



# **WEST AFRICA ODYSSEY**

**A Voyage From Angola to Ghana, With Special Guest Lecturer  
Ambassador Robert E. Gribbin**

*April 1 - 16, 2023*



**Aboard the New 152-guest Expedition Cruise Ship Vega**

Dear Friends,

This voyage to the mid-Atlantic region of Africa is an extraordinary opportunity to explore a part of the world largely untouched by tourism. And although the stretch of coastline between Angola and Ghana is less visited than areas to its north and south, it is no less fascinating than they—encompassing an astonishingly rich variety of wildlife in an environment of lush rainforests, and a history both proud and tragic.

The variety of experiences that awaits is virtually endless. The colonial architecture in cities like Luanda, Sao Tome, and Porto-Novo is juxtaposed to the simple houses of the traditional villages along the shores of Lake Togo. The hustle and bustle of great oil-exporting ports like Pointe-Noire contrasts sharply with the pace of life associated with the handicrafts on display in markets in Benin and Togo. And then there is the singular experience of the unspoiled tropical paradise of Bom Bom Island.

The rich biodiversity of both flora and fauna is apparent nearly everywhere, from mangrove to savanna to rainforest. Birds in particular abound in and around these lakes and rivers, and especially in the wetlands of Conkouati and Loango National Parks. We will meet primates that have been rescued from poachers, first at Jane Goodall's Tchimpounga Chimpanzee Sanctuary in Congo, and then again at Camp Help, and in the Limbe Wildlife Center in Cameroon. And we will encounter elephants and hippos, crocodiles and manatees in their natural environments.

We will also be mindful of the human stories of this region, as guest lecturer Ambassador Robert E. Gribbin traces the history of West Africa from early European contacts, through the slave trade, colonialism and the struggle for independence, to the Cold War. He will also offer thoughts on what he calls the "curse of oil," and on current politics, disease and terrorism. We will also benefit from the insights of local guides and of our resident team of experts.

We look forward to welcoming you aboard Vega in Luanda in early April. This is a voyage you do not want to miss.

Sincerely,



Jim Smith  
President



Cover: African pygmy elephants in Loango National Park, Gabon

FOR RESERVATIONS, CALL CODA INTERNATIONAL TOURS AT +1 561-791-9890 OR E-MAIL TO [INFO@CODA-TOURS.COM](mailto:INFO@CODA-TOURS.COM)

*Floating market, village of Ganvié, Benin*



## **SPECIAL GUEST LECTURER AMBASSADOR ROBERT E. GRIBBIN**



### **Ambassador Robert E. Gribbin's**

experience of Africa began in the late 1960s, when he spent three years building rural water systems as a Peace

Corps Volunteer in Kenya. He became a Foreign Service Officer in 1973 and returned to Africa with diplomatic assignments in Bangui, CAR and Kigali, Rwanda as well as tours in Kampala, Uganda and Mombasa, Kenya. In 1992, Gribbin was appointed US Ambassador to Central African Republic, and served as Ambassador to Rwanda from 1995-99. He was a four-time delegate to UN Human Rights Commission, also thrice to UN General Assembly. Since retiring, Ambassador Gribbin has undertaken short term assignments as chargé d'affaires in Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Burundi, Djibouti, Chad and Mauritius plus other postings in South Sudan, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, and Liberia.

Gribbin is the author of a memoir *In Aftermath of Genocide: the U.S. Role in Rwanda* and of four novels. He is married to Connie Chapman. They have two adult sons and five grandchildren. During our cruise Gribbin will lecture on early European contact with West Africa, slavery, colonialism and the struggle for independence, the cold war in Africa, the curse of oil, and on current politics, conflicts, disease and terrorism.

# AFRICA



Sao Tome

## ITINERARY

**Saturday, April 1, 2023**  
**DEPART THE UNITED STATES**

**Sunday, April 2**  
**LUANDA, ANGOLA**

Arrive in Luanda and transfer to our deluxe hotel. This evening, gather for a welcome dinner and meet fellow travelers. (D)

**Monday, April 3**  
**LUANDA/EMBARKATION**

After breakfast at the hotel, our tour of Angola's capital includes the Museum of Anthropology, with interesting exhibits on traditional folklore; the Church of Remedios, built in 1628; and the 16th-century Fortaleza de Sao Miguel that guards the port where we will embark Vega in late afternoon and set sail. (B,L,D)

**Tuesday, April 4**  
**AT SEA**

During days at sea, you may treat yourself to the amenities aboard and attend informative lectures and briefings from expedition staff and guest lecturers. You may also simply relax and enjoy cruising along the African coastline with vast horizons under open skies. (B,L,D)

**Wednesday, April 5**  
**POINTE-NOIRE, REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO**

Congo's main port, Pointe-Noire, is a relatively prosperous city of nearly a million inhabitants whose wealth is generated primarily by the offshore oil industry. We will travel about 25 miles north of Pointe-Noire to the Tchimpounga

Sanctuary, founded in 1992 by the Jane Goodall Institute. Now expanded to include three small islands on the Kouilou River within the large nationally run Tchimpounga Reserve, the Goodall Institute's sanctuary is the largest chimpanzee sanctuary in Africa. The animals here—nearly 200 of them—are all orphans, victims of the illegal bushmeat or pet animal trading. (B,L,D)

**Thursday and Friday, April 6 and 7**  
**CONKOUATI NATIONAL PARK**

Spend two days exploring this protected area of rainforest, mangrove, and sandy beaches, habitats for a wide range of fauna, from elephants, gorillas, and chimpanzees in the forest to hippos, manatees, and leatherback turtles on the beaches and in the mangroves. Our ship remains anchored just offshore and serves as the base for excursions that include guided walks along the beach, kayaking in the Tchitembo Lagoon, a visit to a local fishing village, a cruise aboard local boats on the Noubi River, and time with researchers at the chimpanzee sanctuary at Camp Help, where we learn about conservation efforts in the Conkouati Park and beyond. (B,L,D)

**Saturday and Sunday, April 8 and 9**  
**SETTE CAMA, GABON/SOUTH LOANGO NATIONAL PARK**

During our time in Gabon, Vega will anchor offshore at the tiny village of Sette Cama on a peninsula between the Atlantic and the Ndogo Lagoon. Once a major center for trade in timber and ivory, Sette Cama serves today as our entry



In the market of Lome, Togo



Children carrying fruits & vegetables to a local market



Handwoven baskets, Ghana



*Ganvie village, Benin*



*Red-throat Bee-eater*



*Stack of colorful african fabrics called Kente, market, Lome, Togo*

point to South Loango National Park. As in our visit to Conkouati, a variety of excursions will allow us to sample the incredibly rich biodiversity of this region, often referred to as "Africa's last Eden." The beach here is among the few places in the world where elephants still go down to the sea, and Ndogo Lagoon is world famous for its incredible bird life. On walks in the jungle and along the beach, 4X4 drives through the mangrove and forest, and cruises on local boats, we are very likely to see buffalo, hippos, crocodiles, manatees, elephants, chimpanzees and gorillas. And sightings of rare birds like quail finch, rosy bee-eaters, and Congo River martins are common. (B,L,D)

**Monday, April 10**  
**AT SEA**

During days at sea, you may treat yourself to the amenities aboard and attend informative lectures and briefings from expedition staff and guest lecturers. You may also simply relax and enjoy cruising along the African coastline with vast horizons under open skies. (B,L,D)

**Tuesday, April 11**  
**SAO TOME, SAO TOME & PRINCIPE**

Sao Tome was a prized possession of the Portuguese, who ruled it from the 15th century until 1975, when Sao Tome and the nearby island of Principe gained independence and formed the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe. We call at the island's capital and main port, also called Sao Tome, a picturesque

and friendly town featuring colonial architecture. Also explore the island's lush interior and rich biodiversity, and visit an active coffee plantation, where we witness a lifestyle largely unchanged since the colonial era and where we will be invited to sample some of what the locals claim is the world's best chocolate. (B,L,D)

**Wednesday, April 12**  
**BOM BOM ISLAND, SAO TOME & PRINCIPE**

Bom Bom Island Resort sits at the northern tip of Principe. Here we encounter an impressive landscape of soaring volcanic peaks covered with dense forest and beautiful clear-water beaches that line the shore of this tropical paradise. Wander in the charming colonial town of Santo Antonio, walk through the abandoned plantation of Porto Real, watch villagers make palm oil, and hike through the pristine rain forest. (B,L,D)

**Thursday, April 13**  
**AT SEA**

During days at sea, you may treat yourself to the amenities aboard and attend informative lectures and briefings from expedition staff and guest lecturers. You may also simply relax and enjoy cruising along the African coastline with vast horizons under open skies. (B,L,D)

**Friday, April 14**  
**COTONOU, BENIN/PORTO-NOVO**

The small country of Benin, home to an ancient

and sophisticated culture, is emerging as a popular travel destination. From the port of Cotonou, drive to the nearby capital, Porto-Novo, set on green hills surrounding a large lagoon. Formerly the center of a prosperous African kingdom, it later became the capital of the French colony of Dahomey. Explore this pleasant city, including visits to the Ethnography Museum, the restored palace of King Toffa, and the Handicraft Center. After lunch, board local motorboats for a ride across Lake Nokou for the picturesque fishing village of Ganvie. (B,L,D)

**Saturday, April 15**  
**LOME, TOGO**

For centuries, Togo was claimed by successive African empires, later becoming part of the French and German colonial empires. Today, Togo's capital Lome, famous for its palm-lined waterfront, is among West Africa's most exciting and friendly cities. From Lome, drive a few miles up the coast to Agbodrafo, set on the shores of Lake Togo, from where we will explore the lake's traditional villages aboard local pirogues. Returning to Lome proper, we will visit its bustling handicraft markets selling traditional goods from all over West Africa, and noted especially for sculpture and batiks. (B,L,D)

**Sunday, April 16**  
**ACCRA, GHANA/DISEMBARK**

After breakfast, disembark and transfer to the airport in Accra for flights homeward. (B)



*Woman on a pirogue, Lake Nokou, Benin*

# THE NEW EXPEDITION CRUISE SHIP VEGA



Observation Lounge



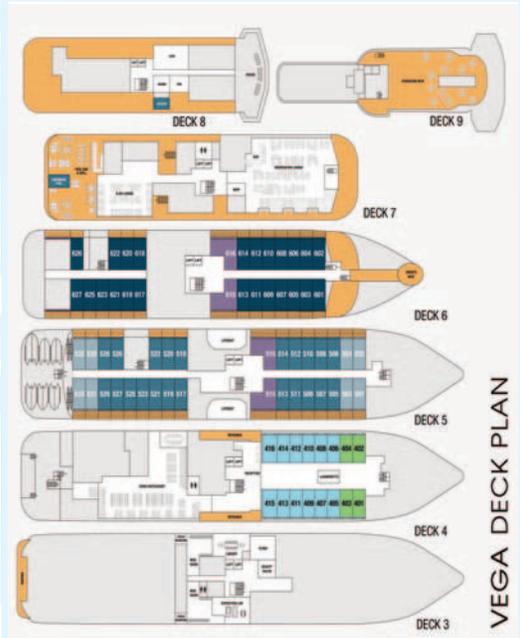
Oceanview Stateroom



Balcony Suite



Café/Bar with swimming pool



Built in Finland and launched in July 2022, Swan Hellenic's Vega is a new-generation expedition cruise ship. Although at 10,250 tons the ship is large enough to accommodate more than 250 passengers, Vega will accommodate a maximum of 152 guests in 76 spacious staterooms and balcony suites. The low guest density results in one of the most generous indoor and outdoor space-to-guest ratios among cruise ships.

Vega has been designed to meet the stringent requirements of the new Polar Code for ships navigating in Polar regions. Its high PC5 Category A ice-strengthened hull, and other technical and mechanical features, allow the ship to cruise the world's remote regions in safety and utmost comfort.

Technologically advanced hybrid engines and a system of powerful batteries make it possible for the ship to cruise in ecologically sensitive areas, leaving minimal footprint, while a computer-controlled Dynamic Positioning System allows the ship to maintain position without anchoring. Operated by a complement of 120 experienced European officers and international crew members, Vega will carry a fleet of Zodiacs, versatile landing boats, kayaks, and a Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV) that will reveal marine life in the deep. Powerful stabilizers provide a smooth ride.

All staterooms and suites face outside and are equipped with private facilities, climate control, TV, basic Wi-Fi and USB connections as well as other

amenities. Of the ship's 76 staterooms, 60 have balconies. Public areas include a spacious observation lounge that is equipped with state-of-the-art facilities for lectures and presentations; a club lounge; a restaurant that accommodates all guests at one seating; an outdoor café/bar that surrounds the heated swimming pool; a wellness area with gym, spa, and sauna that includes an adjoining outdoor jacuzzi; library; beauty salon; a "mud room" with lockers for storing expedition gear; and an infirmary that is attended by a full-time doctor. The ship also features expansive open-deck areas. Two elevators connect all decks. Attentive service is provided on a 24-hour basis.

## RATES

All accommodations aboard Vega are spacious staterooms and balcony suites. They are elegantly decorated, face outside, affording sea views, and include a queen-size bed that can be arranged as two twin beds, a spacious bathroom, mini-refrigerator, safe, ample closet space, climate control, telephone, TV, Wi-Fi, and USB connections, as well as other amenities.

CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	PER PERSON DOUBLE OCCUPANCY
E	Oceanview staterooms with two large oval windows. 206 sq. ft. Deck 4. Staterooms 401 - 404.	\$ 12,490
D	Oceanview staterooms with two large oval portholes. 206 sq. ft. Deck 4. Staterooms 405 - 416.	\$ 12,990
C	Suites with balcony & living room area. 300 sq. ft. Deck 5. Suites 501 - 504, 530 - 533.	\$ 13,990
B	Suites with balcony & living room area. 300 sq. ft. Deck 5. Suites 505 - 514, 517 - 529.	\$ 14,390
A	Suites with balcony & living room area. 300 sq. ft. Deck 6. Suites 601 - 614, 617 - 627.	\$ 14,990
AA	Suites with large balcony, separate bedroom & living room. 440 sq. ft. Decks 5 & 6. Suites 515, 516, 615 & 616.	\$ 16,990

## SAVINGS FOR SOLO TRAVELERS

A limited number of cabins are available for single occupancy in categories E to B at no additional charge.

Additional single cabins are available at a supplement of 50% of the per person double occupancy rate, instead of the normal 70% supplement. For solo travelers wishing to share a cabin, Thalassa Journeys will attempt to pair you with an alumna with whom you can communicate in advance to determine compatibility.

# PROGRAM INCLUSIONS

- One night at a deluxe hotel in Luanda, Angola.
- Welcome dinner in Luanda.
- Cruise aboard Swan Hellenic's *Vega*, as described in the itinerary.
- Airport/hotel/pier transfers and handling of luggage.
- Presentations and discussions with guest lecturer Ambassador Robert E. Gribbin.
- Lectures from our onboard team of experts.
- Complete program of shore landings and activities ashore.
- All meals aboard the ship, with a selection of wines, beer and soft drinks during lunch and dinner.
- Welcome and farewell cocktail receptions aboard the ship hosted by the captain.
- Open bar with select alcoholic beverages.
- Coffee, including espresso and cappuccino, tea and soft drinks throughout the day and night.
- 24-hour room service.
- Gratuities to the ship's crew, guides, porters and drivers.
- Basic Wi-Fi aboard the ship.
- The services of an experienced Thalassa Journeys trip director.
- All local taxes and service charges, including port and embarkation taxes.
- Complete pre departure material.

**NOT INCLUDED:** International airfare; travel insurance; expenses of a personal nature; any items not mentioned in the itinerary or the above inclusions.

# REGISTRATION

Enclosed is my check or credit card no. for \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (\$ 1,500 per person) as a deposit to hold \_\_\_\_\_ place(s) on **West Africa**, April 1-16, 2023 with CODA Tours. I understand that final payment is due ninety (90) days prior to departure and is payable by check or credit card.

Please make check payable to and mail with this registration form to:  
**Thalassa Journeys**, 8815 Conroy-Windermere Rd., Suite 406, Orlando, FL 32835  
Phone Toll-Free: (866) 633-3611

For reservations, call **Coda International Tours** at +1 561-791-9890 or e-mail to [info@coda-tours.com](mailto:info@coda-tours.com).

AmEx       Discover       Visa       MasterCard

No. \_\_\_\_\_

Exp. \_\_\_\_\_ 3- or 4-Digit Security Code \_\_\_\_\_

## PLEASE SELECT CABIN CATEGORY IN ORDER OF PREFERENCE

1st choice  \_\_\_\_\_ 2nd choice  \_\_\_\_\_ 3rd choice  \_\_\_\_\_

Double Occupancy       Single Occupancy

FIRST MIDDLE LAST (AS ON YOUR PASSPORT)

FIRST MIDDLE LAST (AS ON YOUR PASSPORT)

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY/STATE/ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE (DAY) \_\_\_\_\_

(EVENING) \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

*Each participant must sign below: I/We have read the "General Information" section and agree to its terms.*

## GENERAL INFORMATION

**PAYMENT SCHEDULE:** A deposit of \$1,500 per person is required to reserve your space on the tour. Final payment is due 90 days prior to departure. Payment can be made by personal check or charged to a credit card.

**CANCELLATIONS & REFUNDS:** All cancellations are subject to a \$300 per person administrative fee. Cancellations received 61-90 days prior to departure will be assessed a penalty equal to 50% of the total program cost per person. Cancellations received within 60 days of departure are subject to 100% cancellation penalties. Requests for cancellations must be made in writing. No refunds will be made for any part of this program in which you choose not to participate.

**INSURANCE:** We strongly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance, which is available for coverage of expenses in conjunction with cancellation due to illness or accident. Baggage insurance is also recommended. In the event that you must cancel your participation in a travel program, trip cancellation insurance may be the only source of reimbursement.

**ITINERARY:** The itinerary, accommodations and arrangements are subject to change at the discretion of Thalassa Journeys.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** Please read carefully the following terms and conditions, which constitute the sole, legally enforceable agreements between the traveler and Thalassa Journeys. Thalassa Journeys acts solely as agents for the traveler with respect to all transportation, hotel and other tour arrangements. In that capacity, we exercise all reasonable care possible to ensure the traveler's safety and satisfaction, but, we neither assume nor bear any responsibility or liability for any injury, death, damage, loss, accident, delay or irregularity arising in connection with the services of any ship, airplane, train, automobile, motor coach, carriage or other conveyance, or the actions of any third-party, involved in carrying the traveler or in affecting these tours. We are not responsible for damages, additional expenses, or any other losses due to cancellation, delay or other changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, civil disturbances, acts or threats of terrorism, travel warnings or bans, termination or suspension of war risks or other carrier insurance, quarantine, acts of God or other causes beyond our control. All such losses must be borne by the traveler, and tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. In the event of cancellation, delay or rescheduling mandated by any of the aforesaid causes beyond our control, the traveler shall have the option of accepting in lieu of the original tour such rescheduled tour or other substituted tour(s) as may be offered by us, or else, receiving a refund of as much of such advance tour expenditures as we are able to recover on the traveler's behalf from carriers, third-party tour vendors, etc., but, we shall not have any obligation or liability to the traveler beyond the foregoing. We reserve the right to make alterations to the tour's itinerary and to substitute hotels, transportation methods, or lecturers if this is required. We reserve the right to cancel, delay, or reschedule any tour prior to departure, and, so long as this is not due to any of the aforesaid causes beyond our control, the traveler shall be entitled to a full refund of all monies paid to that point if he/she so desires. No refund shall be made for any unused portion of any tour. By forwarding their deposit(s), the traveler certifies that he/she and/or their dependents, minors or others covered thereby do not have any mental, physical or other condition of disability that could create a hazard for them or other travelers. We reserve the right to decline to accept or to decline to retain any person as a member of any tour should such person's health, condition or actions adversely affect or threaten the welfare or safety of other travelers or impede the tour. Baggage or valuables brought on the tour shall be transported, handled or stored at the traveler's risk entirely, and, we shall bear no liability or responsibility for any damage or other loss thereto. Resolution of any disputes arising hereunder shall be affected exclusively in the state or federal courts presiding in Florida, pursuant to applicable Florida law.

**RATES:** Tour costs are based upon current airfares, tariffs, and currency values. While we do everything possible to maintain the listed prices, they are subject to change.

CST 2138603-50

ST 42048

FOR RESERVATIONS,  
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[INFO@CODA-TOURS.COM](mailto:INFO@CODA-TOURS.COM)