Angola

Endemics Overland Adventure



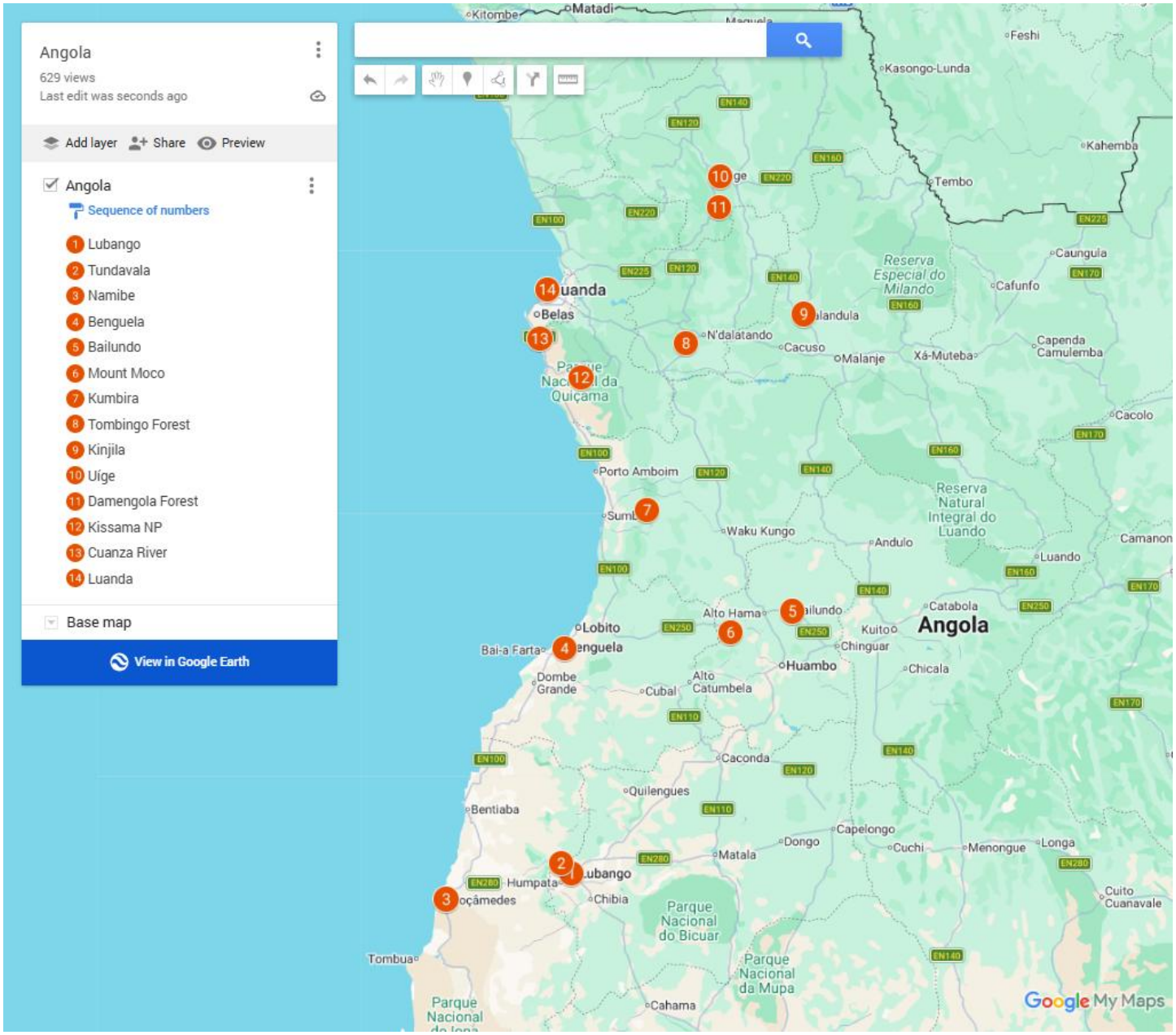
White-headed Robin-Chat by Reece Dodd

After decades of isolation, Angola has re-emerged as one of Africa's most exciting and least-birded destinations. This overland journey is designed to connect the country's key endemic birding sites, beginning in Lubango and the dramatic Tundavala Escarpment, continuing through the arid Namib-influenced landscapes around Namibe and Benguela, then inland to the highlands and miombo around Mount Moco. From there we work northwards through the scarp forests of Kumbira and Gabela, the forests around N'Dalatando, the gallery forests and miombo of Kinjila, and the northern forests near Uige, before finishing with the rich woodland, riverine and coastal habitats of Kissama National Park and the Cuanza River near Luanda.

Across this route we search for an exceptional suite of Angolan endemics and near-endemics, including Swierstra's Spurfowl, Angola Cave Chat, Angola Slaty Flycatcher, Gabela Akalat, Pulitzer's Longbill, Gabela Bushshrike, Braun's Bushshrike, White-headed Robin-Chat, Gabela Helmetshrike, Red-crested Turaco, Angola Waxbill and Angola Lark. The habitats are as varied as the birds themselves, ranging from montane grasslands and remnant Afromontane forest to dry coastal plains, baobab-studded woodland, misty scarp forest, gallery forest, extensive miombo and mangrove-lined river systems. Angola remains a country of real adventure, long travel days and outstanding rewards, offering the chance to see birds that very few birders anywhere in the world have encountered.

Itinerary & Map

Day 1	**Arrival into Lubango**
Day 2	**Tundavala Escarpment**
Day 3	**Namibe area**
Day 4	**Tundavala to Benguela**
Day 5	**Benguela to Bailundo**
Days 6 & 7	**Mount Moco**
Day 8	**Bailundo to Kumbira Forest, Gabela**
Days 9 & 10	**Kumbira Forest**
Day 11	**Kumbira Forest to Tombingo Forest (N'Dalatando)**
Day 12	**Tombingo Forest to Kinjila via Calandula Falls**
Day 13	**Kinjila region**
Day 14	**Kinjila to Uige**
Day 15	**Damengola Forest**
Day 16	**Uige to Kissama National Park**
Day 17	**Kissama National Park to Cuanza River**
Day 18	**Cuanza River to Luanda & final departure**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Sequence of numbers
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Base map
View in Google Earth
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Cacuso
Malanje
Xá-Muteba
Capenda Camulemba
Parque Nacional da Quiçama
Cacolo
Porto Amboim
Reserva Natural Integral do Luando
Waku Kungo
Andulo
Camanon
Luando
Catabola
Angola
Lobito
Alto Hama
Kuito
Chinguar
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Huambo
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Dombe Grande
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Parque Nacional
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Birding sites in detail



Cinderella Waxbill by David Hoddinott

Tundavala Escarpment. This incredible site offers the most dramatic scenery in the country, with huge cliffs dropping over 1 000m (3 000 feet) onto the coastal plain below. Here we will spend our time exploring the extensive grasslands, patches of Afro-montane forest and rugged gorges at an approximate altitude of around 2 200m (7 000 feet).

Tundavala is one of few sites for the little-known and recently rediscovered Swierstra's Spurfowl, while other Angolan specialities that occur here are the fabulous Angola Cave Chat, the uncommon Angola Slaty Flycatcher, common Red-backed Mousebird and the very localised Ludwig's Double-collared Sunbird. Other birds recorded during our earlier visits include Lanner Falcon, Freckled Nightjar, Bradfield's and Alpine Swifts, Black-collared Barbet, Greater Striped Swallow, Hartlaub's Babbler, Striped Pipit, Short-toed Rock Thrush, Bocage's Akalat, Wailing and Wing-snapping Cisticolas, Green-capped and Salvadori's sub-species of Yellow-bellied Eremomela, Oustalet's Sunbird, Jameson's Firefinch, Angola Waxbill (a fairly recent split from Yellow-bellied Waxbill), Yellow-crowned Canary and Cinnamon-breasted Bunting.

Namibe area. Today we will bird the area around the seaside village of Namibe. Our first main birding site will be the absolutely breath-taking Leba Scarp. This area has produced some top-class birding during our previous tours; here we have recorded Augur Buzzard, Grey Kestrel, Fülleborn's Longclaw, Rockrunner and the delightful Cinderella Waxbill.

Once we reach the bottom of the escarpment, the scenery will become progressively more arid until we enter the Namib Desert's gravel plains. We will find a wide range of birds in these varied habitats, including many species previously considered to be Namibian specials. In particular, we will look out for Ludwig's Bustard, Red-crested Korhaan, Namaqua Sandgrouse, Bare-cheeked Babbler, Rosy-faced Lovebird, Monteiro's and Damara Red-billed Hornbills, Gray's, Stark's, Karoo (Benguela) Long-billed and Sabota (Bradfield's) Larks, Karoo and Tractrac Chats, Mountain Chat, Kalahari Scrub Robin, Chat Flycatcher, the cute White-tailed Shrike (very common here), Ashy and Carp's Tits, Pale-winged and Meves's Starlings, Dusky Sunbird, Cape Sparrow and Lark-like Bunting. Other species may include Black-chested Snake Eagle, Pale Chanting Goshawk, Purple Roller, Half-collared Kingfisher and Golden-tailed Woodpecker.



Carp's Tit by Glen Valentine



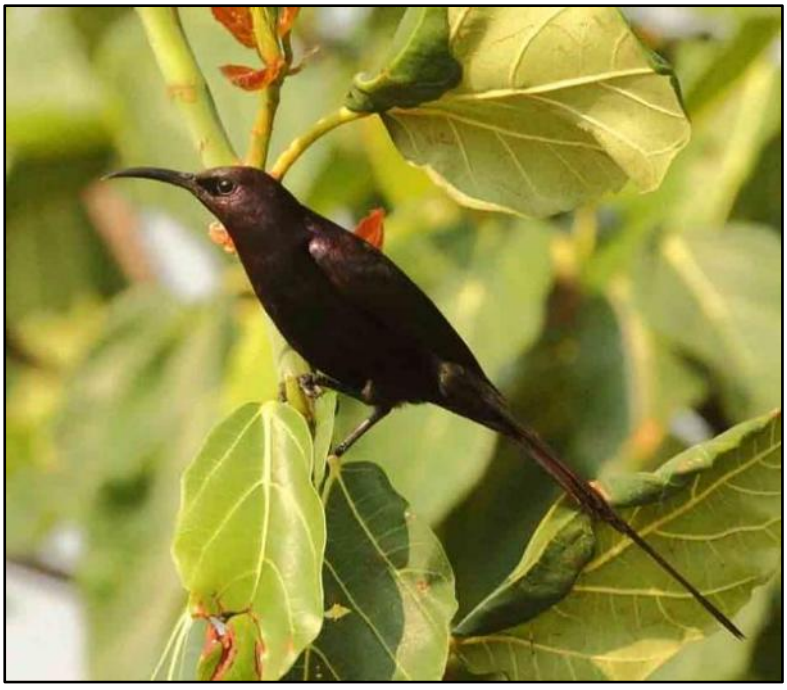
Damara Red-billed Hornbill by Keith Valentine

Lubango to Benguela. On this drive, we'll keep a look out for raptors including Brown Snake Eagle, the majestic Bateleur and elusive Ayres's Hawk-Eagle. We may also see Great Spotted Cuckoo, bizarre Böhm's Spinetail, African Grey Hornbill and Southern White-crowned Shrike.

Benguela. We'll search amongst some impressive kopjies (rocky hills), dry thickets and huge Baobab trees for a number of species at the northern edge of their range, some of which one would expect to see only in Namibia. Possibilities include Hartlaub's Spurfowl, Verreaux's Eagle, Pearl-spotted Owlet, Common Scimitarbill, Acacia Pied Barbet, Brown-backed Honeybird, beautiful Pririt Batis, Swamp Boubou, Brubru, Black-chested Prinia, Barred Wren-Warbler, Red-headed Weaver, stunning Violet-eared Waxbill and White-throated Canary.

Mount Moco. We have two days to explore the habitats around Angola's highest mountain, including remnant Afromontane forest patches, miombo scrub and associated grasslands. Key targets include Swierstra's Spurfowl, Laura's Woodland Warbler, Bocage's Akalat, Margaret's Batis, Angola Slaty Flycatcher, Angola Waxbill and a range of miombo specialities.

The mountain also supports several other specialities, and we will traverse various habitats including an isolated patch of Afromontane Forest, miombo scrub and associated grasslands to have the best chance of seeking out these specials. In addition, we'll keep a careful look overhead for the Fernando Po race of African Black Swift.



Bocage's Sunbird by David Hoddinott



Angola Cave Chat by Reece Dodd

Slowly working the forest patches, we'll search for the delightful Laura's Woodland Warbler (rare), which usually alerts one to its presence by its sweet song, smart Bocage's Akalat that forages in the forest undergrowth, Margaret's Batis, and the endemic Angola Slaty Flycatcher. Both Bar-tailed Trogon and Orange Ground Thrush have been recorded; they are however rare, and we would count ourselves very fortunate to see them!

Time spent in the miombo scrub should produce a different set of specials, including Ludwig's Double-collared, Oustalet's and Bocage's Sunbirds, Black-collared Bulbul, African Spotted Creeper and Anchieta's Barbet. Several seedeaters can be seen in the area including the interesting Angola Waxbill, while an isolated population of Dusky Twinspot also occurs here. In the grasslands, we may be lucky to find Finsch's Francolin, African Marsh Harrier, Common and Black-rumped Buttonquails, African Grass Owl, Marsh Tchagra, Fan-tailed Grassbird, Capped Wheatear and Angola Lark. Other notable species occurring in the area include Red-necked Buzzard, Montane Nightjar, Schalow's Turaco, Coppery-tailed Coucal, Western Tinkerbird, Black-backed Barbet, Olive Woodpecker, African Golden Oriole, White-tailed Blue Flycatcher, Rufous-bellied and Miombo Tits, Cabanis's Greenbul, Black-and-rufous Swallow, Striped Pipit, Evergreen Forest Warbler, Huambo, Wailing and Red-faced (Lepe) Cisticolas, Sooty Chat, Miombo Rock Thrush, Grey Apalis, African Hill Babbler, Bronze Sunbird, Red-headed Weaver, Fawn-breasted Waxbill, Orange-winged Pytilia, Thick-billed Seedeater, Yellow-crowned and Black-faced Canaries and Cabanis's Bunting.

Bailundo to Kumbira Forest area. En route we will make several roadside stops along any productive areas of forest and enjoy a further taste of the exciting Angolan scarp forest birding.



Gabela Akalat by Reece Dodd

Loud, raucous calls here betray the presence of the exquisitely beautiful Red-crested Turaco, Angola's most attractive endemic, and we will find this delightful bird rather common in these forests. The impossibly deep hoots emanating from the understory don't belong to some undiscovered giant owl, but to another giant, the beautiful Gabon Coucal. Bird parties abound, and the commonest bird appears to be Falkenstein's (Yellow-necked) Greenbul, which always seems to pop into view whilst scanning! Other highly sought-after species here include the diminutive



Braun's Bushshrike by Reece Dodd

Yellow-throated Nicator, the recently elevated, endemic Hartert's Camaroptera, Rufous-vented Paradise Flycatcher, Carmelite and Ludwig's Double-collared Sunbird, as well as Red-headed Bluebill.

Other potential species in this forest patch include African Emerald Cuckoo, Blue Malkoha, the bizarre Eastern Yellow-billed Barbet, Western Tinkerbird, Black Saw-wing, Yellow-whiskered Greenbul, Fraser's Rufous and African Thrushes, Buff-throated and Black-throated Apalises, Green Hylia, African Blue Flycatcher, Pink-footed Puffback, Green-headed, Collared, Olive-bellied and Superb Sunbirds, Dark-backed and Black-necked Weavers, Red-headed Malimbe, Grey-headed Nigrita and Black-and-white Mannikin.

Kumbira Forest, Gabela. We set out to explore the forests and woodlands of Kumbira. During previous tours, we have found many of the very special birds of Gabela Forest here, including Gabela Akalat in good numbers (previously only known from nine specimens!), Pale-olive Greenbul, the little-known Pulitzer's Longbill, Forest Scrub Robin, Angola Batis, Monteiro's and Gabela Bushshrikes and Red-crested Turaco.

Other species seen here include the isolated Angolan forms of Dusky Tit, Brown-chested Alethe, both Hairy-breasted and Naked-faced Barbets (all possibly distinct and localized enough to attain full species status), Palm-nut Vulture, African Harrier-Hawk, Red-necked Buzzard, Long-crested Eagle, Black Sparrowhawk, African Goshawk, African Hobby, Tambourine and Blue-spotted Wood Doves, African Pygmy, Brown-hooded and Striped Kingfishers, Crowned and Trumpeter Hornbills, Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird, Pallid Honeyguide, Brown-eared, Elliot's and Buff-spotted Woodpeckers, African Broadbill, Petit's and Purple-throated Cuckooshrikes, Brown Illadopsis, Black-throated and Buff-throated Apalises, African Yellow Warbler, Ashy Flycatcher, Blue-headed Crested Flycatcher, Gorgeous (sometimes split as Perrin's), Orange-breasted and Many-colored Bushshrikes, Mackinnon's Shrike, Red-capped Robin-Chat, Southern Hyliota, Black-throated and Yellow-bellied Wattle-eyes, Carmelite, Green-headed and Olive Sunbirds, the attractive Brown-capped and Vieillot's Black Weavers, Green Twinspot, Red-faced Crimsonwing, Grey (Black-tailed) Waxbill and Black-faced Canary.



Pulitzer's Longbill by Reece Dodd



Angola Waxbill by Reece Dodd

Tombingo Forest (N'Dalatando). An interesting selection of forest birds occur here and we should have enough time to search for Red-fronted Parrot, Piping and Congo Pied Hornbills, Blue Malkoha, Naked-faced Barbet, Green-backed, Brown-eared and Yellow-crested Woodpeckers, Bocage's Bushshrike, Black-winged Oriole, Honeyguide Greenbul, Yellow-browed Camaroptera, Rufous-crowned Eremomela, African Shrike-flycatcher, Sooty Flycatcher, Chestnut-winged Starling, Green-throated and Superb Sunbirds and Red-headed Malimbe, amongst others. At dusk, we'll keep a look-out for the crepuscular Bat Hawk and African Wood Owl.

Calandula Falls. The fabulous Calandula Falls are the second most expansive falls in Africa - after Victoria Falls, and well worth a visit!

Kinjila area. We'll make our way to some nearby patches of gallery forest where one of the prize targets for the entire tour resides - the highly sought-after and very attractive White-headed Robin-Chat. This location is where the type specimen of this most stunning and impressive of the robin-chats was collected, and where it



Calandula Falls by Reece Dodd



Red-crested Turaco by Reece Dodd

was rediscovered after 40 years - found to be fairly common in 2005. It really is a beautiful species, aside from being extremely localised, having an interesting colour combination and unusual behaviour of running along branches. It is also one of the largest of all robin-chats. However, it is rather shy, so patience and perseverance are necessary to see it, but with our time here we should manage good views of this mega in every sense of the word! Yet another highlight of this area is Brazza's Martin, which we enjoyed stunning views of over the years.

Apart from the robin-chat, there are several interesting species that we may see in the gallery forest. These include the cute White-spotted Flufftail, Ross's Turaco, Broad-billed Roller, Grey-headed and Blue-breasted Kingfishers, stunning Double-toothed Barbet, Black-throated Wattle-eye, Square-tailed Drongo, Yellow-gorgeted Leaflove, White-chinned Prinia, Brown Illadopsis, Grey-winged Robin-Chat, Brown-headed Apalis, Bannerman's Sunbird and Dark-backed Weaver.

In the climax miombo woodlands we will search for African Hobby, Meyer's Parrot, Levaillant's, Black and Thick-billed Cuckoos, African Barred Owlet, Pale-billed Hornbill, the localized Anchieta's and lovely Black-backed Barbets, White-breasted Cuckooshrike, Whistling Cisticola, scarce Miombo Wren-Warbler, Arrow-marked Babbler, Sharp-tailed Starling, Miombo Scrub Robin and stunning Anchieta's, Western Violet-backed and Copper Sunbirds. Wetlands nearby may produce African Finfoot, Chirping Cisticola, Marsh Widowbird and Red-headed Quelea. In the evening, we will look for African Scops Owl and Pennant-winged Nightjar.



Gabela Helmetshrike by Reece Dodd

Damengola Forest. We have time to explore these wonderful northern scarp forests. Our prime target here is the lovely endemic Braun's Bushshrike. We have a good chance of finding this very recently rediscovered species. This is yet another extremely localised endemic that very few birders have seen. Other forest species we may see here include Afep and Western Bronze-naped Pigeons, Great Blue and Guinea Turacos, African Emerald Cuckoo, Dusky and Olive Long-tailed Cuckoos, Speckled Mousebird, Blue-throated Roller, Chocolate-backed Kingfisher, the beautiful Black Bee-eater, impressive



White-fronted Wattle-eye by Reece Dodd

Black-casqued Hornbill, Speckled and Red-rumped Tinkerbirds, Cassin's Honeybird, Elliot's Woodpecker, Many-colored Bushshrike, Pink-footed Puffback, Velvet-mantled Drongo, Rufous-vented Paradise Flycatcher, Swamp Palm Bulbul, Green Hylia, Tit-Hylia, Yellow Longbill, Banded Prinia, Grey-backed Camaroptera, Dusky-blue Flycatcher, Blue-throated Brown and Little Green Sunbirds, Yellow-mantled Weaver, Crested Malimbe, Woodhouse's Antpecker, and White-breasted and Chestnut-breasted Nigritas.

During our 2011 tour, we also recorded White-collared Oliveback, a new species for the country, and a major range extension to boot. It is also a species that we have since recorded several times. This is, in fact, a very under-birded area and hence there may well be more exciting discoveries awaiting us here! In the surrounding scrub and grasslands, we'll watch for Blue-headed Coucal, Blue-breasted Bee-eater, Brown-backed Scrub Robin and Brown Twinspot. Other species that have been rarely recorded in the region include White-crested Tiger Heron, Hartlaub's Duck, Congo Serpent Eagle, Cassin's Hawk-Eagle, Red-headed Lovebird, White-bellied and Shining-blue Kingfishers, Black-and-white-casqued Hornbill, Bristle-nosed Barbet, Lyre-tailed Honeyguide, African Piculet, Angola Greenbul, White-tailed Ant Thrush, Cassin's Flycatcher, Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher, Western Black-headed Batis, Scaly-breasted Illadopsis, Fraser's Sunbird, Pale-fronted Nigrita and Black-bellied Seedcracker; however, we can count ourselves particularly lucky if we see any of these species!

Kissama National Park. This park protects 110km (68 miles) of coastline south of Luanda, as well as a variety of great birding habitats that include West Africa's most southerly mangroves, the vast Cuanza River floodplain that teems with water birds, riverine forests and a mix of dry woodland types.

Birding in Kissama produces an eclectic mix of both dry country and forest species, and other notable potential birds Little Sparrowhawk, Grey Kestrel, the near-endemic Rüppell's Parrot, Black Scimitarbill, Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill (the local smaller form is likely to be split as a separate species), Petit's Cuckooshrike, Green and Long-billed Crombecs, the near-endemic Rufous-tailed Palm Thrush and Angola Batis. We should find the lovely White-fronted Wattle-eye, which prefers dense riverine thickets, and flocks of Golden-backed Bishop foraging nearby. Over three hundred species have been recorded in the reserve, and we will no doubt be kept very busy during our time here!



Rufous-tailed Palm Thrush by Clayton Burne

We'll also visit a remote dry riverbed surrounded by a wonderful riparian forest, that allows easy access for birding the best



Monteiro's Bushshrike by Reece Dodd

sections of this forest. On previous tours we scored with not one but two groups of the mythical Gabela Helmetshrike! Seen by only a few birders, this will no doubt be our primary target in this fantastic area. Other great birds recorded here include Red-necked Spurfowl, elusive Grey-striped Spurfowl, Olive Long-tailed Cuckoo (a major southern range extension for this species), Narina Trogon, Yellow-bellied Greenbul, Monteiro's Bushshrike, Forest Scrub Robin, Yellow-bellied Wattle-eye and Swamp (Gabon) Boubou.

Thereafter we will make our way to the northern part of the park and, if we have found our targets and time allows, we can visit Musulu Lagoon, which harbours a wonderful selection of gulls, terns and waders. These include Kelp and Grey-headed Gulls, Gull-billed, Caspian and West African Crested Terns, Eurasian Curlew, Bar-tailed Godwit, Sanderling, Ruddy Turnstone, Little Stint – and more.

Cuanza River. This stunning mangrove-lined river can be quite productive, and here we will search for Blue-breasted Kingfisher, Angola Swallow, the near-endemic Bubbling Cisticola, Mangrove (Mouse-brown) Sunbird, only recently discovered along this river and a major southern range extension of this species, and, if we are fortunate, the lovely Orange Weaver.

The Cuanza River mouth provides huge sandbars for roosting terns and waders and we are likely to find Caspian, West African Crested (a flock of over one thousand in 2011!) and Sandwich Terns, plus a number of waders including Common Greenshank, Curlew Sandpiper, Eurasian Whimbrel, Grey Plover and White-fronted Plover. Other possible species include Osprey, African Fish Eagle and Palm-nut Vulture. African Manatees do occur in the river but we'd be exceptionally fortunate to see one!



Red-backed Mousebird by Reece Dodd

As in many parts of Africa, some habitats are under increasing pressure from agriculture, charcoal production, logging and other land-use changes. Habitat condition varies considerably, and some formerly important areas have become degraded. Nevertheless, Angola retains extensive areas of excellent habitat and continues to offer outstanding opportunities for its endemic and highly localised birds.

Tour Grading & Key

Overall Ease		Tour pace is moderate to fast with several long travel days. Not suitable for dedicated or avid photographers; inexperienced birders; or anyone with mobility or health challenges.
Birding Ease		Mostly easy, rewarding birding. Some endemics are low density or are moderately difficult.
Accommodation		Generally comfortable & of a good standard, particularly given the remote locations. Some reliability issues with hot water, electricity or air-conditioning may occur.
Walking / Trails		Mostly short walks on flat ground & roadside birding. Some longer hikes possible.
Vehicles / Roads		4x4 Landcruiser style vehicles. Numerous long drives. Unsealed roads are variable, sealed roads in decent condition. Some patches of very poor road.
Photography		Worthwhile to good. No dedicated hides. Limited dense forest.
Annoyances		Sit-down meals are generally good, although choices can be limited & meals often consist primarily of meat + starch. Packed breakfasts/lunches can be very simple. Weather is warm to hot, with some light rain possible.

Financial Arrangements and Important Notes

Tour dates, prices, single supplement, approximate flight costs and tour spaces are displayed on our website.

Tour inclusions:

- All meals from dinner on day 1 to lunch on day 18;
- Drinking water;
- All lodgings;
- All ground transportation during the tour;
- All reserve & historical site entrance fees;
- All guiding services
- Tips for local guides, drivers and services.

Tour exclusions:

- Visa fees;
- ANY flights;
- Any beverages (including mini-bar charges at hotels);
- Optional excursions;
- Special gratuities;
- 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.

Tipping: As noted above, gratuities (drivers, hotel staff, restaurants etc.) are included on this tour. However, this does NOT include your Rockjumper leader/s. If you feel that they have given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip them at your discretion.

- **Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing. The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates.**
- **Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registrations, a small group supplement will be offered to confirm the tour.**
- **Tour prices are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.**
- **The designated tour leader/s may be changed at short notice due to unforeseen circumstances.**
- **The itinerary is indicative only. Changes may need to be made to the order in which the tour is conducted, or some of the venues we visit closer to departure. We will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.**

- We have some travel days that may involve 8 hours or more in the vehicle, excluding birding stops and possible traffic delays.
- The markedly improved road network throughout the country does mean that +- 90% of the tour is on asphalt roads.
- Not all lodges are close to our primary birding sites, meaning we may have to travel an hour or more in either direction.
- The more luggage you pack the less room there is in the vehicle, so it is important for your comfort and your fellow travellers that you do not over-pack. Kindly stick to 20 kg (44 lb) for check in luggage and 8 kg (+-18 lb) for hand luggage.
- This tour is conducted at a reasonably quick pace to try and track down as many Angolan endemics and specialities as possible. Nonetheless, the rewards of exploring and birding Angola are truly tremendous for those with a sense of adventure, and a desire to visit one of the least birded countries in the world!

Arrival and Departure Details

The tour departs from Lubango on day 1, as this is an arrival day, you are free to arrive at any time. The tour will conclude at Luanda International Airport on the afternoon of day 18.

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.

Dr António Agostinho Neto International Airport, Luanda (IATA: NBJ) is main port of entry for international flights. Lubango Mukanka Airport (IATA: SDD) serves Lubango and is usually reached via a domestic connection from Luanda. Internal flights in Angola have historically been subject to delays and schedule changes, although the new airport infrastructure and ongoing upgrades are improving reliability. Do allow sufficient connection time, checking in at least 2 hours before domestic departures.

Visa requirements differ by country, nationality of the traveller and duration and purpose of your intended stay. It may be necessary to obtain a visa or an electronic travel authorization in advance of your travel. It is therefore vitally important that you check with your travel agent/consulate/embassy for exact visa requirements.

DO NOT book any flights until the Rockjumper Team have officially confirmed the tour.