

## West African Cities – Mali

Mali has very interesting cities. Let's find out about some of them. Let's find out about Bamako, Djenne and Timbuktu.

### Bamako

Bamako is the capital of Mali. It is a big city of more than 2 million people. It is getting bigger every year – it is a very successful city.

The city is on the river, the Niger River, and ships come to bring many products for business. The government and parliament of Mali are in Bamako.

There is a lot of business here. Industries like clothes, meat, metal are working here.

Bamako is an old city. People have lived here for hundreds of years. Bamako was the capital of the Mali Empire.

Bamako is a centre for learning. There were universities in Bamako a long time ago. There is a very big National Museum of Mali in Bamako. Tourists come to learn about the history of Mali.

There were roads to north Africa and Europe. There was a lot of business - people sold gold and cotton and salt to other countries.

The weather is very hot in Bamako. It is usually more than 30 degrees.

It has very good music. Tourists come to listen to the music. A famous musician Ali Farka Touré lived in Bamako.

Bamako is international too – it is a sister city of Sao Paulo in Brazil.

### Djenne

Djenne is a UNESCO World heritage Site. This means it is a special place, a very old place. It is one of the oldest cities in West Africa. People lived here more than 2000 years ago, in Djenne-Djenno.

The city is near the Bani River and in July the river floods and the city is an island. The weather is very hot and the rain only comes from June to September.

There are many old buildings to see, and a beautiful mosque. Djenne was a centre of Islamic learning and there was a lot of trade with Timbuktu and with Europe. People came to sell gold and salt.

You can buy interesting food and clothes in the market on Monday. And visit the special place called Nana Wangara.

### Timbuktu

Timbuktu is a very old city. It has a long history.

People started to live in Timbuktu about 1200 AD – hundreds of years ago.

Timbuktu was a rich city. It was a city of learning. The Sankore Madrasah was a centre of books and learning for all of Africa.

The city was part of the Mali Empire. People came to Timbuktu from many places in Africa. People came from Algeria, and Nigeria and Morocco. People came to Timbuktu to buy and sell food and clothes and animals.

The city built beautiful buildings – mosques and palaces. It built big walls around the city. Timbuktu had many wars with people from other places

Ali Farka Touré was born near Timbuktu. He loved Timbuktu. He said it is at the heart of the world.

Timbuktu is not a rich city now. There is not enough water, and there is too much sand from the Sahara desert. It is a small city – only about 33,000 people live here now. But it is still a beautiful city.

### New words for this article -

1	cotton	the material you use to make clothes
2	salt	something you put in your food, with pepper
3	palace	the beautiful house of the president or king/queen
4	musician	person who plays music

### Comprehension questions

- How many people live in Bamako?
- Which river is Bamako on?
- When did people start to live in Timbuktu?
- How many people live in Timbuktu now?
- What was the Sankore Madrasah?

**Comprehension questions**

1 more than 2 million people  
2 the Niger River  
3 about 1200 AD  
4 only about 33,000 people live in Timbuktu now  
5 It was a centre of books and learning for all of Africa.

**Answers**