

SOUTH AFRICA: THE WESTERN CAPE & KRUGER

**A Birds, Wildlife & Culture Collaborative Tour
with VENT & BirdNote®**

SEPTEMBER 9-26, 2022

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African Penguins © Avian Leisure

South Africa, despite its relatively small geographic size, has been described as “a world in one country.” Here, at the bottom of the African continent, is a land of unique ecosystems and micro-habitats that supports an extraordinary sweep of birds, mammals, reptiles and botany. Add in a tapestry of spectacular scenic delights and a plethora of cultural attractions, and it becomes clear why this country is a such a draw for so many.

On this special trip, VENT will collaborate with the BirdNote public media program to present the pleasures of South Africa, one of the world’s most beautiful countries. From the convergence of two great oceans off the Cape of Good Hope to the subtropical savanna woodlands of the world-acclaimed Kruger National Park, we present a specially tailored itinerary that embraces a paradise of wildlife-viewing and cultural attractions at the very best time of the year, when the austral winter transitions into spring and early summer.



The focus of the program is on the Western Cape and Kruger regions—the two most diverse parts of the country—where we’ll have ample time to connect at leisure with the natural world as well as the human world. Separated from the rest of the continent by a ring of mountains, the southwestern Cape Province is a world apart. Characterized by a pleasant Mediterranean climate, this region is scenically beautiful, home to many unique and distinctive birds, one of the most diverse floras in the world, some of the most striking landscapes on the continent, and the world-class city of Cape Town. Lying in the shadow of the towering heights of the Drakensburg escarpment, Kruger National Park sits at the center of the Greater Kruger Conservancy, a massive nature reserve of biospheric proportions, home to some of the largest remaining concentrations of land mammals on earth.

Among the many exciting highlight activities included in our itinerary are: a day at West Coast National Park to view spectacular spring wildflower displays; an excursion to the Cape of Good Hope; a visit to the world-famous Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden; overnighing in the wine-growing Stellenbosch region; excursions to view whales, flamingos, and colonies of African Penguins; an outing to Robben Island, where

Nelson Mandela spent 27 years in imprisonment; and a tour of Cape Town's historic City Bowl. As one would expect, birdwatching and wildlife-viewing are paramount in importance, and beyond our natural history successes in Cape Town, we'll strike gold in Kruger. Three days in the Greater Kruger Conservancy area include safari-style game drives that will yield sightings of most of the iconic animals we most closely identify with wild Africa including lion, cheetah, leopard, rhinoceros, elephant, and Cape buffalo, along with a fascinating assortment of birds large and small, from Ostrich and Martial Eagle to an array of waterfowl, cranes, storks and more. Our trip concludes with a grand finale visit to the Apartheid Museum in Johannesburg and a tour of Soweto township.



Male lion, Greater Kruger Conservancy Area © Avian Leisure

In sum, the combined safari of the Western Cape and Kruger Park represents an unsurpassed experience for the wildlife enthusiast, embracing all elements from geology to the night sky within an ecosystem only Africa, in its abundance of wildlife and indigenous cultures, can provide.

Accommodations range from very good to excellent.

Guiding our activities will be expert naturalist Patrick Cardwell. Representing BirdNote will be Jessica Frantz, Development Director. All of our birding and cultural endeavors will be complemented by social time, stories from BirdNote, and time to enjoy an amazing African safari.

Finally, we are pleased to announce that a portion of the proceeds go toward the support of BirdNote's programs.

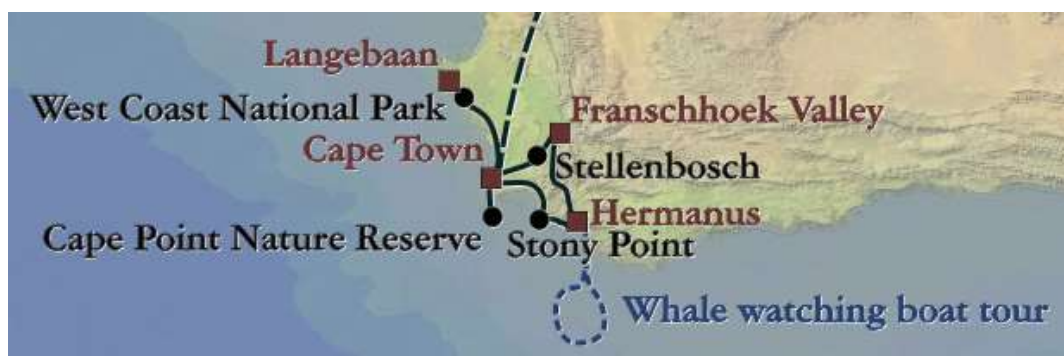
September 9-10, Days 1-2: Travel to Cape Town. Participants should plan to arrive in Cape Town (airport code CPT) on September 10. The most direct route to Cape Town from the USA requires connecting through Johannesburg. Direct overnight flights to Johannesburg are available from Washington Dulles, New York JFK, and Atlanta. Flights departing the USA on September 9 will arrive in Johannesburg on the 10th, with time for same-day connection to Cape Town. Those wishing to avoid connecting through Johannesburg are advised that non-stop overnight flights to Cape Town are available from Amsterdam, London and Frankfurt. Please contact the office of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours for help with air ticketing and other information.

Upon arrival at Cape Town International Airport on September 10, you will be met in the arrival hall by a representative of our ground operator **Avian Leisure/Centurion**, who will provide transportation to the Alphen Boutique Hotel, where a room has been reserved in your name.

This evening we will convene for a trip welcome, at which time you will meet your trip host, fellow participants and your guide Patrick Cardwell of Avian Leisure. Over a lovely dinner, we will engage in general discussion about the program, and Patrick will discuss the trip in terms of what to expect across a broad spectrum of “frequently asked questions,” including briefing about plans for the next day.

Cape Town, the “Mother City,” is an especially attractive place that features an abundance of beautiful scenery, superb wildlife, and an array of cultural attractions. Our tour starts at the historic Alphen Hotel, located in the heart of the Constantia Valley, with vineyards dating back to 1652 and the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck, the first Governor of the Cape, charged with the responsibility of establishing a victualing station by the Dutch East India Company on the trade route between Europe and the Far East. Within the tourism industry, Cape Town today is still affectionally referred to as the “Tavern of the Seas,” especially noted for its fine wines and traditional culinary delights, to be savored and enjoyed at leisure along with the high standard of hospitality warmly extended to visitors from near and far.

We recommend arriving in Cape Town a day or more before September 10, to allow ample time for rest following the lengthy international flight or to enjoy add-ons such as a private tour of the local area or other options not included in the trip program. Those wishing to arrive early can be accommodated at the Alphen Hotel or elsewhere in Cape Town by prior arrangement through the VENT office.



Cape Town and the Cape region

NIGHTS: On board international flight (September 9)
Alphen Boutique Hotel, Constantia, Cape Town (September 10)

September 11, Day 3: Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden and the City Bowl. In a country filled with marvelous natural history attractions, few garner as much attention as Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden. Widely acclaimed as one of the great botanical gardens of the world, Kirstenbosch, with its magnificent collection of native plants and situated deep in the shadow of Table Mountain, is a primary draw to visitors from all over the world. We will dedicate part of the day to exploring this

famous place. After lunch, we will enjoy a city tour of Cape Town that includes the better-known sights of the “City Bowl.”

Laid out and planted more than one hundred years ago, Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden contains representatives of most of the principal plant families found in South Africa. Each family has been grouped by species, to provide a comparative display of visual delight and information for the dedicated botanist and floral enthusiast alike.

The garden is especially famous for its collection of plants from the Cape floral kingdom. Known in botanical terms as the *fynbos*, the name is of Dutch origin and literally means fine-leaved flora, due to the small leathery leaves that characterize members of this kingdom, an adaptation that renders plants capable of withstanding the hot and dry austral summer and gale force winds that blow relentlessly across the Cape Peninsula at that time of the year.



Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden © EcoPrint-Shutterstock

We'll explore the garden on foot, from the highest contour line along a network of intersecting paths. That will provide time enough to form an acquaintance with the spectrum of flora that make up the Cape floral kingdom, the smallest plant kingdom in the world, but one of the richest by area, with a species count in excess of 8,000 and counting.

While botany will be the main focus of our visit, this being the prime time of the year for floral abundance (for yellow pincushions (*Proteaceae*) and pink watsonias (*Iridaceae*) in particular), birding will not be neglected. As we work our way around the garden, we can expect to see Cape Sugarbird and Southern Double-collared and Orange-breasted Sunbirds all cashing in on the abundance of nectar. Other species we'll likely encounter are Cape Batis, Sombre Greenbul, Cape Bulbul, Dusky-brown (African Dusky) Flycatcher, and Forest and Brimstone Canaries, as well as feeding flocks of Red-winged Starlings and Cape White-eyes.

The garden is also home to a pair of Spotted Eagle-Owls, an avian highlight if we are fortunate enough to locate the pair at a day roost within the taller stands of indigenous shrubs and trees.

In all, a relaxing day of botanizing and birding lies in store, complete with a light lunch in the gardens and a visit to the well-stocked craft and bookshop.

Returning to the lower cableway station, we will drive to the lookout point on Signal Hill below the towering peak of Lion's Head before visiting a number of cultural sites within the City Bowl, including the Malay Slave Quarter, Mount Nelson Hotel, St. Georges Cathedral, City Gardens, and the Castle before returning to the hotel at day's end.



Cape Sugarbird © Avian Leisure

NIGHT: Alphen Boutique Hotel, Constantia, Cape Town

September 12, Day 4: West Coast National Park. Today we will venture out of Cape Town with a day-long visit to West Coast National Park, located on the Atlantic coast about 75 miles north of Cape Town in the Western Cape province. This unique reserve is renowned for its spectacular spring wildflower displays (rainfall dependent), scenic coastal setting, and excellent birding opportunities. Habitats here include open water, shoreline, tidal flats, marshes, reedbeds, and native brush interspersed with grassy openings.

After an early breakfast and check-out from the hotel, we'll travel north to the national park along a route that parallels the coastline. Upon arrival, we'll head to a restricted area of the park known for its abundant floral splendor. Our time of arrival is scheduled to coincide with the best time of the day to enjoy the floral displays around us. We'll have a picnic lunch in the field to maximize our time for viewing and photography.



South Africa is famous for its springtime floral abundance © Avian Leisure

Aside from the wide variety of colorful flowers representing several botanical families, we can expect to see our first mammals of the trip, some of which are highly range-restricted species, such as mountain zebra, springbok, and bontebok—the latter a remarkably beautiful animal featuring a chocolate-brown coat with striking white markings—in addition to a variety of other mammals and reptiles found in the reserve.

The birding will prove equally impressive with a wide variety of wintering and resident shorebirds on the tidal flats of the lagoon in association with Greater and Lesser Flamingos in abundance. The surrounding coastal scrub holds a variety of resident birds typical of this semi-arid sand dune system, with Cape and Gray-winged Francolins, the spectacular Black Bustard, Black Harrier and Black “Yellow-billed” Kite among the “target” species for the day. Other species likely to be encountered on the shoreline include African (Black) Oystercatcher, Kittlitz’s and White-fronted Plovers, Great Crested and Sandwich Terns, and Crowned Cormorant. Thickets hold Bokmakierie, a colorful member of the bush-shrike family; Cape Bulbul; Karoo Prinia; Rufous-vented Warbler; Karoo Scrub-Robin; Malachite and Southern Double-collared Sunbirds; Yellow Canary; Cape Bunting and Yellow Bishop.

At day’s end, we will check into our accommodation, the historic Farmhouse Hotel in Langebaan, with dinner at a restaurant overlooking the tidal lagoon.



Black Bustard © Avian Leisure

NIGHT: Farmhouse Hotel, Langebaan

September 13, Day 5: Return to Cape Town via Jacob’s Bay, Versveld Flower Reserve and Milnerton Lagoon. After a leisurely breakfast, we will continue north to the scenic coastal hamlet of Jacob’s Bay, stopping en route at a quarry site where we might see the majestic Verreaux’s Eagle, and in an area of wheat cultivation to search for Blue Crane, South Africa’s national bird. Throughout the morning we’ll have opportunities to admire the mixes of wildflowers and succulents that form part of the coastal scrub plant community of the West Coast Peninsula.

The approach road to Jacob’s Bay passes through open farmland, good habitat for Crowned Lapwing, Rock Kestrel, Red-capped and Large-billed Larks, and Capped Wheatear. Between the houses in Jacob’s Bay, we will check for Bokmakierie, White-backed Mousebird, Pied (Acacia) Barbet, Gray Tit, Southern (Cape) Penduline-Tit, Cape Bulbul, Yellow and White-throated Canaries, Cape Bunting and Southern Masked-Weaver. Mammal possibilities include our first steenbok, common duiker and more springbok.

Our return to Cape Town will include a stop at the twenty-hectare Tienie Versveld Flower Reserve to observe a variety of Sandveld bulbs that flower at this time of the year, as well as Orange-throated Longclaw, a colourful member of the lark and pipit family that is found reliably at this location.

After a light lunch in the nearby country town of Darling, situated in the heart of the wine- and wheat-producing region, we will return to the Alphen Hotel via the tidal Milnerton Lagoon and surrounding area.

A stop at Milnerton Lagoon affords classic postcard-type views of famous Table Mountain along with the opportunity to view a fine variety of waterbirds, a representation of which includes Cape Shoveler, Yellow-billed Duck, Little and Great Crested Grebes, Red-knobbed Coot, Black-winged Stilt, Blacksmith Lapwing, Hartlaub's and Kelp Gulls, Gray Heron, African Spoonbill and Pied Kingfisher.



Springbok © Avian Leisure

Following check-in, we will have dinner at a nearby restaurant.

Note: It will not be necessary to take more than you need in the way of luggage after departing the hotel on Day 3. The Alphen Hotel will happily store our surplus luggage until our return this afternoon.

NIGHT: Alphen Boutique Hotel, Constantia, Cape Town

September 14, Day 6: False Bay Environmental Park and Boulders Coastal Park. We'll spend the day immersing ourselves in high-quality birding and natural history around Cape Town. The morning will be dedicated to a visit to the wetland complex now known as the False Bay Environmental Park while a trip highlight will be an afternoon visit to Boulders Coastal Park to see the iconic African Penguin.

Situated in the heart of the Cape Flats east of the city, False Bay Environmental Park is a water treatment plant that also serves as a premier place to see birds in the Cape Town area. Here, a system of impoundments connected by a matrix of service roads holds varying levels of water in addition to mudflats and reedbeds. This diversity of habitats supports thousands of waterbirds over the course of the year, although the numbers and variety fluctuate depending on the season and prevailing weather patterns in the interior.

During our visit we can expect close-up views of Greater Flamingos and the endemic Cape Shoveler filter-feeding on the abundance of algae within the nutrient-rich settling ponds. Waterfowl are particularly well represented at this site with Yellow-billed and Maccoa Ducks invariably present and White-faced Whistling-Duck, South African Shelduck, Hottentot Teal, Red-billed Duck (Teal), and Southern Pochard all likely. Cape Teal are especially common, feeding in the more open sections of water in association with Little and Eared Grebes, Black-winged Stilt, and Pied Avocet.

Reedbed activity can be rewarding as well. Little Rush-Warbler and Levillant's Cisticola are resident throughout the year, while African Swamphen and African Marsh-Harrier may be seen in this habitat type as well. Swallows and martins are present in numbers. A highlight is seeing White-throated and Greater Striped Swallows nesting under the culverts and eaves of the pump house facility.



Greater Flamingos © Avian Leisure

Water levels between the pans fluctuate continuously, with exposed sand banks providing day roosts and feeding sites for a variety of shorebirds and gull species as well as pelicans and the occasional stork. Waterbirds we typically would expect to see include African (Black) Oystercatcher, Blacksmith Lapwing, Kittlitz's and Three-banded Plovers, Ruff, Little Stint and Common Greenshank, Gray-hooded and Hartlaub's Gulls, Great White Pelican, and flocks of Kelp Gull and Sacred Ibis circling about.

Mammal-wise, the wetland complex supports small numbers of Cape grysbok—a shy and diminutive antelope of chestnut coloration—and small gray mongoose, which we could see if luck is on our side.

Next, we will make the scenic drive along the False Bay coast to Simon's Town, established as a naval base by the Royal Navy in the early nineteenth century to control the lucrative trade route that tracked around the Cape of Good Hope to the Spice Islands in the Far East.

Lunch will be at a restaurant overlooking the naval complex. Afterward we'll pay a visit to the quiet and less tourist-oriented section of the Boulders Coastal Park to view African Penguins coming ashore and preening themselves meticulously before making their way to the breeding area within the rookery. Here, we will walk along the main boardwalk and nearby Burgher's Walk to obtain close-up views of these endearing and now highly endangered penguins. Once much more numerous, this species



African Penguin © Avian Leisure

has declined precipitously in recent years due to a host of reasons relating to climate change, marine pollution, and over-exploitation of ocean resources by commercial fishing enterprises.

Our return to the hotel will be by way of the “Old Cape Road” so that we may enjoy some scenic highlights to end our day, with spectacular views of the Constantia Valley and Cape Town to the north.

NIGHT: Alphen Boutique Hotel, Constantia, Cape Town

September 15, Day 7: Chapman’s Peak and the Cape of Good Hope. We’ll enjoy a relaxed breakfast, and then our route for the day takes us through the heart of the wine-producing Constantia Valley to Chapman’s Peak Drive above Hout Bay on the Atlantic coast. Without doubt, this area offers the most scenic coastal drive on the Cape Peninsula. Not only is the construction of the road along the coast a significant engineering achievement (it took just three years to complete, opening in 1922), but one of considerable geologic interest. The route around Chapman’s Peak follows the contact line between the granite base and the overlying strata of sandstone and mudstone sediments deposited over the millennia in clearly demarcated layers.

Lookout points along the drive provide sweeping views of the Atlantic Ocean and the open expanse of Noordhoek Beach to the south—perfect opportunities for viewing and photo-taking—as we follow the coast down to the southwestern tip of the African continent.

On entering the Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve (part of Table Mountain National Park), we will pause at a pull-off to orient ourselves in relation to the landscape and flora around us, a vast tract of windswept shrubland and grassland comprising more than 1,000 species of plants.

It is an awesome sight looking across False Bay toward Hang Klip in the far distance and Cape Point itself to the south alongside Cape MacLear and the Cape of Good Hope.

Our visit coincides with the peak of the flowering season when the strikingly colorful yellow pincushion bushes and swathes of blindingly white everlasting flowers, known colloquially as “Cape snow,” are abundant.

The beauty and serenity of the area reflects an environment that has been meticulously restored to its former floral glory following a past time of human occupation and farming. As such, this area represents a classic example of the *fynbos* biome, comprising a macchia-type shrubland capable of withstanding the long, hot and dry summers characteristic of the Mediterranean climate.



Bontebok © Avian Leisure

Our day, interspersed by lunch at the Two Oceans Restaurant at Cape Point, will consist of a series of circular drives and short walks in the reserve to specific points of botanical or marine-related interest. For those with more energy, a walk up to the old lighthouse site at the top of Cape Point is a scenically rewarding experience. Those less physically inclined may ride the funicular service as an alternative ascent option (extra out-of-pocket fee).

On the mammal front, we will search for the once critically endangered bontebok, an antelope similar in size to white-tailed deer, as well as eland, Africa's largest antelope. Chacma baboons are readily apparent as well. Marine mammals are represented by Cape fur seal at the Cape of Good Hope, and possibly a southern right whale or humpback whale, both of which are sometimes seen in False Bay or along the Atlantic coast beyond the outer reefs.



Malachite Sunbird © Avian Leisure

Birds, while not plentiful, are well represented by nectivores active within the stands of flowering pincushion. Here we can expect multiple views of Cape Sugarbird and Malachite and Orange-breasted Sunbirds. Stands of coastal "bush" support Southern Boubou, Cape Bulbul, Fiscal Flycatcher, Karoo Prinia, and Cape Grassbird. Without doubt, we will locate Common Ostrich at some stage in the day as well as African (Black) Oystercatcher, Blacksmith Lapwing, White-fronted Plover, Great Crested Tern, and Cape and Crowned Cormorants along

the rocky shore. Several raptors are resident and an eye to the sky could produce Jackal Buzzard, Rock Kestrel, Peregrine Falcon and the interesting black-and-white combination of Pied Crow and White-necked Raven.

Reptiles in the form of angulate and leopard tortoises, black girdled lizard, southern rock agama and even puff adder are all possible if weather conditions are favorable.

We will then return to the hotel via historical Simon's Town and the False Bay coastline.

NIGHT: Alphen Boutique Hotel, Constantia, Cape Town

September 16, Day 8: A Day Around Cape Town: Robben Island and Table Mountain. This day will offer a highlights-style tour of Cape Town, beginning with a morning visit to Robben Island and concluding with a trip to the summit of Table Mountain. As always, we will be on the watch for birds, but today is more heavily geared toward sightseeing, history, and culture.

Following a leisurely breakfast, we will drive directly to the Robben Island departure jetty, situated within the heart of the bustling Victoria & Alfred Waterfront complex, to connect with the ferry service for the 30-minute crossing to the island aboard a high-speed catamaran.

On arrival we will be met by our island guide and taken on an interpretive tour of the infamous prison facility and surrounding area within which Nelson Mandela spent more than 27 years as a political prisoner up to the time of his release in 1990. Once a leper colony, the island is today a nature reserve that is home to thousands of breeding terns, gulls, ibises, pelicans and penguins. All are safe and secure from predation and the disturbance associated with the loss of mainland habitat due to ongoing development.

We will return in time for a traditional Cape Malay lunch in the city before taking the cableway to the top of Table Mountain.

The isolated and scenically iconic block of sandstone that forms Table Mountain is one of the natural wonders of the world. Towering more than 3,000 feet above the city, the mountain is visible on a clear day from 60 miles away. The views in all directions are impressive as we wander about the labyrinth of well-marked trails in search of crag lizards and rock hyrax—the latter a mammal similar in appearance to the marmot family of North America. The diversity of birds is limited atop Table Mountain; nevertheless, our exploration of the summit area could produce sightings of Peregrine Falcon, Rock Kestrel, Sentinel Rock Thrush, Familiar Chat, Orange-breasted Sunbird, Red-winged Starling, and Cape Bunting.



Cape Town and Table Mountain © Alex photography/Shutterstock

NIGHT: Alphen Boutique Hotel, Constantia, Cape Town

September 17, Day 9: A Day in the Winelands of Stellenbosch and the Franschhoek Valley. Today we will take our leave of Cape Town and head inland to the scenic university town of Stellenbosch, situated in the very heart of the winelands for which South Africa is so well known. The focus for the day will be on culture and the historical past, dating to the mid-seventeenth century, with enough time to explore the shops and arcades at leisure.



A vineyard in the Stellenbosch region © Avian Leisure

We will visit a selection of wine estates, each offering something different, be it architectural distinction or a cultivar specifically acclaimed within prominent wine circles. Lunch will be at a wine estate overlooking the vineyards before we descend to the Franschhoek Valley of Huguenot origin, complete with a well-appointed museum embracing the complexity of early settler life in the valley.

We will spend the night at a comfortable guesthouse within easy driving distance of several fine dining French-style restaurants nearby.

NIGHT: Guesthouse in the Franschhoek Valley

September 18, Day 10: From the Franschhoek Valley to Hermanus via the Bot River Valley.

Following a mid-morning check-out—and a final round of shopping for those so inclined—we will head out over the Franschhoek Pass and Villiersdorp Mountains for the Bot River. A goal for the morning is to spot the elegant Blue Crane. Once in serious decline due to excessive pesticide use by the farming community, the crane population in the Bot River valley is on the rise again, thanks to a focused conservation-orientated program that promotes the responsible use of pesticides and herbicides within the agricultural sector.



The elegant Blue Crane © Avian Leisure

Other birds we may see along the route are Spur-winged Goose, Black-winged (shouldered) Kite, Jackal Buzzard, Cape Rook, African Stonechat, African Pipit, and possibly the rare Denham's Bustard. On the mammal side we will scan for gray rhebok—a medium-sized antelope of southern Africa—in areas of suitable native habitat.

Lunch will be at a wine estate in the heart of the Bot River valley where we expect to find Spotted Thick-knee roosting in the grove of olive trees leading to the winery.

Following lunch, a relatively short drive takes us to the vacation town of Hermanus, situated on the cliffs above Walker Bay. Here, we will check into the Marine Hotel before taking a cliff-top walk in search of southern right whales that frequent this stretch of coastline. Aside from the whales, we can expect sightings of a variety of now-familiar coastal thicket birds as we wander along the network of paths in the vicinity of the Old Harbor Museum.

Dinner will be at a restaurant in town that specializes in seafood and traditional dishes. We'll be within walking distance of the hotel. Consider a post-dinner stretch of the legs!

NIGHT: The Marine Hotel, Hermanus

September 19, Day 11: Morning Whale-watching Trip; Afternoon at Betty's Bay, Stony Point, and False Bay. The oceanic waters surrounding South Africa are some of the richest in the world for marine life. High numbers of seabirds and marine mammals frequent these waters, where a combination of currents and upwellings provides the bounty of nutrients that sustains this thriving ecosystem.

After breakfast, a short drive along the coast takes us to the new commercial harbor where we'll check in for the whale-watching trip planned for the morning. A comprehensive briefing on the status of the local whale population precedes our departure. Then, we'll board our vessel and head for the demarcated conservation area on the far side of the bay. On the run out, we can expect to see Great Crested and Sandwich Terns, Cape Gannet, and Cape and Great (White-breasted) Cormorants along with Hartlaub's Gull. Parasitic Jaeger, an ocean-going species, is also possible.

We will spend a couple of hours motoring around the conservation area searching for cetaceans and other marine life. Obtaining close views of southern right whale is a goal of the endeavor, but we'll also hope for sightings of Bryde's whale, long-beaked common dolphin, and Cape fur seal.



Southern right whale © Avian Leisure

After lunch at a restaurant overlooking the harbor, we will visit a variety of locations in an attempt to see a suite of rare and localized birds. We will visit the Harold Porter National Botanical Garden at Betty's Bay. Situated directly below the coastal mountains rising above, this well-maintained and compact botanical garden is home to a variety of localized bird species found in relict native forest. Rameron (African Olive) Pigeon, Cape Batis, Fork-tailed Drongo, African Paradise-Flycatcher, African-brown (African Dusky) Flycatcher, Cape Rock-Thrush, Cape Bulbul, Malachite and Southern Double-collared Sunbirds, Brimstone and Cape Canaries, Cape Siskin, and Sweet Waxbill all occur here.



Nesting Cape Cormorants © Avian Leisure

Next, we will move on to Stony Point, a well-maintained coastal reserve, where we'll view African Penguins at close range and enjoy comparative views of all four marine cormorants: Cape, Great (White-breasted), Crowned, and the now-endangered Bank Cormorant, all of which will be breeding at the time of our visit.

Continuing west into the mid-afternoon, we'll reach the eastern coastline of False Bay at a point where we'll be able to look straight across the water to Cape Point.

Here, we will follow a rugged track along the flanks of the Rooi Els mountain range in search of the now rare and secretive Cape Rockjumper. Also present on occasion among the scattered rocks and boulders are Ground Woodpecker, Familiar Chat, Cape Rock-Thrush, Rock Martin, Orange-breasted Sunbird, Red-winged Starling, Cape Siskin, Cape Bunting, and the diminutive Neddicky, a member of

the cisticola (warbler) family. Klipspringer, a diminutive and highly agile antelope with a preference for rocky slopes, is resident but difficult to spot among the rocks and boulders scattered along the upper slopes.

Our route now follows the False Bay coastline north by northwest, back toward Cape Town, providing scenic views over the bay toward Table Mountain far in the distance to the west. Our destination is a hotel next to the international airport, where we will have dinner and spend the night.



False Bay with Table Mountain in the distance © Avian Leisure

NIGHT: Hotel Verde Cape Town Airport, Cape Town

September 20, Day 12: Domestic Flight to Skukuza; Greater Kruger Conservancy Area. New adventures and completely different ecosystems await us today as we transfer to the Cape Town airport for a flight to Skukuza, in the heart of the Greater Kruger Conservancy area on the far eastern side of the country.

After breakfast we will transfer by shuttle to the airport departure terminal to check in for the mid-morning flight to Skukuza, either directly or via Johannesburg, depending on air schedules at the time.

Kruger National Park is one of the oldest and largest reserves in all of Africa. Additional huge conservation areas surround its boundaries and add to the vast extent of well-protected land. This enormous area supports an amazing diversity of life forms in a variety of habitats and offers a complete “safari” experience. The mammals may be the most obvious and impressive creatures here, but the birds are not far behind in terms of variety and abundance. Based at two lodges—Skukuza Rest Camp and Notten’s Bush Camp—we will have ample opportunity to sample the variety of habitats and attendant wildlife that makes this part of Africa so special.

Upon arrival we will be met by our safari guide and transferred to the Skukuza Rest Camp for a one night stay in comfortable chalet accommodations. Lunch will take the form of a picnic box of sandwiches and refreshments. Then we’ll set off on the first in a series of game drives within the Greater Kruger Conservancy area.

Our specially designed 4x4 safari vehicle provides “wrap-around” views and adequate height for good visibility in the bush, as opposed to the enclosed nature of a conventional mini-bus or sedan. Our objective is to complete a loop connecting the Sabie and Sand Rivers in the central part of the park, seeking views of mammals and birds unlikely to be encountered in the savannah woodland in which Notten’s Bush Camp, our next destination, is situated. Early October is a dry time of the year here, and the weather will likely be warm to hot. Consequently, predator and prey alike frequent riverine bush for shade in the vicinity of these two main river systems.

Mammals and birds will be present in large numbers, with African elephant, Cape buffalo, impala, greater kudu, and giraffe coming down to the water to drink in the late afternoon. Exposed sand banks will be good places to watch for hippopotamus and Nile crocodile as well as storks and herons.



Elephants at waterhole © Avian Leisure

At sunset we will return to camp and reconvene for dinner at the main restaurant followed by a flashlight search in the camp for greater galago—also known as bush baby, for its plaintive cries—and Peters’s epauletted fruit bat before turning in for the night.

NIGHT: Skukuza Rest Camp, Kruger National Park

September 21, Day 13: Greater Kruger Conservancy Area. An early start (5:30 a.m.), following a mug of tea or coffee and a rusk (dried biscuit for dunking), will see us game-viewing our way to the Lower Sabie Rest Camp.

On arrival, following a stop to view hippos and crocodiles at Sunset Dam, we will have a mid-morning “brunch” on the restaurant deck overlooking the Sabie River.

Birds are super-abundant throughout the Kruger area, and we can expect to see a variety of spectacular birds of prey including Bateleur, Wahlberg’s Eagle, Martial Eagle, African Hawk-Eagle, and African Fish-Eagle in addition to Southern Ground-Hornbill, Southern Red-billed and Southern Yellow-billed Hornbills, Saddle-billed and Yellow-billed Storks, Goliath and Gray Herons, Pied and Malachite Kingfishers, Lilac-breasted Roller, Burchell’s and Greater Blue-eared Starlings, and many more bright and colorful birds.



Lilac-breasted Roller © Avian Leisure

Our return along the same route could deliver African lion, leopard, and possibly even African wild dog to get our first full day in Kruger off to a great start.

Back at Skukuza, we will transfer overland to Notten's Bush Camp, situated in the heart of the Sabi Sand Conservancy, arriving in time for a late lunch ahead of an afternoon game drive. Riding in an open 4x4 safari vehicle in the company of a tracker and a ranger, we will go into the bush, now with rhinoceros and leopard high on our "wish list."



Leopard with cub © Avian Leisure

As the sun sets above the distant Drakensberg Mountains, we will pause to take in the splendor of the moment with a refreshment and a snack in hand before working our way back to camp by spotlight, scanning the surrounding woodland for nocturnal mammals and birds such as jackal, hyena, nightjars and owls.



On safari in the bush © Avian Leisure

Dinner will be safari-style, either around the “lapa” fire or on the camp deck, depending on the weather.

NIGHT: Notten’s Bush Camp, Sabi Sands Reserve

September 22-23, Days 14-15: Greater Kruger Conservancy Area. Away from the crowds of Kruger Park, the exclusive and well-appointed Notten’s Bush Camp is one of the very best parts of the entire region for game-viewing and birding. Our time here is sure to be action-packed and incredibly productive. On each of the ensuing two days, we will enjoy morning and afternoon game drives in search of mammals and birds. Our destinations will vary and will be based on local knowledge and radio reports from other rangers in the field.

Leopard is the “house speciality,” and our two rangers will do their utmost to secure close-up views of these exquisitely beautiful cats, in addition to cheetah and African wild dog, if either of these nomadic predators are in the vicinity at the time of our visit.



Cheetahs © Avian Leisure

Collectively, the stay at Notten’s offers a holistic experience complete with game drives for mega-fauna and exotic birds, an interpretive nature walk in the company of a highly skilled local ranger, and a barbecue under starlit skies surrounded by the night sounds of the African bush.

Aside from the bush experience, the standard of hospitality is unsurpassed as the community-based camp and field staff do their utmost to make you feel at home in their world. Moreover, a swimming pool and spa add to the pleasure of a midday siesta before the afternoon game drive. Simply put, there is so much to do and enjoy in the relative privacy of this very special part of the Greater Kruger Conservation Area.

NIGHT: Notten’s Bush Camp, Sabi Sands Reserve

September 24, Day 16: Travel to Johannesburg. The majority of the day will be consumed with our transfer to Johannesburg.

Following a final morning game drive, we will return to camp for breakfast and a chance to freshen up before we make the leisurely overland transfer to the airport at Skukuza. Following a flight to Johannesburg, we'll transfer to a comfortable lodge conveniently situated within the airport complex.

This night will be our last together in South Africa. We'll reconvene for a final group dinner and perhaps have a checklist session to get caught up on our list of sightings, which by now will be most impressive. As we will be in the company of a cultural guide the next day, tonight will be our last with Patrick.

NIGHT: City Lodge Hotel Barbara Road, Johannesburg

September 25-26, Days 17-18: Apartheid Museum and Soweto; Departure for Home. After breakfast, Patrick will bid farewell, and in his place, we will be joined by an expert cultural guide, who will be with us for our final day in South Africa. We will spend the morning at the renowned Apartheid Museum followed by lunch and a guided tour of Soweto in the afternoon. Upon conclusion of our guided day tour, we will return to O.R. Tambo International Airport with plenty of time to check in for our international flights. Direct flights to the United States will arrive in the early morning of September 26, allowing time for onward connections.

Please note that the day's activity is a leisurely city tour in a comfortable air-conditioned bus, eliminating the need to change ahead of your evening flight (unless a day room is requested at personal expense in the case of a late-night departing flight).

TOUR SIZE: This tour will be limited to 12 participants.

TOUR LEADER: This tour will be led by **Patrick Cardwell**. **Jessica Frantz** will represent BirdNote.



Patrick Cardwell has been passionate about birding since his boyhood days in rural surroundings. Armed with an introductory bird book and an inexpensive pair of binoculars, he embarked on what has proved to be an enduring and intense interest for more than 50 years. During this time Patrick enthusiastically indulged in tape recording, bird photography, bird banding, and regional distribution assessments throughout Southern Africa as part of the S.A. Bird Atlas Project. This was the background for developing his ability to provide visiting birders with exclusively tailored itineraries covering specified needs from “relaxed” to “intensive” in detail. Over the years, his interest in nature has expanded significantly and he now holds the FGASA (Field Guides Association of South Africa) accreditation for Levels 1 to 3 and an Honorary SKS: Birding (Specialist Knowledge & Skills: Birding) qualification, as well as BLSA's (Bird Life South Africa)

specialist guide endorsement for all provinces. Patrick's personal Southern Africa bird list is more than 870 out of the 900 or so bird species. Now he relies on vagrants to build his list!



Jessica Frantz is Development Director for BirdNote. She joined the team in July 2020, bringing a love of the natural world and a passion for connecting people and causes. Prior to BirdNote, she worked in membership and development across public radio and with a wide variety of not-for-profit organizations. Jessica is a beginning birder with an interest in ecology and evolution. She enjoys cooking, reading, spending time with family, and hanging out with her 75-pound labradoodle, Max. She has a BS in Biology and Philosophy and a Masters in Library and Information Science.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for South Africa: The Southwestern Cape & Kruger is **\$10,995** per person in double occupancy from Cape Town (tour ends in Johannesburg). The fee includes all meals from dinner on Day 2 to lunch on Day 17; all lodging as stated in the itinerary; internal flights; ground transportation; tipping; park entrance fees; and services of the tour leader. The tour fee does NOT include roundtrip airfare between your home and Cape Town and return from Johannesburg; entrance and departure taxes; alcoholic beverages; special gratuities; phone calls; laundry; or items of a personal nature. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration, a small-party supplement may have to be charged.

The single supplement for South Africa: The Southwestern Cape & Kruger is **\$2,435**.

REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT: To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The initial deposit for this tour is **\$1,000** per person. If you would like to pay your deposit using a credit card, the deposit must be made with MasterCard or Visa at the time of registration. If you would like to pay your initial deposit by check, money order, or bank transfer, your tour space will be held for 10 days to allow time for the VENT office to receive your deposit and completed registration form. The VENT registration form (available from the VENT office or by download at www.ventbird.com) should be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office.

PAYMENTS: All tour payments may be made by credit card (MasterCard or Visa), check, money order, or bank transfer (contact the VENT office for bank transfer information). These include initial deposits, second deposits, interim payments, final balances, special arrangements, etc. Full payment of the tour fee is due 150 days (April 12, 2022) prior to the tour departure date.

EXCHANGE RATE SURCHARGES: In the erratic global financial markets of today, it is difficult to predict foreign currency exchange rates over the long term or at the time of operation of a tour or cruise departure. Tour prices are based upon the rate of exchange at the time of itinerary publication. If exchange rates change drastically, it may be necessary to implement a surcharge. If a surcharge is necessary, every effort will be made to minimize the amount. In many cases, these additional foreign exchange rate surcharges are passed to VENT by its vendors and suppliers.

CANCELLATION & REFUNDS:

Cancellation by Participant:

Refunds, if any, for any cancellation by a participant are made according to the following schedule: If participant cancels 180 days or more before the tour departure date, a cancellation fee of **\$500** per person will be charged unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months, in which case the cancellation fee will be **\$100** per person. If cancellation is made between 179 and 151 days before departure date, the deposit is not refundable, but any payments covering the balance of the tour fee will be refunded. If cancellation is made fewer than 150 days before departure date, no refund is available. **For participants' protection, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance that covers trip cancellation/interruption.**

If participant cancels:

180 days or more before departure date

179 to 151 days before departure date

150 days or less before departure date

Participant's refund will be:

Your deposit minus \$500*

No refund of the deposits, but any payments on the balance will be refunded

No refund available

*Unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months, in which case the cancellation fee will be \$100 per person. To qualify, cancellation must occur 180 days or more before departure date; deposit transfers must be made at the time of cancellation; and one transfer per deposit.

Cancellation by VENT:

If VENT cancels a tour prior to departure without cause or good reason, VENT will provide the participant a full refund, which will constitute full settlement to the participant.

If VENT cancels or delays a tour or any portion of a tour as a result of any Force Majeure event, VENT will use its reasonable best efforts to refund any payments on the balance of the tour fee to participant; provided that, VENT will have no obligation to provide a participant with a refund and will not be liable or responsible to a participant, nor be deemed to have defaulted under or breached any applicable agreement, for any failure or delay in fulfilling or performing any term of such agreement. A “**Force Majeure**” event means any act beyond VENT’s control, including, without limitation, the following: (a) acts of God; (b) flood, fire, earthquake, hurricane, epidemic, pandemic or explosion; (c) war, invasion, hostilities (whether war is declared or not), terrorist threats or acts, riot or other civil unrest; (d) government order, law or actions; (e) embargoes or blockades; (f) national or regional emergency; (g) strikes, labor stoppages, labor slowdowns or other industrial disturbances; (h) shortage of adequate power or transportation facilities; and (i) any other similar events or circumstances beyond the control of VENT.

This VENT Cancellation & Refunds policy does not apply to air tickets purchased through VENT or to any special arrangements, such as additional hotel nights, that fall outside of the services described in the tour itinerary.

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours is not a participant in the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires certain sellers of travel to have a trust account or bond. This business has a bond issued by Travelers in the amount of \$50,000. CST #2014998-50.

MEDICAL EVACUATION INSURANCE REQUIREMENT: This tour visits remote locations where immediate access to primary medical care may **NOT** be available. **For this reason, travel insurance which covers you for emergency evacuation is required for participation on this tour.** This coverage is included in the **Ripcord Rescue Travel Insurance™** program. Through Ripcord, “emergency evacuation” can be purchased as a stand-alone benefit or as part of a comprehensive travel insurance policy. If you choose not to purchase insurance through Ripcord, you are required to obtain it through another provider.

EXCHANGE RATE SURCHARGES: In the erratic global financial markets of today, it is difficult to predict foreign currency exchange rates over the long term or at the time of operation of a tour or cruise departure. Tour prices are based upon the rate of exchange at the time of itinerary publication. If exchange rates change drastically, it may be necessary to implement a surcharge. If a surcharge is necessary, every effort will be made to minimize the amount. In many cases, these additional foreign exchange rate surcharges are passed to VENT by its vendors and suppliers.

FUEL AND FUEL SURCHARGES: In the uncertain, often volatile oil market of late, it is difficult – if not impossible – to predict fuel costs over the long term, and more specifically, at the time of operation of this departure. Our prices are based upon the prevailing fuel rates at the time of itinerary publication. While we will do everything possible to maintain our prices, if the fuel rates increase significantly, it may be necessary to institute a fuel surcharge. Also, please be aware that many African countries often impose fuel surcharges upon checking in for the flight and do not give any advanced warning. Previously, these surcharges have been nominal (\$5-\$15 per flight) and it is the responsibility of each passenger to pay these costs.

TRAVEL INSURANCE: To safeguard against losses due to illness, accident, or other unforeseen circumstances, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance as soon as possible after making a deposit. VENT has partnered with Redpoint Travel Protection as our preferred travel insurance provider. Through Redpoint, we recommend their **Ripcord** plan. Designed for all types of travelers, Ripcord is among the most comprehensive travel protection programs available.

Critical benefits of Ripcord include a completely integrated program with a single contact for emergency services, travel assistance, and insurance claims; **medical evacuation and rescue services** from your point of injury or illness to your **hospital of choice**; comprehensive travel insurance for **trip cancellation/interruption**, primary medical expense coverage, and much more. Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items such as security evacuation coverage in case of a natural disaster or other security events, **waiver for pre-existing medical conditions exclusion**, and a **“Cancel for Any Reason”** benefit. Ripcord is available to U.S. and non-U.S. residents.*

For a price quote, or to purchase travel insurance, please visit: ripcordtravelprotection.com/ventbird; or click the **Ripcord** logo on our website (click Help and Trip Insurance); or call +1-415-481-0600. Pricing is based on age, trip cost, trip length, and level of coverage.

*To be eligible for the pre-existing medical condition exclusion waiver and the optional Cancel for Any Reason (CFAR) upgrade, you must purchase your policy within 14 days of making your tour deposit. The CFAR benefit provides reimbursement for 75% of covered costs, and increases the policy premium by approximately 50%. Policies may be purchased either for the full value of the tour fee at the time of deposit or in segments as individual tour payments are made (deposit, mid-payment, final balance, additional arrangements, etc.). The “pay as you go” approach reduces up-front expense and ensures that the amount paid toward your full policy premium is in proportion to the amount paid toward the full tour fee. If you choose to “pay as you go,” you must cover each deposit or payment within 14 days in order to maintain the CFAR benefit. The primary medical expense benefit is available to U.S. residents only. For this reason, non-U.S. residents will pay an adjusted premium when purchasing a comprehensive policy, which includes all of the other benefits available to U.S. residents. Please refer to the policy for a full description of coverage.

Coronavirus (COVID-19):

The coronavirus pandemic has brought uncertainty for many people currently holding travel insurance policies or who are considering future travel and purchasing such insurance. Redpoint has added a **Coronavirus FAQ page** to its website that addresses questions and concerns regarding its travel insurance and the impact of COVID-19. We strongly recommend that you visit the page for an overview of topics such as policy coverage and limitations, policy modifications, cancellation, refunds, and more. Among the most important points: 1) Trip cancellation solely for concern or fear of travel associated with COVID-19 is not covered; 2) Should you request cancellation of your policy, a full refund of your premium is available only under a limited set of conditions; and 3) Should you request cancellation, you may be eligible to receive a pro-rated refund of the unused portion of your premium or a travel insurance credit. Travel insurance credit (“Premium Credit”) is for the value of the policy purchased and may be applied to future policies. Premium Credits have no expiration dates. Rules and regulations apply.

Please visit the **Coronavirus FAQ** page at the following link:

https://redpointtravelprotection.com/covid_19_faq/

Additionally, as countries begin opening up for travel, many are instituting an array of COVID-19 entry requirements, including mandates to purchase travel insurance covering medical expenses due to COVID-19 illness and accommodation in case of quarantine. Ripcord’s comprehensive travel insurance plans are designed to satisfy the various country-specific travel insurance entry requirements. Those who purchase a Ripcord policy will receive a “letter of confirmation” that affirms that the policy satisfies such requirements.

AIR INFORMATION: Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to make whatever air reservations you desire including stopovers in Europe, business or first-class reservations, etc. from your home and return. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements. *Please be sure to check with the VENT office prior to purchasing your air ticket to confirm that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. VENT cannot be responsible for any air ticket penalties.*

BAGGAGE: Please restrict your luggage to one medium-size soft-sided suitcase or duffel bag and one small carry-on, due to space limitations on the bus. Please try to refrain from bringing excessive amounts of baggage. Most airlines strictly enforce baggage regulations. Excess baggage charges, which can be substantial, are the personal responsibility of each participant. As a precaution against lost luggage, we suggest that you pack a change of clothes, toiletries, medications, important travel documents, optics, and any other essential items in your carry-on bag.

Due to ever-changing circumstances in the government's attempts to improve airport security, we recommend that you check the websites of your airline and the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) for the most updated information regarding checked baggage and carry-on items: <http://www.tsa.gov/>.

CLOTHING: This program is structured as casual; a birding and natural history trip with moderate infusions of historical and cultural highlights. We suggest you bring primarily field-type clothing, which will be appropriate for most if not all occasions; however, a nicer "smart-casual" attire for evenings may be the preferred style of dress for some. Southern Africa's spring climate is variable, and conditions often change markedly during a single day, so layers that can be added or removed as needed are ideal. The following items are recommended:

- **Pants:** A couple pairs of pants are essential. Many people prefer lightweight pants made of cotton or other material, but denim, though not as comfortable, is certainly acceptable.
- **Field Clothing:** Outdoor stores such as Cabela's and REI carry field clothing that many birders find appealing. Pants and shirts made of lightweight yet durable materials with multiple pockets and ventilated seams are popular.
- **Shirts:** Several t-shirts, (long and short-sleeved), in addition to other comfortable styles suitable for warm weather.
- **Hat:** A hat for protection from the sun is essential.
- **Smart-Casual Attire (non-essential, but may be preferred by some for evenings):** For women this includes casual dresses or skirts/slacks. For men this includes khakis/slacks and open-collared shirts.
- **Sweaters and Coats:** Mild to warm weather is anticipated on this trip, but a sweater, fleece, or light coat will definitely be useful for cool mornings and evenings and for when on the boat for the whale watching trip. A water repellent jacket or coat is highly recommended.
- **Thermal underwear:** Can be very useful in the event the spring is unusually cool.

FOOTWEAR: Bring a good-fitting, broken-in pair of hiking boots or trail shoes for time in the field. Athletic shoes or sandals are sufficient when not birding and for evenings.

LAUNDRY SERVICE: Laundry service is available at most hotels and lodges.

EQUIPMENT: One of the most important aspects of having an enjoyable travel experience is being prepared with proper equipment. The following items will come in handy during your trip to South Africa:

- **Backpack/daypack:** Good for carrying extra clothing, field guides, supplies, and optical equipment during all land excursions.
- **Notebooks and pens**
- **Travel alarm clock**
- **Polarized sunglasses with good UV protection**
- **Sunscreen, lip balm, skin lotions**
- **Personal toiletries**
- **Cameras, lenses, memory cards, and extra batteries**
- **Collapsible walking stick:** A highly recommended item for those who have trouble walking.
- **Folding stool:** Recommended for those who have trouble standing for more than 10 or 15 minutes at a time. The typical folding stool is small, lightweight and portable, consisting of three aluminum legs connected by a central bolt, with a sturdy but pliable material seat.

- **Tissue packs**
- **Small flashlight or headlamp**
- **Dust mask:** A dust mask can be useful for when riding in safari vehicles on dusty tracks and roads.

BINOCULARS & SPOTTING SCOPES:

Binoculars: We strongly recommend good binoculars of at least 7x35, 8x42, 10x40, or 10x42 magnification. We recommend that you do NOT bring mini-binoculars of any kind. Some people like “minis” because they are small and lightweight, but they have an extremely small field of view and very poor light-gathering power. Trying to find a bird in your binoculars using minis is like trying to read a book through a keyhole. You will be very frustrated, and even if you do manage to get the bird in your binoculars before it flies, you will have a poor view. You will find that 7x35 or 8x42 binoculars are compact and light enough.

Spotting Scopes: Your tour leader will have a scope available for group use throughout the trip, but if you have one and wish to bring it, please feel free to do so.

CLIMATE & WEATHER: South Africa is a land of great physical variety and equally variable weather. By late September/early October, the unsettled weather that can mark the early part of the spring has largely passed, yet chances exist for a late cold front from the south. The southwestern Cape region can be marvelously warm and clear at this season or it can be quite chilly and wet. Temperatures generally range from the 50s to the 70s (°F). The Kruger region is generally warm to hot at this season, with daytime temperatures possibly reaching 90°. The nights can be cool, with temperatures capable of dropping to 50°. Rain is possible in all areas, especially thunderstorms in the Kruger area, although this trip will operate after the main rains in the southwestern Cape and before the rainy season in the subtropical east.

CONDITIONS: Your trip to South Africa will be a multi-faceted and enriching travel experience combining “serious” bird watching and natural history observation with emphasis on sightseeing, historical and cultural features. Most days will be dedicated to birding and natural history pursuits amid South Africa’s highly varied landscapes; however, the program’s historical/cultural infusions are well-represented and include a day at the Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden, a visit to the wine country at Stellenbosch, a trip to the top of Table Mountain, a day at Robben Island and the City Bowl of Cape Town, and a grand finale tour of select sites in the Johannesburg area, in addition to opportunities for shopping. For the cultural tour on Day 17, we will be joined by a licensed local guide who will provide expert interpretation. Physical demands will be easy to moderate, but please bear in mind that we will experience a wide variety of walking conditions over the course of the trip. We emphasize that no one will be subjected to physical demands that exceed their capabilities. All walking will be done at a slow to moderate pace. Most days will begin at a “reasonable” hour, with breakfast available at 7 or 7:30 a.m.; however, we have scheduled early starts on several days in order to maximize our time in the field. For instance, in the Kruger area we may have a very light breakfast at 5:30 or 6:00 a.m. in order to be out early on the game drives when the weather is still cool and the animals active. That said, a goal of the trip is to have a relaxed to moderately paced travel experience. On most days meals times will occur at “typical” times. Travel will be by bus and safari vehicle.

DOCUMENTS: A passport valid for at least six months beyond your planned departure is required. Please make sure that you have at least two consecutive blank pages in your passport for entry stamps. Visas are not required for entry by United States and Canadian citizens for stays under 90 days. Rules and regulations pertaining to citizens of other countries may vary. Please check with your local consulate or embassy.

CURRENCY & MONEY MATTERS: Your trip to South Africa includes most necessary expenses. You will want to bring enough cash to cover personal expenses not included in the program, such as

taxi rides, gifts, laundry, gratuities, meals on your own, and personal items. It is best to carry small denominations of cash as any places we visit may be unable to provide change for large bills. While US dollars may be accepted in more populous areas, it is always convenient to have a supply of local currency for such items. It is best to acquire local currency before leaving home, or at the airport or a bank upon arrival in South Africa. MasterCard and Visa are more widely accepted than American Express, but all are useful, particularly in major population centers.

Should you extend your vacation beyond what is offered in the program, you'll want to obtain local currency. Please check with your bank and credit card issuer for more information regarding banking and the use of ATM and credit cards overseas.

The official currency of South Africa is the South African Rand (ZAR). You can check the latest currency conversion rate by visiting "XE-The World's Favorite Currency Site" at: <http://www.xe.com/>.

ELECTRICITY: The electrical current in South Africa is 220V (110-120V in the U.S.). Electrical outlets are primarily of the D, M, and N socket types, styles featuring three pins assembled in a triangular formation. You will need to bring a plug adapter in order to plug in your device or appliance. **Please note that some adapters sold in the United States as "For Africa" will not work in South Africa.** Please be sure to get the right plug type.

Since 1995, most small appliances (cell phones, laptop computers, camera battery chargers) are dual-designed to operate on North American (110V) and European (220V) electrical voltages; therefore, it is not essential to bring a transformer to convert the higher voltage to lower voltage. Even if you prefer to bring a transformer, an important point to consider is that the level of Hertz (cycles per second that the current runs; abbreviated as Hz) can vary, which means that the transformer potentially only converts voltage and not Hertz. Most small appliances have a built-in power pack that converts AC current to DC, which removes the problem of different Hertz levels. If there is any question about the ability of your electrical device or appliance to handle the higher voltage and lower Hertz cycle of South African electrical current, we recommend a special transformer or power pack that can accommodate unusual conditions.

INTERNET: Wi-Fi is available at most places we stay. Internet service at certain sites, such as at the camps in the Kruger area, could be spotty or unreliable.

LANGUAGE: The official languages of South Africa are Afrikaans and English. There are nine main African languages, the most widely spoken being Zhusa, Zula, and Sesotho.

TIME: South Africa is on South Africa Standard Time (SAST) and is 6 hours ahead of Eastern Daylight Time (EDT).

HEALTH: No major shots or inoculations are required for entry into South Africa. As standard travel precautions, you should always be up to date with the "routine vaccines," including influenza, chickenpox (varicella), polio, measles/mumps/rubella (MMR), and diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus (DPT). Additionally, some health care professionals consider inoculations against hepatitis types A and B as standard. If you are taking personal medication, prescription or over-the-counter, be sure to bring an ample supply that will allow you to get through the trip safely. Please consult your physician as necessary. Remember to pack all medication in your carry-on baggage, preferably in original containers or packaging. As airline baggage restrictions can change without warning, please check with your airline for procedures for packing medication.

Those who are not fit for light to moderate physical activity, including those with physical disabilities that affect mobility and balance, heart or immune deficiencies, or other conditions associated with poor health, are advised not to join the trip. Comprehensive optional travel insurance is available and recommended. This coverage is available through your trip cancellation policy, if purchased through

Redpoint Resolutions. Please consult your insurance agent or existing policy, if in effect, for the terms and limitations of your existing coverage. Refer to the section on Trip Cancellation Insurance.

Malaria and Yellow Fever: Malaria has been recorded from the Kruger region, but the risk of contracting the disease is considered low, especially as mosquitos are few to lacking at this season. You may choose to take a course of malaria prophylaxis drugs, but please be aware that malaria in this region is of the chloroquine-resistant type. As a prophylaxis, the CDC recommends atovaquone-proguanil, doxycycline, or mefloquine. Yellow Fever is not present in South Africa, but a certificate of vaccination is required if you are arriving from a country where Yellow Fever is known to occur.

Typhoid: A disease of contaminated food and water, the CDC recommends vaccination.

Sun Exposure: The sun's ultraviolet rays are damaging to the eyes and skin with prolonged exposure. Anytime you are outdoors you will want to protect your skin, including your lips, eyes, nose, and ears. Severe sunburn is potentially very painful and will affect your level of enjoyment. Always protect yourself when outdoors and be sure to bring an ample supply of high SPF sunscreen and lip balm. We strongly recommend the use of ultra-violet blocking, polarized sunglasses.

Food and water: Although South Africa is one of the few countries in Africa where you can drink the water in major cities, eat the salads and unpeeled fresh vegetables and fruit, and assume that Western sanitation standards are followed, an antibiotic for any possible GI problems could be useful.

In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travelers is the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta. The CDC operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line 800-CDC-INFO (232-4636) or you can check their website at wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel. Canadian citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada: www.canada.ca/en/public-health.html (click on Travel Health).

Insect Repellents – There are insect repellents for the skin and an insect repellent used to treat clothing that should not be applied to the skin.

Insect repellents for the skin are commonly available in three forms:

- **DEET (N,N-diethyl-meta-toluamide):** A chemical compound that is marketed under various brand names (OFF!®, Cutter™, Ultrathon™, etc.) and offered in a variety of formulations including sprays, lotions, time-release preparations, and disposable wipes. The formulations will state a percentage of the active ingredient DEET on the packaging. DEET may be applied to exposed skin directly and/or sprayed on clothing. Please be careful when applying DEET as it can damage plastics and lens coatings.
- **Picaridin:** A synthetic formulation that is derived from piperine, a substance found in plants that produce black pepper.
- **Herbal insect repellents:** Various mixtures of organic ingredients such as oils from eucalyptus, citronella, cedar, and other herbs. The herbal repellents are more difficult to categorize because of the difference in ingredients from one brand to another. There is considerable variation in their effectiveness.

An insect repellent for clothing is marketed in one approved formulation:

- **Permanone® (Permethrin)** is an odorless spray-on repellent that may be used for **pre-treatment** of clothing, gear, and tents. It should not be used directly on the skin or sprayed on clothing while it is being worn. The pre-treatment process requires a number of hours to complete and must be done outdoors, so is best completed in advance of travel. Do-it-yourself pre-treatment has to be repeated more often than commercial treatment using Insect Shield® technology. It is available at various outdoor stores and can easily be found online.

- Insect Shield® apparel: Clothing pre-treated with Permethrin is made by a variety of manufacturers. It is available for purchase from some sporting goods suppliers. The clothing is advertised as retaining its repellency for up to 70 washings.

The US EPA offers a search tool to help choose a repellent that is best for a particular situation. For example, some repellents work for mosquitoes, but not for ticks.

<https://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/which-insect-repellent-right-you>

COVID-19: The world has been in the grip of a pandemic since early 2020, a result of the uncontrolled spread of SARS-CoV-2, the novel coronavirus that causes the illness COVID-19. COVID-19 is transmitted through person-to-person contact, almost always through inhaling respiratory aerosols or droplets exuded from an infected person. Common signs of COVID-19 illness include fever or chills, fatigue, shortness of breath, cough, loss of taste or smell, and more. Based on what is known about the disease, COVID-19 is far more serious than seasonal flu. Few places in the world have been unaffected. The impact on travel has been substantial, as demonstrated by the fact that VENT did not operate a tour between late March 2020 and late April 2021. The development and deployment of COVID-19 vaccines, particularly in the United States, has allowed VENT to return to tour operations. We emphasize that our number one priority is the health and safety of our customers and employees. **With this in mind, VENT instituted a COVID-19 vaccination requirement. All tour participants and tour leaders must be fully vaccinated in order to travel with us while we are still in a declared public health emergency.** In accordance with the latest guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), full vaccination is defined as an individual being 14 days beyond having received the required amount of vaccine for reaching full immunity to the degree specific vaccines confer. In the United States, so far, this means either the two-shot sequence for the Moderna or Pfizer vaccines or the one-shot Johnson & Johnson vaccine. Proof of vaccination must be provided to our office at least one week before the start of the tour and kept with you while on the tour. Because the world is a very different place than it was before the pandemic, we've made a number of important adjustments to our processes to ensure that our tours can operate as safely as possible. Please visit the **Coronavirus Travel Update** page of our [website](#), where you may view our **COVID-19 Protocols for VENT Tours** document, which details the guidance VENT will follow in the operation of its tours in the time of pandemic. Our decision and policy are firmly rooted in the latest CDC guidance regarding recommendations for avoiding COVID-19. As we move forward, VENT will continue to follow the latest information from the CDC and will update our policy accordingly. Please visit the CDC website for the most up to date information about COVID-19 and associated guidance for proper health and hygiene: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>.

SUGGESTED READING: A number of traditional booksellers and online stores list excellent inventories of field guides and other natural history resources that will help prepare you for this tour. We recommend www.amazon.com which has a wide selection; www.buteobooks.com and www.nhbs.com which specialize in ornithology and natural history books; and www.abebbooks.com for out-of-print and hard-to-find titles.

A great deal has been written about all aspects of South Africa's natural history and human history, and you will find a variety of selections in any library. Browse around a little and you will discover many resources not listed here. This list includes some basic field guides and reference volumes of use to the visitor.

Birds:

Sinclair, Ian, Phil Hockey, and Warwick Tarboton. *SASOL Birds of Southern Africa*. 4th ed. Princeton Field Guides. **The most important field guide for this tour (also available as an app).**

Maclean, Gordon Lindsay. *Roberts' Birds of Southern Africa*, 7th Ed. John Voelcker Bird Book Fund, 2005. This is more of a handbook, with extended information on behavior, breeding, diet, etc. Also available as an app.

Mammals:

Stuart, Chris and Tilde Stuart. *Field Guide: Mammals of Southern Africa*. Cape Town: Struik New Holland Publishers, 2014.

Kingdon, Jonathan. *The Kingdon Field Guide to African Mammals*. London: Academic Press, 1997.

Estes, Richard Despard. *The Behavior Guide to African Mammals*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992. **An awesome resource.**

General Social, Historical and Geographical Background:

Johnson-Barker, Brian. *South Africa The Beautiful*. Cape Town: Struik New Holland Publishers, 1991.

Davenport, Rodney and Christopher Saunders. *South Africa, a Modern History*, 5th ed. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000.

Mandela, Nelson. *Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela*. Back Bay Books, 1995. The remarkable story of one of the 20th century's greatest moral leaders.

SUGGESTED BIRDS FOR LISTENING:

[The Secretarybird: Eagle on Stilts](#)

[White-browed Coucal](#)

[Oxpeckers and Mutualism](#)

[Snake-Eagles Are Awesome](#)

[The Jackass Penguins of Africa](#)

[The Greatest Bird Rescue Ever](#)

[Frantic Fowl from Guinea](#)

[The Dainty Flamingo?](#)

[Cisticolas – Chirping, Croaking, and More](#)

[What in the World Is a Hoopoe?](#)

[Scintillating Starlings](#)

[The World's Most Abundant Bird](#)

[The Social Weaver's Colonial Nest](#)

[Sandgrouse – Desert Water-carriers](#)

[Following the Honeyguide](#)

TIPPING: Tipping (restaurant staff, porters, drivers, local guides) is included on VENT tours. However, if you feel your guide has given you exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that tips are not expected and are entirely optional. Tips should be given directly to your trip leader; they should not be sent to the VENT office.

RESPONSIBILITY STATEMENT: Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc., a Texas corporation, and/or its agents (together, “**VENT**”) act only as agents for the participant in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the participant or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT accepts no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in airfare or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, terrorism, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will be borne by the participant, as tour rates only provide for arrangements for the time stated.

VENT reserves the right (i) to substitute hotels of similar category, or the best reasonable substitution available under the circumstances, for those indicated and (ii) to make any changes in the itinerary that are deemed necessary by VENT or which are caused by third party transportation schedules (i.e. railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, etc.).

VENT reserves the right to substitute leaders or guides on any tour. Where VENT, in its sole discretion, determines such substitution is necessary, it will notify tour participants.

VENT reserves the right to cancel any tour prior to departure. If VENT cancels a tour prior to departure without cause or good reason, VENT will provide the participant a full refund, which will constitute full settlement to the participant. Notwithstanding the foregoing, VENT will not provide any participant with a refund and will not be liable or responsible to any participant, nor be deemed to have defaulted under or breached any applicable agreement, for any failure or delay in fulfilling or performing any term of such agreement, when and to the extent such failure or delay is caused by or results from acts beyond VENT's control, including, without limitation, the following force majeure events: (a) acts of God; (b) flood, fire, earthquake, hurricane, epidemic, pandemic or explosion; (c) war, invasion, hostilities (whether war is declared or not), terrorist threats or acts, riot or other civil unrest; (d) government order, law or actions; (e) embargoes or blockades in effect on or after the date of the scheduled tour; (f) national or regional emergency; (g) strikes, labor stoppages, labor slowdowns or other industrial disturbances; (h) shortage of adequate power or transportation facilities; and (i) any other similar events or circumstances beyond the control of VENT.

If a participant cancels any tour or any portion of a tour, VENT will have no obligation to refund or reimburse any participant for any tour payments or deposits previously paid by any participant (see VENT Registration & Deposit policy and Cancellation & Refunds policy contained in the itinerary). Tour prices are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect on November 22, 2021 and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change thereto.

VENT reserves the right to decline any participant's Registration Form and/or refuse to allow any participant to participate in a tour as VENT deems reasonably necessary, in its sole discretion. VENT also reserves the right to remove any tour participant from any portion of a tour as VENT deems necessary, in its sole discretion, reasons for such removal include but are not limited to, medical needs, injury, illness, inability to meet physical demands of a tour, personality conflict or situations in which such removal is otherwise in the best interest of the tour, the tour group and/or such participant. If a participant is removed from a tour, such participant will be responsible for any expenses associated with such removal, including but not limited to, transportation, lodging, airfare and meals, and VENT will have no obligation to refund or reimburse any such removed participant for any tour payments or deposits previously paid by such participant.

Baggage is carried at the participant's risk entirely. No airline company, its employees, agents and/or affiliates (the "**Airline**") is to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time participants are not on board the Airline's aircraft. The participant ticket in use by any Airline, when issued, will constitute the sole contract between the Airline and the purchaser of the tickets and/or the participant. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for VENT tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airlines Reporting Corporation.