

**Fulbright Hays GPA Senegal
Week Three**

Toubab Dialaw

July 14-15, 2017

This weekend excursion from the hustle and bustle of Dakar and the rigor of daily Wolof lessons was just the break needed. One of many small fishing villages dotting the coast of Senegal, Toubab Dialaw was about an hour's drive from the city. We stayed at the Sobo Bade, a resort located in the middle of town and right along the Atlantic. The closeness of the ocean and its rhythmic roar as waves pushed their way to the rocks below our room had a calming effect both day and night.

Sobo Bade, created by the Haitian artist Gérard Chenet, who had lived for decades in Dakar, was established as an artists' retreat that continues to attract international artists as well as tourists. The architecture throughout is stunning, and we explore the spaces where artists create their magic. It is probably best known as the home of the Jant-Bi Dance Company, founded by the internationally acclaimed Senegalese dancer and choreographer Germain Acogny, regarded as the "mother of African dance." Sobo Bade also serves as a temporary home to a number of artists in residence who come and go. We were fortunate to meet one of the Batik artists and visit his gallery as our own primitive batiks dried in the warm afternoon.

We had a chance both to witness and participate in the traditional art of batik and watch the step by step process that gives birth to some of the beautiful designs that we see across Senegal. A few of the daring participate in the dance sessions, learning traditional dances taught by a patient young area dancer and his assistants. Later we move onto the drumming class and test our memory and rhythms on some of the drums. The class is full of excitement and laughter as we catch on, mess up, or fake it! I gain a new level of respect for all of the artists who are clearly dedicated to keeping Senegal's art traditions alive—working in tandem with nature's rhythms, colors, and spiritual essence.

