

Windhoek to Livingstone Naturetrek 3 countries itinerary

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Saturday 1 March

Neil and Johan met the group at the Windhoek International airport. Left airport at 15:30 after some people exchanged some currency to local Namibian dollars. We explained that the day would be a traveling day and that we would only stop to look at scarce birds and mammals.

Numerous birds along the roadside en route to Waterberg Plateau Park. Yellow crowned bishop, White backed vulture, Tawny eagle, Monteiro's hornbill, Yellow billed Kites, Jacobins Cuckoo. We all had a good meal at the Waterberg restaurant and retired to our rooms. A splendid thundershower during the night with magnificent lightning kept some people awake.

(330 km's)

Sunday 2 March

7 am bird walk and onto breakfast. Damara Hornbill, Yellow billed Hornbill, Grey Hornbill, Monteiro's Hornbill, Ruppel's Parrot, Paradise flycatcher, Violet Woodhoopoe. Drive to Etosha, overnight at Halali. We had to wait for an hour to cross a river that was in flood from the previous evening's downpour. Black chested Snake eagle, Brown snake eagle, Wahlberg's eagle, Tawny eagle were seen as well as Northern Black Korhaan and Kori Bustard. Plus minus 2000 Abdim's stork was seen perched along the road as well as in flight in Etosha. Springbok, Steenbok, Giraffe, Gemsbok, Wildebeest, African wildcat "we watched as the wildcat almost caught a helmeted guinea-fowl", and 2 male lions next to the road was some of our first day in Etosha's highlights. Some of the group visited the floodlit waterhole after dinner, but most people retired early as it had been a long day.

(310 km's)

Monday 3 March

Morning game drive. Zebra, Springbok, Red Hartebeest, Eland, Black faced Impala. Some of the bigger birds included Brown Snake eagle, Black chested snake eagle, Bateleur, African hawk eagle and Booted eagle. We were treated to a very nice African scops owl that was perched very low in a Mopane tree. It took some time for everyone to see as it was so well camouflaged. We returned for lunch and a well deserved siesta. The afternoon game drive included Chestnut-banded plover, Northern black korhaan, Golden breasted bunting, Shaft tailed and long tailed paradise whydah was also seen.

(90 km's)

Tuesday 4 March

We left after breakfast and headed towards Namotoni. We stopped for a tea break at one of the few "toilet areas". Birds seen on the drive included Secretary bird, Blue crane, Tawny & Martial eagle, Black-winged pratincole, Ant eating chat and several Larks as highlights. Mammals included: Burchell's zebra, Red hartebeest, Springbok, Oryx, Greater kudu, Black faced impala, Southern giraffe, and in the late afternoon some lion. Other birds seen included African spoonbill, Greater flamingo, Sacred & Glossy ibis, Greater painted snipe, Ostrich, numerous egrets, Eurasian Hobby, more than a 100 Greenshank, Ruff, Temminck's and Double banded coursers.

(206 km's)

Wednesday 5 March

We packed our bags and left Halali after breakfast. We traveled via most of the waterholes along the route to Namutoni and arrived at the camp at mid-day, in time for lunch. Lunch was served at the pool in this premier camp of Namibia Wildlife Resorts. Birds en route: Blue crane, Secretary bird, Bateleur eagle, Sabota's lark, rufous naped lark and Swainson's francolin. Mammals en-route: Blue wildebeest, Red hartebeest, Springbok, Zebra, Gemsbok, Greater kudu, Southern giraffe. We left the park after lunch and headed to our next overnight destination, Uris! Lodge. Arrived at !Uris lodge at 4pm. We did a bird walk around the grounds. Paradise flycatcher, Long tailed paradise wydah, Pearl spotted owlet, Familiar chat, Golden breasted bunting, Cinnamon breasted rock bunting, Pied barbet, Willow warbler, Icterine warbler.

(205 km's)

Thursday 6 March

Coffee and tea @ 6:45. Birdwalk around the grounds. Exciting! Good views of Bare cheeked babbler, Carp's tit, Black cuckoo shrike, Paradise flycatcher, Grey go away bird, Red eyed bulbul, Spotted flycatcher, Scarlet chested sunbird, Pearl spotted owlet. We had a hearty breakfast and started with our long drive to N'Kwazi lodge near Rundu. Brown snake eagle and White backed vultures were sitting next to the road, Black chested snake eagle and Bateleur were also seen along the road. We stopped near Rundu and drove off into the bush to an area that was know to the guides to look for Rufous bellied tit. We had excellent views of the following birds : Black sunbird, Tinkling cisticola, Rufous bellied tit, Tawny flanked prinia. The water works at Rundu delivered Black heron, Little egret, Marsh sandpiper, African jacana, Hartlaub's babbler, White faced duck, Common sandpiper, Ruff, Hottentot teal, Red billed teal.

(370 km's)

Friday 7

Coffee @ 06:30 with walk on the property. A good selection of new birds this morning, including Bennet's & Cardinal Woodpecker, Pygmy Goose, Yellow-Eyed Canary, Yellow-Bellied Greenbul and many more. We were treated with excellent displays of Woodland Kingfisher. Other birds seen, to name a few, include Pygmy Goose, Water Thicknee, Wattled Plover, Grey Heron and Southern Grey-Headed Sparrow. Breakfast was served at eight on the deck overlooking the Okavango River(!) and left the lodge at 09:00. A few stops en route to Mahango Safari Lodge produced Bateleur, Eurasian Golden Oriole, White-Bellied Sunbird and a number of swifts and swallows. We arrived at Mahango Safari Lodge with the welcome calls of a Black Cuckoo. Lunch was served, again on a deck overlooking the Okavango River with Hippopotamus entertaining us with great views. Late afternoon we did another birding walk on the property covering three different habitats. Purple Banded Sunbird, Common Sandpiper, Greenbacked Heron, Northern Grey-Headed Sparrow, Diderick Cuckoo, Gabar Goshawk, Open-Billed Stork, Meyer's Parrot, White-Browed Robin-Chat, Long-Tailed- & Burchells Starling, Coppery Tailed Coucal and African Fisheagle were the highlights of the afternoon. After finishing our ever growing trip list for birds, we had dinner out on the deck.

(250 km's)

Saturday 8

An early morning start (06:30) to be at the entrance of Mahango Game Reserve. We entered the park just after sunrise and the first mammal for the day was warthog. Other mammals included Greater kudu, wildebeest, Impala, giraffe, bushbuck, steenbok, duiker, Vervet monkeys, baboons, zebra. Early morning we saw ostrich, saddle billed stork, yellow breasted apalis, pale flycatcher, luapula cisticola, sharp tailed starling, buffy pipit, African pipit, pygmy goose, spurwinged goose, rattling cisticola, tinkling cisticola, sabotas lark, rufousnaped lark and fawn coloured lark, golden, village, red headed and specktaled weavers. Border crossing, mosque swallow, grey rumped swallow, lesser striped swallow, wire tailed swallow, banded and brown throated martin. Martial eagle, bataleur, African fish eagle, brown and black chested snake eagle. Eurasian hobby falcon. Red backed and magpie shrike. Cut throat finch, bru bru. White bellied, purple banded and coppery sunbird. African Darter, reed cormorant. Jacobins cuckoo. Green backed heron, Grey heron, Hammerkop.

(90 km's)

Sunday, 9

Morning boat ride upstream. Fish eagle, lesser spotted eagle. Absolutely brilliant views of Pels Fishing owl, white backed night heron, greater swamp warbler, African Reed Warbler, luapula cisticola, malachite, pied and woodland kingfishers. Highlight of the day was a 10 minute gaze at a male sititunga, grazing in a marsh on the island at Xaro less than 30meters from us! The whole group had great views! Yellow fronted tinkerbird, black collared and crested barbets, brown firefinch, blue grey flycatcher, little-, blue checked- and white fronted bee eaters, Lesser- & African Jacana, Coppery Tailed Coucal.

Monday, 10

Early breakfast on the banks of the Okavango River, where after we board the boat for Drotsky's cabins. At the main lodge we see Barn Owl, Arrow-Marked Babbler, Narina Trogon and several weavers. We leave @ 09:00 and see Striped Kingfishers displaying. After entering Namibia via the border control, we drive, once again through Mahango National Park with a family of Warthog grazing in the early morning sun. Filled up the vehicles at Divundu and took the long straight road to Katima Mulilo. We have a picnic lunch in the bush at lunch and the one vehicle got stuck in the thick sand! After 20 min minutes the guides managed to free the vehicles – excitement over with a standing ovation! Birds seen en route include Dickonsen's Kestrel and great views of Bateleur. A fleeting glimpse of Thick-Billed Roller took us through to Katima Mulilo and we checked in at Caprivi River lodge at sunset.

(397 km's)

Tuesday, 11

The group met at 6:15 for a pre-breakfast walk. We had good views of Schalows Turaco, lesser moorhen, half collared kingfisher, red billed firefinch, collard sunbird, black crane, grey headed bush shrike, orange breasted bush shrike, Meyers parrot, golden weaver, sharp tailed- and paradise wydah.

En route to the Mohembo borderpost we saw several Bataleur, Wahlbergs eagle, b.b snake eagle, flapped necked cameloan as well as a very quick glimpse of a green mamba as it sped across the tarmac. We reached the borderpost at 11 am, but we unfortunately had to return to Katima as we lacked certain documentation in order to proceed across the border to Botswana. This was new as SafariWise had never in the last 5 years been asked to produce such documentation. Never the less, the problem was soon solved and we had an extra 140 km's detour to seek some more species. Great views of 4 thick billed rollers in display flight was a small token for the delay. Marabou stork, open billed stork and yes, finally we saw some elephants! We met up with a small breeding herd on the roadside and watched them cross the road and wonder into the water. Late afternoon, after we checked in, a walk on the premises produced Puff-Backed Shrike, Trumpeter Hornbill, Collard Palm Thrush(!), Arrow-Marked babbler & African Paradise Flycatcher. Open-Billed Storks and Hadeda Ibis treated us with spectacular fly-pasts with the sun setting in the west and coloring the mighty Chobe River orange... another fantastic day in paradise!

(280 km's)

Wednesday 12

We all met at 05:45 at reception and boarded our activity transport at around 06:00. Three people chose to do the game drive into Chobe National Park and the other 11 guests decided on an early morning boat excursion into the park. We saw our first African Harrier Hawk. Brilliant views of 4 thick billed rollers in display flight. Other birds include Diedericks Cuckoo, grey hooded, pied, woodland, giant and malachite kingfishers, reed cormorant, darter, pygmy geese, Egyptian geese, white faced duck, fulvous duck, Openbilled stork, African Fish Eagle, White-Backed Vulture, Ground Hornbill and grey heron. Also saw Impala, Greater Kudu, hippo, Chacma Baboons, vervet monkeys, Red Lechwe and a single African Elephant bull come down to drink. We were only a couple of meters away from the bull in the safety from our boat. What a wonderful experience to be facing the drinking elephant at ground or water level! Water monitor, leopard tortoise and numerous Nile crocodiles were also seen. A bird walk around the hotel gardens produced lesser honey guide, bronze mannekin, coppery sunbird, tawny flanked prinnia, paradise flycatcher, Jacobins Cuckoo, white browed scrub robin, scarlet chested sunbird, collared sunbird, arrow marked babblers, thick billed weaver, village weaver, northern grey headed sparrow, grey headed sparrow. The group met at the foyer at 15:00 for our afternoon boat cruise into the Chobe park. A group of 28 elephants treated us with excellent views and photo opportunities while they were drinking water and bathing. Greater Kudu and impala were present in big numbers and several Water Monitors were also seen. Two Leopard Tortoises were also seen. We managed to get close to a number of large Nile crocodiles. Birds seen this afternoon include Black- & Coppery-Tailed, Coucal, White backed night heron, Red faced Crombec, Red-Faced Cisticola, Tawny-Flanked Prinia, Brown-Hooded Kingfisher, Slaty Egret, Black-Winged pratincole, Open-Billed Stork, Grey Heron, Blacksmith-, Long-Toed & White Crowned Lapwings, Water Thick-Knee, Hartlaub's Babbler, White-Backed Vultures, White-Fronted Bee-Eaters at their nesting site in an embankment, Blue-Cheeked Bee-Eaters and African Stonechats. Wire-tailed, lesser striped and Barn

swallows. We had a nice thundershower whilst out and got a bit wet. A beautiful sky with an even more beautiful rainbow.

Thursday, 13

We departed after breakfast for Zambia. We crossed the border/river by ferry and started with procedures at the Zambian Border Post. After 1½ hours at the border, we departed for Thorntree Lodge to arrive mid-day. Lunch was served on the lawns in the garden. After lunch we visited one of the Seven Wonders of the World – Victoria Falls. Although the river is much higher than normal, we had excellent views of the Falls, whilst getting totally soaked from the spray. From Victoria Falls we stopped at The Waterfront for our sunset cruise on the Zambezi River. We had excellent sightings of Hippopotamus and crocodiles. Birds seen included Cattle Egret, White-Crowned Plover, malachite and pied kingfisher, saddle billed and wooly-necked storks, black heron, hammerkop, pied wagtail, water dikkop, blacksmith plover and spectackled weaver.

(120 km's)

Friday, 14

After breakfast, we traveled to town for a visit at the Craft Market. 9 people opted to do the “flight of angels” over the falls by helicopter. A heavy thunderstorm mid-afternoon, “spoiled” our prospects of an afternoon game drive in the Mosye-u-Tunya National Park. We visited the craft market for some local shopping, also saw redwinged starling, African black swift, Orange breasted bush shrike, golden weaver, red bishop, cattle egret, Dickinsons Kestrel, palm swifts, Dark Chanting Goshawk, Steppe buzzard, Village Indigobird. Halfcollared kingfisher and fantailed flycatcher. We returned to the lodge for a late afternoon birding walk and a good cup of coffee and tea. Dinner was served at 7pm.

Saturday 15

Coffee and tea was served at 07:00. Game drive into the national park in two open 4x4 vehicles started at 07:30. A number of birds were seen, with Lizard Buzzard been new for the list and mammals included, Chacma baboons, Vervet monkeys, Burchells Zebra, White Rhinoceros, Warthog, Southern Giraffe, Cape Buffalo, Common Waterbuck, Impala and Blue Wildebeest.

We left Thorntree River Lodge at 12:00 to be at the airport at 13:00 where we sadly had to say our “good-byes” to the group.

On behalf of Johan and myself, I would like to thank each and every-one on tour for being so much fun and understanding. I think that border crossings will have a new meaning to most!

