South Africa
Mammals, birds & spring flowers from the Kalahari to the Cape.

Sunday 16 Aug 2015 - Tuesday 01 Sep 2015 (17 days)
Sunday 14 Aug 2016 - Tuesday 30 Aug 2016 (17 days)

During our two week Kalahari to the Cape Safari we travel through many different vegetation habitats which in turn play host to a multitude of birds, mammals, flowers, reptiles & insects. We spend 6 days in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park & Augrabies Falls National Parks before driving South to the spring flowers of Namaqualand. We end off the trip with four days in the spectacular Cape. In total we will be visiting 5 National Parks, 7 Botanical Gardens and Flower Reserves, 2 Wilderness Areas and 4 Nature Reserves, as well as numerous sights of interest.

The Kgalagadi National Park, recently renamed the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, is a chance to see one of the last true wilderness reserves in the world. The park is made up of three countries, with no border or boundary fences. Kalahari Lion, Cheetah, Leopard, Gemsbok and many other mammal species can be seen in the park. The park is characterised by its red sand dunes with sparse vegetation and the dry riverbeds of the Nossob and Auob rivers, where camel thorn, raisin bush and black thorn attract over 215 bird species to their welcoming cool shade.

From the flowers, birds and stunning scenery of the Cape, to wonderful flower-rich Namaqualand, 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 travel on to one of the world’s most famous spring flower areas – Namaqualand. After winter rains, this area is transformed in to a kaleidoscope of colour, with hundreds of different species of flowering plants. This region also has the highest concentration of endemic birds in Southern Africa and is a superb birding area.

The Cape is known for its dramatic mountain scenery and unique fynbos vegetation, both at sea level and up on top of Table Mountain. The coast around the Cape has some excellent wetlands, and is one of the best places in the world for shore-based whale-watching. We hope to see Southern Right Whales doing some dramatic display activities close inshore.

The tour is designed and operated by Geoff Crane, who has been operating birding and natural history tours throughout Southern Africa for the past twenty years.

Itinerary
Day 1
We take an evening scheduled flight from London to Upington via Cape Town, arriving early on Day 2.
Day 2
You will be met at Upington airport and transferred by road to the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park.

The Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, is a chance to see one of the last true wilderness reserves in the world. The park covers an area of over 3.6 million hectares and is made up of three countries, South Africa, Namibia & Botswana. Many mammal species can be seen in the park – Kalahari Lion, African Wild Cat, Leopard, Cheetah, Caracal, Meerkat, Jackal, Hyaena, Aardvark and many antelope species. The park is characterised by it's red sand dunes and dry riverbeds. The first birds to be noticed will most probably be the Sociable Weavers and their huge nests. Pygmy Falcon, Crimson-breasted Shrike, Red-headed Finch, Fork-tailed Drongo and the Marico Flycatcher are a few of the more noticeable birds within the camp.

*Overnight Twee Rivieren Camp, Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park*

Day 3
Whilst in the park, we usually start the day with the birds at sunrise, for a two hour local drive, followed by breakfast and then another longer drive before retiring to the camp to escape the midday sun! At about 3 in the afternoon we will go out on an afternoon game drive, looking for Lion, Leopard, Cheetah, Wild Cat, Springbok, Gemsbok, Steenbok, Wildebeest..... to name but a few!

The fenced camps are large enough to take a good walk botanising in the dunes. Tsama melons *Citrullus lanatus*, Devil’s Claw *Harpagophytum procumbens*, Gemsbok Cucumber, *Acanthosicyos naudinianus* and Black Storm *Senna italica* can be found in the dunes and the Camelthorn trees *Acacia erioloba* and the Shephard’s Tree *Boscia albitrunca* in the camp, offer good refuge to the many owls found in the park. After 20 years of intense research, each year new flowering plants are discovered in the Park.

*Overnight Twee Rivieren Camp, Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park*

Day 4
We will drive further north today exploring the furthest reaches of the Park. This area is seldom visited and has a reputation for excellent Lion, Leopard and Cheetah sightings. The Nossop camp has a lovely bird hide overlooking a water hole as well as a few resident Owls. Nossop camp has basic facilities and our culinary expertise will be tested as there is no restaurant to look after us! We will go on an evening night drive to see if we can spot some of the nocturnal mammals of the Park – like the Aardvark, Brown Hyena, porcupine, Pangolin, Caracal, African Wild Cat, Aardwolf and of course the Lion and Leopard.

*Overnight Nossop Camp, Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park*

Day 5
Today we will be heading south to Mata Mata Camp. We will take the long dune road through the rolling dunes, which separate the Nossob River from the Auob River. We will be stopping at the various water holes en route, looking out for any birds, mammals and reptiles that we may have missed. An evening walk in the dunes or a ‘sundowner’ in front of the waterhole.... Your choice!

*Overnight Mata Mata Camp, Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park*

Day 6
We will be stopping here and there to see what is flying or flowering as we drive through the arid vegetation to Augrabies Falls National Park. Here the mighty Orange River drops into a deep and spectacular 56 metre gorge aptly named by the Khoi as a ‘place of great noise’. The Augrabies Falls National Park has many species of bird that range from the Pygmy Falcon, Rosy-faced Lovebird, Cinnamon-breasted Warbler and many Chats and Larks to the magnificent Verreaux’s Eagle, Martial Eagle and Ludwig’s Bustard. There are also many mammal species that can be seen on the numerous walks and trails within the Park.

*Overnight Augrabies Falls National Park*
Day 7
We will spend today walking a few of the trails looking out for plants, mammals and birds within the strikingly beautiful lunar landscape of the Park. Birdwatching can be very rewarding from the restaurant deck as the birds are attracted by the possibility of a few restaurant titbits. Beer in one hand, binoculars in the other... this could be many birdwatchers idea of paradise!
*Overnight Augrabies Falls National Park*

Day 8
After lunch we will visit the Goegap Nature Reserve, which features many of Namaqualand’s natural riches in 15,000 hectares of granitic, rocky hills and sandy flats that support close on 600 indigenous flower species. 45 mammal species including Springbok, Gemsbok, and the Hartmann’s Mountain Zebra. 94 bird species have been recorded in the reserve, which include the Black-headed Canary, Red Lark and Sickle-winged Chat.
*Overnight Springbok*

Day 9
Today we will be driving to the Namaqua National Park via the mountains above Kamieskroon. In between the flower stops, we will be looking out for Cinnamon-breasted Warbler, Cape Long-billed Lark, Karoo Lark and Cape Bulbul. The Namaqua National Park has a number of mammal species, which we will be looking out for. Bat-eared Fox, Klipspringer, Cape Fox and African Wild Cat can be seen in amongst the spring flowers.
*Overnight Nieuwoudtville*

Day 10
The route that we take today is very much dictated by where the best Namaqualand flowers are at the time as the Spring flowers of Namaqualand are very dependent on the vagaries of the weather.
*Overnight Nieuwoudtville*

Day 11
Like yesterday, the route that we take today is very much dependant on where the best Namaqualand flowers are at the time. We could spend some time walking along some of the back roads looking at / identifying and photographing the spring flowers or we could drive the circular route to Loeriesfontein via the Quiver Tree Forest. The Oorlogskloof Nature Reserve, with its waterfall and birdlife could be another option.
*Overnight Nieuwoudtville*

Day 12
If the dirt road is in a good condition, we will take the back roads to Clanwilliam stopping en route for a walk. 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. We can visit these paintings whilst on a walk through the dramatic red sandstone rock formations that characterise the Cedarberg Mountains.
*Overnight Cedarberg Mountains*

Day 13
Our first stop this morning will be the spring flower reserves at Darling. These flowers grow on granite derived soils, which makes most of them endemic to the area. We will have a picnic lunch at Rondevlei Bird Reserve in the heart of Cape Town. This Reserve has always been a naturally occurring wetland and is still rich in bird diversity. Birdwatching is from five hides, two observation towers and a series of paths. Waterbirds are well represented here with a few specials including the African Purple Swamphen, Black Crake and the Little Bittern. African Marsh-Harriers can be seen quartering the reedbeds, while African Fish Eagles swoop down on unsuspecting fish. We will also look out for Cape Longclaw, Cape Weaver, Cape White-eye, Southern Boubou and Cape Shoveler.
*Overnight Cape Peninsula*
Day 14
Our first port of call is Rondevlei Bird Reserve, which is one of Cape Town’s premier bird reserves. Rondevlei has five bird hides and an impressive bird list. We will then 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, which boasts 249 recorded bird species as well as a variety of mammals such as the Chacma Baboon, Cape Mountain Zebra, Bontebok, Red Hartebeest, Eland and Cape Grysboek, as well as beautiful flora. A specialist botanical guide will accompany us for a guided walk through the reserve. After a picnic lunch in the reserve, we will visit the African Penguin colony at Simon's Town.

Overnight Cape Peninsula

Day 15
We will follow the spectacular coastline out of False Bay to the Harold Porter National Botanical Gardens, here we will take a short walk through the gardens looking out for some of the 96 recorded bird species. Once in Hermanus, we will have lunch and then walk along the coast watching the whales and sea birds from the cliff tops. (Whale watching is the most rewarding during August & September). After visiting the Fernkloof Nature Reserve with it's wealth of indigenous flora, we then return to Cape Town via Sir Lowry's Pass and the scenic Hottentots Holland Mountains where we will be looking out for Cape Rockjumpers and Black Eagles.

Overnight Cape Peninsula

Day 16
After breakfast we make our way to Kirstenbosch National Botanical Gardens. These gardens must surely be one of the finest Botanical Gardens in the world. Situated on the lower slopes of Table Mountain, the National Botanical Garden at Kirstenbosch covers 560 hectares of land, stretching up the mountain to its highest point – Maclear’s Beacon. There are several walks that lead through the gardens offering birdwatchers a variety of habitats. The forested areas play host to Forest Canaries, whilst Southern Double-collard Sunbird, Cape Francolin, Karoo Prinia and Cape Robin-Chat can be seen in the cultivated gardens, in a setting of mountain streams and rolling lawns.

We will leave the gardens after lunch for your flight back home, arriving on Day 17.

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

Leaders: Geoff Crane

Numbers: Max. 8 clients

Price 2015: £ 3,995
Price 2016: £ 4,495
Deposit: £ 750 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, and the services of the leaders.

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

*For an ex-flight cost (Upington/Cape Town) please deduct £1,000 from the tour cost
Booking

Please make sure you are happy with the booking conditions that appear on our website at:
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