



KRUGER NATIONAL PARK AND ESCARPMENT

9-DAY BIRDING SAFARI

1 - 9 JUNE 2020



Cape Starling (photo James Reveley) is abundant in Kruger National Park.

This is a tour for those who want the ultimate African mammal safari experience while also seeing a huge diversity of birds, a disproportionate number of these birds being very brightly colored, charismatic, and spectacular, with some strategic Drakensberg endemics and incredibly rare raptors being thrown in. This tour should yield **African Elephant**, **Lion**, loads of antelope species, **Nile Crocodile**, and all the other megafauna (plus small mammals too) that sub-Saharan Africa is famous for, as well as multiple species of bee-eater, roller, kingfisher, cuckoo, hornbill, eagle (including **Bateleur**), vulture, owl, turaco, seedeater, stork, and a myriad of others. The Kruger National Park boasts 450 bird species! We also target the phenomenally rare **Taita Falcon** and many other localized species occurring along the forested Great Escarpment west of the drier Kruger National Park lowlands. The tour as detailed below is good for first-time visitors to South Africa or Africa, as it focuses on the bird-rich and mammal-rich southern parts of Kruger, which are also relatively close to Johannesburg, plus it also includes some excellent endemics.

Itinerary (9 days/8 nights)

Day 1. Arrival, transfer to Dullstroom

Your international flight arrives in the mile-high city of Johannesburg, and we immediately embark on our 2.5-hour drive eastwards to the escarpment, where we'll spend some time at one of South Africa's premier grassland endemic birding sites, Dullstroom. Here, we may find **Gurney's Sugarbird**, **Malachite Sunbird**, **Cape Eagle-Owl**, **Secretarybird**, **Yellow-breasted Pipit**, and a host of others. We sometimes also visit a near farm for **African Grass Owl**, time permitting.

Overnight: Linger Longer Country Retreat, near Dullstroom

Day 2. Birding the Escarpment

We'll head to a completely different part of the Escarpment today, this time to an area of beautiful evergreen forest and other habitats. En route we'll look for one of Africa's rarest birds, the small but powerful and extremely fast **Taita Falcon**, which has become more difficult to see recently, but nevertheless it is still present in the area. As usual, we may find all sorts of other birds, including **Mocking Cliff Chat**, **Lanner Falcon**, **Cape Vulture**, etc. Eventually we'll reach Mount Sheba Lodge, where we'll look for the South African endemic **Knysna Turaco**, **Sweet Waxbill**, and **Southern Tchagra**, along with many other more widespread but nevertheless sought-after birds such as the beautiful **Narina Trogon**.

Overnight: Mount Sheba Lodge, Pilgrim's Rest

Days 3 – 7. Kruger National Park

We descend the escarpment to the "lowveld", a mega-diverse wildlife region, in which one of Africa's greatest game parks sprawls, the massive Kruger National Park. This park has a staggering bird diversity, and we are bound to find multiple species of each of the following groups: hornbills, barbets, rollers, bee-eaters, kingfishers, cuckoos, storks, raptors (including the amazing **Bateleur** and the majestic **Secretarybird**), vultures, owls, weavers (including **Red-headed Weaver**), turacos, and many others. We should also encounter **African Elephant**, **Lion**, **White** and with extreme luck even **Black Rhinoceros**, **Giraffe**, **African Buffalo**, a plethora of antelope species, **Hippopotamus**, **Nile Crocodile**, and many small mammals, such as

mongooses, etc. We will, however, require much luck for **Leopard** or **Cheetah**. We stay at some of the very best parts of the park for animals as well as birds – Lower Sabie and Satara Rest Camps being focal places.

Overnight: Rest Camps within the Kruger National Park

Day 8. Transfer to and birding the Rust de Winter Nature Reserve

After a long drive (about five hours), we will spend our last part of this diverse-habitat tour at KwaNdaba Game Lodge (approx. 1.5 hour's drive from Johannesburg airport), where we will immediately be overwhelmed by an incredibly rich assemblage of Kalahari bird species, quite a lot of them extremely spectacular, in the beautiful Rust de Winter Nature Reserve. The list includes the likes of **Northern Black Korhaan**, **Crimson-breasted Shrike**, **Southern Pied Babbler**, **Violet-eared Waxbill**, **Black-cheeked Waxbill**, **White-browed Sparrow-Weaver**, **Red-billed Buffalo Weaver**, **Scaly-feathered Weaver**, **Blue-cheeked Bee-eater** as well as various other bee-eaters, **Kalahari Scrub Robin**, and a host of others.

Overnight: KwaNdaba Game Lodge, Rust de Winter

Day 9. Departure

We will do some final birding at this splendid site, which has a plethora of species absent from Kruger or from the Escarpment, before driving to Johannesburg airport for your international flights home.

Please also note that we have other versions of this 9-day tour available. For example, instead of driving five hours back on the second-last day, we sometimes fly. We also have a version that does the extreme north of the Kruger National Park, which increases driving distances but allows us to find birds that are very localized in South Africa (but sometimes common in Mozambique farther northward).

Please note that the itinerary above 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 guide and other factors.

Duration: 9 days
Group size: 4 – 8 (rarely 9)
Date: 1 – 9 June 2020
Start: Johannesburg
End: Johannesburg

Price: R63,296
Single supplement: R8,936

Price includes:

Meals
 Accommodation
 Entrance fees

Guiding fees

All transport while on tour

2 night/sunset drives

Price excludes:

International flights

Personal insurance

Alcoholic beverages

Gratuities

Personal expenses such as gifts, laundry, etc.