



Senegal

📍 221 / POP 14.5 MILLION

Includes ➔

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Why Go?

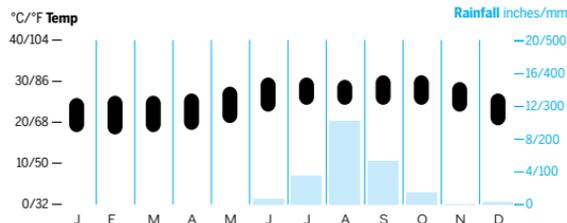
Though it's one of West Africa's most stable countries, Senegal is far from dull. Perched on the tip of a peninsula, Dakar, the capital, is a dizzying, street-hustler-rich introduction to the country: elegance meets chaos, snarling traffic, vibrant markets and glittering nightlife, while nearby Île de Gorée and the beaches of Yoff and N'Gor tap to slow, lazy beats.

In northern Senegal, the enigmatic capital of Saint-Louis, a Unesco World Heritage Site, tempts with colonial architecture and proximity to scenic national parks. Along the Petite Côte and Cap Skirring, wide strips of beaches beckon and the wide deltas of the Casamance invite mesmerising boat journeys amid astounding biodiversity, including hundreds of bird species.

Whether you want to mingle with the trendsetters of urban Africa or be alone with your thoughts and the sounds of nature, you'll find your place in Senegal.

When to Go

Dakar



Nov–Feb Senegal's main tourist season is dry and cool.

Dec & Mar–Jun When most music festivals take place, including the Saint-Louis Jazz Festival.

Jul–late Sep Rainy, humid season; some hotels close, others reduce prices by up to 40%.

DAKAR

POP 1.2 MILLION

Dakar is a city of extremes, where horse-cart drivers chug over swish highways and gleaming SUVs squeeze through tiny sand roads; where elegant ladies dig skinny heels into dusty walkways and suit-clad businessmen kneel down for prayer in the middle of the street. Once a tiny settlement in the south of the Cap Vert peninsula, Dakar now spreads almost across its entire triangle, and keeps growing.

For the traveller, there's much to discover, from peaceful islands just off-shore to vertiginous nightlife dancing to mbalax beats. You can spend your days browsing frenetic markets and taking in the sights of bustling downtown, followed by sunset drinks overlooking the crashing waves. At once both intimidating and deeply alluring, Dakar is a fascinating introduction to Senegal.

Sights

★ Île de N'Gor

ISLAND

(Map p444) For a quick escape from the frenetic streets of Dakar, head to peaceful Île de N'Gor, a tiny island just off Dakar's north shore. It has a few calm beaches on the bay side, and some legendary surf on the northern coastline. Most visitors just come for the day, to relax on the beaches, stroll the sandy lanes of the village and have lunch in one of the waterside eateries, but there are several appealing guesthouses here as well.

★ Musée Théodore Monod

MUSEUM

(Musée IFAN; Map p442; ☎ 33 823 9268; Pl de Soweto, Plateau; adult/child CFA5000/1000; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Sun) This is one of Senegal's best museums. Exhibitions delve into African art and culture with over 9000 objects on display. Lively displays of masks and traditional dress from across the region (including Mali, Guinea-Bissau, Benin and Nigeria) give an excellent overview of styles without bombarding you with more than you can take in.

Village des Arts

ARTS CENTRE

(Map p444; ☎ 33 835 7160; Rte de Yoff; ☎ 9.30am-7pm) **FREE** An arts tour around Dakar is simply not complete without a visit to this famous art complex, where some of Senegal's most promising and established painters, sculptors and multimedia artists create, shape and display their works in individual studios scattered around a large garden

space. There's also an on-site gallery, which exhibits works by artists both home-grown and from abroad.

Médina

AREA

(Map p440) A bustling popular *quartier* with tiny tailor's shops, a busy **Marché Tilène** (Map p440; Ave Blaise Diagne; ☎ 8am-4pm) and streets brimming with life, the Médina was built as a township for the local populace by the French during colonial days. It's the birthplace of Senegalese superstar and current minister of culture Youssou N'Dour. Besides being a very real neighbourhood, where creative ideas and new trends grow between crammed, makeshift homes, it's also home to Dakar's 1664 **Grande Mosquée**, impressive for its sheer size and landmark minaret.

Activities

Dakar's best beaches are found in the north of the peninsula. **Plage de N'Gor** (Map p444) is often crowded; if so, you're better off catching the frequent pirogues (CFA500) to Île de N'Gor, which has two small beaches.

Dakar has decent waves and a growing surf scene. In Yoff, **Plage de Virage** (Map p444; Yoff) is good; **Plage de Yoff** (Map p444) is rubbish-strewn in parts but waves are strong enough for surfing. Malika Surf Camp (p441), **École Surf Attitude** (Map p444; ☎ 77 034 3434; www.senegalsurf.com; Plage des Viviers, Corniche des Almadies; 2hr surf class CFA15,000, 10-class package CFA120,000) and **N'Gor Island Surf Camp** (Map p444; ☎ 77 336 9150; www.gosurf.dk; dm/s/d with half-board CFA25,000/50,000/80,000; ☎ ☎) can point out additional surf spots; they also run courses and hire out boards.

Nautilus Diving

DIVING

(Map p444; ☎ 77 637 1422; www.nautilus-diving.com; N'Gor; discovery dives CFA28,000, two dives CFA53,000; ☎ 9am-7pm Tue-Sun) Operating out of the Maison Abaka (p442), this professional, French-run outfit offers diving to suit all levels (and courses for those who want to learn). The friendly owners, Hilda and Philippe, also speak English (and some Spanish).

Tours

Andaando (☎ 77 793 9432; www.andaando.com; Sicap Mbaou 199, Thiaroye) A recommended agency with trips to Saint-Louis, the desert of Lampou, the Casamance