



Cameroon

POP 20.1 MILLION

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Best Places to Stay

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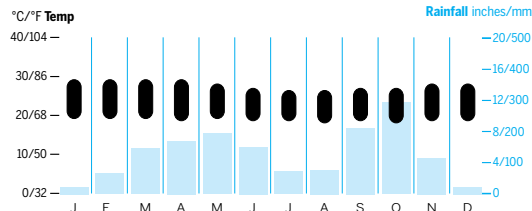
Why Go?

Cameroon is Africa's throbbing heart, a crazed, sultry mosaic of active volcanoes, white-sand beaches, thick rainforest and magnificent parched landscapes broken up by the bizarre rock formations of the Sahel. With both Francophone and Anglophone regions, not to mention some 230 local languages, the country is a vast ethnic and linguistic jigsaw, yet one that, in contrast to so many of its neighbours, enjoys a great deal of stability.

With good infrastructure (think decent roads and functioning trains), travel is a lot easier here than in many parts of Africa. Still, you'll miss none of those indicators that you're in the middle of this fascinating continent: everyone seems to be carrying something on their heads, *makossa* music sets the rhythm, the street smells like roasting plantains and African bliss is just a piece of grilled fish and a sweating beer away.

When to Go

Yaoundé



Nov–Feb It's dry but not too hot, though you can usually expect a harmattan haze.

Feb Join athletes running to the summit of Mt Cameroon in the Race of Hope.

Oct Cameroon's biggest festival, Tabaski, takes place, most impressively in Foumban.

YAOUNDÉ

POP 1.8 MILLION

Let's be brutally honest: West Africa is famous for many things, but pleasant cities – especially capitals – are not among them. Then Yaoundé comes along: green and spread over seven hills, though not exactly a garden city, it's planned, thoughtfully laid out and self-contained. While it is nowhere near as vibrant (or chaotic) as its coastal rival Douala, it enjoys a temperate climate, relatively clean and well-maintained streets and even boasts a host of 1970s government buildings in various exuberant styles that will keep architecture fans happy. Located in the centre of the country, Yaoundé makes a fine stop for getting a visa or before heading off into the rest of Cameroon.

Sights & Activities

Musée d'Art Camerounais MUSEUM
(Quartier Fèbé; admission CFA1500; ☎ 3-6pm Thu, Sat & Sun) At the Benedictine monastery on Mt Fèbé, north of the city centre, the Musée d'Art Camerounais has an impressive collection of masks, bronze- and woodwork and other examples of Cameroonian art. The chapel is also worth a look.

Mvog-Betsi Zoo ZOO
(Mvog-Betsi; admission CFA2000, camera CFA5000; ☎ 9am-6pm) This is one of the better zoos in West Africa, co-run by the **Cameroon Wildlife Aid Fund** (www.cwaf.org), with a sizeable collection of native primates, rescued from poachers and the bushmeat trade.

Sleeping

Ideal Hotel HOTEL \$
(Map p242; ☎ 2266 9537, 2220 9852; ideahotel72@yahoo.fr; Carrefour Nlongkak; r CFA8000-10,000, apt CFA15,000; ☎) Rooms here are decent enough for the low price, though there's no hot water and rooms are fan cooled. Balconies in some make up for a general lack of light (plus you get Yaoundé smog for free). If you're visa hunting, this is well located for embassies.

Foyer International de l'Église Presbytérienne HOSTEL \$
(Map p242; ☎ 9985 2376; off Rue Joseph Essono Balla; tents/dm/s/d CFA2000/5000/8000/10,000; ☎) This 100-year-old building has two fairly uninviting private rooms and two eight-bed dorms, all of which share the same very basic bathrooms. Campers can set up their own

SET YOUR BUDGET

Budget

- ➔ Hotel room CFA5000
- ➔ Two-course dinner CFA2000
- ➔ Coffee CFA500
- ➔ Local bus ride CFA1000

Midrange

- ➔ Hotel room CFA20,000
- ➔ Two-course dinner CFA6000
- ➔ Coffee CFA1000
- ➔ Short taxi ride CFA2000

Top End

- ➔ Hotel room CFA40,000
- ➔ Two-course dinner CFA10,000
- ➔ Coffee CFA1000
- ➔ Long taxi ride CFA5000

tents in the garden. From the main road, walk to the right of the water towers, and it's in the second brick house on your left.

Tou'ngou Hotel HOTEL \$\$
(☎ 2220 1026; www.toungouhotel.com; Rue Onembele Nkou; s/d/ste incl breakfast CFA20,000/30,000/45,000; ☎) One of Yaoundé's better-value midrange hotels, the Tou'ngou is a smart and popular option. Staff can seem a little indifferent, but the rooms are comfortable and clean, the location is central and there's a good restaurant. It's best to book ahead.

Prestige Hotel HOTEL \$\$
(Map p242; ☎ 2222 6055, 2222 6039; www.groupprestigehotel.com; Ave Charles Atangana; ☎) This sprawling and rather raucous hotel has good-value rooms and is handily located for buses to Douala. Rooms are on the small side, but they're clean and secure, with many enjoying balconies. There's a popular bar and restaurant on the site too, but also lots of traffic noise.

El Panaden Hotel HOTEL \$\$
(Map p244; ☎ 9858 7419; elpanaden@yahoo.fr; Pl de l'Indépendance; r CFA15,500-30,000; ☎) This is an old travellers' favourite, with a good wanderer vibe going around. The generously sized and spotless rooms often come with balconies. A renovation was ongoing at the time of our last visit, and so prices may go up when it's complete.