

# Silk Steps

EXPLORE AND EXPERIENCE



## Mali

*Known as the jewel in the crown of West Africa, Mali is one of the most culturally rich and diverse countries in Africa. It is a nation of unusual interest and charm that is intimately linked to a great river, the Niger. It is also home to some of the continent's greatest cultural sites; the legendary Timbuktu, the dramatic Bandiagara escarpment and the fascinating Dogon culture.*

Mali also has a distinctive musical tradition that has achieved worldwide fame and each year the celebrated 'Festival au Desert' attracts world music fans to the small town of Essakane, on the edge of the Sahara.

### WEATHER

The best time to visit Mali is from October to February, during the cool, dry season. The rainy season is from June to September and during this time travel can be difficult, but the countryside is lush and green and the rivers are high. The 'harmattan', a dry dust laden north-easterly wind combining high temperatures and very low humidity blows during the winter months.



### WHEN IN MALI WHY NOT...?

**Visit a music club in Bamako** Music from Mali is known around the world and many of West Africa's finest musicians come from Mali. Check out one of the music clubs where you can boogie to those hypnotic rhythms.

**Travel by boat along the Niger River** The river is a hive of activity as it is the lifeline of Mali. Spend a few hours travelling by dugout pirogue or motorised pinnasse (large canoes) passing fishing villages, markets and the wildlife along the marshy shores.

**Trek into the Dogon hinterland** Spend time getting to know the Dogon by trekking through villages whose traditional way of life is fiercely protected by its people. Discover their distinctive architecture, ancient Telem cave dwellings and witness a spectacular Dogon mask dance (if taking place).

**Attend the Festival of the Desert, Mali's version of Glastonbury** You can be sure that you won't get caked in mud at the Festival of the Desert, a music fest attended by the great musicians from across West Africa as well some well-known Western musicians. Located at the settlement of Essakane, reached by 4WD across 100km of desert, you will camp alongside Tuareg nomads and their camels for this most atmospheric of festivals in January.



# Suggested Itinerary

Nights stay at:

1	Bamako
2	Mopti
3	Timbuktu
4	Timbuktu
5	Dogon Country
6	Dogon Country
7	Djenne
8	Bamako

Silk Steps is delighted to bring you their new adventure programme to Mali, an intriguing destination where tourism is still in its infancy. Here you will discover nomadic Tuareg people and the tribal Dogon, lively market towns, the delightful scenery along the Niger River and the rhythms of African music.

## HIGHLIGHTS OF MALI

This 9-day itinerary starts in Bamako for one night, the capital city which is small and easy to explore on your own, before setting out for Mopti, a popular and lively market town, located on the Niger River. The river is a lifeline for Mali as locals use it as their main means of getting around, to transport goods, for fishing, drinking water and for irrigating crops. Many of the traders that make their way to Mopti are from several ethnic groups selling spices, smoked fish, vegetables, blocks of salt, traditional wood carvings and colourful cloth.

Timbuktu is one of the most evocative names known to us and it really does exist! Once a major trading post where trans-Saharan caravans from the north exchanged salt for gold and slaves from the south, you will spend two nights here discovering the Djinguereber Mosque, the explorers' house, the artisans' centre and the colourful market. Join a camel caravan for an afternoon and ride across the Sahara Desert to a Tuareg encampment. Then you will enter Dogon Country where life has remained pretty much unchanged for centuries and the Dogon still practice their traditional beliefs, such

as mask dances performed at the end of the mourning period. Spend two nights on the Bandiagara Escarpment with these extraordinary, independent people and discover a little of their way of life.

Djenne is a must see in Mali with its huge mud-built 18<sup>th</sup> century Grand Mosque, a World Heritage Site, and the town, with narrow, winding streets lined with mud-brick houses little touched by the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Thousands are drawn to its weekly market to trade their goods dressed in their distinct colourful robes. Time will be spent in Segou, Mali's laid-back colonial administrative centre before returning to Bamako, home to the fetish market for traditional medicine where there will also be time to visit the excellent National Museum.

We suggest that you start the tour on a Tuesday from Bamako so that you can visit the colourful market in Djenne on a Monday.

### Cost per person

(based on two people travelling in a twin/double room)

**FROM £1,670**



# Hotel Selection

The hotels detailed below are recommendations only. We can book most hotels throughout Mali, so please contact us if you would like alternative hotels.

## Bamako

The **Sofitel** is a modern 16-storey hotel centrally situated alongside the Niger River and the National Museum of Mali. The guestrooms feature African influenced contemporary décor and open on to balconies with river and pool views.

The **Grand Hotel** offers a comfortable haven in downtown Bamako. A superior hotel that was renovated in 2004 and offers 77 renovated rooms that are spacious and equipped with modern facilities.

## Mopti

The **Kanaga Hotel** is a clean and quite modern hotel located just a few yards from the banks of the Niger River. The hotel offers a swimming pool and restaurant, with an opportunity to dine outside.

## Timbuktu

The **Hotel Hedrina Khan** is a new hotel located 30 minutes walk from the old town of Timbuktu. The hotel offers clean and simple rooms and an open-air restaurant.

## Sanga

**Hotel Campement** is a well run simple hotel with 36 rooms, all of which are equipped with mosquito nets and private showers. The restaurant offers set meals and a pleasant outdoor seating area.

## Segou

Located in the heart of Segou Town, the **Hotel LAuberge** is a French colonial style hotel offering 30 rooms with private facilities. There is an attractive garden and a swimming pool.



### A Silk Steps inclusive holiday price includes:

- Private return transfers between airports and hotels (unless otherwise specified)
- The services of English speaking guides and representatives at each stage of the tour. Between most places you will travel unescorted
- Accommodation in a standard room (shared twin) with private facilities (unless otherwise specified) with breakfast
- Government taxes and compulsory service charges
- All tours and sightseeing as specified, inclusive of entrance fees
- Economy class air travel within all countries on the scheduled services of the national or domestic carrier as specified in each tour
- The services of our local representative

### Extras

- International flights - please contact us for up-to-date prices
- Travel insurance
- Meals - unless otherwise stated
- Optional sightseeing other than specified
- International airport departure tax payable overseas
- Visa fees
- Single supplement (on request)