

namaste

November 2005

Vol 2, Issue 8



Africa...
Ancient Mauritania
Quick Guide to African Safari
The Coast of Gambia & Senegal
Heidi's Africa Crossword
Plus...
Dakar
Namaste Global Expedition
...and more

Namaste!

Another "fun-filled" month in West Africa on expedition - hit by malaria, refused entry into Guinea, shot at by soldiers, robbed by bandits, searched at gunpoint, abysmal road conditions, threatened with imprisonment for being a tourist, and more dodgy police!

On the upside, though, was Ghana's Mole National Park, the beaches of Gambia's 'Smiling Coast', a surprising reception in war-torn Ivory Coast, plus some time to enjoy

two of the region's more frenetic cities, Mali's Bamako and Senegal's Dakar. As ever, the hospitality and welcome of the poorest and remotest villages refreshed our hearts in a difficult month.

Packed full of features as well as the regular updates, feel free to send me an email with your suggestions and ideas for future issues (chris.charlton@namaste.co.uk)

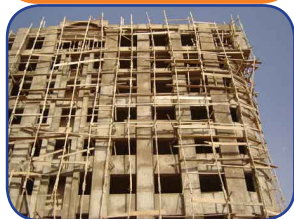
Cheers, Chris

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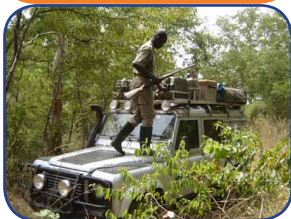
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Global Expedition Highlights

1/11/05 Day 576
Ouagadougou Mile 60630



4/11/05 Day 579
Mole N.P. Mile 60970



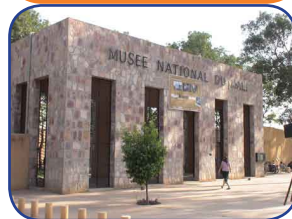
6/11/05 Day 581
Naissan Mile 61221



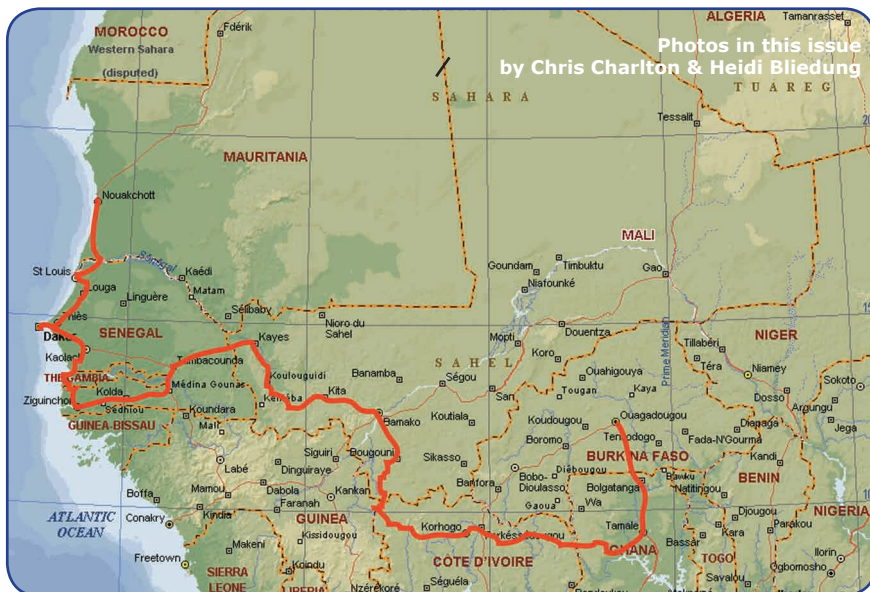
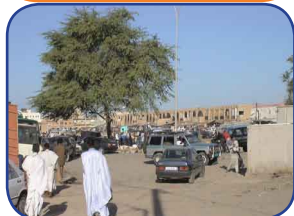
8/11/05 Day 583
Milignan Mile 61571



10/11/05 Day 585
Bamako Mile 61768



30/11/05 Day 605
Nouakchott Mile 63336



13/11/05 Day 588
Tambaga Mile 61932



29/11/05 Day 604
St Louis Mile 63197



16/11/05 Day 591
Taffan Mile 62500



28/11/05 Day 603
Malika Mile 62980



26/11/05 Day 601
Dakar Mile 62920



23/11/05 Day 598
Banjul Mile 62715



20/11/05 Day 595
Brufut Beach Mile 62695



17/11/05 Day 592
Kotu Beach Mile 62685



Expedition Trivia...

# of Days (overall):	30 (605)
Miles in month (overall):	2711 (63336)
Avg miles/day (overall):	87 (105)
Longest day miles (overall):	233 (612)
# countries (overall):	8 (42)
# of police stops (overall):	24 (320)

Top Tips this month...

Top Tip:	Pap's, Brufut Beach, Gambia
Favourite City:	Bamako, Mali
Adventure Spot:	Northern Ivory Coast
Place to Stay:	Le Rabelais, Bamako
Night Spot:	Black & White, Dakar
Wilderness:	Mole National Park, Ghana

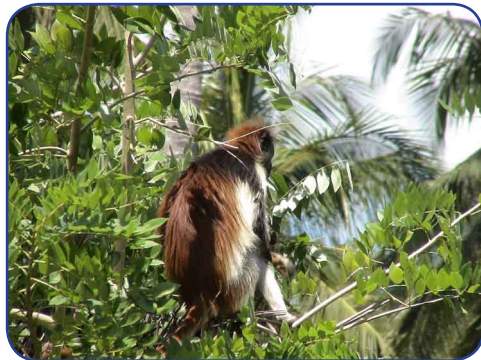
Features...

Explore the quick guide to African safari on page 2 and try Heidi's Africa crossword on page 6. Discover the coast of Senegal & the Gambia, and ancient Mauritania on page 7. Explore Dakar on page 8 and read the Expedition Europe & MidEast Plan on page 9. And find out what is coming next in future issues of Namaste News on page 10...

Quick Guide to African Safari...

Country	Park	'Big 5'	Cats	Elephant	Antelope	Primates	Birds	Fish	Landscape	Facilities	Tourists	Activities	Value	Overall	Luxury	Camping	Comment
South Africa	Kruger	*****	*****	*****	*****	***	***	*	****	*****	***	***	****	*****	Y	Y	The best place for safari in Africa
Namibia	Etosha	****	****	*****	*****	**	**		***	*****	***	**	****	*****	Y	Y	Excellent management all-round
Tanzania	Ngorongoro	*****	*****	***	****	**	**		*****	***	*	***	**	*****	Y	Y	Overpriced & busy, but outstanding
Uganda	Rwenzori				*	*****	***	*	****	***	**	**	**	*****	Y	Y	The place for gorillas & chimps
Zambia	S Luangwa	***	**	*****	****	*****	**	*	***	*****	****	***	*****	****	Y	Y	Fabulous for all-round safari
Botswana	Chobe	****	**	*****	***	*	**	*	***	****	***	**	****	****	Y	Y	The place for elephants
Tanzania	Selous	***	***	***	*****	***	****	*	****	****	*****	**	****	****	Y	Y	Awesome scale, yours to explore
South Africa	Tswalu	****	****		*****	*	*		****	*****	*****	***	***	****	Y	N	Fantastic high-end lodge
Botswana	Okavango	****	***	*****	***	**	***	**	*****	****	**	***	**	****	Y	Y	Breathtaking landscape, great safari
Malawi	Lake Malawi		*		*	***	***	****	*****	***	****	****	*****	***	N	Y	Beautiful scenery & freshwater diving
Mozambique	Bazaruto Is.					*	**	*****	****	****	****	****	*****	***	Y	Y	Awesome diving, sharks & whales
Kenya	Masai Mara	***	***	****	****	***	*		***	****	***	**	****	***	Y	Y	Good safari and great Masai people
Zanzibar	Southeast					****	**	*****	*****	***	***	****	****	***	Y	Y	Awesome diving & unique monkeys
Tanzania	Serengeti	***	***	***	****	***	**	*	***	****	***	**	***	***	Y	Y	The place to see wildebeest migration
Zambia	Vic Falls	*	*	**	*	*	**	*	*****	***	**	*****	***	***	Y	Y	Fantastic adventure spot plus animals
Senegal	Oiseaux Djo.				*	**	*****	***	*	**	***	*	***	***	N	Y	Birder's paradise
Zimbabwe	Zambezi	**	*	****	**	**	*		***	*	****	***	****	**	Y	Y	Great place, near Chobe & Vic Falls
Botswana	Tullii	**	*	**	**	***	**		***	**	*****	*	***	**	N	Y	Out of the way, near northern Kruger
Kenya	Hell's Gate	**	*	**	**	**	**		**	***	***	**	***	**	Y	Y	Great for access from Nairobi
Namibia	Caprivi	**	**	**	***	**	*		**	**	****	*	***	**	N	Y	Cheaper alternative to Okavango
The Gambia	Abuko	*	*		**	***	****	*	**	**	**	**	***	**	N	Y	Good for birds and monkeys
Mauritania	Banc d'Arguin						****	*	**	*	****	*	**	**	N	Y	Great birds, esp. European migrants
Ghana	Mole	*	*	***	**	***	***	*	**	**	***	**	***	*	N	Y	Mid-range option in West Africa
Kenya	Marsabit	*		**	**	*	**		***	*	****	**	**	*	N	Y	Good if in the area
Zambia	Luambe	*		**	*	**	*		**	*	****	*	**	*	N	Y	Developing; few other tourists
Ivory Coast	Comoe	**	*	*	*	*	**	*	***		*****	*	*	*	N	Y	War has reduced access - will be good

Everyone's idea of a great safari can be different. My preference is to be able to get close to a wide range of animals in their natural habitat, where few other vehicles and tourists can disturb that experience. There are countless opportunities in Africa to do this and the table above presents a



Wildlife sightings are best in the early morning, late afternoon and at night...

summary of my findings on visits to each of the parks. The list is not exhaustive, notably a few first-class reserves in Zimbabwe, but it represents the majority of the greatest parks and reserves in Africa that offer the opportunity for safari.

The modern idea of deliberately conserving special areas of the countryside and opening them to the general public rather than reserving them for

the wealthy and privileged, originated in the 19th century. Today, national tourism and wildlife policies varies between countries, and local politics often impinges on the success of individual reserves.

One of the basic principles of wildlife conservation involves providing adequate natural food and shelter to maintain populations of each species in a given habitat. A major threat facing wildlife is both the destruction of habitat, through drainage, agriculture and urban expansion, and the fragmentation of habitat into parcels too small for wildlife populations to use. For example, the Cheetah is under threat as land is lost to cultivation and predators concentrate in protected areas, these areas will become increasingly crucial for the future survival of these beautiful and vulnerable cats.

Illegal trade in feathers, horns, ivory, hides, organs and bushmeat has brought many endangered species to the verge of extinction and poaching remains a significant problem throughout Africa. Wildlife is an important biological, economic, and recreational resource that can be maintained through careful management. Hunting regulations allow the culling of many species without affecting overall population levels, and can even help control species that have grown too abundant for the region they inhabit.

Some parks have been established specifically to protect endangered species of animals or plants and to promote scientific research. They may therefore be seen as nature reserves, where hunting and other disruptive activities are limited or banned and public access is often strictly controlled or even

forbidden. The success of these areas can be felt in the major parks as populations of endangered species can be bolstered and our understanding of ecology enhanced.

The experience of safari is timeless - the chance to see incredible animals in their homeland is never



Tracking on foot through the bush with an expert can give you close encounters...

forgotten. For those new to safari and even for experienced hands in a new area, a good local guide and/or tracker can make all the difference. Their knowledge of the terrain and the behaviours and habits of the local species can dramatically improve your chance of sightings, as well as provide insights into the local human culture. Enjoy!

by Chris Charlton

Global Expedition Update

About 100 miles north of Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso, I looked up from my laptop as Heidi swerved left across the road. Appearing suddenly out of nowhere, I could see a kid on a bike crossing the highway, clearly not looking for traffic. With no time to do much else, Heidi and I went straight off the road and down a steep embankment in order to avoid the boy. Busting through some bushes, we both felt as if the Landie was going to roll, but it stuck to the steep incline like glue, and we slowed to a relieved stop. A definite near miss and aside from a small dent and a ripped mudguard, all was well. As Hedi was a little shaken from the experience, I finished the drive into Ouaga and we had a few days to prepare for the next leg of the expedition in November...

Leaving Ouagadougou, we headed south into Ghana, destination Mole National Park. Not one of Africa's best-known reserves, Mole was nonetheless one of the few opportunities to see some wildlife that has largely disappeared from West Africa.

Hiring a local guide, we took the Landie into the park, sometimes driving, sometimes exploring on foot, and discovered about 20 animal species, including Heidi's first wild elephant sighting. A good day out, and the chance for a dip in the pool afterwards capped it off nicely. Downing a few beers, we were amused as a couple of Dutch girls were forced to jump in the pool as some hungry baboons came just a bit too close, trying to steal sandwiches off their table!

On 5 November, we continued west into the Ivory Coast, crossing the border at a remote point in northwestern Ghana. After some bargaining with the small ferry operator, we landed on the western shore of the Black Volta River to be met by a rather surprised bunch of Ivorian soldiers. Tourists? Here? Following several years of terrible civil war, and successive coup attempts, Ivory Coast was being managed by the military and a delicate ceasefire was in place to allow the politicians to attempt to



Hilltop camp in Ivory Coast

Did you know?

"Centred in Benin, voodoo culture exists throughout West Africa. Originally 'vodun' meaning 'the hidden' or 'mystery', there is a supreme being, and a host of lesser gods or spirits specific to a groups' ancestors. Traditional priests are consulted for their powers to communicate with the spirits, usually for protection and prosperity, though the widespread religion of vodun has been both demonised and distorted by Hollywood..."

resolve the power crisis. While the border patrol was used to some local traffic, they were not sure how to handle foreign travellers. After a lengthy search of the vehicle, they decided to accompany us to the local commander's house. With our armed escort on the roof, we drove the 50km into town and found the commander.

A little uncertain as to what we would find, we were pleasantly surprised to meet the polite and courteous commander. Explaining that we wanted to traverse northern Ivory Coast, he duly gave us permission, handing us several documents that would clear our passage through the many checkpoints. Clearly tired of war, it was a real sign of hope that travellers could once again return to Ivory Coast. He even

radioed ahead to several checkpoints, which just waved us through as we approached.

We passed along the northern edge of Comoe National Park, stopping to make camp amid the savannah trees that lined the track. There we discovered one of the region's other problems, black fly, and no amount of insect repellent or clothing could prevent being bitten alive. On the second night, we managed to find a hilltop camp with a beautiful view across the cotton fields and thankfully, a lot less black fly.

As our primary aim was now to reach the coast for some much-needed R&R, we reached the Guinean border towards the end of our third day in Ivory Coast. We chatted with another friendly commander near the border, who cleared our exit papers, and set off cross-country to another remote border, not far from Mali. I had planned this route into Guinea, partly as a contingency in case we had to reroute into Mali as we did not have Guinea visas. We had not visited a capital of a neighbouring country where we could obtain them, but I thought it

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Mole National Park

Coming Up...to find out how to join, click below

December 2005

Completing the crossing of the Western Sahara along the Atlantic Coast; then a tour of the length of the Atlas Mountains and ancient cities of Morocco. Finally crossing into Spain and France for Christmas and returning to the UK for New Year...

July 2006

Note: Europe & MidEast postponed from January 2006 to July 2006... Across the Med by ferry from France to Algeria for a tour of North Africa's Mediterranean coast ending in ancient and fascinating Cairo. Then by boat along the Gulf of Aqaba to Jordan and north via Petra and the Dead Sea on route to Damascus in Syria...



Moon in SW Mali...

Global Expedition Update cont...

was worth a try as it's possible in a number of countries in West Africa, such as Burkina.

Arriving at the Guinea border post in a small village in the hills, we were met with a mixed reception by a surprising number of local officials, police and military. We explained our lack of visa and hoped that we could figure something out to allow us to visit Guinea and



Getting around in Bamako

continue north. After much debate, and repeated explanations to increasingly senior figures who turned up, it looked as if we had a solution. But that decision was overturned when one grumpy old bloke decreed it was not possible. I said it was disappointing and the first country to refuse entry to the expedition on 3 continents. We could see the intense debate between various officials, some perturbed by our lack of visa, some clearly wanting the tourist dollar in their country, but his decision was final.

So we turned about, and I hopped out of the Landie to grab some footage of the moment. Not entirely wise, but I thought we could get away with it. We almost did, except that several soldiers raced over to us and jumped onto the side of the moving Landie and demanded that we stop. Somewhat unnerved by this, I kept moving, telling the soldier hanging on to the side of the Landie to get off. Then to our amazement we heard gunshots, and the look on the soldier's face said it all - shit, they're firing at us!! We stopped in case it got out of hand and returned to the border post to diffuse the situation. Now the whole village had turned out at the sound of gunfire.

Our cameras were confiscated and we were initially told we were to be arrested and taken to the nearest town. We looked at each other and we commented that they were letting us into Guinea after all, which had them flummoxed for a bit! After much debate between all the various officials around, we persuaded them that we should just go and they should return our cameras, which they agreed to but for a fee (US \$200!). After showing them that I had deleted the photo (the joy of digital cameras), we jumped back in the Landie and they opened the gate, and we set off back into Ivory Coast in a hurry, pleased we had gotten away with it (the footage remained intact!)

As we left, one of the friendlier civilians handed our cash back, highly embarrassed by the reception we had received. I can only imagine the hot debate that evening amongst the various officials about how to treat tourists! As for the soldier who fired his weapon, I

hope swift justice comes his way. Utterly unnecessary, highly dangerous, it could have caused a potentially serious international incident. Welcome to Guinea!

As we crossed back into Ivory Coast, Heidi and I chuckled at the thought that we felt relieved to be heading back into a war zone. By then darkness had fallen and we returned to the friendly commander, Ballo, explained the situation and he offered us space to camp in his compound. Having partly expected a potential problem with Guinea, our contingency plan was to re-route north into Mali and then west into Senegal. We would miss Guinea, but frankly I didn't care, but we would also miss the islands of Guinea-Bissau. Such is life on expedition!

After a good chat over coffee the following morning, we thanked Ballo for his hospitality and set off into the dense savannah bush. The route was rarely used and a little reminiscent of central Africa, and we navigated our way into Mali. The customs official there said we were the first tourists he had ever seen come through that way. Not surprising, given how isolated it was, and coming out of Ivory Coast too!

We made it all the way to Bamako that day; and holed up there for a few days' rest at a lovely hotel, complete with room service, bar, pool table and swimming pool, plus some local nightlife of course..!

Then it was west towards Senegal, through the 'twilight zone' as we nicknamed the region, for the journey felt like it took forever. Western Mali is a beautiful area, and the drive was a great off-road adventure, but our focus was now on the beach after many weeks in the bush and the desert.

The night before we reached Senegal, we had made camp in the bush and settled down to

watch a movie. After several visits by some local villagers, the movie was almost done when we became aware of a large bush fire heading our way. Our backs had been the other way, but the noise and heat of the fire gave it away. Packing up rapidly in the dark, we prepared to move on, but first I walked over to check out whether we could continue down the track or have to turn around and find an alternative route through



Sunset over Kati, Mali

the bush. Fortunately, the fire was still 800m or so away, and had not crossed the track, so we drove right past it until we were a safe distance from the burning hillside.

We stopped near a village to look at the fire, which had lit up the night sky, and considered camping alternatives. As we were doing that, one of the villagers suggested that we camp in the village, "much better than the bush", he said. So we did, pitching the rooftop and awning next to their mud & straw huts in the middle of their village.

Surrounded by excited villagers, we chatted with everyone for some time and Namaste

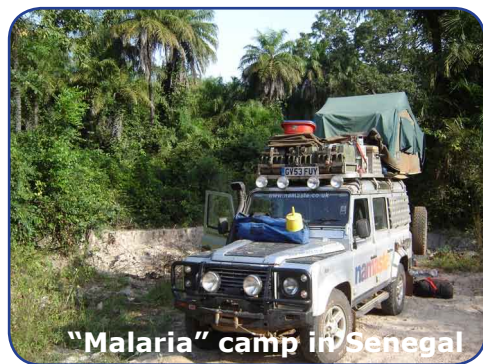
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Our village hosts in western Mali

Global Expedition Update cont...

cinema was put to good use again before we turned in for the night. Conscious of the early start for rural Africans, we set an alarm to make sure we would be up and about at the same time. After some breakfast and group photos, which I printed and presented to the chief, we said a fond farewell to our new friends, our hearts refreshed by the wonderful welcome and hospitality, we set off again, eventually reaching



the Senegal border on 14 November.

Finally on tarmac again, we made swift progress across Senegal, reaching the town of Tambacounda. By this time, I was also starting to feel shit - aching all over severely and getting hot & cold flushes and weird bouts of violent shivering. With Patrick's recent experience in central Africa, I quickly recognised the early symptoms of malaria, which I guessed I had probably picked up in Ivory Coast. Though prophylactics are generally a good preventative, clearly the strain in that region was resistant to Doxy.

Heidi popped into town to buy some anti-malaria medication, a 5-day course which I started immediately. At the time, I did ponder how lucky I was we could do this. As we continued through southern Senegal, the fever began and by the time we were crossing the Cassamance region, I was in a bad state, with a temperature soaring as high as 104F.

One evening, lying in bed in the tent, I got so bad that I told Heidi we should head for a medical facility if my temperature got any higher. She packed up camp around 10:30pm while I sat dribbling in the car front seat wrapped in blankets and we set off west heading for a major town.

I poured water over my head to help lower the temperature as cool air rushed in through the open window and after an hour or so on a massively pot-holed road, my temperature had dropped to a more reasonable 102F. We decided to stop and make camp again and kept watch on the temperature as I sweated out the fever.

I was in no mood to deal with the unfriendly and corrupt Senagalese police, but we got stopped several times as we crossed the Cassamance region. Though the region is beautiful, sadly it has been marred by a violent separatist struggle for some years. It also explained the crumbling infrastructure which had received no funding from the government, in part as a reprisal for the demand for independence.

Eventually, we crossed into the Gambia to

the sound of funky music at the border post, and found a decent hotel on the beach. I was getting delirious again, so Heidi helped me to the room and unloaded the car. There I sweated out the fever overnight and began to feel slightly better the next morning so we decided to go and look for a perfect spot to camp on the beach for several days R&R. While shopping and catching up on email, Heidi met a local guy called Paps who said he had the perfect spot. After dropping some of our washing off at his sister's house, he took us to a deserted beach of golden sand, lined with palms, baobab trees, and flowers. Idyllic, and away from the tourists further north.

Paps' place on Brufut Beach was nestled between two existing restaurants, one of which was run by his brother. He had yet to build anything, simply acquiring the land and offering it for camping, right on the beach. He was a great guy, and took care of us in all kinds of ways, from keeping local kids away from the camp to shopping and washing. He was a great help and he understood our need to be left alone.

There we stayed for 5 nights, while I recuperated from malaria, and we enjoyed our much-needed R&R. Gorgeous sunsets, warm water, good food and a chance to catch some rays, perfect! On several occasions, Paps had suggested some local activities, most of which we declined, but one idea was too good to miss. He knew a local marabout, a charm expert with his Gambian version of voodoo. A fascinating experience, and though we were highly sceptical, Paps, along with much of the local community, was definitely a believer.

As we sat in his house, he collected an array of shells, sticks, boxes and papers covered in Arabic inscriptions. He began by getting

us to throw the shells across the floor after blowing on them, chanted, and through Paps' interpretation, told us about ourselves and what we hoped for in the future. All interesting stuff, but sufficiently general to apply to anyone. After some discussion, he created some good luck charms for us, which Paps collected later, wished us well and we headed back to the beach.



On 23 November, we reluctantly packed up our beach camp and drove the short distance into the Gambia's capital, Banjul, though our stay there was a little marred by the opportunistic thief who grabbed Heidi's bag off the back seat while we were filling up with diesel at a service station. Even the police wanted us to pay them to report the theft and fill out a report. We were not impressed as it was not an insignificant sum and no one in the police station wanted to take responsibility. The Gambia might be a bit of a haven relative to some other parts of West Africa, but its police suffer from the same problems of corruption and incompetence.

The next day, we ferried across the river,

continued on page 6...



Global Expedition Update cont.....

crossed back into Senegal and headed into the traffic chaos of Dakar. We were trying to reach the Mauritanian embassy before midday to get a visa, but we didn't get there until 12:30. As it was Friday, we had to spend the weekend



Male Kob in Mole, Ghana

in town, which was fun and a good chance to catch up on email.

We returned to the Mauritania embassy on Monday morning, but typical, we were told it was a Mauritania holiday, come back tomorrow! So we decided on a bit of sightseeing and

headed out to the nearby Pointe des Almadies, the westernmost point of Africa, then north up the coast to a pretty beach near Malika, where the sun set to the sound of local drums.

In Senegal, there are a number of different ethnic groups, each of which maintains its own musical traditions. Generally, the most prominent elements of Senegalese music are the griot tradition of praise- and history-singers which features the kora, and complex drumming used to accompany dance. The Wolof are the largest of the ethnic groups of Senegal. Their drum groups feature the tama, an hourglass-shaped talking drum. It has two heads, commonly made of lizard skin, which are strung together by laces. By squeezing the laces, the tama player can change the pitch of the drum and produce almost speechlike phrases.

Coming back into Dakar through more horrendous traffic, we almost missed the embassy closing time, but success and we were on our way north. We settled in for a long journey and reached St Louis, Senegal's old colonial capital, that day. On 30 November, we crossed the border into Mauritania and

traversed a desert wasteland to the coastal capital, Nouakchott.

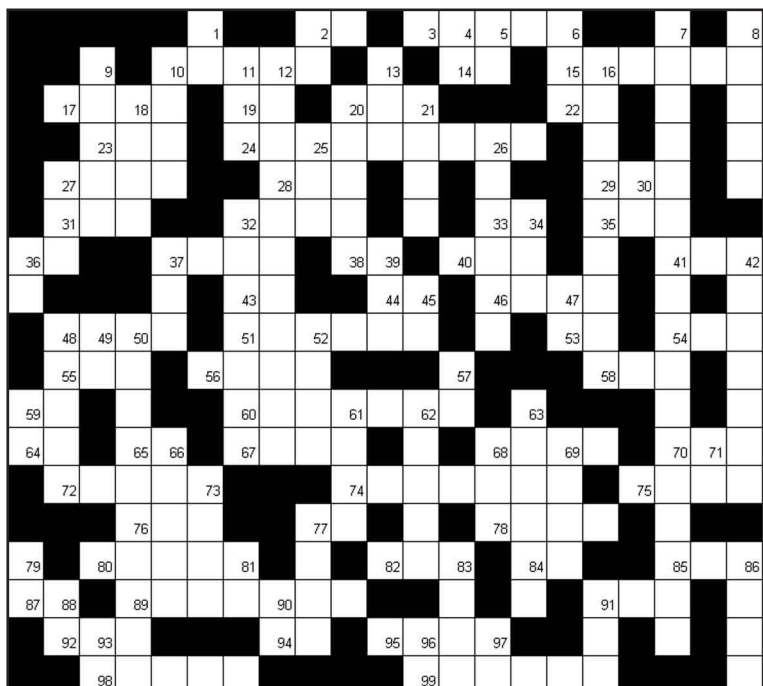
From previous research, we were preparing for the next leg of the journey - 1,500 km across the Sahara desert on infamous beach pistes



Downtown Bamako, Mali

that you have to time for the tide, then navigate notorious minefields along the Mauritania / Morocco border, a legacy of border disputes and the long running Western Sahara problem, but that would have to wait until December...

Heidi's Africa Crossword...



ACROSS

2. Stephen King novel
3. Tribe found north & east of Dakar
10. Dogon chief
14. Laugh sound
15. Term used for diesel
17. Also called voodoo
19. European Union
20. Hardwood
22. Mrs. Husband
23. Don't get stuck in one
24. Sha-men
27. Kind of fish
28. Fuel

DOWN

29. Feline
31. Lives in a colony
32. Mother's nickname
33. P.S. fr.
35. Color
36. Atop
37. Country east of Lake Chad
38. Compass direction
40. Ceremonial beverage in West Africa
41. Barrage
43. Don't stop
44. Capital of Ghana's Upper W Region
46. Path
48. Trademark cola

51. A.K.A. Conakry
53. Born fr.
54. Sun
55. Another name for
56. Between Ghana & Benin
58. Large body of water
59. Night
60. Gringos
64. About
65. Sigh of satisfaction
67. Guinea's 3rd most common indigenous language
68. Chris's sleeping quarters
70. Me fr.
72. North of Chad
74. Speedy antelope
75. Home-brew rum
76. Heavy metal
77. Sold _ is
78. Pottery
80. Waterway
82. Employ
84. And fr.
85. Identifications
87. Go fr.
89. Nepalese word for "Hello/Welcome"
91. Kind of beer
92. Source of headlines
94. Be 3rd person
95. Entry requirement
98. Dry savanna area south of the Sahara Desert
99. Also known as "charm"
11. Precious stone
12. Capital of Burkina Faso
13. Taxi
16. Groundnuts
18. Fair
20. Desert paradise
21. Millet beer
25. Mountain goat
26. Desert north of Air Mountains
27. Forbid
30. At fr.
32. Larvae
34. African board game
36. In relation to
37. West African currency
39. Spoken in Togo, Ghana & Benin
42. Mosquito-spread disease
45. 12-step program
47. One
48. Desert transport
49. Affirmative
50. Bogart & Bergman movie
52. Debts
57. The royal "we", 1st person
59. Public relations
61. Insects
62. Tribe living in Mopti area, Mali
63. Dogon Country's original settlers
66. "Laughing" wildlife
68. Nurse
69. Tidy
71. Above
73. Eve's counterpart
77. Crafts
79. Harmful ray
81. Feminine article fr.
83. Other
86. Heap
88. Part of a six pack
90. Yes
91. Fire product
93. Bush country
96. Can change outcomes
97. Included in e-mail address

DOWN

1. Capital of Ghana's Volta Region
2. Entry
4. Surprised expression
5. Note to follow so
6. Female Genital Mutilation
7. Africa's westernmost point
8. Elder
9. Islamic holy book
10. Most indigenous African homes

The Coast of Gambia and Senegal...

Sunshine, warm weather and long golden beaches...

The Gambia has a subtropical climate with distinct hot and cool seasons. During the cool season, from December to April, the harmattan, a hot dry, dusty wind, blows from the Sahara. Temperatures during the year range from 7° to 43°C (45° to 109°F).



The rainy season lasts from June to October. Senegal has a tropical climate, with a dry season from November to June and a wet season from July to October.

Coastal rainforest near Banjul, the Gambian capital, has been set aside as a nature reserve. The wide mouth of the Gambia River dominates the country's Atlantic Ocean coast. Along the coast and the river's banks,

mangrove swamps are sustained by annual rainfall exceeding 1,016 millimetres (40 inches).

Mangrove, bamboo, and cotton trees flourish along the swampy banks of the Gambia River. Because of its high salt content, water from the river cannot be used for agricultural irrigation, even far inland. Now a major transport route, the river was once a channel for the slave trade based on Banjul Island.

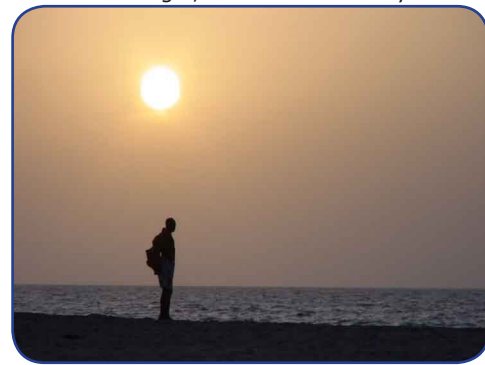
The Gambia has beautiful beaches, but the only Gambians who use them much are hawkers trying to sell goods to tourists, and lads who play beach soccer or go swimming. As in most of Africa, football is the most popular sport, but Gambians also enjoy wrestling, athletics, tennis, basketball, and cricket.

Although drought conditions have existed in Senegal since the late 1960s, wildlife is more abundant here than in most Sahelian countries. Senegal is the world's largest exporter of exotic birds, and there is much poaching of other animals. The government has, however, protected more than 11.3 per cent (1997) of the country as parks and reserves, assuring the survival of a number of species.

Senegal is blessed with more than 560 species of birds, including the many migrants

using the coast as a flight path between Europe and the tropics. Parque Nacional aux Oiseaux du Djoudj (a UNESCO World Heritage Site) is among the most important bird sanctuaries in the world, noted for its vast flocks of pelicans and flamingoes

Cassamance - a beautiful region in south-western Senegal, is home to a labyrinth of



creeks & lagoons; and some of the finest beaches along the coast. Infrastructure, as well as the people, have suffered during a long and violent separatist struggle that dramatically reduced the flow of tourists.

Whilst some coastal areas, notably around Dakar, have been developed for tourists, there remains plenty of isolated, exotic and beautiful beaches to explore...

Ancient Mauritania...

The Islamic Republic of Mauritania is the transition between the North African Arab countries and black Africa. With the exception of a narrow strip in the south along the River Sénégal, the country lies entirely within the Sahara; with some 40 per cent of the country covered by sand.

Mauritania was once covered with large



lakes, rivers and enough vegetation to support plenty of elephants, rhinos and hippos, but has now largely been overtaken by the southward-spreading Sahara.

The majority of Mauritians are Moorish descendants of Arabs and Berbers. Some Moors live in cities or villages, and others are nomads who travel the desert in search of water and pastureland. Political, commercial,

and environmental changes have forced many nomads into urban areas. Black Africans, Mauritania's second ethnic group, are primarily farmers in the country's south. Most of this group lives in small villages along the Sénégal River in tents or in round mud-brick dwellings. Islam, the state religion, is professed by almost all of the people.

Remnants of Stone Age cultures, such as neolithic rock paintings and arrowheads, have been found in northern Mauritania. Berber nomads moved into the area in the 1st millennium AD and subjugated the indigenous black population. The newcomers belonged to the Sanhaja Confederation that long dominated trade between the northern parts of Africa and the kingdom of Ghana, the capital of which, Kumbi Saleh (Koumbi Saleh), was in south-eastern Mauritania. Under Almoravid leadership, the Sanhaja razed Kumbi Saleh in 1076, although Ghana survived until the early 13th century. The Berbers, in turn, were conquered by Arabs in the 16th century. The descendants of the Arabs became the upper stratum of Mauritanian society, and Arabic gradually displaced Berber dialects as the language of the country.

Mauritania's capital city, Nouakchott, lies on a plateau near the Atlantic Ocean. It was selected as the site of the national capital in 1957, three years before the country

achieved independence.

Mohamed Ould Haidalla instituted many reforms in Mauritania after seizing power in 1980. He appointed civilians to government positions, abolished slavery, and drafted a constitution allowing a multi-party state. These reforms were abandoned after an attempted coup threatened Haidalla's



presidency the following year.

A new constitution approved by referendum in July 1991 declared Mauritania to be an "Islamic, African, and Arab republic". The constitution provides for an executive president, elected for a six-year term, and for a bicameral legislature, consisting of a national assembly and a senate. Roll on multi-party elections...

People

Fellow Adventurers...



Heidi Bliedung, 33, from Canada, continued her 10-week journey on expedition through Burkina Faso, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Mali, Senegal, the Gambia and Mauritania.



Paps, 26, from the Gambia hosted the expedition on his beach near Brufut for 5 days.



Along the way...

A big thank you to all those people who we met along the way in November, including:



Danny (Ouagadougou), Miriam, Jan, Susan & David, Kalma (Mole National Park), Commander Brahma & Ballo, Yam farmer (Ivory Coast), "hospitable" border officials (Guinea), Grechen, party crowd, Joseph, the gas man (Bamako), our village hosts & overlanders (western Mali), taxi drivers (Kotu Beach), Paps & family, Balimin (Brufut Beach, Gambia), police guards (Dakar), shop owners (Nouakchott)...



and of course, all the wonderful and countless inquisitive kids and villagers on route and everyone who we can't remember their names...



In the News

In the News

Chris writes about the Expedition's epic and pioneering section through Central Africa for the December issue of Travel Africa magazine - www.travelafricamag.com...

The expedition will feature as a case study in the career break supplement to Wanderlust magazine at an Earl's Court Show in London in Feb 2006...

Previous Newsletters

Previous issues of Namaste News are also available at www.namaste.co.uk/news

Oct 2005 Sep 2005 Aug 2005
Jul 2005 Jun 2005 May 2005

Letters & Emails

Thank you for all your letters, emails, text messages, and faxes. Each month, a few excerpts will be printed here...

"Dear Chris, Thanks for your fascinating News experiences. I was transferred in Juba, South Sudan as my New Duty Station up to April 2006 or Up to five years more depends on the mission developments. Once again thanks and have a safe journey always.", Bernardo, Philippines

"Thanks Chris, we hope you will have a good time in France in front of a good Bordeaux and at home for Christmas! Thanks for all the news and nice photos, the beer seems really good in our Auberge, you look like so happy! With warm regards, " Akly and Céline, Niger

"Hi Chris!! Thanks heaps for your email! I am so jealous, your plans sounds fantastic!...Best of luck with all the travels, I have read all the newsletters you send out so I know what you are up too, though I want to see all the photos and hear all the stories when you get back!!", Jenny, Australia

"Chris, are you feeling any better? I have heard some horrid stories of people getting malaria. Let me know your okay and hopefully on the up and up... In the surf... its the most challenging sport I have ever taken up and rarely get to go. But... still love it as a guy once said to me..."the best surfer out there is the one having the most fun..." Candice, Canada

"Namaste Chris, thanks for sending me the images of your great work, I was so impressed to see, it's unbelievable for me, I am well, I hope your long trip is still happening well!! I wish you safe trip, my great hello to Heidi. Don't forget to send people who are looking for guide in mali, or special in dogon. Best..." Kaou, Mali

"You are communicating again!! Wow!! Thank you for remembering my birthday - means a lot and sorry to hear about your not feeling well (at least you looked on the positive side - got some well deserved rest!!) It is really great hearing from you and I am most happy for you that you will be spending some time with your family most especially the time of the year!!..." Jacky, South Africa

"Hi Chris, Long time no crack - how's it hangin'? Your newsletters are just getting better and better... Cool !!..." Coll, England

Website Update

Stage 2 Development

The first Namaste Management Guides (Project Management Series; Leadership & Management Series) and Namaste Travel & Adventure Films (Climbing Denali, Aconcagua and Kilimanjaro; Adventures in North & South America) are now in production; and should become available in early 2006.

November 2005 Stats

Hits: 48,332
Countries: 60
Downloads: 4,183 Mb

October 2005 Stats

Hits: 31,176
Countries: 57
Downloads: 3,062 Mb

Dakar...

Dakar was founded by the French in the mid-19th century, partly because of its strategic position along the trade routes between Europe and the ports in South Africa and South America. In 1902 it replaced St Louis as the capital of the former colonial French West Africa. Today, Dakar, the capital and largest city of Senegal, has one of the best-equipped ports in West Africa, serving as a shipping centre for Senegal,



All types of transport in Dakar

Mauritania, and The Gambia.

The road and railway centre of Senegal, Dakar is also connected with other important African cities by air. In recent years it has become an important fishing port, particularly for tuna, and a busy fish-processing centre. Other industries are ground-nut oil processing, sugar refining, baking, brewing, and the manufacture of soap and textiles. Notable modern buildings include an art museum and a large medical centre. It is the seat of a Roman Catholic archbishop. The University of Dakar was founded in 1949; including the Institut Fondamental d'Afrique Noire, an important centre for the study of African culture.

Situated on the westernmost point of the African continent, the Cap Vert Peninsular, this sophisticated city attracts thousands of tourists to its beaches each year. One-eighth of all Senegalese live in Dakar, and the city's population is increasing because of the constant influx of rural job-seekers. Dakar must cope with the side effects of growth such as overcrowding,



By moped - the best way...

unemployment, crime, and escalating poverty. But amidst all the hustle and bustle, Dakar serves as a fitting finale to several trans-Saharan rallies...

Namaste!

Welcome to the Europe & Middle East Plan of the Namaste Global Expedition, an amazing around the world adventure. Join me on the expedition for a weekend, a week, a month or longer, and it is up to us to decide what we want to do.

Explore this guide (to be updated monthly), which should give you some idea of the expedition plan for the region, though this is subject to variation depending upon conditions, politics and what you would like to do. Explore the other info

documents for more detail, including how to join the expedition.

If you need anything more, please don't hesitate to contact me, by email, fax or phone. I look forward to your suggestions and ideas; and travelling with you soon...

Cheers, Chris



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Europe & Middle East Route Plan

The Middle East is where three continents meet, where empires have waxed and waned, merchants have long traded and warriors have long clashed. The result is a region rich with the accumulated detritus of five millennia's worth of major civilisations and cultures, from the Pyramids of Egypt to the Roman desert cities of Jordan & Syria, all set amid amazing scenery and landscapes. From Cairo to Istanbul; circumnavigating the Black Sea; climbing Europe's highest peak, Mt Elbrus, in the Caucasus; before a tour of fascinating Eastern Europe. From the Baltic to the Balkans, a treasure-trove of history, culture and natural beauty awaits those who decide to come along for the ride...

Other Info

How to Join the Expedition
About the Expedition Vehicle
About the Expedition Guide

Click on the above documents to read; or visit the Global Expedition web page where you can download them (www.namaste.co.uk/namaste-global-expedition.htm)



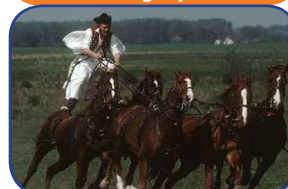
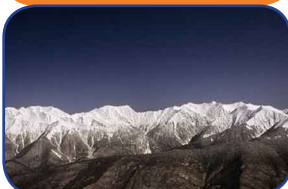
Ancient Petra in Jordan...

The Caucasus Mountains...

Great Mosque in Damascus...

Stunt riding in Hungary...

Zadar on Croatia's Aegean Coast...





namaste

What's next...

**December
2005**

**Western
Sahara**

**Atlas
Mountains of
Morocco**

**July
2006**

**Mediterranean
North Africa**

**Across the
Middle East:
Cairo to
Istanbul**

**August
2006**

**Climbing Mt
Elbrus**

**Transylvania
Castles**

Plus the usual Global Expedition Update...

www.namaste.co.uk/news