



ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

Kruger Park Bird & Wildlife Challenge 2019 - Namibian Endemics & Near-Endemics Extension *15th to 22nd February 2019 (8 days)*



White-tailed Shrike by Adam Riley

This compact 8-day Namibian Endemics & Near-Endemics tour targets some of the most sought after and special birds to be found in Namibia - a stunning array of endemic and near endemic species. The Benguela Current is responsible for the cold, rich upwelling along southern Africa's west coast, and we will sample the region's rich biodiversity right from the start of the tour at Walvis Bay, an estuarine system that holds around 100 000 waterbirds in summer! Our tour will take us through the ancient Namib Desert, a land of enormous red dunes and inhospitable rocky desert, as we journey inland to Namibia's

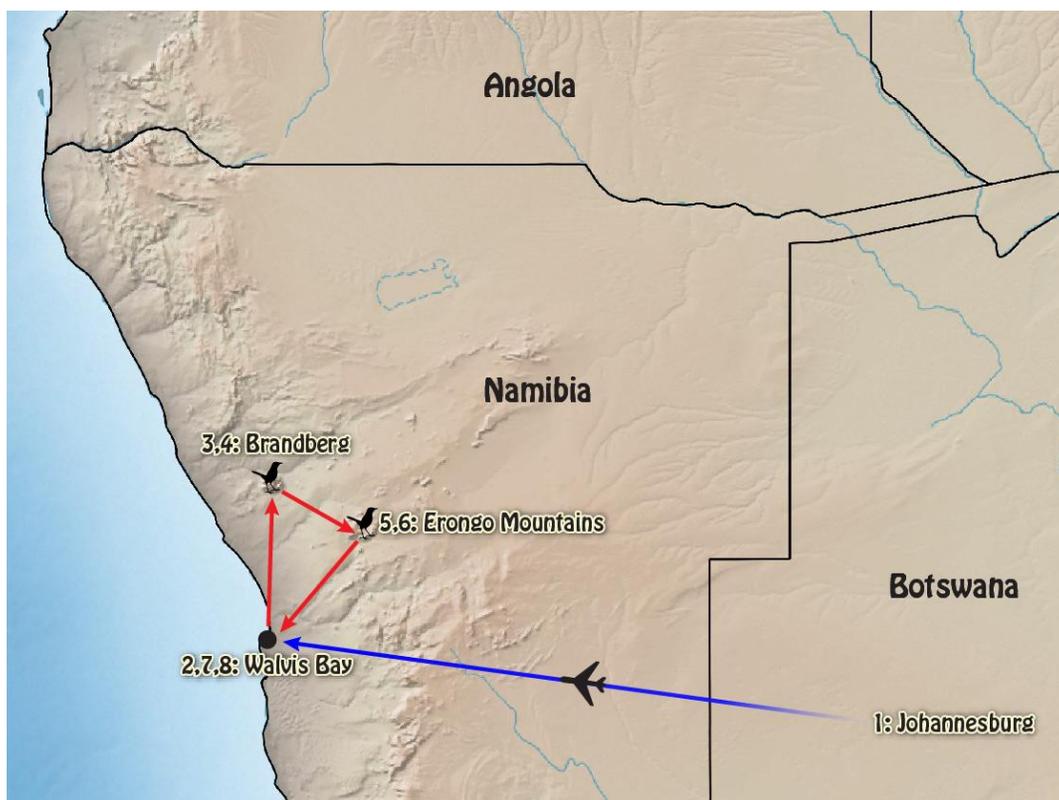
highest mountain, Brandberg and the scenic Spitzkoppe. We spend time in the endemic-rich Erongo Mountains, before returning to Walvis Bay.

THE TOUR AT A GLANCE...

THE ITINERARY

Day 1	Drive from Mopani, Kruger National Park to Johannesburg, South Africa
Day 2	Johannesburg to Walvis Bay, Namibia
Day 3	Walvis Bay to Brandberg, via Swakopmund
Day 4	Brandberg
Day 5	Brandberg to Erongo Mountains, via Spitzkoppe
Day 6	Erongo Mountains
Day 7	Erongo Mountains to Walvis Bay, via Swakopmund
Day 8	Depart from Walvis Bay

TOUR ROUTE MAP...



THE TOUR IN DETAIL...

Day 1: Kruger National Park to Johannesburg. Following the final night of the Kruger Park Birding & Wildlife Challenge spent at Mopani in the Kruger National Park, we drive to Johannesburg to overnight before catching our flight to Walvis Bay, Namibia.



Dune Lark by Markus Lilje

Day 2: Johannesburg to Walvis Bay, Namibia. After a very early breakfast we transfer from our guesthouse to OR Tambo International Airport for the 2.5-hour flight to Walvis Bay. Soon after arrival, we will head directly into the nearby dunes in search of Namibia's only true endemic, the handsome **Dune Lark**. Like many of the desert larks, its plumage colouration perfectly matches that of its environment: the deep ochre sands of the Namib dune sea. From there we will continue to the Walvis Bay Lagoon and spend the remainder of the day birding at this spectacular lagoon.

Walvis Bay is blessed with a rich biodiversity which thrives in the scenic Namib Desert dunes and associated gravel plains, the Walvis Bay Lagoon, the ephemeral Kuiseb River delta and other ecosystems.

The marine coast, offshore guano islands, saltpans and estuaries around Walvis Bay and Swakopmund to the north literally teem with waterbirds. At this time of year most of the migrants and shorebirds are in the Bay and we can expect some wonderful wader-watching. The thousands upon thousands of Greater and Lesser Flamingos feeding along the fringes of the bay alone make the trip worthwhile! Marine cormorants, especially Cape, form impressive lines as they stream out over the cold ocean in search of food. We will scan these large flocks in search of **Crowned Cormorant**, which occur in much lower numbers, as well the rare **Bank Cormorant**. Great



Damara Tern by Clayton Burne

White Pelican is prominent throughout the area and specialities of the pans include the localized Chestnut-banded Plover - a species that occurs here at its highest densities worldwide, **Hartlaub's Gull** and **Damara Tern**, the latter a breeding endemic. The striking but uncommon **African Oystercatcher** may be seen along the rocky shores, while waders to be expected on the extensive lagoon mudflats





Gray's Lark by Adam Riley

include White-fronted and Grey Plovers, Ruddy Turnstone, Common Greenshank, Marsh Sandpiper, Red Knot, Sanderling, Common Whimbrel, Bar-tailed Godwit and Pied Avocet. Black-necked Grebe also occurs here in significant numbers. Some rarities for southern Africa that are possible at this time of year include Common Redshank, Eurasian Oystercatcher and Red-necked Phalarope. The sheer numbers of birds in and around the Lagoon are truly impressive and a sight to behold! Pelagic seabirds may often be seen fairly close inshore; these include White-chinned Petrel, Sooty Shearwater, Wilson's Storm Petrel, **Cape Gannet** and Pomarine Skua. Other terrestrial birds to look out for around Walvis Bay include **Pale Chanting Goshawk**, **Bokmakierie**, **Dusky Sunbird** and **Orange River White-eye**.

Days 3 & 4: Brandberg. After breakfast we depart from Walvis Bay to Brandberg, Namibia's highest mountain, rising to 2573 metres above sea level. *En route* we will stop at the Swakopmund Salt Works to look for another popular target bird, the **Gray's Lark**. This pale-coloured desert lark can be difficult to locate, as it blends perfectly into the expansive gravel plains it frequents in the true Namib Desert.

The Brandberg massif comprises a large, granite inselberg with numerous valleys and gorges, which offer not only excellent birding, but also good reptiles and larger mammals such as Hartmann's Mountain Zebra, Oryx (Gemsbok), Springbok, Kudu, Klipspringer and Leopard. Desert-adapted Elephant also occur in the Ugab River at the foot of the northern section of the mountain.

This area is famous for its rock art and we will definitely visit the famous White Lady petroglyph while we are here. From a birding point of view, we should encounter many of the desert plains species, but significantly, the Brandberg forms the southern range limit for **Benguela Long-billed Lark**, a species near-endemic to Namibia. We will be hoping to find this species during our afternoon exploration of the area before heading to our lodge for the night.



Benguela Long-billed Lark by Adam Riley





Rüppell's Parrot by Adam Riley

There is a rich diversity of reptiles, scorpions and plant life here, including the bizarre *Welwitschia* plant, the only member of the Welwitschiaceae family. Birds are plentiful and raptors such as Verreaux's, Martial and Booted Eagles, Black-chested Snake Eagle, as well as Lanner and Peregrine Falcons and Rock Kestrel are fairly common. The endemic **Herero Chat** and **Rüppell's Korhaan** can also be encountered at the foot of the mountain; other species such as Mountain Wheatear, Familiar and **Karoo Chat**, **Pale-winged Starling**, **Rosy-faced Lovebird**, **White-backed Mousebird**, **Bokmakierie** (a near-endemic Bushshrike named after its call), **Grey-backed Cisticola**, Black-chested Prinia and Sabota Lark are common. Following good rainfall, thousands of

Namaqua Sandgrouse can be found drinking at the many seeps and springs that run off the mountain.

Days 5 & 6: Erongo Mountains. Leaving behind the magnificent Brandberg, we strike out for the ancient Erongo Mountains. We will scan suitable habitat *en route* for **Burchell's Courser**. Luck and patience are needed to find this species as it is nomadic and hence unpredictable; however, the beautiful **Double-banded Courser** and small family groups of Spike-heeled Lark should entertain us while we search. We will also be on the lookout for the endemic **Rüppell's Parrot**, localized **Violet Wood Hoopoe** and the handsome **Southern Pied Babbler**.

Birding the Erongo Mountains is exceptionally rewarding, with many of the Namibian near-endemics present, including **Damara Red-billed Hornbill**, **White-tailed Shrike**, and **Carp's Tit** in the river beds, and **Rockrunner** and other specials such as **Rosy-faced Lovebird** in the granite outcrops. Our destination tonight is Hohenstein Lodge close to the giant granitic boulders of the Erongo Mountains.



Rockrunner by Markus Lilje



One of the target species here requires a pre-dawn walk near our lodge. *En route* we may find the rock-loving **Freckled Nightjar**, but the bird in question is a special endemic, the rather bizarre **Hartlaub's Spurfowl**, which is likely to be seen at first light only, when coveys emerge to vocalize atop prominent boulders. Further potential birds at this locality include **Red-billed Spurfowl**, **Orange River Francolin**, Helmeted Guineafowl, **Namaqua Sandgrouse**, Gabar Goshawk, Verreaux's and Spotted Eagle Owl, African and Southern White-faced Scops-Owl, Pearl-spotted Owlet, Southern Yellow-billed and **Monteiro's Hornbills**, Golden-tailed, Cardinal and Bearded Woodpeckers, Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird, Rufous-naped and Monotonous Larks, **Barred Wren-Warbler**, **Kalahari Scrub Robin**, the wing-flicking Familiar Chat, Chestnut Weaver (rain dependent), Violet-eared and Black-faced Waxbills. The strange Dassie Rat (belonging to a monotypic family) may also be seen poking its whiskered nose from a rock crevice while a variety of interesting reptiles scurry over the rocks.



Hartlaub's Spurfowl (male) by Markus Lilje

Day 7: Erongo Mountains to Swakopmund via Spitzkoppe. Today we head back to the coast via the Spitzkoppe, a series of impressive granite inselbergs rising out of the desert plains. This is one of the



Herero Chat by Markus Lilje

premier sites in the country for **Herero Chat**, Namibia's most elusive endemic, and we will require both luck and patience to find this localised bird. Whilst searching the base of this incredible geological formation we may also find Augur Buzzard, the near-endemic **Bradfield's Swift**, **Acacia Pied Barbet**, Fawn-coloured and Sabota Larks, **Layard's Warbler**, Yellow-bellied Eremomela, **Bokmakierie**, **White-throated Canary** and Cinnamon-breasted and **Cape Buntings**.





Rüppell's Korhaan by Adam Riley

White-tailed Shrike, arguably Namibia's most striking endemic, should also entertain us here. The agile Klipspringer and Rock Hyrax may also be seen, whilst brilliantly coloured Namibia Rock Agamas are common. Other reptiles we might encounter in this area are the impressive Boulton's Namib Day Gecko, Bibron's Gecko, Bradfield's Dwarf Gecko and Namaqua Sand Lizard. The surrounding gravel plains occasionally produce **Rüppell's Korhaan** and **Ludwig's Bustard**, whilst **Namaqua Sandgrouse**, **Stark's Lark** and **Grey-backed Sparrow-Lark** are more regular. Other species found here include **Rosy-faced Lovebird**, **Carp's** and **Ashy Tit**, Mountain Wheatear, **Pale-winged Starling**, **Monteiro's** and **Damara Red-billed Hornbills**.

Closer to the historic town of Swakopmund, a quaint seaside village with a decidedly German character, the almost white

desert race of **Tractrac Chat**, Familiar Chat and Red-capped Lark occur. With luck, we may also find **Rufous-eared Warbler** and **Karoo Eremomela** in this area. Interesting waders such as Kittlitz's and Chestnut-banded Plovers, as well as **African Oystercatcher**, White-breasted, **Bank**, **Cape** and **Crowned Cormorants**, Maccoa Duck, **Cape Shoveler**, Grey-headed Gull and Little Grebe can also be found here.

In the afternoon we will drive through Swakopmund to freshwater pans at the edge of town that are home to wetland species such as Black-necked Grebe, **Cape** and **Red-billed Teals** and **Cape**



Rosy-faced Lovebird by Markus Lilje



Welwitschia mirabilis by Keith Valentine

Shoveler. Thereafter we will explore the famed Welwitschia Plains and seek out one of the world's most bizarre plants. *Welwitschia mirabilis* is a coniferous plant that, despite its immense age, grows to just a few feet tall and has two leaves only. These plants survive in the bone-dry gravel plains of the ancient Namib Desert and we will also look for two species of colourful beetles that survive around these unique plants only. We will overnight at our comfortable accommodation in Swakopmund.



Day 8: Depart from Walvis Bay to Johannesburg, South Africa. Depending on flight schedules we will continue birding around Swakopmund and Walvis Bay in the earlier part of the day and try to find any species we may have missed elsewhere.

The tour will end late morning at the Walvis Bay International Airport.

GROUP SIZE:

This tour is limited to a maximum of 7 participants

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

The prices for the Namibian Endemics Extension are as follows:

3 participants = **ZAR 39 750** per person

4 participants = **ZAR 34 500** per person

5 participants = **ZAR 31 750** per person

6 participants = **ZAR 31 750** per person

7 participants = **ZAR 31 750** per person

Single Supplement: R1 500

The tour price includes:

- All meals from lunch on day 1 of the tour to breakfast on day 8;
- Drinking water throughout the tour;
- All lodgings as per the itinerary;
- Ground transportation;
- All reserve entrance fees;
- All guiding services; and
- Tips for local guides and services.

...and excludes:

- Any airfares, taxes and visa costs;
- Alcoholic beverages;
- 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:



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- a) The tour price is fixed only in the currency printed in bold (ZAR), and the actual cost in any 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.
- c) 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:

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 he has given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip him.

PLEASE NOTE:

- Much of our time is spent in specially converted vehicles, as we do have to cover long distances in order to get to the best areas for birds and animals. However, the vehicle is fairly spacious with large windows and pop-up rooftops which allows for great bird and mammal viewing. Despite this, we recommend that you do not over-pack for the comfort of your fellow travellers and yourself. Kindly stick to 20kg (44lb) for check in luggage and 8kg (+-18lb) for hand luggage.
- Please be aware that the vehicle does not have air-conditioning. However, the windows are large and will remain open for most of the time, while the front windscreen also folds down completely, providing a pleasant through-flow of air.
- Temperatures in Namibia, Botswana and Zambia can be very high at this time of year, especially when compared to the cooler winter months. If you suffer easily from heat exposure, please do contact the RBT office for more information.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE DETAILS

This tour **does not** include ANY airfares. For those guests participating in the Kruger Challenge, the tour will depart from Mopani, Kruger National Park, South Africa, after breakfast on day 1, and continue to O.R. Tambo International Airport, Johannesburg where the group will overnight before flying on day 2 to Walvis Bay, Namibia. For those guests not participating in the Kruger Challenge, the tour will start at dinner on the evening of day 1 at Sunrock Guest House in Johannesburg. The tour will conclude at Walvis Bay Airport, Namibia late in the morning of day 8.

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

The tour price does NOT include the cost of the international flight from OR Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg to Walvis Bay International Airport, Namibia and return. The cost of this flight is roughly ZAR 4 600 per person or US\$ 340 at the current exchange rate.



Walvis Bay International Airport (IATA: WVB) is the main port of entry and departure for international flights for this tour. Reliable airlines with the most direct routing for these flights are Air Namibia and South African Airways into Namibia, while connecting through Johannesburg is another way of departing from Namibia. We have the capacity to advise you on the best route according to your preferences, but your local travel agent will best be able to book these flights for you. If you would like further assistance kindly contact the Rockjumper office. **However, please DO NOT book your international flights until you have consulted the Rockjumper office for confirmation on the status of the tour.**

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