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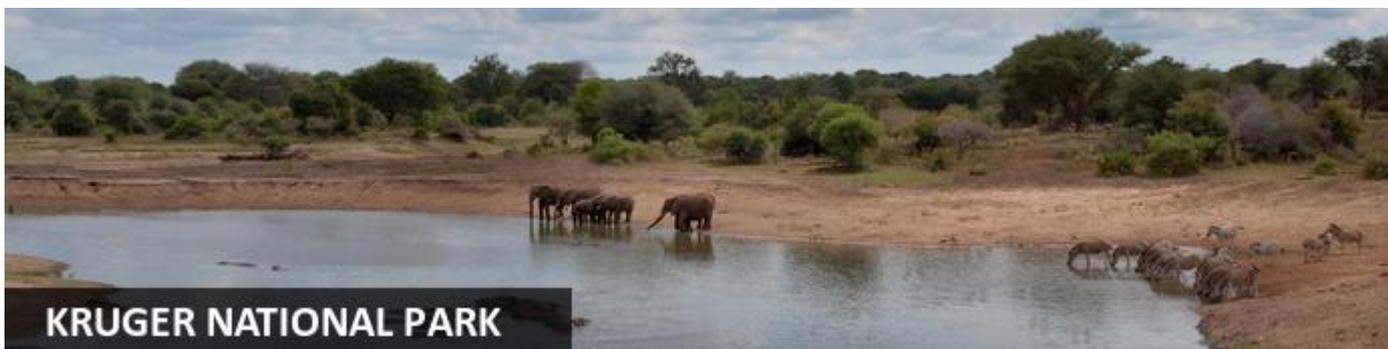
**EASTERN SOUTH AFRICA ENDEMICS - 2023**

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**MPUMALANGA**



**KRUGER NATIONAL PARK**



**MAGOE BASKLOOF**



**LIMPOPO**

## EASTERN SOUTH AFRICA ENDEMICS - 2023

*Creighton - Eshowe - St Lucia - Tembe Elephant Park - Mpumalanga - Kruger National Park - Magoebaskloof - Limpopo*

*16 Days / 15 Nights*

*Reference: S10/23*

**17 November 2023 - 02 December 2023**



[Click here to view your Digital Itinerary](#)

## Introduction

With the Western South Africa Birding Safari tour just completed, it's now time to tackle the Eastern side. Note that the two back-to-back tours can be done together to form a South African Endemics mega-tour. Alternatively, they can be done as stand-alone tours.

South Africa is extremely rich in endemic birds. It's home to 69 endemics and near-endemics. And there are two bird families that are essentially endemic. These are the Rockjumpers and the Sugarbirds. They are shared only with the small land-locked countries of Lesotho and eSwatini. In his outstanding book, *The Birder's Guide to Africa* (ISBN978-0-620-71725-0), Michael Mills rates it as the top African country in 3 out of 5 categories, and number 2 in one of the other two categories. And the large number of endemics and near-endemics play a large part in this high rating. Thus, the endemics and near-endemics are the main focus of our two endemics tours. For global birders this gives the chance to see almost all of the endemics and a large proportion of the near-endemics in one go. Now that's a pretty awesome goal!

## Areas covered

Our eastern **South Africa Birding Safari** starts in Umhlanga, near the port city of Durban. From there we do Sani Pass in the Southern Drakensberg. Next up is Eshowe and Dlinza Forest. We then move on to St Lucia on the Indian Ocean coast. Heading north we visit Tembe Elephant Park. Wakkerstroom and its first-class birding is next up. And then we visit the Kruger National Park. After that it's the misty forests of Magoebaskloof. And finally, we have a last stop in Polokwane. The tour then ends off in Johannesburg.

## Accommodation

The accommodation is of a medium-plus standard. It includes several guest houses, a tented safari lodge, national park chalets and a small hotel. Importantly, all accommodations have en-suite facilities, and are clean and comfortable.

## The birding

Endemics are the name of the game! Our South Africa birding safari covers most of the birding hot-spots of the eastern side of South Africa. These spots have been chosen on the basis of their special birds and geographic location to create a concise route. This route is designed to maximise the chances for the endemics. These endemics include: Drakensberg Rockjumper, Drakensberg Siskin, Gurney's Sugarbird, Bush Blackcap, Cape Vulture, Southern Bald Ibis, Ground Woodpecker, Cape Parrot, Eastern Long-billed Lark, Rudd's Lark, Botha's Lark, Blue Korhaan, Chorister Robin-Chat, Knysna Turaco, Buff-streaked Chat, African Rock Pipit, Yellow-breasted Pipit, Drakensberg Prinia and many others. Exciting near-endemics and other specials include: Blue Crane, Jackal Buzzard, Cape Vulture, Lammergeier, Southern Banded Snake Eagle, Bokmakierie, Plain-backed Sunbird, African Broadbill, Secretary bird, Livingstone's Turaco, Southern Ground Hornbill, Orange Ground Thrush, Narina Trogon, Short-clawed Lark and many others.

## The mammals

Although this is primarily a birding safari, there are plenty of mammals and other wildlife to see. For example, these include the classic African big game species such as: Elephant, African Buffalo, Lion, Leopard, South African Giraffe and Hippopotamus. In addition, one can expect to see a range of Antelope, plus some smaller species such as various Primates, Honey Badger, Black-backed Jackal, various Mongoose species and others. In addition, there's a range of reptiles, amphibians, butterflies and other insects to be seen.

## Group size

Maximum of 12 participants; 6 participants per vehicle / guide.

## Expected weather conditions

The interior will be hot and mildly humid this time of year. The Kwazulu-Natal region will be hot along the coast, and also with a chance of rain.

In conclusion, this South Africa Birding Safari offers the more serious birders a real chance at bagging most of the endemics of eastern South Africa. The pace is quite fast, as there's a lot of ground to cover, so it's not really suited to the more casual birder. But for serious birders, combining our two endemics tours offers a real chance to 'clean up' on South Africa's specials.

Have a look at our Western South Africa Endemics safari.

Accommodation	Destination	Start	End	Basis	Duration
Smithfield Guest House	Creighton	17 Nov	19 Nov	FB	<b>2 Nights</b>
Eshowe Guest House	Eshowe	19 Nov	20 Nov	FB	<b>1 Night</b>
St Lucia Kingfisher Lodge	St Lucia	20 Nov	22 Nov	FB	<b>2 Nights</b>
Tembe Elephant Park Lodge	Tembe Elephant Park	22 Nov	24 Nov	FB	<b>2 Nights</b>
Wetlands Country House & Sheds	Mpumalanga	24 Nov	26 Nov	FB	<b>2 Nights</b>
Pretoriuskop Rest Camp	Kruger National Park	26 Nov	27 Nov	FB	<b>1 Night</b>
Skukuza Rest Camp	Kruger National Park	27 Nov	28 Nov	FB	<b>1 Night</b>
Satara Main Camp	Kruger National Park	28 Nov	30 Nov	FB	<b>2 Nights</b>
Orion Magoebaskloof Hotel	Magoebaskloof	30 Nov	1 Dec	FB	<b>1 Night</b>
Plumtree Lodge	Limpopo	1 Dec	2 Dec	FB	<b>1 Night</b>

## Key

FB: Full Board - Dinner, Bed, Breakfast and Lunch

## Price

**ZAR 71 995** per person sharing

**ZAR 7 000** single supplement

## Included

- Accommodation
- All breakfasts and dinners
- Ground transport
- Lawson's insulated water bottle
- Entrance fees
- Personalised checklists

- Specialist guide fees

## Excluded

- All airfares
- Travel and medical insurance
- Lunches
- All drinks
- Optional excursions where applicable
- Gratuities
- Items of a personal nature

## Day 1-3: Friday, 17 November to Sunday, 19 November Smithfield Guest House, Creighton

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### Day Itinerary

**Note:** *participants continuing on from the Western Endemics set-departure will need to overnight with the guide in Umhlanga on the 16th November at own cost. Participants not doing Western Endemics also need to overnight with the others in Umhlanga on the 16th at own cost. Participants who arrive on the 17th may incur additional transfer costs as the connecting flights from Johannesburg generally only arrive mid- to late-morning. Please consult us about appropriate flights.*

Our tour of Eastern South Africa will begin this morning in Umhlanga, with an early morning birding trip down to the Umhlanga Nature Reserve before breakfast. After breakfast we'll pack up and depart for our first stop at Creighton in the foothills of the Southern Drakensberg, with some birding stops en-route. Arriving in the afternoon we'll have some time to settle in, perhaps visiting the local Amur Falcon roost at sunset. Our full day is bound to be an exciting one as we make our way up Sani Pass, one of the most scenic passes in South Africa, leading up into Lesotho. Not only will we be immersed in spectacular scenery, but will also have some cracking birds to look out for. Some of the birds we'll focus on at the foot of the pass are Malachite Sunbird, Gurney's Sugarbird, Buff-streaked Chat, Cape Rock-Thrush, Bush Blackcap, Barratt's Warbler and White-necked Raven. As we continue to climb, the vegetation slowly changes and shrubs start disappearing leaving only low scrub and grassland, and from this point on we'll start to focus on the next set of specials, with Drakensberg Siskin and Drakensberg Rockjumper being two of our target species, along with Bearded Vulture which could be seen anywhere from this point onwards. Once we reach the top of the pass we'll officially cross over into Lesotho (passports are needed here), and after a short distance we'll start to look for birds such as Southern Bald Ibis, Southern Grey Tit, Layard's Tit-babbler, Large-billed Lark, Mountain Pipit, Fairy Flycatcher, Sickie-winged Chat, Sentinel Rock Thrush and Yellow Canary, among others. We'll have a lunch stop at an old quarry where we often find Ground Woodpecker, and should we still need Drakensberg Rockjumper, we'll carry on a bit further up Black Mountain to search for this iconic species. Afterwards we'll drive back to Creighton, arriving late the afternoon, before we settle in for another lovely meal and what's bound to be a good night's rest.

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### South Africa

Officially listed as one of the most biologically diverse countries on earth, South Africa is made up of a staggering variety of landscapes and habitats. From near-desert on the west coast to sub-alpine scrub at the top of the Drakensberg at 3000 meters above sea-level, the unique Fynbos in the Cape and the savanna of the north-east, the visitor to South Africa will be enthralled by constantly changing landscapes. This diversity lends itself to an incredibly rich fauna and flora component, making South Africa a particularly exciting destination for the birder and natural history enthusiast.

## Creighton

Set in South Africa's KwaZulu Natal Province, the small settlement of Creighton lies in the Harry Gwala District Municipality. Boasting vast valleys filled with thousands of flaming flowering aloes in winter, Creighton hosts an annual festival which offers visitors the opportunity to ride a steam train which meanders along the Umzimkulu River alongside the blazing blooming spectacle. Creighton serves as a great base from which to explore the incredibly scenic surrounding landscapes. Train enthusiasts and nature lovers will be in their element. Other popular activities include: enjoying a thrilling hot-air balloon ride over the spectacularly scenic countryside, as well as trail running, mountain biking and picnicking.

### Overnight: Smithfield Guest House

Set in the beautiful Creighton Valley, flanked by dairy farms, Smithfield Guest House offers guests a home-away-from-home with comfort and warm hospitality. The home is surrounded by a tranquil garden on a working farm. Since opening in 1999, the Guest House has accommodated local and international travellers from far and wide. The home-stead originally built in 1908, has 4 double bedrooms. There are 2 garden cottages with views overlooking the distant Umzimkulu River.

From the kitchen, homemade dishes are lovingly prepared and shared at the long yellow-wood dining table. Meals are usually a communal affair. Breakfasts are often enjoyed out in the garden in summer. Guests are encouraged to relax and enjoy the garden, verandah, lounge and TV-rooms at their leisure.



### Activities

Sani Pass

#### *Sani Pass*

The only driveable pass over the Ukhahlamba-Drakensberg Mountains.

## Day 3: Sunday, 19 November

### Eshowe Guest House, Eshowe

#### Day Itinerary

We'll be up early once more as we drive to a nearby forest site to try and locate one of our target species in the form of the endangered Cape Parrot (though we have a good chance of seeing these at the end of the tour in

Magoebaskloof, so we may alter the plan for the morning, considering what species are around at the time), as well as the highly endangered Blue Swallow. We'll then make our way back to Smithfield for breakfast and departure for Eshowe, a small town situated in the rolling hills just inland from the coast. On the way we'll take a birding detour into the Karkloof Valley, where we'll search for a range of species, with Pale-crowned Cisticola, Black-winged Lapwing and Wattled Crane in particular being high up on our list of wanted birds, although we stand a chance of finding all three southern African Crane species. Eventually we'll get to Eshowe around mid-afternoon, allowing us a bit of time to visit the small Dlinza Forest for the thinly-distributed Spotted Ground-Thrush, with a healthy population of these birds breeding in the forests here. We'll then have time to freshen up before dinner.

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## Eshowe

Overlooking the Zululand coastal plain, Eshowe is surrounded by the stunning Dlinza Forest with its wildflowers and lush, diverse vegetation. Like most of the destinations in the area, Eshowe has an interesting historical heritage connected to Norwegian missionaries, four Zulu kings and British soldiers. It is the oldest European settlement in Zululand. Now a bustling commercial hub, the town is a popular destination offering visitors an array of attractions and activities. The undeniable highlight being the opportunity to explore Dlinza Forest along a network of scenic hiking trails including the Dlinza Forest Aerial Boardwalk for bird's eye view. Other highlights include visiting the Zululand Brewery and visiting the historic Adams Outpost Restaurant in the Fort Nongqayi Museum Village in Eshowe.

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## Overnight: Eshowe Guest House

Eshowe Guest House is located in Eshowe, South Africa. The guest house is set in a large tranquil garden adjacent to the Dlinza Forest and a stone's throw away from the Dlinza Forest Aerial Boardwalk.



Further Information: <http://eshoweguesthouse.com/>

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## Day 4-6: Monday, 20 November to Wednesday, 22 November St Lucia Kingfisher Lodge, St Lucia

### Day Itinerary

We'll start the day with an early morning cup of tea or coffee on the forest canopy tower in the hope of finding the shy Eastern Bronze-naped Pigeon, with these birds being most easily found during the very early morning when they perch in the forest canopy to preen before spending the rest of the day within the canopy feeding. Afterwards we'll have another stroll around the forest hopefully locating more Spotted Ground-Thrushes, along with Olive Woodpecker, Lemon Dove, Green Twinspot, Purple-crested Turaco, White-eared Barbet, Scaly-throated Honeyguide,

Cape Batis and possibly Green Malkoha. After returning for breakfast we'll pack up for the drive through to St Lucia, with some birding on the way there as we visit Ongoye Forest for Green Barbet, with this forest being the only locality in Southern Africa for this species, as well as a stop at Mtunzini to try and find Palmnut Vulture. We'll have a direct drive from here through to St Lucia, arriving mid to late afternoon and having the rest of the day off to relax after a very busy few days, with a birding stroll in the town as an option for those with enough energy left.

On our full day we'll have an early start as we visit the Cape Vidal section of the iSimangaliso Wetlands National Park where, besides game species such as Cape Buffalo, Common Reedbuck, Plains Zebra and Greater Kudu, we'll search for birds such as Woodward's Batis, Rudd's Apalis, Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher, Brown Scrub-Robin, Red-backed Mannikin, Livingstone's Turaco and Southern Banded Snake-Eagle, Grey Waxbill, Black-throated Wattle-eye, Red-capped Robin Chat and Pink-throated Twinspot, among others. We'll return to town early the afternoon with some time to relax before having an early afternoon stroll around the estuary itself where we'll search for Yellow-billed Stork, African Openbill, African Pygmy-Goose, Rufous-winged Cisticola, Goliath Heron, Great White Egret and Water Thick-Knee, whilst a number of waders such as Common Whimbrel, Sanderling, Little Stint and Curlew Sandpiper may also be seen. Depending on conditions and access at the time, we may also have a stroll down to the Umfolozi River mouth where a number of terns and waders may be found in the late afternoon, including Caspian, Common, Greater Crested, Lesser Crested, Swift and Little Terns, whilst Terek Sandpiper, Greater and Lesser Sand Plover, Common Ringed Plover and Grey Plover occur as well.

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## St Lucia

iSimangaliso is a Zulu word meaning "place of wonder". In 1999 iSimangaliso Wetlands Park was declared South Africa's first United Nations World Heritage Conservation Site.

St Lucia, originally founded by Portuguese settlers in 1575 as Santa Lucia, sits between the Indian Ocean and the estuary and lake system to which it gives its name. The town acts as the southern gateway to the whole of the iSimangaliso Wetlands

The magnificent St Lucia Estuary, which is one of the largest in Africa stretching over 85 kilometers, features abundant wildlife, pristine natural beauty, and a wide range of wonderful activities. This haven of tranquillity offers a variety of activities including excellent mountain biking, hiking, bird watching and deep-sea fishing. Visitors can also look forward to thrilling night drive safaris, hippo and crocodile cruises, and many comfortable accommodation options.

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## Overnight: St Lucia Kingfisher Lodge

Kingfisher Lodge has been run as a high quality, family-owned bed and breakfast for over 25 years.

Located at the very end of the town's main street, McKenzie Street, the lodge's beautiful gardens merge into the surrounding forest to provide an air of complete peace and tranquillity, yet the shops and restaurants and other amenities of the town are only a short walk or drive away.




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## Day 6-8: Wednesday, 22 November to Friday, 24 November

### Tembe Elephant Park Lodge, Tembe Elephant Park

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#### Day Itinerary

We'll start the day with an early morning stroll along the iGwalagwala trail to try and find any coastal forest species we may have missed before, such as Woodward's Batis, Livingstone's Turaco, Brown Scrub-Robin, Green Malkoha, Black-throated Wattle-eye, Rudd's Apalis and Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher, before loading up the vehicle for the drive through to the coastal region known as Maputaland for another two night stay. On the way there however we'll spend a bit of time birding at two different sites. At the first site we'll search for Lemon-breasted Canary and Rosy-throated Longclaw, while at the second site the marshy floodplain of the uMkhuze River may turn up Collared Pratincole, African Pygmy-Goose, Southern Brown-throated Weaver, Yellow Weaver, Rufous-winged Cisticola, Red-billed Teal, Fulvous Whistling Duck, Kitlitz's Plover, Spur-winged Goose, Black-winged Stilt and Hottentot Teal. Moving on we'll continue to our destination, Tembe Elephant Park.

This is a large reserve on the border of South Africa and Mozambique, and is co-owned by the people of the local Tembe tribe. Much of Tembe comprises pristine sand forest habitat, which is where we'll look for special birds such as Pink-throated Twinspot, Plain-backed Sunbird, Woodward's Batis, Grey Waxbill, Rudd's Apalis, African Broadbill and many others. Other habitats include grassy vleis (marshes) where we may see Black Coucal, Saddle-billed Stork, Purple Heron and Rosy-throated Longclaw, with a bit of luck. As its name implies Tembe is also home to a large number of African Elephants, many of which carry some impressive ivory (unfortunately Isilo, their biggest tusker, died of natural causes early in 2014). In addition to some wonderful Elephant encounters we'll hope to see Lion, and will no doubt see antelope species such as Impala, Nyala, Kudu, Suni and Red Duiker. Other species to see include Red Squirrel, Thick-tailed Bushbaby, Bushpig and Warthog. We should arrive at Tembe in the mid-afternoon in time for our afternoon game and birding drive in open-sided Land-Cruise game viewers. We'll return to camp for dinner and drinks under the African night sky. On our full day we'll have a morning drive, followed by breakfast and a chance to visit the hide and relax in the camp through the heat of the day. We'll then have another afternoon drive followed by dinner once again.

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#### Tembe Elephant Park

There is a place in Africa where the wild Elephants still roam. The legendary Ivory Route where the great tuskers still tramp their ancient pathways through dense sand forest and tall yellow grass. Tembe Elephant Park is a 300 square kilometer reserve between Zululand and Mozambique, home to Africa's large elephants as well as the smallest

antelope, the Suni, 340 bird species and myriad other animals. The creatures roam through a mosaic of sand forest, woodland, savannah, and swamp.

The Big Five also find their home in the region with Lion, Leopard, Black and White Rhino and Buffalo, as well as more than 340 bird species and myriad other animals and plants. It is a world of hot silence and white sand, where the busy modern world ceases to exist and only the rising and setting of the sun marks the passage of time. It is also the ancestral home of the Tembe people, a place of warm African hospitality and classic safari food.

### **Overnight: Tembe Elephant Park Lodge**

Tembe Safari Lodge offers accommodations in canvas tents, so as not to block out the sounds of the bush. There is a timelessness about Tembe that is invigorating and refreshing. Guests can indulge in an after dinner fireside, with songs, stories and a possible nightcap. It is where guests will find the story of Africa and legend, of adventure and myth.



## **Day 8-10: Friday, 24 November to Sunday, 26 November**

### **Wetlands Country House & Sheds, Mpumalanga**

#### **Day Itinerary**

Today we'll have an early birding drive to try and locate any species we have missed, followed by breakfast and departure for Wakkerstroom, a small agricultural town in the Southern Mpumalanga highlands that is well known as one of South Africa's best birding spots. We should arrive in the mid to late afternoon and if time (and energy) allows we'll take a short drive down to the large wetland on the edge of town. This wetland and expanse of open water is easily viewable from the road bridge and we should record species such as Grey Crowned Crane, Purple Swamphen, Little Bittern, Black-crowned Night-Heron, African Spoonbill, Hamerkop, Cape Weaver, African Reed Warbler, Cape Grassbird and others. In the late afternoon we'll head back to our accommodation and then head into town for dinner, searching for Spotted Eagle Owl on the way.

On our full day we'll have a long excursion in the Wakkerstroom area, where the hilltops rise to over 2000 meters above sea level and the lack of intensive agriculture makes for superb Highveld grassland habitat. We'll head out early on and extended birding excursion, taking a packed breakfast and coffee basket with us and using the assistance of a local guide. There are various loops in the area, and special birds we'll be looking out for include Blue Crane, Secretary bird, Blue Korhaan, White-bellied Bustard, Ground Woodpecker, Quail Finch, Marsh Owl, Pale-crowned Cisticola, Bush Blackcap, Southern Bald Ibis, Eastern Long-billed Lark, African Rock Pipit, Yellow-breasted Pipit, Drakensberg Prinia, Red-throated Wryneck and Rudd's and Botha's Larks, the two specials for the area. Mammals we may see include

Yellow Mongoose and the endearing Meerkat / Suricate. We'll return to the guest house in the afternoon and may opt to head down to the wetland again before dinner.

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## Mpumalanga

Divided by the Drakensberg Escarpment, Mpumalanga - meaning 'where the sun rises' - is a province in eastern South Africa. Known as the Highveld, Mpumalanga's western region features grassland, with the eastern 'Lowveld' region mostly comprised of savanna. Popular tourist attractions include the Sabi-Sand Game Reserve, known for its amazing leopard sightings and the Kruger National Park, home to the renowned Big Five. Visitors can also look forward to a wide selection of wonderful activities such as excellent wildlife viewing, white water rafting down the Sabie River, and visiting the iconic Blyde River Canyon, one of the world's largest and greenest canyons. Other popular activities include: camping, bird watching, hiking, swimming, abseiling, canyoning, fishing and guided nature walks.

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## Overnight: Wetlands Country House & Sheds

Wetlands Country House & Sheds is the perfect place for that getaway from the everyday buzz. A mere three hours from Johannesburg this gem offers a great escape nestled in one of South-Africa's best kept natural secrets. Breathtaking views of grasslands and wetlands, surrounds you whilst you are awakened by birdsong that seems out of this world.

From the lounge and breakfast room you will be greeted by magnificent views of Martin's dam and nearby waterfall which will ensure a tranquil breakfast experience.



Further Information: <https://www.wetlandscountryhouse.co.za/>

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## Day 10: Sunday, 26 November

### Pretoriuskop Rest Camp, Kruger National Park

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#### Day Itinerary

We'll start the day with some time at the wetland and perhaps a short drive before returning to our guesthouse for breakfast and departure for Pretoriuskop Camp in the Kruger National Park. The drive there won't offer too much in terms of birding, although we stand a good chance of encountering Southern Bald Ibis along the way, whilst raptors such as Common Buzzard, Jackal Buzzard and Long-crested Eagle are often seen perched along roadside telephone poles. We'll aim to reach Nelspruit in time for lunch, before continuing on to the Kruger National Park. We'll enter at Numbi Gate and make our way straight in to Pretoriuskop Rest Camp. After settling in we can either take a walk around the camp grounds, which can produce Brown-headed Parrot, Purple-crested Turaco, Scarlet-chested Sunbird, Bennet's

Woodpecker, Red-headed Weaver and perhaps even Pearl-spotted Owlet. Alternatively, and if time and energy levels allow, we can take a short drive in the area to look for some of the other Pretoriuskop specials such as Striped Kingfisher, Bushveld Pipit, Black-bellied Bustard, Dark Chanting Goshawk, Lizard Buzzard and many more. We'll then have a little time to settle in before dinner.

### **Kruger National Park**

Stretching over more than two million hectares, the famous Kruger National Park is one of the world's largest game reserves and a truly remarkable destination. Owing to its exceptional size, visitors are able to experience fantastic diversity – from changing scenery and ecosystems to an impressive array of animals, plant life and birdlife. The park is home to over 130 mammals and over 500 bird species. Visitors can look forward to learning about the area's prehistoric past, enjoying a host of accommodation options, and viewing abundant wildlife including the famed Big Five. The diversity and sheer density of wildlife make Kruger National Park an unforgettable and once-in-a-lifetime experience.

### **Overnight: Pretoriuskop Rest Camp**

Pretoriuskop Camp is one of the oldest camps in the Kruger National Park. Much of this old atmosphere has been retained with only a few modifications, such as restaurants, a shop, a petrol station and one of the best swimming pools in the park. The accommodation is grouped into 3 circles centered round a compact administrative block and spaciouly laid between lush green lawns.



## **Day 11: Monday, 27 November**

### **Skukuza Rest Camp, Kruger National Park**

#### **Day Itinerary**

From Pretoriuskop we'll make our way to Skukuza, situated on the southern bank of the Sabie River, one of the biggest and most biologically diverse rivers in the park. The permanent water in the Sabie River supports a large population of Impala, which in turn support predators such as Leopard and Lion and we'll hope to have a few sightings of these during our time here. There are also a few packs of Wild Dogs in the area and we'll hope to have a sighting of these endangered predators, while general game we should encounter includes species such as Warthog, Plains Zebra, Blue Wildebeest, African Buffalo and of course African Elephant, with the latter two species often heading down to the river to bathe and wallow during the heat of the day. We should arrive in camp in the afternoon and have some time to either relax or to head out on a short afternoon drive before dinner. Birds we'll be looking out for in the area include Bearded Scrub Robin, White-browed Robin Chat, Goliath Heron, White-crowned Lapwing, Purple-crested Turaco,

African Green Pigeon, African Goshawk, Verreaux's Eagle Owl, Martial Eagle, Hooded Vulture, African Finfoot, Saddle-billed, Yellow-billed and Black Storks, Water Thick-knee, Giant Kingfisher, Wire-tailed and Mosque Swallows, White-fronted Bee-eater and many others.

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### Overnight: Skukuza Rest Camp

Skukuza Rest Camp, named after the first Warden of the park, Sir James Stevenson-Hamilton (the name, given to him by the local staff, meaning something to the effect of 'he who sweeps clean') is the headquarters and operations center for the entire park. Although it has a reputation for being large and busy, it's generally quiet around the rooms, and the camp itself offers some good birding opportunities. The surrounding area is also rich in wildlife, especially in the dry season when the permanent Sabie River provides a focal point for animal activity. It also features a doctor, a shop, a bank, a post office, a library, a museum, a restaurant and a cafeteria with decks overlooking the river.




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## Day 12-14: Tuesday, 28 November to Thursday, 30 November

### Satara Main Camp, Kruger National Park

#### Day Itinerary

Today we'll have a morning birding and wildlife session before breakfast and departure for Satara Rest Camp, situated in the basalt plains to the north, some 92 kilometres away by road. The habitat will change as we head north and leave the bushy granitic soil vegetation biome behind us. The Satara region is characterised by open basalt grasslands and Knob-thorn savannah. It is flat and low in altitude above sea level, with some semi-permanent water courses running with a roughly west to east orientation. The low rainfall figures and generally warm climate make for sweet and mixed grasslands, and these attract herds of grazers such as Burchell's Zebra, Blue Wildbeest and Cape Buffalo. These in turn attract predators such as Lion and Spotted Hyena, while Leopard and Cheetah prey on the smaller species such as Warthog, Impala and Common Duiker. The area is rich in birdlife too and daily lists of well over a hundred species are possible in the summer. Notable species we'll be looking out for include Kori Bustard, Common Ostrich, Southern Ground Hornbill, Saddle-billed Stork, Lappet-faced and White-headed Vultures, Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Lark, Double-banded Sandgrouse, Secretarybird, Sabota Lark, Verreaux's Eagle Owl, Namaqua Dove and Red-crested Korhaan, among others. The journey will probably take up most of the day and we'll probably arrive in camp in the late afternoon, hot and tired but well rewarded for the time put in. We'll then have some time at our chalets after checking in, and perhaps meet up in front of the restaurant with our scopes in the late afternoon to see if any Double-banded Sandgrouse come to the camp waterhole to drink before nightfall. We'll then have a drink while we do our checklists before dinner and bed.

On our full day we'll start off with a cup of coffee or tea before a long morning drive, returning to camp for brunch at around 10h00. There are various routes to choose from – one can basically head, north, east, south or west from the camp. North is usually the call for the first morning, where the open plains country are a good bet for species such as Common Ostrich, Kori Bustard, Chestnut-backed Sparrowlark, Desert Cisticola and Secretarybird, while the sharp eye may turn up a roosting Verreaux's Eagle Owl in one of the many stands of Leadwood Trees growing along the creeks beds. Vultures are also reasonably common here and one can see all five species gathered together at feeding sites or the Witpens watering trough, where they gather to bathe in large numbers. After breakfast back at camp we'll take it as it comes, perhaps taking a walk in the camp grounds before a bit of siesta and an afternoon recce of one of the other routes in the area. There's also the option of the National Park night drive after an early dinner. This will give participants the chance to encounter the more nocturnal species, including Owls (Barn, Spotted Eagle Owl, Verreaux's Eagle Owl, Pearl-spotted Owl, Southern White-faced Owl all possible) and mammals such as White-tailed Mongoose, African Wild Cat, Serval and Lion and Leopard on the hunt (note that these park drives are very much mammal-focused, as most participants aren't too interested in birds in general, though Owl are usually appreciated by all at least).

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### Overnight: Satara Main Camp

Satara Camp is situated in the open Basalt plains at the northern end of the park's southern sector. The plains attract large numbers of grazers such as Zebra and Wildebeest, which in turn form the prey base for numerous Lion prides and Spotted Hyena clans, and indeed, the Satara region is one of the top game viewing areas of the park. As with all of Kruger's main camps, there's a shop, restaurant and fuel station, while two water holes on the perimeter attract herds of game in the dry season especially.




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### Day 14: Thursday, 30 November

#### Orion Magoebaskloof Hotel, Magoebaskloof

#### Day Itinerary

We'll start off the day with a drive around camp to see if we can add any more species, with Southern Ground Hornbill being high up on the wish list, along with its common cousins, African Grey Hornbill, Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill and Southern Red-billed Hornbill. After returning for breakfast we'll load up the vehicle and make our way out towards Orpen Gate on the western edge of the Kruger, and from where we'll make our way to Magoebaskloof where we'll spend the evening. The drive there won't offer too much in terms of birding, although time permitting we may search for Magpie Mannikin in the small town of Tzaneen, whilst Dusky Indigobird, Bushveld Pipit and Common Scimitarbill may also be encountered on the way there. We expect to arrive at Magoebaskloof late afternoon, with just enough time to get settled before dinner and good night's rest.

## Magoebaskloof

A serene place of adventure, Magoebaskloof in Limpopo province is often referred to as 'The Land of the Silver Mist', as the mountains and valleys are regularly shrouded in soft mist. The magnificent Magoebaskloof Pass, which traces along the edge of the highveld, is a major drawcard for many. As one of the steepest tarred roads in South Africa, it features twisting horseshoe turns and sharp hairpin bends that make for both a thrilling ride and a place to soak up the spectacular views. With the towering massif of the Wolkberg as a backdrop and lush landscapes dominated by the dramatic scenery of dense indigenous woodlands, eucalyptus and pine tree plantations, cycads and bushveld country, the area is a hiker's and nature enthusiasts' dream. Visitors can look forward to a beautiful network of hiking trails, including the scenic 53-kilometre Mabudashango Hiking Trail or the 60-kilometre Dokolewa Waterfall Trail. Adventure enthusiasts can also enjoy mountain biking, horse riding, white water rafting, and canoeing. Don't miss the opportunity to visit the glorious Debengeni Falls.

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### Overnight: Orion Magoebaskloof Hotel

Set in the dramatically beautiful Magoebaskloof area of Limpopo, the hotel offers guests a chance to enjoy an idyllic and relaxing break in the country. Friendly personal service and comfortable accommodation are a hallmark of the hotel. It is an ideal venue to explore this fascinating region. The Tlou Restaurant offers excellent à la carte and table d'hôte menus that make dining a memorable experience. The Coffee Bean Coffee Shop provides a variety of light meals with an option of indoor or outdoor seating. Enjoy a quiet drink or a light meal in the convivial Phoenix & Fireman Pub or on the terrace. View the rare Samango Monkeys, or walk to our beautiful waterfall through indigenous forests, where the birdlife is abundant.




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## Day 15: Friday, 1 December

### Plumtree Lodge, Limpopo

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#### Day Itinerary

We'll have an early start today as we head straight to the forest, hopefully finding the resident Cape Parrots screeching away as they head out to feed, whilst some of the more common forest species could include Greater Double-collared Sunbird, Southern Double-collared Sunbird, Chorister Robin-Chat, White-starred Robin, Olive Bushshrike, Forest Canary, Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher and Knysna Turaco. Undoubtedly the top species here however is Black-fronted Bushshrike, with this being the most accessible site in the country for this bird, whilst roadsides should be checked for Green Twinspot and Red-backed Mannikin. After returning for breakfast, we'll pack up the vehicle for the relatively short drive through to Polokwane where we'll spend the final night of our tour. A stop en-route will hopefully turn up Red-throated Wryneck and Bokmakierie, whilst the skies overhead should be scanned for Cape Vultures which

are occasionally seen flying over. Once we reach Polokwane we'll settle into our guesthouse and have a bit of time to relax before we spend the afternoon birding a few sites around town in the hopes of locating Black-crowned Night Heron, Malachite Kingfisher, Great Reed Warbler, Chestnut-vented Warbler and Abdim's Stork, before heading back for dinner on our final evening.

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## Limpopo

Bordering Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Botswana, the Limpopo Province is South Africa's northernmost province renowned for its quintessentially African vistas. This region is known for its immense natural beauty featuring rugged mountains meeting pristine savannah plains sheltering a diverse array of wildlife. It encompasses the Makgabeng Plateau, the Blouberg Mountains, and a variety of towns and cities surrounded by a host of reserves including the world-renowned Kruger National Park. Visitors flock to this province to discover the fossil-rich caves of Makapansgat, explore the archaeological site of Mapungubwe and enjoy an authentic safari experience.

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### Overnight: Plumtree Lodge

The well-established garden of over forty years invites you to a relaxing stroll and a quiet cup of tea. Boasting a lapa and swimming pool area, the lodge exudes a calming ambience.




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## Day 16: Saturday, 2 December

### End of Itinerary

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#### Day Itinerary

We'll be up early as we head into the nearby Polokwane Game Reserve, where we'll aim to track down our final major target species of the trip, Short-clawed Lark. Besides this species though the reserve offers a wealth of birdlife and we could encounter Black-faced Waxbill, Violet-eared Waxbill, Olive-tree Warbler, Golden-tailed Woodpecker, Shelley's Francolin, Northern Black Korhaan, African Hawk Eagle, Brubru, Common Whitethroat and Marico Flycatcher before returning to our guesthouse for breakfast. Afterwards we'll reluctantly load up the vehicle as we start the drive south to Johannesburg and the airport to cap off a fantastic trip through this wonderful country.

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## Travel Information

### South Africa

#### *Entry Requirements*

Please acquire the necessary travel documents for your trip to South Africa.

New requirements, introduced by the South African Department of Home Affairs from 1 June 2015, specify that all minors (children under 18 years) are required to produce, in addition to their passport, an Unabridged Birth Certificate which shows the details of both parents for all international travel to and from South Africa. Further documentation may be required, please research this thoroughly (<http://www.dha.gov.za/>) or contact the airline you are booked on for specific requirements.

#### *Banking and Currency*

The currency in South Africa is Rands (ZAR). You will need money for your drinks, any meals not included and personal items.

Master & Visa cards are widely accepted, Diners Club and American Express are not as widely accepted. Cash machines are readily available in most towns. It's best to ask your guide about where and when it is best to draw cash. Please inform your local bank about your travelling arrangements, as they are able to freeze your account should they be suspicious of banking activity in a foreign country. Traveller's cheques are not widely used anymore. It would be best to change money at airport on arrival if you have not arranged it before leaving home.

#### *Travel, Transport and Getting Around*

An extensive tarred road system makes travelling in South Africa by vehicle convenient and easy. You will find gravel roads in rural areas though. Note:

- A valid international driver's licence is required.
- We drive on the left hand side of the road.
- Wearing seat belts is compulsory and cell phones can only be used 'hands free'.
- Speed limits are generally set at 120km on freeways, 100km on secondary roads and 60km in urban areas.
- Toll fees apply on certain national roads.
- Petrol stations are widespread.
- Most global car hire firms have branches in South Africa

#### *Health and Medical Information*

Your guide will carry a very basic first aid kit with antiseptic, bandages and band aids. It would be advisable to bring some of your own basic medical supplies including anti-histamine cream for bites and itchiness, Imodium (or something similar for stomach trouble), rehydrate sachets, painkiller, antiseptic and other personal medication.

#### *Malaria Risk*

Only eastern Mpumalanga, eastern and northern Limpopo and far northern KwaZulu-Natal are malarial areas. Note that the Kruger National Park falls into this region. In malarial regions the rains usually arrive in spring and early summer (September – November), after which the Malaria Risk starts to build up and peaks in February to April. The Kruger itself is a low to medium-risk, but it is a malarial area and as a company we do advise taking malarial prophylactics. We advise consulting your medical practitioner. Prevention is better than cure though, so wearing socks and closed shoes, long pants, etc, in the evenings and spraying with repellent is a key measure of prevention. Please consult your health care practitioner for official medical advice.

Also have a look at <http://www.cdc.gov/malaria/>, under General Information for more advice and information.

***Safety Notices***

South Africa is generally a safe country to visit, especially in the wildlife areas outside of major towns and cities. Generally one should exercise caution by not openly displaying valuables, not leaving bags visible in parked cars, being vigilant and sticking to prescribed routes / areas.

***Snakes and Scorpions***

In the kinds of places we stay, we may encounter snakes and scorpions. It is thus advisable to wear closed shoes and socks when out in the field and to ALWAYS wear closed shoes and socks after dark in areas where scorpions may be encountered (these are more common in hot, dry areas). Also be vigilant and always keep an eye out, even in your rooms (check bedding, towels etc before use).

***Food, Drink and Cuisine Advice***

Standards of hygiene in relation to food health and safety in South Africa, are generally high in hotels, restaurants, pubs and nightspots. Tap water in South Africa is safe to drink and cook with when taken from taps in urban areas. Not all tap water in rural areas is safe for consumption, so take precautions if necessary. It is safe to eat fresh fruit, vegetables and salads, and put ice in your drinks. South Africa's fish, meat and chicken are of excellent quality, so there is no need to limit yourself when enjoying the local cuisine.

Restaurants are subject to South Africa's food safety control legislation, which is implemented by local government. Regulations include certification and regular inspections by health inspectors to ensure hygienic standards are maintained. Street food is not as common in South Africa as it is in other countries, although vendors selling traditional snacks and meals can be found in city centres and townships. Food safety in such instances cannot always be guaranteed.

***Climate and Weather******Summer: September to April***

- Most of South Africa falls under a summer rainfall region (except for the Western Cape and parts of the Eastern Cape).
- It can get hot to very hot in the north and east, mild to warm on the interior plateau.
- Thunderstorms are common, though cool, overcast weather can also be expected. The rainy season coincides with the summer.
- Summers in the Western Cape are usually dry, hot and can be windy.

***Winter: May to August***

- Winters on the Highveld (interior plateau) and Escarpment can be cold to very cold overnight and in the early morning while days are usually cool to mild, though occasional cold fronts can make it cold all day. Minimal chances of rain.
- The eastern coastal regions and Lowveld (savanna / Kruger region) have cool to mild nights and warm to hot days. Minimal chances of rain.
- On tours including open-vehicle game drives it can get very cold on morning drives and adequate clothing is a must.
- The Western Cape has cool wet winters in general.

***Clothing and Dress Recommendations***

Comfortable casual clothing will be suitable and it is best to avoid white and bright colours whilst birding and game viewing on foot. Khaki, brown, beige or sombre coloured casual clothes are best. Long-sleeved shirts and trousers will help protect you against the sun and insect bites. Comfortable walking shoes will be needed, but sandals can also be

worn at times. Hiking boots are not necessary unless your tour includes a specific walking / hiking component. Hats and sunblock lotion are vital, as are sunglasses. A warm jacket, scarf, woollen hat and gloves are advisable if your tour includes open safari vehicle drives in winter (June to September), while a windbreaker / raincoat and warm fleece are recommended for all tours, regardless of the time of the year or mode of transport.

***In addition:***

- Binoculars, camera and accessories. A Spotting Scope is also a good idea.
- Wide brimmed hat.
- Personal toiletries, sun barrier creams and insect repellent.
- Prescription medications (if any).
- Hairdryer if necessary.
- Torch / Flashlight.
- Travel alarm clock or mobile phone with alarm.

On group trips please pack luggage in **soft bags** as it helps with the packing of the vehicles.

***Internet Availability***

Most accommodation offer Wifi (free or paid) in their business centres, rooms or restaurants. Internet cafes are found in most business areas and shopping malls. In addition, some South African restaurants offer WiFi access (free or paid).

There are also outlets such as PostNet that offer internet, fax and postage facilities.

***Electricity and Plug Standards***

The South African electricity supply is 220/230 volts AC 50 HZ.

Most plugs are 15 amp 3-prong or 5 amp 2-prong, with round pins. If an adaptor is called for, consider bringing one with you, although they can be purchased locally. (US-made appliances may need a transformer).

***General Guidance***

***Laundry facilities***

Please enquire with Lawson's if you would like detailed info.

***Tipping***

Waiters at meal times generally get 10% of the bill but you would only need to worry about the meals that you will personally be paying for as the guide will cover the tips for the meals that they will be paying for.

R5 per main bag is the norm for portage.

As far as your guide is concerned, there is no set standard. It is not compulsory to tip drivers and guides, but if you feel that your guide has given his or her best in order to make sure that your safari was enjoyable, then a gratuity is always appreciated.

***WiFi Access***

WiFi access is limited, though more and more accommodation establishments are offering WiFi services. Please enquire with Lawson's if you would like to know which specific establishments have internet access for public use.

***Mobile Phone Reception***

Cell signal is generally quite good in South Africa, but it can be limited in some of the more remote areas. Please enquire if you would like more specifics.

**Recommended Reading**

Your guide will have a small reference library with them (provided they are not embarking on any flights during the tour) so it is not necessary to bring that many books, but a personal bird and mammal field guide is recommended for those who want to do research on their own time.

**Recommended Field Guides****Birds**

Sasol Birds of Southern Africa, Fourth Edition. Sinclair, Hockey, Tarboton & Ryan. 2011  
ISBN-13: 9781770079250

Roberts Bird Guide, Second Edition, Chittenden, Davies & Weiersbye  
ISBN 978-1-920602-01-7

**Mammals**

Smither's Mammals of Southern Africa: A field Guide. Second Edition. Peter Apps. 2012  
ISBN-13: 9781770079137

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**Terms and Conditions****Itinerary Terms and Conditions**

This itinerary is subject to change due to weather conditions at the time and other factors beyond our control.

The species mentioned in the itinerary represent only some of the possible ones we may see on the tour, however, none of these can be guaranteed even though every effort will be made where possible to locate them. A full list of possibles appears on your checklist.