



## South Africa Birding Spectacular: 25 Days

### Day 1: Arrival in Johannesburg

On arrival your guide will meet you at O.R. Tambo International Airport and transfer you to the conveniently located guest lodge.

### Day 2: Johannesburg to Polokwane

Shortly after we leave the lodge we should find our first near-endemic, the Cape Sparrow. This well marked and rather beautiful sparrow is wonderfully common throughout most of the country. Our birding feast will continue as we make our way northwards out of the city. We will make frequent short birding stops today as we familiarize ourselves with some of the country's more common species. We will also take some time to search an area for the localized Melodious Lark, which particularly favours dense areas of 'red grass'. More typical birds seen on the drive up include a variety of widowbirds and bishops, while we will keep our eyes open for the possibility of Pallid Harrier and Montagu's Harrier. Bushveld in this area is largely dominated by Acacia woodland and is incredibly rich in bird numbers and species.

We expect to arrive in Polokwane by late afternoon.

### Day 3: AM Birding Polokwane Bushveld and Polokwane Nature Preserve; Rest of day birding Magoebaskloof Forest

Most of today will be spent birding the bushveld around Polokwane, an area that is home to the highly localized endemic Short-clawed Lark. We will take time to visit the Polokwane Nature Reserve where we may find the delightful Scaly-feathered Weaver, White-browed Sparrow-Weaver and Black-chested Prinia. Other fairly conspicuous species of the woodlands in the area include delights such as Temminck's Courser,

Arrow-marked Babbler, Northern Black Korhaan, African Grey Hornbill, Purple Roller, Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird, Southern White-crowned Shrike, Magpie Shrike, Gabar Goshawk and Groundscraper Thrush. Seed-eaters are generally very well represented in this area and frequently encountered species include the gorgeous Violet-eared Waxbill, Black-cheeked Waxbill, Red-headed Finch, Cut-throat, Red-billed Buffalo-Weaver, Great Sparrow and Cinnamon-breasted Bunting.

After the morning's birding we head for the wonderful forests of Magoebaskloof. These forests can be very lively with bird activity and the key here is to locate mixed feeding flocks. Specials of the area include the seldom-sighted Bat Hawk, Forest Buzzard, lovely little Swee Waxbill, Barratt's Warbler, the splendid Black-fronted Bushshrike, Yellow-streaked Greenbul, Grey Cuckooshrike, Forest Canary and Green Twinspot.

Late afternoon arrival to Magoebaskloof area lodging for night.



## **Day 4: Wakkerstroom Marsh**

This morning we leave the diversity of the forests behind us and head for the grasslands and hills that surround the quaint town of Wakkerstroom, where we will be based for the next two nights.

These grasslands are a centre for avian endemism and are critical for the survival of several range-restricted species. We will make a full exploration of the grasslands tomorrow, while this afternoon will be spent birding the highly productive Wakkerstroom marsh at the edge of town. This is a haven for waterbirds and offers the chance of a number of uncommon or localized species. Purple Heron, South African Shelduck, Cape Shoveler, Purple Swamphen, South African Cliff Swallow, Levaillant's Cisticola and Cape Weaver are all regular, and we should also find African Snipe and the elusive African Rail. Rarely recorded species seen here on our previous trips include the secretive Baillon's Crake and Red-chested Flufftail.



## **Day 5: Wakkerstroom: Additional Birding and Wildlife Watching in Grasslands and Other Habitats**

Driving along the network of dirt roads radiating out from Wakkerstroom we will explore the grasslands, rocky outcrops and gorges of this unique area in search of some of the country's most threatened and range restricted endemics, along with numerous other widespread but no less exciting species. These include Southern Bald Ibis, Blue Bustard, White-bellied Bustard, Jackal Buzzard, the rare and localized Botha's and Rudd's Larks (the latter considered one of the world's most endangered larks), Pink-billed Lark, and the recently split Eastern Long-billed Lark, Ground Woodpecker, Ant-eating Chat, Buff-streaked Chat, Sentinel Rock Thrush, African Rock Pipit, Yellow-breasted Pipit, Cape Longclaw, Pied Starling, the spectacular Long tailed Widowbird, Yellow-crowned Bishop, African Quailfinch and Cape Canary. Red-winged Francolin is fairly common in the moist grasslands and we may find them feeding at the roadside or sunning themselves at dawn.

Small mammals occurring in the grasslands include Yellow Mongoose and the rare Cape Fox. One of the more interesting denizens of these grasslands is the curious Suricate, or Meerkat. We have a good chance of finding family groups of these unusual yet delightful animals.

## **Day 6: Early AM Wakkerstroom Birding Wrap Up; Rest of Day Birding/Driving to Mkuze**

After some final early morning birding in Wakkerstroom, we will drive south to Mkuze. Mkuze is an area in northern Kwazulu-Natal that is home to a host of exciting specials and a handful of endemics. We will arrive in the mid to late afternoon for a two-night stay.

The Mkuze area is one of the most productive birding hotspots in southern Africa and, with its wide variety of savanna, forest and wetland habitats, you can expect an excellent diversity of bird and mammal species in your days here. While we will take

time to appreciate the overwhelming number of birds, we will concentrate particularly on finding the region's more localized specials. These include Eastern Nicator, Bearded Scrub Robin, Stierling's Wren-Warbler, Four-coloured (Gorgeous) Bushshrike and the stunning Pink-throated Twinspot. More widespread but none-the-less spectacular species that we will look for are Black-bellied Bustard with its strange, "cork-popping" display, the nomadic Senegal Lapwing and the beautiful Narina Trogon.

## **Day 7: Mkuze area**

We will spend the whole day exploring the wonders of the area, searching the great diversity of habitats for its numerous species. One of the more exciting habitats for us here is the park's Sand Forest, a rare and localized dry forest severely threatened by development. This habitat is home to Neergaard's Sunbird, Rudd's Apalis, the rather bizarre looking Crested Guineafowl, and the strange African Broadbill with its unique circular display.

The ephemeral wetlands in the area can be very productive after good rains, and depending on the local conditions we may opt for some time at one of these 'pans' where we will search for Black Heron, Lesser Jacana, African Pygmy Goose and White-backed Duck. While in Mkuze we will be sure to enjoy some 'bushveld' birding – an excellent habitat for raptors and 'flock' birding especially. Here we will be ever vigilant for the huge Crowned Hawk-Eagle and Martial Eagle, Little Sparrowhawk, Grey Penduline Tit, Bushveld Pipit, White-fronted Bee-eater, Little Bee-eater, White-crested Helmetshrike, Grey-headed Bushshrike, Orange-breasted Bushshrike, Purple-banded Sunbird and Marico Sunbird.

If conditions permit, we will do a night walk this evening to look for owls, nightjars and small mammals (Greater Galago and White-tailed Mongoose are often seen).



## **Day 8: Mkuze to St. Lucia**

After some final early morning birding in the Mkuze area, we will make our way to the coastal village of St. Lucia. This is nestled on the shores of a lake of the same name and is part of a world heritage site. If time allows we will take a drive to the nearby river mouth where we can obtain great views of Hippopotamus and Nile Crocodile lazing on exposed sandbanks. The Greater St Lucia Wetland Park is an incredibly important breeding site for many species of waterfowl and protects some excellent patches of coastal forest and grassland. This afternoon we will bird our way slowly through the patch of forest that flanks the St Lucia estuary, which is an excellent site for the regional endemics. Woodward's Batis, Rudd's Apalis, Brown Scrub Robin and Livingstone's Turaco will be the focus of our efforts. Other birds to look out for here include the iridescent African Emerald Cuckoo, the scarce Southern Banded Snake Eagle, Lemon Dove, Grey Waxbill, Red backed Mannikin, Narina Trogon and Red-fronted Tinkerbird.



## **Day 9: Greater St. Lucia Wetland Park to Eshowe**

This morning we will visit the finest and arguably the most beautiful of Zululand's forests, the storied Ngoye forest. This majestic forest enjoys an important place in Zulu history and is a very important site for birders. This is the only place in the world where one can find the endemic subspecies of Green Barbet (Woodward's Barbet). The nearest place to spot the nominate race is hundreds of miles away in northern Mozambique and this, coupled with plumage and song differences, have led many to believe that this is a 'full' species. Ngoye is also a good site for Yellow-streaked Greenbul, African Green Pigeon and White-eared Barbet.

From here we will journey back to the coast, stopping in at the small town of Mtunzini. The town looks down on a wonderful patch of coastal forest and a large plantation of Raffia palms. These palms are an intricate part of the life of the Palm-nut Vulture and this represents the southern breeding limit of this species. Other target specials include Black-throated Wattle-eye and a chance for African Finfoot.



Our final destination for the day is the small town of Eshowe, which gives us an excellent launching pad to locate a number of key species in Dlinza Forest the following day.

## **Day 10: Eshowe to Underberg**

This morning we will enter into the verdant Dlinza Forest that is situated on the outskirts of Eshowe. Our targets here may not be endemic, but they are certainly very special. Spotted Ground Thrush, for instance, which is common here, has a patchy distribution throughout its range and is uncommon everywhere else. We will also amble along the Dlinza canopy walkway in an attempt to locate the very uncommon and sparsely distributed Eastern Bronze-naped Pigeon.

In the afternoon we will make our way towards the fabled Drakensberg. En route we will stop at Impendle N.R., an area of pristine rolling grassland. This locality supports a breeding population of the rare Blue Swallow, a species that only visits our region during the summer months in order to breed. Other birds we have a chance of locating are Dark-capped Yellow Warbler, Red-necked Spurfowl and Fan-tailed Grassbird. In the late afternoon we head for the small town of Underberg that is nestled in the foothills of the Drakensberg mountain range.



## **Day 11: Sani Pass**

Today we travel up into the tiny mountain kingdom of Lesotho in search of a handful of highly localized, highland endemics. In order to do this, we will transfer to 4 by 4 vehicles and make our way up the rugged and spectacular Sani Pass, birding en route. The grassy slopes and rocky outcrops at the lower end of the pass are home to the bizarre Ground Woodpecker, Cape Rock Thrush and Yellow Bishop, while stands of Protea support the spectacular endemic Gurney's Sugarbird (belonging to a family endemic to southern Africa), Greater Double-collared Sunbird and the dazzling Malachite Sunbird. As we approach the crest of the Escarpment, we will be watching rocky scree at the roadside for the stunning Drakensberg Rockjumper, African Rock

Pipit, Sentinel Rock Thrush, Drakensberg Prinia and Drakensberg Siskin. Atop the plateau, the steep slopes and rugged cliffs are replaced by gently undulating terrain and endless vistas of distant, blue mountains. Black Stork and Southern Bald Ibis may be found alongside the mountain streams, while Grey winged Francolin, Red-capped Lark, Sickle-winged Chat, African Pipit, Mountain Pipit, Yellow Canary and Cape Bunting prefer adjacent meadows. A number of birds more typical of the Karoo, such as Grey Tit, Large-billed Lark, Karoo Prinia, Layard's Warbler and Fairy Flycatcher, reach the eastern limits of their ranges here in the Lesotho highlands. We will keep a careful watch skywards as Cape Vulture and the magnificent Bearded Vulture, Verreaux's Eagle, Jackal Buzzard, Lanner Falcon and White-necked Raven are all possible. Other animals of particular interest atop the "Roof of Africa" are the approachable and endearing Slogett's Vlei Rat, the endemic Drakensberg Crag Lizard and the colorful Southern Rock Agama.



## **Day 12: Underberg to Hilton**

We have an early departure this morning for the Karkloof, a range of forested hills not far from the town of Hilton and home to a number of uncommon and local birds restricted to Afro-montane forests. We will be searching for South African endemics such as Forest Buzzard, Knysna Turaco, the highly endangered Cape Parrot, elusive Bush Blackcap - one of South Africa's most sought-after endemics - Chorister Robin-Chat, Greater Double-collared Sunbird, Southern Tchagra, Sweet Waxbill, Forest Canary and Barratt's Warbler. We may also see more widespread, yet no less spectacular, birds such as African Olive Pigeon, Olive Woodpecker, Narina Trogon, the uncommon Orange Ground-Thrush, White-starred Robin, Olive Bushshrike and Yellow throated Woodland Warbler. Further up the Karkloof range we visit a pristine area of upland grassland hosting breeding Black-winged Lapwings, but the star bird is undoubtedly the striking Buff-streaked Chat, an endemic wheatear that is breathtaking both in its appearance and song. Wetlands in this area host a variety of waterfowl that might include the uncommon Maccoa Duck and White-backed Duck, as well as Grey Crowned Crane. If we are lucky, we may encounter a pair of the endangered Wattled Cranes striding majestically across the grasslands.

The afternoon will be spent in a forest near our accommodation. While afternoon forest birding can be challenging, we will make an effort to locate the secretive Buff-spotted Flufftail, White-starred Robin and Chorister Robin-Chat.

### **Day 13: Hilton to De Hoop via Durban and Cape Town**

Today we have a mid morning flight to Cape Town. We will arrive in the “Mother City” in the early afternoon and then make the drive to the De Hoop Nature Reserve. Our drive towards the wheat lands of the Overberg region takes us on a very scenic coastal route where we can enjoy breathtaking views of False Bay and the Indian Ocean. This area is home to a number of stunning birds, none more so than South Africa’s national bird, the Blue Crane, which is occasionally seen here in very large flocks. Other species to keep an eye out for include Agulhas Long-billed Lark, Southern Black Korhaan and Denham’s Bustard. We will overnight at a wonderful lodge next to De Hoop Nature Reserve.



### **Day 14: De Hoop Nature Reserve to Cape Town**

This morning we will enter the reserve and begin our search for Cape Clapper Lark and Southern Tchagra. The endemic Cape Mountain Zebra is refreshingly common here and we may also encounter the shy Cape Grysbok. A nearby patch of woodland houses the most sought-after woodpecker in the country, Knysna Woodpecker. This rather secretive endemic can be very difficult to find - patience and a little luck will be needed to track it down. Further bonuses are the possibility for three honeyguide species, namely Greater, Lesser and Brown-backed Honeybirds, as well as a chance for Black-rumped (Hottentot) Buttonquail. On our route back towards Cape Town we might stop in at Harold Porter Botanical Gardens. This is an excellent site for several tough birds and will serve as a backup for us if we are still on the hunt for some of the Cape endemics. The scenic gardens are blessed with fynbos patches and forested ravines. Victorin's Warbler and Cape Siskin are found here, while commoner species include Black Saw-wing, Malachite Sunbird, Orange breasted Sunbird and Brimstone Canary.



In the afternoon we will stop en route at the rugged Hottentots-Holland's Mountains in search of one of South Africa's finest endemics, the handsome Cape Rockjumper. Though strikingly plumaged and conspicuous by their vocalizations, these charismatic birds possess an incredible ability to disappear amongst the boulders and we may have to be patient if we wish to enjoy prolonged sightings of these elusive creatures. Rock outcrops here also support Ground Woodpecker, White-necked Raven and Cape Rock Thrush, while the thick mountain Fynbos is the favored habitat of Cape Siskin and the smart, endemic Victorin's Warbler. If we are very lucky, we may flush Black-rumped (Hottentot) Buttonquail underfoot or stumble upon a Cape Eagle-Owl at its daytime roost. We will arrive at our accommodation in Cape Town towards the early evening.



## **Day 15: Cape Peninsula (Pelagic)**

The cold upwelling of the Benguela current off Cape Town supports a wealth of pelagic seabirds, with vast concentrations of albatrosses, petrels, shearwaters and prions gathering in the deeper water at the edge of the continental shelf. Though boat trips are generally most productive in mid-winter due to the possibility of vagrants from the Subantarctic, the birding is excellent year-round and we hope to see Shy, Black-browed and Yellow-nosed Albatrosses, Northern and Southern Giant Petrels, Cape and White-chinned Petrels, Sooty, Great, Manx and Cory's Shearwaters, Wilson's and European Storm Petrels, Cape Gannet and Parasitic Jaeger. If we manage to locate one of the commercial fishing trawlers, the birding can be truly spectacular with a cloud of seabirds following in the vessel's wake to feed off any resultant offal. Once the excitement has subsided, we will carefully search through the thousands of birds present for rarities such as Wandering Albatross and Grey (Pediuncle) Petrel or Spectacled Petrel. Cetaceans are almost always encountered and we have a good chance of seeing Southern Right Whale, Bryde's Whale and Dusky Dolphin. It goes without saying that a day off the Cape is likely to be a highlight of any trip to South Africa!

While in False Bay, we will also visit the famous African Penguin colony. The comical antics of the penguins make for superb entertainment and here you will be treated to exceptionally close views of these endearing creatures. African Oystercatcher, Cape Cormorant and the abundant Hartlaub's Gull are often nearby. There will be time

enough for us to hunt down the remaining endemic cormorants and our search will begin not far from the Penguin colony. Crowned Cormorants and Bank Cormorants are largely restricted to southern Africa and their numbers are densest here around the Cape Peninsula. Granite domes, pounded by icy Atlantic swells, are the best areas to search for roosting cormorants.

The weather and ocean conditions off the Cape are extremely unpredictable, so our daily schedule will remain flexible to optimize our birding on land and at sea.

## **Day 16: Cape Peninsula**

Today we have the whole day to explore the peninsula for its numerous endemics. We will start the day off with our greatest challenge, Knysna Warbler. This secretive, drab skulker has frustrated many a birder, and any view of it is a good one! By way of relief we will occasionally focus skyward for Forest Buzzard. After the hard work for the warbler, we then visit Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens, arguably the most beautiful gardens on the continent. This is an excellent site for Cape Spurfowl, Forest Canary, Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawk, Cape Batis, Cape Sugarbird, Orange-breasted Sunbird and further chances for the delightful little Swee Waxbill. The dramatic backdrop of Table Mountain, coupled with the great birding, makes this a very memorable stop.

After enjoying this spectacle we travel to the Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve. This wonderful park showcases the most southwestern point of the continent and is very popular among birders and general tourists alike. Here we should find the impressive Cape Grassbird and Cape Siskin. We will explore the network of roads to less visited parts of the reserve, visiting secluded coves and searching for the elusive Cape Mountain Zebra and Bontebok antelope. In addition, we should see Eland and Chacma Baboon. If time allows we will spend the rest of the day at the productive Strandfontein Water Works. This is one of the best known sites in the country for waterfowl and is always teeming with birds. Yellow-billed Duck, Maccoa Duck, Red-billed Teal, Southern Pochard, Black-necked Grebe, South African Shelduck, African Marsh Harrier and Levillant's Cisticola are all regularly encountered here.



## **Day 17: Cape Town to Langebaan via West Coast National Park**

This morning we will be up early for our drive out to the West Coast National Park, including the globally important wetland sites of the Berg River estuary and Langebaan Lagoon. The morning quest will be dedicated mainly to larks. This time we will be looking for Cape Clapper Lark, a very localized species that favours coastal vegetation called 'strandveld', which is stunted by the salty air from the icy Atlantic. At this time of year we should be treated to the obvious, vocal displays of this species.

Large numbers of shorebirds spend the northern winter here and we will check for Red Knot, Bar-tailed Godwit, Ruddy Turnstone, Grey Plover, Terek Sandpiper, Greater Sand Plover and Eurasian Curlew, as well as Kittlitz's Plover and the localized Chestnut-banded Plover. In addition to the shorebirds, these areas also support large numbers of Greater Flamingo and Lesser Flamingo, South African Shelduck, Cape Shoveler and numerous other waterfowl. The surrounding strandveld is home to Southern Black Korhaan, Grey-winged Francolin, Grey Tit, Cape Penduline Tit, Karoo Lark, Capped Wheatear, Fiscal Flycatcher and the magnificent Black Harrier, surely one of the world's most attractive raptors.



## **Day 18: Langebaan to Calvinia**

We will begin our journey north today, travelling along the main national road out of Cape Town. Our first stop will be at Paleisheuwel, arguably the best site for the tricky Protea Canary. Other birds of interest here are White-backed Mousebird, Layard's Warbler, Chestnut-vented Warbler, the dainty Fairy Flycatcher, Acacia Pied Barbet and Mountain Wheatear.

In the mid afternoon we will arrive in the Calvinia area where we will be in the Karoo proper, with a whole host of special birds now possible on the desolate plains around town. These include Pririt Batis in taller vegetation, Karoo Lark, Spike-heeled Lark, Tractrac, Sickle-winged Chat, Karoo Chat, Rufous-eared Warbler, Yellow Canary, White-throated Canary and Pale Chanting Goshawk. If very fortunate we may see the

nomadic Ludwig's Bustard striding through the desolate plains. The usually dry river system that passes through the town will also form the focus of our attention, as the reedbeds here are home to the endemic Namaqua Warbler (recently assigned to a monotypic genus, *Phragmacia*).



## **Day 19: Calvinia & Brandvlei**

Today we have a full day to search for some of the scarce inhabitants of this unique area. On leaving Calvinia we will search for flocks of Pale-winged Starlings. Three species of lark will be at the top of the hitlist, namely Red Lark, a striking and very range-restricted endemic, and the highly nomadic Sclater's Lark and Black-eared Sparrow-Lark. Some of the many star birds of the region include other nomadics such as Burchell's Courser, while Ashy Tit, Bokmakierie and Pirit Batis should be less of a challenge to find. We will also listen for the distinctive flight calls of Namaqua Sandgrouse and the strange, dawn croaking of the Karoo Korhaan, which will help us locate these cryptically colored birds. Some wonderful non-endemic species are also bound to capture our attention and the magnificent Martial Eagle, Lanner Falcon, Kori Bustard and Double-banded Courser are all likely. Today is also our best chance at finding Dusky Sunbird, while we will make a concerted effort to locate a party of elusive Karoo Eremomelas.

We also have the opportunity of venturing out this evening in search of desert denizens such as Bat-eared Fox, Cape Fox, African Wild Cat, the bizarre Aardwolf and the strange, kangaroo-like Springhare. Nocturnal birds here include Spotted Eagle-Owl, Western Barn Owl and Rufous-cheeked Nightjar.

## **Day 20: Calvinia to Springbok**

This morning we have a fairly lengthy drive on some of the Karoo's typical gravel roads. Our journey gives us further chances for a number of unique Karoo species that we may still be missing. In the afternoon we will make a stop at Goegap Nature Reserve and, while searching the rocky slopes and Acacia lined watercourses, we have great

chances for finding many of the more difficult Karoo endemics. These include the highly localized Cinnamon-breasted Warbler, Karoo Eremomela, Layard's Warbler, Chestnut-vented Warbler, Dusky Sunbird and Black-headed Canary.

## **Day 21: Springbok to Port Nolloth and return**

We have an early start today from Springbok as we strike out for the diamond-mining town of Port Nolloth, a small town nestled near the Namibian border on South Africa's west coast. This area is famous for a single species of lark that is found only here and in the extreme south of Namibia: Barlow's Lark. Another lark that is found in this low coastal scrub is the endemic Cape Long-billed Lark, an outrageous species with the longest bill of any southern African lark. Cape Penduline Tits can also be found feeding while little groups move from bush to bush. The road that gives access to the Barlow's Lark habitat runs up the Atlantic coastline; however, most of the road passes through restricted diamond areas, and no stopping is allowed except for the first few kilometers where we may alight from the vehicles. Along the coastline we could enjoy sightings of Crowned Cormorant, Bank Cormorant, Cape Cormorant, Kelp Gull and the smart African Oystercatcher. In the afternoon we will make our way back inland to Springbok and, if time permits, we will visit the Goegap Nature Reserve once again in an attempt to track down anything that we may still need.



## **Day 22: Springbok to Augrabies Falls National Park**

Our journey today is rather short, though we will still be making many stops en route to search for any specific targets. Before reaching Augrabies Falls our route will take us through a few more of South Africa's prime endemic sites. These include the gravel plains surrounding Pofadder, where Sclater's Lark and Burchell's Courser reside, while the red dunes around Aggenys are a good location for the dune form of Red Lark. The immense communal nests of Sociable Weavers are also conspicuous on telephone poles in this area and these colonies frequently host "tenants" such as Pygmy Falcon and Red-headed Finch. In the late afternoon we arrive at Augrabies Falls National Park for a one night's stay.



A linear oasis in the desert heralds our arrival on the banks of the Orange River, South Africa's largest waterway. We will follow its course westwards to where the river narrows and plunges over the 100m high Augrabies Falls, scouring an impressive gorge on its way to the Atlantic Ocean. The national park, centered on the falls, protects a range of bird-rich habitats, and we will search the riparian vegetation and dry Acacia filled watercourses for Red-necked Spurfowl (an isolated population well west of its usual range), Rosy-faced Lovebird, White-backed Mousebird, Red-faced Mousebird, Acacia Pied Barbet, Black-chested Prinia, Pirit Batis, Dusky Sunbird, the attractive, apricot-flanked form of Orange River White-eye and Black-throated Canary.

### **Day 23: Augrabies Falls National Park to Kimberley**

We have a morning to explore the riches of this scenic reserve. Here we will be scanning the skies constantly, as the rocky gorges below the falls are home to Verreaux's Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Greater Kestrel and large numbers of Alpine Swifts and the endemic Bradfield's Swifts. The apparently desolate, boulder-strewn landscapes away from the river are also well-worth exploring for Mountain Wheatear and Familiar Chat and, if we are lucky, Short-toed Rock Thrush. Although big game is not plentiful in this arid park, we should see the sure-footed Klipspringer and the unusual Dassie Rat, while Rock Hyraxes are numerous and can frequently be seen grazing fresh leaves atop flimsy Acacia bushes! The highly localized, brightly coloured Broadley's Flat Lizard is also conspicuous along the walls of the gorge.

We then embark on the long drive east and south to the fabled mining town of Kimberley, where we will arrive in the early evening.



### **Day 24: Kimberley**

This area sits in a very interesting place, where various biomes comes together from the east, west and north, causing an unusual and interesting avifauna in the area. Mokala National Park has been recently proclaimed and is one of the better places to explore the area. The Kamfer's Dam, situated just outside the town, is usually an excellent place

for Lesser Flamingo and Greater Flamingo as both species have attempted to breed here in the past. We will take some time to bird the mosaic of grassland and Acacia thornveld that dominate the area. Many interesting species can be found in this habitat, and these include the strikingly marked Northern Black Korhaan, stunning Crimson-breasted Shrike, Marico Flycatcher, Long-billed Crombec, Cape Longclaw and Common Scimitarbill. This area also holds some interesting wildlife and bird species that are strictly nocturnal, and tonight we will head out after dark in search of a few of these strange animals. The amazing Aardvark tops the list of potential nocturnal beasts in the area, while other highlights include the endearing Aardwolf and the unusual Springhare. On previous night drives in this region we have recorded over 25 mammal species in a single evening! Night birds include Spotted Eagle-Owl, Marsh Owl and the migratory Rufous-cheeked Nightjar.

## **Day 25: Flights Onward: Travel Kimberley to Johannesburg and then Flights Home**

Today is the final day of our incredible journey through some of South Africa's most beautiful and scenic countryside. We depart Kimberley this morning for the hub of Johannesburg, where the tour will conclude. Many participants will be able to arrange flights home after the tour group reaches Johannesburg. Please contact us to confirm that your flight plans fit well with the return time, and/or to plan another night's stay in Johannesburg.

