



Above: Tiwai Island



Above: Outamba Kilimi National Park

## Useful Information

**Time Zone** Sierra Leone is on GMT all year around.

**Climate** Sierra Leone has two seasons, the rainy season and the dry season. The rainy season starts in May and ends in October, while the dry season is between November and April.

**Travel** Sierra Leone is approximately six flying hours away by direct flight so as a European visitor you have the luxury of arriving in a different world without the discomfort of jet lag. It is a world of tropical seas, pristine beaches, beautiful scenery and authentic African culture.

### Health Requirements

A vaccination certificate for yellow fever is required. It is advisable to take anti-malaria tablets and consult your doctor or Travel Agent on what other precautions may be advised, from time to time. Bring plenty of mosquito repellent.

### Travel Insurance

It is advisable for visitors to take out comprehensive travel insurance covering, injury, illness, death, delayed, lost or damaged baggage and personal belongings.

### Entry Document and Customs Regulations

All visitors are required to carry a valid passport. With the exception of citizens from ECOWAS states, visitors must also carry a valid visa for entry. Visas can be secured at Sierra Leone Missions Abroad. The National Tourist Board and handling agents such as VSL Travel, KTI Travel and Tours, IPC Travel and Tours and others also assist in facilitating this process.

### Courtesies/Social Etiquette

Appointments must be made in advance. It is customary to shake hands on meeting and when leaving. Business cards are exchanged after introduction. Visitors should be respectful of local conventions and care should be taken to respect local, religious customs and practices. Goods and Service Tax (GST) in restaurants and hotels is 15%.

### How to Dress

Sierra Leoneans like to dress well especially for official occasions. Formal wear is appropriate for official engagements. Otherwise casual, lightweight and informal clothing is appropriate during the day and evening time and cotton is recommended. Bring rain gear for the rainy season and a light sweater or jacket during the harmattan period from November to February. Don't forget beachwear, comfortable walking shoes and sports equipment.

### What to Eat

Enjoy the culinary delights of charming restaurants with the warm Atlantic breeze and illuminated by the African moon. From local African specialties to international cuisine, there is a restaurant to cater for everybody's needs. (See our Directory for details).

### Where to Stay

Good hotels and guest houses guarantee visitors excellent services, whether you are in Sierra Leone for business or pleasure. (See our Directory for details)

### Conference Facilities

Many hotels have conference halls for hosting workshops, seminars, meetings, parties, wedding receptions etc. Bigger halls can host around 1,500 people. (See our Directory for details)

### Airport Service Charge

All passengers must pay an airport service charge. For more details contact your travel agent.

### Transfer to/from the Airport

Lungi International Airport is the major entry point and is located across the Sierra Leone River from the capital, Freetown. Due to its location, there are various transfer facilities - water taxi, speed boat and hovercraft services operate directly to Aberdeen and the ferries cross to Kissy on the east and Government Wharf in the centre of the city. Helicopter services will soon commence operations.

### Driving

In Sierra Leone they drive on the right. An International driving license is required to drive in Sierra Leone.

### Electricity

220 - 240 volts AC, 50Hz

### Currency

The Leone (Le) is the official currency in Sierra Leone. Leones are available in coins of 50, 100 and 500, and bills of 1000, 2000, 5000 and 10,000. Foreign currencies can be exchanged at any of the commercial banks, foreign exchange bureaus and hotels. Credits cards (American Express, Master Card and Visa) can be used to settle bills in some hotels and restaurants. Please confirm with management before any transaction.

### Official/Business Hours

Monday to Friday: 8.00 - 17.00 hours

### Banks

Banking hours in Sierra Leone are between 8:30 - 3:30 pm from Monday to Friday. Some banks operate on Saturdays from 8:30 to 12:00 noon.

### Communications

The main phone service providers are Sierratel, Comium, Airtel, and Africell who offer GSM services, that are mainly prepaid. GSM sim card packs and recharging cards are available at authorized dealer shops all over the country. There are also a wide range of internet providers so shop around for the best deal.

### Photography

Always ask permission before taking photos of nationals and private or state property. In most cases the locals will be happy to oblige for a photo and especially if you promise to send them a copy of the picture.

### Entertainment

Sierra Leoneans know how to have fun so don't miss a taste of the nightlife. Get your dancing shoes on and get ready to boogie. There are many nightclubs in Freetown and larger towns and cities that play a great blend of African, European, West Indies and hip hop music. There are also many casinos to immerse yourself in.

### Official Holidays

Sierra Leone's Government celebrates Islamic, Christian and National Holidays. Holidays marked with asterisk (\*) are lunar and change every year.

Independence Day - 27th of April

Good Friday and Easter Monday\*

New Year's Day - January 1st

Christmas Day - 25th December

Eid-UI-Fitri\*

Boxing Day - 26th December

Moulid Ul Nabi\*

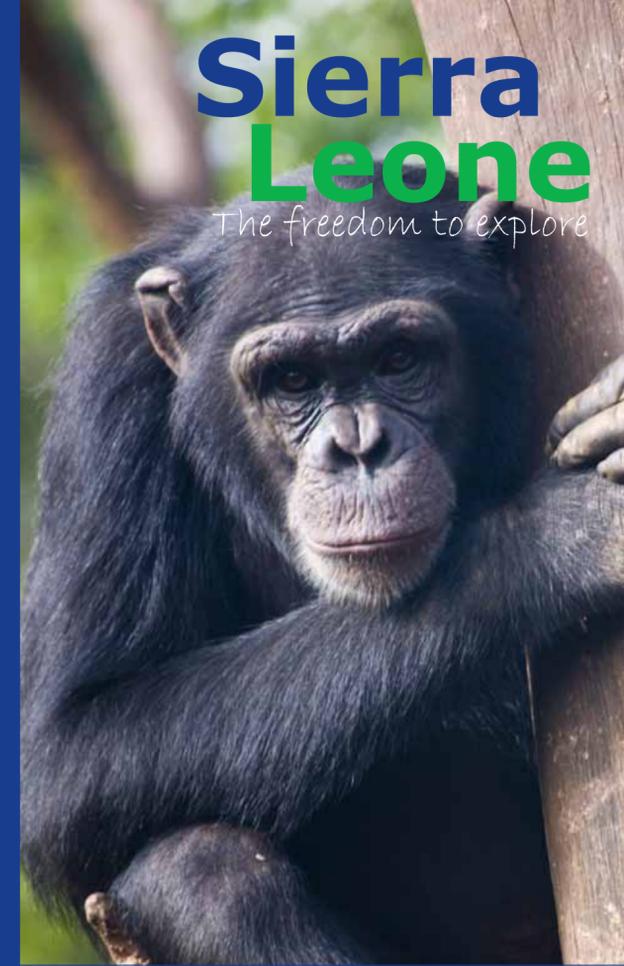
Eld Ul Adha\*

Below: Entrance to Gola Forest



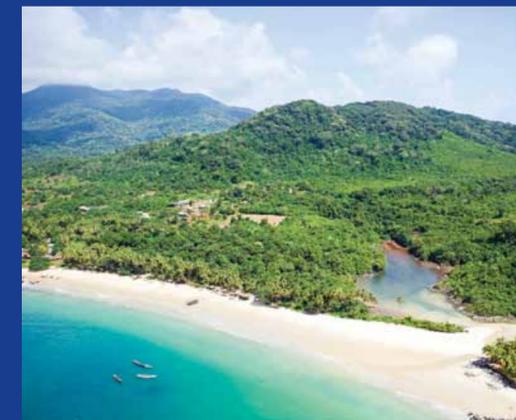
# Sierra Leone

The freedom to explore



## Handy Guide

Experience the breathtaking natural beauty of Sierra Leone.



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Supported by the Enhanced Integrated Framework Tier 2



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Photography Caroline Thomas  
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# Sierra Leone

**Sierra Leone is one of West Africa’s most seductive destinations. Its contrast of palm-fringed beaches, breathtaking mountains, vibrant culture and tropical rainforests offer an exciting and inspiring adventure in undiscovered Africa.**

## Location

Sierra Leone is nestled between Guinea and Liberia on the south-west coast (the 'hump') of Africa, 900 kilometres north of the equator. It covers an area of 73,326 square kilometres (27,925 square miles), including some 360 kilometres (212 miles) of North Atlantic Ocean coastline offering some of the best beaches on the continent.

## Population

The population of Sierra Leone is 5.6 million and is home to 16 ethnic groups.

## Political Status

Sierra Leone operates a multi-party democracy with a stable political climate that is tolerant and fosters peaceful co-existence amongst its citizens.

## Religion

The two dominant religions are Islam and Christianity. Sierra Leone is a leading example of religious tolerance.

## Language

While English is the official language, Krio is the lingua franca, . Sierra Leoneans will be thrilled to hear a visitor use some basic Krio words such as: 'kushéh' meaning hello and 'tenki' - thank you.

## Culture

Sierra Leoneans have a unique blend of cultural traditions. They are vibrant, exuberant and expressive people and their cultural values, traditions and belief systems are widely practiced and respected.



Above: Sunset at Lumley beach



Above: Village scene. Below: Arts & crafts



# Relaxation

## Beaches

Relax on Lumley beach in Freetown, explore the gold sand beaches of Lakka, Hamilton and Sussex, or enjoy the clean white stretches of palm-lined beach at River No. 2 and Tokeh. Black Johnson is a black-sand beach followed by Bureh Town, Kent, York and Mama Beach. Walk along deserted stretches of idyllic palm tree-lined beach, sunbathe, frolic in the ocean or, for the more adventurous, go surfing or take a boat trip.

## River No.2 – Community Based Eco-tourism

River No.2 is one of Sierra Leone’s finest white sand beaches backed by luscious tree-covered mountains that slope down to the sea. There is solar-powered accommodation and a restaurant, all run entirely by the community as a tourist facility. All proceeds from tourist revenue go into a community fund for development.

## Fishing

Sport fishing is an ideal pastime in Sierra Leone. Thanks to the rich Atlantic Ocean where Barracuda, Bonita, Salmon, Lobster, Crab and Catfish are plentiful. Join the local fishermen in popular fishing villages such as Lumley Beach, Murray Town, Funkia, Tombo, and Konakri-Dee to observe how they do it. Charter a boat from any of the beaches to go out on a fishing trip.

## Islands

Sierra Leone has some of the most un-spoilt and exotic islands in the World. Covered with green jungle and skirted by white and golden sands, their breath-taking scenery and relaxed island vibe are something special to be experienced.



Above: River No. 2 Beach. Below: Chain fishing



# Sightseeing

## Historical Sites

### Bunce Island

Bunce Island is located at the mouth of the Sierra Leone River, 18km from Freetown and is the site of a former slave castle built by the British in the 18th century. In the 17th and 18th centuries the Island was controlled by the British who sent thousands of slaves from there to Europe and the Americas. See the old fort wall, the slave quarters, the ruined fort, the ancillary buildings, the grave sites and the remains of the canons.

### Mountain Villages

Villages such as Regent, Bathurst, Leicester and Gloucester, situated along the hills overlooking the city, are well worth a visit. Interesting Krio-style houses (wooden board walls), some dating from the early 19th century, still remain intact. From Regent walk through Krio villages to Charlotte Falls or climb Sugar Loaf Mountain, one of the highest points on the peninsula. Contact the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone for assistance with planning hiking routes.

For a taste of rural Sierra Leone, a trip to see some of the villages in the provinces is a must. Stop at any village on the journey 'upline' to experience the genuine warmth and hospitality of Sierra Leoneans and gain an insight into their way of life. Venture to Rogbonko Village Retreat near Magburaka for a clean comfortable accommodation in a beautiful village in the rain forest.

## Freetown

Freetown is a vibrant and energetic city with colourful markets and a maze of streets and alleyways. Don't miss the original Fourah Bay College ruins (which earned Sierra Leone the title of 'the Athens of Africa'), Big Market (a crafts market), the Cotton Tree (a spectacular and iconic cotton tree in the centre of Freetown), the National Museum, and the Sierra Leone Railway Museum.



Above: Turtle Island. Below: Wara Wara mountain



Below: Hippos at Outamba Kilimi National Park



Above: Slave fort remains, Bunce Island



Above: Bathurst village. Below: Central Freetown



# Adventure

## Mountains and Hills

Sierra Leone offers great opportunities for walking and hiking. Climb Bintumani Mountain, walk in the Tingi Hills or take a dip in Lake Sonfon. The Bumbuna Falls, with its huge volume of water rushing over rocks into a pool below, are a dramatic and inspiring sight. There are also many forest paths and walks in the area and hiking routes into the Sula Mountains.

### Wara Wara Mountains in Kabala

The Wara Wara mountains are a magical place and an ideal spot for the adventurous at heart. Located in Koinadugu District around five hours drive from Freetown, Wara Wara offers endless possibilities for interesting hikes and walks in the hills that spread out to the north-west of Kabala. Ask your host, hotel, or handling agent or contact the National Tourist Board to arrange a unique experience to this enchanting place.

## Wildlife

There is a wonderful diversity of wildlife in Sierra Leone with a total of twenty-one protected areas. The following are some of the most compelling and special places:

### Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary

Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary is situated in 100 acres of rainforest within the Western Area Reserve about 30 minutes drive from Freetown and is home to more than 100 orphaned and rescued chimpanzees. The sanctuary is a leading advocate for wildlife and habitat conservation in Sierra Leone. Take one of their scheduled tours to view the chimps or stay overnight in one of their beautiful self-catering eco-lodges surrounded by pristine rainforest.



Above: Women selling local food. Below: Banana Island



Below: One of Sierra Leone's many rare butterflies



### Outamba Kilimi National Park

Located north-east of Kamakwie in the Bombali district, Outamba Kilimi National Park contains a mixed landscape of hills, grasslands, rainforests and rivers to be explored on foot or by boat. Track rare elephants and buffaloes through dense bush, hire a canoe and observe hippos relaxing in their pools, or listen to the songs of the rich bird-life (over 100 species) and the alarm calls of the various primates while silently paddling along the river. Simple accommodation is available on site. Make enquiries before you travel.

### Tiwai Island Wildlife Sanctuary

Tiwai Island is part of the Upper Guinea Rainforest and is situated 50km south of Kenema on the Moa River. The island is covered in rainforest and is host to eleven primates making it the second most densely populated area for primates in the world including the rare Black and White Colobus, the Olive Colobus, Diana Monkeys and Chimpanzees. The island is also host to a large variety of other rare and endemic species including 135 known bird species and the elusive Pygmy Hippopotamus. Simple accommodation is available on the island.

### Gola Rainforest National Park

Some 40km east of Kenema is the Gola Rainforest National Park. The forest is home to the most interesting and spectacular diversity of wildlife in West Africa including over 330 bird species, over 650 species of butterfly and 49 species of mammals including over 300 Chimpanzees. It is also home to the pygmy hippopotamus and a small forest elephant population. Accommodation is available on site in local community guesthouses.

### Lake Sonfon

Surrounded by hills, forest and savannah, Lake Sonfon is in Koinadugu district, in the north of Sierra Leone, and serves as a water source for different species of birds. More than 110 bird species have been identified in the area including the Emerald Starling (native to Sierra Leone, Guinea and Ivory Coast) Herons and Egrets. No accommodation is available for overnight stays but visitors can stay in nearby Kabala.