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## EASTERN SOUTH AFRICA ENDEMICS 2025

*Underberg - Southern Drakensberg - Eshowe - St Lucia - Tembe Elephant Park - Mpumalanga - Kruger National Park -  
Magoebaskloof - Limpopo*  
16 Days / 15 Nights  
15 November 2025 - 30 November 2025

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## 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, Secretarybird, 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
Cedar Garden Bed & Breakfast	Underberg	15 Nov	17 Nov	D,B&B	2 Nights
Eshowe Guest House	Eshowe	17 Nov	18 Nov	D,B&B	1 Night
St Lucia Kingfisher Lodge	St Lucia	18 Nov	20 Nov	D,B&B	2 Nights
Tembe Elephant Park Lodge	Tembe Elephant Park	20 Nov	22 Nov	D,B&B	2 Nights
Wetlands Country House & Sheds	Mpumalanga	22 Nov	24 Nov	D,B&B	2 Nights
Berg-en-Dal Main Camp	Kruger National Park	24 Nov	25 Nov	D,B&B	1 Night
Skukuza Rest Camp	Kruger National Park	25 Nov	26 Nov	D,B&B	1 Night
Satara Main Camp	Kruger National Park	26 Nov	28 Nov	D,B&B	2 Nights
Bramasole Guest House	Magoebaskloof	28 Nov	29 Nov	D,B&B	1 Night
Plumtree Lodge	Limpopo	29 Nov	30 Nov	D,B&B	1 Night

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#### Key

D,B&B: Dinner, Bed and Breakfast

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#### Price

**ZAR 85 550** per person sharing

**ZAR 8 250** 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: Saturday, 15 November to Monday, 17 November

### Cedar Garden Bed & Breakfast, Underberg

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#### Day Itinerary

**Note:** *participants continuing on from the Western Endemics set-departure will need to overnight with the guide in Umdloti on the 15th & 16th November at own cost. Participants not doing Western Endemics also need to overnight with the others in Umdloti 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 Umdloti. After breakfast we'll pack up and depart for our first stop at Underberg 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 do some birding in the Gardens before dinner.

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, Sickle-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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#### Underberg

The friendly farming town of Underberg lies at the feet of the mighty Drakensberg Mountains, in Kwa-Zulu-Natal's Southern Drakensberg region. Surrounded by verdant swathes of green hills and plains, pretty mountain streams, and dramatic peaks, this is a popular destination among hikers, mountain bikers and photographers. There are also three pristine golf courses on offer. Underberg lies on the Sani Pass, also known as the 'roof of Africa', an incredible network of hikes winding into Lesotho from the Drakensberg Mountains (where thirsty travellers can also enjoy a drink at the highest pub in Africa). Arts and crafts enthusiasts will delight in the charming Underberg Pottery Studio and the quirky Funky Cow shop, where they can buy traditional Basotho blankets and souvenirs.

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#### Overnight: Cedar Garden Bed & Breakfast

Cedar Garden Bed & Breakfast is a spacious, well-appointed home set in a large garden in the popular village of Underberg. The centrally situated bed and breakfast and self catering establishment offers an ideal base from which to explore the Southern Drakensberg region. Cedar Garden is an easy two and a half hours drive from Durban.




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## Day 3: Monday, 17 November

### Eshowe Guest House, Eshowe

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#### 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, known for its bright wildflowers and lush, diverse vegetation. Like most of the destinations in the area, Eshowe has an interesting historical heritage - in this case, 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 is the opportunity to explore Dlinza Forest via a network of scenic hiking trails including the Dlinza Forest Aerial Boardwalk, which provides a spectacular bird's eye view. Other highlights include the Zululand Brewery and 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.



## Day 4-6: Tuesday, 18 November to Thursday, 20 November

### St Lucia Kingfisher Lodge, St Lucia

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#### 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 tranquility 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 tranquility.






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## Day 6-8: Thursday, 20 November to Saturday, 22 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.

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### Overnight: Tembe Elephant Park Lodge

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.




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## Day 8-10: Saturday, 22 November to Monday, 24 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, Secretarybird, 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.




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## **Day 10: Monday, 24 November**

### **Berg-en-Dal Main Camp, Kruger National Park**

#### **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.

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#### **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: Berg-en-Dal Main Camp

Berg en Dal Rest Camp in the Kruger National Park is set within natural bush leaving much of the natural habitat unchanged. The camp is one of the newest camps in the Kruger Park and offers visitors outstanding lodging facilities. Accommodation comprises of modern 6 bed family cottages, 2 and 3 bedded bungalows and 2 guest houses with multiple bedrooms. The more adventurous traveller can make use of one of Berg en Dal's camping sites for caravans and tents, each with a power point and braai (barbecue) stand. The camp's facilities include a restaurant, grocery store, laundromat and petrol station.




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### Day 11: Tuesday, 25 November

#### Skukuza Rest Camp, Kruger National Park

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#### 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: Wednesday, 26 November to Friday, 28 November

### Satara Main Camp, Kruger National Park

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#### 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).

### 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: Friday, 28 November

#### Bramasole Guest House, Magoebaskloof

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#### 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 there 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: Bramasole Guest House

Located in Limpopo, South Africa, Bramasole offers standard rooms as well as self-catering suites and a single luxury apartment. Each room boasts a unique theme. All the rooms have glorious views of the forest and some balconies overlook the glassy lake and beautiful garden. Guests can explore the magnificent forest or try the many hikes in the

area. Bramasole cuts an imposing figure complete with an indigenous forest halo. The precarious approach along the narrow dam wall adds to the drama of the approach as the full extent of the building reveals itself.




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## Day 15: Saturday, 29 November

### 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: Sunday, 30 November

### 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.