

Drakensberg Plateau Extension, 2020

October 12 – 15, 2020

4 Days / 3 Nights

The Drakensberg, a world heritage site, forms the border between South Africa and Lesotho and it is here, on the Sani Pass, that we'll concentrate on finding the high-altitude specials of the Drakensberg Massif. This extension is a must for any endemic-hunter, with almost guaranteed sightings of several endemics. We'll also do some birding in the foothills of the mountain.



Day 1, October 12

We will complete the Birds and Beasts tour on October 11 and spend the night in Durban on the final night (October 11). We will leave Durban shortly after breakfast to allow us enough time to tackle the longish road to the village of Creighton in the KwaSulu-Natal midlands, which will be our base for two nights of our extension. We'll probably have time to do some birding en route and we often take the scenic route via the Hella-Hella Pass (time permitting). Good birds to be on the lookout for include African Crowned Eagle, Pale-crowned Cisticola, and White-starred Robin. We often encounter Striped Pipit and Lazy Cisticola on the dry rocky slopes. African Black Duck and Mountain Wagtail can be seen from the bridge over the Mkomazi River. We'll time our arrival at the lodge for the late afternoon.

[o/n Creighton B&B or similar \(LD\)](#)

Day 2, October 13

We'll be off to a very early start heading up Sani Pass into the small mountain kingdom of Lesotho so have your passports handy. The ascent up Sani Pass is rightly famous as one of the top birding routes in South Africa and this will soon become apparent as we have packed breakfast at our usual stop often in the company of Gurney's Sugarbird, Malachite Sunbird, Buff-streaked Chat and even Cape Rock-Thrush. Higher up we'll scan the skies for White-necked Raven, Cape Vulture and the majestic Bearded Vulture. We hope to find Barrat's Warbler en-route but with the prospect of road works on the pass for the foreseeable future it might not be as easy as on past tours. One we reach the top we'll be on the lookout for Drakensberg Siskin, Drakensberg Rockjumper, Mountain Pipit, Sicklewinged Chat, Cape Bunting and Large-billed Lark. Our lunch stop is usually good for Ground Woodpecker, Grey Tit, Layard's Warbler, Sentinel Rock-Thrush and the dainty Fairy Flycatcher. We'll be in no rush today as we'll be staying over on the mountain. Our lodge, at an elevation of 2874 metres asl. can get very cold, even in early summer, so make sure to pack a few layers. The lodge is superbly comfortable with magnificent views over KwaZulu Natal.

[O/N Sani Mountain Lodge \(BLD\)](#)

Day 3, October 14

We'll take it easy this morning as the birds here don't get going too early. With a cup of coffee in one hand, we'll enjoy some of the birds around the lodge before having a welcome breakfast. We'll concentrate on finding any birds we might have missed the previous day as well as driving out to Black Mountain for African Rock Pipit, Black Stork and Bearded Vulture. After lunch we'll start our descent, birding all the way. We'll also stop at some of the streams on the way down to look for Half-collared Kingfisher and the dams at the base of the pass often hold some surprises. Fallow field on the way back to our guesthouse often yield Denham's Bustard, Grey Crowned Crane, Secretarybird and Southern Bald Ibis.

[O/N Creighton B&B or similar \(BLD\)](#)

Day 4, October 15

Up at the crack of dawn we'll head to a nearby stakeout for Blue Swallow; this critically endangered breeding migrant to South Africa occurs here in small numbers annually and we hope to connect with it here. We'll also look for Black-bellied Bustard, Denham's Bustard and may even visit a nearby patch of forest that may hold Cape Parrot and Orange Ground Thrush. We'll return to the lodge for breakfast before making our way to the busy port city of Durban but en-route we might stop at Bulwer or Karkloof for more forest birding with emphasis on finding Bush Blackcap, Cape Parrot, Knysna Turaco, Forest Canary and Orange Ground Thrush. The extent of birding this morning will largely depend on the time of your flights out.

(BL)

PRICING DETAILS

Price includes:

- ~ Lodging in comfortable hotel/lodges/B&Bs
- ~ All meals as indicated
- ~ All land transportation
- ~ Transfers
- ~ Entrance fees
- ~ Expert local birding guide at a ratio not to exceed 1 guide per 6 birders
- ~ Pre-trip gift package
- ~ Post-trip electronic group checklist

Price does NOT include:

- ~ International airfare to Johannesburg and from Durban, South Africa
- ~ Alcoholic drinks
- ~ Travel insurance
- ~ Gratuities
- ~ Expenses of a personal nature such as laundry, phone calls, extra drinks and snacks, etc.

PAYMENT INFORMATION:

Deposit of \$200 with registration (registration form can be downloaded from a link on the Cheepers! Africa website). Balance is due 4 months prior to departure date.

Checks should be made payable to ***Cheepers! Birding on a Budget*** and mailed with the registration form to:

Cheepers! Birding on a Budget

Post Office Box 385

Spring Valley, OH 45370