



SOUTH AFRICA BIRDING PHOTO TOUR – WESTERN CAPE, WITH EXTENSION TO KRUGER NP

1 – 11 SEPTEMBER 2017



Cape Rockjumper (photo Andre Stapelberg) is one of our targets on this trip.

South Africa's Western Cape Province is scenically stunningly beautiful and hugely varied – from rocky sea cliffs and impressive mountains rising straight out of the sea to everything from moist temperate forests through to semi-desert, peaceful lakes, and a great deal more.

We begin our Cape birding photo tour in one of the world's most scenically spectacular cities, Cape Town. The growth of this city is constrained by imposing geographical features – Table Mountain, the Cape of Good Hope, and of course the sea – the whole of Cape Town is on a stunning-looking peninsula that was once an island. The Cape Peninsula is full of localized endemics restricted to the world's most plant-diverse floral kingdom, the Fynbos Biome (which has more plant species per unit area than even the Amazon). Some of these endemic birds restricted to the fynbos biome are dazzling; they include the likes of **Orange-breasted Sunbird**, **Southern Double-collared Sunbird**, **Cape Sugarbird** with its incredibly long tail, and many others. The nearby False Bay coast hosts one of the Cape's most sought-after birds, the charismatic **Cape Rockjumper** – along with **Cape Rock Thrush**, **Sentinel Rock Thrush**, and many others. We'll also look for seabirds, such as **African Penguin**, **Cape Gannet**, and more. The Cape is also famed for whale watching – southern right whales in particular come very close inshore (seasonal).

After a few days around Cape Town itself we head up the West Coast, which is much drier and has a whole new suite of birds (and other wildlife) we will try to photograph. In the West Coast National Park and other great sites we hope to encounter **Common Ostrich**, **Black Harrier**, **Southern Black Korhaan**, **Cape Penduline Tit**, **Grey-winged Francolin**, and other stunning (and often very localized) birds. We will also look for new mammals, such as the West Coast endemic Heaviside's dolphin, strange rock hyrax (which looks like a large rodent but is more closely related to elephants!), and others.

We then head inland to the Karoo semi-desert. This area has even more endemics than the Cape Peninsula (fynbos biome), and we will look and try and photograph various larks, **Black-headed Canary** and other canaries, **Karoo Korhaan**, **Ludwig's Bustard**, and all the others. There is also a chance of encountering some great mammals, which could even include something like a caracal or an armadillo (both these require a huge dose of luck!).

Eventually we head back to the coast – but this time the East Coast. After crossing imposing mountain ranges, which form rain-shadows that actually create the semi-desert we will have just spent time in, we fairly abruptly find ourselves in a different world in amazing contrast to the arid Karoo – here we see green forests and beautiful lakes. This is the Garden Route – an idyllic area you truly will not want to leave. You could spend two weeks just here, photographing birds and other wildlife, and of course the stunning scenery. However, the aim of this tour is to introduce you to the diverse habitats of the entire Western Cape Province. We do this at a pace suited to wildlife photography, though, and rush around a bit less than on a standard birding tour.

En route to the Garden Route, in the Agulhas Plains, we have a great chance at finding the fine-looking Cape mountain zebra, striking bontebok, and many wondrous birds such as **Secretarybird**, **White Stork**, **Denham's Bustard**, loads of **Blue Crane** (South Africa's stunning national bird), some localized endemics such as **Agulhas Long-billed Lark**, **Cape Clapper Lark**, **Southern Tchagra** – and, as always, loads more.

In the Garden Route itself we'll probably find the jewel-like **Half-collared Kingfisher**, the gorgeous (there is no better word for it) **Knysna Turaco** with its green body and scarlet underwings, and a rich diversity of other birds – plus some nice mammals, as always.

You can either fly or drive (5 hours) back to Cape Town from the Garden Route, or you can fly from the Garden Route to Kruger Mpumalanga International Airport for a 5-day extension to one of Africa's greatest game parks, the Kruger National Park. Here we have a good chance at photographing the "Big Five", as well as a host of other, smaller mammals. Kruger is one of the richest national parks for mammals on the entire African continent. What's more, it also has over 500 bird species, most of which are extremely easy to see in the dry woodlands and savanna – you will see multiple species of brightly colored and spectacular rollers, bee-eaters, storks, eagles, vultures, hornbills, and more.

Please note that the detailed itinerary below 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.

Itinerary (11 days/10 nights)

Day 1. Cape Peninsula

Birding photography

Overnight: at the lovely "birder-friendly" Avian Leisure B&B, Simon's Town

Day 2. Cape Peninsula

Birding photography.

Overnight: Avian Leisure B&B, Simon's Town

Day 3. Cape Peninsula

Birding photography.

Overnight: Avian Leisure B&B, Simon's Town

Day 4. West Coast National Park

Drive one hour north of Cape Town to the West Coast National Park area, birding photography.

Overnight: Le Mahi Guest House, Langebaan

Day 5. Tankwa Karoo

Scenic drive (3 hours) inland, birding photography.

Overnight: Village B&B, Ceres, or Tanqua B&B, Route 355

Day 6. Tankwa Karoo

Spend a full day in the Tankwa Karoo semi-desert, which is full of localized birds found nowhere else in the world.

Overnight: Village B&B, Ceres, or Tanqua B&B, Route 355

Day 7. Agulhas Plains

A 3.5-hour drive to the east, birding photography.

Overnight: Pride of Africa B&B, Agulhas

Day 8. Agulhas Plains

Birding photography.

Overnight: Pride of Africa B&B, Agulhas

Day 9. Garden Route

A 2.5-hour drive further east, birding photography

Overnight: Wilderness Ebb & Flow Rest Camp, Garden Route National Park

Day 10. Garden Route

Birding photography.

Overnight: Wilderness Ebb & Flow Rest Camp, Garden Route National Park

Day 11. Departure

A 20-minute drive to George airport for a flight back to Cape Town, **or** a 5-hour drive back to Cape Town, or a flight to Kruger Mpumalanga International Airport for the Kruger National Park extension.

Kruger National Park extension

(Day 1 of the extension is the same as Day 11 of the main tour.)

Days 11 – 15. Kruger National Park

A few days photographing Africa's "Big Five" as well as small animals and a host of birds – many of them extremely photogenic (spectacular, large, and tame – e.g. hornbills, barbets, storks, birds of prey, etc.).

Overnight: Rest camps, Kruger National Park

Duration:	11 or 15 days
Group size:	4 – 7
Date:	1 September – 11 or 15 September 2017
Start:	Cape Town
End:	George

Price for the main tour:	R43,588
Single supplement:	R6,918
Price for the extension:	R23,180
Single supplement:	R3,819

Price includes:

Meals

Accommodation

Entrance fees

Guiding fees

All transport while on tour

Bottled water through the entire tour

Price excludes:

International flights

Flight George – Kruger for the extension

Personal insurance
Drinks
Tips
Laundry
Personal expenses such as gifts