



**SOUTH AFRICA BIRDING AND PHOTO TOUR – CAPE
TO KRUGER NATIONAL PARK**

10 – 24 JANUARY 2025



The stunning Southern Double-collared Sunbird will be a highlight in the Cape area.

South Africa's Western Cape Province is stunningly beautiful and hugely varied - from rocky sea cliffs and impressive mountains rising from the sea, to moist temperate forests, semi-desert, peaceful lakes, and a great deal more. On this tour we will introduce you to the diverse habitats (and hence bird species) of the Western Cape Province and spend a few days in the world-renowned Kruger National Park which is bustling with tropical bird species and other charismatic wildlife.

Our photography tours are essentially run as slower-paced birding tours that allow more time for photographing birds and animals, rather than heading off to tick the next species. Once we have found our target birds/animals, the idea is to then spend more time ensuring we get the perfect angle and light on our subjects until you are satisfied with your shots. We are unlikely to spend hours and hours waiting to photograph a particular species but will rather ensure we have adequate time to photograph each new species that we find.

We begin our South Africa birding and photo tour in the Garden Route – an idyllic area of green forests and beautiful lakes that you truly will not want to leave. Here, we'll probably find the jewel-like **Half-collared Kingfisher**, the gorgeous (there is no better word for it) **Knysna Turaco** with its green body and scarlet wings, and a rich diversity of other birds – plus some nice mammals, as always. You could spend two weeks just here, photographing birds and other wildlife and of course the stunning scenery.



*Getting good photos of **Knysna Turaco** will be one of our major objectives in the Garden Route.*

Moving from the Garden Route into the Agulhas Plains, we have a great chance at finding the fine-looking (Cape) **Mountain Zebra**, the striking **Bontebok**, and many wondrous birds such as **Secretarybird**, **White Stork**, **Denham's Bustard**, loads of **Blue Cranes** (South Africa's

stunning national bird), some localized endemics such as **Agulhas Long-billed Lark**, **Cape Clapper Lark**, **Southern Tchagra**, **Knysna Woodpecker** and, as always, loads more.

After crossing the imposing Cape Fold Mountains, we then head inland to the Karoo semi-desert. This area has many endemics and we will look for and try to photograph various larks, **Black-headed Canary** and other canaries, **Karoo Korhaan**, **Ludwig's Bustard**, and many of the others. There is also a chance of encountering some great mammals, which could even include something rare like a **Caracal** or **Aardvark** (both these require a huge dose of luck).

Eventually we head back to the coast – but this time the west coast. In the West Coast National Park and other great sites, we hope to encounter **Common Ostrich**, **Black Harrier**, **Southern Black Korhaan**, **Cape Penduline Tit**, **Grey-winged Francolin**, and other stunning (and often very localized) birds. We will also look for new mammals, such as the west coast endemic **Heaviside's Dolphin**, the strange **Rock Hyrax** (which looks like a large rodent but is more closely related to elephants), and others.



Cape Rockjumper is one of the most prized birds on this tour!

We then end the Cape leg of the tour in one of the world's most scenically spectacular cities, Cape Town. The growth of this city is constrained by imposing geographical features – Table Mountain, the Cape of Good Hope, and of course the sea – the whole of Cape Town is on a stunning-looking peninsula that was once an island. The Cape Peninsula is full of localized endemics restricted to the world's most plant-diverse floral kingdom, the fynbos biome (which has more plant species per unit area than even the Amazon). Some of these endemic birds restricted to the fynbos biome are dazzling; they include the likes of **Orange-breasted Sunbird**, **Southern Double-collared Sunbird**, **Cape Sugarbird** with its incredibly long tail, and many others. The nearby False Bay coast hosts one of the Cape's most sought-after birds, the

charismatic **Cape Rockjumper** – along with **Cape Rock Thrush**, **Sentinel Rock Thrush**, **Ground Woodpecker**, and many others. We'll also look for seabirds, such as **African Penguin**, **Cape Gannet**, and more.

From Cape Town, we fly to the Kruger Mpumalanga International Airport, and begin the second part of this exciting photo trip. Here we spend five days at one of Africa's greatest game parks, the Kruger National Park. We have a good chance of photographing the "Big Five" as well as a host of other, smaller mammals. Kruger is one of the richest national parks for mammals on the entire African continent. What's more, it also has over 500 bird species, most of which are extremely easy to see in the dry woodlands and savanna – you will see multiple species of brightly colored and spectacular rollers, bee-eaters, storks, eagles, vultures, hornbills, and more.



Charismatic African Penguins are always a tour highlight!

Itinerary (15 days/14 nights)

Day 1. Garden Route

Depending on arrival times today, we should have time this afternoon to visit one of the many wetlands in the area, where we could find **African Snipe**, **African Fish Eagle**, **Malachite** and **Pied Kingfishers**, and other waterbird species. We may also see small groups of **Red-necked Spurfwols** feeding on the roadside.

Overnight: Reflections Eco-Reserve, Wilderness (or similar)



*The bright **Chorister Robin-Chat** occurs in the forests of the Garden Route.*

Day 2. Garden Route

Today we will spend time among the various wetlands and forests in the Wilderness area. We will probably start the day at a few wetlands, where we may get lucky with sightings of the elusive duo of **Red-chested Flufftail** and **African Rail**. We will then walk a few trails through beautiful forest along the Touws River. This will be our first bit of true forest birding on the trip, and there should be many new birds to find. The skulking **Knysna Warbler** will be searched for in thick tangles of undergrowth, while we could even get incredibly lucky with a sighting of **Buff-spotted Flufftail**, although it puts **Knysna Warbler** to shame with its ability to remain hidden. Other forest species to look out for include **Knysna Woodpecker**, **Black-headed Oriole**, **Chorister Robin-Chat**, **White-starred Robin**, **Terrestrial Brownbul**, **Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler**, **Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher**, **Narina Trogon**, **African Emerald Cuckoo**, **Black-bellied Starling**, **Green Wood Hoopoe**, **Scaly-throated Honeyguide**, **Grey Cuckooshrike**, **Grey and Greater Double-collared Sunbirds**, and possibly the most beautiful of them all, **Knysna Turaco**. In the evenings we may get lucky with sightings of **African Wood Owl**.

Overnight: Reflections Eco-Reserve, Wilderness (or similar)

Day 3. Agulhas Plains

We'll take advantage of the morning light to try to improve on photos from the last couple of days before we drive (roughly three hours) west to the plains and farmlands of the Agulhas region. En route we will keep a lookout for **Forest Buzzard**, which is sometimes seen perched on roadside pylons. Then we will spend some time birding the wheat fields in the Agulhas area,

which are good areas for **Denham's Bustard**, **Karoo Korhaan**, **Cape Crow**, **Agulhas Long-billed Lark**, and **Blue Crane** (usually in large numbers).

Overnight: De Hoop Collection, De Hoop National Park



*The Western Cape is a stronghold for **Blue Cranes**, South Africa's national bird.*

Day 4. Agulhas Plains

Today we will explore the beautiful De Hoop Nature Reserve, which has good numbers of antelope and some great birding too. **Common Eland**, **Bontebok**, and (Cape) **Mountain Zebra** are normally seen easily and can be quite confiding. Top birds to look out for include **Agulhas Long-billed Lark**, **Southern Tchagra**, **Knysna Woodpecker**, **Secretarybird**, and **Black Cuckooshrike**. The birds around the accommodation in De Hoop are often quite tame, providing excellent photographic opportunities. We may also get views of **Cape Vulture**, which have a large breeding colony nearby.

Overnight: De Hoop Collection, De Hoop National Park



*The endemic **Knysna Woodpecker** will be high on our agenda in the Agulhas Plains.*

Day 5. Agulhas Plain and Tankwa Karoo

We'll, once again, make the most of the morning light to try improve on photos from the last couple of days in Agulhas before heading inland (roughly 3.5 hours) through some spectacular mountain passes and eventually dropping back down into the vast, dry plains of the Tankwa Karoo, where we will be based for the next two nights. We will keep a lookout for **Ground Woodpecker** and **Verreaux's Eagle** during the drive, and may have our first looks at Karoo specials such as **Karoo Chat**, **Lark-like Bunting** and **Fairy Flycatcher** in the afternoon near our accommodation.

Overnight: Tankwa Karoo/similar

Day 6. Tankwa Karoo

The Tankwa Karoo is an endemism hotspot with many of the species we will encounter here being restricted to these endless and seemingly barren plains. Looks, however, can certainly be deceiving, as we will spend the day hunting down many of these Karoo-adapted specials. The open plains will be searched for **Karoo Korhaan**, **Karoo Eremomela**, **Burchell's Courser** (scarce and nomadic), **Namaqua Sandgrouse**, **Greater Kestrel**, **Tractrac** and **Karoo Chats**, **Rufous-eared Warbler**, and a host of lark species including **Karoo**, **Spike-heeled**, **Large-billed**, and **Red-capped Larks**. In the dry riverbeds, we should be able to find **Namaqua Warbler**, **Fairy Flycatcher**, **Pirit Batis**, **Dusky Sunbird**, and **Acacia Pied Barbet**.

We will also spend some time exploring rocky outcrops, where **Cinnamon-breasted Warbler** will be our primary target along with **Grey Tit**, **Layard's Warbler**, **Pale-winged Starling**, and perhaps even **Black-headed Canary**. In the evening we will take a night drive to look for

Freckled and **Rufous-cheeked Nightjars** and perhaps some of the Karoo's rarer nocturnal mammals.

Overnight: Tankwa Karoo/similar



Large-billed Lark — one of the many lark species we should encounter on this tour.

Day 7. Tankwa Karoo and West Coast National Park

After some early-morning birding in the Tankwa Karoo we will leave the dry plains and head towards the west coast, where we will have one night before continuing south to Cape Town. The drive (approximately three hours) is another picturesque one as we make our way through the Cape Fold Mountains, and then through vast areas of farmland.

After arriving at Langebaan around midday, we will explore the farmlands to the north in the afternoon. Some of the specials we'll look for here include **Blue Crane**, **Namaqua Sandgrouse**, **Acacia Pied Barbet**, **Cape Long-billed** and **Large-billed Larks**, **Grey-backed Sparrow-Lark**, **Sickle-winged** and **Ant-eating Chat**, and perhaps **Lanner Falcon**.

After birding the farmlands, we will stop at a nearby salt works where we will enjoy close views of the dashing **Chestnut-banded Plover** as well as **Lesser** and **Greater Flamingos**, **Black-necked Grebe**, **Red-necked Phalarope**, and other shorebirds.

Before checking into our accommodation in Langebaan, we should have time to look for the resident pair of **Verreaux's Eagles** just outside of town (if we run out of time today, we will ensure that we try the next morning).

Overnight: Le Mahi Guest House, Langebaan



The tiny Cape Penduline Tit can be reliably seen in the West Coast National Park.

Day 8. West coast and Cape Peninsula

This morning we will explore the scenic West Coast National Park. We will try to time it right so that we arrive at the Langebaan Lagoon at a time when the shorebirds are close to the various hides on the lagoon. Here we can expect to see thousands of Palearctic shorebirds, which feed here throughout the Austral summer. Species to look for include **Bar-tailed Godwit**, **Eurasian Curlew**, **Eurasian Whimbrel**, **Common Greenshank**, **Marsh Sandpiper**, **Grey and Common Ringed Plovers**, **Red Knot**, **Ruddy Turnstone**, **Curlew Sandpiper**, **Little Stint**, and occasionally **Terek Sandpiper**. Of the resident shorebirds we should find **White-fronted**, **Kittlitz's**, **Three-banded**, and **Chestnut-banded Plovers**.

The strandveld throughout the park will be explored for **Grey Tit**, **Long-billed Crombec**, **Chestnut-vented Warbler**, **White-backed Mousebird**, **Bokmakierie**, **Cape Penduline Tit**, **Grey-winged Francolin**, **Cape Weaver**, and our most important target, the graceful **Black Harrier**.

Upon leaving Langebaan and heading south towards Cape Town, we'll fit in some final farmland birding. Hopefully **Blue Cranes** will pose for us while **European Bee-eaters**, near their small colony near Darling, are often a little more edgy. We'll search the adjacent strandveld for **Cape Clapper Lark**, **Grey-backed Cisticola**, **Southern Black Korhaan**, **Chestnut-vented Warbler**, **Cloud Cisticola**, and **Pearl-breasted Swallow**. The wheat fields are normally alive with birds, and we can expect to also find **Pied Starling**, **Yellow Canary**, **African Hoopoe**, **Red-capped Lark**, and **Capped Wheatear**.

Upon arriving in Cape Town, we should have time to enjoy some late-afternoon photography in the golden light, with Table Mountain as our backdrop. We will likely be able to find some of the

more common endemic species, which may include the likes of **Southern Boubou**, **Cape Robin-Chat**, **Karoo Prinia** and **Southern Double-collared Sunbird**.

Overnight: Fernwood Manor, Newlands (or similar)

Day 9. Hottentots Holland and False Bay

Today we will spend the day to the east of Cape Town in the Hottentots Holland Mountains, where we will be targeting several Cape endemics. The drive to our destination is a spectacular one; the route straddles the False Bay coastline, with dramatic fold mountains on the opposite side. During the drive we may get lucky with sightings of whales in False Bay, such as **Bryde's Whales**. Our first stop will be at the quaint coastal town of Rooi Els, where we will search the rocky mountain slopes for **Cape Rockjumper**. Other important birds to look for on the slopes include **Cape** and **Sentinel Rock Thrushes**, **Cape Siskin**, **Ground Woodpecker**, and perhaps **Verreaux's Eagle** overhead. The thicker fynbos nearby will be searched for **Cape Sugarbird** (frequently posing on top of Protea flowers), **Orange-breasted** and **Malachite Sunbirds**, **Cape Bulbul**, **Grey-backed Cisticola**, and **Karoo Prinia**. **Victorin's Warbler** also occurs in this habitat, although visuals of this skulking fynbos endemic are usually brief.



Flowering proteas are popular with birds, such as this Malachite Sunbird.

We will then head around the corner to Betty's Bay to explore the beautiful Harold Porter National Botanical Garden. Here the birds are often very approachable, allowing for great photographic opportunities. **Sunbirds** abound in these gardens, including **Amethyst**, **Southern Double-collared**, **Orange-breasted**, and **Malachite Sunbirds**. We should also become acquainted with **Southern Boubou**, **Olive Thrush**, **Cape Robin-Chat**, and **Fiscal Flycatcher**.

After enjoying lunch in the gardens, we will head to the rocky coast at Stony Point to visit an **African Penguin** colony, however, we will also be targeting **Bank Cormorant** here. Four species of marine cormorant breed at Stony Point (**Bank, Crowned, Cape, and White-breasted Cormorants**) and often give you a chance to photograph them as they fly back and forth feeding chicks or constructing nests.

If time allows, we will pop into Strandfontein Bird Sanctuary on our way back to Cape Town. This area represents the best wetland birding around Cape Town, and we will aim to photograph flying **Lesser and Greater Flamingos** in the golden afternoon light with Table Mountain and the Hottentots Holland Mountains serving as beautiful backdrops. Other waterbirds to be enjoyed here include **South African Shelduck, Maccoa Duck, Southern Pochard, Black-necked Grebe**, and many other common aquatic species. If we run out of time this afternoon, we can head back here the following day.

Overnight: Fernwood Manor, Newlands (or similar)



African Oystercatchers are present on the coastline around Cape Town.

Day 10. Cape Peninsula

Today will be spent birding and photographing on the Cape Peninsula. We will start the morning by heading south to the Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve, where we will visit the most southwesterly point of the African continent. The views of False Bay and the Atlantic Ocean are truly impressive, and from here we can also enjoy **Cape Cormorants** nesting on the cliffs below us, along with the odd **Peregrine Falcon**. We may do a sea watch for various seabird species from the cliffs, when we should be able to pick out distant **Cape Gannet, White-chinned Petrel, Sooty Shearwater**, and perhaps an albatross or two! **African Oystercatcher** is usually present as well. Around the reserve we will also keep a lookout for **Cape Grassbird, Cape**

Siskin, Cape Bunting, and Fiscal Flycatcher. Common Eland, Africa’s largest antelope, should be encountered during our time in the reserve as well as several **Common Ostrich**.

In the afternoon we will head to Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden, where we will wander around the picturesque gardens with Table Mountain serving as a stunning backdrop. In the gardens we should find **African Olive Pigeon, Cape Bulbul, African Dusky Flycatcher, Cape Sugarbird, Orange-breasted** and **Malachite Sunbirds, Cape, Brimstone, and Forest Canaries**, and the tiny and colorful **Swee Waxbill**.

Overnight: Fernwood Manor, Newlands (or similar)

Days 11 – 15. Kruger National Park

Depending on flight times this morning, we may have time for some last-minute forest birding, targeting anything we may have missed over the last couple of days. Cape Town International Airport is only a 20-minute drive from our accommodation, from where we will take a flight to the Kruger Mpumalanga International Airport for the Kruger National Park leg of this trip.



Lion, one of the ‘Big Five’, can be found throughout the Kruger National Park.

Here we will spend five days/four nights photographing Africa’s “Big Five” as well as a host of other animals – expect such charismatic species as **African Elephant, Giraffe, Hippopotamus, Plains Zebra, Common Wildebeest, Impala** and **Nile Crocodile**. We also have good chances for some of Africa’s most prized predators such as **Lion** and **Leopard**, along with **Spotted Hyena**, and other animals such as **Banded Mongoose** and **Vervet Monkey**. Of course, the birds are also extremely important, and we will not forget about them whilst in Kruger – as many of them are extremely photogenic. Some of the big and obvious species we will look for include

Kori Bustard, Martial Eagle, Bateleur, Saddle-billed Stork, Verreaux's Eagle-Owl, Southern Ground Hornbill, and Lappet-faced Vulture, while the smaller, more colorful species include **Brown-headed Parrot, Greater Blue-eared Starling, Lilac-breasted Roller, Grey-headed Bushshrike, White-browed Robin-Chat, Scarlet-chested Sunbird, Blue Waxbill, Golden-breasted Bunting** and a host of kingfishers, barbets, bee-eaters, hornbills, and weavers – and so much more. The above-mentioned species are just a small sampling of some of the exciting possibilities that await us in Kruger – this truly is an incredibly diverse area, with over 500 bird species and 100 mammal species recorded from within the reserve.



*We'll be on the lookout for **Brown-headed Parrot** in Kruger.*

After four nights in this incredible birding and wildlife destination, we will have to bid the Kruger National Park, and this tour, farewell. This tour will end at the Kruger Mpumalanga International Airport on Day 15.

Overnight: Rest camps, Kruger National Park

Please note that the itinerary cannot be guaranteed as it is only a rough guide and can be changed (usually slightly) due to factors such as availability of accommodation, updated information on the state of accommodation, roads, or birding sites, the discretion of the guides and other factors. In addition, we sometimes have to use a different international guide from the one advertised due to tour scheduling.

Duration:	15 days
Group Size:	4 – 6
Dates:	10 – 24 January 2025
Start:	George, South Africa
End:	Nelspruit (Mbombela), South Africa
Prices:	R129,525 per person sharing (2025)
Single Supplements:	R14,715 (2025)

Price includes:

All accommodation
Meals (from lunch on Day 1 until breakfast on Day 15)
Unlimited bottled water
Expert tour leader
All entrance & conservation fees
All ground transport, including airport pick-up and drop-off
Open Safari Vehicle use in Kruger National Park

Price excludes:

International/domestic flights (to George/from Nelspruit (Mbombela))
Visas
Items of a personal nature, e.g. gifts, laundry, internet access, phone calls, etc.
Any pre- or post-tour accommodation, meals, or birding excursions
Soft/alcoholic drinks
Personal travel insurance
Gratuities (please see our [tipping guidelines blog](#))