

The Gambia

POP 1.8 MILLION

Includes ➔

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Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Hibiscus House (p164)
- ➔ Ngala Lodge (p161)
- ➔ Mandina River Lodge (p164)

Best of Nature

- ➔ Abuko Nature Reserve (p164)
- ➔ Bijilo Forest Park (p157)
- ➔ Makasutu Culture Forest (p164)

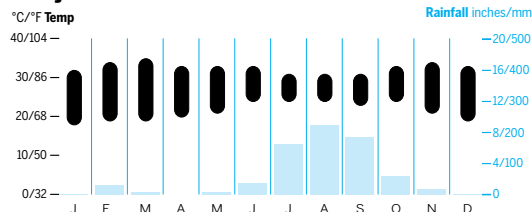
Why Go?

The tiny sliver of Africa's smallest country is wedged into surrounding Senegal, and is seen as a splinter in its side, or the tongue that makes it speak, depending on who you talk to. For many, The Gambia is a country with beaches that invite visitors to laze and linger on package tours. But there's more than sun and surf.

Small fishing villages, nature reserves and historic slaving stations are all within easy reach of the clamorous Atlantic resorts. Star-studded ecolodges and small wildlife parks dot the inland like a green belt around the coast and The Gambia is a bird lovers' utopia: on a leisurely river cruise, you'll easily spot more than 100 species while your *pirogue* charts an unhurried course through mangrove-lined wetlands and lush gallery forests. You won't be able to resist wielding binoculars with the excellent network of guides.

When to Go

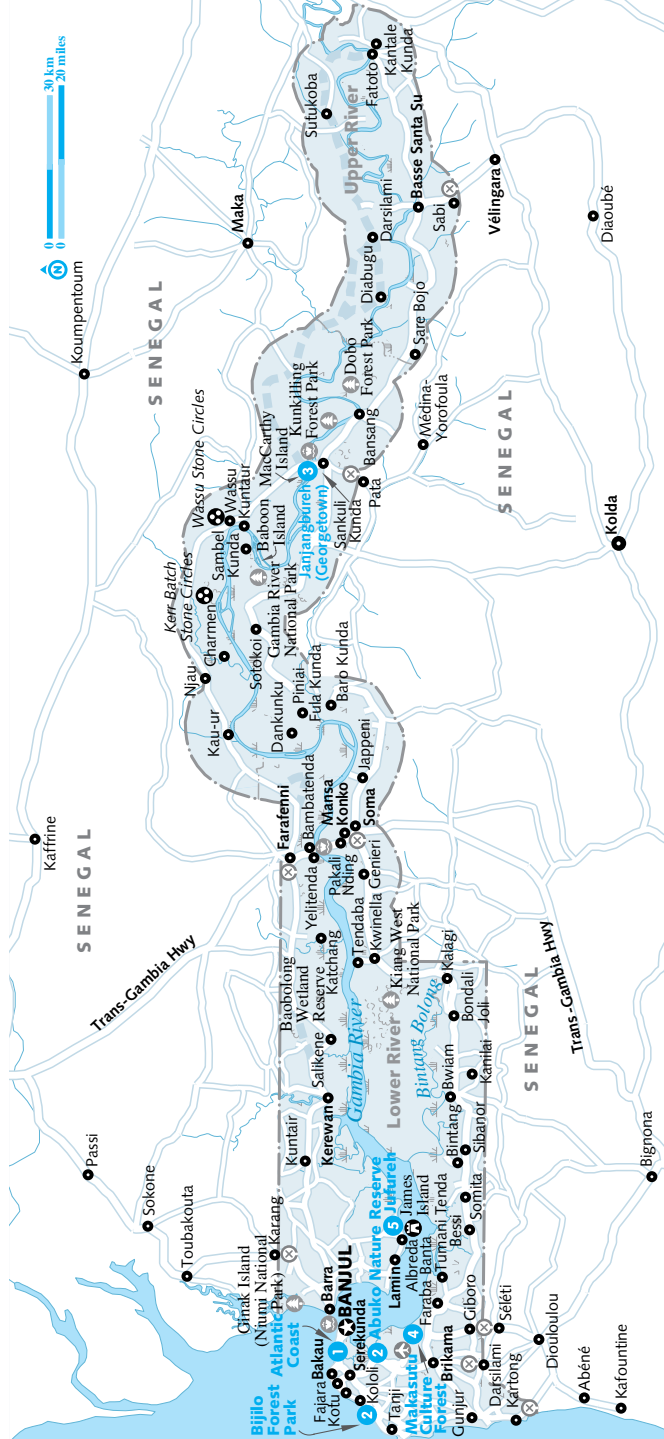
Banjul



Nov–Feb The dry season and the best time to watch wildlife and birds.

Late Jun–Sep Rainy season. Many places close, but you'll avoid the crowds.

Oct & Mar–May Decent weather and ideal for bagging a shoulder-season discount.



The Gambia Highlights

- 1 Indulging in fabulous food, then party the night away in the **Atlantic Coast resorts** (p156).
- 2 Being teased by monkeys on the 4.5km nature trail in **Bijilo Forest Park** (p157) and looking out for rare birds and giant crocodiles in tiny **Abuko Nature Reserve** (p164).
- 3 Following the call of the birds in the forest around **Janjangbureh (Georgetown)** (p166).
- 4 Touring the whole country, squeezed into 1000 hectares of abundant nature at **Makasutu Culture Forest** (p165).
- 5 Contemplating history at the slavery museum in the town to where Alex Haley traced his origins, **Jufureh** (p165).