

*Gabon: Where Hippos Surf, Elephants
Beachcomb & Turtles Nest on the Beach*

JANUARY 7 – JANUARY 15, 2025

**This is a short post-trip extension after the Congo River Cruise
6 PERSON DEPARTURE**



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Chalo Africa Inc.

128 N Guadalupe Street, Santa Fe, NM 87501
info@chaloafricainc.com | +1-703-220-6393 | www.chaloafrica.com

Gabon in the Wet... When it really isn't wet!



Dear Adventurers & Explorers,

We thought we had discovered what Gabon had to offer with our annual Ivindo-Lopé-Loango trips there in July and August, but boy oh boy, were we wrong! This multi-faceted country does not cease to amaze with its different hues and shades and completely different safari experiences, depending on the time of year you visit. One of the enduring images of Gabon is of large charismatic animals foraging on its pristine coastal beaches. This is not so common in the summer months of July and August, but very common during the wet months (most of the rest of the year). While wildlife safaris in pouring rain can be a challenge, Gabon provides us with a brief 'dry' season in the midst of its 'rainy' season, and this is the time we want to be here for hippos that surf, elephants that beachcomb and Great Apes that lounge on the beach!

As it happens, our Congo River Cruise coincides perfectly with Gabon's brief dry spell that occurs in December and January, and offers us the perfect opportunity to go right up to the Atlantic Coast and end our Congo discovery with some last iconic memories from an already epic trip. For those of you who choose to do this extension, you would have explored the Congo Basin all the way from the coast to the Heart of Africa – and covered 5 extremely-hard-to-visit West and Central African nations in the process.

The connection from Libreville to Brazzaville and vice-versa is relatively easy on Afrijet, the regional carrier. I am attaching the flight schedule below. It is possible to do this as a pre-trip extension as well – in other words start in Gabon and end in the Republic of Congo, but the return dates are more suitable, though we can work this either as a pre- or post-trip extension. I hope you decide to join me on this and end this Congo Basin Extravaganza on the highest of notes!

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A winsome Western Lowland Gorilla.

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Gabon is still an enigma. A wild place of pristine old-growth rainforests where there are almost no human settlements, and where wild animals live protected within the thick foliage of the Congolese rainforest spilling down to the coast, and nestled between the many rivers that traverse this west African country. This is a trip for those of you who want to see something new, something different. It is a place for the intrepid Africa enthusiast who will be thrilled by the sight of a red river hog in a wallow, or a wary lowland gorilla in a forest clearing, or a hippo looking to catch the waves. On this trip, timed to coincide with the appearance of charismatic mammals on the beaches of Gabon, we will enjoy a comfortable African adventure in a remote part of Africa. And if at least 6 of you are curious to learn about Gabonese culture, we have the potential to experience an authentic 2-day Bwiti ceremony on this trip as well.



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Trip Highlights

- In search of forest elephants, red river hogs, chimps, African gray parrots, central African buffalo and sitatunga on the beaches of Loango;
- Optional habituated gorilla tracking with the gorilla project in Loango National Park;
- Massive leatherback turtles on the beaches of Pongara NP, a hop away from Libreville



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AFRIJET SCHEDULE (as of time of writing)

AFRIJET BRAZZAVILLE – LIBREVILLE: Mon at 14:45 pm, Wed at 14:00 pm & Fri at 10:30 am

With this flight schedule, it might be best to do the Congo Cruise first, and then fly Brazzaville to Libreville on Wednesday, January 8, 2025.

This would also mean adding on 1 extra night in Brazzaville at the Radisson Blu: Approx 350 Euro

The flight Brazzaville – Libreville costs approx 300-500 Euro one way.



Sangeeta@ChaloAfrica.com 2022

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DAY 1: JANUARY 8, 2025 - ARRIVE IN LIBREVILLE, GABON

On arrival in Libreville, you will be met and transferred to your hotel. We have no specific plans for this first day as you will arrive late in the afternoon, but if people are up to it, we can make a plan!

Overnight lodging: Room at Hotel du Phare in Libreville on double sharing basis. Best beach in town!

Meals included: None



DAY 2: JANUARY 9, 2025 - LIBREVILLE – PORT GENTIL - LOANGO NATIONAL PARK

Today, we will leave after breakfast for the airport, for our flight from LBV-Port Gentil, the oil capital of Gabon. From here we will transfer by road to Iguela Lagoon (3.5 hrs), and from there we will enjoy a boat transfer to the mouth of the Iguela Lagoon. Late lunch at the beautiful Ndola Camp, and then it's off to the beach/coast/Louri Lagoon to see what the Bush Gods have in store for us. All afternoon on the beach, and then back to camp for drinks and a gourmet dinner.

Overnight lodging: Ndola Camp in Loango National Park on double sharing basis.

Meals included: Breakfast, lunch, dinner + non-premium drinks

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DAY 3: JANUARY 10, 2025 – LOANGO NATIONAL PARK

Some of you may have already watched the 5-part Netflix series entitled “Our Great National Parks” – it won some Emmys too. Imagine our surprise when we realized that the very first park in the very first episode of this series was Loango NP, and filmed at precisely the same time of year as this particular safari...

For those of you with a Netflix subscription, please watch this to get a sense of the beauty and majesty and uniqueness of Loango:
<https://www.netflix.com/title/81086133>

If anyone wishes to do another habituated gorilla trek for western lowland gorillas, then day 3 is the day for that trek. If not, enjoy a full day on safari in Loango.

Overnight lodging: Ndola Tented Camp on sharing basis.
Meals included: Breakfast, lunch, dinner + non-premium drinks



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DAY 4: JANUARY 11, 2025 - LOANGO NATIONAL PARK



Spend the full day along the coast & lagoons of the park, looking for animals on the beach. Elephants, hippo, sitatunga and buffalo are seen often on the beach. Gorillas are also fairly frequent visitors, and lately, there have been reports of wild chimpanzees too. With some luck, you'll also see red river hogs (usually very secretive) out on the sand or the fringes of the beach. During this time of the year, animals are drawn out of the swampy backwaters to browse on the more mineral and salt-rich foliage on the beaches of the park. Wonderful photo opps for our photographers – beautiful animals, scenic backdrops, Loango has it all!

Overnight lodging: Ndola Tented Camp on sharing basis.
Meals included: Breakfast, lunch, dinner + non-premium drinks.



©Gabon Wildlife Camps

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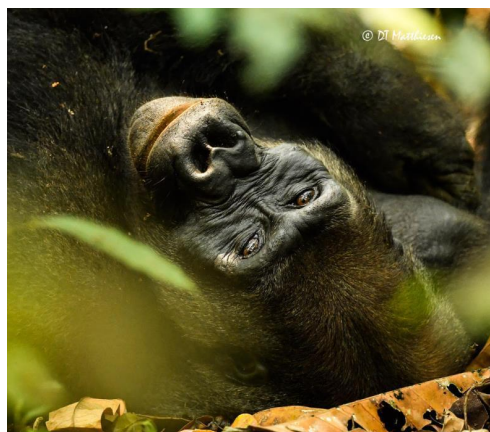
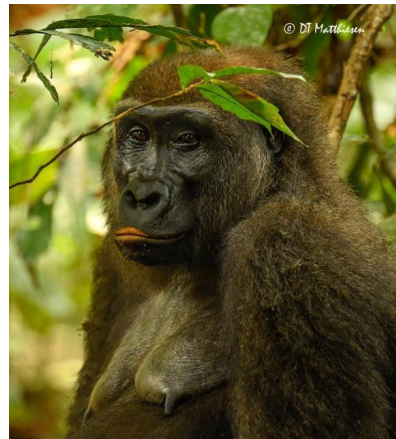
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If you have opted to do a habituated gorilla trek, you will do it on one of your days at Ndola Camp.



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DAY 5: JANUARY 12, 2025 - LOANGO NP - PORT GENTIL - LIBREVILLE

Start the day early today with an early morning safari in the park, followed by a heavy brunch and then leave for Port Gentil. You will drive directly to the airport at PG and connect to your short 35-minute 6:30 pm evening flight to Libreville. Upon arrival in LBV, you will be transferred to Hotel du Phare for the night.

Overnight lodging: Hotel du Phare
Meals: Heavy brunch only.

DAY 6: JANUARY 13, 2025 - LIBREVILLE - PONGARA NP

After an early breakfast, you will be transferred to the pick-up point in the city for your boat transport to Pongara. Pongara is one of the favorite nesting sites of leatherback turtles and this is one of the best times of the year to see them. For the uninitiated, **Pongara National Park** is singularly distinguished by a remarkable diversity of primates, plants and birds. Travel anywhere along its shimmering estuary which also cuts through mangrove swamps and flooded forest, you can view snapshots of arboreal monkeys peering down from lofty treetops, and forest elephants and hippos wading in slow-moving lagoons. And just further afield along tracts of savannah is another unspoilt sanctuary for small herds of forest buffalo and elephant, red river hog and the elusive leopard.

Yet it is the national park's marine reserve where the action steps up a notch during the breeding season. Pongara's tawny beaches become even more wild and wonderful when thousands of nesting sea turtles come to shore.

Overnight lodging: Pongara Lodge
Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner and house drinks



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DAY 7: JANUARY 14, 2025 - PONGARA NP

The best time to view the turtles is between November and March, The arrival of migratory sea turtles; the largest gathering of critically-endangered leatherbacks on the West Coast of Africa - is one of the hallmarks of Pongara. If you visit midway during the nesting season, it is also possible to view on a guided tour the sea turtles' first hatchlings as they make their mercy dash from the nest to the tides.

Overnight lodging: Pongara Lodge

Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner and house drinks



DAY 8: JANUARY 15, 2025 - PONGARA NP - LIBREVILLE

The morning can be spent with the turtles or a general vehicle safari inside the park for other animals. Lunch at the lodge, and then depart for Libreville by boat. Once in Libreville, you will be transferred to the airport for your international flight home.

Overnight lodging: None

Meals: Breakfast and lunch.

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COSTS

The cost of this extension trip is:

EUR 350 per person for an extra night at Radisson Blu in Brazzaville (Day 0, Jan 7, 2025)
 EUR 5250 per person for the Gabon extension based on 6 guests (Days 1-8, Jan 8-15, 2025)

Price of the flight Brazzaville to Libreville varies between EUR 350 - 500.

For those doing this extension, you should book your international tickets from your home city to Brazzaville, and your return from Libreville to your home airport. Try adding in the Brazzaville to Libreville ticket to the international flights - they may work out cheaper that way.

Single supplement of EUR 800 per person

Optional gorilla permit for Loango habituated gorilla tracking is EUR 550, payable directly. This permit price can change. We will be tracking gorillas at Nouabalé Ndoki so this will be a second trek for those who want to include it.

Please bring some extra cash to pay for your dinners and drinks in LBV, as well as for any souvenirs you may want to purchase.

The cost includes:

- Transport within Gabon – car, 4x4, boat and 3 domestic flights as indicated
- Fuel, drivers, and local guides everywhere
- Accommodation, meals & drinks as indicated
- Limited laundry at Ndola & Pongara
- Daily activities as indicated

The cost does not include:

- International flight Brazzaville to Libreville. We can book these as needed.
- Meals & drinks not specified in the itinerary (Day 1, Day 5, Day 8)
- Any applicable visas
- Comprehensive travel and medical insurance
- Compulsory vaccination: Yellow Fever. Please carry your Yellow Book with you.
- Habituated gorilla tracking permit

The itinerary and activities are subject to change in accordance with local conditions
 Please travel with a single 'soft' suitcase/duffle bag (not a 'hard' suitcase) and one backpack
 We recommend that you bring a hiking pole, torch, sunscreen, and dark clothes for the forest hikes + beach wear for the beach.

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Guests should bring along an extra EUR 200 to cover non-included food and to cover drinks, and EUR 100 for tips & miscellaneous expenses. The local currency throughout this trip is the CFA.



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