ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

South Africa

Best of Cape & Kruger II

7th June to 16th June 2022 (10 days)



Cape Rockjumper (male) by Clayton Burne

Beginning in the beautiful and scenically spectacular Western Cape, we will spend our first few days of the tour exploring the varied ecosystems of the Cape Peninsula and surrounds, most notably the Cape fynbos with its feast of endemics. We will then make our way up the West Coast with its teeming coastal wetlands and strandveld habitat, and from there we venture slightly inland to explore the dry country riches of the Tanqua Karoo. Thereafter we will fly to the bird- and game-rich north-eastern

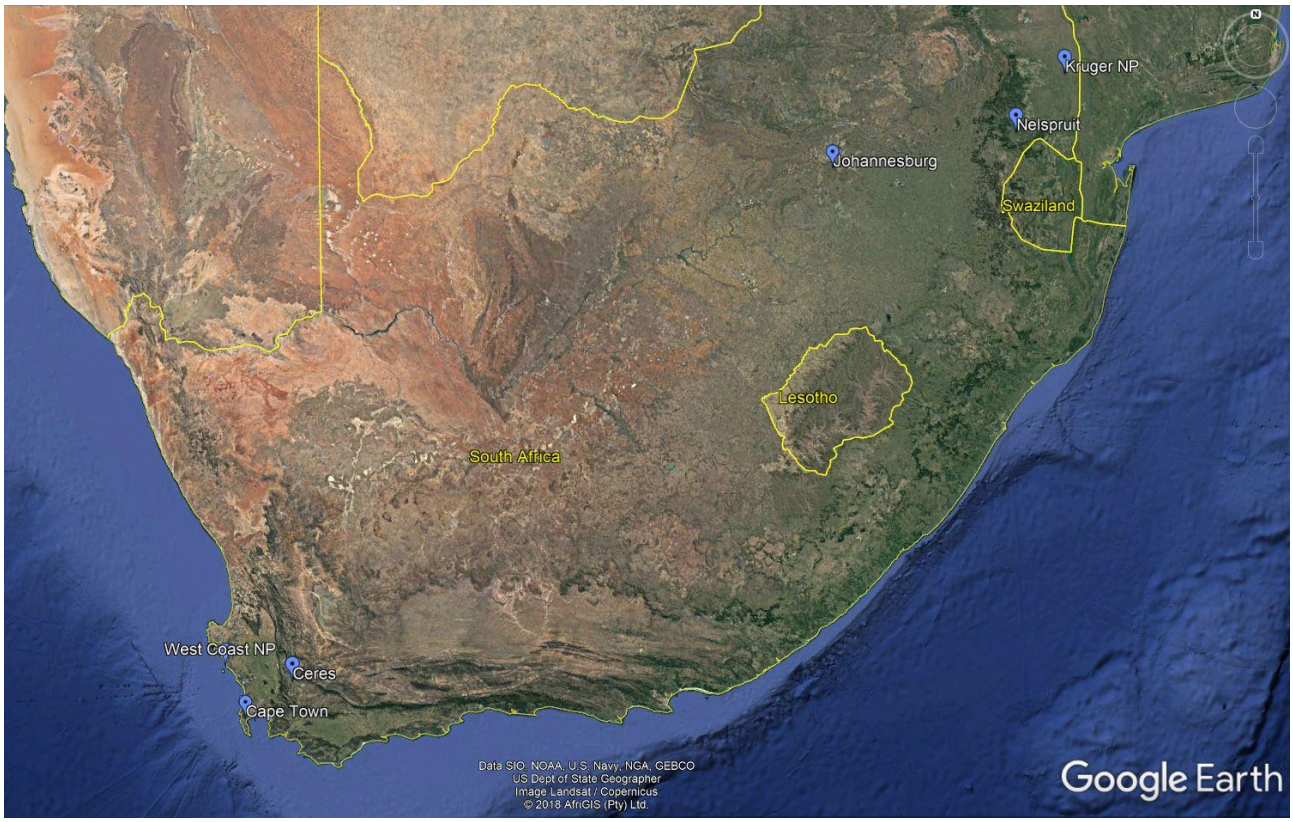
lowlands where the world-renowned Kruger National Park is situated. Here we will enjoy several days in this spectacular reserve enjoying the classic African savanna and the many superb birds and mammals associated with this massive conservation area. This tour of South Africa's Western Cape and the Kruger National Park offers some of the very best birding and game-viewing in Africa and is suitable for both hard-core birders and more general nature enthusiasts alike!

THE TOUR AT A GLANCE…

THE ITINERARY

Day 1	**Arrival in Cape Town, visit Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens**
Day 2	**Cape Peninsula and surrounds**
Day 3	**Cape Town to Ceres via the West Coast National Park**
Day 4	**Ceres and the Tanqua Karoo**
Day 5	**Ceres to Cape Town and flight to Kruger National Park**
Days 6 & 7	**Central Kruger National Park**
Days 8 & 9	**Southern Kruger National Park**
Day 10	**Kruger National Park to Nelspruit and depart**

TOUR MAP



Best of Cape & Kruger



Malachite Sunbird by Hugh Chittenden

Day 1: Arrival in Cape Town, visit Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens. Our tour kicks off in Cape Town in the mid-morning, from where we will immediately begin our exploration of the picturesque Cape Peninsula at one of the local birding hotspots. Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens lies on the slopes of Table Mountain and is home to a plethora of endemics restricted to the Macchia-like fynbos vegetation of the southern tip of Africa. Here, Cape Spurfowl scurry across the lawns, the magnificent protea gardens are home to spectacular Cape Sugarbird and Orange-breasted Sunbird, both of which are South African endemics, as well as the exquisite Malachite Sunbird, whilst Cape Bulbul, Olive Thrush, the attractive Cape Grassbird, Karoo Prinia, Bokmakierie, Southern Boubou and Southern Double-collared Sunbird may be found in areas of denser cover. In addition, we will watch out for African Goshawk and Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawk, which occasionally display above the indigenous forest that cloaks the slopes above the gardens. These forests are also home to African Olive Pigeon, Lemon Dove, Cape Batis and Forest Canary.

Day 2: Cape Peninsula and surrounds. A diverse array of birding habitats is present around Cape Town and today we will visit a variety of sites, ranging from wetlands to fynbos and marine shoreline. Making our way early to the rugged Hottentots-Holland Mountains, we will search for one of South Africa's finest endemics: the handsome Cape Rockjumper! Though strikingly plumaged and conspicuous by their vocalisations, these charismatic birds possess an incredible ability to disappear amongst the boulders and we may have to be patient if we wish to enjoy decent sightings of these elusive creatures. The thick mountain fynbos here is the favoured habitat of Orange-breasted Sunbird, Cape Siskin and the beautiful, endemic Victorin's Warbler, while other species including Verreaux's Eagle, Grey-backed Cisticola and Ground Woodpecker are also found in the area. Chacma Baboon is fairly common, but we will have to scan the rocky ridges carefully for the agile Klipspringer.



Bokmakierie by Clayton Burne

After enjoying this spectacle, we travel to the Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve. This wonderful park showcases the most south-western point of the continent and is very popular amongst birders and more general tourists alike. Here we should again find the enigmatic Cape Sugarbird and the stunning Orange-breasted Sunbird, and perhaps the impressive Black



Black Harrier by Adam Riley

Harrier, Grey-winged Francolin, Cape Grassbird and Cape Siskin. We will explore the network of roads to less-visited parts of the reserve, visiting secluded coves and searching for the elusive Mountain Zebra and sub-species of Blesbok – Bontebok. In addition, we could also find the magnificent Common Eland, the largest antelope in the world! If time allows we will spend the rest of the day at the productive Strandfontein Water Works. Chances of seeing Maccoa Duck, Great Crested and Black-necked Grebes, African Snipe, Greater and Lesser Flamingos and Great White Pelican are all possible.

Day 3: Cape Town to Ceres via the West Coast National Park. Our first site of interest today is the West Coast National Park. Large numbers of waders spend the northern winter here and we will check the exposed banks of Langebaan Lagoon for any remaining Red Knot, Bar-tailed Godwit, Ruddy Turnstone, Grey Plover, Terek Sandpiper, Greater Sand Plover and Eurasian Curlew, as well as Kittlitz's and the localised Chestnut-banded Plovers. In addition to the shorebirds, these areas also support large numbers of Greater and Lesser Flamingos, South African Shelduck, Cape Shoveler and other waterfowl. The surrounding short, coastal vegetation (strandveld) is home to the endemic Southern Black Korhaan, Grey-winged Francolin, Grey Tit, Cape Penduline Tit, Karoo Lark, Capped Wheatear, Fiscal Flycatcher and the magnificent Black Harrier, surely one of the world's most attractive raptors! In the late afternoon we will make the drive through to the farming village of Ceres, gateway to the Tanqua Karoo.

Day 4: Ceres and the Tanqua Karoo. Just a short drive from the village of Ceres is the semi-arid, central plateau of South Africa known as the Karoo; a land of endless vistas and spectacular sunsets, renowned for its endemic larks, chats and canaries. We leave the famous fruit-growing valley of Ceres before reaching our first stop at Karoopoort, a narrow canyon that forms the gateway to the Succulent Karoo. Birds inhabiting the arid, rocky slopes and acacia-filled watercourses of this area include White-backed Mousebird, Acacia Pied Barbet, Mountain Wheatear, Layard's and Chestnut-vented Warblers, the dainty Fairy Flycatcher and Pririt Batis, whilst the adjacent reedbeds are home to the endemic Namaqua Warbler. One of the area's most charismatic birds is the highly localised Cinnamon-breasted Warbler. Though fairly vocal, this species is highly elusive and seeing it in its habitat of jumbled boulders and rocky scree will require a combination of patience and perseverance.



Cape Sugarbird by Hugh Chittenden



Lion by Adam Riley

Continuing northwards onto the open flats of the Karoo, we will watch the roadsides carefully for Karoo and Spike-heeled Larks, Tractrac, Sickle-winged and Karoo Chats, the elusive Karoo Eremomela, Rufous-eared Warbler and Yellow and White-throated Canaries. Pale Chanting Goshawk and Rock Kestrel perch conspicuously on any vantage points and, if we are lucky, we may find Booted Eagle or Lanner Falcon. We will also stop to listen for the distinctive flight calls of Namaqua Sandgrouse and the strange, croaking of the Karoo Korhaan, which may help us to locate these cryptically coloured birds. If very fortunate we may even see the nomadic Ludwig's Bustard striding through the desolate plains or come across a group of highly nomadic Burchell's Coursers on the barren gravel flats.

Day 5: Ceres to Cape Town and flight to Kruger National Park. This morning we have the opportunity to target one final endemic species, the range-restricted Protea Canary. This uncommon and local bird is fairly regularly seen on the high protea clad mountain slopes above Ceres and we will spend time at key positions listening for its distinctive call. The moist gullies here also hold a few other endemics such as the skulking Victorin's Warbler, Cape Grassbird, Cape Sugarbird and Bokmakierie. After our morning's birding we will then depart from Ceres for Cape Town International Airport, from where we catch an internal flight to the Kruger National Park in the north-east of the country.

Upon arrival in Kruger we will immediately board our open game viewing vehicle and head north, to the central part of the park, and our comfortable camp at where we will be based for the next two nights.

Days 6 & 7: Central Kruger National Park. The extensive wilderness of the Greater Kruger conservation area incorporates vast areas of adjacent Mozambique and Zimbabwe and forms one of the largest reserves on earth! It is also one of Africa's most diverse parks, protecting a huge variety of wildlife. In fact, the acacia savanna that dominates most of the Kruger National Park contains one of the highest densities of birds of any habitat type in the world! This, coupled with the immense variety of game that we will endeavour to see, ensures a truly unforgettable experience.



Leopard by Greg de Klerk

In the central part of Kruger, the countryside is dominated by open grassy plains and sparsely vegetated



Lilac-breasted Roller by Gareth Robbins

woodlands. The birding and game viewing in this region is excellent with many bird species attending mixed flocks, particularly in acacia-dominated woodland. Our camp itself is conveniently located in such habitat and is an excellent place to see Bennett's Woodpecker, African Hoopoe, Red-billed Buffalo Weaver, Burchell's Starling, Mourning Collared Dove and Brown-headed Parrot, while the surrounding rich "bushveld" and grasslands are particularly productive for a number of special species. These include Kori Bustard – the world's heaviest flying bird, the magnificent Martial Eagle, Bateleur, Marabou Stork and the impressive Secretarybird, one of the world's great avian gems.

Further specialties that we will search for in the woodland areas include the lovely Orange-breasted and Grey-headed Bushshrikes, African Grey Hornbill, Southern White-crowned and Magpie Shrikes, Red-billed Oxpecker riding on the backs of big game, Red-crested Korhaan, Southern Black Tit, miniscule Grey Penduline Tit, noisy Green Wood Hoopoe, Common Scimitarbill, Greater and Lesser Honeyguides, Acacia Pied Barbet, Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird, Sabota Lark, Mosque Swallow, Black Cuckooshrike, Kurrichane and Groundscraper Thrushes, eye-catching White-throated Robin-Chat, melodic White-browed Scrub Robin, Burnt-necked and Yellow-bellied Eremomelas, Stierling's Wren-Warbler, Black-crowned and Brown-crowned Tchagras, Brubru and Golden-breasted Bunting. Noisy flocks of White-crested Helmetshrike are regularly encountered, and we will also be on the lookout for the much rarer Retz's Helmetshrike.

In the expansive grasslands we will seek out the bold Black-bellied Bustard, Crested and the rare Shelley's and Coqui Francolins, Swainson's and Natal Spurfowls, Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Lark, European and Purple Rollers, Yellow-throated Longclaw and, with luck, the erratic and nomadic Temminck's Courser and Senegal Lapwing, while rocky outcrops might yield Mocking Cliff Chat, Red-winged Starling and Cinnamon-breasted Bunting. In the late afternoon pairs of boldly-patterned and crepuscular Double-banded Sandgrouse come to the edges of the road to feed, before making their way down to watering holes at dusk to drink.



African Wild Dog Pups by Greg de Klerk

The sweet grasses here are also excellent for large herds of grazing mammals such as Common Wildebeest, Plains Zebra and Impala. These huge herds in turn support a healthy population of predators. In fact, we have an excellent chance of finding Lion, Leopard, Cheetah, Spotted Hyena and the very scarce and highly



Saddle-billed Storks by Clayton Burne

threatened African Wild (Painted) Dog in this area. High densities of other game include Giraffe, Greater Kudu, Klipspringer, Bushbuck, Warthog, Chacma Baboon, Vervet and Dwarf Mongoose, to name just a few.

An optional night drive through the park may encounter some of the rarer nocturnal mammals such as African Civet, Common and Central African Large-spotted Genets, Side-striped Jackal, the beautiful Serval, White-tailed Mongoose and Wild Cat, along with several species of owl and nightjar. These include Spotted and Verreaux's Eagle-Owls, African Scops and Southern White-faced Owls, and Square-tailed and Fiery-necked Nightjars.

On our second night here there will be an option after dinner to embark on a night walk around camp and this will offer us an excellent chance of seeing African Scops Owl and Western Barn Owl, while possibilities of finding Spotted Hyena patrolling the surrounding fence are good. If we are lucky, we might even encounter a Honey Badger, of which a few individuals are resident in and around the camp. Falling asleep to the calls of African Scops Owl, Spotted Hyena and roaring Lion is a very special experience indeed.

Days 8 & 9: Southern Kruger National Park. The dense 'bushveld', woodlands and gallery forest in the southern section of the park will be our focus for the next few days. One of the many mouth-watering species that we hope to find is the majestic Southern Ground Hornbill that is often seen striding around in small groups, and we will certainly be treated to many encounters with the gaudy Lilac-breasted Roller. Raptors are numerous throughout the reserve and we will no doubt enjoy sightings of the salient Bateleur as well as Tawny and Wahlberg's Eagles, Hooded, White-backed and huge Lappet-faced Vultures and the handsome African Fish Eagle, while other possibilities include Shikra, Lizard Buzzard, Gabar Goshawk, White-headed Vulture, the scarce but extremely good-looking African Cuckoo-Hawk, Black-chested and Brown Snake Eagles, Crowned Eagle, African Hawk-Eagle, African Harrier-Hawk and Dark Chanting Goshawk.



Bateleur by Adam Riley

This area is also famous for regular sightings of the rare African Wild Dog, while we stand an excellent chance of finding the endangered White Rhinoceros and, with exceptional luck, its rarer cousin, the Black Rhinoceros. It is also arguably the best area in the park to see the crepuscular Leopard, certainly one of the world's best-looking cats! In addition, we should encounter Lion, Spotted



Verreaux's Eagle-Owls by Glen Valentine

Hyena, Black-backed Jackal, large herds of African Elephant lounging in the Sabi River, herds of African Buffalo, Waterbuck, the striking Bushbuck and pods of Hippopotami. The persistent troops of humorous Chacma Baboon and Vervet will keep us entertained during the heat of the day.

Scouring the riverine woodland and thickets along the Sabi River, we hope to encounter Golden-tailed, Bearded and Cardinal Woodpeckers, Ashy Flycatcher, gorgeous White-browed and Red-capped Robin-Chats, Terrestrial Brownbul, Yellow-bellied and Sombre Greenbuls, African, Jameson's and Red-billed Firefinches, superb Green-winged Pytilia, Red-faced Cisticola and Southern Boubou. The large riparian trees lining the rivers provide perfect nesting sites for weavers, which are extremely well represented in the park and include Southern and Lesser Masked, Village, Spectacled and Thick-billed Weavers. Furthermore, we will endeavour to see various species of brightly coloured bee-eaters, kingfishers, rollers and hornbills, along with the occasional Pearl-spotted Owlet, a diurnal owl with a lovely, characteristic call.

The park's numerous large rivers and wetlands harbour a number of exciting water-associated birds and we will be on the lookout for the massive Goliath Heron, stately and severely threatened Saddle-billed Stork as well as the commoner Woolly-necked and Yellow-billed Storks, African Spoonbill, the unique and monotypic Hamerkop, Wire-tailed and Grey-rumped Swallows, White-crowed Lapwing and, if we are lucky, the rare African Finfoot or unpredictable Greater Painted-snipe.

Our base here in the southern part of the park is situated on the banks of the Sabi River, where the huge Sycamore Fig and Sausage Trees that tower over the camp attract some brilliant birds. Included in this suite of species are African Green Pigeon with its lovely, mournful, liquid call, the tiny Little Sparrowhawk, African Goshawk, sensational Purple-crested Turaco, Red-headed Weaver, Black-headed Oriole, the showy African Paradise Flycatcher, Arrow-marked Babbler, Yellow-breasted Apalis, Green-backed Camaroptera, iridescent Collared, Marico, White-bellied, Amethyst and Scarlet-chested Sunbirds, and the vocal Black-collared and Crested Barbets.



White Rhinoceros by Glen Valentine

During our stay in the south of the park we will embark on a pre-arranged sunset drive. Success on these drives varies greatly, but the list of



African Elephant by Keith Valentine

possibilities is rather impressive and includes a good number of owls and nightjars, as well as Bronze-winged Courser, both Common and Central African Large-spotted Genets, Southern Lesser and Thick-tailed Greater Galagos, White-tailed Mongoose, African Savanna Hare, the incomparable Cape Porcupine, Wild Cat, African Civet, Serval and Spotted Hyena – besides the Big 5!

Day 10: Kruger National Park to Nelspruit and depart. This morning we will say our farewells to Kruger and the incredible animals that we will have seen over the past few days to transfer to the nearby city of Nelspruit. For some, this will be the end of the journey and you will catch an internal flight to Johannesburg.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:

Tour dates, prices, single supplement rates, approximate flight costs and spaces available for this tour are displayed on our website. Please see under IMPORTANT NOTES below.

This includes:

- All meals from lunch on day 1 to breakfast on day 10;
- All lodgings;
- Ground transportation;
- Reserve entrance fees;
- Extra activities as mentioned in the itinerary; and
- All guiding services (including tips for local guides and services).

The tour fee does not include:

- Visa fees;
- **ANY flights** (see above);
- Optional Night drive in Kruger National Park;
- Any drinks;
- Special gratuities; and
- Telephone calls, laundry and other items of a personal nature.

Single Supplement: The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBT cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

a) Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is however fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final

invoicing (usually 4 months before the tour.) The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates, which are also quoted in the respective fixed currency.
b) Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration a small party supplement will have to be charged.
c) Furthermore, these costs are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.
d) Lastly, we may be forced to change or alter the itinerary and / or the designated Rockjumper leader at short or no notice due to unforeseen circumstances; please be aware that we will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.

Tipping: As noted above, gratuities (drivers, hotel staff, restaurants etc.) are included on this tour. However, this does NOT include your Rockjumper leader. If, therefore, you feel that he has given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip him.

Special Notes:

- Much of our time is spent in vehicles, as we do have to cover long distances in order to get to the best areas for birds and animals. The more luggage you pack the less room there is in the vehicle, so it is important for the comfort of yourself and your fellow travellers that you do not over-pack. Kindly stick to 20kg (44lb) for check in luggage and 8kg (+-18lb) for hand luggage.
- Exiting the vehicle is prohibited in all areas and parks that contain dangerous animals.
- Winter and Autumn in southern Africa provide variable weather conditions. The Western Cape receives a few Atlantic storms every winter that cause rough seas, wet weather and windy, cold conditions. In the east, clear sunny skies are the norm, with mornings and evenings getting cold – especially on open game drive vehicles.
- Crime is problematic in certain areas of South Africa. Exercise caution as you would for any big city where crime exists. Do not unnecessarily flaunt cash and valuables and do not leave valuables exposed in the vehicle.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE DETAILS:

This tour **does not** include **ANY** airfares. The tour will depart from Cape Town International Airport on day 1 no later than **09:00**; kindly arrive the day before. The main tour will conclude mid-morning at Kruger Mpumalanga International Airport on day 10.

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your **Tour Confirmation** package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

FLIGHT DETAILS:

O.R. Tambo International Airport, Johannesburg (IATA: JNB) and Cape Town International Airport (IATA: CPT) are the main ports of entry for international flights into South Africa and are well serviced by all of the world's major airlines. If your international flight does not arrive directly in Cape Town, you will require a domestic flight from Johannesburg to Cape Town. Kruger Mpumalanga International Airport (IATA: MQP) is the port of departure, with regular internal flights to Johannesburg. **Please DO NOT book any flights until you have consulted the Rockjumper office for confirmation on the status of the tour.**