Somaliland

Horn of African Endemics



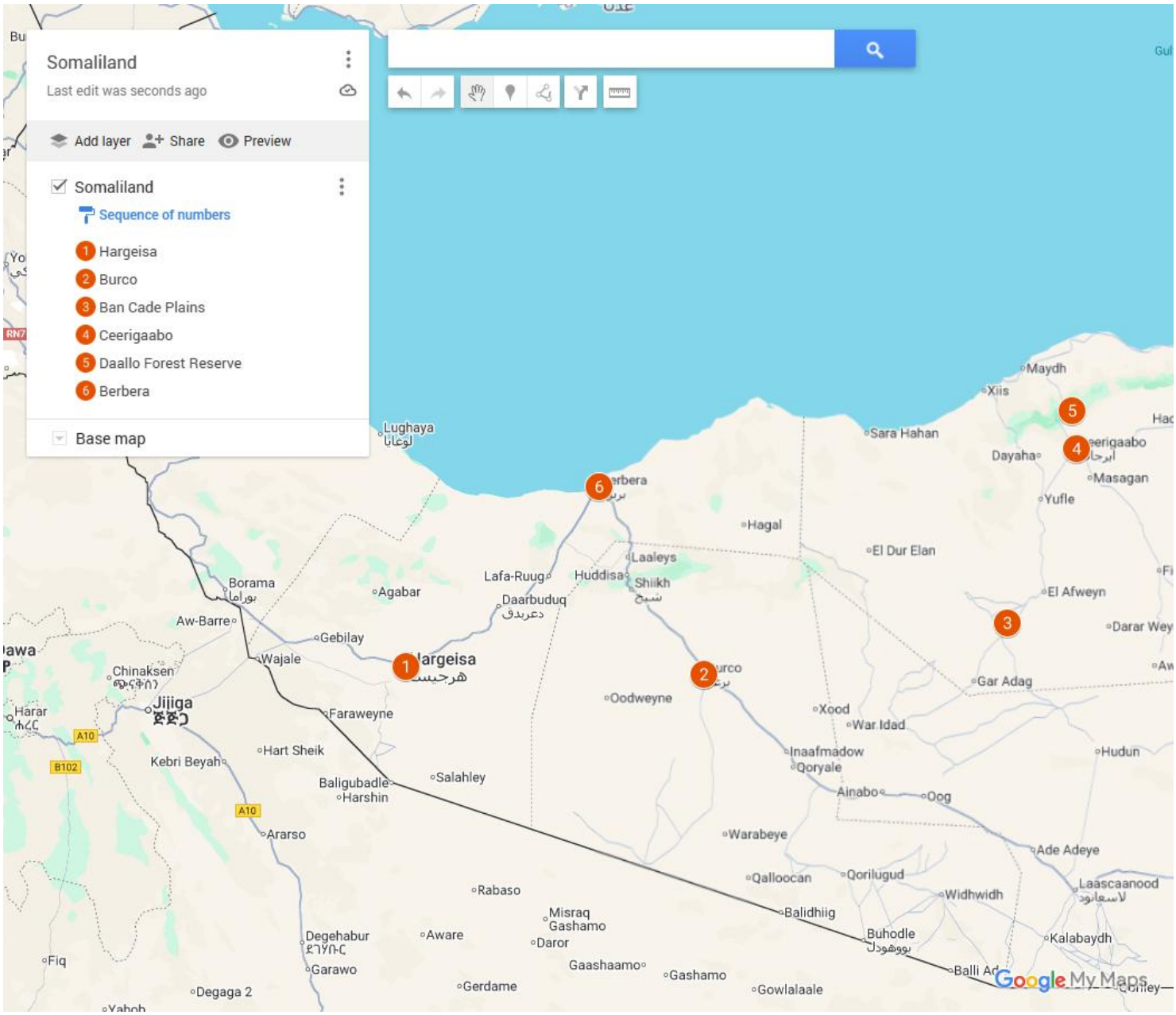
Heuglin's Bustard by David Hoddinott

If the words 'exploratory,' 'intrepid,' 'adventure' and 'discovery' get your blood flowing when it comes to birding, then Somaliland surely ranks high on your list of target destinations. For years this region has been marred by internal conflict; however, Somaliland (Northern Somalia) has recently become safe for travel, allowing access to a remarkable number of endemics that were, until recently, impossible to see. These tantalising endemics and near-endemics include the likes of Little Brown Bustard, Archer's Buzzard, little known Somali Pigeon, Somali & Collared Larks, Lesser Hoopoe-Lark, Somali Wheatear, Philippa's Crombec, Somali Thrush, Somali Starling, Somali Golden-winged Grosbeak and the endangered Warsangli Linnet. These endemic birds are complimented by a rich assemblage of other sought-after dry country and savanna species and include the likes of Heuglin's and Arabian Bustards, White-cheeked Tern, Somali Courser, Somali Crombec, Red-naped Bushshrike, localised Sombre Rock Chat, Blanford's, Somali Short-toed and Short-tailed Larks, Greater Hoopoe-Lark, Yellow-breasted Barbet, Nile Valley Sunbird, White-crowned, Shelley's and Magpie Starlings, Somali Bee-eater, Yellow-vented Eremomela, Somali Sparrow and Northern Grosbeak-Canary.

This is an area that has been little explored, and every trip seems to produce something unusual, unexpected, or new and reports of a possible unique species of cisticola and an interesting scops owl from the Daallo Forest show how much there is yet to still discover. This is pioneering birding at its very best and, when combined with the influx of Palaearctic migrants, should make for a superb bird-filled adventure!

Itinerary & Map

Day 1	**Arrival in Hargeisa**
Day 2	**Hargeisa to the Tri-Plains Camp**
Day 3	**Tri-Plains to Burco (Burao)**
Days 4 & 5	**Red sand country east of Burco**
Days 6 & 7	**Ban Cade Plains**
Day 8	**Ban Cade Plains to Ceerigaabo (Erigavo)**
Days 9 to 11	**Daallo Forest Reserve**
Day 12	**Daallo Forest Reserve to Burco**
Day 13	**Burco to Berbera**
Day 14	**Berbera, flight (or drive) to Hargeisa & depart**



Birding sites in detail

Hargeisa to the Tri-Plains Camp. We make an early start out of Hargeisa and begin the drive east towards the Quoryale Plains and beyond. One of the highlights on our drive will be a good chance at finding the rare and near-endemic Beira Antelope while other species that are also possible on the drive include Gerenuk, Speke's Gazelle and Desert Warthog. This area provides a perfect introduction into the Somaliland avifauna and whilst travelling from the Beira Hills down to Wadi Debis, we will look for the localized Somali Wheatear, Black-throated and Yellow-breasted Barbets, gaudy Golden-breasted and White-crowned Starlings, Grey Wren-Warbler and Grey-headed Batis. Whilst travelling through the rocky hillsides and whistling acacias, we'll also look for Red-bellied Parrot, White-bellied Go-away-bird, Banded Warbler, Acacia Tit, Mouse-coloured Penduline Tit and White-bellied Canary.



Somali Bee-eater by David Hoddinott

Tri Plains area. The Tri-Plains area begins shortly after we exit Wadi Debis, providing an excellent stretch of habitat for a wide selection of bustards, larks and pipits. These may include the much wanted Little Brown Bustard plus the more widespread Buff-crested and huge Kori Bustards, Blanford's, Somali Short-toed, Short-tailed and Singing Bush Larks, and Plain-backed and Long-billed Pipits.

Tuuyo Plain. The last of the series of plains, is the westernmost site to see Somali Lark and Lesser Hoopoe-Lark, both endemic to Somaliland. We may also find Greater Kestrel and Chestnut-headed Sparrow-Lark.



Little Brown Bustard by Angela Pattison

Tri Plains to Burco. Travelling further east towards Burco, we pass through areas of dry mixed woodland and stony hillocks where we could see Nubian Woodpecker, Magpie Starling, Little, Olive and Northern Carmine Bee-eaters, recently split Brown-tailed Apalis, Shelley's Sparrow, Upcher's Warbler, White-browed Scrub Robin, Brubru, Somali Crow, Blue-capped and Red-cheeked Cordon-bleus, Somali, Cream-coloured and Double-banded Coursers, Somali Fiscal, Crested Francolin and Vulturine Guineafowl.

Aroori Plains. Located just outside Burco, theser plains offer further chances for Somali Lark and Little Brown Bustard. Other species we might see in the area include Mourning Collard Dove, Somali Bee-eater, Red-and-yellow Barbet, Steppe Grey Shrike and Blanford's Lark. On this plain there is also an enigmatic remnant of Soemmering's Gazelle



Somali Coursers by David Hoddinott

attempting a return after a near half-a-century absence, as well as Speke's Gazelle which seem to be doing a little better.

Red sand country east of Burco. The first area we will visit is a known site for the tiny Philippa's Crombec, a very localized species. We may also see the more widespread Somali Crombec here as well. In addition, this is a good place for Yellow-vented Eremomela, another tricky and rather localized species, as well as Eastern Chanting Goshawk, Foxy Lark, Hunter's, Shining, Eastern Violet-backed and Nile Valley Sunbirds, Three-streaked Tchagra and Somali Bunting. It is also excellent bustard terrain and we'll keep a watch for Heuglin's, White-bellied, Buff-crested and Little Brown.

Travelling further east we then enter red sand country, where our key target is the extremely localized Collared Lark. As this might take a while to find, we have allocated sufficient time to search for this elusive species. Other birds we could see in the area include Lilac-breasted Roller (of the unique *lorti* subspecies, which is occasionally split off as a separate species), Pygmy Falcon, Alpine Swift, Ethiopian Swallow, Dodson's Bulbul, Blue-naped Mousebird, Abyssinian Scimitarbill, Northern and Eastern Yellow-billed Hornbills, Arabian Warbler, Pale Prinia, Grey Wren-Warbler, Pygmy Batis, Red-naped Bushshrike, Little Owl, Scaly Chatterer, Gillett's Lark, Donaldson-Smith's Nightjar, Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin, Red-fronted Warbler, Golden-breasted, Shelley's and Magpie Starlings, Purple Grenadier, Green-winged Pytilia, African Silverbill, Straw-tailed Whydah, Somali Sparrow, Yellow-spotted Petronia, Red-billed and White-headed Buffalo Weavers, Chestnut Weaver, Northern Grosbeak-Canary and White-bellied Canary.



Collared Lark by Angela Pattison

Ban Cade Plains. We have a good amount of time to explore this interesting area. The Ban Cade Plains are vast, very scenic and quite



Sombre Rock Chat by Clayton Burne

different from the previous plains. This is serious lark, pipit, sandgrouse and bustard country. Specifically, we will look for Somali Lark (a different sub-species from the Tuuyo Plains), as well as Lesser Hoopoe-Lark, Somali Short-toed, Desert and Short-tailed Larks. Other possible species include Egyptian and Lappet-faced Vultures, Short-toed Snake Eagle, Lanner Falcon, Somali Courser, Chestnut-headed Sparrow-Lark, Chestnut-bellied and Spotted Sandgrouse, Desert Wheatear and all the previously mentioned bustards.

Daallo Forest Reserve. We have several days to explore this fabulous reserve. Whilst investigating the lovely Taba'a Escarpment and Daallo Mountain we'll search for a number of endemics, including the critically endangered Warsangli Linnet, which is thought to number no more than 1 000 individuals. The other high priority species here include the near-threatened Somali Golden-winged Grosbeak, inexplicably scarce Archer's Buzzard, Somali Thrush and little known Somali Pigeon. Of the near-endemics, Somali Starling is thankfully common in this area and we will also keep our eyes and ears open for the shy and difficult *archeri* race of Orange River Francolin, which is often split as a separate species.



Somali Starlings by Angela Pattison

During our explorations of the area we should also find a good number of other species and possibilities include Abyssinian Wheatear, Verreaux's Eagle, scarce Barbary form of Peregrine Falcon, Bruce's Green and African Olive Pigeons, White-browed Coucal, Nyanza Swift of the unique and different looking *somalicus* race, Black-billed Wood Hoopoe, Hemprich's Hornbill, Pale Crag Martin, Common Nightingale, White-throated Robin, Common Redstart, Little Rock Thrush, Brown Woodland Warbler, Abyssinian White-eye and Brown-rumped See-eater. Past trips to this largely unexplored area have produced some interesting sightings including an

unidentified species of cisticola and an interesting scops owl that is either Arabian Scops Owl or a new species altogether!

Burco to Berbera. We make a very early start today and travel across the scenic Golis Range, passing an historic Sheik village along the way. We'll stop at the shoulder of the escarpment to look for the rare Sombre Rock Chat, and perhaps Blackstart and Brown-tailed Rock Chat, at an old volcanic, rock-strewn site.



Somali Pigeon by Angela Pattison

Busti Massif. A seemingly lifeless coastal range about 20km above Berbera and the Gulf of Aden. This area has some canyons that hold Somali Pigeon, thereby allowing us further chances for this sought-after and very subtly attractive endemic. In the nearby caves and surrounds we might find Greyish Eagle-Owl, Common Kestrel and Striolated Bunting.

Berbera. We may have a little time to look around the old collapsing port city of Berbera. This is Somaliland's second largest town but is sadly only a shadow of its glory days. We will bird a little along the coastline to pick up White-cheeked, Greater Crested, Lesser Crested and Caspian Terns, Slender-billed and Heuglin's Gulls, Pink-backed Pelican, African Collared Dove and a large variety of waders.

Tour Grading & Key

Overall Ease	🟥 🟨 ⬜	Difficult to moderate. This a Mega style tour designed for the dedicated lister & serious birder. Not suitable for dedicated or avid photographers; inexperienced birders; or anyone with mobility or health challenges.
Birding Ease	⬜ 🟨 ⬜	Moderate. Whilst most birding is in open conditions, several species are low density or very localised.
Accommodation	🟥 🟨 🟩	Variable. Comfortable in large towns, otherwise basic camping.
Walking / Trails	⬜ 🟨 🟩	Mostly short walks on flat ground. Predominantly roadside birding.
Vehicles / Roads	🟥 ⬜ ⬜	4x4 vehicles. Several long drives. Unsealed roads are variable, sealed roads have potholes & livestock.
Photography	⬜ 🟨 🟩	Good to worthwhile. No dedicated hides. Many species are reasonably approachable, habitat & lighting are often conducive.
Annoyances	⬜ 🟨 ⬜	Food diversity is limited. Weather is typically hot & dry.

Financial Arrangements and Important Notes

This tour is made available through our Tailor-made tours department. To explore this offering further for pricing, precise day to day itinerary, inclusions & exclusions, or to tailor the tour to your personal requirements, please contact our Tailor-made team on tailormade@rockjumper.com

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.

- **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.**

Somaliland is an internationally unrecognized state. While Somaliland itself has an enviable safety record as a place to travel, 'western' government advisories conflate the country with Somalia as they do not recognize Somaliland as a distinct entity. As a result, travel insurance can typically only be found through specialist providers.

Visas are only issued on arrival and require a completed visa application form and an invitation letter (which we will provide).

- The itinerary will remain flexible so that if we have seen the target species in a particular area, we can then move camp to the next area, thereby making the most of our time.
- We may make changes to the itinerary before or during the tour itself if security situations make this necessary.
- It can be very hot in some areas, whilst the highlands can get cold especially at night. Rain may be experienced.
- On our visit to Daallo Mountain we get up to 3 000m (9 843ft) above sea level.
- There are several long, all day drives but we will take regular rest and birding stops to break the long journeys. Although they are lengthy, they are scenic and full of interesting waypoints!
- Armed tourist police may accompany us during the trip.
- Accommodation throughout the trip is generally comfortable but can be very basic in some areas. We will be camping for several nights.
- The food in Somaliland is generally basic and consists of both western and local cuisine. We will enjoy many "bush breakfasts and lunches" on the side of the road whilst in good birding areas.
- Special dietary requirements (other than vegetarians) are for all intents and purposes impossible to cater for on this tour.

Arrival and Departure Details

Day 1 of the tour is set aside as an arrival day in Hargeisa, and you may arrive at any time in advance of our introductory group dinner. The tour will conclude at Hargeisa Egal International Airport after in the late afternoon of day 14 (either after a flight or drive from Berbera.

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.

Hargeisa Egal International Airport, Hargeisa (IATA: HGA) is the main port of entry for international flights.

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.