



Streetwise LIBREVILLE

You can now fly with KQ to Gabon's capital city

TOUCH DOWN Flights to **Libreville** land at the Léon Mba International Airport located just 5km north of the city centre. Taxis (red and white) are plentiful outside. The journey into town costs around US\$10 - all quarters are off the Bord de Mer, the main road that runs along the Atlantic Ocean.



SEE The **Musée des Arts et Traditions** is a must-see and is housed in a striking building beside the seafront. Gabonese art, especially the lugubrious long-featured Fang tribal masks, inspired artists such as Picasso and Braque. Don't miss the striking **Church of Saint Michel** in the Nkembo quartier which dates from 1961. Turn up on Sunday morning to experience mass celebrated in the Mpongwe dialect set to African tam tams. The exuberant architecture of Libreville's ministry buildings built during the 1970s oil boom is worth seeing - the **Oil Ministry** is shaped like a rocket and the **Forestry Ministry** is a riot of colour. Take a boat trip to the deserted white-sand beaches of **Pointe Denis** that you can see from the city. Ferries run regularly from Port Môle and Michel Marine.



SLEEP For five star luxury, **Le Meridien** (www.lemeridien-rendama.com) is the city's top hotel with its beautiful pool area and ocean view while the 1970s-built **Laico Okoumé Palace Hotel** (<http://laicohotels.com>), on the road out to the airport, offers a quieter location. Mid-range and bang in the centre of town is **Hotel Les Monts de Cristal** (+241 720283) with air-conditioned spacious rooms with faded style. For a beachside location, **Sunset Beach Hotel** (+241 06 715890) in Quartier La Sablière is a good-value choice with peaceful rooms overlooking a garden and direct access to the ocean. For a more budget-conscious option, near the airport, **Hotel Tropicana** (email: tropicana@inet.ga) offers chalet-style rooms on the beach.

SHOP For everyday needs, the main shopping centre is **M'bolo**, with its large hypermarket stocked with French-sourced products, and a mall with all manner of stores. Traditional crafts are sold at the **Village des Artisans** (Ave Col Parant), much of it from West Africa, including colourful fabrics, wooden masks, jewellery and statuettes. If you want something genuinely made in Gabon, M'Bigou soapstone carvings are a speciality. A few streets away, the smaller **Marché Artisanale** offers calabashes, statuettes and masks used for initiation and funerary rites. For exquisite sculptures made from Gabonese exotic woods such as ebony and padouk, visit **Galerie Olima** in Quartier Louis. The workmanship is the best in town and the wood is from sustainable sources.



EAT For the best Gabonese cooking, **L'Odika**, situated in Quartier Louis, has a delightful wooden open-dining area and serves a mix of French and Gabonese styles, including bushmeat. Sample the national dish, *Poulet Nyembwe* (spicy chicken in red palm nut sauce) or the Sunday buffet - a great chance to taste traditional dishes. For breakfast or light lunch, **Le Pelisson**, behind the main post office, with its people-watching outdoor terrace and



French brasserie-style interior, serves the best coffees and pastries in town. **Le Dolce Vita** at Port Mole is a good-value bustling Italian open-sided restaurant overlooking the Komo Estuary. If you like pork dishes, then **Jacky Cochon**, Quartier Gros Bouquet, is the place. Jacky, who raises the pigs himself, is a Libreville institution and a Bob Marley fan - so expect Rasta décor! For an outdoor dinner beside the beach at sunset, **Le Tropicana**, Quartier Taiti, near the airport, offers fresh seafood