



**COMPLETE NAMIBIA: FROM COAST TO CAPRIVI
BIRDING TOUR**

2-20 NOVEMBER 2023



Bare-cheeked Babbler is one of the many sought-after Namibian near-endemics this tour targets.

We are now offering this brand new tour in alternate years, while running our ever-popular Namibia, Okavango and Victoria Falls tour in the other years. Both are amazing and the choice is tough! This new and exciting Complete Namibia Birding Tour has everything available that the Namibia, Okavango and Victoria Falls tour has, from birds and mammals to scenery and so much more.

All the many Namibian specials and near-endemics, as well as its only country endemic, will still be sought, and are indeed all likely on this tour. These range from desert specials such as **Rüppell's Korhaan** and **Dune and Gray's Larks**, to coastal specials such as **Damara Tern** and **Chestnut-banded Plover**. Sossusvlei offers the best landscapes and vistas of the Namib Desert, and we will indeed make the worthwhile journey into the heart of the Namib for this magical experience! The Namib Escarpment will be thoroughly explored as we search for the likes of **Herero Chat**, **Rockrunner**, **White-tailed Shrike**, **Monteiro's Hornbill**, **Hartlaub's Spurfowl**, and many more.

One of Africa's greatest game parks, Etosha National Park, is also a strong feature. This must surely rank as one of the world's best places for seeing **Black Rhinoceros** and big cats, along with most of the other African megafauna. It is also excellent for a good range of very special birds, such as Namibia's dazzling national bird, **Crimson-breasted Shrike**, the world's heaviest flying bird, **Kori Bustard**, the diminutive **Pygmy Falcon**, and stacks more.



A typical scene in the world-renowned Etosha National Park – a ‘white’ African Elephant.

After Etosha we head into an incredibly bird-diverse tropical corner of Namibia, the Caprivi Strip, and the adjacent Namibian side of the panhandle of the Okavango Delta. The magnificent wetlands and woodlands in these parts support **Pel's Fishing Owl**, **White-backed Night Heron**, **Slaty**

Egret, African Skimmer, Southern Carmine Bee-eater, and literally hundreds of other species, a rather large proportion of them spectacularly colored.

Journeying back towards our starting point, Windhoek – Namibia’s capital city, our final port of call, is the incomparable Okonjima Nature Reserve. Home to the AfriCat Foundation, this reserve offers us one of the ultimate wildlife experiences out there – as we attempt to track **Leopard** and **Temminck’s Ground Pangolin**, with the use of radio telemetry. There is no better way to end this tour than with these thrilling wildlife activities!



*This is an excellent tour for localized species – here, **Dune Lark**, Namibia’s only endemic bird, will be targeted.*

This birding tour covers a vast area and a huge range of habitats, from the coastal deserts to the land of big rivers, and is sure to produce a long list of desirable species and sought-after mammals!

This tour can be combined with our premium Comprehensive Subtropical/Eastern South Africa Birding Tour and our Best of Cape Town and Beyond Birding Tour prior to that. Other possibilities are to combine it with our Best of Madagascar: 14-day Birding and Wildlife tour or our Mozambique/Zimbabwe tours.

Itinerary (19 days, 18 nights)

Day 1. Arrival in Windhoek

Today is your arrival day, and following your arrival into Windhoek, the capital city of Namibia, you will be transferred to our comfortable lodge on the outskirts of the city. Should there be time

available in the afternoon, we will likely head out for a birding walk, familiarizing ourselves with some of the local species occurring here, and trying to get a head start on some of the species listed under Day 2 below.

Overnight: Windhoek

Days 2 - 3. Windhoek to Sossusvlei

We will begin the morning of Day 2 birding in the acacia-dominated rolling hills on the eastern edge of Windhoek, around Avis Dam. This is an incredibly rewarding birding site playing host to a number of the country's near-endemic specials. Some of these top birds include the prized **Rockrunner** along with **Monteiro's Hornbill** and **White-tailed Shrike**. Other characteristic acacia-loving species to be found include the likes of **White-backed Mousebird**, **Common Scimitarbill**, **Swallow-tailed Bee-eater**, **Acacia Pied Barbet**, **Pirit Batis**, **Crimson-breasted Shrike**, **Cape Penduline Tit**, **Barred Wren-Warbler**, **Yellow-bellied Eremomela**, **Marico Flycatcher**, **Kalahari Scrub Robin**, **Marico Sunbird** and a plethora of colorful seedeaters, namely; **Black-faced** and **Violet-eared Waxbills**, **Green-winged Pytilia**, **Shaft-tailed Whydah** and **Yellow Canary**.

We should also have time to visit some nearby wetlands and dams where we often come across the likes of **Southern Pochard**, **Maccoa Duck**, **Blue-billed Teal**, **African Swampphen** and other water-associated bird species.



Rüppell's Korhaan is a target in the Namib Desert.

Following our morning birding around Windhoek, we will transfer into the heart of the Namib Desert, to Sossusvlei, where we will be based for two nights. Not only is this area home to some

of the country's mightiest dunes, but it is also home to a wide range of desert specials. We will have one full day, and possibly some time on the afternoon of Day 2, to explore this area. Open areas will be scanned for species such as **Rüppell's Korhaan** and **Burchell's Courser** while species such as **Namaqua Sandgrouse**, **Common Ostrich** and **Greater Kestrel** are more regularly seen. **Dune Lark**, Namibia's only endemic bird, can also be seen here, and as its name suggests, occurs amongst the vegetated dunes, as opposed to the rocky plains. Patches of acacia trees host a different suite of species, such as **Brubru**, **Pirit Batis**, **White-backed Mousebird** and **Dusky Sunbird**. Although generally scarce, we're likely to see some of our first mammals here – and may include the desert adapted **Gemsbok** (Southern Oryx) – which is Namibia's national mammal, along with others such as **Hartmann's Mountain Zebra** and even such sought-after mammals as **Brown Hyena** (rare).

Overnight: Desert Quiver Camp, Sossusvlei

Days 4 - 5. Sossusvlei to Walvis Bay

We will have the morning of Day 4 available to do any further birding and general exploring of the Sossusvlei area and surrounds, before we transit up to the coast at Walvis Bay, where we will base ourselves for two nights.



Damara Tern will be looked for along the coast at Walvis Bay.

The first site we usually visit is the picturesque red sand dune habitat across a (usually) dry riverbed around the village of Rooibank, right in the middle of the Namib Desert. This is another excellent site for the endemic **Dune Lark**, should we have missed it earlier, but we often also find the almost pure-white desert form of **Tractrac Chat**, amongst others. Our accommodation, for two nights, is

at a place from where one can literally see thousands of **flamingos** (usually about half-half **Greater** and **Lesser**), migratory shorebirds from Eurasia, **Great White Pelicans**, and all the rest, right from our doorstep. We will also take a boat trip on Walvis Bay Lagoon that is focused mainly on marine mammals, such as **Cape Fur Seal**, **Common Bottlenose Dolphin**, the localized **Heaviside's Dolphin**, and sometimes **Humpback Whale**. But one also often sees some good birds from the boat, not the least of which is **Damara Tern** and occasional pelagic species such as **White-chinned Petrel** and **Sooty Shearwater**. But there is also an incredible drive we do later in the day that usually gives us close-up views of all the target birds of the lagoon – including **Damara Tern** as well as **Chestnut-banded Plover**, **Black-necked Grebe** (often in large rafts), and tens of thousands of migrant waders. Today we also look for **Gray's Lark**, a very pale Namib Desert near-endemic. We should also get to observe the bizarre **Welwitschia mirabilis**, commonly referred to as a 'living fossil'.

Overnight: Lagoon Loge, Walvis Bay



Herero Chat is a special of the Namib Escarpment, and a highly sought-after bird!

Day 6. The Namib Escarpment via the Spitzkoppe (the “Matterhorn of Namibia”)

Heading inland and northward we start encountering some spectacular mountains. The Spitzkoppe in particular, is a huge inselberg that rises abruptly from the desert plain. The flat surrounding areas are good for **Burchell's Courser**, **Rüppell's Korhaan**, **Ludwig's Bustard**, a number of localized lark species such as **Karoo Long-billed Lark** (replaced by **Benguela Long-billed Lark** slightly farther north), etc. The mountains themselves are where we search for the enigmatic and bizarre **Herero Chat**, noisy little flocks of **Rosy-faced Lovebirds**, a couple of hornbill species (**Damara Red-billed** and **Monteiro's Hornbills**) basically restricted to the Namib and adjacent arid habitats, **Bradfield's Swift**, and many others. The rocky areas near Omaruru offer some great

habitat for watching hunting raptors, including **Verreaux's Eagle** and **African Hawk-Eagle** as well as **Augur Buzzard**. A diminutive antelope, **Kirk's Dik-dik**, is often encountered in the area.

Overnight: Ai-Aiba – The Rock Painting Lodge, Omaruru

Day 7. Birding the Namib Escarpment

Today we have the full day to continue birding the mountains of central Namibia. **White-tailed Shrike**, **Hartlaub's Spurfowl**, **Rüppell's Parrot**, and **Rockrunner** are four of the superstars of the show – all of them are very localized (occurring only in Namibia and a small part of Angola) and full of personality, not to mention striking-looking. Quite a number of brightly-colored seedeaters also vie for attention around the lodge.

We will also head slightly farther west, targeting another Namibian near-endemic, **Benguela Long-billed Lark**, and may also have another shot at **Herero Chat**, if need be. We might, if we're lucky, see **Kaokoveld Slender Mongoose**, **Greater Kudu**, **Hartmann's Mountain Zebra**, or another mammal or two.

Overnight: Ai-Aiba – The Rock Painting Lodge, Omaruru



*The charismatic **White-tailed Shrike** is always a highlight with its captivating persona.*

Day 8. Etosha National Park: birds and mammals

Etosha justifiably is rated as one of the best game parks in Africa. During our time in this amazing park, we will partake in an open-top game drive which is always a great way to experience the area's birds and wildlife. This is big (and small) mammal country, where **African Elephant**, **Black Rhinoceros**, large herds of **Springbok**, **Gemsbok**, **Plains Zebra**, **Blue Wildebeest**, and many

other herbivores lurk, meaning (excitingly) that there are also relatively high densities of predators and scavengers, such as **Cheetah, Lion, Leopard, African Wildcat, Spotted Hyena, Black-backed Jackal**, etc.

Although we stop to look at all the mammal species, birding is still the main focus. An isolated population of South Africa's national bird, the beautiful **Blue Crane**, inhabits Etosha while **Kori Bustard** and its smaller relative, **Northern Black Korhaan**, are both common. **Secretarybird** and an absolute stack of raptors and vultures are always much in evidence. This is one of the best places in southern Africa for owls, and we often find the tiny **African Scops Owl**, the giant **Verreaux's Eagle-Owl**, and sometimes others such as the beautiful **Southern White-faced Owl** at their daytime roosts. Excitingly, Etosha's open plains must have some of the highest densities of **Double-banded Courser** in southern Africa. The unbelievably huge nests of **Sociable Weaver** are features of some areas, sometimes with **Pygmy Falcon** taking up residence in the same nests.

Overnight: Okaukuejo Camp, central Etosha



*Etosha National Park is one of the best sites in the world to find the scarce **Black Rhino**!*

Day 9. Bird and wildlife viewing in Etosha National Park

We will have the full day in this impressive park birding the open plains and various waterholes. We hope to find a multitude of **lark** species, including **Eastern Clapper, Stark's, Sabota, Pink-billed, Fawn-colored**, and **Rufous-naped**, as well as larger and more brightly colored species such as **Crimson-breasted Shrike, Gabar Goshawk, Greater Kestrel, Lappet-faced Vulture**, and **Namaqua Sandgrouse**.

Overnight: Okaukuejo Camp, central Etosha

Day 10. Central to eastern Etosha National Park

Today we make our way from the central section of the park to the eastern edge. As we head farther east the bird species change gradually, and we hope to find **Blue Crane**, **Secretarybird**, **Red-necked Falcon**, **Burchell's Courser**, **Caspian Plover**, and **Eastern Clapper Lark**, among the usual suspects. Around Mokuti Lodge we should see **Black-faced Babbler**, **Crimson-breasted Shrike**, **White-browed Scrub Robin**, **Black-faced Waxbill**, **Bearded Woodpecker**, **Pearl-spotted Owlet**, and other woodland species.

Overnight: Mokuti Etosha Lodge, eastern Etosha



*The uncommon **Burchell's Courser** is sometimes seen in Etosha National Park.*

Day 11. Transfer to and birding around Rundu

We will have the morning to continue birding the productive grounds of our comfortable lodge. After our morning's birding, we will continue eastward, with the landscape becoming lush, and we should start seeing well-developed woodlands for the first time of the tour. The tall woodlands east of Rundu are home to some tricky birds, such as **Rufous-bellied Tit** (which can be very thin on the ground and tough to find). **Sharp-tailed Starling** (along with the more common but also more spectacularly plumaged **Greater Blue-eared Starling**) and **Souza's Shrike** are two tough birds of human-modified woodland. There is a plethora of other great birds to be found here, both woodland birds and waterbirds, such as cuckooshrikes, orioles, **Green-capped Eremomela**, **Tinkling Cisticola**, **Swamp Boubou**, **Dwarf Bittern**, **Rufous-bellied Heron**, and a rich assemblage of others.

We may also bird the wetlands around Rundu (this afternoon or tomorrow morning) for **Collared Pratincole**, **White-backed Duck**, **Baillon's Crake**, **Greater Painted-snipe**, and perhaps even

Allen's Gallinule, Lesser Moorhen or Lesser Jacana. The lodge we stay at near Rundu has hosted a **Ross's Turaco** for the last year or so (the only place it reliably occurs in southern Africa), and we hope to find this rare beauty!

Overnight: Taranga Safari Lodge or similar, Rundu



*We hope to find the rare **Rufous-bellied Tit** in the woodlands of the Caprivi Strip.*

Days 12 - 13. Into the Caprivi Strip, and birding Katima Mulilo

We continue birding the wetlands and woodlands of this bird-rich corner of Namibia. We spend two nights on the banks of the Zambezi River, from where we can do boat trips and birding/game drives. We will undertake late-afternoon boat trips along the Zambezi – which are extremely productive and usually produce great sightings of **African Finfoot**, **White-backed Night Heron**, **Half-collared Kingfisher**, **White-crowned Lapwing**, **African Skimmer**, and **Rock Pratincole**. Additionally, we will also put in a special effort to track down the magnificent **Pel's Fishing Owl**, which occurs on the river here.

Moving onto dry-land, **Yellow-throated Leaflove** was discovered as a breeding bird on the Namibia/Zambia border (the Namibian side) in 2015, hundreds of kilometers south of its previously known range, and is one of today's targets. **Olive Woodpecker**, **Schalow's Turaco**, and **Western Banded Snake Eagle** all occur in the riparian vegetation along the banks of the Zambezi River. In the surrounding woodlands we search for **Racket-tailed Roller**, **Arnot's Chat**, **Copper Sunbird**, **Striped Kingfisher**, **Grey-headed Bushshrike**, **Grey Penduline Tit**, **Wood Pipit**, and **Lizard Buzzard**. Seasonal pans in the area are explored for **Blue-billed Teal**, **Rosy-throated Longclaw**, **White-backed Duck**, **Lesser Jacana**, **Rufous-bellied Heron**, **Luapula Cisticola**, and perhaps even **Black Coucal**.

A range of nocturnal birds occur in the area, and we will search for species such as **African Wood** and **Western Barn Owls** and a host of **nightjars** including **Fiery-necked**, **Square-tailed**, and the spectacular **Pennant-winged**!

Overnight: Caprivi Houseboat Safari Lodge or similar, Katima Mulilo



*A great number of birds can be found around Katima Mulilo such as the rare and elusive **Pel's Fishing Owl**.*

Days 14 – 15. Mahango birding

Katima Mulilo marks our furthest point from the capital city, Windhoek, and today we will slowly start making our way back towards the capital – although stopping off on the Namibian side of the Okavango Delta panhandle, in the hugely productive Mahango area. This is one of the country's top birding sites, with a wide diversity of habitats and the incredibly rich panhandle area of the Okavango Delta both contributing to the large number of birds residing here.

The bulk of our time will be spent in the Mahango Game Reserve, a protected area within Bwabwata National Park. Here we will search for the likes of **Rock Pratincole**, **African Skimmer**, **Wattled Crane**, **Slaty Egret**, **Western Banded Snake Eagle**, **Long-toed Lapwing**, **African Pygmy Goose**, **Bradfield's Hornbill**, **Greater Swamp Warbler**, **Luapula**, **Chirping** and **Tinkling Cisticolas**, the oversized **Coppery-tailed Coucal**, several spectacular weavers with their bright yellow plumage and amazing nests, **Greater Painted-snipe**, and **Grey-rumped Swallow** and so many more! **African Buffalo** occurs here but not in Etosha, and this is also one of the best places in the world to find the rare **Roan Antelope** and **Sable Antelope**.

The lodge grounds are a haven for birdlife, and we can expect to find **Hartlaub's Babbler**, **White-browed Coucal**, and **Meves's Starling**, with **African Barred Owlet** in the nearby woodlands.

Brown Firefinch and its more common cousins, **Red-billed Firefinch** and **Blue Waxbill**, often feed on the lawns. The liquid calls of **Swamp Boubou** and coucals add greatly to the atmosphere. Other species we'll keep an eye open for are **Meyer's Parrot**, **White-breasted Cuckooshrike**, **African Golden Oriole** and **White-browed Robin-Chat**.

We will undertake a boat cruise along the Kavango River here, searching for any of the scarcer and more difficult-to-find species such as **Pel's Fishing Owl**, **White-backed Night Heron** and **African Pygmy Goose**, that we may have missed on the boat trips around Katima Mulilo.

Overnight: Mahangu Safari Lodge or Ndhovu Safari Lodge, Divundu



*Mahango is another birding gem, with the **Slaty Egret** being one of our main targets!*

Day 16. Leaving the Caprivi Strip

After some final early-morning birding in the Mahango area, we will make the relatively short transfer to the Katere area (east of Rundu), where we will spend some more time birding in the mixed woodlands. Here we will have another shot at the highly sought-after **Souza's Shrike**, **Sharp-tailed Starling**, and **Rufous-bellied Tit**. Following our birding here, we will continue onwards, exiting the Caprivi Strip, back towards the central Namib Escarpment, arriving at our comfortable lodge in the afternoon.

Overnight: Roy's Rest Camp, Grootfontein

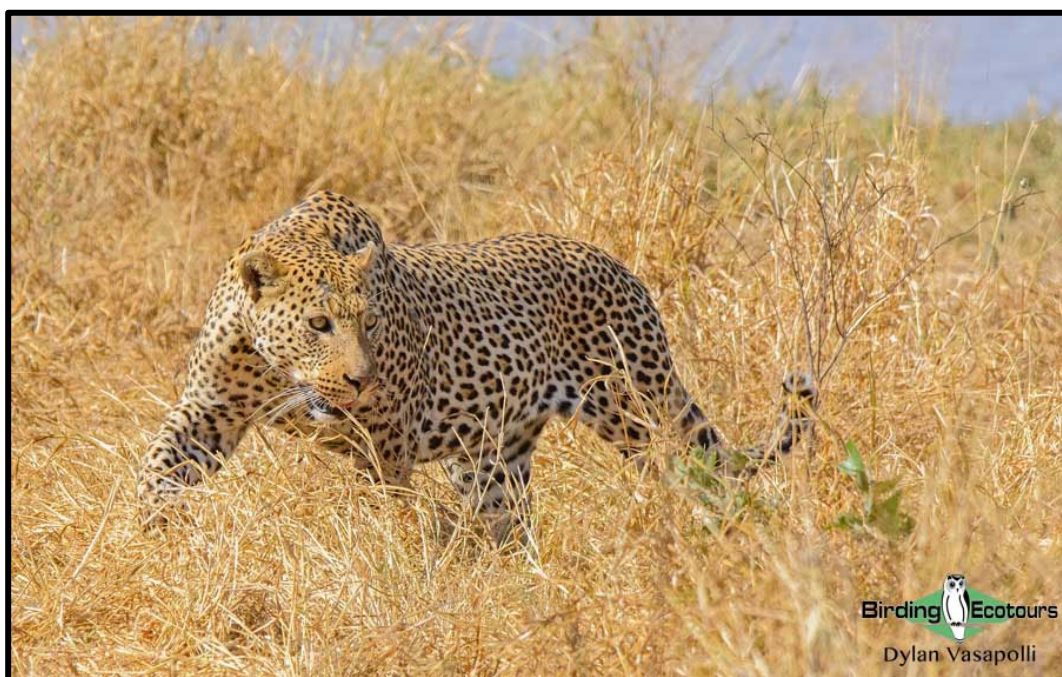
Days 17 – 18. Birds and mammals of Okonjima Nature Reserve

We will be able to spend the morning of Day 17 birding the mixed acacia thornveld around our lodge. The lodge is another excellent site for the restricted **Black-faced Babbler**, should we have

missed this species in eastern Etosha. Other species usually evident include the likes of **Red-billed Spurfowl**, **Pearl-spotted Owlet**, **Bradfield's Hornbill**, **Rosy-faced Lovebird**, **Crimson-breasted Shrike** and a plethora of colorful seedeaters, such as **Black-faced** and **Violet-eared Waxbills**, **Red-headed Finch** and **Shaft-tailed Whydah**.

Following our transfer to the exclusive Okonjima Nature Reserve, which is also home to the AfriCat Foundation, we will likely begin our exploration of this stunning reserve. We will undertake two activities at Okonjima, which will likely be Leopard tracking and Temminck's Ground Pangolin tracking – both through the use of radio telemetry. Although there are no guarantees of successfully finding these highly prized mammals, these are thrilling activities and are sure to be a highlight for all in the group! Birding is still high on our priority list however, and Okonjima is an excellent area for us to 'clean-up' on a number of the core Namibia species that we may have missed on the tour. These include the likes of **Monteiro's** and **Damara Red-billed Hornbills**, **White-tailed Shrike**, **Violet Wood Hoopoe**, **Bare-cheeked Babbler**, **Carp's Tit** and **Rüppell's Parrot**. **Rockrunner** and **Hartlaub's Spurfowl** do occur, but both require much searching and a good dose of luck to see. A range of other species are also to be sought including, **Red-crested Korhaan**, **Double-banded** and **Burchell's Sandgrouse**, **Swallow-tailed Bee-eater** and **Southern Pied Babbler**. **Freckled Nightjar** is regularly present after dark. We will settle in for our final tour dinner, following a wonderful and bird-filled journey through the most-productive regions of Namibia!

Overnight: Okonjima Nature Reserve



*Tracking **Leopards** in the wild is a thrilling experience, and is sure to be a fantastic end to the tour!*

Day 19. Departure

After breakfast, we will transfer to Windhoek, Namibia, where this tour will conclude around midday. As this is a drive of a few hours, we ask participants to please book their departure flights from the mid-afternoon onwards.

We look forward to welcoming you again on future tours!

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 guides and other factors. In addition, we sometimes have to use a different international guide from the one advertised due to tour scheduling.

Duration:	19 days
Limit:	4 – 8
Dates:	2-20 November 2023
Start:	Windhoek, Namibia
End:	Windhoek, Namibia
Prices:	R125,400 per person sharing (2023)
Single supplements:	R13,200 (2023)

Price includes:

All accommodation
Meals (from lunch on day 1 until breakfast on day 19)
Unlimited bottled water
Expert tour leader
All entrance & conservation fees
All ground transport, including airport pick-up and drop-off
Boat ride on the Okavango River
Boat trip along the Zambezi River
Boat trip from Walvis Bay
Leopard and pangolin tracking at Okonjima Nature Reserve
Open-top game drive in Etosha National Park

Price excludes:

International/domestic flights (to/from Windhoek)
Visas
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

Personal travel insurance

Gratuities (please see our [tipping guidelines blog](#))