



## Sierra Leone's First UNESCO Site Gola-Tiwai Complex

[Source: TH](#)

Sierra Leone's **Gola-Tiwai complex**, comprising the **Gola Rainforest National Park (GRNP)** and the **Tiwai Island Wildlife Sanctuary**, has been inscribed as its first [United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization \(UNESCO\) World Heritage Site](#), due to decades-long conservation efforts by a non-governmental organization **Environmental Foundation for Africa (EFA)**.

- **Tiwai Island**, located on the **Moa River**, spans just **12 sq. km** and hosts **11 species of primates**, including **endangered western chimpanzees** and **king colobus monkeys**.
  - Tiwai now serves as a **biodiversity research hub** and model for **community-based conservation** in West Africa.
- **GRNP** is Sierra Leone's **largest tropical rainforest**, rich in biodiversity, including **pygmy hippopotamuses** and **African forest elephants**.
- **EFA** was established in 1992 and began conservation efforts in **Tiwai** in the early 2000s, especially after damage from Sierra Leone's **1991-2002 civil war**.
  - During the war, **deforestation, poaching, and illegal logging** nearly destroyed Tiwai, but EFA led **reconstruction, community engagement, and biodiversity protection**.
  - Despite the **Ebola outbreak (2014)**, **Covid-19**, and extreme weather, EFA protected Tiwai and surrounding forests from ecological collapse.
- The **UNESCO recognition** is a landmark for Sierra Leone, validating grassroots conservation models rooted in **local empowerment and ecological resilience**.



Read more: [Sierra Leone](#)