



**3-DAY AGULHAS PLAINS (OVERBERG) BIRDING TOUR
(2-DAY VERSION ALSO AVAILABLE)**



*The Agulhas Plains hold the largest numbers of South African **Blue Cranes**.*

This is a trip in which a disproportionate number of large and spectacular birds are encountered. We bird the stronghold of the world's population of **Blue Crane** (South Africa's national bird) and should see many hundreds of individuals of this species (sometimes with youngsters in early summer). This three-day trip will also incorporate some of the mountain fynbos specials which we can see while traveling between Cape Town and the Agulhas Plains, and for those who are keen we can also include a visit to Cape Agulhas, the most southerly point of the African continent. If you are short of time, it is possible to do the Agulhas Plains in two days (one night) from Cape Town however we would recommend three days to ensure we can include most of the below exciting birding opportunities.

Day 1: Cape Town to Agulhas Plains

The Agulhas Plains lie around 150 km (a roughly three-hour drive) east of Cape Town and today we will be making our way here slowly with lots of birding stops en route. We can bird picturesque mountain fynbos where we normally find **Cape Rockjumper**, **Cape** and **Sentinel Rock Thrushes**, **Victorin's Warbler**, **Cape Siskin**, **Cape Sugarbird**, **Orange-breasted Sunbird** and **Ground Woodpecker**. If you are after some of the Cape's special coastal bird species, we can also head to a nearby **African Penguin** colony where **Cape**, **Bank** and **Crowned Cormorants** breed too.



Victorin's Warbler is one of the many fynbos specials we will target on our way to the Agulhas Plains.

We will then continue eastwards and can stop off at Cape Agulhas, the most southerly point of the African continent and enjoy the beauty and significance of the area. Next, we can perhaps visit a nearby **Damara Tern** breeding colony (seasonal) before we end a long day at our beautifully set accommodation.

Overnight: Mudlark Riverfront Lodge or De Hoop Collection (more expensive option)

Day 2: Agulhas Plains birding

Today we will mostly be based around De Hoop Nature Reserve where we will bird the plains and surrounding areas for its many endemics and specials. The Agulhas Plains are one of the few areas where **Denham's Bustard** is still common, along with its cousin **Karoo Korhaan** which is fairly reliable in the area's wheatfields. There are a few pairs of **Secretarybirds** found in the area and we have a good chance of finding this charismatic predator. Good numbers of **White Stork** visit in summer as well as roving flocks of **Common Swift**. The stunning, endangered, endemic **Black Harrier** quarters low over the plains while the endemic **Jackal Buzzard** is common, along with many other raptors that sometimes include **Lanner Falcon**. The rolling hills and flat plains are also home to two extremely localized lark species; **Cape Clapper Lark** (with its bizarre breeding display) and **Agulhas Long-billed Lark**. Other slightly more widespread larks (but still endemic to southern Africa) such as **Large-billed Lark**, also abound. The area also holds **Cape Vulture**, the uncommon **Knysna Woodpecker**, **Southern Tchagra**, a host of waterbirds (including **Maccoa Duck** and other difficult species) and shorebirds, **Grey-winged Francolin**, **Cape Spurfowl**, **African Hoopoe**, and a host of others.



*We'll look out for the endemic **Knysna Woodpecker** in De Hoop Nature Reserve.*

Large mammals such as **Bontebok**, **Springbok**, **Eland**, **Grey Rhebok**, the neat (Cape) **Mountain Zebra**, and close inshore **Southern Right Whale** (seasonal) also occur. Our accommodation often hosts resident **Western Barn Owl** and **Spotted Eagle-Owl** as well as **Fiery-necked Nightjar** which may all be seen and heard at night.

Overnight: Mudlark Riverfront Lodge or De Hoop Collection (more expensive option)

Day 3: Fynbos Buttonquail and further Agulhas Plains birding

This final day is set aside to find any missing targets before we make the long drive back west to Cape Town. For those who are keen to see **Fynbos Buttonquail**, we can visit a nearby fynbos reserve which hosts this rarely-seen endemic, however please note this involves long walks (often a few hours long) through tough terrain!

A further option is a predawn start to Grootvadersbosch Forest (a roughly two-hour drive) at the base of the Langeberg Mountains, which form the inland backdrop to the Agulhas Plains. Here we can find good numbers of forest and forest-edge endemics and other desirable species. The exciting list includes **Forest Canary**, **Swee Waxbill**, **Victorin's Warbler**, **Olive Woodpecker** (also **Knysna Woodpecker**, but we may have already found this on the Agulhas Plains), **Narina Trogon**, up to three different honeyguide species, **Olive Bushshrike**, **Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler**, the endangered **Knysna Warbler**, and many others. From Grootvadersbosch Forest it is still another three hours back to Cape Town, and so this excursion will mean a long day out but it is possible to include.



Forest Canary are common in Grootvadersbosch Forest.

The guide for day trips is allocated only after you have booked, as all of them are run as private trips. But we always use the country's top birding guides.

Duration: 3 (or 2) days

Start: Cape Town

End: Cape Town

3-day price: **R14, 451** per person sharing, assuming 3-6 participants; **R19, 126** per person sharing for 2 participants, **R33, 150** for 1 participant, using Mudlark Riverfront Lodge (our usual accommodation) which is good (single supplement **R1, 110**).

Or **R23, 726** per person sharing assuming 3-6 participants using De Hoop Collection, if it's the only place available or if you opt to stay inside De Hoop Park itself. Single and sharing costs are the same.

2-day price: **R9, 048** per person sharing, assuming 3-6 participants; **R12, 082** per person sharing for 2 participants, **R21, 183** for 1 participant, using Mudlark Riverfront Lodge (our usual accommodation) which is good (single supplement **R555**).

Or **R13, 686** assuming 3-6 participants sharing using De Hoop Collection, if it's the only place available or if you opt to stay inside De Hoop Park itself. Single and sharing costs are the same.