Angola in 11 days: a day-by-day itinerary

Still rarely visited, Angola rewards travellers who prepare carefully with spectacular landscapes. This trip combines Luanda and the Miradouro da Lua, the Kalandula Falls, then the Lubango highlands, the Tundavala Gap and the hairpin bends of the Serra da Leba. It stays within areas under heightened vigilance and avoids the provinces that are advised against. Here is the detailed itinerary, with driving times and the essential precautions.

Day by day

Days 1-2 · Luanda, between fortress and bay (night : Luanda)
Land in Luanda and take time to adjust to a vast, expensive and congested city. The next day, tour the city with a driver or guide. The São Miguel Fortress, founded by the Portuguese in the sixteenth century, overlooks the bay and houses the armed forces museum. Then head down to the Marginal, the seafront promenade, and see the Iron Palace, an elegant late nineteenth-century metal structure, and the vast Agostinho Neto Memorial, dedicated to the country's first president. End the day on the Ilha de Luanda, the peninsula of beaches and restaurants, staying alert in the evening and returning by car.

Day 3 · The Slavery Museum and the Miradouro da Lua (night : Luanda)
Head south along the coast road. About twenty kilometres from the city, the National Slavery Museum occupies a small chapel on a hill facing the ocean, from where captives were once shipped to the Americas: a short but powerful visit. Continue to the Miradouro da Lua, about forty kilometres from Luanda. This viewpoint overlooks clay and sand cliffs carved by erosion into ochre, red and white spires and ridges that recall a lunar landscape. The light is best in the late afternoon, but get back to Luanda before dark. If you have time, stop at a beach on the Mussulo peninsula.

Days 4-5 · The Kalandula Falls and the Pedras Negras (night : Kalandula, then Malanje)
Leave Luanda at dawn for Kalandula, about 360 kilometres east in Malanje province: allow six hours or more depending on road conditions. On the Lucala River, the Kalandula Falls drop about 105 metres across a width of nearly 400 metres, making them one of the largest waterfalls in Africa by volume. Admire them late in the day from the upper viewpoint. The next morning, walk down to the foot of the falls on the trail, which is more slippery in the rainy season. In the afternoon, drive on to Malanje, about two hours away. If you set off early and the road allows, first make the detour to the Pedras Negras de Pungo Andongo, giant black rocks linked to the legend of Queen Njinga, allowing several extra hours on the road so that you arrive before dark.

Day 6 · Back to Luanda (night : Luanda)
A transition day: from Malanje to Luanda, allow six to seven hours on the road, leaving early to arrive well before dark. The drive crosses hills, plantations and villages: take your breaks in busy places. Stay on the main roads, as mines may still remain in some isolated areas, usually marked. In the evening, prepare the next part of the trip: the domestic flight to Lubango leaves from Luanda airport, and schedules can change. A quiet night in town, after a dinner of chicken moamba, the national dish made with palm oil, rounds off this first part.

Days 7-8 · Lubango and the Tundavala Gap (night : Lubango)
A domestic flight of about an hour and a half links Luanda with Lubango, a highland city at over 1,700 metres with a much cooler climate. Start by going up to Cristo Rei, the statue of Christ overlooking the city, for an overall view. The next day, leave early for the Tundavala Gap, about twenty kilometres away: this dizzying rift opens on the edge of the escarpment and plunges more than 1,000 metres towards the coastal plains. The view is often clearest in the morning. Keep away from the edge, which is not fenced everywhere, and bring a jacket: it is cool at the top, especially in the dry season.

Day 9 · The Serra da Leba and the descent to Namibe (night : Namibe)
Take the road to Namibe, on the coast. About forty kilometres from Lubango, the Serra da Leba road tumbles down the escarpment in a series of tight hairpin bends, one of the most famous images of the country. Stop at the viewpoint at the top to photograph the bends, then drive down carefully: slow trucks and blind corners call for a gentle pace. At the bottom, the landscape becomes drier and drier as you approach the Namib Desert. Allow about three hours in total to Namibe, a coastal town with a sleepy colonial charm, a long beach and a seafront promenade. Enjoy the sunset over the Atlantic.

Days 10-11 · The Namibe desert, then home via Luanda (night : Lubango)
Devote the morning to the desert, with a local guide and an off-road vehicle: the area around Namibe is home to welwitschias, astonishing plants that grow only two leaves during a life that can last several centuries. Some guides also offer the Arco lagoon further south, if the tracks allow. In the early afternoon, drive back up to Lubango over the Serra da Leba, allowing about three hours to arrive before dark. The next day, take the morning flight to Luanda, then your international flight. Domestic schedules can change: choose an evening flight home, or spend an extra night in Luanda. Between the two airports, always travel by car and keep valuables out of sight.

Getting around

The safest option is to travel with a driver, booked through your accommodation or a reputable guide. The French authorities advise against public transport, which causes many accidents. Never drive at night, stay on the main roads and keep doors locked and windows closed. In Luanda, do not walk around, even in the centre, and use taxis booked through an app.

When to go

The best time is from May to October, during the dry season known as cacimbo: passable roads, pleasant temperatures and often hazy skies on the coast. Nights can be cold in Lubango, especially in June and July. From October to May, the rainy season brings torrential downpours, especially in the north and east, causing floods and damaging roads. The Kalandula Falls are then at their most powerful, but access becomes harder: the end of the rainy season, around May, is a good compromise.

Practical information

Angola

Entry	Depends on your passport: visiterafriqueunie.com/en/visa/angola/
Yellow fever	Certificate required from all travellers
Malaria	throughout the country
Currency	Angolan kwanza (AOA)
Languages	Portuguese
Plugs	type C · dialling code +244 · UTC+1
Emergencies	police 111 ou 110 · ambulance 111 ou 112 ou 116 · fire 111 ou 118 ou 115

Departure checklist

Documents

☐ Passport valid for at least six months after your return, with blank pages
☐ Visa or e-visa (printed if required)
☐ International vaccination certificate (yellow fever if required)
☐ Travel insurance certificate and assistance number
☐ Paper and digital copies of your passport and bookings
☐ Tickets, bookings and addresses saved offline
☐ International driving permit if you are hiring a vehicle

Health

☐ Travel consultation done and vaccinations up to date
☐ Malaria tablets if your doctor recommends them
☐ First-aid kit: plasters, antiseptic, anti-diarrhoea tablets, rehydration salts
☐ Mosquito repellent suitable for the tropics
☐ Sunscreen, hat and sunglasses
☐ Personal medication and prescriptions

Money and connectivity

☐ Bank told, Visa or Mastercard (and a backup card)
☐ Cash in euros or dollars, recent notes in good condition
☐ eSIM or local SIM card sorted
☐ Plug adapter for the country
☐ Power bank and cables
☐ Offline maps downloaded
☐ Afrique Unie app installed

In the bag

☐ Light clothes that cover up (sun, mosquitoes, places of worship)
☐ A fleece for evenings, dawn safaris and altitude
☐ Walking shoes and sandals
☐ Head torch
☐ Water bottle (ideally with a filter)
☐ Small daypack and waterproof pouches
☐ Luggage padlock

Before you close the door

☐ Your government's travel advice reread
☐ Trip registered with your consular service (if it offers this)
☐ Itinerary and contacts left with someone close
☐ Online check-in done and baggage allowance checked

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