



# ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

## Ghana

### Budget Birding

*24<sup>th</sup> October to 6<sup>th</sup> November 2022 (14 days)*



White-necked Rockfowl by Adam Riley

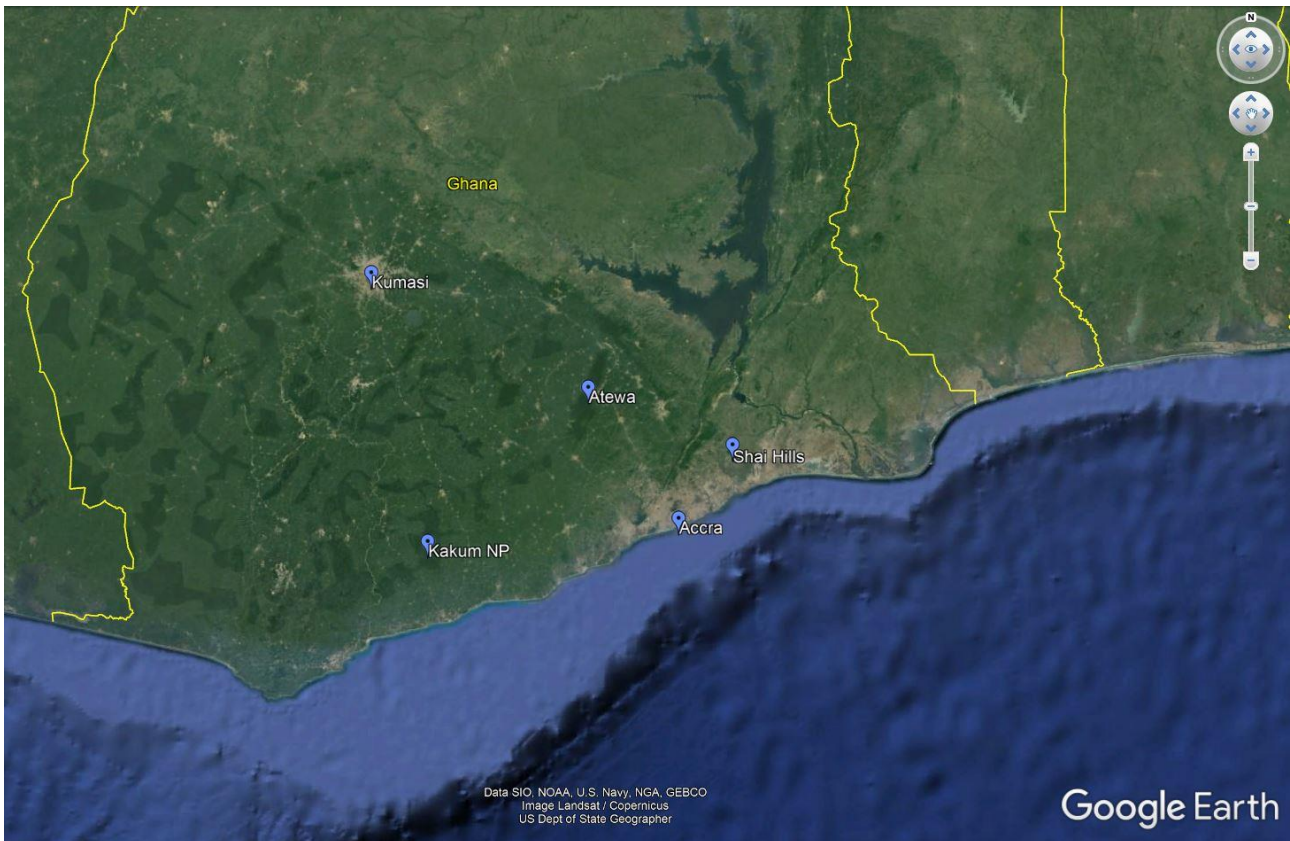
*For our Ghana Budget birding tour, we have cherry-picked the very best and most accessible birding sites of this fantastic country and packaged this into a shorter and more cost effective offering. This tour is primarily focused on Ghana's incredible forests which include the famous Kakum canopy walkway, vast Ankasa Forest and the unique Atewa range. One of the major highlights will be seeing the incredible White-necked Rockfowl and the tour will also target many of Ghana's most special species, including the likes of Congo Serpent Eagle, Long-tailed Hawk, Akun Eagle-Owl, Blue-moustached, Rosy and Black Bee-eaters, Fire-bellied Woodpecker, White-crested and Black Dwarf Hornbills, Rufous-sided Broadbill, Buff-throated Sunbird and a plethora of superb Upper Guinea Forest endemics!*

**THE TOUR AT A GLANCE...**

**THE ITINERARY**

<b>Day 1</b>	<b>Arrival in Accra</b>
<b>Day 2</b>	<b>Shai Hills and Volta region to Kakum National Park</b>
<b>Days 3 &amp; 4</b>	<b>Kakum National Park and surrounding areas</b>
<b>Day 5</b>	<b>Kakum to Sekondi (Shama)</b>
<b>Day 6</b>	<b>Sekondi to Ankasa</b>
<b>Days 7 &amp; 8</b>	<b>Ankasa Forest Reserve</b>
<b>Day 9</b>	<b>Ankasa to Kakum</b>
<b>Day 10</b>	<b>Kakum to Bonkro Forest and Rockfowl colony</b>
<b>Day 11</b>	<b>Bonkro Forest to Kumasi via Bobiri Butterfly Reserve</b>
<b>Day 12</b>	<b>Bobiri Butterfly Reserve to Atewa Range</b>
<b>Day 13</b>	<b>Atewa Range</b>
<b>Day 14</b>	<b>Atewa to Accra and departure</b>

**TOUR ROUTE MAP...**



### THE TOUR IN DETAIL...



Blue Cuckooshrike by Adam Riley

**Day 1: Arrival in Accra.** On arrival at Katoka International Airport in Accra, you will be met and transferred through to a comfortable hotel in the city.

**Day 2: Shai Hills and Volta region to Kakum National Park.** In the early morning, we will make an excursion to the nearby Shai Hills Resources Reserve. This sanctuary, situated about an hour outside the capital, is an expanse of grassland and woodland, dominated by the steeply rising Shai Hills. The birding here is superb and we are bound to turn up something interesting; this is the best site in Ghana for White-crowned Cliff Chat and an excellent site for Stone Partridge, African Hobby, Blue-bellied and Purple Rollers, Double-toothed Barbet, Vinaceous Dove, Red-shouldered Cuckooshrike, Violet Turaco and Tree Pipit.

After lunch, we will visit the Volta Dam, one of the largest in Africa, where we will search for both Pied-winged and White-bibbed Swallows. Thereafter we will drive to Kakum National Park for a three-night stay.

**Days 3 & 4: Kakum National Park and surrounding areas.** This 607 km<sup>2</sup> (234 mi<sup>2</sup>) National Park is the jewel in the crown of Ghana's protected reserve system. The park conserves a critically important block of primary and secondary upper Guinea forest that is surrounded by a sea of humanity and its resultant deforestation. During our days in this area, we will explore several sections of this vast protected area, as well as a selection of nearby habitats.

Easily accessible from the park headquarters at Abrafo is the world famous Kakum canopy walkway, the only such structure of this size on the African continent. It is 350m long (over 1000ft), 40m (132ft) high and is suspended between 7 emergent forest trees, which support platforms stable enough to allow telescope use. We will make special arrangements for the early opening and late closure of the walkway, thereby allowing us patronage during these critical birding hours.

Amongst the many species we hope to see from the walkway are some of West Africa's most sought-after forest jewels. Species that regularly attend the multi-species canopy bird waves include the cotinga-like Blue Cuckooshrike, Violet-backed Hyliota, Sharpe's Apalis (an upper Guinea endemic), Rufous-crowned Eremomela, African Shrike-flycatcher, Lemon-bellied Crombec, Green Hylia, Yellow-mantled and the beautiful Preuss's Weavers, Cassin's Honeybird, Willcocks's and the extremely rare Yellow-footed Honeyguides, White-headed and Forest Wood Hoopoes, Tit-Hylia, Grey Longbill, Red-headed and



Akum Eagle-Owl by David Hoddinott





**Red-billed Helmetshrike by Adam Riley**

providing a unique opportunity for spotting passing birds. Raptor watching is particularly productive and previous trips have produced unbeatable views of the rarely seen Congo Serpent Eagle, Cassin's Hawk-Eagle, Red-thighed Sparrowhawk, Red-necked Buzzard, Palm-nut Vulture, African Harrier-Hawk, African Cuckoo-Hawk and African Hobby. Other birds that we might see include Piping, Black Casqued Wattled, Yellow-casqued Wattled and Brown-cheeked Hornbills, Grey and Red-fronted Parrots, Rosy Bee-eater and mixed flocks of swifts that often include Cassin's and Sabine's Spinetails and, if we are lucky, Black Spinetail. Velvet-mantled Drongo is in constant attendance, as are a wide variety of sunbirds including Fraser's, Little Green, Collared, Olive, the stunning Buff-throated, Olive-bellied, Superb and sought-after Johanna's.

We will also walk the forest trails, covering both deep interior forest and forest edge at Abrafo and Antwikwaa (various sections of Kakum.) This is the realm of greenbuls and there is certainly no shortage of these sociable birds. Species we hope to find include Little, Little Grey, Plain, Slender-billed, Yellow-whiskered, Golden, Honeyguide, Swamp Palm, Icterine, Red-tailed and Western Bearded Greenbuls, as well as Grey-headed and Red-tailed Bristlebills and Western Nicator. Further birds of the forest interior include Red-chested Goshawk, White-spotted Flufftail, Blue-headed Wood Dove, Olive Long-tailed Cuckoo, Black-throated Coucal, Red-billed Dwarf, Black Dwarf and the bizarre White-crested Hornbills, Rufous-sided Broadbill performing its incredible circular dance routine, Finsch's Rufous Thrush, Fraser's Forest Flycatcher, Blue-headed Crested Flycatcher, Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher, Western Oriole and Shining Drongo. Although the forest interior birding is challenging, hard work and perseverance should net us a good selection of these special species.

We will also be ever alert for Safari Ant activity, not only in order to avoid their painful bites, but also (and more importantly!) because they provide us with our best opportunity for viewing shy ant-attending birds such as the three species of Bristlebill, White-tailed and rare Brown-

Crested Malimbos and Grey-headed, White-breasted and Chestnut-breasted Nigritas. Other species we hope to see include the elusive canopy-dwelling Fernando Po Batis, Yellow-billed Turaco, the indescribably beautiful Black Bee-eater, Yellow-spotted and Hairy-breasted Barbets, family flocks of the striking Red-billed Helmetshrike, Chestnut-capped Flycatcher, which also travel in small family groups, the strange-looking Naked-faced Barbet, Red-rumped Tinkerbird, Sabine's Puffback and Maxwell's Black Weaver.

The tree platforms provide a fabulous vista over the forest and forest edge, thereby



**Black Bee-eater by David Hoddinott**





Potto by David Hoddinott

Cameropteras, Green Crombec, Dusky-blue Flycatcher, Black-and-white Shrike-flycatcher, Black-winged Oriole, Splendid, Copper-tailed and Chestnut-winged Starlings and Blue-billed Malimbe

We will also undertake several nocturnal excursions in the hope of finding Fraser's Eagle-Owl, Red-chested Owlet and the very rare and aberrant Brown Nightjar. During the nocturnal excursion, we may well hear Nkulengu Rail, a near impossible rail to see! These large forest rallids roost high in trees and emit their loud "Congo-drum" duets after dusk and in the pre-dawn.

Rainforest mammals are inconspicuous but we should see several species of primates, which may include Spot-nosed and Lowe's Monkeys and Olive and Western Pied Colobus. A night walk will provide the opportunity of finding Potto, a slow moving and primitive primate that subsists largely on tree-gum, as well as several species of fast moving galagos. Many other mammals occur in Kakum but most are very seldom seen; these include Forest Elephant, Giant Forest Hog, Leopard, Water Chevrotain (a primitive antelope that is largely aquatic and often feeds on meat), 5 species of duiker, Bongo, 3 species of pangolin, and the arboreal Brush-tailed Porcupine. We can, however, count on seeing several species of squirrel, including African Giant Squirrel.

While we are in the vicinity, we will also take time out to visit one of Ghana's most notorious edifices, the Cape Coast Castle. Originally built by the Swedish in 1653, it is now a World Heritage Site and a chilling reminder of the horrors of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. In particular, a visit to the dank dungeons and the notorious "Door of No Return" is a deep and sobering experience. During the height of this abhorrent trade, it is estimated that between 12 and 20 million West Africans were removed to the New World!

**Day 5: Kakum to Sekondi (Shama).** Today we leave early for the drive to Shama. On arrival, we will have the opportunity to check-in to our guest house and then venture out to bird in another patch of lowland rainforest at Nsuta Forest. This site is seldom visited as it has only been recently discovered by birders



Red-fronted Antpecker by Adam Riley





Sharpe's Apalis by David Hoddinott

birding at this exciting new site and since so few birders have visited this area, there is good potential to find something unusual or rare!

**Day 6: Sekondi to Ankasa.** This morning we will begin our long journey towards the superb Ankasa Forest Reserve. We will make some comfort stops along the way and have time to enjoy some roadside birding en route. Our first stop will be at a roadside wetland where we are likely to find Orange Weaver at a known nesting site while the secretive and stunning Black-bellied Seedcracker is also found here from time to time. Later on, we will stop at an area of mangroves along a small estuary where we will search for the highly prized Reichenbach's and Mangrove Sunbirds as well as the rare White-browed Forest Flycatcher which has recently been discovered in this area. Our final site will be near the Cote d'Ivoire border in far Western Ghana where we hope to find the localised Carmelite Sunbird before eventually arriving at our campsite where we will be welcomed by our friendly camp staff. This evening we have the opportunity for some birding right around where we are based.

**Days 7 & 8: Ankasa Forest Reserve.** We will have two full days to enjoy the fabulous Ankasa Forest Reserve and here we will endeavour to seek out the many rare and elusive forest species that we have very little chance of seeing in Kakum National Park. Nkulengu Rail is one of the most prized species in West Africa and Ankasa is probably the best place on earth to try and find this fabulous forest rail. Plenty of time will be spent at some of the small forest pools in the heart of this national park where sought-after specials such as White-bellied and Shining-blue Kingfishers, African Finfoot, Hartlaub's Duck, Dwarf Bittern and White-crested Tiger Heron can all be found. In the late evening, we also stand a chance for Spot-breasted Ibis.

The remainder of our time will be spent exploring the various trails through the primary forest and along the access road where the impressive Great Blue Turaco (now a scarce species through Ghana), Red-

and is well off the beaten track. Rare species that have been recorded here in the past include the very rare Rufous Fishing Owl, Spot-breasted Ibis and White-crested Tiger Heron. Nsuta Forest will provide further opportunities to see many species that also occur in Kakum National Park in addition to being a good site for various others. These include Congo Serpent Eagle, Red-thighed Sparrowhawk, Bat Hawk, Long-tailed Hawk, scarce Black-collared Lovebird, Yellow-throated and Black Cuckoos, Bristle-nosed Barbet, Black Spinetail, Black Dwarf and Piping Hornbills, Western Nicator, Ussher's Flycatcher and Square-tailed Saw-wing. We will enjoy two days



Long-tailed Hawk by David Hoddinott





Shining-blue Kingfisher by Jonathan Rossouw

area of savannah grassland scrub. Species we hope to see here include Pruess's Swallow, Marsh Tchagra, Piping Hornbill, Shining-blue Kingfisher, Wilson's Indigobird, Great-spotted Cuckoo, Yellow-crowned Gonolek, Singing Cisticola, Guinea Turaco, Oriole Warbler, Compact Weaver and, if we are very fortunate, Yellow-winged Pytilia. If unsuccessful earlier, we have a further opportunity to search for Mangrove Sunbird before checking into our hotel.

**Day 10: Kakum to Bonkro Forest and Rockfowl colony.** This morning we will more than likely spend a little time at Abrafo Forest searching for any species we may have not yet seen. If the road to the Aboabo area is in decent repair then we will spend some time at this site. Here potential targets include Red-vented Malimbe, Thick-billed Honeyguide, Tessmann's Flycatcher, Yellow-billed Barbet, African Piculet (a very rare bird in West Africa), Black-capped Apalis and the elusive Long-tailed Hawk, amongst a multitude of more widespread forest species. In the late morning, we then carry on towards a remote forest patch where we will wait patiently for the bizarre and pre-historic looking White-necked Rockfowl to appear at its nesting colony in the late afternoon. Although the birds will not be nesting, they regularly roost at the nest site and we, therefore, stand an excellent chance of seeing this near-mythical species.

We'll then head back down the trail, to enjoy a celebratory meal at our lodge in this remote, local community. Up until recently, the nearest accommodation was in the city of Kumasi, which meant many hours of driving to reach the city late in the evening. This new lodge not only removed a lot of late-night travel time, but assists the local community in further protecting this priceless forest. This evening, we will venture out for a night walk to see what nocturnal species we may find.

**Day 11: Bonkro Forest to Kumasi via Bobiri Butterfly Reserve.** We have a rather more relaxed beginning to the day, with many sought after species right on our doorstep. We'll head back into the forest in search of White-crested and Black Dwarf

chested Owlet, Pale-breasted, Blackcap and Rufous-winged Illadopsis, Yellow-bearded Greenbul, White-breasted and Crested Guineafowls, Cassin's Flycatcher, Dusky Long-tailed Cuckoo and Red-fronted Antpecker may be found. Ankasa also gives us another opportunity to find some rare night birds like Akun Eagle-Owl should we have failed on our previous attempts while African Wood and Fraser's Eagle Owls also occur.

**Day 9: Ankasa to Kakum.** Today we make the return journey to Kakum National Park after some final morning birding at Ankasa. Along the way, we will stop off at a coastal



Cassin's Honeybird by David Hoddinott





**Black-capped Apalis by David Hoddinott**

Hornbills, Grey-headed and Red-tailed Bristlebill's, Rufous-sided Broadbill, Fire-bellied Woodpecker, Yellow-throated and Thick-billed Cuckoos, Forest Wood Hoopoe and perhaps Sharpe's Apalis, whilst Western Wattled Cuckooshrike would be a mega find. Indeed, if our luck is in, we could even bump into Long-tailed or Tree Pangolin. We'll enjoy lunch here, before setting off for Bobiri Butterfly Reserve

Bobiri is a small forest sanctuary close to town that is renowned for its diversity and abundance of butterflies. The bird community here is similar to that of Kakum and we, therefore, have a further

opportunity to search for any species we may have missed. We'll spend the afternoon working our way through this beautiful forest for Olive-green Camaroptera, Western Nicator, Puvell's Illadopsis, Tit Hylia, Yellow-footed Barbet, Kemp's Longbill, Blue-headed Crested Flycatcher and Western Bronze-naped Pigeon. In the late afternoon, we'll head across to Kumasi for the night.

**Day 12: Bobiri Butterfly Reserve to Atewa Range.** This morning we will re-visit the Bobiri Butterfly and Forest Reserve. Interesting species that are possible this morning include Congo Serpent Eagle, Forest Wood Hoopoe, Forest Francolin, the now rare Grey Parrot whose numbers have been decimated through Ghana, Purple-throated Cuckooshrike, Afep Pigeon, Black Dwarf and White-crested Hornbills, Dusky Tit, Forest Penduline Tit Lemon-bellied Crombec, Tessmann's Flycatcher, Red-billed Helmetshrike, African Piculet and Magpie Mannikin.

One of the factors that make lowland forest birding potentially frustrating is that although the species diversity is huge, many of the individual species occur at very low density and are therefore seldom encountered. Nonetheless, they can appear at any moment and the golden rule is, therefore, maximum time in the field for maximum species! In the afternoon we will transfer to our accommodation near the rich Atewa forest.

**Day 13: Atewa Range.** We have a full day to explore the infrequently visited forest that cloaks the Atewa Range, situated on the South Volta Scarp and one of the only higher-lying areas in Ghana. Atewa is managed as a logging reserve but is still covered in extensive forest and offers one a chance of encountering a range of seldom-seen and little-known species.

The birding is extremely productive here and we have our final opportunity of seeing some of the rarer forest species as well as giving us additional chances of locating more of the Upper Guinea specials.



**Blue-moustached Bee-eater by David Hoddinott**







**Buff-throated Sunbird by Keith Valentine**

Please note that today is a long and fairly tiring day as we will be on our legs for a long time. We will begin early in the morning, taking a packed lunch with us. The total distance up and down is around 12 kilometres while we also do around 3 kilometres on top of the Atewa Range making for around 15 kilometres in total for the day. We will initially pass through the secondary farm bush habitat and then begin the gradual ascent up the mountain. On our way up we will keep an eye open for Western Bronze-naped Pigeon, Little Green Woodpecker, Square-tailed Saw-wing, Black-capped Apalis, Red-cheeked Wattle-eye, Brown and Puvell's Illadopsises,

Yellow-billed Barbet and the shy and secretive Black-throated Coucal.

The top of Atewa will be our main focus of the day and many very special and often difficult species will be searched for up here. These include both Blackcap and the endangered Rufous-winged Illadopsis, rare and localised Nimba and Little Grey Flycatchers, striking but elusive Many-colored Bushshrike, Brown-chested Alethe (a very localized bird in Ghana), Red-tailed, Grey-headed and most notably Green-tailed Bristlebills, Western Bearded and Red-tailed Greenbills, secretive Forest Scrub Robin, seldom-recorded Red-fronted Antpecker, Fernando Po Batis, African Shrike-flycatcher, Brown-eared Woodpecker, Long-tailed Hawk and, if we are very lucky, we may even bump into the highly elusive Spot-breasted Ibis! Atewa is also the best site in Ghana for the dazzling Blue-moustached Bee-eater and we have a very good chance of seeing this spectacular bird during our day on the mountain.

In the mid-afternoon, we will begin our descent back down the mountain to meet up with our bus, which will then take us back to our nearby hotel to relax and freshen up before dinner.

**Day 14: Atewa to Accra and depart.** This morning we should have time to bird the Farm Bush at Atewa. This uniquely West and Central African secondary habitat is usually extremely productive for forest-edge birds and we may be entertained by a number of exciting species such as Black-and-white Shrike-flycatcher, Dusky-blue Flycatcher, Cassin's Honeybird, Black-bellied Seedcracker, Western Bluebill, Marsh Tchagra, Compact Weaver, Black-winged Red Bishop, Orange-cheeked Waxbill, nomadic Magpie and Black-and-white Mannikins, African Hobby and White-spotted Flufftail. In the late morning, we will return to our hotel to freshen up before we depart back to Accra to connect with our international flights home.



**Tit-Hylia by Markus Lilje**



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**FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:**

Tour dates, prices, single supplement rates, approximate flight costs and spaces available for this tour are displayed on our website. Please see under IMPORTANT NOTES below.

**The tour price includes:**

- All meals from dinner on day 1 of the tour to lunch on day 14;
- Bottled water;
- All lodgings as per the itinerary;
- Ground transportation;
- All reserve entrance fees;
- All local guiding services; and

**The tour price excludes:**

- Any airfares, taxes and visa costs;
- Any beverages;
- Tips for local guides and services;
- Telephone calls, laundry and items of a personal nature.

**Single Supplement:** The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBL cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

Single Accommodation is NOT available at Ankasa Forest or Bonkro Forest lodges at this time. All guests will have to share. All rooms have a pull a wooden pull-out divider for some privacy when sleeping if required.

**IMPORTANT NOTES:**

a) Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is however fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing (usually 4 months before the tour.) The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates, which are also quoted in the respective fixed currency.

b) Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration a small party supplement will have to be charged.

c) Furthermore, these costs are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.

d) Lastly, we may be forced to change or alter the itinerary and / or the designated Rockjumper leader/s at short or no notice due to unforeseen circumstances; please be aware that we will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.

**Tippling:** As noted above, gratuities are NOT included on this tour.

**PLEASE NOTE:**

- A good deal of our time is spent in vehicles as we do have to cover long distances in order to get to the best areas for birds. Some of the roads can be very bad and the going will be slow and potentially frustrating at times. Traffic in certain urban areas can be very bad too. The more luggage you pack the less room there is in the vehicle, so it is important for your comfort and that of your fellow travellers that you do not over-pack. Kindly stick to 20 kg (44 lb) for



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- check in luggage and 8 kg (18 lb) for hand luggage.
- This tour is focused on the rainforest areas in the south where the humidity will be high and often quite uncomfortable.
  - This Ghana tour is designed to be a dedicated birding experience and we will attempt to get good views of as many bird species as possible.
  - This tour does require a reasonable level of fitness and participants should be in good general health as much of the forest birding will be done on foot and may require walking for several hours (on mostly flat terrain) at a time. Should you have any physical or medical limitations, please notify us in advance of departure. Please note that for most of this tour we will be far away from modern medical facilities.
  - Accommodations are generally of a good standard in Ghana. We will do our utmost to make your stay as comfortable as possible, but at times we may experience maintenance problems that are beyond our control. In the smaller towns, while we always opt for the best available accommodation, the accommodations are basic and below the standard of what you have come to expect from the developed world. At Ankasa we will be camping at a well-appointed camping area just outside the national park.
  - Please be aware that the hike up Atewa on the penultimate day of the trip is not a very strenuous walk as the gradient is rather gentle. However, since the total distance up and down the mountain is around 12 km (7.5 mi) and we will be on our feet birding for most of the day, you will need to be in good physical condition to be able to manage well on this day.
  - Should you wish to have a day room on the last day of the tour at Accra, this can be arranged but it will be at an extra cost to yourself.

#### **ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE DETAILS:**

This tour **does not** include any international airfares. The tour will depart from Katoka International in Accra on day 1, this is an arrival day and you are free to arrive at any time on this day. The tour will conclude in the late afternoon on day 14 at Katoka International in Accra.

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your **Tour Confirmation** package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

#### **FLIGHTS:**

Katoka International Airport, Accra (IATA: ACC) is the main port of entry for international flights in Ghana and is well serviced by several of the world's major airlines. **Please DO NOT book any flights until you have consulted the Rockjumper office for confirmation on the status of the tour.**

