



THE CAPE, SOUTH AFRICA

Spring flowers and natural history

The Cape Floral Kingdom is a wildlife wonder. This tiny, yet unique plant kingdom, situated in the mountains of the southernmost tip of Africa, boasts spectacularly high numbers of plant species: about 8,600 in an area roughly the size of Scotland, two thirds of which grow nowhere else.

In addition, the adjacent Succulent Karoo is the world's richest area for succulents, and the clay soils that form the common border of these two regions hold the greatest concentration of bulbous species in the world. We'll explore all of these areas in spring, the peak time for flowering.

On this tour, we will traverse many different landscapes—'mediterranean' heathlands (fynbos), semi-desert shrublands and temperate rainforests. Each has its characteristic soils and climate. The rainfall ranges from 75 mm per year in parts of Namaqualand to at least 2,000 mm per year in the eastern part of the area. Each landscape has its own kaleidoscope of plant species.

Although the plants are the main attraction, we will also enjoy the rich wildlife of the area: penguins on the coast, zebra and bontebok at Cape Point, iridescent sunbirds and endemic sugarbirds in the fynbos, and stately Blue Cranes and bustards on the plains. Finally, along the southern coast, we will look for the southern right whales that bask along its shore - a sighting of these magnificent creatures is one of the many highlights of this tour.

You can easily extend this tour to see more of Cape Town with its dramatic Table Mountain, or perhaps to venture out cage diving with Great White Sharks! It would be possible to fly out before the group or to stay on after.



Price
£4895

Single Room Supplement
£320

Full board

Day 1 flight to Cape Town
Day 2 Kirstenbosch
Day 3 Cape Point
Day 4-5 West Coast Nat'l Park
Day 6-8 S'thern Namaqualand
Day 9-10 De Hoop
Day 11 Overberg
Day 12 Hermanus, Walker Bay
Day 13 Betty's Bay
return to UK (**Day 14**)

Leader
Philip Precey and local guides

spring flowers of the Cape floral kingdom

Wildlife and culture holidays



Our profits are donated to the Wildlife Trusts



The Cape Floral Kingdom

The Cape Floral Kingdom is a wildlife wonder. This tiny, yet unique plant kingdom boasts spectacularly high numbers of plant species– about 8,600 in a relatively small area. About 5,800 of these grow nowhere else in the world. On this tour, we will traverse many different landscapes including 'mediterranean' heathlands (fynbos) and semi-desert shrublands (Namaqualand and Little Karoo).

Each has its characteristic soils and climate. We will see tiny succulent plants in the Knersvlakte and many colourful shrubs and herbs in meadows and pastures. We first ran a holiday here in 1997 since when we have returned several times making this one of our most popular tours.

Amongst 'table mountains' and dramatic coastlines, we will see the rich wildlife of the area. At Cape Point Nature Reserve there are baboons and ostriches, and, nearby, Jackass penguins. We will see iridescent sunbirds and plume-tailed sugarbirds in the fynbos as well as many other attractive species. Seabirds and shorebirds should also be seen on our travels along the coast, particularly in the West Coast area. Finally, along the southern coast, we will look for the southern right whales that bask along its shore - a sighting of these magnificent creatures is one of the many highlights of this tour.

The flowers

The timing and extent of flowering in the Clanwilliam and Namaqualand areas is notoriously difficult to predict. In general, good displays depend on sufficient early and follow-up winter rains, as well as weather conditions at the time of travel, eg. sunny, windless days.

Visits to sites mentioned in the itinerary might be switched to another day, or omitted for suitable alternatives, according to the prevailing local weather or flowering conditions. The plant diversity is so great that in all areas there are many exciting plants to be seen no matter what the flowering season brings.

The itinerary may change at the discretion of the leader or local guides, depending upon local conditions, in particular the flowering season and the weather.





ITINERARY

Day 1, 12th Aug Evening flights take us from London down to Cape Town, arriving the following morning.

The Cape Town and the Cape Peninsula

Day 2, 13th Aug We have a leisurely start to our holiday with a visit to one of the most famous Botanic Gardens in the world, set in one of the most stunning of landscapes. Nestled below towering cliffs of Table Mountain in the suburbs of Cape Town is **Kirstenbosch Botanic Gardens**, where we will have time to explore the wide collection of plants from across the country. The horticultural displays include a population of South Africa's largest protea, *Leucadendron argenteum* (the Silver Tree). Here we'll also see *Protea nitida* and the ancient *Cunonia capensis* growing in streambeds, its closest relatives being in New Caledonia.

The glasshouses have a wonderful collection of succulent plants from the drier areas of the country. This is a perfect introduction to our itinerary and the flora of the region. Cape Sugarbirds and Orange-breasted Sunbirds adorn the flowering proteas and ericas. If we have time, we will venture up Table Mountain, for the amazing views down over the city (weather permitting). The Gardens also have a very good book shop. **O/n Cape Town**



Day 3, 14th Aug The Cape Peninsula itself hold more plant species than the entire British Isles, and as an introduction we'll explore the **Cape Point Nature Reserve**, where in addition to plant species such as *Protea*, *Erica*, *Mimetes*, and reed-like restios, to name just a few, we'll look for the endemic mammals Bontebok and Cape Mountain Zebra.

The delicate iris *Moraea tripetala* may be seen. The nutrient-rich Benguela current surges along the coast from Antarctica and we'll have a chance to see many of the endemic seabirds, including a visit an African Penguin colony in the afternoon. Southern Right Whales will be calving immediately offshore. The coastal thicket vegetation here hold ancient milkwood trees and the fragrant camphor bush. **O/n Cape Town**

West Coast & Darling Hills

Day 4 15th Aug The shales in the Darling area have a **profusion of bulbs**, such as *Romuleas*, *Babianas* and the stunning *Geissorhizas*, a number of which are endemic. *Geissorhiza radians* and the similar *Babiana rubrocyanea* are particularly striking with their red and deep purple flowers.

Large specimens of *Drosera cistiflora* flower in the seeps, and whole fields are filled with *Moraea miniata* and *Heliophila*. Star-shaped *Pauridia capensis* abound in the damp patches. **O/n Langebaan**

Day 5, 16th Aug The sandy shores of the West Coast, just north of Cape Town, hold a completely different flora, and we'll explore both the flashy displays of daisies on the coastal sands and the endemic-rich granites of the **West Coast National Park**. This park is centred around the 16 km long Langebaan lagoon, a globally important site for shorebirds, while overhead we may catch sight of Black Harrier, one of the world's rarest birds of prey. Patches of daisies, such as *Gazania krebsiana* and *Dimorphotheca pluvialis* occur among areas of bulbs. *Ferraria crispa* and *Pelargonium fulgidum* occur on the granite hills. **O/n Langebaan**





The edge of Namaqualand: Clanwilliam, Vanrhynsdorp & Nieuwoudtville

Days 6-8 17th-19th Aug Moving further north still, we'll explore the southern edge of **Namaqualand**, where the Cape Mountains give way to the valleys and plains of **the arid Karoo** and the landscape is dominated by small succulent bushes, prone to bursting into pink flower at this time of year. The **high Cederberg mountains**, with their jagged peaks, give way to the flat topped hills and meandering valleys of the arid areas beyond.

There are a variety of sites in this area that differ between years and we will visit the ones that are at their best. Field of orange daisies are likely to be a spectacular feature of patches of the landscape here, but if we look more closely we'll find many special bulbous plants too. As we potter from place to place, the diversity at our feet is amazing. Damp valleys are dominated by the tall yellow *Bulbinella nutans* and there is a profusion of *Ornithogalums*, *Lachenalias*, *Moraeas*, *Romuleas*, *Ixias* and *Geissorhizas*. Delicate *Hesperanths* only open late in the day in preparation for nocturnal pollinators. Three species of *Sparaxis* are here and there are numerous *Babianas* and *Gladious*.

If we have time, we'll visit the nearby Knersvlakte, a low-lying quartz plain that forms part of the Succulent Karoo flora and hosts a diversity of stone plants. These "babies bottoms" as they are known locally (*Argyroderma*) represent the adaption of miniaturisation in this hard climate. **O/n Nieuwoudtville (2 nights) O/n Ceres (1 night)**

De Hoop

Days 9-10 20th-21st Aug We head for **De Hoop Nature Reserve**, via the Breede River Valley. De Hoop Nature Reserve protects large swatches of coastal habitat and the unique limestone 'fynbos' here has showy species such as *Protea obtusifolia* and *Leucospermum pattersoni*. Looking at one's feet, the small scented *Agathosmas*, or "buchus" as they are known locally, have been used medicinally for centuries. **Southern Right Whales** winter off the coast in good numbers here, and a large wetland in the reserve is excellent for waterbirds. The reserve also holds **big numbers of mammals** such as Eland, Bontebok and Cape Mountain Zebra, and Caracal if we are lucky! **O/n De Hoop (2 nights)**



Hermanus to Betty's Bay

Day 11 22nd Aug From De Hoop we drive via the Agulhas Plains and the plains of the **Overberg** to Hermanus and Walker Bay. Much of the plains have mainly been converted to wheat, but patches of "renosterveld" vegetation survive along the roadsides, supporting a variety of *Gladiolus* and *Watsonia*. The regal Blue Cranes are common in open lands, and we might even see Denhams's Bustards, the males performing an elaborate courtship display. **O/n Hermanus**

Day 12 23rd Aug The town of Hermanus is well-situated between fynbos-covered mountain and the sea cliffs of **Walker Bay**, home to the greatest concentration of Southern Right Whales in the world, and we stand a chance of getting good views of these cetaceans here, while African Black Oystercatchers feed on the coast below us. The red bird-pollinated *Gladiolus canonioides* is found here too. We will explore the coastal path and Fernkloof Nature Reserve for more wonderful wild flowers. **O/n Hermanus**

Day 13 24th Aug. This morning we head for Betty's Bay and the **Harold Porter Botanical Gardens**, where 'fynbos' vegetation intermingles with afro-montane forest and lovely *Psoralea pinnata* grows along the streams. After lunch, we return to Cape Town in time to board our evening flights home, arriving back in London early on **Day 14 25th Aug.**



Leaders and guides

Our local guide for this trip will be **Dalton Gibbs**, a Cape Town-based naturalist with a deep interest in all aspects of ecology (and history if you get him started!). Dalton has long been a key person in the City of Cape Town's nature conservation and his various responsibilities have included running Rondevlei Nature Reserve, monitoring critically endangered flora, assessing biodiversity of reserves, monitoring bird breeding colonies and chasing down escaped hippos - which regularly graze on his lawn on the edge of Rondevlei!

Our leader will be **Philip Precey**, a Director of Wildlife Travel who has led many of our holidays in recent years, from Western Australia to Norfolk, including trips to Botswana and Tanzania. Never far from his binoculars and camera, Philip will help you to enjoy all the aspects of the natural history that we encounter. This will be Philip's second visit to South Africa.

Health and Fitness

No strenuous walking is involved but you need to have a **reasonable level of general fitness** to be able to participate in the holiday. The tour visits several locations and travelling in the tropics can be tiring if you are not used to it. However, the trip is designed to be relatively comfortable so please discuss any concerns with us.

You should consult your GP for advice on malaria prophylaxis and all other travel health advice **AT LEAST EIGHT WEEKS** before travelling. We do not visit any areas where there is risk of Malaria, but the 'standard' travel vaccinations to consider are tetanus, diphtheria, hepatitis A and B, typhoid, rabies and cholera.

Accommodation, Meals & Transport

We will stay at charming local guesthouses, bed & breakfasts and lodges. All rooms have hot water and private facilities, with the possible exception of one of the smaller places, where you might, but not always, have to share a bathroom with other members of the tour. Meals are a mixture of local and international cuisine: special diets can be catered for. Transport will be in minibuses or similar.



Weather

Mild, the average daily temperature range spans 10-25 C. Generally, mornings will be a little chilly at about 10 C, and if it isn't too windy, some days it will get to 25 or a little higher during the hottest part of the day. We should expect some rain, but it should be largely dry.

Flights

The group flights are with British Airways from London Heathrow.

12th August depart London Heathrow 21.35, arrive Cape Town 10.00 (13th)

24th August depart Cape Town 19.20, arrive London Heathrow 06.15 (25th)

South Africa is 1 hour ahead of UK time in August.

It is also possible to fly from Manchester, connecting in London: please talk to us about the options.

Passports and visas

UK passport holders must have a valid passport, valid for at least 30 days after the end of the holiday with at least two blank pages. For visits of up to 90 days, you don't need a visa.

For holders of non-UK passports it is essential that you check with the South African embassy or consulate and obtain the necessary documents prior to travel.



TO BOOK

Contact us to check availability and reserve a place. Complete the Booking Form and send to Sunvil Holidays (CAA-ATOL Licence 808, ABTA V6218), our tour operator, with your deposit. All details about booking are given in the Booking Pack.

**DEPOSIT PER PERSON £1000, SECOND INSTALLMENT ON
CONFIRMATION OF HOLIDAY £1200.
BALANCE DUE BY 13/05/2017**

INCLUDED: Return flights from the UK, including airport taxes. Local transport as specified in itinerary. 12 night's accommodation, full board basis. Entry fees (National Parks and Botanic Gardens). Bottled water throughout. Services of leaders and local guides.

NOT INCLUDED: Drinks and refreshments. Gratuities. Travel insurance.

WILDLIFE TRAVEL

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