

Senegal

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



Overview

Senegal is West Africa's most accessible introduction: stable, welcoming, and an easy short flight from Europe. The country has a culture of hospitality known locally as teranga, and visitors notice it everywhere, from Dakar's markets to small Casamance villages. The landscape ranges from Sahel-edge dunes near Lompoul to the mangrove channels of the Saloum Delta and the greenery of Casamance in the south.

The country's history is closely tied to its coastline. Island of Gorée sits just offshore from Dakar as a UNESCO World Heritage memorial to the transatlantic slave trade. The capital also carries the legacy of *Léopold Sédar Senghor*, Senegal's first president and a founding poet of the Négritude literary movement. He led the country to independence from France in 1960. Senegal suits travelers who want an unpolished West African trip, strong on culture, wildlife, and music. Tourist infrastructure is lighter outside Dakar and the coastal resorts.

Money & payments

Currency

CURRENCY	1 XOF	1 XOF
CFA	**0.001524 EUR**	**0.00168 USD**
XOF	1 EUR = 655.96 XOF	1 USD = 595.18 XOF

Cards accepted in major venues

The CFA franc is mainly a cash currency outside Dakar's hotels and larger restaurants, which do take cards. Carry cash for markets, shared taxis, smaller guesthouses, and rural regions, including Casamance. ATMs are common in Dakar, Saint-Louis, and other regional capitals. They are scarce in small towns, so withdraw money before heading to places like the Saloum Delta or Niokolo-Koba.

Typical costs

Rough prices in touristic areas, per person

Hotel (double room, per night) mid-range hotel, double room	15,000 – 40,000 CFA €23 – €61
Dinner (mid-range restaurant) sit-down restaurant, per person	5,000 – 12,000 CFA €8 – €18
Inexpensive meal	1,500 – 3,000 CFA €2 – €5
Local beer	1,000 – 2,000 CFA €2 – €3
Coffee	500 – 1,500 CFA €1 – €2
Water	300 – 500 CFA €0 – €1
Transit ticket	200 – 500 CFA €0 – €1
Taxi (per km) fares are usually negotiated, not metered	300 – 500 CFA €0 – €1

Tipping

Restaurant round up or 5-10%	Optional
Hotel small note for porters/housekeeping	Optional
Taxi round up	Optional
Tour guide roughly 2000-5000 XOF per day	Expected
Bar	Not customary

A small tip is welcome almost everywhere but rarely demanded. Round up taxi fares rather than calculating a percentage. In restaurants, check whether a service charge is already on the bill before adding more. Guides on wildlife or cultural tours generally expect a tip, since it is a normal part of their income. Hotel porters and housekeeping staff appreciate small notes.

Electricity

Sockets follow the European two-pin standard, so most travelers from continental Europe need no adapter.

ELECTRICITY



Type C

ELECTRICITY



Type E

ELECTRICITY



Type K

230 V · 50 Hz

Language

French is the official language and the one used in signage, government, and most tourist-facing business. Wolof is the country's true lingua franca. Most Senegalese speak it as a first or second language, regardless of ethnicity, and a few Wolof words are appreciated by locals. English is limited outside upscale hotels and tour operators in Dakar and the main resort areas. Some French is genuinely useful once outside the capital.

Useful phrases

	FR
Hello	Bonjour
Thank you	Merci
Please	S'il vous plaît
Yes	Oui
No	Non
Goodbye	Au revoir
Excuse me	Excusez-moi
Sorry	Pardon
How much?	Combien ça coûte
Where is...?	Où est
Help	Au secours
Cheers	Santé

WO

Hello	Nanga def NAHN-ga def
Thank you	Jërejëf jeh-reh-JEF
Yes	Waaw wow
No	Déedéet day-DAYT
Goodbye	Ba beneen ba beh-NEEN

Staying connected

Prepaid SIM cards from Orange, Free, or Expresso are inexpensive and widely available at the airport and in any town. Registration with a passport is required at purchase, so bring identification when signing up. Coverage is strong along the coast and in regional capitals, and weaker in remote parts of Casamance and around Niokolo-Koba National Park.

Safety & emergencies

Senegal is one of West Africa's more stable and visited countries, and most trips pass without incident. The most common issues for tourists are petty theft and pickpocketing in crowded markets and bus stations. Persistent unofficial guides or vendors are also common in tourist areas; a firm, polite decline usually works. Take more care after dark in parts of central Dakar. Check current government travel advice for the Casamance region and areas near the borders with Mali and Mauritania before planning a trip there, since conditions can change.

Emergency numbers

POLICE
17

FIRE BRIGADE
18

Health

Tap water is not considered safe for travelers to drink. Stick to bottled or treated water, including for ice in smaller establishments. Pharmacies, marked with a green cross, are common in cities and regional towns and can handle minor ailments. Stock and opening hours are less reliable in rural areas.

Malaria risk exists across the country, including Dakar. Prophylaxis and mosquito precautions are generally recommended; discuss options with a travel clinic before departure. A yellow fever vaccination certificate can be required for entry, depending on your travel history, so check current requirements before you fly. Routine vaccinations should be up to date. A doctor can advise on typhoid and hepatitis A given local food and water conditions.

Visas & entry

Entry requirements depend heavily on nationality. Travelers from the EU, UK, US, and a number of other countries can enter Senegal without a visa for short tourist stays. Other nationalities need to arrange a visa in advance or on arrival. A passport valid for several months beyond your travel dates is standard practice, and proof of onward travel is occasionally requested.

> Visa and entry requirements change frequently. Verify current requirements with the official immigration authority or your country's embassy before travel.

Etiquette

Greetings matter in Senegal. Take time for a proper hello and a few pleasantries before getting to business, even in a shop or taxi. Dress modestly when visiting mosques such as Great Mosque of Touba or the Grand Mosque of Dakar: cover shoulders and knees, and women may be asked to cover their hair. Remove shoes before entering prayer areas.

Ask before photographing people, especially in villages and markets. A polite request is usually met warmly, but photographing without asking can cause real offense. Bargaining is expected in markets and with informal vendors, but not in shops with marked prices. During Ramadan, be considerate about eating or drinking in public during daylight hours, particularly outside tourist hotels.

Holidays & opening hours

Public holidays, especially Islamic ones tied to the lunar calendar, can close shops, banks, and government offices with little notice. Transport gets busy around major religious dates. The Grand Magal of Touba is an annual pilgrimage to Great Mosque of Touba that draws millions of visitors. It is not a public holiday everywhere, but it still disrupts travel across the country.

Public holidays

Jan 1	New Year's Day
Apr 4	Independence Day
May 1	Labour Day
Aug 15	Assumption Day
Nov 1	All Saints' Day
Dec 25	Christmas Day
movable — May	Ascension Day
movable — Mar/Apr	Easter Monday
movable — May/Jun	Whit Monday

Most shops and markets slow down on Friday around midday prayer time, and many businesses close on Sunday. Expect a slower pace during Ramadan, with shorter working hours and some restaurants closed during the day.

Getting around

- **By air**: Blaise Diagne International Airport (AIBD) near Dakar is the main international gateway; domestic flights are limited, so most inter-city travel is by road.
- **By car rapide / bus**: Colorful shared minibuses (car rapide) and larger intercity buses connect towns cheaply. They have no fixed timetable and leave when full. Comfortable coach operators run the busier routes between Dakar and regional capitals.
- **By shared taxi**: Shared seven-seater taxis, called sept-place, are the standard way to cover longer distances between towns. They depart from designated garages once full; agree the fare before boarding.
- **By train**: The Dakar TER commuter line covers greater Dakar and the airport corridor efficiently. It is not a long-distance option elsewhere in the country.
- **By ferry**: A short ferry crossing links central Dakar to Island of Gorée, a popular half-day trip.

Driving

- **Speed limits**: enforcement is inconsistent, so drive to conditions rather than the posted limit.
- **Key rules**: road surfaces and lighting vary widely outside main routes. Livestock, pedestrians, and slow-moving vehicles are common hazards, especially after dark. Avoid night driving outside cities where possible.
- **Tolls**: the Dakar-Diamniadio-AIBD expressway is a pay-per-use toll road with staffed booths, paid in cash. Most other roads have no toll.
- **Parking**: informal attendants, called gardiens, watch parked cars for a small tip in most towns. This is normal practice, not a scam.
- **Fuel**: stations are staffed, not self-service, and accept cash more reliably than cards outside Dakar.

URBAN	RURAL	MOTORWAY
50 km/h	90 km/h	110 km/h

PETROL	DIESEL
Essence, Super	Gasoil

Drive on the right

No motorway vignette needed

The Dakar-Diamniadio-AIBD expressway charges a per-use toll at staffed booths, paid in cash (CFA francs). Most other roads have no toll.

Food & drink

Senegalese food centers on rice, fish, and slow-cooked sauces, eaten together from a shared platter for lunch, the main meal of the day. **Thieboudienne** is considered the national dish: rice cooked in a rich tomato and fish stock with vegetables. Yassa (chicken or fish marinated in onion and lemon) and mafé (meat in a peanut sauce) are two more everyday favorites. Breakfast is often simple. Bread with café Touba, a spiced coffee flavored with grains of selim, is sold from street stalls everywhere.

Street food includes fataya (fried meat or fish pastries) and grilled skewers. Thiakry, a sweetened millet couscous with yogurt, is a common dessert. To drink, look out for bissap (hibiscus juice), bouye (baobab fruit juice), and ginger juice, all sold cold from roadside stands. Attaya, a strong, sweet green tea poured in three ceremonial rounds, is a social ritual worth joining if offered. It is a genuine mark of hospitality, not a show for tourists.

What to eat & drink

BREAKFAST

Café Touba
Spiced coffee flavored with grains of selim, sold from street stalls.

SNACKS & STREET FOOD

Fataya
Fried pastry filled with spiced meat or fish.

SWEETS & DESSERTS

Thiakry
Sweetened millet couscous mixed with yogurt.

DRINKS

Bissap
Cold hibiscus flower juice, usually sweetened.

Bouye
Juice made from baobab fruit pulp.

Attaya
Strong, sweet green tea, traditionally poured and shared in three rounds.

SIGNATURE DISHES

Thieboudienne · Ceebu jën
Senegal's national dish: rice cooked in a tomato and fish stock with vegetables.

Yassa
Chicken or fish marinated and cooked in onion and lemon sauce.

Mafé
Meat stewed in a rich peanut sauce, served with rice.

Senegal – Plan Your Trip
Turn the places from this guide into a real itinerary, with smart routing, time estimates, and everything you need for a perfect trip.
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Where to explore

Dakar is the natural starting point: a busy coastal capital with the African Renaissance Monument, the Grand Mosque of Dakar, the Our Lady of Victories Cathedral, Dakar, and the Théodore Monod African Art Museum, plus a short ferry crossing to Island of Gorée.

Along the coast north and west of the capital are the pink, salt-crusted waters of Lake Retba and the Sahara-like dunes of Lompoul desert. The Thiès Region holds Senegal's main beach resorts around Saly and M'bour, plus wildlife watching at Réserve de Bandia.

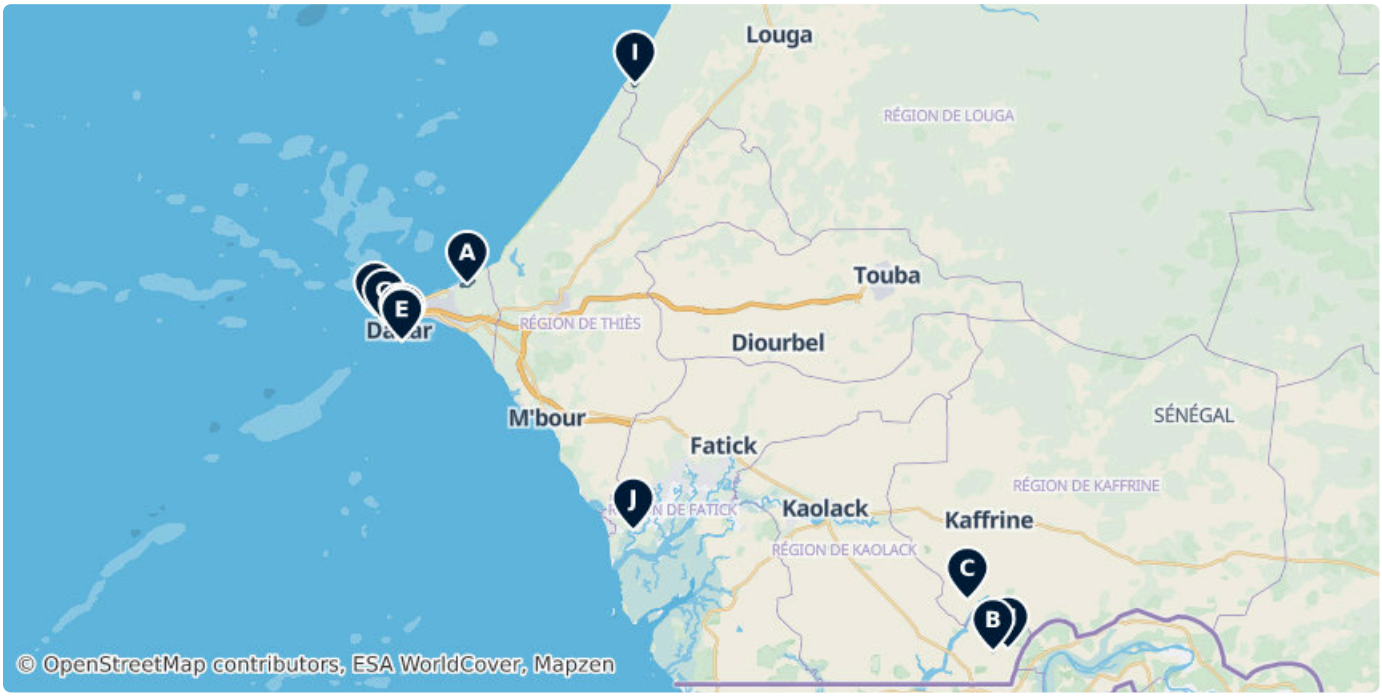
Saint-Louis is a former colonial capital on the Atlantic coast. Its old town sits on a narrow island in the Senegal River. It is also the gateway to Parc National des oiseaux du Djoudj, one of the world's most important bird sanctuaries. Inland, the Sufi holy city of Touba is home to Great Mosque of Touba and draws pilgrims from across West Africa.

Further south, Kaolack is a base for exploring the mangrove channels and fishing villages of the Saloum Delta. Ziguinchor opens up Casamance, a lush, distinct region south of Gambia known for its Diola culture and slower pace of life.

In the southeast, Tambacounda and Kédougou Region are the main access points for Niokolo-Koba National Park, Senegal's premier wildlife reserve and a UNESCO World Heritage Site, along with waterfalls and hiking in the hills around Kédougou.

Senegal's Absolute Essentials

Senegal offers a diverse landscape ranging from the pink, saline waters of Lake Retba to the orange dunes of the Lompoul Desert. This selection features the architectural landmarks of Dakar, including the Grand Mosque and the African Renaissance Monument, alongside UNESCO-listed archaeological sites like the Sine Ngayène stone circles. Visitors can explore West African art at the Théodore Monod Museum or navigate the westernmost point of the continent at the Cap-Vert peninsula.





A Lake Retba

Lake Retba, also known as Lac Rose, lies north of the Cap Vert peninsula in Senegal, some 35 km north-east of the capital, Dakar, in...

Senegal (14.84078, -17.22756)

B Sine Ngayène

A UNESCO World Heritage site comprising 52 stone circles and over 1,000 megaliths. These laterite formations date back as far as the 3rd century BC and mark ancient burial grounds and ceremonial sites.

Senegal (13.69530, -15.53538)

C Cercles de pierres de Wanar

Part of the Senegambian stone circles, this archaeological site features unique bifid stones. Excavations reveal complex funerary rites and burials dating between the 11th and 12th centuries.

Senegal (13.85641, -15.61769)



D Our Lady of Victories Cathedral, Dakar

The Our Lady of Victories Cathedral or Cathedral of Dakar, is a religious building that serves as the Catholic cathedral in the city of...

99341 Dakar (14.66537, -17.43763)



E Théodore Monod African Art Museum

The Théodore Monod African Art Museum in Dakar, Senegal is one of the oldest art museums in West Africa.

Avenue Nelson Mandela, Dakar, Senegal (14.66357, -17.43812)

Tu–Su 09:00–17:00

musee-monod.sn, +221338239268



F Grand Mosque of Dakar

The Dakar Grand Mosque is one of the most important religious buildings in Dakar, Senegal. It is situated on Allée Pape Gueye Fall.

(Unnamed Road), Dakar, Senegal (14.67813, -17.44256)



G African Renaissance Monument

The African Renaissance Monument is a 49 m tall bronze statue located on top of one of the twin hills known as Collines des Mamelles,...

Dakar, Senegal (14.72213, -17.49496)

H Senegambian stone circles

The Senegambian stone circles lie in The Gambia north of Janjanbureh and in central Senegal.

Senegal (13.70295, -15.48755)



I Lompoul desert

The Lompoul desert is a small desert located 145 km south of Saint-Louis, Senegal.

Senegal (15.46242, -16.68788)

J Îles du Saloum Découverte

Information center for exploring the Saloum Delta, a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve characterized by mangrove forests, salt flats, and diverse bird species.

(Unnamed Road), Senegal (14.07342, -16.69348)

+221774592584

K Dakar

Main ferry terminal providing transport links between mainland Dakar and Gorée Island.

(14.67447, -17.43019)



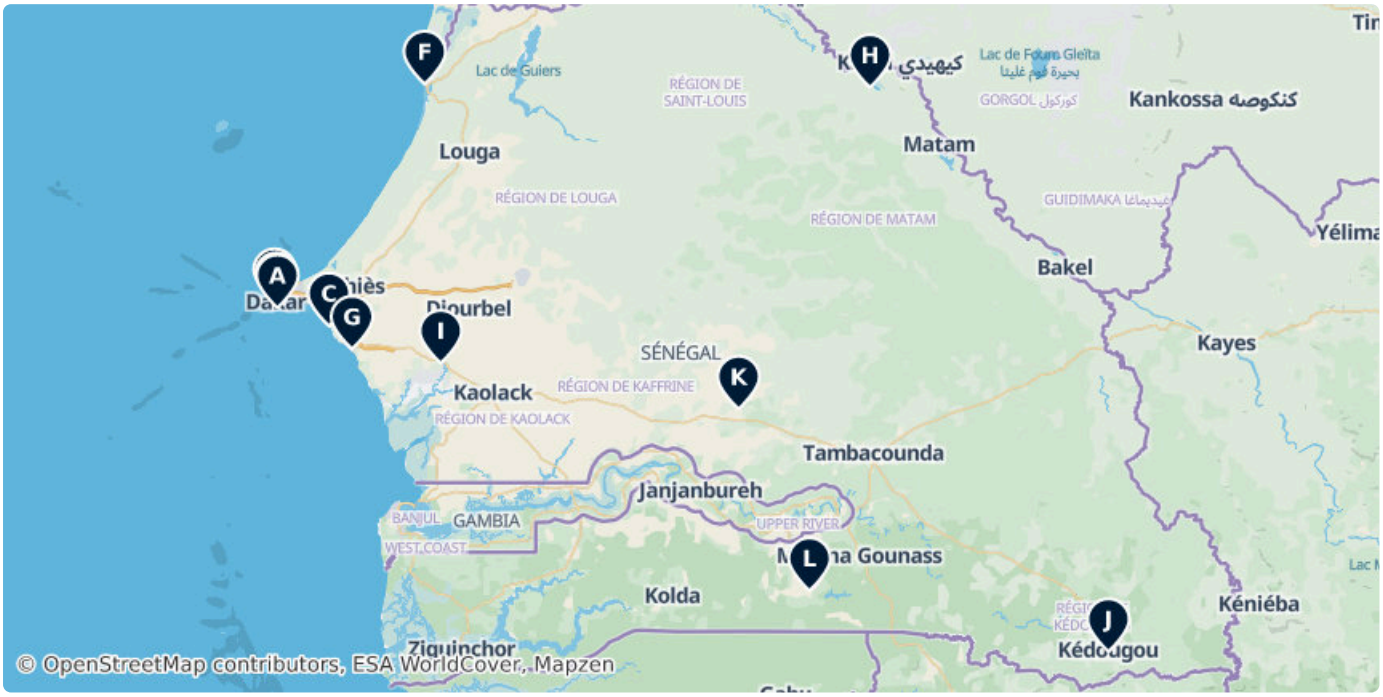
L Cap-Vert

Cap-Vert, or the Cape Verde Peninsula, is a peninsula in Senegal and the westernmost point of the continent of Africa and of the Afro...

(Unnamed Road), Dakar, Senegal (14.74537, -17.52384)

Senegal's Spiritual Landmarks

Senegal’s spiritual landscape is defined by a harmonious blend of Islamic and Christian traditions. This collection features architectural landmarks ranging from the Moroccan-inspired Grand Mosque of Dakar to the Art Deco style of the Dakar Cathedral. It includes the national pilgrimage site at Popenguine, consecrated by Pope John Paul II, and historic mosques in Saint-Louis and Podor that showcase regional Sudanese and colonial influences. These sites serve as vital centers for communal prayer and major religious events like the annual Pentecost pilgrimage.





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C Basilique Notre-Dame de la Délivrance de Popenguine

Consecrated by Pope John Paul II in 1992, this minor basilica is a central site for Senegal's national Catholic pilgrimage.

(Unnamed Road), Popenguine, Senegal (14.55468, -17.11152)

D Mosquée Grand-Dakar

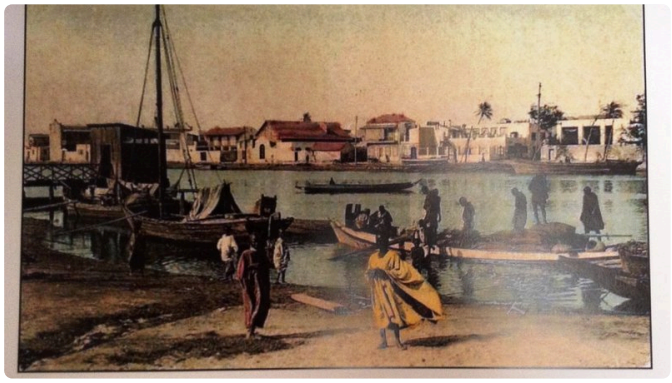
A significant neighborhood mosque serving the community in the Grand Dakar district.

Rue GD 62, Dakar, Senegal (14.70289, -17.45585)

E Sanctuaire Marial de Popenguine

A Marian shrine founded in 1888 that hosts an annual Pentecost pilgrimage, drawing thousands of devotees to the coastal village of Popenguine.

(Unnamed Road), Popenguine, Senegal (14.55486, -17.11035)



F École primaire Émile Sarr

A public primary school in the North district of Saint-Louis with historical ties to the local community.

(16.02830, -16.50582)

G Grande Mosquée

A central place of worship for the Muslim community in the coastal city of M'bour.

(Unnamed Road), Mbour, Senegal (14.41251, -16.96576)

H Grande Mosquée

A mosque in the historic river town of Podor, reflecting the traditional Islamic architectural styles of northern Senegal.

Agnam Goli, Senegal (16.00789, -13.69046)

I Sainte Jeanne d'Arc

A Catholic place of worship serving the Christian community in the Fatick region.

(Unnamed Road), Fatick, Senegal (14.32646, -16.40432)

J Eglise Catholique de Kédougou

A Catholic church and spiritual center for the community in the southeastern region of Kédougou.

(Unnamed Road), Kedougou, Senegal (12.55443, -12.18284)

K Mosquée Fass Gounass

A Sunni mosque located in the Kaffrine region, serving the local population.

Senegal (14.04630, -14.52199)

L Mosquée Lide

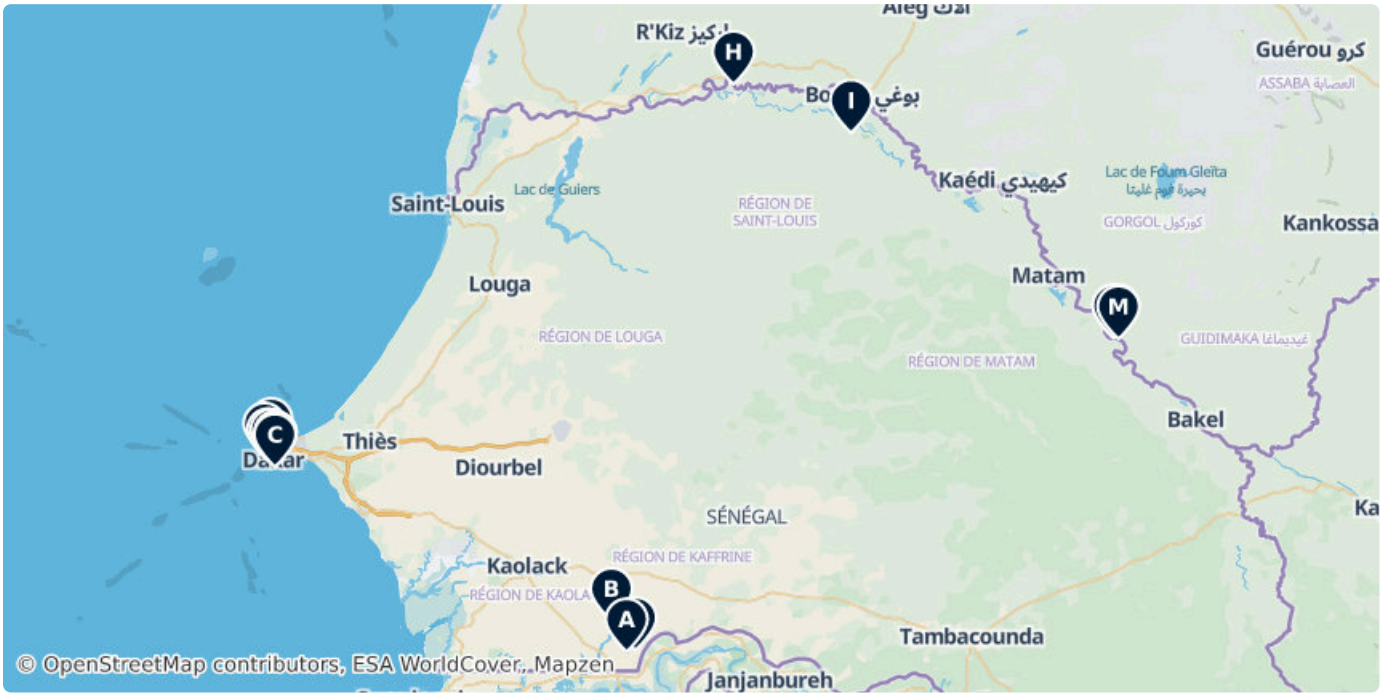
A local mosque in the Kolda region of southern Senegal, open for daily prayers.

(Unnamed Road), Kounkane, Senegal (12.92976, -14.07298)

Mo–Su Open 24/7

Senegal's Cultural Treasures

Senegal’s landscape is marked by a diverse historical legacy, ranging from the UNESCO-listed Senegambian stone circles at Sine Ngayène and Wanar to the modern architectural feats of Dakar. This collection highlights the Museum of Black Civilisations and the Théodore Monod African Art Museum, which preserve West African artistic traditions. The list also includes colonial-era fortifications like Fort de Podor and contemporary landmarks such as the African Renaissance Monument and the Place du Souvenir.



A Sine Ngayène

UNESCO World Heritage site featuring 52 megalithic stone circles and over 1,000 burial mounds dating back to the 3rd century BC.

Senegal (13.69530, -15.53538)

B Cercles de pierres de Wanar

A UNESCO-protected funerary complex consisting of 21 stone circles carved from laterite, primarily dating between the 11th and 12th centuries.

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Dakar, Senegal (14.72213, -17.49496)

E Museum of Black Civilisations

The Museum of Black Civilisations is a national museum in Dakar, Senegal, that opened on 6 December 2018.

Dakar, Senegal (14.67747, -17.43509)

Tu–Su 10:00–19:00

mcn.sn, +221338891180

F Ahmed Iana

Historical palace and administrative building.

(14.68872, -17.45708)

G Galé madiagne

Historical residence and castle located in Dakar.

(14.67316, -17.43351)

H Fort de Podor

Originally constructed in 1744, this French colonial fort on the Senegal River served as a strategic trade post for gum arabic.

(16.65670, -14.95660)

I Aéré Lao

Historical castle structure located in the Aéré Lao region.

quartier Halleybé (16.40410, -14.32104)

J Sithiane

Mauritania (15.33864, -12.90261)

K Bédinki

Mauritania (15.33820, -12.90146)

L Mamoudou Boye

Mauritania (15.34016, -12.87573)

M digarelle Samba Hamet

Community center and historical site.

Ouali, Mauritania (15.33239, -12.87470)

N Place du Souvenir africain

Memorial complex and museum in Dakar dedicated to African history and victims of the slave trade and the Joola ferry disaster.

Route de la Corniche Ouest, Dakar, Senegal (14.69225, -17.47445)



O Village des Arts de Dakar

A creative hub and former workers' camp in Dakar housing over 50 artist studios and galleries dedicated to contemporary Senegalese art.

Dakar (14.74636, -17.45731)

P Senegambian stone circles

The Senegambian stone circles lie in The Gambia north of Janjanbureh and in central Senegal.

Senegal (13.70295, -15.48755)

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