ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

South Africa

Kruger Extension & Flock to Marion I

19th January to 31st January 2022 (13 days)



Bateleur by Marius Coetzee

Kruger National Park is one of Africa's most famous and fabulous reserves. On this birding and wildlife safari we will explore the area's superb road system in our quest to locate some of the most iconic birds and big game in Africa, including the legendary "Big 5" - Lion, African Elephant, Leopard, African Buffalo and Rhinoceros. Kruger provides an excellent opportunity to witness these spectacular beasts in their natural habitat, with some of them in large numbers and at very close quarters. In addition, the park's rich bushveld habitat will provide us with amongst the most exciting and rewarding birding to be had anywhere in Africa. Of special note here are species requiring vast areas of wilderness, such as Common Ostrich, Kori Bustard, the incomparable Southern Ground Hornbill, Martial Eagle, Bateleur, up to five species of vulture and an incredible diversity of other raptors!

THE TOUR AT A GLANCE…

KRUGER NATIONAL PARK

Day 1	**Arrival in Kruger National Park**
Days 2 to 4	**Kruger National Park**
Day 5	**Kruger National Park to Nelspruit and flight to Cape Town**
Day 6	**Cape Town Harbour: boarding and departure for Flock at Sea**

FLOCK TO MARION

Day 1	**Arrival in Cape Town and board vessel**
Days 2 to 7	**Cape Town to Durban via Marion Island**
Day 8	**Arrival in Durban and depart**

TOUR MAP



Kruger National Park



Lilac-breasted Roller by Gareth Robbins

Day 1: Arrival in Kruger National Park. On arrival in the heart of the National Park, we have a fantastic opportunity to encounter some of Kruger's great mammals and special birds this afternoon, which could include any of the 'Big Five'. We will almost certainly be entertained by regular herds of Plains Zebra, Common Wildebeest and Impala, while smaller groups of Warthog, Greater Kudu and Giraffe will also be a constant feature. In the mid to late afternoon we will arrive at our perfectly situated camp and base for the next two nights. There will be an option after dinner this evening to do 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. Falling asleep to the calls of African Scops Owl, Spotted Hyena and roaring Lion is a very special experience indeed.

Days 2 to 4: Kruger National Park. 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. Here, in the central part of the park, the area is dominated by open grassy plains and sparsely vegetated woodlands. The birding and game viewing in this region is excellent with many bird species attending mixed flocks, particularly in acacia dominated woodland. 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 African experience. Over the course of the next few days we will bird around our camp and take day trip to various other habitats within a few hours drive.



Lion by Adam Riley

The denser bushveld, woodlands and gallery forest of the southern section of the park are host to one of the most mouth-watering species that we hope to find, the majestic Southern Ground Hornbill that is often seen striding around in small groups. We will certainly be treated to many encounters with the gaudy Lilac-breasted Roller. Raptors are numerous throughout the reserve and we will



Southern Ground Hornbill by Glen Valentine

no doubt enjoy sightings of the striking Bateleur as well as Tawny and Wahlberg's Eagles, Hooded, White-headed, White-backed and huge Lappet-faced Vultures, and the handsome African Fish Eagle, while other possibilities include Shikra, Lizard Buzzard, Gabar and Dark Chanting Goshawks, the scarce but extremely attractive African Cuckoo-Hawk, Black-chested and Brown Snake Eagles, Lesser Spotted, Steppe, Crowned and Booted Eagles, African Hawk-Eagle, African Harrier Hawk and Amur Falcon.

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 Hyena, Black-backed Jackal, large herds of African Elephant lounging in the Sabi River, herds of African Buffalo, Waterbuck, the beautiful Bushbuck and pods of Hippopotami. The persistent troops of playful 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 Bennett's, 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. 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.



Verreaux's Eagle-Owls by Glen Valentine

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 more common Woolly-necked and Yellow-billed Storks, African Spoonbill, the unique and



Saddle-billed Storks by Clayton Burne

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, gaudy 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.

While in the south of the park there are also opportunities for optional sunset drives. Success on these sunset drives here varies greatly, but the list of 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 Savannah Hare, the incomparable Cape Porcupine, African Wild Cat, African Civet, Serval and Spotted Hyena – besides the Big 5!

We will certainly spend a day visiting the rich bushveld and grasslands of the park, which 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, Bennett's Woodpecker, African Hoopoe, Red-billed Buffalo Weaver, Burchell's Starling, Mourning Collared Dove, Brown-headed Parrot, Red-crested Korhaan, Southern Black Tit, miniscule Grey Penduline Tit, noisy Green Wood Hoopoe, Common Scimitarbill, Greater and



African Wild Dog Pups by Greg de Klerk



Leopard by Greg de Klerk

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, dazzling Violet-backed Starling 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 along with its seldom-seen host, the rare and much sought-after Thick-billed Cuckoo. In addition, we will keep a lookout for the amazing selection of migrant cuckoos that visit the park in summer and these include African, Common, Red-chested, Diederik, Klaas's, Levaillant's and Jacobin Cuckoos, as well as the scarce Great Spotted Cuckoo.

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. Summer visitors to these grasslands also include the scarce Pallid and Montagu's Harriers, 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.

The sweet grasses in the Satara area are, of course, 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 and Satara is particularly well known for this. In fact, we have an excellent chance of finding Lion, Leopard, Cheetah, Spotted Hyena and the very scarce and highly threatened African Wil d (Painted) Dog in this area. High densities of other game include Southern Giraffe, Greater Kudu, Klipspringer, Bushbuck, Warthog, Chacma Baboon, Vervet and Dwarf Mongoose, to name just a few.



Secretarybird by Glen Valentine



Black Rhinoceros by Greg de Klerk

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 Owl, Southern White-faced Owl, and Square-tailed, European and Fiery-necked Nightjars.

Day 5: Kruger National Park to Nelspruit and flight to Cape Town. After some early morning's birding and wildlife viewing, we will leave the splendours of Kruger behind us and make our way to Nelspruit and onto Kruger Mpumalanga International Airport, for our flight to Cape Town. We expect to arrive in Cape Town late this afternoon, in preparation for the Flock at Sea cruise tomorrow.

Day 6: Cape Town Harbour: boarding and departure for Flock at Sea. Depending on our boarding time, we may have a few hours to birds the local environs before heading to Cape Town Harbour to board our vessel for the next leg of out adventure.

Flock to Marion



Blue Petrel by Dušan Brinkhuizen

This 8 day voyage out of Cape Town will sail through the Indian Ocean towards The Prince Edward Islands group, comprising two small islands in the sub-Antarctic Indian Ocean. The islands are a declared Special Nature Reserves under South African Environmental Management, and activities on the islands are restricted to research and conservation management.

The wildlife on Marion is particularly vulnerable to introduced species and has suffered terribly with introduced mice and cats. While cats are now believed to have been eradicated, mice are still a major problem. A portion of the fees paid for this trip will be donated to the Mouse Free Marion Project.



Fairy Prion by Andrew Sutherland

Over the course of the voyage, we expect to see a host of seabirds with highlights including Kerguelan, Blue and Grey Petrels; Grey-headed, Sooty, Light-mantled and Wandering Albatrosses; King, Gentoo, Macaroni and Southern Rockhopper Penguins; Fairy and Salvin's Prions and Kerguelan Tern. Should we obtain permission to venture into the marine protected area around Marion Island, we should also find Crozet Shag and Black-faced Sheathbill. A number of marine mammals are also anticipated, with Southern Elephant and Subantarctic Fur Seals; Fin, Sperm, Humpback and Killer Whales, as well as Dusky Dolphin being amongst the most likely.

More than 40 bird tour leaders and guides will be onboard for the cruise, including many who are very good at their cetacean identification too. Peter Harrison MBE, author of Seabirds: An Identification Guide – considered the bible of seabird identification will also be onboard, during which time he will not only be guiding, but also release his new seabird identification guide.



Wandering Albatross by Dušan Brinkhuizen

Day 1: Arrival in Cape Town and board vessel. Today we commence our adventure by boarding our ship and home for the next 8 days. We set sail out of Cape Town, heading south east towards Marion Island.

Days 2 to 7: Cape Town to Durban via Marion Island. Over the next 6 days, we will spend our time birding from various decks as we head further south to Marion Island, and then north to Durban.

We expect to see a number of pelagic birds and mammals, the below list giving an indication of the most likely species.

Good chances - Black-faced Sheathbill*, Grey-headed, Hartlaub's and Kelp Gulls; Greater Crested, Sandwich and Kerguelen

Terns; Brown Skua; King Penguin; Wilson's and Black-bellied Storm Petrels; Wandering, Sooty, Black-browed, Shy, Grey-headed and Indian Yellow-nosed Albatrosses; Southern Giant, Northern Giant, Great-winged, Soft-plumaged, Grey, White-chinned and Blue Petrels; Salvin's and Fairy Prions; Cory's, Sooty, Great and Common Diving Petrels; Cape Gannet; Cape Cormorant; Crozet Shag*. Subantarctic Fur and Southern Elephant Seals; Humpback Whale.



Fairy Prion by Andrew Sutherland

Moderate chances - Sabine's Gull; Common and Antarctic Terns; Pomarine and Parasitic Jaegers; Gentoo, Southern Rockhopper, Macaroni and African Penguins; Light-mantled and Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatrosses; European Storm Petrel; Cape, Kerguelen and White-headed Petrels; Antarctic Prion; Subantarctic Shearwater. Antarctic Fur Seal; Sperm, Killer, Fin and Long-finned Pilot Whales;
Dusky Dolphin.

Low chances - Lesser Crested and Arctic Terns; Long-tailed Jaeger; Grey-backed and White-bellied Storm Petrels; Southern Royal and Northern Royal Albatrosses; Leach's Storm Petrel; Southern Fulmar; Slender-billed Prion; Barau's, South Georgia Diving and Spectacled Petrels; Manx and Little Shearwaters; Crowned, Bank and White-breasted Cormorants. Heaviside's, Short-beaked Common, Hourglass and Bottlenose Dolphins; Southern Right, Common Minke, Sei and Bryde's Whales.



Light-mantled Albatross by Dušan Brinkhuizen

Very Low chances - White-faced Storm Petrel, Tristan Albatross, Broad-billed Prion, Atlantic Petrel, Flesh-footed Shearwater. Southern Right Whale Dolphin; Blue Whale.

As we get closer to The Prince Edward Islands group, we can expect conditions to become rather cold and windy. Despite sitting within the south temperate zone at 46 degrees of latitude, Marion Island has a tundra climate. The islands lie directly in the path of eastward-moving depressions, meaning the weather is permanently cool and windy. Strong regional winds, known as

the roaring forties blow almost every day of the year!

*At present, Birdlife has not obtained the necessary permission to enter the marine protected areas of Marion Island. These species would not be expected unless permission is gained.

Day 8: Arrival in Durban and depart. We expect to arrive back in port this morning, where we will disembark after a fabulous adventure.

FLOCK TO MARION SPECIAL NOTES:

- The Flock to Marion cruise aboard the MSC Musica is being operated by Birdlife South Africa. Rockjumper Birding Tours has reserved a number of cabins onboard, which along with a land-based sector, form the overall tour package. However, Rockjumper Birding Tours is not responsible for operating, guiding or coordinating any aspect or activity of the cruise itself.
- The land-based sector of the package will be exclusively led and guided by a Rockjumper Tour Leader. (Guest to Tour Leader ratio of 1:9 or 1:12), tour dependent.
- The Flock to Marion cruise will have approximately 40 tour leaders and guides spread out on the ship. (Guest to Tour Leader ratio of roughly 1:55).

LAND BASED 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 dinner on day 1 to breakfast on day 6;
- All lodgings;
- Ground transportation;
- Reserve entrance fees;
- Tips for local guides and staff; and
- All guiding services of a Rockjumper Tour Leader.

The tour fee does not include:

- **ANY** flights;
- Optional Night drive in Kruger National Park;
- Any drinks;
- Special gratuities; and
- Telephone calls, laundry and 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 has given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip him.

Special Notes:

- Exiting the vehicle is prohibited in all parks that contain dangerous animals. There are dedicated, fenced stops within the park where one can walk and use rest rooms.
- The Kruger National Park is classified as a Malaria risk area. We suggest you contact your local health authorities for the best advice in this regard.
- 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 mid-day from Skukuza Airport, Kruger National Park on day 1. The tour will conclude after breakfast with a transfer to Cape Town Harbour where we shall board our vessel for the Flock at Sea Cruise on day 6.

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.

FLIGHTS:

O.R. Tambo International Airport, Johannesburg (IATA: JNB) is the main port of entry for international flights in South Africa and is well serviced by all of the world's major airlines. It is also the primary hub for smaller airports, including Skukuza Airport (IATA: SZK) and Kruger Mpumalanga International Airport, Nelspruit (IATA: MQP). **Please DO NOT book any flights until you have consulted the Rockjumper office for confirmation on the status of the tour.**