



**COMPREHENSIVE PREMIUM KENYA BIRDING AND  
WILDLIFE SAFARI**

**06 – 30 SEPTEMBER 2023**



*White-bellied Bustard should be seen on the plains of the Maasai Mara.*

This 25-day birding and wildlife holiday in Kenya is a more comprehensive tour of this staggeringly diverse country than any other birding tour of Kenya that we have been able to find. This trip is also more of a premium trip than most birding tours of this amazingly mammal- and bird-rich country; we use relatively spacious vehicles and comfortable accommodation compared to a number of other Kenya birdwatching holidays we've seen offered.

Kenya has a spectacularly diverse array of habitats packed into a small area. These range from humid tropical lowland forests with localized denizens such as **Sokoke Scops Owl** near the idyllic Indian Ocean coastline (which boasts **Crab-plover**), to snow-capped mountains at over 16,000 feet (5,000 meters) above sea level! In between the sea and the high mountains are vast arid savannas and grasslands that are famous for their endless herds of wildlife, opportunistic predators such as Africa's big cats, and a myriad of colorful bird species. Then there are the Great Rift Valley scarps and flamingo-filled lakes, highland grasslands, the Taita Hills, a staggeringly bird-diverse tropical rainforest in the form of Kakamega and last but not least the papyrus-lined Lake Victoria, the continent's biggest lake.



*We may be lucky enough to encounter **Crab-plover** along the Indian Ocean coastline.*

Kenya is smaller than Texas, yet boasts an incredible 1,162 bird species. A relatively modest eleven of these species are single country endemics, but then Kenya also boasts a range of East African endemics such as a number of species only occurring in Kenya and Tanzania. The country has 62 Important Bird Areas (IBAs) and some of the most famous game parks in the world, including the Maasai Mara and its endless migrating wildebeest herds, Amboseli with Mount Kilimanjaro as a backdrop, and many others.

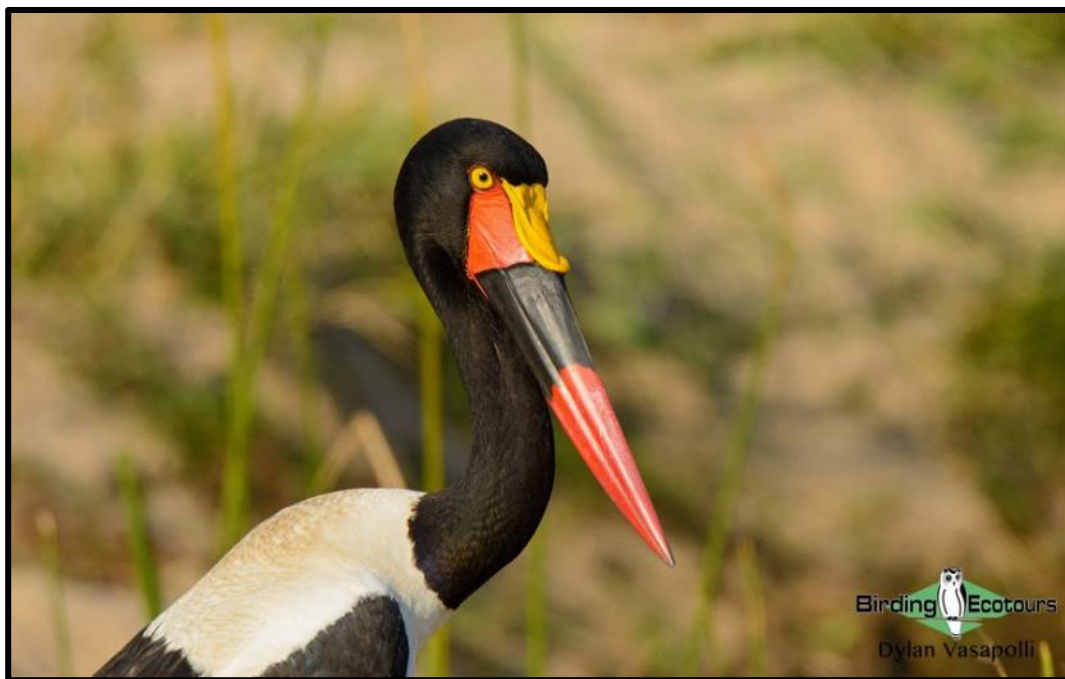
This comprehensive wildlife and birding vacation to Kenya should enable you to see around 600 bird species, enjoy excellent large game viewing and allow you to see some of Africa's most famous sites. While we enjoy all the wildlife, we are sure to spend adequate time looking for the localized bird specials of Kenya (and East Africa as a whole), including **Hinde's Babbler**, the

Taita Hills endemics, **Turner's Eremomela**, papyrus swamp endemics, some breathtakingly beautiful turacos, **Grey-crested Helmetshrike**, **Abbott's Starling**, **Sharpe's Longclaw** and a great variety of others.

### Itinerary (25 days/24 nights)

#### Day 1. Nairobi

Upon arrival at the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport (JKIA) in Nairobi you will be met by our driver and tour leader and transferred to your hotel. If you arrive early, there might be time to visit the excellent Nairobi National Park. Here, Africa's big game species (along with smaller animals such as **Thomson's Gazelle**) can be seen right on the outskirts of Kenya's capital. It's also a rhino sanctuary and an Important Bird Area (IBA). We hope to get our bird list off to a good start with species like **Saddle-billed Stork**, **Yellow-throated Sandgrouse**, **Martial Eagle** (Africa's largest eagle), **Rüppell's Vulture**, **Eastern Chanting Goshawk**, **Common Ostrich**, **Hartlaub's Bustard** and the East African endemic **Red-throated Tit**.



*The impressive Saddle-billed Stork should be seen on this tour.*

Near Nairobi is also the Kikuyu Escarpment at the foot the Aberdare Mountains. Both are IBAs with important Afrotropical highland montane species including **Abbott's Starling**, **Black-fronted Bushshrike**, **Aberdare** and **Hunter's Cisticolas**, **Kikuyu White-eye**, **Grey Cuckooshrike**, **Chestnut-throated Apalis**, **Grey Apalis**, **Mountain Greenbul** and **White-starred Robin**, among many others.

Overnight: Nairobi



## Day 2. Gatamaiyu Forest, Kikuyu Escarpment and the Kinangop Plateau Grasslands.

This morning we travel to Gatamaiyu Forest, part of the chain of forest fragments that form the Kikuyu Escarpment Forest about 37 miles (59 kilometers) north-west of Nairobi. This is a tropical montane forest at the foot of the Aberdare range. The forest covers close to 12,000 acres (4,720 hectares). Here, we will look for the Vulnerable (IUCN) **Abbott's Starling** in the forest canopy, a denizen of a few Afromontane forests in East Africa. We will also look for other range-restricted species such as **Jackson's Spurfowl** and **Hunter's Cisticola**. With luck we may find **Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawk** and Africa's heaviest and most powerful (but not biggest) eagle, **Crowned Eagle**. Other species we hope to get acquainted with here are **African Hill Babbler**, **White-starred Robin**, **Silvery-cheeked Hornbill**, **Tambourine Dove**, **Mountain Greenbul**, the gorgeous and personality-filled **Hartlaub's Turaco**, **Slender-billed Greenbul** and **Kikuyu White-eye** among many others. We plan to finish our birding here in the late morning before rewarding ourselves with a picnic lunch.



*The pretty **White-starred Robin** can be seen in Afromontane forests in Kenya.*

After lunch, we proceed to the Kinangop Plateau grasslands (another IBA) still on the slopes of the Aberdare Range. A major target here is Kenya's well-known grassland endemic, the Endangered (IUCN) **Sharpe's Longclaw**. Many more common and widespread African birds should also be seen here including **Black-winged Lapwing**, **Wing-snapping Cisticola**, **Long-tailed** and **Jackson's Widowbirds**, and **Nyanza Swift**.

Overnight: Naivasha

## Day 3. Naivasha to Maasai Mara National Reserve

This morning, we'll depart for the famed Maasai Mara National Reserve, contiguous with the Serengeti just across the border in Tanzania. The drive will already present some special rewards,

like a sudden surprising, stunning outlook from a viewpoint at the top of the escarpment over the width of the Great Rift Valley, with **Rock Hyraxes** also enjoying the view. All kinds of spectacular birds along with large (and small!) game animals abound, including **Grey Crowned Crane**, **Secretarybird**, **Common Wildebeest**, **Thomson's Gazelle**, **Plains Zebra**, **Impala**, **Black-backed Jackal**, **Common Duiker**, **Vervet Monkey**, and even (Maasai) **Giraffe** – roaming freely in the fields and using the roads together with the traffic, long before we even enter any game reserve.



*The massive **Kori Bustard** is often seen strolling across the open plains.*

We'll arrive in time for lunch and take an afternoon game drive for some of the big game animals and local birds like **Kori Bustard** (the world's heaviest flying bird), several of the seven species of **vultures** here including **Egyptian**, **Hooded**, **Rüppell's**, **Lappet-faced**, and **White-headed**, **Secretarybird**, **Coqui Francolin**, **Von der Decken's Hornbill**, **Hildebrandt's Starling** and **Silverbird**.

Overnight: Sarova Mara Lodge, Maasai Mara National Reserve

#### **Day 4. Maasai Mara National Reserve**

We will have a full day of birding in the park with a picnic lunch. We'll visit the Mara River, hoping to see part of the great wildebeest migration crossing the river, but this can of course not be guaranteed (the timing varies from year to year). We'll also look out for the "big five": **African Elephant**, **Lion**, **Leopard**, **rhinoceros**, and **African Buffalo**. We should also see **Hippopotamus** and plains game like **Thomson's Gazelle**, **Topi**, (Maasai) **Giraffe**, and **Black-backed Jackal**.

Birds we expect to see here include **Red-necked Spurfowl**, **White-bellied** and **Black-bellied Bustards**, a number of vulture species, plus many other raptors like the beautiful **Long-crested Eagle**, the gigantic **Martial Eagle**, **Tawny Eagle**, **Wahlberg's Eagle**, **Black-chested Snake**

**Eagle**, the colorful **Bateleur** (one of the most beautiful eagles!), **Shikra**, and **African Goshawk**. In the more open areas, we can expect to encounter several species of colorful **Bee-eaters**, such as **Cinnamon-chested**, **Little** and **White-throated**, **Kingfishers** such as **Grey-headed** and **African Pygmy** and **Rollers** such as **Purple** and **Lilac-breasted**. The grasslands and woodlands also hold species such as **Coqui** and **Red-winged Francolins**, **Pygmy Falcon**, **Southern Ground Hornbill**, **Fischer's Sparrow-Lark**, **Foxy Lark**, **Trilling Cisticola**, and many others.

Overnight: Serena Lodge, Mara Triangle

### Day 5. Maasai Mara National Reserve

We can have a pre-breakfast cup of coffee and tea before our early morning game drive, after which we will return to our lodge for a proper sit-down breakfast. It is our last day in Mara, so we will carry a picnic lunch and stay out the rest of the day looking for different wildlife (as mentioned above). We also hope to enjoy large herds of wildebeest (it will be the start of the migration season) and will look out for possible wildebeest river crossing sites.

Overnight: Serena Lodge, Mara Triangle

### Day 6. Maasai Mara to Lake Naivasha

After breakfast, we depart for Lake Naivasha, arriving in time for lunch. Lake Naivasha is a birdwatcher's paradise with over 200 species having been recorded from the area. Our afternoon birding may yield **Tropical Boubou**, **Orange-breasted Bushshrike**, **White-headed Barbet**, **Variable Sunbird**, the dazzling **Purple Grenadier**, **White-browed Robin-Chat** with its beautiful song, the arid country specialist **Buff-bellied Warbler**, and **Red-faced Crombec**. Along the edge of the lake, we hope to find **Yellow-billed Stork**, **Long-toed** and **Spur-winged Lapwings**, **Malachite Kingfisher**, and **Pink-backed Pelicans**.

Overnight: Naivasha

### Day 7. Lake Naivasha, Crescent Island Game Park

We will wake up early and do some pre-breakfast birding. After breakfast we'll head for Crescent Island, a private wildlife game sanctuary on the eastern side of Lake Naivasha. It was created in 1988, and following a sudden drop in water levels in 2000, Crescent Island became part of the mainland and is now a peninsula. Big game animals, including **Plains Zebra**, **Thomson's Gazelle**, **Impala**, and (Maasai) **Giraffe**, can all usually be seen up-close. Other wildlife includes (Defassa) **Waterbuck**, **Common Eland** and **Common Wildebeest**.



*The strikingly colored **Long-toed Lapwing** can be seen at Lake Naivasha.*

Up to 80 waterbird species have been recorded during censuses, including **White-backed Duck**, **Saddle-billed Stork**, **Marabou Stork**, **African Spoonbill**, **Great Crested Grebe**, the ubiquitous but attractive **African Jacana**, and various striking lapwing species such as **Long-toed** and **Spur-winged Lapwings**.

We also hope to find the localized, Near Threatened (IUCN) **Grey-crested Helmetshrike**, the personality-filled **Grey-capped Warbler**, **White-bellied Tit** and a wide variety of more widespread terrestrial birds such as **Black-headed Oriole**, **Red-chested Cuckoo**, **Pearl-spotted Owlet**, **Grey-backed** and **Northern Fiscals**, along with many others (in Kenya, there are birds everywhere, and just so many different species!).

Overnight: Naivasha





*Grey-backed Fiscal may be seen at Lake Nakuru National Park.*

#### **Day 8. Lake Naivasha to Lake Bogoria National Reserve**

After an early breakfast, we will check out and depart towards the wonderful Lake Bogoria National Reserve, planning to arrive at Lake Bogoria Spa Lodge in time for lunch. After lunch, we will drive to the Lake Bogoria National Reserve. Unlike Lake Nakuru, whose salinity level has been affected by an increased water volume, Bogoria's water salinity has not been affected. Hence, the lake has retained the spirulina (blue-green algae) which is the food of **Lesser Flamingo** and we hope to see large numbers here (they have vanished from Lake Nakuru because of rising water levels). We might also see **Greater Flamingo**, **Black-necked Grebe**, **Steppe Eagle**, **Tawny Eagle**, **African Fish Eagle** and as usual a host of other interesting species in the nearby woodlands such as **Pygmy Batis**, **Slate-colored Boubou**, **Nubian Woodpecker** and **Red-fronted Barbet**.

Overnight: Lake Bogoria Spa (we've had to tweak our itinerary in recent years because of flooding of the rift valley lakes and two hotels being submerged!).

#### **Day 9. Lake Baringo National Reserve: cliff specialists, boat ride and more**

After breakfast we head to Lake Baringo early in the morning. We arrive and meet our coxswain ready to take us birding by motor boat. Unlike Lake Bogoria, just a few miles away, Lake Baringo is a freshwater lake which means a different mix of waterbirds. Some of the birds we expect to see here include **Goliath Heron**, **Hamerkop**, **Senegal Thick-knee**, **Gull-billed Tern**, **Grey-headed Kingfisher**, dazzling **Northern Carmine Bee-eater**, and **Golden-backed Weaver**, among others.





*The vivid colors of Northern Carmine Bee-eater will leave you awestruck.*

After a two-hour boat ride, we have an hour or so to search for terrestrial beauties here like **Eastern Violet-backed Sunbird**, **Spotted Palm Thrush** and **Abyssinian Roller** among others, before we break for lunch. In the late afternoon we resume birding, now along the cliffs, looking for **Hemprich's Hornbill**, **Bristle-crowned Starling**, **Verreaux's Eagle**, and **Rock Hyrax**, the eagle's main prey. With the help of a local naturalist, we'll walk along the famous Tugen Hills, known for their great diversity of raptors and owls, as well as interesting passerines. Here we hope to find **Three-banded Courser**, **Slender-tailed Nightjar**, **Greyish Eagle-Owl**, **Verreaux's Eagle-Owl**, **Pearl-spotted Owlet**, **Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse**, **White-bellied Canary**, **Brown-tailed Rock Chat**, **Jackson's Hornbill**, **Speckle-fronted Weaver**, **White-billed** and **White-headed Buffalo Weavers**, **Dark Chanting Goshawk**, **African Grey** and **Nubian Woodpeckers**, **Red-and-yellow** and **D'Arnaud's Barbets**, and **Purple Roller**, and many others.

Overnight: Lake Bogoria Spa

### Day 10. Lake Baringo to Kakamega Forest National Reserve

We'll do a pre-breakfast bird walk, and after we've eaten, we'll drive to the Kakamega Forest National Reserve. This drive takes us through the beautiful scenery of the Kerio Valley. We will stop in the valley for a picnic lunch and do some birding, looking for **White-crested Turaco**, **Beautiful Sunbird**, **Orange-breasted** and **Grey-headed Bushshrikes**, and **White-crested Helmetshrike**, among others.

Kakamega Forest is Kenya's only true tropical rainforest, similar to the central and west African forests, and this area is alive with birds, some of which are found nowhere else in the country. We will also have a full day tomorrow to explore this bird-rich area.

Overnight: Rondo Retreat Center, Kakamega Forest



*Great Blue Turaco is loud and conspicuous in Kakamega Forest.*

### Day 11. Kakamega Forest National Reserve

We will spend the day enjoying the sights and sounds of this unique forest. We'll walk the numerous forest trails here in search of many of Kakamega's 194 bird species. The forest is West African in character, and many birds' Kenyan distributions are confined to this forest, here at the eastern extent of their range only marginally making it into this country. The rainforest is also a haven for butterflies and other insects, along with its vast avian riches.

In this tropical greenhouse we'll get a chance to see **Great Blue Turaco**, **Blue-headed Bee-eater**, **Brown-eared Woodpecker**, **Yellow-crested Woodpecker**, **Buff-spotted Woodpecker**, **Joyful Greenbul**, **Shelley's Greenbul**, **Red-tailed Bristlebill**, **Cabanis's Greenbul**, **Slender-billed Greenbul**, the gem-like **African Emerald Cuckoo**, and the cacophonous **Black-and-white-casqued Hornbill**. The forest is well-known for scarce/localized forest barbets including the stunning **Yellow-billed Barbet**. The forest has a Near-Threatened (IUCN) high canopy warbler species, **Turner's Eremomela**, which we will scan for in canopy bird parties. The area also has a small population of the Endangered (IUCN) **Grey Parrot**, a species which, with some luck, we can find here (although it is much easier on our West African tours, such as to Ghana).

Kakamega Forest also supports good populations of three species of wattle-eyes including **Yellow-bellied**, **Jameson's** and **Chestnut Wattle-eye**. The shy **White-spotted Flufftail** is sometimes seen along streams near Rondo Lodge. The forest here is dense and pristine with tall tree canopies, where species like **Western Oriole**, **Red-headed Malimbe**, **Stuhlmann's Starling**, **Sharpe's Drongo** and many others can be searched for.

A range of primate species such as **Blue** and **Red-tailed Monkeys**, beautiful **Guereza** (Black-and-white Colobus), as well as **De Brazza's Monkey**, can also be seen in this forest. Forty percent of

the total butterfly population of Kenya is found in Kakamega Forest as well. We'll also get a chance to experience more of the diverse African culture of the Luhya people.

Overnight: Rondo Retreat Center, Kakamega Forest

### Day 12 Birding on the shores of Lake Victoria

We will start the day with an early breakfast and then have a one-hour transfer south to the shores of Lake Victoria. This is Africa's largest freshwater body and in fact the second-largest freshwater lake in the world. The lake borders three East African countries, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, most of it being in Tanzania (49%) and Uganda (45%), with Kenya having the smallest portion (6%). It is the source of the mighty Nile River flowing north to Egypt. The reed beds around the lake provide unique habitat for a few papyrus specials including **Papyrus Gonolek**, **Papyrus Canary** and **Carruthers's Cisticola**. Also present here are many strikingly-colored weavers such as **Black-headed Weaver**, **Northern Brown-throated Weaver** and **Slender-billed Weaver**. We aim to arrive here around 8 am and will then team up with our local guide and coxswain for a boat ride on the lake looking for the abovementioned species. After a few hours on the lake, we will enjoy coffee and a cup of tea and then head back to Rondo Retreat for lunch. We will then enjoy our last birding around the forest in the late afternoon.

Overnight: Rondo Retreat Center, Kakamega Forest

### Day 13. Kakamega Forest National Reserve to Lake Nakuru National Park

We'll depart, after breakfast, for Lake Nakuru National Park, allowing time to search for several key species along the way. In the early afternoon we'll arrive at Lake Nakuru National Park, where in previous years, vast numbers of **Lesser Flamingos** used to feed in the shallow alkaline water, now replaced with smaller numbers of **Greater Flamingos** because of a change in the lake's salinity. Lake Nakuru National Park was recently named an IBA by BirdLife International due to the huge bird populations/diversity in this magnificent park. A large rocky escarpment en route is a favorite roosting spot for Mackinder's Eagle-Owl, the northern subspecies (sometimes split into its own species) of **Cape Eagle-Owl**. The Acacia scrub is a favorite haunt for **Little Rock Thrush**, **Mocking Cliff Chat**, **Pale Flycatcher** and **Purple Grenadier**. Exploring the Acacia woodland and lakeside marshes we will no doubt come across many other wonderful avian delights in addition, such as **Great White Pelican**, **African Harrier-Hawk**, **Hildebrandt's Spurfowl**, **Levaillant's Cuckoo**, **White-browed Coucal**, **Green Wood Hoopoe**, **Red-throated Wryneck**, **African Grey Woodpecker**, **Anteater Chat**, **Grey-backed Fiscal**, **Brown-crowned Tchagra**, **Fischer's Lovebird** and **African Firefinch**.

Mammals are also quite common in the park, and this is one of the few places in East Africa where both the endangered **White** and **Black Rhinoceroses** can be found. Some of the other mammals we hope to encounter are (Rothschild's) **Giraffe** and **Bohor Reedbuck**.

Overnight: Nakuru

### Day 14. Lake Nakuru National Park to Olpajeta Wildlife Conservancy

We'll depart, after breakfast, for Olpajeta Wildlife Conservancy, allowing time to search for several key species along the way. We will also have a stopover at Thomson's Falls at Nyahururu which is one of Kenya's highest towns, at 7,700 feet (2,360 meters) above sea level. Just outside the town lies Thomson's Falls on the Ewaso Narok River. It falls an impressive 230 feet (72 meters), with the mist feeding the dense forest below. At Thomson's Falls we're likely to see **Chestnut-winged** and **Slender-billed Starlings**, **Rock Martin**, **Grey Cuckooshrike**, **Kikuyu White-eye**, and **Tacazze** and **Collared Sunbirds**. We will have our lunch here before proceeding to Olpajeta, however we will have a stop en route at Wajee Camp to look for the Vulnerable (IUCN) Kenyan endemic Hinde's Babbler as well as **Holub's Golden Weaver**.



*Tacazze Sunbird is one of the many beauties we will look for at Thomson's Falls.*

In the afternoon we will arrive at Olpajeta Wildlife Conservancy and head straight to the lodge. Later in the afternoon we will enjoy yet another fantastic game drive looking for both **Black** and **White Rhino**, while other wildlife here includes **African Elephant**, **African Buffalo**, **Grevy's Zebra**, **Bushbuck**, and **Common Warthog**. We may take a walk in the nearby forest, where we'll look for **African Dusky Flycatcher**, **Cabanis's Greenbul**, **Abyssinian Thrush** and others.

Overnight: Serena Camp, Olpajeta Wildlife Conservancy

### Day 15. Olpajeta Wildlife Conservancy

On our second day here, we will have an early-morning game drive (before breakfast), looking for both **Red-billed** and **Yellow-billed Oxpeckers**, **Fischer's Sparrow-Lark**, **Northern White-crowned Shrike**, **Meyer's Parrot** and **Augur Buzzard** and lots more. After breakfast we can visit the Chimpanzee Sanctuary and learn more about this fascinating primate, whose population in the



wild is heavily affected by poaching and illegal trafficking. We will then have lunch at our lodge and enjoy an early-afternoon rest before our late-afternoon game drive.

Overnight: Serena Camp, Olpajeta Wildlife Conservancy

### Day 16 Olpajeta Wildlife Conservancy to Samburu National Reserve

In the morning we will take a bird walk around the lodge grounds and then after another tasty breakfast we will depart for Samburu National Reserve. This is one of our longer drives (roughly four hours), however we will take birding stops along the way which will give us the opportunity to stretch our legs and enjoy more of Kenya's magnificent birdlife. In particular we will keep our eyes open here for spectacular **Long-tailed** and **Red-collared Widowbirds** along the roadside.

Samburu is an arid reserve, presenting us with some new species as described for the next day. Our hosts here are the Samburu people, who are pastoralists, herding their cattle like their cousins in the south, the Maasai. We will search for game animals as we make our way to our lodge and will have a chance for an evening game drive in search of the many birds and animals that inhabit this impressive park.

Overnight: Samburu National Reserve



*Samburu National Reserve holds large numbers of game animals, such as this impressive **Beisa Oryx**.*

### Day 17. Samburu National Reserve

Samburu is one of the most exciting reserves in Kenya, perhaps even in greater East Africa, with the semi-desert habitat and rich woodlands along the Ewaso Ng'iro River teeming with wildlife. Exploring this fantastic reserve will always produce a most overwhelming array of bird species, such as **Somali Ostrich**, **African Hawk-Eagle**, **Crested Francolin**, **Yellow-necked Spurfowl**,

impressive **Vulturine Guineafowl**, **Kori**, **Buff-crested** and **White-bellied Bustards**, **Black-faced** and **Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse**, **Red-bellied Parrot**, **Somali Bee-eater**, **Von der Decken's Hornbill**, stunning **Red-and-yellow Barbet**, **Pink-breasted Lark**, truly beautiful **Rosy-patched Bushshrike**, **Hunter's** and **Black-bellied Sunbirds**, **Golden-breasted** and **Fischer's Starlings**, **Donaldson Smith's Sparrow-Weaver**, and **Cut-throat Finch**. Also found here is the cute **White-headed Mousebird**, to complete the set of all three Kenyan mousebird species (mousebirds are a charismatic, uniquely African family of wonderfully long-tailed, crested birds), among many other Maasai-Somali biome species.

Mammal life here is also prolific, with many species not seen elsewhere on our tour. Just a few of the many possibilities include **Olive Baboon**, **Dwarf Mongoose**, **Grevy's Zebra**, **Giraffe** (Maasai and Reticulated subspecies), **Kirk's** and **Guenther's Dik-dik**, (Coke's) **Hartebeest**, **Waterbuck**, **Gerenuk**, **Grant's** and **Thomson's Gazelle** and the splendid **Beisa Oryx**.

Overnight: Samburu National Reserve



*Northern Red-billed Hornbill is one of a number of hornbill species we should see in Kenya.*

## Day 18. Samburu National Reserve to Nairobi

We leave Samburu soon after breakfast and drive southwards towards Nairobi. Birding along the way, we proceed past the semi-arid Northern Frontier District into the Mount Kenya region. En route we will pass through spectacular scenery, with the grasslands along the roadside a great place for **Black-winged Lapwing**, **Black-winged Kite**, **Dusky Turtle Dove**, **Cape Crow**, **Long-tailed Widowbird**, and **Speke's Weaver**.

After crossing the equator, we enter the Central Kenya Highlands between the Aberdare Range and Mount Kenya. On a clear day we may get glimpses of the snow-capped peaks of the second-highest mountain in Africa, Mount Kenya. Making our way farther south out of the Central Kenya

Highlands, we'll see the pineapple plantations of Thika and many Kikuyu subsistence farms before arriving once more in Nairobi.

Overnight: Nairobi

### Day 19. Nairobi to Tsavo West National Park via Amboseli and Kilimanjaro

This is a long driving day with an early start, but it will reward us with some of Africa's most famous scenery and a set of new birds. After breakfast we'll proceed to Amboseli National Park right near the Tanzania border. Here, Mount Kilimanjaro is a backdrop to amazing scenes of big game and plentiful birds!



*While passing through Amboseli National Park, we will enjoy safari scenes with Mount Kilimanjaro as a majestic backdrop (photo Amoghavarsha via Wikimedia/CC BY-SA 3.0)!*

Tsavo West National Park is next on our agenda. The Tsavo habitat is a relatively dense thicket of savanna dominated by *Acacia* and *Camiphora* bush with baobabs, grassy plains, riverine woodland, and the Mzima Springs. We'll ensure we arrive in time for lunch. In the afternoon we will take a game drive in the park, which supports a large number of big game species such as **African Elephant**, **rhino**, **Lion**, huge herds of **African Buffalo**, and more. Here, Mount Kilimanjaro is a backdrop to the amazing scenes of big game and plentiful birds. There will be a large number of new species for us here, including **Splendid** and **Hildebrandt's Starlings**, **Common Ostrich**, **Hartlaub's Bustard**, **Black** and **Abyssinian Scimitarbills**, **African Grey** and **Northern Red-billed Hornbills**, while night birds include **Donaldson Smith's** and **Freckled Nightjars**, **Pearl-spotted Owlet**, and **African Wood Owl**.

Overnight: Tsavo West National Park



### Day 20. Tsavo West National Park

After breakfast we tour the Mzima Springs which are part of the Chyulu Range and are composed of porous volcanic lava rock and ashes, which purifies the water to produce the spring's sparklingly clear water. We shall drive along lava rocks and explore the spring on foot enjoying views of **Nile Crocodile** and **Hippopotamus** and birds such as **Holub's Golden Weaver**, **Red-headed Weaver**, **Black-necked Weaver**, **Shikra**, **Little Sparrowhawk**, **Eastern Black-headed Batis**, **African Golden Oriole**, **Straw-tailed Whydah**, and many others.

Other wildlife to experience here includes **Blue Monkey**, **Yellow Baboon**, **African Elephant** and **Klipspringer**. We will head back to our lodge for lunch and later in the afternoon we will enjoy a game drive to the rhino sanctuary.

Overnight: Tsavo West National Park

### Day 21. Tsavo West National Park to Taita Hills

After breakfast we will drive through Tsavo National Park to Taita Hills Wildlife Sanctuary. This is a private conservancy on the slopes of the Taita Hills. The forest shares botanical similarities with the Usambara Mountains in Tanzania to the south. We will arrive in time for lunch and have an afternoon drive exploring the riverine and savanna thickets and open plains in the conservancy for different species of both birds and mammals. We will look for **Black-throated Barbet**, **Pangani Longclaw**, **Spotted Palm Thrush**, **Eastern Violet-backed Sunbird**, **Red-fronted Prinia** and **Grey Wren-Warbler**, among others.

Overnight: Taita Hills Wildlife Sanctuary

### Day 22. Taita Hills Forest

We have an early breakfast before dawn and ascend to the Taita Hills forests, birding in the conservancy en route. The drive will take us about two hours to the top of Ngangao Forest, one of the major forest fragments. We will then meet our local guide and explore the forest. One of our major targets will be **Taita Thrush** which is found on the forest floor and can be a rather shy species; we will thus need to ensure we keep noise to a minimum! We hope to see the other two Taita endemics (**Taita Apalis** and **Taita White-eye**) among the many other highland forest species. Other goodies here include **Striped Pipit**, **Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler**, **Stripe-cheeked Greenbul**, **White-starred Robin**, **Hartlaub's Turaco** and many more. After our forest walk, we will have a picnic lunch and head back to the wildlife sanctuary for an afternoon game drive.

Overnight: Taita Hills Wildlife Sanctuary

### Day 23. Taita Hills to Watamu (Mida Creek)

After an early morning breakfast, we will head further south towards the Indian Ocean coast to the beach resort of Watamu (meaning "sweet"). On our way we will stop at Mida Creek for a picnic and then proceed for shore birding along the creek. Mida Creek, part of a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, is a large inlet that opens into the sea south of Watamu and rises and falls with the tides.



Mida Creek contains one of Africa's largest mangroves and a very important part of the marine ecosystem in the Watamu/Sokoke World Biosphere Zone. The mangrove roots provide a rich source of food for fish, crabs, shrimp, and oysters. The fish and crustaceans then provide the food for Mida's legions of birds. Thousands of migratory birds regularly visit here, with **Crab-plover** being its star attraction. We walk on the boardwalk to Mida Village through the mangrove habitat, looking for birds like **Dimorphic Egret**, **Gull-billed** and **Saunders's Terns**, **Greater Sand Plover**, and **Water Thick-knee**, and if we're lucky we may find **Crab-plover**.

We can spend the afternoon relaxing in the cool tidal breeze on the snow-white sandy beaches after an adventurous and bird-filled journey.

Overnight: Watamu



*The sought-after **Spotted Ground Thrush** can be found at Arabuko-Sokoke National Reserve.*

## Day 24. Arabuko-Sokoke National Reserve

However, the adventure is not over just yet, as today we'll take a short drive to the unique Arabuko-Sokoke Forest, where we'll spend our time walking trails around the forest. It is one of the last remnant indigenous coastal forests in Kenya, and is by far the largest remnant of the forests that once dominated Kenya's coastal fringe. The forest contains at least three distinct vegetation types, which provide habitat for several threatened species, and it has a very high number of species in relation to its size. Twenty percent of Kenya's bird species and about thirty percent of its butterflies have been recorded in this small part (0.07%) of Kenya. At least 24 bird, mammal, and butterfly species are restricted to this stretch of coast. This high proportion of endemic species, some known only from Arabuko-Sokoke Forest, makes the forest a key part of the East African Coastal Forests Endemic Bird Area.

The forest holds some rare endemic species like **Sokoke Scops Owl**, **Sokoke Pipit** and **Clarke's Weaver**, as well as other key species like **Amani Sunbird**, **Fischer's Turaco**, **Crested**

**Guineafowl, Spotted Ground Thrush, Chestnut-fronted and Retz's Helmetshrikes, Scaly-throated Honeyguide, Eastern Nicator, Mombasa Woodpecker, Mangrove Kingfisher, Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher, Green Barbet and Black-bellied Starling.**

Overnight: Arabuko-Sokoke National Reserve

### **Day 25. Departure**

After breakfast we transfer to the airport in Malindi and connect to Jomo Kenyatta International Airport to fly back home.

*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:** 25 days  
**Group size:** 6-9, but we usually guarantee the trip with only 4!  
**Dates:** 06 – 30 September 2023  
**Start:** Nairobi  
**End:** Malindi  
**Prices:** US\$10,890 per person sharing (2023)  
**Single Supplements:** US\$1,910 (2023)

#### **Price includes:**

All accommodation  
Meals (from lunch on Day 1 until breakfast on Day 25)  
Unlimited bottled water  
Expert tour leader  
Local birding guide  
All entrance & conservation fees  
All ground transport, including airport pick-up and drop-off

#### **Price excludes:**

International/domestic flights (to/from Kenya)  
International airport taxes  
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

Laundry service  
Gratuities (please see our [tipping guidelines blog](#))  
Visa  
Personal travel insurance