South Africa

Cape Wildflowers, Birding & Big Game (Small Group)

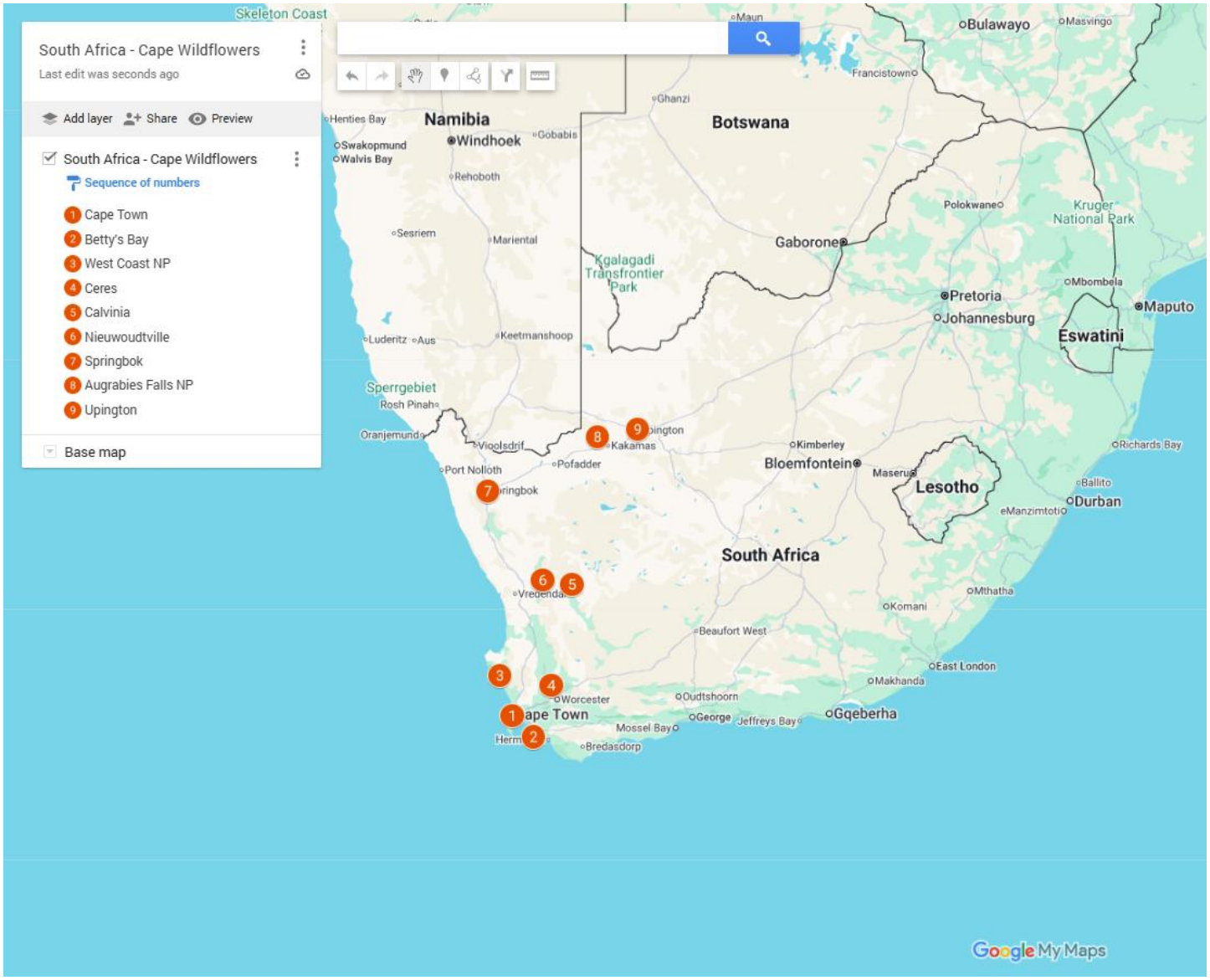


Cape Mountain Zebras & wildflowers in West Coast NP by Adam Riley

This comprehensive tour covers the most exciting regions of the Cape in our quest to experience both breath-taking displays of wildflowers and to track down some of the country's endemic birds. We begin in the vibrant city of Cape Town, where Table Mountain provides a spectacular backdrop to the immensely diverse fynbos that cloaks the cities periphery. This fynbos constitutes the Cape Floral Kingdom – the smallest and richest of the world's 6 floral kingdoms. It is also the only floral kingdom to be confined to the boundaries of a single country. Thereafter we venture to the West Coast and Namaqualand, which boast an outrageous and world-famous floral display in years of good rains, before travelling through the heart of the country's semi-desert region, focusing on the special bird's endemic to this ancient landscape. We conclude the journey heading out of wildflower country to Augrabies Falls, an area offering unparalleled raptor viewing and a wide range of dry region birds. We invite you on this celebration of some of the finest wildflower and endemic birding that the African continent has to offer!

Itinerary & Map

Day 1	**Arrival in Cape Town**
Day 2	**Betty's Bay & Cape of Good Hope National Park**
Day 3	**Hottentots-Holland Mountains**
Day 4	**Cape Town to Langebaan**
Day 5	**West Coast National Park**
Day 6	**Langebaan to Ceres**
Day 7	**Ceres to Calvinia**
Day 8	**Calvinia**
Day 9	**Calvinia to Nieuwoudtville**
Day 10	**Nieuwoudtville**
Day 11	**Nieuwoudtville to Springbok**
Day 12	**Springbok to Augrabies Falls National Park**
Day 13	**Augrabies Falls National Park**
Day 14	**Augrabies Falls National Park to Upington & depart**


South Africa - Cape Wildflowers
Last edit was seconds ago
Add layer
Share
Preview
South Africa - Cape Wildflowers
Sequence of numbers
1 Cape Town
2 Betty's Bay
3 West Coast NP
4 Ceres
5 Calvinia
6 Nieuwoudtville
7 Springbok
8 Augrabies Falls NP
9 Upington
Base map
Skeleton Coast
Namibia
Windhoek
Botswana
Gaborone
Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park
Pretoria
Johannesburg
Eswatini
Maputo
Kruger National Park
Bulawayo
Francistown
Sperrgebiet
Kakamas
Bloemfontein
Lesotho
Durban
South Africa
Cape Town
Worcester
Oudtshoorn
George
Gqeberha
Mossel Bay
Jeffreys Bay
Bredasdorp
Beaufort West
Komani
Mthatha
East London
Makhanda
Richards Bay
Ballito
Manzimtoti
Kimberley
Maseru
Pofadder
Port Nolloth
Vioolsdrif
Oranjemund
Rosh Pinah
Luderitz
Aus
Keetmanshoop
Mariental
Sesriem
Rehoboth
Swakopmund
Walvis Bay
Henties Bay
Gobabis
Ghanzi
Polokwane
Mbombela
Masvingo
Maun
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Birding sites in detail

This itinerary covers different seasons. Please note the below notations:

* **Summer migrants occurring between late October and early April.**
^ **Species that undergo distinct plumage changes, best viewed between November and March.**

Betty's Bay. We will visit the famous African Penguin colony at Stony Point. Here we will enjoy the spectacle of hundreds of penguins waddling about on the beach and rocks at extremely close range, which makes for superb photographic opportunities. We will also keep a lookout for the endemic African Oystercatcher along the adjacent rocky shoreline, and scan through the masses of nesting cormorants for all four species of South African coastal cormorants: Crowned, Bank, Cape and White-breasted.

Cape of Good Hope National Park. The scenery here, at the most south-westerly point of the African continent, is wild and rugged and here you will gain your first insight into the unique and wonderful flora of the Cape Floral Kingdom. The thick stands of proteas support the magnificent, Orange-breasted Sunbird and Cape Sugarbird. Several large mammals occur within the area, and we should find Common Eland, a sub-species of Blesbok known as Bontebok and Chacma Baboon. We conclude the day with a breath-taking coastal drive through the quaint villages of Scarborough and Kommetjie.

Hottentots-Holland Mountains. The area of attractive Cape Fold mountains is a key area to search for one of South Africa's finest endemics, the handsome Cape Rockjumper. Though strikingly plumaged and conspicuous by their vocalizations, these charismatic birds possess an incredible ability to disappear amongst the boulders and we may have to be patient if we wish to enjoy prolonged sightings of these elusive creatures. Rock outcrops here also support Ground Woodpecker, White-necked Raven and Cape Rock Thrush, whilst the thick mountain fynbos is the favoured habitat of Cape Siskin and the smart, endemic Victorin's Warbler. If we are very lucky, we may flush Hottentot Buttonquail underfoot or stumble upon a Cape Eagle-Owl at its daytime roost.

The sandy ground here supports rich mountain fynbos littered with an interesting variety of bulbs and annuals. A staggering 1600 plant species have been recorded in the area, with over 150 of these endemic to the region.



Cape fynbos vegetation at Cape Point, close-ups of *Erica baccans* and *Mimetes hirtus* by Jeremy Exelby

After lunch we will explore the nearby Harold Porter Botanical Gardens, famous among bird and plant enthusiasts with its native plant gardens.



Kirstenbosch Gardens floral scene by Glen Valentine

Harold Porter Botanical Gardens. A smaller version of Kirstenbosch, these beautifully appointed gardens support a wealth of fynbos specialties like Orange-breasted Sunbird, Cape Sugarbird and Cape Siskin and is a particularly good site to see the skulking, endemic Victorin's Warbler. We are also likely to encounter a range of other noteworthy and eye-catching species like Cape and Brimstone Canaries, Karoo Prinia, Swee Waxbill, Cape Batis, Bar-throated Apalis, Southern Double-collared Sunbird, Cape Robin-Chat, African Dusky and Fiscal Flycatchers, Olive Thrush and Sombre Greenbul.

We will amble through the cultivated and wild areas on the lookout for Gladioli, Watsonias, Everlastings and Ericas in flower. For those with diverse interests this Botanical Garden is also a local hotspot for dragonflies

Harmony Flats Nature Reserve. This tiny reserve is the only protected area which conserves Lourensford Alluvial Fynbos – often considered as the most threatened vegetation type in South Africa!



West Coast NP floral display by Adam Riley

West Coast National Park. The immaculately landscaped Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens nestled on the slopes of Table Mountain offer us easy access to the many fascinating displays contained in this world-famous botanical garden. The gardens are also home to a plethora of endemic birds restricted to the Macchia-like vegetation of the southern tip of Africa and we should find Cape Spurfowl and Helmeted Guineafowl scurrying across the lawns, Cape Bulbul, the endemic Cape Grassbird and attractive Southern Double-collared Sunbird. We will search for African Goshawk and Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawk that 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, Swee Waxbill and Forest Canary.

Tienie Versveld Wildflower Reserve. The granitic soils of the reserve can hold some very impressive spring flower displays and we hope for a variety of Babiana, Ixia, Lachenalia and Drosera to be in flower. Two birds of note include the distinctive, localised sub-species of both Cape Clapper Lark and Cloud Cisticola.

West Coast National Park. We'll spend time enjoying the avian and floral wonders of the West Coast National Park, including the globally important wetland site of Langebaan Lagoon. A number of these areas support large numbers of Greater and Lesser Flamingo, South African Shelduck, Cape Shoveler and other waterfowl. Low, coastal vegetation (strandveld) is home to Cape Penduline Tit, Southern Black Korhaan, Karoo, Large-billed and the recently split Cape Long-billed Larks, and Fiscal Flycatcher. Furthermore, the park is the best place on earth to search for the very striking Black Harrier, a regional endemic, and a highly sought-after species!



Common Eland & wildflowers in the Postberg section

If all is well and we have had a good wet year, then we can also expect the most remarkable wildflower display on the West Coast, and indeed one of the finest on earth. Here, in the Postberg section of the reserve, a combination of weather and soil conditions has created what has been described as 'God's Garden', with the normally green and rather drab hills transformed into an extravagance of colour and beauty that is sure to take your breath away.

Lower Karoo. North of Ceres we'll begin exploring the flora and fauna of the Cape's semi-deserts. Gravel plains in this area occasionally hold the nomadic and highly sought-after Burchell's Courser and the stately Ludwig's Bustard.

We will note a stark change in habitat as we depart the winelands of Ceres and move through the narrow entrance of the Karoo proper at Karoopoort and enjoy the open and endless vistas and dry scrublands of the Tanqua-Karoo Region (Tanqua referring to the place of the 'San' or 'Tan' people, the original inhabitants of this



***Cyanella lutea*, *Romulea sabulosa* and *Sparaxis tricolor* by Jeremy Exelby**

area). Birds inhabiting the arid, rocky slopes and acacia-lined watercourses of this area include White-backed Mousebird, Acacia Pied Barbet, Mountain Wheatear, Layard's and Chestnut-vented Tit-babblers, the dainty Fairy Warbler, Pririt Batis and Pale-winged Starling, whilst the adjacent reedbeds are home to the endemic Namaqua Warbler. We will watch the roadsides carefully for Spike-heeled Lark, Tractrac and Sickle-winged Chats, Rufous-eared Warbler and Yellow Canary. Pale Chanting Goshawk and Rock Kestrel are often encountered perching on conspicuous vantage points. We will also stop to listen for the strange croaking of the Karoo Korhaan, which may help us to locate these cryptically coloured endemics.



Argyroderma sp by Richard White

Calvinia area. The wonderful areas around Calvinia and the northern part of the Bushmanland region are an endemic-rich and dramatic landscape with many exciting birding and wildflower moments to be had. The birds that we will be on the lookout for include Black-headed Canary, Black-eared Sparrow-Lark and the regal Blue Crane. Other exciting but perhaps more common birds to look out for today are Karoo Long-billed Lark and Chat Flycatcher on roadside fenceposts and, if we are lucky, we may observe Secretarybirds hunting over the dry grasslands. We will be sure to not ignore the interesting flora of the region as we are once again back in the succulent rich part of South Africa. Occasional flashes of colour reveal the presence of wonderful plants, especially Aloe and Moraea species.

Nieuwoudtville. This lonely but beautiful corner of South Africa is a visual joy in spring, and the day will be spent exploring farms and reserves in the area for the best spring displays and birds. Of particular interest to us here is the diversity of bulbs (no-where else in the world are bulbs as diverse as they are here!) in addition to the numerous plants' endemic to the area. In this relatively small region, we find as many as four different plant biomes converging, creating one of the richest areas for plants in the world. Today is bound to be a very memorable day for us all as we uncover the area's fascinating plant life.



Geissorhiza splendidissima (Blue Pride-of-Nieuwoudtville) by Richard White

Whilst in the area we may visit the Nieuwoudtville Falls, where we will look for Pale-winged Starling and the highly sought-after Ground Woodpecker and the Nieuwoudtville Wildflower Reserve, where we are sure to find numerous flowering geophytes, including representatives of the famous genera, Gladiolus,



Three "Man-in-a-boat" type flowers: Colchicum sp., C. coloratum, and C. volutare **by Jeremy Exelby**

Bulbinella, Romulea, Ixia and the amazingly decorative Geissorhiza. In this area we may also find Namaqua Sandgrouse, Spike-heeled Lark and the delightful little Pririt Batis.

Knersvlakte. This desolate and barren looking land with a gently undulating topography. The barren appearance belies the treasure chest of stone plants (Vygies and Lithops of the family Aizoaceae – previously Mesembryanthemaceae) that litter these quartz plains. We are now in the heart of the succulent capital of the world and will leave the confines of the car to amble this wild garden of miniature, fleshy-leaved plants. By way of birds these plains are home to the wondrous Secretarybird, the endemic Pale Chanting Goshawk, Ant-eating Chat and Cape Crow, among many others.

Skilpad (Tortoise) Wildflower Reserve. This reserve is made up mostly of old farmland that showcases a wonderful selection of spring flowers, including a variety of Daisies, bulbs and geraniums. The ghostly Aloe dichotoma will become evident as we approach the town of Springbok.



Swallow-tailed Bee-eater by Glen Valentine

Goegap Nature Reserve. This reserve notable for its superb birding, great displays of wildflowers, and interesting selection of mammals, including Klipspringer, Mountain Zebra and Chacma Baboon. Birds of interest to us in this parched wilderness include Cinnamon-

breasted Warbler, Dusky Sunbird, White-throated Canary and Mountain Wheatear.



Augrabies Falls and an Augrabies Flat Lizard by Jeremy Exelby

Bushmanland. Departing Namaqualand, we then enter the stark beauty of Bushmanland. The wildflower heartland is now behind us and tracking down the exciting birdlife in the area will require all our efforts. The massive nests of the Sociable Weaver will become apparent, and we will keep our eyes open for the associated Pygmy Falcon that often uses the big nests as a roost site.

Augrabies Falls National Park. Only metres away from our cabins we can marvel at the Orange River as it thunders through a tiny gap in the rocks and pours into the gorge below. In wet years this makes for a very impressive spectacle indeed! In the Camelthorn acacia trees in the camp we will look out for Black-chested Prinia, Ashy Tit, Brubru, Orange River White-eye and Golden-tailed Woodpecker.

We'll spend a day exploring the variety of dramatic landscapes within the park. The lunar-like, rocky outcrops and steep cliff faces not far from camp hold Black Stork, Pale-winged Starling, Peregrine Falcon, Short-toed Rock Thrush and White-backed Vulture. Gracing the reed beds that flank the Orange River are Swallow-tailed Bee-eater, Malachite Kingfisher and Black Crake, while African Fish Eagle may be seen searching the swirling waters for prey. Furthermore, we will have the opportunity for some wonderful mammal viewing. Common Eland, the striking Gemsbok (or Southern Oryx), Klipspringer, Rock Hyrax and Springbok may all be seen today with good fortune.

In the early evening we will take a short night drive into the park in attempt to find Aardvark, Cape Eagle-Owl, Cape Porcupine, Common Genet, Cape Hare, the rather bizarre-looking Springhare and Bat-eared Fox.



***Aloidendron dichotoma* & Karoo scenery by Markus Lilje**

Tour Grading & Key

Overall Ease		Moderate. Can be a little tiring due to travel distances.
Birding Ease		A generalist tour, where focus is on wildflowers, birding & wildlife.
Accommodation		Comfortable lodges.
Walking / Trails		Walking and hiking mostly over flattish ground. Some areas are uneven with rock/stone.
Vehicles / Roads		Comfortable vehicle. Some long drives on both sealed and dirt roads. Some can be bumpy, others wet and muddy depending on season.
Photography		Good to very good.
Annoyances		Typical weather variability (seasonally dependent). Some very hot locations in the Karoo and northern West Coast.

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 breakfast on day 14;
- All lodgings;
- All ground transportation during the tour;
- All reserve entrance fees;
- All guiding services (including tips for local guides and services).

Tour exclusions:

- Visa fees;
- ANY flights;
- Any beverages (including mini-bar charges at hotels);
- No tips or 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.**

- This tour is considered a generalist experience, where the focus is as much on wildflower viewing and appreciation, as it is for birding and wildlife. The tour leader will be an overall generalist, having a very broad knowledge of wildflowers, birds, mammals and other subjects from South African history to astronomy. The tour leader is not a specialist in all subjects.
- The intensity and quality of Wildflower displays is influenced dramatically by rain and heat and their impressiveness can vary from one year to the next. 2003 was a very dry year resulting in a poor spring display while in 2004, sufficient rains fell which produced a riot of spring flowers as it did in 2006, 2007, 2008, 2017, 2018 and 2022.
- This tour is designed to visit the region's best locations at the best possible times under normal circumstances. The tour will run regardless as conditions can change very quickly and even in poor years there is still a great deal to experience botanically.
- 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 20 kg (44 lb) for check in luggage and 8 kg (+-18 lb) for hand luggage.
- Exiting the vehicle is prohibited in all areas and parks that contain dangerous animals.
- 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 begins in Cape Town with an introductory dinner on day 1. The tour will conclude in the early afternoon in Upington on day 14.

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.

Cape Town International Airport, Cape Town (IATA: CPT) and Upington Airport (IATA: UTN) are the main ports of entry and exit for this tour. Upington has frequent flights to Cape Town or Johannesburg International Airports.

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.