

**KWAZULU-NATAL MIDLANDS AND DRAKENSBERG  
4-DAY TOUR**

**Midmar Dam – Roselands – Creighton – Ntsikeni – Sani Pass –  
Karkloof – Krantzklloof**

**BIRDING AND WILDLIFE SAFARI**

**01 January 2021 – 01 January 2022  
4 Days, 3 Nights**

**TRIP GUIDE**



## **KWAZULU-NATAL MIDLANDS AND DRAKENSBURG TOUR – 4 DAYS**

**Midmar Dam – Roselands – Creighton – Ntsikeni – Sani Pass – Karkloof – Krantzkloof**

### **1. Tour Summary**

**Valid Dates:** 01 January 2021 – 01 January 2022.  
**Duration:** 4 days, 3 nights.  
**No. of Pax:** 7 guests maximum.  
**Price:** **ZAR 9,950 per person sharing, with a ZAR 1,190 single supplement.**  
Price may be subject to change based on factors beyond our control.  
**Distance:** Total driving distance (including around sites) = About 670km.

#### **Includes:**

- ✓ Private birding and nature guide;
- ✓ Specialist guide fees – 4x4 Sani Pass tour;
- ✓ Accommodation (may change subject to availability, in which case similar will be found);
- ✓ All breakfasts, lunches, dinners, tea and coffee;
- ✓ All ground transport – max 7 participants and 1 guide per vehicle;
- ✓ All road tolls and parking fees;
- ✓ Bottled water in vehicles whilst travelling – 2 per person per day;
- ✓ All entrance fees;
- ✓ Conservation levies;
- ✓ Community levies;
- ✓ Trip guide;
- ✓ Personalized species checklists.

#### **Excludes:**

- All airfares;
- Travel and medical insurance;
- All drinks (except bottled waters);
- Additional excursions/activities/extensions/purchases;
- Gratuities for guides and local restaurants;
- Items of a personal nature.

#### **Note:**

- Minimum of 4 participants per vehicle required to undertake the trip. If fewer, price will be slightly more;
- Tour starts and ends at King Shaka International Airport or Umhlanga Rocks;
- This itinerary is subject to change due to weather conditions at the time and other factors beyond our control;
- The species mentioned in the itinerary represent only some of those we may possibly view on the tour, however, none of these can be guaranteed even though every effort will be made where possible to locate them. A full list of possible species appears on your checklist, although vagrants and rarities may also surprise us.



## 2. Tour Highlights

This fantastic birding focussed tour explores numerous inland regions rich in endemic and special birds, some wildlife and splendid scenic beauty.

- *Group size:* maximum of 7 participants and 1 guide per vehicle.
- *Birding in brief:* Sightings goal of 150+. Excellent variety of birds to be seen, with a good chance of large birds of prey and many special and endemic species.
- *Wildlife in brief:* Sightings goal of 10+ mammals. Good variety of mammals, reptiles, amphibians and butterflies to be seen across a wide variety of habitats.
- *Areas visited:* Midmar Dam, Roselands, Creighton, Ntsikeni, Sani Pass, Karkloof, Benvie Gardens and Krantzkloof.
- *Expected weather conditions:* Ntsikeni is mostly hot during the day in the summer, and cooler in the evenings, with a chance of mist. Rain is possible, usually in the form of summer convection thunderstorms, and cool wet weather is possible in the event of a cold front moving up from the south. On a climate level, Ntsikeni Nature Reserve falls in the summer rainfall region, with an average rainfall of 911mm per year. Temperatures range from well below freezing point in winter, to an average maximum of 17.4°C and an average minimum of 9.5°C. The driest month is July, the most rainfall falls in January, and the warmest is February.
- *Tour tempo:* medium, optional mid-day breaks (advisable on hot days), no serious walking.
- *Accommodation standards:* medium – private guesthouses.
- *Top birds:* Blue Swallow, Cape Parrot, Drakensberg Rockjumper, Gurney's Sugarbird, Eurasian Bittern (possible), Striped Flufftail, Black Harrier, Baillon's Crake, Red-chested Flufftail, African Rail, Bearded Vulture, Cape Vulture, Verreaux's Eagle, Montagu's Harrier, Wattled Crane, Blue Crane, Grey Crowned Crane, Secretarybird, Black-rumped Buttonquail, Cape Eagle-Owl, African Grass Owl, Marsh Owl, Malachite Sunbird, Greater Double-collared Sunbird, Drakensberg Prinia, Drakensberg Siskin, Mountain Pipit, Mountain Wheatear, Layard's Warbler, Sickie-winged Chat, Red-winged Francolin, Shelley's Francolin, Bokmakierie, Rudd's Lark, Red-capped Lark, Fan-tailed Grassbird, Barratt's Warbler, Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler, Wing-snapping Cisticola, Wailing Cisticola, Cloud Cisticola, Pale-crowned Cisticola, Short-tailed Pipit, Striped Pipit, Plain-backed Pipit, Yellow-breasted Pipit, Nicholson's Pipit, African Quailfinch, Denham's Bustard, White-bellied Bustard, Ground Woodpecker, Red-throated Wryneck, Half-collared Kingfisher, Eastern Long-billed Lark, Buff-streaked Chat, Chorister Robin-Chat, Bush Blackcap, Common Quail, Southern Bald Ibis, Buff-spotted Flufftail, Sentinel Rock-Thrush, Forest Buzzard, Scaly-throated Honeyguide, Orange Ground Thrush, Spotted Ground Thrush, Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawk, Greater Painted-snipe, African Snipe, Orange-breasted Waxbill, Cape Longclaw, South African Cliff Swallow, Southern Ground-Hornbill.



- *Mammal viewing:* Aardvark, Sloggett's Ice Rat, Eland, Oribi, Cape Porcupine, Serval, Black-backed Jackal, Cape Clawless Otter, Black Wildebeest, Grey Rhebok, Mountain Reedbuck, Chacma Baboon,



Rock Hyrax, Water Mongoose, Large Grey Mongoose, Cape Genet, Blesbok, Common Duiker, and good chances for uncommon smaller species

- *Special interests:* birding, wildlife, photography.
- *Specialist guiding:* A morning specialist birding tour up Sani Pass by 4x4.
- *Add-ons:* this tour can be combined with extensions to the Zululand and Maputaland region of KwaZulu-Natal, as well as Wakkerstroom and the Kruger National Park in Mpumalanga.



### 3. Birding and Wildlife Regions

#### 3.1. Day 1: Midlands & Ntsikeni – 250km

**Habitat types:** Wetland, Moist Grassland, Temperate Forest and Rocky Hillslopes

**Route:** Depart Umhlanga

Midmar Dam – Thurlow Peninsula

Roselands

Creighton

**Ntsikeni Vlei – 1-night accommodation.**

**Target birds:**

Cape Parrot, Blue Swallow, Striped Flufftail, Eurasian Bittern, Black Harrier, Montagu's Harrier, Bearded Vulture, Cape Vulture, Ground Woodpecker, Southern Bald Ibis, African Grass Owl, Cape Eagle Owl, Malachite Sunbird, Buff-streaked Chat, Mountain Wheatear, African Marsh-Harrier, Mountain Pipit, African Rail, Greater Double-collared Sunbird, Drakensberg Prinia, Grey-winged Francolin, Red-winged Francolin, Red-throated Wryneck, Bokmakierie, Barratt's Warbler, Eastern Long-billed Lark, Black Cuckoo, Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler.

**Target mammals:**

Aardvark, Oribi, Cape Porcupine, Serval, Mountain Reedbuck, Southern Reedbuck, Black Wildebeest, Blesbok, Grey Rhebok, Black-backed Jackal, Chacma Baboon, Rock Hyrax, and some smaller species.



#### 3.2. Day 2: Drakensberg & Sani Pass – 165km

**Habitat types:** Afromontane Grassland, Afrotemperate Forest, Cliff-faces and Dams

**Route:** Depart Ntsikeni Vlei

Underberg

Himeville

**Sani Pass – 2-nights accommodation. Includes 4x4 drive up pass. Passport required.**

**Target birds:**

Drakensberg Rockjumper, Gurney's Sugarbird, Black Harrier, Southern Bald Ibis, African Crake, African Rail, Bearded Vulture, Cape Vulture, Buff-streaked Chat, Bush Blackcap, Ground Woodpecker, Barratt's Warbler, Malachite Sunbird, Greater Double-collared Sunbird, Drakensberg Siskin, Drakensberg Prinia, Mountain Pipit, Layard's Tit-Babbler, Sickie-winged Chat, Grey-winged Francolin, Red-winged Francolin, Red-throated Wryneck, Bokmakierie, Black Cuckoo, Sentinel Rock-Thrush, Cape Rock-Thrush, Olive Woodpecker, Chorister Robin-Chat, White-starred Robin, Amur Falcon, Cape Batis, Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler, Buff-spotted Flufftail.

**Target mammals:**

Eland, Grey Rhebok, Mountain Reedbuck, Sloggett's Ice Rat, Cape Clawless Otter, Spotted-necked Otter, Serval, Large Grey Mongoose.



**Day 3: Midlands & Karkloof – 178km**

**Habitat types:** Moist Grassland, Mistbelt Wetland, Afrotropical Forest and Botanical Garden.

**Route: Depart Sani Pass**

Marutswa Forest

Benvie Gardens

**Karkloof – 1-night accommodation**

**Target birds:**

Eastern Bronze-naped Pigeon, Orange Ground Thrush, Spotted Ground Thrush, Forrest Buzzard, Denham's Bustard, White-bellied Bustard, Shelley's Francolin, Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawk, Wattled Crane, Blue Crane, Mountain Wheatear, Grey-crowned Crane, Grey Cuckoo-Shrike, Scaly-throated Honeyguide, Chorister Robin-Chat, African Emerald Cuckoo, Mountain Wagtail, Olive Thrush, Olive Bush-Shrike, Goliath Heron, Baillon's Crake, Black Crake, Greater Painted-snipe, Lesser Moorhen, Cape Teal, Cape Shoveler, African Snipe, Little Bittern, and African Marsh-Harrier.

**Target mammals:**

Aardvark, Oribi, Cape Porcupine, Grey Rhebok, Serval, Common Reedbuck, Mountain Reedbuck, Yellow Mongoose, Water Mongoose, Cape Genet.



**3.3. Day 4: Krantzkloof & Durban – 167km**

**Habitat types:** Montane Grassland, Temperate Forest and Scarp Forest

**Route: Depart Karkloof**

Benvie Gardens

Howick Falls

Krantzkloof Gorge

**Durban**

**Target birds:**

Spotted Ground Thrush, African Crowned Eagle, African Goshawk, Forrest Buzzard, Shelley's Francolin, Grey-crowned Crane, Grey Cuckoo-Shrike, Scaly-throated Honeyguide, Cape Robin-Chat, African Emerald Cuckoo, Mountain Wagtail, Olive Thrush, Olive Bush-Shrike, Knysna Turaco, Purple-crested Turaco, Red-chested Cuckoo, Green Woodhoopoe, Narina Trogon, Martial Eagle, African Harrier Hawk, African Goshawk, Black Sparrowhawk, Lanner Falcon, Peregrine Falcon, Walhberg's Eagle, Woolly-necked Stork, Yellow-throated Longclaw, Dark-backed Weaver, Pied Mannikin, Goliath Heron.

**Target mammals:**

Oribi, Common Reedbuck, Caracal, Burchell's Zebra, Blue Duiker, Common Duiker, Bushpig, Cape Genet, Caracal, Cape Clawless Otter, Slender Mongoose, Water Mongoose, Banded Mongoose.



No accommodation required.



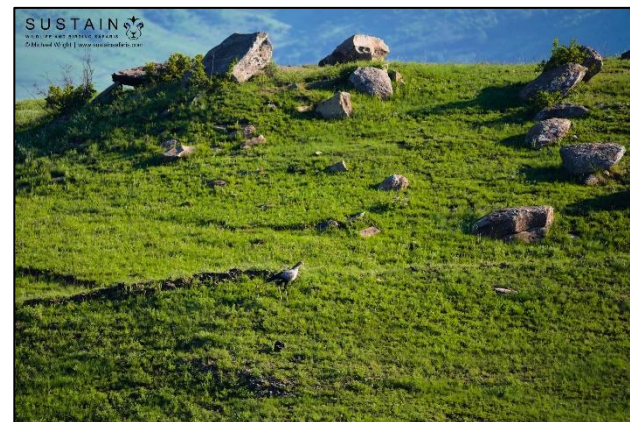
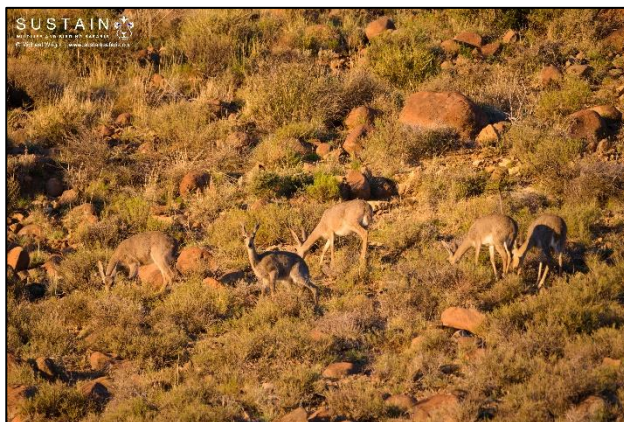
#### 4. Trip Itinerary

Day	Accommodation*	Location	Habitats	Sites	Distance (kms)	Driving Time (hrs)
1	Ntsikeni Vlei Lodge – 1 night	Ntsikeni Vlei Nature Reserve	Wetland, Mistbelt Grassland, Temperate Forest	Midmar Dam, Roselands, Creighton, Ntsikeni Vlei	250	4.0
2	Mkomazana Mountain Cottages – 1 night	Sani Pass	Montane Grassland, Temperate Forest and Scarp Forest	Creighton, Ntsikeni Vlei, Sani Pass	165	3.0
3	Thistledown Country House – 1 night	Karkloof	Mistbelt Grassland, Scarp Forest, Wetlands, Botanical Garden	Marutswa Forest, Karkloof	178	2.5
4	Depart Karkloof for King Shaka International Airport			Benvie Gardens, Krantzklloof Gorge	167	2.5

\* Accommodation may change subject to availability, in which case similar accommodation will be found.

\*\* Total driving distance (including around sites) = 670km.

Note: C = Catered, S/C = Self-catered





## 5. Accommodation

Note: Accommodation may change subject to availability, in which case similar accommodation will be found.

### ***Day 1 – Ntsikeni Vlei Lodge***

Ntsikeni Vlei Lodge caters to tourists undertaking birding and other nature-based tours.

The lodge comprises:

- A communal (self-catering) kitchen with a gas stove, fridge, freezer, crockery and cutlery provided.
- A communal entertainment area and boma.
- Four double en-suite chalet Bedding and towels are provided. s.
- A generator room, housing a diesel generator (operates until 21h00), which provides electricity for the lodge. Paraffin lamps are available.

A 4x4 vehicle is required to reach the lodge and explore the reserve in wet weather.



### ***Day 2 – Mkomazana Mountain Cottages***

<https://www.mkomazana.co.za/>

Experience fresh mountain air, a pristine environment and a nature lover's paradise.

Nestled in a magnificent World Heritage Site at the foot of the Sani Pass, Mkomazana Mountain Cottages have been lovingly restored and are a part of an historic 1800's trading station. Surrounded by the uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park, the sprightly Mkomazana River and four dams on the property attract a multitude of birds and wildlife to enjoy. We are perfectly situated for a wide range of outdoor activities, from hiking and mountain biking to bird watching and trout fishing.



The cottages are beautifully appointed, each with its own character, private garden, and wood burning fireplace. Delicious freshly baked scones are delivered to your door each morning. Just the thing to make a beautiful mountain morning more memorable. Kick back and relax, or explore and discover. It's completely up to you.

Experience Mkomazana, one of the Southern Drakensberg's best kept secrets.

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### **Day 3 – Thistledown Country House**

<https://www.thistledown.co.za/>

Thistledown Country House is set on 20 acres nestling amongst farmlands just below the Karkloof Hills in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands. These hills are covered with the second largest tract of indigenous forest in South Africa. The Nkonkwane stream tumbles down from these hills, flows through the Thistledown property and meets up with the Karkloof River further downstream.

At Thistledown Country House, you are offered elegant country living in a restored farmhouse which has five double, en-suite rooms. The L-shaped verandah is the perfect place to relax and observe some of the 129 bird species which have been recorded in the area. The butterflies are also prolific and you may even be lucky enough to spot the region's very own butterfly – the endangered Karkloof Blue. The forest above Thistledown Country House is home to the rare Samango monkey, crested guinea-fowl, crowned and black eagles as well as a complex variety of flora and fauna.



Your hosts at Thistledown Country House are Norma and Norman Maguire and Donald Knight.

### **Day 5 – None**

No accommodation required.



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