



## IVORY COAST: The land of tribal masks

An 11-day journey through the **Ivory Coast**, a fascinating country that has only recently been accessible to travelers.

**The Ivory Coast is a place with a thousand faces and ancient traditions**, that its tribes have been handed down from generation to generation for centuries.

During this exciting journey you will admire the incredible **lian bridges by the Dan**; legend has it that these bridges are built in one night thanks to the intervention of supernatural forces and spirits.

We will also go into the endless cocoa plantations to learn about the techniques of cultivation and production of one of the most loved foods.

A trip to the [Ivory Coast](#) offers surprises every day and above all offers the opportunity to attend authentic vibrant and colorful tribal celebrations and rituals.

We will admire the dances of the masks of the **Baulè**, the dance of the Panther and the dance of the Virgins of the **Senoufo**, the acrobatic masks of the **Yacuba** and the forest masks of the **Guéré**.

The trip to Ivory Coast also allows us to visit **Abidjan** and **Yamoussoukro**, two very different cities, with the first one as the real engine of the country's economy and the second an utopian project of a perfect capital never finished.

## Visit of Abidjan and Grand Bassam in the Ivory Coast

Abidjan is the true economic capital of the state, the streets of this metropolis are always crowded with people, as well as the lagoon stations where people wait for the boat to reach the other side of the lagoon that divides the city.

At Abidjan you can visit the Treichville market and the historical museum that preserves a beautiful and large collection of masks from all over the country, as well as taking a ride on the lagoon on board a public boat.

The city of Grand Bassam was built on a sand line between lagoons and ocean and, to date, has preserved some colonial buildings dating back to the period in which it was the rich capital of this French colony.

Grand Bassam offers a particular colonial atmosphere, thanks to the large and calm avenues



shaded by tall trees, huge bougainvillea and beautiful colonial buildings, even if partially dilapidated.

The old Post Office building is a jewel of French colonial architecture, the Costume Museum inside the former Governor's Palace is a beautiful building with a large external staircase. The unique collection of tribal costumes, masks, ornaments and period photographs gives an interesting look at the history and culture of the country.

## Meeting with the Baulé

Meeting with the Baulé to watch the dance of the **Goly masks**, that is performed by the Baulé as entertainment and during special occasions such as baptisms, weddings and funerals of high-ranking characters.

The Goly wooden mask is in the shape of a lunar disk and is surmounted by two horns, while the costume is made up of countless strips of straw.

## Visit to Kong and the Sudanese-style mosques

The city of **Kong** in the Ivory Coast is located in the sub-Saharan region, the Sahel area, a tree-lined savannah with trees such as the majestic baobab.

Kong is the area of origin of the Mandè ethnic group, merchants known in West Africa with the name of Diola; the Mandè transformed Kong into an important center of trade between the caravans from the Sahara that carried salt and other goods and those from the Southern forests that exported cola nuts, slaves and gold.

The Kong mosques, built of clay and wooden poles, are the best example of traditional Sudanese architecture in the Ivory Coast.



## The dance of the panther and of the young virgins by the Senoufo

**Senoufo** produced the greatest masterpieces of African art and still live in the respect of their ancient cultural traditions.

The members of this population include skilled sculptors, weavers, painters and blacksmiths.

[You will visit their villages](#) that still preserve the secrets of their artisan production; in the villages you can admire the massive clay barns and sacred houses with colored bas-reliefs.

The Senoufo are also famous for their complex initiatory rites; the initiation of the boys is



called Poro and consists of learning the social and religious secrets that distinguish a true Senoufo, passing some tests and performing in masked dances. Among the Senoufo dances, the most spectacular is that of the Boley, or panther dance, that is celebrated by the boys returning from a period of isolation in the sacred forest, you can attend this dance.

You will also witness the dance of the young virgins, called Ngoro and that is part of the Poro initiation performed by the Senoufo.

## Meeting with the Dozo, the sacred warriors

In the surroundings of Odienne, in the Ivory Coast, the **Malinké** live, descendants of the ancient Mali empire; among them there is a class of warriors, the **Dozo**, a hunting society, who in the past have always shown courage in battle, in addition to the widespread belief that the members of this society have a mystical power that, even today, is handed down during a long initiation.

For this reason, although today there are no more battles to fight, the respect reserved to this caste has not diminished at all.

The Dozo today are considered as a sort of local police, guardian angels who watch over the villages from attackers, they also act as peacemakers in case of quarrels, as well as being considered great healers, thanks to their esoteric knowledge of plants and animals.

You will meet the Dozo dressed in fetish clothes in traditional bogolan fabric and with the rifle covered with amulets, the hunters will accompany you on a hike in the savannah to initiate you to the power of plants; with them you will visit a Malinké village where, at the ever-increasing rhythm of the drums, the Dozo will perform dances and demonstrations of resistance to fire and knives.

## Acrobatic masks and lianas bridges by the Yacuba

The **Yacuba**, also known as Dan, will welcome you and make you visit villages made up of large round huts with thatched roofs; some houses have decorations because they are painted by women during some ceremonies.

Here you will witness the dance of acrobatic masks, while the village meets in the central square, women sing traditional songs and men play big drums.

The masks are very beautiful, the one that moves, dances and jumps on high stilts with



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incredible and harmonious movements is particularly fascinating.

The forest on the border between the Ivory Coast and Liberia is famous for its large **lianas bridges by the Dan**.

For the local population, the origin of these bridges is shrouded in mystery; the young initiates collect the vines necessary for its construction but it is the spirit of the forest that builds it secretly and in the course of one night!

It is possible to cross these bridges, that do not present great difficulties, the important thing is to respect the taboos imposed by the tradition and beliefs of the Dan.





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## Meeting with the Guéré

In a small village you will meet the **Guéré** and watch the masks dance out of the forest.

For the Guéré there is a creator God who communicates with humans exclusively through mediators, and these mediators are the masks, during the dance the distance between the world of men and the world of spirits is reset, the cosmic order is restored and there is an act of gratitude towards the gods and ancestors.

## Visit of the city of Yamoussoukro

In Yamoussoukro, **the capital of the country**, you will visit the Basilica of Our Lady of Peace, a copy of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome; the marbles and stained glass windows that characterize the church make it an unmissable monument of the country's history.

As you walk through the immense busy boulevards of the center, between the holes in the asphalt and a few chickens in the middle of the street, other excesses stand out: the gigantic government buildings, the very high 14-storey hotels, the huge schools and even a artificial lake complete with crocodiles.

The city is surrounded by immense cocoa plantations, here you can discover the cultivation, harvesting and drying techniques of these precious ... and good beans!





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## Useful info

The climate of the interior of the Ivory Coast is tropical and dry, the months from November to March are the mildest and driest and offer the best conditions for traveling.

On the coast the climate is tropical monsoon, that is humid.

The rainy season runs from May to November, but stops in the summer, between August and September; while the months from November to April are temperate and dry and offer the best conditions for traveling.

Vaccination against **yellow fever** is mandatory and a certificate is required on arrival at the airport.

Don't forget your sunglasses and protective cream; always keep your camera with you and always ask before taking a picture of a person in the foreground.