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São Tomé and Príncipe

Prix - **5795.00€** Dates - 14/01 au 25/01/22 Guide - *Andy Smith*

São Tomé and Príncipe are two small islands off the coast of continental Africa, in the Gulf of Guinea, west of Gabon and Equatorial Guinea. Although only 250km from the mainland, the islands, which make up a single country although 140km apart, boast an extraordinary number of endemic birds – no less than 28 species. Clothed in lush tropical forests and skirted with white sandy beaches, the islands are sometimes called the “African Galapagos.” On this 12-day tour we begin with three nights on São Tomé, venturing into Obo National Park in the São Toméan highlands for such birds as São Tomé Speirops and São Tomé Weaver. We then transfer to Príncipe for six nights, searching the forests and plantations for such delights as Príncipe Sunbird and Príncipe Golden Weaver.

São Tomé and Príncipe may be two separate islands but together they form one African island nation. They sit in the Atlantic Ocean, just north of the Equator, about 150 miles off the coast of Gabon. The islands are part of a volcanic chain known as the ‘Cameroon Line’ which runs from Mount Cameroon in the north, to the island of Bioko, through São Tomé and Príncipe, then onward to Annobón. These little-known outposts are clothed in lush tropical rainforest and fringed by white sandy beaches and colourful coral reefs. They are ‘the Galápagos of Africa’, their long isolation from the mainland freeing them to their own unique evolutionary path and allowing the creation of a suite of birds and other wildlife found nowhere else on Earth. Indeed, 28 endemic species of birds can be found on São Tomé and Príncipe (depending on which taxonomy is followed), together with an interesting variety of others that also live on the African mainland. Besides being a birders’ paradise, this beautiful archipelago is also home to a fascinating assemblage of endemic reptiles, amphibians and plants.

Many of the once extensive sugar cane, cocoa and coffee plantations in the coastal areas on both islands have long been abandoned and are now clothed in secondary forest which harbours a wealth of birds. Further inland, the mountainous interiors are covered in extensive tracts of rainforest which cling to the precipitous slopes of towering volcanoes, their summits so often obscured within a veil of mist or cloud. Our visit to the islands will be during one of their drier periods — when birding opportunities can be maximised — and is designed to look for the endemics, although our tour avoids the strenuous hiking and basic camping necessary to find all of the 28 species present.

Our 12-day holiday will begin with an afternoon flight to Lisbon and an overnight stay. The next day, we will take an early morning flight from the Portuguese capital to São Tomé, where we will spend our first three nights at a well-appointed boutique hotel within walking distance of one of the island’s idyllic beaches. The hotel gardens and immediate surroundings should produce our first endemics in the form of São Tomé Prinia, Newton’s Sunbird and the remarkable Giant Weaver, as well as the localised Golden-backed Bishop. Further afield, we will venture into Obo National Park in the São Toméan highlands. The road from the town of São Tomé winds its way up the mountain, through fields, villages and coffee plantations, to the botanical research centre at Bom Sucesso. This is the starting point of the trail into the Obo National Park and is a good place in which to

find São Tomé Thrush and São Tomé Oriole. We will follow the trail towards Pico de São Tomé, the island's highest peak, where we will be looking for São Tomé Spinetail, São Tomé Speirops and São Tomé White-eye. Higher up the mountain lies a spectacular crater lake which is a good place from which to survey the forests in the hope of seeing São Tomé Green Pigeon and São Tomé Olive Pigeon, as well as African Emerald Cuckoo. With luck on our side, we might even hear (or better, see) the elusive São Tomé Scops Owl!

Next, a short flight will take us to Príncipe, where we will spend six nights in a comfortable converted cocoa plantation house. It was on this island in 1919, during a total eclipse of the sun, that British astronomer Arthur Eddington corroborated Albert Einstein's theory of relativity for the first time, his photographs of the eclipse revealing bending of the starlight that accorded with Einstein's predictions! We will begin our explorations on Príncipe by walking to the stunning beach at nearby Ribeira Izé, Príncipe's first capital. The atmosphere on Príncipe is very relaxed, and we will spend the next few days exploring the nearby 'roças' (large plantation estates) as well as the island's unspoilt forests. Here we will be searching for species such as Príncipe Sunbird, Dohrn's Thrush-babbler and Príncipe Golden Weaver. On one of the days, conditions permitting, we will take a boat trip to the Tinhosas Islands, located 13 miles to the south of Príncipe, which are home to a large number of nesting seabirds including Brown Boobies, Sooty Terns and both Black and Brown Noddies. These waters are also home to several species of cetacean, with Humpback Whales passing through during this period.

After a week of enjoying the islands' vibrant tropical forests and deserted and unspoiled beaches, we must reluctantly depart, flying back to London via Lisbon.

Highlights

- Visit both islands making up this small offshore nation
- Deserted sandy beaches and lush forests
- We will search for many of the 28 species of endemic birds
- Stay for three nights in a boutique hotel on São Tomé very close to beach
- Visit forest highlands for endemics
- Transfer to Príncipe for six nights, staying in a converted plantation house
- Boat trip to nearby seabird islands, with Noddies and Sooty Terns

Responsible destination

Carine

Présente du lundi au vendredi de 10h à 17h





Dates & Prix

5795.00€

September 2021 - xxx €

What's Included?

- Flights from London
- Accommodation: A two centre holiday based in two comfortable, but simple, hotels. All rooms have en-suite facilities.
- Food: All meals are included except for dinner on day 1. Allow £25.

* These tours are operated by Naturetrek (ABTA Y6206) for which Nature et Terroir acts as agent.

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Journalier

Itinerary

Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather & other local considerations can necessitate some re-ordering of the programme during the course of the tour, though this will always be done to maximise best use of the time and weather conditions available.

Day 1

Lisbon

Today we will take an afternoon flight from London to Lisbon, where we will stay overnight at a nearby airport hotel. If you'd like to spend a few nights in Lisbon and explore this sunny capital, please see further below for details.

Day 2

São Tomé

We will take a morning flight from Lisbon to São Tomé and arrive in the late afternoon. A short drive will take us to Omali Lodge, our base for the next three nights.

Day 3

Obo National Park

Today we will explore the central Sao Toméan highlands, and make our way up to an ancient crater lake, nowadays mostly dry, named Lagoa Amélia (Amélia Lagoon). The road from the town of Sao Tomé winds its way up the mountain, passing agricultural fields, villages and coffee plantations, and the journey should produce a glimpse of our first endemics! Newton's Sunbird is common throughout the island, and it shouldn't take too long for us to see it. The botanical research centre at Bom Sucesso is the starting point of the trail into the Obo National Park and this is a good place to try and find Sao Tomé Thrush and Sao Tomé Oriole. We will follow the trail towards Pico de São Tomé, the island's highest peak where we will be looking for São Tomé Spinetail. This will be our best chance to see Sao Tomé White-eye, and we should also be able to see a few Black-capped Speirops! Higher up the mountain is the dry crater lake which is a good place from which to survey the forests to try and find São Tomé Green Pigeon, São Tomé Olive Pigeon as well as African Emerald Cuckoo. With luck on our side, we might even hear (or better yet, see) the elusive Sao Tomé Scops Owl!

Day 4

Southern São Tomé

Today, we will explore the southeastern part of Sao Tomé Island. Starting from Sao Tomé city we will make our way to Porto Alegre, at the southern tip of the island, using the coastal road which passes several fishing villages alternated with beaches. We will be stopping at several places, always on the lookout for any sightings, including Roça São João, an old plantation house which has been transformed into ecotourism accommodation and an art gallery, where we should see São Tomé Paradise-flycatcher and São Tomé Prinia. Other species we might see include White-winged Widowbird, Golden-backed Bishop and Black-winged Red Bishop, Southern Masked Weaver and Pin-tailed Whydah, African Palm and Little Swifts, and possibly a Harlequin Quail. Further on, we will also stop at the river Malanza, where surrounded by mangrove trees (the bark of the red mangrove trees was traditionally used on the plantations to dye the sacks for cocoa), we should have good views of Sao Tomé Kingfisher, Reed Cormorant and Western Reef Heron. Here, we should also be able to see the only primate on the islands, the Mona monkey. On the way to Praia Jalé, one the most important spots for turtle nesting on the island, we should be able to see Príncipe Weaver, Giant Weaver and even Sao Tomé Weaver.

Day 5

Príncipe

Leaving Omali Lodge behind, a short flight (30 minutes) will take us to Príncipe Island. We will transfer to our base for the remaining six nights, Roça Sundry. British Astronomer Arthur Eddington was here in 1919, and during a total solar eclipse proved Albert Einstein's relativity theory for the first time. We will begin exploring the island by walking to nearby Ribeira Izé beach, alongside the cocoa plantation. Ribeira Izé was the first capital of the island, and we can still see some of the ruins from those times. After a well-deserved picnic lunch on the beach, we will visit a local mangrove where we'll have the chance of seeing Príncipe Kingfisher and Green-backed heron. Our walk should also produce the Príncipe Golden Weaver and the unusual and vociferous Dohrn's Thrush-babbler, Príncipe Speirops and Príncipe Starling.

Days 6 - 10
Príncipe

During these days, we will take our time to explore all that Príncipe Island has to offer, including its luxuriant dense forests and breathtaking coast, and we'll also take to the sea on two occasions to look for seabirds, whales and dolphins. For those interested in exploring the surroundings of Roça Sundry, Sr Paulino, who was worked in the plantation for many years will be able to show us around the premises, and teach us a little bit about the history of the island. He also manages the chocolate factory that has re-opened adjacent to Roça Sundry.



Quelques photos...



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Contactez la responsable destination par mail ou par téléphone.

Responsable destination

Carine

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