

Kenya Bird Watching Tour.

ITINERARY OF THE 17 DAYS KENYA BIRD WATCHING TOUR

Tour starting with the Swara Plains, a bird rich nature conservancy south of Nairobi, followed by Aberdares /Mt .Kenya region. Rift Valley Lakes where we offer a mix of fresh water lakes (Naivasha and Baringo) and salt water lakes (Nakuru and Bogoria). Move further west and spend 2 full days bird watching in the unique Kakamega Forest, a remaining patch of the tropical rain forest. The last 3 days of the tour are reserved for Masai Mara, the Africa of everyone's dream: rolling plains, great wildlife and a wide diversity of Kenya birds species.

Day 1. Swara Plains. O/N Acacia Camp www.ontdek-kenya-safaris.com/adventure-resort.html

Arrival at the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport in the evening. 45 Min transfer to the Acacia Camp in the Swara Plains.

Day 2. Swara Plains. O/N Acacia Camp

A day to relax and wear off jet lag but not without an introduction of the Kenyan birds.

The 20,000 acres Swara Plains Conservancy is old wild Africa at its very best: wide open savanna grasslands, tall yellow fever trees, endless views, over 3000 resident population of easy to see game and +270 bird species. The Swara Plains are part of the Tsavo-Amboseli eco-system and with exception of elephants, rhinos and buffaloes all the other plains game found in Tsavo and Amboseli is found here. In this adventure resort you will see big herds of oryx, elands, wildebeests, giraffes, monkeys, hartebeests, zebras, impalas, Grant's and Thompson's gazelles, warthogs and the occasional gerenuk (= giraffe-neck gazelle) in total absence of mass tourism.

Expected birds species include Secretary Bird, Crowned Crane, Vulture, Cattle Egret, Great Egret, Tawny Eagle and a herd of elands should provide Red-billed Oxpecker perched on their backs. Black Kite, Marabou Stork, Pied Crow and African Palm Swift are also available in the conservancy.

Day 3+ 4: Sangare Game Conservancy Aberdares /Mt.kenya Region. www.ontdek-kenya-safaris.com/vacation-resorts.html

Sangare is a 6500 acres private wildlife conservancy sandwiched between the Aberdares and Mt. Kenya. The 12-tent camp overlooks a fresh water lake full of exciting bird life

where game comes to drink. The Sangare Hill forms a magnificent backdrop for the camp.

The ranch whose habitat is open savanna with scattered bush is home to zebras, reticulated giraffes, antelopes, warthogs, leopards, hyenas, elephants and buffaloes. Bird life in Sangare is rich with + 300 bird species recorded such as Red-winged Starlings, Greater Blue-eared Starlings, Olive Pigeons, Northern Crombec, Grey Flycatcher, Cardinal Woodpecker... At the lake there is the easy to see Red-knobbed Coot, Black Crake, Storks and others. The tents are spacious and luxurious with four poster beds, unique African furnishing, private verandas and en suite facilities with flush toilet and shower.

Day 4 visit Solio Rhino conservancy for game viewing and further bird watching.

Day 5+6. Lake Elementaita & Lake Nakuru. O/N Sunbird Lodge

After breakfast we leave Sangare and transfer to the Rift Valley at Sunbird Lodge on the shores of Lake Elementaita www.ontdek-kenya-safaris.com/honeymoon-destination.html.

Expected bird species are African Spoonbill, both species of Flamingos, Pied Kingfisher, Cape Teal, Fish Eagle, Fisher's Lovebird, White-fronted Bee-eater, Lilac-breasted Roller, Klaas's and Red-chested Cuckoo, Grosbeak Weaver, Great White and Pink-backed Pelican, Avocets, Storks, Ibises, Ducks, Cormorants, Herons, and Terns. In the wooded acacias there is a chance to see the White-browed Coucal, Broad-billed Roller, Arrow-marked Babbler and the Narina Trogon amongst others.

Day 7,8 +9. Lake Baringo. O/N Lake Baringo Country Club

After breakfast we head further north to Lake Baringo which without doubt is a one of the most interesting places for bird watching in Kenya because of the different habitats that are found with-in a small radius. There is the fresh water lake with a slight degree of alkalinity, cliffs, open grasslands as well as scattered bushes.

+ 400 Kenya birds species have been recorded in this area. The woodlands by the lake are alive with White-browed Sparrow-Weavers, Jackson's and Red-billed Hornbills, Bristle-crowned Starlings, and the rare Northern Masked Weavers, there are several Hamerkops along the lake shore and with luck we should be able to see their nest, which a pair of Grey Kestrels have adopted as a home. There will be time to relax, enjoy the pool, and walk around the grounds of the lodge on the look out for the resident Spotted Eagle-owls, and Sunbirds such as the Beautiful, Hunter's and the Violet-breasted. Nightjars are common on the lake shores at night and the Hippos graze freely on the lodge's lawn. Overnight is at the Lake Baringo Country Club.

While at Baringo our safari detours to Lake Bogoria on day 6. This is an alkaline lake famous for its thousands of Flamingos and beautiful hot springs. As this area is very hot, we go early and return to the Baringo Country Club in time for a late lunch. Afternoon is spent birding leisurely in the garden of the lodge.

Before breakfast on day 7 we will explore the escarpment and surrounding countryside for Hemprich's and Eastern Yellow-billed Hornbill, White-crested Turaco, Madagascar Bee-eater, Rufous-crowned Roller, Gabar Goshawk, Cliff Chat and Verreaux's Eagle which feeds on the Rock Hyrax.

Later on the day we make a boat ride over Lake Baringo, always on the lookout for new species. We will come close to the Goliath Heron, African Fish Eagle, Malachite Kingfisher, plus swimming hippo and crocodiles.

Day 10+11. Kakamega Forest. O/N Rondo Retreat

A Kenyan birdwatching tour is nearly incomplete without a visit to the Kakamega rain forest. This forest, in the heart of an intensively cultivated agricultural area, is a superb remainder of virgin tropical rain forest and is of course the home to a wide range of specialty birds, many which are not found anywhere else in Kenya. The forest is not only home to the rare De Brazza's monkey (only found in Kakamega Forest), but also to the Hammer-headed Fruit Bat, Flying Squirrel, 400 species of butterflies and no less than 330 species of birds.

Yes, birding in a forest has its fair share of difficulties but this is easily forgotten when our count increases with hopeful sightings of the impressive Black-and-white-casqued Hornbill, Ross' and the Great Blue Turaco. Other notables are the Grey-headed Negro-finch, Red-headed Bluebill, Chestnut Wattle-eye, Mackinnon's Shrike and many more. Overnight in the Rondo Retreat in the forest.

Day 12. To Lake Naivasha + Crescent Island. O/N Sawela Lodge

A scenic transfer through the Nandi Hills and the tea rich area of Kericho takes us back to Nakuru and further south to the Lake Naivasha area.

Lake Naivasha is a fresh water lake without a known outlet. This is very strange considering that the rivers that feed it are salty. The lake has dense vegetation, which in turn supports a variety of Kenyan species. The area has a count of 350 bird species.

We reach the Sawela Lodge, built on the shore of Lake Naivasha, in time for a late lunch where we'll stay for the next two nights. In the afternoon we do a boat ride on the lake, which gives us not only the chance to see numerous Hippos but also a wide variety of fresh water species. We dock on Crescent Island, a peninsula in Lake Naivasha and a haven for both bird watchers and hikers.

Day 13. Crater Lake. O/N Sawela Lodge

An early rising will ensure that one gets another magical display of the various birds in the garden of the Sawela Lodge. After breakfast we do a 40 min transfer by car to the nearby Crater Lake nature conservancy. It is a lesser lake in the Rift Valley but a place where nature is at its best.

We do a walk in the nature conservancy, always on the look out for birds and game which is in abundance at Crater Lake. We spot e.g. the Wattled Starling, Shallow's Wheatear, Purple Grenadier, Black-lored Babbler, White-eyed Slaty Flycatcher...

After the walk / game drive in the conservancy, we descend to the lake shore. Here you can spot birds from your seat of the bar of the Crater Lake Camp. Birding couldn't be easier here. The Crimson-rumped Waxbill, African Citril, Grey-headed Bush-shrike, White-browed Robin-chat, Red-fronted Barbet and Red-cheeked Cordonbleu are just a few of the species you can see here.

Day 14,15,16. Masai Mara. O/N Mara Leisure Tented Camp or Ashnil Mara Tented Camp

We head to the famous Masai Mara National Reserve, which borders Serengeti in Tanzania. With over 450 species recorded, excellent game viewing opportunities, the fascinating Masai culture, Mara is always a grand finale in our tours.

In the vast grasslands we expect to see Elephants; the large Cats - Lion, Leopard, and Cheetah; the herd animals - Zebra, Wildebeest, Thompson's and Grant's Gazelles; and specialties like the Hartebeest and the Topi.

Expected species are the highly conspicuous Common Ostrich, the small but still conspicuous Cardinal Quelea, Sooty Chat, Ground Hornbill, Open-billed Stork, Temminck's Courser, Yellow-throated Sandgrouse and Denham's Bustard. Lilac-breasted Rollers are common. If we find a kill, we may see six species of vultures all dining together: Egyptian, Hooded, Griffon, Lappet-faced, White-backed and White-headed. It will be a double reward should a Hyena or a Jackal join in the scramble for the kill.

In addition we will encounter numerous raptors such as Bateleur, Martial and Tawny Eagles, as well as Pale Chanting Goshawk, Augur Buzzards and Black-chested Snake Eagles. Along the Mara River we'll watch for African Finfoot, Shallow's and Ross' Turaco, Crested Guinea fowl, Woodland Kingfisher, Yellow-billed Barbet, Black-billed Weaver, Violet-backed Starling, and perhaps with luck, Pel's Fishing Owl. Any tapping noise on the trees may be indicative of the relatively uncommon Woodpeckers (Golden-tailed and Fine-banded). Hopefully we will be lucky enough to see some of the more difficult to see mammals such as Bat-eared Fox, Hunting Dog, Serval and the delightful Banded Mongoose.

Day 17. Kiambethu Tea Farm + to the airport for outbound flight

Our birding tour ends with a lunch at the Kiambethu Tea Farm. This is an old colonial home established by the early settlers and the pioneers of tea growing in Kenya. There will be a talk on tea: its arrival in Kenya, the growing, processing and up to when you put it into your cup. A short hike in the tea plantation and into a small remaining part of indigenous forest completes the tour. We might add to our list some Mannikins, Golden-winged, Double-collared and Amethyst Sunbirds, Grosbeak Weavers... We have a healthy farm lunch and thereafter transfer to Nairobi for the evening flight out.

Itinerary changes in our tours may be made due to local conditions beyond our control.