



Inspiration  
of Africa

# An eXplorAction Expedition Cruise on the Congo River



From 29 September till 14 October 2025  
Escorted by Bruno Van den Bossche



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# An eXplorAction Expedition Cruise on the Congo River

29th September till 14th October 2025



Contact: Bruno Van den Bossche - Email [brunov@inspirationafrica.travel](mailto:brunov@inspirationafrica.travel) - Mobile: +32 499 334683



# Itinerary

If Africa's mysterious tropical forests captivate you, expedition-style cruise along the Sangha and Congo rivers is the ultimate journey of discovery.

Embark on an unforgettable adventure into the pristine rainforests of Congo, where you'll track majestic wildlife, including plains gorillas, chimpanzees, and the iconic bonobos in their natural habitat. Witness breathtaking gatherings of forest elephants and bongos in the renowned "Bais," and immerse yourself in the traditions of Bantu tribes and nomadic Pygmy communities still living in harmony with nature.

Your journey concludes in Brazzaville, where the vibrant culture of the famous "SAPEurs" contrasts beautifully with the remote wilderness. This is Africa revealed—raw, powerful, and undeniably beautiful.

As this region is my land of birth, I'm thrilled to personally escort you on this once-in-a-lifetime adventure. The itinerary for this second edition, scheduled for 2025, builds on the success of the inaugural journey conducted in December 2024.

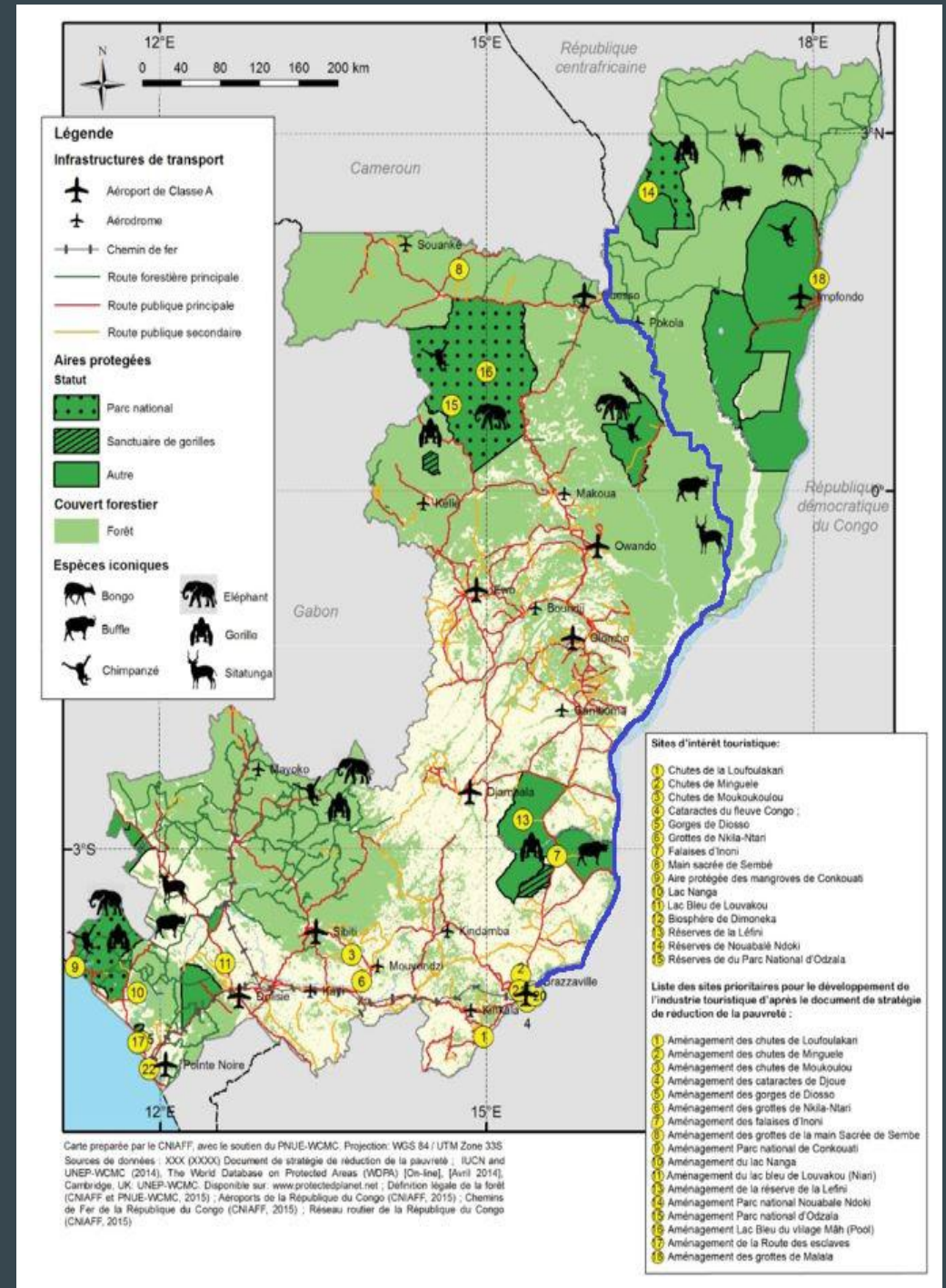
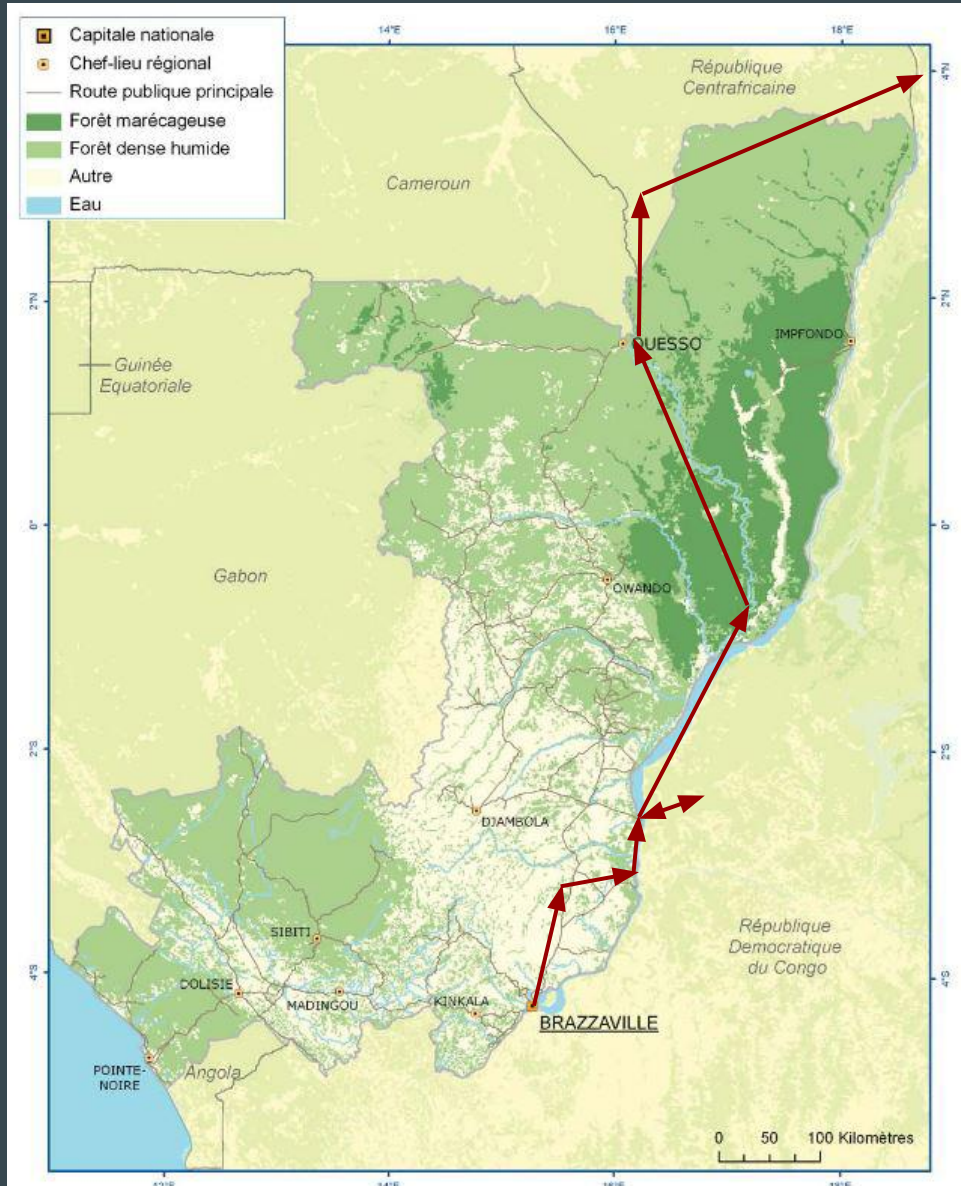
Looking forward to welcoming you

Bruno Van den Bossche





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# Stage by stage itinerary

The cruise begins in Brazzaville, traveling upstream along the Congo River before continuing into the Sangha River. One night will be spent in very rustic conditions in the DRC as part of the bonobo tracking experience. The final portion of the journey is dedicated to staying in comfortable lodges, providing the perfect base for exploring the Dzanga-Sangha Reserve. The trip concludes with departure from Bangui for your return home.

Please note that flights are not included in the itinerary and will be booked separately according to your preferred airline and travel class. From Europe, Ethiopian Airlines offers the best flight options. Tourist visas are required, and we'll gladly assist you with the application process.

While every effort will be made to follow the planned itinerary, please be prepared for possible adjustments due to the unpredictable nature of travel in the Congo. Flexibility and a sense of adventure will go a long way!

## Day 1 - The 29th September 2025

Arrival by air in Brazzaville, clearing of immigration formalities and collecting the luggage before the meet & greet at the airport. Followed by the transfer to the Princess Ngalessa for check-in. Rest of the day at leisure.

## Day 2 - The 30th September 2025

Spend a full day exploring Brazzaville, delving into its rich history and visiting its key landmarks and cultural highlights. The day will also provide opportunities to connect with the local community, including an engaging encounter with the iconic "Sapeurs." All meals are included.

ull day dedicated to discovering the highlights of Brazz

## Day 3 - The 1st October 2025

Today, the group will be divided into two departures to facilitate gorilla observation at Lesio-Louna, with approximately two hours between groups. All transfers will be conducted by road, while the ship continues its journey upstream to meet us in Ngabé, the royal residence of the Queen of the Ba'Teke.

Expect a scenic three-hour drive to the Lesio-Louna Reserve, where powerboats will take you across the river for an up-close encounter with western lowland gorillas in their natural environment. While the sanctuary is fenced, it offers exceptional opportunities for photography and close observation of rescued gorillas in a semi-wild habitat.

After the visit, the journey continues by road to Ngabé, where you'll enjoy a dinner accompanied by traditional dances and a courtesy visit to the Queen of the Ba'Teke. The ship will join us in Ngabé in time for an overnight stay on board.



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# Day by day itinerary

## Days 4 & 5 - The 2nd and 3rd October 2025

As the sun rises over the Congo River, we will arrive at the village of Mpouya to cross into the Congo DRC, completing exit and entry formalities between the two Congos. Here, the true adventure begins as we venture approximately 40 kilometers into the DRC to a remote location offering challenging yet rewarding opportunities to track and observe bonobos (*Pan paniscus*) in their natural habitat.

Using a variety of local transportation—embracing the Congolese way of travel—we'll reach the main camp that will host us for the night. This expedition includes two bonobo tracking sessions: one in the afternoon upon arrival and another at dawn the following morning. Accommodation will be rustic, with a choice of sleeping in tents or hammocks. Prepare for a wet, adventurous experience, but the chance to observe wild bonobos, endemic to the Congo DRC, makes it all worthwhile. Expect to have to hike 4 to 6 hours in the rainforest!

After approximately 30 hours immersed in this unique environment, we will exit the DRC and return to the comfort of the ship to continue our journey.

That day the Princess Ngalessa will cruise towards the Alima river that runs into the Congo stream where it is over 10 kms wide.

## Days 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 - From the 4th till the 8th October 2025

This portion of the journey is dedicated entirely to cruising along the Congo River and its tributaries, including the Alima and Sangha rivers. Aboard a comfortable—though not luxurious—vessel, you'll experience the rhythm of river life, passing through local towns and remote villages, engaging with communities, and sharing in their daily activities while uncovering their unique traditions.

The cruise includes numerous stops to meet local populations, many of whom have had no prior exposure to tourism, ensuring a truly authentic experience. Activities will range from walking, canoeing, and fishing to learning traditional skills such as net fishing, crafting fishing traps, weaving raffia palm leaves, using medicinal plants, hunting crocodiles, making raffia wine, and creating pottery.

While cruising, the journey will be enriched with short onboard presentations, offering insights into the culture, traditions, and environment of this fascinating region.

This cruise offers the perfect opportunity to experience the Congo River at the serene pace of its gentle flow toward the ocean.

## Day 11 - The 9th October 2024

Today will be a long and adventurous day of travel. With the cruise boat reaching its final destination in Ouessou, the journey continues with a challenging 7-9 hour trip by open powerboats from Ouessou to Bayanga. This route crosses from the Republic of Congo into the Central African Republic and first with Cameroon, through the Tri-National Park region, which includes the remarkable Dzanga-Sangha Special Reserve.

While the border formalities will require multiple stops and some patience, they also provide opportunities to engage with local communities in their villages, exchanging smiles and stories along the way. Expect warm and welcoming encounters throughout the journey.

We'll set off at dawn and aim to arrive before sunset—unless, of course, the unpredictable Congo has other plans!

Upon arrival, the group will be divided between two accommodations—Sangha Lodge and Doli Lodge—based on the room types selected and confirmed during booking.

## Days 12, 13, 14, 15 - The 10th, 11th, 12th and 13th October 2024

Over the course of these four full days, we will embark on a variety of activities from their respective lodges, exploring the many highlights of the Dzanga-Sangha region.

## Stay in Dzanga-Sangha: An Immersive Adventure

The Dzanga-Sangha region, is truly unique and offers an incredible array of activities. Over the course of your stay, you'll have the chance to explore this extraordinary area through a variety of unforgettable experiences:

- **Dzanga Bai:** Each guest will visit Dzanga Bai twice, witnessing the remarkable wildlife that gathers at this iconic forest clearing.
- **Mangabey Monkeys:** Observe the agile mangabeys, living in troops of up to 400 individuals, in their natural habitat.
- **Walking Adventures:** Enjoy long walks through the surrounding Baïs near Bai Hokou, where wildlife thrives at every turn.
- **Boat Excursion:** Take a scenic boat trip to visit beautiful waterfalls, immersing yourself in the serenity of the region.
- **Ba'Aka Tribe Encounter:** Meet the Ba'Aka people and learn about their traditional forest lifestyle, including their hunting techniques and extensive medicinal plant knowledge.
- **Western Lowland Gorilla Tracking:** If available, each guest will have the opportunity to track wild Western lowland gorillas (*Gorilla gorilla*) and experience an intimate encounter with these creatures.

This adventure is a blend of unique experiences and thrilling wildlife encounters. Be prepared for challenging conditions, lots of walking, getting wet, and embracing the rugged beauty of the forest. But the rewards are unparalleled.



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# Day by day itinerary

## Day 16 - The 14th October 2025

All journeys must come to an end, and the time to return home has arrived. After enjoying a final breakfast at the lodges, you'll head to the Bayanga Airstrip for a charter flight to Bangui, the capital of the Central African Republic. Depending on the flight's departure schedule, a lunch will be arranged in Bangui before proceeding to the airport for your onward flights home.

You'll return home with the memories of an unforgettable experience.





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## Watch the Video





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# Great Apes

One of the main objectives of this exploration itinerary is to observe the natural environment of the tropical rainforest and adjacent biotopes, with particular emphasis on the great apes.

The program has been designed to offer good observation opportunities in their natural habitat. As nature remains unpredictable, we have optimized the visits to offer the best chances of seeing them:

**Western lowland gorillas** (*Gorilla gorilla*) are great apes living in the western part of central Africa, one of two species of the hominid genus *Gorilla*.

**The chimpanzee** (*Pan troglodytes*) is a species of great ape native to the forest and savannah of tropical Africa, whose range overlaps with that of the western lowland gorilla in the Republic of Congo.

**Bonobos** (*Pan paniscus*), also historically known as pygmy chimpanzees, are endangered great apes endemic to the Democratic Republic of Congo. The bonobo is man's closest relative. As the species are not good swimmers, the natural formation of the Congo River some 1.5 to 2 million years ago probably led to the isolation and speciation of the bonobo.



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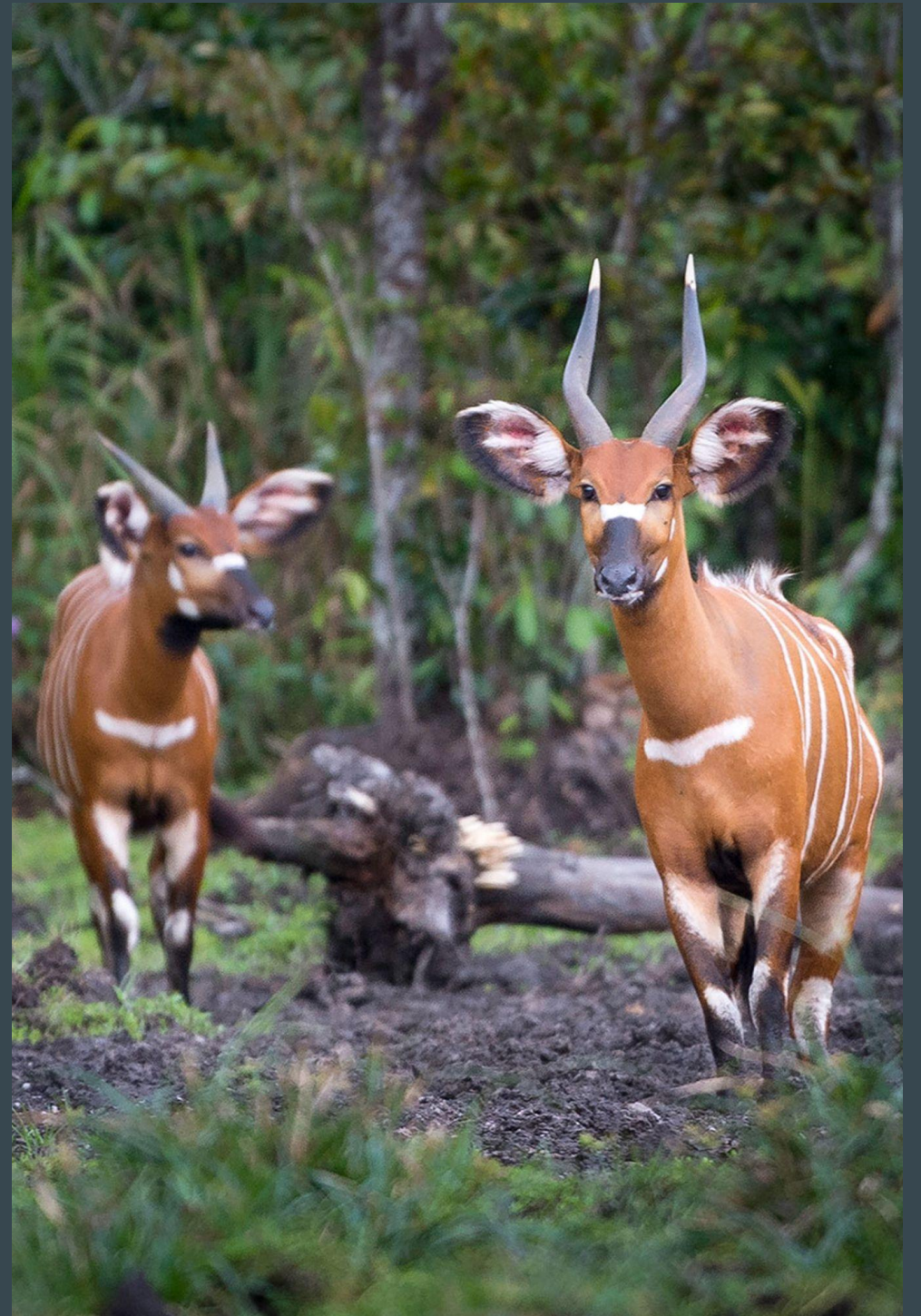
## Other Wildlife

The rainforest of Central Africa that makes up most of the Republic of Congo, is also home to over 400 species of mammal, around 1000 species of bird, 700 species of fish, etc.

Travelling along the rivers, canoeing up their tributaries and walking in the riverbeds, we'll have access to special clearings in the forest, called Baïs, where species of large mammals converge in search of soil rich in mineral salts.

Forest elephants, forest buffalo, bongos, sitatungas, bush pigs, mangabeys, etc. can all be seen here.

Along the way, the attentive eye can spot a multitude of birds, numerous butterflies, the elusive duiker and the monkeys that live in the canopy.





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## People & Culture

A unique part of the trip will also be devoted to interactive encounters with local communities. We'll visit their villages, of course, but we'll also try to understand their way of life, their cultural heritage, their symbiosis with nature, their knowledge of medicinal plants and their unique ability to track down flora and fauna.

The boat trip is probably the best way to discover an impenetrable rainforest, and the journey will be punctuated by stops in the many fishing villages, tribal communities, pygmy villages, small towns, local kingdoms and so on.

Our expedition will also give us a better understanding of the Ba'Aka Pygmies and expose us to a different kind of wisdom, living in far greater harmony with nature than we do.

In complete contrast, Brazzaville will be exactly what Africa's big cities are. Vibrant and colorful... especially when it comes to the Société des Ambianceurs et des Personnes Élégantes.

As a companion on this trip, I'll also have the opportunity to share my own story of growing up in this part of Africa.





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# An eXplorAction Cruise on the Congo River

3rd till 19th September 2024



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# The RV Ducret Congo

This RV Ducret Congo boat left a Belgian shipyard in Kinshasa in 2017. Its design is essentially based on that of the passenger boats that for decades carried passengers on the Congo River and its tributaries linking various cities. Of robust steel construction, it is powered by two new-generation 380 HP Caterpillar engines. With a draught of just 90 centimetres, it navigates easily in shallow waters and around sandbanks.

In 2023, as we speak, after several years of neglect by her former owners, she is currently undergoing serious renovations to launch the first 4\* expedition cruises into the heart of one of the world's most mysterious forests, the Congo Basin.

By end of December 2023, she is due to start sailing up and down the Congo and Sangha rivers, reviving the long tradition of river cruising in the Congo.

Ship type: River expedition vessel

Length: 170 feet / 52 meters

Beam: 36 feet / 11 meters

Draft: 3 feet / 0.90 meters

Cruising speed: 12 knots

Electricity: 220 volts

Engine: 2 Caterpillar 375 HP marine engines

Generators: 150 KVA and 220 KVA

Water: 10,000-liter wastewater treatment plant



# The RV Ducret Congo

**Onboard living spaces:** 600 m<sup>2</sup> of common areas including a dining room, an outdoor lounge, an outdoor Jacuzzi, a massage room and an observation deck.

**A crew of 21,** including a cruise director and 3 naturalist guides.

**World-class cuisine:** a culinary experience nourished by African and European influences. The menus have been specially designed by a French chef who has been awarded a Michelin star for his work in 2021. Emphasis is placed on the use of local produce.

**Launch boats for shore excursions:** 3 auxiliary aluminum launches equipped with low-emission four-stroke engines. Each boat has a capacity of 12 passengers. Kayaks for two people.

**Safety on board:** Radio communication with separate battery; satellite telephone; life jackets, fire extinguishers and smoke detectors in each cabin; flares and signals. Full first-aid kit.



# Cabins on RV Ducret Congo

Guests are accommodated in 14 designer cabins on three decks.

**35 m<sup>2</sup> owner's suite.** Observation deck. Private balcony (9m<sup>2</sup>). Three windows, armchair, desk and chair, two bedside tables, sofa and wardrobe. En-suite bathroom. Air-conditioning. 1 cabin with two single beds convertible into a double bed. 1 cabin with double bed (401, 402).

**Superior forward suite 30 m<sup>2</sup>.** Third foredeck. Public balcony. Four windows, armchair, desk and chair, two bedside tables and wardrobe. One bathroom. Air-conditioning. 2 cabins with two single beds convertible into a double (301, 302).

**Forward master suite 23 m<sup>2</sup>.** Second foredeck. Public balcony. Four windows, armchair, desk and chair, two bedside tables and wardrobe. En-suite bathroom. Air-conditioning. 2 double cabins (201, 203).

**Master suite 27 m<sup>2</sup>.** Second deck. Public balcony. Three windows, armchair, desk and chair, two bedside tables, sofa and wardrobe. Air-conditioning. 1 cabin with two single beds convertible into a queen-size bed. 1 cabin with queen-size bed. (202, 204)

**Deluxe cabins 18 m<sup>2</sup>.** Second deck. Public balcony. Two windows, one armchair, one desk and chair, two bedside tables and one wardrobe. One bathroom. Air-conditioning. 3 cabins with two single beds. 3 double cabins (205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210).



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Observation Deck



Third Deck / Restaurant Deck



Second Deck



First Deck





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## Prices

Owner Suite 35 sqm	€ 14,400	2 units (401/402)
Sup Suite Fwd 30 sqm	€ 12,640	4 units (301/2/3/4)
Master Suite Fwd 23	€ 11,010	2 units (201/203)
Master Suite 27 sqm	€ 10,880	2 units (202/204)
Deluxe Cabin 18 sqm	€ 9,680	6 units (205-210)
Single Room	On request	

All prices above are per person sharing. They cover the entire itinerary at destination from the 29th September till the 14th October 2025; inclusive of accommodation in Brazzaville, on board and in Dzanga-Sangha, all meals, a limited selection of drinks with meals, all park entrance fees, all activities specified as well as the invitation letters.

Single room accommodation is on request only due to the limited number of cabins available.

Are not included in the price: the cost of visa, the return air tickets to reach the destination, drinks outside the selection offered with the meals on board, tips, personal expenses, any service not specified in the itinerary.



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# Information & Registration

Should you require further information or wish to discuss personal details concerning your participation, please do not hesitate to contact Bruno Van den Bossche directly on +32 499 334683 or by e-mail at [brunov@inspirationafrica.travel](mailto:brunov@inspirationafrica.travel).

For those wishing to register firmly, please contact us by e-mail and we'll send you an official registration link.

**Early booking offer:** a per person discount of € 300 on Suites and € 200 on Deluxe Cabins will be offered on bookings received by January 31st, 2025.

**A unique edition:** given the need to charter an expedition vessel on a route including the Bonobos, this is a unique edition; if exploring the Congo and its rainforest is on your bucket list, don't hesitate and don't put it off - this is your chance.

**Picture Credits:** Expeditions Ducret, Scott Ramsay, Sean Brogan, Nicolas Ducret, Nuria Ortega and the Congo Conservation Corporation



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