

Namibia

Day 1

Your International flights will arrive in Windhoek today from various destinations and usually via Johannesburg in South Africa, most flights arrive just after lunch which will allow us enough time to reach Daan Viljoen Game Reserve where we will spend our first two nights O/N Daan Viljoen Game Reserve

Day 2

Daan Viljoen Game Reserve, situated in the rugged Khomas Hochland Mountains, offers outstanding dry-country birding and we could soon find such specials as Rockrunner, Barred Wren-warbler and Monteiro's Hornbill. Augeigas dam is often good for the likes of South African Shelduck and Maccoa Duck and various waders. Birds that are particularly common here and often perch on the roofs of the chalets include Mountain Wheatear, Short-toed Rock-Thrush and Pale-winged Starling whilst Red-billed Spurfowl, Crimson-breasted Shrike, Great Sparrow, Long-billed Pipit and White-browed Sparrow-Weaver feed on the lawns. Other common birds include Ashy Tit, Burnt-necked Eremomela, Violet-eared Waxbill, Cape Bunting and Bearded Woodpecker. The reserve hosts a healthy ungulate population with the likes of Eland, Gemsbok, Greater Kudu and Hartmann's Mountain Zebra all likely to be seen. O/N Daan Viljoen Game Reserve

Day 3

After some early morning birding, where we will again try for Rockrunner if we failed to find it the previous day, but also to look for Orange River Francolin and Carp's Tit, we'll head for breakfast. Once we have the vehicles packed we'll bird our way out of the park and then head north to the Waterberg Plateau National Park, it's a fair drive but we will make the odd birding stop along the way and should get into the park just in time for some further afternoon birding. O/N Waterberg Camp

Day 4

A full day to explore the wonders of the Waterberg and from our camp at the base of the plateau we'll set off on our quest for the day with Ruppel's Parrot quite often seen right in camp. Birds are normally quite confiding around the park, this will present us with some wonderful photographic opportunities, with the cast made up of some spectacular birds like Violet Wood-Hoopoe, Augur Buzzard, Damara and Bradfield's Hornbill, Booted Eagle, Rosy-faced Lovebird, Southern Pied Babbler

and many more. The much sought after Hartlaub's Spurfowl is also present on the rock-strewn slopes just outside of camp and we'll try our utmost to secure good sightings. Mammal wise the diminutive Damara Dik-dik is quite plentiful here, whilst Sable and Roan Antelope is also quite often spotted. Both White and Black Rhino are present in the park. O/N Waterberg Camp

Day 5

After an early morning coffee we head out for some birding before breakfast, we could get lucky with the likes of Shaft-tailed Whydah, Burnt-necked Eremomela and Secretarybird. Our usual ritual of departure after breakfast will again prevail, with a short stop to look for Vultures at the vulture restaurant en route to the amazing Etosha National Park. This is a relaxed driving day with enough time for some birding stops on the way, keeping in mind that we need to reach the park in time before the gate closes. O/N Etosha National Park, Namibia.

Day 6

Our first morning in one of Africa's great parks, we'll do a short game drive to a nearby waterhole before breakfast and hope to get our first taste of more typical Namibian avifauna as well as the chance of great big game sightings. Tawny Eagles are abundant and several Vulture species are present as well, including the magnificent Lappet-faced Vulture. Carp's Tit and Southern White-crowned Shrike are often seen on the route to the main entrance gate, the latter are somewhat nomadic and unpredictable in occurrence. The diminutive Damara Dik-Dik, a curious small antelope is very common around this area and should provide good photographic opportunities. After breakfast we'll be heading west to our next camp in Etosha, birding en-route should hopefully produce chances at Burchell's, Temminck's and Double-banded Coursers, the latter usually more common further west in the park. The stately Secretary Bird is often seen along with Kori Bustard along this route and we'll also have several chances to get closer to the Etosha Pan after which the park is named, here we have a good chance for Chestnut-banded Plover. Note that the water levels in the pan can vary tremendously and whilst it is normally dry, wet years can produce a waterbird spectacle with thousands of Flamingo and Pelican present. At camp we'll make full use of the chance to enjoy the floodlit waterhole, a feature shared by all the main camps in Etosha, we usually see Double-banded Sandgrouse coming in to drink just after dusk. O/N Etosha National Park

Day 7

Another full day in the park, we now head further west from the centre of the park. Before breakfast we'll look for some of the resident Owls around camp and hope to find African Scops, Southern White-faced Scops and sometimes even Barn Owl. Before leaving camp we'll hopefully connect with Violet Woodhoopoe and Damara Hornbill. The more open areas to the west usually harbour Double-banded Courser, Chestnut-backed Sparrowlark, Gabar Goshawk and several species of Lark. We should also encounter our first Sociable Weaver colonies and the possibility of finding Pygmy Falcon whom often shares the Weaver's nests. We will focus much of our attention on the multitude of waterholes that dot the park, these acts as magnets for hundreds of mammals and birds to come and quench their thirst, often followed by the ever opportunistic predators, both avian and mammalian. Commonly encountered mammal species are Common Zebra, Black-faced Impala, Red-Hartebeest, Elephant, Giraffe, Greater Kudu, Gemsbok and Springbok. Possible carnivores include Black-backed Jackal, Lion, African Wild Cat, Spotted Hyena and even Leopard and Cheetah. Some of the commoner birds to look out for are Grey Go-away-bird, Cape Glossy Starling, White-bellied Sunbird, Brubru and Cardinal Woodpecker. A more sought after bird, occurring here as an isolated population, is Rufous-eared Warbler and we hope to add this desirable tick to our list. O/N Etosha NP, Namibia.

Day 8

Today we will transect into the far western part of Etosha, an area that used to be off-limits to the general public for many years, at first we will bird the area just north of Okaukuejo for birds such as Pink-billed and Spike-heeled Larks, Northern Black Korhaan, Capped Wheatear and Pale Chanting Goshawk before making our way to Dolomite camp for lunch, this camp is quite different from the other camps, offering such speciality birds as Hartlaub's Spurfowl, Ruppel's Parrot, Rockrunner, Short-toed Rock-Thrush and Violet Woodhoopoe. Commoner birds such as African Red-eyed Bulbul and Red-headed Finch are easy ticks in and around the camp. From here we exit the western gate of the park for a short drive to our lodge. O/N Hobatere Lodge, Kamanjab, Namibia

Day 9

Hobatere mornings are very special, often with Elephants drinking from the swimming pool and birds aplenty. Raptors such as the resident Gabar Goshawk take full advantage of various birds coming in to drink, this in itself will make it extremely hard to break away for breakfast. Luckily we don't have a long drive today so we can take it all in and hopefully add significantly to our ever growing bird list. Don't forget though that Hobatere is also a superb spot for carnivores and sightings

of Lion, Leopard, Cheetah and some of the smaller cats are often had. A leisurely drive will take us to our next lodge where we will continue our discovery of this wonderful country. O/N Rustig Toko Lodge.

Day 10

Again birding around the lodge early morning can be most rewarding, with some truly spectacular birds often within arm's length, this in turn makes for superb photographic opportunities. We'll be in the company of some real Namibian specials such as White-tailed Shrike, Monteiro's Hornbill, Carp's Tit, Rockrunner, Hartlaubs' Spurfowl and Common Scimitarbill. Other commoner birds like Green-winged Pytilia, Black-faced Waxbill, Barred Wren-Warbler and Ashy Tit makes up the colourful supporting cast. We bid Kamanjab farewell as we head south towards the old mining town of Uis near Namibia's highest mountain, known as Brandberg (Burning Mountain). We are now well and truly entering the more arid parts of Namibia and will be on the lookout for Ruppel's Korhaan, Ludwig's Bustard, Benguella Long-billed Lark, Stark's Lark and Bradfield's Swift to name but a few. O/N White Lady Lodge, Brandberg area, Uis, Namibia

Day 11

From Brandberg we'll head to another mountain massive, the Erongo Mountains, where another spectacular Namibian landscape will greet us. A combination of the Omaruru River on the one side with the Erongo Mountains offering the backdrop and some thorny scrub between makes for superb birding. The likes of Fawn-coloured Lark, Cape Bunting, Karoo Long-billed Lark and Groundscraper Thrush are common here and today or the next we'll also make a visit to the Spitzkoppe, another great site for both Herero Chat and Layard's Tit-Babbler. O/N Ai Aiba Lodge, Namibia.

Day 12

Early morning birding around the lodge could produce the likes of Bearded Woodpecker, Grey-backed Cisticola and Layard's Tit-Babbler. Soon after breakfast we'll be on the road and heading straight line for the coast with some essential stops en-route for arguably Namibia's toughest endemic, Herero Chat and further on for Gray's Lark, Trac-Trac Chat and Karoo Eremomela. Pretty soon we catch our first glimpses of the Atlantic, providing it's a clear day of course and the rolling fog that the west coast of Namibia is famous for hasn't decided to hide the ocean under its blanket. Time and weather permitting we'll make some stops at various spots along the coast where we'll be on the lookout for African Black Oystercatcher, White-fronted and Grey Plovers and who knows

maybe even the likes of Sooty Shearwater or White-chinned Petrel. O/N Amjicaja Guest House, Walvis Bay, Namibia

Day 13

Our lodge is situated right on the Walvisbay Lagoon and often has Orange River White-eye, now an accepted split by Clements, in the garden. Soon after breakfast we'll head inland again for our appointment with another Namibian endemic, Dune Lark. We'll find this bird at the base of some majestic red sand dunes and the brave amongst us might well opt to climb to the top of one of these dunes, believe me, it's tougher than it looks. The area often holds a variety of other species such as Bokmakierie, Common Fiscal and Dusky Sunbird. We should be back in town for lunch before heading to the Mile 2 Saltworks at Swakopmund where we will search for Cape, Bank and Crested Cormorants in addition to Damara Tern and a whole plethora of shorebirds. O/N Amjicaja Guest House, Walvis Bay, Namibia

Day 14

This is our final morning in Namibia and we will concentrate our efforts on the local salt works as well as the extensive bay where we will have another chance at Damara Tern as well as Red-necked Phalarope, Grey Plover, Ruddy Turnstone, Hartlaub's Gull, Bar-tailed Godwit and Sanderling. All too soon we'll have to head for the airport on the outskirts of Walvis Bay from where you'll fly to Johannesburg for your connecting flights home.

Important Notice

Please be aware that some of the birding areas mentioned in this itinerary are very remote and can become inaccessible due to bad weather, bush fires or poor road conditions and in these cases the guide will change, substitute or omit a particular spot at his/her discretion.

Optional night drives are now possible from most camps in Etosha National Park and we encourage you to join at least one of these during the course of our stay in the park.

Accommodation as outlined in the itinerary is not guaranteed and Etosha National Park in particular can be tough to book, often necessitating a shuffle of camp nights or worst case having to book at one of the fine lodges outside the park gates.

End of Trip

