

WILDLIFE TRAVEL



24th August to 6th September 2020 (14 days)

SOUTH AFRICA

Wild flowers and wildlife of the Cape Floral Kingdom

"thoroughly enjoyed the trip
and all the experiences.
Brilliant... and all so well
planned"

South Africa 2017

The Cape Floral Kingdom is a wildlife wonder. This tiny, yet unique plant kingdom, situated in the mountains of the southernmost tip of Africa, boasts spectacularly high numbers of plant species: about 8,600 in an area roughly the size of Scotland; two thirds of which grow nowhere else.

In addition, the adjacent Succulent Karoo is the world's richest area for succulents, and the clay soils that form the common border of these two regions hold the greatest concentration of bulbous species in the world. We'll explore all of these areas in spring, the peak time for flowering.

On this tour, we will traverse many different landscapes - 'Mediterranean' heathlands (fynbos), semi-desert shrublands and temperate rainforests. Each has its characteristic soils and climate. The rainfall ranges from 75 mm per year in parts of Namaqualand to at least 2,000 mm per year in the eastern part of the area. Each landscape has its own kaleidoscope of plant species.

Although the plants are the chief attraction, we will also enjoy the rich wildlife of the area: African Penguins and Southern Right Whales along the coast; iridescent sunbirds and the endemic Cape Sugarbird in the fynbos; stately Blue Cranes and the stunning Black Harrier out on the plains; endearing hyraxes bounding about the rocks of Cape Point; and 'big game' including Cape Mountain Zebra, Bontebok, Springbok, Eland and Rhebok are all likely to be amongst the trip's highlights.

You can easily extend this tour to see more of Cape Town with its dramatic Table Mountain, or to spend time visiting some of the famous wineries: it would be possible to fly out before the group or to stay on after.



Price
£tbc

Single Room Supplement
£tbc

Full board

- Day 1** flight to Cape Town
- Day 2** Kirstenbosch
- Day 3** Cape Point
- Day 4-5** West Coast Nat'l Park
- Day 6-8** S'thern Namaqualand
- Day 9-10** De Hoop
- Day 11** Overberg
- Day 12** Betty's Bay
- Day 13** Hermanus
- return to UK (**Day 14**)

Leader
Charlie Rugeroni

Group size
min/max tbc

spring flowers and
wildlife of the Cape
floral kingdom

Wildlife and culture holidays



Our profits are donated to the **Wildlife Trusts**



FOCUS OF INTEREST

This is one of our 'mainly wild flowers' holidays. The itineraries for these are mainly based around plants but there may also be visits to certain areas for birds and general wildlife. There is the opportunity to enjoy the birds and general wildlife in each location, as well as the culture of the areas visited.



The Cape Floral Kingdom

The Cape Floral Kingdom is a wildlife wonder. This tiny, yet unique plant kingdom boasts spectacularly high numbers of plant species - about 8,600 in a relatively small area. About 5,800 of these grow nowhere else in the world. On this tour, we will traverse many different landscapes including 'mediterranean' heathlands (fynbos) and semi-desert shrublands (Namaqualand and Little Karoo).

Each has its characteristic soils and climate. We will see tiny succulent plants in the Knersvlakte and many colourful shrubs and herbs in meadows and pastures.

The timing and extent of flowering in the Clanwilliam and Namaqualand areas is notoriously difficult to predict. In general, good displays depend on sufficient early and follow-up winter rains, as well as weather conditions at the time of travel, eg. sunny, windless days.

ITINERARY

The itinerary may change at the discretion of the leader or local guides, depending upon local conditions, in particular the flowering season and the weather. The plant diversity is so great that in all areas there are many exciting plants to be seen no matter what the flowering season brings.

Day 1, 24th Aug Overnight flights take us from London to Cape Town, arriving the following morning.

Day 2, 25th Aug We have a leisurely start to our holiday with a visit to one of the most famous Botanic Gardens in the world, set in one of the most stunning of landscapes. Nestled below the towering cliffs of Table Mountain in the suburbs of Cape Town is **Kirstenbosch Botanic Gardens**, where we will have time to explore the wide collection of plants from across the country. The horticultural displays include a wonderful array of South African plants, with ericas and proteas aplenty, including South Africa's largest protea, *Leucadendron argenteum*, the Silver Tree,



endemic to the slopes of Table Mountain above us. The flowering shrubs in turn attract the attention of Cape Sugarbirds and three species of sunbirds, while mousebirds and Cape Spurfowl feed around the flowerbeds.

The glasshouses have a wonderful collection of succulent plants from the drier areas of the country. This is a perfect introduction to our itinerary and the (bewilderingly diverse) flora of the region. The Gardens also have a very good book shop. **o/n Cape Town**

Day 3, 26th Aug This morning we head down the Cape Peninsula to **Cape Point Nature Reserve**. The Peninsula holds more plant species than the entire British Isles, and we will start to become familiar with some of the major groups that will be keeping us company over the trip: proteas, leucospermums, leucadendrons and mimetes, ericas, gladioli and the reed-like restios (the 'fine' plants that give the fynbos its name). In the open areas of the reserve we will look for **Bontebok** and Cape Mountain Zebra, Eland and Chacma Baboons, as well as visiting the Point itself, where Cape Cormorants breed and the endemic Black Girdled Lizard sunbathes on the rocks.

After lunch we will head back towards the city and the Cape Flats. This area, now part of the urban sprawl of Cape Town, was once covered by the species-rich Cape Flats Sand Fynbos vegetation. Less than 1% of this habitat remains, and the surviving fragments are now the last retreat for a variety of critically endangered species. We will visit **Rondevelei nature reserve**, one of the key conservation sites for this habitat, where we will learn about the conservation work going on to ensure their survival, and meet *Erica verticillata* and *Serruria foeniculacea*, which are both now endemic to this one site.

We will finish our day with a visit to the nearby Strandfontein nature reserve, a series of pools, which attract large numbers of wildfowl and wetland birds, including flamingos and pelicans. **o/n Cape Town**

Day 4, 27th Aug We leave the big city behind and make our way up the west coast. In the Darling Hills, we will visit the Tinie Versveld Wild Flower Reserve.



Photos: (page 2, left to right) *Romulea cruciata*, *Erica versicolor* and *Aloidendron dichotomum* (page 3 from top) *Mimetes cucullatus*, Orange-breasted Sunbird, *Leucospermum tomentosum*

The shales in the Darling area have a **profusion of bulbs**, perhaps including our first *Romuleas*, *Babianas* and *Lachenalias*.

We will stop on the coast for lunch, exploring the 'strandveld' where we will search for the bizarre *Freesia viridis* and keep our eyes peeled for Haviside's Dolphin playing just beyond the surf, endemic to the Benguela current along this coastline. Nearby we will stop briefly to listen for the endemic Cape Long-billed Lark. **o/n Langebaan**

Day 5, 28th Aug Today we explore the flashy displays of daisies on the coastal sands and the endemic-rich granites of the **West Coast National Park**, centred around the 16 km long Langebaan lagoon. After the winter rains, enormous patches of daisies, such as *Arctotis hirsuta*, *Gazania krebsiana* and *Dimorphotheca pluvialis* paint the hillsides white and orange, surely one of the seasonal highlights of this coastline. Amongst the granitic rocks we will find more wonderful bulbs, with *Lachenalias*, *Trachyandras*, *Moraeas* and *Spiloxenes* all likely to be in flower. The open 'flats' of the reserve are home to grazing animals, with Springbok, Bontebok and Cape Mountain Zebra all present here, while the stunning Black Harrier may be found, quartering the hillside. **o/n Langebaan**

Day 6, 29th Aug Back on the road, we head north into the southern edge of **Namaqualand**, where the Cape Mountains give way to the valleys and plains of the **Karoo**. Here we will visit the 'grinding plains' of the Knersvlakte, a low-lying quartz plain, part of the Succulent Karoo flora and home to a diversity of succulent plants, many of them truly tiny, including the delightful *Argyroderma* 'babies bottoms'.

From here we climb up into the **Cederberg mountains**, enjoying the spectacular views out to the north, before arriving at Nieuwoudtville, 'the world bulb capital', our home for next two nights. **o/n Nieuwoudtville**

Day 7, 30th Aug There are a variety of sites in the Nieuwoudtville area that differ between years and we will take local advice in visiting the sites that are at their best.

As we potter from place to place, the diversity at our feet is amazing. Damp valleys are dominated by the tall yellow *Bulbinella nutans* and there is a profusion of *Ornithogalums*, *Lachenalias*, *Moraeas*, *Romuleas*, *Ixias* and *Geissorhizas*. Delicate *Hesperanthes* only open late in the day in preparation for nocturnal pollinators. Three species of *Sparaxis* are here and there are numerous *Babianas* and *Gladious*.



Nearby we will be sure to visit the 'Kokerboom Forest', a grove of iconic Quiver Trees *Aloidendron dichotomum*.

Whilst botanising, we will also keep our eyes open for the impressive Ludwig's Bustard feeding in the fields, with various lark species singing overhead. **o/n Nieuwoudtville**

Day 8, 31st Aug Today we head south and cross the spectacular, arid **Tanqwa Karoo National Park**, home to Gemsbok and Bat-eared Fox, Mountain Wheatear and Martial Eagle. We will encounter some awe-inspiring views as we head up into the Koue Bokkerveld mountains, and then drop down into the fertile valley where we will spend the night. **o/n Ceres**

Day 9, 1st Sept From Ceres we head eastwards, crossing the Langeberg at the scenic Tradouw Pass and dropping down onto the coastal plains, where Blue Cranes and Denham's Bustards forage in the fields. **o/n De Hoop**

Day 10, 2nd Sept We will spend today exploring the wonderful **De Hoop Nature Reserve**. The Potberg mountain, within the reserve, is home to a colony of Cape Vultures, and the unique limestone fynbos here has showy species such as *Protea obtusifolia* and *P.neriifolia*, *Leucospermum truncatulum* and *L. pattersoni*, various Leucadendrons, Polygalas and Ericas.

Photos (page 4) *Pelargonium triste* (left), *Protea obtusifolia* (right)
(page 5 from top) Blue Crane, Black Harrier, African Penguin, *Dorotheanthus bellidiformis*, *Babiana ringens*



Southern Right Whales gather off the coast in good numbers here, and we can expect to get good views of mothers with their new calves. The reserve also holds healthy populations of 'game', with Rhebok, Bontebok, Cape Mountain Zebra and Eland all grazing right outside our rooms. **o/n De Hoop**

Day 11, 3rd Sept From De Hoop we drive via the Agulhas Plains and the plains of the **Overberg** to Hermanus and Walker Bay. Much of the plains have been converted to wheat, but patches of 'renosterveld' vegetation survive along the roadsides, supporting a variety of *Gladiolus* and *Watsonia*. **o/n Hermanus**

Day 12, 4th Sept This morning we head for Betty's Bay, where we will visit the **African Penguin colony** at Stony Point, also home to all four of the Cape's coastal cormorants and some very relaxed Rock Hyraxes. We will then visit the **Harold Porter Botanical Gardens**, where beyond the more formal plantings, we will explore the hillside where fynbos vegetation intermingles with afro-montane forest of *Podocarpus latifolius*, *Cunonia capensis* and *Widdringtonia nodiflora*. **o/n Hermanus**

Day 13, 5th Sept This morning we will visit the Fernkloof Nature Reserve, just on the edge of Hermanus for more wonderful wild flowers. After lunch on the sea front, where we will have another chance to see Southern Right Whales or maybe even a passing pod of dolphins, we return to Cape Town in time to board our evening flights home, arriving back in London early on **Day 14, 6th Sept**

Accommodation, Meals & Transport

We will stay at local guesthouses, bed & breakfasts and lodges. All rooms have hot water and private facilities, with the possible exception of one of the smaller places, where you might, but not always, have to share a bathroom with other members of the tour. Meals are a mixture of local and international cuisine: special diets can be catered for.

Transport will be in small minibus/people carrier: we may be in two vehicles, depending on group size.

Photos: (page 6) Southern Black Korhaan (left) and Gemsbok (right)
(page 7, left to right) *Erica verticillata*, *Leucospermum grandiflorum*, *Protea compacta*



Leaders and guides

Charlie Rugeroni is a garden designer and all-round naturalist based in Dorset. His knowledge and interest in wildlife stems from his previous work in nature conservation, with English Nature, Butterfly Conservation and in Venezuelan nationals parks. Charlie has led several of our holidays in recent years, particularly our trips with a botanical focus, including Costa Rica, Morocco, Portugal, France, Romania and Mallorca.

Our local guide for this trip will be **Dalton Gibbs**, a Cape Town-based naturalist with a deep interest in all aspects of ecology (and history if you get him started!). Dalton has long been a key person in the City of Cape Town's nature conservation and his various responsibilities have included running Rondevlei Nature Reserve, monitoring critically endangered flora, assessing biodiversity of reserves, monitoring bird breeding colonies and chasing down escaped hippos - which regularly graze on his lawn on the edge of Rondevlei! We may be joined by a second driver/guide, depending on the eventual group size.

Health and Fitness

No strenuous walking is involved but you need to have a **reasonable level of general fitness** to be able to participate in the holiday. The tour visits several locations and we will be moving on every two or three days, which can be tiring if you are not used to it. However, the trip is designed to be relatively comfortable so please discuss any concerns with us.

You should consult your GP for travel health advice **AT LEAST EIGHT WEEKS** before travelling. We do not visit any areas where there is risk of Malaria, but the 'standard' travel vaccinations to consider are tetanus, diphtheria, hepatitis A and B, typhoid, rabies and cholera.

Weather

This is early spring in South Africa, with average daily temperatures around 10°-20° C. It can feel chilly, especially at night and on the coast, where it may also be windy and we might expect some rain. On the other hand, on some days it will likely get to 25° or a little higher during the hottest part of the day.



Flights

The group flights are with British Airways. Flight times for 2020 aren't yet available, but are likely to be similar to 2019 times as follows:

24th Aug depart London 21.40, arrive Cape Town 10.10 (25th)
5th Sept depart Cape Town 19.30, arrive London 06.30 (6th)

South Africa is 1 hour ahead of UK time in August.

You might want to consider flying out a day or two early, to have a more relaxed start to the trip. It is also possible to fly from Manchester, connecting in London: please talk to us about the options.

Passports and visas

UK passport holders must have a valid passport, valid for at least 30 days after the end of the holiday with at least two blank pages. For visits of up to 90 days, you don't need a visa. For holders of non-UK passports it is essential that you check with the South African embassy or consulate and obtain the necessary documents prior to travel.

Insurance

Personal travel insurance providing good medical cover, including emergency rescue and repatriation, is essential for this trip.



TO BOOK

Contact us to check availability and reserve a place. Complete the Booking Form and send to Sunvil Holidays (CAA-ATOL Licence 808, ABTA V6218), our tour operator, with your deposit. All details about booking are given in the Booking Pack.

DEPOSIT PER PERSON £1000, SECOND INSTALLMENT ON CONFIRMATION OF HOLIDAY £tbc. BALANCE DUE BY 25/05/2020

INCLUDED: Return flights from the UK. Local transport as specified in itinerary. 11 night's accommodation, full board basis. Entry fees (National Parks and Botanic Gardens). Bottled water throughout. Services of leaders and local guides.

NOT INCLUDED: Drinks and refreshments. Gratuities. Travel insurance. Entry fees: additional sightseeing

WILDLIFE TRAVEL

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All photos taken on our 2017 trip to South Africa: a trip report is available to download from www.wildlife-travel.co.uk/trip-reports

Front cover (clockwise from top): Bontebok, *Bulbinella natans*, *Protea cynaroides*, *Arctotis hirsuta*. Back: Cape Sugarbird and *Gladiolus carinatus*