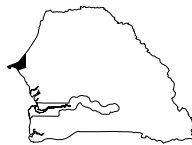


Greater Dakar & Cap Vert Peninsula



If Dakar only could, it would burst its beaches, leap into the sea and lead its cacophonous parade of furious drumbeats, screeching traffic, exuberant nightlife, teeming markets, street hustling and boundless creativity in ever-wider circles across the country. But Dakar's frontiers are not negotiable. The vibrant city is limited by a long, sandy coast in the west, and a tight bottleneck in the east, which connects the Cap Vert peninsula to the mainland. Dakar's astounding energy can't flow over, and so it piles up sky-high on the few square kilometres the city occupies. This means you'll rarely have a boring day in Dakar, whether you're browsing through the city's markets, strolling around tiny boutiques and arts galleries or relaxing on the beaches of Yoff and N'Gor, two suburbs on the western edge of the peninsula.

The only moments you're likely to curse Dakar's enduring popularity, and certainly its peninsula setting, is in all those lost hours you're condemned to patience by yet another gridlock, wedged into a battered *car rapide* (colourfully decorated blue-and-yellow minibus) with dozens of fellow passengers and several bags of rice. But if the fumes, noise and intensity get too much, make a quick getaway to the tranquil Île de Gorée, only a 20-minute ferry ride from central Dakar, or spend a peaceful day enjoying African church music at Keur Moussa Monastery and glimpsing the pink shimmer of Lac Rose. Both lie an hour's drive east of the city.

Dakar is a feverish town that brims with life. It's got some of the best nightclubs, live-music venues and arts festivals in West Africa. And it only charges an occasional fee in unwanted hassle and sly con-jobs – easily negotiated once you've learnt a few tricks.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Put on your most glittering robes, hit the vibrant nightclub scene in **Dakar** (p162) and get a bout of *mbalax* fever
- Soak up the calm ambience and significance of the historical buildings and leafy alleyways on **Île de Gorée** (p167)
- Indulge in a day of sea, sand and sun at the beaches of **N'Gor** (p171)
- Get in the Sunday morning spirit at **Keur Moussa Monastery** (p176)
- Try to catch a glimpse of the **Lac Rose** (p174) shimmer on the way back to town

POPULATION: 2.5 MILLION



DAKAR

HISTORY

Dakar was founded in 1857 and grew around an increasingly important trading port. By 1871, its importance had grown so much that the French granted it the special status of a self-governing community, together with Rufisque, Saint-Louis and Gorée. When the famous Dakar–Saint-Louis railway was opened in 1885, Dakar's role as an economic hub was strengthened further – so much that in 1902 the town became the capital of French West Africa. With Senegal's independence, it was chosen as capital of the newborn nation, and has since expanded so much that plans have been made to move the capital to a new location – one that can accommodate the growth in size and population that Dakar's peninsula setting doesn't permit.

ORIENTATION

Once a tiny settlement in the south of Cap Vert peninsula, Dakar now spreads almost across its entire triangle, from the southernmost tip of Cap Manuel to the northwestern end, the Pointe des Almadies, then east to N'Gor and Yoff beaches.

Dakar's heart is Place de l'Indépendance, from which Av Léopold Senghor heads south in the direction of the Palais Présidentiel and the Hôpital Principal. Av Pompidou (still known to most as Av Ponty) heads west, with the city's largest and busiest market,

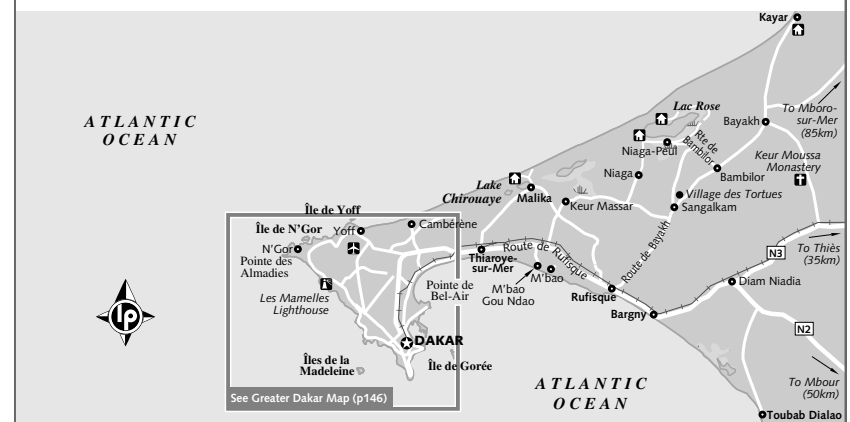
Marché Sandaga, at its western end. These are Dakar's most hectic streets, with a vast selection of shops, restaurants, cafés, bars and street hustlers. At the time of research, plans to move the market out of the city were eagerly debated; you might find it already settled in a different part of town.

Leading from the eastern side of Place de l'Indépendance is the more upmarket Av Albert Sarraut, a major shopping street with another market, Marché Kermel, near its eastern end. The eastern edge of the city is marked by the ocean and the Rte de la Corniche-Est (Petite Corniche), which winds above cliffs and small beaches, linking to the main port to the north.

At the southwestern edge of the city are Place de Soweto, the IFAN Museum, the Assemblée Nationale and many embassies. From Place de Soweto you can head north along Av du Président Lamine Guèye, eventually reaching the Gare Routière Pompiers and the main autoroute (motorway) out of the city, which ends at the junction Patte d'Oie. From here, you can turn northwest towards the airport or take the eastern route towards Rufisque.

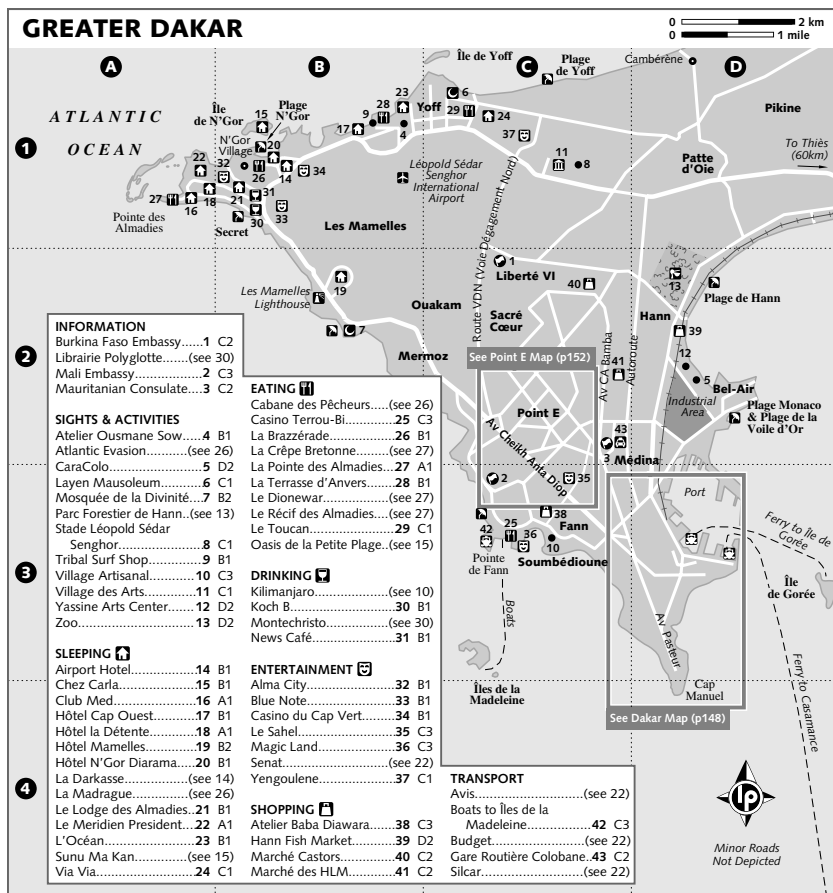
Av Blaise Diagne heads northwest from the centre, passing near the Grande Mosquée and Médina to become Av Cheikh Anta Diop (known to locals as Rte de Ouakam). This road runs between Fann and Point E, a pretty middle-class *quartier* (neighbourhood) before reaching Mermoz, Ouakam, and finally Pointe des Almadies and N'Gor.

CAP VERT PENINSULA



GREATER DAKAR & CAP VERT PENINSULA

GREATER DAKAR & CAP VERT PENINSULA



The Rte de la Corniche-Ouest (Grande Corniche) runs along the Atlantic Ocean – here you'll see joggers and the city's finest homes and embassy residences. At the time of writing, the Rte de la Corniche-Ouest was closed for construction works, planned to continue until 2008. Information on alternative routes to the centre of town is widely distributed in Dakar.

The Rte de la Corniche runs roughly parallel to Av Cheikh Anta Diop – the most direct access to Yoff Airport.

Maps

By far the best city map is the one produced by **Editions Laure Kane** (www.editionslaurekane.com; maps CFA3500). Colourful and detailed, it shows

the names of all *quartiers* (neighbourhoods), streets and major sites. You can find it in most souvenir shops and hotels. The locally produced *Carte du Sénégal* (CFA3500) also has a map on the back, but it's not particularly user-friendly. The cartoon-style *Dakar Bird View* map is widely available but contains several errors.

INFORMATION

The free listings magazines *Dakar Tam Tam* and *L'Avis* contain details of hotels, restaurants and travel agencies and a full list of embassies and hospitals (for some embassies, see p262). The pocket magazine *Clin d'Œil* contains useful addresses and numbers as well as articles.

DAKAR IN...

Two Days

Start your day with croissants and coffee at the leafy **Institut Français** (below), then dive right into city life with a stroll around the historical buildings of the centre and a visit to the **IFAN Museum** (p153). Have a sumptuous lunch at **Le Sarraut** (p159), then spend the afternoon strolling around the historical alleyways of **Île de Gorée** (p167). Treat yourself to dinner at **La Fourchette** (p160), then hit the club scene, not missing **Le Seven** (p161) and the dance floors of **Kilimanjaro** (p161) and **Thiossane** (p161). Start the next day with breakfast at the beach on **Île de N'Gor** (p171). Enjoy the waves, then return by pirogue to the mainland and have lunch at the **Cabane des Pêcheurs** (p171). Visit the **Village des Arts** (p172) and the art gallery-cum-hairdressing salon, **Salon Michèle Ka** (p153). Round the day off with some brilliant live music at **Just 4 U** (p161).

Four Days

Start your visit as for the two-day itinerary, then add a day at the **markets** (p164) and admire the view across town from the lighthouse at **Les Mamelles** (p153). On day four, start early and travel to **Lac Rose** (p174). Go horse riding and take the pirogue across the lake for lunch at **Bonaba Café** (p174). Head back to Dakar for a sunset drink at the relaxed beach bar of the **Hôtel Cap Ouest** (p173) or gaze across the ocean from Africa's westernmost tip, the **Pointe des Almadies** (p171) before settling into an evening in style at **Koch B**. (p170).

The excellent pocket-sized glossy 221 (CFA500) contains plenty of interesting write-ups and events listings for music, arts and sports around the country, with a particular focus on Dakar. It's available at newsagents, shops, restaurants and hotels.

Bookshops

All of the following bookshops have a good range of books, magazines and maps, though there's little in English. The secondhand street stalls around the Marché Sandaga don't offer much choice, but you might find the occasional dog-eared curiosity among last season's women's magazines and outdated school books.

Librairie Clairafrique Central Dakar (Map p150; ☎ 822 2169; Rue C; ☎ 8.45am-12.30pm & 3-6.45pm Mon-Sat); Point E (Map p152; ☎ 864 4429; University Campus, Av Cheikh Anta Diop)

Librairie aux Quatre Vents (Map p150; ☎ 821 8083; Rue Félix Faure; ☎ 8.45am-12.30pm & 3-6.45pm)

Cultural Centres

British Council (Map p152; ☎ 869 2700; www.britishcouncil.org/senegal; Rue AAB-68, Amitié Zone A-B) Having moved to a nicer and calmer part of town, the office now has a pretty café (lunch around CFA1500), frequent exhibitions and a small library with a good selection of English-language books, magazines and DVDs.

British-Senegalese Institute (Map p148; ☎ 822 4023; Rue 18 Juin) Near Place de Soweto; has a library and frequently shows British, African and American films.

Goethe Institute (Map p150; ☎ 823 0407; www.goethe.de/dakar; 2 Av Albert Sarraut) The German Cultural Centre has frequent exhibitions and shows German, African and other films with French subtitles.

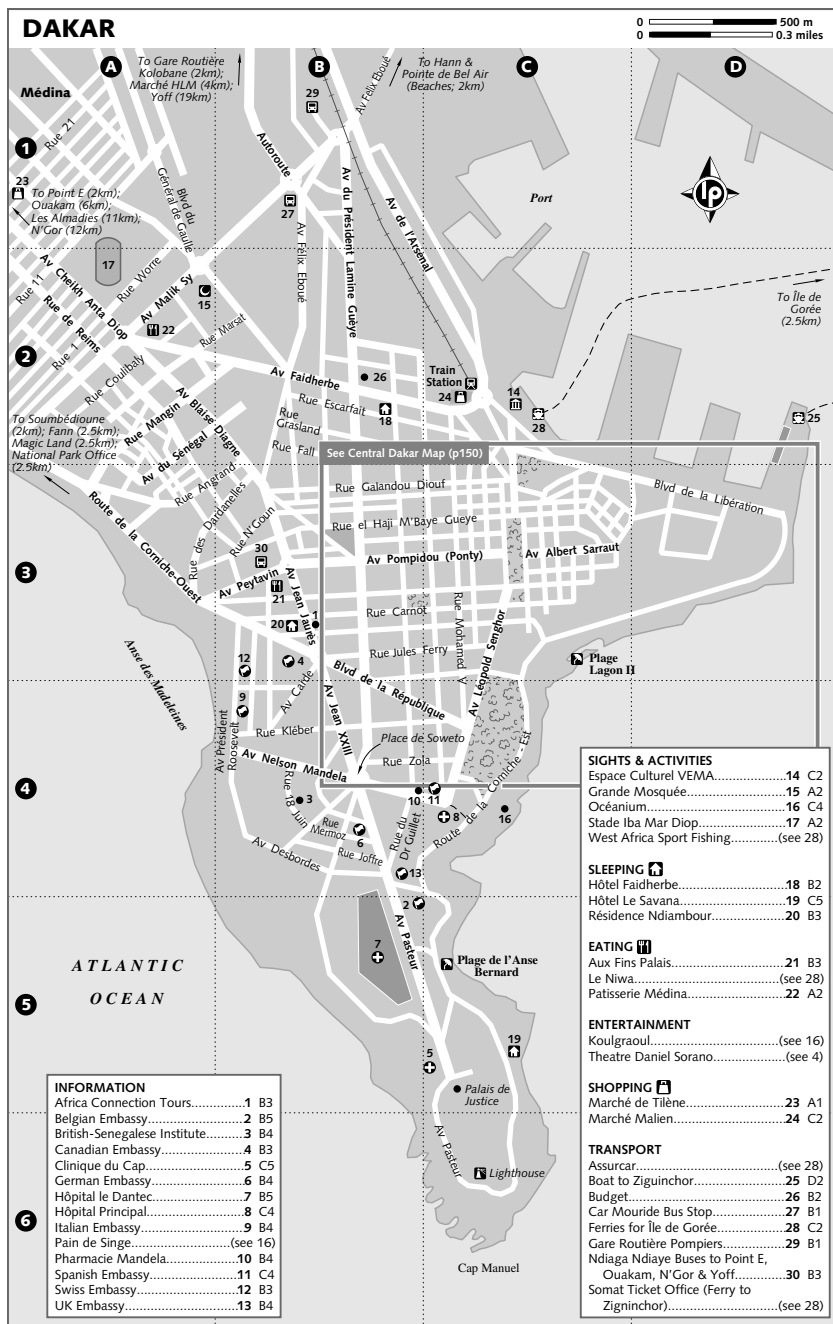
Institut Français Léopold Sédar Senghor (Map p150; ☎ 823 0320; www.institutfr-dakar.org; 89 Rue Joseph Gomis) This spacious centre occupying a whole block is the driving force behind many of Dakar's artistic and cultural endeavours. It produces a regular guide to upcoming events, houses an excellent café and a glass-painter's workshop in a small park, and has a performance arena that frequently hosts excellent live concerts and films.

Emergency

There's no general emergency number. The Hôpital Principal has the best accident and emergency department, followed by Hôpital Le Dantec. Outside the centre, **Suma Urgences** (Map p152; ☎ 824 2418; Fann Résidence, Av Cheikh Anta Diop) gives emergency assistance.

Internet Access

There are plenty of Internet cafés in Dakar, some fully equipped with scanners, Web cams etc; even those that aren't offer a good service for around CFA300 to CFA500 an hour. The university area is well covered with cybercafés (invariably crowded with chattering students). Wi-fi is becoming popular, with many hotels and restaurants becoming wi-fi spaces. At the time of research, the Novotel (p157) and Pen'Art jazz club (see p161) both had free wi-fi access.



Business Centre (Map p152; Blvd du Sud; ☎ 8am-10pm) Opposite the Jardin Thaïlandais.

Cyber-Business Centre (Map p150; ☎ 823 3223; Av Léopold Senghor; ☎ 8am-midnight)

Espace Sentoo (Map p150; Place de l'Indépendance; ☎ 9.30am-8pm)

Espace Plus (Map p150; ☎ 822 9062; Blvd de la République; ☎ 8am-midnight)

Medical Services

Most embassies have a list of doctors used to dealing with nonresidents, and can direct you to a doctor who speaks your language. Following are some of the best clinics and hospitals in Dakar.

Clinique du Cap (Map p148; ☎ 821 3627) Just south of Hôpital Le Dantec, this privately run clinic is good for treating minor illnesses and injuries.

Clinique Pasteur (Map p150; ☎ 839 9200; 50 Rue Carnot) West of Place de l'Indépendance, this is another comfortable, privately run clinic. Not best for emergencies, but a good place to go if you're after a malaria blood test.

Hôpital Le Dantec (Map p148; ☎ 889 3800; Av Pasteur) This hospital has a reputation for having the best-trained staff, but is terribly neglected in terms of infrastructure.

Hôpital Principal (Map p148; ☎ 839 5050; Av Léopold Senghor) Run by military staff, this is the best-organised hospital in Dakar and the one with the most effective emergency service.

Dakar has many pharmacies. Most open from 8am to 11pm, and there's a rotational 24-hour standby system; you'll find details of the current 24-hour place outside every pharmacy door.

Pharmacie Guigon (Map p150; ☎ 823 0333; Av du Président Lamine Guèye)

Pharmacie Mandela (Map p148; ☎ 821 2172; Av Nelson Mandela) Near the Hôpital Principal.

Money

Bicis, CBAO, Citibank and SGBS (Map p150) have offices on and around Place de l'Indépendance. They all change money, though sometimes are reluctant to change travellers cheques. All except Citibank have security-guarded ATMs. You can usually withdraw up to CFA250,000. There's a **Western Union** (Map p150; Rue du Docteur Thèze; ☎ 7.30am-5.30pm Mon-Sat) in CBAO's Pempidou branch.

The suburbs are equally well served with ATM-enhanced banks and petrol stations. In Point E, the **SGBS** (Map p152; Blvd de l'Est) and the **Bicis** (Map p152; Place OMVS) ATM at the Station Mobil Relais are reliable options.

Opening hours vary from bank to bank, but they all tend to be open from around 8am to noon, and in the afternoon from around 2.30pm to 4pm. Some also open on Saturday morning, and you can get cash around the clock from ATMs.

Photography

Clic Numérique (Map p150; Rue Jules Ferry) The best place in town for digital prints.

Passport Photos (Map p150; Place de l'Indépendance) A good place to get your pictures developed.

Post

DHL (Map p150; ☎ 823 1394; 2 Av Albert Sarraut; ☎ 8am-6.30pm Mon-Thu, to 7pm Fri, 8am-noon Sat) The Senegal agent for all express mail.

Main post office (Map p150; Blvd el Haji Djily Mbaye; ☎ 7am-7pm Mon-Fri, 8am-5pm Sat) Near Marché Kermel. This is where you'll find poste restante. Letters are held for up to 30 days; the cost per item is CFA250.

Post office (Map p150; Av Pempidou) At the eastern end of Av Pempidou, this smaller office seems to run more smoothly than the main post office. It's got a small **télécentre** (privately owned telephone bureau) and a Western Union service.

Telephone

There are dozens of **télécentres** in Dakar, mostly with similar rates. A few recommended central ones are indicated on the Central Dakar map. Post offices and Internet cafés often also have telephone facilities.

Espace Sentoo (Map p150; Place de l'Indépendance) This established Internet café is also a good place for international calls.

Post office (Map p150; Av Pempidou)

Tourist Information

There is no official tourist information office in Dakar, but the travel agencies listed below will be able to help with enquiries.

Travel Agencies

For reconfirming flights, most airlines have offices in central Dakar (p280). For a ticket, a travel agency can save a lot of shopping around. Agencies' fares are standardised and are usually the same as the airline (or cheaper), although special deals are sometimes available, particularly to/from Paris. Most agencies also offer good rates on trips around the country from Dakar.

Africa Connection Tours (Map p148; ☎ 821 8316; 32 Rue Mass Diokhané) A tiny agency that caters particularly to English-speaking travellers.



INFORMATION	Palais Présidentiel.....40 B4	Restaurant Farid.....(see 47)
BICIS Bank.....1 C2	Pôle Linguistique de l'Institut	Restaurant VSD.....(see 85)
Cape Verde Embassy.....2 D1	Français.....(see 34)	Savoir d'Asie.....79 C1
CBAO Bank.....3 C2	Sun Park.....(see 31)	Score Supermarket.....80 C2
Citibank.....4 C2		
Clic Numérique.....5 A3	SLEEPING	DRINKING
Clinique Pasteur.....6 B2	Dakar Résidences.....41 C1	Bar de Hôtel de
Cyber-Business Centre.....7 B3	Hôtel Al Afifa.....42 A3	l'Indépendance.....(see 46)
Dakar Voyages.....8 C2	Hôtel Al Baraka.....43 B1	Bar L'Impérial.....81 C1
DHL.....9 D2	Hôtel Continental.....44 B1	Café Indigo.....82 B3
Espace Sentoo.....(see 18)	Hôtel Croix du Sud.....45 C2	Casino du Port.....83 D1
Espacelot Plus.....10 A3	Hôtel de l'Indépendance.....46 C2	Iguane Café.....84 B3
French Embassy.....11 D2	Hôtel Farid.....47 B1	Le Mex.....85 B2
Gambian High Commission.....12 B2	Hôtel Ganalé.....48 A2	Le Seven.....86 B3
Goethe Institute.....13 D2	Hôtel Lagon II.....49 D2	Snooker Palace.....87 B1
Institut Français.....14 B2	Hôtel Le Miramar.....50 B3	
Librairie aux Quatres Vents.....15 B3	Hôtel Nina.....51 B2	ENTERTAINMENT
Librairie ClairAfrique.....16 C1	Hôtel Océanic.....52 D1	Kadjinol Station.....88 D2
Main Post Office.....17 D1	Hôtel Provençal.....53 C1	King's Club.....89 B3
Mboup Voyages.....18 C2	Hôtel Saint-Louis Sun.....54 A3	Playclub.....(see 42)
Netherlands Embassy.....19 A4	Novotel.....55 D2	
Nouvelles Frontières.....20 B4	Sofitel Teranga.....56 C2	SHOPPING
Passport Photos.....21 C2		Cajou.....(see 92)
Pharmacie Guigon.....22 A2	EATING	Cocktail du Sénégal.....90 B3
Planète Tours Voyages.....(see 46)	Ali Baba Snack Bar.....57 B2	Galerie Antenna.....91 C3
Post Office.....23 B2	Caesar's.....58 A3	Garmy's Confection.....92 B1
Sahel Découverte Bassari.....24 C1	Café de Rome.....59 A3	Marché Kermel.....93 D2
SDV Voyages.....(see 95)	Café Restaurant de l'Institut.....(see 14)	Marché Sandaga.....94 A2
Senegal Tours.....25 C2	Chez Grenelles.....(see 48)	Touareg Jewellery Market.....(see 46)
SGBS Bank.....26 C3	Chex Loutcha.....60 B2	
Télécentre.....(see 18)	Filli Fili Supermarket.....61 C1	TRANSPORT
US Embassy.....27 A4	Keur N'Deye.....62 B1	Afrique Location.....(see 8)
VIA Senegal Voyages.....28 C3	La Casa Créole.....63 D1	Air Algérie.....(see 18)
Western Union.....29 B2	La Fourchette.....64 D1	Air France.....95 C2
	La Galette.....(see 65)	Air Guinée.....96 B2
	La Palmeraie.....65 B2	Air Mali.....97 B1
	La Royaltine.....66 A3	Air Mauritanie.....(see 18)
	La Villa Chez Yannick.....67 C1	Air Sénégal International.....98 C2
	Lagon I.....68 D3	Alitalia.....99 B2
	Le Bambou.....69 B3	Dakar Location.....100 B2
	Le Dragon.....70 A3	DDD Bus Terminal.....101 D1
	Le Mélea.....71 B2	Hertz.....102 A2
	Le Sarraut.....72 D2	Iberia.....(see 18)
	Le Seul.....73 A2	Noprola.....(see 8)
	Héliopolis.....37 B3	Royal Air Maroc.....(see 18)
	Hôtel de Ville (Town Hall).....38 C1	Senecartours.....103 A2
	Les Grilladins.....75 B1	SN Brussels.....104 C2
	IFAN Museum.....39 A4	South African Airways.....105 C2
	Lagon I.....(see 68)	TACV Cabo Verde Airlines.....106 B2
	Marché Kermel.....(see 93)	TAP Air Portugal.....(see 104)
	Marché Sandaga.....(see 94)	Restaurant du Centre.....78 B1

Dakar Voyages (Map p150; ☎ 823 3704; dakarvoyages@sentoo.sn; 28 Rue Assane Ndoye) Tends to have the best ticket deals.

Nouvelles Frontières (Map p150; ☎ 823 3434; fax 822 2817; 3 Blvd de la République) Sometimes has cheap seats to Paris on charter flights.

ONITS (Map p152; ☎ 516 3293; onits2005@yahoo.fr) This umbrella organisation for small-scale, Senegalese tourist enterprises can put you in touch with guesthouses and hostels around the country, as well as recommend itineraries.

Planète Tours Voyages (Map p150; ☎ 823 7423) Next to the Hôtel de l'Indépendance.

SDV Voyages (Map p150; ☎ 839 0081; dkrsdvagv@sdvsn.net; 51 Av Albert Sarraut) The Diners Club agent.

Universities

Dakar's sprawling **Université Cheikh Anta Diop** (Map p152) occupies most of the Fann suburb, south of Point E.

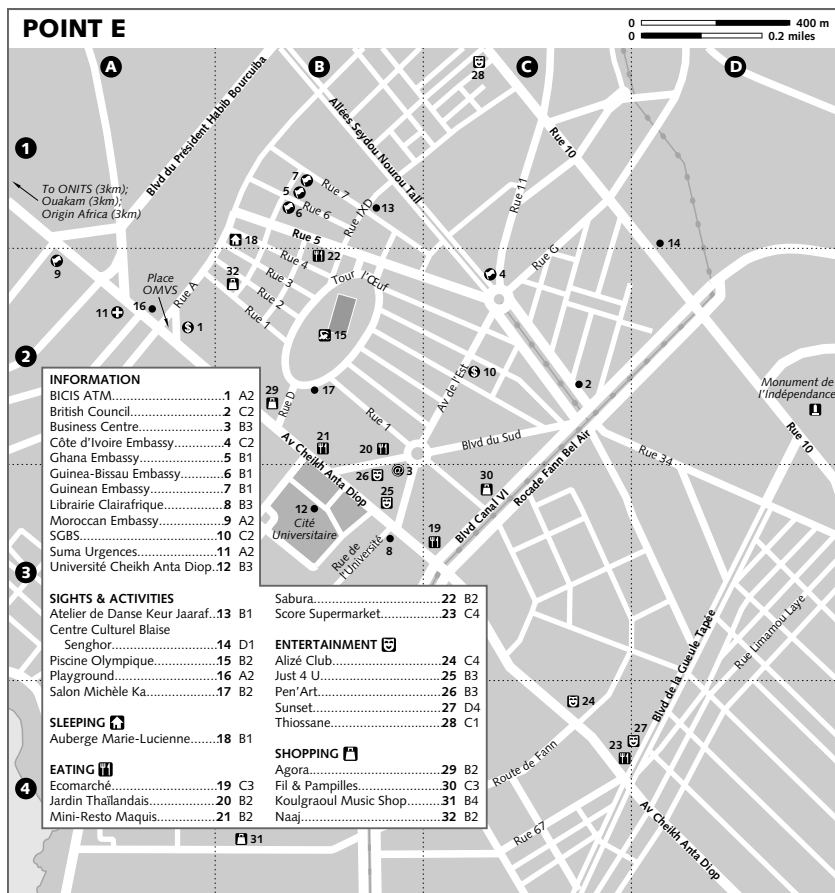
It's like a vibrant city within itself, with plenty of little eateries, Internet cafés and copy shops catering to students. When we visited, clashes between students and police were frequent – stay well clear of the area if this is the case.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

The inner city of Dakar is a pickpocket's paradise – especially the crammed streets around Av Pompidou and Marché Sandaga.

GREATER DAKAR & CAP VERT PENINSULA

GREATER DAKAR & CAP VERT PENINSULA



Avoid carrying large bags around and be on your guard. Less worrying, but potentially very annoying, are the street traders and hustlers. For ideas on how to shake them off, see p259.

Other pickpocketing hotspots are the beaches and the port, including the jetties for the Gorée Ferry and *Le Willis*, the boat to Ziguinchor. Stay alert and clutch your credit card. In the inner city, the 'Remember me?' scam is particularly popular (see Scams, p261). The remedy: don't respond to random calls of 'mon ami, long time no see!' If someone doesn't know your name, chances are they don't know you; being rude to someone you do know is still preferable to having your passport and purse snatched.

As in most inner cities around the world, women should avoid walking around alone after dark or waiting for taxis in empty areas.

Some vigilance and common sense should help you get around unharmed – inner-city Dakar can be a pain to walk around, but Lagos it ain't, and none of the areas mentioned are no-go zones.

SIGHTS

Historical Buildings

The **cathedral** (Map p150; Blvd de la République) is a large but fairly unspectacular 1920s building. It's still worth a glimpse, being the main cathedral of the capital city, and the adjacent garden has a leafy children's playground – your kids will no doubt

prefer to staying there rather than take a tour of Dakar's impressive colonial buildings. There's the **Gouvernance** (Map p150) and the **Chambre de Commerce** (Map p150) on either side of Place de l'Indépendance, a remarkable space itself because it is huge, wide, lined by grand buildings and symmetrically laid out. The stately **Hôtel de Ville** (town hall; Map p150; Blvd el Hajj Djily Mbaye) sits north of the *place*. A short walk further north takes you to the **train station** (Map p148; Blvd de la Libération), whose elegant façade inspires ideas of romantic train journeys (quickly wiped away once you enter the bleak interior).

A short walk east from Place de l'Indépendance takes you to the cute round house of **Marché Kermel** (Map p150; see p164). Heading southwest, the awe-inspiring **Palais Présidentiel** (Map p150; Ave Léopold Senghor) is surrounded by sumptuous gardens and guards in colonial-style uniforms. It was originally built in 1907 for the governor of the time, General Roume, who used to lend his title to the street outside. The road has since been renamed Av Léopold Senghor, although most locals still refer to it by its old name. The **Assemblée Nationale** (Parliament; Map p150; Place de Soweto), with its modern glass façade, is easy to reach from here.

Dakar's most interesting mosques are slightly out of town. The **Grande Mosquée** (Map p148; Av Malik Sy), built in 1964, is impressive for its sheer size and landmark minaret. The building is closed to the public, but it's worth coming here anyway because the surrounding neighbourhood, **Médina**, is a bustling popular *quartier* with tiny tailor shops, a busy market (see p164) and streets brimming with life. It was built as a township for the local populace by the French, and is the birthplace of Senegalese superstar Youssou N'Dour.

Taking the coastal road northwards, you'll see the stunning **Mosqué de la Divinité** (Map p146; Rte de la Corniche-Ouest) perched on the coast near Les Mamelles *quartier*. **Les Mamelles Light-house** (Map p146), off Rte de la Corniche-Ouest, is just a 25-minute walk or 1km drive north from here, on a small volcanic hill. You get an excellent view across Dakar from the 1864 building; visits are best made during the day and are free of charge.

Museums & Art Galleries

A testament to former President Senghor's interest in promoting African art and culture, Dakar's **IFAN Museum** (Map p150; Place de

Soweto; adult/child CFA2000/200; ☎ 8am-12.30pm & 2-6.30pm) compares well to the national museums of other West African nations. Yes, exhibits are gathering dust, but there are imaginative displays of masks and traditional dress from the whole region (including Mali, Guinea-Bissau, Benin and Nigeria), as well as fabrics and carvings, musical instruments and agricultural tools.

Dakar has a vibrant contemporary arts scene to be discovered in the cluster of small art galleries and ateliers hidden in the city's side streets. The leafy garden of the **Institut Français** (☎ 823 0320; 89 Rue Joseph Gomis) is a hub of creativity. The scrap-metal bird sculptures by Mamadou Tall Dhiedhiou and charmingly chaotic workshop of the famous *sous-verre* (reverse-glass painting) artist Moussa Sakho alone are worth a visit. The brilliant little **Galerie Le Manège** (Map p150; ☎ 821 0822; 3 Rue Parchappe; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Sat), in a beautifully restored 19th-century building, is also part of the French cultural complex. The space of the **Galerie Nationale** (Map p150; ☎ 821 2511; 19 Av Albert Sarraut; admission free; ☎ 9am-6pm) is slightly less enticing, but its frequently changing exhibitions of photography or paintings are usually very good. **Galerie Arte** (Map p150; ☎ 821 9556; www.arte.sn; 5 Rue Victor Hugo) looks more like a shop than a gallery, and though all items are for sale, there's no pressure to buy. The **Espace Culturel VEMA** (Map p148; ☎ 821 7026; Embarcadère de Gorée; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-7pm) is a ray of hope in the dreary industrial lands near the Île de Gorée ferry. Its spiced-up warehouse frequently houses exhibitions and events, but you need to phone first to see if anything's on.

In Point E, the **Salon Michèle Ka** (Map p152; ☎ 824 7033; Tour de l'Euif) is not only the funkyest hairdressing salon in town, but also one of the most original art galleries. The whole salon, from styling tables to wall displays, is decorated with urban *sous-verre* motifs à la *car rapide*. It's an absolute must-see – you don't need to get a new hairstyle to visit.

The Hann neighbourhood, Dakar's 'lost corner', squeezed between a polluted beach and impossibly jammed roads, is in fact a thriving place for the arts. You can't miss the gargantuan, lion-shaped entry to the **Yassine Arts Center** (Map p146; ☎ 832 2611; info@yassinearts.com; Baie de Hann). Exhibitions here have a habit of spilling over into the hotel, theatre, restaurant and even the fitness centre that

form part of the complex. The fantastic **Caracolo** (Map p146; ☎ 832 1590; www.caracolo.com; 7 Allée Marinas) gallery is within walking distance of here. This original arts space exhibits and sells works made by local artists and artisans using materials found in the immediate creative space. Their metal, fabric and wooden objects are incredibly beautiful and, needless to say, unique.

Beaches

Beaches within easy reach of the city centre include the private Plage Lagon II (Map p150), near Hôtel Lagon II, and **Plage de l'Anse Bernard** (Map p148) near Hôtel Le Savana. Those along the Rte de la Corniche-Ouest are popular with local joggers, picnic parties and Sai-Sais (p277). Strong currents make them less suitable for swimming.

The **Plage de Hann** (Map p146), once one of Dakar's finest strands, is now an environmental catastrophe due to illegal sewage disposal by the adjacent industrial zone. South of here, in the shelter of Pointe de Bel-Air, are the private beaches **Plage de la Voile d'Or** (Map p146; admission CFA650) and the adjacent **Plage Monaco** (Map p146; admission CFA650), where occasional beach concerts take place year-round.

On the route towards Les Almadies, the so-called **Secret** (Map p146) is a favourite surfing spot, while further north, Dakar's finest sand stretches along the coast of **N'Gor** (p171), where beach access costs CFA500, and **Yoff** (p172). Strong currents make Yoff's beaches largely unsuitable for swimming, but most beach-lovers head there anyway, or to Île de Gorée (p167).

ACTIVITIES Diving

Good scuba-diving (*plongée sous-marine*) sites include the rocky reefs and islets around the Pointe des Almadies and the islands of Gorée, N'Gor and La Madeleine. By far the best address for diving excursions is the **Océanium** (Map p148; ☎ 822 2441; www.oceanium.org; Rte de la Corniche-Est; ☹ Mon-Sat). It offers half-day dives as well as longer excursions and also has introductory courses for beginners. The Océanium also houses a very active and effective environmental protection agency, so its courses come with eco-awareness and as much extra environmental input as you like. Divers can stay at the Océa-

SOUMBÉDIOUNE PIROGUE CONSTRUCTION

Behind Soubédioune beach is an area where fishing pirogues are constructed, usually by and for the Lebu, the ethnic group mainly involved in the fishing industry. The base of a pirogue is usually made from the hollowed-out trunk of a kapok tree (known locally as a *fromager*). This light, spongy wood is left outside to absorb water during the rainy season for up to eight months, after which it can be beaten perfectly straight to form the base of the boat. The sides are then built up around it using long planks of a harder wood such as kola, and finally the inside of the bottom half is coated with tar. When treated like this, the *fromager* base lasts for years; when the pirogue finally reaches the end of its life, the base may be reused several times in new boats.

Large pirogues take months to build and sell for around CFA12 million (about US\$17,000). This is beyond the reach of most fishermen, so many large boats are owned by local businesspeople. They may lease their boat to a team of fishermen or simply employ them. Either way, they take up to 60% of the profits from each catch.

nium for more than reasonable rates; don't forget to ask about its tours to the Aire Marine Protégée de Bamboung (see p67).

Fishing

You can arrange deep-sea fishing at **West Africa Sport Fishing** (Map p148; ☎ 823 2858; ffs@sentoo.sn), next to the Île de Gorée ferry terminal, or at the **Océanium** (Map p148; ☎ 822 2441; www.oceanium.org; Rte de la Corniche-Est). The restaurant **Lagon I** (Map p150; ☎ 821 5322; Rte de la Corniche-Est) arranges deep-sea fishing trips and boasts several world-record catches.

Swimming

Dakar is surrounded by beaches, but not all of them are safe for swimming (see left). Other than that, there's always the chlorine option.

Dakar's best swimming pool is the sublime **Piscine Olympique** (Map p152; ☎ 869 0606; piscineolymp@sentoo.sn; Tour de l'Euif). It's part of a huge sports complex, known locally as 'l'œuf

(the egg), housing other (smaller) pools, fitness centres, basketball courts and football grounds, plus restaurants and even rooms to spend the night. Sports courses are also available.

In town, most top-end hotels have swimming pools that are open to nonguests for a small fee. The Sofitel Teranga has a pool overlooking the ocean, which is free if you eat at the adjoining restaurant, otherwise it will cost you CFA4500 (CFA7000 on Sunday). The Hôtel de l'Indépendance charges CFA3000 for its rooftop pool with a great view of Dakar (free if you have a meal). At Hôtel Faidherbe, you get a dive, a drink and a sandwich for CFA2000.

Surfing

A swimmer's disappointment is a surfer's dream – the wave-beaten beaches around Dakar aren't always suitable for bathing, but make excellent surfer haunts. Any aspiring or experienced surfer should pass through the **Tribal Surf Shop** (Map p146; ☎ 646 0914, 820 5400; tribal@arc.sn; Yoff Virage), the best place to rent boards (CFA10,000 per day), take courses, buy gear, get your board repaired and find out about the best spots.

Exercise

The **Piscine Olympique** (☎ 869 0606; Tour de l'Euif) in Point E has excellent fitness facilities. In town, **Héliopolis** (Map p150; ☎ 823 8686; Rue V Hugo; ☹ 7.30am-9.30pm Mon-Sat) is brilliantly equipped with state-of-the-art machines and weights, and offers a range of classes from aerobics to yoga. Otherwise, try the large hotels. Many of them have gymnasiums that nonguests can use for a fee.

Wrestling

Dakar's main arena for traditional wrestling is in Médina, near the large **Stade Iba Mar Diop** (Map p148; Av Cheikh Anta Diop). Fights of big-name wrestlers are national sports events, held in **Stade Léopold Sédar Senghor** (Map p146), Dakar's main stadium in Yoff. Senegal's entire population awaits the results of the traditional star match held on 1 January.

Most matches are announced only on the radio, but important ones will be advertised by posters around town and talked about incessantly by the locals. Saturday and/or Sunday are the usual days for the fights, starting around 4.30pm or 5pm.

COURSES Language

If you're spending more than a brief holiday in Senegal, a Wolof course is a good investment. The linguistic branch of the Institut Français, **Pôle Linguistique de l'Institut Français** (Map p150; ☎ 823 84 83; 3 Rue Parchappe; ☹ Oct-May) runs recommended courses (four hours per week for 12 weeks, CFA90,000). It's also a good place to brush up on your French.

Dance

For dance courses, try the **Centre Culturel Blaise Senghor** (Map p152; Rue 10). Its bleak facade doesn't do justice to the creative bustle going on inside. In Point E, the **Atelier de Danse Keur Jaaraf** (Map p152; ☎ 574 4056; Rue 1XD) is an inspiring little dance company that runs courses for adults and children, covering most major styles of dance.

DAKAR FOR CHILDREN

As a big, brash city, Dakar probably doesn't feature highly on a parent's list of must-sees. But the locals' overwhelmingly friendly attitude towards children, the surrounding beaches and a few child-focused activities make it surprisingly family-friendly – as long as you avoid the inner city.

Dakar's affluent citizens love taking their kids out to **Magic Land** (Map p146; ☎ 842 7307; Rte de la Corniche-Ouest; adult/child under 2 CFA2500/free; ☹ 5-10pm Tue & Thu, 4-10pm Wed & Fri, 2-10pm Sat & Sun), a trendy theme park fully equipped with merry-go-rounds, Ferris wheels and other attractions. For something smaller, try **Sun Park** (Map p150; Jardin de la Cathédrale; adult/child CFA500/300; ☹ 4-10pm), a cute little playground in the garden of the cathedral. Another good **playground** (Map p152; Av Cheikh Anta Diop) is in a leafy park in Point E.

If your children are older than five, the glass-painting workshops by master Moussa Sakho in the **Institut Français** (Map p150; ☎ 823 0320; 89 Rue Joseph Gomis) are a must. And if you're lucky, you might be able to catch a show by the theatre troupe **Côte Jardin** (☎ 636 5497), a brilliant two-woman team that specialises in children's entertainment. Both women speak English and their shows take place in various venues around town; you can even invite them to your home for kids entertainment. Phone to see what's happening.

Other than that, a ferry trip to **Île de Gorée** (p167) and a pirogue tour to the **Îles de la**

Madeleine (p170) make for good family escapes from hectic Dakar.

With kids, you're better off staying in a hotel around Yoff or N'Gor rather than in town, both for the sake of sanity and space. You'll be close to the beaches, which is always good news with kids (N'Gor beach is by far the safest – keep a close eye on them, though, as the northern beaches aren't always safe).

Hann Zoo (Map p146) is supposed to be a kids attraction, but the sight of caged, neglected animals is more likely to make them cry. Stick to the adjacent **Parc Forestier de Hann** (Map p146) – a peaceful woodland area with paths, benches and a couple of snack bars that's popular with weekend picnic parties.

Note: it's next to impossible to push a pram around anywhere in Dakar. In the inner city you're fighting a losing battle against parked cars, and on the beaches, well, there's sand. Nappies, baby food and other baby products are readily available in all big supermarkets.

TOURS

The following agencies offer a good range of tours around the country.

Mboup Voyages (Map p150; ☎ 821 8163; mboup@telecomplus.sn; Place de l'Indépendance) One of the most enduring agencies for tours.

Origin Africa (Map p152; ☎ 860 1578; origin@sentoo.sn; Cité Africa, Ouakam) This is one of the more interesting tour operators in Senegal, with plenty of tours around Senegal on offer. It's well signposted.

Pain de Singe (Map p150; ☎ 824 2484; paindesinge@arc.sn) Unbeatable for ecotourism, off-the-beaten-track and original itineraries. They are based in the suburb Sacré Cœur, but you can contact them at the **Océanium** (Map p148; ☎ 822 2441; Rte de la Corniche-Est).

Sahel Découverte Bassari (Map p150; ☎ 842 8751; carresahel@sentoo.sn; 7 Rue Masclary) Near Av Allés Delmas; has a range of inspired tours on offer and caters equally well to English, French and Spanish speakers. It offers tours to destinations all around Senegal, including an excellent hiking tour around Bassari Country.

Senegal Tours (Map p150; ☎ 839 9900; fax 823 2644; 5 Place de l'Indépendance) One of the largest operators with a reputation for reliability.

VIA Sénégal Voyages (Map p150; ☎ 823 3300; www.viavoyages.sn; 13 Rue Colbert) A fairly new operator owned by Hertz Car Hire; its catalogue is pretty standard.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Dakar's cultural calendar is packed, and outside the wettest months (July and August) you're almost bound to stumble across

a festival, awards ceremony or concert series of some sort.

Dak'Art Biennale (☎ 823 0918; www.dakart.org; May) This biennial festival of painting and sculpture is the queen of Dakar's festivals. It drowns the town in colour for the whole of May, with exhibitions all across Dakar. Unmissable.

Kaay Fecc (☎ 826 4950; www.ausenegal.com/kaayfecc; early Jun) One of Africa's best dance festivals, Kaay Fecc features contemporary and traditional choreography from all across Africa and beyond.

Festival International du Film de Quartier (www.festivaldufilmdequartier.com) Film lovers shouldn't miss this annual showcasing of Senegal's best contemporary film work. For the duration of the festival many cultural centres, restaurants and other spaces mount screens to show films.

Afrikakeur (☎ 860 3116; early Jun) This comedy and music festival is held annually at venues all across Dakar.

SLEEPING

Dakar has a wide range of accommodation, from dodgy dosshouses to palatial hotels. Although everything is expensive, the steadily increasing prices are only justified in a few places.

Don't concentrate your room search only on the cramped city centre of Dakar. The suburbs of Yoff (close to the airport) and N'Gor are only a 30-minute taxi ride away and have plenty of hotels sitting right next to some of Dakar's finest beaches.

Budget

There's hardly such a thing as a budget hotel in Dakar. Like most West African cities, the town doesn't cater particularly well to backpackers. The cheapest places are usually brothels where there's a high chance of theft, so even travellers on a shoestring budget might be persuaded to dig a little deeper for a decent room (and the added luxury of undisturbed sleep).

Hôtel Continental (Map p150; ☎ 822 1083; 10 Rue Galandou Diouf; s/d from CFA13,000/15,000; 🚽) The best of the cheapest, with prices that have remained virtually unchanged over the last few years. The basic rooms even have a touch of character. For your own bathroom and air-conditioning you pay some CFA5000 more.

Hôtel Provençal (Map p150; ☎ 822 1069; 17 Rue Malenfant; s/d CFA14,400/16,800) This place isn't too bad for a part-time brothel. Just make sure you get a room upstairs to avoid most of the noise.

Midrange

All hotels in this price range have rooms with private bathrooms. Prices do not include tax (CFA600 per person). Most places accept credit and charge cards.

Hôtel Saint-Louis Sun (Map p150; ☎ 822 2570; fax 822 4651; Rue Félix Faure; s/d/tr CFA23,000/29,500/35,500; 🍷 🚽) Pretty rooms with beach-house doors open onto a peaceful, green courtyard. Right in the heart of Dakar, this long-standing favourite with independent tourists allows for a mental escape from the crowds and car fumes that wash past it.

Hôtel Ganalé (Map p150; ☎ 889 4444; hganale@sentoo.sn; 38 Rue Assane Ndoye; s/d CFA28,000/35,000, apt CFA38,000-48,000) This place is a gem. Never mind the sinister-looking lobby – the rooms are bright, tastefully decorated and come equipped with TV and telephone. The management is friendly and helpful, and the restaurant is a popular place with tourists and locals. You'll be hard pressed to find better value for your precious CFAs in this price range.

Hôtel Mamelles (Map p146; ☎ 860 0000; contact@lesmamelles.com; s with/without bathroom CFA14,500/10,000, d with/without bathroom CFA19,500/15,000) Tucked away in a side street off Rte de la Corniche-Ouest in Les Mamelles *quartier*, this a hugely popular place, and for good reason. The colourfully decorated rooms are excellent value, and its small size and leafy patio give it a great ambience.

Hôtel Océanic (Map p150; ☎ 822 2044; www.hoteloceanicdakar.com; 9 Rue de Thann; s/d/tr/q CFA 21,600/25,800/33,000/36,800; 🚽) Just north of Marché Kermel, this pleasant old-style place has spotless rooms and larger apartments – fair value for Dakar. A relaxed bar-restaurant with a pretty courtyard offers a good *menu du jour* (meal of the day) for CFA4800.

Hôtel Faidherbe (Map p148; ☎ 889 1750; faidherbe@sentoo.sn; Av Faidherbe; s/d/ste CFA36,000/42,000/70,000) This place has plenty of the niceties of a top-end place: broadband connection in each of the pretty rooms, swimming pool, an ATM, a cosy bar and a popular restaurant – all for a much better rate than the grand hotels.

Hôtel Le Miramar (Map p150; ☎ 849 2929; miramar@hotmail.com; 25 Rue Félix Faure; s/d with breakfast CFA25,600/31,200; 🍷 🚽) Some call it funky, some call it scruffy. It has great ambience, although a concerted renovating effort wouldn't be lost on this gaudily coloured place.

Dakar Résidences (Map p150; ☎ 821 9568; dakar.resid@sentoo.sn; Blvd el Haji Djily Mbaye; apt CFA35,000-45,000) Behind a humble entrance hide nicely maintained and neatly equipped apartments; good value for self-caterers.

Hôtel Farid (Map p150; ☎ 821 6127; www.hotelfarid.com; 51 Rue Vincens; s/d from CFA26,500/29,000) It looks modest, and is half-hidden in a side street, but here are some of the best-maintained rooms in central Dakar. And the restaurant is something you could get addicted to.

Auberge Marie-Lucienne (Map p152; ☎ 869 0090; Rue A, Point E; s/d CFA28,920/36,000; 🍷 🚽) In Senegal, auberge often refers to something extremely basic. Though not exactly a glossy address, this one is nicer than many of its namesakes. Rooms have TV and hot water, and there's free Internet access in the reception area.

Also recommended:
Hôtel Al Baraka (Map p150; ☎ 822 5532; halbaraka@arc.sn; 35 Rue el Hadj Abdoukarim Bourgi; s/d CFA28,000/33,000; 🚽) Large, modern rooms with TV, fridge and phone, but not exactly in a nice corner of Dakar – close to Marché Sandaga, so full of street hustlers.

Hôtel Nina (Map p150; ☎ 889 0120; hotelnina@sentoo.sn; 43 Rue du Docteur Thèze; s/d CFA28,000/35,000; 🚽) Recently renovated, but still feels stuffy.

Top End

All hotels in this range have rooms with private bathrooms, accept major credit/charge cards and have a tour desk where you can arrange excursions, car hire and so on.

Hôtel Al Afifa (Map p150; ☎ 889 9090; gmbafifa@telecomplus.sn; 46 Rue Jules Ferry; s/d/ste CFA37,000/40,000/45,000; 🚽) This place is ageing a little but still retains some of its lustre. Ask for room 103 – the only one with a terrace. The bar, restaurant and disco downstairs offer plenty of nightlife within minimum staggering distance.

Sofitel Teranga (Map p150; ☎ 889 2200; fax 823 5001; Place de l'Indépendance; r from CFA136,000; 🍷 🚽 🚿) Part of the Accor Hotel group, this is exactly what you would expect from a luxury, over-equipped businessperson's favourite hotel. Facilities include tennis courts, sauna, shops and nightclub. It's really very nice – but is a sea view worth CFA136,000 a night? Plenty think so.

Novotel (Map p150; ☎ 849 6161; novotel@sentoo.sn; Av Abdoulaye Fadiga; r CFA85,000; 🍷 🚽 🚿) It's a Novotel all right. Smooth standards, good service, bland character. Sea views cost an extra CFA5000.

Hôtel Lagon II (Map p150; ☎ 889 2525; www.lagon.sn; Rte de la Corniche-Est; s/d/ste CFA72,000/80,000/120,000; 🍷 🍷) If you can bear the kitsch seafarers decor, this is a great place to view the ocean from cabin-style rooms perched on stilts at the edge of the ocean. A favourite address for those interested in deep-sea fishing.

Hôtel Savana (Map p148; ☎ 849 4242; www.savana.sn; Rte de la Corniche-Est; s/d CFA74,000/80,000; 🍷 🍷) If you really want to relax in style, this ingenious construction overlooking the ocean is the place to go. Facilities include business centre, fishing deck, private jetty, tennis courts, nightclub, sauna and gym. For a right royal treatment, book one of the villas for a small briefcase of CFA (CFA 4.3 million per week).

Other options:

Hôtel de l'Indépendance (Map p150; ☎ 823 1019; www.hotel-independance.com; Place de l'Indépendance; s/d CFA50,000/55,000; 🍷) The shine may have worn off this place but there are good views from the rooftop bar.

Hôtel Croix du Sud (Map p150; ☎ 889 7878; 20 Av Albert Sarraut; s/d CFA55,000/60,000) Overpriced hide-out for old-fashioned, armchair-lounging cigar smokers. The restaurant is excellent though, and renowned for its quality French cuisine.

Résidence Ndiambour (Map p148; ☎ 823 6111; ndiambour@sentoosn; 121 Rue Carnot; studio/ste CFA45,000/95,000) Spacious but unspectacular apartments.

EATING

Dakar's restaurant scene is definitely one of the capital's highlights. There are about 100 eateries in the town centre alone, and that's before you've even headed for the suburbs, where chic new restaurants open all the time.

French cuisine, a hangover from the colonial past, is a particular highlight, but there's more to Dakar than *entrecôte* (rib steak) and *crème brûlée* (cream dessert covered in caramelised sugar). Cape Verdean, Vietnamese, Thai, Lebanese, Italian, Korean and Mexican, along with a remarkable array of seafood restaurants, are also available. Almost every place will also be able to offer you some decent *yassa poulet* (grilled chicken marinated in a thick onion and lemon sauce) and *thieboudienne* (Senegal's national dish; rice cooked in a thick sauce of fish and vegetables), though for the best taste of classic Senegalese dishes you're often better off trying one of the small, unremarkable places frequented by the locals.

Restaurants

Restaurants are listed here according to the cuisine they mainly serve, although there's a lot of overlap. Seafood is served in all Dakar restaurants.

Restaurants usually open from 11am to 2pm and 6pm to midnight or later. (Many only close when the last guest has staggered out). Some open all day, but might only serve food at lunch and dinner hours. Note that most Dakar restaurants are closed on Sunday.

AFRICAN

There are dozens of African restaurants in Dakar; most of the ones listed here have achieved near-classic status.

Keur N'Deye (Map p150; ☎ 821 4973; 68 Rue Vincens; dishes from CFA1500) Highly recommended, this place offers well-prepared Senegalese specialities and a reasonable range of vegetarian dishes including large bowls of salad. At most times, the tinkling of the kora accompanies the eager clattering of cutlery.

Restaurant du Centre (Map p150; ☎ 822 0172; 7 Rue El Haji M'Baye Gueye; dishes around CFA1500; 🍷 8am-midnight) Extremely packed during lunchtime, this is a favourite with Dakar's downtown workers. Huge portions of local and European food are served with a slice of real Dakar life.

Chez Loutcha (Map p150; ☎ 821 0302; 101 Rue Moussé Diop; dishes CFA2500-3500; 🍷 noon-3pm & 7-11pm Mon-Sat) Ignore the air-conditioned front room and head out back to the fan-conditioned garden, where fountains embellish the aquatic theme. The Cape Verdean and 'Eur-African' cuisine is excellent and comes in enormous serves.

Point d'Interrogation (Map p150; ☎ 822 5072; Rue Assane Ndoye; dishes CFA1500-2500) This small eatery sells filling and seriously scrumptious Senegalese dishes for reasonable prices. Its *thiebouthienne* is divine.

Restaurant VSD (Map p150; ☎ 661 3333; 91 Rue Moussé Diop; mains CFA3500; 🍷 7am-midnight) There's not much jazz at this intimate place any more, but the West African and international dishes are still good value. Home delivery is also available.

EUROPEAN

Senegal's cultural heritage means Dakar has a wide choice of bars, bistros, cafés and restaurants doing French food.

Casino Terrou-Bi (Map p146; ☎ 839 9039; Rte de la Corniche-Ouest; meals around CFA5000-8000) Right on the sea, this chic garden restaurant serves highly recommended French cuisine. It's a favourite with Dakar's monied classes, and the perfect place to sip cocktails near the pool before blowing the holiday budget in the adjacent casino.

Le Sarraut (Map p150; ☎ 822 5523; Av Albert Sarraut; 🍷 8am-midnight Mon-Sat) This place is a Dakar institution. It's not cheap – but is a great place to invest in a rounded culinary experience. The tasty French and international cuisine in this calm, central place is hard to beat – the scrumptious seafood spaghetti is enough to persuade you to return.

Café Restaurant de l'Institut (Map p150; ☎ / fax 823 1909, ☎ Institute 823 0320; 89 Rue Joseph Gomis; 🍷 9am-11pm; dishes around CFA3000) In the cool shade of the Institut Français' mighty *fromager* tree, this oasis of calm has an excellent range of simple meals, delicious desserts and great coffee.

Le Méléa (Map p150; ☎ 502 8293; 90 Rue Moussé Diop; dishes around CFA5000) This tiny French restaurant is all simple elegance, and the food tastes divine (we enjoyed a gigantic bowl of Moroccan couscous, spiced to flavoursome perfection). The catch: it can get a little smoky.

Lagon I (Map p150; ☎ 821 5831; Rte de la Corniche-Est; mains around CFA7000) In this expensive restaurant the nautical theme is consistently pursued, from cruise-ship decor and cabin-style toilets to the terrace suspended on stilts in the ocean and scrumptious platters of seafood.

Ozio (Map p150; ☎ 823 8787; 21 Rue Victor Hugo; meals around CFA5000-9000) This ubertrendy restaurant has been a favourite of the glitterati for years. The food is great and is served with the egotickling sense of belonging to the in-crowd.

Le Bambou (Map p150; ☎ 822 0645; 19 Rue Victor Hugo; mains CFA6000-10,000) If money is not a concern, head to Le Bambou, the culinary equivalent of a day's pampering.

Café de Rome (Map p150; ☎ 823 2610; Blvd de la République) You want to mingle with Dakar's jet set? This is the place. So pretentious it borders on hilarious.

La Villa Chez Yannick (Map p150; ☎ 823 2197; 4 Rue Malenfant; mains CFA5000; 🍷 11am-3pm & 7-11pm) French food and a few miscellaneous international dishes are served in an airy outdoor setting.

La Palmeraie (Map p150; ☎ 821 1594; 20 Av Pompidou; meals CFA4000-6000) This place is usually

buzzing – but that's got to be due to the central location. It can't be the ordinary food, nor the gloomy setting. The service? Disgruntled. Still, for a quick bite in the centre of town it's a reasonable option.

Le Niwa (Map p148; ☎ 822 2029; dishes CFA3000-6000; 🍷 8am-9pm) Right above the Île de Gorée ferry departure hall, this usually crowded place is the 'waiting lounge' if you've missed your boat. Its seafood is recommended.

ASIAN

Dakar being the cosmopolitan lady it is, it also has the best range of Asian food for thousands of kilometres – we dare suggest.

Jardin Thaïlandais (Map p152; ☎ 825 5833; 10 Blvd du Sud; meals around CFA8000; 🍷 lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) There's no better Thai, perhaps no better Asian food altogether, in the whole of Senegal than that served at this pretty place in Point E. Prices are a bit steep, but every bite is worth it.

Le Dragon (Map p150; ☎ 821 6676; 35 Rue Jules Ferry; mains CFA3000-5000; 🍷 6-11pm Mon-Sat) This is one of Dakar's oldest Vietnamese restaurants, and the one that started the popularity of Asian food in the city.

Saveur d'Asie (Map p150; ☎ 821 4774; 21 Rue de Thann; dishes around CFA5000) Hugely popular, this takeaway restaurant makes an enticing promise of serving Senegalese-Asian cuisine. It sells almost the complete works of Yousou N'Dour in its adjacent boutique.

Le Seoul (Map p150; ☎ 822 9000; 75 Rue Assane Ndoye; dishes CFA5000-8000; 🍷 noon-3pm & 7.30-11pm) The leafy courtyard setting is a welcome respite from the inner-city streets, and the Korean food is carefully prepared and subtly spiced.

INTERNATIONAL

Dakar's most original restaurants find themselves united under this globe-spanning heading.

Restaurant Farid (Map p150; ☎ 821 6127; 51 Rue Vincens; dishes CFA2500-4000; 🍷 Mon-Sat) Forget for a minute that this is a hotel restaurant. The Lebanese food here is probably the best in town.

La Casa Créole (Map p150; ☎ 823 4081; Blvd Djily Mbaye; meals around CFA4000-6000; 🍷 Mon-Sat) Don't be put off by the busy pub at the front – walk right through and you'll find a marvellous garden terrace where French and Creole food are served with a sprinkling of live jazz.

La Fourchette (Map p150; ☎ 821 8887; 4 Rue Parent; meals around CFA6000-10,000; ☺ Mon-Sat) The humble exterior betrays nothing of the polished food temple that hides within. Impeccable sushi and dishes from around the world prepared by two of Dakar's most renowned chefs attract expats and the trendiest Senegalese folks. The set lunch for CFA5500 must be the best value for money in Dakar – and don't leave without indulging in the heavenly *roti au chocolat*.

Le Toukoulour (Map p150; ☎ 821 5193; 122 Rue Moussé Diop; ☺ Mon-Sat) It's all about tasteful African chic in this mud-red painted, patio-adorned restaurant *de classe*. The food fits its environment, too; a refined mix of international flavours.

Sabura (Map p152; ☎ 641 1072; Av Birago Diop, Point E; meals CFA3000-5000) This Bissau-Guinean restaurant serves excellent Cape Verdean, Portuguese and Creole cuisine. If you want a royally prepared *catchoupa* – Cape Verde's porky answer to paella – this is your place. The many Cape Verdean and Guinean regulars are the best quality indicator.

Cafés & Pâtisseries

In Dakar, a patisserie is not somewhere to buy your bread but a place to take your date if you really want to make an impression. Pâtisseries are springing up all over the place, most of them air-conditioned to freezing point and scrubbed till they shine.

La Royaltine (Map p150; ☎ 821 9994; Av du Président Lamine Gueye) Guarded by a uniformed porter and drenched in soft, golden lighting, Dakar's most polished patisserie oozes class. Affluent Dakarois swagger in here for tasty cakes, desserts and chocolates.

La Galette (Map p150; ☎ 821 3340; 16 Av Pompidou) This patisserie is slightly more down-to-earth, though still floating way above a simple bakery.

Aux Fins Palais (Map p148; ☎ 823 4445; 97 Av André Petyavin) It's easy to tire of French bread in Dakar. This is one of the few places that serve an excellent range of wholemeal breads.

Pâtisserie Médina (Map p148; Av Faidherbe; ☺ 24hr) Dakar's 'terminus'. Every night out ends here at 5am, with coffee and croissants. With some luck, you'll even see some of Senegal's biggest music and football stars huddled around cups of hot chocolate.

Metissacana (Map p150; ☎ 822 2043; Rue de Thiong) This is a haven of peace in the inner city –

a leafy patio where you can enjoy a coffee and simple meals. And best of all – you can browse through the original creations by internationally acclaimed fashion designer Oumou Sy and her students in the adjacent boutique.

Quick Eats

All across Dakar you'll see women stirring pots of *mafé* (rice covered with a thick, smooth groundnut sauce with fried meat and vegetables) and grilling fish in the street and in makeshift *tanganas* (cafés literally meaning 'hot stuff') and selling steaming glasses of *café toubou* (a spicy coffee) with a slice of bread and butter. A fast-food favourite is the *shwarmas* (CFA800), sold in snack bars and restaurants.

Ali Baba Snack Bar (Map p150; ☎ 822 5297; Av Pompidou; ☺ 8am-2am) Dakar's classic fast-food haunt keeps turning thanks to the undying love of the Senegalese. Serves the whole fast-food range: kebabs, *shwarmas* and other quick snacks.

Caesar's (Map p150; ☎ 842 7879; 27 Blvd de la République) Sometimes only fried chicken wings, burgers and fries will do, and for those moments Caesar's is your place. Come here regularly and you'll gain precious insights into the complexities of teenage love life.

Les Grilladins (Map p150; ☎ 821 3839; 4 Rue el Hadj Abdoukarim Bourgi) This is a good address for pizzas and crêpes. Food here isn't fancy but it's reliable, and even served relatively speedily. It also does home delivery.

Self-Catering

Corner shops stacked sky-high are scattered all across Dakar. They tend to have a standard selection of local foodstuffs. Supermarkets have a bigger, more expensive and French-oriented selection of foods. For Western-style supplies such as cornflakes, juice and pasta, you're better off at the shops at petrol stations, or you could head straight for one of the big supermarkets where the selection is good, but prices steep.

The best-stocked supermarkets in Dakar are those of the Score chain. There are two main branches: the **Score Supermarket** (Map p150; 31 Av Albert Sarraut) in the town centre and the giant one (Map p152) on Blvd de la Gueule Tapeé in Point E. Both are good for imported items and food, sanitary and baby products and plenty of other nonfood items.

Fili Fili Supermarket (Map p150; Av Allés Delmas) three blocks north of Place de l'Indépendance is a dusty little place with slightly cheaper prices but a much smaller range of stock. In Point E, the **Ecomarché** (Map p152; Av Cheikh Anta Diop, Point E) is pretty good.

DRINKING

Dakar by night can be almost as busy as Dakar by day. The town centre has a scattering of good bars all within easy reach for an increasingly entertaining pub crawl. But the scene is getting bigger, and some of the best places are now in the suburbs rather than the centre.

Le Mex (Map p150; ☎ 823 6717; 91 Rue Moussé Diop; ☺ noon-2am) Firmly on the rise when we visited, this colourful Mexican place transforms from a restaurant into a lively bar once the sun has set. It's popular with the French military and their obligatory female following, but can still be fun.

Le Seven (Map p150; ☎ 842 6911; seven_dkr@yahoo.fr; 25 Rue Mohamed V) This is the glittering queen of Dakar's bars. Think champagne bubbles, tiny tank tops, the latest hits. So *branché* (literally 'plugged in') that you risk electrocution, this is where the in-crowd parties.

Snooker Palace (Map p150; ☎ 822 9487; 44 Rue Wagane Diouf) This polished snooker hall starts early and gets hotter by the hour. Giant plasma screens ooze class and are perfect for watching football matches.

Café Indigo (Map p150; ☎ 842 2607; 26 Rue Félix Faure; ☺ 7am-midnight) Somewhere between a restaurant, a café and a bar, this is a relaxed place to start your night out.

Iguane Café (Map p150; 26 Rue Jules Ferry) This tiny place is draped in mock-military decor, but despite the strict camouflage colours of the surroundings it's surprisingly easy-going.

Chez Grenelles (Map p150; ☎ 889 4444; 38 Rue Assane Ndoye) Classy and imaginatively decorated, this place in the Hôtel Ganalé gets crowded with a predominantly French and Lebanese crowd.

Also worth trying:

Bar L'Impérial (Map p150; ☎ 822 2663; Place de l'Indépendance) For those who like their bars nice and calm.

Bar de l'Hôtel de l'Indépendance (Map p150; ☎ 823 1019; Place de l'Indépendance) An uninspired setting, but the views across Dakar are brilliant.

Casino du Port (Map p150; ☎ 842 5311; Blvd de la Libération) Lose your money in luxurious surroundings.

ENTERTAINMENT

For a fun night out, don't even get your kit on before midnight. Leaving the house around 1am shows impeccable timing; returning home before 4am is a sign of weakness. Now go party.

Live Music

Dakar's live-music scene is booming. More and more restaurants and bars are opening small stages, and many nightclubs feature live gigs. In restaurants, admission is often free, while clubs charge between CFA3000 and CFA5000.

Pen'Art (Map p152; ☎ 864 5131; Blvd du Sud) Around the corner from Just 4 U, this is a cosy jazz club with good bands in a relaxed atmosphere. It's also a wi-fi space, which is great if you're trying to get online for free, but does affect the atmosphere – half the crowd hides behind their laptops.

Kilimanjaro (Map p146; Village Artisanal, Soubédioune) The mighty Thione Seck plays here, at his personal club, every weekend. Fabulous. Men – don't forget your suit and tie...

Thiossane (Map p152; ☎ 824 6046; Rue 10) Yousou N'Dour's nightclub was once the hottest place in town but is now frequently closed when the world-music star is out of town. And even if he's there, he rarely appears on stage before 3am. Still, it's a hub of the glittering, hip-swaying, high-heeled *mbalax* scene.

THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Just 4 U (Map p152; ☎ 824 3250, 634 4801; just4u@sentoosn; Av Cheikh Anta Diop; ☺ 11am-3am) There are few places where a platter of grilled fish is served in more welcoming surroundings than in the lovingly decorated open-air space of this restaurant-cum-bar. But that's not even the point. People flock to Just 4 U because it's by far the best address for live music in Dakar. There's a concert on every night, sometimes even two, and Senegalese greats such as Cheikh Lô, Souleymane Faye and Orchestra Baobab perform regularly on the small stage. This is usually the first stop for visiting stars, and with a bit of luck you might just take in a performance by the likes of Salif Keita, Philip Monteiro, Viviane N'Dour or Omar Pene while enjoying a sumptuous three-course meal.

Alizé Club (Map p152; Av Cheikh Anta Diop) You want to master the *mbalax*? The informal environment of this live-music club is a good place to practise that seductive hip swing.

Sunset (Map p146; ☎ 821 2118; Centre Commercial Sahm) Similarly popular with the Dakarais, this club is on the northeastern corner of the intersection of Av Blaise Diagne and Blvd de la Gueule-Tapée, about 3km northwest of Marché Sandaga.

Nightclubs

Playclub (Map p150; 46 Rue Jules Ferry) The club of the Hôtel Al Afifa is a classy affair for the over 30s, so the music is smooth and comes spiced with salsa beats.

Koulgraoul (Map p148; ☎ 505 6969; Rte de la Corniche-Est; admission CFA2500) This relaxed club night held once a month in the garden of the Océanium (behind the Palais Présidentiel) attracts a mixed, laid-back crowd. Relief – a less dressed-up affair than most of Dakar's clubs.

King's Club (Map p150; 32 Rue Victor Hugo) This inner-city club is hugely popular for its heavy dance beats and good vibes.

Theatre

Théâtre Daniel Sorano (Map p148; ☎ 822 1715; Blvd de la République) This is Dakar's proudest theatre. The Ensemble Instrumental, the Ballet National du Sénégal and the Théâtre National du Sénégal perform here on occasion. Check listings magazines and posters for event updates.

MBALAX FEVER

It's Saturday night, you're all decked out in your gladdest rags, and ready for a night on the dance floor. You're in Dakar, you're in the right place. Enter any one of the city's fancy clubs and you'll be greeted by the familiar sight of mirrors, showy lighting, huge amps and, yes, spinning disco balls. But that's where the comfort zone stops. Time to hit the dance floor and put your suppleness to the test. Already you feel underdressed among the glittering crowds – the curve-hugging dresses, sparkling heels and perfectly fitted shirts of the Senegalese. And now the *mbalax* beat kicks in, that uniquely Senegalese rhythm that sends legs spinning and provokes the most outrageously sensual hip gyrations. Keen dancers form small circles, urging each other on with laughter and hand claps to ever more daring moves. The beat gets faster, the air-conditioning loses against the body heat. Pearls of sweat appear on your forehead and that strapless top seems too much to wear. That's when the DJ switches. The lights go down, the music slows to a sensual *zouk*, and the clusters of dancers dissolve into tightly glued couples. As the night wears on, you'll swing your way through the latest R&B, heavy hip-hop from the USA and Senegal, and a few pounding techno tracks – enough to throw off any shyness and loosen up for the next round of *mbalax*.

Cinemas

Kadjinol Station (Map p150; ☎ 842 8662; www.kadjinol-edu.com; ☎ 11am-3am) This lounge bar and global-food restaurant off Rue Sarraut also has the most interesting film selection in town, with a strong focus on world cinema, as well as Hollywood classics and recent hits. Film viewings are free with purchase of drinks and/or food.

SHOPPING Central Dakar

Dakar isn't really the place for a relaxed shopping stroll. You'll be too busy clutching your purse, shaking off hustlers and dodging parked cars to appreciate a relaxed promenade around the inner city. Still, there are a few places worth venturing into town for, most of them in the side streets between Av Pompidou and Blvd de la République. The **Institut Français** (Map p150; ☎ 823 0320; www.institutfr-dakar.org; 89 Rue Joseph Gomis) is one of Senegal's major outlets of the Maam Samba label, which is known for its simply cut clothes made from rich, stunningly coloured cottons. All ingredients are natural, and the fabrics are woven, dyed and sewn locally by the women of Ndem village, and sold fairtrade.

For children's clothes, two boutiques on Rue Assane Ndoye have cute, African-style cuts: **Garmy's Confection** (Map p150; ☎ 822 6126) and **Cajou** (Map p150) right next door, which also has a lovely range of toys and bags made from African fabrics. The spacious **Cocktail du Sénégal** (Map p150; ☎ 823 5315; 108 Rue Moussé Diop)

TAILOR MADE

Dakar isn't normally included in the list of the world's capitals of style, but that's a serious omission. Dakar emanates chic. At any time of day, the city's sandy pavements are dotted with a dazzling range of colours, fabrics designed to reflect the sunlight in shimmering sparks, and myriad imaginative versions of the classic *boubou* (elaborate robe-like outfit worn by men and women) cut. Your holiday wardrobe will have a hard time competing. But worry not, the Senegalese love for all things elegant has brought with it a multitude of tailor shops. Time to get your own tailor-made gown.

First step: find your designer of choice. Dakar has everything, from the ateliers of world-famous designers such as Oumou Sy to numerous tiny shacks in all the major markets, where tailors churn out garments to meet local demand.

The best place by far to rummage for material is the Marché HLM in the lively neighbourhood HLM – every taxi driver knows it. Stroll along the countless boutiques and roughly constructed stalls, look, feel, negotiate hard and take your pick. Then take your precious wares to a tailor shop, dig up the artisan from under the pile of neatly folded fabrics, half-finished ensembles, threads, needles and sewing-machine oils, and explain the design you've got in mind. Just take along any drawings or clothes that will help explain your ideas. In less than a week, your item could be ready, and you ready to be seen.

At the smaller tailor shops you can have an item made for CFA10,000 to CFA20,000. At the more established places prices go up to about CFA40,000, much higher at the designers' showrooms. To find a good tailor, best ask the locals – everyone has their 'house favourite'.

also has a very good selection of clothes, both for children and adults, along with a great variety of original gifts, souvenirs and jewellery.

For quality African art and craftwork, try **Galerie Antenna** (Map p150; ☎ 822 1751; 9 Rue Félix Faure) near the Sofitel Teranga. The 'Moroccan mile' on Rue Mohamed V, between Av Pompidou and Rue Assane Ndoye, has a line of small shops with masks, carvings and other objects from all over West and central Africa. On the same street you will find shops selling Moroccan or Algerian-style carpets, leatherwork, pottery, Maghreb clothing and shoemakers that can produce stylish, made-to-measure footwear.

Point E

The leafy suburb of Point E is home to several chic boutiques – it's the place to rummage for souvenirs beyond the obvious. **Naaj** (Map p152; ☎ 825 7546; Rue 1) sells elegant tableware, decorated using Senegal's traditional *sous-verre* technique. **Fil & Pampilles** (Map p152; ☎ 824 0931; Blvd Canal IV) is the place to rummage for unique, contemporary craftwork, ranging from gaudily painted furniture and woven handbags to silver jewellery and classy *sous-verre* art. The airy patio setting of **Agora** (Map p152; ☎ 864 1448; Rue D) displays beautiful Moroccan artwork and

homewares and furnishings at steep prices. For music, the **Koulgraoul Music Shop** (Map p152; Fann; ☎ 9am-11pm) near the university has a great range of African and international CDs and cassettes, both new and used. And, here comes the real gem, the **Atelier Baba Diawara** (Map p146; Rte de la Corniche-Ouest) opposite Marché Soubédioune is a magic corner selling bags, toys, CD stands, lamps and various other objects from recycled cans. A cool alternative to the usual touristy masks and batiks.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

The Léopold Sédar Senghor International Airport is in Yoff. For details of flights between Dakar and international or regional destinations, see p279. Within Senegal, Dakar is connected to Saint-Louis, Cap Skiring, Ziguinchor and Tambacounda, though some upcountry airports are only served seasonally. For further information, see p291.

The following airline offices in Dakar can answer international flight inquiries, confirm flights and make reservations.

Air Algérie (Map p150; ☎ 823 5548; 2 Place de l'Indépendance)

Air France (Map p150; ☎ 829 7777; 47 Av Albert Sarraut)

MARKET-HOPPING

Dakar's markets are among the city's most fantastic features, and you can have a hugely entertaining time spending a day or two market-hopping. Just take plenty of energy and some money (best hidden in your pockets, as it's not advisable to carry bags or large wallets around the crammed market streets) and prepare for some hard negotiating with the shrewd traders.

If you want to plunge in headfirst, start at **Marché Sandaga** (Map p150; Av Pompidou), Dakar's largest, busiest and most central market (and the one where you're most likely to have your purse stolen). The market lies at the intersection of Av du Président Lamine Guèye and Av Émile Badiane. There's little you won't find here, and eager traders will try to satisfy even the most extraordinary requests. Hi-fi systems, folds of fabric, clothes and pirate videos are sold at stalls and hang off the shoulders of walking merchants. In Av Émile Badiane you'll find some of Dakar's best choices of CDs and cassettes, and a massive, Sudanese-inspired construction that houses plenty of grocery, meat and fish stalls.

At the Hôtel de l'Indépendance, the **Touareg jewellery market** (Map p150; Place de l'Indépendance) has a shining selection of beautifully decorated rings, earrings and necklaces – if it's around, that is. The traders occasionally dismantle their mobile stalls for exhibitions elsewhere.

The **Marché Malien** (Map p148; Av Faidherbe), near the station, is the place for women who are keen to learn the Senegalese art of seduction. All the ingredients, including incense, the earthenware you need to burn it in, mixed perfumes and jingling waist beads, are sold here.

The covered **Marché Kermel** (Map p150), behind Av Sarraut and within walking distance of Marché Sandaga, sells a mixture of foodstuffs and souvenirs. It's mainly worth visiting for the beautiful building that shelters its busy stalls. The original 1860 construction burnt down in 1994, but the 1997 reconstruction has been closely modelled on the building's initial structure and decoration.

Then it's time to head out of the city centre and into the heart of the Médina (a hire taxi there will cost around CFA1000). Created in colonial days, as a 'township' for African residents, this is still a popular and slightly deprived *quartier*, though one that buzzes with sights, sounds and smells. The bustling **Marché de Tilène** (Map p148; Av Blaise Diagne) mainly sells fruit, vegetables and daily household objects. The *quartier* itself has plenty of tiny tailor shops, perfect to get your clothing of choice made at a fraction of the retail price.

The Village Artisanal market of **Soumbédioune** (Map p146) on the Rte de la Corniche-Ouest, is one of the most popular places to buy woodcarvings, metalwork, ivory and batiks. It's squarely aimed at tourists, so prepare for some serious bargaining. Soumbédioune is also home to a busy fish market. Come in the late afternoon to catch sight of colourful pirogues rolling in to unload stacks of fish, prawns and crabs. You can buy the fish directly from the local women, who sort, prepare and sell it at the market.

Across town, you can observe the same spectacular event at the **Hann Fish Market** (Map p146).

The fabulous **Marché des HLM** (Map p146; Av CA Bamba) is the best place to buy African fabrics. Hundreds of rolls of wax-dyed *bazin* (dyed fabrics beaten to a shine with wooden clubs), vibrant prints, embroidered cloth, lace and silk lend colour to the ramshackle stalls and dusty streets of this popular *quartier*. You can get matching shoes, bags and jewellery at the same place, and even have your new ensemble sewn here.

A little further north is the relaxed **Marché Castors** (Map p146) in the residential suburb of the same name. Here it's all about fruit, vegetables, spices and cooking ingredients.

Air Guinée (Map p150; ☎ 821 4442; 25 Av Pompidou)

Air Ivoire (Map p146; ☎ 889 0280; www.airivoire.com; 31 Rue Abdul Karim Bourgi)

Air Mali (Map p150; ☎ 823 2461; 14 Rue El Haji M'Baye Gueye)

Air Mauritanie (Map p150; ☎ 822 8188; 2 Place de l'Indépendance)

Air Sénégal International (Map p150; ☎ 804 0404; 45 Av Albert Sarraut)

Alitalia (Map p150; ☎ 823 3874; 5 Av Pompidou)

Iberia (Map p150; ☎ 823 3477; 2 Place de l'Indépendance)

Royal Air Maroc (Map p150; ☎ 849 4747; 1 Place de l'Indépendance)

SN Brussels (Map p150; ☎ 823 0460; Rue Amadou Assane Ndoye)

South African Airways (Map p150; ☎ 823 0151; 12 Av Albert Sarraut)

TACV Cabo Verde Airlines (Map p150; ☎ 821 3968; 105 Rue Moussé Diop)

TAP Air Portugal (Map p150; ☎ 821 0065; Rue Amadou Assane Ndoye)

Boat

The excellent ferry boat *Le Wilis* (brand new in 2005) travels between Dakar and Ziguinchor twice weekly in each direction. For more details see p231.

Bush Taxi & Minibus

Ndiaga Ndiayes (white Mercedes bus, used as public transport in Senegal) and bush taxis for long-distance destinations leave from Gare Routière Pompiers (Map p148), at the junction of the autoroute and Av Malick Sy (3km north of Place de l'Indépendance), or from Gare Routière Colobane (Map p146).

Journey durations are impossible to quote with certainty, as they depend on tyre punctures, the number of people and the time it takes to get out of Dakar.

Taxis and minibuses only leave when they're full, and most people travel early. To get a quick start, be at the station well before 9am. (The only way to avoid Dakar's gridlock is to get out of town before 7am).

Sept-place taxis are slightly more expensive, but preferable to minibuses. They are safer, fill up quicker and arrive faster as there are fewer people to drop off on the way. You almost always have to pay extra for luggage (generally CFA100 per item).

Driving in Dakar can be a real nightmare – the city is almost permanently gridlocked. At the time of research, the Rte de la Corniche-Ouest and the Rond-Point de Kolobane had been blocked off due to huge roadwork projects, designed to improve traffic flow in the future. Until those have finished, expect traffic chaos.

Car & Motorcycle

There are several major car-rental agencies in Dakar:

Avis (Map p146; ☎ 849 7757; www.cfaogroup.com) At the airport.

Budget (Map p148; ☎ 822 2513) Has branches on the corner of Av du Président Lamine Guèye and Av Faidherbe, and agents at the airport.

Hertz (Map p150; ☎ 820 1174; www.hertz.sn) Has branches at the airport and on Rue Joseph Gomis in central Dakar.

Independent car-hire companies include the following:

Afrique Location (Map p150; ☎ 823 8801; 28 Rue Assane Ndoye)

Assurcar (Map p148; ☎ 823 7251; www.assurcar.sn) Near the Île de Gorée ferry terminal.

Dakar Location (Map p150; ☎ 823 8610; 7 Rue de Thiong)

Noprola (Map p150; ☎ 821 7311; 29 Rue Assane Ndoye)

Senecartours (Map p150; ☎ 889 7777; www.senecartours.sn; 64 Rue Carnot)

Silcar (Map p146; ☎ 859 0086; silcar@silcar.sn) Car hire is possible at the airport.

For a list of all operators see www.au-senegal.com; in the English version click Travel & Transport, then on Where to Rent a Car.

Car Mouride

This long-distance bus service is financed by the Sufi brotherhood of the Mourides (hence the name). Most buses are clean and safe, and the service is fairly reliable. Still, they are generally much slower than bush taxis and not particularly comfortable.

Book your seat ahead of travel (a couple of days notice is usually enough) at the office of the **Gare Routière Pompiers** (Map p148; ☎ 821 8585), off Av Lamine Gueye. It's always safer to go there in person. Most buses leave in the middle of the night (check exact departure times at the office), and thanks to the booking system they don't take too long to fill up.

Buses leave from a petrol station that doubles as a bus stop at an intersection of Malik Sy and Av Félix Eboué, near the Gare Routière Pompiers. Incoming transport sometimes terminates at Gare Routière Kolobane, about 2km north of Gare Routière Pompiers.

Train

Only one of Senegal's train lines survives – the train that goes from Dakar to Bamako (Mali) via several towns, including Thiès, Diourbel and Tambacounda. The service is completely unreliable and derailments are frequent. If you're keen on the adventure (which it certainly is), check the latest state of the service at Dakar's train station. If you

PUBLIC TRANSPORT FROM DAKAR

Following are public-transport costs for various destinations. Note that the prices given here are an indication only. Minor variations may be due to a luggage charge and, most likely, the rising cost of petrol.

Destination	Sept-place	Minibus	Ndiaga Ndiaye
Bakel	11,500	9500	9000
Kaolack	2600	1650	1350
Karang (Gambia)	5500	4500	3500
Mbour	1300	1000	670
Rosso	5510	3880	3440
Saint-Louis	3500	2600	2200
Tambacounda	7500	6000	5000
Thiès	1200	900	800
Touba	3200	1900	1500
Ziguinchor	7500	5500	5000

really want to get somewhere, take a bush taxi. For details of the train to Bamako, see p283.

GETTING AROUND To/From the Airport

The journey from the airport to town is the only one with a fixed rate (CFA3000), though prices may well have risen by the time you read this. You can change money or use the ATM inside the terminal. Yoff and N'Gor are a lot closer, and should be cheaper (around CFA2000), though you might have to pay the full rate depending on how well you negotiate.

If you want to save a couple of hundred CFA, walk out of the airport onto the main road and flag down a taxi there.

Bus

Dakar's DDD (Dakar Dem Dikk, or 'Dakar going and returning') bus service is surprisingly good, and the large, blue DDD buses go and come back regularly – every 10 to 15 minutes during the day. They have fixed stops (some clearly visible, with small waiting cubicles, others simply marked by a tiny DDD sign stuck in the ground) and theoretically go every 10 minutes, depending on how tight the gridlock is. Short distances cost CFA150, longer ones range from

CFA175 to CFA250, with prices conforming to a system of zones. Pay for your ticket at the conductor's booth on the bus.

You can view the full network, complete with maps and prices, at www.demdikk.com. Some useful circuits:

No 1 Parcelles Assainies–Place Leclerc From the heart of town via the suburbs all the way up the peninsula.

No 7 Ouakam–Palais de Justice Travels the length of Ave Cheikh Anta Diop into the centre of town.

No 8 Aéroport (Yoff)–Palais de Justice The direct bus route from the airport to the centre of town.

No 11 Keur Massar–Palais 1 Takes you from Keur Massar, en route to Keur Moussa and Lac Rose right through to the centre of town.

No 16 Malika–Palais A direct connection between the village Malika and the town centre.

Car Rapide

These colourfully decorated, blue-and-yellow minibuses are Dakar icons, and while travelling in these pretty (though battered) vehicles is certainly an experience, the routes they follow are hard to understand if you don't know the city well. Destinations aren't marked, and the assistants perched dangerously on the back shout directions so fast that untrained ears won't understand a thing. If you approach to ask, chances are you'll be ushered in before you can protest, as the assistants are always keen to fill up a bus. *Car rapide* drivers have a reputation for driving dangerously, and stop frequently and randomly. When you want to get off, just tap a coin on the roof or window. Journeys cost between CFA50 and CFA100.

Ndiaga Ndiaye

This is another one for Dakar insiders. These privately owned, white 30-seater minibuses adorned with colourful decorations (most with *Alhamdoulilai* – meaning 'Thank God' – across the front) roughly follow the same routes as the DDD buses. Fares are between CFA100 and CFA150 depending on the length of your trip. Destinations and routes are not marked, so you'll have to ask or listen for the call from the apprentice.

Senbus

These white minibuses are made in Senegal. They were newly introduced in 2006 and are eventually supposed to replace the battered *cars rapides*. That's a little sad, seeing

that the *cars rapides* are such an integral and typical part of Dakar street life, but it's good news for travellers. They are much more comfortable and infinitely more user-friendly, with clearly marked destinations and fairly fixed stops. Rates are the same as for *cars rapides*.

Taxi

Going by taxi is definitely the easiest way to get around Dakar, and the one most travellers rely on. You simply negotiate your fare and get dropped off exactly where you want. Dakar taxis are equipped with dusty old meters, but it's been years since any of them worked, so prices are up for discussion.

For a short ride across the city centre, the fare should be around CFA500. From Place de l'Indépendance to Gare Routière Pompiers is around CFA750, and Dakar Centre to Point E is around CFA1000. Rates go up at night and on public holidays. Hiring a taxi for day trips around Dakar should cost around CFA25,000.

CAP VERT PENINSULA

The Cap Vert peninsula stretches away beyond downtown Dakar, punctuated by a series of satellite towns and fishing villages that have expanded with the city and now blur into what has become greater Dakar. But these suburbs and settlements are far from uniform.

To the east of the city centre, about 3km offshore, is Île de Gorée (Gorée Island), one of the earliest European settlements along this part of the coast, and today a haven of history and peace within easy reach of the frenetic activity of Dakar. To the west are the Îles de la Madeleine, a national park with not a single historic site but plenty to see and a great place to just chill out in the rock pool.

North of the city centre, at the western tip of the Cap Vert peninsula, is Pointe Almadié – the African continent's westernmost tip. Along the coast from here are N'Gor and Yoff – the former an untidy mix of fishing village and seaside resort favoured at weekends by escapees from the crowded city, and the latter a compact traditional town with a fascinating cultural heritage but little in the way of tourist facilities.

East of here is the vast sprawling settlement of Pikine, stretching across the neck of the peninsula and almost connecting the north and south coasts. Pikine is technically a separate entity, but in reality it's a working-class suburb of Dakar that has expanded so rapidly it now has a larger population than the capital itself. Many of Senegal's famous wrestlers, rappers and other streetwise, self-made heroes stem from this vast sprawl of clapboard housing and crammed streets.

Beyond Pikine, the Cap Vert peninsula begins to widen and merge with the mainland. Within easy reach of Dakar are several more interesting places to visit, including the beaches at Malika, the monastery of Keur Moussa, and the great pink lagoon of Lac Rose (also called Lac Retba).

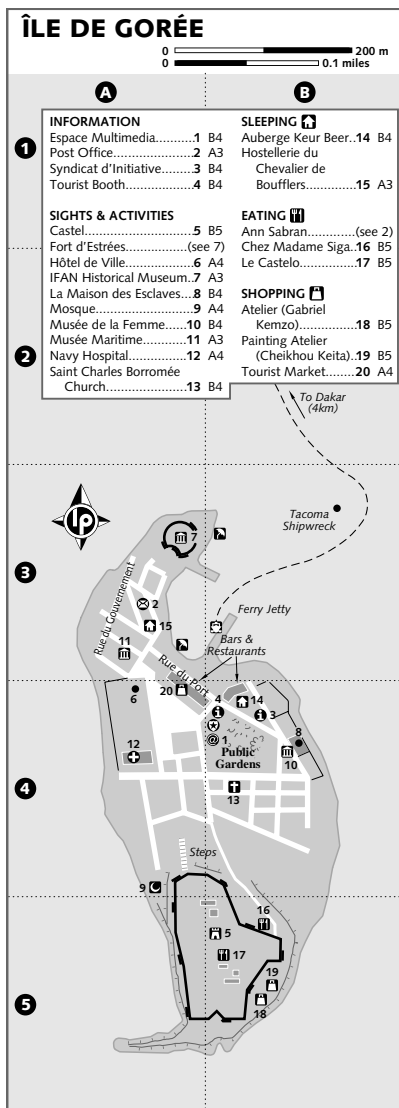
ÎLE DE GORÉE

It's only a 30-minute ferry ride from Dakar's hectic port to Gorée Island – 23 hectares of almost complete stillness. Where Dakar is all traffic noise, car fumes and beeping horns, Gorée is enveloped by an almost eerie calm, only disturbed by breaking waves, rustling leaves and voices. There are no tar roads and no cars on this island, just narrow alleyways filled with trailing bougainvillea and colonial brick structures whose wrought-iron balconies suggest Mediterranean love stories.

But Gorée's calm is not so much romantic as meditative. Ancient buildings bear witness to the island's role in the Atlantic slave trade. They attract visitors in search of historical truth, and have given rise to plenty of cultural initiatives like the **Gorée Diaspora Festival** (☎ 823 9177; www.goreediasporafestival.org; Mairie de Gorée), an annual celebration of music from Africa and the African diaspora. If you visit Gorée in May or June, you might be so lucky as to catch the annual 'Day of the open doors', when the island's many artists' workshops and some private homes are open to the public.

Information

Any tourist entering Gorée needs to pay a tourist tax of CFA500. You pay this at the tourist information booth near the ferry landing. You can also hire tourist guides here or at the **Syndicat d'Initiative** (Map p168; ☎ 823 9177; Rue du Port; ☎ 9am-1pm & 2.30-5pm



try the small tourist booth near the police station.

Gorée has a post office and an Internet café, **Espce Multimedia** (per hr CFA500; ☎ 10am-1pm & 3-10pm), both near the ferry jetty.

Sights

There's plenty to see on the island to fill a day, but don't come on a Monday, as all the museums and historical buildings will be closed.

The island's most famous building is **La Maison des Esclaves** (admission CFA500; ☎ Tue-Sun 10.30am-noon & 2.30-6pm). No trip to the island is complete without a visit to this 1776 Dutch construction, whose arched staircase opening to the ocean has become a symbolic image of the horrors of slavery. For more details see the boxed text, opposite.

The base of the **Castel** at the southern tip of the island is another Dutch building, though one that was erected in the 17th century, well before the slave house was built. Over the centuries other fortifications were added, including massive WWII guns, which sank a British warship in the harbour. You can walk up on its rocky plateau, from where you get excellent views over the island and across the water to Dakar. Today, the Castel is inhabited by a group of Baye Fall disciples (for more information on them, see the boxed text, p45).

Gorée's two sacred buildings are also worth seeing. The 1830 **Saint Charles Borromée Church** is an imposing building that's usually open to visitors, while the **mosque** (Castel), built in 1892, is one of the oldest stone mosques in Senegal.

There are several museums on the island. The **IFAN Historical Museum** (Fort d'Estrées; admission CFA200; ☎ 10am-1pm & 2.30-6pm Tue-Sat) has interesting pictures and artefacts portraying Senegalese history up to the present day. It's also worth visiting for its building, the ancient French **Fort d'Estrées** (1850). The permanent exhibition at the **Musée de la Femme** (Rue du Port; admission CFA500; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun), dedicated to the role of Senegalese women throughout history, is at least as interesting and really comes to life in the tour (CFA350) given by the enthusiastic museum guide. The **Musée Maritime** (admission CFA500), in an 18th-century West Indies company building, isn't quite as scintillating as the building it's housed in. Both the

Tue-Sun), rather than using one of the free-lancers lurking around the ferry jetty. But Gorée is tiny and can easily be explored independently.

For leaflets and books, including the excellent *Gorée – The Island and the Historical Museum*, the Syndicat d'Initiative is a good address. For some on-the-spot information,

LA MAISON DES ESCLAVES

Île de Gorée was a busy slave- and goods-trading centre during the 18th and 19th centuries, and many merchants built houses in which they would live or work in the upper storey and store their cargoes on the lower floor.

The Maison des Esclaves (Slave House) is one of the last remaining 18th-century buildings of this type on Gorée. It was built in 1786 and renovated in 1990 with French assistance. With its famous doorway opening directly from the storeroom onto the sea, this building has enormous spiritual significance for some visitors, particularly African-Americans whose ancestors were brought from Africa as slaves.

Walking around the dimly lit dungeons, particularly after a visit to the historical museum, you will begin to imagine the suffering of the people held here. This is reinforced by the gruesome details provided by the Slave House curator. The Maison des Esclaves is an important symbol and reminder of the horrors of the slave trade. However, although an important slave-trading culture did exist in Gorée, the island's role as a major slave-shipment point is sometimes overstated. Of the 20 million slaves that were taken from Africa, only 300 per year may have gone through Gorée and, even then, the famous doorway would not have been used – ships could not get near the dangerous rocks and the town had a jetty a short distance away.

But the number of slaves transported from here isn't necessarily what matters in the debate around Gorée. The island, and particularly the Maison des Esclaves, stands as a terrible reminder of the immense suffering inflicted on African people as a result of the Atlantic slave trade.

old **Navy Hospital** and the **Hôtel de Ville**, just north of the hospital, are interesting historical buildings.

Sleeping

Gorée's hotels rarely get booked up, but if you find them full, you can always inquire at some of the bars and restaurants facing the ferry jetty about a room in a private home. Rates start at CFA7500 per room per night.

Auberge Keur Beer (☎ /fax 821 3801; keurbeergie@yahoo.fr; Rue du Port; s/d CFA20,000/25,000) Gorée's most popular place has pristine rooms. Management is full of useful information and can even arrange accommodation in private homes should the auberge be full.

Hostellerie du Chevalier de Boufflers (☎ 822 5364; www.boufflers.com; r from CFA18,000) Best known for its terrace restaurant overlooking the harbour, this place in the northern part of Gorée has several rooms spread across a whole block. Prices vary depending on the view and the floor. Best are the enormous, tastefully decorated rooms upstairs that sleep up to five.

Eating

For food, try the two hotels, or any of the stretch of restaurants opposite the ferry jetty. At the post office, **Ann Sabran** (☎ 826 9429; dishes around CFA2500) is a cosy port-side restaurant

where the meals are simple and the sandwiches filling. At the Castel, your choice is between the local *gargotte* (basic eatery) **Chez Madame Siga** or **Le Castelo** (dishes around CFA2500), superbly located on top of the plateau.

Shopping

Just behind the row of bars and restaurants facing the ferry jetty is a little tourist market that's crammed full of crafts and batiks. The countless stalls that line the ascent to the Castel sell similar souvenirs and cheap paintings.

If you really want to invest in some artwork, it's best to go directly to the workshop of one of several artists who have made Gorée their home. The brilliant sculptor Gabriel Kemzo has his atelier in a beautiful spot near the Castel, formerly the workshop of his teacher, the renowned Moustapha Dimé. Cheikhou Keita, one of Senegal's most outstanding painters, also lives nearby. His home and atelier can be visited.

Getting There & Away

A **ferry** (☎ 849 7961, 24hr infoline 628 1111) runs regularly from the wharf in Dakar, just north of Place de l'Indépendance, to Île de Gorée. The trip across takes 20 minutes and costs CFA5000 return for foreigners. For the ferry timetable phone the infoline or check www.ausenegal.com.

TWITCHER TIPS: ÎLES DE LA MADELEINE

The 45-hectare park of the Îles de la Madeleine is home to an impressive number of birds. The black kite, the islands' emblem, is only one species to be observed here. There are also breeding colonies of common cormorants, northern gannets, bridled terns, ospreys and red-billed tropical birds – the latter a beautiful specimen with narrow, swept-back wings, and long tail streamers in the breeding season.

ÎLES DE LA MADELEINE

Declared a national park in 1985, the Îles de la Madeleine are west of central Dakar, about 4km off the mainland. Consisting of a main island called Sarpan and two other islets – plus several lumps of volcanic rock that stick out of the water at low tide – they are not inhabited, which makes their nature very interesting. Sarpan's dwarf baobab trees are worth looking at, and with a bit of luck you might spot dolphins or turtles. The best thing to do on the Madeleines is bird-watch (see above). If small trees and big birds don't make your heart beat faster, you can come here for some snorkelling, diving or swimming in the rock pool.

Remember to bring all the food and water you'll need as well as a hat, as there's virtually no shade.

Getting There & Away

To reach the Îles de la Madeleine, go to the well-signposted **National Park Office** (☎ 821 8182) on Rte de la Corniche-Ouest, just a few metres north of Casino Terrou-Bi and Magic Land; ask for park rangers Mr Seck or Mr Mbaye. A park ranger will organise your trip to the islands (admission adult/child under 10 CFA1000/free; pirogue 20 minutes, CFA3000). Groups of three to 10 people get a CFA1000 discount per person.

Alternatively, the **Océanium** (Map p148; ☎ 822 2441; www.oceanium.org; Rte de la Corniche-Est) runs diving trips to the islands.

LES ALMADIES

Les Almadies is Dakar's *quartier chic*, a plush neighbourhood where the polished villas of Senegal's richest look out onto private beaches. It's also home to the city's best

hotel, a string of lively bars and restaurants, and a great popular ambience that brews behind the luxury dwellings in the street-side food stalls and secret surfer spots at the Pointe des Almadies.

Route des Almadies & Route de N'Gor

The Route des Almadies, the northern continuation of the Rte de la Corniche-Ouest, is the area's lifeline. It's lined with several restaurants, bars and hotels and there will probably be plenty more by the time you visit. The major banks have branches with ATMs, and there's **Librairie Polyglotte** (Map p146; ☎ 820 8887; polyglotte@sentoo.sn; Rte de N'Gor, Les Almadies), a friendly little bookstore with a good selection of English-language books and magazines.

SLEEPING & EATING

The only cheapie in this realm of the affluent is **La Darkasse** (Map p146; ☎ 820 0353; Rte de N'Gor; CFA15,100/17,100), which somewhat resembles a bleak office block, but has decent rooms for the price you pay. The **Airport Hotel** (Map p146; ☎ 820 0480; Rte de N'Gor; s/d CFA39,000/43,000; 🚗 🚻), a little further north, is more upmarket – you obviously pay for luxuries such as gleaming tiles, TV and your own bathroom. For slightly more you can get a beautiful room with an American breakfast bar at the **Hôtel La Détente** (Map p146; ☎ 820 3975; contact@hotel-ladentente.com; Rte des Almadies; s/d from CFA39,000/47,000), which overlooks a pretty garden. **Le Lodge des Almadies** (Map p146; ☎ 869 0345; hotellelodge@sentoo.sn; Rte des Almadies; r CFA35,000) tops the list. It's a hotel with a personal touch – the tastefully decorated rooms and luxurious, mosaic-decorated bathrooms ooze character and loving attention. And it's got one of Dakar's best restaurants to boot.

DRINKING & ENTERTAINMENT

This is an area to go out rather than stay in – just compare the number of hotels to that of bars. The **Monte Christo** (Map p146; Rte des Almadies) is a classy bar-restaurant with a subdued atmosphere, a good selection of cocktails and fine French cuisine. The trendy **Koch B.** (Map p146; ☎ 820 8671; Rte des Almadies; 🍷 12pm–3am) next door is a nicely laid-out bar with comfy armchairs. It regularly attracts the Dakarois in-crowd. Across the road, the **Blue Note** (Map p146; Rte des Almadies) with its multiple bar spaces is great for live music. The **News Café** (Map p146;

Rte des Almadies) is a cosy place for some mean cocktails at night and a sumptuous pancake breakfast (CFA2900) the morning after.

Hidden in the *quartier* is **Alma City** (Map p146; ☎ 820 2410), one of the most discreetly fabulous developments of modern Dakar. The small complex off Rte des Almadies houses a tiny but colourful restaurant as well as a recording studio and concert and theatre space. And it's one of the city's few wireless spots.

Clubbers are well catered for with the **Casino du Cap Vert** (Map p146; ☎ 820 0974), one of city's busiest nightspots. But its thunder has recently been stolen by the **Senat** (Map p146) at Le Meridien President, which is now the magnet for Dakar's flashy young crowd. To spot famous footballers, singers and the like, head here.

Pointe des Almadies

This understated cape is the *quartier's* liveliest spot, framed by several good restaurants, groups of women roasting fish on the street and an unassuming artisans market.

SLEEPING & EATING

Opposite Club Med (Map p146), the palatial **Le Meridien President** (Map p146; ☎ 869 6969; www.lemeridien-dakar.com; r from CFA90,000) overlooks the Pointe des Almadies. It's undeniably the finest hotel in and around Dakar and has every facility you could possibly want (including its own golf club and heliport) and prices to match – rates go much, much higher than that listed here.

The bustling community of small restaurants huddled together at the Pointe stands in complete contrast to such refined luxury. You can either have your fish grilled by one of the women who have put up their stalls near the stony beach or go for something with a roof. **La Pointe des Almadies** (Map p146; ☎ 820 0140; mains around CFA3500; 🍷 Tue–Sun) is an enduring institution, with good food, including Vietnamese specialities, in a wide setting complete with flower garden and swimming pool. More Vietnamese is served at the nearby **La Récif des Almadies** (Map p146; ☎ 820 1160; dishes around CFA2800–5000; 🍷 lunch & dinner Thu–Tue), an airy sea-view place that gets good reviews. For ambience, **La Crêpe Bretonne** (Map p146; crêpes from CFA1500) is unbeatable. It gets particularly lively on Sunday afternoons, when Dakar's youth comes out to

play. **Le Dionewar** (Map p146; meals around CFA5000) keeps locals coming back for its seafood.

N'GOR

East of the point, the sheltered **Plage N'Gor** (N'Gor Beach; Map p146) tastes of carefree beach holidays. You can swim here or indulge in one of several restaurants. A short boat ride (CFA500 return) across the bay takes you to Île de N'Gor (Map p146), a tiny island with more fine beaches and a couple of relaxed hotels.

Sleeping & Eating

PLAGE N'GOR

The **Hotel N'Gor Diarama** (Map p146; ☎ 820 1005; fax 820 2723; r CFA45,000) is the monolith on the headland to the east. A touch more informal is **La Madrague** (Map p146; ☎ 820 0364; 🚻), one of the nicest places on Plage N'Gor, though the sea-view rooms tend to get booked up quickly. A few steps along, **La Brazzerade** (Map p146; ☎ 820 0364; www.labrazzerade.com; d/ste CFA20,000/35,000; 🚻 🚻) has transformed itself from one of the best grilled-food places in Dakar into a cosy, affordable, sea-view hotel with solar-powered hot water and, of course, great grilled food. Seafood lovers mustn't miss a dinner at the **Cabane des Pêcheurs** (Map p146; meals around CFA6000–9000; 🍷 11am–11pm), where freshly caught, prepared and heavenly spiced fish is served with real fisherman's insight.

ÎLE DE N'GOR

Chez Carla (Map p146; ☎ 820 1586; d with/without breakfast CFA20,000/15,000), on the western beach, has long been a N'Gor favourite – both for its cosy rooms and its fine Italian food (dishes cost about CFA3000). The **Sunu Ma Kan** (Map p146; ☎ 647 8166; r CFA10,000) on the other side of the island is another decent choice, with clean, comfortable rooms and a lively beach restaurant. The **Oasis de la Petite Plage** (Map p146; meals around CFA3000–5000) is an overpriced little eatery, though the beachside setting is appealing.

Getting There & Away

To reach Pointe des Almadies or N'Gor you can take a No 8 bus from central Dakar out towards the airport, and then a taxi from there for about CFA700. Ndiaga Ndiayes run along Av Cheikh Anta Diop all the way to N'Gor. A taxi from central Dakar will cost about CFA2000.

YOFF

A short distance east of N'Gor, but contrasting sharply in feel, is the town of Yoff. On the map it may look like just another suburb, but there's a vital sense of community here that singles it out from other places around Dakar. The people of Yoff are almost exclusively Lebu, renowned fishermen who have inhabited this area for many centuries. Despite, or because of, their relatively small population (they number a few thousand, whereas the Wolof are counted in millions) they have remained culturally intact and retain a great spirit of independence. The town itself is self-administering, with no government officials, no police force and, apparently, no crime. In fact, it was regarded as a separate state by the French colonial authorities before Senegal itself became independent.

The Lebu of Yoff are nearly all members of the Layen, one of the brotherhoods that dominate life in Senegal (for more details see p45). The founder of the brotherhood, Saïdi Limamou Laye, is believed to be a reincarnation of the Prophet Mohammed, and his large **Layen Mausoleum** (Map p146), an impressive 1950 construction, is a highly revered place of pilgrimage for Muslims. The mausoleum is the gleaming white building topped with a green onion-shaped dome on the beach at the eastern end of town.

About 1km northwest of the mausoleum is the main fishing beach, where large pirogues

are launched into the giant rollers and the day's catch is sold straight from the sand. The Lebu fishermen have a healthy respect for the sea and a belief in the spirit it contains, which is represented by a large snake. If the waves are too large, the boats stay on the beach.

Even if the waves weren't so dangerously large and the beach wasn't covered in the town's rubbish, Yoff Plage is no place for swimming or sunbathing: skimpy clothing is inappropriate in this close-knit Muslim community. Forget about 'entertainment', too – there are no clubs or bars, drunkenness is frowned upon and smoking is prohibited in Yoff village. This is a place to come and wander around respectfully, simply taking it all in.

Sights & Activities

Yoff village life and the impressive Layen Mausoleum hold plenty of interest for visitors. Art fans should invest a day doing a tour of Yoff's wider surroundings. The fabulous **Village des Arts** (Map p146; Rte de l'Aéroport) is a bubble of creativity, squeezed between the busy Rte VDN (Voie Dégagement Nord) and the imposing national stadium, Stade Léopold Sédar Senghor. It houses the ateliers of some of Senegal's finest artists, including the sculptor Alpha Sow and painters Kebé and Moussa Mbaye. A stroll through their workshops feels like a personalised tour through the world's most informal art gallery. Around the corner, in

the neighbourhood Nord Foire, you'll see the colourful **Yengoulène** (Map p146; ☎ 869 0710; Nord Foire) sign overlooking the street. This vibrant bar, restaurant and live-music complex is best visited in party mode at night (and especially on weekends when it holds frequent star-studded concerts), but it's also a good place to stop for a coffee during the day. Near Yoff Virage (Yoff bend) is the personally decorated **Atelier Ousmane Sow** (Map p146), the working and living space of Senegal's most famous sculptor.

Sleeping & Eating

Via Via (Map p146; ☎ 820 5475; viavia@sentoo.sn; Rte des Cimetières; s/d incl breakfast CFA9600/17,200) This backpacker favourite at the eastern end of Yoff has been consistently friendly, clean and welcoming for years. People head here for instant peace when fresh off the plane, or to learn to play some *djembe* (a short, goat hide-covered drum) in a relaxed space.

L'Océan (Map p146; ☎ 820 0047; hotelocean@sentoo.sn; Rue de l'Océan; s CFA12,000, d CFA14,000-30,000; 🚗) This is a fairly upmarket place overlooking the sea on the western side of Yoff. Rooms are spacious, and the restaurant (with mains around CFA4500) does a mean Sunday

buffet (CFA9500). At high tide waves break into the swimming pool jutting into the sea.

Le Toucan (Map p146; ☎ /fax 820 9039; meals CFA3000) Follow the signs from the main road to this rooftop restaurant, where the Senegalese fare takes a while to come but is worth the wait.

La Terrasse d'Anvers (Map p146; ☎ 688 0000; Yoff Virage) Beer drinkers rejoice: the name evokes Belgium and this is indeed Dakar's most reliable address for a Belgian brew. It's also an excellent restaurant serving, you guessed it, Belgian food, as well as a wide range of quality international cuisine.

Getting There & Away

Yoff is near the airport and the places to stay listed here are most easily reached from there by taxi – the fare is CFA1500. From Dakar's city centre, a taxi to Yoff should cost around CFA2000. By public transport, take DDD bus No 8. Buses loop through one part of the village, but in order to reach either L'Océan or Via Via you have to get off on the main road and walk down a street towards the beach. All places are signposted.

MALIKA

Only a few years ago the tiny village of Malika, 15km east of Yoff, used to be a favourite weekend hideout for young Dakarois couples. But the once wide and unspoilt beaches are gradually disappearing, due to intensive sand mining close by. Some of its formerly popular *campements* (hostels) have already been claimed by the sea, together with the trees that once surrounded them.

At the moment, it's still a good place to go for a peaceful day away from the inner city. You might be allowed to visit the town's famous Quranic school, you can simply chill out at the beach or, if you're feeling energetic, attempt the three-hour walk along the coast to **Lac Rose** (p174). The beach is pounded by some pretty stunning waves – warning enough not to enter the water. Several people have drowned here in recent years.

Sleeping & Eating

The youth-run **Campement Touristique** (☎ 658 4867; r CFA5000) is pretty run down, but a good option if you don't mind roughing it in exchange for kora and drumming lessons. Right behind, the **Campement Les Dunes** (☎ 650 0254; r CFA5000) looks like an extension

YOFF HEALERS

One of the most interesting aspects of life in Yoff is the traditional *ndeup* ceremonies, where people with a mental illness are treated and healed. People come to be cured from all over Senegal and Gambia and even from neighbouring countries such as Mali and Guinea-Bissau. Despite the town's Islamic heritage, the ceremonies are totally animist and based on a belief that psychological sickness is the result of possession by spirits. The leaders of the Layen brotherhood turn a blind eye to these 'pagan' ceremonies, allowing the two beliefs to comfortably coexist.

The healing ceremonies, which usually last one day but may last longer for serious illnesses, take place about twice a month. The traditional healers sacrifice animals (a chicken or cow, depending on the seriousness of the illness) to invoke intervention from guardian spirits, and place the sick people into a trance-like state that allows malevolent spirits to be drawn out. Some observers have noted that the process is similar to voodoo ceremonies that take place in other parts of West Africa. The healers' services are not cheap; families of people who need treatment reportedly pay large sums (the equivalent of many years' salary), and often several sufferers are treated at the same time.

The ceremonies take place in the centre of Yoff and can attract large crowds of local people. Tourists are tolerated, but watching can be a disturbing experience. It's best to go with a local and keep to the sidelines. Waving a zoom lens around would be the height of insensitivity.

THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Hôtel Cap Ouest (Map p146; ☎ 820 2469; capouest@arc.sn; Yoff Virage; s/d CFA16,000/19,000)

Just when you thought there was no such thing as a good, affordable room in greater Dakar, you stumble across this cosy place right at the wide bend of Yoff Virage. You can get a large, nicely furnished room here for the price of a downtown brothel, and that's just the beginning. The restaurant features changing wall displays of quality contemporary art and opens onto a small beach, perfect for a sunset drink sipped to the sound of waves lapping on the shore. Don't think that the owners just haven't caught up on current room rates in Senegal's capital – they know exactly what excellent value they're offering, as they've got direct comparisons – the fantastic website au-senegal.com is another one of their products, as is the cultural magazine 221. So if you want to travel upcountry, you won't get more up-to-date or in-depth advice anywhere.

of the Campement Touristique. The two places enjoy friendly relations and agree on all prices, all the way down to a plate of chicken with rice (CFA1750). They both look equally dire but try to make up for that with a warm welcome. The **Complexe Nabou** (Keur Guil; ☎ 595 3860; d/apt incl breakfast CFA13,000/16,000) looks like a weather-beaten palace in the wilderness. It's run by an ex-dancer with the group Touré Kunda and has a slightly artistic touch.

Getting There & Away

DDD bus No 16 takes you straight from Dakar centre to Malika. To get to the hotels, follow the sand track from the bus stop all the way to the ocean (look for the small sign to the *campements* or ask the locals). A hire taxi from Dakar is around CFA15,000. If you're driving, the most direct route is to turn left off the main road between Dakar and Rufisque at Thiaroye-sur-Mer, which will take you straight there.

LE VILLAGE DES TORTUES

On the Rte de Bayakh just north of the village of Sangakam is the fascinating **Village des Tortues** (Turtle Village; ☎ 658 9984; adult/child CFA3000/2000; 🕒 9am-5.30pm). This 'village' is a sanctuary for more than 400 injured and neglected turtles. There are several species of land and sea turtles, but the main attractions are the giant African spurred tortoise (*Geochelone sulcata*). This is the largest continental tortoise on earth, and the neatly kept reserve has got scores of them, ranging from newly hatched ones to a 92kg giant.

The wide turtle enclosures are spread across a large botanical garden, full of local medicinal plants, and the turtle tours conducted by passionate staff are packed with information on tortoises and trees.

There's also a small boutique where you can purchase locally made craft work, and a pretty café to sip a *bissap* (a deep-purple drink made from hibiscus, sugar and water) with your packed picnic. People interested in volunteering should call the village, as it regularly hires volunteer workers.

To get here, take DDD bus No 15 or a Ndiaga Ndiaye to Rufisque and then another Ndiaga Ndiaye heading for Kayar; ask to be let off at the village (you'll see the huge sign on your left). Alternatively, a taxi

from Rufisque will cost about CFA2000, or CFA12,000 from Dakar.

LAC ROSE

Also known as Lac Retba, Lac Rose is a shallow lagoon surrounded by dunes, mainly famous for being the final destination of the annual Paris-Dakar rally.

Water here is 10 times saltier than the ocean, and the high concentration of minerals causes the lake to shimmer with a pink light when the sun is high. The spectacle isn't always visible; your best chances of seeing it are in the dry season, but even if nature lets you down, you can still swim here, buoyed by the salt. On the southern side of the lake, the small-scale salt-collecting industry is worth a glimpse (see opposite).

The lake makes an enjoyable day trip from Dakar but the Dead Sea it ain't, whatever tour operators tell you. The saleability of the faint hue together with the rally have spurred a massive tourist industry at the lake edge – be prepared to be hassled by tourist hustlers, souvenir traders etc. Better still, take it head-on and come here for the noisy arrival of the rally.

Most of the hotels listed here organise activities for similar prices (listed rates are approximate). They include 4WD tours around the lake (CFA15,000), beach-buggy (in French, quad) tours (CFA25,000) and camel riding (CFA15,000 per hour). **Chevaux du Lac** (☎ 630 0241) offers horse riding to beginners and advanced riders (two hours/six days CFA6000/400,000).

Sleeping & Eating

The cluster of hotels on the lake get busy with busloads of tourist groups, and the village artisanal that's developed can be a hassle to get through with traders trying to lure you into their shops. There are slightly more secluded options near the salt village and on the opposite side of the lake.

All the *campements* do food, and there's little difference in quality or menu. A promising restaurant was about to open at the Résidence Lac Rose near the salt village when we visited.

Bonaba Café (☎ 638 7538; r per person CFA5000; 🍽️) Hidden away on the far side of the lake, this café has been a favourite with independent travellers for years. Rooms are simple and the bathrooms shared; the inviting dunes are

good for walks and also provide shelter from the more touristy zones. You get here either by walking 2km from the main hotel cluster through the dunes or by pirogue (CFA3000 to CFA5000) from the salt village.

Ker Djinné (☎ 634 0468; d CFA20,000; 🍽️) The prettiest of the touristy places, this open-spaced *campement* has round-hut accommodation and a recommended restaurant where a griot usually strums his kora.

Chez Salim (☎ 638 1019; d/tr CFA20,000/25,000; 🍽️ 🍷 🍹) This large *campement* is one of the more upmarket ones, with a wide range of activities and accommodation in comfortable huts.

Niwa Oasis (☎ 532 2023; r CFA17,000; 🍽️) This place en route to the salt collectors only gets really busy when the rally arrives – the winner collects his trophy right opposite, and observers are invited to chill out in the Mauritanian tents on the hotel grounds, where drinks can be purchased. At any other time it's at a pleasant distance from the more crowded corners. The management also operates a small, rustic *campement* nearby.

Ma Petite Camargue (☎ 511 2745; s/d CFA15,000/20,000) This cute *campement* on the Rte de Bombilor sits at a relaxing distance from the tourist bubble. Basic accommodation has shared bathrooms, but is adequate. The enterprising French couple managing this place has also taken over Le Jardin du Lac in Niaga-Peul, and there's little doubt they'll turn it from a run-down shell into a stylish hotel-cum-restaurant in no time. Absolutely worth checking out.

Also recommended:

Le Palai (☎ 633 5477; s/d CFA15,000/17750; 🍽️) Busy, soulless beach hotel, at the busiest corner of the lake.

L'Étoile du Lac (☎ 822 2016; www.etoiledulac.sn) A promising new construction, with accommodation in pretty, thatched-roof huts. It had just been completed at the time of research (rates weren't available yet).

Getting There & Away

Trying to get here by public transport is nigh on impossible, involving a journey by Ndiaga Ndiaye (CFA200), *car rapide* (CFA200), DDD bus No 11 to Keur Massar, a taxi trip (CFA1000) or minibus (CFA100) to Niaga-Peul village, then a 5km walk to the lake.

Don't do it. Hire a taxi (return trip with an afternoon wait costs around CFA20,000). Or join an organised excursion from Dakar (see p156).

SALT-COLLECTING AT LAC ROSE

On the southern side of Lac Rose is a village called Niaga-Peul, from where local people go out to collect salt from the lake. The lake is shallow, so they wade up to their waists and use digging tools to scrape the salt off the lake bed and load it into flat-bottomed pirogues. When the canoe is full, and the water only millimetres below the rim, it is punted back to the shore and the salt carried onto the bank in buckets. Each salt collector builds his own pile of salt – marked by his initials – and members of the family are also involved; the women do most of the carrying work. The good-quality salt is put straight into 25kg sacks and sold to middlemen from Dakar who come each morning with trucks and pickups. The poorer-quality salt gets loaded in bulk and is taken elsewhere for processing. The workers get paid less than CFA400 for each 25kg sack, and even less for the low-grade salt.

If you're driving from Dakar, take the main road towards Rufisque and, about 6km beyond Thiaroye-sur-Mer, turn left on the tar road 6km beyond Thiaroye-sur-Mer, which takes you to Keur Massar. About 3km beyond the village, in Niakoul Rap, turn left for Niaga-Peul and Lac Rose. Alternatively, go to Bambilor, shortly behind the Village de Tortues, and take the dirt road (apparently soon to be sealed) past a farm that sells fresh milk and juice, directly to the southern end of Lac Rose.

RUFISQUE

Rufisque was one of the first and most important French settlements during colonial days, and the crumbling buildings along the transit town's dusty main road still tell the story of the town's former glory. It's worth stopping here for an hour or so, checking out the architecture and perhaps taking a ride on a horse cart, Rufisque's main mode of public transport. Otherwise do as the locals do – pass through.

If you want to spend the night, the cosy **Oustal de l'Agenais** (☎ 836 1648; Rte de Rufisque; r from CFA11,000) is a good option with clean, comfortable rooms, a cosy restaurant and friendly management.

Getting There & Away

Rufisque is on the main road out of Dakar and there's plenty of transport, including DDD bus No 15, frequent Ndiaga Ndiayes and *cars rapides*. The road is notoriously congested, so the trip can take up to two hours during the rush hour. The best time to get out is early in the morning, before 7am.

KEUR MOUSSA MONASTERY

About 12km southeast of Lac Rose and 50km from Dakar on the road to Kayar, Keur Moussa Monastery is a great place to spend a reflective Sunday morning. The building itself is pretty unremarkable, apart from altar paintings that evoke the ancient Coptic Christian art of Ethiopia. But the real reason to visit is the 10am mass, famous for its unique music – a stunning mixture of kora playing and Gregorian chants in Wolof. The monks sell CDs after the service (CFA10,000), as well as homemade goat's cheese, prayer books and various other items. If you can't make it to the monastery, try Dakar's bookshops for copies of the CDs.

Getting There & Away

Take bus No 15 to Rufisque and change for a minibus to Bayakh or Kayar (CFA100). Tell the driver where you're headed and you'll be dropped off at a junction, from where it's a 1.5km walk to the monastery. It's signposted and all the drivers know it. Getting a lift back to Dakar shouldn't be

difficult, as many people will be going that way after the mass.

If you are driving, take the Rte de Rufisque from Dakar, turn left at Rufisque in the direction of Kayar, drive for 21km to Bayakh and then turn left (south) and continue for 5km to the monastery.

KAYAR

The pretty fishing village of Kayar marks the point where the coast swings from the east towards the north – the beginning of Senegal's Grande Côte. It is framed by a wide sandy beach, where the whole cycle of a fisherman's day can be observed: rolling out to sea, coming home, emptying the nets and gutting the fish.

The northern beaches aren't particularly recommended for swimming, as the current here is very strong. But the coastline is an impressive sight and a great place to relax. Pirogue trips, as well as walks to the sand dune behind the village, fill a day nicely, and watching pirogue makers at work is fascinating. Kayar isn't far from Lac Rose, and the two destinations can easily be combined in a weekend excursion.

The **Auberge de l'Océan Bleu** (☎ 953 5058, 507 9125; r CFA7000-10,000) is a relaxed, simple, solar-powered place right behind the beach (you can't drive here). The manager, David, can arrange pretty much any excursion around the country, and also had a great plan for a pirogue shuttle service between Yoff airport and Kayar. Phone to ask if that's happening.