In conjunction with

Birding Ecotours

Presents

INTRODUCTION TO AFRICA: THE CAPE, KRUGER AND VICTORIA FALLS

30 May – 10 June 2023

Lilac-breasted Roller abounds in the Kruger National Park.
Join us on a comfortable birding and wildlife safari of a lifetime in South Africa and at the Victoria Falls. This fabulous “introduction to Africa” trip will allow you to get your first taste of Africa (or, if you’ve been before, you’ll surely see some birds and mammals you might have missed the first time around). We begin by experiencing one of the world’s most beautiful cities, Cape Town, and the surrounding Cape Fold Mountains and spectacular Cape coastline with its unique, rich plantlife and accompanying endemic birds such as sugarbirds, sunbirds and Cape Rockjumper. We also look for African Penguin, Blue Crane, Cape Mountain Zebra and other charismatic species.

We will then fly to the opposite corner of South Africa and spend a few days in one of Africa’s greatest game parks, Kruger National Park. This is not only one of South Africa’s richest places for mammals, but also boasts a bird list of over 500 species. This massive park covers a vast area and is teaming with Africa’s big (and small) mammals (including African Elephant, Giraffe, Plains Zebra, Lion, Leopard, and Cheetah). The great thing for birders, though, is that it’s full of easy-to-see, spectacular-looking birds, such as several species each of roller, bee-eater, kingfisher, hornbill, vulture, owl, and stork. The park is teaming with birds of prey, including the spectacular, colorful Bateleur. There’s also a good chance of finding Secretarybird, Kori Bustard (the world’s heaviest flying bird), and Southern Ground Hornbill (along with a plethora of other hornbill species). We end this amazing trip with a flight from the Kruger Park to Victoria Falls, bordering Zambia and Zimbabwe. What locals call “The Smoke that Thunders” is the planet’s largest waterfall (it’s twice the height of Niagara and more than twice its width), where the mighty Zambezi plummets into a deep gorge. The area around the falls is extremely rich with birdlife and is in the heart of wild Africa where megafauna still freely roam.

*Lion (and with luck Leopard and Cheetah), should be encountered on this tour.*
Itinerary (12 days/11 nights)

Days 1 – 4. Birding the Fairest Cape
We arrive in beautiful Cape Town and spend our first four nights of the trip at a comfortable B&B near Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens, one of the world’s great botanical gardens. After checking into our accommodation, time-permitting we can start looking for some of the more common Cape Town area bird species which are likely to include brightly-colored sunbirds and our first localized endemic species such as Cape Bulbul.

Malachite Sunbird is often seen near Cape Town.

During our first full day in Cape Town, we plan to visit several bird-rich sites on the Cape Peninsula and around the breathtakingly beautiful False Bay coast where the mountains come right down to the sea. We can visit Cape Point and the Cape of Good Hope, where we might see Common Ostrich, localized nectar-feeding birds such as the dazzling Orange-breasted Sunbird and unbelievably long-tailed Protea nectar specialist, Cape Sugarbird, along with mammals such as Bontebok, Cape Mountain Zebra and particularly brazen Chacma Baboons which might snatch any food you’re carrying so be alert! There are some amazing wetland birding sites near Cape Town, and we hope to bird the mega-diverse Strandfontein Bird Sanctuary for a few hours. This is a great place for Greater Flamingo, African Marsh Harrier, Maccoa Duck, all three South African teal species, a number of reedbed-inhabiting warblers and a great many other species.
During one of our three full days in Cape Town, weather-permitting we can embark on a pelagic seabird trip that sails up to 50 miles out to sea from the iconic landmarks Cape Point and Cape of Good Hope. Here we usually encounter at least four albatross species, Cape Gannet, petrels, storm-petrels, shearwaters, and many other seabirds. After the boat trip ends, we can visit one of the three mainland African Penguin colonies if we have not already done so around False Bay, although we are also likely to see swimming penguins during the pelagic.

**African Penguin** can be seen near Simonstown on this tour.

**Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross** is one of at least four albatross species we usually see on Cape pelagic trips.
On another of our full days, we’ll head north to the West Coast National Park and the huge, picturesque Langebaan Lagoon where birds like Southern Black Korhaan, Black Harrier, the tiny Cape Penduline Tit and stacks of others will be sought, among an assemblage of interesting mammals.

Overnight: Fernwood Manor or similar, near Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens

Days 5 – 7. Karongwe Private Game Reserve
Karongwe is one of the many large private game reserves near Kruger National Park. It’s what’s known as a “Big Five” reserve since it features the five mammals African big game hunters sought: the Lion, the Leopard, the Cape Buffalo, the White Rhinoceros, and the African Elephant. Not only will you have a chance to stalk these animals with your cameras, you’ll have an excellent chance of getting shots of all of them here. Cheetah is another specialty in this reserve—and of course there’s also Hippopotamus, Giraffe, Plains Zebra, and a large range of antelopes, too. It’s also a great place for birds, boasting almost 300 species. Our targets will include White Helmetshrike, Common Scimitarbill, Brubru, Purple-crested Turaco, Black-backed Puffback, Black-crowned Tchagra, Hamerkop (literally, “hammerhead”, a name perfectly suited to this species!), Green Woodhoopoe, Black-collared Barbet, Southern Black-Tit, Red-faced Mousebird, Arrow-marked Babbler, and various flycatchers and kingfishers. There are lots of dams and waterholes on the reserve, and at these we’ll have a chance for Grey Heron, Water Thick-knee, Three-banded Plover, White-faced Whistling Duck, Blacksmith Lapwing, and various swallows and swifts.

Hamerkop is a charismatic African bird species we should see on this trip.
Each day at Karongwe we’ll take a morning and an afternoon birding/game drive in an open safari vehicle. It’s also possible to arrange a walk in the bush with the local guides who will teach you the uses of various plants in traditional medicine.

A friendly-looking (but pet at your own risk!) **African Wild Dog**. They’ve become very rare.

Overnight: Shiduli Private Game Lodge, Karongwe Collection

**Days 8 – 9. Kruger National Park proper**

After leaving Karongwe private reserve, we’ll head south to Kruger National Park, where we’ll spend two nights in the park itself. Kruger is one of the most famous game parks on the planet. And rightly so. It covers a humongous area of low-altitude dry woodland and savanna. Not only is the park full of Africa’s megafauna, but it also has a staggering diversity of birds, a disproportionate number of them easy to see, dazzlingly colorful (e.g. barbets, rollers, etc.) or just plain large (in the case of **Common Ostrich**, **Kori Bustard**, all the storks, eagles and owls). There are a lot of weaver species in the park, usually bright yellow and black, but with some exceptions such as the incomparable **Red-headed Weaver**.

Another dazzling thing about Kruger Park is the size of the herds of mammals it’s possible to encounter. While we will have seen **Plains Zebra**, **Giraffe**, **African Elephant**, **African Buffalo** and many antelope species in Karongwe, we’re likely to see much larger numbers of these species at Kruger. Additionally, the guide will put in extra effort to try and locate the more difficult species such as **Black Rhinoceros**, **Leopard**, **Cheetah**, smaller cats, and **African Wild Dog**. The accommodation inside Kruger is basic but it’s great to spend a couple of days inside the park itself.
**Red-headed Weaver** is different from most weavers which are usually bright yellow and black.

**Bateleur**, a colorful, acrobatic eagle that is still common in the Kruger National Park but now very rare outside of large game parks.

Overnight: Skukuza orLower Sabie, Kruger National Park
Days 10 – 12. Victoria Falls sightseeing and birding

We fly from Kruger to the town of Livingstone on the Zambian side of the incomparable Victoria Falls where we spend two nights. This is wild country, and big game can still be encountered around the town (please be aware that many of these are dangerous animals so kindly don’t stray off on your own without one of our guides accompanying you!). For those wanting to go to the Zimbabwe side of the Falls, we can purchase a visa and take the footbridge across the spectacular gorge. We are bound to see all kinds of amazing birds such as hornbills, turacos, firefinches, waxbills, perhaps even a **Pennant-winged Nightjar** in the evening. Your flight homeward will depart from Livingstone (you can book this flight for any time on Day 12).

Overnight: Camp Nkwazi on the Livingstone/Zambian side of Victoria Falls.

*Victoria Falls from the Zambia side. There is more water on the Zimbabwe side making it more impressive in the dry season from that side, but in the rainy season the Zambian side is often best as there is less spray and better visibility. We can, however, cross the border on foot after purchasing visas and look at both sides.*

*Please note that the itinerary cannot be guaranteed as it is only a rough guide and can be changed (usually slightly) due to factors such as availability of accommodation, updated information on the state of accommodation, roads, or birding sites, the discretion of the guides, updates to flight schedule to Victoria Falls and other factors. In addition, we sometimes have to use a different international guide from the one advertised due to tour scheduling.*
Duration: 12 days

Group size: 7-8 guests (with a surcharge in the unlikely case we have a smaller group size)

Dates: 30 May – 10 June 2023

Start: Cape Town, South Africa

End: Livingstone, Zambia

Prices: ZAR102,000 per person sharing, based on a group of 7 or 8 (we limit this trip to a maximum of 8. In the unlikely situation we get fewer than 7 participants signing up, there will be a surcharge, about 15% if 5-6 instead of 7-8).

Single supplement: R17,300

Price includes
A US$300 per participant administrative fee to GGAS
Accommodation
Meals
Unlimited bottled water is provided in the vehicle (which you’re welcome to take at night as well but more pricey bottled water bought at restaurants is for your account)
Kruger “conservation fee” and other entrance fees
Guide fees
All transport during the tour, including an open safari vehicle while in Kruger and an open safari vehicle in Karongwe

Price excludes
International and domestic flights
Travel insurance (vital to have, and it needs to cover trip cancellation, trip interruption, medical, evacuation, repatriation costs in case needed, and Covid insurance to cover extra expenses outside of the tour itself due to Covid or other illness)
Drinks
Tips (see https://www.birdingecotours.com/tipping-guidelines/)
Laundry
Gifts and other items of a personal nature

How to book: to make a booking, you can kindly go to https://www.birdingecotours.com/make-a-booking/ or e-mail info@birdingecotours.com. We will then also inform you how to pay your 25% deposit to confirm your booking. Most people pay this by mailing a check at the prevailing exchange rate (which we’ll give you) to our Ohio office (which we’ll also give you details of when we get your e-mail or online booking). The 75% balance is due two months before the trip starts.

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