

AFRICA · WILDLIFE · ADVENTURE · OFF THE BEATEN PATH

Central African Republic

The Central African Republic receives only a trickle of visitors, nearly all bound for Dzanga-Sangha in the far south-west, where forest elephants gather in dozens at the Dzanga Bai clearing and habituated western lowland gorillas can be tracked with BaAka guides. Reaching it takes money, planning and flexibility, so check the FCDO travel advice closely before committing.



The UK Foreign Office (FCDO) advises against all travel to parts of Central African Republic.

Read the latest FCDO travel advice before planning a trip. Your travel insurance may be invalid if you travel against FCDO advice. FCDO advice last updated 28 May 2026.

 CAPITAL Bangui	 CURRENCY Central African CFA franc (XAF) £1 ≈ FCFA 781	 LANGUAGE Sango, French	 BEST TIME Dec-Feb
 DAILY BUDGET £60-£320 £££ Expensive	 PLUGS Type C, E 220V · adapter needed	 FLIGHT FROM LONDON 11h 30m via Paris, Casablanca or Addis Ababa ~£900-£1,500 return	 TIME ZONE UTC+1 standard time

Landlocked and slightly larger than France, the Central African Republic stretches from Sahel savannah in the north to dense Congo Basin rainforest in the south-west, with the Oubangui River forming much of its southern border. Decades of political instability have left almost no tourism infrastructure, so trips are shaped by logistics rather than route-planning: fly into Bangui, then continue to Dzanga-Sangha, part of the UNESCO-listed Sangha Trinational alongside reserves in Cameroon and the Republic of the Congo. A couple of days in the capital and an excursion to Boali Falls are the usual additions.

Expect high costs: charter flights, fuel, park fees and guides add up, and most visitors book through a lodge or specialist operator that arranges transfers. In return you get extraordinary wildlife with very few other people around. It suits experienced Africa travellers, wildlife photographers and anyone comfortable with basic facilities and plans that can change at short notice. What surprises people most is the forest itself: walking in with BaAka trackers, listening for gorillas, and learning how many plants they can name for food and medicine.

Top 5 highlights

- 1

WILDLIFE

Dzanga Bai

A mineral-rich forest clearing where forest elephants come to dig for salts, often dozens at a time, watched from a raised platform; bongo, giant forest hogs and sitatunga appear too. Reached from Bayanga by road and a short forest walk.
- 2

WILDLIFE

Gorilla tracking at Bai Hokou

The primate habituation programme at Bai Hokou lets small groups follow habituated western lowland gorillas through the forest with BaAka trackers, often with agile mangabeys nearby. Numbers are strictly limited, so book well ahead.

3

CULTURE

BaAka forest walks, Bayanga

Spend a morning in the forest with BaAka guides from around Bayanga, joining a traditional net hunt, gathering plants and hearing their polyphonic singing, which UNESCO recognises as intangible cultural heritage.

4

NATURE

Boali Falls

Roughly 100 km north-west of Bangui, the Mbali River pours around 50 m over a broad rock face; the falls are at their fullest in the rainy season and make the classic day trip from the capital.

5

SACRED SITE

Notre-Dame Cathedral, Bangui

The capital's red-brick colonial-era cathedral, where Pope Francis opened the first Holy Door of the 2015 Jubilee of Mercy, days before the one at St Peter's in Rome; Sunday Mass is lively with song.

Biggest cities

LARGEST CITY

Bangui

≈ 900,000 people

The riverside capital on the Oubangui, facing the DR Congo, is the unavoidable gateway; its markets, red-brick cathedral and river views fill a day or two between flights.

2ND LARGEST CITY

Bimbo

≈ 250,000 people

A separate town that has grown into Bangui's south-western sprawl along the river; it has no sights of its own and most visitors pass straight through.

3RD LARGEST CITY

Berbérati

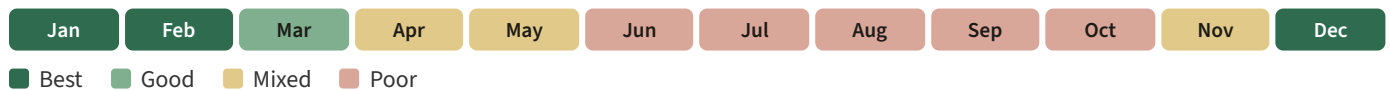
≈ 100,000 people

A diamond- and timber-trading town in the far west near the Cameroon border; it sees few visitors, though overland travellers arriving from Cameroon may pass through.

Bimbo is a separate municipality but is effectively part of greater Bangui; counting it within the capital, the third place would go to one of Carnot, Bambari or Bouar, which are of broadly similar size. All figures are estimates, as the last full census was in 2003.

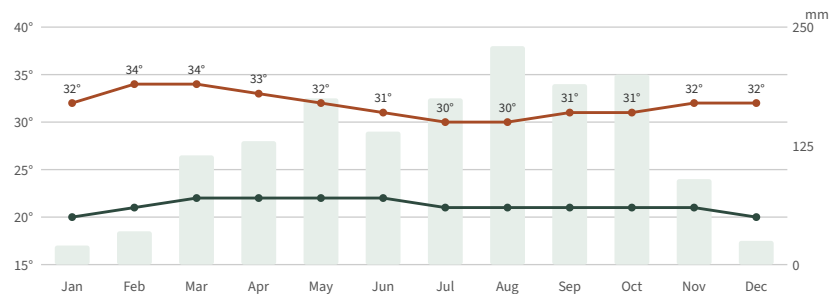
When to go to Central African Republic

Best time: **Dec–Feb**.



Average climate in Bangui

— High °C — Low °C — Rain (mm)



Festivals & events

Mar	Boganda Day 29 March marks the death of Barthélemy Boganda, the country's founding father, in a 1959 plane crash, with commemorations in Bangui and widespread closures.
Dec	National Day 1 December commemorates the proclamation of the republic in 1958 with parades and speeches in Bangui; many offices and businesses close for the day.

How much does Central African Republic cost?

SHOESTRING £60 per person / day ≈ FCFA 46,848 hostels, street food, buses	MID-RANGE £150 per person / day ≈ FCFA 117,121 3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis	COMFORTABLE £320 per person / day ≈ FCFA 249,859 4-star+, guided trips, private transfers
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Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

Food to try

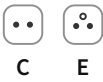
Kanda ti nyama Meatballs of minced beef or goat simmered in a tomato and onion sauce, often thickened with peanut, and eaten with gozo or rice.	Gozo The everyday staple: a stiff, slightly sour dough of fermented cassava flour, torn by hand and used to scoop up stews.	Ngunza Pounded cassava leaves stewed with palm oil or peanut paste, sometimes with smoked fish, found in homes and roadside eateries across the south.
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Getting around

Bangui has shared taxis, minibuses and motorbike taxis but no ride-hailing apps; agree fares before setting off. Paved roads are few, and the overland route to Dzanga-Sangha via M'Baïki and Nola is a long, rough 4x4 drive that can take more than a day. Most visitors therefore charter a light aircraft from Bangui to the airstrip at Bayanga, usually arranged through their lodge or operator.

Practical information

PLUGS & VOLTAGE



220V — bring a UK-to-C/E adapter

DIALLING CODE

+236

TAP WATER

Not safe — drink bottled or treated water

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Telephone: **117** (ambulance, fire, police)

or: Ambulance: **610600**

Fire: **118**

Military police ('gendarmerie'): **2161 2200**

Source: FCDO "Getting help"

TIME ZONE

UTC+1 (standard time)

DRIVING

On the right

TIPPING

Not expected in local places, but around 10% is appreciated in Bangui's better restaurants; tip trackers, guides and lodge staff at Dzanga-Sangha.

ETIQUETTE

Greet people before making any request — 'balao' in Sango is welcome. Never photograph soldiers, government buildings, bridges or the airport, and ask before photographing anyone.

MAIN AIRPORTS

Bangui M'Poko International Airport (BGF), Bangui

Visas & entry for Central African Republic

Shown for a British passport.

Visa required — apply before you go

You must have a visa to visit the Central African Republic.

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

Health & vaccinations

 See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

- Hepatitis A
- Tetanus
- Typhoid
- Yellow fever

SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

- Chikungunya
- Dengue
- Hepatitis B
- Measles
- Meningococcal disease
- Polio
- Rabies
- Tuberculosis

YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

A yellow fever vaccination certificate is required for all travellers (usually over 9 months or 1 year old). There is a risk of yellow fever in parts of the country — vaccination may be advised.

MALARIA

High risk of malaria

- There is a high risk of malaria in Central African Republic: antimalarial tablets recommended.

Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

Public holidays in Central African Republic

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

Sun 1 Nov 2026	All Saints' Day
Tue 1 Dec 2026	National Day
Fri 25 Dec 2026	Christmas Day
Fri 1 Jan 2027	New Year's Day

Tue 9 Mar 2027	Eid al-Fitr (date may shift)
Mon 29 Mar 2027	Barthélemy Boganda Day · Easter Monday
Sat 1 May 2027	Labour Day
Thu 6 May 2027	Ascension Day
Sun 16 May 2027	Eid al-Adha (date may shift)
Mon 17 May 2027	Pentecost Monday
Wed 30 Jun 2027	General Prayer Day
Fri 13 Aug 2027	Independence Day
Sun 15 Aug 2027	Assumption Day

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

Useful phrases in French

ENGLISH	FRENCH	SAY IT
Hello	Bonjour	<i>bon-ZHOOR</i>
Thank you	Merci	<i>mair-SEE</i>
Please	S'il vous plaît	<i>seel voo PLAY</i>
Excuse me	Excusez-moi	<i>ex-KOO-zay MWAH</i>
How much is this?	C'est combien ?	<i>say kom-BYAN</i>

Know before you go

- Check the FCDO travel advice well before booking, and arrange Dzanga-Sangha through the reserve or an established lodge, which can handle flights, permits and guides.
- Bring plenty of euros in cash: the CFA franc is pegged to the euro, but card payments and reliable ATMs are rare outside a few Bangui hotels and banks.
- Carry your yellow fever vaccination certificate, which is checked on arrival, and pack antimalarials, repellent and a basic medical kit, as healthcare is very limited.

Visa, health and safety rules change. Before you book or travel, check the FCDO travel advice (gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) and TravelHealthPro (travelhealthpro.org.uk). Costs are estimates. © 2026 Pick My Trip.