

Gabon

Country name	Gabon
State title	Gabonese Republic
State title in French	République gabonaise
Name of citizen	Gabonese
Official language(s)	French (<i>fra</i>) ¹
Script	Roman
ISO-3166 code (alpha-2/alpha-3)	GA/GAB
Capital	Libreville (0° 23' 00" N, 9° 27' 00" E)
Population/Area	2,397,368 (2023 est.) / 267,667 sq km ²

Introduction

Gabon is a country on the west coast of central Africa. Located on the equator, it is bordered by Equatorial Guinea to the northwest, Cameroon to the north, the Republic of the Congo to the east and south, and the Gulf of Guinea (Atlantic Ocean) to the west.

In 1910, Gabon became one of four territories of French Equatorial Africa; this federation survived until 1958, when Gabon became an autonomous republic within the French Community. Gabon became fully independent in August 1960. Since 1967, the country has been run by Omar Bongo, and then his son Ali Bongo, who succeeded him as president in 2009.

Geographical names policy

Geographical names will be found written in Roman script, in a French style. Where possible, names should be taken from official Gabonese Roman-script sources. In the absence of these, maps produced by the French Institut national de l'information géographique et forestière (IGN) can be used. All diacritical marks, apostrophes and hyphens should be retained.

Language

The official language of Gabon is French. It is estimated that 80% of the population speak French, which functions as a *lingua franca* and is the language of education and government. A majority of the Gabonese people speak indigenous languages, according to their ethnic group. The indigenous languages in Gabon are from the Bantu language family, the most widely spoken being Fang (*fan*); Mbere (*mdt*) and Sira (*swj*).

¹ Language codes given in this Factfile are ISO-639 codes.

² <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/gabon/>

Inventory of characters (and their Unicode³ encodings)⁴:

French (and consequently Gabonese toponyms) contains the following letter-diacritic combinations in addition to the unmodified letters of the basic Roman script:

Upper-case character	Unicode encoding	Lower-case character	Unicode encoding
À	00C0	à	00E0
Â	00C2	â	00E2
Ç	00C7	ç	00E7
È	00C8	è	00E8
É	00C9	é	00E9
Ê	00CA	ê	00EA
Ë	00CB	ë	00EB
Î	00CE	î	00EE
Ì	00CC	ì	00EC
Ï	00CF	ï	00EF
Ô	00D4	ô	00F4
Œ	0152	œ	0153
Ù	00D9	ù	00F9
Û	00DB	û	00FB
Ü	00DC	ü	00FC
Ÿ [#]	0178	ÿ [#]	00FF

[#] rarely encountered

Toponymic/Boundary Disputes

The Corisco Bay islands are **Mbañe/Mbanié** (00°48'37"N, 009°22'45"E), **Cocotiers/Cocoterros**⁵ and **Congas**, located close to where the land boundary between Equatorial Guinea and Gabon terminates. HMG products should not assign sovereignty to these islands. If the scale of mapping is appropriate, then the label: "Disputed between Equatorial Guinea and Gabon" can be added.

³ See www.unicode.org

⁴ Characters can be manually input into Microsoft Word documents by typing in these character codes and then holding down the ALT key and pressing /x/. The code will change to the required character. The letter can be copied and pasted into other programmes if required. Alternatively, the 'Insert – Symbol' command can be used; the code can be entered into the 'Character code' box which will show the corresponding letter.

A GeoNames Soft-Copy Keyboard can be downloaded from the NGA website and used to enter the required letter-diacritic combinations for a particular region: http://geonames.nga.mil/gns/html/gns_services.html.

⁵ These names are shown as in the International Court of Justice (ICJ) Proceedings, showing names as used by Equatorial Guinea and Gabon (<https://www.icj-cij.org/case/179>)

TOPONYMIC FACT FILE

Administrative structure

Gabon is divided into 9 provinces at first-order administrative level (ADM1). These are subdivided into 50 departments at second-order (ADM2) level.

Administrative map of Gabon: <https://www.lepratiquedugabon.com/carte-administrative-du-gabon/>

	Province (ADM1)	ISO 3166-2 code	Administrative Centre (PPLA)	PPLA Location	Departments (ADM2s)
1	Estuaire	GA-01	Libreville	0° 23' 00" N 9° 27' 00" E	Komo Komo-Mondah Noya Komo-Océan
2	Haut-Ogooué	GA-02	Franceville	1° 36' 29" S 13° 36' 55" E	Djoué Djouori-Agnili Lébombi-Léyou Lékabi-Léwolo Lékoko Lékoni-Lékori Ogooué-Létili Mpassa Des plateaux Sébé-Brikolo Bayi Brikolo
3	Moyen-Ogooué	GA-03	Lambaréné	0° 41' 58" S 10° 13' 13" E	Abanga-Bigné Ogooué et Lacs
4	Ngounié	GA-04	Mouila	1° 51' 49" S 11° 03' 36" E	Boumi-Louétsi Dola Douya-Onoy Louétsi-Wano Ndolou Ogoulou Tsamba-Magotsi Louétsi-Bibaka Mougalaba

TOPONYMIC FACT FILE

5	Nyanga	GA-05	Tchibanga	2° 51' 00" S 11° 02' 00" E	Basse-Banio Douigni Doutsila Haute-Banio Mougoutsi Mongo
6	Ogooué-Ivindo	GA-06	Makokou	0° 34' 26" N 12° 51' 51" E	Ivindo La Lopé Mvoun Zadié
7	Ogooué-Lolo	GA-07	Koulamoutou	1° 07' 49" S 12° 28' 25" E	Lolo Bouenguidi Lombo Bouenguidi Mouloundou Offoué-Onoy
8	Ogooué-Maritime	GA-08	Port-Gentil	0° 43' 39" S 8° 47' 30" E	Bendjé Etimboué Ndougou
9	Woleu-Ntem	GA-09	Oyem	1° 35' 54" N 11° 34' 31" E	Haut-Komo Haut-Ntem Ntem Okano Woleu

Other Significant Locations

PCGN Approved Name	Location	Feature Type
Estuaire du Gabon	0° 12' 55" N 9° 33' 00" E	River estuary
Ngounié	0° 37' 00" S 10° 18' 00" E	River
Ivindo	0° 09' 00" S 12° 09' 00" E	River
Ogooué	0° 49' 00" S 9° 00' 00" E	River
Lagune Nkomi	1° 30' 52" S 9° 12' 30" E	Coastal lagoon
Lagune N'dogo	2° 35' 00" S 10° 00' 00" E	Coastal lagoon
Lac Onangué	0° 57' 25" S 10° 04' 12" E	Lake

Useful references

- BBC Gabon Country Policy: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13376333>
- CIA World Factbook: <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/gabon/>
- Ethnologue: www.ethnologue.com (for information on languages)
- International Organization for Standardization (ISO): www.iso.org
- ISO Online Browsing Platform (OBP): <https://www.iso.org/obp/ui#home>
- Direction Générale des Statistiques: <https://instatgabon.org/>
- Omniglot www.omniglot.com (for information on languages and scripts)
- PCGN Country Names list: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/country-names>
- Plan de Libreville: <https://www.lepratiquedugabon.com/plan-de-libreville/>
- Pratique du Gabon: <https://www.lepratiquedugabon.com/>
- US Board on Geographic Names Geographic Names Server: <https://geonames.nga.mil/geonames/GNSHome/index.html>

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 September 2023