

Visit of Gorée Island

Goree Island (Île de Gorée) is a small island just off the coast of Dakar, Senegal's sprawling capital city. Goree Island is a tourist attraction because of its history as a major slave-trading center. It's an important destination for African-Americans in particular who come to pay their respects and reflect upon their ancestors' past. In fact, the Maison des Esclaves (House of Slaves) on the island has become a place of pilgrimage for everyone to reflect upon the horrors of the slave-trade and remember the millions of souls who died because of it.

Goree Island is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and has been visited by dignitaries such as the Pope, President Bill Clinton, Nelson Mandela and recently President George Bush. Despite this attention, there are several scholars who dispute that the House of Slaves was ever a major slave-trading center, especially since its size may not warrant the numbers of slaves (several millions) attributed to have passed through its "doors of no return". These scholars tend to believe that the island and its 'House of Slaves' have been talked up by those interested in making a few dollars off gullible tourists. But everyone I've met who has visited the House of Slaves Museum has been deeply moved by the symbolic significance of the place. Regardless of the number, slaves did indeed pass through and the Museum provides everyone with a focal point to express their grief at this dark side of history.

What to See on Goree Island:

Goree island is a haven of tranquility compared with the noisy streets of Dakar. There are no cars on the island and it is small enough to find your way around on your own, even though there will be plenty of "Guides" offering you their service.

* The main attraction is of course the Maison des Esclaves (House of Slaves) built by the Dutch in 1776 as a holding point for slaves. The house has been converted into a museum and is open every day except Monday. Tours will take you through the dungeons where the slaves were held and explain exactly how they were sold and shipped.

* The IFAN Historical Museum is also worth a visit if you are interested in the history of Senegal. The museum is situated on the northern end of the island.

* Musee de la Femme (The Women's Museum) looks at the role of Senegalese women in traditional and modern West African culture. The Museum is closed on Monday.

* Maritime Museum offers the visitor information about Senegal's seafaring history. The Museum is closed on Monday.

* The jetty area of Goree Island is filled with little restaurants where you can eat fresh fish. Behind the restaurants you'll find a market that sells the usual tourist trinkets. According to the Lonely Planet Guide bargaining is a lot more relaxed here than in Dakar, so it's worth a browse.



1. FORT D'ESTREES (1856) Now historical museum
2. Doiug Dieng House
3. House of Sudan
4. Beach bulwarks
5. Hortala House
6. House of Slaves
7. Victoria Albis House (1777) Now women's museum
8. Angrand House
9. William Ponty School (1913-1921)
10. House of women catholic missionaries
11. Former Catholic Women's School
12. The Castel Fort - Defended Dakar against General De Gaulle and British allies during WWII 23/25 September, 1940.
13. The Mosque
14. Mariama Ba Secondary school
15. Order of Malta Dispensary
16. The Church (1745)
17. Former Military Hospital
18. Sword Fish Relay
19. Police Station
20. Public Garden
21. Knight of Boufflers Hotel
22. Post Office