

Dzanga Sangha National Park, March 24-31 2017 Group Trip

This is a fully escorted trip.

Itinerary at a glance

Day	Location	Meal Plan
1	Bangui	Laico Ledger Plaza BB
2	Dzanga Sangha National Park	Sangha Lodge LDBB
3	Dzanga Sangha National Park	Sangha Lodge LDBB
4	Dzanga Sangha National Park	Sangha Lodge LDBB
5	Dzanga Sangha National Park	Sangha Lodge LDBB
6	Dzanga Sangha National Park	Sangha Lodge LDBB
7	Dzanga Sangha National Park	Sangha Lodge LDBB
8	Bangui (Optional)	Laico Ledger Plaza BB
9	Bangui	

L-Lunch, D-Dinner, BB-Bed and breakfast, LDBB-Lunch, dinner, bed and breakfast

Quotation Full Itinerary

Day 1 24/03/2017 Bangui

Upon your arrival into Bangui International Airport you shall be met by our representative and assisted through customs and immigration formalities.

Bangui is the capital of the Central African Republic and lies on the northern banks of the Ubangi River. The navigable Ubangi River turns sharply south below Bangui and connects to the Congo River just south of the Equator near Brazzaville as its chief northern tributary. The river marks the border between the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The Congolese town of Zongo sits opposite the river from Bangui.

Because of the various flight options in and out of Bangui Airport, the cost of overnight at Ledger Hotel is not included in the quotation below, however will be added once international flights are booked and confirmed. Current flight options Air France and Kenya Airways.

Laico Ledger Plaza-Standard Rooms BB

Day 2 25/03/2017 Bangui - Dzanga Sangha National Park

Optional flight option on Royal Air Maroc.

Fly Bangui-Dzanga Sangha National Park. A 90 minute private charter flight south westwards across the Congo Basin forests to Dzanga Sangha National Park. Dzanga-Sangha is the northern section of the north-western Congo Basin. In the reserve are large populations of Forest Elephant, Lowland gorillas, 16 of the country's primate species (such as De Brazza's Monkey with its distinctive white beard), hundreds of bird species, reptiles, frogs etc. you visit a village of the Ba'aka pygmies and if you want, you can join them in a hunt for food into the forests. The woman will share some traditional knowledge of the plants and you learn about their lifestyle in the forest. The WWF works with the Ba'aka in establishing conservation, education and health programs in the area. The next few days, may be spent visiting Dzanga Bai, tracking lowland gorillas and hunting with the Ba'aka.

Sangha Lodge-Standard Banda LDBB

Day 3 26/03/2017 Dzanga Sangha National Park

Visit the Forest Elephants of Dzanga Bai

Dzanga Bai is large mineral rich clearing in the middle of the rainforest where forest elephants gather in large numbers to indulge in drinking the mineral rich waters that bubble up in places in this Bai. The interaction between so many different groups of Forest elephants ensure that no one can ever get bored at this place, while the possibility of some of the other normally shy forest creature like Bongo, Giant Forest Hog, Red River Hog, Sitatunga and Forest Buffalos visiting the Bai keep us alert.

Sangha Lodge-Standard Banda LDBB

Day 4 27/03/2017 Dzanga Sangha National Park**WESTERN LOWLAND GORILLA TREK**

Early this morning depart for Bai Hoku research camp (approx. 1 hour drive). On arrival depart with the tracking team that consists of a Ba'Aka forest tracker and WWF researcher. The team will depart camp with information on where the gorillas slept the previous night. Begin the trek searching for the nest. As soon as the nest site is found, the team then follows the traces the gorillas have left while moving and feeding. The search for these western lowland gorillas follows elephant paths and narrow trails. The pursuit can be extensive as gorillas can sometimes cover significant distances before finding a fruit tree of choice. Tracking can take 1 to 2 hours before establishing contact with the, and while encounters are always likely they cannot be guaranteed. Please Note: Gorilla trekking occurs twice daily allowing 3 guests per trek. Each trek begins and ends at Bai Hoku.

Sangha Lodge-Standard Banda LDBB**Day 5 28/03/2017 Dzanga Sangha National Park****A second visit to WESTERN LOWLAND GORILLA TREK**

Early this morning depart for Bai Hoku research camp (approx. 1 hour drive). On arrival depart with the tracking team that consists of a Ba'Aka forest tracker and WWF researcher. The team will depart camp with information on where the gorillas slept the previous night. Begin the trek searching for the nest. As soon as the nest site is found, the team then follows the traces the gorillas have left while moving and feeding. The search for these western lowland gorillas follows elephant paths and narrow trails. The pursuit can be extensive as gorillas can sometimes cover significant distances before finding a fruit tree of choice. Tracking can take 1 to 2 hours before establishing contact with the, and while encounters are always likely they cannot be guaranteed. Please Note: Gorilla trekking occurs twice daily allowing 3 guests per trek. Each trek begins and ends at Bai Hoku.

Sangha Lodge-Standard Banda LDBB**Day 6 29/03/2017 Dzanga Sangha National Park**

Cultural visit which many include net hunting with the Ba'aka. Originally a small fishing village inhabited by Sangha-Sangha fishermen and BaAka huntergatherers, Bayanga was charted on German maps in 1901. Today villagers live in wooden houses with palm leaf roofs, fish the river, and cultivate cassava, corn, and peanuts. Walking through the village you'll meet the community and its school kids, and visit small shops and local traders.

THIS ACTIVITY IS NOT CONTRIVED AND THE HUNTERS ARE THERE TO CATCH THEIR FOOD SO PLEASE BE AWARE THAT SOME ANIMALS MAY BE KILLED DURING THIS TIME.

Today you head out with a group of Ba'aka net hunters as they go about their daily hunter-gatherer lifestyle. It is fascinating and a joy in itself to see how well adapted and comfortable the Ba'aka are in the forest while you may find it overwhelming and almost intimidating. You will be shown several of their medicinal plants while the hunt goes along in the background, and the excited cheers will alert us if they do catch something. There are also river activities. Heading upriver by boat you will hike to a series of waterfalls in the area. These will take us through the best examples of prime rainforest that you would ever see. Apart from the amazingly beautiful waterfalls, you will see some of the most spectacular trees imaginable. Climbing to the top of the falls will provide vistas over the canopy of the forest while the possibility of seeing the extremely rare and endangered Grey-necked Rock fowl will excite any birders. In the evening you may do a night walk near the lodge with the hope of finding some of the more elusive nocturnal animals such as Potto, Thomas's Galago, Tree Pangolin, African Palm Civet, Frazer's Eagle Owl, Vermiculated Fishing Owl and several more.

Sangha Lodge-Standard Banda LDBB**Day 7 30/03/2017 Dzanga Sangha National Park****A second visit the Forest Elephants of Dzanga Bai**

Dzangha Bai is large mineral rich clearing in the middle of the rainforest where forest elephants gather in large numbers to indulge in drinking the mineral rich waters that bubble up in places in this Bai. The interaction between so many different groups of Forest elephants ensure that no one can ever get bored at this place, while the possibility of some of the other normally shy forest creature like Bongo, Giant Forest Hog, Red River Hog, Sitatunga and Forest Buffalos visiting the Bai keep us alert.

Sangha Lodge-Standard Banda LDBB**Day 8 31/03/2017 Dzanga Sangha National Park - Bangui**

Fly Dzanga Sangha National Park to Bangui. A ninety minute private charter flight back to CAR's capital city Bangui.

ETA Bangui no earlier than 12 noon. Current flight options: Air France and Kenya Airways.

Because of the various flight options in and out of Bangui Airport, the cost of overnight at Ledger Hotel is not included in the quotation below, however will be added once international flights are booked and confirmed.

Laico Ledger Plaza-Standard Rooms BB**Day 9 01/04/2017 Bangui**

Departure transfer to Bangui International Airport for your departure flight. Optional flight option on Royal Air Maroc.

Accommodation Information

Sangha Lodge

Situated on the banks of the Sangha River in the Dzanga-Sangha special reserve, Sangha Lodge is the ideal tranquil spot from which to set off on activities within the Dzanga-Sangha National Park, and the perfect most relaxing spot to return to after a long day in the field. We organize visits into the National Park which offers Gorilla Tracking of one of the only 2 groups of habituated Western Lowland Gorillas in the world, visiting the world renowned Dzanga Bai with its great spectacle of Forest Elephants, net hunting with the Ba'aka People, or just plain relaxing in the quiet of the forest at the lodge.

Sangha Forest Lodge was originally built in 1993 as a base for trophy hunters hunting the elusive Bongo. The site has now been taken over for use in more conventional and eco-friendly tourism.

Rod Cassidy a long-time conservationist and guide in the area now runs this camp for the sole purpose of sustainable tourism. Current plans are to develop several areas of sustainable tourism, as yet untried in Central Africa, with the focus on community involvement and development. It is hoped that this lodge will become a model for sustainable tourism in Central Africa.

The lodge consists of 7 spartanly appointed bungalows, each with its own en-suite bathroom, with hot and cold running water and flush toilets (3 standard rooms, 2 rooms with shared bathroom, and 2 family rooms).

There is a well stocked bar with cold beer and drinks, ice is made with bottled water and is safe to add to your drinks. A small kitchen produces simple yet tasty Western and African foods.

Sangha Lodge's situation on the bank of the Sangha River makes it the perfect spot to relax and unwind after a tough day in the forests. Situated on the edge of the Dzangha Sangha Reserve, we have easy access to all activities in the park as well as some of our own that we are developing.

Some activities are under our direct control, and these include:

- * Boat trips on the SANGHA and BABONGO Rivers. We have introduced an evening sundowner cruise up river from the lodge taking you into the area of the hill where the river narrows considerably. Once there, the motor is turned off and we drift down slowly while drinking gin and tonics or beer as we watch the sunset over the forest.
- * Bird watching along our 3 km access road and along the series of forest trails which we have cut.
- * Fishing for a host of different fish types, with the ultimate being Goliath Tiger fish.
- * Spotlighting around the camp and from the boat to find some of the more unusual nocturnal species like Galago, Potto, Gennet, Civit, Golden Cat, Hammer-Bat and a number of owls.
- * We also have a small project with the Ba'aka people where we go into the forest and spend the night with them in a forest camp.

The dimension of music and dance that you experience here is something that few westerners will ever see. All monies from this activity go directly to the Ba'aka to help with education and health issues.

Visits from local experts and conservationists when they are available can add a welcome dimension around the dinner table at night.

These activities are the principle reason for visiting Dzangha Sangha and are controlled entirely by the WWF project in Bayanga:

- * Gorilla Tracking
- * Visits to Dzangha Bai
- * Net Hunting and other cultural activities with the Ba'aka People



Laico Ledger Plaza

The Ledger Plaza Bangui is a 5* property conveniently located 15 minutes away from the Bangui International Airport and the city centre.

It features an outdoor swimming pool and a tennis court. The rooms are spacious, air-conditioned, and feature electronic safes and satellite TV. They offer a panoramic view over the gardens, the pool and the city. The vast conference facility, featuring fully equipped meeting rooms with state of the art technology and high debit internet connection, make the Ledger Plaza Bangui the reference hotel in Central Africa for seminars, business or leisure travelling. The property features a fitness center including two saunas, two steam baths and a rest lounge. Relaxing massages are proposed.

In the main restaurant, our chef proudly cooks specials from around the world, including delicious African dishes. Meals can be served on the terrace; the bar offers a vast choice of premium brands, while the coffee lounge bar proposes various salads, sandwiches and homemade pies. The Ledger Plaza Bangui graciously complements its guests with a shuttle service to and from the airport.

Rooms:

Standard Rooms: 29 sqm, our contemporary style rooms are air-conditioned and equipped with a large bed or 2 separate beds, Plasma screen TV, phone, electronic safe, mini-bar, desk, luggage rack, ironing set, electronic door keys, AC: 220v. The bathrooms include a tub, phone, hairdryer.

Business Center:

The Business Center is located in the Lobby Area and offers all the necessary: Work stations with internet access/Wi-Fi, fax, laser & color print, scanner, secretarial services, post service and selling mobile phone recharges.

Banquets:

The Ledger Plaza Bangui features 3 Lounges including the prestigious NBAKO Ballroom which can be subdivided, ideal for seminar meetings, cocktails and private diners (50 to 200 guests).

Fact file:

- * Air-conditioning
- * Electronic safe
- * Mini-bar
- * Hairdryer
- * Wi-Fi
- * Plasma screen TV
- * Reception desk 24-hours
- * Concierge desk 24-hours
- * Room service
- * Currency exchange
- * Medical doctor on request
- * Complimentary airport shuttle
- * Conference facility
- * Fitness center
- * Swimming pool
- * Tennis court
- * Massage



Service Information

Steve Turner - Professional Safari Guide

The Turner's have a long and established history with Africa. The very first members of the family to adventure into the continent did so more than a century ago, and in 1876 were amongst the first western explorers to discover the islands of Zanzibar and Pemba. More recently, during the Mau Mau Wars of the 1950's, Don Turner came to Nairobi, Kenya with the British Colonial Service. He stayed on in Kenya with his young family after Kenya's independence in 1962, after a personal invitation from the new President - Jomo Kenyatta. Don's business - East African Ornithological Safaris Ltd (EAOS) started well, his first client was the famous American author and naturalist Roger Tory Peterson - who on that very safari described the Flamingoes of Lake Nakuru as : "the finest bird spectacle in the world". After 25 years in the safari business, Don retired to the shores of Lake Naivasha in the Great Rift Valley to finish writing the authoritative guide to "The Birds of Kenya and Northern Tanzania" and then in 1987 left the family business to his son Steve.

Steve's post colonial upbringing in the wildernesses of East Africa obviously fostered a very special and dedicated interest and extensive knowledge, in not only natural history, but also the communities and tribal people who live within these rich environments. He knows East and Central Africa like few others, having spent much of his early adult years in Central Africa. It was in the early/mid 1980's, in Zaire (now DRC), Rwanda, CAR and the rest of East Africa where he cut his teeth on expedition planning - working with conservationists and film makers in search of rarely seen endemic wildlife such as eastern lowland and mountain gorillas, okapi and the rediscovery of the thought to be extinct Congo Peacock amongst others.

Steve has travelled widely throughout the region with and without guests searching for similar life changing experiences - including a massive 25,000 kms photographic expedition taking some 6 months across north, west and central Africa. His passion for culture, wildlife and nature has taken him and his guests throughout the African continent, and as far afield as Australia, Asia, The Amazon, The Arctic and Antarctica. He has received acclamation awards for his in depth photography of endangered Mountain Gorillas of Rwanda and Zaire, and after 25 years of guiding in Ethiopia's Omo Valley, his extensive collection of photographs of Africa's disappearing tribal people have been published worldwide. Steve photographs are represented internationally by Getty Images worldwide.

Today Steve is CEO and Managing Director of EAOS, now trading as "Origins Safaris", one of East Africa's most specialized safari operator. Steve is a Trustee of the Kasigau Conservation Trust an organization dedicated to the development of community based environmental enterprises in Kenya's largest wilderness - Tsavo. In his time Steve has been the Chairman of "The Kenya Professional Guides Association" - an association to promote greater qualification for the tour guides. He is currently one of the few Gold certified guides in East Africa. As the Chairman of "Campfire Kenya" he lead a consortium of conservationists working to promote greater conservation amongst Africa's pastoralists peoples. He has also served as vice chairman of the Ethics and Standards Committee for The Kenya Association of Tour Operators, a Board Member of The East African Natural History Society, and the African Board member of the US based Ecotourism Society. As with all Origins driver/guides he has also attained a certificate in 4WD Off Road Driving skills from Glen Edmunds Performance Driving School. Steve's first aid training does not stop at just the normal "Emergency First Responder", but in addition he is trained and certified in "Advance Wilderness Medicine". This is a specialist programme geared towards expedition medicine in remote areas where emergency medical assistance is not always available - i.e places that he often find himself.

When not travelling, Steve lives in a leafy suburb of Nairobi, Kenya with wife Jayne, while their now adult children study abroad.



The Western Lowland Gorilla

The Western Lowland Gorilla (*Gorilla gorilla gorilla*) has suffered exceptionally high levels of hunting- and disease-induced mortality (over 90% in some areas), which combined are estimated to have caused an overall decline of more than 60% over the last 20 to 25 years. In early 2008, the estimate of the world's population of critically endangered Western Lowland Gorillas received a boost with the discovery of large numbers of gorillas in remote and not easily accessible swamp forests in the northern part of the Republic of Congo, bringing the population estimates for north eastern Congo to 125,000. Current estimates of the total population are in the order of 150,000 -200,000 individuals.

The Eastern and Western Gorilla are separated by approximately 1,000 km. Western and Eastern Gorillas can be distinguished by external features, together with clear geographic and morphological distinctions. Western Lowland Gorillas live in the western Congolese forest, west of the Congo/Oubangi Rivers and south of the Sanaga River.

Description - The shape of the nose provides a point of difference between the eastern and western forms; the western species has an overhanging tip to its nose that is absent in the eastern forms. Western Lowland Gorillas have chestnut-brown, not black, hair on their heads though the extent is variable. Western Gorillas have more rounded faces and slender chests than Eastern Gorillas. Although predominantly terrestrial, they climb well, if cautiously. The Western Lowland Gorilla is the smallest and lightest of the four subspecies, and also the one in which sexual dimorphism is most pronounced.

General Biology - Gorillas are mainly terrestrial. The gorilla's large size and folivorous diet mean that the animals must spend long hours feeding everyday. Of all the great apes, the gorilla shows the most stable grouping patterns. The same adult individuals travel together for months and usually years at a time. It is because gorillas are mainly foliage eating that they can afford to live in these relatively permanent groups. Foliage, unlike fruit (especially the ripe fruits that the ape gut requires), comes in large patches than can in turn support large groups of animals. In West Africa, where fruits form a far higher proportion of the gorilla's diet than in the East, gorilla groups tend much more often to split into temporary feeding subgroups than they do in east Africa, as animals range far apart searching for the relatively scarce ripe fruit. Sleeping subgroups have also been reported but are anecdotal and seem to occur in the process of permanent splitting of a multi-male group into two single male groups. Groups usually number 5 to 10 individuals, but some groups can count as many as 20 to 32 animals.

Habitat - Western Lowland Gorillas inhabit dense primary rainforest, swamp forest, thicket, secondary vegetation, forest edges and clearings, riverine forests and abandoned cultivated fields within or adjacent to forest, but prefer the more closed-canopy primary forests. Some forest clearings have a particularly sodium-rich herbaceous vegetation and are known as saline or bais. Gorillas are known to visit these clearings on a regular basis to feed on plants from families such as Cyperaceae and Asteraceae. Swamp forests are now considered important habitats and feeding areas for western gorillas, supporting them in high densities both in the wet and the dry season.

Food - Gorillas are largely herbivorous (plant-eating). Plant material contains cellulose, which is indigestible to many non-herbivorous animals. Food availability affects both diet and foraging behaviour of gorillas. High quality herbs that are easily digestible and rich in proteins and minerals are scarce and patchily distributed in outside swamp forest areas. Fruit is relatively widely available in their habitats and forms an important part of the diet of Western Lowland Gorillas. The availability of seasonal fruit appears to shape foraging and ranging patterns of gorillas (Remis, 1997). When fruit is abundant, it may constitute most of the diet. Western gorillas travel farther when more fruit (and termites) are available in the forest and have shorter day ranges when they must rely on leaves and woody vegetation (Goldsmith, 1999).

Social Behaviour - Gorillas form harems. Reproductive groups of Western Gorillas almost always contain only one dominant silverback male plus three or four females and four or five offspring. Adult females in any group are mostly unrelated, and the social ties that exist between them are weak. In contrast to many other primates, it is the bond between each individual female and the silverback, rather than bonds between the females, that hold the group together. Upon reaching maturity, both males and females leave the natal group. The females usually join another group or a lone young adult male, whereas the males remain solitary until they can attract females and establish their own groups. The takeover of a group during which another male from outside ousts the group's silverback has never been reported, and a group splitting has been reported on only one occasion. However, western gorillas do not appear to be as cohesive on a daily basis as their eastern counterparts. In some groups, members spread out with distances of over 500m between them, other groups split up during the day and then reunite at the nest site. Recent studies at bais also suggest that around those particularly attractive locations, population dynamics might be more active than previously thought, with frequent exchange of individuals between groups.

The very large groups sometimes observed among eastern gorillas have not been reported to occur in western gorillas. Group size appears to be influenced by the size of the foraging patches and fruit abundance. Western gorillas eat considerably more fruit than eastern gorillas, and this preference for clumped food

resources may constrain their group size. Total group size ranges from two to 32 individuals with an average of four to six adults.

Distribution - The Western Lowland Gorilla is a relatively widespread species, but if the recent decline continues, a notable reduction in their distribution is to be expected. Surveys conducted in the 1980s indicated that healthy populations existed in many areas remote from human settlements. However, despite the fact that western equatorial Africa has one of the lowest human population densities of any tropical forest area in the world, gorilla (and chimpanzee) populations in this region are, today, in dramatic decline. This is due to increased commercial hunting, the spread of logging, which alters forest structure and facilitates poaching, and outbreaks of Ebola.

Ranging behaviour - Western Lowland Gorilla groups travel within a home range averaging 5 to 30 km². Gorillas do not display territorial behaviour, and neighbouring groups often overlap ranges. The group usually favours a certain area within the home range but seems to follow a seasonal pattern depending upon the availability of ripening fruits and, at some sites, localised large open clearings (swamps and "bais"). Gorillas normally travel 0.5-3.0 km per day. Populations feeding on high-energy foods that vary spatially and seasonally tend to have greater day ranges than those feeding on lower-quality but more consistently available foods. Larger groups travel greater distances in order to obtain sufficient food. Human hunters and leopards (*Panthera pardus*) can also influence the movement patterns. The annual home ranges (the areas used by a group over a year) of western gorillas are larger than those of mountain and eastern lowland gorillas and the home ranges of different groups overlap quite extensively.



Dzanga Bai

This morning set off for the Dzanga baai to catch the early flocks of noisy African grey parrots that visit the clay licks each day. Other visitors to the clearing include rare sitatunga and bongo antelope, forest elephants, red river hogs, red forest buffalo, Hartlaub forest ducks and other hard to see forest species. You drive for about 1 hour into the rain forest, then set off along elephant paths for a leisurely 1 hour hike through cool shallow sand streams and clouds of butterflies, until you reach the top of an observation platform that looks out over a natural clearing in the forest. This type of clearing, called a "baai," is frequented by scores of forest elephants who exhibit wonderful interactive behaviors: meeting and greeting each other, sniffing, trumpeting and challenging, and sinking their long trunks deep into water-logged holes in search of minerals. Here you might meet field biologist Andrea Turkalo the world's leading expert on forest elephants, who has lived in Dzanga Sangha for 20 years, and works to decipher the elephants' vocal communication as she compiles the world's first "elephant dictionary" from her perch on the edge of the baai.

Physical Requirements: All travelers must be in good health and prepared for travel in places without medical facilities. Participants must be able to climb into and out of private aircraft, safari vehicles, boats, and pirogues un-aided. They should be capable of walking moderate distances at an easy pace for up to 3 hours through the rain forest and over rough terrain, and be able to withstand hard riding four-wheel-drive vehicles that travel over dirt roads and sometimes rough, bumpy ground. While this expedition is scheduled during the West African winter and dry season, please note that due to the proximity to the equator, weather is typically hot and humid with a chance of showers, and average temperatures range between 60 and 90 degrees Fahrenheit. In general you will most enjoy the opportunities this expedition has to offer if you are willing to dispense with a few Western amenities and travel with flexibility and a spirit of adventure



Net Hunting with Ba'Aka Pygmies and Palm Wine

THIS ACTIVITY IS NOT CONTRIVED AND THE HUNTERS ARE THERE TO CATCH THEIR FOOD SO PLEASE BE AWARE THAT SOME ANIMALS MAY BE KILLED DURING THIS TIME

This morning begins with a visit to the Ba'Aka villages, where the Ba'Aka accompany you on a short drive into the rainforest. Along the way excitement grows and the Ba'Aka sing and chant with anticipation. Carrying hand woven nets and gathering baskets they head into this rich environment searching for food—edible plants and roots, medicinal barks, and Africa's smallest antelope called duiker. The Ba'Aka disperse, yodeling to each other as they efficiently orchestrate their centuries old tradition of hunting and gathering, striking their nets and pulling them down repeatedly. At the end of the hunt they come together and share their bounty according to tradition, before you drive back to their villages, surrounded by harmonic singing and great green canopies.

Following lunch at the lodge, board a dugout canoe called a pirogue that will take you to a completely different landscape. Similar to paddy fields, part of the Sangha River meanders through a lush swampy area littered with raffia palm trees. The palm wine extraction is carried out from standing palms. As the sap flows for several hours into a container, it begins to naturally ferment, diminishing the sugar and forming a musty tasting wine. Continue by pirogue to Bayanga village, where "buvettes" (small bars) sell the palm wine which is low in alcohol and contains supplementary calories, vitamins, calcium and other important nutritional elements and an important food source produced by the forest.



Location and park information

Dzanga Sangha National Park

Since 1988 the CAR component for the region has been managed by the Dzanga-Sangha Project run by WWF. The purpose of the project is the development, protection and management of the Dzanga-Sangha Dense Forest Reserve that covers 3195 km², and the Dzanga-Ndoki National Park (Dzanga sector comprising 495 km² and the Ndoki sector another 727 km²). By developing viable wildlife protection programs, eco-tourism, scientific research, education and rural development. It is hoped that the region will be preserved and that the cultural integrity of its people (most notably the Ba'Aka Pygmies) will survive.

The primary reason to visit the Dzanga-Shanga National Park are for the forest elephant, western lowland gorilla, agile mangabey and bongo. There is nowhere else in central Africa that boasts the daylight viewing possibilities for these species. The Sangha river, its environs, the forest and the bais in the region offer many opportunities to see some of the forest related species of mammals, reptiles, amphibians and insects that occur here. Bird and plant life is varied and plentiful. By traveling on a large river like the Sangha, good sightings of animals are increased significantly. In addition this body of water gives one the chance to watch local people fishing and working the river.

The two gorilla highlights in the Sangha-Ndoki National Park are the visits to the habituated gorilla families of 'Makumba', a silverback and his family located close to the research camp at Bai Hokou, and another newly habituated silverback gorilla and his family at Mongambe.

The elephant highlight, revolves around the unique clearing of Dzanga bai. A crossroad for elephants in the region. Visited by elephants day and night, this is one of central Africa's most famous spectacles. The clearing not only attracts countless elephants, but it is a good place to view giant forest hogs, bushpigs, sitatunga and bongo antelope. Flocks of African grey parrots and even on occasion, western lowland gorillas can be seen here too.

The Region - The region is well known for its inhabitants: the Ba'Aka Pygmies who have lived here for thousands of years. Various ethnic groupings of these people inhabit a narrow band of tropical rainforest about 4° above and 4° below the Equator. This stretches from the western extremities of Lake Victoria right through to the Atlantic Ocean on the west coast of the continent. Considered the largest group of hunter-gatherers left on earth, the Ba'Aka's lifestyle is principally under threat from the everincreasing destruction of their forest environment. Gradual erosion of tradition and change is posed by their attempts to adopt a new, more modern African lifestyle, commonly found near towns and villages throughout the region.

Pygmies dazzled the 'ancients' when tales about a mysterious race of tiny Africans were brought home by travelers. The earliest mention of these people was in a letter written about 2360 BC by the Egyptian Pharaoh Pharaoh II to a general who brought a Pygmy to Egypt after a jungle expedition to Africa. In the 5th Century BC, Herodotus – a Greek historian – wrote to a Persian explorer after seeing from a distance '... small men dressed in palm leaves at a spot along the west African coast.' However, it was some 23 centuries later that a Russian botanist, George Schweinfurth became the first European to come across a tribe on the Congo river.

Landscape - The landscape is flat, with very few hills or points of high elevation. Presumably the flood plain of a much mightier river thousands of years ago. There is a distinct demarcation between the forest protected within the confines of the Dzanga-Sangha Dense Forest Reserve, the Dzanga-Ndoki National Park and the area surrounding the village of Bayanga which is serviced by the roads that radiate outward from this small town. Forest clearance for gardens has pushed the tree line back from the road, opening-up the skyline and indicative of the fact that the area is actively exploited and has been for some time. Only in the reserve and the park itself, does the lush vegetation promise to swamp the rough, dirt road that wends its way for a couple of hours taking visitors to the Dzanga bai, Bai .Hokou or Mongambe to see elephants and gorillas Dzanga-Ndoki National Park:

Wildlife - This area is famous for its numerous forest elephants *Loxodonta africanus cyclotis*, habituated western lowland gorillas *Gorilla.gorilla.gorilla* and Agile mangabeys *Cercocebus agilis*, wild chimpanzee populations *Pan troglodytes troglodytes*, forest buffalo *Syncerus caffer nanus*, and Bongo *Bocercus euryceros*. All of these creatures can be seen in the daytime out in the open in several of the forest's clearings or bais. The permanent wooden hide structure erected beside the Dzanga bai offers visitors a perfectly comfortable and elevated vantage point over the mass of elephants that congregate to drink-up minerals excavated from the muddy waters of the clearing. African grey parrots *Psittacus erithacus* gather in the tree tops near the Dzanga bai. Patiently, they wait to built-up courage before flying down en-masse to feed on particular greenery that they cannot find elsewhere. Female Sitatunga *Tragelaphus spekei* roam many of these open areas together with their offspring from the previous season. By comparison the males are shy, making them much more difficult to observe. They will seldom wonder into the clearings for any length of time, preferring instead to visit briefly, before returning to the sanctuary of the forest.

The gorillas are habituated to humans here. A task that has taken years to execute. Painstaking collaboration with Ba'Aka pygmy trackers has resulted in one of the few successful – and still operational – western lowland gorilla habituation programs in Central Africa. The other is over the border in the neighboring Republic of Congo, where it is possible to see 'Kingo' and his family of females and infants at Mondika. With a history in the region of vulnerability to disease, there is great urgency in trying to make sure that there is more than just one family of gorillas getting habituated to the presence of human beings. It is hoped that 40% of earnings from tourism will go to the local community, and provide much needed local employment for many in the area. This kind of economic situation may help counter the devastating effect of the common alternative in central Africa: logging and exploitation of timber and its associated illegal poaching for meat and ivory.



Destination Information

Central African Republic

The Central African Republic is a landlocked nation within the interior of the African continent. It is bordered by the countries of Cameroon, Chad, Sudan, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Republic of the Congo. The country lies between latitudes 2° and 11°N, and longitudes 14° and 28°E. Much of the Central African Republic consists of flat, or rolling plateau savanna, typically about 500 metres (1,640ft) above sea level. Covering some 618,135 km², the Central African Republic (CAR) has dry 'Sudan' savanna in the north of the country. At its centre there is a band of wetter 'Guinea' savanna. In the south are a mosaic of farms, secondary grasslands and rainforest. Heading still further southwest, into the distinctive 'V' shaped base of the country, close to the borders of the Republic of Congo and Cameroon exists two blocks of continuous lowland tropical rainforest covering 40,200 km² and swamp. From the sandstone Ubangui Plateau waters flow south to the Congo and north to basins in Chad and Lake Chad itself. In the south west, where the Sangha River flows close to the Republic of Congo, in the Sangha-Mbaere prefecture, exists a truly unique and special expanse of rainforest. This is the world of the Dzanga-Ndoki National Park. The 122,000-ha area and the adjacent faunal reserves are part of a tri-national park project with Cameroon and Congo. This protected area has gained international importance and it contains the last unlogged forest and intact fauna in the country.

Two thirds of the country lies in the basins of the Ubangi River, which flows south into the Congo River, while the remaining third lies in the basin of the Chari River, which flows north into Lake Chad. Since most of the territory is located in the Ubangi and Chari River basins, France called the colony it carved out in this region Ubangi-Chari, or Oubangui-Chari in French. It became a semi-autonomous territory of the French Community in 1958 and then an independent nation on 13 August 1960. For over three decades after independence, the CAR was ruled by presidents who either were not freely elected or took power by force. Local discontent with this system was eventually reinforced by international pressure, following the end of the Cold War.

Cultivation of food crops is the main livelihood, while export of diamonds is an important industry. The official languages spoken here are French, Swahili and Sango. Bangui is the capital city, with its own attractions. Despite its significant mineral resources (gold, uranium, diamonds, etc.) the Central African Republic remains one of the poorest countries in the world and among the ten poorest countries in Africa. The climate of the CAR is generally tropical. The northern areas are subject to harmattan winds, which are hot, dry, and carry dust. The northern regions have been subject to desertification, and the northeast is a desert. The remainder of the country is prone to flooding from nearby rivers.

Tourism in the Central African Republic has been negatively affected by its recent troubled history and fighting in neighbouring countries. Security in the country is unstable, particularly in its north and northwest. The country's government cannot guarantee the safety of travelers in most of the country. The Central African Republic is a landlocked and remote country, and a lack of air access makes it an expensive destination. Locations in the country attractive to travelers include the Chutes De Boali, waterfalls of a height of 50m (164ft). Dzanga-Sangha National Park in the south west of the country has gorillas and elephants. The Ba'Aka people live in this area. Bayanga beside the Sangha River is the main village near to the national park. The best time to visit most of the country is from November to April.

CAR has four national parks with fantastic natural attractions, and it is hoped that they can be the key to successful sustainable tourism for the country. Features include waterfalls near the capital city Bangui, primate safaris with gorilla watching, elephants, rhinoceros and buffaloes as well as pristine rainforests in untouched settings. Eco-tourism has become the tourism focus for many countries in this region, and CAR risks missing out on development and income opportunities whilst the instability continues. However, the country is working closely with the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNTWO) to develop its eco-tourism offerings.

The culture of the people here gives us a clear idea about their daily life. Families are of prime importance, and considered sacred. The country is made up of different tribes and that is another reason for the diversity in practices and languages. The main occupations of the people are as close to nature as possible. Their livelihood is very dependent on hunting, fishing, agriculture and making simple crafts. The traditions prevalent in the rest of Africa, of passing on legends orally, poetry and storytelling are important threads weaving society together. Social events like weddings, naming ceremonies etc are celebrated with great aplomb. The Pygmies found here, are very protective of their ways of life.

Fact file:

- * Official name: Central African Republic
- * Population: 4,303,356
- * Coastline: 0 km (landlocked)
- * Climate: tropical; hot, dry winters & mild to hot, wet summers
- * Capital City: Bangui (838,000)
- * Largest Cities: Bangui, Berberati, Carnot, Bouar
- * Currency: CFA Franc
- * Languages: French (official), Sango, others

