

Dakar Tips for newcomers and visitors

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Hello! We are Chris and Kelly Trimble. We moved from Washington, DC to Dakar in March 2017 with our two boys Finn (now 4) and Declan (now 3). We put together this guide for friends, family and colleagues moving to or visiting Dakar. It basically has a lot of the information we wish we had been given when we arrived, plus various tips and Dakar “life hacks” we have picked up along the way, but it is still only a slice of what Dakar has to offer. And a lot of the content is probably bias towards English speaking expat families with young kids. All views are our own and not of our employers. Plus, we had help from some friends: Kari Masson provided lots of the links in the document (including the google spreadsheet on schools) as well we lots of good additions, and Agustin Cornejo provided most of the section on neighborhoods. Hope it is useful!

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Visiting Dakar

1. Activities around Dakar

Here is our top ten Dakar based activities:

1. **Trip to Gorée Island:** the number one tourist attraction in Dakar. A historic island given its role in the slave trade, which was the last stop for most slaves leaving West Africa. Obama visited here when he came to Senegal a few years ago. Very interesting walk around the island with a guide, visit the museum, buy some local low-cost arts and crafts. It's a 20-30 mins ferry ride over. You can get an OK lunch on the island (approx. \$10-15 per person).
2. **Trip to Ngor Island:** simple cheap local boat ride over to the island (around \$5). Walk around the island, take photos, lunch at Italian restaurant on the water (about \$15-20 pp for boat/lunch/loungers).
3. **Trip to Madeleine Island:** this is another island off the coast of Dakar but this one isn't inhabited. Possible to rent a boat to take you there (around \$30), hike around, have a picnic, swim in the lagoon.
4. **Spa:** need some pampering after a long flight? There are several upscale options available ([Buddhattitude](#) at the Radisson Blu Hotel, [Ryad at Sultan](#) on the corniche just up from Radisson Blu, [Escale d'Orient](#) in Fann which offers many services including nails, etc.). But we'd suggest you skip these more expensive (though lovely) options (unless your mom is visiting, and you need to take her somewhere nice) and go straight for [Hua Medical Hall](#). 15,000 FCFA for a one-hour massage (or buy ten and price drops to 13,000). Bargain, and should be a mandatory start to any date night. There are also several therapists that will come to your house – we recommend Marie Claude Eid (find her on facebook) and Lamine for pedicures (775376240). Another nail salon Kelly has used and liked was Allure Salon, one in Plateau and one in Almadies (both can be found on Facebook).
5. **Art Village:** Senegal is culturally extremely rich. If anyone wants to buy some “real” art (i.e. not the standard touristy art), this is the place to go. When the Chinese came to build the local football stadium, they built a bunch of small houses for their workers. When they finished the stadium, these houses were given as studios for local artists. It is fascinating to visit, and if you are lucky you will catch some of Senegal's most famous artists (if there are not touring the Tate Modern in London or Moma in NY). Be warned – this is not a very slick museum experience, more raw and gritty, seeing the artists where they work, often with dozens of pieces crammed into a small room and difficult to see. But it is authentic. Art pieces are quite expensive (many in the hundreds-to-thousands of dollars). Call Oumar Diack for a tour (776432071).
6. **Surfing:** Dakar is one of the best places to learn to surf, if anyone wants to take a whirl when they are here. There are several surf schools, but Ecole Surf Attitude is generally

considered the best for both kids and adults. Lessons in English or French. The rest of us can sip a Margarita at Black and White Cafe and enjoy the show.

7. **[Black civilization museum](#)**: opened in December 2018. Beautiful new building with well-done exhibits representing the histories and contemporary cultures of Black people everywhere. Well worth a visit.
8. **Downtown tour** including, the Presidential Palace (can only see the palace from the outside), Independence Square, the Catholic Cathedral where you can join the nuns for mass, and lunch at Erik Kayser bakery for some tasty pastries.
9. **HLM Market**: an intense but “real” local market experience. Especially good for local fabrics. If you have a favorite dress, bring a dress they would want to be replicated with material they pick up at the market (\$30-\$45 including work and material) nice if you want a nice custom fit dress! Let us know if you want any tailor recommendations
10. **Renaissance monument**: a kind of ridiculous \$30 million bronze monument built by the North Koreans (yes - your read right - North Korea - [massive bronze statues are one of their biggest exports](#)), but still a local thing to do and nice views over Dakar. It’s a simple easy trip and free (and good for a workout getting up the steps).

Bonus: five other easy options around Dakar 😊

1. **Pool time**: you can spend an afternoon in one of the hotel pools, most likely the Terrou Bi as it has a large heated pool and a private beach (approx. \$20 / person). Marina Bay is also a nice option to spend the day: it also has a nice flat private beach which is great for small kids), and decent quality food (approx. \$20 per adult for pool and beach access, \$40 with three course lunch menu; slightly less for kids).
2. **Ten pin bowling**: the sea plaza shopping center has a bowling place which can be a fun family activity. Approx. \$10 per person.
3. **Movie theater**: Dakar has a [new movie theater](#) which is surprisingly good quality if you want a “real” movie experience including nice new leather seats, huge screen, and even a concession stand that serves popcorn and Sierra Nevada Pale Ale. There is another one at the amusement park by the Supreme Court / Terrou Bi – we have not been but hear good things. Look on the program for “VOST FR” if you want to watch an Hollywood movie in English (means “Version Originale, Sous Titre Francais”).
4. **Music**: the Senegalese love their music so this is a must-have experience at some point. Large concerts normally start around 1am and go all through the night, although you may get [caught on camera as one of the only white guys](#) (scroll down through the pics). There is also some good local jazz. There is one place in particular - the Joloff Hotel - that is well known for its jazz on Saturday evenings in its renovated basement cellars.
5. **Hann Parc**: several things at Hann including a reptilarium which is great, a pony center where the kids can do pony rides, and a zoo (though not worth visiting - very sad as animals are not well looked after). A few dollars for the animals, and maybe \$6-8 per person for lunch at The Spot. See more here: [17 things to know about Hann Park](#)

2. Full Day trips out of Dakar

There are several good options within an hour or so of Dakar:

1. **Popenguine:** this is the first decent beach south of Dakar, and our go to day trip. Grab lunch at [Echo-Cotier](#) and spend the afternoon there by the beach. Lovely clean beach, very quiet compared to the more popular Saly resort. Great for an afternoon stroll. Get there early if you want to get one of the sun loungers (there are only around 4-6). Also good to call ahead on the weekend to make a reservation as it fills up quickly. If you want to turn your trip to Popenguine into a weekend trip there are also a number of decent villas on AirBnB you can rent (our favorite is just a few houses down from Echo-Cotier). Or you can go to our favorite place, [Les Manguiers de Guéréo](#) (in Guereo, just beside Popenguine) which is a wonderful hotel comprised of modern and well equipped huts (some with private pools), a good large pool for all guests which has a wonderful lookout over the Somone Lagoon Reserve (see photo below) i.e. you see a lot of green, which is a rare thing in Dakar.



View from the deck at Les Manguiers de Guéréo

2. **Somone:** a little further south along the coast is Somone. There are several hotel options but the most popular to go to is the Royal Horizon Baobab which you can get a day pass for. It is a big resort with several pools. The large pool by the restaurant can be quite loud during peak tourism season (dance classes etc.) so we usually head to the smaller quieter pool at the other end of the resort. From here you can also rent a boat and go into the Somone Lagoon Reserve which is nice.
3. **Saly area:** this is the main tourist destination in Senegal, including people coming over from France, about an hour south of Dakar (since Jan 2019, you can get there almost entirely by the new autoroute). There are several high-end resort type hotels, but the best is Lamantin

(owned by the same group as the Terrou Bi hotel in Dakar). We normally rent an AirBnb in the residential area beside the Lamantin, and then pay to get a day pass which include an excellent buffet lunch, access to the pool, kids pool / play area (which is excellent), and nice private beach. In addition to visiting Saly itself (beach, pool etc.), for anyone really looking for an adventure, we know a guy who owns a gyrocopter in Saly (kind of like a helicopter) who does tours up and down the coast of Senegal. This is really a once in a lifetime kind of experience but pricey (couple of hundred dollars each).

4. **Activities:** about an hour south of Dakar (on the way to Saly, but easy to access from Popenguine and Somone if you are spending the weekend these places), there are a several fun options including (i) [Bandia Nature reserve](#) early morning visit to see some african game animals and lunch (beware of the monkeys at the restaurant which are cute for about the first five minutes and then get really annoying – the restaurant provides water bottles to squirt the monkeys); (ii) [Accro-baobab](#) is right next to Bandia which is a fun ropes course in Baobab trees (iconic African tree) with zip lining etc. good team building experience if you ever need an activity for a team retreat (iii) **Africa Ranch** – literally opposite the entrance to Bandia is a gate to another small reserve where there are 6-8 lions here which you can get out and walk with – a bit expensive but a fun one off experience;; and (iii) [Bird park](#) which has a wide range of tropical birds, a huge koi fish pond, and a nice restaurant.



Pink Lake: this is a popular spot to visit. Early morning is apparently the best time to visit to see how the salt is harvested from the lake. Take boat ride out with a guide that has been highly recommended to us, on a lake that is apparently [get quite pink](#) depending on when you visit, and thanks to the high salt content you can also float on the water, like the dead sea (just make sure you have no open cuts and don't get the water in your eyes - quite stingy!). While there are some restaurants around the lake, what we have been sold is the best thing is to take a camel ride into the sand dunes and then have a picnic. There is also a decent beach closeby. The lake is about an hour away from Dakar, going through some local villages. If you fancy some adventure, try quad biking on the nearby Dunes. There are two options (i) call Chez Salim (main line) and ask them to organize - can be a little cheaper; or (ii) Moussa at 774528344.



3. Long weekend trips out of Dakar

Further afield (ideally a 3-4-day trip), there are several good options to consider:

1. **Saint Louis.** This is the former colonial capital of French West Africa. A historical place which is now a bit run down but still retains a degree of charm. There are several nice hotels here – our favorite is the [Maison d'Hôtes au Fil du Fleuve](#) which is a bespoke / boutique hotel run by a French / Seneglese lady who is great fun and a great cook. Take a horse and cart tour of the town, don't miss the [photography museum](#). There are several decent hotel options outside of Saint Louis – our favorite is the [Lodge Ocean et Savane](#) which has some basic beach huts, a nice pool, decent beach including some watersports (kayaks are free – go to the island across the bay, you can pay for banana boat). It is off the grid but they have a generator which is turned on for 4-6 hours at night time. One highlight in this region is the [Djoudj National Bird Park](#) (famous for its enormous Pelican breeding ground). You can also spend one night en route there or on the way back camping at the Lampoul Dessert at the [Eco-Lodge](#). Finally, if you are brave and have a 4*4, you can actually drive on the beach up to Saint Louis all the way from Dakar. It is actually quicker than the road but you need to go with someone who knows the way since there are several places you can get stuck if you don't know where you are going, plus you need to time it well with the tides (you want to be driving when the tide is going out so you are on the hard wet sand).
2. **Niakolo Koba Park and Dindéfelo Reserve**
 - The [Niakolo Koba National Park](#) is Senegal's largest reserve. Once home to abundant wildlife including elephants, a lot of the reserve has been depleted. Some lions are still hanging on and can be worth a visit.
 - Further south is the [Dindéfelo Reserve](#), which is part of the Bassari Country, a UNESCO World Heritage site. The reserve is famous for the [cascades](#), but it is also in part of Senegal unlike anywhere else in the country, with dramatic plateau formation close to the border with Guinea. Also known as one of the few areas in Senegal with Chimpanzees.
3. **Cap Skirring:** close to Ziguinchor in Casamance, this is a beach resort and a popular tourist destination so there are even direct flights here from Europe. You can fly for pretty reasonable cost with Air Senegal or TransAir, or take the overnight [ferry from Dakar to Ziguinchor](#) (new boat recently financed by the German government). Many people stay at the [Club Med](#).

4. Food: our top ten cafes for breakfast / brunch / lunch

There are tons of café options and constantly new places popping up. Here are our top ten recommendations (with those marked with a * our go-to cafes), moving from north to south:

1. **Le Surce-rit** (*Ngor, opens 8.30am*): tucked away in a side street of Ngor, this place has some nice light eats if you are in the area.
2. **Mawa's Taste of America** (*Almadies, opens 9am*): think American brunch diner, plopped down in a nice garden in Dakar. This is the place to go if you want waffles, pancakes, eggs benedict etc.
3. **KOTAO Coffee*** (*Almadies, opens 8.30am*): new café (opened July 2019) in Almadies beside the American Food Store. We love this place.
4. **Layu** (*Almadies, opens 7.30am*): one of the staples of Almadies, you will often find folk in here has a nice gift shop attached to it. Tip we think these guys have the best samosas in Dakar.
5. **Aroma Café** (*Almadies, 8.30am*): nice selection of sandwiches, salads and decent coffee (Illy).
6. **[Melo Patisserie*](#)** (*Mamelles, opens 8am*): great selection of treats available here, and a decent bread selection including bagels.
7. **Simone Café** (*Mermoz, opens at noon*). Wonderful cafe. Lots of tasty small bite options, but best of all, best Cheesecake ever (I mean, better than most places in the US).
8. **Café Lulu*** (*in between Fann and Mermoz, on the Corniche, opens at 8am*). Generally super tasty food. A bit on the higher end price wise but a great lunch option. Plus, it has a nice gift shop. *Tip*: call ahead to book a table for lunch as this place fills up fast.
9. **Erik Kayser bakery*** (*Plateau, opens at 6.30am*): probably our favorite café. Excellent range of pastries. Great breakfast and lunch options including tasty sandwiches (my go to is the rustique chicken). Probably the best baguettes in Dakar. There is also a new one about to open beside the new KFC in Fann on the corniche.
10. **Feel Juice** (*Plateau, opens at 9am*): these guys do tasty bagel sandwiches and deliver usually within 20-30 mins of calling even though they are based downtown.

5. Food: our favorite restaurant options for dinner

There are lots of good food options in Dakar, and you can eat most genres (French, of course), Italian, Thai, Chinese, Lebanese, Sushi, and (for better or worse) western fast-food is coming with the opening of Dakar's first KFC in the summer of 2019 (still no good Mexican restaurant though - gap in the market!). It's a dynamic scene with nice places opening up every month. Below are some of our favorites and go-to options:

Our "Best of" restaurants

1. **Best Pizza:** [Mamma Pizza](#). We think this place has the best pizza in Dakar – great thin crust and Dakar's first proper wood fired oven (others have since arrived, like at Le Colorado). Opened in plateau in summer 2019. Tip: they don't serve alcohol, but its BYOB. They also deliver, but better quality to eat there. Runners up: (i) Noliane is an upscale Italian restaurant with an Italian owner and chef, which is located in the outdoor terrace of "[The Palms](#)" Hotel in Almadies. We recommend the "Burratina" pizza; and (ii) Gino & Gino's (rooftop of Hotel du Phare, Mamelles).
2. **Best rooftop restaurant:** [Bayekou](#). There are several good rooftop restaurants. Our favorite is Bayekou in Ngor. This place opened in 2016, has a really nice vibe, good cocktail menu and good food. Well worth checking out. For ideas on other rooftop experiences, check out [the 4 best roof top bars and restaurants in Dakar](#).
3. **Best upscale experience:** [Beluga](#). This is hands down our favorite restaurant in Dakar is the Peruvian restaurant called Beluga, as their pisco sours and ceviche are great. Downtown Plateau, and around the corner from its sister restaurant **La Parilla** (Argentinian Steak House – also great). A good back up is **La Lagoon** (in plateau).
4. **Best sunset restaurants:** **Bella Vista**: we love this Italian restaurant. Food isn't amazing but the view really is nice, and great to eat here after an hour or two at the beach with the kids, and watch the sun set. Depending on the tides, there can be a wonderful sandy beach in front of the restaurant, or just rocks.
5. **Le Phare des Mamelles and La Calabasse**: the lighthouse is a close rival for the best sunset spot (see photo). It opens a few nights a week for cocktails and food. This is also a very nice spot for the sun set, but because the food is a bit overpriced and not great in our experience, we usually just do a sun downer drink and then head for to Le Calabasse for family style dinner and Gospel Music Night on Thursday's (which is great).



Petite corniche: restaurants continue to pop up along beach drive, to cater to the surf schools, US embassy families, and to take advantage of some natural rock pools for kids to enjoy. Some of our go to's:

1. **La Mer a Table:** this one is one "go to" spots on a Sunday afternoon when they have live music. Cape Verdean restaurant you feel like you are at a wedding in the Caribbean. Right on the beach, watch surfers, sip some Rosé.
2. **Le Cabanon:** our favorite restaurant on the petite corniche –opened in 2018 and really good quality. While it is definitely the most expensive restaurant on the petite corniche, the food is a step up from the standard menus you will find at the other restaurants. *Tip:* the set lunch menu is a great deal – 10,000 for a three-course set menu, and always good quality in our experience.
3. **Chef Fatou:** While maybe not the tastiest food on the petite corniche, does have sand for kids to play, kids meals that our kids like (chicken nuggets and mac and cheese), and English menu's for families visiting that might not read French. Kids 3 and younger eat free, and they have a good happy hour special on cocktails (two for one), so it can be affordable if the timing is right. They do have some steep steps down to the water, so keep an eye out if you have wondering toddlers.
4. **Estendera:** One of our favorite date spots. Great for laying on some loungers and drinking some tasty mojitos. Their food is quite good, but like most of the restaurants on the petite corniche, service can be slow.
5. **Creperie La Prainha:** if you are in the mood for a crepe, this is where to go on the petite corniche. Also have a good range of other lunch options.

Asian: you will not find the best quality Asian food in Dakar, but here are some of the better options if you have a craving:

1. **Best Thai :** [Le Jardin Thailandais](#). (*Point E*). If you are really craving a green Thai curry, this is one of the only options. Not great but also not terrible.
2. **Best Chinese:** [La Baie d'Or](#) (*Almadies / Ngor*) It has to be said there are not an amazing range of Chinese restaurants we know of, even though there is an ever-growing Chinese presence in Dakar. Our favorite is le Baie d'Or, right where Almadies meet Ngor.
3. **Best Korean:** [Arisu](#) (*Almadies*): offers a lovely array of Korean favorites.
4. **Best Indian:** [Ana Purna](#) (*Ngor*). Again, not many good Indian food options, but Ana Purna is a basic restaurant offering decent food. They also deliver.

Living in Dakar

1. Choosing accommodation and neighborhoods

If your employer doesn't tell you where you will be living, this section is for you. First off, there are other factors to consider beyond neighborhood. Several we think deserve special mention in Dakar:

1. **Apartment vs house (or “villa” as they are affectionately referred to in Senegal):** apartments generally offer good size (many are 3-4 bedrooms), better security, they often have shared facilities that can be expensive to install in a villa (such as shared pool, water tank and electricity generator etc.), and since most new builds in Dakar are apartments, they are also generally better-quality buildings with more modern fixtures and fittings. On the other hand, villas can be a good option for families since they often offer more outdoor space for the kids to roam around, and it can be easier to meet other families in the neighborhood. At the same time, they tend to be older so often need updating, many are enormous (like 8-10 bedrooms since so many Senegalese families live all together with several generations), and you can expect them to need regular maintenance.
2. **Landlord:** if you go for a villa, we think one of the most important things is to ensure you have a cool landlord, because most houses you will visit are likely to require some upgrades to bring it to your standards 😊. That can be a more important factor than the neighborhood. Everything is negotiable – you can ask for changes when negotiating your lease – we asked for a pool, a generator and a bathub – landlord agreed to a pool for increased rent. Our landlord also allowed us to make some additions at our own expense e.g. we added a pergula to the back yard. Friends have re-done their kitchens.
3. **Pricing:** there is a huge range on accommodation pricing in Dakar. Locals often complain of expats pushing housing market prices up with their employers generous housing budgets. In the neighborhoods mentioned below, you will generally find 2-4-bedroom apartments / villas ranging from as low as FCFA 500,000, up to FCFA3-4 million. Of course, you will often get better quality and more amenities the more you pay, but it's not a linear relationship. If you have time to look, there are bargains to be found. Many friends have chosen to compromise a little on location and quality but have found great options.
4. **Finding accommodation:** information is difficult to come by. While you will find some websites claiming to show options, most are not updated regularly. Generally, you need to work with a real estate agent, and they tend to specialize to specific areas e.g. we can connect you to agents in Fenetre Mermoz (where we live) and Almadies. Other tips
 - Don't be afraid to put yourself out there – often places are spread through word of mouth so the larger the network you have the more likely you will hear about good accommodation options opening up before the agents find them.

- Don't be rushed in making a decision. There are several serviced apartment options such as La Residence in Almadies. Moving again is painful (trust us – we did it!). If you have the chance, you could stay in temporary accommodation and take time (1-2 months) to wait for the right place.
- Finally, timing matters. June is typically a high turnover month you can often find more options in these months (and more competition!). Tip: this is also a good month to pick up decent quality, decently priced second hand stuff as families leaving look to sell their furniture, appliances, cars etc.

Neighborhoods

All that being said, here are some thoughts on the most common places where expats choose to live, moving from north to south:

Virage: While it is a bit out of the way from most places of work, many people love it. Some cool houses and apartments with outstanding views of the ocean (although many apt in Dakar have this). Some friends live there and they have an awesome house with pool and garden and pay less than us. Definitely a top choice if on a budget.

Almadies/Ngor: US expats place to be! great if you have limited French. American store in town good supermarkets. Walking to restaurants, great place for exercise. Nice beaches/waterfront (rock beach for surfers, kids can have fun in waterfront restaurants with sandpits/waterpools). Problem: a bit of an expat bubble, but still a 100% Senegalese experience for first timers in Africa! :) If budget allows it is possibly the best place with kids. Especially if you are not looking for the ultimate "real" African living. Ngor has areas that are like Almadies and others that are a bit cheaper but can be a bit dirtier, so must be selective.

Mamelles: affectionately named thanks to the two hills ("Mamelles" is french for breasts), this neighborhood has cheaper houses and if you get one between the Corniche road and the water, it is very quiet although some construction going on. Advantage: good sand beach with not many people using it. Problem: 50% paved roads, not walking distance to shops. Cheap rent by Dakar expat standards.

Ouakam & Mermoz: Definitely some nice areas with very cool hoses but problem is traffic and noisy. Good central location but airplanes can be very annoying. Close to restaurants/supermarket. More urban feel than the previous two. Ouakam is certainly more budget friendly and more Senegalese in character (less expat). 80% paved roads. Mermoz is not too far from the Corniche road.

Fenetre Mermoz: This is where we live. Lots of families and feels like a neighborhood with kids playing on the streets and families walking their dogs. Walking distance to the ISD and EAB schools. Only big down side is that there is very limited retail and restaurants.



Photo: the Fenetre Mermoz neighborhood, looking towards Mamelles and Ouakam

Fann: The most traditional places for expats/embassies. Very central and really close to schools and work. A bit of a commute to the beach (10 mins!!! not joking) but definitely close to the traditional restaurants. A very safe bet if you have the budget. 100% paved roads. Great for joggers as you can hit the Corniche in no time.

Point E: a cool area with an urban vibe to it. You may get houses (with small patio) but you must look. Problem for some / advantage for others is mixed residential commercial so quiet on weekends but noise and traffic on weekdays. Also protest central due to university. Great for people who like urban walking. 100% paved roads

Plateau: Traditional downtown to be in the heart of the hustle and bustle of the city. Lots of excellent restaurants, L'institut francais, lots of new apartment buildings many of which have a reasonable price tag. This is where a lot of the embassies are located so a lot of expat staff working there chose to live there.

2. School options

Some schools to consider which are common choices amongst the expat community:

1. **ISD**: the large “American” school with excellent campus in the Fenetre Mermoz neighborhood. Very pricey. English dominates though some French lessons.
2. **EAB**: right next to ISD, traditional French or bilingual curriculum. Some love it, some struggle.
3. **Dakar Academy West**: New campus for preschool & elementary opening Fall 2019, fully accredited American program, Christian school (the original schools is in Hann, which started off as a school mainly for missionary kids but has broadened since).
4. **Ile Aux Enfants**: montessorri style kindergarten (ages 2-6) in Point E. All french. This is where our kids go. Parents are super engaged (in a good way).
5. **Dakar Montessorri**: located in Ngor, has a great reputation
6. **Saint Exupery**: we have heard nothing but good things about this school in Almadies. All French.

Further details on many of Dakar’s schools, see:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1CjOoCZuxL77c-RootW9cKTvjmmM7unNbGyOuOycxD2k/edit?usp=sharing>

3. Toddler entertainment options

While it has to be said there are not a plethora of amazing parks and playgrounds to visit, there are still a decent range of options. These are the typical activities we do with our toddlers, but in general check out the Moms and Mums in Dakar Facebook group:

1. **Trampoline park** on the Corniche: awesome and has to be the best view of any trampoline park in the world?
2. **Skate park:** on the corniche, close to downtown, this place is a great place to spend a morning. They have plenty of equipment for rental and staff on hand to teach the young uns. See more here: [Roule & Glisse skate park](#)
3. **Beach time:** we have two go to options:
 1. Mamelles is our go to beach for the kids. Bring a beach chair with a bottle of wine while the kids play. Eat at Bella Vista after.
 2. Beach in front of La Mer a Table.
4. **Play grounds at ISD or Ebbets Field:** find a friend with a pass for either, as these are the only good quality play ground in Dakar. Ebbets field is the US embassy leisure facility, or as one friend put it, a wee piece of Northern Virginia plopped down in Dakar.
5. **Ker Imagination** in Yoff. Discovery and play center with bilingual staff and programs.
6. **Sea Plaza:** can be an easy way to spend a few hours including toy stores, pets store, small carousel, tasty ice cream from Xocco, kids carts at the casino, large space outdoor for the kids to run around (which sometimes has some kids play options like a bungee trampoline). Check facebook page for activities.
7. **Pool time at a friends house or at one of the hotels mentioned above.**

More family tips:

[Parent-child dates in Dakar](#)

[School break survival guide for Dakar](#)

[My kind of adventure: perfectly planned.](#)

[Parc Kay Bonde: fun for kids... and not-kids!](#)

[Dakar day trip? Be prepared!](#)

4. Retail

Once you learn where to go, you can get most things in Dakar. Below are our retail recommendations:

1. **Grocery stores:** there has been an explosion of western grocery stores in Dakar in the last couple of years:
 - i. The first mover of the western stores, there are several “**Casino**” stores (the supermarket, not the gambling place) with decent range of products (the Casino in Almadies probably has the best range of fresh produce in Dakar), but generally more expensive than other supermarkets.
 - ii. **Auchan** stores have popped up all over Dakar since 2018 and in many of the larger towns in Senegal). Generally best prices we have found. Auchan opened a “[Hypermarche](#)” in October 2019 which is coupled with a Decathlon and KFC. Its not a hypermarche as you will find in France, but still big for Dakar and a better selection and pricing that we have seen anywhere else.
 - iii. We love **Utile**, which also started opening in 2018, for the opening hours (open 8am – 10pm) and it is close to our house. Although their stores are generally smaller, it has most of the basics covered.
 - iv. **Carrefour** arrived in Point E in March 2019 (only one for the moment)
 - v. [American Food Store](#): although we know we shouldn’t due to pricing, we can’t resist going from time to time to pick up some US treats (and actually, despite the reputation, the pricing seems to be reasonable for the most part). Also stocks Beersheeba meat. *Tip:* the lesser known [Dakar Family Market](#) in Ouakam is run by the same owners and has a similar range (including Beersheeba meat).
 - vi. Also, there is a decent Asian food store in Ngor (by the football stadium) where you can pick up various asian food products as well as some random US products.
2. **Butchers:** there are several good options available.
 - i. **Le Gac** (*Virage*): our go to for filet steak and pork chops
 - ii. **Boucherie Nouvelle** (*Point E*) has good quality meat
 - iii. But best of all, [Beersheeba](#). Great breakfast sausages, chicken, beef, and did I mention they recently started doing bacon? You can buy at the American Food Store, Dakar Farmers Market, and they will soon be available through Club Kossam.
3. **Bakeries:** one of the best things the French left. Here are our top picks
 - i. **Croissants:** we think the croissants and pain au chocolats from [Grain d’Or](#) are the best. *Tip:* Utile Supermarche stocks their bread and they open from 7am in Ouakam so that is our go to.
 - ii. **Bagels:** we like the bagels from [Melo Patisserie](#) but they are generally only available at weekends. *Tip:* best to order ahead (day before) if you want Sesame bagels as they often run out fast.

- iii. **Baguettes:** our favorite are from Eric Kayser, but it is a bit of a pain to get to. They also have amazing patisseries – definitely worth checking out when downtown.
- 4. **Fresh milk:** we were pleasantly surprised to find this. Same company has two brands – Dolima in the grocery stores (Casino and Auchan), or [Club Kossam](#) when you get it delivered to your house (once a week). We get five bottles a week and some yogurt.
- 5. **Household goods**
 - i. [Orca](#) is a good place located in Plateau for buying all sorts home goods including indoor and outdoor furniture, gardening supplies, office furniture and supplies, kids toys, and much more (the place is a 5-6 story maze – be careful not to get lost, or stuck inside when they close for afternoon prayers, as happened to one friend...!).
Tip: there is a shop across the street from the Orca entrance which has a wide range of fabrics and they make curtains to order.
 - ii. [Discover](#) is a similar store to Orca, with a wide range of furniture.
- 6. **Other retail / shops:** Dakar has limited quality retail options but some which deserve a mention include:
 - i. There are several **Hypermarche** stores which are the closest thing to a Target in the US. We go to the one up by the old airport.
 - ii. **Decathlon** recently arrived in Dakar with several locations to pick up reasonably priced French sports goods (much more reasonably priced than City Sports).
 - iii. **Africa Gourmet in Ngor:** if you are particular about your wine, this is where to go
 - iv. **Minibap** (<https://www.instagram.com/shopminibap/?hl=en>) is a wonderful place to pick of local arts and crafts for your home or for a gift. Think anthropologie but local.
 - v. [Happy Land](#) (Plateau) a party supply store including helium balloons.
 - vi. [Aux 4 vents:](#) excellent book store with a wide range of art and craft supplies. There are several locations. The biggest is in Mermoz, on Cheikh Anta Diop, just north of the Elton station.
- 7. **Dakar Farmers Market:** while this only happens 4-6 times a year (when it could easily be successful if it was every couple of weeks if they could find someone to run it), this is a great experience to buy local fresh products and crafts. Usually held at the renaissance monument. Look out on the facebook page for information.

Online shopping

- 8. [Jumia](#) **delivery:** this is the closest thing to Amazon in Dakar. Deliver a wide range of goods, including food. Check out their app where you can also order food for delivery from a wide range of restaurants.
- 9. **Amazon:** speaking of Amazon, there are various delivery service companies available in Dakar (e.g. [Shop Me Away](#)) who ship your amazon delivery (or other online retailers in the

US and Europe) for a fee. While the delivery fee is hefty, its good to have access to in a pinch.

10. **Craigslist:** Expat-Dakar.com and Dakarium (see facebook page) the closest thing to Craigslist in Dakar. Things get snatched up quickly, so you need to move fast.

5. Bonus chapter: 10 tidbits and tips about living in Dakar

Here is a splattering of other random tidbits of knowledge about life in Dakar that we have picked up during our time in Dakar:

1. **Guides:** the updated [Bradt Travel Guide to Senegal](#) was released in April 2019 and offers an in depth guide. Pick it up on Amazon before coming to Senegal. Also check out the [New York Times 36 hours in Dakar](#).
2. **Blogs:** our favorite local blogs for information: [Dakar eats](#) or [senegal daily](#). Here are some of the “must-reads” for newcomers:
 - [Dear new arrivals in Dakar](#)
 - [50 life hacks and tips for Senegal](#)
 - [So, about the Dakar Women’s Group...](#)
 - [My Senegal travel tips](#)
 - [10 commandments for life in Senegal](#)
 - [“Can I wear this?”](#)
 - [How to send money with Wari](#)
 - [Free advice](#)
 - [Application for Expat Friendship](#)
 - [Sick days in Dakar](#)
 - [Creative recycling in Dakar](#)
 - [The expat rules](#)
 - [So how can we help talibés?](#)
 - [How to buy _____ when you don’t know the price](#)
 - [How do expats say hello?](#)
 - [Things you learn when you live in Senegal](#)
 - [50 tips for running in Senegal](#)
 - [Bad ideas](#)
 - [10 commandments for life in Senegal](#)
 - [Life hacks: Dakar edition](#)
 - [How to prepare for a water cut](#)
3. **Healthcare:** generally decent level of healthcare options available in Dakar relative to other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. Some to be aware of:
 - **Call out doctors:** There are a couple of 24/7 health services that come to your house: [ReMed 24](#) and [SOS Medecin](#)
 - **Dentist:** we have had good experiences with [Dr Mac](#) – Chinese origins, trained in the US (so speaks English), great at explaining what he is doing and why. Used by a lot of expats. If you need an orthodontist, Dr Mathieu Vautier is excellent and speaks English.

- **Osteopath:** we highly recommend Jonathan Masson (<https://senosteo.wordpress.com/your-osteopath/> / 77 757 2952) if you have a need for an Osteopath.

4. Gyms / fitness

- Many people use Club Olympique on the Corniche. Wide range of facilities, and coaches available e.g. for Tennis
- Tennis coaching also available at King Fahd
- AMBY fitness in Mamelles is a good gym with a great personal trainer
- Squash at Tennis facilities at the University can also be used
- There are also about 200 yoga classes that happen every week from peoples homes, sides of restaurants to seaside retreats.

5. Communication:

- Almost everyone communicates by WhatsApp and Facebook messenger
- Fiber optic has arrived in Dakar and is being rolled out. It is in our neighborhood but we happen to be in one of the only black spots so hopefully you won't be like us (7 months since signing the contract and still waiting...). Friend who have it get download speeds of 100 MB/S or more (so jealous!)
- Also, note that few businesses have a website, but many have a Facebook page (as you can probably tell from some of the links in this doc)

6. **Orange Money:** not quite as good as Apple Pay, but close and definitely worth getting. Once set up on your phone, lots of useful functions including

- paying for bills (e.g. we pay our electricity and phone bills)
- sending people money
- recharging your Car Rapide for the autoroute
- buying phone credit for yourself and others (for calls and data)
- paying at checkout
- etc.

Note cash only for recharging - you cannot recharge with a credit card (not sure why).

There are several other widely used mobile money services in Senegal like Wari.

Tip: if you think you will use this a lot, ask Orange to lift the artificial limit (which I think is FCFA 100,000).

7. TV:

- Most people suffice with Netflix which generally works with the standard Orange 10 Mb/S package.
- With a VPN package you can stream other subscription services like HBO
- Apple TV works well and in addition to renting movies, we like the Reuters News App, and a range of stuff available on the YouTube app (Daily Show, Colbert etc.)

- DSTV satellite TV is also available with a bunch of different packages. You can pay month to month which is nice. So, I just pay when there is a rugby tournament that I want to watch like the Six Nations (come on Ireland!) or the Rugby World Cup.
8. **Household staff:** as a guide, salary ranges usually around 150,000 / month. If you are going to get staff, we can chat about how to manage staff, guidance on social security and tax payments etc. We are also big fans of investing in house staff with training opportunities to help them build skills to make them better positioned for future jobs, from speaking English, to cooking lessons (which let's be honest will benefit you too). We used [Les Ateliers de Corinne](#) and all the dishes our house lady learnt have been amazing. For more tips and advice on house staff, check this out: [The scoop on \(and from!\) house-help.](#)
 9. **"Handymen":** here are some people we would recommend as handymen should you need:
 - **Painter:** Abraham (764953462) has been a fantastic painter for us. He is the painter at Dakar Academy.
 - **Plumber:** Jarjue (776499062) is more expensive than other plumbers but this is worth it.
 - **Electrician:** Pape Amadou (770498918) has done almost all our electrical work and been excellent. He is the electrician at the Waterfront apartments but does additional jobs on the side. A bit expensive but worth it.
 - **Carpenter for Bespoke furniture:** there are a bunch of good quality craftsmen in Dakar, some doing good quality woodwork. We have done a lot of work with Tode (778993019) who always delivers quality work. He can build kitchen cabinets, beds, tables – pretty much any furniture.
 - **Pool guy:** Mr Kane (772157402) has been excellent for us. Also cleans the US embassy pool so speaks English.
 10. **Buying a car:** if you have green plates, the unofficial [US embassy CLO website](#) is the best place to buy and sell. Also, let us know if you want to know about the process for buying a car, getting it registered (can be a pain). As for mechanics for maintenance, we had a great guy (former race car mechanic from the US) but he left in June 2019 and we haven't found a replacement yet...