



# Democratic Republic of Congo

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## Best for Wildlife

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## Best for Adventure

- ➔ Congo River by boat (p507)
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## Why Go?

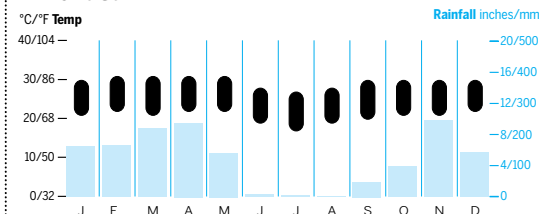
As much a geographical concept as a fully fledged nation, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC; formerly Zaïre) has one of the saddest chapters in modern history: from the brazen political folly of King Leopold of Belgium to the hideously corrupt kleptocracy of maverick leader Mobutu Sese Seko and the blood-stained battlegrounds of Africa's first 'world war'.

But after a decades-long decline in which much of the country descended into anarchy, Africa's second-largest nation is, by and large, headed in the right direction. It still has a long way to go (militias continue to brutalise civilians in many areas), but new roads, enormous untapped mineral wealth and the world's largest UN peacekeeping force have bred optimism among its tormented but resilient population.

Carpeted by huge swaths of rain forest and punctuated by gushing rivers and smoking volcanoes, DRC is the ultimate African adventure. There is absolutely nothing soft nor easy about it but for an African immersion you'll never forget, this is the place to be.

## When to Go

### Kinshasa



**Dec–Mar** Dry season for the north means slightly easier travel conditions.

**Jan** A good month to have the mountain gorillas totally to yourself.

**Apr–Oct** Dry season for the south and best time to attempt Kinshasa to Lubumbashi route.

# Democratic Republic of Congo Highlights

1 Gaze into a volcano's liquid eye at **Nyiragongo** (p505).

2 Get up close and personal with gorillas at **Parc National des Virunga** (p506) and **Parc National de Kahuzi-Biéga** (p506).

3 Meet the bonobo, a rare, peace-loving relative of chimpanzees, at **Lola Ya Bonobo Sanctuary** (p505).

4 Take the legendary boat trip down the still-wild **Congo River** (p507).

5 Dance to the pulsating beat of **Kinshasa** (p500), DRC's megacity.

6 Cross the mighty jungle of the **Congo** (p514), the adventure of a lifetime.

7 Look for elusive okapis and learn the secrets of the Mbuti in **Okapi Wildlife Reserve** (p508).

