



Tinariwen performing at the Festival on the Niger, 2007

DAMIAN RAFFERTY - WWW.FUGLOBALMUSIC.COM

Bamako, Ségou and the Festival on the Niger

Mali 10 days – January 30-February 8 2010 (ex-London)

Mali 9 days – January 31-February 8 2010 (ex-Bamako)

Economically Mali may be one of the poorest countries in Africa, but musically it's one of the richest on earth. The names of Mali's biggest stars – Ali Farka Touré, Salif Keita, Oumou Sangaré and the Rail Band – will be familiar to anyone with an interest in African music. On this trip we'll visit the capital Bamako and further along the Niger, the charming town of Ségou as it celebrates the Festival on the Niger, one of the best festivals in West Africa.

Bamako has a rich music scene – and you'll get a good flavour of the clubs and nightlife on this trip, as well as a taste of music in rural West Africa, which is a fantastic experience in itself. Mali's rich rural traditions are the source from which the popular urban scene in the capital draws. In Bamako, there are some amazing clubs, but the best music isn't always easy to find – you need to know where to go and when.

We can also visit *djembe* and *kora* makers – some of the best in West Africa – to see the skills that go into

making the instruments. We'll hear great singers and instrumentalists on the distinctive instruments of Malian music – the *kora* (a sublime creation of gourd, cow-skin and fishing line), *balafon* (traditional xylophone) and *djembe* drum. This is a privileged music opportunity and one that no fan of African music should miss.

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.

Mali & Festival on the Niger – 10 days

Itinerary

Day 1 Sat For those flying out of the UK, we depart London in the afternoon for an overnight flight to Bamako arriving in the early hours of the Sunday morning.

Day 2 Sun This morning our Songlines Music Travel leader will be meeting you for a late breakfast. This is when the trip will start for those joining us in Bamako. The morning is free to have a rest, a wander or a swim. After a break for lunch a city tour will help us get our bearings. In the evening, after dinner, we head for the clubs to enjoy Sunday night in Bamako.

Day 3 Mon A day in Bamako. In the morning we can explore the central market and after a break for lunch we visit Toumani Diabaté's *kora* workshop and a place where they make *djembe* drums – essential in West African music.

Day 4 Tues Today we drive out of Bamako. After an hour or so, we reach Sibi, an important location in the history of the Mande Empire. Against a backdrop of spectacular rock formations we learn about the history of Sunjata Keita's Mandé Empire in the 13th century. The story of the Koumanjan battle will be told by one of our 'griot' friends – and it is still the inspiration for much of today's music. We'll have time to get some lunch in Sibi. We return to Bamako for dinner in the evening.

Day 5 Wed After breakfast we visit the National Museum of Mali and the Modern Arts Conservatory. In the afternoon we'll have a chance to learn first-hand about Mali and its music through a workshop, seminar or hands-on experience.

Day 6 Thurs Today we set off up-country to Ségou, on the banks of the Niger. It's the ancestral home of the great *ngoni* player Bassekou Kouyaté. After a break for lunch there'll be time to take an optional boat trip on the Niger to a pottery making village and visit Old Ségou where Biton Coulibaly founded the town in the 17th century.

Days 7-8 Fri-Sat We have two days in Ségou to enjoy the Festival on the Niger, fast becoming one of the most exciting events on the West African music scene. Many of Mali's top artists perform here and there's also an emphasis on the regional puppet traditions and *bogolan* cloth-making and handicrafts. We can have a go at the bogolan mud-cloth technique for ourselves. It's a thrilling experience mixing with the locals and enjoying this very special atmosphere in Ségou.

Day 9 Sun We drive back to Bamako for a final night in the city. If you are returning to the UK or Europe, you'll check into the hotel and, if you wish, we can probably catch more music in Bamako in the evening.

Day 10 Mon The tour ends today and with many flights to Europe leaving in the early hours of the morning, it's probably a very early transfer to the airport.

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



Toumani Diabaté
with a row of koras

Pricing details

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 to Mali and then meeting up with the rest of the party at the hotel in Bamako.

Mali 9-day trip (ex-Bamako)

January 31-February 8 2010

Tour Price £1,299 per person

Tour includes:

- 9 nights twin-share accommodation on a bed and breakfast basis
- Entry to selected music events
- Tickets to the Festival on the Niger
- The services of your Songlines Music Travel leader
- All sightseeing and transfers as listed

Mali 10-day trip (ex-London)

January 30-February 8 2010

Flights are available from London, from £630 per person. You can book these yourself or we can book them for you. Transfers from and to the airport in Bamako are included with flights booked through Songlines Music Travel.

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: £345 per person

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