

AFRICA · BEACHES · CULTURE · FOOD · NIGHTLIFE · OFF THE BEATEN PATH

Ivory Coast

Côte d'Ivoire combines Abidjan, one of West Africa's most cosmopolitan cities, with palm-fringed Atlantic beaches, rainforest where chimpanzees crack nuts with stones, and Yamoussoukro's Basilica of Our Lady of Peace, which Guinness lists as the world's largest church. Tourism is still modest, so travel here takes French, patience and a decent budget.

 **The UK Foreign Office (FCDO) advises against all travel to parts of Ivory Coast.**
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 29 May 2026.

 CAPITAL Yamoussoukro	 CURRENCY West African CFA franc (XOF) £1 ≈ FCFA 781	 LANGUAGE French, Dioula Baoulé	 BEST TIME Dec–Mar
 DAILY BUDGET £45–£220 ££ Moderate	 PLUGS Type C, E 220V · adapter needed	 FLIGHT FROM LONDON 9h 30m via Paris, Brussels or Casablanca ~£550–£950 return	 TIME ZONE UTC+0 standard time

Côte d'Ivoire — the government prefers the French name — divides into a humid, lagoon-laced south, the forested west around Man and Taï, and dry savannah in the north, where Senufo craft villages surround Korhogo. Abidjan, the economic capital, is where almost every trip starts. Most visitors combine the city with the beaches of Assinie and the UNESCO-listed colonial quarter of Grand-Bassam, then take the motorway north to Yamoussoukro's basilica. Those with more time continue to Bouaké and Korhogo, or head west to the green hills and mask traditions of Man.

Abidjan feels big, ambitious and expensive, with Plateau's towers, lagoon bridges and a nightlife soundtracked by coupé-décalé and zouglou at open-air maquis restaurants. Beyond the south-east, tourist infrastructure thins quickly, so many travellers hire a local driver. French is essential and costs run higher than in most neighbouring countries. Few Western holidaymakers visit, which means curiosity rather than hustle in most places. People are often surprised by the quality of the main roads and by the sheer power of the Atlantic surf, which makes many ocean beaches unsafe for swimming.

Top 5 highlights

- 1

SACRED SITE

Basilica of Our Lady of Peace

Completed in 1989 in President Houphouët-Boigny's home town, this basilica modelled on St Peter's in Rome is listed by Guinness as the world's largest church. Its dome and vast expanses of French stained glass rise improbably above Yamoussoukro.
- 2

HISTORY

Grand-Bassam

The first colonial capital, abandoned after a yellow fever epidemic at the end of the 19th century, keeps crumbling arcaded merchant houses in its UNESCO-listed Quartier France, plus a costume museum and a long beach. An easy day trip from Abidjan.

3

BEACH

Assinie

A narrow sand strip between lagoon and ocean east of Grand-Bassam, lined with weekend villas and boutique hotels. Swim in the calm lagoon rather than the Atlantic, where currents are dangerous.

4

WILDLIFE

Taï National Park

One of West Africa's largest remaining blocks of primary rainforest, UNESCO-listed and home to pygmy hippos and chimpanzees famous for using stones to crack nuts. Visits must be arranged in advance through the park authority or a specialist operator.

5

NATURE

Man and the Dent de Man

Green hills ring the western city of Man, known for the tooth-shaped Dent de Man peak, a forest waterfall at La Cascade and Dan masked dances. Villages towards Danané string bridges of woven liana across rivers.

Biggest cities

LARGEST CITY

Abidjan

≈ 5.6 million people

The economic capital sprawls around the Ébrié lagoon: Plateau's skyscrapers, Treichville's markets, Cocody's restaurants and the rainforest of Banco National Park, all within one city.

2ND LARGEST CITY

Bouaké

≈ 830,000 people

The second city and heart of Baoulé country, known for its huge central market. Mostly a stopover on the road north, but a lively one.

3RD LARGEST CITY

Korhogo

≈ 440,000 people

Capital of Senufo country in the savannah north. Visit nearby craft villages such as Waraniéné for weaving and Fakaha for painted Korhogo cloth.

Ranked by urban-area population where available. Figures are rounded estimates, and sources define city limits differently, so rankings of similar-sized cities can vary.

When to go to Ivory Coast

Best time: **Dec–Mar**.

Jan

Feb

Mar

Apr

May

Jun

Jul

Aug

Sep

Oct

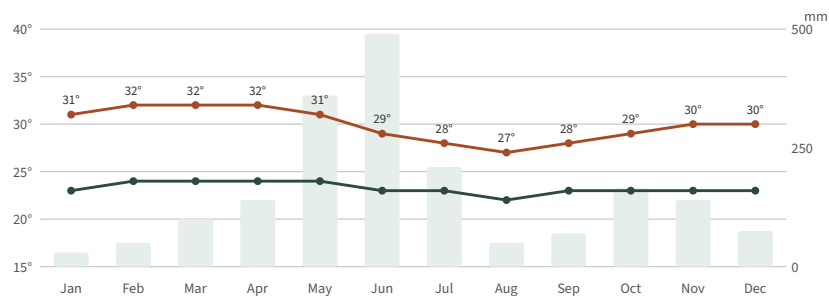
Nov

Dec

■ Best ■ Good ■ Mixed ■ Poor

Average climate in Abidjan

— High °C — Low °C ■ Rain (mm)



Festivals & events

Apr–May	FEMUA Founded by the band Magic System, the Anoumabo urban music festival brings major African stars to Abidjan for a week of concerts each spring.
Oct–Nov	Abissa The N'zima people's week-long festival in Grand-Bassam, combining drumming, dance and a tradition of public mockery in which grievances are aired and then forgiven.

How much does Ivory Coast cost?

SHOESTRING £45 per person / day ≈ FCFA 35,136 hostels, street food, buses	MID-RANGE £100 per person / day ≈ FCFA 78,081 3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis	COMFORTABLE £220 per person / day ≈ FCFA 171,778 4-star+, guided trips, private transfers
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Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

Food to try

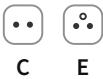
Attiéké with grilled fish Fermented cassava couscous with a gentle sourness, served with grilled fish or chicken, chopped tomato, onion and fiery chilli.	Kedjenou Chicken or guinea fowl slow-cooked with vegetables in a sealed clay pot, shaken rather than stirred so it steams in its own juices.	Alloco Ripe plantain fried in palm oil and served with chilli sauce and onions; an evening street-food staple, often eaten with grilled fish.
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Getting around

Air-conditioned coaches run from Abidjan to Yamoussoukro, Bouaké, Korhogo, San-Pédro and Man; stick to established companies. In Abidjan, orange metered taxis, shared woro-woro taxis, lagoon water-buses and ride-hailing apps such as Yango get you around. Domestic flights reach Korhogo and San-Pédro. Hiring a car with a driver is the easiest way to reach parks and remote villages.

Practical information

PLUGS & VOLTAGE



220V — bring a UK-to-C/E adapter

DIALLING CODE

+225

TAP WATER

Not safe — drink bottled or treated water

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Ambulance: **185**

Fire: **180**

Police: **110, 111 or 170**

Source: FCDO “Getting help”

TIME ZONE

UTC+0 (standard time)

DRIVING

On the right

TIPPING

Not traditionally expected, but 5–10% in upmarket restaurants and small tips for drivers, guides and hotel porters are appreciated.

ETIQUETTE

Greet people properly before any request and shake hands with the right hand. Ask before photographing people, and never photograph military sites, police or government buildings.

MAIN AIRPORTS

Félix-Houphouët-Boigny International Airport (ABJ), Abidjan

Visas & entry for Ivory Coast

Shown for a British passport.

Visa required — apply before you go

You must have a visa to enter Côte d’Ivoire.

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
- Yellow fever

SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

- Chikungunya
- Dengue
- Hepatitis B
- Measles
- Meningococcal disease
- Polio
- Rabies
- Tuberculosis

YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

A yellow fever vaccination certificate is required for all travellers (usually over 9 months or 1 year old). 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 Côte d’Ivoire: antimalarial tablets recommended.

Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

Public holidays in Ivory Coast

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
Sun 15 Nov 2026	National Peace Day
Fri 25 Dec 2026	Christmas Day
Fri 1 Jan 2027	New Year's Day
Sat 6 Mar 2027	Day after Night of Power

Tue 9 Mar 2027	Eid al-Fitr
Mon 29 Mar 2027	Easter Monday
Sat 1 May 2027	Labour Day
Thu 6 May 2027	Ascension Day
Sun 16 May 2027	Eid al-Adha
Mon 17 May 2027	Day after the Eid al-Adha · Pentecost Monday
Sat 7 Aug 2027	Independence Day
Sat 14 Aug 2027	Day after Prophet's Birthday
Sun 15 Aug 2027	Assumption Day

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	<i>bon-ZHOOR</i>
Thank you	Merci	<i>mair-SEE</i>
Please	S'il vous plaît	<i>seel voo PLAY</i>
Excuse me	Excusez-moi	<i>ex-koo-zay MWAH</i>
How much is this?	C'est combien ?	<i>say kom-BYAN</i>

Know before you go

Côte d'Ivoire requires proof of yellow fever vaccination on arrival, so carry your certificate, and check current entry rules on the FCDO travel advice before you fly.

Carry CFA francs in cash outside Abidjan; card acceptance is patchy. Locals pay by mobile money such as Wave and Orange Money, and euros are easy to exchange.

The Atlantic has powerful currents along much of the coast. Swim in lagoons, at guarded beaches, or only where locals confirm it is safe.

Visa, health and safety rules change. Before you book or travel, check the FCDO travel advice (gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) and TravelHealthPro (travelhealthpro.org.uk). Costs are estimates. © 2026 Pick My Trip.