

EXPLORE!

Sao Tome with Kathleen Becker

10 days

Sao Tome - Trip code SAT



Sao Tome with Kathleen Becker

This trip will be led by Kathleen Becker, author of the Bradt Travel Guide for Sao Tome and Principe. Kathleen will take us into the heart of the country to provide a unique insight into this small and enchanting destination. Described in the Bradt Travel Guide as a 'largely undiscovered, uniquely rewarding and safe destination with an exciting blend of African, Portuguese and Caribbean cultures', our discovery of this island will include visiting secluded beaches, swimming in its pristine waters and hiking in its rainforest while on the lookout for an abundant array of wildlife, specifically birds and plants. A boat trip along the wild west coast of the island will lead to hidden waterfalls and rock formations while there are opportunities to visit colonial plantation houses and sample some of the best coffee and chocolate in the world. Combine this with gaining an insight into its turbulent history and the only thing left to do will be to get into the laid-back Santomean way of life and enjoy this paradise island

Trip highlights

- ★ Kathleen Becker - this trip is lead by Sao Tome enthusiast and author of the Bradt guide
- ★ Rainforest - walk in the rainforest in search of hidden waterfalls and endemic birds
- ★ Food - try Santomean food, including some of the best chocolate in the world; have a drink with the chilled out locals
- ★ Beaches - swim from, and relax on empty beaches
- ★ Abandoned plantation buildings - explore relics of the colonial past

ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

Standard

Our standard, mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service, often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en suite facilities.

TRIP PACE:

Moderate

Moderate pace tours are ideal if you want a holiday which combines exciting activities and experiences with plenty of time to relax and unwind. Typically you'll be active and busy for part of the day but then also have time to rest and recharge your batteries.

GROUP SIZE:

8 - 12

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

DAY 1 - Join trip in Sao Tome

The trip starts in the town of Sao Tome, upon arrival we will be transferred to our hotel in the centre of town, our base for the next two nights.



Accommodation: Residencial Avenida (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Meals Provided: None


DAY 2 - Explore the colonial heritage and sights of Sao Tome town

Today we explore the sights and sounds of the town of Sao Tome. Originally established in 1493, the town gained prominence off the back of sugarcane and the transatlantic slave trade; it was over the next 50 years that work started on the cathedral and the Fort of Saint Sebastian, our first sights we will see on the island. The fort houses the National Museum, detailing the history of Sao Tome and the legacy of the slave trade. Cocoa and coffee predominately feature too, a reminder of the key part both have played in the story of this beautiful island. We will walk along the seafront to independence square, enjoying the hustle and bustle of the town, filled with street vendors selling jackfruit, local shops pumping out bass-heavy local music and motorbikes buzzing around. The afternoon is free for you to wander the Mercado, take in the colourful buildings of Sao Tome, visit Claudio Corrilho chocolate factory (reputedly home to the best chocolate in the world) or find a café, try some of the famous local coffee and watch the world go by.



Accommodation: Residencial Avenida (or similar)

 Standard Hotel


 Meals Provided: Breakfast and Lunch

DAY 3 - Journey down the east coast stopping at fishing villages and beaches

As we say goodbye to the capital we take the ocean road, heading south towards the famous beaches at the bottom of the island. We drive through small fishing villages and past beautiful beaches until we stop at the Roca Agua Ize, a beautiful old plantation where cocoa production first started. Not far down the road is the natural blowhole of Boca do Inferno, one of the most famous attractions on the island. The next stop is Sao Joao Angolares, known for being the centre of the Angolares community - a fishing people said to be descendants of runaway slaves. We will have lunch at the Roca de Sao Joao which, according to our very own Kathleen Becker, serves some of the best food in Sao Tome. After lunch we have a tour of the working plantation before continuing down to Praia Inhame, our coastal home for the next two nights.




Accommodation: Praia Inhame (or similar)

 Standard Cabins



Single room available

 Meals Provided: Breakfast and Lunch

DAY 4 - Dugout canoe ride through mangroves, swim in pristine waters

This morning we board a traditional dugout canoe and are peacefully steered through red and white mangroves from the town of Malanza. The mangroves are a great place to spot birds including the moorhen, malachite kingfisher and the reed cormorant; we will be out on the canoe for around 2 hours before a traditional lunch in Porto Alegre. Being right on the beach this will normally be freshly caught fish, but other options are available on request. In the afternoon we explore Praia Piscina, an idyllic place for swimming and one of the best beaches on the island, we will also stop at Praia Jale, a turtle beach (as are many of the beaches in the area) and known for its bar - a great place to stop for a refreshing Nacional or Criollo, two of the beers brewed on the island.




Accommodation: Praia Inhame (or similar)

 Standard Cabins



Single room available

 Meals Provided: Breakfast and Lunch

DAY 5 - Stand on the equator, boat trip up the rugged west coast

We have an early start today to board our boat to the isle of Rolas and to boldly stride between two hemispheres as we reach the equator! We will have time for a quick swim before starting our boat journey up the west coast of Sao Tome. On the lookout for endemic birds and marine life, we hug the coast as we slowly cruise past forest, beaches and small villages on our way to the beaches and blue lagoon in the north of the island. The blue lagoon or "Lagoa Azul" surrounded by baobab trees and fossilised corals is a fantastic place for snorkelling and we will have some time to snorkel and swim here before a short drive to Mucumbli, our home for the next 3 nights.



Accommodation: Mucumbi (or similar)

 Standard Cabins



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast and Lunch

DAY 6 - Free time on the beach

After a fairly busy few days, today there is time to relax and take at your leisure. We have no organised activities, but our chalets are located above a beach for a spot of swimming, and the panoramic terrace overlooking the sea is perfect for lounging and catching up with a book. For those that want to explore the local area, bikes are available to rent from our accommodation. An interesting place to ride to is Santa Catarina, a local fishing village where it is often possible to see a canoe being made by hand. There are some fantastic walks and hikes to be found in the area and our accommodation can provide maps and guidance. The food served at our accommodation is the perfect combination of local produce and innovative Italian flair.



Accommodation: Mucumbi (or similar)



Standard Cabins



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 7 - Morning walk through forested valley to Roca Ponta Figo

Roca Ponta Figo was a nursery that provided plants to plantations all over the island, this morning we walk the short distance to the Roça and explore its atmospheric colonial buildings. From here, our hike takes us through São Tomé's deepest valley, exploring some of the old tunnels found in the area, now mainly home to bats. We will come across another waterfall and keep our eyes peeled for birds and endemic plant life. Our lunch stop today will be at historic Roça Monteforte, right next to the local CECAB organic cocoa cooperative, an initiative that is helping farmers to gain a fair living and access new markets. The late afternoon is free to make the most of our last moments by the sea followed by our final dinner to reminisce the highlights of the trip.



Accommodation: Mucumbi (or similar)



Standard Cabins



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast and Lunch

DAY 8 - Visit botanical gardens and walk to crater lake

Today we head back into the interior of the island and drive up to the botanical gardens of Bom Sucesso. The garden is home to over 400 local plants and 140 orchids and we will have a guided tour to learn about the traditional healing that the plants were used for due to their medicinal qualities. From Bom Sucesso we make our way to the ancient crater lake of Lagoa Amelia, the walk takes us through agricultural land to the primary forest of the Obo National Park. As we are walking our guide will hopefully spot some of the local birds, including the maroon pigeon, Sao Tome scops owl, giant sunbird and the Sao Tome oriole. From here we make our way to the Monte Café plantation, previously the largest producer of coffee on the island, here we will try some of the earthy beans and visit the coffee museum. Santomeans are very laid back but do enjoy letting their hair down and having a party and this is our last evening in Sao Tome town to try and locate a good dancehall before moving to the south of the island.



Accommodation: Hotel Miramar (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast and Lunch

DAY 9 - Rainforest walk to plantation and waterfalls

This morning we head out of town and into the heart of the island as we arrive at Bombaim plantation, known locally as Bombaim Roca. The old cocoa Plantation house had gradually retreated into the jungle after being abandoned years ago, but in recent years has been partially restored. We take a look around the ruins and gardens before starting our walk through the forest on our way to the waterfalls known as Cascata Formosa (around two hours each way). We expect to see many of the endemic birds of Sao Tome on this walk and will also enjoy the local speciality of mangosteen - a citrusy tasting fruit originally from Asia and the only place it can be found in Sao Tome is in Bombaim. We will also stop for lunch in the jungle and have a swim in the waterfall for those needing to cool off. Our hotel for tonight is set on the outskirts of Sao Tome town, just a short walk from the beach and with a pool for those wanting time to relax.



Accommodation: Hotel Miramar (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast and Lunch

DAY 10 - Relax in the morning, trip finishes at airport

There is time this morning to relax on the beach before we head back to Sao Tome town for last minute souvenir shopping and coffee drinking. We will then transfer back to the airport where the trip ends.



Meals Provided: Breakfast



What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 9
Lunch: 7



Transport

Bus
Boat



Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader
Driver(s)



Accommodation

5 nights standard cabins
4 nights standard hotel

Trip information

Country information

Sao Tome Holidays & Tours

Climate

With a tropical weather system, Sao Tome and Principe can be visited at any time of the year. Sao Tome's equatorial climate keeps fairly constant temperatures throughout the year. The average high is between 28 to 31 C, while the average low is between 21 to 23C, along the coast and lower lands. The months between June and September feature the cooler end of these temperatures which is also during the dry season. The rainy season begins around October and continues through to May, when it becomes more humid in between the showers. In land the mountain areas are a couple of degrees cooler at around 20C with the nights being generally cool.

Time difference to GMT

0

Plugs

2 Pin Round

Religion

Roman Catholic

Language

Portuguese, Portuguese Creole

Budgeting and packing

Optional activities

Sao Tome - Visit Claudio Corrilho chocolate factory, approx €4

Clothing

Clothing should be lightweight and ideally cotton all year round. Shorts and T-shirts are acceptable everywhere, although take long trousers/skirts for evening wear. Don't forget your swimming costume.

Footwear

Lightweight ankle-high walking boots are recommended for the walks, whilst shoes or trainers are ideal for exploring the islands. Sandals for relaxing and beachwear. Sea urchins can give a nasty sting, and so closed sea-shoes or plastic sandals are recommended for when you take a dip in the sea

Luggage

20kg

Equipment

Take a small torch, water bottle, sunglasses, sunhat, suncream, insect repellent, binoculars if planning to birdwatch and a beach towel. Bring a lightweight rainjacket just in case. You may find walking poles useful on the uneven terrain during the walks.

Tipping

Explore leader

At your discretion you may consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Local crew

You should allow €30 for tipping local staff.

International Departure Taxes

Airport departure tax is approximately US\$24 or €20. This is gradually being phased out, and is now incorporated into many tickets. This must be purchased prior to check in, from a counter at the front of the airport building.

Country Information

Sao Tome Holidays & Tours

Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Lunch price

£2.00 - 3.00

Dinner price

£3.00 - 5.00

Beer price

£1.00 - 3.00

Water price

£0.60 - £1.50

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Santomean Dobra

Recommended Currency For Exchange

Major hard currencies are accepted in Sao Tome, we therefore advise taking all of your spending money in Euros. Once you arrive on Sao Tome island there will be limited methods to get extra money so please make sure you bring enough with you so that you do not run out.

Where To Exchange

Main banks in Sao Tome capital city

ATM Availability

None for international cards

Credit Card Acceptance

Accepted in very limited places. Money transfers can be arranged for Visa/Mastercard credit cards at the main bank in Sao Tome with your passport.

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bus, Boat

Essential information

FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice [click here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, [click here](#)

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Essential Information

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

Visa Information

Sao Tome: Visas are not required by UK, Canadian and US citizens for stays of upto 15 Days. For stays of 15 days and over a visa must be obtained prior to arrival in the country. Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office. Please note that your passport needs to be valid for at least a minimum of 3 months after the expiry date of your visa.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our [Essential Information](#) and [Booking Conditions](#).

Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer click [here](#)

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. Read more about them [here](#).

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Sao Tome Holidays & Tours

Vaccinations

Please note you will be required to supply a yellow fever certificate prior to arrival in Sao Tome if you have travelled from or via a country where yellow fever is endemic. We recommend protection against malaria, hepatitis A, tetanus and typhoid. Consult your travel clinic for the latest advice on different antimalarials. Special Note: Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider.