

For tours departing beyond 2009, itineraries may be subject to change. This will be confirmed by the publication of the 2010 brochure (issued in Oct 09).

2009
Tour Dossier

EXPLORE!
ON FOOT

MALI Dossier Ref. MA

Timbuktu & Dogon Trails

Amended 18 Jun 2009. Valid from 01 Jun 2009 to 31 Dec 2009
Since first issue this dossier has been updated with amendments to the following sections: visa, vaccinations, luggage & trek gradient

As our itineraries may be amended from time to time, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers, please ensure you have the most up-to-date copy of this dossier immediately before you travel. You can download the dossier from our website, www.explore.co.uk. Of course we will notify you of any significant changes, but sometimes minor changes may simply be added to the tour dossier.

JOINING TOUR ABROAD

16 days/15 nights Land Only
Bamako back to Bamako

Join Bamako (day 1)

End Bamako (day 16)

Clients booked on 'Land Only' arrangements should make their own way to the joining point in Bamako. Please refer to separate 'Joining Instructions' for name and address of hotel and time of rendezvous with tour leader.

GROUP TRAVEL FROM LONDON

16 days/15 nights Tour including Connecting Group Flights
London-Bamako-London

Depart from London Heathrow to arrive in Bamako in the early hours of the following morning (day 2 of Land Only itinerary). Transfer to hotel.

Return from Bamako (day 16 of Land Only itinerary) on early morning night flight to arrive London Heathrow the same day in the afternoon.

Passengers with non-group flights booked through Explore should refer to their individual confirmation invoice for flight details. Transfers to and from the airport are not included unless purchased in addition to the tour package.

SPECIAL HIGHLIGHTS

Among the many highlights featured on this tour we particularly mention:

- * **BAMAKO** Tour of Mali's capital.
- * **SEGOU** Colonial town on Niger River.

CO₂ Offsets Included

The biggest environmental impact of your holiday with Explore is the CO₂ generated by your flights. As a responsible tour operator, we have included in our tour prices the costs of offsetting CO₂ emissions from all international and domestic flights forming part of the tour. Our chosen offset partner is Climate Care. If you are making independent flight arrangements to join one of our tours, may we urge you to take responsibility for your CO₂ emissions by offsetting through Climate Care, or a similar offsetting scheme.

- * **DJENNE** Largest mud-brick mosque in the world.
- * **MOPTI** Colourful harbour town on Niger River.
- * **NIGER RIVER** 3-day pinasse journey on Niger River to Timbuktu.
- * **TIMBUKTU** Famous Saharan town on Trading route.
- * **FOUR DAY DOGON TREK** Foot safari through Dogon villages along Bandiagara Escarpment.

Mali, once West Africa's greatest merchant empire, conjures up the spirit of adventure, of tiny villages and encounters with tribal peoples. Explore was the first UK-based adventure operator to offer tours to Mali. Consequently we now offer one of the most comprehensive itineraries to this off-beat destination. We begin by spending time in Colonial Segou and then Medieval Djenne with its huge mud-brick mosque. Then we voyage down the Niger River in a traditional Pinasse, to arrive at every adventure traveller's holy grail, the legendary city of Timbuktu. Here we can head out into the Sahara to a Tuareg village, before crossing the Sahel in 4WD vehicles, making for the extraordinary country of the Dogon. Here we'll make a memorable 4-day trek, traversing a dramatic section at the foot of the remarkable Bandiagara Escarpment.

Note: Internal flights in Mali are notoriously unreliable for this reason we prefer to rely on ground transport.

Walking Grades and Fitness:

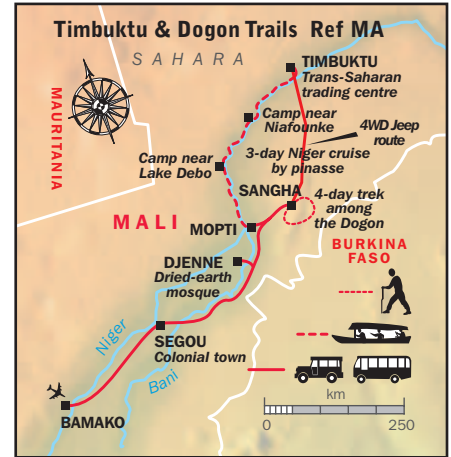
Grading is a somewhat difficult topic as much depends on the individuals' own perception of his or her abilities. The following is intended as a general guide to our walking grades. This is rated **Grade B**.

Grade B walks (Moderate): will usually involve some longer walks (4-6 hours/day) at low altitudes (below 3000m). Some previous hill walking experience would be beneficial but these walks should be within the capabilities of those who lead a normal active life. In order to get the best out of the trip we would advise that you tone up your fitness before you join.

Please note: There are a couple of steep drops to look down upon during the trek and the walks involving these should not be undertaken by anyone who suffers from severe vertigo. Some degree of scrambling is involved and climbing of the 'Dogon ladders' to reach the villages. Alternative routes avoiding the steep drops, though less satisfying, are available.

Earth Matters

- Although it may seem illogical, in fact the purchasing of bottled water from villagers in Dogon Country is a valuable way of generating income in this remote and very dry region. If you bring a water filter then be advised you will not be able to use it for the Dogon part of the trip.
- We use local guides for both the Dogon, Djenne and Timbuktu parts of this trip to supplement the information given by our own Tour Leader. They are fantastic characters and lend a real local feeling to the tour.
- For further information on responsible travel go to <http://www.explore.co.uk/ResponsibleTourism/>



Special Note: Due to Mali's location and desert climate, temperatures often reach high levels – normally with a dry heat. This can make trekking along the Bandiagara Escarpment in Dogon country more difficult than the actual terrain and walking duration would normally dictate. Although our walks are planned to avoid the hottest part of the day, it is inevitable that some walking will take place in hot conditions.

LAND ONLY ITINERARY

Be Prepared: While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day route printed below, a degree of flexibility is built into the itinerary. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested. The Campements used can be fairly primitive, and you should be prepared for spartan conditions. Camping is fully supported by a cook and crew but you should come prepared to erect your own tents.

Accommodation and Included Meals: please find the key to our accommodation ratings overleaf, and note that included meals are indicated in the itinerary below and are shown on the day they are provided (B = breakfast, L = lunch, D = dinner).

Day 1. Join tour Bamako
Arrive Bamako and check-in at hotel.
Overnight hotel H+.

Day 2. Drive to Segou
After an initial briefing, we begin our journey by travelling north to Segou, which was once the seat of the Bambara Kingdom, now home to some of the best colonial architecture in the country. **Overnight hotel H+ (included meals: B).**

Day 3. In Segou; drive to Djenne
This morning we plan an orientation tour of the town. The market at Segou is very important for the South of the country and is worth a visit, whilst the town is also known for its wonderful pottery. In the afternoon we drive further north and take a short ferry crossing over the Bani River to arrive in Djenne – a legendary old trading town, standing on what is virtually an island. Founded around 1400AD, it had very close trade links with Timbuktu. **Overnight campement (basic Malian hotel with limited facilities, only cold water showers) H+ (included meals: B).**

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Day 4 In Djenne; Drive to Mopti

Situated on the banks of the river Bani, the narrow alleyways and huddled mud-brick buildings of Djenne have changed little over the centuries, although its golden era has vanished and it now appears isolated and locked in a forgotten time warp. Untarnished by 20th century modernism, its narrow alleyways and mud-brick buildings huddle together in a sleepy Rip Van Winkle embrace. The town's highlight is undoubtedly the famous Great Mosque, the largest dried-earth building in the world. Roughly, or perhaps one should say 'crudely' designed, the impression it creates against the open skyline is one of primitive elegance. Huge and magnificent, the Djenne mosque (built in 1906) has to be daubed with fresh mud every year with great ceremony before the rains. Entry to the mosque is prohibited to non-Muslims, but we can marvel at it from a nearby vantage point. We have the whole morning to enjoy the town with the aid of a local guide, and have time here to see the lively Monday market, one of the most colourful in West Africa. In the afternoon we make our way towards Mopti, a thriving river town, situated on three islands at the confluence of the Niger and the Bani. This delightful harbour town has been dubbed the 'Venice of West Africa', though in reality there is no comparison. Depending on our arrival time, there may be the opportunity to explore Mopti – you'll find traders from as far away as Timbuktu here to sell their various products and artefacts. The place is alive with colour and bustle, and among the fantastic commotion many traditional and tempting items are sold. The stalls offer wares such as local smoked fish, ready-made clothes or clothes made to measure, blankets and colourful lengths of cloth, traditional wood carvings and objet d'art, exotic spices and vegetables, fruits, reed work, and blocks of salt (once the most important product that camel caravan traders carried and once exchanged weight for weight with gold). **Overnight hotel H+ (included meals: B).**

Days 5 & 6. Cruising to Timbuktu on the Niger River

The Niger River is a major highway in the Sahel desert region and often the most practical means of getting around. River transportation varies from local craft like the pirogue (a traditional poled canoe used by riverside villagers) to pinasses (large motorised pirogues which perform an inter-village commuter service and are capable of carrying from 20 up to 100 passengers); and also steamers (which operate on seasonal timetables). We charter our own private pinasse and spend 3 days cruising the Niger River northwards to Timbuktu. This will afford an even more intimate look at life along a great African river as we pass by tiny villages, meet friendly Bozo fishermen and their families and enjoy the wildlife that inhabits the marshy shores: especially birds – the

river is an ornithologist's paradise. At night we'll moor on the banks of the river and wild camp. We will be accompanied by a Dogon cook who will prepare our meals. Conditions are primitive and we'll take all our supplies with us. The Niger, whose route was for many centuries a mystery to European minds, is Africa's third longest river, after the Nile and the Congo. From its source in the Fouta Djallon Highlands of Guinea, close to the Atlantic Ocean, its course ascribes a huge arc through north-eastern Mali into Niger to debouch finally some 4184km away in the multi-stream delta of Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea. **2 nights camping C (included meals: Bx2, Lx2, Dx2).**

Day 7. Arrive Timbuktu

We spend one final day on the river, hopefully seeing hippo en route, before finally drawing into the port of Korioume, gateway to the fabled city of Timbuktu. **2 nights hotel H+ (included meals: B, L).**

Day 8. Exploring Timbuktu

During our time here we hope to unravel some of the many mystical legends surrounding the city, helped by our charismatic Tuareg guide. Timbuktu was an important city for many centuries as it was the final oasis along the important caravan trading route through the Sahara. Residents came in from other towns to set up shops and levy taxes on the wealthy traders, thus increasing the wealth of the town. It was once home to one of the largest Universities in the world, with a student population twice that of Cambridge today. Today, in less opulent times, wandering through the narrow sandy streets lined with stucco and mud brick and carved limestone houses, we may catch a glimpse of women baking bread in one of the many clay ovens dotted around the town. We visit the famous Djingareiber Mosque, which non-Muslims are sometimes permitted to enter, built by a famous Andalucian Architect in the 14th century. It may be possible to climb up onto the roof for spectacular views across the Sahara. We also visit the houses where explorers such as Gordon Laing stayed, the first European to set foot in Timbuktu. We have the opportunity to take a 4WD excursion through the dunes surrounding Timbuktu where the vast Sahara Desert starts and/or to take a ride on a camel (optional). **(Included meals: B).**

Day 9. 4WD across the Sahel to Dogon Country

Today, after crossing the Niger by ferry, we set off in 4WDs across the Sahel on dirt roads, towards Douentza, before then heading for our first night in Dogon Country at Youga Na. **Overnight camping C+ (included meals: B, D).**

Days 10 to 12. Trekking in Dogon Country

Accompanied by our knowledgeable Dogon guide, we explore the picturesque villages along the escarpment and meet the people of the Dogon Country during the course of

the next 4 days. Our walking days are fairly long, some scrambling is involved as we climb up and down the escarpment on the rocks and it can be very hot, however we have built in enough time for rest and drinks. Sections of the route are sandy and this can make the journey slow-going. All necessary food, luggage, tents and cooking equipment will be carried by porters – you simply need your camera, water (available to buy in all villages) and a light daysac for personal gear. The Dogon people are very friendly and hospitable: we take our own food provisions with us and camp for the next 4 nights. The local millet beer (konjo) is well worth trying even if it is potent. During the trek we will ascend the Bandiagara Escarpment cliff face and enjoy the superb view across the rocky plateau from the top. The Dogon arrived from Mande country in the west some 600 years ago and eventually replaced the original inhabitants after assimilating their artistic and religious traditions. They continue to revere the earlier residents of the Bandiagara, and at the same time present modern anthropologists with a number of particular puzzles. The Dogon have strong magical beliefs including a divination technique which uses foxes' paw-prints to predict the future. The Dogon are perhaps most famous for their masked funerary dances: their elaborate masks are intended to placate ancestral spirits. They represent the whole world of the Dogon with a wide variety of totem objects including people, mammals, birds and reptiles. Dancers often wear the Kananga (creation) mask – this dance involves bending low down to touch the ground with the top of the mask in frenzied excitement. Today, some of these unique Dogon masks can cost a small fortune in elite salons of Western Art. As mystics and magicians, Dogon shaman are also said to possess strange and secret powers: for instance, they claim to have a knowledge of several cosmological features that are invisible to the ordinary naked eye, such as the three stars of Sirius. Our route takes us through Youga Na, Banani and Tireli, villages as well as the UNESCO world heritage site of Irel. **3 nights camping in Dogon country 2 nights C+, 1 night C (included meals: Bx3, Lx3, Dx3).**

Day 13. Final Day of trek to Sangha

On our final day of trekking we arrive in the village of Sangha, the "capital" of

Booking a Single Room

All of our tours are planned and operated on a twin-share basis, meaning that the standard cost is based either on individual travellers sharing accommodation with another group member of the same sex, or people who book together sharing accommodation. On this particular tour we are pleased to be able to offer customers the option of pre-booking a guaranteed single room for each night of the tour.

EXPLORE ACCOMMODATION RATINGS : An important feature of many Explore tours is the wide range of accommodation used, and since the beginning our philosophy has been to select accommodation to suit the itinerary - not the other way round.

To help gauge the comfort level on your chosen tour, we have graded the accommodation standards at all night-stops using the rating guide below. Please keep in mind however that standards can vary from one trip to the next, and occasionally we may need to change a night-stop without advance warning.

Hotels / lodges / guesthouses - or similar

H++ : Comfortable hotels, lodges or guesthouses with twin or single rooms and en suite facilities. With air-conditioning/heating where appropriate and with reliable hot and cold water. Generally good levels of service and often with added amenities such as restaurant, bar, gardens or swimming pool.

H+ : Standard hotels, lodges or guesthouses, usually with twin or single rooms and en suite facilities. These are generally standard, no-frills hotels with adequate amenities and service standards. Whilst comfort levels are perfectly acceptable to most, please don't expect too much! These are often small, family run establishments.

H : Basic hotels, lodges or guesthouses (also village houses, mountain huts, hotels etc often come into this category). Accommodation may be communal or dorm-style, and WC / washing facilities are usually shared. Running hot and cold water may be unreliable or even unavailable. These can be the most rewarding and memorable places to stay, but comfort levels are low.

Camping

C++ : Comfortable, full service camping generally in permanent, fixed camps with walk-in tents, proper beds and often with en-suite facilities and other amenities such as dining area, bar, gardens and a swimming pool. Your bed-linen is provided.

C+ : Standard camping in private or public campsites, usually with WC and washing / showering facilities in a shared ablutions building. Typically in two person tents, and some level of participation is often required. Generally bed linen or sleeping bags are not provided.

C : Basic camping in wild camps where facilities / amenities may be limited or non-existent. Generally there is no running water, and we dig a temporary bush toilet. Two person tents are often used, but occasionally we sleep under the stars. Participation normally required and sleeping bags usually not provided.

Note: other accommodation, for example, aboard boats or on overnight sleeper trains is described individually at the appropriate point in the tour itinerary above.

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Dogon Country, passing en-route several areas of intense onion cultivation – one of the main income earners of the Dogon people. **Overnight campment H+ (included meals: B, L).**

Day 14. Drive to Segou

Leaving Dogon Country we head towards the important crossroads of Sevare, before starting our return journey south, breaking our drive once more at the colonial town of Segou. **Overnight hotel H+ (included meals: B).**

Day 15. Drive to Bamako

After a morning's drive back to Bamako, we will have a brief tour of the Capital. Bamako was first visited by the famous explorer Mungo Park in 1806. Formerly an important trading post on the Niger River, the name comes from Bama meaning crocodile and Ko meaning river. It was colonised by the French towards the end of the 19th century. Although there has been rapid urban growth in recent years, the capital remains a fairly small, busy place. Our visit includes the superb National Museum with its excellent collection of anthropological and archaeological artifacts – a fitting end to this most varied and surprising country!

Overnight hotel H+ (included meals: B).

Day 16. Tour ends Bamako

The flight for London departs in the early hours of the morning. **(Land only passengers: included meals: B).**

PERSONAL EXPENSES

You'll also need some extra money to cover meals not included in the tour price, other sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Foreign Exchange

Local Currency: West African CFA Franc.

Recommended Currency for Exchange:

Although US Dollar and pound sterling can be exchanged in Bamako, we recommend that you bring the majority of your spending money in Euros cash. Small Euro notes (€5, €10, €20) are very difficult to exchange and we recommend you bring large denomination notes.

ATM Availability: None.

Credit Card Acceptance: None.

Travellers Cheques: It is difficult and expensive to change travellers' cheques. Not recommended.

Up-to-date information re: global exchange rates can be obtained at <https://www.currency-express.com/explore/>

Other Sightseeing

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date this dossier was originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations.

TIMBUKTU 4WD with included camel excursion and Tuareg experience €25.
DOGON COUNTRY Masked dance in Tireli, approx. €15 depending on numbers.

Meal Plan

Local Food and Drink: 14 breakfasts (15 breakfasts- Land Only passengers), 7 lunches and 6 dinners are included on this trip; please be prepared to pay for all other meals. **You should come prepared to buy a lot of water, especially early or late in the season when it is hottest.** Prices quoted are correct as of the date this dossier was originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations. Please note that costs for drinks and meals can vary depending on location and the prices below are given as an average guide only.

	UK	Mali
Coffee/tea	£1.20	€1.00
Bottled Water	0.80	2.00
Soft drink	0.80	1.00
Bottle of Beer	2.50	2.00
2 Course Meal*	10.00	5.00
3 Course Meal**	18.00	10.00

*Cheap local fare in a small cafe or restaurant.

**Typical food in a simple, reasonably comfortable mid-range restaurant.

Tippling

Local Staff: In this area, tipping is a recognised part of life. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of services provided. Accordingly, you should allow approximately €40 for tipping.

Tour Leader: At your discretion you might also consider tipping your tour leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Seasonal Climate

About half of Mali lies in the southern Sahara and is virtually rainless. South of Timbuktu, the area from Mopti to Bamako has reduced temperatures and a longer rainy season the farther one moves to the south. The harmattan, a dry dust-laden northeasterly wind combining high temperatures and very low humidity, blows during the winter months. This can be a problem for asthma sufferers and those with contact lenses. Average temperature is 35°C. The rainy season is from Jun-Sept, and it can be very hot both in October and February/March.

Additional information and climate charts can be accessed at <http://www.explore.co.uk/weather>. Seasonal weather patterns can be unpredictable. Up-to-date information on the weather worldwide can be found by following the BBC weather link on this page.

Visa Requirements

Entry visas are required by all nationalities. These may be obtained through Visa Swift, Explore's recommended Visa Service. All passport information is to be forwarded to Explore with booking details. Please be aware that the nearest Malian Embassy is in Paris and visa application costs exceed £150.

All visa information is subject to change. You should confirm all visa related issues with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

Vaccinations & Protection

Yellow Fever vaccination is compulsory, a Certificate is necessary for entry into Mali.

We recommend protection against malaria, hepatitis A, diphtheria, tetanus, typhoid and polio. Although the risk is low you may also consider immunisation against rabies and meningococcal meningitis. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on different prophylaxis available against Malaria.

Special Note: Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure.

This is not an exhaustive list.

Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider.

Electric Supply and Plugs

For comprehensive information regarding voltages and plug types in use in the countries visited, follow the relevant link at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Traveladvice/>. Please note there are limited facilities to recharge batteries/cameras.

Insurance

Travel insurance is compulsory for all bookings. You must take your policy document with you on tour, as your tour leader will ask to see this at the start of the trip. Your documentation must state in writing that you are the named policyholder and that the cover is valid for your period of travel. Your policy document must also indicate that you have medical expenses and emergency repatriation cover and a 24-hour contact telephone number for your Insurance Company must be shown on your documentation in case of emergency.

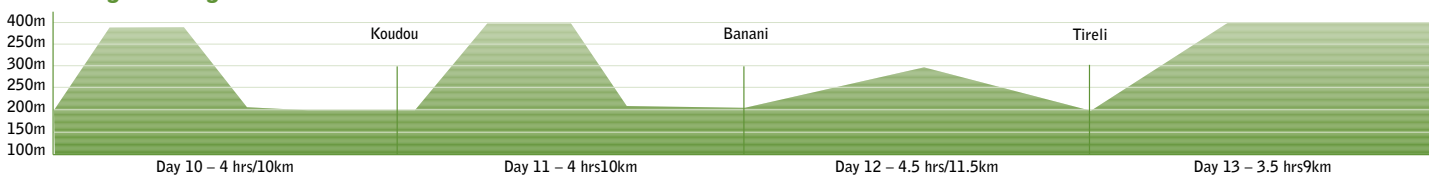
If you are unable to provide all this information at the start of the trip you will not be allowed to join the trip. If you have purchased Explore Insurance you should carry the Master Certificate leaflet with you, which outlines the conditions of the policy together with a copy of your Confirmation Invoice, which is your proof of purchase of insurance. Explore Worldwide are an Appointed Representative of Campbell Irvine Limited, who is authorised and regulated by the Financial Services authority.

RAMADAN 2009

22nd August - 21st September

Please note that Ramadan is a month of fasting observed by Muslims throughout the world, during which time the followers of Islam should not eat or drink between sunrise and sunset. There may be some limitations to services and disruptions to schedules during Ramadan, but generally our tours still operate effectively during this period and food is available to non-Muslims throughout the day in most countries.

Trek length and gradients



Please note distances and walking times are approximate, the trek lengths are there as approximate guidelines for the walking excluding breaks.

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Know Before You Go

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs, including advice re: the legality of and local attitudes towards same-sex relationships. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Advice follow the link at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Traveladvice/>

PACKING FOR YOUR TRIP

A complete list of clothing and personal gear is contained in Explore's '**General Information booklet**', available after booking. Here we make a few specific recommendations with regard to your tour.

Luggage: One main piece of luggage, waterproof. A daysac for you to carry personal items such as water and camera on trek and a small holdall/trek kit bag for the pinasse and the trek (carried by the porters). This should be waterproof and large enough to hold your sleeping bag, washbag etc).

Total allowance: 33lbs/15kgs (due to restrictions on pinasse). Remember, you are expected to carry your own baggage in and out of hotels – so don't overload yourself.

Clothing: Pack essentially for '**Hot Conditions**'. Light cotton clothing is recommended plus heavier trousers and protective headgear (in case of strong winds). A fleece and full lightweight waterproofs are advisable as the pinasse journey can be surprisingly cold and the spray from the water unavoidable at times. Long sleeved shirts and long trousers help give protection against mosquitoes. Remember to take a swimming costume as a few of the hotels have pools.

Mali is predominantly a Muslim country and you should dress conservatively in public places: very short skirts and scanty clothing can cause offence.

Footwear: Lightweight walking/hiking boots with good ankle support are required for the Dogon Trek. Trainers or sandals for relaxing.

Equipment: Bring a small torch, a 2-season (temperature 0°C to 5°C) sleeping bag and a sheet sleeping bag. You may consider bringing a 2/3 season sleeping bag for Dec/Jan. Insect repellent is essential. Sleeping mats are provided.

Trek Kit Bag: For an exclusively designed Explore Trek Bag, follow the relevant link at www.nomadtravel.co.uk/explore

Personal First Aid Kit: For an exclusively designed Explore Medical Kit, visit www.nomadtravel.co.uk/explore

Need help on clothing or equipment?

Then we suggest you contact Nomad Travel, our equipment partner, who specialise in kitting people out for adventurous travel. You receive a special 10% discount in-store or online. Visit one of their stores, phone 0845 260 0044, or visit their website www.nomadtravel.co.uk/explore for further information.

Please find below some space for you to make notes regarding your trip...

Horizontal lines for taking notes.

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