

# South Africa

## Flowers & Wildlife of the Cape and Garden Route

Wednesday 7 – Thursday 22 September 2011

(16 days)

*From the flowers, whales, birds and stunning scenery of the Cape, along the west coast, across to the Karoo, and back along the beautiful Garden Route, we visit an astoundingly beautiful and varied land, rich in wildlife. Join us at a time of year when the flowers and birds here are at their best, and when whales are displaying close inshore!*



We start in Cape Town, known for its dramatic mountain scenery and unique fynbos vegetation, both at sea level and up Table Mountain, where we take one of the most spectacular cable car rides in the world. Cape Point is the meeting place of two of the world's largest oceans, as well as being the home of Southern Right Whale and African Penguin.

Our travels take us up the west coast to Langebaan Lagoon, rich in birds and with a wealth of flowers, and on up to Lambert's Bay, with its accessible Cape Gannet colony. We then head inland to an area of red sandstone rocks and ancient rock art, and on to the Karoo, with its array of drought-adapted succulent plants and specialised birds. South through spectacular mountain passes, we eventually reach the famed Garden Route, with rich forests and birdlife. We finish the tour in one of the best places in the world for shore-based whale-watching, where we hope to see Southern Right Whales doing some dramatic display activities close inshore.

The tour is again designed and operated by Geoff Crane and led by Mike Raymakers.

August to September is usually the best time for flowers in the Cape, when the endemic birds are displaying, and when the seabirds and whales also come close inshore.

### Outline Itinerary

**Day 1 :** We take an evening scheduled flight from London to Cape Town, arriving early on **Day 2**.

**Day 2 :** *Overnight Cape Peninsula*

**Day 3 :** We will spend a leisurely day experiencing the rugged beauty of the Peninsula with its spectacular coastline and diverse fauna & flora. We will follow the False Bay coastline to the Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve.

We will also visit the African Penguin colony at Simon's Town.

*Overnight Cape Peninsula*

**Day 4 :** Weather permitting, we will then take the spectacular cable car ride to the top of Table Mountain and enjoy a short walk across the top.

*Overnight Cape Peninsula*

**Day 5 :** Our first port of call is Hout Bay harbour, where we will be joining a boat cruise to Duiker Island, with its Cape Fur Seal colony.

The spring flowers of the Western Cape have a worldwide reputation. The area receives little rain throughout the year but after the winter rains, the landscape is swathed with a vibrant carpet of flowers.

*Overnight Langebaan*

**Day 6 :** Langebaan Lagoon and the West Coast National Park have a number of habitats, which include the largest salt marsh in South Africa. After lunch we will visit the Postberg Flower Reserve.

*Overnight Langebaan*

**Day 7 :** We will be taking the coastal route up to Bird Island at Lambert's Bay, visiting the wetlands of the lower Berg River. Lambert's Bay is a small town with an attractive harbour that plays a large role in South Africa's fishing industry. Here we can view the Cape Gannet Colony, as well as terns, cormorants and African Penguins from very close quarters.

We then travel inland to the town of Clanwilliam.

*Overnight Clanwilliam*

**Day 8 :** The Cedarberg Mountains were once the hunting ground of the San people (Bushmen). Though the San no longer live in the area, they recorded their exploits in the form of remarkable rock paintings.

*Overnight Clanwilliam*



The view from Table Mountain (Photo: Bob Gibbons)

### TRIP DETAILS

**ACCOMMODATION** will be in quality guest-houses and lodges with all rooms en suite.

**LEADER :** Geoff Crane

**NUMBERS :** Max. 8 clients

**PRICE :** £ 3,995

**Single supp. :** £ 375

**Deposit :** £ 400 per person

The price is per person and includes scheduled return flights London/Cape Town\*, airport taxes, ground transportation and excursions as outlined above, accommodation on a full-board basis, admissions, local taxes, tips, and the services of the leaders.

The price excludes holiday insurance, drinks, optional tips to the driver/local guides, and other personal expenses.

\*For an ex-flight cost (Cape Town/Cape Town) please deduct £ 645 from the tour cost.

**Day 9 :** After a leisurely breakfast we will be heading for the Karoo town of Worcester, where we will have an opportunity to visit the Karoo National Botanical Gardens. These gardens specialize in the succulents and hardy plants of the Karoo.

*Overnight Worcester*

**Days 10 - 12 :** After an early breakfast we will head through the Great Karoo to the Swartberg Mountains. The awe-inspiring Swartberg Pass, one of the renowned Thomas Bain passes, will take us through some craggy mountain scenery. En route to Wilderness we will be driving through the Little Karoo and over the Outeniqua Mountain Pass, which opens up a totally different world, namely the forests of the Garden Route.

*Three nights Knysna*

**Day 13 :** We leave the Garden Route and head south towards the notorious southern tip of Africa, Cape Agulhas. We will then drive through small farming communities to Hermanus.

*Overnight Hermanus*

**Day 14 :** Hermanus has gained worldwide recognition for its excellent land-based whale watching. During the southern spring months, Southern Right Whales use this coastline as a safe haven in which to calve. We can watch these gentle giants from the cliff top walk.

*Overnight Hermanus*

**Day 15 :** After a morning at leisure in Hermanus with its many arts & craft shops, and perhaps more cliff-top whale watching, we will drive to the Harold Porter National Botanical Gardens at Betty's Bay, before heading for Cape Town for our return flight back to London, arriving on **Day 16**.