

WILDLIFE TRAVEL

13th-26th January 2027 (14 days)

DRAKENSBERG

mountain flowers on the 'Roof of Africa'

"guides knowledgeable ,
patient and caring"

"magnificent... superb scenery.
almost too much to see and
absorb"

Drakensberg 2026

Spectacular wild flowers, big game, mountain birds and rich history on the 'Roof of Africa'.

The Drakensberg escarpment - "the mountains of the dragon" - is the highest mountain region in southern Africa, reaching heights of over 3,000 metres and curving up from the Eastern Cape around Lesotho and towards Kwazulu-Natal. More than 2,000 species of plants are found here, of which almost one fifth are endemic, found nowhere else.

These awe-inspiring mountains have been designated as a World Heritage Site both for their scenic and natural diversity, and for the area's cultural significance. The caves and cliffs of these mountains hide one of the greatest concentrations of rock art in the world, with more than 40,000 pictures at over 600 sites, one of which we hope to visit during our tour.

January is the start of the South African summer and our visit is timed to coincide with the peak flowering season in the mountains. Among the many highlights of the trip we can hope to see fields of Kniphofia red hot poker, delicate orchids and wonderful proteas in full bloom.

For those who can drag their attention away from the amazing flowers of the mountains, the Drakensberg offers much else of interest. There is a rich natural history which should appeal to all. Antelope we may encounter includes Blesbok, Black Wildebeest and the stately Eland. The area has a rich bird diversity, including local specialities such as Drakensberg Rock-Jumper, Drakensberg Siskin, Southern Bald Ibis and the elegant Gurney's Sugarbird, which visit the flowering proteas to feed on nectar, while overhead we can expect Cape Griffon and Bearded Vulture.



Price

£5,995

Single Room Supplement
£450

Full board

Day 1 depart UK
Day 2 Durban to Underberg
Day 3-4 Sani Pass/Lesotho
Day 5 Underberg
Day 6 Giant's Castle
Day 7 Bushman caves
Day 8 drive to Golden Gate
Day 9 Golden Gate Nat'l Park
Day 10 Witsieshoek
Day 11 Sentinel
Day 12 Witsieshoek
Day 13 Johannesburg
Day 14 to UK

Leaders

Philip Precey
with local guides

Group size

min 5, max 10

mountain botany,
endemic birds,
small group



ITINERARY

Please note that we may change the itinerary to suit local weather and road conditions or for other practical reasons, at the leader's discretion.

Day 1 Wed 13th January. Our overnight flight takes us from the UK to Johannesburg, arriving early morning **Day 2 Thu 14th Jan**, where we connect to a short flight to Durban, and then drive to the base of the Drakensberg mountains. night Underberg.

Day 3 Fri 15th Jan. Today we slowly ascend the Sani Pass by four-wheel-drive, stopping along the way to look for the special flora. Sani Pass is world famous for its flora and the ascent gives us a chance to appreciate how the species change with altitude. The list of special plants we might see today is very long, including *Sandersonia aurantica* along streams at the bottom of the pass, *Dierama dracomontana* on grassy hillslopes, *Protea dracomontana* and the dramatic *Gladiolus flanaganii* growing out of sheer basalt cliffs near the top of the pass. Drakensberg Rock-jumpers and Drakensberg Siskins are bird specials of the upper reaches.

Tonight we spend in a lodge perched on the lip of the escarpment with sweeping views across the Drakensberg. night Sani Mountain Lodge

Day 4 Sat 16th Jan. For our second day around the Sani Pass, we will explore the harsh alpine plateau inland into Lesotho, enjoying and *Rhodohypoxis baurii* on the rocks, alpine *Helichrysum* species, Sloggett's Ice Rat and Malachite Sunbird. Finally, we'll head slowly down the pass, spending more time searching for species that we might have missed on the way up, before ending up back in Underberg for the night. night Underberg

Day 5 Sun 17th Jan. A day targeting mid-altitude species. We hope to access a marshy area where the pink orchid *Satyrrium hallacki* grows in profusion alongside the large *Disa cooperi*. Grey-crowned Crane is a special bird of the area, where large stands of *Crocsmia paniculata* are found along the roadsides. night Underberg

Day 6 Mon 18th Jan. We head north, a scenic drive to Giant's Castle in the central Drakensberg, stopping along the way to admire *Hesperantha coccinea* along the streamsides, the candelabras of *Brunsvigia undulata* and many more. night Giant's Castle

Day 7 Tue 19th Jan. The focus of the morning will be a walk to the famous Bushman paintings cave, birding and botanising along the way. The open grasslands can be full of flowers, including *Moraea brevistyla*. The forest near the mouth of the cave has *Crocsmia aurea* along the edges and *Streptocarpus gardenii* on the giant moss-covered boulders. Silver *Protea roupelliae* line the paths in places, often with Gurney's Sugarbirds and Malachite Sunbirds, and this is a good place to see Eland, the largest antelope in the world and the equally spectacular Bush Beauty butterfly. night Giant's Castle

Day 8 Wed 20th Jan. Today we'll walk the riverside trail, looking for specials such as *Gomphostigma virgatum*, while Jackal Buzzards and Bearded Vultures fly overhead, before heading north on the long journey to Golden Gate National Park. night Golden Gate Hotel

Day 9 Thu 21st Jan. We'll explore the Golden Gate National Park, famous for its scenic sandstone buttresses and herds of plains game such as Black Wildebeest, as well as its mid-altitude flora that includes *Agapanthus campanulatus*. night Golden Gate Hotel

Days 10-12 Fri 22nd to Sun 24th Jan. Today we head up towards the Sentinel and settle in to the upgraded Witsieshoek Mountain Lodge with sweeping views over the amphitheatre of the Drakensberg, and begin our exploration of the famous Sentinel / Witsieshoek area, spanning the upper reaches of Royal Natal Park. The area has an abundance of *Moraea* and *Eucomis* species, *Kniphofia thodei* and *Dianthus basuticus*, amongst a huge diversity of alpine and around 15 species of orchids. On one day we might do a more difficult (optional) hike towards the Chain Ladders, hoping to see some of the high altitude specials such as *Nerine bowdeni* which will just have started to flower. Drakensberg Rock-jumpers are found on the scree slopes, with Mountain Beauty butterflies in the lower altitude areas. night Witsieshoek Mountain Lodge

Day 13 Mon 25th Jan. After some last botanising, we drive northwards across the grassy highveld plateau eventually reaching Johannesburg International airport in time for our evening flight back to London, arriving **Day 14 Tue 26th Jan.**

Accommodation and transport

All of the lodges and hotels are of a good standard, some with very attractive settings. All the rooms have private bathrooms. All meals are included, with picnic lunches.

We will be travelling by minivan for this trip, transferring to four wheel drives for the Sani Pass, to reach the best of the wild flower habitats. We will do our best to ensure that our travelling is as comfortable as possible, taking plenty of stops for comfort breaks and to enjoy interesting areas.

Leader and guides

Philip Precey will be familiar to our travellers as an experienced Wildlife Travel leader, having led more than 100 of our holidays over the past 20 years. This will be Philip's fourth visit to South Africa, and his second to the Drakensberg Mountains.

We will be accompanied throughout by an expert South African botanist guide.

Weather and seasons

It is mid-summer in the Drakensberg and a wide range of temperatures can be expected. It can be hot at lower altitudes (up to 30C), but most of our time will be at medium to high altitudes where it will be milder and often cold in the evenings. At higher altitudes, it is often warm in the direct sun but otherwise cool if there is a breeze. We can expect some rain, most of which falls in very dramatic late afternoon and night thunderstorms.

Health and Fitness

You will need to have a **reasonable level of general fitness** to get the most from the holiday. Although most of the walks are not long, we will sometimes be walking on **uneven, rocky terrain or wet ground**. Walking boots (lightweight ok) are essential for most areas. There are a few occasions when we walk uphill but this is not excessive.

We will be spending time at altitudes of c 3,250m asl. There is some risk of altitude sickness although rest and drinking plenty of water usually relieve any mild effects (headaches and tiredness). If you have suffered from altitude problems before or are suffering from any medical condition, you should take your doctor's advice. We will be taking it easy at these higher altitudes and none of the walking will be strenuous.



Flights

Group flights are with British Airways from London Heathrow, as follows:

13th January Depart **London Heathrow 18.30**, arrive Johannesburg 07.35 (14th)
14th January Depart Johannesburg 11.05, arrive Durban 12.15
25th January Depart Johannesburg 19.35, arrive **London Heathrow 04.55 (26th)**

South Africa is two hours ahead of GMT.

Entry Requirements: Passports, Visas and covid

On this itinerary we will be travelling from South Africa into Lesotho and then back again.

Your passport must have an expiry date at least 90 days after the date you arrive in Lesotho (day 3), and at least 30 days after the date you leave South Africa.

Your passport should have at least 6 blank pages: 4 blank pages are required for passport stamping going in and out of Lesotho, and South Africa requires at least 2 blank pages.

You can visit both South Africa and Lesotho without a visa for up to 90 days for tourism.

For up-to-date information, check www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice

Travel Health

There is a very low risk of malaria in the parts of South Africa and Lesotho we visit, and prophylaxis isn't usually recommended. Vaccines against Hepatitis A, Tetanus and Typhoid are recommended for most travellers, and you might also want to consider Cholera, Hepatitis B, Rabies and Tuberculosis vaccines.

Travellers should arrange an appointment with their health professional at least four to six weeks before travel to assess health risks. Up-to-date information on travel health can be found at travelhealthpro.org.uk

TO BOOK: Contact us to check availability and reserve a place. Then 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 £2,000, SECOND INSTALMENT ON
CONFIRMATION OF HOLIDAY £2,000 (to cover committed costs)
BALANCE DUE BY 14/10/2026**

INCLUDED: Return flights as describe, London to Durban, Johannesburg to London. Local transport as specified in itinerary. 11 nights' accommodation (2 nights extra on overnight flight), full board basis (all meals from lunch day 2 to lunch day 13). Entry fees. Services of leader and local guides.

NOT INCLUDED: Drinks with evening meals, refreshments. Gratuities. Travel insurance. Visas and associated costs.

WILDLIFE TRAVEL

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Photos (all taken on our 2026 Wildlife Travel holiday to the Drakensberg):

A trip report from our recent Drakensberg holiday can be found on our website.