

## ALL YOU **NEED** TO KNOW

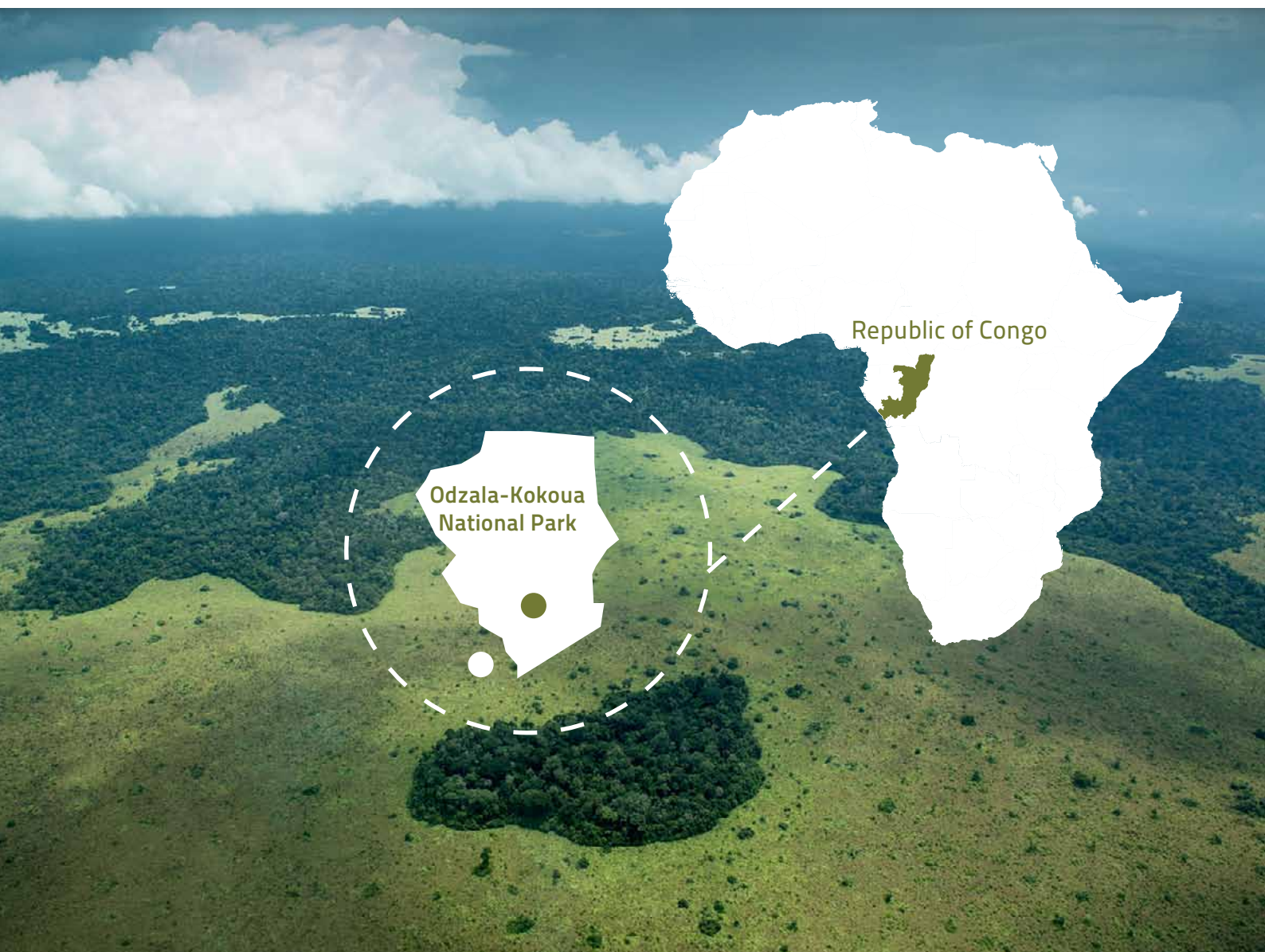
[www.odzala-kokoua.com](http://www.odzala-kokoua.com) | [www.wilderness-collection.com](http://www.wilderness-collection.com)

**ODZALA**  
WILDERNESS CAMPS



## WELCOME TO ODZALA

Deep in the rainforest of Republic of Congo is one of the last refuges of the critically endangered western lowland gorilla. The opportunity to track and view these great apes, combined with the exploration of a remote, thriving and unspoiled ecosystem, is the Odzala experience.



## WHERE?

- In the north-west of Republic of the Congo (Congo-Brazzaville)
- NB: This is **not** the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC, formerly Zaire) – DRC is a different country to the south and east, on the other side of the Congo River
- In Odzala-Kokoua National Park – one of Africa's oldest national parks, founded in 1935
- Size of Park: 1 360 000 hectares (3 360 633 acres)
- Renowned as the richest forest block in central Africa for primate species





## HIGHLIGHTS

- Explore a thriving rainforest ecosystem
- Track and view habituated western gorilla groups
- Walk along dappled paths through the forest
- Wade through clear forest streams
- Watch for wildlife coming down to drink at a forest bai (marshy clearings rich in minerals, a magnet for animals and birds)

## ALL ABOUT RAINFORESTS

- A significant feature of life on Earth
- Treasure chests of biodiversity; the Congo rainforest basin provides shelter for no fewer than 10 000 plant, 1 000 bird, 700 fish and 400 mammal species
- Also many different tribes of forest dwelling people
- Under immense pressure from logging, mining, and the impacts of global climate change
- Absorb carbon dioxide and thus regulate global climate; they are an important carbon sink and function as the “lungs of the Earth”

## WHY VISIT?

- Adventure – be among the very few who have experienced such a unique, remote and undeveloped rainforest wilderness
- Discover a rich mosaic of habitats and incredible biodiversity
- Explore pristine rainforest environments and meet people from traditional forest communities

## WHY ECOTOURISM IN CONGO?

Ecotourism contributes to global awareness, local sustainable development and protection of rainforest:

- Pioneering not only the destination but also the actual activities and camp surrounds
- Helping develop a new business sector in Congo and diversifying the economy away from petrochemicals
- By hosting globally caring guests in this wilderness wonderland, we hope that the knowledge guests take back with them will inform the choices they make in day-to-day personal and business life



## WHEN TO GO, WHAT TO EXPECT

Congo lies on the Equator, so that temperatures vary very little year round. It has a “bimodal” rainfall pattern, meaning that its seasons can be divided into two green seasons when more rainfall occurs and two drier seasons, when rainfall is much reduced but still possible. A typical pattern is shown in the diagram below, but rainfall and the start and end dates of seasons can be quite variable...



## GREEN SEASON HIGHLIGHTS (MARCH TO MAY, SEPTEMBER TO NOVEMBER)

- Rainfall during this period means that the air is clearer for photography; when it is not raining the humidity higher
- A scarcity of ripe fruits during this period results in smaller ranges and daily movements by gorillas and elephants
- Elephant visits to baobabs to obtain minerals are more frequent during this season
- Spectacular electrical storms contrast with sustained periods of clear blue skies and beautiful limpid light for photography
- Stunning sunrises and sunsets

## DRY SEASON HIGHLIGHTS (DECEMBER TO FEBRUARY, JUNE TO SEPTEMBER)

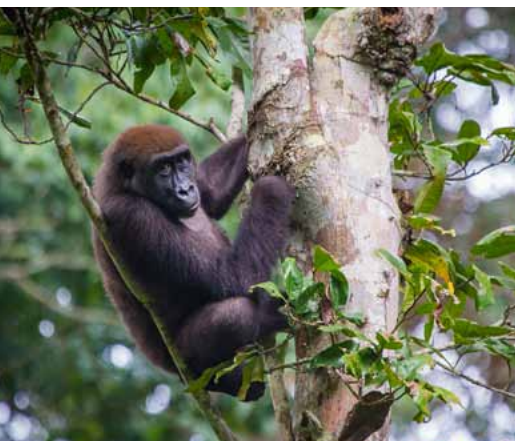
- With limited rain during this period the air can be relatively hazy and humidity is lower than the green season
- Ripe fruits during this period (especially February and August) result in gorillas feeding primarily in trees thus allowing easier sightings and more kinds of behaviour on display
- When trees are fruiting the gorillas can move significant distances across their home range to access specific tree species but also stay close to fruiting trees, and thus can be more accessible

Please visit the Wilderness Portal for advice on photography in the different seasons:

[WWW.WILDERNESS-COLLECTION.COM/ODZALA-INFO-PORTAL](http://WWW.WILDERNESS-COLLECTION.COM/ODZALA-INFO-PORTAL)

## WESTERN LOWLAND GORILLAS

- For most people, the absolute highlight of the Congo experience
- Despite a global population of around 100 000, western lowland gorillas are classed as Critically Endangered by the IUCN due to the risks they face from habitat loss, the bushmeat trade and transmission of diseases from humans.
- Differences between western lowland gorillas and mountain gorillas:
  - Habitat choice
  - Size – western lowland gorillas are slightly smaller
  - Appearance – western lowland gorillas lack the very thick fur of mountain gorillas
  - Diet - the western lowland gorilla’s diet is more fruit-based
  - Resting - western lowland gorillas tend to rest in cover during midday siesta rather than in the open





## THE CONGO EXPERIENCE

### NGAGA CAMP GORILLA RESEARCH

- Ngaga Camp is the home of top gorilla researchers Dr Magda Bermejo and German Illera
- First people to successfully habituate western lowland gorillas
- World authorities on this species
- They have focused their research on this species in northern Congo for the past 15 years
- Without this research there would be no habituated gorillas – and no guest experience

### CURRENT RESEARCH EFFORTS

- Location of the study site makes it ideal for investigation of the human-gorilla interface and the potential for human-wildlife conflict
- Habitat overlap between gorillas and smaller central chimpanzees provides an ideal opportunity to look at competition, resource sharing and other interaction between the two ape species
- Habituation of gorillas for ecotourism purposes
- Effects of said ecotourism on broader gorilla conservation
- Permanent research team based at Ngaga includes three highly skilled Mbeti trackers led by Zepherin Okoko
- Tracker training academy – supported by a grant from the Wilderness Wildlife Trust
  - Enables detailed observation of the gorillas that would otherwise not be possible in this environment
  - Preserves a unique set of traditional skills
  - Provides employment opportunities for local trackers as well as apprentices from all over west-central Africa.
  - Employment for former poachers

### NGAGA GORILLA GROUPS

There are several groups of gorilla in the 30km<sup>2</sup> (11.5 sq. mi) Ndzehi Forest area surrounding Ngaga Camp. Two of these groups have been habituated and can be viewed by guests. The movements of both groups are dictated by the seasonal availability of different forest fruits and other forage such as marantaceae leaves and stems. There are also a number of unhabituated gorilla groups but these tend to be skittish and are not often seen.





JUPITER Silverback



NEPTUNO Silverback

### NEPTUNO GROUP (~16 INDIVIDUALS)

- **Silverback: Neptuno**, an enormous and sometimes intimidating male
- Home range centred on Ngaga Camp

### JUPITER GROUP (~25 INDIVIDUALS)

- **Silverback: Jupiter** – just as enormous, but curiously shy and retiring
- Home range centred to the south of Ngaga Camp

### GORILLA DAILY ROUTINE & BEHAVIOUR

- Morning – leave the overnight nests while it's cool. Forage on the move until a productive feeding site is found
- Midday (siesta period) – individuals make day nests in which they relax; the youngsters can't resist interacting with each other
- Afternoon – more foraging; find an overnight nesting site and settle down for the night

### GORILLA TRACKING EXPERIENCE

- Tracking western lowland gorillas on foot
- Excursions are led by a guide and skilled local tracker
- Interpreting and following signs on the forest floor and vocalisations to locate gorillas
- In contrast to mountain gorillas which rest in open clearings, western lowland gorillas rest up in thick vegetation – noise from (unseen) humans would disturb them so they have to be observed while feeding / active
- This makes western lowland gorilla viewing potentially more challenging – but guests are more likely to see unique behaviour e.g. play, tree-climbing etc.

### WHAT TO EXPECT

- Each guest has two opportunities to track gorillas
- Although every effort is made, gorilla viewing is not guaranteed – depends on weather and tracking conditions – while we won't guarantee that you see two groups, trackers facilitate a good viewing
- Tracking expeditions can range in length from 1-8 km (0.5-5 miles) over undulating country
- Excursions can last between 2 and 8 hours including the time spent with a gorilla group





### GORILLA VIEWING PROTOCOL

- Critical for gorilla conservation
- Designed specifically to limit behavioural impact and potential disease transmission from humans to gorillas
- Based on the guidelines issued by the IUCN for Great Ape viewing
- Very similar to protocols in Rwanda and Uganda
- Minimum age for gorilla viewing is 15 years – this is for reasons of safety, but also for possible disease transmission, with children under this age more prone to infection
- Maximum proximity to gorillas is 7 metres (22 feet) – we typically view the animals at 10-15 metres (32-50 feet)
- Maximum viewing duration of any gorilla group is **1 HOUR** during any given gorilla tracking activity
- Maximum number of guests per gorilla tracking excursion is 4
- Guests that display cold, flu or other respiratory tract symptoms will not be allowed to track gorillas
- No food can be consumed when close to the gorillas but guides carry snacks and extra water for refreshment breaks in the forest
- Smoking is not permitted in the forest

### OTHER ACTIVITIES AT NGAGA CAMP

- Walk the forest – which can require wading and stalking...
- Bird or insect walks – take time to see the myriad colourful creatures that call the forest home
- Night walks – in search of nocturnal primates and other shy forest species
- Cultural visits to nearby Ombo village – learn more about sustainable forest lifestyles

### RAINFOREST WILDLIFE – NGAGA

- In addition to gorillas, an incredible diversity of life
- A game-viewing experience that is more about exploration and tracking
- Relatively high densities of large mammals, but vegetation cover can make them harder to spot and some species can be very shy
- Many of the species you see will be completely new even to experienced safari-goers, e.g.
  - Putty-nosed and crowned monkey
  - Central chimpanzee (more often heard than seen)
  - Central potto and Demidoff's galago
  - Duiker species
  - Rodents such as squirrels, giant pouched rat, porcupine
  - Possibility of elephant tracks in the forest
  - Tree dassie (vocalisations at night)

## LANGO CAMP

Lango Camp celebrates the exploratory experience of discovering the abundant life of the African rainforest.

### RAINFOREST WILDLIFE – LANGO CAMP

- Forest elephant
- Forest buffalo
- Western sitatunga
- Monkey species such as Guereza colobus, putty-nosed, moustached, de Brazza's and grey-cheeked and agile mangabey
- Red river hog
- Spotted hyaena
- Harnessed bushbuck
- Slender-snouted and African dwarf crocodile (both harmless species)
- **Special sightings:**
  - Lowland bongo, Giant forest hog, Serval

### BIRDS

- Perhaps the richest forest block in west-central Africa for birds
  - Nearly 450 species of birds have been recorded in Odzala
  - Over 300 breeding species
- Important families:
  - Broadbills, trogons, malkoha, greenbuls and turacos
- Look out for:
  - Green pigeons and African grey parrots at Lango bai – seasonal
- **Special sightings:**
  - Black-casqued wattled hornbill, plumed guineafowl, Hartlaub's duck, Cassin's malimbe, bare-cheeked trogon, black bee-eater, blue-throated roller, spot-breasted ibis, Congo serpent eagle, Forbe's plover, chocolate-backed kingfisher, hairybreasted barbet, spotted greenbul, firecrested alethe, buff-throated apalis, chestnut wattle-eye, and many more...







### ACTIVITIES – LANGO

- Focus on the bai (or saline) itself, and associated swampy open areas, the Lekoli River and surrounding savannah and forest areas
- Most activities are a combination of walking, boating, and driving.
- Walk (and wade) the (Lango) bai and savannah – the best way to study the forest, from fungi to forest elephants
- Adventurous trails allow access to the main areas, and involve walking through wet and sometimes muddy areas
- Boat the Lekoli River – by aluminium boats, motorised traditional pirogues and even kayaks
- Savannah drive en route to forest and river experiences
- Night drives in the savannah, while returning to camp from activities
- Listening to and identifying forest sounds – a chorus of monkeys, frogs, birds and insects
- Cultural visits to Mbomo village (en route to / from Ngaga) to experience forest village life



### PEOPLE OF ODZALA

- Cultural visits to our neighbouring communities
- Nearby Ombo or Mbomo villages – learn more about how people make the most of all that Nature provides in such a remote location
- Mbomo – large village at the entrance to Odzala-Kokoua National Park
  - Vibrant markets and street life, SPAC community centre and schools
  - Please note that bushmeat is a traditional part of people’s diet here so more sensitive guests should be aware that they may see wildlife products on sale
  - People here prefer not to be photographed as a rule
- Ombo – much smaller village, closer to Ngaga
- People here maintain a very traditional lifestyle, with the forest supplying most of their needs



## PREPARING FOR YOUR CONGO EXPERIENCE

### VISA & MEDICAL REQUIREMENTS

**Requirements:**

- Visa (must be obtained in advance)
- Letter of invitation.
- Yellow fever certificate.
- Gorilla viewing vaccination protocol from 01-Jan-15 (paper exercise)

### GUEST VACCINATION RECORD REQUIREMENTS

- Gorillas are vulnerable to catching human diseases and we take every step possible to minimise any risks to these endangered primates
- Guests will be required to provide evidence of the following:
  - Measles and polio vaccinations
  - No active tuberculosis (TB) infections
- Existing gorilla welfare procedures regarding flu, and other respiratory complaints remain in force

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- All guests should visit their physician or travel clinic well in advance of their travel date
- Have a doctor certify their completed vaccination record or issue a certificate of health
- Discuss malaria prophylaxis and other sensible health precautions
- A valid yellow fever certificate remains an entry requirement for the Republic of Congo

### WHAT TO PACK

- Most important: **a sense of adventure!**
- For everything else, please see: [WHAT TO PACK](#)

### RAINFOREST PHOTOGRAPHY – FACTORS TO CONSIDER

- Humid / wet environment
- Challenging lighting conditions
- Flashes cannot be used
- Gorillas typically viewed at not closer than 7 metres / 24 feet
- Amazing macro photography opportunities
- You are required to carry all your own equipment (maximum group sizes of six including guide and tracker does not allow for porters)
- Strict baggage weight limits for charter flights into the Congo camps

For more information, please see: [PHOTOGRAPHIC ADVICE DOCUMENTS](#)



# ODZALA

WILDERNESS CAMPS

## RECOMMENDED GUIDES

- **Wilderness Collection Odzala Species Checklist** – distributed on arrival at Ngaga Camp
- **Forests of Central Africa: Nature and Man** – Jean Pierre Vande Weghe (Protea Book House, 2010) ISBN-13: 9781869190736
- **Birds of Africa: South of the Sahara** – Ian Sinclair and Peter Ryan (Struik, 2011) ISBN-13: 9781770076235
- **Birds of Western Africa** – Borrow and Demey (Christopher Helm, 2004) ISBN: 0713666927
- **The Kingdon Pocket Guide to African Mammals** – Jonathan Kingdon (Christopher Helm, 2004) ISBN: 0713669810

## WEB LINKS

[WWW.WILDERNESS-COLLECTION.COM/ODZALA](http://WWW.WILDERNESS-COLLECTION.COM/ODZALA)  
[WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/ODZALACOM](http://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/ODZALACOM)  
[WWW.ODZALA-KOKOUA.COM](http://WWW.ODZALA-KOKOUA.COM)

### FACEBOOK

ODZALA-WILDERNESS-CAMPS-CONGO  
WILDERNESS COLLECTION  
CONGO MAMMAL ATLAS

### TWITTER

@ODZALA\_WILD  
@WEARECOLLECTION



# QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

## WESTERN LOWLAND GORILLAS

They are critically endangered

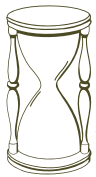
FEWER THAN  
**100 000** remain



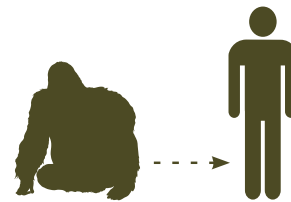
They live in family groups with typically 4 to 10 members per group



**35** YEARS  
average life span in the wild



**SIZE:** adult silverback compared to a 1.8m man  
**THEY ARE DIFFERENT TO MOUNTAIN GORILLAS:**  
smaller, less furry & better tree climbers



**WEAR A MASK** to minimize the risk of passing on germs that gorillas can catch from humans



Wear **VERY COMFORTABLE** walking shoes.  
You'll be walking for up to 8 hours or 10km



**BINOCULARS** will help you see the detail in the beauty  
Move carefully and watch quietly



**SOAK UP THE DETAILS!**  
There are butterflies, strange fruits and  
primeval vegetation all around you



Remember your camera manners  
**NO FLASH PHOTOGRAPHY**



You're in the care of a  
**PROFESSIONAL GUIDE AND EXPERT TRACKER**  
all the way

