

TANZANIA

Northern Safari Circuit

March 5 – 18, 2024

14 Days / 13 Nights

\$TBA

Single supplement

\$TBA

EXTENSION

**Mkomazi/Usambara
(Savannah to Mistbelt Forest)**

March 18 – 23, 2024

6 Days / 5 Nights

\$TBA

Single supplement

\$TBA



Overview

Tanzania, home to the world-famous Serengeti and Ngorongoro Crater Conservation Areas and the mighty Mount Kilimanjaro, hardly needs any introduction as a top safari destination. Tanzania's birdlife is equally impressive with a bird list of over 1,150 species, a whole host of which are endemics or near-endemics.

A 3-week trip can easily yield 500+ species. Good lodges and ever-improving infrastructure make for an easy trip and one can always indulge in a visit to the spice island of Zanzibar or its nearby cousin, Pemba Island, with their own unique set of endemics as optional extensions.

In addition to birding in the Serengeti and the Ngorongoro Crater, birding destinations include Arusha National Park, Tarangine National Park, Mkomazi National Park, Lake Manyara National Park and Lake Ndutu.

Detailed Itinerary

Day 1, Thursday, March 5

Arrival late evening at Kilimanjaro International, from where you will be transferred to your lodge in Arusha.

O/N Ngare Sero Mountain Lodge (no meals)

Day 2, Friday, March 6

We have a full day to spend in Arusha NP. The park is teeming with birdlife and this is a good chance to give our list a healthy start. Mammals we might encounter include Massai Giraffe, Bushbuck, African Buffalo, Guereza Colobus, Blue Monkey and Olive Baboon. This ancient volcanic crater is cloaked in lush forest and

here we'll be looking for African Crowned Eagle, Ayres's Hawk-Eagle, Mountain Buzzard, Scaly Francolin, Hartlaub's Turaco, Bar-tailed Trogon, Black Stork, Cinnamon-chested Bee-eaters, Moustached Green Tinkerbird, African Palm, Horus, Alpine, Mottled, Little, and Nyanza Swifts, Black Saw-wing, Olive Mountain (Placid), Stripe-cheeked and Mountain Greenbuls, Waller's and Kenrick's Starling and



Chin-spot Batis

Eastern Double-collared Sunbird. Rufous-naped Lark and Pangani Longclaw are often encountered in areas of open grassland, while Chin-spot Batis and White-browed Scrub Robin inhabit areas of Acacia savannah. We'll have fun with some LBJ's including African Moustached and Cinnamon Bracken Warblers and Trilling and Siffling Cisticolas. The very local Taveta Golden Weaver will add a splash of color and must rate as one of the more handsome Weavers in these parts. Several wetlands teem with Lesser and Greater Flamingos, several duck species and even the elusive Greater Painted Snipe.

O/N Ngare Sero Mountain Lodge (BLD)

Day 3, Saturday, March 7

Early morning outing to the Lark Plains, 40km away from Arusha. These arid plains, in the rain shadow of Mt. Meru and Mt. Kilimanjaro, harbors many typical dry country species. Particularly well represented is the Lark family, first and foremost of which is the critically endangered Beesley's Lark with less than 50 individuals believed to reside here. Other Larks we'll be on the lookout for are Pink-breasted, Athi Short-toed, Short-tailed, and Foxy Larks. Raptors are prevalent here with Montagu's Harriers, Lesser Kestrels and Amur Falcons joining the resident Eastern Chanting Goshawks, Greater and Common (Rock) Kestrels. Other good bird might include Taita Fiscal, Pied and Capped Wheatears, Beautiful Sunbird and White-bellied Canary. All too soon we'll have to continue westwards to Tarangire National Park, another gem in the crown of Tanzanian wildlife destinations. Majestic

Baobabs rise out of the acacia parkland, forming a perfect backdrop for the largest concentration of game outside the Serengeti ecosystem. Mammals include Lion, Black-backed Jackal, Kirk's Dik-Dik, Dwarf and Banded Mongoose, Impala, Beisa Oryx, Steenbok and African Hare. With over 550 species on record, this is also a birders' paradise with such enigmatic species as Ashy Starling and Yellow-necked Spurfowl.

O/N Tarangire Safari Lodge (BLD)

Day 4, Sunday, March 8

Another full day to explore this superb habitat. The rich variety of birds we may see include Kori, White-bellied and Buff-crested Bustards, White-headed, Rüppell's and African White-backed Vultures, Red-necked Spurfowl, Bare-faced and White-bellied Go-away Birds, Black-faced Sandgrouse, Abyssinian Scimitarbill, Pygmy Falcon, White-browed Coucal, Banded Parisoma, Silverbird, Hildebrandt's and Superb Starlings, Von der Decken's and Northern Red-billed Hornbills, Northern White-crowned Shrike and Yellow-collared Lovebird. Numerous raptors such as Bateleur, Tawny Eagle, and African Hawk-Eagle patrol the skies. Mosque Swallows and Mottled Spinetails swoop around the Baobabs. The huge swamp in the south of the park hosts a variety of water birds and en route we might encounter Bronze-winged Courser and the elusive Hartlaub's Bustard, with Rufous-bellied Heron, Saddle-billed Stork, White-backed Duck, Western Marsh Harrier and many more at the swamp itself. The endemic Rufous-tailed Weaver is rather common here albeit not quite as handsome as the equally common White-headed Buffalo Weaver. The lodge grounds host Nubian Woodpecker, Slate-colored Boubou and Spotted Palm Thrush.



Kori Bustard

O/N back in Tarangire Safari Lodge (BLD)

Day 5, Monday, March 9

We will enjoy another morning of exploration in Tarangire, with big game viewing and hoping to catch up with species that we may have missed the previous day, such as; White-rumped Shrike, Spotted Morning-Thrush, Brubru, Bearded Woodpecker, Red-headed Weaver, Slate-colored Boubou, Tawny-flanked Prinia, and Lesser Striped-Swallow. Out in the bush we'll find many more superb birds from Bateleur Eagles to Pygmy Falcons, Saddle-billed Storks and Hamerkops, Helmeted Guineafowl and Yellow-necked Spurfowl, to Double-banded Coursers, Black-faced Sandgrouse, Blue-cheeked Bee-Eaters and Paradise Whydahs. After lunch back at the lodge we will cross the Great Rift Valley to the Lake Manyara area.

O/N Lake Manyara Serena Safari Lodge (BLD)

Day 6, Tuesday, March 10

Full morning in Manyara, starting with birding the unusual groundwater forest at Manyara (now with an aerial boardwalk) which holds Ashy Flycatcher, Mountain Wagtail, Tambourine Dove and often other species of interest. Then we'll explore the lake shores looking for Flamingoes, Rosy-throated Longclaw, Collared Pratincole, Black Egret, Great White and Pink-backed Pelicans; Little, Great and Intermediate (or Yellow-billed) Egrets; Squacco, Grey and Purple Herons; Curlew, Marsh, Wood and Common Sandpipers; the huge Goliath Heron, the colorful Saddle-billed Stork, Yellow-billed Stork, Glossy Ibis, African

Spoonbill, Spur-winged Goose, Red-billed and Hottentot Teals, Black-winged Stilt, the beautiful Long-toed Plover, Spur-winged Plover, Little Stint, Ruff, Common Greenshank, Whiskered and White-winged Terns, and Brown-throated Sand (or Plain) Martin. Other good birds include Chestnut Sparrow, Yellow-spotted Petronia, Black Bishop, Vitelline Masked Weaver, Crested Guinea fowl, Crimson-rumped Waxbill, Cardinal Quelea and colorful Red-and-Yellow and Usambiro



Goliath Heron Juveniles

Barbets. We will return to the lodge for a late lunch and a break afterwards with some late afternoon birding around the lodge before dinner.

O/N Lake Manyara Serena Safari Lodge (BLD)

Day 7, Wednesday, March 11

We'll enjoy some early morning birding on the lodge grounds before enjoying a scrumptious breakfast and then a game and birding drive back to Manyara where we'll spend some more time scouring the park for species we might have missed the previous day. Later in the day, we will begin our journey toward the mighty Ngorongoro Crater. This once vast volcano is now one of the most unique wildlife destinations on the planet. At 20km wide, 600 meters deep and 300 sq kms in area, it is the largest unflooded and unbroken caldera in the world. On the way up, we'll be on the lookout for Jacson's Widowbird, Schalow's Turaco, Speke's Weaver, the spectacular Golden-winged Sunbird, Mountain Greenbul, Grey-capped Warbler and Dusky Turtle Dove.

Our lodge is ideally situated in the Ngorongoro highlands. The lodge grounds and surrounding forests should hold Eastern Bronze-naped Pigeon, Malachite and Tacazze Sunbird, and the exuberant Hunter's Cisticola. With some luck, even the sought-after Brown-backed Woodpecker might be seen.

O/N Tloma Mountain Lodge (BLD)

Day 8, Thursday, March 12

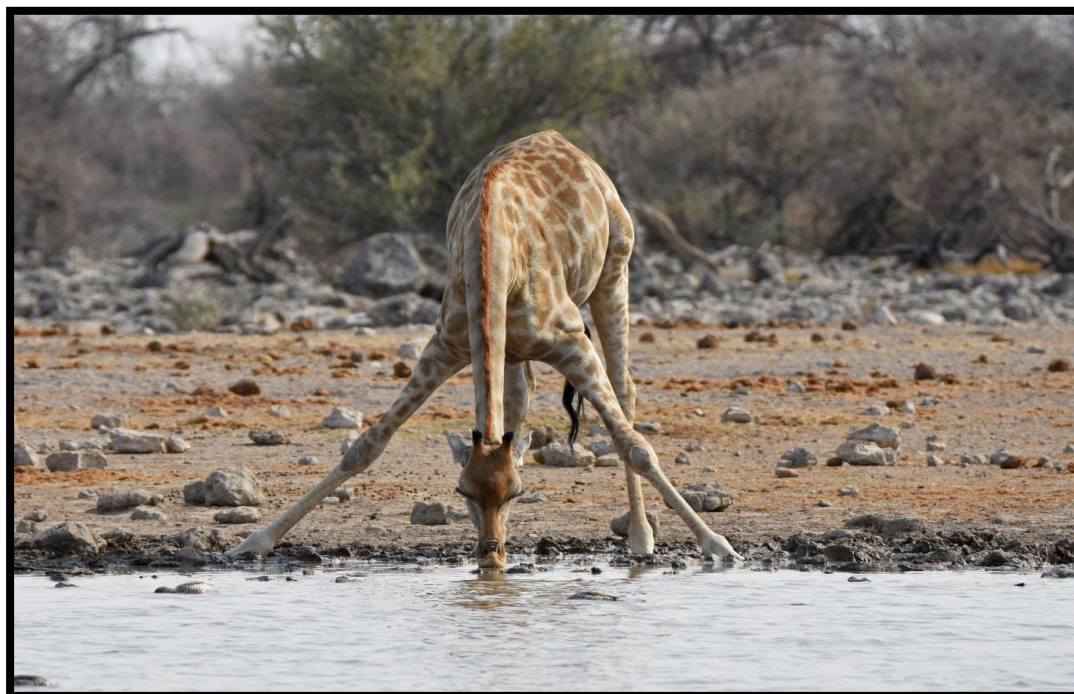
Words alone cannot describe the beauty of the Ngorongoro crater, and this morning we'll spend time in what was once, many eons ago, the fiery heart of a huge volcano. Wildebeest, Coke's Hartebeest, Zebra, and Grant's and Thomson's Gazelles feed contentedly; Lion and Cheetah are joined by the ever-present Spotted Hyena, and huge male Buffalo gives chase whenever a predator ventures too close. Bird life in the crater is equally varied, and we should see Grey Crowned Crane, Shelley's Francolin, Abdim's and Black Storks, Lappet-faced Vulture, Black-bellied and Kori Bustards, Fischer's Lovebird, Mottled Swift, Pectoral-patch Cisticola and Northern Anteater Chat, among many others.

O/N Tloma Mountain Lodge (BLD)

Day 9, Friday, March 13

We will have a leisurely breakfast before we check out and drive to the neighboring Ngorongoro Conservation Area forest that is above Tloma village. With the slight change in elevation we will notice a change in habitat and, of course, a corresponding change in bird species. It is only a 10-minute drive to the conservation forest from our lodge. For the less energetic, there is an opportunity to personally wander amidst idyllic and beautifully designed ornamental gardens and coffee plantations, or there is an opportunity to take a well-earned break and relax with a cup of organically grown coffee on Gibbs Farm. The keen birders and fairly adventurous will take a forest walk, a fairly easy morning hike of about 3-4 hours covering about 2.5-3 miles into the Conservation Area to seek out more of the excellent birding opportunities. Expect everything from Crowned Eagles and Upland Buzzards to a host of smaller passerines: Arrow-marked Babblers; Yellow-bellied Waxbills; Stripe-cheeked Greenbuls; Black-throated Wattle-eyes; Gray-capped and Brown Woodland Warblers; Bar-throated, Yellow-breasted and Brown-headed Apalises; Emerald-spotted Wood-Dove; Klaas, Dideric, and African Emerald Cuckoos; Crested Guinea fowl; White-tailed Blue Flycatcher, and more. Gibbs Farm is a

unique destination where everyone will have an activity to participate depending on interest. We will all meet up at 12:30 for one of Tanzania's best safari meals served from the organically grown and raised foods on the Farm. The afternoon will



see us drive through the Ngorongoro Conservation area to the Serengeti Short Grass Plains. On the way we'll stop at a few spots for the likes of Brown Parisoma, Abyssinian Wheatear and Red-throated Tit, arriving in Ndutu area late-afternoon.

O/N Ndutu Safari Lodge (BLD)

Day 10, Saturday, March 14

The short grass plains around Ndutu are justifiably famous as a top game viewing and bird watching area with Gull-billed Terns scouring the plains for insects, Yellow-throated and Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse occurring side by side, Grey-breasted Spurfowl taking over as the more common Francolin, and large herds of Wildebeest and Zebra grazing alongside each other. At Lake Ndutu we'll look for the likes of Chestnut-banded Plover, Common Snipe, Cape Teal and Black-necked Grebe. The open grassland and scant acacia scrub hold obvious species such as Ostriches, Secretary Birds, Lilac-breasted and European Rollers, Little Bee-eaters, and noisy Crowned and Blacksmith Plovers, along with raptors such as Long-crested Eagle, and both Dark and Pale Chanting-Goshawks. Often, groups of Fischer's Sparrow-Larks, Rufous-naped and Red-capped Larks, Red-billed Queleas, and various cisticolas flush up from the grass as we move along. Black-faced, Chestnut-bellied and Yellow-throated Sandgrouse can also be seen reacting to the approach of vehicles. The endemic Gray-breasted Spurfowl, Fischer's Lovebird, and Rufous-tailed Weaver are common in this area, along with D'Arnaud's Barbet, Green Wood Hoopoe, Cardinal and Nubian Woodpeckers, Black-lored Babbler, Beautiful and Mariqua Sunbirds, and Wire-tailed Swallow.

O/N Ndutu Safari Lodge (BLD)**Day 11, Sunday, March 15**

Game drive in the Ndutu area and onwards into the Serengeti. Game drive for the full day to arrive in the Angata Tented Camp located in the Serengeti in the late afternoon. Out on the plains we'll be looking for Kori and Buff-crested Bustard, Coqui Francolin, the endemic Grey-breasted Spurfowl, Brown Parrot, Yellow-throated Sandgrouse, Freckled Nightjar, Plain-backed Pipit, Sooty Chat, the endemic Tanzanian (Ruaha) Hornbill, Rosy-patched Shrike, Long-tailed Cisticola, Steel-blue Whydah, and Buff-bellied, Grey Penduline and Red-throated Tits, to mention a few. Among the many mammal species we hope to see are Cheetah, Leopard, and Topi, while Rock Hyraxes and Klipspringer should be found in the rocky koppies and herds of Hippopotamus wallow in muddy pools.

**O/N Angata
Tented Camp, Serengeti**

Days 12 & 13, Monday and Tuesday, March 16 – 17

Two full days in the Serengeti where we'll concentrate on different parts of this vast park, taking in the different habitats with their accompanying suites of birds. Toward the west we stand our best chance for the endemic and highly sought after Karamoja Apalis, as well as the rare and hard-to-find Grey-crested Helmet-shrike. Depending on how far west we go, we might even encounter Eastern Plantain-eater. Grey-backed Fiscal and Ruppel's Starling are quite common near our camp and a small dam always hold interesting birds. Greater Spotted Cuckoos are seen often. The same cannot be said for White-headed Barbet, but the fig trees near our camp usually attract one or two of them. Eleonora's and Sooty Falcons are mostly seen in the late afternoon when they are at their most active, accompanied by the more abundant Eurasian Hobbies. We hope to bump into parts of the famous Wildebeest migration as they move west at this time of year, followed by the ever-present predators.

O/N Angata Tented Camp, Serengeti.

Day 14, Wednesday, March 18

We will enjoy a game drive out of the Serengeti and drive back to Arusha over the Crater, stopping at various birding spots along the way. Susan Harrison will be transported to the Kilimanjaro airport for the evening flight that will begin her journey home, while the rest of the group will have an evening of leisure before starting the Mkomazi/Usambara (Savannah to Mistbelt forest) extension.

O/N Ngare Sero Mountain Lodge (BLD)



Blue Wildebeest

Mkomazi/Usambara (Savannah to Mistbelt forest) Extension

March 18 – March 23

Day 1, Wednesday, March 18

Effectively the first day of the extension is also the last day of the main tour (see above). For those staying on we'll check in at the lodge and drop our bags and then after a short breather there will be some local birding for those not opting for a relaxed afternoon before the start of the extension.

O/N Ngare Sero Mountain Lodge (BLD)

Day 2, Thurs, March 19

Depart out of Arusha for Mkomazi National Park with some good birding along the way. Several seasonal wetlands in an otherwise arid part of the country may yield the likes of Woolly-necked Stork, Zanzibar Red Bishop and Little Grebe with a supporting cast of dry land specialties such as Spot-flanked Barbet, Red-faced Crombec, Hunter's Sunbird, Brubru and Grey-headed Silverbill.



O/N Same White Elephant Motel (BLD)

Day 3, Friday, March 20

We'll spend a full day in this undiscovered gem of a National Park, far away from the bustling northern tourism circuit. We're often the only group in the park. Mkomazi is in the southern tip of the Sahel zone; it is a classic dry-country reserve of grey-green nyika bush, ancient baobab trees and isolated rocky hills. Mammals such as Giraffe, Oryx, Gerenuk, Hartebeest, Lesser Kudu, Eland, Impala and Grant's Gazelle share the reserve with Elephant, Buffalo, and numerous predators, including Lion, Leopard and Cheetah. Birding is prolific with many new species not encountered on the main tour. This is a fantastic area to compare Red-backed, Isabelline and Red-tailed Shrikes and become familiar with the subtle differences. The uncommon Fischer's Starling and Parrot-billed Sparrow are often encountered here, as is Red-bellied Parrot. Tsavo and Black-bellied Sunbirds are two of the more common arid country Sunbirds and Spot-flanked Barbet is replaced by Black-throated Barbet. Mkomazi is probably the best place in Tanzania for Pangani Longclaw and Ashy Cisticola while Red-winged and Flappet Lark can also be found. Bare-eyed Thrush and Abyssinian White-eye are often seen around the visitors' center.

O/N Same White Elephant Motel

Day 4, Saturday, March 21

Driving briefly through the dry lowlands after leaving Mkomazi, this time to the cool of the West Usambaras. White-necked Raven should be along the roadside, and radiant Lilac-breasted Roller finds perches on the flowering heads of sisal. As we enter through the rocky gorge we look for Striped Pipit and more colorful Mocking Cliff Chat. The waterfall that tumbles down this rugged landscape can attract many birds, especially if there is a good crop of corn nearby. Our beautiful hotel is an ideally located home-away-from-home. After dinner we look for Ruwenzori Nightjar (the local subspecies *guttifer*, "Usambara Nightjar") and Usambara Eagle-Owl, and this walk may reward us as well with some locally endemic reptiles and perhaps frogs.

O/N Muller's Mountain Lodge (BLD)

Day 5, Sunday, March 22

We will explore the local forest in search of two endemics, Usambara Akalat and the attractive Usambara Weaver, which clambers over the epiphyte-laden branches in the manner of a nuthatch. Other species here include Hartlaub's Turaco at the southern end of its distribution, noisy but well-hidden Evergreen Forest and Cinnamon Bracken Warblers, Black-fronted Bushshrike, and the unusual Spot-throat with its earsplitting song. Angola Black-and-white Colobus give their motor-like calls at dawn shortly after the African Wood Owl has retired.

O/N Muller's Mountain Lodge (BLD)

Day 6, Monday, March 23

We will drive back to Kilimanjaro with some birding en route, arriving in time to depart on an evening flight. (B)

End of Tour (BL)

TOUR SPECIFICS

Price includes:

- ~ Lodging in comfortable hotel/lodges/B&Bs
- ~ All meals as indicated
- ~ All land transportation
- ~ Transfers
- ~ Entrance fees
- ~ Expert local birding guide at a ratio not to exceed 1 guide per 6 birders

Price does NOT include:

- ~ International airfare
- ~ Alcoholic drinks
- ~ Travel insurance
- ~ Gratuities
- ~ Expenses of a personal nature such as laundry, phone calls, extra drinks and snacks, etc.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS:

- ~ Deposit of \$TBA for the main tour, \$TBA for the extension, is required with registration
- ~ Balance is due 4 months prior to the start date.
- ~ Checks should be made payable to *Cheepers! Birding on a Budget* and mailed with the registration form to:

Cheepers! Birding on a Budget
Post Office Box 385
Spring Valley, OH 45370

Cancellation policy:

Cancellation should be made in writing (email or snail mail)

More than 6 months prior to departure – full refund of deposit

Between 4 and 6 months prior to departure – 50% refund of deposit

Less than 4 months prior to departure – No refund of deposit

If cancellation occurs after full payment is made, a refund will be given only if the vacant spot is filled.

Trip insurance is recommended.

You can compare prices offered by various trip insurance companies at these websites:

<https://www.insuremytrip.com/?linkId=ER791460>

http://www.quotewright.com/?sub_id=6056

Cheepers! Birding on a Budget LLC reserves the right to make changes in the itinerary if the need should arise due to unforeseeable circumstances such as weather, landslides, and other natural phenomena, as well as suggestions by local guides in order to take advantage of an unusual birding opportunity. Lodging is subject to change based on availability.

QUESTIONS? CONTACT US!

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Giant Kingfisher