

Birding Ecotours



MOZAMBIQUE BIRDING TOUR– AFRICAN PITTA SPECIAL

Date TBA



This tour is specifically timed to maximize chances of finding the mythical African Pitta.

This is a special tour, specifically set up to facilitate easy and safe travel during the Covid-19 pandemic, and will be run in place of our popular **Highland Zimbabwe to Coastal Mozambique – African Pitta special tour**.

This tour is run solely within central Mozambique, and offers a mouth-watering array of top specials, including almost all of the birds we'd typically be searching for in Zimbabwe! As its name suggests, this tour is centered on locating the mythical **African Pitta**, in the lowland forests of Mozambique. While searching for this highly prized bird, we'll also be on the lookout for skulkers such as **White-chested Alethe**, **East Coast Akalat** and **Lowland Tiny Greenbul**, amongst others. Noisy flocks of **Chestnut-fronted Helmetshrike** flop around overhead, and we'll keep an eye out for other scarce and localized species such as **Böhm's Bee-eater**, **Racket-tailed Roller**, **Dickinson's Kestrel**, **Mangrove Kingfisher**, **Livingstone's Flycatcher**, **Speckle-throated Woodpecker** and so many more!

We will also make a special excursion into western Mozambique along the **Chimanimani Mountains**. Here we will be searching for a number of 'typical' Zimbabwean birds including **bVumba** species such as **Chirinda Apalis**, **Roberts's Warbler**, **Stripe-cheeked Greenbul**, **Black-fronted Bushshrike** and **Red-faced Crimsonwing**, amongst others. The **Vulnerable (IUCN) Blue Swallow** also occurs in the montane grasslands here, and will be another major target. This area will also allow us to access excellent tracts of miombo woodland (a unique woodland type, restricted to south-central Africa), and by extension a host of birds that are almost exclusively found in this woodland, many of which have miombo in their name. These include the likes of **Miombo** and **Cinnamon-breasted Tits**, **African Spotted Creeper**, **Miombo Rock Thrush** and **Eastern Miombo Sunbird**.



Livingstone's Flycatcher is a localized species we'll be searching for in the lowlands of Mozambique.

Beginning and ending in the port city of Beira, we firstly explore the vast grassy floodplains, wetlands, and coastal areas around the town. Following which, we transit westwards to the Zimbabwean border, where we spend our first few days exploring a mix of miombo woodlands and montane forests. We then transit to the incredible Gorongosa National Park. This magnificent wildlife area is one of the continent's best conservation success stories, and boasts a wide range of Africa's megafauna. The nearby Mount Gorongosa is sadly, still out of bounds, however, we will be able to see this famed site as we transfer to the Zambezi River delta area, with its associated lowland forests. Here we will search for our main quarry on this tour – the **African Pitta**, along with a great deal of other mouth-watering species. We then journey back to Beira, where this tour ends.

This special tour (designed with the global Covid-19 pandemic in mind) can be easily combined with our southern Mozambique pre-tour, where we target some of the most range-restricted birds in south-east Africa such as **Olive-headed Weaver**, **Green Tinkerbird**, **Neergaard's Sunbird**, along with the monotypic **Crab-plover**. This is a wonderfully complementary tour and will ensure you experience the best birding Mozambique has to offer!

Itinerary (15 days/14 nights)

Day 1. Arrival in Beira, Mozambique

Today your international flight arrives in Beira. Depending on your exact arrival time, there may be some time available for us to explore nearby wetlands, and coastal areas, surrounding Beira. The vast floodplains here, especially out towards Rio Savane, are usually fairly dry at this time of the year, with only the odd pond containing some water. For those joining this tour from our southern Mozambique pre-tour, we will already be based in Beira, and will have the full day at our disposal to get a head-start on some of the area's birds.

Some of the species we'll be looking for here include **Wattled Crane**, **Rufous-bellied Heron**, **African Pygmy Goose**, **Lesser Jacana**, **African Marsh Harrier**, along with more nomadic species such as **Locust Finch**, **Blue Quail** and **Great Snipe**. The scarce **Lesser Seedcracker** also occurs, but much luck is required to see this difficult bird! Coastal mudflats can also be visited, where we'll look for **Greater** and **Lesser Sand Plovers**, **Terek Sandpiper**, along with **Lesser Crested Tern** amongst others.

Overnight: Beira

Day 2. Birding Beira, and transfer to western Mozambique

We will have a full morning available to continue our birding in and around Beira (see Day 1 above for an account of some of the possible species). Following our morning birding, we will transfer to western Mozambique, situating ourselves in the foothills of the Eastern Highlands for four nights. We anticipate arriving in the afternoon, and will likely do some local exploring, familiarizing ourselves with some of the birds occurring in the area, such as **White-browed Robin-Chat** and **Variable Sunbird**.

Overnight: Manica province



Lesser Jacana can be seen in the wetlands near Beira.

Days 3 – 5. Birding western Mozambique

We will have three full days to explore two of the core birding sites in the area; Mount Tsetserra and the recently proclaimed Chimanimani National Reserve. Mount Tsetserra lies within clear eyesight of the bVumba highlands of Zimbabwe and support a near-identical suite of birds. The montane forests will be searched for prized birds including **Stripe-cheeked Greenbul**, **Chirinda Apalis** and **Roberts's Warbler**. The localized **Swynnerton's Robin** has been recorded, but is rarely seen here. Other species occurring here that we'll keep an eye out for include **Livingstone's Turaco**, **Orange Ground Thrush**, **Olive** and **Black-fronted Bushshrikes**, **White-starred Robin**, **Yellow-streaked Greenbul**, **White-tailed Crested Flycatcher**, **Barratt's Warbler**, **Singing Cisticola**, **Bronzy Sunbird**, **Yellow-bellied Waxbill** and **Red-faced Crimsonwing**. The more open areas atop the mountain will be searched for **Blue Swallow**, along with others such as **Wailing** and **Singing Cisticolas** and **Cape Grassbird**. We will keep an eye to the sky, as **Scarce**, **Mottled** and **Alpine Swifts** do occur in the area, and various raptors may pass overhead, and might include the likes of **Crowned Eagle**, **Augur Buzzard**, **Rufous-chested Sparrowhawk** and **Rock Kestrel**.

The lower slopes of Mount Tsetserra and the nearby Chimanimani National Reserve offer some excellent miombo woodlands, and we will also be sure to include some time here to help find as many targets as possible. This area is a great site for the scarce and local **Cinnamon-breasted Tit**, and we'll also search for other typical miombo species as **Miombo Tit**, **African Spotted Creeper**, **Red-faced Crombec**, **Southern Hyliota**, **Miombo Rock Thrush**, **Pale Batis**, **White-breasted Cuckooshrike**, **Green-capped Eremomela**, **Stierling's Wren-Warbler**, **Grey Penduline Tit**, **Cabanis's Bunting** and **Black-eared Seedeater**.

Overnight: Manica province



Roberts's Warbler is typically a Zimbabwean special, although we'll be searching for it in western Mozambique.



African Spotted Creeper will be one of our main targets in the miombo woodlands!

Day 6. Transfer to Gorongosa National Park

We have a full morning available to us to continue birding in the area, searching for any species that may still be eluding us, before we set off to the Gorongosa National Park, where we will likely arrive in the afternoon. The entrance road towards the park passes through some phenomenal mixed-miombo woodlands, and we will be sure to spend some time birding these rich woodlands this afternoon (time permitting), and over the next two days. While we will likely be familiar with the bulk of the miombo birds already, these woodlands do host a number of other target species we may well not have seen yet, some of which include **Thick-billed Cuckoo**, **Speckle-throated Woodpecker**, **Racket-tailed Roller**, **Pale Batis**, **Arnot's Chat**, **Red-winged Prinia** (Warbler), **Orange-winged Pytilia** and **Miombo Blue-eared Starling**. We will eventually make our way into the Gorongosa National Park, and onwards to the Montebelo Lodge, where we will be based for three nights.

Overnight: Montebelo Lodge, Gorongosa National Park



Red-winged Prinia (Warbler) can be reliably seen around Gorongosa.

Day 7 - 8. Birding Gorongosa National Park

We have two full days to explore the park, and surrounds. Depending on road-access (flooding does occur from time to time), we will try to access the stunning Urema Floodplain which will present us with a host of new species. Among others, we'll look for **Great White** and **Pink-backed Pelicans**, **Grey Crowned Crane**, **Saddle-billed Stork**, **Long-toed Lapwing**, **Collared Pratincole** and many more. Other species such as **Dickinson's Kestrel**, **Black-and-white Shrike-flycatcher** (Vanga Flycatcher), **Collared Palm Thrush**, and **Short-winged Cisticola** are to be sought in the area as well. This is a phenomenal raptor area, a true testament to how 'wild' these parts are, and we stand a good chance at seeing a number of vulture and eagle species, with the

likes of **White-headed Vulture**, **Bateleur**, **Martial** and **Wahlberg's Eagles**, and **Lizard Buzzard** all being regular. The woodlands throughout this area support some forest-edge species as well, which include the likes of **Brown-necked Parrot**, **Narina Trogon**, **Crowned Hornbill**, **Bearded Scrub Robin** and **Eastern Nicator**. We should also encounter some of our first large mammals of the tour, with many of Africa's megafauna such as **Cape Buffalo**, **African Elephant**, **Lion**, **Giraffe** and a host of others, occurring in the park as well. We will also have opportunities to explore the woodlands on the entrance road to the park (species mentioned under Day 6 above) as well, should we still be searching for any of those species.

Overnight: Montebelo Lodge, Gorongosa National Park

Day 9. Gorongosa to the Zambezi River delta area

Today we make our way to M'phingwe Lodge, near Caia. This is in the Zambezi delta area, which is another absolute treasure-chest for special birds, including a whole new suite of species we won't yet have seen. Following breakfast in the morning, we will bird on the drive out from our lodge along the access road, searching for any of the woodland species we may still need (mentioned on Day 6), before starting the drive, in earnest. The condition of the road to Caia seems to vary from year to year, and although it has recently been upgraded, the journey may still take some time to complete. We will likely arrive at the rustic yet wonderfully comfortable M'phingwe Lodge in the late afternoon, and time permitting, we may explore some of the vast concessions (*coutadas*) surrounding the lodge, and get a slight head-start on some of the species listed for Days 10 – 13 below.

Overnight: M'phingwe Lodge, Catapu



This tour is specially designed to see the mythical African Pitta!

Days 10 – 13. Birding M'Phingwe Lodge and surroundings

We have four full days to spend birding in the stunning mixed woodlands and towering lowland forests spread throughout the region. This is an incredibly rich area and hosts a great many birds, and our chief target will be the dazzling **African Pitta**, which we will hopefully find displaying in its preferred forested habitat. The audible wing-beats and loud frog-like call herald this highly prized bird, and we have had great success with finding this bird over the last ten years or so, and have yet to miss this species on this tour. Some of our other target species will include **White-chested Alethe**, **East Coast Akalat**, **Chestnut-fronted Helmetshrike**, **Livingstone's Flycatcher**, **Lowland Tiny Greenbul**, **Mangrove Kingfisher** (in this area, away from the coastal mangroves it frequents elsewhere in its range), rare **Barred Long-tailed Cuckoo**, **Green Malkoha**, **Black-and-white Shrike-flycatcher**, **Woodward's Batis**, **Plain-backed Sunbird**, **Black-headed Apalis**, and **Southern Banded Snake Eagle**. Finding all these specials, some of them real skulkers, takes time, and this is why we have four full days to properly explore and bird the area. We are sure to accumulate a large list of species in the area; we may also come across species like the magnificent **Pennant-winged Nightjar**, **Mottled** and **Böhm's Spinetails**, **Broad-billed Roller**, **Swallow-tailed Bee-eater**, **Scaly-throated Honeyguide**, **African Hobby** and **Mosque Swallow**, to mention a few. We will also be sure to include some time near the Zambezi River, and will importantly try to get to the Villa de Sena region, where a recently discovered population of **Böhm's Bee-eater** (the only known population in the southern African subregion), has been found. The associated Zambezi River floodplains also have excellent birding and give us further chances for species such as **Moustached Grass Warbler**, **Marsh Tchagra** and **Short-winged Cisticola**, while also hosting species such as **Rufous-winged Cisticola** and **Southern Brown-throated Weaver**.

Overnight: M'phingwe Lodge, Catapu



East Coast Akalat is another of the denizens of the 'pitta forests'.

Day 14. M'Phingwe Lodge to Beira

Today we have a long trip to get to Beira from the wonderful M'Phingwe Lodge, and we will be departing early in the morning (around sunrise). Depending on the state of the road, we will likely arrive in the afternoon. Although the road is slow going, there is usually excellent birding to be had, and we'll be making many stops to explore the woodland tracts that remain. Depending on our arrival time into Beira, we may be able to head out for some brief afternoon birding (searching for a similar suite of species as mentioned for Day 1 above). We will end this tour off with a dinner on the beachfront, reminiscing about all of the excellent birds we have encountered!

Overnight: Beira

Day 15. Birding Beira, departure

The first half of the morning will see us birding the above-mentioned areas around Rio Savane and Beira, searching for the specials of the area, before transferring to the airport, where this tour will conclude around midday (as most of the flights out of Beira depart in the early afternoon).



Böhms Bee-eater is one of many localized species possible on this exciting tour!

Please note that the itinerary cannot be guaranteed as it is only a rough guide and can be changed (usually slightly) due to factors such as availability of accommodation, updated information on the state of accommodation, roads, or birding sites, the discretion of the guides and other factors. In addition, we sometimes have to use a different international guide from the one advertised due to tour scheduling.

Duration:	15 days
Group Size:	4 - 8
Dates:	TBA
Start:	Beira, Mozambique
End:	Beira, Mozambique
Prices:	TBA
Single Supplements:	TBA

Price includes:

All accommodation
Meals (from lunch on Day 1 until breakfast on Day 15)
Unlimited bottled water
Expert tour leader
Local bird guide fees
All National Park/Game Reserve entrance fees (including a game drive in Gorongosa National Park)
All ground transport, including airport pick-up and drop-off

Price excludes:

International flights (to/from Beira)
Visas (Mozambique)
Items of a personal nature, e.g. gifts, laundry, internet access, phone calls, etc.
Any pre- or post-tour accommodation, meals, or birding excursions
Soft/alcoholic drinks
Personal travel insurance
Gratuities (please see our [tipping guidelines blog](#))
Covid test (we facilitate this test at the end of the tour, but the cost is excluded – we anticipate it being roughly ZAR1000-2000 (~US\$100-150) per person)