



South Africa: The Western Cape, KwaZulu-Natal & Kruger NP

September 23-October 15, 2021



Blue Crane

The Western Cape lies in the austral winter rainfall region of South Africa and constitutes a medley of varying habitat types ranging from coastal sand dunes and rocky shores to rugged mountain ranges that flank the southern and eastern extremities of the province.

As such the region is comprised of a variety of unique eco-systems found nowhere else on earth. One such biome is known as “fynbos,” an area of hardy plants capable of withstanding the hot, dry and windy conditions of the South African summer as well as the frequent winter rains. Fynbos are home to an impressive number of endemic plants and animals including many birds that have co-evolved with fynbos plants. Examples of these birds include Cape Sugarbird, Cape Rockjumper, Cape Francolin, Black Bustard, Black Harrier, Protea Canary, Cape Siskin and Orange-breasted Sunbird.

Further inland one enters a vast arid region known as “karoo,” an area characterized by sparse and irregular winter rainfall stretching from the Kalahari Desert in South Africa to the Namib Desert in Namibia. Like the coastal fynbos, the karoo region hosts large numbers of birds and plants endemic to this unique eco-system. Examples include Yellow-rumped Eremomela, Slater’s Lark, Red Lark, Karoo Long-billed Lark, Namaqua Warbler, Karoo and Tractrac chats and Ludwig’s Bustard.



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Finally, the coastal areas of the Western Cape, heavily influenced by the cold Benguela Current, are home to species like African Penguin, Bank, Cape and Crowned cormorants, Cape Gannet, Cape Siskin, African Oystercatcher and Hartlaub's Gull, and we will visit several areas in pursuit of these birds.

The coastal areas of the Western Cape have seen significant human alteration of the land. Large urban settlements and extensive farming practices over generations have transformed the geology of the alluvial plain significantly, providing emerging habitats for an influx of birds and mammals capable of adjusting to the ongoing pace of change associated with rural development and a steadily expanding population. As one moves further from the coast, the high summer temperatures and low rainfall make any activities beyond low key pastoral farming with sheep and goats untenable for most of the year.

As such, the province provides visiting naturalists with a wide variety of botanically unique habitats supporting an amazing diversity of plant and animal species within one of the most scenic parts of the world, aptly described by Sir Francis Drake on his global voyage as by far, the 'Fairest Cape in all the World'.

The second portion of the tour will take us to KwaZulu-Natal in the eastern part of the country and the South African province with the highest bird list. Like the Western Cape, KwaZulu-Natal is comprised of four very different eco-systems and we will spend time in each.

1) The Drakensburg Mountains are sure to be one of the scenic highlights of the tour. Here we will use 4WD vehicles to climb above 10,000 feet, eventually entering the imbedded country of Lesotho. The rocky landscapes here are host to species like Drakensberg Rockjumper, Drakensberg Siskin, Yellow-tufted Pipit, Ground Woodpecker, Bearded Vulture and Sentinel Rock-Thrush.

2) Afro-montane Forest. Most of KwaZulu-Natal's forests have been cleared for farming and grazing, but a few small remnant patches persist and these also hold a unique set of birds unavailable anywhere else on the tour. We will visit remnant patches at Xumeni, Dhlinza and near St. Lucia in search of species like Delagorgue's Pigeon, Trumpeter Hornbill, Orange Ground-Thrush, Spotted Ground-Thrush, Knysna Turaco, African Emerald Cuckoo, Narina Trogon, Bush Blackcap, Green-backed Twinspot, Chorister Robin-Chat, Barratt's Warbler and Woodward's Batis.



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3) Grasslands: Like most places around the world, grasslands in Africa have been largely destroyed and the birds found there have become increasingly scarce, and in many cases, quite rare. We will spend 2 days in remnant grassland habitat near Wakkerstroom where we will seek Botha's and Rudd's larks, Yellow-breasted Pipit, Blue Bustard, Gray-crowned Crane and Southern Bald Ibis. One highlight in this area will be the impressive numbers of the spectacular Long-tailed Widowbird.

4) Acacia and Savanna. Near the Mkuze game reserve south of the border with Swaziland, we will spend time in these habitats that are more characteristic of points further north in Africa. Distinctive birds here will include White-throated Robin-Chat, Neegard's Sunbird, Kurrichane Thrush, Rudd's Apalis, Lilac-breasted Roller, Four-colored Bushshrike, Crested Francolin, Golden-breasted Bunting and Bearded Scrub-Robin. This area will also provide us with our initial opportunities to see large mammals like Giraffe, Burchell's Zebra, White Rhinoceros and a variety of antelope including the rare Nyala.

We will conclude our tour with three days in the world famous Kruger National Park where we will have excellent chances to see some of Africa's most famous wildlife including Lion, Leopard, Elephant, White and Black rhinoceros and a splendid variety of antelope. Kruger is also a fantastic birding area and we will have chances to find Bataleur, Lappet-faced Vulture, Martial Eagle, Red-crested Bustard, Double-banded Sandgrouse, Gray-go-away Bird, Red-billed Oxpecker, Burnt-neck Eremomela, Kalahari Scrub-Robin, Violet-eared Waxbill and many, many more.

All in all, the widely varying habitats available along this tour's itinerary will provide participants with excellent chances to see a large number of South Africa's suite of endemic birds. The tour will be conducted at the onset of South Africa's spring season, so many species will have begun singing and breeding which will increase our chances of finding them. South Africa is a splendid and diverse country and this tour will provide everyone with lasting memories of this amazing land.





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Daily Itinerary

Day 1: Thursday September 23 - Departure

All participants must depart the U.S. today on overnight trans-Atlantic flights in order to arrive in Johannesburg (airport code JNB) on September 24.

Day 2: Friday, September 24 - Arrival in Johannesburg

After clearing customs and immigration in Johannesburg, you will walk to City Lodge, conveniently located just outside the arrival terminal. The path to the hotel is clearly marked. Flights from the U.S. generally arrive in the evening and everyone will be exhausted after the long trip, so there will be no planned activities on this day. Due to the varying and uncertain arrival times, tonight's dinner will not be included in the tour cost. Night at City Lodge adjacent to Johannesburg airport.

Day 3: Saturday, September 25- Flight to Capetown

We will take an early flight of approximately two hours duration to Cape Town and drive immediately to the world renowned Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens, truly one of the world's premier botanical gardens. A series of trails meander through the indigenous garden complex taking in the floral splendor of springtime and providing close up views of some of South Africa's most sought after endemics including Cape Sugarbird, Orange-breasted and Southern Double-collared Sunbird, Cape Canary, Cape Batis, Forest Canary and Cape Francolin. A resident pair of Spotted Eagle-Owl are often visible near the entrance gate and Kirstenbosch is also a good place to see the uncommon Swee Waxbill. After lunch at one of the garden's restaurants, we will drive south along the coastal route toward the Cape of Good Hope. A brief stop at Kommetjie should provide close views of African Oystercatcher, Crowned Cormorant and a variety of terns and gulls. We will plan to arrive in Simon's Town by mid-afternoon where we will check in to a beautiful "birder friendly" guest house with spectacular panoramic views of False Bay and a bird-rich indigenous garden where we might get close views of Karoo Prinia and Speckled Mousebird. We will spend the remainder of the afternoon at nearby Boulder's Beach for close-up views of African Penguin interacting endearingly with one another. The penguins will be at the start of this year's breeding cycle and chicks from the previous season should still be present. Night in Simon's Town.



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Day 4: Sunday September 26 - Cape of Good Hope and False Bay Environmental Park

We will depart early for the Cape of Good Hope reserve at the southern point of the Cape Peninsula. This is a popular tourist destination and we will want to arrive when the gate opens to make the most of the quiet time of day before the hordes of day trippers and buses begin to appear. Scenically, Cape Point area is impressive with towering cliffs and sea views in all directions along the access path leading to a lookout point at the old lighthouse. As well as enjoying the scenery, we will focus on locating the elusive and endemic Cape Siskin, which is often found on the slopes below the lighthouse. We will also spend time scanning the sea for Cape Gannets careening over the wave crests and enjoy the spectacle of breeding Cape Cormorants spiraling on the updrafts and landing on the towering cliff face of Cape Point itself. Other species likely to be encountered are Red-winged Starling, White-necked Raven, Cape Bunting, Familiar Chat, Cape Grassbird, Karoo Prinia, Cape Bulbul, Red-headed Cisticola and Common Ostrich. We will also stop at the actual Cape of Good Hope, the southwesternmost tip of the African continent, for photos and views of Chacma Baboon and Cape Fur Seals. Around mid-morning we will drive north into Capetown for a picnic lunch at the Rondevlei Bird Sanctuary, and then drive a short distance to the False Bay Environmental Park where we will spend the remainder of the afternoon. Here an inter-linked settling pond filtration system provides a variety of differing wetland habitats supporting thousands of ducks, gulls, terns and shorebirds. Birding is a leisurely affair using the vehicle as a blind and making regular stops to set up scopes. It is easy to record 60+ species here in a couple of hours. Some of the possibilities will include Greater and Lesser Flamingo, White Stork, Great White Pelican, African Sacred Ibis, Blacksmith Lapwing, Hartlaub's and Gray-hooded gulls, Cape Shoveler, Yellow-billed Duck, Red-billed Duck, Cape Teal, Black-headed Heron, Maccoa Duck, Hottentot Teal and African Marsh Harrier. When we've had our fill we will drive back to Simon's Town where we will spend the night. Night in Simon's Town.

Southern Double-collared Sunbird





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Day 5: Monday, September 27 - Rooi Els, Stony Point and Swellendam

Today we will leave the Cape area and make the scenic drive around False Bay to the small hamlet of Rooi Els. Here on the rocky slopes outside of the village, a dirt track will allow us access to prime habitat for the endemic Cape Rockjumper. Unfortunately these birds have been declining and much of their habitat is inaccessible. However there are multiple breeding pairs present at this site and we will spend several hours attempting to locate them. Other birds here include Piping and Red-headed cisticolas, Orange-breasted Sunbird, Familiar Chat, Verreaux's Eagle and occasionally African Swift. From Rooi Els we will make a short drive to Stony Point to view another colony of African Penguins. However in addition to the penguins, Stony Point hosts four species of breeding cormorants including the critically endangered Bank Cormorant, and this will likely be our only chance to see this species. We will then drive for 2 hours through rolling farmlands to the quaint town of Swellendam where we will spend the next 2 nights. Enroute we will watch for the stately Blue Crane, South Africa's national bird, and a common sight in this part of the country. We will plan to arrive at our guesthouse by mid-afternoon in order to have time for a late afternoon drive into the agricultural areas south of town. Here we will look for Karoo Bustard and a variety of larks including the endemic Agulhas Lark. Night in Swellendam.

Day 6: Tuesday, September 28 - DeHoop Nature Reserve

We will depart Swellendam before sunrise and drive an hour south to DeHoop. Before reaching the actual reserve we will spend some time checking the farm fields along the way for Agulhas and Large-billed larks, Blue Crane, Capped Wheatear, Orange-throated Longclaw and Denham's Bustard. We will then enter the reserve where we will spend the bulk of the day. We'll start around the campground looking for things like Southern Tchagra, Speckled Mousebird, Southern Boubou, Bar-throated Apalis, Namaqua Sandgrouse, Fiscal Flycatcher and Spotted Thick-knee. A trail along the edge of large lake will add a nice variety of waterfowl, gulls and terns to our list and a drive through the park's grasslands will provide chances for Secretarybird, Cloud Cisticola and Cape Clapper Lark. We will end the day at the Potberg section of the reserve where the critically endangered Cape Griffon is present and with good fortune we may find the rare Knysna Woodpecker. On my 2019 scouting trip I found a pair here excavating a nest cavity! Night in Swellendam.



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Day 7: Wednesday, September 29 - Swellendam to Capetown

As a change of pace, this morning we will sleep in and have a leisurely breakfast at our guesthouse. The property backs up to a wooded stream and the birding right from the patio is excellent. Possibilities here will include Klaas's and Red-chested cuckoos, Hammerkop, Streaky-headed Seedeater, Black Sawwing, Olive Thrush and many others. The guesthouse also has nectar feeders that attract Amethyst and Greater Double-collared sunbirds as well as Cape White-eye and Cape Canary. We will then drive back to Capetown and along the way we will have options of returning to the grasslands south of town to try and find any

species we missed there the prior day. We could also return to the Stony Point penguin colony or to Roi Ets if we missed Cape Rockjumper on the first visit. We will stay at very nice hotel near the airport with a small wetland in the rear that has many colorful Southern Red Bishops as well Southern Masked-Weaver and Malachite Sunbird. Night near the Capetown airport.



Day 8: Thursday, September 30 - West Coast National Park

An early breakfast at the hotel will be followed by a drive of about an hour to West Coast National Park where we will spend the entire day. Depending on our needs, we may take a short detour on the Darling Road which can be good for the endemic Black Harrier. Upon reaching the park we will drive slowly, birding from the vehicle hoping to find the park's specialty birds which include Black Harrier, Black Bustard, Gray-winged Francolin, Cape and Karoo larks, Karoo Scrub-Robin, Karoo Prinia, Red-headed Cisticola and a whole lot more. The park also has 2 blinds from which we can see an excellent mix of waterfowl, shorebirds and terns. A healthy population of Common Ostrich is also present along with a nice variety of antelope including Eland. Though rich in birds and wildlife, the park is relatively small and manageable and with a full day we should be able to develop a lengthy bird list. In the late afternoon we will exit the park at its northern gate and stay in the nearby town of Langebaan at a cozy inn overlooking Saldanha Bay. Night in Langebaan.



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Day 9: Friday, October 1- Berg River estuary, Kransvlei Poort and to Calvinia

Today will be a long drive (4.5 hours), so we will begin immediately after breakfast. We will make a brief stop at the Berg River estuary to look for Chestnut-banded Plover and then drive directly to a canyon outside the town of Clanwilliam known as Kransvlei Poort. This will be our only chance to see the rare and endemic Protea Canary. A few of these difficult to find birds are generally present in the reeds and grasses along the road and we will make our best efforts to find one. Other birds here will include Little Rush Warbler, Fairy Flycatcher, Yellow Bishop, Bokmakierie, Gray Tit and Fiscal Flycatcher. From there it will be a 2-3 hour drive to the town of Calvinia where we will stay for 2 nights. We will plan to arrive by mid-afternoon in order to have some time to make a late afternoon drive into the Karoo outside of town to look for Ludwig's Bustard, Rufous-eared Warbler and hopefully the enigmatic Yellow-rumped Eremomela, which can be very tricky to find. Night in Calvinia.

Day 10: Saturday, October 2 - Brandvlei area

We will take a packed breakfast this morning in order to leave well before sunrise for the 1.5 hour drive north to Brandvlei. Arriving here at daybreak is imperative as the Karoo often gets hot and windy by mid-morning. The stony plains outside of Brandvlei are an excellent place to find a variety of birds that will be seen nowhere else on the tour. Larks will be the center of our attention today and the possibilities will include Karoo Long-billed Lark, Red Lark (very difficult), Sclater's Lark, Sabota Lark, Large-billed Lark and Spike-heeled Lark. Finding all of these in a single day is not easy, but with luck and diligence we should see most, if not all of them. Other good birds in this area include White-quilled Bustard, Namaqua



Warbler, Pririt Batis, Dusky Sunbird, Namaqua Sandgrouse, Rufous-eared Warbler and Black-chested Prinia. We will try and arrive back in Calvinia by late afternoon in order to make a short visit to the Akkerendam Nature Preserve on the edge of town to look for Mountain Wheatear, Sickle-winged Chat and, if we are very lucky, Kopje Warbler. Night in Calvinia



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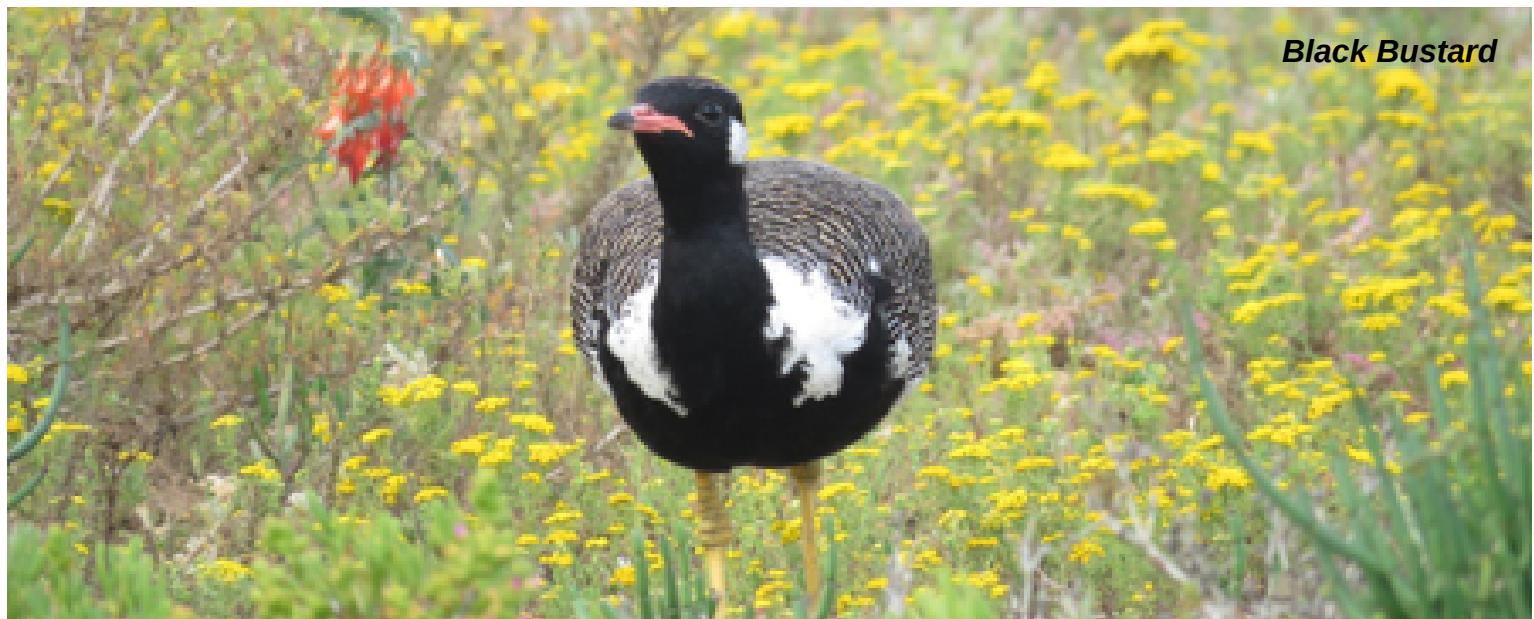
Daily Itinerary

Day 11: Sunday, October 3 - Return to Capetown

Much of today will be spent making the 4 hour drive back to Capetown. Options along the way will include a return to Akkerendam for Kopje Warbler, another stop at Kransvlei Poort for Protea Canary, or simply sleeping a bit later and taking our time making unplanned stops along the way for whatever happens to turn up. Night near the Capetown airport.

Day 12: Monday, October 4 - Flight to Johannesburg; Drive to Wakkerstroom

The second leg of our adventure begins this morning with an early morning flight to Johannesburg. After securing our rental vehicle we will begin the 3 hour drive to Wakkerstroom where we will base for the next 2 nights. To break up the drive we will stop at the Marievale Bird Sanctuary, a large protected wetland area where we can easily tally 70-90 birds in an hour. Some of our targets here will include Goliath and Purple herons, Water Thick-knee, Whiskered and White-winged terns and Hottentot Teal. We will then continue on to Wakkerstroom where we will stay in a birder friendly guesthouse with a nice greenspace in the rear. In the late afternoon we will visit the Wakkerstroom Wetland reserve where a nice variety of waterfowl will be present and there is a breeding colony of South African Swallows. Here we will also hope to glimpse African Rail, African Snipe, African Marsh-Harrier and possibly Marsh Owl. Night in Wakkerstroom.





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Day 13: Tuesday, October 5 - Lark hunting in Wakkerstroom grasslands

Today we will be accompanied by an excellent Zulu bird guide who will help us locate some of the area's toughest species. Our primary targets in the Wakkerstroom area will be Blue Bustard, White-bellied Bustard, Yellow-breasted Pipit, Wing-snapping Cisticola, Botha's Lark, Rudd's Lark, Pink-billed Lark, Eastern Long-billed Lark, Eastern Clapper Lark and Rufous-naped Lark. All of these are highly sought after grassland birds and seeing all of them will be a challenge. Rudd's and Botha's larks are both in serious decline and our chances of finding any birds this day will be highly dependent upon the weather conditions. High winds or a cold, overcast day will make things much more difficult, so we will hope for the birding gods to smile upon us with favorable weather. Other birds we hope to see during the course of the day will include African Yellow Warbler, Rock-loving Cisticola, White-fronted Bee-eater, Secretarybird, Wattled and Black-winged lapwings and Quailfinch. Night in Wakkerstroom.



Botha's Lark

Day 14: Wednesday, October 6 - Drive to Underberg

Today will be mainly a travel day as it is 5+ hours from Wakkerstroom to Underberg. Though it will be a long drive, there will be roadside sightings available along the way, however our primary objective will be to reach Underberg by mid-afternoon in order to have time for a late afternoon drive into the nearby farmlands. This is an excellent area for Gray-crowned Crane and we will hope to locate a flock of these handsome birds. A smattering of small ponds and wetlands dots this area and around them we can look for Greater Striped-Swallow, African Rail, Long-crested Eagle and Fan-tailed Widowbird. Night in Underberg.



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Day 15: Thursday, October 7 - Sani Pass & Lesotho

We will use 4x4 vehicles today and be accompanied by an area guide for the steep, rocky drive up to the Lesotho border at Sani Pass in the heart of the Drakensberg Mountains. This is one of the most scenic drives you will ever experience, and in addition to the spectacular vistas there will be many fabulous birds available. Some of the targets today will include Bearded Vulture, Southern Bald Ibis, Drakensberg Rockjumper, Sentinel Rock-Thrush, Cape Rock-Thrush, Barratt's Warbler, Drakensberg Prinia, Ground Woodpecker, Drakensberg Siskin, Yellow-tufted and Mountain pipits, Cape Grassbird, Wailing Cisticola, Gurney's Sugarbird and Rufous-necked Wryneck. When we reach the actual pass we will cross the border into Lesotho where we may see Black Stork and breeding Cape Griffon. Night in Underberg.

Day 16: Friday, Oct. 8 - Xumeni Forest and drive to Eshowe

Today will begin at daybreak at Xumeni Indigenous Forest where we will hope to find the critically endangered Cape Parrot. This is a very difficult bird and there is certainly no guarantee we will see any. With or without parrots, Xumeni will give us chances for several other good birds including Kysna Turaco, Narina Trogon, Orange Ground-Thrush, Rameron Pigeon, Gray Cuckooshrike, Bush Blackcap and Olive Bushshrike. We will have to leave Xumeni by mid-morning as it is a 3.5 hour drive to Eshowe, our home for the night. We will

try to arrive by mid-afternoon so we can make a visit to the nearby Dlinza Forest. This is an excellent forest preserve on the edge of town with several birds that we will see nowhere else during the tour. Having a chance to visit in the afternoon and the following morning will increase our chances of success. We will spend the night at a lovely guesthouse in town with well manicured grounds and lots of birds including Wooly-necked Stork, Cape Bulbul and Black-collared Barbet. Night in Eshowe.





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Day 17: Saturday, October 9 - Dhlinza Forest; Mtunzini and St. Lucia

After an early breakfast we will head directly to Dhlinza Forest to look for its suite of specialty birds. These will include Spotted Ground-Thrush, Delagorgue's Pigeon, Chorister Robin-Chat, African Emerald Cuckoo, Olive Woodpecker, Lemon Dove, Green-backed Twinspot and Livingstone's and Purple-crested turacos. From Dhlinza we will drive to

Lesser Flamingo



Palm-nut Vulture at the Raphia Palm Monument and then to St. Lucia where we will spend the rest of the afternoon at the St. Lucia estuary where we might see Greater and Lesser flamingos, Brown-hooded Kingfisher, Forest Weaver, Lesser Striped Swallow and much more. Night in St. Lucia

Day 18: Sunday, October 10-St. Lucia - iSimangaliso Wetland Park and on to Mkuze

This morning we will spend several hours birding the dune forest outside St. Lucia. This is an incredibly birdy area with many specialty birds including White-browed Coucal, Green Malkoha, Trumpeter and Crowned hornbills, White-eared Barbet, Golden-tailed Woodpecker, Black-throated Wattle-eye, Rudd's Apalis, Woodward's Batis, Tawny-flanked Prinia, Ashy Flycatcher, Spectacled Weaver, Black-tailed Waxbill and Mouse-colored, Olive and Collared sunbirds. We will return to our guesthouse for a late breakfast and then drive 2 hours north to our hotel near Mkuze. On the way we will pass through the western portion of iSimangaliso Wetland Park where open country birds could include Secretarybird, Little Bee-eater, Black-crowned Tchagra, Rattling Cisticola and Black-backed Puffback. Large mammals will also become more apparent here with chances for Burchell's Zebra, Blue Wildebeest, Impala and White Rhinoceros. Night near Mkuze.



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Day 19: Monday, October 11 - Mkuze Game Reserve

Today we will spend the entire day in the Mkuze Game reserve, one of the premier birding destinations in all of South Africa. If we have good weather and good luck we can easily tally 100+ bird species in the park. The park has an excellent gravel road network and fairly light traffic making birding relatively straightforward. There are also several blinds overlooking waterholes and larger wet pans making for a slow-paced and enjoyable birding experience. Some of our targets here will include Crested Guineafowl, Senegal Lapwing, Lilac-breasted Roller, White-backed Vulture, Broad-billed Roller, Four-colored and Gray-headed bushshrikes, Neergaard's Sunbird, Bearded Scrub Robin, Yellow-bellied Greenbul, Yellow-breasted Apalis, Purple-banded Sunbird, Brown-crowned Tchagra, White-throated Robin-Chat, Rufous-backed Scrub-Robin, Crested Barbet, Emerald Spotted Wood-Dove, Red-faced Mousebird and Southern Cordonbleu. Waterbirds are well represented depending on water levels in the ephemeral pans with African Openbill, African Jacana, African Fish Eagle, Yellow-billed and Woolly-necked Stork regularly recorded. Night near Mkuze.

Burchell's Zebra



Day 20: Tuesday, October 12- On to Kruger NP

Today we will begin the final leg of our adventure which takes us to the world famous Kruger NP. We will start by spending a bit of time birding the grounds of our hotel where Lesser-Masked Weavers have a large colony in the parking lot and the flowering trees in the garden attract Marqua and Collared sunbirds. This is also an excellent place to see White-browed Robin-Chat and the occasional Green Woodhoopoe. After breakfast we will pass through the border station into Swaziland and then drive through this embedded nation for about 4 hours to the Malelane gate into Kruger NP. We will plan to reach the Berg-en-Dal camp by mid-afternoon allowing for time to check in to our rooms and have a late afternoon game and birding drive. Night at Berg-en-Dal Camp.



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Day 21 & 22: Wednesday-Thursday, October 13-14- Kruger NP

Kruger NP is one of Africa's largest protected reserves. Together with huge swaths of protected land adjacent to the park, this is one of the world's largest expanses of protected land and the plethora of birds and animals found there are a tribute to this fact. While in Kruger you will have a true African "safari experience" with chances to see many of the animals that Africa is famous for. All of the "Big Five" are found including a healthy population of the critically endangered White Rhinoceros. Kruger also has one of the largest populations of elephants in the world and good numbers of Lions. Cheetahs are present in the grasslands, but these cats have large ranges and can be quite difficult to locate on a single visit. Leopards are much more likely to be encountered although they tend to rest in trees by day and are easiest to find at dawn and dusk or on night drives. To support these large predators an ample prey base must exist and Kruger has this as well with large numbers of Burchell's Zebra, Blue Wildebeest and a dizzying variety of antelopes present. Other exciting mammals here will include Spotted Hyena, African Wild Dog, Giraffe, Vervet Monkey and several species of mongoose. The birding in Kruger is also excellent and here we will surely find species that we have not yet seen on the tour. Examples include Gray-go-away Bird, Southern Ground-Hornbill, Black-bellied Bustard, Lilac-breasted Roller, White-headed Lapwing, Greater Blue-eared Starling, Swainson's Francolin, Village Indigobird, Southern Red-billed Hornbill, Arrow-marked Babbler and Brown-headed Parrot. Raptors will be richly represented as well with species like Martial Eagle, Wahlberg's Eagle, Tawny Eagle, Bataleur and African Goshawk all present. We will stay in two different camps on these days with first night at Skukuza and the second at Satara. Each of these will provide a slightly different experience with different birds and animals at each venue. Nights at Skukuza and Satara.

Day 23: Friday, October 15 - Drive to Johannesburg for flights home

After a final morning game drive we will make the long drive back to the international airport in Johannesburg for evening flights home. It will take 7-8 hours for us to reach the airport, so we will have to leave early to guarantee an on time arrival. Please do not book flights back to the U.S. before 7 PM.



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Tour Information

Tour Size

This maximum number of participants for this tour will be 7.

Tour Cost

The price of this tour is \$7995 double occupancy from Johannesburg. The quoted price includes all meals beginning with breakfast on September 25 and ending with lunch on October 15, all lodging and ground transportation during the tour, guide service provided by local guides as well as by Jan Hansen from Otus asio Tours, all park and reserve entrance fees, round trip internal airfare between Johannesburg and Capetown. It does not include round trip airfare between your originating destination and Johannesburg, optional tips to guides and drivers, laundry service or alcoholic beverages. The single supplement for the tour is \$900.

Registration & Deposit

A \$1000 deposit and a completed and signed registration form are necessary to register for this tour. If you register by email the deposit and paperwork must be received within 10 days of the email in order to secure a place. Final payment will be due 90 days before departure (July 15, 2021). Final invoices will be sent out in June 2021.

Trip Insurance

Trip insurance is strongly suggested in the event that you need to cancel after you have registered. Please note that I have to make some non-refundable deposits to guarantee bookings at some of the parks and thus initial deposits will not be 100% refundable in the event of cancellations. The tour registration form details the refund policy, but cancellations within 60 days of the tour will be limited to the amount that can be recouped from the various vendors and cannot be determined until that time, but may be less than 50% of the tour cost. Trip insurance will be your safeguard against such contingencies.

Accommodations

The lodges and hotels we will use during this tour will be excellent. Most will be small guesthouses more akin to bed & breakfast inns in the U.S. although we will also use a couple of standard hotels. Wi-fi will be available at most of our accommodations.



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Tour Information

Air Travel to South Africa

This tour begins and ends in Johannesburg (airport code JNB). This is a large international airport with many options available from the U.S. If you need help with arranging your flight to Johannesburg, please feel free to contact me and I can assist you.

Entry into South Africa

Visas are not required for U.S. citizens entering South Africa. Passports must be valid for at least 6 months after your departure date from South Africa and there must be one blank page in your passport in order to enter the country. This is very important and an absolute requirement for entry!

Health Concerns

Please consult your physician or the CDC website for other suggestions about travel-related medications for a trip to this part of South Africa. It is always a good idea to be current on your tetanus vaccine. Malaria is present in the Mkuze area and in Kruger although we will be visiting during the dry season and mosquitoes will not be prevalent. It is best to consult your physician regarding any medications for the tour and to make decisions based upon your own peace of mind.

Insects

Biting insects are not expected to be a problem on this tour due to it being conducted during the dry season. However recent rainfall and moisture levels can sometimes make things worse than expected, so it is always best to be prepared for the possibility of biting insects. The best defense is wearing long-sleeved shirts and long pants and having an adequate supply of repellent.

Currency

The South African Rand (ZAR) is the currency used in South Africa and you will need to use it to pay for incidental expenses like alcoholic beverages and souvenirs. ATM's will be widely available during the tour and that is generally the best way to obtain ZAR. However it is also a good idea to bring some cash or ZAR with you from the U.S. in the event that your card doesn't work at the ATM terminals. Please be sure to call your bank and let them know you will be traveling in South Africa during the tour dates to ensure that your card will work at ATM terminals.



South Africa: The Western Cape, KwaZulu-Natal & Kruger NP

September 23-October 15, 2021

Tour Information

Electricity

There will be electrical outlets that you can use to recharge batteries at all of the places we stay. Electrical plug-ins in South Africa are unique and unlike any in other countries, so you will need special adapters for South Africa. You can find these online. Please note that standard travel adapter kits do not include plug adapters for South Africa! Also, though there are outlets in all of the hotels, it is always a good idea to bring several spare batteries or a portable battery pack.

Cell Service

South Africa has very good cell phone coverage, so if you have an international plan you should be able to use your phone there much of the time.

Field Guides

The recommended field guide for this tour is *Sasol Birds of Southern Africa*. This book has been updated several times and the most current version is the 4th edition published in 2011. Note that older editions are available online, so be sure to get the latest edition. Since even the most recent edition is nearly 10 years old, some of the common names in the guide will not match eBird taxonomy. I will prepare and distribute a list of all name discrepancies between the field guide and eBird prior to the tour.

Guides

The leader for this tour will be Jan Hansen from Otus asio Tours. We will use local guides in Wakkerstroom and for the trip up to Sani Pass.

Transportation

For most of the tour we will travel in a 10-seat Toyota Quantum mini-bus. Vehicles are air-conditioned and comfortable and everyone will have a window seat. For the trip to Sani Pass we will use two 4WD vehicles.

Information

For additional information regarding this tour contact Jan Hansen at 919-259-9423 or at otusasiotours@gmail.com