Banana Island, Tiwai Island, Bunce Island and Tasso Island) our itinerary will also feature a number of boat/ferry journeys. When visiting Banana Island and Tiwai Island, you will travel in smaller speedboats and whilst visiting Bunce and Tasso Islands, you'll travel onboard larger boats, which may be shared with other passengers.

21. Voltage

Sierra Leone uses three-pin sockets (Type D and G) with a voltage of 230 volts. If your plugs are different, you'll need a travel adapter, readily available at most airports and travel shops. While standard European adapters (Type C) might fit, they can sometimes be loose in the sockets.

All hotel rooms have sockets for charging devices, though power outages in Sierra Leone are common, therefore we do recommend bringing along a battery pack for charging devices such as mobile phones.

If you have appliances designed for 110 volts (like those used in the US), you'll need both a plug adapter and a voltage converter to avoid damaging your devices.

22. What to take

Luggage: Suitcases, rucksacks, or fabric holdalls are all suitable for your trip to Sierra Leone, however due to the number of accommodation changes, you may find using a rucksack easier to handle. A small daypack is also recommended for carrying essentials during the day. Your main luggage will usually be left at your accommodation, and porters are often available to assist with heavier bags.

Luggage Limits: There are no specific luggage limits for this tour. However, airlines typically have restrictions, usually between 20kg and 25kg for checked luggage and 5kg to 10kg for carry-on luggage. Confirm with your airline before departure.

Clothing: Sierra Leone has a tropical climate, so pack lightweight and breathable clothing. Evenings and higher altitudes can be cooler, so bring layers for varying temperatures. Formal attire is not necessary. Long sleeves and trousers offer protection from mosquitoes and are recommended for modesty, particularly for women. While shorts and T-shirts are acceptable in tourist areas, it's best to dress respectfully and avoid overly revealing clothing. When visiting villages or religious sites, ensure your shoulders and knees are covered. We also recommend bringing along a good pair of hiking boots/shoes.

Other items: A light sleeping sheet or liner can provide comfort, and a light sleeping bag might be needed for cooler nights. Essentials include a sun hat, sunscreen, sunglasses, a basic first aid kit, toiletries, a small towel, a money belt, a small torch, a camera, chargers and battery packs.

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Note: Please [download an up-to-date copy](#) of these tour notes shortly before you travel as itineraries and information does change from time to time.
