

Swaziland Pre-tour Extension

Birding & Wildlife

5 days / 4 nights

November 28 – December 2, 2021

24,950 ZAR

Single Supplement 2800 ZAR



Overview

The tiny landlocked Kingdom of Eswatini, formerly known as Swaziland, has much to offer the intrepid traveler, and, of course, it's another country tick for those keeping a list of countries visited. Several well-run national parks and game reserves dot the countryside and, while Swaziland might not offer the "Big 5" experience of some of Africa's larger parks, the scenic beauty, good birding and overall good general game viewing certainly makes up for it. Visitors can expect to see most of the expected antelope species as well as smaller predators. Hlane Royal National Park offers several of the larger mammals such as Rhino, Hippo, Elephant and Lion, the latter in a separate fenced area. With roughly 450 bird species recorded in one of the smallest countries in Africa (only 17,363 km² or roughly the size of New Jersey), we should be able to find a fair selection of birds here, including some really good ones.

Detailed Itinerary

Day 1

Our first day starts in the City of Johannesburg, where you would have arrived the previous day. We intend to get on the road rather early for our roughly 4-hour drive to Swaziland but, as always, there will be some birding en-route so it could take us a fair bit longer. We will drive through the beautiful hamlet of Barberton in South Africa, which lies on the border with Swaziland, and pass through some breathtaking scenery as we head into Swaziland. We will waste no time in heading for our lodge just outside Malalotja National Park, an area of stunning scenic beauty situated in the foothills of the Drakensberg. Time permitting, we will do some birding at the Hawane Reservoir in the afternoon.

O/N Hawane Resort (BLD)

Day 2

After an early breakfast, we will waste no time in getting into the 1800-hectare Malalotja National Park (pictured on previous page) for some great higher altitude birding. There are some exceptional targets here, including the highly endangered **Blue Swallow**, which will be one of our main targets. **Red-winged Francolin**, a normally skulky species, is usually very confiding here and often wanders out onto the open gravel tracks. An equally mouthwatering supporting cast consisting of **Bald Ibis**, **Denham's Bustard**, **Striped Flufftail**, **Fan-tailed Grassbird (aka Broad-tailed Warbler)**, **Ground Woodpecker**, **Black-winged Lapwing**, **Sentinel Rock-Thrush**, **Buff-steaked Chat**, and **Gurney's Sugarbird** will keep us on our toes throughout the day. Several antelope species such as Oribi, Blesbok, Grey Rhebok, Mountain and Common Reedbuck, Klipspringer and the endemic Black Wildebeest occur in good numbers.

O/N Hawane Resort (BLD)

Day 3

Morning birding back in Malalotja for some of the trickier species we might have missed the previous day, as well as another chance to visit the Hawane Reservoir for some waterbirds. We often find **Orange-breasted Waxbill** here. We have a fairly short drive to the Capital of Swaziland, Mbabane, where we will stay at the lovely Reilly's Rock Lodge in Mlilwane Wildlife Sanctuary just on the outskirts of the city. The lodge serves as a fantastic base to bird the reserve, which holds a good variety of bird species and is normally a very good spot for raptors such as **African Harrier Hawk**, **Jackal Buzzard** and **Amur Falcon**. With a bird list of over 250 species, this small reserve packs a lot of punch for its size, and we should find the likes of **Black-bellied Starling**, **Chorister Robin-Chat** and **Violet-backed Starling** around the lodge.

O/N Reilly's Rock Lodge (BLD)

Day 4

We have a full morning to explore Mlilwane and we hope to find the likes of **Croaking Cisticola**, **Black Cuckooshrike**, **Golden-breasted Bunting**, **White-eared Barbet**, **Tambourine Dove** and many more. **White-throated Bee-eaters** are particularly common and stands of exotic trees are great for **Crowned Eagle**, **Black Sparrowhawk** and several other species of raptor. After a delightful lunch in town, we'll head to Hlane Royal National Park, Swaziland's only big game park; 4 of the Big 5 occur here albeit not quite in the same wild environment as the likes of Kruger NP, with Lion being confined to a specially fenced part of the park. Other big game are represented by both Black and White Rhino, Elephant and Buffalo.

O/N Ndlovu Camp (BLD)

Day 5

We'll spend the morning in the park where we will be able to bird both Hlane and the adjoining Mlawula Nature Reserve. In contrast with the high altitude Malalotja, Hlane is at a lower altitude with mostly lowveld thicket and riverine woodland, grassland and rocky slopes, reminiscent of Kruger National Park. Birds to be on the lookout for include **Thick-billed Cuckoo, Scaly-throated Honeyguide, Pink-throated Twinspot, African Broadbill, Black Coucal** and **Retz's Helmet-Shrike**. All too soon it will be time to head to the border to cross into Mozambique for the start of our main tour.

Price includes:

- ~ All accommodation
- ~ All meals
- ~ Bottled water
- ~ Ground transportation in a private vehicle
- ~ Entry fees
- ~ Full time services of a personal guide and driver
- ~ Services of two tour leaders, Jim and Cindy Beckman
- ~ Customized checklist
- ~ Electronic copy of final checklist at the end of the tour
- ~ Flash drive with photos from the tour

Price excludes:

- ~ Items of a personal nature such as gifts, souvenirs, alcoholic beverages
- ~ Optional night drives in the national parks
- ~ Tips for the guide/driver