



**BIRDING TOUR SOUTH AFRICA: BEST OF CAPE
TOWN AND BEYOND: ENDEMIC, SEABIRDS AND
MORE**

**7 - 14 OCTOBER 2021
5 - 12 AUGUST 2022 (PRE-TOUR FOR IOCONGRESS)
7 - 14 OCTOBER 2022**



The endemic Cape Sugarbird is one of our targets on this trip.

South Africa must surely rank as one of the best value destinations on the entire African continent. The combination of superb accommodation, excellent infrastructure, great food, wonderful South African hospitality, impressive and varied scenery, and the presence of Africa's big and small mammals makes it one of the most popular countries in the world to bird in. The tour begins in one of the world's most beautiful cities, Cape Town, where we will search for a host of avian endemics found nowhere else but in the fynbos of the Cape Floral Kingdom (the richest place on earth for plants). While in Cape Town we will also do a pelagic trip, enjoying the great numbers and diversity of seabirds which visit the southern tip of Africa. After a few days birding around Cape Town we then head northward up the west coast and finally head inland through rugged mountain ranges into the Tankwa Karoo, another of Africa's great 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 **Wandering Albatross**. Then we hope to encounter some very enigmatic birds: Watch a weird little warbler, a desert bird that skulks, disappear into a rock crevice, namely **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?



Cape Rockjumper is one of the two species making up the rockjumper family; we normally encounter it on this tour.

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.



Cape Petrel is usually seen on our pelagic trip on our 8-day Cape tour.

The October departures can be combined with our preceding **Kruger National Park and Escarpment Birding Safari** (2021 only) and then with our following **Subtropical South Africa Birding Tour: Comprehensive Eastern South Africa** for a 38-day South African adventure, and, following that, with our **Namibia, Okavango and Victoria Falls 18-day Birding Adventure** for a stunning 46-day Southern African mega tour.

The August 2022 tour is a pre-tour provided by Birding Ecotours for the International Ornithological Congress in Durban. It can be combined after the congress with our extension to the congress, **Kruger National Park and Escarpment Birding Safari** August 2022.

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 in Simonstown. We should hopefully have some time to start with some local birding – probably birding one of the many impressive wetlands nearby. Species to look for include **Great White Pelican, Greater and Lesser Flamingo, Cape Teal, Cape Shoveler, Southern Pochard, and Maccoa Duck** among many other waterfowl species. Some of the more elusive species we will search for are **Little Bittern, African Snipe, African Marsh Harrier, Malachite Kingfisher**, four species of reed-associated warblers, and other waterbirds. In the neighboring fynbos we should come across the first of many South African specials, such as **Cape Bulbul, Karoo Prinia, Southern Double-collared Sunbird** and **Cape White-eye**.

Overnight: Mariner Guest House, Simonstown, South Peninsula



The colorful Malachite Kingfisher can be seen in wetlands around Cape Town.

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

Today is an early start as we head down to Simonstown where we embark on a Cape pelagic trip (weather-permitting, otherwise we will spend the day around the Cape Peninsula and False Bay). Soon after leaving the harbor we normally come across **African Penguins** (from the nearby Boulders Beach colony), which are heading out for the day's fishing, along with large flocks of **Cape Cormorants** and **Cape Gannets**. As we leave False Bay we pass the magnificent Cape

Point, which, enjoyed from the sea, offers an entirely different perspective! Once rounding Cape Point the serious pelagic birding soon begins as we start seeing good numbers of **Sooty**, **Great**, and **Cory's Shearwaters**, **White-chinned Petrels**, and the odd **Storm Petrel** (**Wilson's** and **European** being most common). As we head farther out we will be on the lookout for trawlers, which attract huge numbers of seabirds. If we do find a trawler it normally has a cloud of seabirds behind it, particularly when the nets are being hauled in. Here we can expect to find **Shy**, **Black-browed**, **Indian Yellow-nosed** and **Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatrosses**, **Northern** and **Southern Giant Petrels**, **Cape Petrel**, **Brown Skua**, and occasionally **Great-winged Petrel**. We will always be on the lookout for **Spectacled Petrel**, **Northern** and **Southern Royal Albatrosses**, and **Wandering Albatross** which, although considered rare, are seen with some frequency off the Cape.



We'll keep a lookout for hake trawlers, as they usually attract large numbers of seabirds.

Other marine life to search for include **Humpback** and **Bryde's Whales** as well as **Long-beaked Common Dolphin** and, if we are extremely lucky, **Killer Whale**! If possible/already decided, please let us know if you do not 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 beautiful Hottentot Holland mountain range and Strandfontein Bird Sanctuary, one of Cape Town's best waterbird sites. We start the day with an early departure (we'll take breakfast packs along to enjoy later) heading east toward the Hottentot Holland mountains and particularly the small village of Rooi Els. To get to this picturesque 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. Our primary target for the day is **Cape Rockjumper**, which only occurs in the Cape Fold Mountains. Rooi Els is perhaps the easiest and most accessible spot to see the rockjumper, and our success rates are high. Other species to find here and nearby include **Ground Woodpecker**, **Cape** and **Sentinel Rock Thrushes**, **Victorin's Warbler**, **Cape Siskin**, **Cape Grassbird**, **Cape Sugarbird**, and many others. We may be lucky with a flyover of the pair of **Verreaux's Eagles** that breeds in the area.

We then head to the small town of Betty's Bay, where we visit the picturesque Harold Porter National Botanical Garden and enjoy lunch after a walk around the gardens. In the gardens we should find **African Dusky** and **African Paradise Flycatchers**, **Black Saw-wing**, **Sweet Waxbill**, **Yellow Bishop**, and **Brimstone, Cape**, and **Forest Canaries**.



The subtly beautiful Forest Canary

If we still need better views of **Cape**, **Crowned**, and **Bank Cormorants** we may pop over to the **African Penguin** colony at Stony Point, where these cormorants breed.

On our way back to Cape Town we will visit Strandfontein Bird Sanctuary, which offers Cape Town's best wetland birding. Species to look for here include **South African Shelduck**, **Hottentot**, **Red-billed**, and **Cape Teals**, **Maccoa Duck**, **Cape Shoveler**, **Great Crested** and **Black-necked Grebes**, **African Swamphen**, and a number of other waterbird species.

Overnight: Mariner Guest House, Simonstown, South Peninsula

Day 4. West Coast Birding

Today we head north of Cape Town and travel along the west coast. The strandveld vegetation is subtly different and, with the habitat change, results in a different mix of bird species. We will stop off in some farmlands en route to look for **Blue Crane**, **Pied Starling**, **Cape Clapper Lark**, **Capped Wheatear**, **Cape Longclaw**, **Pearl-breasted Swallow**, and the endemic Cape subspecies of **Cloud Cisticola**. Birding the strandveld habitat around the West Coast National Park and its surrounding areas will hopefully produce **Cape Penduline Tit**, **Grey Tit**, **White-**

backed Mousebird, Bokmakierie, Karoo Scrub Robin, Yellow and White-throated Canaries, Grey-winged Francolin, Southern Black Korhaan, and the striking **Black Harrier**. We will also spend time at a few of the strategically positioned bird hides along Langebaan Lagoon, one of Africa's most important shorebird stopover sites. Here we hope to find an assortment of Palearctic shorebirds as well as resident shorebirds, such as **Chestnut-banded, White-fronted,** and **Kittlitz's Plovers,** with the possibility of **Western Osprey** and **African Fish Eagle** overhead.

We may have time to look for Langebaan's resident pair of **Verreaux's Eagles** this afternoon; if we run out of time we will look for them tomorrow morning.

Overnight: Le Mahi Guest House, Langebaan

Day 5. Transfer to the Karoo

We often start this day by birding some of the farmlands north of Langebaan for a few more endemics that are unlikely to be found elsewhere on the trip. Our primary targets this morning will be **Cape Long-billed Lark** and **Sickle-winged Chat**; however, we should also find **Large-billed Lark, Grey-backed Sparrow-Lark, Blue Crane, Ant-eating Chat,** and perhaps **Namaqua Sandgrouse**. After our early-morning birding we head inland through some spectacular mountain scenery. But we have to get to the eastern (rain-shadow) side of the mountains to get to the famed (among birders) Karoo. The Karoo exhibits an amazing level of endemism, as the species need to adapt to the incredibly harsh conditions. This makes for spectacularly exciting birding for any serious birder who has never visited this particular semi-desert.

Overnight: Tanqua B&B, Route 355



*The majestic **Blue Crane** is commonly encountered on this tour.*

Day 6. Birding the Karoo

Today we will have a full day of Karoo birding. Dry, rocky gorges will be explored for **Cinnamon-breasted Warbler** (a truly bizarre rock crevice skulker) as well as **Layard's Warbler**, **Grey Tit**, **Fairy Flycatcher**, and **Booted Eagle** overhead. In the riverbed vegetation we will look for another special, **Namaqua Warbler**. The dry plains will be birded extensively for a number of exciting species such as **Rufous-eared Warbler**, **Black-headed Canary**, **White-throated Canary**, **Karoo and Tractrac Chats**, **Karoo, Karoo Long-billed, Spike-heeled**, and **Large-billed Larks**, **Karoo Eremomela**, **Ppirit Batis**, **Burchell's Courser**, **Ludwig's Bustard**, **Karoo Korhaan**, **Pale Chanting Goshawk**, **Namaqua Sandgrouse**, **Namaqua Dove**, and many others.

We will head out this evening to search for **Freckled** and **Rufous-cheeked Nightjars** and any other exciting nightlife we may encounter.

Overnight: Tanqua B&B, Route 355

Day 7. Transfer to Cape Town

After some early-morning Karoo birding, searching for anything we have missed over the last couple of days, we head out of the Karoo and back toward Cape Town. On our way back we will stop on a beautiful mountain pass to search for **Protea Canary** and **Victorin's Warbler** and may get lucky with a flyover **Verreaux's Eagle**.



Protea Canary — a Cape endemic

Once back in Cape Town we will have part of the afternoon to bird at Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden. The gardens here are incredibly beautiful, complete with Table Mountain as a backdrop. In the beautifully maintained gardens we will look for **Orange-breasted Sunbird** and **Cape Sugarbird** feeding on Protea flowers, while **Cape Spurfowl**, **Southern Boubou**, **Cape Canary**, **Brimstone Canary**, **Swee Waxbill** and **Lemon Dove** should all be seen while walking around the gardens.

Overnight: Fernwood Manor, Kirstenbosch

Day 8. Departure

We may have time to do some final birding along the eastern slopes of Table Mountain before you catch your flight to Durban to join our Subtropical South Africa tour or your international flight to leave Cape Town.

For those joining both the Cape and Subtropical trips, 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 Birding Ecotours books the flight the cost can just be added to the balance you owe – the flight usually costs R1000-R2000 (ballpark).

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.

Duration:	8 days
Limit:	8 (rarely 9); (The prices assume a group of 8, but we typically guarantee the departure even with a smaller group.)
Dates:	7 – 14 October 2021 5 – 12 August 2022 (Pre-tour for IOCongress) 7 – 14 October 2022
Start:	Cape Town
End:	Cape Town
Prices:	R37,735 per person sharing (2021) R40,376 per person sharing (2022)
Single supplements:	R5,835 (2021) R6,243 (2022)

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