

Cameroon

Cameroon's tourist industry is a victim of geography. It sits in a tough neighbourhood, bordered by some problematic countries. But this shouldn't put you off, as Cameroon really has just about everything a traveller could want. One of the most culturally diverse countries on the continent, its people include ancient tribal kingdoms, Muslim pastoralists and forest-dwelling pygmies.

The landscape is no less dizzying in its diversity. Mt Cameroon (4095m) is the highest peak in West Africa and attracts plenty of trekking interest. A still-active volcano, it rises almost straight from the sea in a spectacular manner. Further north are the rolling grassfields of the Ring Road area, while the Mandara Mountains are a complete contrast again – dry and rocky, with isolated villages eking out a living. Fringing all of this are some of Africa's oldest rainforests, and the excellent Parc National de Waza, with abundant mammal and birdlife, and large herds of elephants gathering at water holes in the dry season.

If all this exhausts you, you can retire to some fine palm-fringed beaches and fantastic seafood, which should help to recharge your batteries. Throw in a cold beer or two, some lively home-grown *makossa* music and the Indomitable Lions of the national football team, and you'll be revelling in your discovery.

FAST FACTS

- **Area** 469,440 sq km (a little smaller than Spain, a little bigger than California)
- **ATMs** At banks in large cities, linked to Visa
- **Borders** Nigeria, Chad, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Central Africa Republic (CAR) all open; borders with Democratic Republic of Congo sometime closed, check in advance
- **Budget** US\$40 per day
- **Capital** Yaoundé
- **Languages** French, English and many local languages
- **Money** Central African CFA; US\$1 = CFA498
- **Population** 16.4 million
- **Seasons** Hot year-round; north: wet (April to September); south: heavy rain (June to October)
- **Telephone** Country code ☎ 237, international access code ☎ 00
- **Time** GMT/UTC +1
- **Visas** Required by all, available in neighbouring countries for US\$60



HIGHLIGHTS

- **Mount Cameroon** (p288) Don your hiking boots to climb the mist-shrouded slopes of West Africa's highest peak.
- **Kribi** (p293) Chill on the white beaches and practise your French with the locals over grilled fish.
- **Ring Road** (p291) Explore the cool green scenery and rolling countryside near Bamenda.
- **Mandara Mountains** (p298) Head into the remote landscape and trek from village to village.
- **Parc National de Waza** (p298) Watch elephants at the water holes of one of the region's best national parks.

CLIMATE & WHEN TO GO

The north has rains from April/May to September/October. The hottest months are March to May, when temperatures can soar to 40°C, although it's a dry heat. The south has a humid, equatorial climate, with rain scattered throughout the year. The main wet season there is June to October, with light rain from March to June. Throughout Cameroon, November to February are the driest months.

The best months to visit are November to February, although you'll have harmattan haze during much of this time. The worst months are July to October, when it's raining almost everywhere, and many roads impassable.

ITINERARIES

- **One Week** Starting from either Douala (p284) or Yaoundé (p280), go to Limbe (p288) for a night or two to get your bearings before climbing Mt Cameroon (p288). Alternatively leave the cities for Foumban (p292) or Bamenda (p289) and then head to the open country of the Ring Road area (p291). Finish back in Douala or Yaoundé.
- **Two to Three Weeks** Spend the first week exploring the Ring Road area (p291) and visiting Foumban (p292). Then head to Yaoundé (p280), fly north to Maroua (p296) and venture into the Mandara Mountains (p298) for a few days trekking. With more time, you could go from Yaoundé to N'Gaoundéré (p294) by train, and from there make your way north by road to Maroua.
- **One Month** Start with a night or two in Limbe (p288), followed by a climb of Mt

HOW MUCH?

- **Ingredients for juju fetish** US\$1
- **100km bus ride** US\$1.60
- **Moto-taxi ride across town** US\$0.20
- **Bottle of palm wine** US\$2
- **Carved mask** US\$30

LP INDEX

- **1L petrol** US\$0.60
- **1.5L of bottled water** US\$0.90
- **Bottle of '33' beer** US\$1.20
- **Souvenir football shirt** US\$6.80
- **Stick of brochettes** US\$0.20

Cameroon (p288) before making your way up to Bamenda (p289) and the Ring Road area (p291). Cross to Foumban (p292), and from here make your way to Yaoundé (p280) before taking the train to N'Gaoundéré (p294). Spend the remainder of your time exploring northern Cameroon (p294).

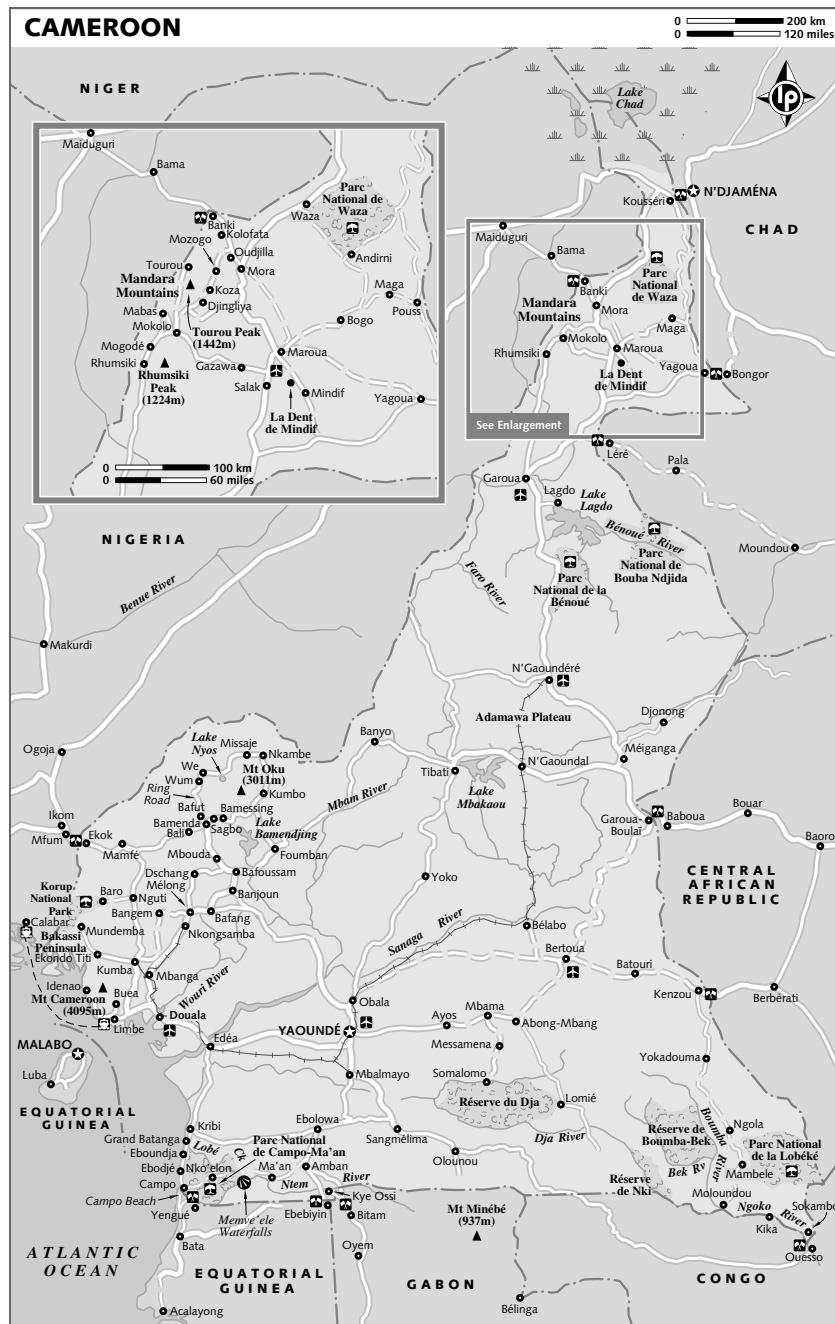
HISTORY

Cameroon is another example of colonial powers creating a country without regard for tribal boundaries or geography. The parts of what is now Cameroon were divided and ceded between European countries throughout the colonial era until the modern boundaries were established in 1961, creating a part-Anglophone, part-Francophone nation.

Prawns for Starters

Portuguese explorers first sailed up the Wouri River in 1472, and named it Rio dos Camarões (River of Prawns). Soon after the Portuguese arrived by sea, Fulani pastoral nomads from what is now Nigeria began to migrate overland from the north, forcing the indigenous forest peoples southwards. The Fulani migration took on added urgency in the early 17th century as they fled the increasingly predatory attentions of Dutch, Portuguese and British slave-traders.

British influence was curtailed in 1884 when Germany signed a treaty with the well-organised chiefdoms of Douala and central Bamiléké Plateau, although for the



local inhabitants the agreement meant little more than a shift from one form of colonial exploitation to another. After WWI the German protectorate of Kamerun was carved up between France and Great Britain.

Local revolts in French-controlled Cameroon in the 1950s were brutally suppressed, but the momentum throughout Africa for throwing off the shackles of colonial rule soon took hold. Self-government was granted in French Cameroon in 1958, quickly followed by independence on 1 January 1960.

Wily Ahidjo

Ahmadou Ahidjo, leader of one of the independence parties, became president of the newly independent state, a position he was to hold until his resignation in 1982. Ahidjo, a man with a total lack of charisma, ensured his longevity through the cultivation of expedient alliances, brutal repression and wily if authoritarian regional favouritism.

In October 1961 a UN-sponsored referendum in British-mandated northwestern Cameroon ended up splitting it in two, with the area around Bamenda opting to join the federal state of Cameroon and the remainder joining Nigeria. In June 1972 the federal structure of two Cameroons was replaced by the centralised United Republic of Cameroon – a move that is bitterly resented to this day by Anglophone Cameroonians, who believe that instead of entering a true union they have become second-class citizens.

The Biya Era

In 1982 Ahidjo's hand-picked successor, Paul Biya, distanced himself from his former mentor, but adopted many of Ahidjo's repressive measures, clamping down hard on calls for multiparty democracy. Diversions such as the national soccer team's stunning performance in the 1990 World Cup bought him time. But the demands for freedom would not go away and Biya was forced to legalise 25 opposition parties. When it became apparent that plurality placed limitations upon the president, these parties were quickly, though temporarily, suspended, along with the constitution.

The first multiparty elections in 25 years were grudgingly held in 1992 and saw the Cameroonian Democratic People's Movement – led by Biya – hanging on to power with the support of minority parties. International observers alleged widespread vote-rigging and

intimidation – allegations repeated in elections in 1999 and, most recently, in 2004.

Cameroon Today

The international anticorruption organisation, Transparency International, consistently ranks Cameroon among the world's most corrupt countries. This phenomenon affects every aspect of daily life, from dealings with petty government officials to the rampant destruction of the country's rainforests by logging interests and kickbacks from the recently completed oil pipeline from Chad to Kribi. Until this malaise is seriously addressed and genuine political openness is permitted, Cameroon will continue to limp along for the foreseeable future.

CULTURE

Traditional social structures dominate life. Local chiefs (known as *fon* in the west, or *lamido* in the north) still wield considerable influence, and when travelling in places that don't receive many tourists, it's polite to announce your presence. You'll also need to get the chief's permission to enter tribal lands, including various mountains and crater lakes. In many cases, a small gift is expected – a bottle of whisky is common currency.

There's a distinct cultural and political gap between the Francophone and Anglophone parts of Cameroon, albeit one felt predominantly by the Anglophone minority. The country is far from being truly bilingual, and Anglophones complain of discrimination in education (most universities lecture in French only) and in the workplace.

PEOPLE

Cameroon is home to around 280 distinct ethnolinguistic groups. Most Cameroonians are involved in agriculture, and the country is a major regional exporter of food, as well as being the seaport for Chad and Central African Republic (CAR). While Cameroonians may have a reputation as hustlers, it's a skill they often need to navigate a faltering economy and corrupt bureaucracy.

ARTS

Cameroon has produced a few of the region's most celebrated artists. In literature, Mongo Beti deals with the legacies of colonialism. Musically, Manu Dibango is the country's brightest star.

BEER MONEY

If there's one thing Cameroonians love as much as football, it's drinking beer. Brewers recently tried luring punters with free prizes hidden under the tops of beer bottles. Cars, phones or just more free booze were all on offer. So many promotional bottle tops were produced in 2006 that for a short time the tops became an unofficial form of currency – the value of a free beer being roughly equivalent to a taxi fare. Even the traffic police got in on the game, accepting bottle tops instead of the usual bribes for minor infractions.

Woodcarving makes up a significant proportion of traditional arts and crafts. The northwestern highlands area is known for its carved masks. These often are representations of animals, and it's often believed that the wearer of the mask can transform themselves and take on the animal's characteristics and powers. Cameroon also has some highly detailed bronze- and brass-work, particularly in Tikar areas north and east of Foumban. The areas around Bali and Bamessing (both near Bamenda), and Foumban, are rich in high-quality clay, and some of Cameroon's finest ceramic work originates here.

SPORT

Cameroon exploded onto the world's sporting consciousness at the 1990 World Cup when the national football team, the Indomitable Lions, became the first African side to reach the quarterfinals. Football is truly the national obsession. Every other Cameroonian male seems to own a copy of the team's strip, and go into any bar and there'll be a match playing on the TV. When Cameroon narrowly failed to qualify for the 2006 World Cup, the country's grief was almost tangible. Nevertheless, the Lions hold a proud record in the continent-wide Cup of Nations, winning the trophy four times – most recently in 2002.

ENVIRONMENT

The land, like its people, contains many different elements thrown together by colonial-era boundaries. The south is deep rainforest in a low coastal plain. In the centre of the country the jungle gives way to a sparsely populated savannah. The north and extreme north are

close to the Sahel, with arid, sandy conditions all the way up to Lake Chad. Mountains run up the west of the country, from Mt Cameroon near the Atlantic coast to the Bamenda Highlands and further to the Mandara Mountains in the north.

Cameroon has abundant wildlife, though it is threatened by habitat encroachment and poaching for the bushmeat trade. In the south there are gorillas, chimpanzees, forest elephants and a variety of rare Central African species, but they're almost impossible to see in the dense forest. In the scrublands up north the animals are much easier to find. Your best bet for wildlife-viewing is Parc National de Waza in the far north of the country. Many other national parks are being established and made accessible to visitors in the hope of developing an ecotourism industry while protecting endangered habitats.

FOOD & DRINK

Cameroon has a wide cuisine. The staple dish is some variety of peppery sauce served up with a plate of heavy starch. This is usually rice or *fufu* – mashed yam, corn, plantain or couscous. One of the most popular sauces is *ndole*, made with bitter leaves similar to spinach and flavoured with smoked fish.

Grilled meat and fish are eaten in huge quantities, along with plenty of fruit.

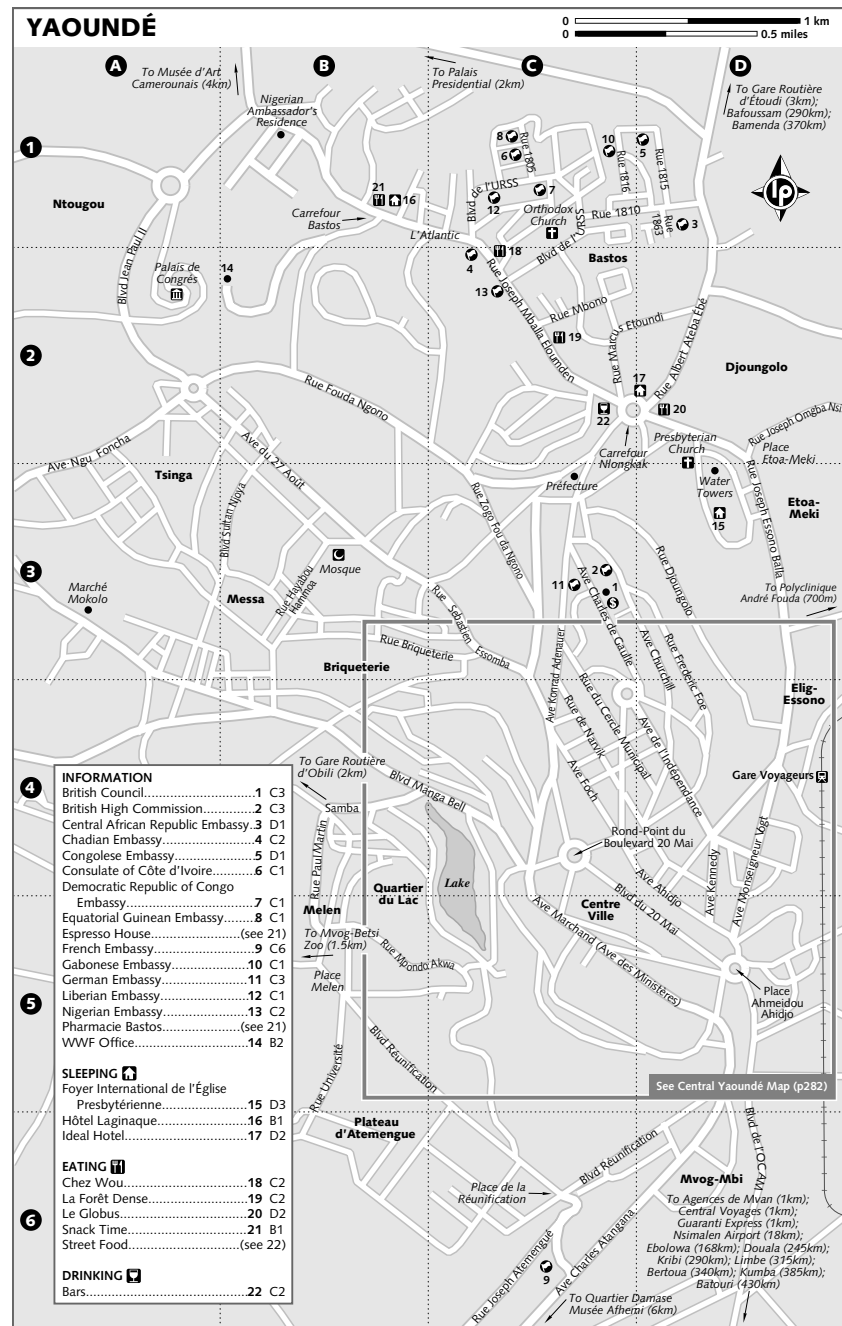
YAOUNDÉ

pop 1.1 million

Yaoundé is unique among West African capitals for its green and hilly setting. Set at an altitude of 750m, this gives the city a slightly more pleasant air than sweaty Douala. If its rival to the west is livelier, Yaoundé is better placed for travellers – anyone heading from north to south will pass through, and it's a good place to pick up onward visas, rest from the road and charge your batteries.

ORIENTATION

Its hilly geography means that Yaoundé's street plan has evolved without any discernible pattern, and it can take a while to get your bearings. The focal point of the lower-lying Centre Ville is Place Ahmadou Ahidjo. From here, Blvd du 20 Mai runs northwest to the landmark Hilton hotel and the administrative district (Quartier du Lac). North from here,



the road winds uphill to Carrefour Nlongkak, a major intersection. About 1.5km further up is Carrefour Bastos and the upscale Bastos residential quarter, where many embassies are located as well as some good restaurants.

Buses from other cities stop at various *gare routières* (bus stations) around Yaoundé, usually a quick taxi ride away from the city centre. The train station, however, is centrally located, with some hotels in walking distance.

INFORMATION

Cultural Centres

British Council (Map p281; ☎ 220 3172; Ave Charles de Gaulle)

Centre Culturel Français (Map p282; ☎ 222 0944; Ave Ahidjo)

Internet Access

Expect to pay around CFA400-500 per hour. **ADT Cybercafé** (Map p282; Rue de Narvik)

Cometé Internet (Map p282; Rue de Narvik) One of several near the US embassy.

Espresso House (Map p281; per 30min CFA1000; Carrefour Bastos) Offers broadband.

Medical Services

Pharmacie Bastos (Map p281; ☎ 220 6555; Carrefour Bastos) Well-stocked pharmacy.

Polyclinique André Fouda (☎ 222 6612) For medical emergencies; in Elig-Essono southeast of Carrefour Nlongkak.

Money

There are ATMs at most of the major banks; see the maps for locations. As always in Cameroon,

travellers cheques are problematic to change in banks – try **Express Exchange** (Map p282; Ave Kennedy), which also accepts US dollars.

Post

Central post office (Map p282; Place Ahmadou Ahidjo; ☎ 7.30am-3.30pm Mon-Fri, 7.30am-noon Sat)

Travel Agencies

Inter-Voyages (Map p282; ☎ 222 0361, 223 1005) One block west of the US embassy.

Safar Tours (Map p282; ☎ 222 8703; safar@safartours.com) At the Hilton.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Yaoundé is more relaxed than Douala, but there's still a small risk of street crime. Be particularly wary around the *Marché Central* (Map p282), and don't carry too many valuables with you. Take a taxi if you're out at night.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

At the Benedictine monastery on Mt Fèbé, north of the city centre, the **Musée d'Art Camerounais** (Quartier Fèbé; donation requested; ☎ 3-6pm Thu, Sat & Sun) has an impressive collection of masks, bronzes, woodwork and other examples of Cameroonian art. The chapel is also worth a look.

Mvog-Betsi Zoo (Mvog-Betsi; admission CFA2000, camera CFA500; ☎ 9am-6pm) is one of the better zoos in West Africa, co-run by the Cameroon Wildlife Aid Fund (CWAF; www.cwaf.org), with a sizeable collection of native primates, rescued from poachers and the bushmeat trade.

SLEEPING

Foyer International de l'Église Presbytérienne (Map p281; ☎ mobile 985 236; off Rue Joseph Essono Balla; tent/dm/tw CFA2000/3000/5000; P) Favoured by overlanders, this no-frills guesthouse is tucked behind the water towers looming over Nlongkak. Rooms and (communal) facilities are simple but clean, and the grounds have enough trees to laze under or kick a ball between. It's unsigned – look for the orange brick building trying to appear grand.

Ideal Hotel (Map p281; ☎ 220 9852; Carrefour Nlongkak; r CFA6000-8000; P) Tucked behind a six-storey building on lively Carrefour Nlongkak. Some rooms are a bit dark, but balconies make up for this, and the hotel is a well-located budget option, particularly if you're in town hunting for visas.

El Panaden Hotel (Map p282; ☎ 222 2765; elpanaden@yahoo.fr; Place de l'Indépendance; r CFA15,500-28,000; P) This centrally located hotel is an old travellers' favourite. Helpful staff complement clean and generously sized rooms, most with balconies. La Terrasse bar next door is a handy late-night stagger away.

Hotel Laginaque (Map p281; ☎ 221 0554; mangwachuisse@yahoo.fr; Carrefour Bastos; r CFA20,000-35,000; P) Just off the main road this place has soft beds in very comfortable rooms, some with good views over the city. The management could be more efficient; room service makes up for the lack of restaurant, but order in good time.

EATING

Calafata's Boulangerie (Map p282; Rue de Nachtigal; pastries from CFA200; ☎ 8am-6pm) People cross the city to get their pastries from Calafatas and you should, too. Although it's open all day, the best choices are gone by late morning leaving little but baguettes.

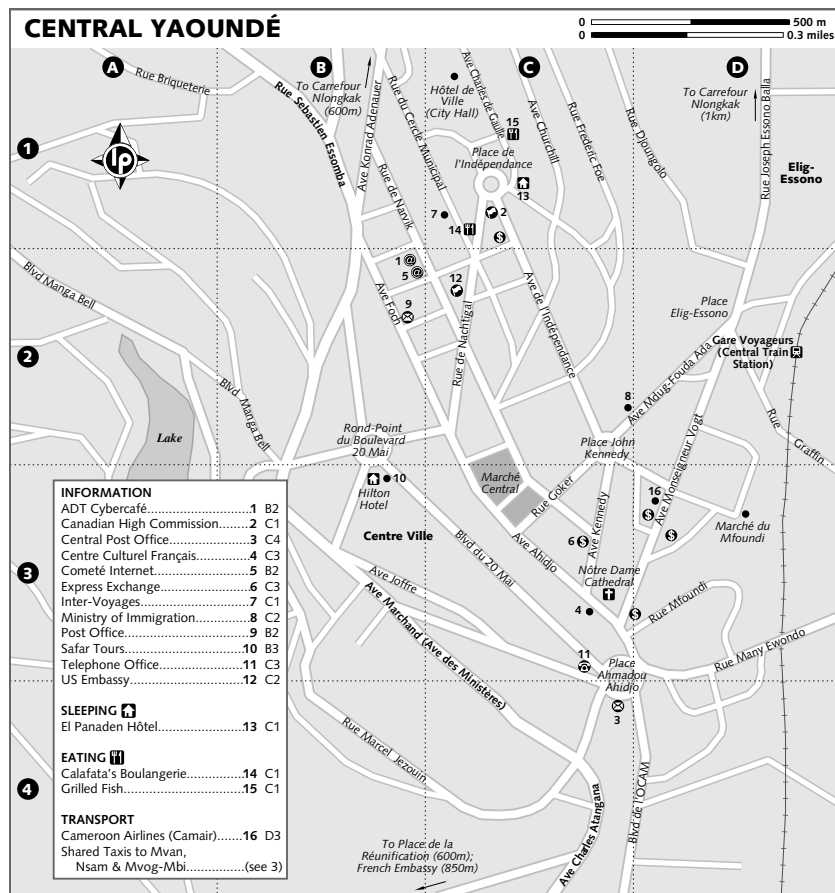
Chez Wou (Map p281; Rue Joseph Mballa Eloumden; mains from CFA4000; ☎ 12-3.30pm & 6-11pm) One of Yaoundé's older Chinese restaurants, this has nice tables set under a wide porch, and a comprehensive menu.

Le Globus (Map p281; Carrefour Nlongkak; dishes from N700; ☎ 7am-11pm) A good watering hole as well as restaurant, Globus has Cameroonian dishes and a few trusty standards, like chicken with rice. Raised above Nlongkak, it's great for watching the world go by and catching some gorgeous sunsets.

Snack Time (Map p281; Carrefour Bastos; mains from CFA2700; ☎ 10am-11pm) This bright place serves up a menu straight from an American diner, with a few Lebanese and Italian dishes thrown in for good measure. The bean burritos (CFA3000) are real winners, and the vegetarian pasta a treat for those suffering from a surfeit of meaty Cameroonian stews.

La Forêt Dense (Map p281; Rue Joseph Mballa Eloumden; meals from CFA5500) This is pricey place serves traditional Cameroonian dishes in an upscale setting. If you have ever wondered what crocodile *mbongo* tastes like, this is the place to find out.

Around Carrefours Bastos and Nlongkak you can find grills serving *suya* (brochette) throughout the day. On Place de l'Indépendance, near El Panaden Hotel, there are women grilling delicious fish, served with chilli or peanut sauce from CFA1000.



DRINKING

The best bars are in Carrefours Bastos and Nlongkak, most with open-air seating facing the street – great for people watching. Solo female travellers might find the atmosphere uneasy in some bars once the sun dips.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

Flights from Yaoundé's Nsimalen airport are available with **Cameroon Airlines** (Map p282; ☎ 223 0304; Ave Monseigneur Vogt) to Douala, Maroua, Garoua, N'Gaoundéré and Bertoua, from around CFA65,000 one way. Services also connect Yaoundé to Gabon, Nigeria and other regional centres.

Bus

There are buses between Yaoundé and all major cities in Cameroon. Buses leave from their companies' offices, spread out on the outskirts of town. For Douala (CFA3800, three hours), Central Voyages (in Mvog Mbi) and Guaranti Express (in Quartier Nsam) are recommended. Guaranti Express is also recommended for Limbe (CFA5000, five hours), Bamenda (CFA5000, six hours), Bafoussam (CFA2500, three hours) and Kumba (CFA4000, four hours).

Otherwise, all agency and nonagency buses for Kribi, Bertoua, Batouri, Ebolowa, Limbe and Buea depart from Blvd de l'Ocam, about 3km south of Place Ahmadou Ahidjo (direct taxi drivers to Agences de Mvan).

Transport to Bafoussam, Bamenda and points north departs from Gare Routière d'Etoudi, 5km north of Centre Ville.

Train

The most popular and convenient way to travel north from Yaoundé is by train, which runs all the way to N'Gaoundéré. Trains depart daily at 6pm, taking around 18 hours. Delays on the line are not uncommon.

There's a choice of comfortable 1st-class *couchettes* (sleeping compartments) for CFA25,000/28,000 per person in a four-/two-bed cabin; 1st-class airline-style seats (CFA17,000); and crowded 2nd-class benches (CFA10,000). The *couchettes* are the only recommendable option, in part because you'll be in an enclosed cabin. *Couchettes* can be reserved 24 hours in advance, but are paid for on the day of travel. Seats in 1st and 2nd class are in open wagons, with no way to se-

cure your bag. Even in *couchettes*, be alert for thieves.

The train has a restaurant car where you can buy surprisingly good meals (breakfast/dinner CFA1000/2500). If you're in 1st class, someone will come and take your order and deliver to your *courette*. At every station stop, people will offer street food at the windows.

There are also services between Yaoundé, Douala and Kumba, though these are used much less frequently, as buses are cheaper, faster and more convenient.

GETTING AROUND

Shared taxis are the only public transport option. Fares are set at CFA175 for short- to medium-length rides. Flag them down on the street and shout out the name of your destination – the driver will sound his horn if he's not going your way. A private taxi to Nsimalen airport from central Yaoundé should cost CFA3000 to CFA4000 (40 minutes).

WESTERN CAMEROON

Cameroon's lush western provinces are the most bountiful parts of the country. There's a riot of vegetation and a colourful selection of produce in the markets. Douala is the jumping-off place for Mt Cameroon and the Ring Road, as well as the lazy beaches around Limbe. Throw in several tribal kingdoms and sultanates, and it's a traveller's paradise.

DOUALA

pop 1.7 million

Yaoundé might be Cameroon's capital, but Douala is the economic powerhouse. With little in the way of tourist attractions, it's a swelteringly hot mess of dusty honking traffic jams. Hard to love initially, give it some time and you may begin to appreciate this port city's good restaurants, lively nightlife and decaying tropical ambience. As the Cameroonians say, 'Yaoundé sleeps, Douala moves'.

Orientation

Akwa district is at the heart of Douala, bisected by Blvd de la Liberté, where you'll find many hotels, internet cafés, banks and restaurants. South of here, near Rue Joss in Bonanjo, is the administrative quarter, with airline offices and government buildings. The airport is a couple of kilometres south of town.

Information

INTERNET ACCESS

There are internet cafés all along Blvd de la Liberté; **Cyberbao** (Blvd de la Liberté, per hr CFA400) is reliable.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Pharmacie de Centre (Blvd de la Liberté)

Pharmacie de Douala (Blvd Ahidjo)

Polyclinique Bonanjo (☎ 342 7936; Ave de Gaulle)

For medical emergencies.

MONEY

For changing money, try the banks along Blvd de la Liberté or Rue Joss – most have ATMs.

Express Exchange (Blvd de la Liberté) conveniently changes travellers cheques and US dollars. Hôtel Akwa Palace (Blvd de la Liberté) has plenty of touts outside for changing cash out of hours, but watch yourself.

POST

Central Post Office (Rue Joss)

TRAVEL AGENCIES

Saga Voyages (☎ 342 3317; Rue Joss) Well-organised agency.

Trans Africa Tours (☎ 342 8307; near Rond Point Déido) Good for African flight connections.

Dangers & Annoyances

Douala has a poor reputation for muggings and you need to be streetwise. Taxis are always a good idea after dark, and leave your valuables in your hotel. The beggars near Hôtel Akwa Palace can sometimes be aggressive.

Sleeping

Centre d'Accueil Missionnaire (☎ 342 2797; progemis.douala@camnet.cm; Rue Franceville; r without/with shower CFA7000/8000; P ☎ ☎) This is a real oasis. There are clean twin rooms, a pleasant veranda and a pool to cool off in. Part of the Catholic Mission, it's poorly signed – it's next to the pink Axa Building.

Hotel Hila (☎ 342 1586; Blvd de l'Unité; s CFA10,000-12,000, d CFA15,000; ☎) Ideally located for the Yaoundé bus agencies, the Hila sits on a very busy road, so get a room at the back if you can. Rooms are a little threadbare, but fair value for the price.

Foyer du Marin (☎ 342 2794; douala@seemannmission.org; Rue Gallieni; s/d CFA15,000/28,000; P ☎ ☎ ☎) Otherwise known as the German Seaman's Mission, tidy comfortable rooms

are kept ship-shape for visiting sailors – and other travellers – coming into port. It's equally popular as a drinking spot with Douala's expats, who visit for the nightly sausage and meat grill from 7pm. There's an eclectic multilingual book exchange. Douala's bargain, it's regularly full so advance booking is essential.

Hotel Beausejour Mirabel (☎ 342 3885; info@beausejour-mirabel.com; Rue Joffre; r CFA25,000-27,000; ☎ ☎) This hotel's bright exterior puts forward a warm welcome. The corner location can make the interior seem like it's all corridors, but at the end of them you'll find large tidy rooms with balconies. Nonresidents can use the pool for CFA1500 per day.

Parfait Garden (☎ 342 6357; hotel.parfait-garden@globalnet2.net; Rue de la Liberté; r from CFA35,000; ☎) Rooms are spacious and plush. There's a nice bar and restaurant, and the liveried bell boys inject a little class.

Eating & Drinking

There are plenty of good restaurants along Blvd de la Liberté, selling a spectrum of international cuisine.

Delice (Blvd de la Liberté; snacks from CFA500; ☎ 7am-9.30pm) A great early morning stop for pastries and a shot of coffee; there are also some good toasted sandwiches. The 'delice' surely refers to the cool air-conditioning and comfy seating.

Grilled fish & beer (Rue de la Joie; fish from CFA1000; ☎ 10am-late) This street of bars off Blvd de la Réunification is punctuated at regular intervals by women with stalls selling grilled fish with plantain or *baton* (steamed manioc). Order, then retire to a drinking hole to sink a cold one while your meal is prepared.

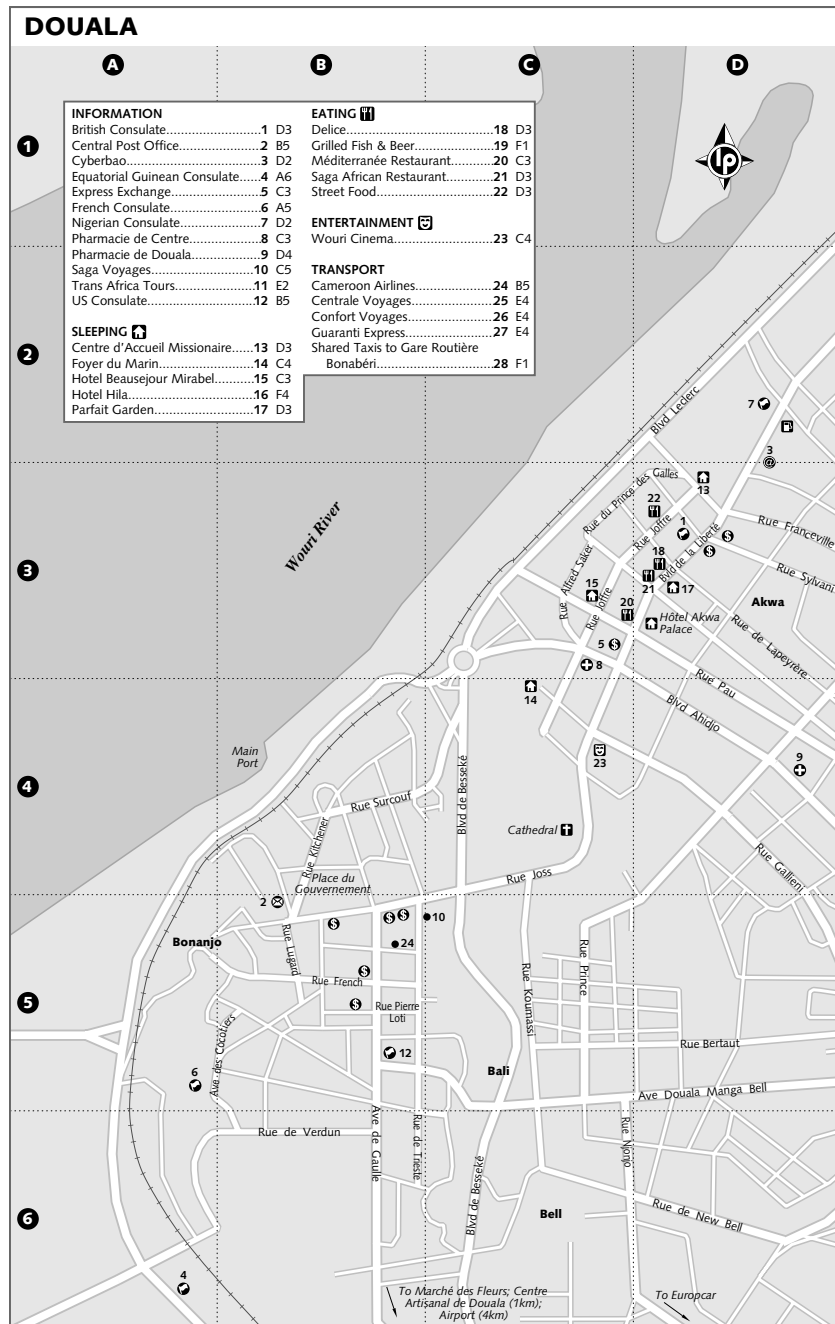
Saga African Restaurant (Blvd de la Liberté; mains from CFA1200; ☎ noon-10pm) Opposite the Parfait Garden hotel, the Saga offers an interesting mix of continental dishes with some local classics, such as *ndole*. It's nicely decked out, with a bar out the front and restaurant behind.

Méditerranée Restaurant (Blvd de la Liberté; mains from CFA2500; ☎ 8am-midnight) With an open terrace but still cleverly sheltered from the busy road, the Méditerranée is perennially popular. The menu is a good mix of Greek, Italian and Lebanese dishes.

You can find good Cameroonian food from the street stalls along Rue Joffre.

Entertainment

Douala is known for its nightlife. Asking locals is the best way to find the current hotspots,



but when we visited Rue de la Joie near Rond Point Déido was one of the happening streets, with bars and nightclubs dancing until dawn on the weekend.

Wouri cinema (Blvd de la Liberté) Shows recent Hollywood and European hits in French.

Getting There & Away

Douala has a major international airport with links to cities around the region. **Cameroon Airlines** (☎ 342 2525; Rue Joss, Bonanjo) is the main carrier.

Buses to Yaoundé (CFA3800, three hours) depart from agency offices along Blvd de l'Unité throughout the day.

For other destinations, use the sprawling Gare Routière Bonabéri, 6km north of the city centre. Routes include Limbe (CFA1000, 1½ hours), Bamenda (CFA5000, seven hours), Bafoussam (CFA4000, five hours) and Foumban (CFA4500, six hours).

Getting Around

The main ways of getting around are shared taxis and *moto-taxi* (motorcycle taxi), of which there are thousands and they are cheaper than taxis (CFA100). Charter taxis from central Douala to Bonabéri generally charge CFA3000. A taxi to the airports CFA2500.

BUEA

Buea is a cool and breezy mountain town and the base for hiking and trekking on Mt Cameroon. It's a laid-back, Anglophone town spread over several steep hills. Even if you don't climb, it's a nice place to relax and enjoy the cooler weather.

Conveniently, **Express Exchange** (Molyko Rd) will exchange euros, dollars and travellers cheques.

At the **Presbyterian Church Synod Office** (☎ 332 2336; Market Rd; camp sites CFA1000, s/d without bathroom CFA2500/4000, with bathroom CFA3000/5000; 🏠) rooms are comfy and spotless, and there's a tidy communal sitting room and cooking facilities. This church mission is a gem.

The **Paramount Hotel** (☎ 382 2074; Molyko Rd; s/d CFA7000/10,000, with hot water CFA14,000/17,000; 🏠) should be credited for trying to bring some upscale pomp to Buea. Rooms are comfortable and clean with TV; the budget options are a little simpler.

There are several cheap eating establishments on Molyko Rd around the Paramount Hotel.

TREKKING MOUNT CAMEROON

Most treks to the summit of West Africa's highest peak take two or three days, but it's not stroll in the park. The difficulty stems not only from its height (4095m), but from the fact that you start from near sea level, making a big change in altitude in a relatively short distance. November to April is the main climbing season and although it's possible to climb the mountain year-round, you won't get much in the way of views during the rainy season. Warm clothes and waterproofs are a must. A popular ascent is a two-night, three-day trek via the Mann Spring route and descending via the Guinness Route.

Treks are arranged in Buea through the **Mount Cameroon Ecotourism Organisation** (☎ 332 2038; mountceo@yahoo.co.uk; Buea Market; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 7am-noon Sat-Sun). The organisation works closely with the 12 villages around the mountain, employing many villagers as guides and porters. All trekkers pay a flat 'stakeholder fee' of CFA3000, which goes into a village development fund and is used for community projects, such as improving electricity and water supply. The organisation's office also has a small shop selling locally produced handicrafts.

Guides, well versed in the local flora and fauna, cost CFA6000 per day and porters CFA5000 per day. Equipment can also be hired on a daily basis, including tents (CFA5000), sleeping bags (CFA2000), sleeping mats (CFA300) and raincoats (CFA300). Expect to spend around CFA2000 per day on food for the trek – Buea Market has a decent selection of basics.

LIMBE

The easygoing port of Limbe is the centre of Anglophone Littoral Province. It sits in the shadow of Mt Cameroon, surrounded by banana and coconut plantations, and is best known as a weekend getaway from Douala, with people coming to enjoy the languid air and fresh seafood.

Information

The **Fako Tourist Board** (☎ 333 2861; Banley St; ☎ 7.30am-5pm Mon-Sat) can arrange local tours, hotels and bookings with the Mt Cameroon Ecotourism Organisation. Internet access is available at **Computer World** (Banley St; per hr CFA400; ☎ closed Sun) and **Bifunde Computer Centre** (Bota Rd; per hr CFA800), which has very fast connections. Ahidjo St has several ATMs.

Sights

Most zoos in Africa are depressing places, but the **Limbe Wildlife Centre** (www.limbewildlife.org; admission CFA3000; ☎ 9am-5pm) is a shining exception. Jointly run by the Ministry of the Environment and the primate charity Pandrillus, it contains rescued chimpanzees, gorillas, drills and other primates, all housed in large enclosures, with heaps of information about local conservation issues. Staff are well informed, and are heavily involved with community education. Interested visitors may even 'adopt' a primate to help pay for their care from CFA20,000 per year.

The **botanic gardens** (admission CFA1000, camera CFA2000; ☎ 8am-6pm) are a pleasant place to while away an afternoon. There's a small visitors' centre and an area with Commonwealth War Graves. Those with particular botanic interests will profit from hiring a knowledgeable guide for CFA1000.

The best of Limbe's **beaches** are north of town and known by their distance from Limbe. Mile 6 and Mile 11 beaches are popular, but the best is at the village of Batoké at Mile 8, from where the lava flows of Mt Cameroon's eruption a few years ago are still visible.

Sleeping

Bay Hotel (☎ mobile 773 3609; off Makangal St; s/d/stc CFA5000/7000/10,000) Ignore the peeling paint work, this old colonial building has wide verandas and airy rooms to catch the best of the sea breeze. A tidy choice, the huge suites are an absolute steal at the price.

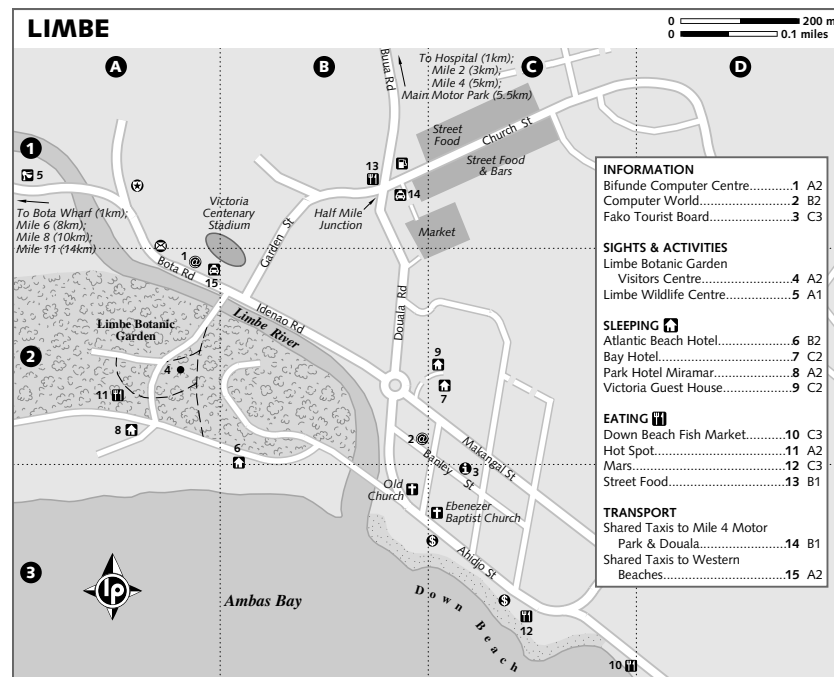
Victoria Guest House (☎ 333 2446; off Makangal St; r CFA12,000-16,000; ☎) Fine in a pinch, this budget option has adequate accommodation.

Park Hotel Miramar (☎ 332 2332; Botanic Garden road; camp sites CFA5000, s/d CFA13,650/18,400, all incl breakfast; ☎) Individual chalets are the order of the day here. With a terrace right on the water, there's a relaxing, almost languid air that makes this Limbe's most popular hotel.

Atlantic Beach Hotel (☎ 332 2689; near Limbe Bridge; r CFA16,500-23,500; ☎) This hotel's days as Limbe's top dog are sadly over, and there's an air of past glories here. Rooms are fine, but only those overlooking the bay with their stunning sea views really justify the price tag.

Eating

Down Beach Fish Market (Down Beach; dishes from CFA1000) Perfectly located where the fishing boats haul up on the beach, you'll find this



cluster of shacks grilling the day's catch. Soak up your beer with fish, crab or sticks of delicious crevettes (shrimps). The dish of the day doesn't come any fresher.

Mars (Beach road; mains from CFA2000) This decent place has the usual range of Cameroonian dishes, but come here for the seafood and the terrace sticking out into the bay – a great place for a sundowner.

Hot Spot (off Botanic Garden road; mains from CFA2000) On a low hill, there are great views overlooking the water, and good meals to boot. Take a torch for the walk home at night.

Getting There & Away

The main motor park is Mile 4, about 6km out of town. Minibuses and bush taxis leave approximately hourly to Buea (CFA500, 25 minutes) and Douala (CFA1500, 70 minutes). From Mile 2, there are buses to Yaoundé (CFA5000, five hours).

Ferries travel every Monday and Thursday from Limbe to Calabar in Nigeria (CFA35,000, 10 hours), departing at around 11pm and returning on Tuesday and Friday at 6pm. Operator **Destiny** (☎ mobile 755 3435) sell tickets

on the day of departure at Bota Wharf, from where the ferry sails. Take your own food and water, and fight hard for a seat.

BAMENDA

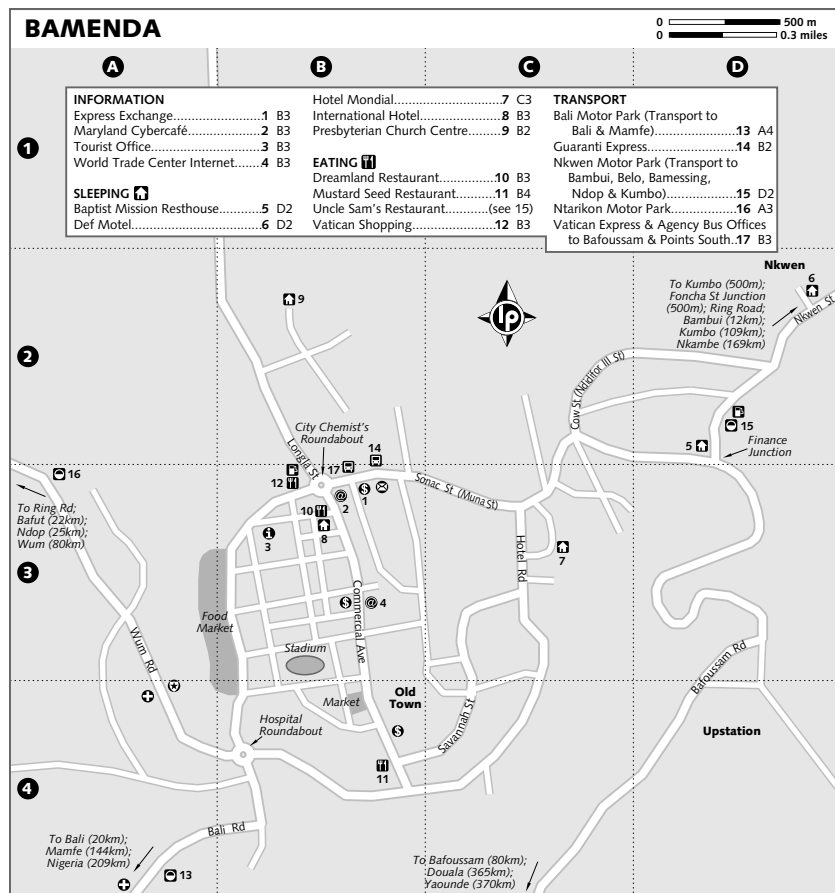
The capital of Northwest Province is a slightly unkempt, sprawling place tumbling down a hill at over 1000m altitude. With a decent range of hotels and restaurants, it's a good jumping-off point for exploring the Ring Road circuit. Anglophone Bamenda is the centre of political opposition to President Biya.

Information

The **tourist office** (☎ 336 1395) can provide basic maps and dates of local festivals. You can access the internet at **Maryland Cybercafe** (per hr CFA300), which also has internet phone for CFA250 per minute, and **World Trade Center Internet** (per hr CFA3000). **Express Exchange** (City Chemist's Roundabout) changes travellers cheques as well as US dollars cash.

Sleeping

Baptist Mission Resthouse (☎ 336 1285; Finance Junction; dm CFA2500; ☎) A bit far from Bamenda's



centre, but this is still a great place to lay your head. Rooms are immaculate, with spotless shared-bathroom facilities proving that cleanliness is indeed next to godliness.

Presbyterian Church Centre (☎ 336 4070; off Longla St; dm/r CFA4000/6000; 🏠) Hidden away from the bustle of the town centre, this is a good budget option. Private rooms are self-contained and the generous grounds are a good place to relax.

Def Motel (☎ 366 3748; off Nkwen St; r CFA6000-10,000) Right in the middle of the lively Nkwen district, this place offers decent value. Prices increase as you go up each floor – those climbing all the stairs get rewarded with a TV and hot-water heater.

Hotel Mondial (☎ 336 1832; off Hotel Rd; s/d CFA12,500/14,000; 🏠) The Mondial feels a little

more modern than its equivalents elsewhere in Bamenda. Comfortable rooms come with water heater and satellite TV, and there are a few decent cheaper options without, for those with slimmer budgets (CFA 7500).

International Hotel (☎ 336 2527; off Commercial Ave; r CFA15,000-18,000) This option fits solidly into the Cameroonian business person's class. Usually busy, rooms are big and have balconies, while the restaurant serves a great breakfast. The higher tariff gets you a TV and 'guaranteed' hot water.

Eating

Mustard Seed Restaurant (Commercial Ave; mains from CFA800; ☎ 8am-10pm) This joint serves decent local food – the usual Cameroonian stand-

ards plus local speciality *amajama* – meat sauce with chopped huckleberry leaf. There are plenty of similar options along this stretch of Commercial Ave and across the road on Savannah St.

Uncle Sam's Restaurant (mains from CFA1000; ☎ 10am-11pm) Handily located next to Nkwen Motor Park, this is a reliable joint with a brightly painted red-and-blue façade.

Dreamland Restaurant (Commercial Ave; mains from CFA1300; ☎ 7am-11pm) A fancy dining option dishing up excellent-value food for such swish surroundings. Choose from a good selection of local and international dishes (and a large wine list), or graze on the salad buffet every Friday from 7pm to 9pm (CFA2000, including two drinks).

Vatican Shopping (City Chemist's Roundabout) is well stocked for self-caterers.

Getting There & Away

Most agency offices for points south are on Sonac St. Destinations include Yaoundé (CFA5000, six hours), Douala (CFA5000, seven hours) and Bafoussam (CFA1200, 1½ hours).

Nkwen Motor Park has transport to the east stretch of the Ring Road, including Ndotp (CFA1000, 1½ hours) and Kumbo (CFA3000, five hours). The west stretch of the Ring Road is served by Ntarikon Motor Park, with minibuses to Wum (CFA2000, two hours). Transport also leaves for Bafut from here (CFA300, 20 minutes). Shared taxis to the further motor parks shouldn't cost more than CFA150.

THE RING ROAD

The Ring Road is a circular 367km route through the heart of Cameroon's northwestern highlands, better known as the Grassfields. It's a particularly scenic part of the country, with rolling hills and mountains, lakes and waterfalls, and traditional kingdoms. There's great potential for hiking, but ask permission from the local chief before camping.

Transport links along the Ring Road are reasonable but not always particularly frequent, with minibuses usually leaving very early in the morning. Roads are poor throughout. Kumbo is the Ring Road's largest town, but apart from here (and to a lesser extent Nkambe), there's little infrastructure in the area, and nowhere to change money, so stock up on CFA before leaving Bamenda. There are basic hotels in Ndotp, Kumbo, Nkambe and Wum.

Starting from Bamenda and heading east, you pass through the villages of **Bamessing**, with a handicraft centre and pottery workshop, **Sagbo**, with a hill with spectacular views, and **Ndotp**. After that you reach **Kumbo**, dominated by its Catholic cathedral and *fon's* palace of the traditional chief. It's a good place to base yourself, with a good market and the Ring Road's best hotels. From there you go north to Nkambe, then Missaje and the end of the road.

The road from Missaje to We is just a dirt track in places, and in the rainy season you might not even find that. Some travellers continue on foot, sometimes with help from Fulani herdsman. It can take a couple days to get to We, so bring supplies.

After We you pass **Lake Nyos**, a volcanic crater lake that was the site of a natural gas eruption in 1986, which resulted in around 1700 deaths. Continuing south you reach **Wum**, the biggest village on the west side of the ring. South of Wum the road passes the **Metchum Falls**, where most shared taxi drivers will stop to let you have a quick peek or photo. The falls are most impressive in the rainy season but are worth a stop year-round.

The last town on the Ring Road (or the first, if you're heading clockwise) is **Bafut**, traditionally the strongest of the kingdoms in this region. The *fon's* palace (admission CFA1000, camera CFA1500, museum CFA2000) here is a highlight of the Ring Road tour and includes a tour of the compound where the *fon's* large family lives.

BAFOUSSAM

A thriving business centre, Bafoussam is a Bamiléké stronghold in the middle of a coffee- and cocoa-producing area. The town has outgrown its farming routes too quickly, and there's little of great interest to travellers as a result, barring the large *chefferie* (www.museum.cam.org; chief's compound; admission CFA2000; ☎ 10am-5pm), about 15km south at Bandjoun.

Good value and with a decent bar to boot, the rooms at **Hotel Federal** (☎ 344 1309; Route de Fouban; r CFA6000-9000) are neat and tidy. Take one at the back, choosing the balconied options over those with no external window.

As well located as the name suggests, and a useful landmark, the rooms at **Hotel du Centre** (☎ 344 2079; Carrefour Total; s/d CFA12,000/15,000) are bright and airy. They have balconies, but choose one away from the noisy road.

At the southern end of town along the main highway, the restaurant **La Bonne Table de l'Ouest** (mains from CFA1500; ☎ 10am-11pm) offers excellent value, with a pleasant atmosphere and local and Western cuisine.

Les Arcades de l'Ouest (☎ 9am-late), opposite the market and just off Ave de la République, is good for cheap Cameroonian food, washed down with copious amounts of beer deep into the night.

Rue de Marché and Route de Fouban are good for street food and cheap eats.

Minibuses to Fouban (CFA800, one hour) depart from near Carrefour Total, along with shared taxis. Agencies to Yaoundé (CFA2500, three hours) and Douala (CFA4000, five hours) have offices along the main road south from the town centre. Transport to Bamenda (CFA1200, 1½ hours) leaves from the Bamenda road, north of the town centre (CFA150 in a shared taxi).

FOUMBAN

Predominantly Muslim, Fouban is a great contrast to the rest of southwestern Cameroon. If you're heading north, this is the first place you'll hear the call to prayer. Home to the Bamoun people, it's also a great centre for Cameroonian handicrafts. Tabaski is a great time to be in Fouban, when horse races and parades mark the end of Ramadan (see right).

The Grande Marché is a warren of narrow stalls and alleys leading to a square where the Grande Mosquée faces the palace. Wednesday and Saturday are the biggest market days.

Sights

The must-see attraction of Fouban is the **Palais Royal** (Rue du Palais; admission CFA2000, camera CFA1500; ☎ 8.30am-6pm), the sultan's palace, currently home to the 19th sultan of the Bamoun dynasty. The palace has a fascinating and well-organised museum containing previous sultans' possessions such as royal gowns, musical instruments, war garments and jewellery.

South of town, the **Village des Artisans** (Rue des Artisans) seems to produce more handicrafts than the rest of Cameroon combined. The village is one of the few places in the country where you can expect some tourist hustle, so get haggling. Close by, the **Musée des Arts et Traditions Bamoun** (admission CFA1000; ☎ 9am-5pm) houses a private collection of art and historical artefacts.

Festivals & Events

Every year at **Tabaski** (the Islamic holiday of Eid al-Adha), Fouban attracts thousands of pilgrims for an extraordinary blend of Muslim and traditional Bamoun ceremonies.

It all starts before sunrise with the call to prayer blasting from loudspeakers at the mosque. Thousands of men and boys, dressed in their finest, climb the hill to the Sacred Mountain and kneel in prayer. Around dawn the imam arrives, followed by the sultan in his white Cadillac. There are sunrise prayers, a sermon from the imam and a blessing from the sultan (on Eid al-Adha this is when the sheep is sacrificed). The heavy-set sultan then gets on his skinny little horse surrounded by his warriors in their full regalia, and everyone follows him in an enormous parade to the palace, while the women and girls, so far absent from the proceedings, line the streets dressed all in white and ululate as the sultan passes.

After the parade there's a rest, and then horse races through the town streets. Then another break until it gets dark, when the drumming and dancing start in front of the Palais Royal. Meanwhile (this is still Cameroon, after all) people pack the bars and clubs, and when these are full they set up speakers on the streets for heavy drinking and dancing until the sun comes up.

Sleeping & Eating

Hotel Beau Regarde (☎ 348 2183; Rue de l'Hotel Beau Regarde; r without bathroom CFA3000-4000, with bathroom CFA6000) Thirty years ago this would have been a cracking hotel. A little tired now, it's still a decent cheap option. Rooms at the back overlook the town to good effect.

Hotel Complexe Adi (☎ mobile 743 1181; Rue de l'Hotel Beau Regarde; r CFA7000-9000) One of the nicer budget options in Fouban, rooms are simple but good value. Eat in the hotel restaurant, or enjoy the grilled meat vendors a stone's throw away.

Rifam Hotel (☎ 348 2878; Route de Bafoussam; s/d CFA15,000/25,000; ☎) Near the bus agency offices, this hotel is easily Fouban's plushest. Doubles are huge and come with balconies large enough to play football on.

Royal Café (meals from CFA2000; ☎ 8am-10pm) On the southern side of the Grand Marché, this eatery has good meals and a patio with views. It's down a flight of steps and is easy to miss; look for the white building and red signboard.

Restaurant de la Maturité (meals from CFA2000; ☎ 8am-10pm) Opposite the gare routière at the eastern end of the Grand Marché, this is a decent option, with good salads and omelettes.

The area just east of the *gare routière* is good for grilled meat; the streets along the Grande Marché are also good for eating on the hoof. Bars, as across Cameroon, are abundant.

Getting There & Away

There are a few direct buses to Yaoundé (CFA3000, five hours) and Douala (CFA4500, six hours); otherwise head for Bafoussam (CFA800, one hour) and change there. Bus agency offices are on the west side of town, about 3km from the Grande Marché (CFA100 in a shared taxi).

Transport between Fouban and Kumbo (CFA3000, around six hours) runs year-round, with times varying according to the rains. Although the road is very poor, it's easily one of the most beautiful in the country, skirting along the edge of the spectacular Mbam Massif.

SOUTHERN CAMEROON

The area to the south of Yaoundé is mostly rainforest and includes Cameroon's number one beach destination, Kribi. It's also the route for overland travel to Gabon and Equatorial Guinea.

KRIBI

It's easy to see why Kribi is Cameroon's most popular beach resort. A weekend getaway for government ministers and expats alike, it can be sleepy during the week, when you'll have the palm-fringed beaches almost to yourself. Check locally before diving in though, as the oceanic waters can have strong currents and rip tides.

Most of Kribi's hotels, usually with their own beachfronts, start at the southern end of town, but camping isn't advised. The **Chutes de la Lobé**, 8km south of town (*moto-taxi* CFA500), are an impressive set of waterfalls that empty into a pool by the sea.

Stock up on CFA before coming to Kribi – the banks don't like changing money and there's no ATM.

Sleeping

If you're visiting in the rainy season, ask for a discount.

Auberge du Phare (☎ 346 1106; off Route de Campo; r without air-con CFA12,000, with air-con CFA16,000-25,000; ☎ ☎) Conveniently near the town centre, this long-standing favourite has a good beachside location with a great restaurant. The hotel is usually closed in October, so call ahead.

Hotel Tara Plage (☎ 346 2038; Route de Campo; r without/with air-con CFA12,000/16,000; ☎ ☎) A popular beachside option with a mellow vibe. A great place to get away from town, with a restaurant serving good food. Advance booking is recommended.

Hotel de l'Océan (☎ 346 1635; Route de Campo; r CFA20,000-24,000; ☎ ☎) This hotel wins the prize for being the closest to the beach in Kribi – if the rooms were any nearer the sea, you'd have to swim to breakfast. Rooms are cute but simple, and there's a veranda restaurant-bar for sunbathers.

New Coco Beach Hotel (☎ 346 1584; off Route de Campo; s/d/t CFA25,000/32,000/46,000; ☎ ☎ ☎) Small but very nicely formed and run with a little Gallic flair, this hotel is popular with families. It's no problem that the swimming pool is only big enough for kids – the sea is just metres away.

Hotel Ilomba (☎ 346 1744; Route de Campo; s/d CFA25,000/30,000; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) Some way out of Kribi, this is the loveliest hotel in the area. Rooms are in *boukarous* (open-sided circular mud huts), all well furnished and tastefully decorated. The restaurant has a good menu and there's a lazy beachside bar. The Ilomba is just a short walk to the Lobé waterfalls.

Eating

All the beach hotels have restaurants, and are the nicest dining options in Kribi. Expect to pay from CFA3000 per meal; seafood is an obvious feature on menus.

Hot & Cold Snack Bar (snacks & fast food CFA500-1500; ☎ 8am-10pm) This place is clean, efficient and reasonably priced. The menu includes really good filled baguettes, omelettes, chicken and chips, and the like.

Fish Market (meals from CFA1000; ☎ 10am-5pm Wed & Sat) This market at the marina grills the day's catch over coals. From crab and lobster to massive barracuda, you'd be hard pressed to find a better, and tastier, selection of seafood anywhere else in Cameroon.

When the fish market is closed, head over to Carrefour Kingué, where you will find plenty of **fish & meat stands** (meals from CFA1000; ☎ 10am-late) lined up in front of the bars. Just

order your food, then sink a beer while it's being cooked. They will bring it out to your table.

Getting There & Away

Bus agencies have offices on Rue du Marché in the town centre. Nonagency transport leaves from the main *gare routière* (bus station). Buses for Douala (CFA18,000, three hours) leave throughout the day, along with transport to Campo (CFA2000, three hours) and Yaoundé (CFA3000, 3½ hours).

EBOLOWA

Ebolowa, capital of Ntem district, is a bustling place and a possible stopping point en route between Yaoundé and Equatorial Guinea or Gabon. Its main attraction is the artificial Muncinial Lake in the centre of town.

The best accommodation is at **Hôtel Porte Jaune** (☎ 228 4339; Route de Yaoundé; r CFA10,000) in the town centre, with some cheaper *auberges* (hostels) near the main roundabout, including **Hôtel Âne Rouge** (Place Ans 2000; r CFA4000).

During the dry season there's at least one vehicle daily along the rough road between Ebolowa and Kribi. There are also plentiful buses daily to Yaoundé (CFA3000, three hours). Several vehicles depart in the morning for Amban (CFA1000, one hour), from where you can find transport towards Ebebiyin (Equatorial Guinea) or Bitam (Gabon).

CAMPO

Campo is the last town before the Equatorial Guinea border. It's the jumping-off point for visiting Parc National de Campo-Ma'an. The best accommodation is at **Auberge Bon Course** (r CFA5000) at Bon Course Supermarché at the main junction. There are three simple but decent rooms, and meals are available. There are daily minibuses between Campo and Kribi (CFA1500).

A small fishing village 25km north of Campo, Ebodjé is home to a conservation project run by the Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV). Accommodation is in **local homes** (r CFA2000, meals CFA2000, environmental protection fee CFA1000). You'll need to bring your own water or filter, mosquito net and sleeping sheet.

Parc National de Campo-Ma'an (2608 sq km) protects rainforest, many plants and various animals, including buffaloes, elephants and mandrills. The park is being developed by

WWF as an ecotourism destination, with plans for canopy walks and river trips on the drawing board. Before planning a trip, check with the **WWF office** (☎ 221 6267; www.wwfcameroun.org; Bastos) in Yaoundé to see what progress is being made.

You'll need your own 4WD to get here. The CFA5000 entry fee can be paid at the tourist office in Campo; get a receipt to show at the park entrance at the village of Nko'elon. Staff at the office can also help you arrange a guide (obligatory, CFA3000 per day). You'll need to be self-sufficient with equipment and supplies.

NORTHERN CAMEROON

Cameroon's northern provinces are a world apart from the lush south. Rolling grasslands give way to barren rocky outcrops of striking beauty, dotted with picturesque villages. Roads to the south are barely existent, so getting there means taking an overnight train or internal flight. Mainly Muslim, the north draws adventure travellers for the hiking and wildlife-viewing opportunities, all conveniently reached from the town of Maroua.

N'GAOUNDÉRE

Leafy N'Gaoundéré is the terminus of Cameroon's main railway line and the first major town in northern Cameroon. It makes a relaxing stop, particularly if you've taken the overnight train, and at an altitude of 1100m the evenings are pleasantly cool.

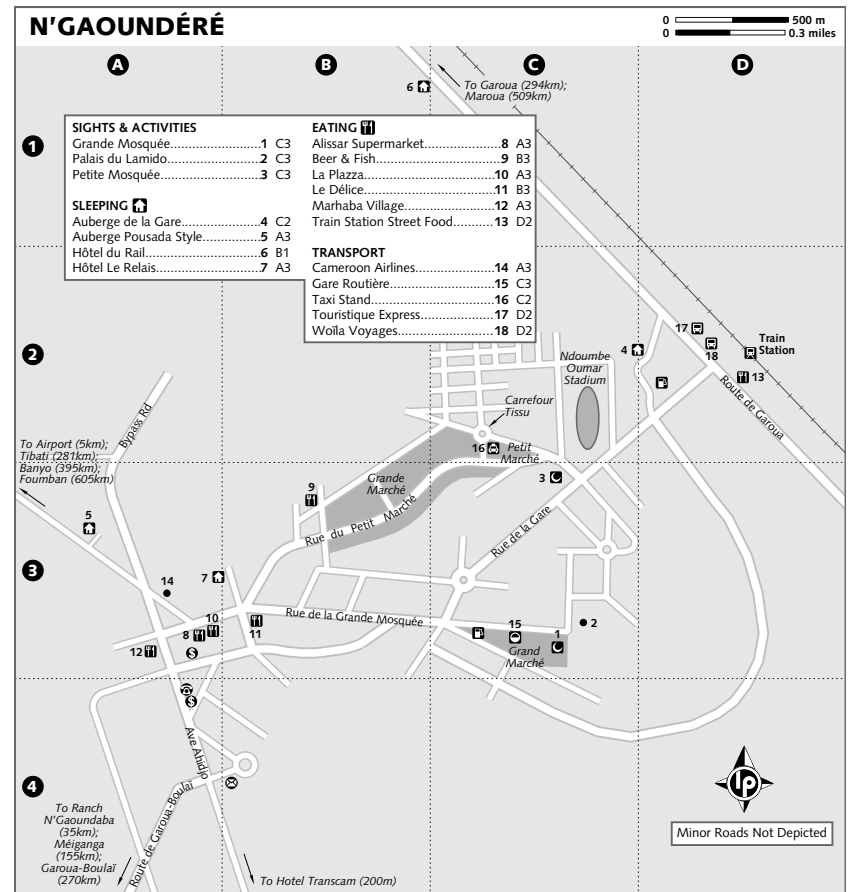
Some areas of N'Gaoundéré have bad reputations for safety at night, including the area around the stadium and north of the cathedral. If in doubt, take a *moto-taxi*.

Sights

The **Palais du Lamido** (admission CFA2000, guide CFA1000, camera CFA1000; ☎ 9am-5pm), also known as the *lamidat*, is worth a trip inside for a taste of local culture. Friday (especially) and Sunday are the best days to visit, as you'll be able to see many nobles from the surrounding area who come to pay their respects, and the procession from the palace to the **Grande Mosquée** next door for midday prayers.

Sleeping

The cool air of N'Gaoundéré means there's no need for air-conditioning.



Auberge Pousada Style (☎ 225 1703; r CFA4000-5000) A basic but friendly resthouse, there was a reassuringly clean smell of bleach throughout when we visited. Take a *moto-taxi* late at night in this area.

Auberge de la Gare (☎ 225 2217; r CFA5000-7000) Rooms are basic but reasonably clean and tidy, and there's an attached restaurant. It's convenient to the train station and bus agencies.

Hôtel Le Relais (☎ 225 1138; r without/with TV CFA9000/12,000) Well located near the intersection of Rue du Petit Marché and Rue de la Grande Mosquée, rooms are clean, if sometimes a little musty. All are good sized; the more expensive ones are even larger. There's a small bar.

Hôtel du Rail (☎ 225 1013; Route de Garoua; r from CFA13,500) A good place with large rooms, and al-

though it's handy for the train station, it's some way from the action in town. Luckily there's a restaurant, and (French) TV in all rooms.

Hôtel Transcam (☎ 225 1252; r CFA25,000-35,000) N'Gaoundéré's best hotel, with fine rooms and a posh restaurant. It's in a quiet setting 1.5km southwest of the town centre.

Eating

The best street food is easily found at the row of shops, stalls and bars opposite the train station – worth the detour even if you don't have a train to catch.

Beer & Fish (fish from CFA1000; ☎ 10am-late) A generic row of bars runs behind Rue du Petit Marché, interspersed with women grilling fish over coals. Order the fish, then sink a beer

while waiting for your meal to arrive – a recipe for a great Cameroonian evening.

Marhaba Village (mains from CFA1200; ☎ 9am–11pm) An open-air restaurant, with a snack bar and a more formal eating area. Its central location makes it a good place to hang out and people-watch.

Le Délice (meals about CFA1500; ☎ 9am–11pm) Friendly place off the western end of Rue de la Grande Mosquée, and one of several in the immediate area serving Western and Cameroonian dishes.

La Piazza (meals from CFA3000; ☎ 9am–midnight) Something of an N’Gaoundéré institution, this place has live music nightly and cold draught beer from the thatched bar. The Lebanese and pasta dishes are excellent, but don’t miss the perennially popular Sunday buffet from 12pm (CFA5000).

Alissar supermarket is well stocked for essentials and imported goods. The main market is the Petit Marché; the Grand Marché only sells vegetables.

Getting There & Away

Cameroon Airlines has flights most days connecting N’Gaoundéré with Garoua, Maroua, Yaoundé and Douala. The airport is situated about 4km west of town (CFA1000 in a taxi).

The train station is at the eastern end of town. Trains to Yaoundé leave daily at around 7pm (CFA25,000 in 1st-class *courette*, 18 to 36 hours), and you can reserve your seat a day in advance. See p284 for more information.

By bus, Touristique Express and Woïla Voyages are best, with several buses daily to Garoua (CFA3500, five hours) and Maroua (CFA6000, eight hours). Kawtal Voyages operates a battered Garoua-Boulaï (CFA4000, 12 hours) service most days from the *gare routière* by the Grande Mosquée. Think twice before attempting this during the rains. Equally strenuous is the appalling road south to Fouban. Kawtal Voyages also operates along this route, as far as Banyo (CFA5000, around 10 hours), from where you can change for Fouban.

GAROUA

On the Benue River, the port-town of Garoua is the commercial hub of the north. There’s little to hold the interest of travellers, but as it’s a transport junction you might find yourself passing through. Garoua has a large Chadian

population, with direct flights to N’Djaména and a handy consulate for visas (see p300).

Near the port, **Auberge Hiala Village** (☎ 227 2407; Rue Cicaï; r CFA5000–7000; ☎) has decent self-contained rooms and is the best bet in town, with a good bar and restaurant. **Super Restaurant** (Route de Maroua; mains from CFA1000) is a breezy place, with good food and juices.

Several bus companies run daily to Maroua (CFA2500, 2½ hours), N’Gaoundéré (CFA3500, five hours), while Cameroon Airlines flies to Yaoundé and Douala.

MAROUA

Dusty Maroua, Cameroon’s northernmost major town, is popular with travellers. It’s a good starting point for exploring the nearby Mandara Mountains and Parc National de Waza, or to catch your breath if you’re tackling the nearby borders with Chad and Nigeria. Neem trees line the streets, and there’s an easygoing feel in the air. With its good range of accommodation and facilities, you can easily spend a little longer here than you had anticipated.

Information

The fastest, most reliable internet is at **Braouz** (per hr CFA750), with **Marouanet** (per hr CFA400) a cheaper option.

For medical emergencies, try Meskine Hospital, southwest of town off Garoua road.

Maroua’s banks can be reluctant to change even cash euros. If the main banks won’t help, try CCA Bureau de Change next to SGBC. The latter also has an ATM.

Maroua has numerous tour operators that can arrange trekking in the Mandara Mountains and visits to Parc National de Waza. Better ones include:

Extrême Nord Safaris (☎ 229 3356; deliteri@hotmail.com)

Fagus Voyages (☎ 986 1871; www.fagusvoyages.com)

Porte Mayo Voyages (☎ 984 1573) Through Relais de la Porte Mayo.

Sleeping

Auberge le Voyageur (☎ 229 2100; Rue Mobil; r CFA5525–8500; ☎) This standard-issue hotel is handy to the town centre. Some rooms are a bit dreary, and you pay extra for air-conditioning. Nothing special, but a decent option.

Relais Ferngo (☎ 229 2153; off Blvd de Diangana; r CFA6000; ☎) This is a delightful budget choice. Simply furnished but spotless *boukarous* sit

between shady trees, ideal for whiling away the hours. Well located for buses and some great *suya* stalls.

Motel Coffana (☎ mobile 970 9643; off Blvd de Diangana; r CFA6000–10,000; ☎) You’ll find nicely turned out *boukarous* here, freshly painted and welcoming. Cheaper rooms in the main block have fan only, but are airy enough with high ceilings.

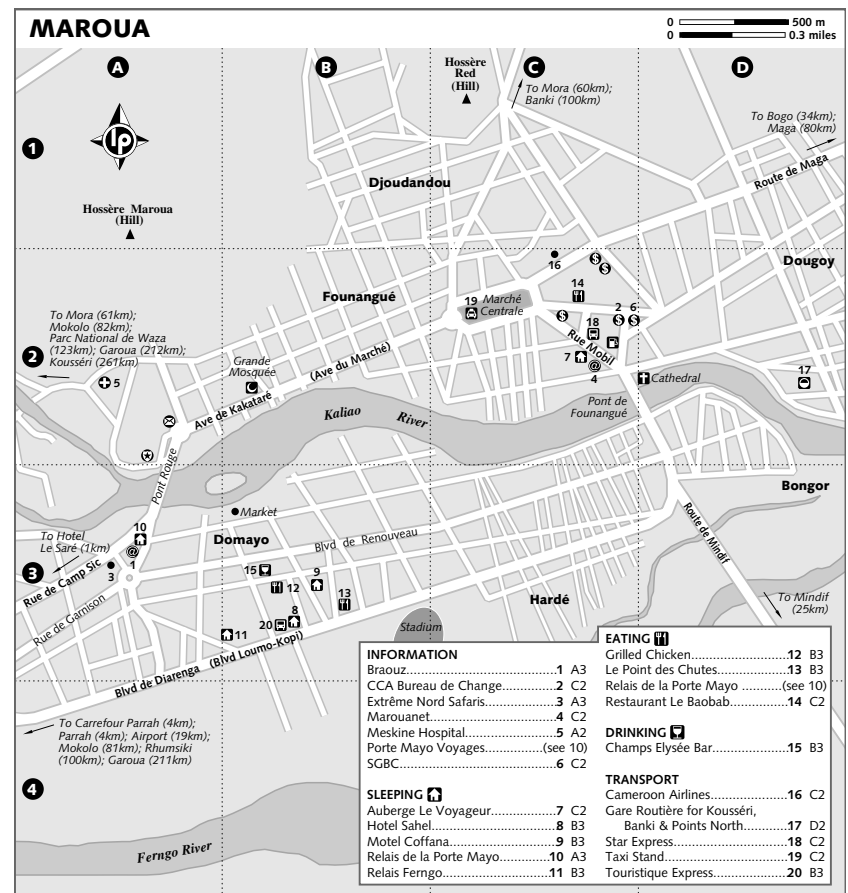
Relais de la Porte Mayo (☎ 229 2692; Pont Rouge; s/d CFA13,900/15,000, apt CFA17,500; ☎) There’s a lovely relaxed ambience at this French-run establishment, with well-planted grounds and freshly uniformed staff. Rooms in *boukarous* are well presented, but sometimes a little small for the price. The restaurant-bar is good, and there’s a fancy souvenir shop–cum-boutique.

Hotel Sahel (☎ 229 2960; Blvd de Diangana; s CFA14,500–18,000, d CFA21,500; ☎) This whitewashed, modern hotel is a lot bigger than the exterior promises. The rooms are good, and there are lots of outside sitting areas and a posh bar. Check out the traditional beehive-houses in front of reception.

Eating & Drinking

Maroua has plenty of bars, the liveliest of which are strung along Blvd de Renouveau.

Grilled Chicken (dishes from CFA1000; ☎) 10am–midnight) Opposite the Champs Elysée Bar, this place does fantastic whole chicken covered over coals, served with bread and a green salad (ask for no sugar in the dressing, though). As it’s Muslim-run there’s no alcohol, but staff



will happily bring your meal to you if you prefer to sit in the bar next door.

Several stalls on Blvd de Renouveau offer *brochettes* (kebabs), *suya* and grilled fish, all of which can be eaten in the bar of your choice in the same way.

Le Point des Chutes (meals from CFA1500; ☎ 8am–11pm) Just off the main drag, this small one-room outfit does great breakfasts for CFA1000, generously portioned Cameroonian standards and freshly squeezed fruit juice to die for.

Restaurant Le Baobab (dishes from CFA2000; ☎ 7am–11pm) This pleasant spot has outdoor seating under a thatched roof, a great atmosphere and good food. Check what's available – the lunchtime menu can be a bit limited.

Relais de la Porte Mayo (dishes from CFA4500; ☎ 7am–11pm) For upscale dining, this is Maroua's best option, and very popular with the local French community. The restaurant has great French and Italian options, while there's a cheaper snack menu available from the bar.

Getting There & Away

Flights are available three or four times a week with **Cameroon Airlines** (☎ 229 2019) to Yaoundé and Douala (both around CFA89,500), sometimes via Garoua. The airport is 20km south of town along the Garoua road (CFA3000 in a chartered taxi, if you can find one).

Touristique Express has several daily buses to Garoua (CFA2500, 2½ hours) and N'Gaoundéré (CFA6000, eight hours). You can also book tickets for the N'Gaoundéré–Yaoundé train here at the same time. Several other agencies operate along the N'Gaoundéré route, with depots on the same road; Star Express in the town centre is also good.

Plentiful transport to Mokolo (CFA1000, 1½ hours) and less frequently to Rhumsiki (CFA2000, around three hours) departs from Carrefour Parrah in Djarangol at the southern end of town.

Transport to Kousséri for the Chad border (CFA3500, five hours) departs from the *gare routière* on Maroua's eastern edge. Minibuses to Banki for the Nigerian border (CFA2000, two hours) also depart from here.

MANDARA MOUNTAINS

Running west of Maroua to the Nigerian border, the Mandara Mountains area is one of the most enjoyable places in Cameroon – rich in tribal culture, natural wonders and beautiful scenery. With traditional hillside villages of

round huts, huge stone formations and wide green valleys, it's no surprise that the area offers Cameroon's best trekking.

There are many fascinating villages, including **Rhumsiki**, with its striking mountain scenery; **Djingliya** and **Koza** set against steep terraced hillsides; **Tourou**, known for the calabash hats worn by local women; and **Maga**, with its unique domed houses made entirely of clay. **Mora** has a particularly notable weekly market. Hiking between villages is one of the best ways to appreciate the scenery and culture alike.

Rhumsiki is the main entrance point for visitors to the Mandara Mountains, and is the one place where there's a tangible feeling of a tourist scene, although being Cameroon this is something of a relative term.

There's accommodation in Rhumsiki, Mokolo, Mora, Waza, Maga and a few other villages, but otherwise, no infrastructure. If you're travelling independently, allow plenty of time and plan to be self-sufficient with food and water. Local minibuses usually set off around 6am. *Moto-taxis* are sometimes the only option for getting around.

For those with limited time, travel agencies in Maroua can organise visits, although it's just as easy to arrange things on the spot in Rhumsiki or Mokolo, which will ensure that more of the money you spend is pumped directly into the local economy. Expect to pay around CFA9000 per day, including guide, simple meals and accommodation.

PARC NATIONAL DU WAZA

The most accessible of Cameroon's national parks **Waza** (admission CFA5000, vehicle CFA2000, camera CFA2000; ☎ 6am–6pm November 15–May 15) is the best for viewing wildlife. While it can't compare with East African parks, you're likely to see elephants, hippos, giraffes, antelopes and – with luck – lions. Late March to April is the best time for viewing, as the animals congregate at water holes before the rains. Waza is also notable for its particularly rich birdlife. The park is closed during the rainy season.

A guide (CFA3000) is obligatory in each vehicle. Walking isn't permitted.

The park entrance is signposted and about 400m off the main highway. Unless you have your own vehicle, the best way to visit is to hire a vehicle in Maroua (about CFA30,000 per day plus petrol). See p296 for listings of tour operators. A 4WD vehicle is recommended.

Accessing the park by public transport is difficult; any bus between Maroua and Kousséri should be able to drop you at the park turn-off, but after that you'll be reliant on hitching a lift into the park itself, which is likely to involve a long wait.

Sleeping

Waza can easily be done as a day trip from Maroua if you start early (bring a packed lunch). Otherwise, there are three places to stay near the park entrance.

Centre d'Accueil de Waza (☎ 229 2207; camp sites per person CFA2500, r CFA7000) This simple place at the park entrance has accommodation in no-frills two-person *boukarous* with shared bathroom facilities. Meals can be arranged (CFA2000) and it has a small kitchen.

GIC-FAC Café-Restaurant du Ilme Millénaire (r around CFA4000) The local women's group has a few very simple rooms in a basic guesthouse. Meals can be arranged. It's just off the main road along the park access road.

Campement de Waza (☎ 229 1646, in Maroua 229 1165, in Waza 765 7717, 765 7558; s/d CFA14,800/16,000; ☎) This is the most luxurious option, with accommodation in reasonably comfortable *boukarous* and an attached restaurant. There are also a few cheaper rooms with fan only. It's located on a small hill about 700m from the park entrance, on the opposite side of the main road.

There's also basic accommodation in Waza village, just north of the park entrance.

EASTERN CAMEROON

Cameroon's remote east is wild and untamed. Seldom visited by travellers, it's very much a destination for those with plenty of time and the stamina to back up an appetite for adventure. There's little infrastructure and travel throughout is slow and rugged, with dense green forest and red laterite earth roads. The rainforest national parks are the main attraction, along with routes into the CAR and Congo.

BERTOUA

The capital of East Province, Bertoua is a genuine boomtown, born of logging and mining. Here you'll find all the facilities lacking elsewhere in the region, including banks and sealed roads.

Hôtel Mansa (☎ 224 1650; Mokolo II; r CFA25,000; ☎) is the town's best, worth a splurge if you've been lost in the forest. **Hôtel Montagnia**, near the *gare routière*, and **Hôtel Mirage**, near the post office, have basic rooms for around CFA6000. **Café Moderne** (meals from CFA500) is at the *gare routière*; also try Grille de la Ménagère (near the Orange phone mast) or Chez Odette, near La King textile store.

Cameroon Air flies from Bertoua to Yaoundé and Douala. Buses to Yaoundé (CFA5000, seven hours), Bélabo (for the train; CFA1000, one hour) and Garoua-Boulaï, leave from the *gare routières* near the market.

GAROUA-BOULAÏ

If you're looking for a picture of a rough African frontier town, Garoua-Boulaï is it. On the CAR border, it's a place of bars, trucks and prostitutes. The *auberges* (hostels) aren't recommended, so try the **Mission Catholique** (dm for a donation, r about CFA5000) instead.

There's a bus to N'Gaoundéré (CFA4000, 12 hours, one daily) during the dry season and year-round service to Bertoua; both roads are just tolerable. The CAR border is on the edge of Garoua-Boulaï next to the motor park.

CAMEROON DIRECTORY

ACCOMMODATION

Cameroon has a decent range of accommodation options, from simple *auberges* and dorm beds in religious missions to luxury hotels. Expect to pay around CFA12,000 for a decent single room with bathroom and a fan. Most hotels quote prices per room – genuine single and twin rooms are the exception rather than the norm.

ACTIVITIES

Hiking is a big draw card in Cameroon. The two most popular trekking regions are Mt Cameroon (p288) near the coast and the Mandara Mountains (opposite) in the north. The Ring Road (p291) near Bamenda also offers great hiking possibilities, but there's nothing organised so you'll need to be self-sufficient.

BUSINESS HOURS

Government offices are officially open from 7.30am to 3.30pm Monday to Friday. Businesses are open from 7.30am or 8am until

PRACTICALITIES

- The *Cameroon Tribune* is the government-owned bilingual daily. The thrice-weekly *Le Messager* (French) is the main independent newspaper.
- Most broadcast programming is government run and in French, through Cameroon Radio-TV Corporation (CRTV). TVs at top-end hotels often have CNN or French news stations.
- Electricity supply is 220V and plugs are of the European two-round-pin variety.
- Cameroon uses the metric system.

6pm or 6.30pm Monday to Friday, generally with a one- to two-hour break sometime between noon and 3pm. Most are also open from 8am to 1pm (sometimes later) on Saturday. Banks are open from 7.30am or 8am to 3.30pm Monday to Friday.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

The major cities, Douala and Yaoundé, both have reputations for petty crime, especially in the crowded central areas. The roads pose a greater risk, with plenty of badly maintained vehicles driven at punishing speeds.

Scams and official corruption are a way of life in Cameroon; keep your guard up and maintain a sense of humour.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES
Cameroon Embassies & Consulates

In West Africa, Cameroon has embassies in Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria and Senegal. Check the appropriate country chapter for details. Elsewhere, embassies and consulates include the following:

- Australia** (☎ 02-9876 4544; www.cameroonconsul.com; 65 Bingara Rd, Beecroft, NSW)
Belgium (☎ 02-345 1870; Ave Brugmann 131-133, Brussels)
Canada (☎ 613-236 1522; 170 Clemow Ave, Ottawa, Ontario)
Central African Republic (☎ 611687; Ave de la France, Bangui)
Chad (☎ 512894; Rue des Poids Lourds, N'Djaména)
Democratic Republic of Congo (☎ 833404; Rue Général Bayardelle, Brazzaville)
Equatorial Guinea (☎ 2263; 19 Calle Rey Boncoro, Malabo)
Ethiopia (☎ 448116; Bole Rd, Addis Ababa)

- France** (☎ 01 47 43 98 33; Rue d'Auteuil, 75016 Paris)
Gabon (☎ 732910, 732800; Blvd Léon Mba, Libreville)
Germany (☎ 0228-356 038; Rheinallee 76, Bonn)
Italy (☎ 06-4429 1285, 3558 2234; Via Syracuse 4/6, Rome)
Netherlands (☎ 70-346 9715; www.cameroon-embassy.nl; Amalstraat 14, The Hague)
Switzerland (☎ 022-736 2022; 6 Rue Dunant, Geneva)
UK (☎ 020-7727 0771; www.cameroon.embassyhome.page.com; 84 Holland Park, London)
USA (☎ 202-265 8790; www.ambacam-usa.org; 2349 Massachusetts Ave NW, Washington, DC)

Embassies & Consulates in Cameroon

The following embassies and consulates are located in Yaoundé, except as noted. Australians and New Zealanders should contact the Canadian High Commission in the case of an emergency. Opening hours listed are for visa applications.

- Canada** (Map p282; ☎ 223 2311; Immeuble Stamatias, Ave de l'Indépendance, Centre Ville)
Central African Republic (Map p281; ☎ 220 5155; Rue 1863, Bastos; ☎ 8am-3pm Mon-Fri)
Chad Yaoundé (Map p281; ☎ 221 0624; Rue Joseph Mballa Eloumden, Bastos; ☎ 7.30am-noon & 1-3.30pm Mon-Fri; Garoua (☎ 227 3128)
Congo (Map p281; ☎ 221 2458; Rue 1815, Bastos; ☎ 8am-noon Mon-Fri)
Democratic Republic of Congo (Map p281; ☎ 220 5103; Blvd de l'URSS, Bastos; ☎ 9.30am-3.30pm Mon-Fri)
Equatorial Guinea (Map p281; ☎ 221 0804; Rue 1805, Bastos; ☎ 9am-3pm Mon-Fri); Douala (☎ 342 2729; Rue Koloko; ☎ 9am-3pm Mon-Fri)
France (Map p281; ☎ 223 6399; Rue Joseph Atemengue, near Place de la Réunification); Douala (☎ 342 6250; Ave des Cocotiers, Bonanjo)
Gabon (Map p281; ☎ 220 2966; Rue 1816, Bastos; ☎ 9.30am-3pm Mon-Fri)

IDENTIFY YOURSELF

In Cameroon it's a legal requirement to carry identification with you at all times. If you're not happy with always carrying your passport, it's possible to get an official certified copy. Photocopy the title and visa pages and go to the main police office in any large town during office hours and ask to be 'legalised'. The process is quick and easy, leaving you with a passport copy with enough official stamps to satisfy even the strictest of checkpoint police. The certification costs CFA1000.

- Germany** (Map p281; ☎ 221 0056; Ave Charles de Gaulle, Centre Ville)
Liberia (Map p281; ☎ 221 1296; Blvd de l'URSS, Bastos)
Nigeria (Map p281; ☎ 221 3509; Rue Joseph Mballa Eloumden, Bastos; ☎ 9.30am-3.30pm Mon-Fri); Douala (☎ 343 2168; Blvd de la Liberté); Buea (☎ 332 2528; Nigeria Consulate Rd; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri) Visas not issued in Douala.
UK (Map p281; ☎ 222 0796; Ave Churchill, Centre Ville); Douala (☎ 342 3612; Immeuble Standard Chartered, Blvd de la Liberté)
USA (Map p282; ☎ 223 0512; Rue de Nachtigal, Centre Ville); Douala (☎ 342 0303; Immeuble Flatters, off Ave de Gaulle, Bonanjo)

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Tabaski (p292) is the biggest festival celebrated in Cameroon, with the most festivities taking place in Foumban. Each February Cameroonian and international athletes gather for the **Race of Hope** to the summit of Mt Cameroon, attracting large crowds of spectators. Considerably faster than the leisurely trek most people opt for, winners usually finish in a staggering 4½ hours for men and 5½ hours for women. For more information contact Fako Tourist Board in Limbe or the **Fédération Camerounaise d'Athlétisme** (☎ 222 4744) in Yaoundé.

HOLIDAYS

Public holidays include the following:

- New Year's Day** 1 January
Youth Day 11 February
Easter March/April
Labour Day 1 May
National Day 20 May
Assumption Day 15 August
Christmas Day 25 December

Islamic holidays are also observed throughout Cameroon (see p1106).

INTERNET ACCESS

Internet access can be found in any town of a reasonable size, usually with pretty good connections. Costs average CFA300 to CFA600 per hour.

MONEY

The unit of currency is the West African CFA. Cash is king in Cameroon, especially in remote regions where it's the only way to pay – bring plenty of euros. Banks regularly refuse to change travellers cheques, and charge

around 5% commission when they do – try Bicec, SGBC, Crédit Lyonnais and Standard Chartered Bank.

Most towns now have at least one ATM, always tied to the Visa network. SGBC is usually the most reliable when using foreign cards. Banks won't generally offer cash advances on credit cards. If you get stuck, Western Union has branches throughout Cameroon for international money transfers.

Express Exchange moneychangers change cheques and US dollars cash; there are branches in Yaoundé, Douala, Bamenda and Buea, with further plans for expansion.

POST

Yaoundé and Douala have reliable poste restante services at their central post offices, with letters held for about two weeks (CFA200 per letter collected). International post is fairly reliable for letters, but international couriers should be preferred for packages – there are branches in all large towns.

TELEPHONE

There are private teleboutiques or street-side phone stands in all towns. International calls cost about CFA1000 per minute. Internet telephony is increasingly popular, costing around a quarter of normal rates.

VISAS

Visas are required by all travellers and must be bought prior to arrival in the country. At Cameroonian embassies in neighbouring countries, visas are issued quickly for around US\$60. Applications in Europe and the USA may require a confirmed flight ticket, hotel reservation and proof of funds for the trip (a copy of a recent bank statement should suffice).

Visa Extensions

You can obtain visa extensions at the **Ministry of Immigration** (Map p282; Ave Mdug-Fouda Ada) in Yaoundé, where one photo plus CFA15,000 is required.

Visas for Onward Travel

Thirty-day visas for CAR (CFA35,000), Chad (CFA30,000), Congo (CFA70,000), Equatorial Guinea (CFA37,000), Gabon (CFA37,000) and other nearby countries are available from embassies in Yaoundé; see opposite for address details. For visas to Nigeria, see p470.

TRANSPORT IN CAMEROON

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

Both Yaoundé and Douala have international airports linking Cameroon to major cities in Africa and Europe. Cameroon Airlines is the local carrier, with flights to major cities throughout Central and West Africa.

Regional flights from Douala include Lagos (Nigeria; one way CFA172,000), Nairobi (Kenya; one way CFA536,000) and Addis Ababa (Ethiopia; one way CFA537,000).

DEPARTURE TAX

A departure tax of CFA10,000 is charged for all flights leaving Cameroon. Domestic flights incur a departure tax of CFA2500.

Land

Neighbouring countries' borders are open.

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

The standard, if rough, route is via Garoua-Boulāi (p299), which straddles the border, and on to Bangui (via Bouar). An alternative is to travel to Kénzou, south of Batouri.

CHAD

For Chad, travellers head to Kousséri in the extreme north for the border near N'Djaména. Minibuses go to Kousséri from Maroua; the border is notorious for its greedy officials.

CONGO

This border is as remote as you can get, and near impossible in the rains. From Yokadouma, travel south to Sokamba, where you can catch a ferry (large enough for 4WDs) or pirogue across the Ngoko River to the Congolese port of Ouesso. From there, head for Pokola and the logging road to Brazzaville.

EQUATORIAL GUINEA & GABON

The main border crossings into Equatorial Guinea and Gabon are a few kilometres from

each other, and are accessible from Amban. The road splits here, with the easterly route heading for Bitam and Libreville (Gabon) and the westerly route heading for Ebebiyin and Bata (Equatorial Guinea).

The Cameroon–Equatorial Guinea border at Campo is normally closed.

NIGERIA

To/from Nigeria the main crossing points are Ekok, west of Mamfé, where you cross to Mfum for shared taxis to Calabar (treacherous in the rainy season), and at Banki in the extreme north for crossings to Maiduguri.

Sea

NIGERIA

A twice-weekly ferry sails from Limbe to Calabar on Monday and Thursday, and in the opposite direction every Tuesday and Friday – see p289.

GETTING AROUND

Air

Cameroon Airlines has flights connecting Yaoundé and Douala daily, and travels three times weekly to Garoua, Maroua, N'Gaoundéré and Bertoua from both major cities. One-way fares from Douala to N'Gaoundéré cost CFA125,000 and Yaoundé to Maroua CFA89,500.

Bus

Agences de voyages (agency buses) run along all major and many minor routes in Cameroon. Prices are low and fixed, and on some bus lines you can even reserve a seat. From Yaoundé to Douala costs CFA3800 and N'Gaoundéré to Maroua CFA6000. However, some drivers are extremely reckless, and bus accidents occur all too frequently. *Taxis brousses* (bush taxis) are also popular.

Train

Cameroon's rail system (Camrail) operates three main lines: Yaoundé to N'Gaoundéré, Yaoundé to Douala and Douala to Kumba. In practice, only the first is of interest to travellers, as it's the main way to get between the southern and northern halves of the country. For details, see p284.

© Lonely Planet Publications. To make it easier for you to use, access to this chapter is not digitally restricted. In return, we think it's fair to ask you to use it for personal, non-commercial purposes only. In other words, please don't upload this chapter to a peer-to-peer site, mass email it to everyone you know, or resell it. See the terms and conditions on our site for a longer way of saying the above - 'Do the right thing with our content.'