



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Cameroon

Table of Contents:

Country Snapshot

Country Analysis

Five Priority Site Packets

Campo Ma'an National Park

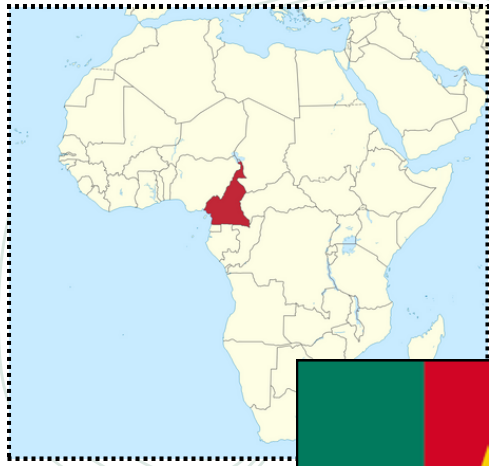
Mount Cameroon National Park

North Province Landscape

Dja Faunal Reserve

Lobeke National Park

USAID FABS
Congo Basin Nature-Based Tourism Assessment



Destination Snapshot:

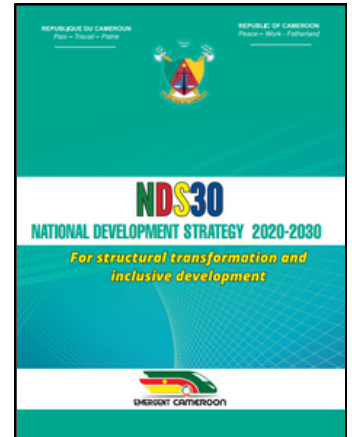
Target Country **Cameroon**

National Tourism Strategies & Policy

- As of 2023, Cameroon does not have a standalone tourism policy.

However, tourism strategies are discussed within the framework of broader development policies, like the **Cameroonian National Development Strategy (2020-2030)**, published by the Ministry of Economy, Planning, and Regional Development, facilitated by the UNDP.

(pictured right)



In this document, the tourism industry is identified as one of the major pillars involved in the “structural transformation of [Cameroon’s] economy.”

Specific goals include:

- Defining & organizing investment priorities for 2-3 flagship tourism products
- Providing incentives for Public-Private Partnerships
- Structuring of actors and stakeholders in tourism
- Develop education related to tourism culture

Tourism Visa Information

E-Visa: ✓

Yes, but only if arriving at an international airport (not via a land crossing, although there is a plan to change this in the future)

Tourist Visa Cost:

- US Citizens: \$181 short stay visa (<6 months)
- UK Citizens: \$200 short stay visa (<6 months)
- EU Citizens: \$166 short stay visa (<6 months)

Supplementary Requirements:

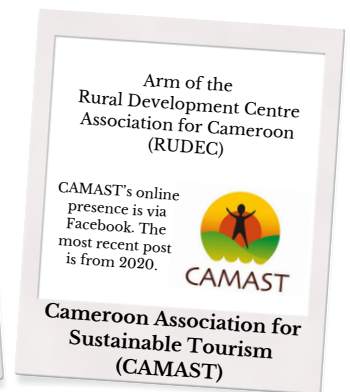
- Letter of invitation
- Booked return flight (with proof)
- Booked accommodation (with proof)

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

Nuances of the visa process:

The visa application process can be tricky if the country of origin for the visitor does not have a Cameroon embassy (applicant needs to select the nearest embassy that covers their country, but this is not clear on the website)

National Tourism Associations



The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report, 2019

World Economic Forum

Overall Ranking: 128th of 140
Sub-Sahara Africa Ranking: 24th of 34

Tourism Policy & Enabling Conditions: 135th
 Infrastructure: 127th
 Natural & Cultural Resources: 78th
 Travel & Tourism prioritization: 133rd
 Safety & Security: 117th
 Environmental Sustainability: 51st
 Tourist Service Infrastructure: 127th

Inbound Arrivals:

1.02M (2019)

High: 1.08M (2017), Low: 150,000 (2020)

International Visitor Spending:
 \$670M USD (2019), \$640M USD (2022)

Domestic Visitor Spending:
 \$2.1B USD (2019), \$1.8B USD (2022)

Top Source Markets (2022):
 France (#1), Belgium, UK, USA, Germany

The UNWTO Tourism Dashboard & WTTC's Cameroon Country Report

Estimated

Travel & Tourism Jobs:
 930,000, 8.5% of country total (2019)
 870,000, 7.4% of country total (2022)

GDP Contribution:

\$3.4B USD/8.0% (2019)
 \$3.0B USD/6.6% (2022)

Destination Snapshot:

Target Country **Cameroon**

Online Presence

TripAdvisor

1,241 properties listed, high volume
7,300 hotel reviews

Product variation:
Budget: 51, MidRange: 94, Luxury: 12

242 'Things to Do' listed
14 tours linked for booking



Lonely Planet

24 'Must-See Sights'
1 linked activity for booking

3 National Parks listed:
Mefou, Campo-Ma'an, Waza



National Tourism Website: 'Destination Cameroon'

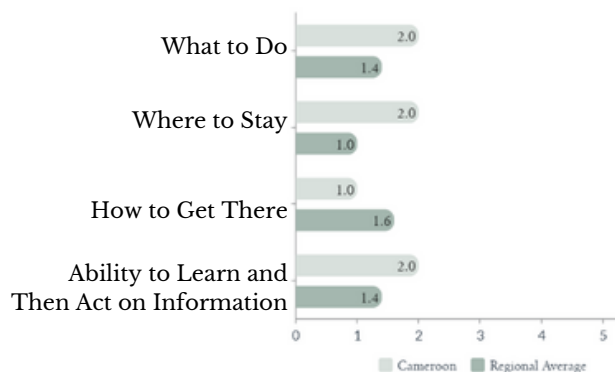
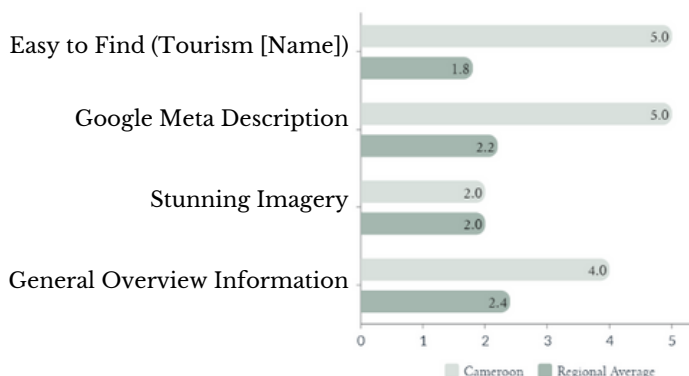
Site is easy to find but lacks the content for a visitor to easily act and book a trip.

Overall Score: 58%
Regional Average: 35%



www.tourisminformationcameroon.net

Tourism Website Ranking Criteria: 'Destination Cameroon'



Major International Hubs

Douala International Airport (DLA)

Located in: Douala, largest city & economic capital

Flight Volume: 19 direct destinations

Major routes:

- Brussels, Belgium
- Paris, France
- Casablanca, Morocco
- Istanbul, Turkiye
- Algiers, Algeria
- Cairo, Egypt
- Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
- Nairobi, Kenya
- Abuja, Nigeria
- Lagos, Nigeria

Non-major routes:

- Port Harcourt, Nigeria
- N'Djamena, Chad
- Lome, Togo
- Cotonou, Benin
- Kigali, Rwanda
- Bangui, CAR
- Brazzaville, Rep. of Congo
- Bata, Equatorial Guinea
- Libreville, Gabon

Yaoundé-Nsimalen International Airport (NSI)

Located in: Yaoundé, Cameroon's capital city

Flight volume: 9 direct destinations

Major routes:

- Paris, France
- Istanbul, Turkiye
- Casablanca, Morocco
- Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire
- Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
- Abuja, Nigeria

Non-major routes:

- Lome, Togo
- Libreville, Gabon
- Bangui, CAR



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

Mefou National Park



4.5/5 stars
138 Reviews

Lobeke National Park



5/5 stars
3 Reviews

Benoue National Park



4.5/5 stars
2 Reviews

Country Analysis: Cameroon

Overview

Cameroon has 54 total protected areas, covering 51,538 km². 10.98% of the country's landmass is designated as protected according to Protected Planet. This figure is even larger when considering the 45 government and 26 community-managed hunting areas (ZIC's). With 402 km of coastline, and an elevation of up to 4,000m at the peak of Mount Cameroon, the country offers a diversity of marine and varied terrestrial ecosystems.

In terms of publicly available raw numbers, Cameroon receives by far the highest number of international visitors compared to the other countries in the Congo Basin, with a 5-year average of almost 1-million visitors a year. This figure is impressive, but should also be taken in context as it includes all border crossings, including those for commercial trade, business, visiting friends & family as well as leisure tourism. The latter is likely a small portion of the total.

The country is known as 'Africa in miniature' due to its cultural and ecological diversity [2]. It is globally ranked #24 for biodiversity [1] and #20 for bird species diversity. Interestingly however Cameroon ranks #121 out of 180 countries regarding "actions toward retaining natural ecosystems and protecting the full range of biodiversity within their borders" [3]. Indicating the commitment to protect natural ecosystems (including parks) may be less focused in Cameroon than its neighbors, which all rank higher. According to stakeholders interviewed for this study, in recent years the pressures on the country's natural resources have been more significant, especially from extractive industries such as logging, mining and large scale farming, as well as poaching. Limited community involvement in conservation efforts has also contributed to the issue.

[1] [The Swiftest Biodiversity index](#)

[2] Data from BirdLife International. summarized at MongaBay.com <https://rainforests.mongabay.com/03birds.htm>

[3] <https://epi.yale.edu/epi-results/2022/component/bdh>

Country Analysis: Cameroon

Nature-Based Tourism

Interviews with stakeholders with in-depth knowledge of the country provided a consistent theme that there was great potential for tourism, but a need for greater focus on, and support for, the sector. According to the Ministry of Tourism and Leisure (MINTOUL), they have an institutional focus on ecotourism as their model through which tourism will be developed in the country. They have outlined a desired project called “Programme for the Promotion of Tourism, Resilience and Sustainable Development in Cameroon's Forest Communes (PTRDD-CFC)” with the objective to promote the development of sustainable tourism and ecotourism with the active participation of municipalities and local and indigenous communities in and around forest landscapes (Dja Faunal Reserves, LOBEKE National Park and the Campo MA'An National Park are included in the project outline). Funding for these activities is currently being sought. The 2020-2030 National Development Strategy also includes references to tourism.

Although it is only a part of the toolkit to protect natural ecosystems and biodiversity, the government's focus, if implemented, would help to ensure tourism supports conservation and communities in areas of high biodiversity in the country. Progress so far has been slow with no stand alone tourism policy for the country and no specific tourism/ecotourism strategy. Without these guiding documents and the capacity within government to put them in action it will be a challenge to realize significant movement in the tourism sector within Cameroon. There is a need to strengthen the political will to support tourism and conservation in the country, which would help to create momentum around the sectors.

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

- Campo MA'An National Park
- Dja Faunal Reserves
- LOBEKE National Park
- Mount Cameroon National Park
- North Province Landscape (Faro-Bénoué-Bouba Ndjida and surrounding hunting blocks)

Some protected landscapes were recognized in the screening process, but ultimately not prioritized. Nki National Park was not prioritized based on information received from stakeholders, indicating that it would be quite difficult to develop tourism here in the short or medium-term. Kom National Park was not prioritized, as it is a proposed national park, unlikely to practically accommodate guests or tourism development until its full establishment as a park. However, because of its location along the southern border of the country as well as its proximity to other parks in the southern belt (Dja, Campo-Ma'an, Mengine, & Ngyola), this park may warrant additional analysis in the future. Mbam Djerem National Park has also been mentioned as having potential, although still at a very early stage. Korup National Park was removed because of security concerns mentioned by local operators, as well as NGOs working in the region. Team members were advised against visiting this park for research, indicating difficulty for potential tourists as well.

Country Analysis: Cameroon

Enabling Environment

Infrastructure, Access, & Services

There are two international airports in the country, with Douala on the coast receiving direct international flights from 19 destinations and Yaounde receiving international flights from 9 destinations. Flights to Cameroon are also relatively more cost competitive than regional peers making it a little cheaper to fly to than other locations.

With more flights to the coast, opportunities may be greater for parks that could form a circuit in this region (Campo MA'An and Mount Cameroon National Parks). Regionally Cameroon airports are connected to Gabon, Republic of Congo and the Central African Republic that could also offer cross border travel and tourism circuit potential.

There are also a number of connections with cities in Nigeria, a potential source market for tourism given the size of its middle class (approximately 50 million people). A World Bank study that looked at the Nigerian travel market, estimated that there are over four million people living in the Lagos region with over US\$5,000 in purchasing power and an interest in travel outside of Nigeria [4].

Regularly scheduled domestic flights are available to nearby access hubs for Campo MA'An (Kribi), Mount Cameroon (Douala) and the North Province Landscape (Garoua). Charter flights are also possible to these locations and near to Dja, but not Lobeke. All still require an element of road transport to get into the park.

Although relatively well connected to international airport hubs, the road conditions within Cameroon are generally considered to be poor. Only 6.6% of all roads are paved and road coverage compared to the country's landmass is average for the region. The government has a focus on improving the road infrastructure in the country, but moving around in-country by road will likely remain a challenge for the short and medium term. This means that connecting parks through purely driving circuits is a challenge and air with elements of road connections is likely the most viable way to package tourism circuits in the country in the short/medium term. There is also a lack of accommodation in or near key protected areas to stimulate more cohesive tourism circuits.

Country Analysis: Cameroon

Enabling Environment

Enablers

Cameroon is said, by some working in the country, to have a relatively friendly business environment and it is 'relatively easy' to open a business compared to regional peers. This is however relative and Cameroon ranks 167 out of 190 countries globally and 34 in Africa measured for overall 'ease of doing business.' Although low, this is the best ranking of the five Congo Basin countries surveyed. Breaking the ranking down further, Cameroon ranks 17 in Africa for opening a business (a much better ranking than countries like Uganda and Tanzania, but not as good as Rwanda) and 13 for access to credit. It ranks low on factors such as taxes, trading across borders and registering property.

In 2010 the government formed the Cameroon Investment Promotion Agency (CIPA) that is designed to provide a 'one-stop-shop' for investment in the country. Although this resource is available, it appears to focus on larger investments, and therefore may be less applicable for smaller scale nature-based tourism investments. Tourism, media and leisure investments were 2% of its portfolio by 2020. The government does provide some business and tax incentives to investors (more information [here](#)). Cameroon has also improved the visa process relatively recently (e-visa) and although the process still requires a letter of invitation is said to be much improved.

Major conservation partners working in the landscape include WWF (with a focus on lowland gorilla conservation and habituation in Campo-Ma'an) and AWF (working on tourism, infrastructure and conservation management relating to Campo-Ma'an as well as some in Dja and Faro-Benoue parks). Both also work with the government at the national level. WCS is also working at the national level and more specifically in the North Province Landscape along with Conserve Global.

As a country and in/around the target protected areas, security is not a major issue. The US travel advisory for the country is level 2 (same as France and the UK), with some elevated security warnings for specific areas, including Mount Cameroon, but not the other target parks. The challenge Cameroon faces (along with peer countries) is more of an image one, with the country not well known within the international travel market and a general perception of insecurity for the broad area.

Stakeholder surveys relating to tourism in five key protected areas in the country indicated that workforce capacity and the skills needed to service tourism operations was a consistent challenge. The survey also suggested that the level of workforce capacity was lower relative to other Congo Basin countries, demonstrating the need for improved training for tourism workers to stay regionally competitive.

Country Analysis: Cameroon

Recommendations

Building on the nation's tourism slogan 'Africa in Miniature,' logical target circuits in the short and medium-term may focus on Campo MA'An for coastal and forest experiences, Mount Cameroon for highlands and the Northern Province Landscape for savanna/big game. Longer term, Dja has potential for its forest ecosystem and Baka pygmies as well as Lobeke when linked to Sangha Trinational conservation complex, although access to these last two is more challenging and therefore will take time to address.

Lower Cost & Short-Term Actions:

****Nature-based tourism plan for Cameroon with a specific focus on circuit development and the components needed to activate tourism circuits (accommodation, activities, transport, sales/marketing, etc.). Initial areas of focus may include Campo MA'An, Mount Cameroon and the Northern Province Landscape (Faro-Bénoué-Bouba Ndjida and surrounding hunting blocks), along with the communities in/around these locations and access hubs (towns). Further expansion could then focus on Dja, Lobeke and possibly Mbam Djerem and Kom.**

The planning process will engage with all key stakeholder groups in the country and foster meaningful dialogue relating to the future of the sector. The plan should explore opportunities for innovative tourism products in each landscape, including specialty activities such as sport fishing, hunting, etc.

Nature-based tourism economic impact study, possibly as a part of the above plan. This study would assess and project the potential economic impact for the country if nature-based tourism was developed 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

****Capacity and skill development for government staff, including MINTOUL and other relevant ministries to build a greater understanding of the nature-based tourism sector (and conservation work) in the country as well as its potential. Training would include introductory information about the sector and its potential, best practices, models from peer countries that can be replicated, etc. The goal is to build greater interest and action to support and grow the sector in Cameroon.**

****Critical Enabler**

Country Analysis: Cameroon

Recommendations

Lower Cost & Short-Term Actions: (continued)

Support the government, private sector, donors and civil society in the establishment of a 'Tourism Working Group,' that includes representatives from relevant stakeholder groups. This group would help to guide the proposed activities in this document as well as build greater collaboration and momentum among stakeholders. This may include collaborative actions on planning, marketing, training, visa and regulations, etc. One organization should be identified as the 'facilitator' and play this role for at least 3-years to consistently organize meetings, coordinate among representatives and share information with the broader network of tourism stakeholders in the country.

Micro-campaign focused on attracting expat travelers from Cameroon and neighboring countries to Douala for packaged trips to Mount Cameroon and/or Campo MA'An. The goal is to use the campaign to bring the tourism private sector, government and other stakeholders together to work on a specific tangible action and also to improve capacity within the country relating to current marketing techniques.

The program would focus on packaging each park (including promotional content), identify gaps and issues, work on short-term solutions to any issues and then implement a campaign to promote the packaged itineraries (developed by stakeholders). Through the process stakeholders would work together to test and refine the offer, develop workable itineraries to sell in the short-term and identify gaps for future investment. This would also build momentum in the sector through specific, visible actions.

Country Analysis: Cameroon

Recommendations

Higher Cost & Medium-Term Actions:

Support the MINTOL Programme for the Promotion of Tourism, Resilience and Sustainable Development in Cameroon's Forest Communes (PTRDD-CFC) and/or explore ways in which components of the program can be supported.

****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 incentivize 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 that are developed. This could be structured as a community bond (fixed annual payment), or stock ownership (split of revenues). 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 the parks. Therefore a complementary program to the above would focus on development of a 'critical mass' of at least 5 tourism activities in each target location. This would include identification of the activities (possibly through the Nature-based tourism plan), tourism product development and training (with a challenge element to attract entrepreneurial community members and innovation), small grants, marketing and sales materials, connection with local sales channels (tour operators and local accommodations) and packaging to connect the activities. This should be implemented in partnership with the tourism private sector, so tourism operators can help guide what they can sell and also learn best practices in developing tourism experiences for the future.

Regional marketing campaign, in partnership with the private sector and government, to attract regional tourism markets such as expats, the Nigerian middle class, etc. This would include development of marketing materials, packages/circuits and outreach to tour operators in target source markets to help them promote and sell tours to the country. This could later be expanded to broader international markets and specialty segments like sports fishing connected with Gabon or other such circuits, but should start more regionally as it will be an easier market to mobilize.

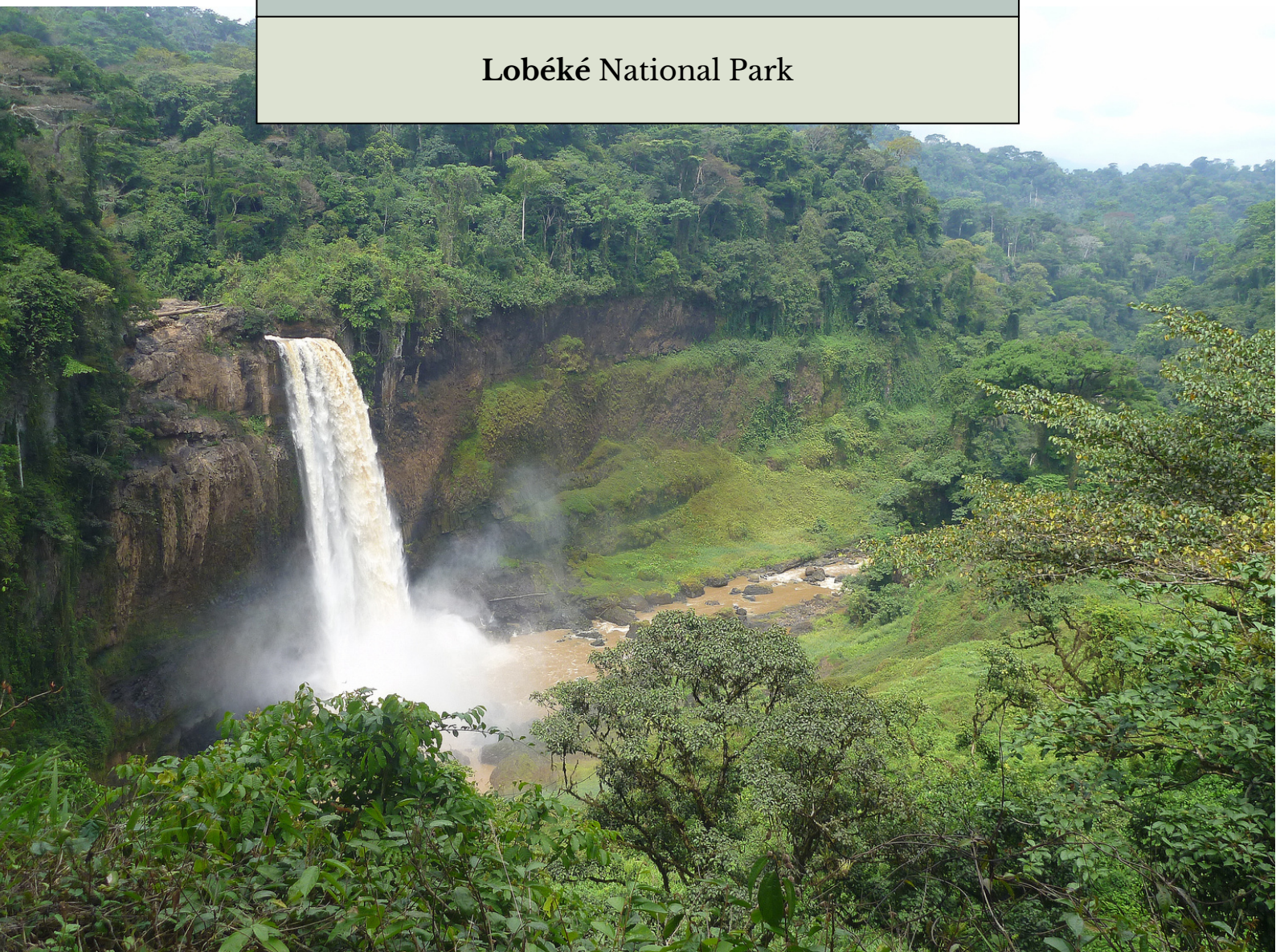
****Critical Enabler**



Cameroon: Priority Protected Areas

Destination Snapshots, Scorecards, Site Analyses, & Recommendations

Campo Ma'an National Park
Mount Cameroon National Park
North Province Landscape
Dja Faunal Reserve
Lobéké National Park



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)

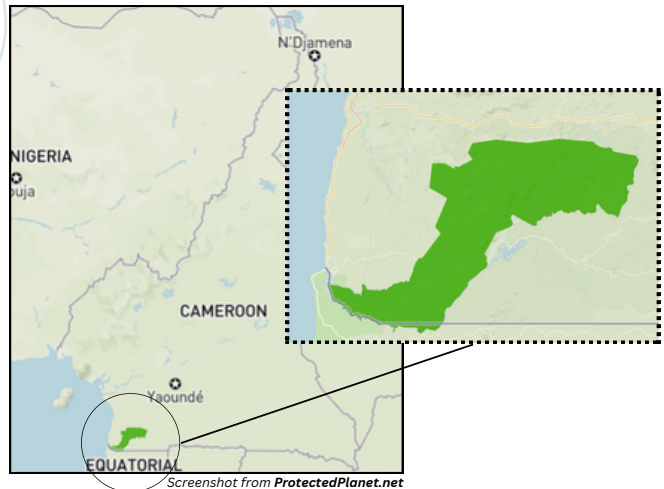
When relevant, also includes important wildlife seasons and/or the 'best' time to visit.

Destination Snapshot:

Campo Ma'an National Park, Cameroon

Quick Facts:

- 270,000 Hectares
- Largely Coastal Evergreen Rainforest
- IUCN Category 2 - 'National Park'
- Park Entry Fee: 5,000 CFA (foreigners)
- Gorilla Habituation: **Ongoing**
- Seasonality:
 - ☀ November to March, July to August
 - 💧 April to June, August to October



Accommodations & Facilities

Within the Park:

'Camp Couscous' is the park's main camp.
'Gorilla Habituation Camp' further into the forest.
Both are very basic.

- Platforms for tents along the Ntem River.
- Mobile camps for habituation groups moving throughout the forest.
- No formal facilities or infrastructure.

Outside the Park:

Basic accommodations in Campo
Variety of lodging options in Kribi

Accessibility:

Int'l Air	Douala Int'l Airport: 171 km to Kribi, 254 km to Campo	Yaoundé Int'l Airport 286 km to Kribi, 370 km to Campo
Domestic Air	Kribi Airport: Aerodrome built for light aircrafts	No airstrip within the park
Ground	Douala is approx. 6 hours' drive to Campo Yaoundé is approx. 10 hours' drive to Campo.	
	Best Route (historically): Leg 1: Kribi to Campo 80 km of "passable dirt road" and wooden plank bridges Leg 2: Campo to CMNP 45 km of rugged dirt road	Considered largely inaccessible for unfit or unprepared travelers. Road conditions dangerous & volatile in rainy season.
	As of October 2023, there is no direct road access into the park due to a broken bridge. The only access from Campo then is by boat, which has been true for at least 5 years.	
Water	20-25 minutes by motorboat from Campo Port to the park's landing point.	From the landing point, it is a 1.5km walk through rough paths in the forest to the main camp.
Within Park	All travel within the park is on foot, largely walking with guides. Occasional river boat usage on the Ntem & Campo rivers.	

Transportation Infrastructure **Fair**
Park Headquarters **Nearby**
Availability of Accommodations **Self-serviced**
Accommodation Product Variation **Low**
Visitor Activities **Special Request**
Activity Product Variation **Low**

None **Basic** Limited Diverse

Site Destination Maturity
Relative to the Congo Basin Market

Destination Snapshot:

Campo Ma'an National Park, Cameroon

Current & Potential Natural Tourism Assets:

Geographic Features:

Evergreen rainforest, Dipikar Island, Campo River, waterfalls, and the 'Tree Museum' (century-old tree).

Right outside park boundaries are the Campo and Ebodje beaches with marine turtles. **Significant because it is the only Cameroonian park featuring direct contact with the marine space of the Atlantic coast.**

Borders with Equatorial Guinea: *cross-border tourism circuit potential.*

Wildlife:

Forest elephants, Western Lowland Gorillas, Central Chimpanzees, Mandrills, Giant Pangolins, Duikers, and 300+ bird species (200 in park, 100 in buffer zones).

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



Google Maps (2023) Campo Ma'an National Park.



Photos taken by team on independent field visits, 2023



Google Reviews Rating: ★★★★★
44 Total Reviews

TripAdvisor Rating: ●●●○○
7 Total Reviews

Human Capital

WWF:

Supporting park governance, leading the gorilla habituation program

AWF:

Leading the tourism development workstream within the park

Welcoming local communities due nearby pilot ecotourism projects.

"An experience to be carried out with full knowledge of the facts, this will not necessarily be easy."

"Not worth the effort in rainy season"

"None of it impressive enough though to go through [the hassle]"



TripAdvisor Reviews
2018 – 2022

"The proximity of the [park] to beautiful beaches makes for an enticing combination"

"The park is neither suitable for mass nor for high-priced individual tourism - poor infrastructure, high costs, but little on offer, poor financial infrastructure..."

"You will see seaside, forest and experience sleeping in a wild but safe environment"

TripAdvisor Reviews
2014 – 2016

Destination Scorecard:

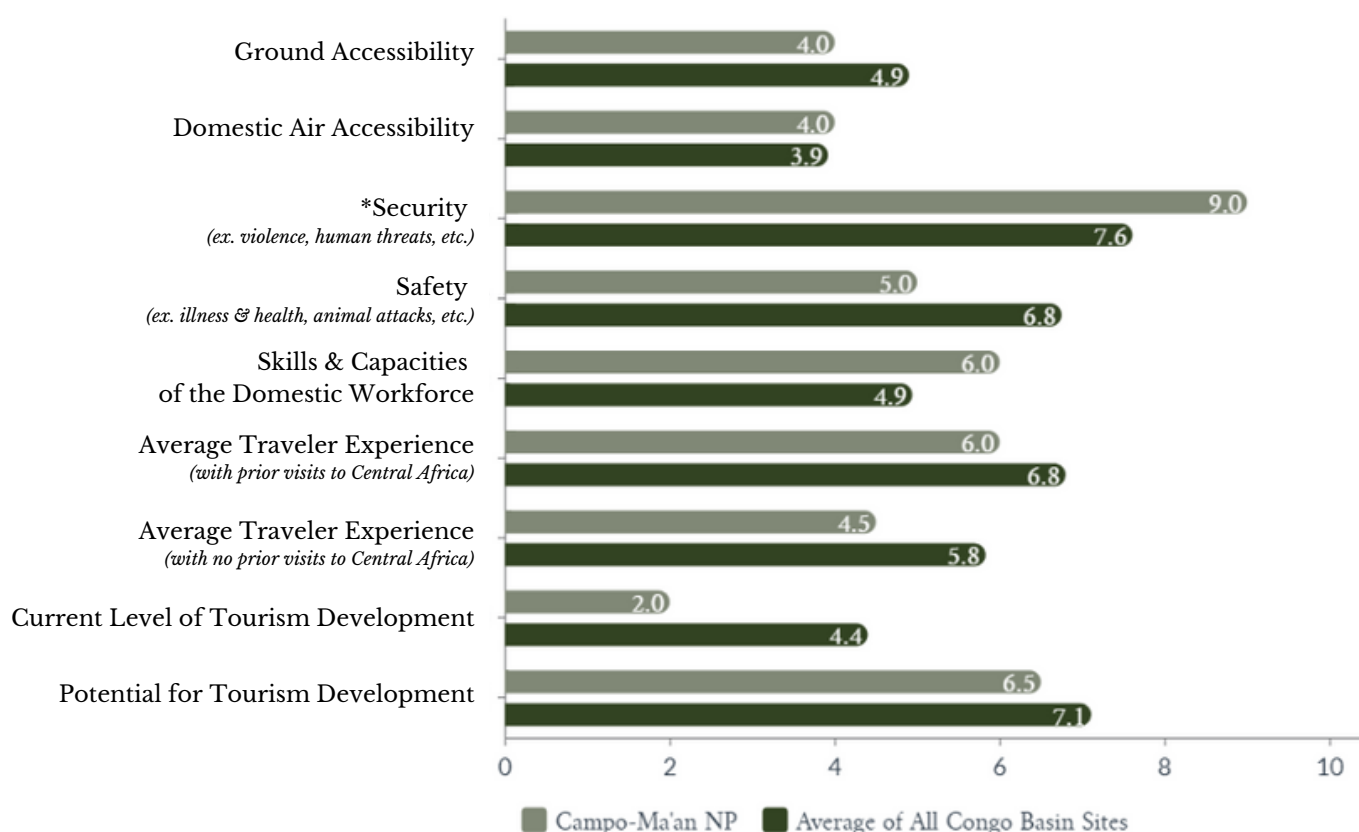
Campo Ma'an National Park, Cameroon

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

Ranking was based on a 1-10 scale:

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

Campo Ma'an National Park Tourism Assessment Survey Results



Key Takeaways:

- Campo Ma'an is considered more secure than other sites in the Congo Basin market.
- The average traveler experience in Campo Ma'an is seen as slightly weaker compared to other Congo Basin sites.
- The current level of tourism development is much weaker than other sites in the Congo Basin, with a strong potential for tourism development following appropriate investments and strong leadership.

Additional Insights from Survey:

- There is formal interest from tourism investors and opportunities for expanded tourism in Campo Ma'an National Park.
- Boats are, at present, the best way to access the site because a) *the road from Kribi is "not very practical,"* and b) *the bridge to Dipikar Island needs to be upgraded.*

Site Analysis:

Campo Ma'an National Park

Overview

Campo-Ma'an National Park (CMNP) is located in southwest Cameroon, bordering the Atlantic Ocean to the west and separated from Equatorial Guinea by the Campo River. The main park is roughly 270,000 Hectares and the peripheral zone, also known as the Campo-Ma'an Technical Unit, is another 500,000 Hectares [1].

CMNP's landscape is largely coastal evergreen rainforest, however, right outside of the park's boundaries are the Campo and Ebodje beaches. This makes Campo-Ma'an Cameroon's only National Park with direct connection to the marine environments of the Atlantic coast, a key selling point for offering a diverse tourism experience in the country.

Other key natural features include the Campo & Ntem Rivers and Dipikar Island estuary park, the site where WWF's ongoing gorilla habituation program is located [2]. Also found within CMNP, on Dipikar Island, is an area known as 'The Tree Museum,' which consists of an extremely large and old tree painted on by past generations using natural materials, a unique 'photo-op' site within the forest. As for wildlife, Campo-Ma'an has stable populations of western lowland gorillas, chimps, and forest elephants, as noted by WWF's 2014 wildlife census [3]. Other key wildlife species include giant pangolins, buffalo, panthers (black leopards), and mandrills [4].

While CMNP 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 Cameroon as a whole [5] (for comparison, France and the UK are in the same category). In and around CMNP there is a very low risk of crime or other security threats. The main concern for tourism development is remoteness and access to respond to any medical emergencies. Heavy rainfall on dirt roads and dense forests make access and evacuation difficult.

[1]<https://academicjournals.org/journal/IJBC/article-full-text-pdf/E49DDFE70124>

[2]https://files.worldwildlife.org/wwfcmsprod/files/Publication/file/3zjht4t4py_CBSL_IP_Cameroon_WWF_GEF_ProDoc_21_07_30_final.pdf

[3]https://www.panda.org/wwf_news/?325912/The-saving-of-Campo-Maan-National-Park

[4]<https://fedec.cm/en/le-parc-national-de-campo-maan/>

[5]<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/cameroon-travel-advisory.html>

Site Analysis:

Campo Ma'an National Park

Nature-Based Tourism Development Opportunities

Both the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) and World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) support CMNP. AWF is focused on supporting park management, community development and ecotourism [6], and has been working in Campo-Ma'an since 2019 while WWF is focused on gorilla habituation and a 'One Health' program in and around the Park landscape. CMNP is the only park in the country with habituated gorilla groups, including one fully habituated and another in the early stages. Presently there is no gorilla tourism offered.

Representatives from AWF note strong potential for ecotourism in CMNP. The close proximity and infrastructure developments in nearby Kribi (80 km from the park) have been quoted as "really helping" the potential for tourism in the park and Campo Village. AWF works closely with the Cameroonian Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF) in promoting ecotourism, as well as preparing formal strategies related to ecotourism in the park.

Another strong indicator of potential for ecotourism development in Campo-Ma'an is the recently signed agreement between MINFOF, the Tourism Ministry, and African Travel Management (ATM). ATM is a private tourism operator, who under the agreement signed in 2023, will be responsible for mobilizing resources for ecotourism. Specifically, ATM will be focused on developing touristic facilities, lodging, and activities in CMNP. Initially they are expected to tap into the domestic market, providing a 4 night/3 day trips from Douala linking up Douala-Edea National Park, Kribi, Campo Village and Campo Ma'an National Park.

Supporting and expanding the ATM efforts as well as the gorilla habituation and trail work being done on Dipikar Island are key near-term drivers for tourism development. There is also a significant opportunity to better link the Park with the nearby town of Kribi. Kribi is one of Cameroon's most popular tourist spots, with travelers drawn to the sandy beaches, handicrafts, water activities, etc. Because of its popularity, Kribi has a wide range of accommodation options and good infrastructure, including well-maintained asphalt roads to both Douala and Yaoundé. The World Bank notes that the potential to attract tourists from Kribi to CMNP is enormous [7]

Opportunities also exist for community-based tourism. In nearby Ebodje, the fishing village is undertaking ecotourism pilot projects, mainly related to sea turtles and other marine life. One local resident explains, "Sea turtle ecotourism has changed Ebodje" [8], where travelers come in relatively large numbers to see the turtles. The traveler profile of those coming to Ebodje beaches for ecotourism largely resemble the same types of travelers who would be interested in CMNP. Creating a link between coastal ecotourism products and CMNP's more forest-centric ecotourism products has a strong development opportunity for both groups of stakeholders.

Indeed, in addition to water sports in Campo Ma'an National Park such as kayaking and canoeing, ATM highlighted intentions to link experiences at Campo Ma'an with sea-based excursions in the recently-designated Manyange na Elombo Marine Park, such as whale and dolphin-watching (albeit limited to a short 2-month season every year). ATM also outlined an intention to develop visitor experiences with pygmies in Campo Ma'an, allowing different villages to share aspects of their culture such as traditional medicines and subsistence crafts.

Site Analysis:

Campo Ma'an National Park

Enabling Environment Constraints

Access

The most significant constraint to tourism development for CMNP is access. Historically, the best way into the park was first, from Kribi to Campo Village via passable dirt roads and wooden plank bridges, and then into the park by more rugged dirt road. However, these roadways deteriorate during the rainy season, and are still in dangerous and unreliable condition in dry seasons. Accessing the park by road is not viable for unfit or unprepared travelers, minimizing the reach of potential target markets. Furthermore, as of October 2023, a broken bridge along this route has prevented direct road access into CMNP. It is currently unknown when this bridge will be fixed. The option of a coastal ferry from Kribi to Campo has been discussed, however the navy base at Campo and the nearby border with Equatorial Guinea may prove to be sensitive to develop this as a regularly-used access route for tourists.

Accommodation & Infrastructure

Another constraint for tourism development in CMNP is the lack of accommodation infrastructure. Both camps within the park are very basic with no formal facilities or infrastructure. Though they are feasible accommodation options for the intrepid traveler, they are limited to only this segment of the market. These constraints have trickle-down effects where tour operators, who are key to growing tourism in the area, cannot facilitate travel to and around the park as easily as other protected areas and are therefore hesitant to promote the park until its an easier and more reliable tourism experience. ATM has outlined an intention to develop a lodge or cabins on Dipikar Island, but the scale and timeframe for this is not yet clear.

Investments in Community-Based Ecotourism

Campo village and port is currently the launch point for travel by boat into CMNP. It sees multiple ferries a day arriving from Equatorial Guinea and there is some small-scale subsistence fishing activity, along with small shops and basic accommodation. Other than this there is little economic activity. Investments aimed at developing alternative livelihood opportunities for locals around ecotourism in the village, for example crafts and music experiences would complement the key tourism product (wildlife) in the Park itself and provide revenue-generating opportunities for local people. This could also be packaged as a circuit with Ebodje to create a mixed community and wildlife, multi-activity experience

[6]<https://www.awf.org/pressroom/kfw-visits-campo-maan-landscape-cameroon>

[7]<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/364731468233038110/pdf/E23260REVISED01AFR1EA1P1129751Final.pdf>

[8]<https://mintoul.gov.cm/en/site/ebodje-ecotourism-site/>

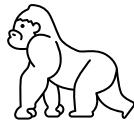
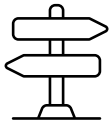
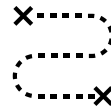
Site Analysis:

Campo Ma'an National Park

Recommendations & Considerations

Lower Cost & Short-Term Actions:

**Improved access from Kribi via water. Examine the feasibility of a coastal route from Kribi to Campo Village (estimated ~1.5 hours), including whether the government will allow this given the proximity to the border as well as the type of craft needed to safely provide the service.



Continued investment supporting the work being done on Dipikar Island: gorilla habituation according to best practices and establish structures, fees and guidelines for gorilla tourism.

In collaboration with African Travel Management, the private operator recently charged with mobilizing resources for ecotourism development, support development of 2-3 additional tourism experiences and accommodation to be offered in the park (to establish a critical mass of activities/services). Activities may include trails, other wildlife based activities, etc. This may also include support to identify other investors in tourism services and activities as well as the structures and systems to ensure these activities and investments generate revenues that support the park and local communities.



Develop marketing strategies and campaigns aimed specifically at attracting Kribi tourists to Campo Ma'an National Park.

Creation of a more formal tourism circuit between CMNP and Kribi (*including community and turtle activities in Ebodje and Campo*). Eventually also expand this to Mount Cameroon NP.



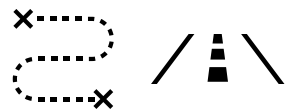
****Critical Enabler**

Site Analysis: **Campo Ma'an National Park**

Recommendations & Considerations

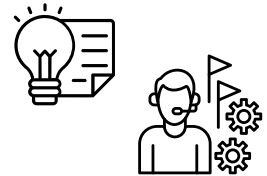
Higher Cost & Medium-Term Actions:

**Improved access from Kribi via road. The route can be impassable to vehicles other than 4WD and trucks in the wet season. The road also crosses over a dozen small rivers that discharge into the sea, with bridges in deteriorating condition and built to low standards (many with no guard rails) presenting a safety risk to travelers.



**Re-establish the alternative access route to the park from Yaounde, which is currently impassable due to a broken bridge. Rebuilding this bridge and ensuring access and maintenance is under the Park's remit or influence and would be needed to ensure its ongoing viability as an access point.

Travel trade outreach program to develop content (visuals, text and itineraries) to engage and excite national tour operators about the activities in the park along with support to help them package and sell to international travel trade that specialize in intrepid, authentic, and/or nature-based tourism.



Investments to increase access to Dipikar Island: rebuild the existing bridge or invest in higher quality boats as well as the trail network and site guides.

***Critical Enabler*

Destination Snapshot:

Mount Cameroon National Park, Cameroon

Quick Facts:

- 58,178 Hectares
- Mountain peak 4,095m (13,435 ft)
- Lowland rainforests, cloud forest, sub-alpine grassland, and the active volcano.
- IUCN Category 2 - 'National Park'
- Park Entry Fee: 5,000 CFA (for foreigners)
- Site of forest elephants & chimps

Seasonality:



November - March

Best time for climbing Mount Cameroon: Dec-Feb



April - October

Accommodations & Facilities

Two operational lodges in MCNP:

Mann's Spring Lodge: ("Hut/Camp #1")

Situated at 2,300m altitude along the savannah & forests' edge.

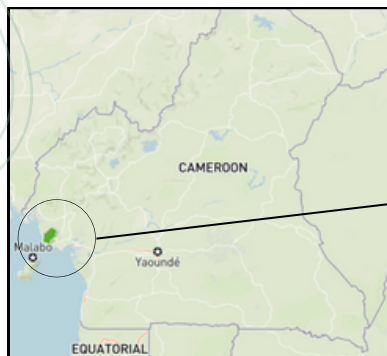
There are 6 cabins (2 in the savannah, 3 in the forest) as well as a restaurant & bar. The site is equipped with water & solar energy.

Fako Mountain Lodge: ("Hut/Camp #2")

Situated at 2,800m altitude on the main summit hiking trail.

There are 6 cabins alongside a restaurant & bar area. There are also 10 tent platforms available. Solar-powered facilities.

User reviews note that this accommodation is comfortable and relatively affordable.



Screenshot from ProtectedPlanet.net

Accessibility:

Int'l Air	Douala International Airport (Douala): ~1.5 hours from Buea (65km) and Limbe (75km)	
	Busses and taxis regularly make trips between the Douala Airport and Buea/Limbe.	
Domestic Air	Airstrip in park boundaries: Unknown	Tiko Domestic Airport: -18 km from Beau One runway, suitable for private charters. <i>June 2023: Announcement of new Tiko Airport site expansion & rehabilitation.</i>
Ground	Many tour guide itineraries note that they meet travelers in either Douala or Limbe, driving them then to Beau to begin the park tour.	From Beau to 'Upper Farms' (the traditional hiking trailhead, right outside of park boundaries): Tour operators drive travelers, ~20 mins.
Within Park	Currently, the park is only accessible on foot. Entering the park boundaries with a vehicle is not permitted. (Applicable after 'Upper Farms') There are plans to create a regulated shuttle service to the lodges in tandem with improved road accessibility projects.	
	Upper Farms trailhead to Hut #2: ~7.4km trek	From Hut #2 to Summit: ~4.5km trek
	Descent from peak to Mann's Spring Lodge: ~12km trek	Mann's Spring Lodge to Bokwoango Village: (common pick-up spot for Beau transfer) ~13km trek

Transportation Infrastructure **Fair**

Park Headquarters **Offsite**
Dedicated website and contact info

Availability of Accommodations **Serviced**

Accommodation Product Variation **Medium**

Visitor Activities **Openly Available**
Must use local operator for entry

Activity Product Variation **Medium**

None

Basic

Limited

Diverse

Site Destination Maturity
Relative to the Congo Basin Market

Destination Snapshot:

Mount Cameroon National Park, Cameroon

Current & Potential Natural Tourism Assets:

Wildlife:

Biodiversity hotspot and one of the most diverse ecosystems in Cameroon.

Forest Elephants, Chimpanzees, and ~370 bird species.

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

Geographic Features:

Mount Cameroon (one of Africa's largest volcanoes, active), Western slope features unbroken vegetation of rainforests, montane forests, montane grasslands, alpine grasslands, crater lakes, and volcanic rock.

The geological and vegetation diversity creates a very unique landscape for hiking.



Google Maps (2023) Mount Cameroon National Park.

Google Reviews Rating: ★★★★★

60 Total Reviews

TripAdvisor Rating: ●●●●●

54 Total Reviews

"[Fako Ecolodge] is super comfortable and the views from the summit are amazing, fully recommend it!"

"It was a great experience very well planned and we had so nice Guides!"

"The trek, the lodge, the food, everything was well planned and prepared for us [By 'Queen Tours']."

"Our expectations were exceeded, from the stay in the very tidy lodges to the almost 'magical' places such as the Volkan craters and crater lakes."

"A fantastic area, combined with good organization, guaranteed us a great time in Cameroon!"

TripAdvisor Reviews 2020 - 2023

"Hiking up Mount Cameroon was one of the highlights of my trip through West Africa."

"Coordination by Simo in their office was invaluable for sorting permits and logistics."

"Getting a visa for Cameroon can be tricky but Sarah Etonge, who set up the Queen of the Mountain agency and its associated charity, is well-known and respected, so mentioning I had a tour with them really helped with the visa application process."

"Cameroon is really blessed with this wonderful touristic site."

TripAdvisor Reviews 2018 - 2019

Human Capital

WWF

MCNP is one of the parks under the WWF Coastal Forests Program, in which WWF provides technical and administrative support to park management.

On the park's official website, it notes that **travelers are not permitted to enter the park without a guide.**

A list of registered local tour operators is linked on the site.

As of Dec. 2023, the list includes 13 registered organizations with manager names, phone numbers, email addresses, and websites (when applicable).

[PDF linked here.](#)

"This is written fairly and accurately with a view to helping other climbers to make an informed decision:
Positives:

- The national park is huge and well worth the visit.
- The starting point is easily accessible and the ascent is manageable.
- The local fish that was cooked fresh was amazing with a few beers.
- The Manager Simo was supportive and helpful especially with airport transfers.

Negatives:

- The visa process is not available on arrival and it is a nightmare and much more expensive and bureaucratic than any other African country.
- The area around Buea is generally uneasy for Westerners/Europeans and there are many police checkpoints from Douala to Buea which can feel uncomfortable and harrasing.
- The airport is small and flights are subject to constant change."

TripAdvisor Review 2020

Note: The park itself does not have its own dedicated TripAdvisor page.

These reviews instead are pulled from 'Mount Cameroon' in association with Queen Tours (a local tour operator).

Destination Scorecard:

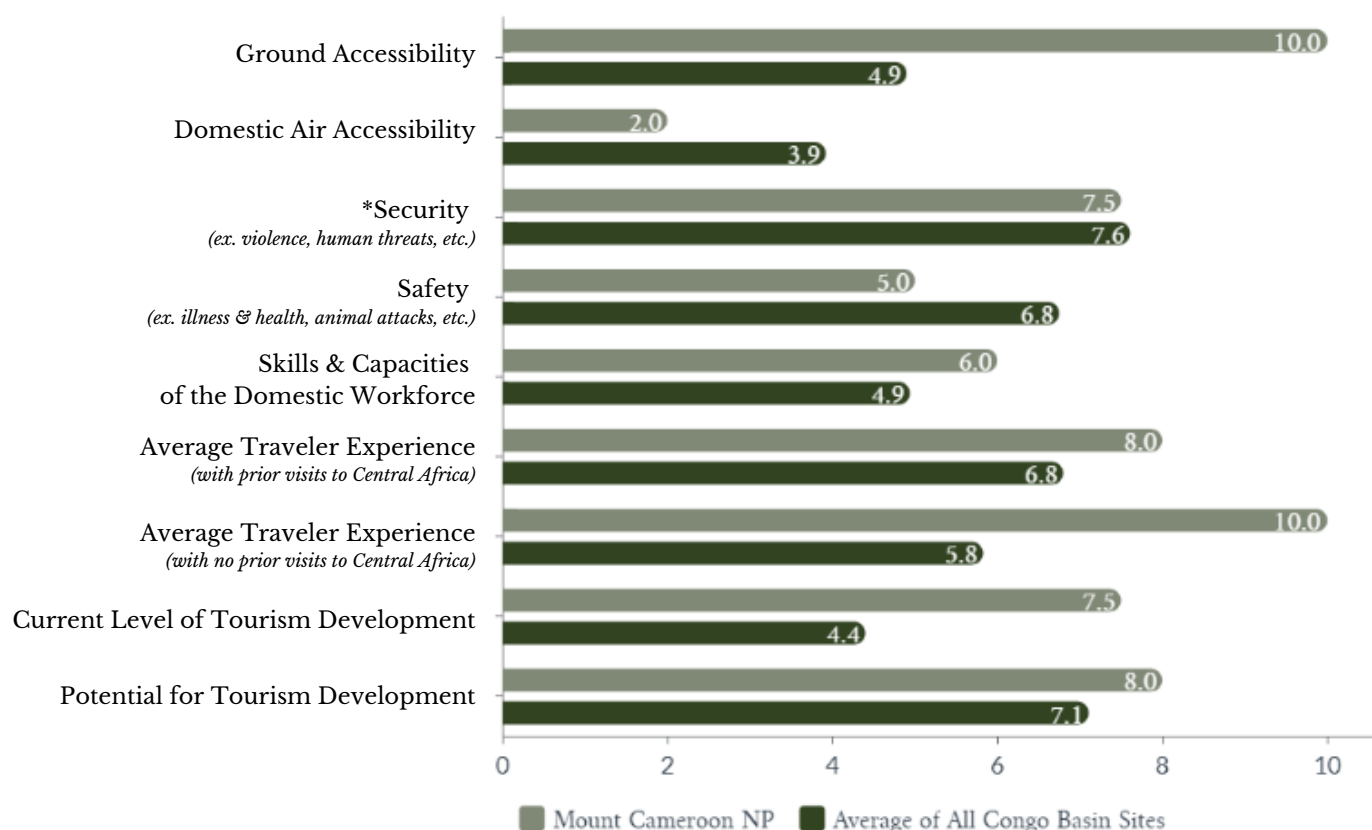
Mount Cameroon National Park, Cameroon

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

Ranking was based on a 1-10 scale:

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

Mount Cameroon National Park Tourism Assessment Survey Results



Key Takeaways:

- The park is much easier to reach via ground transportation compared to other Congo Basin sites.
- Despite international travel warnings, stakeholders report the park as being just as secure as the region's average.
- The reported traveler experience, current level of development, and potential for future tourism development all rank higher than the regional average - a great sign for interested investors or local stakeholders.

Additional Insights from Survey:

- There is some formal interest from tourism investors and opportunities for expanded tourism in Mt. Cameroon National Park.
- Transportation costs are “moderate,” and its relatively easy to access
- Tourism circuit opportunities & site linkages, as suggested by expert stakeholders:
 - Lobéké NP
 - Campo Ma'an NP

Site Analysis:

Mount Cameroon National Park


Overview

Mount Cameroon National Park (MCNP) is located in southwest Cameroon, only a few kilometers inland from the Atlantic coast. The park covers 58,178 Hectares, with an additional 5km buffer zone around the park [1]. Mount Cameroon is an active volcano and among the highest peaks in Africa [2]. The park ecosystems stretch from evergreen rainforest, to sub-montane and montane forests, to montane and subalpine grasslands [3].

MCNP's landscape has exceptional levels of species diversity and endemism and is recognized as one of the eight biodiversity hotspots in the 'Gulf of Guinea Forests,' a globally recognized priority site for conservation spanning 11 countries [4]. The park has at least 42 strictly endemic plant species and another 50 that are near-endemic. In total, nearly 2,500 species of plants have been recorded on Mount Cameroon [4]. Nearly 370 bird species have also been recorded. Larger wildlife, including forest elephants, chimpanzees, multiple monkey species, and mangabeys also are present in the park [5].

The security situation in the region around the park is less secure than other parts of the country, with the U.S. Department of State categorizing the immediate area around the park as 'Level 4: Do Not Travel.' A number of other countries also have travel warnings. This is due to "armed clashes between separatists and government forces, and other acts of violence" in the region [6].

AWF explains in the MCNP Ecotourism Development Plan (2017-2024) that 'the Mount Cameroon area has no specific safety and security risks and the nearby Buea and Limbe towns are safe,' despite the international travel warnings. Two key stakeholders from the region also noted that the northern portion of the park would be less safe for international travelers, but the rest of the park is safe. Despite these assurances, the tense situations that exist in the region can flare up and the unpredictability that this brings makes visitors and tourism operators take pause.



[1][DOI:10.2305/IUCN.CH.2014.PARKS-20-2.EDN.en](https://doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.CH.2014.PARKS-20-2.EDN.en)

[2]<https://www.britannica.com/place/Mount-Cameroon>

[3]<https://www.mountcameroonnationalpark.org/discover-the-park>

[4]https://www.cepf.net/sites/default/files/en_guinean_forests_ecosystem_profile.pdf

[5]<https://doi.org/10.17352/gjz.000027>

[6]<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/cameroon-travel-advisory.html>



Site Analysis:

Mount Cameroon National Park

Nature-Based Tourism Development Opportunities

The African Wildlife Foundation (AWF), the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), and KfW Development Bank support Mount Cameroon National Park in various ways. AWF authored MCNP's 2017-2024 Ecotourism Development & Management Plan. KfW is currently financing all of the activities in MCNP with the exception of salaries [7]. MCNP is one of four landscapes that falls under WWF's 'Coastal Forests (SAWA) Programme' in Cameroon. The program provides technical and administrative support to MINFOF on both regional and park-levels interventions [8]. As AWF and KfW are more focused on the activities of ecotourism, WWF is more focused on natural resource management and policy.

The Mount Cameroon Foundation is an additional stakeholder in the park, with plans to develop the Mount Cameroon Fund (MCF), a long-term financial sustainability mechanism to secure and manage other sustainable sources of funding. Part of the revenue projected for the fund includes ecotourism concession fees from lodges, tour operators, and other touristic activities in both MCNP and its periphery zones.

The MCNP website (www.mountcameroonnationalpark.org) has detailed descriptions of all-things tourism, including accessibility information, a list of approved tour guides with contact information [9], park entry fees, accommodation options, current visitor activities, and future plans for development [10]. The Fako Mountain Lodge, Mann's Spring Lodge, and a network of trekking trails as well as other facilities exist, but could also benefit from further investment.

MCNP's diverse landscapes create the ideal environments for hiking tours, landscape photography, and specialty nature-travelers like birders and botanical enthusiasts. Several tour operators already specialize in bird tourism in and around MCNP [11]. Plant nurseries have also been established on the northern slopes of Mt Cameroon to develop alternative income opportunities for communities living in the Park periphery, and could be developed as tourism activities. Additionally, the nearby coastline presents opportunities for coastal tourism activities.

MCNP is home the Mount Cameroon Race of Hope, held in February. The 2023 race features athletes from 14 countries, including both France and the United States [12]. The race is well known and a way to promote the park and country to visitors, however presently does not generate any income for the park and is a significant burden on park staff.

The park has potential for circuit development with the nearby town of Limbe, which is already popular with visitors. This could also be extended south through Kribi, Ebodje and Campo Ma'an National Park. More regionally, potential could also exist for a region circuit with Cross-River National Park in Nigeria and also other parks that are in Cameroon or the Gulf of Guinea Forest ecoregion. Additionally the western region of Cameroon is known for its diverse cultures that could play into the regional tourism experience and circuits.

Site Analysis: --- --- Mount Cameroon National Park

Enabling Environment Constraints

Security

One of the most significant external constraints for tourism in MCNP is the security concern, discussed earlier in this document. Within the majority of the park boundaries, travelers are considered safe, but the region as a whole is under various travel warnings from multiple embassies and this makes the development and promotion of tourism more challenging and unpredictable for the region.

Marketing & Image

Though there are a solid group of operators working in and around the park, proactive ecotourism developments by both public and private sector entities, and an exceptional amount of nature-based tourism assets, the marketing and promotion of the park is very limited. To overcome market concerns about safety and to highlight the attractions of the region, good quality information and promotional programs are needed.

At present, travelers are only hearing about the park through word-of-mouth or the few-and-far-between blog posts. This park is primed for success, with accommodations, activities, tour guides/operators, and experiences. However, until marketing efforts are addressed and expanded, this will remain a serious constraint for tourism development in and around the park.

[7] <https://www.mountcameroonnationalpark.org/mount-cameroon-foundation>

[8] https://cameroon.panda.org/places_landscapes/coastal_forests_programme/

[9] https://www.mountcameroonnationalpark.org/_files/ugd/f2c585_9f752cc892ae4957bc272e305c1e69c7.pdf

[10] <https://www.mountcameroonnationalpark.org/ecotourism>

[11] <https://www.mountcameroonnationalpark.org/bird-watching>

[12] <https://www.crtv.cm/2023/02/mount-cameroon-race-of-hope-2023-preparations-are-at-90/>

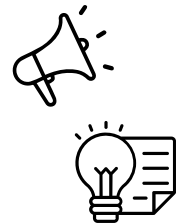
[13] [Cameroon declares 48-hour curfew in troubled Anglophone regions - CGTN Africa](#)

Site Analysis: **Mount Cameroon National Park**

Recommendations & Considerations

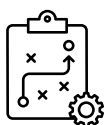
Lower Cost & Short-Term Actions:

****Plan and implement a marketing, packaging and storytelling program for the park and those operating in the park, with a focus on developing engaging content about the park's tourism experiences and facilities, addressing concerns visitors may have about safety, and developing materials/content that can be used by tourism operators to understand and promote the park. Development of packaged itineraries, connecting to diverse experiences and activities in the region should also be a part of this activity.**



****Enhance the capacity of local tour operators to promote and package the park, its activities and its lodges. This includes support with establishing reliable transport & facilitation services for visitors, Market data to understand target markets (international, regional and domestic), hospitality training and marketing skills (e.g. website and social media). This could be implemented through a tourism incubator/accelerator for local businesses that also (if possible) provides grant funds at the end of the program to help businesses implement some of the skills they have obtained.**

Strengthen the Mount Cameroon Race of Hope event so that it also raises funds for the park and conservation efforts in/around the park through organizational support and promotion of the event.



Refresh and update MCNP Ecotourism Development Plan (2017-2024) to incorporate the current context for the park and region.

Higher Cost & Medium-Term Actions:

****Facilitate and structure more private investor partnerships and concessions in and around the park to build a critical mass of tourism facilities and experiences (page 82 ecotourism management plan for MCNP). Initially this may focus on Mann's Spring Lodge and Fako Mountain Lodge.**



Assess and develop a risk & emergency management plan for the park, with a focus on regional security and responses to issues that arise, safety within the park if accidents and emergencies occur as well as emergency evacuation in the case of an eruption. This should also look at the system, training and equipment needed to implement the plan.

Follow through with the development of the Volcano Trail (page 52 of the ecotourism management plan for MCNP) as this trail can help to expand and diversify the tourism experience in the area.

****Critical Enabler**

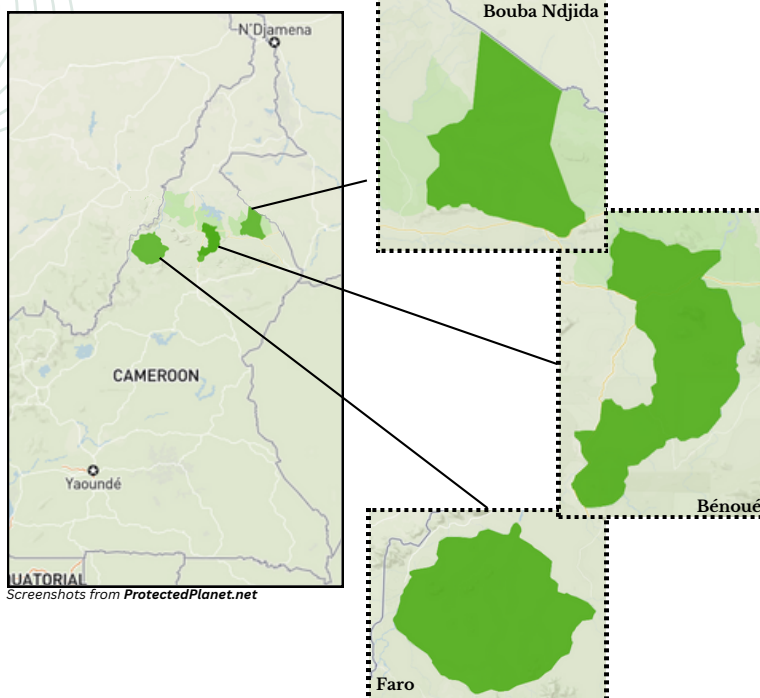
Destination Snapshot:

North Province Landscape, Cameroon

Faro, Bénoué, & Bouba Ndjida National Parks, Including Buffer Zones & Hunting Blocks

Quick Facts:

- Bouba Ndjida: 220,000 hectares
- Bénoué: 180,000 hectares
- Faro: 330,000 hectares
 - Total (parks only): 730,000 hectares
 - Total (entire landscape): Over 1.5 million hectares
- Savanna & dry forests landscape
- IUCN Categories: Level 2 - 'National Park'
- Hunting blocks fill space between parks: 34 total (# between parks)
- Seasonality:
 - Best time to visit: December - February
 - Bouba Ndjida is only open to tourists from December - May (dry season).
 - March: "Dying of Heat," not recommended for travelers.



Accommodations & Facilities

Of the three parks, Bouba Ndjida NP is the only one with true accommodation options. Other than that, basic tent camping is possible in Bénoué and on the edge of Faro, though it is done "at your own risk."

In the buffer zones & hunting blocks, there are accommodation options. Notably, Zic 16, which has a high quality camp and infrastructure "perfect for touristic activities."

In Faro:
Building a new park HQ in Voko & base on the river at Faro Beach

In Bouba Ndjida:
Park HQ and associated formalities are in Koum village, right outside park.

Accessibility:

Int'l Air	Yaoundé-Nsimalen International Airport (Yaoundé) Extremely far from the parks. Many travelers use this airport as a connection for domestic flights.	
Domestic Air	Garoua Airport Scheduled flights from Yaounde about 4-times a week ~5-6 hours from Faro ~6-7 hours from Bouba Ndjida Travel time unknown from Bénoué	A number of operators in hunting concessions & buffer zones have built airstrips (e.g. Zic 18 & 13 outside Faro NP) <i>Because of the flat, savanna topography, building airstrips is much easier and less expensive compared to their counterparts in dense, Congo Basin rainforest areas.</i>
Ground	The roads from Garoua to the parks vary in quality, but are viable transportation options.	From Ngaoundéré: ~2 hours to Benoue on N1, and another hour to the camp. 302 kms, ~6 hours to Bouba Ndjida
	Roads between the parks are not great, so moving between them is difficult, though possible (best December - February as hunters maintain roads).	
Within Parks	There are no roads in Faro, and only some in Bénoué. Good network of roads in Bouba Ndjida.	

Transportation Infrastructure	Fair
Park Headquarters	Offsite (varies)
Availability of Accommodations	None & Serviced (varies)
Accommodation Product Variation	Medium
Visitor Activities	Special Request (varies)
Activity Product Variation	Medium
<div> <div>None</div> <div>Basic</div> <div>Limited</div> <div>Diverse</div> </div>	

Site Destination Maturity
Relative to the Congo Basin Market

Destination Snapshot: North Province Landscape, Cameroon

Current & Potential Natural Tourism Assets:

Wildlife:

Plethora of antelope species, including the popular Giant Eland (aka **Lord Derby's Eland**).
Bouba Ndjida and Bénoué are considered the most important landscapes for the Giant Eland.

Buffalo, hippos, elephants, warthogs, crocodiles, etc. all gather at riverways throughout the landscape. **Wildlife gatherings at water points** - *potential to compliment the jungle/forest in other parks.*

The Bénoué Biosphere Reserve, recognized by UNESCO, hosts a striking diversity of wildlife.

Bird species: 300+ in Bénoué & ~240 in Faro.

The bird species are unique to the savanna landscapes
- *Birding Tourism Circuit Potential*

Both are recognized as **Important Bird Areas** by BirdLife International.

Geographic Features:

Most Unique: **The savannah landscape** -
'Africa in Miniature' tourism circuit potential

Faro River & Benoue Rivers -
Trophy Fishing & Sport Fishing tourism potential.

Faro's **hunting blocks** are some of the best in the region.
Lots of wildlife and mostly in-tact, compared to others which are largely depleted.

The hunting blocks between the parks feature professional operators with real investments and long-term interests.

Being located in Northern Cameroon creates **cross-border tourism circuit potential** with neighboring Chad & Nigeria, as well as a proximity to the new Cameroonian National Park, 'Waza,' in the far north (although security currently an issue)



Google Maps (2023) North Cameroon.

Human Capital

Conserve Global:

Working in hunting Concessions around Faro NP

Noé: Working with local communities throughout the landscape

AWF: Works in Faro alongside government actors

WCS: In Bouba Ndjida & Bénoué. WCS is considered the main actor in the east, including supporting law enforcement activities.

There are fewer operators taking travelers into this landscape. However, the operators within hunting blocs & hunting concessions run very high quality touristic operations.

The potential for growth is high, especially if tour operators can develop circuits between hunting blocks & the parks.

"We were able to observe lots of animals, and the guide explained a lot of things to us. The accommodation and the restaurant are good too (expensive all the same, but it's understandable, given the enclave of the park)."

"The national park itself is brimming with different species of antelope around the center. We also saw lions, crocodiles, baboons, a family of giraffes, hyenas, monkeys, etc. on the first day. Wonderful place."

TripAdvisor Reviews
Bouba Ndjida: 2017-2019

"A change of scenery guaranteed. Breathtaking landscape."

"You can swim in the river at the camp and the view of the river is great! You do need a 4WD to explore the park."

"The main attraction in the park are the hippo's which lay in the sand banks in the river. [...] From the camp you can take a guided walk along the river to the hippo's or do a safari on the rough roads for other wildlife. We really liked our stay in the park and the rangers were glad and proud to show us their park!"

TripAdvisor Reviews
Bénoué: 2014-2017

Destination Scorecard:

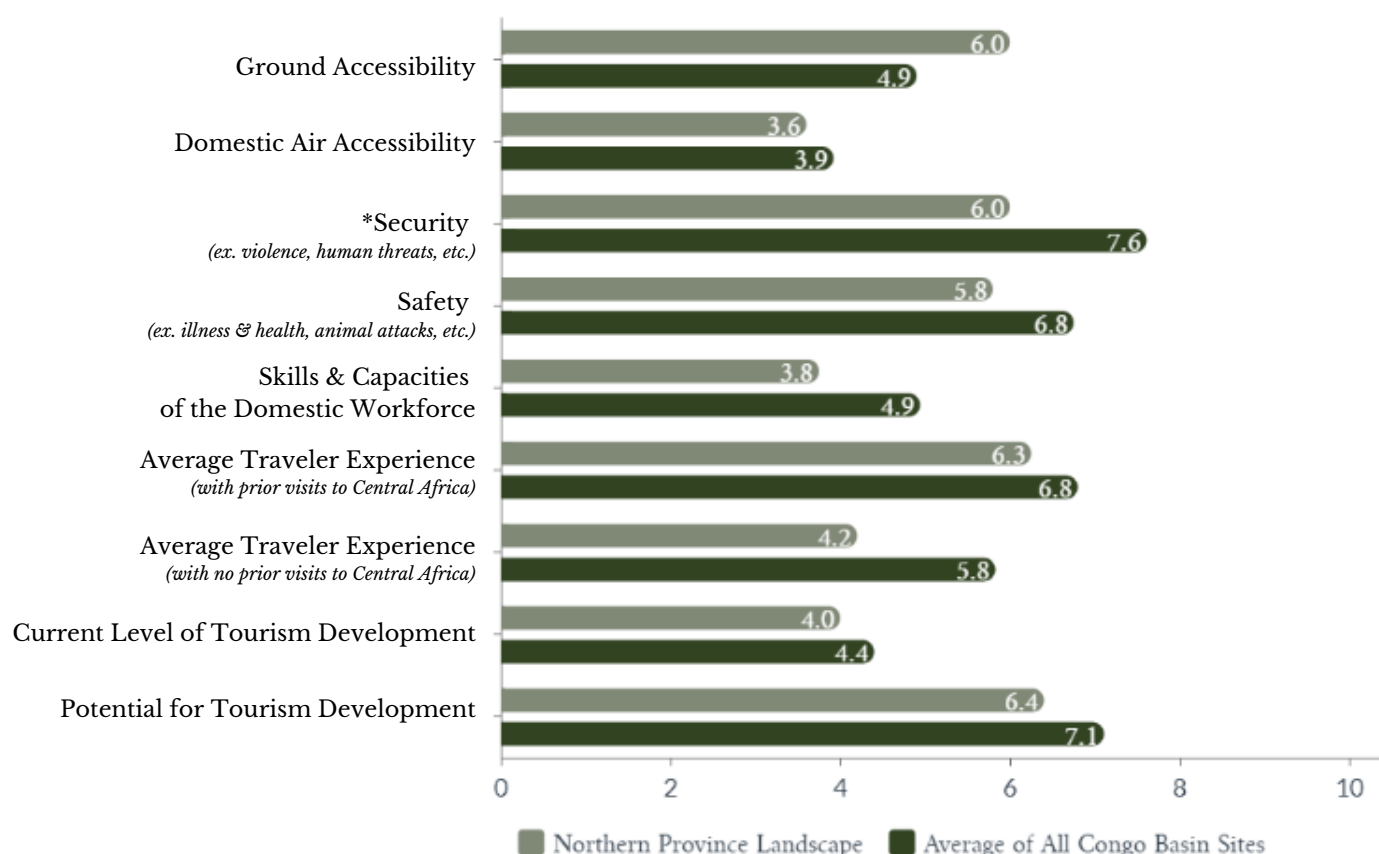
North Province Landscape, Cameroon

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.

Northern Province Landscape Tourism Assessment Survey Results



Key Takeaways:

- Overall ground access is better than the regional average, via nearby airport hubs.
- Despite the low levels of current tourism development, there is good potential for future expansion and development.
- Security and safety in this region is slightly less stable than the larger regional average.
- The average visitor experience is lower than average if the visitors are first time travelers to Central Africa, indicating a site for the well initiated traveler

Additional Insights from Survey:

- There is formal interest from tourism investors and opportunities for expanded tourism in Bouba Ndjida NP, but less so in the other parts of the Northern Province.
- There is no tourism in Faro NP at present
- Tourism circuit opportunities & site linkages, as suggested by expert stakeholders:
 - Hunting areas throughout the north

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

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

Site Analysis:

North Province Landscape

Overview

This tri-park landscape, situated in northern Cameroon, spans over 1.5 million hectares, encompassing buffer zones and hunting blocks connecting Faro National Park (FNP), Bouba Ndjida National Park (BNNP), and Bénoué National Park (BNP). FNP is the largest at 330,000 hectares [1], followed by BNNP with 220,000 hectares [2], and BNP with 180,000 hectares [3].

Primarily a savannah landscape, each park exhibits unique features—FNP with wooded grasslands, BNP with Sudanian woodland, and BNNP with Sudanese-Guinea bush savannah. This diverse ecosystem contributes to Cameroon's 'Africa in Miniature' identity, complementing coastal and forest ecosystems in the south, desert in the north, and the country's rich cultural heritage [4]. Notably, this landscape distinguishes Cameroon from other Congo Basin countries, predominantly characterized by forest ecosystems.

The parks are connected by hunting blocks, vital for safeguarding the lands between national parks. Stakeholders, working in the region, highlight that these blocks are some of the best in the region, with superior wildlife populations compared to many parts of the parks. Notable species include Giant Eland, buffalo, hippos, savannah elephants, and the endangered West African lion. The bird diversity is also of significant note. BNP, situated within the Bénoué Biosphere Reserve, holds UNESCO recognition for its outstanding biodiversity and conservation significance [5].

Despite Cameroon's nationwide Level 2 travel advisory by the US Department of State, the North region faces a stricter 'Level 4: Do Not Travel' advisory due to ongoing security concerns [6]. Similar advisories from other countries impact travel considerations to the region.

[1]https://www.awf.org/sites/default/files/2023-07/202305_Faro_Factsheet.pdf

[2]<https://cameroon.wcs.org/Wild-Places/Bouba-Ndjida-National-Park1.aspx>

[3]<https://datazone.birdlife.org/site/factsheet/b%C3%A9nou%C3%A9-national-park-iba-cameroon>

[4]https://www.giz.de/en/downloads/GIZ_Fact_Sheet_Arbeiten_in_Kamerun_en.pdf

[5]<https://en.unesco.org/biosphere/africa/benoue>

[6]<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/cameroon-travel-advisory.html>

Site Analysis:

North Province Landscape

Nature-Based Tourism Development Opportunities

The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) lends support to BNP and BNNP, with BNNP receiving specific support relating to ecotourism and hosting the only active tourism lodge among the three parks. Campement De Boubandjida camp is managed by WCS but owned by the Ministry of Tourism & Leisure. The African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) focuses on Faro, though without a current emphasis on tourism. Conserve Global supports conservation efforts in the hunting blocks between Faro and BNP, witnessing successful consumptive tourism due to private sector investments. WCS is also involved with hunting blocks between BNP and BNNP. While these organizations provide technical and financial assistance, the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF) retains overall management authority over the protected lands.

Presently, tourism in the region primarily revolves around hunting, facilitated by private operators in 28 government-gazetted ZICS and a few community-owned ZICS (hunting blocks) [7]. Stakeholders note that many of these blocks have reputable operators with substantial investments, boasting good infrastructure in most camps. The Faro and Bénoué Rivers also offer potential for sports fishing, specifically for tiger fish (3 species in the river) and Nile Perch. African Waters recently introducing a fly fishing tourism product in the Faro River Basin, featuring a dedicated campsite called 'Gassa Camp' [8]. Ultimately there may also be an opportunity to link such activities with sports fishing sites in Gabon.

Studies indicate that hunting and consumptive tourism exhibit greater resilience to insecurity compared to photographic and ecotourism in this landscape [9]. This resilience may stem from the consumptive tourism market's price point and market dynamics, coupled with its relatively small scale, allowing for more concentrated security efforts. Consumptive tourism is likely to be the most significant tourism activity in the region in at least the short-term.

Birding also presents an additional opportunity in this landscape, as the distinct savannah bird species found in northern Cameroon can be bundled with forest and coastal habitats in the southern part of the country. The birding market also tends to be more willing to move long distances and 'rough it' to spot specific species.

[[7]]<https://conserveglobal.earth/faro-landscape-cameroon/>

[8]<https://africanwaters.net/camps/gassa-camp-cameroon/>

[9]<https://conbio.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/cobi.13860>

Site Analysis:

North Province Landscape

Enabling Environment Constraints

Wildlife Populations:

Poaching poses a significant obstacle to tourism development. AWF, backed by EU funding, supports anti-poaching efforts in FNP, while Bristol Zoological Society, focusing on giraffe conservation in BNP [10]. They reported a mere 27 giraffes in the park in 2024, due to prolonged poaching [11]. The 2012 elephant massacre in BNNP garnered global attention, leading to interventions by international conservation groups in this park as well [12]. Stakeholder insights and reports suggest that wildlife populations are yet to rebound throughout the landscape, necessitating further efforts and investments for recovery. Continuous protection and anti-poaching measures in the short term would help to incentivize investors for longer-term tourism development.

Access & Accommodations:

While private operators in hunting blocks have established camps and road networks, parks lack such facilities. BNNP has Campement De Boubandjida and an airstrip, which could be enhanced for tourism charters but the other parks lack even this infrastructure. The landscape's tourism facilities are roughly 5-7 hours from Garoua by road, with regular flights every week from Yaounde to Garoua. AWF are initiating projects to develop infrastructure in FNP with likely a 5-7 year timeline before these are complete. Travel between parks is challenging, and is usually only possibly during the dry season when hunting operations are maintaining their roads. Until accessibility and accommodations improve, non-consumptive tourism will remain a challenge.

Security:

Security advisories from major international governments hinder tourism development in North Cameroon. While parks are relatively secure, recent violence has occurred and concerns persist. The landscapes' hunting blocks, which have more tourism investments and anti-poaching teams, are considered more secure than their neighboring parks. BNNP, having some tourism infrastructure, is also deemed more secure than the other parks. Overall, security issues impede international tourism in the short-term, but with continued anti-poaching efforts this could change in the medium-term.

[10]<https://www.awf.org/where-we-work/faro>

[11]<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2024/01/240123122322.htm>

[12]https://www.panda.org/wwf_news/?203763/Cameroon-sends-military-to-secure-site-of-elephant-slaughter

Site Analysis: --- --- North Province Landscape

Recommendations & Considerations

Lower Cost & Short-Term Actions:

**Continue and scale the conservation and anti-poaching/security efforts in the landscape along with development of infrastructure in the parks (roads, facilities, airstrips, etc.).



**Review tourism concession and revenue-sharing arrangements in the landscape, with government, to identify community-based livelihood opportunities that will help reduce pressure on wildlife and natural resources. In parallel highlight models from peer countries that may be replicated, such as Ethiopia where community engagement reforms have improved insecurity. This process should also focus on work with the government to identify and establish a small number of tourism concession sites for future private concessions.

**Work with Cameroon tour operators to package 1-2 model circuits, building on the 'Africa in Miniature' branding, to connect the lodge in BNNP with coastal parks and tourism experiences. This should include itinerary development, content creation to tell the story of the region (and overall package) and a promotional budget. The goal is to start putting the northern province landscape 'on the tourism map' and start integrating it as a part of the overall country wide tourism offer. Through this process gaps and needs will be identified that can be addressed in later efforts.



Improve the airstrip for BNNP so that its usable for tourism purposes.

Analysis of the carrying capacity of the Faro and Bénoué Rivers for sports fishing to assess the potential for expansion of this activity and if so its limits.



Conduct a bird species inventory and identify key species for bird tourism.

Site Analysis:

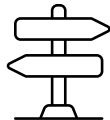
North Province Landscape

Recommendations & Considerations

Higher Cost & Medium-Term Actions:

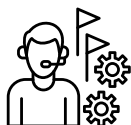
****Strategic investment promotion to attract 1-2 anchor tourism facilities in national parks, ideally linked to the revenue sharing arrangements with the bordering communities to ensure they have a long-term stake in tourism and provide alternatives to poaching and illegal mining.**

This should include a financial grant element to attract investors, buy down the investment risk and provide ownership in the operation for local communities (the grant being the communities equity stake in a tourism investment, although the private operator would maintain management control).



Invest in basic visitor infrastructure, such as trails, signage, camping facilities, etc. as well as park staff and community capacity to manage and host tourism.

Marketing and communications strategy as well as campaign to position the landscape as a critical part of the overall Cameroon 'Africa in Miniature' experience to local tour operators as well as international travel trade markets.



Establish visual and written content that can be used to promote the landscape as well as expand short-term efforts with itineraries and circuit development.

****Critical Enabler**

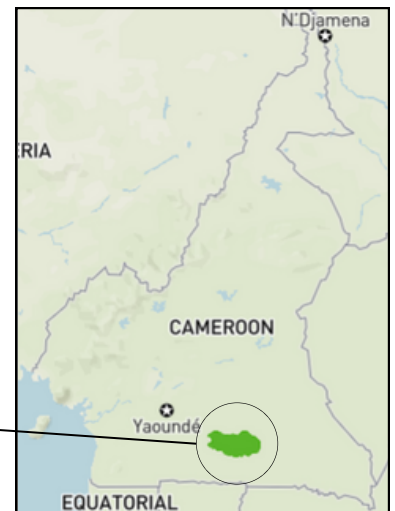
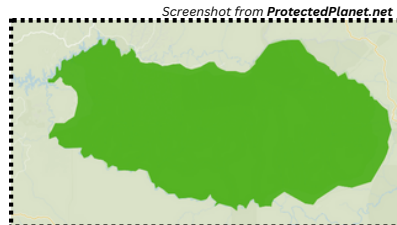
Destination Snapshot:

Dja Faunal Reserve, Cameroon

Quick Facts:

- 526,000 Hectares
- Critical Rainforest Ecosystem
 - Dja River forms a natural boundary
- IUCN Category 4 - 'Habitat Management Area'
- UNESCO Natural World Heritage Site
- Park Entry Fee: 5,000 CFA (foreigners)
- Primate Habituation: **None currently**

No seasonality information available



Accommodations & Facilities

Within the Park:

No dedicated lodging for tourists within park boundaries.

Clearings for campsites are found near stopping points on treks, with various clearings for wildlife viewing.

Some travelers have opted to stay in Pygmy villages overnight.

Outside the Park

The town of Somalomo, along the park's northern boundary, hosts the park headquarters. A guesthouse exists but travelers must handle the booking process on their own.

The nearby town of Djoum, along the park's southern boundary, also has multiple accommodation options.

Accessibility:

Int'l Air	Yaoundé-Nsimalen International Airport (Yaoundé)	
Domestic Air	Mvomeka'a Aerodrome: Small aerodrome with an asphalt track. Currently services the Mvomeka'a Village (the President's village).	No data suggests the aerodrome operates for tourism to Dja, but it's close proximity to the reserve acts as an opportunity for future development.
	No airstrip within the park	
Ground	Often cited as the 'gates of Dja Reserve,' the town Somalomo lies along the northwestern border. This is the most popular stop on tour itineraries for those traveling by ground.	From Yaoundé: 5 hour drive on fairly good roads. ~200km on tar roads, 30-40km on dirt roads.
		From Djoum: 6 hours on moderately good roads.
Within Park	Dja Ecoguards have access to three pickup trucks, over 10 years old, for team deployment. However, it is unknown if these could be used for touristic purposes. Footpaths and boating are the primary methods of transportation within park boundaries.	

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

None Basic Limited Diverse

Site Destination Maturity
Relative to the Congo Basin Market

Accessibility to Dja is much weaker than some other Cameroon sites.

Only the most intrepid travelers have gone into the site, aided by AWF and other conservation partners, largely based on its remoteness and subsequent lack of accessibility.

Destination Snapshot:

Dja Faunal Reserve, Cameroon

Current & Potential Natural Tourism Assets:

Wildlife:

Western Lowland Gorillas, Western Chimpanzees, Forest Elephants, Mandrills,
2 species of Forest Crocodiles, and ~310 bird species.

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

Dja is known to support at least 14 species of primates. **Unique in that there are very few sites elsewhere in Africa known to support such a high diversity of primates in a single location.**

Geographic Features:

Primary rainforest ecosystem with nearly 90% of forest area completely undisturbed,
Swamp-forests & otherwise generally flat terrain.

Dja River with ~60km associated with rapids & waterfalls - *potential for developing adventure/sport tourism products.*

Human Capital

AWF:

Has been supporting
this park since 2017.

Their work includes:

- Building new income-generating opportunities
- Supporting strategic anti-poaching
- Participatory conservation planning

Two small populations of
Baka Pygmies live within the
reserve in encampments.

The reserve has less than 60
staffed ecoguards. They work
with various conservation
partners on anti-poaching
trainings.

There are no tourism training
programs or existing capacity
in surrounding populations.



Google Maps (2023) Dja Faunal Reserve.

Google Reviews Rating: ★★★★★
106 Total Reviews

TripAdvisor Rating: ●●●●●
6 Total Reviews

"Seeing [Baka Pygmies] move in the forest and following them in their various daily activities is a great life lesson. However, an uncomfortable experience, it takes almost an hour to reach them on foot... If you sleep with them, bring everything you need for the rain"

"There are no motorways! Guides and park rangers are required, and you sleep in a tent or in a pygmy hut!"

"We stayed at a pygmy village (not for everyone) and did all sorts of interesting things."



TripAdvisor Reviews
2015 - 2019

"Living with the pygmies for a few days in the deepest part of the jungle is priceless! Experiences like listening to Baka women sing at night are things that are never forgotten in life..."

"This is a wonderful experience totally worthy but I only recommend it to expert travelers in Africa."

"You should know on advance that this is not like traveling to the African Savanna, animals are really difficult to see, it requires time and it requires the expertise of a guide."

TripAdvisor Reviews
2011 - 2014

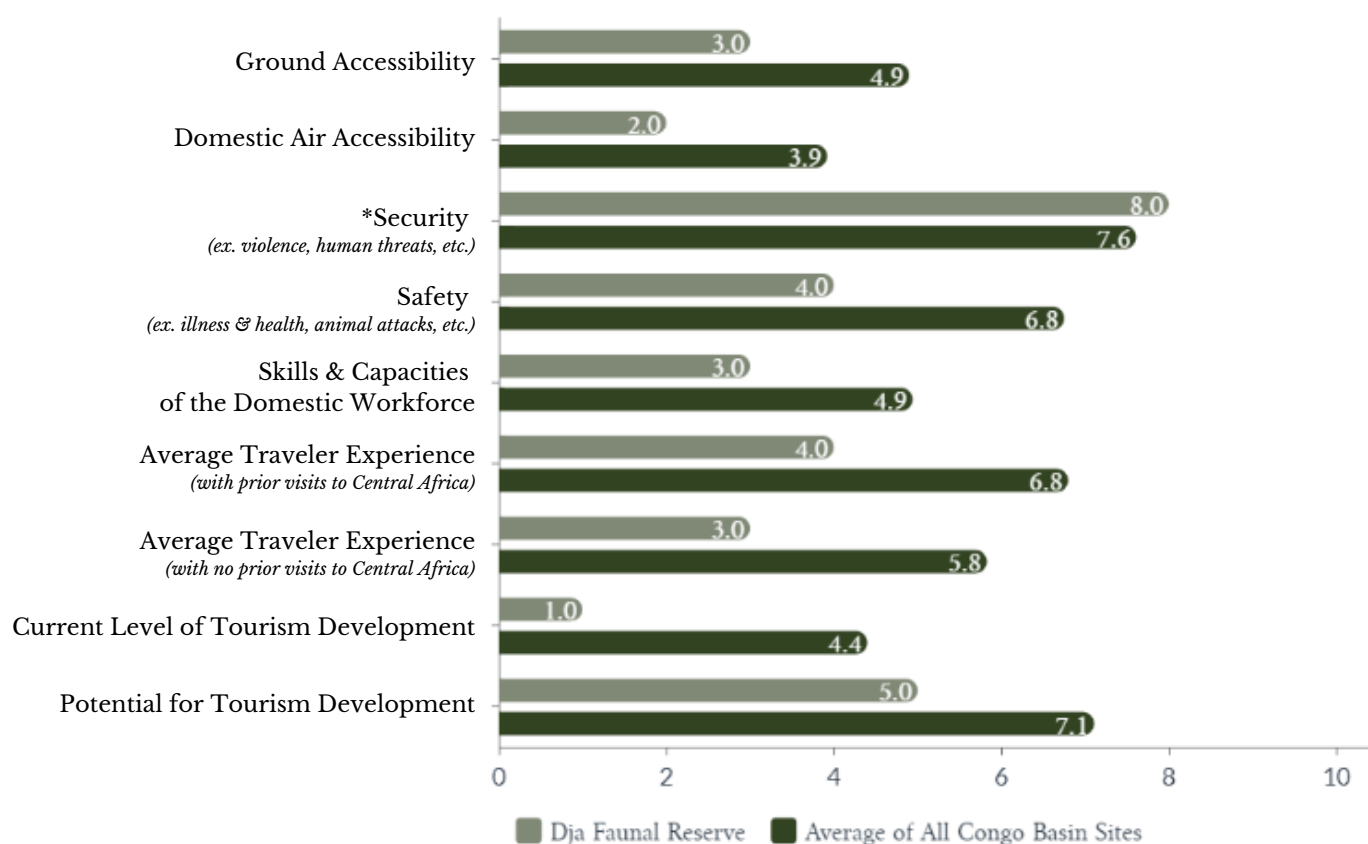
Destination Scorecard:

Dja Faunal Reserve, Cameroon

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

Ranking was based on a 1-10 scale, with '1' representing relative weakness in the field and '10' represents strength in the field.

Dja Faunal Reserve Tourism Assessment Survey Results**



Key Takeaways:

- Dja's remoteness makes it less accessible by both air and ground transportation than other parks in the region.
- The reserve is considered more secure than the regional average
- The site is considered much less developed for tourism relative to the broader Congo Basin sites and the potential for development is also less than the regional average.

Additional Insights from Survey:

- There is not much formal interest from tourism investors and opportunities for expanded tourism in Dja.
- Tourism circuit opportunities & site linkages, as suggested by expert stakeholders:
 - Mount Cameroon NP

Site Analysis:

Dja Faunal Reserve

Overview

The Dja Faunal Reserve (DFR) is located in southeast Cameroon and is considered one of the largest and best-protected rainforests in Africa. The reserve is a UNESCO World Heritage Site with 90% of the landscape undisturbed due to low human pressures and strong governance. In addition to its natural significance, the site is considered culturally important by UNESCO because of the Baka pygmies who live within the Reserve [1]. The Reserve covers approximately 526,000 Hectares and falls within the larger 'Dja Biosphere Reserve,' which includes an additional 903,093 Hectares of buffer & transition zones [2]. Dja is also one of eleven national parks that fall in the Trinational Dja-Odzala-Minkébé (TRIDOM) landscape [3]. TRIDOM is known as a global biodiversity and conservation stronghold, covering three countries (ROC, Cameroon, and Gabon) and 10% of the entire Congo Basin Rainforest [4].

DFR's rainforest ecosystem makes up the main visitor attraction. Wildlife in the park includes western lowland gorillas, western chimpanzees, mandrills, bongo, African grey parrots and forest elephants. However, some of these key wildlife species have been on the decline; the elephant population has seen a nearly 97% decline in the last ~20 years, with only an estimated 219 individuals left in the reserve (2020) [5]. As of 2018 the gorilla population was estimated at ~1,200 individuals compared to the over 6,000 just three years prior [6].

Global Conservation has invested in a 5 year Global Park Defense program in DFR. Their 2021-2022 Progress Report noted that they facilitated a number of guard trainings, renovated old buildings to serve as operational bases and control rooms, and facilitated the guard staff to be equipped with new uniforms, solar panel kits, and tents [7]. Additionally, African Wildlife Foundation's (AWF) anti-poaching support in the Reserve is promising, with hunting rates reportedly dropping by over half in 2022 [8].

While DFR 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 Cameroon as a whole [9] (for comparison, France and the UK are in the same category). In and around DFR there is a very low risk of crime or other security threats. The main concern for tourism development is remoteness and access to respond to any medical emergencies.

[1] <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/407/>

[2] <https://en.unesco.org/biosphere/africa/dja>

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

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

[5] <https://pfbc-cbfp.org/news-partner/forest-elephant.html>

[6] <https://globalconservation.org/projects/dja-biosphere-reserve-cameroon/>

[7] <https://globalconservation.org/news/dja-faunal-reserve-cameroon-project-update/>

[8] <https://www.awf.org/where-we-work/dja>

[9] <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/cameroon-travel-advisory.html>

Site Analysis:

Dja Faunal Reserve

Nature-Based Tourism

AWF began working in Dja Faunal Reserve in 2017. Their support activities include strategic anti-poaching, development and support for more sustainable livelihoods for local communities, and facilitating ecological surveys for management and land-use planning [10]. No primate habituation activities are currently occurring in the reserve. Unlike AWF's work in other protected areas, they are not prioritizing ecotourism development in DFR at present. However, one representative from AWF explained that they have taken intrepid travelers into the park before, while another expressed that the Reserve does have a lot of ecotourism potential. There are opportunities in the medium-term for tourism development in the reserve, but current organizations simply have other areas of focus and there is little to no existing tourism infrastructure to host guests.

The EU is also investing in the DFR. A grant project entitled, 'Ensuring a Sustainable Future for the Dja Landscape, its People, and Biodiversity' was implemented in 2017. The ultimate goals of this project relate to coordinating and strengthening socio-economic activities, systems management within the protected area, integrated natural resource management for the local riverine populations, and establishing structures for the management teams [11]. A representative of AWF explained in November 2023 that a new project financed by the EU, similar to the aforementioned work, had just started. This new project includes a section on ecotourism and there is a tourism baseline analysis of assets underway at the time of writing this document.

With ~90% of its area considered pristine and untouched, DFR could offer an off-the-beaten path nature and community based tourism experience, especially connected to the Baka Pygmies. The community activities could build on current collaborations between communities and AWF. Travelers that have ventured to the reserve have tended to stay in local Pygmy villages and highlight the activities they have done with these community members as the main attraction. This element also provides a distinctive component not found in many other protected areas.

Sport fishing may also have potential in the Dja River. The river has the potential for white water rafting, etc., however due to the remote nature of the location this would likely be difficult to effectively and safely operationalize in the short-medium term.

[10] <https://www.awf.org/where-we-work/dja>

[11] <https://www.awf.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/ENG-W15-1-Evaluation-ToR-EU%20Dja-FINAL.pdf>

Site Analysis:

Dja Faunal Reserve

Enabling Environment Constraints

Infrastructure & Services

Development of tourism in this landscape will require the initial development of basic infrastructure, tourism facilities and services, as nothing of note currently exists. Development of the infrastructure and 'tourism experiences' in the reserve is critical for tourism to get started. Given the current focus on protection efforts in the reserve, tourism related activities in the park are likely a medium-term goal. A tourism asset assessment is underway. Building on this, tourism planning would be needed in the shorter-term to guide and structure the type of tourism development that then occurs.

Wildlife Populations

A major constraint involves the poaching activities that highly threaten the viability of wildlife-based tourism development. Global Conservation and AWF's work in the park is focused on anti-poaching activities and protections, which has seen promising results [12]. Consistent protection and the rebuilding of wildlife populations would provide greater incentives for investors to develop tourism in the region in the medium and longer-term.

Access

Road access to the park from Yaoundé is estimated at about 5 hours drive on passable roads to the town of Somalomo, nicknamed 'the Gates of Dja.' In the regional context this is a reasonable drive time given travel times to other protected areas in the region. If facilities and services were developed, road access would likely not be a major constraint. However, air access is lacking. There is no airstrip within the park boundaries at present. There is an airstrip in Mvomeka's Village (the President's Village) -20kms from the reserve's western border, but it is unclear if this can be used for tourism purposes. To attract higher-end visitors that will tend to fly in and out, easy air access would need to be available.

Awareness

There is a general lack of awareness of the reserve in tourism markets. On LonelyPlanet's 'Must-See Attractions' list for Cameroon, the reserve is nowhere to be found [13]. Many other popular websites in the travel community also do not have much information on the reserve, if at all. The Cameroon Ministry of Tourism and Leisure also does not include the reserve on their website, although it is listed in plans for tourism development in the future [14]. The lack of awareness is likely a result of very limited tourism infrastructure, facilities and services to host guests, but once these start to develop a push will be needed to get the reserve on the tourism circuit.

[12] <https://www.awf.org/where-we-work/dja>

[13] <https://www.lonelyplanet.com/cameroon/attractions>

[14] <https://mintoul.gov.cm/cameroun-en-decouverte/sites-touristiques/>

Site Analysis:

Dja Faunal Reserve

Recommendations & Considerations

Lower Cost & Short-Term Actions:

**Tourism planning for the reserve to create a roadmap for where and how tourism infrastructure, facilities and services will be developed, along with skill development and the structures, systems and standard operating procedures to effectively manage tourism in the reserve.



**Continued investment in anti-poaching and wildlife protection efforts.

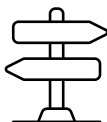
Explore opportunities, including training and tourism product development for expansion of the homestays and visitor activities offered by the Baka Pygmy communities, as well as market access (connections) with tour operators. This may be modeled on the Batwa tourism experiences offered in Uganda.



Assess air access to determine if the nearby Mvomeka Aerodrome can be utilized for touristic charter flights or an alternative plan for future air access

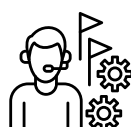
Higher Cost & Medium-Term Actions:

**Strategic investment promotion to attract an anchor tourism facility, ideally linked to the Baka pygmies to ensure they have a long-term stake and voice in the tourism developed in the reserve.



Invest in basic visitor infrastructure, such as trails, signage, camping facilities, etc. as well as staff capacity to manage and host tourism.

Marketing and communications strategy to attract influencers and local celebrities to build the profile of the reserve, with a focus on the link between wildlife, the forest ecosystem and the Baka people.



Establish visual and written content that can be used to promote the reserve as well as itineraries and circuits that will make it easier for travelers and the travel trade to visit or start to sell tours to the reserve (including familiarization trips for tour operators/influencers once the tourism experiences and services are established).

****Critical Enabler**

Destination Snapshot:

Lobéké National Park, Cameroon

Quick Facts:

- 217,854 Hectares
- Semi-evergreen equatorial forest,
 - Sangha River bounds the eastern border
- IUCN Category 2 - 'National Park'
- UNESCO Natural World Heritage Site*
- Park Entry Fee: 5,000 CFA (for foreigners)
- Gorilla Habituation: Early in process

Seasonality:

- ☀ December - February
Considered the best time to visit for road accessibility
- 💧 September-November, March-June



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

Accommodations & Facilities

Outside the Park:

Along the driving route from Yaoundé, there are a handful of hotels which are featured in various tour itineraries:

Mansa Hotel (Bertoua)
Elephant Hotel (Yokadouma)
Kombo Camp (Mambélé)

There is also a **WWF** guesthouse/office in Mambélé which occasionally hosts travelers.

Within the Park:

Basic camping

Camps are usually found in forest clearings, usually along creeks (for bathing), where tents can be pitched. There are no built facilities and have natural 'pit toilets.'

Deep in the park is **Djembe Camp**, located along the Sangha River. It is unclear if this camp is still operational for tourism.

This park has **commendable infrastructure in their forest clearings**, 'bais,' where 3-4 of them have wooden viewing platforms.

'Petite Saline' & 'Grand Saline' are the most popular, but Ndangaye Bai also has a great viewing platform.

Accessibility:

Int'l Air	Yaoundé-Nsimalen International Airport (Yaoundé)	
Domestic Air	<p>There is a nearby airstrip, right outside of park boundaries and within reach of Park HQ.</p> <p>The airstrip is operated by a logging company, so park managers have no control over its operations.</p>	
Ground	<p>From Yaoundé:</p> <p>- 2 days drive on a variety of good and bad roads. During rainy season, many of these roads are considered likely impassable.</p> <p>Travelers that have visited the park recommend not to drive oneself, rather hiring a private car & driver to navigate the route.</p>	
	<p>All tour itineraries feature an overnight stay in one of the following villages: Bertoua, Batouri, or Yokadouma.</p>	<p>Yaoundé to Bertoua: ~340km on asphalt road</p> <p>Bertoua to Yokadouma: ~300km on 'maintained' dirt road</p>
Within Park	<p>To reach the bais & viewing platforms, the trek ranges from 2-7 hours through muddy creeks and rough forest terrain.</p>	
	<p>To 'Petite Saline': ~3 hour trek</p>	<p>To 'Grand Saline': ~3-4 hours trek further from Petite Saline</p>

Transportation Infrastructure **Poor**

Park Headquarters **Nearby**

Availability of Accommodations **Self-serviced**

Accommodation Product Variation **Low**

Visitor Activities **Special Request**

Activity Product Variation **Medium**

None **Basic** Limited Diverse

Site Destination Maturity
Relative to the Congo Basin Market

*Sangha TriNational is a UNESCO World Heritage site, so Lobéké National Park falls under this designation.

Destination Snapshot:

Lobéké National Park, Cameroon

Current & Potential Natural Tourism Assets:

Geographic Features:

Semi-evergreen rainforest with over 300 species of trees, Forest clearings (Bais) rich in salt, and Saline Swamps to the east. Sangha River along eastern border with sandbars and sandy banks.

Adjacent with two other parks (Sangha-TriNational)

Cross-border tourism circuits are popular with major growth potential.

Wildlife:

Western Lowland Gorillas & Forest Elephants (*some of the highest densities in Africa*), Chimpanzees, ~10 forest ungulate species, Leopards, Buffaloes, and ~305 bird species.

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



Google Maps (2023) Lobeke National Park.

Human Capital

WWF

Lobeke NP falls under the WWF Jengi TNS Program, in which WWF works closely with local communities and larger stakeholders to promote sustainable management of the park as well as local livelihoods.

WWF reports that **nearly 24,000 inhabitants live adjacent to park boundaries**, spread over ~23 villages, including the indigenous Baka and Bantu tribes.

In December 2022, park management signed 34 social pacts with the local communities. The pacts correspond to individual community micro-projects and collaborative conservation management activities in exchange for 'Conservation Bonuses' for active community participants. The payments totaled 10,200,000FCFA

Google Reviews Rating: ★★★★★
1 Total Review

TripAdvisor Rating: ●●●●●
3 Total Reviews

"Extraordinary wild place."

"Access to the site requires walking a little but the (rustic!) camp is 500 m from the site."

"Any visit is an important contribution to the conservation of this region where WWF does remarkable work."

"[Lobeke National Park] is certainly one of the most underrated wildlife experiences in Africa. The main reason is the lack of local infrastructure and the remoteness. [...] In the park, there are no flashy lodges nor are there hotels at the park entrance."

"All in all, it is not bad at all and for somebody who really enjoys the outdoors, it can actually be pleasant."

TripAdvisor Reviews 2017 - 2018

"[Lobeke NP] is about as remote as can be."

"Wildlife viewing in Lobeke centres around forest clearings [...] all you need is patience and luck - they will come to you!"

(Regarding the rustic camping and long trekking distances):

"However, the rewards are immense [...] I'm really not sure why this sight is not better known."

"My visit contributed to local employment, as you cannot just walk into the forest yourself."

"If you have visited some of the better known countries of Africa, and want to try something different, why not give [Cameroon] a go? There are species here you will not find together anywhere else in the continent."

TripAdvisor Reviews 2017

"Now for the reasons why it is a very rewarding experience:

- You are in a tropical rainforest that is completely different from the usual East African safari experiences. There is always something going on around you.
- You get to walk and actually experience nature as opposed to being driven in a safari vehicle.
- You will actively support conservation and the local community by visiting the National Park and by creating job opportunities for porters, guides, etc. Your visit will also help to keep poachers away from the park.
- You will be part of an exclusive group of tourists who visit this mostly unspoiled wildlife experience. Not many people know about it and even fewer actually go there."

TripAdvisor Review 2017

Destination Scorecard:

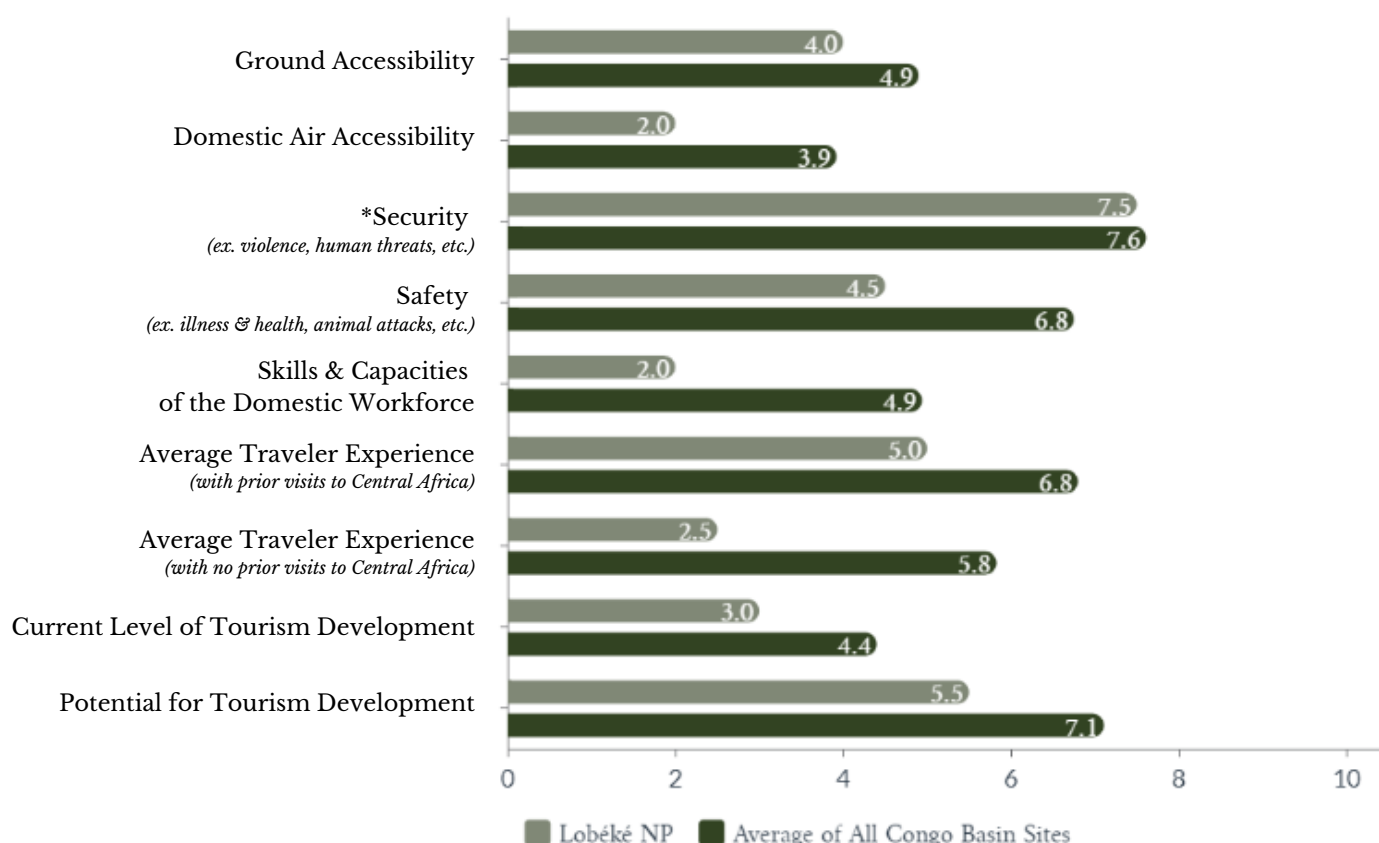
Lobéké National Park, Cameroon

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.

Lobéké National Park Tourism Assessment Survey Results



Key Takeaways:

- Both air and ground modes of access into the park are weak, signaling a need for investment in infrastructure.
- The average traveler experience for tourists in Lobeke NP who have never visited Central Africa before is considerably lower than the regional average. Ensuring that the correct markets are being targeted in the short-term will be key (i.e. those with previous Central African travel experience).

Additional Insights from Survey:

- There is not much formal interest from tourism investors and opportunities for expanded tourism in Lobeke NP at the present time, but investment in neighboring parks may create more interest.
- Touristic infrastructure in the park is low.
- Tourism circuit opportunities & site linkages, as suggested by expert stakeholders:
 - Sangha Trinational Landscape
 - Odzala-Kokoua NP

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

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

Site Analysis:

Lobéké National Park

Overview

Lobéké National Park (LNP) is located in southeast Cameroon, bordering both the Central African Republic and the Republic of Congo. LNP covers roughly 217,854 Hectares. The park's surrounding buffer zone constitutes an additional 596,000 Hectares. Lobéké NP is one of three national parks that make up the Sangha Trinational (TNS) transboundary conservation complex, one of the most important conservation areas in Central Africa [1]. The whole complex was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2012 because of its ecological importance, including its mostly intact and diverse ecosystems, ongoing ecological and evolutionary processes within the landscape, and its endangered species [2].

The landscape of Lobéké National Park is primarily a semi-evergreen equatorial rainforest, with a significant portion of the forest having never been logged - one of the few remaining unlogged forest areas in the region. Within the forest are a multitude of forest clearings, locally known as 'Bais.' The Bais in Lobéké are rich in salt, drawing in some iconic wildlife species such as forest elephants, bongos, green pigeons, gray parrots, and other forest ungulates. Also present in Lobéké are the iconic western lowland gorilla, of which some groups are in the early stages of the habituation process. The two most famous bais for tourism in LNP are Petit Savane and Grand Savane ('Djangui'). Ndangaye Bai is also impressive, however, it is not as frequently visited due to it being further away and harder to access. LNP is bordered on the east by the Sangha River that connects it to other parks in the complex.

The U.S. Department of State has a country level travel advisory for Cameroon of Level 2 (same as France and the UK) [3]. However portions of LNP are subject to a more specific Level 4: 'Do Not Travel' advisory for all areas that lie within 20 kms of the country's border with the Central African Republic. Despite this broad designation, the region of CAR bordering Lobéké is the Dzanga-Sangha complex of protected areas and is considered relatively stable [4]. In fact, multiple stakeholders working in this region report that this advisory does not conform with the reality of the security situation in the TNS complex.

[1]https://2017-2020.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1860/CAFEC_Sangha_Tri-National_Fact_Sheet.pdf

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

[3]<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/cameroon-travel-advisory.html>

[4]<https://www.worldwildlife.org/magazine/issues/fall-2020/articles/safe-zone>

Site Analysis:

Lobéké National Park

Nature-Based Tourism Development Opportunities

The park is supported by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and the Ministry of Forestry & Wildlife (MINFOF). MINFOF is considered the planning and decision-making authority, while WWF Cameroon is the implementing partner, giving financial and technical support to the park [5]. There is a unique third partner in the park, the Sangha Trinational Trust Fund (FTNS), founded in 2007, the organization supports conservation efforts as well as socio-economic wellbeing for local communities, within the Sangha Trinational landscape [6].

Both WWF and FTNS have a key role in tourism development in Lobéké National Park, alongside MINFOF. FTNS is working on several ecotourism initiatives across the wider Sangha Trinational Complex, including infrastructure development, a variety of tourism trainings, and research/monitoring related to ecotourism potential in the national parks [7]. They are also implementing a primate habituation program, though this is still in its early stage.

Access to the park is a constraint from the Cameroon side but is much easier when coming from one of the neighboring parks in the Sangha Trinational Complex. The overland route from Yaoundé to the park averages 2-3 days, with limited rest facilities or accommodation along the way. During the rainy season, many portions of the road are nearly impassable, with stakeholders reporting that ground transportation is only a viable option from December to February, significantly decreasing the park's overall tourism viability from Cameroon's major hubs. An April 2023 safari report by Pictus Safaris reported that many of the hotels along this route were "no longer safe after reports of violence associated with local miners" [8].

In contrast, for tourists coming from one of the other two Sangha Tri National parks, the journey is easier and are both less than one day. A tri-national agreement also exists, 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.

Djembe, a riverside campsite in southern LNP, is only a 5 hour boat ride from Bayanga (CAR) and 30 minutes by boat from Bomassa (RoC) where a new lodge is being developed. However, at present, visitors to LNP must still pass through the formal border inspection sites in Libongo or Socambo (north and south of the park, respectively). They must also check in to the park headquarters in Mambélé, which adds several hours to the journey. To link LNP in a circuit with its neighboring parks, a new system is needed, which streamlines these administrative hurdles for tourists.

The unique selling point of 'checking the box' on three countries in one trip should also not be understated. The Sangha Trinational Complex, if packages and facilitated efficiently could be a highly attractive tourism experience both for its natural attractions and the ability for visitors to step into three countries in one trip.

Site Analysis:

Lobéké National Park

Nature-Based Tourism Development Opportunities

The next major opportunity is in redeveloping Djembe camp as a main tourist hub within the park. Of all the sites within the park, Djembe is noted as the one with the most potential. The wildlife, its proximity to the Sangha River, and its proximity to the two neighboring parks work together in creating significant potential as a tourist attraction and landing spot within LNP. In the past Djembe used to have relatively strong touristic infrastructure. It was reported that there were five wooden huts, a restaurant, and a bridge connecting it to the mainland, though most sit abandoned today and the bridge was burned a few years ago [9].

According to a 2023 report by Pictus Safaris, a small African tour company specializing in wildlife-based tourism, “the game-viewing in Lobeke continues to exceed (reasonable) expectations” [10]. LNP has limited, but commendable infrastructure in their forest clearings. At least 3-4 bais have wooden viewing platforms, where visitors can set up camp for overnight visits.

An opportunity may exist to expand the gorilla habituation programs for tourism in Lobéké National Park, however this should be considered with caution as the other parks in the Sangha Trinational landscape already have habituated groups for tourism and the demand for more may be limited in the short and medium-term.

[5]<https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/210514317.pdf>

[6]<https://fondationtns.org/en/mission-and-vision/>

[7]<https://fondationtns.org/en/promotion-of-ecotourism/>

[8]<https://www.mammalwatching.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Pictus-Safaris-Tour-Report-Cameroon-and-CAR-2023.pdf>

[9]<https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/210514317.pdf>

[10]<https://www.mammalwatching.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Pictus-Safaris-Tour-Report-Cameroon-and-CAR-2023.pdf>

Site Analysis:

Lobéké National Park

Enabling Environment Constraints

Access:

Lobéké National Park faces three major obstacles regarding accessibility; ground transportation to the park, air connectivity to the park and transportation within the park.

Access from Yaoundé and into the park from the neighboring national parks has been detailed in the previous section, with the greatest opportunity being connectivity to parks in neighboring countries, though administrative obstacles exist to facilitate these connections.

The nearest airstrip, which could facilitate travel to the park, is owned by a logging company and the park managers have no control over its operation. If tourism becomes more established in the park, this airstrip may be an access option for travelers if an arrangement could be made with the logging company. Djembe camp, which has strong potential for tourism, is also hard to access. In 2019 it was reported that Djembe is only accessible by boat because of a connecting bridge which was burned down years prior. Access needs to be improved for this camp to become viable.

Lack of Accommodation Infrastructure:

All of the accommodation options for travelers to LNP are considered extremely basic. There are no built facilities except for the WWF guesthouse in Mambélé. There are a handful of forest clearings in which travelers have been known to pitch tents for overnight stays, though they are hard to access. A more diverse tourism offer is needed, one that matches with the facilities in the neighboring parks so that viable circuits can be established. Without the development of more extensive tourism facilities tourism is unlikely to grow in the park.

Capacity:

As with many of the protected areas in the region, there is a need to enhance the capacity of local staff working within the park to understand and be able to manage tourism as well as for communities to also benefit from tourism that is developed in the park. Local Bakwe and Bantu communities had an LNP access and benefit sharing MOU with the government that expired in 2022 and was never fully implemented or socialized in the communities.

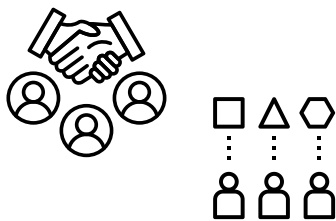
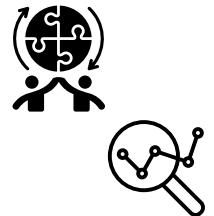
Site Analysis:

Lobéké National Park

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.



**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:

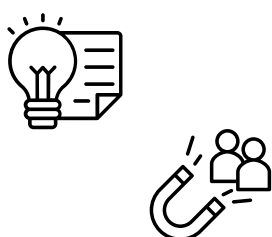
LNP: Still need defining, but possibly birding and mobile camping under the stars, etc.

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.

**In collaboration with MINFOF, WWF and FTNS, develop a tourism plan for the park to create a roadmap for where and how tourism infrastructure, facilities and services will be developed, along with skill development and the structures, systems and standard operating procedures to effectively manage tourism in the reserve. This should specifically focus on connectivity with tourism in other Sangha Trinational Complex parks and development of the Djembe site, with a possible concession of this site for a private tourism operator.



Familiarization trip to Djembe for private lodge operators operating in other parks of the Sangha Trinational Complex as well as potential operators in Cameroon to help define how the Djembe site could be improved for tourism and explore possible collaborative partnerships. This would feed into the tourism plan.

***Critical Enabler*

Site Analysis:

Lobéké National Park

Recommendations & Considerations

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

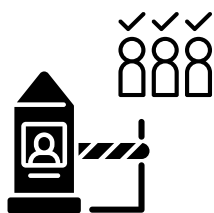
Explore partnership with the logging company that owns and operates the nearby airstrip. Create an agreement where park management and tourism operators can use this airstrip for touristic purpose.



Reestablishing and implementing the MOU between government and the Bake and Bantu communities for access to LNP and involvement of the communities in tourism planning efforts (described above), possibly with a study tour to the community efforts in Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park to model in LNP.

Higher Cost & Medium-Term Actions:

**In collaboration with a private operator (under concession), renovate or rebuild the tourism structures at Djembe to create a lodging facility of similar standards to those in Dzanga-Sangha (Sangha Lodge & Doli Lodge) and the planned facility in Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park to facilitate the circuit between parks/lodges.



**Work with MINFOF and Cameroon boarder control on the establishment of a 'pilot' check-in office in or near Djembe and allowing circuit travelers from the two neighboring parks to check-in here, as opposed to going all the way to the park main office in Mambélé and Libongo or Socambo for border control. Alternatively establish a mobile unit that could facilitate the same.

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.



***Critical Enabler*

Site Analysis:

Lobéké National Park

Recommendations & Considerations

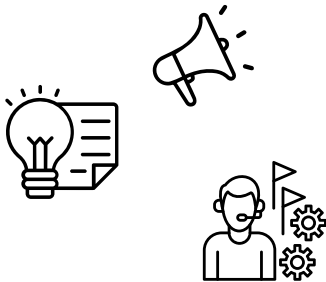
Higher Cost & Medium-Term Actions:

Continued investment in wildlife-viewing infrastructure (wooden viewing platforms, overnight facilities near bais, etc).



Establish a capacity building program for park staff to understand and be able to more effectively manage tourism in the park

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.



Develop a marketing and sales program for the Sangha Trinational Complex in collaboration with park management and tourism operators. This will include a marketing and branding strategy, content creation to tell the story of the parks and the tourism offer, influencer trips to build the image of the region and a travel trade outreach program to engage and excite tour operators about the region.