

AFRICA'S EDEN



"Africa's Last Eden" Loango National Park Tour, Gabon 9-day itinerary



FOR THE PASSIONATE TRAVELLER



“Africa’s Last Eden” Loango Tour, 9-day itinerary (from Libreville, Gabon)

Trip Highlights

Where else on earth can you step straight from dense rainforest onto a beach nearly 100-km long with only crabs, buffalos and elephants for company?



Away from the crowds of East and South Africa, Loango National Park in Gabon is one of Africa’s Last Edens on earth. Come to Loango and experience a completely different type of Africa, filled with rainforests, lagoons and dark-watered rivers.

Loango National Park is said to be the most beautiful and diverse national park of Gabon, representing all of its forest and coastal eco-systems. In the park, we have created a circuit that allows you to see and experience all the highlights and ecosystems. The starting point for most visitors is Evengué Island. From there, you can travel to Loango Lodge and our eco-camps.

Meet the researchers that are involved in the numerous science projects that are conducted in the park, amongst others by the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), the Max Planck Institute and the Fernan-Vaz Gorilla Project. Their activities are partly funded by tourism revenues, thus by visiting the park, you are contributing to its sustainable development.

Highlights

- Experience Loango National park’s variety of intact eco-systems: rainforest, lagoon, savannah and beach;
- Accompanied by expert guides, take walking safaris and cultural excursions, boat trips and game drives in open four-wheel-drive vehicles;
- Sleep amidst the sounds of the jungle in our bush camp, feel at one with nature in our savannah camp looking out over the coastal grasslands towards the ocean, and sip champagne and enjoy a feet-in-the-sand beach barbeque affair at our beach camp.
- Visit a gorilla sanctuary on Evengué Island just outside the park and meet the team behind its efforts;
- Go whale-watching (mid-July to mid-September), fishing (from September – April), or on the lookout for elephants and buffalo wandering on the beach (from October – April).

AFRICA'S EDEN



Departure Dates 2009

Every Thursday from Libreville, Gabon.

International Flight Schedule

Libreville, Gabon serves as main arrival and departure base for the tours of Africa's Eden.

Please note that we are not able to book or print your international airline ticket to Gabon, São Tomé & Príncipe and/or to the Central African Republic, but we do advise you to contact us before booking your international flight to be sure we have availability on your preferred tour.

Travel Map



'I literally want as many people on earth as possible to see this place and fall in love with it'

*J. Michael Fay
ecologist and conservationist*

FOR THE PASSIONATE TRAVELLER



Trip Summary

Age restrictions

- Children under the age of 8 are allowed to go on daytrips in Loango National Park but are not allowed to sleep in our eco-camps Tassi and Akaka.

This is an example itinerary. Upon arrival, our specialised staff will sit down with you to compose the actual programme, based on your personal interests, weather conditions, and where the wildlife can be found.



	Day	Trip Summary	Lodging
1	Thursday	Arrival in Libreville, Gabon*; meet and greet, transfer to Hotel Le Méridien	Le Méridien Libreville
2	Friday	Africa's Connection flight to Omboué via Port Gentil. Transfer by boat to Evengué Island. Visit to Fernan-Vaz Gorilla Sanctuary (morning or afternoon visit, depending on time of arrival)	Evengué Lodge
3	Saturday	Boat trip to Mission Ste. Anne and on the Mpivié River to Loango Lodge. Depending on time of arrival: safari possibilities in Loango National Park	Loango Lodge
4	Sunday	Boat trip to Akaka region / 4x4 Drive to Tassi region (depending on season)	Akaka Bush Camp / Tassi Savannah Camp
5	Monday	Full day excursion possibilities in Akaka / Tassi region (depending on season)	Akaka Bush Camp / Tassi Savannah Camp
6	Tuesday	Full day excursion possibilities in Akaka / Tassi region (depending on season)	Akaka Bush Camp / Tassi Savannah Camp
7	Wednesday	Morning safari possibilities in Loango N.P.; afternoon boat transfer to Pte. Ste. Cathérine	Pte. Ste. Cathérine Beach Camp
8	Thursday	Return to Loango Lodge; safari possibilities in Loango National Park	Loango Lodge
9	Friday	Afternoon Africa's Connection flight to Libreville via Port Gentil; connecting international flight to Europe / USA / South Africa	N/A

* We advise travellers from South Africa to fly with South African Airways from Johannesburg to Libreville, Gabon on Wednesday. Your first two nights will be in Le Méridien in Libreville. On Friday, you will catch the early morning Africa's Connection flight to Port Gentil and Omboué. The tour ends on the same day.



Travel Itinerary

Day 1: Thursday – Arrival in Libreville, Gabon

Upon arrival at Libreville International Airport, a representative of Africa's Eden will meet you and bring you to your hotel. He or she will help you with the customs procedures and collecting of your luggage. Please note that you will need to show your vaccination booklet. After that you will be brought to the Hotel Le Méridien.

You can spend the evening as you like; there is no organised programme. If you would like to go out for dinner, the "Quartier Louis" is Libreville's most lively neighbourhood with many restaurants. In addition, Tropicana (near the airport) is also a good spot for a nice dinner or a relaxing drink by the sea.



Lodging: *Hotel Le Méridien, Libreville, breakfast included* - © Le Méridien (Starwood hotels)

Day 2: Friday – Evengué Island & Fernan-Vaz Gorilla Sanctuary

In the morning, you will be picked up by a representative of Africa's Eden and brought to the airport for the 08h30 Africa's Connection flight to Omboué via Port Gentil. The pick-up time from your hotel will be communicated upon arrival in Libreville.

In Omboué, our Evengue Lodge staff will help with your luggage. In a 20-minute boat trip you will be taken to Evengué, a small island just outside Loango National Park where the *Fernan-Vaz Gorilla Sanctuary* is situated, which is sponsored by *Africa's Eden*.



During your stay on Evengué Island, our experts of the Fernan-Vaz Gorilla Project will share their knowledge with you on the bush meat crisis and other reasons why gorillas are a critically endangered species, and they will give you information about the Fernan-Vaz Gorilla Sanctuary and Rehabilitation & Reintroduction Programme. Afterwards one of the guides will accompany you on a short bush walk leading to the gorilla family in the sanctuary.



Lodging: Evengué Lodge

Evengué Lodge has 5 bungalows, each with ensuite bathroom, a fan and a private terrace with views over the lagoon. The wooden restaurant is cosy and friendly. It is possible to eat inside or on the large terrace outside.



GORILLA PROJECT



Fernan-Vaz Gorilla Project (FVGP)

The Fernan-Vaz Gorilla Project aims to rescue, rehabilitate and hopefully one day re-introduce back to the wild Western Lowland Gorillas who have become orphan by the bush meat trade. Six gorillas are currently part of this Rehabilitation & Reintroduction Programme; they reside in the forest during the day with their keepers to learn wild gorilla behaviour. To prevent the gorillas from getting used to human presence, no visits are allowed.

The island also serves as a sanctuary for gorillas that have spent their whole life in captivity. At the moment, there are 3 gorillas that reside in a semi-natural captive setting and are fed and monitored by trained local keepers.

Mabeke (top left) is an impressive Silverback who lived in captivity for 20 years at a research centre in Gabon. Like all other orphans victim of the bush meat trade, Mabeke had lost his family, his home and his dignity. In 2001, he was re-located to Evengué Island in the hope of providing him with an improved quality of life.

In September 2003, at the age of 5 months, **Izowuet** (bottom right) was handed to the project by two boys from a local village called Izowuet. Despite his young age, Izowuet will likely never be reintroduced since he has lost critical survival skills and has gained some dependence on us, humans.



Day 3 – Saturday: Boat trip on Mpivié River to Loango Lodge

After breakfast, you will start the boat trip up the dark waters of the Mpivié River to Loango Lodge. En route, there will be time to visit the small town of Ste. Anne, where Gustav Eiffel built an iron church in the late 1800s. After the visit to Ste. Anne, the trip will continue up the Mpivié River that from there runs through some very dense rainforest. This is a perfect opportunity to sit back and enjoy the breathtaking views. Monkeys, crocodiles and all kinds of birds (Hartlaub's ducks, finfoots and fishing owls in particular) can be seen.



After approximately 2 hours, the boat will be exchanged at the end of the river for a 4x4 jeep that will drive to the lodge within 45 minutes. Upon arrival at Loango Lodge you will be welcomed with refreshments and shown to your room. (A late) Lunch will be served in the restaurant. Depending on the time of arrival, it might still be possible to make a first visit to Loango National Park by boat or by 4x4.

Lodging: *Loango Lodge*

Loango Lodge has 7 bungalows; Each bungalow has an ensuite bathroom and shower. There are 3 one-bedroom suites with an ensuite bathroom with bath. In addition there is a two-bedroom suite with 2 bathrooms and a living area, ideal for families. All bungalows and suites have a fan, safe, air-conditioning and screen windows. The restaurant, offering French/Gabonese cuisine, has a large sun terrace and a library with an extensive collection of books on Gabon, birds and other wildlife. The open-sided bungalow (paillotte) in the lagoon offers the possibility of dining privately.





Day 4 & 5 & 6: Sunday, Monday, Tuesday – Tassi / Akaka (depending on the season)

- **Tassi region ***

After breakfast, one of our 4x4 jeeps will take you south-west to the Tassi / Louri area (approx. 1.5 hours). During this drive, animals such as elephants, red river hogs, buffalos, birds and sitatungas (a swamp-dwelling antelope) can be seen. Tassi Camp is situated on the savannah, surrounded by primary and secondary forest.



Take the 4x4 and visit the research camp of the Max Planck Institute in Tassi Sud, 30 minutes from Tassi Camp. From here, the researchers go into the forest to carry out studies amongst the shy, elusive gorillas and chimpanzees. This also acclimatises the animals gradually to the presence of humans in the vicinity. In the future, this habituation programme will allow a controlled form of tourism to track and view the gorillas and chimpanzees, while at the same time allowing researchers to gather data on all aspects of their behaviour and ecology.



From Tassi you can easily go on excursions to Louri, where there is a good chance of seeing buffalos and elephants on the beach: a truly remarkable sight and characteristic of Loango National Park. On rare occasions, even hippos can be seen.

Lodging: *Tassi Savannah Camp*

Tassi Savannah Camp has 5 Meru tents on sundecks, each with ensuite bathroom with shower and toilet. Each tent has 2 comfortable single beds, chairs and a private terrace. The tents are pitched far enough away from each other to ensure your privacy. The restaurant is also built on a platform, which gives a superb view of the surroundings while having breakfast, lunch or dinner.



* Tassi Savannah Camp is open all year around, however, during the rainy season, elephants and buffalos often roam freely on the beach.



- ***Akaka region*** *

After an early breakfast, the boat departs for a 4-hour journey south to Akaka. After crossing some large lagoons, you will arrive at the Rembo Ngowe River, where you will spend the last 1.5 hours. During the trip you might encounter birds, elephants, buffalos and sitatunga (swamp-dwelling antelopes), possibly bathing in the river.



Akaka is one of the most remote parts of Loango National Park. The Akaka forests thrive with butterflies and are home to a number of rare bird species. The bush camp is situated on the riverbank in the heart of the tropical rainforest and the wetlands. At times, the wildlife, especially elephants, passes right through the camp. Akaka is a good starting point for excursions like forest walks, or trips by kayak or motorboat along the Rembo Ngowe and Rembo Echira rivers. In the dry season, the concentrations of particularly forest buffalo and forest elephant that migrate into the area are easily seen. Smaller mammals like sitatunga, red river hogs, forest duikers, five species of monkey and great apes inhabit the area all year round.

Lodging: Akaka Bush Camp

Akaka Bush Camp has 5 Meru tents on sundecks, each with private bathroom with refreshing shower and toilet. Each tent has 2 single beds with foam mattresses, chairs and a private terrace overlooking the jungle. During the night, the sounds of the elephants and the other wildlife make sure you get the authentic African experience. Akaka has a small restaurant with a terrace overlooking the river: a perfect spot to enjoy the beautiful sunrises.



* Akaka Bush Camp is open all year around, however, during the rainy season, the staff will determine if it is possible to go on either a day trip or an overnight trip, depending on the weather conditions and number of tsetse flies, mosquitoes and other insects.



Day 7: Wednesday – Pte. Ste. Cathérine

This morning, you will have time to discover some other parts of Loango National Park; by car into the savannah, on foot into the mangroves, or by boat along the shore.

In the afternoon, a short boat tour over the lagoon takes you to the Pointe Sainte Cathérine Beach Camp. This basic camp is situated at a beautiful spot on the beach in the north of Loango National Park.

Beach walks, collecting shells and fishing are amongst the possibilities. You can also simply relax here, with one of the most beautiful beaches on earth all to yourself.



As the sun sets, dine in the restaurant, on the lounge deck, or enjoy a feet-in-the-sand beach barbeque affair. During the rainy season, from November to April, Pte. Ste. Cathérine sunsets are even better than usual.

Lodging: *Pte. Ste. Cathérine Beach Camp*

Pte. Ste. Cathérine Beach Camp has five Meru tents on sundecks, each with ensuite bathroom with shower and toilet. Each tent has 2 comfortable single beds, chairs and a private terrace. Every morning here you will wake up to a spectacular view of the sea. Pte. Ste. Cathérine has a small lounge and restaurant and its facilities are comfortable.



Please note that swimming here can be dangerous due to strong currents and the possibility of sharks and/or crocodiles close to the shoreline.



Day 8: Thursday - Return to Loango Lodge

Today, you can relax at Loango Lodge or discover more of the National Park. Some of the possibilities include:

- ***Game drives***

Game drives in a 4x4 jeep are an easy and comfortable way to view the park and see wildlife such as buffalo, elephant, red river hogs and sitatunga. In the rainy season from November to April, you can find large mammals roaming freely on the beach.



- ***Walking Safaris***

You can venture out with one of our eco-guides into the forest. On foot is one of the best ways to learn more about the diversity of the park. You can encounter wildlife such as elephants and buffalo, but even more so, discover the more inconspicuous forest animals and birds.



- ***Cultural Walks***

From the lodge, you can go on a cultural walk to the nearby village or the "Operation Loango" school, which is sponsored by Africa's Eden's sister company "Société de Conservation et Développement".

- ***Whale Watching*)***

From mid-July to mid-September, humpback whales visit the coastline of Loango National Park. Go out on a boat with our skipper to look for these impressive, playful mammals.



*) Please note that sightings cannot be guaranteed and this excursion is not included in the package price of this programme.



- ***Fishing *)***

The point where the lagoon empties into the ocean contains some of the largest game fish in the world, making it an ideal spot for fishing – and only 10 minutes by boat from Loango Lodge!

*) Please note that this excursion is not included in the package price of this programme.



- ***Presentation / Dinner with the Wildlife Conservation Society researchers***

Loango Lodge is base camp for the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS). WCS is engaged in a collaborative venture with SCD (Société de Conservation et Développement) in Loango National Park, a unique effort to bring the private sector and an international NGO together to achieve a series of key conservation activities. WCS is partly funded by Africa's Eden tourism revenues and is active in conservation, monitoring, surveillance, and research activities in the park, all aimed at maintaining the long-term integrity of this 'window into the past'. The researchers are happy to give a presentation about their activities in Gabon, and/or simply to chat about what they do over drinks / dinner.





Day 9: Friday – Flight to Libreville, Gabon

In the morning, you have time to relax or go on a last safari in the park. In the afternoon, the Africa's Connection flight will fly to Libreville via Port Gentil, where you will arrive in time (approximately 17h30) for your connecting international flight.

For the extension possibilities, please read our other itineraries:

- Africa's Last Eden + 3-day extension to the island of São Tomé
- Africa's Last Eden + 3-day extension to the island of Príncipe

WE WISH YOU A WONDERFUL TRIP!

