



Rare Mammals of South Africa

12 days / 11 nights
19 -30 August 2024
01 – 12 Sept 2025





Overview

South Africa is justifiably famous for its wildlife and in particular the iconic species that make up the so called "Big 5". There's far more to the country's wildlife though and seasoned travelers will tell you of coveted moments where they managed to lay eyes on one of the rarer nocturnal species, species so seldomly seen that only a select group of wildlife enthusiasts can claim to have seen all of them. During this trip we'll focus on finding the likes of Aardvark, Aardwolf, Black-footed Cat, Brown Hyena and who knows maybe even a Pangolin. While the rarer mammals will certainly be our main focus on this trip, we'll not neglect the more iconic species of the Kalahari, spectacular Black-maned Lions in the Kgalakgadi, the ever inquisitive Meerkats, cute-as-a-button Bat-eared Foxes and all this with a supporting cast of antelope which include the likes of Gemsbok (Oryx), Springbok, Red Hartebeest and more.

For those who enjoy observing our feathered friends, fear not as all our guides are qualified bird guides as well so you'll be in the best of hands.

NB! Please note that weather conditions might occasionally force us to deviate from activities outlined in this itinerary, but we will always reschedule any activities where possible to maximize on target species for this tour.

Another very important consideration to keep in mind is that many of our top targets on this tour are extremely shy and elusive and the majority of them are nocturnal necessitating multiple night drives during the course of the tour. Please note that we have carefully selected the best locations to find these rare animals but no sightings are ever guaranteed.



Detailed Itinerary

Day 1

Arrival day, participants will be arriving in Johannesburg from various international destinations today from where you will be transferred to your comfortable lodge near the airport. O/N **Safari Club** or similar (D)

Day 2

After a hearty breakfast you'll make your way back to the airport for a short flight to the city of Bloemfontein where you will meet up with your guide for the tour. After transferring to our van for the tour we'll waste no time in getting out of the city for a roughly 3-hour journey to the Karoo Gariep Nature Reserve. Time permitting we'll do an afternoon game drive where we hope to see some of the larger mammals that are present here such as Cape Buffalo and Hippopotamus. We'll return to the lodge for dinner before heading out on our first of 7 scheduled night drives. Karoo Gariep has proven to be a great location for some of the rarer nocturnal mammals and we hope to encounter the likes of Aardvark, Springhare, African Wild Cat, Aardwolf, Zorilla, Cape Porcupine, Bate-eared Fox and maybe even a Cape Fox. O/N **New Holme Lodge** or similar (B, L, D)

Day 3 and 4

Two more full days in Karoo Gariep lay ahead of us and we aim to make the most of our time here. During the day we'll do several game drives, exploring the reserve for mammals and birds. The reserve is home to over 200 bird species and we should encounter birds such as the Blue Crane, South Africa's National bird, alongside sought after species such as Burchell's Courser, Blue (Bustard) Korhaan and Rufous-eared Warbler. There will also be time to explore the reserve on foot where we'll be on the lookout for smaller mammals such as some of the Sengi or Elephant Shrew species. Lunches will be enjoyed at our lodge and there will be time during the midday heat to relax around the lodge. Our focus here is without a doubt the nocturnal specialties and Karoo Gariep has become a very reliable spot for Aardvark so we hope to knock this one off the list before we even get to Kimberley. African Striped Weasel has been reported from here, but we'll have to be extremely lucky to find what is most certainly one of the most elusive mammals in South Africa. We have one more scheduled night drive and then there's also an optional night drive



(not included) for the last night. During our night drives we'll keep an eye out for nocturnal birds with Spotted Eagle-Owl almost a given but we're also hoping for a few nightjars. O/N **New Holme Lodge** or similar (B, L, D)

Day 5

After breakfast we'll bid our hosts farewell and start the 4-hour drive north to the town of Kimberley. There will be time along the way to stop for some birding and to stretch our legs. Once we reach Kimberley we'll check in at our lodge and take a short break before doing some birding in the area, either at Kamfer's Dam, famous for its Lesser Flamingo breeding colony (although it seems at present the artificial breeding island has been inundated due to excess waterflow into the dam), nevertheless both species of flamingo should still be present alongside the likes of Black-winged Stilt and several species of duck. We return to our guest house for an early dinner before heading out on a night drive at Marrick Game Farm, arguably the best place in the country to see the rare and elusive Black-footed Cat. We'll also encounter many similar species to Karoo Gariep giving us a chance to catch up on any species we might have missed there. O/N **Marrick Game Farm or Langberg Lodge**, (B, L, D)

Day 6

After breakfast we'll head out to Mokala National Park, a short distance to the south of Kimberley. This 19,000 ha park is home to several rare antelope species such as Sable, Roan and Tsessebe. Both Black and White Rhino were successfully reintroduced and we'll be on the lookout for the endemic Black Wildebeest which occurs here alongside Blue Wildebeest. Other common species include Eland, Warthog, Giraffe and Greater Kudu. The park is situated in a transition zone between the Karoo and Kalahari biomes which produces an interesting bird assemblage. We should be able to find the likes of Short-toed Rock-Thrush, Cinnamon-breasted Bunting, Violet-eared Waxbill, Fawn-coloured Lark, Crimson-breasted Shrike and we might even be lucky enough to find the diminutive Pygmy Falcon here. We return to our lodge in time for an early dinner and another night drive at Marrick should we have missed Black-footed Cat the night before, as always, a healthy dose of luck will be needed to find Africa's smallest cat. A more



recent arrival at Marrick is Brown Hyena and we hope to maybe get a glimpse of one of them. O/N **Marrick Game Farm or Langberg Lodge**, (B, L, D)

Day 7

After a leisurely breakfast we'll get the van loaded and head out of Kimberley on the rather long drive to Upington, the drive will be between 5 and 6 hours depending on stops we make along the way. We should arrive at Augrabies National Park, named after the 56m high Augrabies Falls, in the late afternoon. Upon arrival there will be time to take a walk down to the falls where the Orange River squeezes through a narrow rock gap, Rock Hyrax are extremely common here and you'll be hard pressed not to see at least a dozen or more on the walk down to the falls. Keep an eye out for the colourful Augrabies Flat Lizard (*Platysaurus broadleyi*). After dinner we'll all retire to our chalets for a night of well-deserved rest. O/N **Augrabies Falls Rest Camp**, (B, L, D)

Day 8

We have a full day to explore this rather small (820 sq km) but rather diverse park dotted with Quiver Trees. We'll head west along the Orange River, stopping at various viewpoints along the 18km gorge. Echo corner often produces the sought after Cinnamon-breasted Warbler and we should find the endemic Namaqua Warbler anywhere where there are reeds and water. Gemsbok and Eland are common here and we'll keep an eye on the rocky outcrops for Klipspringer. Hartmann's Mountain Zebra is present here and we hope to get a glimpse of this uncommon sub-species. Raptors are common along the gorge, the likes of Verreaux's Eagle, Lanner and Peregrine Falcon are often spotted. We'll return to the camp for lunch and afford everyone some downtime after to relax or explore the area around the camp. Should night drives be available at the time of this tour (currently suspended) we'll embark on one of those and could find Zorilla, Springhare, Porcupine and maybe even Leopard. O/N **Augrabies Falls Rest Camp**, (B, L, D)

Day 9

After breakfast and some early morning birding we'll head out of Augrabies and back towards Upington before setting off in the direction of the vast, 3.6-million-hectare, Kgalakgadi National Park. We'll start encountering massive Sociable Weaver nests along the way and might have another chance to see Pygmy Falcon.



Time permitting we'll head into the park for a late afternoon game drive. O/N **Twee Rivieren Rest Camp or Kgalakgadi Lodge**, (B, L, D)

Day 10 and 11

We have two full days to explore the park after breakfast each day returning for lunch and some rest before heading out again on a night drive on both nights. The park is absolutely spectacular and a lot of the action is focused along the two dry riverbeds of the Nossob and Auob Rivers where there are several waterholes dotted all along. We'll focus most of our time exploring these areas with its rich and abundant wildlife, large herds of Springbok and Gemsbok can be seen throughout alongside less numerous Blue Wildebeest, Steenbok and Red Hartebeest. This abundance of prey attracts the famous Black-maned Kalahari Lions as well as Leopard and Cheetah. Kgalakgadi is arguably one of the best places in Southern Africa to spot Cheetah. Other predators that are less regularly encountered include Spotted Hyena, Honey Badger, Brown Hyena, African Wild Cat, Caracal, Bat-eared and Cape Fox as well as Aardwolf. We'll be sure not to neglect the smaller mammals and hope to find the likes of Meerkat, African Ground Squirrel, Brant's Whistling Rat and Woosnam's Desert Rat.

Birdlife around the waterholes can be prolific and we'll watch hundreds of Sandgrouse, both Namaqua and Burchell's, coming in to drink around mid-morning. As with the mammals, these congregations of birds drinking will bring in many raptor species such as Lanner Falcon, Gabar Goshawk, Pale Chanting Goshawk and many more. Other good birds include Swallow-tailed Bee-eater, Cut-throat Finch, Martial Eagle, Tawny Eagle, Kori Bustard and Black-faced Waxbill. O/N **Twee Rivieren Rest Camp or Kgalakgadi Lodge**, (B, L, D)

Day 12

We'll be up early for our 3-hour drive back to Upington for our late morning flights back to Johannesburg and/or Cape Town to connect with international flights home. (B)

End of Trip



PRICE

The price per person sharing, based on a minimum group of 6 pax:

- 2024 - ZAR 62,500 pp sharing.
- 2025 - ZAR 65,800 pp sharing.
- A single supplement off R7,600 is applicable to this tour.

PRICE INCLUDES:

- ~ All accommodation
- ~ All meals from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 12
- ~ Full-time services of an expert local bird and mammal guide and driver
- ~ Ground transportation, tolls and fuel
- ~ Two local flights
 - ~ Johannesburg to Bloemfontein
 - ~ Upington to Johannesburg or Cape Town
- ~ Bottled water
- ~ All conservation and entry fees
- ~ A total of 7 night drives
- ~ One soft drink, local beer or glass of local wine with lunch and dinner
- ~ Tips other than for your TL and local specialist guide

PRICE EXCLUDES:

- ~ International airfare
- ~ Items of a personal nature such as laundry, phone calls, extra snacks and/or beverages, souvenirs, alcoholic beverages, etc.
- ~ Visa Fees
- ~ Any drinks not mentioned above
- ~ Tips for personalized services such as porters



~ Any night drives not mentioned in the itinerary