



Never Mind the Mbalax

Senegal

10 days – March 27-April 5 2010

Dakar is one of the music capitals of Africa – renowned for its *mbalax* music, the rhythmic dance style pioneered by Youssou N'Dour; and its hip-hop scene, one of the liveliest in Africa, credited for bringing an end to 40 years of socialist rule in 2000. But it's a city that's hard to negotiate as an outsider. With *Songlines'* help, you can visit the best clubs, witness the latest fashions and marvel at the beautiful old colonial capital of St Louis.

We'll take you to the busy downtown markets of Dakar, the picturesque medina, and on to Gorée island. It's a pleasant trip now, but the history is grim. It's from here that West African slaves were dispatched to the New World.

It's the *sabar* drums that are at the root of *mbalax* music, and we'll go to a workshop for some hands-on experience of traditional drumming. Then, of course, Dakar's nightspots are infamous, including Youssou's Thioassane, Thione Seck's Kilimanjaro, Baobab's Just 4 U and the youthful Yengoulène – but it depends who's in town.

Of course visitors on this trip must understand that musicians may be away on tour and that the music scene changes on a month by month basis. Some things may be impossible to arrange, but usually something surprising turns up to make up for it. If you are prepared to be flexible, you will not be disappointed.

All Songlines Music Travellers will receive an information sheet about the local music, plus recommended recordings and DVDs.

Senegal – 10 days

Itinerary

Day 1 Sat Today we meet our Travel leader in the hotel in Dakar. (Many clients, whether using a flight booked through Songlines Music Travel or booking their own flights, may arrive in the early hours of Sunday morning, and will then meet the Travel Leader at breakfast on day 2).

Day 2 Sun After breakfast a meeting with our Travel Leader will provide an introduction to the days ahead. The rest of the morning is free to rest or take a walk into the bustling streets of the capital. In the afternoon there will be an orientation tour of Dakar to give you a sense of what there is to see. In the evening we'll start to uncover the Dakar music scene.

Day 3 Mon Today we take a ferry to the island of Gorée. A visit to the Slave Museum, a more relaxed stroll along the sandy streets and a break for lunch at one of the many restaurants by the beach next to the jetty. We'll head back to town in time for a few hours in the hotel before setting out for the evening.

Day 4 Tues After breakfast we leave Dakar for a drive of some 200 miles up the Atlantic coast to St Louis – the old French colonial capital of West Africa. With a stop at the Pink Lake en route and an opportunity for a close encounter with baobab trees, we should arrive in St Louis in the late afternoon. After checking into our hotel, there's time for a wander in the narrow streets of this island town before dinner.

Day 5 Wed Today is free to explore more of St Louis, or we can arrange an optional trip to a World Heritage site, the National Park of the Birds of Djoudj, home to a huge range of species including pelicans and flamingoes where a *pirogue* (wooden fishing boat) ride along the waterways will allow glimpses of the birdlife. In the evening we continue our musical exploration of St Louis.

Day 6 Thurs This morning we have arranged a walking tour of the historic heart of the city. St Louis has a 19th century feel about it and has been compared, with its decaying colonial charm, to Bahia in Brazil, Havana in Cuba and the French quarter of New Orleans. Once the capital of Senegal, it lost the role at independence, but in 2000 was declared a UNESCO World Heritage site. In the afternoon we drive back to Dakar.

Day 7-9 Fri-Sun Friday and Saturday are the two best nights of the music week in Dakar so we aim to spend the entire weekend in the capital. But as well as the music, these three days are free for you to explore the markets of Dakar, or to head for the beaches out of the city at Ngor. You might like to see the fabric weavers or get some clothes made up by a local tailor, wander into a Senegalese artist's studio or browse the CD and cassette markets – the choice is yours. In the evenings there's plenty of music available and your travel Leader will be seeking out the best sounds to take you through the night.

Day 10 Mon After breakfast our tour ends and it's time to head for the airport and the flight home, or to continue our travels in Senegal. Many flights to Europe depart in the middle of the night so you may actually be leaving Dakar in the early hours, before breakfast.

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Tour costs

We have designed these tours to give you the option of taking up an all-inclusive package which includes your air seats, or the option of making your own way there and then meeting up with the rest of your party at the first hotel.

Senegal 10-day trip

(Ex-Dakar) March 27-April 5, 2010

Tour Price £995 per person

Tour includes:

- nine nights accommodation in Senegal on a bed and breakfast basis
- transfers between Dakar and St Louis
- the excursions as described in the itinerary
- services of our Songlines Travel Leader

Items not included: Single room supplement, travel insurance, visas, all meals with the exception of breakfast, gratuities and any items of a personal nature.

Single supplement: £299 per person

Flights are available from London from £536 per person. You may book these yourself or we can book these for you. Transfers from and to Dakar airport are included with flights purchased through Songlines Music Travel.

To reserve your place

Please read the booking conditions on the website and contact the reservations office on:

+44 (0)20 8505 2582
 or email:
songlines@thegroupscompany.com