

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 camping on the outskirts of the village (tents, sleeping mats and sleeping bags are provided, though you are welcome to bring your own if you prefer), this camping experience allows you to connect with nature and experience the serenity of the Sierra Leonean countryside.

OVERNIGHT: Camping in Boma Village

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.

Printed on: Friday 26th of September 2025

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.
