



# Freetown cost savings

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Freetown is the capital of Sierra Leone and is located just north of Liberia in West Africa. It can be a difficult place to get to. Many of the guides online are just incorrect and do not tell you all of the information. We provide time and money saving tips, guide information as well as the best Freetown tour (which is in a Tuk Tuk). Make sure to read this prior to your arrival in the country to get the most out of these recommendations.

Freetown travel is not as straight forward as we thought. In fact the airport for the capital city is actually located in a totally different town and area. Therefore deciding on how to get here in advance is crucial to saving time and money for true Freetown on a budget.

While planning your Freetown travel and if you choose to fly in, you will be arriving into the International Airport in Lungi (FNA) which is located either a taxi + a ferry ride away or a 3-5 hour drive away. In addition, the airport charges you \$25 USD to come into the airport and another \$25 USD to leave via the airport.

There are 2 private ferries running daily. Seacoach Express and SeaBird Express. As mentioned above, these are \$45 USD per person per direction and they are comfortable, reliable and quick. The only way to purchase tickets is to go to the terminal to buy them. There is a bus shuttle that will take you from the airport to the ferry terminal and back. However, communicating with these ferries is very difficult to find out schedule times, etc.,

**PRO TIP:** Due to the poor communication with the ferries, here are a few What's App numbers to gain schedule information: Emmanuela: +232 75 023481 and VSL Travel Sierra Leone: +232 76 258258

Driving into Freetown from the airport does take 3-5 hours depending on traffic. However, it is quite scenic and since this option is direct from the airport to your hotel in Freetown, it may save you some time and frustration. The quotes for this drive, that we received were \$200 USD and more. However, we found a great driver who speaks English and is a nice person and guide. Our drive during the day took 3 hours and the cost was \$80 USD from our Lungi Airport Hotel to our hotel in Freetown.

For travelers heading between Conakry and Freetown, we strongly recommend utilizing the direct ferry service. This modern and reliable option eliminates the need to travel to and from Lungi Airport, saving you valuable time and money. Instead, you'll depart from and arrive in the heart of Freetown, bypassing the lengthy airport transfer. In addition to avoiding the \$45 USD one-way ferry fee, you'll also save the \$25 USD one-way airport tax.

The recommended way to get the best rate for your money in Sierra Leone is to exchange it on the black market. Very few stores accept credit cards. And even if they do, you will lose money in the exchange, as the

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official exchange is at least 10% worse than the black market rate. The same goes for the ATMs. In addition, ATMs do not always have money and then with the lower exchange rates and fees you will be losing quite a bit.

Therefore, we recommend that you bring either USD or Euros with you to get the best exchange rate. The more you exchange, the better the rate that you will receive. In addition, the notes should be clean, crisp ones that are from 2013 or newer.

So how does one find a black market currency dealer? Well, it isn't that hard and this is done very openly and casually. Many stores will have a preferred exchange rate. In addition, on the streets you will see many people with stacks of cash asking if you want to exchange. Get a few quotes and take the best one. Unfortunately you will not be able to exchange the Leones back to any foreign currency. Therefore, make sure that you are not exchanging more than you need.

West Africa is an interesting and chaotic place. There is so much history and strife here. We really felt it in the capital of Sierra Leone. Unlike the colors and vibrancy of Benin (a country with similar slave trade horrors), here it was dirtier and dustier. It was also much harder to get to, given the distance between the airport and the city.

In this Freetown travelguide we shared how to travel Freetown on a budget, through the various ways that one can save time and money to get in and out of the capital (whether by taking the Conakry to Freetown ferry or driving in). We also talked about how to save money and enjoy Freetown on a budget through the black market currency exchange as well as the best things to do in Freetown.

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