



**WESTERN SOUTH AFRICA BIRDING TOUR: CAPE ENDEMICS,
NAMAQUALAND WILDFLOWERS AND THE KALAHARI**

**25 AUGUST – 06 SEPTEMBER 2024
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*The stunning **Cape Rockjumper** is one of South Africa's most sought-after endemics.*

This birding tour lies firmly within the endemic-rich zone of western South Africa, and sees us focusing much of our time getting to grips with the many rare and highly localized birds found only in this region, and is certainly a must for any world birder. Additionally, we time this tour to best coincide with the annual flower blooms along the west coast of South Africa and in the Namaqualand region. Although these blooms can be unpredictable and vary from year to year, we have selected the best dates to allow us a greater chance of seeing these incredible floral carpets. The experience of seeing dazzling rafts of yellow, orange, white, blue and purple flowers covering vast areas of this otherwise arid, rugged landscape is a sight to behold, and is one of the ultimate natural experiences anywhere in the world!

This carefully-designed tour has been specifically developed to try and find the maximum number of endemic and regional specials occurring in this unique part of the world. We include time in key habitats, including fynbos, renosterveld and the greater Nama-Karoo, and these together offer up almost all of western South Africa's most prized birds, which should result in a hefty list of endemic and near-endemic species. Although set up to primarily focus on the birds of the region, we also dedicate some time on this tour to track down mammals, and indeed we should end with an impressive array of cats and other animals. Incorporating a visit to the world famous Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, one of Africa's greatest game parks, gives us opportunities to see the incredible black-maned **Lions** of the Kalahari, along with other cats (often including **Cheetah** and **Leopard**, plus smaller species; **African Wild Cat** is unusually common here), and some of the lesser-known mammals of this region, including the strange **Bat-eared Fox** and many others. The charming **Meerkat** (always a crowd favorite) is truly at home on the Kalahari dunes, along with some of its poorer-known relatives like **Yellow Mongoose**.



*The incredible Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park is one of the best places to see **Lions**!*

We begin this tour in Cape Town, the 'Mother City' of South Africa. Here we spend a short while familiarizing ourselves with some of the more widespread species along with a plethora of fynbos

habitat endemics such as **Cape Rockjumper**, that can be found amid some of Africa's most splendid scenery! Following our time in and around Cape Town, we transfer a short distance up the west coast to the small coastal village of Langebaan, where we call in for a couple of days. This area gives us further opportunities at more of the country's endemics, such as **Southern Black Korhaan**, along with giving us our first opportunity to witness some of the dazzling flower displays that often dominate the west coast of South Africa at this time of the year.

We then progress into Namaqualand, where we bird the endemic-rich, beautiful desert mountains of one of the most famous flower areas on earth. Like the fynbos, Namaqualand also has a huge plant diversity, and its spring flower shows make it world-famous. In addition, we can also access the desert coast just south of the Namibian border. Some of the highly prized species we'll be searching for here include the likes of **Cinnamon-breasted Warbler**, **Karoo Eremomela** and **Barlow's Lark**, amongst many others.

Next, we head inland for some extremely localized birds inhabiting the region called Bushmanland. Here, we will focus our efforts on species such as **Red, Stark's** and **Sclater's Larks**, along with others such as **Karoo Korhaan**, **Namaqua Sandgrouse** and **Namaqua Warbler** (all of these are essentially restricted to the Northern Cape Province of South Africa and Namibia, except for Red Lark which doesn't extend into Namibia)



*Many sought-after specials can be seen on this tour, such as this **Karoo Eremomela**.*

Without a doubt, one of the main attractions of the tour follows, and sees us heading for one of Africa's great game parks: the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park. A stop en route sees us bird the surroundings of the impressive "waterfall in the desert" (Augrabies Falls) and its associated gorge! The vast Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, extending into neighboring Botswana, is on a par with Kruger and Etosha National Parks and is set in one of South Africa's most remote wilderness areas,

wedged between Namibia and Botswana. Not only is this game park inhabited by some of Africa's most charismatic megafauna such as **Lion** and **Gemsbok (Southern Oryx)**, but it also hosts many vibrant southern African endemic birds like **Crimson-breasted Shrike**, **Swallow-tailed Bee-eater**, **Southern Pied Babbler**, **Kori Bustard** and **Black-faced Waxbill**. This park is also a truly phenomenal place for raptors and owls, many of which we should see during our stay. The tour comes to an end following our time in this great wilderness area, in Upington, set on the banks of the mighty Orange River.



***Kori Bustard**, the world's heaviest flying bird, occurs in the Kgalagadi.*

This tour is set at the beginning of our South African 'core' tour period, and can be combined with several of our other tours. We recommend that you combine it with our very exciting and wonderfully complementary (because it includes such a vastly different set of birds and mammals in eastern South Africa) Kruger National Park and Escarpment Birding Tour. This tour can also be combined with our similar Kalahari Mammal and Birding Tour (which sees us focus more time on trying to find some of the rarer and more elusive nocturnal mammals of the Kalahari such as **Aardvark** and, with luck, **Black-footed Cat**).

Please note that although this tour is timed to coincide with the Namaqualand/west coast flower season and we do make our best efforts to see and enjoy the spectacular floral show, this is still a birding tour, with the usual early starts and sometimes long days out. Although some of our guides may have an interest and knowledge of wildflowers, we always use specialist bird guides, rather than botanical guides, for this tour.

Itinerary (13 days/12 nights)

Day 1. Arrival in Cape Town

Your international flight arrives in Cape Town any time today or tonight. This is a travel day and if you arrive early enough you can spend it at your leisure. Your guide will meet you at the airport and transfer you to the leafy Cape Town suburbs. Here we will base ourselves for two nights near the world-famous Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens. Should we have time available this afternoon, we may decide to stretch our legs at some nearby sites and begin familiarizing ourselves with some of the more common birds occurring on the Cape Peninsula. These may include the likes of **Southern Boubou**, **Cape Bulbul**, **Karoo Prinia**, **Cape White-eye**, **Cape Robin-Chat** and the delightful **Southern Double-collared Sunbird**, amongst others. While common, a number of these birds are actually endemics or near-endemics. There are also chances for some of the trickier species occurring in the area such as **African Goshawk**, **Rufous-chested Sparrowhawk** and **Cape Siskin**, but we will need a bit of luck to find these birds.

Overnight: Fernwood Manor, Cape Town

Day 2. Birding Rooi Els, Betty's Bay and surrounds

We have a full day set aside to track down some of the most prized birds occurring in the Western Cape province. The bulk of our time will be spent in the Hottentots-Holland Mountains, where we'll try to include visits to the endemic-rich sites of Rooi Els and the Harold Porter National Botanical Garden and Betty's Bay. We will likely start our day off at Rooi Els, where we'll do our birding on foot as we slowly walk along a gravel road. The scene here is incredibly dramatic, with towering mountains to one side and the rocky shoreline of False Bay to the other, and the area hosts a number of South Africa's most sought-after endemics. First and foremost, will be the delightful **Cape Rockjumper**, a few pairs of which breed on the mountain slopes here. Although at times they can be difficult to find, this is arguably the most reliable site to see this species and some perseverance usually pays off! Whilst searching for rockjumpers, we're also likely to notch up a number of other prized species, including **Ground Woodpecker**, **Cape Grassbird**, **Grey-backed Cisticola**, **Cape Sugarbird**, **Cape Rock Thrush**, **Orange-breasted Sunbird**, **Cape Siskin** and **Cape Bunting**. The difficult **Victorin's Warbler** occurs here as well, but is usually easier to see at other stops elsewhere on the day. An array of more common and widespread species occurs here as well and species such as **White-necked Raven**, **Rock Martin**, **Neddicky**, **Familiar Chat**, **Cape Weaver** and **Yellow Bishop** usually abound. We'll also keep an eye out for **African Oystercatchers** on the rocky shoreline.



*The fynbos endemic **Orange-breasted Sunbird** is one of South Africa's most beautiful birds!*

Harold Porter National Botanical Garden is usually next on our agenda, and searching the mix of manicured gardens, mountain fynbos and riverine woodland often produces species such as **African Black Duck**, **Jackal Buzzard**, **Cape Batis**, **Sombre Greenbul**, **Black Saw-wing**, **Bar-throated Apalis**, **Olive Thrush**, **Fiscal Flycatcher**, **Swee Waxbill** and **Brimstone Canary**, amongst others. We will also include a visit to the Stony Point **African Penguin** colony in nearby Betty's Bay. Here we can enjoy excellent and up-close views of these curious and comical penguins, often along with the full suite of marine cormorants, namely **White-breasted**, **Cape**, **Crowned** and **Bank Cormorants**, all of which breed on the rocks here. Various gulls and terns, including the south-west African endemic **Hartlaub's Gull**, are usually in evidence as well. The sleepy village of Betty's Bay often has **Cape Spurfowl** running around on the edges of the gardens, and with a bit of luck we can also see **Cape Grey Mongoose**. Throughout our time in the Hottentots-Holland Mountains we will keep an eye out for the huge and boldly marked **Verreaux's Eagle**; a pair regularly breed in the general area and show from time to time.

En route back to our comfortable guesthouse, we usually stop off at the Strandfontein Sewage Works, which is an absolute hive for wetland birds. The various pans all host a differing array of species, and we stand good chances of finding the likes of **Cape Shoveler**, **Cape**, the diminutive **Blue-billed** (Hottentot) and **Red-billed Teals**, **Maccoa Duck**, **African Swamphen**, **Great Crested** and **Black-necked Grebes**, **Greater** and occasionally **Lesser Flamingos**, **Water** and **Spotted Thick-knees**, **African Sacred**, **Glossy** and **Hadada Ibises**, and a variety of widespread herons and egrets. This is also a great site for other species such as **African Marsh Harrier**, **Brown-throated Martin**, **Lesser Swamp** and **Little Rush Warblers**, **Levaillant's Cisticola** and **Cape Longclaw**. We'll settle in for a wonderful evening following a successful day out in the field.

Overnight: Fernwood Manor, Cape Town

Day 3. Birding Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden and transfer to Langebaan

With a two hour (traffic permitting) transfer to get to our next destination, we have the morning available to do some local birding, and will spend it exploring the stunning and famous Kirstenbosch National Botanical Gardens. These expansive gardens on the lower slopes of Table Mountain host some excellent birds and we stand a chance of seeing some of the fynbos endemics, should we have missed them previously, such as **Cape Sugarbird** and **Orange-breasted Sunbird**. Other species we'll search for include the difficult **Lemon Dove**, **Spotted Eagle-Owl**, **Cape Batis**, **Red-winged Starling**, **African Dusky Flycatcher**, **Malachite Sunbird**, **Common Waxbill** (and with luck, **Sweet Waxbill**), the spectacular **Pin-tailed Whydah** and **Forest** and **Cape Canaries**. Kirstenbosch is also often a great place to see raptors, and we'll keep an eye out for **African Harrier-Hawk**, **African Goshawk**, **Black** and **Rufous-chested Sparrowhawks**, **Common** and **Jackal Buzzards** and **Rock Kestrel**.

We will then transfer up the west coast to the small coastal village of Langebaan, where we'll be based for two nights. We will have the afternoon to acquaint ourselves with the area, and may likely try and get a head start by visiting some of the 'usual' wildflower blooming areas, located in the greater Langebaan area. These incredible floral displays are quite something to behold, and are a 'must-see' attraction for any nature lover; however, this area also provides good opportunities to see some of the prized birds of the area. We will keep an eye out for species such as **Blue Crane**, South Africa's national bird, **Southern Black Korhaan**, **Grey-winged Francolin**, **Cape Clapper Lark** and the dazzling **Bokmakierie**, amongst many others.

Overnight: LeMahi Guesthouse, Langebaan



Cape Clapper Lark will be one of many endemic and prized larks we'll be searching for. The tour is timed when they are performing their spectacular, "clapping" display.

Day 4. Birding the West Coast National Park and surrounds

We will have a full day at our disposal to further explore the west coast region around Langebaan, and the bulk of our time today will likely be spent in the fantastic West Coast National Park, located on the outskirts of the village. This scenic national park is centered on the vast Langebaan Lagoon, a mecca for a wide array of wetland birds, and is surrounded by rich strandveld fynbos and the Atlantic Ocean. It is one of the best birding spots in the entire Western Cape province! Additionally, the park also opens its restricted Postberg Section during the period of our visit, allowing us to experience the incredible wildflower displays that are present in the park.



When in full bloom, the wildflowers on the west coast of South Africa can be spectacular!

Together with some walking trails, a number of blinds/hides and viewpoints allow us to access a large section of this park and give us ample opportunity to find all the various specials. On top of the birds mentioned for yesterday (most of which can be seen today as well), we will also try for other species such as **Common Ostrich**, the stunning near-endemic **Black Harrier**, **Grey Tit**, the absolutely tiny **Cape Penduline Tit**, **Cape Grassbird**, **Grey-backed Cisticola**, **Bar-throated Apalis**, **Pied Starling**, **Karoo Scrub Robin**, **Cape Robin-Chat**, **Southern Double-collared Sunbird**, **Cape Weaver**, **Yellow Bishop**, **White-throated Canary** and **Cape Bunting**, all within the fynbos and open areas of the park.

However, the water-based birding will likely be the main event, and we'll search for a great many species including both **Greater** and **Lesser Flamingos**, **Great White Pelican**, **South African Shelduck**, **Cape Teal**, **African Rail** and **Black Crake**, through to a large diversity of shorebirds, some of which are likely to include **Pied Avocet**, **Black-winged Stilt**, **Grey**, **Common Ringed**, **White-fronted** and **Kittlitz's Plovers**, **African Oystercatcher**, **Eurasian Whimbrel**, **Ruddy Turnstone**, **Curlew Sandpiper**, **Sanderling** and **Common Greenshank**, amongst others. We're

also likely to see all of the marine cormorants, including the scarce, localized **Bank** and **Crowned Cormorants**, while the ever-present **Hartlaub's** and **Kelp Gulls** are never far off. A pair of the majestic **Verreaux's Eagle** nest nearby, and we'll try to include a visit to see these special birds!

The West Coast National Park is a birdy park, and we're likely to see a number of species over the course of the day. Eventually, we'll settle in for the evening and enjoy an excellent meal after a fruitful day out!

Overnight: LeMahi Guesthouse, Langebaan

Day 5. Birding Langebaan and transfer to Springbok

We have a final morning to traverse the greater Langebaan area for any final birds we may still be missing. These might include a visit to the Vredenburg farmlands as well, where we can try for some slightly different species. Foremost amongst our targets here will be the endemic **Cape Long-billed Lark**, but a wide array of other species is possible and includes the likes of **Blue Crane**, **Secretarybird**, **Lanner Falcon**, **Large-billed Lark**, **Sickle-winged** and **Ant-eating Chats** and **Capped Wheatear**, amongst others. We will also try and track down the prized **Antarctic Tern** which winter sporadically along the South African coast, more regularly in this area.

Eventually, we'll begin our long drive through the endemic-rich Karoo, towards Springbok which is located within the heart of the ruggedly beautiful Namaqualand. The drive will likely take the bulk of the afternoon, but we'll be sure to include various stops along the way, especially at the salt works around Velddrif, which are another magnet for waterbirds, and in particular, large numbers of the sought-after **Chestnut-banded Plover**. Big flocks of flamingos are also possible, along with scarcer species such as **Red-necked Phalarope** and **Black-necked Grebe**. We will likely arrive at Springbok in the late afternoon.

Overnight: Kleinplasia Guesthouse, Springbok

Day 6. Birding from Springbok to Port Nolloth and surrounds

We have a full day at our disposal to explore and traverse the area. This Namaqualand region is arguably even more famous than the west coast for its spring flower blooms, but they are less predictable here and the blooming timing and exact sites tend to vary from one year to the next. We'll keep our 'ears to the ground' and see where the blooms are taking place and plan our day accordingly. One of the likely spots is Goegap Nature Reserve on the outskirts of Springbok, and aside from the incredible floral spectacle possible here, the reserve is a 'must-visit' site from a birding perspective as well! First and foremost, will be major Namaqualand targets; **Karoo Eremomela** and **Cinnamon-breasted Warbler**. These are both notoriously difficult and unpredictable birds, but with some dedicated searching we're likely to find both here. The reserve is also a good spot for various other species more characteristic of the drier western regions of South Africa, such as **White-backed Mousebird**, **Acacia Pied Barbet**, **Pirit Batis**, **Fairy Flycatcher**, **Spike-heeled** and **Karoo Larks**, **Layard's Warbler** (Tit-babbler), **Pale-winged Starling**, **Karoo Chat**, **Mountain Wheatear**, **Dusky Sunbird**, both races of **Black-headed Canary** and **Lark-like Bunting**. The open plains dotted throughout the reserve are a great area for the difficult **Ludwig's Bustard**. The reserve also hosts the localized (Hartmann's) **Mountain**

Zebra, and we should find our first of the strange **Gemsbok**. **Springbok**, the national mammal of South Africa, abounds.



Cinnamon-breasted Warbler is one of our core targets in Namaqualand.

The small coastal village of Port Nolloth, located close to the Namibian border, will also feature on our day's plans. Here at the southern extremity of the Namib Desert, north of this village, hosts the incredibly localized **Barlow's Lark**, and this is one of the few places in the world to see this species. We will spend some time searching this area for the lark, and are likely to come across other species as we go. The white 'ghost-like' coastal race of **Tractrac Chat** often perches conspicuously on fence posts, and larger **Greater Kestrels** and **Pale Chanting Goshawks** sit atop the roadside electricity pylons, while less conspicuous residents of the typical sparse vegetation found here are **Rufous-eared Warbler**, **Cape Penduline Tit** and **Grey Tit**. Additionally this is also a great area for the endemic **Cape Long-billed Lark**, and their eerie whistle-call can regularly be heard. The prized **Damara Tern** does occur in the area, but we'll need some luck to find this species, and while we have our eyes on the coast, the harbor breakwater is also a great area to see the Benguela Current endemic, **Heaviside's Dolphin**. We will eventually return to Springbok following a full day exploring the area.

Overnight: Kleinplasie Guesthouse, Springbok



*The coastal desert north of Port Nolloth is one of the only places to see the extremely localized **Barlow's Lark**.*

Day 7. Birding Springbok and transfer to Pofadder

We have a final morning to bird in and around Springbok, searching for any birds we may have missed, such as **Karoo Eremomela**, **Cinnamon-breasted Warbler**, **Ludwig's Bustard**, **Cape Clapper Lark** and **Grey Tit**. Hopefully we might also get a last view of some of the incredible flower blooms before we leave Namaqualand behind and transfer the short distance eastwards to Bushmanland. This area is generally less rugged and mountainous and consists of open plains, but also hosts a great many prized and endemic birds. This is a short transfer, so we should have the bulk of the day available to begin exploring this area. We will likely include a visit to the Koa Dunes Valley near Aggeneys, which is home to the very localized South African endemic **Red Lark** – here this red-color 'dunes' form of the lark matches the red soil, and can make picking up the lark quite difficult as it scurries around between grass tufts. However, with perseverance, we should get views of this prized bird. Cattle drinking troughs in the area are also often great for spending time waiting for birds coming in to drink, sometimes producing the likes of **Namaqua Sandgrouse**, **Grey-backed Sparrow-Lark**, **Red-headed Finch**, **Black-headed** and **Yellow Canaries**, **Lark-like Bunting** and **Scaly-feathered** and amazingly gregarious **Sociable Weavers**. The **Sociable Weavers** are indeed one of the charismatic species of these dry regions of western South Africa, as they construct massive straw nests in trees and on electricity poles, and are a characteristic sight as we move through the area. The tiny **Pygmy Falcon** make use of these massive nests as well, and can often be seen in their vicinity.

The open plains closer to Pofadder are arguably of the greatest interest in the area, as they support three of the most difficult and nomadic birds of western South Africa, namely; **Sclater's** and **Stark's Larks** and **Black-eared Sparrow-Lark**. These three birds are notoriously unpredictable and move around substantially from one year to another; we will need a good dose of luck to run

into all of them, but with enough perseverance we stand a good chance. Despite our focus on these three birds, we won't be ignoring the other species present in the area, and we'll also be on the lookout for the localized **Karoo Korhaan**, **Namaqua Dove**, **Double-banded Courser**, **Pale Chanting Goshawk**, **Pygmy Falcon**, **Karoo Long-billed**, **Fawn-colored** and **Sabota Larks**, **Black-chested Prinia**, **Rufous-eared Warbler**, **Yellow-bellied Eremomela**, **Karoo Scrub Robin**, **Chat Flycatcher** and **Sociable Weaver**, amongst others. The scarce **Burchell's Courser** can also be seen here, but is best seen on some of our Namibian tours.

Overnight: Pofadder Hotel



Red Lark is only found in the Northern Cape province of South Africa, we'll search for it near Aggeneys and perhaps at other sites too.

Day 8. Birding Pofadder, Onseepkans and surrounds

We have a full day at our leisure to continue exploring the plains around Pofadder, searching for the species mentioned under Day 7 above. Additionally, we will likely also spend some time around the small village of Onseepkans on the Orange River which forms the border with Namibia. The Orange River has crafted and eroded a rugged, yet incredibly scenic, valley through the region (over vast amounts of time), and aside from the birds is well worth the trip by itself. The lush river oasis gives life to the surrounding dry landscape and the riverine trees support good numbers of the prized **Namaqua Warbler**, and this is also one of the few areas where truly wild **Rosy-faced Lovebirds** can be found in South Africa (this is otherwise mainly a Namibian endemic species). The rugged landscape here also supports the likes of **Bradfield's** and **Alpine Swifts**, **Orange River White-eye**, **Karoo Thrush**, **Pale-winged Starling** and even **Cinnamon-breasted Warbler** (should we have missed this elusive bird previously). The river itself also supports species such as

Grey Heron, Little Egret, Reed Cormorant, African Fish Eagle and African Pied Wagtail while **White-throated Swallows** and **Brown-throated Martins** zip up and down the river.

Overnight: Pofadder Hotel



*The peculiar **Sclater's Lark** is one of the region's most nomadic and difficult-to-find birds.*

Day 9. Birding Pofadder and transfer to the Kalahari

We have a final morning to spend in and around Pofadder, searching for any species which we might still be missing, and which might include some of the more difficult targets such as **Sclater's**, **Stark's** and **Red Larks** and **Black-eared Sparrow-Lark**, amongst others. Following breakfast, we'll begin the relatively long (~4.5 hours) transfer to the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park. En route, we will stop off at the spectacular Augrabies Falls National Park. Here we will spend some time enjoying the powerful Orange River as it blasts down into a beautiful deep gorge below, allowing us to appreciate the local name, "place of great noise". Eventually we'll have to tear ourselves away from the falls, and continue on our way. We will likely only arrive at our comfortable lodge, located directly outside the park's gate, in the late afternoon. Over dinner, there will doubtless be a lot of excitement as we prepare for our upcoming two full days in this great African game park.

Overnight: Kgalagadi Lodge

Day 10 – 11. Birding the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park

We have two full days to spend within the world famous Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, set in the Kalahari Desert. Although the bird diversity and total species numbers are lower than some other parks such as Kruger, the quality of the species makes up for it, and we'll search for more localized

and scarcer species restricted to these drier areas. Additionally, the park is an excellent area for raptors and various birds of prey, and they're sure to keep us entertained on a regular basis. Due to the dry nature of the park, various waterholes have been installed, and these form a prime focal point for a wide array of birds and mammals. They are sometimes the only source of water for miles around, and so these waterholes will feature prominently on our forays through the park. Some of the large species we'll look out for include **Common Ostrich**, **Kori Bustard** and **Northern Black Korhaan**, while possible raptors include the unique **Secretarybird**, **White-backed Vulture**, **Black-chested Snake Eagle**, the strange **Bateleur**, **Martial** and **Tawny Eagles**, **Gabar Goshawk**, along with **Lanner**, **Pygmy** and **Red-necked Falcons**. The park can be a great place for owls, and we'll be sure to keep an eye out for **Western Barn**, **Southern White-faced**, **Spotted** and **Verreaux's Eagle-Owls** and the diminutive **Pearl-spotted Owlet**.



*We will have chances of finding the uncommon **Southern White-faced Owl** in the Kalahari.*

During the mornings, vast numbers of both **Namaqua** and the scarce **Burchell's Sandgrouse** come to drink from the waterholes, and it can be quite a spectacle with hundreds of these birds all wheeling about coming in to drink! Various other species join them as well, and might include the likes of **Namaqua** and **Ring-necked Doves**, **Grey-backed Sparrow-Lark**, **Cape Starling**, **Cape Sparrow**, **Scaly-feathered Weaver**, **Red-headed Finch**, **Shaft-tailed Whydah** and **Black-throated Canary**. As we go about traversing the park, and in particular the dry Auob and Nossob riverbeds, we'll also keep an eye out for other species such as **Double-banded Courser**, **Common Scimitarbill**, **Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill**, **Lilac-breasted Roller**, the beautiful **Swallow-tailed Bee-eater**, the stunning **Crimson-breasted Shrike**, **Brubru**, **Cape Crow**, **Ashy Tit**, **Fawn-colored Lark**, **Yellow-bellied Eremomela**, **Chestnut-vented Warbler**, **Groundscraper Thrush**, **Kalahari Scrub Robin**, **Marico Flycatcher**, **Short-toed Rock Thrush**, **Great**

Sparrow, White-browed Sparrow-Weaver, Red-billed Quelea and Black-faced and Violet-eared Waxbills, amongst others.

Mammals will also feature prominently here and we'll make an effort to find as many as we can. The park is an excellent area to find Africa's large cats; **Lion, Leopard and Cheetah** all occur here, and with some time and luck, we may find all these large cats. We also have chances at some of the scarcer smaller cats, such as **African Wild Cat** (this species is actually unusually common in this reserve) and even **Caracal**. The cute and charming **Meerkat** (Suricate) also occurs, and we'll likely run into some family groups during our travels. Other likely species include **Black-backed Jackal** (often seen hunting sandgrouse at the waterholes), **Springbok** (South Africa's national mammal), **Blue Wildebeest, Gemsbok, Steenbok and Giraffe**. An optional night drive (at a relatively nominal extra cost) into the park is sometimes possible to arrange as well, and gives us additional chances at the larger cats, along with **Brown Hyena** (with luck though we may see this during the day), **Spring Hare** and **Bat-eared and Cape Foxes**.

Overnight: Kgalagadi Lodge



*Whilst we traverse the Kgalagadi, we'll keep a beady eye open for **Cheetah**.*

Day 12. Birding the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park and transfer to Upington

We have a final morning for one last jaunt into the incredible Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, searching for any species we may not yet have seen and to soak up this incredible wilderness area, before having to transfer to Upington. This is a relatively short transfer (~3 hours), and will likely see us arriving in the mid-afternoon. The afternoon will be spent at our leisure, where we can either relax on the banks of the Orange River, in the grounds of our lush lodge (the river providing much-needed life to the surroundings), or we can explore some of the open areas around the town. The larger trees on the riverbanks support species such as **Swallow-tailed Bee-eater, White-backed**

Mousebird, Golden-tailed Woodpecker, Orange River White-eye and Dusky Sunbird, while the river hosts species such as **African Black Duck, African Darter, African Pied Wagtail** and the massive **Goliath Heron**. With some dedicated searching, **Namaqua Warbler** can also be seen here, if we missed this bird previously. The open plains outside of town host a different suite of birds, some of which we may have seen previously on the trip (in the Pofadder area). Here we have chances for difficult species such as **Double-banded** and **Burchell's Coursers** and **Stark's Lark**, while more commonly seen species include **Northern Black Korhaan** and **Namaqua Sandgrouse**. We'll eventually settle in for the day, enjoying our final dinner together on the banks of the impressive Orange River.

Overnight: Sun River Kalahari Lodge, Upington



Delightful Orange River White-eyes are common along the Orange River.

Day 13. Departure from Upington

Today is the last day of the tour, and we may have some final time available to us to explore the lodge's grounds on the Orange River (or a bit further afield) searching for a similar suite of species to those mentioned for the previous day. Usually, this tour would conclude when we catch our flights from the nearby Upington Airport, but in 2023 we are doing a short extension (6-8 September, finishing at Cape Town airport at 3.30 pm on 8 September, please ask for details).

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: 13 days
Group Size: 4 – 8
Dates: 25 August – 06 September 2024
25 August – 06 September 2025
Start: Cape Town, South Africa
End: Upington
Prices: R83,048 per person sharing (2024)
R92 183 per person sharing (2025)
Single Supplements: R10,899 (2024)
R12 098 (2025)

Price includes:

All accommodation
Meals (from lunch on day 1 until breakfast on day 13)
Unlimited bottled water
Expert tour leader
All entrance fees
All ground transport, including airport pick-up and drop-off

Price excludes:

International/domestic flights (to Cape Town, and from Upington)
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](#))