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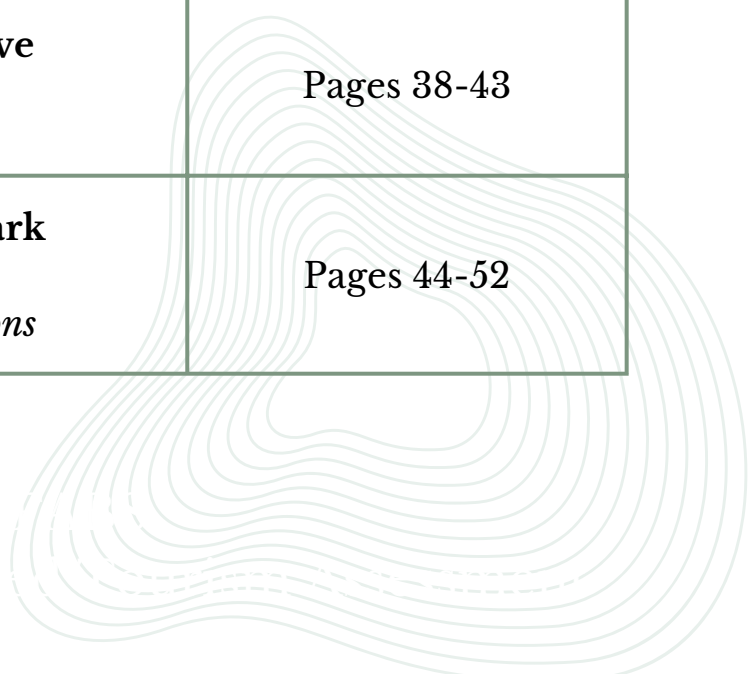
# Congo Basin Nature-Based Tourism Assessment

Republic of Congo



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# Destination Snapshot: *Target Country* Republic of Congo



## Tourism Visa Information

E-Visa: **X**  
No.

### Tourist Visa Cost:

- US Citizens: \$200 short stay visa (<180 days)
- UK Citizens: \$140 short stay visa (<15 days)
  - \$200 short stay visa (<30 days)
- EU Citizens: \$60 short stay visa (<15 days)
  - \$240 short stay visa (<3 months)

### Supplementary Requirements:

- Letter of invitation
- Booked return flight (with proof)
- Booked accommodation (with proof)

(These extra steps increase the burden on visitors and hosts)

### Nuances of the visa process:

Visa applications are estimated to take approximately 15 working days and require the passport at the Embassy during processing.

## National Tourism Strategies & Policy

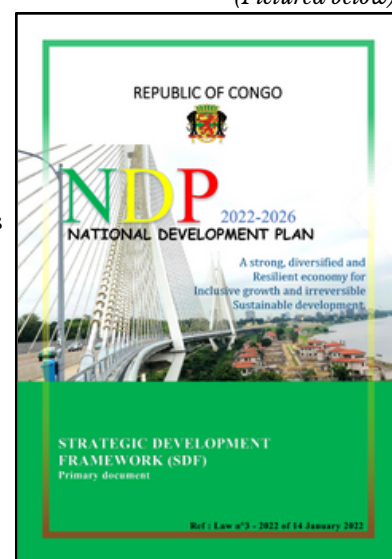
In partnership with the UNWTO and UNDP, the Congolese government has adopted a Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy and Master Plan (2015).

Additionally, the tourism industry is recognized as a vital sector within the RoC's most recent National Development Plan (2022-2026), developed in partnership with the International Monetary Fund.

(Pictured below)

Strategic & specific goals under the tourism pillar include:

- Improvement & diversification of the tourism offer
- Construction & development of access roads to touristic sites
- Construction & equipment of tourism & leisure infrastructures
- Developing tourism sites (especially within protected areas)
- Improvement of the governance and regulation of the tourism sector



## National Tourism Associations

None Found

## The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report, 2019 *World Economic Forum*

The Republic of Congo was not included in this report due to insufficient data.

### Inbound Arrivals:

160,000 (2018)

High: 340,000 (2013), Low: 150,000 (2017)

### International Visitor Spending:

\$43.9M USD (2019), \$42.0M USD (2022)

### Domestic Visitor Spending:

\$310M USD (2019), \$272M USD (2022)

### Top Source Markets (2022):

DRC (#1), France, Cameroon, Angola, Italy

## The UNWTO Tourism Dashboard & WTTC's ROC Country Report

### Estimated

### Travel & Tourism Jobs:

60,400, 3.6% of country total (2019)

63,400, 3.6% of country total (2022)

### GDP Contribution:

\$460M USD/2.8% (2019)

\$441M USD/2.9% (2022)



# Destination Snapshot:

## Target Country Republic of Congo

### Online Presence

#### TripAdvisor

321 properties listed, low volume  
2,071 hotel reviews

Product variation:  
Budget: 6, MidRange: 18, Luxury: 8

37 'Things to Do' listed  
8 tours linked for booking



#### Lonely Planet

18 'Must-See Sights'  
No linked activities for booking

3 National Parks listed:  
Odzala, Nouabalé-Ndoki,  
Conkouati-Douli



#### National Tourism Website: 'République du Congo'

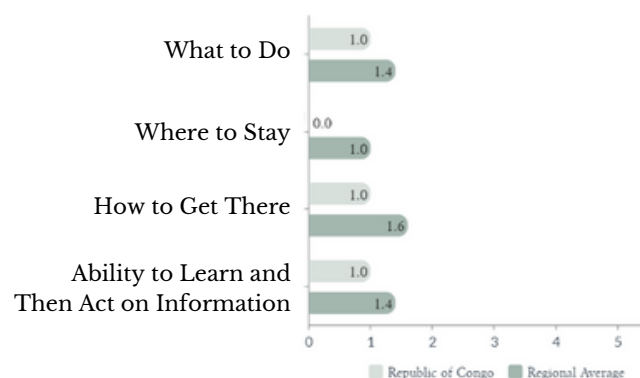
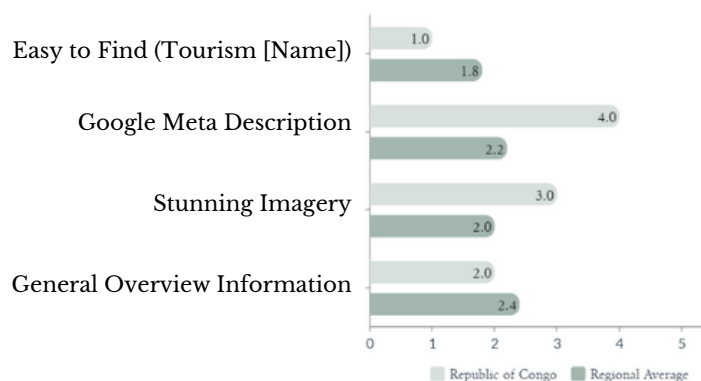
Site has a good design but is not easy to find (google). The site is focused on investment and what not to do in the country than attracting visitors.

**Overall Score: 33%**  
**Regional Average: 35%**



<https://republic-congo.com/>

### Tourism Website Ranking Criteria: 'République du Congo'



### Major International Hubs

#### Brazzaville Maya-Maya Airport (BZV)

Located in: Brazzaville, ROC's capital city

Flight Volume: 8 direct destinations

##### Major routes:

- Paris, France
- Casablanca, Morocco
- Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire
- Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

##### Non-major routes:

- Kigali, Rwanda
- Douala, Cameroon
- Libreville, Gabon
- Kinshasa, DRC

#### Agostinho-Neto International Airport (PNR)

Located in: Pointe-Noire, ROC's second largest city & oil industry hub

Flight volume: 6 direct destinations

##### Major routes:

- Paris, France
- Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire
- Luanda, Angola
- Istanbul, Turkey

##### Non-major routes:

- Libreville, Gabon
- Port-Gentil, Gabon
- Cotonou, Benin

### Top National Parks for Tourism, based on traveler content on TripAdvisor (2023)

#### Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park



4.5/5 stars  
5 Reviews

#### Odzala-Kokoua National Park

No ratings or reviews

# Country Analysis: Republic of Congo

## Overview

The Republic of Congo (RoC) has 34 protected areas covering 126,472km<sup>2</sup>. 36.79% of the country's landmass is designated as protected according to Protected Planet, the largest proportion of any country in the region. Most of the RoC is densely forested (70%), but more open ecosystems can also be found as well as 170 km of coastline. Although they have abundant natural assets with tourism potential, they rank lower than their peer countries for overall biodiversity (#40 in the world), number of bird species (#52 in the world) and #58 in the world for overall biodiversity and habitat protection measures.

According to limited publicly available data, RoC has received an average of 195,000 international arrivals per year over the 5-year period prior to 2018 (most recent data), a relatively small number compared to regional peers. The number of arrivals shows a decreasing trend from a peak of 345,000 in 2013 to 158,000 in 2018.

Part of this may be due to the overly burdensome visa process (described by a number of stakeholders as 'a nightmare') as well as poor recognition in international markets as a tourism destination. Despite the low numbers, tourism contributes almost 3% to the country's GDP, with clear potential for a more significant impact. A 2023 Ecotourism Management Plan for Conkouati-Douli National Park that also looked at the border national context, projected that if the tourism sector can be grown two-fold in the medium-term, this would add US \$400 million to national GDP, support 60,000 jobs and generate USD 150 million in direct visitor spending a year. Tourism can also play a role in diversifying the country's economy from a reliance on the oil and gas sector.

# Country Analysis: Republic of Congo

## Nature-Based Tourism

The country's biodiversity faces significant threats, including deforestation, illegal wildlife trade and mining. Protection of RoC's natural landscapes is critical, but they also need to be economically sustainable over the long-term and tourism can play a role in this goal.

Nature-based tourism is limited in the RoC, with the current market consisting of a small number of expat and domestic travelers, some regional travelers, the 'mega-adventurer,' who are well traveled in other African countries and looking for a more 'off the beaten path' destination as well as higher-end wildlife watchers looking for the same 'off the beaten path' experience. For the latter, a shining model for the region is Kamba African Rainforest Experiences that has created a network of lodges in Odzala-Kokoua National Park and is expanding to Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park. Part of the success of Kamba is that they can offer a fully integrated circuit for visitors and manage all logistics from arrival to departure.

Based on the screening process conducted by the assessment team, five protected landscapes have significant short and medium-term tourism potential in the country:

- Odzala-Kokoua National Park
- Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park
- Ntokou-Pikounda National Park
- Tchimpounga Nature Reserve (as well as the better known Lésio-Louna Reserve)
- Conkouati-Douli National Park

# Country Analysis: Republic of Congo

## Enabling Environment

### Infrastructure, Access, & Services

There are two main international airports for the country, Maya-Maya Airport (Brazzaville) with connections to eight international destinations and Pointe-Noire Airport (Republic of Congo's second city), with connections to six international destinations. Collectively eleven international airlines fly to/from eleven countries to RoC (some fly to both airports). Oyo-Ollombo Airport, which is closer to Odzala-Kokoua, Nouabalé-Ndoki and Ntokou-Pikounda parks than the other airports, is also reportedly approved for international flights, yet none currently fly to this airport. It is understood that at least one other airport, in Ouessou, also meets the grade for international flights but is not classified as such. The airlift to RoC is less than most of its peers (except for Central African Republic), however it does have two daily connections with Paris that provides onward connections. The cost of flights to RoC is average in comparison to regional peers.

Airline safety is an important factor for tour operators. All commercial domestic airlines are currently blacklisted in the EU, therefore it is unlikely that major international tour operators would utilize domestic commercial flights unless their safety standards are improved. The standard of infrastructure to support domestic aviation is also patchy. While there are around 20 small airstrips in the country, some are currently inoperable or can only be used seasonally. Charter flights are available, although costly and are utilized by operators such as Kamba Africa.

The road network in the Republic of Congo may be the most well-developed in the region [1]. The RoC has higher road density than some of its neighbours, with 55.5 km of roads for every 100km<sup>2</sup> of land area in the country, which is more than three times the road network of the nearest regional peer (Cameroon). Most of this can be attributed to government and private investment in infrastructure development, including timber extraction being heavily dependent on good road infrastructure to the port at Pointe Noire. There are two main roads in the country, the RN1 linking Brazzaville with Pointe-Noire and the RN2 linking Brazzaville to Ouessou. This main arterial RN2 road (running north-south) through Republic of Congo is paved and in good condition. Although journey times are long, it provides a relatively safe and reliable main route towards several nature tourism destinations and areas with nature tourism potential in the north of the country. Although RoC has relatively better road networks than others in the region, once travelers get off these major arteries, roads can still be a challenge to access parks and other rural areas.

[1] <https://dlca.logcluster.org/>

# Country Analysis: Republic of Congo

## Enabling Environment

### Visa Access and Entry Requirements

Visitors to ROC must obtain a visa in advance of travel. More and more countries are now introducing visa exemptions (e.g. Saudi Arabia), visas on arrival (e.g. Nepal) or e-visas (e.g. Cameroon) in an attempt to reduce bureaucratic hurdles for travelers, however RoC lags behind on this trend.

The types of documentation required and bureaucratic steps that need to be completed mean it is virtually impossible for a traveller to obtain a visa without in-country support. At OKNP for example, Kamba Africa is heavily involved in the visa process. In addition to the traveller's passport details, a visa application from foreign nationals must include:

- A Letter of Invitation from the immigration administration in Congo.
- A Certificat d'Hébergement obtained from a town hall, at a cost of XAF 12 000, or around USD 22 (at May 2021 rates).
- A return flight booking issued to the traveller with the flight number and the date of arrival and departure from Congo.
- Details of the individual's occupation and the purpose of their visit.

Once obtained, an appointment must be made with the embassy to review the documents before leaving their passport in the embassy for the visa to be affixed. Processing times for visa applications can be lengthy. In the UK for example, the standard processing time for a visa application by the Congolese Embassy is 15 working days, with the option of expediting this to 7 working days. Frequent business travellers with one passport would struggle to leave passport or ID documents for this length of time. Moreover, because the visa process is typically the first experience a visitor has when interacting with the end destination, complex visa procedures can dissuade travelers altogether. Streamlining visa procedures could immediately enhance attitudes towards travel and open up a wider market of potential visitors.

Efforts have been made in recent years to simplify Congo's visa process, including a World Bank supported Business Development and Competitiveness Support Project (Projet d'Appui au Développement des Entreprises et la Compétitivité (PADEC) which included work on an online visa entry system. It is not known what stage this work has gotten to.



# Country Analysis: Republic of Congo

## Enabling Environment

### Business Environment for Nature-Based Tourism

Kamba Africa is likely to be the most advanced and sophisticated nature-tourism operator in Central Africa. Their work to establish a professional, reputable business provides useful insights into some of the opportunities to address barriers in the enabling environment and reduce the bureaucratic burden that would facilitate greater investment into the sector.

Challenges they and other tourism operators reported in relation to the business environment for nature-based tourism included:

- Protracted process and lack of clarity on the steps to set up and register a tourism company in Congo, involving a series of meetings with different Ministries with the whole process taking up to two years.
- Lack of dedicated tax treatment for nature tourism businesses (as exists in other sectors in Congo such as forestry, oil and gas and mining), despite operating in similar frontier and high-cost environments that have poor baseline infrastructure and difficult logistics requiring significant upfront investment;
- Lengthy customs clearance times and no exemption on customs duties and VAT for imports of essential equipment for tourism businesses, as exists for agricultural, horticultural, forestry and fisheries equipment.
- High levels of bureaucracy and lengthy wait times for sign-off on routine documentation, fundamental for the business to operate;
- Lack of coordination in company audits and compliance checks by officials, and low levels of understanding among regional officials on the compliance requirements of tourism businesses, leading to tourists being held up multiple times on journeys;
- The lack of any provision for force majeure events e.g. no Government concessions or tax relief during the COVID-19 pandemic.

# Country Analysis: Republic of Congo

## Enabling Environment

### Enablers

In 2015, the Congolese Government published a Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy and Master Plan for the country, which sets out a roadmap for tourism development. However there have been limited advances towards implementing the strategy. A key component of the strategy is the stated need for the government to improve the institutional, legislative, and regulatory frameworks for tourism to succeed in the country.

The RoC scores extremely poorly on 'ease of doing business,' (180 / 190 countries) and similarly ranks poorly on measures such as ease of starting a business, etc. By comparison Uganda is ranked 116 and Rwanda is ranked 3. As with many of its regional peers, RoC is a hard place to do business, and until there is a more business-friendly environment it will be hard to attract significant inward investment into the sector. Key challenges cited include:

- High operating costs, including permitting and employment
- Highly bureaucratic process for opening a business and ongoing compliance
- Limited investor protections (especially non-resident and minority investors)
- Understanding of tourism and capacity within supporting institutions as well as the general workforce

Small, niche high-end tourism models will likely be possible, such as Kamba African Rainforest Experiences and a limited number of other businesses/investors that are exploring potential investments, however broader tourism development will be extremely limited until the business operating environment is improved.

According to the U.S. Department of State's "Investment Climate Statements 2022," businesses regularly report obstacles linked to corruption, lack of transparency, subjective application of legal codes and inefficiency in matters such as registering businesses, obtaining land titles, paying taxes, and negotiating contracts as constraints for investors.

Despite the difficult business environment, ROC has most of the major conservation partners working to conserve biodiversity and support local communities around protected areas, including WCS (Nouabalé-Ndoki NP and Lac Télé NP), African Parks (Odzala-Kokoua NP), WWF (Ntokou-Pikounda NP), JGI (Tchimpounga Nature Reserve) and Noé (Conkouati-Douli NP). All have public-private partnership management or co-management agreements with the government for their respective parks. Several also work at a national level with the government. There are additional projects related to nature conservation and tourism development such as USAID/Tetra Tech supporting ecotourism management plans in Lésio-Louna Gorilla Reserve and Conkouati-Douli National Park.

As a country and in/around the target protected areas, security is in general not a major issue. The US travel advisory for the country is level 2 (the same level as France and the UK). However, as with its regional peers, RoC faces issues with its external image. The country is not well known or promoted within the international travel market and there is a general perception of insecurity. The country is often mixed up with DRC, which has a far less stable security situation. Any negative press or security issues relating to DRC have implications for RoC simply because of the similarity in their names. The country's tourism brand is not well known or promoted to travelers, and the national tourism website is not easy to navigate with mixed messaging between promoting the country to investors and what not to do as a visitor, rather than focusing on attracting visitors to the country.

# Country Analysis: Republic of Congo

## Recommendations

There are two logical clusters or circuits for the target protected areas that are a focus of this document, one northern cluster connecting and strengthening tourism in and around the TRIDOM landscape, including Odzala-Kokoua, Nouabalé-Ndoki and Ntokou-Pikounda National Parks as well as a southern cluster of protected areas along the Atlantic coast that include Tchimpounga Nature Reserve and Conkouati-Douli National Park.

As tourism and nature tourism is still in its very early stages in the RoC, the focus of short-term activities should be to build momentum, strengthen collaboration and demonstrate success, even if initially small in scale. This in turn makes a stronger, more tangible case for the government to focus on tourism and improved understanding of the sector, which then facilitates more significant actions in the medium-term.

### Lower Cost & Short-Term Actions:

Support the government, private sector and civil society to establish a 'Tourism Working Group,' that includes representatives from relevant stakeholder groups. This group would help to guide the activities proposed below. One organization should be identified as the 'facilitator' and play this role for at least 3-years to organize meetings, coordinate among representatives and share information with the broader network of tourism stakeholders in the country.

As the Government's tourism strategy & master plan was written in 2015, almost a decade ago, there is a need to review and update this document, understand what has been done, what still needs doing and what are the roadblocks to moving forward. The document can then be revised and realigned to today's context and the next 5-10 years. This is also an opportunity for tourism stakeholders to convene, collaborate, discuss and plan out the priorities for the coming decade, through the auspices of the Tourism Working Group.

A nature-based tourism economic impact study, possibly as a part of updating the current plan, could also be commissioned to make a stronger case for Government prioritization and investment in tourism. This study would assess and project the potential economic impact for the country based on difference scenarios for tourism development and package this information into easy to understand infographics to help encourage a more meaningful focus on the sector. A socialization and educational program should also be implemented to get this information in-front of relevant stakeholders, especially government officials.

# Country Analysis: Republic of Congo

## Recommendations

### Lower Cost & Short-Term Actions: (continued)

To demonstrate quick results immediately after the strategy and master planning update activity described previously, launch:

- A storytelling competition, for stakeholders to submit engaging stories about tourism and conservation experiences that people can have in the country. Winners would receive professional videos, photos and content development of their stories. A professional travel writer would be engaged to develop this content and then pitch these stories to media in RoC as well as internationally. The goal of this activity is to build awareness and catalyze stakeholders in the sector to work together on a project, building social capital for future activities.
- Support to Government to update their tourism website with new content (from the stories above) as well as re-orientate the site to focus exclusively on attracting visitors (a separate site, or sub-site may be developed for investment purposes).

In partnership with the Ministry of Tourism & Recreation, as well as in coordination with organizations such as the World Bank and USAID working in this space, conduct a tourism legislative, policy, regulatory review and action plan. This will include identifying which ministries have direct control of specific tourism related regulations and policies and the potential for change. Through stakeholder consultations (possibly linked to the planning activity) and the Tourism Working Group, specific legislative, policy & regulatory 'pain points' will be identified for prioritization. This will include immigration and the visa process. Through this process a better understanding of the priorities, needs and specific government bodies and/or government officials that have the power to make change will be identified along with a focus on where follow-on actions can be taken. The process will also engage with individual government officials to inform them about tourism and the needs of the sector to gauge interest in taking action.



# Country Analysis: Republic of Congo

## Recommendations

### Higher Cost & Medium-Term Actions:

**\*\*As the regulatory and business operating environment is significantly burdensome, each business is forced to commit significant staff time and resources in understanding and managing the regulatory environment in which they operate. Changing these bureaucratic systems will take time and require the government's willingness to push them through. There is therefore a need for individuals or organizations based in RoC that can understand the systems as they relate to tourism and help other businesses navigate them.**

This is a role for a 'Tourism Business Coach/Facilitator,' who can help investors navigate the systems, understand what's needed and have a full understanding of the sector, rather than each business figuring that all out themselves each time. They would play a role of tourism business coach and 'fractional-staffer,' supporting and navigating the regulatory and operating environment for multiple businesses, rather than each one having to dedicate staff to this role.

A program could be established to competitively recruit and train local 'Tourism Business Coach/Facilitators,' and help them establish this as a support service for the sector. Experts would work with the tourism coaches to ensure they fully understand all tourism related taxes, regulations and requirements as well as who's doing what and the tourism 'universe' of the country. They would be supported for a fixed period of time (3-4 years) to supply these services to current and potential investors in the sector to smooth the process by helping to facilitate all of the steps required for tourism investment and operations in the sector.

They would also have a role in making connections and building networks (as a facilitator) in the sector. This role would help reduce the number of 'unknowns' for investors and taking on responsibilities that distract investors from their primary objectives. Once established the 'Tourism Business Coach/Facilitator,' can also offer these services to future tourism business on a commercial basis after the initial funding is finished.

# Country Analysis: Republic of Congo

## Recommendations

### Higher Cost & Medium-Term Actions: (continued)

**\*\*A Challenge grant and technical assistance program to attract private investment in tourism anchor sites (accommodations) in or around each target protected area. Building on the nature-based tourism plan and related short-term activities, prospectus documents would be developed for each site along with challenge grants to incentivise investors to the sites. The grant funds would be considered 'on behalf of the local community' and therefore the communities investment and ownership stake in the tourism facility. Investment and management agreements would be structured to ensure mutual benefits (financial and other) for the investor, community and protected area.**

Building a critical mass of tourism experiences is also key to the success of tourism in a park. Therefore a complementary program to the above would focus on development of a 'critical mass' of at least 5-8 tourism activities in each target location. This would include identification of the activities (possibly through the updated tourism master plan), tourism product development and training, small grants, marketing and sales materials, connection with sales channels (tour operators and local accommodations) and packaging to connect the activities. This should be implemented in partnership with the private sector, so tourism operators can help guide what they can sell and also learn best practices in developing tourism experiences in the future.

The RoC needs to establish a stronger brand and image in the global tourism market and therefore there is a need for positive media coverage of the tourism and conservation actions in the country. A campaign to pitch media and influencers to travel within the country, experience the destinations and tell that story to their followers would help the tourism sector leverage that positive messaging to boost sales. If resources allow this could also be coupled with a campaign to connect targeted tour operators in source markets with the current tourism sector in the RoC to strengthen business-to-business networks and boost sales.





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# Republic of Congo: Priority Protected Areas

*Destination Snapshots, Scorecards, Site Analyses, & Recommendations*



# Destination Snapshots Key

## Accessibility:

**International Air** = The closest &/or most popular international airport for tourists to the park

**Domestic Air** = The closest domestic airports or local airstrips for travelers to the park

**Ground & Water** = Details roads and waterways used to access the park, including route information from airports and nearby cities

**Within Parks** = How travelers move within park boundaries, including relevant roadways, waterways, hiking paths, and relevant modes of transportation

## Destination Maturity Scale:

**None** = No tourism facilities or tourist infrastructure in the park

**Basic** = Only simple, self-service facilities in the park

**Limited** = One serviced tourism facility operating in the park

**Diverse** = Multiple serviced tourism facilities & touristic infrastructure in the park

## Destination Maturity Definitions:

**Nearby park headquarters** = Within 5-10km of park boundary

**Self-serviced accommodations** = no staff, basic facilities. **Serviced accommodations** = Comes with some type of formal touristic service (i.e., staff, a restaurant, etc.)

**Visitor activities special request** =

They need to be organized through an NGO or other organization and are not readily commercially available

**Visitor activities openly available** =

They are commercially available to visitors, without the need for special connections

## Geographic Features:

Standout, iconic, or distinctive geographic features in or around the park

## Wildlife:

Key species that can be found in the park

## Human Capital:

Description of the technical expertise available in and around the park (i.e., conservation partners & NGOs) as well as the tourism capacities of local communities and residents.

## Seasonality Icons:

**Sun** = Dry season(s)

**Rain** = Wet/Rainy season(s)

When relevant, also includes important wildlife seasons and/or the 'best' time to visit.

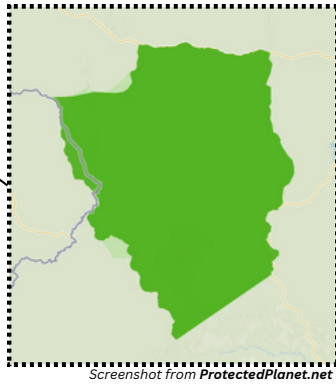


# Destination Snapshot:

## Odzala-Kokoua National Park, ROC

### Quick Facts:

- 1,354,600 Hectares
- Preserved old-growth rainforests
- IUCN Category 2 - 'National Park'
- Odzala Forest Massif is a UNESCO Heritage Site
- Park Entry Fees:
  - \$35 USD: International
  - \$20 USD: Regional
  - \$18 USD: Congolese Residents
  - \$5 USD: Local Residents
  - Conservation fee paid by international visitors
  - Community fee paid by all visitors
- Gorilla Habituation: **3 Successful Groups**
- Seasonality:
  - Peak season for tourism:** June - September
  - ☔ March - May, September - November
  - ☀ December - February, June - September



Screenshot from ProtectedPlanet.net

### Accommodations & Facilities

**3 'Discovery Camps,'** luxury ecolodges operated by Kamba Africa/CCC in the southern region.  
6 rooms each (36 beds total).

**Imabalanga Camp** is operated by African Parks in the eastern region.  
Tented forest camp.  
4 Safari bungalows with bathrooms (8 beds total).

Food is flown in twice a week. On-site chefs cook extremely high quality meals for guests at the Discovery Camps.

Additionally, within the park, APN has built touristic infrastructure in some baïs for wildlife viewing as well as a various camping platforms.

Park headquarters is located within the park in Mboko, nicknamed by travelers as 'the gates of Odzala.'

### Accessibility:

Int'l Air	<b>Maya-Maya Int'l Airport (Brazzaville):</b> Park managers and staff sometimes meet travelers at this airport to aid in the customs process and transfer logistics.	
Domestic Air	The most common route into the park is via <b>private charter flights to the airstrip in Mboko.</b>  Flight time is approx. 1 hour 45 minutes from Brazzaville.  <b>'AirTech'</b> is the private charter operator with flights to the park.	
	<b>Ouéssou Domestic Airport:</b>  Both the airport & its access roads are in excellent condition. Has capacity of landing large aircrafts and the landing strip is "comparable to international airports." Main use at present is for government visits, but has potential.	
Ground	<b>East Entrance (Imbalanga Camp):</b>  Accessible via National Road ('N2').	<b>South Entrance (Discovery Camps):</b>  Accessible via Etoumbi road through Mbomo village.
	Driving from Brazzaville to the park is possible.  The trip takes around -12 hours over good roadways.	
Within Park	There are paved roadways between the Discovery Camps, which guests are driven on.  Ngaga to Lango: 3 hours drive Ngaga to Mboko: 2.5 hours drive Lango to Mboko: 30 minutes drive <u>OR</u> 2 hours walk	

Transportation Infrastructure	Good
Park Headquarters	Onsite
Availability of Accommodations	Serviced
Accommodation Product Variation	High
Visitor Activities	Openly Available
Activity Product Variation	High
<div> <div>None</div> <div>Basic</div> <div>Limited</div> <div><b>Diverse</b></div> </div>	

**Site Destination Maturity**  
Relative to the Congo Basin Market

# Destination Snapshot:

## Odzala-Kokoua National Park, ROC

### Current & Potential Natural Tourism Assets:

#### Geographic Features:

Falls within the southern fringes of the Guinea-Congolese forest block. Forest-savanna mosaic in the south & continuous semi-evergreen forest in the north. Small blocks of swamp-forests and wooded grasslands.

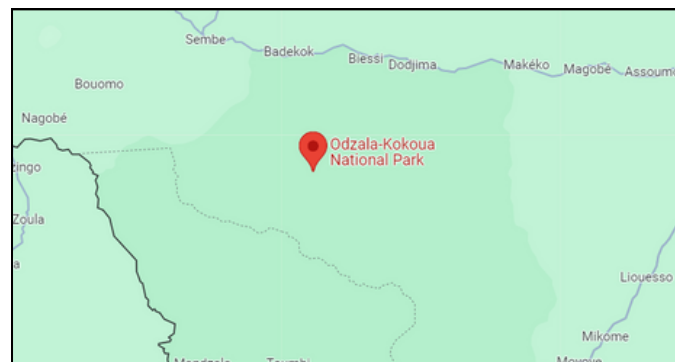
Rivers and Forest Bais - *significant tourism assets.*

#### Wildlife:

Stable & growing populations of Western Lowland Gorillas and Forest Elephants.

Bongos, Forest Buffalo, and Giant Forest Hogs are present.

~440 bird species,  
Designated an **Important Bird Area** by BirdLife International.



Google Maps (2023) Odzala-Kokoua National Park.

Google Reviews Rating: ★★★★★  
29 Total Reviews

TripAdvisor Rating: ●●●●●  
38 Total Reviews

"An African Rainforest success-story!"

"They are certainly some of the best camps that my wife and I have ever been in [...] when you are there you realize it is the staff that makes your experience one you will never forget."

"Fantastic experience, wonderful luxury accommodations, excellent, really delicious interesting meals, great accommodations with large comfortable beds, lovely private bathrooms, friendly staff, expert guides and trekkers."

"The daily schedule was well planned and travel between the camps was enjoyable and interesting."

"Enchanting and immersive adventure. Incredibly knowledgeable guide, exceptional staff."

"The food was such a highlight."

**TripAdvisor Reviews**  
2023

"I've had the privilege of traveling extensively throughout Africa over the past 15 years [...] I count on one hand all the places that have really moved me, burrowed deep in my heart [...] Odzala tops them all."

"The staff, camp managers, and team of guides in Odzala are truly brilliant."

"It's a pioneering adventure that leaves you feeling empowered and inspired each day."

"[CCC] put a huge effort into working with the local community, training them and thereby making them proud to be hosts and show their part of the world."

**TripAdvisor Reviews**  
2023

### Human Capital

#### African Parks Network (APN):

Delegated Management Agreement - focus on conservation & community-based enterprise projects.

#### Kamba Africa

(formerly known as 'CCC'): 8 ecotourism concessions within the park, with strong support from the **Plattner Foundation**.

Concessions are of various sizes.

There is a strong, collaborative relationship between the park and its surrounding communities. The 2022 Eco-team project employs over 20 youths from neighboring villages.

Most employees working in and around the ecotourism facilities come from local towns and villages.

Staff training sessions are held at Park HQ.

"It is unique, remote, magical, intense and breathtakingly stunning."

"Being able to experience this jungle in such comfort has been nothing short of a dream come true."

"Everything was seamless from the minute I arrived in Brazzaville."

"I was a solo female traveler and felt completely safe the entire time."

"Three times is not enough. I'm thinking about a fourth."

"Odzala is AWESOME... but not for those new to Africa."

"The gorilla trekking was an incredible experience which will stay with us forever."

**TripAdvisor Reviews**  
2019 - 2023

*Note: The park itself does not have its own dedicated TripAdvisor page. These reviews instead are pulled from the 'Kamba African Rainforest Experiences Lodges' page.*

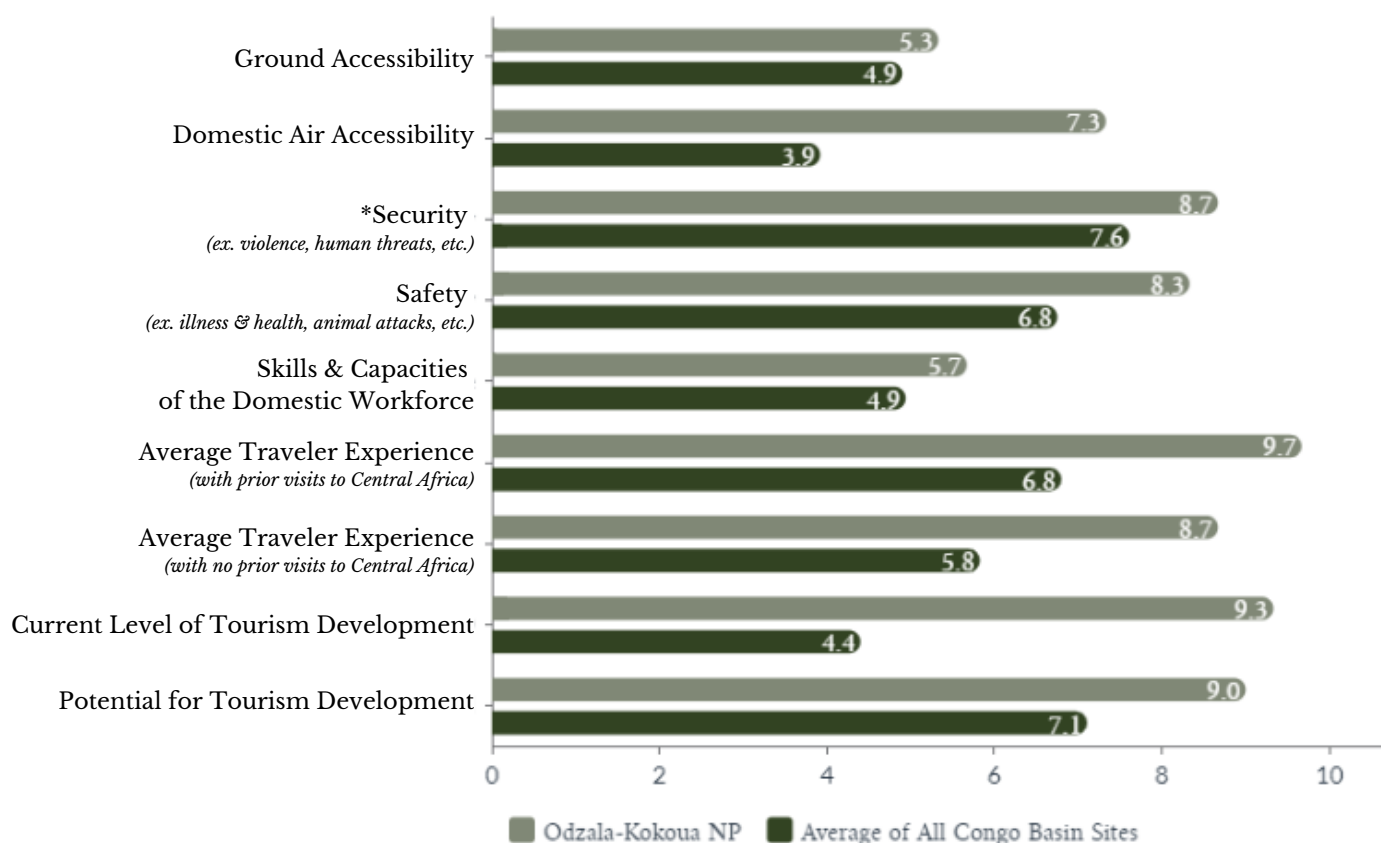
# Destination Scorecard: **Odzala-Kokoua National Park, ROC**

Stakeholders with firsthand knowledge of the park were asked to rank different aspects of tourism in and around the landscape.

Ranking is based on a 1-10 scale:

‘1’ represents relative weakness in the field and ‘10’ represents strength in the field.

## Odzala-Kokoua National Park Tourism Assessment Survey Results



### Key Takeaways:

- This park ranks higher than the Congo Basin average in every category, signifying great opportunities for this park to be a market leader with further marketing and investments.
- The current and potential level of tourism development, relative to peers, is considered high in the park.
- The average traveler experience for those having already traveled to Central Africa is considered very positive, signaling OKNP as a top destination for this market.

### Additional Insights from Survey:

- There is formal interest from tourism investors and opportunities for expanded tourism in Odzala-Kokoua National Park.
- Tourism circuit opportunities & site linkages, as suggested by expert stakeholders:
  - Nouabale-Ndoki National Park
  - Conkouati-Douli National Park
  - Dzanga-Sangha Complex

Responses collected via Qualtrics surveys, from October 2023 - March 2024

*\*For additional information on security, see site analysis below.*



# Site Analysis: Odzala-Kokoua National Park, ROC

## Overview

Odzala-Kokoua National Park (OKNP) is situated in the northwest of the Republic of Congo (ROC) and shares its border with Gabon to the west. It is also close to Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park (NNNP) in RoC, and the broader Sangha Trinational (TNS) complex of parks. As the largest park in ROC, the park covers 1,354,600 hectares [1]. OKNP is part of the Trinational Dja-Odzala-Minkébé (TRIDOM) landscape, which comprises eleven national parks spanning ROC, Cameroon, and Gabon [2]. This landscape is a biodiversity and conservation hotspot, encompassing 10% of the entire Congo Basin Rainforest [3]. The Forest Massif of Odzala-Kokoua, primarily within OKNP boundaries, holds UNESCO recognition for its unique ecological assets, processes, and status as a critical refuge for Central African forest elephants [4].

OKNP boasts one of Africa's largest, intact primary rainforests, dotted with over 140 open forest clearings, known as 'bais,' which are vital for both tourism and wildlife conservation [5]. While the dense tropical rainforest predominates, savannahs lie to the south, alongside lower-lying riverine areas with swamp and gallery forests, and wooded grasslands [6]. The diverse landscape gradients contribute to the park's complexity, further enhancing its natural appeal and assets for tourism development.

As of 2022, OKNP's wildlife includes nearly 7,600 western lowland gorillas, marking it one of the largest populations in any national park. Additionally, there are close to 7,300 forest elephants, constituting approximately 7% of the global population [7]. Both populations are highlighted in African Park's 2022 triennial park survey as stable and growing [8], underscoring the park's significance. OKNP also hosts roughly 440 bird species and other key animals such as bongos, forest buffalo, and giant forest hogs. The park's numerous bais serve as safe havens, as well as great viewing possibilities, for animals and visitors.

While OKNP isn't under any specific travel advisories, the U.S. Department of State has issued a 'Level 2: Exercise Increased Caution' travel advisory for the Republic of Congo overall [9]. For comparison, France and the UK are in the same category. African Parks maintains an extensive law enforcement operation in Odzala, with rangers receiving regular training and the risk of crime or security threats is extremely low. [9]

[1]<https://www.africanparks.org/the-parks/odzala-kokoua>

[2]<https://origin-congo.wwf-sites.org/where-we-work/tridom-tri-national-dja-odzala-minkebe/>

[3]<https://pfbc-cbfp.org/news-partner/landscape-financelab.html>

[4]<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/692/>

[5]<https://legacylandscapes.org/map/odzala-kokoua/>

[6]<https://davieslab.oeb.harvard.edu/odzala-kokoua-national-park-republic-congo>

[7]<https://legacylandscapes.org/2023/01/highlights-from-the-ground-2022>

[8]<https://www.africanparks.org/the-parks/odzala-kokoua>

[9]<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/republic-of-the-congo-travel-advisory.html>



# Site Analysis:

## Odzala-Kokoua National Park, ROC

### Nature-Based Tourism Development Opportunities

Odzala-Kokoua National Park falls under the management of the NGO African Parks (AP). Since 2010, AP has operated under a 25-year delegated management agreement with the Republic of Congo's Ministry of Forest Economy, Sustainable Development, & Environment. This model shares governance and oversight between partners, while on-the-ground management is fully entrusted to African Parks. [10] In 2020, the Congolese government reaffirmed the agreement and extended AP's responsibilities to include the nearby Lossi Gorilla Sanctuary. Consequently, AP's role was rebranded as the 'Odzala-Kokoua-Lossi Foundation.' [11]

The U.S. Forest Service International Programs highlights that the enduring commitment of reputable NGO partners like AP in OKNP attracts private tourism investors, crucial for its development. Kamba Africa (formerly Congo Conservation Company) has the exclusive ecotourism concession in OKNP and has invested approximately \$13 million in three luxury lodges, significantly boosting tourism from under 50 to over 1,600 bed nights annually. [12] Their offerings include gorilla tracking, guided bai walks, kayaking, and village visits. In addition to the Kamba Africa facilities, AP also has a lower cost lodge (Imbalanga Camp) on the eastern edge of the park and easily accessible from the main road.

This critical mass of tourism facilities can help to attract additional investment to the park and help to diversify the tourism markets traveling to the park. A significant opportunity also rests in the connection with Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park (NNNP) and longer-term, the broader Sangha Trinational (TNS) complex of parks. Kamba Africa are building lodges in NNNP and plan new itineraries in 2025/26 connecting the two parks. [13] Creating this circuit, and in doing so establishing a model for diversified tourism experiences in the whole region, provides a platform to attract additional investment and broader tourism markets in the future.

Arguably, the most crucial asset for nature-based tourism in OKNP is its wildlife, particularly the habituated gorilla groups. With three habituated groups, there is opportunity for greater visitation to the park centered on gorilla observation. Compared to Uganda and Rwanda, gorilla tracking fees are notably lower, offering a competitive edge (although for this market this may not be their primary consideration). Apart from gorillas, OKNP also boasts impressive populations of other wildlife, providing opportunity for expanded wildlife tours, overnight stays at bays, bird watching, and more.

[10][https://usfscentralfafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Assessment-of-Protected-Area-Management-Partnerships-in-Central-Africa\\_USFS\\_2021.pdf](https://usfscentralfafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Assessment-of-Protected-Area-Management-Partnerships-in-Central-Africa_USFS_2021.pdf)

[11]<https://www.africanparks.org/the-parks/odzala-kokoua>

[12]<https://kambaafrica.com/journeys/>

[13][https://content.wetu.com/Resources//28943/kamba\\_lodges\\_factsheet.pdf](https://content.wetu.com/Resources//28943/kamba_lodges_factsheet.pdf)

# Site Analysis: Odzala-Kokoua National Park, ROC

## Enabling Environment Constraints

Compared to many parks in the region, OKNP has two very strong partners, AP and Kamba Africa that have partnered with the government. Collectively this creates a strong foundational environment for tourism in the park, although challenges still exist at the national level relating to the broader tourism operating environment (see country level analysis for more information).

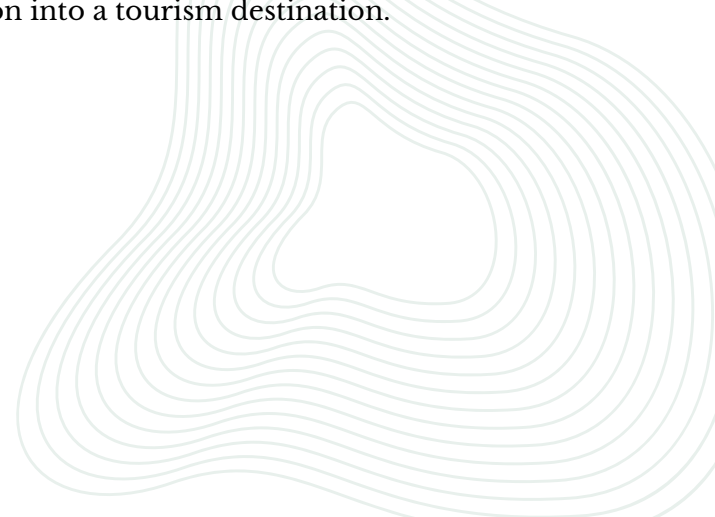


### Marketing & Promotion

Marketing and promotion for OKNP, and nature tourism in Congo generally, face significant challenges due to poor understanding of the tourism offer within international tourism markets. More work is needed to promote the park, and by extension the country for tourism. Kamba Africa has laid the groundwork for a successful ecotourism destination in Central Africa and is actively promoting the park internationally. While the current clientele mainly consists of luxury travelers from the United States and Europe, Kamba is expanding its outreach efforts to other markets. The planned expansion to Nouabale-Ndoki National Park also offers a unique opportunity to create an exclusive travel brand around Central Africa's lush rainforests, showcasing conservation successes and attracting investment from governments, NGOs, and the private sector to further develop nature tourism in the region.

### Access, Accommodation & Services

For the current Kamba Africa market, access is costly but not a major constraint as the market predominantly flies into the park. For other markets that drive, the park is approximately a 12-hour drive, although the road is paved most of the way until one gets to the park. The time it takes to get to the park by road will necessitate a focus on tourism markets that are willing to make this effort and who will likely then want to stay in the region for some time. A diversity of tourism experiences is therefore critical to build the region into a destination.

A network of roads and trails is established in the park between the current accommodation facilities and key sites. The support facilities in the park including workshops, etc. are also significant compared to most peer parks in the region. With the presence of Kamba Africa camps and AP's Imbalanga Camp, the park is relatively well off for accommodation, compared to many of its regional peers, but a more diverse suite of tourism activities and eventually more accommodations would help to build the region into a tourism destination.



# Site Analysis:

## Odzala-Kokoua National Park, ROC

### Recommendations & Considerations

#### Lower Cost & Short-Term Actions:

**\*\*Co-op marketing & storytelling campaign with Kamba Africa and AP (with a possible additional partnership with WCS and NNNP).** This would include a travel trade outreach program targeting international markets as well as domestic/regional travelers to inform, engage and excite them about the park.

This may initially include:

- A joint marketing campaign strategy and content generation (image, video and written) to tell the story of the region and provide content to help promote the region.
- Direct outreach and sales visits to target tour operators in key international markets to increase awareness and help these operators package and sell the destination.
- Collaboration with RoC and regional tour operators to package trips for domestic and regional visitors (mainly to AP's accommodation facility), as well as a social media campaign to inform potential visitors and promote packages.
- Familiarization trips for target tour operators so that they can understand and sell the tourism experience.
- Engage with an intrepid A-list celebrity or influencer to explore the region and highlight the travel experience to their network.
  - *This should be tied to current conservation activities that the celebrity can get involved in for a more meaningful story (for example, the 'Friend-a-Gorilla' campaign with Hollywood celebrities that ran in Uganda in 2010, generating over \$4 million in free media coverage or Katmai National Parks in Alaska where they have a funny 'Fat Bear Week' social media tournament, where instagram users can 'vote' for the fattest bear.*

Leverage the tourism foundation that currently exists to explore opportunities for product diversification and further investment, including additional accommodation services (targeting domestic and mid-market, educational travel, bird watchers, etc.) and tourism experiences/activities for visitors in the park. This would take the form of a tourism product development strategy that would include a focus on how these services support community benefit sharing and involvement.

#### Higher Cost & Medium-Term Actions:

**\*\*Building on the marketing efforts described in the short-term recommendations,** engage with tour operators and key stakeholders in OKNP and NNNP to define optimal itineraries and circuits between the two parks and logistics relating to this. This may include current plans as well as future opportunities for circuits. Continued marketing should then focus on promotion of these itineraries with tour operator partners. Through this process gaps and needs will be identified along with what is needed to address them (*see next recommendation*).

A challenge grant program could be established to address product development and investment needs in addition to addressing gaps and needs for the development of circuits between OKNP and NNNP. Where grant funds are used to attract private investors, grant funds should be provided as an equity stake in a tourism investment for local communities, although the private operator would maintain management control.

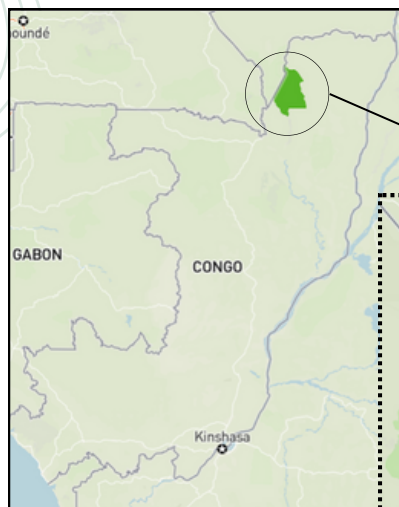
**\*\*Critical Enabler**

# Destination Snapshot:

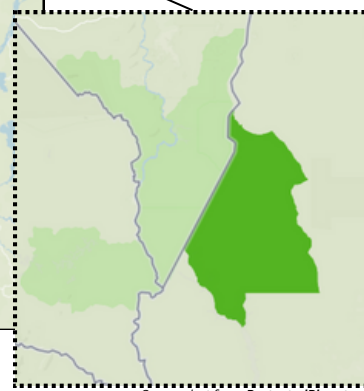
## Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park, ROC

### Quick Facts:

- 423,870 Hectares
- Lowland Rainforest
- IUCN Category 2 - 'National Park'
- UNESCO Natural World Heritage Site\*
- Park Entry Fees:
  - \$35 USD: International Visitors
  - \$25 USD: CEMAC Residents, \$5 USD: Congolese Citizens
  - Visitors also pay a Community & Conservation Fee:
  - \$35 USD: International, \$25 USD: CEMAC Residents
- Gorilla Habituation: **3 Successful Groups**
- Seasonality:
  - Dry Season: Jan. - March      Low Rainfall: April & May
  - Average Rainfall: June - August      Heavy Rains: Sep. - Dec.



This park is one of three that make up the **Sangha TriNational Transboundary Forest Complex**.



Screenshot from ProtectedPlanet.net

### Accommodations & Facilities

Several accommodation options:

#### Mondika Camp

Location of habituated gorilla groups. Accommodates 4 people overnight. 30 minute drive or 2.5 hour hike from HQ.

#### Sangha House, at Park HQ

4 bedrooms, 2 with ensuite bathrooms. Shared living space and kitchen. Overlooking the Sangha River.

#### Mbeli Bai & Wali Bai

Raised platforms overlooking large forest clearings. Basic sleeping arrangements.

The ecotourism operator **Kamba Africa** (formerly known as 'CCC') has plans to develop **two luxury lodges** within the park, similar to the ones they operate in the nearby Odzala NP. The 6-room and 4-room lodges are set to be developed in Mombongo and Mokele, respectively.

Transportation Infrastructure	Fair
Park Headquarters	Onsite
Availability of Accommodations	Serviced
Accommodation Product Variation	Medium
Visitor Activities	Openly Available
Activity Product Variation	High
<div> <div>None</div> <div>Basic</div> <div>Limited</div> <div>Diverse</div> </div>	

**Site Destination Maturity**  
Relative to the Congo Basin Market

### Accessibility:

Int'l Air	Maya-Maya Int'l Airport (Brazzaville)	
Domestic Air	<b>Kabo Airstrip:</b> Approx. 30-45 minute journey from airstrip to the HQ in Bomassa. 2018: Major project to refurbish the airstrip and make it fully operational again. 2021: Small vegetation clearing project post-Covid.	<b>Ouéso Domestic Airport:</b> Approx. 3-4 hours by car. Both the airport & its access roads are in excellent condition. Has capacity of landing large aircrafts and the landing strip is "comparable to international airports."
	<b>Driving From Brazzaville:</b> Brazzaville to Ouesso, 10 hours on tarred road. Public transportation is also available to Ouesso. River crossing at Ouesso by barge (runs 8am-3pm). Ouesso to Bomassa, 3-4 hours on dirt road.	
Ground		
Water	<b>Ouéso to WCS HQ (in Bomassa):</b> Possible by boat, 3-4 hours	<b>The park is also accessible by boat from Central African Republic.</b> Approx. 3-4 hours.
Within Park	Depending on traveler itineraries, travel within the park is largely by foot, by pirogue, or 4WD vehicles.	

\*Sangha TriNational is a UNESCO World Heritage site, so Nouabalé-Ndoki falls under this designation.



# Destination Snapshot:

## Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park, ROC



Photos taken by team on independent field visits, 2023

### Current & Potential Natural Tourism Assets:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><u>Geographic Features:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contiguous lowland rainforest, <i>which has never been logged.</i></li> <li>Forest Bais, Ndoki &amp; Goulougo Rivers, and Swamp forests.</li> <li>Adjacent with two other parks (Sangha-TriNational)</li> <li><i>Cross-border tourism circuits are popular with major growth potential.</i></li> </ul> | <p><u>Wildlife:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gorillas, chimpanzees, 10 additional primate species, forest elephants, and bongo.</li> <li>300+ bird species,</li> <li>Designated an <b>Important Bird Area</b> by BirdLife International.</li> </ul> |
|--|---|

### Human Capital

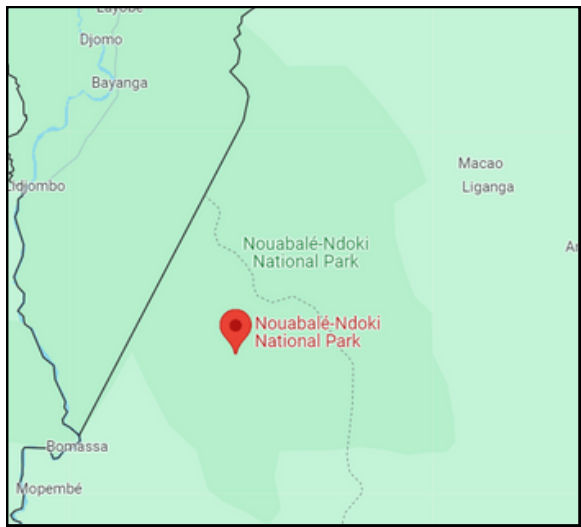
**WCS:**

WCS has signed a Cooperative Agreement with the Congolese Government, creating the Nouabalé-Ndoki Foundation, a Public-Private Partnership ensuring long-term management & financing of the park.

WCS support activities include:

- Park Management
- Anti-Poaching Activities
- Ecological Research & Monitoring
- Training & Education
- Ecotourism Development

The majority of park staff are hired from local villages in Bomassa and Makao.



Google Maps (2023) Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park.

**Google Reviews Rating:** *None*

**TripAdvisor Rating:** ●●●●●

5 Total Reviews

**TripAdvisor Reviews**

2017

“This is such a unique, pristine and amazing place on this planet!”

“We enjoyed talking to the international and Congolese staff during meals and over a beer, and were greatly moved by the dedication of the local staff to the animals and to their (tracking or research) work.”

“We spent a night in tents on the platform at Mbeli bai listening to the nearby elephant 'traffic' under a full moon.”

“This is a true nature-based adventure where your needs will be more than met.”

**TripAdvisor Reviews**

2017

“If you need ease, all the comforts, AC, this isn't the trip for you. But if you want some of the most spectacular rainforest left on the planet, adventure, and a once-in-a-lifetime experience, this is definitely the place.”

“Spending time with the WCS staff was [a] joy.”

“Observing the gorillas and learning about their behavior and history from my WCS host and the professional trackers was amazing.”

“The only thing that could have made it better would have been a longer stay.”

# Destination Scorecard:

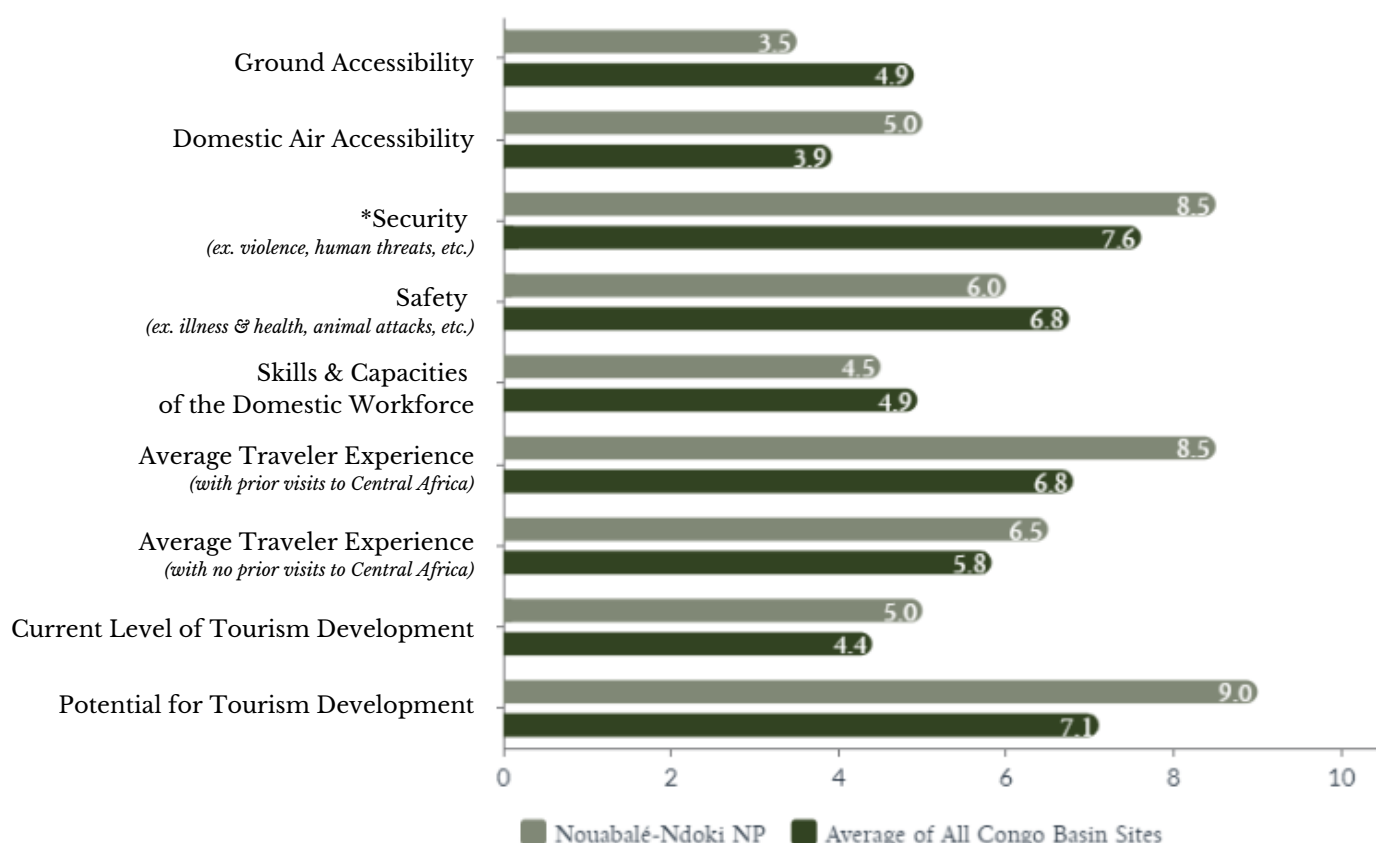
## Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park, ROC

Stakeholders with firsthand knowledge of the park were asked to rank different aspects of tourism in and around the landscape.

Ranking is based on a 1-10 scale:

'1' represents relative weakness in the field and '10' represents strength in the field.

### Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park Tourism Assessment Survey Results



#### Key Takeaways:

- Despite the low levels of current tourism development, there is good potential for future expansion and development.
- This park is considered slightly less safe than the regional average, possibly due to its remoteness from medical facilities
- The perceived security of this site is higher than the regional average, a distinguishing factor for potential visitors and investors.
- The traveler experience is above average for the region

#### Additional Insights from Survey:

- There is formal interest from tourism investors and opportunities for expanded tourism in Nouabale-Ndoki National Park.
- Public transportation from Brazzaville to Ouessou is noted as available, prompting further analysis of this option.
- Tourism circuit opportunities & site linkages, as suggested by expert stakeholders:
  - Sangha Trinational Circuit
  - Odzala-Kokoua National Park

Responses collected via Qualtrics surveys, from October 2023 - March 2024

\*For additional information on security, see site analysis below.

# Site Analysis: --- --- Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park, ROC

## Overview

Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park (NNNP) lies in the northern Republic of Congo (RoC), bordering the Central African Republic to the west, and spans approximately 423,870 hectares [1]. It is part of the Sangha Trinational (TNS) transboundary conservation complex, comprising three national parks, connecting with Dzanga-Sangha Complex of Protected Areas (CAR) and Lobéké National Park (Cameroon) [2]. Recognized for its ecological significance, the entire Sangha Trinational was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2012 [3]. NNNP boasts one of the finest remaining examples of intact lowland rainforest ecosystems in the Congo Basin, untouched by logging activities [4].

Among its notable features are the forest clearings, locally known as 'bais,' with the 12-hectare Mbeli Bai standing out as a prime spot for gorilla viewing. Mbeli Bai attracts 13 known groups and 9 solitary silverbacks regularly. Wali Bai, distinguished by its shallow lake, offers a contrasting experience with sightings of both large mammals and aquatic wildlife [5]. Additionally, the park features swamp forests and river systems, including the prominent Ndoki and Goualougo Rivers.

Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park is home to a diverse array of wildlife. An ecological survey conducted in 2017 revealed the park and its surroundings harbor approximately 24,000 lowland gorillas, 6,300 forest elephants, and 5,000 chimpanzees [6], making it an impressive and enticing destination for travelers and ecotourism investors. The park currently boasts three fully habituated gorilla groups, with a fourth group currently undergoing habituation [7]. These are located around the Mbeli Bai. Additionally, it supports a rich avian population, with over 300 species of birds thriving within its boundaries.

Certain countries have issued travel advisories regarding NNNP due to its proximity to the Central African Republic (CAR). Canada and France advise against travel within 50 and 30 kilometers of the CAR border, [8][9] which includes NNNP. However, the UK advisory only cautions against travel to areas north of NNNP in the Likouala Region. [10] The U.S. Department of State issues a 'Level 2: Exercise Increased Caution' advisory for the Republic of Congo overall, a similar level as France and the UK, without specific advisories for NNNP [11]. Despite these warnings, the NNNP and the bordering Dzanga-Sangha complex of protected areas, are generally regarded as safe by stakeholders working in the area. There have been no reported incidents of crime or violence against foreigners in the area, even during CAR's tumultuous periods. [12]



# Site Analysis: **Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park, ROC**

## **Nature-Based Tourism Development Opportunities**

In 2014, the RoC Ministry for Forest Economy partnered with the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) to establish the Nouabalé-Ndoki Foundation, a public-private partnership (PPP). Under this agreement, WCS, who has been working in the landscape for 30 years, and the government jointly oversee high-level management, while on-ground site management is entirely entrusted to WCS. The WCS landscape approach to conservation has been commended for maintaining stable species numbers not only within NNNP boundaries but also in peripheral zones [13]. The existence of this PPP is particularly appealing to international investors, as it signifies a long-term commitment by a reputable NGOs [14], with WCS granted authority to manage the park until at least 2038.

In April 2020, WCS initiated a four-year program to establish sustainable ecotourism activities in the park, in collaboration with Kamba Africa (formerly known as 'Congo Conservation Company'). This partnership led to NNNP's inaugural professionally managed tourism concession, committed to constructing lodges, developing ecotourism products, enhancing local capacity, and launching marketing campaigns [15]. The investment agreement between the government and Kamba Africa is expected to be signed in mid-2024, with the lodge openings slated for visitors in 2025 [16]. WCS also provides basic visitor facilities in their headquarters and camps in several key locations in the park.

A key opportunity for ecotourism development in NNNP lies in supporting and investing in the efforts of WCS, their new tourism concessionaire, Kamba Africa as well as future tourism investments. Future investments may include a planned community tourism camp, diversification of tourism activities, expansion of tourism to the eastern part of the park, access roads/airstrips, and recruitment, training, and capacity-building for the local workforce. These initiatives are critical enablers for the success of ecotourism in the park and will likely be a part of a tourism plan and standard operating procedure currently being developed by the park.

Gorilla tourism stands out as a top opportunity in NNNP. The gorilla viewing and trekking experiences in NNNP are comparable to visiting the mountain gorillas of East Africa [17], a highly successful sector in African tourism. NNNP holds a distinct competitive advantage as the first 'Certified Gorilla Friendly™ National Park,' awarded by the Wildlife Friendly Enterprise Network in partnership with the International Gorilla Conservation Programme [18]. NNNP earned this certification in late 2023, unlocking new avenues for attracting the international gorilla tourism market through strategic marketing and branding of this eco-label and 'first earner' distinction. The three habituated groups offer a foundation for tourism, however to ensure a consistent offer and scale tourism in the landscape, additional habituated groups will be needed in the future.



# Site Analysis: --- --- Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park, ROC

## Nature-Based Tourism Development Opportunities, *continued*

The circuit opportunities between NNNP and Odzala-Kokoua NP are significant, with both parks boasting strong and consistent management structures and with the near term development of Kamba Africa lodges in each park. If NNNP can also develop a more domestic/mid-market facility that is comparable to Imbalanga Camp in Odzala-Kokoua NP, then a diverse tourism circuit can be established.

Additionally, a tri-national agreement exists for the Sangha Trinational parks, allowing for visitors to move between parks without a visa, although this is currently underutilized and in many cases poorly understood by border control authorities. The opportunity exists to develop and promote packaged itineraries between the TNS parks that would add a distinguishing element to a travelers experience. The camp of Djembe in Lobeke National Park is only a 30 minute boat ride from NNNP, and a 4-5 hour boat ride from Bayanga in Dzanga-Sangha. Work is needed with border control and park agencies from all three countries to ensure the MOU that allows the movement of visitors is understood and the procedures to travel between parks is easy for a visitor.

Supporting the development of circuit itineraries, promoting these packages, and investing in accessibility enablers between the parks presents an excellent opportunity to advance nature-based tourism in NNNP.

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[1]<https://www.protectedplanet.net/72332>

[2][https://2017-2020.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1860/CAFEC\\_Sangha\\_Tri-National\\_Fact\\_Sheet.pdf](https://2017-2020.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1860/CAFEC_Sangha_Tri-National_Fact_Sheet.pdf)

[3]<https://whc.unesco.org/document/152527>

[4]<https://congo.wcs.org/Wild-Places/Nouabale-Ndoki-National-Park.aspx>

[5]<https://wscsongoblog.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/brochure-Guide-to-Nouabale-Ndoki.pdf>

[6][https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/PA00ZKM2.pdf](https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00ZKM2.pdf)

[7]<https://newsroom.wcs.org/News-Releases/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/21108/Nouabale-Ndoki-Becomes-First-Certified-Gorilla-Friendly-TM-National-Park.aspx>

[8]<https://travel.gc.ca/destinations/congo-brazzaville>

[9]<https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/conseils-aux-voyageurs/conseils-par-pays-destination/congo/#securite>

[10]<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/congo>

[11]<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/republic-of-the-congo-travel-advisory.html>

[12]<https://www.sanghalodge.com/frequently-asked-questions>

[13]<https://www.wcs.org/films/ndoki-25-anniversary>

[14][https://usfscentralafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Assessment-of-Protected-Area-Management-Partnerships-in-Central-Africa\\_USFS\\_2021.pdf](https://usfscentralafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Assessment-of-Protected-Area-Management-Partnerships-in-Central-Africa_USFS_2021.pdf)

[15]<https://newsroom.wcs.org/News-Releases/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/14319/Ecotourism-to-Bring-Post-COVID-19-hope-for-Wildlife-and-Communities-in-Northern-Congo.aspx>

[16][https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/PA00ZKM2.pdf](https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00ZKM2.pdf)

[17]<https://wscsongoblog.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/brochure-Guide-to-Nouabale-Ndoki.pdf>

[18]<https://newsroom.wcs.org/News-Releases/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/21108/Nouabale-Ndoki-Becomes-First-Certified-Gorilla-Friendly-TM-National-Park.aspx>

# Site Analysis: Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park, ROC


## Enabling Environment Constraints

### Access & Infrastructure

Accessibility to the park poses a significant challenge for tourism development. Travelers from Brazzaville must first reach Ouessou through domestic flights or a lengthy 12-hour car ride. From Ouessou, travelers can embark on a 3-5 hour boat trip up the Sangha river or continue by road to Bomassa, an additional 3-4 hours on unpaved forest roads. However, this still doesn't bring travelers into the park boundaries. From Bomassa to Mbeli Camp, travelers must navigate forestry roads by truck and then proceed by pirogue along the Mbeli river, followed by a 3-hour walk to reach Mondika camp, the base for gorilla tracking activities. While the park's remoteness and lack of infrastructure preserve biodiversity, it also impedes tourism development, especially for less adventurous or physically fit travelers [19]. Scheduled domestic flights between Brazzaville and Ouessou are sporadic and unreliable, often delayed or canceled without warning. Charter flights are possible to Ouessou, and this is the form of transport most often used by Kamba Africa clients.

### Awareness & Promotion

NNNP and neighboring OKNP share similar landscapes and wildlife, theoretically making it challenging for travelers to choose between them. However, due to constraints like limited access, infrastructure, and awareness, OKNP is often preferred. To compete, NNNP requires stronger marketing and awareness efforts. Offering circuit itineraries with OKNP could also help to address these challenges. However, it's crucial for NNNP to develop its own distinct destination branding, image and tourism offer to differentiate itself and garner greater awareness in the market.



[19]<https://wscsongoblog.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/brochure-Guide-to-Nouabale-Ndoki.pdf>



# Site Analysis:

## Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park, ROC

### Recommendations & Considerations

#### Lower Cost & Short-Term Actions:

\*\*Harmonization between stakeholders throughout the Sangha Trinational Complex to make the cross-border management initiative and its subsequent MOU on the movement of tourists within the complex, usable as a tourism circuit. This would include an initial analysis of existing structures and operating procedures for cross border tourism to fully understand the operational context.

\*\*Co-op marketing & storytelling campaign with Kamba Africa and WSC (plus potential collaboration with OKNP). This would include a travel trade outreach program targeting international markets as well as domestic/regional travelers to inform, engage and excite them about the park (or tourism circuit with OKNP). This should also be timed for when the Kamba lodges are open. This may initially include:

- A joint marketing campaign strategy and content generation (image, video and written) to tell the story of the region and provide content to help promote the region.
- Direct outreach and sales visits to target tour operators in key international markets to increase awareness and help these operators package and sell the destination.
- Collaboration with RoC and regional tour operators to package trips for domestic and regional visitors (using WCS current facilities, but eventually a mid-level lodge), as well as a social media campaign to inform potential visitors and promote packages.
- Familiarization trips for target tour operators so that they can understand and sell the tourism experience.
- Engage with an intrepid A-list celebrity or influencer to explore the region and highlight the travel experience to their network.
  - *This should be tied to current conservation activities that the celebrity can get involved in for a more meaningful story (for example, the 'Friend-a-Gorilla' campaign with Hollywood celebrities that ran in Uganda in 2010, generating over \$4 million in free media coverage or Katmai National Parks in Alaska where they have a funny 'Fat Bear Week' social media tournament, where Instagram users can 'vote' for the fattest bear.*

# Site Analysis:

## Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park, ROC

### Recommendations & Considerations

#### Lower Cost & Short-Term Actions:

Supporting the ongoing efforts of WCS, develop a plan and establish the organizational/structural arrangements to develop a mid-market tourism facility near the park that is wholly or partly owned by the local community.

A cross-border Sangha Trinational Complex tourism plan focused on the facilitation of cross-border tourism in the complex should then be developed. This may also include defining the unique tourism offer of each location to ensure diversity of the cross-border experience as well as a common brand theme that connects them together, matching this with the markets likely to travel to the area.

*For example:*

LNP: Still need defining, but possibly birding and mobile camping under the stars, etc.

DSNP: Famous Dzanga Bai forest elephants, bongo and luxe lodging.

NNNP: Habituated gorillas, tall rainforest canopy and fledgling community-based ecotourism

*This action should focus only on travel within the borders of the parks with visitors entering and existing through the same country as this is easier and quicker to achieve. See recommendations on implementation in medium-term actions for longer-term more complex steps regarding cross-border travel.*



# Site Analysis:

## Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park, ROC

### Recommendations & Considerations

#### Higher Cost & Medium-Term Actions:

**\*\*Expand gorilla habituation in order to offer gorilla trekking to an expanded market base.**

**\*\*Support the development of a mid-level tourism facility jointly or wholly owned by the community, but operated by a professional operator, ideally a Congolese company.**

Building on the marketing efforts described in the short-term recommendations, engage with tour operators and key stakeholders in OKNP, Dzanga-Sangha and possibly Lobeke to define optimal itineraries and circuits between the parks and logistics relating to this. This may include current plans as well as future opportunities for circuits. Continued marketing should then focus on promotion of these itineraries with tour operator partners and branding the region. Through this process gaps and needs will be identified along with what is needed to address them (*see next recommendation*).

A challenge grant program could be established to address product development and investment needs in addition to addressing gaps and needs for the development of circuits between OKNP and NNNP as well as Dzanga-Sangha and Lobeke. This may include new tourism activities and experiences including, but also beyond gorillas. It may also include support for trail development, viewing and camping platforms, logistics (boats, roads, etc.), training and marketing. Where grant funds are used to attract private investors, grant funds should be provided as an equity stake in a tourism investment for local communities, although the private operator would maintain management control.

Building on initial cross-border travel facilitation within the park boundaries, expand this effort to efforts to facilitate full board crossing for travelers that would allow for entry in one country and exit in another.

Training of police, border control agents, other regulatory personnel and park staff, to ensure they are aware and can facilitate effective border crossings between the three TNS parks.

Assessment of the potential for and carrying capacity of sports fishing in the region, possibly in collaboration with the sport fishing operator African Waters, who have camps in Cameroon and Gabon.

# Destination Snapshot:

## Ntokou-Pikounda National Park, ROC

### Quick Facts:

- 457,200 Hectares
- IUCN Category - Not Reported
- Park Entry Fee: None
  - At present, the park is not open for tourism.
- Primate Habituation: None
- Seasonality:
  - Best time to visit: Long dry season (May-September)
- There is not a TripAdvisor page for this park



Screenshot from ProtectedPlanet.net

### Current & Potential Natural Tourism Assets:

#### Geographic Features:

Mosaic of forests and savanna.

Lies Southeast of Odzala NP -  
*potential circuit opportunities.*

#### Wildlife:

Lowland gorillas, forest elephants, & chimpanzees.

Important Bird Area by  
BirdLife International

### Human Capital

#### WWF:

Signed a co-management agreement for the park in 2017.

There is a team of 15 ecoguards with an additional 15 in training, most of whom have been hired from the local villages.

Reported distrust between the park and local communities.

The Rainforest Foundation UK published a 2023 investigation regarding alleged human rights abuses within park boundaries.

### Accommodations & Facilities

#### Park HQ:

Located in Ntokou Village

Consists of a cluster of 4 buildings, two on raised stilts to provide boat storage underneath.

Park HQ can accommodate occasional visitors relatively comfortably.

There is a mobile tented camp at one of the park's ecoguard stations.

Additional basic accommodation can be found in Ntokou Village.

### Accessibility:

Int'l Air	Maya-Maya Int'l Airport (Brazzaville)	
Domestic Air	No airstrips in the vicinity	<b>Owando National Airport:</b> Approx. 80km from the Ntokou district, however it is not clear if there is direct access between the airport and park
Ground & Water	This park is <b>not fully accessible by ground</b> transportation, a boat transfer is required.	<b>Route From Brazzaville:</b> 8 hours drive on tarred roadways to reach the turnoff to the park. 1.5 hours drive on dirt roads to reach Okombe (boat launch point). ~1.5-2.5 hours by motorized pirogue (owned by the Park) from Okombe to Ntokou (Park HQ location).
Within Park	Primarily walking, by motorboat, or by motorized pirogue.	

Transportation Infrastructure

Poor

Park Headquarters

Nearby

Availability of Accommodations

Self-Service (nearby)

Accommodation Product Variation

Low

Visitor Activities

None

Activity Product Variation

Low

None

Basic

Limited

Diverse

Site Destination Maturity  
Relative to the Congo Basin Market

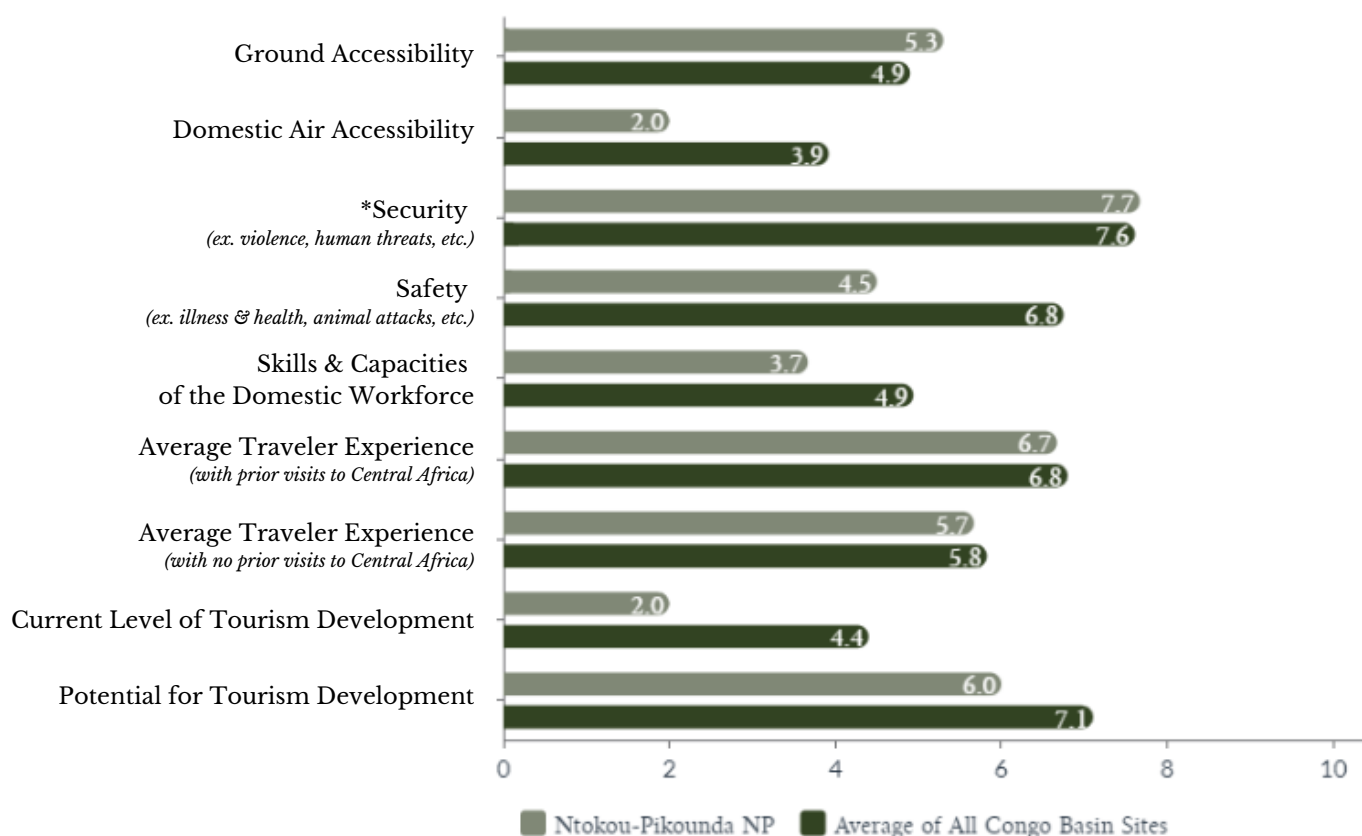
# Destination Scorecard: **Ntokou-Pikounda National Park, ROC**

Stakeholders with firsthand knowledge of the park were asked to rank different aspects of tourism in and around the landscape.

Ranking is based on a 1-10 scale:

‘1’ represents relative weakness in the field and ‘10’ represents strength in the field.

## Ntokou-Pikounda National Park Tourism Assessment Survey Results



### Key Takeaways:

- Domestic air accessibility is considered much weaker in this park than the regional average, signaling a need for investment in this important enabling factor.
- This park has a perceived lower level of potential for future developments compared to the whole Congo Basin market, signaling that this park might be a medium-term focus for tourism investment.

### Additional Insights from Survey:

- Currently there is no formal interest from tourism investors in Ntokou-Pikounda National Park.
- Despite the long drive to the park, the ‘beautiful scenery’ was mentioned as a benefit, something that could be leveraged in marketing and development efforts.
- Tourism circuit opportunities & site linkages, as suggested by expert stakeholders:
  - Nouabale-Ndoki National Park
  - Odzala-Kokoua National Park

Responses collected via Qualtrics surveys, from October 2023 - March 2024

\*For additional information on security, see site analysis below.

# Site Analysis: --- --- Ntokou-Pikounda National Park, ROC

## Overview

Ntokou-Pikounda National Park (NPNP) is located in the north-central part of the Republic of Congo (RoC) and covers approximately 457,200 Hectares [1]. Ntokou-Pikounda is one of eleven national parks that falls within the Trinational Dja-Odzala-Minkébé (TRIDOM) landscape [2]. This landscape is a biodiversity and conservation stronghold, covering three countries (ROC, Cameroon, and Gabon) and 10% of the entire Congo Basin Rainforest [3].

NPNP's landscape is a mosaic of virtually intact forests and swampland, inspiring J. Michael Fay to coin the park's now-famous mantle, "the Green Abyss." The park forms part of the Central Congo peatlands [4], one of the world's most important carbon sink landscapes [5]. The park hosts a large ape population (~15,000 western lowland gorillas in 2013), as well as about 800 forest elephants, 950 chimpanzees [6], forest buffalo, leopards, giant pangolins, hippopotamus and the once-lost Bouvier's red colobus monkey, which was rediscovered in the park in 2015, 40 years after the species' last sighting and thought to have been hunted to extinction [7].

While NPNP is not subject to any specific travel advisories, the U.S. Department of State has issued a '*Level 2: Exercise Increased Caution*' travel advisory for the Republic of Congo as a whole (a similar level to France and the UK) [8]. In and around NPNP, there is an extremely low risk of crime or other security threats. Local community engagement in park management, particularly in Ntokou & Pikounda, enhances security. Notably, in 2021, only one elephant was reported lost to poaching [9], indicating a substantial decline in poaching activities and good levels of security.

[1][https://wwf.panda.org/discover/people\\_and\\_conservation/protected\\_and\\_conserved\\_areas/ntokou\\_pikounda\\_national\\_park/](https://wwf.panda.org/discover/people_and_conservation/protected_and_conserved_areas/ntokou_pikounda_national_park/)

[2][https://origin-congo.wwf-sites.org/where\\_we\\_work/tridom\\_tri\\_national\\_dja\\_odzala\\_minkebe/](https://origin-congo.wwf-sites.org/where_we_work/tridom_tri_national_dja_odzala_minkebe/)

[3]<https://pfb-cbfp.org/news-partner/landscape-financelab.html>

[4]<https://kbs-frb.be/en/co-management-ntokou-pikounda-national-park-brazzaville-republic-congo>

[5]<https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/critical-ecosystems-congo-basin-peatlands>

[6]<https://newsroom.wcs.org/News-Releases/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/6521/New-Park-Protects-15000-Gorillas.aspx>

[7]<https://medium.com/@WWFWildlife/restoring-an-iconic-species-of-the-congo-basin-82a8793324b4>

[8]<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/republic-of-the-congo-travel-advisory.htm>

[9]<https://medium.com/@WWFWildlife/restoring-an-iconic-species-of-the-congo-basin-82a8793324b4>



# Site Analysis:

## Ntokou-Pikounda National Park, ROC

### Nature-Based Tourism Development Opportunities



The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) supported the Congolese government in establishing the Park in 2013 and in November 2017, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) entered into a co-management partnership with the Ministry of Forest Economy. Under this model, the park's executive body is co-headed by representatives from both WWF and government [10].

Immediate priorities for tourism development, and the park in general, include completion of a Management Plan, which builds on WWF's ongoing efforts to establish an operational Park HQ, train staff, and implement a fisheries regime to manage fishing within the park. The Management Plan should also include reference to tourism, however a separate plan should be developed for tourism in the park. Management plan components relating to tourism may include infrastructure investment and zoning as well as components such as staffing and management.

Potential tourism initiatives include developing a nature-based tourism concession and community-run enterprises along with related infrastructure and facilities. Facilitating a third-party operator for a concession in the park would provide an anchor for development of tourism in the park. This may be modeled on the Odzala-Kokoua operations, exploring both high-end and more mid-market/domestic opportunities.

With a unique freshwater swamp ecosystem, Ntokou-Pikounda offers a distinct experience that is on the way to other significant parks in the country. Though wildlife densities are lower than other parks, the park supports endemic species and has the potential as a part of bird watching circuits. Stakeholders also note that while the primates in the park aren't habituated, they show a lack of fear towards humans, making it conducive to start the habituation process for tourism.

Building on these attributes, there may be scope to incorporate, over time, NPNP into a wider circuit with Odzala-Kokoua NP (OKNP) and Nouabalé-Ndoki NP (NNNP). There's a distant physical connection with both parks through elephant migration corridors (NPNP - OKNP) and the Sangha River (NPNP-NNNP).



[10][https://wwf.panda.org/discover/people\\_and\\_conservation/protected\\_and\\_conserved\\_areas/ntokou\\_pikounda\\_national\\_park/](https://wwf.panda.org/discover/people_and_conservation/protected_and_conserved_areas/ntokou_pikounda_national_park/)



# Site Analysis: Ntokou-Pikounda National Park, ROC

## Enabling Environment Constraints

### Accommodations & Infrastructure

The park has future aspirations for tourism, however its current management priorities are focused on non-tourism activities. The park headquarters, situated in nearby Ntokou village, offers 'good' facilities and has accommodated NGO visitors in the past, however, beyond this, the only tourism infrastructure in the park comprises cleared areas in the forest for pitching tents. Tourism development here can be gradual, but would need to start with a foundation of basic infrastructure and facilities before tourism can grow in the park. Tourism planning is essential to guide and structure future tourism development initiatives.

### Access

Similar to other protected areas in Central Africa, NPNP faces challenges with accessibility. Access primarily involves an ~8 hour drive on paved roads from Brazzaville, followed by 1.5 hours on dirt roads to Okombe, the starting point for a 2-3 hour pirogue journeys to Ntokou village where park HQ is located. Given the length of this trip, travelers would most likely need to stop overnight along the way, making it a 2-day trip each way. Currently, there are no good air access options, although Owando National Airport is located roughly 80 kilometers from Ntokou district.

### Funding availability

An additional constraint to tourism development in the park is funding for protected area management. Despite WWF and the government's co-management of NPNP, WWF reports the absence of an agreed-upon, formal management plan for the park that limits the capacity of the park staff to manage and develop the park [11].

Although a management plan is in the process of being developed, it may take several more years before it is finalized and ratified by the government. WWF attributes this delay to chronic under-funding of the landscape and insufficient staff capacity. To facilitate tourism in the park, identifying long-term, sustainable funding is imperative, alongside the creation of a comprehensive management plan that incorporates dedicated sections for tourism activities.

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[11][https://wwf.panda.org/discover/people\\_and\\_conservation/protected\\_and\\_conserved\\_areas/ntokou\\_pikounda\\_national\\_park/](https://wwf.panda.org/discover/people_and_conservation/protected_and_conserved_areas/ntokou_pikounda_national_park/)

# Site Analysis: **Ntokou-Pikounda National Park, ROC**

## Recommendations & Considerations

### Lower Cost & Short-Term Actions:

**\*\*Completion of a Management Plan for NPNP, with ratification of the plan by the government. This plan would include infrastructure investment and zoning as it relates to tourism as well as components such as staffing and management.**

Development of a Tourism Plan for the park that compliments the Management Plan and would include an assessment of the tourism potential in and around the park, development plans, community interests in enterprise and partnership opportunities related to nature-tourism in the park, as well as concession structures and standard operating procedures to manage tourism in the park. The plan would provide a practical roadmap to put the opportunities into action as well as a prospectus for potential tourism investors

Assess sustainable financing mechanisms to support the park, including potential carbon credits.

Study tours for park staff to understand how other protected areas in the county or elsewhere have gone about their planning and development efforts (tourism and general management).

### Higher Cost & Medium-Term Actions:

**\*\*Leveraging the tourism plan, engage donors and other potential supporters in a 4-5 year program to establish the foundation for tourism in and around the park, including investment in base infrastructure, such as access roads, trails, viewing platforms and camping sites. On the management side, training will be needed for park staff to plan and manage tourism activities as well as guides (ideally in partnership with local communities). This program would also identify and structure partnerships with potential tourism operators who could be attracted to invest in the site. Grant funds to support and buy down the risk to investors would also be needed and could be integrated with a component of community ownership in tourism facilities that are developed (i.e. the grant is the equity investment on behalf of the community).**

Develop a brand and marketing/storytelling campaign to position the park itself as well as develop circuits with Odzala-Kokoua and Nouabalé-Ndoki National Parks. Through this program help to raise awareness of the park as a tourism destination. For example explore a possible campaign related to the famous Mike Fay 'Mega Transect' and Green Abyss mantle.

# Destination Snapshot:

## Tchimpounga Nature Reserve, ROC

### Quick Facts:

- 7,000 Hectares
- Surrounded by dense rainforest & savannah
  - Three islands as a ‘safe space’ for chimpanzees
  - The Kouilou River as a natural barrier
- IUCN Category 4 - ‘Habitat Management Area’
- Large chimpanzee population
- Park Entry Fee: Not Applicable
- No tourism activities or facilitation at present.
- Seasonality

☀ May - September  
💧 October - April

- There is no TripAdvisor page for this site

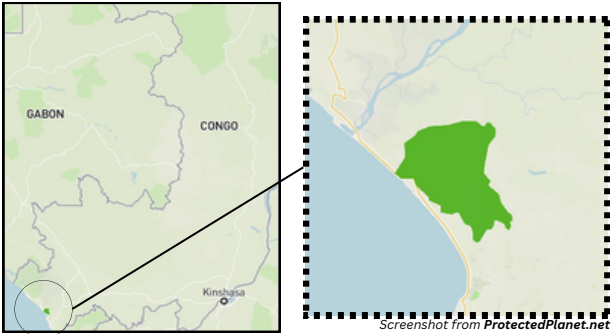
### Accommodations & Facilities

There are **no accommodation facilities** for tourism within Reserve boundaries, and none in the immediate vicinity.

However, Pointe Noire is only 1 hour away by road. This is Congo’s second largest city and has a wide variety of accommodation options.

**Park HQ:**  
Located in Tchissanga Village, the Reserve’s southern entrance.

Comprised of a cluster of 10-12 buildings, a small veterinary facility, offices, staff accommodations, and animal enclosures.



### Current & Potential Natural Tourism Assets:

#### Geographic Features:

Coastal plain of savanna & surrounded by dense rainforests.

Kouilou River & three River-island sites (Ngombe, Tchibebe, & Tchindzoulou).

Located near PointeNoire -  
*Major tourism potential (day trips)*

#### Wildlife:

**One of Africa’s largest Chimpanzee sanctuaries.**

-140 Chimpanzees receiving care from JGI staff at the Sanctuary.

### Human Capital

#### Jane Goodall Institute

This reserve has been managed by JGI, in collaboration with ACFAP since the 1990s.

They employ local eco-guardians to prevent poaching and other illegal activities within the reserve.

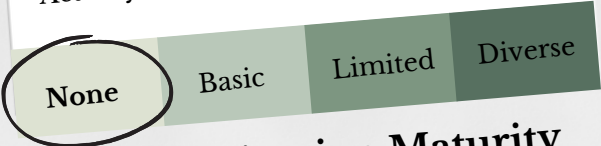
JGI works closely with local communities on “aggressive education & awareness campaigns” related to ape conservation.

Additionally, JGI works closely with local communities on women’s health & education initiatives.

### Accessibility:

Int’l Air	Agostinho-Neto Int’l Airport (Pointe Noire)
Domestic Air	No airstrip in the vicinity.
Ground	<b>From Pointe-Noire:</b> 1 hour drive on largely tarred roads. Some sections however are badly maintained.
Water	The <b>Kaouilou River</b> falls within park boundaries, navigable by motorboat or pirogue.  Kouilou Village (mouth of the river) to the island sanctuaries where JGI has a small field station: approx. 45 minutes by boat.
Within Park	Primarily vehicle or boat, depending on location & activity.  The northeastern portion of the Reserve is difficult to access due to flooded terrain.

Transportation Infrastructure	Poor
Park Headquarters	Nearby
Availability of Accommodations	None
Accommodation Product Variation	Low
Visitor Activities	None
Activity Product Variation	Low



**Site Destination Maturity**  
Relative to the Congo Basin Market



# Destination Scorecard:

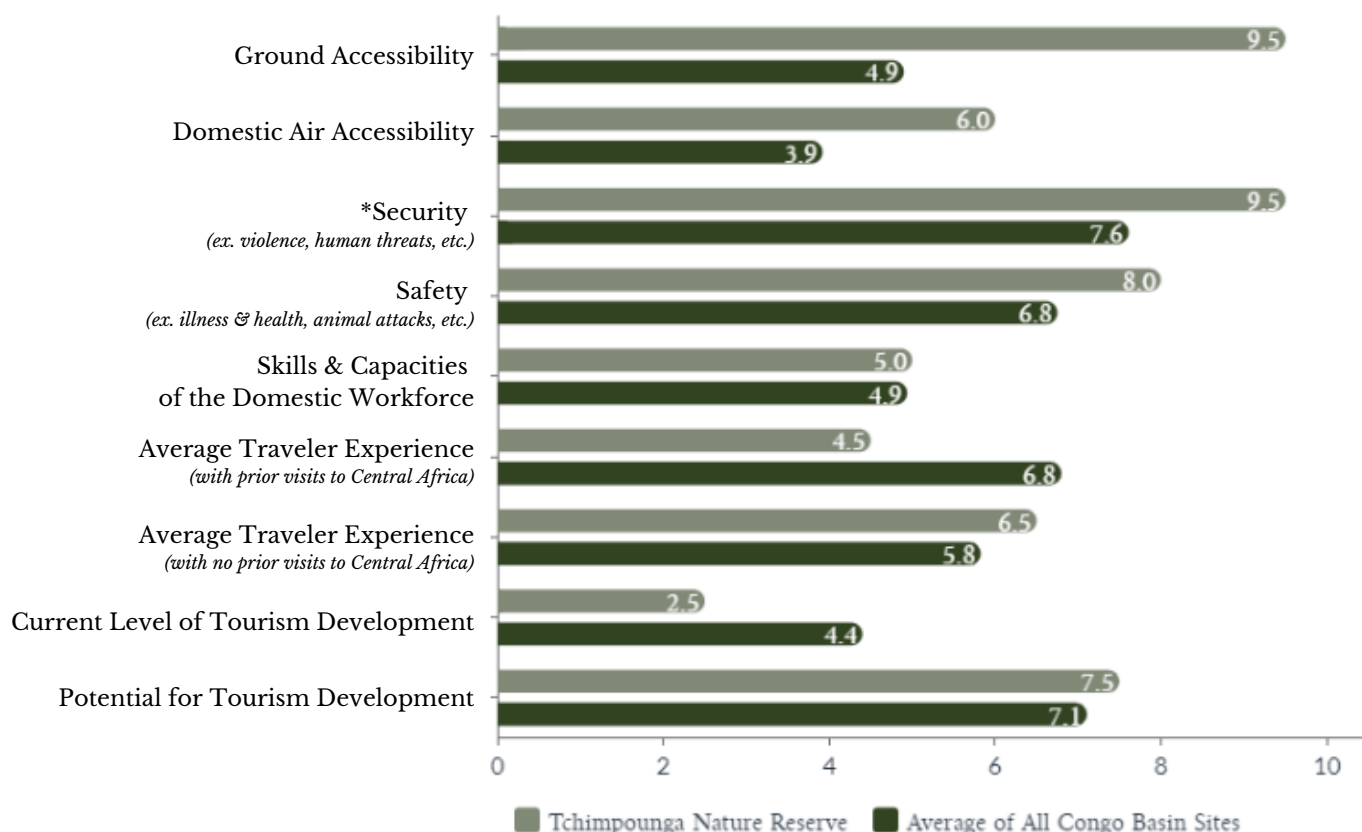
## Tchimpounga Nature Reserve, ROC

Stakeholders with firsthand knowledge of the park were asked to rank different aspects of tourism in and around the landscape.

Ranking is based on a 1-10 scale:

‘1’ represents relative weakness in the field and ‘10’ represents strength in the field.

### Tchimpounga Nature Reserve Tourism Assessment Survey Results



#### Key Takeaways:

- Despite the low levels of current tourism development, there is good potential for future expansion and development.
- The Reserve is much more secure and accessible by ground transportation compared to the regional average.
- The average traveler experience for those who have visited Central Africa before is lower than the regional average, signaling that work may be needed on improving the tourism product quality and service

#### Additional Insights from Survey:

- There is currently no formal interest from tourism investors and opportunities for expanded tourism in the Reserve.
- Tourism circuit opportunities & site linkages, as suggested by expert stakeholders:
  - Conkouati-Douli National Park
  - Loango National Park
  - Coastal areas in the Republic of Congo

Responses collected via Qualtrics surveys, from October 2023 - March 2024

*\*For additional information on security, see site analysis below.*

# Site Analysis: Tchimpounga Nature Reserve, ROC

## Overview

Tchimpounga Nature Reserve (TNR) lies in the southwestern part of the Republic of Congo (RoC), a few kilometers from the Atlantic coast and 50 kilometers north of Pointe Noire [1]. Covering approximately 7,000 hectares, the reserve includes the 27-Hectare Tchimpounga Chimpanzee Rehabilitation Center (TCRC) [2], thought to be the largest sanctuary for chimpanzees in Africa. Currently, the reserve's boundaries are understood to be under review due to two potash mining permit applications. The implications for conservation and tourism development remain uncertain pending the outcome of the boundary review process, and will need to be assessed again in due course.

The Reserve sits on a largely coastal plain of savannah with patches of gallery forest, surrounded by tropical rainforest. Also found in the Reserve are flood plains, mangrove swamps, and one of Africa's most endangered ecosystems, the coastal Mayombe forest [3]. The Kouilou River cuts through the Reserve and serves as the primary access point. Three river islands—Tchibebe, Tchindzoulou, and Ngombe—provide undisturbed habitats for some chimpanzees, offering natural protection from external threats [4]. With approximately 140 chimpanzees under care at the TCRC, the Reserve also supports robust populations of forest elephants and pangolins.

While TNR is not subject to any specific travel advisories, the U.S. Department of State has issued a 'Level 2: Exercise Increased Caution' travel advisory for the Republic of Congo as a whole (the same level as France and the UK) [5]. However, Pointe-Noire is considered a more dangerous area and travelers are recommended by various government advisories to be on heightened alert here. It should be noted that the reserve itself is considered quite safe, as local eco-guards and community awareness campaigns have both been successful in reducing poaching and other illegal activities.

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[1]<https://www.abc.net.au/tv/wildlifeatthezoo/about/Tchimpounga.pdf>

[2]<https://old-www.wsu.edu/goodall/tchimpounga.html>

[3]<https://janegoodall.ca/our-stories/the-guardians-of-tchimpounga/>

[4]<https://janegoodall.org/portfolio/tchimpounga-safe-haven-second-chance-2-2/>

[5]<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/republic-of-the-congo-travel-advisory.html>

# Site Analysis: --- --- Tchimpounga Nature Reserve, ROC

## Nature-Based Tourism Development Opportunities

The Tchimpounga Chimpanzee Rehabilitation Center was established in 1995 by the Jane Goodall Institute (JGI) [6], and the larger reserve is considered to be under their management. At present, the JGI operations in Tchimpounga Nature Reserve are focused on rescuing and rehabilitating chimpanzees. They also support local law enforcement, employ eco-guards, and work closely with local communities on education related to ape conservation and women's health initiatives.

Despite the currently limited tourism levels, there's potential for growth. JGI is a highly renowned and respected institution with global reach, partnerships, and a strong international following. They are a trusted organization, which gives this reserve a competitive advantage in the global market if and when they decide to develop nature-based tourism offerings.

The main tourism opportunity within the reserve lies in chimpanzee-related experiences. JGI's successful petition for and subsequent expansion of the reserve facilitates semi-wild living conditions for chimps on the three river islands. They are still fed twice-daily by JGI staff and kept a close eye on by JGI veterinarians. The opportunity here would be taking tourists on boats during the feeding process enabling them to view chimpanzees in a managed and safe environment for all. Two travel markets could be initial targets:

1. Resident markets in Pointe-Noire and Brazzaville, such as middle/upper income Congolees and expats (several thousand expats and their families are estimated to reside in Pointe-Noire).
2. Traditional wildlife-based and educational travel markets, possibly tied to tourism circuit to other parks in the country (longer-term).

The hour-long drive from Pointe-Noire to TNR, despite poorly maintained roads, makes it one of Central Africa's more accessible parks by ground transportation. Taxis already serve this route, highlighting existing interest. Clear opportunities exist to access this market, developing 'back to nature,' family-friendly, and couple-focused guest accommodation for weekend stays, integrating and expanding the existing day tourism itineraries that JGI has created.

Ways to engage regional populations may also exist in the development and hosting of low-impact, pop-up events such as running or biking competitions. These would inform local residents about the reserve, attract greater visitation and raise money for management of the reserve. These could occur in lower biodiversity value, semi-natural eucalyptus plantations and grasslands on the southern boundary of the Reserve.

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[6]<https://janegoodall.org/portfolio/tchimpounga-safe-haven-second-chance-2-2/>

# Site Analysis: --- --- Tchimpounga Nature Reserve, ROC

## Enabling Environment Constraints

### Tourism Products & Activities

JGI has piloted small-scale visitor day trips to TNR, featuring forest walks, chimpanzee observation on the river islands, and village visits. However, tourism operations currently rely on existing JGI staff, operate only on weekends, and are priced relatively low. There is potential to scale and diversify TNR's activity offerings and possibly also link this with an overnight accommodation facility. There may also be opportunity to engage communities in these activities, including as guides or stand alone community tourism experiences, reducing the management burden that is currently carried by JGI. There is opportunity to build on the current activities to further develop and expand them as well as restructure the revenue systems to maximize financial benefits for the reserve and local communities. These experiences also need to be better understood in local markets (promotion).

### Accommodation

At present, TNR lacks dedicated accommodation facilities for tourism. Although JGI built a small lodge with two bedrooms facing the Kouilou River, it primarily accommodates conservation volunteers and other uses for JGI.

TNR has significant potential as a weekend getaway destination due to its proximity to Pointe-Noire. The development of a small accommodation facility that would provide these services, while also generating sustainable revenue for the reserve and benefits for local communities has high potential. This could be structured as a partnership between JGI and a private tourism operator/investor and most likely targeting a mid-budget, resident markets. There may also be opportunities to attract the small meetings and incentives as well as the wedding market. The management structure of the lodge could also facilitate community benefits, through an ownership stake in the lodge, through revenue share and through employment.

Although the opportunity exists, such facilities aren't part of JGI's current plans for the reserve. This absence of lodging options remains a major constraint for tourism in the reserve.

### Chimpanzee Safety

JGI's driving mission in the reserve is the rescue, rehabilitation, and protection of chimpanzees. Ensuring the health and safety of the chimpanzees, particularly regarding human interaction, is paramount to JGI. Many chimpanzees in the TCRC suffer injuries or trauma and are housed in areas unsuitable for tourist exposure. JGI is also hesitant to bring visitors to the main sanctuary site, as it is both the main working site for the organization, and also sees a heightened risk of human-to-chimp disease transmission (particularly so during the COVID-19 pandemic). Ensuring chimpanzee safety and security remains a significant constraint to tourism development in this reserve and tourism should not be prioritized over animal safety. Any nature-based tourism initiatives must align fully with JGI's mission, prioritizing chimpanzee safety and security in all tourism planning efforts.



# Site Analysis:

## Tchimpounga Nature Reserve, ROC

### Recommendations & Considerations

#### Lower Cost & Short-Term Actions:

**\*\*Tourism planning for the reserve to create a roadmap for where and how tourism can be developed, the projected benefit sharing mechanisms, along with skill development and the structures, systems and standard operating procedures to effectively manage tourism in the reserve. The tourism plan will also explore the possibilities for an accommodation partnership for JGI to consider.**

Scale and enhance the current tourism activities offered by JGI, to refine existing activities and add additional services where appropriate. This would include training for staff and those involved in the activities, equipment, etc. The activity would also look at how to reduce JGI staff obligations in running these activities (through partnerships and possible community involvement), while retaining oversight of tourism in the landscape.

Develop and implement a marketing campaign to improve awareness in the regional market about the reserve and how to visit. This may include:

- A content and storytelling component to build on existing content and gather engaging images, videos and text about the reserve and visitor activities,
- Establish a website and social media channels
- A social media campaign to promote the site
- Familiarization trips for regional tour operators and media influencers.

#### Higher Cost & Medium-Term Actions:

**\*\*If JGI agree to explore the potential for lodging, develop a concession prospectus, describing the opportunity and establish concession structures and procedures. Utilize this information to engage with potential investors, which could be a combination of donors (with their capital providing the equity stake for JGI/community) and private investors.**

Road maintenance and improvement from Pointe-Noire to the reserve

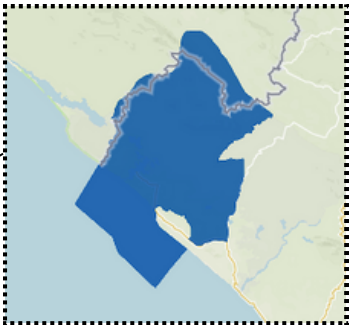
Expansion of tourism activities, within the reserve and with the community to further leverage visitation to maximize benefits for communities and the reserve. These may include activities such as community dance and crafts, forest/birding walks, wellness retreats, boat cruises, etc.

# Destination Snapshot:

## Conkouati-Douli National Park, ROC

### Quick Facts:

- 504,905 Hectares (121,600 marine ecosystem)
- Congolese forest-savanna mosaic, coastal forests, and Gulf of Guinea marine ecosystem
- IUCN Category 2 - ‘National Park’
- Park Entry Fee: Unknown
- One of the world’s most important nesting sites for leatherback turtles.



### Seasonality

- Best time to visit: June-September
- Turtle observation: October-March
- Whale watching: June-September

There is no TripAdvisor page for this site

### Accommodations & Facilities

3 existing lodges within park boundaries:

Tourism Lodge, operated by the NGO ‘HELP Congo’	Ageduren Ecolodge ~5kn from Park HQ	Manatee Lodge, Private ownership.
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Capacity: ~20 visitors Nightly rate: ~160 USD, includes all meals and 3 activities.	Capacity: 7 rooms and bathroom facilities in separate building. Rate: ~20 USD daily per person, includes activities and food.
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Largely used for  
personal use and  
private rentals.

Two additional lodges exist in the park’s buffer zone.

**Park HQ:** Overlooks Conkouati lagoon,  
built originally by the IUCN.

Noe reports plans to renovate and expand park  
infrastructure and facilities within the next 5 years.

### Current & Potential Natural Tourism Assets:

#### Geographic Features:

Forest mosaic, lagoons, and beaches.  
**Congo’s only marine-protected area.**

Notable ‘Conkouati Lagoon,’ Noumbi  
River, and Atlantic coast beaches  
(35% of country’s coastline).

Shares Northern border with Gabon’s  
Mayumba NP - *tourism circuit potential.*

#### Wildlife:

Marine: Sea turtles, dolphins, whales,  
and manatees.

Forest: Gorillas, Chimpanzees, Forest  
Elephants, River Hogs, and Buffalo.

~300 bird species,

Designated **Important Bird Area**  
by BirdLife International.

### Human Capital

**Noé**, a French conservation NGO  
signed a management agreement with  
the Congolese Government in 2021  
for a 25-year period.

Noé’s vision for the park is “to be a  
natural refuge for Central Africa’s  
emblematic wildlife, as well as **Congo’s  
number one tourism destination**,  
benefiting local communities and  
climate change mitigation.

Noé reports ~20 villages within  
the park’s ecodevelopment  
zone. These communities are  
recognized as important  
partners of the park.

Noé has worked hard so far  
in community engagement  
through regular visits and  
conversations with village  
leaders.

Transportation Infrastructure	Poor
Park Headquarters	Onsite
Availability of Accommodations	Serviced
Accommodation Product Variation	Medium
Visitor Activities	Special Request
Activity Product Variation	Medium

None Basic Limited **Diverse**

**Site Destination Maturity**  
Relative to the Congo Basin Market

### Accessibility:

Int’l Air	<b>Agostinho-Neto Int’l Airport (Pointe Noire)</b> Approx. 180km from park
Domestic Air	Domestic air transport is largely impractical, as the Pointe Noire International Airport appears to be the closest airport to the park.
Ground	<b>From Pointe Noire:</b> Total journey time approx. 6 hours  Mixture of tarred (first half) and dirt roads (last half). The dirt roads are reportedly waterlogged often, and require 4WD vehicles to pass,
	Access to buffer-zone lodges: Single-track road through Park HQ to reach the coast, where both lodges are situated.
Within Park	There are a few roads within park boundaries. Otherwise, all activities require walking or boating.

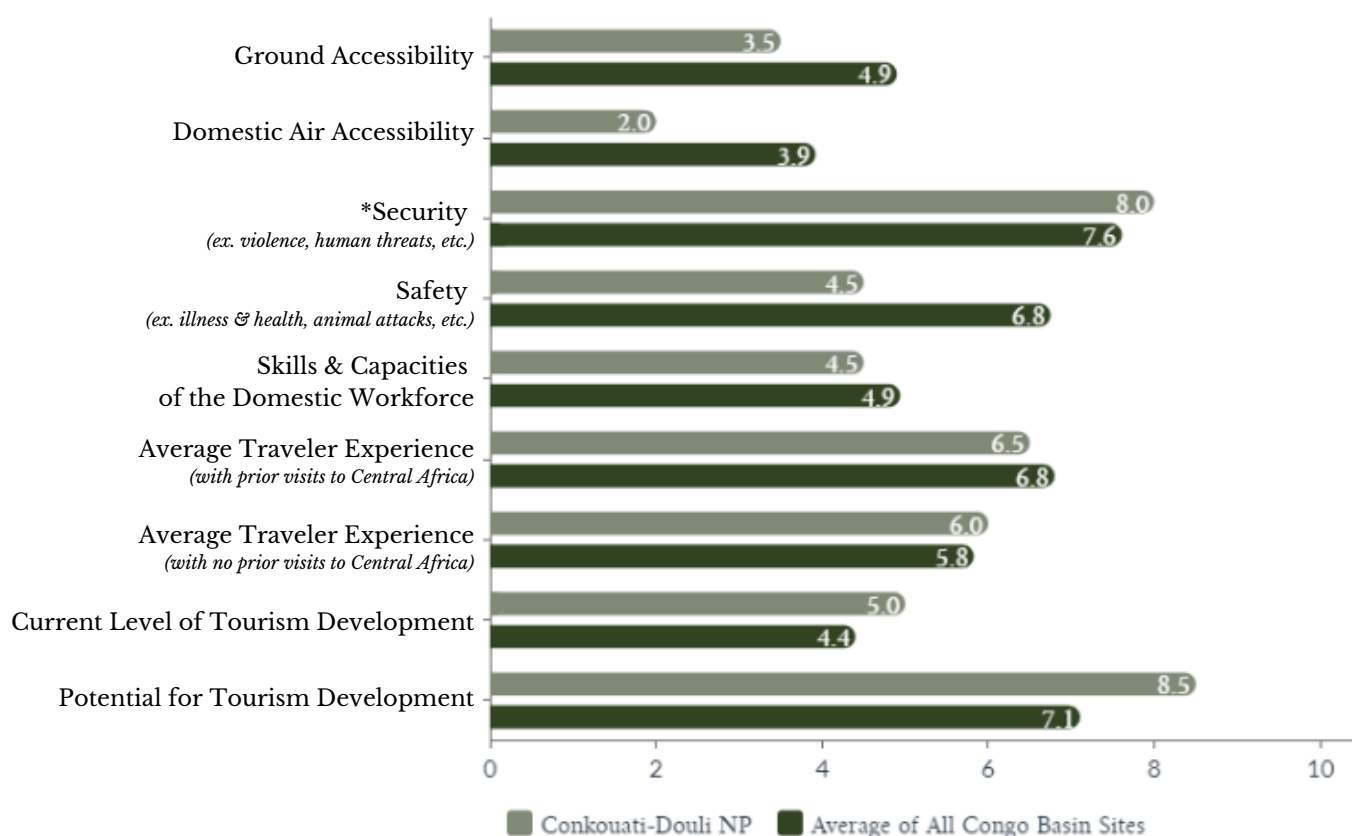
# Destination Scorecard: **Conkouati-Douli National Park, ROC**

Stakeholders with firsthand knowledge of the park were asked to rank different aspects of tourism in and around the landscape.

Ranking is based on a 1-10 scale:

'1' represents relative weakness in the field and '10' represents strength in the field.

## Conkouati-Douli National Park Tourism Assessment Survey Results



### Key Takeaways:

- This park is considered less safe than the regional average, signaling a need for investment in on-site or nearby medical facilities and resources.
- Despite the low levels of current tourism development, there is good potential for future expansion and development.
- Ground and Air accessibility to this site are considered much lower compared to the regional averages.

### Additional Insights from Survey:

- There is formal interest from tourism investors and opportunities for expanded tourism in and around Conkouati-Douli National Park.
- Tourism circuit opportunities & site linkages, as suggested by expert stakeholders:
  - Odzala-Kokoua National Park
  - Tchimpounga Nature Reserve
  - Loango National Park
  - Lesio-Louna Wildlife Reserve

Responses collected via Qualtrics surveys, from October 2023 - March 2024

*\*For additional information on security, see site analysis below.*

# Site Analysis: --- --- Conkouati-Douli National Park, ROC

## Overview

Conkouati-Douli National Park (CDNP) is located in the southwestern part of the Republic of Congo (RoC). It lies along the country's Atlantic coast, and includes approximately 30 kms of coastline. The whole park covers 504,905 Hectares, with 121,600 consisting of marine ecosystems off the coast [1].

The park is set to expand its marine ecosystems by an additional 290,000 hectares pending the finalization and approval of a draft decree adopted by the Congolese government in October 2023 [2]. The park also includes a 5-kilometer buffer zone along its southeast border [3] and shares its northern border with Gabon's Mayumba National Park, forming the Mayumba-Conkouati Transfrontier Park [4].

CDNP is categorized as a marine reserve, the only one of its kind in RoC. It is also recognized as a Ramsar site (*'wetland of international importance'*) [5] for its biodiversity and unique ecological processes. The park's landscape is remarkably diverse, featuring beaches, coastal forests, mangroves, lagoons, and lakes, as well as the Congo Basin's famous forest-savanna mosaic & rainforests in the northern sector of the park [6]. Some of the most popular draws to the landscape, include the Conkouati Lagoon, undisturbed beachfront, and lush rainforests.

CDNP stands as the most biodiverse protected area in RoC [7], harboring an estimated 7,000 chimpanzees, 900 western lowland gorillas, and 900 forest elephants. Along the coast, it hosts nesting for 400 leatherback turtles, 300 Atlantic humpback dolphins, and 125 bottlenose dolphins [8]. CDNP's beaches are globally significant for sea turtle nesting [9], providing sanctuary to Green, Hawksbill, Loggerhead, Olive Ridley, and Leatherback species [10]. Moreover, its wetlands, lagoons, and mangrove forests are habitats for manatees, hippos, and migratory birds.

While CDNP is not subject to any specific travel advisories, the U.S. Department of State has issued a *'Level 2: Exercise Increased Caution'* travel advisory for the Republic of Congo as a whole (a similar level to France and the UK) [11]. CDNP is considered a stable and secure area.

[1]<https://parcsdenoe.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/pl-congo-uk.pdf>

[2]<https://www.afrik21.africa/en/congo-conkouati-douli-park-gets-2900-km2-marine-extension/>

[3][https://africanelephantdatabase.org/system/population\\_submission\\_attachments/files/000/000/400/original/svyFCCGCON2013DC.pdf](https://africanelephantdatabase.org/system/population_submission_attachments/files/000/000/400/original/svyFCCGCON2013DC.pdf)

[4][https://wcscongloblog.org/portfolio\\_page/conkouati-douli-national-park/](https://wcscongloblog.org/portfolio_page/conkouati-douli-national-park/)

[5]<https://rsis.ramsar.org/ris/1741>

[6]<https://parcsdenoe.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/pl-congo-uk.pdf>

[7][https://africanelephantdatabase.org/system/population\\_submission\\_attachments/files/000/000/400/original/svyFCCGCON2013DC.pdf](https://africanelephantdatabase.org/system/population_submission_attachments/files/000/000/400/original/svyFCCGCON2013DC.pdf)

[8]<https://parcsdenoe.org/en/parcs-congo/>

[9][https://renatura.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Activity\\_Report\\_Sea\\_Turtle\\_Nesting\\_R%C3%A9natura\\_2017\\_2018.pdf](https://renatura.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Activity_Report_Sea_Turtle_Nesting_R%C3%A9natura_2017_2018.pdf)

[10]<https://wcscongloblog.org/conkouati-doulis-turtle-guardians/>

[11]<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/republic-of-the-congo-travel-advisory.html>



# Site Analysis: Conkouati-Douli National Park, ROC



## Nature-Based Tourism Development Opportunities

Initially established as a Faunal Reserve, CDNP gained National Park status in 1999 and is currently under consideration for UNESCO World Heritage designation. Supported by IUCN from 1993-1999, followed by the Wildlife Conservation Society until 2018, the park entered a 20-year management agreement with the French nature conservation NGO Noé in 2021. The agreement entrusts full management responsibilities to the NGO. The park's 2022 brochure highlights its commitment to sustainability across three key areas: economy, environment, and society, with a special focus on maximizing tourism opportunities [12].

Compared to other parks in the country, CDNP is relatively well off for accommodations, with a host of lodges in the park and buffer zone operated by different entities, including:

- HELP Congo's tourism lodge, associated with their chimpanzee rehabilitation program, accommodating approximately 300 guests in 2022.
- Ageduren Ec lodge, managed by a local NGO Agduren, who are supporting conservation efforts and community engagement.
- Lodge les Lamantins, privately owned and situated by the lagoon, available for rental.
- Kunda Eco-Lodge, situated in the CDNP buffer zone on the beach, offering a nature-immersive experience, but currently without onsite dining services.
- Noubi Resort, located directly on the beach in the buffer zone, with a focus on surfing, currently non-operational.
- Conkouati Lodge, originally developed by WCS as the Park HQ, currently non-operational and requiring renovation.
- Mvandji Community Ec lodge, currently inactive but potentially operational in the future.

Currently the Noé park management team are exploring opportunities related to building accommodations, investing in infrastructure, water-based tourism activities, and community-based tourism experiences [12]. In addition to on-the-ground plans by park management, an Ecotourism Management Plan was recently completed for CDNP (2023) and provides extensive recommendations for the development of tourism in and around the park, in addition to an inventory and analysis of tourism related to the park.



[12]<https://parcsdenoe.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/pl-congo-uk.pdf>



# Site Analysis: Conkouati-Douli National Park, ROC



## Nature-Based Tourism Development Opportunities, *continued*

The Ecotourism Management Plan recommendations can be summarized into four objectives:

1. Enhance the Visitor Experience by Developing Visitor Services and Infrastructure
2. Increase Community Benefits by Developing Community Conservancies and Community-based Products and Services
3. Create Market Linkages by Strengthening the Capacities of Tour Operators in ROC
4. Increase Destination Awareness, Demand, and Visitation by Establishing a Destination Management Social Enterprise (DMSE)

As these recommendations are fleshed out in detail in the Ecotourism Management Plan, the analysis and recommendations within this document focus on a smaller number of priority areas of focus for tourism development in and around the park. In the short to medium-term this may include strengthening and professionalizing the accommodation facilities in the landscape, diversification of tourism experiences and marketing/storytelling to attract visitors.

The park's unique landscape and biodiversity offer a major opportunity for tourism development, particularly focusing on its marine attractions. These marine assets provide a distinct experience in the country that could ultimately be combined through circuits with other parks. Along the coastline, wildlife viewing, including whale-watching and sea turtle nesting, are significant opportunities. Sports fishing and boating activities along the lakes and rivers present another opportunity, with kayaking already offered on a small scale. The park's migratory birds and unique marine species also make it attractive for birding tours. Continuing to develop these attractions and visitor services aligns with the EMP strategic objective #1 and should be seen as the next most relevant opportunity.



# Site Analysis: Conkouati-Douli National Park, ROC

## Enabling Environment Constraints

### Accessibility

Accessibility poses one of the most significant constraints to tourism development in CDNP. Situated 180 kilometers from Pointe Noire, travelers primarily rely on driving from Pointe Noire, a journey averaging 5-6 hours, subject to road conditions, traffic, and weather. The road consists of tarred roads initially, transitioning to challenging dirt roads, often waterlogged, necessitating 4WD vehicles. Presently, the absence of an airstrip limits private charters as an alternative, however, Noé has reportedly identified a site for development of a grass airstrip not far from park HQ. An airstrip would be needed if circuit tourism is ultimately developed, connecting with parks in the interior of the country.



### Infrastructure & Tourist Services

Another constraint to tourism development in CDNP is the lack of tourism-related infrastructure and services for visitors. The park suffers from a scarcity of roadways and boats for transportation within the park, as well as a limited range of tourist services and activities. Currently, most visitors are expats from Pointe Noire, making weekend trips feasible. To attract a broader international market and compete with more established Central African national parks, CDNP needs to invest in building its tourist infrastructure and services.

### Awareness & Promotion

CDNP currently lacks visibility and promotion in the international tourism market, making it one of the lesser-known destinations in Central Africa. Despite its diverse offerings, including strong populations of emblematic species and availability of accommodation options, CDNP struggles to compete with other parks in the region, such as Loango, Sette Cama, and Pongara in Gabon, which benefit from stronger marketing efforts. The absence of online promotion, including a Tripadvisor page or independent tourism website, further hinders CDNP's visibility. Without increased awareness and promotion, CDNP is likely to remain under-visited and experience limited growth in its nature-based tourism sector.

Despite the obstacles, the park holds a solid tourism foundation, both in its natural assets as well as with Noé overseeing management and their tourism goals both within and around the park. Additionally, the presence of other partners with established facilities and activities contributes to this foundation.



# Site Analysis:

## Conkouati-Douli National Park, ROC

### Recommendations & Considerations

#### Lower Cost & Short-Term Actions:

*The recommendations below are guided by the 2023 Ecotourism Management Plan, which has extensive recommendations for the park and surrounding landscape. The recommendations below are intended to suggest a smaller number of initial steps and priority actions for the park that can build on current momentum.*

**\*\*Developing an infrastructure and services improvement strategy along with local partners with a focus on infrastructure and facilities that are viable within available budgets, such as walking trails, viewing stations, signage, etc. This should also include planning to enhance accommodation facilities in the landscape. In parallel, focus on human capital and skills, designing tourism training programs for park and NGO staff as well as community members. This would center around practical skills to manage tourism in the area, hospitality, guiding and other knowledge to effectively engage with visitors. The strategy would define and cost specific actions, creating materials that can be used to raise funds for each specific action.**

**\*\*Strengthening and diversifying the tourism experiences/activities. Based on the strategy outlined above, implement the development of tourism products, including infrastructure such as hiking trails. Training should also be designed and implemented. This could employ open source tourism training materials, such as that offered in Uganda at Ukarimu Academy (<https://ukarimuacademy.org/downloads/>), and implemented by a local partner. These efforts would create a critical mass of high quality tourism experiences in the destination.**

To boost awareness of the park, a strategic approach to marketing and storytelling is essential, initially targeting domestic and expat markets. Engaging with tour operators in Pointe Noire and potentially Brazzaville is crucial. Discussions with these businesses should focus on understanding their needs and preferences regarding tourism opportunities. These conversations would help to guide efforts to align with market demands. Organizing familiarization trips to the park for tour operators and local influencers/media and assisting in developing attractive itineraries can further bolster interest.

This would be followed by collaborative marketing initiatives with tour operators and influencers/media in Pointe Noire and Brazzaville. Leveraging local media channels to showcase the park's unique experiences and offering incentives such as free trips for a winning listener/viewer, can also stimulate interest and promote visitation to the region.



# Site Analysis:

## Conkouati-Douli National Park, ROC

### Recommendations & Considerations

#### Higher Cost & Medium-Term Actions:

*The recommendations below are guided by the 2023 Ecotourism Management Plan, which has extensive recommendations for the park and surrounding landscape. The recommendations below are intended to suggest a smaller number of initial steps and priority actions for the park that can build on current momentum.*

**\*\*Establish a challenge grant program, accompanied by technical assistance, to incentivise investment in accommodations in the region. The focus would be on upgrading existing facilities and/or to attract new investments into the region. The technical assistance would include help with market analysis and planning for upgrades/development as well as support to engage and attract investors and structure investments so that they support conservation and community efforts in the landscape.**

As private investment funds are scarce and hard to attract, the grants would help to 'buy down' the risk for investors. Long-term expats and higher-net-worth Congolese residents would likely be the 'easiest' investment capital to attract. With this segment, rather than seeking one large investor, fractional ownership models may be appropriate, where investors can buy into a portion of the company in exchange for an allocated number of nights per year at the facility, as well as potential investment returns from their investment. This way each investment is more manageable for investors, there are benefits beyond investment returns (a holiday retreat), risk is more diversified and the investors themselves can act as ambassadors to promote the facility with their networks. Corporate investment (such as oil and gas companies) at this scale may also be possible, where they can provide 'incentives' trips for their employees through fractional ownership in an accommodation facility.

SAVE Tourism - design tourism experiences alongside NGO's currently working in the landscape ranging from 1-week to possibly a month that support existing efforts of NGO's in the landscape. For example, HELP Congo chimp activities or Renatura's Sea turtle conservation activities, rather than any new research or stand-alone efforts that have to be created. The key to success with this type of tourism is a strong local partner that can integrate paying educational travelers into their current activities to provide an immersive experience that is educational to the visitor and financially beneficial for the host.

It is important to ensure the work is useful, but also be realistic that volunteer and educational travelers will not provide significant help to the research, conservation and community efforts. Programs should therefore be designed as immersive and educational tourism experiences that ultimately contribute primarily to the financial sustainability of the conservation efforts (through the fees the visitors pay), more than having a significant conservation or social benefit.

# Site Analysis:

## Conkouati-Douli National Park, ROC

### Recommendations & Considerations

#### Higher Cost & Medium-Term Actions:

*The recommendations below are guided by the 2023 Ecotourism Management Plan, which has extensive recommendations for the park and surrounding landscape. The recommendations below are intended to suggest a smaller number of initial steps and priority actions for the park that can build on current momentum.*

Work with government and local partners to assess ways to improve access to the park from Pointe Noire. This would focus on two aspects:

- Sea transportation routes (an avenue currently being explored by Noe), which would require investment in a seaworthy boat to transport visitors, staff and community members between Pointe Noire and the park. This could also offer a significant benefit for the community to more easily access the city for trade, etc. as well as possibly include a stop at Tchimpounga Nature Reserve, establishing opportunities for tourism circuits.
- The other option may be to improve the 180km road that provides access to the park, however this would likely be a more expensive option. Such an investment would provide benefits to the communities that are along the road as well as the park itself.

A strategic plan and estimated budget for implementation would be developed alongside government and local partners that could be used to raise funds for the most viable option. This would help solve a significant constraint to tourism in and around the park.