THE MOUNTBATTEN SCHOOL

CGH/JHE

07 May 2025

Dear Parent/Carer

**Expedition to The Gambia, October 2026 (Dates to be confirmed)**

I am delighted to be able to offer your child an exciting opportunity to visit The Gambia in October 2026.

The Gambia is the smallest country on mainland Africa and has an estimated population of 2.8 million people. The Gambia's official language is English and it lies in the same time zone as the UK. The Gambia experiences a warm climate which hosts a wide range of biodiversity making it the perfect location to see a variety of wildlife such as crocodiles, monkeys, chameleons, geckos, snakes and much more. The Gambia also boasts magnificent golden beaches backed by swaying palms; you do not have to look far to see why The Gambia is the known as "The Smiling Coast", as the locals are known to be among the friendliest people you will ever meet!

The expedition may be a 'once in a lifetime' experience for your child, providing an insight into a completely different and fascinating culture within a developing country. The students will uncover the Gambian village way of life by having the opportunity to work closely with our partner school, Mansa-Colley Bojang School, and through a varied programme of cultural experiences which will offer your child a memorable and rewarding expedition. In the run-up to the expedition, our students attending will be required to participate in fundraising activities to sponsor young girls to attend our partnership school for the year, therefore enhancing the volunteering aspect of the whole experience.

The provisional itinerary is:

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| Day 1 | Flight London-Banjul (depart Gatwick, arrive Banjul). Familiarisation walking tour of hotel followed by dinner in the hotel. |
| Day 2 | **4 Wheel Drive adventure** following the coast and uncovering the Gambian way of life including a visit to Tanji (a traditional village) and a reptile farm to see snakes and lizards indigenous to The Gambia. |
| Day 3 | Explore the mangroves of the award winning **Makasutu Cultural Forest** in canoes; nature walk through the forest to glimpse baboons, mongoose and monkeys. Lunch, dancing with the Jola tribe. |

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| Day 4 | **Visit partner school** and pay a courtesy call to the village Chief: learn about the hierarchy and different roles in the village; take part in classes. |
| Day 5 | **Volunteering at Galloya village**. After a warm welcome from the residents and a chance to see village life at first hand, students join renowned Gambian artist, Njogu Touray, to paint a meaningful mural on one of the village compound walls with help from the Gambian villages. |
| Day 6 | **'City and more' excursion** in the morning, visit the Monkey Park, Katchically crocodiles, Bakau Market (you will get the chance to barter for souvenirs) and a drive through the capital Banjul, with commentary. The afternoon will be spent relaxing in the hotel complex with a visit to the local craft market to barter for more souvenirs. |
| Day 7 | **Visit partner school**. Students shadow Gambian students in their lessons. Lunch at the Calypso restaurant with a chance to see crocodiles in the nearby pool. |
| Day 8 | Morning at the hotel. Transfer to airport after lunch (depart Banjul, arrive Gatwick). |

We will be travelling with a reputable travel company, 'The Gambia Experience', who are experienced in successfully arranging school trips to The Gambia. We will be staying in the resort of Koto, at the Kombo Beach Hotel. The cost of the trip will be approximately £1,860.00 and will include all travel expenses, accommodation and breakfast, lunch and dinner during the visit. Students will require their own passport and will need to consult their doctor with regards to immunisations and anti-malarial medication, the cost of which is not included. As you will be aware, the final price cannot be confirmed until the airlines release the flights (usually 12 months before departure date).

Teachers accompanying residential visits carry an enormous responsibility for the students in their care. We therefore reserve the right to refuse a place to any student whose behaviour in school has been or becomes a problem.

You can apply for a place by completing the Google Form below and paying a **£170.00 deposit** via Scopay (if your child is unsuccessful in gaining a place, the deposit will be refunded). The registration form and deposit must be completed by **Friday 6 June.**

**Google Form**: The Gambia Expedition 2026 Registration Form

If your child is successful in gaining a place on this residential visit, we will inform you by email after the deadline for deposits. Should the trip not run due to insufficient interest, you will, of course, receive a full refund. The payment plan will require £130.00 per month from July 2025 to July 2026 (13 monthly payments).

Should you child secure a place, it is the responsibility of parents/carers to make the necessary visa arrangements for entry to the country(s) we are visiting and/or travelling through. The school and/or tour company may be able to signpost you to supporting documents when applying in advance for visas. Please be aware that the insurance policy does not cover any circumstance where the necessary visa has not been obtained in time for the trip departure.

As such, your cooperation in organising the necessary documentation in a timely manner is appreciated. Please check the travel requirements on the Government website: https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice.

We will be running a briefing for parents on **Monday 19 May at 6.00pm** in J9, where we will outline the itinerary and answer any questions you may have. Please indicate on The Gambia Expedition 2026 - Parent Briefing form, your attendance.

Having secured a place, should you wish to cancel your child's place, the school will try to fill the place from any waiting list. If this is not possible, the deposit will be lost and further cancellation charges made by the travel company will be incurred. These will vary according to the notice given.

You may, of course, make a claim on the insurance purchased as part of this trip, if your cancellation comes within the terms of the policy. Please bear in mind that the itinerary may have to change due to conditions or circumstances beyond the school's control.

If you have any further enquiries, please do not hesitate to contact me via info@mountbatten.school

Yours faithfully

C Goodrich (Mr)
Director of Business Services