

South Africa – Wildlife & Cricket: One Day Internationals

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

January-February 2020

Outline itinerary

Day 1	<u>Depart London</u>
Day 2/3	<u>Langebaan</u>
Day 4	<u>Cape Town</u>
Day 5	<u>ODI, Newlands</u>
Day 6/8	<u>Simon's Town</u>
Day 9	<u>Johannesburg</u>
Day 10	<u>ODI, Wanderers</u>
Day 11	<u>Mount Sheba</u>
Day 12/15	<u>Kruger National Park</u>
Day 16	<u>Depart Johannesburg</u>
Day 17	<u>Arrive London</u>

Dates

Friday 31st January - Sunday 16th February 2020

Price

£5,595 per person (£4,995 Cape Town/Johannesburg).

Single Room Supplement

£695.

Food

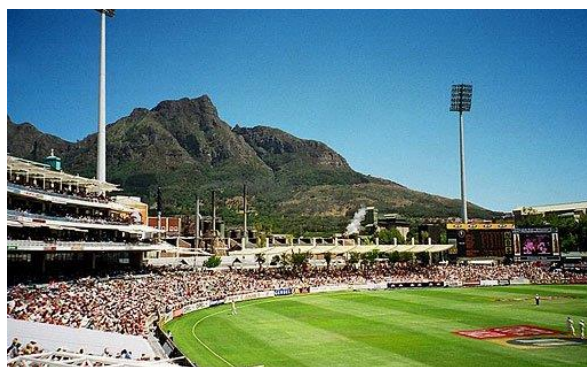
All included in the price except for lunches. Allow £150.

Focus

Birds, mammals and cricket.

Grading

Grade A. Mix of vehicular safaris and wildlife walks.



From top: Newlands Cricket Ground, Lion & Pin-tailed Whydah. Images courtesy of South Africa Tourism & Shutterstock



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Itinerary

NB. Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather & other local considerations may necessitate some re-ordering of the programme during the course of the tour, though this will always be done to maximise best use of the time and weather conditions available.

Day 1

Depart London

We leave London Heathrow this evening on board a scheduled British Airways overnight flight bound for Johannesburg.

Day 2 & 3

Langebaan

After our arrival at Cape Town Airport we will drive north to Langebaan where we stay for two nights at a guesthouse in the town. Langebaan is adjacent to the West Coast National Park, an attractive reserve encompassing the shallow, azure-hued, Langebaan Lagoon and its strandveld surroundings. The lagoon is famous for its concentration of waders which gather here during the austral summer. Other birding highlights include Common Ostrich, Grey-winged Francolin, Black Harrier, Southern Black Korhaan, Karoo, Cape Clapper and Cape Long-billed Larks, Karoo Robin, Cape Penduline-tit, White-backed Mousebird, Yellow Canary, Cape Bunting, Chestnut-vented Tit-babbler and Cape Weaver. Mammals to be seen include Cape Grey Mongoose, Cape Grysbok, Springbok, Red Hartebeest and Cape Mountain Zebra, while Dusky and Heaviside's Dolphins are occasionally seen offshore. The beautiful Caracal is present but elusive.

Day 4

Cape Town

This morning we will make our way back to Cape Town, where we will be staying at a guesthouse near Newlands Cricket Ground. If time allows we may stop in at Kirstenbosch National Botanical Gardens on the way to the accommodation. These large and spectacular gardens are situated on the lower slopes of the famed Table Mountain and are a wonderful place to relax and stroll around enjoying the botany, birds and scenery. Birds here are fairly used to people and are generally very confiding. We will be on the lookout for Cape Spurfowl, Helmeted Guineafowl, Spotted Thick-knee, Spotted Eagle Owl, Karoo Prinia, Sombre Greenbul, Cape Batis, Black Saw-wing, Forest Canary, Sweet Waxbill and raptors such as African Goshawk, Rufous-chested Sparrowhawk and perhaps even Verreaux's Eagle. Kirstenbosch is also one of the few places offering close up sightings of the normally shy and elusive Lemon Dove. Cape Robin-chat and Olive Thrush should also be seen and we may encounter a party of Cape Grey Mongoose. Highlights in the Protea garden often include Malachite Sunbird, Orange-breasted Sunbird, Southern Double-collared Sunbird and Cape Sugarbird.

Day 5

One Day International at Newlands

We will spend today at the world-famous Newland's Cricket Ground watching the One Day International match between England and the Proteas. Newlands is regarded as one of the most beautiful cricket grounds in the world, and is overlooked by Table Mountain and Devil's Peak.

Day 6-8

Simon's Town, Cape Peninsula

The Cape Peninsula will be ours to explore over the next few days. 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 wide range of birds to be seen, including Jackal Buzzard, Cape Siskin, Ostrich, Cape Robin-chat, Grey-backed Cisticola, Fiscal Flycatcher, Cape Bulbul, Southern Double-collared Sunbird, Greater Flamingo and marine species such as African Black Oystercatcher, Cape Gannet, 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. We will be based for the next three nights in a comfortable guesthouse in Simon's Town and specific spots we may visit include:

Boulder's Beach - On the False Bay side of the Peninsula there is a colony of African Penguins, the larger of only two mainland breeding colonies, and we will see them up close with wonderful photographic opportunities. The wooded area inland from the colony usually produces White-backed Mousebird, Cape Batis, Brimstone and Cape Canaries, Fiscal Flycatcher, Southern Boubou, Southern Double-collared Sunbirds and the common Cape White-eye. Mammals seen here may include Rock Hyrax and Cape Fur Seal.

Cape of Good Hope Reserve - This entails a drive along the magnificent shoreline to the southern tip of the Peninsula, with the final leg of this lovely journey by funicular railway to Cape Point. This reserve has an excellent representation of fynbos vegetation, with varieties of Protea, Leucospermum, Restio and other genera making up one of the richest plant kingdoms on Earth. Birds favouring this habitat include Malachite and Orange-breasted Sunbirds, Cape Sugarbird, Cape Grassbird, Cape Bulbul and others. The mountain slopes are favoured by Rock Kestrels, Cape Rock Thrush, Cape Siskin, Peregrine Falcon and Ground Woodpecker. Mammals on the peninsula include the endemic and striking Bontebok and the endemic Cape Mountain Zebra, plus Eland, the largest of African antelope, and the small Common Duiker. Chacma Baboons will probably also be seen and sadly some have become habituated by people illegally feeding them.

Strandfontein Wetlands - These are actually large water-treatment ponds and the open water as well as the prolific growth of water vegetation makes for a habitat that is very attractive to water birds such as Greater Flamingo, Red-billed and Cape Teals, Maccoa Duck, Cape Shoveler and Southern Pochard among others. This is a great venue for birding in the 'English' style; ie. setting up scopes and scanning for new species.

Rooi Els - Rooi Els, a small seaside village on the far side of False Bay, is a good spot to find the endemic Cape Rockjumper. They are found on the steep rocky slopes behind the village and with luck we should get some great views. It is a wonderful drive there and back, through Gordon's Bay and along the winding coastal road, with the mountain of the Kogelberg Range rising up on one side and the Atlantic Ocean crashing against the rocks on the other. This is one of the most scenic drives in the region, rivalling the famous Chapman's Peak Drive for scenic splendour.

Day 9

Johannesburg

Today we will fly to Johannesburg, where we will be based for two nights at a comfortable guesthouse close to The Wanderers Cricket Ground. There should be time for a wildlife excursion, either before or after our flight depending on timings.

Day 10

One Day International at The Wanderers

Today will be taken up by the ODI between England and the Proteas. The match is likely to last most of the day and afterwards we will head back to our guesthouse to rest and/or have a drink in the bar whilst no doubt enjoying a lively discussion about the ups and downs of the day's game.

Day 11

Mount Sheba

After breakfast, we will begin our journey east towards the Mount Sheba Hotel, a lovely old-style hotel situated in the hills to the west of the Kruger National Park, within a large patch of indigenous montane forest. After checking in there will be time for an afternoon birding walk in search of such species as Knysna Turaco, Narina Trogon, White-starred Robin, Chorister Robin-chat, Grey Cuckooshrike, Yellow-streaked Greenbul, Cape Batis and Olive Woodpecker.

Day 12/13

Satara, Kruger National Park

Today we will enjoy a pre-breakfast birding walk around the Mount Sheba Nature Reserve in search of some of the species outlined above. Although birding here can be challenging at times - due to morning mists, low light levels and the tendency of many species to inhabit the upper parts of the canopy - our efforts are sure to be rewarded.

After breakfast we will pack and depart for the Kruger National Park, entering via Orpen Gate. We will then spend the rest of the day slowly making our way to Satara Rest Camp. New birds and animals will be coming thick and fast including various hornbills and rollers, starlings and bee-eaters as well as an impressive array of raptors, from the massive Martial Eagle down to the small, but rapacious, Little Sparrowhawk. We will aim to arrive at Satara Rest Camp in the late afternoon, our base for the next two nights.

The Satara region is characterised by open basalt grasslands and Knob-thorn savannah. This is a flat and low landscape cut by semi-permanent watercourses running with a roughly west to east orientation. The low rainfall figures and generally warm climate here make for sweet and mixed grasslands, and these attract herds of grazers such as Burchell's Zebra, Blue Wildebeest and Cape Buffalo. These in turn attract predators including Lion and Spotted Hyena, while Leopard and Cheetah prey on the smaller species such as Warthog, Impala and Common Duiker. The area is rich in birdlife too and daily lists of well over a hundred species are possible. Notable species to look out for include Kori Bustard, Ostrich, Southern Ground Hornbill, Saddle-billed Stork, Lappet-faced and White-headed Vultures, Chestnut-backed Sparrow-lark, Double-banded Sandgrouse, Secretarybird, Verreaux's Eagle Owl, African Scops Owl, Namaqua Dove and Red-crested Korhaan. This evening there will also be the option of joining a night drive with park rangers, which will give you the opportunity to be out after the public

are back in camp and to see nocturnal species including Fiery-necked and Square-tailed Nightjars, Spotted Thick-knee, Spotted Eagle Owl and mammals such as Serval, African Civet and genet (Small-spotted and Large-spotted). Night drives are not included in the cost of the tour but can be booked by your guides for around 250 Rand per person. Within the camp itself, African Wildcat and Honey Badger are regular nocturnal visitors.

Day 14/15

Skukuza, Kruger National Park

Rising early we will have time for a cup of coffee before heading out on our final drive from Satara. Returning for breakfast, we will then head south into bushier country to Skukuza Rest Camp (where we will spend another two nights), birding and mammal viewing all the way. As we drive the terrain will become somewhat hillier, with rocky outcrops known locally as 'koppies' breaking the horizon here and there. The transition to granite-based soils also means an increase in shrubs and trees and the open grasslands will have largely given way to dense bush and well-wooded watercourses such as the Sabie and Sand Rivers by the time we reach Skukuza. The journey is just short of 100 kilometres and will take us the better part of the day to complete, but should also produce an exciting variety of birds, mammals and other wildlife. After settling in we may have time for a short birding walk in the camp grounds in search of species such as White-browed Robin-chat, Bearded Scrub-robin, African Green Pigeon, Purple-crested Turaco, Crowned Hornbill and Collared Sunbird. After dining in the camp's restaurant we will complete our checklists for the day before going to sleep to the sounds of the African night – Lions and Hyena in the distance, the metallic 'tink-tink' of fruit bats or perhaps the haunting wail of a Thick-tailed Bushbaby, which is commonly seen in camp at night.

We will have the next full day to explore the habitats around Skukuza and will start our wildlife viewing with an early morning drive, probably heading south-east along the Sabie River. This is one of the largest rivers in the park and attracts lots of game, particularly Impala, which are never found far away from water. The concentrations of herbivores in turn attract predators, including one of the world's highest densities of Leopards. Lion, Spotted Hyena and Cheetah are also regularly encountered, and this is the most reliable region of the park for the elusive African Wild Dog, several packs of which hold territory nearby. Rhinoceroses remain common in the south-west of the Kruger, and we should enjoy multiple sightings of White Rhino; Black Rhino is much shier, but we may be fortunate enough to catch a glimpse of one through a dense thorn thicket. Birdlife is abundant and includes White-crowned Lapwing, White-fronted Bee-eater, Brown Snake-eagle, Bearded Woodpecker, Grey-headed Bush-shrike, Southern Boubou, Green Woodhoopoe and many others. We will return to the rest camp for breakfast and then embark on a more extensive birding walk around the lodge grounds, which can produce some excellent birds such as Purple-crested Turaco, Bearded Scrub-robin, White-browed Robin-chat, Collared Sunbird, White-bellied Sunbird, African Green Pigeon and Black-collared Barbet. Then, as per the usual Kruger routine, there will be lunch and a siesta before an afternoon game drive to look for more birds and mammals. Once again, optional night drives can be booked locally by your guide..

Day 16

Depart Johannesburg

We must sadly leave the park today, but should still have time for a final morning's game viewing before breakfast and departure for our 5-hour road journey to Johannesburg. Our exact timings will depend on the departure times from Johannesburg Airport (usually mid-evening).

Day 17

Arrive London

We will arrive back at London Heathrow early this morning.

Weather

We will be travelling during Johannesburg and Kruger's summer rains (the so-called 'Green Season'). This does not mean, however, that you should expect a lot of rain, merely that there will be some rain from time to time, usually in the form of sharp afternoon showers. This gives the land a less parched appearance, and the arrival of rain ensures a more attractive landing spot for the many birds that are drawn here from the north. You can still expect plenty of sunshine, however, with daytime temperatures around 30°C in the lowlands, much cooler in the mountains.

February is high summer around Cape Town with temperatures often climbing to the mid to upper 20s degrees centigrade during the middle of the day. The maritime weather around the Cape, however, can be fickle at any time of the year, however, and although we expect plenty of sunshine, the occasional wet and windy day here cannot be ruled out.

Tour grading

Grade A. This is a traditional wildlife viewing holiday including morning and afternoon vehicular safaris and gentle wildlife walks. Although, you should be prepared for a busy programme of wildlife watching - including plenty of early mornings and several late nights - there is nothing to stop you taking a day, or part of the day, off to relax at the accommodation should you so wish!

Your transport

We will use VW Kombi vans or 10-seater Toyota Quantum minibuses for the majority of the tour. Whilst all passengers will have a window seat, in common with the majority of vehicles in South Africa, these do not have an opening 'pop-top'. For our days in Kruger, however, we will travel in open safari vehicles which have three rows of stepped seats, great visibility and a sunshade/roof to protect the group from the worst of the midday sun.

Food & accommodation

All accommodation is included in the cost of this holiday along with breakfast and dinners. Lunches are excluded and you should budget for around £150 per person to cover these. We will be using a mix of comfortable guesthouses (Cape Town, Johannesburg and Langebaan), national park rest camps (Kruger) and lodges (Mount Sheba). All rooms have private facilities.

Please note that it may, on rare occasions, be necessary to change the one or more of the camps and lodges outlined above. You can be assured, however, that any alternate lodge or camp will be of the same standard as the original and all will be in excellent areas for mammals, birds and other wildlife.

Extra expenses

Please note that the following expenses are excluded from the cost of the holiday and are paid locally. Lunches, any necessary Visas (not needed for UK citizens), locally paid airport taxes, night drives, drinks, tips and all items of a personal nature.

Your safety & security

You have chosen to travel to South Africa. Risks to your safety and security are an unavoidable aspect of all travel and the best current advice on such risks is provided for you by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. In order to assess and protect against any risks in your chosen destination, it is essential that you refer to the Foreign Office website – www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/south-africa or telephone 0870 6060290 prior to travel.

How to book your place

In order to book a place on this holiday, you will need to read the Naturetrek terms and conditions in the back of our brochure or on our website, and then book either online at www.naturetrek.co.uk, by calling us on 01962 733051, or by completing and returning the booking form in the brochure together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday cost. If you do not have a copy of this brochure, please call us on 01962 733051.

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