

your Experience magazine

September 2012

Green Gambia

**Discovering
The Gambian interior**

**Experiencing the
slow pace of Sal**

The Gambia, Senegal &
The Islands of Cape Verde

**25
YEARS**

1987-2012
SERVING THE GAMBIA

Features

4 What's new

5 Images of The Gambia

View photographs of The Gambia and share yours via our Flickr group

6 25 years in The Gambia

How things have changed (and remained the same) over quarter of a century

8 Getting married in The Gambia

Coco Ocean's guest relations manager Mary organised her own big day

10 Green Gambia

Journalist Susan Grossman visits some of The Gambia's sustainable tourism projects

12 Discovering The Gambian interior

Cruising the river and driving through rural Gambia

14 Images of Senegal

View images of Senegal on our Flickr group

15 It's not all hard work!

Our Senegal Product Manager shares with us the wonderful 'day off' she had during her last visit to West Africa.

16 Images of Cape Verde

View wonderful photographs of the islands on our Flickr group

17 Experience the slower pace of Sal

Travel Channel's Petra Shepherd visits Cape Verde for the first time

19 What's Your Experience?

Earn £100 for your travel experiences....

front cover:

Santa Maria, Cape Verde by Heidi Page

opposite: Red billed hornbill, Senegal



Contributors



Mary Dymore-Brown

has lived and worked in The Gambia for 12 years. As Coco Ocean's wedding co-ordinator she has arranged many functions including her own earlier this year.



Susan Grossman

runs travel writing workshops and is a media trainer. www.susangrossman.co.uk Susan enjoyed discovering 'Green Gambia' for Real Travel Magazine earlier this year.



Peter & Elizabeth Stephens

first visited The Gambia around 7 years ago and have returned a number of times. This year they took an independent road trip through rural Gambia.



Alison Collins, our

Senegal Product Manager, visits West Africa at least once a year. Here she tells us about the wonderful day off she had during her last 'working' visit.



Petra Shepherd

joined Travel Channel in 1994; she has visited over 70 countries including The Gambia and Senegal. Read her opinion of her first trip to Cape Verde.



What's new

25
YEARS

1987-2012
SERVING THE GAMBIA



Mandina Lodges at Makasutu

Mandina Lodges receives...

The National Order of The Gambia award

Congratulations to Lawrence from the Mandina Lodges at Makasutu Forest who was recently presented with The National Order of The Gambia award from the President of The Gambia at a ceremony in July 22nd Square in Banjul. This is an important year for Makasutu: it is now 20 years since Lawrence and James discovered the site that would become home to Mandina Lodges, and it is also 10 years since The Gambia Experience started providing holidays to the lodges.

2 hotels receive TripAdvisor Certificate of Excellence

Hotel Morabeza in Cape Verde and Ngala Lodge in The Gambia have both recently received the TripAdvisor Award for Excellence. Ngala Lodge has also once again come out top in our customer holiday questionnaires – customers gave it the highest scores of any of our Luxury Collection properties last winter, receiving scores of 91% for location, 94% for room standards, 93% for maid service, 94% for meals and 96% for service provided by hotel staff.



Hotel Morabeza



Ngala Lodge

Sustainable tourism update – 25 year donations

To commemorate our 25th anniversary The Gambia Experience is giving away £25,000 worth of flights to charitable causes in The Gambia and we are also setting up a fund of £25,000 which will be donated to projects working to make a difference in the country. To find out more see pages 6 & 7 or go online at Gambia.co.uk/25years.

New tourism & culture minister Youssou Ndour

The singer Youssou Ndour has been appointed tourism and culture minister in the cabinet of new Senegalese President Macky Sall, sworn into power in April this year. We're hoping the new appointment will help boost tourism to this country, virtually undiscovered by British holidaymakers.

Join Chris Packham birdwatching in The Gambia

Once again TV presenter Chris Packham will be leading birdwatching tours in The Gambia; places are very limited so if you would like to be one of just a small group joining Chris and learning from his extensive knowledge please visit Gambia.co.uk/chrispackham or telephone 0845 330 4567.



The Gambia on Flickr

Dancing at Makasutu
by Pete Kendrick

One of many beautiful images from The Gambia
View more at: The Gambia Experience's Flickr group
[Flickr.com/groups/thegambiaexperience](https://www.flickr.com/groups/thegambiaexperience)

Celebrating 25 years in The Gambia some of our reps (who have all been with us for at least 10 of those years) look back on how The Gambia has changed and we announce some exciting news about how we will be celebrating this mile stone.

25 years in The Gambia



Buba J



Jatta



Karamo



LT

A word from our MD, Chris Rowles:

“The 2012-13 season will, remarkably, be our 25th year of arranging holidays to The Gambia and, although there have been many changes to the country in this time, the original appeal that led Stephen and Sandra Wilde to establish holidays to The Gambia remains. Many of our customers would agree with over 40% of our guests returning on a regular basis.

Upon reflection, our relationship with the country has developed and solidified throughout the 25 years and so much has changed. In the early days there was no tarmac on the roads, no streetlights, the airport was little more than a shack by a runway, and the resort areas barely existed at all. Yet in essence, the allure of The Gambia hasn't changed at all: its relative closeness to the UK, the beautiful climate, and most of all the friendliness and genuine welcome of The Gambian people.”

Donating £50,000 to good causes

To commemorate our 25 year anniversary The Gambia Experience is giving away £25,000 worth of flights to charities working in The Gambia plus has set up a fund of £25,000 which will be given to good causes working to make a positive difference in The Gambia. Both registered charities and non-registered sustainable projects can apply. The flights will be selected at random from all appropriate entries and there will be two draws – the closing date for the first is 30th October and the second will be 11th January. A panel including sustainable tourism expert Dick

Sisman will choose the successful projects and allocate the funds, the closing date for this is 17th December. Anyone interested in applying for either the flights or the funds can find out more and complete a short application form online at Gambia.co.uk/25years.

A word from our reps

What part of The Gambia are you from and do you still live there now?

Buba J: I come from a village call Bulock, it lies in the Foni Brefer, western region about 60 kilometres from Banjul. I don't live there any more due to my work but I still have a house there and my elder sister lives there.

Jatta: I come from Gunjur Town but now I live in a village called Kerr Sering, just a 10 minute walk from our office at the Senegambia Hotel.

LT: I come from Lamin Town which is within the Greater Banjul Area; I still live there with my family.

Karamo: I am from Sintet about 135 kilometres from Banjul. Now I live in Lamin.

What changes have you seen in The Gambia in the last 25 years?

Buba J: There is a rapid development of education meaning more schools from nursery to university have been created. When I was young, to go to high school we had to leave our home villages to move to the towns, but that is no longer the case, there are schools all over The Gambia. More girls are going to school today than

ever before and primary education is virtually free. There is also a university that is doing well in medicine, law, public health and other disciplines.

Jatta: The infrastructure of the country has improved – more roads have been built, more schools, health clinics, traffic lights have been introduced, the new airport was built and there are more supermarkets, restaurants and hotels.

LT: There is more access to information through local and foreign newspapers, television, radio stations as well as the introduction of internet and mobile phones.

What has remained the same during this time?

Buba J: The family social structure has not changed. We still maintain our extended family system which allows us to help one another. The level of poverty has not changed; people in the rural areas lack some basic things which we take for granted in the city.

LT: Despite infrastructure development a lot of things remain the same such as the religious tolerance and peace of the country.

Karamo: There are many things that have remained the same including people of different faiths inter-marrying and polygamous families, although the number has dropped.

What it is that you love about The Gambia?

Buba J: I love the simplicity and kindness of the Gambian people. If you live locally you will realise people share whatever they have with others.

Jatta: The weather, the peace and tranquillity of the country and the beautiful River Gambia.

LT: What I love about The Gambia is the food and the friendliness of people regardless of your tribal, ethnic or religious background.

Karamo: I love the extended family units, where everyone looks after and cares for one another.

What would you like to change about the country?

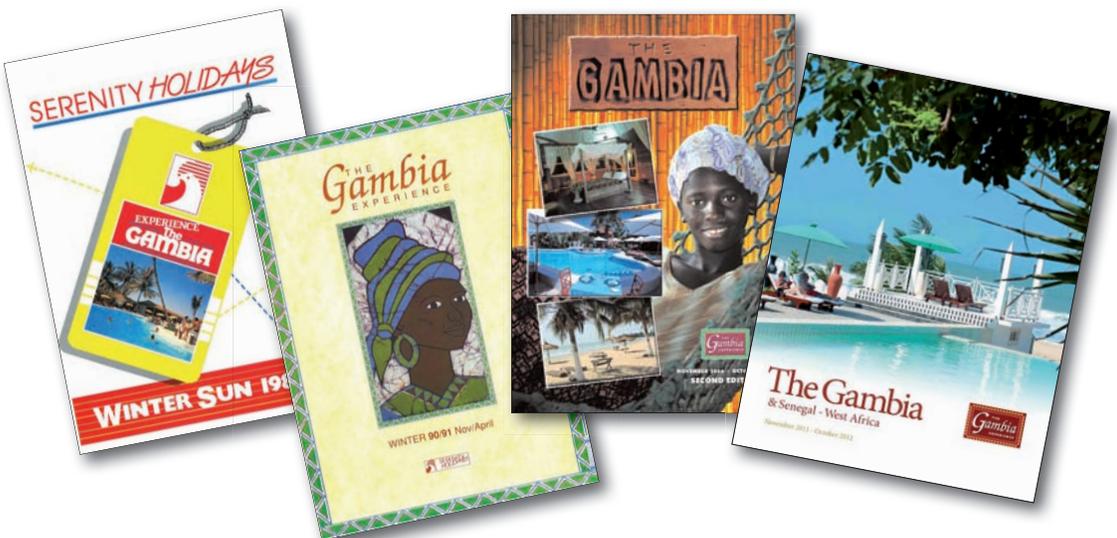
Buba J: I would like to see education to be free and compulsory for all and for each Gambian to have free medical attention. I would like tourism to develop beyond what it is now.

Jatta: Some attitudes have to change; some people are lazy and corrupt. We need to stop bumsters to attract more tourists throughout the year.

LT: I would like to change energy generation to be more sustainable and affordable as I believe it is essential to foster development for any developing country.

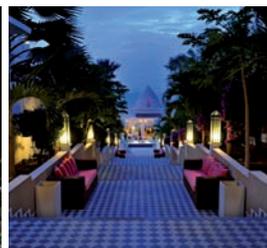
Karamo: I would like to change the high cost of living with more factories for production rather than relying on imported goods. At the end of the season there are a lot of fruits wasted so processing and preservation plants should be introduced to make sure they aren't wasted and are available all year round. A fish canning factory would also be very important in making The Gambia self sufficient.

below: a few of our brochure covers over the years



Coco Ocean's wedding co-ordinator Mary Dymore-Brown organises her own ceremony in The Gambia, of course there was only one choice for the location of her wedding.

Getting married in The Gambia



I came to The Gambia to work for The Coconut Residence 12 years ago, where I was initially employed on the front desk interacting with guests and, as time went by, also took over the reservations.

I naturally moved to Coco Ocean Resort & Spa when it opened in December 2008 and my role became even more important as repeat guests from The Coconut Residence relied on me to select the right room for their first visit to the new hotel.

Over the last 12 years being part of the team has been a wonderful experience and I still maintain as much contact as I can with my repeat guests, keeping an eye on the front desk and of course looking after the reservations. Over the years I have taken on many additional roles within the hotel, including wedding co-ordinator, arranging weddings from simple services for couples and their immediate family, to large parties of up to 1,200 people.

Of course when it came to my own wedding there was no question that it would be held at Coco Ocean Resort & Spa; I knew that the whole team would make a wonderful day for me and even though we wanted a simple wedding for family and friends we still managed to "acquire" 100 guests!

I knew straightaway that I wanted to have the wedding ceremony down at the Beach Club pool with the Atlantic Ocean in front of us. We had a special platform built that fitted over the pool so that all the guests sitting down the sides of the pool could see. We knew that the one problem we would not have to consider was rain on the day! So, following the brief ceremony, our guests mingled in the gardens with cocktails and canapés whilst photographs were taken.

We then had a lovely walk along the path, adjacent to the sea, to the Safran restaurant which had been beautifully decorated. The tables were all white, with ribbons, crystal

glasses and fresh white tropical flowers which smelt divine. After a glass of champagne, we had the speeches so that everyone could relax knowing that they were over; of course there were tears, particularly when Alan mentioned that the two most important men in my life were missing for the day – Jim, my father, who died some time

ago and Farid Bensouda (the owner of Coco Ocean) who due to unforeseen circumstances was not in the country.

Our wonderful wedding cake was then cut and taken away to be divided up for later. The sumptuous buffet had been laid out in the Ocean Bar with a whole variety of very English style dishes including a whole roast lamb and a roast pig on a spit.

“The Safran restaurant had been beautifully decorated. The tables were all white, with ribbons, crystal glasses and fresh white tropical flowers which smelt divine.”



Arranging a wedding at Coco Ocean Resort & Spa could not have been easier, I knew for certain that I only had to ask for something and it would be done – we only had one planning meeting and actually saw nothing until the day. It was clearly meant to be, just like making the decision to come and live here!



NEW wedding & honeymoon brochure

Our new brochure specialising in weddings in The Gambia and our favourite honeymoon locations in The Gambia, Senegal, Cape Verde, Corsica and Sardinia is available online now!

Gambia.co.uk/Weddings

Journalist & media trainer Susan Grossman travelled to The Gambia with daughter Savanna to discover what makes The Gambia “Green” and how the country has become a beacon for sustainable tourism initiatives.

Green Gambia



Mandina Lodges



Susan at Sifoe Kafo Farm



Ngala Lodge

The Gambia may be a traditional favourite with winter sun-seekers, but the country that was a British colony until 1965 is also a good example of how sustainable tourism can make a difference, with UK-funded initiatives currently helping build new schools, plant trees and improve the lives of local communities.

Tucked into the armpit of Francophile Senegal, Gambia is one of the world’s poorest countries, a skinny strip of scrubland 500km long by 50km wide with salt flats, bush and forest cut by a river that flows directly into the Atlantic. The 80km coastline is skimmed by long, pale sand beaches, largely empty but with small enclaves that have attracted European tourists for decades.

Intrigued by this multi-faceted country, I travelled inland to see the work of British visionary Lawrence Williams, winner of a UN Darwin Initiative Grant for demonstrating how responsible tourism can help eliminate poverty. Alongside running Mandina Lodges, a luxury retreat at Makasutu, he works tirelessly with local communities.

Into the bush

Like Katharine Hepburn in *The African Queen*, binoculars at the ready, I head up river from Mandina Lodges to the Ballabu Conservation Project, an unlikely setting for the

work of graffiti artists from around the world. Okay, my boat is a dugout canoe with a paddle, but the romance remains: white egrets noisily bickering in the baobabs, serrated-winged vultures blackly darkening the sky, a Goliath Heron with shoulder pads glares from a distant bank. Two women wade waist deep in the mangroves to harvest oysters that cling to the roots, using their canoes like baskets. And there it is, the guy on the beer bottles, a blue-breasted Kingfisher diving vertically into the water to claim his morning catch.

“Corrugated huts, trees and compound walls are painted with vivid scenes in a village where they still perform rituals under the giant cotton tree...”

Lawrence’s dream is to bring art classes to the children. So far he has persuaded well-known street artists to ‘decorate’ four bush villages as part of the Wide Open Walls community rural project. Corrugated huts, trees and compound walls are painted with vivid scenes in a village where they still perform rituals under the giant cotton tree, such as washing the naked bride

before her wedding. Back at Makasutu, Williams joins me for breakfast on the jetty. Clearly passionate about his work, he tells me his main aim is to show communities how to trade together as a cooperative.

There are three jungle lodges, one stilted lodge and four floating lodges, built upstream at Ballabu, and then towed down river and secured onto a pontoon. Sumptuous in décor, the only downside, for some, is the outdoor compost loos in some lodges and the nightly tympani of



— Susan planting fast-growing trees

jungle noises. TV naturalist Chris Packham uses Mandina as a base for annual bird watching tours every February – as well he might, since there are over 500 species to spot.

How tourism helps

UK tour operator The Gambia Experience has been working with the locals on sustainability for over 20 years. Since 1989 they have built, renovated and equipped 115 school projects, and visitors are encouraged to meet local children – donating much needed pencils.

I'm curious to see how initiatives work in practice. I meet farmers who now replant fast-growing varieties of tree including eucalyptus and cashew, and women who are crazy about a simple Mayan Turbo Stove made out of recycled car parts. It uses natural waste, like ground nut shells, to cut carbon emissions. Using them also reduces smoke inhalation and enables their youngest girls to go to school, rather than walk for up to 14km a day in search of firewood.

At the Sifoe Kafo Farm, women share a communal allotment and use seed banking, plus an American-donated solar dryer to preserve mango, pawpaw and cashews. Pipi-Bojang who runs the farm is clearly grateful. "We never had help before and it was drudgery. We

threw away almost 75% of our crops, now thanks to God, we preserve 75%," she says, her eight-month-old baby, Osman, strapped to her back. I come away with honey, beeswax (which proves to be a good lip balm) and some mango jam.

Back to the beach

Ngala Lodge, located on the coast at Fajara, is a former colonial house turned boutique hotel, privately run by Dutchman Peter Engels. Engels is a serious collector of African art, from Ethiopian masks to ornate metalwork sculptures, all of them dotted around the hotel's manicured grounds. Built on a cliff, away from the busy resort areas, there is a peaceful deck at sea level as well as a small pool. The majority of guests have been coming to The Gambia for years. "This is our 21st visit to Gambia," says Mike, from Taunton. "It's much cheaper than the Caribbean, the beaches are as good and the people are really friendly."

This is an extract of a feature written by Susan Grossman, which appears in full in the Summer 2012 edition of Real Travel Magazine www.realtravelmagazine.com

Photographs of Susan: copyright Susan Grossman

Cruising and driving through rural Gambia with Mr & Mrs Stephens repeat clients of The Gambia Experience.

Discovering The Gambian interior



We first visited The Gambia about seven years ago whilst looking for some winter sun and knowing very little about the country. As keen birdwatchers we were immediately impressed with the huge variety of birds easily observed from the area around our resort.

Wanting to explore the interior of the country as well we made a road trip to Tendaba, about 100 miles inland along the Gambia River, where accommodation and food was available. The wildlife there did not disappoint but the road and accommodation did, and we searched in vain on our return to the UK for a cruise on the Gambia River. Finally, in 2011, we found one – Rivers of West Africa - with The Senegal Experience. Travelling in extreme luxury on MV Pegasus, a catamaran capable of carrying around forty passengers, we departed Dakar in Senegal, visited briefly the Saloum estuary before beginning the main part of our cruise up the Gambia River for around 300 miles to Kuntaur with an excursion in a smaller local boat to Janjangbureh (formally Georgetown) before returning eventually to Dakar. We enjoyed the trip so much that we decided to repeat it this year but joined the ship in Banjul, Gambia. This time we were to sail again upriver to Kuntaur and back but, on our return, rent a 4x4 vehicle and explore along the banks of the river for a few days.

“With the development of a decent road structure we expect to see more tourist accommodation away from the coast becoming available in the future.”

The Pegasus was again most comfortable and we had a tremendous welcome back from the Captain; from Christian, the tour leader; and from Assan, the very capable local guide. On the trip up and down the river there was always something of interest. We visited Kunta Kinteh Island (formerly James Island) where slaves were kept prior to being transported to Dakar and then across the Atlantic and on the way we were lucky enough to see dolphins. At Tendaba we had a walk in the Kiang West National Park, observing many birds and plants, ending in a local village where we met villagers informally and got an insight into village life. Across the river we took a trip in a pirogue (a small local boat) into the mangroves where again there was prolific bird life including several species of kingfisher. Assan was very knowledgeable about the species and often pointed out birds we would otherwise have missed.

The following day found us at Kuntaur where we again embarked on a pirogue to continue upstream into the islands of the Gambia National Park. This is an area where some of the larger mammals can be observed and we were able to see hippos, brown colobus and green vervet monkeys, and also chimpanzees. The chimps are in a protected area where tourists may not go ashore but we were lucky to see a family with a youngster in the trees at the water's edge.

Again the bird life was varied and prolific with large flocks of pink backed pelicans and white faced whistling ducks as well as fish eagles, hamerkops and palm nut vultures.

An excursion by minibus took us to Janjangbureh for a tour of the colonial town, a visit to a newly completed school building at Lamin Koto which had been financed entirely by contributions from passengers on the Pegasus over the last two years, and finally to the UNESCO World Heritage Site at Wassu to see the thousand year old stone circles.

We interrupted the journey downriver to Banjul at Kaur where we walked past rice paddies into the village. An attraction there for the birdwatchers was a clay bank teeming with nesting red-throated bee-eaters.

When not on excursions, life on board the Pegasus was always interesting. There were presentations by Christian and Assan as well as food to die for (an important consideration for Peter!)

The Gambia Experience were very flexible in allowing us to extend our stay so that we could make a road trip after the cruise. They arranged hotel accommodation and transfers in Banjul to fit in with our needs. Road

travel in The Gambia until recently has been very difficult with dirt roads outside the capital. Now there are two excellent roads, the North Bank and South Bank Roads which are almost completely tarmac all the way from Banjul to Janjangbureh on the north bank and to Basse on the south bank of the river. There are ferry crossings too at Banjul, Soma/Farfenni and Janjangbureh. The Banjul crossing is problematic at present as the ferries are small and antiquated, however new ferries are being brought in to service shortly. We drove to Janjangbureh via Soma and the North Bank Road and stayed for a few nights at Janjangbureh Camp where accommodation was basic but comfortable and the food excellent. From there we crossed to the south bank, visited Basse and then returned to Banjul on the South Bank Road. There were frequent road blocks but they were non-threatening and not a problem. Driving ourselves enabled us to visit areas not normally visited by tourists and we enjoyed the villages and countryside equally. With the development of a decent road structure we expect to see more tourist accommodation away from the coast becoming available in the future and the interior of the country opening up much more to tourism.

Photos courtesy of Liz Stephens



Island of Gorée, Senegal





Senegal on Flickr

Bungalows at Delta Niominka

One of the hotel's own photographs that they have shared on Flickr. View more at [Flickr.com/groups/thesenegalexperience](https://www.flickr.com/groups/thesenegalexperience)

The Senegal Experience product manager Alison Collins escapes from her busy work schedule to enjoy a day excursion through the waterways of the Sine Saloum Delta and lunch on a desert island.

It's not all hard work!



I visit Senegal and neighbouring Gambia at least once a year, which usually makes my friends and family very envious who think it all sounds very exotic and exciting; and whilst I do get to stay in many of the lovely hotels we feature and enjoy excellent hospitality, it's never quite the same as being on holiday. When the thermometer is rising to nearly 40°C and the skies are a clear blue, it would be so nice to be lying on one of the sun-beds by the pool or on the white sandy beach instead of going 'behind the scenes' in the hotels and into another contracting meeting!

During my last visit though I was lucky enough to have a day away from meetings when I experienced one of the many possible excursions which are on offer in the Sine Saloum Delta. Along with our Senegal agent, Didier, I boarded a pirogue from the jetty at the Hotel Delta Niominka and we set off through the 'bolongs' and along the coast. Eventually a series of 'desert' islands came into view; formed by the ever moving currents, they were simply large mounds of perfect sand in the middle of the water. Our two boat men beached the pirogue on the shore and Didier and I decided to go off and explore; whilst he went for a swim in the crystal clear water, so clear you could see the fish swimming up to the shore line, I was fascinated watching the scurrying crabs popping in and out of their holes along the water's edge. At this point the sun was becoming quite fierce and I did start to wonder how my pale English skin was going to cope! I needn't have worried though as when we walked back to the pirogue, the men had erected a Mauritanian tent on

the beach, complete with carpets, cushions and coloured awnings and were in the process of preparing our lunch for us. As Didier and I cooled off in the shade of the tent, the men prepared a simple but delicious meal of grilled fish, rice, warm bread and salad, followed by fresh fruit and mint tea. After an obligatory doze in the shade, it was time to head back to the hotel. As the pirogue cut through the water in the late afternoon sun, we were soon accompanied by the working boats bringing in their catch of the day and the water taxis carrying their colourful passengers from different parts of the Delta to the fishing port of Djiffere. An intriguing glimpse of Senegal life and a perfect end to a perfect day. Perhaps these working trips aren't so bad after all?!

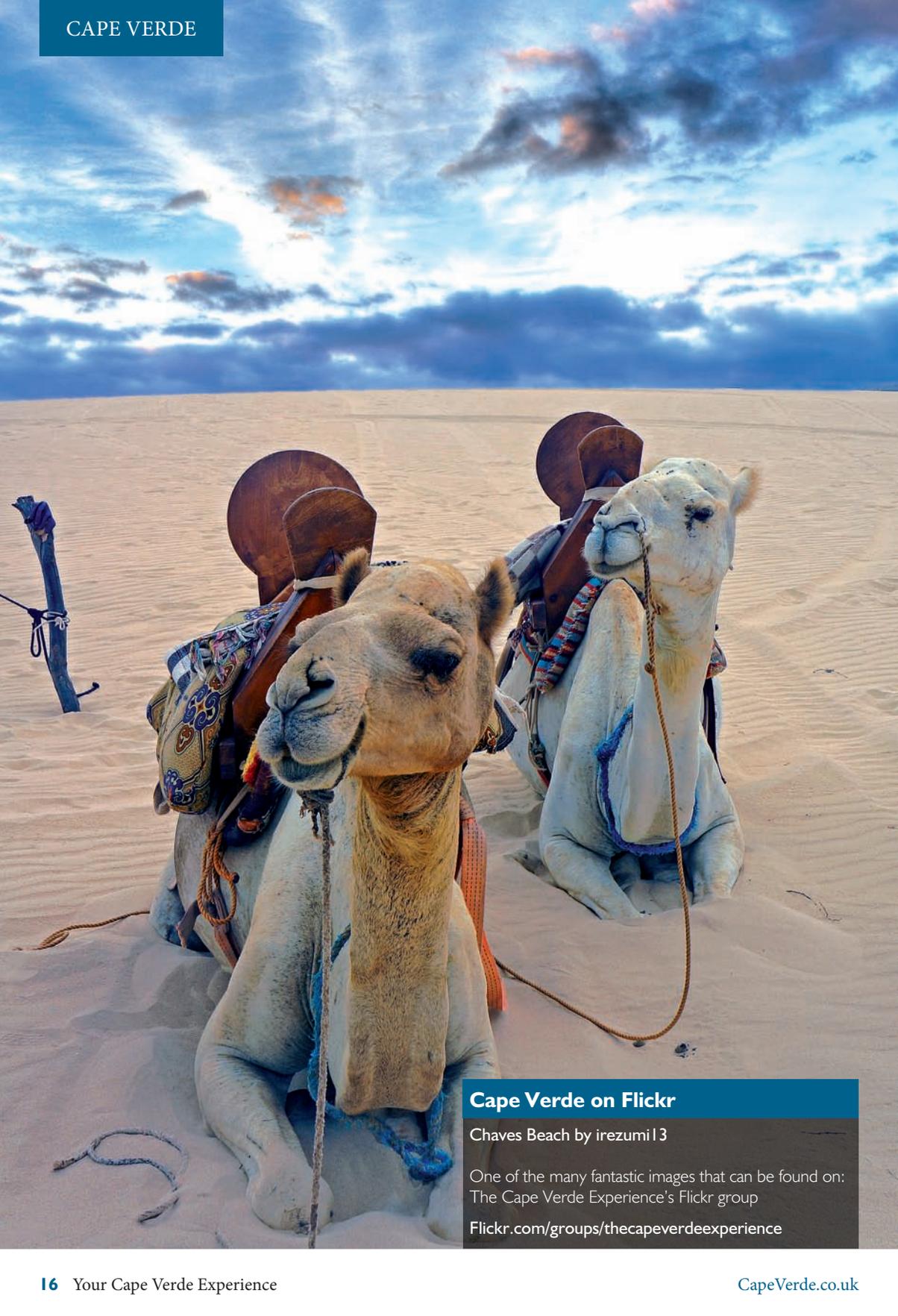


Discover more about Senegal

To find out more about the country, hotels and holidays or to order a brochure visit:

Senegal.co.uk or telephone 0845 338 8700

View more images and upload yours to [Flickr.com/groups/thesenegalexperience](https://www.flickr.com/groups/thesenegalexperience)



Cape Verde on Flickr

Chaves Beach by irezumil 3

One of the many fantastic images that can be found on:
The Cape Verde Experience's Flickr group

[Flickr.com/groups/thecapeverdeexperience](https://www.flickr.com/groups/thecapeverdeexperience)

Travel Channel's Petra Shepherd and friend Sarah Franklin swapped an action packed holiday for the more tranquil, beach lover's paradise of Sal, Cape Verde.

Experience the slower pace of Sal



Petra Shepherd



The beach at Meliá Tortuga Hotel

Sal was the first island in the archipelago to erupt from the sea over fifteen million years ago and it's where I headed to get my first taste of the islands. When budgeting for a holiday in the current economic climate it makes great sense to go all-inclusive, especially on an island that's still relatively undeveloped. I therefore opted for an all-inclusive break at Hotel Meliá Tortuga.

The Meliá Tortuga is a good hour and half walk along the beach to Santa Maria (be sure to try it at least once, you'll welcome the exercise to walk off the excess pounds you'll no doubt gain from all the delicious food on offer) or alternatively it's a 10 minute 3 euro taxi ride. If you're looking to just literally fly and flop, gaze over the turquoise Atlantic Ocean whilst soaking up the guaranteed year round sunshine then it's the perfect choice of hotel. For someone more used to action packed holidays, I surprised myself how easily I adapted to the quieter routine. As most of the island's attractions can be seen in half a day, you'll be spending a lot of time within the hotel and it therefore makes perfect sense to base yourself somewhere so aesthetically pleasing, peaceful and relaxing. Most of the guests I talked to welcomed the ability to just do nothing and with a flight time of only 6 hours from the UK, it's a great alternative to the Canaries as a winter sun break.

Sal is an island that is best enjoyed by beach lovers. The pristine white sand beaches rival any of those found in the Caribbean and literally go on for miles. In fact with a blend of African, Brazilian and Portuguese cultures, Cape Verde has been dubbed the African Caribbean (but without the

hurricanes). There's no denying that Sal's beaches are its biggest USP. However, the island's once mountainous topography has been whittled down by gusty Saharan winds and any vegetation has been obliterated. At first glance the barren interior can be a tad depressing, it's not as green as the name implies. None the less, there's still some impressive sights to see and it's well worth doing the island tour.

Sal was discovered by the Portuguese in 1460 who named their new territorial gain Lлана, which means 'flat'. It wasn't until some time later, when salt was uncovered at the lake at Pedra de Lume, that its name was changed to Sal, meaning 'salt'. Pedra de Lume is a definite highlight of the island tour. The salt lake is situated inside a long extinct volcano and if you've not been to the Dead Sea a swim or float in its shallow waters makes for an interesting experience. The lake water is twenty six times saltier than sea water with saliency levels on a par with those found in the Dead Sea. It's therefore not difficult to get the requisite reading a newspaper whilst floating shot. There's a shower where you can wash of all the caked salt and a small café. It's a very atmospheric place, especially with the backdrop of the volcano and long abandoned conveyor system to transport the salt from the mine to the small port below.

Along with stunning beaches, Sal's other claim to fame is wind. The steady ocean breezes have made Sal one of the top places in the world for kite and windsurfing. So although you might not get to enjoy swimming in the sea, the Atlantic rollers making it too rough, the breeze is a

CAPE VERDE

welcome respite from the heat and the champion surfers leaping off the waves make for a spectacular sight.

The slow pace of life on Sal grows on you and for city dwellers used to a frantic way of life there's something very appealing about just lazing on the sand and relaxing by the pool. If you're looking for a first class, friendly and all inclusive hotel in a year round sun and sand destination that's just a little different then the Meliá Tortuga Beach on Sal in the Cape Verde Islands comes highly recommended.

This is an extract of a travel feature written by Petra Shepherd, published on Travel Channel website in May 2012 TravelChannel.co.uk

Discover more about Cape Verde

To find out more about the country and holidays or to order a brochure visit:

CapeVerde.co.uk or telephone 0845 330 2046

View more images and upload yours to Flickr.com/groups/thecapeverdeexperience



Sarah relaxing at the Meliá Tortuga Hotel



Meliá Tortuga Hotel

Do you have an experience of The Gambia, Senegal or Cape Verde that you would like to share with us? We are looking for guest writers to contribute to our magazine and also to feature on our blog site TheGambiaBlog.co.uk

What's your experience?

Perhaps you have worked with a charity in The Gambia; or you are one of the many people who have been travelling to The Gambia for years; you may have honeymooned in Senegal or been hiking in Cape Verde.

Whatever your experience, however long ago it was, if you fancy yourself as a bit of a travel writer please send your articles (of either 350 or 700 words) to:

Your Experience, Serenity Holidays, Atlantic House,
3600 Parkway, Solent Business Park, Fareham, Hampshire,
PO15 7AN or email experience@serenityholidays.co.uk
If you have any photographs that you would like to share, please upload them to [flickr.com/groups](https://www.flickr.com/groups) and search for The Gambia Experience, The Senegal Experience or The Cape Verde Experience.

Any article chosen to feature in our magazine will receive a £100 holiday voucher valid against any holiday with Serenity Holidays.



Short Breaks to France & Belgium



Great Escapes

Search & book online at GreatEscapes.co.uk
Or talk to an expert on 0845 330 3434

ABTA
ABTA No. V3421

AITO
Association
of Independent
Tour Operators



Gambia.co.uk
0845 330 4567



CapeVerde.co.uk
0845 330 2046



Senegal.co.uk
0845 338 8700



The Gambia Experience, The Senegal Experience and The Cape Verde Experience are all trade names of Serenity Holidays. We also offer holidays to the Mediterranean islands of Corsica and Sardinia and European short breaks with Great Escapes.

Corsica

0845 330 2345

Corsica.co.uk

Sardinia

0845 330 2056

SardinianPlaces.co.uk

Great Escapes 0845 330 3434

GreatEscapes.co.uk

Serenity Holidays Limited, Registered in the UK 01744872
Serenity Holidays Limited, Atlantic House, 3600 Parkway, Solent Business Park,
Fareham, Hampshire PO15 7AN

