

Overview of Burkina Faso

Its name meaning 'land of the upright men', Burkina Faso is a country of 60 different ethnicities and a diverse blend of cultures and traditions. Landlocked and bordered by Mali, Niger, Benin, Togo, Ghana, and Cote d'Ivoire, the destination has a surprising number of attractions, despite the fact that very few tourists ever visit. The capital, Ouagadougou, is a welcoming city with excellent restaurants and entertainment options.

The most interesting place to visit is Bobo Dioulasso, known throughout West Africa for its music and nightlife and as the home of the djembe drum. The city's atmospheric Old Quarter and Grande Mosque are also well worth seeing. Another city, Gorom Gorom, is known for its Thursday market and for the Feminine Artisan Centre of Gorom, where the local women demonstrate their skill in art, sculpture, and pottery. Other sites that are sure to capture a visitor's imagination include the granite-sculpting artists of Laongo, the sacred crocodiles of Sabou, the mausoleum commemorating Princess Guimbi Ouattara, and the natural waterfall of Banfora.

Getting around Burkina Faso entails roughing it a bit, as infrastructure remains underdeveloped, but the adventure and scenery are compensation enough for the inconvenience of potholed roads and lack of basic facilities. There is a train service running from Ouagadougou to the other main towns, but flying is invariably the quickest travel option within the country. Travellers looking for a varied slice of West African life will have many incentives to find their way around.

Key Facts

Language:

About 69 languages are spoken in Burkina Faso, but the official language is French.

Passport/Visa:

It is recommended that all travellers ensure their passports have six months validity remaining. Tourist are required to have proof of sufficient funds for stay and a ticket for onward travel.

Currency:

The West African CFA franc (XOF) is the official currency of Burkina Faso. It is technically divided into 100 smaller units called centimes, but no centime denominations have been issued. Burkina Faso is largely a cash economy and credit cards are seldom accepted, but cash can be withdrawn with a card at certain banks in the big cities. Banks that will change money for travellers include Banque Internationale du Burkina (BIB), Ecobank and Banque Internationale pour le Commerce, l'Industrie et l'Agriculture du Burkina (Biciab).

Electricity:

Electrical outlets in Burkina Faso usually supply electricity at between 220 and 240 volts, 50Hz. European two-pin plugs with round pins are standard.

Travel to Burkina Faso

Climate in Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso's varied climate is tropical in some regions and semi-arid in others, and the country has two very distinct seasons. The rainy season runs from May to October and is hot and wet; the dry season occurs between November and March, and is warm, comfortable and dry. Burkina Faso is humid year-round, but less so than its coastal neighbours, and the rainy season is much shorter in the north of the country, as the semi-arid Sahel zone (just south of the Sahara Desert) receives far less rain and is prone to drought. The southwestern part of the country is tropical and receives the most rain. The rainy season is the hottest time of the year, and the average high temperature in the capital, Ouagadougou, during May is 93F (34C). Conditions cool down a bit in July, when the average high temperature drops to 82F (28C). The dry season, between November and March, is cooler and more comfortable, and the average high temperature during January is 75F (24C) in the capital. A hot, dry wind from the Sahara, called the harmattan, brings heat and dust between March and May. The best time to visit Burkina Faso is in the dry season, particularly between November and January.

Health Notes when travelling to Burkina Faso

Malaria occurs in Burkina Faso and some form of prophylaxis is recommended for all travellers in all areas of the country. A yellow fever vaccination is required for all visitors who are over the age of nine months. Vaccinations for hepatitis A, hepatitis B, typhoid, and meningococcus are recommended; those who will be spending a lot of time outdoors and are at risk of animal bites should consider a rabies vaccination.

Visitors should also be up to date on vaccinations for polio, MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella), and tetanus-diphtheria; all visitors who are older than 16 should get fully vaccinated for COVID-19. Travellers should drink only bottled or filtered water and avoid ice in drinks; all meals should be eaten while hot and uncooked fruit and vegetables avoided.

Medical facilities are very limited and of poor quality, particularly outside of the capital city, so comprehensive travel insurance is required. In many areas of the country, emergency medical services are non-existent, and the supply of medication is often very limited. Travellers who require specific medications should bring along sufficient supplies, accompanied by a signed and dated note from a doctor detailing what the medications are and why they are needed.

Safety Notes when travelling to Burkina Faso

Visitors are advised to exercise caution and maintain a high level of security, as theft and banditry occur in certain parts of the country. The northern Sahel region is too remote for the local government or foreign embassies to provide much assistance in the event of an emergency, and is considered dangerous, especially near the borders with Mali and Niger. There have been no documented terrorist attacks directed against foreigners in Burkina Faso, but there is often concern that conflict in neighbouring countries may spill over, and some governments, including the British Foreign Office, advise against all but essential travel to the Sahel region. Crime is a problem and incidents of robbery, sexual assault and rape against foreigners have been reported. Most crime, however, is petty, and bag-snatchers, pickpockets and scam artists operate in cities.

Customs in Burkina Faso

Hospitality and politeness are very important, and elders are to be treated with respect. Locals rarely engage in direct conversations, so visitors should stick to general issues as a way to put people at ease. Visitors should also ask permission before photographing local people, and should never attempt to take a picture of a military or government building. Women should dress modestly and keep shoulders and legs fully covered to avoid unwanted attention, and should refrain from smoking in public. Shaking hands is an appropriate way to greet a person regardless of sex; greetings should always be returned. Homosexuality is not generally accepted in Burkina Faso. Eating, touching another person, and giving someone money with the left hand is considered offensive.

Duty Free in Burkina Faso

Visitors to Burkina Faso may import up to 200 cigarettes, or up to 50 cigars, or 250g of tobacco. One bottle of spirits and one bottle of wine are permitted, as are 500ml of eau de toilette and 250ml perfume.

Doing Business in Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso is a poor country that doesn't rank highly for ease of doing business, according to the World Bank. Business etiquette is fairly standard, with lightweight suits or traditional African dress the norm for meetings, and handshakes and business cards exchanged upon greeting. Business hours vary, but most offices are open from 7.30am to noon, and from 3pm to 5.30pm, Monday to Friday. Some shops and businesses are also open on Saturdays from 9am to 1pm.

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By its very nature, information in this travel guide is subject to change at short notice and travellers are urged to verify information on which they're relying with the relevant authorities. Travmarket cannot accept any responsibility for any loss or inconvenience to any person as a result of information contained above. Event details can change. Please check with the organizers that an event is happening before making travel arrangements. We cannot accept any responsibility for any loss or inconvenience to any person as a result of information contained above.

Communication in Burkina Faso

Communications in Burkina Faso are limited, even in major cities, due to the low penetration of electricity. The international access code for Burkina Faso is +226. Landline use is extremely low, but mobile phones are widely used; internet use is low but on the rise.

Tipping in Burkina Faso

A 10 to 15 percent service fee is usually included in restaurant bills, but it is customary to tip taxi drivers, porters, and hotel staff.

Passport/Visa Note

It is recommended that all travellers ensure their passports have six months validity remaining. Tourist are required to have proof of sufficient funds for stay and a ticket for onward travel.

Entry Requirements

Entry requirements for Americans:

A valid US passport and visa are required.

Entry requirements for Canadians:

A valid Canadian passport and visa are required.

Entry requirements for UK nationals:

A valid UK passport and visa are required.

Entry requirements for Australians:

A valid Australian passport and visa are required.

Entry requirements for Irish nationals:

A valid Irish passport and visa are required.

Entry requirements for New Zealanders:

A valid New Zealand passport and visa are required.

Entry requirements for South Africans:

A valid South African passport and visa are required.

Burkina Faso Embassies

In the United States:

Embassy of Burkina Faso, Washington, D.C. United States: +1 202 332 5577

In Canada:

Embassy of Burkina Faso, Ottawa, Canada: +1 613 238 4796

In the United Kingdom:

Burkinese Honorary Consulate General, London, United Kingdom: +44 0 7771 984 680

In South Africa:

Embassy Of Burkina Faso, Pretoria, South Africa: 012 346 6205

Foreign Embassies in Burkina Faso

American Embassy

Embassy of the United States, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso: +226 70 19 19 39

Canadian Embassy

Embassy of Canada, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso: +226 61 36 76 09

British Embassy

British Honorary Consulate in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso: +226 25 30 88 60

Australian Embassy

Embassy of Australia, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso: +225 226 311 894

South African Embassy

Embassy of South Africa, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso: +226 253 760 98

Currency

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Overview of the Attractions in Burkina Faso

Public Holidays in Burkina Faso

	2020	2021
Revolution Day	Wed. January 3	Wed. January 3
Women's Day	Fri. March 8	Fri. March 8
Easter Monday	Sat. April 13	Fri. April 5
Labour Day	Wed. May 1	Wed. May 1
Ascension Day	Tue. May 21	Mon. May 13
Eid al-Fitr (End of Ramadan)	Fri. May 24	Mon. May 13
Independence Day	Mon. August 5	Mon. August 5
Assumption	Thu. August 15	Thu. August 15
Tabaski (Feast of the Sacrifice)	Wed. July 31	Sat. July 20
All Saints' Day	Fri. November 1	Fri. November 1
Proclamation of Independence	Wed. December 11	Wed. December 11
Christmas Day	Wed. December 25	Wed. December 25
Birth of the Prophet	Tue. October 29	Sat. October 19
New Years Day	Mon. January 1	Mon. January 1