

Ghana

A greentours Itinerary

Day 1 Shangri-La

After touching down at Accra's international airport we'll make the ten minute journey to the excellent Shangri-La hotel.

Day 2 Panbros Salt pans and Elmina

The lovely grounds of the Shangri-La offer an early introduction to West African birdlife as jackdaw-sized Splendid Glossy Starlings and Village Weavers accompany us as we take breakfast in the garden. Our three hour journey takes us past the excellent Panbros Salt pans where Pied Kingfishers are truly abundant (and very approachable!) and Western Reef Herons dance in the shallows. You'll soon notice the wonderful names of the local shops - two of the best spotted last year were 'Eric Cantona's Straightening and Welding Shop' and 'Uncle Father's Nippy Spot!' Once at Elmina we'll settle into the tranquil Coconut Grove Resort and spend the afternoon relaxing by the beach or perhaps enjoying the rich birdlife on the golf course next door.

Days 3-5 Kakum National Park

Kakum is one of West Africa's most important National Parks. This magical place contains a bewildering variety of wildlife amongst some of the best-preserved Guinean Forest in Africa. Kakum is also very accessible being only forty minutes drive from Elmina! Mid mornings are great for butterflies on the Canopy Walkway as Drury's Emperors and various Sailors float past. The golden hues of the Lurid Glider are perhaps only surpassed in the shocking colour stakes by its cousin the Blood Red Cymothoe! Earlier in the day is the best time for both birds and mammals. Troupes of Olive Colobus cavort boisterously above us. Mona Monkeys and the very pretty Lesser Spot-nosed Monkey are just two more out of seven species of primate at Kakum. Bird life is phenomenal both from the canopy walkway and along trails in the vicinity. Immaculate black and white Piping and Pied Hornbills are common in fruiting trees, and are often joined by huge Black-casqued Wattled Hornbills. The brilliant azure Blue Cuckoo-Shrike is surely one of West Africa's most glorious residents and Emerald Cuckoo, Superb

Sunbird and Blue-throated Roller all add their dazzling brilliance to the show. Speckled Tinkerbirds, Hairy-breasted Barbets, Yellowbills and stunning Red-headed Malimbos are all common constituents of feeding parties. Gray's Malimbos and Cassin's Honeyguides accompany a confusing variety of Greenbills in the undergrowth. African Grey Parrots can still be seen in good numbers, gathering briefly on bare branches as they fly from roost sites to their feeding grounds. Overhead soar Harrier-Hawk and Red-necked Buzzard whilst Great Sparrowhawks speed between the boughs in pursuit of Green Pigeons. A track takes us deeper into the forest to Antwikwa where we can find some really special birds such as the lovely Black Bee-eater and Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher. Swamp Palm Greenbills utter their crazed 'Mr Punch' calls from deep cover! The stunning brilliance of Mrs Verreaux's Sunbird, one of Africa's rarest, is just one of many sunbirds that feed at the large red flowers of African Tulip Trees. This is a haven for Euphaedras, one of the most beautiful genera of butterflies in Africa. Many species of these glorious insects are found here, their lovely iridescent greens, blues and purples only revealed when they open their wings in the dappled sunlight. A couple of afternoons will be spent back at the coast where you can enjoy relaxing on the local beach (hawkers are scarce here!), visit the atmospheric fort at Elmina, or perhaps potter round the local countryside with us. Pin-tailed Whydahs, Broad-billed Rollers and Splendid Sunbirds are among the colourful birds that frequent the environs. Along the coast we pass lines of colourful hand-crafted fishing boats, some with attendant Long-tailed Cormorants, as we explore coastal wetlands where Wattle-eyes and Green-headed Sunbirds inhabit the mangroves.

Days 6–8

Kumasi and the Bobiri Forest Reserve

After breakfast we head north to the Ashanti capital at Kumasi and the fabulously rich Bobiri Forest Reserve just east of the city. In excess of five hundred species of butterfly are found in this excellent forest reserve. We will soon be admiring various Swallowtails, Swordtails, the African Map Butterfly, and some stunning blues. The last includes the beautiful *Iolus* genus which have several long tails, shimmering blue upper sides and orange striped undersides. Euphaedras, or Foresters, are relatives of our own peacock and tortoiseshell and, like those, are tremendously colourful butterflies. Bobiri is an amazing spot for these and we may see a dozen or more species in a single day, their complex patterns of red, orange, yellow, green and blue a delight to the eyes. Fast-flying Charaxes are almost as diverse with a mixture of black, green, orange and blue species, these often settling on carnivore dung along the trail! We are sure the sensational Lilac Beauty and the almost equally exquisite Blue Mother-of-

Pearl will induce plenty of admiration. This is a rich site for Pierid butterflies with the lovely Belenois calypso and the sky-blue Cambridge Vagrant to the fore. The strangely named Morose Sailor glides along paths and the ochre-banded Soldier Commodore sips from puddle edges alongside Papilio zenobia. African Leaf Butterflies come to sip salts along the impressive and beautiful Blue Diadem and Blue-banded Salamis. Weavers, sunbirds and greenbuls frequent the roadside shrubbery and in the trees are Dwarf Black Hornbills, Red-fronted Parrots and abundant White-throated Bee-eaters.

Day 9 Journey to Mole

We will spend the whole day covering the six hour drive as there is plenty to interest us en route. Lunch will be taken at the impressive Kintampu Waterfall where Mocker Swallowtails and dragonflies drift across the spray. Glossy Ibis, Black-necked Herons and Spur-winged Plovers feed in pools below the bridge over the giant Volta River. Now in open savannah, we will encounter lily-covered waterholes which form a focal point for both livestock and wildlife. Wattled Plovers and stunning Black-winged Red Bishops are found on their fringes whilst Grasshopper Buzzards and Blue-bellied Rollers search for locusts from the tops of acacias. Our hotel at Mole is fantastically situated atop an escarpment overlooking two waterholes and within minutes of our arrival we'll be admiring magnificent Saddlebill Storks as they stride past groups of elegantly horned Kob.

Days 10-13 Mole National Park

Mole covers no less than five thousand square kilometres of prime Guinea Savannah and in many ways resembles the famous game reserves of East Africa. Here there is an important difference and one that we will take full advantage of! We can walk out directly from our hotel - accompanied by an armed ranger of course! These walks will be a major feature of our stay and in particular will allow photographers much more versatility than vehicle based safaris. At Mole the wildlife starts around your rooms with brilliantly coloured Rock Agamas and Orange-lined Skinks scurrying across the paths and Patas Monkeys and quarrelsome Olive Baboons playing on verandas. Beautiful Red-throated Bee-eaters, Grey Hornbills and Grey Woodpeckers frequent the trees and Warthogs root around the grounds. Overhead elegant Bateleurs demonstrate their aerial prowess. Plentiful raptors include Gabar Goshawk, Banded Snake-Eagle, Ayre's Hawk Eagle and Grey Kestrel as well as plenty of vultures. By our verandahs pygmy and Beautiful Sunbirds harvest nectar from red hibiscus flowers. Yellow-

fronted Tinkerbirds and Viellot's Barbet, the latter looking like it has lain face-up in the sun for too long, eye us from their perches. Blues and orange-tips are to the fore here with the perhaps familiar Lang's Short-tailed Blue and the amazingly named Blue Heart Playboy! Dapper speckled 'Guineafowl' butterflies are very common, and Sahel and Bush Charaxes are two particularly magnificent species. Walks down the escarpment to the waterholes will see us amongst numerous Kob as well as Defassa Waterbuck and the beautifully striped Bushbuck. Callithrix Monkeys and Gambian Sun squirrels are common in acacias and flowering Daniella oliveri trees. From time to time we shall come across Elephants - an altogether different sensation than being in a vehicle! The photographic opportunities as they wallow in the waterholes are sensational. We should clock up in excess of eighty species of bird before breakfast each day! Helmeted Guineafowl and Double-spurred Francolins are abundant and tame. Grey Plantain Eaters and Violet Turacos are often in company with Green and Bruce's Green Pigeons in fruiting trees. The brightly coloured birds just keep coming with Carmine Beeeaters, orange-bellied Senegal Parrots and various Kingfishers including Giant and Blue-breasted. Some bird parties seem to go on for ever with new species popping up all the time - White-browed Robin-chats and African Blue Flycatchers, Crimsonwinged Pytilias and iridescent Long-tailed Glossy Starlings, Lavender Waxbills and the glorious gold, scarlet and black Yellowcrowned Gonoleks. Uelle Paradise Whydahs will be flaunting their spectacular newly grown tail feathers. Down by the waterhole Nile Crocodiles and Soft-shelled Turtles bask in the sun. With Saddlebill Storks are noisy Hadadas, Hammerkops and immaculate Black Crakes, and in flowery shrubs are the citrus shades of Grey-headed and Sulphurbellied Bush-Shrikes as well as the elusive Moho, or Oriole Warbler. Well-camouflaged against flaky bark are Spotted Creeper and White-faced Scops Owl. On outcrops of dark rock we can find cryptically-plumaged Freckled Nightjars whilst around our hotel pool hawk Standard-winged Nightjars. Pearlspeckled Owlets, Straight-crested Helmet Shrikes and abundant Stone Partridges mark this out as a really special habitat. Overhead the giant Martial Eagle soars looking for unwary monkeys and stunning Abyssinian and Rufous-crowned Rollers are ever vigilant in their search for a tasty grasshopper-sized meal. On the last morning we will once again visit the escarpment slopes and waterhole before we depart for Kumasi, again stopping at various places en route.

Days 14 & 15

To Accra and departure

After breakfast we will make our way south towards Accra. Demon Charaxes, Blue Diadem and the fabulous Euphaedra francina are at our

lunchspot by a forestlined brook where we'll also see Chestnutcapped Flycatchers and the colourful Bluebill. In Accra we'll enjoy dinner at the Shangri-la's excellent restaurant before the overnight flight to London. Trip reports are available from previous holidays to Ghana.

Trip reports are available from previous trips. If you would like to see a copy, or to ask about any other aspect of this holiday, please contact us on 01298 83563 or email on enquiries@greentours.co.uk.