

# Congo Wildlife Adventures

& Mama Tembo Tours Inc

*Be Among the First to Arrive*

**Republic of Congo: Nouabale-Ndoki National Park/Central African  
Republic: Dzanga-Ndoki National Park**

Revised Jan 25, 2011  
MTT/CWA Congo Basin Safari 2011  
Agents

## **Itinerary:**

***Mistral Airlines flies Thursday and Sunday between Brazzaville and Ouessou. Air Congo flies Monday and Friday. This is the current internal airline schedule and is subject to change without notice.***

Arrival Brazzaville: You are met at the airport, helped through immigration and transferred to a hotel of three star standard for overnight. Hotel upgrades are available. Guests can also arrive two nights before safari departure.

**Day One:** Fly Brazzaville – Ouessou. Transfer via motorized pirogue to Bomassa, Nouabale-Ndoki National Park headquarters for overnight. This can take seven + hours; it depends on the size of the pirogue, motor available that day, and river conditions. It can also mean a very late arrival into Bomassa if Air Congo or Mistral have been delayed leaving Brazzaville.

**Day Two:** Transfer to Mbeli Camp via road (45 minutes) and pirogue (90 minutes). Afternoon at the observation platform, a 45 minute walk from Mbeli Camp, where it is hoped to sight wild western lowland gorillas. Overnight at Mbeli Camp.

**Day Three:** Full day at Mbeli Bai observation tower. Overnight at Mbeli Camp.

**Day Four:** Transfer to Mondika Camp via pirogue (90 minutes), road (30 mins) and on foot (2 hours). Some flooded swamp to cross. Afternoon in camp. Overnight Mondika Camp.

**Day Five:** Visit habituated gorilla family at Mondika. Forest walks in the afternoon, or relaxing in camp with the Ba'Aka trackers. Overnight at Mondika Camp.

**Day Six:** Return to Bomassa, park headquarters for lunch. Transfer via motorized pirogue to Lidjombo, Central African Republic border post for immigration formalities. Continue on to Bayanga. This trip can take between three to six hours depending upon the pirogue available. Overnight at one of two available lodges near Dzangha-Ndoki NP.

**Day Seven:** Drive to trailhead in park, 1 ½ hours. Walk to Dzanga Bai viewing platform, 45 minutes. Remain at tower to observe elephants which come to mine for minerals in the saline clearing. You might also see sitatunga antelope, giant forest hogs, forest buffalo, monkey species, and flocks of African Grey parrots. Depart the viewing platform before 16:00 to return to vehicles and the return drive to the lodge.

**Day Eight:** Drive to Bai Houkou research center in the park, 1 ½ hours drive. Trek to see habituated gorilla family in the am and a mangabey primate troop in the afternoon.

**Day Nine:** Net hunting with the Ba'Aka people in the morning. You will also learn about medicinal plant collecting from the Ba'Aka women. The rest of the day is for exploring on your own. There are some guided walks available in the vicinity of Sangha Lodge.

**Day Ten:** After breakfast, pirogue to Bomassa, a two to three hour trip. Arrive in time for lunch. Take a guided walk to Wali Bai near Bomassa headquarters. Overnight in Bomassa.

**Day Eleven:** Travel by pirogue to Ouessou for overnight in a simple hotel, the best standard available. There is time to explore Ouessou's market.

**Day Twelve:** Fly to Brazzaville. Depart for home in the evening on AF or overnight in Brazzaville and depart the following day.

- This program works with a Thursday dep from Brazzaville and a Monday return which fits best with Air France's schedule of Mon, Wed and Friday night flights in and out of Brazzaville.
- It also works with a Monday dep from Brazzaville and a Friday return. Because there are internal flights four days a week now, we are allowed greater freedom of program options.
- It can also be shortened by one day without impacting the tour too much for a Thursday dep from Brazzaville and a Sunday return. With this option, Day Ten becomes a long travel day between Bayanga in the CAR back to Ouessou for overnight with a break in Bomassa for lunch only.

#### **Costs:**

**Accompanied by CWA's Max Bwily**

**Using Sangha Lodge (CAR):**

- **Eight people: 3624 E PP**
- **Seven people: 3707 E PP**
- **Six people: 3817 E PP**
- **Five people: 3969 E PP**
- **Four people: 3955 E PP**
- **Three people: 4285 E PP**
- **Two people: 4703 E PP**

- **One person: 6554 E (inclusive of single supplement at Nouabale-Ndoki NP of 145 E)**

**Using Doli Lodge (CAR):**

- **Eight people: 3804 E**
- **Seven people: 3887 E**
- **Six people: 3996 E**
- **Five people: 4149 E**
- **Four people: 4135 E**
- **Three people: 4565 E**
- **Two people: 4883 E**
- **One person: 7082 E (inclusive of single supplements of 145 E (NNNP) and 348 E at Doli Lodge.)**

**Foreign Tour Guides:**

**2463 E each using Sangha Lodge**

**2537 E each using Doli Lodge**

**If there is a foreign tour guide along, the maximum number of guests should be seven.**

**Cost for foreign tour guide includes:**

Two nights' hotel accommodation in Brazzaville, three star standard, bed and breakfast basis, single room

One night hotel accommodation in Ouessou, the best available

Internal flights Brazzaville – Ouessou – Brazzaville

Park fees in ROC and CAR

Mandatory village development fees in the ROC

English and French speaking CWA guide (unless requested otherwise)

Letters of invitation for visas

Airport Assistance x 4

Hotel transfers in Brazzaville and Ouessou

Room and full board while on safari, single status

NNNP activities: Mbeli Bai mirador and Mondika Camp gorilla trekking

DSNP: Dzangha Bai, Bai Houkou (habituated gorillas and mangabeys), half day activities with Ba'Aka

All transportation via motorized pirogue and 4 x 4 once safari commences

Forest guides in the parks

Porters

Drinking Water

**Cost for foreign tour guide excludes:**

International Flights

Visas to ROC and CAR  
Gratuities for CWA guide and trackers  
Drinks other than water  
Additional nights in Brazzaville if international flights are missed

#### **Unaccompanied Travellers:**

**CWA will handle all park arrangements, internal flight bookings, hotel reservations, letters of invitation, and airport meet and greet in and out of Brazzaville, However, guests will fly to parks on their own, and travel in the parks on their own with only the assistance of park staff. This is most suitable for guests who speak French.**

#### **Using Sangha Lodge:**

- **Eight people: 3475 Euros PP**
- **Seven people: 3537 E PP**
- **Six people: 3619 E PP**
- **Five people: 3731 E PP**
- **Four people: 3716 E PP**
- **Three people: 3966 E PP**
- **Two people: 4225 E PP**
- **One person: 5471 E (inclusive of single supplements of 145 E at Nouable-Ndoki NP.)**

#### **Using Doli Lodge:**

- **Eight people: 3655 E**
- **Seven people: 3717 E**
- **Six people: 3798 E**
- **Five people: 3911 E**
- **Four people: 3896 E**
- **Three people: 4146 E**
- **Two people: 4405 E**
- **One person: 5999 E (inclusive of single supplements of 145 E (NNNP) and 348 E at Doli Lodge.)**

**A note about single travellers: they bear the high transport costs to the parks alone. I suggest that we customize programs for single requests and see where we can trim expenses for them.**

#### **Safari Includes:**

Two nights hotel accommodation in Brazzaville, three star standard, bed and breakfast basis  
One night hotel accommodation in Ouesso, the best available

Internal flights Brazzaville – Ouessou – Brazzaville  
Park fees in ROC and CAR  
Mandatory village development fees in the ROC  
English and French speaking CWA guide (unless requested otherwise)  
Letters of invitation for visas  
Airport Assistance x 4  
Hotel transfers in Brazzaville and Ouessou  
Room and full board while on safari, based on two people sharing  
NNNP activities: Mbeli Bai mirador and Mondika Camp gorilla trekking  
DSNP: Dzangha Bai, Bai Houkou (habituated gorillas and mangabeys), half day activities with Ba'Aka  
All transportation via motorized pirogue and 4 x 4 once safari commences  
Forest guides in the parks  
Porters  
Drinking Water  
Contribution for gratuities to trackers

**Safari Excludes:**

International Flights  
Visas to ROC and CAR  
Gratuities for CWA guide  
Drinks other than water  
Additional nights in Brazzaville if international flights are missed

**Brazzaville Tours:**

CWA offers guided tours of Brazzaville which can include visits to local markets, the famous rapids on the Congo River, the Brazzaville art school, as well as dance performances, Congolese musical instrument instruction, and meals at local restaurants serving traditional foods. Since rental vehicles run 350 E a day, local taxis, which are plentiful and inexpensive, will be used. Final tour program will be decided when number of participants is known. Average cost of full day tour runs 70 to 100 E per person but can be down sized as well in the interests of time and cost.

## Visitor Facts

- Single rooms are available upon request but may not be available.
- It is very possible to be delayed in either direction by local airlines. This impacts the tour most if the delay is returning to Brazzaville to make the departing international flight. Guests may be required to pay additional nights in Brazzaville hotels if their international flight is missed. MTT/CWA prefers to inform its guests of this possibility rather than to build contingency costs into the tour which may not be used.
- All guests are accompanied by Brazzaville-based Max Bwily unless they request to travel alone.
- Languages catered for: English, French, Spanish, Lingala; working knowledge of Sanjo and Ba'Aka.
  
- Visas required in advance for ROC and CAR.
- CWA guests are furnished with letters of invitation which are required in order to apply for a visa from a ROC and CAR embassy abroad.
  
- Proof of yellow fever vaccination is required for entry to both ROC and CAR. International health certificates are checked upon arrival in Brazzaville.
- All visitors must furnish proof of a negative TB test administered within six months of arrival at NNNP. Proof of vaccination against yellow fever, polio (if for the first time, administered no less than eight months before arrival) and measles is also required. There will be no exceptions. Gorillas are highly susceptible to human diseases.
- It is strongly recommended that all visitors are vaccinated against tetanus, and hepatitis A and B.
- If guests arrive ill, or show any symptoms of illness (colds, flu, cough, diarrhoea, etc), they are not allowed to visit the habituated gorillas and may be barred from Mbeli Bai observation platform as well.
- All visitors are supplied masks to place over their nose and mouths when visiting the habituated gorillas and they must maintain a distance from the animals of seven meters. This is strictly enforced.
  
- Typically two guests at a time visit the habituated gorillas. Viewing time is one hour. There are no exceptions.
- Children under the age of fifteen years are not permitted to observe the habituated gorillas at NNNP.
- Instructions on how to behave while in the forest and while observing gorillas are furnished to all participants before travel.
  
- Special diets other than vegetarian cannot be catered for.
  
- Air France: flies Paris – Brazzaville – Paris: Monday, Wednesday, Friday
- Ethiopian flies Addis – Brazzaville – Addis: every day except Tuesdays, and London Heathrow and Paris de Gaulle to Addis several times weekly.
- Interair flies Johannesburg – Brazzaville: Monday, Thursday; and Brazzaville – Johannesburg: Wednesday and Friday
- Kenyan Airways flies Nairobi – Brazzaville: Tuesday, Wednesday, Saturday

Airline schedules are subject to change.

## Important Additional Facts for Visitors

**Physical Fitness:** This is a very active safari. When it comes to gorilla trekking, the habituated gorilla groups may be 30 minutes walk from the camp or three hours. You will not know until you arrive at the starting point. In Nouabale-Ndoki National Park in the ROC, it is a two to three hour walk just to arrive at the starting point for a gorilla follow. The forest treks are not arduous in terms of elevation gain or loss. The terrain is for the most part flat so all that is really required is stamina. There are also patches of swamp to wade through and stretches of river to cross. This requires wearing rubber shoes. The park's other attractions are the bais, saline clearings in the middle of the forest which attract elephants, buffalo, sitatunga and bongo antelope, and gorilla. Accessing these bais requires more walking, which is why we spend all day at the observation towers which have been built overlooking the forest clearings.

**Respect for Quiet:** The ability to remain quiet -as you walk through the forest and for the long hours that you spend on the observation platforms - is a requirement of this tour. The trackers and guides enforce silence. Scientists on the platforms work in silence too. (Your days here offer you the opportunity to experience a researcher's life.) Wildlife conservation in Central Africa has supplanted a long tradition of hunting. Animals have long ago learned to fear man. The trackers who now habituate gorillas or who escort us through the forest, ever vigilant about spotting elephants, once hunted them. If we talk on the observation platforms the wildlife will leave the clearing. If we are noisy in the forest we risk startling gorillas and elephants. We need to be quiet as we walk through the forest so that our trackers can do their job and avoid any distressing man-wildlife confrontations.

**Elephants:** There are large numbers of elephants in these forests and there is always the chance that we encounter them. Our forest guides are unarmed. We are briefed before entering the forest to always stay close, remain quiet, and follow our guide's instructions at all times.

**Annoyances:** Primary rainforest is extremely humid. It can cool down dramatically at night but during the day, it is hot. There are also insects with which to deal—most of them of them harmless but annoying nevertheless, like the little sweat bees. Not so hard to ignore are tsetse flies, ticks, and the large biting army ants. A rainforest is arguably nature at its most indomitable. If you stand stationary long enough it attempts to break you down into leaf litter!

**Accommodations and Food:** In Congo's case, the accommodations are decidedly no-frills. At Mbeli Camp, we share raised wooden chalets with toilet and bathing areas below. At Mondika Camp, we share tents with separate ablution blocks. In Congo too, the majority of food is tinned and while vegetarians won't have any problems, any special diets other than vegetarian are difficult if next to impossible to accommodate. Meals and accommodations are not the highlights of travel to this remote part of Africa.

## Travel Rewards

**Rare Forests and Wildlife:** The tropical forests of the Congo Basin comprise the world's largest rainforests after those of the Amazon Basin. They are therefore among the last of their kind on the planet. Delayed flights and bumpy roads notwithstanding, this remote area is now *accessible*. And if location alone makes it a rare travel experience, by extension so must be the wildlife that is found there. The Central African Republic has some of the highest densities of forest elephants and western lowland gorillas in Africa. At Mbeli Bai in Nouabale-Ndoki National Park, there may be three separate families of gorillas feeding peacefully. Sixteen gorilla families along with ten solitary silverbacks, amounting to some 150 animals, are known to come to Mbeli to feed on its nutritional plants, and the researchers know every last one of them. Then there are Kingo and Boka, the habituated gorilla patriarchs of Nouabale-Ndoki. To meet them and their families is to understand that you are now inextricably wrapped up in their fate. Habituated in the interests of science, they have been made vulnerable by their trust of man. A sustainable tourism program is the best answer to ensuring their survival once the science is complete. Tourists also bring the revenue to better the lives of local people, without whom conservation efforts would fail. It is easier to keep wildlife alive if men who hunted in the past for their livelihood earn a salary guiding you through the forest.

**Culture:** These forests are the ancestral homes of Ba'Aka pygmies, traditionally hunters and gatherers, who have been integral to the establishment of conservation efforts. The Ba'Aka are the cornerstone of the tourism program. Without their knowledge of the forest and its wildlife, the gorilla habituation program wouldn't exist. Every time we enter the forest we are escorted by a Ba'Aka guide.

**It is inevitable that challenges to travel to the Congo Basin will decrease as they develop. The interest shown in this area and its wildlife is growing. Nouabale has opened a chimpanzee research and ultimate habituation program a six hour hike from Mbeli Bai, which may become another park activity in the future. Meanwhile, to spend time in these parks now is to understand that you are paying for the privilege, only a few of you at a time, to enter a remote, pristine rainforest to experience one of Africa's most recent wildlife opportunities—and not for the five-star luxuries your per diem can provide you elsewhere.**

## **Guidelines for Forest/Gorilla Trekking**

Obey your guide at all times.

Never step in front of your tracker or guide.

Walk in single file in the forest and maintain a short distance from the person in front of you.

Avoid sudden movements.

Do not speak. If necessary, use a low voice or whisper.

Do not point at gorillas.

Never run, shout or scream around gorillas.

If a gorilla shows aggression (barks, screams or charges), it is important that you do not move. This may be interpreted by the gorilla as aggression.

Do not look a gorilla silverback in the eye. This can be interpreted as aggression.

Keep a distance of seven metres from a gorilla to minimize the risk of disease transmission.

Do not touch a gorilla if it comes close.

Step away slowly if a curious young gorilla comes too close.

If you must sneeze, turn away and cover your nose and mouth with your shirt.

Do not use flashes while filming or photographing gorillas.

Do not leave litter in the forest.

Do not eat in the forest.

Do not leave human feces in the forest.

Do not smoke in the forest.

On rare occasions visitors can encounter elephants and buffaloes in the forest and must be prepared to run on the instructions of their tracker or guide. Please evaluate your physical capability to do so before entering the forest.

If you are allergic to insect stings, please carry your own emergency medicines. Inform your guide before entering the forest if you are highly allergic to bees and other stinging insects.

### **Booking, Cancellation Policies, and Travel Insurance:**

Booking forms are required for each participant on a private tour or for each group sent by an agency, including any group accompanied by a Tour Leader. Booking forms are available from [leslie@mamatembotours.com](mailto:leslie@mamatembotours.com). There is also a form which can be downloaded on [www.mamatembotours.com](http://www.mamatembotours.com) at [www.mamatembotours.com/contact.php](http://www.mamatembotours.com/contact.php).

A deposit of 50 percent of the total safari cost is required to confirm the booking, which is refundable up to 90 days before arrival less a handling fee of 300 USD. For bookings of groups of eight participants, 25 % of the deposit is non-refundable.

Final payment is due TWO months before arrival date.

Cancellation charges: 0 - 60 days before arrival: 75 % of the safari cost.

Emergency medical care equivalent to Western standards is unavailable in Northern Congo. The WCS has an emergency evacuation plan in place but should it be necessary it will take time to enact. Northern Congo is very remote. It is imperative that all tour participants consider themselves healthy and physically fit and tell the truth about any physical issues, past or present, should they exist, on their booking forms. A great deal of walking is required for travel to these parks. Travel insurance which covers trip cancellation as well as health and emergency evacuation is essential. Proof of such travel insurance is required by MTT Inc/CWA before participants arrive in the Republic of Congo.