



SOCIÉTÉ ANONYME UNIPERSONNELLE (SAU)

ANNOUNCEMENT

*Congo Conservation Company, operating Odzala Discovery Camps,
postpones the reopening of tourism to 2nd September 2021*

3 February 2021

On the 16th of March 2020, the Directors of Congo Conservation Company and SPAC (Sabine Plattner African Charities) Conservation Research suspended the arrival of all tourism into Odzala Discovery Camps in Odzala-Kokoua National Park and Sangha Lodge in Dzanga-Sangha National Park. The clear purpose of the suspension was for protecting both the vulnerable local human populations in these remote and isolated areas, as well as the Western lowland gorillas, from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Considering the virulent spread of COVID-19 and recent cases of transmission from humans to gorillas in the San Diego zoo, the park managing authorities – African Parks, WCS (Wildlife Conservation Society) and WWF (Worldwide Fund for Nature) – have jointly agreed that the national parks in the Congo Basin remain closed until further notice. This decision has been made in consultation with the IUCN Section of Great Apes and adheres to IUCN Best Practice Guidelines for Health Monitoring and Disease Control in Great Ape Populations.

Following on from this decision by the Park Management, the reopening date of Odzala Discovery Camps has been postponed from 26th April 2021 to 2nd September 2021.

Since closing, 92% of bookings have postponed to new dates. We would like to thank our trade partners and their guests for their continued commitment to the future of tourism in the Congo Basin. Our Founder, Sabine Plattner, remains fully committed to tourism in the Congo Basin and operations at Odzala Discovery Camps are still in place. The team on the ground is exploring future guest experiences, as well as using this time to undertake camp renovations and interior upgrades.

In times of hardship and uncertainty, it is more important than ever to retain a sense of hope while supporting the people living around the Park, offering them alternatives to hunting and the poaching of wildlife. The ultimate goal of conservation remains key to all our decision-making.” - Sabine Plattner

The Odzala-Kokoua National Park and surrounding areas, which includes Congo Conservation Company's gorilla tracking camp, Ngaga, has an estimated population of 50,000 Western lowland gorillas (*Gorilla gorilla gorilla*). Gorillas and humans share a 98% genetic sequence and these magnificent apes are as susceptible to disease as we humans are.

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Odzala Discovery Camps have guests coming from all over the world, many of whom are arriving from countries affected by the pandemic. With the current protocol of wearing masks and keeping a minimum of 7m distance, the probability of gorillas getting infected directly by a tourist is not high. The more likely scenario is that a tourist could infect one of our staff members and the infection then spreading into the local villages. This would put our staff, communities and gorillas at risk.

CCC, together with SPAC and other partners, is investigating the possibility of setting up accredited PCR or high-accuracy antigen testing at our Camps, which will support and benefit both the local community and allow for all guests to be tested on arrival and again before their international departure. The Directors aim to have this in place over the next few months to ensure that the targeted re-opening date may be reached.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elza Gillman', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Yours sincerely,

Elza Gillman
Acting Chief Executive Officer
Congo Conservation Company