South Africa

Mega: Kruger National Park Extension II

15th December to 19th December 2024 (5 days)



Bateleur by Clayton Burne

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!

Itinerary & Map

Day 1	**Arrival in Kruger National Park**
Days 2 to 4	**Kruger National Park**
Day 5	**Kruger National Park to Mbombela and depart**



Birding sites in detail

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. We'll visit a number of sites and camps in the central and southern part of the park.



Lion by Adam Riley

The central part of the park 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.

We will bird 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 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.



Southern Ground Hornbill by Glen Valentine

The sweet grasses in the Satara area 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 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 Wild (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.

Aside from the many mammals, we'll be seeking 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.



Verreaux's Eagle-Owls by Glen Valentine

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 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.



Saddle-billed Storks by Clayton Burne

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. We should also find 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.



African Wild Dog Pups by Greg de Klerk

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.

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 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.



Leopard by Greg de Klerk

*There will be 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!

Tour Grading & Key

Overall Ease	■ ■ ■	Undemanding. Suitable for all birding / wildlife interest levels and mobility capabilities.
Birding Ease	■ ■ ■	Mostly easy birding in open habitat.
Accommodation	■ ■ ■	Comfortable.
Walking / Trails	■ ■ ■	Walking is limited to dedicated camps only.
Vehicles / Roads	■ ■ ■	Comfortable open safari vehicle on flat sealed & unsealed roads.
Photography	■ ■ ■	Excellent, mostly from open safari vehicle.
Annoyances	■ ■ ■	Potential for malaria (low risk)

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 5;
- 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 excursions;
- 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 made 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.**

- 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

The tour starts early in the early afternoon of day 1 at Skukuza Airport and will conclude at Kruger National Park Airport, Mbombela around mid-morning of day 5.

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.

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).

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. The following website provides detailed information about visa eligibility and assistance with online applications options where viable: Visa HQ for Travel

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