

Cameroon Cultural Experience

12/26/11 to 01/07/12

Cameroon, also affectionately known as “Africa in Miniature” or “Petit Afrique” is a West African Country about the size of California with a population of about 18 million people. It has two official languages, French and English and has over 250 ethnic groups, each with its own language and culture. Cameroon has its nickname from its great environmental and cultural diversity, which mimic the continent of Africa. From South to North, Cameroon straddles all the major vegetation belts in Africa, from the Equatorial forest of the south with highest rainfall, through the Savanna in the middle and the Sahel (semi desert) region of the north with the least precipitation. The town of Debunsha in southern Cameroon is one of the 5 top rainiest places on earth with an annual rainfall of 400 inches (10,000 mm). The ecological diversity resulting from climatic differences are responsible for the environmental and food diversities, which have also translated to cultural diversity- since cultural practices are primarily shaped by environmental factors.

In addition to ecological diversity, Cameroon also has a unique history that has contributed to further cultural diversification, including blending of Cameroonian and Western cultures. Cameroon is the only African country to have been colonized at one point in their history by three separate major world powers, Germany, England and France. Visitors to Cameroon will see firsthand how these world powers impacted and continue to impact Cameroon. Visitors to Cameroon can easily see how French culture impacts local cultures in Francophone Cameroon while Western Cameroon cultures are mostly impacted by English culture. Cameroon is very unique in that it has two systems of justice and two systems of education, the English justice and educational systems in the West and the French legal and education systems practiced in the East. Due to the passage of time since German colonization, German influence is mostly limited to existing plantations and infrastructure such as roads, bridges, buildings and statues.

Cameroon was part of the Transatlantic Slave Route. The port region of Bimbia still contains relicts of the slave trade for visitors to see. This inhumane trade devastated communities, causing people to flee their settlements in order to escape slave raiders. Part of the legacy of the Transatlantic Slave Trade is the importation of various cultural practices into the Americas and Caribbean, especially music which has evolved to today’s American Popular music. Visitors to Cameroon will experience the rich cultural diversity as expressed in the varieties of traditional music, languages, clothing, foods and more.

Itinerary

- 12/26/11 Depart USA
- 12/27 Arrive Yaounde in the Central Province. This is one of the 8 French speaking Provinces of Cameroon.
- 12/28 Orientation, visit to the US embassy and register, tour of Yaounde town. Watch a cultural dance presentation from the region and sample the local cuisine.
- 12/29 Travel to Bamenda in the Northwest Province (one of two English speaking provinces of Cameroon): During this 7 hours drive through the Western Province participants will observe the transition from forest to savanna and then grassland region.
- 12/30 Visit to Bafut Fon's palace (15 minutes drive from Bamenda): Meet with the locals and also with the chief in his palace, receive lecture on Bafut resistance to German rule in Cameroon, watch a traditional music and dance performance (including war victory celebratory music) and try traditional food from the region, and walk through/shop at a local market. Return to Bamenda and each participant will be paired with a host family for an overnight stay. Pairing will be done based on professional and/or other mutual interests. For those who may not be interested in this activity, they will return to the hotel in Bamenda.
- 12/31 Each host family will take their guest for a tour of Bamenda town. Each host family will have a list of recommended stops where participants can buy gifts and also the Bamenda market where people can buy traditional clothes, memorabilia etc). Hosts will be allowed to be creative in deciding other destinations and activities. Those who stayed at the hotel will receive a guided tour of the city by Dr. Fonjweng with stops and activities as agreed to by participants and going at the participants' pace. Entire group meets at the Fon of Mankon's palace, greet the chief, watch a traditional music and dance performance, and try the local cuisine.
- Main highlight of the day: Attend a New Year's Eve Gala in Bamenda (for those who are interested). The gala is organized by the Meta Teachers' Association in Bamenda. This will be an opportunity to meet teachers in the region in a social setting for informal discussions. Those who are not interested in attending the gala would remain at the hotel, unless they identify an alternative activity that can be accommodated.
- 1/1/12 Travel to Mbengwi (30 mins drive): and attend church service in one of the congregations. Relax the rest of the day and have a New Year's feast in the

evening in Dr. Fonjweng's home (another highlight). Watch several cultural dance performances.

- 1/2/12 Tour of the Mbengwi region: Meet with the locals, visit Abi Falls, Tad market and meet with the Chief and village councilors in the Mbengwi palace, visit the Mayor in his office, visit local NGOs that work on development issues.
- 1/3/12 Travel to Buea (Southwest Province, the other English speaking province of Cameroon): This 7 hrs road trip from the Grassfields through the Savanna regions and back to the forest region of Cameroon contains spectacular scenery, which includes a visual ecological transition and elevation changes, going from the Northwest Province, through the Western (French speaking) and Littoral (French speaking) Provinces to the Southwest Province (English Speaking).
- 1/4/12 Tour of Buea (plus shopping for memorabilia) and visit to villages at the foot of Mount Cameroon (meet the locals) and have a tour of plantations of the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC). These plantations were started by the Germans. One of them is a rubber plantation that was started to produce raw materials for the manufacture of vehicle tires to feed the German war machine. View a traditional music and dance performance from the region.
- 1/5/12 Travel to the seaport town of Limbe (20 minutes drive): This town is named after River Limbe that flows through it. It was initially named Victoria by the Baptist missionary, Alfred Saker who discovered the town and whose statue is still present in the town to date. The group will have an outdoor lunch on the Atlantic Shore of Cameroon at Dockyard, Limbe, next to the statue of Alfred Saker. The group will then visit the Limbe museum, the Botanical Gardens and Zoo. Those who are interested will go out for a social evening.
- 1/6/11 Visit Bimbia, part of the Transatlantic Slave Route. This is near Debunsha, the second rainiest place on earth. We will see relicts of a slave holding area and view an enactment of some of the activities that took place at Bimbia back in the time of slavery. Drive to the seaport town of Douala (the economic capital of Cameroon) in the Littoral province- one hour drive.
- 1/7/12 Driving tour of Douala town (Cameroon's economic capital): Visit shops, supermarket, the seaport, statues of prominent kings of Douala and other tourist attractions. Participants will have a briefing on the legacies of the kings of Douala and their relationships with colonial authorities. Depart Douala for USA at about midnight.
- 1/8/13 Arrive USA.

Trip leader

Dr. Godlove Fonjweng will be the leader of this trip. He was born in Cameroon, and received his bachelor's degree from Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania and his master's and doctorate degrees from the University of Pennsylvania. Godlove currently serves as Director of Global Education at Wilkes University, where he is in charge of Study Abroad and International Scholars programs, among other things. Godlove has previously served as Assistant Dean for Advising and Adjunct Professor at the University of Pennsylvania, Special Assistant to the Provost and Director of Academic Advising at Cheyney University of Pennsylvania, and Assistant Professor at Philadelphia University. Godlove has led many cultural and mission trips to Cameroon for student and non student groups.

Trip Cost- \$4,000.

Includes:

- Round trip air travel from Newark international Airport or JFK to Cameroon and back
- All ground transportation in Cameroon
- All meals and accommodation in Cameroon

Excludes:

- All travel within the US
- Cost of passports, visas and vaccinations
- All meals outside of Cameroon
- All shopping costs

Registration Dateline: 9/20/2011, but may close sooner, if trip fills up before dateline.

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