

# Equatorial Guinea

📍 240 / POP 1,862,158

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## Why Go?

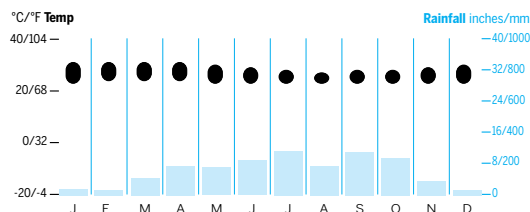
This is the land of primates with painted faces, soft clouds of butterflies and insects so colourful they belong in the realm of fiction. Yes, Equatorial Guinea has something of a reputation, with a history of failed coups, allegations of corruption, trafficked bushmeat and buckets of oil, but there is plenty to bring you to this country's beautiful black-and-white shores.

The capital, Malabo, boasts fascinating colonial architecture alongside sleek oil company high-rises, yet retains its African flavour with colourful markets and a bustling port. Though the country is currently dripping in oil wealth, many people's taps run dry. Poverty permeates ordinary life, making a trip to Malabo at once hedonistic and heartbreaking.

Beyond Malabo, on Bioko Island, are volcanic views, fishing villages, rainforests full of endangered primates, vibrant birdlife and shores of nesting sea turtles. On the mainland, Rio Muni's white beaches, forest paths and jungle-scapes await.

## When to Go

### Malabo



**Jun–Aug** Dry season on the mainland, Rio Muni; more comfortable to travel and roads easier to navigate.

**Dec–Feb** Bioko Island's dry season, although it can rain at any time.

**Nov–Feb** Turtles comes ashore to lay their eggs at Ureca and in the Reserva Natural de Rio Campo.

## BIOKO ISLAND

Bioko Island, rather curiously, sits off the coast of Cameroon rather than the mainland of Equatorial Guinea, and is home to the capital, Malabo. The northern third of the island, Bioko Norte, has a number of small villages along the coast but the further south you go towards Bioko Sur, the thicker the rainforest becomes and stately ceiba trees dot the landscape.

Surrounded by beautiful beaches with either black volcanic or white sands, Bioko has rainforests, woodland, savannah and one volcanic peak, Pico Basile (3012m), usually covered in cloud. While the capital can keep you occupied for a few days, it is worth exploring the southern regions of the island, easily visited on a day trip. Ureca in the far south is the jewel in the crown. Four types of turtles visit from November to February to lay their eggs on the beaches here, and the dense forest around the Luba Crater is home to the primates for which Equatorial Guinea is so well known.

## Malabo

POP 439,070

Malabo is a city of sharp contrasts. To the east is the port and the old city with its splendid cathedral and some interesting colonial architecture. To the west, the city positively gleams with upmarket suburbs sporting elegant villas, smart hotels, government ministries and embassies.

In the heart of it all, the city centre has wide boulevards and modern buildings including a shopping mall featuring upmarket tenants and an array of restaurants and hotels.

## Sights

★ **Catedral de Santa Isabel** CATHEDRAL  
(Ave de la Independencia/Calle de 12 Octubre) On the west side of the Plaza de España, this gracious, recently restored apricot-hued building is the most beautiful in the country. The architect, Llaíradó Luis Segarra, had some input from Antonio Gaudí. Construction began in 1887 and it was consecrated in 1916. The style is Gothic Revival and it is flanked by two 40m-high towers and has three naves.

## Equatoguinean Cultural Centre

NOTABLE BUILDING

(Centro Cultural Ecuatoguineano; ☎222 110 450, 333 091 032; ccegmalo@hotmial.com; Ave de la Independencia; ☉9am-10.30pm Mon-Fri) A bright yellow building on the main street,

this centre is a lovely colonial building with large windows. It has a central atrium that serves as a performance area and gallery, and is worth visiting to see if there's anything cultural planned during your visit. There are always lots of young people about, using the free wi-fi.

## Tours

### Ruta 47

TOURS

(☎222 019 786; www.visitguineaecuatorial.com; Hotel Yoly, Calle 3 de Agosto; ☉8am-6pm) The personable and highly professional Ángel Vañó is a mine of information on Equatorial Guinea. He organises trips (and visa applications) throughout the country.

## Sleeping

### Internet Hostal

HOTEL \$

(☎222 126 653; www.facebook.com/Internet-Hostal-548468751952667; Ave de las Naciones Unidas; d CFA20,000, with wi-fi CFA25,000; ☹☹) One of the cheapest options in town, this hotel has large, quiet rooms and is in an excellent location. However, the bathrooms are rather grubby, shower-over-the-toilet affairs. The owner only speaks Chinese so making a reservation in advance is difficult.

### Hotel Yoly & Hermanos

HOTEL \$\$

(☎333 091 895; www.hotelyolyhermanos.com; d CFA46,000; ☹☹) Hotel Yoly is a good mid-range hotel: the rooms are pleasant and have a fridge, and bathrooms are large. Wi-fi only works in the large, wood-panelled lobby. The location is very good for exploring the old part of the city.

### ★ Magno Suites

BOUTIQUE HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎333 096 333, Whatsapp 222 755 542; www.magnosuites.com; Carretera del Aeropuerto, Paraiso; d/junior ste/exclusive ste incl breakfast CFA116,000/138,000/275,000; ☹☹☹☹) Malabo's only boutique hotel, this is a superb choice in the upmarket suburb of Paraiso. It has swish modern decor, king-size beds and an excellent restaurant. An airport shuttle service is offered free of charge. Visa and MasterCard credit cards are accepted.

### ★ Apart-Hotel Impala

HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎333 092 492, 222 287 122; www.hotelimpala.net; Calle de Enrique Nvó; s/d CFA50,000/90,000; ☹☹) Don't be put off by the tacky lobby, this place gets better upstairs, and there's a lift. The rooms are very comfortable and have tiny balconies, a fridge and good bathrooms. Staff are friendly and helpful. Be choosy about which room you take: some