

Cape Town Extension
November 15-21, 2022
Itinerary

Day 1 (November 15) Cape Town

On arrival at Cape Town International airport we will be met by our guide and transfer to the Underberg guesthouse where we will settle in and relax for the balance of the day.

Overnight: *Underberg Guest House*

Day 2 (November 16) Table Mountain & Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens

This morning we will depart for the world-famous Table Mountain and take the ascent via aerial cableway to the top. The journey only takes 5 to 10 minutes to reach the top of Table Mountain, travelling at a speed of about 10m (33ft) per second. The height of Table Mountain is 1085m (3560ft) and the views from the top reach all the way to Robben Island and beyond. We will enjoy the views and take a short walk to enjoy the birdlife and any wildflowers in bloom. Table Mountain is known for its rich biodiversity and is home to about 2000 species of plants, most of them fynbos, which forms one of the world's six plant kingdoms all on its own.

Afterwards we head for Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens – one of the world's leading indigenous gardens on the eastern slopes of Table Mountain. Kirstenbosch still manages to offer a worthwhile diversity of forest and cape mountain Fynbos birding in a truly beautiful, relaxed and easily accessible environment. It remains the best spot close to Cape Town to see some of the more common mountain fynbos and forest endemics and also supports a number of other species not easily seen elsewhere on the Peninsula. The mountain fynbos endemics, Cape Sugarbird and Orange-breasted Sunbird, are prolific in the cultivated protea and erica patches in the south western corner of the gardens. Cape Spurfowl, Cape Batis and Southern Boubou are also common and the endemic Forest Canary is sometimes present and Cape Grassbird is often heard and seen. Overnight: *Underberg Guest House*

Day 3 (November 17) Cape Town to West Coast National Park

After breakfast we will head north to the West Coast National Park, including the globally important wetland sites of the Berg River estuary and Langebaan Lagoon. Large numbers of waders spend the northern winter here and we will check for Red Knot, Bar-tailed Godwit, Ruddy Turnstone, Black-bellied Plover, Terek Sandpiper, Greater Sand Plover and Eurasian Curlew, as well as Kittlitz's and the localised Chestnut-banded Plover. In addition to the shorebirds, these areas also support large numbers of Greater and Lesser Flamingos, South African Shelduck, Cape Shoveler and other waterfowl. The surrounding short, coastal vegetation, is home to the endemic Southern Black Korhaan, Gray-winged Francolin, Southern Grey Tit, Southern Penduline-Tit, Karoo Lark, Capped Wheatear, Fiscal Flycatcher and the magnificent Black Harrier, surely one of the world's most attractive raptors. Return to Cape Town in the late afternoon. Overnight: *Underberg Guest House*

Day 4 (November 18) Cape Point

Today we depart southwards along the peninsula, visiting a number of coastal localities, in search of Benguela Current endemics, all of which, except for Damara Tern, are distinct possibilities. Cape and Hartlaub's Gull are widespread around the Cape Peninsula, and may be seen en route to our first stop, Kommetjie. Here, a full sweep of marine cormorants can usually be seen, including Cape, Bank and Crowned Cormorant. Cape Gannets hunt off-shore, while African Black Oystercatcher forage on the shoreline.

If time allows we can include a visit to the scenic Cape of Good Hope. Here, coastal thicket adjacent to the parking area supports Fiscal Flycatcher, Cape Bulbul, Southern Boubou and Speckled Mousebird. Ostrich, and Bontebok- a once critically endangered antelope endemic to the Cape - graze in the open near the parking area. Flowering patches attract Cape Sugarbird, Orange-breasted, Malachite and Southern Double-collared Sunbirds. Rocky places in the reserve are worth searching for Ground Woodpecker, Jackal Buzzard, Cape Rock Thrush, Cape Siskin and Familiar Chat. We wrap up with a visit to Strandfontein Sewage Works, with a vast array of waterbirds, including: Eared Grebe, Maccoa Duck, Southern Pochard, Cape Teal, Cape Shoveler, South African Shelduck, White Pelican, and Greater Flamingo. Return to Cape Town in the late afternoon. Overnight: *Underberg Guest House*

Day 5 (November 19) Hermanus via Rooi Els / Betty's Bay / Harold Porter Botanical Gardens

This morning we pack up and drive along the coastline towards Hermanus. We will follow the coastline and bird areas such as Rooi Els, Betty's Bay as well as a stopover at Harold Porter Botanical Gardens. Rooi Els is one of the best places to find the Cape Rock-jumper, and hosts a number of other fynbos and Southern African endemics. Situated on the eastern corner of False Bay, Rooi Els holds a huge diversity of fynbos plant species as well as some breathtaking views of the Peninsula and coastline. A colony of African Penguins is also just up the road at Betty's Bay. Harold Porter Botanical Gardens contains excellent examples of the main local habitat-types, coastal bush, fynbos, riverine woodland and montane scrub. The entire area can be easily covered in 3 to 5 hours of strolling through pleasantly laid-out paths and trails. We could expect to see about 40 species, including several cape endemics. An afternoon visit to Fernkloof will end the day. This fynbos reserve is conveniently close to Hermanus and gives very easy access to a number of the region's special species. Specials include: Verreaux's Eagle, Jackal Buzzard, Cape Spurfowl, Olive Woodpecker, Cape Rock-jumper, Cape Grassbird, Victorin's Warbler, Cape Sugarbird, and Malachite, Orange-breasted and Southern Double-collared Sunbirds. Overnight: *Milkwood Lodge*

Day 6 (November 20) Baines Kloof & Val du Charron Estate

Early morning departure for Wellington. After checking in at *Val du Charron* we depart for Baines Kloof Pass. Bain's Kloof Pass, traversing the mountains above Wellington, takes one along 20 miles of dramatic curves supported by dry-stone walls built, with the use of convict labour, some 150 years ago. The spectacularly rugged, boulder-strewn terrain is laced with icy streams, stained a deep tea colour by humic acid leached from herbivore-detering plants. These streams support the dense vegetation favoured by Victorin's Warbler, which is common in such habitat along the entire length of the pass. At the summit of Bain's Kloof Pass there is a small settlement shaded by alien trees frequented by Fiscal Flycatcher and, more rarely, Olive Woodpecker. Cape Rock Thrush, often surprisingly scarce elsewhere, perch on the buildings. The ridges in this vicinity are good for Cape Rockjumper and Cape Siskin. Victorin's Warbler also occur in the denser vegetation on the slopes. Birders caught out by nightfall would do well to carefully check all outcrops and telephone poles for the distinctive, bulky silhouette of the (admittedly ever-scarce) Cape Eagle Owl. Val Du Charron is ten minutes from the town of Wellington and less than an hour's drive from Cape Town - the perfect accommodation spot in the heart of the Cape Winelands, South Africa. The original farm was proclaimed in 1699 and, as only the fifth family to hold title, the owners are conscious to maintain its historic integrity and re-establish the tradition of wine making on the farm itself. Overnight: *Val du Charron Wine Estate*.

Day 7 (November 21) Depart Cape Town

This morning we drive back to Cape Town to connect with our return flight home.