



ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

African Bird Club Kenya **Coastal Forests, Taita Hills & Tsavo Reserves** *19th to 28th April 2024 (10 days)*



Taita Thrush by David Hoddinott

This special tour offers an opportunity to view some of Africa's rarest and most localised species in the Dakatcha Woodlands and coastal forests of Arabuko-Sokoke, as well as the Taita Hills, which have been strongly supported by the African Bird Club's conservation efforts in recent years. Participants will each be expected to contribute £300 to the Club in advance of the tour. We hope to have a chance to meet some of the local people who have been involved in the efforts to conserve Dakatcha and the Taita Hills. We start out exploring a handful of coastal sites including the famed Arabuko-Sokoke Forest, which holds several localised and range-restricted species. Here we will endeavour to find Sokoke Scops Owl, Sokoke and Malindi Pipits, stunning Fischer's Turaco, Mombasa Woodpecker, Green-headed Oriole, Chestnut-fronted Helmetshrike, Green Tinkerbird, East Coast Akalat, Little Yellow Flycatcher, Scaly Babbler, Amani Sunbird and the enigmatic Clarke's Weaver. Other sites in this area include the

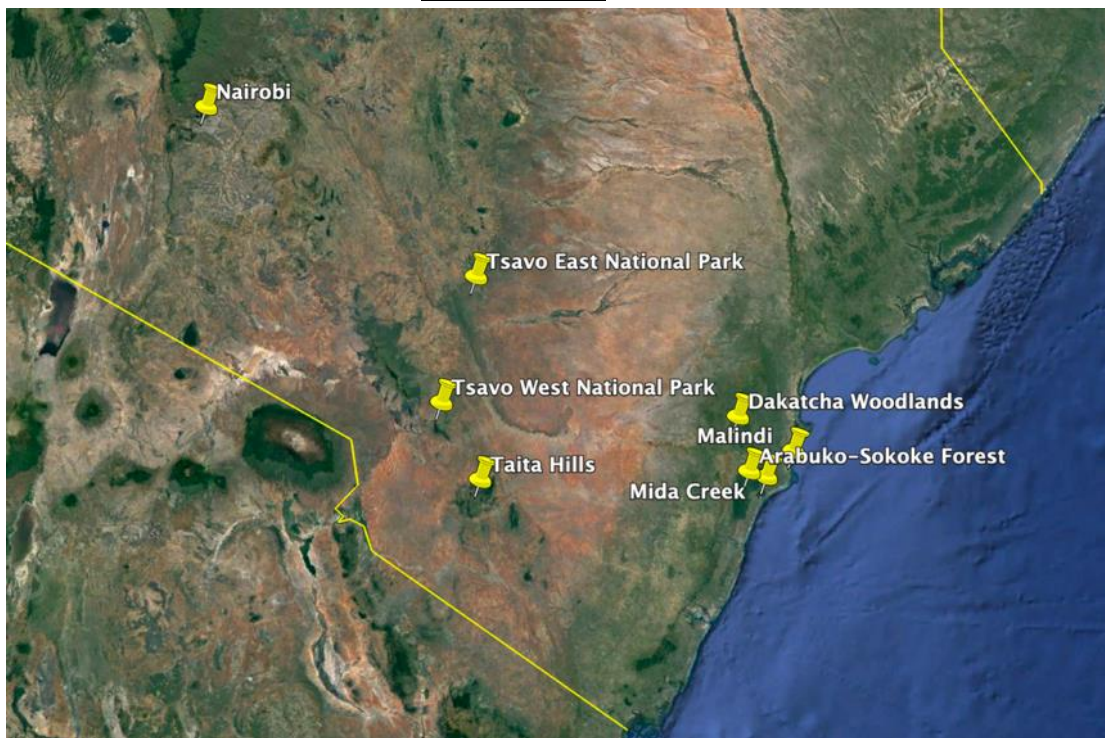
Dakatcha Woodlands, Mida Creek for Crab-plover and the Sabaki River Mouth. The second half of our tour is spent exploring the exceptional Tsavo reserves which hold a wonderful assortment of dry country birds and mammals such as African Elephant, Big Cats such as Lion, Leopard and Cheetah and a variety of different antelope. On the birding front the list of quality species is numerous and includes Scaly Chatterer, Red-naped Bushshrike, Pringle’s Puffback, Tsavo Sunbird, Taveta Weaver, Golden-breasted and Fischer’s Starlings, White-throated Robin, the rare and little known Friedmann’s Lark, Hartlaub’s Bustard and Grey-headed Silverbill to name a few. We also take time to visit the Taita Hills where three extremely localized Kenyan endemics can be found: Taita Thrush, Taita White-eye and Taita Apalis.

THE TOUR AT A GLANCE...

THE ITINERARY

Day 0	Participants are advised to spend a night in Nairobi
Day 1	Nairobi flight to Malindi and drive to Watamu Bay
Days 2, 3 & 4	Arabuko-Sokoce Forest, Sabaki River Mouth, Mida Creek and Dakatcha Woodlands
Day 5	Watamu Bay to Tsavo East National Park
Day 6	Tsavo East
Day 7	Tsavo East to Taita Hills
Day 8	Taita Hills to Tsavo West National Park
Day 9	Tsavo West National Park
Day 10	Tsavo West National Park to Nairobi and depart

TOUR MAP:



THE TOUR IN DETAIL...

East Coast Akalat by Hugh Chittenden

Day 0: Guests are recommended to arrive a day early ahead of our mid-morning flight from Nairobi to Malindi. Upon arrival in Nairobi, you will be transferred to our comfortable hotel in the city where you will meet other members of the group and discuss the forthcoming adventure.

Day 1: Nairobi to Malindi. This morning we will board a connecting flight to Malindi where we will meet up with our local driver/guide and enjoy lunch at a nearby restaurant.

Depending on the time of our arrival, we will begin our foray at the nearby Mida Creek. Mida Creek is probably most famous as one of the best locations to see Crab-plover. This unique species, placed in

its own monotypic family, is often seen here in good numbers while many other waders are often present as well. We will also move across to Arabuko-Sokoke Forest for an initial exploration. This protected reserve covers 420 square kilometers of coastal forest consisting of *Brachystegia* woodland, dense *Cynometra* forest and *Azelia* lowland forest that offers some of the finest birding in East Africa. Birding in the forest can be difficult and perseverance is required to find the shy forest inhabitants.

Skulkers such as the near-endemic Sokoke Pipit creep across the forest floor and are hard to see amongst the leaf-litter. The delicate East Coast Akalat is a shy understory skulker and other key species include the endemic and little-known Clarke's Weaver, almost totally restricted to this site, and the extremely localized Amani Sunbird. Our local guide keeps track of day roosts of the near endemic Sokoke Scops Owl and seeing a pair of these charming little fellows is undoubtedly one of the highlights of birding in this forest. Both brown and red morphs occur, and pairs often consist of each of these totally different looking birds. If we do not find the owls at home, we will stay after dark and wait for them to call. The evening sounds are exciting, and we may encounter African Wood Owl, African Barred Owlet (the disjunctive local form sometimes split off as Sheffler's Owlet), Fiery-necked Nightjar and several species of bats and galago's.

Days 2, 3 & 4: Arabuko-Sokoke Forest, Mida Creek, Dakatcha Woodlands, and the Sabaki River Mouth. We have three full days to explore the wonderful Arabuko-Sokoke Forest complex as well as other nearby sites. Our first early morning birding will be a return visit to the Arabuko-Sokoke Forest. Whilst exploring the network of trails in the



Chestnut-fronted Helmetshrike by Markus Lilje





Red-naped Bushshrike by David Hoddinott

White-eared and Green Barbets, and raptors including Southern Banded Snake Eagle, Ayres's Hawk-Eagle and Black and Little Sparrowhawks. Flocks of strange Böhm's Spinetail and Ethiopian Swallow may be seen winging their way over the forest while the scarce Forbe's-Watson's Swift is another species to watch out for. Along the forest edge we may find the beautiful Red-throated Twinspot and flocks of Red-backed Mannikin feeding amongst the grass seeds. The localized Scaly Babbler also occurs outside the forest.

On one of the days, we will also venture to the nearby Dakatcha Woodlands, located immediately to the north of the Arabuko-Sokoke Forest. This recently discovered site is best known for the inexplicably rare and endemic Clarke's Weaver; arguably Kenya's least-known endemic. The weaver has remained something of an enigma following its discovery in 1913 and the first breeding records for the species were noted as recently as 2013 from this very site. The species breeds in highly synchronous colonies in tiny wetlands within the woodland complex and we will endeavour to find this beautiful weaver along with many of the aforementioned species.

We will likely also take some time to visit the nearby Arabuko Swamp which has also produced Malindi Pipit over the past few years. Water levels can fluctuate at the swamp, but conditions are usually conducive to holding specials like White-backed Duck and African Pygmy Goose while Coastal Cisticola can be found in the adjacent grassy areas. We will also keep our eyes open for rarer species such as Black Coucal and Dwarf Bittern which turn up when conditions are suitable.

Mammals we hope to see include Blue or Gentle Monkey, the diminutive Blue Duiker and the giant Golden-rumped Elephant-Shrew, a truly

forest, we will look for mixed bird flocks. Some of the species found in these aggregations may include Green Malkoha, the highly sought-after Thick-billed Cuckoo, Fischer's Turaco, Narina Trogon, Mombasa Woodpecker, Scaly-throated and Pallid Honeyguides, Sombre, Fischer's and Lowland Tiny Greenbuls, the delightful Little Yellow Flycatcher, Black-headed Apalis, Eastern Nicator, Bearded Scrub Robin, Red-tailed Rufous Thrush, Blue-mantled Crested Flycatcher, Pale and Forest Batis, Retz's and Chestnut-fronted Helmetshrikes, the attractive Four-colored Bushshrike and the uncommon Plain-backed Sunbird. Dead trees are favourite perches of many bird species and worth checking for Green Tinkerbird,



Bearded Scrub Robin by Keith Valentine





Red-and-yellow Barbets by Markus Lilje

Babbler.

impressive creature. Our next port of call will be the Sabaki River mouth, an excellent birding site where we will be looking for Sooty, Lesser Black-backed and Grey-headed Gulls, Greater Crested, Lesser Crested, Sandwich, Roseate and Saunders's Terns, Eurasian Curlew, Whimbrel, Terek Sandpiper, Ruddy Turnstone, Madagascar Pratincole and a variety of other waders. In the surrounding reedbeds, Golden Palm Weaver, Zanzibar Red and very occasionally Fire-fronted Bishops may stand out like blossoms while the nearby grazed grasslands support the range restricted Malindi Pipit. Other species that occasionally turn up in the surrounding Sabaki woodlands and scrub include the little-known Violet-breasted Sunbird, Eastern Black-headed Batis and Scaly

Day 5: Watamu Bay to Tsavo East National Park. After a final early morning birding session in the Arabuko-Sokoke Forest, we will depart with lunch boxes for Tsavo East NP. Checking large Baobab trees along the way could produce sightings of both Broad-billed Roller and occasionally Brown-headed Parrot. The roadside also offers great birding, as well as a chance to see Swahili women in their traditional regalia. We should see a wonderful assortment of dry country species on a drive into Tsavo East this afternoon. Tsavo East National Park is one of the oldest and largest parks in Kenya and is over 13,000 square km in extent and is covered by a large network of roads which we will have plenty of time to explore. This reserve is drier on the whole than neighboring Tsavo West with large open flat plains that are excellent for species such as Somali Ostrich, Secretarybird, elegant Pallid and Montagu's Harriers, Buff-crested, Kori and White-bellied Bustards, Black-headed Lapwing, Northern Carmine and Somali Bee-eaters, Red-winged and Pink-breasted Larks, Ashy Cisticola, Rosy-patched Bushshrike, Long-tailed and Taita Fiscals, Black-faced Sandgrouse and Cut-throat Finch. Tonight, we will stay in the Voi area on the western edge of Tsavo East where species such as Western Barn Owl and Nubian and Slender-tailed Nightjars are sometimes seen.

Day 6: Tsavo East. The dry country of Tsavo East holds a huge variety of species and we have a full day set aside to explore the reserves wonderful variety of habitat. Raptors are often a major feature and we will look for Egyptian, Hooded, White-headed, White-backed, Rüppell's and Lappet-faced Vultures, African Cuckoo-Hawk, Black-chested and Brown Snake Eagles, African Hawk-Eagle, Eastern Chanting Goshawk, migrating Steppe and Lesser Spotted Eagles, the majestic Bateleur, Pygmy Falcon and Eurasian Hobby. Other potential ticks include Emerald-spotted Wood Dove, Little,



Golden-breasted Starling by Daniel Danckwerts



White-throated, Blue-cheeked, Olive and European Bee-eaters, Lilac-breasted, Purple and European Rollers, Abyssinian Scimitarbill, Northern Red-billed and Von der Decken's Hornbills, Nubian, Bearded and Cardinal Woodpeckers, Greater and Lesser Honeyguides, D'Arnaud's, Red-and-yellow Barbet, Flappet Lark, and Chestnut-headed and Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Larks.



Taita Apalis by Keith Valentine

Day 7: Tsavo East to the Taita Hills. After an early breakfast, we embark on a morning game drive towards the Taita Hills-Ngangao Forest for a single night stay. Mammals will be a feature of our drive and we could see Lion (these descended from the famous “man-eaters of Tsavo”), Cheetah, African Buffalo, Lesser Kudu, Maasai Giraffe and Plains Zebra. The Tsavo complex is home to the largest population of African Elephant in Kenya (said to number over 7000) and a small population of Black Rhinoceros.

The Taita Hills is a beautiful area and extremely fertile but has suffered massively at the hands of man with most of the native forests cut down. These hills famously harbor three highly endangered endemics, namely Taita Thrush, Taita Apalis and Taita White-eye. Recent research has found the apalis to be the species most at risk of extinction as it appears to be completely absent from the largest extant patch of forest in the Taita Range. The entire world population may be less than 100 breeding pairs! Ngangao forest, the patch we visit, holds some of the last pairs of this rare species. The thrush, while shy, occurs in reasonable numbers but is never easy to find while the white-eye is the most numerous. Other birds that we will be on the lookout for include Augur Buzzard, Mottled and Alpine Swifts, White-necked Raven, Stripe-faced Greenbul, Evergreen Forest Warbler, Yellow-throated Woodland Warbler, Striped Pipit, Singing Cisticola and Sharpe's Starling.



Taveta Weaver by Rich Lindie

We will also have the rare opportunity to embark on an optional night drive within the Taita Hills Conservancy. Previous records from the region include Donaldson-Smith's Nightjar, Pearl-spotted Owlet, African Scops and Marsh Owls, Spotted Eagle-Owl, and a host of rarely seen mammals including Bat-eared Fox, Aardwolf, Honey Badger and Crested Porcupine.

Day 8 & 9: Tsavo West. Early this morning, we will continue towards Tsavo West National Park where we will have



the better part of the day to enjoy a game drive between the park entrance gate and our idyllically situated lodge. This reserve is often extremely productive from both a birding and mammal-watching point of view and we can expect to see something special during our introductory foray.

Our lodge is situated inside Tsavo West National Park and is well known as a migrant trap and we can expect to enjoy some superb birding on the grounds of the lodge. At certain times of the year, the lights of the hotel attract large numbers of Palearctic passerines during their nocturnal migration. We will look out for Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin, White-throated Robin, Thrush Nightingale, Northern, Isabelline and Pied Wheatears, Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush, Lesser Grey, Red-backed and Isabelline Shrikes and a bevy of warblers that might include Marsh, Olive-tree, Barred, River, Upcher's and the little-known Basra Reed. We will also take time to visit the shores of Lake Jipe to look for the localized Taveta Weaver, Zanzibar Red Bishop and African Reed and Lesser Swamp Warblers. We also have a chance of finding the reintroduced Black Rhinoceros in this area.



Buff-crested Bustard by Daniel Danckwerts

Game-watching and birding in Tsavo West NP will produce large numbers of new sightings which may include Somali Ostrich, Martial, Tawny and Long-crested Eagles, Crested Francolin, Yellow-necked Spurfowl, Harlequin Quail, Kori, Buff-crested, Black-bellied and Hartlaub's Bustards, Southern Ground



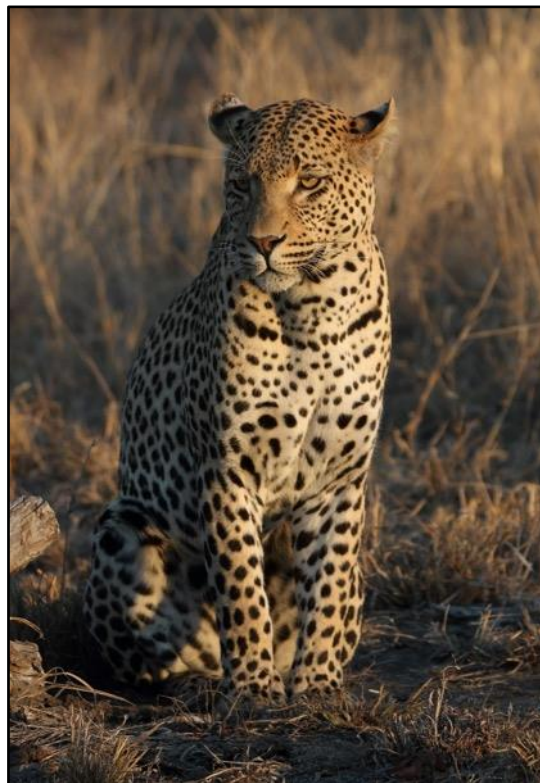
Secretarybird by Julian Parsons

Hornbill, White-bellied Go-away-bird, Pearl-spotted Owlet, the rare and localised Friedmann's Lark, Northern Crombec, Yellow-bellied Eremomela, Tiny, Rattling and Winding Cisticolas, Tawny-flanked and Pale Prinias, African Grey, Pale and Spotted Flycatchers, Chinspot, Pygmy and Eastern Black-headed Batis, Rufous and Scaly Chatterers, White-bellied and Acacia Tits, Mouse-colored Penduline Tit, Amethyst, Scarlet-chested, Beautiful, Variable, Collared and Eastern Violet-backed Sunbirds, as well as the localized Tsavo Sunbird, now considered to be a separate species from the closely related Purple-banded Sunbird.

Other likely possibilities include Long-tailed and Taita Fiscals, Tropical and Slate-colored Boubous, Brubru, Black-backed and Pringle's Puffbacks, Black-crowned, Brown-crowned and Three-streaked Tchagras, Rosy-patched, Orange-breasted and Grey-headed Bushshrikes, Northern White-crowned Shrike and White-crested Helmetshrike, Black-headed, African Golden and Eurasian



Golden Oriole, both Yellow-billed and Red-billed Oxpeckers perched atop large animals, brilliant Golden-breasted, Greater Blue-eared, Rüppell's, Violet-backed, Magpie, Superb, Hildebrandt's and Fischer's Starlings, Chestnut and Parrot-billed Sparrows, Yellow-spotted Bush Sparrow, White-browed Sparrow-Weaver, White-headed and Red-billed Buffalo Weaver, Village, Lesser and Vitelline Masked, Spectacled, Baglafaecht, Chestnut and Red-headed Weavers, Green-winged Pytilia, Red-cheeked and Blue-capped Cordon-bleus, Purple Grenadier, Jameson's Firefinch, Common, Crimson-rumped and Black-cheeked Waxbill, African and Grey-headed Silverbill, Quailfinch, Bronze Mannikin, Long-tailed Paradise and Straw-tailed Whydahs, and Cinnamon-breasted and Somali Buntings. Over 60 species of mammals occur in the park, including the scarce and elusive Lesser Kudu, and we will be treated to an exceptional African birding and big game experience today! Tonight, we have a chance at finding a few of the numerous nightjars that forage around the lodge and species that we could encounter include Eurasian, Plain, Sombre and Donaldson-Smith's.



Leopard by Riaan Botha

Day 10: Tsavo West NP to Nairobi. This morning we will depart Tsavo West, continuing to look for any species that we may still need. After exiting the reserve, we then head for Nairobi, passing through upland grasslands with open savannah. This area supports a good population of cisticolas and widowbirds including Pectoral-patch, Zitting, Desert, Tiny, Croaking and Ashy Cisticolas and Red-collared, White-winged and Jackson's Widowbirds. Later in the afternoon, we arrive in Nairobi where the tour concludes.



FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:

The cost of this **10-day birding tour of Kenya** is **US\$4,145.00** (Excluding the £300 donation to the African Bird Club) for each of **six** persons on a twin/sharing basis.

Single supplement: US\$490.00

Internal flight cost: US\$110.00. The internal flight between Nairobi and Malindi is NOT included in the tour cost. Rockjumper will happily make this reservation on your behalf the final cost of the flight will be added to your invoice for the tour.

Extra accommodation: For those wishing to arrive early or extend their stay in Kenya, we will gladly assist with making your extra accommodation arrangements at our recommended hotel in Nairobi as follows:

Extra single room on bed and breakfast will be: **US\$105** at [Ole Sereni 254 Hotel](#)

Extra double room on bed and breakfast will be: **US\$140** at [Ole Sereni 254 Hotel](#)

This includes:

- All meals from lunch on day 1 to dinner on day 10;
- Bottled drinking water;
- All lodgings as required by the itinerary (9 nights);
- Ground transportation in safari-style 4x4 Landcruisers;
- Reserve Entrance Fees;
- Gratuities for local guides and services; and
- All guiding services.

The tour fee does not include:

- **ANY** airfares (see above);
- Visa fees;
- Lodging for Night 0 of the tour (see rates below);
- Optional excursions not mentioned in the itinerary;
- Beverages;
- Special gratuities; and
- Telephone calls, laundry or other items of a personal nature.

Single Supplement: The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBL cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

Extra accommodation: For those wishing to arrive early or extend their stay in Kenya, Rockjumper will gladly assist with making your extra accommodation arrangements at our recommended hotel in Nairobi as follows:

Extra single room on bed and breakfast will be: US\$105 at Ole Sereni 254 Hotel

Extra double room on bed and breakfast will be: US\$140 at Ole Sereni 254 Hotel



Fitness: Although this Kenya tour does not require a high level of fitness, participants should be in good general health as much of the forest birding will be done on foot and may require walking for several hours at a time. There will be a few lengthy drives and many of the days will be long with early starts. Should you have any physical limitations, please notify us in advance of departure.

The **vehicles** used are comfortable stretched Landcruiser 4X4's with open roof-hatches. In areas with large, dangerous game, we will be confined to the vehicles.

It is important for the comfort of your fellow travelers that you do not over-pack. Kindly stick to 20kgs (44lb) for check in luggage and 8kg's (18lb) for hand luggage.

Accommodation throughout the trip is of a generally high standard and the hotels and resorts that we make use of range from comfortable to rather luxurious. There is no camping on this trip.

Tippling: As noted above, gratuities (drivers, hotel staff, restaurants etc.) are included on this tour. However, this does NOT include your Rockjumper leader/s. If, therefore, you feel that he/they have given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip them.

Special Notes:

- Although this Kenya tour does not require a high level of fitness, participants should be in good general health as much of the forest birding will be done on foot and may require walking for several hours at a time. There will be a few lengthy drives and many of the days will be long with early starts. Should you have any physical limitations, please notify us in advance of departure.
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ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE DETAILS:

This tour **does not** include **any** airfares. The tour will depart from Jomo Kenyatta International Airport, Nairobi (IATA: NBO) on the **morning** of day 1 of the tour and it is advised that you arrive the day before the tour starts. The tour will conclude in the **early evening** of day 10 in Nairobi.

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your **Tour Confirmation** package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

FLIGHTS:

Nairobi International Airport, Nairobi (IATA: NBO), in Kenya is the main port of arrival and exit for this tour. **Please DO NOT book any flights until you have consulted the Rockjumper office for confirmation on the status of the tour.**



IMPORTANT NOTES:

- a) Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is however fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing (usually 4 months before the tour.) The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates, which are also quoted in the respective fixed currency.
- b) Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration a small party supplement will have to be charged.
- c) Furthermore, these costs are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.
- d) Lastly, we may be forced to change or alter the itinerary and / or the designated Rockjumper leader/s at short or no notice due to unforeseen circumstances; please be aware that we will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.

