Guinea-Bissau in 10 days: a day-by-day itinerary

Rarely visited, Guinea-Bissau is home to one of the finest archipelagos in West Africa: the Bissagos, a maze of islands, mangroves and sandbanks recognised as a UNESCO biosphere reserve and, since 2025, a World Heritage site. This ten-day itinerary combines the old town of Bissau, the island of Bubaque, Orango National Park and its hippos that venture into salt water, then the forests of Cantanhez in the south. It avoids the border area with Senegal, where the French government advises against all but essential travel. As the political situation can change, check official travel advice before you leave.

Day by day

Days 1-2 · Bissau, a capital on the Geba (night : Bissau)

Bissau is easy to explore on foot during the day. Start with Bissau Velho, the old town with its Portuguese colonial façades, often crumbling but full of charm, then walk down to the port of Pidjiguiti, where a memorial recalls the dockworkers' strike crushed in 1959, a founding moment in the struggle for independence. The next day, dive into the bustle of Bandim market, the largest in the city, then pass by the cathedral. Use these two days to organise the rest of the trip too: connections to the islands depend on the tides and change often. Avoid any gatherings, which are banned by the authorities, and do not travel at night.

Day 3 · Crossing to Bubaque (night : Bubaque)

Board a boat for Bubaque, the most accessible island in the Bissagos archipelago. A public ferry links it with Bissau, but it does not run every day, often only once or twice a week, at times that vary with the tides, and the crossing takes several hours. Another option is to share a chartered speedboat, which is faster. Either way, check the condition of the boat and make sure there are life jackets. On arrival, explore the small town of Bubaque, with its low houses and fishing harbour. The island, around fourteen kilometres long, can be explored on foot or by motorbike. In the evening, enjoy the calm: life here follows the rhythm of the tides.

Days 4-5 · Orango National Park and its hippos (night : Orango)

Travel to Orango Island by boat from Bubaque; the length of the crossing depends on the sea and the tides. The national park, created in 2000, covers the south of the archipelago, with islands, mangroves and shallow waters. Orango is famous for its hippos, which live in the lagoons and venture into salt water, a rare behaviour. Look for them on foot with a park guide, keeping a safe distance, as the animals are dangerous. In the village of Eticoga, learn about Bijagó culture and the memory of Queen Okinka Pampa, who ruled there until her death in 1930. Respect sacred sites, which outsiders may not enter without permission.

Day 6 · Beaches and villages of Bubaque (night : Bubaque)

Return to Bubaque for a quieter day. Hire a bicycle or take a motorbike ride to Bruce Beach, in the south of the island, a long stretch of sand lined with palm trees. On the way, pass through Bijagó villages surrounded by rice paddies and palm groves. Watch birds in the mangroves at low tide, when the mudflats attract waders by the thousand. The archipelago is also home to sea turtles that nest on some beaches; never approach them with a torch. In the evening, prepare for the return to the mainland by confirming the boat time, which can change at the last minute.

Day 7 · Back to Bissau (night : Bissau)

Take the boat back to Bissau, leaving yourself some margin: in rough seas or if the timetable changes, it is better to have a spare day before your flight. If the crossing is early, spend the afternoon revisiting the lanes of Bissau Velho or strolling along the avenue leading to the presidential palace. This is also the time to prepare the trip south: book a four-wheel-drive vehicle with a driver and check the state of the road to Cantanhez with your local contacts. Nights in Bissau are generally quiet, but avoid walking around after dark.

Days 8-9 · The forests of Cantanhez National Park (night : Jemberem)

Leave early for the south via Buba: the road, partly in poor condition, takes a long day, sometimes five to six hours or more. Cantanhez National Park, in the Tombali region, protects one of the last blocks of dense forest in the country, among rice fields, mangroves and villages. Base yourself in Jemberem, where village guides lead dawn walks in search of chimpanzees, which you are more likely to hear than to see. You can also spot colobus monkeys, hornbills and many other birds. The forest is looked after by local communities, which protect certain sacred groves, so follow your guide's instructions.

Day 10 · Back to Bissau and departure (night : Flight home)

Leave Jemberem at sunrise to reach Bissau by early afternoon, then the airport, on the outskirts of the city. Allow as much time as on the way down, or more if the road has been damaged by the rains. If your flight leaves in the morning or early afternoon, it is safer to return to Bissau the day before and spend a final night in the city, even if that shortens your stay in Cantanhez. Use your last hours to buy fabrics, basketwork or cashew nuts, the country's main agricultural product, in the capital's markets.

Getting around

On the mainland, hire a four-wheel-drive vehicle with a driver: roads are often in poor condition, and you should never drive at night. For the Bissagos Islands, a public ferry links Bissau with Bubaque usually once or twice a week, and speedboats can be chartered; always check the boat's condition and that life jackets are on board. Between the islands, you travel by motorised canoe, depending on the tides. Allow a spare day before your flight home in case of rough seas.

When to go

The best time to go is from November to April, during the dry season: calmer seas for the crossings, passable roads and many migratory birds in the archipelago. From December to February, the harmattan can haze the sky. From June to October, the rains are heavy, the southern tracks become difficult and boat connections less regular. Sea turtles nest on some islands mainly towards the end of the rainy season.

Practical information

Guinea-Bissau

Entry	Depends on your passport: visiterafriqueunie.com/en/visa/guinea-bissau/
Yellow fever	Certificate required from all travellers
Malaria	throughout the country
Currency	West African CFA franc (XOF)
Languages	Portuguese, Creole
Plugs	type C · dialling code +245 · UTC0
Emergencies	police 117 · ambulance 1313 ou 119 · fire 1313 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/guinea-bissau-in-10-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).