



Every year Royle Safaris runs at least one group tour into the wonderful and wild country of Gabon in Central Africa. This green land is a jewel of a country when it comes to intact, pristine forest in Africa (over 80% of Gabon is forested) and with a lack of tourism industry the country is wild and you can end up having thousands of square kilometres of pristine forest and abundant wildlife to yourself. There is probably nowhere else in Africa quite like this amazing country.

A country that has long been rich in oil and has seen no need to exploit its forests, a country that has endless forests, large savannas and huge rivers that crisscross the evergreen landscape. It is also a country with a chequered past when it comes to tourism. For a long time the country was open to tourism (mostly birding), but in the early 2000's the government cut back on tourism and the country fell away from the tourist circuit and into obscurity. But around 2015 the country started to open itself up again to tourism and particularly wildlife tourism. That was then put to a swift end (like all tourism around the world) with the covid-19 pandemic, but with the reopening of the world Gabon followed suit and we have successfully run nine trips (many groups on our set itinerary and several private tailored tours) here since the reopening.

This report is from our latest trip, which was in July 2024, the tour was led by Alex Meyer (known to many from his trip reports and podcast interview in the mammalwatching world. Alex leads many trips around the world as well as conducting his own travels and is a great person to have in a country such as Gabon, where the mammalwatching rewards can be awesome.

Gabon offers sightings (and many reliable) of some of the most incredible, elusive, enigmatic and endangered mammals of Central Africa. From the strikingly coloured mandrills, to large populations of African forest elephants, the beautiful red river hogs and handsome western lowland gorillas to the impossibly large giant pangolin and West African manatee. Gabon delivers on a level that few countries can. Of course seeing all of those species on one trip would be exceptional and we were not that lucky. However some of those and many more are near guarantees in Gabon. Thanks largely to the concerted effort of the government to keep their parks and forests as natural and pristine as possible and the great work of people like David Lehmann and his long term team; who have been researching the mandrills and also establishing eco-tourism activities for red river hogs and giant pangolins.

As with all of our group tours to Gabon we visit two of the country's best national parks, Lope & Loango – with some wildlife watching in between of course and our main focus was two primates, the mandrills and western lowland gorillas. But we hoped for a wealth of other wildlife and we were not disappointed. As always there is an optional pre-tour extension which nearly everyone took up to visit the very wild and rugged Ivindo National Park and experience the abundant wildlife (mostly the same species which we would see in other parks) but from large raised platforms overlooking openings called Bais which give an incredible and peaceful view into the lives of these usually secretive forest species. From Ivindo the group would meet up with the others and our Royle Safaris tour leader Alex in Lope and everyone would continue on from day 2 of the main trip and day 6 of the Ivindo clients together.

The trip was successful with 33 species of mammals seen (many photographed) including all of our main targets. We had 12 species of primates including **mandrill, western gorilla, black colobus, chimpanzee** and **northern talapoin**. Other key species seen were many **African forest elephants, rusty-spotted genet, Beecroft's anomalure, Ogilby's duiker, western yellow-backed duiker** and **forest buffalo**.

Royle Safaris will be running two group tours in the summer mandrill breeding season in 2025. One of the trips is fully booked now, but there are still some places available on our trip which will run from 3rd July until the 12th July 2025 (with the pre tour extension to Ivindo set for 29th June 2025). If anyone is interested please contact us at info@royle-safaris.co.uk and if 2025 is not possible we have also started to take bookings on our 2026 group tour.

All of the pictures below are from Alex Meyer with permission.

Species List

Gabon Wildlife Adventure & Ivindo Extension - July 2024

	Common Name	Binominal Name
1	Beecroft's Anomalure	<i>Anomalurus beecrofti</i>
2	Red-capped Mangabey	<i>Cecocebus torquatus</i>
3	Peter's Duiker	<i>Cephalophorus callipygus</i>
4	Oligby's Duiker	<i>Cephalophus ogilbyi</i>
5	Western Yellow-backed Duiker	<i>Cephalophus silvicultor</i>
6	Moustached Monkey	<i>Cercopithecus cephus cephodes</i>
7	Putty-nosed Monkey	<i>Cercopithecus nictitans nictitans</i>
8	Mantled Guereza	<i>Colobus guereza</i>
9	Black Colobus	<i>Colobus satanus</i>
10	Straw-coloured Fruit Bat	<i>Eidolon helvum</i>
11	Peter's Dwarf Epauletted Fruit Bat	<i>Epomophorus pusillus</i>
12	Franquet's Epauletted Fruit Bat	<i>Epomops franqueti</i>
13	Demidoff's Dwarf Galago	<i>Galagoides demidovii</i>
14	Rusty-spotted Genet	<i>Genetta maculata</i>
15	Western Lowland Gorilla	<i>Gorilla gorilla gorilla</i>
16	Red-legged Sun Squirrel	<i>Heliosciurus rufobrachium aubryi</i>
17	Common Hippopotamus	<i>Hippopotamus amphibius</i>
18	Sundvall's Roundleaf Bat	<i>Hipposideros caffer</i>
19	Hammer-headed Fruit Bat	<i>Hypsignathus monstrosus</i>
20	Grey-cheeked Mangabey	<i>Lophocebus albigena albigena</i>
21	Forest Elephant	<i>Loxodonta cyclotis</i>
22	Mandrill	<i>Mandrillus sphinx</i>
23	Northern Talapoin	<i>Miopithecus ogouensis</i>
24	Hairy Slit-faced Bat	<i>Nycteris hispida</i>
25	Common Chimpanzee	<i>Pan troglodytes</i>
26	Green Bush Squirrel	<i>Paraxerus poensis</i>
27	Congo Blue Duiker	<i>Philantomba monticola</i>
28	Red River Hog	<i>Potamochoerus porcus</i>
29	Egyptian Rousette	<i>Rousettus aegyptiacus</i>
30	Gabon Squirrel Galago	<i>Sciurocheirus gabonensis</i>
31	Forest Buffalo	<i>Syncerus nanus</i>
32	Kabinda Bushbuk	<i>Tragelaphus scriptus phaleratus</i>
33	Western Sitatunga	<i>Tragelaphus spekii gratus</i>

Key: Lope National Park (LOP) / Ivindo National Park (IVD) / Loango National Park (LOA) / Lamberene River (LAM) / Akaka Camp (AKA)				
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Mandrill



Western Gorilla



Red-capped Mangabey



Putty-nosed Monkey



Gabon Squirrel Galago



Forest Buffalo



Red River Hog



Sitatunga



African Forest Elephant



Rusty-spotted Genet



Red-legged Sun Squirrel



Beecroft's Anomalure



Dwarf Epauletted Fruit Bat



Sundvall's Roundleaf Bat



Egyptian Rousette



Hairy Slit-faced Bat



Congo Pied Hornbill



Black-casqued Hornbill



Village Weaver



African Thrush



Hadeda Ibis



Palm Nut Vulture



Pied Kingfisher



Giant Kingfisher



Shining Blue Kingfisher



Hartlaub's Duck



African Harrier-Hawk



Hammerkop



Central African Slender-snouted Crocodile



Aubry's Flapshell Turtle



Nile Monitor

