

AFRICA · DESERT · WILDLIFE · ADVENTURE · OFF THE BEATEN PATH

 Chad

Chad is one of Africa's least-visited countries, and its sights are on an epic scale: the sandstone arches and canyons of the Ennedi Massif, the desert lakes of Ounianga deep in the Sahara, and Zakouma, where elephant herds have recovered from poaching. Almost every visit is an organised expedition with a specialist operator, and it is priced accordingly.

 **The UK Foreign Office (FCDO) advises against all travel to parts of Chad.**
Read the latest FCDO travel advice before planning a trip. Your travel insurance may be invalid if you travel against FCDO advice.
FCDO advice last updated 6 August 2026.

 CAPITAL N'Djamena	 CURRENCY Central African CFA franc (XAF) £1 ≈ FCFA 781	 LANGUAGE Chadian Arabic, French Sara	 BEST TIME Nov–Mar
 DAILY BUDGET £70–£550 £££ Expensive	 PLUGS Type C, D, E, F 220V · adapter needed	 FLIGHT FROM LONDON 10h 30m via Paris or Addis Ababa ~£700–£1,150 return	 TIME ZONE UTC+1 standard time

Chad straddles the Sahara and the Sahel: a vast, landlocked country whose north is sand sea and volcanic mountains and whose south is wooded savannah watered by the Chari and Logone rivers. Visitors come for two things. Zakouma National Park, in the south-east, is reached by charter flight or a long drive from N'Djamena for game drives among elephants, buffalo and Kordofan giraffe. The north is a separate expedition of one to two weeks by 4x4, crossing the Ennedi Massif's arches and gueltas towards the lakes of Ounianga and camping wild under some of the clearest skies in Africa.

Nothing here is cheap or casual. Tourism infrastructure is minimal outside N'Djamena's business hotels and Zakouma's camps, permits are typically needed for travel and photography, and distances are huge, so specialist operators handle logistics, guides and paperwork. Expect long days on rough tracks, simple bush camps and frequent checkpoints. The payoff is solitude: you may see no other travellers for days in the Ennedi, and Zakouma's dry-season buffalo herds can number in the thousands. It suits experienced Africa travellers with a generous budget and flexible plans; read the FCDO travel advice before committing to anything.

Top 5 highlights

1

WILDLIFE

Zakouma National Park

Once devastated by ivory poachers, Zakouma has been managed by African Parks since 2010 and its elephant herds are growing again. Dry-season game drives reveal lions, huge buffalo herds, Kordofan giraffe and spectacular birdlife around shrinking pools.

2

NATURE

Ennedi Massif

A UNESCO-listed sandstone plateau in the north-east, eroded into arches, pillars and canyons. The Aloba Arch, one of the world's tallest natural arches, and thousands of ancient rock paintings of cattle and camels are the stand-outs.

3

NATURE

Guelta d'Archei

A deep, shaded waterhole in an Ennedi canyon where camel herds come to drink each day. It shelters one of the last relict populations of crocodiles in the Sahara, survivors from a time when the desert was green.

4

NATURE

Lakes of Ounianga

A UNESCO-listed chain of eighteen lakes in the hyper-arid Sahara, fed by ancient groundwater and coloured in shades from deep blue to green. They lie in two groups, Ounianga Kebir and Ounianga Serir, days from the nearest city.

5

ADVENTURE

Tibesti Mountains

The Sahara's highest range, a volcanic massif topped by Emi Koussi at 3,415 m, with vast calderas such as the Trou au Natron. Reaching it requires a long, fully supported expedition and careful planning.

Biggest cities

LARGEST CITY

N'Djamena

≈ 1.5 million people

The capital sits where the Chari meets the Logone, opposite Cameroon. It is a functional base rather than a destination, but the Grand Marché and riverside fish grills fill a day.

2ND LARGEST CITY

Moundou

≈ 200,000 people

Chad's second city and the economic hub of the greener south, built on cotton and home to the brewery that makes Gala beer; few visitors come, but it shows a very different Chad.

3RD LARGEST CITY

Abéché

≈ 150,000 people

The old capital of the Ouaddaï sultanate in the east, with mud-brick lanes and a busy market; today it is chiefly a humanitarian hub and a staging post for travel in the east.

Chad has not held a census since 2009, so these are rough estimates. Abéché and Sarh were almost level at that census (about 98,000 and 97,000), and either may now rank third.

When to go to Chad

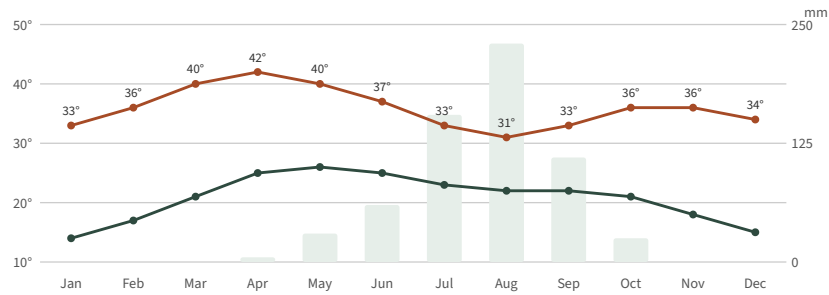
Best time: **Nov–Mar**.



■ Best ■ Good ■ Mixed ■ Poor

Average climate in N'Djamena

— High °C — Low °C — Rain (mm)



Festivals & events

Aug **Independence Day**
Chad marks independence from France on 11 August 1960 with parades in N'Djamena; it falls in the rainy season, so pair it only with a city stay.

Sep–Oct **Gerewol**
Wodaabe herders gather at the end of the rains for days of dancing, in which young men paint their faces and compete to be chosen by women. Specialist operators run trips from N'Djamena.

How much does Chad cost?

SHOESTRING £70 per person / day ≈ FCFA 54,657 hostels, street food, buses	MID-RANGE £220 per person / day ≈ FCFA 171,778 3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis	COMFORTABLE £550 per person / day ≈ FCFA 429,444 4-star+, guided trips, private transfers
--	--	--

Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

Food to try

Daraba

A thick southern stew of okra, tomato, aubergine and sweet potato, enriched with peanut butter and usually eaten with boule.

Boule (aiysh)

A stiff porridge of millet or sorghum, shaped into a mound and torn by hand to scoop up okra or meat sauces; Chad's everyday staple.

Karkanji

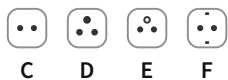
A deep-red infusion of hibiscus flowers, sweetened and often spiced with ginger or cloves, served chilled from street stalls as relief from the heat.

Getting around

There is no railway and scheduled domestic flights are scarce, so visitors rely on operators. Zakouma's camps arrange charter flights or long road transfers from N'Djamena, and trips to the north use convoys of 4x4s with drivers, cooks and guides. Buses and bush taxis run between the main towns. In N'Djamena, shared taxis and motorbike taxis are cheap; agree the fare before setting off.

Practical information

PLUGS & VOLTAGE



220V — bring a UK-to-C/D/E/F adapter

DIALLING CODE

+235

TAP WATER

Not safe — drink bottled or treated water

TIPPING

Not expected in local eateries; in hotels and restaurants round up or add about 10%, and tip drivers, cooks and guides at the end of an expedition.

ETIQUETTE

Never photograph soldiers, government buildings, airports or bridges, and ask before photographing people. Dress modestly, greet elders first, use your right hand, and allow time for lengthy greetings before getting down to business.

MAIN AIRPORTS

N'Djamena International Airport (NDJ), N'Djamena

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Ambulance and fire: **1212**

Police: **2020**

Source: FCDO “Getting help”

TIME ZONE

UTC+1 (standard time)

DRIVING

On the right

Visas & entry for Chad

Shown for a British passport.

Visa required — apply before you go

You must have a visa to visit Chad.

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

Health & vaccinations



See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

Hepatitis A

Tetanus

Typhoid

SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

Chikungunya

Dengue

Hepatitis B

Measles

Meningococcal disease

Polio

Rabies

Tuberculosis

Yellow fever

YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

A yellow fever certificate is only required if you arrive from (or transit through) a country with yellow fever risk — not if you fly direct from the UK. There is a risk of yellow fever in parts of the country — vaccination may be advised.

MALARIA

High risk of malaria

- There is a high risk of malaria in Chad: antimalarial tablets recommended.
-

Public holidays in Chad

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

Sun 1 Nov 2026	All Saints' Day
Sat 28 Nov 2026	Republic Day
Tue 1 Dec 2026	Freedom and Democracy Day
Fri 25 Dec 2026	Christmas Day
Fri 1 Jan 2027	New Year's Day
Mon 8 Mar 2027	International Women's Day
Tue 9 Mar 2027	Eid al-Fitr (date may shift)
Mon 29 Mar 2027	Easter Monday
Sat 1 May 2027	Labour Day
Sun 16 May 2027	Eid al-Adha (date may shift)
Wed 11 Aug 2027	Independence Day
Sat 14 Aug 2027	Prophet's Birthday (date may shift)

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

Useful phrases in French

ENGLISH	FRENCH	SAY IT
Hello	Bonjour	bon-ZHOOR
Thank you	Merci	mair-SEE
Please	S'il vous plaît	seel voo PLAY
Excuse me	Excusez-moi	ex-KOO-zay MWAH
How much is this?	C'est combien ?	say kom-BYAN

Know before you go

- Bring euros in cash: the CFA franc is pegged to the euro at 655.957, euros change easily, and card payments and working ATMs are scarce outside N'Djamena's top hotels.
- Photography usually requires a permit, which your operator can arrange, and pointing a camera at anything official can land you in serious trouble; when in doubt, put it away.
- Book through an operator with real experience in Chad, check the FCDO travel advice, and build in spare days: flights, permits and desert crossings rarely run to schedule.