



BirdLife South Africa Avitourism Division  
Self Drive Itinerary

**Birding Route Name:** Western Cape Birding Route

**Self Drive Itinerary Name:** Kirstenbosch Botanical Garden, Silvermine, Kommetjie, and Strandfontein - Day Trip Option D

**Habitats:** Seashore, fynbos, reedbeds, pans, cultivated gardens, forest, dams.

This day trip is designed to give you a taste of the birding opportunities that the Cape peninsula has to offer – fynbos and manicured gardens, the seashore both rocky & sandy, forest, and of course a birding trip wouldn't be complete without a visit to the local sewage works!

**Duration:** Kirstenbosch Botanical Garden (2-3 hrs) – drive (45 mins) – Kommetjie (1-2 hrs) – drive (30 mins) – Silvermine NR (1 hr) – drive (35 mins) - Strandfontein sewage works (2-3 hrs) – drive to Cape Town city bowl (45 mins)

**Distance covered:** ± 130 km's

|                               |                   |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Costs:</b> Fuel            | – R120            |
| Kirstenbosch Botanical Garden | – R35 pp          |
| Silvermine                    | – R20 pp          |
| Chapman's Peak toll fees      | – R28 per vehicle |

**Itinerary updated:** January 2010

**Itinerary**

Kirstenbosch Gardens open at 08h00 throughout the year, so aim to get here as they open. Early mornings are really productive for raptors, so keep an eye overhead for African goshawk, Rufous-chested & Black sparrowhawk, and in summer for Honey buzzard. There are 2 entrances into Kirstenbosch, the main entrance and Rycroft gate, both off Rhodes Drive (M63). Turnoff at the main entrance and park near the Visitors Centre which has a number of facilities – restaurant, deli, café, toilets and a shop. The 520ha botanical garden is made up of cultivated gardens and a heavily wooded nature reserve, all of this at the foot of the iconic Table Mountain. The special at Kirstenbosch is of course the endemic Cape sugarbird, which together with the Orange-breasted & Southern double-collared sunbirds are best seen right at the top of the gardens in the *Protea* and *Erica* sections. Starting

out from the Visitor's Centre ask the staff if they know where the resident Spotted eagle owls are roosting. Follow the signs to the Fragrance Garden, from where the Braille Trail starts and finishes. As you near the forest look for Black saw-wings (summer) flying low over the canopy. The Braille Trail is a short path (450m) that meanders through a typical example of Afromontane forest, offering an opportunity to see some forest species such as African olive pigeon, Lemon dove, African paradise flycatcher, Sombre greenbul, Olive thrush, Forest canary, Cape batis and Cape white-eye. During the summer months you will also hear Red-chested cuckoo, though actually seeing this bird can prove rather difficult! From here keep heading up the hill towards the *Erica*, fynbos and *Protea* gardens. Cape spurfowl and Helmeted guineafowl can be found anywhere in the gardens and are wonderfully unconcerned, enabling you to approach quite close. As you're walking along the paths look for Southern boubou, Cape robin-chat and Karoo prinia skulking in the undergrowth, and check fruiting trees for Cape bulbul, Sombre greenbul and African olive pigeon and open flower beds for roosting Spotted thick-knees. The rather large expanse of *Protea* and *Erica* gardens provide the best views of Cape sugarbird, and if you're really lucky you may also see Cape siskin in this area, though you are more likely to find this bird higher up the mountain i.e. along the Nursery Ravine or Skeleton Gorge trails.

An optional side trip at this stage may prove worthwhile for another South African endemic, the Knysna warbler. However, be warned that this skulking bird can be very difficult to see and knowing the birds' call is crucial to finding it! Leaving Kirstenbosch Gardens turn right onto Rhodes Drive/M63 towards Hout Bay. At the M63 – M41 junction turn left onto the Constantia Nek Road/M41 and drive for 0.8km's, look for a small parking area on the left hand side of the road signed 'Greenbelt'. From the parking area follow a service track to the right, down to a small stream. Off the service track are 2 walking trails that cross the stream via small bridges. The Knysna warbler is an inhabitant of tangled undergrowth and thickets along river courses so keep close to the stream along any of the paths and listen for its ringing call. The path follows the stream upriver before crossing it, so you can also try for the bird along this stretch.

Leaving Kirstenbosch Gardens turn right onto Rhodes Drive/M63 towards Hout Bay. Just before Hout Bay the M63 becomes the M6, follow the M6 south through Hout Bay towards Noordhoek along the stunningly scenic and renowned Chapmans Peak Drive. Continue through Noordhoek, and on the outskirts of the town look for a 4-way intersection signed M65 to Kommetjie. From the intersection it's 7 km's to the charming seaside village of Kommetjie, situated on a rocky promontory overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. From the M65 turn right onto Van Imhoff Way and continue to Beach Road where you'll find parking. Search among the roosting birds for Swift, Sandwich & Common terns, and in winter for Antarctic terns (uncommon). Four species of cormorant (Bank, Cape, Crowned & White-breasted) may occur together here, though the target bird is the threatened Bank cormorant. Other regulars on the beaches around Kommetjie include Kelp & Hartlaub's gull, African black oystercatcher and White-fronted plover. Returning the way you came, take a right onto Lighthouse Road and follow it all the way to a lovely lighthouse (Slangkop Lighthouse), where you can park and scan for more birds. Look for Karoo prinia in the roadside vegetation.

Follow Lighthouse Road along the rocky shoreline until it meets up with the M65 at a 4-way intersection. Carry on straight across the intersection onto Slangkop Road/M82 until you reach a T-junction. Turn right onto Main Road/M65 and continue for 5 km's then turn left onto the M6. After 1 km take the right fork onto Ou Kaapse Way/M64. Approximately 6km's along Ou Kaapse Way/M64, look for a left turn signed Silvermine Nature Reserve ([GPS: 34°05'13.87''S, 18°25'28.25''E](#)). Park in the ample parking area and take the boardwalk around the dam. The freshwater dam is reed-fringed so look for Little rush-warbler and Lesser swamp-warbler, and on the dam itself you'll see Red-knobbed coot and Common moorhen. However, it is the fynbos habitat that is the drawcard for this site, and it harbours Orange-breasted

sunbird, Southern double-collared sunbird, Malachite sunbird, Cape sugarbird, Cape siskin, Cape canary, Neddicky and Cape grassbird. Keep an eye overhead for Jackal buzzard, Steppe buzzard (summer), Rufous-chested sparrowhawk, Peregrine falcon, Rock kestrel and a pair of Black eagles which nest nearby.

Leaving Silvermine turn left onto Ou Kaapse Way/M64 and continue until you reach a T-junction, then turn right onto the M42. Follow the M42 for 3km's and at the next T-junction turn right onto Main Road/M5. Continue on Main Road/M5 for 3 km's and look for a left turn onto Baden Powell Drive/R310. This road hugs the coastline for 8 km's of scenic driving before you take the Strandfontein Road/M17 left. Continue up Strandfontein Road/M17 for 4.1 km's and turn left at the 'Zeekoevlei' sign (GPS: 34°03'12.79''S, 18°31'45.07''E). Follow the road straight before it bends to the left and runs along the edge of Zeekoevlei for about 2.5 km's before heading south towards the settling ponds of Strandfontein Sewage Works – look for African fish eagle in the trees and Black-headed heron in the fields. African marsh harrier is regularly seen at Strandfontein, so keep an eye overhead. This sewage works provides birds with 320ha of aquatic habitat and is possibly the best water-bird watching site in the greater Cape Town area. Almost 120 bird species have been recorded at the works, and total bird numbers can reach 30 000 individuals, though summer counts usually yield 15 000 birds. Birding here is done from the comfort of your car, your mobile hide, along the myriad of good gravel roads that crisscross Strandfontein. The only road that may prove problematic is the southern-most road, the road closest to the sand dunes, which can be very sandy at times and impassable for sedan vehicles. The settling ponds at Strandfontein have been numbered P1, P2 etc. for the primary ponds and S1, S2 etc. for the secondary ponds - see map. The primary ponds are generally kept full and provide constant habitat for ducks and other waterfowl, while the secondary ponds often have fluctuating water levels providing more suitable habitat for waders (though it must be noted that the densities are not high). Birds that you're likely to see in the primary ponds are: Little, Great-crested & Black-necked grebe, Great white pelican, White-breasted & Reed cormorant, Purple & Grey heron, South African shelduck, Cape shoveler, Yellow-billed duck, Red-billed teal, Cape teal Southern pochard, Maccoa duck, Common moorhen and Red-knobbed coot. Spur-winged & Egyptian goose are found in any of the primary or secondary ponds. Terns forage over the entire network of ponds, so look for Swift, Sandwich, Caspian, Common & White-winged terns. Also seen sweeping over the pans are White-throated & Barn swallow and Brown-throated martin. The secondary ponds with their fluctuating water levels and exposed margins offer habitat for numerous shorebirds, the most common of which are African black oystercatcher, Greater flamingo, Three-banded plover, Blacksmith lapwing, Common greenshank, Pied avocet and Black-winged stilt. Hadedda, African sacred & Glossy ibis are all very common at Strandfontein. Seasonal waders that occur in summer include Common ringed plover, Little stint, Ruff, Common sandpiper, Curlew, Marsh & Wood sandpiper and Bar-tailed godwit. Common throughout in the fringing reedbeds are African purple swamphen, Common moorhen and Black crane, as well as Little rush-warbler and Lesser swamp-warbler. Kelp & Hartlaub's gulls roost and nest in the sand dunes along the southern section of the secondary ponds. The terrestrial sections of the works are home to Cape bulbul, Cape Spurfowl, Helmeted guineafowl, Levillant's cisticola, Cape wagtail, African pipit, Cape longclaw, Cape weaver and Karoo prinia. This is a popular birding spot for local birders, and as such a number of rarities or uncommon species have been recorded here, including Black tern, Franklin's gull, Red-necked phalarope, Yellow wagtail, Common redshank and the first African record of Elegant tern (seen at S8). The ponds can be explored as you like, but below is a suggested route that takes in a good selection of the pans at Strandfontein.

As you enter the sewage works (at this stage the road is still tar) you'll drive between P6 on the right and P7 on the left, with the plant buildings directly in front of you. Turn right between P5 and P6, the road is

now gravel, then loop back out between P4 and P5, skirting the northern edge of S7 and S6. Along this stretch are a couple of benches, a good spot to stop for a bite to eat or a drink if you've packed some supplies! Continue on between S6 and S8 and as long as the road is not too sandy, drive along the road that skirts the southern shores of S5, S4 and S3. Head back north along the edge of S3 and turn left when you reach the primary ponds, skirting around P3 and P2. To exit the works you have to return to the P5/P6 road, so drive between P1 and P2 and you can make your way back to Strandfontein Road when you've birded your fill.

- Costs are accurate at the time of collation of copy
- 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](http://www.earthpoint.us/Convert.aspx)