

Blog Posts - Senegal

Joseph Elliott

Saturday June 24, 2017 ARRIVAL IN DAKAR: After all the pre-departure training and activities, we finally boarded the plane at Dulles. A very nice flight to Brussels but I felt confined in the space we were forced to remain in during our overlay there. Once boarding our flight to Dakar, I found it impossible to sleep. Perhaps I was excited and did not want to miss the first sighting of the continent. FINALLY it came! Looking down on the tan colored earth, I was moved with emotions. Thinking of the minor discomforts of the overlay, I was reminded of how my ancestors did not have any of the luxuries I had experienced. No for them the trip from Africa was tortuous to say the least. I was overwhelmed as my eyes embraced the vision of the MOTHER LAND. I was so thankful for this once in a lifetime opportunity to come, learn and share about Senegal.

Monday June 26, 2017: Today is my birthday and for the first time in my life I technically became older before my identical twin brother who was born five minutes before me. The four hour difference in time made this possible. Today we did a walking tour of the neighborhood. This was really nice because we all got to see how regular people live, how they responded to our greetings and how they would look at us..... obviously perceiving us as tourist. While walking the neighborhood we were challenged with negotiating traffic, animals and people. Dakar is a VERY busy city. Unlike U.S. cities where we may pass by dogs or cats, here we find goats, horses, dogs and cats working or relaxing in the shade. I am most impressed by the variety of clothing styles and colors. From the traditional attire to mixed contemporary. This is a place where people really do pay attention to how they dress. French designers have indeed made their mark. As we toured, I also found it very interesting how one of my colleagues received a lot of attention from the male population. It was as if I were walking with Beyonce' or some other famous female celebrity.

Thursday June 29, 2017 Today we arrived in St. Louis after little more than a four hour drive from Dakar. When entering this city, one thing struck me more than anything else. Along both sides of the very crowded streets, as far as the eye could see, Islamic men had assembled for prayer. Each man facing the east, in nearly perfect military precision, bowed at the exact same time and kneeled in the exact same way. The discipline of these men is seriously impressive. In this particular city, it just seemed as if there were more men than women. I later found out that a lot of the women were at home while the men prayed as it is the duty of the men to do so. Once again I was amazed at the bright colors and brilliant white of the garments worn by the people. In spite of wearing mostly sandals on dusty streets. In fact I have never seen colors like this before in my life.... perhaps the African sun shines brighter. We also discovered that this being a place where fishing is the primary industry, men try to have as many sons as possible. I think the guide told us some may have as many as eighteen sons.