



# ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

## South Africa Kruger National Park

2022 (5 days)



**Bateleur by Marius Coetzee**

*Kruger National Park is one of Africa's most famous and fabulous reserves. On this birding and wildlife safari we will explore the area's superb road system in our quest to locate some of the most iconic birds and big game in Africa, including the legendary "Big 5" - Lion, African Elephant, Leopard, African Buffalo and Rhinoceros. Kruger provides an excellent opportunity to witness these spectacular beasts in their natural habitat, with some of them in large numbers and at very close quarters. In addition, the park's rich bushveld habitat will provide us with amongst the most exciting and rewarding birding to be had anywhere in Africa. Of special note here are species requiring vast areas of wilderness, such as*

*Common Ostrich, Kori Bustard, the incomparable Southern Ground Hornbill, Martial Eagle, Bateleur, up to five species of vulture and an incredible diversity of other raptors!*

### THE TOUR AT A GLANCE...

#### THE ITINERARY

<b>Day 1</b>	<b>Johannesburg to Kruger National Park</b>
<b>Days 2 to 4</b>	<b>Kruger National Park</b>
<b>Day 5</b>	<b>Kruger National Park to Johannesburg for departure</b>

### THE TOUR IN DETAIL...

**Day 1: Johannesburg to Kruger National Park.** This morning we depart Johannesburg and transfer eastwards to the world-renown Kruger National Park in South Africa's 'lowveld' region. On leaving Johannesburg, we will first make our way across the once extensive grasslands that covered the area known as the 'highveld'. Here, remnant patches of this grassland still offer good birding and some of the more obvious species we will be on the lookout for include Long-tailed, Red-collared and Fan-tailed Widowbirds, Southern Red and Yellow-crowned Bishops, a variety of waterfowl, Banded Martin and African Wattled Lapwing, as well as the possibility of the regal Secretarybird.

After a few hours of driving we will eventually leave the highveld's highland grasslands and wind our way through the rugged and picturesque Mpumalanga Drakensberg Mountains into the warm, humid acacia savanna of the 'lowveld'. The change in habitat and scenery is stark and here we will be welcomed by a completely different and mouth-watering suite of birds. We are likely to encounter typical lowland 'bushveld' species while driving through this bird-rich habitat, including the splendid Lilac-breasted Roller, Magpie Shrike, Southern Red-billed and Southern Yellow-billed Hornbills, quirky Grey Go-away-bird and Burchell's Starling. We expect to arrive at the entrance to the park at around midday, and from here we begin our epic Kruger adventure!



Lilac-breasted Roller by Gareth Robbins

We already have a good chance of encountering some of Kruger's great mammals and special birds this afternoon, which could include any of the 'Big Five'. We will almost certainly be entertained by regular herds of Plains Zebra, Common Wildebeest and Impala, while smaller groups of Warthog, Greater Kudu and Giraffe will also be a constant feature. In the mid to late afternoon we will arrive at our perfectly situated camp and base for the next two nights. There will be an option after dinner this evening to do a night walk around camp and this will offer us an excellent chance of seeing African Scops Owl and Western Barn Owl, while possibilities of finding Spotted Hyena



patrolling the surrounding fence are good. Falling asleep to the calls of African Scops Owl, Spotted Hyena and roaring Lion is a very special experience indeed.

**Days 2 to 4: Kruger National Park.** The Greater Kruger conservation area incorporates vast areas of adjacent Mozambique and Zimbabwe and forms one of the largest reserves on earth! It is also one of Africa's most diverse parks, protecting a huge variety of wildlife. Here, in the central part of the park, the area is dominated by open grassy plains and sparsely vegetated woodlands. The birding and game viewing in this region is excellent with many bird species attending mixed flocks, particularly in acacia dominated woodland. In fact, the acacia savanna that dominates most of the Kruger National Park contains one of the highest densities of birds of any habitat type in the world! This, coupled with the immense variety of game that we will endeavour to see, ensures a truly unforgettable African experience. Over the course of the next few days we will bird around our camp and take day trip to various other habitats within a few hours drive.



**Lion by Adam Riley**

The denser bushveld, woodlands and gallery forest of the southern section of the park are host to one of the most mouth-watering species that we hope to find, the majestic Southern Ground Hornbill that is often seen striding around in small groups. We will certainly be treated to many encounters with the gaudy Lilac-breasted Roller. Raptors are numerous throughout the reserve and we will no doubt enjoy sightings of the striking Bateleur as well as Tawny and Wahlberg's Eagles, Hooded, White-headed, White-backed and huge Lappet-faced Vultures, and the handsome African Fish Eagle, while other possibilities include Shikra, Lizard Buzzard, Gabar and Dark Chanting Goshawks, the scarce but



**Southern Ground Hornbill by Glen Valentine**

extremely attractive African Cuckoo-Hawk, Black-chested and Brown Snake Eagles, Lesser Spotted, Steppe, Crowned and Booted Eagles, African Hawk-Eagle, African Harrier Hawk and Amur Falcon.

This area is also famous for regular sightings of the rare African Wild Dog, while we stand an excellent chance of finding the endangered White Rhinoceros and with exceptional luck, its rarer cousin, the Black Rhinoceros. It is also arguably the best area in the park to see the crepuscular Leopard, certainly one of the world's best-looking cats! In addition, we should encounter Lion, Spotted Hyena, Black-backed Jackal, large herds of African



Elephant lounging in the Sabi River, herds of African Buffalo, Waterbuck, the beautiful Bushbuck and pods of Hippopotami. The persistent troops of playful Chacma Baboon and Vervet will keep us entertained during the heat of the day.

Scouring the riverine woodland and thickets along the Sabi River, we hope to encounter Bennett's, Golden-tailed, Bearded and Cardinal Woodpeckers, Ashy Flycatcher, gorgeous White-browed and Red-capped Robin-Chats, Terrestrial Brownbul, Yellow-bellied and Sombre Greenbuls, African, Jameson's and Red-billed Firefinches, superb Green-winged Pytilia, Red-faced Cisticola and Southern Boubou. The large

riparian trees lining the rivers provide perfect nesting sites for weavers, which are extremely well represented in the park and include Southern and Lesser Masked, Village, Spectacled and Thick-billed. Furthermore, we will endeavour to see various species of brightly coloured bee-eaters, kingfishers, rollers and hornbills, along with the occasional Pearl-spotted Owlet, a diurnal owl with a lovely, characteristic call.

The park's numerous large rivers and wetlands harbour a number of exciting water-associated birds and we will be on the lookout for the massive Goliath Heron, stately and severely threatened Saddle-billed Stork as well as the more common Woolly-necked and Yellow-billed Storks, African Spoonbill, the unique and monotypic Hamerkop, Wire-tailed and Grey-rumped Swallows, White-crowned Lapwing and if we are lucky, the rare African Finfoot or unpredictable Greater Painted-snipe.

Our base here in the southern part of the park is situated on the banks of the Sabi River, where the huge



Saddle-billed Storks by Clayton Burne



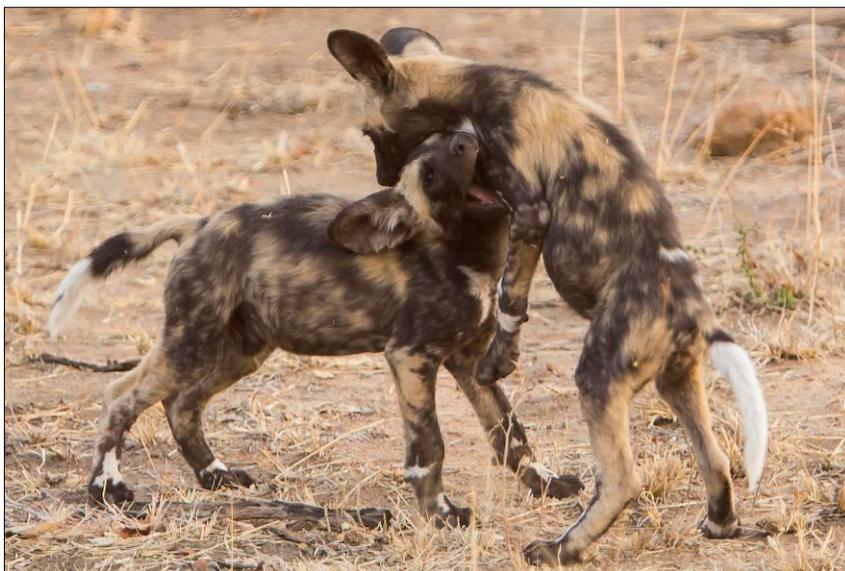
Verreaux's Eagle-Owls by Glen Valentine

Sycamore Fig and Sausage Trees that tower over the camp attract some brilliant birds. Included in this suite of species are African Green Pigeon with its lovely, mournful, liquid call, the tiny Little Sparrowhawk, African Goshawk, gaudy Purple-crested Turaco, Red-headed Weaver, Black-headed Oriole, the showy African Paradise Flycatcher, Arrow-marked Babbler, Yellow-breasted Apalis, Green-backed Camaroptera, iridescent Collared, Marico, White-bellied, Amethyst and Scarlet-chested Sunbirds, and the vocal Black-collared and Crested Barbets.

While in the south of the park there are also opportunities for optional sunset drives. Success on these sunset drives here varies greatly, but the list of possibilities is rather impressive and includes a good number of owls and nightjars, as well as



Bronze-winged Courser, both Common and Central African Large-spotted Genets, Southern Lesser and Thick-tailed Greater Galagos, White-tailed Mongoose, African Savannah Hare, the incomparable Cape Porcupine, African Wild Cat, African Civet, Serval and Spotted Hyena – besides the Big 5!



**African Wild Dog Pups by Greg de Klerk**

We will certainly spend a day visiting the rich bushveld and grasslands of the park, which are particularly productive for a number of special species. These include Kori Bustard – the world’s heaviest flying bird, the

magnificent Martial Eagle, Bateleur, Marabou Stork and the impressive Secretarybird, one of the world’s great avian gems. Further specialties that we will search for in the woodland areas include the lovely Orange-breasted and Grey-headed Bushshrikes, African Grey Hornbill, Southern White-crowned and Magpie Shrikes, Red-billed Oxpecker riding on the backs of big game, Bennett’s Woodpecker, African Hoopoe, Red-billed Buffalo Weaver, Burchell’s Starling, Mourning Collared Dove, Brown-headed Parrot, Red-crested Korhaan, Southern Black Tit, miniscule Grey Penduline Tit, noisy Green Wood Hoopoe, Common Scimitarbill, Greater and Lesser Honeyguides, Acacia Pied Barbet, Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird, Sabota Lark, Mosque Swallow, Black Cuckooshrike, Kurrichane and Groundscraper Thrushes, eye-catching White-throated Robin-Chat, melodic White-browed Scrub Robin, Burnt-necked and Yellow-bellied Eremomelas, Stierling’s Wren-Warbler, Black-crowned and Brown-crowned Tchagras, Brubru, dazzling Violet-backed Starling and Golden-breasted Bunting. Noisy flocks of White-crested Helmetshrike are regularly encountered and we will also be on the lookout for the much rarer



**Leopard by Greg de Klerk**

Retz’s Helmetshrike along with its seldom-seen host, the rare and much sought-after Thick-billed Cuckoo. In addition, we will keep a lookout for the amazing selection of migrant cuckoos that visit the park in summer and these include African, Common, Red-chested, Diederik, Klaas’s, Levillant’s and Jacobin Cuckoos, as well as the scarce Great Spotted Cuckoo.

In the expansive grasslands we will seek out the bold Black-bellied Bustard, Crested and the rare Shelley’s and Coqui Francolins, Swainson’s and Natal Spurfbwls, Chestnut-backed



Sparrow-Lark, European and Purple Rollers, Yellow-throated Longclaw and with luck, the erratic and nomadic Temminck's Courser and Senegal Lapwing. Summer visitors to these grasslands also include the scarce Pallid and Montagu's Harriers, while rocky outcrops might yield Mocking Cliff Chat, Red-winged Starling and Cinnamon-breasted Bunting. In the late afternoon pairs of boldly-patterned and crepuscular Double-banded Sandgrouse come to the edges of the road to feed, before making their way down to watering holes at dusk to drink.



Southern Carmine Bee-eaters by Wayne Jones

The sweet grasses in the Satara area are, of course, also excellent for large herds of grazing mammals such as Common Wildebeest, Plains Zebra and Impala. These huge herds in turn support a healthy population of predators and Satara is particularly well known for this. In fact, we have an excellent chance of finding Lion, Leopard, Cheetah, Spotted Hyena and the very scarce and highly threatened African Wild (Painted) Dog in this area. High densities of other game include Southern Giraffe, Greater Kudu, Klipspringer, Bushbuck, Warthog, Chacma Baboon, Vervet and Dwarf Mongoose, to name just a few.

An optional night drive through the park may encounter some of the rarer nocturnal mammals such as African Civet, Common and Central African Large-spotted Genets, Side-striped Jackal, the beautiful



Black Rhinoceros by Greg de Klerk

Serval, White-tailed Mongoose and Wild Cat, along with several species of owl and nightjar. These include Spotted and Verreaux's Eagle-Owls, African Scops Owl, Southern White-faced Owl, and Square-tailed, European and Fiery-necked Nightjars.

**Day 5: Kruger National Park to Johannesburg.** After some early morning's birding and wildlife viewing, we will leave the splendours of Kruger behind us and head back to Johannesburg and onto O.R. Tambo International Airport, where our Kruger Extension will conclude.



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## INCLUSIONS & EXCLUSIONS

### **This includes:**

- All meals from dinner on day 1 to lunch on day 5;
- All lodgings;
- Ground transportation;
- Reserve entrance fees;
- Tips for local guides and staff; and
- All guiding services of a Rockjumper Tour Leader.

### **The tour fee does not include:**

- ANY flights;
- Optional Night drive in Kruger National Park;
- Any drinks;
- Special gratuities; and Telephone calls, laundry and items of a personal nature.

**Single Supplement:** The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBT cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

### IMPORTANT NOTES:

- a) Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is however fixed only in the currency printed in bold (South African Rand), and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing (usually 4 months before the tour.) The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates, which are also quoted in the respective fixed currency.**
- b) Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration a small party supplement will have to be charged.**
- c) Furthermore, these costs are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.**
- d) Lastly, we may be forced to change or alter the itinerary and / or the designated Rockjumper leader/s at short or no notice due to unforeseen circumstances; please be aware that we will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.**

**Tippling:** As noted above, gratuities (drivers, hotel staff, restaurants etc.) are included on this tour. However, this does NOT include your Rockjumper leader. If, therefore, you feel that has given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip him.

### **Special Notes:**

- Exiting the vehicle is prohibited in all areas and parks that contain dangerous animals.
- The Kruger National Park is classified as a Malaria risk area. We suggest you contact your local health authorities for the best advice in this regard.

### ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE DETAILS:

This tour **does not** include ANY airfares. The tour will depart from O.R. Tambo International airport, Johannesburg no later than **09:00** on the morning of day 1. The tour will conclude **mid to late afternoon on day 5** at O.R. Tambo International Airport, Johannesburg, the recommended international departure time is after 19:00.

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your **Tour Confirmation** package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

### FLIGHTS:

O.R. Tambo International Airport, Johannesburg (IATA: JNB) is the main port of entry for international flights in South Africa and is well serviced by all of the world's major airlines. **Please DO NOT book any flights until you have consulted the Rockjumper office for confirmation on the status of the tour.**

