

# AFRICA

## Travel Magazine

**This sample edition features pages from our Southern Africa Yearbook Edition. The latest version is in production and a digital version will be available for download following the Africa Travel Association (ATA) 35th Annual Congress, May 17-20 in Banjul, The Gambia.**

**For your convenience, we have limited the size of this sample to under 60 pages**

**Also for your convenience to avoid constant page turning, we have designed this PDF version in double page spreads, except for the covers. Previews of over 24 other editions can be viewed from our website - <http://www.africa-ata.org/mag.htm>**

**To turn pages, please scroll - use the return key or the forward arrow.**



# CENTRAL *Region*

# Central Africa

THIS WORLD EDITION IS IN A WORK IN PROGRESS. Until we begin our subscription program, this version is available for preview at no charge. Before any pages from this edition appears in print, all photos and advertisements appearing in this preview that are not of highest resolution will be replaced. Before our final editing, several new pages and supplements will be added.

*“The western media needs to focus more on success stories in Africa. We are doing so many good things out here which do not get enough publicity.”* President Kikwete, Tanzania,

Testimonials from our supporters in Africa, the UK, USA and around the world are solid proof that we have heeded President Kikwete’s request by providing positive publicity for the past 15 years. The results are showing up in meaningful, measurable ways, as we move ahead in building a library of books and magazines that showcase the Best of Africa. Our “Faces of Africa” are smiling for good reason - their stories in print, online and on air are many, varied and well received. For over 100 examples visit: [www.africa-ata.org/faces1.htm](http://www.africa-ata.org/faces1.htm)

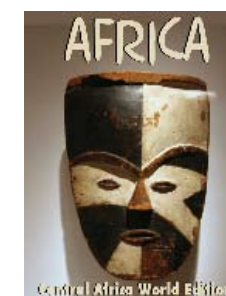
*Left: View of Lubango, Angola from nearby mountain. Photo by Muguette Goufrani  
Cover: Festival in Cameroon.*

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**Inserts: 24 Page Supplement on Cameroon**

**Africa’n Fashions and Designers**



# VISIT CAMEROON DURING THE COUNTRY'S SPECTACULAR CULTURAL FESTIVALS



## Africa in One Country: Cultural Mosaic and Ecotourism Paradise

Cameroon's theme, "Africa in One Country," says it all - cultural variety, pageantry, panoramic scenery, and wildlife in its natural habitat. Serendipity brings a pleasant surprise around every corner, from Mount Cameroon and the balmy beaches of Kribi and Limbe, to Waza National Park and Lake Chad in the far north, on the doorstep of Africa's Great Sahara desert. Cameroon is the home of colorful festivals year round. The Ngondo Festival in Douala, Cameroon's largest city, is held annually for ten days, ending on the first Sunday in December. In the photo (left) two tribal experts collect and read a message from the water spirits. The scene opposite features a 65 man dugout canoe, 30m in length. The canoe portrayed is the winning entrant from 2005. The smaller dugout carries divers, about to descend into the Wouri river waters to retrieve a message from the spirits. The spirit message, after being interpreted by the experts, is then delivered to a group of chieftains from Douala and area, sitting under a special canopy.



The Ngoun Festival is held every second year in December. The Sultan-King of Bamoun is sitting on his ornate throne, framed by huge elephant tusks. On the page opposite (lower row) the guard's shield features a double headed serpent, which depicts the kingdom's continuing vigilance in keeping its enemies at bay in a two front war. The next photo is of local officials in their colorful regalia. The final photo shows the guards and guests in line with the Bamoun palace in the background.

## Venez découvrir le Cameroun: Toute l'Afrique dans un pays - une mosaïque culturelle et un paradis écotouristique

Yaoundé et Douala, deux principales villes du Cameroun, ont déjà abrité les rencontres de l'Africa Travel Association; et le slogan du Cameroun "Toute l'Afrique dans un pays," en dit long. Ce slogan décrit la diversité culturelle, l'apparat, les paysages panoramiques et la faune dans son habitat naturel. Le don de faire des trouvailles vous gratifie d'un plaisir agréable d'un coin du pays à un autre; du Mont Cameroun et des plages douces de Kribi et de Limbé au Parc National de Waza, ainsi qu'au Lac Tchad dans l'Extrême-Nord, aux portes du grand désert africain du Sahara. Notre équipe de rédaction prépare actuellement un tiré-à-part de Africa Travel Magazine, qui présentera la culture camerounaise ainsi qu'un ensemble de photographies sur le festival du Ngoun et sur d'autres manifestations pittoresques qui se déroulent annuellement - c'est une raison suffisante pour laquelle cette édition aura un aspect conservateur.

*Africa Travel Magazine*



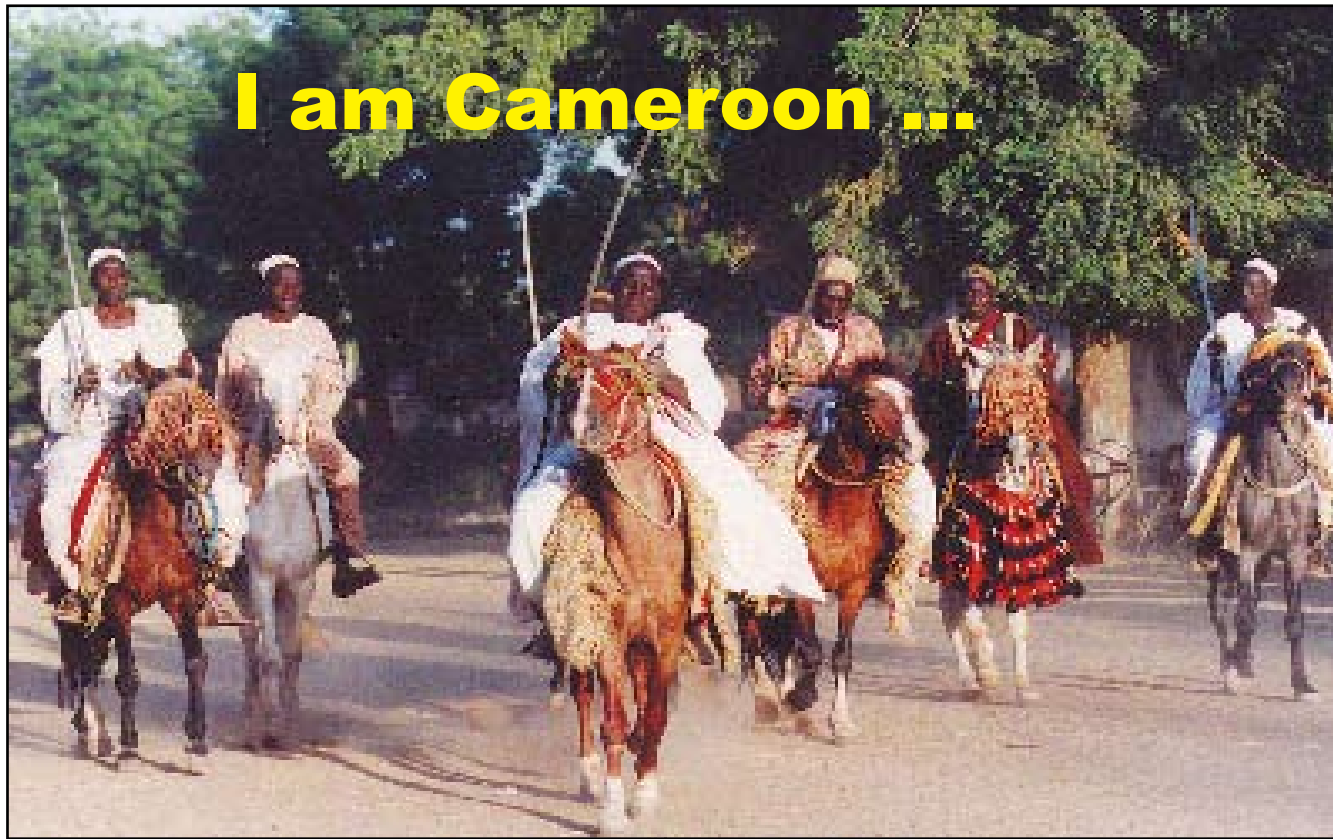
Ngondo Festival Douala  
The Ilimbe Ilimbe Canoe Race  
Pirogue de Course Ilimbe Ilimbe  
Photo- Koffi Joseph



## Cameroon Ministry of Tourism

Tel.: +237 222-4411  
Fax.: +237 222-1295.  
B.P. 266 Yaoundé 237 Cameroon  
For more information, visit [www.africa-ata.org/cameroon.htm](http://www.africa-ata.org/cameroon.htm)

# I am Cameroon ...



## Cameroon: Africa in One Country

“If you dance, you vibrate - and he who vibrates lives.”

Mount Cameroon, West Africa’s highest peak, stands like a giant sentinel, gazing out over the Gulf of Guinea on Africa’s Atlantic Coast. Among its legendary names is “Throne of Thunder,” a fitting tribute to the powerful gods that are said to inhabit the mountain’s inner core. Our group of ATA members and journalists approached the ‘throne’ shortly after one of its frequent volcanic eruptions, and the ribbons of cooled lava resembled grey frosting oozing from an enormous layer cake. The lava beds are evident from the main highway to Kribi and a hiking trail winds up and over them. The warning signs advised us to pay respect and to tread gently in this eco-sensitive area.

Mount Cameroon is the crown jewel of a chain of volcanic mountains strung like a giant pearl necklace along the shoulders of the Cameroon Nigeria border. This vast range stretches from the seacoast to the northern plains at Maroua, gateway to Waza National Park. Each February the popular ‘Course of Hope.’ attracts aspiring climbers to the area and we’re told that, while the ascent is challenging, it’s not dangerous or overly strenuous. Many other sights would amaze and impress us that day and in the week to follow.

**So much to see and do**  
Speaking personally, this trip was by far the most complete tour of any ATA- African host country I had experienced to date. At its conclusion most travelers in our group were tired - and somewhat bedazzled - yet I enjoyed a feeling of solid accomplishment. As a result I will never forget Cameroon and always hunger for more. Cameroon’s Minister of Tourism, Hon. Pierre Helé, puts “ecology first” in his country’s efforts to win an impor-

tant share of the tourist trade from North America and other markets we hope to target for his ministry. **Road to Economic Success**

But its not Mile Zero on the road to economic success - this progressive country is already high on the preferred list in terms of business travel. Scan the financial pages, or dig a little deeper in the Internet, and you’ll see what I mean - the country is rich with potential in terms of agriculture, forestry, marine life, minerals and natural resources. And a word to the wise, “Where business goes, tourism flows” - and vice versa. Europeans discovered long ago what most North Americans have yet to learn - that Cameroon is a Tourism Mecca in the raw. Ministry officials such as our tour leader Ebenezer Elimbi agree with the popular expression that their land is Africa in One country.” In other words Cameroon is a little bit of everything, or as my Grade 9 Spanish textbook said in its title, “de todo un poco.”

### Cruising the Countryside

Our escorted bus trip through the hills, plains, valleys and coastline of Cameroon was quite similar to taking a small ship cruise or a personal rail tour. Why? - it provided whistle stops, combined with extended visits, photo opportunities and overnight moorings. Ports of call on this ‘amazing land cruise’ from Yaounde and Douala, included Edea, Kribi, Limbe, Buea, Bafang, Bandjoun, Bafoussam, Bamenda, Bangangte, Bafia, Bafut, Foumban, Bafia, Maroua, Pouss, Mokolo, Rhumsiki, Mora and Waza National Game Park. Sounds like a heavy duty schedule - right? Well, the surprising thing was the fact that in spite of all the cities, towns and villages mentioned, nothing was the same. In other words, when they say “Africa in One country” they mean exactly that, as we discovered

in a way that you could never do by flying . **Africa’s Doors of Hospitality**  
Whether the roads were smooth and broad or rough and dusty, there was always something new and interesting to look forward to. Our overnight stays on the North-South tour were at Yaounde - Kribi - Douala - Limbe - Bamenda - Maroua and Waza, and while the accommodation was varied I would recommend all the hotels selected to our tour operator friends.



*I am Cameroon, Africa in One Country, famous for festivals such as Ngondo.*

*Douala, my largest city with over 2 million inhabitants, has hosted two major events sponsored by the Africa Travel Association since 2001. During post tours, ATA members had many opportunities to sample the hospitality and feel the true spirit of the people. Nowhere was this feeling more evident than in Douala during the Ngondo Festival, a spectacle unlike anything you have ever seen in Africa.* Annual festivals and gala events abound throughout West Africa, but this one tops them all as a simply outstanding spectacle that has deep spiritual significance. Having read Wilbur Smith’s great book “The River God,” concerning life on the Nile and Blue Nile in ancient times, I have been keenly interested in the rivers of Central Africa and the mysteries they hold. In this case, the Wouri River, focal point of the Ngondo Festival in Douala, has its own River Gods, it’s a ceremony involving the “water spirits,” who communicate their message in an unusual way.

### Ngondo Festival River God

For starters, one could not have asked for a nicer day, as our delegates descended from the Ministry’s tour buses and the ATA members took their seats in a specially reserved, tented area. Speaking of the weather, this occasion was typical of most days during our month long stay in Cameroon, deep blue skies, puffy cotton candy clouds, and just the right measure of sun shine to make it comfortable. This was one of my biggest surprises, perhaps being located on the Wouri River, 24 km (15 miles) from the Atlantic Coast is the reason. In a coming edition we will write at length about this great event and why its story is so significant in the local customs and culture. There are many more other reasons to visit Douala, and from here, you will enjoy good transportation links to all of Cameroon. Contact us anytime: [mailto:africa@dowco.com](mailto:mailto:africa@dowco.com). Douala, Cameroon’s largest city, main hub for air travel and industrial center is located on the Wouri River, a few miles from the Atlantic Coast, with its tourist attractions such as Kribi and Limbe. Mount Cameroon, Africa’s second highest peak, is also within a few hours’ drive from Douala. The

landmark Hôtel Akwa Palace, located in the city center, is an ideal meeting place with its popular terrace. Nearby is the Musée de Douala, located in the hôtel de ville (town hall), featuring Bamoun and Bamiléké craftwork. Visitors can purchase artifacts at Artisanal Camerounais, an open-air crafts market. The city is 120 miles west of Yaoundé, Cameroon’s capital. While Douala is not the capital of Cameroon, it is the most significant city in terms of population, and the economic role it plays in the overall economy. It is said to be named after the Douala, a black African ethnic group that originally settled in the area. The chief commercial center, Douala has an airport and extensive docks, and is a terminus for two railway lines extending into the interior. Industries include the manufacture of aluminum products, beer, soft drinks, textiles, and the processing of timber and cacao beans. Douala’s port handles some 95 percent of the country’s maritime traffic. *This article is continued on [www.africa-ata.org/cm\\_douala.htm](http://www.africa-ata.org/cm_douala.htm) Above photo by Mugnette Goufrani. Africa Travel Magazine.*



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Dr.Marc NKWENTI, Managing Director . Immeuble La Patience 273, Rond Point Nlongkak, P.O.Box 1198 Yaoundé, Cameroon.  
E-mail:  
[info@camtours.org](mailto:info@camtours.org)  
Web site:  
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## Gabon: West Central Africa

by Muguette Goufrani

As part of my decade living on Africa's West Coast, our family spent a memorable year in the Republic of Gabon, which hugs the Atlantic, straddles the equator and is roughly the size of France. Being health fanatics and outdoor types, my mother Suzanne, brother Jean Pierre and I thrived in the hot, humid climate - and in 12 months, managed to visit much of the countryside. This gave us an intimate connection with the Gabonese culture and was valuable in my future career in tourism. We enjoyed a laid back, tropical lifestyle; food was delicious and varied, the shops and stalls were full of interesting items and tempting snacks. What's more, to our delight, the traditional West African culture had in no way disappeared with the oil boom."

Thanks to mineral wealth and a relatively low population growth, Gabon is better off financially than most of Africa. This fact is reflected in their care and attention to basic ecological concerns. For example, the vast coastal wetlands and marshes, are still largely intact. This is something with which ATA members will heartily agree, the Association being a strong advocate of ecotourism. Gabon, which hosted the Africa Travel Association (ATA) International Congress in 1980, is easily accessible from the USA and Canada.

West Africa's Freedom City: Libreville, our home at the time, began as a settlement for freed slaves on the site of a naval fortress. How did it get its name? In 1849, our French ancestors cap-

tured a slave ship, releasing all of the passengers at the mouth of the Komo River. In joyous response and gratitude, the newly freed slaves named their settlement Libreville (Free Town). A lively and charming capital, Libreville reminds me of a quieter, more laid back 50s version of Miami Beach, with its large ocean-view hotels. To name a few, there's the Hotel Mont-Bouet, the Ebene, Rendema Meridien, Novotel's Rapontchombo, Hotel Okoume Palace Inter-Continental, Hotel Mont de Crystal and Hotel Gam-ba.

Libreville's chalk white buildings contrast dramatically with the dappled green shades of the nearby equatorial forest. It's a city of modern office buildings, fancy shops, supermarkets and white, sandy beaches inside city limits. Not far away (140 km) on the south coast is Port -Gentil on Ile de Mandji, a coastal island to the south. Fueled by oil funds and relatively high wages, the town has dozens of restaurants, night clubs and unique shops.

Getting around in Gabon: The country's national carrier, Air Gabon, has regular flights from Libreville International Airport to Paris, Rome and London as well as several cities in Africa. Air Gabon is one of the three or four best African airlines serving Central and West Africa. If you

are arranging a bus tour, or taking a rental vehicle, there are over 5,000 miles of good road. A Land Rover or other 4-wheel drive vehicle is recommended in much of the forested areas. Africa Travel Magazine's Associate Editor/ Publisher, covers West African destinations and events. Her native language is French and she has lived in five West African countries, working for Air Afrique, Royal Air Maroc and Citroen. As a Travel Agent, she worked in North Africa, where her family operates an inbound tour company, and later in Tahiti and Cambodia. Muguette has been a partner in the magazine since it was founded in 1995.

AIR GABON is the national carrier of the Republic of Gabon. We are proud to be in the vanguard of African airlines that provide a wide-ranging international and domestic flight network, soaring across continents with the most up-to-date fleet, equipment, and highest caliber of services.

We make it easy to fly not only within Africa, but between Africa and Europe and the Middle East. Travelers coming to Africa from the United States can make easy connections to AIR GABON in Paris, London or Rome. Until 1977, Gabon's only airline was a small domestic carrier functioning under the Transgabon Company, with international routes served by other airlines.

Today, Air Gabon offers "Le Meilleur Solution" (The Best Solution) and convenient connections to get you here, there, and almost anywhere!

Nearly 85 percent of Gabon's terrain is composed of dense tropical forest, making ground travel quite difficult. Until the Transgabon Railway opened in 1983, AIR GABON was the sole viable means of linking the provinces. Along with the railway, we have contributed to the development and unification of the country, while continuing to be "The Best Solution" for getting around Gabon. For more visit

[www.africa-ata.org/air\\_gabon.htm](http://www.africa-ata.org/air_gabon.htm)



# A TASTE OF LIFE IN GABON, WEST CENTRAL AFRICA



During my lengthy stay on Africa's West Coast, our family spent a memorable year in the Republic of Gabon, which hugs the Atlantic, straddles the equator and is roughly the size of France. Being health fanatics and outdoor types, my mother Suzanne, brother Jean Pierre and I thrived in the hot, humid climate - and in 12 months, managed to visit much of the countryside. This gave us an intimate connection with the Gabonaise culture and was valuable in my future career in tourism. We enjoyed a laid back, tropical lifestyle; food was delicious and varied, the shops and stalls were full of interesting items and tempting snacks. What's more, to our delight, the traditional West African culture had in no way disappeared with the oil boom. Thanks to mineral wealth and a relatively low population growth, Gabon is better off financially than most of Africa. This fact is reflected in their care and attention to basic ecological concerns. For example, the vast coastal wetlands and marshes, are still largely intact. This is something with which ATA members will heartily agree, the Association being a strong advocate of ecotourism. Gabon, which hosted

the Africa Travel Association (ATA) International Congress in 1980, is easily accessible from the USA and Canada.

**Gabon's Great Leap:** With a stable government and 11 percent of the country's land area set aside for the parks, Gabon is uniquely positioned to become the ecotourism capital of Africa. Photographer Nicolas Reynard trekked through Gabon's new national park system, where lush forests hide Africa's largest concentration of undisturbed - and camera-shy animals. Could these parks change the face of ecotourism and preservation in the Congo Basin? When French photographer Nicolas Reynard and writer Tom Clynes set out to test drive three of Gabon's 13 new national parks for "The Gabon Experiment," they expected dozens of close encounters with the forest's denizens of hippos, elephants, gorillas, and mandrills. Excerpt from National Geographic.

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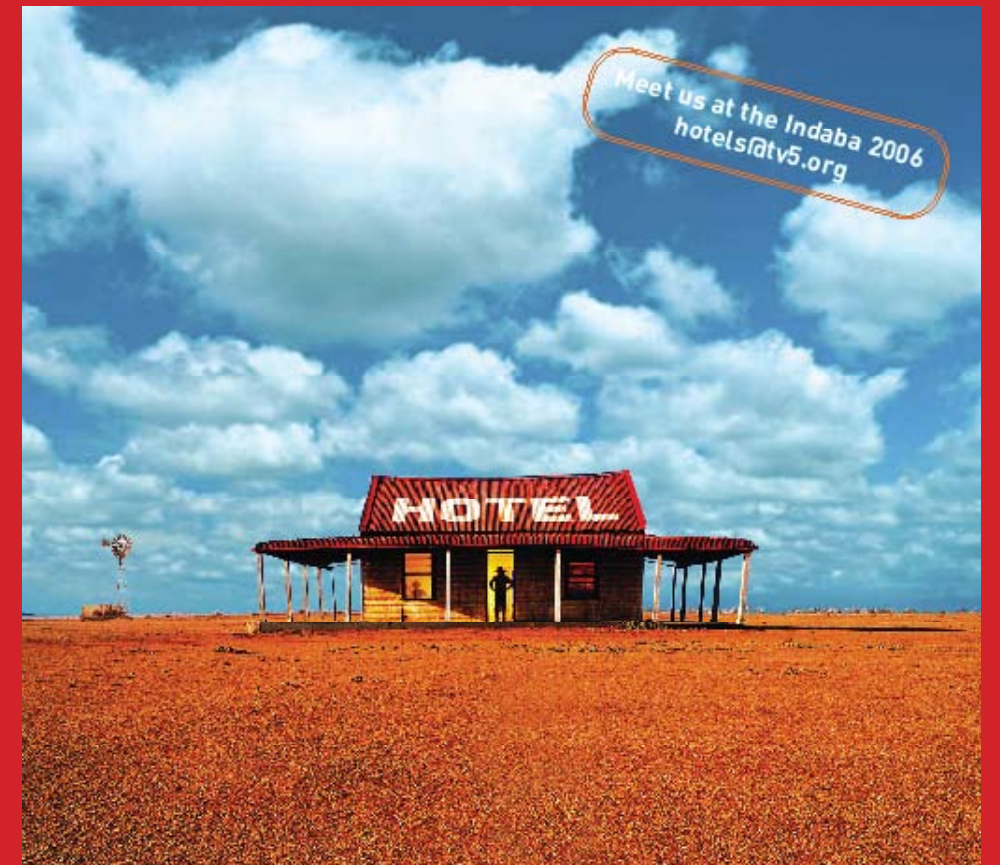
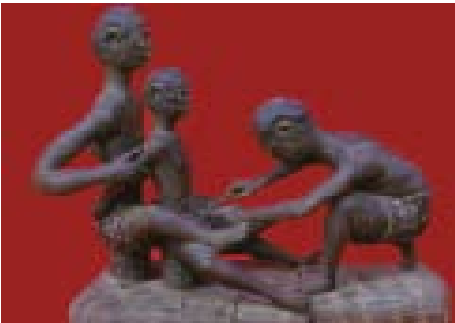
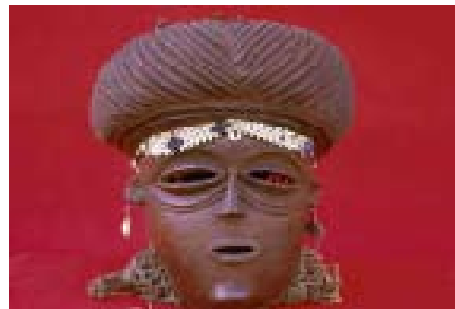
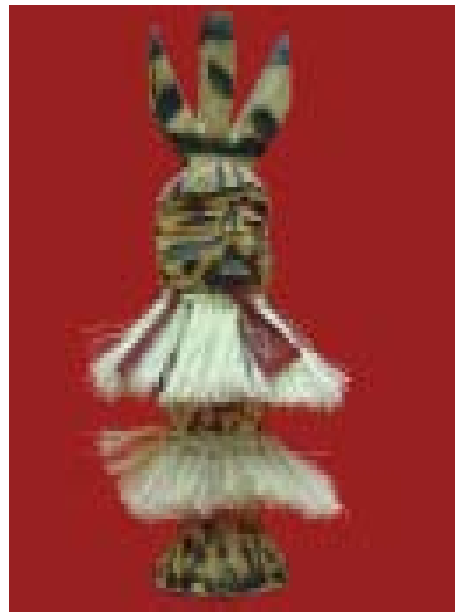
and charming capital, Libreville reminds me of a quieter, more laid back 50s version of Miami Beach, with its large ocean-view hotels. To name a few, there's the Hotel Mont-Bouet, the Ebene, Rendema Meridien, Novotel's Rapontchombo, Hotel Okoume Palace Inter-Continental, Hotel Mont de Crystal and Hotel Gamba. Libreville's chalk white buildings contrast dramatically with the dappled green shades of the nearby equatorial forest. It's a city of modern office buildings, fancy shops, supermarkets and white, sandy beaches inside city limits. Not far away (140 km) on the south coast is Port -Gentil on Ile de Mandji, a coastal island to the south. Fueled by oil funds and relatively high wages, the town has dozens of restaurants, night clubs and unique shops.

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## Mugnette Goufrani

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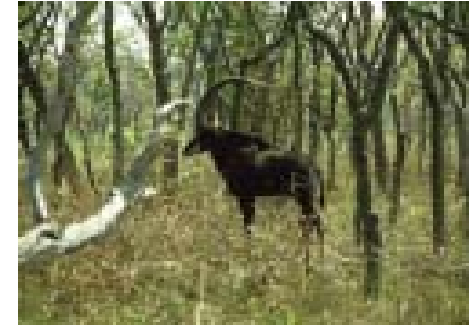
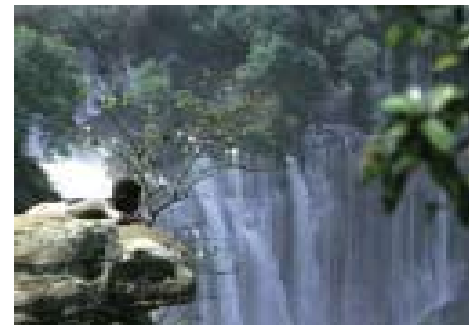
# I am Angola ,,,

**Other attractions:** These include the Mussulo Peninsula with its three islets, the largest of which is called the Island of Priest. Further south, tourist can visit the Slavery Museum, housed at the site where slaves were kept while waiting to be taken to Brazil in the Americas. The Kwanza River mouth nearby is a beautiful spot for picnics and fishing.

**Kuando Kubango Province**, situated in the far southeastern area of Angola, bordering Zambia and Namibia, it is the country's second largest province. Blessed with two great rivers, the Kuando and the Kubango, the province forms the gateway to the rest of southern Africa and certainly has tremendous potential to become the hub for cross-border trade and tourism opportunities. The climate is pleasantly tropical and dry and the land is rich in many untapped resources such as timber, diamonds, gold and copper.

**Namibe Province:** Bordered by the Atlantic Ocean to the west and Namibia to the south, this province is the land of the *Welwitschia mirabilis*, an astonishing desert plant that resembles a giant octopus! This plant, which spans 2m to 3m in diameter, is unique to the region and is carnivorous! The Namib Desert itself offers excellent hunting and attracts game hunters from southern Africa and overseas. With the third largest port in the country, Namibe Province is one of the main centers of fishing.

The province also has very beautiful beaches, with facilities for water sports and other activities. One of the most attractive spots is Bibala Beach, where the water is said to have healing properties. Kwanza Norte, which is well known for its mighty rivers, it is covered by dense tropical forest in the north and savannah in the south. The Capanda Dam, situated in the middle of the Kwanza River, is a hydro-electric power source and one of the largest civil engineering projects in the country.



**Kwanza Sul Province**, which is bordered by the Bengo, Kwanza Norte and Malange Provinces in the north, Brie to the east, Benguela and Huambo to the south and the Atlantic Ocean to the west. The main tourist attractions in the province include the waterfalls, thermal springs and caves. The port, Porto Amboim, is the major access by sea.

**Lunda Norte and Lunda Sul:** this province is famous for its art and vast reserves of diamonds and was once part of a powerful ancient kingdom known as Tchokwe. The kingdom straddled what are now northeast Angola and the southwestern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Today, Tchokwe sculptures are still popular with art collectors; one of the most famous being O Pensador, a graceful sculpture of a philosopher resting his head in his hands. Benguela Province, whose main attraction is the city of Benguela, known locally as Crimson Acacia. The province has superb beaches, including Kaota, Katinha, Baia, Azul and Baia Farta. Scuba diving and deep sea fishing are very popular pastimes.

**Huambo Province**, with its stunning colonial style buildings has long been the center of Angolan history. This province has a pleasant climate and rich, fertile soil that lends itself to much cultivation.

**Zaire Province**, along with its neighboring province of Uige, Zaire was once part of the Kongo Kingdom. The

heartland of the kingdom encompassed Mbanza Kongo, the present day capital of the province. The royal court was based in the town, which was the center for trade and other political and economic activities. The province has vast offshore oil reserves and plays host to a large number of oil companies.

The place where the Congo River meets the sea is one of the most moving sights in the country and a trip to the "Point," will take one to the site where the great explorer, Sir Henry Morton Stanley started his historic trip into the heart of Africa in search of the famous Dr. David Livingstone.

**Cabinda Province:** The Cabindans have a very rich cultural tradition and still practice Bantu rituals, such as initiation ceremonies. The province's most impressive attraction is the Maiombe Rainforest, which is especially famous for its butterflies. There are hundreds of species of butterflies to be found in the forest, many of which are unique to the area. Prized by collectors, specimens of these butterflies can be found in natural history museums throughout the world.

**Travel Details:** The climate in Angola varies depending on the altitude. The dry season is between May and October with the rain beginning from November and December until April. The warmest months are September and October, while July and August are the

coolest. Lightweight casual wear is appropriate throughout the year, although jackets and jerseys are advisable for the evenings as it can get cold at night. Rainwear is definitely recommended during the rainy season. It is generally advisable to consult with your health care practitioner for precautionary measures against tropical disease before traveling to Angola. Medication against malaria is strongly recommended and it is also advisable to have a yellow fever vaccination.

The local currency is the Kwanza (Kzr) which is named after one of the larger rivers in Angola and U.S. dollars are widely accepted. Visas are required for American citizens and all visitors must have a valid passport and proof of return tickets. While most European airlines provide transport to Angola you should always consult with your travel agent for specific travel and tourism assistance as many hotels have recently undergone refurbishments in Luanda.

For more information about visiting Angola, please contact the Embassy of Angola in Washington, D.C. at telephone: (202) 785-1156 or facsimile at (202) 822-9049 and the mailing address is 2108 Sixteenth Street, Washington, D.C. 20009. You can also visit the following website: <http://www.angola.org>.



**Ten Best Reasons to visit Angola**

- a) the capital city of Luanda which is a vibrant tourist venue;
- (b) historic reminders of the colonial past;
- (c) a thriving tribal culture with many traditions;
- (d) a tropical climate with year-round pleasant weather;
- e) the opportunity to view wildlife in unique and unfrequented national parks;
- (f) splendid landscapes including rivers, jungles and mountains;
- (g) a unique heritage of traditional art;
- (h) plenty of water sports in Luanda and nearby towns;
- i) the erotic, Angolan "masemba," dance performed by local dancers; and
- (j) traditional Angolan cuisine with a strong Portuguese influence.

In addition, local arts and crafts can be purchased in many marketplaces in Angola. Items made from ebony, rosewood, straw, malachite, bronze and pottery are all available. A wide variety of wooden masks and traditional instruments such as marimbas kissanges, xingufos, ankle rattles and drums can also be purchased.

**Interesting places to visit**

Luanda the capital city of Angola, which was founded in 1575 by the Portuguese explorer Paulo Dias de Novais, retains its heritage as a Portuguese colonial city and there are several interesting buildings of historical significance and a number of churches that date back to the 17th century. Luanda is divided into two parts, the "baxia," or old part and the "cidade alta," or new part.

One of the city's most famous landmarks is the Armed Forces Museum, which is housed in the St. Miguel Fort. The National Bank of Angola building, a large pink colonial building overlooking the palm fringed bay, which is another example of the legacy of Portuguese architecture as is the Kinaxixi market building. Ilha de Luanda, originally an island, has been joined to the mainland by a causeway. There, one will find many discotheques, bars and casinos, as well as restaurants where national dishes such as palm oil beans, fish calulu, dried meat, corn funge, chicken muamba and mufete de cacuso (tilapia) farofa can be truly savored.



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## Central African Republic offers Pristine Parks, Wilderness Safaris

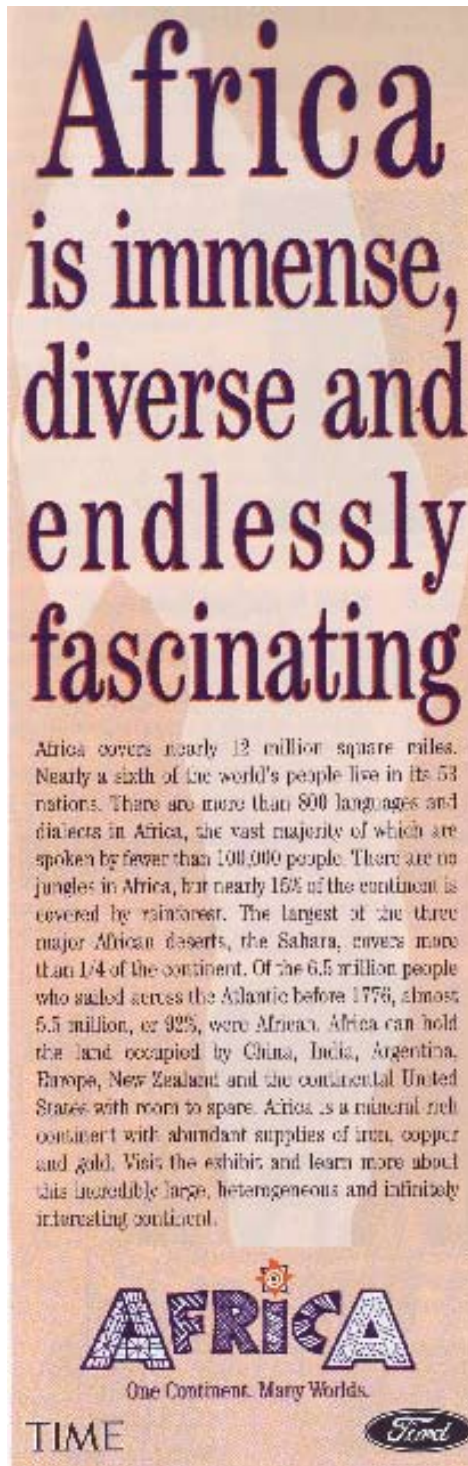
by Mugnette Goufrani

Among my journeys throughout the length and breadth of this vast continent, the Central African Republic provided an opportunity for me to experience something beyond the ordinary. This relatively new nation is roughly the size of France, with geographical features that include Savannah plains, mountain ranges, dense rain forests and many rivers. Back in late 1800s, the French Colonial powers named this country 'Ubangui-Shari,' and focused on making it an agricultural resource with vast cotton, coffee and tobacco plantations. All of this was in the government's plans, despite the country's disadvantage of being a land-locked nation.

Working in Tahiti at the time, I flew direct from the Pacific to Bangui the capital, just in time to witness the crowning of a new Emperor. This stately figure, an African named Jean Bedel Bocassa, fashioned himself after his hero, Napoleon I of France.

It was a lavish ceremony, financed and organized by the French Government. Like many African leaders, Bocassa was also a great admirer of late Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, whose palace and private railway coaches we visited in 2000.

Everything you may have read about this equatorial area for years in National Geographic or in countless books about Africa is right here. Without a doubt, the Central African Republic (CAR) has some of the world's most pristine parks. Pygmies guide you through virgin woodlands that are the domain of forest elephants and rare lowland gorillas. The dense rainforests literally 'explode' as the tropical sky fills with colorful, exotic butterflies - and out on the sweeping plains you can encounter elephants, lions, leopards, rhinos, and a host of other species found nowhere else. My brother Jean Pierre and I visited the Dzanga-Sangha Reserve, which has perhaps the highest densities of lowland gorillas and elephant anywhere in Africa.



Altitude and rainfall help to moderate the temperature and vegetation is thicker, with many varieties of flowering tropical plants flourishing in the rainforests. Most people have a connection to the land even if they live in a city, and my European girl friend and I had a chance to visit their farms during the harvest. Despite their poverty, they opened a bottle of champagne to welcome us. What great hospitality! While French is the official language, Sango is the national tongue.

### Enjoy the National Parks

My favorite game viewing area is St. Floris and the Banigui-Bangoran parks, which are known for protecting elephants, lions, leopards and Rhinos - as well as buffaloes, hippos, monkeys, giraffes, baboons, cheetahs and crocodiles. The town and cities have bustling markets. You will find beer, plus palm and banana wine for sale by the side of the road, with green hills and giraffes close by. Bangui, the capital, is a charming administrative district, and there's enough attractions to keep you going for several days. The French founded the city in 1880, naming it after the nearby rapids. The old section features wide, -shaded boulevards and a central market area where all public transports converge. I will continue this feature in a later edition, and will provide some photos of the area at that time. Au Revoir.

### About Mugnette Goufrani

Born in Casablanca, Morocco, Mugnette Goufrani has worked as an airline, automotive, tour and travel agent in several African nations and in French speaking countries around the world. Her father was one of the first tour operators in Morocco.

She is a dual citizen (France - Canada) and has been featured extensively on African television, radio and print media, both English and French. Her first assignment was the 1996 ATA Ecotourism Symposium in Marrakech, Morocco.

This was followed by a National Geographic - American Airlines sponsored project in Haiti, plus ATA Congresses in Benin, Tanzania, Ghana, Ethiopia, Zanzibar, Guinea, Zambia, Morocco, South Africa, Cameroon, Kenya and Djibouti. Travel Agents To contact her e-mail [Africa@dowco.com](mailto:Africa@dowco.com)

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