

KHOISAN KAROO
CONSERVANCY

Cape Town, Namaqualand, Karoo and Kgalagadi birding tour

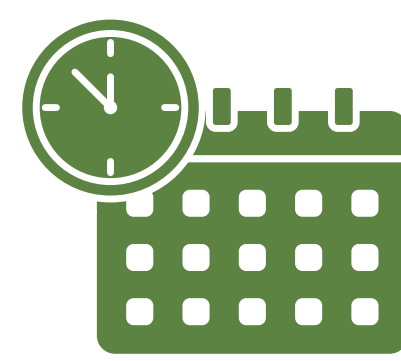
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18 Days / 17 Nights



+1 (770) 324-0068
+27 (83) 368-6969



info@southernskyadventures.com
liame@ssa.email

This 18-day Western Cape, Namaqualand and Northern Cape tour begins in Cape Town, one of the most beautiful cities in the world. From here we will explore the varied habitats of the Cape Peninsula and surrounding areas, focusing on the world-renowned fynbos biome, both close to the sea and in the nearby mountains, which is home to numerous endemic bird species. The tour then moves slightly north, up the West Coast to the extensive Langebaan coastal estuary system, which includes productive tidal flats that teem with birds during summer. Then we move further north to Namaqualand, world renowned for its annual floral spectacle during August and September. En route to Namaqualand, the tour explores the wonderful flowers of the Western Cape, including the Darling area and the Seeberg and Postberg sections of the West Coast National Park. A number of special dry country bird species, many of which are endemic, will be high on the wish list in Namaqualand, especially around Springbok and in the wide arid expanses of the Northern Cape en route to Augrabies Falls National Park and the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park. The tour returns southwards via Bushmanland and the Succulent Karoo, ending back in Cape Town.



Interesting Birds



Adventurous Activities



Vast Flower Fields



Expert guide: Rick Nuttall

Day to Day

Day 1

The tour begins in the ‘Mother City’ – Cape Town - where our birding starts in the famous Kirstenbosch National Botanical Gardens in the shadow of the iconic Table Mountain. Here the Cape Spurfowl is common, and the fynbos (“fine bush”) / macchia areas are home to the Cape Sugarbird, stunning Orange-breasted- and Southern Double-collared Sunbirds. The delightful, diminutive Swee Waxbills are regulars, often seen feeding in small family groups on seeding grasses. Cape Bulbuls are conspicuous, while the more densely vegetated areas along the numerous streams provide cover for Southern Boubou, Bokmakierie, Olive Thrush and Karoo Prinia.



Day 2

The greater Cape Town area offers wide-ranging habitats such as unique fynbos, wetlands, mountains and seashore, each with its associated avian diversity. These areas all offer breathtaking scenery. The quaint seaside village of Kommetjie offers an opportunity to see four cormorant species (Bank, Cape, Crowned and White-breasted), as well as African Oystercatcher. Greater Crested- and Sandwich Terns wheel in flight over the inshore areas as they search for small fish, and roost in large numbers on the nearby rocky areas. Diminutive White-fronted Plovers frequent the tidal zone, foraging amongst the beached kelp.

Day 3

After enjoying an early breakfast at our accommodation near Cape Town, we travel around False Bay to the Rooi Els and Betty’s Bay areas for some excellent birding in fynbos, along mountain slopes and the rocky coast. Our main focus will be some very special endemic species, including the iconic and striking Cape Rockjumper. Other endemics of the mountain fynbos that we will search for include Ground Woodpecker, Cape Rock Thrush, Cape Siskin and the beautiful Victorin’s Warbler, a skulking species often challenging to find. Verreaux’s Eagle may be seen traversing the high mountain slopes in search of their favoured Rock Hyrax prey.



Day 4

This morning we travel northwards to the small town of Langebaan and the nearby West Coast National Park. A major birding attraction of this Park is the significant number of waders utilizing the productive tidal mud and sand flats of the vast Langebaan Lagoon. A number of well-positioned viewing hides enhance this wader spectacle, particularly during summer when the Palaearctic migrant waders are present. After a day of exciting birding in this unique area, we overnight in Langebaan.

Day 5

Today we travel north to Vanrhynsdorp, where we will search for the endemic Protea Canary and a few other special species. This area hosts an extraordinary botanical heritage ranging from the blooming ‘vygieveld’ in spring to the eccentric miniature succulents and obscure soil lichens. To the uninitiated, this region appears as a vast, flat desert-like area with very little vegetation, however, between the white quartz pebbles there are about 1500 plant species, with 190 endemic to the Knechtsvlakte, of which 155 are threatened with extinction. These plants represent one of the world’s most unique and threatened collections of plant species.



Day 6

Early morning birding in threatened ‘Renosterveld’ vegetation close to Vanrhynsdorp produces a host of endemic bird species, including the Black Harrier, Blue Crane, Ludwig’s Bustard, Southern Black Korhaan, Large-billed-, Karoo-, and Cape Clapper Larks. After breakfast, we will spend the day exploring the natural wonders of this area, including the nearby landmark Gifberg (‘Poison Mountain’). This was named after the endemic, poisonous tree species that grows only here and further incredible plant diversity and colourful carpets of spring flowers await us. It may also be possible to arrange an unforgettable visit to the quartz pebble plains, with amazing miniature succulents.

Day 7

Today we will head south towards Clanwilliam, before heading over the Pakhuis Pass in the spectacular Cederberg Mountains and on to the Biedouw Valley with its array of colourful spring flowers. After taking in this wonderful display, we travel back west to Lambert’s Bay and the Atlantic Ocean. Here we will enjoy not only the spectacle of the local Cape Gannet breeding colony, as well as various cormorants, gulls and terns, but also follow it up with a tasty seafood lunch, together with a glass or two of local wine.



Day 8

After breakfast we depart for Nieuwoudtville - only 55km away – ascending the Northern Cape’s Bokkeveld escarpment via the spectacular Van Rhyn’s Pass. This winter rainfall area around Nieuwoudtville hosts the highest density of geophytes / bulb plants (as many as 25 000 bulbs and 50 different species per square metre) in the world; the town is aptly named the ‘bulb capital of the world’. Many of the plants here are found either in this area only, or not further than the surrounding Namaqualand region. As such, this floral richness is unparalleled and the region enjoys high volumes of tourists, particularly during the winter / spring peak in flowering.

Day 9

We will enjoy a full day immersing ourselves in the floral bounty and beauty of this area, including a visit to the local Hantam National Botanical Garden on the outskirts of town, and travelling the back roads to the nearby waterfall and Quiver Tree Forest. We will also keep a look out for birds such as the Blue Crane, Malachite Sunbird and Cape Weaver, butterflies and other interesting biodiversity. After what promises to be a thrilling day, we will again enjoy a pleasant dinner at a local restaurant before returning to our Guest House for a good night’s rest.



Day 10

We will spend another day enjoying the incredible floral diversity, landscapes and birdlife of this area. During the morning we will visit the Kliprand area to the north-east of Nieuwoudtville which is host to some very special and endemic bird species such as Ludwig’s Bustard, Red Lark, Karoo Eremomela, Cinnamon-breasted Warbler and Black-eared Sparrow-Lark. Following good winter rainfall, this is a must-visit birding area, with many breeding birds displaying prominently.

Day to Day

Day 11

After breakfast we leave Nieuwoudtville. Then we head west to descend the Bokkeveld escarpment via Van Rhyn's Pass to Vanrhynsdorp, where we join the N7 to Springbok. Goegap Nature Reserve, not far from Springbok, offers excellent rocky hillside habitat favoured by the Cinnamon-breasted Warbler, as well as vegetated dry streambeds favoured by Layard's and Chestnut-vented Warblers, Karoo Eremomela, Dusky Sunbird and Black-headed Canary. We will overnight in Springbok.



Day 12

This morning we head north to Port Nolloth, near the Namibian border, to search for the highly localised Barlow's Lark. This detour requires an early start from Springbok, but may also produce sightings of the endemic Cape Long-billed Lark. We will then divert eastwards through the Bushmanland region of the Northern Cape, heading for Augrabies Falls National Park. The red dunes at Aggenys is a prime habitat for Red Lark, in case this species was missed previously at Kliprand. We should have ample opportunities in the coming days to see the thatched-roof nest structures of Sociable Weavers and to watch the antics of these highly social, desert-adapted birds.

Day 13

We will have time for some early morning birding along the gorges and some of the routes in the wilderness area at Augrabies. Here we will be on the lookout for various raptors, including the Verreaux's Eagle, Peregrine Falcon and Greater Kestrel. Endemic Bradfield's Swifts and larger Alpine Swifts are common in the river gorges. Augrabies Falls National Park also offers some interesting mammals, including Rock Hyrax, Dassie Rat and Klipspringer, the latter clambering effortlessly over rocks on its specially adapted hooves. Brightly-coloured, endemic Augrabies Flat Lizards are also commonly spotted in the Park.



Day 14

Today will be spent exploring this incredible arid conservation area. The Park is particularly good for frequently encountering raptors. Lappet-faced- and White-backed Vultures, Verreaux's- and Spotted Eagle Owls, Western Barn Owl, Southern White-faced- and African Scops-owls, and Pearl Spotted Owlet complete the list of possible birds of prey in the area. Large Camelthorn trees are often home to the large, thatched nest masses of Sociable Weavers. The Park is also renowned for excellent sightings of Lion, Leopard and Cheetah, while other frequently seen mammals include Giraffe, Gemsbok, Blue Wildebeest, Red Hartebeest and Springbok, as well as many small mammal species.

Day 15

We will depart early this morning for the long drive south through the arid expanses of Bushmanland, the open country of the Karoo and the town of Calvinia, sheltered in the shadow of the Hantam mountains. We will be scanning the open plains for some scarce larks - Sclater's, Stark's- and Red Larks - as well as a number of other special dry-country birds. Brief stops at various water points along the road will provide an opportunity to stretch our legs while trying to find these nomadic species, which visit water regularly if present in the area. We should arrive at Calvinia in the mid-afternoon, where we will check into our comfortable accommodation.

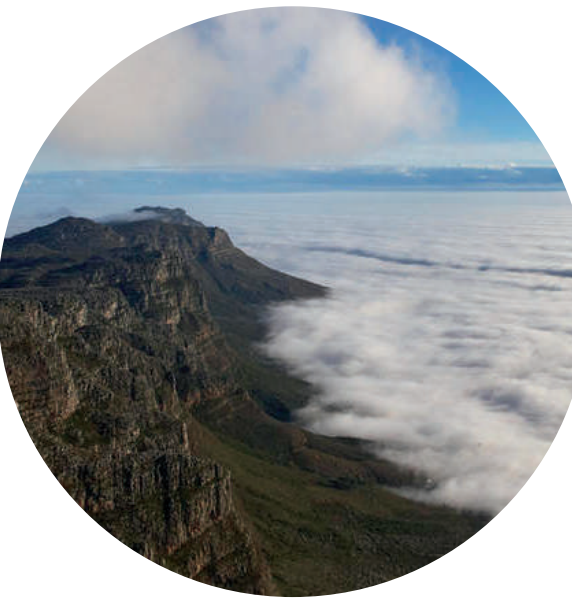


Day 16

Today will be spent birding in the town of Calvinia & the surrounding mountains and dry plains. This area offers a host of special Karoo birds, including the Pale Chanting Goshawk, Karoo- and Spike-heeled Larks, and Yellow Canaries. A visit to Akkerendam Nature Reserve, at the base of the Hantam Mountain, just north of town should produce sightings of the White-backed Mousebird, Karoo Lark, Karoo Scrub Robin, Mountain Wheatear, Layard's Warbler, Cape Penduline Tit, Fairy Flycatcher, Karoo Prinia, Black-headed Canary and Cape Bunting. There is also a good chance of finding the elusive, endemic Cinnamon-breasted Warbler along rocky slopes in the reserve.

Day 17

The semi-arid Tanqua Karoo region is not far to the north-east of Ceres, and provides a window into the fascinating Succulent Karoo. This is quintessential open country and it includes the Katbakkies and Karoopoort canyon areas. Here we will track down several special Karoo birds, including White-backed Mousebird, Acacia Pied Barbet, Mountain Wheatear, Chestnut-vented- and Layard's Warblers, Pririt Batis and the stunning, busy Fairy Flycatcher. Reedbeds along the sparse watercourses host the Namaqua Warbler, yet another endemic species. Also to be found along Karoopoort's rock-strewn slopes is the highly localized and elusive Cinnamon-breasted Warbler.



Day 18

We will have time for a final morning's birding around Ceres before departing for Cape Town International Airport, where the tour ends. Our birding will target the range-restricted Protea Canary. As its name implies this dark grey canary is often associated with proteas, particularly in mountainous areas, such as those near Ceres. Other specials that will keep us busy here include the striking Bokmakierie - a bush shrike, Cape Sugarbird, Cape Grassbird and Victorin's Warbler. The short trip to Cape Town International Airport - via some spectacular mountain scenery - brings this endemic-packed tour to an end.





Rufous-eared Warbler



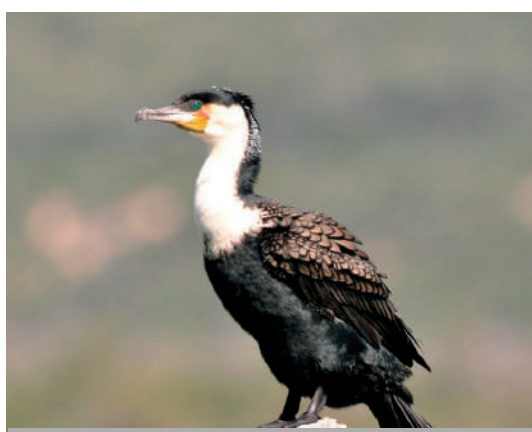
Black-headed Canary



Blue Wildebeest



African Penguin



White-breasted Cormorant



Capped Wheatear



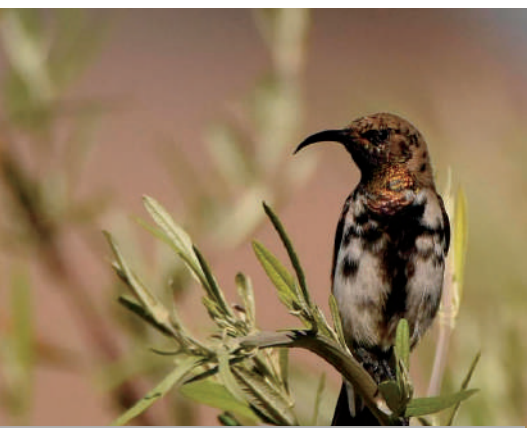
Violet-eared Waxbill



Double-banded Courser



Red-headed Finch



Dusky Sunbird



African Oystercatcher



Karoo Thrush



Leopard



Ludwig's Bustard



African Lion

Included

- 3-night accommodation at Monkey Valley Beach Nature Resort (B&B)
- 2-night accommodation at The Sharks Bay (B&B)
- 3-night accommodation at Botuin Cottages (Self-catering)
- 3-night accommodation at Linda Se Dop (Full-board)
- 1-night accommodation at Springbok Inn (B&B)
- 1-night accommodation at Dundi Lodge (B&B)
- 2-night accommodation Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park
- 2-night accommodation at Calvinia Hotel (B&B)
- 1-night accommodation at The Village Guesthouse (B&B)
- Ground transfers

Excluded

- Dinners and lunch at Monkey Valley Beach Nature Resort
- Dinners and lunch at The Sharks Bay
- All meals at Botuin Cottages
- Dinners and lunch at Springbok Inn
- Dinners and lunch at Dundi Lodge
- Dinners and lunch at Calvinia Hotel
- Dinners and lunch at The Village Guesthouse
- Items of a personal nature
- International flights



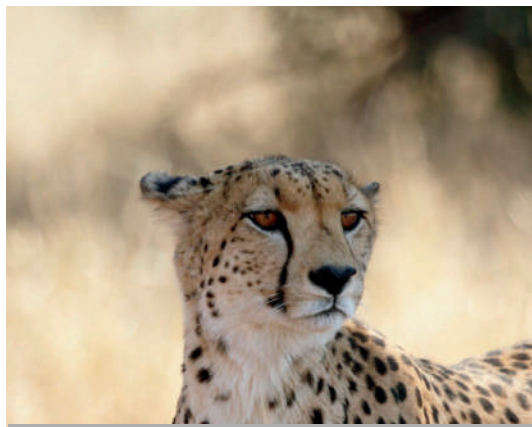
Swee Waxbill



Secretarybird



Giraffe



Cheetah



Orange-breasted Sunbird

WHY SOUTH AFRICA?



South Africa, on the continent's southern tip, is the 25th-largest country in the world – slightly less than twice the size of Texas. It boasts a lengthy coastline, stretching more than 1,500 miles along two oceans, the South Atlantic on the west and the Indian on the south and east. South Africa is neighboured by Namibia in the northwest, Zimbabwe and Botswana in the north, with Mozambique, Swaziland and Lesotho in the northeast.

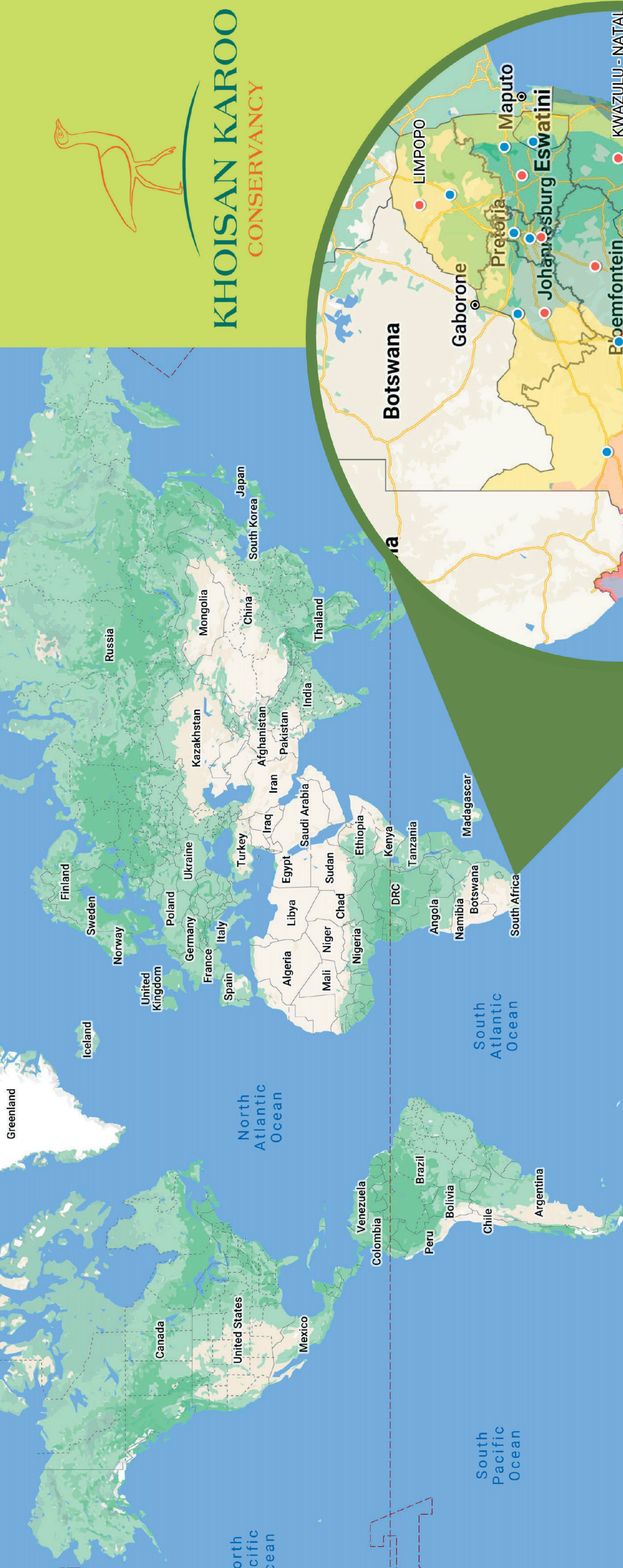
Its natural beauty and scenic wonders are legendary, from its soaring mountain peaks and passes, dense and ancient forests, to its miles of unspoiled coastline and rolling flower fields and grasslands of every hue. South Africa truly offers something to lift everyone's spirits.

South Africa is known as the adventure capital of the world. Whether it's seeing the big game animals, diving with Great White Sharks, death defying adventure sports or discovering the humanity and generosity of other cultures. Game viewing and safari in South Africa is as up-close and wild as it gets. Almost anywhere you travel in South Africa you will experience an overwhelming abundance of nature, wildlife, culture, adventure, heritage and good vibes.

One of the world's most captivating cities, Cape Town – and the Cape Peninsula up to Cape Point – are famous for its scenic beauty and celebrity beaches, 3,500 foot Table Mountain rising above the city, whale-watching, world-class shopping, nightlife, food & wine, and a laid-back atmosphere. Indeed, with wine regions stretching from the Western to the far Northern Cape and the edge of the Karoo, one can almost taste their way around South Africa.

South Africa's 'City of Gold' is Johannesburg, which pulsates with an African heartbeat felt in its endless opportunities for shopping, entertainment, freedom tours and eating out, while the world-renowned Kruger National Park is as large as Massachusetts, and consists of nearly 5 million acres and features 16 ecosystems.

When it's time to plan the most exotic golf getaway imaginable, think South Africa. The quintet of Sun City, Johannesburg, Cape Town, the Garden Route and Durban will provide the trip of a lifetime and memories for a lifetime too.



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Photos were provided by Rick Nuttall, Jamie Paterson, Pc Ferreira and Southern Sky Adventures , unless otherwise indicated.

ABOUT Us

Southern Sky Adventures

For almost two decades Southern Sky Adventures has introduced discerning travellers to the sheer magnificence of AFRICA. A land of warm welcomes, breath-taking sunsets, pristine wilderness areas and diversity as colourful as the local artwork.

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Khoisan Karoo Conservancy

KhoiSan Karoo Conservancy includes the Karoo Gariep Nature Reserve and the Hanover Aardvark Nature Reserve. New Holme Nature Lodge is the main lodge at Karoo Gariep Nature Reserve with Stoffels Rus and Karoo Gariep tented camp as additional accommodation options.

At Karoo Gariep Nature reserve we offer a variety of activities, from bird watching, night drives, a 3-day horse trail, fishing and mountain biking. On these two Reserves we also host and organize eight different events per year. We have four social- and two nature orientated projects we initiate under the Karoo Gariep Wildlife Conservation and Rhino Project (NPO).

Come and enjoy the finest the Karoo has to offer.



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Rick Nuttall Birding & Nature

Rick Nuttall has been sharing his knowledge and passion for birds with like-minded people from a young age. His MSc degree involved behaviour studies of waxbills and their close relatives (Estrildid finches). Rick joined the National Museum, Bloemfontein, as Ornithologist in 1991, undertaking research for ten years before his appointment as Director, a position held until November 2017.

Rick has authored scientific, semi-scientific and popular ornithological publications and contributes regularly to national bird monitoring and citizen science projects. He has led small group birding trips in South Africa and Lesotho on occasion since 1993 and has travelled widely in Southern Africa; he now leads general nature- and birding tours full time. An avid amateur photographer and sound recordist, Rick is fascinated by the natural sound environment and always has his recording equipment at hand when he is out and about. He has been recording birds and their sounds since the early 1980s and has a particular interest in vocal imitation or mimicry, an aspect of avian behaviour prevalent in a surprising number of bird species.



**Rick Nuttall Birding & Nature
Adventures**



@ricknuttall_birding_and_nature