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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 Pace - Moderate

## Tour Highlights

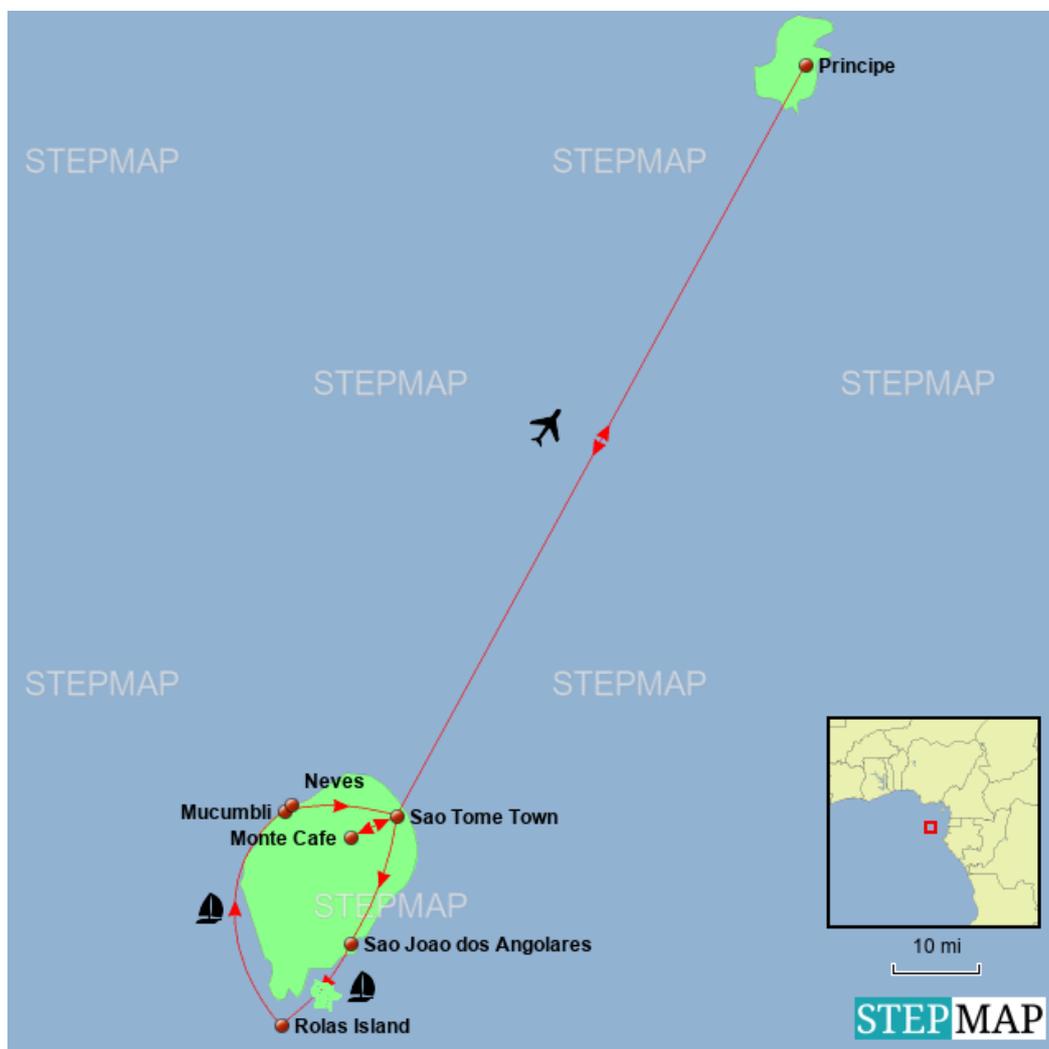
- ✓ Discover a largely undiscovered, uniquely rewarding and safe destination with an exciting blend of African and Portuguese cultures and a Caribbean feel





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## Tour Map - Sao Tome & Principe Holiday - Islands Explorer



### Tour Essentials

- Accommodation:** Comfortable hotel accommodation and 'Roças' (plantation houses) – please see notes about Roças
- Included Meals:** Daily breakfast (B), plus lunches (L) and dinners (D) as shown in the itinerary
- Group Size:** Maximum of 12
- Start Point:** São Tomé
- End Point:** São Tomé
- Transport:** 4WD or minibuses, internal flights, boat
- Country:** São Tomé and Príncipe



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### São Tomé and Príncipe - Islands Explorer

Cast adrift in the Atlantic, some 250km off the coast of Gabon, the island nation of Sao Tome & Principe is Africa's second smallest country, and the world's smallest Portuguese-speaking state. Uninhabited till the 15th century, fertile volcanic soils and an equatorial climate lent themselves to sugar, coffee and cocoa cultivation. A series of bloody slave revolts against brutal Portuguese authorities characterised later history. Exploitation of African labour existed even until the mid-20th century. However, independence came in 1975 and since then Sao Tome & Principe has been one of Africa's most stable states and has led the continent in political reforms. UNESCO declared the island of Principe, and its surrounding islets a World Biosphere Reserve in 2012 for its important ecosystem. The country now attracts the attention of a steady trickle of tourists, those interested in hiking, marine wildlife, great cuisine and fantastic coffee and chocolate. A fascinating, relaxed and hassle-free African island destination, 'leve-leve' is a ubiquitous local phrase. It's a greeting, suggesting things should be taken slowly. Probably good advice.

### 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

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. Where possible you will have the same guide throughout your trip but on occasions it may be necessary to change the guide at one or more points during the tour.

## Itinerary

### Day 1 – Arrive São Tomé

Arrive in São Tomé and transfer to hotel accommodation, with the rest of the evening free to relax. Overnight Emoyeni Gardens Hotel. (D)

**Please Note:** *A compulsory hotel tax of EUR€3 per person per night is levied by all hotels and must be paid in person upon check out.*

### Day 2 – São Tomé

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. Overnight Emoyeni Gardens Hotel (BLD)

### 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.



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### Day 3 – São Tomé – Monte Café Plantation – São Tomé

This morning we visit the Valúdo coconut factory near Tridade, to try the products and meet with the owner. We continue up to Nova Moka where we meet Luis Mário, the executive director of a coffee cooperative, who will guide us through his yard/orchard and along coffee plantation paths on to Monte Café. We then walk a brief way to Roça Saudade for a gourmet lunch in a rainforest setting before returning to our hotel. This evening, around 17:00, 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 Emoyeni Gardens Hotel (BL)

### Day 4 – São Tomé – Príncipe

After an early breakfast we transfer to the airport for our short flight to Príncipe. On arrival we explore Santo António, the capital of Príncipe, and meet Henry Cronje, HBD's recycling manager, a Zimbabwe-born, long-term resident of the island. After lunch we drive to Roça Sundry for a 3-night stay. Later this afternoon before dinner we take a tour of Roça Sundry, where a hundred years ago, Einstein's theory of gravity was proven by a British scientist, and a new chocolate factory has sprung up. Overnight Roça Sundry (BLD)

### Day 5 – Príncipe

After a leisurely breakfast we explore the island by jeep: visit Roça Paciência to explore the orchard where all fresh produce for the HBD hotels comes from – if possible encounter with the head of product development; tasting, opportunity for shopping for exclusive treats. On to visit another restored plantation Belomonte with a fabulous new museum on STP's wildlife and opportunity for swimming on famous Banana Beach, a 20-min downhill walk beach picnic. Free time on beach with opportunity for kayaking (Belomonte) or walking along the nearby beaches to the Praia Burra community, the site of a new women-run jewellery project. Overnight Roça Sunday (BLD)

### Day 6 – Príncipe

Before breakfast this morning there is an option for birdwatching on the plantation. After breakfast transfer to Bom Bom resort to enjoy its facilities, with many options for relaxing or exploring. For example, take a 3-hour circular hike to Ribeira Izé, the former capital of Príncipe with a connection to the famous slave trader Maria Correia, kayak around Bom Bom Islet, snorkelling, and others. Return to Roça Sundry for dinner and overnight. (BD)

### Day 7 – Príncipe – São Tomé – 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 (Hells 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 Roça São João (BLD)

### 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





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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 we drive to the southern tip of São Tomé Island and transfer by boat from Ponta Baleia to Rolas Island, straddling the equator. We 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. Those who don't want to hike can join us at the beach (approx. 20m walk on flat ground) This afternoon we take a boat trip up the west coast (approx. 2.5 hours) to Neves where we transfer to nearby Mucumbli Lodge for a 2-night stay (BLD)

### Day 9 – Northern Plantations

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 Mucumbli Lodge (BL)

### Day 10 – São Tomé Departure

Spend the morning at leisure. You may wish to visit an interesting social/school project in Neves (30min walk from Mucumbli, your tour leader can accompany you). This afternoon, around 14:00hrs, we leave for the capital (approx. 1-hour drive) with a stop for shopping in town en route, and visit the Diogo Vaz Chocolateria for a chocolate tasting and patisserie stop before being transferred to the airport for your departure flight (B)

## Tour Inclusions/Exclusions

### Inclusions:

Arrival and departure transfers  
All accommodation  
Services of English-speaking tour leader – Kathleen Becker, as well as the services of a local guide  
Meals as listed (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner)  
All transport on tour  
Entrance fees for sites listed as part of the itinerary

### Excluded:

International flights  
Travel Insurance  
Visas  
Drinks  
Tips



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## Important Information

### Foreign Office Travel Warnings

We constantly monitor the advice posted by the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). 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 Foreign and Commonwealth Office 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.

It should be noted that this information applies to British citizens. Other nationals are asked to check the current position of their respective government.

### 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

At Undiscovered Destinations we know our travellers prefer to stay in comfortable, mid-range accommodation which meets our own exacting standards. You can expect rooms to be en-suite, with private bathroom and when necessary air-conditioning or fans will be provided. In general you will find your hotel has a restaurant and/or bar.

#### '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.

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





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designated single rooms. These may be smaller in size. However, the supplement payable takes this into consideration.

Please note that 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.

### 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, heathy 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 common practice in Africa. Accordingly, a tipping kitty is organised on arrival which covers day to day tips incurred whilst on tour. This includes tips at restaurants and hotels. It also includes tips for drivers and local guides in the national parks. Please budget Eur 50 to 70 depending on the size of the group. This will be collected in euros or pounds cash by your guide at the start of the tour who will then be responsible for tipping throughout your trip.

The kitty does not cover tips for your Tour Guide. At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Guide in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

### 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



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

**Recommended Currency for Exchange:** Euros. Pounn Sterling 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

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 clients travelling on our small group tour, we strongly advise to book a night at one of the airport hotels in Lisbon. 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 and emergency repatriation to your home country and be valid for the entire duration of your holiday.

### Visa Information

American citizens and those of the EU, including British nationals do not require a visa to visit São Tomé and Príncipe for up to 15 days. For longer stays, you should get a visa before you travel as problems can occur if you arrive without the necessary documentation.

All other nationals should check with the authorities before travel.

### 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 the UK. It is a good idea to bring a copy of your passport for security and to facilitate check-in at the hotels.

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.

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](http://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice).





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## 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

The first thing on your list should be 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. 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.



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### **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.

### **Service Standards**

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.

### **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 17 January 2020