

Swaziland Pre-tour Extension

Birding & Wildlife

5 days / 4 nights

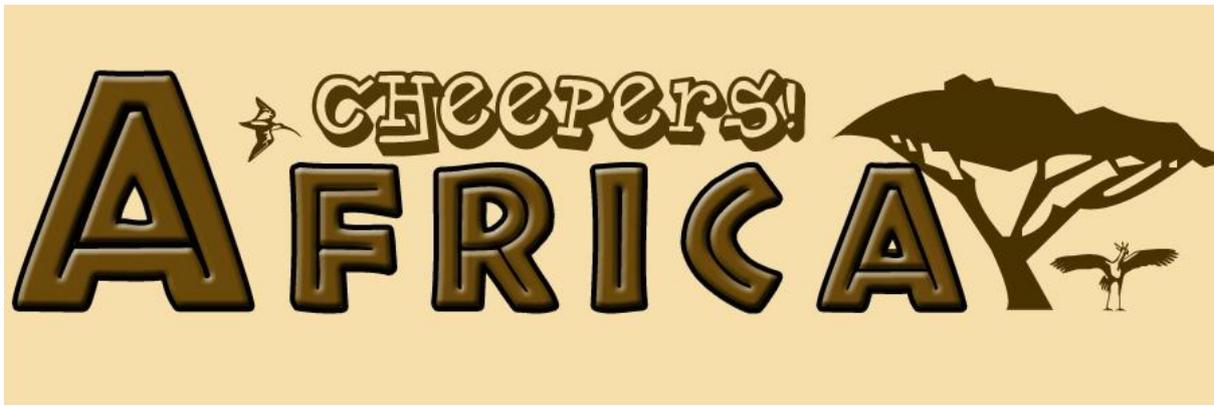
24,950 ZAR

Single Supplement 2800 ZAR



Overview

The tiny landlocked Kingdom of Eswatini, formerly known as Swaziland, has much to offer the intrepid traveler and of course it's another country tick for those keeping a list of countries visited. Several well run National Parks and Game Reserves dot the countryside and whilst it might not offer the "Big 5" experience of some of Africa's larger parks they sure make up for in scenic beauty, good birding and overall good general game viewing that includes most of the expected antelope species as well as smaller predators. Hlane Royal National Park does offer several of the larger mammals such as Rhino, Hippo, Elephant and Lion, the latter in a separate fenced area. With roughly 450 bird species recorded in one of the smallest countries in Africa, only 17,363 km² or roughly the size of New Jersey, we aim to find a fair selection of birds here, including some really good ones.



Detailed Itinerary

Note: You will need to arrive in Johannesburg on November 27 to stage for day 1 of the tour. This means you will need to leave the US on November 26. If you prefer that we make reservations for you for the night of November 27, we will include that cost on your final invoice.

Day 1, November 28

Our first day starts in the City of Johannesburg, where you would have arrived the previous day. We intend to get on the road rather early for our roughly 4-hour drive to Swaziland, but as always there will be some birding en-route so it could take us a fair bit longer. We will drive through the beautiful hamlet of Barberton in South Africa on the border with Swaziland and pass through some breathtaking scenery as we head into Swaziland. We will waste no time in heading for our lodge just outside Malalotja National Park, an area of stunning scenic beauty, situated in the foothills of the Drakensberg. Time permitting, we will do some birding at the Hawane Reservoir in the afternoon.

O/N Hawane Resort (BLD)

Day 2, November 29

After an early breakfast we will waste no time in getting into the 1800-hectare Malalotja National Park (pictured on previous page) for some great higher altitude birding. There are some exceptional targets here including the highly endangered Blue Swallow, which will be one of our



Denham's Bustard

main targets. **Red-winged Francolin**, a normally skulky species, is usually very confiding here and often wanders out onto the open gravel tracks. An equally mouthwatering supporting cast consisting of **Bald Ibis, Denham's Bustard, Striped Flufftail, Fan-tailed Grassbird (aka Broad-tailed Warbler), Ground Woodpecker, Black-winged Lapwing, Sentinel Rock-Trush, Buff-steaked Chat** and **Gurney's Sugarbird** will keep us on our toes throughout the day. Several antelope species such as Oribi, Blesbok, Grey Rhebok, Mountain and Common Reedbuck, Klipspringer and the endemic Black Wildebeest occur in good numbers.

O/N Hawane Resort (BLD)

A *CHEEPERS!* **FRICAY**

Day 3, November 30

We will spend the morning birding back in Malalotja for some of the trickier species we might have missed the previous day, as well as another chance to visit the Hawane Reservoir for some waterbirds, where we often find **Orange-breasted Waxbill**. We have a fairly short drive to the Capital of Swaziland, Mbabane, where we will stay at the lovely Reilly's Rock Lodge in Mlilwane Wildlife Sanctuary just on the outskirts of the city. The lodge serves as a fantastic base to bird the reserve which holds a good variety of bird species and is normally a very good spot for raptors such as **African Harrier Hawk, Jackal Buzzard, and Amur Falcon**. With a bird list of over 250 species, this small reserve packs a lot of punch for its size and we should find the likes of **Black-bellied Starling, Chorister Robin-Chat and Violet-backed Starling** around the lodge.

O/N Reilly's Rock Lodge (BLD)



Violet-backed Starling

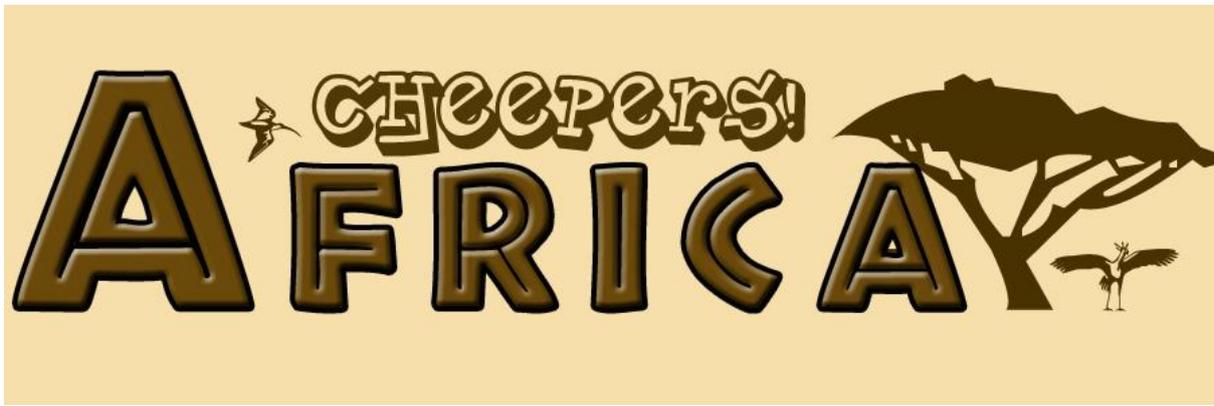
Day 4, December 1

We have a full morning to explore Mlilwane and we hope to find the likes of **Croaking Cisticola, Black Cuckooshrike, Golden-breasted Bunting, White-eared Barbet, Tambourine Dove** and many more. **White-throated Bee-eaters** are particularly common, and stands of exotic trees are great for **Crowned Eagle, Black Sparrowhawk** and several other species of raptor. After a delightful lunch in town, we'll head to Hlane Royal National Park, Swaziland's only big game park. Four of the "Big 5" occur here albeit not quite in the same wild environment as that of Kruger NP, with Lion being confined to a specially fenced part of the park. Other big game are represented by both Black and White Rhino, Elephant and Buffalo.

O/N Ndlovu Camp (BLD)

Day 5, December 2

We'll enjoy one last morning in the park, where we will be able to bird both Hlane and the adjoining Mlawula Nature Reserve. In contrast with the high altitude Malalotja, Hlane is at a lower altitude with mostly lowveld thicket and riverine woodland, grassland and rocky slopes, reminiscent of Kruger National Park. Birds to be on the lookout for include **Thick-billed Cuckoo, Scaly-throated Honeyguide, Pink-throated Twinspot, African Broadbill, Black Coucal and Retz's Helmet-Shrike**. All too soon it will be time to head to the border to cross into Mozambique for the start of our main tour. **(BL)**



Included in the price:

- ~ All accommodation
- ~ All meals as indicated in the itinerary
- ~ Bottled water throughout the tour
- ~ Ground transportation in private vehicle
- ~ All entry fees
- ~ Full time services of an expert birding/wildlife guide and driver
- ~ Pre-tour gift package, including customized checklist
- ~ Post-tour electronic checklist and photos from the tour

Price does NOT include:

- ~ Lodging in Johannesburg for the night before the tour begins (November 27)
- ~ Items of a personal nature such as laundry, phone calls, souvenirs, etc.
- ~ Alcoholic beverages
- ~ Night drives in the national park
- ~ International flights
- ~ Tips for guides and drivers

PAYMENT INFORMATION:

Deposit of \$250 with registration (registration form can be downloaded from a link on the *Cheepers! Birding on a Budget* 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

Cancellation policy:

Cancellation should be made in writing (email or snail mail)

More than 6 months prior to departure – full refund of deposit

Between 4 and 6 months prior to departure – 50% refund of deposit

Less than 4 months prior to departure – No refund of deposit

If cancellation occurs after full payment is made, a refund will be given only if the vacant spot is filled.