

# Mauretania & Mali



A splendid visit to  
these two countries in  
West-Africa.

February 2018



## ...Mauretania at last

... I arrived an hour late into Nouakchott with my flight from Casablanca. I was prepared for the “rat-race” to customs immigrations to be first in line. This as they issue VOA and as this can take a long time. No doubt this was a very good idea. Then of course a few “special” VIP’s managed to get through before us with local airport-security staff. Even so quite quick. 55 Euro for the visa. Then the customs guy wanted an extra 100 USD to let me through – Absolutely no fucking way I would agree to this not so subtle bribe attempt. My pre-arranged pick got me to my Hotel – Le K, some 30 minutes from the airport. Got to be around 2:30 AM only to take breakfast and leave in the morning for Chinguetti.

My guide Mohammed and driver Yousef, loaded my stuff and off we went. First stop was the Oasis Terjit ca: 5 hours’ drive from Nouakchott on more or less good roads. There were some 5-6 check-points along the road where a “fiche” was needed to be produced. This is basically a copy of your passport. So be prepared and bring some 15-20 of these as there are plenty of check-points on the roads. We changed some money with the money changers in the city at a rate of 60 USD = 2000 Ouguiya. They had just recently introduced a new bill.



...The Oases are nice and plentiful

Islamic Republic of Mauritania الجمهورية الإسلامية الموريتانية (Arabic) al-Jumhūriyah al-Islāmiyah al-Mūrītāniyah République islamique de Mauritanie (French)	
<p>Flag</p>	<p>Seal</p>
<b>Area</b>	
• Total	1,030,000 km <sup>2</sup> (400,000 sq mi) <sup>(28th)</sup>
• Water (%)	0.03
<b>Population</b>	
• 2016 estimate	4,301,018 <sup>(1)</sup>
• 2013 census	3,537,368 <sup>(1)</sup>
• Density	3.4/km <sup>2</sup> (8.8/sq mi)
<b>GDP (PPP)</b>	
• Total	2017 estimate \$17.421 billion <sup>(4)</sup> (134th)
• Per capita	\$4,488 <sup>(4)</sup> (140th)
<b>GDP (nominal)</b>	
• Total	2017 estimate \$5.063 billion <sup>(4)</sup> (154th)
• Per capita	\$1,304 <sup>(4)</sup> (149th)

**The Oasis Terjit** was nice with fresh water and lots of palm trees in a setting near a mountain. A tourist stop – no doubt – for locals as well as foreigners. There is also a nice Auberge where we had lunch and where you can stay overnight as well. We looked at the local huts and visited with the locals who, I believe mostly made their living from the few visitors/tourists who made their way here.

We then continued onward to the second oasis in the area – **Oasis Meredith**. This was located at a rift (valley). Here we were invited to take tea with the local nomads. The tradition bids that you have to drink at least three cups of tea. We purchased some locally made jewellery. The trip then continued through some amazing desserts to our final stop for the day – **Chinguetti**. **Auberge La Gueila** owned by a French lady who runs this as a boutique style establishment. Really nice. It attracts visitors from abroad as well as Expatriates from Nouakchott. A perfect base to use for spending a couple of days to see the region.





## Visiting the nomads of the desert

Having slept like a baby, taken a shower then breakfast was served at the Auberge. Really good stuff with fresh juice, homemade marmalades, tea, warm pain riche and homemade yogurt. What more could one ask for. We had clear blue skies when we set out into the dessert at 08:00 AM. Our first target was the **Oasis of Tanouchert** some 3 hours' drive from Chinguetti. We drove through sand in a beautiful setting all morning. We stopped to take pictures at the sand dunes and we made a stop at one of the Bedouin settlements where we were invited into the Nomad Chiefs' tent for tea and a chat – truly genuine. We then continued and did the same at the Oasis of Tanouchert where we had more tea. The tradition bids that you sit in the tent and drink at least 3 cups of locally made tea. They go through a lot of work and pour the tea many times from cup to cup before you are allowed to drink it.

From the Oasis we continued to the ancient and **World Heritage protected city of Ouadane**. The city was founded in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and is now in ruins, but much of it can still be visited and seen. Lunch was then served at home of my guides wife's' parents who were living in the city. An invitation to see how the Mauritanians live. At 3 PM we then made it back to Chinguetti and a visit to the ancient library to see some very old Islamic manuscripts. We went back to the Auberge to freshen up and then timed the sun-set at the dunes at around 6:45 PM – nice. Dinner at the Auberge – Camel stew.





# Admojar and Ametlich Oases....

Starting off once more at around 08:00 AM after breakfast heading for **Ametlich Oasis** near Terjit. The drive went back through the **city of Atar** where we stopped to stock up on bread and fruits at the local market. The market was colourful and very much like most other African small-town markets. We then continued in the direction of Terjit and **Ametlich Oasis**. On the off-roads to this place we passed through some smaller and very different and **interesting villages like Loudey and Targad** with unusual houses.

The Ametlich is known for the enormous sand dunes in connection to the mountains. Camels were grazing on the slopes. At the Oasis we then stopped to have tea made up in the shades under a tree. We invited the local Camel herder who waited with his camel at the water well. The road back to the main road was awful, but then the main road to Nouakchott was with tarmac in excellent condition. We arrived to the capitol and my hotel Le K. at around 6:30 PM. As most restaurants were closed on a Sunday in town, I arranged to have dinner at Le K.





## ...Mali, long overdue on my list

Getting up at 04:15 AM this morning to be able to get to the airport in good time for the departure at 07:00. Fortunately, the flight left, pretty much on time. So, with a stop-over in Dakar this meant I only arrived one hour late into Bamako, where my friends Pyret and Hans waited for me together with Carlos, our guide, and Hama our driver. We left Bamako immediately for Koulikolo on the river Niger to check-in with the European Military forces for a security check before we went any further up the country. The ferry was not operating to take us across the river so we had to use Pirogue boat instead. On the other side the Officer in charge of the military base, and also a friend of Carlos, met us and transported us to a local secure restaurant **Hotel Nanageleni** where lunch was taken and a briefing of the security situation in the country was given. We had to adjust our original program somewhat as we originally intended to stay in Mopti overnight was discarded due to security situation. Unsafe after dark and at night due to local insurgents. We will instead stay overnight in Djenne some 100 km away.

We had an excellent lunch, a couple of beers and then went on back crossing the river again in a pirogue canoe to the other side where our vehicle awaited. We drove down to the main road and continued up to the city of Segou where we checked in to **Hotel Djoliba (\*\*\*\*)**. We then continued down to the river side and had dinner and wine at a local **restaurant La Pailotte (Vue de l'Esplanade)** overlooking the river and watching the sun-set. Back to the hotel for an early evening, as I had been up since very early in the morning.





## The magnificent mud-mosque in Djenné ...the highlight of the trip was without a doubt Djenné

Setting off at 08:00 AM we had a pretty long day in front of us getting up to Djenné. Again, the roads were in very good condition, which is unusual for Africa. We stopped along the way to have leg-stretches and for taking photographs. We had lunch under a Baobab tree in the countryside and also took time to distribute some of the clothes which Pyret had brought along + some of my school equipment. We were quickly swarmed with local women and kids who wanted to have something. A Football was also being distributed. Our next stop was the city of San, where they had a lovely mosque similar to the famous one in Djenné.

We also made stops at local markets along the way, which were very busy and offered good photo opportunity. Near Djenné we had to cross the river Bani by a small ferry to get across to the Island on which Djenné is located. This also gives the city some extra protection against the ongoing insurgents and fractions fighting for control of the region. We entered Djenné, and the old Medina where we checked into our hotel – **Campement Hotel Houbert**. This was a hotel with a nice inner yard (typical style with the rooms spread around the court). The rooms were however very basic and smelled of mould as the A/C's had not been turned on due to lack of visitors/guests. We took off to see the main attraction: The Mud mosque which was just as splendid as one could expect. We were also invited in to see the mosque from the inside (this for a small fee of 5000 CFA per head). We also good to see the mosque in the sun-set from to the top of an adjacent house. After this visit and a walk-about in the old medina it was time for dinner, which was taken at, probably, the only decent **restaurant** in town – **Le Fleuve**. We had brought beer and also a bottle of wine.



Huvudstad (och största stad)	Bamako
Officiellt språk	franska
Statsskick	Enhetlig semipresidentiel republik
- President	Ibrahim Boubacar Keita
- Premiärminister	Modibo Keita
Självständighet	från Frankrike
- Erkänd	22 september 1960
Area	
- Totalt	1 242 248 km <sup>2</sup> (24:e)
- Vatten (%)	1,6 %
Befolkning	
- 2009 års uppskattning	14 517 176 (173:a)
- Befolkningsstäthet	11,7 inv./km <sup>2</sup> (207:e)
BNP (PPP)	
- Totalt	2003 års beräkning 514 400 milj (124:e)



## From Djenne to Dogon Country

### With a stop over and boat ride on river Bani in Mopti

After breakfast we made a morning tour around the old medina in Djenne. This was very nice as it was still quite cool and we also got to see the madrassas, where the young children were taught about the Koran. We then took our leave of Djenne and left crossing the island by the small ferry and continued on to **Bandiagara**, the centre of the Dogon hills. Here we took our lunch at the **Hotel La Falaise** which was a positive surprise. We also decided to rearrange our schedule and come back and stay here overnight instead of spending the night in the small **village of Teli**. We then made our way to **the villages of Djiguibombo and Kani Kombole** inhabited by some 300 Dogon people. These were simple huts and people here lived in a traditional way. This is also the place where they perform **the famous Mask Dance**. Over the last 3-4 years due to civil war and internal fighting's in Mali, almost all tourism has stopped. The recommendation from most embassies is RED, for all most parts of the country – Bamako and the southern parts excluded. We had rearranged to see the Mask Dance, which I thought was very colourful and a good photo-option. It was scorching hot as they performed out in the sun mid-day. We spend some time here before we went on to see the other town – Tely. **The old village of Tely** is located also in the Dogon valley next to a mountain wall. There is an also village establishment, now abandoned since over 100 years build high up in the side of the mountain. We got to hike up to see these old houses and got a marvellous view at the same time.

Before leaving at sun-set we got to visit a general assembly hall where all the women of the village were holding a meeting. This was so colourful and beautiful. We distributed the last bags of clothes, footballs and school equipment which we had brought along. This was really highly appreciated. We then travelled all the way back to our hotel for dinner and a few cold beers before going to bed quite early. The heat and the intense program takes its toll.





## The Dogon Country ...

Leaving Bandiagara and heading home to Bamako again...

Today we had breakfast at 06:00 and left soon thereafter. Our first leg was Segou for lunch which took us some 5 hours of driving. We had a few leg-stretches but drove otherwise straight through. Super lunch at the same place we had dinner on our way up **restaurant La Pailotte**. Really excellent food. We continued then to Bamako, which we reached at 4 PM in the afternoon traffic. We continued straight to the central market and walked around and did a few purchases. Later checked in at the **Hotel Comme Chez Soi**. Cleaned up, had a couple of beers and went on to the local hot-spot: **Club Hippique** where everyone supposedly goes. We went early to eat and have a beer, much before the place filled up. Really nice place. Hans and Pyret made their way to the airport for their departure at midnight. I went to bed quite early, really tired after 4 really packed days.

My last day was planned for meeting up with our Swedish Ambassador, but she made her apologies as she had to be at a meeting in Abidjan, only coming back on Sunday. I spent the day not doing much. Went for long walks, as long as possible in the heat of the day, and then just relaxed around the pool at the hotel and sorting out my photographs on the computer. Heading out to the airport for a scheduled flight at 02:35 AM – Bamako-Casablanca-Stockholm

