



EXPLORER'S AFRICA

Cape Town, SOUTH AFRICA to Dakar, SENEGAL
22 Day Cruise/Tour Portion Only

Please note that the itinerary below is based on the March 2011 sailing, therefore this information is for "reference only". Final detailed itinerary for March 2012 departure will be provided with your documents.

Expedition Highlights:

- See colourful salt works, gravel desert plains and spectacular rock formations
- Encounter chimpanzees, pygmy hippos, crocodiles and the endangered African forest elephant at protected sanctuaries
- Watch for dolphins, sea turtles, whales and seals
- Identify pelicans, flamingos, herons, kingfishers, waders, cormorants, sandpipers, plovers and many rare endemic birds including the endangered Damara tern
- Contemplate the solemn history of slave trade sites
- Visit a stilt village, local school, cocoa plantation and natural blowhole
- Go off-roading in 4x4 vehicles
- Discover the enormous Mirabilis plant and a hundred orchid species
- Tour a former whaling station and abandoned diamond-mining town
- Travel to Ouidah Voodoo Country
- Hike through rainforest and glimpse monkeys, parrots, butterflies
- Shop the Grand Marché market
- Sample palm wine 'jungle juice'

Optional Excursion: Fly low over the famous Sossusvlei Dunes

Expedition Team:

David C. Conrad, Special Guest Lecturer

Dr Conrad holds a PhD in African History from the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, and is retired as Emeritus Professor of History at the State University of New York, Oswego. From 1986 to 2008 he served as President of the Mande Studies Association, an organisation of several hundred scholars from thirty countries in Europe, Africa, Asia and North America. Dr. Conrad is a former Fellow of the Royal Geographic Society and the recipient of major grants from the Fulbright Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities. Specialising in oral tradition, indigenous religion and early kingdoms of the Western Sudan, he conducts ongoing research in Guinée and Mali, which he visits at least once a year. Dr Conrad is presently working as ethno-historian on a five-person research team for the Yale University art history project: The Performance of the Great Baga D'mba.

Dr Conrad's books include *A State of Intrigue: The Epic of Bamana Segu, Status and Identity in West Africa*, *Epic Ancestors of the Sunjata Era*, *Somono Bala of the Upper Niger*, *Sunjata: A West African Epic of the Mande People*, and *Empires of Medieval West Africa: Ghana, Mali, and Songhay*.



Day 1 — Cape Town, South Africa

Embark the *Prince Albert II* for your 24-day Silversea Expedition: Explorer's Africa. This unique Cape Town to Dakar adventure explores some of the more remote and less visited areas along the West African coast. This trip is a first for Silversea and while some of the ports might present challenges such as poor infrastructure, the pay off will be truly one-of-a-kind experiences and lifelong memories. Once onboard, meet some of your fellow explorers as you become acquainted with the ship's luxurious amenities. This evening, after settling in and setting sail, you will be introduced to your Expedition Team.

Day 2 — At Sea

Our knowledgeable Lecture Staff members are experts in a variety of scientific fields. Gather in The Theatre to hear our guest speaker, Dr. David Conrad, present his lecture "The Herero Uprising and German Oppression in South West Africa (1904-1907)". Then learn some tips and techniques on taking better photos during a photographic workshop offered by our resident photographer. Tonight, we invite you to attend a special Welcome Aboard cocktail party whereat the Captain will introduce his senior officers and various members of the *Prince Albert II* crew.

Day 3 — Luderitz, Namibia

The small town of Luderitz is wedged between the Namib Desert dunes and the wild Atlantic seaboard. Following an early lunch onboard, we will visit the abandoned diamond-mining town of Kolmanskop. In 1908, a sparkling diamond was found among the sand and the news spread like wildfire, causing fortune hunters to converge in droves on Kolmanskop. The town reached its pinnacle in the 1920s with approximately 300 German adults, 40 children and 800 Owambo contract workers as residents. In spite of, or probably because of, the isolation of the surrounding desert, Kolmanskop developed into a lively little haven of German culture. However, richer diamond deposits were discovered further south, and operations were moved. Today it is mostly a ghost town of crumbling ruins; the stately homes, eroded by the wind, are gradually becoming sand. However, a museum has been established and a number of buildings restored. Our excursion continues with a tour of Luderitz, stopping at historic spots such as the old whaling station, Goerke House, Diaz Point and the old Herero internment camp of Shark Island.

Alternatively, you may choose to set off on a guided walking tour of Luderitz for an in-depth exploration of its attractions. Set against a background of black rock and sparkling blue waters, an architectural heritage of graceful buildings from the German era gives the town a special charm. Take time to visit the small museum in town that features German colonial flags and photos of Adolf Lüderitz, as well as exhibits on the town's history, its indigenous population, and life in the desert.

Days 4–5 — Walvis Bay, Namibia

We arrive in Walvis Bay in the afternoon and head ashore for an off-road adventure. By 4x4 vehicles we explore the coastal dune belt, once home to the Topnaar people. We will see a great variety of birdlife including pelicans, flamingos, waders and the endangered Damara tern at the lagoon, and pass salt works of amazing colours en route to the dry Kuiseb River and go in search of Topnaar settlements. During our visit, we will learn how the current inhabitants survive in this desert environment. We will also see old settlements, traditional graveyards and inspect the preserved clay tracks of animals that have not inhabited this area for centuries.

Alternatively, you may choose to join an excursion to Swakopmund, a town with an air of enchantment about it as if the ornate buildings of the old quarter and the lush greenery of the seafront were somehow spirited away from their proper setting, only to be left without rhyme or reason between the edge of an African desert and the South Atlantic ocean. It has a large community of German speaking residents and a variety of craft shops and



charming cafés. During our tour, we will also see the gravel plains of the Namib, the 'moon landscape' gouged by the Swakop River, as well as the age-old *Mirabilis* plants.

Scenic Dunes Flight

Take advantage of an unparalleled opportunity to see the famous Sossusvlei Dunes from the air, a site very difficult to access by land. Following the (normally dry) Kuiseb River, fly over Sesriem Canyon then along the Tsauchab river valley where the free-standing but static dunes tower up to 250 metres above the plain. The dune belt runs north to south for over 70 km between Sossusvlei and the Atlantic. Upon reaching the coast, head north over deserted mining camps and seal colonies to Conception Bay and the wreck of the *Eduard Bohlen* (run aground in the early 40s). This optional Silver Shore excursion will operate only if weather/fog conditions permit.

Tonight, everyone will gather together again for a three-course meal in a spectacular desert location. Away from all habitation, there is virtually no ambient light in the coastal dunes and the stars should be amazing. Soft lights, candles, crisp white tablecloths, sparking chinaware and glasses enhance the special ambience of our unique and unforgettable evening. We begin our second day in Walvis Bay with an early morning boat cruise in the protected outer lagoon area where the water is calm and abundant with bird life. Enjoy wonderful photographic opportunities as playful Haviside's and bottlenose dolphins frolic in the boat's wake and pelicans fly low overhead. Atlantic cape fur seals may even come aboard for a fishy snack! Other seabirds we will see include flamingos and cormorants. If we are very lucky, we may even see leatherback turtles, whales, or the local 'Mola Mola' or sunfish. We will pass fishing factories and foreign ships in the port and conclude our excursion with a taste of fresh Walvis Bay oysters and local 'champagne'.

Days 6–7 — At Sea

Binoculars and camera in hand, head out on deck to watch for seabirds and marine mammals. Attend informative lectures that will prepare you for the upcoming ports-of-call and the adventures that lie ahead. Other onboard diversions include spa treatments, a workout in the Fitness Centre, and, of course, exquisite dining experiences.

Day 8 — Lobito, Angola

Our morning in Lobito allows us to explore Sao Felipe de Benguela, a city that lies on a bay of the same name. Benguela was founded by Portuguese in 1617 and served as an important centre in slave trading. It is Angola's self-appointed cultural capital, with lovely Art Deco architecture. We continue our tour to Baia Azul (Blue Bay) one of Angola's most impressive beaches, or, time permitting, we may visit the fishing community of Caotinha.

Day 9 — Luanda, Angola

We arrive early in Luanda, the capital of Angola, and home to four million. This bustling city presents us with many places to explore including the 1575 Fortress of S. Miguel de Luanda with its striking blue tiles, the military museum that houses many of the old colonial statues left by the Portuguese, and Mussulo Island – a beautiful sandy extension of land situated in the south of Luanda, famous for its beaches and water sports.

Days 10–11 — At Sea – Crossing the Equator

Participate in onboard activities, relax in one of the lounges, or peruse an array of titles and topics in the well-stocked Library. Tonight, before turning in, take a stroll on deck and enjoy the solitude and splendour of the vast sea and sky.

Day 12 — Libreville, Gabon

We will spend a full day exploring this exciting French-infused capitol city, with its wide boulevards and unique *quartiers*, each with its own character. At L'Eglise St-Michel church, we will marvel at the façade of mosaics and



carved local wood, depicting stories from the Bible. Le Villages des Artisans is a colourful stop for soapstone carvings, masks and textiles. In the afternoon we can stop to enjoy lunch at a local hotel and enjoy some time to relax on the beach near Cabo Santa Clara before returning to the *Prince Albert II*.

Alternatively, head out on a full-day tour to the Akanda National Park. This park is a Ramsar site of international importance for migratory birds. It is only accessible by 4x4 vehicles and boat – either by sea or by way of the rivers and creeks of the Mondah bay complex. Our route takes us from Libreville through the mangroves to the mouth of the Moka River on the edge of the Akanda National Park. This is one of the finest places in Gabon for estuarine migrants, and the mangrove and tidal flat landscapes of the Mondah and Corisco bays are especially fascinating. The undersea pastures of the Corisco Bay are important feeding zones for turtles, which come from as far as Brazil. We will go in search of the rosy bee-eaters lining the riverbanks and possibly the white-crested tiger heron too. Loango and slender-billed weavers are found here too, as are shining-blue and malachite kingfishers. Exposed sandbars might have numbers of African skimmers, perhaps some grey pratincoles, terns and waders including terek and marsh sandpipers, grey plover and little and western reef heron. At the end of the day, we return to the *Prince Albert II* and set sail for Principe.

Day 13 — São Tomé, São Tomé and Príncipe

Palm fringed beaches, crystal clear water and barely explored jungles are surely the reason for the pervasive national mood that translates to 'slowly slowly' and loosely translates to 'it's all good, take it easy'. The Portuguese-Creole flavour and unspoilt beauty of this tropical paradise is ours to savour.

Some of the world's best coffee is produced on the island, and during our full-day tour we will experience coffee culture at São Tomé's highest plantation estate and learn how coffee is still processed in the traditional manner. Travel along the east coast to enjoy the view of Ilhéu de Santana. In Água Izé we will stop at the viewpoint, Miradouro d'Água Izé and visit the cocoa plantation to meet with a local historian. On our way, we pass by Rio lô Grande before continuing to Boca do Inferno – a natural blowhole. Before continuing our exploration, we will stop to enjoy a Creole-fusion lunch and traditional performance at a local restaurant or plantation house.

São Tomé is also an ornithologist's paradise. During an afternoon birding tour we hope to see some of São Tomé's native flora (700 species including a hundred orchids) as we search for the 143 bird species that have been identified here including rare endemic species like the São Tomé short tail, São Tomé giant sun bird, and São Tomé fiscal shrike.

Day 14 — At Sea

This leisurely day at sea is yours to enjoy. Participate in discussions and onboard activities led by the Expedition Team, relax in one of the lounges with that book you've been meaning to read, and meet up with new friends for cocktails.

Day 15 — Cotonou, Benin

We dock this morning at Cotonou, Benin referred to by many as the 'Latin Quarter of Africa'. After we receive clearance from the local authorities, we head out on tour to Voodoo Country and Ouidah, a town typically and profoundly African. Ouidah is known as the religious capital of the country due to the numerous festivals with singing, chanting, drumming and dances that take place here. These celebrations bear witness to a tradition of beliefs and local superstitions interpreted over hundreds of years. Voodoo was born in the villages that lie between Abomey and Ouidah – a religion whose rites were transported across the Atlantic by the slaves and is still practised today in the Caribbean.

Historically, Ouidah was one of the busiest of the West African slave embarkation points. Along with Gorée Island in Senegal and the village of Juffure in the Gambia River, Ouidah is an important reminder of the slave



trade that occurred along the West Africa shores. We will walk along the “Route des Esclaves” down to the shoreline where there is an imposing arch with bas-relief sculpture to memorialise the people who were shipped out from here. We will visit the Temple of the Sacred Pythons and walk through majestic coconut groves. Sculptures, including the Tree of Forgetfulness, serve as reminders of the slaves’ plight. We will also walk along the wide avenues visiting the modern Youth and Cultural Centre, the Cathedral, and the history museum, which is housed in the buildings of the Old Portuguese fort.

After lunch on board, we will board small motorboats and cross Lake Nokoue to visit a fishing village built on stilts. Ganvié village is made up of bamboo houses resting on teak stilts, perched above the water. The village is scattered and all travel between homes is done in wooden boats on the waterways that separate them. We will have the chance to see the floating market and boatloads of chattering children heading to and from school. The welcoming Tofinu people like to show off their fishing skills.

Day 16 — Lome, Togo

We dock early the morning and head out on a morning tour from Lome, the capital of Togo, which stretches along the coast for about 12 km between the Ghanaian border and the new Port of Lome. During colonial times, eastern Togo was controlled by the French (it gained independence in 1960) and the western strip of the country was occupied by the British who annexed the territory to Ghana. (This explains why the Ghanaian border is on the edge of Lome.) We will stroll through the alleys and colourful local stalls of the local Grand Marché market, watching craftsmen skilfully carving wood and metal. Our visit to the Grand Marché will not be complete until we meet the Togolese Nanas famous for selling the most fashionable wax batik cloth of every imaginable colour and design. Lively discussions spill from the shops as women consult about styles, colours and prices. We return to the *Prince Albert II* for lunch and set sail for Takoradi, Ghana.

Day 17 — Takoradi, Ghana

Akwaaba! Welcome to Ghana, the Land of Sunshine. Today we will visit the Cape Coast Castle, which was the seat of the British Colonial administration until 1877 when the capital was moved to Accra. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Castle is known for its role in the ancient slave trade. After our picnic lunch, we continue on to Elmina Castle, which was built in 1482 and is said to be the oldest European-built structure outside of Europe. Between the picturesque old town alleys and the numerous flat-bottomed *pirogue* boats in the harbour, we enjoy one of West Africa’s greatest photo opportunities. We continue inland to visit the Kakum National Park, a 357-square-km park comprising undisturbed virgin rainforest. Join our natural history staff and local guides for a walking tour through the forest and on a canopy walkway, offering an opportunity to see much of Ghana’s indigenous plant life, as well as rare butterflies, birds and game.

Day 18 — At Sea

How will you spend your day today? A photography workshop or martini tasting seminar? Learning of Africa’s fascinating cultures or simply finding a sunny spot on the open deck to take in the fresh sea air? Your choices are as diverse as your interests.

Day 19 — Greenville, Liberia

Greenville is located in southeast Liberia on a pristine lagoon near the breathtakingly beautiful Sinoe River. The town was constructed in 1838 by the Mississippi Colonization Society and settled by emancipated African-American slaves. Our adventure today takes us to Sapo National Park, Liberia’s largest protected rainforest area. Here, in the shade of a towering tree canopy, we will have the opportunity to view exotic flora and fauna. This biodiversity hotspot is home to pygmy hippos, chimpanzees and the endangered African forest elephant. On our return to Greenville, we will drive by the ruins of The Presidential Palace and the historic Greenville Church.



Days 20–21 — At Sea

Take this opportunity to enjoy a fine cigar and cognac at the Connoisseur's Corner or to indulge in any of the other special amenities offered aboard ship that you have not yet had the chance to experience. Enjoy a variety of onboard activities and attend a final series of lectures. All accommodations feature an interactive television system allowing you to watch your choice of movies or documentary films and even lectures broadcast from The Theatre in the comfort and privacy of your suite or stateroom.

Day 22 — Banjul, The Gambia

A wide variety of ethnic groups live in The Gambia with a minimum of intertribal friction, each preserving its own language and traditions. After docking this morning, we will drive to Sukuta Village where we will enjoy an authentic taste of Africa at the local fish and vegetable market. Most locals buy their fresh food daily because they cannot afford refrigerators or they live in very rural areas where there is no electricity. Afterwards, we drive to Yuna Village to sample palm wine 'jungle juice' and watch a demonstration of how the locals make this unique and strong Gambian beverage also called 'zum zum' or 'fire water'. If left out in the sun for approximately 24 hours, the alcohol percentage can go up to 38%! We next visit the local school in Sanyang. Our time spent observing the children during their lessons promises to be one of the voyage's most memorable. During our stop for lunch in the relaxing setting of Sanyang Beach, enjoy some free time to swim in the ocean or just soak up the Gambian sun. From here, we visit the Tanje Village Museum where we will learn about The Gambia, its different tribes and their way of life. We can also find out more about the regional birdlife, insects, reptiles, fish, and plantlife. Traditional craftsmanship is demonstrated at a variety of artisan workshops. Our final stop is the Tanje fishing village where we will see the locals gathering their day's catch. The scenic fishing village set against a peaceful beach makes for lovely landscape photos. Time permitting, we may also stop at the Kim Kombo Liquors factory.

Ornithologists all over the world consider The Gambia to be a birdwatchers' paradise where over 500 species can be seen. So, naturally we will also offer an excursion for our birding enthusiast guests! An early morning start is essential and our adventure begins at the famous Lamin Creek where we quietly paddle dug-out canoes while bird spotting. Following breakfast at the Lamin Lodge, we head to the Abuko Nature Reserve where our guides lead us on a forest walk. More than 500 birds live in the reserve, as well as monkeys and crocodiles. At the Reserve's zoo we can also see lions, hyenas, reptiles, antelopes, bush ducks and crown cranes. As a third alternative, choose to visit the Makasutu cultural forest situated on the banks of a beautiful meandering tributary of the River Gambia, and encompassing many different ecosystems including dense forest, savannah and mangrove regions. The forest is home to hundreds of varieties of birds, three species of monkeys, monitor lizards, pygmy deer, and mongoose to name but a few – and, if we are lucky, we may catch a glimpse of migrating baboons that make the forest their home for a number of months each year.

During our day there will be many different activities on offer – river trips on traditional dug-out canoes, guided walks through the forest, bird watching and wildlife observation. Here we will enjoy a relaxing river ride drifting along in traditional dug out canoes while spotting wildlife and watching fishermen and women collecting oysters from the mangrove. We will then set off on a "bush walk" where we can see some of the flora and fauna of the area. Lunch at base camp follows and consists of some of the best African dishes in this region, including *Benechin*, *Domada* and *Yassa*. We will be entertained by traditional dancers and drum troupes who perform on a natural stage, under the shade of a majestic Baobab tree. At base camp there will also be an opportunity to participate in pottery and furniture making, African cooking, and dancing and drumming.

Day 23 — Dakar, Senegal

After breakfast, disembark the *Prince Albert II*.

Expedition highlights and wildlife listed here are possible experiences only and cannot be guaranteed. Your Expedition Leader and Captain will work together to ensure opportunities for adventure and exploration are the best possible, taking into account the prevailing weather and wildlife activity. Expedition Team members as well as guest speakers and their lecture topics scheduled for this voyage are subject to change or cancellation without notice.