

MTT Inc

# Congo Wildlife Adventures

See *Another Africa*

## ***Central Africa Series: Western Lowland Gorillas & Forest Elephants Republic of Congo & the Central African Republic***

### **Quick Facts:**

- Departing from: Brazzaville, Republic of Congo
- Transport: by air, motorized pirogue, and private 4 x 4 vehicle
- Accommodation: basic to simple.
- Adventure meter: off the meter
- Suitable for: adventurers; the physically fit; those prepared to rough it; those prepared for cultural immersion; those who are flexible, and can handle delays; those who travel hopefully.
- When to go: You can visit the habituated gorillas all year round, but August/September/October provide better chances of spotting wild gorillas. July through November, the rainy season just above the equator, is when river levels are high and it is easier to get around by pirogue. February and March are when the river levels are at their lowest.
- How many days: minimum of twelve days is required. Delays must be expected.
- How many participants: minimum of two; maximum of six is best.
- Customizable?: can be altered slightly.
- Escort: French, English and Spanish speaking guide

### **Summary:**

This tour focuses on the observation of the world's only two habituated families of Western lowland gorillas, of gorillas in the wild, and of Africa's highest densities of forest elephants. It is a true adventure and unique wildlife experience—only a handful of visitors make it each year to Nouabale-Ndoki National Park in the Republic of Congo and Dzanga-Ndoki National Park in the Central African Republic. Conservationist J Michael Fay, who pioneered conservation efforts in this remote area, has said that there are few places left which are truly wild. He counts the Congo Basin parks among them.

Although some of the most rewarding travel you might ever undertake, Central Africa does not make for easy travel. A minimum of twelve days is required. Customized programs can only vary slightly since their timing is largely dependent upon the Republic of Congo's unreliable internal airline schedules. As of late March 2010, all air travel between Brazzaville and northern Congo where these parks are located abruptly terminated. The only access is two days by road by local bus and/or private hire 4 x 4s, each way. This has added greatly to the already significant challenges to traveling to these parks, but it is also what sends the adventure meter into outer orbit.

The cost of travel in Central Africa may seem at odds with the standards encountered, but to spend time there is to understand that you pay for the privilege 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 elsewhere.

**Details:**

**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 in their roles as trackers. Tour includes a day in Brazzaville to enjoy its local flavors. The road route to the north ensures total immersion in Congolese culture.

**Wildlife:** Wild gorillas and forest elephants are observed at bays, swampy saline clearings in the middle of rainforest, from wooden viewing platforms. The habituated groups of gorillas are tracked on foot. Other wildlife that might be observed are a prolific bird life; forest hogs, forest buffaloes, antelopes such as bongo, sitatunga and duiker; many species of monkeys, and leopard (if you are very, very lucky).

**Walking:** Several hours of walking a day are required. Flooded forest and rivers are crossed. Very good levels of physical fitness and health are required.

**Accommodations:** Three star hotels in Brazzaville; local guest houses upcountry; rustic chalets and science camps in the parks.

**Includes:** internal air tickets if required; ground transportation and transfers; all food and accommodation upon arrival in BZV; two nights' accommodation in Brazzaville (at tour commencement and completion); one gorilla tracking permit per national park; all activities in parks.

**Excludes:** gratuities; international flights; visas to ROC and CAR.

**Visa requirements:**

- Double entry visa for Republic of Congo (approximately \$US150.00) and single entry visa for Central Africa Republic (approximately \$US130.00). These must be obtained in your home country. Both embassies will require a LOI (Letter of Invitation) which you will receive prior to visa applications.

**Vaccinations:**

- All recommended vaccinations for international travel to developing countries, including Yellow Fever. Your health certificate will be checked upon arrival in Brazzaville.
- In addition, all visitors must furnish proof of a negative TB test administered within six months of arrival at Nouabale-Ndoki, as well as proof that they are vaccinated against polio and measles. There will be no exceptions. Gorillas are highly susceptible to human diseases.
- If guests arrive ill, or show any symptoms of cold or flu, they will not be allowed to visit the habituated gorillas groups and may be barred as well from the observation platforms.