

South Africa trip report

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South Africa is a magnificent and unique country, and I would highly recommend visiting it if you love wildlife and nature. We could only manage a very short family trip in September 15th-26th 2023. We've seen 48 mammal and 310 bird species in the entire trip. Our itinerary included the Cape Town area, Hermanus and De hoop in the southern part of the country, and Marrick farm and Madikwe national park in the northern part. During this trip report I will mark **mammals** in red, **birds** in blue and **reptiles** in green.

Logistics:

This entire trip was individually planned and booked, and everything was self-done besides the night game drive at Marrick, the game drives in Madikwe and the drives in the second part of our trip.

All our hotels were booked via booking.com besides Marrick, and all are very recommended.

In Cape Town and its surroundings, we rented a car and drove alone. The roads were almost always great, and we felt safe all the time.

Later, we took a domestic flight to Kimberley and were picked up from the airport by people from Marrick farm. The drive from Marrick to Madikwe and then from Madikwe to Johannesburg was arranged by our hotel in Madikwe.

Cape Town:

We stayed at The Zest Boutique Hotel. Not a great place for wildlife, but it was very nice, the breakfasts were great and we felt safe in this area. They don't have generators for load shedding though, so you should consider that as well.

West Coast National Park

We had a full day in this beautiful national park. The arrival from Cape Town with a private car took about an hour and from the entrance to the flowering area it took another 45 minutes. The area had an amazing flowering and nice landscape but it's not full of animals. We saw a few **Bonteboks**, **Cape Mountain Zebras** and a **Gray mongoose**. As for birds we saw a few good species and on top of them was the **Southern Black Korhaan**. Other birds worth mentioning were **White-Fronted Plover**, **Cape Gannet**, **African Oystercatcher**, **Cape Longclaw**, **Yellow Bishop** and **Southern Red Bishop**.



Cape Of Good Hope

The Cape Of Good Hope, including Boulders Beach and the Chapman's Peak was one of the highlights of the trip. Boulders Beach has lots of cute [African Penguins](#) and a few [Malachite Sunbirds](#). In the Cape Of Good Hope National Park we saw lots of good birds such as [Verreaux's Eagle](#), [Cape Sugarbird](#), [Orange-Breasted Sunbird](#), [Cape](#)



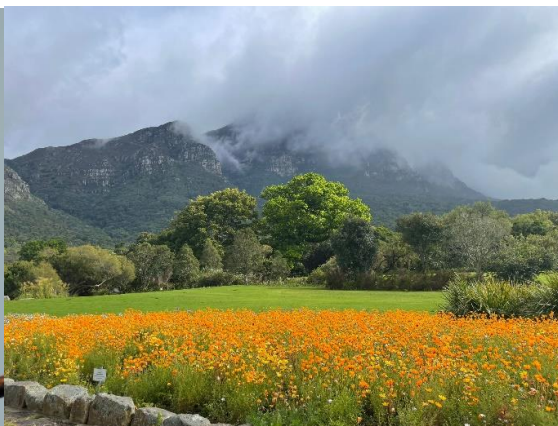
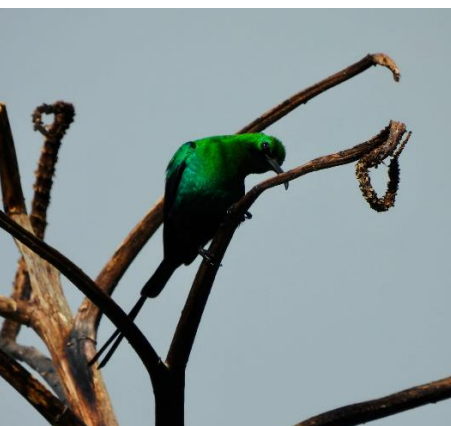
[Grassbird](#), [Cape Rock-Thrush](#). Mammals seen

were [Chacma Baboon](#), [Common Eland](#) and [Rock Hyrax](#). Reptiles identified are [Angulate Tortoise](#) and [Black Girdled Lizard](#). In the Hout Bay we had good views of [Cape Fur Seals](#) but make sure to come there when the place is not empty, we had a scary moment there with some homeless people that stay there to feed the seals and to ask tourists for money.



kirstenbosch Botanical Garden

The Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens are a little paradise inside the city. The only mammal we saw was the invasive [Grey Squirrel](#), but birds were plentiful. The [Spotted Eagle-Owls](#) were easy to find, there is a nest on a pillar in the entrance and another one high in the gardens inside a tree. Ask the workers and they will help you finding them. Other good species were [Malachite Sunbird](#), [Cape Sugarbird](#), [Orange-Breasted Sunbird](#), [Amethyst Sunbird](#), [Pin-Tailed Whydah](#), [African Harrier-Hawk](#), [Sombre Greenbul](#), [Cape Batis](#), [Forest Canary](#) and [Swee Waxbill](#).



Hermanus

In Hermanus we stayed at Cliff Cottage Hermanus. It was very nice and was less than a minute away from the cliff path, which is a very nice path along the cliff which leads all the way to the city center and you can see whales from.

Hermanus is famous for its whale watching boat trip. We were unlucky to arrive in a bad weather, but we still had incredible whale sightings from the shore. We saw at least 20 different **Southern Right Whales**, both babies and moms including lots of breaching not too far from the shore, but it's much better to have binoculars with you in cases like this. We also had a few **Common Bottlenose Dolphins**.



De Hoop

De Hoop is a wonderful National Park and a must visit place for animal lovers who visit the Garden Route. We stayed at De Hoop Collection Hotel which was amazing (but they don't have generators so make sure



to look for load sheddings!). The hotel area was teeming with wildlife, including great numbers of **Bonteboks**, **rheboks**, **Elands**, **Cape Mountain Zebras** and **Ostriches**. There was a path with a view to the lake that didn't produce much, we saw **Southern Tchgara**, **african fish-eagle**, **African Darter**, **Cape Shoveler**, **Cape Teal** and **Yellow-Billed**

Duck. During the night we had a few close encounters with **Spotted Eagle-Owls** inside the .hotel grounds



The morning after we went to the southern part of the reserve that was fantastic for birds. **Blue Cranes** were all around, **Bokmakeries**, **Greater Double-Collared Sunbird**, **Yellow** and **Red Bishops**, a **Skaapsteker** and the highlight – 2 **male Denham's Bustard** in courtship dance. Later that day we had perhaps our best few hours in South Africa, sitting in the coffee shop inside the national park and watching tens of **Southern Right Whales** swimming and breaching from a fair distance. Amazing!!



Marrick Farm

Convincing the whole family to make the detour to Marrick was almost impossible, but we made it and once we landed in Kimberley it was clear that this is a special place. From the plane window in Kimberley airport, we added our first mammal – **Yellow Mongoose** and a **Northern Black Korhaan**. A short afternoon drive in Marrick produced lots of Mammals including **Sable**, **Gemsbok**, **Black Wildebeest**, **Red**



hartebeest, **Springbok**, **Bontebok**, **Roan Antelope**, **Plains Zebra**, **Black Impala**

and **South African Ground Squirrel**. We were afraid the one night we had would not be enough, but luckily we managed to see most of our target species. An **Aardvark** made a close appearance, two **Aardwolves**, **three Bat-Eared Foxes** and lots of **Springhares** made it a .memorable night

The morning after was dedicated for birdwatching and it was fantastic! many colorful seed-eaters came to drink and feed between the cabins, including **Golden-Breasted Bunting**, **Violet-Eared Waxbill**, **Black-Faced Waxbill**, **Green-Winged Pytilia** and other beauties like **Pied Barbet**, **Crimson-Breasted Gonolek**, **Common Scimitarbill** and **Pirit Batis**.



Madikwe game reserve

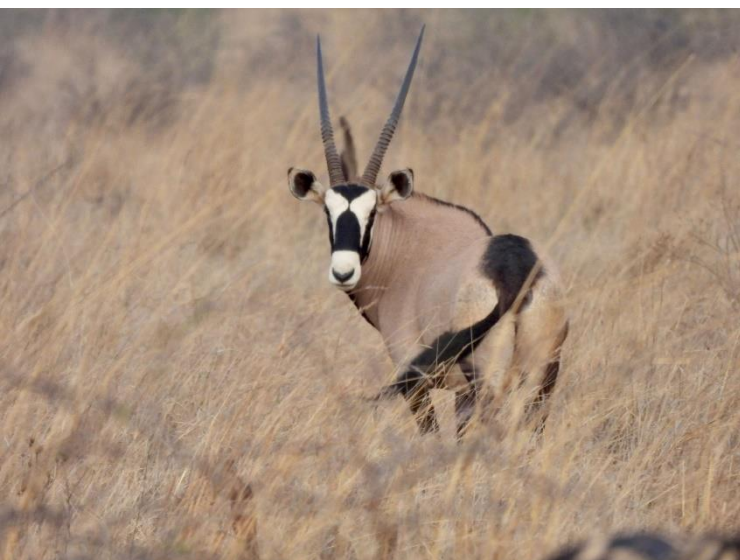
The long way between Marrick to Madikwe produced a few good sightings including a **Meerkat**, **Secretary Bird**, **White-Fronted Bee-Eater** and **Vervet Monkeys**. We also drove through active fires but all in all it was a fine drive if you hire a local driver (but 8 hrs long!). Madikwe was our last destination for the trip, and it is a magnificent one. It's not so big but during our 3 nights we never felt like we have seen

.everything

Our best observations were along the main road of the reserve that was always teeming with wildlife – lots of **Giraffes**, **Elephants**, **Wildebeests**, **Zebras**, **Impalas**, and **Kudus**. the highlight was a big **Brown Hyena** crossing the road, other predators - we had a few close **Lion** sightings including cubs, fresh kill, and a beautiful roaring male. Also 2 different close **Cheetah** sightings and 2 **Leopards**

on a tree. **White Rhinos** were seen in almost every drive and more mammals seen are **Klipspringer**, **Steenbok**,

and **Gemsbok**.





We stayed at Rockfig Madikwe Lodge which was wonderful. The water holes allowed close sightings of **Elephants, Warthogs, Kudus, Klipspringers, Zebras**, and a huge **Verreaux's Eagle-Owl**. Inside the hotel grounds mammals seen were **Jameson's Red Rock Hare, Pygmy Mongoose**, and **Smith's Bush Squirrel**. There were also lots of birds including **White-Throated Robin-Chat, Crimson-Breasted Gonolek, Pied Barbet, Crested Barbet, Yellow-Billed Hornbill, Long-Billed Crombec, Cape Penduline Tit, Yellow-Bellied Eremomela, Chestnut-Vented Tit-Babbler, Barred Wren-Warbler, Grey-Backed Camaroptera, Brubru, Red-Headed Weaver** .and **Violet-Eared Waxbill**



More good birds seen in the reserve are **South African Shelduck, Verreaux's Eagle, Kori Bustard, Red-Crested Korhaan, Pearl-Spotted Owlet, Swallow-Tailed Bee-Eater, Striped Kingfisher, Purple Roller, Ashy Tit, Southern Pied Babbler, and White-Crested Helmetshrike**. We also had one identified reptile – **Rock Monitor** .**Lizard**



In conclusion – South Africa is a wonderful and very diverse country with wonderful nature. It demands caution but with good preparations it's not hard to travel. We had a total of 48 Mammal species and 310 Bird species in only 10 days and I hope to come back soon and explore more of this amazing country. For more information, tips and locations of birds and mammals feel free to email me at klilzait@gmail.com

