Tanzania Endemics

2019 Tour Details

9 September – 8 October 2019
ENDEMICS GALORE!

- Some of the best birding on the continent, with more than 40 endemics and near-endemics.
- Southern Tour, suitable for fit adventure-loving birders, visits remote Eastern Arc Mountains requiring hikes and camping.
- Northern Tour visits forest and savanna and suitable for all types of birders.

Michael’s incredible focus, dedication and ability to locate and show Africa’s toughest birds is probably unequalled on the continent. He has led dozens of tours across Africa and his experience in locating birds on just the softest of calls or briefest of views impresses those who travelled with him. Tanzania is one of his favourite countries for birding.

TOUR SUMMARY

This extensive 30-day Complete Tanzania Tour is the most comprehensive birding tour available to one of Africa’s top birding destinations. It is conveniently divided into two sections, based on style and comfort of travel.

The Southern Tour focusses almost entirely on the remote Eastern Arc Mountains, including the Ulugurus, Ukagurus and Udzungwas, and also visits the Mikumi area, Kilombero Floodplain and Ruaha National Park. Most of the country’s endemics are found in these remote mountains, with top targets including Uluguru Bushshrike and Udzungwa Forest Partridge. Camping and long hikes do not make this section of the tour suitable for everyone.

The Northern Tour focusses on top birding sites in the north of the country, visiting Pemba Island with four endemics, the endemic-rich East Usambaras and West Usambaras, the South Pare Mountains, and the traditional big-game circuit of Northwestern Tanzania, including the famed Serengeti National Park. Good quality accommodation and no long hikes, together with big game viewing opportunities, makes this trip suitable for all birders.

TOUR FOCUS

Tanzania is one of Africa’s top birding destinations, and offers more than 40 endemics and near-endemic and a large potential bird list (expect well over 550 species). The northwestern savanna parks offer great large mammal viewing opportunities for those with a more general interest. However, this trip has a strong focus on watching birds, and especially targeting Tanzania’s endemics which include lots of localised forest birds. A species list will be handed out to you at the start of the tour and is available beforehand upon request.

The tour is timed to coincide with the peak time for birding across Tanzania as a whole. We expect to encounter some rain in the southern mountains, but the north is likely to be dry. Due to altitude, most days will be cool, and nights potentially cold, although lower-lying areas can be hot.

We will mostly make use of one or two four-wheel-drive vehicles, depending on group size. More details about what to expect, how to prepare and what to pack are provided in our Tour Information Pack.
Accommodation and meals differ significantly between the Southern and Northern Tours. The Southern Tour involves a significant number of nights camping under remote conditions (small tents, no stretchers, limited opportunities to bathe), with simple but wholesome camping meals expertly prepared by our dedicated ground staff, although comfortable but simple lodges will be used between camping segments. The Northern Tour will generally use international standard hotels and lodges with private ablutions and good food. Please advise us if you are vegetarian or have any specific dietary requirements, so that we can try to accommodate your needs. Water is not safe to drink so we supply complimentary bottled water in the vehicle and may also purify water when camping.

Walking
The Southern Tour requires a high degree of fitness and is the most physically demanding tour offered on the African continent. Walks on several days are longer than 8 km and involve changes in altitude of more than 300 metres. Conditions underfoot can be muddy at times.

The Northern Tour involves only short, gentle walks and at a manageable pace. In the Northwest, most birding will be done from vehicles.

Group size
Southern Tour: maximum 8 participants.
Northern Tour: maximum 10 participants.

International flights
Please plan to fly in to Dar es Salaam by the night of the following dates:
- Southern Tour: 9 Sep.
- Northern Tour: 23 Sep (on 24 Sep you will be transferred to Dar es Salaam airport to join a flight to Pemba Island. You will meet up with the rest of the group who will be on the incoming flight from Ruaha)

Please note that the Southern Tour ends in Dar es Salaam, but the Northern Tour ends at Arusha’s Kilimanjaro International Airport. Departure is not before the following dates:
- Southern Tour: 24 Sep (from Dar es Salaam).
- Northern Tour: 20h00, although the tour will most likely end around midday.

- Northern Tanzania: 8 Oct (from Arusha’s Kilimanjaro International Airport), not before 21h00.

Please email michael@birdingafrica.com a copy of your proposed flight details for approval before paying for your ticket.

Introduction
With Africa’s third largest bird list and more than 40 endemics and near-endemics, Tanzania ranks as one of the continent’s top birding countries. Although much of the country is blanketed in miombo woodlands and savannas, it is the famed Eastern Arc Mountains forests that hold most of the country’s top endemics, many shy and little-known.

Our comprehensive 30-day itinerary takes in all the key birding sites in Tanzania, and aims to find as many endemics and specials as possible. The only endemics that we do not target Reichenow’s Batis, of questionable validity, which is confined to the far south-east, and Rubeho Forest Partridge, generally regarded as a subspecies of Udzungwa Forest Partridge and never seen before by birders.

During the Southern Tour, which starts and ends in Dar es Salaam, we will focus our attention on three of the most important mountain ranges, namely the Ukagurus, Ulugurus and Udzungwas. The Ukagurus (one night camping) offer access to Rubeho Warbler and Rubeho Akalat, and are a good place to see several other endemics. The Ulugurus (two nights camping) hold the desirable Uluguru Bushshrike, Winifred’s Warbler, Loveridge’s Sunbird and Uluguru Mountain Greenbul. And in the Udzungwas (5 nights camping across two sites) we aim to track down Udzungwa Forest Partridge, Iringa Akalat, Rufous-winged Sunbird, Moreau’s Sunbird, Swynnerton’s Robin, Kipengere Seedeater, Yellow-throated Mountain Greenbul, Tanzania Illadopsis (currently lumped with Pale-breasted Illadopsis) and Dapple-throat. Between visiting these mountains we’ll bird the surrounding lowlands, including Miombo woodlands near Mikumi for Hofmann’s Sunbird, Racket-tailed Roller and Speckle-throated Woodpecker, and swamps of the Kilombero Floodplain from Kilombero Weaver, Kilombero Cisticola and White-tailed Cisticola. We will end of by flying back to Dar Es Salaam from Ruaha National Park.

During the Northern tour, which starts in Dar es Salaam and ends in Arusha, we will visit Pemba Island, the Usambara Mountains and the savanna parks of the north-west. We will start off by flying to Pemba for a two-nights stay, where Pemba White-eye, Pemba Green Pigeon, Pemba Sunbird and Pemba Scops Owl will be our main targets. Flying back to the mainland we’ll first visit the East Usambara Mountains where we hope to find endemics such as Long-billed Forest Warbler and Usambara Hlyiota, and other specials such as Green-headed Oriole, Kretschmer’s Longbill, Amani Sunbird, Banded Green Sunbird, Chestnut-fronted Helmetshrike, Fischer’s Turaco and Uluguru Violet-backed Sunbird. The West Usambaras are home to Usambara Thrush, Usambara Double-collared Sunbird, Usambara Akalat, and the South Pare Mountains to South Pare White-eye. In the same area we’ll bird the arid bushveld in search of Black-bellied Sunbird, White-headed Mousebird, Taveta Golden Weaver and Tsavo Sunbird, before moving onto the Arusha area. Arusha National Park is home to the localised Kilimanjaro White-eye and rare Abbott’s Starling, and on the Libaribo Plains we’ll search for Beesley’s Lark. Moving onto Tarangire National Park we’ll search for Yellow-collared Lovebird and Ashy Starling, before visiting Serengeti National Park and the Ngorongoro Conservation area (with spectacular views of Ngorongoro Crater from the rim) where specials include Grey-breasted Spurfowl, Fischer’s Lovebird, Usambiro (D’Arnaud’s) Barbet, Karamoja Apalis, Schalow’s (Abyssinian) Wheatear, Grey-crested Helmetshrike, Red-throated Tit, Mbulu (Montane) White-eye and Buff-bellied (Grey) Penduline-Tit. Finally we’ll return to Arusha where the tour will end.
**DAY-BY-DAY ITINERARY**

Day S1: Arrive Dar es Salaam

Welcome to Tanzania! Today we arrive in Dar es Salaam for an overnight stay. Dimorphic Egret may be visible from our beach-side hotel, but we expect to see few other birds here.

Day S2: Dar es Salaam to Morogoro

Making an early morning start to escape the notorious Dar traffic, we head inland, first stopping at the Ruvi River where we'll search for the enigmatic Ruvi Weaver (status uncertain). A short detour will be made for Bohin's Bee-eater, and we'll stop for roadside savanna birding as time allows. Total driving time is c 5 hours.

Day S3: Morogoro to Ulugurus (camp A1)

Another early start will see us making our way to the nearby Uluguru Mountains. A three-hour drive will bring us to the edge of the forest where we may encounter Bertram’s Weaver and White-lined Barbet. Our first big hike of the trip will see us entering the forest and hiking about 5 km to a camp site near known territories for Winifred’s Warbler. Parts of the trail are quite steep so we will take our time and bird along the way.

Day S4: Ulugurus (camp A2)

With the better part of two days to explore the endemic-rich Uluguru Mountains from our base camp, we'll take our time to target all the local specialties. Loveridge’s Sunbird is the easiest to find, and several pairs of Uluguru Bushshrike occur around our campsite or along the trail to it. Our campsite is carefully selected for its close proximity to two territories of the localised Winifred’s Warbler. The final endemic, Uluguru Mountain Greenbul, is the least common and restricted to the higher altitudes, but we have seen them around our campsite before. A host of other good forest birds are also on offer, and we stand the chance to see Shelley’s Greenbul, Placid Greenbul, Orange Ground Thrush, Dark Batis, Moustached Green Tinkerbird, Spot-throat, Chapin’s Apalis, Green Barbet, White-winged Apalis and Green-headed Oriole.

Day S5: Ulugurus to Morogoro

After some final birding around our campsite this morning we’ll descend back to the forest edge and drive back to Morogoro.

Day S6: Morogoro to Ukagurus (camp B)

Today we’ll strike out 100 km north-west of Morogoro to the Ukaguru Mountains, which will take about 3 hours to reach by road. On our inaugural Tanzania Endemics Tour in 2015 we were the first birding group to ever see Rubeho Akalat, and this will be the main target of our visit. The other special we'll be looking for is Rubeho Warbler, which is much easier to see. Other specials we stand a chance to encounter here are Ubehehe Fiscal and Bertram’s Weaver at the forest edge and Black-fronted Bushshrike, Olive-flanked Robin-Chat and Red-capped Forest Warbler.

Day S7: Ukagurus to Mikumi

After some final birding in the Ukaguru Mountains in the morning, we'll use our way back to Morogoro and on to Mikumi. In the afternoon we'll do some birding in the savannas or miombo woodlands in the Mikumi area, as time allows.

Day S8: Mikumi to Kilombero to Hondo Hondo

An early start will see us birding the miombo woodlands adjacent to Mikumi NP (access permitting). This is one of the few sites where the localised Hofmann’s Sunbird can be seen, and we should see a good variety of other miombo specials over the morning, possibly including Racket-tailed Roller, Orange-winged Pytilia, Red-throated Wryneck, Pale-billed Hornbill, Pale Batis, Retz’s Helmetshrike, Grey Penduline Tit, Sterling’s Wren-Warbler, Green-capped Eremomela, Yellow-bellied Hylota, Western Violet-backed Sunbird, Arnott’s Chat, Cinnamon-breasted Tit, Miombo Blue-eared Starling and Speckle-throated Woodpecker. Once activity dies down we’ll make our way down to the Kilombero Floodplain (3 hours) for an afternoon vigil in search of Kilombero Weaver, Kilombero Cisticola and White-tailed Cisticola, stopping in at our lodge en route if time allows.

Day S9: Hondo Hondo to Udekwa (camp C)

We'll start off birding in the vicinity of our lodge where we have seen Lesser Seedcracker in the past, and other birds could include Collared Palm Thrush and Bearded Scrub Robin. With a long drive ahead of us we’ll leave straight after breakfast, to complete the 300 km journey to the edge of the Udzungwa National Park, only 50 km from our accommodation the previous night. We'll camp at the trailhead to ensure an early start into the forest the next morning.

Day S10: into the Udzungwas (camp D1)

After breakfast we’ll start the 8 km hike into the remote Udzungwa Mountains. Initially we’ll pass through relatively open habitats where Brown Parisoruma, Brown-headed Apalis and Malachite Sunbird are possible. After a few kilometres we'll
Day S12: Udzungwa Mountains to Iringa

After some final birding around our campsite we’ll hike back out of the forest and drive to Iringa (3 hours) for an overnight stay. Around our accommodation we may find Jameson’s Firefinch and Grey-olive Greenbul.

Day S13: Iringa to Udzungwa Scarp (camp E1)

After a spot of early morning around our hotel we’ll make the 3-hour drive to the edge of the Udzungwas Scarp Forests. Here we have a shorter (4 km), flatter walk into our campsite, looking for Churring Cisticola, Black-lored Cisticola and Marsh Tchagra in the farmlands on our way in and watching out for Ayres’s Hawk-Eagle.

Day S14: Udzungwa Scarp Forest (camping E2)

The moister Udzungwa Scarp Forests are the best place to see the unusual Rufous-winged Sunbird and highly secretive Dapple-throat, our two main targets. This is also one of the best places to see the delightful Swynnerton’s Robin, and other highlights could include African Broadbill, Green Barbet, Fülleborn’s Boubou, Evergreen Forest Warbler, Black-headed Apalis and Forest Double-collared Sunbird.

Day S11: Udzungwa Mountains (camp D2)

We have the better part of three days to explore the Udzungwa Mountains, based for two nights at the same camp site. Right on top of our list is the highly-desirable but secretive Udzungwa Forest Partridge; any sort of views of this shy species will be considered a major triumph. Kipengere Seedeater and Iringa Akalat are other more tricky endemics we’ll be targeting, but easier to find are Yellow-throated Mountain Greenbul, Moreau’s Sunbird and Yellow-browed Seedeater. A long list of other desirable birds is on offer, including Usambara Weaver, White-winged Apalis, Eastern Bronze-naped Pigeon, Ruwenzori (Usambara) Nightjar, African Grass Owl, Sharpe’s Akalat, Forest Double-collared Sunbird, Bar-tailed Trogon, Tanzanian (Pale-breasted) Illadopsis, Olive-flanked Robin-Chat, Mountain Buzzard and Spot-throat.

reach the forest edge proper, and from here on we could encounter a long list of specials.

Taveta Golden Weaver

Yellow-throated Sandgrouse
Day N3: Pemba Island

With four endemics, Pemba Island makes for a short, relaxed visit. Both Pemba Sunbird and Pemba White-eye occur widely on the island, including in the garden of our seaside hotel, although Pemba Green Pigeon is harder to track down and will be looked for on the edge of the largest forest remaining on the island, Ngezi Forest. We’ll have a second shot at Pemba Scops Owl tonight, if we’re successful on our first attempt. Other species we may see on Pemba include Mangrove Kingfisher, Red-backed Mannikin, Black-bellied Starling, African Goshawk, Dimorphic Egret, Dickinson’s Kestrel, African Pygmy Goose and Brown-headed Parrot.

Day N4: Pemba to Tanga to Amani

After some final birding on Pemba we’ll take a short flight to Tanga on the mainland, and drive to Amani in the East Usambara Mountains.

Day N5-6: East Usambaras

We have two full days to explore the endemic-rich East Usambara Mountains. At night we’ll search for the scarce Usambara Eagle-Owl (lumped with Fraser’s Eagle-Owl by BirdLife). During the day our main targets will include Amani Sunbird, Uluguru Violet-backed Sunbird, Banded Green Sunbird, Long-billed Forest Warbler, Kretschmer’s Longbill, Chestnut-fronted Helmetshrike, Plain-backed Sunbird, Fischer’s Turaco and Usambara Hyliola. We also hope to find Lowland Tiny Greenbul, Montane Tiny Greenbul, Mombasa Woodpecker, Little Yellow Flycatcher, Red-tailed Ant-Thrush, Half-collared Kingfisher, Forest Batis, Kenrick’s Starling and East Coast Boubou.

Day N7: Amani to Lushoto

After some final birding around Amani we’ll descend into the lowlands that divide the Usambaras, and climb back up to Lushoto in the West Usambaras. Swampy habitat en route will be checked for Coastal Cisticola and Zanzibar Red Bishop, and we may also find African Golden Weaver and Mocking Cliff Chat.

Day N8: West Usambaras

We have a full day to track down the West Usambaras key birds, which are Usambara Akalat, Usambara Thrush and Usambara Double-collared Sunbird. The focus of our birding will be Magambo Forest, where all three these species occur, and we’ll also hope to find Usambara Weaver, Buwenzori (Usambara) Nightjar, Montane Tiny Greenbul, White-chested Alethe feeding on the road, Sharpe’s Starling and Hartlaub’s Turaco. There is also an outside chance of seeing Taita Falcon.

Day N9: West Usambaras to Same

After some final birding in the West Usambaras we’ll descend to the arid lowlands en route to Same. Commiphora bush and Acacia thickets should turn up a wide variety of new birds, which may include Black-bellied Sunbird, White-headed Mousebird, Taveta Golden Weaver, Tsavo Sunbird, Grey-headed Silverbill, African Silverbill, Pink-breasted Lark, Red-fronted Warbler, Banded Parisoma, Bare-eyed Thrush, Somali Bunting, Eastern Violet-backed Sunbird, Blue-capped Cordon-bleu, Red-and-yellow Barbet, Southern Grosbeak-Canary and Acacia Tit.

Day S15//N1 Udzungwa Scarp Forest to Ruaha//Arrive Dar es Salaam

After some final birding around our campsite we’ll walk back to the vehicles and then drive to Ruaha National Park (4-5 hours), rarely visited on bird tours. We’ll search Emin’s Barbet, split from D’Arnaud’s Barbet.

Those arriving for the North Tanzania Tour will arrive today in Dar es Salaam for an overnight stay.

Day S16//N2: Fly Ruaha to Dar es Salaam//Fly Dar es Salaam to Pemba Island

After some final birding in Ruaha National Park we’ll take the flight (probably late morning) from Ruaha to Dar es Salaam, where the Southern Tanzania Tour ends on arrival at Dar es Salaam airport. Those on the Complete Tanzania Tour will be met by those arriving for the Northern Tanzania Tour, and fly together to Pemba Islands. An evening outing will be made in search of Pemba Scops Owl.

Day S17: Pemba Island

With four endemics, Pemba Island makes for a short, relaxed visit. Both Pemba Sunbird and Pemba White-eye occur widely on the island, including in the garden of our seaside hotel, although Pemba Green Pigeon is harder to track down and will be looked for on the edge of the largest forest remaining on the island, Ngezi Forest. We’ll have a second shot at Pemba Scops Owl tonight, if we’re successful on our first attempt. Other species we may see on Pemba include Mangrove Kingfisher, Red-backed Mannikin, Black-bellied Starling, African Goshawk, Dimorphic Egret, Dickinson’s Kestrel, African Pygmy Goose and Brown-headed Parrot.

Day N9: Pemba to Tanga to Amani

After some final birding on Pemba we’ll take a short flight to Tanga on the mainland, and drive to Amani in the East Usambara Mountains.
Day N10: South Pares
The main target for today will be tracking down the scarce South Pare White-eye, confined to a small area of forest on top of the mountain. Fortunately a gravel track leads all the way to the top of the mountain, where we hope to find our main quarry. Other birds we may find along the way include Abyssinian White-eye, Brown-breasted Barbet, White-bellied Tit and Striped Pipit. During the rest of the time we’ll bird the species-rich drylands in the vicinity to Same.

Day N11: Same to Arusha via Arusha NP
After some final birding in the Same area we’ll make our way west to Arusha (5 hours), and spend the better part of the afternoon in Arusha NP. The forests around Ngurdutu Crater will be the main focus of our visit, and it is here that we hope to track down the very rare Abbots Starling and localised Kilimanjaro White-eye. Other birds we may see here include Trilling Cisticola and White-eyed Slaty Flycatcher.

Day N12: Arusha to Lariboro to Tarangire
An early start will see us heading out to the Lariboro Plains which hold the known world population of Beesley’s Lark, with Athi Short-toed Lark and Short-tailed Lark occurring alongside it. The edge of the plains are good for a range of arid bushveld birds, including Foxy Lark, Grey Wren-Warbler, White-headed Buffalo Weaver and Kenya Rufous Sparrow. Once birding activity dies down we’ll drive (2 hours) west to Tarangire for an overnight stay. This is one of the best sites to see Ashy Starling and Yellow-collared Lovebird, and other targets include Black-faced Sandgrouse, Yellow-throated Sandgrouse, Northern Pied Babbler, Long-tailed Fiscal, Southern Ground Hornbill, Yellow-necked Spurfowl, Red-necked Spurfowl, White-bellied Go-away-bird and Superb Starling.

Day N13: Tarangire to Ndutu
After some final birding around Tarangire we make our way into the crater highlands, pausing on the rim of Ngorongoro Crater to look for Golden-winged Sunbird, before dropping down to the expansive plains of the Serengeti. The Ndutu area is one of the best places to find Grey-breasted Spurfowl, Fischer’s Lovebird, Usambiro Barbet and Rufous-tailed Weaver. We’ll also watch out for Caspian Plover, Coqui Francolin, Temminck’s Courser, Double-banded Courser, Secretarybird, Kori Bustard, Red-throated Tit and Chestnut-banded Plover.

Day N14: Ndutu to Seronera (Serengeti NP)
Today we make our way into the heart of Serengeti National Park, passing throngs of large game despite the main migration being further to the north. Typical savanna birds such as Common Ostrich, vultures and starlings about, but we’ll also keep a look out for White-bellied Canary, Plain-backed Pipit, Blue-capped Cordon-bleu, Speke’s Weaver, Chestnut Sparrow, Grey-capped Social Weaver, Northern Ant-eater Chat, Silverbird, Hildebrandt’s Starling, Banded Parisoma, Rufous Chatterer, White-tailed Lark, Fischer’s Sparrow-Lark, Taita Fiscal, Eastern Grey Woodpecker, Red-fronted Barbet, Von der Decken’s Hornbill, Tanzanian Red-billed Hornbill and Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse.

Day N15: Western Serengeti
The western corridor of the Serengeti is home to the highly localised Grey-crested Helmetshrike, which is our main target for the day. En route we’ll also hope to find the little-known Karamoja Apalis and distinctive Buff-bellied Penduline-Tit. A whole host of other savanna species is possible.

Day N16: Seronera to Arusha
After some final birding in the Serengeti we’ll make our way back past Ngorongoro Crater on back to Arusha, where the tour ends in the evening.
INCLUDED IN THE PRICE OF THE TOUR

• services of Birding Africa tour leader and local guides
• entry fees and activities as per itinerary
• ground transport and internal flights to and from Pemba and from Ruaha
• accommodation and all meals starting with dinner on the first night and ending with lunch on the last day
• airport transfers
• bottled water in the vehicle and one soft drink per meal
• general tips

QUESTIONS?

Email Michael at michael@birdingafrica.com and copy callan@birdingafrica.com.

BOOKLET AND CHECKLIST

Birding Africa provides:

1. Tour Details leaflet with detailed itinerary (this document).
2. Tour Information Pack, emailed to you.
3. Tour Booklet with checklists, provided in hard copy at the start of the tour.

HOW TO BOOK

1. Complete our easy online booking form.
2. Secure your booking deposit by credit card on our 3D secure online payment site (ZAR2000 or about $110.)
3. Settle the balance by bank transfer 150 days before the tour. We will email you a reminder and the banking details.