



Pictus Safaris Trip Report – Senegal – January 2023

Abstract

Senegal remains our very favourite destination in Africa, and it was a pleasure and privilege to visit this wonderful West African country again this year. With key targets of African manatee, Guinea baboon, Patas monkey and green monkey, the itinerary largely wrote itself. We began with a domestic flight from Dakar to Cap Skirring and transfer to Pointe-Saint-Georges in the southern region of the Casamance, where a well-known freshwater spring attracts African manatee in fair numbers. From here, we transferred east to Niokolo-Koba, Senegal's flagship national park, where the target primate species are easily found. This park is also home to small and isolated populations of lion, leopard, wild dog, chimpanzee, bush elephant, giant eland and local specials such as Gambian mongoose, although none are likely to be seen on a typical visit.

At a Glance

Dates	January 17 th – January 22 nd , 2023
Number of Clients	1
Countries Visited	Senegal
Key Target(s)	African Manatee, Guinea Baboon, Patas Monkey
Total Mammal Species Recorded	22
Total Bird Species Recorded	128

Itinerary

Day	Destination	Accommodation
January 17 th – January 18 th , 2023	Pointe-Saint-Georges, Senegal	Campement le Lamintin
January 19 th , 2023	Wassadou, Senegal	Campement Wassadou
January 20 th , 2023	Niokolo-Koba NP, Senegal	NiokoLodge
January 21 st , 2023	Niokolo-Koba NP, Senegal	Camp du Lion
January 22 nd , 2023	Saly, Senegal	Hotel Neptune



Highlights

Pointe-Saint-Georges & Niokolo-Koba NP, Senegal

- African manatee seen well at Pointe-Saint-Georges
- Red-flanked duiker easily recorded in Niokolo-Koba
- Guinea baboon, green monkey and Patas monkey encountered at close quarters
- Pardine genet and African civet seen by night
- Superb birding, with African finfoot, Pel's fishing owl and Egyptian plover recorded

Report

The tour began smoothly, with an easy connection from Dakar to Cap Skirring with Air Senegal. From the airport, it is a drive of just over an hour to the basic accommodation at Pointe-Saint-Georges on the banks of the vast Casamance River. Rooms here remain basic, but are self-contained with private bathrooms, although none of the bathroom fittings are connected and showers will be of the 'scooping from a bucket' variety. The food is also basic, and generally consists of a bucket of fresh-ish shrimp and grated carrot. However, the location is perfect, just thirty seconds walk along the beach from the spring. In our one full day here, we saw several **African manatee**, usually either individuals or mothers with calves. Generally, speaking there were always two or three manatees around throughout the day, with lulls only at the peak of high tide and when boats had passed immediately over the spring. Sadly, excellent work by local conservationists to install viewing platforms and buoys over the spring have not taken – the viewing platform is now in a complete state of disrepair, and the buoys are disregarded totally. Despite frequent visits by French-speaking tourists, the shoreline is covered in litter, and there is no reason to visit unless you are keen to see manatees. However, the manatees do still persist here and are easy to see. We also had several good views of **common bottlenose dolphin**, including bowriding on the Dakar-Ziguinchor ferry as it came past, and a distant and brief view of **Atlantic humpback dolphin**. Around camp at night, you could often pick up **dark-winged lesser house bat**, which seem to be the most common bats in the village.

It is a full day transfer from Pointe-Saint-Georges to Niokolo-Koba, although en route we secured our first views of **Patas monkey**, **green monkey** and **Gambian sun squirrel**. The park will not permit entry late in the day, as it is a 90-minute drive or so from the entrance to any accommodation, so we overnighted just outside the park at the well-known Campement Wassadou. The camp is awash with green monkeys and **Guinea baboon**. Primarily used as a base for birders, it is easy here to spot species including African finfoot, which we saw here as well as in Niokolo-Koba. A night walk along the access track offered good views of **common genet** and **Senegal galago** (tracks indicated that spotted hyena and African civet were also using this track regularly), and a quick spotlight down at the river from camp after our walk provided a view of **hippo**.

The following day, we headed into the park proper. The park can be superb on its day, and it is remarkable that any wildlife persists here given the chaotic and opaque management. We had arranged an open vehicle prior to our arrival, which turned up at the entrance gate an hour so after the scheduled time – this is owned by the local guides' association and is in a very poor state of repair, with push-starts required



whenever the ignition has been turned off. The accommodation we use in the park, NiokoLodge, do have two open vehicles themselves, one of which is brand-new and has been specifically set up for photographers, but the lodge owners do not permit its hire in advance for exclusive use. Bear in mind also that, regardless of where you stay in the park, you must bring in a local guide with you from Dar Salam, even if self-driving. None of the guides speak English and guiding standards are low.

After negotiating our way into the park, we began the long drive to NiokoLodge. The arid areas of the park that you pass through generally provide little in the way of wildlife until you reach the riverine woodland that flanks the Gambia River near the core game-viewing area of the park, Simenti. We chose to head for a game drive around Simenti first, before checking in at NiokoLodge. Our first mammals were **red-flanked duiker** and **banded mongoose**, and as we reached Simenti we also recorded Guinea baboon, green monkey, **common warthog**, **Buffon's kob**, **Defassa waterbuck** and **bushbuck**. Due to our late entry into the park, most of the watering points (or 'mares') were quiet. The hour-long drive through more arid habitat produced our first **roan** and **common duiker**.

The accommodation in NiokoLodge is superb, and by far the best in Senegal, let alone the best in Niokolo-Koba. It is slightly bizarre to have a lodge constructed to the specs of premier wildlife destinations in Eastern and Southern Africa in Niokolo-Koba, but its mod-cons, including a swimming pool, are very welcome. It is in a poor area for game-viewing, though, despite the 'Grand Mirador' (the viewpoint on which it was built, once being an epicentre for lion, leopard, wild dog and buffalo activity in the park. Generally, lions will be seen near the lodge a couple of times a season, wild dogs once every few seasons, and leopards almost never. Unless you luck out and lions or dogs are being seen in the area during your visit, you will have to make the long drive across to Simenti, where game-viewing is a little bit (but not much) more reliable. This issue is compounded by the fact that afternoon drives must return you to your accommodation an hour before sunset, when the heat of the day is still stifling, and this means that game-viewing can be very poor indeed from NiokoLodge. We continue to lobby park management and Panthera to facilitate night drives in the park, as we know first-hand how productive these can be, and it looks like there may be some forward movement in this regard in 2025. NiokoLodge did originally open with about a dozen nocturnal hides that clients could use, but park management insists that only one can be used – this can seat two people, and you are only allowed to use it for one hour a night. We used it on one night, seeing only bushbuck and Senegal galago. For those wishing to explore the south of the park, which is the only area where giant eland, chimpanzee and bush elephant might be seen, you would have to seek approval from park management to bivouac deep in the park in areas such as Banghar or Mansafara – that approval is not easily granted. Again, talks are ongoing to remediate this in 2025 but, for now, visits are limited to the north and centre of the park.

The remainder of our drives focussed on Simenti, and generally reliably produced sightings of Guinea baboon, green monkey, Patas monkey, bushbuck, Defassa waterbuck, red-flanked duiker, common duiker, common warthog, roan, banded mongoose and **oribi**. Leopard, for which this park is the best site in West Africa, and lion were not seen by anyone during our stay, but were seen later in the 2022/23 season. Gambian mongoose and western red colobus are present in the park, but very rarely seen. On our last night, we decamped from NiokoLodge to the much more basic Camp du lion in Simenti, to allow for a later drive in the core area, and in the hope that honey badgers would make an appearance. The badgers didn't appear, but we did get excellent views of **African civet** and **pardine genet**. At sunset, Egyptian plover and Pel's fishing owl were seen on the riverbank below camp, and **banana serotine** were seen in-flight too.



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Mammal List – 22 species

Species	Scientific Name	Location(s)*
Carnivora – 4 species		
African Civet	<i>Civettictis civetta</i>	PNNK
Banded Mongoose	<i>Mungos mungo</i>	PNNK
Common Genet	<i>Genetta genetta</i>	PNNK
Pardine Genet	<i>Genetta pardina</i>	PNNK
Cetartiodactyla – 11 species		
Red-Flanked Duiker	<i>Cephalophus rufilatus</i>	PNNK
Hippopotamus	<i>Hippopotamus amphibius</i>	W
Roan Antelope	<i>Hippotragus equinus</i>	PNNK
(Defassa) Waterbuck	<i>Kobus ellipsiprymnus</i>	PNNK
(Buffon's) Kob	<i>Kobus kob</i>	PNNK
Oribi	<i>Ourebia ourebi</i>	PNNK
Common Warthog	<i>Phacochoerus africanus</i>	PNNK
Atlantic Humpback Dolphin	<i>Sousa teuszii</i>	PSG
Common Duiker	<i>Sylvicapra grimmia</i>	PNNK
Bushbuck	<i>Tragelaphus scriptus</i>	PNNK
Common Bottlenose Dolphin	<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>	PSG
Chiroptera – 2 species		
Banana Serotine	<i>Neoromicia nana</i>	PNNK
Dark-Winged Lesser House Bat	<i>Scotoecus hirundo</i>	PSG
Primates – 4 species		
Green Monkey	<i>Chlorocebus sabaesus</i>	C, W, PNNK
Patas Monkey	<i>Erythrocebus patas</i>	C, PNNK
Senegal Galago	<i>Galago senegalensis</i>	W
Guinea Baboon	<i>Papio papio</i>	W, PNNK
Sirenia – 1 species		
African Manatee	<i>Trichechus senegalensis</i>	PSG

*PSG – Pointe Saint-Georges, C – Casamance, W – Wassadou, PNNK – Niokolo-Koba National Park

Bird List – 128 species

Species	Scientific Name	Location(s)*
Accipitriformes – 16 species		
Shikra	<i>Accipiter badius</i>	PNNK
Ovambo Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter ovampensis</i>	PNNK
Tawny Eagle	<i>Aquila rapax</i>	PNNK
Grasshopper Buzzard	<i>Butastur rufipennis</i>	PNNK
Scissor-Tailed Kite	<i>Chelictinia riocourii</i>	C
Brown Snake-Eagle	<i>Circaetus cinereus</i>	PNNK
White-Backed Vulture	<i>Gyps africanus</i>	PSG
African Fish Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus vocifer</i>	W, PNNK
Lizard Buzzard	<i>Kaupifalco monogrammicus</i>	PNNK
Dark Chanting-Goshawk	<i>Melierax metabates</i>	PNNK
Gabar Goshawk	<i>Micronisus gabar</i>	PNNK



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Yellow-Billed Kite	<i>Milvus aegyptius</i>	PSG, C, PNNK
Hooded Vulture	<i>Necrosyrtes monachus</i>	PSG, C
Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	PSG
Gymnogene	<i>Polyboroides typus</i>	C
Bateleur	<i>Terathopius ecaudatus</i>	PNNK
Anseriformes – 3 species		
Egyptian Goose	<i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>	PNNK
White-Faced Whistling Duck	<i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>	C
Spur-Winged Goose	<i>Plectropterus gambensis</i>	PNNK
Apodiformes – 2 species		
Little Swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>	PSG
Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	PSG
Bucerotiformes – 5 species		
Southern Ground Hornbill	<i>Bucorvus abyssinicus</i>	PNNK
Western Piping Hornbill	<i>Bycanistes fistulator</i>	C
African Grey Hornbill	<i>Lophoceros nasutus</i>	PNNK
Green Woodhoopoe	<i>Phoeniculus purpureus</i>	C, PNNK
Common Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	PNNK
Caprimulgiformes – 2 species		
Fiery-Necked Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus pectoralis</i>	PSG
African Palm-Swift	<i>Cypsiurus parvus</i>	PNNK
Charadriiformes – 18 species		
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	PSG
African Jacana	<i>Actophilornis africanus</i>	PNNK
Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>	PSG
Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	PSG
Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>	PSG
Common Gull-Billed Tern	<i>Geochelidon nilotica</i>	PSG
Grey-Headed Gull	<i>Larus cirrocephalus</i>	PSG
Slender-Billed Gull	<i>Larus genei</i>	PSG
Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	PSG
Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	PSG
Egyptian Plover	<i>Pluvianus aegyptius</i>	W, PNNK
Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	PSG
Royal Tern	<i>Thalasseus maximus</i>	PSG
Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	PSG
Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	PSG, PNNK
Common Buttonquail	<i>Turnix sylvaticus</i>	PNNK
African Wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus senegallus</i>	PNNK
Spur-Winged Lapwing	<i>Vanellus spinosus</i>	PNNK
Ciconiiformes – 3 species		
African Woollyneck	<i>Ciconia microscelis</i>	PNNK
Saddle-Billed Stork	<i>Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis</i>	PNNK
Yellow-Billed Stork	<i>Mycteria ibis</i>	PNNK
Columbiformes – 7 species		
Speckled Pigeon	<i>Columba guinea</i>	PSG
Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>	C
Namaqua Dove	<i>Oena capensis</i>	PNNK
Laughing Dove	<i>Spilopelia senegalensis</i>	PNNK
African Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia roseogrisea</i>	PNNK
Red-Eyed Dove	<i>Streptopelia semitorquata</i>	PSG, PNNK
Black-Billed Wood Dove	<i>Turtur abyssinicus</i>	PNNK



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Coraciiformes – 11 species		
Pied Kingfisher	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>	PSG, C, W, PNNK
Abyssinian Roller	<i>Coracias abyssinicus</i>	C, PNNK
Blue-Bellied Roller	<i>Coracias cyanogaster</i>	C, PNNK
European Roller	<i>Coracias garrulus</i>	C
Malachite Kingfisher	<i>Corythornis cristatus</i>	W
Grey-Headed Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon leucocephala</i>	PNNK
Woodland Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon senegalensis</i>	PNNK
Giant Kingfisher	<i>Megaceryle maxima</i>	W
Red-Throated Bee-Eater	<i>Merops bullocki</i>	W, PNNK
Northern Carmine Bee-Eater	<i>Merops nubicoides</i>	PSG
Little Bee-Eater	<i>Merops pusillus</i>	PNNK
Cuculiformes – 1 species		
Senegal Coucal	<i>Centropus senegalensis</i>	C, PNNK
Falconiformes – 1 species		
Grey Kestrel	<i>Falco ardosiaceus</i>	PNNK
Galliformes – 4 species		
Helmeted Guineafowl	<i>Numida meleagris</i>	PNNK
Double-Spurred Francolin	<i>Pternistis bicalcaratus</i>	PNNK
Stone Partridge	<i>Ptilopachus petrosus</i>	PNNK
Gruiformes – 1 species		
African Finfoot	<i>Podica senegalensis</i>	C, W
Musophagiformes – 1 species		
Western Plantain-Eater	<i>Crinifer piscator</i>	PSG
Passeriformes – 32 species		
Senegal Batis	<i>Batis senegalensis</i>	PNNK
White-Billed Buffalo-Weaver	<i>Bubalornis albirostris</i>	PNNK
Lesser Striped Swallow	<i>Cecropis abyssinica</i>	PSG, PNNK
Rufous-Chested Swallow	<i>Cecropis semirufa</i>	PNNK
Olive-Bellied Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris chloropygius</i>	PSG
Beautiful Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris pulchellus</i>	W
Pied Crow	<i>Corvus albus</i>	C
White-Crowned Robin-Chat	<i>Cossypha albicapillus</i>	PSG
Snowy-Crowned Robin-Chat	<i>Cossypha niveicapilla</i>	W
Common House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	C
Fork-Tailed Drongo	<i>Dicrurus adsimilis</i>	PNNK
Yellow-Bellied Eremomela	<i>Eremomela icteropygialis</i>	W, PNNK
Wire-Tailed Swallow	<i>Hirundo smithii</i>	PSG
African firefinch	<i>Lagonosticta rubricata</i>	PNNK
Red-Billed Firefinch	<i>Lagonosticta senegala</i>	PNNK
Long-Tailed Glossy Starling	<i>Lamprotornis caudatus</i>	W, C, PNNK
Greater Blue-Eared Starling	<i>Lamprotornis chalybeus</i>	C, PNNK
Lesser Blue-Eared Starling	<i>Lamprotornis chloropterus</i>	PNNK
Yellow-Crowned Gonolek	<i>Laniarius barbarus</i>	PNNK
Northern Black Flycatcher	<i>Melaenornis edolioides</i>	PNNK
White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	C
Eurasian Golden Oriole	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>	PSG
Northern Grey-Headed Sparrow	<i>Passer griseus</i>	C
Village Weaver	<i>Ploceus cucullatus</i>	PSG, PNNK
Black-Headed Weaver	<i>Ploceus melanocephalus</i>	PSG
White-Crested Helmetshrike	<i>Prionops plumatus</i>	C, PNNK
Piapiac	<i>Ptilostomus afer</i>	PSG, PNNK



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Common Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus barbatus</i>	PNNK
Red-Billed Quelea	<i>Quelea quelea</i>	PNNK
African Paradise-Flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone viridis</i>	PNNK
Brown Babbler	<i>Turdoides plebejus</i>	PNNK
Village Indigobird	<i>Vidua chalybeata</i>	PNNK
Pelecaniiformes – 16 species		
Great White Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	C, PNNK
Intermediate Egret	<i>Ardea brachyrhyncha</i>	C, PNNK
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	PSG, C, PNNK
Goliath Heron	<i>Ardea goliath</i>	PNNK
Black-Headed Heron	<i>Ardea melanocephala</i>	C, PNNK
Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>	PNNK
Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>	PNNK
Hadada Ibis	<i>Bostrychia hagedash</i>	W, PNNK
Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	C, PNNK
Green-Backed Heron	<i>Butorides striata</i>	W, PNNK
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	C, PNNK
Western Reef Egret	<i>Egretta gularis</i>	PSG, C
Great White Pelican	<i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i>	PSG
Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>	PNNK
Hamerkop	<i>Scopus umbretta</i>	C, PNNK
African Sacred Ibis	<i>Threskiornis aethiopicus</i>	PNNK
Piciformes – 1 species		
Cardinal Woodpecker	<i>Dendropicus fuscescens</i>	PNNK
Psittaciiformes – 1 species		
Rose-Ringed Parakeet	<i>Alexandrinus krameri</i>	PSG
Pterocliiformes – 2 species		
Chestnut-Bellied Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles exustus</i>	PNNK
Four-Banded Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles quadricinctus</i>	W, PNNK
Strigiformes – 1 species		
Pel's Fishing Owl	<i>Scotopelia peli</i>	PNNK
Suliformes – 1 species		
Great Comorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	PSG

*PSG – Pointe Saint-Georges, C – Casamance, W – Wassadou, PNNK – Niokolo-Koba National Park

Reptile List – 1 species

Species	Scientific Name	Location(s)*
Crocodylia – 1 species		
West African Crocodile	<i>Crocodylus suchus</i>	PNNK

*PSG – Pointe Saint-Georges, C – Casamance, W – Wassadou, PNNK – Niokolo-Koba National Park

Misses

The primary targets on this trip were seen well, but Senegal does not give its rarer mammals up easily. Very lucky visitors may see **African wild dog, lion, leopard, buffalo, African bush elephant, giant eland** or



chimpanzee in Niokolo-Koba, but none were seen during this short visit. **Gambian mongoose** and **western red colobus** are sometimes seen on the fringes of the park, and **pale fox** can be seen in pretty much any sufficiently arid area in Senegal.

Contact Details

Pictus Safaris can be contacted by email at contact@pictus-safaris.com or via our website at www.pictus-safaris.com. We are a tour operator specialising in small-group and private departures across Africa, and will be offering a small-group departure to Senegal in April 2024.