

São Tomé and Príncipe

**Tour Leaflet
2024**



Dwarf Olive Ibis © Tasso Leventis

26 June - 3 July 2024

São Tomé and Príncipe 2024



ENDEMIC-FILLED ISLANDS

- a chance to see all of the more-than-25 endemic birds
- lush, tropical forests
- rarely-seen endemics such as Dwarf Olive Ibis, Sao Tome Grosbeak and Principe Thrush

Sao Tome Grosbeak © Tasso Leventis



TOUR LEADER: MICHAEL MILLS



Michael's incredible focus, dedication and ability to locate and show Africa's toughest birds is probably unequalled. He has led dozens of tours across the continent and his experience in locating birds on just the softest of calls or briefest of views impresses those who travelled with him.

DATES (2024)

São Tomé & Príncipe 26 Jun – 3 Jul

PRELIMINARY PRICES

Per person sharing	\$3850
Single supplement	\$360

Includes all ground costs other than internal flights estimated at \$275

BOOK ONLINE

Visit www.birdingafrica.com
 Deposit (\$150) by credit card
 Email info@birdingafrica.com



Principe Speirops © Tasso Leventis

Our seven-night eight-day tour of the volcanic islands of São Tomé and Príncipe offer birders the chance to see all of the islands' more-than-25 endemic bird species. The avifauna has a high degree of endemism, with more species on the larger São Tomé island, located further from the African coast than the smaller Príncipe island. Most endemics are relatively easy to see, but Sao Tome Grosbeak, Sao Tome Fiscal, Principe Thrush, Principe White-eye and the newly discovered scops owl on Principe are very tricky to find and can require days of remote camping and trudging through damp forest to successfully track down. We strike a balance between comfort and the birds by offering an itinerary which gives you a reasonable chance of seeing all the endemics in a week, with camping limited to just two nights of the trip. On the trip we visit Príncipe island for two full days to search for the approximately 10 endemics, with the rest of the time spent on the larger and richer São Tomé island.

TOUR FOCUS

São Tomé and Príncipe offers a very high number of endemics, of interest especially to world listers. However, the laid back atmosphere and interesting environment make the islands a tourist attraction of a wide range of visitors. This trip has a strong focus on watching birds, but there are opportunities too for bird photography.

Let us know if you have target species or want to know more about the species we might encounter. A species list will be handed to you at the start of the tour and is available beforehand upon request.

The tour is timed to coincide with the short dry season when it is generally drier but all birds are in breeding plumage. That said, we expect to encounter some rain, especially on the south of the islands. Weather will mostly be warm and humid.

Please pack lightly as there is a 15 kg baggage weight limit on the internal flight.



Sao Tome Oriole © Tasso Leventis

ACCOMMODATION AND MEALS

Accommodation and meals are generally fairly good, except for two nights of remote camping. When not camping we will stay in tastefully converted old farms and small hotels. Rooms mostly have private facilities and hot water

Meals are generally Portuguese-inspired, with a strong seafood component. Please advise if you are vegetarian and what foods you enjoy, so that we can cater for you.

Water is not safe to drink so we supply complimentary bottled water throughout.

GROUP SIZE

Maximum 9 participants.

INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS

Please plan to fly in to São Tomé island by the night of 26 June 2024. Departure from São Tomé is possible any time from 14h00 on the afternoon of 3 July 2024.

Please email callan@birdingafrica.com a copy of your proposed flight details for approval before paying for your ticket.

WALKING

This tour requires a reasonable degree of fitness. Most walks will be done at a gentle pace, although the terrain is often wet and uneven (gum boots recommended!). The long hike into our campsite on southern São Tomé is the most demanding of the trip and we can make alternative arrangements for those not wanting to join that part of the trip.

INTRODUCTION

The little-known island nation of São Tomé and Príncipe lies off the west coast of central Africa, some 230 km due west of Equatorial Guinea in the case of Príncipe and 280 km west of Gabon in the case of São Tomé. The islands straddle the equator and are surrounded by ocean with mountains rising steeply out of the ocean their peaks trap large amounts of moisture and the remote south-west facing sides of the islands are some of the wettest places on earth. The islands form part of the volcanic chain of mountains that runs from the south-west to the north-east, and includes the islands of Annobon (Equatorial Guinea), São Tomé, Príncipe and Bioko (Equatorial Guinea), plus the mountains of western Cameroon, including Mount Cameroon.

Together the islands host more than 25 endemic birds species. São Tomé is the larger of the two and located further from the mainland, thus holding a higher degree of endemism (more isolated) and also a greater number of endemic species (larger land area). Príncipe is closer to the mainland and thus is less isolated, with a greater proportion of mainland birds and fewer endemics.

Golden-backed Bishop © Tasso Leventis



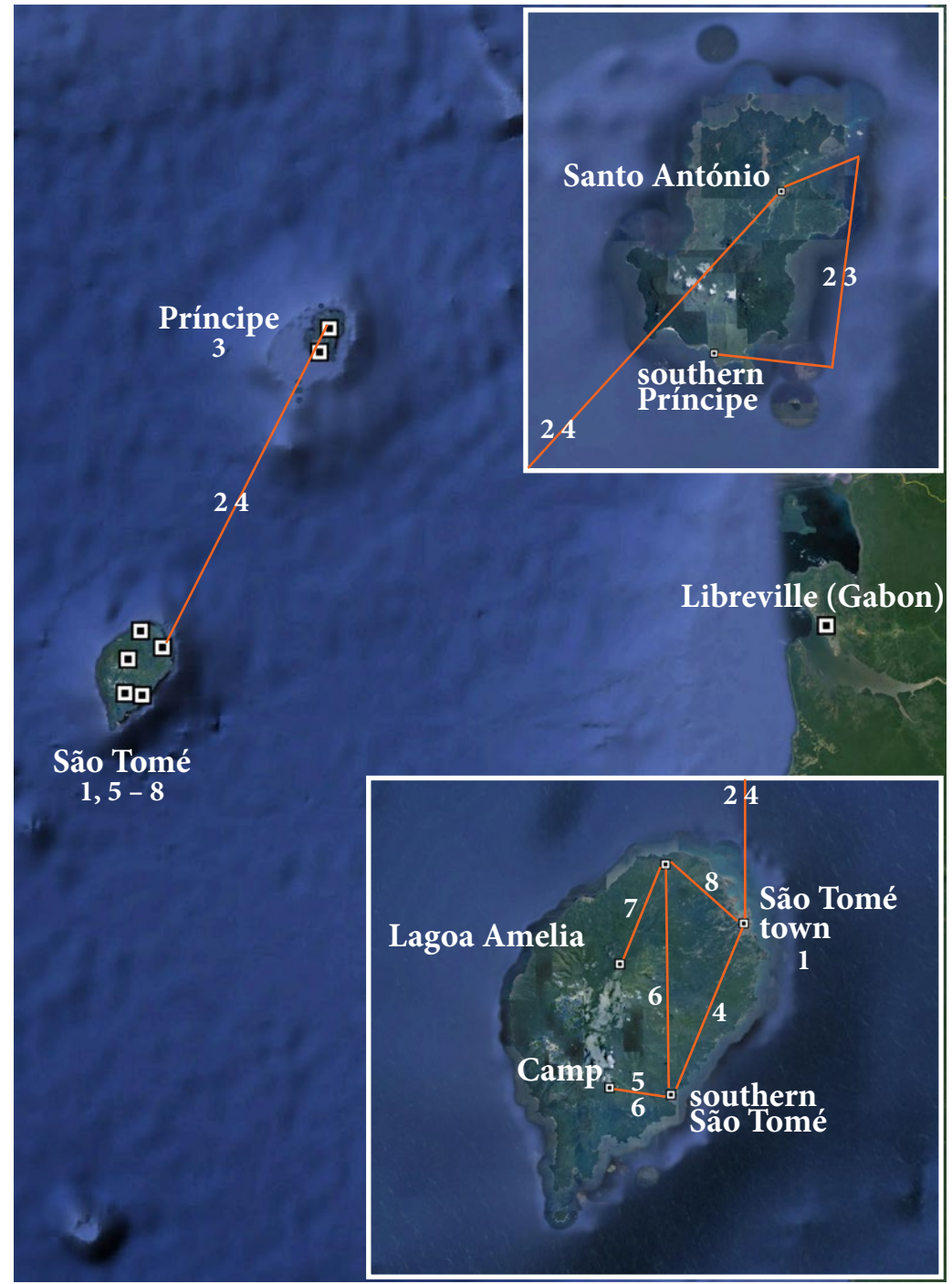
On this tour we aim to see all of the endemics. Several of the species, especially Sao Tome Fiscal, Sao Tome Grosbeak, Principe Thrush, Principe White-eye, and the newly discovered scops owl on Príncipe occur primarily in very remote, wet areas on the south of their respective islands. With no accommodation nearby camping is a must for any chance of seeing these species. Some are so rare that it can take days to find them, but we strike a balance by offering a tour that gives you a chance to see all these birds with a reasonable amount of camping (two nights). Any tours longer than a week generally return no more than one new species a day.

As is typical with oceanic islands, the avifauna include endemic scops owls (two species), pigeons (three species) and white-eyes (four species). However, the avifauna includes some very distinctive endemics too such as Dwarf Olive Ibis, the only forest shrike (Sao Tome Fiscal) and the unique Sao Tome Short-tail, previously thought to be a warbler but now known to be an aberrant wagtail. Giant Sunbird, Dohrn's Thrush-Babbler and Giant Weaver are other popular endemics.

ITINERARY AND MAP

Day 1	26 Jun 2024	Arrive. Overnight in or near São Tomé town.
Day 2	27 Jun 2024	Fly to Príncipe Islands. Take boat to south of island. Overnight camping.
Day 3	28 Jun 2024	Southern forests. Return by boat to north. Overnight near Santo António.
Day 4	29 Jun 2024	Fly Príncipe to São Tomé. Overnight on southern São Tomé.
Day 5	30 Jun 2024	Hike into southern forests. Overnight camping.
Day 6	1 Jul 2024	Morning in forest. Return to north of island. Overnight in the north.
Day 7	2 Jul 2024	Full day in central highlands at Lagoa Amelia. Overnight in the north.
Day 8	3 Jul 2024	Morning birding on north of island. Tour ends

Dohrn's Thrush Babbler © Tasso Leventis



DAY-BY-DAY ITINERARY

Day 1: Arrive São Tomé

Welcome to São Tomé and Príncipe! From the airport you will be transferred a short distance to our hotel. Around the hotel we may find Sao Tome Prinia. Overnight in or near São Tomé town.

Day 2: To southern Príncipe

Today we take the hour-long flight to Príncipe island. On arrival we transfer to town and then

Velvet-mantled Drongo (Príncipe Drongo) © Tasso Leventis



take a boat to the remote southern side of the island. We set up camp in an area where the newly discovered scops owl occurs and will search for it tonight. Overnight camping on southern Príncipe.

Day 3: Southern to northern Príncipe

We have the better part of the morning to bird around our camp site. The scarce Príncipe Thrush is our main target, and we may encounter Sao

Tome White-eye. Around midday we will return by boat to Santo António town and bird in the vicinity of town. Overnight near Santo António town on a functioning farm.

Day 4: to southern São Tomé

Most of Príncipe's endemics occur around our accommodation, including Príncipe Golden Weaver, Príncipe Speirops, Príncipe Glossy Starling, Dohrn's Thrush-Babbler and Príncipe Sunbird, and we spend a few hours looking for any of these that we may be missing. Other endemic taxa here include the local race of Malachite Kingfisher (Príncipe Kingfisher), Velvet-mantled Drongo (Príncipe Drongo), Lemon Dove, Blue-breasted Kingfisher and Olive Sunbird. We then fly back to São Tomé island before transferring to the south of the island. Tonight we have a chance to see the local race of Western Barn Owl. Overnight on a farm.

Day 5: southern forests

Today we hike into the remote forest of southern São Tomé. This is the best area on the island for the threatened Dwarf Olive Ibis, and other key birds we hope to see include Sao Tome Scops Owl, Sao Tome Short-tail and Giant Sunbird. There is also a chance to see the very rare Sao Tome Grosbeak and Sao Tome Fiscal. Overnight camping in the forest.



Sao Tome Speirops © Tasso Leventis

Day 6: southern to northern São Tomé

We have the better part of the morning to bird around our campsite in the remote southern forests, before returning back to the cars and driving to the northern side of the island. We will stop on the way to search for the local subspecies of Malachite Kingfisher (Sao Tome Kingfisher) at some of the river crossings, along with Forest Chestnut-winged Starling and Lemon Dove. Overnight on a farm on the north of the island.

Day 7: Lagoa Amelia

The central highlands of São Tomé island are best accessed around Lagoa Amelia, where we hope to find several more endemics. Sao Tome Olive Pigeon is the trickiest of these, but we also aim to

see Sao Tome Green Pigeon, Sao Tome Spinetail, Sao Tome Oriole, Sao Tome Paradise Flycatcher, Sao Tome Speirops, Sao Tome White-eye, Sao Tome Thrush, Newton's Sunbird, Sao Tome Weaver and Sao Tome Bronze-naped Pigeon, some of which we may already have seen on the south of the island. Overnight on northern São Tomé.

Day 8: northern São Tomé and depart

Our final morning on São Tomé will be spent in the drier habitats of northern São Tomé. This is the stronghold of Sao Tome Bronze-naped Pigeon and Giant Weaver, but other new species may include Golden-backed Bishop (introduced) and Harlequin Quail. Western Reef Heron is common along the coastline. The tour ends in the afternoon on return to São Tomé Town.

INCLUDED IN THE PRICE OF THE TOUR

- services of Birding Africa tour leader and local guides
- entry fees and activities as per itinerary
- ground transport and airport transfers
- accommodation and all meals starting with dinner on the first night and ending with lunch on the last day
- internal flights are billed separately
- bottled water in the vehicle and one soft drink per meal
- general tips

QUESTIONS?

Please email the office, info@birdingafrica.com, to reserve a place or ask questions (you can also cc michael@birdingafrica.com and callan@birdingafrica.com who are both involved in the planning of this tour.

BOOKLET AND CHECKLIST

Birding Africa provides:

1. Tour Details leaflet with detailed itinerary
2. Tour Information Pack, emailed to you
3. Tour Booklet with checklists, provided in hard copy at the start of the tour

HOW TO BOOK

1. Complete our easy online booking form.
2. Secure your booking deposit by credit card on our 3D secure online payment site (\$150)
3. Settle the balance by bank transfer 150 days before the tour. We will email you a reminder and the banking details.

