

WHALE ROUTE & WINELANDS SAFARI (7 DAYS)

This combined nature and cultural tour incorporates all the main highlights of the Western Cape, including its spectacular coastline, rugged mountains, diverse fauna and flora, majestic winelands and its charming historical character. On this tour, we visit Cape Agulhas, the southern-most tip of Africa and the dividing point between the Atlantic and Indian Oceans! This tour includes a night in the picturesque and serene village of Swellendam, South Africa's third oldest settlement, nestled at the foot of the high Langeberg Mountains, plus we explore the three main wineland areas of Franschhoek, Stellenbosch and Paarl. To end our tour, we stay at the widely acclaimed Bartholomeu's Klip Game Reserve, where we hope to see numerous antelope species, zebra, jackal, birdlife and possibly even leopard.

BASIC ITINERARY

Day	Accommodation
1 Hermanus	Francolinhof Guest House
2 Agulhas	Agulhas Country Lodge
3 De Hoop	Buchu Bush Camp
4 Swellendam	Aan de Oewer/ or similar
5 Stellenbosch	De Rusthuiz/ or similar
6 Wellington	Bartholomeu's Klip Game Reserve

Price*: *Please refer to rates page on website.*

*** These prices include all accommodation, meals, transport, entrance fees and guide fees. Prices exclude beverages, laundry fees, any optional activities, gratuities and items of a personal nature (such as gifts and souvenirs).**

DAY 1: CAPE TOWN TO HERMANUS

Highlights: Harold Porter Gardens, Stony Point Sea Bird colony, Whale watching (seasonal)

We will fetch you after breakfast from your place of stay and make our way eastwards, along the beautiful False Bay Coast. We have a chance of seeing a variety of marine birds and mammals along this route, including Cape Gannets, Cape Fur Seals, dolphins and whales (seasonal). Our first stop will be at Stony Point - a great place to see the rare African Penguin as well as four cormorant species (two of them endangered southern African endemics) and several other marine bird species. We then continue our tour to the spectacular Harold Porter Botanical Gardens, with its amazing variety of flowering plants and birds. Here, we will observe and discuss pollination, seed dispersal and germination - there is always something happening and a story to be told. This area forms part of the Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve, the richest place on earth for plants. We then make our way to the coastal town of Hermanus for lunch. Hermanus is a stunning town nestled between a quiet bay and rugged, fynbos-clad mountains. Here we plan to have lunch at a restaurant, which is actually set inside a coastal cave, overlooking the bay! Depending on the time of year, this bay, well-known as one of the best land-based whale watching spots in the world, may be teeming with Southern Right Whales. Rock hyraxes and other wildlife are also usually present to entertain us. In the afternoon, we visit the Fernkloof Nature Reserve for a gentle walk through some of the pristine vegetation found here. This predominantly fynbos reserve is conveniently situated near the centre of Hermanus and gives very easy access to some of the region's special plant and bird species. In whale season, this area also provides a good vantage point from which to spot sea mammals further out to sea. We then retire to Francolinhof Guest House, situated on the edge of Fernkloof, with its exquisite views and tranquil setting. Here you can enjoy sundowners on your balcony before a relaxing dinner.

DAY 2: HERMANUS TO AGULHAS

Highlights: Medicinal plant hike, Lighthouse tour, Southern tip of Africa

After breakfast, we join a well-known local author on a medicinal plant hike in the indigenous vegetation on a nearby farm. After a light lunch under an umbrella of milkwood trees on this farm, we depart on our journey through the Agulhas Plains. These plains separate the southern-most tip of the African continent from the mountains of the Cape Fold Belt further inland, and are home to a number of interesting bird species. This area, predominantly comprised of rolling wheatfields and flat plains, interspersed with pockets of fynbos and renosterveld vegetation, is one of the few places where Secretary Birds and Denham's Bustards are still common. We also hope to see large numbers of South Africa's magnificent national bird, the Blue Crane, and in winter may enjoy the spectacular sight of flame-red flowering Aloes. *En route* to the coast, we pass through the quaint town of Napier, where we will visit the local farm stall to sample some of the region's natural produce. We will then make our way to the small coastal town of Agulhas, where we will spend some time in the Agulhas National Park, visit the Agulhas Lighthouse (built in 1848) and see the place where the Atlantic and Indian Oceans meet. We will then retire to the beautiful, castle-like Agulhas Country Lodge, built of natural stone and overlooking the rugged sea.

DAY 3: AGULHAS TO DE HOOP

Highlights: De Hoop Coastal Nature Reserve

After a relaxing breakfast at the lodge, we will make our way to the De Hoop Nature Reserve, where we will spend the day exploring this unspoilt natural wonderland. The De Hoop Nature Reserve protects a large tract of highly threatened lowland fynbos, as well as an abundance of mammals, including Cape Mountain Zebra and Bontebok (both recently brought back from the verge of extinction) and Springbok (South Africa's National animal). The reserve also has a wealth of birdlife, and in the early summer we hope to see the Agulhas Clapper Lark, with its bizarre breeding display. In the late winter and spring we may also enjoy some spectacular whale watching, since this is the time of year that Southern Right Whales come into the area to calve. After a fantastic day in this reserve we will make our way to the nearby Buchu Bush Camp, where we will spend the night in rustic A-frame log chalets. Here we can spend a relaxing evening at the "Lapa" where we will enjoy drinks and a traditional meal by the log fire.

DAY 4: DE HOOP TO SWELLENDAM

Highlights: Historical Swellendam, Marloth Nature Reserve

After a relaxed breakfast in the Lapa, we drive inland towards the historical and beautiful town of Swellendam, situated at the base of the high Langeberg Mountains. *En route* we hope to see numerous birds typical to the area, including Bustards, Cranes and Storks. Swellendam, the historic heart of the Overberg, was established in the early 1700s and is the 3rd oldest town in South Africa. We will visit the local Drostdy Museum (the seat of the first Magistrate, or *Landdrost*, built in 1747), where we will be given insight into the early way of life of the settlers here, and other historical buildings in this town with their unique collections of period antiques. After lunch in Swellendam, we will visit the nearby Marloth Nature Reserve for some unsurpassed views of the area and a great opportunity to discover the natural wonders of the incredibly rich mountain vegetation and unique birdlife. Alternatively, we will visit the nearby Bontebok National Park, home to numerous antelope species, including the endangered Bontebok, brought back from the brink of extinction. We will then retire to our serene guest house, to relax and enjoy the sounds of nature before dinner.

DAY 5: SWELLENDAM TO STELLENBOSCH

Highlights: Scenic drive, Winelands, Historic Stellenbosch

After breakfast, we make our way through the historical wine-growing areas of Robertson and Worcester *en route* to Franschhoek. After travelling through the highly scenic Franschhoek Pass, with its magnificent views of the Franschhoek Valley, we will be spoilt with some magnificent "French Cuisine" at one of Franschhoek's picturesque and elegant restaurants. We continue our drive through the awe-inspiring Helshoogte Pass to the Delaire Wine Estate – "vineyards in the sky" - with its spectacular views of the Jonkershoek Mountains and Simonsberg and to Thelema Wine Estate. Here you can purchase some of

Thelema's world-renowned and award-winning wines. Later in the afternoon we will visit Delheim Wine Estate for a cellar tour where we will be given insight into the art of winemaking. At Delheim, you will have the opportunity to sample some of the estate's internationally-acclaimed wines in the coolness of their famous "Downstairs Cellar". A brief stroll through the vineyards will provide an excellent opportunity for bird-watching and for soaking in some of the beauty and serenity of this estate. We then make our way into Stellenbosch - South Africa's second oldest town (after Cape Town) and home to the famous University of Stellenbosch. This picturesque town is otherwise known as Eikestad (the 'City of Oaks'), due the age-old oak trees which have been planted there. We will spend the night at the serene De Rusthuiz Guest Lodge.

DAY 6: STELLENBOSCH TO WELLINGTON

Highlights: Historical villages of Stellenbosch and Paarl, Game and bird-watching drive

We start our day by exploring the historical oak-lined streets of Stellenbosch, flanked by buildings of Cape Dutch and Georgian architecture. We then visit the Village Museum, with its four lovingly restored historic homes, each of which reflects a certain period in the Cape's history. Of course, no trip to Stellenbosch would be complete without a stop at 'Oom Samie se Winkel', a characterful store bursting with quaint and historical items. After lunch, we continue our tour to the nearby town of Paarl, another key village in the Cape Winelands, where we will introduce you to its many cultural and architectural highlights. Above the town, Paarl Rock, a huge granite outcrop that resembles a large round pearl (hence its name in Dutch) and the Afrikaans Language Monument, can be seen. In the late afternoon, we will arrive at Bartholomew's Klip Private Game Reserve for a 'sundowner' game drive. Some of the mammals we hope to see on the drive include Eland (the largest antelope in Africa), Springbok, Bontebok (a species brought back from the verge of extinction), Blue and Black Wildebeest, Zebra, Gemsbok, and, perhaps even Black-backed Jackal. More than 160 bird species have been recorded in the reserve, including the endangered Blue Crane (South Africa's national bird), the majestic African Fish Eagle, and the Ostrich (the world's largest flightless bird). After sundowners, we will retire to our rooms before enjoying a gourmet dinner.

DAY 7: WELLINGTON TO CAPE TOWN

Highlights: Morning Game Drive, Riebeeck West and Kasteel, Bird watching, botanising

Following a hot cup of coffee, we will embark on an early morning drive in the reserve, where we will enjoy seeing further game and birdlife, before returning for brunch. We then depart for the picturesque and historical towns of Riebeeck Kasteel & Riebeeck West, situated on the slopes of Kasteelberg, meaning "Castle Mountain" in Dutch. This area, in the heart of the rolling wheatfields of the Swartland, is well-known for its olive production. We will visit the well-known "Olive Boutique", where we will learn a little about olive oil production, enjoy olive-tasting and sample a wide variety of olive related products – from tapenade to olive oil cosmetics. We then continue our journey towards the West Coast, via Malmesbury, the "capital" of the Swartland. Especially in the spring, we hope to see some spectacular displays of wildflowers along this route. We will visit the Koeberg Nature Reserve for a gentle walk where we will do some final bird watching

and botanising. This reserve is known for its pristine strandveld vegetation, somewhat different to the fynbos we have become familiar with throughout our trip, and its very localised and interesting bird species including Black Harrier, Southern Black Korhaan and many others. After spending some time in this diverse and fascinating reserve, we make our way back to Cape Town. During our drive we will have magnificent views of Table Mountain, Table Bay and Robben Island and we may even catch the sun setting over the Atlantic! We will return you to your hotel/ guest house in the early evening.