

OVERFED MONKEYS IN GAMBIAN BIJILO FOREST PARK



Gambian Bijilo Forest Park was created to protect the local wildlife and help to generate tourism revenue. However, tourists who visit the Bijilo Forest Park destabilize its environment by feeding local animals and littering the park.

Gambia is a small and poor country in western Africa. Tourism is certainly a good way how to generate revenue and there was also a need to stop rapid deforestation. For this reasons the **Bijilo Forest Park** was established in 1991.

The 126 acres park is home to 133 species of birds and also to four species of primate: the red colobus, patas monkeys, nocturnal galagos and to the green monkeys. These animals suffered from the deforestation and creation of a fenced public park seemed as the best way how to protect them. Other things worth seeing in the park are wild orchids, palms or baobab trees. The park is simply an **ideal spot for eco-tourists and bird watchers**.

The forest park is near the capital Banjul and it is easily accessible for tourists. Every year some **23,000 visitors come to the park**. Here, however, starts the problem. The high numbers of incoming tourists have a devastating impact on the local wildlife, especially on the green monkeys. These creatures no longer look for food. They just sit in big groups near roads and wait for tourists to feed them. Feeding of the animals is of course prohibited, there are also signs that ask the visitors not to do it, but nothing helps.

Tourists buy bags of groundnuts for the monkeys and after such a trip the park is littered with empty bags, which could be dangerous to the animals who try to eat them. The monkeys are overfed and increasingly aggressive. They do not fear people any more which make it easier for poachers who want to steal them.

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