

# Un monde pygmée

## THE ITINERARY

### Day 1 : Paris-Bangui

Departure from Paris on a regular Air France flight.

Flight duration: 7 hours

Time difference: +1 hour GMT



### Day 2 : Bangui

*(on foot and by taxi)*



*Greek-style columns.*

First day in the capital of the Central African Republic. Bangui means "rapid" and relates to the many rocks right in front of our hotel's swimming pool which suddenly transform the normally calm waters of the Ubangi into a fast flowing river. Here, depending on where the mood takes us, we have the option of touring the city's colonial relics and the extravagant buildings put up at great expense by former 'Emperor' Bokassa, to check out the local food and handcraft markets, to visit the ethnological museum or the ruins of the imperial palace... The choices are endless.

1 night at the Hôtel Oubangui (Ubangi Hotel), the former Sofitel Hotel.

### Day 3 : Bangui – Ubangi River – Bimbo

*(on foot and by 'whaleboat')*

After gathering the last supplies for the expedition, we depart Bangui in the early afternoon for a short whaleboat journey along with our two Central African camp aides. From this point on, we will be completely self-sufficient for the next two weeks.



*The whaleboat.*

## Un monde pygmée

Equipped with two motors and operated by a three man crew (captain, watcher and mechanic) of actual local sailors, the whaleboat will take us to our first camp site near Bimbo, a small fishing hamlet on river's banks, already light years away from modern urban life.



*The watcher*

### **Day 4 : Ubangui River – Bobassa** *(on foot and by whaleboat)*

First real day of navigation. For the next few days on the water, the whaleboat will become our base camp away from the heat, allowing for stops in numerous villages, hamlets, temporary fishermen camps and on sandbank islands (from January to June) for a stroll or a swim.

The locals are courteous, polite and very hospitable. And you will meet many of them...



*A school.*

There are a few schools and churches made of palm leaves along the way. Campsite set up in a village like Bobassa for example.

### **Day 5 : Ubangi River – The sandbank island of Sékiamoté** *(on foot and by whaleboat)*

Back on board the whaleboat. We will stop on one of the rare islands inhabited by pioneer families, nomadic fishermen and by the occasional professional butterfly catchers.

So depending on our mood and the season, we will set up camp on a sandbank near Sékiamoté.



*Sandbank*

# Un monde pygmée

## **Day 6: Ubangi River – on the doorstep of Zinga – Lobaye River – Safa** *(on foot and by whaleboat)*

After exploring at a leisurely pace the banks of Libengué Island, home to the last Hippopotamuses of the region, we head for Zinga.

Located at the junction of the Ubangi and Lobaye Rivers opposite Zaire and near the Congo, Zinga village is at the foot of the former territory belonging to the infamous Bondjos who used to send the fear of God into their neighbours, missionaries and 19<sup>th</sup> Century colonisers because of their appetite for human flesh.

The area was previously known as "Germanie Point". But now it's called "Germaine Point" (sic). It's where the last German outpost was located before France gave up its territories in 1911.

Some relics from that period are still standing: the local police station, the Gendarmerie's headquarters and that of the Amphibious Customs Brigade which will take charge of carefully examining our passports.

We will then take the Lobaye River upstream, leaving the Ubangi flow down towards the Congo on our left.



The Lobaye River is so unspoilt that it probably looks pretty much like it did back in 1886 when it was first explored by the Belgian Captain Van Gèle. It also marks our entry into Aka Pygmy territory. Camp at Safa, a well-established coffee farm, where we might meet a few Pygmies who have come there to work.

## **Day 7 : Safa – Lobaye River – Batalimo** *(on foot and by whaleboat)*

Stops along the Lobaye River are tricky because of its steep and dense forest banks. It's also a very low populated area. Hence, we will cruise directly towards Batalimo, a large colourful village of three whole streets, which was built with lumber donated by the local IFB wood mill, the only active industry in the area.

We'll visit this massive tropical mill run by a handful of French nationals (probably the only Westerners we'll see during our entire trip) who will offer us the traditional hospitality of a straw hut, a shower and a power point (the only one we'll see from now on). Encounters with other Pygmies who live nearby.

## **Day 8 : Batalimo – Lobaye River– Bokopi** *(on foot and by whaleboat)*

Last day on the boat. After hiring our first Pygmy porters at Batalimo, we'll embark and head for Bokopi, our entry point into the forest.

So it will be goodbye to the whaleboat and its crew who will return to Bangui, and hello to the remaining Pygmy porters who have just been hired. Camp at the hamlet.

## **Day 9 to 13: primary forest – Congo border** *(on foot)*

With a team of about 12 up to 15 all-Pygmy porters and trackers in front of us carrying all our belongings (camping equipment and supplies), we enter a superb forest to meet the Pygmy clans who still live there.

**Un Monde Pygmée** - a non-profit independent organisation under the French Association Act of 1901 3

E.Mail : [ocourtemanche@yahoo.fr](mailto:ocourtemanche@yahoo.fr) -Website : [www.unmondepygmee.com](http://www.unmondepygmee.com)

**La Route des Sens** – Sustainable, fair and ethical travel : Mairie - 34150 Puechabon - FRANCE

Tel/Fax : 33 (0) 4 67 57 37 59 – E.Mail : [contact@laroutedessens.org](mailto:contact@laroutedessens.org) - Website : [www.laroutedessens.org](http://www.laroutedessens.org)

Tourism licence LVT AG 075.08.0001 – RCP MAIF – Police n°3262472N

## Un monde pygmée

During these 5 days in the forest, we will be surrounded by a massive cluster of giant trees which turn both the sky and horizon into a constant shade of green.

Pygmy settlements of about 20 inhabitants are usually separated by a trek of 3 to 5 hours.

Most of these camps are more or less permanent, while others come and go.

Among the permanent ones, we will almost certainly pass through Mogounda, Karawa, Motokakélé and depending on our pace, we may end up in Propoto on Congo border.



*A camping site*



*"My Neighbour" by C. Jeandel*

We may also decide to prolong our stay in one of the more pleasant and friendly camps to a full day and two nights.

Depending on their degree of shyness, we might share in some Pygmies daily activities such as hunting, fishing and trapping; or mushroom, tuber and wild berry picking; and possibly honey, caterpillar or termite catching depending on the season...

We will also share in the Pygmies' traditional hospitality and rather animated evenings, as their shyness falls with daylight.

Towards the last day, we will reach the edge of the forest.

Last evening staying with Pygmies, an environment you will quickly miss and won't see again anytime soon.

### **Day 14: exit from the forest – Lobaye River – M'Bata** *(on foot and by canoe)*

In the morning, we cross back to the right bank of the Lobaye River to exit the forest.

We then head downstream on board our canoes towards the small village of M'Bata, our first such village in 6 days, where we will farewell the Pygmies who have been our porters for the past week and reconnect with villagers and a way of life we are much more familiar with. Rest. Quiet camp site on the river bank.



*The porters' backpacks, made of two palm leaves, are discarded into the river at the end of the trip...*

# Un monde pygmée

## Day 15 : M'bata - Bangui

*(in a bush taxi or by truck)*

First and last car-friendly road of the trip.

Return to Bangui after a few hours on dirt tracks and roads, in the midst of a depleted landscape which was covered in lush rainforest only 50 years ago...



Free afternoon in town or by the pool.

Night at the hotel.

## Day 16 : Bangui - Paris

*(by taxi and plane)*

Airport transfers.

Return to Paris via regular scheduled Air France flight.



### - AID PROJECTS -

**6 %** of the total cost of your trip  
will go to straight to local Pygmy aid and development projects

#### **Aid Program for the Aka Pygmies of the Central African Republic**

**By participating in this trip, you will be supporting an upcoming vaccination and treatment program for yaws, a widely ignored disease which disfigures and debilitates forest-dwelling Pygmies on a massive scale, with children under the age of 5 particularly vulnerable.**



**[If you have any further queries, please don't hesitate to contact us](#)**

Un Monde Pygmée - a non-profit independent organisation under the French Association Act of 1901

E.Mail : [ocourtemanche@yahoo.fr](mailto:ocourtemanche@yahoo.fr) - Website : [www.unmondepygmee.com](http://www.unmondepygmee.com)

La Route des Sens – Sustainable, fair and ethical travel : Mairie - 34150 Puechabon - FRANCE

Tel/Fax : 33 (0) 4 67 57 37 59 – E.Mail : [contact@laroutedessens.org](mailto:contact@laroutedessens.org) - Website : [www.laroutedessens.org](http://www.laroutedessens.org)

Tourism licence LVT AG 075.08.0001 – RCP MAIF – Police n°3262472N