São Tomé and Príncipe in 10 days: a day-by-day itinerary

Two volcanic islands off Gabon, covered in forest and old cocoa plantations: São Tomé and Príncipe is one of the most peaceful destinations in the Gulf of Guinea. In ten days, this itinerary takes you around São Tomé, from the capital to the roças and Pico Cão Grande, crosses the equator on Ilhéu das Rolas, then flies to the small island of Príncipe and its beaches. The whole archipelago calls for increased vigilance, mainly because emergency services are limited: check the official travel advice before you leave.

Day by day

Days 1-2 · São Tomé and the northern roças (night : São Tomé)
You land in São Tomé, a small capital of colourful colonial houses stretched along Ana Chaves Bay. On the first day, walk along the seafront avenue to the São Sebastião Fort, home to the national museum, then pass the cathedral and the municipal market, very lively in the morning. The next day, head north to Roça Agostinho Neto, one of the largest former cocoa plantations, with its monumental hospital and workers' housing. Continue to Lagoa Azul, a cove with clear water lined with baobabs, for a swim. Keep your belongings close at the market and leave nothing unattended on the beaches.

Day 3 · Monte Café and Lagoa Amélia (night : São Tomé)
Head up into the highlands in the centre of the island, around half an hour from the capital. At Roça Monte Café, a small museum tells the story of coffee, still grown on the surrounding slopes. Continue to the Bom Sucesso botanical garden, at the entrance to Obô Natural Park, where you discover orchids and endemic plants. From there, a trail leads in a few hours there and back to Lagoa Amélia, an old crater filled with marshy vegetation, surrounded by misty forest home to rare birds. The trail is often muddy: wear good shoes, take a local guide and pack a rain jacket. Come back down before late afternoon to sleep in town.

Days 4-5 · The east coast and Pico Cão Grande (night : São João dos Angolares)
Take the road south along the east coast. Stop at Boca do Inferno, where the swell rushes into a lava crevice with an impressive roar, then pass through fishing villages and coconut plantations. After about an hour and a half on the road, you reach São João dos Angolares, the main town of Caué district. The next day, head to the area around Vila Clotilde to approach Pico Cão Grande, a volcanic needle that shoots up from the forest to over 600 metres above sea level. It is not climbed by visitors, but a viewpoint and a few trails offer superb views. Return to São João for the night.

Day 6 · Ilhéu das Rolas, on the equator (night : Ilhéu das Rolas or Porto Alegre)
Continue to the far south of the island, on a slower road, to Ponta Baleia, where the boat leaves for Ilhéu das Rolas, a crossing of just a few minutes. The equator runs across this small islet: a monument marks the line at the top of a short climb, with a view over the ocean and São Tomé. Walk around the islet, between beaches, lighthouse and forest. Depending on the season, you can then visit Praia Jalé, a turtle nesting beach, with guides from local associations. Sleep on the islet or near Porto Alegre, checking the time of the last boat if you are staying on the main island.

Day 7 · Flight to Príncipe (night : Santo António)
Drive back to the capital in the morning: allow around two hours on the road from the south. Then take the small plane to Príncipe, about forty-five minutes over the ocean, with a strict baggage allowance. The island, a UNESCO biosphere reserve since 2012, is even calmer than São Tomé. Santo António, its only town, is one of the smallest regional capitals in the world: a few streets, colonial houses and a church by a river. Stroll around in the late afternoon and watch the quiet life of the harbour. Book early, as seats are few and schedules sometimes change.

Days 8-9 · Príncipe, beaches and forest (night : Santo António)
Devote these two days to the island. Head to Praia Banana, a cove of golden sand lined with coconut palms and forest, one of the most beautiful beaches in the Gulf of Guinea. Visit Roça Sundy, where a plaque recalls the observation of the 1919 eclipse that confirmed Einstein's theory of relativity. On the second day, explore part of the coast by boat to admire the forest-covered volcanic peaks of the south, or hike with a guide in the natural park. Tracks are often difficult: get around with a local driver. Between July and October, humpback whales sometimes pass offshore.

Day 10 · Back to São Tomé and flight home (night : Flight home)
Take the flight from Príncipe back to São Tomé, where international flights depart. Inter-island flights are sometimes delayed or cancelled: if possible, return to São Tomé the day before, or allow at least several hours before your international flight. If you have time left, buy chocolate and coffee produced on the island, then take a last stroll along the capital's seafront, facing the bay. Bear in mind that medical facilities are very limited in the archipelago: good insurance covering repatriation is essential for the whole trip.

Getting around

The easiest option is to hire a car with a driver, or a four-wheel drive if you are driving yourself: roads in the south and on Príncipe are narrow and sometimes damaged. Shared minibuses serve the villages, but without fixed timetables. Between the two islands, flying is the only practical option; recreational sailing is strongly advised against in the Gulf of Guinea. Avoid driving at night, as roads are unlit.

When to go

The best periods are from June to September, during the dry season known as gravana, and from December to February, during a shorter lull. The gravana is a little cooler and coincides with the passage of whales. From late September to around March, sea turtles come ashore to nest on the beaches. The rest of the year, rain is more frequent, especially in the south-west of São Tomé, but the heat remains constant.

Practical information

São Tomé and Príncipe

Entry	Depends on your passport: visiterafriqueunie.com/en/visa/sao-tome-and-principe/
Yellow fever	Certificate required if arriving from a risk country
Malaria	throughout the country
Currency	São Tomé and Príncipe dobra (STN)
Languages	Portuguese
Plugs	type C, F · dialling code +239 · UTC0
Emergencies	police 113 ou 222 22 22 · ambulance 222 22 22 · fire 112

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

Notebook made from visiterafriqueunie.com/en/itineraries/sao-tome-and-principe-in-10-days/ · information checked in November 2026 against official sources. Entry, health and safety rules change: check them again before you leave (your country's official advice, the embassy of the country you visit).