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SOUTH AFRICA

Sustainable Biodiversity and Conservation

Flora, Fauna, & Culture - Led by Dr. John Silander

University of Connecticut Foundation - Office of Alumni Relations

August 26 - September 9, 2017

South Africa is a spectacularly diverse country of contrasts. The biological diversity is as great as any region globally; the landscape as well as its peoples, cultures and ethnicities are equally diverse. Charles Darwin found inspiration from his visit here. And modern humans likely evolved in southwestern Africa some 200,000 years ago. The ecosystems and associated climates in South Africa range from rainforests to extreme deserts, with a quarter of the rainfall of Death Valley. One can find extensive tracts of undisturbed wilderness and modern cosmopolitan cities, like Cape Town, with some of the finest restaurants and wines in the world. But, South Africa is also a land of historical conflicts. Cape Town, the Mother City, is one of the most strikingly beautiful cities in the world, and Kruger is one of the best places in Africa to have intimate encounters with diverse wildlife, including the "Big 5".

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- Explore Table Mountain National Park, a World Heritage Site and home to one of the most biologically diverse regions on the planet, and learn about the challenges of conservation in a diverse, urban landscape.
- Discover cosmopolitan, ethnically diverse, metropolitan Cape Town, everyone's favorite city located in a spectacular landscape with globally some of the best restaurants, most beautiful vineyards, and finest wines.
- View the spectacular spring wildflower display around the village of Nieuwoudtville, home to more species of bulb plants than anywhere else in the world, and see the bizarre quiver-tree forest.
- Observe the stark wilderness of the Succulent Karoo, one of the most biologically diverse deserts globally against the dramatic backdrop of the Cederberg Mountains.
- Expect close encounters with a diversity of animals in and around Kruger National Park, one of the best places in all of Africa to see lion, elephant, buffalo, rhinoceros, leopard and many species of antelope.

ITINERARY

AUGUST 26 - CAPE TOWN

Upon arrival in Cape Town, after clearing customs and collecting luggage, we will be met and transferred to our hotel. The Three Boutique Hotel is a small, highly rated, 4-star, environmentally conscious boutique hotel and a national monument that was originally an 18th century manor house. *Overnight at The Three Boutique Hotel.*

AUGUST 27 - CAPE TOWN

This morning, weather permitting, we will ride the cable car up 3,000 feet to the top of Table Mountain for a guided walk, with gorgeous views at every turn. This area forms part of the Cape Floristic Region and is dominated by the “Fynbos”—Mediterranean-climate shrubland vegetation that supports one of the most diverse floras in the world, matching that of tropical rainforests. Many rare and endangered species found nowhere else in the world occur here. Continue to the famous Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden. Enjoy lunch on the grounds at Moyo Kirstenbosch restaurant. After lunch, take a special guided tour, then have time to meander on your own in this amazing garden, which lives up to its reputation as one of the most spectacular gardens in the world, filled with thousands of indigenous species. This evening, we will dine at a fine local restaurant hosted by Dr. Silander. *Overnight at The Three Boutique Hotel. (BLD)*

AUGUST 28 - CAPE TOWN

Today will be spent sightseeing from Chapman's Peak Drive to the Cape of Good Hope section of Table Mountain National Park, and the penguins at Boulders Beach. Chapman's Peak Drive is one of the most scenic drives in the world, with breathtaking views. It is an engineering feat with an interesting history. We will then continue to the Cape of Good Hope Reserve, where the Atlantic and Indian Oceans meet. Take the funicular to the lighthouse at the top of the hill and enjoy lunch at Two Oceans Restaurant, with commanding views of the oceans at every angle. There will be an optional hike out to the tip of Cape Point. The next stop will be to see the African Penguin colony at Boulders Beach in Simon's Town. The penguins will be nesting and can easily be seen from the walkway built for their protection. After returning to the hotel, you will have the remainder of the late afternoon and evening to explore on your own. Dr. Silander will offer to lead a walk of selected sights around the compact area of central Cape Town. He and our guide will have plenty of other suggestions including great places for dinner. *Overnight at The Three Boutique Hotel. (BL)*

AUGUST 29 - CAPE TOWN

Spend today learning about the townships and conservation conflicts across the urban landscape of Cape Town. The townships are located in an area known as the Cape Flats, or simply The Flats. Under apartheid, black and mixed race citizens were confined to impoverished lives here. Today more than a million people live here, with new arrivals building informal housing every day. Tour the townships and learn about their history, conflicts, and the way of life there today. We will then visit an urban conservation site, Edith Stephens Wetland Park, where the natural biodiversity of the Cape Flats and the needs of the local communities are brought together. The Edith Stephens Wetland Park is a tiny reserve surrounded by urban sprawl, and it contains species found nowhere else in the world. It also provides habitat for a variety of waterfowl. Also visit Macassar Dunes and learn how the community is working with the city to control invasive plant species and the building of informal settlements, as well as to conserve rare species. If time permits, we will be able to visit Rondevlei Nature Reserve, a spectacular area for birders with more than 230 species present—an island of nature

surrounded by urban Cape Town. This evening, enjoy dinner at a local restaurant recommended by Dr. Silander. *Overnight at The Three Boutique Hotel. (BLD)*

AUGUST 30 - NIEUWOUDTVILLE

Today we begin our journey into one of the most scenic areas of South Africa, at least during this special time of the year. The destination is the small town of Nieuwoudtville, which is extremely popular during the wildflower season (August and September) because of its unique placement, where the arid succulent Karoo meets the Fynbos biome. This is the bulb capital of the world, with thousands of endemic species of bulb plants on display. En route, stop for lunch at Teubes Family Winery, and then later in the afternoon visit the Knersvlakte Reserve. This reserve is a striking, stark landscape covered with white quartz pebbles embedded with a diversity of unique “stone plants” species. This is also part of the landscape in which alluvial diamonds washed here by the Orange River over millions of years were first discovered in the 1800s. From this stark desert landscape, we will continue up the escarpment to Nieuwoudtville. *Overnight at Van Zijl guesthouse (shared accommodations). (BLD)*

AUGUST 31 - NIEUWOUDTVILLE

Today we will visit the Hantam National Botanical Garden. During flower season the garden is a feast of flowers, and this is one of the loveliest places to explore the spectacular bulb display on the Bokkeveld Plateau during spring. Enjoy a delicious picnic lunch at the Nieuwoudtville waterfall, followed by a visit to the amazing quiver tree forest, located on a private farm whose owners graciously allow visitors to see this great wonder. These remarkable trees (*Aloe dichotoma*), which together constitute the largest aloe forest in the world, are a cornerstone of Khoi San culture. If time permits, we will visit the Nieuwoudtville Wild Flower Reserve, a unique 250-acre site that is particularly rich with 199 genera and 309 species of plants. Visit Papkuilsfontein Farm for a private dinner at Die Waenhuis restaurant. Before dinner, meet the owner of the farm and learn about its history and conservation farming. *Overnight at Van Zijl guesthouse (shared accommodations). (BLD)*

SEPTEMBER 1 - CEDERBERG MOUNTAINS

This morning we journey south until we reach Kagga Kamma Private Nature Reserve. Lunch en route in the Tankwa Karoo, a desert drier than Death Valley. Following arrival, you will have the remainder of the afternoon at leisure to relax and explore your new surroundings. Kagga Kamma is located in a wilderness area in the peaceful southern Cederberg Mountains. This site is dominated by the succulent Karoo vegetation, globally the most species-rich of all desert biomes, with dry Fynbos and Renosterveld vegetation at higher elevations. Here we can enjoy the silence and brilliant starlit skies. The stunning location of the lodge was once home to the San Bushmen; today many of their ancient cave paintings are still clearly visible on the rocks (some dating back 6,000 years). This spiritual land offers spectacular scenery, majestic mountains and phenomenal night skies. Our stay at Kagga Kamma includes two excursions per day: the Rock Art Tour, Sundowner Tour, Morning Nature Drive, or Late Night Nature Drive. There are also extensive hiking trails and other options for the more adventurous. *Overnight at Kagga Kamma - Cave or Hut Suites. (BLD)*

SEPTEMBER 2 - CEDERBERG MOUNTAINS

We will have a full day at Kagga Kamma to enjoy what this unique area has to offer. Start the day early with a nature drive. Dry Mountain Fynbos and Succulent Karoo plants provide grazing for animals in this western part of South Africa. Kagga Kamma's guides take guests on game drives where breathtaking views over the Ceres Karoo and the spectacular rock formations of the Cederberg

Mountains can be enjoyed. Morning and night drives cross the 33,000-acre reserve to spot some of the 33 resident mammal species including some 10 species of antelope, plus zebra, baboon, jackal, as well as the elusive aardvark and aardwolf. The Cape Mountain leopard also occurs here, but is very rarely seen. On the drive the guides will also point out interesting bird (80+) and reptile (35+) species and share fascinating facts about plants of the area. *Overnight at Kagga Kamma - Cave or Hut Suites. (BLD)*

SEPTEMBER 3 - STELLENBOSCH

This morning, after breakfast, we will leave Kagga Kamma and travel to the beautiful wine country of South Africa surrounding the town of Stellenbosch. En route, visit the Karoo Desert National Botanical Garden. This truly unique garden cultivates and displays a wide variety of desert and semi-desert plants that are found across the diverse Succulent Karoo Biome. The 380-acre garden lies at the foot of the Hex River Mountain Range. Only 27 acres are cultivated and the remaining 353 acres are composed of natural Karoo vegetation. Next, continue on via the Huguenot Tunnel to Asara, a magnificent wine estate outside Stellenbosch; established in 1691, it boasts a five-star hotel. After a tour of the winery and a wine tasting, we will have the remainder of the day and evening at leisure. There is a fine restaurant at the wine estate, plus several other excellent restaurants within a couple of miles. *Overnight at Asara - Classic Rooms. (BL)*

SEPTEMBER 4 - STELLENBOSCH

Today is all about wineries, but with a special twist. Learn all about the BWI, the Biodiversity Wine Initiative. The World Wildlife Fund participates in a pioneering partnership between the South African wine industry and the conservation sector in the winelands region to promote participation in conservation-minded farming practices, while sustaining the biodiversity of the region. Wineries receive education about best practices, with one third of the producers participating. Visit one of Dr. Silander's favorites, Vergelegen Winery, which is also a nominated World Heritage Site, and one of the earliest supporters of the BWI. Receive a tour and commentary of their BWI and sustainable conservation initiatives. Visit a second, contrasting, smaller winery with a strong community involvement and poverty upliftment program: again, one of Dr. Silander's favorites, Solms Delta, which is owned by a biologist. After returning to Asara, you will have the remainder of the late afternoon and evening again at leisure. *Overnight at Asara - Classic Rooms. (BL)*

SEPTEMBER 5 - KRUGER NATIONAL PARK

This morning, we will transfer to Cape Town Airport for our flight to Nelspruit/Kruger. After collecting our luggage, we will be met by our driver and begin the transfer to Kruger National Park. Once in the park, our game drive begins! Our destination is the Olifants Rest Camp, one of many wonderful national park rest camps within the park. Kruger, a reserve larger in area than Connecticut and Rhode Island combined, and contiguous with adjoining parks in Zimbabwe and Mozambique, is one of the best places in Africa to see the full diversity of wildlife that the continent has to offer in a spectacular landscape. Over the next four days we will have an excellent chance to see not only the "Big 5," but much more. The Olifants Camp is situated on top of a high hill with a commanding view of the Olifants River. (Olifants means elephants in Afrikaans.) Enjoy our first evening game drive tonight. *Overnight at Olifants Rest Camp - Bungalows. (BLD)*

SEPTEMBER 6 - KRUGER NATIONAL PARK

Today we will have game drives in the early morning and late afternoon into evening, as well as a bush walk along the river. Bush walks offer the most intimate and exciting way to connect with nature and wildlife in the park. Kruger offers a very different landscape and vegetation from that seen in the Cape. Here we are

in the heart of the African savanna landscape, with clumps of trees or woodlands in a grassy landscape. We will be focusing on animal diversity as it plays out on a varied landscape. *Overnight at Olifants Rest Camp - Bungalows. (BLD)*

SEPTEMBER 7 - ELANDELA PRIVATE RESERVE

After an early morning game drive and breakfast, we head to Elandela Private Reserve for a special, traditional African safari to end our adventure in South Africa. Elandela, which adjoins Kruger, is a privately managed wildlife conservation reserve, one of the oldest of a coordinated network of private reserves surrounding Kruger. This afternoon, after settling in to our beautiful suites, we will have a late afternoon/early evening game drive. We should have good luck here completing our list of the African Big 5: lion, leopard, rhino, elephant and Cape buffalo, as well as many antelope species, small game, plus diverse avifauna, plants and invertebrates. This evening will include sundowners overlooking the river or the lake, or around a fire in the traditional South African boma under the stars, followed by a delicious dinner. An optional night safari drive is possible. *Overnight at Elandela Luxury Lodge. (BLD)*

SEPTEMBER 8 - ELANDELA PRIVATE RESERVE

A full day of game drives and bush walks is provided from dawn to evening. All meals are provided, along with drinks and tea breaks. Elandela is known for its rhino conservation initiative (ERST), as well as for the pride of white lions found on the reserve; these are rare, natural color mutants that occur in some populations in and around Kruger. Many other optional activities are also available. This last full day in South Africa should be one of the highlights of our adventure here. *Overnight at Elandela Luxury Lodge. (BLD)*

SEPTEMBER 9 - DEPARTURE

After an optional early morning game drive, transfer to the local airport for the flight to Johannesburg. You will be on your own to check in for your international return flight. *(B)*

LAND COST

\$5,945 per person (minimum 8 passengers/maximum 16 passengers)

Price includes accommodations, meals, entrance fees, and activities as indicated in the itinerary, flights within South Africa, private in-country vehicle transportation, non-alcoholic beverages with meals, full-time guide for duration of program, tips/gratuities for guide and driver, bottled water on bus, and carbon offset.

Does not include international airfare, tips/gratuities for local guides, porters, or housekeeping, or items of a personal nature. Holbrook can assist with your international flight arrangements if desired.

THE FINE PRINT

Cost is based on double occupancy; for a single room throughout the trip add \$1,200 per person. A \$200 per person deposit and enrollment form are required by April 28, 2017 to secure your space on the trip. This deposit is refundable minus a \$100 cancellation fee until May 23, 2017, at which time final non-refundable payment is due. Travel/trip cancellation insurance is strongly recommended. For more information call Travel Insured at 800-243-3174. Holbrook Travel's agency number is 15849.



This program includes optional carbon offsetting with ClimateSafe. Learn more at holbrooktravel.com/climatesafe

ABOUT YOUR LEADER



John Silander, Ph.D., has been a Professor of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at the University of Connecticut for 40 years. During this time he has conducted research on understanding biodiversity patterns and effective

conservation practices around the world, with grant support from NSF, USDA, NASA, the Smithsonian Institution, the National Geographic Society, the Nature Conservancy, the MacArthur Foundation, and other agencies. He has conducted research expeditions in Africa for many years, and has worked continuously in South Africa on issues related to biodiversity and conservation since 1999. Having traveled to more than 100 countries and territories, South Africa remains one of his favorite places, because of its cultural, ethnic, landscape and biological diversity, as well as its vibrancy. South Africa is the best place to become familiar with what Africa has to offer, and to become acquainted with various facets of the diversity it contains. Dr. Silander has developed a film series course on the history, politics and sociology of South Africa, as well as a background reading list related to things South African. He would be happy to share this with anyone interested.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit holbrook.travelluconnsa17 or contact Sandy Schmidt at schmidt@holbrooktravel.com or 877-907-5360



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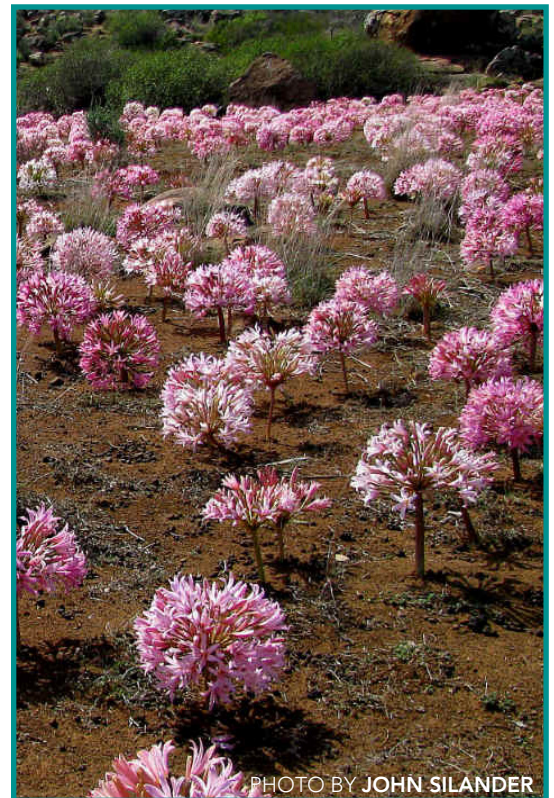


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