

AFRICA · BEACHES · HISTORY · CULTURE · FOOD · WILDLIFE

 Senegal

Senegal makes a rewarding introduction to West Africa: Dakar's live music and seafood grills, Gorée island's sobering slave-trade memorial, Saint-Louis's faded colonial streets on the Senegal River and the mangrove creeks of the Sine-Saloum Delta. In the dry season, Casamance's beaches and the pelicans of Djoudj add enough for a two-week trip.

 Before you go, read the UK government's travel advice for Senegal and entry requirements (visas, passport validity). Last updated by FCDO 15 October 2026.

 CAPITAL Dakar	 CURRENCY West African CFA franc (XOF) £1 ≈ FCFA 781	 LANGUAGE Wolof, French Pulaar, Serer	 BEST TIME Nov–Feb
 DAILY BUDGET £35–£180 ££ Moderate	 PLUGS Type C, D, E, K 230V · adapter needed	 FLIGHT FROM LONDON 8h 30m via Lisbon, Madrid, Casablanca or Paris ~£500–£900 return	 TIME ZONE UTC+0 standard time

Senegal wraps around The Gambia on Africa's westernmost bulge, from the Sahel fringe in the north to the green, rice-growing Casamance in the south. Dakar sits on the Cap-Vert peninsula, and nearby Pointe des Almadies is the westernmost point of mainland Africa. A typical first trip spends a few days in Dakar with a ferry to Gorée, heads north to Saint-Louis and the Djoudj bird sanctuary, then swings south along the Petite Côte to the Sine-Saloum Delta. With more time, take the overnight ferry or a short flight to Ziguinchor and Cap Skirring in Casamance.

Senegalese hospitality, teranga, is a point of national pride, and long greetings and glasses of sweet ataya tea set the pace. Costs surprise many visitors: Dakar is pricey for hotels and imported goods, though street food and shared taxis are cheap. Away from the Petite Côte resorts, tourists are few. It suits music lovers, birdwatchers and travellers wanting West Africa with decent roads and transport. Many are struck by the influence of Sufi brotherhoods such as the Mourides, and by the big-money wrestling (laamb) bouts that fill stadiums.

Top 5 highlights

- 1

HISTORY

Île de Gorée

A car-free island 20 minutes by ferry from Dakar, with ochre colonial houses and bougainvillea; the House of Slaves and its Door of No Return are a powerful memorial, though historians debate Gorée's scale in the trade.
- 2

ARCHITECTURE

Saint-Louis

The former colonial capital spreads across a narrow island in the Senegal River, reached by the iron Faidherbe Bridge; explore its UNESCO-listed balconied houses, the Guet Ndar fishing quarter and, nearby, Djoudj's pelicans and flamingos.

3

NATURE

Sine-Saloum Delta

A UNESCO-listed maze of mangrove channels, shell-mound islands and fishing villages; explore by pirogue from Toubacouta or Ndangane, watching for herons, pelicans and kingfishers, and stay in an eco-lodge.

4

NATURE

Lac Rose (Lake Retba)

A shallow lagoon about 35 km north-east of Dakar whose high salinity and algae can turn it strawberry pink, most vividly in the dry season; salt collectors still work the water by hand.

5

BEACH

Cap Skirring and Casamance

Long, palm-backed Atlantic beaches at the south-western tip, with Jola villages, Enampor's round impluvium house, Mlomp's two-storey mud houses and river trips from Ziguinchor; greener and quieter than the north.

Biggest cities

LARGEST CITY

Dakar

≈ 4 million people

A sprawling Atlantic capital of markets, surf breaks and live mbalax; see the African Renaissance Monument, the IFAN museum and Soumbédioune's fish market at sunset.

2ND LARGEST CITY

Touba

≈ 1.1 million people

Holy city of the Mouride brotherhood, built around a vast Great Mosque; alcohol and tobacco are banned within the city, modest dress is expected, and a local guide helps.

3RD LARGEST CITY

Thiès

≈ 390,000 people

A railway and market town about 70 km east of Dakar, best known for its tapestry workshops; mainly a transport hub on the way inland.

Ranked by urban-area population where available. Figures are rounded estimates, and sources define city limits differently, so rankings of similar-sized cities can vary.

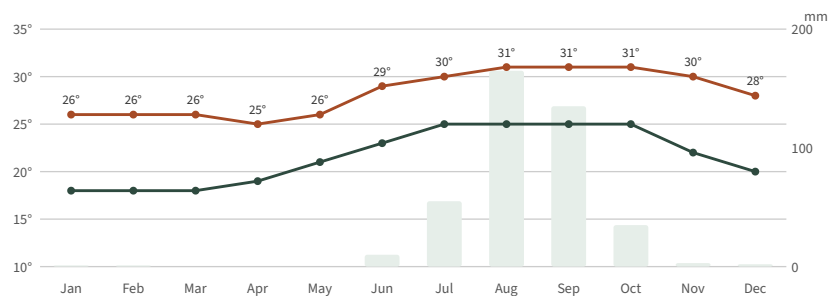
When to go to Senegal

Best time: **Nov–Feb.**



Average climate in Dakar

— High °C
 — Low °C
 ■ Rain (mm)



Festivals & events

Jan, Dec	Abéné Festivalo Several days of Jola drumming, dance and wrestling in the Casamance village of Abéné over New Year, drawing percussionists from across West Africa and Europe.
May–Jun	Saint-Louis Jazz Festival Running since 1993, this festival brings African and international jazz acts to Saint-Louis's squares and stages, usually in late May or early June.
Jul–Aug	Grand Magal of Touba The Mouride pilgrimage marking Cheikh Amadou Bamba's exile draws millions to Touba; it follows the Islamic calendar, currently falling in midsummer and moving about 11 days earlier each year.

How much does Senegal cost?

SHOESTRING £35 per person / day ≈ FCFA 27,328 hostels, street food, buses	MID-RANGE £85 per person / day ≈ FCFA 66,369 3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis	COMFORTABLE £180 per person / day ≈ FCFA 140,545 4-star+, guided trips, private transfers
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Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

Food to try

Thieboudienne

Ceebu jën: fish stuffed with parsley, garlic and chilli, cooked with broken rice, tomato, cassava, carrot and cabbage; UNESCO-listed and best at lunchtime.

Yassa

Chicken or fish marinated in lemon juice and mountains of onion, then slow-cooked into a tangy, mustardy sauce over rice; originally from Casamance.

Mafé

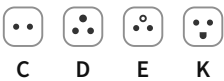
Rich groundnut stew with beef, lamb or chicken and root vegetables, reflecting Senegal's long history as a peanut-growing nation.

Getting around

Sept-place taxis, old estate cars carrying seven passengers, leave from gares routières when full and cover most routes; pay for an extra seat for comfort. Dakar has the TER commuter train, a BRT bus line and ride-hailing apps such as Yango and Heetch. A ferry links Dakar with Ziguinchor a few times a week, domestic flights serve Ziguinchor and Cap Skirring, and frequent boats cross to Gorée.

Practical information

PLUGS & VOLTAGE



230V — bring a UK-to-C/D/E/K adapter

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Ambulance: **15**

Fire: **18**

Police: **17**

Call **123** for the military police, who may be more responsive if you are in the countryside.

Source: FCDO “Getting help”

DIALLING CODE

+221

TIME ZONE

UTC+0 (standard time)

TAP WATER

Varies — bottled or filtered is safer

DRIVING

On the right

TIPPING

Not obligatory; leave about 10% in tourist restaurants, round up for guides and drivers, and agree taxi fares before getting in.

ETIQUETTE

Greet everyone before business with 'salaam aleekum' and ask after their family. Use your right hand to eat and give, dress modestly away from beaches, and respect Touba's alcohol and tobacco ban.

MAIN AIRPORTS

Blaise Diagne International Airport (DSS), Dakar

Visas & entry for Senegal

Shown for a British passport.

No visa needed

You can visit Senegal without a visa for up to 3 months.

You need to show border officials evidence of return or onward travel and proof of your arranged accommodation. If you do not have these, you may be refused entry.

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

Health & vaccinations



See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

Hepatitis A

Tetanus

Typhoid

Yellow fever

SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

Chikungunya

Dengue

Hepatitis B

Measles

Meningococcal disease

Rabies

Tuberculosis

YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

No yellow fever certificate is required to enter. There is a risk of yellow fever in parts of the country — vaccination may be advised.

MALARIA

High risk of malaria

- There is a high risk of malaria in Senegal: antimalarial tablets recommended.

Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

Public holidays in Senegal

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

Sun 1 Nov 2026	All Saints' Day
Fri 25 Dec 2026	Christmas Day
Fri 1 Jan 2027	New Year's Day
Tue 9 Mar 2027	Eid al-Fitr (date may shift)
Mon 29 Mar 2027	Easter Monday
Sun 4 Apr 2027	Independence Day
Sat 1 May 2027	Labour Day
Thu 6 May 2027	Ascension Day
Sun 16 May 2027	Eid al-Adha (date may shift)
Mon 17 May 2027	Eid al-Adha (observed, estimated) · Pentecost Monday (date may shift)
Tue 15 Jun 2027	Ashura (date may shift)
Thu 22 Jul 2027	Grand Magal of Touba (date may shift)
Sat 14 Aug 2027	Prophet's Birthday (date may shift)
Sun 15 Aug 2027	Assumption Day

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

Useful phrases in Wolof

ENGLISH	WOLOF	SAY IT
Hello	Salaam aleekum	<i>sa-LAAM a-LAY-kum</i>
Thank you	Jërējëf	<i>jeh-reh-JEFF</i>
Please	Su la neexee	<i>soo la NEH-kheh</i>
Excuse me	Baal ma	<i>BAAL ma</i>
How much is this?	Ñaata la?	<i>NYAH-ta la</i>

Know before you go

Blaise Diagne airport is around 45 km from central Dakar; allow at least an hour by taxi, and considerably more in rush-hour traffic.

Taxis have no meters: agree the fare before getting in and expect to haggle; checking the price on a ride-hailing app first gives you a fair starting point.

Mobile money services such as Wave and Orange Money are everywhere, but carry cash: ATMs are common in cities but scarce in rural areas and Casamance villages.

Visa, health and safety rules change. Before you book or travel, check the FCDO travel advice (gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) and TravelHealthPro (travelhealthpro.org.uk). Costs are estimates. © 2026 Pick My Trip.