

Visiting Toubab Dialaw

By Badiyyah Waajid



Approximately 45 km (miles) from Dakar is the fishing village of Toubab Dialaw, and within, the Sobo Bade -a lodge-meets-cultural centre (www.bradtguides.com). What a treat! Artists of all types are in residence here in Soba Bade and we had the opportunity to learn drumming, dancing and batiking from the best. My room which was cliffside on the ocean's edge in a building adorned with archways of sea shells.

The food was fantastic and is the one place in Senegal where I had the least problem being vegetarian. That, perhaps is because of the bohemian aura of Soba Bade. To my surprise the meals were not only filling, but exquisitely prepared. There were various deliciously prepared vegetarian options and I thoroughly enjoyed each and everyone.

After checking into my room, my first inclination was to take a refreshing walk on the water's edge. I found that I was actually on a cliff looking down at the sand and water. With each step from the top of that cliff to the beach, the smell of water and sounds of the water became more vivid. Magnificent! Finally reaching the beach--such peace communing with this environment. It seemed that this was a type of play ground for the children who jumped from the rocks and swam in the waves. I was

then joined by one of the locals who talked about the joys of living in the area and of the evening event opened to all who were interested in sitting around a fire listening to drumming and socializing. My group and I were invited to attend.

After spending time on the beach, I retreated to the outdoor lounge; reclining in a lounge chair overlooking the cliff, enjoying a fruit drink topped with a slice of pineapple. But now, it was time for our groups drumming lessons. I had really been looking forward to this opportunity to learn from drumming and dancing artists in residents, here at Toubab Dialaw. I have two djembe drums at home but art of playing has always escaped me and this was a long-awaited opportunity! The djembe drum and I found one another as this is my drum of choice. The lead drummer was our instructor and his strategy for teaching was effective. In no time, our small group accompanied the professionals in making beautiful rhythmic music. It felt as if my hands were moving on their own. It had to be the magic of Sobo Bade! Just as I decided that I could do this all night, it was time to move to the dancing class.

Having observed the agility and flexibility of Senegalese dancers, I was somewhat hesitant to participate in this class. To my surprise, however, the dance instructor was patient, prepared, and experienced in encouraging non-dancers. In addition to making the lesson fun, he ensured that we could successfully complete a dance. Fantastic! Immediate gratification!

Now it was time to learn batik techniques. Arriving slightly later than the others because I could not pull myself away from dancing, I quickly found my place at the table and began to follow directions for batik. I was instructed to first draw designs on the fabric using a pencil and wooden stencils, to be followed by applying hot melted wax to the design. The wax would dry quickly, after which I would dye the entire piece of fabric—leaving it to dry overnight. Upon returning the next morning I was extremely pleased to see my yellow dyed creation!

That night, from my sea-view room as I fell asleep under the mosquito net, listening to the drums as I fell asleep. I decided that I must definitely return to Sobo Bade and Toubab Dialaw.

Learn more about [Toubab Dialaw](#).