

who live in a large, lily-padded
barrage here. One old, big one
comes out every day and is
fed by the guardian. The Bobo
bus makes a stop here - tho'
it's not a tour bus, and is full
of Burkina Bés!

Moored most of the 6 hr. bus
ride. We stopped half-way for a
free soda! Woke near Bobo to greenery
and lovely boulder formations.

At one point saw dozens of large trees
which had been blown over and had
their rootballs in the air. Perhaps
every 10th tree, some recently, others
long ago, ~~had been~~ in the several
mile stretch I watched, was down.

Bobo: a lovely city, at least
as large as Ouaga, but clean, crisp,
modern. The old colonial capital,
it has roots: a feeling of having
been here awhile and intending to
stay. So different from Ouaga's
ephemeral Banco skeleton. Lots of
old colonial architecture, a feeling
of scrubbed whiteness, brightness.
Staying at the Soba Hotel: clean,
spacious, friendly. Feels like a
small Europe city, ~~more~~ less
African even than Lomé. A lovely

ambiance hangs over. Many big, shady trees, sprawling villas, modern, incredibly well-stocked storefronts,

an abundance of gorgeous fruits & vegetables. Goods here must come from Abidjan, not so far away.

There's a train and good road. (The Ouaga to Bobo road was in excellent condition). Noticed many very modern women, tastefully instead of garrishly, dressed in ~~modern~~ ^{western} clothes & pseudo-western hairdos. Spent the afternoon

flaking out! Now at the Transfo - a restaurant / bar hangout with a big courtyard and dancing pavillion. Outrageous brochettes.

Walked home down the long, straight Ave. de Gaulle, lined with thick, close-packed trees and villas, dark & shadowy behind thick shrubberies.

Place Nation is a large, 6-pointed road-point made for a much larger city. Bobo, with its modern façades, street lighting, wide, uncrowded avenues, feels like a city too small for its bitches. She has a graceful charm, many trees, shade, a cultured, almost opulent

ambiance. Even the market women dress richly, and the dead-youth stalls boast the classiest, most attractive selection of clothes I've seen in West Africa. There's an outdoor movie theatre next to our hotel, French action thrillers & such. Vendors were lined up selling everything from popcorn to popsicles. The selection of gorgeous fruits and vegetables here is impressive.

Wed. Sept. 24 Bobodionlasso

Breakfast: a large bowl of steaming coffee, fresh pastries, and luscious bananas from Abidjan! It's muggy, but mostly overcast. I'm loving the exercise, but am not used to it any more, and the heat is exhausting. We've all been very tired, and sleeping a lot.

Bobo seems to have 2 main downtown attractions: the mosque and the market. Both are examples of "Islamic" architecture, square towers and parapets bordered in squarish geometric shapes.

The mosque is very old, a low
branco expanse with 2 large towers
like rocket cones, laced with

scaffolding of wood to climb
for whitewashing; ladders to god?
Inside is very dark; a series of
mat-lined chambers. Pottery jars
of water sit under trees near the
several low, tunnel-like entries,
and small clay bowls, for the
ritual ablutions, or washings that
precede prayer.

The market now sprawls over
a large area, a maze of crowded
stalls & narrow passageways.

Its center is a tall 4-sided
wall, boasting 4 large, arched
entry portals. ~~Inside~~ The marché
must have once fit inside here, but
has spilled out several streets in
every direction. The quantity of
goods stock-piled here, especially
cloth, is staggering. Around the
marché are motor scooter parking
lots: hundreds of mopeds & scooters
crammed together into pay lots!

Beautiful things for sale: blankets,
jewelry, carvings. But as we still
have many miles to go on our "loop",
it would be silly to carry too much.

As it is, we've overpacked.

Had a great street food dinner of red beans & spaghetti, so yummy - so cheap! We've been spending lots of money. Spent the afternoon at the Hotel l'Auberge pool. Nice place to hangout, but I got attacked by a black ant in the pool and got fiery bites all over my belly!

After dinner walked up to Maheno, a bar/restaurant. Very nice atmosphere, with a landscaped, ~~tree~~ lamp-lit courtyard, cane chairs, American tunes, Sangria punch!

We're travelling with Dave Goodrich, an Animal Traction volunteer who lives in Toaga, near Dapaong. He cos's in about 6 months. A mellow guy, slightly stocky, with a bushy mop of hair and a hint of Groucho Marx eyebrows, he has a humour to match. Mellow & witty, an excellent guitarist who writes comic songs of PC life, he's also a good artist and has been doing a lot of sketches on the trip.

Thurs. Sept. 25 Bobo to Dopti?

Morning finds us hangin' out at the taxi gate, hoping to get to

Mopti. It's a very expensive trip - 475 kms.; 8,000 CFA each! Promises to be a very long drive.

Bobo impressions: Coffee men with real butter; serve coffee in glass bowls or glasses; no sugar, just sugar milk; thick glob of sugar milk into a bowl, a spoonful of nescafé crystals, then the hot water on top. They like it sickening sweet.

The women here are striking, often tall, slender, with exquisite faces. Saw a Diana Ross look-alike yesterday, had her hair tressed into tiny braids to look like a copy of Diana's Supremes hairdo: chin length, fluffy on top, blunt cut to curl under the jawline. The tressing of hair has reached impressive dimensions: many imitations of western women's hair, from long & straight to pony tails or bobs, all done with fake hair plaited into tiny braids. Have seen many women in parts, and some smoking.

Burkina's motto: la patrie ou la mort nous vaincrons. Lots of signs for vaccinating your kids, foyer améliorés. Saw a rack full

of metal forgers for sale. Saw
women roasting corn in braziers
shaped like martini glasses made
of woven metal. Clever cylindrical
tree guards made of 1" metal
strips woven together like an open
basket. Facial scarification is often more
elaborate here. Have seen ~~two~~ long
arcs traced over the forehead and
down both cheeks. Watching a
barber shaving ~~for~~ men's faces and
occasionally, heads. Sitting facing
his customer on a mat, his practised
hands massage & lather & lotion.
Looks like it feels wonderful.

After, he rubs ice on the face,
then swabs with a sponge. Nice way
to start the day - wish I needed
a shave! Menial jobs: what to us
seems menial, a guy spending his
whole day selling a few shirts,
sticks of gum, or cloth; a shoe
shiner; a girl selling bananas.
But here this is good, honest work,
and people accept the pice. Maybe
they spend hours wandering the
marché & only sell one or two
things. But it's enough to get
by on.

Our taxi filled up and
off we went, stopping several

times to find remaining passengers, until at last at 11:15 we hit the road, had a big fat woman sharing our

seat, completing the required 4-some. So started out the trip in a litchy mood: crowded, hot, long wait for a passenger and many official stops.

After 10 very tiring but cool hours in the 504 taxi we arrived in deep dark at the Djenne junction. Still 112 k's to Mopti, and it seemed a bit crazy to go all the way to Mopti and back - a good 2 hours each way. The driver asked at a concession

if we could stay the night, so we unloaded and were shown into a square mud room containing already many sleeping forms. To our amazement they brought us out a large foam mattress, like brand new, still in plastic! Comfy, but the mosquitoes (despite coils & repellent) kept us awake most of the night.

Morning finds us in a large, square concession with a very nice family, mostly young women & kids.

We gave them 500 each for the night and they in turn gave us breakfast - fermented millet porridge, called "bouilli". It's cool & slightly overcast, but cheery, like an early

spring day. Weaver birds twitter loudly in ~~their~~ a tree overcrowded with their hanging nests of woven grass.

We're sitting under a tree chatting with some villagers. Luckily a nice young man has appeared who speaks French well. It's very pleasant here, and a delight to be back in a village, out of the city scene and hotels and touring.

Had a wonderful dinner last night of igname ragout at a tiny stop called Teme (just a few k's from a village called Togo!). Smoky & lamplit, I felt as if I were in a movie set. Food we've eaten so far has been less spicy than in Togo.

The road all the way to this jet. (Kessedougon) was surprisingly very good. The greenery was also unexpected, tho' it is rainy season, and we're approaching the Niger river lowlands. Sections of road looked like they're sometimes under water, and grasses grew tall & thick up to the edge of the road. Just before dark we noticed the trees thinning out. After
At the san jet. we stopped while

the driver took 2 passengers in into Jan. Had coffee and yummy cakes with a group of women & their kids. Lots of smiles. Sometimes it's pleasant not speaking the same language. Communication becomes more subtle, sincere, caring. A young woman laughed when I couldn't hold on to a cake, fresh out of the oil. She went to the fire and got a small, hot coal which she held up for me in her bare hands. Everyone got a big kick out of that. Women's hands get incredibly tough, esp. resistant to heat. Occasionally hear of babies scalded by bath water their mom couldn't tell was too hot. (Women give small babies enemas, as a matter of daily ritual, to "empty 'em out", so they can put them on their backs, diaperless, and they won't poop!). After this stop at the taxi jet, the driver began racing along very, very fast, as if making up for lost time, and just as we I got ready to ask him to please slow down, he suddenly screeched to a halt and jumped out of the car.

Oh dear, a flat tire, was my first thought. "What is it?" we

asked. "Time to pray" was the response, and he and several other passengers ran off to face east for their evening prayers.

I started the day very irritated, by the crowded taxi, all the stops. The gendarme, police, and douane stops can seem calculated to make travel as unpleasant as possible.

All the carefully packed and lashed on luggage is removed and searched at their whim. But then I get mad at myself for being so petulant.

It's not calculated or cruel, it's just the way things are, and people here accept it uncomplainingly.

Part of me envies them that ability. But part of me wonders if they're not just snivelling wimps who don't have the guts to complain!

But what it really comes down to of course is that they have no choice: complaining wouldn't do any good, and would just get them in trouble. The military here, as autocrats everywhere, love homage & power, and can be very nasty when they don't get it.

Across from where we sit at the junction is a large cluster of concessions linked

together by square mud brick walls. Few straw roofs here, most are flat, made by laying rounds of

wood across the ceiling, tight together, then packing mud on top of these and forming a slope. Squarish cone-shaped bldgs, small, with flat ~~perched~~ roofs, abound. Granaries, cases? Between us & this cluster of mud dwellings is a small, stagnant pond, covered in a slime of green algae. Just as I sit here, I see a woman brushing aside green algae to scoop drinking water, a boy next to her washing his bicycle, which is half in the water, a woman washing rice, and another woman washing out the rag her baby has just pooped on. No wonder disease is rampant.

Turns out the place we stayed last night is a sort of hotel / restaurant. Had rice & sauce for lunch and then a nice shower.

About 10:30, began to wonder if a taxi would come, so began negotiations with a horse cart owner. His price was a bit high, but we finally decided to go for it, when lo & behold,