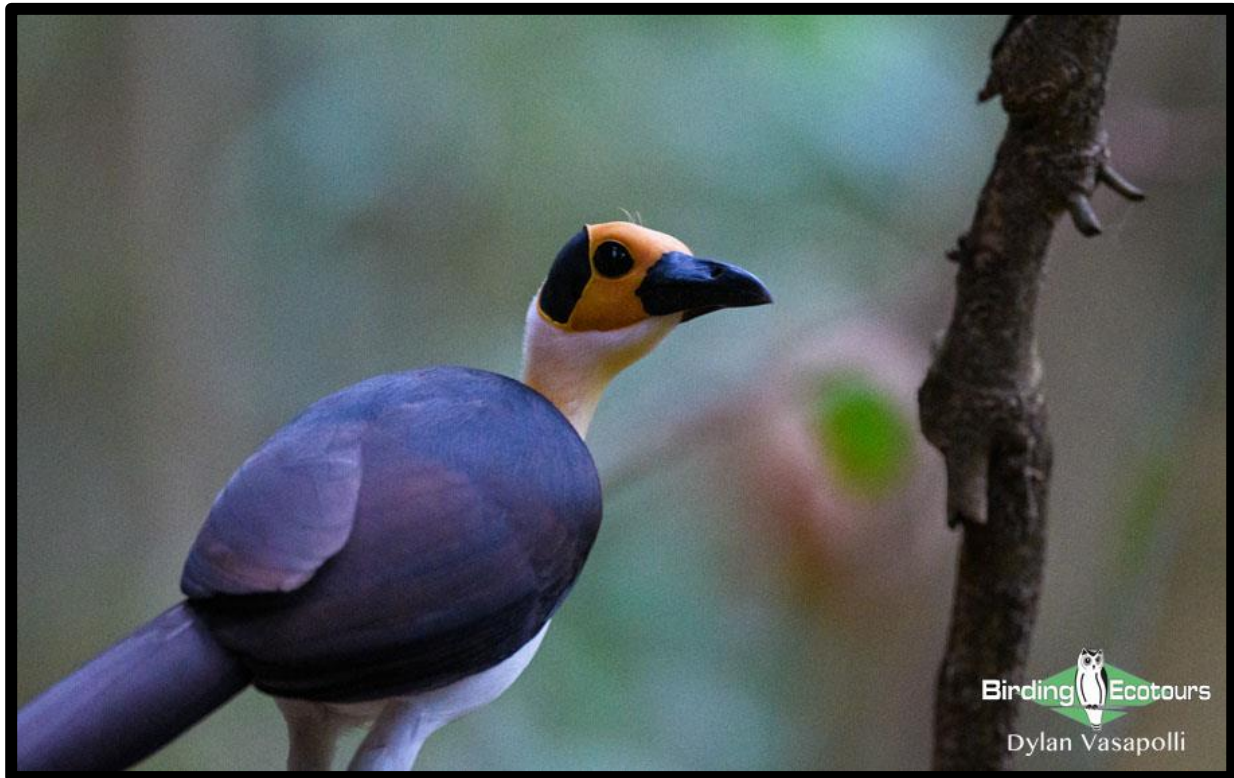




GHANA:

GENERAL INFORMATION



White-necked Rockfowl is one of the main birding attractions in Ghana.

INTRODUCTION

Ghana is arguably the best and most accessible country from which to access West Africa. Many highly sought-after species can be found here, and virtually nowhere else, and indeed makes this an exciting birding tour. This tour begins and ends in the capital city, Accra (on the Ghanaian coastline). The bulk of the birding takes place in forests, with almost all birding on the tour being on our feet, out walking. Forest birding can be difficult with quick views of most birds in a dark environment skulking, or high against the canopy flitting about. Some time is also spent in more arid open wooded environments farther north in the country which generally allows for easier birding. Photography opportunities are usually very poor in the forests, though are better in the more open northern regions.

It needs to be stressed that this is a challenging tour, with oppressive heat and humidity, which takes a toll. Travel is also slow in this rural African country, and there are several long travel days with little birding possible.

PASSPORT AND VISA

Your passport must be valid for a period of at least six months after the date of your arrival in Ghana. Please make sure that there is at least one full empty page available in your passport. Please make sure that you also bring a photocopy of your passport, to be kept in a different location from your passport, in case of loss. Most non-African countries require a visa which needs to be arranged in advance, while most African countries are either exempt or can obtain a visa on arrival. Please make sure you find out accordingly, and well in advance of your tour.

Birding Ecotours can assist in providing documentation to confirm your participation on the tour, in support of your visa application. The onus is on you, as a client, to secure your visa to travel here.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

We require (see [Birding Tours Terms and Conditions - Birding Ecotours](#)) that you purchase trip cancellation insurance in case you have to cancel due to illness just prior to the tour departure date, to protect yourself against accidents, illness, loss of valuables, luggage etc. and travel interruptions or delays of all kinds. [Allianz Travel](#) and [Generali Global Assistance](#) are two options to consider.

HEALTH/MALARIA

Please carefully read the [Center for Disease Control \(CDC\) information for travelers to Ghana](#) (or your government's equivalent health travel advice for Ghana). Below we have mentioned a couple of specific items but first and foremost kindly be advised by the updated information at the above link.

Required immunizations for travel to Ghana: yellow fever vaccine.

It is recommended that you are up to date with all routine vaccines, such as polio and measles-mumps-rubella (MMR). Additionally, it is also recommended getting vaccines for Hepatitis A and B, meningitis, rabies and typhoid. Please keep in mind that if you have not had any of these, one should make sure that you have been inoculated at least six weeks prior to your trip to take full effect.

Malaria

We strongly recommend anti-malaria drugs for travel to Ghana. Note that as per the CDC, Chloroquine prophylaxes are not effective here. The following are recommended chemoprophylaxis: atovaquone-proguanil, doxycycline, mefloquine and tafenoquine. Please consult with your doctor.

Mosquito repellent, long trousers/jeans and long-sleeved shirts, particularly at night when malaria (*Anopheles*) mosquitoes bite, are advised, in addition to the drugs.

MEDICAL CONDITIONS

Please make sure that you are covered with medical insurance in case of an emergency while on these trips. Without insurance the cost of medical care can be extremely high.

Please notify us at the time of registering for the tour of any medical conditions you think we should know about (including allergies, heart conditions, epilepsy, etc.). This will greatly help us to cater to your needs.

WATER/FOOD

We provide unlimited bottled water in the tour vehicles, and you are welcome to take water from the vehicle for evenings when not provided in the hotel rooms. More expensive bottled water at restaurants is excluded from the tour cost and is for your account, but (again) you can take water from our tour vehicle whenever you want.

The bulk of our breakfasts and lunches will be enjoyed at our hotels and lodges throughout the tour (including roadside restaurants for some lunches). Very occasionally, packed breakfasts and packed lunches will be required as well (but this is infrequent). Dinners are always held at our hotels or lodges.

Kindly note that breakfasts are usually held early in the morning (before sunrise and our birding; between 05h00-06h00). There are generally big gaps between meals (6+ hours), and bringing various snacks (such as cereal bars, trail mix etc.) is recommended.

As always, please do inform us if you have any food allergies or other dietary requirements. Kindly note, that we cannot guarantee these can be accommodated throughout the tour. Ghana is a rural African country that has extremely limited availability (or none at all) of specialist foods (such as

for gluten intolerance etc.). If you have special requirements/allergies, we kindly ask if you can bring along appropriate/replacement foods, as it is often impossible to purchase in the country.

A special note needs to be made that meals are often prepared on the ‘spicier’ side, regardless of requests to have no/mild spice. Meals are generally not very exciting, consisting of largely rice, a limited sampling of vegetables, chicken or fish.

CURRENCY AND MONEY

The Ghanaian cedi (GHC) is the official currency, and it is suggested to ensure you have sufficient cash in local currency to cover expenses such as drinks, tips, and for other items of a personal nature (such as gifts). Credit cards are not widely accepted for payment.

You will only be able to exchange currency at the airport upon your arrival in Ghana however if you need to withdraw money this can be done at the airport upon your arrival or when we pass through larger towns during the tours. Visa and Mastercard are accepted for drawing cash from ATMs. Note: US and Canadian dollars, pound sterling and euros cannot be used for purchases.

WEATHER

Conditions will be hot and very humid throughout the tour. The forested coastal regions (from the coast until Kumasi) experience high temperatures (nearing 40°C/100°F) with high and oppressive humidity. In the northern regions (Mole NP and Bolgatanga) we can expect high temperatures (nearing 45°C/110°F) with low humidity. As always, it is good practice to ensure you have some warmer clothes, as some folks may feel the need for a jersey/jacket in the evenings, and a raincoat. Although we visit during the dry season, unseasonal rain is not impossible.

Please be aware that the high heat and humidity make this tour challenging.

ELECTRICITY

The standard voltage is 240 V. If you intend to recharge video batteries etc. in your hotel room you will need an international adapter. Note that in Ghana, the power plug sockets generally make use of either Type D, or Type G (see link).

All of our hotels/lodges will have access to electricity throughout the day/night, and many have backup generators, in case of power failures or power outages. Remember, this is rural Africa, and sometimes the electricity does go out.

A good torch will also be useful if you fancy joining us for a night walk or drive. If you intend to do any trips, you’d be advised to bring at least one good torch, preferably with a strong beam. All the places we will stay at will have electrical outlets for chargers and laptops.

INTERNET/WIFI

Most of the hotels and lodges we stay at have access to Wi-Fi internet, and cell signal. Kindly note

that in many places, the Wi-Fi is not accessible from your rooms, but only the main reception area/dining area.

Please note that our lodgings at Ankasa and Bonkro have extremely limited cell service (virtually non-existent), and no Wi-Fi.

LENGTH OF DRIVES

Kindly note that this tour takes place in a third-world country, and roads are often narrow, potholed and very busy. Do not expect highways and quick travel between destinations. Unfortunately, this does mean we will spend quite a bit of time in the vehicles, travelling to and from birding sites, and transiting between destinations. Additionally, there are a few days with particularly long drives (more than half the day) – such as transitioning up to Mole National Park and Bolgatanga.

Air-conditioning is available in our tour vehicles.

Some roads can be dusty so please consider bringing a scarf (or other measures) in case you are birding along an unpaved road and a car goes past putting up dust.

WALKING

There is a lot of walking needed on this tour. Almost all our birding sites require birding from foot, as opposed to from vehicles, and will require us being on our feet for several hours at a time. Much of our birding is done in forests, and we do have to venture off trail (into the forest/bush) to track down certain species regularly. The high heat and humidity generally make walking a challenge.

Participants should be able to manage these conditions, and most importantly be comfortable on their feet for many hours at a time.

Note that the Kakum Canopy Walkway is high above the ground, and requires one to navigate many very steep stairs to get to the top. The full day hike up the Atewa Range is also very challenging (probably the most challenging day of the trip) with a steep dirt-track ascent required for the entire journey up (at least four miles (six kilometers) each way).

PACE OF TOUR

This is a very intense tour, with long days required virtually every day.

We will generally start the days off early, with a pre-dawn breakfast, before spending the full morning birding – as we try to maximize the morning coolness, before the heat sets in. We usually return to our hotels/lodges for a lunch-break (and a short siesta during the oppressive midday heat). We then typically resume in the mid/late afternoons, but note that the afternoons are usually hot. Kindly be aware that due to the rural nature of Ghana, most of our birding sites require some driving to reach from our hotels/lodging.

Several nocturnal trips are also undertaken to search for various nightjars, owls and other exciting nocturnal creatures.

It is possible to opt out of some activities, should you not feel up for it, but this generally won't be possible on the days where we transit between accommodations.

ACCOMMODATION

Please note that the accommodation used on this tour ranges from 'standard' to 'basic' (and below the standard we use on virtually all our other tours, especially those we use on our southern/East African tours). Despite this, en-suite bathroom facilities are available throughout the tour. Ankasa Reserve Lodge is an exception, as this is an upmarket, high-quality lodge.

Kindly be aware that two new establishments; Ankasa Reserve Lodge and Picathartes Guesthouse (in Bonkro) have limited rooms, and depending on total participants and the structure of single versus sharing clients, participants may need to share rooms. These two new lodges are necessary as they cut out a significant amount of what would otherwise be extra driving time.

WHAT TO BRING

Clothing Casual and informal dress is fine in the hotels. Loose lightweight, breathable field clothing works best, with a warm fleece or jacket for cooler weather. As mentioned before, it is good practice to bring some warmer clothing, certainly a minimum of a warm fleece and a rain jacket. Rain is always a possibility, so an umbrella and or rain gear is always useful to have.

* Note that cotton clothing is suggested (versus the quick-dry nylon clothing) due to cotton being more breathable in the high heat and humidity expected.

Laundry can be done at all establishments throughout the tour (at your expense) – but please note that a lead time of at least one day is needed (it is therefore impossible to get laundry done if we stay at a hotel/lodge for only a single night – but is possible if we have two nights or longer).

Sunglasses, sunhat and sunscreen (rated SPF 30 or higher) are essential. A pair of trousers or a long skirt, and a long-sleeved shirt should be included to help protect against forest vegetation and the sun. Swimwear can be brought as there are swimming pools at some of the lodges.

We would recommend lightweight walking boots for when out on foot, and bringing a second pair is often useful. Please ensure that whatever footwear you bring, that it is comfortable, as much time is spent on your feet on this tour. You might like to consider sandals/Tevas as well, for use around the hotels/lodges.

Do not forget – BINOCULARS, prescription drugs (also bring the generic names for these drugs), toiletries, prescription glasses (and a spare pair), insect repellent, camera, flashlight, batteries (for electronic equipment and chargers for the re-chargeable batteries), plug adaptors, alarm clock, mosquito repellent, money pouch, field guide(s), a soft-sided duffle-style luggage bag is recommended (hard-sided luggage is not always ideal), daypack/backpack, and your favorite road snacks!

Key documents and cash – Passports, your travel or health insurance cards (you can send us copies to file in case of emergency), credit cards – Visa and Mastercard are best – see above, US

dollars, euro or pounds can be exchanged for local currency at the airport as you arrive into the country (if you prefer not to simply draw from ATMs), cash for drinks, gifts, **tips**, items of a personal nature etc.

Luggage – Due to restricted space in the vehicles, please pack as lightly as possible. A medium-sized, soft-sided duffle bag (not the hard-sided cases) works best for packing in the vehicles. This allows us to better fit the bags. Please bring a daypack to keep items that you wish to use or need on a daily basis. Additionally, we make use of a domestic flight to transfer back to Accra, and there is usually a limit imposed of one check-in bag, weighing ~40 pounds (20 kilograms) per person.