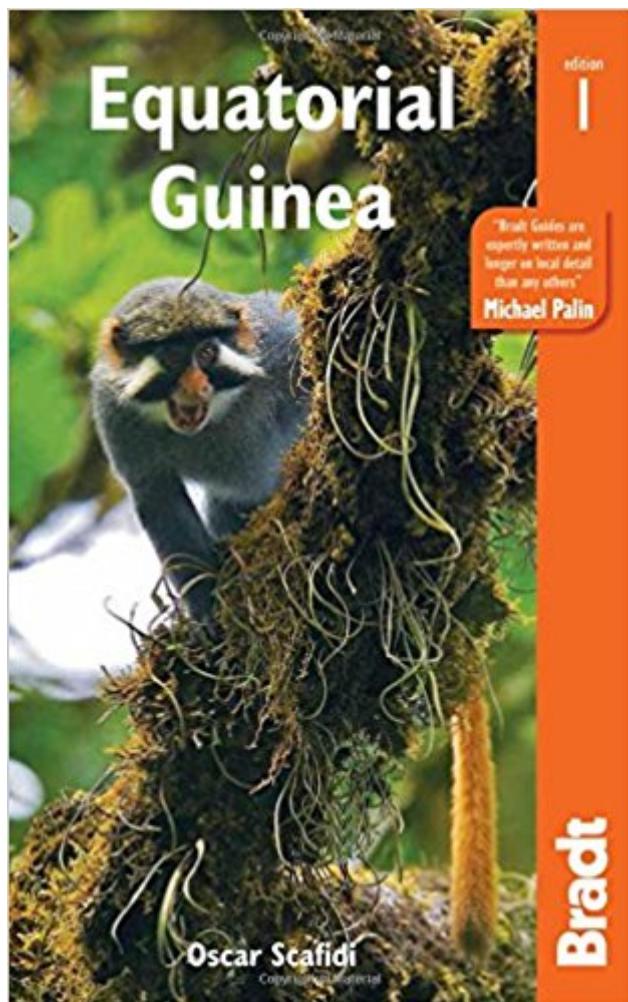


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Equatorial Guinea (Bradt Travel Guide)



Synopsis

This is the only English language guide to Equatorial Guinea, one of the last truly unexplored corners of sub Saharan Africa. Ranked by the United Nations among the ten least visited countries in the world, this tiny nation is slowly opening up thanks to the discovery of vast oil reserves in the nineties and the resultant influx of foreign workers and capital. In 2004 Equatorial Guinea gained worldwide notoriety following British former SAS Officer Simon Mann's failed coup d'État.

However, there is much more to this tiny nation than international political intrigue and mercenaries. From the oil rich capital of Malabo on the volcanic island of Bioko, set out to explore the jungle interior via the Spanish colonial outpost of Bata. Here you will find pristine national parks teeming with wildlife, incredible white sand beaches and a wealth of small, traditional communities. The authorities will not make it easy, but a few shakedowns and the mountains of red tape are a small price to pay for such a unique experience in the heart of tropical Africa's only Spanish speaking nation. With first-hand descriptions of all seven provinces (including the islands and the mainland), plus practical details, this is all the information you need to successfully tackle this challenging but rewarding travel experience.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Oscar Scafidi has spent the last five years living and teaching in Africa while writing about his experiences. He has visited over twenty countries on the continent and recently co-authored the second edition of the Bradt Guide to Angola. Armed with a solid grasp of English, French, Portuguese, Spanish and Italian, as well as experience travelling to difficult destinations such as

Somalia, Yemen and Afghanistan, Oscar is well qualified to write the first English language guidebook to Equatorial Guinea. Oscar Scafidi is originally from the UK and Italy and has spent the past five years living and working in Africa as a history teacher. While not teaching, Oscar also writes travel journalism focusing on difficult destinations such as Somalia, Afghanistan, Liberia and East Timor. Some of his work can be found on the adventure travel website Polo's Bastards.

This is an excellent, in-depth travel guide to Equatorial Guinea. I highly recommend it!

Small is beautiful? Think again. Equatorial Guinea is a black hole in the heart of Africa: Small, obscure, corrupt, nasty and evil. It is the 5th most censored country on earth. It uses most of its educational budget to send the children of the ruling elite to study abroad. A former US ambassador described its system of government as a “family criminal conspiracy”. Previously, nobody cared about the suffering of its people because the country was too insignificant. Today nobody cares either because the country is swimming in oil. Equatorial Guinea also seems to have actively discouraged tourism for much of its history as an independent state. All that should not (and does not) discourage adventurous travellers, or (more realistically) expats who already live there and want to explore the country. While Lonely Planet has long gone mainstream and ditched seldom visited countries as not profitable enough (e.g. Comoros, Djibouti, Falkland Islands), Bradt has thankfully made the courageous yet “commercially bonkers decision” in the publisher's own words “to produce guidebooks that will surely not sell millions of copies, bringing us titles on destinations such as North Korea, South Sudan, St. Helena and Sao Tome. The second-best guide to Equatorial Guinea is a 25-page chapter from Lonely Planet's 1994 (and long discontinued) Central Africa regional guidebook. Faced with such weak competition, a mediocre, shortish, but updated guidebook would have done the job. However, the author has been far more ambitious and diligent and has produced a superb book that literally puts Equatorial Guinea on the tourist map for the first time ever. The guidebook is sometimes refreshingly outspoken, with background info on politics and human rights, and two pages about infamous Teodorin Obiang. Some views and phrases reminded me of Lonely Planet's irreverent 1980s “Africa on a Shoestring”. My personal favourite is the two-page feature “Avoiding the shakedown”, which contains hilarious but very practical advice on how to deal with corrupt officials who hassle you “immensely useful almost everywhere in Central and West Africa. You almost think the author is hell-bent to get his guide on Equatorial Guinea's banned book list. Sounds familiar? Lonely Planet was banned in Malawi in the

1980s and many self-respecting writers on African affairs used to regard it as a badge of honour if their writings were banned in a country or two. The guidebook is an impressive 240 pages long and although the history and context chapters are detailed you never get the feeling that the author's intention was to merely fill the book with bloatware: The majority of text consists of practical, detailed, first-hand researched travel information. Bradt's maps were traditionally inferior to Lonely Planet's, but seem to be getting better (easily achieved because LP's have been getting worse). I still dislike Bradt's practice of indicating food and hotel prices with \$\$\$ symbols instead of giving precise amounts. Lastly, Bradt's information on in-country transport has often been weak, but this is not a huge problem in Equatorial Guinea, which is a tiny country where there is usually only a single road and a single form of transport between A and B. These are all minor issues that do not distract from the quality of this book.

This is an excellent and remarkably comprehensive travel guide to one of the world's least visited countries. Africa's only Spanish speaking nation has had a turbulent past and visa restrictions (US citizens are the only ones not requiring visas) have made access by most foreigners quite difficult. This is an intriguing country for the adventurous with spectacular rainforests, islands with beautiful beaches and wildlife found nowhere else, and (due to Equatorial Guinea's oil wealth) good roads and some good hotels. This guide book gives great coverage of travel basics (transport, lodging, restaurants, and what to see) for the whole country with a couple dozen maps plus fascinating background information on a variety of topics such as wildlife and history, and great advice on dealing with the challenges of visiting Equatorial Guinea.

I've lived in Central Africa for 22 years, and if I were writing a guide to a country, I would wish to write one as good as Oscar Scafidi's guide to Equatorial Guinea. I especially appreciate all of the historical background which he offers, information which is very difficult to find if one doesn't have access to Spanish sources. If you are going to E.G., or just interested in the region, this is a book I highly recommend.

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