



1-DAY DURBAN BIRDING TOURS



Purple-crested Turaco is common in the coastal forests around Durban.

Durban is situated on the east coast of South Africa, and its subtropical climate makes it a popular destination for tourists. It also offers fantastic birding opportunities, with several excellent spots located within an hour or two's drive from the city center, perfect for a one-day birding tour. The best time for birding in Durban is during the summer months, between September and April, but excellent opportunities exist year-round. Certain species, like the **Spotted Ground Thrush**, are actually easier to see in the winter months, from May to August.

To learn more about other possible destinations for Durban birding day trips, be sure to check out [this article](#).

Greater Durban area day tour options

Situated only 20 minutes from the airport, Umhlanga Nature Reserve offers birders with time constraints the ideal birding destination. This reserve has an easy-to-walk 1.2-mile (2-kilometer) trail that winds its way through the reserve, including a wooden boardwalk over the wetland. Although small, the reserve offers a good diversity of habitat—wetland, coastal forest, and sandy beaches. Species found here include **Southern Brown-throated**, **Thick-billed**, and **Eastern Golden Weavers**, **Red-headed Quelea**, **Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher**, and the elusive **Buff-spotted Flufftail**. During summer, the beach area allows birders to connect with shorebirds such as **Grey Plover**, **Sanderling**, **African Oystercatcher**, **Ruddy Turnstone**, and other Palearctic migrants.



Red-headed Quelea can be seen reliably near Umhlanga in summer.

Closer to the city center is the small reserve of Pigeon Valley Nature Reserve where a couple hours birding in the lush forest can produce **Green Twinspot**, **White-eared Barbet**, **Yellow-rumped**

Tinkerbird, Purple-crested Turaco, Red-capped Robin-Chat, Dark-backed Weaver and Olive Woodpecker. The reserve is a great place to try for the elusive **Buff-spotted Flufftail**, while in winter, **Spotted Ground Thrush** is possible too.



Spotted Ground Thrushes are winter visitors to the coast.

On the southern side of Durban, Umbogavango Nature Reserve is a popular spot for local birders. The well-maintained trails allow visitors to explore a range of habitats, including coastal forest, small dams, and an exotic tree plantation. For photographers or those who prefer less walking, the reserve offers three bird hides overlooking the dams. Furthermore, Umbogavango is one of the best places in Durban to see the sought-after **Magpie Mannikin**. The reserve has an impressive species list, including **Green Twinspot, Tambourine Dove, White-eared Barbet, Red-backed Mannikin, and Black-throated Wattle-eye**. During winter, it is a reliable site for **Spotted Ground Thrush**. Birding along the water's edge, may produce species such as **Mountain Wagtail, Half-collared, Giant, Pied, and Malachite Kingfishers, African Black Duck, and Goliath Heron**. In summer, the reserve often hosts a vagrant **Rufous-bellied Heron**. Please note that access to the reserve is controlled and prior arrangements are required. When booking a day trip, we will take care of all necessary bookings for you.

If you head inland from central Durban, Springside Nature Reserve is a small, well-maintained reserve located in the heart of the picturesque suburb of Hillcrest. The reserve features a mix of habitats, including forest, wetlands, and a patch of sandstone sourveld grassland—an endangered vegetation type. Visitors to the reserve have the chance of seeing species such as **Holub's Golden Weaver, Fan-tailed Grassbird, and the powerful Crowned Eagle**.

For those prepared to travel a little further, just under an hour south of Durban, Umdoni Park offers birders the opportunity to explore a well-maintained indigenous coastal forest. Here, a walk

through the paths in the conservancy will allow you to add species, such as **Green Malkoha**, **Scaly-throated Honeyguide**, **Narina Trogon**, **Grey Cuckooshrike**, **Brown Scrub Robin**, **Grey Waxbill**, **Lemon Dove**, **Knysna** and **Purple-crested Turacos**, **Grey Sunbird**, along with **Crowned Eagle**, which nest in the area. In winter, we will look out for **Spotted Ground Thrush** and **White-starred Robin**.



*The loud and colorful **Knysna Turaco** can be targeted on Durban day tours.*

Depending on what you're hoping to see, our guides can further help you connect with species such as **Knysna Warbler**, **Striped Pipit**, and **White-starred Robin**—all within the Greater Durban area. Several other birding options close to Durban are also available, and the day's route can be tailored based on the species you're targeting. We can also cater to bird photographers who would prefer to focus more on capturing great images.

Further afield day tour options

We also offer day trips to locations further afield, outside of the Greater Durban area but still well within reach for a one-day tour. Please note that these areas require approximately **two hours of travel** to reach, and a **R500 surcharge** applies for these longer-distance destinations.

Southern Zululand

Heading north will allow us to bird in southern Zululand. This is an incredibly bird-rich part of South Africa and below are some of the locations we could bird at for the day, however, due to

time constraints we would not be able to bird all of the sites discussed and would rather have to refine the day's itinerary based on target species.

Photographers will love being able to photograph canopy birds at eye level on Dlinza Forest Boardwalk, in Eshowe. The boardwalk will allow you to see many typical forest species. Get ready to take breathtaking eye-level photos of species such as **Narina Trogon**, **White-eared Barbet**, **Black-bellied Starling** and the noisy **Trumpeter Hornbill**. The tower at the end of the boardwalk is also a great location to see the tough-to-find **Eastern Bronze-naped Pigeon**. Birding along the forest's good network of trails may further reveal **Spotted Ground Thrush** and **Chorister Robin-Chat**, while bird parties often hold **Grey Cuckooshrike**, **Cape Batis**, **Olive Sunbird** and **Olive Woodpecker**. A hide on the edge of the forest often produces sightings of **Lemon Dove**, **Green Twinspot** and **Black-and-white Mannikins** as they come down to feed.



Narina Trogon occurs in forest patches around Eshowe.

The nearby Entumeni Nature Reserve is located just 8 miles (13 kilometers) outside of Eshowe and offers a mix of grassland and forest habitats. The forest, in particular, can be rewarding, and holds a similar selection of species to Dlinza, with the addition of **Yellow-streaked Greenbul**, **African Olive Pigeon**, **Brown Scrub Robin**, **African Broadbill**, and **Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler**. In the surrounding grassland areas, we'll look out for **Fan-tailed Grassbird**, as well as **Croaking**, **Levaillant's**, and **Rufous-winged Cisticolas**. Some parts of the reserve can be challenging to walk and require a reasonable level of fitness.

Located roughly 15 miles (20 kilometers) west of Eshowe, Ongoye Forest is another popular day trip destination, as it's the only site in the southern African subregion where **Green Barbet** can be seen. As with all forest birding, many species are best detected by their calls—making a guide highly recommended. Key forest species include **Eastern Bronze-naped Pigeon**, **Lemon Dove**, **Spotted Ground Thrush**, **Yellow-streaked Greenbul**, **Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher**, and **Narina Trogon**. Just outside the forest, there is a chance of seeing grassland species such as **Striped Pipit** and **Southern Ground Hornbill**.

Along the southern Zululand coast, Mtunzini is a real birder's paradise! Over the years, Umlalazi Nature Reserve has produced many regional rarities. The town itself is one of the most reliable places to see **Palm-nut Vulture** in South Africa! Another species that draws birders to the area is the **Southern Banded Snake Eagle**, which is often spotted along the railway lines near town. In winter, Umlalazi Nature Reserve is the best place in South Africa to see the **Mangrove Kingfisher**. We'll also take time to scan the waterways that wind through the mangrove-lined banks, as the reserve offers a good chance to see the secretive **African Finfoot**. Other regular species to be seen around Mtunzini include **African Woolly-necked Stork**, **Green Malkoha**, **Red-capped Robin-Chat**, **Black-throated Wattle-eye**, **Grey and Purple-banded Sunbirds** and **Green Twinspot**.



Mangrove Kingfisher can be seen in the winter months around Mtunzini.

Further nearby spots around Mtunzini are reliable for species such as **Black Coucal**, **African Pygmy Goose**, and **White-backed Duck**. With its friendly atmosphere and well-developed infrastructure, Mtunzini is the perfect destination for a day trip from Durban.

Karkloof

Heading inland from Durban, the Karkloof area is a popular destination for local birding trips. The highlight is the Karkloof Conservation Center, which is situated just 20 minutes out of Howick. The conservation center has three fantastic hides overlooking small wetlands. The hides are the perfect place either for observing or photographing the birds in and around the water. The reserve provides the opportunity to record all three of South Africa's crane species – **Wattled**, **Grey Crowned** and **Blue Cranes**. The reserve is also a great place for other water birds such as **White-faced Whistling Duck**, **South African Shelduck**, **Yellow-billed**, and **White-backed Ducks**, **Malachite Kingfisher**, as well as **African Darter**.



*The rare **Wattled Crane**, along with **Grey Crowned** and **Blue Cranes**, can be seen around Karkloof.*

Roughly 30 minutes further inland, is the historic Benvie Garden which will allow you to bird in the Karkloof mist belt forest. The 70-acre garden was established by John Geekie in 1882 and is a popular destination for local birders. The garden is the best place in South Africa to photograph the sought-after **Orange Ground Thrush**. In the gardens and surrounding forest patches, we can also look for species such as **Knysna Turaco**, **Lemon Dove**, **African Olive Pigeon**, **Olive Woodpecker**, **Olive Bushshrike**, **Grey Cuckooshrike**, **Bush Blackcap**, **Chorister Robin-Chat**, **Swee Waxbill**, and **Forest Canary**. The surrounding grasslands host an assortment of exciting species such as **Wailing**, **Lazy** and **Pale-crowned Cisticolas**, **Drakensberg Prinia**, **African Yellow Warbler** and the scarce **Fan-tailed Grassbird**.

Ixopo for Blue Swallows

During the summer months, from late-October until mid-March, it is possible to target the rare **Blue Swallow** in the mist belt grasslands around Ixopo (a roughly two-hour drive from Durban). **Blue Swallows** are decreasing in numbers and are now considered Critically Endangered in South Africa as their required habitat type, mist belt grasslands, is being lost to commercial forestry and other farming practices. Other birds to be seen in the general area include **Red-necked Spurfowl**, **Fan-tailed** and **Cape Grassbirds**, **African Yellow Warbler**, **Drakensberg Prinia**, **Wailing Cisticola**, **Greater Double-collared Sunbird** and **Forest Canary**.



Blue Swallows are experiencing a dramatic decline in numbers due to the loss of montane grassland.

Oribi Gorge

Traveling roughly 90 miles (150 kilometers) south of Durban, Oribi Gorge Nature Reserve marks the northernmost distribution of the endemic **Knysna Woodpecker**. The gorge is framed by towering sandstone cliffs, carved out over time by the Umzimkulwana River (along which **Mountain Wagtails** can often be seen feeding). Other species we'll look out for in the reserve include **Knysna** and **Purple-crested Turacos**, **Trumpeter Hornbill**, **Olive Bushshrike**, **Knysna** and **Barratt's Warblers**, **Gorgeous Bushshrike**, **Dark-backed Weaver**, **Swee** and **Grey Waxbills**, and **Green Twinspot**.

A guide for your day trip is assigned only once your booking is confirmed, as all trips are run privately. Rest assured, we work with some of the country's top birding guides who know the area exceptionally well.

Duration: 1 day

Start: Durban

End: Durban

Price: R7,000 for one person, then R500 per extra person sharing; with a R500 surcharge for further afield day trips.