FLOCK TO MARION — BUDGET SOUTH AFRICA BIRDING TOUR: CAPE TOWN'S FYNBOS ENDEMICS

27–31 JANUARY 2028



Cape Rockjumper *is one of our primary targets on this tour.*

Overview

This tour will form part of our scheduled program of pre- and post-Flock to Marion birding tours. You can book this tour on its own or combine it with one or more of our other Flock to Marion departures, giving you an excellent opportunity to see a wide range of South Africa's endemic and range-restricted birds. Please note that the Flock to Marion cruise fare is not included in the tour price. The cruise must be booked separately, and information on how to book can be found on the BirdLife South Africa website. The Flock to Marion cruise dates are 31 January–07 February 2028.

To make your Flock to Marion experience as smooth as possible, we can also assist with private birding tours, day trips, accommodation, domestic travel, and onward arrangements before and after the cruise. If you have any questions or would like help working out the best combination of tours for your trip, please feel free to contact us.

South Africa's southwestern Cape is an endemic-rich, scenically spectacular region of this incredibly diverse country. Excellent infrastructure and accommodation, friendly people, abundant access to reserves and parks, and great value for money make South Africa an obvious destination for travelers. Couple this with exceptionally high levels of endemism, particularly in the Cape, and a large active birding community, and it becomes a must-visit destination for world listers and causal birders wishing to explore this unique corner of Africa.

This budget tour focuses on the endemic and near-endemic species of the greater Cape Town area. In the interest of keeping costs down on this tour, we stay in a comfortable and reasonably priced hotel on the outskirts of Cape Town – frequently rated among the best cities in the world. We will explore the botanically diverse fynbos habitats in search of iconic birds, including **Cape Rockjumper**, **Cape Sugarbird**, **Victorin's Warbler**, **Protea Canary**, **Ground Woodpecker**, and **Orange-breasted Sunbird**. The rich waters of the Atlantic Ocean provide food for several range-restricted coastal species, like the Critically Endangered (BirdLife International) **African Penguin** and Endangered (BirdLife International) **Bank Cormorant**, both of which we target at their breeding colonies.



*We will see the Critically Endangered **African Penguins** at one of the few mainland breeding colonies at Stony Point.*

We also visit South Africa's West Coast and its strandveld (translated to "beach scrub") habitats, where we target special birds like **Black Harrier**, **Grey-winged Francolin**, **Cape Clapper**, **Cape Long-billed** and **Karoo Larks**, and **Southern Black Korhaan**, among others. The birding along the forested slopes of the famous Table Mountain can produce jewels like the endemic **Forest Canary** and secretive **Lemon Dove**, and we look forward to our time birding the fantastic Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens.



*The attractive **Southern Double-collared Sunbird** is widespread on this tour!*

This tour serves as an excellent introduction to South African birding around famous Cape Town and Table Mountain, at a cost-conscious rate, and forms part of our "Budget Flock to Marion South African Birding Tour" offerings. It can be combined with our preceding **Flock to Marion — Budget South African Birding Tour: Northern Cape's Desert Endemics**, while our **Flock to Marion — Budget South African Birding Tour: Zululand** and **Flock to Marion — Budget South African Birding Tour: The North** follow directly the Flock to Marion cruise.

Detailed Itinerary (5 days/4 nights)

Day 1. Arrival in Cape Town

You are free to arrive at any time today, with hotel check-in from 2 p.m. Upon arrival in Cape Town, you will be met at Cape Town International Airport and transferred to your comfortable hotel on the outskirts of this beautiful city. Should you be arriving from our preceding **Flock to Marion — Budget South African Birding Tour: Northern Cape's Desert Endemics**, kindly note that tour ends the previous day (yesterday), to allow for a smoother (less rushed) arrival into Cape Town for this tour.

Time permitting, we may start birding this afternoon and will either begin on the forested slopes of Table Mountain or at one of the wetland reserves in the area. We should kick off our lists

with species typical of the southwestern Cape, including **Cape White-eye**, **Cape Spurfowl**, **Cape Robin-Chat**, **Southern Double-collared Sunbird**, **Southern Boubou**, **Cape Canary**, **Cape Bulbul**, **Karoo Prinia**, and many more. Wetlands in the area may yield **Greater** and **Lesser Flamingos**, **Great White Pelican**, **Cape Shoveler**, **Cape Teal**, **Southern Pochard**, **Maccoa Duck**, and **African Marsh Harrier**. **Hartlaub's Gull** and **African Oystercatcher** are a regular feature of the coastal habitats here, and we could have our first encounters with both species today.

In the evening, we will return to our hotel, enjoy our first dinner together, and prepare for an exciting day chasing several fynbos endemic species tomorrow.

Overnight: Cape Town

Day 2. Birding Rooi-Els and Betty's Bay

We will have an early start today, making our way towards the Hottentots Holland Mountains along the eastern side of False Bay. The drive to our first birding spot takes us along a spectacular ocean drive, where towering sandstone mountains clad in scrubby fynbos vegetation meet the Atlantic Ocean.

We will bird along a dirt track on the outskirts of the picturesque coastal town of Rooi-Els, where we should connect with our first fynbos endemics, such as the gorgeous **Orange-breasted Sunbird**, **Cape Siskin**, **Cape Sugarbird**, and our primary target, the characterful **Cape Rockjumper**. Both the rockjumper and sugarbird are members of families endemic to Southern Africa. Their respective eastern counterparts, Drakensberg Rockjumper and Gurney's Sugarbird, are best seen on our **Subtropical South Africa Birding Tour: Comprehensive Eastern South Africa**. Other birds worth looking out for here include **Cape Rock Thrush**, **Cape Grassbird**, **Grey-backed Cisticola**, **Cape Bunting**, and the large **Ground Woodpecker**. We may also hear the repetitive song of **Victorin's Warbler** coming from the higher slopes, but it is tricky to see here, and we will try for views at our next stop.



*We should see **Cape Sugarbird** on most days of this trip!*

From Rooi-Els, we will head to the small town of Betty's Bay. First, we will visit Harold Porter Botanical Gardens, where we may see the attractive **Swee Waxbill**, **African Paradise**, **African Dusky** and **Blue-mantled Crested Flycatchers**, **Brimstone Canary**, **Black Saw-wing**, and **Victorin's Warbler**, in addition to many other species characteristic of the southwestern Cape. We will pop in at Stony Point Nature Reserve, famous for its **African Penguin** colony. These Critically Endangered birds (BirdLife International) have experienced a 97% decline in population size; however, recent conservation efforts are a hopeful step in the right direction for this iconic species. The reserve also has large numbers of breeding cormorants, and we should see **Great**, **Crowned**, **Cape**, and Endangered (BirdLife International) **Bank Cormorants** with their bizarre bi-colored eyes.

On our way back to Cape Town, we will stop for an afternoon birding session at Paardevlei or Strandfontein Bird Sanctuary, the latter one of the most popular birding sites in the city and a rarity hotspot. We will spend some time driving around the pans and reedbeds here, hoping to connect with a variety of waterfowl, including **Cape Teal**, **Southern Pochard**, **Fulvous Whistling Duck**, **Cape Shoveler**, and **Maccoa Duck**, among several other species. The reedbeds here hold skulkers like **Lesser Swamp** and **Little Rush Warblers**, as well as the colorful **Malachite Kingfisher**. Depending on the water levels in the pans, we may be in for some exciting wader-watching or tern roost scanning.

After a busy first full day, we will return to our hotel with the prospect of West Coast specials tomorrow.

Overnight: Cape Town



Victorin's Warbler *is a super-skulker that requires patience to see well.*

Day 3. Birding West Coast National Park and surrounds

Today, we will make our way north of Cape Town, along the West Coast. The habitat here superficially resembles the scrubby fynbos vegetation from yesterday; however, the strandveld (translated as "beach scrub") is botanically very distinct and grows on white-dune sands. The

avifaunal complex is different too, and at our first stop, we hope to connect with **Grey-winged Francolin**, **Cape Clapper Lark**, **Karoo Scrub Robin**, **Chestnut-vented** and **Layard's Warblers**, **Bokmakierie**, **Grey Tit**, **White-backed Mousebird**, **Long-billed Crombec**, **Cape Penduline Tit**, **White-throated Canary**, and more.

As we continue our drive north toward West Coast National Park, we will keep a constant lookout for the most-wanted **Black Harrier**, which is fairly common in this area and could show up anywhere today. Upon arrival in the park, we will explore the strandveld habitat further, which is likely to yield many of the same species seen at our first stop, as well as the **Southern Black Korhaan**.

This impressive park includes a large area of the Langebaan Lagoon, and its azure blue waters and mudflats attract remarkable numbers of shorebirds every summer. Though the bulk of these birds would have begun their migration to their Northern Hemisphere breeding ground by now, there are usually still some birds around.

We will need to pay careful attention to the tides to maximise our chances. Scanning from the park's hides could produce the likes of **Curlew Sandpiper**, **Ruddy Turnstone**, **Bar-tailed Godwit**, **Sanderling**, **Little Stint**, **Eurasian Whimbrel**, **Grey**, **Common Ringed**, **White-fronted**, **Three-banded** and **Kittlitz's Plovers**, and **Common Greenshank**. Other slightly less frequent visitors that we will keep an eye out for include **Terek Sandpiper**. The reedbeds around the edges of the lagoon hold **African Rail**, and we often see **African Marsh Harrier**, **Osprey**, and **African Fish Eagle** flying overhead. The eucalyptus trees near Geelbek hide are usually quite birdy, and we may see **Cardinal Woodpecker** and **Common Hoopoe**.



*The intricately patterned **Grey-winged Francolin** is one of our targets on the West Coast.*

We will leave West Coast National Park and visit a quarry in the town of Langebaan, where a pair of the impressive **Verreaux's Eagles** breed. The farmlands north of Langebaan are next on the agenda, and we hope to connect with **Blue Crane**, **Cape Long-billed**, **Large-billed** and

Karoo Larks, **Sickle-winged Chat**, **Cape Longclaw**, **Pied Starling**, the Cape subspecies of **Cloud Cisticola**, and the abundant **Capped Wheatear**.

After lunch, we will visit the salt works near the town of Velddrif. **Lesser** and **Greater Flamingos** are abundant here, as are the saltpan specialist **Chestnut-banded Plovers**. Kilphoek Salt Works is also the only reliable site in southern Africa for **Red-necked Phalarope**, and there is almost always at least one bird here.

We will then slowly make our way back to our hotel in Cape Town after an action-packed day out.

Overnight: Cape Town



*We will look for **Southern Black Korhaan** on the West Coast.*

Day 4. Paarl and Table Mountain birding

Our plan today is to target one of the trickier fynbos endemic species near the town of Paarl, located in the Cape's famous and picturesque winelands. The target species in question is **Protea Canary**, and we will search for it on Paarl Mountain and the surrounding Hottentots Holland range. The Protea flowers here are likely to produce more views of **Cape Sugarbird** and sunbirds like **Southern Double-collared**, **Malachite**, and **Orange-breasted Sunbird**. This is also a good area for the inconspicuous **Brown-backed Honeybird** and other more common species like **African Olive Pigeon**, **African Goshawk**, **Cape Batis**, **Olive Thrush**, **Streaky-headed Seedeater**, **Fiscal Flycatcher**, and **Bar-throated Apalis**.

After our time in Paarl, we will make our way in the direction of Cape Town, stopping at the spectacular Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens on the slopes of Table Mountain. We will spend some time strolling around these wonderful gardens, where we will try to see **Forest Canary**, **Olive Woodpecker**, **Lemon Dove**, **Swee Waxbill**, **Southern Boubou**, and several of the species mentioned earlier in the itinerary.

Overnight: Cape Town

Day 5. Departure (Flock to Marion boarding)

The tour comes to an end after breakfast, and no birding plans are included for the day. You are free to depart at any time today.

For guests who have booked the Flock to Marion cruise, we will arrange a transfer after breakfast to the Cape Town Cruise Terminal to board MSC Sinfonia. Transfer times will be confirmed closer to departure once the final cruise embarkation details have been released. For guests who are not joining the Flock to Marion cruise, airport transfers will be arranged.

This tour is designed to transition to our **Flock to Marion — Budget South African Birding Tour: Zululand,** which begins immediately after the Flock to Marion cruise disembarks in Durban.

Overnight: Not included



Protea Canary *is one of the trickier fynbos endemics.*

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:	5 days
Group size:	4–6
Dates:	27–31 January 2028
Start:	Cape Town, South Africa
End:	Cape Town, South Africa
Prices:	R 37,720 per person sharing – based on 4–6 participants (2028)
Single supplements:	R 6,900 (2028)

Price includes:

All accommodation
Meals (from dinner on Day 1 until breakfast on Day 5)
Unlimited bottled water
Expert tour leader
All entrance & conservation fees
All ground transport
Airport pick-up and drop-off (Days 1 and 5 only)

Price excludes:

Flock to Marion cruise fare
International/domestic flights (to/from Cape Town)
Visas
Items of a personal nature, e.g. gifts, laundry, internet access, etc.
Any pre- or post-tour accommodation, meals, or activities
Soft/alcoholic drinks
Personal travel/medical insurance
Gratuities (please see our tipping guidelines blog)