

Senegal

Couched between the arid desert lands of the north and lush tropical forests in the south, Senegal boasts a stunning array of sights, sounds and flavours. The capital Dakar alone hands you the country in a capsule. Perched on the tip of a beach-lined peninsula, this dizzying city is composed elegance and street hustler rolled in one. Its busy streets, vibrant markets and glittering nightlife will easily draw you into their relentless rhythm, but the escape route is always open – be it to the meditative calm of the historical Île de Gorée or the golden sands of Yoff and N’Gor. And if Dakar’s sensory overload really gets too much, the calm sway of the architectural beauty Saint-Louis, the first French settlement in West Africa, boasts a vibrant urban culture without the inner-city bustle.

Most visitors head to Senegal for its beaches, and for good reason. North and south of Dakar, wide strips of white sand invite swimming and sunbathing, whether in the built-up resort zones, where a lazy day at the beach can be followed by a cocktail trail at night, or in one of the coast’s charming fishing villages, whose beaches are dotted with hundreds of colourful wooden pirogues. At the wide deltas of the Casamance and Saloum Rivers, the straight coastline is broken up into a maze of thick mangroves, tiny creeks, wide lagoons and shimmering plains. A pirogue trip through these striking zones reveals hundreds of bird species, from the gleaming wings of tiny kingfishers to the proud poise of pink flamingos. Whether you want to mingle with the trendsetters of urban Africa, or be alone with your thoughts and the sounds of nature – Senegal is the place to be.

FAST FACTS

- **Area** 196,192 sq km
- **Capital** Dakar
- **Country code** ☎ 221
- **Famous for** Its hospitality; vibrant music scene; Dakar’s urban culture
- **Languages** Wolof, Fula, Diola, Serer and French
- **Money** West African CFA franc; US\$1 = CFA544.89; €1 = CFA655.96
- **Population** 11.1 million
- **Visa** Not needed for citizens of the EU, Canada, Norway, South Africa, Japan, Israel, USA and several other (mainly African) countries. For all others, one- to three-month visas cost about US\$15 to US\$20



HIGHLIGHTS

- **Casamance** (p731) Weave your way via tiny villages to Senegal's best beaches in Cap Skiring.
- **Saint-Louis** (p712) Follow in the footsteps of history in West Africa's first French settlement.
- **Dakar** (p683) Spend sleepless nights touring the capital's vibrant nightclub, bar and concert scene.
- **Siné-Saloum** (p705) Wind through the mangroves of the Siné-Saloum Delta in a pirogue.
- **Kedougou** (p723) Hike across the hills of the remote Bassari country.

ITINERARIES

- **One Week** Spend a couple of days tasting the nightlife, arts and restaurant scene of **Dakar** (p683). From here, take day trips to the peaceful **Île de Gorée** (p696) and **Île de la Madeleine** (p697). Head north to visit the historical town of **Saint-Louis** (p712). And travel further north to visit the **Parc National des Oiseaux du Djoudj** (p717) and **Parc National de la Langue de Barbarie** (p717). On your way back to Dakar, take in the **Desert de Lompoul** (p712).
- **Two Weeks** Start as above, then head from Dakar south to the Petite Côte. Stop at the chilled-out fishing villages of **Toubab Dialao** (p701) and **Popenguine** (p702) before following the shoreline further south to **Mbour** (p704) and the unique seashell town **Joal-Fadiout** (p705), if you like your beach life local, or **Saly** (p703), if you're more at home in a holiday resort zone. From Mbour, trace the coastal road beyond to **Palmarin** (p705), the stunning entry port to the region of the Siné-Saloum Delta, then head via **Ndangane** (p706) and **Mar Lodj** (p706) for **Toubakouta** (p707), one of the prettiest spots in the Delta.
- **One Month** Follow the two-week itinerary as described, then cross The Gambia from Toubakouta to reach the Casamance. Head straight for the peaceful villages of **Kafountine** (p735) and **Abéné** (p736), then take the route towards Ziguinchor, with side trips to **Affiniam** (p734) and **Koulaban** (p734). Spend a couple of days in **Ziguinchor** (p727), the region's relaxed capital. Head west towards **Oussouye** (p731), with a detour via **Enampor** (p731), with its stunning *campement villageois* (village 'camps'

or guesthouses). From Oussouye, pass via **M'Lomp** (p731) and visit its traditional *cases étages* (two-storey mud-brick houses), then carry on towards **Elinkine** (p732) and take a pirogue to **Île de Karabane** (p732). Take a couple of pirogue excursions, then ask your driver to steer his wooden boat towards **Cap Skiring** (p732), where you can spend a few days chilling at Senegal's best beaches. Take a couple of days to visit **Boucotte** (p734) and **Diembéring** (p734). Return to Cap Skiring to take the plane to Dakar, or the long road back to the capital.

- **Six Weeks** In six weeks, you can visit pretty much the entire country. Continue from the Casamance towards **Tambacounda** (p720) and the **Parc National du Niokolo-Koba** (p721). Keep going south towards **Kedougou** (p723) and the **Bassari Country** (p723). In this part of the country you can go for long hikes in the mountains, take in the strong traditional culture of Bassari and Bédik villages and the stunning sights of plateaus, waterfalls and forests. From here, it's a long way back to Dakar. Stop at **Kaolack** (p711), **Diourbel** (p710), the holy town of **Touba** (p710) before re-entering the capital. Alternatively, travel from Tambacounda towards **Bakel** (p719), then follow the river route via **Matam** (p719), **Podor** (p719) and the amazing **Île à Morphil** (p719) towards Saint-Louis, then back to Dakar.

CLIMATE & WHEN TO GO

Senegal's main tourist season is from November to February, during the dry season, and the 'coolest' months. Dakar average daytime maximums are around 24°C (75°F) from January to March. It's also the best time to spot wildlife (particularly migratory birds). If you are the partying kind, the urban centre of Dakar is a great place to spend Christmas and New Year. Several of Senegal's famous dance and music festivals take place between March and June, when temperatures are higher, though the climate is still dry. See Climate Charts, p813.

The wet months from late June to late September see far fewer visitors, as some national parks become inaccessible or even close, malaria is a major problem and the heat and humidity presses down on the country. But it's also the time everything

HOW MUCH?

- **Soft drink** CFA300
- **Newspaper** CFA200
- **Sandwich** CFA1000
- **French bread** CFA150
- **One hour Internet access** CFA300

LONELY PLANET INDEX

- **Litre of petrol/gas** CFA500
- **Litre of bottled water** CFA400-600
- **Bottle of Flea beer** CFA500-1000
- **Souvenir T-shirt** CFA1500-5000
- **Shwarma** CFA750

is green and beautiful, and many hotels reduce their prices by up to 50%.

Since you're travelling to a predominantly Muslim region, it's worth checking the lunar calendar, particularly for the dates of the fasting month Ramadan. Though it's perfectly possible to visit during Ramadan, and the month's special ambience is worth experiencing, many restaurants close and the entertainment scene is in hibernation. See p818 for more information on Islamic holidays.

HISTORY

Evidence of organised societies from early in the first millennium AD has been discovered in parts of Senegal (for instance the ancient burial shell mound *diorom bumag* near Toubakouta), and the area was part of the great empires of Ghana (which flourished between the 8th and 11th centuries), Mali (13th to 15th centuries) and Songhai (16th century). Smaller empires or kingdoms were also established during that period. Along the Senegal River, the Tukulur built the Tekkur empire in the 9th and 10th centuries; and as Mali's power began to wane, the Wolof people united several areas into the Jolof empire in the central region of Senegal.

European Arrival

In 1443, Portuguese explorers reached the mouth of the Senegal River – a moment that marked medieval Europe's first direct contact with West Africa. The following year

they landed at Cap Vert, near present-day Dakar, and later settled on Île de Gorée – a vital base for ships trading along the coast.

By the 16th century other European powers had become increasingly active in West Africa. For the next two centuries the English and Dutch fought with the French over the islands of Gorée and Saint-Louis, and with it for control of the lucrative trade in gold, ivory and, most importantly, slaves. In 1659 the French developed a trading station in Saint-Louis at the mouth of the Senegal River, and in 1677 finally secured Gorée.

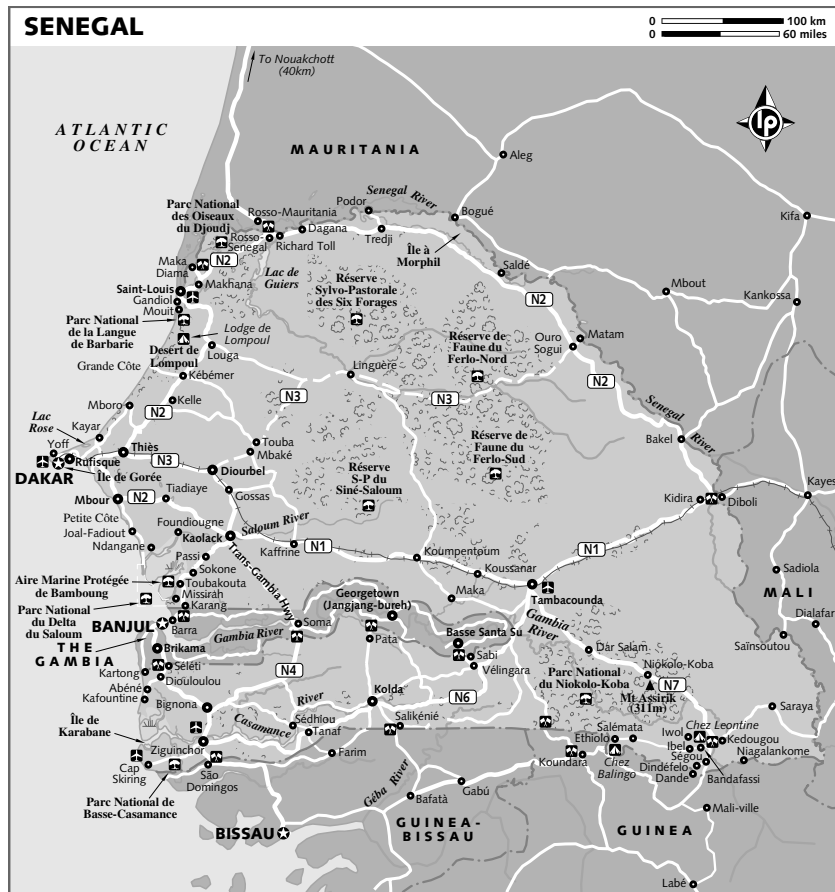
During the 18th century, Saint-Louis grew in size and importance, but after the slave trade was banned in 1815, the French were forced to look for new sources of wealth. Louis Faidherbe was appointed governor in 1845, and forced the local people near the Senegal River to grow groundnuts as a cash crop. Over the next few decades, French forces moved inland, and Senegal became the gateway to the large territory of Afrique Occidentale Française (French West Africa).

Meanwhile, El Hajj Omar Tall, a marabout (Muslim holy man) who hailed from the Fouta Toro region in northern Senegal, had established a vast empire with Segou (in today's Mali) as its centre. His soldiers spread west into Senegal, where they clashed with French forces. A chain of forts along the Senegal River (including Bakel, Matam and Podor) and Sudanese-style 'Omarian' mosques still bear witness to the confrontation of cultures and interests of that era. Faidherbe also established a settlement opposite Île de Gorée, which later became Dakar.

El Hajj Omar Tall's forces were defeated by the French in 1864, but his missionary zeal inspired followers to continue the 'Marabout Wars', as they were called, for another three decades. Soldiers of the Wolof king Lat Dior, for instance, repeatedly hindered French attempts to build a railway between Dakar and Saint-Louis. Another thorn in the French side was a marabout called Cheikh Amadou Bamba (p710), whose 1857 Islamic brotherhood of the Mourides became a hugely popular focal point of anticolonial sentiment.

The Colonial Period

At the Berlin Conference of 1884–85, following the 'Scramble for Africa' (p37), the continent was divided between powerful



European states. While Britain, Germany and Portugal got most of East and Southern Africa, the greater part of West Africa was allocated to France. At the end of the 19th century, French West Africa stretched from the Atlantic to present-day Niger. In 1887, Africans living in the four main French settlements in Senegal (Dakar, Gorée, Saint-Louis and Rufisque) were granted limited French citizenship. Saint-Louis was the capital of the region until administration was shifted to Dakar in 1902.

In the early 20th century, things began to change. In 1914, Senegal elected its first black African delegate, Blaise Diagne, to the French national assembly in Paris. After WWI, an increasing number of Senegalese

studied in France. One of them was Léopold Sédar Senghor. He became the first African secondary-school teacher in France, began writing poetry and founded *Présence Africaine*, a magazine promoting the values of African culture.

Senghor was an astute politician, and began building a personal power base that resulted in his election as Senegal's representative to the French national assembly. Meanwhile, the political influence of the marabouts had steadily increased, and through the 1950s Senghor made several secret deals with leading religious figures, allowing them limited autonomy and control of the groundnut economy in return for their public support.

Independence

In the late 1950s, Senghor gained support from French Sudan (present-day Mali), Upper Volta (present-day Burkina Faso) and Dahomey (present-day Benin) to form a single union, the Mali Federation. But his plan failed when Upper Volta and Dahomey withdrew under pressure from France and Côte d'Ivoire. On 20 June 1960, Senegal and Mali became independent while remaining in the French union, and Senghor became the first president. But two months later, the Senegal-Mali union broke up, and French West Africa was divided into nine republics.

Senghor was a popular president, but the early years of independence did not always run smoothly. In 1968, student riots at the University of Dakar were answered with military pressure, though conflicts were only resolved when the students were promised reforms. The 1970s were less turbulent and Senghor held on to his position. In 1980, after 20 years as president, Senghor did what no other African head of state had done before – he stepped down voluntarily. His hand-picked successor Abdou Diouf took over.

One of Diouf's first major acts as president was to help the Gambian head of state Dawda Jawara regain power after he had been ousted in a coup, by sending in Senegalese military. Cooperation between the two countries was formalised through the establishment of the Senegambia Confederation later that year.

In 1983 and 1988, Diouf's Parti Socialiste (PS) defeated a loose opposition, led by Abdoulaye Wade, in elections widely thought to be rigged. During the latter election, Wade was arrested and charged with intent to subvert the government. He received a one-year suspended sentence and left for France. By this time, the Senegambia Confederation was in trouble, and in 1989 it was completely dissolved. But while Diouf was contending with this break-up and calls for political reform, he had two other major problems to deal with: a dispute with Mauritania and a separatist movement in the southern region of Casamance (see p725).

Wade returned from exile and stood again in the presidential election of 1993. Diouf won, but both Wade and his Parti Démocratique Sénégalais (PDS) had claimed a significant percentage of the vote.

Wade's Sopi Campaign

Though the 1998 parliamentary elections were again won by Diouf, the growing power of the opposition became undeniable.

By the time voting began for the next election in 2000, Wade's *sopi* campaign (Wolof for 'change') had captured the imagination of the nation. Wade was elected and power was transferred peacefully. The people of Senegal were rightly proud of this affirmation of the strength of their democracy, and in January 2001 90% voted for the new constitution allowing the formation of opposition parties and giving enhanced status to the prime minister. Real change, however, was disappointingly slow.

Senegal Today

In 2002, the country was shaken by a huge tragedy when the *MS Joola*, the ferry connecting Dakar and the Casamance capital, Ziguinchor, capsized due to dangerous overloading, leaving almost 2000 people dead. It is also thought that Wade's subsequent dismissal of his entire government is related to their handling of the catastrophe.

Also in the Casamance, separatist rebellion smouldered, despite a 2001 peace deal. Another accord signed between the MFDC and Wade's government in 2004 showed some results, and the situation in southern Senegal finally began to calm down, give and take occasional unrest that goes on to this day.

However, the president's controversial decision to arrest former prime minister Idrissa Seck on accusations of undermining state security and embezzling funds while working as mayor of the commune Thiès sparked clashes between Seck's supporters and police and sent the country into a flurry of political debate. In February 2006, Seck was released and all charges are dropped, probably in order to reunite their joint party PDS in good time before the next presidential and parliamentary elections in 2007.

THE CULTURE The National Psyche

Senegal takes great pride in being the 'Land of Teranga' – meaning 'hospitality'. The national football team is called 'Lions of Teranga', and plenty of hotels and restaurants have adopted the name. Much of this is promotional hype, but as these things go, it's indeed rooted in that proverbial kernel

of truth; people tend to be open and welcoming towards visitors.

In the busy tourist areas, it can be hard to tell the difference between true hospitality and a 'con job', devised to trick you into some unplanned spending. The further you get away from the resort zones, the more 'real' society gets, and you can relax your shoulders and practise your rudimentary Wolof or French – people will be keen to teach you their language.

In Senegal, conversation is the key to local culture, and the key to conversation is a great sense of humour and a quick-witted tongue. The Senegalese love talking, teasing and testing you out, and the better you slide into the conversational game, the easier you'll get around. Someone mocks your habits? Don't tense up, retaliate with a clever remark, and you're likely to be on your way to an entertaining evening. People don't mean harm laughing at you, and the ability to laugh at yourself is just as important an item in your luggage as your malaria pills and T-shirts.

Daily Life

The majority of Senegalese households are polygamous, the Qur'an allowing men to take up to four wives (see below). Families are large and, as elsewhere in Africa, the extended family with its clearly defined rules of interrelations, responsibilities and respect, plays a

vital role. Unmarried children, particularly women, stay at their parents' home until they are wed, which is when men establish their own household, and women join their husband. Marrying is a pricey business, and many men don't have the necessary means at their disposal to take this step until they are in their mid-20s. It's therefore not unusual (nor discreditable) for men of this age to still occupy a room in their parents' house. In the case of a divorce, the woman usually rejoins her family, bringing her children with her. Single women, or single-mother households (by choice), or even houseshares of young female students that are common in the Western world are virtually unheard of.

As to be expected, traditional family relations tend to remain more deeply preserved in rural regions than in the cities. There are exceptions, however, as many young men leave their villages to seek work in the cities or abroad, some rural communities show a worrying absence of men, and women raising a large number of offspring on their own are becoming increasingly common.

A second factor that determines daily life is religious faith. In most Senegalese homes, you'll notice the portraits of marabouts looking down earnestly from the walls. Men often join Senegal's influential Islamic brotherhoods for religious learning, while women tend to be the ones who mainly

consult them for advice in mystic matters, such as protection for their children and ways of keeping a husband faithful.

Population

Senegal's population is young – around 42% people are under 14 years old. The greatest density is around the urban areas of Dakar – the rapidly growing, impoverished suburb of Pikine is a vivid example of the flight towards the cities and the problems this entails. However, the government is taking some decided measures to combat the country's strong centralisation, even contemplating moving the capital to a completely new location.

The main ethnic group of the country is the Wolof. They account for 43% of the population, and their language and culture is dominant. Smaller groups are the Fula (around 24%), Tukulor, a sub-branch of the Fula, who make up 10%, Serer (14%) and Diola (5%). Geographical distribution and cultural differences of these groups all lie with Senegal's precolonial history of empires. With the exception of the Diola, these ethnic groups are structured in a hierarchical fashion where the freeborn (rulers and traders) are at the top, followed by professional occupational groups, including griots (traditional musicians and oral historians) and blacksmiths, and formerly the slaves. These structures still determine much of social life, though other aspects, such as economic success and education are also important.

RELIGION

About 90% of the population is Muslim. What's distinctive about Islam in Senegal, is the importance of Sufi brotherhoods, primarily that of the Mourides. Christian faith is most widespread among the Diola in Casamance, and to a lesser extent the Serer in the Siné-Saloum region and the Bassari around Kedougou. Traditional religious forms (sometimes called animism) are most commonly practised in the Christian areas. Elements of animism have also found their way into the practice of Islam and Christianity.

ARTS Literature

Senegal is has a prolific literary output, but most works are only published in French.

Filmmaker Ousmane Sembène started out as a writer, and is still among the

country's best-known authors. The most influential writer is probably Léopold Senghor, the country's first president. Studying in France during the 1930s, he coined the term 'negritude', which emphasised black-African ideas and culture, countering the colonial policy of 'assimilation'. Naturally, these beliefs influenced Senghor's own political thought.

Great female authors include Aminata Sow-Fall and Mariama Ba, whose short novel *So Long a Letter* is one of the most sensitive, intimate and beautiful contemplations of female lives in a polygamous society. Fatou Diome is a young author whose 2004 debut novel, *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique*, became an unexpected bestseller in France; it has since been translated into German. Perhaps her success will persuade publishing houses to work on an English translation, too.

The philosophical contemplation of religion and colonisation *An Ambiguous Adventure* by Cheikh Hamidou Kane has almost achieved the status of a Senegalese classic.

Cinema

Senegal is one of the most productive nations in African cinema. The doyen of Senegalese cinema is Ousmane Sembène. From his first 1962 production *Borom Saret*, a moving black-and-white tale about an inner-city horse-cart driver, through to the 2006 release *Moolaade*, which treats the sensitive subject of female circumcision, he has used cinema to shed a critical eye onto Senegalese society, history and culture.

Other famous directors include the illustrious Djibril Diop Mambety and the younger Joseph Kamaka Gaye whose acclaimed work *Karmen Gei* sets the classic story of Carmen in a Senegalese context.

Dakar's annual Festival International du Film de Quartier (see p740) is the place to spot future big names.

Music

Senegal is one of Africa's most musical nations, and names such as Youssou N'Dour, Baaba Maal and Ismael Lô are famous worldwide. The beat that moves the nation is *mbalax*. Created from a mixture of Cuban beats and traditional, fiery *sabar* drumming in the late 1970s, *mbalax* was made famous by Youssou N'Dour, still the unrivalled leader of the scene. Since

POLYGAMOUS MARRIAGES

When singer Youssou N'Dour (opposite) married a second wife in 2006, he set Senegal's paparazzi machine and boulevard press in motion, in a way only he can. In the following months, the debate around polygamy took up plenty of column space in Senegal's glossies. Young women were dismayed at the iconic singer's move, having seen in his monogamous status an influential example worth following by their male peers. The defenders of polygamy – you guessed it, mainly men – rejoiced, welcoming Youssou back into the more traditional fold.

The Holy Qur'an, which guides the lives of the vast Muslim majority of Senegal, allows men to take up to four wives, normally on the condition that they can equally provide for and love all of them. And that's really the crux of the issue – can one man equally love four women? Most women would say no, pointing an accusing finger at the many men who bring a pretty young wife into the family home once they've 'tired' of their first, aging, spouse.

Western women generally find it inconceivable to share their husband with another wife, and though Africa's women are generally resigned to this reality, few welcome it with joy, secretly praying that their partner will proudly spell the word 'monogamy' when asked about his choice at the civil wedding.

And a word of caution to the men who might dream of such rights – managing a polygamous household can be hard work. Wives tend to be jealous of one another, and resentment is often spread quite purposefully from the mothers to their children. All of this means a family home where tensions brew easily, and it's the head of the house that is expected to calm escalating situations.

MARABOUTS AND BROTHERHOODS

Take a tour around Dakar, and you are bound to notice the images of two veiled men, one dressed in white and the other in black, painted on numerous walls, cars and shop signs. They are the portraits of Cheikh Amadou Bamba, the 19th-century founder of the Mouride brotherhood, and Cheikh Ibra Fall, his illustrious follower and spiritual leader of the Baye Fall, a branch of Mouridism. *Télécentres* (telephone centres) and tailor shops are named after them, their names are written broadly across *cars rapides* (minibuses) and a vast number of pop songs, from *mbalax* (a mixture of Cuban beats and traditional, fiery sabar drumming) to hip-hop, praise the two revered personalities.

While orthodox Islam holds that every believer is directly in touch with Allah, Muslim faith in Senegal is more commonly channelled via saintly intermediaries who are ascribed divine powers and provide a link between God and the common populace. The concept of the marabout-led brotherhood was imported to Senegal from Morocco, where a spiritual leader is known as a *cheikh*, or *khalif*, terms that are also used in Senegal. The earliest brotherhood established south of the Sahara was the 16th-century Qadiriya. Today, most Qadiriya followers are Mandinkas, both in southern Senegal and in The Gambia.

The Moroccan-based Tijaniya brotherhood was introduced to Senegal by El Hajj Omar Tall in the mid-19th century, and remains powerful today, with large and important mosques in the towns of Tivaouane and Kaolack.

With over two million followers, the Mouridiya established by Cheikh Amadou Bamba is by far the most important brotherhood (see p710), and its power has consistently grown since the mid-19th century. The rise of Mouridism is closely connected to colonial expansion and popular resistance to the measures imposed by the French. Colonial administration weakened, or completely disabled traditional structures of governance, rendering the chiefs powerless, and leaving their subjects without respect-worthy leaders. The evolving structures of the brotherhoods were remarkably close to the societal organisation that had been lost, which made them extremely attractive to a population that sought to preserve its autonomy and oppose the colonial power.

For many years, Cheikh Amadou Bamba was a humble marabout, not more, perhaps even less, renowned than any other religious leaders of his time. Part of his rise to fame is due to the total adherence of his most famous *talibe* (student), Cheikh Ibra Fall. He was wholly devoted to the marabout, and demonstrated his commitment less through study than through hard, physical labour. 'Lamp' Fall, as he is often called, renounced Quranic study, and refused the Ramadan fast, stating that in order to serve God, he required all his time and bodily force to work hard. He soon gathered his own group of followers, the Baye Fall. Baye Fall adepts are traditionally recognisable by their long dreadlocks, heavy leather amulets containing pictures of their marabout, and patchwork clothing (not all follow the dress code), and to this day, the Baye Fall tend to be the hardest workers in the Touba region, building mosques and preparing fields for cultivation.

As the Mourides and Baye Fall gained immense popularity, the French began to fear their impact, and forced Cheikh Amadou Bamba into exile. His return in 1907 is still celebrated by the annual Magal pilgrimage (p710) to Touba.

Today, the Mourides, together with the ensemble of other brotherhoods, hold an almost worrying sway over politics and economics. About a quarter of the population hang on to every word of the *khalif* of the Mourides – a word that can thus easily decide the outcome of an election. The Mouride leaders also largely control the profitable groundnut trade, and see their immense wealth and subsequent economic impact further swell thanks to the donations they receive from their followers.

its inception, *mbalax* has evolved, always adapting to changing fashions without ever losing its essence. The always impeccably suited-and-tied Thione Seck has married the beat with Indian-style vocals. Senegal's 'street kid' Omar Pene and his band Super Diamono were the first to replace the con-

gas of a standard *mbalax* outfit for a drum kit in 1974 – a move that has been copied ever since. Youssou N'Dour's sister-in-law Viviane N'Dour is one of Senegal's major style icons, mixing sexy *mbalax* beats with breathy, R&B-inspired vocals. And then there's a whole new generation that causes

havoc on the region's dance floors, including such excellent performers as Abdou Guité Seck, Ablaye Mbaye, Aliou Mbaye N'Der and Titi.

In the 1960s, Cuban music was the most prominent influence, and Senegal still has a vibrant salsa scene. The most famous salsa orchestra is Orchestra Baobab, who reformed in 2001 and now tour regularly, luring audiences onto dance floors with their inimitable grandfather charm. The father of Senegalese music, however, is an artist that's lesser known today – Ibra Kasse, leader of the defunct Star Band de Dakar. In the line-up were Pape Seck and the illustrious Gambian-born singer Labah Sosseh. When the Star Band divided into glittering pieces, Etoile de Dakar emerged, which proved the rocket for Senegalese star Youssou N'Dour.

Influencing popular music are the griots (*gewel* in Wolof), West Africa's traditional praise singers, genealogists and oral historians (Youssou N'Dour is a griot on his mother's family lineage). The griots' soaring voice rings from modern recordings as well as traditional ceremonies, and their ancient repertoire forms the basis of many pop tunes.

Senegal has an exciting hip-hop scene, with leading names including: Positive Black Soul (who emerged in the mid-1980s), Daara J, Pee Froiss, Carlou D, Chronik 2H and Sen Kumpe. On a quieter side, Afro-folk is represented by artists such as Xalam, the Frères Guisse and Diogal Sakho.

And then there are of course the many artists that don't fit in any of the categories. Famous are Cheikh Lô, whose music is a moving mix of *mbalax* and Latin music; Turé Kunda, who stormed the world with their smooth Afro-pop in the '80s; and Baaba Maal, the voice of the Tukolor.

Architecture

Prominent examples of historical architecture are the French colonial houses of Saint-Louis, Île de Gorée and Rufisque, as well as the ancient Faidherbian forts of Podor and Bakel. In northern Senegal, you will also find some late-19th-century 'Omarian' mosques in Sudanese style. Interesting local house constructions, range from the *banco* (mud-brick) architecture typical of the Tukolor and the stone huts of the Bassari to the *cases étages* (two-storey, mud-brick houses) and *cases à impluvium* (huge round huts with a

hole in the roof to collect rainwater) that are found in the Casamance.

The most famous contemporary architect is Pierre Goudiaby, who designed both Arch 22 (p300) and Banjul airport in The Gambia.

Painting & Sculpture

Senegal has a vibrant contemporary arts scene. Well-known painters include Souleymane Keita and Kambel Dieng; leading sculptors are the world-famous Ousmane Sow and the emerging Gabriel Kemzo, who specialises in metal sculptures.

Senegal is particularly renowned for the unique art of *sous-verre* (reverse-glass painting). Outstanding artisans include Moussa Sakho (who has a workshop at the l'Institut Français in Dakar), Babacar Lô, Andy Dolly, Séa Diallo, Mbida and Gora Mbengue.

And don't forget to keep your eyes open for the everyday art that gives Dakar its particular character. The city's *cars rapides* and taxis are draped in decorative writings and images. Reproductions of the portraits of Cheikh Amadou Bamba and Cheikh Ibra Fall adorn walls around town, and painted profiles outside hairdressers' salons add spots of colour to ragged barbershops.

ENVIRONMENT The Land

Senegal is Africa's westernmost country; the continent's western tip, Le Point des Almadies, lies just north of Dakar. It comprises an area of just under 200,000 sq km, which compares in size to England and Scotland combined.

Senegal is largely flat, with a natural vegetation of dry savanna woodland. The country's western border, some 600km in length, is marked by the shores of the Atlantic Ocean.

Senegal has four major rivers, which flow east to west from the Fouta Jallon highlands in Guinea to the Atlantic Ocean. The Senegal River is the northernmost. The Gambia River flows through Senegal's only mountainous area (the lands surrounding Kedougou) before entering The Gambia itself. In the far south the Casamance River gives the surrounding region its name, and the Saloum River enters the ocean via a large delta to the south of the Petite Côte. This is a zone of labyrinthine mangrove swamps, salty plains, lagoons, small creeks and river islands.

Wildlife ANIMALS

Main areas for bird-watching include the Parc National des Oiseaux du Djoudj, the world's third-largest bird sanctuary; the Parc National de la Langue de Barbarie; and the mangrove areas of the Casamance and the Siné-Saloum Delta. Inland, the dry Sahel landscape supports several arid-savanna species that are seldom seen elsewhere in Africa.

Easily recognised mammal species include baboons and three types of monkeys (vervet, patas and red colobus), while Parc National du Niokolo-Koba contains chimpanzee populations. The park also has drier grassland areas where antelope species (including cob, roan, waterbuck and Derby eland) roam, and there's a chance of seeing hyenas, buffaloes and hippos. Crossing the main road through the park in the early morning, you stand a reasonably good chance of spotting a lion near the roadside.

PLANTS

Senegal lies in the Sahel zone, with a natural vegetation of well-dispersed trees (eg baobabs) and low scrub. Some northern areas come close to being desert, and the greenest zones are the Casamance in the south and the Siné-Saloum, where lush estuary vegetation, including mangroves, lines creeks and rivers.

National Parks

Senegal has six national parks: Parc National du Niokolo-Koba (p721) in the southeast, the largest with a wide range of habitat types; Parc National du Delta du Saloum (p708; coastal lagoons, mangroves, islands and dry woodland); the Île de la Madeleine (p697) near Dakar; and in northern Senegal, Parc National des Oiseaux du Djoudj (p717) and Parc National de la Langue de Barbarie (p717), both noted for their bird life. Parc National de Basse-Casamance has been closed for years because of rebel activity and suspected landmines.

Other protected areas include the Ferlo wildlife reserves, the Réserve de Bandia (p701), the small reserves of Popenguine and La Somone (the latter a community reserve; see p703), and the Aire Marine Protégée de Bamboung, an area of protected sea, also managed by the local community.

Environmental Issues

Overfishing, deforestation and coastal erosion are the main environmental issues the country faces. Coastal erosion is mainly caused by illegal sandmining. In Malika near Dakar, the problem has become so great that lines of trees, and the first tourist venues of a once vibrant holiday village are being claimed by the sea. In another bitter twist, the sand mined isn't even particularly suitable for building, as its high salt content ruins the metal skeletons of concrete constructions.

Overfishing is caused by both local fishermen and large European boats, and has reached such an extent that Senegal's characteristic fish, the *thiof*, is beginning to become rare. The community-run Aire Marine Protégée de Bamboung, established to protect endangered fish species, is showing an impressive rate of success in replenishing the species, but only covers a small area.

Deforestation is partly caused by a growing demand for farmland, mainly to cultivate groundnuts, but trees are also felled for firewood and to make charcoal, much of which is used to smoke fish.

FOOD & DRINK Staples & Specialities

Senegal's national dish is the *tiéboudienne* (spelt in different ways, and pronounced chey-bou-jen). The word means fish and rice, and refers to a delicious dish of rice cooked in tomato sauce and served with chunks of fried fish, often stuffed with parsley and garlic paste, carrots, cassava and other vegetables. The festive variation is *tiebouyape* (or *yollof* rice), where fish is replaced by meat.

Another regional favourite is *yassa poulet*, grilled chicken marinated in a thick onion and lemon sauce. Occasionally chicken is replaced by fish or meat, changing the name to *yassa poisson* (fish) or *yassa bœuf* (beef).

Mafé, a meaty groundnut sauce served with rice, is another typical dish, and among the Fula and Tukolor, *lacciri* (millet couscous) is common, either eaten with a savoury sauce or *kosan* (milk).

Drinks

Locally produced juices include the hibiscus drink *bissap*, *gingembre* (ginger beer) and *bouyi*, made from the fruits of the baobab.

For a caffeine kick, try a *café touba*, a spicy brew served in small cups at roadside

stalls, or *ataaya*, concentrated, bittersweet green tea that's served with the free offer of an afternoon's socialising.

Palm wine is a popular home brew, particularly in the non-Muslim, and palm-tree blessed Casamance.

Celebrations

The meals served for family celebrations are more refined versions of staples. For naming ceremonies, *lakh* (millet porridge) is served with milk or yogurt, and both for baptisms and weddings, *beignet* (small doughnuts) are fried and given to the guests. At Tabaski, every Muslim family slaughters a sheep to commemorate Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son on God's demand (see p819).

Where to Eat & Drink

Dakar's restaurant scene is excellent and varied – but meals in the best restaurants can be expensive. If you're on a budget, head for the *gargottes* (small, local eateries). Be careful, though, some are of rather dubious hygienic quality.

On the tiny side are the Senegalese *tanganas* (literally meaning 'hot stuff'), where you get your *café touba* and a sandwich with sauce. A *dibieterie* is a grilled-meat stall, usually only open in the evenings, and the place people head to before a night out, or before returning home in the wee hours of the morning. Dakar has fantastic patisseries, places to indulge in cakes and croissants, as well as a post-nightclub alternative to *dibieteries* for those who only leave at breakfast.

Vegetarians & Vegans

Vegetarian food is hard to find and, what's worse, there's little understanding why someone who can afford it won't eat meat – vegetarians are for the poor. This means that when you order a dish without meat, you'll still notice a suspicious chicken or fish flavour, just no 'bits'. Prepare for a rather limited variety of food choices during your stay.

Habits & Customs

Meals are traditionally eaten squatting on the floor, grouped around a large platter of rice and sauce. People mostly eat the traditional rice dishes with a spoon or the hand. If you try the hand version, make sure you use your right only – the left is the hand you wipe your bum with and is strictly out at meal times.

It's usually polite to finish eating while there's still food in the bowl to show you have had enough, and the shocked comments of 'you haven't eaten anything, dig in' are more an acceptance of your finishing, rather than actual invitations to eat more.

DAKAR

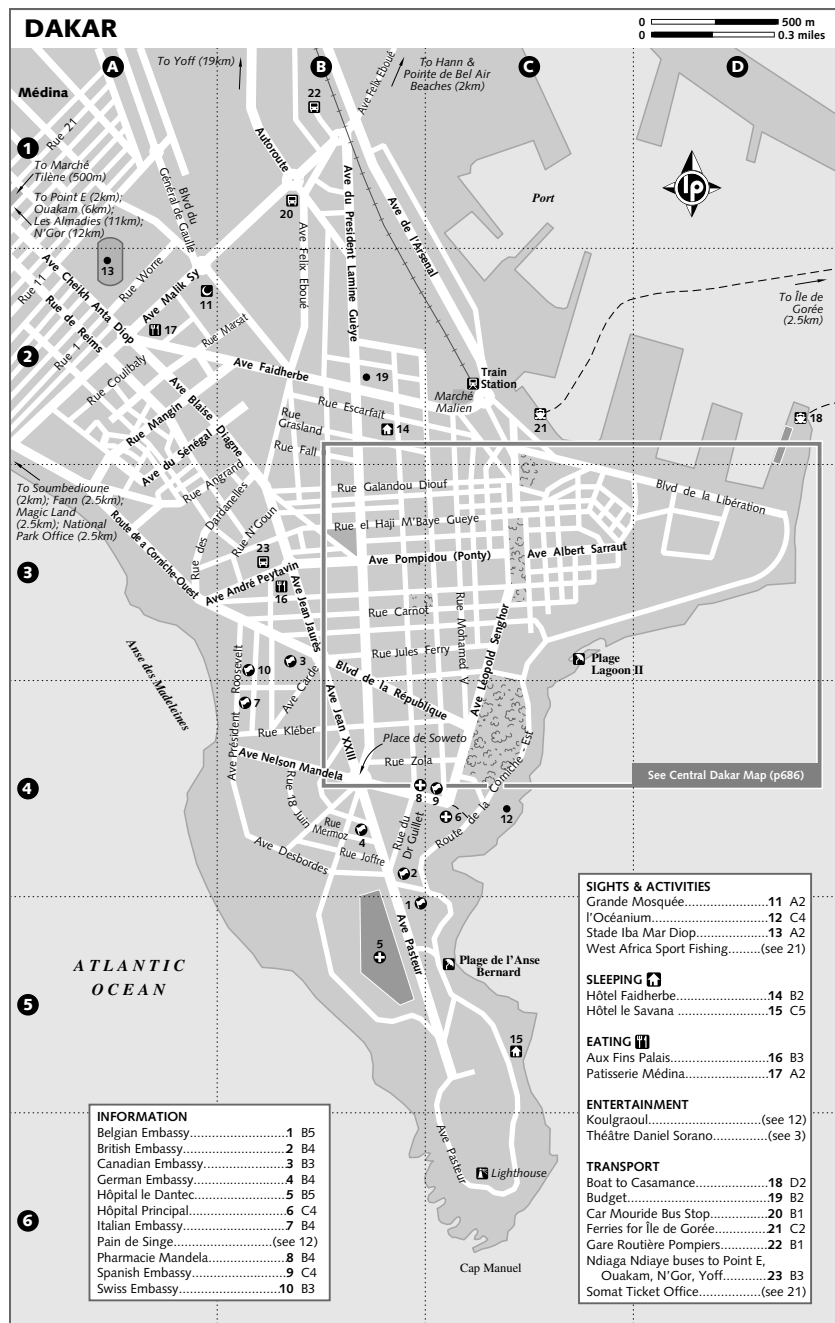
If Dakar only could, it would burst its beaches and lead its cacophonous parade of furious drumbeats, screeching traffic, exuberant nightlife, market shouting, street hustling and boundless creativity in ever-wider circles across the country. This is a feverish city that brims with life. It's got some of the best nightclubs, live venues and film, music and arts festivals in the whole of West Africa. You'll rarely have a boring day in Dakar, and the city charges only an occasional fee in unwanted hassle and sly con-jobs – easily negotiated once you've learnt a few tricks.

ORIENTATION

Once a tiny settlement in the south of the Cap Vert Peninsula, Dakar now spreads almost across its entire triangle. The city's heart is the Place de l'Indépendance, from which Ave Léopold Senghor leads south in the direction of the Palais Présidentiel. Ave Pompidou goes west to the hectic area of Marché Sandaga, while Ave Albert Sarraut takes you east towards Marché Kermel.

The main arteries out of town are Ave du Président Lamine Guèye, which runs north from Place de Soweto, reaching the Gare Routière Pompiers and the main *autoroute* (highway) out of the city. At the eastern edge, the Route de la Corniche-Est (Petite Corniche) winds above cliffs and small beaches, linking the main port to the north.

Ave Blaise Diagne takes you northwest, past the Grande Mosquée and La Médina, to become Ave Cheikh Anta Diop (known to locals as Route de Ouakam). This road runs between Fann and Point E, a pretty, middle-class *quartier* (suburb), before reaching Mermoz, Ouakam, and finally Pointe des Almadies and N'Gor. The Route de la Corniche-Ouest (Grande Corniche) runs along the Atlantic Ocean roughly parallel to Ave Cheikh Anta Diop; here you'll see the city's finest homes.



Maps

By far the best city map is the colourful, detailed one by Editions Laure Kane (www.editionslaurekane.com; CFA3700). You can find it in most souvenir shops and hotels.

INFORMATION

The free listings magazines *Dakar Tam Tam* and *l'Avis* and the pocket magazine *Clin d'Oeil* contain useful phone numbers, including those of embassies and hospitals and are available in hotels, restaurants and shops.

The tiny glossy 221 (CFA500) is an excellent source of information on cultural and sports events around the country, and includes Dakar concert listings.

Bookshops

There's little available in English, the following have English books and magazines.

Librairie aux Quatre Vents (Map p686; ☎ 821 8083; Rue Félix Faure; ☎ 8.45am-12.30pm & 3-6.45pm)

Librairie Clairafrique (Map p686; ☎ 822 2169; Rue el Haji M'Baye Guèye; ☎ 8.45am-12.30pm & 3-6.45pm Mon-Sat)

Cultural Centres

British Council (Map p691; ☎ 869 2700; www.britishcouncil.org/senegal; Rue Joseph Gomis, Amitié Zone A-B) Has a library with English magazines, books and newspapers.

L'Institut Français Léopold Sédar Senghor (Map p686; ☎ 823 0320; www.institutfr-dakar.org; 89 Rue Joseph Gomis) A cultural hub with regular exhibitions, concerts, events. Also has a pretty café, souvenir shop and glass-painters workshop in a leafy garden.

Internet Access

There are plenty of Internet cafés in Dakar. Most charge between CFA300 and CFA500 per hour. Outside the centre, the university area is well covered with cybercafés.

Cyber-Business Centre (Map p686; ☎ 823 3223; Ave Léopold Senghor; ☎ 8am-midnight)

Espace Sentoo (Map p686; Place de l'Indépendance; ☎ 9.30am-8pm)

Espacel Plus (Map p686; ☎ 822 9062; Blvd de la République; ☎ 8am-midnight)

Medical Services

Most embassies have a list of doctors used to dealing with nonresidents, particularly those speaking your language.

Clinique Pasteur (Map p686; ☎ 839 9200; 50 Rue Carnot) This privately run place is not the first choice for emergencies, but good for malaria tests.

Hôpital le Dantec (Map p684; ☎ 889 3800; Ave Pasteur) Has the best-trained staff, but terribly neglected infrastructure.

Hôpital Principal (Map p684; ☎ 839 5050; Ave Léopold Senghor) Fairly well-organised, with the main emergency department in Dakar.

Suma Urgences (Map p691; ☎ 824 2418; Fann Résidence, Ave Cheikh Anta Diop) Can give assistance in emergencies.

Dakar has many pharmacies. Most open from 8am to 11pm, and there's a rotational 24-hour stand-by system; you'll find details of the current 24 hour place outside every pharmacy.

Pharmacie Mandela (Map p684; ☎ 821 2172; Ave Nelson Mandela) Near the Hôpital Principal.

Money

BICIS, CBAO, Citibank and SGBS have offices around Place de l'Indépendance. They all change money, though travellers cheques can sometimes be problematic. Except Citibank, they all have ATMs (withdrawal limit usually CFA250,000) The suburbs are equally well served with ATM-enhanced banks and petrol stations.

BICIS (Map p686; ☎ 839 0390; Place de l'Indépendance; ☎ 7.45am-3.45pm Mon-Fri)

CBAO (Map p686; ☎ 839 9696; Place de l'Indépendance)

Citibank (Map p686; ☎ 849 11 11; Place de l'Indépendance)

SGBS (Map p686; ☎ 839 55 00; 19 Ave Léopold Sédar Senghor)

Post

Main post office (Map p686; Blvd el Haji Djily Mbaye; ☎ 7am-7pm Mon-Fri, 8am-5pm Sat) Near Marché Kermel. This is where you'll find the poste restante. Letters are held for up to 30 days, the cost is CFA250.

Post office (Map p686; Ave Pompidou) Smaller and at the eastern end of Ave Pompidou. Has a small *télécentre* and a Western Union service.

Telephone

There are dozens of *télécentres*, mostly with similar rates. Post offices and Internet cafés often also have telephone facilities.

Travel Agencies

Dakar has plenty of travel agencies. Good ones include the following:

Dakar Voyages (Map p686; ☎ 823 3704; dakarvoyages@sentoo.sn; 28 Rue Assane Ndiaye) Tends to have the best ticket deals.



INFORMATION		Palais Présidentiel.....31 B4	DRINKING ☑
American Embassy.....1 A4	BICIS Bank.....2 C2	Pôle Linguistique de l'Institut Français.....(see 26)	Café Indigo.....60 B3
Cape Verde Embassy.....3 D1	CBAO Bank.....4 C2	SLEEPING ☑	Chez Grenelles.....(see 36)
Citibank.....5 C2	Clinique Pasteur.....6 B2	Hôtel Al Afifa.....32 A3	Iguane Café.....61 B3
Dakar Voyages.....8 C2	Cyber-Business Centre.....7 B3	Hôtel Continental.....33 B1	Le Mex.....62 B2
Dutch Embassy.....9 A4	Espace Sentoo.....(see 17)	Hôtel de l'Indépendance.....34 C2	Le Seven.....63 B3
Espacel Plus.....10 A3	French Embassy.....11 D2	Hôtel Farid.....35 B1	Snooker Palace.....64 B1
Gambian High Commission.....12 B2	Gambian High Commission.....12 B2	Hôtel Ganale.....36 A2	ENTERTAINMENT ☑
Librairie aux Quatre Vents.....13 B3	Librairie ClairAfrique.....14 C1	Hôtel Lagon II.....37 D2	Kadjinol Station.....65 D2
L'Institut Français Léopold Sédar Senghor.....15 B2	Main Post Office.....16 D1	Hôtel le Miramar.....38 B3	King's Club.....66 B3
Mboup Voyages.....17 C2	Nouvelles Frontières.....18 B4	Hôtel Océanic.....39 D1	Playclub.....(see 32)
Post Office.....19 B2	Post Office.....19 B2	Hôtel Provençal.....40 C1	SHOPPING ☑
SDV Voyages.....(see 70)	Senegal Tours.....21 C2	Hôtel Saint-Louis Sun.....41 A3	Cocktail du Sénégal.....67 B3
SGBS Bank.....22 C3	VIA Senegal Voyages.....23 C3	Sofitel Teranga.....42 C2	Galerie Antenna.....68 C3
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES	Assemblée Nationale.....24 A4	Commerce.....25 C1	Marché Sandaga.....69 A2
Chambre de Commerce.....25 C1	Galerie le Manège.....26 D2	Le Méléa.....55 B2	TRANSPORT
Galerie Nationale.....27 D2	Gouvernance.....28 C1	Le Sarraut.....56 D2	Afrique Location.....(see 8)
Hôtel de Ville.....29 C1	IFAN Museum.....30 A4	Le Toukoulour.....57 B3	Air France.....70 C2
Lagon I.....(see 53)	Lagon I.....(see 53)	Ozio.....(see 54)	Air Guinée.....71 B2
		Restaurant VSD.....(see 62)	Air Ivoire.....72 C1
		Savoir d'Asie.....58 C1	Air Mali.....73 B1
		Score Supermarket.....59 C2	Air Sénégal International.....74 C2
			Alitalia.....75 B2
			Dakar Location.....76 B2
			DDD Bus Terminal.....77 D1
			Ethiopian Airlines.....78 B3
			Hertz.....79 A2
			Iberia.....(see 17)
			Noprola.....(see 8)
			Royal Air Maroc.....(see 17)
			Senecartours.....80 A2
			SN Brussels.....81 C2
			South African Airways.....82 C2
			TACV Cabo Verde Airlines.....83 B2
			TAP Air Portugal.....(see 81)

Mboup Voyages (Map p686; ☎ 821 8163; mboup@telecomplus.sn; Place de l'Indépendance) One of the most enduring touring agencies.

Nouvelles Frontières (Map p686; ☎ 823 3434; fax 822 2817; 3 Blvd de la République) Often has cheap seats to Paris on charter flights.

Pain de Singe (Map p686; ☎ 824 2484; paindesinge@arc.sn) Unbeatable for ecotourism, off-the-beaten track and original circuits. You can contact it at l'Océanum (p688).

Sahel Découverte Bassari (Map p686; ☎ 842 8751; bassari@bassarisenegal.com, carresahel@sentoosn; 7 Rue Masclary) This company has a range of inspired tours around Senegal and caters for English, French and Spanish speakers.

SDV Voyages (Map p686; ☎ 839 0081; dksrdvagv@sdsven.net; 51 Ave Albert Sarraut) The Diners Club agent.

Senegal Tours (Map p686; ☎ 839 9900; fax 823 2644; 5 Place de l'Indépendance) One of the largest tour operators in the country. Good for trips throughout the country.

VIA Senegal Voyages (Map p686; ☎ 823 3300; www.viavoyages.sn; 13 Rue Colbert)

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Beware of pickpockets, especially at the markets and on Ave Pompidou. Less worrying, but very annoying, are street traders and hustlers. Be firm but friendly to shake them off. A confident *bakhna* (it's OK), or *après* (later) usually gets rid of them. Don't fall prey to the inner-city scams. The 'remember me?' scam is particularly popular. Someone might call out 'my friend, long time no see!', pretending they know you, then cheat you out of money. The remedy: don't respond to random calls. If someone doesn't know your name, chances are they don't know you, and mistaken rudeness to someone you did actually know is still preferable to having your passport and purse snatched.

Muggings occur occasionally, particularly after dark, and as in most cities around the world, women should avoid walking around alone at night or waiting for taxis in empty areas.

Some vigilance and common sense should help you get around unharmed – inner-city

Dakar can be a pain to walk around, but Lagos it ain't, and none of the areas mentioned is a no-go zone.

SIGHTS

Historical Buildings

Central Dakar has a few impressive colonial buildings. The **Gouvernance** (Map p686) and the **Chambre de Commerce** (Map p686), both on Place de l'Indépendance, a remarkable space itself. The stately **Hôtel de Ville** (Town Hall; Map p686) sits right behind, and a short walk north takes you to the **train station** (Map p684), whose elegant façade inspires ideas of romantic train journeys (quickly wiped away once you enter the bleak interior).

A short walk east takes you to the roundhouse of **Marché Kermel** (Map p686), a reproduction of the original 1860 building. Further south, the awe-inspiring 1907 **Palais Présidentiel** (Map p686; Ave Léopold Senghor) is surrounded by sumptuous gardens and guards in colonial-style uniforms. The modern glass front of the parliament, the **Assemblée Nationale** (Map p686) on Place Soweto is in easy reach.

The impressive **Grande Mosquée** (Map p684), built in 1964, sits in the heart of the bustling neighbourhood of **Médina**, home to a busy market and birthplace of Senegalese superstar Youssou N'Dour. Further north, the 1864 lighthouse **Les Mamelles** (Map p693) sits on a small volcanic hill, from where you get great views across Dakar.

Museums & Art Galleries

Though slightly dusty, Dakar's **IFAN Museum** (Map p686; Place de Soweto; adult/child CFA2000/200; ☎ 8am-12.30pm & 2-6.30pm) compares well to the national museums of other West African nations. There are imaginative displays of masks and traditional dress from the region (including Mali, Guinea-Bissau, Benin and Nigeria), as well as fabrics and carvings, musical instruments and agricultural tools.

Numerous small art galleries invite you to discover the city's vibrant contemporary arts scene. The **Galerie le Manège** (Map p686; ☎ 821 0822; 3 Rue Parchappe; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Sat), has excellent exhibitions in a beautifully restored 19th-century building. The space of the **Galerie Nationale** (Map p686; ☎ 821 2511; 19 Ave Albert Sarraut; admission free; ☎ 9am-6pm) is less enticing, but its exhibitions are usually very good.

In Point E, **Salon Michèle Ka** (Map p691; ☎ 824 7033; Tour de l'Oeuf) is not only the funkiest hair-

dresser in town, but also one of the most original art galleries. The salon is decorated with urban *sous-verre* (reverse glass painting) motives à la *car rapide*. In Hann, the fantastic gallery **Caracolo** (Map p693; ☎ 832 1590; www.caracolo.com; 7 Allée Marinas) exhibits and sells works made by local artisans, uniquely using materials 'found' in the immediate creative space.

ACTIVITIES

Diving

L'Océanium (Map p684; ☎ 822 2441; www.oceanium.org; Route de la Corniche-Est; ☎ Mon-Sat), which is an environmental-protection agency, runs excellent diving excursions, ranging from introductory half-day dives to longer expeditions. Divers can stay at the L'Océanium for reasonable rates.

Fishing

You can arrange deep-sea fishing at **West Africa Sport Fishing** (Map p684; ☎ 823 2858; ffs@sentoo.sn; Embarcadère de Gorée). The restaurant **Lagon I** (Map p686; ☎ 821 5322; Route de la Corniche-Est) also organises fishing trips and boasts several world-record catches.

Swimming

Beaches within easy reach of the city include the **private beach** (Map p686) near Hôtel Lagoon II and **Plage de l'Anse Bernard** (Map p684) near Hôtel Le Savana. For swimming and sunbathing, the beaches of **N'Gor** (p698) and **Île de Gorée** (p696) are better. Other than that, there's always the chlorine option.

Dakar's best swimming pool is the sub-lime **Piscine Olympique** (Map p691; ☎ 869 0606; piscineolymp@sentoo.sn; Tour de l'Oeuf) in Point E, which is part of a huge sports complex. Most top-end hotels allow nonguests to access their pools for a small fee. The pool at Sofitel Teranga is free if you eat at the adjoining restaurant, otherwise it will cost you CFA4500 (CFA7000 on Sunday). The Hôtel de l'Indépendance charges CFA3000 for its rooftop pool with a great view of Dakar (free if you have a meal).

Surfing

Dakar is great for surfing, ask at the **Tribal Surf Shop** (Map p693; ☎ 646 0914, 820 5400; tribal@arc.sn; Yoff Virage) for advice on good spots. This is also the best place to hire boards (per day CFA10,000), take courses, buy gear and get your board repaired.

Wrestling

Dakar's main arena for traditional wrestling is in Médina, near the large **Stade Iba Mar Diop** (Map p684; Ave Blaise Diagne). Most matches are announced only on the radio, but important ones will be advertised around town, and talked about incessantly by the locals. Saturday and/or Sunday are the usual days for the fights, starting around 4.30pm or 5pm.

COURSES

The **Pôle Linguistique de l'Institut Français** (Map p686; ☎ 823 84 83; 3 Rue Parchappe; ☎ Oct-May) runs recommended Wolof and French courses (four hours per week for 12 weeks; CFA90,000). Keen dancers should try the **Centre Culturel Blaise Senghor** (Map p691; Rue 10). Its bleak façade doesn't do justice to the creative bustle going on inside – just beware of the faux-drummers, out to hassle women.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Dakar's cultural calendar is packed, and outside the wettest months (July and August), you're almost bound to stumble across a festival.

Kaay Fecc (☎ 826 4950; www.ausenegal.com/kaayfecc) is one of Africa's best events for contemporary and traditional dance. It usually happens in early June. Film lovers shouldn't miss the annual **Festival International du Film de Quartier** (www.festivaldufilmdequartier.com) featuring the best of contemporary film in cultural centres, restaurants and other spaces. The **Dak'Art Biennale** (☎ 823 0918; www.dakart.org) is the queen of Dakar's festivals. It drops the city in colour, with art exhibitions all across town.

SLEEPING

Dakar has a very wide range of accommodation from filthy dosshouses to palatial hotels – although everything is expensive and the steadily increasing prices are only justified in a few places. Outside the city centre, the suburbs of Yoff (p699) and N'Gor (p698) also have a number of good options.

Budget

There's hardly such a thing as a budget hotel in Dakar. The cheapest places are usually brothels with a sure chance of theft. These two are acceptable.

Hôtel Continental (Map p686; ☎ 822 1083; 10 Rue Galandou Diouf; s/d from CFA13,000/15,000; ☎) The best of the cheapest. The basic rooms

even have a touch of character. For your own bathroom and air-con you pay some CFA5000 more.

Hôtel Provençal (Map p686; ☎ 822 1069; 17 Rue Malenfant; s/d CFA14,400/16,800) This isn't too bad for a place where rooms are often rented by the hour. Just make sure you get a room upstairs and you'll avoid most of the noise.

Midrange

Most hotels in this range have rooms with private bathrooms. Prices do not include tax (CFA600 per person).

Hôtel Saint-Louis Sun (Map p686; ☎ 822 2570; fax 822 4651; Rue Félix Faure; s/d/tr CFA23,000/29,500/35,500; ☎ ☎) Pretty rooms with big, glass doors opening onto a peaceful, green courtyard. Right in the heart of Dakar, this allows for a mental escape from the crowds and fumes that wash past it.

Hôtel Ganalé (Map p686; ☎ 889 4444; hganale@sentoo.sn; 38 Rue Amadou Assane Ndoye; s/d CFA28,000/35,000, apt CFA38,000-48,000) This place is a gem. Rooms are bright and tastefully decorated, all equipped with TV and telephone and the restaurant is excellent.

Hôtel Mamelles (Map p693; ☎ 860 0000; www.lesmamelles.com; s/d CFA10,000/15,000, with bathroom CFA14,500/19,500) Tucked away in a side street in the *quartier* Les Mamelles, this tranquil place has colourfully decorated rooms set around a leafy patio.

Hôtel Océanic (Map p686; ☎ 822 2044; www.hotel.oceanicdakar.com; 9 Rue de Thann; s/d/tr/q CFA21,600/25,800/33,000/36,800; ☎) With spotless rooms and a relaxed courtyard restaurant, this pleasant old-style place is fair value.

Hôtel Faidherbe (Map p684; ☎ 889 1750; faidherbe@sentoo.sn; cnr Ave Faidherbe & Raffanel; s/d/st CFA36,000/42,000/70,000) This hotel has got plenty of the niceties of a top-end place – broadband connection in the rooms, swimming pool, ATM and a cosy bar – for a much better rate than the grand hotels.

Hôtel le Miramar (Map p686; ☎ 849 2929; miramard@hotmail.com; 25 Rue Félix Faure; s/d incl breakfast CFA25,600/31,200; ☎) Some call it funky, some call it scruffy. It's great for ambience, though a concerted effort at renovation wouldn't be lost on this gaudily coloured place.

Hôtel Farid (Map p686; ☎ 821 6127; www.hotel.farid.com; 51 Rue Vincens; s/d from CFA26,500/29,000) It looks modest, but has some of the best-maintained rooms in central Dakar. And the Lebanese restaurant is addictive.

Auberge Marie-Lucienne (Map p691; ☎ 869 0090; Rue A; Point E; s/d CFA28,920/36,000) It calls itself an *auberge* (inn or hostel), but it is actually quite a well-furnished, little hotel in a calm part of town. Rooms have TV and hot water.

Top End

All hotels in this range have rooms with private bathrooms and accept major credit cards.

Hôtel Al Afifa (Map p686; ☎ 889 9090; gmbafifa@telecomplus.sn; 46 Rue Jules Ferry; s/d/ste CFA37,000/40,000/45,000) This place is ageing a little, but it retains some of its lustre. Ask for room 103 – the only one with a terrace. The bar, restaurant and disco downstairs offer plenty of nightlife.

Sofitel Teranga (Map p686; ☎ 889 2200; fax 823 5001; Place de l'Indépendance; r from CFA136,000; 🏨) Part of the Accor Hotel group, this is exactly what you'd expect from a luxury, businessmen's favourite. Facilities include tennis courts, sauna, shops and a nightclub.

Hôtel Lagon II (Map p686; ☎ 889 2525; www.lagon.sn; Route de la Corniche-Est; s/d/ste CFA72,000/80,000/120,000; 🏨 🍷) If you can bear the kitsch seafarers décor, this is a great place to view the ocean from cabin-style rooms perched on stilts at the edge of the water.

Hôtel le Savana (Map p684; ☎ 849 4242; www.savana.sn; Route de la Corniche-Est; s/d CFA74,000/80,000; 🏨 🍷 🍷) If you really want to relax in style, this ingenious construction overlooking the ocean is the place to go. Facilities include a business centre, fishing deck, private jetty, tennis courts, nightclub, sauna and gym.

EATING

Dakar's restaurant scene is one of the capital's highlights. There are about 100 eateries in the town centre alone, and that's before you've even headed for the suburbs, where chic restaurants open all the time.

The French cuisine, a hangover from the colonial past, is a particular highlight, but the culinary range stretches from Cape Verdean over Vietnamese to Thai and Mexican. The seafood tends to be particularly good in Dakar. For flavoursome *yassa poulet* and *tiéboudienne* you're best off in one of the small places frequented by the locals. Restaurants are usually open for lunch and dinner, with some staying open all day. Most places are closed on Sundays.

Restaurants

Keur N'Deye (Map p686; ☎ 821 4973; 68 Rue Vincens; dishes from CFA1500) Highly recommended, this place offers well-prepared Senegalese specialities. At most times, the tinkling of the *kora* (harplike instrument) accompanies your eager clattering of cutlery.

Chez Loutcha (Map p686; ☎ 821 0302; 101 Rue Moussé Diop; dishes CFA2500-3500; 🍷 noon-3pm & 7-11pm Mon-Sat) Head straight for the air-conditioned garden, where the fountains embellish an aquatic theme. The Cape Verdean and 'Euro-African' cuisine is excellent and comes in enormous serves.

Restaurant VSD (Map p686; ☎ 661 3333; 91 Rue Moussé Diop; mains CFA3500; 🍷 7am-midnight) There's not much jazz at this intimate place any more, but the West African and international dishes are still good value.

La Villa Chez Yannick (Map p686; ☎ 823 2197; 4 Rue Malenfant; mains CFA5000; 🍷 11am-3pm & 7-11pm) French food and a few miscellaneous international dishes are served in an airy outdoor setting.

Le Mélaé (Map p686; ☎ 502 8293; 90 Rue Moussé Diop; dishes CFA5000) This tiny French restaurant is all simple elegance, and the food tastes divine. The catch: it can get a little smoky.

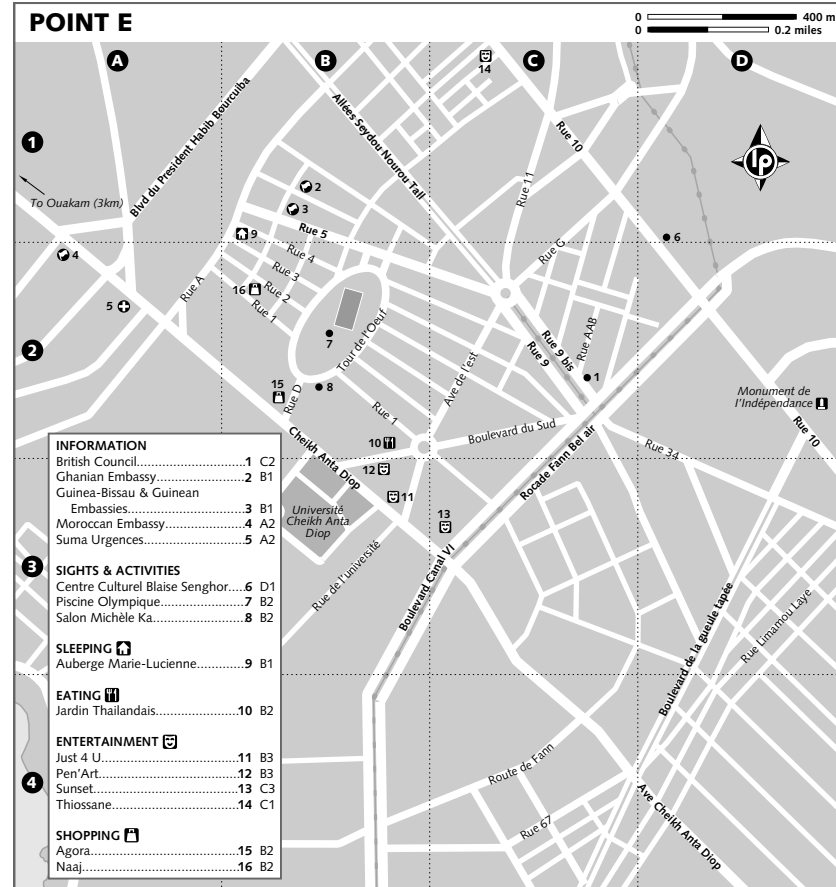
Le Sarraut (Map p686; ☎ 822 5523; Ave Albert Sarraut; meals around CFA5000-8000; 🍷 8am-midnight Mon-Sat) This is a Dakar classic, and for good reason. The tasty French and international cuisine in this calm, central place is hard to beat.

Le Bambou (Map p686; ☎ 822 0645; 19 Rue Victor Hugo; mains CFA6000-10,000) If money is not a concern, then head to Le Bambou, the culinary equivalent of a day's pampering.

Ozio (Map p686; ☎ 823 8787; 21 Rue Victor Hugo; meals around CFA5000-9000) This uber-trendy restaurant has been a favourite of the glittering classes for years. The food is good, and is served with the ego-tickling sense that you belong to the in-crowd.

Lagon I (Map p686; ☎ 821 5831; Route de la Corniche-Est; mains around CFA7000) In this restaurant, the nautical theme is consistently pursued from cruise-ship décor to the cabin-style toilets, the terrace suspended on stilts in the ocean to the scrumptious platters of seafood.

Saveur d'Asie (Map p686; ☎ 821 4774; 21 Rue de Thann; dishes around CFA5000) Hugely popular, this takeaway restaurant makes a mysterious promise to serve Senegalese-Asian cuisine and sells most of the works of Youssou N'Dour in its adjacent boutique.



Jardin Thaïlandais (Map p691; ☎ 825 5833; 10 Blvd du Sud; meals around CFA8000; 🍷 lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) There's no better Thai, perhaps no better Asian food altogether, in the whole of Senegal than that served at this pretty place in Point E.

La Casa Créole (Map p686; ☎ 823 4081; 21 Blvd Djily Mbaye; meals around CFA4000-6000; 🍷 Mon-Sat) Don't be put off by the busy pub at the front – walk right through, and you get to a marvellous garden terrace where French and Creole food are served with a sprinkling of live jazz.

La Fourchette (Map p686; ☎ 821 8887; 4 Rue Parent; meals around CFA6000-10,000; 🍷 Mon-Sat) The humble exterior betrays nothing of the polished food temple that hides behind the plain doors.

Impeccable sushi and dishes from around the world, prepared by two of Dakar's most renowned chefs, attract expats and trendy crowds. And don't leave without indulging in the heavenly *roti au chocolate* (a sinfully rich chocolate desert).

Le Toukoleur (Map p686; ☎ 821 5193; 122 Rue Moussé Diop; meals around CFA5000-8000; 🍷 Mon-Sat) Divine. The setting oozes character and the cuisine is a refined mix of international flavours.

Cafés & Pâtisseries

In Dakar, a pâtisserie is not somewhere to buy your bread, but a gleaming place to take a special friend if you really want to make an impression.

La Royaltine (Map p686; ☎ 821 9994; Ave du Président Lamine Guèye) Guarded by a uniformed porter, and drenched in soft, golden lighting, Dakar's most polished patisserie oozes class. The local middle classes swagger in here for tasty cakes, desserts and chocolates.

Aux Fins Palais (Map p684; ☎ 823 4445; 97 Ave André Petyavin; breads CFA150-700) It's easy to tire of French bread in Dakar. This is one of the few places that serve an excellent range of wholesome bread.

Pâtisserie Médina (Map p684; Ave Faidherbe; pastries around CFA500-800; ☎ 24hr) Dakar's terminus. Every night out ends here at 5am, with coffee and croissants. With some luck, you'll even see some of Senegal's biggest music and football stars huddled around cups of hot chocolate.

Le Metissacana (Map p686; ☎ 822 2043; Rue de Thiong) The leafy patio is great for an afternoon coffee. Best of all – you can browse through the original creations by famous fashion designer Oumou Sy and her students in the adjacent boutique.

Quick Eats

All across Dakar, you'll see women stirring pots of *mafé* and grilling fish in the street and makeshift cafés (*tangana* – meaning 'hot') selling steaming glasses of spiced *café Toubou* (spicy coffee brew) with a slice of bread and butter. A fast-food favourite is the shwarma, sold in snack bars and restaurants (CFA800).

Ali Baba Snack Bar (Map p686; ☎ 822 5297; Ave Pompidou; snacks from CFA600; ☎ 8am-2am) Dakar's classic fast-food haunt serves the whole greasy range of kebabs, shwarmas and other quick snacks.

Caesar's (Map p686; ☎ 842 7879; 27 Blvd de la République; pizzas around CFA3000) Sometimes only greasy chicken wings, burgers and fries will do, and for those moments Caesar's is your place.

Self-Catering

Score Supermarket (Map p686; 31 Ave Albert Sarraut) in the town centre is good for food, imported items, sanitary and baby products, and plenty of other nonfood items. **Fili Fili Supermarket** (Map p686; Ave Allés Delmas), three blocks north of Place de l'Indépendance, is a dusty little place with slightly cheaper prices but a much smaller range of stock. For fresh food, try the markets (see p694).

DRINKING

The town centre has a scattering of good bars all in easy reach for an progressively hilarious pub crawl, but don't miss out on the excellent places in the suburbs.

Le Mex (Map p686; ☎ 823 6717; 91 Rue Moussé Diop; ☎ noon-2am) This colourful Mexican place transforms from a restaurant into a lively bar once the sun has set. It's popular with the French military and their obligatory female following, but can still be fun.

Le Seven (Map p686; ☎ 842 6911; 25 Rue Mohamed V) The glittering queen of Dakar's bars. Think champagne bubbles, tiny tank tops, and the latest hits. So *branché*, you risk electrocution – this is where the in-crowd parties.

Snooker Palace (Map p686; ☎ 822 9487; 44 Rue Wagane Diouf) A snooker hall, which starts early and gets hotter by the hour. Giant screens are perfect for watching football matches.

Café Indigo (Map p686; ☎ 842 2607; 26 Rue Félix Faure; ☎ 7am-midnight) Somewhere between a restaurant, café and a bar, this is a relaxed place to start your night out.

Iguane Café (Map p686; 26 Rue Jules Ferry) This tiny place is draped in mock-military décor. This may be aggressive to the eye, but the atmosphere is decidedly relaxed and friendly.

Chez Grenelles (Map p686; ☎ 889 4444; Hôtel Ganalé, 38 Rue Amadou Assane Ndoye) Classy and imaginatively decorated, this place gets crowded with a predominately French and Lebanese crowd.

ENTERTAINMENT

For a fun night out, don't even get your kit on before midnight. Leaving the house at 1am means great timing, returning home before 4am is a sign of weakness. Now go party.

Live Music

The live music scene was booming when we visited. More and more restaurants and bars feature small stages, and many nightclubs host live gigs. In restaurants, admission is often free, while clubs charge between CFA3000 and CFA5000.

Just 4 U (Map p691; ☎ 824 3250, 634 4801; km 2.5, Ave Cheikh Anta Diop; ☎ 11am-3am) This spacious bar-restaurant is the best address for live music in Dakar. There's a concert every night, sometimes even two. Senegalese greats like Cheikh Lô, Souleymane Faye and Orchestra Baobab, as well as visiting greats, proudly take their regular place on the small stage.

Pen'Art (Map p691; ☎ 864 5131; Blvd du Sud) Around the corner from Just 4 U, this is a cosy jazz club with good bands in a relaxed atmosphere.

Kilimanjaro (Map p693; ☎ 822 6991; Soumbédioune) The mighty Thione Seck plays here, at his personal club, every weekend. Fabulous. Men – don't forget your suit and tie...

Thioissane (Map p691; ☎ 824 6046; Sicap Rue 10) Youssou N'Dour's nightclub was once the hottest place in town, but is now frequently closed when the star is out of town. And even if he's there, he rarely appears on stage before 3am. Still, it's a hub of the hip-swaying, high-heeled *mbalax* scene.

Sunset (Map p693; ☎ 821 2118; Centre Commercial Sahm) Similarly popular with the Dakarais,

this *mbalax* club on the northeast corner of the intersection of Ave Blaise Diagne and Blvd de la Gueule-Tapée.

Nightclubs

Playclub (Map p686; Hôtel Al Afifa, 46 Rue Jules Ferry) The club of the Hôtel Al Afifa is a classy affair for over 30s, hence the music is a little smoother and spiced with salsa beats.

Koulgraoul (Map p684; ☎ 505 6969; l'Océanum, Route de la Corniche-Est; admission CFA2500) This relaxed, once-monthly club night in the garden of the l'Océanum attracts a mixed, laid-back crowd.

King's Club (Map p686; 32 Rue Victor Hugo) This inner-city club is hugely popular for its heavy dance beats and good vibes.

GREATER DAKAR

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Theatre

Théâtre Daniel Sorano (Map p684; ☎ 822 1715; Blvd de la République) The Ensemble Instrumental, the Ballet National du Sénégal and the Théâtre National du Sénégal frequently perform at Senegal's national theatre.

Cinemas

Kadjinol Station (Map p686; ☎ 842 8662; www.kadjinol-edu.com; off Ave Albert Sarraut) This lounge bar and global-food restaurant has the most interesting film selection in town, including recent Hollywood flicks and world cinema.

SHOPPING

Dakar has several markets that are worth exploring. **Marché Sandaga** (Map p686) in the centre is the largest, busiest and most central market (also the one at which you're most likely to have your purse stolen). There's little you won't find here, and eager traders will even try to satisfy your most extraordinary requests. In Médina, **Marché de Tilène** sells mainly fruits, vegetables, and daily objects for local households, and has a great ambience. The artisanal market of **Soumbédioune** (Map p693), on Route de la Corniche-Ouest, is one of the most popular places for buying wood carvings, metal work and batiks. It's squarely aimed at tourists, so prepare for some serious bargaining. The fabulous **Marché des HLM** (Map p693) is the best place to buy African fabrics. Hundreds of rolls of wax *bazin* (dyed cloth that's beaten to shine), vibrant prints, embroidered cloth, lace and silk lend colour to the ramshackle stalls and dusty streets of this popular *quartier*.

Dakar isn't really the place for a relaxed shopping stroll. Still, there are a few places worth venturing into town for. The **Institut Français** (p685) is one of Senegal's major outlets of the Maam Samba label, which stands for locally made, fair-trade clothes made from rich, stunningly coloured cottons.

The spacious **Cocktail du Sénégal** (Map p686; ☎ 823 5315; 108 Rue Moussé Diop) also has a good selection of gift items.

For quality African art and craftwork, try **Galerie Antenna** (Map p686; ☎ 822 1751; 9 Rue Félix Faure) near the Sofitel. The 'Moroccan mile' on Rue Mohamed V, between Ave Pompidou and Rue Assane Ndoye, has a line of small shops with masks, carvings and other objects from all over West and Central Africa.

The leafy suburb of Point E houses several chic shops, such as **Naaj** (Map p691; ☎ 825 7546; www.naaj.sn; Rue 1), where you can find tableware, decorated in traditional glass painting technique. The airy patio setting of **Agora** (Map p691; ☎ 864 1448; Rue D) displays beautiful Moroccan artwork and home décor at steep prices. Near Soumbédioune, the **Atelier Baba Diawara** (Map p693; Route de la Corniche Ouest) is a magic corner selling funky bags, toys, CD racks, lamps and other objects from recycled cans.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

Léopold Sédar Senghor International Airport is in Yoff. Information on flights between Dakar and international or regional destinations are given on p830. Within Senegal, Dakar is connected to Saint-Louis, Cap Skirring, Ziguinchor and Tambacounda, though some upcountry airports are only served seasonally. See p743 for further information.

For international and regional flight details, inquiries, reconfirmations and reservations and airline offices in Dakar see p742.

Boat

The excellent ferry boat *Wilis* (brand new in 2005) travels between Dakar and Ziguinchor twice weekly in each direction. See p730.

Car Mouride

This bus service financed by the Mouride brotherhood offers a fairly reliable, though slow and uncomfortable connection to major towns in Senegal.

You book your seat ahead of travel, best in person, at **Gare Routière Pompiers** (Map p684; ☎ 821 8585). Buses leave from the petrol station near there.

Sept-Place Taxi & Minibus

Most Ndiaga Ndiayes (large two-seater buses) and *sept-place* (seven-seater) taxis for long-distance destinations leave from Gare Routière Pompiers (Map p684) at the junction between the *autoroute* and Ave Malick Sy. It's best to get there early. The only chance to avoid Dakar gridlock is by getting out of town before 7.30am.

Train

At the time of writing, only one of Senegal's train routes was working – the train from Dakar to Bamako (Mali) via Thiès,

PUBLIC TRANSPORT FROM DAKAR

Note that these prices (CFA) are indications only, you may encounter minor variations, luggage charges, and increases due to the rising cost of petrol.

Destination	Sept-Place	Minibus	Ndiaga Ndiaye
Bakel	11,500	9500	9000
Karang (The Gambia)	5500	4500	3500
Kaolack	2600	1650	1350
Mbour	1300	950	870
Rosso	5100	3880	3440
Saint-Louis	3500	2600	2200
Tambacounda	7500	6000	5000
Thiès	1200	900	800
Touba	3200	1900	1500
Ziguinchor	7500	6000	5000

Diourbel and Tambacounda. The service is unreliable and derailments are frequent. If you're keen on the adventure, check out the latest situation at Dakar's train station. For details on the train to Bamako, see p743.

GETTING AROUND To/From the Airport

The journey from the airport to town is the only one with a fixed rate (CFA3000), though prices may well have risen by the time you read this. If you want to save a couple of hundred CFA, you can walk from the airport out onto the main road and flag down a taxi there.

Bus

Dakar's DDD bus service is surprisingly good. DDD stands for Dakar Dem Dikk (meaning Dakar going and returning), and the large, blue DDD buses do go and come back with astonishing regularity. They have fixed stops and go about every 10 minutes. Short distances cost CFA150, longer ones CFA175, CFA200 or CFA250. Prices conform to a system of zones. You simply pay your ticket at the conductor's booth. You can view the full network, complete with maps and prices on www.demdikk.com. The main DDD terminal in Central Dakar is near the port, on Blvd de la Libération.

Car

The major self-drive car-hire agencies in Dakar:

Avis (Map p693; ☎ 849 7757; www.cfaogroup.com) At the airport and the Hôtel Meridien President.

Budget (Map p684; ☎ 822 2513; cnr Ave du President Lamine Guèye & Ave Faidherbe) Agencies at the airport and the Hôtel Meridien President.

Hertz (Map p686; ☎ 820 1174; www.hertz.sn; Rue Gomis) Also at the airport.

Independent car-hire companies include the following:

Afrique Location (Map p686; ☎ 823 8801; 28 Rue Assane Ndoye)

Dakar Location (Map p686; ☎ 823 8610; 7 Rue de Thiong)

Noprola (Map p686; ☎ 821 7311; 29 Rue Assane Ndoye)

Senecartours (Map p686; ☎ 889 7777; www.senecartours.sn; 64 Rue Carnot)

Car Rapide

These colourfully decorated, blue-and-yellow minibuses are Dakar's identity symbols, and while travelling in those pretty (though battered) vehicles is certainly an experience, their circuits are hard to understand if you don't know the city well. Destinations aren't marked, and the assistants perched dangerously on the back shout directions so fast, that untrained ears won't understand a thing. When you want to get off, just tap a coin on the roof. Journeys cost between CFA50 and CFA100.

Ndiaga Ndiaye

These privately owned, white 30-seater minibuses (most of them have 'Alhamdoulila' written across the front) roughly follow the same routes as the DDD buses. Fares are between CFA100 and CFA150 depending on the length of your trip. Destinations and routes are not marked, so you'll have to ask or listen for the call from the apprentice.

Senbus

These white minibuses are assembled in Senegal. They were newly introduced in 2006 and are eventually supposed to replace the *cars rapides*. They are a lot more comfortable, and infinitely more user-friendly with clearly marked destinations and fixed stops. Rates are the same as *cars rapides*.

Taxi

Going by taxi is the easiest way to get around Dakar. Taxis are equipped with dusty old meters, but it's been years since any of them worked, so fares need to be negotiated. For a short ride across the city centre, the fare should be around CFA500. Place de l'Indépendance to Gare Routière Pompiers is around CFA750, and Dakar Centre to Point E around CFA1000. At night and on public holidays rates go up.

GREATER DAKAR & CAP VERT PENINSULA

Once a busy harbour on the tip of the Cap Vert Peninsula, Dakar city is gradually clawing its way up this tongue of land, turning the area into a bustling centre of activity. Still the areas of Yoff and N'Gor, adorned with wide beaches, and the tranquil Île de Gorée just off the coast of Dakar are places to head for a breather, in case Central Dakar's relentless urban buzz gets too much.

ÎLE DE GORÉE

The historical Île de Gorée is enveloped by an almost eerie calm. There are no sealed roads and no cars on this island, just narrow alleyways with trailing bougainvillea and colonial brick buildings with wrought-iron balconies. But Gorée's calm is not so much romantic as meditative, as the ancient buildings bear witness to the island's role in the Atlantic slave trade.

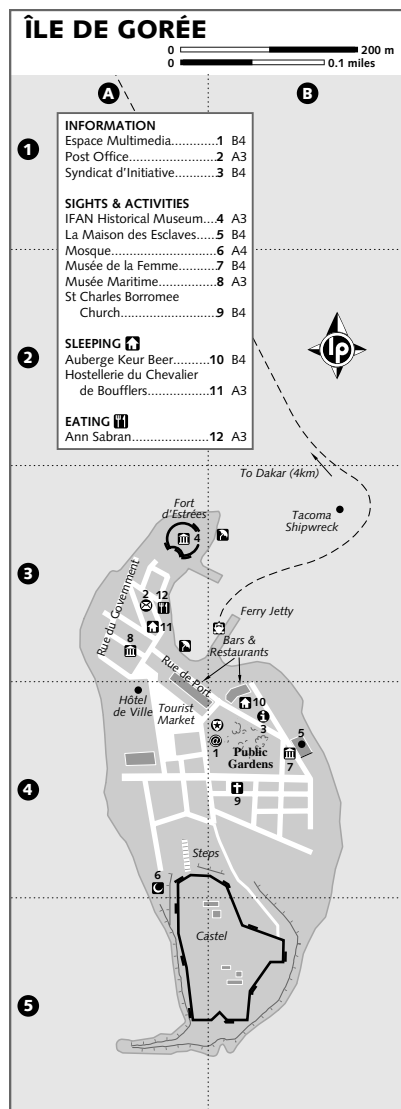
Information

Gorée is tiny, and can easily be explored independently, though the **Syndicat d'Initiative** (☎ 823 9177; Rue du Port; ☎ 9am-1pm & 2.30-5pm Tue-Sun) can arrange guides. For some quick, on-the-spot information, try the small tourist booth near the police station. This is also where you'll have to pay your CFA500 tourist tax – an obligatory payment for all non-Senegalese visitors. Gorée has a **post office** and an Internet café **Espace Multimedia** (per hr CFA500; ☎ 10am-1pm & 3-10pm).

Sights

There's plenty to see on the island, just don't come on a Monday, when all museums and historical buildings are closed.

The island's most famous building is **La Maison des Esclaves** (admission CFA500; ☎ 10.30am-noon & 2.30-6pm Tue-Sun). No trip to the island is complete without a visit to this 1786 Dutch construction (see opposite), whose arched staircase opening to the ocean has become a symbolic image of the horrors of slavery.



The **Castel** at the southern tip of the island was erected in the 17th century, with other fortifications, including massive WWII guns, added over time. You get excellent views over the island from the top of the rocky plateaus.

Gorée's 1830 **St Charles Borromeo Church** is usually open to visitors, and the **mosque**, built slightly later in 1892, is one of the oldest stone mosques in Senegal.

The **IFAN Historical Museum** (admission CFA200; ☎ 10am-1pm & 2.30-6pm Tue-Sat) in the ancient French **Fort d'Estrées** (1850) has interesting exhibits portraying Senegalese history up to the present day. The permanent exhibition at the **Musée de la Femme** (admission CFA500; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun), dedicated to the role of Senegalese women throughout history, really comes to life in the explanations by the enthusiastic museum guide (CFA350). The **Musée Maritime** (admission CFA500; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun) in an 18th-century West Indies Company building, isn't quite as interesting.

Sleeping & Eating

Auberge Keur Beer (☎ /fax 821 3801; keurbeergie@yahoo.fr; s/d CFA20,000/25,000) Gorée's most popular place has pristine rooms. Management is full of useful info, and can even arrange accommodation in private homes, should the place be full.

Hostellerie du Chevalier de Boufflers (☎ 822 5364; www.boufflers.com; r from CFA18,000) Best known for its terrace restaurant overlooking the harbour, this place has several rooms spread across a whole block. Prices vary depending on the view and floor – the best are the enormous rooms upstairs that sleep up to five.

For food, try the two hotels, or any of the stretch of restaurants opposite the ferry jetty. Near the post office, **Ann Sabran** (☎ 826 9429; dishes around CFA2500) is a cosy, portside restaurant serving simple meals.

Getting There & Away

A **ferry** (☎ 24hr infoline 628 1111, 849 7961) runs regularly from the wharf in Dakar to Gorée (CFA5000 return for nonresidents, 20 minutes). See p744 for the timetable.

ÎLE DE LA MADELEINE

Île de la Madeleine is west of Dakar, about 4km off the mainland. It was declared a national park in 1985, and consists of a main island (Sarpan), two other islets, plus several lumps of volcanic rock. The island is not inhabited, which makes its nature so much more interesting. Sarpan's dwarf baobab trees are worth looking at, and with a bit of luck you might spot dolphins or turtles. The best thing to do here is bird-watching.

LA MAISON DES ESCLAVES

Île de Gorée was a busy trading centre during the 18th and 19th centuries, and many merchants built houses in which they would live or work in the upper storey and store their wares on the lower floor. La Maison des Esclaves is one of the last remaining 18th-century buildings of this type on Gorée. It was built in 1786 and renovated in 1990 with French assistance. With its famous doorway opening directly from the storeroom onto the sea, this building has enormous spiritual significance for some visitors, particularly African-Americans whose ancestors were brought from Africa as slaves.

Walking around the dimly lit dungeons, particularly after a visit to the historical museum, you will begin to imagine the suffering of the people held here, reinforced by the gruesome details provided by the curator. La Maison des Esclaves is a significant symbol and reminder of the horrors of the slave trade. Although an important slaving culture existed in Gorée, the island's role as a major slave-shipment point is sometimes overstated. Of the 20 million slaves that were taken from Africa, only 300 per year may have gone through Gorée, and even then, the famous doorway would not have been used – a ship could not get near the dangerous rocks and the town had a jetty a short distance away.

But the number of slaves transported from here isn't necessarily what matters in the debate around Gorée. The island, and particularly La Maison des Esclaves, stands as a terrible reminder of the immense suffering inflicted on African people through the Atlantic slave trade.

Written with assistance from Chris de Wilde (specialist in 19th-century West African history)

If small trees and big birds don't make your heart beat faster, you can also come here for some snorkelling, diving or swimming in a natural pool.

Pirogues go from the **National Park Office** (Mr Seck or Mr Mbaye; ☎ 821 8182) on Route de la Corniche-Ouest, just a few metres north of Casino Terrou-Bi. A park ranger will organise your trip (admission adult/child under 10 CFA1000/free; pirogue CFA3000, 20 minutes). Groups from three to 10 people get CFA1000 discount per person.

N'GOR & LES ALMADIES

Les Almadies is a plush Dakar neighbourhood where the polished villas of Senegal's richest look out onto private beaches. It's also home to a string of lively bars and restaurants and culminates in the Pointe des Almadies, West Africa's westernmost spot.

Route des Almadies & Route de N'Gor

This northern continuation of Ave Cheikh Anta Diop is the area's lifeline. It's lined with several restaurants, and the major banks, which have ATMs.

SLEEPING & EATING

La Detente (Map p693; ☎ 820 3975; contact@hotel-ladentente.com; s/d from CFA39,000/47,000) has large rooms overlooking a pretty garden, while **Le Lodge des Almadies** (Map p693; ☎ 869 0345; hotellelodge@sentoos.sn; r CFA35,000) is a personalised hotel with tasteful rooms, bathrooms in which to enjoy a luxurious shower, and one of Dakar's best restaurants to boot.

ENTERTAINMENT

At the trendy **Koch.B** (Map p693; ☎ 820 8671; www.kochb.com; Route des Almadies; ☎ noon-3am), Dakar's in-set chills to live music in comfy armchairs. Across the road, the **Blue Note** (Map p693; Route des Almadies), with its myriad bar spaces, is also great for concerts.

Hidden in the *quartier* is the fabulous **Alma City** (Map p693; ☎ 820 2410). The complex houses a tiny restaurant, as well as a recording studio and concert space. The airy, brightly decorated bar-restaurant **Aquarela do Brazil** (Map p693; ☎ 536 17 70) follows the Brazilian theme to perfection from the *caipirinhas* (cocktails) and the mouthwatering menu to the samba music.

Clubbers are well catered for with the popular **Casino du Cap Vert** (Map p693; ☎ 820

0974) and the **Senat** (Map p693; ☎ 869 6969) at the Hôtel Meridien President.

Pointe des Almadies

This understated cape is the *quartier's* liveliest spot, framed by several restaurants and a shabby artisanal market.

Opposite the Club Med the palatial **Hôtel Meridien President** (Map p693; ☎ 869 6969; www.lameridien-dakar.com; r from CFA90,000) overlooks the Pointe des Almadies. It's undeniably the finest hotel in and around Dakar, and has every facility (including its own golf club and heliport) and prices to match.

The bustling community of small restaurants huddled together at the point stands in complete contrast to such refined luxury. **La Pointe des Almadies** (Map p693; ☎ 820 0140; mains about CFA3500; ☎ Tue-Sun) is an enduring institution, with good food, including Vietnamese specialities, in a wide garden setting. For ambience, **La Crêpe Bretonne** (Map p693; crêpes from CFA1500) is unbeatable on Sundays, when Dakar's youth comes out to play.

N'Gor

East of the point, the sheltered **Plage N'Gor** (N'Gor Beach) smacks of carefree beach-tourism. The **Hôtel N'Gor Diarama** (Map p693; ☎ 820 1005; fax 820 2723; r CFA45,000) is the monolith on the headland to the east. A touch more informal is **La Madrague** (Map p693; ☎ 820 0364; s/d CFA28,000/36,000; ☎), one of the nicest places to stay on Plage N'Gor, and **La Brazzerade** (Map p693; ☎ 820 0364; www.labrazzerade.com; d/ste CFA20,000/35,000; ☎) a cosy, affordable, sea-view hotel with a great grill restaurant. Seafood lovers mustn't miss a dinner at the **Cabane des Pêcheurs** (Map p693; ☎ 820 76 75; Plage de Ngor, meals around CFA5000-10,000), where freshly caught and heavenly spiced fish is served with real fishermen's insight.

A short pirogue ride away, **Ile de Ngor** with its pretty beaches is popular with day-trippers on weekends. **Chez Carla** (Map p693; ☎ 820 1586; d with/without breakfast CFA20,000/15,000) is a friendly place to stay, with cosy rooms and fine Italian food (dishes about CFA3000).

Getting There & Away

To reach Pointe des Almadies or N'Gor, you could catch bus 8 from central Dakar out towards the airport, and take a taxi from there for about CFA700. A taxi from central Dakar will cost about CFA2000.

YOFF

The fishing town of Yoff has a completely different feel. The local residents are almost exclusively Lebu, renowned fishermen who have inhabited this area for many centuries and retain a vital spirit of independence. The town itself is self-administering, with no government officials, no police force and, apparently, no crime. In fact, it was regarded as a separate state by the French colonial authorities before Senegal itself became independent.

The Lebu of Yoff are nearly all members of the Layen, one of the brotherhoods that dominate life in Senegal. The founder of the brotherhood, Saïdi Limamou Laye, is buried in the **Layen Mausoleum** (Map p693), a gleaming white building topped with a green onion-shaped dome, on the beach at the eastern end of town.

About 1km north from the mausoleum is the main fishing beach, where large pirogues are launched onto giant rollers and the day's catch is sold straight on the sand. Even if the waves weren't so dangerously large, and even if the beach wasn't covered in the town's rubbish, this is no place for swimming or sunbathing: skimpy clothing isn't inappropriate in the close-knit Muslim community. Forget about 'entertainment', too – there are no clubs or bars in Yoff Village, private drunkenness is frowned upon and smoking is prohibited. This is a place to come and wander around respectfully – dressed appropriately in long skirts or trousers.

Sights & Activities

Yoff village life and the impressive Layen Mausoleum hold plenty of interest, though arts fans shouldn't miss a trip to the fabulous **Village des Arts** (Map p693; Route de l'Aéroport), squeezed between the Route VDN and the national stadium. Though slightly neglected, this is still a bubble of creativity, housing the *ateliers* (workshops) of some of Senegal's finest artists, including the sculptor Alpha Sow, painter Kebé and Moussa Mbaye.

Sleeping & Eating

Hôtel Cap Ouest (Map p693; ☎ 820 2469; capouest@arc.sn; s/d CFA16,000/19,000) This cute place at Yoff Virage is possibly the best value on the whole peninsula. You can get a large, nicely furnished room here for the price of one

in a downtown brothel/hotel. The restaurant features changing displays of quality contemporary art and opens onto a small beach, perfect for a sunset drink. Plus, management are friendly and know their way around the country.

Via Via (Map p693; ☎ 820 5475; viavia@sentoos.sn; Route des Cimetières; s/d incl breakfast CFA9600/17,200) This backpackers' favourite at the eastern end of Yoff has been consistently friendly, clean and welcoming for years. It also has *djembe* drumming courses on offer.

La Terrasse d'Anvers (Map p693; ☎ 688 0000; Yoff Virage) The name evokes Belgium, and beer drinkers rejoice, this is indeed Dakar's most reliable address for Belgian brew, as well as an excellent restaurant.

Getting There & Away

Yoff is near the airport, and is most easily reached from there by taxi (around CFA1500). From Dakar's city centre, a taxi to Yoff should cost around CFA2000. By public transport, take DDD bus 8.

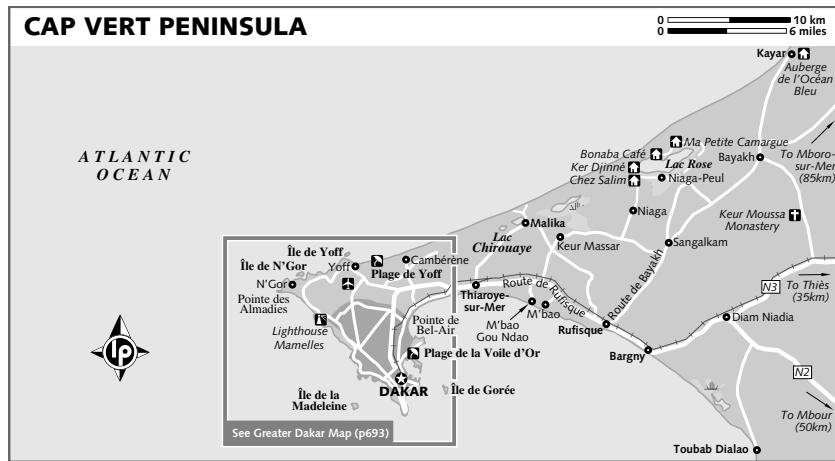
LAC ROSE

Lac Rose, also known as Lac Retba, is a shallow lagoon surrounded by dunes, mainly famous for being the final destination of the annual Dakar Rally.

Water here is 10 times saltier than the ocean, and the high concentration of minerals causes the lake to shimmer in a pink light when the sun is high. The spectacle isn't always visible, best chances are in the dry season, but even if nature lets you down, you can still swim here, buoyed by the salt. On the southern side of the lake, the small-scale salt-collecting industry is worth a glimpse.

The lake makes for an enjoyable day trip from Dakar, but the Dead Sea it ain't, whatever the tour operators try to tell you. The saleability of the faint hue together with the rally have caused the development of a massive tourist industry on the edges of the lake – be prepared for hassle.

Most of the hotels listed organise activities for similar prices (rates listed are approximate). They include 4WD tours around the lake (CFA15,000), beach-buggy tours (CFA25,000) and camel riding (per hour CFA15,000). **Chevaux du Lac** (☎ 630 0241) offers horse riding (CFA6000/400,000 for two hours/six days) for beginners to advanced riders.



Sleeping & Eating

The cluster of hotels on the lake get busy with busloads of tourist groups, and the artisanal village that's developed can be a hassle to get through. There are slightly more secluded options near the salt village and at the opposite side of the lake.

Bonaba Café (☎ 638 7538; r per person CFA5000; 🍽️) Hidden away on the far side of the lake, this has been a favourite with independent travellers for years. Rooms are simple and bathrooms shared, and the dunes invite walks and provide shelter from the more touristy zones. You get here either by walking 2km from the main hotel cluster through the dunes, or by pirogue from the salt village (CFA3000 to CFA5000).

Ker Djinné (☎ 634 0468; d CFA20,000; 🍽️) The prettiest of the touristy places, this open-spaced *campement* has round-hut accommodation and a recommended restaurant where a griot usually strums his *kora*.

Chez Salim (☎ 638 1019; d/tr CFA20,000/25,000; 🍽️) This large *campement* is one of the more upmarket, with accommodation in comfortable huts.

Ma Petite Camargue (☎ 511 2745; s/d CFA15,000/20,000) This cutesy *campement* on the road to Bombilor is a relaxing distance from the tourist hub. Accommodation is basic, with shared bathrooms. The French couple that manages this place had just taken over Le Jardin du Lac in Niaga Peul, and there's little doubt they'll turn it from a run-down shell into a stylish hotel-restaurant in no time.

Getting There & Away

Trying to get here by public transport is near impossible, involving a journey by Ndiaga Ndiaye (CFA200), *car rapide* (CFA200) or DDD bus 11 to Keur Massar, from there a trip by taxi (CFA1000) or minibus (CFA100) to the village Niaga Peul, then a 5km walk to the lake.

Don't do it, hire a taxi (round trip with an afternoon waiting time around CFA20,000) or join an organised excursion from Dakar (see p685).

RUFISQUE

Rufisque was one of the first and most important French settlements during colonial days, and the crumbling buildings along the transit town's dusty main road still tell the story of a former glory. It's worth stopping here for an hour or so, checking out the architecture and perhaps taking a ride on a horse cart, Rufisque's main mode of public transport. Otherwise do as the locals do – pass through.

If you want to spend the night, the cosy **l'Oustal de l'Agenais** (☎ 836 1648; r from CFA11,000) is a good option with clean, comfortable rooms, a cosy restaurant and friendly management.

Rufisque is on the main road out of Dakar and there's plenty of transport, including DDD bus 15, frequent Ndiaga Ndiaye and *cars rapides*. The road is notoriously congested, so the trip can take up to two hours during rush hour.

KEUR MOUSSA MONASTERY

The Keur Moussa Monastery, situated south-east of Lac Rose and 50km from Dakar on the road to Kayar, is a great place to spend a reflective Sunday. The 10am mass is famous for its unique music – a stunning mixture of African music and Gregorian chants in Wolof. The monks sell CDs (CFA10,000) after the service, as well as homemade goat's cheese, prayer books and other various items. If you can't make it to the monastery, you can try Dakar's bookshops for copies of the CDs.

Take bus 15 to Rufisque and change for a minibus to Bayakh or Kayar (CFA100). Tell the driver where you're headed, and he'll drop you off at a junction, from where it's a 1.5km walk to the monastery. It's signposted and all the drivers know it. Alternatively, a taxi from Dakar should be around CFA15,000, including waiting time.

KAYAR

The pretty fishing village Kayar marks the point where the coast swings north – the beginning of Senegal's Grand Côte. It is framed by a wide sand strand, where the whole cycle of a fisherman's day can be observed, from the rolling out to sea, to the homecoming, emptying of the nets and gutting of fish.

The northern beaches aren't really recommended for swimming – undertows are very strong. But the coastline makes an impressive sight, and is a great place to relax. Pirogue trips, as well as walks to the sand dune behind the village fill a day nicely, and watching pirogue makers at work is fascinating. Kayar isn't far from Lac Rose, and the two destinations can be combined in a weekend trip.

The **Auberge de l'Océan Bleu** (☎ 953 5058, 507 91 25; r CFA7000-10,000) is a relaxed, simple, solar-powered place right behind the beach (you can't drive here). Manager David can arrange excursions around the country, and also had a great plan to create a pirogue shuttle service between the airport at Yoff and Kayar. Phone to ask if that's already been implemented.

PETITE CÔTE

South of Dakar, the Petite Côte is where Senegal greets the Atlantic with 70km kilometres of sandy coast. Safe swimming beaches attract large numbers of tourists, and cause the flashy holiday village Saly to

spill over its boundaries. If you like your holiday more low-key and your beach-body slightly less exposed, the villages Toubab Dialao, Popenguine and La Somone in the north, as well as Mbodiène, Nianing and Joal-Fadiout in the south have white strands that still swing to the local rhythm.

TOUBAB DIALAO

The calm fishing village Toubab Dialao is an excellent hideout from the bustle of Dakar – a great place for walking, swimming and horse riding. **Les Cavaliers de la Savane** (☎ 836 7876) offers guided tours on horseback (CFA10,000 for two hours).

Perched on a cliff, the seashell-decorated **Sobo-Bade** (☎ /fax 836 0356; www.espacesobobade.com; dm per person CFA4000, s/d from CFA10,000/12,000) is something of a classic on the backpacker's scene, and the hub of much activity in the village. Its design has inspired two other places: **La Source Ndiambalane** (☎ 836 1703; ndiambalan@sentoos.sn; d/tr CFA12,000/15,000) and **Auberge La Mimosa** (☎ /fax 826 7326; mimosa@sentoos.com; d CFA10,000, 🍽️), which has an Internet café.

The grandest place in town is the **Iris Hotel** (☎ 836 2969; www.irishotel.net; s/d with half board CFA35,000/58,000; 🍽️ 📺 📶), a luxurious address with tastefully decorated rooms and a spectacular sea-view terrace. A rough and muddy dirt track out of town, **La Pierre de Lisse** (☎ 957 7148; pierredeglise@sentoos.sn; s/d CFA20,000/30,000; 🍽️) is a welcoming place, run by the friendly and knowledgeable Bab Mbengue.

To get here from Dakar, take any transport headed for Mbour and get off at the Diam Niadia junction. Minibuses run from here to Toubab Dialao (CFA300). A taxi from Dakar should cost around CFA15,000.

RÉSERVE DE BANDIA

This small **wildlife reserve** (☎ 685 5886; adult/child CFA7000/3500; 🕒 8am-6pm) sits 65km from Dakar on the road to Mbour, about 5km south of Sindia. The impressively well-managed reserve is crowded with wildlife, including colobus monkeys, crocodiles and other species indigenous to Senegal, as well as rhinos, giraffes, buffaloes, ostriches and other animals more at home in East Africa. In that sense, it's more of a zoo, but an amazingly beautiful one, with not a cage

in sight. And unlike in the national parks, you're almost guaranteed animal sightings.

For those more interested in human tradition than beasts, the Serer burial mounds and giant baobab, once used to bury griots, may be an enticement to visit.

Walking isn't allowed here, but you can enter with your own car or taxi. During or shortly after the wet season you may have to hire one of the reserve's own 4WDs (CFA30,000), as many routes will be impassable for smaller vehicles. Tours take two to three hours.

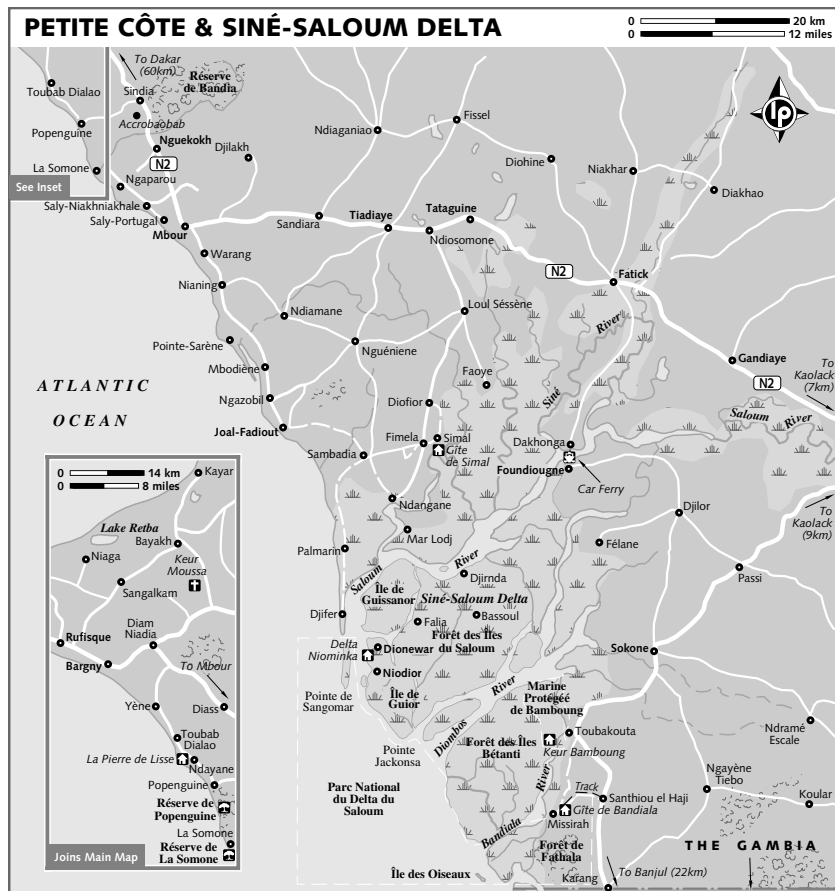
Even if you don't want to visit the park, the fantastic restaurant, overlooking a pond is worth a visit. You can normally spot bufaloes, monkeys, birds and crocodiles from

here, and the food is good, too (dishes around CFA4000 to CFA6000).

Across the Dakar–Mbour main road lies the fantastic **Accrobaobab** (Xavier Larcher; ☎ 637 1428; www.accro-baobab.com; adult/child CFA15,000/10,000), where you can climb, glide, and clamber your way around mighty baobab trees – all with safety nets and trained staff to watch out. Great fun.

POPENGUINE

This tranquil, friendly village is famous for its annual Pentecostal pilgrimage (check www.sanctuaire-popenguine.sn for details on the annual event) and a modern church that commemorates the apparition of the black Madonna in 1986.



THE RESERVES OF POPENGUINE AND LA SOMONE

Less known than Senegal's large national parks, these two tiny reserves are home to some 150 different species of birds. The Réserve de Popenguine was declared a protected zone in 1986, after the blue rock-thrush was spotted here. Excursions to see this, and plenty of other species, can be organised by the Campement Keur Cupaam, whose women's collective looks after the reserve, and also has resident ornithological guides from the National Parks Authority. The adjacent Réserve de La Somone is very different in character. It was created by the local community in 1999, and is maintained independently. The park headquarters is situated at the edge of the reserve (ask locals to show you the way there), but for guided bird-watching tours you are better off booking a combined tour at Popenguine, which has the better trained staff. The protected zone of La Somone contains a stunning lagoon, where pelicans and flamingos are the most prominent feathered residents, though with a bit of patience, you'll spot rarer species, too. At Popenguine, you'll pay CFA5000 for a ½-day tour around both reserves.

Bird-watchers love it for its small nature reserve, and the adjacent community reserve of La Somone – a beautiful lagoon. More than 150 species of birds can be spotted in the two protected areas. The **Campement Keur Cupaam** (☎ 956 4951; dm CFA5000, d CFA12,000) sits right at the edge of the reserve, and the boisterous women's cooperative that runs it also organises recommended ornithological tours. Across the road, **Keur de Sable** (☎ 957 71 64; s/d CFA7500/12,000, house CFA20,000) is a wonderfully welcoming hotel, restaurant and cultural centre. The beach, where you find the small restaurant **L'écho-Côtier** (☎ 637 8772; meals CFA5000) lies a few stone steps further down. A short walk along the wave-kissed shore takes you back to the village proper, and the rustic beach bar **Chez Ginette** (☎ 957 7110; ☹; Wed–Mon).

From Dakar, head for Mbour and get off at Sindia, from where infrequent bush taxis run to Popenguine for CFA300.

LA SOMONE

Eighty kilometres from Dakar, La Somone is the gentle medium between the mass tourism of Saly-Portugal and the village intimacy of Touba Dialao. The town sits right on a stunning lagoon, whose extraordinary landscape and rich bird life are protected (see above).

Sleeping & Eating

La Somone has several good accommodation choices – this is only a tiny selection of what's on offer. All of the places listed are along the main road that leads to the beach and the lagoon – Club Baobab sits right next to the lagoon.

Canda (☎ 958 5054; tening@sento.sn; d CFA18,500; ☹) The nicest place – a small family-style hotel with pretty rooms and Belgian beer on the menu.

Hôtel Sorong (☎ 958 5175; www.sorong.sn; s/d CFA21,000/30,000; ☹) A low-key hotel with a good restaurant.

Le Phoenix (☎ 957 7517; www.phenix-senegal.sn; villa CFA40,000) Has gleaming, spacious villas on the beach that accommodate whole families.

Le Bassari (☎ 957 7464; d/tr/q CFA17,000/25,000/34,000) A low-key, beach-view *campement* packed with masks and artefacts.

Africa Queen (☎ 957 7435; www.africaqueen.com; d CFA25,000; ☹) An unremarkable resort hotel catering mainly for groups.

Club Baobab (☎ 957 7402; h2131@accor.com) A luxurious option that only accepts independent travellers in the low season. Inquire for individual rates.

A recommended restaurant outside the hotels is the cute **Café Creole** (☎ 958 5191; dishes around CFA2500–3000), near the junction between Ngarou and La Somone – the place for tasty Senegalese and European cuisine, with live music on Thursday evenings.

Getting There & Away

To get to La Somone, take a Mbour-bound taxi, get off at Nguékokh where taxis leave for Ngarou and La Somone (CFA300).

SALY

The French call Saly Senegal's 'Cote d'Azur', and they're not far off. Once here it's easy to forget that you're in Africa. This is the sort of coastal holiday destination found all over the world: palm-lined beaches,

dozens of big hotels, nightclubs, bars and souvenir shops. The main tourist mile is in Saly-Portugal. The northern part of town, Saly-Niakhniakhale, is much more local in character.

BICIS (☎ 957 3331; Saly Portugal; 🕒 3.30-5.30pm Mon, 9am-12.30pm & 3.30-5.30pm Tue-Fri, 9am-12.30pm Sat) and **SGBS** (☎ 957 37 03; Saly Portugal) have branches in Saly, and there are several Internet cafés.

Sleeping

This is a tiny selection of the dozens of hotels and self-catering apartments in Saly.

Les Bougainvillées (☎ 957 2222; bougainvilleesaly@sentoo.sn; r CFA41,200; 🚽 📺 📺) With comfortable bungalows set in a spacious garden, this is prettier than your standard resort hotel.

Les Flamboyants (☎ 957 0770; www.hotelsenegal.flamboyant.com; s/d from CFA24,600/25,000; 🚽 📺) For Saly-Portugal, this is a nicely understated place. It's all about wrought iron it seems, from the room furnishings to the tables of the plant-adorned restaurant.

Espadon (☎ 957 1949; fax 957 2000; half board per person CFA36,600; 🚽 📺 📺) This smoothly decorated place provides luxury with an African flavour. The attached fishing centre enjoys a good reputation.

Lamantin Beach Hotel (☎ 957 0777; www.lalamantin.com; s/d/ste with half board CFA82,000/131,000/210,000; 🚽 📺 📺) This five-star establishment calls itself paradise on earth, and if your idea of heaven involves being pampered in a spa, or relaxing on a private beach, then you'll probably agree with the hype.

Au Petit Jura (☎ 957 3767; www.aupetitjura.ch; d CFA19,500; 📺 📺 📺) This pretty retreat in a calm corner of Saly-Niakhniakhale has spotless huts in a half-circle around a swimming pool.

La Medina (☎ 957 4993; lamedina@sentoo.sn; s/d 13,000/17,000; 🚽) This Mediterranean-style place stretches over three floors, surrounding a lush courtyard. A stunning oasis of peace in the heart of Saly village.

Eating & Drinking

Saly-Portugal's restaurant scene leaves you spoilt for choice, though many serve similar fare. The following are among the most interesting.

El Paséo (Saly junction; meals around CFA5000) For scrumptious Spanish meals head to this lively place.

Le Manguier (Route de la Somone; dishes around CFA4000) This tastefully decorated restaurant is a gem, both for its excellent international cuisine, and the pleasant courtyard where giant mango trees watch over a collection of African masks and statues.

Habana Café (☎ 957 0724; dishes around CFA5000) Fast becoming one of Saly's mightiest magnets, thanks to its beautiful beach spot, excellent service and its delicious French cuisine.

Chez Poulo (☎ 659 6331; dishes around CFA1000) A small and informal eatery that is hugely popular, thanks to its mouthwatering Senegalese and European food.

Getting There & Away

A taxi from Mbour is CFA1500.

MBOUR

Five kilometres south of Saly, Mbour is a big fishing centre. The town's 200m-long fish market on the beach, the colourful dots of pirogues and the surrounding marine-related commerce is a sight to behold.

The *gare routière* (bus station) is near the exit towards Dakar, behind a wide gate. Mbour has a **BICIS** (☎ 957 1086) with ATM, several Internet cafés and a post office. All of those are found in the centre of Mbour, at the tree-lined alleyway that crosses town. Mbour hospital is on the route towards the beach and Tama Lodge.

Sleeping & Eating

There are a few places to stay scattered around town, all of them south of the fishing market.

Village Petit Eden (☎ 957 4477; www.petit-eden.de; d CFA17,000) Has been a favourite with travellers for years, thanks to a leafy garden setting, clean rooms and friendly staff.

Le Bounty (☎ /fax 957 2951; bounty@sentoo.sn; d CFA9500; 🚽) Near the beach, the Bounty has rooms stuffed with souvenirs that try hard to look like apartments.

Hôtel Club Safari (☎ 957 1991; fax 957 3838; s/d incl breakfast CFA16,000/20,000; 🚽 📺) A few blocks further down from Le Bounty, the seashell-decorated Safari has spacious, comfortable rooms set around a pool.

Mbègeel (☎ 957 5177; www.mbegeel.com; hut/ste/house CFA39,500/59,000/98,000; 🚽 📺) A few kilometres along the road to Nianing, this 'handcrafted' guesthouse is a softly lit, mosaic-decorated piece of art.

Tama Lodge (☎ /fax 957 0040; www.tamalodge.com; s CFA30,000-40,000, d 60,000-80,000) The queen of Mbour's hotels where amazing wooden sculptures watch over modern mud-huts. A dinner on the beach terrace by candlelight is a fine night out indeed.

For cheap, filling and utterly delicious Senegalese meals, head for **Chez Paolo** (dishes from CFA2000) Anyone in town can show you the way there.

Getting There & Away

There's frequent public transport between Mbour and Dakar (minibus CFA950, *sept-place* CFA1300); Mbour to Joal is a little less regular (minibus CFA600, *sept-place* CFA750). Taxis cost around CFA15,000 from Dakar to Mbour.

NIANING

Sleepy Nianing is one of the quieter places along the coast, perfect if you like to dip your toes without anyone stepping on them. Youthful ambience and a spacious garden make **Le Ben'Tenier** (☎ 957 1420; bentenier@telecomplus.sn; r per person CFA8630) a good option. The **Auberge des Coquillages** (☎ /fax 957 1428; tidiane@telecomplus.sn; s/d CFA26,000/28,100; 📺), however, is much brighter and prettier. **Le Girafon** (☎ 957 5266; s/d CFA10,000/15,000) is a tiny *campement* with a relaxed family feel that also organises local excursions.

Nianing is on the main road between Mbour and Joal and all public transport stops here.

JOAL-FADIOUT

Joal is the birthplace of former president Léopold Sédar Senghor, but it's the town's 'twin sister' Fadiout that attracts the people. Fadiout sits on an island made entirely of oyster and clam shells, and everything in town is made of shells, from the houses and car-free roads to the shared Muslim and Christian cemetery. The island is reached via a long wooden bridge from Joal.

The citizens of Joal and Fadiout are rightly proud of their religious tolerance. Christians and Muslims live in harmony here, and Fadiout's impressive church and shrines to the Virgin Mary are complemented by a large mosque.

There are plenty of pirogue trips on offer, taking you to the cemetery, a nearby oyster cultivation and a set of stilt-balanced

granaries. The trips make for a great day out, but the pirogue owners are a hassle-some lot. You're better off relying on the badge-bearing employees of the Syndicat de Tourisme. They hover around the bridge, or can be found at the Hôtel le Finio.

Sleeping & Eating

Le Thiouraye (☎ 515 6064; s/d/tr CFA10,000/12,000/14,000) is a relaxed *auberge* right on the river. You can leap straight from the brilliant terrace restaurant into a pirogue to Fadiout – a useful way to avoid the hustlers near the bridge. The quirky **Relais 114** (☎ 957 6178; r incl breakfast without/with bathroom CFA7500/10,000) is pretty run-down, though the larger-than-life owner Mamadou Balde and his performing pelicans give the neglect some character. The fairly new **Hôtel de la Plage** (☎ 957 6677; hakim@yahoo.fr; d/tr CFA25,000/28,000; 📺 📺) has bright, large rooms at reasonable rates, and a good restaurant.

Getting There & Away

A minibus to/from Mbour is CFA600. If you're heading on down the coast, from Joal to Palmarin costs CFA1000. A *sept-place* taxi goes directly to Dakar most mornings (without changing at Mbour) for CFA1800.

THE SINÉ-SALOOM DELTA

Some 60km south of Mbour, the Petite Côte is cut by the mouth of the Saloom River, and sand strands give way to a maze of mangrove swamps and creeks. This is the 180,000-hectare zone of the Siné-Saloom Delta, with its shimmering flat lands, palm groves, salt marshes and lagoons, which is one of Senegal's most beautiful areas.

PALMARIN

Palmarin is an expansive area encompassing four villages that lies 20km south of Joal-Fadiout, where the beaches of the Petite Côte merge with the labyrinthine creeks of the Siné-Saloom Delta. It's a breathtaking spot, where dots of bush grass and tall palm groves, salty plains and patches of gleaming water line a series of causeways. All places are clearly signposted on the main road.

Sleeping & Eating

Palmarin has a seductive choice of beautiful *campements*. Leading the pack is the original **Lodge des Collines de Niassam** (☎ 669 6343; www.niasam.com; half board per person CFA37,000-57,000; 🍴 🚿) where you can sleep in classy treehouses that cling to the mighty branches of baobabs, or sit on stilts in the shallow waters of the delta. The **Yokam** (☎ 936 3974; yokam@teranga-horizon.com; r per person incl breakfast CFA7000) is run by a young and enthusiastic bunch and has accommodation in comfy straw huts. The red-mud bungalows of the **Lodge de Diakhomor** (☎ 644 9491, 957 1256; www.lesenegal.info; s/d with half board CFA23,000/41,000) are visible from afar. This is a stylish place where pirogue excursions, horse riding, bicycle and fishing trips are all included in the price. The basic **Campement Villageois de Sessene** (☎ 669 0365; r per person incl breakfast CFA6500) is run by the local population. If you wish to spend your holiday cash locally, this is the place to stay.

Getting There & Away

Palmarin is most easily reached from Mbour, via Joal-Fadiout and Sambadia (where you may have to change). The fare from Joal to Sambadia is CFA500 in a Ndiaga Ndiaye, and from Sambadia to Palmarin it's CFA300.

DJIFER

Fifteen kilometres south of Palmarin, Djifer is a good starting point for pirogue excursions around the Siné-Saloum Delta (half-day trips around CFA25,000). The filthy, litter-strewn village holds little appeal in itself, but the deserted sand bank **Pointe de Sangomar** and the tranquil islands of Guior and Guissanor are close by. A visit here can be combined with a pirogue tour through the maze of mangroves, and a stop at the villages of Dionewar and Falia.

In Djifer, **La Pointe de Sangomar** (☎ /fax 835 6191; d CFA8600, with bathroom CFA12,600) is popular, while the slightly shabby **Yokam** (☎ 936 3752; r per person CFA3000) is great for arranging pirogue excursions. In Dionewar, you can spend the night in the luxurious **Delta Niominka** (☎ 948 9935; www.deltaniominka.com; r per person incl breakfast CFA25,000).

NDANGANE & MAR LODJ

Ndangane is a thriving tourist centre on the northern side of the Siné-Saloum Delta. From here you can get boats across the river

to the village of Mar Lodj, on a peaceful island cut off from the mainland by the delta. There's no bank here, but Internet connections are available at a couple of places.

Beware of the overeager pirogue-owners on the departure point to Mar Lodj – you're best off arranging your trip through your *campement*.

Sleeping & Eating

NDANGANE

Most of the accommodation and eating options are located at the end of the road to Fimela, which is from where most boat trips depart. **Le Barracuda** (Chez Mbacke; ☎ 658 5794; s/d CFA9000/12,000) is a cheap and cheerful family-run place. Another good choice is the well-known **La Palangrotte** (☎ 949 9321; lalalang@sentoo.sn; s/d incl breakfast CFA9750/13,000) at the exit of town where 10% of all profits are invested in local-development projects. The spacious **Les Cordons Bleus** (☎ 949 9312; cordons-bleus@sentoo.sn; s/d/tr CFA25,000/32,000/42,000; 🍴 🚿 🚿) is the classiest establishment in town.

Good restaurants include **Le Petit Paradis** (dishes from CFA800), **Le Tamarko** (dishes from CFA3000) and **Le Baobab** (☎ 653 4073; dishes around CFA4000), all of which serve mainly European food. For Senegalese food try **Le Pichouef** and **La Maroise**.

MAR LODJ

There aren't vast differences in quality between the *campements* on Mar Lodj, just in price and service. The friendly *campement Essamaye* (www.senegaliam.com; r with full board CFA17,500) has excellent-value rooms with clean, shared bathrooms. **Le Limboko** (☎ 641 2253) has a good restaurant, a couple of rooms and a manager who's full of useful advice. Inquire for prices. **Mbine Diam** (☎ 636 9199; s/d/tr CFA9000/16,000/21,000) is one of the simplest *campements* on the island, which is reflected in the adequate prices. A little more upmarket are the bungalows of **Le Bazouk** (☎ 820 4125; lebazoudusalom@sentoo.sn; per person CFA12,000) and **Nouvelle Vague** (☎ 634 0723; s/d/tr CFA15,600/23,200/25,800). All *campements* offer pick-up from Ndangane, some for free.

Getting There & Away

Take any bus between Kaolack and Mbour, and get off at Ndiosomone, from where bush taxis shuttle back and forth to Ndangane. You can go directly by bush taxi from Dakar

to Ndangane for CFA1800. From Mbour bush taxis go via Sambadia and Fimela.

You can charter a pirogue between Ndangane and Djifer for about CFA25,000. A pirogue to Foundiougne is about CFA40,000.

FIMELA & SIMAL

The two villages Fimela and Simal lie just north of Ndangane, past the tourist trail. In Simal, 2km from Dioffor, the **Gîte de Simal** (☎ 644 9491, 957 1256; www.lesenegal.info; s/d with half board CFA21,000/37,000) has accommodation in rootsy straw-huts. All activities, such as pirogue and fishing trips around the mangroves are included in the half-board rate.

There are fairly frequent bush taxis from Ndangane to Fimela (CFA200), from where you can hire a taxi to either place for about CFA1000 to CFA2000. Taxis from Fimela to Ndiosomone cost CFA400.

FOUNDIUGNE

Once a French colonial outpost, the expansive village of Foundiougne now mainly attracts keen anglers and is a good place to arrange pirogue trips. Most *campements* listed have boat tours on offer, and prices tend to be similar (pirogue day trips around CFA20,000 to CFA30,000, transfer to Djifer CFA40,000).

This area has notoriously bad drinking water – stick to bottled.

Sleeping & Eating

West from the ferry pier, there's a string of *campements*. They're numerous, but overall quality standards are pretty low.

La Pirogue (☎ 516 7102; r per person CFA8000, with half/full board CFA13,000/16,000) This tiny hotel has spotless rooms and a bread oven onsite.

Le Baobab sur Mer (Chez Anne Marie; ☎ 948 1262; s/d/tr incl breakfast CFA8500/16,000/20,000) Right on the river and run by the boisterous Anne Marie, this place is booming. Meals are available (CFA3000 to CFA4000).

Le Baobab sur Terre (Chez Ismail; ☎ /fax 948 1108; s/d incl breakfast CFA6500/13,000) A relative of Baobab sur Mer, sur Terre is a more understated affair, with very basic, but cheap rooms.

Les Bolongs (☎ /fax 948 1110; www.lesbolongs.com; r CFA10,000) Spacious bungalows set in a lush garden.

Indiana Club (☎ /fax 948 1213; www.indianclub.net; r per person with half/full board CFA15,000/19,000;

🍴 🚿) Has a curious cowboy character and a very good restaurant.

Saloum Saloum (☎ 534 8370; saloumsaloum@sentoo.sn; s/d/tr CFA8500/16,000/19,000; 🍴) Try the slightly rugged if you want to spend your money locally.

Foundiougne Hôtel (☎ 948 1212; fax 948 1310; s/d/tr incl breakfast CFA21,600/35,200/40,800; 🍴 🚿) If you just want to spend, the overpriced Foundiougne might appeal – it offers a vast range of activities.

The Italian restaurant **La Cloche** (☎ 544 4242; meals CFA3500), right near the jetty, has an excellent reputation, both for the sparkling cleanliness of its kitchen and the fully-fledged Italian menu.

Getting There & Away

By minibus, Kaolack to Foundiougne is CFA700. There aren't many direct buses, so you might have to change at Passi.

Alternatively, you can reach Foundiougne from Fatick. Take a bush taxi to Dakhonga, where you catch a ferry across to Foundiougne (passenger/car CFA100/1200). If there's no ferry waiting, you can take a pirogue across (around CFA3000).

TOUBAKOUTA

Nestled among mazes of mangroves, the tiny town of Toubakouta is one of the most beautiful spots of the Siné-Saloum Delta. It's an excellent base for excursions to the nearby Parc National du Delta du Saloum and the stunning Air Marine Protégée, both of which teem with wildlife, including pelicans, flamingos, herons and egrets.

Toubakouta has a couple of cybercafés, *télécentres* and a post office, but no bank.

Sleeping & Eating

Toubakouta has hotels for all budgets.

KeurYoussou (☎ /fax 948 7728; d/tr CFA12,000/15,000; 🍴) One of the best-quality cheapies in the country. Rooms are beautifully furnished and the atmosphere friendly and relaxed.

Les Coquillages du Niombatto (☎ 645 3036; layoum@hotmail.com; d incl breakfast CFA12,500) Head here for basic, but impeccable rooms. It also has an excellent restaurant.

Keur Bamboung (☎ 510 8013; www.oceanium.org; r with half board/full board CFA17,000/22,000) The most fascinating place of all. A beautiful, village-run ecolodge, stunningly located on the edge

of a mangrove-lined island, a pirogue journey and donkey-cart ride out of town. Transport and all activities (mangrove walks, pirogue trips, canoeing, bird-watching) are included in the price.

Hôtel Keur Saloum (☎ 948 7715; www.keursaloum.com; s/d with half board CFA36,000/58,000; ♿ ♿) This vast hotel is the most upmarket place where nicely furnished bungalows are scattered across a pretty garden.

Getting There & Away

Toubakouta is just off the main road between Kaolack and Karang. Kaolack to Toubakouta is CFA3000 by *sept-place* taxi and CFA1300 by Ndiaga Ndiaye.

PARC NATIONAL DU DELTA DU SALOUM

The 76,000 hectares of the **Parc National du Delta du Saloum** (admission CFA2000) encompass the dry savanna woodland of the Forêt de Fathala, wide stretches of mangrove swamps, and a maritime section that extends from the islands of Betanti to the Pointe de Sangomar. Wildlife in the forest section includes red colobus and patas monkeys, warthogs and hyenas. The sea sections allow for bird-watching, though sea turtles and dolphins can occasionally be spotted.

The main entrance to the park is in Missirah. You pay your admission charge at the office of the **eco guards** (☎ 936 3431; ♿ 9am-4pm), who can also show you around.

In Missirah, you can stay at the peaceful and welcoming **Gîte de Bandiala** (☎ 948 7735; www.gite.bandiala.com; r per person with half/full board CFA15,400/21,100), which lies about 2km east of Missirah, down a sand path that turns off the main road just before you get to the village. The place is full of character and a great base for exploring this part of the delta. It also has a water hole where monkeys, warthogs and other animals come to drink.

Getting There & Away

A bush taxi from Toubakouta is CFA400, but they're few and far between. For around CFA5000, someone will usually drive you there. Another option is to get a private taxi all the way from Kaolack – this will cost anything between CFA20,000 and CFA40,000.

CENTRAL & NORTHERN SENEGAL

This region covers a vast area, from the edge of the busy Cap Vert Peninsula, to the remote outer edges of northern Senegal. It includes some rarely visited spots, such as the magnificent Desert de Lompoul and the route through the arid lands along the Senegal River. These solitary spaces contrast sharply with the bustling towns of historical Saint-Louis, Thiès, Kaolack and Touba, Senegal's holy city.

THIÈS

Thiès is the gateway to the region, a city destined to absorb Dakar's population overspill. The leafy town is of marginal interest to travellers apart from one major attraction – the world famous **Tapestry Factory** (see below).

Information

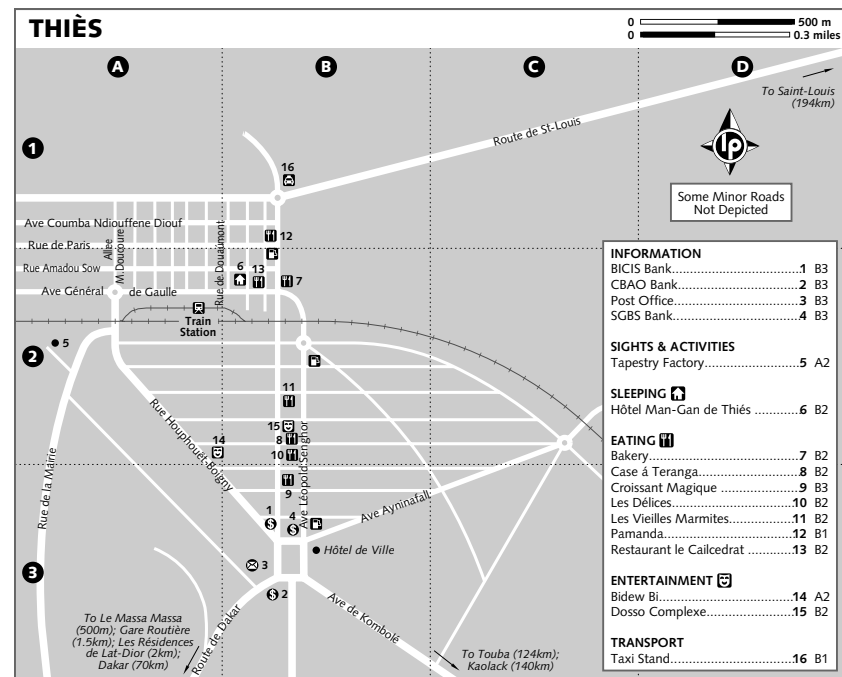
CBAO, SGBS and BICIS all have branches with withdrawal facilities. There are several *télécentres*, cybercafés and a post office in the centre of town.

BICIS (☎ 951 8339; Place de France; ♿ 7.45am-12.15pm & 1.40-3.45pm)

TAPESTRIES OF THIÈS

The factory of the **Manufactures Sénégalaises des Arts Décoratifs** (☎/fax 951 1131; admission CFA1000; ♿ 8am-12.30pm & 3-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-12.30pm Sat & Sun) was one of the many artistic endeavours inspired by President Senghor during the 1960s. Today, the factory is run as a cooperative, with designs for the tapestries chosen from paintings submitted by Senegalese artists.

All the weaving is done on manual looms, and two weavers complete about 1 sq metre per month. Only eight tapestries are made from each design. Most find their way around the world as gifts from the government to foreign dignitaries; there's a huge tapestry hanging in Atlanta airport and another in Buckingham Palace. Others are for sale, but at CFA500,000 per square metre, most of us will be content to admire them in the exhibition room.



CBAO (☎ 952 05 05; Rue Nationale 2)

SGBS (☎ 951 82 25; Ave Léopold Sédar Senghor)

Sleeping

There are several good sleeping options, including the excellent **Le Massa Massa** (☎ 952 1244; Cité Malick Sy; r with/without air-con CFA20,600/12,600), where rooms are simple and welcoming and the French and Belgian cuisine (dishes around CFA4000) divine. The simpler **Hôtel Man-Gan de Thiès** (☎ 951 1526; fax 951 2532; Rue Amadou Sow; s/d CFA15,000/18,000; ♿) is more basic but has the added attraction of a pleasant courtyard garden. The most luxurious place is the multistar hotel **Les Résidences de Lat-Dior** (☎ 952 0777; residencelatdior@hotmail.com; s/d CFA27,600/35,200; ♿) equipped with a modern fitness centre, wi-fi access and even its own mosque.

Eating

The local restaurant scene is mainly made up of Lebanese fast-food joints – but good ones. The **Croissant Magique** (☎ 951 1878; dishes around CFA2000) is popular, though pizzas are

better at **Pamanda** (☎ 952 1550; Rue de Paris; dishes from CFA1000-5000; ♿ 9am-2am). **Les Délices** (☎ 951 7516; Ave Léopold Senghor; ♿ 7.30am-2am) serves good ice cream and pastries on a pretty terrace.

The **Restaurant le Caïcedrat** (☎ 951 1130; Ave Général de Gaulle; CFA1500-4000; ♿ 7am-midnight) leads the route upmarket, with kofta and other Lebanese dishes in pleasant surroundings. The excellent restaurant **Les Vieilles Marmites** (☎ 951 4440; dishes around CFA3000) has been popular for years and the **Case à Teranga** (☎ 611 5125; Ave Léopold Senghor; meals from CFA1000-5000) has a delicious choice of West Indian, Indian and French cuisine served with live music on weekends.

There's a good **bakery** (bread CFA150, croissants CFA700) for breakfast stuff, and several small boutiques for groceries and other items.

Entertainment

The two mighty entertainment complexes **Bidew Bi** (☎ 639 8554; ♿ 7pm-4am) and **Dosso Complexe** (☎ 951 2640; www.dossonight.com; ♿ Tue-Sun; ♿) are where it all happens on weekends.

Getting There & Around

Bush taxis and minibuses leave from the *gare routière*, 1.5km from the centre, on the southern outskirts. There are frequent *sept-place* taxis to Dakar (CFA1200, one hour, 70km), Kaolack (CFA1900, two hours, 140km) and Saint-Louis (CFA2600, four hours, 196km). Any taxi trip around town should cost you CFA400, including the journey from the *gare routière* into the centre. There's a taxi stand in the north of town.

DIOURBEL

Diourbel was home to Cheikh Amadou Bamba, the founder of the Mouride Sufi brotherhood, from 1912 until his death in 1927. The palatial compound of his descendants is quite a sight, as is the town's main mosque, a building that's smaller, neater and, it has to be said, more aesthetically pleasing than the more famous mosque of Touba.

The small, simple *campement Keur Déthié Caty* (☎ 971 5190; s/d CFA11,600/13,000; 📍) is the only place to stay in town, unless you knock on the doors of the locals. There are a few cheap restaurants on the main street and around the *gare routière*.

Plenty of traffic runs through Diourbel on its way to Dakar or Touba. *Sept-place* taxis go to Dakar (CFA1720, three hours, 146km), Thiès (CFA900, 80 minutes, 76km) and Touba (CFA700, one hour, 50km).

TOUBA

Touba is the sacred focus of the Mouride Sufi brotherhood, the place where their spiritual leader Cheikh Amadou Bamba lived, worked and died. He is buried in the Grand Mosque of Touba, an awe-inspiring building whose minaret dominates the town. The constantly expanding building shows signs of various phases of construction, and has an impressive library containing the complete works of Cheikh Amadou Bamba.

But Touba is not only about spirituality, but about big business. The Mouride brotherhood is an influential economic and political force in the country, and much of Senegal's money is concentrated in Touba. Touba market is a huge sprawl of tax-free and illegal activity. Seeing the combined forces of religion, economy and politics work hand in hand is fascinating, though a bit confusing.

Once a year, 48 days after the Islamic New Year, around two million people

BAMBA

Cheikh Amadou Bamba, the founder of the Mouride brotherhood (1887), is without a doubt Senegal's most iconic religious figure. His veiled portrait looks earnestly down on the population from thousands of paintings spread across walls, shop signs, cars, stickers and even T-shirts. Born in 1850 as a relative of the powerful Wolof leader Lat Dior and a member of the wealthy Mbacke clan, he initially renounced his noble heritage, and chose a path of religious devotion. His preachings attracted an increasingly large following, the most famous disciple being the eccentric Cheikh Ibra Fall, leader of the Baye Fall, an offshoot of the Mouridiya. Both branches emphasise the importance of physical labour as a path to spiritual salvation. This initially fitted neatly with the French administration's attempts to improve its territory's economic output, but Bamba's anticolonial stance and the colonialists' fear of his growing Islamic power base led them to exile the charismatic leader. Bamba returned to Senegal in 1907 and, despite his continued anticolonial rhetoric, entered into hushed negotiations with the French; they both had much to gain from keeping peasants working in the groundnut fields.

Long after his death, the influence of Bamba and his teachings keeps growing, the ever-increasing masses of people descending on Touba for the Magal being proof of the immense popularity the Mouridiya enjoys.

descend on Touba for the **Grand Magal**, a pilgrimage that celebrates Bamba's return from exile in 1907 where he was banished for 20 years by the French authorities. It's an impressive sight but you have to be early to find a place in a taxi and keep your wits about you once there.

There are no places to stay in Touba, but on the day of the Magal local residents open their homes for visitors. At any other time, your best bet is the **Campement Touristique le Baol** (☎ 976 5505; fax 976 7254; s/d CFA11,600/13,000; 📍) in Mbaké (10km south of Touba), which has spartan rooms with their own bathrooms. There's an SGBS bank past the turn-off to Touba.

Touba to Dakar costs CFA3200 by *sept-place* taxi, CFA1500 by Ndiaga Ndiaye and CFA1500 by *car mouride*.

KAOLACK

Kaolack is a city that sees a lot of visitors pass through, but only a few that stay. However, the town has a unique urban charm worth inhaling for a day or two, and its central position makes it a great base for exploring much of the country.

Information

Banks include **CBAO** (Rue de la Gare) and **SGBS** (Rue de la Gare), both of which have Visa-welcoming ATMs. There are many places to connect to the net; the **Internet Café** (Rue Cheikh Tidiane Cherif; per hr CFA150) has a fairly speedy service. Kaolack has a relatively well-equipped and -staffed hospital.

Sights & Activities

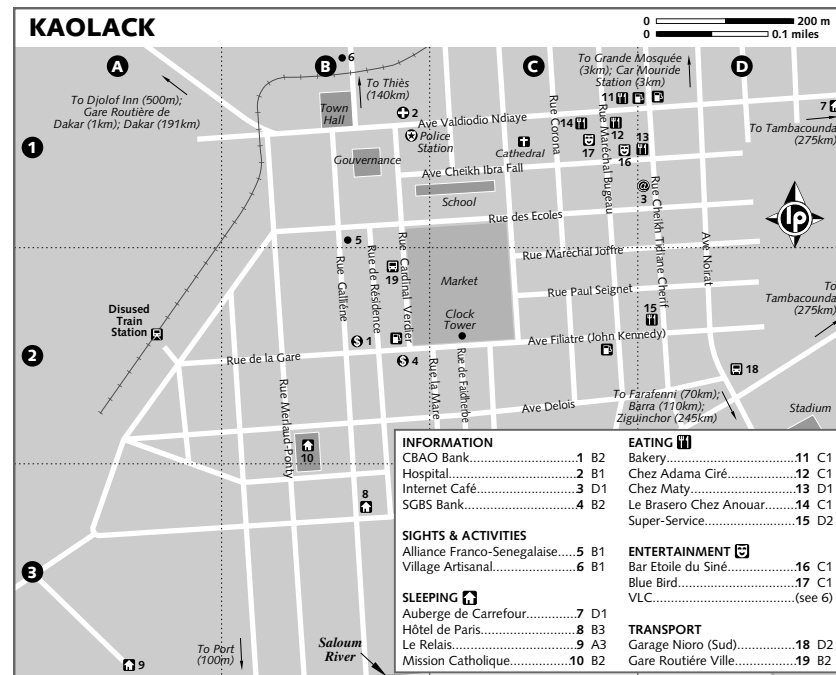
The town's round, covered **market** is one of the biggest in Africa, and fairly hassle-free compared to its Dakar relatives. The Moroccan-style building of the **Grande Mosquée** is the pride

of the Baye Niass brotherhood. Interesting is also the **Alliance Franco-Senegalaise** (☎ 941 1061; Rue Gallieni), either admire its fantastic décor, take in one of the frequent exhibitions and events, or just have a tranquil cup of coffee. If it's wood carvings and batiks you're after, check the **Village Artisanal** in the north of town, on the route to Thiès.

Sleeping

There are several cheap places, but not all of them worth considering. The **Djolof Inn** (☎ 941 9360; r CFA10,000; 📍), near the *gare routière* to Dakar, is the friendliest and most welcoming of the lot. **Auberge de Carrefour** (☎ 941 9000; Ave Valdiodio Ndiaye; s/d CFA8500/13,000) is also pretty good, with clean, spacious rooms and enthusiastic management. You can also stay at the **Mission Catholique** (☎ 941 2526; Rue Merlaud-Ponty; dm CFA2000, s CFA5000), though rooms are nothing special.

More upmarket are the **Hôtel de Paris** (☎ 941 1019; fax 941 1017; Rue Gallieni; s/d CFA24,000/30,000; 📍), which has a worn-out charm, and **Le Relais** (☎ 941 1000; fax 941 1002; Plage de Kundam; s/d CFA22,000/27,000; 📍), which surprises



with style among the many unglamorous options around.

Eating

If good-quality food is important to you, you should probably cook it yourself. Exceptions to Kaolack's dire *gargotte* scene include **Le Brasero Chez Anouar** (☎ 941 1608; Ave Valdiodio Ndiaye; meals about CFA3000; ☎ 7am-11pm), with an entirely deserved reputation for good food and lively ambience. For cheap swarmanas and simple meals, **Chez Maty** (☎ 941 9000; Rue Cheikh Tidiane Cherif; mains around CFA2500; ☎ Mon-Sat) is a good address.

Self-caterers are fairly well served, with the **Super-Service** (Ave Filiaire), a giant sprawl of a market selling fresh produce and a good **bakery** (Ave Valdiodio Ndiaye).

Entertainment

The **VLC** (Village Loisir Club; Village Artisanal) is the closest Kaolack gets to urbane entertainment. The music is bass-heavy as it should be and the dance floors crammed. At **Blue Bird** (☎ 941 5350; Rue Maréchal Bugeau; ☎ 8am-3am Mon-Sat, 6pm-2am Sun), a dinner for two can be followed by dancing in the adjacent nightclub. The boisterous **Bar Etoile du Siné** (☎ 936 45 93; ☎ 9am-2am) is a grubby little place for those who take their drinks seriously.

Getting There & Away

The town has three *gares routières*: Gare Routière de Dakar, on the northwestern side of town, for western and northern destinations; Garage Nioro (Sud), on the southeast side of the city centre, for Ziguinchor, The Gambia and Tambacounda; and Gare Routière Ville for local taxis.

There are frequent *sept-place* taxis to Dakar (CFA2600, three hours). A *sept-place* to the Gambian border at Karang is CFA2300 (two hours) and to Tambacounda CFA5000 (five hours). *Cars mourides* (CFA1500) to Dakar leave from near the mosque; ask your way there.

Shared taxis around town cost CFA500.

DESERT DE LOMPOUL

Near the Grande Côte, west of Kébémér, Lompoul surprises with huge sand dunes that stretch from the coast far into the country's interior, forming a veritable desert. There's an impressive *campement* in the heart of the dunes, **Le Lodge de Loumpoul**

(☎ 644 9194; 957 1256; www.lesenegal.info; s/d with half board CFA21,000/37,000), which offers accommodation in Mauritanian desert tents. Camel tours, picnic in the dunes and pick-up from Lompoul village are included in the price.

Most people get here by organised tour from Saint-Louis (see p714). If you're in your own car or hire taxi, take the route from Saint-Louis to Dakar, turn off at Kébémér and follow the smooth road to Lompoul village, from where *campement* staff can pick you up with 4WDs.

SAINT-LOUIS

pop 147,100

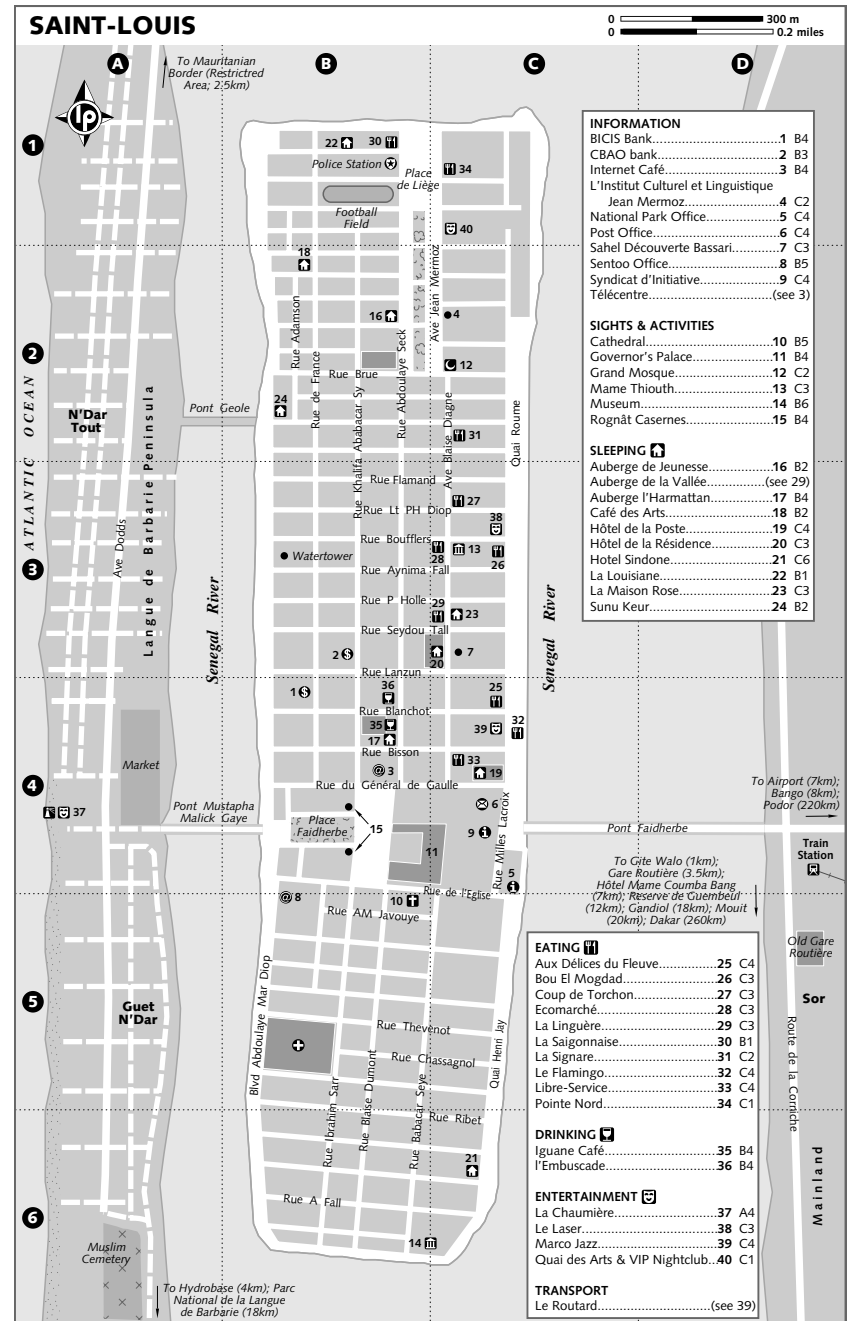
When you consider the enormous impact the French had on this continent it's fascinating to think that the place where it all began has barely changed for more than a century. Founded in 1659 by Louis Caullier on the easily accessible, flood-proof Île de Ndar, Saint-Louis was the first French settlement in Africa. By the 1790s, it had become a busy port and trading centre with a racially diverse population of 10,000. Most notable among the residents of Saint-Louis at this time were the *signares* – women of mixed race who married wealthy European merchants temporarily based in the city, and thereby earned aristocratic status and great wealth.

With the creation of l'Afrique Occidentale Française (French West Africa) in 1895, Saint-Louis became the capital of the French colonial empire. When the capital status was transferred to Dakar in 1902, Saint-Louis' prestige started fading, even though it retained status of capital of Senegal and Mauritania until 1958, when all Senegalese administration was moved to Dakar.

Over the years, Saint-Louis expanded beyond the confines of the island, covering part of the mainland (Sor) and the Langue de Barbarie Peninsula. With its range of classic architecture, the island was classified a Unesco World Heritage site in 2000.

Orientation

The city of Saint-Louis straddles part of the Langue de Barbarie peninsula, the island and the mainland. From the mainland you reach the island via the 500m-long Pont Faidherbe; two smaller bridges, the almost-derelict Pont Mustapha Malick Gaye and the safer Pont Geole, link the island to the peninsula. The island was formerly the



European quarter, with many grand old houses, a few of which still retain their gracious wrought-iron balconies, while others are gradually crumbling away. The peninsula was the African quarter, previously inhabited by freed slaves; today it's a thriving fishing community called Guet N'Dar.

MAPS

The map *Saint-Louis et la Région du Fleuve Sénégal* (CFA3000), a cross between a cartoon and an aerial photograph, is available in bookshops and hotels.

Information

CULTURAL CENTRES

L'Institut Culturel et Linguistique Jean Mermoz

(☎ 938 2626; www.ccfis.sn; Ave Jean Mermoz; ☎ 8.30am-12.30pm & 3-6.30pm Mon-Fri) Has a café and hosts films, concerts and art exhibitions.

INTERNET ACCESS

Internet Café (Rue du Général de Gaulle; per hr CFA500; ☎ 8am-11pm) Has decent terminals and several phone booths.

Sentoo Office (Blvd Abdoulaye Mar Diop; per hr CFA500; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-8pm)

MONEY

Both banks change money and have ATMs.

BICIS (☎ 961 1053; Rue de France; ☎ 7.45am-12.15pm & 1.40-3.45pm Mon-Thu, 7.45am-1pm & 2.40-3.45pm Fri)

CBAO (☎ 961 9639; Rue Khalifa Ababacar Sy; ☎ 8.15-5.15pm Mon-Fri) Also has a Western Union office.

POST

Post office (Rue du Général de Gaulle) The Art Deco-style building opposite the Hôtel de la Poste.

TELEPHONE

Télécentre (Rue du Général de Gaulle; ☎ 8am-midnight)

TOURIST INFORMATION

National Park Office (Quai Henri Jay; ☎ 8am-1.30pm, 3-7pm) Can also help with information about the national parks of northern Senegal.

Syndicat d'Initiative (☎ 961 2455; sttourisme@sentoo.sn) A haven of regional information and also organises tours.

www.saintlouisdusenegal.com This website contains plenty of useful information and has links to all major hotels and restaurants.

TRAVEL AGENCIES

Sahel Découverte Bassari (☎ 961 5689, 961 4263; www.saheldecouverte.com; Ave Blaise Diagne) Saint-Louis' best agency, with a range of tours on offer.

Sights

Designed by Gustav Eiffel and originally built to cross the Danube, the **Pont Faidherbe**, linking the mainland and island, was transferred to Saint-Louis in 1897. The bridge is a grand piece of 19th-century engineering – 507m long with a middle section that can rotate to allow ships to pass through.

Across the bridge, you see the **Hôtel de la Poste**, the oldest hotel in town, and the place the colonial air-mail pilots used to stay in colonial times. The **Governor's Palace** is flanked north and south by the 1837 **Rognât caserns**. The nearby **Cathedral** (Rue de l'Église), built in 1828, is one of the oldest operating churches in Senegal. The **Grand Mosque** in the north was constructed in 1847 and features the oddity of an attached clock tower.

Saint-Louis has plenty of historical buildings, most of them in a semiruinous state, yet still recognisable with their typical balconies and two-storey layout surrounding a small courtyard. At the southern tip of the island is the historical **museum** (☎ 961 1050; Quai Henri Jay; admission CFA500; ☎ 9am-noon & 3-6pm), but more interesting is the contemporary art gallery **Mame Thiouth** (☎ 961 3611; ☎ 8am-7pm), housed in a restored old Saint-Louis building.

The mainland parts of Saint-Louis have less to offer in historical architecture, but more in contemporary life. **Guet N'Dar** is a fantastically busy fishing town. At the southern end of Guet N'Dar is the **Muslim cemetery** where each fisherman's grave is covered with a fishing net.

Festivals & Events

The **Saint-Louis Jazz Festival** (see opposite) is an event of international renown that regularly attracts jazz greats from around the world. It takes place annually in early May.

If you pass through town in October, you might have the chance to watch the impressive **Regatta of Guet-Ndar**, a lively boat race that passes through the river arm between Saint-Louis and Sor. **Les Fanals**, the historic processions with decorated lanterns (not the handheld kind, but lanterns so big they resemble carnival floats), are a tradition unique to Saint-Louis. They were initiated

SAINT-LOUIS JAZZ

Jazz is a big thing here – and it's not just the shared name with St Louis, Missouri, in the USA, where blues and jazz originated. Way back in the 1940s jazz bands from Saint-Louis (Senegal) were playing in Paris and elsewhere in Europe. Worldwide interest was revived in the early 1990s when the Saint-Louis Jazz Festival was first held, with mainly local bands performing. Now renamed the Saint-Louis International Jazz Festival, this annual event is held the second weekend of May, and attracts performers and audiences from all over the world. At most other times, the stages of the city's many concert venues and jazz bars remain empty. For more background, have a look at *St-Louis Jazz*, a book by Hervé Lenormond (French text, Editions Joca Seria), which outlines the history of jazz in Senegal and has some wonderful photos of musicians from Africa, America and Europe performing in Saint-Louis.

Programmes and dates can be checked on www.saintlouisjazz.com, or with the Syndicat d'Initiative.

by the *signares* – and are held around Christmas and sometimes during the jazz festival.

Sleeping

MAINLAND

Gîte Walo (☎ 961 4407; clem.mathieu@voila.fr; d from CFA10,000) This understated place on the route from Dakar offers plenty for the amount you pay: a wide terrace, shaded courtyard and spacious, spotless rooms.

Hôtel Mame Coumba Bang (☎ 961 1850; www.hotelcoumba.com; s/d CFA28,000/35,000; ☎ ☎) It's named after a water spirit and calls itself 'lover's wood' – the large swimming pool and the tranquil riverside garden explain the choice of names. It's 7km from town just off the road to Dakar.

ISLAND

Auberge de Jeunesse (☎ 961 2409; pisidiallo@yahoo.fr; Rue Abdoulaye Seck; dm/d CFA5500/10,000) Yes it's possible: a spotless, cheap, mosquito-netted, ventilated place to spend the night sleeping comfortably.

Café des Arts (☎ 961 6078; Rue de France; dm/d CFA4500/9000) Rooms are basic, but the fam-

ily atmosphere of this colourful little place more than makes up for it.

Auberge l'Harmattan (☎ 961 8253; auberge.harmattan@yahoo.fr; Rue Abdoulaye Seck/d/tr CFA15,000/20,000; ☎) Rooms in the historic building are enormous, but suffer slightly from neglect. The patio is a fine place to relax.

Sunu Keur (☎ 961 8800; chaffoisjeanjacques@yahoo.fr; s/d from CFA15,000/20,000) This calm guest-house has beautifully decorated rooms overlooking the river in a carefully restored colonial building.

La Louisiane (☎ 961 4221; Point Nord; louisiane@sentoo.sn; www.aubergelouisiane.com; d/tr CFA18,400/24,300) Excellent value for money, this peaceful little place has spacious, ventilated rooms right on the river.

La Maison Rose (☎ 938 2222; www.lamaisonrose.net; Ave Blaise Diagne; s/d/ste from CFA45,000/55,000/77,500) Every room and suite in this beautifully restored house is unique, though they all exude a spirit of old-time comfort. The furniture is antique and the walls are decorated with wonderful art works.

Hôtel Sindone (☎ 961 4244; www.hotelsindone.com; Quai Henri Jay; s/d from CFA26,500/29,300; ☎) A faint pink'n'fluffy honeymoon feel scents the air of this stylish and airy hotel on the south side of the island. River views cost CFA3000 extra.

Hôtel de la Résidence (☎ 961 1260; hotresid@sentoo.sn; Ave Blaise Diagne; s/d CFA27,600/34,200; ☎) This is one of Saint-Louis' oldest hotels, and the owners (an ancient Saint Louisian family) have done a great job of evoking that sense of history. Rooms are pretty and comfortable, and the restaurant one of the town's best.

Hôtel de la Poste (☎ 961 1118; www.hotel-poste.com; Rue du Général de Gaulle; s/d/tr CFA30,000/36,000/43,000; ☎) Another Saint-Louis classic; dating from the 1850s, the oldest hotel was the historical port of call for the pilots of the colonial air-mail service. You pay for the historic surroundings as well as for the plain rooms.

LANGUE DE BARBARIE

Hotel Dior (☎ 961 3118; www.hotel-dior.com; s/cfa12,600-18,700, d 18,100-24,200) This is a good-value option at the Hydrobase on Langue de Barbarie. You can also camp here (per person CFA2500).

Hôtel Cap Saint-Louis (☎ 961 3909; www.hotel.capsaintlouis.com; s/d CFA10,400/14,800, with bathroom CFA12,600/32,200; ☎ ☎ ☎) What looks like

another resort hotel is in fact a friendly (and child-friendly) place. It's tastefully done, sits right on the sea, and has one of the best swimming pools around. Large groups or families can rent five-bed bungalows (CFA43,400).

Hôtel l'Oasis (☎ /fax 961 4232; http://hoteloasis.free.fr; s/d CFA15,000/21,000; ♿ ♿) Small, unpretentious huts are decked out in busy African prints, and spotless bungalows house up to three people.

Hôtel Mermoz (☎ 961 3668; www.hotelmermoz.com; s/d/tr from CFA13,000/18,000/23,000; ♿ ♿) This has more character than many of the large hotels. Huts and bungalows are spaced out in a large, sandy garden, and all buildings are connected by meandering, wheelchair-accessible paths.

Eating & Drinking

There's a growing choice of good restaurants in Saint-Louis. Most hotels also do food – the Hôtel de Résidence leading the pack with a menu that leaves you spoilt for choice.

La Linguère (☎ 961 3949; Ave Blaise Diagne; meals around CFA2000) Never mind the shoddy interior, the *yassa poulet* of this place is almost unbeatable.

Pointe Nord (☎ 961 4221; Ave Jean Mermoz) This humble eatery in the far north of the island does an amazing grilled fish at very reasonable prices.

Coup de Torchon (☎ 518 5408; Ave Blaise Diagne; meals CFA3500-5000; ☎ 11am-1am) This friendly little restaurant is the perfect spot to spend long evenings chatting over huge plates of food.

La Signare (☎ 961 1932; Ave Blaise Diagne; meals CFA7000; ☎ lunch & dinner Thu-Tue) Considered one of the best restaurants in Saint-Louis, La Signare offers a truly top-notch *menu du jour* in a beautifully decorated old-style building.

Aux Délices du Fleuve (☎ 961 4251; Quai Roume) Saint-Louis' famous patisserie serves delicious pastries, ice creams and milky coffees.

La Saigonnaise (☎ 961 6481; Rue Abdoulaye Seck; mains CFA5000; ☎ noon-midnight) If you fancy a taste of Asia, this Vietnamese restaurant complements its great river location with tasty Saigon fare.

Bou El Mogdad (☎ 961 3611; Quai Roume; meals around CFA3000-6000) Here you can sample international cuisine in old-style surroundings overlooking the busy Quai Roume.

Le Flamingo (☎ 961 1118; Quai Roume; meals around CFA5000; ♿) This classy restaurant turns into

an upmarket bar at night, and frequently has good live bands playing near the swimming pool.

L'Embucade (☎ 961 7741; Rue Blanchot) A popular beer and tapas place that gets busy at weekends.

Iguane Café (☎ 558 0879; Rue Abdoulaye Seck) Stylish Dakar-vibes flow through this busy Cuban-themed bar.

Self-caterers can shop in the market just north of the bridge in Guet N'Dar. For European goods and French wine, head for the **Libre-Service** (Ave Blaise Diagne) or the **Ecomarché** (Ave Blaise Diagne).

Entertainment

Saint-Louis has a fine selection of night-clubs and live-music bars. **Le Laser** (☎ 961 5398; www.casinolaser.com; admission from CFA2000; ☎ Wed-Sun 7pm-3am), part of the Saint-Louis Casino complex, is popular. **La Chaumière** (☎ 961 1980; Pointe à Pitre, Guet N'Dar; admission around CFA2000) is Guet N'Dar's main haunt, and **Le Papayer** (☎ 961 8687; Carrefour de l'Hydrobase; ☎ noon-midnight) has the best dance floor on the Langue de Barbarie.

For live concerts, try the intimate **Marco Jazz** (☎ 654 2442; benedettoma@yahoo.fr; Quai Roume), where the big jazz names tend to give impromptu concerts during the jazz festival. **Quai des Arts & VIP Nightclub** (☎ 961 5656; Ave Jean Mermoz) is where the main action happens during the jazz festival. The rest of the year, the place stays fairly calm, though the nightclub attracts a stylish crowd.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Saint-Louis has its own airport, 7km out of town; a taxi from there into Saint-Louis costs around CFA5000. Air Sénégal International operates a regular flight to Saint-Louis, which connects to Paris and Dakar every Wednesday. You can book directly, or through Sahel Découverte Bassari (p714).

TAXI

The *gare routière* sits on the mainland at 4.5km from town, south of the Pont Faiderbe. A taxi from here to the city centre on the island costs CFA500. The fare to or from Dakar is CFA3500 by *sept-place*.

A *sept-place* to Gandiol, from where boats to the Parc National de la Langue de Barbarie leave, costs CFA500.

Getting Around

BICYCLE

Saint-Louis and its surroundings are good biking areas. **Le Routard** (☎ 608 9444; Quai Roume) opposite the Flamingo rents mountain bikes (in French VTs) for CFA5000 per day.

TAXI

Taxi prices in Saint-Louis are fixed (CFA350 at the time of writing). Prices to any destination in the surrounding regions depend on your negotiating skills.

AROUND SAINT-LOUIS

Gandiol & Mouit

Gandiol is a small village on the mainland, about 18km south of Saint-Louis. From the lighthouse north of the village, pirogues cross the estuary to the two *campements* on the southern end of the Langue de Barbarie.

About 2km south of Gandiol is Mouit, where you'll find the national park office and, on the edge of the river, the brilliant *campement Zebrabar* (☎ 638 1862; www.come.to/zebrabar; camping per person CFA2500, s CFA4000-7000, d CFA15,000-18,000). This spacious, child-friendly place has accommodation in simple huts (and the cut-off cabin of an old truck) and spacious bungalows. Guests can use kayaks for free, and arrange canoe tours and bird-watching trips with the local fishermen (CFA2500 per person). If you contact them before arrival, they can collect you from Saint-Louis.

Hiring a taxi from Saint-Louis to Mouit and Zebrabar should cost you around CFA3000. Alternatively, there are a few daily bush taxis from Saint-Louis to Gandiol (CFA500). Sometimes this taxi continues to Mouit (CFA700), otherwise you'll have to walk the last 2km.

Parc National de la Langue de Barbarie

The *park* (admission CFA2000; pirogue for 1 or 2 people CFA7500, each extra person CFA2500; ☎ 7am-7pm) includes the far southern tip of the Langue de Barbarie Peninsula, the estuary of the Senegal River and a section of the mainland on the other side of the estuary. Its 2000 hectares are home to numerous birds – notably flamingos, pelicans, cormorants, herons, egrets and ducks. From November to April these numbers are swelled by the arrival of migrants from Europe.

The park is best explored by pirogue, which can cruise slowly past the mud flats,

inlets and islands where the birds feed and roost.

SLEEPING

Two *campements* both provide meals, transfers and offer a range of activities, including sailboarding, kayaking and bird-watching.

Campement Langue de Barbarie (☎ 961 1118; s/d with half board CFA27,000) This large place that's run by the Hôtel de la Poste in Saint-Louis has pretty cottages, wonderfully positioned at the southern end of the peninsula.

Campement Océan et Savane (☎ 637 4790; r with half/full board CFA15,200/21,200) In this relaxed place run by the Hôtel de la Résidence in Saint-Louis you can stay in low-roofed, Mauritanian-style bungalows or, if you want a bit more comfort, in pretty log cabins that house one to five people (CFA30,000) and sit on stilts in the river. The place has got a fine restaurant under a huge Mauritanian tent.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Take a taxi from Saint-Louis to Gandiol lighthouse (around CFA7000). From there, you cross with a pirogue. Organised tours from Saint-Louis are another option.

Parc National des Oiseaux du Djoudj

This 16,000-hectare *park* (☎ 968 8708; admission CFA2000, plus pirogue CFA3500; ☎ 7am-dusk Nov-Apr) is 60km north of Saint-Louis. With its channels, creeks, lakes, mud flats and woodland savanna, it's one of the best places on earth to view migratory birds from Europe. It is a bird sanctuary of global significance with Unesco World Heritage and Ramsar status.

Even if you're not a keen ornithologist, it's hard to escape the impact of seeing vast colonies of pelicans and flamingos in such stunning surroundings. Experienced bird-watchers will recognise many of the European species, and the sheer numbers that assemble here are impressive indeed. Around three million individual birds pass through the park annually, and more than 350 separate species have been recorded.

There are also a few mammals and reptiles in the park, most notably populations of warthogs and mongooses, serpents and crocodiles (you're unlikely to spot the latter though). Other mammals include jackals, hyenas, monkeys and gazelles.

Trips around the park are usually, and best, done by pirogue. The ideal time for

TOURING THE PARC NATIONAL DES OISEAUX DU DJOUDJ

The Parc National des Oiseaux du Djoudj is a protected and internationally renowned bird sanctuary, and bird-watchers flock to the protected area to observe spur-winged geese, purple herons, egrets, spoonbills, jaçanas, cormorants, harriers and a multitude of European migrants that settle here during November and April. The park is, however, most famous for its impressive flocks of pelicans and flamingos, and all tours offered by agencies, hotels and guides focus on them.

Tours tend to leave Saint-Louis at 7am to reach the park by 8.30am. They start with a two-hour boat ride through the creeks, the highlight and sole purpose of which is to get a view of the enormous pelican colony. After lunch you drive to see flamingo flocks on the lake's edge.

You'll be able to spot other species, no doubt, but if it's the rarer varieties you're after, a tourist tour might not be so satisfying. Keen bird-watchers are better off coming with their own guide, or contacting the **Station Biologique** (☎ 542 4472; dpnsbpnod@sentoo.sn) and explaining their interest to park director Ablaye Diop or the head of the station Assane Ndoeye. They can put you in touch with a trained ornithological guide, and will have up-to-date research findings about the park.

bird-watching is from December to January. During those months, you'll already be greeted by vast colonies of birds before you've even entered your boat.

SLEEPING

Hotel du Djoudj (☎ 963 8702; fax 963 8703; huts d/tr CFA15,000/20,000, rooms d/tr CFA27,000/34,500; ☎ 1 Nov-31 May; 🚻) This friendly, grand place sits near the main entrance. It has comfortable rooms and helpful staff. You can arrange boat rides around the park (adult/child over two CFA 3500/2500) and hire bicycles (half-/full-day CFA3000/6000).

Station Biologique (☎ 968 8708; dpnsbpnod@sentoo.sn; r per person with full board CFA15,000) Situated at the park headquarters and main entrance, this low-key camp with clean rooms is intended for research groups, though

tourists can be accommodated if space is available.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

There's no public transport to Djoudj, so it's best to go by hire taxi from Saint-Louis (around CFA20,000) or come on an organised tour. If you're driving from Saint-Louis, take the paved highway towards Rosso for about 25km. Near Ross-Béthio you'll see a sign pointing to the park, from where it's another 25km along a dirt road.

SENEGAL RIVER ROUTE

From Saint-Louis, the route along the valley of the Senegal River traces the French conquest of the interior, as well as the signs of its opposition. Along the river, which marks Senegal's northern and eastern borders, you'll find a string of mid-19th century forts in Dagana, Podor, Matam and Bakel, some in nearly ruins, others in the early stages of restoration. The French fortifications were military and administrative centres and battle stations in the enduring clashes with the army of El Hadj Omar Tall, who put up fierce resistance to the colonial efforts.

The historical leader had plenty to defend – his expansive Islamic empire, which at its height reached all across West Africa to Timbuktu (in today's Mali). The few remaining Omarian mosques, dating from the second half of the 18th century, that are found in the river region (notably in Alwar), still seem to oppose the French forts in a silent, architectural battle.

Where other areas in Senegal lure visitors with lush vegetation and rich wildlife, the hot and arid north is all about history and cultural pride. Smooth *banco* (clay or mud) brick houses of the Tukolor seem to rise naturally from the soil, and would blend with their desertlike surroundings, were it not for the local custom of decorating the outer walls in bold stripes of red, brown and yellow.

Rosso-Senegal

The fly-blown frontier town of Rosso-Senegal, around 100km northeast of Saint-Louis is the main ferry crossing point between Senegal and Mauritania. The boat service is also about the only reason you might want to visit Rosso.

If you get stuck, there's the **Auberge du Walo** (d CFA10,000) where basic double huts

come with bathroom, and the restaurant can prepare meals on order.

The journey to Dakar costs CFA5100 by *sept-place* taxi, to Saint-Louis the fare is CFA2000. For more information on crossing the border see p743.

Richard Toll

Richard Toll was once a colonial administrative centre and home to a French agricultural experiment, who tested the tropical adaptability of European plants (hence the name Richard Toll, meaning 'Richard's Garden'). Today, it's the centre of Senegal's sugar industry. A stroll or horse-cart ride to the **Château de Baron Roger**, a crumbling colonial château is a way to while away an hour or so.

CBAO (☎ 963 32 89; Route de Matam) and **BICIS** (☎ 963 3499; Route de Matam; 🕒 Mon-Thu 7.45am-12.15pm & 1.40-3.45pm; 7.45am-1pm & 2.40-4.45pm Fri) banks have branches here, both equipped with Visa-friendly ATMs, and there are a couple of internet cafés.

Hôtel la Taouey (☎ 531 4010; s/d CFA13,600/16,800; 🚻 🚿) on the river north of the main street, has adequate though bare rooms, a friendly bar and forthcoming management. The **Gîte d'Étape** (☎ /fax 963 3240; s/d CFA25,400/28,800; 🚻 🚿), down a dirt road opposite the *gare routière*, is very well-appointed, though the food disappoints.

A direct *sept-place* from Dakar to Richard Toll costs around CFA10,000.

Podor & Île à Morphil

The ancient town of Podor has been a busy trading centre since the first encounters between Arabs and the Tukolor of Fouta Toro. It's home to an ancient fort, first built in 1744, then reconstructed by Faidherbe in 1854. It was in the early stages of restoration when we visited. There's also a chain of colonial warehouses along the riverfront.

Podor is the gate to excursions along the **Île à Morphil**, which stretches for 100km between the Senegal River and a parallel channel. Rugged landscape, scenic Tukolor villages and the historical Omarian mosques of Guédé and Alwar, built in Sudanese style, makes this a great off-the-beaten track diversion. Nearby is **Wouro Madiyou**, home to the unique, mosaic-ornamented mausoleum of Cheikh Ahmadou Madiyou.

The **Maison de la Femme** (☎ 965 1234; r CFA5000), run by an enthusiastic women's collective is

a great place to stay. The **Catholic Mission** (Ave El Hajj Oumar Tall; r CFA5000) also has a couple of dusty rooms for stranded tourists that come with kind conversation by the talkative Péré Mohiss. The **Gîte d'Étape** (☎ 965 1642; d incl breakfast CFA6600), owned by famous singer Baaba Maal, is the only 'proper' guesthouse in Podor. Its Senegalese food is better than the bare rooms.

Sept-place taxis travel fairly regularly between Podor and Saint-Louis (CFA3000, four hours, 262km), sometimes continuing all the way to Dakar. *Sept-place* taxis go to Ouro Sogui (CFA4500, five hours, 222km); minibuses cost CFA2500 but take twice as long.

Matam & Ouro Sogui

Matam was once a proud administrative centre 230km southeast of Podor, but has over the years lost in status to its neighbour Ouro Sogui, which is now a busy trading centre and transport hub for the Ferlo plains.

Ouro Sogui has two banks with ATMs (though it's not a good idea to rely too much on them), a hospital, post office and even an aerodrome. Matam has a waterfront lined with several colonial warehouses – testimonies of busy days gone by.

In Ouro Sogui, the cheapest accommodation is the **Auberge Sogui** (☎ 966 1198; s/d CFA8500/10,000; 🚻) opposite the market, which has just-passable rooms. Your best choice, however, is the **Oasis du Fouta** (☎ 966 1294; seftop@hotmail.com; s/d incl breakfast CFA13,500/15,000; 🚻 🚿), which has comfortable rooms with TV, an Internet café and staff that tries to accommodate your every excursion wish, from pirogue journeys to trips into the mountains where El Hadj Omar Tall once battled French forces.

Food outside your hotel is pretty much limited to the cheap eateries in the same street and the *dibieteries* (grilled-meat stalls) spread across town. The best of those is probably **Le Teddungal**, where grilled-lamb skewers only cost a handful of CFA.

Battered *sept-place* taxis run to Dakar (CFA10,500, 10 hours, 690km) and Bakel (CFA2000, two hours, 148km).

Bakel

Peacefully perched among a scattering of rocky hills, Bakel is a picturesque spot, though one that tourists rarely venture to. Like all of the northern towns it's hot, dry

and sandy, but it's prettier than most. Its colonial architecture is still fairly intact. An 1854 **fort**, another ambitious **Faidherbe** endeavour, and the **Pavillon René Caillé**, once temporary home to the famous French explorer, have been fairly well maintained.

The barely held-together **Hôtel Islam** (r per person CFA10,000; 🏠) about 500m east of the *gare routière*, is about your only choice of accommodation. It has spartan rooms, and hardly inviting shared toilets.

For food, it's a trip to the market for fresh produce, or ready-made sandwiches and skewered meat at the *gargottes* next door.

If you come from Ouro Sogui on a vehicle bound for Kidira you might be dropped off at the junction 5km south of Bakel, from where local bush taxis shuttle into town. A *car mouride* goes daily (except Fridays) from Bakel to Tambacounda (CFA3500, five hours, 184km) via Kidira (CFA1500, one hour, 60km).

Kidira

Kidira is the main border crossing between Senegal and Mali. Both the Dakar-Bamako train and bush taxis pass here. Note that the road on the Malian side has been severely washed out. For more details see p743.

EASTERN SENEGAL

It takes some courage to brave the seemingly endless stretch of potholed tarmac that connects Dakar to Tambacounda in the east, but the road that leads through flat savanna lands specked with shrubs and baobabs takes you to one of Senegal's best-kept secrets – the mountainous Bassari lands of the southeast.

Eastern Senegal is also home to Senegal's main wildlife reserve, the gigantic Parc National du Niokolo-Koba, where you have a higher chance of seeing large mammals in their natural surroundings than anywhere else in the country.

TAMBACOUNDA

Tambacounda is all about dust, sand, sizzling temperatures and lines of traffic heading in every direction. From here, routes lead eastwards to Mali, south to Guinea, west to Dakar and The Gambia, and south-

west to Ziguinchor. The town's hectic loading and unloading of taxis, and coming and going of people is well worth taking in for a day or so.

Information

Tambacounda has an Internet café, a well-stocked **pharmacy** and a **SGBS** (Ave Léopold Sédar Senghor; ☎ 7.45-noon & 1.30-3.45pm Mon-Thu, 7.45-noon & 2.45-4.15 Fri), which can exchange cash and give advances on credit cards. The Syndicat d'Initiative has a representative at **Hôtel Niji** (☎ 981 1250; nijihotel@sentoo.sn) and the **Headquarters of Parc National du Niokolo-Koba** (☎ 981 1097; ☎ 7.30am-5pm) can help with inquiries about the park, and also has 4WDs for hire.



Sleeping

Bloc Gadic (☎ 531 8931; per person CFA3000) This friendly little hostel in the centre of town has spacious, clean rooms with shared toilets. There are double or quad rooms.

Hôtel Keur Khoudia (☎/fax 981 1102; Blvd Demba Diop; s/d CFA11,700/16,000; 🏠) With spotless bungalows at decent prices and helpful management, this popular *auberge* is an excellent choice for those travelling on a budget. The Hotel Simenti in Niokolo-Koba is run by the same family – so you're in perfect hands if you're intending to visit the park.

Hôtel Niji (☎ 981 1259; nijihotel@sentoo.sn; s/d/tr CFA11,200/14,000/16,700; 🏠) This hotel has seen better days, though the adjacent Hôtel Niji Annexe, with its thatched, round houses in a shady garden compound isn't too bad, and a more upmarket section was being built when we visited.

Le Relais de Tamba (☎ 981 1000; www.relaisrizons.net; s/d/tr CFA22,200/27,200/36,600; 🏠 🏠 🏠) The Relais hotel chain has a reputation for classy simplicity, and this branch has all the niceties of its other places.

Oasis Oriental Club (☎ 981 1824; rgueuen@sentoo.sn; s/d/tr CFA25,000/32,000/40,000; 🏠 🏠 🏠) Cheap it ain't, but the large huts of this top-level *campement* are nice, and perhaps even worth paying slightly exaggerated rates.

Eating & Drinking

For good local food, the humble **Le Relais du Rais** (meals around CFA1000), near the train station, is almost unbeatable. **Chez Eva** (Blvd Demba Diop) and **Chez Nanette** (meals about CFA1500; ☎ 8am-midnight), near the *gare routière*, are two other good options. For greasy fast-food, try **Best Burger** (☎ 981 3203; Blvd Demba Diop), which is also a popular hang-out of Tamba's youth. **La Hortencia** (Blvd Demba Diop) and **Bar-Restaurant Chez Francis** (☎ 643 1231; Ave Léopold Senghor) have good, international menus.

For drinks and nights out on the dance floor, try **Complex Leggal Pont** (☎ 981 7756; Blvd Demba Diop; ☎ restaurant 8am-midnight, bar & nightclub 11pm-4am), a slightly run-down version of an entertainment complex that also has a few rooms down the back.

Self-caterers will find all the fruit, veg and bags of rice they need at the local market. In the centre of town, the **Libre Service Chez Ibou Diop** (Ave Senghor) is a good place to find European foods as well as a spot to mingle.

The **Pâtisserie Guèye and Frères** (Blvd Demba Diop) next to Best Burger is the place to get your bread and croissants in the morning.

Getting There & Around

All taxi trips around town cost CFA300, no need to bargain.

AIR

Air Sénégal International flies from Dakar to Tambacounda, in theory twice every Saturday from November to March. Contact the airline first, though, as flights can be quite irregular.

BUS & BUSH TAXI

From the *gare routière* on the eastern side of town vehicles go to the Mali border at Kidira (CFA5000 by *sept-place*, CFA3500 by minibus, three hours). Vehicles to most other destinations go from the larger garage on the southern side of town.

Vélingara is well-served by minibuses (CFA1400) and *sept-places* (CFA1650). A *sept-place* journey Dakar-Tamba is CFA7500, by minibus CFA6000. Tamba-Kedougou is CFA4800 by *sept-place*, Vélingara-Kaolack CFA4000.

The *car mouride* bus leaves from outside the Car Mouride Station daily at 4.30am for Dakar (CFA5000, eight hours). You have to reserve your place in advance at the office. There are also *cars mourides* from here to Kedougou (CFA3000, three hours) and Bakel (CFA3500, five hours).

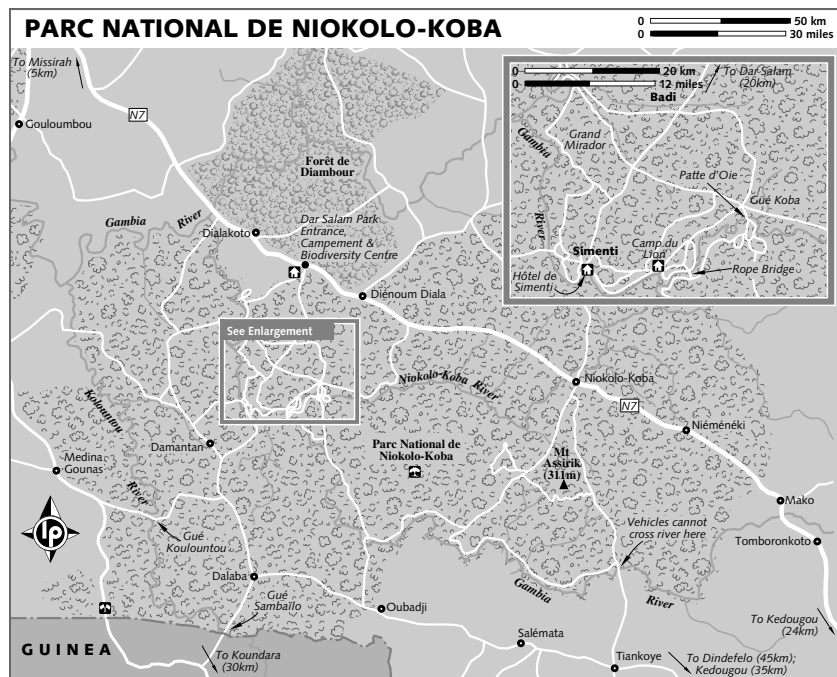
TRAIN

The train between Dakar and Bamako (Mali) normally passes through Tambacounda on a Wednesday and Saturday, provided there hasn't been a derailment or other impediment (see p743).

PARC NATIONAL DU NIOKOLO-KOBA

The World Heritage site Niokolo-Koba, a vast biosphere reserve spanning about 900,000 hectares, is Senegal's major national park. The landscape is relatively flat, with plains, marshes and a few hills – the highest is Mt Assirik in the southeast. Vegetation is spectacularly varied, with savanna woodland and grassland, patches of bamboo and gallery forest along the rivers.

The Gambia River and its two tributaries, the Niokolo-Koba and the Koulountou, cross



the vast wilderness, and are crucial sources of water for the 80 species of mammals and 350 bird varieties that inhabit the park.

There are African classics such as lions, also waterbucks, bushbucks, kobs, duikers, baboons, monkeys (green and patas), wart-hogs, roan antelopes, giant Derby elands, hartebeests and buffaloes. There are hippos and three types of crocodiles (Nile, slender-snouted and dwarf), and chimpanzee troops inhabit parts of the eastern and southern areas, though you'll be lucky to see them.

Not all of Niokolo-Koba's enormous area is equally well maintained, and visitors to the more far-flung corners have reported woodcuttings and an eerie absence of wildlife. The best part for animal-spotting is the area of Simenti, the park's jewel.

If you take the Tambacounda-Kedougou route, you're likely to see monkeys, birds, porcupines and other animals cross the road and lie on the tarmac – so be careful if you're driving. Just before dawn the road is especially full of animals, and there's a good chance you might spot a lion stretching out on the roadside.

The park was neglected until the early 1990s, and poaching has also been a problem, but international funding for development as part of the Parc Transfrontalier Niokolo-Badiar transnational ecosystem (which includes areas in neighbouring Guinea) has improved the situation slightly. Several NGOs are also working directly with the surrounding populations to help conserve the resources found in the park, such as the ronian trees and bamboo.

A glossy visitor guide is available at the park entrance, with a park map and illustrations of some of the wildlife you might see. However, it's in French and costs CFA6000.

Information

The park is officially open from 15 December to 30 April, though you can visit any time. You enter the park at Dar Salam, where you find a *campement* and the Biodiversity Centre, which has an exhibition. An hour's drive further on is Simenti, the park's main focus, where many animals are concentrated. There's also a park office,

visitor information centre and the large Hôtel de Simenti.

Details about track conditions and other aspects of the park can be obtained from the park headquarters (p720) in Tambacounda.

You must have a vehicle to enter the park, and walking is not allowed, except near accommodation sites or in the company of a park ranger. Travellers without a car can visit the park using public transport, taxis or on an organised tour. All tracks, except those between the park gate and the Simenti area, require a 4WD, even in the dry season.

The entrance fee (adult/child under 10 CFA2000/free, vehicle CFA5000) gives you access for 24 hours. Trained and approved guides can be hired at the gate or in Simenti (per day CFA6000).

Several of Tambacounda's hotels can organise some 4WD tours (CFA70,000 to CFA90,000). Rates usually include fuel, driver/guide and admission for the car, while you pay for your park fees, food and accommodation.

Sleeping & Eating

At the park entrance, the **Dar Salam Campement** (☎ 981 2575; camping per tent CFA3500, d/tr CFA7000/8000) has clean bungalows with bathrooms and a good restaurant (dishes CFA3500). Most people stay at **Hôtel de Simenti** (☎ 982 3650; s/d 15,000/20,000; 🚽), a concrete monstrosity that may not look in touch with its surroundings, but sits in a prime spot overlooking the river. The busiest animal sites are close to here, and you can see many of them drinking and grazing from a nearby hide.

Camp du Lion (camping per person CFA3500, r CFA7000) is a tiny *campement* in a beautiful spot beside the Gambia River 6km east of Simenti. It has simple but adequate huts. You can also walk to the nearby Pointe de Vue, where hippos and other animals can be sighted drinking on the opposite bank of the river.

Getting There & Away

You're best off hiring a taxi (around CFA35,000 to CFA40,000) or 4WD (around CFA60,000 to CFA70,000) in Tamba, for instance at the park headquarters. There's also an official transfer between Hôtel Keur Khoudia in Tamba and Hôtel de Simenti (CFA60,000).

If you do rely on public transport, take a Kedougou minibus from Tamba (CFA4500) and get off at the Dar Salam park entrance. From there, you can call Hôtel de Simenti, who'll pick you up (CFA25,000).

BASSARI COUNTRY

The far southeast corner of Senegal is often called Bassari country after the largest ethnic group, whose traditional way of life gives this region its particular character. Also, this is the only place in Senegal where you can go mountain climbing. The striking landscape, with its craggy mountain paths, forests, plateaus and steep waterfalls has much in common with the adjacent Fouta Jallon region in neighbouring Guinea.

It's the perfect place for extended hiking tours along solitary paths through bushland, passing occasionally through a tiny village. It's advisable to walk with an experienced guide who knows the area and local people well. Don't forget to bring change and even better, kola nuts, as a gesture of appreciation for being allowed to visit the local villages.

Kedougou

Kedougou is the largest town in southeast Senegal, though this seems hard to believe when you walk along the red, dusty roads lined by lush greenery and traditional huts.

It has a colourful market, famous for its indigo fabrics imported from Guinea, several *télécentres*, and Internet access (for a whopping CFA1500 per hour) at the Kedougou Multi-Service. There is no bank.

Alimentation de Dioubo in Kedougou centre is a well-stocked boutique and a popular evening gathering place for Kedougou's youth.

SLEEPING

There are plenty of *campements* to choose from. All arrange tours in the surrounding area and to Parc National du Niokolo-Koba. Note that in most places prices double for air-con rooms.

Campement Bantamba (Chez Moulaye; ☎ 558 0154; r CFA8300; 📍 🚽) A youth-run place that feels wonderfully remote, sitting at the edge of town in a large garden by the river.

Chez Diaio (☎ 985 1124; d CFA5400; 🚽) A relaxed spot with clean bungalows grouped around a leafy patio. Toilets are shared and breakfast is CFA1000, meals CFA3000.

Le Nieriko (☎ 985 1459; d/tr CFA8600/12,600) At the edge of town this tranquil place is a good choice, with well-kept bungalows in a spacious garden setting, and satellite TV in the lounge for the bored.

Le Bedik (☎ 985 1000; s/d/tr incl breakfast CFA22,200/27,000/36,600; P ☎) A bit classier with comfortable, TV-equipped bungalows, a tennis court and friendly management.

EATING & DRINKING

All *campements* serve food, though most only on request. Otherwise it's down to the cheap eateries around the market, such as **Keur Niase**, near Chez Diao. The most up-market restaurant is the **Nieta** on the route to Tamba, with simple meals and drinks served in a spacious, round hut.

For an evening drink, try the **Tour de Babel** or **Black&White**, both lively bar-nightclubs.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

There's plenty of traffic between Tamba and Kedougou (*sept-place* CFA4800, minibus CFA3500, four hours). There's no regular public transport to Mali, but occasional intrepid overland drivers go this way. Complete all your exit formalities in Kedougou,

GUIDED WALKS

The company of a clued-up guide is invaluable for exploring the myriad mountain paths of Bassari country. Two of the best guides in the region are **Noumou Diallo** and **Amadou Ba**, who have their base at the Le Bedik (see p723; phone the reception and ask for them) in Kedougou. They come from the area, know the best routes through the hills, and have a good relationship with the villagers, which will make you – the visiting stranger – much more welcome. (It remains up to you though to show the proper respect, and perhaps present kola nuts, money and small gifts to the *chefs de village* or village chiefs.)

They can arrange anything from leisurely day trips to strenuous hikes of several days through the forests, mountains and tiny Bedik and Bassari villages, with the possibility of sleeping in the homes of locals or at *campements*. They usually charge CFA10,000 per day, rates for longer excursions need to be negotiated.

as the border post on the route to Kéniéba is unreliable.

By contrast, Guinea is well-served by transport (*sept-place* to Labe CFA15,000, minibus CFA12,000, 24 to 48 hours). Taxis leave in theory every day, though the best day to set off is Friday.

GETTING AROUND

Almost all *campements* have one or several 4WDs with driver for hire (per day CFA40,000 to CFA50,000, and some hire bicycles (CFA3000), which are good for town trips, but often too clapped-out for trips into the hills.

Around Kedougou

The best way of exploring Kedougou's stunning surroundings is a combination of driving (in a 4WD) and hiking – best under the care of a good guide (see left).

THE KEDOUGOU–SALÉMATA ROUTE

One of the nearest villages is **Bandafassi**, actually the capital of Kedougou district. The inhabitants are mainly Fula and Bassari, and the village is renowned for its basket-makers. In Indar, a part of Bandafassi, is the wonderfully welcoming *campement* **Chez Leontine** (☎ 554 9915; d CFA6000), with solar-powered lights and delicious meals prepared by the charming owner.

The Fula village of **Ibel** lies another 7km up the road from Bandafassi. Visits here are usually, and rewardingly, combined with a steep hike up to **Iwol**, a stunningly beautiful hamlet stretched out between a giant from-ager tree and a sacred baobab. Plenty of legends are associated with this place, and the local teacher will share them with you for a donation (CFA1000). The local women make pottery, which you can buy (CFA300).

Continuing west from Ibel, you reach **Salémata**, 83km from Kedougou. This is a regional hub, with a health centre, small shops and the friendly *campement* **Chez Gilbert** (☎ 985 5009; d/tr CFA8000/9000). In April and May, the entire region surrounding Salémata is plunged into week-long festivities during the annual initiation ceremonies of the Bassari. Observers are accepted, but you might want to decline and leave the villagers to follow their custom undisturbed. The best day to visit is Tuesday, when the *lumo* (weekly market) brings the village to life,

and with it a better chance of public transport (minibus from Kedougou CFA2250, four hours).

Don't leave Salémata without taking the 15km trip to **Ethiolo**, either on foot or by car. The road leads mainly through forest and bushland, and there's a good chance of spotting chimpanzees in the trees. Ethiolo's brilliant **Campement Chez Balingo** (☎ 985 1401) has accommodation in traditional Bassari stone huts, and is run by the enthusiastic and knowledgeable Balingo, who can take you on exciting tours to Ethiolo's surroundings.

DINDEFELO

One of the most popular destinations from Kedougou is Dindefelo, famous for its impressive 100m **waterfall** with a deep, green pool suitable for swimming. It's a 2km hike through lush forest from Dindefelo village to the cascade. The starting point is the **campement villageois** (☎ 658 8707; r per person CFA3000), which has accommodation in well-kept huts. You pay CFA500 for admission to the waterfall at the *campement* (the money goes to the village, just check out the solar-powered street lamps). Much less visited is the village of **Dande**, on the hill above Dindefelo, but if you love steep climbs, don't miss out on this spectacular hike. From here, you can visit the source of the waterfall and stand scarily close to the edge (don't go here without a guide, the deep drop is hidden by some innocent-looking shrubs).

If you rely on public transport, go to Dindefelo on a Sunday, the day of the *lumo* (minibus CFA700, two hours). But a hired 4WD really is the best thing; the road is no fun, a punctured minibus wheel much less so.

CASAMANCE

The Casamance is one of Senegal's most beautiful regions, with lush tropical landscapes, myriad waterways and the unique culture of the Diola, the largest ethnic group of the region. The Casamance River winds its way through the area in a labyrinth of picturesque creeks lined with abundant estuary vegetation – a pirogue is the ideal means of exploring the waterway. On the western coast, Senegal's finest beaches spread in a wide strip of white sand from Cap Skiring towards the 'hip' villages of

Kafountine and Abéné, only broken by a mangrove-lined delta where the Casamance River spills into the Atlantic.

Over the last decades, the region has unfortunately become better known for an ongoing separatist rebellion than its attractive landscape. At the time of writing, a 2004 peace deal signed between the Senegalese government and insurgents had calmed things down, and tourists had started returning to the region. The most exciting sign of this was the renovation of several *campements villageois*, the rural, village-managed lodgings that are typical of the Casamance.

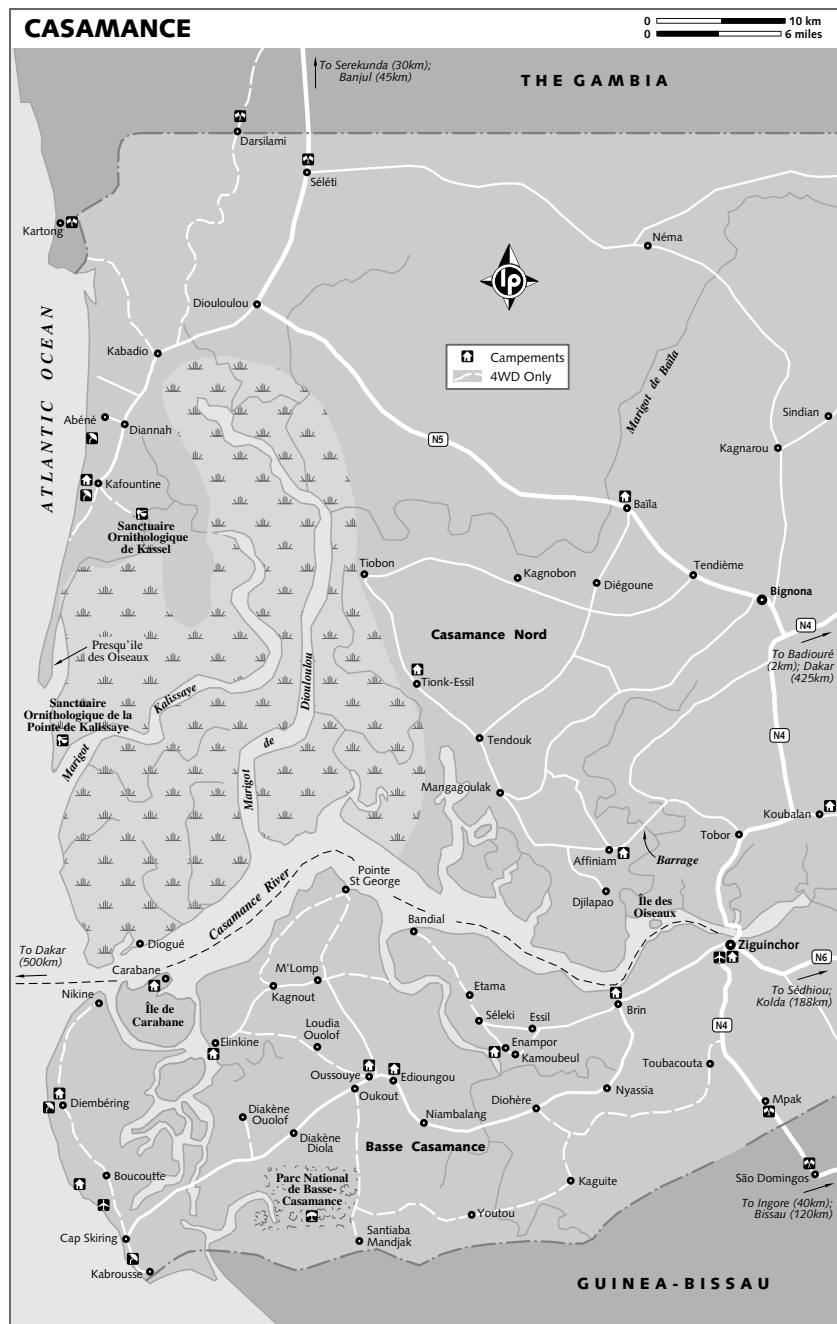
History

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, the French colonial authorities controlled the territory through local chiefs. In Casamance, however, the Diola people do not have a hierarchical society and thus had no recognised leaders. The French installed Mandinka chiefs to administer the Diola, but they were resented as much as the Europeans, and Diola resistance against foreign interference remained very strong well into the 1930s.

In 1943, the last Diola rebellion against the French was led by traditional priestess, Aline Sioe Diatta, from Kabrousse. The rebellion was put down and Aline Sioe was imprisoned at the remote outpost of Timbuktu in Mali, where she eventually died.

The conflict that has plagued the region for nearly the last 25 years originated from a pro-independence demonstration held in Ziguinchor in 1982, after which the leaders of the Mouvement des Forces Démocratique de la Casamance (MFDC) were arrested and jailed. Over the next few years the army clamped down with increasing severity, but this only galvanised the local people's anti-Dakar feelings and spurred the movement into taking more action.

In 1990, the MFDC went on the offensive and attacked military posts. The army responded by attacking MFDC bases in southern Casamance and over the border in Guinea-Bissau, which had been giving covert support to the rebels following a coastal territorial dispute with Senegal. As always, it was local civilians who came off the worst, with both the Senegalese army and the MFDC accused of committing atrocities against people who were thought to be sympathetic to the opposite side.



TO GO OR NOT TO GO?

It's the nature of news that you hear more about killing than about living, and in the case of Casamance good news is hard to find. This means that the vast majority of Senegalese know little more than yourself about the current situation in the Casamance and their view of the region's security may be as obscured as your own.

Anybody we spoke to in the Casamance assured us that travelling to the area was perfectly safe, but you do need to be extra vigilant. The most important thing is not to be travelling on the roads at night, particularly in the areas near Guinea-Bissau and the route from Ziguinchor via Bignona to Kafountine. There have been occasional carjackings and ambushes at roadblocks, usually put up by armed bandits, rather than separatists defending the rebel cause. Alarm bells rang when, in 2006, the deputy prefect of Diouloulou was assaulted at one of these roadblocks, and later lost his life. These attacks are rare, but they do occur, so make sure you give yourself enough time to arrive at your destination before nightfall.

At the time of writing, conflicts between rebels and Bissau-Guinean military had flared up in a small area near the border with Guinea-Bissau, resulting in the temporary suspension of public transport and the closure of the border in São Domingos. These kinds of confrontations have become rare since 2004, but you always need to check security advice, listen to the locals and give conflict areas a wide berth. In Ziguinchor you can ask at your hotel, but a more grass-roots picture may be gleaned by talking to bush-taxi drivers: if they are reluctant to go, you should be too.

During the two weeks we travelled through the Casamance, visiting remote villages as well as major tourist centres, we didn't experience any difficulties whatsoever. By contrast, the hospitality of the people and their eagerness to welcome foreign visitors back into their region and help tourists to travel safely were impressive and moving. Casamance used to be one of Senegal's major tourist destinations, and for most people, the suffering is greater for the lack of tourists and their dollars than any direct confrontation with separatist fighters.

The only real permanent no-go zone is the Parc National de Basse-Casamance, which has been closed for years because of suspected land mines. Rest assured that unless you just wander off on your own accord, people will simply not allow you to get too close to trouble.

As the '90s wore on, cease-fire agreements were signed and broken as periods of peace repeatedly ended in violence. In 1995, four French people touring Casamance disappeared. The Senegalese government blamed the MFDC, while Father Diamacoune Senghor, the MFDC's leader, accused the army of trying to turn international opinion against the rebels.

Peace talks continued, but following the government's refusal to consider independence for Casamance, a group of hardliners broke away from the MFDC and resumed fighting.

Meanwhile, Father Diamacoune urged his supporters to continue the search for reconciliation with the government. Another cease-fire was agreed in late 1997 but it did little to slow the mounting death toll, and during the following three years about 500 people were reportedly killed. His authority fading, Father Diamacoune unexpectedly signed a peace deal in March 2001. While the agreement provided for the release of

prisoners, the return of refugees and the clearance of landmines, it fell short of the full autonomy many rebels sought. Divisions within the MFDC deepened; a bloody battle was fought between two opposing factions and many in Casamance had begun referring to some of the rebels as bandits or common thieves. Things have become calmer since, and the 2004 peace deal appears to have been effective, though occasional uprisings and street ambushes still occur.

ZIGUINCHOR

pop 217,000

Ziguinchor (pronounced *zig-an-shor*) is the largest town in southern Senegal, as well as the main access point for travel in the Casamance region. It's hard to imagine a more laid-back town than this regional capital – just don't call it sleepy. Unlike other 'junction towns', Ziguinchor has real atmosphere, couched among the majestic houses, leafy streets and busy markets of this old colonial administrative centre.

Information

BOOKSHOPS

The **bookshop** (☎ 9am-noon & 2.30-6pm) on the northern end of Rue Javelier has a few English-language magazines.

CULTURAL CENTRES

Alliance Franco-Sénégalaise (☎ 991 2823; Ave Lycée Guignabo; ☎ 9.15am-noon & 3-7.15pm Mon-Sat) This stunning *case à impluvium* (large round hut) has regular exhibitions, a large concert hall and a café. Tourists are expected to make a donation of CFA750 when visiting the centre, and are given a postcard of the centre in exchange.

INTERNET ACCESS

There are many *cybercafés* in town. Le Flamboyant hotel and Hôtel Kadiandoumagne are

both wi-fi spaces, and the Alliance Franco-Sénégalaise has a speedy Internet café.

Sud-Informatique (☎ 991 1573; www.sudinfo.sn; per hr CFA1000; ☎ 9am-midnight)

Web City (☎ 991 1044; per hr CFA1000; ☎ 10am-midnight)

MEDICAL SERVICES

Ziguinchor's regional **hospital** (☎ 991 1154) has an emergency department. Veronique Chiche at Le Flamboyant hotel can recommend other reliable doctors in town.

MONEY

The following banks change money, give advances on credit cards and have ATMs taking Visa and MasterCard.

CBAO (Rue de France; ☎ 7.45am-noon & 1.15-2.30pm Mon-Thu, 7.45am-1pm & 2.45-3.45pm Fri)

SGBS (Rue du Général de Gaulle; ☎ 7.45am-noon & 1.15-2.30pm Mon-Thu, 7.45am-1pm & 2.45-3.45pm Fri)

POST

Main post office (Rue du Général de Gaulle)

TRAVEL AGENCIES

Diatta Tour International (☎ 991 2781; aessibye@yahoo.fr; Rue du Général de Gaulle) A good agency, that arranges air tickets, tours, hotel and *campement* reservations.

Sights & Activities

Ziguinchor has some colourful historical buildings, including the central **post office**, the office of **Diatta Tour International**, the **Governance** (Rue du Général de Gaulle) and the stunning **Cathedral**. Still on the architectural side, the huge *case à impluvium* of the **Alliance Franco-Sénégalaise** offers plenty of interest – from the mosaic floors to the Ndebele patterns painted all across the walls and ceiling. Not far from there, the **Marché Artisanal** and the **Marché St-Maur**, both on Ave Lycée Guignabo, tempt with wooden carvings, fabrics and, more ordinarily, with fresh fruit and vegetables.

Heading 5km west out of town, you can walk through the vast greenness of the **Ferme de Djibelor** (☎ 991 1701; admission CFA2000; ☎ 9am-6pm), which has a tropical fruit and flower garden and a crocodile farm.

Africa Batik (☎ 9911 2689; near Rond-Point Jean-Paul II) offers batik-making courses of varying duration.

Most hotels offer pirogue excursions – day trips to Affiniam are particularly popular.

Sleeping

BUDGET

Le Bombolong (☎ 938 8001; off Rue du Commerce; r CFA8000) This simple place with a leafy courtyard is best known for its nightclub – a relaxed place to stay, but not for light sleepers.

Hôtel Tourisme (☎ 991 2223; Rue de France; s/d CFA6600/8200) Four simple, clean rooms, in the heart of town, and above a great restaurant – it's a bargain. Managed by the owners of Le Flamboyant, it benefits from their vast regional knowledge.

Relais de Santhiaba (☎ 991 1199; off Ave Cherif Bachir Aidara; s/d CFA5000/8000, with bathroom CFA9000/13,000; ☎) It looks drab from the outside, but rooms are surprisingly welcoming and facilities are clean.

Auberge Casafrique (☎ 991 4122; casafrique@yahoo.fr; off Ave Cherif Bachir Aidara; s/d CFA5000/7000, with bathroom CFA8000/10,000; ☎) The spartan rooms in a leafy garden seem to appeal mainly to young travellers.

MIDRANGE

Le Perroquet (☎ 991 2329; perroquet@sentoosn; Rue du Commerce; s/d CFA10,000/12,000) This simple place right on the river and beside the pirogue pier is excellent value. For 1st-floor rooms with river views you pay an extra CFA1000.

Hôtel Tahiti (☎ 991 5949; tahitimotel@sentoosn; s/d incl breakfast CFA15,600/18,200; ☎) It's placed in a strangely unattractive location in front of a military camp. But its well-kept rooms, equipped with TV, fridge and phone, make this a viable option.

Hôtel N'Daary Kassoum (☎ 991 1472; ndaary@hotmail.com; Rue de France; d CFA12,000; ☎) With their dark décor and rattling air-conditioning, rooms don't exactly feel welcoming, but then again, they're fairly cheap, too.

Le Flamboyant (☎ 991 2223; flamboyant@casamance.net; Rue de France; s/d CFA15,000/17,000; ☎) This classy place is possibly the best value in the country. The tranquil rooms with red-brick floors and comfy mattresses come with phone, satellite TV, bar fridge and soothing lighting, and are set in a quiet garden. The French couple who runs it are absolutely forthcoming and knowledgeable, and oh yes, the whole place is a wi-fi zone.

TOP END

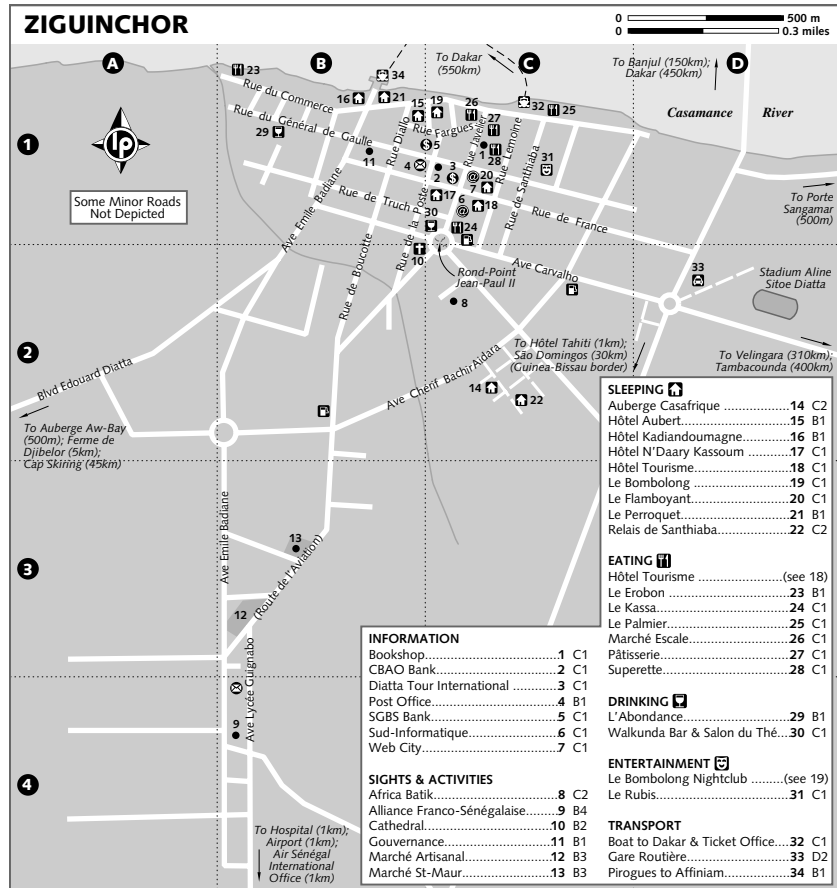
Hôtel Kadiandoumagne (☎ 938 8000; www.hotel-kadiandoumagne.com; Rue du Commerce; s/d CFA22,000/25,000; ☎) Stunningly located right on the river, this top-quality place has good rooms, wi-fi access in the restaurant, and stunning views from the spacious terrace. It's wheelchair accessible.

Hôtel Aubert (☎ 938 8020; hotelaubert@sentoosn; Rue Fargues; d/r CFA22,000/30,000; ☎) Part of Ziguinchor's upper class of hotels, this is a tastefully laid-out place, complete with a sports centre and jazz bar.

Eating & Drinking

The best restaurants, and those with the widest range of choices, are part of the hotels, otherwise try one of these.

Hôtel Tourisme (☎ noon-2.30pm & 7-10pm; mains around CFA3000) This place doesn't actually



look like much during the day but after sunset the subtle mood lighting lends this restaurant some style. Head here for some great seafood dishes and *al dente* spaghetti.

Le Erobon (☎ 991 2788; Rue du Commerce) This humble outdoor eatery serves a mean grilled fish in a relaxed environment.

Le Palmier (☎ 936 8181; Rue du Commerce; dishes from CFA1000; ☎ 24hr) Not the most attractive address, but this cheapie near the port serves good Senegalese, Guinean and Casamance specialities.

Le Kassa (☎ 936 8300; ☎ 8am-2am) This is the most inviting of the local-style places – a spacious restaurant-cum-bar, with a fairly wide menu and frequent live shows on weekends.

Walkunda Bar & Salon du Thé (☎ 991 1845; ☎ 9am-1am) This pretty place near the Rond-Point serves drinks at very reasonable rates, as well as filling meals.

L'Abondance (Rue du Général de Gaulle; ☎ 5pm-2am) Like any *dibiterie* worth its meat, this is the popular final stop after a night out dancing.

Self-caterers can buy all the fresh fruit and vegetables they can carry at the **Marché Escale** (Rue Javelier). There's a small **supermarket** (Rue Lemoine) and a good **pâtisserie** (Rue Javelier).

Entertainment

Le Rubis (Rue de Santhiaba; admission CFA1000-2000) was Ziguinchor's most fashionable dance floor when we headed into town. They spin salsa music on Fridays and a global mix of hip-hop, R&B, *mbalax* and plenty more on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Another popular heaving choice in town is **Le Bombolong Nightclub** (Rue du Commerce; admission CFA1000-2000).

Getting There & Away

AIR

Air Sénégal International (☎ 991 1081) has an office at the airport and flies daily to Dakar (one way CFA80,000).

BUSH TAXI, MINIBUS & BUS

Ziguinchor's extremely well-organised *gare routière* is 1km east of the centre. If you want to get all the way to Dakar, get there early, around 6am or even earlier. Some sample fares (in CFA):

Destination	Sept-Place	Minibus	Ndiaga Ndiaye
Bissau	6000	-	-
Cap Skiring	1400	1100	1000
Dakar	7500	6000	5000
Elinkine	1300	850	850
Kafountine	2500	1700	1600
Kaolack	5500	3800	-
Kolda	3500	-	-
Séléti	2200	-	-
Soma	2500	-	-
Tambacounda	7500	-	-

BOAT

At the time of writing, a reliable and comfortable boat service had just started travelling between Dakar and Ziguinchor. There's a sad background for all this unexpected comfort though. The current boat (the *Wilis*, though it could well be a different one by the time you travel) resumed in 2005 the journey previously performed by the *MS Joola*, which tragically capsized in 2002, in the worst catastrophe Senegal had ever experienced. Almost 2000 people perished in the fatal accident (only 64 of the passengers were rescued), which was caused by dangerous overloading of the boat.

The accident was a shocking wake-up call and has now made the *Joola*'s successor the *Wilis* one of the safest passenger boats of the region, where all essential measures are respected.

In Dakar, the **SOMAT ticket office** (Map p684; ☎ 889 8009, 889 8060/51), is located next to the Gorée Ferry; while in Ziguinchor, you'll find it at the port. The boat departs from Dakar every Tuesday and Friday at 7pm, returning from Ziguinchor every Sunday and Thursday at 2pm. In Dakar, you need to arrive at least 1½ hours in advance; in Ziguinchor at least one hour. Tickets cost CFA15,500 for an armchair, CFA23,500 for a sleeper seat and CFA28,500 for a cabin bed (cabins sleep four people). Residents pay CFA5000 less, children under 12 travel for half the price, and free if they're younger than four.

Getting Around

TAXI

The official rate for a taxi around town or to the *gare routière* (1km) is CFA400. The main taxi rank is at Rond-Point Jean-Paul II.

VILLAGE CAMPMENTS

Among Casamance's attractions are its *campements villageois* (village camps), traditional-style lodgings often in remote locations, that are built by local residents, integrated into the village and, best of all, benefit the local community directly. The *campements* have existed since the 1970s, when Adama Goudiaby and Christian Saglio initiated them as a way of counteracting the rural exodus and offering prospects to local youth. Ten were built originally, yet during the years of conflict, many were left in ruins. Over the last few years, the Fédération des Campements Villageois (FECAV) has, with financial help from the Alliance Française and German GTZ, been able to begin an ambitious renovation programme.

At the time this book was researched, the *campements* of Oussouye, Enampor, Baïla, Koulaban and Affiniam had been fully restored, so spectacularly, that some of them exceed any competing private ventures in quality and service. All of them are built in traditional architectural styles (the *case à impluvium* in Enampor and *case étage* in Oussouye are particularly impressive), and offer insightful excursions in the immediate surroundings led by knowledgeable local guides. Integrated and respectful rural tourism is rarely more enjoyable.

The prices of all Campements Villageois are standardised, with only small variations. A bed (with mosquito net) is CFA3000, breakfast CFA1500 to CFA1800, three-course lunch or dinner CFA2500 to CFA3500, beer CFA800 and soft drink CFA500.

For more information, particularly regarding renovation progress of other *campements*, contact Mr Sane at the **Fédération des Campements Villageois** (FECAV; ☎ 991 1268, 558 1421).

BASSE CASAMANCE

Enampor

The **Campement Villageois** (☎ 441 4484, 936 9160; r per person CFA3000) is a huge *case à impluvium*, a typical Casamance architectural style, where rainwater is funnelled into a large tank in the centre of the house through a hole in the roof. There are many such buildings around, but this is one of the most beautiful examples.

In theory, there are two minibuses per day from Ziguinchor to Enampor and nearby Séleki (CFA500). Hiring a taxi will set you back CFA7000 to CFA9000. Other than that, it's a bush taxi to Brin and a long walk or bicycle ride to Enampor.

Oussouye

Roughly halfway between Ziguinchor and Cap Skiring, relaxed Oussouye is the main town in the Basse Casamance area. For the local Diola population this town is of significance, as it's home to an animist king who is often sought for advice.

At **Casamance VTT** (Chez Benjamin; ☎/fax 993 1004; <http://casavtt.free.fr>) you can hire mountain bikes (half-day CFA4000, full-day CFA7500) and participate in tours.

SLEEPING & EATING

The **Campement Villageois d'Oussouye** (☎ 993 0015; <http://campement.oussouye.org>; s/d CFA4500/6000)

is one of the great success stories of the rekindling of the regional tourist industry. Accommodation is in a beautifully restored *case étage*, built entirely in the stunning, heat-busting mud-architecture once typical of the region. Another big plus: the resident guide Jean Baptiste, who is deeply familiar with the region and all too happy to share his knowledge. **Campement Emanaye** (☎ 993 1004; emanaye@yahoo.fr; s/d CFA4500/6000) is another striking two-storey, mud dwelling that houses good-quality rooms with bathrooms and great views over the local rice fields. At the more basic **Auberge du Routard** (☎ 993 1025; r per person CFA3000) you can sometimes see batiks being made, or even participate.

For food, **Le Kassa** (Chez Odette; ☎ 563 7186; dishes around CFA1000) and **Le Passager** (☎ 512 0243; meals around CFA1500) are good options, both serving deer.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

All bush taxis between Ziguinchor and Cap Skiring pass through Oussouye. Rates to the half-way point Oussouye are usually around CFA1000.

M'Lomp

On what is allegedly a sealed road between Oussouye and Elinkine you'll pass through the village of M'Lomp, the best place to admire the local *cases étages* (two-storey,

mud-brick houses). An enormous fromager tree, at least 400 years old and sacred in the village, towers above the first *case étage*.

Decent food in a welcoming setting can be found at **Les Six Palmiers** (☎ 569 9058; meals CFA500-1000; ☎ 8am-11pm). To get here, ask for Chez Brigitte, and any local can give you directions.

Elinkine

The busy fishing village Elinkine is the best jumping-off point for Île de Karabane. The simple but charming **Campe ment le Fromager** (☎ 525 6401; s/d CFA3000/6000) has been rebuilt after having been burnt to the ground a few years ago, and now offers good, basic accommodation and a vast range of excursions. Mammadou Ndiaye, the welcoming manager, has spent several decades in the local tourist industry – this is your chance to tap into his vast regional knowledge.

There are normally several Ndiaya Ndiayes each day from Ziguinchor to Elinkine, via Oussouye for CFA850, or from Oussouye for CFA300.

Île de Karabane

It's hard to believe that the tranquil Île de Karabane was the first French trading station in the region (1836–1900). The French legacy is now ruins, but you can still see the crumbling remains of a tall Breton-style church and a school. Further along the beach lies the so-called Catholic cemetery with the graves of French settlers and sailors. The beach is good for swimming (and occasionally dolphin spotting), and the mangroves surrounding the island are great for bird-watching tours.

SLEEPING & EATING

The following places are listed from east to west. All serve food. Always leave a message if you don't get an answer on any of the numbers given – mobile coverage isn't great.

Campe ment le Barracuda (☎ 659 6001; r CFA3000, with half board CFA7300) With its pretty rooms with bathrooms, forthcoming management and excellent restaurant, this is probably the most commendable place on the island. It's definitely the best address for bird-watching and angling excursions, whether you're experienced or first-time rod-holder.

Hôtel Carabane (☎ 569 0284; hotelcarabane@yahoo.fr; s/d CFA13,000/18,000) This delightful and well-maintained hotel is set in a lush and shady

tropical garden. You'll have the honour to stay in what used to be the colonial governance, and enjoy your drink in the former Catholic mission.

Chez Helena (☎ 654 1772; s/d CFA4000/6000) If the rooms were as pretty as the gleaming restaurant terrace, this would be a fantastic place to stay. But they're not, although boisterous manager Helena will try to make you forget the ugly lino floors and curious assembly of furniture by wrapping you up in sparkling conversation.

Lehiba (☎ 544 5108; www.bamboocollege.ne; r per person CFA4000) Furthest along the beach, this busy little *campement* offers workshops in dance, music and crafts, and even houses a small recording studio. It's a place that'll appeal to those keen to learn about the local culture.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Île de Karabane is best reached by motorised pirogue from Elinkine. A fairly regular *navette* (boat) leaves Elinkine daily at 2.30pm and 5pm, reaching Île de Karabane half an hour later before continuing to the village of Diogé. It returns at 10am the next day. The fare is CFA1000. Alternatively you can charter a boat for about CFA10,000 each way, just ask at the harbour. If you know where you'll be staying, your *campement* can also arrange to pick you up for a fee. A hired pirogue from Cap Skiring will cost around CFA30,000 to CFA40,000.

Cap Skiring

Considering the awesome beauty of Cap Skiring's beaches, the tourism industry of the area is still surprisingly low-key. A handful of resort-style hotels attract European package tours, but all along the beachfront you will also find small *campements* appealing to independent travellers. Off the beaten track this is not, but if you want a few easy days of sun and sand, with the option of a bit of partying after hours, this is the place.

INFORMATION

Cap Skiring has a small hospital, a post office and several *télécentres* in the centre of the village. The **CBAO** bank in the village has an ATM that accepts Visa cards. **Diatta Tours** (☎ 991 2781; aessibye@yahoo.fr) is as close as you get to a local tourist-information office, and is the place to book tours around the area. **Net's Cap** (☎ 993 5371; net-s-cap@sentoo.sn; ☎ 9am-

10pm) is one of the fastest and best-equipped Internet cafés in the entire country.

SLEEPING

You'll find accommodation for all budgets in Cap Skiring, most of it overlooking the beach and offering all the associated facilities and activities you'd expect, though with greatly differing quality and prices.

Budget

Just south of the junction is a sandy track that stretches along the beach. All the *campements* listed here are situated there.

Campe ment Paradise (☎ 993 5129; r with/without bathroom CFA12,000/6000; ☎) If you're spending your holiday on a beachfront, you're unlikely to spend much time in your room – so who cares if it's a little basic? The garden surrounding the bungalows invites lounging and gives access to the beach.

Campe ment Chez M'Ballo (☎ 936 9102; r with/without bathroom CFA7500/4000) Possibly the pick of the cheap places on this strip, M'Ballo is a good-value option with a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. Palm trees fight for space in this pretty plot of green, and the restaurant gives great views across the beach.

Noopalou Cousse (Chez Bruno Diatta; ☎ /fax 993 5130; www.casamance-peche.org; r per person with half board CFA15,000) This is a simple but excellent place, specialising in fishing excursions. Accommodation is in spotless rooms or self-catering bungalows.

Auberge de la Paix (☎ 993 5145; aubergedelapaix@yahoo.fr; s/d CFA6000/10,000) A friendly place with a family feel and a chilled-out restaurant with hammocks to laze the day away.

Midrange

Villa des Pêcheurs (☎ 993 5253; www.villadespecheurs.com; s/d from CFA13,000/15,000; ☎) On the same beachfront strip as the *campements*, this place has stylish rooms and a renowned restaurant. Fishing trips, including surf casting and angling, can be arranged.

Les Paletuviers (☎ 993 5210; www.hotel-kaloo.com; r ind breakfast CFA15,000; ☎) This freshly polished hotel offers great value for money. It looks out onto a beautiful stretch of mangroves, and has all the quality and comfort of a top-end place at a much better rate.

Auberge le Palmier (☎ 993 5109; d CFA10,000; ☎) Opposite the Club Med, the Palmier masters the art of tasteful understatement.

Rooms are as welcoming as the friendly management, and for an extra CFA2000 per night you even get hot water.

Les Bougainvilliers (☎ 993 5129; d CFA20,000; ☎) At the time of research, this was still a brilliant restaurant with eight newly finished rooms at the back. If the character and quality of the eatery are anything to go by, this will be very nice indeed.

Top End

La Maison Bleue (☎ 993 5161; www.lamaisonbleue.sn; r per person CFA30,8000) This luxurious place oozes sophistication, from the subdued colour scheme and Moroccan-style lounge to the mosaic-tiled swimming pool. Massages and beauty treatments are on offer, too. During the low season, prices drop by almost 50%.

Hôtel la Paille (☎ 993 5151; www.pailleote.sn; s/d CFA52,000/74,000; ☎) This hotel has been here the longest, and spoils visitors the best. For a luxurious stay with access to a supreme range of activities and services (including tailoring, golf, tennis, beauty treatments, pirogue excursions and plenty more), this is your ideal holiday home.

Les Hibiscus (☎ 993 5136; hibiscus@sentoo.sn; s/d ind breakfast CFA19,900/28,800) Right on the border of Guinea-Bissau near Kabrousse is this classy hotel in lush gardens on the beach, where comfortable bungalows are decorated with stunning murals and local fabrics.

EATING & DRINKING

Cap Skiring village has a whole range of quality eateries to choose from. **Le Terazza** (Chez Gnima; ☎ 993 5110) has tasty pizzas and plenty of character, thanks to the energetic owner Gnima and her mainly female staff. You pass the place on your way from the village to the beach. For Senegalese food, **Le Salima** (☎ 936 9127) and **Le Carpe Rouge** (☎ 993 5250) are both good. For something a little more upmarket, try the cosy restaurant **Le Djembe** (Chez Nadine & Patrick; ☎ 533 7692) where you can enjoy live jazz on Fridays while relishing mouth-watering French and Italian dishes. The lively *dibieterie* **Le Kassala** (☎ 653 0382; ☎ 8pm-4am) is the place danced-out clubbers head to for delicious roast meat (per kilo CFA5000) at 3am. Combine a visit here with a night out at the stylish **Case Bambou** (☎ 993 5178; admission CFA1000; ☎ 10.30pm-4am), **Savane Café** (admission CFA3000; ☎ 9pm-3am) or the more down-to-earth **Kassoumaye** (admission

CFA500-1000; ☎ 10pm-4am) and **Les Paletuviers** (Les Paletuviers hotel; admission CFA1000; ☎ 9pm-3am).

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

Air Sénégal International has twice weekly flights to Dakar from November to April (return CFA110,600). **Air CM** (☎ in France 01 53 41 00 50; mail.aircom@wannadoo.fr) has a twice-weekly connection between Paris and the Cap.

Bush Taxi & Minibus

Bush taxis (CFA1400) and minibuses (CFA1100) run regularly throughout the day between Ziguinchor and Cap Skiring, although there's more traffic in the morning.

GETTING AROUND

It's quite a trek from the main *campement* area to Cap Skiring village. You can hail a taxi for around CFA600. Bicycles are another good option – most hotels, *campements* and Diatta Tours have them for hire. Day trips by pirogue start at around CFA25,000. Try the two reliable piroguers **Jean Baptiste** and **Philippe Gomis** (☎ 555 2415) opposite the Hôtel Katakalousse. **Auto Cap4** (☎ 993 5265; autocap4@sentoo.sn) has an eclectic mix of 4WDs for hire starting at CFA30,000 per day.

Boucotte

This tiny village lies half-way between Cap Skiring and Diembéring, on the seemingly endless stretch of white sand that is Boucotte beach. Once in the village, you should absolutely pay a visit to the **Boucotte Museum** (ask any local to take you there). It's a low-key exhibition of Diola artefacts and objects among the roots of some giant fromager trees. The pretty, blue bungalows of the **Oudja Hôtel** (☎ 991 2781, 517 5895; s/d/tr CFA10,000/12,000/15,000) sit right on the shoreline.

Hiring a taxi from Cap Skiring to Boucotte should cost you around CFA2000 to CFA3000, if you call before setting out a pick-up can be arranged. Alternatively, you can walk along the beach, or do the polluting thing of driving along the seashore in your 4WD when the sea is low.

Diembéring

Diembéring tempts independent travellers with a taste of village life and a quiet beach thrown in. The place to stay is **Campement Asse** (☎ 993 3106; r per person CFA3000), a spacious,

though slightly run-down place near the big fromager tree at the entrance to town. Check out the local *groupement des femmes* (women's collective) that makes cute toys and other souvenirs from colourful African fabrics and sells them at reasonable prices.

Rates for private taxis to/from Cap Skiring vary enormously depending on the season and state of the roads. Expect to pay between CFA4000 to CFA6000 each way. The daily minibus from Ziguinchor passes through Cap Skiring around 5pm and returns early next morning, the seat costs CFA600 to CFA700.

CASAMANCE NORD Koubalan

Koubalan is a small village, 22km east of Ziguinchor. Its **campement villageois** (☎ 578 2091, téléc centre 936 9473; badianepap@hotmail.com) was created in 1979, and has been restored. Accommodation is in a beautifully decorated, spacious round hut. Ask the staff to take you on excursions, there's plenty to do here: visit a sacred forest, pirogue trips through the mangroves (some just being reforested) to nearby bird habitats, trips to local artisans' workshops and much more.

You reach Koubalan by bush taxi from Ziguinchor (CFA500, 45 minutes). It's on a dirt road off the Ziguinchor-Bignona road.

Affiniam

A few kilometres north of the river, Affiniam is stunningly located between forest and river, and easily reached from Ziguinchor by boat. The **campement villageois** (☎ 508 8025, téléc centre 936 9619) is in a beautiful *case à impluvium* on the edge of the village, watched over by giant fromager trees, and close to the pirogue point. The village itself has an interesting artisanal centre, where you can buy locally produced soap, marmalade and juice, and sometimes watch batiks being made. Otherwise, Affiniam is in a good location for pirogue trips to bird habitats and the *case étage* in Djilapao.

The best way of visiting Affiniam is by pirogue. There's a public boat once a day between Affiniam and Ziguinchor (CFA400, 1½ hours, daily except Thursday and Sunday; departs from Ziguinchor 3.30pm, from Affiniam 9.30am). Hiring a boat will cost around CFA25,000, hiring a taxi from Ziguinchor CFA15,000 (one hour, 30km).

Bignona & Baïla

Bignona is a sleepy crossroads town with crumbling colonial buildings, where the main route to/from Banjul joins the Trans-Gambia Hwy 30km north of Ziguinchor.

A short drive out of town, the **Hôtel le Palmier** (☎ 994 1258; r CFA7000) has adequate facilities in an old, colonial-style building. In Badiouré, 11km from Bignona on the road towards Séléti, you'll find the **Relais Fleuri** (☎ 994 3002; fax 994 3219; s/d CFA12,000/14,000; ☎ ☎), which is as pretty as its name, but caters almost exclusively for hunters. Just avoid the main season (November to April).

Off the main road between Bignona and Diouloulou, Baïla tempts with another pretty **campement villageois** (☎ 544 8035; téléc centre 936 9516). The area is great for walks and pirogue tours. It's best to go with a guide, and don't venture out on lonely paths late at night.

Ziguinchor to Baïla takes around 45 minutes along the tarmac main road. A bush taxi costs CFA1500, a hire taxi around CFA20,000.

Kafountine & Abéné

Kafountine and Abéné are the hip face of tourism in Senegal. The two villages on the coast just south of The Gambia have spawned more than 20 guesthouses, often the sort of place where dreadlocked staff seem happy to drum the day away and everything is 'cool, mon'. The villages are separated from the rest of Casamance Nord by a large branch of the Casamance River called Marigot Diouloulou.

The area looks more to the north than to the south: if you travel here from The Gambia, the reggae-vibing tourist scene will seem familiar.

Several Senegalese and European artists have settled here, *djembe* drum clutched between their knees and tie-dye kit in hand, and have tuned in the area to the laid-back rhythms of 'baba cool' – a West African version of relaxed reggae culture. You don't have to look far for your introductory drumming, batik or dance workshop.

KAFOUNTINE

Kafountine is a spread-out village near the end of the pot-holed tarmac leading in from Diouloulou. The village centre stretches along the main road. It's reasonably well equipped, with several *téléc centres*, a slowish cybercafé,

BIRD-WATCHING SITES AROUND KAFOUNTINE

The creeks and lagoons around Kafountine are wonderful areas for watching birds, especially waders and shore birds. You can start your excursions right in town, at the small pool near the *Campement Sitokoto*, or at the bar of the *campement Esperanto*, where you can gaze across the *bolongs* (estuaries) while imbibing a soothing sunset drink. Esperanto, and several other lodgings organise trips to the famous bird-watching sites further afield, including the Sanctuaire Ornithologique de la Pointe de Kalissaye, a group of sandy islands (usually hidden by the waters), at the mouth of the Marigot Kalissaye, and the highly rated Sanctuaire Ornithologique de Kasel, some 5km southeast of Kafountine. Another place is the Presqu'île des Oiseaux, a narrow spit of land between the ocean and a creek, noted for its huge populations of Caspian terns. It lies south of the fishing village – most *campements* organise excursions.

a hospital and post office, but no bank. Most hotels and *campements* are scattered along a wide, sandy beach, which divides into two areas: the northern strip, reached by turning right on the sandy road as it leads west from the village; and the southern strip that lies on the main road south of Kafountine village. The beachfront is a taxi- or bicycle-worthy 2km from the village. To reach the southern strip, you pass the fishing village, a busy settlement with lines of shacks where fish are dried and smoked, and a beach from where boats are launched.

Sleeping

Esperanto (Chez Eric & Antonella; ☎ 635 6280; esp eranto@arc.sn; d CFA10,000, with half board CFA16,500) This relaxed place between the river and sea is a real gem, with bungalows (some family sized) set in a landscaped garden with palm trees and bamboo bridges.

Le Fouta Djallon (☎ 936 9494; www.casamance.net/foutadjallon; s/d CFA12,000/20,000) The hotel's extensive garden begins right behind a small dune that leads to the beach. The red-brick huts are comfortable and the cosy bar invites relaxed evening drinks.

Le Kelediang (☎ 542 5385; www.senegambia.net; r per person CFA3200) Enter the forest and soak up the free-spirited, close-to-nature atmosphere of this relaxed Dutch-run establishment. Accommodation is in deliberately basic, but comfy bungalows and the restaurant near the beach serves delicious lunch and dinner.

Le Bolonga (☎ 994 8515; s/d CFA7500/10,000) This quality place really is as warm and welcoming as the bar-reception in the brick building at the entrance suggests. The young staff go to great lengths to put you at ease and satisfy all your excursion or workshop wishes.

Campement Sitokoto (☎ 994 8512; r per person incl breakfast CFA4500) Kafountine's *campement villageois* has got basic rooms with clean, shared toilets right near the river.

La Case de Marie Oldie (☎ 936 9710, 539 2379; s/d CFA3000/4500) This red-brick *case à impluvium* construction is a treat close to Kafountine village. Sunny, clean and friendly – and the rates are unbeatable.

Le Paradis (☎ téléc centre 936 9492; r CFA4000) 'Very Jah', is the going description of this phlegmatic little *campement*. Drumming, smoking, hanging about and philosophising – *voilà* the ambience of this self-declared paradise. The drumming courses get good reviews.

À la Nature (☎ 994 8524; alanature@arc.sn; r per person incl breakfast CFA4500) Past the fishing village and pirogue-makers and just above the high-water line, this is Kafountine's famous beachfront venture with a rasta feel. Drumming workshops and hammock-lounging are obligatory.

Le Saloulou (☎ /fax 994 8514; r per person CFA6000) Fancy it ain't, but it's situated seconds from the surf and offers fishing trips in the sea or *bolongs*.

Le Bandoula Village (☎ 994 8511; s/d CFA13,000/15,000) A few steps down from the Saloulou, this place is slightly more upmarket, as the fair rates suggest. Not a bad option.

Eating

Kafountine isn't a gourmet's paradise, and the hotel restaurants are still your safest bet. Esperanto, Fouta Djalou, Le Kelediang and Bandoula Village are among the most reliable. Other good options include **Le Bis-sap** (☎ 994 8512; dishes CFA2000-3000; ☎ 8am-midnight), where food is tasty. You can check your emails and buy your groceries there, too. Alternatively, there are a few cheap eat-

eries in the market offering similar local fare for little money: **Chez Yandé**, **Le Cocotier Café** (☎ 8am-midnight) and **Couleur Café** (☎ 936 9520; ☎ 8am-midnight) are popular. **Pointe Nord** (☎ 11am-2am) is a lively bar. Simple Senegalese meals cost around CFA750 to CFA1500 in all three places.

Self-caterers can stock up in the centre of the village. The **Mini Marché** (☎ 9am-11pm) sells a good variety of foodstuffs and is a popular hang out for local youth.

Entertainment

This is a town full of party-ready inhabitants. The nightclubs are usually packed with dreadlocked youngsters, and often get rowdy as the night wears on. The **Farafina** (admission CFA1500-2000) enjoys the reputation of being the most upmarket, and most expensive place of the lot. **Black and White** (admission CFA1000) and **Chez Pablo** (admission CFA500-1000) are the cheaper alternatives. Additionally, there's a set of bars that have live bands on rotation. They include the Le Kabekel and Le Flamant Rose.

Getting There & Away

From Ziguinchor, *sept-place* taxis (CFA2500) and minibuses (CFA1700) run directly to Kafountine. Alternatively, take any vehicle to Diouloulou, from where local bush taxis take the rough tarmac road to Kafountine for CFA600.

You can also get bush taxis from Serekunda or Brikama in The Gambia, although direct traffic usually goes via the back roads and the sleepy Darsilami border crossing rather than the main one at Séléti. There's no Senegalese border post, so you might have to return to Séléti to get your passport stamped.

Getting Around

It's quite a walk from the hotel-lined beachfront to the village centre, and while you can hope for a ride with a friendly local, you're unlikely to come across a taxi. Ask the hotel to call you a cab, it'll set you back around CFA1000 to CFA2000.

ABÉNÉ

Abéné, a slightly quieter version of Kafountine, lies 6km north on the route to Diouloulou. From the village it's 2km along a sandy track to the beach, past a small craft village

near the junction where a track goes off to the upmarket Le Kalissai Village-Hôtel.

If cycling is more your thing, try the Campement la Belle Danielle in the village centre, where bikes can be hired for CFA2000 per day. The friendly owner is full of suggestions for interesting day trips.

Sleeping

Campement la Belle Danielle (☎ 936 9542; r per person CFA2500, with half board CFA6000) Contrary to what the name suggests, this isn't the most beautiful *campement* in town, but without a shadow of a doubt the one that offers the deepest insider knowledge. Manager Mammadou Konta is also the local representative of the tourist board, and can organise pretty much any pick-up and excursion in Casamance and beyond.

Maison Sunjata (☎ /fax 994 8610; info@senegambia.de; s/d CFA7500/15,000) Located in a well-tended garden, this small German-run place has clean, comfortable rooms with bathrooms shared between two bungalows.

Le Kossey (☎ 994 8609; r per person CFA5000) The beach begins where the lush garden with its inviting bungalows stops. This place is particularly famous for its rasta drumming parties on New Year's Eve.

O'Dunbeye Land Ecole de Danse (Chez Thomas; ☎ 524 9600; www.odunbeyeland.com/fr; r per person CFA2600) There are plenty of drumming and dancing courses in Abéné, this place offers some of the best-quality ones. The ambience is expectedly *artistique*, accommodation basic and the food delicious.

Le Kalissai Village-Hôtel (☎ 994 8600; www.kalissai.com; s/d CFA28,000/32,000; ☎ ☎) You won't find anything more polished than this luxury establishment. Bungalows and surroundings are as welcoming as you want them to be for the price, and you can even fly here in your privately hired plane (see right). Class.

Eating

Chez Vero (☎ 617 1714; meals around CFA3000) is the much-loved auntie of Abéné's restaurant scene. Food has been consistently good for many years now, and is served on a terrace, under the watchful eyes of gaudy Madonnas and griots on the walls. The unpretentious **Afad Snackbar** opposite the Village Artisanal and the nearby **Bistro Café** (☎ 634 3532) both serve reasonable fast food. Bistro Café is the more upmarket of the two, with decent pizzas

on the menu (CFA1000 to CFA2000), a well-stocked boutique selling batiks and clothes, and the occasional drumming soirée.

Getting There & Away

All public transport to and from Kafountine stops at the turn-off to Abéné, near a place called Diannah. The village is 2km off the main road, and the beach is a further 2km, which you'll have to walk. A private taxi will set you back CFA2500 to CFA3500. Abéné also has its very own aerodrome, with flights to and from Dakar. Hiring a three-seater aircraft will cost you around CFA280,000 one way. Plane hire is arranged at Le Kalissai Village-Hôtel.

HAUTE CASAMANCE Sédhiou & Kolda

Some 100km east of Ziguinchor, Sédhiou is a tranquil place that sleep-walks through an existence that's rarely disturbed by visitors. From 1900 to 1909, this was the main trading post of the French colonial administration.

The **Hôtel la Palmeraie** (☎ 995 1102; philippe.bertrand@apicus.net; s/d CFA20,000/28,000; ☎ ☎) caters mainly for hunters, though its spectacular palm-grove setting distracts from the hunters' ambience. A short diversion off the smooth tarmac road from Kolda to Carrefour Diaroumé takes you to Sédhiou (bush taxi CFA3500); the turn-off is signposted. There are also bush taxis between Sédhiou and Bounkiling on the Trans-Gambia Hwy (CFA2000).

Kolda's glory lies in its past, the time when this second-largest city of the Casamance used to be the capital of Fouladou, the historical 19th-century Fula kingdom led by the illustrious kings Alpha Molo and his son Musa Molo. Today, it's an spectacular place, mainly visited by hunters. The prettiest hotel is **Le Firdou** (☎ 996 1780; fax 996 1782; s/d CFA14,100/18,700; ☎ ☎ ☎), where attractive bungalows sit right on the river in a spacious palm-tree garden. In town, the impressively sized **Hôtel Hobbe** (☎ 996 1170; www.hobbe-kolda.com; s/d CFA18,100/22,000; ☎ ☎ ☎) again caters mainly for hunters. Rooms are enormous and come with cable TV. **Hôtel Moya** (☎ 996 1175; fax 996 1357; s/d from CFA9,800/10,800; ☎ ☎) is drab, overpriced and run by uniquely unforthcoming management.

Kolda isn't exactly blessed with a thriving restaurant scene or nightlife. Simple meals

can be found at **Chez Koumba**, **Chez Bintou**, **La Terrasse** and **Darou Salam**. Culinary choices are mainly between your regular Senegalese dishes and brochettes with bread.

From Kolda, it's worth going on a day trip to the spectacular market of **Diaoubé** where traders from across Casamance, The Gambia and Guinea come on Wednesdays to peddle their wares.

Kolda is well-served by public transport. If you head to Ziguinchor, make sure you get into a *sept-place* that takes the route Kolda-Carrefour Diaroumé-Ziguinchor, rather than Kolda-Tanaf-Ziguinchor. The former is a bitumen dream, the latter a potholed promise of breakdowns. The CFA3500 price is the same. A *sept-place* to Vélingara costs CFA2300, to Tambacounda CFA3000. All bush taxis leave from the *gare routière* about 2km outside town on the road to Sédhiou.

SENEGAL DIRECTORY

ACCOMMODATION

In this chapter, rates are quoted exclusive of tourist tax. For larger towns, places are organised according to price range: budget hotels (less than US\$30 per night), mid-range (between US\$30 and US\$75 per night) and top end (more than US\$75 per night). Dakar has the biggest range of accommodation, though everything is expensive, and there are few budget options. Inland, there are several good rural *campements*, where accommodation is usually in round huts, including the *campements villageois* in the Casamance (see p731) and several upmarket options, particularly in the Siné-Saloum region.

PRACTICALITIES

- *Focus on Africa* (BBC) often has excellent news stories on Senegal, and is sold in the country.
- If you read French, *Jeune Afrique* and *l'Intelligent* are good sources of political and cultural news.
- The electricity supply in Senegal is 220V. Plugs have two round pins, as in France and continental Europe.
- Senegal uses the metric system.

All places charge a tourist tax of CFA600 per person, which usually isn't included in the price. In this book, rates are quoted exclusive of tourist tax.

Some hotels charge by the room, making no difference whether you're alone or sharing, and many have favourable rates for two people sharing. The high season for hotel rates is from around October to May, with extra hikes around Christmas and New Year. During the low season, rates can drop by up to 50%. Some hotels also offer half-board rates, which include breakfast and lunch.

ACTIVITIES

Most tourists head to Senegal for the beaches, particularly those of the Petite Côte (p701) and Cap Skiring (p732). The main tourist centres have a range of sea-related activities on offer, including sailboarding, kayaking etc. Pirogue journeys are popular, particularly around the mangrove creeks of Siné-Saloum (p705) and Casamance (p725). The boat journeys are often combined with bird-watching – though there's no equivalent in Senegal to Gambia's well-organised network of ornithologists. Fishing, including deep-sea fishing, is possible along the coast, and in Dakar (p688). Along the Petite Côte (p701) diving and surfing are popular.

Some cautious wildlife spotting can be done in Senegal's national parks. In northern Senegal, 'desert tourism', including 4WD tours and windsurfing is possible around Saint-Louis, the Desert de Lompoul and the border areas with Mauritania.

BOOKS

Most books on Senegal are in French and if you're capable of the tongue, you should read *Sénégal*, Christian Saglio's musings on the country. The author, currently head of Dakar's Institut Français, has spent the greater part of his life in Senegal, where he, among other things, helped conceive the fabulous network of *campements villageois* (see p731) in Casamance in the 1970s.

The stunning *Senegal behind Glass* by Anne-Marie Bouttiaux-Ndiaye contains reproductions of *sous-verre* paintings, from historical to contemporary examples, giving artistic insights into the country's religion and culture (as well as the arts scene). *A Saint in the City* by Allen and Mary Roberts takes a similar approach, discussing the ubiquitous

presence of the images of Senegal's great Sufi leader Cheikh Amadou Bamba around urban Dakar. You'll spot them too on your travels – this book explains why. Music lovers should read the amusing *The Music in My Head* by Mark Hudson, which describes the power, influence and everyday realities of modern African music set in a mythical city that is instantly recognisable as Dakar.

BUSINESS HOURS

Businesses and government offices open from 8am to noon and 2.30pm to 6pm Monday to Friday, and some open from 8am to noon on Saturday. Most banks are open from 8.30am to noon, and 2.30pm to 4.30pm Monday to Friday. Some banks also open until 11am on Saturday mornings. Shops are usually open from 9am to noon, and from 2.30pm to 7pm Monday to Saturday, and very few open from 9am to noon on Sunday.

Most restaurants offer lunch (noon to 2.30pm) and dinner (7pm onwards), and many are closed on Sundays.

For a night out in Dakar, don't even think of leaving the house before midnight, most clubs and bars only get going around 1am.

CHILDREN

There's little in the way of child-centred activities, though Dakar has a few playgrounds and some children's entertainment, and the national parks and quiet beaches (beware of undertow) are good to visit with kids.

Children are generally welcome, and hotels and restaurants are usually accommodating, rustling up a kid's meal and arranging extra beds (at an extra cost). Baby-sitting services are rare, and only available in the more upmarket places.

Disposable nappies and baby food are found in the supermarkets and many smaller shops in the larger towns around the country; stock up before heading to the more remote regions. Babies are best carried in a baby-rucksack – it's near impossible to push a pram around anywhere in the country.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Dakar, particularly the inner city, markets and beaches, is a hotspot of pickpocketing, muggings and scams (see p687), though nowhere near the scale of, let's say, Lagos. Another risk is civil unrest in the Casamance (see p727 for more information).

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES Senegalese Embassies and Consulates

Belgium (☎ 02 673 0097; senegal.ambassade@coditel.net; 196 Ave Franklin-Roosevelt, Brussels 1050)

Canada (☎ 613-0238 6392; www.ambasseneccanada.org; 57 Marlborough Ave, Ottawa ON K1N)

France (☎ 01 44 05 38 69; www.ambassenparis.com; 22 Rue Hamelin, 75016 Paris)

Germany (☎ 022-821 80 08; Argelanderstrasse 3, 53115 Bonn)

Guinea (☎ 224-409037; Corniche Sud, Coléah, Conakry; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 1.30-5pm Mon-Fri)

Guinea-Bissau (☎ 245-21 29 44; 43 Rue Omar Torrijos, Bissau; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri)

Japan (☎ 0464 8451; fax 464 8452; 1-3-4 Aobadai, Meguro-ku Tokyo 153)

Mali (☎ 223-221 8273; fax 221 1780; off Blvd Nelson Mandela, Bamako; ☎ 7.30am-1pm & 1.30-4pm Mon-Fri)

Mauritania (☎ 222-525 72 90; Rue de l'Ambassade du Sénégal, Nouakchott)

Morocco (☎ 07754171; 17 Cadi Ben Hamadi Benhadj, BP 365 Rabat)

UK (☎ 020-7938 4048; www.senegalembassy.co.uk; 39 Marloes Rd, London W8 6LA)

USA (☎ 202-2340540; 2112 Wyoming Ave NW, Washington, DC 20008)

In West Africa, Senegal also has embassies in Banjul (The Gambia), Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire), Freetown (Sierra Leone), Lagos (Nigeria), Niamey (Niger) and Praia (Cape Verde). See the appropriate country chapters for more information.

Embassies & Consulates in Senegal

If you need to find an embassy that is not listed here, check the phone book, one of the listings magazines, or www.auseneal.com/pratique_en/ambassad.htm. Most of the following embassies are located in Dakar:

Belgium (Map p684; ☎ 822 4720; Route de la Corniche-Est)

Burkina Faso (☎ 827 9509/8; Lot 1, Liberty VI Extension; ☎ 8am-3pm Mon-Fri)

Canada (Map p684; ☎ 889 4700; Immeuble Sorano, 4th fl, 45-47 Blvd de la République)

Cape Verde (Map p686; ☎ 821 1873; 3 Blvd el Haji Djily Mbaye; ☎ 8.30am-3pm Mon-Fri)

Côte d'Ivoire (☎ 869 02 70; Rue 7 X G, Point E; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 3-5pm Mon-Fri)

France (Map p686; ☎ 839 5100; 1 Rue Assane Ndoye)

The Gambia (Map p686; ☎ 821 7230; 11 Rue de Thiong; ☎ 9am-3pm Mon-Thu & 9am-1pm Fri)

Germany (Map p684; ☎ 889 4884; 20 Ave Pasteur)

Ghana (Map p691; ☎ 869 4053; Point E)

Guinea (Map p691; ☎ 824 8606; Rue 7, Point E; ☎ 9.30am-2pm Mon-Fri) Directly opposite Ker Jaraaf.
Guinea-Bissau Dakar (☎ 824 5922; Rue 6, Point E; ☎ 8am-12.30pm Mon-Fri); Ziguinchor (☎ 991 1046; Rue de France; ☎ 8am-2pm Mon-Fri)
Italy (Map p684; ☎ 822 0076; Rue Seydou Nourou Tall)
Mali (Map p693; ☎ 824 6252; 23 Route de la Corniche Ouest, Fann; ☎ 8am-11am Mon-Fri)
Mauritania (Map p693; ☎ 822 6238; Rue 37, Kolobane; ☎ 8am-2pm Mon-Fri)
Morocco (Map p691; ☎ 824 6927; Ave Cheikh Anta Diop, Mermoz) Near the Total petrol station where all the cars rapides wait.
Netherlands (Map p686; ☎ 849 0360; 37 Rue Kléber)
Spain (Map p684; ☎ 842 6408; 18-20 Ave Nelson Mandela)
Switzerland (Map p684; ☎ 823 0590; Rue René Ndiaye)
UK (Map p684; ☎ 823 7392; 20 Rue du Dr Guillet) One block north of Hôpital Le Dantec.
USA (Map p686; ☎ 823 4296; Ave Jean XXIII)

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

There's always a festival on somewhere in Senegal; some so small and informal that you'll hardly hear about them, others huge, international events.

Abéné Festivalo This is an informal affair, mainly featuring drumming troupes of varying standard. Happens every New Year in Abéné.

Dak'Art Biennale (☎ 823 0918; www.dakart.org) This fantastic arts festival is held in Dakar every two years – one of Africa's best.

Festival International du Film de Quartier (www.festivaldufilmdequartier.com) Dakar's best film festival with excellent fringe shows.

Kaay Fecc (☎ 826 4950; www.auseneal.com/kaayfecc) One of Africa's best dance festivals. Usually happens around June.

Saint-Louis Jazz Festival (www.saintlouisjazz.com) Renowned international jazz festival in a historical setting.

GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELLERS

Gay sexual relationships are a cultural taboo and the gay scene, which certainly exists in Dakar and other urban centres, isn't very visible. Open displays of affection are generally frowned upon, whatever your sexual orientation, and can be met with downright hostility in the case of same-sex relationships.

HOLIDAYS

Both Christian and Islamic events are celebrated. The Muslim holidays, such as Korité, Tabaski, Tamkharit and Mouldid are determined by the lunar calendar, and occur

on different dates each year. 48 days after Islamic New Year, Senegal celebrates the Grand Magal pilgrimage in Touba (p710).

The exact dates of Islamic holidays are only announced just before they occur, as they depend on the sightings of the moon. And occasionally, experts differ in their readings of the moon, which can result in a two-day celebration. See p818 for more information.

Other holidays include the following:

New Year's Day 1 January

Independence Day 4 April

Easter Monday March/April

Whit Sunday/Pentecost 7th Sunday after Easter

Whit Monday Day after Whit Sunday

Ascension 40th day after Easter

Workers Day 1 May

Assumption August 15

Christmas Day 25 December

INTERNET ACCESS

Senegal is the third-best place in Africa for web services. Connections are usually fast and there are plenty of Internet cafés. The main operator is **sentoo** (www.sentoo.sn), which has a chain of speedy cybercafés around the country.

INTERNET RESOURCES

Au-Senegal (www.au-senegal.com) A fantastically packed information site, with hotel booking facilities and up-to-date cultural and political information.

Senegal Tourist Office (www.senegal-tourism.com) Comprehensive tourist site listing attractions, and giving travel and accommodation tips.

Stanford Site Guide (www-sul.stanford.edu/depts/ssrg/africa/sene.html) Has links to hundreds of websites about Senegal, both in English and French.

Senerap (www.senerap.com) Comprehensive website with news on Senegal's hip-hop scene.

MAPS

The locally produced *Carte du Senegal* (1:912,000) isn't bad. For Dakar, the colourful street map by **Editions Laure Kane** (www.editionslaurekane) is a must have. It was last updated in 2006.

MONEY

The currency of Senegal is the West African CFA franc. CFA stands for Communauté Financière Africaine, and is also the official currency of Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger and Togo.

There are notes for CFA500, CFA1000, CFA5000 and CFA10,000. The value of the CFA is tied to the euro at a fixed rate of one euro to CFA655.967.

ATMs

Banks with ATMs exist in most major towns throughout the country. Visa is the most widely accepted plastic. The withdrawal limit is supposed to be CFA300,000, though some bank branches only allow up to CFA150,000.

Cash

Euros, US dollars, British pounds and other major currencies can be changed in banks, bureaux de change and hotels. Euros are most widely accepted, and the only currency dealt with outside Dakar. It's best to do all your changing in Dakar before heading into the country.

Credit Cards

The use of credit cards is limited to top-end hotels, some restaurants, car hire and very few shops. American Express (Amex) and Visa are the most widely accepted. Some banks in the interior of Senegal can give cash advances on credit cards, though readers have reported this being too much hassle to try.

Moneychangers

All major bank branches change money, and there are a few exchange bureaux in the tourist zones.

Tipping

In good quality restaurants and hotels you're usually expected to tip, not so in most midrange and budget places. You wouldn't normally tip a taxi driver.

Travellers Cheques

The major banks in the cities accept travellers cheques grudgingly, but tend to charge high commissions. Forget about changing them upcountry. Only American Express cheques tend to be considered, and the best currency for travellers cheques (as for cash) is euros.

POST

Senegal's postal service is very reliable. Letters to and from Europe usually take about a week, up to 15 days for Australasia. For

speedier mail, there are DHL offices in Dakar and other major towns.

The main post office in Dakar has a poste restante facilities, though note that some travellers have reported problems with the service.

TELEPHONE & FAX

There are plenty of public *télécentres* all around the country, where you can make national and international calls and send faxes. National calls cost CFA60 per minute, and international calls are around CFA500, depending on which country you call. After 8pm, prices fall by 20%.

Mobile coverage is excellent, with even the remotest villages having at least a tiny pocket of reception. Alizé, Sentel and Tigo are the main companies. An Alizé SIM card costs CFA25,000. You top up with prepaid cards, which are sold in units of CFA1000, CFA2500, CFA5000 and CFA10,000.

The country code is ☎ 221. For directory assistance dial ☎ 12.

TIME

Senegal is at GMT/UTC, which for most European visitors means there is no or very little time difference. There is no daylight savings time.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Senegal's Syndicat d'Initiative has an office in each of the regions. The main and best branch is in Saint-Louis.

Gorée (☎ 823 9177; methiourseye@hotmail.com)

Lac Rose (☎ 836 5517; kerkanni@tspnet.sn)

Saint Louis (☎ 961 2455; sltourisme@sentoo.sn)

Saly (☎ 957 22 22; bgvsn@yahoo.fr)

Siné-Saloum (☎ 948 3140; www.tourismesinesaloum.sn)

Tambacounda (☎ 981 1250; nijihotel@sentoo.sn)

Ziguinchor (☎ 993 5151; pailote@sentoo.sn)

VISAS

Visas are not needed by citizens of the EU, Canada, Norway, South Africa, Japan, Israel, USA and some other (mainly African) countries. Tourist visas for one to three months cost about US\$15 to US\$20. Australians and New Zealanders definitely need a visa.

Visa Extensions

For extensions, submit a request to the **Ministère de l'Intérieur** (Map p684; Place de l'Indépendance, Dakar), who'll give you a receipt, which already

gives you right to extended stay. It takes about two weeks for the official letter confirming extension to arrive, which you then present to get your passport stamped.

Visas for Onward Travel

For onward travel, it's best to get your visa beforehand at the relevant embassy (see p739). Most issue visas within 24 hours. For Mauritania, you can get visas at the border in Rosso. For The Gambia, it's always better to have your visa beforehand, as border officials can be difficult.

WOMEN TRAVELLERS

While it's not exactly dangerous to travel on your own as a woman in Senegal, you do need to prepare for some low-key hassle and constant advances. If you travel on your own, inventing a husband is a good strategy, and you should also refer to boyfriends as husbands, to gain respect for your relationship.

It's always better to dress more modestly. Short skirts don't do anything to keep trouble away.

Downtown Dakar is a prime 'hunting ground' for *sai-sais* – guys out to chat up women, either to get you into bed, or cheat you out of money and most probably both. Beware and shake them off with a firm but polite *bakhna* (meaning OK, it's alright) or by simply ignoring them.

Beaches are prime hassle zones, and the areas where female readers report the most irritating, sometimes downright threatening advances.

Very few women become the victims of physical harm or rape. And if you follow some common sense ground rules – don't stroll along deserted beaches or dark city roads alone, don't hitchhike or accept rides with cars full of drunken men – you're unlikely to get into serious trouble.

ally pain free, and the Dakar airport is very organised.

Air

Senegal's main airport is the easily negotiated **Aéroport International Léopold Sédar Senghor** (DKR; ☎ 869 50 50, 24hr information line 628 1010; www.aerportdakar.com) in Yoff, 30 minutes from central Dakar. The airports of **Saint-Louis** (☎ 961 14 90) and **Cap Skiring** (☎ 993 51 77) also have connections to Dakar and Paris.

The national carrier is **Air Sénégal International** (☎ 804 0404, in France 0820 202 123; www.air-senegal-international.com), one of the most reliable airlines in Africa.

Airlines servicing Senegal and with offices in Dakar include the following:

Air Algérie (AH; ☎ 823 2964; www.airalgerie.dz) Hub: Algiers.

Air CM (☎ in France 01 53 41 00 50; mail.aircom@wannadoo.fr) Has a twice-weekly connection between Paris and Cap Skiring and plenty of good package deals.

Air France (Map p686; AF; ☎ 823 2964; www.airfrance.fr; Ave Albert Sarraut) Hub: Paris, Charles de Gaulle.

Air Guinée (Map p686; 2U; ☎ 821 4442; www.mirinet.com/airguinee; 25 Ave Pampidou) Hub: Conakry.

Air Ivoire (VU; ☎ 889 0280; www.airivoire.com) Hub: Abidjan.

Air Mali (Map p686; XG; ☎ 823 2461; 14 Rue El Haji M'Baye Guèye) Hub: Bamako.

Air Portugal (Map p686; TP; ☎ 821 5460; www.tap.pt) Hub: Lisbon.

Air Sénégal International (V7; ☎ 804 0404; www.air-senegal-international.com; 45 Ave Albert Sarraut) Hub: Dakar.

Alitalia (Map p686; AZ; ☎ 823 3874; www.alitalia.com; 5 Ave Pampidou) Hub: Rome.

Ethiopian Airlines (ET; ☎ 821 32 98; www.flyethiopian.com/et; 16, Ave Léopold Sédar Senghor) Hub: Addis Ababa.

Iberia (Map p686; IB; ☎ 889 0050; www.iberia.com; 2 Place de l'Indépendance) Hub: Madrid.

Kenya Airways (KQ; ☎ in Nairobi 020 3274747; www.kenya-airways.com) Hub: Nairobi.

Royal Air Maroc (Map p686; AT; ☎ 849 4747; www.royalairmaroc.com; 1 Place de l'Indépendance) Hub: Casablanca.

SN Brussels (Map p686; SN; ☎ 823 0460; www.flysn.com; Immeuble Fayçal, Rue Parchappe) Hub: Brussels.

South African Airways (Map p686; SA; ☎ 823 0151; www.flysa.com; 12 Ave Albert Sarraut) Hub: Johannesburg

TACV Cabo Verde Airlines (Map p686; VR; ☎ 821 3968; www.tacv.cv; 105 Rue Moussé Diop) Hub: Praia, Cape Verde.

TAP Air Portugal (Map p686; ☎ 821 0065; Rue Amadou Assane Ndoye) Hub: Lisbon.

Virgin Nigeria (VK; ☎ 4600505; www.virginigeria.com) Hub: Lagos.

Land

GAMBIA

See p326 for details.

GUINEA

Nearly all traffic between Senegal and Guinea goes to/from Labé, a town in northwestern Guinea. The busiest route is via Koundara, but some transport also goes via Kedougou (in the far southeast of Senegal) and the small town of Mali (usually called Mali-ville, to distinguish it from the country of the same name). Tambacounda has connections almost every day. From Kedougou, your best chances to find transport are on a Friday, though at least one car might leave most other days. Another popular jumping-off point is Diaoubé near Kolda. Wednesday, the day of the Diaoubé *lumo* is the best day to get transport here. Fares to Guinea are around CFA15,000 from all these places, and the trip can take up to 48 hours as routes are bad and Guinean roadblocks tedious to pass.

GUINEA-BISSAU

Bush taxis run several times daily between Ziguinchor and Bissau (CFA6000, 147km) via São Domingos (the border) and Ingore. The road is in fairly good condition, but the ferries on the stretch between Ingore and Bissau can make the trip take anything from four to eight hours. Occasionally the São Domingos border closes due to suspected rebel activity (see the boxed text, p727). Other options are to go from Tanaf to Farim or from Tambacounda via Vélingara to Gabú.

MALI

You can take the train, or a *sept-place* from Dakar via Tambacounda to Kidira (CFA5000, three hours, 184km) where border crossings are reportedly hassle-free. In Kidira, you cross the bridge to Diboli, from where bush taxis go on a washed-out road to Kayes (CFA3000). From Kayes to Bamako, both train and taxi are equally good (or bad) options.

MAURITANIA

The main border point is at Rosso, where a ferry (free for passengers, CFA2000 for a car

and CFA3000 for a 4WD) crosses the Senegal River. It's been announced that a bridge is supposed to replace the boat service within the next few years, but work hadn't started when this book went to press.

Dakar–Rosso by *sept-place* taxi is CFA5100 (six hours, 384km), from Saint-Louis CFA2000 (two hours, 106km).

The only other option is the Maka Diama barrage, 97km southwest of Rosso and just north of Saint-Louis, but there's no proper road. The crossing here costs CFA5000/10,000 in winter/summer.

River & Sea

If you're feeling brave, you can take a pirogue from the Siné-Saloum region to Banjul in The Gambia. Note that these aren't particularly safe and the ride can be very rocky.

The most common departure points are Djifer, where a place in an often overpriced pirogue costs CFA5000, and the trip takes around six hours. From Betenti, there's an almost daily pirogue to Banjul (CFA1500, three hours) that leaves around 8am.

A regular boat service between Banjul and Dakar had ceased at the time of writing, though it was rumoured that the route was supposed to be reopened.

Train

The Dakar–Bamako train is something of a traveller's classic. In theory, trains run between Dakar and Bamako twice a week in each direction and the trip takes about 35 hours. In practice, this almost never happens – one train is often out of action, the trip usually takes 40 hours or longer, and derailments are frequent. Inquire about the situation at Dakar train station before setting off, and once on the train, watch out for pickpockets.

GETTING AROUND

Air

Air Sénégal International (☎ 804 0404; www.air-senegal-international.com) has flights from Dakar to Saint-Louis, Ziguinchor, Cap Skiring and Tambacounda, though only those to Ziguinchor (once or twice daily, return fare CFA80,600) operate with complete regularity. Flights to Cap Skiring (Friday and Sunday, return fare CFA110,600) and Saint-Louis (Wednesday, return fare CFA70,000)

TRANSPORT IN SENEGAL

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Entering Senegal

A full passport is essential for entering Senegal. If you enter from within the region, you'll also need to show a yellow fever vaccination certificate. Border checks are usu-

operate only from November to April, and the two flights that fly from Dakar to Tambacounda every Saturday seem pretty irregular.

To Ziguinchor or Cap Skiring, flights are particularly worth considering, as reaching the Casamance by road involves either tedious border crossings in The Gambia, or a seemingly endless tour via Tambacounda around The Gambia.

Other companies include the following:

Air Saint Louis (☎ 644 8629; www.air saintlouis.com)
Flights from Dakar to Saint-Louis.

Le Kalissai Village-Hôtel (☎ 994 8600; www.kalissai.com) Arranges flights from the aerodrome in Abéné to Dakar.

Senegalair Avion Taxis (☎ 821 3425) Flies mainly to Simenti in Parc National du Niokolo-Koba, though it can also arrange flights elsewhere.

Bicycle

Senegal's flat savannah landscape is great for cycling, but there are a few things to consider. Roads are in poor condition, and often sandy. The bigger problem, however, is the drivers, who simply aren't used to cyclists, which makes cycling potentially very risky. The best place to hire bikes is Casamance VTT in Oussouye (see p731). Kedougou and the region around Saint-Louis are also particularly good for biking.

Boat

By far the most important boat service in Senegal is the *Wilis*, which connects Dakar twice weekly to Ziguinchor in the Casamance, see p730.

In some areas, including N'dangane, N'Gor, Elinkine and Affiniam, pirogues are used as public transport. It's always possible to hire a pirogue for an excursion (particularly in the Casamance and Siné-Saloum regions), though it can get expensive. If you go to Île de Gorée or Foundiougne, you need to cross by ferry – these services are safe and reliable.

Major leisure boat options include the tours of the Bou El Mogdad from Saint-Louis to Podor, and the trips of the African Queen around the Petite Côte.

Africa Queen (West Africa Sportsfishing; ☎ 957 7435; Sally) Tours off the Petite Côte.

Bou El Mogdad (☎ 961 5689; www.saheldecouverte.com) One- to four-day cruise trips along the Senegal River can be booked through Sahel Découverte Bassari in Saint-Louis (see p714).

GORÉE FERRY TIMETABLE

DEPARTING FROM GORÉE

Monday to Saturday Sundays & Holidays

6.45am	7.30am
8am	9.30am
10.30am	10.30am
noon	12.30pm
2pm	2.30pm
3pm	4.30pm
4.30pm	5.30pm
6.30pm	7pm
7pm	8pm
8.30pm	9pm
11pm	11pm
11.30pm	midnight

DEPARTING FROM DAKAR

Monday to Saturday Sundays & Holidays

6.15am	7am
7.30am	9am
10am	10am
11am	noon
12.30pm	2pm
2.30pm	4pm
4pm	5pm
5pm (*)	6.30pm
6.30pm	7pm
8pm	8.30pm
10.30pm	10.30pm
(*) except Sat	

Gorée Ferry (☎ 24hr infoline 628 1111, 849 7961) Ferries travel 11 times daily between Dakar and Île de Gorée. The first ferry leaves at 6.15am, the last return from Gorée is at 11pm. The trip takes 20 minutes.

Willis (☎ 889 8009, 889 8060/51) Departs from Dakar every Tuesday and Friday at 7pm, returns from Ziguinchor every Sunday and Thursday at 2pm. Tickets start from CFA15,500.

Bus, Bush Taxi & Minibus

Senegal's long-distance bus network is fairly good, punctual and cheap – though slow and not exactly comfortable. Buses are owned and operated by members of the Mouride brotherhood, hence they're known as *cars mourides*. These go from Dakar to most major towns in the country. In Dakar they leave from the Shell station at Ave Malick Sy near *gare routière* Sapeurs-Pompiers (just referred to as Pompiers), usually in the mid-

dle of the night. You have to book your seat in advance, best by going there in person.

'Bush taxi' is the generic term for all public transport smaller than a big bus. The most common forms include Ndiaga Ndiayes, large white Mercedes busses that usually have 'Alhamdoulilai' printed across the front, minibuses (usually Nissan Urvans) carrying 20 people, and *sept-place* taxis. These are seven-seaters, usually Peugeot 504s, that are also referred to as brake or *cing-cent-quatre*. *Sept-place* taxis are always the most comfortable and fastest option. They cost around 20% more than Ndiaga Ndiayes. In some remote areas, however, Ndiaga Ndiayes, minibuses, or even pick-up trucks, might be your only option.

Bush taxis leave when they're full, and they fill up fastest in the morning, from 6.30am or earlier to 8.30am. In remote locations, your best chance for transport is on market days, when people will be heading to the market town (or village) in the early morning and returning in the evening.

Car & Motorcycle

No cars older than five years may be imported to Senegal. You need an international driving licence to drive or hire a car in Senegal. Most hire companies request a minimum age of 23.

Car hire is generally expensive. By the time you've added up the costs, you can easily end up paying over US\$1000 per week. In Senegal all the international names (Hertz, Avis, Budget etc) are represented, and there are also smaller independent operators. Dakar is the best place for car hire (see p695 for contact details).

It usually works out better hiring a *sept-place* with its driver. To work out the cost of a journey, multiply the number of seats by the fare and add some extra, particularly for waiting times, and you've got your estimated price.

Tours

Most places of interest in Senegal can be reached by public transport or car, but if you're short of time you could get around the country on an organised tour. A small selection of operators based in and around Dakar is included here.

M'boup Voyages (Map p686; ☎ 821 8163; mboup@telecomplus.sn; Place de l'Indépendance) One of the most enduring agencies with tours to the major destinations

Origin Africa (☎ 860 1578; origin@sentoo.sn; Cité Africa, Ouakam) One of the more interesting tour operators in Senegal, with plenty of tours to destinations less frequently covered.

Pain de Singe (Map p684; ☎ 824 2484; paindesinge@arc.sn) Absolutely original, this tiny operation runs excellent, eco-oriented tours, including trips to the marine reserve at Bamboung, Casamance and plenty of other off-the-beaten track destinations.

Sahel Découverte Bassari (Map p686; ☎ 842 8751; bassari@bassarisenegal.com, carresahel@sentoo.sn; 7 Rue Delmas) The tours in northern Senegal are particularly good. It caters well for Spanish speakers.

Senegal Tours (Map p686; ☎ 839 9900; fax 823 2644; 5 Place de l'Indépendance) One of the largest operators.

TPA (☎ 644 9491; 957 1256; tpa@sentoo.sn; www.lsenegal.info) A tour operator with a difference. The leading agency for 'bush tourism', with excellent tours around the lesser travelled routes, including trips to its remote *campements* in Lompoul, Simal and Palmarin (Siné-Saloum).

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