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21 DAYS LUXURY AFRICA CRUISE - TEMA TO LISBON

From Africa's energetic western shores to Lisbon's pastel charms. Journey from Liberia, Africa's oldest republic, to Freetown, founded to repatriate former slaves. Lush mangrove sanctuaries await in the glorious Bijagos Archipelago - weave between 88 pristine islands by Zodiac. Dance to Cape Verde's African, Portuguese, and Creole influences, before exploring the Canary Islands's volcanic drama. We may spot dolphins and whales before sailing for Morocco's mystique.



ITINERARY

Day 1 - Tema (Accra)

From a modest fishing port to the biggest in Ghana, Tema's industrial activity has all but tarnished the charming, postcard scenery of the region. The neighbouring white-sanded beaches remain immaculate, still serving as a testimony of the rich variety of birds that can be found in the area. In the way Mother Nature intended it, gannets, boobies and kingfishers amongst

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other species fish in and around the cerulean waters of the coast. A light breeze tickles the inflamed, iron-filled soil of the mainland on which the railway linking Tema to Accra lures hundreds of visitors each day. On board one of the carriages to Accra, distinctively noticeable by their painted coats of red, yellow and green that echo Ghana's national flag, a peek out of the window will offer scenic views of the harbour and coast, as well as the fields that separate Tema from the capital.

Day 2 - Takoradi

Ghana's fourth-largest city plays serene beaches against a bustling commercial centre. People from around the world visit the shore, both for its beauty and to enjoy the fresh seafood served right on the sands. Frantic city life awaits a short distance inland, where an economy fuelled by Ghana's oil industry is most apparent in the maze of vendors at Market Circle. Takoradi is also the gateway to the UNESCO World Heritage sites of Elmina and Cape Coast Castle.

Day 3 - Abidjan

Located on Africa's Ivory Coast, Abidjan lies amid canals and waterways. It's a modern African city, affectionately known as Babi by locals, or, more optimistically, Paris of West Africa. This last moniker could be due to two things: one, Abidjan is both the economic and cultural capital of West Africa and two: it truly is a city of lights. It is also the most populous French speaking country in the continent, so welcome, bienvenue to Abidjan! Looking at Abidjan's towering skyscrapers, you would be surprised to think that the sprawling city was originally a small fishing village. The French established a protectorate in Abidjan in 1842, and eventually colonised the region in 1893. Under French rule Abidjan quickly became a major port terminus, exporting mainly timber and coffee to Europe. Cote d'Ivoire was

granted independence in 1960 but Abidjan remained the country's capital until 1983. Today it considered one of the foremost African cities in terms of fashion, culture and the standard of living. Like much of West Africa, Abidjan has cachet and soul in buckets. The civil war of 2007-2007 may have left some pock marked remnants, but that should and must be easily overlooked. The city is bubbling with energy, enjoying a diversity of cultures from the aforementioned French connection to the steady stream of travellers that come to Abidjan looking for a destination with a bit of authenticity. If travelling outside of the city, the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Grand Bassam is less than an hour away.

Day 4 - Day at sea

Days at sea are the perfect opportunity to relax, unwind and catch up with what you've been meaning to do. So whether that is going to the gym, visiting the spa, whale watching, catching up on your reading or simply topping up your tan, these blue sea days are the perfect balance to busy days spent exploring shore side.

Day 5 - Monrovia

Wedged in between the Atlantic Ocean and the Mesurado River, Liberia's capital Monrovia has a lot to recommend it. Despite its reputation as being risky, if you can look beyond the scars two civil wars have left on the city, you'll soon find that Monrovia is bursting with African excellence. Like many African nations, Monrovia has had its fair share of turmoil. Founded in 1824 by the freed slaves of the USA and Caribbean, Monrovia take its name from James Monroe, then President of America, and ardent supporter of the freedom movement. Thousands flocked to its shores with the promise of finding a better life in the early 20th century and by 1937 the population had reached 10,000

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(for a police force of just 30). Oppression and civic unrest was bound to and did follow. A military coup in 1980 overthrew the government, which was later followed by 14 near-consecutive years of civil war. Certainly, the city is a bit rough around the edges. However, Monrovia has a proverb, that "To the patient man will come all the riches of the world." And, as Monrovia has been more than patient, riches are most definitely beginning to arrive. African history has found its rightful place in the Liberian National Museum, while the rolling surf and glorious beaches have begun attracting holidaymakers in search of an authentic African experience. The city's transformation is definitely a work in progress, but watch this space, and you might be one of the lucky ones to say that you were there in the beginning.

Day 6 - Tokeh

Tokeh, or Tokeh Town as it is also known, is a coastal resort town that relies mainly on fishing and tourism. Only twenty miles outside Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone, this town is nestled in an area of beautiful scenery, surrounded by mountains, forests and beaches. The Tokeh Beach is considered one of the largest and most attractive beaches in West Africa. This town was first founded by a Sherbro fisherman who settled along the river bank. Much later, in 1968, a prominent barrister from Sierra Leone purchased the land, and in partnership with a French company, developed the village. Today, it is a thriving town with the resort, a church, mosque, community center, school and about 6000 residents.

Day 7 - Freetown

It may still be a bit of a rough diamond, but Sierra Leone's capital is a true traveller's gem. Lush rainforest and palm fringed beaches have been sadly overshadowed by Freetown's turmoil,

which has left its pock marked legacy on the city. Happily, this reputation is slowly receding. Expect to be greeted by warm welcomes and wide smiles. The city is slowly rebuilding after spats of fierce fighting in the 1990s. Today Freetown is a bustling metropolis, centred around the busy port. While there may be an undeniable element of poverty to the city, this is more than out balanced by the unfailingly optimistic vibrancy and intriguing history that Freetown offers. This joie de vivre makes Freetown one of West Africa's most dynamic cities; think bustling streets and gentle sign-song sounds of local dialect Krio. British philanthropists founded the 'Province of Freedom', which later became Freetown in 1787. This was a British crown colony and the principal base for the suppression of the slave trade. By 1792, over 1,000 freed slaves from Nova Scotia had joined the original settlers, called the Maroons. Another group of slaves rebelled in Jamaica and travelled to Freetown in 1800. Unsurprisingly, colonial reign has left its mark on the architecture of the city. British involvement is best viewed at the National Museum, and in the superbly preserved Victorian railway. The uplands around Freetown are verdant and home to the Western Area Forest Reserve (accepted by UNESCO as a tentative World Heritage Site).

Days 8 - 10 - Bijagos Archipelago

Sacred, serene and secluded, the Bijagos Archipelago is one of the most intriguing island collections the world can offer. Almost falling off the map, the string of 88 lands form an archipelago of tropical beauty, scattered from the west of Guinea Bissau. The sprawling archipelago's challenging location cocooned the islanders from much of the colonial interference for many years. So local traditions - of ancient ritual and colourful initiation ceremonies - have remained strong and safeguarded here.

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Thatch-roofed houses host welcoming locals, in villages where diminutive pygmy cows wander freely. Anthropologists note the islands for matriarchal elements in society, and priestesses play a significant role here, sermonising the islanders' bonds with the natural world. Many of the islands are uninhabited, instead declared sacred and reserved for spirits. This has also helped form a protected paradise for some of Africa's most exotic wildlife. UNESCO declared the archipelago a Biosphere Reserve in 1996 and its sprawling mangrove forests, undisturbed savannahs and muddy flats attract long-legged migrating birds, as well as beady-eyed crocodiles. West Africa's largest saltwater hippo colony lurks in the waters of Orango National Park - see them smashing their way in and out of the water. Endangered sea turtles also faithfully return to the tranquil beaches each year, digging out over 25,000 nests. Extraordinary and authentic - an expedition to this enchanted, off-the-grid archipelago is one to cherish.

Day 11 - Dakar

Capital of Senegal, and a major gateway to Western Africa, the former colonial trading post of Dakar stamps the Cap-Vert peninsular with glorious surf-fringed beaches. Enjoy the thrum of markets - where colourful textiles are exchanged - and wander streets where jazz, sambar and mbalax spill from every ajar door. Offering tropical island-style beaches in an incongruous urban setting, Dakar is a wild and urgent experience for the senses. Watch on as surfers revel in consistent rollers on this, the most westerly peninsula of continental Africa. Scuba divers can explore worlds below the surface in Dakar's diving areas, or you can head to sandy beaches like Plage des Mamelles' cove, which provide endless options for cooling off. Looking for a little more activity, loosen up and play on golf courses that unroll

along the sun-kissed Senegalese coastline, or visit startling natural sites like the vivid pink water of the salty pink Lake Retba. Cultural relevance abounds in Dakar - those wanting to delve a little deeper into the dark history of Senegal should visit the House of Slaves on the UNESCO World Heritage Site listed Goree Island, or duck into the Theodore Monod Museum to pour over an incredible collection of masks, artefacts, and treasures. Sandaga Market is a full-on experience of choreographed chaos, sound and flavours. Tear into fish fresh off the boat, and don't be afraid to get your hands a little greasy while handling Dibi - the national street food - soft mutton, simmered with onions and zesty orange spice.

Day 12 - Day at sea

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Day 13 - Porto Novo

Porto Novo is found on Sao Antonio, the northwesternmost of the Cape Verde Islands, and is the island's largest town with approximately 17,400 inhabitants. Located on Sao Antonio's southeastern and arid side, Porto Novo began as a fishing village and only in 2005 it was recognized as a city. Since the island has no airport and Porto Novo faces the town of Mindelo on the island of Sao Vicente, this harbor is the main link to the other islands in Cape Verde and the outside world. A monument above the port shows a woman waving goodbye to those emigrating from the Cape Verde Islands. Roads leading out of Porto Novo have to either go along the impressive northeast

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coast or cross the island's mountains through a rugged and even more spectacular landscape. The third highest peak of the Cape Verde islands at 1,979 meters is the Tope de Coroa to the west of Porto Novo.

Days 14 - 15 - Day at sea

Days at sea are the perfect opportunity to relax, unwind and catch up with what you've been meaning to do. So whether that is going to the gym, visiting the spa, whale watching, catching up on your reading or simply topping up your tan, these blue sea days are the perfect balance to busy days spent exploring shore side.

Day 16 - Las Palmas, Canary Islands

Watch the stars glittering at night, climb jungled volcano calderas, and explore the historical allure of this entry point to the sun-gorged island of Gran Canaria. The sprawling capital of the Canaries is Spain's ninth biggest city, stretched out along the sparkling coastline. Visitors and locals alike blow off steam on the city's urban beaches, before filling out bustling, authentic tapas bars. An offshore barrier of lava strips waves of their power, making Las Canteras's urban beach expanse one of the best and calmest in the Canaries. Strap on your snorkel to explore the seabed, which blooms with colourful fish and tropical reefs. Or, settle back to soak in the warm glow of one of the best climates in the world, while reclining on the soft sand, which arcs along the capital's fringe. At the other end of town, La Vegueta old town is a charming stroll along cobbled streets, wandering past decorative doorways and balconies that beg to be photographed. The narrow 15th-century streets take on an extra romantic air in the evenings, as lanterns cast a soft glow over them. Calle Colon offers a hint of the street's history - and it's here where the handsome colonial house - turned museum -

of Christopher Columbus stands. Columbus stayed here to recuperate, between his boundary-redefining voyages. Out of Las Palmas, diverse and exciting volcanic landscapes await, including the spectacular Caldera de Bandama, which plunges 200 metres into the earth. From the summit, views stretch out to the looming island of Fuerteventura unravel. You can also discover pretty white-wash fishing villages, dazzling gardens, and the sun-bathed vineyards that produce Gran Canaria's crispest wines.

Day 17 - Arrecife, Canary Islands

Nestled on the east coast of Lanzarote, Arrecife takes its name from the rocky reefs and outcrops that dominate its coastline. This pretty working city has a friendly, authentic feel, and has managed to remain true to its roots as a historic fishing village. There's a lot to explore, and whether you want to lie back on long swathes of opulent golden sand, or strap on hiking boots to crunch across Lanzarote's scorched volcanic scenery, this versatile capital has so much to offer. With castles, caves, sleepy beaches, and a glittering saltwater lagoon, Arrecife is the perfect place to get acquainted with the sun-kissed appeal of the Canary Islands. Lanzarote's charcoal desert vistas radiate a remarkable luna-like quality, but dotted cacti, waving palms, and bursts of vibrant wildflowers add an accent of colour to the canvas. Arrecife itself boasts apricot-coloured beaches and labyrinthine lanes of white-wash buildings within its Old Quarter, where you can smell fresh fish grilling, and see locals dipping delicious local salty potatoes - papas arrugadas - into colourful sauces. An evening stroll along El Charco de san Gines is a must for watching fishing boats bobbing gently on the lagoon, and watching spectacular sunsets burning across the sky. Standing tall for more than four centuries, Castillo De San Gabriel is

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located on the tiny island of Islote de los Ingleses, and was once a target for pirates, who would appear menacingly on the Atlantic's horizon. The stalwart 16th-century fortress now serves as the History Museum of Arrecife, and exhibitions inside explore the evolution of the city, and the ancient culture of Lanzarote. The International Museum of Contemporary Art, meanwhile, displays modern and abstract works within the 18th-century San Jose Castle's refined setting. See works from Cesar Manrique - the prominent artist and architect whose slick sixties style flair can be admired across the island.

Day 18 - Agadir

Boasting an impressive 300 days of sun per year, there is a reason why Agadir is Morocco's premier holiday resort. Nicknamed the "Miami of Morocco", the resort has sea and sand in abundance, along with a dreamy 10 km beach - perfect for travellers who want sheltered swimming or enjoy water-based fun in the sun. By contrast to the rest of the country, Agadir is thoroughly modern. An earthquake destroyed the city in 1960, killing 15,000 in 13 seconds and leaving another 35,000 homeless. In its place, and under the direction of Le Corbusier, a new city with a new direction was built. Instead of souks and medinas, think modern architecture, wide, tree-lined avenues, open squares and pedestrian precincts. Low rise hotels, boutiques and apartment blocks line the splendid waterfront. While all the original landmarks were destroyed (many not once, but twice, in the 1960 earthquake but also in the 1755 Lisbon earthquake), Agadir strove to rebuild as much as it could. Thus the fabled 1540 Oufia Fort, originally built in the mid-16th century by Saadian Sultan Mohammed ech Cheikh was painstakingly recreated with as much authenticity as possible. The ancient kasbah sits at an amazing vantage point (Oufia

being the Amazigh word for 'above'). The inscription "God, King, Country" over the entrance in both Dutch and Arabic is one of the few original elements and dates back to the middle of the 18th century, when the kasbah was initially restored. The Kasbah offer by far the best views of the city.

Day 19 - Safi

Lying in a natural harbour to the west of Morocco, Safi (formerly Asafi) carries the weight of legend. As one of the oldest cities in Morocco, it is thought to have been founded by Hanno the Navigator in the 5th or 6th century BC. The etymology of the city's name allegedly comes from a sailor who got lost and sighed as he passed Safi's coastline (Safi meaning "oh my regret"). However, there could be another, more literal translation. In Berber, the word Asafi means to spill or flood, undoubtedly referring to the rich sea that makes Safi one of the biggest and safest seaports in the country. The city has been - and still is - a major player in Morocco's trading industry. Its port has seen everything from gold in the 11th century to today's principal export, sardines. Portuguese rule in the 1500s saw the Castelo do Mar be built, an imposing fortress that still presides over the city today. Under Portuguese rule, other Europeans came and by the mid-16th century, Safi was Morocco's principal trading hub. This would all cease however under Sultan Mohammed ben Abdallah in the mid-18th century, who would order that all foreign trade must take place in his newly built city of Mogador (Essaouira). Famous for its pottery of all shapes and sizes, Safi is one destination where you will want to support the local economy. The potter's quarter, just out of the city walls, boasts the country's oldest kilns and is a mecca for all those who love both ceramics and tradition.

Day 20 - Day at sea

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Day 21 - Lisbon

A glorious mosaic of beauty, freedom and authenticity, Portugal's capital is a stirring artwork of a city. Known for the seven hills it spreads across, and its stirring fado music, Lisbon is a pastel-coloured blend of houses and beautiful tile artworks - and this creative city strikes a perfect harmony between natural and manmade beauty. Stroll along Alfama's steep, cobbled streets as you explore one of the city's oldest neighbourhoods - where each house and door could be its own photograph. Look for the decorative tiles, with the distinctive blues and whites of Azulejo ceramics, and visit the dedicated museum to learn more. Afterwards, wind up to Sao Jorge Castle, where views out across Lisbon's red rooftops unravel. Just one of many majestic viewpoints, you can also seek out Miradouro da Graça for perhaps Lisbon's finest panorama, with the copper-coloured suspension bridge stretching over sparkling water beyond the sea of buildings. The elegant Tower of Belem rises in the Tagus estuary and is a historic defender of these shores. The grand, carved cloisters of Jeronimos Monastery spread out close by, and there's another UNESCO recognised location close by at Sintra, where a colourful town is set amid thick gardens and towering mountains - capped by the royal Pena Palace. Later, relax and take a quick break to drink Ginjinha, a cherry liqueur made from chocolate cups instead of coffee. Lisboetas have a sweet tooth, and the famous Pastel de Nata's crumbling pastry

and caramelised-custard topping is the essential accompaniment to any coffee stop.

Please note:

Itineraries are subject to change.

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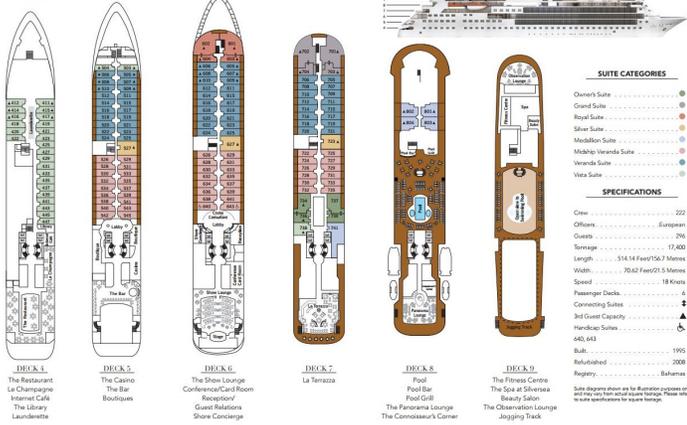
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