Sierra Leone in 8 days: a day-by-day itinerary

With forest-covered mountains and white-sand beaches, the Freetown Peninsula packs much of Sierra Leone's appeal into a few dozen kilometres. This eight-day itinerary, with no long drives, combines the capital and Bunce Island, a key site in the history of the slave trade, the chimpanzees of Tacugama, the finest beaches on the peninsula and the Banana Islands. It avoids the border area with Liberia, where the French government advises against all but essential travel. Check official travel advice and health entry requirements before you leave.

Day by day

Days 1-2 · Arrival across the estuary and Freetown (night : Freetown)
The international airport is at Lungi, on the other side of the estuary: the quickest way across is by water taxi, which reaches Freetown in thirty to forty minutes, while the public ferry takes about an hour. The next day, take a boat to Bunce Island, around thirty kilometres upstream on the Sierra Leone River: the ruins of the British fort, from which thousands of captives were shipped to the Americas, can be visited with a guide. Back in town, stop at the National Railway Museum, which tells the story of the old railway, then end the day on Lumley Beach, but do not walk there after dark.

Day 3 · The chimpanzees of Tacugama (night : River No. 2)
Head up early into the wooded hills above Freetown, in the heart of the Western Area Peninsula National Park, to reach Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary, founded in 1995. It takes in orphaned or confiscated chimpanzees, victims of poaching and the illegal pet trade, with a view to their rehabilitation. The guided tour, which must be booked, lets you watch them in large forest enclosures and learn about efforts to protect the species, a national emblem. Hiking trails also lead into the surrounding forest. In the afternoon, drive down to the south coast of the peninsula, about an hour away, and settle in at River No. 2 Beach.

Days 4-5 · River No. 2, Tokeh and Bureh (night : River No. 2 or Bureh)
Take time to enjoy the coast, one of the most beautiful in West Africa. At River No. 2, a river runs down from the mountains into a bay of white sand; hire a canoe to paddle upstream through the mangroves to a small waterfall. On day 5, follow the coast south to Tokeh and then Bureh, a beach known for its surf, where you can take a lesson with instructors from the village. The beaches are safe to visit during the day, but they have no lifeguards and the currents can be dangerous, so ask locally before swimming. Stick to daytime travel on the peninsula road.

Days 6-7 · The Banana Islands (night : Banana Islands)
Drive to Kent, at the southern tip of the peninsula, where a motorised canoe takes around half an hour to reach Dublin, the largest of the Banana Islands. The archipelago, which also includes Ricketts and Mes-Meheux, has kept a few relics of the colonial era and the slave trade, such as an old church and rusting cannons. People come here mainly for the peace: fishing villages, empty coves and clear water. Walk around Dublin and Ricketts, crossing the forest, then go snorkelling over the rocks. Check that there are life jackets on the boat, and be back before dark.

Day 8 · Back to Freetown and departure (night : Flight home)

Return by canoe to Kent, then drive back up the peninsula road to Freetown, allowing an hour and a half to two hours depending on traffic, which is often heavy on the way into the city. Leave plenty of time for the crossing to Lungi airport: check the water taxi times, which determine when you need to leave Freetown. If your flight leaves early in the morning, it is better to spend the last night in Freetown, or even in Lungi. If you have time, pick up some batik and tie-dyed fabrics, a speciality of the country.

Getting around

Hire a car with a driver for the peninsula: roads are narrow, rarely lit, and you should avoid driving at night outside the city. The French government strongly advises against motorbike taxis, tricycles and shared transport because of the high number of accidents. Between Lungi airport and Freetown, water taxis are the fastest option. For the Banana Islands and Bunce Island, crossings are made by canoe or motorboat, arranged from Kent or Freetown.

When to go

The best time to go is from November to April, during the dry season, with the most comfortable conditions from December to March. Early November can still be wet. From December to February, the harmattan can reduce visibility. From May to October, the rains are among the heaviest in West Africa, with a risk of flooding and landslides in Freetown, and boat crossings become less safe.

Practical information

Sierra Leone

Entry	Depends on your passport: visiterafriqueunie.com/en/visa/sierra-leone/
Yellow fever	Certificate required from all travellers
Malaria	throughout the country
Currency	Sierra Leonean leone (SLE)
Languages	English, Krio
Plugs	type D, G · dialling code +232 · UTC0
Emergencies	police 117 ou 999 · ambulance 117 ou 999 · fire 117 ou 999

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/sierra-leone-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).