

Western Cape Voyager

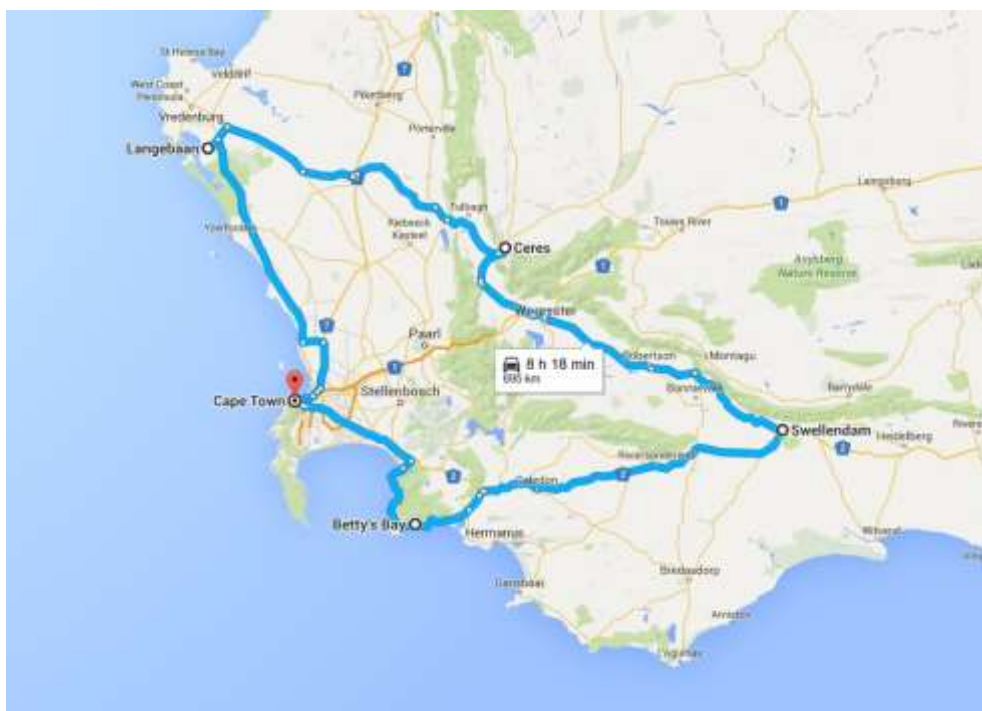
Between the ocean and the mountains; a birding and wildlife adventure in the fairest Cape



Introduction

Cape Town is one of South Africa's main tourist attractions and is indeed one of the most beautiful cities in the world, with sea and / or mountain views in every direction, such that, on a fine day, almost every vista commands a photograph or two. Part of the attraction in the Cape is also the history, culture and of course the food and wine, the latter being particularly popular. But for birders the Cape has a lot more to offer. The unique Fynbos vegetation, a very species-rich heath-like plant community, holds a few specialist birds, namely Cape Rockjumper, Orange-breasted Sunbird, Cape Siskin and Cape Sugarbird, arguably some of South Africa's most sought-after bird species. In addition to these Fynbos specials there are many other endemics and near-endemics to be seen on this itinerary, which includes the Cape Peninsula, Swellendam and the Agulhas Plain, Ceres and the arid Tankwa Karoo and finally Langebaan on the West Coast. Mammal enthusiasts will also be kept busy by Southern Right Whales off-shore (between July and December), Cape Mountain Zebra, Bontebok, Cape Grysbok, Eland and the like. This adds up to superb birds, mammals and general natural history coupled with wonderful food and world-class wines, all in a concise itinerary that includes all the major biomes without too much travelling time in between (though travelling time in the Cape is usually through incredible scenery anyway!). For those struggling to choose between the Cape and the savannah country of the north-east, why not combine the two itineraries to make a comprehensive 2-week package?

Map Reference



Daily Itinerary

Dates: This tour runs throughout the year. See 'Best Time to Visit' below for further information.

Day 1: The Cape Peninsula

Arrive at Cape Town International or other arrival point and head straight to the famous Kirstenbosch National Botanical Gardens, located on the slopes of Table Mountain and commanding spectacular views over the Cape Flats and the Hottentots-Holland Mountains in the distance. Here we will search for birds such as Cape Sugarbird, Cape Spurfowl, Olive Thrush, Sweet Waxbill, Spotted Eagle-Owl, Black Sparrowhawk, Malachite and Orange-breasted Sunbirds, Forest Canary and others before heading on to a charming guest house in Simon's Town on the Cape Peninsula, where we spend the next two nights. Note that the scope of what we can include on this day depends on your arrival time.

Day 2: The Cape Peninsula

The Peninsula is ours to explore over the next day and a half. Highlights include the African Penguin colony at Boulder's Beach, Cape Point Nature Reserve and the south-western most tip of Africa, Kommetjie and the Strandfontein Water Treatment Works. The Cape has notoriously fickle weather and we will plan each day's activities according to the weather at the time. There's a range of birds to be seen, including Jackal Buzzard, Cape Siskin, Ostrich, Cape Robin-Chat, Grey-backed Cisticola, Fiscal Flycatcher, Cape Bulbul, Lesser Double-collared Sunbird, Greater Flamingo and marine species such as African Black Oystercatcher, Cape Gannett, Cape Bank, White-breasted and Crowned Cormorants, and perhaps even White-chinned Petrel or Sooty Shearwater offshore. Mammals to be seen on the Peninsula include Chacma Baboon, Cape Mountain Zebra, Eland and Bontebok. Note that, for those wishing to partake in a pelagic seabird trip, it will be necessary to add another night on the Peninsula and to arrive in Cape Town on a Friday.

Days 3 - 4: Swellendam and the Agulhas Plain

After an optional morning activity we'll drive around the edge of False Bay and on to Rooi Els via one of the area's most scenic drives to look for Cape Rockjumper near Hangklip on the eastern point. On a fine day the views are spectacular, with the Atlantic Ocean crashing against the rocks below us on one side and the Kogelberg Range rising high above us on the other side. Then we'll head inland and drive on to Swellendam, the third oldest town in the country. This gives us access to Bontebok National Park and De Hoop Nature Reserve on the Agulhas Plain, where we'll look for species such as Agulhas Long-billed and Agulhas Clapper Larks, Southern Tchagra, Southern Black Korhaan, Karoo Korhaan, Blue Crane, Denham's Bustard, Black

Harrier and others. Mammals to be seen include Bontebok, Eland, Grey Rhebuck and Yellow Mongoose, while Southern Right Whales are common off-shore between August and November. We'll spend our time birding and exploring in the area, scheduling Bontebok National Park for the afternoon of arrival, De Hoop for our full day and the Grootvadersbosch Nature Reserve for the morning of departure, if time allows.

Days 5 - 6: Ceres and the Tankwa Karoo

After breakfast and a possible visit to Grootvadersbosch, we'll head some distance north-west to Ceres, an agricultural town in the fertile Ceres Valley. On our full day here we depart early on an excursion into the desolate Tankwa Karoo, which will take up most of the day. This desolate region of sand, gravel plains and rocky outcrops holds a surprising number of endemic birds and we'll be on the lookout for species such as Verreaux's Eagle, Black-eared Sparrowlark, Black-headed Canary, Karoo Eremomela, Karoo Korhaan, Layard's Tit-Babbler, Namaqua Warbler, Fairy Flycatcher and the highly sought-after Cinnamon-breasted Warbler. This trip will take up most of the day, and we'll take packed meals and drinks with us. We'll return in the late afternoon for some time to rest before dinner.

Days 7 - 8: Langebaan

In the morning, after a quick trip up the scenic Gydo Pass to look for the endemic Protea Seedeater, we'll drive to Langebaan on the West Coast, where we stay at a guest house in the town. Langebaan is adjacent to the West Coast National Park, which encompasses the shallow, azure-hued Langebaan Lagoon. On our full day we will spend our time exploring the lagoon, renowned for migrating waders, and the West Coast National Park, which provides some good Strandveld birding. Birding highlights here include Ostrich, Grey-winged Francolin, Black Harrier, Southern Black Korhaan, Cape Clapper and Cape Long-billed Larks, Karoo Robin, Cape Penduline-Tit and a host of wader species. During the August and September flower season this area is particularly attractive. Mammals to be seen include Bat-eared Fox, Small Grey Mongoose, Cape Grysbok, Springbok, Red Hartebeest and Cape Mountain Zebra.

Day 9: Departure

After a full morning activity we depart for Cape Town and the airport, some two hours drive away, with stops to view Table Mountain on the way if time permits.



Tour in brief

Best time to visit: September is the prime month, but anywhere between mid-August and mid-November is a good time to visit. Winter is the rainy season, and long periods of cold and wet weather can be expected between May and July, while summers are hot and can be rather windy.

Expected weather conditions: mild to warm / hot in summer, cool mornings and evenings away from the coast during autumn and spring, prolonged periods of rain possible anytime during the winter.

Tour tempo: medium to medium-plus, optional mid-day breaks on non-travelling days.

Accommodation standards: medium plus: lodges and guest houses.

Birding in brief: excellent variety, forest, marine, coastal, Karoo and mountain habitats covered.

Top birds: Cape Rockjumper, African Penguin, Cape Sugarbird, Black Harrier, Orange-breasted Sunbird, Cape Siskin, Knysna Woodpecker, Bank Cormorant, Cape Gannett, Karoo Korhaan, Karoo Eremomela, Cinnamon-breasted Warbler.

Mammal viewing: Southern Right Whales in season (August to December); antelope species such as the endemic Bontebok, Chacma Baboon, Rock Hyrax and other smaller species. No Big Five.

Other wildlife and attractions: Table Mountain and the Cape Peninsula, the scenic drive between Gordon's Bay and Pringle Bay, the Fold Mountains of the interior, the desolate scenery of the Karoo.

Add-ons: this tour can be combined with an Escarpment and Kruger National Park tour.

Note: The exact itinerary will depend on availability, but will be as close to the original as possible.

Tour Costs

(Please contact us for prices for groups larger than 6)

November 2017 - October 2018

2 participants	R 39 800 per person sharing
3 participants	R 31 250 per person sharing
4 participants	R 26 930 per person sharing
5 participants	R 24 250 per person sharing
6 participants	R 22 075 per person sharing
Single Supplement	R 1 880

Includes

- Accommodation
- All breakfasts and dinners
- Ground transport
- Bottled water in the Lawson's vehicle whilst travelling
- Entrance fees
- Personalised checklists
- Specialist guide fees

Excludes

- All airfares and associated airport costs
- Travel and medical insurance
- Lunches
- All drinks
- Optional excursions where applicable
- Gratuities
- Items of a personal nature

Notes

- This itinerary is subject to change due to weather conditions at the time and other factors beyond our control.
- Birds and mammals mentioned on this itinerary do not represent all that can be seen. A full list of possibles appears on your checklist.

