



# Oualata and Tagant expedition

## MAURITANIA



14 days

01 - 14 Febbraio 2025

English speaking tour leader



### The 'unforgettable' of the trip:

- The **Mauritanian Sahél**, along the banks of the Senegal River, between rice plantations and Peulh villages
- The mythical **caravan city of Oualata**, with its beautifully decorated houses
- The **stone city of Tichitt**, an ancient outpost of the trans-Saharan routes
- In the heart of **Tagant**, crossing the Erg Aouker with its salt caravans
- The **Matmata guelta**, with the last Nile crocodiles in the heart of the Sahara
- The picturesque **fish market of Nouakchott** and the bustle of multicoloured pirogues



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### Day 1: Saturday 01 February

#### Outward flight/Nouakchott (NKC)

Flight to Nouakchott. Meeting with the Kanaga Africa Tours staff who will arrange transfer to Hotel Sunset or similar. Overnight stay in a double room with services.

### Day 2: Sunday 02 February to Wednesday 05 February

#### Nouakchott/Rosso/Aleg/Kiffa/Aioun el Atrouss/Timbedra/Nema

Breakfast and departure to the south, travelling along the tarmac road in the direction of Rosso, at the border with Senegal, and then turning east in the direction of Bogué. On the way we will stop for our picnic lunch and admire the beautiful scenery along the Senegal River, among lush rice fields and characteristic Peulh villages. Advancing eastwards, in the middle of the Mauritanian Sahel, we will begin to spot the first typical morphologies of the Sahara Desert: gueltas, rocky mountains and dune belts. At sunset, we will set up our tented camp for dinner and an overnight stay in an igloo tent near Bogué. The following day, immediately after breakfast prepared by our cook, we will continue in the direction of Aleg and Kiffa, with a refuelling stop in the towns we encounter along the way and a picnic stop for lunch amidst the boundless, typically Sahelo-Saharan landscapes, until we reach the striking dunes of Erg Çangrava, where we will set up camp for our second night in bivouac, under millions of stars. Early, immediately after breakfast at the camp, we will continue our adventure passing through the small town of El Kayra, before crossing the desert mountains in the direction of Kamour and Gerou, finally reaching Kiffa, the capital of the Assaba region, a historic town famous for its ancient savoir-faire in the handcrafted manufacture of glass paste beads, an ancient tradition that culturally links this town, on the border with Mali, with our Murano, thanks to the centuries-old merchant trade between Venice and the Middle East and between the latter and the caravan towns of the Sahara. Bivouac for lunch en route. Before sunset, we reach the Guelta of Fam Lekheyerat, one of the last permanent (and very old) reservoirs in the Sahara to be home to the last specimens of Nilotic crocodiles, in the middle of the desert. We set up camp in the surrounding area, for dinner and our third bivouac night. Immediately after breakfast, we will resume our journey in the direction of Aioun el Atrouss, the capital of Hodh el Gharby, known for its traditional stone houses. We will travel along one of the most evocative stretches of the interminable and almost straight Route de l'Espoir, a 1,100-kilometre-long link road that connects Nouakchott to Nema, and which at this point offers some of the most desolate and magnificent landscapes of the Sahel, much frequented by semi-nomadic shepherds with their herds, in search of pasture and water in the vicinity of the region's main gueltas. Stop for a picnic lunch along the road and set up camp for dinner and overnight bivouac between Timbedra and Nema. If time permits, we will make a diversion to Koumbi Saleh, the political centre and capital of the ancient kingdom of Ghana. In the 10th and 11th centuries it was a cosmopolitan city of 15-20,000 inhabitants, controlling the caravan routes between the Niger valley and the Maghreb. Incursions by the Almoravids and the shifting of caravan routes led it to decay, until it was gradually abandoned. Its ruins are an important archaeological site, but almost completely covered by the sands of the Sahara, and difficult to read.



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### Day 6: Thursday 06 February

#### Oualata

Immediately after breakfast at the camp, we will continue our expedition in the direction of Nema, until we leave the asphalt of the Route de l'Espoir and enter a dirt track that, after about 90 km, will take us to our destination around mid-morning: the mythical caravan city of Oualata, with its splendid decorated houses, declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1996. Accommodation in a campement, where we can have a shower and lunch, before starting our visits in the afternoon. Founded in the 7th century by the Soninké of the Ghanaian Empire, and entirely rebuilt in 1224, Oualata is the fourth largest caravan city in Mauritania, along with Tichitt, Chinguetti and Ouadâne, and made its fortune thanks to its isolation, which made it a compulsory stop for caravans heading for Timbuktu. It is precisely this isolation that still makes it a fascinating destination to visit, a centre whose atmosphere seems typical of cities forgotten by the world. But there is more. Oualâta is a jewel, an oasis whose clay dwellings give the village a unique appearance. What strikes one on entering the village is the red colour of the mud bricks with which its houses have been built for centuries and decorated with murals, both on the façade and inside. It is the local women who are responsible for the decoration, usually consisting of geometric motifs and red, white or indigo arabesques, obtained from natural pigments. The small museum and library, on the other hand, preserve ancient manuscripts of Islamic culture, evidence of how important this intellectual centre was in antiquity. Typical dinner in the rich gastronomic tradition of Oualata and overnight stay in a double room with shared bathroom.



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### Day 7-8: Friday 07 February to Saturday 08 February

#### Oualata/Aratane/Tichitt

Immediately after breakfast, early in the morning, we will resume our adventure along a rather difficult track, but one that will take us through the heart of magnificent desert landscapes, some of the most evocative in the whole of Mauritania, towards the remote Tagant region and the caravan city of Tichitt, the second historical destination of our journey. We will admire the Oued Initi, continue to the remote town of Oujaf, bivouac in desert scenery of sand and rocky crags, before encountering the surreal finger-shaped pinnacles that suddenly emerge from the sands at Lasbaa, and the Aratane well with the magical elephant-shaped mountains that form the backdrop to this enchanted landscape. Finally, we reach the Tagant region, where the ancient and once flourishing caravan city of Tichitt lies, not forgetting a stop at the Neolithic village of Akreijit, inhabited 4,000 years ago by an agro-pastoral population. Arrival in Tichitt and visit of the historic centre, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, with its ancient mosque and ornate stone houses. Dinner and overnight stay in campement in a double room with shared bathroom.

### Day 9-11: Sunday 09 February to Tuesday 11 February

#### Tichitt/Tidjikja/Rachid/Ksar el Barka/Matmata

After breakfast we will enter the most remote region of Mauritania, the Tagant, a vast and remote desert area, softened by the sandy curves of the Erg Aouker and steepened by rocky crags, still traversed by the last caravans of dromedaries carrying salt bars. We reach Tidjikja, the capital of the region, via the rugged Zig Gorge, where we stop for supplies and visit the historic town, founded in the 17th century: the market, the mosques, the colonial-era Coppolani Fort and the immense palm grove surrounding the town. Continuation to Rachid and Ksar el Barka, ancient ruined outposts dating from the 18th century, founded by the Berber people of the Kountas and destroyed by the French. Arrive in Matmata before sunset to admire some of the last specimens of Nilotic crocodiles that have lived since ancient times in the natural pools of this oasis of extraordinary beauty, surrounded by rocky backdrops, fed by a paradisiacal waterfall and also frequented by monkeys and hyraxes. Picnic meals and bivouac nights in igloo tents.



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### Day 12: Wednesday 12 February

#### Matmata/Boutilimit/Nouakchott

After breakfast at the camp prepared by our cook, we will leave our bivouac in the vicinity of Matmata early in the morning and head back towards the capital Nouakchott, passing through the magnificent dunes that embrace Moudjeria. On the way, we will make stops at Aleg and Boutilimit, and for a picnic lunch. Arrival in Nouakchott in the evening and overnight stay in a double room with services at the Hotel Sunset or similar.

### Day 13: Thursday 13 February

#### Nouakchott

After breakfast at the hotel, a day dedicated to visiting the capital: the museum, the central market, the handicrafts street, the main mosque (exterior), the picturesque and lively *Port de Peche*, with its colourful bustle of wooden pirogues returning laden with fish. Seafood lunch in a restaurant by the ocean and a few hours of beach relaxation. Some rooms in day use. Transfer to the airport in time for your return flight. End of services.

### Day 14: Friday 14 February

#### Nouakchott (NKC)/Return flight

Arrival at the destination airport.



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14 days

01 - 14 Febbraio 2025

English speaking tour leader

Individual participation fee in double room/tent  
(min. 6/max. 16 pax)

**2,590 €/pax**

**in promotion at € 2,490**  
for bookings before 01/11/2024

**in promotion at € 2,390**  
for bookings before 01/08/2024

## Supplements:

- Enrollment fee: **free!**
- Single room/tent: **270 €**
- Single tent: **50 €**
- Extra night in Nouakchott: **120 €/room**
- Extra transfer: **30 €/person/one way**

## The fee includes:

- English speaking tour leader;
- French-speaking local guide;
- Visits and excursions as scheduled;
- All transfers in a 5-seater Toyota Hilux 4x4 (max. 4 clients/car) including driver, fuel and tolls;
- Transfers to/from the airport at the times of the recommended airline;
- Full board except dinners in Nouakchott;
- Cook and camp kitchen for meals in the desert;
- 10 overnight stays as mentioned in the itinerary;
- Field material;
- Day use in Nouakchott (1 room per 4 pax).

## The fee does not include:

- Mauritanian visa (€55 on arrival);
- Insurance for cancellation, health, luggage;
- Air flights ;
- Drinks and mineral water;
- Dinners in Nouakchott;
- Transfers to/from the airport on airlines other than the one recommended;
- Tips for photos and videos;
- Tips and expenses of a personal nature;
- Everything mentioned in 'supplements';
- Anything not expressly mentioned in 'the fee includes'.