

Cape Verde Pelagics

The Ultimate Western Palearctic Seabird Experience

07th – 13th May 2026



An unforgettable pelagic seabirding experience based on the volcanic island of Fogo, where rich waters of the tropical east Atlantic meet the mountainous landscape of the Cape Verde archipelago. This exclusive 6-day package offers the opportunity to encounter some of the most exhilarating seabird spectacles in the North Atlantic.

This dedicated pelagic birding package offers a unique opportunity to observe and photograph the endemic and migrant seabirds of the Cape Verde Archipelago, many of which are difficult, if not impossible, to see anywhere else in the Western Palearctic.

Four Full-Day Pelagics

Boarding our vessel in São Filipe, our full-day pelagic trips venture offshore into the pristine waters surrounding Fogo, Brava and the Rombos Islands. We will spend time chumming for *Pterodromas* in the windy areas to the north of the islands where large numbers of **Cape Verde petrels** are likely, and **Black-capped petrel** is a possibility. We will dedicate considerable effort to the far south in the wind shadow of Fogo where we should encounter passage **Wilson's** and **Leach's storm-petrels**, local breeding **White-faced storm-petrels**, and have our best chance of encountering the highly elusive **Cape Verde storm-petrel**. Motoring and chumming through the channel between Fogo and Brava, we will encounter **Boyd's shearwaters**, **Cape Verde shearwaters**, and **Bulwer's petrels** as we head west to the renowned seabird and cetacean feeding areas of the Codamosto Seamount. As we pass through the channel between Brava and the Rombos Islands, we will enjoy breathtaking views of towering cliffs which play host to breeding colonies of **Brown booby**, **Red-footed Booby** and **Red-billed tropicbird**.

Expected highlights include:

- **Cape Verde storm-petrel** – endemic to Cape Verde
- **White-faced storm-petrel** – ssp. *P. m. eadesi* endemic to Cape Verde
- **Cape Verde shearwater** – endemic to Cape Verde
- **Boyd's shearwater** – endemic to Cape Verde (previously also bred in Bermuda)
- **Cape Verde petrel** – endemic to Cape Verde

- **Black-capped petrel** – one of the most sought-after *Pterodromas* in the Western Palearctic
- **Leach’s storm-petrel** – abundant wintering and passage migrant
- **Wilson’s storm-petrel** – passage migrant
- **Bulwer’s petrel** – abundant local breeder
- **Red-billed tropicbird** – abundant local breeder
- **Brown booby** – abundant local breeder (Brava)
- **Red-footed booby** – increasing local breeder (Brava)
- **Masked booby** – very recent possible breeding in small numbers (Brava)

Other potential passage and vagrant species include **Trindade petrel**, **Manx**, **Cory’s**, **Scopoli’s**, **Sooty** and **Great shearwater**, **Magnificent frigatebird**, **Sooty** and **Bridled tern**.



Cape Verde petrel *Pterodroma feae*



Cape Verde storm-petrel *Hydrobates jabejabe*



White-faced storm-petrel *Pelagodroma marina*



Boyd’s shearwater *Puffinus Boydi*

Masked booby – Ilha Brava

During our Cape Verde Pelagics tours in March 2026 we made the incredible discovery of two **Masked boobies** amongst the **Brown booby** colonies on Ilha Brava. Remarkably, one of the birds was found to be hybridising with a brown booby, with the pair co-incubating a nest in the booby colony at Ponta do Incenso in the north of Ilha Brava. This discovery is likely to be the most well documented case of hybridisation ever recorded between these two species, and with the birds still seemingly at the incubation stage it is possible that the masked booby will be attending the nest site for the next 2-3 months – the first time that a Masked booby will have ever been ‘twitchable’ in the Western Palearctic. We will dedicate time at these booby colonies to maximise our chances of connecting with one, or both, of the masked boobies, as well as enjoying the spectacle of the 100s of pairs of brown boobies present whilst also searching for the small population of **Red-footed boobies**.



Masked booby when first discovered on Ilha Brava (left) and the same bird when rediscovered the following week having just swapped incubating duties with its brown booby mate (right)



The second adult **masked booby** discovered on Ilha Brava, flying out from the brown booby colony at Quebra Cabeças in the south of the island

White-tailed tropicbirds – Ilehu de Cima

Since 2020 **White-tailed tropicbirds** have made several breeding attempts on the cliffs of Ilehu de Cima, the second largest of the Rombos Islands, 15km west of Fogo. The lone pair raised a chick for the first time in 2024, and repeated the feat in 2025 with another successful breeding year. The pair returned once again in 2026 but unfortunately appeared to have failed and abandoned the nest by the time the March 2026 Cape Verde Pelagics tours visited the site. Nonetheless, we will dedicate some time during our full-day pelagics to visiting the nest site as we pass by Ilehu de Cima, drifting offshore with the aim of observing the birds around the nesting cliffs. Due to the nest being tucked inside a deep crevice it is not visible from the sea. Seeing these birds is far from a guaranteed, but through close communication with the Ilehu de Cima wardens, and some effort on site, we will maximise our chances of observing this true Western Palearctic mega! The nesting cliffs also host approximately 50 pairs of red-billed tropicbirds, so a visit here is an exceptional tropicbird experience whether we are fortunate enough to see the white-tailed tropicbirds, or not.



White-tailed tropicbird with chick (Projecto Vito)

Cetaceans

The deep tropical waters surrounding Fogo host an array cetacean species which we hope to encounter. **Pantropical spotted dolphin**, **Short-finned pilot whale**, **Humpback whale** are regularly seen, whilst the possibility of **Sei whale**, **Rough-toothed dolphin**, **Bottlenose dolphin** and several species of beaked whale is high, and the list of other potential species is extensive.



Pantropical spotted dolphin *Stenella attenuate*



Gervais' beaked whale *Mesoplodon europaeus*

Nighttime excursion to a Boyd's shearwater colony

A rare opportunity to visit a **Boyd's shearwater** colony along the southern coastal cliffs of Fogo where we will experience the high-pitched rhythmic calls and aerial activity of these of these charismatic small shearwaters. Viewing through a thermal imaging camera is not essential, but is highly recommended. This excursion will be undertaken either by boat or on land, depending on sea conditions a weather at the time.



Boyd's shearwaters returning to their coastal colony along the southern cliffs of Fogo

Inland Tour to the Caldera and Cloud Forest

A full-day land excursion will take us up to the Calderas of Fogo, an otherworldly volcanic crater home to an extraordinary village community some 2000m above sea level, and the site of the first Cape Verde Petrel colony to be discovered and studied. We will spend time in the coffee plantations and cloud forests of Fogo's northern slopes in search of the endemic **Cape Verde swamp warbler**, and witness much of the magnificent conservation work carried out by Projecto Vito in preserving Fogo's endemic flora and unique island ecology. Along the way we will have the opportunity to see several other endemic and speciality bird species present on Fogo, including **Cape Verde swift**, **Iago sparrow**, **Grey-headed kingfisher**, **Black-crowned sparrow-lark**, **Alexandra's kestrel**, and **Brown-necked raven**.



An otherworldly volcanic view of Pico do Fogo



Grey-headed kingfisher *Halcyon leucocephala*

Clifftop Accommodation with Breathtaking Views

Our base for the trip is a clifftop apartment in the quaint town of Sao Filipe overlooking the Atlantic Ocean, offering exceptional land-based seawatching opportunities and stunning panoramic views towards Ilha Brava. The eight double-bedrooms are divided between three self-contained apartments, each with their own spacious kitchen and living room facilities. Bedrooms include options of either en-suite or shared bathroom facilities. Clothes washing facilities are also provided. Our apartment is situated on the northern edge of the town, only a six-minute drive from Fogo Airport, and a six-minute drive from Porto Vale Cavaleiros where we board our pelagic vessel each day. All transport to and from both the airport and harbour is provided.



Our Vessel

An exciting new partnership with Fogo-based NGO Projecto Vito and their vessel, Vénus, and her crew, has been essential to the development of the Cape Verde Pelagics model. Vénus is a spacious and stable boat, capable of speeds in excess of 20kts enabling us to cover vast areas on our full-day pelagics. The walk-around cabin allows easy access to the bow which offers an excellent platform for photography. The spacious cabin with padded seating provides shelter from the sun or sea spray when required, along with access to an onboard toilet.



Meal Arrangements

Breakfast is included is the tour cost and is served daily at 08:00 at the hotel restaurant next door to our apartment. Substantial lunches are prepared and served onboard the boat during pelagic days, these are also inclusive within the tour costs. Lunches on non-pelagic days are not included in the tour costs but we will make a stop at a nice local café or restaurant where a cooked lunch can be purchased. Evening meals are **not included** in the tour cost but each evening we will eat at one of the local restaurants in Sao Filipe, a short walk or taxi ride from our accommodation. Eating out in Fogo is very reasonably priced and you can expect to spend approximately 15 euros for a meal and drink. There is also the option to purchase food for evening meals from the local supermarket, which can be prepared using the self-catering facilities at our accommodation, if preferred. Bottled water will be provided onboard all pelagics.

Trip Details

- Date: **07th May – 13th May 2026**
- Group Size per trip: **7 participants**
- Base: **São Filipe, Fogo, Cape Verde**
- Price: **£1795**
- Includes:
 - Four full-day pelagic trips
 - Nighttime excursion to Boyd's shearwater colony
 - Full-day land tour of Fogo to the Calderas and cloud forest
 - 6 nights' clifftop **bed & breakfast** accommodation
 - Expert and local guiding throughout
 - Daily transfers to and from the quay
 - Airport transfers (Fogo only)
 - Excellent lunches and drinks served onboard all pelagics

What's not included

- Any flights or connecting travel to and from Fogo
- Any overnight accommodation that may be required whilst travelling to Fogo
- Evening meals and non-pelagic lunches
- Travel insurance

Logistics

Please ensure that you arrive in Sao Filipe, Fogo, on the tour start date of **07 May 2026**. There are two scheduled flights per day from Praia to Sao Filipe with CVsky (www.cvsky.cv). It is recommended that you arrive in Sao Filipe on the morning flight to allow time on the 07th of May to settle into our accommodation, unpack, and prepare for the busy week ahead. Our first pelagic will depart at approximately 0830 on the 8th of May.

When departing Sao Filipe on **13 May 2026** at the end of the trip, airport transfers will be arranged for both the morning and afternoon flights. Which of these two flights you chose to book is completely up to you to best suit your onward travel arrangements.

Getting to Cape Verde

The only way to fly to Sao Filipe, Fogo, is from Nelson Mandela International Airport in Cape Verde's Capital City of Praia, located on the island of Santiago. Daily Flights to Praia are available from several major European airports including Lison, Paris and Madrid. If travelling from the UK (or any other country which does not fly direct to Praia), a connecting flight to any of the three airports stated above is a good option.

If you require a night accommodation in Praia ahead of a connecting flight, very reasonably priced accommodation is usually available near the airport and can be found easily on booking.com and Airbnb.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at scottreid@windshearbirding.com if you have any further questions regarding travel options.