

AFRICA · CULTURE · ARCHITECTURE · OFF THE BEATEN PATH



Burkina Faso

Patience in Burkina Faso is repaid by the painted Kassena compounds of Tiébélé, the wind-carved sandstone needles of the Sindou Peaks and Ouagadougou's FESPACO, Africa's biggest film festival. Live music, millet beer and sociable street-side maquis make up for thin tourist infrastructure. Read the FCDO travel advice before planning anything.

**The UK Foreign Office (FCDO) advises against all travel to Burkina Faso.**
Read the latest FCDO travel advice before planning a trip. Your travel insurance may be invalid if you travel against FCDO advice.
FCDO advice last updated 10 December 2025.

 CAPITAL Ouagadougou	 CURRENCY West African CFA franc (XOF) £1 ≈ FCFA 781	 LANGUAGE Mooré, French Dioula, Fulfulde	 BEST TIME Nov–Feb
 DAILY BUDGET £30–£140 ££ Moderate	 PLUGS Type C, E 220V · adapter needed	 FLIGHT FROM LONDON 9h 30m via Paris or Istanbul ~£600–£1,000 return	 TIME ZONE UTC+0 standard time

Burkina Faso, the former Upper Volta, was renamed by Thomas Sankara in 1984; the name joins Mooré and Dioula words and is usually translated as 'land of upright people'. It has no blockbuster sights, but its culture is unusually rich: masks, griot music, mud-built Sudano-Sahelian mosques and the geometric painted houses of the Kassena in the south. The classic route ran west from Ouagadougou to Bobo-Dioulasso, then on to Banfora's waterfalls and the Sindou Peaks, with a detour south to Tiébélé near the Ghanaian border. Before planning any of it, check the FCDO travel advice, which sets out the areas it advises against visiting.

Travel here is slow, hot and sociable. Long greetings matter, French gets you through officialdom, and evenings revolve around grilled chicken, cold Brakina beer or millet dolo and live music in open-air maquis. Costs are low, but comfortable hotels are scarce outside Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso, and the heat from March to May is punishing. It suits travellers who care more about music, crafts and conversation than ticking off monuments, and who are happy to keep plans flexible. Many visitors are surprised by Ouagadougou's film culture, its craft markets and the warmth of the welcome in a country that sees few tourists.

Top 5 highlights

1

ARCHITECTURE

Painted houses of Tiébélé

The royal court of the Kassena at Tiébélé is a cluster of mud houses decorated by women with geometric red, black and white designs, renewed before the rains. A guide from the community leads visits and explains the symbols.

2

NATURE

Sindou Peaks

A ridge of wind-sculpted sandstone needles and domes running for kilometres above the plain near Sindou in the far south-west. Local guides lead walks among the formations, best in the cooler early morning.

3

SACRED SITE

Grand Mosque of Bobo-Dioulasso

Built in the late 19th century of mud brick over a timber frame, its conical towers bristle with the wooden struts used for regular replastering. Local guides show visitors round, and non-Muslims can usually enter outside prayer times.

4

NATURE

Karfiguéla Falls and the Fabédougou Domes

Near Banfora, a series of cascades tumbles over rock shelves into pools, while the nearby Dômes de Fabédougou are a cluster of eroded rock domes. Lake Tengréla, with its hippos, is close by too.

5

HISTORY

Ruins of Loropéni

Burkina's first UNESCO World Heritage Site: laterite stone walls up to 6 m high enclosing a ruined settlement linked to the trans-Saharan gold trade, at least 1,000 years old and at its height between the 14th and 17th centuries.

Biggest cities

LARGEST CITY

Ouagadougou

≈ 2.8 million people

Sprawling and low-rise, 'Ouaga' is best for its culture: the national museum, artisans at the Village Artisanal, live music bars and, in odd-numbered years, FESPACO screenings across town.

2ND LARGEST CITY

Bobo-Dioulasso

≈ 1 million people

Burkina's second city is greener and more relaxed, with a famous mud-brick Grand Mosque, the old Dioulassoba quarter and a strong musical tradition of balafon and djembe.

3RD LARGEST CITY

Koudougou

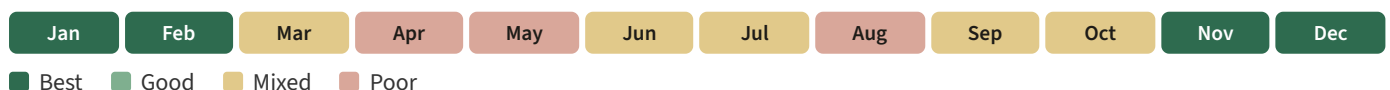
≈ 170,000 people

The third city is a university and market town on the road west of Ouagadougou, once home to the national Faso Fani textile mill; few visitors stay more than a night.

Ranked by urban-area population where available. Figures are rounded estimates, and sources define city limits differently, so rankings of similar-sized cities can vary.

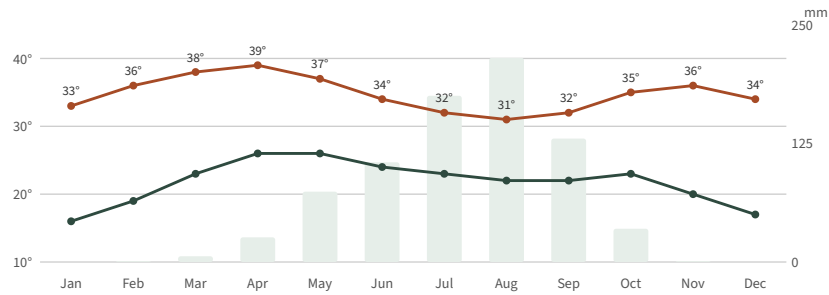
When to go to Burkina Faso

Best time: **Nov-Feb.**



Average climate in Ouagadougou

— High °C — Low °C — Rain (mm)



Festivals & events

Feb–Mar

FESPACO

The Panafrican Film and Television Festival of Ouagadougou, founded in 1969 and now held in odd-numbered years, fills the city's cinemas for a week as African films compete for the Golden Stallion of Yennenga.

Oct–Nov

SIAO

The International Arts and Crafts Fair of Ouagadougou, held in even-numbered years, brings together artisans from across Africa selling bronzes, textiles, leatherwork and carvings.

How much does Burkina Faso cost?

SHOESTRING

£30

per person / day

≈ FCFA 23,424

hostels, street food, buses

MID-RANGE

£65

per person / day

≈ FCFA 50,753

3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis

COMFORTABLE

£140

per person / day

≈ FCFA 109,313

4-star+, guided trips, private transfers

Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

Food to try

Riz gras

Rice simmered in a tomato, onion and oil-rich meat stock, often topped with chicken or beef; a festive favourite and an everyday plate at roadside eateries.

Tô

A stiff porridge of millet, sorghum or maize, eaten by hand with okra, baobab-leaf or peanut sauce; the country's true daily staple.

Poulet bicyclette

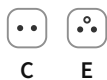
Lean, free-range 'bicycle chicken', said to be named after the bikes that carry it to market, grilled or braised and eaten with fries or attiéké at maquis.

Getting around

Air-conditioned coaches run by companies such as STMB, TCV and Rakieta link Ouagadougou with Bobo-Dioulasso in around five to six hours, each leaving from its own depot. Bush taxis and minibuses cover smaller towns. In cities, shared green taxis and swarms of mopeds dominate; hiring a car with a driver is the comfortable option. Check the FCDO advice on road travel before any journey outside the capital.

Practical information

PLUGS & VOLTAGE



220V — bring a UK-to-C/E adapter

DIALLING CODE

+226

TAP WATER

Not safe — drink bottled or treated water

TIPPING

Not expected at maquis or street stalls; leave 5–10% in better restaurants and tip guides and drivers a few thousand CFA.

ETIQUETTE

Greet everyone before any business and ask after family and health. Use your right hand to eat and pass things, and ask before photographing people, markets or anything official.

MAIN AIRPORTS

Thomas Sankara International Airport Ouagadougou (OUA), Ouagadougou

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Ambulance: **18**

Fire: **18**

Police: **17**

Source: FCDO “Getting help”

TIME ZONE

UTC+0 (standard time)

DRIVING

On the right

Visas & entry for Burkina Faso

Shown for a British passport.

Visa required — apply before you go

You must have a visa to enter Burkina Faso.

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

Health & vaccinations



See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

Hepatitis A Tetanus Typhoid Yellow fever

SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

Chikungunya Dengue Hepatitis B Measles Meningococcal disease Rabies Tuberculosis

YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

A yellow fever vaccination certificate is required for all travellers (usually over 9 months or 1 year old). There is a risk of yellow fever in parts of the country — vaccination may be advised.

MALARIA

High risk of malaria

- There is a high risk of malaria in Burkina Faso: antimalarial tablets recommended.
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Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

Public holidays in Burkina Faso

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

Sat 31 Oct 2026	Martyrs' Day
Sun 1 Nov 2026	All Saints' Day
Mon 2 Nov 2026	All Saints' Day (observed)
Fri 11 Dec 2026	Proclamation of Independence Day
Fri 25 Dec 2026	Christmas Day
Fri 1 Jan 2027	New Year's Day
Sun 3 Jan 2027	Revolution Day
Mon 4 Jan 2027	Revolution Day (observed)
Mon 8 Mar 2027	International Women's Day
Tue 9 Mar 2027	Eid al-Fitr (date may shift)
Mon 29 Mar 2027	Easter Monday
Sat 1 May 2027	Labour Day
Thu 6 May 2027	Ascension Day
Sun 16 May 2027	Eid al-Adha (date may shift)
Thu 5 Aug 2027	Independence Day
Sat 14 Aug 2027	Prophet's Birthday (date may shift)
Sun 15 Aug 2027	Assumption Day
Mon 16 Aug 2027	Assumption Day (observed)

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

Useful phrases in French

ENGLISH	FRENCH	SAY IT
Hello	Bonjour	bon-ZHOOR
Thank you	Merci	mair-SEE
Please	S'il vous plaît	seel voo PLAY
Excuse me	Excusez-moi	ex-KOO-zay MWAH
How much is this?	C'est combien ?	say kom-BYAN

Know before you go

Read the FCDO travel advice before booking and again before every road journey; it lists the areas it advises against visiting, and most travel insurers follow it.

The CFA franc is pegged to the euro, so euros are the easiest currency to exchange; ATMs in Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso take Visa more reliably than Mastercard.

Photographing government buildings, military sites, bridges and airports is forbidden. Always ask before photographing people; a polite request after a proper greeting usually goes down well.

Visa, health and safety rules change. Before you book or travel, check the FCDO travel advice (gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) and TravelHealthPro (travelhealthpro.org.uk). Costs are estimates. © 2026 Pick My Trip.