Kenya

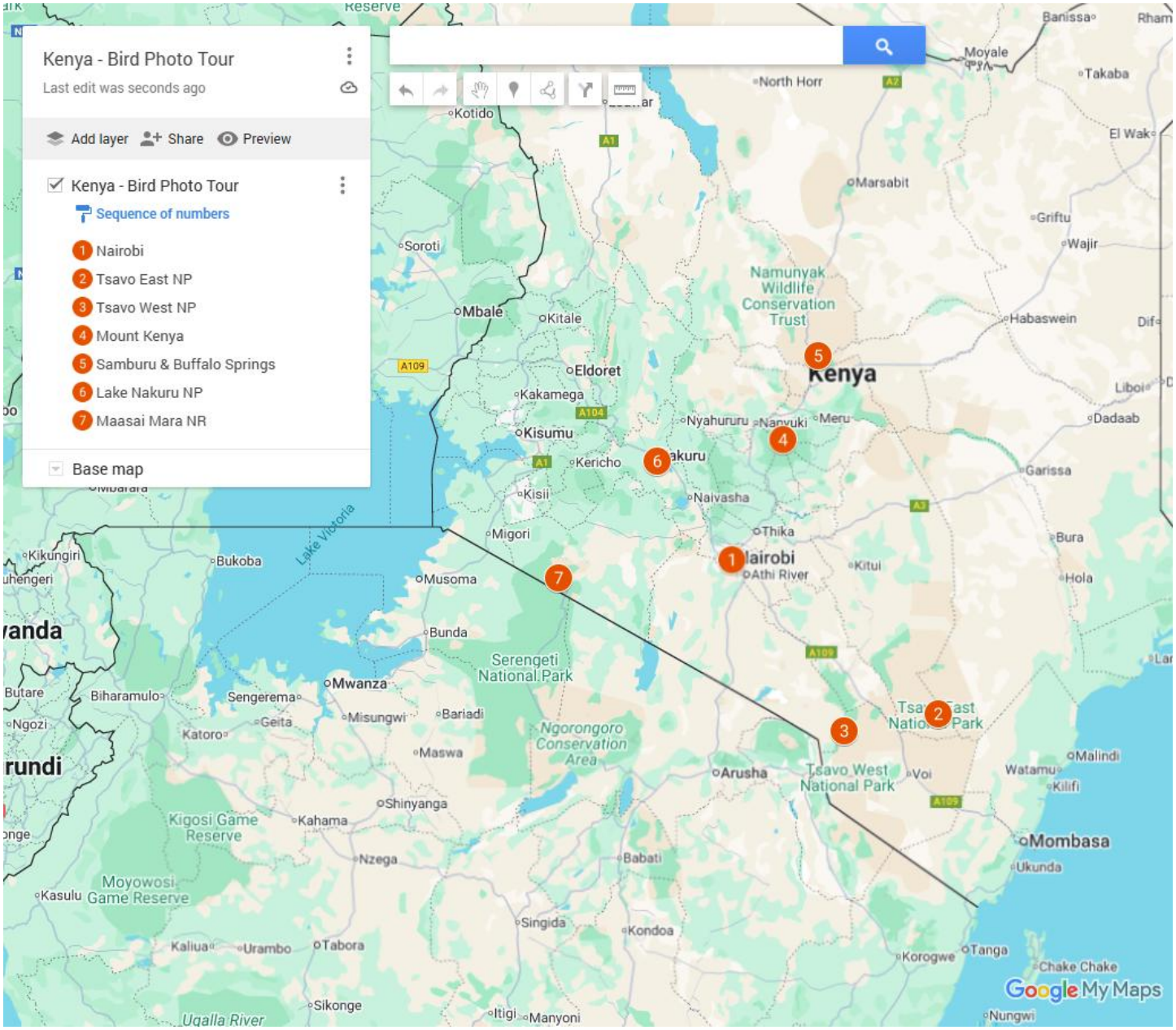
Bird Photo Tour



Grey Crowned Crane by Adam Riley

Our Kenya Photo Tour highlights some of Africa's most iconic and famous wildlife reserves. From the undulating plains of the Maasai Mara to impressive Mount Kenya this tour is a photographer's dream with wildlife highlights at every turn. Our tour begins in Nairobi – one of the most species diverse cities in the world – before heading west to the famous Tsavo reserves where prolific birdlife and mammals abound. To the north of Nairobi lies Mount Kenya, shrouded in montane forest and offering a completely different suite of birds. After our time in the cool forests, we continue north to the dry savanna and riverine woodland of Samburu and Buffalo Springs for a plethora of incredible birds and mammals. We'll then head southwest and descend to the nutrient-rich Lake Nakuru in the Great Rift Valley, with its inexhaustible numbers of Lesser Flamingos. Lastly, we head further south towards the vast plains of what is arguably one of the most fabulous game reserves in the world, the justifiably famous Maasai Mara! This tour offers incomparable wildlife and birding with plenty of exceptional photographic opportunities!

Itinerary & Map



Kenya Bird Photo Tour

Day 1	Arrival in Nairobi
Day 2	Nairobi to Tsavo East
Day 3	Tsavo East
Day 4	Tsavo East to Tsavo West
Day 5	Tsavo West
Day 6	Tsavo West to Nairobi
Day 7	Nairobi to Mount Kenya
Day 8	Mount Kenya
Day 9	Mount Kenya to Samburu
Days 10 & 11	Samburu & Buffalo Springs
Day 12	Samburu to Lake Nakuru
Day 13	Lake Nakuru
Day 14	Lake Nakuru to Maasai Mara
Days 15 to 17	Maasai Mara
Day 18	Maasai Mara to Nairobi and depart

Highlights

- ***Experience some of the planets most enthralling wildlife havens such as the Maasai Mara, the Tsavo reserves and the Samburu/Buffalo Springs reserves***
- ***Kenya is arguably the most bird-rich country on the planet. Not only is there a lot of birds and wildlife but they are mostly very showy and easy to photograph. Make sure you have plenty of storage space for images!***
- ***Every day is a delight and the tours 'feel good factor' is exceptionally high with very comfortable accommodations and lots to see, enjoy and experience***
- ***This tour is largely centred around Kenya's prolific wildlife reserves and these sanctuaries harbour an incredible diversity of megafauna. Given we visit no less than 6 iconic safari destinations we have multiple opportunities to see and photograph the 'Big 5' – Lion, Leopard, Buffalo, Elephant, and Rhino plus others such as Cheetah, Serval, Beisa Oryx, 3 species of Giraffe (Reticulated, Rothchild's and Maasai), Lesser Kudu, Gerenuk and so much more***
- ***Mount Kenya, Africa's 2nd highest peak***
- ***Experiencing Lake Nakuru, one of the famous African Rift Valley lakes, brimming with waterfowl and impressive numbers of flamingos***

Sites in detail

Tsavo East National Park. This is one of Kenya's great national parks and we will have ample time to explore this fabulous wildlife sanctuary. Our time is sure to be filled with both bird and mammal highlights while the photographic opportunities will feel endless. The list of specials and possibilities is extremely long but some of the highlights are sure to be the volume of large birds on show such as Egyptian, Hooded, White-headed, White-backed, Rüppell's and Lappet-faced Vultures, Kori, Buff-crested and White-bellied Bustards, and Somali Ostrich. We will also focus our time on the smaller denizens of the region and highlights are likely to be Black-faced and Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse, Somali Courser, the brilliant Golden Pipit, Black-headed Lapwing, Olive and Somali Bee-eaters, Lilac-breasted, Purple and European Rollers, Abyssinian Scimitarbill, Northern Red-billed and Von der Decken's Hornbills, Nubian, Bearded and Cardinal Woodpeckers, Greater and Lesser Honeyguides, D'Arnaud's and Red-and-yellow Barbets, Eastern Olivaceous and Barred Warblers, Pink-breasted, Red-winged,

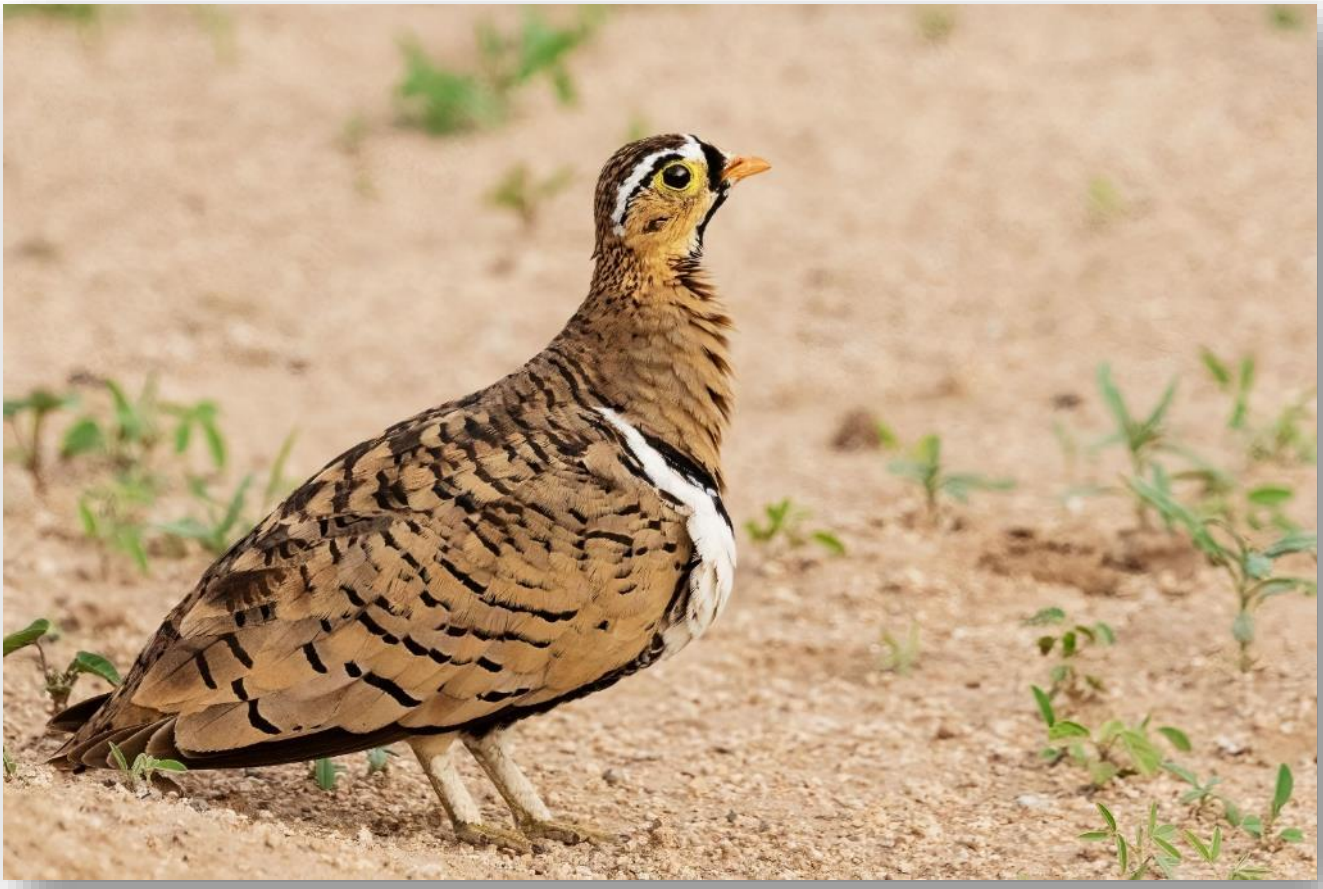


Lioness & cubs by Keith Valentine

Foxy and Flappet Larks, Chestnut-headed and Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Larks, Rosy-patched Bushshrike, Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin, Yellow-necked Spurfowl, Blue-naped Mousebird, Grey-headed Kingfisher, Slate-colored Boubou, Red-tailed Shrike, Red-fronted and Pale Prinias, Grey Wren-Warbler, Pied Wheatear, roving family groups of Vulturine Guineafowl and the stunning Eastern Violet-backed Sunbird among many other incredible dry-country birds.

Mammal highlights could include Lion, Cheetah, Plains Zebra, the strange-looking Gerenuk, regal Grant's Gazelle, tiny Kirk's Dikdik, African Buffalo, the specialized Lesser Kudu, huge Common Eland, Waterbuck, Impala,

Warthog and Giraffe. The Tsavo complex is home to the largest population of African Elephant in Kenya (said to number over 7000), a small population of Black Rhinoceros and even an introduced population of the critically endangered Hirola.



Black-faced Sandgrouse by Greg de Klerk

Taita Hills. These hills famously harbor three highly endangered endemics, namely Taita Thrush, Taita Apalis and Taita White-eye. Recent research has found the Apalis to be the species most at risk of extinction as it appears to be completely absent from the largest extant patch of forest in the Taita Range. The entire world population may be less than 100 breeding pairs! Ngangao forest, the patch we visit, holds some of the last pairs of this rare species. The thrush, while shy occurs in reasonable numbers but is never easy to find while the white-eye is the most numerous. Other species that we will be on the lookout for include Augur Buzzard, Mottled and Alpine Swifts, White-necked Raven, Stripe-faced and Placid Greenbuls, Evergreen Forest Warbler, Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler, Striped Pipit, Singing Cisticola and White-starred Robin.

Tsavo West National Park. Our well situated lodge often provides superb birding around the grounds. At certain times of the year, the lights of the hotel attract large numbers of Palearctic passerines during their nocturnal migration. We will look out for Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin, White-throated Robin, Common and Thrush Nightingales, Common Whitethroat, Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush, Lesser Grey, Red-backed, Red-tailed and Isabelline Shrikes and a bevy of warblers that might include Marsh, Olive-tree, Barred, River, Upcher's and the little-known Basra Reed.

Traversing the arid acacia savanna that dominates Tsavo West National Park, we'll target a number of special, arid-country species such as the rare and localised Friedmann's Lark, Tiny and Ashy Cisticolas, Pygmy and Eastern Black-headed Batis, Rufous and the rare and secretive Scaly Chatterers, White-bellied and Acacia Tits, Mouse-colored Penduline Tit, Hunter's, Black-bellied, Eastern Violet-backed and the localised Tsavo Sunbirds,

Long-tailed and Taita Fiscals, Pringle's Puffback, Three-streaked Tchagra, the rare and skulking Red-naped Bushshrike, Golden-breasted and Magpie Starlings, Chestnut and Parrot-billed Sparrows, Black-cheeked Waxbill, African and Grey-headed Silverbills, Slate-colored Boubous, Rosy-patched Bushshrike, Somali Bunting, Bare-eyed Thrush, Black-capped Social Weaver, Chestnut Weaver, D'Arnaud's, Red-and-yellow and Spot-flanked Barbets, the nomadic Golden Pipit, Pale White-eye, Blue-capped Cordon-bleu and the stunning Purple Grenadier.

Other likely possibilities include Common Ostrich, Martial, Verreaux's, Tawny and Long-crested Eagles, Crested Francolin, Yellow-necked Spurfowl, Harlequin Quail, Black-bellied and Hartlaub's Bustards, Southern Ground Hornbill, White-bellied Go-away-bird, Pearl-spotted Owlet, Northern Crombec, Yellow-bellied Eremomela,



Martial Eagle by Stratton Hatfield

Tawny-flanked and Pale Prinias, African Grey, Pale and Spotted Flycatchers, Chinspot Batis, Amethyst, Beautiful and Variable Sunbirds, Tropical Boubou, Brubru, Black-backed Puffback, Black-crowned Tchagras, Orange-breasted and Grey-headed Bushshrikes, Northern White-crowned Shrike, White-crested Helmetshrike, Black-headed, African Golden and Eurasian Golden Orioles, both Yellow-billed and Red-billed Oxpeckers perched atop large mammals like Giraffe and Buffalo, the brilliant Greater Blue-eared, Violet-backed and Superb Starlings, Yellow-spotted Bush Sparrow, White-browed Sparrow-Weaver, White-headed and Red-billed Buffalo Weavers, Lesser and Vitelline Masked, Spectacled, Baglafecht, Black-necked and Red-headed Weavers, Green-winged Pytilia, Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu, Jameson's Firefinch, Crimson-rumped Waxbill, Bronze Mannikin, Long-tailed Paradise and Straw-tailed Whydahs and Cinnamon-breasted Bunting.

Over 60 species of mammals occur in the park, including the scarce and elusive Lesser Kudu and African Wild Dog, while Lion, Spotted Hyena, Yellow-spotted Hyrax, Banded and Dwarf Mongooses, Beisa Oryx and Coke's

Hartebeest are more likely. We will certainly be treated to an exceptional African birding and big game experience today!

We have a chance for a few species of nightjar with scarce species such as Sombre and Donaldson-Smith's being possible together with Eurasian.



White-starred Robin by Daniel Danckwerts

Tsavo West National Park to Nairobi. Whilst mostly a travel day, we do pass through upland grasslands with open savanna. This area supports a good population of cisticolas and widowbirds including Pectoral-patch, Zitting, Desert, Tiny, Croaking and Ashy Cisticolas and Red-collared, White-winged and Jackson's Widowbirds and we'll keep our eyes peeled for these as we drive.

Nairobi to Mount Kenya. Birding starts almost immediately, as we depart Nairobi en route to Mount Kenya, and there is a distinct possibility of sighting Speckled Mousebird, Red-fronted Tinkerbird, Spot-flanked Barbet, Lesser Striped Swallow, Capped Wheatear, Abyssinian Thrush, Red-faced Crombec, White-eyed Slaty Flycatcher, African Paradise Flycatcher, Collared and Variable Sunbirds, Pale White-eye, White-browed Sparrow-Weaver, Spectacled Weaver, Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu, Streaky Seedeater and African Citril. We will also search for the endemic Hinde's Babbler on the lower slopes of Mount Kenya.

Mount Kenya. We'll spend the day birding and photographing the montane forest slopes of Mount Kenya. If the weather is clear, we shall awaken to views of the snow-capped summit of Mount Kenya at 5 199m (17 057ft) – Africa's second highest peak after Mount Kilimanjaro. Birds that we will be targeting here include the magnificent Crowned Eagle, Jackson's Francolin, African Olive and Eastern Bronze-naped Pigeons, Red-fronted Parrot, Crowned and Silvery-cheeked Hornbills, Hartlaub's Turaco, Bar-tailed Trogon, Scarce Swift, White-

headed Wood Hoopoe, Moustached and Yellow-rumped Tinkerbirds, Abyssinian Ground Thrush, Black Saw-wing, Yellow-whiskered, Slender-billed and Olive-breasted Greenbuls, White-starred Robin, Cape Robin-Chat, Chestnut-throated, Grey and Black-throated Apalises, White-bellied Tit, Grey Cuckooshrike, Waller's Starling, Kikuyu White-eye, Eastern and Northern Double-collared Sunbirds, Brown-capped Weaver, Yellow-bellied and Kandt's Waxbills, the secretive Abyssinian Crimsonwing, Thick-billed Seedeater, Yellow-crowned Canary and, if we are very lucky, Olive Ibis and Oriole Finch. Mammals we may see include the beautiful Blue (Sykes's) Monkey and Guereza. At night we should hear the eerie screams of Southern Tree Hyrax.

Mount Kenya to Samburu National Reserve. Heading northwards to the Samburu district, we'll drive through montane grasslands and fields where we hope to find Long-tailed, Red-collared and Jackson's Widowbirds before we descend the escarpment to the town of Isiolo, gateway to the arid-zone reserves of Shaba, Samburu and Buffalo Springs.



Purple Grenadier by Adam Riley

Samburu, Shaba & Buffalo Springs National Reserves. We have time to explore this trio of national reserves, Samburu, Buffalo Springs and Shaba. They boast a unique collection of game only found in this region, including Reticulated Giraffe, the attractive Grevy's Zebra, Lesser Kudu, giraffe-necked Gerenuk and Beisa Oryx. These reserves consist of rugged mountains, acacia woodland and inhospitable lava plains dissected by strips of verdant riverine vegetation along the Ewaso Nyiro River, while isolated springs away from the river provide much needed water for the areas' faunal inhabitants.

Shaba, made famous by the late Joy Adamson and her leopardess Penny, has also gained media attention due to it being used to film parts of the Hollywood movie 'Out of Africa' and the reality show 'Survivor: Africa'.

Some of the special birds that we will search for in the desolate but beautiful semi-desert scrub and riverine vegetation during these two days include Somali Ostrich, the strange and colourful Vulturine Guineafowl, Somali Courser, Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse, White-throated and Somali Bee-eaters, Grant's Wood Hoopoe, the localised White-headed Mousebird, Eastern Yellow-billed and Von der Decken's Hornbills, Greater Honeyguide, Black-throated Barbet, Fan-tailed Raven, Red-winged, Pink-breasted and Foxy Larks, Brown-tailed Rock Chat, Yellow-vented Eremomela, Grey Wren-Warbler, the strange scrub-dwelling Red-fronted Warbler, Rufous Chatterer, Pygmy Batis, Acacia Tit, Northern Puffback, Rosy-patched Bushshrike, the breath-taking Golden-breasted and quirky Bristle-crowned Starlings, Fischer's Starling, Golden Pipit, Black-bellied and Hunter's Sunbirds, Straw-tailed Whydah, Black-capped Social Weaver, White-headed Buffalo Weaver, Donaldson Smith's Sparrow-Weaver, Golden Palm Weaver, Chestnut Weaver, Crimson-rumped Waxbill, African Silverbill, Cut-throat Finch, Parrot-billed Sparrow and Somali Bunting.

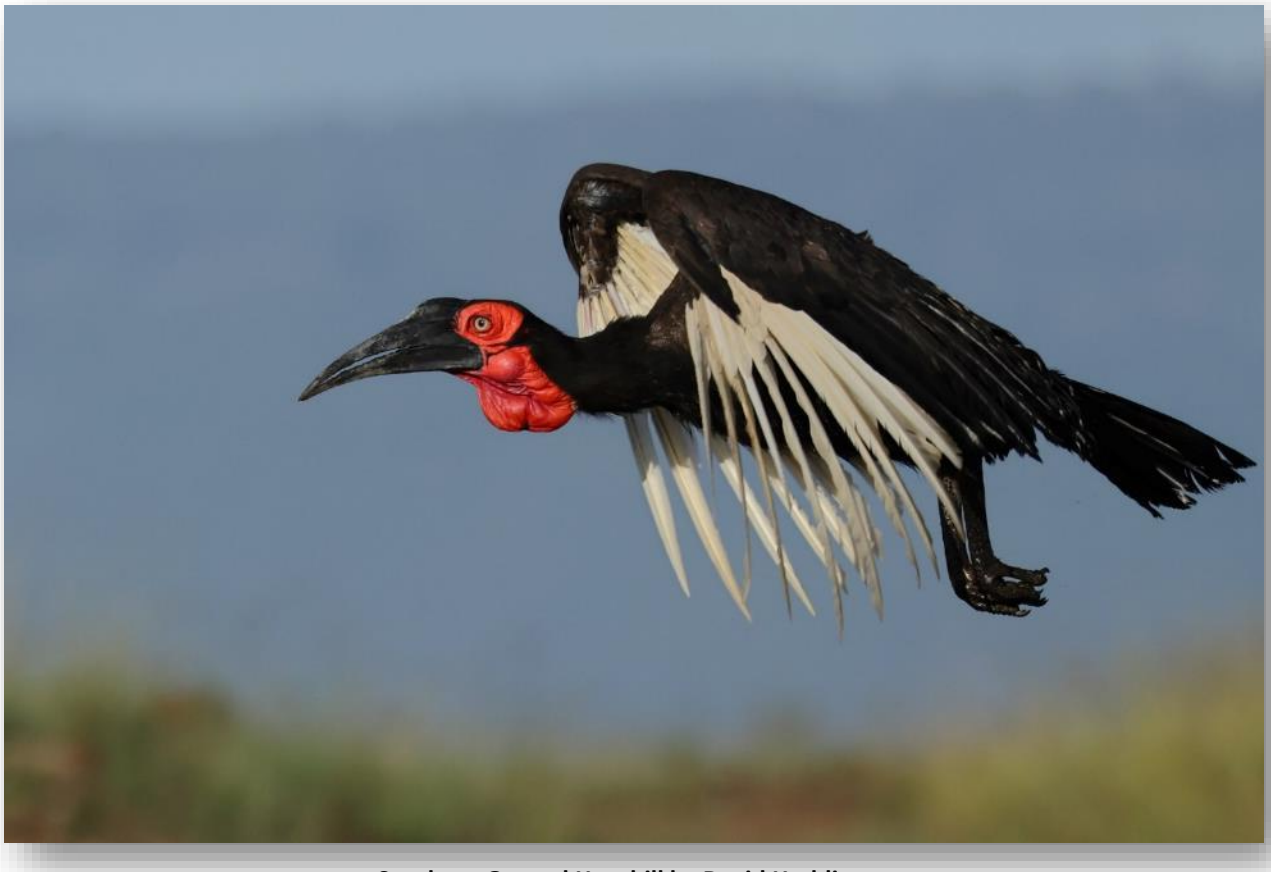


Black Rhinoceros by Stratton Hatfield

Shaba National Reserve to Lake Nakuru National Park. We'll head towards Lake Nakuru National Park in the Great Rift Valley. En route we will search for the localised Cape Eagle-Owl, the sub-species sometimes split as Mackinder's Eagle-Owl.

Lake Nakuru National Park. Originally declared a national park because of its vast flamingo population, Lake Nakuru is also known for supporting populations of both species of African rhinoceros. The levels of the blue-green alkaline waters of the lake vary annually and this, with other accompanying environmental changes, causes considerable variation in the flamingo population (from millions to none at all). However, when they are present en masse the lake turns a gorgeous rosy pink, and the Lesser Flamingos form a pink wall along the entire length of the lake.

We'll spend our time driving through the park searching for African Buffalo, Plains Zebra, glamorous Rothschild's Giraffe, several antelope species, and both Lion and Leopard may be found. Besides the flamingos, other waterbirds abound, and we can expect to find both species of African pelicans (Great White is usually present in large numbers), cormorants, egrets, herons, ibises, ducks, African Spoonbill, the regal African Fish Eagle and noisy groups of Pied Kingfisher. Other species we may encounter include Coqui and Hildebrandt's Francolins, White-fronted Bee-eater, Green Wood Hoopoe, Red-throated Wryneck, Eastern Grey and Nubian Woodpeckers, Anteater Chat, Mocking Cliff Chat, Abyssinian Wheatear, Little Rock Thrush, Arrow-marked Babbler, the scarce Grey-crested Helmetshrike, Rüppell's and Greater Blue-eared Starlings, and Yellow Bishop.



Southern Ground Hornbill by David Hoddinott

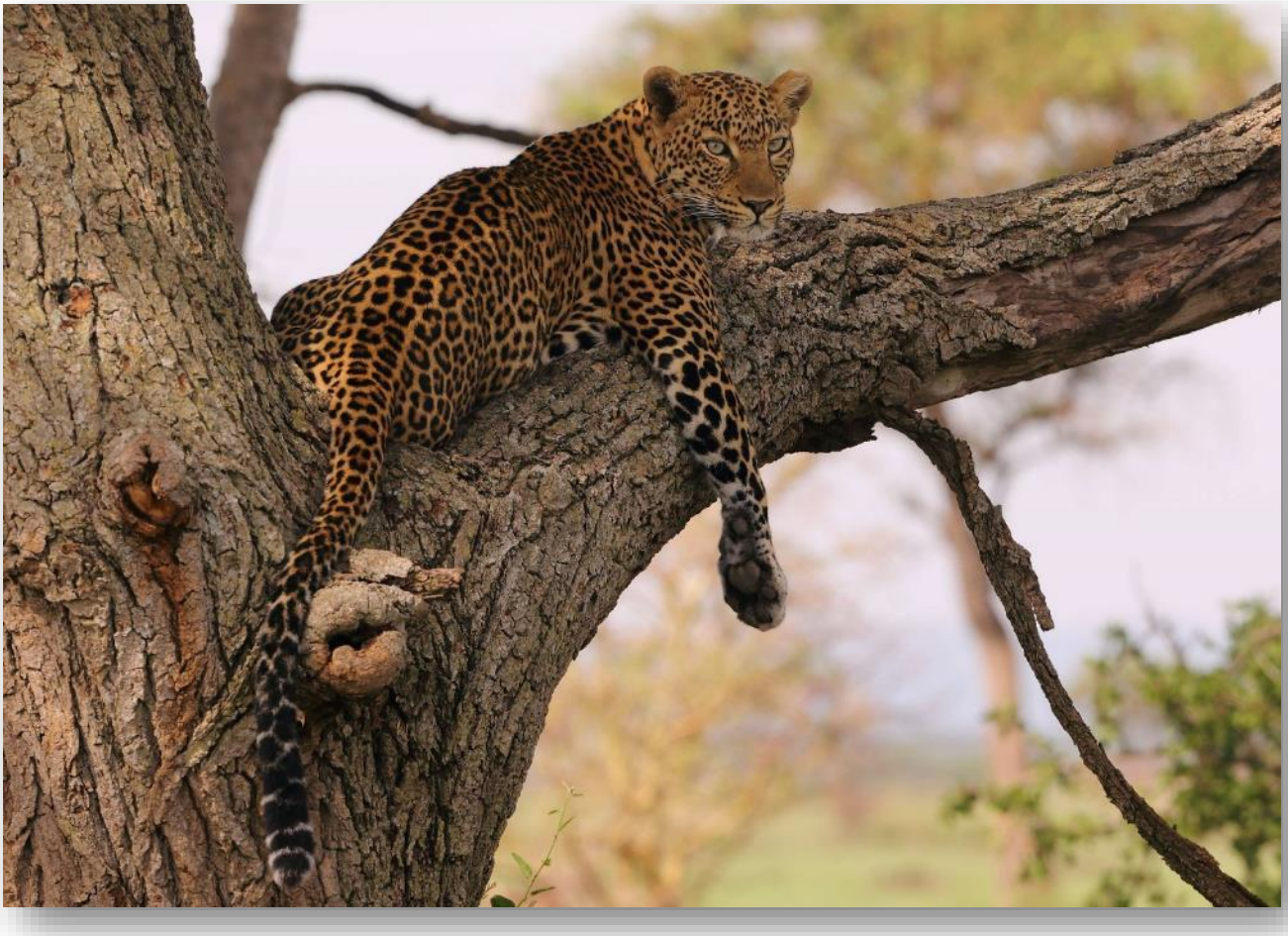
Lake Nakuru National Park to Maasai Mara National Park. We drive to the world-famous Maasai Mara, enjoying lunch and the occasional birding opportunity on the way.

As we head southwards, the countryside will become notably drier and considerably less undulating. We should encounter our first tall and proud Maasai cattle-herders on the drive.

Maasai Mara National Park. The Mara, as it is affectionately called, is Kenya's most well-known reserve, boasting one of Africa's most astonishing big game populations. Unfenced, it is bounded to the east by the Ngama Hills, to the west by the Oloolulo or Siria Escarpment, and to the south by the vast Serengeti National Park in Tanzania. Famously, the Mara constitutes the very northerly end of the Great Migration, that unrivalled primeval surge of wildebeest, zebras and antelopes that sweeps in from Tanzania's Serengeti to Kenya's Maasai Mara as the rainfall affects the quality of grasses across these vast plains. Although we will not experience the migration at this time of year, we can still expect to see first-class numbers of Africa's big game. The impressive black-maned Mara Lions are possibly the stars of the show, but Cheetah, Leopard, Spotted Hyena and other top predators are also present in good numbers.

Other animals we can expect to see include African Elephant, African Buffalo, Maasai Giraffe, Plains Zebra, Hippopotamus, Impala, Waterbuck, Topi, Hartebeest (locally known as Kongoni), Grant's and Thomson's Gazelles, endearing Banded Mongoose, and the comical and familiar Common Warthog.

Not only is this a great place in which to find game, but the wide golden-green savannas, dotted with acacia trees, make it ideal for photography. The Mara is ravishingly beautiful and offers long, undisturbed views and utterly dramatic panoramas. As for the birding opportunities, the Mara is world-renowned, providing almost unparalleled opportunities to see Rufous-bellied Heron, Temminck's Courser, Red-necked Spurfowl, Black Coucal, Schalow's and Ross's Turacos, Bare-faced Go-away-bird, Southern Ground Hornbill, Usambiro Barbet, Green-backed and African Grey Woodpeckers, Flappet and Rufous-naped Larks, Rosy-throated Longclaw, Long-billed Pipit, Sooty Chat, Northern Black Flycatcher, Green-capped Eremomela, Yellow-bellied Hyliota, Red-throated Tit, Hildebrandt's Starling, Swahili Sparrow and Yellow-mantled Widowbird. The Mara is also renowned for its raptors, and we can expect to see a good selection during our stay.



Leopard by Adam Riley

We will also explore the eastern section of the park to give us better chances of finding several dryland species including Double-banded Courser, Yellow-throated Sandgrouse, Spotted Eagle-Owl, Silverbird, Grey-capped Social Weaver and Magpie Shrike.

Manguo Pond. Time permitting, we'll make a quick stop at Manguo Pond, a seasonal wetland that fills when there have been sufficient rains. This site supports a good selection of duck species including Blue-billed Teal, White-backed and Maccoa Ducks, as well as a variety of waders.

Tour Grading & Key

Photography		Excellent throughout. Mostly from the vehicle and in lodge gardens. No dedicated hides.
Overall Ease		Undemanding. Suitable for all photography / birding / wildlife interest levels and mobility capabilities.
Accommodation		Comfortable lodges & tented safari camps.
Walking / Trails		Limited walking, mostly around lodge gardens. Only on Mount Kenya we will explore on foot. This will be mostly on the roadside and around the lodge.
Vehicles / Roads		Comfortable safari vehicle with pop open roof. Mostly flat sealed roads between major towns. Dirt roads within most wildlife areas.
Birding Ease		Undemanding. Most species provide good visuals in open conditions. Forest birding and photography is limited.
Annoyances		Can be bright and hot. Biting Tsetse fly are encountered at times.

Financial Arrangements and Important Notes

Tour dates, prices, single supplement, approximate flight costs and tour spaces are displayed on our website.

Tour inclusions:

- All meals from dinner on day 1 to lunch on day 18;
- Bottled drinking water;
- All lodgings;
- All ground transportation during the tour;
- All reserve entrance fees;
- All guiding services
- Tips for local guides, drivers and services.

Tour exclusions:

- Visa fees;
- ANY flights;
- Any beverages (including mini-bar charges at hotels);
- Optional excursion to a traditional Maasai village;
- Optional guided forest walks;
- Special gratuities;
- 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 RBL 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.

Tipping: As noted above, gratuities (drivers, hotel staff, restaurants etc.) are included on this tour. However, this does NOT include your Rockjumper leader/s. If you feel that they have given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip them at your discretion.

- **Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is 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. The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates.**
- **Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registrations, a small group supplement will be offered to confirm the tour.**
- **Tour prices are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.**
- **The designated tour leader/s may be changed at short due to unforeseen circumstances.**
- **The itinerary is indicative only. Changes may need to be made to the order in which the tour is conducted, or some of the venues we visit closer to departure. We will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.**

- To ensure your comfort and that of your companions, please limit yourself to one medium-sized suitcase or duffel bag (20 kg / 44 lb) and one carry-on bag, as space in the vehicles is limited.
- Due to the presence of potentially dangerous game, we will be spending much of this tour in vehicles, including birding time.

Bird Photo Tours

- Our Bird Photo Tours are a hybrid between our Classic birding tours and dedicated photographic tours. You don't have to be a professional photographer or have the biggest lens; this is for everyone with an interest in photography and birding. Whether you're using a bridge camera or the latest body and prime lens, our aims are the same.
- These tours are not aimed at seeing the most species possible on the route, rather taking time to photograph key targets and any other interesting species we may find. Naturally, the overall species list will be lower than a comparable birding focused tour.
- Whilst we may use blinds, feeders and hide setups on some of these tours, we will not be spending an entire day nor even several hours fixed in one spot.
- These tours are suitable for photographers who prefer opportunistic photography over entire days in a hide.
- Our leaders will assist in helping everyone secure good photographic opportunities and advise as much as they can on camera setup. However, they are not professional photographic tour leaders.

Arrival and Departure Details

Day 1 of the tour is set aside as an arrival day in Nairobi. You are welcome to arrive at any time this day. We will begin with an evening briefing and dinner. The tour concludes in Nairobi in the late afternoon/early evening of day 18.

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.

Jomo Kenyatta International Airport, Nairobi (IATA: NBO) is the main port of entry/departure for this tour.

Visa requirements differ by country, nationality of the traveller and duration and purpose of your intended stay. It may be necessary to obtain a visa or an electronic travel authorization in advance of your travel. It is therefore vitally important that you check with your travel agent/consulate/embassy for exact visa requirements.

DO NOT book any flights until the Rockjumper Team have officially confirmed the tour.