Southern Africa’s dry west is a unique and fascinating, yet under-visited land. A hotbed of faunal and floral diversity, this area harbors two botanical regions found nowhere else on earth; the Cape Floristic Region and the Succulent Karoo. Our ‘Budget Western SA’ tour showcases these areas and the range of special birds endemic to them; you can expect not only great birds, but some of the most dramatic scenery in Africa! Tour highlights include the stunning fynbos-clad slopes of the Western Cape, home to the stunning Cape Rockjumper and numerous other endemics; and the arid and semi-arid areas of the Karoo, which provide another great backdrop for a variety of bustards, larks and other endemics before we head back to Cape Town, taking in an impressive Cape Gannet colony and the West Coast National Park on the way.
THE TOUR AT A GLANCE…

THE ITINERARY

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TOUR ROUTE MAP…
THE TOUR IN DETAIL…

Day 1: Arrival in Cape Town and visit 
Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens. After 
arriving in Cape Town we will begin our 
exploration of the picturesque Cape Peninsula 
at one of the local birding hotspots.

Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens lies on the 
slopes of Table Mountain and is home to a 
plethora of endemics restricted to the 
Macchia-like Fynbos vegetation of the 
southern tip of Africa. Cape Spurfowl scurry 
across the lawns and the magnificent protea 
gardens are home to the spectacular Cape 
Sugarbird and Orange-breasted Sunbird, while 
Cape Bulbul, Olive Thrush, the attractive 
Cape Grassbird, Karoo Prinia, delightful 
Bokmakierie, Southern Boubou and Southern Double-collared Sunbird may be found in areas of 
denser cover.

We will also search for African Goshawk and Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawk that occasionally 
display above the indigenous forest that cloaks the upper slopes of the gardens. These forests are 
home to African Olive Pigeon, Lemon Dove, Cape Batis and Forest Canary.

Day 2: Optional Pelagic and greater Cape Town area. The cold upwelling of the Benguela current 
off Cape Town supports a wealth of pelagic seabirds, with vast concentrations of albatrosses, petrels, 
shearwaters and prions gathering in the deeper water at the edge of the continental shelf. Birding is 
excellent year-round and on the optional pelagic trip (see cost under financial details below) we 
hope to see Shy, Black-browed and both Yellow-nosed Albatrosses, Southern and Northern Giant 
Petrels, Cape and White-chinned Petrels, Sooty Shearwater, Wilson’s Storm Petrel and Cape Gannet. 
If we manage to locate one of the commercial fishing trawlers the birding can be truly spectacular, 
with a cloud of seabirds following in the wake of the vessel to feed on the fish offal. Once the excitement 
has subsided, we will carefully search through the 
thousands of birds present for rarities such as 
Wandering and Northern Royal Albatrosses. 
Cetaceans are almost always encountered and we 
have a good chance of seeing Bryde’s, Humpback 
and Southern Right Whales. It goes without saying 
that a day off the Cape is likely to be a highlight of 
any trip to South Africa! On our way to the Cape 
Peninsula we will visit the famous African Penguin 
colony, watch for the endemic African Oystercatcher 
along the adjacent rocky shoreline, and scan the 
offshore islets for the breeding populations of 
Crowned, Bank and Cape Cormorants.

For those that opt not to join the pelagic excursion, 
we will spend the morning at the productive

Orange-breasted Sunbird by Adam Riley

Cape Siskin by Gareth Robbins
Strandfontein Water Works. This is one of the most productive fresh water localities close to Cape Town, with species including Black-necked Grebe, Maccoa Duck, Southern Pochard and Cape Teal. Here we also have good chances to find the huge Great White Pelican, Greater and Lesser Flamingos and Hottentot Teal. Reedbeds here hold Little Rush and Lesser Swamp Warblers, and African Marsh Harrier is normally seen quartering over the area.

Whilst in False Bay we will also visit the famous African Penguin colony, watch for the endemic African Oystercatcher along the adjacent rocky shoreline, and scan the offshore islets for their breeding populations of Crowned, Bank and Cape Cormorants.

After enjoying this spectacle, we then travel to the Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve. This wonderful park showcases the most southwestern point of the continent and is very popular amongst birders and more general tourists alike. Here we should again find the charismatic Cape Sugarbird and the stunning Orange-breasted Sunbird, the former of which belongs to a family that is endemic to southern Africa, and perhaps the impressive Black Harrier, Grey-winged Francolin and Cape Siskin. We will explore the network of roads to less visited parts of the reserve, exploring secluded coves and searching for the elusive Mountain Zebra, beautiful sub-species of Blesbok – the Bontebok, the huge and majestic Common Eland and Chacma Baboon.

Please note: it is not unusual for the pelagic tour to be cancelled as a result of bad weather. Furthermore, the weather and ocean conditions off the Cape are extremely unpredictable, so our daily schedule will thus remain flexible to optimise our birding on both land and at sea.

Day 3: Rooi Els and Betty’s Bay. An early start will see us heading for the rugged Hottentots-Holland Mountains, in search of one of South Africa’s finest endemics: the handsome Cape Rockjumper. Though strikingly plumaged and conspicuous by their vocalizations, these charismatic birds possess an incredible ability to disappear amongst the boulders, and we may have to be patient if we wish to enjoy good sightings of these elusive creatures. Rock outcrops here also support Cape Rock Thrush, while the thick mountain fynbos is the favored habitat of Cape Siskin and the beautiful endemic Victorin’s Warbler. Chacma Baboon is fairly common here, but we will have to scan the rocky ridges carefully for the agile Klipspringer.

We will also stop in at Harold Porter Botanical Gardens in Betty’s Bay. This is an excellent site for several tough birds and will serve as a
backup for us if we are still on the hunt for any Cape endemics. The scenic gardens are blessed with fynbos patches and forested ravines. Victorin's Warbler and Cape Siskin may also found here, while more common species include Black Sawwing, Malachite Sunbird and Brimstone Canary.

Day 4: Cape Town to Ceres. We will start the day off with our greatest challenge, Knysna Warbler. This secretive, drab skulker has frustrated many a birder, and any view of it is a good one! By way of relief we will occasionally focus skyward for Forest Buzzard. Forest Canary is also pleasantly common here, but we would be very fortunate to see the secretive Buff-spotted Flufftail.

Leaving Cape Town behind, we will travel to the historic town of Paarl, dominated by the huge granite inselberg that is the source of the town’s name. Here we will call in at the Wildflower Reserve where we have further chances at Cape Sugarbird, Orange-breasted Sunbird and Fiscal Flycatcher. The massif of Paarl Mountain is also a reliable site for the inconspicuous Protea Canary and we shall spend some time trying to locate this species.

This afternoon we will then continue to the farming village of Ceres, gateway to the Tanqua Karoo; if time allows, we will search for the elusive, endemic Protea Canary – if we missed it earlier; on a nearby mountain pass overlooking the fertile valley. Other birds of interest here are White-backed Mousebird, Layard’s, Chestnut-vented Warblers, dainty Fairy Flycatcher, Acacia Pied Barbet and Karoo Thrush.

Day 5: Ceres to Calvinia. Just a short drive from the village of Ceres is the semi-arid, central plateau of South Africa known as the Karoo; a land of endless vistas and spectacular sunsets renowned for its endemic larks, chats and canaries. After leaving the famous fruit-growing valley of Ceres we will reach our first stop at Karoopoort, a narrow canyon that forms the gateway to the Succulent Karoo. Birds inhabiting the arid, rocky slopes and acacia-filled watercourses of this area include White-backed Mousebird, Acacia Pied Barbet, Mountain Wheatear, Layard’s and Chestnut-vented Warblers, Pririt Batis and the dainty Fairy Flycatcher. One of the area’s most charismatic birds is the highly localised Cinnamon-breasted Warbler. Though fairly vocal, this species is highly elusive and seeing it in
its habitat of jumbled boulders and rocky scree will require a combination of patience and perseverance.

Continuing northwards onto the open flats of the Karoo, we will watch the roadsides carefully for Karoo and Spike-heeled Larks, Tractrac, Sickle-winged and Karoo Chats and Yellow and White-throated Canaries. Pale Chanting Goshawk perch conspicuously on any vantage points and we may also find Verreaux’s and Booted Eagles. If we are very fortunate, we may even see the nomadic Ludwig’s Bustard striding through the desolate plains.

In the mid to late afternoon we will arrive in the Calvinia area, and here we will be in the Karoo proper. The usually dry river system that passes through the town, as well as the reedbeds here, are home to the endemic Namaqua Warbler (recently assigned to a monotypic genus, Phragmacia).

**Day 6: Calvinia & Brandvlei.** Today we have a full day to search for some of the scarce inhabitants of this unique botanical region. On leaving Calvinia we will search for flocks of Pale-winged Starling and we have further chances for Fairy Flycatcher. Three species of lark will be at the top of our hit list, namely Red Lark, a striking and very range-restricted endemic, and the highly nomadic Selater’s Lark and Black-eared Sparrow-Lark. Some of the other star birds here include many other nomads such as Burchell’s Courser, while Rufous-eared Warbler, Pale Chanting Goshawk, Grey Tit, White-backed Mousebird, Bokmakierie and Pirit Batis should be less of a challenge to find. We will also listen for the distinctive flight calls of Namaqua Sandgrouse and keep our eyes peeled for the cryptically coloured Karoo Korhaan. Some wonderful non-endemic species bound to capture our attention include the magnificent Martial Eagle, Lanner Falcon, Kori’s Bustard and Double-banded Courser. Today is also our first chance at finding Dusky Sunbird and we will make a concerted effort to locate a party of elusive Karoo Eremomelas.

**Day 7: Calvinia to Springbok.** This morning we have a fairly lengthy drive on some of the Karoo’s typical gravel roads. Our journey will give us further chances for a number of the unique Karoo species we may still be missing. In the afternoon we make a stop at Goegap Nature Reserve and while searching the rocky slopes and acacia lined watercourses, we have great opportunities of finding many of the difficult Karoo endemics that we should be getting to grips with by now. These include the vocal the highly localised Cinnamon-breasted Warbler, Layard’s and Chestnut-vented Warblers and Black-headed Canary.
Day 8: Springbok to Port Nolloth and return. We have an early start today from Springbok as we strike out for the diamond-mining town of Port Nolloth, a small town nestled near the Namibian border on South Africa’s west coast. This area is famous for a single species of lark that is found only here and in the extreme south of Namibia; namely Barlow’s Lark. Another species that occurs in this low coastal scrub is the endemic Cape Long-billed Lark, an outrageous bird with the longest bill of any southern African lark. Flocks of Cape Penduline Tit can also be found feeding as they move from bush to bush. In the afternoon we will make our way back inland to Springbok and, if time permits, we will visit the Goegap Nature Reserve once again in an attempt to track anything down that we may have missed.

Day 9: Springbok to Lambert’s Bay. Today we start the long journey back to Cape Town, and in the late afternoon we will cross the coastal plain to the Atlantic Ocean at Lambert’s Bay. If time allows, we will spend part of the evening at the immense Cape Gannet colony here, appreciating the spectacle of thousands of birds engaged in their deafening courtship rituals. The area also supports all three species of marine cormorants (Cape, Bank and Crowned), Kelp and Hartlaub’s Gulls and the smart African Oystercatcher.

Day 10: Lambert’s Bay to Langebaan. We will enjoy a pre-breakfast visit to the Cape Gannet colony on Bird Island within the borders of the town itself. After breakfast we will then head south to visit the globally important wetland site of the Berg River estuary. Most of the shore-birds will not have migrated this far south yet; however, checking in at the local hide may reveal Bar-tailed Godwit and Eurasian Curlew as well as Kittlitz’s and the localised Chestnut-banded Plovers. These areas also support large numbers of Greater and Lesser Flamingos, South African Shelduck, Cape Shoveler and numerous other waterfowl. Surrounding low, coastal vegetation (strandveld) is home to Pearl-breasted Swallow, Cape Penduline Tit, Karoo and Large-billed Larks and Fiscal Flycatcher.

One of our main targets here is the highly elusive Protea Canary, in case we missed it earlier and we will stop at a rocky valley near the town of Clanwilliam in our attempt to track down this difficult bird. Though fairly drab, this endemic has a delightful trisyllabic call that we will listen out for as we meander the track through the valley.

Day 11: Langebaan to Cape Town. On this final day of our tour of South Africa’s Western and Northern Cape Provinces, we...
will end in the West Coast National Park, another haven for many of local specialties. This reserve, just south of Langebaan, harbours the highest density of Black Harrier anywhere within its range, and we have great chances to encounter this splendid species as well as Grey-winged Francolin, Cape Penduline Tit and Southern Black Korhaan, amongst many others. The park is also well-known for its Common Eland, Hartebeest and even the tiny and often elusive Cape Grysbok. Today gives us a final chance to target any birds we would like to get better views of before we head south, back to the mother city of Cape Town.

**Day 12: Depart.** After a final breakfast together, this morning our tour will conclude at the Cape Town Airport.

**FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:**
Tour dates, prices, single supplement rates, approximate flight costs and spaces available for this tour are displayed on our website. Please see under IMPORTANT NOTES below.

**This includes:**
- All breakfasts;
- All lodgings;
- Ground transportation;
- Reserve entrance fees;
- Any activities as mentioned in the itinerary; and
- All guiding services (including local guides and tour leaders).

**The tour fee does not include:**
- ANY international and domestic flights;
- Visa fees;
- The optional pelagic excursion off Cape Town (see above);
- Any lunches and dinners, as well as breakfasts in Springbok;
- Any drinks;
- Any gratuities; and
- Telephone calls, laundry and other 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 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.

Tipping:
Tipping (drivers, lodge and restaurant staff, local guides and your Rockjumper guide) is NOT included on this Rockjumper tour. Therefore, if you feel that your Rockjumper leader and/or any local staff or guides have given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip them.

Special Notes:
- We will visit a variety of restaurants for lunches and dinners when these are available; however, on a few occasions you will be required to self-cater for dinners. On these days we will go to supermarkets en route to our lodgings where you will be able to purchase food provisions.
- Much of our time is spent in vehicles, as we do have to cover long distances in order to get to the best areas for birds and animals. The more luggage you pack the less room there is in the vehicle, so it is important for the comfort of yourself and your fellow travellers that you do not over-pack. Kindly stick to 20kg (44lb) for check in luggage and 8kg (+- 18lb) for hand luggage.
- Exiting the vehicle is prohibited in all areas and parks that contain dangerous animals.
- Crime is problematic in certain areas of South Africa. Exercise caution as you would for any big city where crime exists. Do not unnecessarily flaunt cash and valuables and do not leave valuables exposed in the vehicle.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE DETAILS:
This tour does not include any airfares. The tour will depart from Cape Town International airport, South Africa, on day 1 no later than 12 noon. The tour will conclude after breakfast in Cape Town on day 12.

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. Cape Town International Airport (IATA: CPT) is equally well serviced by many airlines. Please DO NOT book any flights until you have consulted the Rockjumper office for confirmation on the status of the tour.