



WESTERN CAPE HIGHLIGHTS 2024

Cape Town - Swellendam - Cederberg - Langebaan

10 Days / 9 Nights

Reference: S07/24

25 October 2024 - 03 November 2024





Introduction

The Western Cape is a special place indeed. It's unique in many ways. And this uniqueness is what makes it such a great birding destination. The region's Fynbos Vegetation type makes up the Cape Floral Kingdom. To clarify, this is the smallest of the world's Floral Kingdoms. Yet it contains over 9000 species of vascular plants, 69% of which are endemic! Moreover, this Fynbos vegetation component is home to a range of endemic birds. Consequently, these will be a core focus of this Western Cape Birding tour. In addition to some superb birds, the scenery, landscapes, food and wine will all add to the experience. Indeed, this tour offers an unforgettable birding, wildlife and cultural experience!

Areas covered

Your **Western Cape birding** experience starts at Cape Town International Airport. Our first stop is on the Cape Peninsula, where we are based in Simon's Town. From there we head east to Swellendam and the Agulhas Plain. Turning inland we then explore the arid Tankwa Karoo. Our last stop is in Langebaan on the West Coast. Finally, on the last day we head back to Cape Town.

Accommodation

The accommodation is of a medium-plus standard. It includes Bed and Breakfasts throughout. Importantly, all accommodations have en-suite facilities, and are clean and comfortable.

The birding

Endemics and near-endemics are a core focus of this Western Cape birding tour. For example, there are a handful of Fynbos endemics that are found nowhere else in the world. These are top of the list and include: Cape Rockjumper, Cape Sugarbird, Orange-breasted Sunbird, Cape Siskin, Protea Canary and Victorin's Warbler. Other near-endemics and specials are also on the cards, including: Cape, Crowned and Bank Cormorants, African Black Oystercatcher, Cape Gannet, Black Harrier, Jackal Buzzard, Bokmakierie, Southern Double-collared Sunbird, Cape and Agulhas Long-billed Larks, Blue Crane, Southern Tchagra, Knysna Woodpecker, Karoo Eremomela and many others. And participants who arrive early to do the pelagic trip will be introduced to a host of marine species, including a range of Albatrosses, Petrels, Prions, Shearwaters, Storm Petrels etc.

The mammals

The Cape doesn't hold as many big mammals as other parts of the country. There are still however some interesting species to see. These include Bontebok, Cape Grysbok, Cape Mountain Zebra and even Caracal with a bit of luck. And by November numbers of Southern Right Whales offshore will be decreasing, but there should still be a fair few to be seen.

Group size

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

Expected weather conditions

The Cape's weather is notoriously variable and while November is out of the traditional winter rainy season, some rain can be expected, while fine and warm conditions are also expected.

In conclusion, this Western Cape birding experience is unique in every respect. From the birds to the wildlife, scenery, food and culture, be prepared for something completely different... Western Cape Highlights can easily be combined with a visit to the Kruger National Park, so speak to us for more info.

Accommodation	Destination	Start	End	Basis	Duration
Whale View Manor Guest House	Cape Town	25 Oct	28 Oct	D,B&B	3 Nights
Swellendam Country Lodge	Swellendam	28 Oct	30 Oct	D,B&B	2 Nights
The Village Restaurant & Guesthouse	Cederberg	30 Oct	1 Nov	D,B&B	2 Nights
The Farmhouse Hotel	Langebaan	1 Nov	3 Nov	D,B&B	2 Nights

Key

D,B&B: Dinner, Bed and Breakfast

Price

ZAR 45 790 per person sharing

ZAR 5 040 single supplement

ZAR 3 500 optional Pelagic trip

Included

- Accommodation
- All breakfasts and dinners
- Ground transport
- Lawson's insulated water bottle
- Entrance fees
- Personalised species 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 1-4: Friday, 25 October to Monday, 28 October

Whale View Manor Guest House, Cape Town

Day Itinerary

Note: participants should overnight in Cape Town on the 24th Oct at own cost (we recommend a few nights in Cape Town to see the city and cultural / general tourist highlights), or arrive on early morning flights on the 25th Oct. Later arrivals on the 25th Oct may result in additional transfer costs. Please consult us about appropriate flights.

Arrive at Cape Town International and head straight to the famous Kirstenbosch National Botanical Gardens, located on the slopes of Table Mountain and commanding spectacular views over the Cape Flats and the Hottentots-Holland Mountains in the distance. Here we will search for birds such as Cape Sugarbird, Cape Spurfowl, Olive Thrush, Sweet Waxbill, Spotted Eagle-Owl, Black Sparrowhawk, Malachite, Southern Double-collared and Orange-breasted Sunbirds, Forest Canary and others before heading on to a charming guest house in Simon's Town on the Cape Peninsula, where we spend three nights in total. The Peninsula is ours to explore over the next two days. Highlights include the African Penguin colony at Boulder's Beach, Cape Point Nature Reserve and the south-western most tip of Africa, the Kommetjie tern roost and the Strandfontein Water Treatment Works. The Cape has notoriously fickle weather and we will plan each day's activities according to the weather at the time. There's a range of birds to be seen, including Jackal Buzzard, Cape Siskin, Ostrich, Cape Robin-Chat, Grey-backed Cisticola, Fiscal Flycatcher, Cape Bulbul, Southern Double-collared Sunbird, Greater Flamingo and marine species such as African Oystercatcher, Cape Gannet, Cape, Bank, White-breasted and Crowned Cormorants, and perhaps even White-chinned Petrel or Sooty Shearwater offshore. Mammals to be seen on the Peninsula include Chacma Baboon, Cape Mountain Zebra, Eland and Bontebok. For those wanting to do an optional pelagic birding trip we'll have Saturday and Sunday available.

Cape Town

Set at the confluence of the Indian and Atlantic oceans and backed by the iconic Table Mountain, the bustling city of Cape Town presents an alluring combination of drawcards. Incredible powdery white beaches, highly acclaimed wine routes, and astonishingly beautiful mountain trails surround a cosmopolitan hub. This diverse metropolis is filled with superb shops and restaurants, extraordinary heritage monuments, a multitude of entertainment venues, and a spectacular, chic waterfront harbour. Highlights include the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary African Art; Table Mountain's jaw-dropping views; Boulders Beach, where penguins might swim right up to you in the warm Indian ocean waters; the Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens, where you can walk along a treetop canopy among incredible native flora or watch an open-air concert at the base of the mountain; Robben Island, where visitors can see the cell where Nelson Mandela was imprisoned for 18 years; and many more.

Overnight: Whale View Manor Guest House

Whale View Manor Guest House overlooks a secluded beach, and lies on the outskirts of historic Simon's Town, between Cape Town and Cape Point, on the False Bay Coastline.



Day 4-6: Monday, 28 October to Wednesday, 30 October

Swellendam Country Lodge, Swellendam

Day Itinerary

After an optional morning activity, we'll drive around the edge of False Bay and on to Rooi Els via one of the area's most scenic drives to look for Cape Rockjumper near Hangklip on the eastern point. On a fine day the views are spectacular, with the Atlantic Ocean crashing against the rocks below us on one side and the Kogelberg Range rising high above us on the other side. Then we'll head inland and drive on to Swellendam, the third oldest town in the country. This gives us access to Bontebok National Park and De Hoop Nature Reserve on the Agulhas Plain, where we'll look for species such as Agulhas Long-billed and Large-billed Larks, Southern Tchagra, Capped Wheatear, Southern Black and Karoo Korhaans, Blue Crane, Denham's Bustard, Black Harrier, Cape Vulture (from the province's last breeding colony at Potberg), and others. Mammals to be seen include the endemic Bontebok, Eland, Grey Rhebuck and Yellow Mongoose, while Southern Right Whales are common off shore between August and November. We'll spend our time birding and exploring in the area, scheduling Bontebok National Park for the afternoon of arrival and De Hoop for our full day in the area.

Swellendam

Perfectly situated at the foot of the Langeberg Mountains, the quaint heritage town of Swellendam is South Africa's third-oldest town. It is idyllically positioned in the scenic Overberg area and serves as an excellent base to explore the magnificent surrounding landscape, including the Little Karoo in the hinterland. The streets are lined with beautifully restored Cape Dutch buildings dating back to 1745. Visitors can explore the Dutch Reformed Church and Drostdy Museum complex, visit the surrounding nature reserves and enjoy the local farm stalls selling an array of locally produced jams, liqueurs and baked goods. Other popular activities include: hiking, kayaking, camping, game viewing, horse riding, and stargazing.

Overnight: Swellendam Country Lodge

Swellendam Country Lodge offers quality accommodation in a stylish and friendly atmosphere. This 4-star Guest House is a well-liked base to explore this precious part of South Africa. But it is also a perfect place to unwind, a place to discover and enjoy.



Day 6-8: Wednesday, 30 October to Friday, 1 November

The Village Restaurant & Guesthouse, Cederberg

Day Itinerary

After breakfast and a possible morning visit to Grootvadersbosch Forest to look for some forest and thicket species more common in the east of the country, such as Narina Trogon, Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher, Terrestrial Brownbul and Olive Bush Shrike (and another shot at Knysna Woodpecker and Knysna Warbler), we'll head some distance north-west to Ceres, an agricultural town in the fertile Ceres Valley. After arrival, if time allows, we can take a trip up the nearby Gydo Pass to look for the endemic Protea Seedeater before returning to town for dinner. On our full day we'll leave the guest house early on an excursion into the desolate Tankwa Karoo, which will take up most of the day. This desolate region of sand, gravel plains and rocky outcrops holds a surprising number of endemic birds and we'll be on the lookout for species such as Verreaux's Eagle, Black-eared Sparrowlark, Black-headed Canary, Karoo Eremomela, Karoo Korhaan, Layard's Tit-Babbler, Namaqua Warbler, Fairy Flycatcher and the highly sought-after Cinnamon-breasted Warbler. This trip will take up most of the day, and we'll take packed meals and drinks with us. We'll return in the late afternoon for some time to rest before dinner.

Cederberg

The Cederberg is a region of wild, dramatic valleys situated just 2.5 hours' drive from Cape Town, between Citrusdal and Clanwilliam. Lined with citrus orchards and surrounded by magnificent mountains, the jaw-dropping scenes here become even more spectacular at sunset when they are bathed in an array of vivid colours, and in springtime when flowers completely take over (this is the heart of the biodiverse Cape Floral Kingdom). Travellers can also swim in turquoise rock pools, visit intriguing ancient rock art sites, take advantage of superb beaches with excellent surfing conditions, or learn about the clear night skies at the Cederberg Astronomical Observatory. Some other activity options include hiking, bouldering, tubing, sundowner cruises, and rock climbing - as well as dining at top-notch wineries and restaurants.

Overnight: The Village Restaurant & Guesthouse

The Village Restaurant & Guesthouse has been in business since 2000 with a small restaurant. Over the years the business has developed into a top 3 star guesthouse.



Day 8-10: Friday, 1 November to Sunday, 3 November

The Farmhouse Hotel, Langebaan

Day Itinerary

In the morning, after a quick trip up the Gydo Pass to search for Protea Seedeater (if we missed it on the afternoon of arrival), we'll drive to Langebaan Lagoon on the West Coast, where we stay at a guest house in the town. Langebaan is adjacent to the West Coast National Park, which encompasses the shallow, azure-hued Langebaan Lagoon. We'll visit the park on the afternoon of arrival, with some time to explore the lagoon, renowned for migrating waders, and the West Coast National Park, which provides some good Strandveld birding. Birding highlights here include Ostrich, Grey-winged Francolin, Black Harrier, Southern Black Korhaan, Karoo, Cape Clapper and Cape Long-billed Larks, Karoo Robin, Cape Penduline-Tit, White-backed Mousebird, Yellow Canary, Cape Bunting, Chestnut-vented Tit-Babbler, Cape Weaver and a host of wader species. Mammals to be seen here include Bat-eared Fox, Small Grey Mongoose, Cape Grysbok, Springbok, Red Hartebeest, Cape Mountain Zebra and Caracal with a bit of luck. In the late afternoon we'll check in to Crystal Lagoon, with some time to freshen up before dinner in town. On our full day we'll head into the park for much of the day, taking a packed breakfast with us to allow us to maximize our time there.

Langebaan

Set on the banks of the magnificent Langebaan Lagoon, the popular resort town of Langebaan is conveniently located only 120 kilometres north of Cape Town, in the Western Cape Province of South Africa. This lovely little town is renowned for the pristine white sand beaches lining its turquoise lagoon, which provides an ideal environment for an array of exhilarating watersports including waterskiing, kayaking, sailing, fishing and kitesurfing. The lagoon also features tidal mudflats which serve as a habitat for an impressive variety of local and migratory birds. Visitors can look forward to exploring the nearby West Coast Nature Park, where they can enjoy game viewing, cycling, and hiking; and the West Coast Fossil Park, which offer visitors an informative tour of a fossil dig, the chance to hunt for their own fossils, as well as biking, hiking and horse riding through the park.

Overnight: The Farmhouse Hotel

Overlooking the tranquil Langebaan lagoon, The Farmhouse Hotel is an exclusive, members-only hotel. A visit to The Farmhouse Hotel is an experience to be savoured. Celebrated for their pleasant staff, intriguing in-house museum and West Coast warmth, The Farmhouse Hotel offers guests an authentic coastal farmstead experience.

The hotel features a stunning patio from which to enjoy lovely lagoon views and a homemade meal from Panorama Restaurant, the hotel's in-house restaurant. Tannie Jane's offers gourmet coffee and homemade confectionary, while Legend's Bar is ideal for an ice-cold beer.

A sparkling swimming pool overlooks the lagoon, while Kite Basecamp - located in the boatyard - houses a kitesurfing shop and school and a raw juice bar.

Explore the lagoon by foot or by kite, browse through the antique collection or simply relax and enjoy the sunset. The Farmhouse Hotel is an unpretentious and welcoming West Coast escape for travellers and families.



Day 10: Sunday, 3 November
End of Itinerary

Day Itinerary

After a full morning activity, we depart for Cape Town and the airport, some two hours' drive away, with stops to view Table Mountain on the way if time permits.

Urgent Contact Numbers

Company Name	Telephone	Email Address	Contact Person
Lawson's Birding, Wildlife & Custom Safaris	+27 82 576 7526	mavourneen@lawsons-africa.co.za	Mavourneen Pearce
Lawson's Birding, Wildlife & Custom Safaris - Emergency Contact	+27 82 576 7526		

Service Provider Directory

Service Provider	Ref. Number	Telephone	Address
Swellendam Country Lodge		+27 028 514 3629	237 Voortrek Street 6740 Swellendam
The Farmhouse Hotel		tel: +27 (0) 227722062 emergency +27(0)214304100	5 Egret Street Langebaan 7354
The Village Restaurant & Guesthouse		+27 23 316 2035 Tel: 022 921 3963 Sonia Hager 082 802 4580	64 Vos St, Ceres, 6835
Whale View Manor Guest House		+27 (0)79 192 0221	402 Main Rd Murdoch Valley Simonstown 7995 Cape Town South Africa

Terms and Conditions

Itinerary Terms and Conditions

Note that this tour can only run at the listed price with a minimum of two participants.

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 possible appears on your checklist.