

BASIC INFORMATION

Address

Catholic Relief Services - Mali
Batimat Aliou Diarra, ACI 2000 Hamdallaye,
Bamako, BP E3256, Mali ([link to map](#))

Phones

Bamako 223-2023-4457/223-2022-8730
Sevaré 223-21420436/ 21421281
Timbuktu: 223- 76991881/89926383
Gao: 223- 76213230/97774383

Hours

Monday-Thursday 8 AM to 5 PM
Friday 8 AM to 12:30 PM

Security

All of Mali is at Security Level III, following a series of high profile terrorist attacks, including in the capital Bamako. The North and Center of the country face armed insurgency and frequent attacks against UN and Mali armed forces.

Life in Bamako is by and large safe, with crime consisting mainly of pick-pocketing around large markets and occasional carjacking and residence/office break-ins by night. Please avoid wearing or carrying valuables, especially when walking alone. Walking at night is not recommended.

Visits to Mopti, Timbuktu and Gao regions



TRAVEL TIPS

Language

The official national language is French, but many people only speak local languages. In Bamako and large towns, some people speak English, particularly around tourist sites, but do not count on it.

Money

CRS visitors are requested to take per diem from their home offices before arriving in Mali. ATMs accept debit cards and there are a few ATMs within walking distance of the office. Credit cards are not widely accepted. If you need to change money, CRS staff can help. The current rate (Dec 2017) is FCFA 580 to \$1.

Health

Mali has been environmental sanitation problem, yet precautionary measures remain: eating food sold on the road is not recommended, Proof of Yellow Fever vaccination is required for entry to Mali. Visitors should drink only boiled/filtered or bottled water and should avoid raw, uncooked fruits and vegetables. Malaria is prevalent in Mali, and if you feel flu-like symptoms, chills, and fever, you should seek immediate medical attention. Avoiding malaria with mosquito nets and repellent is recommended. Access to good healthcare is limited, particularly outside Bamako. In case of evacuation, CRS international staff and most visitors are covered by SOS insurance. If you have a medical emergency, refer to the Constant Companion.

Packing

Many websites offer tips for packing for Africa. All visitors are required to have a valid Mali visa. Sunscreen and insect repellent are necessities, with a hat recommended for daytime use and closed shoes and socks for nights. Sunglasses and an extra pair of prescription glasses are essential. Prescription medicines should be brought in. Mali is a Muslim country, but without the stricter dress requirements of the Middle East. Western men wear pants and button-down shirts, while Western women wear slacks or long skirts and blouses. Malian men and women alike wear long-flowing gowns. You should pack a jacket or sweater for cooler evenings.

Public Transportation

In Bamako, yellow taxis with red license plates average FCFA 1,000 to 2,000 per trip. It is necessary to negotiate fares. Other transport is available, but red-plated taxis are recommended.

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CRS Regional Office

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Other

- Police dial 17
- Fire Department dial 18
- U.S. Embassy 2070-2300
- U.S. Embassy (emergency) 6675-2860
- French Embassy 4497-5757
- Bamako Airport 2020-2704
- Air France 2022-2212

Climate

Mali is located within the Sahel region of Africa. June to October is the rainy season, when temperatures range from 70-95 degrees Fahrenheit. Rainfall can reach 350 mm during the month of August, causing extensive flooding in the Niger river delta. December to April is the dry season, with temperatures ranging from 65-115 degrees Fahrenheit. Humidity is relatively high year-round in the south. Most buildings and hotels have air conditioning, but access to air conditioning is difficult in remote areas. The sun remains strong throughout the year, with sunrise towards 6:30 AM and sunset towards 6:30 PM.

Food

The staples of the Malian diet are rice, millet, and corn. Thick stews of cooked onions, peanuts, or potato leaves are often poured over rice, with pieces of chicken, fish, or beef added. Flour is prepared as porridge and dipped in a leaf or similar vegetable sauce. In the northern areas, milk, dates, and wheat are important foods. The *bissap* is a bright red and common drink made from hibiscus flowers that are boiled. Restaurants in Mali range from inexpensive establishments offering local cuisine to expensive international cuisine found at upscale hotels and fancier restaurants. Restaurants change frequently, so please ask a CRS staff member for recommendations. In annex to this VB some leisure and recreation areas to know.

Accommodation

Following the terrorist attacks on the Byblos hotel in Sevaré, and the Radisson Blu in Bamako, CRS prioritizes CRS guest houses for visitors. If CRS operated Guest House rooms are not available, lodging will be provided in safe and low-key hotels. These are modest, but specifically vetted to be safe. All lodging includes electricity and running water, most with hot water. Most CRS provided lodging will include air conditioners. Expensive personal items like cameras and laptops are best keep with you at all times.

Communication

On arrival, a CRS driver with a CRS sign will meet you at the SENOU international airport of Bamako and will provide you with a pre-paid cellphone and the printed copies of the Constant Companion and the visitor briefing. The local communication network in Bamako and other major towns, and along key roads is mostly good. CRS office also has a good internet connection.