

I was born and raised in Baltimore, Maryland and although Maryland is technically a southern state, it's not the state that first comes to mind when talking about southern hospitality. Now Georgia, on the other hand, is a state that many have agreed is the state that can boast as having the most southern hospitality. Southern hospitality is described as a way of making people feel welcome whether it's family, friends, or a stranger. It's a combination of qualities such as politeness, kindness, helpfulness, charm, charity, and of course homemade cooking with a side of sweet tea. Unexpected kindness is a part of everyday life in the south. Southern hospitality is definitely a "thing" in the American south and to experience it, is to know it, is to love it.



After nine months of COVID isolation and suffering from "notripphobia," I took an opportunity to travel across the Atlantic Ocean to visit family in the wonderful country of Senegal. While this was not my first trip to the capital city of Dakar, it had been almost 18 years since I last visited. Although I knew that Dakar had emerged as one of Africa's favorite cities to visit, it didn't take long for me to understand why. The multicultural, diverse city is full of vibrant arts and traditions. And, what stood out for me almost immediately was the strong southern hospitality vibe.



The unmistakable southern vibe is exponentially real in Senegal. I felt it in the way we were greeted by family and strangers alike. The conversations. The mannerisms. The Actions. It started within the family and extended throughout the community in which we had become a part. During my time in Dakar, we took a weekend get-a-way to the family beach house located about two hours outside of the city. While one would expect family to show hospitality to visiting family members, the experience I had at the beach house, and throughout my whole stay in Senegal, was so much more than what would be commonly expected. Everything from the willingness to go out

of the way to accommodate, help, entertain, serve, and yes- feed- was done with a natural sincerity that convinced me that this way of doing things was much more than a common courtesy. I have since learned that it is a way of life that is instilled in each generation and manifests in the day-to-day Senegalese life.



In episode eight of the Traveltude Podcast, Stephanie Nails Kane was my guest. She emigrated from the U.S. and has been living in Senegal for 35 years. She is a wife, mother of 4 beautiful daughters, and has 3 lovely grandchildren. Stephanie is the founder and director of the Senegalese American Bilingual school. She is also my cousin by marriage. During the interview, Stephanie talked about Teranga, a Wolof word when roughly translated means "good hospitality." She explained that Taranga is where southern hospitality comes from and when interacting with Senegalese, you come to know to extent to which they will go for their guests. So yes, it all began to make sense to me. I came to understand and experience the fundamental aspects of Teranga which include respect, community, solidarity and sharing. I can attest to the warmth and inclusion of the Senegalese society. It is no wonder that not only was I easily able to embrace the Senegalese culture, I felt at home. Teranga will do that to you.

