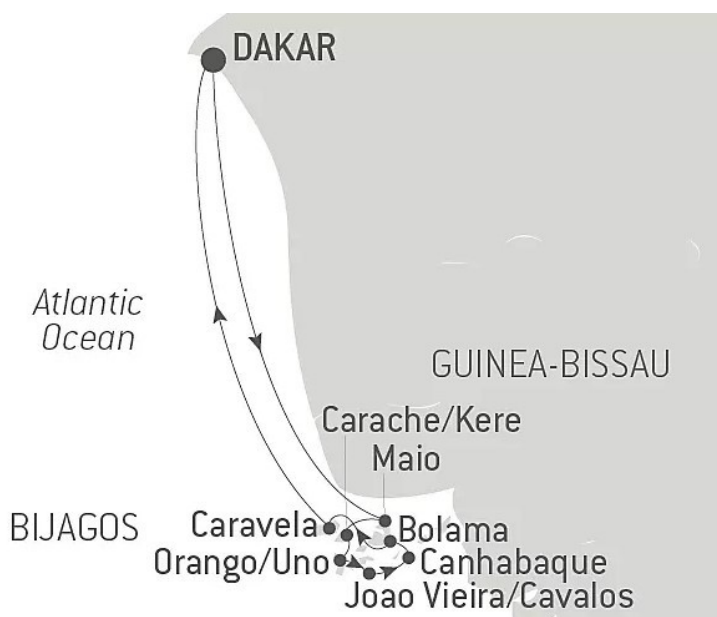




ADVENTURE IN THE BISSAGOS ISLANDS - 9 DAY CRUISE FROM DAKAR

In the secret lands of the Atlantic, off the coast of Guinea-Bissau, where the infinite blue of the ocean meets the lush green of the islands, a rare jewel hides: the Bissagos. A UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, this archipelago, one of the most preserved on the planet, consists of 88 islands, most of which are uninhabited. In an environment that is often still unspoiled by man, these islands offer the few visitors who explore them the chance of a unique and authentic experience. PONANT has designed an all-new and exclusive 9-day journey aboard Le Lyrial, into the heart of this string of islands featuring preserved nature, a land of ancestral civilisations and a refuge for many terrestrial and marine species. You will humbly sail towards these extraordinary lands, which hold the promise of an interlude where time may stand still. During your exploration, its backdrop a symphony of sounds and colours, you will be as close as possible to exceptional nature, between white sandy beaches, mangals stretching as far as the eye can see, mangrove trees, savannah, palm trees and baobabs. Sea turtles, those majestic creatures, choose these isolated beaches to lay their eggs, while brightly coloured lizards skilfully weave in and out of the lush vegetation. During your hikes in the heart of the tropical forest, you will be lucky enough to admire the hypnotic ballet of many species of migratory birds such as pelicans or pink flamingos on the island of Kere or to contemplate the spectacle of vervet monkeys. You will move through this world, the cradle of the Bissagos culture, where life follows the pace of the tides and the surrounding nature. The villages, lying in the thick vegetation, seem to emanate from the earth itself. The houses made of woven palms and the rough wooden dugout canoes melt into

the background, almost inseparable from the natural environment. This unique journey will be punctuated by many encounters with the Bissagos people, in particular on the islands of Caravela, Carache and Orango. You will take part in traditional ceremonies accompanied by the sound of drums, and discover their customs and traditions, which have not changed for thousands of years and are based on a matriarchal society where the sacred lies at the centre of everything. Nature is a divinity here, and every bird call, every rustling of a tree, every sparkle of the sun on the water is a ode to the beauty of these



sacred lands.



ITINERARY

Day 1 DAKAR

On the tip of the African continent, the buzzing capital of Senegal stretches along the narrow peninsula of Cape Verde. You may be overwhelmed by its sheer size, but Dakar will win you over with its richly diverse districts, appealing cultural scene and rich natural surroundings. In the historic centre, you'll enjoy the pell-mell of colours and tasty delights in Kermel market. Far from the effervescence of the city, Goree Island, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is known as a place of remembrance, having once been a slave trade outpost. On the other side of the plateau, the wild Madeleine islands are protected by a national park.

Day 2 MAIO ISLAND, BIJAGOS

Some 20 kilometres off the coast of west Africa, the Bissau-Guinean archipelago of Bissagos is famous for its abundant biodiversity. The richness of its marine animal and plant life afforded it the status of Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO. Of the 88 islets and islands in the archipelago, only 23 are inhabited. At Maio, still called Chedia, and at Formosa, you can meet the Bissagos people and get to know their ancestral ways and customs. In this region, cut off from the rest of the world and secluded from Western influences, you'll discover how locals really live.

Day 3 CARACHE ISLAND, BIJAGOS & KERE, BIJAGOS

In the midst of a rich natural environment, you will enjoy a fascinating encounter with the Bijagos, who have been successful at taming their environment and preserving their ancestral way of life. Five villages provide a home for the island's few thousand inhabitants, who rely on a subsistence economy: they take from nature only what they need, they cultivate rice, breed chickens and pigs, fish on a small scale and use all the parts of the oil palm. Cob huts with thatched roofs are the traditional dwellings. Among other things, you will be able to enjoy a wonderful show of authentic traditional dancing.

The private island of Kere is an unspoiled Eden, a one-hectare (two-acre) stretch of tropical forest in the heart of the Bissagos Islands. One original feature of this island is that a small, sustainable and fair-trade ecotourism business was developed upon it. On the island's magnificent beach, a Frenchman has set up a business to show people around this exceptional natural environment or to take them out for some game fishing, particularly in search of tarpon, a fish weighing over a hundred kilos (220 pounds). The bungalows made from earth and straw blend into the idyllic setting and reflect the mindset of the islet's owner: authentic and respectful of nature and people.

Days 4 - 5 ORANGO ISLAND, BIJAGOS & UNO ISLAND, BIJAGOS

Some 20 kilometres off the coast of west Africa, the Bissau-Guinean archipelago of Bissagos is famous for its abundant biodiversity. The richness of its marine animal and



plant life afforded it the status of Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO: dolphins, green tortoises, monkeys, striped antelopes and hundreds of thousands of migrating birds find refuge here. Composed of five islands and several islets, Orango is the largest and most mysterious island in the archipelago. Its national park and marine protected area lie in the heart of the Biosphere Reserve. During your zodiac outings, you will set off to discover this preserved environment, home to the Bijogo people, the true custodians of this sanctuary.

Covered in beautiful savannah, paddy fields and lush forests, the island of Uno, or Ilha de Uno, is one of the most populated in the Bissagos archipelago. In its many villages, life follows the pace of the everyday scenes and traditions of the Bissago people. The lifestyle of these island people remains relatively untouched by colonial domination and external influences, and still honours animist beliefs and rites, such as the fanados, which are coming-of-age initiations for young men and women that involve them spending four months in the forest with the village elders. By sanctifying the natural environment, the islanders are protecting the archipelago's unique biodiversity.

Day 6 JOAO VIEIRA ISLAND, BIJAGOS & CAVALOS ISLAND, BIJAGOS

In the far south-east of the Bissagos Islands, Joao Vieira is a small unspoiled island in the Joao Vieira and Poilao Marine National Park. This park, where a number of sacred sites can be found, is home to a wonderful biodiversity. On the practically uninhabited island of Joao Vieira, the Bijagos have set up temporary camps for fishing or for collecting the fruit of oil palms. Like everywhere else in the archipelago, the local

population displays ingenuity to adapt to this incredible environment.

A UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, the island of Cavalos is the second-largest nesting site in West Africa. Here you will be able to observe many bird species, including terns, in particular near the freshwater lake. Take a stroll on the beach full of shells, stretching all the way around the island's 6-km (3.8-mile) circumference. Some rocks have mango trees growing on them, which just rise above the surface during high tide. The interior of the island, blanketed in palm trees and high grasses, is inhabited by a colony of wild pigs.

Day 7 BOLAMA & CANHABAQUE, BIJAGOS

Bolama, the capital of Portuguese Guinea from the late 19th century to the end of the 1930s, is shrouded in the surreal and poetic atmosphere of a ghost town forgotten by time. Along the streets covered in ochre earth, the vestiges of neoclassical colonial buildings hint at what was once the sumptuous government palace or the governor's residence. Now neglected, this hard-to-reach natural harbour surrounded by mangrove swamps once served as an outpost for keeping a close eye on the Guinean population that had come to seek refuge on these remote islands of the Bissagos archipelago to escape their colonisers.

Canhabaque Island, also known by the name Roxa, is covered in lush vegetation and boasts pretty beaches alternating with rocky formations. The first island in the archipelago to be inhabited, it is today home to a community of around 2,500



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inhabitants, spread across various tabancas (rural villages). Long closed to tourism, it is considered the most traditional island in the whole archipelago in terms of customs and lifestyle. It competes with Caravela for the reputation of the most beautiful island. It has an animist and matrilineal society; women are highly predominant in the management and maintenance of balance in the tabancas.

Day 8 CARAVELA ISLAND, BIJAGOS

Dotted with authentic and wild landscapes, the Bissagos archipelago is a constellation of islands covered in savannah, forests of palm trees, mangrove trees, silk-cotton trees, baobabs and, in large part, mangrove swamps. From the island of Caravela, you will be able to set out in a Zodiac® dinghy to explore the mangrove and observe the African grey hornbill, the palm-nut vulture, the kingfisher, the weaverbird and some of the many species that fly to this region each year. It is the second most important site for migratory birds in West Africa, after Banc d'Arguin in Mauritania: herons, curlews, red-chested swallows. In full immersion, far from the beaten track, your discovery of the archipelago will take on an air of adventure.

Day 9 DAKAR

On the tip of the African continent, the buzzing capital of Senegal stretches along the narrow peninsula of Cape Verde. You may be overwhelmed by its sheer size, but Dakar will win you over with its richly diverse districts, appealing cultural scene and rich natural surroundings. In the historic centre, you'll enjoy the pell-mell of colours and tasty delights in Kermel market. Far

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Please Note:

Itineraries are subject to change.



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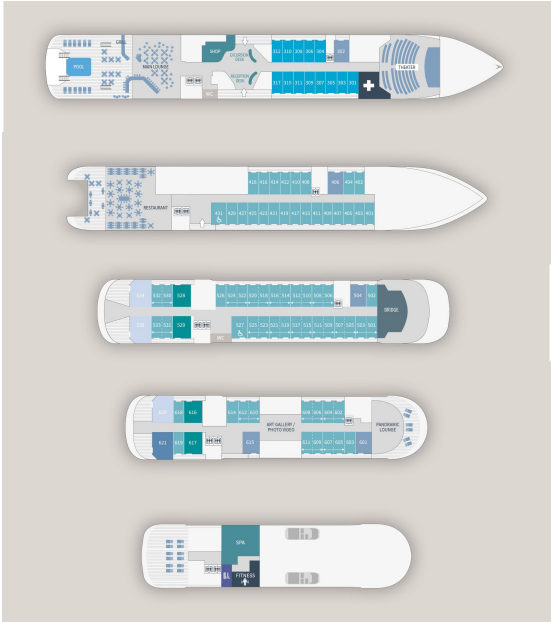
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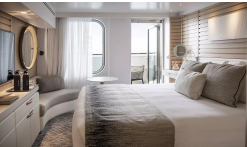
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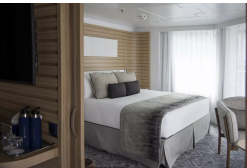
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