

Go Slow ... in South Africa (Wildlife of the Western Cape)

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Outline itinerary

Day 1	Depart London.
Day 2/8	Wildlife excursions from Simon's Town.
Day 9	Depart Cape Town.
Day 10	Arrive London.

Departs
September.

Focus
Birds, mammals, Cape flora and other wildlife.

Grading
Grade A - All walks easy and optional.

Dates and Prices
See website (tour code ZAF17).

Highlights:

- Spectacular scenery of South Africa's Western Cape
- Cape Town, Table Mountain & Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens
- Southern Right Whales in False Bay
- Birds including Cape Sugarbird, Ground Woodpecker, Cape Batis & Bokmakierie
- Visit a winery in Stellenbosch
- Endemic Fynbos vegetation on the Cape Peninsula
- African Penguins at Boulders Beach
- Visit Robben Island, Nelson Mandela's notorious prison
- Expertly guided by a Naturetrek leader and local South African naturalist



SATOUR



Images from top: Table Mountain, Cape Sugarbird & African Penguins. Images courtesy SATSA & Shutterstock images.



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Introduction

On our most far-flung 'Go Slow' tour to date we will take you to the southern-most tip of the African continent to explore South Africa's Western Cape region. We have timed this 10-day holiday for September, the start of the austral spring, when the Cape's unique flora is bursting into flower, the birds are active and the Southern Right Whales are loafing around offshore. We begin with a direct overnight flight to Cape Town from where we transfer to Simon's Town for a 7-night stay at the Whale View Manor and Spa. Our very comfortable hotel is backed by the mountains of the Cape Peninsula and overlooks the sweeping arc of False Bay. From this delightful base we will explore the varied habitats around Cape Town, Table Mountain and the Cape Peninsula, including the wave-pounded headland of Cape Point itself and the unique Fynbos vegetation that carpets the slopes inland. Stands of colourful protea and leucospermum attract Orange-breasted Sunbird and Cape Sugarbird, both Western Cape endemics, whilst a visit to the nearby African Penguin colony at Boulders Beach is a must! We will also be on the lookout for an interesting variety of mammals on land including Rock Hyrax, Cape Mountain Zebra, Eland and the attractive Bontebok, plus Cape Fur Seal and Common Dolphin out at sea. We will spend a day exploring Table Mountain and the famous Kirstenbosch Botanic Gardens, visit the urban highlights of Cape Town and sample some of the local Cape wines at a nearby winery.



Itinerary

NB. Please note that the itinerary above 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 the best use of the time and weather conditions available.

Day 1

Depart London

We leave London's Heathrow Airport this evening on board a direct scheduled British Airways or South African Airways flight bound for Cape Town.

Day 2

Simon's Town

We will arrive at Cape Town International Airport this morning after our overnight flight. There we will be met by our South African specialist wildlife guide who will accompany us for the duration of this tour. After loading the vehicles we will head towards Simon's Town, a small town located on the fynbos-covered slopes of the Cape Peninsula on the edge of False Bay. Here we will be based for 7 nights in the very comfortable Whale View Manor and Spa. Soon after leaving the airport our view will be dominated by the dark brooding slopes of Table Mountain,

the now iconic flat-topped mountain that looms over Cape Town and its surroundings. As we near its precipitous slopes we turn south through the city's affluent suburbs, through Fish Hoek and then into Simon's Town itself.

Enroute to our hotel we have lunch at one of the local wineries and then arrive in good time to either enjoy a relaxing couple of hours before dinner or to admire the spectacular views over False Bay and perhaps spot our first Southern Right Whale of the tour.

Day 3 - 8

Simon's Town

We now have 6 full days to leisurely explore the scenic and wildlife highlights of Cape Town and the beautiful Table Mountain National Park which stretches from the famous mountain itself south to Cape Point. Each day will start with a relaxed breakfast overlooking False Bay before we board our bus and head out into the field at around 0930 hours. We will then spend the morning looking for birds and mammals, enjoying the region's unique flora and admiring the spectacular landscapes that abound here. Breaking for lunch in the middle of the day we will continue our quest for the region's wildlife highlights before returning to the Whale View Manor and Spa once more around 1600 hours for afternoon tea.

The exact itinerary for each day will be kept flexible to take account of the weather, recent wildlife sightings and the advice of our local guides. On our first full day, however, we are likely to slowly make our way south to Cape Point, at the southern-most tip of the Peninsula. The 75 kilometre Cape Peninsula is edged by one of the most scenic stretches of coastline in the world, one that was even remarked upon by Sir Frances Drake in 1580 as "...the fairest Cape we saw in the whole circumference of the Earth". The rugged backbone of the Cape is carpeted in the fragile and beautiful Fynbos flora which should be in full bloom during our September visit.



Malachite Sunbird



Southern Right Whale

En route to the Cape (or on our return to Simon's Town) we will stop at Boulders Beach to have a look at one of only two mainland colonies of the African Penguin. Despite the encroaching development, the penguins are thriving (nearly 1,000 pairs) and you are assured wonderfully close views of these endearing creatures lining the beach and bobbing in the surf. Whilst the penguins seem so at home here it is interesting to note that the first pioneering pair only arrived in 1985 and numbers have been increasing ever since. Leaving Boulders Beach we will drive south along the edge

of False Bay stopping occasionally to scan for the Southern Right Whales which are regularly seen in this area. These whales visit the South African coast in thankfully increasing numbers to calve and to feed between June and October, returning to Antarctic waters in the southern hemisphere's summer months. The coastline from the Cape to Hermanus must rank as one of the world's very best whale-watching destinations and we should always be on the lookout for these leviathans whenever we are on the coast.

At the Cape of Good Hope Reserve we are sure to enjoy the fine range of flowers typical of the Fynbos (numerous species of *Protea*, *Leucospermum*, *Leucodendron* etc.), we also hope to see the rare Bontebok, one of Africa's rarest and, without doubt, most beautiful antelopes. Other mammals that may be seen today include Chacma Baboon, Cape Fur Seal, Cape Mountain Zebra and Eland. Amongst a range of birds, such species as Cape Francolin, Cape Grassbird, Bokmakierie, Southern Double-collared Sunbird and Yellow Bishop are all possibilities. In addition, patches of flowering proteas are sure to hold Cape Sugarbird and Orange-breasted Sunbird, whilst it may seem somewhat out of place to watch Ostrich feeding on the beach backed by the crashing waves of the Atlantic Ocean. We will break our day here with lunch at the Two Oceans Restaurant at Cape Point. Don't be fooled by the name, however, as the Indian and Atlantic Oceans actually 'meet' far to the east at Cape Agulhas!



If time permits we will also stop at the Silvermine Nature Reserve. Here we will be able to explore the Fynbos, a totally unique habitat confined to the Western Cape region of South Africa. Fynbos is a collective term used to describe the shrubby, heath-like plants such as the Ericas, Proteas and Restios, which dominate the Cape Floral Kingdom (one of only eight worldwide). Over 8,500 different plant species are found here, more than in some of the tropical rainforests of South America! Many of these are endemic to the Cape and have adapted over the millennia to tolerate

regular bush fires and sandy infertile soils. Indeed, the flora of the Fynbos has many similarities with those of the West Australian bushland, the Mediterranean Macchia, and Californian Chapparal. Furthermore, since our tour is timed to coincide with the start of the South African spring this unique habitat will be in full flower and awash with colour.

Table Mountain and Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens (weather and tablecloth permitting!) will also be on the itinerary. From the cable car station in Cape Town we will join the spectacular ride to the top of Table Mountain and, after enjoying the beautiful views of the city, explore the surrounding slopes in search of birds and plants. In the afternoon we will visit the world-famous Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens which nestles on the eastern slopes of Table Mountain. This 830 hectare reserve, of which only 60 hectares is cultivated, not only offers a fabulous collection of Cape flora but is one of the region's best birdwatching spots. Kirstenbosch commands a spectacular setting. The high ramparts of Table Mountain reach to over 900 metres above whilst to the east the views stretch out across the southern suburbs of Cape Town to the far-off mountains of the Hottentots Hollands Range. Birds



around should include Brimstone Canary, Southern Boubou, Olive Thrush, Cape Batis, Speckled Mousebird, Cape Bulbul, Southern Double-collard Sunbird and Cape Canary.

A scenic drive to Hout Bay via Chapman's Drive (one of the world's great scenic roads) will offer us the chance to board a charter boat for a cruise to view the Cape Fur Seal colony on Duiker Island and then back under the dramatic cliffs of the Chapman's Peak. As well as hundreds of fur seals, we should see an interesting variety of birds including Cape, Crowned and White-breasted Cormorants, African Black Oystercatcher and Swift Tern.

On another day we will swap the Western Cape's natural history for its cultural and political history with a visit to Robben Island, the infamous prison island for former political prisoners, the most well-known of whom was Nelson Mandela. The trip is a fascinating insight into life within this notorious prison and Nelson Mandela's path from political prisoner to president. It should also provide stunning views back towards the mainland, and an understanding of why the San People named Table Mountain 'Hoerikwagga' ... translated as 'mountain rising out of the sea!'

It would be a great shame to visit South Africa's Western Cape region without sampling a few of its local wines. The town of Stellenbosch lies in the heart of the winelands and we will travel here on one day to visit one of the wineries where good wine, fine views and a generally amiable atmosphere are part of the draw. We can also visit the nearby Paarl Mountain Nature Reserve where we can look for an interesting variety of birds including Black Eagle, Jackal Buzzard, Malachite Sunbird and perhaps the elusive Ground Woodpecker.



Day 9

Depart Cape Town

We have the majority of today to further explore the Cape Peninsula before returning to the airport mid-afternoon for our early-evening British Airways or South African Airways flight back to London's Heathrow Airport.

Day 10

Arrive London

We will arrive back at London's Heathrow Airport early this morning.

Weather

We will be travelling to the Cape in the southern spring, when the weather can be somewhat fickle. Around Cape Town the climate is typically 'Mediterranean' and the winter rains have usually ended. Daytime temperatures will vary between around 18°C and 25°C, although it can be cooler on occasion and night-time temperatures are lower. Whilst conditions should generally be settled, pleasant and comfortable, the weather in the Cape can be stormy

and unpredictable! Unfortunately, this is one destination where you need to be prepared, and pack, for any eventuality!

Tour grading

Grade A. This is an easy tour suitable for those with an average fitness level who enjoy short walks. We plan to spend as much of the holiday as possible out of the minibus and on foot, pottering at a slow pace in search of birds, plants and other wildlife. We will be walking on good trails for the majority of the time, although it should be noted that some of the trails on the Cape Peninsula and Table Mountain can be a little rough and undulating in places.

The tour price includes

The cost this holiday includes direct economy class flights to Cape Town with either British Airways or South African Airways, 7 nights accommodation at the comfortable Whale View Manor and Spa in Simon's Town on the Cape Peninsula (all rooms with private facilities), meals from lunch on Day 2 to lunch on Day 9 and guiding. It also includes all excursions mentioned within the above itinerary and tips for your guides.



Extra expenses

Please note that drinks, laundry, any necessary visa fees (UK nationals do not currently need a visa to enter South Africa), souvenirs and all items of a personal nature are excluded from the cost of this holiday.

Guiding

This tour will be led by a Naturetrek tour leader who will fly out from the UK with the group and a local South African naturalist guide who will meet the group on arrival into Cape Town. Please note that it may not be possible to send a UK based Naturetrek leader with smaller group sizes. In these cases the group will be led by one of our excellent team of local South African naturalist guides. For further details please call 01962 733051 or email info@naturetrek.co.uk.

Your safety & security

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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