

ODZALA - HEART OF DIVERSITY

AFRICAN RAINFOREST SAFARIS

Odzala-Kokoua National Park, Republic of the Congo (Brazzaville)



ODZALA
WILDERNESS CAMPS



www.odzala-kokoua.com
www.wilderness-collection.com

SET DEPARTURE ITINERARIES

(specific activities may vary from day to day depending on local circumstances and group choice)



Join Wilderness Collection on a journey through the life-filled African rainforest – along with the privilege and thrill of observing one of our closest relatives in the wild – the Western Lowland Gorilla.

SET DEPARTURE ITINERARY – 6 NIGHTS / 7 DAYS

THURSDAY – DAY 01:

In the early afternoon we depart by private charter from Brazzaville to M'boko Airstrip, Odzala-Kokoua National Park. The charter flight takes approximately two hours and includes a light packed lunch. On arrival at M'boko Airstrip, we are met by a Lango Camp guide who will transfer us by vehicle to Lango Camp – our home for the next three nights. The drive takes approximately 30 minutes through open savannah with views of the forest fringe and interior. Once at camp, we are given an opportunity to freshen up and settle in before embarking on our short afternoon activity which may consist of a walk around Lango Bai and the forest fringe and stream or perhaps a game drive.

FRIDAY - DAY 02:

An early morning wake-up is followed by a light breakfast and coffee on the main deck, after which we embark on our first activity for the day. This could be a walk from camp through Lango Bai and down the clear, shallow waters of the Lango Stream to its confluence with the Lekoli River. A motorised pirogue will then head upstream for two hours (stopping en route for tea/coffee) until reaching the access point to Mbouebe Bai, where a short excursion on foot reaches a concealed hide from which activities at the bai can be observed. The return to camp includes a downstream portion of the river followed by a game drive through the savannah. Back in camp a hearty brunch and rest period awaits before we head out again later for the afternoon activity. An example of this would be a return game drive to the boat jetty followed by a pirogue trip downstream along the Lekoli River to its confluence with the larger Mambili River for sundowners. A night drive back to camp offers intriguing opportunities for seeing some of Odzala's more secretive nocturnal creatures.

SATURDAY - DAY 03:

Wake up early for a light breakfast and coffee before setting off on the morning activity. Today this may begin with a game drive to the boat jetty at the confluence of the Likeni Stream and Lekoli River and then a pirogue trip down the Lekoli River in search of primates, Forest Buffalo and other species, before returning to camp on foot through Lango Bai. The trip along the river offers great opportunities for birding and mammals, while the walk can provide excellent viewing of buffalo, Red River Hogs, a number of primate species and even Bongo. Our return to camp is greeted by an appetising brunch and some downtime before heading out again in the afternoon. This afternoon we may head back to the boat jetty and take a pirogue trip upstream along the Lekoli River enjoying sundowners and perhaps some catch-and-release fishing before returning to camp on a night drive, searching for species such as Spotted Hyaena, Golden Cat and even Water Chevrotain.

SUNDAY - DAY 04:

This morning, after an early wake-up and breakfast we head away from the savannah in air-conditioned land cruisers to the south-western corner of the Park to spend time at Dzebe Bai some two and half hours' drive from Lango. Having walked about a kilometre through the forest to access the bai, we spend midday in the hide waiting for secretive forest animals to appear in the clearing; there's a chance of viewing unhabituated gorillas here, as well as species such as Black-fronted Duiker, Guereza Colobus monkey and perhaps even Chimpanzee. We enjoy a packed lunch in the hide at the bai and in the late afternoon, as activity at the bai subsides, we will return north towards Ngaga Camp. On arrival at Ngaga Camp, we will be met by the staff and given an opportunity to settle in. Before dinner, the group will receive an extensive briefing on Western Lowland Gorillas, including the research project in the area, conservation of the species, their biology and ecology and of course what to expect when tracking the habituated groups of the area.

MONDAY – DAY 05:

This morning, after an early wake-up and light breakfast we depart on foot with our guide and tracker on our first gorilla tracking excursion. Using the expert skills of the trackers we start at the point where the group chosen to be monitored for that day slept the night before



and follow their tracks as they move through the forest until we find them. While home range sizes are relatively small, the gorillas can move quite quickly through thick forest undergrowth and during a 2-5 hour tracking excursion (including time spent observing the gorillas) we may cover between 5 and 8 kilometres.

After this exhilarating experience we return to camp to freshen up and enjoy a brunch before spending the middle of the day at leisure. In the afternoon after a light tea we will enjoy a guided forest walk in search of birds and primates as well as forest duiker and, if time allows, visit the Gorilla Tracking Academy run by Dr Magda Bermejo and German Illera. Here we will learn about the comprehensive training of local community trackers from all over west-central Africa and how this plays a role in gorilla conservation.

TUESDAY – DAY 06:

This morning after another early wake-up and light breakfast we set out again on foot for our second gorilla tracking excursion. Our expert trackers will again follow the obscure tracks and sign of the group through the forest until we find the group and enjoy another fascinating experience watching them resting and foraging. Returning to camp, we freshen up and enjoy brunch and a siesta. The afternoon sees us out on the forest trails in search of the birds and mammals of the area, returning to camp to enjoy a sundowner on the main deck overlooking the forest canopy and Ngaga Stream.

WEDNESDAY – DAY 07:

We have a far more leisurely start this morning, leaving after breakfast for M'boko airstrip (a drive of 2.5 hours) to meet our private charter flight back to Brazzaville. We will land in Brazzaville in the afternoon in plenty of time for any onward flights.



SET DEPARTURE ITINERARY – 3 NIGHTS /4 DAYS

TUESDAY – DAY 01:

In the early afternoon we depart by private charter from Brazzaville to M'boko Airstrip in Odzala-Kokoua National Park. The charter flight takes approximately two hours and includes a light packed lunch. On arrival at M'boko Airstrip, we are met by a Lango Camp guide who will transfer us by vehicle to Lango Camp. Once at camp we are given an opportunity to settle in before embarking on our short afternoon activity which may consist of a walk around Lango Bai and the forest fringe and stream.

WEDNESDAY - DAY 02:

This morning, after a very early wake-up and breakfast we depart for Ngaga Camp, a transfer of approximately two hours. On arrival at Ngaga Camp, we will be given an extensive briefing on Western Lowland Gorillas including what to expect when tracking the habituated groups of the area. We then depart on foot with our guide and tracker and using their expert tracking skills follow gorilla signs as they move through the forest, until we find them. While home range sizes are relatively small, the gorillas can move quite quickly through thick forest undergrowth and during a 2-5 hour tracking excursion (including time spent observing the gorillas) we may cover between 5 and 8 kilometres. We later return to camp to freshen up and enjoy brunch before spending the middle of the day at leisure. In the afternoon we will enjoy a walk on the forest trails in search of birds and mammals.



THURSDAY – DAY 03:

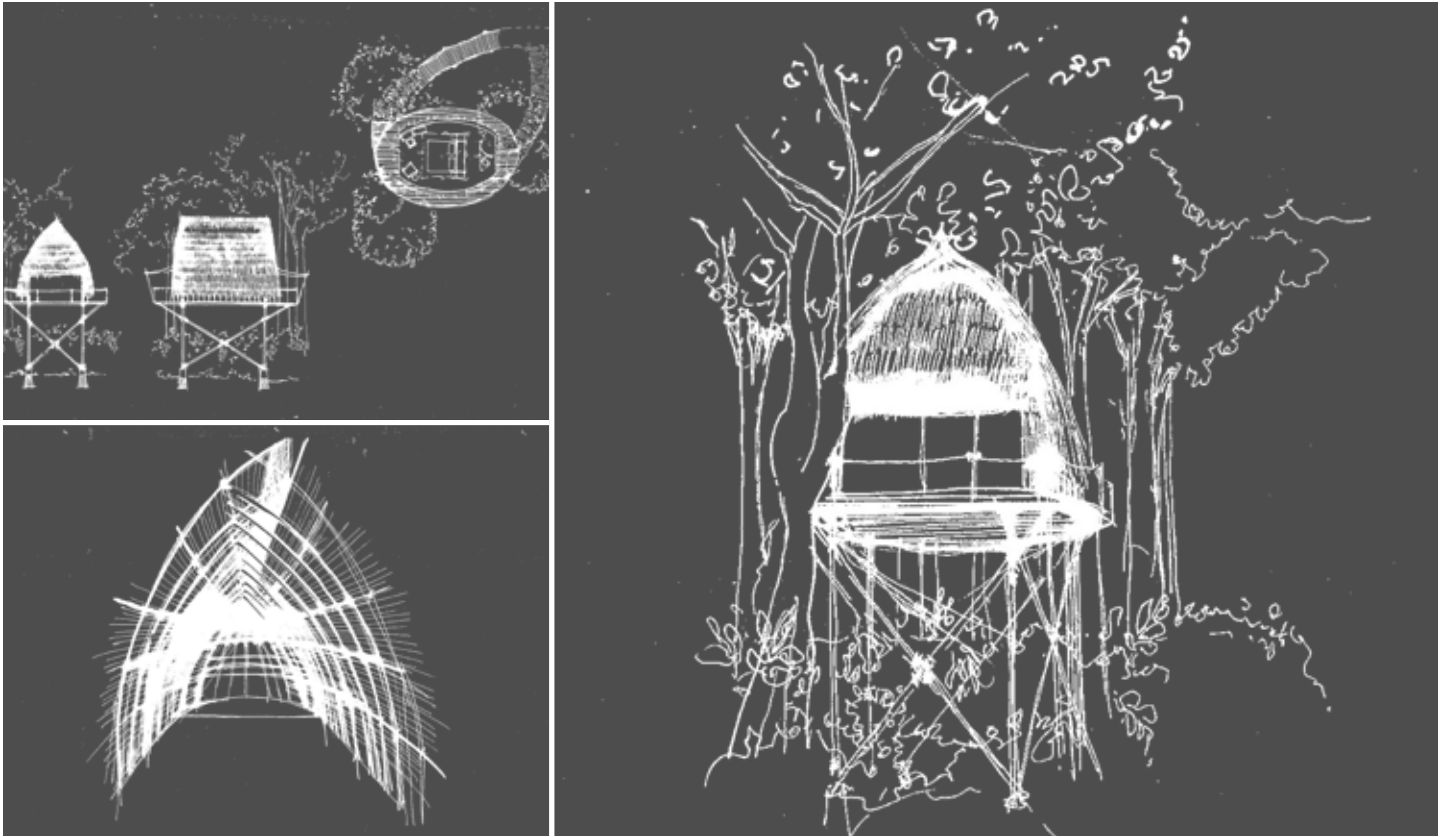
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FRIDAY – DAY 04:

We have a far more leisurely start this morning, leaving after breakfast for M'boko airstrip (a drive of 2.5 hours) to meet our private charter flight back to Brazzaville. We will land in Brazzaville in the afternoon in plenty of time for any onward flights.



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION



ACCOMMODATION

The privilege and thrill of observing one of our closest relatives in the wild will be undertaken from two intimate, sensitively constructed camps that leave as light a footprint as possible and blend into this remote forest environment: Lango Camp, nestled in mature forest on the outskirts of Lango Bai and with access to the savannah as well as the Lekoli and Mambili Rivers, and Ngaga Camp in the heart of a marantaceae forest.

Each camp will consist of six creatively designed guest rooms, taking inspiration from the designs of the local Pygmy or 'forest dweller' groups. Natural, locally sourced materials will be used extensively in the construction of the camps: sustainably harvested hardwoods (FSC certified), bamboo and raffia palm matting. Each of the guest rooms will be raised 3-4m above the ground with a wraparound walkway allowing full appreciation of the forest canopy.

INTERNATIONAL ACCESS

Brazzaville, the capital of Congo, is easily accessed by numerous airlines, notably Air France via Paris, Inter Air via Johannesburg and Kenya Airways via Nairobi, thus making the destination easily accessible from Europe and also combinable with Southern or East African safaris.

WESTERN LOWLAND GORILLA

There are two species of gorilla found in Africa, the Western Gorilla *Gorilla gorilla* and the Eastern Gorilla *Gorilla beringei*. The Eastern Gorilla consists of two subspecies, the well-known Mountain Gorilla *G. b. beringei* of Uganda and Rwanda, and the Eastern Lowland Gorilla *G. b. graueri* of the eastern parts of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Both of these subspecies are considered Endangered. The Western Gorilla also consists of two subspecies, the Western Lowland Gorilla *G. g. gorilla* principally of Congo (Brazzaville) and Gabon, and the little known Cross River Gorilla *G. g. diehli* of the border region between Cameroon and Nigeria. Both of these subspecies are considered Critically Endangered as a result of commercial bushmeat hunting, disease epidemics and habitat loss. The very slow rate of reproduction accentuates all these effects.

It is the Western Lowland Gorilla that occurs in Odzala and is found here at the highest densities so far recorded for the species.

In the area of Ngaga Camp Western Lowland Gorillas live in groups ranging in size from 10 to 25 individuals (average 16-17 animals), usually with one silverback, maybe 5-7 adult females and then a collection of sub-adults, babies and sometimes subordinate males. In this high density area, home range size is between just less than 4km² and just over 8km² (average 5-6km² or 2 square miles). Movements within the home range depend on seasonal utilization of key food types. Staple foods for example include leaves, shoots and plant material, but the seasonal availability of fruit is crucial in the diet and influences group foraging movements.

Born at 2kg (4.5lbs), female Western Lowland Gorillas will grow to around 70kg (150lbs) in weight, while the much larger males might reach 180kg (390lbs) and stand 1.8m (6 feet) in height.

GORILLA TRACKING



Western Lowland Gorillas can be observed in two different ways while in Odzala: either through tracking habituated groups using the impressive skills of our expert local Mbeti trackers (Okoko Zepherin and Okele Gabin), or by patiently waiting at hides on the edge of forest bays for family groups to forage on the sedges (water-loving grasses) there.

As a result of the work done by gorilla researchers Dr Magda Bermejo and German Illera, a number of habituated groups can be tracked and observed in the area around Ngaga Camp. In this extended 30km² (11.5 square miles) area there are no fewer than 7 groups totalling 105 individual gorillas. Two of these groups are usually accessed by our guests while a third is observed primarily for research purposes. Other groups are also seen on a regular basis.

Given that Ngaga Camp is situated at an overlap between the home ranges of three different gorilla groups and close to another three, tracking expeditions do not cover enormous distances and can range in length from 1-8km (0.5-5 miles) over undulating country. The undergrowth can be thick however and, including the time spent with a gorilla group, excursions can last between 2 and 5 hours.

Gorilla viewing protocol is based on the guidelines issued by the IUCN for great ape viewing and is very similar to that of Rwanda/Uganda. Protocols are designed specifically to limit behavioural impact and also potential disease transmission from humans to gorillas. They are critical for gorilla conservation.

- Minimum age for gorilla viewing is 15 years – this is for reasons of safety but also for possible disease transmission, with children under this age more prone to infection.
- Maximum proximity to gorillas is 7 metres (22 feet). It is not permitted to approach more closely and we typically view the animals at 10-15m (32-50 feet).
- Maximum viewing duration of any group is 1 hour per day. Each group is only visited once per day, but if guests would like to spend more than an hour with gorillas on a particular day and time allows it is possible to track a different group following the first encounter.
- Maximum number of guests per gorilla tracking excursion is 6.
- Guests that display cold, flu or other respiratory tract symptoms, will not be allowed to track gorillas.
- No food is permitted on gorilla tracking excursions, nor is smoking allowed. Hand washing facilities are provided at Ngaga Camp prior to gorilla tracking.
- While gorilla sightings and encounters are very reliable, viewing is dependent on variables such as weather and tracking conditions.



FOREST WILDLIFE

Viewing of birds and mammals in tropical forests anywhere in the world can be challenging. The dense environment and slow-going through the undergrowth means that a great guide with a comprehensive knowledge of behaviour and calls is essential to get the best sightings. Odzala is blessed as a result of containing numerous habitats, from dense primary forest to forest fringe, savannah, wide, languid rivers and forest bais and salines. As a result diversity is high and the rivers and bais in particular allow the 'green curtain' of the forest to be pulled back and allow our guests an insight into this spectacular ecosystem.

While many of our visitors will no doubt be attracted principally by the opportunity to observe Western Lowland Gorillas, this giant ape that shares more than 97% of its DNA with humans, is not the only inhabitant of the forest and its bais. Below we describe the quality of sightings of a few of the key species likely to be encountered on an Odzala expedition.



PRIMATES

WESTERN LOWLAND GORILLA

A number of habituated groups of this species are accessible in the Ndzehi area from Ngaga Camp. Sightings in two bais that are accessed on each trip are regular and provide the opportunity for an entirely different kind of gorilla encounter.



GUEREZA COLOBUS

This is one of the more visible primate species in Odzala and is seen in the M'boko and Lango areas, as well as along the Lenkeni and Lekoli Rivers. It is also a regular visitor to the forest bais, including three that we visit on a regular basis.



GREY-CHEEKED MANGABEY

Another fairly visible species that is regularly seen in the forests around M'boko especially in the early morning.



MOUSTACHED MONKEY

Although difficult to observe for long periods of time, this colourful species is fairly regularly seen in mature forest.

OTHER

Agile Mangabey, De Brazza's Monkey, Allen's Swamp Monkey, Crowned Monkey and Putty-Nosed Monkey are all regularly seen in their preferred habitats and visitors to Odzala should see a number of these species during their trip. Western Chimpanzee are regularly heard in the M'boko and Lango areas as well as along the Lekoli River but are not habituated and are seldom seen except during rare appearances at two of the bais that most trips to Odzala visit.



HERBIVORES

FOREST ELEPHANT

Bulls of this species are regularly seen in the M'boko area, both in the savannah and forest fringe as well as along the Lekoli River. Small family groups are less often seen.



FOREST BUFFALO

This charismatic species is abundant and is commonly seen in the M'boko and Lango areas and especially at Lango and Mbouebe Bais, along the Lekoli River and in the savannah.



BONGO

This exciting forest species is resident in the area around Lango Camp and although primarily nocturnal is regularly seen, either as single animals or in a small herd of about 6 animals. It is also occasionally seen at one of the bais that is visited on most expeditions to Odzala.



SITATUNGA

This is a resident species in the area around Lango Camp and is regularly seen, especially at the bai near Camp.

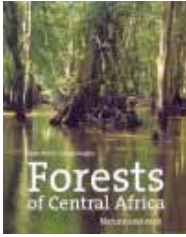


BLACK-FRONTED DUIKER

This is the most regularly-seen forest duiker species since it visits the open bais and can therefore be easily observed.

OTHER

Red River Hog, Harnessed Bushbuck, Grey Duiker and Peters' Duiker are regularly seen in the M'boko and Lango areas while a number of other forest duiker are occasionally encountered but are difficult to observe (Blue, Yellow-backed, White-bellied and Bay Duiker). Another exciting species occasionally seen after dark is the Water Chevrotain. Hippo occur in the Lekoli River but are secretive and rare.



READING LIST:

Forests of Central Africa: Nature and Man - Jean Pierre Vande Weghe

(Protea Book House, 2010) ISBN-13: 9781869190736

An excellent hard cover book that is an excellent introduction to the whole African equatorial region from west to east. It covers mammals, vegetation, people and many other subjects. Odzala is frequently covered.



Congo Journey – Redmond O’Hanlan

(Penguin Books, 1997) ISBN: 0140121390

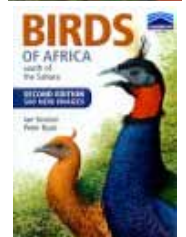
“O’Hanlon sets off on a journey into the Congo in search of a dinosaur in a lost prehistoric lake. He describes the hundreds of rare and little-known birds and animals which he encounters on his travels, combining the acute observation of a nineteenth century missionary with the wit and humour of a Monty Python extra.”



Bradt Travel Guide: Congo

(Bradt Travel Guides, 2008 – 2012 edition due out soon) ISBN-13: 9781841622330

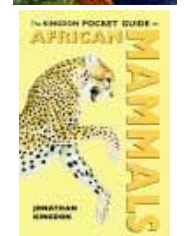
This guidebook to both Congo (Brazzaville), where Odzala is situated, and the neighbouring democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is currently in revision and will feature Odzala when it is reprinted. The book covers the major cities and national parks of the two countries as well as their cultures. Well worth reading for a comprehensive overview of the region.



Birds of Africa: South of the Sahara - Ian Sinclair and Peter Ryan

(Struik, 2011) ISBN-13: 9781770076235

This is THE guide to African birds and is superbly illustrated as well as still being handy enough to use as a field guide despite the fact that it covers such a broad area. It is the only book to describe and illustrate all the birds found in Africa south of the Sahara Desert (the Afrotropic Region), including the islands in the Gulf of Guinea (Sao Tome, Principe and Bioko) just off the coast of Gabon and Cameroon.



The Kingdon Pocket Guide to African Mammals - Jonathan Kingdon

(Christopher Helm, 2004) ISBN: 0713669810

This is the best field guide to the mammals of Africa and is compact, concise, well-illustrated and very easy to use. It is a must in terms of the vast array of primates, squirrels, forest duiker, pangolins and other exciting species found in Odzala.



DVD LIST:

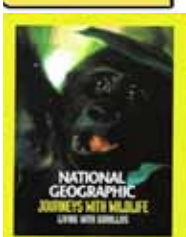
National Geographic has produced two DVDs on Odzala, while a third DVD covers western lowland gorillas in Nouabale-Ndoki National Park further north in the country. Each one is well worth watching to get to grips with the unique features of the rainforest and bays of the Congo Basin.

Odzala - Islands in the Forest (National Geographic, 2008)

This spectacular production focuses on the bays and the biodiversity of Odzala National Park.

Watch a trailer of ‘Odzala – Islands in the Forest’ here:

<http://www.natgeoeeducationvideo.com/film/238/odzala-islands-in-the-forest>



Living with Gorillas (National Geographic, 2008)

This DVD covers the lives of Dr Magda Bermejo and her partner German Illera as they track and study the western lowland gorillas of Odzala.



Mystery Gorilla (National Geographic, 2010)

Great footage of the gorillas of Nouabale-Ndoki and the work done here by the Wildlife Conservation Society.

The **BBC Natural History Unit** has also focused on Odzala and featured this phenomenal national park in the 2001 three-part TV series, ‘Congo’: i) The River that Swallows All Rivers, ii) Spirits of the Forest, iii) Footprints in the Forest. Odzala also featured prominently in a 2002 BBC Wildlife Special called ‘Gorillas: On the Trail of King Kong

BOOKING INFORMATION

RACK RATES (VALID FOR TRAVEL 3 MAY 2012 UNTIL 9 JANUARY 2013)

6 NIGHT ITINERARY: US\$6,000 per person per trip, single supplement of US\$3,600 (Brazzaville to Brazzaville)

3 NIGHT ITINERARY: US\$4,500 per person per trip, single supplement of US\$2,700 (Brazzaville to Brazzaville)

INCLUSIONS AND EXCLUSIONS

PACKAGE INCLUDES:

- Internal flights (Brazzaville to Lango Camp airstrip and return).
- Ground transportation (M'boko airstrip to Lango Camp and return; Lango Camp to Ngaga Camp and return).
- Accommodation (full board basis) as per itinerary:
3 nights Lango Camp, 3 nights Ngaga Camp
OR
1 night Lango Camp, 2 nights Ngaga Camp
- All meals
- All local drinks (excludes premium alcoholic brands)
- Laundry at camps
- Activities:
LANGO CAMP – guided walking/game drives/boat cruises/canoeing/park and forest visits
NGAGA CAMP – daily tracking of habituated gorilla groups/guided forest walks

PACKAGE EXCLUDES:

- International air travel to/from Brazzaville
- Gratuities/Tipping
- Curios and personal purchases
- Visas
- Accommodation in Brazzaville where this is required
- Departure tax of US\$ 30 from Brazzaville

DEPARTURE & SEASON DATES

Departing every Thursday starting from 3 May 2012.

(Closed between 27 September 2012 to 05 December 2012 and 26 September 2013 to 04 December 2013.)

BOOKINGS

Please continue to book all Odzala itineraries through your usual travel consultant at Wilderness Safaris

INSURANCE COVER

Due to the remote location of Odzala it is a requirement for all travellers to ensure that they have a minimum of US \$100,000 medical evacuation cover in case of any emergencies. Additional cover above this figure will also be required for in-house hospital costs and for this purpose we would recommend a minimum of US\$50,000.

BACKGROUND

ODZALA-KOKOUA NATIONAL PARK

Odzala-Kokoua is one of Africa's oldest national parks, having been proclaimed by the French administration in 1935. It covers some 13600 square kilometres (1.360 million hectares) of pristine rain forest and is an integral part of both the Congo Basin and the TRIDOM Transfrontier Park overlapping Gabon, Congo and Central African Republic. It holds globally significant populations of Western Lowland Gorilla and Forest Elephant as well as a plethora of other species: 430 bird species and more than 100 mammal species of which around 50 are classified as medium- or large-sized. Odzala has the highest number (11) of diurnal primates for any forest block in central Africa, as well as Africa's highest density of Western Lowland Gorillas and central Africa's highest density of Chimpanzees.

BAIS

Bais, or salines, are swampy, grassy areas that are dotted across the rainforest and which offer a rare chance to catch a glimpse beyond the 'green curtain' into the lives of the forest dwellers. Various mammal species come to the bais on a regular basis in order to access various elements from minerals and salts, to sedges and water loving grasses to water. These bais range in size from less than a hectare to more than 10 hectares and represent the best chance of seeing forest wildlife. Viewing at the bais takes place from raised platform hides, or miradors, and requires patience. The bais we visit in Odzala-Kokoua are relatively small and as a result offer the opportunity for close up viewing of various species.