



São Tomé & Príncipe



Obo National Park

Discovered on St Thomas' day in 1470 by Portuguese navigators, Sao Tomé which was uninhabited, is like a jewel in the Gulf of Guinea off the Gabonese coast.

This ancient volcanic cone culminating in Pico de São Tomé (2 024 metres asl), offers dramatic landscapes with torrents and waterfalls on its slopes, white and black sand beaches, sheer cliffs over the sea, tropical forest and extensive cocoa plantations with their beautiful “ roças ” (colonial houses).

The native flora (700 species including a hundred orchids) and fauna (birds and marine turtles) are of particular interest as many species are endemic. The Obo Natural Park was created recently and helps to protect the unique natural heritage of Sao Tome island. From October to February, turtles can be observed laying their eggs at Praja de Micolo.

👉 Highlights :

- You will discover an **island rarely visited** offering colonial history, volcanic landscapes, tropical forests and the kindness of its people..
- **Endemic fauna and flora, great diversity of landscapes** from the sea coast to the summit of the island.
- **Winter** : you will take part in protection of **marine turtle nests** and you may see **females laying**.
- You will help to **protect Obo National Park**.



☛ Suggested programmes

There is many possible itineraries on São Tomé island. See below the ones recommended by ECOFAC.

Walk to Lagoa Amélia (3 hours)

- **D1 Bom Sucesso – Lagoa Amélia – Bom Sucesso**

Walk from Bom Sucesso (1.115 meters asl) to reach Lagoa Amélia, strange volcanic crater deep in the forest of the Obo National Park. On the way back, visit of the Bom Sucesso botanical garden where it is possible to see more than 100 different orchids from São Tomé.

Walks between Bom Sucesso and Bombain

- **D1 Bom Sucesso - Bombain**

Morning departure from Bom Sucesso (1.115 m. asl) to reach Lagoa Amélia; . 6 hours walk on a trail which passes through the old roças of Nova Ceilão and Zampalma. Follow the Rio Abade to reach the roça of Bombain .

Observation of marine turtle nesting

The beaches on the north, east, and south east of the island are used by nesting marine turtles. Five species can be seen in São Tomé : the green turtle, the leatherback, the olive riddley, the hawksbill and the caouanne. The nesting period is between October and February. It is possible to see females at night digging their nests and laying eggs.

Bird watching

São Tomé is also an ornithologist's paradise : 143 species are known for the archipelago with a high degree of endemism. Several rare endemic species can be observed : Principe white-eye, São Tomé short tail, giant weaver, São Tomé giant sun bird, Maroon pigeon, Dwarf olive Ibis, São Tomé fiscal shrike, etc...

For bird lovers we highly recommend the guide book : “ Oiseaux de São Tomé et Príncipe ” written by Patrice Christy and edited by Ecofac.

Good birding areas are : São João dos Angolares, Lagoa Amélia (mountain forest) ; São Miguel, Xufexufe and Quija (lowland forest) ; between Diogo Nunes and Lagoa Azul (north coast savannahs)

Ascension of Monte Pico

-**D1 Bom Sucesso – Monte Pico (7 hours walk)**

Departure from Bom Sucesso to begin the climb through primary forest on the slopes of Monte Pico.

Passing through Calvario (1.525 m), after a difficult exposed section camp at 1.875 meters. Night under canvas.

-**D2 Monte Pico – Neves (6 to 7 hours walk)**

Early morning final climb of one hour to reach the highest point of São Tomé (2.024 m). If no clouds, spectacular view of the island before the descent to Neves in the north part of the island.

➤ **Conditions :**

- **Logistic :**

To organise these itineraries we suggest you to contact the following operators.

MISTRAL VOYAGE – CP 297 – Mato Quitxiba – SAO TOME

Tel : (239 12) 21 246/ 23 344 – Fax : (239 12) 22 142

Email : mvoyages@cstome.net

FLOGÀ Excursões e Turismo – CP984 - Budo Budo, 45A - SAO TOME

Tel : (239 12) 24 436 - Fax : (239 12) 24 394 – email : flogatours@cstome.net

NAVETUR-EQUATOIR – Luis M. Beirão : Email : navequatur@cstome.net

- **Security and fitness level :**

- As the terrain is steep some of the walks are strenuous (Monte Pico for example) specially when it is raining. All participants must be in very good shape.
- It is strongly recommended to take an insurance for medical repatriation.

- **Seasons :**

wet season : mid-september to mid-december
mid-march to june

dry season : mid-december to mid-march
july to mid-september

The island contains an extraordinary variety of landscapes from 0 to 2.000 meters above sea level) and has a high annual rainfall (varying from 700 in the north, to 7.000 mm in the south) Temperature : $\pm 26^{\circ}\text{C}$ on the coast, but much cooler at altitude (sometimes 15°C). Humidity relatively high (> 80%).

➤ **Practical Information :**

Health

- Vaccination against yellow fever is compulsory
- anti-malarial treatment is essential.
- Check polio, tetanus and B.C.G.
- Meningitis (A+C), Hepatitis (A+B) and Typhoid are recommended.

Formalities, language and currency

- valid passport (at least 6 months) and visa (50 US\$ in 2000) that you can get on arrival at the airport.
- Official language : Portuguese, but French is often understood and spoken
- Local currency is the dobra. (in september 1998, 1 FF = 1160 dobras). Because of constant variations in the rate of exchange, it is recommended that visitors bring foreign currency (US\$). Credit cards are little used, and are not accepted by the banks, and only by some hotels.

Flights and local time

- Local time is GMT
- The São Tomé e Príncipe archipelago is volcanic in origin. It lies 300 km off the coast of Gabon, on the equator. Sao Tomé, its capital city, is served by TAP from Lisbon, Portugal (6h flight), by Air Gabon from Libreville in Gabon (1h flight). Air São Tomé flies to Libreville.

➡ **To know more about :**

• **Wildlife watching :**

- **Marine turtles** : the beaches on the north, east, and south east of the island are used by nesting marine turtles. Five species can be seen in Sao Tomé : the green turtle, the leatherback, the olive riddley, the hawksbill and the caouanne. The nesting period is between october and february. Il is possible to see females laying at night on the beaches.

- **Birds** : São Tomé is also an ornithologist's paradise : 143 species are known for the archipelago. with a high degree of endemism, several rare endemic species can be observed : Principe white-eye, São Tomé short tail, giant weaver, São Tomé giant sun bird, Maroon pigeon, Dwarf olive Ibis, São Tomé fiscal shrike, , etc...

• **Plants :**

For those who enjoy hiking the luxuriant montane forest which covers the steep slopes of the island provides excellent possibilities. The vegetation in São Tome is special : since the island has never been connected to the African mainland, its flora shows a high level of endemism : e.g. the São Tomé giant begonia (up to 3 metres high), several orchids and tree ferns.