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Tour Notes

São Tomé & Príncipe – Islands Explorer

Tour Duration – 10 Days



Tour Rating

Fitness ●●○○○ | Off the Beaten Track ●●●●● | Culture ●●●●○ | History ●●●○○ | Wildlife ●●○○○

Tour Highlights

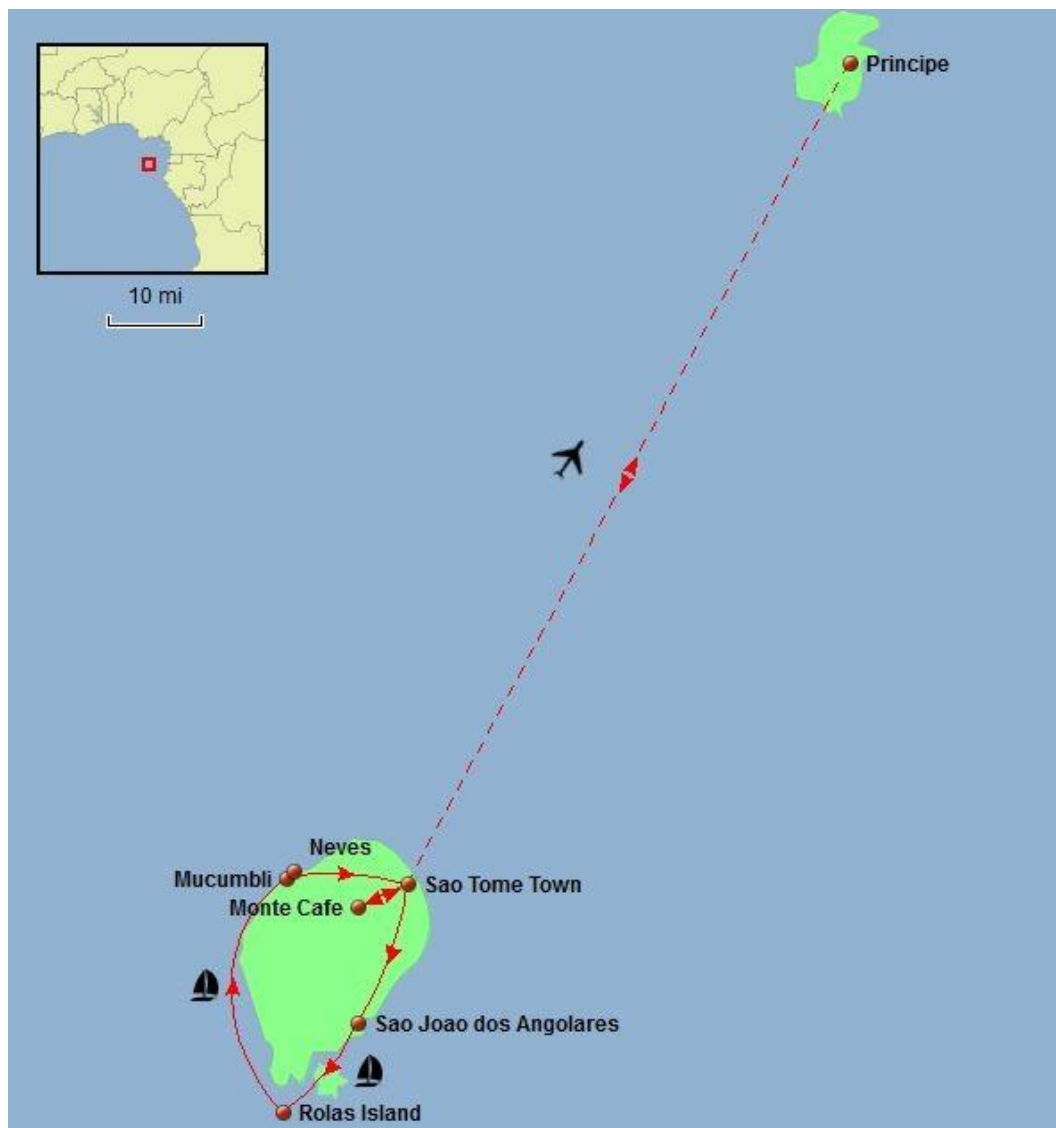
- ✓ Discover a largely undiscovered, uniquely rewarding and safe destination with an exciting blend of African and Portuguese cultures and a Caribbean feel
- ✓ Relax by the pristine beaches in Príncipe





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Tour Map



Tour Essentials

- Accommodation:** Comfortable hotel/lodge accommodation and 'Roça' (plantation house) – please see notes about Roças. All private bathrooms.
- Included Meals:** Daily breakfast (B), plus lunches (L) and dinners (D) as shown in the itinerary
- Group Size:** Minimum 2 travellers and maximum 6 travellers
- Start Point:** São Tomé – you can arrive any time on day 1
- End Point:** São Tomé – please depart on an afternoon or evening flight
- Transport:** 4WD or private sedan car, internal flights, boat
- Country Visited:** São Tomé and Príncipe



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São Tomé and Príncipe – Islands Explorer

Imagine travelling to tropical islands with white palm fringed beaches, crystal clear water, unexplored jungle and a friendly people who rarely see tourists. Welcome to São Tomé and Príncipe, a remote archipelago off the coast of central Africa that few people have even heard of, let alone been to. On our tour we explore the colonial heritage of the islands by staying in restored plantation houses, walk through unspoiled forests in the interior and relax on pristine beaches. Explore a truly undiscovered destination.

Tour Itinerary Notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, due to the budding tourism infrastructure in a tiny African country, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested using alternative accommodation, of a similar standard to that named below.

Tour Guide / Driver

Our guides are a key strength, chosen for their knowledge of and passion for the areas in which they work. All of our guides are carefully hand-picked, and are not just passing through these countries, but are usually locally born. Unlike some companies it should be noted we do not send a guide or tour leader from Undiscovered Destinations in the UK as we have every confidence in our locally appointed representative who is responsible for operating the tour on our behalf. **On this tour, you will have various drivers and local guides accompanying you on the excursions, of which some may be combined driver/guides. There will be no driver nor guide while in Principe.**

Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival in São Tomé

Arrive in São Tomé and transfer to your hotel. The rest of the day is at leisure for you to relax or start exploring the town on your own. Overnight at Avenida Residencial Hotel, or similar. No meals nor guided arrangements are included today.

Note: A compulsory hotel tax of 3 Euros per person per night is levied by all hotels and must be paid in person when checking out.

Day 2: São Tomé city tour

Today after a welcome briefing we explore São Tomé town on foot. We visit the Post Office and the Tourist Office to pick up postcards and beautiful stamps, and a map. We also visit Independence Square, the National Museum and the bustling market. Lunch is a light bite at the surprisingly urban C.A.C.A.U art & museum space. This afternoon we visit the Corallo Chocolate Factory for a chocolate presentation and tasting. The afternoon is at your own leisure to relax and continue the exploration on your own. Overnight at Avenida Residencial Hotel, or similar. (B)

São Tomé Town

Founded in the 15th century by Portuguese slavers, this small town is full of fading colonial buildings, giving it a charming ambience and making it a great place to wander round, especially in the early morning or the late hours of the afternoon. The town has a handful of good restaurants which make for a scenic and relaxing place to grab some food and a beer and watch life go by.

Day 3: São Tomé – Monte Café Plantation - São Tomé (Approx. driving time today: 1 hour)

This morning we visit the Valúdo coconut factory near Tridade to try the products and meet with the owner. We continue up to the Nova Moka coffee plantation for a guided tour through the yard/orchard and along coffee plantation paths on to Monte Café. We then walk a brief way to Roça Saudade for a relaxing break in a





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rainforest setting before returning to the hotel. In the late afternoon, transfer to a sand cards workshop with local artist and musician Guilherme Carvalho. The rest of the evening is at leisure. The tour leader can point out local restaurants for you to explore. Overnight at Avenida Residencial Hotel, or similar. (BL)

Day 4: São Tomé – Príncipe (Domestic Flight)

After an early breakfast we transfer to the airport for our short flight to Príncipe. On arrival transfer to your accommodation, the Roça Belo Monte. The rest of the day is left at leisure. There will be no driver/guide accompanying you when in Príncipe. Overnight at Roça Sundy, or similar. (BD)

Days 5 and 6: Príncipe at leisure

These two days are left at leisure for you to relax and explore Santo António, the capital of Príncipe, as well as the rest of the island at your own pace. Many activities such as visits to other plantations, kayaking trips or walking and diving excursions can be arranged directly from your accommodation. Overnights at Roça Sundy, or similar. (BD)

Day 7: Príncipe - São Tomé (Domestic Flight) – São João

Transfer to the airport for the short flight back to São Tomé and transfer to São João along the east coast, with the opportunity to stop by the post office, pharmacy/supermarket en route. We have a brief stop at Voice of America and visit the dramatic Boca do Inferno (Hell's Mouth) rock formation, reminiscent of the Giant's Causeway. There is also the chance for a dip in the ocean at mystical 7 Ondas Beach. Continue on to São João where you can take a walk on the plantation before dinner. Overnight at Mionga Hotel, or similar. (BD)

São João dos Angolares

The settlement of São João dos Angolares sits on the east coast of the island and represents the heart of Angolar culture, a fishing community made up of descendants of runaway Angolan slaves. The inhabitants speak Angolar, a unique Creole dialect found nowhere else.

Plantations

São Tomé's initial raison d'être was effectively as an enormous plantation, populated by an increasingly diverse Creole society. Portuguese traders imported unfortunate souls from the African interior, setting them to work on sugar cane plantations, and the island soon became the most important producer of the commodity in Africa, fuelled by slave labour under brutal conditions. Sugar cultivation declined from the 16th century onwards under competition from better quality cane from the New World, and after a long period of abandonment, serving as a refuelling water stop for transatlantic ships and as a depot for slaves. In the 19th century São Tomé's plantation owners turned to coffee and cocoa, establishing themselves as a serious presence on the world market. The Portuguese abolition of slavery in the late 19th century did little to improve conditions for workers, but pressure from international buyers eventually meant that minor changes were made to the plantations, which had schools and hospitals built on each property. After independence in 1975 the plantations were nationalised and production declined enormously, and now, although re-privatised, they are a shadow of their former selves. Some of the old plantation guesthouses now allow tourists to stay, giving a unique insight into the history of this tiny country.

Day 8: São João - Ilhéu das Rolas – Mucumbli

After a relaxing breakfast, continue your journey to the southern tip of São Tomé Island and transfer by boat from Ponta Baleia to Rolas Island, straddling the equator. On arrival, take a 1-hour hike via the real equator to the equator mark viewpoint and have a beach lunch at beautiful Praia Café with the opportunity for a dip. This afternoon take a boat trip up the west coast (approx. 2.5 hours) to Neves where we transfer to nearby Mucumbli. You may wish to visit the beach or take a botanical walk around the grounds. Overnight at Roça Monte Forte, or similar. (BLD)

Day 9: Mucumbli – Excursion to the Northern Plantations



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This morning we visit Diogo Vaz cocoa plantation. This can be done by cycling (approx. 8km) or by a short transfer by car. We take a couple of hours exploring the plantation on easy trails before a simple lunch at the plantation's cabin restaurant. After lunch we visit the fermentation/drying complex, located on the other side of the road before returning to Mucumbli for a relaxing afternoon. You may wish to visit the beach or take a botanical walk around the grounds. Those who chose to cycle can continue along the scenic coast road towards Sta Catarina, with the opportunity for visiting a new women's embroidery project. Overnight at Roça Monte Forte, or similar. (BLD)

Note: If you would like to visit the cocoa plantation by bicycle, no car or driver will be included. Bikes can be rented from the hotel.

Day 10: Mucumbli at leisure - São Tomé (Approx. 1 hour drive) - Departure from São Tomé

Spend the morning at leisure. There are a number of activities that can be arranged directly with your hotel. You may also wish to visit an interesting social/school project in Neves (30min walk, each way) – please inform your guide in advance if you wish to take part in this optional activity (to be paid locally). In the afternoon, we leave for the capital with a stop for shopping in town en-route before being transferred to the airport for your departure flight tonight. (B)

Tour Inclusions/Exclusions

Inclusions:

Arrival and departure transfers
Domestic return flights São Tomé – Príncipe - São Tomé
All accommodation
Transportation for all transfers and excursions mentioned in the itinerary
Services of English-speaking local driver/guides for all excursions mentioned in the itinerary – Note that there will be no driver/guide accompanying you when in Príncipe
Meals as listed (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner)
Entrance fees for sites listed as part of excursions included in the itinerary
Mineral bottled water in the vehicle
Visa support documentation, if required

Excluded:

International flights
Travel Insurance
Visas (if required)
Drinks, including water at hotels and restaurants
Hotel taxes in Sao Tome
Covid-19 test/s and other procedures, if required
Items of a personal nature
Tips (discretionary)

Important Information

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Foreign Office Travel Warnings

We constantly monitor the advice posted by the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). In particular we will always advise clients of any travel warnings. São Tomé and Príncipe is one of the safest countries in Africa and at the time of writing the FCDO does not advise against travel to São Tomé and Príncipe. Please feel free to contact us should you have any specific concerns or if you would like to know in detail what measures are being taken to ensure visits remain trouble free and without incident.

Accommodation and Meals

Hotel Check-in Times

As a general rule most hotels will allow guests to check-in from 2pm. Please note that the price of your tour does not include guaranteed early check-in. Therefore, please advise us if you would like to ensure that your room is available for an earlier arrival. This is particularly relevant on the first day of the tour and for early morning arrivals. One option is to pre-book and pay for an extra night at the beginning of your tour which will guarantee your accommodation is available irrespective of what time you arrive. Please contact us for information and costs.

It should also be noted that on many of our tours we have set-aside Day 1 of the itinerary as an 'arrival day'. For this reason and because tour participants are likely to be arriving at different times, and often from different countries, guided sightseeing or other activities are not included. If you are arriving early or before the start date of the tour and would like to organise some extra arrangements on a private basis please contact us.

Accommodation Rating

On this tour you will be staying in clean and comfortable hotels, with private bathroom facilities. When necessary air-conditioning or fans will be provided. Swimming pools are available at some properties as well.

We welcome solo travellers and single rooms will be allocated subject to the applicable tour supplement. Please note that on occasions you may not always be allocated a double or twin room, as some hotels have designated single rooms. These may be smaller in size. However, the supplement payable takes this into consideration.

'Roças' (plantation houses)

An exception to the above is the 'Roça' or plantation house accommodation used on this tour. Under Portuguese colonial rule cocoa production was organised into roças (estates). After independence in 1975, a lack of investment and collapsing global prices saw São Tome's cocoa-coated heyday slowly melt away. Today, the roças lie in atmospheric ruins and now some have been opened for tourists. Surrounded by rain forests, the roças are a perfect starting/finishing point for walks, bird watching and discovering botanical treasures of rainforest medicine, ornamental flowers and rare orchids. Simply renovated, these plantation houses have a small number of rooms. Electricity and hot water can be sporadic, but you can expect lots of character and often a balcony that goes all around the house. Staying in a roça is the perfect opportunity to watch the world go by, view the peaks and relax after a day's walk. And the traditional Santomean food is delicious.

Please note that a compulsory hotel tax of 3 Euros per person per night (subject to change) is levied by all hotels and must be paid in person when checking out.

Service Standards

Please note that standards of service in much of Africa are not comparable to those of more developed countries, especially in the more off the beaten track locations. Service is often slow and lacks the same attention to detail, and your patience and understanding will be appreciated.



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Food & Drink

The daily meal basis is shown in the tour itinerary; breakfast (B), lunch (L) and dinner (D). Please note that lunch may be a picnic. Drinks are not included and will be payable locally in cash.

Alcohol (wine, beer and liquors) is widely available. With its choice of exotic fruit, expertly marinated fresh fish, hearty tubers and veg, plus surprising gourmet lunches, Santomean food exceeds the expectations of travellers familiar with West Africa.

Dietary Requirements

If you have any special dietary requirements, you must notify us at the time of booking. While we will make every effort to cater for you, we cannot guarantee that this will be possible.

Budgeting for your Tour

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the tour price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Food

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Lunch £3 to £10

Dinner £8 to £20

Drink

The prices for drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive.

Water £1.50

Beer £1.20

Tipping – Guide and Drivers

Tipping is commonly recognised as a way of rewarding guides and drivers for good service. If you are happy with your guide and driver, please consider leaving a tip for them. You should allow per person around EUR 2-4 per day for your driver and EUR 4-8 per day for your guide.

Foreign Exchange

ATM Availability: At the time of writing there are no ATMs which accept international cards

Credit and Debit Card Acceptance: Limited to higher end hotels and restaurants only

Local Currency: Dobra (Db); 50 dobras = 2 Euros, 100 dobras = 4 Euros etc.

Recommended Currency for Exchange: Euros. Pound Sterlings and Dollars may be changed in the capital.

Where to Exchange: Your guide will advise you

****Please note that Travellers Cheques are not accepted****

Joining your Tour

Flight Information



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You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

For travellers departing from London, we strongly advise to book a night at one of the airport hotels in Lisbon on your outward journey. Due to the too tight transfer window at an ever more overstretched Lisbon Airport, missed connections or missing luggage are a real risk, and a missed connection would result in losing the first two days of your trip. Also, arriving well-rested in a challenging climate improves the chances of staying healthy and enjoying the trip to the full.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will receive an airport transfer, both on arrival and departure include in the tour price.

In order that the transfer can be arranged please ensure that you advise us of your flight information once available. Please advise the date, time and flight number for your arrival/departure. If we have not been advised of this information at least 2 weeks before travel, then you will be required to make your own way to the hotel on Day 1 of your tour.

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Undiscovered Destinations that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses (including cover for Covid-19 conditions) and emergency repatriation to your home country and be valid for the entire duration of your holiday.

Visa Information

At the time of writing British and US nationals do not require a visa for a short-term tourist visit to Sao Tome & Principe.

As it is the travellers' responsibility to ensure that they meet all entry requirements it is essential that you check the rules and any other conditions at the time of booking and again when making your balance payment. In addition, we would strongly advise that you make a final check around two weeks before your arrival. This is important as requirements can change at short notice. Undiscovered Destinations, when possible, will provide guidance about entry rules, but in the first instance please contact the relevant authorities, including the applicable embassy or consulate for assistance.. Contact details can be found by visiting the following websites

British Nationals - www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice

US Nationals - <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel.html>

Other nationals should check the latest requirements with the authorities in their home country, or with the destination's nearest embassy or consulate.

Passports

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, valid for at least six months after the date of return to your country. We strongly advise that your passport contains a minimum of two blank pages, as this may be a requirement of the local immigration authorities. In addition certain countries will stipulate that the two blank pages are opposite each other. If you are unable to meet these requirements you may be refused boarding by your airline or denied entry by the immigration authorities.



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For specific information about the requirements for your destination please check with the country's embassy or consulate. Alternatively UK citizens can visit www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice.

Vaccinations & Protection

As with travel to most parts of Africa, we strongly recommend that you contact your doctor's surgery or a specialist travel clinic for up-to-date information, advice and the necessary vaccinations. For a visit of less than one month, almost certainly you will be advised to have immunisations against the following: Diphtheria and Tetanus, Hepatitis A, Typhoid, Meningitis. Anti-malaria medication is also required and the use of a DEET-containing insect repellent is highly recommended.

In addition we strongly advise that you hold a valid Certificate of Yellow Fever vaccination. Although it is not mandatory for travellers coming in from Europe, you may not always be asked to show this, we know that delays or problems can occur if you do not hold the certificate.

Travel Health Website advises:

Under International Health Regulations, a certificate of yellow fever vaccination is required for travellers over 1 year of age arriving from countries with risk of yellow fever transmission and for travellers having transited through an airport of a country with risk of yellow fever transmission

The legal status and regulation of some medicines prescribed or purchased in your home country can be different in other countries. If you're travelling with prescription or over-the-counter medicine, read this guidance from NaTHNaC on best practice when travelling with medicines. For further information on the legal status of a specific medicine, you'll need to contact the embassy, high commission or consulate of the country or territory you're travelling to.

Preparing for your tour

Climate

The islands have a hot and humid, tropical climate and can be visited year-round. At sea level the average day time temperatures are about 27°C and there is not much variation. The mountainous interior is cooler with average temperatures closer to 20°C. The rainy season runs between October and May, with rainfall concentrated on the mountainous south western slopes and Príncipe. April/May and October are traditionally the wettest months; the relatively cool and dry June-September are the best in which to visit. If you plan to travel in July-August or December – January (with a short dry season), we strongly advise you to book flights minimum 6 months prior to departure to avoid disappointment.

Clothing

When it comes to clothing it is usually recommended that lighter clothes are worn through the day, and warmer ones at night. A hat is also advised to be worn through the day to protect from the sun, along with at least one piece of light waterproof clothing for any days that the weather may be wet or windy. A cheap poncho is sufficient.

Equipment

On thing you should have on your list is a first aid kit. Whilst there is no undue cause for alarm, travellers are best advised to travel well-prepared: adequately immunized, with sufficient supplies of prescription drugs, along with a medical kit. Suncream/sunblock is a must. Insect repellent, including a bite spray will also be useful to have.



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If you will be using a camera which needs film, it is recommended that a supply is taken with you, as it is not always available in São Tomé and Príncipe. You may want to bring your own snorkelling equipment for the beach and a head torch and binoculars plus a day rucksack are also good.

Footwear

Footwear is a main priority on this tour. Comfortable walking shoes/boots are recommended. Rainproof walking boots with good soles are important if you are planning to go hiking. Water sandals are useful on beaches and kayaking.

Luggage on tour

Your luggage should not exceed 20kgs (44lbs). One large suitcase/rucksack, and one small hand luggage rucksack is acceptable. For the flight to Príncipe only 15kg is accepted, any extra luggage can be safely stored in the capital.

Electric Supply & Plugs

Generally electrical supply is 220-240V AC (50 Hz) and plugs are of the European two-round-pin variety. Please note that the power supply in Príncipe may be subject to interruptions.

Tour Itinerary Versions

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes. These notes were updated 3 November 2023.