



# Reef & Rainforest



## **The Wonderful Wildlife of My Congo**

An Escorted Small Group Tour

Accompanied by BBC Presenter and Cameraman

**Vianet D'jenguët**

19<sup>th</sup> February to 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2018

**Accompanied by BBC Presenter and Cameraman**

## VIANET D'JENQUET



With a first class honours degree in Film and Moving Image Production, Bristol-based Vianet has had a diverse and varied career underpinned by a strong interest in the natural world.

He has been involved in productions ranging from African gastronomy and Senegalese wrestling, to the Discovery Channel's 'Beast Tracker' and National Geographic's 'Wild Scene Investigation'.

Born in Brazzaville in the Republic of Congo (not to be confused with its much larger, neighbour, the Democratic Republic of Congo) a young Vianet and his family moved to Paris where his physician father, a malaria specialist, worked treating students and diplomats. In France Vianet achieved a Baccalaureate in Electronics in the late 1990s, and he went on to gain his honours degree from Leeds in 2006. His documentary work has since taken him across Africa, but during that time he never had the opportunity to film in his native country.

However, this all changed in 2015 when he returned to the Republic of Congo to film *My Congo* for the BBC, from both behind and in front of the camera. In his first person account – aired on the BBC in September 2016 – Vianet explored Brazzaville, (where the sights and sounds of the city reminded him of his childhood), visited the coast and explored the Congo's wildlife-rich interior.

Vianet is passionate about his native Congo and eager to show the wonders of this small yet biologically diverse country to the outside world. He is excited to have the opportunity to show group members vibrant Brazzaville and to venture inland to one of the most pristine National Parks on the continent: Odzala.

Join Vianet and a small number of like-minded natural history enthusiasts on an enjoyable journey through this little-visited country and return home replete with tales of friendly people and memorable wildlife encounters.

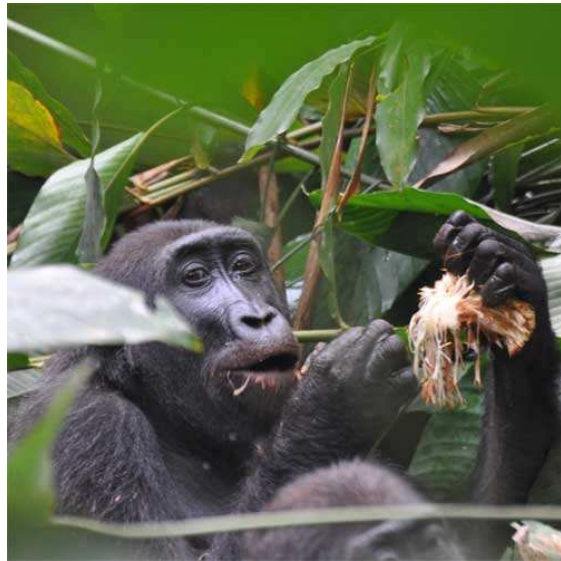


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## DESCRIPTION OF THE GROUP ITINERARY

Most of our clients are interested in general natural history – Mother Nature in all her various manifestations. Some have certain types of wildlife that are of particular interest. Others seek something out of the ordinary – a little-visited wildlife gem that's resolutely off-the-beaten-track; somewhere that engenders a frisson of excitement and perhaps a modicum of trepidation.

We have discovered just such a destination – the Republic of Congo. Throughout this varied and comprehensive journey you will be accompanied by documentary cameraman Vianet D'jenguet who will



bring the destination to life with his passion for the people and rare wildlife of the Congo. In addition to Vianet, who can also give you helpful photography tips, experienced wildlife guides from the Congo Conservation Company will be on hand to provide specialist local knowledge and priceless natural history insights.

Enjoy the sights and sounds of the capital, Brazzaville, situated on the banks of the mighty Congo River facing Kinshasa, then board a scheduled charter flight deep into the Congo to Odzala National Park in the far north. From here you will travel to a private concession outside the park's western boundary, in search of the 23 groups of western lowland gorillas which frequent the area – probably one of the highest gorilla densities in Africa. There will be the opportunity to track two habituated gorilla groups and go out on night nature walks (which are not possible to do inside the park). Four nights will then be spent inside the National Park staying at two comfortable bush camps. You will explore the region's rich wildlife diversity during many game drives, hikes and boat trips. Species often seen include forest elephant (an incredible 10,000 are estimated to inhabit the park), forest buffalo, spotted hyena, a good variety of primates (11 diurnal and 6 nocturnal), and a bird list of nearly 450 species.

Whatever you do eventually see on this trip, it will undoubtedly be varied, often large, and completely fascinating. With Vianet on hand you will gain so much more insight into the country than on a normal, tailor-made tour. Call now for more details on 01803 866965 as places are limited to just 9 lucky participants.



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## The Wonderful Wildlife of My Congo, 2018

Mon 19 FEB Depart LONDON HEATHROW at 2100 on ETHIOPIAN AIRLINES flight ET701 to ADDIS ABABA (flight duration: 7hrs 35mins).

Tue 20 FEB Arrive ADDIS ABABA at 0735. Connect at 0920 with ET861 to BRAZZAVILLE (with a short stop in Pointe Noire en route), arriving at 1340 (duration: 6hrs 20mins). Met on arrival, assisted through security and customs, and transfer to hotel. The rest of the day is at leisure. No meals are included today.

O/n RADISSON BLU M'BAMOU PALACE HOTEL, BB. This modern, 178-room hotel occupies a privileged position overlooking the Congo River towards Kinshasa. The rooms have views of the city and river

and are equipped with fridge (mineral water only), desk, direct dial phone, satellite TV with a large variety of multilingual channels, safe, air-conditioning and complimentary high speed WiFi. There is the M'Bamou Larder serving international cuisine for breakfast, lunch and



dinner, the M'Bamou lounge offering light bites and drinks, Le Feu des Saveurs grill overlooking the Congo River and Il Taglio pool bar serving Italian cuisine and Mediterranean cocktails. A same day laundry service is available if clothes are received before 0930. The hotel also provides 24-hour room service,

The M'Bamou Health Club and Spa has an outdoor pool, outdoor deck overlooking the gardens and the Congo River, a fitness centre, massage and treatment rooms, a hairdresser, sauna, steam bath, Jacuzzi, nail spa and juice bar.



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There are a number of high-priced boutique shops on the ground floor, as well as a supermarket a short walk away. Euros, US Dollars and Pounds can be exchanged for CFA Francs 24 hours a day at reception. There is a Visa ATM in the lobby and a MasterCard ATM less than a block away.

Wed 21 FEB After breakfast explore Brazzaville accompanied by Vianet and our local representative.

Founded in 1880 by the Italian-French explorer Pierre de Savorgnan de Brazza, this city of three million inhabitants is dwarfed in size by



neighbouring Kinshasa across the Congo River, with its population of 12 million. There is no set tour arranged; instead Vianet will simply show you some of his favourite parts of the city, no doubt also visiting one of Brazzaville's bustling markets. There will almost certainly be a visit to Rapide, a viewpoint overlooking the foaming Congo River where it surges through in a series of wild rapids. From below the rapids to the Atlantic Ocean, a distance of 280 miles, the Congo River is impassable. Breakfast only is included today. O/n RADISSON BLU M'BAMOU PALACE HOTEL, BB.

Thu 22 FEB After a relaxed breakfast, transfer to BRAZZAVILLE AIRPORT for a scheduled charter flight (1hr 40mins) to Mboko airstrip in ODZALA-KOKOUA NATIONAL PARK. *Note: The maximum permitted luggage is 30 kg per person total. Soft-sided bags are recommended.*

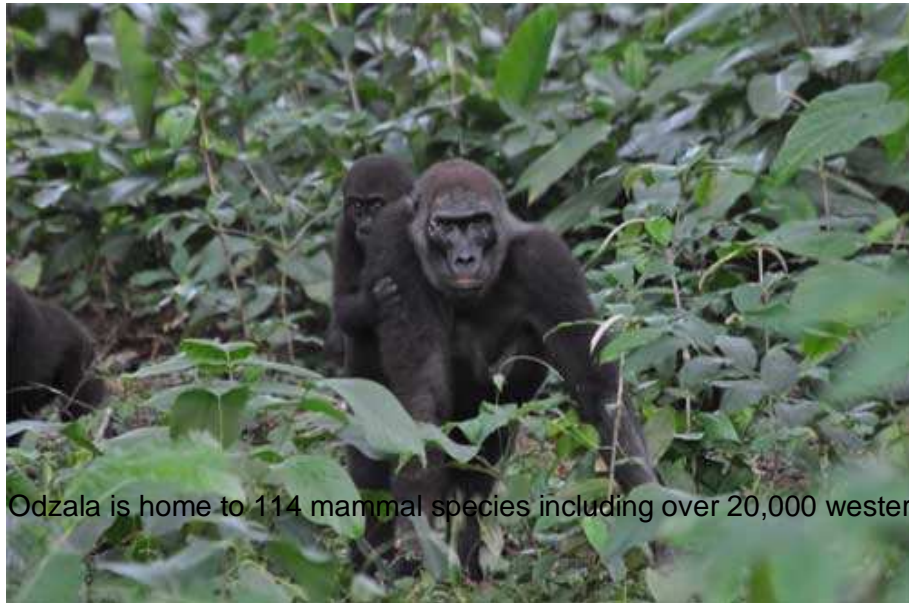
Odzala-Kokoua National Park was proclaimed by the French administration in 1935 making it one of the continent's oldest national parks. It occupies 13,500 square kilometres within the second largest tropical rainforest



of the world and is an integral part of both the Congo Basin and the TRIDOM Trans-frontier Park which overlaps Gabon, Congo and Cameroon.

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The park boasts rich wildlife diversity with primary rainforest, forest galleries, swamp forests, pockets of savannah, and rivers and baies (pronounced the same as “buys”). These baies, or forest clearings, are distributed throughout the national park and are generally created by the presence of a water source. Many contain soils that are naturally rich in salts and minerals which attract wildlife, thereby providing excellent opportunities for clear, unobscured observation.



Odzala is home to 114 mammal species including over 20,000 western lowland gorillas, h

The National Park harbours nearly 450 species of birds (including migrants and blow-ins), with more than 300 breeding species making Odzala one of Birdlife International’s Important Bird Areas. Notable species include abundant roosting populations of African grey parrots, plumed guineafowl, Hartlaub’s duck, Cassin’s malimbe, bare-cheeked trogon, blue malkoha, black-casqued wattled hornbill, black bee-eater, blue-throated roller, and many others.

Odzala contains one of the least studied forests in the world, although there are known to be at least 26 butterfly species believed to be endemic to the area, including a relatively new species, *Bebearia ivindoensis*, discovered in 2005.



Upon arrival at Mboko airstrip we will be met by our guide and transfer (3 hrs) to a private concession in the Ndzehi Forest which borders the National Park’s western boundary. After dinner enjoy an activity that is not possible within Odzala National Park – a short forest night walk. As well as myriad insects search for potoos, palm civets, genets and galagos. Breakfast and dinner are included today.

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O/n NGAGA CAMP, FB. Perched above a forest clearing surrounded by dense marantaceae forest, Ngaga has six guest cabins raised on three- to four-metre stilts with wraparound viewing walkways. All rooms are en suite with a hot shower and flush toilet, mosquito net, fans, in room safe, and power points. There is also a dining room, lounge and bar area on one raised deck overlooking the rainforest, and a star deck and fire pit located on a lower deck below the main area. Laundry service is included.



Fri 23 FEB

The main activity at Ngaga is tracking western lowland gorillas, drawing on the expertise of primatologists Dr Magda Bermejo and German Illera, who have their research base here. Alongside their team of trackers they have studied these amazing primates for more than 17 years and the focus of each morning at Ngaga will be to locate and view the gorillas as much as possible, within limits.

Two groups have been habituated and can be viewed by guests. Neptuno and his group of 13 are generally quite relaxed in the presence of guests and researchers. The second habituated group numbers 23 individuals and is led by Jupiter who is very shy and does not show often, though there is usually plenty of noise and interesting dynamics to observe amongst the group's adolescents.



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In order for everyone to have an opportunity to track both habituated groups, and have some time with Vianet whilst tracking, we will divide the group into three. Accompanied by a skilful local tracker and guide, two of the groups will set off at first light, heading towards the nesting sites Neptuno and Jupiter used the previous night. From here the tracker will interpret and follow signs on the forest floor and listen out for gorilla activity. No talking is permitted by guests to enable the tracker to attune to the sounds of the forest. The distance covered is not likely to be too great, but the terrain can be uneven and the trail is often through



dense stands of marantaceae. Once the group is encountered face masks are donned, and head nets to protect from the swarms of sweat bees that are around the gorillas. There are also wasps and honey bees that like nothing more than trying to make their way up a trouser leg or sleeve to sting. Guests are permitted an hour with the gorillas who might be up trees, foraging along the ground, or with luck exploring a root site. The duration of outings varies but the average time spent out of the camp tracking is about five hours.

Whilst two of the groups are tracking the gorillas, the third group can relax around the camp, spot wildlife from the deck or enjoy a guided hike along some of the 80 kilometres of trails through the forest.

After returning to the lodge for lunch, the early afternoon will be spent relaxing before heading off by vehicle to visit the nearby village of OMBO. Learn about the sustainable forest lifestyle of this small village of fewer than 40 inhabitants, and hear how they have played a key role in setting up gorilla programmes in the area. Ngaga Camp employs several people from Ombo and buys fresh fruit and vegetables from their smallholdings. After dinner there will be another opportunity for a night walk. O/n NGAGA CAMP, FB.



Sat 24 FEB

This morning two groups will track the habituated gorilla groups whilst the third group relaxes at the lodge or explores the forest trails. In the afternoon the whole group will enjoy a guided exploration of the forest, focusing on forest ecology and its smaller denizens. O/n NGAGA CAMP, FB.



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Sun 25 FEB

During a final morning at Ngaga two groups will track the habituated gorilla groups whilst the third group relaxes at the lodge, or explores one of the forest trails. After lunch it is time to pack up and drive back into ODZALA-KOKOUA NATIONAL PARK. En route stop in the small town of MBOMO to visit a pre-school and community centre which is supported by Sabine Plattner African Charities (SPAC). Arriving at dusk we will hopefully be welcomed by spotted hyena which frequently visit the camp before nightfall.



O/n MBOKO CAMP, FB. Mboko is the largest of the three adventure camps, and is the operational centre. There are 12 tented rooms built along the Likeni River, consisting of 10 double occupancy and two family cabins. Each room has a private deck with forest or river view, en suite bathroom with hot shower, flush toilet, mosquito net, fans, power points and in-room safe. There is a large dining, lounge and bar area with star deck and fire pit overlooking wide-open grasslands that are frequented by buffalo, elephants and abundant bird life. Laundry service is included here.



*Note: Care needs to be taken when walking between the rooms and main building because of wildlife activity, and after dark guests are required to have an escort on the pathways.*



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Mon 26 FEB After breakfast drive to the Lekoli River for a boat trip upriver and hike to one of the baies. During the river trip look out for primates in the gallery forest along the river's edge including crowned monkey, putty-nosed monkey, agile mangabey and guereza colobus. The actual baie to be visited will depend on wildlife activity and weather, but is likely to involve a hike with short stretches of possibly waist deep water, muddy trails, and grassland. Whilst on foot the guides are particularly vigilant for forest elephant and buffalo who can sometimes take exception to being disturbed. Return to the camp in time for lunch.



In the late-afternoon enjoy a gentle boat trip down the Lekoli River for a stunning sunset over Lango Stream. Return to the camp after dark in time for dinner. O/n MBOKO CAMP, FB.

Tue 27 FEB After breakfast we will enjoy a transfer with a difference to the next camp. Those who would like a more leisurely transfer can walk from the Likeni River along a boardwalk through swamp to the grassland and then take a short vehicle transfer to LANGO CAMP. The more active and adventurous can return to the Lekoli River and kayak (about 1 hr 30 mins) in double kayaks downstream to Lango Stream,

and from there hike along the stream into Lango Baie, arriving in time for lunch. While quietly paddling down the river, look out for wildlife along the water's edge – slender-snouted crocodile and African dwarf crocodile can



occasionally be spotted. The hike takes at least 1 hr 30 mins but can take longer depending on water levels and elephant and buffalo activity. Looping detours are sometimes required.

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In the late afternoon hike across the baie to a forested 'island' – Lango East Forest. Here the understorey is relatively open making walking quite easy, and we will be looking for primates (attractive guereza colobus are common here) and birdlife.



In the late evening, and pre-dawn, there can be a great deal of elephant activity on the baie so at least one late night and one early morning vigil on the viewing deck are recommended.

O/n LANGO CAMP, FB. Located on a baie in the south-central part of the National Park, the camp buildings are connected by a series of raised walkways. There are six comfy double



occupancy rooms built amongst the forest overlooking Lango Baie. All rooms have a wraparound viewing walkway, en suite bathroom with hot water shower, flush toilet, mosquito net, fans, power points and in-room safe. There is a central dining room, lounge and bar area, with star deck and fire pit affording magnificent views over the baie. A laundry service is provided free of charge.



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Wed 28 FEB After breakfast, cross the baie once again to enjoy a morning wildlife hike through a variety of habitats including gallery forest, grassland and forest 'islands'. As always when on foot, vigilance is required, especially as this hike follows a number of forest elephant trails. There is great potential to see a good mix of wildlife in these varied habitats, both in the trees and on the ground.

*Note: The last part of the hike could involve wading through a stretch of waist high water.*



Return to the camp for lunch. The afternoon programme of activities is flexible. Some may prefer to relax on the deck and watch the activity on the baie from that viewpoint, others might like to hike in one of the forest islands, or perhaps take a grassland walk.

In the evening enjoy a final dinner in Odzala National Park and do not forget to pack ready for an early start the following morning. O/n LANGO CAMP, FB.

Thu 1 MAR After an early breakfast board the vehicles for a 15 minute drive across the grassland followed by a short walk across the swamp boardwalk back to Mboko Camp. After a quick tea or coffee, climb board the vehicles for the short drive to Mboko airstrip and the scheduled charter flight back to BRAZZAVILLE. Met on arrival and transfer to your hotel. The afternoon is at leisure to relax and reflect on your Odzala adventures. In the evening enjoy a farewell dinner in the hotel's grill restaurant overlooking the Congo River. Breakfast and dinner are included today. O/n RADISSON BLU M'BAMOU PALACE HOTEL, BB.



Fri 2 MAR After a relaxed breakfast and time to pack, transfer to BRAZZAVILLE AIRPORT. Depart at 1435 on ETHIOPIAN AIRLINES flight ET861 to ADDIS ABABA, arriving at 2100 (flight duration: 3 hrs 35 mins). Breakfast only is included today.

Sat 3 MAR Connect at 0105 with ET700 to LONDON HEATHROW, arriving at 0550 (flight duration: 7 hrs 45 mins).

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Maximum Number of Participants: 9

Price: £7,205 per person sharing double/twin accommodation.

Single Supplement: £880

To include: Economy class international flights; scheduled domestic charter flights; accommodation; transfers; nearly all meals; all tours and excursions as stated; entrance fees; gorilla permits (two per person); private transportation; services of Vianet D'jenguet and various local guides; letter of introduction; government taxes and service charges.

Not included: Meals in Brazzaville (accept breakfast and farewell dinner); alcoholic and soft drinks (purified water is provided during meals and excursions in Odzala); visa fees; tips; various items of a personal nature; and travel insurance.

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Please call John Melton for more details on 01803 866965 or email him at [john.melton@reefandrainforest.co.uk](mailto:john.melton@reefandrainforest.co.uk)





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## IMPORTANT NOTES TO ACCOMPANY THE ABOVE ITINERARY

NB: It is currently envisaged that Vianet D'jenguët will be accompanying this group and he has agreed to do so, but should there be any unforeseen reason or eventuality which leads to him being unable to be with the group, a suitable alternative person will be chosen to take his place.

NB: This tour involves some travel in remote areas. This adds to the adventure and increases the opportunity to enjoy a true wildlife experience. However, due to terrain, weather, road conditions, and other factors beyond our control, some elements of the tour may have to be altered. Times of some activities may need to be changed or even cancelled due to the conditions. If an activity is cancelled it will usually be replaced with an alternative activity that is more appropriate for the conditions. Advance notice will be given for any changes where possible, although at times changes may need to be made whilst the tour is in progress.

NB: The quoted price for the above itinerary is based on current airline fares (both international and domestic), fuel surcharges and flight taxes. These (and other tour costs) may be subject to unanticipated increases beyond our control at short notice, either before or after you have booked the tour, in which case the price would need to be revised accordingly.

NB: A visa is required to visit the Republic of Congo. Please contact the Honorary Consulate of the Republic of Congo on 0203 0779958. A letter of introduction is required from Reef and Rainforest before the application process begins. Your passport should be valid for the proposed duration of your stay.

NB: Prices are based on standard rooms unless otherwise stated in the itinerary. Should you wish to upgrade (where available) please let us know.

NB: All itineraries are subject to change without notice to take into account possible airline flight schedule changes which can take place before departure date or during the tour, and other operational factors.

NB: Inclusive tours and excursions as stated in the itinerary will have been pre-paid. Once full payment has been made and/or clients are actually at their destination, should clients be disinclined to partake of any inclusive tour or excursion, no refunds will be possible.

NB: Meals are provided as follows BB = bed and breakfast, HB = half board, FB = full board.

NB: For gorilla viewing guests need proof of polio and measles vaccinations and that they are free from tuberculosis.

NB: It is a condition of booking that full travel insurance including Emergency Medical Repatriation is taken out by each person travelling. Your insurance cover must also include Missed Departure and/or Missed Flight Connection for both outbound and return flight sectors (such cover might be subject to a small additional premium – please confirm with your insurers). We ask that you send us a photo/fax/electronic copy of your policy document together with the 24hr medical assistance telephone number issued by your insurer.

NB: Before and after booking, clients must familiarise themselves with current UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) travel advisories so as to satisfy themselves as to the suitability of the destination(s) to be visited in this itinerary. All decisions relating to the tour will be based on UK FCO advisories, and not those of any other countries' governments. In the event of any emergency or other problem encountered in the destination, it is advisable if appropriate to contact the local UK Embassy, High Commission or Consulate for assistance. The FCO in London also has dedicated telephone call centres: Crisis Management Dept - 0207 008 5335 (during UK office hours), and Global Response Centre - 0207 008 1500 (out of UK office hours).

NB: Some service providers may require that guests sign an indemnity waiver form and may refuse services if these forms are not signed. Reef and Rainforest Tours cannot give refunds for services not provided due to a refusal to sign such forms.

NB: Yellow fever vaccination is recommended for this country. This may not be suitable for people aged over 60 who have not been vaccinated before. If this applies to you, please seek medical advice prior to booking. Clients must ensure they seek medical advice prior to booking.

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## Reef and Rainforest Tours Ltd.

A7 Dart Marine Park, Steamer Quay, Totnes, Devon, TQ9 5AL, UK

Tel: ++ 44 (0)1803 866965 Fax: ++ 44 (0)1803 865916

Websites: [www.reefandrainforest.co.uk](http://www.reefandrainforest.co.uk) [www.familytours.co.uk](http://www.familytours.co.uk)

E-mail: [mail@reefandrainforest.co.uk](mailto:mail@reefandrainforest.co.uk)

