The Gambia in 8 days: a day-by-day itinerary

A narrow strip of land on either side of the River Gambia, the country makes an easy first trip to West Africa: distances are short and you quickly move from the Atlantic coast to the villages of the interior. Over eight days, this itinerary combines Banjul and its beaches, the Abuko forest, Kunta Kinteh Island, a key site in the history of the slave trade, and a journey upriver to Janjanbureh and the Wassu stone circles. Neither the French nor the British government currently advises against travel to any part of the country. Even so, check official travel advice before you leave.

Day by day

Days 1-2 · Banjul and the Atlantic coast (night : Banjul or Bakau)

The airport is at Yundum, about half an hour from Banjul and the beach resorts. On the first day, settle in on the coast, between Bakau, Fajara and Kotu, and slip into the country's relaxed pace. The next morning, explore Banjul, a small capital on St Mary's Island: climb to the top of Arch 22 for the view over the estuary, visit the National Museum, then wander through Albert Market. In the afternoon, stop at the Kachikally sacred crocodile pool in Bakau, then watch the fishing boats come in on the beach. Swimming is dangerous in places because of the currents, so stay close to the shore.

Day 3 · Abuko Nature Reserve and Tanji fishing village (night : Banjul or Bakau)

Set off early for Abuko Nature Reserve, about twenty kilometres from the coast near Lamin, when the animals are most active. This small forest, protected since 1968, is crossed by a trail a few kilometres long that follows the Lamin stream. You will see monkeys, including red colobus and vervets, plenty of birds and, with luck, crocodiles near the pools. Allow two to three hours of gentle walking. In the afternoon, head south to Tanji, a large fishing village where fish is smoked on the beach, a striking scene when the boats return.

Day 4 · Kunta Kinteh Island, Albreda and Juffureh (night : Banjul or Bakau)

Take the ferry from Banjul to Barra, on the north bank, leaving early: waits can be long and timetables irregular. From Barra, the road leads to Albreda and Juffureh, about thirty kilometres away. A dugout canoe then takes you to Kunta Kinteh Island, formerly James Island, less than four kilometres from the bank. The fort, one of the slave-trading posts on the river, is now in ruins, and the island, eaten away by erosion, is only a fraction of its original size. Together with Albreda and Juffureh, it is a World Heritage Site. Visit the small museum on the slave trade too, then return to Banjul before dark.

Days 5-6 · Up the river to Janjanbureh (night : Janjanbureh)

On day 5, follow the south bank road east: allow five to seven hours to reach Janjanbureh, formerly Georgetown, built on MacCarthy Island and linked to the south bank by a bridge. On day 6, cross to the north bank by ferry to Lamin Koto, then drive to the Wassu stone circles, about twenty kilometres away. These standing stones, some over two metres tall, belong to the Senegambian stone circles, a World Heritage Site. A small museum explains their history. In the afternoon, take a boat trip on the river to look for birds, monkeys and sometimes hippos.

Day 7 · Back to the coast (night : Bakau or Kotu)
Drive back west along the south bank road, leaving early so that you reach the coast by mid-afternoon without ever driving after dark. On the way, stop at a village market or beside a bolong, one of the mangrove-lined creeks where you can spot herons, kingfishers and sometimes dolphins near the estuary. In the evening, return to Kotu or Bakau beach for sunset. If you still have energy, Serrekunda market, the largest in the country, is worth a visit for its atmosphere and fabric stalls, but keep an eye on your belongings in the crowds.

Day 8 · Last morning and departure (night : Flight home)
Depending on your flight time, enjoy a last morning by the ocean or a walk in Bijilo Forest Park, a small coastal reserve south of Kotu where you will meet monkeys. Birdwatchers may prefer an early outing to the Tanji bird reserve on the coast. Pick up some last crafts, such as tie-dyed fabrics or carvings, then head to Yundum airport, allowing extra time for traffic, which is often heavy around Serrekunda at rush hour. If your flight leaves in the morning, save these activities for the day before.

Getting around

A car with a driver is the simplest option, especially for the trip upriver. On the coast, taxis are plentiful; agree the fare before getting in. The paved south bank road takes you to the east of the country, and ferries cross the river between Banjul and Barra and at Janjanbureh. The Farafenni bridge, on the Trans-Gambia Highway, also makes crossing easier. Avoid driving at night: unlit vehicles, animals and pedestrians are common on the roads.

When to go

The best time to go is from November to May, during the dry season, with sunny weather and pleasant temperatures on the coast. Inland, the heat becomes intense from March onwards. From June to October, the rainy season makes some tracks difficult and can cause flooding, but the vegetation is lush and the birds are plentiful. The harmattan can haze the sky in December and January.

Practical information

The Gambia

Entry	Depends on your passport: visiterafriqueunie.com/en/visa/the-gambia/
Yellow fever	Certificate required if arriving from a risk country
Malaria	throughout the country
Currency	Gambian dalasi (GMD)
Languages	English, Mandinka, Wolof
Plugs	type G · dialling code +220 · UTC0
Emergencies	police 17 ou 117 · ambulance 16 ou 116 · fire 18 ou 118

Departure checklist

Documents

☐ Passport valid for at least six months after your return, with blank pages
☐ Visa or e-visa (printed if required)
☐ International vaccination certificate (yellow fever if required)
☐ Travel insurance certificate and assistance number
☐ Paper and digital copies of your passport and bookings
☐ Tickets, bookings and addresses saved offline
☐ International driving permit if you are hiring a vehicle

Health

☐ Travel consultation done and vaccinations up to date
☐ Malaria tablets if your doctor recommends them
☐ First-aid kit: plasters, antiseptic, anti-diarrhoea tablets, rehydration salts
☐ Mosquito repellent suitable for the tropics
☐ Sunscreen, hat and sunglasses
☐ Personal medication and prescriptions

Money and connectivity

☐ Bank told, Visa or Mastercard (and a backup card)
☐ Cash in euros or dollars, recent notes in good condition
☐ eSIM or local SIM card sorted
☐ Plug adapter for the country
☐ Power bank and cables
☐ Offline maps downloaded
☐ Afrique Unie app installed

In the bag

☐ Light clothes that cover up (sun, mosquitoes, places of worship)
☐ A fleece for evenings, dawn safaris and altitude
☐ Walking shoes and sandals
☐ Head torch
☐ Water bottle (ideally with a filter)
☐ Small daypack and waterproof pouches
☐ Luggage padlock

Before you close the door

☐ Your government's travel advice reread
☐ Trip registered with your consular service (if it offers this)
☐ Itinerary and contacts left with someone close
☐ Online check-in done and baggage allowance checked

Notebook made from visiterafriqueunie.com/en/itineraries/gambia-in-8-days/ · information checked in November 2026 against official sources. Entry, health and safety rules change: check them again before you leave (your country's official advice, the embassy of the country you visit).