

Kenya Rift Valley Anytime

Dates: Anytime

Guide: Local Guide

Sample Price: £2700

This sample Anytime tour takes in the best of species-rich central Kenya, including some of the best reserves for wildlife.



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Day 1: Arrive Nairobi

After arrival in Nairobi in the morning, we transfer to our hotel on the edge of the National Park with local birding if time permits.

Day 2: Magadi Road & Nairobi NP

In the morning, after an early breakfast, we set off down the Magadi Road, which has dry-country specialities, including Pringle's Puffback, Chestnut Weaver, Chestnut Sparrow. In the afternoon, we will visit Nairobi National Park, which offers perhaps the best chance of Black Rhino. Here is the as yet undescribed Nairobi Pipit, as well as Long-tailed Shrike, Pangani Longclaw, Northern Pied Babbler and Jackson's Widowbird.

Day 3: Nairobi – Lake Elementaita

Lakes Elementaita itself has thousands of Lesser Flamingo, as well as a few Greater. Other waterbirds include African Spoonbill, Cape and Hottentot Teals, Kittlitz's and Blacksmith Plovers, Grey-headed Gull, In the lakeside trees and grasslands are Temminck's Courser, Coqui and Hildebrandt's Francolins, Klaas' and Black Cuckoos, Nyanza and Horus Swifts, Pied Kingfisher, White-fronted Bee-eater, Broad-billed Roller, Green Woodhoopoe, Scaly-throated Honeyguide, Red-throated Wryneck, Red-capped Lark, Red-rumped and Mosque Swallows, Yellow-throated Longclaw, Arrow-marked Babbler, Schalow's Wheatear, Cliff Chat, Black-crowned and Brown-crowned Tchagras, Rüppell's Long-tailed Starling and Red-headed Weavers.

Day 4: Nairobi – Lake Elementaita / Nakuru

Today, a visit to Lake Nakuru National Park is suggested. The species are the same as Lake Elementaita above, but there are more mammals, and these can include, Leopard, Black and White Rhinos and several antelope species.

Alternatively, it is possible to head up to the Aberdare National Park, whose slopes are home to the endemic Sharpe's Longclaw and Aberdare Cisticola, as well as the possibility of Jackson's Francolin and Scarlet-tufted Malachite Sunbird.

Day 5: Lake Elementaita – Lake Baringo

It is possible to visit Lake Nakuru NP on the way to Lake Baringo (extra park fee) if you chose to visit the Aberdares on Day 4.

In the afternoon, reach Lake Baringo, where species include Vitelline Masked, Northern Masked, Jackson's Golden-backed, Little and White-billed Buffalo Weavers, Northern Red Bishop, Brown Babbler, Verreaux's Eagle Owl, Red-and-Yellow Barbet and Beautiful Sunbird. Nearby scrub is excellent for White-faced Scops Owl, Heuglin's Courser, Spotted Dikkop, Bru-bru and Slender-tailed Nightjar. Some of these species are more tricky to find than previously, as the lakeside hotels and their feeders have been inundated with floodwater.

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Day 6: Baringo – Naro Moru

Pre-breakfast at Baringo, a trip to the cliffs is a must, as it offers the opportunity of several scarce northern species, including Bristle-crowned Starling, Hemprich's and Jackson's Hornbills, Brown-tailed Rock Chat, Mocking Cliff-chat, Northern Grey Tit, Green-winged Pytilia and others. Spotted Eagle Owl is also resident.

The route to Naro Moru will be skirting the Aberdares, crossing Solio Plain, where we should see some or all of Black-bellied, White-bellied, Kori and the rare Denham's Bustards. In addition, it is an excellent area for Long-tailed and Jackson's Widowbirds, Capped Wheatear and Pectoral-patch Cisticola, and sometimes, the endemic Sharpe's Longclaw. We pass a quarry where Mackinder's Eagle Owl can be seen.

We will also pass marshes at Thompson's Falls, which hold African Snipe, Tinkling Cisticola, Cape Wagtail, Slender-billed Starling, and Africa's highest Hippos.

Once at Naro Moru, Montane Nightjar can be seen and heard in the evening. Mammals include Black-and-White Colobus and Syke's Monkey, and the night is filled with the eerie cries of the Tree Hyrax.

Day 7: Naro Moru -Samburu

Once at our lodge, we can bird the grounds, and the lower slopes of Mt. Kenya. The key species in the area include: Olive and Eastern Bronze-naped Pigeons, Red-fronted Parrot, Hartlaub's Turaco, Scarce Swift, Crowned and Silvery-cheeked Hornbills, Moustached Green and Yellow-rumped Tinkerbirds, Cape Wagtail, Black Saw-wing, Yellow-whiskered, Slender-billed and Mountain Greenbuls, White-starred Robin, Cape Robin Chat, Cinnamon Bracken Warbler, Hunter's Cisticola, Chestnut-throated, Grey and Black-throated Apalises, White-browed Crombec, African Dusky Flycatcher, Rufous Chatterer, Chin-spot Batis, Montane White-eye, White-bellied Tit, Tropical Boubou, Grey Cuckoo-shrike, Montane Oriole, Waller's Starling, Red-billed Oxpecker, Eastern Double-collared Sunbird, Brown-capped Weaver, Yellow-bellied Waxbill, Thick-billed Seed-eater, Yellow-crowned Canary and Oriole-Finch. Raptors include Harrier Hawk, Crowned Eagle, Great Sparrowhawk and the scarce Grey Kestrel and Rufous-sided Sparrowhawk.

On the way north, the Timau Escarpment is home to Boran Cisticola.

Samburu itself is an excellent reserve for birding (it actually consists of a complex of 3 reserves, Buffalo Springs, Samburu & Shaba). The area is mainly dry acacia savannah, but has riverine forest along the river banks, along with doum palms. This area has several unusual species, more commonly encountered in the arid north. Spectacular species include Somali Ostrich, Secretary Bird, Vulturine Guineafowl and Kori and Buff-crested Bustards. Specialities of the area include Somali Courser, Somali Bee-eater, White-headed Mousebird, Violet Woodhoopoe, Bare-eyed Thrush, Straw-coloured Whydah, Golden Pipit, Golden-breasted Starling, Shining and Black-bellied Sunbirds and Donaldson-Smith's Sparrow-Weaver. Raptors are commonly seen and include Egyptian, Hooded, African White-backed, Rüppell's Griffon, Lappet-faced and Palm-nut Vultures, Bateleur, Harrier-Hawk, Pale Chanting and Gabar Goshawks, Brown Snake Eagle, Verreaux's, Tawny and Martial Eagles, African Hawk Eagle and Pygmy Falcon. Species likely to be seen whilst driving through the reserve include; Crested Francolin, Yellow-necked Spurfowl, Helmeted Guineafowl, Spotted and Water Thick-knees, Crowned, Spur-winged and Three-banded Plovers, Chestnut-bellied, Liechtenstein's and Black-faced Sandgrouse, Namaqua Dove, Orange-bellied Parrot, Black-and-white, Great Spotted, Red-chested, African and Dideric Cuckoos, White-browed Coucal, Pearl-spotted Owlet, Slender-tailed Nightjar, Palm Swift, Blue-naped Mousebird, Grey-headed and Striped Kingfishers, White-throated and Little Bee-eaters, Lilac-breasted and Rufous-crowned Rollers, Common Hoopoe, Abyssinian Scimitar-bill, Eastern Yellow-billed and Von der Decken's Hornbills, Black-throated, D'arnaud's and Red-and-yellow Barbets, Greater Honeyguide, Nubian, Grey, Cardinal and Bearded Woodpeckers, Singing Bush Lark, Red-winged, Pink-breasted and Fawn-coloured Larks, Fischer's and Chestnut-headed Sparrow-Larks, Wire-tailed Swallow, Rock Martin, White-browed Scrub Robin, Southern Black and African Grey Flycatchers, Rattling, Ashy and Desert Cisticolas, Pale Prinia, Grey Wren-Warbler, Yellow-breasted Apalis, Red-fronted Warbler,

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Banded Parisoma, Northern Crombec, Yellow-bellied and Yellow-vented Eremomelas, Northern Grey Tit, Mouse-coloured Penduline Tit, Pygmy Batis, Northern White-crowned Shrike, Taita Fiscal, Three-streaked Tchagra, Brubru, Rosy-patched Shrike, Slate-coloured Boubou, Northern Puffback, Black-headed Oriole, Fan-tailed Raven, Fischer's, Magpie and Wattled Starlings, Eastern Violet-backed, Hunter's and Mariqua Sunbirds, Chestnut Sparrow, Yellow-spotted Petronia, Black-capped Social Weaver, Speckle-fronted, Vitelline Masked, Lesser Masked and Chestnut Weavers, Red-billed Quelea, Blue-capped Cordon-bleu, Purple Grenadier, Crimson-rumped and Black-cheeked Waxbills, African Silverbill, Cut-throat Finch, Yellow-rumped Seed-eater, White-bellied Canary and Somali Golden-breasted Bunting. Common birds include Emerald Spotted Wood Dove, Mourning Dove, White-bellied Go-away-bird, Red-billed Hornbill, Northern Brownbul, Rufous Chatterer, Spotted Morning Thrush, Red-billed and White-headed Buffalo Weavers, Golden Palm and Black-headed Weavers, and Parrot-billed Sparrow. In terms of mammals, there are several unusual species present, which specialise in this dryer area. These include both Grevy's and Grant's Zebras, Gerenuk, Beisa Oryx, Reticulated Giraffe (Reticulated Giraffe, African Elephant, Kirk's Dikdik, Grant's and Thompson's Gazelles and Impala. Lion are reasonably common, and Cheetah are possible. The trees along the river offer good conditions for finding Leopard.

Day 8: Samburu/Shaba

We have the option of transferring to the adjacent Shaba reserve, for an early morning search for the endemic William's Lark, and scarce Masked Lark. Friedmann's Lark is also a possibility. The rest of the day will be back in Samburu/Buffalo Springs.

Day 9: Thika – Kirinyaga

Heading back round Mt. Kenya, we can visit Wajee Nature Park, one of the strongholds of the endemic Hinde's Babbler, as well as offering good chances of African Wood Owl and Rüppell's Robin-chat.

Castle Forest Lodge is located on the lush green tropical forest and was built by the British, originally as a retreat for royalty during the late twenties. It offers the most stunning views of Mount Kenya and also absolutely wonderful forest birding.

Species include Long-crested Eagle, African Crowned Eagle, Mountain and Augur Buzzards, African Stonechat, Kenrick's, Waller's and Sharpe's Starlings, and montane specials including Black-tailed Oriole, Montane White-eye, African Hill Babbler, Oriole-Finch, Red-fronted Parrots, White-headed Woodhoopoe, Grey, Black-headed, Chestnut-throated, Black-collared and Black-throated Apalis, Olive, Green and Eastern Bronze-naped Pigeons, Tambourine, Lemon and Red-eyed Doves, Moustached Green Tinkerbird, White-headed and White-eared Barbets, Scarce and Alpine Swifts, Green-headed, Tacazze, Bronze, Northern Double-collared and Eastern Double-collared Sunbirds among other common species. At dusk African Green Ibis can sometimes be seen flying to roost.

Day 10: Kirinyaga – Nairobi Depart

Today, we have most of the day for our journey back to Nairobi for evening flights out. We can bird around Castle Forest, and the paddyfields on the way may bring us new species.

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