

# Information brochure for our 11th Sabar Camp in Yoff, Dakar.

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**From Saturday 11 to 25 February 2023**

We are very happy that you have decided to come with us to Dakar!

Here is some information about Senegal in general, the sabar, the culture and the course which we hope will help answer any questions you may have when considering this workshop. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any unanswered questions after reading this information.

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## Senegal & Sabar

**My thesis on sabar is written in Dutch, but I have written a summary in English. Part of it might be interesting as an introduction to the culture of the Senegalese sabar.**

Before the era of colonialism and modernism, Senegal was a society of oral tradition; history was told and passed on to the next generation. History was told and passed on to the next generation. The singing of praise by griots to nobles, kings and other social superiors was also part of this tradition. The griots are called the masters of the word and they bring poetry to life in the hearts and minds of the people.

Their performance was often supported by music or dance. With the rise of literacy, modern technology, mass media and modern means of communication, this oral culture of praise song and speech took a back seat to music and dance. This had direct consequences on the work of the griots: they had to adapt to the new form and requirements of the sabar in order to keep their traditional work alive. Senegalese society has changed. Nowadays there are no more kings, and praising a nobleman does not pay well. The griots now focus on sabar events that emphasise dancing rather than speaking. These festivities are mainly organised by and for women and are no longer just about money. These developments and processes in Senegalese society have led to a change in the hierarchy of the oral tradition. Dance and music are now much more popular and therefore share the first place, to the detriment of the spoken word.

It is not only Griots who are affected by these changes; sabar events as a whole have changed in number and character. They have grown dramatically and are therefore accessible to a wider range of people. As a result, more people are dancing, the latest trend being that men are starting to dance at sabar events. However, despite all the changes that have taken place within the site, traditional gender values and norms have not changed. While men have expanded their role in sabar performances by making a name for themselves as dancers, women still do not play the drum, nor are they in the first and best place rewarded when it comes to the professionalisation of sabar dancing.

Sabar dance has grown considerably, first locally and then internationally. The process of Wolofisation explains how the Sabar, which was originally a local product forming part of the Wolof cultural complex, was adopted by all other ethnic groups in Senegal. The Wolof ethnic group became permanently dominant, not only linguistically (Wolof is the largest language in Senegal) but also culturally, since almost everyone in Senegal can be a dancer.

Sabar has also developed internationally, first through the rhythms brought by Senegal's biggest export, Youssou N'dour, then through the international tours of many Senegalese ballets and the growing interest in cultural festivals in the West, which has led to an increased demand for Senegalese artists. Since the strict caste division in Senegal has begun to fade, drumming, singing and dancing are no longer the exclusive preserve of the Griots. Everyone, including non-Griots, is taking advantage of this growing demand, well aware that a Griot name is now a new way of making money, both in the West and in Senegal. The international breakthrough of Sabar rhythms in the form of popular music, initiated mainly by Youssou N'dour, has made people think differently about the Sabar. It is now used as a national identity of Senegal for the outside world. For the Senegalese, the evolution of gender relations is more easily accepted. Male dancers are now tolerated, people seem to ignore the non-masculine nature of their dance and the fact that, traditionally, sabar dancing is considered a women's affair. Money and fame certainly influence the way Senegalese respond to changing gender patterns, but the general feeling that sabar is 'clean' and the popularity of the sabar complex relaxes traditional morals and values. Indeed, the European influences made possible by modern mass media, particularly in the form of cable television, are having a great impact on the way Senegalese dancers present themselves and their performances.

Nevertheless, sabar events remain relatively intimate female domains, even though they take place outside the private bonds of the home and men enter these domains. Female spectators function as a wall around the dance floor where women behave in sexually explicit and provocative ways, against the curious eyes of the outside world. Due to the increased interest in sabar events and

the fact that most sabar events are organised by and for women, these sabar events will probably not disappear, but will only expand from their origin. Sabar has thus become more pluriform.

### **Dakar**

Dakar is wild, hectic, noisy and spectacular. Some love it, others hate it. Certainly, Dakar offers the best playground for sabar dancing. All the big artists have their own nightclubs where they perform live from Monday to Sunday. The streets are full of *baptisms* (naming ceremonies), *weddings* (nuptials) and *tanebers* (niggardly sabars), so there is never a dull moment in Dakar!

Dakar is surrounded by the sea. Recently, a highway was built to connect all the suburban areas to the centre. It is now a much less bumpy road, but the traffic in Dakar is still crazy. So be very careful when crossing the streets, those on wheels have all the power.

The big roads are paved, but the small ones are full of sand. Think carefully about your choice of shoes: Dakar is full of sand! I recommend comfortable but open-toed sandals.

### **Yoff**

We are based in Yoff, the quiet fishermen's district on which Dakar was founded. Up to now, Yoff is mainly inhabited by Lebou, fishermen. Yoff is somewhat traditional and there are still values that are respected and lived. This is one of the reasons why Yoff is one of the calmest neighbourhoods in Dakar. And believe me, this is a good thing. Dakar can drive you crazy with all its noise. Yoff is a few degrees cooler because it is located by the sea and north of the Dakar peninsula and is therefore a very pleasant neighbourhood to live in.

### **Dance (culture)**

Senegal is known for its different ethnic groups with different patterns of dance, movement and drumming. For example, the Diola in the south accompany their dances with different drums than the Pulaar (Peul/Fulani) in the north. We are based in Dakar, the heart of the sabar. Sabar is originally a Wolof dance and culture, and Dakar and its surroundings are still Wolof-dominated areas. Logically, sabar dominates the streets. Djembe dancers might be very disappointed: apart from ballet rehearsals, there are no djembe weddings on the streets of Dakar. Everything revolves around the sabar.

## **PRACTICAL INFORMATION; meal times, courses, accommodation**

For the workshop to be a good, healthy and joyful experience, some structure is needed! These are only basic structures, in which everything is still possible.

### **Power supply**

Breakfast                      from 8.30 a.m., there will be bread.

Lunch (anj)                    2 hours

Dinner(reer)                 8-9 a.m.

(this is our goal, but we cannot guarantee it).

### **Dance classes: from 15.00 to 18.00**

The dance classes take place from Monday to Friday. On weekends we have other activities planned, such as an extra class, the beach, Ngor, the market, sabar events.

### **Drum classes: 11:00 to 13:00**

We can adapt this time to the time that suits all participants and drummers in the morning.

We drum on the beach. This is obviously a sabar drumming class, as it aims to better understand the rhythms we dance to later in the day.

### Going out at night

If you go out every night in Dakar, you won't make it through the first week of the workshop, it's exhausting! No artist performs before 3am. It might be a good idea to take a nap before going to a club, or to stay awake with loud music or a touba coffee!

In the meantime, I'll try to find my way through the complicated and ever-changing schedule of Senegalese artists in Dakar. Who performs or tends to change every fortnight or so. I'll try to schedule some interesting and nice nights (Salam Diallo, hopefully Youssou Ndour, Pape Diouf) to go out on certain nights during this workshop. I can't guarantee anything, especially as sabar events are announced quite unexpectedly (on the day), never start at a time that suits you, and usually don't have a set time when they start. I usually call every 30 minutes to see if the event has already started, and if it has, we make sure we are ready (i.e. fully dressed) to hit the road. A little flexibility is necessary to get somewhere and is part of the Senegalese experience.

### Housing

We rent a flat about 70 meters from the beach, in Yoff Apepsy.

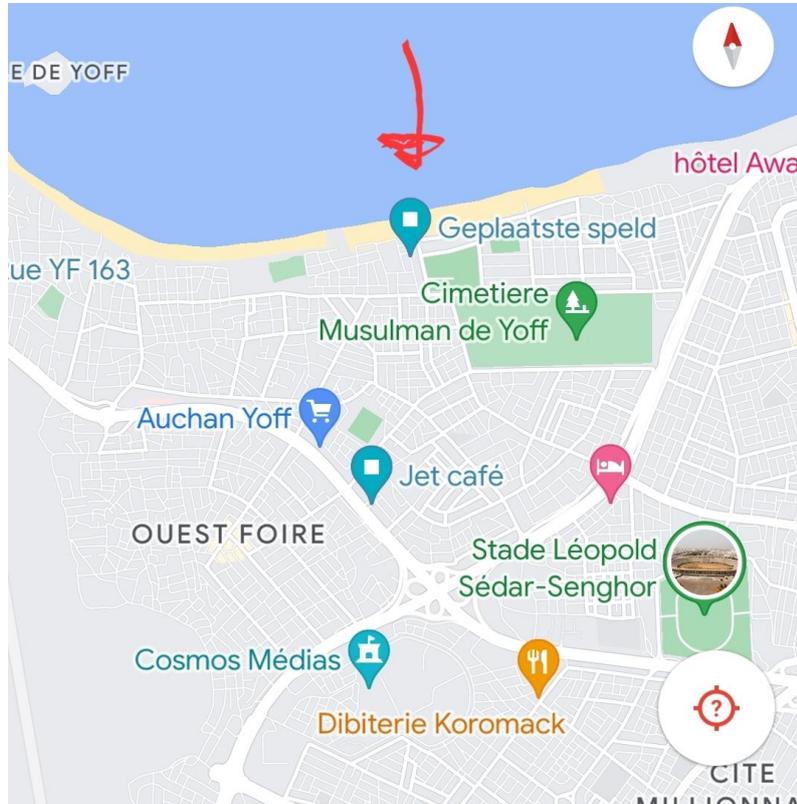
This is the exact location: <https://goo.gl/maps/tfUqtsH6iPwt9StBA>

You will share a room with two or three people.

If this does not suit you, please let me know ([info@sophie-sabar.nl](mailto:info@sophie-sabar.nl) | + 31 6 45078021)

We provide sheets and pillows.

Bring your own towel!



## **Rates :**

The price of this 2-week journey is **€800,-** and includes

### **3 meals a day**

We offer a full but Senegalese breakfast: coffee, tea, milk, sugar, water, bread, jam, cheese (the laughing cow and real Dutch Gouda), chocolate and butter.

In addition, a changing, fresh, Senegalese-style lunch and dinner will be served. You can let us know your preferences for Senegalese food, we try to accommodate your tastes.

We make sure that there is fruit regularly, either as a dessert or in between meals. You can also buy your own fruit and snacks in the shop 10 metres from our flat.

### **Drinks**

We will try to have as many bottles of drinking water as possible for the dance classes and regularly fresh Senegalese fruit juices (bissap, bouye, ginger) will be prepared by the family. I will also regularly stock the fridge with soft drinks. Would you like something else to drink? There's a shop run by Oumar 10 meters from our apartment. He sells everything!

### **Sabar dance classes**

They are part of the programme and therefore included.

### **Sabar drumming course**

They are part of the programme and therefore included.

### **Visit to Ngor**

We will visit the island of Ngor. This trip is offered by us, lunch is at your expense.

### **NOT INCLUDED IN THIS PRICE:**

#### **Taxi from and to AIBD airport to our place of stay in Yoff**

It's on your account! However, I know a good and reliable company that can take you from the airport to Yoff and back for 25,000 f cfa.

#### **Going out for a sabar event or a nightclub.**

It's on your own account. But remember that we will probably all go together, so the taxi will be shared. Entrance fees, drinks and tips are also on your account.

#### **Drinks / tips / lunch during the outdoor event**

For your own account.

#### **DANCE & DRUM classes only**

If you wish to participate in the courses only, without doing the whole programme with us, you are also welcome to do so:

Dance class: 15.000 f cfa - €23 per class

Drum class 10.000 f cfa - €15 per class

## OTHER PRACTICAL INFORMATION TO BETTER DECODE AND PREPARE

### About your clothing:

Senegal is a predominantly Muslim society, so think about what you are going to wear. The country is rapidly evolving into a very modern society and, of course, some girls wear miniskirts, but think about the people around you. Anything from the waist up is considered sexual and therefore inappropriate to show in public. When dancing in a low cut, wear shorts underneath and you will feel much more comfortable.

I personally prefer to show my breasts in a deep neckline than my upper thighs.

### Griots or Guewel in Wolof

The Guewel were once appointed by kings to be their praise singers. They survived the era, as did their sabars, and today they make their living by accompanying singers such as Youssou N'dour or sabar demonstrations in the streets of Dakar. When a Guewel sings for you, you normally give him something in return, as a sign of appreciation and reciprocity.

Try to get rid of your Eurocentric "Africans always ask me for money" view. It is not even about you personally. By entering Sabar circles, you are entering Sabar politics and economics. Try to remember that this is essentially what the Guewel do: they sing the praises of their patrons. Make a decision based on what you think its performance is worth. These days you see a lot of Guewels asking for money before they even perform, I'm sure your instincts tell you exactly when to give something and when not to. When in doubt, ask your guide 😊

### Vaccinations

Check with your doctor or the web to see what precautions you should take.

Hepatitis A, Typhoid, Yellow Fever are strongly recommended.

Malaria is present throughout the year, so please take this into account as well.

### Covid

Senegal has responded impressively to the pandemic. It was one of the first countries where cheap tests were available and used. Thanks to previous experiences, such as Ebola, Senegal responded quickly and concretely to the pandemic. As a result, few deaths and cases have been reported from the early stages until now.

Senegal has fortunately turned the page on covid for some time. Wearing a mask is in some public spaces formally obligatory, but in everyday life you won't see many people wearing them.

Check the rules and regulations of your airline and country for the latest corona restrictions for travel to Senegal. They may vary from country to country.

### Airline tickets

I'm not sure which websites are useful outside Holland, but I guess you should always check with the airlines. The following airlines fly to Dakar: Iberia, KLM/Air France, TAP Air, Turkish Airlines, Air Europa. I usually check [www.skyscanner.com](http://www.skyscanner.com) to see all the airlines at once.

### Blaise Diagne International Airport.

This new airport is a huge improvement on the old LSS airport, but it is very far away. You will most likely arrive at the new airport in the evening or at night, about 45 minutes from Dakar. It is much less of a hassle than the old airport, but it is a long way to Dakar. A taxi to Yoff should cost about 25,000 CFA (€40). We may be able to arrange a pick-up for your convenience.

## Some handy things to know

- Senegal has decided to abolish the visa requirement, bravo!
- It can be very hot in Senegal, but not in February. It is cool especially at night. Bring a jacket or jumper or anything else.
- Dakar is made of sand: think of the shoes you bring
- Even though our cooks take every precaution and work in a very hygienic way, your stomach may have to get used to the change of climate and diet. So bring some brewed tea or simple biscuits for the first few days.
- Dancing on the beach is hard on your skin. Bring long sleeves, a sun hat, sunscreen and sunglasses to protect yourself.
- Our meals are fresh and delicious However, vegetarians are not so lucky: there are hardly any vegetarian dishes. Vegetarians can eat around meat or fish and eat the vegetables with rice.
- In Africa, people eat with their right hand. The left hand is used to go to the toilet. Do not embarrass yourself or the people you are eating with, and never use your left hand to touch the food.
- In most toilets you will only find water to clean yourself. It takes a while, but you will get used to it. You can buy toilet paper in the local shop.
- Sabar is hectic and noisy, bring earplugs to sabar programmes! On days when you want to get a good night's sleep, please bring earplugs to protect you from the muezzin (the early morning call to prayer), shouting neighbours, tamas and goats.
- There are mosquitoes all year round, so protect yourself: long sleeves at night, spray and anti-malaria pills. You don't want to take any risks!
- Senegal is a Muslim society. This means that from every corner 5 times a day the call to prayer. Therefore: earplugs!
- Good to know: the artists start performing at 3 o'clock in the night. You may have to drink a lot of attaya (strong Senegalese tea) to stay awake!
- On Fridays, shops may be closed between noon and 3pm.
- You can now withdraw money from all banks in Dakar, but many ATMs are often out of order. Withdraw before you reach your last 10.000 f cfa. You can change euros with us at the current rate of 1 € = 650f cfa.
- You can buy a very nice outfit to wear for a taneber or a party. In the market you can buy a fabric and I can take you to my tailor to make you what you want. Think about what you would like to have made. Look in the streets for inspiration! We are going to visit the HLM market and my wonderful tailor.
- You can buy a local SIM card. It is quite cheap and convenient to have a local number.
- Internet: There is wifi in most bars/restaurants and you can get internet packages with your local sim card.
- Dancing can cause a lot of blisters and pain. Bring tape and other things to heal your poor feet. They work very hard in Dakar!
- Dakar is a very fashionable city with very fashionable people. When you go out, wear your make-up and bling with pride: this is Dakar where people are used to showing off and looking good for any event (even shopping). And don't forget that you will always be underdressed, even if you feel like a drag queen. Enjoy it!
- French is the national language, but in practice you will find that most people speak Wolof to each other and to you. There are a few online sources and applications for learning Wolof, and I'll bring some pocket books to practice.

## Checklist

- Passport and copies scattered in your luggage
- Covid QR code / proof of vaccination or negative test result.
- Yellow fever passport with vaccinations (just in case)
- Money, credit card, insurance cards, current account card
- Small backpack for the day
- Sunglasses
- Sun hat
- Sunscreen
- Swimsuit/bikini
- Earplugs!
- Towel and/or loincloth for the beach and for the shower
- Medication/travel kit/mosquito gel
- Mosquito net (just in case, although there are very few mosquitoes at this time of year)
- Sweater/sleeves for the evenings, it can be cool in February, I'm not exaggerating!
- For dance classes: long sleeves, tape for your feet, something to disinfect when you are injured, talking powder (you never know).
- For drumming lessons: something to cover you from the hot sun: a sun hat, a shawl to cover your shoulders,
- To go out: tops, high heels, skinny jeans, shiny leggings, big earrings, make-up.
- Flip-flops for the beach and the shower

We are looking forward to sharing a great time in Dakar.

Sophie and Mbaye

This is our team in Dakar:

