



ANGOLA:

GENERAL INFORMATION



The Angolan Cave Chat is one of many special birds possible on this exciting tour!

INTRODUCTION

Angola has a rather unfortunate history, and has only fairly recently opened up to tourism (basically since the 2000s). As such, Angola has long been perceived to be a “difficult” destination, with birding sites and suitable accommodations tricky to access, making for a logistically-challenging trip. This is rapidly changing, however, and every year, there are regular improvements to infrastructure, with new and better roads making travel easier and quicker. Importantly, our tour to Angola does not include any camping, and suitable accommodations are used throughout.

This tour begins and ends in the capital city, Luanda (in the north of the country). There is a wide mix of habitats encountered, ranging from forested areas, to mixed woodland and open desert environments. The birding on this tour is generally not particularly challenging, with birding mostly from roadside edges and the occasional foray into the surrounding woodland/forest/area. We do, however, undertake a couple strenuous birding walks at Mount Moco, and possibly Tundavala and elsewhere (see more below under ‘WALKING’). As always, forest birding can be difficult with brief views of skulking birds in a dark environment, or high up into the canopy as they flit about. Photographic opportunities are usually very poor in the forests, though are better in the more open areas

It needs to be stressed that this is a tour for more serious and dedicated birders. The tour is focused on finding Angola’s endemic and special birds, and every effort is made to accomplish this. There is little down time envisioned on this tour, and full days out are expected throughout. Much time is spent in the vehicles, as we travel to and from birding sites, and bird from the vehicles. 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 Angola. Please make sure that there is at least one full empty page available in your passport. Please ensure that you also bring a photocopy of your passport, to be kept in a different location from your passport, in case of loss.

Visa entry regulations to Angola changes rapidly, and it is the responsibility of each client to verify whether they need a visa to travel, or not. As recently as 2020, virtually every nationality needed a visa to travel to Angola, however, this is not the case anymore, and many countries (with more routinely being added) no longer need a visa, and can easily travel to Angola. 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, and generally help with this process, should it be required. However, 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, medical, 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 Angola (or your government's equivalent health travel advice for Angola). 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 Angola: Yellow Fever vaccine. Please note that Angola accepts that Yellow Fever inoculation is now acknowledged as a lifetime vaccine (but of course you still need to produce the certificate, even if it shows as a technically expired date).

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, 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, for the vaccine to take full effect.

Malaria

We strongly recommend anti-malaria drugs for travel to Angola. Please consult with your doctor accordingly.

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 this trip. 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 vehicles 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 vehicles whenever you want.

Dinners will virtually always be enjoyed at our hotels and lodges, with breakfasts and lunches mostly packed meals in the field (though occasionally may be enjoyed at our hotels).

As always, please do inform us if you have any food allergies or other dietary requirements. Kindly note, that we cannot guarantee that these can be accommodated throughout the tour. If you have special requirements/allergies, we kindly ask if you can bring along appropriate/replacement foods.

Meals in Angola are generally more basic and consistent with other parts of rural Africa—typically with lots of starch, and limited vegetables and protein choices. Chicken and fish meals are available widely. We do ask for your understanding in not expecting excellent and varied food, routinely, and to ensure your expectations are consistent with the destination (rural Africa).

CURRENCY AND MONEY

The Angolan kwanza (Kz) 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 be able to exchange or draw money at the airport upon our arrival. Note that exchanging money is only easily possible at the airport on your arrival – it is very time-consuming (and not possible) to do so during the tour. Visa and Mastercard are generally accepted for drawing cash from ATMs, though some banks may decline transactions on international bank cards – it is important to notify your bank that you will be traveling abroad. Note: US and Canadian dollars, pound sterling and euros cannot be used for purchases.

WEATHER

Conditions will generally be comfortable, but note that some areas in the highlands may be cool and windy, especially in the mornings or evenings, and some areas are likely to be warm and humid (especially in the north). We do not anticipate extreme heat or humidity, nor very cold conditions. As always, it is good practice to ensure you have some warmer clothes, as some people 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.

ELECTRICITY

The standard voltage is 220 V. If you intend to recharge camera batteries etc. in your hotel room you will need an international adapter. Note that in Angola, the power plug sockets generally make use of Type C (see link). It is always good practice to bring an international adapter along, as hotels and lodgings occasionally differ.

All of our hotels/lodges will have access to electricity throughout the day/night, and will have at least one outlet available for chargers and laptops etc. Remember, this is rural Africa, and sometimes the electricity is cut off. While we cannot control such aspects of the tour, we will always try our best to ensure backup options are possible/used, if needed.

A good torch is also advised, which can be used if joining a night walk, and/or, should the power go out, and light is needed in the room.

INTERNET/WIFI

Wi-Fi internet will be intermittently available at our lodges and hotels on this trip. Kindly note that in many places, this is not accessible from your rooms, but only the main reception area/dining area.

Should you wish to stay connected more regularly, we advise you to:

- Purchase a local sim card at the airport, on your arrival. Kindly use “Unitel”, and not other cell companies which have very poor coverage.

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 vehicles, traveling to and from birding sites, and transiting between destinations. Additionally, there are a few days with particularly long drives.

Most of the birding sites are accessed from/birding along, gravel roads leading to remaining areas of natural habitat. These are usually in a bad condition and very bumpy.

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

Although we spend a lot of time in the vehicles, there is still a fair bit of walking needed on this tour. Many of our birding sites require birding from foot, as opposed to birding from vehicles, and will require us being on our feet for several hours at a time. Despite this, the distances walked are often not very far, and the taxing aspect comes from simply being on one’s feet. While most of the walking is generally easy and either along roads, or roadside edges, we do occasionally venture off the road, and “bushwhack” into forest/woodland/similar. Participants should be able to manage

these conditions, and be comfortable on their feet, with comfortable shoes, for several hours at a time etc.

The following is noteworthy:

1. The birding on the slopes of Mount Moco is extremely difficult and challenging. We will go as far as possible with the vehicle, though a final point will be reached, from which we will need to ascend the rest of the way on foot – via rough, steep trails, on rocky and loose ground, to reach the lower forested slopes. While we don't get anywhere near the summit, this is still extremely challenging.

PACE OF TOUR

This is an intense tour, with long days out in the field, virtually every day. We will generally start the days off early pre-dawn, with an early breakfast at the hotel, before departing for our day birding, usually still while dark. After arriving, and some birding, we will have short breaks for morning breakfast/coffee and lunch (these are usually out in the field).

Note that many of the birding sites are far from our accommodation, and we will spend the full day out birding, only returning to our accommodation later in the afternoon/evening. There is little down time expected.

There will be occasional evening forays to look for nocturnal birds (and mammals), but this is not a daily activity.

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 overnight accommodations. In some instances, it may be possible to stay with the vehicles should you be unable/unwilling to join the group.

ACCOMMODATION

Please note that most of the accommodation places used on this tour are considered to be of a “good/standard” quality, though some places are “basic” (and below the standard we use on our southern/East Africa tours). En-suite bathroom facilities are available throughout the tour, though in some places, hot water can be an issue and may not always be available. Furthermore, maintenance can be an issue at some places, with electrical points, lights etc. not working – or easily repairable.

As the tourism industry is still new in Angola, many of the birding sites lie far from available accommodation establishments and thus a drive to and from is necessary in the mornings and evenings.

FLIGHTS

This tour starts and ends in the capital city, Luanda, that has an international airport serviced by various airlines (often routing through Europe).

*The tour begins early on Day 1, and it is best for all participants to arrive a day (or two) prior to the tour beginning.

*The final night of the tour sees us staying well outside the capital city, Luanda, and to ensure smooth logistics, we kindly ask all clients to only book outbound flights departing Angola, from 4pm or later that afternoon.

Please kindly check in with the Birding Ecotours office before booking any flights.

WHAT TO BRING

Clothing – Casual and informal dress is fine in the hotels and lodges. Loose lightweight 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. While unlikely, rain is always a possibility, so an umbrella and or rain gear is always useful to have.

Laundry can be done at most 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.

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 – Mastercard (and to a lesser extent VISA) 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 limited luggage 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.