



TOUR INFORMATION FOR GHANA

These notes are designed to help you prepare fully for the tour. Please read carefully.

ENTERING GHANA: United Kingdom citizens will need a passport valid for six months or more at the time of arrival in Ghana and a visa. This visa must be applied for individually at either the Ghana High Commission in London (tel: 020 8342 7500 or 020 8342 7550) or Ghana Consulate in Dublin (tel: 353 1 676 3408). At the time of writing postal applications must be completed in duplicate and can take up to two weeks to process, however please check the High Commission's website for the most up-to-date information.
<http://www.ghanahighcommissionuk.com>

Citizens of other nations should contact their nearest Ghanaian Embassy for entry requirements.

Please note that a single entry visa is only valid for 3 months from the date of issue so do not apply too soon.

There are visa service agencies that can provide an information pack on how to obtain a visa. They will also process your application for you however they will charge a handling and processing fee.

As with many African countries, visitors must be in possession of a current medical vaccination certificate for Yellow Fever. You will be asked to show this on entry into Ghana.

It is always a good idea to take a photocopy of your passport and air ticket with you when travelling abroad. They can prove invaluable in helping you get replacements if your originals are lost or stolen. Obviously you should keep the photocopies in a separate bag to the originals.

TIME DIFFERENCE: There is no time difference between Ghana and Greenwich Mean Time.

FLIGHT: The major flight operators (KLM and BA) usually close their check in desks in Accra 2 hours before departure. With that in mind we will check in at least 4 hours before the scheduled departure time (so you may wish to save a book to read at the airport).

CURRENCY: The currency is the Cedi (GHS). This can be purchased from Accra airport. As the tour price includes all travel, hotel and main meal costs, you need bring only enough to cover gifts, snacks, extra drinks, or other purchases of a purely personal nature. Drinking water is provided throughout.

LANGUAGE: English is the official language, but many other African languages are spoken including Twi, Fante, Ga and Ewe.

CLIMATE: There is still the chance of heavy rain during the trip, especially at Ankasa and at Kakum. Temperatures will be very hot (and very humid) with typical day time temperatures around 30 to 40 degrees C. The temperature can drop at night, especially in the north, but not usually below 25 degrees C

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ALTITUDE: All our birding is done at relatively low altitudes.

PACE OF TOUR AND DAILY ROUTINE: Due to Ghana's proximity to the equator the middle of the day can be very hot, and the bird activity much reduced. Therefore we will tailor our birding to suit the climate. On most days we'll have breakfast at 4.30am or 5am, then return from our mornings birding for lunch between 1200 and 1300. If you think you may require something more to keep you going until lunch, you may want to bring some cereal bars with you (our ground agents supply a limited – but seemingly unending - selection of biscuits). Lunch is usually back at our accommodation but occasionally we take a packed lunch. On some days we will then take time out to relax in the middle of the day before heading out into the field again around 3pm until dark (6pm). On several nights we will stay out after dark in search of nightjars and owls, which will mean a late dinner (8.30 – 9pm, after the picathartes maybe later) and no time to shower beforehand. Otherwise in the evenings we will try to allow time to shower before dinner, after which we will do the day's checklist. The days when we move to and from Mole National Park are effectively 'travel' days with the whole day taken up with driving. However we will stop when required or when we see a good bird.

Most of the birding will be done along good paths and tracks, however please see below for exceptions to this rule. On most morning walks we will be away from the vehicle for up to 4 hours. The distance we walk depends entirely on how many birds we see. In Mole, because of the presence of large animals, we will have an armed guard with us and it will not be possible to leave the group to return to the bus as the guard must be with us at all times.

KAKUM CANOPY WALKWAY: At over 120 feet high the canopy walkway really is something different. It was built by a Canadian company and the locals have been trained in its maintenance. Along its course are stable viewing platforms. It is wide enough for just one person at a time, and it is best to allow the person in front of you to get over halfway to the next viewing platform before starting your walk. All our birding will be done from the platforms, where there is space for the leader to set up a telescope. On one afternoon we may go back to the canopy walkway and stay until it is dark, meaning a **head torch is essential** for the return walk.

ANKASA: The conditions here are ever changing. Our journey usually involves using 4x4 vehicles followed by some muddy walks. Wellington/rubber boots are useful but not essential

FOREST TRAILS: Forest birding can be very rewarding but there can also be periods of inactivity. On the narrow trails we will operate a rotation system so that each person has time behind the leader. In a few places we may go off trail.

HEALTH: **It is essential that you contact your own doctor to obtain the latest information on the regions you are visiting.** Please contact your doctor well in advance of your tour's departure as some medication must be initiated weeks before the period of possible exposure.

It is recommended that you are up-to-date on routine vaccinations. These include measles-mumps-rubella (MMR), diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis, varicella (chickenpox), polio, and your yearly flu jab. As with all African countries, visitors must be in possession of a current vaccination certificate for Yellow Fever.

A malaria preventative and up-to-date inoculations are strongly recommended. Useful information on all aspects of malaria, including how to reduce your chances of being bitten can be found at the website <http://www.preventingmalaria.info>.

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Do not drink or brush your teeth with the tap water - bottled water will be widely available. Mild stomach upsets are possible in Ghana and we strongly suggest bringing an adequate supply of a diarrhoea treatment such as Imodium or Arret. Several sachets of re-hydrate powder can also be very useful as they replace the sugars and salts lost during bouts of diarrhoea.

It may be difficult to obtain any special medication during the tour, so bring all you are likely to need.

For further information on health advice refer to the Medical Advisory Services for Travellers Abroad website www.masta-travel-health.com

ACCOMMODATION: Our hotels vary from standard hotels to simple guesthouses with more basic rooms. All have ensuite facilities and either a fan or in some instances air conditioning. Water and power can fail at any time. We will be spending two nights camping at Ankasa.

All the hotels have swimming pools except Ankasa (camping) and Bobiri. Clients may have opportunities to go swimming during their leisure time.

LAUNDRY: Although laundry maybe available at several hotels a stay of only one night is not normally long enough to have it returned in time. With multiple nights at Kakum and at Mole these will be ideal opportunities to have laundry cleaned with Mole, in particular, being a week into the trip.

ELECTRICITY: 220/240V AC 50Hz - 13 amp square pin plug (the same as in the UK) are compatible in most hotels but every now and again we come across the more typical 2 pin European-style sockets. Power cuts are frequent. There are sockets available whilst camping at Ankasa for charging camera batteries/mobile phones. An international travel plug is useful and can be bought in most airport departure lounges. You may find the following website helpful: <http://www.power-plugs-sockets.com>.

FOOD: Food is generally adequate but not one of the highlights of the tour. Breakfasts typically consist of toast, jam, omelette and baked beans. Lunch will either be a buffet or we can order from the limited menu. Dinner usually consists of chicken or fish, served with rice or chips. There will be plenty of opportunity to try local dishes which our Ashanti guide will be able to recommend. Most popular foods are red-red, fufu, ground nut soup and fried yam or plantain. Vegetarians may find some of the options offered to them monotonous (such as omelettes) or bland (such as vegetable stews).

Sunbird tours are all-inclusive and no refunds can be issued for any tour meals participants choose to miss. While we will try to do all we can to accommodate the requirements of all participants, please note that we cannot guarantee all causes of food allergies can be avoided at every destination. Many restaurants offer set menus and are unable to accommodate all special requests within a group. Thus, participants with significant food allergies or special dietary needs should bring appropriate foods with them for those times when their needs can, regrettably, not be accommodated. Our tours are carefully scheduled to ensure the best possible birding experience and although the leaders will do all they can to make sure the group eats at a reasonable time, sometimes early or late lunches and/or evening meals cannot be avoided. Any participants who need to eat at specific times may need to bring supplemental food with them.

DRINKS: Bottled water, a soft drink or a beer (or wine if appropriate) are provided at meals, as is coffee or tea. In addition we keep a supply of bottled water on the tour vehicles. Bottled or filtered water may also be provided in some rooms where we stay.

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INTERNET AND MOBILE PHONE ACCESS: Our hotels have reasonably good Wi-Fi connections. Mobile phone access is very good near our lodging locations but can be intermittent when in the field. During our time at Ankasa and Bobiri there would be limited phone and internet connection. If you need to make a telephone call at either of these two places you need to inform the leader, or local guide, who will take you to an area with better reception.

FIELD CLOTHING: Dress will be informal throughout the tour. Culturally it is acceptable to wear shorts and T-shirts, however long sleeved shirts and long trousers help protect from mosquitoes, thorny plants and the intense sun. Lightweight and loose clothing will be best for the hot and humid conditions. A good sun hat is essential. Sandals are ideal for use around the hotels and swimming pools but walking trainers/boots should be worn in the field. At Mole the wildlife guard will not let you walk in the park if you are wearing sandals. The wet and muddy conditions at Ankasa are almost bad enough to warrant rubber boots although most people just accept that their walking boots will get very muddy.

MISCELLANEOUS EQUIPMENT: Please bring the following:

Alarm clock	Head-torch or flashlight and extra batteries
Notebook and pencil	Sun-glasses
Small rucksack/shoulder bag	Field guide
Plastic bags	Drinks bottle
Insect repellent	Sun cream
Personal medication	Small cushion
Insect head net	(helps while waiting for the Picathartes)
(the flies at Mole can be very troublesome)	
Waterproof bag for camera etc	
(if we are a long way from the vehicle and there is torrential rain please make sure you have adequate protection for any valuable equipment)	

Optional: Telescope & tripod (recommended if you have them), camera, film or memory cards, spare binoculars and spare spectacles (in case of loss or damage), field guide, swimwear. Telescopes are an advantage on this tour especially when we are birding away from the vehicles for any length of time, such as Sakomona Lagoon and Mole. However they cannot be used on the canopy walkway.

Note: The most effective insect repellents are those containing at least 35% of the active ingredient diethyltoluamide (DEET). The higher the percentage, the greater the effectiveness. However, care must be taken to avoid getting the repellent on to optical equipment as it dissolves rubber and plastic and can damage coated lenses. A reasonably effective alternative, which isn't corrosive, is Mosi-guard, produced by MASTA, and we recommend this. It is available in most high street chemist (including those at the airport). Camping supply stores sell a product containing permethrin 0.5%, which must be applied directly to clothing in advance of wearing and allowed to dry. This non-staining, odourless chemical is non-toxic to humans and protective on clothing through several launderings. Please make sure you never to spray insect repellent inside the vehicle or when you are standing close to other participants – it may drift on to their optical equipment.

LEADER'S EQUIPMENT: The leader will provide the following:

Telescope & tripod	First-aid kit
Field guides & reference books	Playback equipment
Spotlight	Laser pointer

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LUGGAGE: Our Final Information document, which will be sent to you approximately three weeks before departure, will give details about baggage weight and size restrictions imposed by the airline used for this tour.

If possible, please bring your luggage in soft-sided bags or cases (rather than large hard 'Samsonite'-type suitcases) as these pack more easily into our vehicles during the tour. Please note that on many tours there are no porters to carry your luggage so please ensure that **no bag is so heavy that you are unable to lift and carry it yourself**. As a general rule, in addition to using your luggage labels, it is a good idea to fix identification to the *inside* of each piece of luggage.

PHOTOGRAPHY: There will be plenty of opportunities photography throughout the tour although a telephoto lens will be needed for most of the birds and mammals we encounter. If you wish to 'digiscope' please ensure that you bring your own telescope as the leader's telescope will not be available for this. Make sure you bring plenty of memory cards or a facility for storing digital images. If using film bring all that you are likely to use as obtaining film locally may be difficult. Generally you should always ask before taking photographs of people whatever their nationality.

There will be plenty of opportunities to take photos of birds, mammals and scenery and the leaders will do all they can to accommodate anyone wishing to take photographs. However if you are a serious photographer please bear in mind that this is first and foremost a birdwatching tour. Please do not allow your photographic desires to conflict with other participants' birdwatching activities.

SMOKING: Smoking is not allowed in the vehicles or when the group is gathered for meals, checklists etc. If you are sharing a room with a non-smoker, please do not smoke in the room. If you smoke in the field, we ask that you do so well away and downwind from the group.

TRANSPORT: Transportation will be by comfortable air-conditioned minibus. At Atewa we will be taken up a forested hill by 4x4 vehicles which will take a couple of journeys. On the whole the roads are good, although potholes are abundant! We travel on some dirt roads but these are generally not too bad, although the other drivers cannot be spoken for! The journey to Mole takes about ten hours. The leader will arrange a seating rotation. Participants should be able to ride in any seat in tour vehicles.

TRAVEL INSURANCE: Travel insurance is essential and we insist that you take out suitable cover as soon as your tour is booked. If you are bringing expensive optical equipment or other valuable items, please make sure they are also adequately insured on your home contents policy, as most travel insurance policies do not cover very expensive individual items. You may wish to consult your insurance broker regarding coverage. Please also ensure that your policy covers you in the event of a medical emergency, cancellation of a trip or severe delays. Medical costs abroad can often be extremely expensive. Please note that Sunbird is not liable for any medical or repatriation costs resulting from injury or illness during a tour or for covering any costs resulting from a flight delay such as extra hotel accommodation.

If you wish, insurance can be arranged by Helen Fisher, Bullerwell Independent Insurance Brokers, 13 Goldington Road, Bedford, MK40 3JY. Tel: 01234-866964. Please contact Helen for a quote and she will send the schedule directly to you.

TIPPING: All tour-based tips are included in the tour price. These include tips to local guides, drivers, hotel porters, and waiters and waitresses. You only need to pay tips for personal services such as room service or drinks from the bar.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Borrow, Nik & Ron Demey. Birds of Ghana. 2010. Christopher Helm. (1408122790). **Recommended. Also available as an e-book through I-Tunes.**

F. Dowsett-Lemaire & R.J. Dowsett. The Birds of Ghana. An atlas and handbook. 2014. Tauraco Press, Liège.

Kingdon, J. The Kingdon Pocket Guide to African Mammals. 2004. A&C Black, London. ISBN 0-7136-6981-0. A pocket-sized version of the popular field guide which is much more 'user-friendly'. It contains the same illustrations and maps, but with less text. Also available as an e-book. **Recommended.**

OBTAINING BOOKS: Most of the field guides and the major ornithological references in print are available by mail order from booksellers specialising in natural history titles.

Natural History Book Service Ltd
Tel: 01803 865913
www.nhbs.co.uk

Subbuteo Books
Tel: 0870 010 9700
www.wildlifebooks.com

WildSounds
Tel: 01263 741100
www.wildsounds.co.uk

MAPS: An ITB 1:50000 map of Ghana seems to be the only good one on offer. This is published in Canada but is available from Amazon www.amazon.co.uk. However you might be able to get a copy from either of the following too:

The Map Shop
Tel: 01684 593146
www.themapshop.co.uk

Stanfords
Tel: 020 7836 1321
www.stanfords.co.uk

AFRICAN BIRD CLUB: Please support this charity which aims to raise money to support conservation projects, encourages an interest in the conservation of birds, and liaises with and promotes the work of existing societies within the region. You will find their contact details and further information about the Club at www.africanbirdclub.org

FINAL INFORMATION: Final information with instructions for meeting the group, hotel addresses etc., and your air tickets will be sent out about three weeks before the start of the tour. If you have any questions about the trip, please contact us.