

Textiles Abroad

Journey to West Africa and Far Flung Places

By: Judi Arndt

Since seeing Estelle Carlsen's slides of her trip to Ghana, Burkina Faso, and Mali I have dreamed of traveling to these places myself. All three countries have a rich textile tradition, and I finally found a trip that concentrated on these traditions.



Our trip began in Accra with a visit to a casket making shop where they make caskets in the form of Coke bottles to chickens. From Accra we ventured to the Cape Coast area home of fishing villages, bush rats and Elmina Fort home of the dungeons that were a dark reminder of our slave

history. The next day led us to a part of the trip I was not looking forward to. We arrived early morning to be the first group to walk the 350 meter rope bridge over the rain forest canopy at Kakum National park. It was a piece of cake once I got started.



The next day found us on the road to Kumasi, heart of the Ashanti culture with its Adinkra (hand dyed and stamped), and hand woven Kente cloth. One of the high lights of this area was meeting a local chief and attending an Ashanti funeral (all of the mourners wear black and red Adinkra). All comers are

welcomed at a funeral as they believe the more people attending will make the persons entry into the next world more honorable.

We journeyed on to Burkina Faso to see the wonderfully graphic painted mud houses painted by the women of the villages. The women of this area also make beautiful baskets. The houses have an interesting small wall at the entrance to deter intruders. We headed



to Ouagadougou where we saw a wonderful Museum of Musical Instruments. Later that day we attended an Artisan's Colony where mud cloth, batik, and lost wax casting were being done.

BoBo-Dioulasso was our next stop. The highlight of this area was attending a Bwaba dancing mask performance staged in a village. Saw many of these flat masks for sale in other areas.



This village having its weekly market when we arrived which was an added benefit.

From Bobo we crossed over into Mali where we met our Bambara guide, Abdoulaye. The Niger River Festival was going on in Seguo. It is a music and art

festival. From Seguo we traveled to Mopti where we spent the longest time. From here we traveled to Djenne to see the largest mud Mosque. This area's market was teeming with Fulani (Cattle and Goat herders), Herbalists, textiles, and my favorite Turbaned Tuareg men. We visited with a master mud artist (Bogolan).

We embarked our 4 wheel drive vehicles for our journey to the Dogon country. This area presented everything from a visit to a male circumcision area, Hogan (spiritual leader),
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