NORTHERN TANZANIA BIRDING TOUR – AFRICA'S ULTIMATE SAFARI & SAVANNA BIRDING ADVENTURE

28 APRIL–07 MAY 2027
08–17 MAY 2027
28 APRIL–07 MAY 2028
28 APRIL–07 MAY 2029



***Grey-breasted Spurfowl**, a highly localized Tanzanian endemic*

Overview

If you could visit Africa only once, this would undoubtedly be the tour to take. Our Northern Tanzania birding safari is designed to showcase the very best of Africa in just ten days, combining iconic wildlife spectacles with outstanding birding. Where else can you see **Lion**, **Leopard**, and **Cheetah**, witness the breathtaking Great Wildebeest Migration, and see a hundred bird species in a single day? Add the chance to gaze upon Mount Kilimanjaro, Africa's highest mountain, and to explore two of the world's most famous wildlife destinations – the Serengeti and the spectacular Ngorongoro Crater – and it quickly becomes clear why northern Tanzania ranks among the finest safari destinations on Earth. We enjoy easy yet exceptionally rewarding savanna birding on this tour as we target several localized and endemic species, typically with good photographic opportunities along the way. This tour offers one of the finest introductions to Africa's wildlife and birds available anywhere on the continent.



*The endemic **Yellow-collared Lovebird** is one of our many colorful targets on this trip.*

We begin this tour at Kilimanjaro International Airport near Arusha. Flying into this airport, weather permitting, you might get views of Africa's highest mountain. From here, we visit the Lark Plains, north of Arusha, for some highly localized species, including the endemic **Beesley's Lark** and **Athi Short-toed Lark**. Next, we travel to the famed Ngorongoro Crater, enjoying Lake Manyara National Park en route. The crater is a truly unforgettable destination, offering a classic African wildlife experience. Before leaving the Ngorongoro Conservation Area, we spend a day birding the forests on the crater rim, targeting several range-restricted species such as **Brown Woodland Warbler**, **African Hill Babbler**, and **Mbulu White-eye**.

We then head to the spectacular Serengeti National Park, where the iconic African mammals truly shine. Here, we encounter high densities of **Lion**, **African Savanna Elephant**, and, of course, the breathtaking Great Wildebeest Migration. At the same time, the Serengeti is home to several highly sought-after, range-restricted birds, including **Maasai Apalis**, **Fischer's Lovebird**, **Rufous-tailed Weaver**, **Red-throated Tit**, and **Grey-crested Helmetshrike**, alongside a wide variety of more widespread African species.

Finally, we spend two nights in Tarangire National Park, an area famous for its enormous concentrations of **African Savanna Elephants** and iconic **Baobab** trees. Here, we search for **Northern Pied Babbler**, **Yellow-collared Lovebird**, **Pangani Longclaw**, and **Ashy Starling**, among others. Northern Tanzania boasts an impressive diversity of localized birds, and this tour offers an unforgettable combination of Africa's classic mammal spectacles and its unique endemic avifauna, making it the perfect introduction to the continent for both birders and wildlife enthusiasts of all levels.

If you'd like to experience even more of Tanzania's remarkable birding, consider joining our 23-day Tanzania: Remote Endemics of the Eastern Arc tour. This exciting adventure takes us into some of the most remote corners of Tanzania's Eastern Arc Mountains, as well as the white-sand beaches and coastal forests of Pemba Island, in search of some of Africa's most enigmatic and sought-after birds. Along the way, we target more than 30 endemics, including the near-mythical **Udzungwa Forest Partridge**.



*Tanzania must rank as one of the best countries on earth for **Cheetah**, which take advantage of the massive herds of migrating wildebeest!*

Detailed Itinerary (10 days/9 nights)

Day 1. Arrival in Arusha

Today is your arrival day into Arusha's Kilimanjaro International Airport and you can arrive at any time, as we don't have any planned birding on this day. Leisurely birding around the lodge grounds may, however, produce **African Black Duck**, **Silvery-cheeked Hornbill**, **White-eared** and **Brown-breasted Barbets**, **Black-throated Wattle-eye**, **Grey-Olive Greenbul**, **Kenrick's Starling**, **Rüppell's Robin-Chat**, **Mountain Wagtail** and the localized **Taveta Weaver**.

Overnight: Ngare Sero Mountain Lodge, or similar, Arusha

Day 2. Birding the Lark Plains

Our first full day of birding on this tour is certainly an exciting one as we make an early start, heading north out of Arusha (with Mount Meru as a backdrop) for a full day of fantastic plains and dry-country birding. Weather-permitting, we will enjoy distant views of Africa's highest mountain, Mount Kilimanjaro, rising out of the vast African plain.

We will spend time birding the (aptly named) Lark Plains for the rare and localized **Beesley's Lark** (less than 200 remaining) along with a host of other lark species, including **Fawn-colored**, **Short-tailed**, **Athi Short-toed**, and **Rufous-naped Larks** and **Fischer's Sparrow-Lark**. Other species we will keep an eye out for on the plains include **Kori Bustard**, **Eastern Chanting Goshawk**, **Greater Kestrel**, **Temminck's** and **Double-banded Coursers**, **Yellow-throated** and **Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse**, **Abyssinian** and **Capped Wheatears**, **Taita Fiscal**, and others.



*The distinctive **Short-tailed Lark** will be searched for alongside the rare Beesley's Lark.*

Many Serengeti-type birds can also be found here in the grassland and dry woodland habitat. **Red-throated Tit** is possible, as are some fine barbet species. We also hope to see our first mousebirds, in the form of **Speckled** and **Blue-naped Mousebirds** (with **White-headed Mousebird** occasionally seen). The colonially nesting **Grey-capped Social Weaver** is always a delight, and we may see (and hear the loud call of) **Nubian Woodpecker**. Other species to look out for in the woodlands include **Mouse-colored Penduline Tit**, **Red-fronted Prinia**, **Grey Wren-Warbler**, **Rosy-patched Bushshrike**, **Spotted Palm Thrush**, **Beautiful Sunbird**, **Pale White-eye**, **Kenya Sparrow**, **Black-faced Waxbill** and **Southern Grosbeak-Canary**. After birding the area for most of the day, we eventually head back to Arusha for the night.

Overnight: Ngare Sero Mountain Lodge, or similar, Arusha

Day 3. Lake Manyara birding and transfer to Karatu

After breakfast we will make our way out of Arusha and arrive at Lake Manyara National Park in the late morning. Here we usually add quite a number of birds to our list and will enjoy a picnic lunch while being distracted by many exciting bird species. In the forested areas we'll be on the lookout for **Narina Trogon**, **Grey Cuckooshrike**, **Mountain Wagtail**, **Crowned Hornbill**, and the huge **Silvery-cheeked Hornbill**, among others. In the more open woodland, we should hopefully find **Spotted Palm Thrush**, **Red-and-yellow Barbet**, **White-bellied Tit**, **Banded Parisoma**, **Rufous Chatterer**, **Rufous-tailed Weaver**, **Steel-blue** and **Straw-tailed Whydahs**, and **Purple Grenadier**. The reserve is particularly good for raptors and some of our targets today include **Lappet-faced** and **White-backed Vultures**, **Bateleur**, **Crowned Eagle**, **African Hawk-Eagle**, **African Goshawk**, **Verreaux's Eagle-Owl** and the diminutive **Pearl-spotted Owlet**.



*The gorgeous **Purple Grenadier** is readily encountered in northern Tanzania.*

Depending on water levels, the shallow alkaline lake will be visited to enjoy the flocks of both **Greater** and **Lesser Flamingos** along with **Great White Pelican**, the massive **Goliath Heron**, and many other ducks, storks, and herons. After a few hours in the reserve, we will transfer to our lovely lodge on the outskirts of the nearby town of Karatu, which will be our base for the next three nights.

Overnight: Karatu

Day 4. The unforgettable Ngorongoro Crater

Today we have the full day to bird the Ngorongoro Crater and crater rim which will prove to be a sure trip highlight. Descending into the crater floor is truly an unforgettable experience. There's a very high density of **Lion** and large herbivores, some of them seemingly trapped by the natural enclosure formed by this huge, nicely intact caldera. About 25,000 large mammals, which also include **Black Rhinoceros** and a pool with **Common Hippopotamus**, inhabit the crater floor. With luck we might also see some of the smaller predators, like **Serval**, **Bat-eared Fox**, and **African Golden Wolf**, which was formerly classified as an African variant of the Eurasian Golden Jackal but now is thought to be more closely related to the Grey Wolf. As always, however, our main focus is on birds, although we stop for the other wildlife too, and we expect many additions to our growing bird list – **Lesser Flamingo**, **Grey Crowned Crane**, **Abdim's Stork**, **Black-bellied** and **Kori Bustards**, **Pectoral-patch Cisticola**, **Rufous-tailed Weaver**, **Rosy-throated Longclaw**, and many others are expected.



***Black Rhinoceros** in the picturesque Ngorongoro Crater.*

Large African animals, spectacular birds (of a staggering variety), and stunning scenery combine to make this one of the most incredible wildlife experiences on Earth; the rim of this crater rises an incredible 2,000 feet (600 meters) above the plain at the bottom (which has a diameter of 15 miles (24 kilometers)).

The forested sections of the crater rim will also be birded, looking for localized specials such as **Golden-winged Sunbird**, **Brown-headed Apalis**, and the curious **Oriole Finch**, which we may also be lucky enough to encounter here. Other species to look out for here include **Eastern Bronze-naped Pigeon**, **Dusky Turtle Dove**, **Grey-capped Warbler**, **Eastern Double-collared Sunbird**, **White-eyed Slaty Flycatcher**, **Brown-backed Woodpecker**, **Mbulu White-eye**, and **Thick-billed Seedeater**.

Overnight: Karatu



*The attractive **Eastern Double-collared Sunbird**.*

Day 5. Birding the lush forests of the Ngorongoro Crater rim

Today we will visit the Endoro section of Ngorongoro Conservation Area as well as the splendid Gibb's Farm, which is a great place for lunch and to add new birds to the growing list. This morning's birding will be quite different from the rest of the trip as we enjoy some fine forest birding while walking the Elephant Caves Trail. Highlights of this morning will hopefully include, **Narina Trogon**, **Moustached Tinkerbird**, **Pallid** and **Scaly-throated Honeyguides**, **African Broadbill**, **Purple-throated Cuckooshrike**, **Black-fronted Bushshrike**, **Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher**, **Brown-headed Apalis**, **Grey-capped Warbler**, **Black-headed Mountain Greenbul**, **Brown Woodland Warbler**, **African Hill Babbler**, **Mbulu White-eye**, **Grey-headed Nigrita** and **Red-throated Twinspot**. We will keep an eye out overhead for the likes of **Ayres's**

Hawk-Eagle, **Black Sparrowhawk**, **Augur Buzzard** and **Nyanza Swift**. The prehistoric-looking **Schalow's Turaco** adds a spectacular flash of crimson and green, and, if one gets a good view, its spectacular crest leaves even a hardened birder gob smacked.

We will enjoy lunch in the wonderful, relaxed atmosphere of Gibb's Farm which is normally full of birds. After lunch we will bird the large property where we hope to find **Cinnamon-chested Bee-eater**, **Dusky Turtle Dove**, **White-tailed Blue Flycatcher**, **White-eyed Slaty Flycatcher**, **Green-headed Sunbird**, **Holub's Golden Weaver**, **Black-and-white Mannikin**, **Southern Citril** and **Yellow-bellied Waxbill**.

Overnight: Ngorongoro Crater rim lodge (or similar)

Days 6-7. Serengeti: wildebeest, predators, and a dazzling array of spectacular birds

This morning we embark on a spectacular journey that few people will ever forget. If you've never been to Africa before, you're likely to be amazed by **African Savanna Elephant**, **Cape Buffalo**, and the sheer number of bird species. After an exciting drive we'll reach the Serengeti, where we enjoy the huge and impressive wildebeest migration, not to mention the large numbers of **Plains Zebras** and **Thomson's Gazelles**. Other megafauna that we'll search for include **Tsessebe** (Topi), **Common Eland**, **Grant's Gazelle**, **Bohor Reedbuck**, and **Maasai Giraffe**. This is one of the best places on the planet to see big cats – we've sometimes seen **Lion**, **Leopard**, and **Cheetah** in a single day, as well as some of the smaller cats such as **Serval** and **Caracal**. Finding a kill should allow us to see a good number of vulture species, such as **Rüppell's**, **White-backed**, **Lappet-faced**, **White-headed**, and **Hooded Vultures**.



*The Serengeti supports large numbers of **Lions**.*

Birds of prey are common here, including the most colorful of the world's eagles, **Bateleur**. **Secretarybird** regally roams the plains searching for its serpentine prey, while **Common Ostrich** tries to be regal but without much success. Smaller birds are everywhere, and so many of them are brightly colored – such as **Little Bee-eater**, **Purple Grenadier**, **Lilac-breasted Roller**, **Hildebrandt's Starling**, **Beautiful Sunbird**, and many others. Other target species that we will look for in the plains and open savanna of the Serengeti include **White-bellied Bustard**, **Coqui Francolin**, **Temminck's Courser**, **Dark Chanting Goshawk**, **Pygmy Falcon** and **Pangani Longclaw**.

Interestingly, the Serengeti is home to quite a few extremely localized bird species. One of these is **Maasai Apalis**, which favors the weird whistling-thorn habitat that we'll visit for this species; it only occurs here and over the border into Kenya. **Red-throated Tit**, **Fischer's Lovebird**, and **Grey-crested Helmetshrike** are other range-restricted species we will look for in the Serengeti. Other important target birds here include **Rufous-tailed Weaver** and the Tanzanian endemics, **Tanzanian Red-billed Hornbill** and **Grey-breasted Spurfowl**. The huge **Kori Bustard** can be seen roaming the grasslands throughout the Serengeti plains.

Overnight: Serengeti



Tanzanian Red-billed Hornbill *– a Tanzanian endemic.*

Day 8. Transfer to Tarangire National Park

After breakfast, we make the drive back through the animal-filled plains of the Serengeti where we will again hopefully enjoy further looks at massive herds of migrating wildebeest, zebra and gazelle. We may also have time to look for any remaining bird targets before we finally leave this wildlife haven.

After a long day on the road, we will make it to Tarangire National Park, a breathtaking landscape of red-stained elephants (from the soil), towering baobabs, savanna-clad hills, and winding rivers: the real Africa as far as scenery goes. Here at magnificent Tarangire National Park we have some localized northern Tanzania specials and endemics to target: **Yellow-collared Lovebird**, the long-tailed **Ashy Starling**, and the charismatic **Northern Pied Babbler**, which we usually manage to find. In Acacia woodlands around the park, we should encounter **Von der Decken's** and **Northern Red-billed Hornbills**, **Yellow-necked** and **Red-necked Spurfowl**, **Black-faced Sandgrouse**, **Bearded Woodpecker**, **Abyssinian Scimitarbill**, **Eastern Violet-backed Sunbird** and many others. We may also come across larger terrestrial birds like **Secretarybird**, **White-bellied**, **Hartlaub's** and **Buff-crested Bustards**, and the massive **Southern Ground Hornbill**, while **Common Ostrich** puts them all to shame, as far as size goes. If sufficient rains have arrived in the area Tarangire can be a good place to look for **Black Coucal** and **Dwarf Bittern**. The massive Baobabs dotted throughout the landscape host good numbers of **Mottled Spinetail** which use the hollows within old trees to build their nests.

The Tarangire River (after which the park is named) attracts good numbers of waterbirds including the likes of **White-faced Whistling Duck**, **Knob-billed Duck**, **Saddle-billed Stork**, **Hamerkop** and **Grey Crowned Crane** which may be seen as we traverse this wonderful park.

Overnight: Tarangire National Park



*We often find **Black-faced Sandgrouse** in Tarangire National Park.*

Day 9. Full day in Tarangire National Park

This will be the final full day of our Tanzanian birding safari and we will spend the day looking for any remaining target species (as described under Day 8) as well as enjoying the fine wildlife-viewing that is possible in Tarangire. We will likely end the afternoon enjoying a sundowner drink

on the lodge's balcony which overlooks the Tarangire River, while being harassed by cheeky **Ashy Starlings**, with **African Scops Owls** giving their soft purr-like call as the sun sets.

Tarangire offers night drives to enjoy some of the area's nocturnal birds and wildlife and, although these drives are not included in the tour price, it is possible to join one of these exciting drives. Some of the nocturnal species which may be seen at night include **Verreaux's Eagle-Owl**, **Southern White-faced Owl**, **Bronze-winged** and **Three-banded Coursers**, **East African Springhare**, **Northern Lesser Galago** and **African Savanna Hare**.

Overnight: Tarangire National Park



***Ashy Starlings** are numerous in Tarangire National Park.*

Day 10. Departure from Arusha

Unfortunately, today marks the end of an incredible ten days in northern Tanzania. After breakfast we will make our way to Kilimanjaro International Airport, just outside of Arusha, from where our flights will depart. It is a roughly four-hour drive to Arusha, so please do not book flights any earlier than 3pm.

Overnight: Not included

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 guide from the one advertised due to tour scheduling or other factors.

Tour Details

Duration:	10 days
Group size:	6
Dates:	28 April–07 May 2027 08–17 May 2027 28 April–07 May 2028 28 April–07 May 2029
Start:	Kilimanjaro International Airport near Arusha
End:	Kilimanjaro International Airport near Arusha
Prices:	$6,720 per person sharing (2027) $7,260 per person sharing (2028) $7,840 per person sharing (2029)
Single supplement:	$720 (2027) $780 (2028) $840 (2029)

Price includes:

Accommodation
Meals (from dinner on Day 1 until lunch on Day 10)
Drinking water – two bottles of mineral water per day per person from our tour vehicle, please bring a refillable water bottle (if taken from the hotel this will be at your own cost)
Expert tour leader
Local driver
Airport transfers (on Day 1 and Day 10 only)
All park, conservation, and entrance fees
Excursions and activities as detailed in the itinerary
Transport by minibus or converted 4x4 safari vehicle with professional safari guide

Price excludes:

All flights and airport taxes
Visa
Mandatory government travel insurance
Personal travel insurance
Items of a personal nature
Laundry
Soft/alcoholic drinks
Gratuities (please see our tipping guidelines blog)