

# Travel diary

## IVORY COAST



Supporting Alliance for African Mobility

**FROM:** Spain, Asociación Mundus and Germany, EVBB

**TO:** Ivory Coast, Don Bosco CPAR centre, Duékoué

10/04/2021 - 20/04/2021

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# Travel diary

## Ivory Coast

### Let's discover our two mobility experts

*Enrique Miana and Markus Espeter are the perfect team! Their expertise in mobility projects and their enthusiasm make them great SAAM ambassadors in Ivory Coast. Let's get to know them!*



#### MARKUS ESPETER

##### Project Manager (EVBB)

Markus is focused on Communications at the European Association of Institutes for Vocational Education partnering in the SAAM project for work package 4, the analysis of the African VET systems.

Previously, he had the privilege to gain a long term experience of more than 10 years with connections to associations in Sub Saharan Africa spending parts of it living on the ground for almost 2 years in Uganda. He is fascinated about the people, cultures and places of this beautiful continent. Therefore he is very much excited to be part of this project.

Founding a start-up in 2014 for the Manufacturing of Energy Saving Cookstoves for Developing and Emerging Countries, he has a special interest in the surroundings of the schools, especially families and their living conditions.

#### ENRIQUE MIANA

##### President of Asociación Mundus

As president in Mundus, he is involved in different parts of SAAM at an administrative and financial level, but also strategic. He has a lot of experience in VET field, as with youth projects. He is a mobility expert but also a counsellor for many aspects of SAAM.

He has been working for more than 20 years in the area of cooperation programs for private companies and public institutions as an expert consultant. Enrique is a recognized trainer by the executive Agency EACEA and the Erasmus + programme. He was for several years the general coordinator for mid-term evaluation training for EVS in Spain. He is also part of the REPLAY network that manages the EVS training cycle in Italy.



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# Travel diary

## Arriving in Ivory Coast

**Saturday, April 10th**

On Friday evening we were ready to begin our journey and we were very excited to finally meet the Salesian brothers and their colleagues in **Abidjan and Duékoué**. Checking again and again all the **travel regulations and documents** is exhausting but it is a very important step.



On Saturday, Markus started the journey **from Brussels by train** and Quique **from Madrid by airplane** and we met in Paris where we finally took our flight to **Abidjan**.

After a tough flight, wearing a mask for 6 hours and almost no moving, we made it. Stepping out of the plane, we felt it. The hot temperature, the humidity and also the smell. It is so different from many European places that it made us feel like **we had finally started our adventure**.



At the **airport**, we suffered some consequences of the pandemic, **having to deal with a strict bureaucratic process**, a situation that right now is **common in all the airports of the world**.

Finally we met **Father Paul** and he took us to the Salesians House, we arrived safe by 11:30pm. There, we enjoyed **some fantastic food (chicken, green vegetable sauce and fries)** and we had some rest.



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# Travel diary

## Duékoué, Ivory Coast

**Sunday, April 11th**

We started our day at 6 am for breakfast. We enjoyed some omelette and some hot water, milk and coffee powder. After our **morning coffee**, Father Paul took us to **airport** and said goodbye to us. Unfortunately, we will not meet him again on our way back as he will be on a mission to Burkina Faso. **What a kind first contact! Very much appreciated!**



Easy check at the **Abdijan Airport** showing our passport and the flight ticket and we started our second phase of our journey. After a quick discussion with our fellow passengers, we found out that **the plane works like a bus**, picking other passengers in the north of the country. We crossed the country first from South to North and then we continued to the West to finally land in the **small airport of Man**.

After a warm welcome by **Father Trésor**, we enjoyed a 1 hour car drive to **Duékoué**, a town of 200k inhabitants. For us Europeans, the car drive is rough because of the traffic and the conditions of the road. After arriving at the parish of Don Bosco, we were treated very nice with an **outstanding lunch**:



- **Salad** (Avocado, Tomato, Onions, Green Salad)
- **White Rice, Spaghetti, Tomatosauce**
- **Spinach with Fish**
- **Fried Pork**
- **Tomato Vegetable Sauce with Beef**
- **Dessert:** Mango / Papaya

And the best after such a long journey: We are delighted with **two cold beers**.

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# Travel diary

## Duékoué, Ivory Coast

### *Sunday, April 11th*

After the lunch, we went to our accommodation. Both of us have a small apartment with a **bedroom, bathroom** and another room with a **desk and TV**.

In the afternoon, we rested without a fixed agenda. It was Sunday and some music and singing made us curious about what was happening around. **Members of the church were celebrating worship**. After sneaking a bit from outside, a Salesian Sister gave us a sign to come in and we joined for some time. **We were very happy to be so warmly welcomed!**

Before dinner, we had a **quick work meeting** discussing the agenda for the week. Then, we met **Father Paul**, the director of the school, for the first time. He joined us for dinner and we had a relaxing chat with **good food, a cold drink and nice people**.

**A brilliant start to this expert mobility that was then treated with some good sleep!**



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# Travel diary

## Duékoué, Ivory Coast

### Monday, April 12th

The day started with a **canned food breakfast... and it was wonderful!** Don't underestimate the cans, the food was incredibly tasty and nice. Also, you must know that **refrigerators are not common here**, so they have other methods to preserve food. We also had **fresh grapes, mango, pineapple and papaya**. If we were thinking of losing some weight for the European summer, this was not the right place!



After breakfast, we visited **the Don Bosco CPAR centre**. The night before, we were announced that students were preparing something, but we did not expect such a **warm and nice welcoming event**. We were left speechless! The students were waiting for us at the entrance. One girl gave us a bracelet and guided us while we were all dancing and saying hello to everyone there.

### Travel with us!

In our social media, you can always follow our mobilities. We publish regular updates when we are on site. For instance, **you can watch the video of the welcoming event in the Don Bosco Centre**.



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# Travel diary

## Duékoué, Ivory Coast

### *Monday, April 12th*

In the centre, it was the first time that students hear about SAAM. At this initial stage of the project implementation, it is clear that face to face communication is key. **We tried to explain and summarize the basic highlights of SAAM.** In the afternoon, we had the chance to have a walk around the area and a lot of the students gave us a smile and said "bonsoir" to us. **It was very nice to see that they already recognized us!**

After the warm welcome, we had our first, very interesting, working meeting in the offices of the school direction with **Father Trésor, Father Blaise and Sister Yesenia.** Yesenia is from Ecuador and she joined the Parish some years ago. Due to her origine, she speaks Spanish, so she enriched the meeting with a brilliant mix of languages: **French, English and Spanish.** We managed to overcome the language barriers and we explained the SAAM project with the help of [the explanation video](#). We discussed about the **calendar**, the following **mobilities**, the purpose of the first staff mobility and we set up the **agenda for our visit with Father Trésor.**



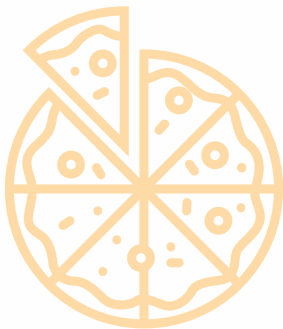
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# Travel diary

## Duékoué, Ivory Coast

### *Monday, April 12th*

The Don Bosco Center here in Duékoué is a small oasis. Imagine a small village built for the education and wellbeing of young people. The area of this Don Bosco centre includes a **boarding school zone, workshops, classrooms, a culture centre, a church, a dining room, a seminar room and many other things!** Alain, Head of the Staff, showed us the main spaces like **the Electricity, Mechanics & Carpentry section, the sports area or the student accomodation.**



For lunch, we enjoyed a **delicious pizza made by the Pastry section of the school.** As we liked it so much, we were very curious and looking forward to seeing and tasting more meals cooked by them.

In the afternoon, after lunch, we had some rest and we were also able to follow a session of **The Voyage** from there.

Then, we had a **second meeting** with the Don Bosco team (Father Tresor, Father Blaise, Father Paul and Father Jean Baptiste). We presented the SAAM project and talked about the importance of **Erasmus** and also the fact that this pilot is a **huge opportunity for the school and our organizations to cooperate in the future on other EU - Africa VET exchanges.** Enrique talked about his experience with Mundus and Markus explained his own experience as a “child of Erasmus”, having participated in the programme three times on his own and meeting dozens of wonderful people from all over Europe and beyond. This long and productive day ended with the most wonderful sunset and with a long and interesting conversation while enjoying some fish for dinner.



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# Travel diary

## Duékoué, Ivory Coast


**Tuesday, April 13th**

After breakfast, the morning started with a **meeting with all the school teachers** from all the specialities.

We explained to **Father Gerard** the need of giving information about the project not only to those students from VET sectors already involved but also to the rest of them: **mechanics, electritians, IT, pastry, carpentry or clothing manufacture.**

We started with an open talk. As expected, for 90% of the students it was the first time they heard not only about SAAM but about **international mobility** as an educative tool and resource for improving and fostering students competences and soft skills.

We mentioned the word '**ERASMUS**' many times and we hope that from now on they hear this word much more!

 We must be aware of the fact that Erasmus is over 35 years old in Europe and here it is just a newborn baby.



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# Travel diary

## Duékoué, Ivory Coast

### *Tuesday, April 13th*

After a break, we continued with the electricity and mechanic teachers. We had a **interesting talk to know more in detail how the classes are organized**, the number of students per class or the technical content of the classes.



We had an appointment with the **sisters of Don Bosco**. Entering their compound has something relaxing. We saw there big trees that must have been there for more than 30 years. Sister Yesenia welcomed us with her smile. One of the purposes of the SAAM exchange is widening our views and learning about other cultures. **After joining the sisters, we knew why this will be a full success**. Enjoying the expressions and opinions of six people from six different nations, **we had a fruitful rather informal discussion about views, our families, the time we spent in other countries and our religious views**. We ended the meeting with some blessings and a friendly picture in front of the sisters home.

### MORE MATERIAL

Watch here a video summary of the presentation with students.



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## Duékoué, Ivory Coast

*Tuesday, April 13th*

Then, we had the chance to visit the **city centre**. Kato, a teacher of the biggest public highschool in Duékoué, came with us. We saw a lot of **small wooden shops** that offer all kinds of goods: from snacks to car tyres. After the small touristic tour, we went to a bar to enjoy another **conversation with Kato**.



### DID YOU KNOW

 Duékoué is known as the “region of the 18 hills”.

You can recognize this by climbing one of the mounds. From there, you will be able to appreciate some of the hills and enjoy a beautiful general view from there.



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# Travel diary

## Duékoué, Ivory Coast

**Wednesday, April 14th**

Alain was our guide for the day. First, we visited the Employment Orientation Bureau.



Francis leads the service. Entrepreneurship, guiding and assistance have also a place at ETFP school. Francis distributes his time and tasks **offering guidance and orientation to the students**, once they start to arrive to the end of their student years.

Next, we went to the classes to explain the purpose of the project. We started our **presentations** in German and English, giving some keywords to find the right answers even though the **students** were not used to hearing these languages. **We managed to catch their attention and make them understand the purpose of our visit** with some activities that involved using our hands, our feets, painting on the blackboard or moving around the classroom.



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# Travel diary

## Duékoué, Ivory Coast

### *Wednesday, April 14th*

After a break, where we enjoyed a fresh and cold fruit salad prepared by the Pastry section students, we went to the **tailoring** section. **There, we found mainly girls.** When we finished the explanation, they took our measures and made an incredible shirt for each of us. **What a great and colourful gift!**



Then we had a **general meeting** with the whole school. **This helped us to better understand the profile of the students** that will be working with Saam in the near future. We even had time to do a **small simulation showing how a VET mobility in Erasmus works** and to debrief with them about **their thoughts** on the learning outcomes of it.

In the afternoon, we followed **the students' representative** while visiting his house and meeting his family.

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# Travel diary

## Duékoué, Ivory Coast

### Wednesday, April 14th

On our way back to the school, we made another spontaneous stop. The accountant of the school **Sylvain** invited us to his house.

In the evening, we went once again to **La Maison Mère**, which is already a beloved and familiar place to us, and we invited **Father Trésor and Sylvain** for a cold drink in order to evaluate our activities, solve unclear question and... also discuss about the Champions League and our favorite clubs in the national leagues of France, Germany and Spain.

### #VibingTogether

People in Ivory Coast love to put their stars and celebrities on the taxis and trucks. Seeing some huge pictures on the back of the taxis, we asked who was this one person that was everywhere. Next to the football players Messi and Drogba, there is place for the singer "**Petit Denis**", one of the most famous stars of the country. Please enjoy his songs in our **SAAM playlist**.



 [Find the SAAM playlist on Spotify.](#)

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# Travel diary

## Duékoué, Ivory Coast

### *Thursday, April 15th*

It can be said that on Wednesday, we finished the work related to school issues. Today, Thursday, we began the institutional work. We visited different VET education institutions in the area. **DRENET-FP (Direction Regionale de l'Education Nationale te de l'Enseignement Technique et de la Formation Professionnelle)** was the first one.

We visited the department of **technical education and VET**, which is part of **DRENET**. And we had an appointment with the director. We had a short talk with two representatives who ensured that the department is very much welcoming our actions with the school. We have returned the wishes and emphasized on the importance of Don Bosco in this project and how much we value the cooperation between the department and the school.



Later, we were hosted by another student and her family. **Hopefully a great candidate for the students mobilities!**



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# Travel diary

## Duékoué, Ivory Coast

### Friday, April 16th

On Friday, we met the **parents association**. Once, we briefly explained SAAM, we focused on the benefits it will have for the students: **enriching their personal experiences and having more opportunities on the labour market**. There was so time to answer questions and before finishing, we thanked each other for the effort and took a group photo.



Meeting with the parents association



The school makes a **break at 10 o'clock** everyday and we spent that time **tasting some wonderful fresh juices made from local fruits**. Markus can confirm that some of them are delicious but a bit spicy.

### BISSAP JUICE

Bissap is a drink made from the flower known as the Roselle. The sepals of the flower are infused in hot water leaving a pink, red, magenta or dark liquid.

The bissap has many benefits. For instance, it relieves stress and digestive disorders.



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# Travel diary

## Duékoué, Ivory Coast

### *Friday, April 16th*

We continued with a session with a **mixed group of students**. Activities like this are needed to confirm the **hopes, fears and expectations** teenagers and young students have when they imagine an intercultural challenge such as SAAM. **Besides, we enjoyed a lot talking to them!**



For lunch, Quique prepared a typical Spanish dish: **Gazpacho** for the community.

Then we were invited by a student who also works for the mission of Don Bosco. He knows **Father Trésor for a long time**. Being active at the **Bureau des Jeunes (the Office for Young People)**, he organizes events for the youth. When we asked him about his dream and plans for the future, he gives a clear answer: **He wants to be a missionary in the parish and beyond.**

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# Travel diary

## Duékoué, Ivory Coast

**Friday, April 16th**

On Friday, we received the official school T-shirts too and we could not be more grateful!



The next thing we did was having a refreshing drink with some of our new friends. What a good suggestion, Sylvain! Arriving by taxi, we found a **relaxing garden near the mountains** where people take their food and drink wine from a bar near the zone. We used this time to evaluate our experience in **Duékoué**. Then, after another ride by taxi, we reached our favorite place “**Maison de la Mère**” and we enjoyed a **cold drink and some deliciously spicy chicken**.

### DID YOU KNOW

The taxi cabs in Duékoué used to be green.

They chose this color because the region of Duékoué is a place full of plantations and agriculture areas.



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# Travel diary

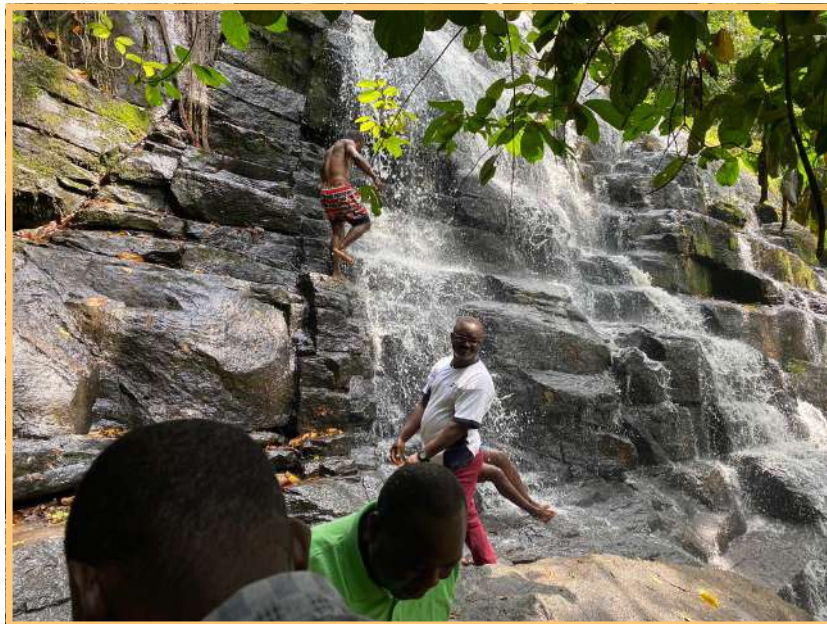
## Man, Ivory Coast

*Saturday, April 17th*

On Saturday morning, **our tourist tour around Man and the region began**. We enjoyed the wild landscape and we even waited at the forest with our friends to see some monkeys.



Continuing the fantastic adventure, we drove to the mountains to see the **waterfalls** of Man.



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# Travel diary

## Man, Ivory Coast

### *Saturday, April 17th*

After a long drive through the forest and the red road, we made it to the highest mountain of the region where they built in **1969** the **TV Tower**. Reaching the top of the tower we were gifted with a lovely view over the region of Man, even seeing the borders of Guinea and Burkina Faso.



We had lunch and we visited the **city of Man**. We saw the **craft market** and decided to buy some shoes and dresses for our family at home. After being back, our friend Richard had some nice chairs prepared for us to take them home with us as a beautiful souvenir. In the evening, we enjoyed a last "**Soixante-Cinq**" (**local beer**) in our favorite bar "**La Maison de la Mère**" and we said goodbye to our friends. When the time to say goodbye came, we said thank you for our **extraordinary time there** and we explained how grateful we were for being able to bring the SAAM project a bit forward.

### *Sunday, April 18th*

After saying goodbye to the fathers we leave early in the morning to pick our flight from Man to Abidjan.

Arriving safe and sound in Man we were picked up by the Salesians of Don Bosco Abidjan. We met father Eric who studied Theology for about 9 years in Seville (Spain). A nice surprise for Enrique who can have some discussion in his mother tongue.

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# Travel diary

## Abidjan, Ivory Coast

### *Monday, April 19th*

In the morning, an important appointment was waiting for us: our COVID test in the **University of Tycoon**. Because of the pandemic, we always need to be tested before going back home. Afterwards, we spent some time discovering the city. This is the biggest city in Ivory Coast and its landscape is full of huge buildings. We visited the local shops and market to buy some regional product like spices or African textiles.



In the afternoon, we visited the **delegation of the European Union in Ivory Coast**. We finished the meeting with lots of positive energy, synergies in our work and plans for a joint way forward keeping in touch.



On our way to the meeting with the delegation of the European Union in Ivory Coast, we saw the local area of Kumasi which is quite different from the rest of the city. We made it to the building of the delegation and after the security process we were welcomed by the delegates **Hadrien Maillard and Mody Diop**. We had a fruitful meeting and they were quite interested in SAAM. They explained to us that the delegation has invested a lot in vocational education in the last years and their enthusiasm to keep the connection for the next steps of SAAM but also beyond.

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# Travel diary

## Abidjan, Ivory Coast

**Tuesday, April 19th**




For our last working day, we visited the **Centre de Formation Professionnelle "Marie Dominique"**, near the centre of **Salesians of Don Bosco Abidjan**. It's a school for girls but for some professions they also have some boys and they also have mixed primary sections. The school is very renowned for patisserie (pastry) and couture (tailoring) and it is very easy for students to find internships after the school.



 They have about 250 students

We met the **headmaster of the school**, a sister from Ghana. Enrique also met another sister from his home region near Zaragoza. She has been in Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana for more than 30 years and dedicated her life to Don Bosco helping children in education.

### FUN FACTS

-  Abidjan is the third largest French speaking city in the world.
-  It is also the fourth most populous city in Africa.
-  It has around 5 millions of residents.



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# Travel diary

## Leaving Ivory Coast

**Wednesday, April 20th**

Wednesday came and it was time for us to leave Abidjan.



***Until the next time!***

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