

12/30/05 - Debby: Our Wild Ride to the Internet

It's our first day here in Dakar and we know our first priority is to get connected to the Internet so we can send our news back to the folks at home. Right after breakfast, Massamba sent his friend, Boubacar, to drive Bob, Jean, and I down to Sonatel, the biggest Internet company in Senegal.

The ride though Dakar was such a rich treat! We saw new construction EVERYWHERE: houses, hotels, and shops. The architecture and design is beautiful! They all seem to be made from cinder blocks and we saw people making those from the sand near the beach (Dakar runs right along the ocean). There were many, many cars (but no big vans), trucks, buses painted artistically with symbols which were mostly religious, and horse buggies, all traveling the roads together.

On the side of the road we saw flocks of goats or sheep many times. We found out that these were for Tabaski, a Muslim holiday of thankfulness on January 10th, and the goats were to be part of the celebration and feast. A couple times we saw long-horned cattle and one time we had to stop and wait while they crossed the road. The Dunya radio station really stood out because the front of the building was covered with a beautiful mural depicting a lion (symbol of Senegal) roaring into a microphone and a man holding up the world. Vegetable stalls were evident on the sidewalks until we got to the really exclusive part of town. The women everywhere were dressed in brightly colored dresses, often with matching decorative scarves. Massamba says they are worn for religious reasons as well as for beauty. People were out strolling all over town. That reminded me of Rome.

We saw numerous telephone boutiques and Internet cafes (many folks don't have their own telephones or computers). We saw one dentist's office, but we didn't see any doctor's offices. Maybe they prefer not to be near the main roads. There were kids playing soccer - they call it football - on every spare piece of open land, and we passed a big, beautiful new stadium that was just built in 2002 and named for the first president of Senegal, Léopold Sédhar Senghor.

Oh yes, we saw baobab trees all along the road. I had some juice from the baobab tree tonight. I can't explain the taste - you'd have to see me face after I drank it.

When we got to Sonatel, we found it all decorated for Christmas; Joyeaux Noel signs were on the window, lights hanging from the ceiling, and a big decorated tree in the corner. We found this most amazing as it was the only sign of Christianity we saw anywhere. The country is 99% Muslim after all. It took three hours to sign up for the net because we had to find someone who could speak English, understand what we needed, and set up the account and our PC's and Macs. We tested everything there and it worked! Yippee! It's only a dial-up connection, there's no DSL or cable in Toubab Dialaw where we'll be staying, so news could be a little slow in coming. I hope you'll all be patient with us.

Update, 12-29-05

We have about 345 pictures to send you and several journals, but we tried a day to find the owner so we could access her office. That is where we have to go to connect to our dial-up service. She was "unavailable" today. Then we found an Internet café in Toubab Dialow. They were only able to connect one of us at a time with dial-up, so I only got to put 2 files on.

Update, 12-30-05

I'm on!! It's 12:07 pm, but I'm on. I'll get a couple more changes on tonight. I'm planning to work all day tomorrow catching up on processing pictures and making sense of all the marvelous files and pictures we have. Tomorrow night, I should be able to upload lots of goodies.