ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

São Tomé & Príncipe I

8th April to 15th April 2022 (8 days)



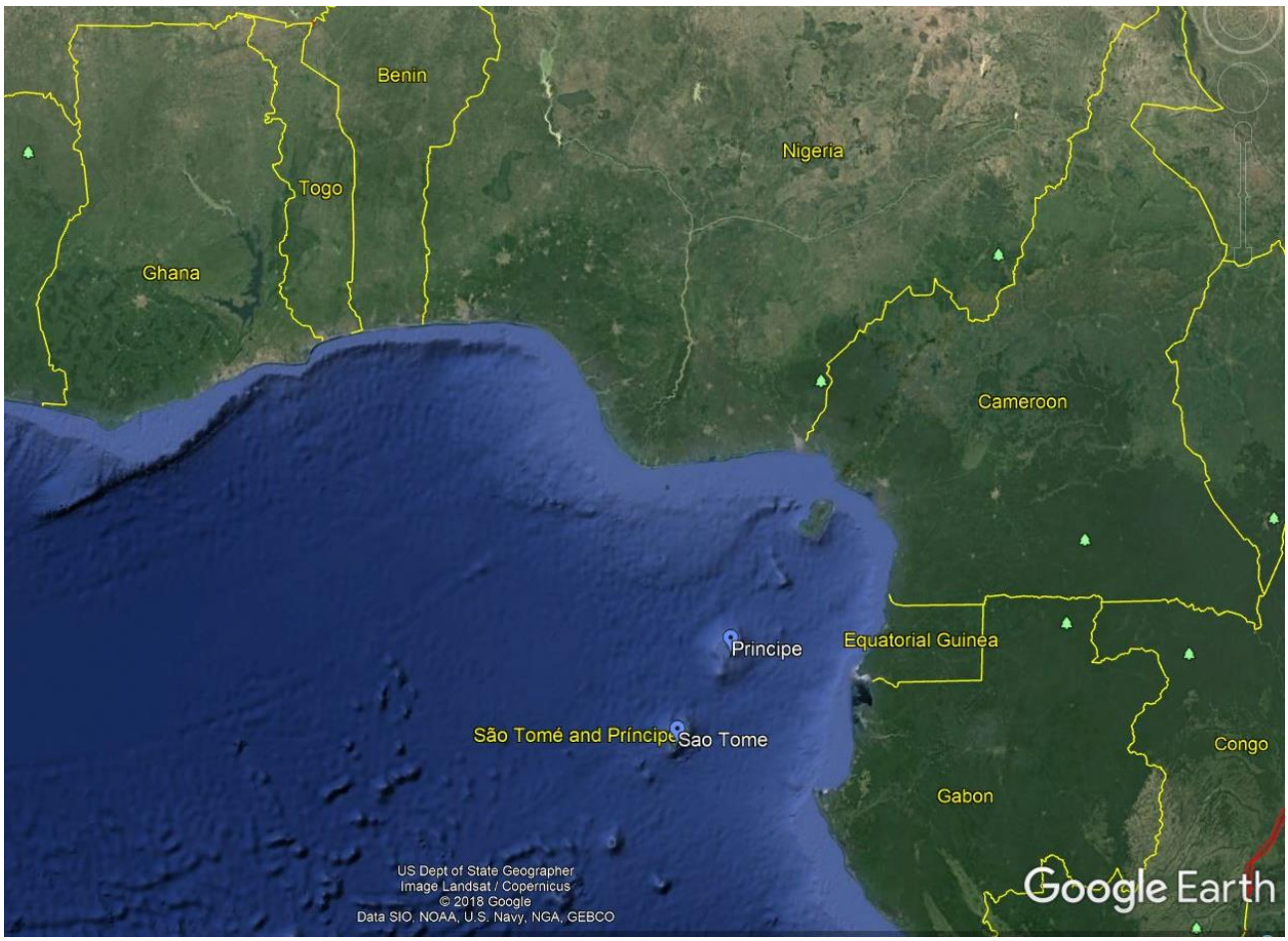
Bom Bom Island Resort scene on Príncipe Island by David Hoddinott

The seldom-visited islands of São Tomé & Príncipe are tucked away in the Gulf of Guinea, 180 miles off the African coastline. Amongst dramatic scenery, we will search for all 27 currently recognized endemic birds, as well as a further 6 species that may very well be split as endemic species in the near future. Top of the list includes some heart-stoppers such as São Tomé (Dwarf Olive) Ibis, Giant Sunbird, Giant Weaver, the enigmatic São Tomé Fiscal, Sao Tome Grosbeak, Dohrn's Thrush-Babbler, Sao Tome Shorttail and 2 species of strange Speirops. These are but a few of the incredible highlights we look forward to sharing with you in this most exciting and forgotten corner of Africa!

SÃO TOMÉ AND PRÍNCIPE ENDEMICS EXTENSION

Day 1	**Arrival in São Tomé**
Day 2	**Bom Sucesso and Lagoa Amélia area**
Day 3	**São Tomé fly to Príncipe, transfer to Bom Bom Island**
Day 4	**Príncipe - Bom Bom Island**
Day 5	**Príncipe and flight to São Tomé, birding around Omali or Lagoa Amélia**
Day 6	**São Tomé town to Monte Carmo**
Day 7	**Monte Carmo to São Tomé**
Day 8	**São Tomé and depart**

TOUR ROUTE MAP…



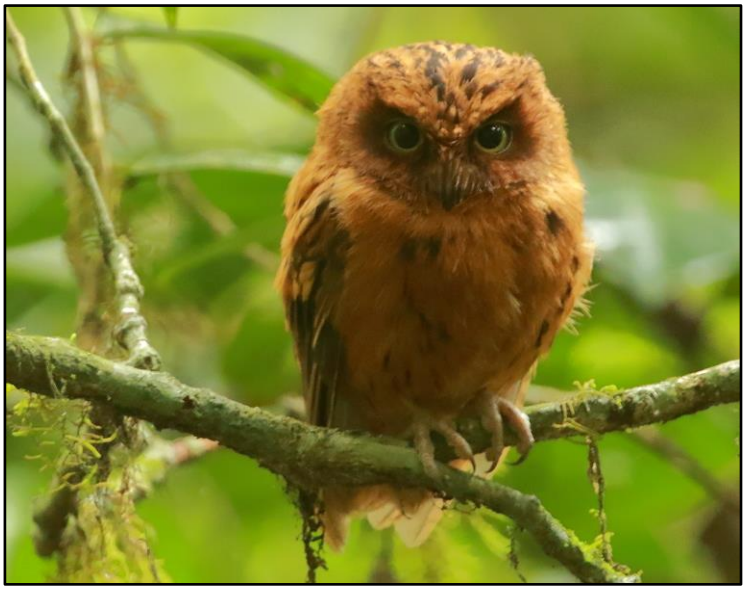
THE TOUR IN DETAIL…



Principe Speirops by David Hoddinott

Day 1: Arrival in São Tomé. Today has essentially been set aside as an arrival day but we will embark on some introductory birding around the lodge grounds and surrounds for those that arrive early. Some exciting endemic species that we may very well already encounter today include Sao Tome Prinia, Black-capped Speirops, Newton's Sunbird, Principe Seedeater (will probably be split as Sao Tome Seedeater in years to come), Sao Tome Weaver, Sao Tome Spinetail and Sao Tome Paradise Flycatcher. In the scrubby fields, bushes and rank grassland nearby we might encounter the introduced Golden-backed Bishop (otherwise endemic to coastal Angola), as well as White-winged Widowbird, Black-winged Red Bishop, Village and Southern Masked Weavers, Blue and Common Waxbills, Bronze Mannikin, Yellow-fronted Canary and Harlequin Quail, while Western Reef Herons often feed along the shore and White-tailed Tropicbirds soar overhead. This evening we can try our luck at finding the endemic race of Western Barn Owl that is visually and geographically distinct and may be split as an endemic *Tyto* owl.

Day 2: Bom Sucesso and Lagoa Amélia area. This morning we will drive a short ways through agricultural fields, villages and coffee plantations towards the forested hills to the south-west of our beachside accommodation. We will spend the remainder of the day birding the forest edge and interior along a track and forest trail where we shall search for a number of exciting Sao Tome and Gulf of Guinea island endemics. These include São Tomé Thrush, São Tomé Green Pigeon and São Tomé Oriole. In the canopy, we will search for two more columbids, the difficult São Tomé Olive Pigeon and Island Bronze-naped Pigeon, as well as African Emerald Cuckoo. São Tomé Spinetails are often spotted as they flutter over clearings and we'll also keep an eye out for flocks of the local race of Chestnut-winged Starlings. The yellow-bellied Newton's Sunbird is the common sunbird of the island, but we also hope to encounter small numbers of the amazing Giant Sunbird. This area is also our best chance at the scarce Sao Tome White-eye and we can expect to see fairly large numbers of Black-capped Speirops. Sao Tome Scops Owls sometimes vocalize during the day and we might then be able to track one down on the day roost. After what should be an excellent first full day on Sao Tome we will return to our comfortable sea-side hotel in Sao Tome town in the late afternoon.



São Tomé Scops Owl by David Hoddinott

Day 3: São Tomé fly to Príncipe, transfer to Bom Bom Island. Today we

will take a morning flight from São Tomé to Príncipe. The tiny nation of São Tomé & Príncipe consists of the two main islands (São Tomé and Príncipe) and a dozen smaller ones, which add up to 1,001 square kilometres of land. The population is small and all are of recent immigrant decent. After independence in 1975, the country became a completely closed off Marxist state, which only opened up in the 1990s. To this day, it still remains way off the beaten track of tourists.



Sao Tome Oriole by David Hoddinott

Upon arrival, we will transfer to our comfortable lodge at Bom Bom Island Resort. The island of Príncipe is just 12-miles long and 9-miles wide and inhabited by a mere 5,000 souls – and, other than at our luxurious resort, not much happens on Príncipe! We are here to find the seven endemic birds to this island, of which we are likely to have scored five of them before the day has ended; namely, the aberrant Dohrn's Thrush-Babbler, Príncipe Sunbird, Príncipe Speirops, Príncipe (Glossy) Starling and Príncipe (Golden) Weaver, as well as the local form of Malachite Kingfisher (Sometimes split as Príncipe Kingfisher) and Velvet-mantled Drongo (sometimes split as Príncipe Drongo). Endemics shared with São Tomé include São Tomé Spinetail and Príncipe Seedeater. Other species also occur and we'll keep an eye out for African Green Pigeon, Timneh Parrot, Red-headed Lovebird, Blue-breasted Kingfisher (also occurring here as a distinctive, endemic subspecies) and Olive Sunbird.

Day 4: Príncipe - Bom Bom Island. We have a full day to further explore the island for any species we might not have seen the day before, or else to acquire better views of the island's skulkier inhabitants. For those wishing to search for the two very difficult endemics we'll embark on a boat trip to a nearby bay where we will then hike on a rather strenuous trail uphill for several hours in search of Principe Thrush and Principe White-eye. Some participants may prefer to simply relax and enjoy the beaches and serenity of this little-known and seldom-visited patch of our planet. Interesting species that we may encounter during the boat trip include Brown and Black Noddies and Brown Booby, while Hump-backed Whales are also often spotted offshore.



Newton's Sunbird by Glen Valentine

Day 5: Príncipe and flight to São Tomé, birding around Omali or Lagoa Amélia. We will have the early morning to enjoy the birdlife around our fabulous lodge and surrounding forest, after which we'll then make our way to the airport for our morning return flight back to São Tomé.

Upon arrival we will transfer to our now-familiar and extremely comfortable beachside hotel for the night. Depending on our arrival time and how we're feeling or how many endemics we've now seen, we could either relax at our hotel for the afternoon in preparation for two long and tiring birding days

ahead at Monte Carmo or we could return to the Bom Sucesso/Lagoa Amelia area if we're still needing one or two of the site's rarer endemics like the Sao Tome Olive (Maroon) Pigeon or Island Bronze-naped Pigeon.



São Tomé Prinia by Glen Valentine

Day 6: Sao Tome town to Monte Carmo. This morning we embark on our Monte Carmo adventure to search for a host of very special and localized endemics, including the huge São Tomé Grosbeak, probably the most difficult of all the island's endemics. This extraordinary seedeater was considered extinct for a hundred years until its rediscovery in 1991; its population is considered to be less than 50 individuals and it is classed as critically endangered. Understandably, very few birders have had the opportunity to see this elusive species. First we will drive for around 3 hours to a small village in the extreme south-east of the island.

Upon arrival at Monte Carmo we will gather up all of our camping gear and with the help of porters and local guides we will embark on the hike up into the primary forest that clads these seldom-visited hills. Lemon Dove (the long-legged form is sometimes split as Forest Dove) is common here and often seen scuttling off in the undergrowth; São Tomé Thrush (Olivaceous / Gulf of Guinea Thrush) feed along the trails, and a high-pitched whistle will indicate the secretive São Tomé Shorttail (also known as Bocage's Longbill), a bizarre little understory species with uncertain taxonomic affinities that is currently placed in the pipit family! Bird parties moving through the canopy may harbour the vociferous São Tomé Oriole, the aberrant São Tomé Weaver and family groups of Black-capped Speirops and São Tomé White-eyes. São Tomé Paradise Flycatchers often join the parties; the striking all black male being quite different to the more typically coloured female. Príncipe Seedeater and São Tomé Prinias occur in more open areas, the latter having an amazing aerial display flight! Another incredible bird that occurs here is the Giant Weaver, and we may find some of their football-sized nests. Three other major target species at Monte Carmo are the rare and elusive Sao Tome Fiscal, the critically endangered São Tomé Ibis and Sao Tome Scops Owl (should we not have seen one at Lagoa Amelia).



Sao Tome Fiscal by Glen Valentine

Along the moister, flatter areas we will search for the enigmatic São Tomé Ibis, one of the world's rarest birds – they feed in the darkest areas of the forests and, when disturbed, flush into nearby trees, often allowing scope views. We will also venture higher up the mountain to search for the lovely, slope-specialist São Tomé Fiscal, a long-tailed forest shrike presumed extinct until 1990, when a single bird was discovered. Strident whistles will betray the presence of this strange bird that superficially resembles a fiscal shrike, but its unusual calls, yellow underparts and forest mid-strata habitat are clues that it is

totally unrelated. Just after dusk we are likely to hear the twittering calls of Band-rumped (Madeiran) Storm Petrels flying low over the canopy as they come into roost at their nesting colonies higher up the mountain but seeing one will be a serious challenge! Sao Tome Scops Owls are commonly heard around our campsite and if we haven't yet seen one on its roost we will endeavour to hunt one down this evening.



Principe Sunbird by David Hoddinott

Day 7: Monte Carmo to São Tomé. We have the entire morning to search upslope for the rare and elusive Sao Tome Fiscal and any other species that we may not yet have seen before walking back down through the forest to meet up with our awaiting vehicle that will transfer us back to our accommodation in Sao Tome town.

Day 8: São Tomé and depart. After breakfast today, we head to the airport where this tour will conclude.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:

Tour dates, prices, single supplement rates, approximate flight costs and spaces available for this tour are displayed on our website. Please see under IMPORTANT NOTES below.

This includes:

- All meals from lunch on day 1 to lunch on day 8;
- Bottled drinking water;
- All lodgings;
- Ground transportation;
- Reserve entrance fees;
- All guiding services (including local guides and tour leaders); and
- Gratuities for local guides and other staff.

The tour fee does not include:

- **ANY** airfares;
- Visa fees;
- Any drinks;
- Special gratuities; and
- Telephone calls, laundry and other items of a personal nature.

Single Supplement: The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBL cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

a) Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we now quote our tours in 4 currencies (see website for all 4 currencies). The tour price is however fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed (see website) will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing (usually 3 months before the tour.) Approximate domestic flight and single supplement rates have been converted to US$ but are also subject to exchange rate movements.
b) Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration a small party supplement will have to be charged.
c) Furthermore, these costs are subject to major foreign exchange fluctuations and unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.
d) Lastly, we may be forced to change or alter the itinerary and/or the designated Rockjumper leader/s at short or no notice due to unforeseen circumstances; please be aware that we will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.

Tipping: As noted above, gratuities (drivers, hotel staff, porters, restaurants etc.) are included on this tour. However, this does NOT include your Rockjumper leader. If, therefore, you feel that he has given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip him.

Special Notes

- The pace of the tour is generally moderate.
- We will be birding in some remote areas well away from modern medical facilities. If you have any pre-existing medical conditions, please inform the Rockjumper office in advance.
- Many of the hotels are of reasonable standard during the tour. There is one night of camping at Mt. Carmo, São Tomé. The walk in is fairly strenuous, although we will be going at birding pace, and takes approximately 3 hours to get to the campsite. However, the quality of the birding at these sites more than makes up for the minor temporary inconveniences!
- There is one optional strenuous walk on Principe to search for Principe Thrush and Principe White-eye.

ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE DETAILS:

This tour **does not** include **ANY** airfares. The tour will commence with a group transfer from São Tomé Airport in the early morning on day 1. Kindly arrive in advance of this time on this day, or arrive the day before. The extension will end at São Tomé Airport on the morning of day 8.

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your **Tour Confirmation** package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

FLIGHTS:

São Tomé International Airport (IATA: TMS) is the main port of entry and exit from São Tomé and Principe. **Please DO NOT book any flights until you have consulted the Rockjumper office for confirmation on the status of the tour.**