



Tico Tours

The Gambia: An Introduction to Africa

Duration- 14 Days

For 6 participants (+ Tour Leader, driver and local guides where required).

The Gambia makes a perfect introduction to African birding, a small country where English is the chiefly spoken language and birds are in superabundance through habitats ranging from mangrove swamps to dry forests and savannah. The River Gambia splits the country in two and is the main feature of the country. As our aeroplane comes in to land we will appreciate this as we circle over some fantastic scenery. The Gambia is a small country, only 330km long and averages 25-30km wide, surrounded to the north, east and south sides by the huge country of Senegal with the somewhat larger Atlantic Ocean to the west.

Over 550 species have been recorded from this tiny country with a third being of a migratory nature, thus our tour is timed to coincide with a plethora of species, both Afrotropical and Western Palearctic in their origin. One of the main reasons for this large number of species is the fine mosaic of habitats lying along a major ecotone between the arid Sahel/Sahara in the north and the humid tropics in the south.

5 nights Senegambia Hotel
2 nights Tendaba Camp
2 nights Basse (TBA)
2 nights Tendaba Camp
2 nights Senegambia Hotel

Tour Summary:

Expect 250-300 species.

The first half of this tour will be spent in the coastal region visiting some fantastic locations such as Abuko Forest, Brufut Woods and Bijilo Forest for Afrotropical specialities and Tanji Bird Reserve and the Kotu area for Afrotropical species and many Western Palearctic migrants. This time at the

coast will be highly rewarding, it is not just the quality of the birds here but the quantity also, a large number of birds wait at every turn. During our time here we will focus on finding specialities such as *Blue-breasted Kingfisher*, *Blue-bellied* and *Abyssinian Roller*, *Oriole Warbler*, *Greater Painted-Snipe*, *Senegal Thick-knee*, *Standard-winged* and *Long-tailed Nightjar* and *Swallow-tailed Bee-eater*. Other common yet fascinatingly beautiful species include *White-crowned Robin-Chat*, *Yellow-crowned Gonolek*, *Pearl-spotted Owlet*, *Little Bee-eater*, *Purple* and *Long-tailed Glossy Starling*, *Wire-tailed Swallow*, *Sacred Ibis*, *Marsh Sandpiper*, *African Paradise-Flycatcher*, *Lizard Buzzard*, *Grey Kestrel*, *Shikra*, *Pied* and *Malachite Kingfisher*, *Beautiful Sunbird* and *Palm-Nut Vulture*. This period at the coast will also produce many Western Palearctic migrants, the highlights including *Black Kite*, *Subalpine* and *Melodious Warbler*, *Common Greenshank*, *Wood Sandpiper*, *Black-winged Stilt*, *Pied Avocet*, *Little Stint*, *Slender-billed Gull*, *Caspian Tern*, *White-winged Black Tern*, *Eurasian Hoopoe*, *Common Chiffchaff*, *Blackcap* and *Great Reed Warbler*.

After we have acclimatised at the coast and seen some birds that will stick in our minds for a lifetime we will move further inland where the birding just gets better and better. We will head for Tendaba Camp making several birding stops en-route, highlights over the journey may include *Black-crowned Crane*, *Quail-Finch*, *Mosque Swallow*, *Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Lark* and *Crested Lark*. During our journey we will also be keeping our eyes skywards where we will be on the lookout for *Bateleur* and *Wahlberg's Eagle*, *Brown*, *Short-toed* and *Beaudouin's Snake-Eagle*, *Lanner Falcon* and *White-backed Vulture*, all jaw-dropping raptors of huge standing within the country. Once we have arrived at Tendaba we should be greeted by some fantastic birding (and great local cuisine), with the likes of *Goliath Heron*, *White-backed Night-Heron*, *African Fish-Eagle*, *Brown-necked Parrot*, *Bruce's Green Pigeon*, the bizarre *White-crested Helmet-Shrike* and the huge prehistoric looking *Abyssinian Ground-Hornbill* being highlights.

From Tendaba Camp we will head further inland along the river to the town of Basse, one of the most reliable localities for the 'bird of the trip', *Egyptian Plover*! Other specialities we will be on the prowl for will include *Northern Carmine Bee-eater*, *Ruppell's Griffon* and *White-headed Vulture*, the near mythical *Pel's Fishing Owl* and *African Finfoot*, *Red-throated Bee-eater*, *Red-chested Swallow*, *Sudan Golden Sparrow* and *Exclamatory Paradise Whydah*.

After reaching and spending some quality time at Basse we will gradually meander our way along the river back towards the coast with a couple more nights at Tendaba en-route where we will hope for some further interesting species, followed by some additional time at the coastal localities that may provide yet more excitement.

This two-week tour is the perfect introduction for anyone visiting (West) Africa for the first time. As we leave the tourist area of the coast we will discover the 'real' Africa, a truly breathtaking experience. Accommodation at the coast is a 3* hotel with good food, comfortable air-conditioned (optional) rooms and great birding, accommodations further inland are more rustic as is to be expected in this part of the world, the friendly staff and traditional food will make us feel totally at home. All meals are included; some meals will be taken 'out-and-about' as packed lunches to help optimise time spent 'in the field'.

Price: TBA

Single Supplement: TBA

Price includes: All accommodation (ceiling fan at coast)
 All meals
 All guiding
 All transport when in The Gambia
 All park entrance fees

Price does not include: Items of a personal nature (air-conditioning)
 Insurance
 Optional extra drinks (i.e., alcohol, soft drinks)
 Gratuities

Suggested Reading List:

Barlow C, Wacher T & Disley T, (1997). *A Field Guide to Birds of The Gambia and Senegal*. Christopher Helm, London.

Barlow C, Hammick J & Sellar P, (2002). *Bird Song of The Gambia and Senegal: An aid to Identification*. Mandarin Productions.

Borrow N & Demey R, (2005). *Birds of Western Africa*. Christopher Helm, London.

Gabb R, (2004). *Birding The Gambia DVD/Video*. Dragon Films, Poynton.

Andrews M, (2004). *Collins Illustrated Checklist: Mammals of Africa*. Harper Collins, London.

Burke A, (2002). *Lonely Planet The Gambia*. 2nd Edition. Lonely Planet Publications, London.

Emms C & Barnett L, (2001). *The Gambia: The Bradt Travel Guide*. Bradt.