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CAPE TOWN * SOUTH AFRICA

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This is one of several sample itineraries available on www.honeyguide.co.uk/yoursouthafrica.htm run by Crane's Cape Tours and Travel with Honeyguide Wildlife Holidays. We can also adapt itineraries to suit you – please contact us so together we can plan your South African wildlife holiday.

Cape Town & the Garden Route

This natural history safari takes in a broad interest in the environment. During our 15 day safari of the Western Cape, we will spend seven days experiencing the wonders of the Cape Town area. We visit formal Botanical Gardens, National Parks and Nature Reserves as well as venturing into the natural areas of the Cape. We then drive to Oudtshoorn in the Little Karoo and on to the indigenous forests of the Garden Route. We will be birding & botanizing in this area for seven days, visiting wilderness areas, National Parks and Nature Reserves. The Garden Route has inland lakes, beautiful sweeping beaches and intertidal flats that are the final destination for many migrating birds from Europe and western Asia.

The holiday will be based on three centres, seven nights in Cape Town, two nights at Oudtshoorn and five nights in the Garden Route in a guesthouse just outside Plettenberg Bay. Two further nights will be spent on overnight flights from the UK to Cape Town / Port Elizabeth via Johannesburg.

Cape Town – 6 nights.

On the Cape Peninsula We will visit Silvermine Nature Reserve, which has excellent *fynbos* and is a great place to introduce you to the *fynbos* flora of the Cape. We will also visit the Cape of Good Hope Nature reserve, which is now part of the Table Mountain National Park. This windswept park has many indigenous plant species. Indeed the 7,750 hectare reserve has as many plant species as the whole of Great Britain. The park also has a variety of mammals such as the Chacma Baboon, Cape Mountain Zebra, Bontebok, Red Hartebeest, Eland and Cape Grysbok. The African Penguin colony at Simon's Town is always a highlight to visit. Strandfontein Water Purification Plant (sewage works!) and Rondevlei Nature Reserve were both naturally occurring wetlands. With bird hides and observation towers, which will aid in our seeing and identifying an impressive amount of birds. Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens, which must surely be one of the finest Botanical Gardens in the world and Table Mountain, Blouberstrand and Rietvlei Reserve are all destinations that are on our tour agenda.



African penguins; Cape flowers; whale watching at Hermanus

Cape Town is famous throughout the world for its majestic mountain setting, and the many places and sights that both the city and the Cape Peninsula offer the visitor. Over the centuries, visitors have marveled not only at the Peninsula's natural splendor but also at the cultural diversity of the Mother City - the blending of Eastern, African and Western ways of life, which is constantly evident in architecture, dress and local customs. There is so much that we can recommend to visit in Cape Town that we schedule in a day at leisure so that you can visit a few of the many sights on offer.

We will spend a day at the Whale watching town of Hermanus and Fernkloof Nature Reserve. The Harold Porter National Botanical Gardens has one of the densest concentrations of fynbos in the Western Cape, with many beautiful ericas, proteas and pincushions. The Gardens have many paths that wind among the manicured lawns and flower beds, as well as through the forested kloofs.

The dramatic backdrop of the Hottentots Holland Mountains and the tree-lined streets, with the white gabled Cape Dutch homesteads all blend in tranquil harmony to make Stellenbosch one of the most beautiful towns in South Africa. The Paarl Bird Reserve with its many different water birds and the Paarl Mountain Reserve will afford us excellent birding opportunities.

We will visit Langebaan lagoon and the West Coast National Park. This Park is a must for any keen birdwatcher, with over 250 bird species recorded on and around the lagoon to date.



Blacksmith lapwing

The Little Karoo – 2 nights.

We stay two nights at a guest farm (ostrich farm) at Oudtshoorn, the ostrich capital of the world. One of South Africa's greatest natural wonders, the Cango Caves, has stalactites, stalagmites and helictites.

The Swartberg Pass will take us through some craggy mountain scenery covered in 'mountain fynbos'. Up at this high altitude there are many of the protea family that survive the snow in winter and heat in summer. This mountain range of beautiful vistas and twisted strata, separates the Great Karoo from the Little Karoo. Cape rock-jumper, Victorin's warbler, Cape siskin, ground woodpecker and protea seed-eater are a few of the special birds to look out for.

The Garden Route – 5 nights.

Indigenous forests, a rugged coastline, wetlands, mountains, rivers and hidden coves, hint at the range of wildlife to be enjoyed on the Garden Route.

The Garden of Eden nature reserve has mighty Outeniqua yellowwood trees, as well as many other types of indigenous trees and plants. As well as forest birds, reptiles include the endemic Knysna dwarf chameleon, boomslang (tree snake) and puff adder.

The beautiful coastline of the Robberg Peninsula (*right*) is a red sandstone promontory, its rugged coastline and high cliffs is a favourite venue for naturalists. Southern right whales, dolphins, Cape fur seals and seabirds are seen from the cliff tops, while in amongst the coastal fynbos there are small antelopes like the



common duiker or grysbok. Archaeological digs are revealing some interesting facts about the early inhabitants (700BC) of the peninsula.

On a leisurely boat trip up the Keurbooms River we look out for kingfishers, fish eagles and riverine birds, while the boat takes us into the forest. In the Tsitsikamma National Park, the Knysna turaco, Cape batis and chorister robin are three of many forest birds to look out for. The beach at Nature's Valley is one of the most beautiful in South Africa. Occasionally we see Cape clawless otters here.

The Diepwalle Forest has the last few remaining forest elephants, though the chance of seeing one of these great animals is slim. Birds include narina trogon, African emerald cuckoo, green woodhoopoe and Knysna woodpecker. Above the forest towards the Spitskop Peak we will be out of the forest and into *fynbos*, a chance to do some botanising.

In Knysna Lagoon National Park the lagoon flows in to the Indian Ocean. Tidal mudflats attract many migrating birds. At the Featherbed nature reserve, only accessible by boat, we take a coastal walk exploring caves and looking out for the rare blue duiker.

At the Tsitsikamma National Park the indigenous forest and the Indian ocean meet. The national park has more than 220 bird species and regular sightings of common dolphins and southern right whales are made from the shore.



Cape cormorants

When to visit: any time of year, but September to March is best.