The tiny West African nations of The Gambia and Senegal are both very popular birding holiday destinations, for many reasons. One of these is the ability to escape the cold Northern winters to a summer wonderland only a few hours’ flight away, though add in modern facilities (especially in The Gambia), along with easily accessible, and superb West African birding habitats and it’s easy to understand why so many birders flock to these two nations on an annual basis.

Rockjumper is, therefore, pleased to finally be offering a tour to these great birding destinations, and our very comprehensive tour encompasses the avian highlights of this remarkable region, targeting an array of very special and sought-after species. For anyone seeking a relaxed and enjoyable introduction to African birds and birding, along with comfortable accommodations, good food and excellent photographic opportunities, this tour comes highly recommended!
**THE TOUR AT A GLANCE…**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Itinerary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Day 1</td>
<td>Arrival day in Dakar, Senegal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 2</td>
<td>Dakar to St. Louis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 3</td>
<td>St. Louis to Richard Toll</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 4</td>
<td>Richard Toll area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 5</td>
<td>Richard Toll to Djoudj National Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 6</td>
<td>Djoudj National Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 7</td>
<td>Djoudj National Park to Kaolack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 8</td>
<td>Kaolack to Janjangbureh, Gambia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 9</td>
<td>Janjangbureh and transfer to Tandaba Camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 10</td>
<td>Tandaba Camp and Kiang West National Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 11</td>
<td>Tandaba Camp and transfer to Banjul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Days 12 to 14</td>
<td>Abuko NR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 15</td>
<td>Abuko NR to Banjul and depart</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOUR MAP…**
THE TOUR IN DETAIL…

Day 1: Arrival in Dakar, Senegal. On arrival in Dakar, you will be met and transferred to our comfortable hotel. This evening you will meet your Rockjumper tour leader and the other participants for a welcome dinner and a chat about our forthcoming birding adventure.

Day 2: Dakar to St. Louis. We depart the capital city of Senegal this morning heading north towards St. Louis. After departing the bustling capital, our birding experience kicks into full gear as we enter the Sahel (the semi-arid area along the southern edge of the great Sahara Desert). We will stop as and when we see birds while travelling, and aim to arrive in St Louis with plenty of time to search through the various gull flocks for Audouin’s and Mediterranean, both good sub-Saharan birds, and who knows, perhaps something even rarer. Likely species in this harshly dry habitat include Blue-naped Mousebird, Mosque Swallow, Chestnut-bellied Starling and Sudan Golden Sparrow, the males of which are rather eye-searing. We will also keep our eyes on the skies for mixed flocks of vultures; whilst the ubiquitous Hooded Vulture will be seen regularly around villages. It is the carcasses of dead cattle, however, that attract the more interesting species such as White-backed, Rüppell’s, Lappet-faced and hopefully even one or two Griffon Vultures that spend the winter in this area.

This region also holds the localised Savile’s Bustard and we will make a determined effort to see this rarely sighted species. If we are very fortunate we may even chance upon a Quail-plover, though we would be extremely lucky to connect with this enigmatic species. We reach the town of St Louis where we will head straight for the coast, passing hundreds of colourful ocean-going pirogues (fishing boats) to start searching through potentially thousands of gulls, before we retire to our quiet hotel in the heart of this old French town.

Day 3: St Louis to Richard Toll. If we have been unsuccessful in our gull quest the previous evening, we may spend some more time searching through them before we set off on the fairly short drive to Richard Toll, where we will stay for two nights in a comfortable hotel. En route, we will check out various wetlands while aiming to arrive in time for lunch. The area is very dry, but holds a couple of special Sahel species and in the afternoon we will commence our search for them, though in the heat of the day we may not be successful. For those who don’t want to venture out in the heat, there is a pontoon (platform) jutting out into the Senegal River, which forms the border between Senegal and Mauritania. Here, with the river’s cooling breeze, one can watch birds moving both up and downstream.

Cricket Warbler by Markus Lilje

Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse by Markus Lilje
while keeping an eye out in particular for the rare *monicae* race of Grey Heron; a possible future split given how different it looks to the ones we will have already encountered.

**Days 4: Richard Toll area.** In the cool of the morning, before the temperature rises and the potential dust storms (which regularly plague the area) commence, we’ll search for such gems as Little Grey Woodpecker, the delightful Cricket (or Scaly-fronted) Warbler and the diminutive Sennar Penduline Tit, all of which occur in the area. Although these birds are our main targets, we will also come across plenty of other interesting species including Common Quail, Small Buttonquail, Cream-colored Courser, Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse, African Collared and Namaqua Doves, Eurasian Hoopoe, Eurasian Wryneck, Black-crowned and Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Larks, Singing Bush Lark, Yellow-bellied and Green-backed Eremomelas, Southern Grey Shrike, Black Scrub Robin, Greater Blue-eared Starling, Pygmy Sunbird and Speckle-fronted Weaver. The region is a major wintering area for Palearctic migrants and we should come across Black Kite (though we’ll need to look carefully at hundreds of Yellow-billed Kites to find one!), Tree Pipit, Common Redstart, Northern (including the *seebohmi* race that breeds in north-west Africa) and Black-eared Wheatears, Western Olivaceous, Western Bonelli’s, Western Orphean and Subalpine Warblers, both Common and Iberian Chiffchaffs as well as Woodchat Shrike.

**Day 5: Richard Toll to Djoudj National Park.** Today we have another short drive as we relocate to the Djoudj National Park situated right on the border with Mauritania, where we will stay for two nights. We will arrive in time for some initial exploration of this mighty wetland, which is of significant international importance due to the hundreds of thousands of waterbirds that make it their winter home. We will soon come across flocks of wildfowl including colossal numbers of White-faced Whistling Duck and Northern Pintail, with lesser numbers of Spur-winged and Egyptian Geese, Fulvous Whistling Duck, Garganey and Northern Shoveler.

**Day 6: Djoudj National Park.** Djoudj National Park may be internationally famous for its vast flocks of wildfowl, but more recently a Critically Endangered species has enhanced its reputation further, and today we will make a very special effort to try and see this skulking bird, which lives in the swamp on the edge of the park. Expect to get wet feet, though, for the only way to see Aquatic Warbler is to wade knee deep in muddy water – even then success isn’t guaranteed as most records of this species have come as a result of French ringing (banding) operations. However, with patience and skill, it is possible to coax one out into view and if we are successful we will join a very small band of people who have seen this bird outside of

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**Coppery Sunbird by Hugh Chittenden**

**Standard-winged Nightjar by David Shackelford**
If we get lucky with Aquatic Warbler, we can then concentrate our efforts on the vast numbers of waterbirds that inhabit this wonderful wetland. We can expect to see Greater Flamingo, hundreds of Great White Pelicans, White-breasted Cormorant (split from Great), African Darter, Little Bittern, Purple and Squacco Herons, Glossy and African Sacred Ibis, Eurasian and African Spoonbills, Black, White and Yellow-billed Storks, Knob-billed Duck, African Fish Eagle, African Swamphen, Black Crowned Crane, African Jacana, Greater Painted-snipe and Collared Pratincole, while amongst the throngs of waders we will search for Little Ringed, Common Ringed and Kittlitz’s Plovers, Wood, Marsh and Curlew Sandpipers, Little Stint, Dunlin, Ruff and Black-tailed Godwit. We could also come across White-winged and Whiskered Terns, African Stonechat of the moptanus race, Greater Swamp Warbler and Black-headed (Yellow-backed) Weaver.

However, the area is not just about waterbirds and in the surrounding dry country we will look for Montagu’s and Western Marsh Harriers, the endangered Arabian Bustard, Sand Martin, Western Yellow and White Wagtails, Tawny Pipit, Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin, Whinchat, Sedge and European Reed Warblers, the recently described River Prinia - one of our main targets during this leg of the tour, Winding Cisticola, (Black-faced) Quailfinch, Orange-breasted (Zebra) Waxbill and thousands of Red-billed Quelea. Long-tailed Nightjars inhabit the area, as does Western Barn Owl, which we may find in our Hotel grounds. A real bonus would be a Short-eared Owl, a very rare visitor to the sub-Sahara that occasionally frequents this park and which we will search for in suitable habitat. We should also encounter Common Warthog and Common Jackal during our time in this very special area.

**Day 7: Djoudj National Park to Kaolack.** Having had our fill of waterbirds, today we will return to Kaolack for an overnight stay. While principally a travel day, we will have further chances to look for any species we may have missed earlier or perhaps require better views of as we head towards Kaolack.

**Day 8: Kaolack to Janjangbureh, Gambia.** Today we enter The Gambia, so we shall leave Kaolack early this morning to set off for Janjangbureh (previously known as Georgetown), where we will spend the night.

Pressing on, we hope to arrive in Janjangbureh with enough daylight to allow sufficient time for some early evening...
birding, if not, we will still have time to search for some nocturnal species, including the tiny African Scops Owl, Northern White-faced Owl and the massive Verreaux’s Eagle-Owl.

Day 9: Janjangbureh and transfer to Tandaba Camp. Janjangbureh is situated on an island in Eastern Gambia, due to the climate and habitat, the birds are significantly different to those that we will have encountered in Senegal. One of our principal targets here will be Adamawa Turtle Dove, a species normally found further east (in Cameroon for instance), but has regularly been recorded in this area. Other birds that we will look for here include Marabou Stork, Tawny Eagle, Gabar Goshawk, Western banded Snake Eagle, Grey Kestrel, Eurasian Turtle Dove, Four-banded Sandgrouse, Red-throated Bee-eater, the equally exquisite Northern Carmine Bee-eater, West African Swallow (sometimes considered a race of Red-rumped Swallow), Swamp Flycatcher, Cut-throat Finch, Exclamatory Paradise Whydah (although if the birds are out of breeding plumage they are impossible to separate from Sahel Paradise Whydah) and Red-winged Pytilia. Thereafter, we will move on again to the wonderful Tendaba Camp, situated on the south bank of the River Gambia where we will spend the next two nights.

Day 10: Tandaba Camp and Kiang West National Park. This area is great for birds and in and amongst the nearby woodland, scrub and marshy grassland we will search for Long-crested Eagle, the uncommon African Hobby, Lanner Falcon, Bruce’s Green Pigeon, Brown-necked Parrot, White-throated Bee-eater, Abyssinian Ground Hornbill, Cardinal Woodpecker and Black-rumped Waxbill. Our stay here also includes a river trip by pirogue (with engines thankfully), as the river is almost two kilometres wide at this point, despite us being a very long way inland! By carefully searching the creaks (‘bolons’ as they are also known here), and the opposite side of this vast river, we hope to find the massive Goliath Heron, Woolly-necked Stork and possibly even White-backed Night Heron. We shall also search the mangroves diligently for two tricky species; White-backed Night Heron and African Finfoot. Other species we hope to find include Blue-breasted Kingfisher, African Blue Flycatcher and Brown Sunbird.

We will then move into the surrounding woodlands near Kiang West National Park. Some of our targets include Grasshopper Buzzard, Beaudouin’s and Brown Snake Eagles, White-shouldered Black Tit, Bronze-tailed and Lesser Blue-eared Starlings, Vitelline Masked Weaver, Chestnut-crowned Sparrow-Weaver and possibly Brown-rumped Bunting. No tour to sub-Saharan Africa would be complete without the customary night drive, and we will venture out after dark in search of the ever-
elusive Bronze-winged Courser and one of the world’s uniquely adorned birds, the incredible Standard-winged Nightjar.

**Day 11: Tandaba Camp and transfer to Banjul.** We have a few hours this morning to search for any more species we may have missed or wish to get better views of. A little after breakfast, we shall depart Tendaba Camp and make our way to Banjul and our comfortable coastal hotel for the next four nights. With what daylight we have left in the afternoon, we shall bird around our hotel gardens and the nearby Kotu stream. There is a surprising array of species around the hotel itself and some of the birds we could bump into include Hooded Vulture, the bizarre Hamerkop, magnificent Blue-bellied Roller, Western Plantain-eater, Green Wood Hoopoe, Yellow-crowned Gonolek, Piapiac, Blackcap and Brown Babbler, Long-tailed Glossy Starling, White-crowned Robin-Chat and a selection of colourful seedeaters including Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu, Red-billed Firefinch and Lavender Waxbill.

**Days 12 to 14: Abuko Nature Reserve.** Abuko Nature Reserve was created almost 100 years ago and now protects one of the few patches of riverine forest left in The Gambia, whilst the extension to the park also consists of dense bush and scrub. As a consequence, the reserve boasts a high number of species including many that occur at the extreme edge of their range. We will have the opportunity over the next three days to explore both our hotel grounds and this superb reserve.

The list of birds local to the hotel is certainly very impressive and also encompasses a selection of Sunbirds such as Western Violet-backed, Copper, Beautiful, Scarlet-chested and Splendid, as well as some typically impressive and extravagant African species including Malachite and Giant Kingfishers, Blue-cheeked Bee-eater, Western Red-billed and African Grey Hornbills, and Vieillot’s and Bearded Barbets. By night, both Pearl-spotted Owlet and Long-tailed Nightjar can be heard from the hotel, with the former often seen during the day as well. Some of the many other species recorded in the area include Stone Partridge, Double-spurred Francolin, Pink-backed Pelican, Striated and Black Herons, Western Reef Egret, the majestic Bateleur, Palm-nut Vulture, African Harrier-Hawk, Dark Chanting Goshawk, Lizard Buzzard, Wahlberg’s Eagle, African Hawk-Eagle and Red-necked Falcon. Add to the mix Temminck’s Courser, Senegal Thick-knee, Eurasian Oystercatcher, Black-winged Stilt, Pied Avocet, African Wattled, Black-headed and Spur-winged Lapwings, Kentish and White-fronted Plovers (amongst a selection of Palearctic shorebirds), African Green Pigeon, Vinaceous and African Mourning Doves,
Senegal Parrot, Rose-ringed Parakeet, Striped Kingfisher, Little and African Palm Swifts, Mottled Spinetail, Levailant’s and Klaas’s Cuckoos, Senegal Coucal, Little and Swallow-tailed Bee-eaters, Abyssinian, Purple (Rufous-crowned) and Broad-billed Rollers, White-breasted Cuckoo-shrike, Black Scimitarbill, Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird, Grey, Fine-spotted and Brown-backed Woodpeckers, Red-chested, Pied-winged and Wire-tailed Swallows, Yellow-throated Longclaw, Yellow-throated Leaflove, African Thrush, White-fronted Black Chat, Northern Crombec, Senegal Eremomela, several species of Cisticola including Whistling, Short-winged and Rufous, migrant Melodious and Willow Warblers, Red-winged Warbler, Northern Black Flycatcher, Yellow Penduline Tit, African Golden Oriole, Yellow-billed Shrike, Northern Puffback, Orange-breasted Bushshrike, Brubru, White Helmetshrike, Purple Starling, Yellow-billed Oxpecker, White-billed Buffalo Weaver, African Silverbill, Little Weaver, Northern Red and Black-winged Red Bishops, and Village Indigobird.


The reserve is well served by numerous trails and in the middle of the forest, there is a shady pool, to which the stately Sitatunga (a large, shy and seldom-seen forest antelope) is an occasional visitor. Other mammals and reptiles we could be fortunate to see include Callithrix Monkey, Western Red Colobus and Gambian Sun Squirrel, while Nile Crocodiles should be present around the pool. Any visit to Abuko proves to be very rewarding and we are sure to rack up a good number of quality species!

**Day 15: Abuko NR to Banjul and depart.**

We will spend much of the day birding around our hotel and in Abuko Nature Reserve for any species we may have missed thus far or simply prefer better views of. All good things must come to an end unfortunately and after a fabulous last day’s birding, we shall transfer to Banjul Airport this afternoon where the tour will conclude.
FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:
Tour dates, prices, single supplement rates, approximate flight costs (where applicable) and spaces available for this tour are displayed on our website. Please see under IMPORTANT NOTES.

The tour price includes:
- All meals from dinner on day 1 of the tour to lunch on day 15;
- A soft drink with meals;
- Bottled drinking water;
- All lodgings as per the itinerary;
- Ground transportation;
- All reserve entrance fees;
- All guiding services; and
- Tips for local guides and services.

The tour price excludes:
- Any airfares, taxes and visa costs;
- Any alcoholic beverages;
- Special gratuities; and
- Telephone calls, laundry and 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.

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.

Tipping: As noted above, gratuities (drivers, hotel staff, restaurants etc) are included on this tour. However, this does not include your Rockjumper leader. Therefore, if you feel that he has given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip him.

PLEASE NOTE:
- In some areas, it may be very hot, especially in the north of Senegal. We will thus make good use of the early mornings and will have many early starts, to avoid birding in the middle of the day as far as is possible. Furthermore, in the rainforest areas in the south, the humidity will be high and uncomfortable.
This Gambia & Senegal tour is designed to be a dedicated, fast paced birding experience and we will attempt to obtain good views of as many bird species as possible.

This tour **DOES** require a good level of fitness and 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 (on mostly flat terrain) at a time. Should you have any physical or medical limitations, please notify us in advance of departure. Please note that for most of this tour we will be far away from modern medical facilities.

Accommodations are generally of a good standard in both The Gambia & Senegal. Lodges at Janjangbureh and Tendaba, although fairly simple, are quite comfortable and all rooms have private bathrooms. However, there is no electricity at Janjangbureh, so do make sure your electrical equipment and batteries are fully charged. We will do our utmost to make your stay as comfortable as possible, but at times we may experience maintenance issues that are beyond our control. We will stay either in hotels, guesthouses or park chalets.

A fair amount of our time is spent in vehicles as we do have to cover some long distances in order to get to the best birding areas. Some of the roads (especially in The Gambia) can be poor, and the going may be slow and potentially frustrating. Traffic in certain urban areas can be very time consuming too. The more luggage you pack, the less room there is in the vehicle, so it is important for your comfort and that of your fellow travellers that you do not over-pack. Kindly stick to 20kg for check in luggage and 8kg for hand luggage.

**ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE DETAILS:**
This tour price **does not** include ANY airfares. The tour will start in Dakar, Senegal on day 1, and as this is an arrival day and you are free to arrive at any time you wish. The tour will conclude in the afternoon of day 15 at Banjul International Airport, The Gambia.

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:**
Dakar International Airport (IATA: DKR), is the main port of entry for international flights into Senegal and is well serviced by several of the world’s major airlines. Banjul International Airport (IATA: BJL) is the main port of departure. **Please DO NOT book any flights until you have consulted the Rockjumper office for confirmation on the status of the tour.**