

Gabon (Gabonese Republic. République Gabonaise)

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Location and area

Gabon is an independent nation in central Africa, located astride the Equator, and bounded on the northwest by Equatorial Guinea, on the north by Cameroon, on the east and south by the Republic of Congo, and on the west by the Atlantic Ocean. The area of Gabon is 267,667 km². (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

Topography

A belt of generally narrow coastal lowlands borders the Atlantic Ocean on the west. To the interior is the plateau zone, which extends over the entire northern and eastern sections of Gabon and part of the south. The Crystal Mountains in the north are about 900 m high. The central Chaillu Mountains contain Mount Iboundji (1,575 m), the highest summit in the country. Numerous rivers cross this escarpment, notably the Ogooué, whose basin covers almost the entire country. (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

Climate

Gabon has a hot and humid climate. The temperature varies only slightly throughout the year. The average daily temperature is 27° C. There is a long dry season from May to September and a short dry season from December to January, while the rainy seasons are from February to April and from October to November. At Libreville the average annual rainfall is 2,500 mm.

Mineral production in Gabon has kept the pressure off the forests as a source of revenue. As a result, about 70 % of Gabon remains covered in forest. (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

Peatlands

Bord na Mona (1985) and Shrier (1985) mention the occurrence of Histosols associated with Orthic Ferrasols in Gabon.

Possible peatland areas in Gabon include the swamps and floodplain of the Ogoonué River, and the shallow lakes Onangue (ca. 350 km²) and Manje (ca. 50 km²) (Howard-Williams & Thompson (1985).

According to the interpreted World Soil Map (Van Engelen & Huting 2002) 1,951 km² of histosols exist in Gabon and 26,168 km² of gley soils.