

## 1.2.05 - Debby's Journal, Odds and Ends, Thoughts and Observations

Senegal magic - whenever we're in need of anything around here, folks always turn up right at the minute to help us. For example, I was uploading the other night until 2:00 am and when I came out it was dark and much too quiet. A man named Savar showed up with a flashlight just as I was coming out the door and walked me to my building. He was there the other night, too, when I walked into my room and found one of the cats around here had climbed in my window and was sleeping in my bed. We're not supposed to touch them because they're wild, so I wasn't sure what to do, but just at that minute there was Savar. This kind of thing is happening between our group, too. For example, we might forget someone's name that we need for our journal, and in right at that minute in walks Kim who has a memory like a steel trip and has it for us every time.

The stars are GORGEOUS here. There's so many and they are SO bright. We can see the Milky Way really clearly. It's like having natural fireworks every night. Why? There's hardly any light pollution in Toubab Diallow. Dakar's sky is about the same as home.

All the people here are so friendly. Everyone greets you with a "C'est va?" and a handshake and often start a conversation as you walk by. It often takes 20 minutes to walk across to the restaurant because we want to talk to our new friends on the way.

African time is very open. Most people don't wear watches, they just gauge the time by saying after lunch, or before sunset, and that sort of thing. Also, if we have set a certain time for a lesson, the teacher could very well get delayed during their drive here. Their car may break down, they may get caught waiting for a herd of cattle or goats to cross the road - that sort of thing.

Massamba Diop is the best host in the world. He takes such good care of us and has brought many of his friends to show us around and to teach us music and dance.

The running water works almost all the time here, but they have an old-fashioned well, too, just in case. Yes, it's just cold - no hot showers, but it never gets cold, so that's OK. It's been between 82 - 90 during the day and between 68 - 75 at night. The electricity has worked 95% of the time, but does go out at awkward time, like in the middle of dinner tonight. You can't eat what you can't see!

We've had 2 folks get really sick for a couple days, and several with minor stomach problems. I think we're all well today. There's some fun skin rashes going around, too. It's either bites or reaction to the ocean or the soap, etc.

It's really hard to keep clean here. I think it's the dust mixed with the sand that stirred up when we walk and then gets into our hair and under our nails.

Many people here have cell phones. A couple times during lessons, our teachers have had to answer their phones. One had a Bach Minuet for his ring. Too funny! We understand because they are all famous and gifted musicians and have to keep in touch with their people about recording sessions and shows.

Sobobade is the most lively place we've ever stayed in, yet the most tranquil place, too. It's a wonderful combination.

Folks here live big. They laugh a lot, but at the same time tell each other exactly how they feel if something bothers them. The women and men dance big and drum big and with glowing confidence. New Year's Eve some of us went into Dakar to see Baaba Maal and some of us stayed back here in Sobobade. They had a show here that was as good as any African dance show I've ever seen. At midnight, everyone filed out and danced in the streets. A few of us went down to the ocean and threw white flowers in to the sea to send our wishes for the world.

We're all having constant bad hair days so don't laugh when you see us in the pictures. I think it's the sea air more than anything, but it does take courage to wash your hair in cold water, so it gets done a little less often than at home.

Last night I saw Modou and N'Diaw, 2 friends from our last trip in 1998. We all recognized each other and there was much hugging and catching up to do.

We went to the pizza place and they were out of pizza.

Did you know that the French keyboard is different from our keyboards?! For example, the "a" and "q" keys are switched. No "querty" keyboards here. The Sobobade architect and half owner just got back from New York yesterday with a brand new platinum Apple iBook. He's been a PC man until now and needed some help setting it up and I was so happy to help the man who created this beautiful place. We got everything going, and I learned a lot of French since all the directions were in French, but he has a big problem with the keyboard because many of the letters are out of place for him. We're working on a solution to that.

**Happy New Year to you all!**