

DATABASE OF ANSWERS FOR SENEGAL & THE GAMBIA
Version 3.0 (Last Modified on Jan 19th, 2007)

FOR
MALARIA 2007, PATHOGENIC HELMINTHS 2007, HIV/AIDS 2007,
PNEUMOCOCCI 2007, ANTIBIOTIC RESISTANCE 2007
& MEDICINAL CHEMISTRY 2007

This Document –
How To Get What You Most Need From It, In The Least Time

Legend:

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| S | Paragraphs with a Yellow Background (S in Leftmost Column) Specifically Pertain to Senegal |
| G | Paragraphs with an Orange Background (G in Leftmost Column) Specifically Pertain to The Gambia (the nation in General) |
| G
K | Paragraphs with a Green Background (GK in Leftmost Column) Specifically Pertain to Kololi and The Atlantic Coast Region of The Gambia |
| G
T | Paragraphs with a Blue Background (GT in Leftmost Column) Specifically Pertain to Tendaba and the Surrounding Region in The Gambian Heartland |
| B | Paragraphs without Background Colouration are at least somewhat relevant to Both Senegal and The Gambia (& B in Leftmost Colum) |

Paragraphs Written In A White Font With A Black Background Relate To A Specific Object That You Might/Should Consider Bringing. Some Are Essential, Others Suggestions Or According To Your Personal Needs.

If you only look at this document to figure out what you to pack for a week in West Africa then read these points and the associated paragraphs.

Red Font (Underlined) Is Reserved For Strong Emphasis

Please pay attention to anything in red.

- P** Paragraphs With a **P** on the Left Hand Side are in one way or another related to **Preparation for the Trip to West Africa.**

Things you should know or consider prior to flying. Other than the paragraphs in red these should be the first points you consider reading.

- X** Paragraphs With an **X** on the Left Hand Side contain **Extra information.**

Information about things that you cannot prepare for, or do not need to know ahead of travelling. Only bother to read these points if you have time – perhaps during the flight.

Also includes general reference material about the destinations – where to find the post office etc.

Table Of Contents

SPECIAL WARNING	5
1 – STAYING SAFE IN SENEGAL & THE GAMBIA	5
The Region & The Big City	5
Dangers, Annoyances & Scams	6
2 – YOUR MONEY, YOUR POSSESSIONS & HOW TO KEEP THEM	9
Things You Should Not Bring – For Your Personal Safety	9
Your Money – Safe Handling And Best Practices	9
Your Possessions – Safe Handling And Best Practices	11
3 – ALL ABOUT MONEY	12
General Considerations	12
Estimated Expenditure	12
Money In Senegal	13
Money In The Gambia	15
4 – STAYING HEALTHY IN SENEGAL & THE GAMBIA	16
Sickness And Emergencies	16
Health Related Items To Bring	17
Health Related Items You Ought/Need Not Bring	18
Hygiene – Avoiding Water/Food-Borne Infections	18
Avoiding Mosquito-Borne Diseases	18
Avoiding Rabies	19
5 - FOOD & DRINK	19
Water	19
Food	20
Drinks	20
Restaurants	21
6 – THINGS TO BRING – SUGGESTIONS WHEN PREPARING & PACKING	21
The Bottom Line - Absolutely Do Not Bring:	21
For The Meeting	21
Luggage And Bags	22
Clothing And Footwear	23
Documents	23
Money	24
Personal Hygiene	24
Contact Lenses	24
Food And Drinks	24
Photography	24
Batteries	25
Communications	25
Navigation	26
Useful Items And Tools	26
Gifts For Local Children	26
7 – THE CLIMATE & THE WEATHER	27
8 – CLOTHING & FOOTWEAR	27
Clothing – Cultural Considerations	27
Footwear In General	28
Clothing & Footwear – By Location	28
Clothing – By Time Of The Day	28
Clothing – For Travelling Overland to Tendaba	29
Laundry	29
Shopping For Clothes	29
9 – GENERAL THINGS THAT YOU DO NOT NEED TO BRING	30
Laptop Computers	30
Cool Weather Clothing	30
10 – LOCAL PEOPLE & YOUR BEHAVIOUR	30
People	30
Local Customs – Public Dos And Don'ts	31
Miscellaneous Considerations	31
11 – PHOTOGRAPHY	31
Your Camera & Photographic Equipment	31

Photographic Subjects	32
12 – HOW TO GET THINGS DONE	33
Telephone & Cell Phone	33
Internet And Email	34
Electricity & Electrical Appliances	34
Navigation	35
Transport	36
Receipts for Reimbursement of Expenses	39
13 – ENTERTAINMENT	39

Preparing & Packing – Things You Might Bring

Bring All Kinds of Money	12
Bring Some Hard Currency in Cash – It Always Works, Anywhere	13
Bring Your Bank Cards	14
Bring Your Credit Cards	14
Traveller's Cheques	15
Prescription Medicine	17
A Broad Spectrum Antibiotic	17
Mosquito Repellent	17
Non-DEET Insect Repellents	17
Antimalarial Prophylaxis	17
Sunglasses	17
Sun Screen	17
After-Sun Cream or Moisturiser	17
Lip Balm	17
Sun Hat	18
Your Presentation on a USB Flash Drive	21
Email Your Presentation to Yourself – Make it Un-lose-able	21
Clothes for the Conference – in General	21
Clothes for the Conference In Dakar and Kololi	22
Clothes for the Conference in Tendaba	22
Research Papers and Reprints	22
Photocopies of Research Papers	22
Basic Texts	22
Research Level Texts	22
Long Distance Luggage	22
Bags to Tendaba, The Gambia	23
Daily Bag	23
As a General Rule - Bring Clothes with Lots of Good Deep Pockets.	23
'Adventure Clothing'	23
Swimming Costume	23
Photocopies of Your Passport	23
Photocopies of Your Documents	23
Digitize your Documents and Store them on the Internet	23
Passport Photos for a Gambian Visa Application	23
Health Insurance	24
Health Insurance Client Number & Insurance Company Contact Details	24
Travel Insurance	24

Internet Banking E-identifier/Digipass	24
Disinfectant Gel – Hand washing Soap	24
'Wet Wipes' - Cleansing or Disinfectant Towelettes	24
Towel	24
Toilet Paper	24
Contact Lens Cleaning Fluids	24
Spectacles: The Harmattan and Contact Lenses	24
Small Refillable Water Bottle (500mL to 1 litre)	24
Insurance for your Photographic Equipment	24
Camera	25
Digital Camera	25
Camera USB Cable	25
Digital Media	25
Camera Film	25
Camera Batteries	25
Camera Lens Cleaners	25
Mini Tripod	25
Rechargeable Batteries	25
Battery Charger	25
Single-use Batteries (Alkaline AA, AAA, etc)	25
Cell Phones / Mobile Phones	25
Phone Charger	26
Compass	26
GPS – Handheld Global Positioning System	26
Guidebook	26
Battery Powered Flashlight or Torch	26
Headlamp	26
Penknife	26
Travel Alarm Clock	26
Laundry Detergent	26
Balloons	26
Pens	26
Football (Soccer ball)	26
Shorts and Trousers (Long Pants and Short Pants)	27
Skirts and Dresses	27
Sandals	28
City Clothes and Country Clothes – Bring Two Sets of Clothing	28
Items of Clothing for a Tailor/Dressmaker to Duplicate	30
Camera Film	31
A Backup Email Account – In Case of Email Problems	34
Plug Adapters	35

SPECIAL WARNING on DIARRHOEA

Please, please, please be very careful what you eat and drink during your time in Senegal and/or The Gambia.

This document aims to lay out some of the things you need to know ahead of travelling to the region and without a doubt the thing you need to take most care of is what you put in your mouth! (Please read on)

Traveller's diarrhoea is really quite possible and is likely to effect at least one member of any sizeable group – so please always be very aware and fastidious about what you consume, about washing your hands more than you think is normally necessary, and about not using the water supply to brush your teeth etc. Put only bottled water in your mouth, and keep your mouth closed while in the shower!

That said, I have personally spent over 3 months in Senegal and The Gambia and have been sick only one time. I blame myself for this, for eating a salad in a rather questionable dirty-looking restaurant. In general I consider the hygiene and food quality of restaurants in the region to be good – as I say, I've had well over 200 meals in the region and have been unlucky just once! Chances are that for every 200 meals in restaurants in the US or Europe you might just suffer a little food poisoning once also.

But again. I can't say it often enough – please be careful.

And if you are unfortunate enough to get sick, please don't keep quiet about it.

1 – STAYING SAFE IN SENEGAL & THE GAMBIA

The Region & The Big City

Safety In General

B P Both Senegal and The Gambia are fairly safe places to visit. In their guidebook to the region the Lonely Planet refer to the Senegal and The Gambia as 'Africa for beginners'. While you may need to learn a few things to be feel fully confident and independent in either country, you can easily get away with knowing very little, and you still won't get mugged or robbed. Not even if you elect to go for a midnight stroll through some of the backstreets with a bulging wallet full of cash wearing a diamond encrusted tiara! Then again, you could be unlucky, so for the most part try not to do these things. Instead give a little thought to your daily practices and you will almost certainly be as safe as in your home town.

Dakar – Frequently Annoying, But Rarely Dangerous

S P Do Not Be Intimidated By Dakar.
It is big. It is noisy. You will come across a multitude of young male hustlers who will continually follow you, talk at you rather than to you, and who will try to sell you everything imaginable. But don't let that frighten you, whether alone or in a group, Dakar is not a city that you should fear.

S P For the overwhelming majority of visitors Dakar is very much like an old toothless dog whose bark is considerably worse than its bite. But beware – if you don't pay attention or show it the right level of respect, the dog might just give you a nasty suck! The centre of the city is full of walking annoyances at times, but Dakar is unlikely to do you any lasting damage.

S P Dakar is without a doubt safer than any sizeable US city. The main distinction between the two being that in the US you will likely not have the opportunity to meet half of the city's young men, whereas in Dakar you will! They will seek you out, will want to get to know you, will want to sell you things, and at times will want to pick your pockets!

Continuous disturbances by young men is the city's greatest annoyance – not the infrequent pickpocket attempts, but the fact that when walking around the centre of the city you are rarely left alone with your own thoughts for more than a few seconds. Sometimes your new friends will only give you a few minutes of their time – and sometimes they will stay with you and tag along for hours! Like a superglued barnacle. Shake one off and the next is never far away.

Three Important Guidelines To Live By While In Senegal And The Gambia

- B P** **Rule 1 – Never Get Angry**
- B P** **Rule 2 – Never Raise Your Voice**
- B P** **Rule 3 – Never Demonstrate Any Form Of Aggression**
- B P** You are in effect an extremely wealthy person from the developed world spending a little time in an extremely poor part of the developing world – hence you have nothing to get angry about! Even if you don't see yourself as wealthy, you are – poor people don't buy plane tickets to West Africa!
- B P** At times you may feel a little frustrated by the things going on around you, but keep that feeling in – save it for later, take it home with you and convert it into an amusing African travel story.
- B P** The only exception to these three guidelines is if you are unfortunate enough to find yourself in a situation where your 'fight or flight' response demands it – if you are being pickpocketed or in imminent danger and it's no longer the time to remain calm and collected, but time to make some noise to either make an escape or attract the attention of others.
- B P** **Even If You Find Yourself Being Overcharged Or Ripped-Off In The Market ...**
or being followed by an over-friendly local, deal with the situation in a friendly manner, with patience and a smile. If you need to make your point then a frown and stern tone of voice are the only weapons you may use – and if used correctly these will almost certainly be all that you need.
- B P** **If You Can't Recover Your Change From A Taxi Driver Or Street Trader, Let It Go**
Some traders/taxi drivers will try to keep small banknotes and coins, or renege on an agreed price. But if you can't make your man return the money he owes you by lowering your eyebrows to their maximum, then forget about it – and wish him a good dinner and a better education for his children as you walk away.
- B P** **Annoyances = Young Men**
It's almost exclusively men that will bother you, and young men in their twenties or early thirties at that. Adolescents too, learning their 'trade'.
Women generally mind their own business and get on with their work. I can't think of a single incident where I have been hassled by a woman, except while visiting to tourist beaches of the Gambian coast and only then by a persistent masseuse looking for customers.
For some reason that is not clear to me, homeless child beggars too are almost exclusively male. Little boys with tin cans walking the streets are highly visible in Dakar especially.

Dangers, Annoyances & Scams

Dakar's Hotspots For Hassle, Theft And Pickpockets

- S P** **There are six main areas and situations where you can expect the most hassle from hustlers and/or thieves, and where you should pay most attention to your pockets and bags:**
1 – La Place de l'Indépendance
2 – Avenue Pompidou, a.k.a. Ponty
3 – The main market - Marché Sandaga
4 – The beaches
5 – Anywhere you see a number of white faces – obvious tourist hotspots
6 – Any crowd!
- S P** **NB: Just about everything that follows in this section refers to Dakar directly - and these six areas/situations in Dakar specifically – but the lessons to be learned are the same for a lot of places in Afirca.**

Avoiding Hassle With Beggars, Hustlers And Pushy Traders

- B P** **My Golden Rule Of Avoiding Hassle With Hustlers –**
Speak To People That Don't Make Efforts to Speak to You – And Do Your Best To Avoid Speaking To People That Are Determined To Make You Speak With Them!
Normal friendly people are busy going about their lives, they are not interested in you or your money. These are the people to ask for help, should you have a question or need directions.
- B P** **Spotting The Good, The Bad And The Ugly Among Dakar's Young Men**
There are traders, there are hustlers, there are thieves, there are beggars and there are friendly talkative people. It's your task to figure out who's who, and this can sometimes be extremely difficult to do.
If you get it completely wrong you run the risk of being robbed or offending a genuinely friendly innocent man.

- B P** Beggars are the easiest to distinguish, at least they are straight up and direct about what they want from you. They'll stick their open palm out and expect you to place some coins in it.
- B P** It's also usually very easy to pick out honest traders going about their business – generally walking the streets with all of their merchandise in their arms or on their head – or else with a stationary stall.
- B P** Much more difficult is the task of distinguishing the man that wants to speak to you solely for a friendly chat, the one that has something he wants to sell you after spending a few minutes of getting to know you and the one that speaks to you by way of preparation as prepares to pick your pockets.
- B P** Generally speaking, and in the centre of Dakar especially, there are a whole lot more young men that will want to talk to you for a reason (usually financially motivated) than those that will simply want to talk for the fun of it.

Dealing With Hustlers And Potential Hustlers

- B P** What to do if a young man is tagging along, trying to grab your attention with his patter? My approach is to treat everyone in a friendly way, talk to them, play along with their conversation, but carry on doing what you were doing in the first place. Don't let them distract you too much, and with a bit of luck, they'll see you're not interested and so will leave you alone after a minute or two.
- If not, if they choose to follow you along your route then they're doing nothing more than wasting their own time, and you're not even helping them to do it.
- B P** **Both Hassle And Hustlers Are Rare In The Countryside**
- In parts of the country that see few tourists they won't be looking to hassle you, they'll simply be happy to see a face from a far off land, to talk for a few minutes and then let you go do what you have to do. It's not wise to be suspicious of locals in the countryside, they're generally an extremely hospitable bunch, the kind of people you'll be only too happy to sit and drink and chew the fat with.

Dakar's Dangers – According To The Guidebook

- S P** The Lonely Planet guidebook reports that in Dakar many people have bags snatched and pockets picked, occasionally violently. I do have personal experience of pickpockets – see **Section on Scams** – and have heard of only one first hand report of a serious (but preventable) incident of theft – see **Report of a Theft at a Tourist Hotspot**.
- S P** The guidebook also reports that tourists are occasionally pushed to the ground in the process of bags or cameras being stolen, though not knifed or shot, with gun toting muggers being very rare indeed.
- S P** Again, after having spent more than a month in the centre of Dakar I have no first hand experience of such violence. I do however not tend to spend a lot of time in parts of the city or surrounding area in which the tourist density is at its highest. Not only because I'm not particularly interested in visiting the tourist sights, but because the most hassle is always there right beside the most tourists (again see **Report of a Theft at a Tourist Hotspot**).

Thieves And Pickpockets

- B P** Thieves often work in pairs or in groups.
- B P** Try to avoid being surrounded by two or more young men that walk up to you – no matter how friendly they seem at first.
- B P** You are a much more difficult target for pickpockets if you are moving, so if in doubt don't stop walking. Make them walk if they want to talk.
- B P** Beware of traders with only one item to sell – it's frequently a pretext to a scam.

Report Of A Serious Theft From Tourists At One Of Dakar's Tourism Hotspots

- B P** **Gang Robbery at Lac Retba**
- I was recently told of an experience that a group of conference participants had while visiting the major tourist attraction Lac Retba (a.k.a. Lac Rose, the 'Pink Lake'), just outside Dakar, in 2001.
- The group were staying at one of Dakar's most exclusive hotels – Le Meridien President – three words which were painted on the sides of the minibus they were travelling in.
- At some point during their visit a gang of thieves robbed the group. They did so by waiting until the group were about to depart - at which point the soon-to-be victims were all in the minibus, with limited freedom of movement and no easy escape route. I know nothing of how the gang prevented the minibus from driving off, or if they threatened the group with violence or weapons, but the gang stole diamond earrings from the women by simply reaching in through the windows and pulling them out of their ears.

I'm assuming they similarly stole all other jewelry, bags and the men's wristwatches and wallets. The gang then departed, most likely on foot, which is easy enough to do given the remoteness of the location, their local knowledge of the area, and the general lack of a police presence.

It's A Sad Story, And An Unnecessary One, So Who Is To Blame Here?

Several people made mistakes to allow this to happen, but I would say that the tour operators and guides at Le Meridien President are most responsible, since it was they that had the idea to bring sheep into the lion's den without adequately protecting or preparing them.

Anyone that knows anything about the developing world knows that tourist centres are always hotspots for theft. It is a universal truth, and it isn't difficult to spot the obvious mistakes that made it all the more tempting for the thieves in this instance.

You should not take diamond earrings, engagement rings, expensive watches or other symbols of wealth to tourist hotspots – to do so is to invite trouble upon yourself. Better still, you shouldn't even bring them into the country.

The French words "Le Meridien President" when written on the side of a hotel tour bus may be translated into English as "we have lots of money, please rob us". It makes for a most effective target, clearer than a bullseye!

I don't suggest for a minute that visitors avoid tourist sights, they're part of the reason that many people visit in the first place. What I do suggest, however, is that you do not forget that you are an extremely wealthy person in a land of extremely poor people, and although the vast majority of local people wouldn't dream of hurting or stealing from a visitor to their country – some will, and some of those will do so violently.

Be prepared by not serving as a highly visible and extremely profitable target. With a white face in a land of black men, it is difficult to keep a low profile, but do your best.

See also - Not being a highly visible target – **What Not to Wear for Your Personal Safety.**

See also - Not being an extremely profitable target – **Safe Handling of Your Money.**

Scams

B P Shorts/Trousers Tugging Scam – My First Hand Experience Of Team Thievery In Dakar

At lunchtime one day I was walking along busy Avenue Albert Sarraut. A friendly and smiling young man starts speaking to me – in French at first, and then in English – he offers his hand to me, I take it, shake it and stop walking to speak with him and his friend.

Seconds afterwards a third man, selling a T-shirt comes up to me – that's normal, he's working, selling clothes, nothing unusual about that. He's at my left side, with one man in front of me, and the other at my right.

Before I know it, the first two guys have leaned down to knee level and are tugging on the corner of my shorts – up and down, with quite some force – not in a gentle, friendly way that might suggest they are interested to know where I bought the material!

But with enough force to make me react to stop it and to make sure that they don't get their hands on anything that might jump out of my pockets.

So naturally, I lower my hands – and cup my hands around my pockets – and they duly let go of my shorts.

But at the same time, the man selling the T-shirt - whose hands were previously otherwise occupied, holding the T-shirt in both - is dipping into my shirt pocket trying to steal what ever it is that I keep in there!

This time he wasn't fast enough, I caught him in the act and so had the pleasure of pushing him away, pointing at him and loudly labelling him 'voleur' (thief).

3rd Time Unlucky – I Caught The Thieves In The Act

This was the third time I experiences this scam – the first two incidents cost me two photocopied maps of Dakar! No great loss. What do they think, that I'm stupid enough to carry money around in my shirt pocket?

I hope the maps helped them find their way around the city – preferably to the police station! Unfortunately, as usual, there were no policemen in sight. I looked for one, I really wanted to nail those men because you can guarantee they were back on the street doing the exact same thing to the next white face that was friendly enough to stop and speak to them.

The solution to this scam, how to avoid it –you cannot refuse to speak to everyone on the streets of Dakar, and you cannot refuse to shake hands with people. But what you can do, and yet remain polite enough, is to keep moving – tell them you're busy and don't stop walking, don't allow the thieves to position themselves. If they are genuine and really want to speak with you, then they will be only too happy to walk with you.

B P The 'Free Gift' Scam – From First Hand Experience

Should a man walk up to you, strike up a conversation and then offer you a present, do not accept it. It will not be a free gift, there will be strings attached.

If you don't offer your hand to accept, he may try to gently place it into your palm. If this happens simply flatten your palm and hold it vertically so that you can hold nothing – smile and say "non merci" quietly and repeatedly until he gets the message.

He may feign offence, but don't you worry, he's not offended because he knows that he wasn't trying to give you a present in the first place.

Beggars

- B P** In most of Africa there is no government welfare for the unemployed, sick, disabled, homeless, or old. If such people have no family to help, they are forced to beg. It won't take you long to realize this – just your very first trip to the bank at la Place de l'Indépendance.
- B P** But being a beggar doesn't make you a thief. You have nothing to fear from beggars, they are not prone to dipping into your pockets.
- S P** Small boys will be the most obvious beggars that you will come across – they'll walk up to you clutching a tin can and will stick their hand out in expectation. They're never aggressive, but are sometimes persistent – it's difficult for them to allow a white face to walk away without gaining something from the encounter.
- B P** It's entirely up to you – if you want to give money, or food if you have it, all will be gratefully accepted. Money more than food.
- B P** **Shaking Off Persistent Beggars**
There are several ways to detach yourself from a beggar. It may take more than one attempt to dislodge a particularly persistent person. But whatever you do, do it calmly –
- B P** 1 – “Non merci” – French (in Senegal) for ‘no thank you’. Say it once, say it twice and keep saying it until your beggar walks away. Don't say it angrily, do not shout the words – in a quiet but firm voice, simply repeat the same words.
- B P** 2 – Walk away. Your beggar might follow you. If they do simply say “no thank you”, or “non merci” in French.
- B P** 3 – Avoid eye contact. Staring at the floor is often enough to see off most beggars. They see you are not interested so decide to bother you no longer.

Traders

- B P** Genuine street traders are of course not thieves.
But beware, some may work with thieves to slow down potential targets!
- B P** Unless you genuinely want something, ignore them or try a firm but friendly “non merci”

2 – YOUR MONEY, YOUR POSSESSIONS & HOW TO KEEP THEM

Things You Should Not Bring – For Your Personal Safety

- B P** Do Not Wear Or Display Any Obvious Symbols Of Wealth
- B P** Do Not Wear Jewelry
Do not bring your cheap jewelry, and leave your more expensive items at home. Leave all of your jewelry at home!
- B P** Loose-fitting wedding rings – and engagement rings should stay at home.
- B X** Cheap earrings are no less likely to get stolen than expensive ones and both make you more of a target than you might otherwise be. No matter how little they may actually be worth, no matter what you paid for them. Try to keep a very low profile.
- B X** Think of thieves as magpies, if an object shines, they just might be attracted to it.
- B X** It might not bother your bank balance to lose a cheap necklace, but the experience certainly might spoil your trip.
- B P** Do Not Wear A Wristwatch
If you carry a watch, then keep it in your pocket.
- B P** Also see the **Section – The Bottom Line, Absolutely Do Not Bring**

Your Money – Safe Handling And Best Practices

Do Not Carry A Fat Wallet – Do Not Store Cash In A Purse Or Pocketbook

- B P** When in the developing world, I RECOMMEND THAT YOU DO NOT USE A WALLET or bring a hand-carried or shoulder carried purse or pocketbook.
At home I always carry a wallet, and always carry it in my front pocket. (Wallets are far easier to steal when kept in the back pocket of a pair of trousers/pants.)
But it's just not a good idea to centralize all of your cash when in impoverished developing countries.
- B P** I find it's best to distribute my daily spending money around my body, typically in at least two trouser/pants pockets. (Ideally in zipped or buttoned pockets.)
- B P** In total I usually have no more than the equivalent of \$40-50 US dollars in my pockets. (With perhaps another \$20-30 dollars in my daypack.)
I either roll up half a dozen banknotes or keep the money tidy in my pocket with a simple money clip.

Dressing To Keep Your Money

- B P** As a general rule bring clothes with lots of good deep pockets.
My personal preference are trousers and shorts with zip pockets at the front.
- B P** Do not use your shirt pocket to store cash unless it has a button which is buttoned-up at all times. There is at least one daylight street scam that I know of which aims to steal whatever is kept in an unbuttoned shirt pocket – see **Section on Scams**.

Distribute Your Cash Around Your Body

- B P** There are several reasons to distribute small amounts of money about your person rather than using a wallet, purse or pocketbook.
- B P** 1 – Pickpockets, if active, and successful, will not be able to steal more than the equivalent of \$20-30, an amount that you can afford to lose.
- B P** 2 – A fat wallet bulging out of your pocket invites trouble – it is visible from a distance and makes you a clear target.
- B P** 3 – When shopping - and inevitably bargaining - you will not look as rich as you might if you pull a fat wallet out of your pocket. You will be more likely to get a good price, less likely to awaken the locals to your wealth, and far less likely to incite impromptu begging from your salesperson and/or their colleagues on seeing it. The latter sometimes provides a response that Pavlov would have been proud of. Rest assured you could easily have more than their month's wages in your wallet should you go on a short shopping spree at the market.
- B P** **MOST IMPORTANT:**
4 – Robbery with aggression. If you are unlucky enough to be robbed - then you do not need to give a second's thought to protecting your wallet. Simply dip into one or both of your pockets and hand over all the money you have.
NEVER RESIST – WITHHOLDING MONEY FROM A MUGGER WITH A WEAPON IS A DANGEROUS AND STUPID THING TO DO!!

Other Than In The Bank – The Hotel Is The Best Place To Keep Your Cash

- B P** I keep the bulk of my cash out of sight, hidden and locked away in the hotel. If anything, this is what I use my wallet for – keeping banknotes tidy and tucked away in the bottom of my travel bags.
- B P** In my experience, most of the hotels I've stayed in during my time in the developing world are safe and secure, and the cleaning staff are wholly trustworthy. For them not to be jeopardises the livelihood of everyone that works at the hotel, and none of them can afford for that to happen.
- B P** To categorically remove all temptation, please do not leave your cash, passport or other valuables lying around in clear view in your room. Make a point of keeping items of value concealed at all times.

Money Belts & Concealed Money Carriers

- B P** While in the developing world, some people advocate wearing a money belt around their waist during every waking hour. I don't see the need – money belts are extremely uncomfortable and difficult to access, and also smack of unnecessary paranoia.
- B P** For the purpose of this trip, I don't recommend you wear any kind of concealed money carrier, it's just not worth the hassle. There are many more convenient and equally safe ways in which to store your valuables.
- B P** I always have a neck pouch/wallet with me (it resembles a necklace with a wallet hanging off it), but in Senegal

and The Gambia, I practically never wear it around my neck. In safe situations I simply use it as a central place of storing my passport, bank and credit cards, traveller's cheques, emergency cash and vaccination records. When I am separated from my baggage, for example when on a bus, I carry it on my person, but otherwise it remains out of sight in my bags in the hotel.

B P Don't Use Hip Pack Or Waist Belt (a.k.a. 'Fanny Pack')

Keeping everything of importance in a bag tied around your waist is asking for trouble. You might think it's great that it's right in front of you, but in a crowd, the straps of such bags are easily sliced open with a skilfully delivered razor blade.

Safety At The Banks And Cash Machines

S P Withdrawing Money From The Cash Machines In Central Dakar – The Evening Is The Best Time

I recommend withdrawing money in the evening, rather than during the day. This may seem counterintuitive and even unsafe, but given the location of Dakar's ATMs it makes perfect sense.

During the daytime, the area around the banks in la Place de l'Indépendance (where all of the cities' major banks are to be found) serve as a marketplace and swarms with traders, hustlers and beggars. Consequently, a hundred pairs of eyes will see you enter and exit the ATM (Cash Machine).

In all likelihood it's safe enough, there are security guards watching over the area surrounding the ATMs, but the likelihood of hassle of one kind or another is at its highest, and that's not what you need when you have pockets full of cash.

In the evening (after 6pm), the place is quiet, for the most part only the security guards remain, and the path back to the hotel is a far less crowded, making for a more direct walk.

B P If you do withdraw a large sum from the ATM, distribute it around your body, again, loading up a wallet or stashing all of the cash in your daypack is never the best option.

B P Walking From The Bank With Pocketfuls Of Cash - Time To Enter 'Supercautious Mode'

If you haven't done so already, departing the ATM with pocketfuls of cash is the time to learn to walk confidently – most likely straight back to the hotel. Without stopping to listen to any young men that want to speak to you.

Secure your money in your pockets, walk out of the ATM and stride confidently past any number of young men that might try to speak to you or offer you their hand to shake. It's really not the time to make new 'friends'! Smile at the same time, just let it be known that you are busy and don't have time to stop.

Your Possessions – Safe Handling And Best Practices

Use A Daypack Or Book Bag

B P Daypacks, Book Bags And The Stuff In Them

Walking around Dakar for a few hours – then take a bag, take a map, take your camera, take a bottle of water, take whatever you need. Be careful in crowds, but do not be unduly concerned that it will get stolen – it won't if you take care.

B P Two Shoulders Are Better Than One - Don't Hang Bags From One Shoulder

Daypacks worn with two shoulder straps as per hiking are surely safer than bags carried in one hand or dangling from one shoulder. Try to make it 'snatchproof'. However, it must be said, that in my experience I haven't found bag snatching to be a big problem in Dakar.

B P Though some don't believe in it, I've spent many hours in Dakar's markets carrying my daypack on both shoulders and never once felt it was about to be stolen. It would be nice to think that was because there aren't many thieves around – but I think it might have more to do with the fact that a daypack worn on both shoulders is quite difficult to steal (unless two skilfully used razor blades are employed synchronously!).

B P But feel free to be a little paranoid – take it off your shoulders once in a while to check that it's well zipped up – thieves don't need to steal the whole bag to get to the best of the contents!

B P I don't believe in carrying a daypack backwards - on your chest, rather than on your back. In my opinion it is an encumbrance, it limits freedom of movement - and looks ridiculous into the bargain!

Looking Out For Your Possessions

B P Putting Bags Down

Be very careful when putting your daypack down during lunch etc. Never do so without giving considerable thought to how easy its theft would be. At home, in a café, you might place your bag/daypack either at your feet or leaning against your chair. Do not do this in a busy part of Dakar – it could well disappear.

- B P** I typically hang one or both shoulder straps of my daypack over my knees, or perhaps over the arm of the chair if it has one. It's generally in front of me, in full view at all times.
- B P** **Don't Put Your Money On A Table Or On A Counter**
In a bank or a shop – never put your money/wallet on the counter – it's either in your hand, in your pocket or in your bag. Specialists in distraction techniques could whip it away in a second.
Better still, don't have a wallet at all – see **Safe Handling of Your Money**.

Looking After Your Valuables

- B P** **Passport, Traveller's Cheques, Bank Cards And Credit Cards**
Leave them in your locked hotel room.
There is no reason to carry your personal documentation with you at all times. It's actually much less likely to get stolen there than by carrying it on your person.
- B P** **For easy personal identification purposes it is a good idea to carry a photocopy of your passport with you at all times.** It won't be a problem if you lose it – it's just a piece of paper – but it will usually satisfy the needs of any policeman that might ask to see identification.
- B P** **See also the Section – The Bottom Line, Absolutely Do Not Bring**

3 – ALL ABOUT MONEY

General Considerations

- B P** **Bring All Kinds of Money**
I generally take the full range of types of money with me to the developing world. If I can use my bank card I do, if not then I either cash in a few traveller's cheques or use my Visa credit card in an ATM or for a cash advance at the bank.
If absolutely necessary, or if I just need in a small amount of local currency until the morning, I generally either exchange a small denomination banknote or pay for the night's hotel or dinner with hard currency.
- B P** **Euros, US Dollars And UK Sterling Are Best**
If your home currency is not the euro, the US dollar or British sterling, your hard currency of choice to take with you should be the euro. If your home currency is the US dollar or sterling then it certainly makes no sense to consider converting any money (cash or traveller's cheques) to euros.
Euro, US dollar and UK sterling banknotes are readily accepted by just about everyone – just about everywhere.
- B P** **Hard Currency In Cash**
Whether easily lost or not, it is essential to bring at least some of your funds in cash in one or other of the most widely accepted currencies (Euros, US Dollars, or British sterling)
- B P** Given the anticipated level of expenditure for a week-long meeting trip, the absolute safest thing to do would be to bring approximately €200 in traveller's cheques and €200 in cash, in one or other of the major currencies, for use as emergency funds. I would not however suggest €400 in traveller's cheques or €400 in cash – traveller's cheques can be useless if you find yourself away from major population centres and it really isn't wise to have so much cash on your hands at any one time.

Estimated Expenditure

Anticipated Expenditure While In Dakar

- S P** Staying at the Hôtel de l'Indépendance with breakfast, lunch, dinner and a beer or two (at any of the nearby restaurants), and all essential local transportation you can expect to spend approximately €70 per day. Sharing a room at the same hotel, or staying at Hôtel Blanchot or other similarly priced hotel total daily costs will be of the order of €50 per day.

Anticipated Expenditure While In The Gambia

- G T P** Budgeting at a very generous €50 per day, and including the trip to and from Dakar or the Gambian Coast, it is highly unlikely that you will spend the equivalent of more than €150 during your time in Tendaba. In fact you could well spend as little as €60-100, with the extra €50-100 in cash making for a very useful emergency reserve.
- G P** Staying at the Hotel Paradise Suites (in a single room) with breakfast, lunch, dinner and a beer or two (at any of

K the nearby restaurants), and all essential local transportation you can expect to spend approximately €60 per day.

Cash

B P **Bring Some Hard Currency in Cash – It Always Works, Anywhere**

If all else fails, if the ATM machines break down and the banks are closed – euros, pound notes or US bills are always exchangeable – anywhere in West Africa.

B P Professional money changers, local people and hotels will be only too happy to take them off your hands - you may not get the best possible exchange rate, but your losses will be minimal, and at least you will have restocked your supply of local currency.

B P Informal exchange rates are generally slightly better for large denomination banknotes - the locals want to get their hands on €50, €100 notes or \$50, \$100 bills. Then again, overall, it makes more sense to carry €20 notes or \$20 bills, they are far more flexible.

B X **The Universal Shortage Of Change – Small Denomination Banknotes And Coins**

Change in smaller denominations of both notes and coins is in extremely short supply. Once you have a pocket full of change, value it and try to keep it!

Try to 'break' large banknotes whenever you have the opportunity to do so.

B X **Old Money**

Banknotes in the developing world are frequently extremely old, tattered and worn. Only in the capital city will you come across brand new notes – usually by way of ATMs.

While Dakar's money is typically clean, Central Gambia's bank notes are all rather ancient. There are not a lot of new coins in either country, many are worn smooth.

Money In Senegal

Senegal's Currency

S P The currency of Senegal is the West African CFA franc, typically known as the CFA franc, or abbreviated to CFA and pronounced 'say-fah'.

S P The banknote denominations are CFA500, 1000, 2000, 5000 and 10000. There are 100 centimes in one CFA franc – with coins for CFA5, 10, 25, 50, 100, 200, 250 and 500.

S P CFA5000, equal to €7.50 or \$10 is a large banknote for most small vendors in Senegal. You'll have extreme difficulty in buying something for less than CFA1000 with a CFA5000 note, so do your best to amass a pocketful of CFA100 coins and CFA500 and CFA1000 banknotes for small purchases and taxi rides.

S P **Exchange Rate Versus The Euro**

The CFA franc is pegged in to the euro at 656 to 1. (655.957 to 1, to be precise)

S P Whether you can order CFA franc banknotes or not in your bank, I do not recommend that you try to get any prior to arriving in Dakar. There is really no need. It makes far more sense to wait until you arrive in Senegal, then go to the bank – either at the airport or in the centre of Dakar.

S P **Exchange Rates Vs Other Currencies ()**

Roughly speaking CFA1000 = \$2 US

Roughly speaking CFA1000 = €1.50

Roughly speaking CFA1000 = £1

S P **Official Exchange Rates**

1 US Dollar = 493.42 CFA Franc

1 British Pound = 943.42 CFA Franc

1 Australian Dollar = 380.98 CFA Franc

1 Canadian Dollar = 416.15 CFA Franc

S P **Rough Approximations**

1 Euro = 1.30 US Dollar = 0.70 British Pound

1 US Dollar = 0.75 Euro = 0.50 British Pound

1 British Pound = 1.40 Euro = 1.90 US Dollar

Accessing Local Currency At Dakar Airport

- S P** Important – Please note that it is not essential to get cash from the airport just to pay the taxi fare to the hotel. The hotel receptionist will lend you money to pay the taxi driver. Ask him to park his car and take him into the lobby.
- S P** There is a CBAO bank inside the arrivals lounge of the airport.
It's not in the part of the arrivals lounge you first enter but just left, around the corner towards the airline check-in desks - don't walk too far, it's right there. I have not used it, so cannot speak from experience, but depending on your arrival time at the airport the bank may indeed be open and therefore a ready source of local currency.
- S P** If the bank itself is not open, there is an ATM. The symbols on the ATM are Visa, MasterCard, Cirrus, Visa electron, Plus and Maestro.

Accessing Local Currency In Central Dakar and Koloли, The Gambia

- S X** All of Senegal's major banks are represented on the west side of la Place de l'Indépendance in the centre of the city.
- G K X** Senegambia Road in Koloли has a Standard Chartered Bank with an ATM – this machine accepts Visa, and some other cards
While on the Gambian Atlantic Coast I exclusively use my Visa card to withdraw money in the forma of a cash advance.
- G T** There are no banks or bank machines in Tendaba. Credit cards are not accepted at the Camp. You must bring cast with you – either local currency (Gambian Dalasis or Senegalses CFA) or hard currency. The staff there will exchange if for you.
- S P** **Bring Your Bank Cards**
Far and away the best way to access money while in Dakar is to pluck it straight from an ATM machine. There are plenty of very reliable ATMs in and around la Place de l'Indépendance.
While in Dakar I exclusively use my Dutch bank card to withdraw money directly from my Dutch bank account. The charge for each withdrawal is approximately two euros.
- B P** I generally go to the bank every three or four days to withdraw of the order of €200/\$250. This way I don't need to go the bank too frequently, but then I also don't have too much money on my person or in the hotel, should I be unlucky enough to lose everything.
The net result are bank charges amounting to approximately 1%.
- B P** Don't Be Overly Reliant On Bank or Credit Cards
It really is not wise to rely on a single bank card or a single credit card as your sole source of funds. So unless you have a pocket full of different bank cards and credit cards I suggest that you bring some money in the form of traveller's cheques and some as cash.
- B P** **Bring Your Credit Cards**
Withdrawing Cash From An ATM Using A Credit Card
Both Visa and MasterCard may be used, but different banks may or may not accept one or the other credit cards. In my experience, Visa is generally more useful than MasterCard in West Africa. But if you have both, bring both.
- B P** It is also possible to get a cash advance on your credit card from the bank itself. Again in my experience Visa is more widely accepted than MasterCard in the region.
Dakar has a large and well organized financial infrastructure – I doubt you will have a problem getting a cash advance on any kind of credit card.
- B P** Bring all the credit cards you have, do not be overly concerned about theft or fraud. Keep them separately from your bank card, perhaps locked away in the hotel and only bring them out when you actually intend to withdraw money.
- B P** Making Purchases With A Credit Card
For the most part you will not be able to pay for anything with a credit card. Do not plan to rely on your credit cards to pay your hotel or restaurant bills. Both Senegal and The Gambia's economies are very much based on cash.
- B P** Credit cards (or debit or charge cards) can be used to pay for some items, but their use is usually limited to the more expensive hotels, restaurants and for air tickets.
- S P** To the best of my knowledge, Hotel de l'indépendance accepts some major credit cards – I do not have a current list of the cards they accept, please ask me nearer the time of the meeting.
- G K G** Hotel Paradise Suites does not accept credit cards.
Tendaba Camp does not accept credit cards.

T
B P In general, Visa and American Express are the most widely accepted when cards accepted at all.

B P **Traveller's Cheques**
TCs are a good source of backup money, should you be unable to access funds from your bank account or use your credit cards

B P Given the number of ATM machines in Dakar, and the fact that you will pay 1% to create the traveller's cheque and a commission to cash it, TCs do not represent a better deal than withdrawing cash directly from an ATM machine

B P Cashing traveller's cheques in any major currency is easy in Dakar.
The same is true in the banks on the Atlantic Coast of The Gambia.

B P **Not All Types Of Travellers' Cheques Are Created Equal**
If at all possible get American Express branded traveller's cheques since these are the most widely accepted

B P Avoid bringing traveller's cheques in €100 or \$100 denominations since they are rather inflexible -- €20 or \$20 denominations are optimal, otherwise €50 or \$50 cheques.

Money In The Gambia

The Gambia's Currency

G P The Gambian unit of currency is the dalasi, pronounced 'dah-lah-see' and abbreviated D.

G P There are notes in D5, D10, D25, D50 and D100 denominations.
The dalasi is divided into 100 bututs - but you will rarely hear this term. The most common (and perhaps only) coin that you will typically see will be the heptagonal one dalasi piece (D1).

G P **Exchange Rates Vs Major Currencies**

Roughly speaking D100 = \$3.50 US

Roughly speaking D100 = €2.50

Roughly speaking D100 = £1.75

G P 436

Official Exchange Rates

1 Euro = 39.68 Gambian Dalasi

1 US Dollar = 29.84 Gambian Dalasi

1 British Pound = 57.04 Gambian Dalasi

1 Canadian Dollar = 25.17 Gambian Dalasi

1 Swiss Franc = 26.19 Gambian Dalasi

Obtaining Local Currency In Central Gambia

G P **The Road To Tendaba**

T The route from Dakar or The Gambia's Atlantic Coast to Tendaba will not take us near a bank or ATM.

G P **Obtaining Local Currency In Tendaba Camp**

T Due to the remoteness of the Camp, you may need to exchange money informally. This we will do at the reception of Tendaba Camp, the meeting site in The Gambia.

G K If travelling to Tendaba from Kololi on the Atlantic Coast – you are best advised to withdraw money from an ATM on the coast or exchange traveller's cheques etc.

G T If you need to exchange money into Gambian local currency there are options as to which currency to exchange:
Option 1 – Exchange hard currency, euros or dollars or pounds – CASH ONLY.

S P Option 2 – If travelling to Tendaba from Dakar - you can withdraw money from a Dakar bank and bring Senegalese currency to be exchanged at the Camp.

Funds For Additional Days In The Gambia, After The Meeting

G P I am aware that some meeting participants intend to stay on in The Gambia for a few days at the conclusion of the meeting. Here, money considerations become a little more of an issue.

G P **For Those Heading West, To Banjul and the Atlantic Coast**

Again, it's not optimal to carry a large pocketful of cash, but for those going near the capital of Banjul there is no

need to, since the area has plenty of ATM machines.

The Standard Chartered bank's ATMs definitely accept Visa cards, I've used them many times in just this way.

G P For Those Heading East, To 'Up-Country' Gambia

It's not as straightforward to access local currency in the centre or east of the country as it is in the capital region. Soma, Georgetown, Farafenni and Basse may have banks in which you can either exchange traveller's cheques or organise a cash advance on a credit card, but I cannot confirm this.

The alternative to exchanging money in a bank is to exchange it informally – converting hard cash into local currency on a routine basis. Thankfully, up-country Gambia is an extremely peaceful and safe part of the world, and the likelihood that you will be robbed or lose your bags is extremely small, so it is actually not so unrealistic to carry a larger supply of cash on your person.

To ease matters somewhat, it will quickly become clear that it's difficult to spend too much money too rapidly in up-country Gambia. Daily expenses will be considerably less than in Dakar – €100 should well last for fully 4 days.

4 – STAYING HEALTHY IN SENEGAL & THE GAMBIA

Sickness And Emergencies

If You Feel Unwell

B X If You Feel Sick – Do Not Keep Quiet About It

Be very mindful of your body's normal functions, and seek medical advice the moment that you suspect you have any sort of a problem – even if it appears to be something as simple as 'traveller's diarrhoea'. Should other symptoms be present it could potentially be a more serious condition, and the worst thing you can do is to keep quiet about it.

B X There is no room for embarrassment about diarrhoea in the developing world!!

Medical Emergencies And Hospitals In Dakar

S X The best hospital in Senegal is reputed to be Hopital Principal. From the outside it may not look very special, but I have it on good authority that the hospital is very well equipped and has a large number of extremely well-trained medical specialists.

S X Other hospitals include Hopital Le Dantec and CHU Fann.

S X Another highly recommended option is the privately owned Clinique de la Madeleine (889 94 70). SOS Medecin takes all of its patients here. (The owner of SOS Medecin recommends Hopital Principal for major problems.)

S X Dakar Emergency Ambulance And Paramedic Service - SOS Medecin

In case of an emergency call 889-1515

This service works and is extremely efficient – on the last occasion in Dakar we were required to use SOS Medecin for a meeting participant with bronchitis.

Website - <http://www.senegal-online.com/sos-medecin/>

Medical Emergencies In Senegal - Outside Of Dakar

S X In case of a serious medical emergency while far from Dakar the best thing to do is call SOS Medecin in Dakar - call 889-1515 and request an air ambulance. The plane will be with you within 1 hour. (The plane requires at least 300m of flat land to use as a runway.)

Medical Emergencies And Hospitals In The Gambia

G X Air Ambulance To Dakar

In case of a serious medical emergency while in The Gambia – when not in or near Banjul - the best thing to do is call SOS Medecin in Dakar, Senegal –

SOS Medecin Telephone Number from The Gambia: +221-889-1515.

Request an air ambulance. The plane will be with you within 1 hour. (The plane requires at least 300m of flat land to use as a runway.)

- G X Hospitals In The Gambia**
 There are several hospitals I know of in The Gambia including the Victoria in Banjul and Bwiam and Bansang up-country. But none are as good as the hospitals in Dakar.
 Depending on the nature of the medical problem and level of urgency, from Tendaba there are several options. Bwiam and Bansang are closest – but these hospitals cannot be trusted for a major medical problem. Banjul is at least four hours from Tendaba by car – I’m advised that the Victoria Hospital is OK, but not the best.
- G T X** Tendaba is remote - 3 to 4 hours drive east from the airport – but it does have an airstrip (‘Tendaba Airport: Terminal 3’) that could serve as the landing site for a flying doctor if absolutely necessary.

Health Related Items To Bring

Medicines

- B P Prescription Medicine**
 Don’t forget to bring an adequate supply of any prescription medicine that you are taking or may need. It might be difficult to find or out of stock in Dakar, and certainly unavailable in The Gambian countryside.
- B P A Broad Spectrum Antibiotic**
 Something I carry with me when in Africa, just in case I happen to pick up a gastrointestinal bug and do not have a doctor at hand. I typically 5-day course of ciprofloxacin (Ciloxan, Cipro). It can come in handy, and might be something you want to consider – not so much for Dakar, since doctors and pharmacies are plentiful, but for use in rural Gambia where the nearest doctor and pharmacy could well be 3 or 4 hours drive away.

Preparing For Mosquitoes

- B P Mosquito Repellent**
 In case of mosquitoes it is advisable to bring insect repellent – the most effective contains DEET (*N,N*-diethyl-*meta*-toluamide). Sprays and gels containing 25-50% DEET are readily available in outdoor shops and chemists/pharmacies across Europe and North America.
- B P Non-DEET Insect Repellents**
 Although the Centre for Disease Control in Atlanta, Georgia, USA (www.cdc.gov) recommends the use of DEET as the most effective and longest lasting mosquito repellent, some have health concerns about its use. The same places that sell DEET insect repellents typically also have non-DEET based alternatives available – these generally employ citronella or other naturally occurring oils as the active ingredient. Perhaps the most interesting – which I have yet to try for myself – is a cream or paste containing oil extracted from the leaves of the neem tree, traditionally employed on the Indian subcontinent for just this purpose.
- B P Antimalarial Prophylaxis**
Dry season or not, minimal mosquitoes or not, nowhere in Senegal or The Gambia is completely free of malaria, so it’s extremely important to protect against bites and take a course of prophylactic tablets.

Preparing For The Sun

- B P Sunglasses**
 Bring a pair –they’ll be extremely useful – albeit in the early spring the harmattan wind will dim the brightness of the sun.
- B P Sun Screen**
 It’s advisable to bring a small bottle – sun protection factor (SPF) 15 or more. The region’s equatorial position makes the sun strong, though for part of the year (Dec to Feb) it is moderated by the atmospheric dust of the harmattan. I’ve never personally found the sun in the region to be very strong or oppressive – especially not during the period of the harmattan.
- B P West Africa, The Sun & Sun Screen**
 Having spent over four months in West Africa – I’ve walked around a lot outside, generally without using sun screen and generally come home without any hint of sunburn, and not much of a sun tan. It’s almost the perfect climate in which to pick up a very safe and gentle tan – the sunshine is rarely over-powering.
- B P After-Sun Cream or Moisturiser**
 If your skin is extremely susceptible to burns. (NB: the sun is almost completely avoidable during this trip – if you don’t want to spend time outside there is no need to.)
- B P Lip Balm**
 Again for sensitive skin, you may want to bring a lip balm with sun protection in case of dry or chapped/cracked lips. (Personally, I’ve never had any problems with the climate in this respect)

- B P Sun Hat**
There is no shade whatever when in a boat on the Gambia River – a sun hat (with a brim to protect your neck) is a wise addition to your luggage.

Health Related Items You Ought/Need Not Bring

- B P Perfume, Scented Deodorants Or Aftershave**
Mosquitoes are attracted by strong scents – so it's wise to avoid using perfumed deodorants.
- B P Medical Kit**
I always carrying a well stocked basic first aid kit in case of cuts and grazes, need for aspirin etc. If you need something please just ask.

Hygiene – Avoiding Water/Food-Borne Infections

General Considerations

- B P Healthcare Precautions**
The first step you can take to avoid food and water contamination and poor hygiene concerns is to get yourself vaccinated against Hepatitis A and typhoid. For this you must speak your doctor or travel clinic.
- B X** The second is to pay very good attention to what you eat and drink. Again, please be very, very careful – if you're not then traveller's diarrhoea might be just around the corner!
See the Section on Food and Drinks

Hand Washing

- B X** It should go without saying, but it's extremely important that you wash your hands before eating – and as often as you are able during the day. If in doubt wash your hands!
- B X Local Habits - Lots Of Hand Shaking, Not So Much Hand Washing!!**
Such is the way of the locals that on an average day in West Africa you will shake hands with many people – but not all will adhere to western standards of hygiene. Consequently, you are certain to have some very interesting bacterial colonies on your skin! So wash your hands.
- B P Hand Washing Without Water**
On occasions where I need to wash my hands but there is no soap and/or running water in sight (which is most of the time) I use one or both of two products which I take with me and carry in my daypack at all times:
1 – An alcohol based disinfectant gel.
2 – 'Wet wipe' disinfectant towelettes.
Wet wipes have a multitude of uses and the gel is perfect for post-toilet/restroom use.
See Section on Hand Washing.

Toilets / Restrooms

- B X Toilet Paper**
Both Senegal and The Gambia are predominantly Muslim. Consequently, the locals are not big users of toilet paper they favour the left hand and water approach – which makes it all the more important that you be vaccinated against Hepatitis A and typhoid when you consider the poor hand washing culture and lack of soap and water facilities. **See Section on Hand Washing.**
- B X** Toilet paper is usually absent from public toilets/restrooms – except in good quality hotels and restaurants.
- B X** Even though there is not a large market for it, in major cities such as Dakar, toilet paper is always available in shops. But beware of running short of this highly valued commodity – don't be caught short in the countryside, where it is typically very difficult to find.
- B X** Facial tissues of one kind or another are however always available and so will certainly substitute.

Avoiding Mosquito-Borne Diseases

Mosquitoes

- B X** The northern spring is in the dry season in Senegal and The Gambia – you will not see many mosquitoes!

S	X	Mosquitoes In Dakar Bizarrely enough, practically the only place I have been bitten by mosquitoes in Dakar (during the dry season) is in an internet café –a humid, sweaty little place, much more to the insects’ liking! So one essential thing I usually take with me to read email is a bottle of insect repellent.
S	X	The story would be very different during the wet season – with puddles of standing water providing fantastic breeding grounds.
G	P	Biting Insects By The Gambia River It is at Tendaba Camp on the Gambia River that you are most likely to come into contact with the evils of the flying syringe. Be prepared – wear long-sleeves and trousers/long pants at sunset and in the evening. See Section on Evening and Night Time Clothing.
T		
G	X	Kololi is Comparatively Mosquito Free In my experience mosquitoes are not a big problem on the Atlantic Coast.
K		

Precautions Against Malaria

B	X	Malaria Carrying Mosquitoes <u>The malaria parasite is carried by the anopheles mosquito which, like most other mosquitoes are most likely to bite at sunset and after dark.</u>
B	P	Preventing Malaria And Other Mosquito-Borne Diseases <u>The best prevention is to avoid being bitten! So cover your arms to your wrists and legs to your ankles every evening.</u> See Section on Evening and Night Time Clothing
B	P	<u>Apply insect repellent – see Section on Mosquito Repellent.</u> Please bring a small bottle/tube or tube of repellent – I will bring extra for general use.
B	P	<u>Mosquitoes are attracted by perfumes, scented deodorants and aftershave. Avoid using such scents.</u>
B	P	<u>Take anti-malarial prophylactic tablets – see Section on Antimalarial Prophylaxis.</u>
B	X	<u>Sleep under a mosquito net if there is one, and turn the fan on.</u>
G	X	Tendaba Camp in The Gambia has mosquito nets over every bed. And the camp staff will offer to spray your room every evening (I generally don’t take them up on the offer, since the insecticide they use is not necessarily to be trusted and the net alone works fine).
T		
G		Hotel rooms in Kololi do not all have mosquito nets over the beds – but practically all should have fans and screens over the windows. In my experience mosquitoes really are not a bit problem in Kololi hotel rooms – you may see one or two, not many more.
K		
S	X	Not all hotel rooms in Dakar have mosquito nets over the beds – but practically all should have fans and screens over the windows. In my experience mosquitoes really are not a bit problem in Dakar hotel rooms – you may see one or two, not many more.

Avoiding Rabies

B	X	<u>It’s Easy – Don’t Go Near Cats, Dogs, Bats, Monkeys And Other Mammals</u> <u>Rabies is a fatal viral infection endemic in West Africa – but it is also the most easily prevented of all diseases!! It might be difficult to resist stroking the cute little kittens and puppies that you will see in West Africa, but my recommendation is that you stay away – keep your distance, just as you would with rats, mice and other vermin.</u>
B	X	<u>Make a particular point of avoiding any animal that seems sick or acts strangely.</u>
B	X	<u>Any bite, scratch or even lick from an animal should be cleaned immediately – scrubbed with soap and water, alcohol and/or hydrogen peroxide. Then head straight to Dakar for medical assistance. Treatment must begin before the first signs of illness appear – if not, rabies is life-threatening. Don’t mess with rabies!</u>

5 - FOOD & DRINK

Water

B	P	<u>Do Not Drink Tap Water</u> <u>The only water you should drink will be purified and will come in sealed plastic bottles – or occasionally small</u>
----------	----------	---

plastic sachets.

B P **Do Not Brush Your Teeth With Tap Water.**

B P **Keep Your Mouth Closed While Taking A Shower.**

B X The most common water container that you will see in shops will be a 1.5 litre bottle. Bottle by bottle this is expensive – in Dakar each costs CFA500 (approximately US \$1) Cheaper is to buy a tray containing six 1.5 litre bottles – 9 litres of water then costs CFA1600. Cheaper still are 5 litre carboys which cost CFA 700.

And the best deal of all is 250 mL sachets for a mere CFA25 each. Buy a few of these and top up a larger water bottle. All sachets should have a printed label – ink on the plastic – and are opened by biting or cutting off the corner.

B X **The Seal On Water Bottles**

Make sure that you are the first to break the seal on your bottle of purified water. Some enterprising individuals refill them with tap water! Do check the seal before you drink!

B X **Un-Drinkable Water**

Do not drink the water sold in plastic bags (resembling small supermarket fruit bags, sandwich bags) sealed with a knot – hand-sealed rather than machine-sealed. This is not the purified water sold in sachets.

Food

B P **The General Rule: If you can cook it, boil it or peel it, eat it. Otherwise forget it!**

B X **Salads**

Cheap salads and garnishes are a real danger. Only eat salads in the best looking restaurants. Inappropriately washed or unwashed vegetables represent a real danger.

B X **Meat**

Vegetarians are far less likely to suffer from intestinal complaints in the developing world than meat eaters. Be very cautious about the meat you eat – and if in doubt take the vegetarian option. For an indication as to why, take a walk around the meat market and play a quick game of spot the refrigerator!

Eat meat only in good restaurants, and only when you know which animal it came from. Avoid minced meat products.

B P **Fruit**

Peel apples, peaches, plums, nectarines and similar fruit wherever possible. At the very least make sure you give these fruits a very good wash with purified water before taking a bite.

Bring a clean penknife for the task. (Or borrow mine)

B X **Ice Cream**

Do not get into the habit of eating the ice cream sold by street traders. La Gondole and Mezzo are famous for their ice cream in Dakar, these two places are safe and reliable.

B X **Shellfish**

The wisest thing to do is stay away from shellfish for the duration of your trip. But if you'd like to try something that came straight out of the Atlantic at least make sure that the restaurant is of the highest quality.

Drinks

B X **Milk**

It's a good idea to take your tea and coffee black while in the developing world!

Unless you personally milked the cow and pasteurized it, milk should generally be treated with extreme caution – it frequently is not pasteurized, nor refrigerated and frequently is left around uncovered on tables for longer than it should be! Beware.

B X **Milk With Coffee**

West Africans typically add boiled milk to their coffee. This is much less likely to be a health hazard than cold milk, provided that you are its first and only recipient.

B X **Tea And Coffee**

Provided the water used has actually been taken to the boil hot beverages should be quite safe to drink. Test the temperature for yourself – and if you're not satisfied, send it back for a hot one.

B X **Ice Cubes**

Ice cubes are always a potential danger. If in doubt throw them out of your drink. It's a good idea to get into the

habit of requesting cold drinks without ice.

B X Glasses Of Fruit Juice

Bottled is best. Fruit juices and fruit-based drinks are sometimes diluted with water. This may be tap water rather than purified water. I trust the juice in good restaurants, but beware in cheap places.

Restaurants

B X Selecting A Restaurant

I have eaten at all of the restaurants I will take you to or suggest in Senegal and The Gambia. Food in Dakar and Kololi is typically quite good, perhaps some of the best and safest in Africa.

I have personally spent over 4 months in Senegal and The Gambia and have been sick only one time. I blame myself for this, for eating a salad in a rather questionable dirty-looking restaurant. In general I consider the hygiene and food quality of restaurants in the region to be good – as I say, I've had well over 200 meals in the region and have been unlucky just once! Chances are that for every 200 meals in restaurants in the US or Europe you might just suffer a little food poisoning once also.

If you happen to choose your own place to dine at – if the place looks clean and well run, then the food is probably safe. In general, places that are packed with foreigners or locals will be fine, while empty restaurants should be treated with caution.

The food in busy restaurants is cooked and eaten quickly with little time spent standing around, and is probably not reheated.

B X Glasses Of Water In Restaurants

Any glasses of water provided free in the best restaurants are safe to drink – it'll be bottled water.

But glasses of water given out with 'street food' or with a quick cheap lunch may not be. Be very wary about the water you drink, and don't hesitate to ask about the source.

6 – THINGS TO BRING – SUGGESTIONS WHEN PREPARING & PACKING

The Bottom Line - Absolutely Do Not Bring:

- B P First and foremost, do not bring anything that is irreplaceable.**
Do not bring anything that you are not prepared to lose.

Do not bring anything of great sentimental value.

Do not bring anything of great intrinsic value.

See Section on Things You Should Not Bring For Your Personal Safety

For The Meeting

Your Presentation

B P **Your Presentation on a USB Flash Drive**

If at all possible please bring your presentations on a USB flash drive/USB stick.

Alternatively put it on a CD or floppy disk (if it will fit on 1.4MB).

Bring your laptop only if you would like to use it for other things during your trip.

- B P NB: If you will be using a CD or floppy please tell me as soon as possible, or as soon as you arrive in Africa – I will need to transfer your presentation to the laptop hard drive.**

B P **Email Your Presentation to Yourself – Make it Un-lose-able**

For safety's sake I suggest you email your presentation both to yourself and to me (england@mangosee.com).

Once on the mail server we can be sure that your presentation will always be available from any internet café.

You may also want to upload it to an FTP site to make it accessible there also; I will do the same if you would like to send it me to.

Clothing For The Conference

B P **Clothes for the Conference – in General**

This is to be a meeting in an informal style – in a very warm part of the world. For comfort's sake and in order to

[maintain a relaxed atmosphere, I strongly recommend that you do not wear formal attire.](#)

- B P** Please, no jackets and/or ties, I really don't believe the climate to be compatible with such restrictive clothing. It could well simply make for a lot of unnecessary perspiration and discomfort.
February is not hot, but rather pleasantly sunny – it's the coolest time of year – but on any given day it may well be very warm. Later in spring is somewhat warmer.
- B P** Traditional West Africa clothes are flowing robes. Staying cool in Africa is all about air flow – loose fitting clothing is better all around.
- B P** My suggestion for what to wear during the meeting --
For men – a shirt, long pants/trousers and lightweight shoes or sandals.
For women – a top, trousers or a skirt and lightweight shoes or sandals.
- B P** **Clothes for the Conference In Dakar and Kololi**
In Africa the air conditioning is never 100% guaranteed, the electrical power may fail at any time – and when it does the lack of circulation makes for an instant sauna, which makes it's important to choose lightweight flexible clothing.
- B P** Even if the conference room is a perfect temperature, the rest of Africa is unlikely to be - the outdoor temperature may well be extremely hot and sweaty – make sure that you are appropriately dressed for a possible walk to lunch each day
- G T P** **Clothes for the Conference in Tendaba**
In order to take advantage of the pleasant early evening temperatures, the Gambian sessions of the meeting will take place after sunset.
As with every evening, long-sleeved shirts and trousers are advisable, as is a touch of insect repellent, in case of mosquitoes and other biting insects. **See Section on Evening and Night Time Clothing.**

Scientific Donations For Students And Researchers

- B P** **Science In Print: Books, Texts, Reprints**
[I would like to encourage you to bring any written science that you can afford to give away to the host scientific communities. Good science books are often extremely expensive and difficult to come by in the developing world. Anything you are able to bring will be gratefully received and distributed.](#)
- B P** **Research Papers and Reprints**
Please bring anything published materials related to your presentation (or not) that you can afford to give away.
- B P** **Photocopies of Research Papers**
It might not be 100% legal, but if at all possible please photocopy some recent papers to hand out after your talk, they will be treasured by any local scientists and students in attendance.
- B P** **Basic Texts**
The library at the Université Cheikh Anta Diop (University of Dakar) has several copies of most introductory scientific text books. The University of The Gambia is not so fortunate.
It's certain that the majority of students will not own copies of the texts that they are studying, and the libraries of both institutions could always be better stocked. Practically any text that you no longer have a need for, be it dog-eared or in good condition, will find a home and an appreciative owner in West Africa.
Please have a look through your bookshelves prior to leaving the office or lab.
- B P** **Research Level Texts**
Many researchers and university professors in both Senegal and The Gambia work on very limited resources – and their bookshelves reflect it. As with student texts, your unneeded books will be gratefully accepted, no matter what their condition (within reason).

Luggage And Bags

- B P** **Long Distance Luggage**
Dakar and Banjul airport are like any other. Your bags will not receive any worse treatment here than at any other airport.
- B P** Dakar or Banjul Airport - from the door of the arrivals hall to the hotel, via the airport taxi park, the greatest distance you will need to walk will not exceed 100m. Any kind of luggage is therefore suitable.
- B P** I generally take two bags allowing me to take a few more clothes and do a bit less laundry
Bag 1 - A large aircraft carry-on with wheels which I filled with my 'city clothes' and left in storage at the hotel visiting other parts of the country.
Bag 2 – A backpack which I take with me when moving around the country – flexible, and easy to carry at times.

G T P **Bags to Tendaba, The Gambia**
It's not critical, but the best kind of bag to bring to the Tendaba section of the meeting is something that you can easily carry for further than just a few metres. Such is the nature of travel in rural Africa that it may be necessary for us to pick up our bags and walk for a short distance – to reach the river terminal for example, access to which very much depends on the volume of traffic ahead.
My recommendation for this portion of the trip would be either a sports holdall (with a shoulder strap) or a small backpack/rucksac.

B P **Daily Bag**
A daypack or book bag that will do for carrying work materials to and from the conference venue and wandering around the city and/or countryside.

NB: Bags with two shoulder straps are better than bags with one – see **Section on Daypacks, Book Bags.**

Clothing And Footwear

B P **As a General Rule - Bring Clothes with Lots of Good Deep Pockets.**
My preference (especially in Dakar or other pickpocket's paradise) is trousers, shorts with zip pockets at the front, and other useful pockets.

G P **'Adventure Clothing'**
For boat and jeep trips from Tendaba Camp, or from Kololi - a shirt and trousers/pants which you don't mind getting a little dirty – or even torn while sitting in the back of a truck or jeep. And trainers/sneakers to complete the outfit.

G P **Swimming Costume**
The Atlantic Coast has an ocean and excellent beaches - most of its hotels have swimming pools. Tendaba camp has a swimming pool.

Documents

Passport

B P **Passport Theft**
European and North American passports are highly valued in the developing world - they do get stolen – so look after it. (My recommendation – don't carry it with you for the sake of it - lock it in your hotel room.)

B P **Photocopies of Your Passport**
Make several photocopies of your passport. Spread them around different parts of your luggage.

B P **Carry A Photocopy Of Your Passport**
Also carry a photocopy of your passport on your person or in your pocket or daily bag so that you can present it rather than your actual passport should 'an official' on the street request to see it. Not everyone is quite as official as they may say, and it's a mistake to hand over your passport at the first time of asking. Even genuine police and army checkpoints are generally happy to accept a photocopy as quick identification.

B P The most hassle that you can give yourself in West Africa is to lose your passport and not have a photocopy of it, or a record of the number, to present to your embassy/consulate for cancellation and replacement. If you're unlucky and your consular officials are inefficient you may miss your flight home.

B P I'm fortunate, as a dual citizen I have two passports, so getting a replacement is not such a concern - I travel on my Irish passport and leave my British one with a friend for quick mailing, in case I lose the former. If you have two, I suggest you do something similar.

All Personal Documents

B P **Photocopies of Your Documents**
Bring photocopies (actual size or reduced) of all of your important documents – passport, visas, air ticket, health & travel insurance policies, the receipt for your traveller's cheques, vaccination records. Spread them around your different bags. I also carry photocopies of my bank and credit cards.

B P **Digitize your Documents and Store them on the Internet**
Scan all of your important personal documents. Save the scans as image files and either email them to yourself or upload them to an FTP server. This way a copy of your passport, and other essential documents, will always be accessible should you be unfortunate enough to lose the real thing.

B P If you don't have suitable digital resources, please free to email image files of your documents to me, I will upload them to my FTP server.

S P **Passport Photos for a Gambian Visa Application**

Bring two recent passport photos if you need to obtain a Gambian visa from the Gambian High Commission in Dakar. (Please ask me if you are not sure about your need for a Gambian visa.)

Insurance – For Health, Travel And Personal Effects

- B P Health Insurance**
Please don't even think of travelling to West Africa unless you have adequate health insurance – including complete emergency hospital care and repatriation coverage.
- B P** In case of an emergency, it would be helpful if you also provide me with your insurance details.
- B P Health Insurance Client Number & Insurance Company Contact Details**
Bring a hard copy of your health insurance details with you – most important is your client number and a telephone contact for the insurance company.
- B P Travel Insurance**
Make sure that all of your personal belongings are insured – feel free to bring an expensive camera, just make sure that you have the appropriate level of travel insurance.

Money

- B P Internet Banking E-identifier/Digipass**
Internet banking is possible via internet cafes – bring your digipass if you may need to transfer money between accounts.

Personal Hygiene

- B P Disinfectant Gel – Hand washing Soap**
An alcohol based soap/handwash that can be used without water. (Carry at all times.)
NB: I will bring extra for general use, please just ask.
- B P 'Wet Wipes' - Cleansing or Disinfectant Towelettes**
Perfect for washing your hands when soap and hot water is not available (which is most of the time, especially away from the best hotels or restaurants), and for cleaning up small spills or sticky fingers after fruit. (Carry at all times.) NB: I will bring extra for general use, please just ask.
- B P Towel**
Dakar and Kololi's hotels supply plenty of towels – but Tendaba Camp's towels aren't the best - I recommend you bring a small towel just in case.
- B P Toilet Paper**
I suggest including a couple of rolls of toilet paper in your luggage to ensure that you can put your hands on some at short notice. (See Section on Toilet Paper in Muslim Countries)

Contact Lenses

- B P Contact Lens Cleaning Fluids**
There is no guarantee that you will be able to buy the cleaning fluids and other supplies that you may need. Please bring all that you need.
- B P Spectacles: The Harmattan and Contact Lenses**
Be advised that at times the dusty conditions (especially those generated by the harmattan) may create problems for your contact lenses. It would be a good idea to bring spectacles along too.

Food And Drinks

- B P Small Refillable Water Bottle (500mL to 1 litre)**
Bring a bottle – any bottle suitable for carrying drinking water – of one pint or more. Refill it from larger water bottles/carboys in your hotel room.

Photography

General Considerations

- B P Insurance for your Photographic Equipment**
Make sure that your photographic equipment is suitably insured against theft and loss.

- B P Camera**
Bring whatever you like to use – don't worry about it getting stolen. It's unlikely provided that you are not genuinely careless.

Digital Photography

- B P Digital Camera**
Batteries are easily charged. Bring the charger.
- B P Camera USB Cable**
Bring a USB cable should you want to download your photos to my computer hard drive (as backup, in case you lose your camera)
- B P Digital Media**
Bring what you need – it could be close to impossible to find in Africa.

Film Photography

- B P Camera Film**
To ensure the best picture quality, I advise you to bring all of the camera film with you that you think you will need for the duration of your trip.
- B P Camera film may actually be very difficult to come by – it's easy to find in Dakar and Kololi, but away from the big cities and tourist areas it can be a challenge to find any at all.**
- B P The film available in shops in West Africa may not be to your liking for any number of reasons, and photographic shops may have a limited range available for you to buy - limited manufacturers, film speeds, roll sizes.**
- B P More problematic is that the film rolls you are likely to find for sale are either well past their sell by date, or have been left on a shelf rather than being refrigerated or stored in a suitably cool place .**
- B P Camera Batteries**
Single use batteries may be difficult to find, likely impossible outside Dakar/Gambian coast. If your camera requires a special kind of battery please bring all that you need.

Miscellaneous Photographic Equipment

- B P Camera Lens Cleaners**
Both the cities and countryside of West Africa can be dusty places (especially during the harmattan – Dec to Feb, and on remote roads) – bring a lens cleaning brush or tissues.
- B P Mini Tripod**
A fantastic small tool for multiplying the photographic possibilities open to you.

Batteries

- B P Rechargeable Batteries**
I recommend you bring rechargeable batteries for cameras and other gadgets – all of the hotels will have electrical sockets for easy recharging.
- B P Battery Charger**
If using rechargeable batteries bring your charger – provided it can run on 220V. If it only works on 110V please let me know. (NB: I will bring one that works on 220V))
- B P Single-use Batteries (Alkaline AA, AAA, etc)**
Easily purchased anywhere in West Africa. Many will look exactly like the ones at home, but most are fakes! Look carefully at the name. Don't expect any batteries you buy for peanuts to last too long – but then you may get lucky.

Communications

- B P Cell Phones / Mobile Phones**
European Phones
Bring your mobile phone. Senegal and The Gambia's cellular phones work on the same frequencies as in Europe.
- S X** If your phone is currently connected to a European network then it is highly likely that it will automatically connect to one of Senegal's networks.
- G X** The same is not necessarily true in The Gambia where the cell phone network is not as highly developed.

B P North American Phones

Will only work if they have triband functionality, utilizing US and European frequencies.

B P Phone Charger

Bring your phone charger. It will work provided it can operate on 220V, with or without a plug adapter.

B P Please let me know if you charger will only work on 110V.

Navigation

B P Compass

A small handheld or button compass is useful wherever you go wandering. With a map and compass you'll not get lost in Dakar, and will always allow you find the river and your bearings when walking around Tendaba. Conversely, it's very difficult to get lost in Kololi – if in doubt jump in a taxi!

B P GPS – Handheld Global Positioning System

A fantastic tool. Unbeatable in the countryside for wandering aimlessly and never getting lost.

B P A GPS is useful in Dakar and on the Gambian coast too – let me know ahead that if you will be bringing a GPS and I will provide you with a number of useful waypoints that I have recorded that may prove useful.

B P Guidebook

I have a guidebook for the region. There's no need to purchase one unless you would like to. Helpful guides include the Lonely Planet "Senegal & The Gambia" and the "Rough Guide to The Gambia".

Useful Items And Tools

B P Battery Powered Flashlight or Torch

A small maglite or LED light will suffice. Put it somewhere that you can easily find it – if you need it at all, you will most likely need to find it in the dark!

B P Headlamp

If/when the power goes out in the hotel, you cannot beat a headlamp. Better than a flashlight/torch. Put it somewhere that you can easily find it.

B P Penknife

A penknife is always useful – especially for peeling fruit. (Don't put it in your carry-on bag!!)

B P Travel Alarm Clock

There may not be an alarm clock in your hotel room. Hotel reception will wake you if you request a call.

B P Laundry Detergent

A small bag or bottle of laundry detergent will enable you to rinse out clothes in your hotel room. (Air dry on the balcony.)

Gifts For Local Children

B P Africa's Children Will Always Greet You (Especially so in Rural Areas)

No matter where you go, you will attract the attention of local children.

In the centre of Dakar many will be beggars - but away from the capital they are simply friendly and happy to see you. Away from the coastal resorts neither Senegal nor The Gambia sees a lot of visitors and so your presence and the chance to speak with you and shake your hand may well be the unique highlight of their day.

The Gambian coast is unusual in this respect – there are few people you'll come across who aren't working for tourists and you won't see many children.

Beside Tendaba Camp is Tendaba village and towards the main road are several other villages.

A minority will not be able to resist the reflex to pop out a hand and beg for a few coins – I don't recommend you give them money, but if you want to give genuinely friendly children something then go ahead::

B P Balloons

Cheap and simple, bring a pack, pull some out and blow them up for children to play with.

You'd be surprised at what children use as toys in Africa, making balloons most welcome.

B P Pens

One thing that you will certainly be asked for – and whether the children genuinely want them or not (some do, some don't) – you can easily help out with a few cheap pens or pencils.

Why not grab a handful from your desk as you walk out of the office.

B P Football (Soccer ball)

All the world loves football – and no one more than African children, but most can't afford an actual football.

Many that you will see will no longer be spherical, having seen better days, or may not be footballs at all. You

can't do much better than to provide a new football for a village full of children.

7 – THE CLIMATE & THE WEATHER

B P Daytime Highs

The weather in Senegal and The Gambia in February will be warm, sunny, and dry. Expect average daily temperatures to range from 24 to 30°C. But don't be surprised if it's hotter.

B P Night Time Lows

Evenings in West Africa are generally extremely pleasant, with night time temperatures not dropping below 15°C. At worst cool – but never cold.

B P Rain

The northern winter and spring is the dry season in West Africa – it does not rain between November and June – you do not need to prepare for rain.

Or at least it should not rain – I was very surprised in Feb 2005 with a few drops of rain one evening!

B P Humidity

The Sahel in the dry season – it's a semi-desert. It might be hot, but will not be humid.

B P The Harmattan

Between December and February the harmattan wind blows from the north. During this time the sky will be greyed somewhat, and hazy due to the volume of particulates the wind carries from the Sahara.

Also see Sections on The Harmattan and Contact Lenses and The Harmattan and Photography.

8 – CLOTHING & FOOTWEAR

Clothing – Cultural Considerations

B P The Muslim Tradition

West Africa is a warm place, which creates a few clothing issues since the majority of Senegalese and Gambians are Muslim. Neither country is at all conservative by Iranian or Taliban standards, but it is important to consider what you are wearing and where you are wearing it.

B P Only at European dominated beach resorts (including Kololi) is it at all acceptable to walk around in a minimum of clothing. It's certainly not appropriate for a woman to wear beach-style clothing in the centre of Dakar or when wandering through a rural village.

B P But wear what you like at a night club or concert venue, such places encompass an altogether different aspect of modern African life.

B P Shorts and Trousers (Long Pants and Short Pants)

By my reckoning, the climate of West Africa warrants shorts rather than long trousers. However, some visitors avoid wearing shorts for fear of offending local sensitivities. I don't subscribe to this point of view since I don't believe that the majority of locals are at all offended by an appropriately cut (lower thigh length, fairly close to the knee) pair of shorts. Many may not see white legs often, but they will certainly not be shocked or offended.

B P For the most part West African men will wear long trousers in the hottest of weather.

Although short trousers are usually the preserve of children, the poor and tourists, it is not unusual to see local men wearing shorts. That said, at any one time on the streets of Dakar, you may be the only adult in sight wearing shorts.

B X Shorts will make you look more like a tourist than a resident – and so potentially subject to more attention from hustlers.

B P Skirts and Dresses

Senegalese and Gambian dresses reach all the way to the ankle – according to Muslim tradition.

B P Western-style dresses and skirts are extremely common and perfectly acceptable in almost all circles.

B X Miniskirts and the likes should be kept back for beach resorts and nightclubs.

B X Mosques And Other Cultural Centres

The one time you may not have options is at mosques or other important cultural sites, where you may be denied entry if dressed inappropriately.

Footwear In General

- B P Sandals**
Whenever possible I recommend you wear sandals, by far the most comfortable option.
- B P** Sandals are appropriate in almost any situation – and with long trousers can certainly be worn for a formal appointment – and certainly during conference sessions.
- G T P** In a flat country, in the dry season, the only time that shoes become the better option is during a long walk – a walk into the bush – or on an unpaved path littered with many small stones. (
See Section on Clothing for Walks in the Bush.
- B X** During three weeks in Senegal and The Gambia at the end of 2004 I did not wear shoes once. Sandals and open-toed or free-fitting footwear are very much the favoured footwear of the region. The majority of West Africans have no reason to own a pair of western-style shoes.
- B X** Mine are Teva sport sandals – and although ageing they are very popular amongst people on the street in West Africa – I've received many offers to swap!

Clothing & Footwear – By Location

- B P City Clothes and Country Clothes – Bring Two Sets of Clothing**
Dakar is a big city – for the most part the locals are fashion conscious and dress well.
Kololi is a tourist centre catering for Western tourists wearing all sorts of vacation clothes.
- G T P** Tendaba is in rural Gambia – where fashion is for all intents and purposes irrelevant! The clothes that you bring to The Gambia should be 100% practical.
- G T P** It makes sense to bring two sets of clothing to Africa, leaving your city clothes in storage at the hotel in Dakar/Kololi while we travel to Tendaba. I have done this several times in Dakar and don't have any concerns about security or theft of my possessions from the hotel.
- S P Footwear For Dakar**
Dakar is a concrete jungle with paved sidewalks/pavements and black tar roads – take your pick as to the kind of lightweight footwear you deem appropriate. (My personal favourite almost all of the time is a pair of sandals.)
- G K P Footwear For Kololi**
The Atlantic Coast is a tourist resort – paved sidewalks – lightweight footwear or sandals are recommended
- G T P Footwear For Tendaba**
Tendaba Camp is 5km by dirt track from a potholed main road. No roads or paths around the camp are paved and hence city footwear is not ideal. Shoes with high heels are a really bad idea!
- G T P** Don't bring hiking boots – totally unnecessary as they're far too heavy for a hot flat country during the dry season.
- G T P** In addition to a pair of sandals, my recommendation would be a pair of sneakers/training shoes.
- G T P Tendaba Boat Trips**
It is always possible that you may get wet shoes clambering in or out of a boat – please remember this when selecting your footwear. (The alternative is to take your shoes off.)

Clothing – By Time Of The Day

Morning & Daytime Clothing

- B P** For the most part, the most appropriate clothing to wear in West Africa is the same as you would wear during a good summer at home – a shirt, lightweight pants/trousers or shorts and shoes or sandals.
- B P** Even if it's cool first thing in the morning, it'll warm up by 10am.
- B P** I almost never take thick or warm fabrics to Africa. Lightweight cotton and cotton/polyester are my fabrics of choice – easily washed and quick drying.
- S P Morning/Daytime Clothing For Dakar**
Should you be walking around the city – and especially to la Place de l'Indépendance or the market areas – think pockets. Wear something to keep cool, but also give consideration to how you will safely carry your cash.
See Section of Safe Handling of Your Money.
- G K P Morning/Daytime Clothing For Kololi**
It's basically very simple – relax and make like you're on vacation at a beach resort – summer clothes are what

you'll need. You will not need to worry about safety in Kololi – there are no pickpockets or thieves to worry about (but still leave most of your cash and all of your documents in your hotel room, it's always the best option) – all the locals you will see make their living from tourism, so they're very protective of international visitors and the only 'hassle' you will receive should be from people trying to sell you souvenirs or day trips.

G P Morning/Daytime Clothing For Tendaba

T For a boat or jeep trip – or let's call it a jeep/bird safari – you'll want to wear your 'adventure clothes' – meaning clothes that you don't mind getting dirty.

G P Long trousers are more suitable than shorts when travelling by boat due to the lack of shade while on the river.
T A hat and sun screen may also be needed.

G P Clothing For Walks In The Bush

T Always wear long trousers and shoes when walking in the bush – when planning to go on foot through any forest, undergrowth or vegetation. Sandals and shorts offer no protection against snakes, and the somewhat greater likelihood of ticks.

Evening & Night Time Clothing

B P Evening/Night Time Clothes - General

In my experience, evening temperatures in West Africa are warm and pleasant.

I can think of only one or two occasions when I have felt at all cold, so requiring an extra layer of clothing.

To keep your baggage to a minimum, my personal recommendation would be to put on a T-shirt or second shirt rather than bringing additional cool weather clothing that you most likely will not need.

B P 'Mosquito-Proof' Clothing

Mosquitoes can and do penetrate thin clothing – making heavy cloth or multiple layers a more effective barrier.

B P Interesting, but not critical - clothing will attract more mosquitoes than light-coloured clothing!

B P Evening Clothing For Dakar

I typically 'dress for dinner' – meaning only that after the heat of the day it's great to take a shower and put on a clean change of clothes – always with long-sleeves.

B X The majority of the best restaurants in Dakar are not exclusive establishments – they are distinguished by the fact that the food they serve is fit for anyone to eat, and that they are out of the price range of most Senegalese.

G X Evening Clothing For Kololi

K Warm evenings in restaurants designed for tourists –with the occasional mosquitoes – long sleeves and pants/trousers. Only in very few of the restaurants can you actually eat indoors – it's alfresco all the way

G X Evening Clothing For Tendaba Camp, The Gambia

T Don't worry about looking stylish in Tendaba – it's a very rural environment.

Should evenings by the river be a little cooler than you like, a thin sweater or an extra shirt will be enough to keep you comfortable.

Clothing – For Travelling Overland to Tendaba

G P Travelling On Roads In Africa – During The Harmattan

T Please don't plan to wear your best or cleanest clothes for the trip between meeting sites.

G X South of Kaolack (central southern Senegal) or east of Brikama, the combination of poor road surfaces, Saharan dust and speed may make the journey from Dakar/Kololi to Tendaba quite a dusty one – and quite a bumpy one.

G X Dress comfortably – it's a car and boat journey totalling approximately 8 to 9 hours.

T

Laundry

B P You can bring a full complement of clothes – or you can easily do some laundry. Two options –

B X 1 – Hand the items to the hotel staff, they will be only too happy to wash your things for a small fee.

B X 2 – Hand wash dirty items in your hotel room sink – and hang them on the balcony to dry. West Africa has a fantastic climate for quick-drying clothes – they'll be dry before you know it.

Shopping For Clothes

B P Just about any item of clothing you may want or need can be purchased for not a lot of money in one of many

market

B P Tailor-Made Clothes

It's extremely easy and inexpensive to have a tailor make any item of clothing you may wish for.

The first step is to buy material from the market – the second is to take it to a tailor (check his work, make sure he's good), state your wishes and bargain for the price.

B P Items of Clothing for a Tailor/Dressmaker to Duplicate

The best way to get exactly what you need is to bring an existing item for the tailor to copy. I have done this many times with shirts. Let me know, I'll introduce you to my tailor.

9 – GENERAL THINGS THAT YOU DO NOT NEED TO BRING

Laptop Computers

B P A fully-loaded laptop and all other essential equipment will be provided for seminar presentations. This computer (and my own laptop) will also be available should you need to make minor changes to your presentation after arriving in West Africa. **See Section on Laptops.**

B P [If you intend to bring a laptop please let me know prior to departing for West Africa.](#)

S P In Dakar, access to email and the internet is available via a number of cheap nearby internet cafes.

G K Kololi and the surrounding area has a number of internet cafes so access to email is easy - Quantumnet is perhaps the best – Gamtel is the cheapest. Hotel Paradise Suites and several other hotels also have their own small internet cafes.

G T P In Tendaba there is no access to the internet – it's an extremely rural part of the world.

Cool Weather Clothing

B P To keep your baggage to a minimum, my personal recommendation would be to put on a long-sleeved shirt as an extra layer rather than bringing additional cold weather clothing that you will most likely not need.

10 – LOCAL PEOPLE & YOUR BEHAVIOUR

People

B X Friendly, Welcoming And Hospitable

West Africans are genuinely hospitable and would not dream of hassling guests in their country. And generous too – they might not have much but they'll happily share it with you nonetheless.

B X Aggression is not a typical Senegalese or Gambian trait – and the vast majority are practising Muslims. They're generally extremely peaceful people.

B X Suspicion

A lot of young men of the streets of Dakar will bother you, and make themselves into clear annoyances – but whatever you do, do not treat everyone you meet as a potential assailant. Poor does not equal thief.

Bring the right attitude with you – the vast majority of local people are simply going about their lives, and they are only too willing to help if and when you need to ask for assistance.

B X A Liking For All Things Western

And I don't mean cowboy movies.

There is a belief running through the mind of many people in the developing world that everything in the developed world is perfect – that we are all extremely rich and also all extremely happy. True isn't it? Wealthy yes, comparatively speaking. However, the overall disparity in the level of happiness is debatable.

They also want (to legally hold) everything that we have, because they consider that the objects and accessories that we carry around are better than the equivalent items that they have.

Mobile phones for example – if they don't recognise the phone you are carrying then it will be automatically assumed that the one you have is better and more expensive than the one they have – and this alone might just trigger them to offer to swap.

Funnily enough I was offered a mobile phone as a swap for my 'phone' when I was seen speaking into it one day

– the only thing being that mine wasn't a phone at all, and I wasn't holding it to my ear but simply speaking into the digital voice recorder that I use to take notes when I'm on the road. But I'm a westerner and it looked enough like a phone, so that's enough to make it 'wanna have' item for a Senegalese or Gambian.

Local Customs – Public Dos And Don'ts

B X The Muslim Left Hand

Be aware of what you do with your left hand! It would be a great insult to offer someone food with it or offer it to shake. The left hand is reserved for 'personal toiletries'.

As for 'finger food' – always with your right hand!

B X Don't Touch Women

Handshakes are acceptable, and encouraged – a pat on the back, arm or anything similar is not.

Miscellaneous Considerations

B X Greetings

Be prepared to shake hands with everyone that you even come close to speaking to.

B X I shared one half of a doorstep with a local man while finishing a drink in Dakar one evening, but we didn't speak or communicate in any way. A group of his friends approached, stood and spoke to him, but made sure to shake my hand too before entering into a conversation with him. Very friendly, typically so.

B X Walking

Never look as if you are lost. Even when you are lost!

Always walk in a confident manner as if you know exactly where you are going, as if you know the city streets like the back of your hand. To amble around is to attract the attention of young men that might want to 'assist' you in finding your way, and you probably don't need or desire their kind of assistance.

B X Try Not To Be Too Much Of A Tourist!

Tourists walk around without a care and sometimes without a clue, ambling around not knowing where they are. Tourists get hassled continually, residents do not. Make like a resident and let it be known that you know exactly where you are, what you are doing and where you are going.

11 – PHOTOGRAPHY

Your Camera & Photographic Equipment

B P I don't advise leaving your camera in the hotel for fear of it being stolen on the streets. There's no point in bringing a camera with you if you are not going to use it. What I do advise is that you don't let it leave your consciousness if you are amongst the crowds.

B P Do not hang your camera around your neck on the strap – it's too easy to steal in a crowd – particularly so in a busy market.

B P I suggest that you keep it in a bag/daypack and only pull it out when you want to take a picture. This isn't great for quick spontaneous photography, but it is good for maintaining possession of your camera!

B P If yours is a palm-sized camera then there is no reason why you might not keep it in your hand for extended periods – provided that you have a strap, and you lock that strap around your wrist or wrap it around your hand several times. Do so in a way that you can forget about the camera, but that it still can't be stolen without you knowing.

Hand carrying a camera without a strap is really not a good idea.

B X Never put your camera down – not anywhere, ever – it either stays in your hand or in your bag.

B P **Camera Film**

To ensure the best picture quality, it is advisable to bring all of the camera film with you that you think you will need for the duration of your trip.

The film available in shops in Africa may not be to your liking for any number of reasons, and photographic shops may have a limited range available for you to buy - limited manufacturers, film speeds, roll sizes.

B P Camera film may actually be very difficult to come by – it's easy to find in Dakar or Kololi, but away from the big cities it can be a challenge to find any at all.

B P More problematic is that the film rolls you are likely to find for sale are either well past their sell by date, or have

been left on a shelf rather than being refrigerated or stored in a suitably cool place .

B X Film Developing And Photo Print Processing

I recommend you take your film rolls home for processing – photo developing may be cheaper in the developing world, but it is also of variable quality.

After exposing a roll of film, store it in a cool place ready for the journey home. Avoid carrying it around in the heat of the day in your daypack for longer than necessary. (Exposed film is more sensitive to heat and light than when unexposed.)

B X The Harmattan And Photography

Be advised that the harmattan period is not great for photography – pictures are likely to appear ‘overcast’. Don’t waste too much time on beautiful sunsets and sky shots.

Photographic Subjects

Photos Of People

B X Many West Africans will not be happy if you take their photo. People will turn away the moment they see you pointing a camera in their direction – and they will tell others to do the same, quickly spoiling any spontaneous group shot that you might have envisioned.

B X Should you want to take a photo of someone, you basically have 2 options – to ask their permission, or don’t ask their permission – with the following 6 possible outcomes:

B X Ask Permission Before You Take Photos of People!

(1) – You ask and they say ‘yes’, then you take the photo. They may ask you for a copy of the photo, in which case take their name and address and send them a copy. It’s the least you can do.

B X (2) – You ask and they say ‘no’, so you don’t take the photo. It’s unfortunate; I’ve lost numerous fantastic images simply because the owner of that image wasn’t willing to let me capture it. But that’s just the way it is and you must respect their privacy.

B X (3) – You ask and they say ‘no’, so you offer them money for a photo. If it matters that much to you then you are probably willing to pay for it – so try to find a price that suits you both.

B X (4) – You ask and they say ‘no’, but you take the photo anyway
OR you don’t ask their permission and they don’t approve!

An unwise move!! This is the one time that you can easily make West Africans quite angry very quickly – angry, but not aggressively so. They will typically respond in one of two ways – either ask you for the film in your camera or ask you to pay them for the photos which they assume you are about to sell.

Most such privacy and image rights issues can of course quickly be cured with right sum of money! So now you are in the position of trying to sweet-talk your way out of a difficult situation surrounded by the person you upset and the rest of his friends. Good luck! Smile, don’t get angry, shout or show frustration, and if you’re lucky they’ll either get bored or one of them will eventually persuade the others that it’s not worth pursuing the matter.

B X (5) – You ask permission, they say no – you agree not to take a photo, then as you lower the camera you press the shutter anyway. Well, you’re sneaky, but if you’re lucky you may have a decent shot and your subject will not have noticed what you have done. Good luck if they have seen you – see point (4) above.

B X (6) – You don’t ask permission, and take the photo. Judge the situation carefully and you might get lucky, your subject might not disapprove - see point (4) above. Children (with parents out of sight) are some of the best subjects – they don’t mind having their photos taken – so you can often make the most of a single child or group and get some very nice pictures.

Photos Of Crowds

B X What you deem to be a long distance crowd shot may not be a long enough distance for the people in the crowd! If so, you just might find a handful of the crowd approaching you!

See Section on Photos of People – Permission Denied

Photos Of Seemingly Ownerless Or Publicly Owned Inanimate Objects

B X Occasionally you may take a picture of some obscure object in the street or attached to a house or building – perhaps something that is truly in the public domain. And the next thing you know someone is running up to you

in an animated manner asking for money or the removal of the camera film/deletion of the image. They say that they are the owner of the object or are otherwise responsible for it, and they expect that you are about to sell your photos – so therefore you owe them money! It's laughable, don't believe it for a second. But be polite, don't get frustrated or angry, simply say no thanks ("non merci") and walk away.

- B X** The most recent example I have of public photography causing someone a problem is a photo of the Blood Donor wagon which I took at the UCAD (University of Dakar). After a few seconds deliberation, one of the nurses/assistants came over to me demanding the film roll from my camera. It was a vehicle standing in a public place – and she was trying to tell me that I needed to ask the permission of the director of the National Blood Bank before being allowed to take its picture! Thankfully a more sensible chap came along, I explained, he understood, he let me keep the photo and we talked about a range of things for the next few minutes.

12 – HOW TO GET THINGS DONE

Telephone & Cell Phone

Cellular Phone Networks

S X **Cell Phones In Senegal – Foreign Networks**

My Dutch prepaid mobile/cellular phone with a Vodafone SIM Card works throughout the whole of Senegal. It's a predominantly flat country with numerous masts. In Senegal my phone automatically connects to Sentel's Alizé network.

The Vodafone text messaging service works as per normal.

S X **Cell Phones In Senegal – Senegalese Networks**

While in Senegal I use a local Senegalese SIM card and phone number – it's extremely cost-effective to buy one to use while in the country. The price of international phone calls using a local SIM card is comparable to calls made from a typical Senegalese call centre.

Scratch cards to replenish credit are widely available throughout the country. My phone and phone number are available for you to use either to place or receive calls.

G X **Cell Phones In The Gambia – Foreign Networks**

My Dutch prepaid phone with a Vodafone SIM Card does not work throughout the whole of The Gambia.

In Banjul and the Atlantic Coast region my phone automatically connects to the Africell network – whereas 'Up country' in Central Gambia there is no coverage.

G X **Cell Phones In The Gambia – Gambian Networks**

While in The Gambia I use a local Gambian SIM card and phone number – it's extremely cost-effective to buy one to use while in the country. The price of international phone calls using a local SIM card is comparable to calls made from a typical Gambian call centre.

Scratch cards to replenish credit are widely available throughout the country. My phone and phone number are available for you to use either to place or receive calls.

- G T X** Due to the remoteness of the location, in Tendaba you may not be able to connect to a foreign network (or Gambia's Africell network). The one network which will surely work will be Gamcel (The Gambia's #1 mobile network) – and for this reason I will have a Gamcel SIM card in my phone while in the country.

International Telephone Calls / Call Centres

- B X** Throughout West Africa domestic and international telephone calls are made from telephone centres – nothing more than a phone in a cabin in any kind of shop or store.

Enterprising individuals with telephones supplement their income by providing this service.

Call centres are plentiful in cities and are also found in towns and villages.

B X **Telephone Call Charges**

Calls are priced by units. On the door of a telephone centre (in Senegal) you will see a sign saying "U = 75F" or "U = 100F". One unit does not equal one minute. But how long is a unit? I have no idea, it's entirely arbitrary!

- B X** International telephone calls are not expensive. (The only extortionately priced phone I know of is in the CyberCafe behind the Al Italia office in Dakar).

Please note – you may just as well place calls from a mobile/cellular phone with a local SIM card – it will most likely be cheaper.

- B X** The one thing that might limit the time you choose to spend speaking to someone on the phone will not be the cost – it is far more likely to be the impromptu sauna you will be taking as you sweat yourself to dehydration in

one of the steamy little cabins! Leave the door open if at all possible – or otherwise try to find one with a fan.

Mail

- S X Post Office in Dakar (On Ponty)**
There is a post office on Ponty, just a few blocks west of La Place de l'Indépendance
There is a larger post office in another part of the city, but the one on Ponty will most likely serve your needs. It works, but don't expect fantastic service, or a smile.
- S X Mail Box At The Post Office On Ponty**
It's literally a hole in the wall of the post office – a thick concrete slot, painted blue. There is no access to the mail box from inside the post office – the employees will send you outside after you have bought your stamps.
- B X Stamps For Letters Of Postcards – Could Be Stickier!**
Are all available from the post office.
The only reason to mention stamps is that the backing glue is often useless – the stamps don't stick. If you receive unsticky stamps ask a teller for the pot of glue that they all keep behind the counter for just this purpose.

Internet And Email

Internet Access & Internet Cafés

- S X Email And Internet Access**
It's not difficult to find an internet café in Dakar. They're plentiful and cheap – typically US \$1 per hour.
- S X** One prominent company is CyberCafé who have a branch with approximately 30 PCs in the same building as Al Italia's office near to La Place de l'Indépendance. Open 7 days per week, closes at 10pm.
It's a sweaty and sometimes very noisy little place and with a few mosquitoes too, so you might prefer an alternative location - they have several around the capital. There are many other independent operations also.
Only one internet café that I know of is open 24 hours per day – if you need late night internet access let me know and I'll provide directions.
- G K** Kololi and the surrounding area has a number of internet cafes so access to email is easy - Quantumnet is perhaps the best – Gamtel is the cheapest. Hotel Paradise Suites and several other hotels also have their own small internet cafes.
- G T P** In Tendaba there is no access to the internet – it's an extremely rural part of the world.
- S X QWERTY**
Not all internet cafés have computers with English keyboards. QWERTY is a whole lot easier than AZERTY if that's what you're used to. Take a look before you pay your money.
- B P A Backup Email Account – In Case of Email Problems**
An email problem that I sometimes experience in West Africa – but which I can't blame the country's infrastructure for – is that in some cafes my login screen is blocked for some reason and so I cannot use my first choice email account.
I therefore recommend that if email is critical to you during your time in West Africa that you also have your messages forwarded to a Hotmail, Yahoo, Gmail or similarly infallible web-based account.
- B X** The reason for my email problem is that the webmail application I use requires different settings than those available through a restricted internet café terminal. Most internet cafés in the region utilize extremely inflexible software that controls every aspect of the computer's operation in order to time each user's session.

Electricity & Electrical Appliances

Electricity

- B P** Senegal and The Gambia's electricity supply is 220V.
- B P** 220V or 240V appliances require only the requisite plug adapter to work.

Electrical Sockets In Senegal

- S P** Are the same as in continental Europe - round 2-pin.

Electrical Sockets In The Gambia

- G P** Are of 2 kinds - continental European round 2-pin and UK 3-pin sockets. Round 2-pin sockets are more common.
- G P** **Electrical Sockets in Kololi**
K Are generally UK 3-pin sockets. But this creates no problem for 2-pin continental European plugs – round pins can easily be made to go into square holes.
- G P** **Electrical Sockets Tendaba Camp's Rooms**
T Each room has at least one electrical socket – round 2-pin (continental European)
- G P** **Electrical Sockets In Tendaba Camp's Restaurant**
T Beside the restaurant there is a bank of 220V worldwide electrical sockets primarily used for charging cell phones.
The bank includes European round 2-pin, UK 3-pin and North American/Japanese 2-pin sockets. (NB: It's 220V only, 110V North American appliances may not be used without a transformer.)
-

Worldwide Electrical Appliances – Compatibility And Adapters

- B P** **Plug Adapters**
If you need one, please bring it. I will bring a range of plug adapters for general use. Others are available and cheap on the streets of Dakar.
- B P** **Continental European Appliances**
Appliances with 2-pin round male plugs require no adapter.
Some parts of The Gambia have only UK 3-pin sockets available. (Plug adapter: European 2-pin female to UK round 3-pin male plug adapter.)
- B P** **UK Appliances**
Plug adapter: UK 3-pin female to European round 2-pin male plug.
- B P** **North American 110-240v Appliances**
Appliances which can operate on either 110V or 220/240V (which have a 110-240V converter) can be used. (Plug adapter: US 2-pin female to European round 2-pin male plug adapter) No transformer is required.
- B P** **North American Appliances That Operate On Only 110V**
Appliances which operate on only 110V, which do not have the possibility of a 110-240V adapter, will not work without the use of a transformer. If at all possible I suggest you don't take such 110V only appliances to Africa.

Navigation

General Navigation Tips

- B X** **Maps**
If you are lost and need to consult a city map, do so discretely – all part of doing what you can to avoid looking like a lost tourist. If possible step into a doorway or out of view place.
- B P** **Photocopies Of Maps**
Whenever possible use photocopies rather than pretty printed maps or map pages in a guidebook. You'll attract far less attention if you are simply taking a look at a scrap of paper – and you won't be able to stuff the book in your pocket in the same way as a single piece of paper
- B X** **Asking Directions**
If you lose your bearings, ask a trader or someone else that is clearly sitting and minding their own business. People that approach you to offer directions are unlikely to be the most reliable source – more often than not they have other ideas about where you should go, and it's usually in the direction of their craft shop!!
- B X** **If you are looking for somewhere and choose to follow a young man that promises to take you there – do so but keep in mind that there is a very good chance that he will take you somewhere else altogether!**
Do so without walking up a dark alley or along abandoned streets! Beware. Don't hesitate to say "merci, non merci/no thanks" and depart from your navigator. You don't need to take his short cut.
- B X** **Lost In The Dark, Lost In The Backstreets – Take A Taxi**
The moment that you suspect that you are truly lost, that you have totally lost your bearings then you must take advantage of one of the cheapest and most plentiful resources that Dakar or any other city in the developing world has to offer – hop in a taxi.
At the most a taxi ride to the hotel will cost you a dollar or two, and it may save you from a lot of frustration, and

perhaps from being robbed.

Transport

Taxis

B P Arrival at the Airport

Do not be concerned about how you will get from the airport to the hotel - you will be met upon Arrival at the Airport in Dakar or Banjul – most likely by myself, and if not, by a hotel chartered taxi driver.

S P Taxis



Dakar Taxis -

All taxis in Dakar are yellow with black wings. If it's not black and yellow, it's not a taxi.

G P Taxis in The Gambia –there are basically 2 types – Yellow and Green.

Yellow taxis are normal taxis that Gambians use to go about their business. All prices need to be negotiated with the driver ahead of your journey.

Green taxis are Tourist Taxis – prices are pre-determined but much higher, and I personally see no reason to use them unless there is nothing else available.

S P Taxis at Dakar and Banjul Airport

Taxis are available 24 hours a day – whenever your plane comes in, you can be sure that there will be taxis to take you to the city centre/resort hotels.

B P Important Note - If You Don't Have Any Local Currency

Invite the driver to park his taxi and bring him into the hotel where the employee on the reception desk will lend you the money to pay the fare.

S P Dakar - From Airport Arrivals Hall To Taxi

Immediately as you leave the arrivals hall you will walk out onto a white paved sidewalk/pavement - and will probably be greeted by a crowd of local people including taxi drivers, money changers and other people trying to 'assist' you in any number of ways.

G P Banul - From Airport Arrivals Hall To Taxi

A parking lot full of green taxis can easily be found in front of the airport's main entrance – a short walk out of the arrivals area. Walk out of the terminal and the drivers will find you! Green taxis are not permitted to enter the airport complex to pick up passengers – hence your only taxi option from the airport is a Green one.

The prices for the trip from the Airport to Kololi should be on a painted board at the front of the airport – and there may well be an official taxi controller there to 'help' you find you. He might help you, he might not! But make sure before you pay attention to anyone's information please ask them to show you some identification, which may be genuine, and then again may be fake!!

B P It's The Airport – Watch Your Bags

Take good care of your bags, and make sure that your wallet or passport is not poking out your pocket! Dakar is not a dangerous city, bag grabbing is not very common – but the airport is a unique place, the first sight most first-time visiting foreigners have of Africa, so beware.

S P Dakar Airport - The Route To The Taxis

In order to keep your contact with the chaos to a minimum, have a plan fixed in your head before you step out of the sanctuary of the arrivals hall into the hustle and bustle of the public access area of the airport drop-off/pick-up road.

Your plan should be to walk out of the arrivals hall, to turn right and walk straight ahead for about 50m to where a large number of taxis will be waiting.



Photo of Dakar Airport – taxis are on the near side, underneath a blue on white TAXI sign. The arrivals hall is just right of centre behind the 4x4. Note the number of people outside the arrivals hall – but this is mid-afternoon when few flights arrive. There may be many more people, so inhibiting your path as you walk towards the taxis. Do not be distracted, just politely plough your way straight through the crowd.

S P Taxi Drivers Will Always Find You

If they haven't already done so, several taxi drivers are guaranteed to approach you as you approach them. They will speak to you in French, and ask you where you need to go.

B P Determining The Price Of The Taxi

Dakar taxis (and The Gambia's Yellow Taxis) do not use a metering system and there are no fixed prices.

All prices are determined by bargaining. So before getting in the taxi you must agree the price with the driver.

Bargaining is a game you have to play when you pay for almost anything on the street in the developing world, so the airport is as good a place to learn as anywhere else. While you are amongst the taxi drivers you need not fear thieves or deception – the taxi drivers need and value your custom. They will however try to get as good a price as they can, but that's business! They're not rich, they don't typically own the cars they drive, and very much need to make the most of every customer they carry.

B P Bargaining For A Fair Fare

In the developing world commodities are often considered to be worth whatever their seller can get for them. So it's up to you to get the price that you want. Although the locals are very friendly and always willing to assist, no taxi driver (or trader) will be too willing to assist you during bargaining sessions. You and your pocket full of large denomination banknotes are very much on your own, and a lot of locals won't be too unhappy if you miscalculate or don't bargain hard enough. At times it's up to you to help to keep vendors honest! Particularly true where taxi drivers are concerned. Bargain well and you will not be overcharged.

All bargaining is done with a smile on your face – bargain hard, but always be very friendly about it. Your taxi driver may have a very serious business-like look on their face while the deal is being done, but you'll know that the price is a fair one if he quickly brightens up and is happy to chat with you.

It's always a good idea to double check after the deal is done, once your taxi is underway – ask the driver if the price is OK. Now is the time that you will learn the driver's true feelings, and if he strongly indicates that the fare is not quite enough you might want to consider giving him a little extra when you pay him at the end of the journey.

B P Bargaining For Beginners

No worries about language barriers (in Senegal), the best way to do this without learning too much of the French language is to carry a piece of paper with three numbers written on it.

This is a much better alternative than pulling your wallet out in public and pointing at banknotes!! Never do that.

B P The Taxi Driver's First Price

When you ask the driver for the price – he will respond with his first price – which is never the price you should pay. The first price you'll be given will frequently be way over the odds, potentially extortionately expensive!

In the case of a taxi from the airport into Dakar city centre, the taxi driver's first price may range anywhere from an expensive CFA5000 to a ridiculous CFA10000.

S P The True Price for the Trip from Dakar Airport to the City Centre

No matter what the taxi driver tells you, the price for the ride from Dakar airport to the city centre is between CFA2000 and CFA3000. Do not pay more than CFA3000, and don't expect to pay less than CFA2000. The compromise is a happy medium of CFA2500.

For non-French speakers -

CFA2000 = deux milles (pronounced 'deuh meal/meel')
CFA2500 = deux milles cinq cents (pronounced 'deuh meal/meel sank sohn/Son[ia]')
CFA3000 = trois milles (pronounced 'trwah meal/meel')
(Roughly speaking CFA1000 is equal to \$2 US OR €1.50 OR £1)

B P The 'Journey' From The First Price To The Price You Pay

Start pointing at the numbers on the paper until the driver stops saying "NON", starts saying "OUI" and gestures to get into the taxi. At this point the deal is done.

If you bargain successfully then you should definitely be able to get him to agree to CFA2500.

If you are a hard bargainer and if he is a fair and generous guy you may get him to agree to CFA2000.

If he's stubborn – then maybe CFA3000 is the best price he'll accept. If you're happy then you're all set to go.

But if he's not happy with CFA3000 – then smile, say "au revoir" and walk away!!

Take a few slow steps towards another taxi.

B P Walking Away Is An Important Part Of Bargaining

It's your trump card in forcing your man to accept a fair price!

The driver will either call you back and accept your price, or you will have the opportunity to play the whole game again with a new taxi driver.

My bet is that any taxi driver in the car park will accept CFA3000 as soon as you begin to walk away - they would be unwise to refuse what they know to be a very a fair price. CFA2000 is acceptable, CFA2500 is good, CFA3000 is a bonus – they just can't help playing hard to get!

B P Baggage

I have never had any problems with bags not being loaded by a taxi driver, or being damaged or stolen. Nevertheless, put the bags in the back of the car yourself or watch the driver do it. If you can easily fit your bags in the back seat of the taxi with you, feel free to do so.

B P Trusting Your Taxi Driver

I have never had a taxi driver try to mislead me – once the bargaining is finished your driver is generally very friendly and very protective, he'll look after you and get you to the hotel. He wants your fare, and to earn it honestly.

But I have had trouble with a taxi driver refusing to accept the price which he himself suggested!

Other possible problems – see **Section on Paying the Taxi Driver and Getting Your Change Back and Avoid Paying Through the Car Window.**

S P The Ride Time From Dakar Airport To The Centre Of Dakar

The airport is of the order of 15-20 minutes taxi ride out of the city centre, maybe a little more in daytime due to the usual large volume of traffic.

B P Paying For The Taxi

Most importantly, just as in the developed world, do not pay the taxi before satisfactorily arriving at your destination. And don't pay until you and your bags are out of the car.

Taxis do not take credit cards. It's cash and cash only.

There are 2 ways in which you can pay the driver the agreed amount:

1 – If you don't have any local currency

2 – If you have local currency in your pocket then pay the driver.

B P If You Don't Have Any Local Currency

Invite the driver to park his taxi and bring him into the hotel where the employee on the reception desk will lend you the money to pay the fare.

B P Paying The Taxi Driver & Getting Your Change Back

Do yourself a favour and do not hand the driver a large denomination banknote (in Senegal: CFA 5000 or CFA 10000 – there are no large banknotes in The Gambia) – he might not be very willing to find change!

The 'correct technique' is to pull out the large denomination banknote, show him its value – and then invite him to find and present you with the correct change before you hand over the 'big money'.

Some drivers feel rightfully offended by this approach, that you don't trust them – that's unavoidable, but trust me, you never know what sort of a guy you are dealing with – some of the friendliest taxi drivers turn miserable and uncooperative when it comes to making change, if they can get away without paying you the last CFA500 or CFA1000 then many will do so. They are looking for you to hesitate and say that it doesn't matter, but you must let them know that it does.

B P Avoid Paying Through The Car Window

Never pass a large denomination banknote through the window – he just might drive away with your change. He

may be an honest guy, but he's definitely quite poor, so just don't tempt him.

B P Paying The Taxi Driver & Getting Your Luggage Back!

Never pass a large denomination banknote through the window until after your bags are out of the car – if you're really unlucky he just might drive away with your bags.

B P Tipping The Taxi Driver

Tips are by no means obligatory - but all money is gratefully accepted!

You've already done the bargaining. You've already determined a price that your driver is happy with – but if you feel like adding a couple of CFA100 coins to your fare then feel free to do so. But to give a CFA500 tip on top of a CFA2500 fare is very generous.

There are three main criteria I have for tipping taxi drivers –

1 - How much did I have to bargain to get a fair price?

2 - How much did I have to remind the driver to get my change back?

3 – Is he friendly?

If bargaining was easy, and if the coins and CFA500 banknotes came straight back to me without having to remind him more than once then he's an honest guy and he will rightfully have earned some extra coins as a tip.

Airports

S X Airports In Senegal

Senegal has a total of 20 airports - 9 with paved runways, 11 with unpaved runways.

Ziguinchor has an active airport. (Ziguinchor is only a 2 hour drive south of Soma)

Kaolack has some kind of airstrip or small airport – I've not seen it, but the map says so.

G X Airports In The Gambia

The Gambia has 1 airport with a paved runway (Banjul) – but it's a very nice runway -long and smooth due to being refurbished by NASA as an emergency landing site for the space shuttle.

G X Tendaba has an unpaved airstrip! "Tendaba Airport - Terminal 3" – you might enjoy going to take a look at it.

Receipts for Reimbursement of Expenses

B X Not everyone you make a purchase from in West Africa will provide you with a receipt.

Taxi drivers will certainly not give you a receipt for your journey.

Restaurants always will, and if they don't you should ask for one.

The better hotels will provide receipts, but the cheaper ones might not. If not, you must ask.

Please beware of this – and if you lack receipts to reimburse your expenses while in West Africa please let me know – I will act as guarantor for all reasonable expenditure and create the necessary receipts for you to submit to your institution for reimbursement.

13 – ENTERTAINMENT

S X Bars

There are a number of bars in the centre of Dakar. I've only spent time in one of them - the most visible, the Viking on Ponty beside Ali Baba restaurant. It's not the best bar in the world, but there is music on some evenings.

G X Just about all of Kololi's restaurants double as bars/open air cafés