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Benin

POP 9.6 MILLION

Includes ➡

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Best Places to Eat

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- Bab's Dock (p205)
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Best Places to Stay

- La Guesthouse (p200)
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- Pendjari Lodge (p213)
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Why Go?

The birthplace of voodoo and a pivotal platform of the slave trade for nearly three centuries, Benin is steeped in a rich and complex history still very much in evidence across the country.

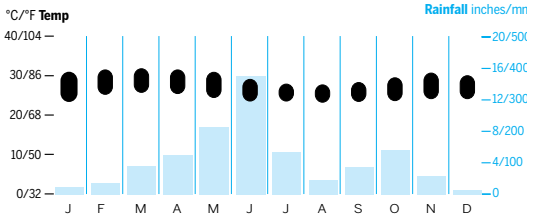
A visit to this small, club-shaped nation could therefore not be complete without exploring the Afro-Brazilian heritage of Ouidah, Abomey and Porto Novo, learning about spirits and fetishes.

But Benin will also wow visitors with its natural beauty, from the palm-fringed beach idyll of the Atlantic coast to the rugged scenery of the north. The Parc National de la Pendjari is one of the best wildlife parks in West Africa. Lions, cheetahs, leopards, elephants and hundreds of other species thrive here.

In fact, Benin is wonderfully tourist friendly. There are good roads, a wide range of accommodation options and ecotourism initiatives that offer travellers the chance to delve deeper into Beninese life. Now is an ideal time to go because the country sits on the cusp of discovery.

When to Go

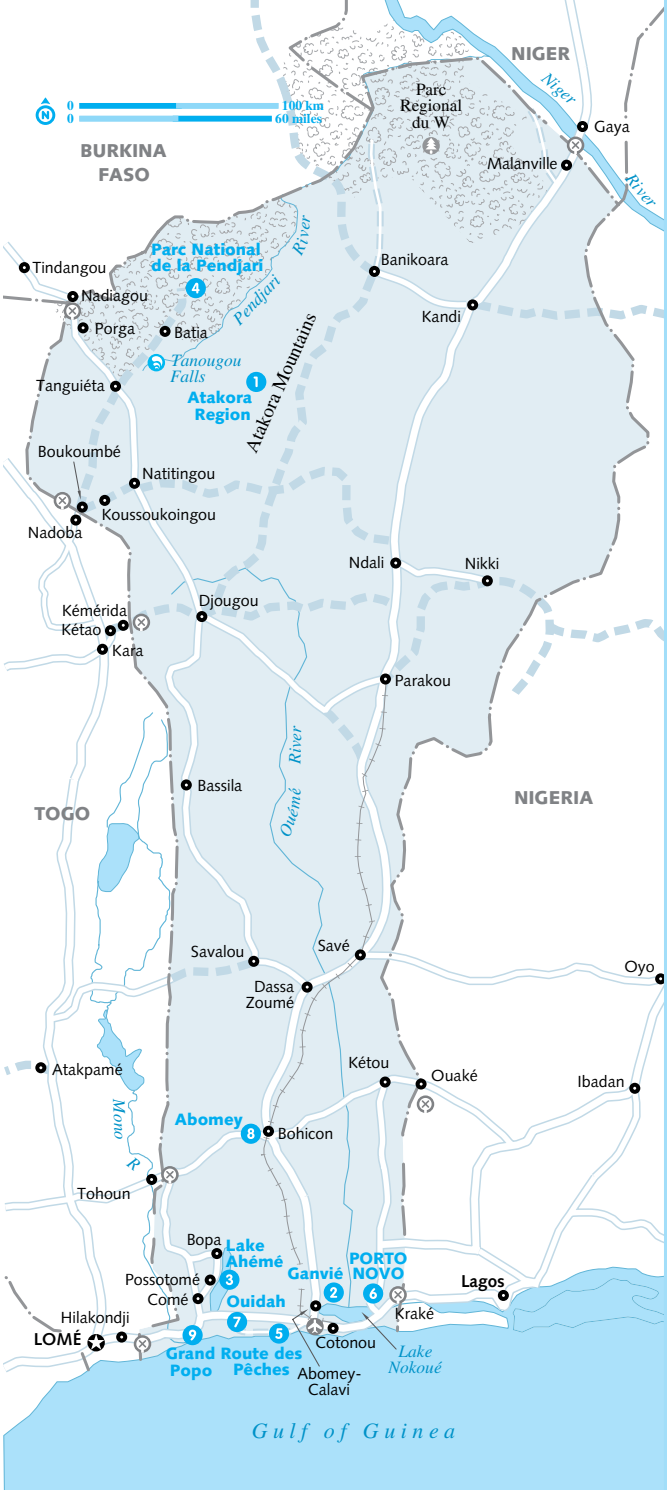
Cotonou



Nov–Feb Warm and dry weather. Prime wildlife watching. Harmattan can produce hazy skies.

Mar–May The hottest period, after the harmattan lifts. Clear skies and some rain in the south.

Jun–Oct Usually downright wet and humid; a dry spell mid-July to mid-September in the south.



Benin Highlights

1. Exploring the rugged landscapes of the **Atakora Region** (p212) and be awed by the intriguing Somba country.
2. Spending a night at the lacustrine stilt village of **Ganvié** (p206).
3. Learning traditional fishing techniques on the shores of **Lake Ahémé** (p209).
4. Spotting lions, cheetahs, elephants and more in **Parc National de la Pendjari** (p213), West Africa's best wildlife park.
5. Spending an afternoon chilling out at **Route des Pêches** (p205), blessed with endless beaches.
6. Discovering **Porto Novo** (p205), Benin's mellow capital, with its Afro-Brazilian heritage.
7. Checking out **Ouidah** (p207), once a capital of the slave trade and now the centre of voodoo worship.
8. Visiting the ruined palaces of the kings of Dahomey in **Abomey** (p210).
9. Putting your bags down at lovely **Grand Popo** (p209) and relaxing on Benin's beautiful, palm-fringed coast.