



TOUR INFORMATION FOR ANGOLA

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

ENTERING ANGOLA: A certificate of Yellow Fever inoculation is essential to enter Angola. If you are unable to get one a letter from your GP explaining why you cannot have the inoculation will suffice (see section on Health).

A Tourist Visa is required to enter Angola and must be obtained in advance via the Angola Consulate in London's website. Visas cannot be obtained upon arrival. Full details can be found here <http://www.angola.org.uk/visas>. The Angola Consulate in London's telephone number is 020 729 18700 and email address is: info@consuladogeralangola-uk.org. We advise all participants to submit their online visa applications 30 days before the start of the tour to ensure the visa is issued in time and we can troubleshoot any issues that occur.

Citizens of other nations should contact their nearest Angolan Embassy for entry requirements. Be aware that some countries may need a longer time period in which to obtain a visa

There are visa service agencies that can provide you with 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. One such company is Trailfinders Visa Service <http://visas.trailfinders.com> (tel: 0207 368 1504).

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.

CURRENCY: The official currency and only legal tender is the Kwanza. Cash US dollars or Euros can be exchanged on arrival at the airport.. US dollars are most widely accepted; traveller's cheques are hard to exchange and most credit cards will not work in ATMs or credit card machines, even in Luanda. We strongly advise you to bring enough cash in US Dollars or Euros to last your entire stay. Old/worn notes and small denominations may be rejected, so bring recent-mint notes in good condition of \$50 or above.

As the tour price includes all travel, hotel, and main meal costs, you need only bring enough money to cover items of a personal nature.

LANGUAGE: Portuguese is the main language with English being the second language spoken. There are six different Bantu languages.

CLIMATE: We are visiting Angola at the end of the dry season. Although we are unlikely to encounter much rain, some light showers are possible. It will mostly be warm and sunny, but temperatures in the highlands are cooler and it can sometimes be windy.

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

PACE OF TOUR AND DAILY ROUTINE: This is not a particularly strenuous tour. Most walks are reasonably short and over good terrain. There will be one demanding hike when we visit Mount Moco, and there may be one or two other locations where we encounter some uneven ground or need to push through vegetation. As this tour is based entirely in hotels, and does not involve camping, there will be the need for some early starts to reach certain locations.

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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.

Malaria preventative is strongly recommended, even though we will be travelling at the end of the dry season when few mosquitoes are around and contracting malaria is least likely. Useful information on all aspects of malaria, including how to reduce your chances of being bitten can be found at the website <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/malaria/prevention>

Sunburn is a risk, so bring plenty of sunscreen.

Do not drink or brush your teeth with the tap water - bottled water will be widely available. Mild stomach upsets are possible 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.

Angola is known to have a significant number of landmines. However, all areas we will be birding in are mine free. As a precaution, when making roadside stops in new locations, we stay on roads.

Yellow Fever: Many doctors no longer give this inoculation to anyone over 60 years old and will also no longer give booster jabs. The current feeling is that one inoculation now lasts a lifetime. If you have never had a Yellow fever inoculation please speak to your doctor who will be able to issue you with an official letter explaining why he will not give this. The same applies if you have a certificate that is out of date – they used to last 10 years. **Some form of certificate or letter from a medical practitioner is essential to be able to enter the country.**

Insect repellent will provide adequate protection against biting insects. Many brands use diethyltoluamide (DEET) which, while providing the best protection, can be corrosive and therefore require care when using. There are many 'natural' and less-harmful repellents available from various outdoor supply stores.

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

ACCOMMODATION: Unlike other tours to Angola which use camping, this one is based entirely at hotels. The quality does vary but generally they are all of a reasonable standard. The only issue tends to be a lack of maintenance with various things such as plumbing and some lights not working. All the hotels have en suite facilities.

LAUNDRY: Laundry is available at hotels where we stay more than one night.

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. 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 mostly Angolan/Portuguese, which is generally heavily meat and starch based. Breakfasts will be simple – tea, coffee, cereal, fruit, bread and jam, and sometimes eggs. Lunches will be light and mostly taken in the field.

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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 are provided at meals, as is coffee or tea. In addition, we keep a supply of bottled water on the tour vehicles. Participants should bring a small water bottle for use in the field and refill with the supply kept on the bus.

INTERNET AND MOBILE PHONE ACCESS: Mobile phone coverage is reasonably extensive and you will have reception on most nights, although roaming often does not function. Local SIM cards may be available at the airport. Some hotels have WiFi but it can be slow.

CLOTHING: 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 conditions. A good sun hat is essential. Sandals are ideal for use around the hotels but walking trainers/boots should be worn in the field. For those light showers you might want to take a raincoat and/or umbrella might, and a sweater when the temperature drops.

MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS: Please bring the following:

Notebook and pencil	Alarm clock
Small rucksack/shoulder bag	Sun-glasses and sun screen
Head-torch	Drinks bottle
Insect repellent	Water bottle
Small inflatable cushion for use in vehicles	Personal medication

Optional: A telescope and tripod will be useful on this tour; spare binoculars and spare spectacles (in case of loss or damage). We suggest leaving conspicuous or expensive jewellery at home to avoid any mishaps. As luggage locks are sometimes broken at the airport, bring a spare one.

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

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

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.

It is essential that you 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.

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PHOTOGRAPHY: There will be plenty of opportunities photography throughout the tour although a telephoto lens will be needed for most of the birds 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. Generally you should always ask before taking photographs of people whatever their nationality.

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.

TRANSPORT: We will be travelling in one or two 4x4 vehicles. The leader will arrange a seating rotation. Please note that while many of Angola's main roads have been resurfaced in the last few years, some sections are under construction which means we will be driving on some small, bumpy tracks.

SMOKING: Smoking or vaping 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.

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.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Sinclair, I., Hockey, P. and Tarboton, W. 2012. *Sasol Illustrated Guide to Birds of Southern Africa*. New Holland Press, London. Struik, Cape Town. The newest and best field guide of the region's birds. This book has some excellent plates and will be the main guide for the tour. This is the recommended guide for this tour – please try to obtain the latest edition. Available as an E-book.

PAR Hockey, WRJ Dean and PG Ryan. 2005. *Roberts Birds of Southern Africa*. Russell Friedman Books. ISBN: 0620340533. This latest version of the long-standing classic is now the benchmark reference work for birds in the region. Expensive but a very useful reference. Available as an app for mobile phones and tablets.

Stuart C. & M. *Field Guide to the Mammals of Southern Africa*. 2015. Struik. ISBN-13: 9781775841111. A very good comprehensive book on the mammals packed with photos and lots of useful text. Also available in a smaller edited version.

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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.

The Special Birds of Angola is published privately by Michael Mills. If you would like to have a copy please contact the office and we'll try to obtain one for you.

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.