

Let's Go to Gabon

8-PERSON SMALL GROUP ADVENTURE

JUNE – JULY 2026

A CHALO EXPLORERS CLUB EXPEDITION

Female Mandrill by Chalo guest @ Michael Ortner



INTRODUCTION

Of Birds & Bees, and Forest Elephants, Mandrills, Gorillas & even a Bwiti...

Dear Adventurers,

We are happy to report that more people have started to venture into Gabon – long may this trend continue! This particular safari has been designed as a pre-trip extension to our Congo River Cruise in 2026, but if you read it carefully, you'll see that it holds up extremely well as a stand-alone trip as well, because of its many unique inclusions.

- 1) One of the big draws of Gabon is its ability to allow visitors to track wild mandrills in Lopé National Park. Only in Gabon.
- 2) One of the most intriguing & authentic cultural activities on the continent is the psychedelic Bwiti Ceremony. Only in Gabon.
- 3) That jewel of Gabon, Loango NP, a unique biodiversity hotspot and home to

so many charismatic and enigmatic species. Only in Gabon.

Question: Where in the world can you be relatively sure of seeing African forest elephants, Western lowland gorillas, mandrill, red-river hogs, humpback whale congregations, slender-snouted crocs, dwarf crocs, grey-cheeked and red-capped mangabeys, grand murmurations of African River Martins and Rosy Bee Eaters on one and the same trip?

Answer: Nowhere in the world, except perhaps in Gabon!

So if you are intrigued by the idea of exploring virgin rainforests, boating down broad African rivers and lagoons, tracking mandrills with pioneering researchers, walking in the footsteps of lowland gorillas or sleeping on a bed at Dr Albert Schweitzer's hospital, I hope you will decide to join us on this extraordinary adventure to the Congo Basin where a different type of safari awaits you...

We have tweaked this itinerary to make it flow smoother, but it is still an adventure in every sense of the word. This is not your typical glamping safari for which sub-Saharan Africa is famous. It requires a certain level of physical fitness and mental fortitude to truly enjoy the experiences that Gabon has to offer. But if you are up to the challenge, then I promise that your rewards will be tremendous.

Sangeeta



This can be a stand-alone trip OR a pre/post-trip extension to Chalo's Congo Cruise in July 2026

Dates for Trip 1: June 24, 2026 – July 3, 2026

Dates for Trip 2: July 22, 2026 – July 31, 2026



Onward Ho! To Lopé and Loango NP

Gabon is a wild place of pristine old-growth forests where there are almost no human settlements, and where wild animals live protected within the thick foliage of the Congolese rainforest, nestled between the many rivers that traverse this west African country. This is a trip for those of you who want to see something new, something different. It is a place for the intrepid Africa enthusiast who will be thrilled by the sight of a red river hog in a wallow, or a wary lowland gorilla in a forest clearing. On this trip, (hopefully!) timed to coincide with the gathering of humpback whales off the shores of Gabon, and the troops of the fabulously colorful Gabon mandrill, we will enjoy a truly epic African adventure, moving by boat, and plane through the heart of Africa.



DAY 1, **June 24, 2026** or **July 22, 2026**:

ARRIVE IN LIBREVILLE, GABON

Today we will assemble in Libreville, where you will be met and transferred to your hotel. We have no specific plans for this first day as people will be arriving at different times from all parts of the world.

Overnight lodging: Room at the Mina Hotel in Libreville

Meals included: Welcome dinner with soft drinks and beer is included in the cost. Any other liquor is payable directly by the guests.



DAY 2, **June 25, 2026** or **July 23, 2026**:

LIBREVILLE to LOPE NP BY ROAD

After breakfast at the hotel, we'll start our road trip to Lopé National Park which is located about 300 kms due east of the city. Although the distance is not much on paper, it can take several hours to complete this trip (no more than 8 hours, we hope). Even though that seems very long for so few kms, believe it

or not, the road trip takes less time than doing the train ride from Libreville to Lopé! The remainder of your day will be at leisure. The hotel grounds are very pretty and you can stroll down to the river and get in some good birding today.

Overnight lodging: Lopé Hotel for 3 nights

Meals included : Breakfast at the Mina and packed lunch en route to Lopé. Lunches and dinners at Lopé are to be settled directly because they work on an à la carte menu basis and won't let us pre-order unfortunately. Also drinks are to be settled directly.



Lopé Hotel views by Chalo guest @ Kit Boey



DAYS 3-4,

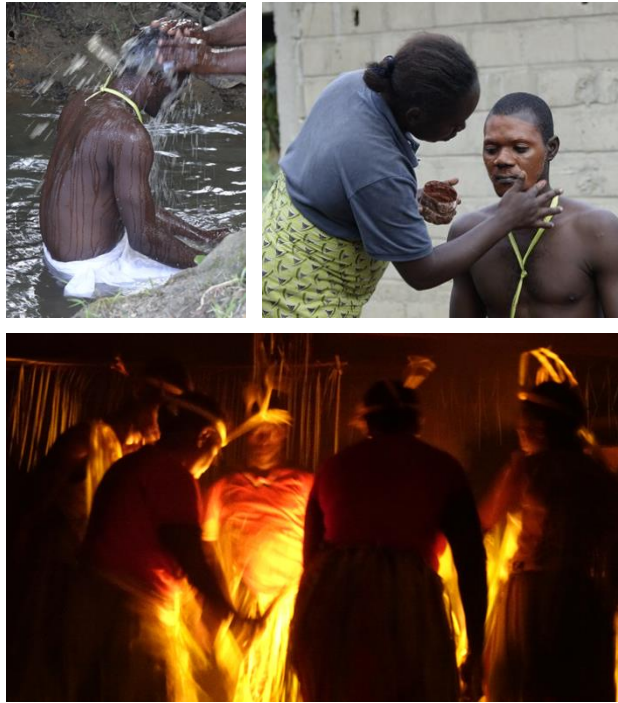
June 26 & 27, 2026 or **July 24 & 25, 2026**

LOPÉ NP – MANDRILL TREKS

On each of the 2 full days here, groups of 4 guests per day will accompany the mandrill research team and head out to track the mandrill troops of Lopé NP, possibly the best place to see them in the wild anywhere in the world. Dr. David Lehmann has radio-collared a few individuals for his scientific research work on mandrills, so we will take advantage of his telemetry equipment to track these elusive primates as they forage and feed in the park. The mandrill permits support Dr. Lehmann's conservation efforts and we think that this type of collaboration with scientists on the ground goes to the very heart of conservation travel. You will have an opportunity to also go on a walking- or driving safari in the park when not on a mandrill trek.



Dr David Lehmann with a Chalo guest, discussing the mandrill habitat <https://gabon.wcs.org/en-us/Wild-Places/Gabons-Forests/Mandrill-Research-and-Tourism.aspx>



Bwiti photos Sangeeta@Chalo Africa

On Day 4, June 27, 2026 (or July 25, 2026), **we have organized a Bwiti Ceremony in Lopé.** On our first couple of trips, we had included a Bwiti ceremony at a village just outside Libreville. This time, we have included a Bwiti ceremony right in the middle of the trip. It is hard to describe this unique ceremony that originated with the forest people of Gabon. Suffice it to say, it is a dazzling blend of color, song and fire with the initiates going into a deep trance after ingesting the iboga root bark. It is an orthodox, original ceremony – and what we will see will be the real thing. Bwiti rites are expensive, so our attendance helps the participants gather the funds

needed for their ceremony.

DAY 5, **June 28, 2026** or **July 26, 2026**

LOPÉ TO LAMBERENE BY CAR (about 6 hours)

After an early breakfast, we'll head out by car to Lamberéné, the site of Dr. Albert Schweitzer's hospital that he founded in 1913 on the Ogooué River, and get acquainted with his work for which he received a Nobel Prize in 1952. We'll spend the evening exploring the hospital premises and museum and spend the night here in simple but comfortable rooms that are very evocative of the original hospital. Overnight at the Schweitzer Hospital. Breakfast, packed lunch and dinner included. No drinks are included.



Dr Albert Schweitzer's Hospital in Lamberéné @Chalo guest, Joel Gunter

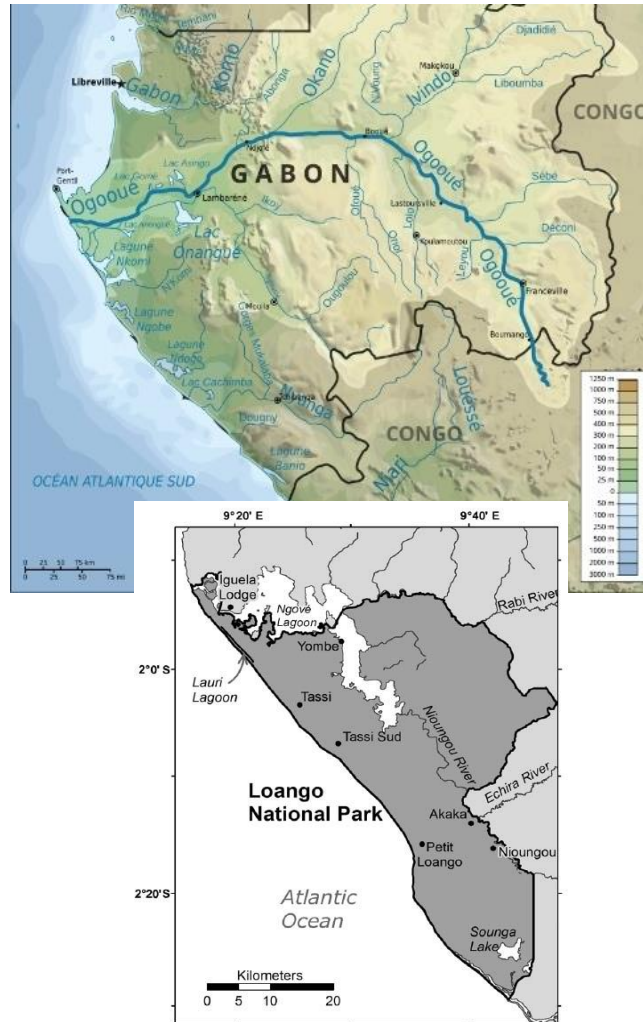


DAY 6, **June 29, 2026** or **July 27, 2026** **LAMBERENE to LOANGO BY BOAT (8-9 hours)**

After breakfast, we will hop onto a motorized boat by 7am for a thrilling 4-5 hour ride down the Ogooué River to Omboué, where we will stop for lunch. From there, it is 1.5 hours to Loango NP by car and then a productive boat safari to Akaka Camp, arriving in camp by about 6pm. The Ogooué journey recreates what early explorers like De Brazza might have seen when they first arrived to explore the Congo Basin. Although these explorers initially thought that the Ogooué was a tributary of Congo, it is an independent river system that empties into the Iguela Lagoon and from there into the Atlantic. Although this will be a long day, we encourage you to treat this not simply as a transfer/travel day, but as a day on the river, enjoyed as an experience by itself.

Overnight at Akaka Camp for 3 nights in Loango NP

Meals included: Breakfast, lunch and dinner & house drinks (premium drinks not included)



DAY 7 & 8, **June 30-July 1, 2026** or **July 28-29, 2026** **LOANGO NP, AKAKA CAMP**

Akaka Camp is a very special place, perched as it is in the backwaters of Loango NP. During the dry season, it becomes a magnet for forest elephants, all sorts of primates including chimps, gorillas and mangabays, as well as for

a plethora of migratory and resident birds – from loudly chattering African Grey Parrots to murmuring flocks of River Martins and Rosy Bee Eaters – it is an enchanted place where you can watch snorkeling elephants from the deck of the camp, with a chilled drink in hand.



During your 3-night stay here, you can do an optional habituated gorilla trek (if you are not joining us on the Congo cruise where 2 gorilla treks are included), explore the little streams and inlets of the Akaka River looking for 5 species of kingfishers, African finfoots, dwarf and slender-snouted crocodiles, as well as extremely hard to see animals like the anomalure. Simple but comfortable tents are set right on the riverbanks in the forest, and the forest teems with life at this time of the year.

Overnight at Akaka Camp.



ITINERARY & COSTS

DAY 9, July 2, 2026 or July 30, 2026

LOANGO NP – PORT GENTIL – LIBREVILLE

After an early breakfast today, we'll transfer by car to Port Gentil and head off directly to the pier for a 2-3 hour whale watching excursion. For group 1, we may be a bit early in the season, and if the whales are not there, we will spend more of the day in Loango instead and set off later for Port Gentil. For group 2, starting in late July, the whales should have arrived already. The humpback whales start to gather on both coasts of Africa starting late June-early July (Gabon on the west coast and Madagascar on the east coast), and with some luck we'll enjoy some nice whale sightings in the harbor area. The short flight back to Libreville is at about 10 pm.

Overnight at the Mina Hotel Breakfast & Lunch included. Dinner is not included.

DAY 10, July 3, 2026 or July 31, 2026

LIBREVILLE – BRAZZA/HOME

We have a city/market tour this morning for those of you who are not joining us in the Congo. You will be transferred to the airport in time for your international flight back home (please check your onward flight timings with us before booking your flight). For those who are continuing on to the Congo with us, you will be on a 7:30 am flight from Libreville – Brazzaville on July 3. You will reach Brazzaville and transfer to the Radisson Blu, where you will meet the rest of the group before embarking on your Congo adventure the following day.

End of our services

- **The cost of this 10-day Gabon trip is EUR 8,975 per person sharing**
 - Single supplement of EUR 850 per person (limited singles possible at Akaka. Elsewhere, not a problem);
 - Optional gorilla permit for Akaka habituated gorilla tracking is EUR 550;
 - Compulsory vaccinations: yellow fever vaccination is needed; please ensure that you carry your yellow book with you for random inspections
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The cost includes:

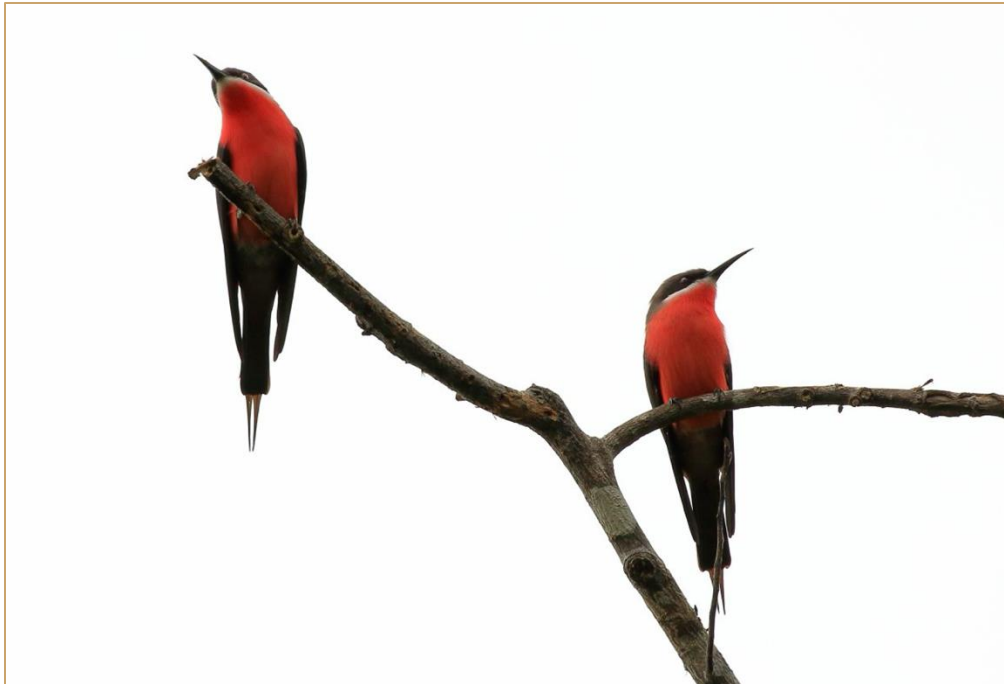
- Meet and greet + all transport within Gabon – car, boat and flights as indicated
 - Fuel, drivers, and local guides everywhere
 - Accommodation and meals as indicated
 - Daily activities as indicated 1 x Mandrill permit included
 - House drinks are included only at Akaka
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The costs do not include:

- International flights to and from Libreville
- The flight from Libreville to Brazzaville is NOT included (approximately Eur 500).
- Meals not specified in the itinerary (in Libreville & Lopé)
- Any applicable visas
- Visas on arrival (Euro 220)
- Travel insurance
- Habituated gorilla tracking permit (Euro 550)



- The itinerary and activities are subject to change in accordance with local conditions
- Please travel with a **single 'soft' suitcase/duffle bag** (not a 'hard' suitcase) and one backpack
- We recommend that you bring a **hiking pole, torch, sunscreen, and dark clothes** for the forest
- Guests should bring along an **extra EUR 300 to cover non-included food and drinks, and EUR 250 for tips, shopping & miscellaneous expenses (per person).**
- Payment means that you have read, understood, and accepted our Terms and Conditions: <https://www.chaloafrica.com/docs/terms-and-conditions.pdf>



Rosy bee-eaters - photo credit to Chalo guest © Michael Ortner

Expedition Payment Terms:

- A 30% non-refundable deposit confirms the reservation.
- An additional 40% deposit is due 180 days prior to trip date.
- Remaining 30% due 90 days prior to trip date

Cancellations:

- Cancellation from confirmation date until 181 days from trip date – forfeit the 30% deposit.
- Cancellation from 180 days to 91 days from trip date – forfeit 70% deposit
- Cancellation 90 days or less from trip date -- forfeit 100% of trip cost.



Bwiti ceremony witnessed by Sangeeta



Great Blue Turacao, skimmers, and terns by Chalo guest @Michael Ortner



@KitBoey



*A forest elephant in Loango NP
@Chalo guest, Joel Gunter*



Registered Office: Santa Fe, USA

Phone: +1 703 220 6393

E-mail: hello@chaloafricainc.com

Website: www.chaloafrica.com

