



SOUTH AFRICA

Namaqualand: Birds & Flowers

Birding, Wildlife & Flower Tour

11 Days / 10 Nights

August 15 – 25, 2020

**ZAR 39,950 pp (group of 6)
ZAR 3250 Single supplement
Includes 2 domestic flights**

Overview

In birding terms, South Africa is a must for both the world lister and the leisure birder. For the leisure birder it's a wonderfully diverse destination in which to see a lot of birds as well as some of Africa's iconic mammal species in a seemingly endless array of habitat types. For the world lister, South Africa is important for the high levels of endemism which make it the most important country on the continent in terms of endemic and near-endemic species. These include 19 true endemics, 2 breeding endemics, 1 seasonal endemic, and 45 near-endemics. This special tour has been designed to complement our existing itineraries (Eastern South Africa, Western Cape and Drakensberg) to give birders who have done the other three tours a chance to "clean up" on South African endemics. This trip is truly spectacular, from the stark, lunar-like scenes of Augrabies National Park to the vast carpets of red, yellow, blue and white flowers of Namaqualand, where endemic birds abound. This trip is perfectly timed to catch the bulk of the Namaqualand flower season, a world-renowned natural spectacle that should be on every nature lover's bucket-list.

Note: You might want to arrive in Johannesburg the day before the tour start date, spend the night there, and take a flight to Upington the next day to arrive early in the day for Day 1 of the tour. We will assist in arranging for lodging and transfers if you opt to arrive early, at cost.

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DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1

After collecting tour participants from Upington Airport, we'll head to Augrabies National Park, where we should still have time to explore the park. En-route we will keep an eye out for **Fawn-colored Lark**, **Sociable Weaver** and **Northern Black Korhaan**. Augrabies National Park, named for the 56 meter (182 feet)-high

Augrabies Falls, is set in a very arid landscape and is home to a great variety of succulent plants. Here we will find many species of birds typical of the Karoo biome such as **Double-banded Courser**, **Ludwig's Bustard**, **Chat Flycatcher** and **Namaqua Sandgrouse**.

Around the campsite we might find the resident **Short-toed Rock-Thrush**, **Dusky Sunbird** and **Orange River White-Eye**. Echo

Corner is good for the localized **Cinnamon-breasted Warbler**, and **Verreaux's Eagle** regularly puts in a showing as well. **Klipspringer** is one of the more common antelope, and night drives can sometimes be productive for carnivores such as **Caracal**, **African Wild Cat** and possibly even a **Leopard**.

O/N Augrabies Falls National Park (LD)



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Day 2

We'll be up early for a short morning drive through a nearby section of the reserve where we'll try to locate a few species we may still need after yesterday's birding before returning for breakfast. After our morning meal, we'll set off in the direction of Pofadder, where we'll be staying for the next night. The road we'll be travelling provides some excellent birding, and we'll make several stops to search for a selection of important species, with top prize arguably going to the quite striking



'Dune' form of **Red Lark**, a distinctly different color morph compared to the birds found further south. Time permitting, we'll head down a dirt road toward the Orange River to allow ourselves an opportunity to locate **Rosy-faced Lovebird**, a difficult bird to locate in South Africa. Along the way we might encounter **Stark's Lark**, **Cinnamon-breasted Warbler** and the highly nomadic **Burchell's Courser**. Once we get back to Pofadder, we'll check a

few nearby sites for the enigmatic **Sclater's Lark** before heading to the lodge situated on the largest Date farm in the southern hemisphere.

O/N Klein Pella Guest House (BLD)

Day 3

Shortly after breakfast we head slightly south of town where we'll search for **Karoo Korhaan** and we might again look for **Sclater's Lark**. On our way to Springbok we'll keep an eye out for **Black-eared Sparrowlark**, a highly nomadic species that appear and disappear from areas overnight, following the sparse rains in this arid

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part of the country. Closer to Springbok, we'll try a spot that has proven fairly reliable for **Ludwig's Bustard** in the past.

O/N Okiep Country Hotel (BLD)

Day 4

Our full day will be focused on one species, **Barlow's Lark**, and we'll drive across to the coastal town of Port

Nolloth, experiencing a very pleasant drop in temperature as we do so, with the cold Benguela Current running along the coast creating a very different habitat compared to the dry interior. Along the way we'll also search for the similar **Karoo Lark**, which overlaps slightly with **Barlow's Lark** at various sites, and as such, we'll spend a fair amount of time aiming to get good views of both species in order to ensure a positive ID before we search for some of the other, more widespread, but nevertheless interesting, birds to be found here. **Cape Long-billed Lark** is found in the coastal scrub, where it is joined by several other species such as **Southern Grey Tit**, **Cape Penduline-Tit**, and **Southern Double-collared** and **Malachite Sunbirds**. The coastline can also be quite rewarding, with **Cape** and **Crowned Cormorant** occurring here alongside **African Black**

Oystercatcher, **Kelp** and **Hartlaub's Gulls**, **Caspian**, **Swift**, **Common** and, if lucky, **Damara Terns**, with the latter occasionally being seen at a nearby pan where they



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are known to breed in small numbers. Depending on time, we may choose to drive further north to Alexander Bay, where the Orange River meets the cold Atlantic Ocean, offering us the chance to do some excellent coastal estuary birding. We should encounter a host of species here such as **Curlew Sandpiper**, **Common Whimbrel**, **Grey Plover** and **Little Stint**, while **Caspian Tern** is regularly seen alongside the typically scarce **Damara Tern**. Eventually we'll start to make our way back to Springbok, keeping our eyes open for the fairly widespread **Black-headed Canary**, as well as the more scarce **Damara Canary**, although the latter can be quite erratic in its occurrence. Once we arrive back in Springbok, we may opt to search for the scarce **Cape Eagle-Owl** at a few areas along the outskirts of town after dinner.
O/N Okiep Country Hotel (BLD)

Day 5

By now we should be quite accustomed to our typical daily routine, and we'll be up fairly early in order to bird the nearby Goegap Nature Reserve where we hope to



locate **Cinnamon-breasted Warbler** and **Karoo Eremomela**, if we haven't yet done so. Other species we'll be looking for include **Dusky Sunbird**, **White-backed Mousebird**, **Mountain Wheatear**, **Layard's Titbabbler** and

Ground Woodpecker. Armed with local knowledge, we'll spend the afternoon hunting for the most spectacular flower areas. Not that we would have neglected the amazing flowers of Bushmanland during the previous days, but today we'll dedicate the afternoon to enjoying this remarkable spectacle.

O/N Okiep Country Hotel or Agama Tented Camp (BLD)

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Day 6

This morning we'll be up with a packed breakfast as we prepare to spend the day exploring the Bushmanland interior in search of a few localized species, with **Black-eared Sparrowlark** and **Sclater's Lark** being at the top of the list. Initially we'll spend time making our way further east in order to maximize our chances of locating these birds, although roadside species could include the much sought-after **Black-eared Sparrowlark**, **Large-billed Lark** and **Red-capped Lark**. A roadside stop at a small dam may turn up **South African Shelduck** and **Black-necked Grebe**



before we continue through to the small town of Brandvlei, briefly stopping to view the **South African Cliff-Swallows** along the way. Once we reach Brandvlei, we'll start exploring the smaller dirt roads that branch out from here, with the hotter times of the day often being good for several lark species as they visit the few livestock drinking troughs which are the only sources of drinking water for most of the year in this arid region. We'll look for a host of different species along the way, such as **Red Lark**, **Karoo Korhaan**, **Karoo Eremomela**, **Spike-heeled Lark**, **Black-eared Sparrowlark** and with luck, **Burchell's Courser**.

O/N Brandvlei (BLD)

Day 7

Another full day around Brandvlei where we will explore several of the roads surrounding this small town. The Loeriesfontein Road in particular can be very rewarding and probably the most reliable site in the country for the highly nomadic **Black-eared Sparrowlark**.

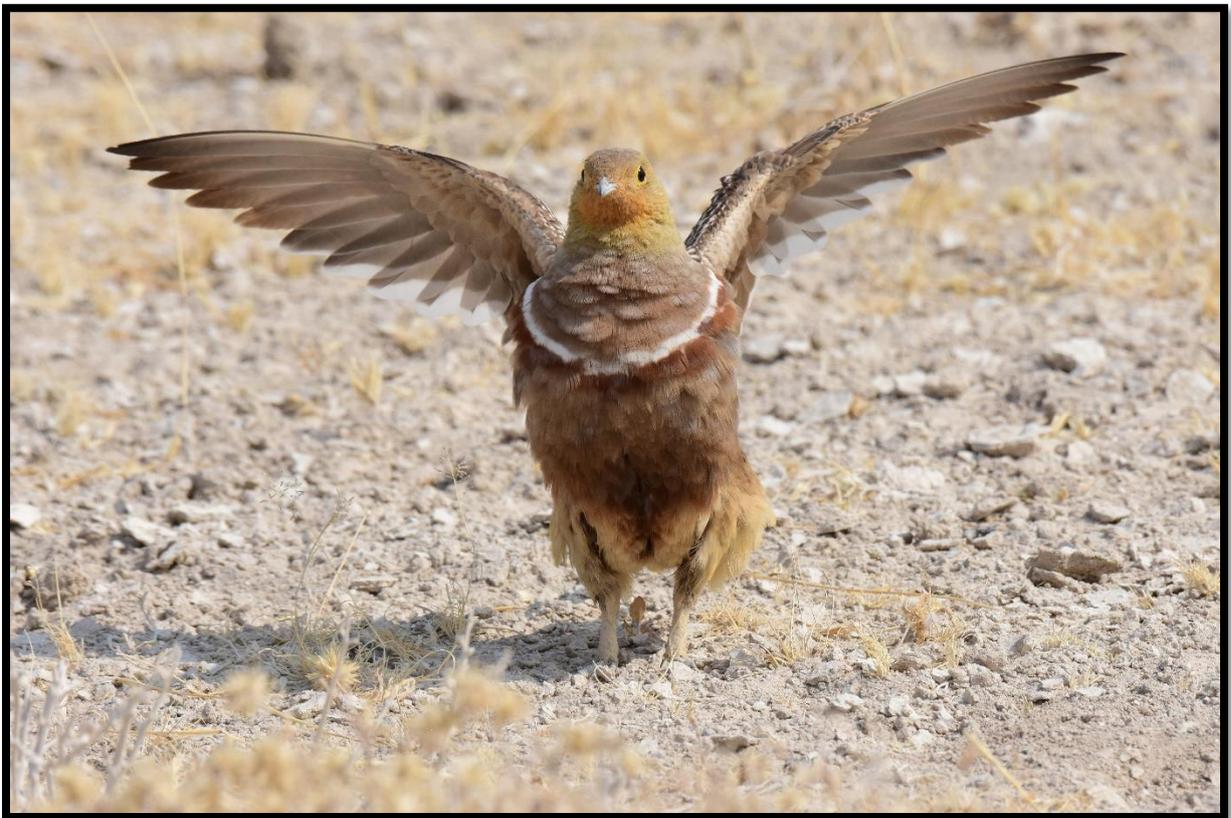
O/N Brandvlei (BLD)

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Day 8

After breakfast we'll load everything into the vehicle once more and make our way southwest to the small town of Niewoudtville, situated in the heart of the Namaqualand flower region. The drive there will be fairly lengthy, but we will be passing through the most amazing flowering landscapes that time will pass quickly. We'll still devote some time to birding at a few sites along the way, where we'll search for birds such as **Cape Long-billed Lark**, **Spike-heeled Lark**, **Cape Clapper Lark** and **Namaqua Sandgrouse**.

O/N On a Guest Farm in Niewoudtville (BLD)



Day 9

We'll arise slightly later than usual, and after breakfast we'll take a tour around the farm, which is justifiably famous as one of the top wild flower spots in all of Namaqualand. We might even bump into a few **Cape Clapper Larks** here. The route to the West Coast National Park offers some spectacular scenery as we drop

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down to the coastal plain once more, where we'll spend some time birding along the way for a few specialties, with **Protea Seed-eater** being one of our main targets for the day. Additional species to look out for include **Streaky-headed Seed-eater**, **Yellow**, **Cape** and **White-throated Canaries**, **Fairy Flycatcher** and **Layard's Titbabbler**. Along the way we'll also spend some time birding the excellent Berg River Estuary where a host of shorebirds can be found, with **Curlew** and **Marsh Sandpipers**, **Little Stint**, **Ruff**, **Bar-tailed Godwit** and **Common Whimbrel** all being fairly regular, while **Eurasian Curlew** and **Red Knot** are present in low numbers. If we're lucky, **Red-necked Phalarope** may even turn up here. Afterwards we'll have a fairly straightforward drive through to Langebaan, situated just outside of West Coast National Park, which we should arrive at in the late afternoon.

O/N Duinepos Chalets (BLD)

Day 10

We'll be up early again, heading to the West Coast National Park for the morning. This is arguably the best site for waders in South Africa, with numerous rarities having turned up on the lagoon shores over the years. We'll divide our time between birding the tidal mudflats around the Geelbek Hide and visiting another famed wild flower area in the Postberg section of the park (only open to the public for 2 months of the year). At Geelbek we hope to find a number of waders, many of which we would probably have recorded already but we'll still aim to locate **Bar-tailed Godwit**, **Eurasian Curlew**, **Red Knot**,



African Black Oystercatcher, **White-fronted Plover** and **Chestnut-banded Plover**, while searching for rarities such as **Eurasian Oystercatcher**, **Black-tailed Godwit** and **Greater Sand Plover** that turn up from time to time. The surrounding bush and scrub will also attract our attention for much of the morning as we aim to locate **Grey-winged Francolin**, **Black Harrier**, **Cape Penduline-Tit**, **Karoo Lark** and **Southern Black Korhaan**. Afterwards we'll return for lunch before we make our way south to the Cape Peninsula, where we'll be based for the next night.

O/N Monkey Valley or Avian Leisure (BLD)



Day 11

Some early morning birding before heading to the airport after lunch.

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INCLUDED

- Accommodation
- Meals as indicated in itinerary
- Expert birding guide throughout the tour
- Ground transportation
- Domestic flights (Johannesburg to Upington / Cape Town to Johannesburg)
- Park fees and all activities mentioned in itinerary

NOT INCLUDED

- international flights
- Items of a personal nature
- Medical and travel insurance
- Alcoholic beverages
- Tips

All lodging mentioned subject to availability; any changes will be reflected in the final itinerary sent out to participants in their tour package.