

# Cape Verde Pelagics

The Ultimate Western Palearctic Seabird Experience

March & April 2027



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-night tour offers the opportunity to encounter some of the most exhilarating seabird spectacles in the North Atlantic.

The dedicated pelagic birding package offers a unique opportunity to observe and photograph the endemic and migrant seabirds of the Cape Verde, of which many 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 pelagics 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 concentrations 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 will encounter wintering **Leach's Storm-petrels** and local breeding **White-faced Storm-petrels**, and have our best chance of seeing the 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 towards the renowned seabird and cetacean feeding area 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 **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
- **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 colonist possibly breeding in small numbers (Brava)

Other potential passage and vagrant species include **Trindade Petrel**, **Manx**, **Cory's**, and **Scopoli's 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*

## Black-capped Petrel

This spectacular and highly sought after *Pterodroma* has become somewhat of an enigma in the Western Palearctic, particularly Cape Verde, in recent years. With ever-increasing numbers being recorded, primarily from the islands of Santo Antao in the north and Fogo in the south, **Black-capped Petrel** is now firmly a target species for anyone visiting the archipelago. The reason for this increase in numbers and their association the islands' only endemic *Pterodroma*, Cape Verde petrel, remains unclear, but as we continue to encounter these birds from our Cape Verde Pelagics we add further pieces to this intriguing puzzle. We also have as much chance of seeing Black-capped Petrel from land as we do at sea, with our cliff-top accommodation offering an exceptional platform for seawatching – we have now seen three Black-capped Petrels from here in the past two years.



**Black-capped Petrel** from Cape Verde Pelagics in March 2025, approximately 5km west of Fogo

## 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. 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 Booby present whilst also searching for the small population of **Red-footed Booby**.



**Masked Booby** when first discovered on Ilha Brava (left) and the same bird when relocated 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. If the pair return once again in 2027 we will dedicate 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 commuting to and from the cliffs. Due to the nest being tucked inside a deep crevice it is not visible from the sea, and the birds will likely be incubating an egg through March and early April. Seeing these birds is not guaranteed, but through close communication with the Ilehu de Cima wardens and some considerable effort on site, we will maximise our chances of observing this true Western Palearctic mega!



**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**, and **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 Cape Verde Petrel courtship site

A rare and unmissable opportunity to visit a **Cape Verde Petrel** courtship site in the foothills of Pico do Fogo, where we will witness the haunting calls and aerial displays of these captivating *Pterodromas* under the breathtaking Cape Verdean stars. Viewing through a thermal imaging camera is not essential but is highly recommended. A short walk of moderate difficulty is necessary to access the site and a headtorch is essential. Also our best opportunity to see **Cape Verde Barn Owl**.



### Island 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 Associação Projecto Vitó and their vessel, Vénus, and her crew, has been essential to the development of the Cape Verde Pelagics model. Vénus is a deceptively 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** in the tour cost and is served daily at 08:00 in the hotel restaurant next door to our apartment. Substantial **lunches** are prepared and served onboard the boat during pelagic days, these are also **included** in the tour. **Lunches on non-pelagic days** are **not included** in the tour cost 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 in the apartment and onboard all pelagics.

## Trip Details

- Date Options:
  - 01 – 07 March 2027**
  - 08 – 14 March 2027**
  - 05 – 11 April 2027**
  - 12 – 18 April 2027**
- Group Size per trip: **7 participants + leader**
- Base: **São Filipe, Fogo, Cape Verde**
- Cost: **£1845**
- Deposit: **£500**
- Includes:
  - Four full-day pelagic trips
  - Nighttime excursion to a Cape Verde petrel 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

**\*\*PLEASE COMPLETE TO BOOKING FORM PROVIDED AND PAY THE REQUIRED DEPOSIT AMOUNT TO SECURE YOUR PLACE ON CAPE VERDE PELAGICS 2027, STATING THE DATES OF YOUR PREFERRED WEEK ON THE BOOKING FORM\*\***

### **Getting to Cape Verde**

The only way to fly to our pelagic destination of 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 Nelson Mandela International Airport 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, Santiago), a connecting flight to any of the three airports stated above is a good option.

### **Getting to Fogo**

Please ensure that you arrive in Sao Filipe, Fogo, on the advertised start date of your selected tour. There are two scheduled flights per day from Nelson Mandela International Airport in Praia to Sao Filipe with CVsky ([www.cvsky.cv](http://www.cvsky.cv)). It is recommended that you arrive in Sao Filipe on the morning flight to allow time to settle into our accommodation, unpack, and prepare for the busy week ahead. Our first pelagic will depart at approximately 0830 on the morning of our first full day.

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

If you require a night accommodation in Praia ahead of your flight to Sao Filipe, Fogo, very reasonably priced accommodation is often available near the airport and can be found easily through [booking.com](http://booking.com) and [Airbnb](https://www.airbnb.com).

Please do not hesitate to contact me at [scottreid@windshearbirding.com](mailto:scottreid@windshearbirding.com) if you have any further questions regarding travel arrangements.