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Discover the Paradise of São Tomé and Príncipe

Celebrating its golden anniversary in 2020, award-winning travel specialist Sunvil (www.sunvil.co.uk) has been providing authentic tailor-made holidays to lesser-known destinations for the last 50 years. Leading the way in top-quality sustainable tourism, Sunvil is passionate about working alongside – and building personal relationships with – local communities in each of the captivating destinations that the independent holiday company offers.

Dramatic and undiscovered, São Tomé & Príncipe ; a two-island nation floating in the Gulf of Guinea off the west coast of equatorial Africa, is the latest untouched discovery to be added to Sunvil's fascinating portfolio.

The islands are some of the least-visited destinations in Africa. Often described as the path to paradise, the largely uninhabited islands offer lush landscapes, unexplored rainforest and some of the most beautiful palm-fringed beaches on the planet. With an average temperature of 26°C all year, this is truly a year-round destination.

Sunvil is launching three new itineraries for 2020, each centred around the charms of São Tomé & Príncipe – the food, culture and activity.

São Tomé & Príncipe are blessed with an array of natural produce – from forests filled with fruit and nuts to waters brimming with fish, such as Tuna and Wahoo. The warm environment provides the perfect conditions for coffee and cacao plantations – at one time the islands were the world's largest producers of cacao.

Experience a feast for your senses: A Taste of São Tomé & Príncipe

Visit both cocoa and coffee plantations and discover the delicate process that produces world-famous Claudio Corallo Chocolate. Hone your cookery skills, using different home-grown herbs and vegetables, during a cookery workshop, and then embark on an island tour that will excite your senses further. Enjoy awe-inspiring views and sample delicious local produce, such as grilled fish, home-made jams, and tropical muesli made from mango, pineapple, coconut and papaya, washed down with the national drink, palm wine. Your final meal promises to be memorable; a tasting menu of the chef's signature dishes for one last mouth-watering journey around the island.

This 12-night trip costs from £4,540 pp (two sharing), including return flights (London via Lisbon and Accra), 12 nights' accommodation (two nights' B&B in Lisbon, three nights' half-board on São Tomé, and six nights' half-board on Príncipe), domestic flights (São Tomé to Príncipe), all excursions mentioned (guided cocoa tour, coffee tour, cooking workshop, Príncipe island tour with traditional meal).

The islands are steeped in fascinating history; first discovered in 1471 by Portuguese explorers, they were ruled by the Portuguese from the 15th century, before gaining independence in 1975. Over the years, São Tomé and Príncipe have welcomed people from various nationalities, in particular Cape Verde, Angola, Mozambique and the Congo basin.

Immerse yourself in island life: Culture & Tradition on São Tomé & Príncipe

Enjoy a history lesson like no other, visiting monumental sights around São Tomé city and its fading pastel -coloured buildings, including Independence Square and the Presidential palace. Test your rhythm with a lesson on traditional African dances, and discover how herbs, barks and roots are used to treat diseases during a medicine workshop. Visit Príncipe's sustainable waste recycling centre, where glass is recycled into jewellery and organic waste into compost. Spend a full day exploring Príncipe, delving further into the island's cultural history, from the smallest capital in the world, 'Santo Antonio', to more rural communities, soaking up the beautiful landscape throughout.

This 10-night trip costs from £3,535 pp (two sharing), including return flights (London via Lisbon and Accra), 10 nights' accommodation (one night B&B at Heritage Avenida Liberdade Hotel, three nights' half-board at Omali, two nights' half-board at Roca Sundry and four nights' half-board at Bom Bom), domestic flights (São Tomé to Príncipe), all excursions mentioned, (São Tomé City Tour, Traditional Dance Workshop, Traditional Medicine Workshop,



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Cocoa Route Excursion, Boat Trip from Príncipe, Explore Príncipe Tour).

There's more to São Tomé & Príncipe than the miles of golden sandy beaches. The crystal-clear waters are full of life, so snorkeling and diving are very popular. With much of each island still made up of natural parks, hikes are challenging – but those who persevere are richly rewarded. Whale watching can be organised in the summer months, along with bird-watching – the islands boast more endemic species of bird per square mile than anywhere else on earth including the Galápagos islands.

Bom Bom on Príncipe is your own slice of paradise, connected to Bom Bom island via a 140-metre raised wooden walkway. Unwind in one of the 25 chalets set over two beaches. Relax on practically private sands and swim in warm turquoise waters or try snorkeling, kayaking and paddle boarding. Take a boat trip to visit the Bay of Needles – phonolite towers dominating the skyline – then delve into Príncipe's heritage with a full-day island tour. Spend one evening turtle-watching, learning from experts about conservation and nesting, then break a sweat with a three-hour guided hike through the rainforest to reach the O Que Pipi Waterfall, cooling off in the remote pool with only the sound of nature as a backdrop.

This trip costs from £3,098 pp (two sharing), including return flights (London via Lisbon and Accra), nine nights' accommodation (two nights' B&B in Lisbon, one nights' B&B at the Omali on São Tomé and six nights' half-board at Bom Bom on Príncipe), domestic flights (São Tomé to Príncipe), all transfers and excursions mentioned (turtle watching experience, plantation tour and boat trip to the Bay of Needles).

To book or talk to an expert, call Sunvil on 020 8758 4722 (

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