Kenya

Birds & Big Game (Relaxed)



Vulturine Guineafowl by Nigel Redman

Our Kenya Relaxed tour highlights some of Africa's most iconic and famous wildlife reserves. Our tour begins with an exploration of Nairobi – one of the most species diverse cities in the world – before heading a little further north to Mount Kenya, shrouded in montane forest. After our time in the cool forests, we continue north to the dry savanna and riverine woodland of Samburu and Buffalo Springs for a completely new suite of 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 in the space of just two weeks!

Itinerary & Map

Day 1	**Arrival in Nairobi**
Day 2	**Nairobi to Mount Kenya**
Day 3	**Mount Kenya**
Day 4	**Mount Kenya to Samburu National Reserve**
Day 5 & 6	**Samburu, Shaba & Buffalo Springs National Reserves**
Day 7	**Shaba National Reserve to Lake Nakuru National Park**
Day 8	**Lake Nakuru National Park**
Day 9	**Lake Nakuru National Park to Masaai Mara National Park**
Days 10 to 12	**Masaai Mara National Park**
Day 13	**Masaai Mara National Park to Nairobi & depart**



Birding sites in detail



Hartlaub's Turaco by Forrest Rowland

Nairobi to Mount Kenya. Birding starts almost immediately, as we depart Nairobi en route to Mount Kenya, 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 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.



Martial Eagle by Stratton Hatfield

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



Reticulated Giraffe by Clayton Burne

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



Kori Bustard displaying by Nigel Redman

Waxbill, African Silverbill, Cut-throat Finch, Parrot-billed Sparrow and Somali Bunting.



Lesser Flamingos at Lake Nakuru by Nigel Redman

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.



Mara Lions 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



African Elephants on the Maasai Mara by David Hoddinott

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 Oloolollo 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.



Grey Crowned Cranes by Glen Valentine

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



Cheetah by Rob Williams

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.

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

Overall Ease	☐ ☐ ■	Undemanding. Suitable for all birding / wildlife interest levels and mobility capabilities.
Birding Ease	☐ ☐ ■	Undemanding. Most species provide good visuals in open conditions. Forest edge birding is limited.
Accommodation	☐ ☐ ■	Very comfortable.
Walking / Trails	☐ ☐ ■	Very little walking, mostly around lodge gardens.
Vehicles / Roads	☐ ☐ ■	Comfortable safari vehicle with pop open roof. Mostly flat sealed roads between major towns. Dirt roads within most wildlife areas.
Photography	☐ ☐ ■	Excellent. From vehicle and in lodge gardens. No dedicated hides.
Annoyances	☐ ☐ ■	Can be bright and hot. 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 dinner on day 13;
- 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.

Our Relaxed series of tours are designed to focus on having an enjoyable holiday with a bird and wildlife focus. Where possible; we have reduced or removed long drives, single night stays and poor/rustic accommodation. We have also sought to reduce or remove difficult hikes, narrow/muddy trails and otherwise oppressive environmental conditions. Early starts and night birding are mostly optional, and we will not spend much time searching for difficult and/or skulking species. These tours are not suitable for hardcore birders and listers, or dedicated photographers.

- **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.**

- It is important for the comfort of your fellow travellers that you do not over-pack. Kindly stick to 20kg (44lb) for check-in luggage and 8kg (18lb) for hand luggage.

- To cover the variety of sites in this large country, there are some relatively long drives. Our vehicle is a comfortable safari modified Toyota Landcruiser.
- We will be visiting several national parks and reserves where there are good numbers of megafauna; for our safety we are naturally confined to the vehicles while on game drives but can exit at dedicated rest stops.
- We will be birding in some parts of this beautiful land that are far away from medical facilities.
- Fitness: This Kenya tour does not require a high level of fitness.
- Due to Maasai Mara NP regulations, departure day game drives are not permitted. Vehicles are required to remain closed as they drive to the gate.

Arrival and Departure Details

Day 1 of the tour is set aside as an arrival day, and you may thus arrive at any time you wish. The tour will conclude at Nairobi International Airport in the late afternoon or early evening of day 13.

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.