

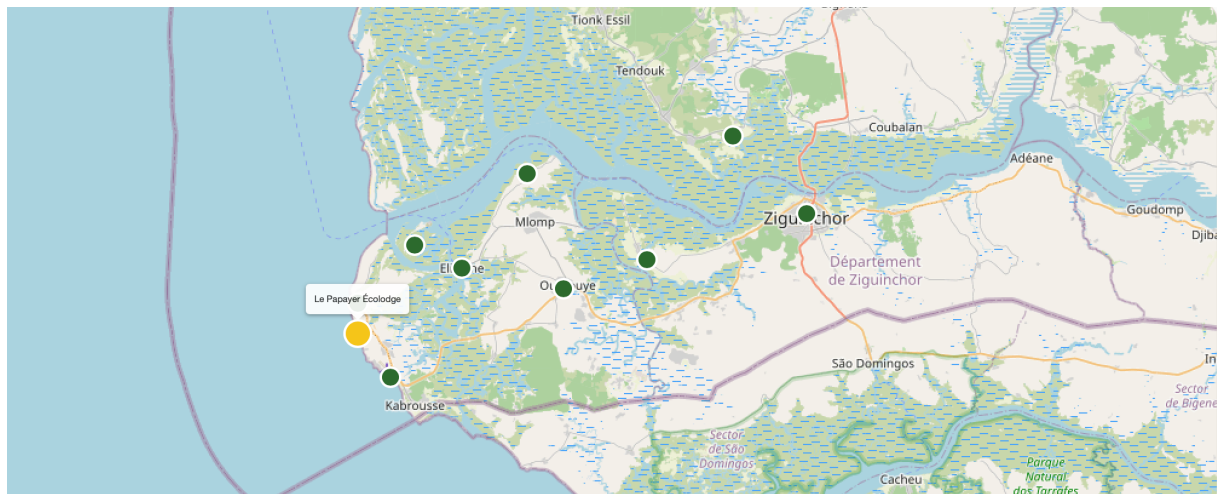
🌴 Travel Journal: Immersion in Casamance 🌴

Discoveries and excursions from Le Papayer Ecolodge - Cap Skirring

Our immersive excursion map

Le Papayer Ecolodge is your base camp: from here, all our excursions radiate out towards the islands, the bolongs, Diola villages and the markets. Tap a point to discover it.

(Photos: Le Papayer Ecolodge - all rights reserved)



The destinations of our excursions around Le Papayer Ecolodge.

Great guides are becoming rare, and those who remain honour the knowledge passed down by their elders. A great guide has two precious skills: speaking their guests' language with ease, and knowing exactly who they are addressing. Because Casamance is a mosaic of peoples

— **Diolas, Mandingues, Peuls, Balantes, Baïnouks, Manjaques, Mancagnes, Wolofs, Sérères** — with different languages, beliefs and customs, bringing together animist, Christian and Muslim traditions. Our guides know this ethnic patchwork from the inside: from one village to the next, they know which traditions to honour and how to build a dialogue. It is this **dual mastery — language and terrain** — that turns a visit into a genuine encounter.

À LA CARTE

Our excursions, destination by destination

Tailor-made guided day trips. This is the spirit of our excursions — the precise itinerary is planned with you, according to the season, the tide and your wishes.



Carabane, the car-free island

Once a colonial trading post at the mouth of the river, Carabane is reached by pirogue. Sandy lanes, an old church, deserted beaches and lunch with your feet in the water: a timeless escape.

Carabane Island, located at the mouth of the Casamance River, has a rich and turbulent history that makes it a major witness to the colonial period in West Africa. Ceded to France in 1836 by the local village chief, it quickly became the first administrative capital and the first major French trading post in Casamance. In the 19th century, Carabane was a bustling strategic crossroads, first serving as a hub for the slave trade, then prospering through the trade in peanuts, rice, rubber and cotton. However, at the dawn of the 20th century, the island gradually declined: its limited draught for large ships and the development of land-based infrastructure led the colonial administration to transfer the capital to Ziguinchor in 1904. Today, this peaceful island, where no cars circulate, seems frozen in time, offering visitors a glimpse of its prestigious past through colonial ruins overgrown with vegetation, its former prison, and its impressive Breton-style church built in 1885.

4x4 + Pirogue + Swimming Day



Manatees at Pointe Saint-Georges

We head upriver in search of manatees — and sometimes dolphins. On site, a climb into the great kapok tree offers a breathtaking view over Casamance, followed by lunch overlooking the water.

Pointe Saint-Georges, nestled on the southern bank of the Casamance River, is one of the last natural refuges in Senegal for the African manatee (*Trichechus senegalensis*), a discreet and protected aquatic mammal. Often nicknamed the “river mermaid”, this peaceful herbivore finds an ideal ecosystem in the bolongs and calm, mangrove-fringed waters of Pointe Saint-Georges, rich in seagrass on which it feeds daily. These fascinating animals, which can weigh several hundred kilograms, are observed with the utmost respect: traditional pirogue excursions favour a silent approach so as not to disturb them. This site, which bears witness to the region’s rich birdlife and aquatic biodiversity, perfectly illustrates the importance of local conservation efforts to protect this fragile sanctuary from environmental threats and poaching, helping to preserve this emblematic wildlife of Casamance.



The Wild Bolongs of Boudédiète

At the far reaches of Casamance, on the border with Guinea-Bissau, we venture by pirogue into some of the region's most pristine mangrove channels. Silence, birds, fishing in the bolongs: the most secret side of Casamance.

Located in the heart of Lower Casamance, the wild bolongs of Boudédiète embody the region's secret, untouched soul. Venturing into this natural labyrinth by traditional pirogue means leaving the modern world behind and entering a sanctuary where the tide alone sets the rhythm. This intricate network of waterways, islands and dense mangroves forms an exceptionally rich ecosystem, a true nursery for local marine biodiversity. It is a place of absolute silence, disturbed only by the gentle lapping of water against the boat or the distant call of a migratory bird. Beyond its wild beauty, Boudédiète offers travellers a fully immersive experience: traditional, respectful fishing, the observation of rare birdlife and, around a bend, a glimpse of the ancestral way of life of local communities living in close symbiosis with these life-giving waters. It is, above all, a destination for lovers of authentic nature seeking the most mysterious and untouched side of Casamance.

Pirogue + Fishing Day



Essaout, the oyster village

Trolling for barracuda along the water, then on to the mangrove oyster village: a picnic of fresh oysters harvested from mangrove roots, an experience found nowhere else.

Located in the wetlands of Lower Casamance, not far from the border with Guinea-Bissau, the village of Essaout is an essential stop for discovering the Casamance way of life shaped by the river. The village is particularly renowned for its symbiotic relationship with the mangrove, an ecosystem where mangrove oysters (*Crassostrea gasar*) reign supreme. Unlike conventional farmed oysters, these oysters attach themselves naturally to the aerial roots (stilt roots) of mangroves plunging into the brackish waters of the bolongs. Harvested by hand, often at low tide by the village women, these wild oysters are prized for their powerful briny taste, firm flesh and unique flavour, born from the mingling of river freshwater and the salt tides of the Atlantic. Eating these fresh oysters, harvested just moments earlier directly at the foot of the mangrove, is a raw and authentic culinary experience — a true reflection of the abundance and preservation of the ecosystem in this remote part of Casamance.



An Audience with the King of Oussouye

A rare meeting with the King of Oussouye, guardian of Diola traditions (bring your questions). The day continues at an artisanal cashew-processing workshop and towards the mysterious village of Djiromaïte.

At the heart of Diola country, the Oussouye excursion offers the rare privilege of meeting King Sibiloumbaye Diedhiou, spiritual guardian and custodian of his people's ancestral traditions. Far more than a simple visit, this audience at the royal court offers a glimpse into the essence of Diola society, where traditional leadership still plays a fundamental role in mediation, conflict resolution and the preservation of social cohesion. The king, a true moral authority who lives in accordance with centuries-old rites, embodies the wisdom of a culture that has crossed the centuries while preserving its deep identity. This solemn and respectful exchange offers a unique immersion in a world where animism and local beliefs continue to shape village life, giving travellers a precious perspective on the cultural and spiritual richness of Casamance.



Énampor, Diola Architecture

The famous impluvium house: a huge round house made of earth and thatch, designed to collect rainwater at its centre. Lunch beneath its roof, in the cool shade, in an authentic Diola village.

Nestled in the heart of Diola country in Lower Casamance, the village of Énampor perfectly illustrates local architectural ingenuity through its famous impluvium houses. These unique, fortress-like circular dwellings are built from earth and thatch, with a roof sloping inward towards a large central opening. This ingenious system collects rainwater directly in a basin in the middle of the inner courtyard to meet household needs, while protecting the banco walls from erosion and maintaining a naturally cool environment. A powerful symbol of community life and the resilience of the Diola people, a visit to Énampor offers a striking immersion in an architectural heritage where every detail responds to the challenges of the tropical climate and traditions of family sharing.



Impluvium House and the Village of Afiniam and its Bolong

Navigation and fishing in the Afiniam bolong, followed by lunch in the village's great impluvium house. A day on the water, between rice fields, mangroves and Diola hospitality.

Nestled among the bolongs of Lower Casamance, the village of Afiniam is a sanctuary where Christian faith and animist traditions coexist harmoniously, bordered by a winding bolong ideal for peaceful navigation between mangroves and rice fields. This unique place is distinguished by its impressive great impluvium house, a masterpiece of Diola architecture in earth and thatch, whose circular structure and roof sloping towards a central basin provide ingenious water management and a naturally cool environment. Offering visitors total immersion, this exceptional site also allows guests to spend the night beneath its protective roof, for a rare sensory experience lulled by the calm and history of this authentic village, where the soul of Casamance reveals itself fully between land, water and spirituality.



Ziguinchor, the Capital of the South

The great city of Casamance, its colourful markets overflowing with fruit, its crafts, and the peaceful setting of the Alliance Française for lunch. The vibrant pulse of the region.

Ziguinchor is the economic powerhouse and historic capital of Casamance, a cosmopolitan city that pulses to the rhythm of trade and Senegalese Teranga. The soul of the city lies above all in its vibrant markets, such as Saint-Maur, where the aromas of spices mingle with colourful stalls of exotic fruit and finely crafted local handicrafts. Strolling through its streets means stepping into an authentic atmosphere where everyday life unfolds beneath the shade of great kapok trees, amid weathered colonial façades and the bustle of the river port. Ziguinchor offers a striking urban immersion, ideal for discovering the beating heart of the region, before taking a peaceful break at the Alliance Française, a true cultural haven amid the city's joyful bustle.



Niomoune and the Karone Islands

Set course for the Karone archipelago by pirogue. Niomoune and its four districts, its mystical atmosphere, its fishermen: an island immersion far from everything, with lunch in a village camp.

Nestled in the labyrinthine Karone archipelago, Niomoune is reached by pirogue through an endless maze of mangroves and waterways. Divided into four distinct districts, the village of Niomoune has a mystical, timeless atmosphere, deeply shaped by the Karoninkés, a distinctive branch of the Diola people. Historically isolated by their island territory, the Karoninkés have fiercely preserved their culture, ancestral rites and unique social organisation, marked by a strong community spirit and an intimate relationship with nature. Exploring Niomoune means immersing yourself in this extraordinary island way of life, observing the skills of local fishermen, sharing an authentic lunch in a village camp and absorbing the spirit of one of the most secretive and fascinating communities in Casamance.

4x4 + Pirogue + Island Day



Village of Djembering and the Giant of the Savanna

At the heart of the village stands Senegal's largest kapok tree — a colossal tree, a gathering place steeped in stories. The visit continues at the nearby Ecopark, just a short distance from the lodge.

Just a stone's throw from the lodge, the village of Djembering is home to one of the most impressive natural treasures of Lower Casamance: a colossal sacred kapok tree, a true giant of the savanna and age-old guardian of local traditions. This majestic tree, whose buttress roots spread spectacularly across the ground, is far more than a remarkable tree; it is a place of spiritual gathering and a powerful living landmark for local people. Rich in stories and legends passed down through generations, the site invites contemplation and respect for the forces of nature, ideally extending the discovery to the nearby eco-park for a complete immersion in the rhythm of the Casamance bush.

Half-day 4x4 + Nature + Culture



Cap Skirring, from the Market to Nightfall

The village, its craft market, its colourful pirogues; and when evening comes, dinner shows and live music that keep locals and travellers dancing late into the night. Casamance celebrates.

Washed by the Atlantic Ocean, Cap Skirring pulses to the rhythm of a dual identity, balancing the tranquillity of its coastal village with a warm and lively nightlife. The day begins with the colourful bustle of its craft market and the early arrival of multicoloured pirogues loaded with fresh fish. But it is at nightfall that the seaside resort reveals its other face: the vibrations of live music, from traditional rhythms to Afrobeats, echo through the bars and beach venues. Between lively dinner shows and spontaneous encounters beneath the stars, Cap offers a festive and joyful interlude where travellers and locals celebrate Senegalese Teranga together late into the night.

Half-day + Evening Village + Music