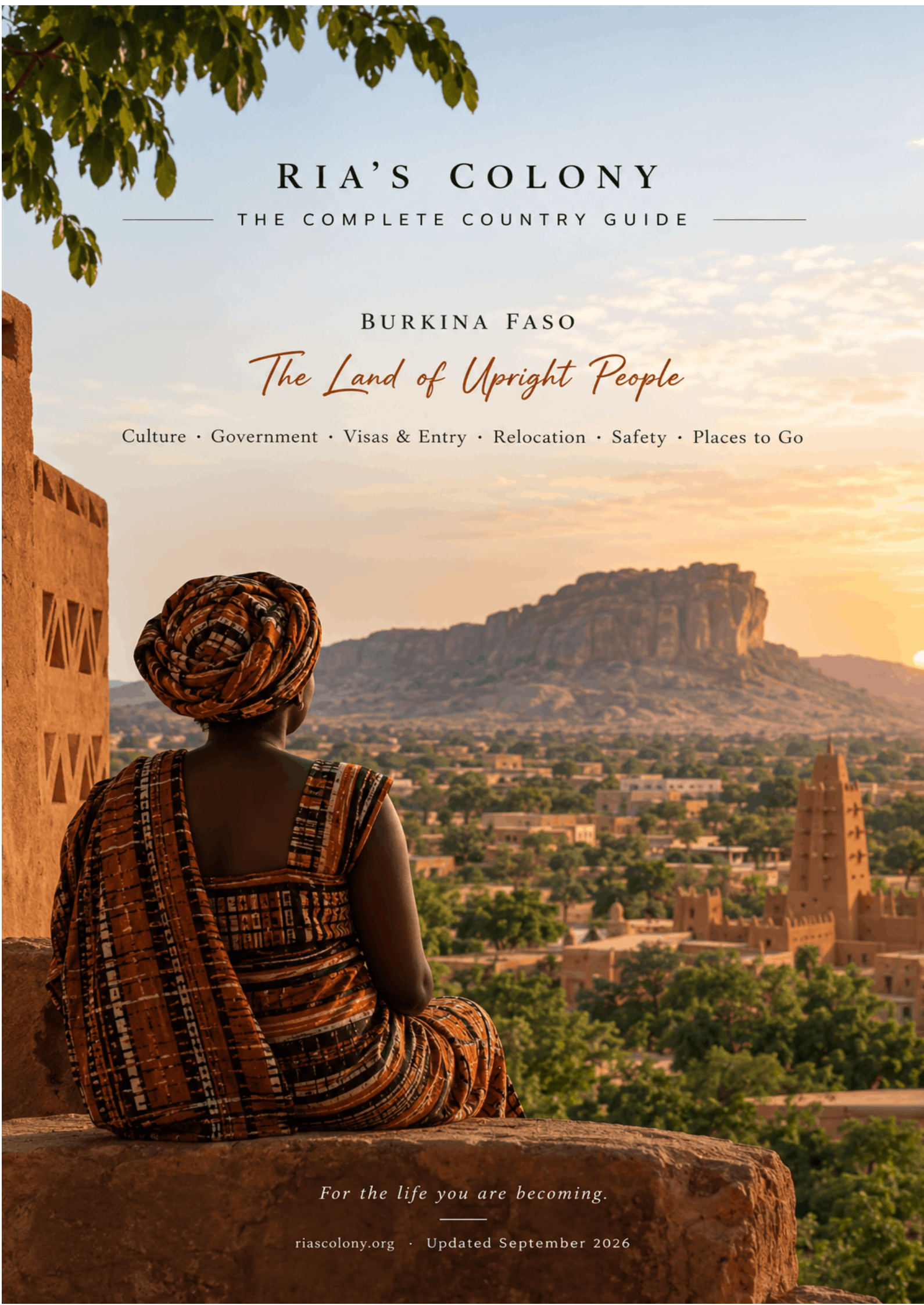


A woman wearing a colorful patterned headwrap and a matching dress is seen from behind, sitting on a stone wall. She is looking out over a town with traditional mud-brick buildings and a large, flat-topped rock formation in the distance. The scene is set during sunset, with warm orange and yellow light in the sky. Green leaves of a tree are visible in the top left corner.

RIA'S COLONY

THE COMPLETE COUNTRY GUIDE

BURKINA FASO

The Land of Upright People

Culture • Government • Visas & Entry • Relocation • Safety • Places to Go

For the life you are becoming.

riacolony.org • Updated September 2026

About Ria's Colony

Ria's Colony is a trade and tourism company that helps people understand other African countries, travel between them and do business across their markets — because right now, all three are often harder than they should be. There are gaps between being interested in a country and actually understanding it, between wanting to travel somewhere and knowing what to expect, and between seeing an opportunity in a market and knowing who to speak to. Ria's Colony works across those gaps, using media, travel information, learning, research, business development and connections to make it easier for people and organisations to move across African countries with better understanding.

What we commit to

- **Equip** — practical courses and resources that help people build useful skills and participate more confidently in opportunities across Africa ([Style Vault](#)).
- **Reflect** — original stories that help people understand Africa's countries, cultures, economies and the issues that matter there — this guide is part of that work ([Style Mirror](#)).
- **Explore** — travel information, destination stories and experiences that help people know what to expect before they go ([Aerial View](#)).
- **Connect** — helping businesses enter and expand across African markets with local knowledge before they invest heavily ([Aerial Connect](#)).

Our promise on this guide

Every figure, fee, law, and status quoted in this guide is drawn from an official government source, a recognised international body, or established, dated reporting — and each is linked at the point it is used and again in the Sources section at the end. Where information is contested, time-sensitive, or likely to change (visa fees, exchange rates, security conditions), we say so plainly and tell you where to check for the live figure before you travel or make a decision.

Source: [About Ria's Colony](#)

*This guide is Part 6 of Ria's Colony's series [Exploring the Cultures of Africa: 54 Countries, One Continent](#), and expands on the original feature [Burkina Faso: The Land of Upright People](#) by *Tori for Ria's Colony*.*

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Burkina Faso at a Glance

Official name	Burkina Faso (formerly the Republic of Upper Volta until 1984)
Meaning of the name	“Land of upright people” / “land of incorruptible people” — from Mòoré (burkina, “upright/honest”) and Dioula (faso, “homeland/fatherland”), chosen by President Thomas Sankara in 1984
Capital	Ouagadougou
Largest cities	Ouagadougou, Bobo-Dioulasso, Koudougou
Government type	Military-led transitional government; unicameral Transitional Legislative Assembly; elections officially postponed to 2029
Head of state	Interim President Captain Ibrahim Traoré, in power since 30 September 2022
Head of government	Interim Prime Minister Jean Emmanuel Ouédraogo, in office since 7 December 2024
Independence	5 August 1960 (from France, as the Republic of Upper Volta)
Area	274,200 km ² (105,900 sq mi) — landlocked
Borders	Six countries: Mali (north/west), Niger (east), Benin (southeast), Togo (south), Ghana (south), Côte d'Ivoire (southwest)
Population	Roughly 23 million (2023 estimate)
Official language	French (government, formal education, public life)
Widely spoken local languages	Mòoré (Mossi), Dioula (trade language, especially around Bobo-Dioulasso), and more than 60 other local languages
Religion	Islam (largest), Christianity (substantial, especially south/west), indigenous religious traditions (significant, especially west/southwest)
Currency	West African CFA franc (XOF), pegged to the euro, shared with 7 other West African states
Regional bodies	Formally left ECOWAS on 29 January 2025; founding member, with Mali and Niger, of the Alliance of Sahel States (AES)
Time zone	GMT / UTC+0 year-round (no daylight saving)
Calling code	+226
Current UK/US travel guidance	Do Not Travel / advises against all travel — see Section 11

SECTION 02

Government & Politics

Burkina Faso is currently governed by a military transitional administration. Interim President Captain Ibrahim Traoré took power on 30 September 2022 in the country's second coup that year, and remains head of state and commander-in-chief.

Source: [List of heads of state of Burkina Faso — Wikipedia](#)

The interim Prime Minister is Jean Emmanuel Ouédraogo, a journalist and former minister of communication, in office since 7 December 2024. Ministers are appointed by the president rather than elected, and the cabinet was reshuffled again in January 2026 under what the government calls the “Popular Progressive Revolution.”

Source: [Cabinet of Burkina Faso — Wikipedia](#)

Legislature

Burkina Faso's legislature is a unicameral Transitional Legislative Assembly seated in Ouagadougou; a Senate was planned under 2012 constitutional amendments but has never been established. Political parties were formally dissolved by the military government in a decree approved by the Council of Ministers on 29 January 2026, with their assets transferred to the state, and more than 100 civil society associations were dissolved on 15 April 2026.

Source: [National Assembly \(Burkina Faso\) — Wikipedia](#); [2026 in Burkina Faso — Wikipedia](#)

Elections

There is no elected government currently in place. Under the transitional charter, elections have been officially postponed to July 2029, and Captain Traoré will be eligible to stand. The Bertelsmann Transformation Index assesses that there will be no free and fair elections, and no democratically elected representatives with effective power to govern, before that date.

Source: [BTI 2026 Country Report: Burkina Faso — Bertelsmann Stiftung](#)

Leaving ECOWAS, and the Alliance of Sahel States

Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger announced their intention to leave the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in January 2024, after the bloc threatened military intervention over the 2023 coup in Niger. Their withdrawal became formally effective on 29 January 2025. The three countries instead formed the Alliance of Sahel States (AES), a confederation with its own biometric passport, and have deepened security and economic ties with Russia, China, Turkey and Iran while distancing themselves from former Western partners, including France.

Source: [Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso officially quit ECOWAS — VOA News](#)

For what this means in practice for travel, trade and movement between AES states and the rest of West Africa, Ria's Colony has a dedicated explainer: [What Does It Mean to Leave ECOWAS? Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger Explained](#).

The traditional layer of government: the Moro Naba

Alongside the modern state, Burkina Faso's Mossi kingdoms left behind a living institution: the Moro Naba, the traditional ruler of the Mossi people, still holds court in Ouagadougou. Every Friday morning, a centuries-old ceremony called the “false departure” is performed at his palace — a horse is presented to him as though for a journey, and he turns it away. The Moro Naba has no formal political power over the modern state, but the institution has survived colonial rule, independence, Sankara's revolutionary government and every coup since.

Source: [Burkina Faso: The Land of Upright People — Ria's Colony](#)

History in Brief

Long before Burkina Faso existed as a country, the Mossi built powerful kingdoms across the central part of what is now the country, centred on Ouagadougou, Yatenga and Tenkodogo — each with its own ruler, royal advisers, provincial chiefs and cavalry. That structure of governance helped the Mossi kingdoms stay independent for centuries, resisting repeated attempts by Muslim-led states to bring them under outside religious and political control. The territory was also home to many other peoples — the Bobo, Bwa, Gurunsi, Senufo, Lobi, Dagara and Fulani among them — who organised their societies differently: some through kings and chiefs, others through village elders, age groups or religious societies.

Colonial period

French colonial expansion reached the region in the late 19th century. The territory became the French colony of Upper Volta in 1919, was dissolved and divided among neighbouring French colonies in 1932, and was re-established in 1947. Burkina Faso (then Upper Volta) became independent from France on 5 August 1960.

Thomas Sankara (1983–1987)

In 1983, a young army captain named Thomas Sankara took power. His government introduced sweeping changes to healthcare, women's rights, local production and government spending, and in 1984 renamed the country Burkina Faso — combining *burkina* from Mòoré and *faso* from Dioula, generally translated as “land of upright/incorruptible people.” The name reflected the society Sankara said he wanted to build: one where officials acted with integrity and the country relied more on its own people and resources. In November 1984, his government ran a nationwide vaccination campaign that reached roughly 2.56 million children against measles, meningitis and yellow fever in just 15 days — later cited by the World Health Organization as a model of what a coordinated campaign could achieve.

Sankara was assassinated in a 1987 coup led by his former ally Blaise Compaoré, who then governed for 27 years. Sankara's ideas — self-reliance, anti-corruption, women's rights, African political independence — continued to shape political conversation across Africa long after his death.

From Compaoré to today

Compaoré was removed from power by a popular uprising in 2014. The years since have been marked by growing jihadist violence spilling over from Mali from around 2015 onward, and by repeated changes of government: a 2022 coup brought Lieutenant-Colonel Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba to power in January, and a second coup the same year installed Captain Ibrahim Traoré in September 2022, who remains interim president. Damiba was extradited from Togo in January 2026 to face charges of plotting a further coup.

Source: [Burkina Faso: The Land of Upright People — Ria's Colony: 2026 in Burkina Faso — Wikipedia](#)

People, Languages & Religion

Ethnic groups

Burkina Faso is home to roughly sixty ethnic groups. The Mossi are the largest, concentrated mainly in the central regions around Ouagadougou; their language, Mòoré, is among the most widely spoken local languages. The Fulani, a West African people whose communities extend across Nigeria, Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso, are numerous in the north and are historically associated with livestock keeping and pastoralism. The Gurunsi, Senufo, Bobo, Bwa, Lobi and Dagara are concentrated largely in the west and southwest, each with their own languages, music, dance, weaving and mask traditions.

Languages

French remains the official language, used in government, formal education and public life. Dioula is widely used for trade and commerce, particularly around Bobo-Dioulasso. Alongside these, more than 60 local languages are spoken across the country's different communities.

Religion

Islam is the largest religion, spread through centuries of trade and contact with Muslim communities; it took longer to become established among the Mossi, partly because Mossi rulers resisted outside religious and political control. Christianity has a substantial following, particularly in parts of the south and west where missionary activity expanded during the colonial period. Indigenous religious traditions — mask ceremonies, communication with spirits, farming rituals, ancestor veneration, and life-stage rites — remain an important part of cultural and ceremonial life, especially in the west and southwest. In practice, religious life is often layered: people who identify as Muslim or Christian frequently also take part in family and cultural ceremonies rooted in older indigenous traditions.

Source: [Burkina Faso: The Land of Upright People — Ria's Colony](#)

A note on the Fulani and the conflict

Some armed groups have recruited Fulani men, particularly in areas where pastoral communities have long-running disputes with local authorities. That does not mean Fulani communities as a whole are part of the insurgency: Fulani civilians have themselves been killed, displaced, and accused of supporting jihadists purely on the basis of ethnicity, and both government forces and civilian militias have been accused of violence against Fulani communities. Understanding this distinction matters for anyone reporting on, working in, or travelling to the region.

Food & Drink

Tô — a thick, smooth porridge made from millet, sorghum or corn flour — is the base of many everyday meals, served with a sauce built from baobab leaf, okra or peanut, and eaten by tearing off a piece and dipping it into the sauce. Rice dishes, including a Burkinabè take on the regional riz gras (rice in a rich tomato sauce with meat or fish), are widely eaten too, especially at celebrations and in urban households.

Grilled meat — mutton and beef seasoned simply with salt and pepper and cooked over open charcoal, called brochettes when skewered — is sold from roadside stalls across Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso in the evenings. It's often eaten alongside dolo, a traditional beer brewed from red sorghum, largely by women who run dedicated dolo bars called cabarets — informal community gathering spots as much as places to drink.

Shea butter

Extracted from the nuts of the shea tree, which grows across much of the country's savanna, shea butter is both a cooking fat in many households and an economic backbone for rural women, who have historically driven its production and sale. That role is now the focus of numerous cooperative and fair-trade initiatives aimed at giving Burkinabè women a stronger position in the global shea market that supplies the international cosmetics and personal-care industry.

Source: [Burkina Faso: The Land of Upright People — Ria's Colony](#)

Music, Dance, Art & Craft

FESPACO — Africa's biggest film festival

Burkina Faso's most internationally recognised cultural export is arguably its film industry. FESPACO, the Panafrican Film and Television Festival of Ouagadougou, was founded in 1969 and is held every two years, bringing filmmakers, critics and audiences from across Africa and its diaspora to the capital. During FESPACO, screenings, concerts, exhibitions and public discussions turn Ouagadougou into a major meeting point for African cinema, and the Étalon de Yennenga remains one of the major prizes in African film.

Music

The balafon, a wooden xylophone with calabash resonators, is especially important in western Burkina Faso, including among the Bobo. Different communities have their own musical traditions built around drums, flutes, string instruments and other percussion for ceremonies, celebrations and everyday entertainment, and contemporary Burkinabè musicians increasingly blend these traditions with reggae, hip-hop and other African and international genres.

Dance

Contemporary dance companies such as Compagnie Salia ni Seydou have carried Burkinabè dance to international stages, drawing on West African dance traditions while exploring contemporary subjects.

Faso dan fani

Faso dan fani — a handwoven cotton cloth whose name refers to the homeland — became a powerful cultural and political symbol under Thomas Sankara, whose government required civil servants to wear it rather than imported fabric as part of a push for local production and self-reliance. Traditionally woven in narrow strips later joined together, the cloth's importance has continued well beyond the Sankara era: officials still promote it at state events, a 2023 proposal considered it for school uniforms, and a 2024 government initiative introduced Faso dan fani judicial robes.

Masks

Masks are a major part of Burkina Faso's artistic and cultural heritage, particularly among the Bobo and Bwa. They can represent humans, animals or spiritual figures and appear in initiation ceremonies, funerals, harvest ceremonies and performances. For the communities that use them, masks are not decorative objects — they can be connected to ancestors, spirits, initiation and the wellbeing of the community, which is worth remembering when such objects are displayed in museums or reproduced for visitors.

Source: [Burkina Faso: The Land of Upright People — Ria's Colony](#)

Festivals & Ceremonies

- **The Moro Naba “false departure” ceremony** — every Friday morning in Ouagadougou. A horse is brought before the Moro Naba as if for a journey, and he sends it away — a ritual understood as a lesson in restraint, listening to advisers, and putting responsibility before impulse. It has survived colonial rule, independence, Sankara's government and every coup since.
- **FESPACO** — the Panafrican Film and Television Festival of Ouagadougou, held every two years since 1969; one of Africa's most important film festivals.
- **Semaine Nationale de la Culture (SNC)** — National Culture Week, held every two years in Bobo-Dioulasso, bringing performers and artists from across the country together for competitions and exhibitions in music, dance, theatre, visual arts and traditional cuisine.
- **Mask ceremonies** — among the Bobo, Bwa and Gurunsi, tied to funerals, agricultural ceremonies and rites of passage; some knowledge involved is reserved for initiated community members.

Source: [Burkina Faso: The Land of Upright People — Ria's Colony](#)

SECTION 08

Where to Go

Burkina Faso is currently under Do Not Travel guidance from the US, UK and other governments (see Section 11) — the places below describe what the country holds culturally and geographically, not a current recommendation to visit. If and when conditions change, this is the map worth returning to.

Place / Region	What's there
Ouagadougou (capital)	Moro Naba Palace & Friday ceremony, National Museum, Grand Market, FESPACO venues, craft markets
Bobo-Dioulasso	The Grand Mosque (Sudano-Sahelian mudbrick architecture), the country's liveliest live-music scene, host city of Semaine Nationale de la Culture
Banfora & the Cascades region	Karfiguéla Waterfalls, the Dômes de Fabadougou (climbable sandstone domes), Lake Tengréla (pirogue rides, hippo spotting)
Sindou Peaks	A roughly 3km chain of dramatic sandstone rock formations near Banfora, sacred to the local Senufo people; hiking and rock scrambling
Loropéni Ruins	Burkina Faso's only UNESCO World Heritage Site — 11th-century stone fortifications tied to the trans-Saharan gold trade, the best-preserved of ten such fortresses in the Lobi area
Tiébébé	Painted Kassena royal court compounds with distinctive geometric mudwork — among West Africa's most striking vernacular architecture
Nazinga Game Ranch	A conservation area with elephants, antelope, warthogs and rich birdlife
Gorom-Gorom	A historic Sahel crossroads market town known for crafts, textiles and jewellery
W & Arli National Parks	Cross-border wildlife reserves in the east, part of the wider W-Arly-Pendjari (WAP) complex shared with Benin and Niger

Source: [Tourism in Burkina Faso — Wikipedia](#)

SECTION 09

Visas & Entry for Tourists

All information below is taken directly from Burkina Faso's official e-visa authority, Visa Burkina (a service of the Ministry of Security / Direction Générale de la Police Nationale), currently as of September 2026. Visa fees and rules can change — always confirm on the official portal before you pay for or book anything.

The official channel

Burkina Faso requires all foreign nationals to apply for an entry visa through the electronic visa system. There is no legitimate way around this — apply only at the official portal or embassy, never through unofficial resale sites that inflate the government fee. Official applicant portal: applicant.visaburkina.bf. Official information portal: visaburkina.bf.

Entry documents required at the border (every visitor)

- A passport or laissez-passer / recognised refugee travel document
- A valid entry visa, visa agreement, permit or residence permit (unless exempted)
- A health record that complies with International Health Regulations (this is where your yellow fever certificate is checked — see Section 12)
- A return transport ticket, or a deposit, or an exemption from the repatriation deposit
- A completed, dated and signed border information sheet

Source: [Burkina Faso entry conditions — Visa Burkina \(official\)](#)

Short-stay visa (tourism, business, family visit) — up to 90 days

Required documents: a valid passport; a completed, dated and signed application form; two recent colour passport photos on a white background (3.5 x 4.5 cm); proof of the reason for your stay; a medical certificate confirming you are free of contagious disease; a health insurance certificate covering your stay; and proof of payment of stamp duty.

Visa type	Single entry (F CFA)	Multiple entry (F CFA)	Notes
Express visa	104,500	—	For emergency travel
Tourist visa	33,000	55,000	Hotel reservation required
Business visa	77,000	93,500	—
Conference / Studies / Training / Visit visa	55,000	71,500	—
Cooperation visa	44,000	79,500	—

Source: [Entry visas to Burkina Faso: the short-term visa — Visa Burkina \(official\)](#)

At current exchange rates

As an approximate guide only (rates move daily — always check a live converter before you pay): a single-entry Tourist visa at 33,000 F CFA works out to roughly US \$57 / £45 / €50 at mid-2026 rates. Always pay the exact F CFA or the portal's quoted equivalent, not a rounded third-party estimate.

Source: [West African CFA franc exchange rates — GeoCountries](#)

Long-stay visa — more than 90 days

Required documents are the same as the short-stay list, plus a certificate of support from someone in Burkina Faso or proof of sufficient income for the length of your stay.

Visa type	Cost (F CFA)
Business visa	187,000
Conference / Studies / Training / Visit visa	110,000
Cooperation visa	77,000

Source: [Entry visas to Burkina Faso: the long-term visa — Visa Burkina \(official\)](#)

Three ways to apply

- **Online (e-Visa)** — apply and pay at applicant.visaburkina.bf; you'll typically hear back within a few business days by email.
- **At an embassy or consulate** — submit in person and pay the visa fee in cash (no surcharge) or by card/electronic wallet (processing surcharge applies); return after 72 hours for the decision.
- **At the border** — possible in some circumstances via immigration services, but arriving without a pre-approved e-visa is the highest-risk, least reliable option and is not recommended for tourists.

Source: [Get your visa online / at the embassy — Visa Burkina \(official\)](#)

A practical tip from third-party visa services

Independent visa agencies (iVisa, VisaHQ and others) note the same core document list — valid passport, passport photo, proof of accommodation, and a yellow fever vaccination certificate — and recommend applying at least two weeks before travel. These services can be convenient but charge a service fee on top of the government fee; the official portal above is always the cheapest route if you're comfortable applying yourself.

Source: [Burkina Faso eVisa — iVisa](#)

SECTION 10

Relocation & Long-Stay

“Relocation” to Burkina Faso, in practical terms, means securing the long-stay visa described in Section 9, then converting that status into a residence permit (carte de séjour) once you're in the country — the long-stay visa itself is not indefinite. Given the current security and travel-advisory picture (Section 11), Ria's Colony's honest guidance is that this is not a moment most people should be actively planning a personal relocation to Burkina Faso; the process below is provided for completeness, for people who have an existing, specific reason to be there (a posting, a family tie, an NGO or diplomatic assignment) and are proceeding with full awareness of the risk.

The route, step by step

- Secure a long-stay visa before travel (Business, Conference/Studies/Training/Visit, or Cooperation — see fee table in Section 9), which requires proof of support or sufficient income for your intended stay.
- On arrival, register your presence and, where your purpose requires it, apply for a residence permit / carte de séjour through the immigration authorities (the Direction Générale de la Police Nationale handles migration matters).
- If you intend to work, note that a short-stay visa does not give the right to work — prior authorisation from the minister in charge of labour is required, and this is a separate process from the visa itself.
- Budget for a certificate of medical fitness (proof you are not carrying a contagious disease) and health insurance covering your stay — both are required documents, not optional extras.
- Keep your passport valid well beyond your planned stay and carry your printed e-visa or permit at all times; it is checked on both entry and exit.

Source: [Entry visas to Burkina Faso: the long-term visa — Visa Burkina \(official\)](#)

What it costs to live there

Burkina Faso remains, on paper, an inexpensive place to live by international standards — but “cheap” and “easy” are not the same thing right now, given the security situation. For budgeting purposes:

Average net monthly salary (Ouagadougou)	≈ US \$624
1-bedroom apartment, city centre	≈ US \$490/month (≈ \$297 outside the centre)
3-bedroom apartment, city centre	≈ US \$1,226/month (≈ \$735 outside the centre)
Basic utilities, 85m² apartment	≈ US \$166/month

Inexpensive restaurant meal	≈ US \$8
Mid-range 3-course meal for two	≈ US \$27
Legal minimum wage (SMIG)	30,684 F CFA/month (≈ €47), set in 2018 and unchanged since

Source: [Cost of Living in Ouagadougou 2026 — Wise](#)

Source: [Cost of Living in Burkina Faso — Africarrieres \(2026\)](#)

A World Bank price-level comparison puts everyday prices in Burkina Faso at roughly 37% of US levels, meaning local-currency spending goes about 2.7 times as far as the same amount would in the United States — useful context if you're budgeting against a foreign salary or savings.

Source: [Burkina Faso Cost of Living & Relocation for UN Staff — UNjobnet](#)

Safety: The Good, the Bad & the Ugly

Ria's Colony believes in giving people the full, honest picture — good, bad and ugly — before they make a decision. On Burkina Faso, the picture is difficult, and we're not going to soften it.

The Good

- The capital, Ouagadougou, functions day to day: government offices, the airport, hotels, markets and the FESPACO infrastructure all continue to operate.
- Burkinabè hospitality and cultural life — the Friday Moro Naba ceremony, FESPACO, National Culture Week, the country's music and craft scenes — remain genuinely vibrant and continue despite the conflict.
- The e-visa and entry system is functional, clearly documented and consistently enforced by the official Visa Burkina portal.
- The economy has grown at a healthy clip on paper — GDP growth of roughly 4.3–4.4% in 2024–2025 — as the government has pursued industry nationalisation and debt clearance, even as the security situation has worsened.

Source: [BTI 2026: Burkina Faso — Bertelsmann Stiftung](#); [Economy of Burkina Faso — Wikipedia](#)

The Bad

- Burkina Faso has faced a serious jihadist insurgency since roughly 2015, when armed groups expanded from neighbouring Mali. Groups affiliated with al-Qaeda (JNIM) and the Islamic State (ISGS/Islamic State Sahel Province) are active across large parts of the country.
- More than two million people have been displaced from their homes, and insecurity has made it difficult for many communities to farm, attend school, travel safely, or reach healthcare.
- A state of emergency remains in force in the Centre-Est, Est, Centre-Nord, Nord, Boucle du Mouhoun, Sahel, Hauts-Bassins and Cascades regions, giving security forces expanded powers to search, restrict movement and detain people of interest.
- There is no elected government, political parties have been dissolved, press freedom is heavily restricted, and civil society organisations have been shut down.

Source: [Foreign travel advice: Burkina Faso — GOV.UK \(FCDO\)](#)

The Ugly

- As of 2026, JNIM operates or holds territory in roughly 11 of Burkina Faso's 13 regions outside the capital, with reporting suggesting extremist groups hold influence over as much as 60% of the country's territory. JNIM alone conducted more than 500 attacks nationwide in 2025 (SITE Intelligence Group), with 512 reported casualties from JNIM violence between January and April 2026 alone.
- The northern city of Djibo has been under blockade by JNIM-affiliated groups since 17 February 2022, forcing authorities to airlift in supplies; its population reportedly swelled from around 30,000 to about 300,000 as displaced people fled there for safety. At least 40 towns and villages, mainly in the Centre-Nord, Est, Nord and Sahel regions, were under blockade by armed groups by the end of 2024, affecting up to two million people.
- In May 2025, JNIM fighters overran a military base near Djibo, killing an estimated 200 soldiers — one of the deadliest single attacks of the conflict.
- Terrorists and armed groups actively target foreigners for kidnap-for-ransom. The US State Department, UK FCDO, Australian and Canadian governments all currently hold Burkina Faso at their highest-severity travel warning.
- The Liptako-Gourma tri-border area shared by Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger now accounts for more than half of all terrorism-related deaths recorded worldwide, according to the Council on Foreign Relations' Global Conflict Tracker.

Source: [Is Mali about to fall to al-Qaeda affiliate JNIM? — Al Jazeera](#); [Terror Groups Pressure Sahel Capitals — Africa Defense Forum](#); [JNIM Blockades Bamako Fuel Supply as Sahel Deaths Top Half of Global Terror Toll — Rio Times](#)

Official travel guidance, in the words of the source

United States (State Department, current): “Do not travel to Burkina Faso for any reason due to crime, kidnapping, terrorism, and health” — its most severe rating, Level 4.

United Kingdom (FCDO, current): “FCDO advises against all travel to Burkina Faso,” citing terrorist attacks, terrorist kidnap and an unstable political situation. There is no British Embassy in Burkina Faso; consular support is provided from Accra, Ghana, and cannot be delivered in person.

Both governments are explicit: do not rely on your government to evacuate you if the situation deteriorates. Have your own departure plan, keep documents current, and monitor local reporting.

Source: [Travel Advisory: U.S. Embassy Ouagadougou — U.S. Department of State](#)

Source: [Burkina Faso travel advice — GOV.UK \(FCDO\)](#)

A note for anyone still travelling for essential reasons

Some people travel to Burkina Faso despite this guidance — for diplomatic, humanitarian, journalistic or family reasons. If that's you: enrol with your embassy's travel-registration programme (the US STEP programme, for example), limit movement outside the capital, avoid places frequented by foreigners (hotels, restaurants, places of worship, mining-site areas), keep evacuation plans that don't depend on government assistance, and carry evidence of comprehensive travel and medical evacuation insurance — noting that many standard policies exclude Level-4/advises-against destinations, so check the small print before you rely on one.

Source: [Burkina Faso — Travel Advisory Level 4: Do Not Travel — U.S. Embassy in Burkina Faso](#)

Health & Vaccination

Required for entry

A yellow fever vaccination certificate is checked at the border as part of the health record required under International Health Regulations, and is listed as a required document by the official visa process and by every visa-facilitation service reviewed for this guide. Get vaccinated well ahead of travel — most yellow fever vaccines require 10 days before they're considered valid for entry purposes.

Source: [Burkina Faso entry conditions — Visa Burkina \(official\)](#); [Burkina Faso eVisa — VisaHQ](#)

What to know about care inside the country

The US State Department's current advisory specifically flags health as a reason not to travel: medical services for routine and emergency procedures are limited; health facilities exist in major cities but are harder to find in rural areas; public clinics lack basic resources and supplies; patients must cover all costs of transfer between hospitals themselves; hospital-based care is available only through government institutions; and psychological and psychiatric services are limited even in larger cities.

Source: [Travel Advisory: U.S. Embassy Ouagadougou, May 4 2026 — U.S. Department of State](#)

Also worth arranging before you go

- Comprehensive travel and medical evacuation insurance — check explicitly whether your policy covers Level-4/adverse-against-all-travel destinations, since many standard policies exclude them.
- A pre-travel consultation with a travel medicine clinic for malaria prophylaxis and any other regionally recommended vaccinations (routine immunisations, hepatitis A/B, typhoid and meningitis are commonly discussed for the wider Sahel region — confirm current recommendations with a clinician or your national travel-health authority, as these are medical decisions this guide won't make for you).
- A basic first-aid kit and any personal prescription medication in its original packaging, given limited pharmacy stock outside major cities.

Money, Currency & Cost of Living

Burkina Faso uses the West African CFA franc (XOF), shared with seven other West African states (Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo). The XOF is pegged to the euro at a fixed rate and issued by the Central Bank of West African States (BCEAO).

Approximate rate, mid-2026	1 USD ≈ 574 XOF · 1 GBP ≈ 770 XOF (indicative only — rates move daily; check a live converter before travelling or sending money)
GDP (nominal, 2025)	≈ US \$27.06 billion
GDP per capita (nominal, 2025)	≈ US \$1,110
Inflation (CPI, 2024)	4.2%
Population below the national poverty line	40.1% (2014 data, most recent available)

Source: [Currency in Burkina Faso — XOF — 247CountryInfo](#); [Economy of Burkina Faso — Wikipedia](#)

What things cost, roughly

Item	Approximate cost
2-star hotel room	≈ US \$39 / night
3-star hotel room	≈ US \$64 / night
4-star hotel room	≈ US \$122 / night
5-star hotel room	≈ US \$182 / night
Inexpensive restaurant meal	≈ US \$8
Mid-range 3-course meal for two	≈ US \$27
1-bedroom flat, Ouagadougou city centre	≈ US \$490/month

Source: [Burkina Faso Prices 2026 — World-Prices \(HikersBay data\)](#)

Overall, everyday costs in Burkina Faso run well below US and UK levels — food is roughly 43% cheaper and restaurant dining roughly 73% cheaper than the United States, according to aggregated pricing data — but wages are correspondingly low, and over 80% of the workforce operates in the informal economy, where incomes vary widely and are rarely captured in official statistics.

Source: [Cost of Living in Burkina Faso — Africarrieres \(2026\)](#)

Getting There & Getting Around

By air

Ouagadougou's Thomas Sankara International Airport (OUA) is the country's main gateway. International service has thinned considerably as the security situation has worsened: Air France suspended its direct Paris route in January 2026, and remaining carriers such as Brussels Airlines have moved to reduced schedules subject to ongoing security assessment. Always reconfirm your specific flight's operational status directly with the airline close to your travel date, since Sahel routings change with little notice.

Source: [Burkina Faso Travel Advisory Warning 2026 — Travel Warning Check](#)

By road

Overland border crossings with all six neighbouring countries exist but are subject to frequent, sometimes unannounced closures due to insecurity, and the FCDO and State Department both discourage road travel outside the capital. Within AES member states (Mali and Niger), Burkina Faso's exit from ECOWAS does not currently change day-to-day border mechanics for AES citizens, who continue to enjoy free movement under interim arrangements — but non-AES nationals should not assume ECOWAS-era rules still apply and should check current requirements before any overland trip.

Source: [What Does It Mean to Leave ECOWAS? — Ria's Colony](#)

Within Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso

Taxis (shared and private) and private minibuses are the main forms of local transport; agree fares before you get in, as meters are not standard. Both official advisories recommend limiting movement after dark and avoiding predictable routines.

SECTION 15

Etiquette & Practical Tips

- Greetings matter. Take time with hellos and small talk about family and health before moving to business — rushing a greeting can read as rude.
- Dress modestly, particularly outside the capital and in the more religiously conservative north; cover shoulders and knees as a default, especially at religious or ceremonial sites.
- Ask before photographing people, ceremonies or masks. As explained in Section 6, masks and ceremonial objects can carry deep spiritual significance for the communities that use them — treat them accordingly, not as photo props.
- Use your right hand (or both hands) to give and receive things, including money and food; the left hand is traditionally considered unclean for this purpose in much of West Africa.
- French is the practical working language for officials, hotels and formal settings; a few words of Mòoré or Dioula go a long way as a courtesy in everyday interactions.
- Bargaining is expected in markets, but keep it good-natured; aggressive haggling is considered poor form.
- Public displays of affection are uncommon and best avoided.
- If you're in the country during the state of emergency in the regions listed in Section 11, follow local instructions on curfews and movement restrictions precisely — security forces have expanded search and detention powers there.

Source: [Foreign travel advice: Burkina Faso — GOV.UK \(FCDO\)](#)

Full Source List

Every fact, figure and quote in this guide traces back to one of the sources below. We've grouped them by topic so you can go straight to what matters to you. Rates, fees, advisories and security assessments change — treat the date next to each as the point it was last checked, and re-verify anything time-sensitive before you act on it.

Ria's Colony

Source: [About Ria's Colony](#)

Source: [Burkina Faso: The Land of Upright People](#)

Source: [What Does It Mean to Leave ECOWAS? Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger Explained](#)

Source: [Exploring the Cultures of Africa: 54 Countries, One Continent \(series\)](#)

Government, politics & regional bodies

Source: [List of heads of state of Burkina Faso — Wikipedia](#)

Source: [Cabinet of Burkina Faso — Wikipedia](#)

Source: [National Assembly \(Burkina Faso\) — Wikipedia](#)

Source: [Senate \(Burkina Faso\) — Wikipedia](#)

Source: [2026 in Burkina Faso — Wikipedia](#)

Source: [BTI 2026 Country Report: Burkina Faso — Bertelsmann Stiftung](#)

Source: [BTI 2026 Dashboard: Burkina Faso — Bertelsmann Stiftung](#)

Source: [Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso officially quit ECOWAS — VOA News](#)

Source: [Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger's Withdrawal from ECOWAS is now a reality — ECOWAS \(official\)](#)

Visas, entry & official immigration information

Source: [Visa Burkina — official visa portal \(home\)](#)

Source: [Apply for an e-Visa — applicant.visaburkina.bf \(official\)](#)

Source: [Burkina Faso entry conditions — Visa Burkina \(official\)](#)

Source: [Short-term visa & fees — Visa Burkina \(official\)](#)

Source: [Long-term visa & fees — Visa Burkina \(official\)](#)

Source: [Get your visa online — Visa Burkina \(official\)](#)

Source: [Get your visa at the embassy — Visa Burkina \(official\)](#)

Source: [Frequently Asked Questions — Visa Burkina \(official\)](#)

Source: [Burkina Faso eVisa — iVisa](#)

Source: [Burkina Faso Visa — VisaHQ](#)

Safety & travel advisories

Source: [Travel Advisory: U.S. Embassy Ouagadougou, May 4 2026 — U.S. Department of State](#)

Source: [Burkina Faso — Travel Advisory Level 4: Do Not Travel — U.S. Embassy in Burkina Faso](#)

Source: [Burkina Faso Travel Advisory — U.S. Department of State \(travel.state.gov\)](#)

Source: [Burkina Faso travel advice — GOV.UK \(FCDO\)](#)

Source: [Burkina Faso — safety and security — GOV.UK \(FCDO\)](#)

Source: [Is Mali about to fall to al-Qaeda affiliate JNIM? — Al Jazeera](#)

Source: [Terror Groups Pressure Sahel Capitals — Africa Defense Forum](#)

Source: [JNIM Blockades Bamako Fuel Supply as Sahel Deaths Top Half of Global Terror Toll — Rio Times](#)

Money, cost of living & economy

Source: [Cost of Living in Ouagadougou 2026 — Wise](#)

Source: [Cost of Living in Burkina Faso — Africarrieres \(2026\)](#)

Source: [Burkina Faso Cost of Living & Relocation for UN Staff — UNjobnet](#)

Source: [Currency in Burkina Faso — XOF — 247CountryInfo](#)

Source: [West African CFA franc \(XOF\) live rates — GeoCountries](#)

Source: [Burkina Faso Prices 2026 — World-Prices \(HikersBay data\)](#)

Source: [Economy of Burkina Faso — Wikipedia](#)

Places, culture & tourism

Source: [Tourism in Burkina Faso — Wikipedia](#)

Source: [Geography of Burkina Faso — Wikipedia](#)

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