

The Natural Tourism Riches of Manyu Division, Cameroon: An Inventory of An Exceptional but Underexploited Ecological Endowment

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Abstract

Manyu Division, in the South-West Region of Cameroon, possesses one of the richest natural tourism endowments in Central Africa, anchored by Korup National Park among the oldest and most bio-diverse rainforests on the continent. It extends across the Takamanda highlands, the Cross River and its tributaries, a landscape of waterfalls, wildlife corridors, and geological formations that together constitute a natural capital of world-class quality. This article presents a systematic inventory of Manyu's natural touristic assets, drawing on archival records, conservation science, government reports, and interview evidence gathered between 2022 and 2025. It demonstrates that the division's natural endowment is not merely locally significant but internationally competitive. It hosts one of the world's rarest primates, one of Africa's most botanically diverse forests, a river and a highland landscape of considerable scenic and recreational value. The paper argues that the persistent gap between the ecological quality of these assets and their tourism development outcomes reflects infrastructural and institutional constraints rather than any deficiency in the natural resource base itself. It closes with observations on the seasonal and planning considerations that any future valorization strategy must address.

Keywords: *Natural Tourism, Manyu Division, Inventory, Ecological Endowment, Korup National Park.*

Introduction

Tourism geography distinguishes between possessing a natural resource base and realizing its developmental potential: a destination can hold ecologically significant assets and still fail to attract commensurate visitors or revenue.¹ This distinction is well developed in the literature on

protected area tourism in East and Southern Africa, but rarely applied to Cameroon's South West Region, where accounts of the forest divisions tend to describe wildlife in narrow biological terms or tourism potential in vague terms, without connecting the two. This article treats Manyu Division's natural endowment explicitly as tourism capital, inventorying specific, benchmarkable assets whose conservation status and market potential can each be assessed on the evidence.

The problem is a striking mismatch. Manyu's protected areas meet or exceed, on several documented ecological measures, the standards of destinations generating tens of millions of dollars annually elsewhere in Africa — yet the Korup National Park, the division's flagship asset, has never drawn more than a few hundred visitors in a year, and most of Manyu's other natural assets have seen no organized tourism development at all. The central question is why this endowment has produced so little developmental yield, and what would need to change to realize it. This raises further questions the article treats in turn: what does Manyu's natural endowment consist of, and how does it compare, asset by asset, with resource bases recognized internationally as first-rank tourism destinations? Why did the Korup Project of the 1980s and 1990s fail to build a lasting visitor base? What remains unexploited beyond Korup — the Takamanda highlands, the Cross-River corridor, the division's waterfalls and geological features — and why? What seasonal and planning constraints, specific to Manyu's equatorial climate, must any development strategy accommodate? The sections that follow address these in order: Manyu's administrative and climatic setting; Korup's ecological profile and development history; Takamanda and the Cross River gorilla; the Cross River corridor, waterfalls, highlands, and geological heritage; wildlife corridors; seasonal and planning constraints; and finally, visitor-experience potential and the implications of the endowment-versus-development gap.

Geographic and Climatic Foundations

Manyu Division sits in the south-western corner of Cameroon, bordering Nigeria's Cross River State to the west and north-west, and comprising four sub-divisions (Mamfe Central, Eyumojock, Akwaya and Upper Banyang) administered from the divisional headquarter at Mamfe.¹ Colonial-era administrative reporting from the 1960s already identified the division's topographic range as a distinguishing feature: lowland rainforest in the west descending to altitudes below 100 metres, rising through rolling mid-elevation terrain to the Takamanda and Tinto highlands in the east and south, which reach elevations in excess of 1,700 metres.²

¹Republic of Cameroon, Administrative Map of Manyu Division.

²National Archives Buea (NAB), File SWP/a 1965/4, "Administrative Report: Mamfe Division, 1965–1966."

Fig 1: Map of Manyu Division with its subdivisional capitals



Source: Republic of Cameroon, Administrative Map of Manyu Division

This topographic range produces a corresponding range of vegetation zones within a compact geographic area: lowland evergreen rainforest in the Korup area, transitional semi-deciduous forest across the mid-elevation zones, and montane forest and grassland in the highland areas of Akwaya and Upper Banyang.³ - Manyu's climate is defined by an equatorial monsoonal regime with a pronounced wet season from March to November and a shorter dry season from December to February. Rainfall totals ranging from approximately 2,500 millimetres in the eastern highlands to more than 5,000 millimetres in the wettest parts of the Korup lowlands.⁴ This intensity of rainfall is directly responsible for the botanical productivity documented in Korup. It also imposes real constraints on tourism planning: the wet season renders many forest trails difficult or impassable, the Cross-River's flow regime varies dramatically between seasons, and any visitor infrastructure strategy must be designed explicitly around this seasonality. The division's borderland position, sharing ethnic kinship, trade relationships, and ecological continuity with Nigeria's Cross River State, is itself a geographic asset relevant to tourism planning.⁵ The wildlife corridor connecting Korup and Takamanda to Nigeria's Cross River National Park constitutes a single trans-boundary conservation landscape, a fact recognized in regional conservation planning but never translated into a joint cross-border tourism product of the kind that has proved successful in other trans-boundary conservation areas in Southern and East Africa.⁶

Korup National Park: Ecological Profile

Korup National Park, covering approximately 1,260 square kilometres of the western portion of Manyu Division, is widely regarded by conservation scientists as one of Africa's most significant surviving lowland rainforests, substantially undisturbed for an estimated sixty million years and consequently free of the Pleistocene climatic disruptions that reshaped forest composition elsewhere on the continent.⁷ This antiquity is the foundation of the park's exceptional biodiversity, and it is worth stating plainly for a tourism-planning audience. Korup is not simply "a rainforest" in the generic sense conveyed by much tourism marketing, but a forest of

³Republic of Cameroon, Divisional Report: Manyu Division 2010 (Mamfe: Divisional Office, 2010), 22–29.

⁴Cameroon Ministry of Environment, Biodiversity Survey: South West Region, 55–68.

⁵NAB, File Qb/a1985/9, "Cross River Navigation and Tourism: Mamfe Division, 1980–1985."

⁶Republic of Cameroon, Road Infrastructure Development Plan: South West Region (Yaoundé: Ministry of Public Works, 2012), 18–24.

⁷S.A. Gartlan, "Conservation Status of Korup Forest Reserve, Cameroon," WWF Technical Report 3128 (Gland: WWF, 1984), 5–19.

demonstrable and specific scientific distinction. Botanical surveys conducted since the 1980s have documented more than 1,700 species of vascular plants within the park boundaries, including at least 60 species considered locally endemic. Tree-species density in the richest sample plots exceeds 300 species per hectare, a figure that places Korup among the most botanically diverse forests documented anywhere in the tropics, comparable to the richest sites recorded in the Amazon basin and the forests of Borneo.⁸ This density is directly relevant to the park's tourism potential: high species diversity supports a correspondingly rich understorey and canopy fauna, and provides the basis for specialist botanical and birding tourism markets that reward exactly this kind of documented rarity.

Faunal surveys record more than 160 mammal species within Korup's boundaries, including the Nigeria-Cameroon chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes ellioti*), the drill (*Mandrillus leucophaeus*), one of Africa's most endangered primates, the rare Preuss's monkey (*Cercopithecus preussi*), the African forest elephant (*Loxodonta cyclotis*), and several duiker species, including Ogilby's duiker (*Cephalophus ogilbyi*) and the blue duiker (*Philantomba monticola*), found nowhere else in comparable density.⁹ Ornithological surveys have recorded in excess of 400 bird species, including several forest specialists of high interest to the international birding tourism market, a segment that has grown substantially in East African destinations but that Korup has never systematically targeted.¹⁰ The park's establishment followed a sustained campaign of scientific documentation led by the ecologist S.A. Gartlan and colleagues working with WWF, whose surveys through the early 1980s built the case that ultimately persuaded the Cameroonian state to act.¹¹ Korup National Park was formally created by presidential decree in October 1986. Its creation attracted a scale of international conservation investment in excess of twenty million pounds sterling over the active life of the subsequent Korup Project

⁸John S. Comiskey, Thomas B. Lee Thomas, and David Newbery, "Observations on the Structure and Dynamics of Korup Forest," in *The Conservation of Korup National Park*, ed. Jo Anderson and Heather Sherrington (London: Overseas Development Administration, 1992), 17–35.

⁹Cameroon Ministry of Environment, Biodiversity Survey: South West Region (Yaoundé: MINEPDED, 2012), 44–61.

¹⁰Interview with Mr. Enow Arrey, Senior Park Ranger, Mundemba, 22 March 2022.

¹¹Republic of Cameroon, Presidential Decree No. 86/1283 of 16 October 1986 Creating Korup National Park (Yaoundé: Presidency of the Republic, 1986).

Fig 2: Picture of mammals (*Pan troglodytes ellioti*, *Mandrillus leucophaeus*, and *Loxodonta cyclotis*) found in the Korup National Park



Source: MINFOF, Annual Report on Korup National Park (Yaoundé: MINFOF, 2018), 12–17

The park's vegetation structure itself rewards close attention. Korup preserves an essentially unbroken canopy reaching 40 to 50 metres in height, with emergent trees, several belonging to the Caesalpiniaceae family so characteristic of West African lowland forest, rising above 60 metres in places. The emergent layer is dominated locally by *Microberlinia bisulcata*, whose distinctive monodominant stands have made Korup a reference site in tropical forest ecology; the closed canopy below it is characterized by *Tetraberlinia bifoliolata* and *Cynometra hankei*, with *Oubanguia alata* prominent in the understory.¹² That investment produced the division's only sustained experiment in international-standard ecotourism infrastructure: a visitor Centre at Mundemba, a network of marked interpretive trails, a modest overnight forest camp at Rengo Rock, and a trained cohort of local nature guides drawn from surrounding communities.¹³ Even so, and this is the central empirical finding that motivates the remainder of this article, visitor numbers to Korup never exceeded approximately 450 per year even at the peak of this investment in the mid-to-late 1990s, and have declined substantially since.¹⁴ The gap between the park's documented ecological distinction and this thin visitor base illustrates the broader argument developed throughout this article: Manyu's natural tourism assets are underexploited relative to their intrinsic quality for reasons that lie in infrastructure and institutional capacity rather than in the assets themselves. That investment produced the division's only sustained experiment in international-standard ecotourism infrastructure: a visitor centre at Mundemba, a network of marked interpretive trails, a modest overnight forest camp at Rengo Rock, and a trained cohort of local nature guides drawn from surrounding communities.¹⁵ Even so, and this is the central empirical finding that motivates the remainder of this article, visitor numbers to

¹²Gartlan, "Conservation Status of Korup Forest Reserve," 5–19.

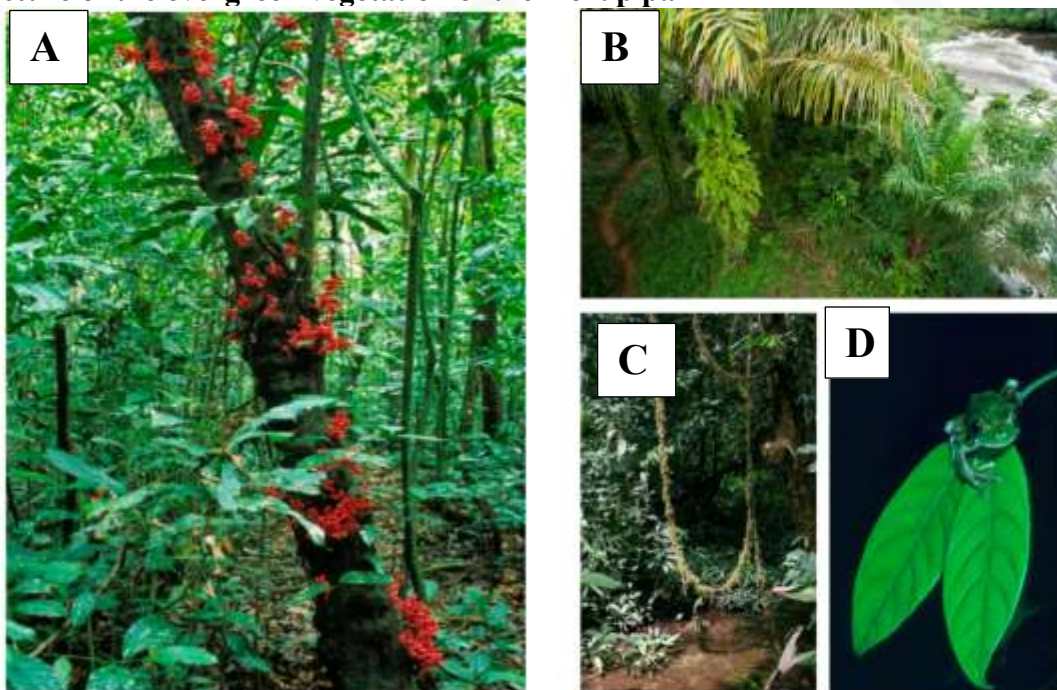
¹³Jo Anderson and Heather Sherrington, eds., *The Conservation of Korup National Park* (London: Overseas Development Administration, 1992), 17–55.

¹⁴MINFOF, *Annual Report on Korup National Park* (Yaoundé: MINFOF, 2018), 12–17.

¹⁵Jo Anderson and Heather Sherrington, eds., *The Conservation of Korup National Park* (London: Overseas Development Administration, 1992), 17–55.

Korup never exceeded approximately 450 per year even at the peak of this investment in the mid-to-late 1990s, and have declined substantially since.¹⁶ The gap between the park's documented ecological distinction and this thin visitor base illustrates the broader argument developed throughout this article: Manyu's natural tourism assets are underexploited relative to their intrinsic quality for reasons that lie in infrastructure and institutional capacity rather than in the assets themselves. Among Korup's fauna, particular tourism-relevant interest attaches to species with strong visual or behavioral appeal to visitors. The drill, whose social groups and vivid facial coloration make it a compelling subject for wildlife viewing and photography, the chimpanzee communities, whose presence has been documented through nest counts and vocalization surveys across multiple park zones and the forest elephant, whose trails and feeding signs are frequently encountered along the park's interpretive trail network even where direct sightings remain rare.¹⁷ Reptile and amphibian diversity, though less prominent in tourism marketing generally, is exceptionally high within Korup and has attracted specialist herpetological research interest¹⁸

Fig 3: Picture of the evergreen vegetation of the Korup park



Source: MINFOF, Annual Report on Korup National Park (Yaoundé: MINFOF, 2018), 12–17.

- A.** Caesalpinaceae family
- B.** *Microberlinia bisulcata*
- C.** *Tetraberlinia bifoliolata* and *Cynometra hankei*,
- D.** *Oubanguia alata*

The infrastructure legacy of the Korup Project though degraded from its 1990s peak, remains the most substantial base on which any renewed tourism investment could build. The Mundemba

¹⁶MINFOF, *Annual Report on Korup National Park* (Yaoundé: MINFOF, 2018), 12–17.

¹⁷Cameroon Ministry of Environment, *Biodiversity Survey: South West Region*, 44–61.

¹⁸Comiskey, Thomas, and Newbery, "Observations on the Structure and Dynamics of Korup Forest," 17–35.

visitor Centre building itself survives, together with the alignment of the principal interpretive trail network, even where trail surfaces and boardwalks require substantial rehabilitation.¹⁹ The overnight forest camp at Rengo Rock, though it has fallen out of regular use, likewise survives as a physical structure, illustrating a broader pattern relevant to investment planning. Much of the capital cost of establishing basic ecotourism infrastructure at Korup has already been sunk, and the incremental cost of rehabilitation is considerably lower than the cost of building comparable infrastructure from nothing.²⁰ Even so, and this is the central empirical finding that motivates the remainder of this article, visitor numbers to Korup never exceeded approximately 450 per year even at the peak of this investment in the mid-to-late 1990s, and have declined substantially since.²¹ The gap between the park's documented ecological distinction and this thin visitor base is the clearest available illustration of the broader argument developed throughout this article: that Manyu's natural tourism assets are underexploited relative to their intrinsic quality, for reasons that lie in infrastructure and institutional capacity rather than in the assets themselves.

Takamanda National Park and the Cross-River Gorilla

At the East of Korup, in the Akwaya Sub-Division, lies Takamanda National Park, gazetted in 2008 and covering approximately 676 square kilometres of montane and sub-montane forest contiguous with Nigeria's Cross River National Park across the international boundary.²² Takamanda's faunal profile overlaps substantially with Korup's (chimpanzees, drills, forest elephants). But its single most significant asset is a resident population of the Cross-River gorilla, a distinct gorilla subspecies confined to the Cameroon–Nigeria border highlands.²³ The Cross-River gorilla's conservation status places it among the rarest large mammals alive: total wild population estimates across its entire range, spanning both Takamanda and the contiguous Nigerian protected areas, remain below 300 individuals.²⁴ This extreme rarity is, from a tourism-development perspective, a double-edged consideration. It gives any future trekking product an unusually powerful marketing proposition access to a primate rarer than the mountain gorilla, who's Rwandan and Ugandan trekking programmes have proved highly lucrative. But it also demands a conservation-first approach to any tourism development, since the population's small size leaves no margin for the kind of habituation errors or disturbance that a larger, more resilient population might absorb.²⁵

¹⁹Interview with Enow Arrey, 22 March 2022.

²⁰Interview with Mr. Enow Arrey, Senior Park Ranger, Korup National Park, Mundemba, 22 March 2024.

²¹MINFOF, Annual Report on Korup National Park (Yaoundé: MINFOF, 2018), 12–17.

²²Republic of Cameroon, Divisional Report: Manyu Division 2010, 22–29.

²³Interview with Mr. Bekeh Ntui, District Officer, Akwaya, 2 August 2022.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵WWF-Cameroon, Korup National Park Management Plan 2008–2017 (Yaoundé: WWF-Cameroon, 2008), 22–38.

Fig 4: Picture of Elephants and Chimpanzee at the Takamnda National Park



Source: New England Primate Conservancy: Nigeria-Cameroon chimpanzee.

At present, this asset generates no organized tourism revenue whatsoever. No trekking infrastructure, no trained guide corps specific to gorilla habituation, and no visitor accommodation exists within or immediately adjacent to Takamanda's boundaries.²⁶ The park's remoteness, reached only via the same deteriorated road network discussed in Section 7, has compounded its inaccessibility, but the underlying conservation and tourism-development case for a carefully managed, small-scale trekking product, similar in conception to but appropriately scaled below Rwanda's mountain gorilla programme, is exceptionally strong on ecological grounds alone.

The Cross River and Its Tributaries: A Riverine Tourism Corridor

The Cross River, rising in the Cameroonian highlands and flowing through Manyu Division before crossing into Nigeria and reaching the Atlantic through the Niger Delta region, has functioned since the colonial period as the division's principal transport corridor, historically the fastest route between Mamfe and the coast before road development began.²⁷ This transport function has left the river with an established, if informal, network of motorized canoe operators and a body of local ecological and navigational knowledge that could underpin a substantial riverine tourism product.²⁸ The lower reaches of the Cross River between Mamfe and the Nigerian border town of Ekok pass through extensive gallery forest, past resident hippopotamus pods and crocodile populations, and through stretches where the river narrows into scenic gorges cut through the region's ancient basement rock.²⁹ Colonial-era travellers already recognized this stretch as among the most naturally striking river journeys in the wider South West Region, a

²⁶WWF-Cameroon, Korup National Park Management Plan 2008–2017 (Yaoundé: WWF-Cameroon, 2008), 28–35.

²⁷NAB, File Qb/a1985/9, "Cross River Navigation and Tourism."

²⁸Interview with Mr. Patrick Ebong, Cross River Transport Operator, Mamfe, 21 March 2022.

²⁹Interview with Mr. Patrick Ebong, Cross River Transport Operator, Mamfe, 14 March 2023.

judgement echoed by conservation researchers and the small number of contemporary visitors who have undertaken the journey.³⁰

Fig 5: Picture of the manyu River which empties itself in the Cross River State and into the Atlantic ocean



Source: Wikimedia Commons and Cameroonians Highlands Forest, Cameroon.

The river's fishery, and the traditional ecological knowledge embedded in local fishing practice such as seasonal fish traps, ceremonial fishing rites tied to particular reaches of the river, and an oral tradition of navigation passed down through families of boat operators, add a living cultural dimension to what is, at present, a functional transport route used by only a handful of small-scale operators rather than a developed tourism circuit.³¹ The river's tributaries, including the Manyu River on which Mamfe itself sits, offer further, entirely unexploited stretches of comparable scenic and recreational quality.

Waterfalls, Highlands, and Geological Heritage

Among Manyu's least-known natural assets are the Munaya Falls, on the Munaya River in Eyumojock Sub-Division, where the river drops approximately thirty metres through forested rock into a clear pool held to have spiritual significance among local communities.³² Reachable via a two-hour forest trail from the nearest motorable point. The falls have attracted a trickle of self-motivated visitors — researchers, adventure travellers, and diaspora returnees — since at least the 1990s, entirely in the absence of any interpretive signage, maintained trail, or organized guiding service.³³

³⁰NAB, File Qb/a1985/9, "Cross River Navigation and Tourism."

³¹Interview with Patrick Ebong, 21 March 2022.

³²Interview with Ma Mabel Enow, Women's Group Leader, Tinto, 26 March 2022.

³³Ibid.

Fig 6: Picture of Agbokim Waterfalls found in Eyumojock subdivision (Cameroon) and Etung, Cross River State (Nigeria)



Source: CrossRiverWatch Magazin.

The Tinto Hills, in the sub-division of the same name, offer a further distinct landscape type: rolling grassland and gallery forest at elevation, with panoramic views across the Cross River basin, historically valued by local communities for recreation but never packaged as a tourism product for external visitors.³⁴ The geological formations underlying much of Manyu's terrain — ancient Precambrian basement rock, lateritic inselbergs rising from the forest floor, and the river gorges cut through resistant rock along the Cross River corridor — constitute a further, essentially unmarketed asset class of the kind that has become a recognized, if specialist, niche within international nature tourism: geotourism focused on landform, geological process, and deep-time earth history.³⁵ A second, smaller cascade on a tributary of the Munaya, known locally to Eyumojock communities but almost entirely undocumented in any formal survey, illustrates a further point relevant to future inventory work: the natural features catalogued in this article, extensive as they are, almost certainly understate the full extent of Manyu's scenic and recreational natural assets, since no comprehensive geotourism or scenic-resource survey of the division has ever been undertaken by any government agency or conservation partner.³⁶ Considered together, these features demonstrate that Manyu's natural tourism endowment extends well beyond Korup and Takamanda, the two protected areas that have attracted the great majority of conservation and development attention to date. A comprehensive natural-heritage strategy should treat the waterfalls, hills, geological features, and river corridors discussed in this section as a second tier of assets in their own right. Because their development requires less specialized conservation management than the protected areas do, they may in some respects be more immediately actionable.

Wildlife Corridors and Community Forests

Between and around Korup and Takamanda lies a network of community and council forests, including the Bechati and Fossimondi zones that function ecologically as connective tissue

³⁴Republic of Cameroon, Divisional Report: Manyu Division 2015 (Mamfe: Divisional Office, 2015), 31–37.

³⁵Cameroon Ministry of Environment, Biodiversity Survey: South West Region, 55–68.

³⁶Interview with Ma Mabel Enow, 26 March 2022.

linking the two protected areas and, ultimately, the wider trans-boundary landscape shared with Nigeria's Cross River National Park.³⁷ These community forests already provide informal wildlife-viewing experiences, chiefly to researchers and small numbers of conservation-oriented travellers, demonstrating a level of latent visitor demand that exists even in the total absence of formal product development, guiding infrastructure, or marketing.³⁸

The conservation significance of this corridor extends beyond its role in supporting wildlife movement between Korup and Takamanda. It represents one of relatively few remaining forest corridors of this scale in the wider Gulf of Guinea forest region, a fact recognized in regional conservation planning documents but rarely translated into the kind of trans-boundary tourism circuit that has proved successful in comparable trans-boundary conservation landscapes elsewhere in Africa.³⁹

Seasonal and Planning Considerations

Any strategy for developing the natural assets inventoried in this article must account explicitly for Manyu's climatic regime. The long-wet season, from March through November, renders many forest trails within Korup and Takamanda difficult or impassable for extended periods. It also dramatically affects the navigability of the Cross River; whose flow and depth vary substantially between wet and dry season. The short dry season, from December through February, represents the period of greatest accessibility across nearly all of the assets discussed in this article. This period also coincides with the traditional timing of the Ekang cultural festival, a convergence that offers a natural basis for combined natural-and-cultural tourism itineraries timed to the dry season, a point developed further in the companion article on Manyu's cultural tourism.⁴⁰ Trail and infrastructure design for both Korup and Takamanda must therefore be planned with wet-season durability in mind, a consideration that was only partially addressed even during the well-funded Korup Project period, and one that any future investment must treat as a design requirement rather than a maintenance afterthought.⁴¹

Visitor Experience and Product Design Potential

Translating the asset inventory presented in this article into a coherent visitor experience requires attention to how these natural features could be combined into itineraries rather than treated as isolated attractions. A dry-season itinerary might combine two to three days at Korup, including canopy and understorey forest walks, night walks for nocturnal species, and visits to Rengo Rock, with a river journey down the Cross River to Ekok and an excursion to the Munaya Falls. Such an itinerary would require no new natural asset development. It would need only the rehabilitation of existing trail and river-transport infrastructure and the reconstitution of a trained guide corps.⁴² A second, more specialist itinerary built around Takamanda and the Cross-River gorilla would necessarily be smaller in scale and slower to develop, given the conservation sensitivities involved. It would depend on a habituation and monitoring programme of the kind that has taken years to mature at comparable gorilla-trekking destinations, including Rwanda's

³⁷WWF-Cameroon, Korup National Park Management Plan 2008–2017, 28–35.

³⁸WWF-Cameroon, Annual Report 2005: Community-Based Natural Resource Management in the Korup Landscape (Yaoundé: WWF-Cameroon, 2006), 22–38.

³⁹Republic of Cameroon, Road Infrastructure Development Plan: South West Region, 18–24.

⁴⁰Manyu Cultural and Development Association (MACUDA), Ekang Festival Programme and Report 2018 (Mamfe: MACUDA, 2018), 5–14.

⁴¹WWF-Cameroon, Korup National Park Management Plan 2008–2017, 22–38.

⁴²Interview with Enow Arrey, 22 March 2024.

Volcanoes National Park and Uganda's Bwindi Impenetrable National Park.⁴³ Even so, the scientific literature on primate tourism development suggests that carefully sequenced, conservation-led habituation programmes can begin generating modest visitor revenue before full habituation is achieved. This requires that visitor numbers and protocols be conservatively managed from the outset.⁴⁴ A third itinerary type, combining geotourism with highland recreation focused on the Tinto Hills and the division's broader geological heritage, requires the least specialized conservation management of the three. It could, in principle, be developed most rapidly, though it would depend on the kind of systematic scenic-resource survey identified as a gap in the preceding section. Across all three itinerary types, the binding constraint is not the quality or variety of the underlying natural assets, each of which compares favourably with assets underpinning far more visited destinations elsewhere on the continent. The binding constraint is the infrastructural and human-capital investment required to convert those assets into a reliable, marketable visitor experience.

Conclusion

The inventory presented in this article demonstrates that Manyu Division's natural tourism endowment is not a modest or merely locally significant resource base: by the specific ecological and scientific measures reviewed here, including tree-species density, primate rarity, forest antiquity, and riverine and geological diversity, it is a natural capital of internationally competitive quality, comparable to and in some respects exceeding the natural assets that underpin far more commercially successful tourism destinations elsewhere in Africa. What distinguishes Manyu from those more successful destinations is not the quality of the underlying resource but the almost complete absence of the infrastructural and institutional conditions, such as accessible roads, durable trail networks, trained guiding capacity, visitor accommodation, and sustained marketing, required to convert ecological quality into visitor experience. This is the argument developed at greater length, with explicit international comparison, in the companion article to this one; the present article's contribution has been to establish, asset by asset, the scale and specificity of the natural endowment on which that comparative and strategic case rests.

⁴³Interview with Bekeh Ntui, 2 August 2022.

⁴⁴WWF-Cameroon, Korup National Park Management Plan 2008–2017, 22–38.

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