

South Africa

Mammals and Birds

2022: Saturday 17 September - Sunday 2 October (16 days)



Black-footed Cat is one of the speciality mammals we hope to find on our South African holiday © Ewan Davies

This exciting tour focuses on three main areas with an exceptional selection of mammals. We hope to see in excess of 50 species, with our primary focus being on some of South Africa's rare and elusive mammals including Black-footed Cat, Aardvark, Aardwolf, Cape Porcupine, Cape Clawless and Spotted-necked Otter and African (Cape) Hunting Dog. There are also opportunities to see a number of Africa's 'Big 5', as well as a good variety of predators, more widespread African mammals and around 250 species of birds.

Highlights

- A 16-day mammals-focussed tour looking for some of the tricky species at three varied sites in South Africa
- Begin on the coast near Cape Town looking for Southern Right Whales, Bontebok, Cape Mountain Zebra plus African Penguin and Cape Rockjumper
- Three nights in the Kimberley area staying at Marrick Game Farm with night drives and day safaris

- Look for an exceptional range of nocturnal mammals including Black-footed Cat, Aardvark, Aardwolf and Cape Porcupine
- Visit sites near Johannesburg where there are chances for Black Wildebeest, Blesbok and Cape Clawless and Spotted-necked Otters
- Travel on to Madikwe Game Reserve where the possibilities include African Wild Dog, Brown Hyaena, White Rhino plus Africa's "Big 5"
- Expect to see a great range of African birds potentially including Secretarybird, Kori Bustard, Spotted Eagle-Owl, Swallow-tailed Bee-eater, Crimson-breasted Shrike and Quailfinch
- Led by WildWings leader and African mammal expert Ewan Davies

What's Included?

- WildWings Tour Leader and local guides
- 13 nights accommodation in comfortable hotels and lodges
- All main meals
- All excursions, entry fees and permits
- WildWings checklist of mammals and birds

Outline Itinerary

- Day 1:** Evening flight from London Heathrow
- Day 2:** Arrive Cape Town. Transfer to Hermanus
- Day 3:** Morning Hermanus. Afternoon transfer to De Hoop birding on route
- Day 4:** De Hoop
- Day 5:** Morning transfer to Cape Town. Afternoon flight to Kimberley and transfer to Murrumbidgee
- Days 6-7:** Full days at Murrumbidgee and Warrenton
- Day 8:** Flight to Johannesburg and transfer to Heidelberg. Late afternoon Suikerbosrand
- Day 9:** Suikerbosrand and/or Marievale
- Day 10:** Transfer to Madikwe
- Days 11-14:** Madikwe
- Day 15:** Early morning Madikwe, transfer to Johannesburg for flight home
- Day 16:** Arrive London Heathrow

Tour Overview

This exciting tour focuses on three main areas with an exceptional selection of mammals. We hope to see in excess of 50 species, with our primary focus being on some of South Africa's rare and elusive mammals including Black-footed Cat, Aardvark, Aardwolf, Cape Porcupine, Cape Clawless and Spotted-necked Otter and African (Cape) Hunting Dog. There are also chances for a number of Africa's 'Big 5', as well as a good variety of predators, more widespread African mammals and around 250 species of birds.

The tour starts with three nights to the east of Cape Town where we hope to see Southern Right Whales, as well as some fantastic land mammals including Bontebok and Cape Mountain Zebra. This area is also home to some localised birds and those we would expect to find include African Penguin and Cape Rockjumper.



Black-backed Jackal © Ewan Davies

We will then move on to the Kimberley area where the night spotlighting can be truly exceptional with the chance of a number of enigmatic nocturnal mammals. We hope these will include Black-footed Cat, the recently split African Wildcat, Bat-eared Fox, Aardvark, Aardwolf, Cape Porcupine and Springhare, with the possibly of South African Hedgehog and Caracal. During the day we will visit sites for otters and a variety of ungulates including Black Wildebeest.

We will then visit two or three localities not far from Johannesburg where we will focus on looking for Otters, Black Wildebeest, Blesbok and Mountain Reedbuck along with many other species.

The final leg of the trip in Madikwe Game Reserve in northern South Africa on the border with Botswana will focus on looking for African Wild Dog, Brown Hyaena and other carnivores including Lion, Leopard and Cheetah. We also expect to see a good variety of ungulates including the remaining members of the African 'Big 5', Cape Buffalo, White (and hopefully) Black Rhinos plus African Savanna Elephant, together with a good selection of birds hopefully including African Finfoot.

It is important to stress, however, that the main focus of this trip will be mammals so if you are looking for a bird tour to South Africa, then we suggest this may not be for you, although we will try

to accommodate the wishes of birders as far as possible.

There is no obligation on any tour participant to take part in every excursion but we strongly recommend that you do so. It is better to catch up on your sleep in the back of the vehicle where we can wake you if we see something good, than in the hotel room where you might miss something.

The key locations:

The Cape – Our trip will start near Cape Town with visits to Hermanus and De Hoop. Both these areas are well-known calving grounds for the Southern Right Whale with Hermanus considered one of the premiere whale-watching locations in the world. We should get excellent views of the whales and whilst at De Hoop will hope to find Bontebok, Cape Mountain Zebra, Grey Rhebok and Baboon with chances for Caracal and Leopard. We will also look for some of the speciality birds of this region and these could include African Penguin, Bank Cormorant, Cape Sugarbird and Southern Double-collared Sunbird.

Kimberley Area – We will visit several sites in the Kimberley area including Marrick Game Farm where we plan to stay for three nights. Marrick is well-known for its night drives when we hope to see Black-footed Cat, Aardvark, Aardwolf, Cape Porcupine, Smith's Red Rock Rabbit and a number of commoner species. During the day we will look for a good selection of ungulates including Black Wildebeest, along with smaller species such as Yellow Mongoose, South African Ground Squirrel, Meerkat and if we are very lucky Western Rock Sengi (Elephant-Shrew). Whilst at Kimberley we also plan to visit nearby Warrenton to look for Spotted-necked and African Clawless Otter and a range of waterbirds. If time allows, we will also go to Kamfers Dam which has a large colony of Greater and Lesser Flamingos and many other waterbirds.

Madikwe – Madikwe Game Reserve lies on South Africa's border with Botswana and is an area reclaimed as a reserve in 1991. It is home to a wide range of species some of which have been reintroduced as part of a reintroduction programme. We hope to see many of Africa's "Big 5" and a range of ungulates but our primary target will be African (Cape) Hunting Dog. Madikwe also offers opportunities to see other predators including Lion, Cheetah, Brown and Spotted Hyaenas and possibly Leopard or Caracal. We will work hard to see as many of these as we can and on most evenings we plan to return to the lodge for dinner after dark to enable us to spotlight on our way back. We may also do at least one pre-dawn spotlighting session.

Most of our time here will be spent looking for mammals from the vehicle but elsewhere there should be plenty of opportunities to walk around, although no long or strenuous hikes are anticipated.



We hope to see many of Africa's "Big 5" on our holiday including Lion © Ewan Davies

Potential Mammals (selected species only)

South African Hedgehog, Karoo Rock Sengi, Chacma Baboon, Vervet Monkey, Cape, Scrub and African Savanna Hares, Smith's Red Rock Rabbit, South African Ground Squirrel, Springhare, Cape Porcupine, Bushveld Gerbil, Cape and Bat-eared Foxes, Black-backed Jackal, African Wild Dog, Cape Clawless and Spotted-necked Otters, Zorilla, Banded, Dwarf, Slender, Small Grey, Marsh and Yellow Mongooses, Suricate (Meerkat), Small and Large-spotted Genets, Brown Hyaena, Aardwolf, Black-footed Cat, African Wildcat, Caracal, Cheetah, Lion, Leopard, Aardvark, African Savanna Elephant, Rock Hyrax, Plains (Burchell's) Zebra, White and Black Rhinos, Warthog, Southern African Giraffe, African Savanna Buffalo, Zambezi Greater Kudu, Common Reedbuck, Black and Blue Wildebeest, Blesbok, Red Hartebeest, Common Impala, Kalahari and South African Springboks, Transvaal Klipspringer, Steenbok, Mountain Reedbuck and Common Duiker.

Potential Birds (selected species only)

Common Ostrich, Spur-winged Goose, Knob-billed Duck, Cape Shoveler, Southern Pochard, Helmeted Guineafowl, Crested Francolin, Swainson's Francolin, Rufous-cheeked Nightjar, African Black Swift, Kori Bustard, Red-crested Korhaan, Northern Black Korhaan, Namaqua Sandgrouse, Yellow-throated Sandgrouse, Speckled Pigeon, Namaqua Dove, Greater Flamingo, Water Thick-knee, Spotted Thick-knee, African Oystercatcher, Blacksmith Plover, African Jacana, African Penguin, Cape Gannet, Bank Cormorant, African Darter, Hadada Ibis, African Spoonbill, Black-headed Heron, Goliath Heron, Hamerkop, Secretarybird, Cape Vulture, Black-chested Snake Eagle, Brown Snake Eagle, Wahlberg's Eagle, African Hawk-Eagle, Pale Chanting Goshawk, African Fish Eagle, Southern White-faced Owl, Spotted Eagle Owl, Speckled Mousebird, Red-faced Mousebird, African Hoopoe, African Grey Hornbill, Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill, Lilac-breasted Roller, Purple Roller, Brown-hooded Kingfisher, Malachite Kingfisher, Swallow-tailed Bee-eater, Little Bee-eater, White-fronted Bee-eater, Bearded Woodpecker, Cardinal Woodpecker, Chinspot Batis, Pirit Batis, Crimson-breasted Shrike, Brubru, Black-headed Oriole, Southern White-crowned Shrike, Cape Rockjumper, Southern Black Tit, Spike-heeled Lark, Sabota Lark, Eastern Clapper Lark, Grey-backed Sparrow Lark,

White-throated Swallow, Lesser Striped Swallow, Red-breasted Swallow, South African Cliff Swallow, Long-billed Crombec, Levallant's Cisticola, Southern Pied Babbler, Cape Sugarbird, Cape Starling, Kurrichane Thrush, Karoo Thrush, Kalahari Scrub Robin, Marico Flycatcher, Fiscal Flycatcher, White-throated Robin-chat, Short-toed Rock Thrush, Mocking Cliff Chat, Southern Double-collared Sunbird, Orange-breasted Sunbird, Cape Sparrow, Southern Grey-headed Sparrow, Cape Weaver, Black-faced Waxbill, Quailfinch, Violet-eared Waxbill, Red-headed Finch, Cape Wagtail, Cape Siskin, Lark-like Bunting, Cinnamon-breasted Bunting, Golden-breasted Bunting.



Cheetahs on the South African plains © Ewan Davies

Daily Itinerary

Day 1: Evening flight from Heathrow

Day 2: Arrive Cape Town. Transfer to Hermanus

Our flight to Cape Town should arrive in the morning and after meeting up with our local guide, we will make the relatively short transfer to Hermanus. Although it is less than a two-hour drive, we plan to make a series of strategic stops on the way and will concentrate on looking for some of the specialities of the region, in particular African Penguin and Cape Rockjumper.

We are also likely to see our first mammals of the tour including Chacma Baboons.

Day 3: Morning Hermanus. Afternoon transfer to De Hoop birding on route

Our plan for the morning is to concentrate on looking for Southern Right Whales and Hermanus is regarded as one of the best places in the world to see this otherwise tricky cetacean. Named the 'right whale' by the whalers, as this species was the right one to hunt (as they were relatively slow moving and floated after being killed), the numbers of these 20+ metre long marine mammals were massively reduced in the southern hemisphere with some populations almost entirely eliminated.

Although hunting officially stopped many decades ago, Southern Right Whale is only slowly recovering but despite this, we stand an excellent chance of finding it as more than one hundred individuals migrate to the coastal waters off Hermanus to calve and mate.

After a morning enjoying the whales, we will leave for De Hoop and, once again, will make strategic stops to look for birds and mammals probably including South Africa's national bird, Blue Crane, as well as Stanley (Denham's) Bustard, Bontebok and Yellow Mongoose.

Day 4: De Hoop

We have a full day to explore around De Hoop and hope to find a number of mammals which we are unlikely to see later in our trip. These include Bontebok, Cape Mountain Zebra, Eland, Grey Rhebok and Chacma Baboon and there are also chances for Caracal, Honey Badger and if the water levels in the vlei are good, also Cape Clawless Otter. We will also have further opportunities to look for Southern Right Whales that occur off De Hoop in large numbers and can often be found loafing close to the shore.

There are also a good selection of birds in this region including the only breeding colony of Cape Griffons in the Western Cape. This species of vulture is classified as 'vulnerable' by Birdlife International and whilst the numbers in this region have recovered in recent years from a low point of fifty individuals, it remains a somewhat uncommon bird.

Other species we could see in this region include Blue Crane, Denham's Bustard, Karoo Bustard, Southern Black Korhaan, Black Harrier, Knysna Woodpecker, Grey Tit and the localised Agulhas (Long-billed) Lark. There are also a number of species which are restricted to the Cape Fynbos EBA (endemic bird area) including Cape Spurfowl, Orange-breasted Sunbird, Cape Sugarbird, Cape Bulbul and Cape Siskin.

Day 5: Morning transfer to Cape Town. Afternoon flight to Kimberley and transfer to Marrick

We will leave De Hoop after breakfast, heading for Cape Town where we will take an afternoon flight to Kimberley (c.90 minutes). On arrival, we will transfer to the comfortable Marrick Game Farm which will be our base for three nights.

There are plenty of species to look for over the course of our stay and our days here will combine a mix of day and night drives in our search for the speciality wildlife of the region. Amongst the potential highlights at Marrick are Black-footed Cat, Aardwolf, Aardvark, African Wildcat, Cape Porcupine, Smith's Red Rock Rabbit and Southern African Hedgehog. We have also seen Zorilla at this location.

There are also some great birds in the area with the possibilities including Northern Black Korhaan, Kori Bustard, Double-banded Courser, Namaqua Sandgrouse, Cape Vulture, Common (Small) Buttonquail and Crimson-breasted Shrike.

Days 6-7: Marrick and Warrenton

We have two full days to explore Marrick and nearby Warrenton (c.70kms away) and our plans will be deliberately kept flexible to maximise on the wildlife opportunities.

There are a great variety of mammals here and possibilities include Karoo Rock Sengi, Cape Hare, Scrub Hare, Spring Hare, Bat-eared Fox, Black-backed Jackal, Small Grey Mongoose, Slender Mongoose, Yellow Mongoose, Meerkat, Small-spotted Genet, Zambezi Greater Kudu, Mountain Reedbuck, Bush Duiker, Gemsbok, Ellipsen Waterbuck, Blue Wildebeest, Steenbok, Four Striped Grass Mouse, Large Eared (Gerbil) Mouse and Bushveld Gerbil.

During our time at Marrick, we will also aim to visit Warrenton as this can be an excellent place to look for Otters - in 2018 we saw three Cape Clawless Otters and those on our 2019 tour saw this species plus two Spotted-necked Otters.

There should also be plenty of birds at both Marrick and Warrenton and previous visits have seen Spotted Thick-knee, Spotted Eagle-Owl, Red-faced Mousebird, Pied Kingfisher, Malachite Kingfisher, South African Shelduck, Red-billed Teal, African Black Duck, Swallow-tailed Bee-eater, Short-toed Rock Thrush, Violet-eared Waxbill, Quailfinch, Black-throated Canary, Lark-like Bunting and Golden-breasted Bunting.

Day 8: Flight to Johannesburg and transfer to Heidelberg. Late afternoon Suikerbosrand

Depending on the time of our flight to Johannesburg, we may have time for some final exploring at Marrick before we return to the airport for the short flight back to South Africa's largest city. On arrival at Johannesburg, we will transfer to Heidelberg (which should take us about an hour) and, assuming we have time, are likely to visit the Suikerbosrand Reserve in the late afternoon.

Possibilities in this area include Black-backed Jackal, Chacma Baboon, Eland, Blesbok, Red Hartebeest, Plains Zebra and Black Wildebeest with birds seen here previously including Marsh Owl, Red-throated Wryneck, Mocking Cliff Chat, Cape Robin-Chat, Black-collared Barbet, Yellow Bishop and Cape Bunting.

We may also explore the grounds of our lodge as Slender and Yellow Mongooses and Rock Hyrax can be seen there.

Day 9: Suikerbosrand and/or Marievale

We have two options for the day, the reserves at Suikerbosrand and Marievale, and depending on the weather and what we have already seen will largely determine which one we concentrate on.

Both reserves have an excellent range of species and on previous visits to Suikerbosrand, we have found Yellow Mongoose, Meerkat, South African Springbok, Blesbok, Zambezi (Greater) Kudu and Red Hartebeest. On our 2018 tour, we were even fortunate enough to find a Caracal sitting by the side of the road.

As with all the places we visit, there will also be plenty of birds and new species at Suikerbosrand could include Grey-winged Francolin, Cape Rock Thrush, Mountain Wheatear, Neddicky, Crested Barbet and Cape Bunting.

At Marievale, we have a further chance of finding otters, with Marsh, Yellow and Slender Mongooses amongst the other possibilities. This area is also very rich in birds and possibilities include African Marsh Harrier, Swainson's Spurfowl, African Spoonbill, Black-headed and Goliath Herons, Southern Pochard, Cape Shoveler, Hottentot and Red-billed Teal, African Rail, African Swamphen, Black Crake, Three-banded, Blacksmith and Crowned Plovers and Lesser Swamp, African Reed and Little Rush Warblers.

Day 10: Transfer to Madikwe

The drive to Madikwe (which is close to the border with Botswana) is likely to take about five hours, although it is well worth the journey, as there are some great mammals and birds to look for once we arrive. We will, however, certainly aim to stop for anything interesting we see on the way there.

We plan to stay at the Madikwe River Lodge and will have four full days to explore the rich habitats around this delightful lodge where we will have a mix of morning and afternoon excursions, some of which will return to the lodge after dark so we can look for nocturnal wildlife. We may also offer a pre-dawn trip, although like all the other excursions this is, of course, entirely optional and you are welcome to spend time relaxing at the lodge.

Our main target here is the African Hunting (Wild) Dog which we saw on both our 2018 and 2019 tours. We will also target Brown Hyena. Madikwe also offers opportunities to see a great range of other predators with the possibilities including Lion, Cheetah, African Wild Cat, Spotted Hyena, Black-backed Jackal, Small-spotted Genet, Large-spotted Genet, Slender, Banded and Dwarf Mongoose with chances also for Leopard and Caracal.

Days 11-14: Madikwe

With plenty of options at Madikwe, we can expect to find many species over the four days we have planned here and our days will generally comprise some pre-breakfast exploring, followed by morning and afternoon/evening excursions. When not out looking for mammals from our vehicle, there are opportunities to either rest up at the lodge or explore the grounds for birds and other wildlife.

As well as the carnivores listed above, there are plenty of other interesting mammals for us to look for at Madikwe and those seen on our previous trips include Southern Lesser Galago, African Savanna Hare, South African Ground Squirrel, Tree Squirrel, Spring Hare, African Savannah Elephant, Plains Zebra, White Rhinoceros, Black Rhinoceros, Common Warthog, Short-snouted Sengi, South African Giraffe, African (Savanna) Buffalo, Zambezi (Greater) Kudu, Cape Bushbuck, Gemsbok, Ellipsen Waterbuck, Transvaal Klipspringer, Steenbok and Common Duiker.



African Hunting (Wild) Dog © Ewan Davies

Whilst mammals will be our main priority, there is a fantastic range of birds that can be found here too, many of which we may not have encountered previously on the trip and the possibilities include Common Ostrich, Natal Spurfowl, Harlequin Quail, Red-crested Korhaan, Emerald-spotted Wood Dove, Grey Go-away-bird, Pearl-spotted Owlet, Spotted Eagle-

Owl, Rufous-cheeked Nightjar, Malachite Kingfisher, Brown-hooded Kingfisher, Swallow-tailed Bee-eater, Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill, Southern Red-billed Hornbill, Bearded Woodpecker, Black-headed Oriole, Sentinel Rock Thrush, White-browed Scrub Robin, White-throated Robin-Chat, Rattling Cisticola, Chinspot Batis, Southern White-crowned Shrike, Red-billed Oxpecker, Red-billed Buffalo Weaver, Blue Waxbill and Red-billed Firefinch.

Day 15: Early morning Madikwe, transfer to Johannesburg for flight home

We will have a final early morning to explore around Madikwe before we will reluctantly pack our bags for the drive back to Johannesburg and our overnight flight back to the UK.

Day 16: Arrive Heathrow

Trip Information

GROUP SIZE

A maximum of seven participants and 1 leader

WHAT TO EXPECT

A 16-day mammal-focussed wildlife tour to South Africa where we will visit three main areas over the course of the holiday. We start off by travelling east from Cape Town exploring Hermanus and De Hoop where our goal will be to see Southern Right Whales plus a number of species which only occur relatively close to the coast. We will then head to Marrick for a three night stay before moving on to Heidelberg (for a brief stay) where again there will be plenty of different species to look for. Our tour will then conclude with five nights at Madikwe Game Lodge which is close to the border with Botswana where we stand a chance of seeing all of Africa's "Big 5" plus African Wild Dog and a host of other species.

Whilst mammals will be the main focus of the trip, we will also look for some of the speciality birds of South Africa and during our time near Cape Town, for example, will endeavour to see African Penguin and Cape Rockjumper, however, it is important to appreciate that this is not a birding tour.

Whilst many of our excursions will (by necessity) be by vehicle, there will be some exploring on foot at some locations, however, we will not be undertaking long/extended walks.

On some evenings, we will offer trips after dark to look for wildlife but like most of the excursions, these are entirely optional.

VISAS

Visas are currently not required for South Africa for British citizens but your passport must be valid for at least 6 months after this tour, with two blank pages

CURRENCY

The rand (ZAR) is the currency of South Africa. In February 2022, a Pound was worth approximately 20 Rand. There are exchange facilities and cash machines in the airport. You should only require a small amount of local currency, probably no more than £100 for drinks, laundry, gifts, tips etc.

Local guide and driver tips are included in the cost of the tour but you may want to leave tips for waitresses etc at the lodges. There are tip boxes at each of the lodges. The cost of soft drinks and beers with meals are included in the cost of the tour but you will need to pay for wine and other alcoholic drinks.

If are taking cards with you, please inform your issuer/s, so they do not block transactions for 'security reasons'.

LANGUAGE

English is widely spoken although we may also encounter Afrikaans in some areas.

ELECTRICITY

- Electricity in South Africa is 230 Volts.
- Several types of plugs/sockets are in use but the most common has three round pins, so a travel adaptor is essential if you plan to charge batteries etc. See the following website for further details: <http://www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plug-voltage-by-country/>

TRANSPORT

When not on foot, our ground transport will be in a combination of minibuses and 4x4 vehicles. At most localities we should be in one vehicle but if the numbers in the group do require us to use two vehicles, the vehicles will have radios to stay in contact.

HOTELS AND MEALS

We will be staying in three comfortable lodges/hotels on the tour.

- Kimberley area. Marrick Game Farm www.marricksafari.com
- Johannesburg area. We will be staying in comfortable accommodation in Heidelberg to the south of Johannesburg and will have our evening meals in nearby restaurants.
- Madikwe Game Reserve. Madikwe River Lodge www.madikweriverlodge.com

On most days we will have breakfast, lunch and dinner at our accommodation, although on two or three days we may take picnic lunches with us into the field. If you have any particular dietary restrictions or any particular culinary dislikes please advise us in advance.

At Madikwe, we have late breakfasts after morning spotlighting sessions and may not have breakfast until 11:00 on some mornings, so you may want to bring snack bars with you to keep you going on these drives.

Please ensure that you drink only bottled water and/or soft drinks throughout. (NB: Do not drink if water the seal has been broken!).

WEATHER

It is likely to be hot during the day but it could be much cooler when spotlighting at night, and at dawn. The mean temperatures (centigrade) are: Kimberley 18C; Heidelberg area 15C; and Madikwe 28C

INSECTS

Mosquitoes may be a problem at some locations but this varies a lot from year to year and we have not experienced any problems previously, however, please come prepared with repellent and long sleeved clothing.

HEALTH

- It is essential that you check with your doctor regarding vaccination requirements for South Africa, particularly with regards to yellow fever.
- Malaria is low risk throughout and Madikwe Game Reserve and Suikerbosrand are generally considered to be malaria-free but please check with your doctor regarding the latest malaria advice.
- If you have any existing medical conditions please ensure that you bring all personal medication with you, as it is unlikely that we will be able to obtain replacement medication in the areas that we are visiting.
- If you do have any pre-existing medical conditions and/or are taking any regular medication would you please provide details when booking or alternatively ensure that Ewan is made aware of this at the start of the tour.

SMOKING

Smoking (including E-cigarettes) is not permitted on minibuses etc used but the leaders will try to ensure that there are adequate stops for those requiring a nicotine fix. We would also ask smokers to respect non-smokers during the tour and refrain from smoking during meals.

CLOTHING AND OTHER EQUIPMENT

- Temperatures can be extremely cold at night and early in the mornings if a cold front passes through, so please bring some warm clothing including a warm fleece and a windproof jacket plus gloves with you. Sunblock is essential.
- We expect to spotlight on at least four nights but this will in part depend on weather conditions. Consequently please bring torches with you.
- Sober coloured clothing, hats and backpacks, greens, browns and dark blue etc is preferable, conspicuous colours such as white, red and yellow should be avoided.
- A folding umbrella and light-weight waterproofs could be useful if we do experience any rain.
- Waterproof boots should not be necessary, but a pair of sturdy waterproof walking shoes is advisable.
- Good binoculars with a specification of at least 8x30 are essential, particularly when spotlighting, and if you have them a telescope and tripod or monopod may well be useful.
- Photographic opportunities should be excellent.

CHECKLIST

We will attempt to do a daily log each evening. Ewan will keep a track of what has been seen at each locality and at some stage; there is always time to catch-up. A bird and mammal checklist will be sent to you before departure and we will provide a trip report after the tour.

INTERNET

Wi-fi access can be erratic at a number of places where we stay so please ensure that anyone likely to be trying to contact you while you are away is aware that you may not have access to email on some days.

EMERGENCIES AT HOME

Mobile phones do work in South Africa but coverage is patchy so people may not be able to contact you. In the event that someone does need to contact you while you are on the tour please ask them to contact the Wildwings' office on 0117 965 8333 and they will arrange for the message to be forwarded on to the tour.

Financial Protection:

WildWings (which is a division of Birds and Wildlife Limited) has financial failure insurance provided by Travel Vault which fully protects you should Birds and Wildlife Limited cease trading.

All passenger bookings are fully insured including the initial deposit and balance payments. The policy also includes repatriation, arising from the cancellation or curtailment of your travel arrangements in the unlikely event of the insolvency of Birds and Wildlife Limited.

For full details please see <https://wildwings.co.uk/about/financial-protection/>

GENERAL INFORMATION

How To Book

The easiest way to book most of our holidays and pay the deposit is online via our website, using the **'Book This Tour'** button on the relevant tour page. This is secure and the most efficient way to book.

For some holidays (eg cruises where we act as agent for an expedition ship company or where we may be awaiting a few final details from our ground agents), there may not be a 'book' button in which case please either use the 'Enquire about this Tour' button to contact us, call the office or email tours@wildwings.co.uk

We are happy to accept telephone bookings but these must be confirmed in writing within seven days by completing a booking form (which can be downloaded from our website) and posting this to our office address in Surrey.

We are usually able to hold provisional reservations for up to 7 days, however, a completed booking form and deposit is then required to confirm your place(s) as otherwise these will be released.

Please be sure to read our Booking Conditions and General Information prior to booking.

These can be found in full via the footer on every page on our website or available from our office on request.

When to Book

Early booking is advised as all our tours have small group sizes and so they can fill very quickly; indeed, occasionally this can happen before we have even uploaded details to the website.

The number of single rooms is sometimes limited and these are often taken quickly so we encourage you to plan ahead if you would like one.

When a trip becomes a 'guaranteed departure' early on, this also means that everyone can book flights which is advantageous for all.

Last-minute Bookings: We inevitably receive a few unexpected cancellations, so it is always worth enquiring about vacancies on any tour even if it is departing in the near future.

Payments

Deposit: The amount of **booking deposit per person** is shown alongside every tour on our website. We accept deposit payments by **electronic bank transfer** (please ask for our bank details), **UK cheque** (made payable to *Birds and Wildlife Limited* and drawn on a UK bank in GB Pounds Sterling) or Visa and Mastercard.

Balance: The date for the payment of the **tour balance** is specified on the tour invoice and is generally due no later than 12 weeks prior to departure (although it may be earlier for some trips)

such as expedition cruises). We will send you an invoice before the balance is due.

We accept balance payments by **electronic bank transfer (BACS) or UK cheque**.

Payment by overseas customers

These must be made in GB Pounds Sterling and should be made by electronic transfer directly to our bank (please ask for details).

Unfortunately, we cannot accept cheques on US Banks in US Dollars, or cheques in Euros.

Credit cards - please note:

(i) **We do NOT accept credit cards for balance payments** from customers living within the UK or European Economic Area (the EEA is the EU countries plus Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway).

(ii) For customers living in North America, Australia and all other areas outside of the UK and the EEA, we are able to accept payment by Visa and MasterCard credit cards but with a charge of 2.5% of the transaction amount to help offset credit card company charges.

Late Booking Payments: In order for us to guarantee hotel rooms etc, full payment is required at time of booking when this is made within 12 weeks of departure. [Other Things You Need To Know](#)

Passports and Visas

For UK passport holders: your **passport must be valid for the proposed duration of your stay** and many countries insist that it does not expire for at least 6 months after the intended end of your trip.

It can take more than a month to renew a British passport, so we recommend you apply as soon as possible if you need to do this. Please advise us as soon as you have the updated details.

Health and Vaccinations

You must consult your Doctor in good time prior to travel to establish what immunisations (if any) are needed for your chosen holiday.

For full and up-to-date health information we encourage everyone to consult either NHS Scotland 'Fit for Travel' website or The National Travel Health Network and Centre (NaTHNaC) prior to booking any overseas holiday and to then recheck for any updated advice at least 8 weeks before your trip.

The 'Fit for Travel' website, for example, has country-specific page with information on vaccine recommendations, any current health risks or outbreaks, as well as factsheets with information on staying healthy abroad.

You may also wish to contact your health adviser or pharmacy for advice on other preventive measures and managing any pre-existing medical conditions while you are abroad.

Your Safety and Travel Advice

An unavoidable aspect of travelling abroad nowadays is the risk it may pose to your safety and security. The best advice on current risks is provided by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO).

In order to assess and protect against any risks in your chosen destination, we recommend that you refer to the relevant FCDO Travel Advice both prior to booking and regularly before you travel.

'Travel Aware' is a travel safety campaign run by the FCDO and another useful resource and this can be found at www.gov.uk/travelaware

Travel Insurance

Good travel insurance is essential before setting off on any overseas trip and in common with all responsible tour operators, **it is a condition of booking** that all clients are fully and adequately insured before travelling overseas with us.

Be aware that some destinations may require you to produce proof of comprehensive travel insurance (eg a valid insurance certificate) at Immigration on arrival in the country, so you should carry your documentation with you.

Your travel insurance should cover against cancellation, curtailment, missed departure, delay, personal accident, death, loss of baggage and valuables (see note below), personal liability and legal expenses.

Most importantly, your insurance must cover you fully in respect of medical care and repatriation should you become too ill to continue with the tour, including the cost of emergency evacuation by helicopter or air ambulance should this be necessary.

Note that passenger liability insurance covering the transportation that we hire, particularly in Third World countries, may be inadequate; it is therefore important that your insurance cover includes sufficient provision for your dependents in the event of an accident.

We recommend that you obtain travel insurance as soon as possible after booking your holiday to ensure you are protected right from the word go in the event of unexpected cancellation prior to departure due to accident or illness. You must inform your insurers of any pre-existing medical conditions (including those of persons not necessarily travelling but upon whom your holiday may depend) that may require treatment during a period of overseas travel or might cause you to cancel the trip.

Once you have arranged your insurance, please be sure to send us the following essential details: name and contact details of your insurance provider, your policy number, expiry date and your insurers 24hr Emergency Assistance number.

Important Things to Note about Insurance

- Travel Insurance does **not** normally provide sufficient cover for valuable optical equipment, which is often best protected under your own household insurance policy. If in doubt ask your insurers for advice prior to travel.
- Most travel insurance policies limit the amount of cover, typically up to a maximum tour cost of £5000 per person. If the tour you are booking exceeds this amount, additional cover can usually be provided upon payment of additional premium. **We recommend all travellers check** their individual policy limit to ensure the full cost of their holiday is covered.

Arranging Your Insurance

Due to UK Government legislation, we are not allowed to offer or recommend travel-related insurance to customers. Premiums can vary widely according to your age, needs, health, choice of destination and other factors, while many people nowadays have Annual Travel Insurance cover. For these reasons, we leave you free to shop around and pick your own policy, one best suited to your own individual needs.

Special Diets & Other Requests

We pass on all such requests to hotels and other suppliers and do our best to ensure (but, of course, cannot guarantee) that your needs will be met. Please be sure to tell us about these (in as much detail as possible) at the time of booking, to allow good time to make the necessary arrangements.

Smoking and vaping

Almost all of our clients prefer a smoke-free environment. For the enjoyment and comfort of all, we ask that smokers refrain from smoking in proximity to the group and respect our NO SMOKING policy in the vehicle, at meals and when watching wildlife.

Any Questions?

If you have any questions at any time, please either email (tours@wildwings.co.uk) us or call the office and we will do our best to assist you.

Our office is generally open from 09:00-17:00 from Monday to Friday. In the event that we are unable to take your call, please leave a message on our answerphone and we will contact you as soon as we can.

Thank you for your interest in our tours. We do hope that you will be able to join us

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