

Burkina Faso

226 / POP 18.5 MILLION

Includes ➔

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Best Places to Eat

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Best Places to Sleep

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Why Go?

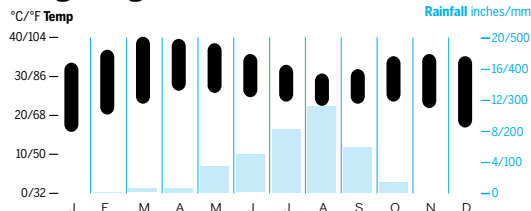
Burkina should be on everyone's travel list – it may not have many big-ticket attractions, but the warmth of its welcome and the friendliness of the Burkinabé people is unique. Wherever you go you'll be greeted with a memorable *bonne arrivée* ('welcome') and a handshake.

There's also the lively cultural scene. The capital, Ouagadougou, and Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina's two largest and gloriously named cities, are famous for their musical traditions and beautiful handicrafts. Throw in Fespaco, Africa's premier film festival (held in Ouaga every odd-numbered year), and there's enough to engage your mind and senses for a couple of weeks or so.

Tourism infrastructure is fairly limited, but the true gems of Burkina Faso are in the remoter areas, outside of the cities: the enchanting beauty of the landscapes – from rolling savannah and surprising geology to the mesmerising painted houses at Tiébélé – and the unique culture and genuine hospitality of the Burkinabé.

When to Go

Ouagadougou



Jan–Mar Perfect wildlife-viewing time; dusty harmattan winds can produce hazy skies.

Apr–Sep Hot season (April to May) best avoided; rainy season (June to September) difficult for transport.

Oct–Dec A lovely time of year, with green landscapes and pleasant temperatures.

OUAGADOUGOU

POP 1.4 MILLION

Ouaga, as it's affectionately dubbed, is a thriving, eclectic arts hub, with dance and concert venues, live bands, theatre companies, a busy festival schedule and beautiful handicrafts. Its streets are a busy, dusty mix of concrete and red roads, thousands of mopeds, street-peddlers and general, exuberant life that more than makes up for the capital's lack of major sights.

Sights



Moro-Naba Palace

PALACE

(Ave Moro-Naba) **FREE** On Fridays at 7am the Moro-Naba of Ouagadougou – emperor of the Mossi and the most powerful traditional chief in Burkina Faso – presides over the **Moro-Naba Ceremony** at the palace. It's a formal ritual that lasts only about 15 minutes. Travellers are welcome to attend, but photos are not permitted.


National Museum

MUSEUM

( 25 39 19 34; Blvd Charles de Gaulle; CFA1000;  9am-12.30pm & 3-5.30pm Tue-Sat) The national museum, almost 4km east of the city centre, has displays of the various masks, ancestral statues and traditional costumes of Burkina Faso's major ethnic groups.

Musée de la Musique


MUSEUM

(Ave d'Oubritenga; CFA1000;  9am-4pm Tue-Sat, by appt Sun) You don't need to be into music to enjoy this excellent museum: the Burkinabé live and breathe music and a visit to the museum serves as a great introduction to Burkinabé culture. The new building is a traditional adobe structure that gives the place a special atmosphere in which to soak up local music history.

Festivals & Events

★ Fespaco

FILM

(Festival Pan-Africain du Cinéma de Ouagadougou; www.fespaco.bf;  Feb-Mar) Going strong since 1969, this world-renowned biennial festival (held in odd-numbered years) sees African films competing for the prestigious Étalon d'Or de Yennenga – Fespaco's equivalent of the Oscars.

Jazz à Ouaga

MUSIC

(www.jazz-ouaga.org;  Apr-May) A well-established music festival bringing out the Afrobeat, soul and blues influence in jazz.

SIAO

ART

(Salon International de l'Artisanat de Ouagadougou; www.siao.bf; Blvd des Tensoba;  Oct) Biennial

trade fair (held in even-numbered years) of reference for the arts and crafts sector in Africa – and a godsend for gem-hunting visitors.

Sleeping

★ Les Jardins de Koulouba

GUESTHOUSE \$

( 25 30 25 81; www.jardins-koulouba.fr; r with air-con CFA25,000, with fan & without bathroom CFA15,000;   ) A wonderfully decorated patio and a lush tropical garden, African art, spacious rooms, a fantastic location, a pool and a relaxed vibe make this lovely guesthouse one of the best in Ouaga.




★ Le Pavillon Vert

HOSTEL \$

( 25 31 06 11; www.hotel-pavillonvert.com; Ave de la Liberté; s/d with fan CFA12,500/13,500, with air-con CFA17,000/18,000, with fan & without bathroom CFA8000/8500;  ) The stalwart 'PV' is the best backpackers' spot in Ouaga. It has competitive prices, a lively bar and restaurant, a gorgeous plant-filled garden and an assortment of well-kept rooms for all budgets. It's run by the same management as the excellent Couleurs d'Afrique (p62) travel agency and the **Hotel de la Liberté** ( 25 33 23 63; www.hotel-liberte.com; Avenue de la Liberté; s/d CFA17,500/20,000;  ).

Villa Yiri Suma

GUESTHOUSE \$

( 25 30 54 82; www.yirisuma.com; 428 Ave du Petit Maurice Yameogo; d CFA21,000-28,000;  ) Yiri Suma is all about art: Lucien, the owner, is passionate about African art and likes nothing better than to share his passion with guests via displaying contemporary Burkinabé works in the courtyard. The villa regularly houses exhibitions and cultural events, and the five spotless rooms enjoy their own contemporary decor and unique works.

Chez Giuliana

GUESTHOUSE \$

( 25 36 33 97; www.chezgiuliana.com; Rue Lamine Gueye, Quartier 1200 Logements; s/d without bathroom CFA16,000/20,000, with bathroom CFA20,000/24,000;  ) This bustling Italian guesthouse is a perennial favourite among aid workers: the welcome is as colourful as the rooms and the roof terrace is simply awesome for sundowners. It's about 3km outside the centre, near the Maternité Sainte Camille hospital. Rates include breakfast.

Auberge Le Karité Bleu

B&B \$\$

( 25 36 90 46; www.karitebleu.com; 214 Blvd de l'Onatel, Zone du Bois; d CFA28,000-47,000;  ) In a residential neighbourhood, this adorable B&B offers eight spiffy rooms decorated