

KWAZULU-NATAL TOUR

**Midlands & Drakensberg – Zululand & Elephant Coast –
North Coast**

BIRDING AND WILDLIFE SAFARI

**01 January 2023 – 31 December 2023
9 Days, 8 Nights**

TRIP GUIDE



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KWAZULU-NATAL TOUR – 9 DAYS **Midlands & Drakensberg – Zululand & Elephant Coast – North Coast**

1. Tour Summary

Date: 01 January 2023 – 31 December 2023.

Duration: 9 days, 8 nights.

Price: **2 guests = ZAR 46,450.00 per person sharing**

3 guests = ZAR 35,200.00 per person sharing

4 guests = ZAR 29,850.00 per person sharing

5 guests = ZAR 25,950.00 per person sharing

6 guests = ZAR 23,800.00 per person sharing

Price may be subject to change based on factors beyond our control.

Distance: Total driving distance (including around sites) = 1,750km.

Includes:

- Accommodation (may change subject to availability, in which case similar will be found);
- All breakfasts, dinners, tea and coffee;
- Ground transport – max 6 participants and 1 guide per vehicle;
- Bottled water in vehicles whilst travelling – 2 per person per day;
- Entrance fees;
- Conservation levies;
- Personalized checklists;
- Specialist guide fees – 1 day Sani Pass 4x4 Tour, uMkhuze Fig Forest walk.

Excludes:

- All airfares;
- Travel and medical insurance;
- All lunches;
- All drinks;
- Optional excursions where applicable;
- Gratuities;
- Items of a personal nature.

Note:

- Minimum of 2 participants per vehicle required to undertake the trip;
- Tour starts and ends either from King Shaka International Airport or Umhlanga;
- This itinerary is subject to change due to weather conditions at the time and other factors beyond our control;
- The species mentioned in the itinerary represent only some of those we may possibly view on the tour, however, none of these can be guaranteed even though every effort will be made where possible to locate them. A full list of possible species appears on your checklist, although vagrants and rarities may also surprise us.



2. Tour Highlights

- *Group size:* maximum of 6 participants and 1 guide per vehicle.
- *Birding in brief:* Sightings goal of 300+. Excellent variety of birds to be seen, with a good chance of large birds of prey and many special and endemic species.
- *Wildlife in brief:* Sightings goal of 50+ mammals. Excellent variety of mammals, reptiles, amphibians and butterflies to be seen across a wide variety of habitats. iSimangaliso Wetland Park offers a very good chance of the Big 5.
- *Areas visited:* Creighton, Coleford, Sani Pass, Marutswa, Midmar Dam, Karkloof, Benvie Gardens, Dlinza, St Lucia, iSimangaliso (Eastern and Western Shores), Nibela Peninsula, Mpempe Pan, Muzi Pan, uMkhuze, Umlalazi, Ongoye, Dlinza, Sappi Stanger Hide.
- *Expected weather conditions:* Subtropical with occasional rain, hot most of the time. Rain is possible, usually in the form of summer convection thunderstorms, and cool wet weather is possible in the event of a cold front moving up from the south in winter months.
- *Tour tempo:* medium, optional mid-day breaks (advisable on hot days), some light walking.
- *Accommodation standards:* medium – private guesthouses and lodges, and public rest camps.
- *Top birds:* Cape Parrot, Blue Swallow, Black Harrier, Striped Flufftail, Bearded Vulture, Cape Vulture, Gurney's Sugarbird, Yellow-breasted Pipit, South African Cliff Swallow, Cape Eagle-Owl, African Grass-Owl, Malachite Sunbird, Drakensberg Rockjumper, Drakensberg Siskin, Drakensberg Prinia, Mountain Pipit, Layard's Tit-Babbler, Sickle-winged Chat, Grey-winged Francolin, Red-winged Francolin, Shelley's Francolin, Bokmakierie, Barratt's Warbler, Red-breasted Sparrowhawk, Wing-snapping Cisticola, Wailing Cisticola, Black-winged Lapwing, Mountain Wheatear, Denham's Bustard, Sentinel Rock-Thrush, Eastern Long-billed Lark, Knysna Turaco, Bush Blackcap, Ground Woodpecker, Chorister Robin-Chat, White-starred Robin, Southern Bald Ibis, Dark-capped Yellow Warbler, Buff-spotted Flufftail, Red-chested Flufftail, Wattled Crane, Blue Crane, Grey Crowned Crane, Orange Ground-Thrush, Forest Buzzard, Scaly-throated Honeyguide, African Emerald Cuckoo, Mountain Wagtail, Greater Painted-snipe, Western Yellow Wagtail, Pied Avocet, Black Coucal, Palm-nut Vulture, Southern Brown-throated Weaver, Black-throated Wattle-eye, Swamp Nightjar, Narina Trogon, Crested Guineafowl, Orange-breasted Waxbill, Cape Longclaw, African Finfoot, Goliath Heron, Eastern Bronze-naped Pigeon, Spotted Ground-Thrush, Green Barbet, Striped Pipit, Plain-backed Pipit, Black-rumped Buttonquail, Mangrove Kingfisher, Sooty Tern, African Oystercatcher, Southern Banded Snake-Eagle, Green Malkoha, Green Twinspot, Livingstone's Turaco, Brown Scrub-Robin, Yellow-breasted Pipit, Cape Eagle-Owl, Pel's Fishing-Owl, Verreaux's Eagle-Owl, Bateleur, Rosy-throated Longclaw, African Broadbill, Woodward's Batis, Pink-throated Twinspot, Secretarybird, Rudd's Apalis, African Pygmy Goose, Common Ostrich, Lappet-faced Vulture, Neergard's Sunbird, Purple-banded Sunbird, Southern Ground-Hornbill, Stierling's Wren-Warbler, Grey Tit-Flycatcher, African Pygmy Kingfisher, Half-collared Kingfisher.
- *Mammal viewing:* Lion, Leopard, Elephant, Black Rhino, White Rhino, Buffalo, Cheetah, African Wild Dog, Brown Hyena, Spotted Hyena, Pangolin, Hippo, Giraffe, Sloggett's Vlei Rat, Serval, Caracal, Eland, Red Hartebeest, Grey Rhebok, Oribi, Mountain Reedbuck, Samango Monkey, Thick-tailed Bushbaby, Suni, Red Duiker, Blue Duiker, Cape Clawless Otter, Honey Badger, Bushpig, other general game, and good chances for uncommon smaller species.
- *Special interests:* birding, wildlife, photography.
- *Specialist guiding:* 4x4 Sani Pass Tour; uMkhuze Fig Forest walk.

- *Add-ons*: this tour can be combined with extensions to Wakkerstroom, Kruger National Park and the Soutpanesberg.



3. Birding and Wildlife Regions

3.1. Days 1 and 2: Midlands & Drakensberg – 365km

Habitat types: Mistbelt and afro-montane forest, mistbelt and montane Grassland, altitudinal wetland.

Accommodation: Mkomazana Mountain Cottages or similar, base of Sani Pass – 2 nights

Specialist activity: Includes day 4x4 tour up pass. Passport required.

Route:

We depart Umhlanga or King Shaka International Airport to a Blue Swallow breeding site in Richmond, before proceeding to the quaint Midlands town of Creighton in search of several mistbelt forest and grassland target species. Should time allow we will visit Coleford Nature Reserve in the afternoon in search of its many altitudinal wetland and mistbelt grassland specials. In the late afternoon we proceed through Underberg and Himeville to our comfortable accommodation at the base of the breath-taking Sani Pass.

We depart early the next morning on our exciting 10-hour adventure climbing up Sani Pass, as we summit the majestic Drakensberg Mountains in search of its many high-altitude species. The final hours of daylight are spent exploring the forests and stream banks along the walking trails at the base of the pass.

Target birds:

Blue Swallow, Cape Parrot, Eurasian Bittern, Blue Swallow, Black Harrier, Striped Crake, Bush Blackcap, Yellow-breasted Pipit, Gurney's Sugarbird, Drakensberg Rockjumper, Ground Woodpecker, Cape Eagle-Owl, African Crake, African Rail, Bearded Vulture, Cape Vulture, Buff-streaked Chat, Drakensberg Siskin, Southern Bald Ibis, Mountain Pipit, Layard's Tit-Babbler, Sickle-winged Chat, African Rock Pipit, Buff-spotted Flufftail, Barratt's Warbler, Sentinel Rock-Thrush, Drakensberg Prinia, Grey-winged Francolin, Red-winged Francolin, Shelley's Francolin, Wing-snapping Cisticola, Wailing Cisticola, Red-throated Wryneck, Bokmakierie, Cape Rock-Thrush, Mountain Wheatear, Scaly-throated Honeyguide, Olive Woodpecker, Chorister Robin-Chat, White-starred Robin, Amur Falcon, Eastern Long-billed Lark, Malachite Sunbird, Greater Double-collared Sunbird, African Yellow Warbler.

Target mammals:

Eland, Grey Rhebok, Mountain Reedbuck, Sloggett's Vlei Rat, Spotted-necked Otter, Serval.





3.2. Day 3: Midlands – 320km

Habitat types: Montane and mistbelt grassland, temperate forest, scarp forest.

Accommodation: Thistledown Country House or similar, Karkloof – 1 night

Route: We depart early for Marutswa forest in search of a few more targets, before proceeding to the grasslands and shores of Midmar Dam. We then head for the impressive Karkloof forests, grasslands and wetlands in search of several rare and endangered species.

Early the next morning we make our way to the remarkable and blissful Benvie Gardens in search of its forest and garden treasures. Following a productive morning, we depart for the coast and up north to the bountiful coastal holiday town of St Lucia, and spend the late afternoon exploring the estuary and shores.

Target birds:

Cape Parrot, Dark-capped Warbler, Grey Cuckooshrike, Knysna Turaco, Blue Swallow, Wattled Crane, Blue Crane, Grey-crowned Crane, Orange Ground-Thrush, Bush Blackcap, Eastern Bronze-naped Pigeon, Spotted Ground-Thrush, Forest Buzzard, Scaly-throated Honeyguide, Southern Bald Ibis, Chorister Robin-Chat, African Emerald Cuckoo, Mountain Wagtail, Olive Bush-Shrike, Sweet Waxbill, Olive Thrush, Cape Teal, Cape Shoveler, Little Bittern, African Marsh-Harrier, Little Rush-Warbler, Lesser Swamp-Warbler, Sedge Warbler.

Target mammals:

Grey Rhebok, Oribi, Bushbuck, Common Reedbuck, Samango Monkey, Banded Mongoose, Water Mongoose, Bottlenose Dolphin.





3.3. Days 4 and 5: Elephant Coast & Zululand – 210km

Habitat types: Coastal forest, pans, estuaries, moist grassland, coastal wetland, woodland

Route: Early this morning we walk the lively forest trails adjacent the town. Mid-morning we enter the abundant Eastern Shores section of the iSimangaliso Wetland Park, which we explore for the rest of the day. We stop at several viewing hides and viewing spots along the way, and enjoy lunch in the wonderful beach resort of Cape Vidal. We then make our way back through the park to return to St Lucia town at dusk. After dinner we search the outskirts of the town for its numerous nocturnal treats by spotlight.

Accommodation: Amazulu Lodge or similar, St Lucia – 2 nights

Target birds:

Southern Banded Snake-Eagle, African Cuckoo-Hawk, Corn Crake, Lesser Moorhen, Swamp Nightjar, Narina Trogon, Green Malkoha, Green Twinspot, Livingstone's Turaco, Woodward's Batis, Brown Scrub-Robin, Eastern Nicator, Crested Guineafowl, African Wood-Owl, Western Yellow Wagtail, Rufous-bellied Heron, Black-throated Wattle-eye, Rudd's Apalis, Gorgeous Bush-Shrike, Southern Brown-throated Weaver, Yellow Weaver, African Emerald Cuckoo, Sooty Tern, Caspian Tern, Little Tern, Yellow-billed Stork, Goliath Heron, Greater Painted-snipe, Palm-nut Vulture, Lesser Flamingo, Greater Flamingo, Lesser Sand Plover, Greater Sand Plover, African Oystercatcher, Pied Avocet, Bar-tailed Godwit, Little Rush-Warbler, Lesser Swamp-Warbler, Sedge Warbler, African Marsh-Harrier, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Grey Sunbird, Red-backed Mannikin, Black-bellied Starling, Blue-mantled Crested-Flycatcher, European Honey Buzzard.

Target mammals:

Leopard, Elephant, White Rhino, Black Rhino, Cape Buffalo, Hippo, Spotted Hyena, Honey Badger, Serval, Side-striped Jackal, Red Duiker, Blue Duiker, Kudu, Nyala, Bushbuck, Giraffe, Waterbuck, Common Reedbuck, Bushpig, Samango Monkey, Bottlenose Dolphin.





3.4. Days 6 and 7: Elephant Coast – 182km

Habitat types: Coastal forest, sand forest, riverine forest, pans, savanna and woodland

Route: Another early departure leads us into the iSimangaliso Western Shores section, which we travel through for most of the morning. We exit the park and head north to the lake shores of Nibela Peninsula and then onto Mpempe Pan for more coastal grassland and wetland specials. The mid-afternoon hours are spent surveying Muzi Pan, before entering uMkhuze Game Reserve, where we enjoy the final few daylight hours. Again after dinner we undertake a moonlit walk around camp searching by spotlight. Early the following morning we set off for by open safari vehicle for the famous Fig Forest walk, in search of several big target species. After a special morning on foot we spend the rest of day exploring the most bird and mammal species dense/rich park in South Africa by vehicle. We stop at several of the productive viewing hides and viewpoints as we enjoy the mammal and bird behaviour around these hotspots until dusk.

Accommodation: Mantuma Camp, uMkhuze Game Reserve – 2 nights

Specialist activity: uMkhuze Fig Forest walk and night drive.

Target birds:

Pel's Fishing-Owl, Verreaux's Eagle-Owl, Rosy-throated Longclaw, African Broadbill, Narina Trogon, Brown Scrub-Robin, Red-fronted Tinkerbird, Green Twinspot, Pink-throated Twinspot, African Crowned Eagle, Secretarybird, Southern Banded Snake-Eagle, African Cuckoo-Hawk, African Wood-Owl, African Pygmy Goose, Dwarf Bittern, Great White Pelican, Black Heron, Purple Heron, Giant Kingfisher, African Marsh-Harrier, Denham's Bustard, Collared Pratincole, Senegal Lapwing, Western Osprey, Greater Flamingo, Lesser Flamingo, Livingstone's Turaco, Pale-crowned Cisticola, Lemon-breasted Canary, Caspian Plover, Red-backed Mannikin, Yellow-bellied Eremomela, Grey Waxbill, Pearl-spotted Owlet, Crested Guineafowl, Bearded Scrub-Robin, Eastern Nicator, Gorgeous Bush-Shrike, Neergard's Sunbird, Purple-banded Sunbird, Common Ostrich, Lappet-faced Vulture, Southern Ground-Hornbill, Stierling's Wren-Warbler, Rudd's Apalis, Greater Honeyguide, Bateleur, White-throated Robin-chat, Southern Brown-throated Weaver, African Yellow White-eye, Acacia Pied Barbet, Grey Tit-Flycatcher.





Target mammals:

Lion, Leopard, Cheetah, Elephant, White Rhino, Black Rhino, Cape Buffalo, African Wild Dog, Hippo, Spotted Hyena, Honey Badger, Suni, Red Duiker, Blue Duiker, Kudu, Nyala, Bushbuck, Giraffe, Waterbuck, Common Reedbuck, Thick-tailed Bushbaby.

3.5. Day 8: Zululand – 253km

Habitat types: Coastal Grassland, Coastal Forest, Scarp Forest and Estuary

Route: After a morning walk exploring the lively camp environments we make our way out of the western gate, and head southwards to the coastal town of Mtunzini, where we explore the Umlalazi Nature Reserve for several targets. In the afternoon we make our way up the hillslopes to Ongoye Forest in search of several target endemics and specials, before ending the day in the mistbelt town of Eshowe.

Accommodation: Eshowe Guesthouse or similar, Eshowe – 1 night

Target birds:

Swamp Nightjar, Narina Trogon, Mangrove Kingfisher (winter), Black Coucal, Green Malkoha, Crested Guinea fowl, Black-throated Wattle-eye, Grey Waxbill, Grey Sunbird, Trumpeter Hornbill, Green Twinspot, Orange-breasted Waxbill, Cuckoo Finch, African Fish-Eagle, African Crowned Eagle, African Cuckoo-Hawk, Black-chested Snake-Eagle, African Finfoot, Goliath Heron, Purple Heron, Southern Brown-throated Weaver, White-eared Barbet, Cape Longclaw, Black-rumped Buttonquail, Small Buttonquail, Common Quail, Chorister Robin-Chat, Green Barbet, Yellow-streaked Greenbul, Striped Pipit, Southern Ground Hornbill, Croaking Cisticola, Olive Bush-Shrike, Grey Cuckooshrike, Spotted Ground Thrush, Black-bellied Starling, Blue-mantled Crested-Flycatcher, Klaas's Cuckoo, Plain-backed Pipit, African Pygmy-Kingfisher, Swamp Nightjar.





Target mammals:

Bushbuck, Common Reedbuck, Giraffe, Plain's Zebra, Red Duiker, Blue Duiker, Hippo, Banded Mongoose, Samango Monkey.

3.6. Day 9: North Coast – 135km

Habitat types: Scarp forest and wetland

Route: This morning we explore the glorious mature forest of Dlinza, and enjoy its famed aerial boardwalk and trails in search of its many treasures. After a picnic brunch we depart for the productive wetlands of Sappi Stanger, which is our final destination. At the end of a wonderful tour together we bid farewell as we drop you off at either King Shaka International Airport or the wonderful seaside town of Umhlanga.

Target birds:

Eastern Bronze-naped Pigeon, Spotted Ground-Thrush, Chorister Robin-Chat, Narina Trogon, Trumpeter Hornbill, Green Twinspot, African Emerald Cuckoo, Lemon Dove, Cape Batis, African Crowned Eagle, Grey Cuckooshrike, African Goshawk, Red-backed Mannikin, White-eared Barbet, Black-bellied Starling, Olive Bush-Shrike, Lesser Moorhen, Little Bittern, Black-crowned Night-Heron, African Fish Eagle, Black Sparrowhawk, Pied Avocet, Red-chested Flufftail, African Pygmy-Kingfisher (summer), Baillon's Crake (summer), African Marsh Harrier, Goliath Heron, Purple Heron, Little Bee-eater.

Target mammals:

Red Duiker, Blue Duiker, Banded Mongoose, Samango Monkey, Bushbuck, Vervet Monkey.



4. Trip Itinerary

Day	Accommodation*	Location	Habitats	Sites	Distance (kms)
1 & 2	Mkomazana Mountain Cottages – 2 nights	Sani Pass	Montane Grassland, Temperate Forest and Scarp Forest	Creighton, Sani Pass	365
3	Thistledown Country House – 1 night	Karkloof	Montane grassland, Temperate forest, Scarp forest and Altitudinal wetlands	Marutswa Forest, Midmar Dam, Karkloof	320
4 & 5	Amazulu Lodge – 1 night	St Lucia	Coastal grassland, Coastal forest, Lake and Estuary	Benvie Gardens, St Lucia, iSimangaliso Eastern Shores	210
6 & 7	Mantuma Camp – 2 nights	uMkhuze Game Reserve	Coastal forest, Sand forest, Riverine forest, Pans, Savanna and Woodland	iSimangaliso Western Shores, Nibela Peninsula, Mpempe Pan, Muzi Pan, uMkhuze	182
8	Eshowe Guesthouse – 1 night	Eshowe	Coastal Grassland, Coastal forest, Scarp forest and Estuary	uMhuze, Umlalazi, Ongoye	257
9	Depart Eshowe for King Shaka International Airport			Dlinza, Sappi Stanger, King Shaka International Airport	135

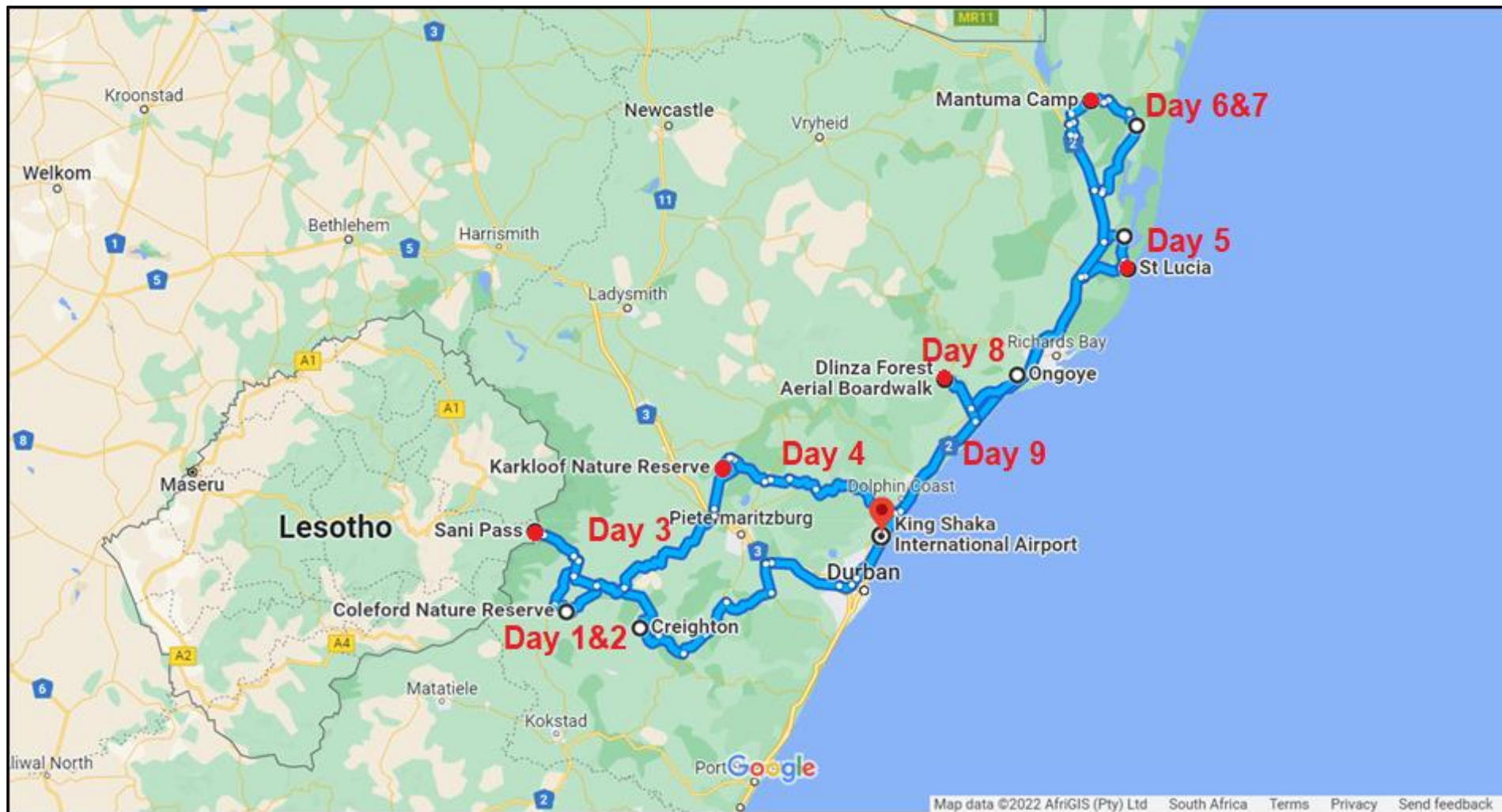
* Accommodation may change subject to availability, in which case similar accommodation will be found.

** Total driving distance (including around sites) = 1,750km.

Note: C = Catered, S/C = Self-catered



5. Trip Route





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