



CONGO CONSERVATION

Gorilla tracking at Ngaga Camp



A team of permanent researchers, as well as guides and trackers from nearby communities, work with the gorilla families on a daily basis.

Guests of Odzala are led on expeditions into the Marantaceae forest in search of the critically endangered species, the western lowland gorilla. Treks entail 3-4 guests as well as a guide and a tracker from this treasured team of researchers in an untamed forest environment with the gorillas going about their usual activities (often in the trees).

Following a devastating disease outbreak that reduced gorilla populations in the early 2000s, we are fastidious about the physical health and mental well-being of the gorilla families. This is why we request pre-arrival medical checks, keep groups small and wear medical masks once we are close to the families which protect them against the airborne diseases to which they are very susceptible. With this in mind, Ngaga Camp has become one of Africa's most important gorilla tracking destinations offering an opportunity to engage with science and nature through informed, respectful exploration practices.

GORILLA TRACKING AT NGAGA CAMP

- We offer two types of permits at Ngaga Camp: Observer and Research.
- **Observer Permits** give guests access to the two established tourism gorilla groups within the area and are included in our Discovery packages.
- **Research Permits** are more focused treks and go deeper into the scientific aspect of gorilla observation (requires at least 2 Observer Treks prior, only available in camp at Ngaga at the discretion of the research team - subject to availability).
- We require a medical form is completed by a medical health professional prior to your arrival. This is to clear you of any possibly harmful diseases to which the gorilla families are susceptible.
- Treks are limited to a maximum of 4 guests, 1 guide and 1 tracker in a group.
- During the gorilla treks, we require guests to wear medical masks once near to the gorilla families to protect them further from any airborne diseases.
- Camera equipment and personal belongings must be easily accessible during the trek to reduce noise.
- Guests remain at a respectful distance during the 1-hour observation period of the gorillas getting no closer than 7 metres. This is to preserve their natural behaviours, protect them against disease and create a boundary of mutual respect.
- Western lowland gorillas are nimble and agile, moving quickly through the forest canopy and through the thick Marantaceae. While we are with the gorillas, we are an extension of their group and move as one through the forest. Treks can therefore be fast paced and a decent fitness is recommended.
- Your tracker and guide will use hand signals to communicate while in close proximity to the gorilla families. Guests receive a full briefing of hand signals before the trek and are asked to remain silent until the tracker and guide advise it is safe to be vocal.
- Your tracker has grown up in this forest and spends each day with the gorilla family he shares with you. This forest is a part of them and they have been growing and learning from it, some for over 20 years. Trust your tracker and guide, they will keep you safe and ensure you have a memorable experience.





CONGO CONSERVATION

The gorilla families



WESTERN LOWLAND GORILLAS

There are 4 species of gorilla within east and west Africa. In the east, you will find the mountain gorillas of the DRC, Rwanda, Uganda as well as eastern lowland gorillas (DRC). To the west, western lowland gorillas are found in most forest blocks between Ubangi River and the Atlantic as well as Cross River Gorillas along the Cameroon/Nigeria boarder.

Western lowland gorillas are slightly smaller in size, have shorter fur and a higher fruit consumption in their diet (which means more energy to climb trees and be highly active) when compared to their more frequently visited mountain cousin.

There are several groups of gorilla found in the Ndzehi Concession surrounding Ngaga Camp. Three of these groups have been habituated, 2 can be observed by guests and the third remains a research group (available to guests at the discretion of the research team). Each group is known by the silverback at the head of the family, whimsically named after celestial beings.



NEPTUNO FAMILY GROUP

The first of these groups to have been habituated by Magda and Germán, the leaders of our research team, this group is headed by the silverback named Neptuno.

FAMILY MEMBERS

Neptuno is an enormous and sometimes intimidating male, who seems especially curious about the world around him. Apart from him, Caco is the obvious one to look out for. A sub-adult male, putting on a bit of bulk before he starts moving away from the main group, he tends to be near, but not necessarily in the group. He is known for silently sneaking up to visitors from behind watching us while we watch the rest of the group. Pan is a male younger than Caco who will sometimes test his strength by dangling with one arm, fool around with other youngsters, or balance a few small branches on his head.





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The gorilla families



JUPITER FAMILY GROUP

The second habituated social group being studied by the research team is led by the silverback named Jupiter with a home range south of Ngaga Camp.

FAMILY MEMBERS

Just as enormous as Neptuno, Jupiter is unusually shy and retiring for a silverback. He prefers to grunt and have branches and fruit dropped for him, rather than climbing the trees. Although, for the right fruit, he'll climb the tallest tree. Within Jupiter's group, there is almost always a relatively small baby clinging to it's mother. Cura, an adolescent male with a lot of energy, is often seen playing with other adolescents while Lua, a sub-adult male, has a slight deformity in his forearms from a possible injury that has healed incorrectly so he is often seen walking bipedal (like a tourist).



PLUTON FAMILY GROUP

The third and most recently habituated family group is headed by the silverback Pluton. This groups is still reserved for the research team, however should the family be close enough to camp and the guests interested in the research and observation of this exceptional species, the research team does invite guests to join them on Research Treks.

This type of trek is only available once you are in camp and there is a surcharge for the experience. To be eligible for a Research Trek, at least 2 Observation Treks need have been completed .

Please enquire for more information and permit rates: discovery@odzala.com

