

# BioTropic

ORGANICS FOR ONE WORLD



**A TRIP TO IVORY COAST**  
11TH TO 16TH MAY 2018





**IVORY COAST**

# A TRIP TO IVORY COAST EXOTIC FRUITS FROM AFRICA

**Ivory Coast is a country in western Africa which, today,** is home to around 24 million people. Its surface area is somewhat smaller than Germany's and it is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean in the south. It borders Liberia, Guinea, Mali, Burkina Faso and Ghana.

Ivory Coast was a French colony for a long time, until it gained independence in 1960. At the time, the French exported ivory, coffee, cacao, rubber and palm oil in great style. Unfortunately, elephants are practically extinct in the Ivory Coast today. We were also on the look-out for giraffes, wild cats and monkeys, but in vain.

The national language today, French, comes from its time as a French colony, as does the official name of the country, the "Republic of Côte d'Ivoire". 70 further languages are spoken alongside French. Alongside the African natural religions, the main religions are Islam and Christianity.

Despite obligatory attendance at primary school, the illiteracy rate is high. The government is continuously working to modernise the country's infrastructure which, compared to other African countries, is already very good. In spite of the revitalised upswing, many people continue to live below the poverty line.

**Ivory Coast is situated only 400 kilometres from the Equator** and thus has the ideal climate for cultivating tropical fruits. Pineapples, mangoes and coconuts are as natural to our latitude as apples and potatoes – it is only that these cannot thrive in Central Europe at all. Tropical fruits have been familiar to Europe for a long time; Christopher Columbus enjoyed pineapples. Originally, the pineapple comes from America, from where it had already been distributed to most tropical regions of the world as early as the 16th century. In the 17th century, pineapples were cultivated in heated greenhouses in the Netherlands, which was very time-consuming and costly. In England, pineapple cultivation in local greenhouses became the fashion among the nobility. For a long time, pineapples were a luxury item in Europe.

It was only from the middle of the 19th century, with the advent of steam ships which were able to travel across great distances quickly and reliably, that pineapples were able to be imported and sold at lower prices.

Even today, the name „Toast Hawaii“ refers to the fact that the tinned pineapple, i.e. the type of pineapple which was affordable for the population around 1900, originated from the leading pineapple cultivation area of the time, Hawaii. In this way, every product has its story – the fact is that we have to import these exotic fruits from distant countries in order to be able to have the opportunity to enjoy them.

## BIOTROPIC IMPORTS ORGANIC FRUIT FROM IVORY COAST

**Why does BioTropic import tropical fruits from Ivory Coast?** BioTropic imports organic fruits and vegetables from all parts of the globe. However, establishing our own cultivation projects is even better than just importing and supporting the growers on site. In this manner, we are able to directly influence and control the social standards and regulations for organic cultivation and, for example, can decide how to further invest in our own projects through the profits made.

Based on these thoughts and, because BioTropic employee Kuemkwong Siemefo recognised the potential and the suitability of Ivory Coast, we began to push ahead with our own organic pineapple cultivation project in 2008. In addition to our own crop land, small farmers in the surrounding area are integrated into the project and are mentored in agricultural technology.

**Ivory Coast was once very prosperous**, but then the prices for cacao fell, which led to the economic crisis. Since then, the country has been shaken by civil wars and corruption. Due to the reduction in cacao prices, its cultivation is no longer viable for small family businesses and more than 40 percent of the population live below the poverty line. As BioTropic, we can create perspectives here with the cultivation of organic pineapples, as the people require urgent help.

**Our motto, “100% organic”, doesn’t stop at the German border.** We have it good in Germany, but what about those people who work for us in third countries? We don’t want to extort them, but rather to help them achieve foundations for livelihoods worth living across the globe.

# ORGANIC AGRICULTURE IS ONLY MADE POSSIBLE WITH DEVELOPMENT WORK

**Together with its partner company, Ivoire Organics, BioTropic is providing very successful development aid in Ivory Coast.** Ivoire Organics was founded by BioTropic, together with a regional partner in Ivory Coast. The company cultivates its own crop land and works in close cooperation with the farmers whose products are imported by BioTropic. Together, BioTropic and Ivoire Organics have implemented two very successful development aid projects, through which organic agriculture was introduced to Ivory Coast for the very first time. The activities carried out by Ivoire Organic are “beacon projects”, with their beams set on ecological cultivation and socially responsible working conditions in the cultivation regions.

**These PPP projects (Public Private Partnership)** have been co-financed by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation (BMZ) and carried out together with the Deutsche Investitions- und Entwicklungsgesellschaft (DEG) [German Association for Investment and Development]. Within the framework of PPP projects, “transfers of know-how” in ecological cultivation are carried out via comprehensive training measures, e.g. how solar-powered wells are built and how packaging machines, vehicles and agricultural machines can be acquired.

**Currently (2018), Ivoire Organics is using its own funds to build a modern packing house** near the city of Abidjan. This is where the locally-cultivated organic pineapples and coconuts shall be prepared for export. Additionally, comprehensive processing technology will be installed. This will enable a wide range of products and creates true added value on site: the preparation of dried fruit, the production of juices and coconut oil, as well as the bottling and packaging of products. In doing so, more qualified jobs will be created and the value-added chain on site will be extended – this provides for a giant additional boost in development.

**Our two employees and agronomists** Kuemkwong Siemefo and Messan N’ditsi are supervising the project, and are active on-site in Ivory Coast as well as in Duisburg. The leader of the entire project is Kuemkwong Siemefo, our Africa specialist at BioTropic. Messan N’ditsi is a specialist in soil fertility and crop protection.



**Picture above**  
Africa Project Manager and Agricultural Economist  
Kuemkwong Siemefo



**Picture below**  
BioTropic Agricultural Engineer Messan N’ditsi

The pair have diverse scopes of work: the planning and coordination of cultivation, harvest, as well as the handling of the fruits and transportation by ship to Europe. Furthermore, the organisation of packaging material, required certifications, as well as training courses for employees. Other tasks include the frequent contact with chambers of commerce and official bodies in African countries.

**“A clear development has taken place compared to 2008,”** reports Kuemkwong Siemefo. “In the meanwhile, approx. 150 containers of organic pineapples, mangoes and coconuts are exported per year. The farmers in the community identify with their work and that also motivates us.”

### **Introduction of Social Standards**

Ivoire Organics is aware of its pioneering role as a socially-responsible employer in the region and, in addition to its EU Organic Certification, introduced the GLOBALGAP Certification as early as in 2012, a standard which determines requirements for occupational safety, hygiene and machine equipment within the framework of “good agricultural practice”.

In 2014, the **Naturland Certification** was implemented, which contains a module on social standards which was expanded in 2017 through the **GRASP Certification**, in order to completely guarantee the safeguarding of social standards.

GRASP stands for “GLOBALG.A.P. Risk Assessment on Social Practice”, and is a voluntary additional module which was developed in order to assess social practices in an agricultural enterprise. It is concerned with specific aspects of occupational safety, health protection, and the social issues of workers. GRASP expands the GLOBALG.A.P. Certification with questions regarding the working conditions at the certified business and helps to protect one of the most important resources of the said business: its people.

**In the meantime, around 400 small farmers,** agricultural workers and employees at packing stations in Korhogo and Bonoua are profiting from this hand-in-hand project. Taking into account the actual average family size of five persons in an Ivory Coast household, approximately 2,000 people are currently benefiting from this project.

# THE FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF OUR TRIP

**In order to give our customers an impression** of how the organic cultivation of our tropical fruits in Ivory Coast works, we went on a trip with them on site through the organic cultivation regions.

**In Ivory Coast, nothing is like it is in Europe.** First of all, it was warm and humid when we arrived in Abidjan, despite it being “winter”. The land has a special smell which is typical to tropical countries, which you stop noticing after only a short time. Dusk starts setting in as early as 6 p.m. throughout the entire year because, due to the country’s vicinity to the Equator, the length of the day barely changes at approx. 12 hours of daylight, and the differences between summer and winter are very small.

**The landscape is dominated by red soil.** Away from the paved streets, even those streets in the capital city of Abidjan, with its 5 million inhabitants, merge directly into dirt roads. There are few supermarkets and shops, as we are used to seeing. You can’t always get petrol at the petrol stations, and the towns and villages seemed very simple.

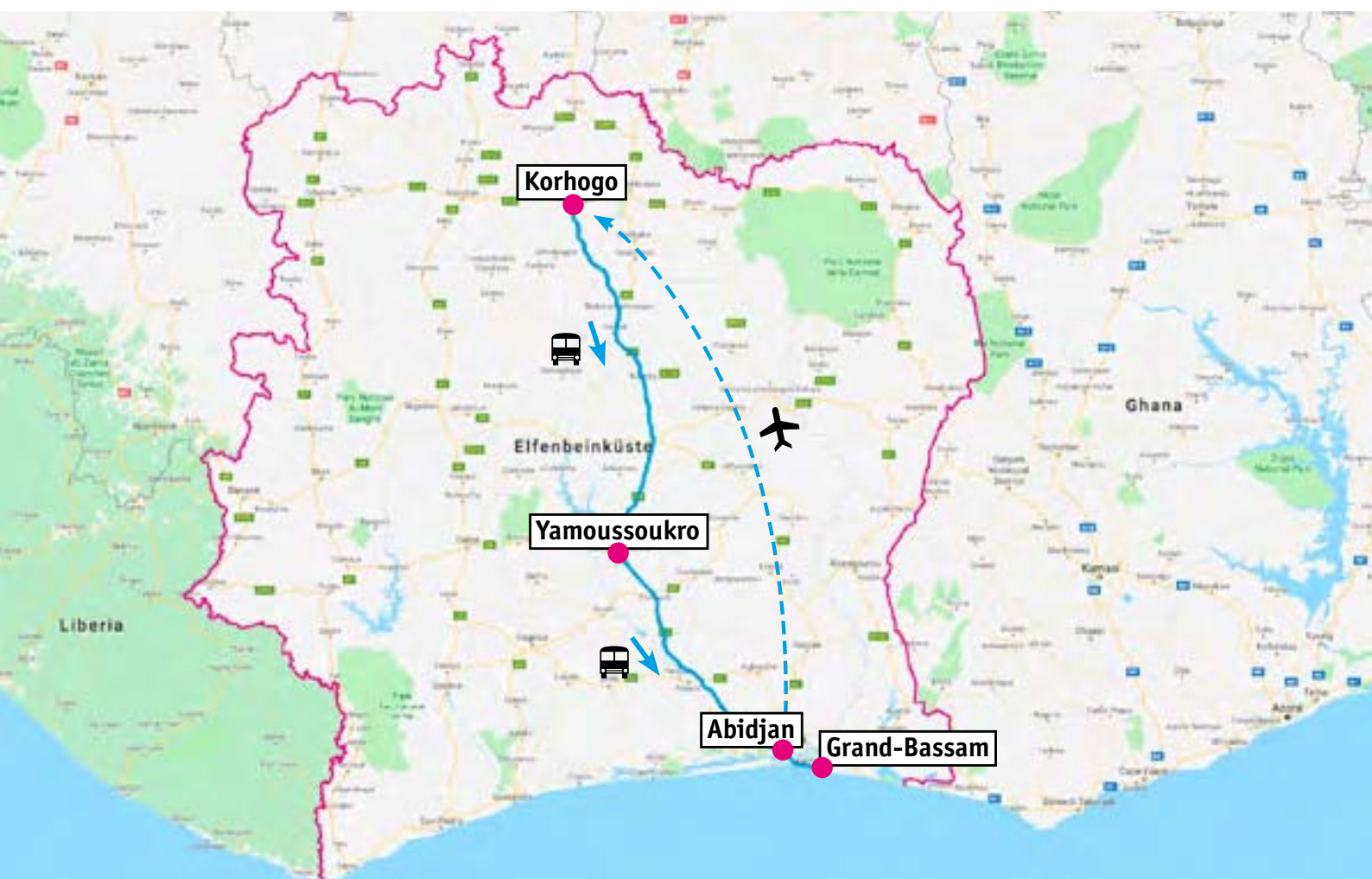
On the internal flight from Abidjan to Korhogo, from a bird’s eye view, it became clear to us: The country is green and fertile! So why are the people so poor? The answer lies in the lack of means in those places where they are needed. A farmer receives no credit in order to build up a business, as the money is given to those people who enrich themselves personally, instead of those who use it to finance sensible projects.

To us, the people appeared full of the joys of life, and well-fed. The women wear dresses made from bright materials and, at the same time, carry out hard, physical labour. While we are used to complaints about mere trifles in Europe, the people in Ivory Coast hardly complain at all, despite their lack of material resources.

**With regards to vaccinations and entry visas,** the preparations for the trip are very time-consuming. There are no travel guides about Ivory Coast, and little information about the people, culture and relationships on the ground. Is it dangerous to travel there? How are the streets, places and accommodation? How will the people treat us and what dangerous animals will we encounter? To be upfront: We were not exposed to any dangerous situations, nor were we threatened by any people or animals. With their giant potholes, some of the streets are really dangerous, and you should only be out and about during hours of daylight.



# THE ITINERARY



# THE STATIONS ON OUR TRIP

<b>Friday</b>	<b>11th May 2018</b>	page 9
	Flight to Abidjan via Paris 2 hours time difference, arrival 7:20 p.m.	
<b>Saturday</b>	<b>12th May 2018</b>	page 11
morning	Internal flight from Abidjan to Korhogo 600 km, flight time 1 hour 20 minutes	
midday	Arrival in Korhogo, lunch at the Hotel Olympe	
afternoon	Visit to the mango packing station and mango drying facility in Korhogo	
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>13th May 2018</b>	page 17
morning	Tour of the cashew and mango plantation	
midday	Bus trip from Korhogo to Yamoussoukro 300 km country road, approx. 6 hours	
<b>Monday</b>	<b>14th May 2018</b>	page 24
morning	Visit to the Notre-Dame-de-la-Paix cathedral in Yamoussoukro	
midday	Bus trip from Yamoussoukro to Grand Bassam 275 km motorway, approx. 3 hours	
evening	Tour of the new packing station building in Larabia, near Bonoua	
<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>15th May 2018</b>	page 27
morning	Pineapple planting by farmers	
midday	Own planting of pineapples in Samo and current packing station	
afternoon	Coconut plantation in Assouindé	
<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>16th May 2018</b>	page 39
morning	Walk in Grand Bassam	
afternoon	Artists' market in Abidjan	
evening	Transfer to the airport in Abidjan and return flight 10:30 p.m. Departure from Abidjan	
<b>Thursday</b>	<b>17th May 2018</b>	
morning	Arrival 8 a.m. in Paris and onward flight home	

# THE TRAVEL GROUP OUT AND ABOUT

**Those who took part in the trip** were employees from cooperating companies, as well as employees from BioTropic.

In addition, the employees of a large cardboard manufacturer and the employees of a manufacturer for special drying ovens also accompanied us for some stretches and stations of the trip. It was very interesting for all travellers to see all the processes involved in the cultivation of the various organic products and, what's more, to receive insights into the acquisition of the equipment.

**The trip was a challenge for all involved**, with 14 travellers out and about on the streets of Africa. At this point, we would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to Kuemkwong and Messan for the perfect organisation of the trip!

**All participants experienced up-close** how local conditions such as the climate, the environment, distances and the mentality of the people underlie the cultivation of organic products in Ivory Coast.

**The route along jolting roads that we covered with the bus in Ivory Coast** is the same one which our lorry travels on a daily basis with the harvest from the field to the harbour. It is very impressive to experience how much effort, energy and work is contained in the cultivation, in the harvesting and in the transportation of the fruits which later stock the shelves of our organic supermarkets, in correspondence with our criteria.

#### **The Travel Group**

*BioTropic Germany*  
Kuemkwong Siemefo  
Messan N'ditsi  
Udo Bürk  
Regina Kerz

*BioTropic France*  
Willem Bakker

#### **Ivoire Organics Travel Group**

Stephan Goa  
Pélagie Aboi



# FLIGHT TO IVORY COAST – ABIDJAN FRIDAY 11TH MAY 2018

The travel group made its way from various areas of Germany to Paris, and from there we flew together to Abidjan.

The time difference between Germany and Ivory Coast is minus two hours, meaning we arrived in good time during the evening in Abidjan.

We met the manager of Ivoire Organics, Stephan Goa, in the hotel, as well as Amacodou Diouf, our mango grower from Senegal, who wished to form an impression of the conditions in Ivory Coast for himself. Both accompanied us on our trip.



# DOMESTIC FLIGHT FROM ABIDJAN TO KORHOGO SATURDAY, 12 MAY 2018

We finally set off! We should actually have travelled by bus, but the journey via the road network is very time-consuming and tiring. For this reason, we made the outward journey of 600 kilometres to Korhogo by air.





# MANGO PACKING STATION IN KORHOGO



# MANGO PACKING STATION IN KORHOGO



# MANGO PACKING STATION IN KORHOGO





# MANGO PACKING STATION IN KORHOGO



# MANGO PACKING STATION IN KORHOGO

# CASHEW AND PINEAPPLE PLANTATION\* BUS TRIP FROM KORHOGO TO YAMO USSOUKRO SUNDAY 13TH MAY 2018

During the adventurous bus trip from Korhogo to Yamoussoukro, we see a lot of the country. Stretches of wild forested regions alternate with agricultural fields and simple villages.

[\*= Note on the term "plantation": the crop land is usually collectively owned by a large family – e.g. the plantation belonging to the Coulibaly family, where each of the cousins, uncles, children cultivate a plot.]



## ON THE WAY TO THE CASHEW PLANTATION



# NASSARA KAMAGATE'S CASHEW PLANTATION



# BOIKARY COULIBALY'S MANGO PLANTATION



# BOIKARY COULIBALY'S MANGO PLANTATION



# THE MANGO PLANTATION AND SURROUNDING AREA



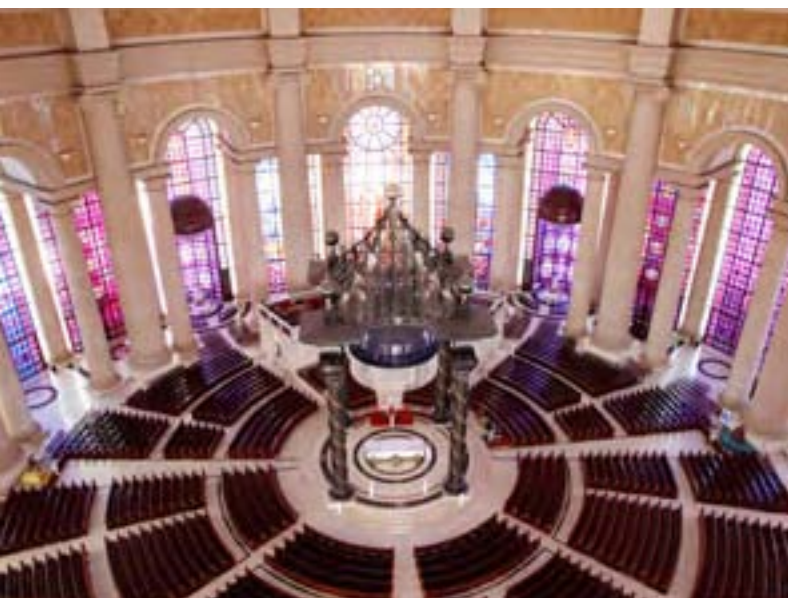
300 KM ON THE BUS VIA THE COUNTRY ROAD





300 KM ON THE BUS VIA THE COUNTRY ROAD

# NOTRE-DAME-DE-LA-PAIX CATHEDRAL IN YAMOUSSOUKRO BUS TRIP FROM YAMOUSSOUKRO TO GRAND BASSAM TOUR OF THE NEW PACKING STATION BUILDING MONDAY 14TH MAY 2018



# NOTRE-DAME-DE-LA-PAIX CATHEDRAL IN YAMOUSSOUKRO



**ON THE WAY TO THE NEW PACKING  
STATION IN LARABIA, NEAR BONOUA**



# THE BUILDING SITE OF THE NEW PACKING STATION IN LARABIA

# PINEAPPLE PLANTING AND COCONUT PLANTATION TUESDAY 15TH MAY 2018



# ADAMA SAWADOGO'S PINEAPPLE PLANTATION NEAR SAMO



# ADAMA SAWADOGO'S PINEAPPLE PLANTATION NEAR SAMO



# ADAMA SAWADOGO'S PINEAPPLE PLANTATION NEAR SAMO



# ADAMA SAWADOGO'S PINEAPPLE PLANTATION NEAR SAMO





# IVOIRE ORGANICS' OWN PINEAPPLE PLANTATION



# IVOIRE ORGANICS' OWN PINEAPPLE PLANTATION



# IVOIRE ORGANICS' OWN PINEAPPLE PLANTATION



# CURRENT PINEAPPLE PACKING STATION



# CURRENT PINEAPPLE PACKING STATION



# PEOPLE LIVING NEAR THE PACKING STATION



# ZARE INOUSSA'S COCONUT PLANTATION NEAR ASSOINDÉ



# ZARE INOUSSA'S COCONUT PLANTATION NEAR ASSOINDÉ



# LAST DAY: WALK IN GRAND BASSAM, ARTISTS' MARKET IN ABIDJAN, RETURN FLIGHT WEDNESDAY 16TH MAY 2018



## FORMER FRENCH COLONY IN GRAND BASSAM



# FORMER FRENCH COLONY IN GRAND BASSAM

# SUPERMARKET IN ABIDJAN AND ARTISTS' MARKET





# SUPERMARKET IN ABIDJAN AND ARTISTS' MARKET





**GERMANY**



**IVORY COAST**

**Legal notice**

Travel organisation | Udo Bürk, Messan N'ditsi

Photos & design | Regina Kerz

Text | Regina Kerz, Udo Bürk

# BioTropic

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**BioTropic GmbH**

Daimlerstraße 4  
D - 47167 Duisburg

Phone + 49 (0) 203 51 87 60  
Fax + 49 (0) 203 51 87 63 60

info@biotropic.com  
www.biotropic.com