Full Detailed Itinerary - South Africa Introtour: Kruger National Park and Escarpment

Day 1: Kaapschehoop

Participants fly directly into the Kruger Mpumalanga International Airport, for the start of this tour. After checking into the lodge, we will head out for an afternoon in a beautiful patch of Afromontane Forest. This habitat holds a completely different and mouth-watering set of birds from Kruger. These include African Emerald Cuckoo, Orange Ground-Thrush, Narina Trogon, and Bush Blackcap.

Day 2: Kaapschehoop to Hazyview

This morning we explore the high-altitude grasslands and forested valleys of the Kaapsehoop region, a biodiversity-rich area renowned for its striking scenery and unique birdlife. We'll search for a suite of sought-after birds that occur in this habitat mosaic, including Red-winged Francolin, Buff-streaked Chat, Orange-throated Longclaw, and Cape Grassbird. Kaapsehoop is also a reliable site for Gurney’s Sugarbird when aloes are in bloom. The combination of wide-open views, rich bird diversity, and the chance to encounter some real Southern African specials makes this a truly memorable birding destination. At mid-day, we’ll drive to Hazyview and check into our hotel. The afternoon will be spent enjoying the area’s beautiful mountain scenery and searching for birds like Cape Rock-Thrush and Barratt’s Warbler. We have one night in Hazyview.

Day 3: Hazyview to Kruger NP

This is an exciting day, as it’s the day we enter the legendary Kruger National Park. This park is huge and diverse. Birding here is fantastic, with many species living right in the park’s camps. The staccato calls of the Woodland Kingfisher and ridiculous moans of the Gray Go-away-bird reverberate throughout most lodgings. Elsewhere Saddle-billed Storks and White-crowned Lapwings patrol the river edges, while menacing Nile Crocodiles watch from distant sandbanks. While looking for birds, we will undoubtedly bump into vast numbers of large mammals, including the possibility of Lion, Leopard, African Elephant, African Buffalo, and two species of rhinoceros. Kruger holds the famous “Big Five”, and much much more. This is an area where there is never a dull moment! We'll spend the night at one of several lodges in or near the park.

Days 4-9: Kruger NP in-depth

Kruger National Park is one of Africa’s greatest natural treasures, and throughout our journey we’ll experience a variety of its most rewarding habitats. We’ll stay at a mix of camps, each offering unique access to the park’s extraordinary diversity — from dry mopane woodlands to moist mixed savannas and lush riverine corridors. Our days will blend relaxed bird walks in the leafy campgrounds with thrilling game drives through some of the richest ecosystems in the southern and central regions of the park. There are a swathe of great camps throughout and adjacent to the park. We intend on visiting a variety of them – as they each have their own character – and make the most of the richest ecosystems within the park in the south and central part of the park. We will explore a mix of riverine habitats and dry woodland ecosystems. The day may include game drives along a scenic river, bird walks around the camp area, and some downtime during the hotter part of the day. The dry surrounding landscapes often concentrate wildlife around the river,

providing excellent viewing opportunities. Bird walks inside of the camp may reveal species like African Scops-Owl, and Golden-tailed and Bearded Woodpecker. Species that we might spot on the broad and sandy banks of the river include Hippo, Nile Crocodile, Saddle-billed and Marabou Storks, and Goliath Heron. African Fish Eagles and Pied Kingfishers patrol the skies, and swoop down on unsuspecting fish, which they pluck from the river's amazingly clear water. On one of the days we drive through a vast and wild section of south / central Kruger. Although there aren't as many big mammals here as there is further south, the seemingly endless and open nature of this landscape gives it a special, Serengeti-like feel. The sight of a distant herd of Elephants or Giraffe necks littering the horizon is not soon forgotten. Small dams along the way can hold a bounty of waterbirds like Abdim's Stork, Hamerkop, Water Thick-knee, and African Jacana. We'll spend the night at one of several lodges in or near the park. If we are able to stay at one of the central camps we can expect their spacious grounds to hold Crested Barbet, Bearded and Bennett's Woodpeckers, Brown-headed Parrot, and Sulphur-breasted Bush-Shrike. Sometimes there are even tame Bushbuck munching on the green lawns! The southern areas though, offer panoramic views over the western lowlands of Kruger combined with one of the very best mammal-watching portions of the park, along the banks of the Sabie River. This is a great area for the rare Nyala, highly threatened White Rhino, and for Lion and Leopard. Careful scans of the sandy riverbanks may reveal the localized White-crowned Lapwing. We will also enjoy several of the dedicated Bird Hides, which gives us a good chance to get out of the vehicle, and perhaps enjoy intimate views of some waterbirds. Then we'll continue through some beautiful grasslands, looking for marquee birds like Secretarybird, Lappet-faced Vulture, and Lilac-breasted Roller. At mid-day, we'll have some time off, then head out for an afternoon drive. We'll be sure to visit the perfectly-situated Lake Panic bird hide, a great spot for waterbirds like African Jacana, Black Crake, African Fish Eagle, Giant and Pied Kingfishers, and Black Heron.

Day 10: Skukuza to Kruger Airport

After a final drive, we'll head out of Kruger, and back to the Kruger Mpumalanga airport, to catch outbound flights.

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