



Birding in São Tomé and Príncipe Overview:

São Tomé and Príncipe are two seldom visited islands close to equator in the Gulf of Guinea Western Africa. Part of a volcanic range the islands boast stunning coral, beautiful beaches and pristine rainforest protecting an impressive 28 endemic species (depending on which list you follow). São Tomé is the larger more populated island with approximately 215,000 people living there and the smaller island of Príncipe having a population of just 8,000. These beautiful islands were discovered by the Portuguese between 1469 and 1472.

The Democratic Republic of São Tomé and Príncipe gained their independence in July of 1975. This country is exceptionally friendly and safe for birding travel.

These islands are a paradise for birders with over 143 species being recorded with 40 families to date. The number of endemic bird species in São Tomé and Príncipe equals that of the much more extensive Galapagos Islands and exceeds the Seychelles.



Due to the concentration of endemics on a few islands and due to the accessibility of most of these endemics, this is some of the easiest island endemic birding in the world. Most endemics can be seen in and around our hotel and guesthouse locations. Also to be clear, this birding is not all easy. To have a chance of seeing all the endemic species which these islands protect, a few days of more difficult birding is required. With so many amazing birding locations globally and so little time and money to enjoy all of them, São Tomé and Príncipe should be considered a must go to spot for world birders.



Day 1: Arrival in São Tomé and Start Birding

You will be met upon your arrival at the international airport in São Tomé. After clearing immigration, collecting your bags and passing through customs you will enter the main arrival hall where your tour leader/local guide will be waiting to meet you. Our team will take care of you from here.

Once you have boarded your vehicle, we transfer you to your accommodation for the next three nights. Once we have checked you in, your guide will brief you on the following day's activities and answer any questions you may have.

Depending on your arrival time, we may have time for some late afternoon birding.

No matter the plans for the day, we will plan to have an evening meal together at or near our first hotel.

We spend the first of several nights at the comfortable Roca St Joao Guest House.

Days 2 and 3: Two Full Days Birding Monte Carmo Forest Area

Expect an early start over the next two days as we aim to see the most difficult to find Island endemics at the renowned Monte Carmo Forest. An early breakfast is essential before we set off to fuel ourselves in preparation for some difficult walking on trails that can be slippery and a little challenging as we ascend Monte Carmo. Pack lunches will be arranged by our team over the next few days as we will return to our vehicles just before dark ensuring we dedicate the most critical hours birding at this forest location protecting so many endemic species.



We will dedicate 2 full days to birding at this remote forest location from the lowland forest to the higher reaches of Monte Carmo. Our main targets in this forest would all be endemic species. They include; São Tomé (Dwarf) Olive Ibis, São Tomé Short-tail (Bocage's Longbill), Giant Sunbird, São Tomé Grosbeak and São Tomé (Newton's) Fiscal. Other species we hope to see include São Tomé Weaver, São Tomé Oriole, São Tomé Paradise Flycatcher, Newton's Sunbird, São Tomé Scops Owl, São Tomé Chestnut-winged Starling, Lemon (Forest) Dove, São Tomé Prinia, Red-headed Lovebird, São Tomé Speirops, Giant Weaver and São Tomé Seedeater. Birding can be slow in São Tomé Forests, however most of the species are endemic and extremely rewarding when seen well. After challenging but enjoyable birding on both days, we return to our guesthouse that is owned by São Tomé's most famous chef and as you can guess the food is amazing.

Note: Due to the Islands most sought after and difficult to find species are located here, we visit this location early during our itinerary in the unlikely event we may need to revisit before your departure.

Each evening, the group will have supper together. The tour leader will review the bird checklist for the day, and he will review plans for the next birding morning and day.

We spend these two nights at the Roca St Joao Guest House.



Day 4: Morning Birding (Rio Grande) to Airport; Flight to Príncipe and More Island Endemic Birding

After an early breakfast we are transferred to the airport to take our flight to the beautiful island of Príncipe where we will be staying for the next 3 nights.

On route to the airport, we will be stopping at Rio Grande. Here we hope to see São Tomé Kingfisher, Giant Sunbird, Common Moorhen, Little Egret, Striated Heron and other species.

The luggage allowance for the flight to Príncipe is 15kg per person and every additional kilo is charged at €5.00 Euros due to the size of the plane, we can arrange storage for any bags you would like to remain in São Tomé. The island of Príncipe is the smallest of the two main islands in the country, with a population of about 8,000 people and stunning pristine forest area called Obo Natural Park. The main population on the island are based in the capital Santo António. On arrival we transfer to our accommodation, check, enjoy lunch and relax before heading out for afternoon birding. Our afternoon will be dedicated to birding the areas around our hotel and nearby bush and forest fringes aiming to see our first endemics on this Island. Our evening is spent relaxing at this beautiful location, enjoying our evening meal, and discussing the day's activities and tomorrow's adventures.

Tonight we spend the first of several nights at the Mira Rio Guest House.



Day 5: Príncipe Island Birding Excursions in Remote Obo National Park and Nocturnal Birding for Príncipe Scops Owl

An early start and breakfast before we take a boat trip to a remote part of Obo National Park getting deeper into this pristine forest habitat in search for the Islands endemics. Here we hope to find Príncipe Drongo, Príncipe Kingfisher, Príncipe Speirops, Príncipe Golden Weaver, Príncipe Sunbird, Príncipe Glossy Starling, Dohrn's Thrush Babbler and São Tomé Spinetail. Other species we might see include Gray Parrot, Blue-Breasted Kingfisher, African Green Pigeon, Western Olive Sunbird, Western Reef Heron, Yellow-billed Kite, African Palm and Little Swift. As we are dedicating a full day in this habitat, we enjoy a packed lunch and short rest before afternoon birding. After a wonderful productive day in nature, we head back to our boat and return to our accommodation.

We will have supper at a group and then prepare for a bit of nocturnal birding.

This evening we will head to a different part of the Island where we have seen the recently discovered Príncipe Scops Owl. Quality time will be dedicated looking for this species.

Tonight we spend another night at the Mira Rio Guest House.

Day 6: Second Day of Príncipe Island Birding Excursions for More Endemics

Another early start and breakfast before we take a boat trip to a different part of the Islands as we visit one of the most important sea bird colonies in this part of Africa with a visit to Bone de Jokey and Tinhosas. Here we will be looking for more Island endemics in addition to Storm Petrol, White-tailed Tropicbird, Brown Bobby, Bar-tailed Godwit, Ruddy Turnstone, Common Tern, Bridled Tern, Sooty Tern, Black Noddy, Common Noddy amongst many other species.

A visit to Bone de Jockey enables us to see the (Bone) Príncipe Seed-eater which has

a heavier, longer and broader bill than the one on Príncipe mainland. After a wonderful morning and early afternoons birding, we head back to Príncipe.

Once again if we did not see it yesterday, our evening will be dedicated to searching the Islands Forest for the Príncipe Scops Owl before returning to our accommodation to relax and enjoy our evening meal.

Tonight we spend another night at the Mira Rio Guest House.



Day 7: Morning Birding then Fly Back to São Tomé and Birding New Sites North of Island

We will spend approximately an hour birding the surrounding habitat (close to the hote) before breakfast. We hope to find any species we may want better views of or photos.

We will return to our hotel to have breakfast. After breakfast, we re-arrange our bags and transfer to the airport for our morning flight back to São Tomé. On arrival back on the main Island we head to the Northern habitat which is the hotter drier part of São Tomé. Here we aim to see more sea birds that include Curlew Sandpiper, Whimbrel, Little Egret amongst others and in the bush and forest we find Harlequin Quail, Fire-crowned Bishop, Golden-backed Bishop, White-winged Widowbird, and some of the more common endemics.

Another wonderful day's birding is behind us as we transfer to Monte Café which will be our base for the final part of our tour. Our accommodation has outstanding views

from the hills across to the capital São Tomé and is surrounded by secondary forest habitat with good birding in our grounds. On arrival we enjoy our evening meal at the excellent restaurant connected to the hotel.

Tonight, we spend the night at the Almada Negreiros Guest House (first of two nights).



Day 8: More Birding Macabrara, Botanical Gardens and Obo National Park

Choosing to stay so close to our next birding location enables us to have a more relaxed breakfast with less travel to the birding sites. After breakfast we visit an area called Macabrara which is the most productive birding area around Bom Successo and Obo National Park. Our target species would be, São Tomé Scops Owl, Southern Masked Weaver, São Tomé Paradise Flycatcher, São Tomé Oriole, São Tomé Speirops, Newton's Sunbird, Common Waxbill, São Tomé Green Pigeon, Gulf of Guinea Thrush, São Tomé Spinetail, São Tomé Seedeater and Bronzed Mannikin amongst other species. After productive birding, we enjoy a short excursion to one of the beautiful waterfalls in São Tomé before returning to our guest house for lunch.

Afternoon and early evening excursions to the Botanical Gardens and Obo National Park should enable us to see all our desired endemics.

The evening will be spent at the excellent restaurant and bar of our guest house, enjoying the stunning views and good food, discussing the day's sightings and adding to our checklist.

We spend a second night at the Almada Negreiros Guest House.



Day 9: Final Day of Birding in São Tomé and Departure

Our final day birding depends upon actual flight times and the bird species we have left to find (and/or which will be new to the tour).

Breakfast plans will be based upon what birds we have left to find. However, we will probably have a leisurely breakfast (as compared to most days of a birding tour). Our breakfast is enjoyed with one of the best Island views as our backdrop.

This morning our birding is flexible based on which species we would still need to see better. We may return to the botanical gardens and/or to the Obo National Park. After a full morning birding we return to our guest house to enjoy lunch, freshen up and re-arrange our bags in preparation for your evening flight home.

A late check-out will be arranged, and we head into town for our final checklist and meal prior to transferring you to the airport after a wonderful São Tomé and Príncipe birding tour.