



BirdLife South Africa Avitourism Division
Self Drive Itinerary

Birding Route Name: Western Cape Birding Route

Self Drive Itinerary Name: Intaka, Sir Lowry's Pass, Rooi Els, Harold Porter Botanical Gardens - Day Trip Option C

Habitats: Wetlands, rocky outcrops, fynbos, forest, manicured gardens

From a success story of a man-made wetland in the heart of a city, to the spectacular drive over the Hottentots Holland Mountain, to the plunging cliffs over False Bay and the peaceful surrounds of a botanical garden, this is a day trip not to be missed!

Duration: Intaka (1-2 hrs) – drive (1 hr) – Rooi Els (2-3 hrs) - drive (20 mins) – Harold Porter (1-2 hrs) – drive to Cape Town city bowl (1 hr 30 mins)

Distance covered: ± 250 km's

Costs: Fuel – R215

Intaka Island – R8 per person

Harold Porter Botanical Gardens – R16 pp

Itinerary updated: January 2010

Itinerary

To get to Intaka Island from Cape Town take the N1 highway towards Paarl. Take the Century City/Canal Walk off-ramp, and at the traffic lights at the top of the off-ramp turn left onto Sable Road. Travel for about 2 km's, Sable Road becomes Ratanga Road, before turning right along Century Boulevard - do not take the 1st road right signed Century Boulevard, take the second. Follow Century Boulevard and at the first traffic circle take the 2nd exit along Century Way, then the first left into Park Lane and Intaka Island is at the end of this road. Intaka Island is a man-made wetland of 8 ha alongside a natural and seasonal salt pan of another 8ha. Together these wetlands provide some good birding opportunities right in the heart of the suburbs. Intaka is probably the best place in Cape Town to see **Little bittern, African snipe** and **Greater painted snipe**, so aim to get here early for these birds. More common species that you're almost guaranteed to see are **White-breasted & Reed cormorant, African darter, Grey, Black-headed & Purple heron, Little & Cattle egret, African sacred, Glossy & Hadeda ibis** and **Black-crowned night-heron**. Waterfowl are prolific, in particular **Little grebe, Common moorhen, Egyptian goose** and **Red-knobbed coot**. Other duck species that you may see here are **Cape shoveller**,

Red-billed & Cape teal, Yellow-billed duck and occasionally **White-faced & White-backed duck, African spoonbill** are fairly common, as are **Water & Spotted thick-knee, Black-winged stilt** and **Blacksmith lapwing** are very common. And of course omnipresent in the Cape Town area, **Hartlaub's gulls! Peregrine falcon** nest in the building nearby, so keep an eye overhead. The other common terrestrial birds here include **Yellow & Cape canary, Common waxbill, Southern red bishop, Cape weaver, Southern masked-weaver, Cape sparrow, Cape wagtail, Levillant's cisticola** and **Cape robin-chat. House crow** are occasionally found here, though they are more reliably seen at Cape Town International Airport.

Leaving Intaka Island retrace your route and get back onto the N1 highway via Sable Road, and head east towards Paarl. After approximately 1.9km's keep right and take the on-ramp onto the N7. Follow the N7 for 8 km's before taking the N2 towards Somerset West. If **House crow** is still on your to-see list, you may wish to stop off at Cape Town International Airport for a quick tick! At this point you have the choice of visiting Rooi Els or Sir Lowry's Pass in search of two South African endemics - **Cape rock-jumper** and **Victorin's scrub-warbler**. Due to the hilltop location of Sir Lowry's Pass this site is often very windy causing birds to go to ground and thus being difficult to find. In this respect Rooi Els is more sheltered and offers better viewing opportunities.

* Below is an account of a trip to Rooi Els, followed by the itinerary to Sir Lowry's Pass, and finally a description of Harold Porter National Botanical Gardens.

To Rooi Els:

From the N2 look for the R44 to Gordon's Bay/Kleinmond. Keep on the R44 through Strand and Gordon's Bay, and once through Gordon's Bay the road hugs the coastline for some spectacularly scenic driving. During whale season (Sept – Nov) look out over False Bay for the tell-tale spouts of whales blowing! Drive into the village and look for the second turning to the right onto Porter Drive, drive down this gravel road until you reach a boom across the road. Park your car off the road and follow the gravel road on foot for about 2 km's one-way – if you wish you can walk further. A stroll along the road through the short, scrubby fynbos is almost certain to produce a good selection of fynbos endemics as well as a sprinkling of others - **Orange-breasted sunbird, Cape sugarbird, Malachite sunbird, Cape grassbird, Cape siskin, Cape bunting, Yellow bishop, Neddicky** and **Grey-backed cisticola** are all relatively common. **Cape rock-thrush** are also common in this area, though check carefully for the extent of grey on the breast as **Sentinel rock-thrush** have been recorded from time to time. Look for **Ground woodpecker** perched on exposed rocks, and scan the boulder strewn mountain slopes for the endemic **Cape rock-jumper**. A pair of **Verreaux's eagle** is thought to nest in the mountains along this section, and possibly **White-necked raven** too. To find the secretive **Victorin's warbler**, knowing its call is a must. These birds are very shy and rarely venture out into the open, so you'll probably get only the briefest glimpse of this lovely warbler, if any at all! But patience is key and sparing use of playback may prove helpful. Retrace your steps, get back onto the R44 and continue along the coast to Betty's Bay and the Harold Porter National Botanical Gardens.

To Sir Lowry's Pass:

Follow the N2 past Somerset West and on towards Grabouw & Caledon. As you approach the top of the Pass keep right and look for the parking area on the right (GPS: [34°08'57.967''S, 18°55'41.46''E](#)). From the parking area you have to cross the N2 highway, so please be aware of fast-moving traffic. After crossing the highway you'll see 2 gravel tracks, one leads off to the left and runs along the base of the rocky ridge, the other forks right and down towards the railway track. Initially take the left-hand track and head towards the rocky outcrops that a number of **Cape rock-jumper** inhabit. You can follow the

path and keep a sharp look-out for the birds, or preferably scramble up onto the rocky slopes to explore the peaks and gullies, listening for the shrill, piping call which will aid finding the birds. The panoramic view from Kanonkop peak is well worth the climb! Alternatively the gravel track runs along the lower slope of the ridge for 1.7 km's, at which point you can take a rough path off to the left – just after you pass under some powerlines. The thick, dense thicket along the stream is a good place to look for **Victorin's warbler**, though getting a good view of the bird may be tricky. **Cape grassbird** and **Neddicky** occur in the denser fynbos along the stream. The path bisects the ridge giving you a chance to walk amongst the rocky outcrops looking for **Cape rock-jumper**. Other birds that you may encounter on your walk include **Ground woodpecker**, **Orange-breasted sunbird**, flocks of **Cape siskin**, **Cape rock-thrush**, and overhead you may see **Jackal buzzard**, **Rock kestrel**, **Peregrine falcon** and **Verreaux's eagle**. After exploring the rocky ridge, take the track that runs towards the railway to explore the thick vegetation for **Victorin's warbler**.

After you've birded Sir Lowry's Pass, return back down the mountain towards Cape Town and at the bottom of the Pass look for a road left to Gordon's Bay – Sir Lowry's Pass Road. At the T-junction with the R44 turn left towards Rooi Els and Betty's Bay, and as you enter Betty's Bay look for signs for Harold Porter National Botanical Gardens on the left-hand side.

Harold Porter is set in coastal fynbos and consists of 10ha of cultivated fynbos gardens and 191ha of pristine, natural fynbos. Once in the main gate take a circular route through the cultivated gardens up the western side, to the bridge over the Disa Kloof stream, and then back down the eastern side through the *Protea*, *Restio* and fynbos gardens. **African black duck** are often seen along the stream or at the dam, and look for **Black saw-wing**, **African black**, **White-rumped swift & Alpine swift**, **Rock martin** and **Greater striped swallow** overhead. As you begin the return from the top of the gardens look for **Victorin's scrub-warbler**, **Orange-breasted & Southern double-collared sunbird**, **Cape sugarbird**, **Neddicky** and **Cape grassbird** in the indigenous, manicured gardens. **Ground woodpecker** and **Cape rock-thrush** are two other species that are often recorded here, so look carefully in any rocky areas. The forested portions of the gardens are home to **African paradise flycatcher**, **Sombre greenbul**, **Cape bulbul**, **Cape batis**, **Sweet waxbill**, **Bar-throated apalis** and **Olive woodpecker**.

- Costs are accurate at the time of printing (July 2010).
- Fuel costs are based on the AA rate for a standard petrol 1.6L sedan, fuel price of R8.60/litre, and calculate out at R0.90/km.
- Accommodation rates are on a per person sharing basis. Single supplements are usually more expensive.
- GPS co-ordinates are in DDMMSS format. To convert to an alternative format try www.earthpoint.us/Convert.aspx