



**WESTERN CAPE, SOUTH AFRICA, 8-DAY BIRDING
ADVENTURE**

7 - 14 OCTOBER 2019



The endemic **Ground Woodpecker** (photo Ian Merrill) is one of our targets on this trip.

South Africa is one of the best value destinations on the entire continent. The excellent infrastructure, superb accommodation, great food, wonderful South African hospitality, spectacular and varied scenery, and the presence of Africa's big and small mammals makes it one of the most pleasant countries in the world to bird in. We begin this tour in one of the world's most beautiful cities, Cape Town, looking for a host of avian endemics found nowhere else but in the Cape Floral Kingdom (the richest place on earth for plants), and also doing a pelagic trip. Cape pelagics are among the best in the world. We then head northwards from Cape Town up the west coast and finally past rugged mountain ranges into the Karoo, another of Africa's greatest endemic hotspots.

We begin this tour with a Cape pelagic trip, where we invariably find four albatross species and always hope for an additional rarer one like **Salvin's Albatross**. Then we hope to encounter some very enigmatic birds: a desert bird that skulks, watch a weird little warbler disappear into a rock crevice, **Cinnamon-breasted Warbler**, one of the Cape's strangest endemics and one of the toughest of the many Karoo endemics to see well. **Cape Rockjumper** has a beautiful call, striking colors, a boisterous personality and a terribly limited distribution around Cape Town. A terrestrial woodpecker, **Ground Woodpecker**, and **African Penguin** are also found on the spectacular Cape Peninsula. What more can you possibly ask for?

But his trip is not only full of localized avian endemics but also of spectacularly famous scenery such as the Cape of Good Hope, Cape Point, and Table Mountain. All in all, our 8-day Cape tour is full of localized endemics, spectacular scenery, and so much more. This is where Birding Ecotours started as a company, in 2002, and nowhere else do we have as much experience as in the Cape.

The Western Cape is the most important endemic bird area on the entire African continent. It is a truly essential area for any serious birder because of its sheer number of endemics. Pelagic trips off Cape Town also rank as among the finest in the world (with at least four albatross species, **Cape Petrel** [seasonal] and many more on the rich trawling grounds near where two oceans meet). The Cape is also a spectacularly scenic area, with the rugged Cape Fold Mountains that come right down to the sea, white sand beaches, sea cliffs on the Cape Peninsula, and beautiful vineyards. Close inshore Southern Right Whales (seasonal) plus a lot of other mammals, spectacular carpets of flowers (seasonal), and the most plant-diverse biome on earth (even richer than the Amazon!) are major attractions that are easily seen incidentally, while not jeopardizing our chances of finding all the birds. We recommend at least a week in the Western Cape. The aim of our standard (set departure) 8-day tour (but we can custom-make a trip of any length) is to find a majority of the endemics of this province, with many other species as an unavoidable byproduct (plus, as always, an amazing overall experience), and of course a lot of pelagic and other seabirds. To find the endemics, we budget adequate time in each strategic ecosystem – the fynbos, Langebaan Lagoon, and the Karoo.

This tour can be combined with our preceding **Kruger National Park and Escarpment Birding Safari October 2019** tour and then with our following **18-day Subtropical South Africa Birding Adventure October 2019** for a 38-day South African adventure, and, following this, our **Namibia, Okavango and Victoria Falls 18-day Birding Adventure 2019** for a stunning 46-day Southern African mega tour.

Please note that the detailed itinerary below 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.

Itinerary (8 days/7 nights)

Day 1. Arrival in Cape Town

This is the day you need to arrive in Cape Town – any time during the day. You will be met at Cape Town International Airport and transferred to our B&B. Time-permitting, we may already start some birding today – we can bird one of the Cape Peninsula’s fine wetlands (Intaka Island, Rietvlei, or Rondevlei). Here we will look for **Great White Pelican**, **Greater Flamingo**, a host of shorebirds, **Cape Teal** and **Maccoa Duck** among many other waterfowl, **Little Bittern** and many other herons, three grebe species, **Greater Painted-snipe**, **African Snipe**, four species of reed-associated warblers, and other waterbirds. While looking for waterbirds (or even while driving to our B&B) we should also find good numbers of terrestrial endemics, including **Karoo Prinia**, **Cape Bulbul**, and **Jackal Buzzard**.

Overnight: Mariner Guest House, Simonstown, South Peninsula

Day 2. Pelagic trip (or Cape Peninsula and False Bay birding)

After an early breakfast we embark on a pelagic trip (weather-permitting, otherwise Cape Peninsula and False Bay birding), departing from Simonstown, where we will find **African Penguin**, and from here we’ll be going 30-50 km out to sea. En route we pass the magnificent Cape Point – really spectacular when seen from the sea. Our first pelagic species are usually **Sooty Shearwater** and **White-chinned Petrel** (with the occasional **Spectacled Petrel**), followed soon by sometimes both species of **Giant Petrel**, **Northern** and **Southern**. Further out, a minimum of four albatross species, **Cape** and other **Petrels**, several storm petrels (two species are usually common), shearwaters, and many others are observed. We almost always find at least one trawler, and it is around these fishing boats that huge congregations of albatrosses and other seabirds create an amazing spectacle. We also often encounter marine mammals, such as Bryde’s Whale, on these pelagics. If possible/already decided, please let us know if you don’t want to join the pelagic.

Overnight: Mariner Guest House, Simonstown, South Peninsula

Day 3. Birding the Cape Peninsula and False Bay (or pelagic trip)

Today we plan to visit excellent sites such as the Strandfontein Bird Sanctuary, one of the best waterbird sites, and Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden, one of the most beautiful places anywhere and full of birds. At Kirstenbosch it is quite easy to find some important fynbos endemics such as **Orange-breasted Sunbird** and **Cape Sugarbird**, while **Cape Spurfowl**, **Southern Boubou**, **Cape Canary**, **Brimstone Canary**, **Cape Robin-Chat**, **Sweet Waxbill** (with luck), and a whole host of other quality birds entertain us. Many raptors are possible here and at other sites we will visit – including **Verreaux’s Eagle**, several exciting accipiters, **Jackal Buzzard** (endemic), **Forest Buzzard** (endemic), **Peregrine Falcon**, **Rock Kestrel**, and others. After birding this beautiful garden we depart for Rooiels (although sometimes we reverse the order and bird Rooiels first). To get to this village we have to traverse one of the most scenic

drives in South Africa along the False Bay coast. First we drive parallel to an extremely long white beach bordering the “Cape Flats” that separate the mountainous Cape Peninsula from the inland Cape Fold mountain ranges. Then we reach an area where impressive mountains meet the sea to begin a truly stunning marine drive. The main target bird at Rooiels is the charismatic and localized **Cape Rockjumper**. But we should also find **Cape Siskin**, **Cape Rock Thrush**, and many more. On our return to the Cape Peninsula, time-permitting (else later in the itinerary), we can bird the superb Strandfontein Bird Sanctuary for a plethora of herons, reed-associated warblers, waterfowl, shorebirds, **African Oystercatcher**, **African Swamphen**, **Great White Pelican**, **Greater Flamingo**, **African Marsh Harrier**, and (as usual) many others.

Overnight: Mariner Guest House, Simonstown, South Peninsula

Day 4. West Coast Birding

Today we begin an exciting birding journey northwards from Cape Town. We hope to find **Black Harrier**, **Chestnut-banded Plover**, **Cape Penduline Tit**, **Cape Clapper Lark**, **Cape Long-billed Lark**, **Grey-winged Francolin**, **Southern Black Korhaan**, and other specials in addition to a tremendous shorebird spectacle. Langebaan Lagoon is one of Africa’s most important shorebird stopover sites, and there are good hides (blinds) from which to observe the spectacle. We may also find **Western Osprey**, **African Fish Eagle**, and many others.

Overnight: Le Mahi Guest House, Langebaan

Day 5. Transfer to the Karoo

Today we head inland past some spectacular mountains. On the way we may stop to try for **Protea Canary** and many other species. But we have to get to the eastern (rain-shadow) side of the mountains to get to the famed (among birders) Karoo. Here almost every species encountered is endemic, so it makes for spectacularly exciting birding for any serious birder who has never visited this particular semi-desert.

Overnight: Village B&B, Ceres, or Tanqua B&B, Route 355

Day 6. Birding the Karoo

A full day of Karoo birding. The pickings here include the likes of **Cinnamon-breasted Warbler** (a truly bizarre rock crevice skulker), **Namaqua Warbler**, the lovely **Rufous-eared Warbler**, **Black-headed Canary**, **White-throated Canary**, **Fairy Flycatcher**, **Southern Grey Tit**, **Karoo Chat**, **Sickle-winged Chat**, **Tractrac Chat**, **Karoo Lark**, **Karoo Long-billed Lark**, **Spike-heeled Lark**, **Large-billed Lark**, **Karoo Eremomela**, **Pirit Batis**, **Burchell’s Courser**, **Double-banded Courser**, **Ludwig’s Bustard**, **Karoo Korhaan**, **Pale Chanting Goshawk**, **Namaqua Sandgrouse**, **Namaqua Dove**, and many others.

Overnight: Village B&B, Ceres

Day 7. Transfer to Cape Town

We will drive back to Cape Town, birding at Paarl en route for fynbos species and those waterbirds we are still missing. A night back on the Cape Peninsula will give us time to find some of the Cape’s more difficult species.

Overnight: Klein Bosheuvel Guest House, Kirstenbosch

Day 8. Departure

We may be able to do some final Cape Peninsula birding before you catch your flight to Durban, to begin the Subtropical leg of the tour, or your international flight to leave Cape Town.

For those joining both the Cape and Subtropical trips, Chris in the Birding Ecotours office plans to book the one-way flight from Cape Town to Durban for everyone (on this, the last day of the Cape trip, which is also the first day of the Subtropical trip). It is no problem at all, however, if you have already booked this flight. If Chris books the flight, the cost can just be added to the balance you owe – the flight usually costs R1000-R2000 (ballpark).

Duration: 8 days
Limit: 8 (rarely 9)
Date: 7 – 14 October 2019
Start: Cape Town
End: Cape Town

Price: R34,236 per person sharing
Single supplement: R5,292

(The prices assume a group of 8, but we typically guarantee the departure even with a smaller group.)

Price includes:

Meals
Accommodation
Entrance fees
Guiding fees
All transport while on tour

Price excludes:

International flights
Personal insurance
Alcoholic beverages
Gratuities
Laundry service
Personal expenses such as gifts