ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

Spain

Best of Birding

4th May to 18th May 2024 (15 days)



Little Bustard by Ignacio Yufera

Spain has long been a very popular birdwatching destination, offering a wide range of Mediterranean habitats along with safe, easy and excellent birding. Many sites are in beautifully scenic settings, featuring Romanesque architecture and ancient, fortified hilltop villages; whilst much of interior Spain that we visit is very rural and way off the tourist trail. Our comprehensive itinerary is specially designed for a great diversity of birds and concentrates on three major and distinct habitats: the semi-arid steppes and cork-oak dehesas (a type of wooded pastureland) of the central and northern interior, the scenic Sierras and high, alpine Pyrenees to the north in Catalonia, and the wetlands and marshes of Doñana National Park on the Atlantic coast. During spring, the area's many resident and breeding birds are joined by migrants en route from Africa to their northern nesting areas, and some of the fabulous species we hope to see include Spanish Imperial Eagle (up to 23 raptor species are possible!), Great and Little

Bustards, Pin-tailed and Black-bellied Sandgrouse, Spectacled Warbler, Alpine Accentor, both species of noisy Chough, White-throated Dipper and the fabulous Wallcreeper. Our journey begins in the southern city of Seville, travels through the steppes and heartland of Spain with stops in the Sierra de Gredos before reaching the mighty Pyrenees, and then continues east to the historic city of Barcelona. We travel in spacious and comfortable vehicles, the food is delicious and plentiful; while our accommodations are mostly family-run establishments in pleasant and beautifully renovated ancient stone farmhouses, nestled in quiet and charming villages.

THE TOUR AT A GLANCE…

THE ITINERARY

Day 1	**Arrive in Seville and Bonanza Salt Pans**
Days 2 & 3	**Sanlucar & Doñana National Park**
Day 4	**Doñana NP to Monfragüe**
Day 5	**Monfragüe National Park**
Day 6	**Trujillo to Gredos**
Day 7	**Gredos area**
Day 8	**Gredos to Pamplona via Navarre**
Day 9	**Pamplona to Hecho Valley**
Day 10	**Hecho Valley**
Day 11	**Hecho to Ordesa National Park**
Day 12	**Ordesa National Park area**
Day 13	**Ordesa to Lleida area**
Day 14	**Lleida to Barcelona**
Day 15	**Delta del Llobregat & final departure**

TOUR MAP…


Hecho Valley
Ordesa
Lleida
Barcelona
Gredos
Monfragüe NP
Trujillo
Seville
Doñana NP
Data SIO, NOAA, U.S. Navy, NGA, GEBCO
Image Landsat / Copernicus
Google Earth

THE TOUR IN DETAIL…

Day 1: Arrive in Seville and Bonanza Salt Pans. After arrival in Seville, we'll head to the Bonanza Salt Pans, one of most rewarding birding sites in the Doñana area. En route, we should encounter several common and widespread species including Common Wood Pigeon, Eurasian Collared Dove, Pallid Swift, White Stork, European Bee-eater, Common Kestrel, Eurasian Magpie, Northern Raven, Crested Lark, Eurasian Blackbird, Spotless Starling, and catch our first glimpses of the abundant water birds we will seek over the following few days.



Eurasian Crag Martin by Rob Williams

Near the mouth of the River Guadalquivir is the best place to look for the globally threatened and range-restricted White-headed Duck, as well as the uncommon Marbled Duck in the province of Cadiz. This is also an excellent place for waders, including Kentish Plover, Common Greenshank, Common Redshank, Ruff, Wood and Curlew Sandpipers, Black-tailed Godwit, Sanderling, Dunlin, Little Stint and Common Snipe. In addition, the saltpans here are our best place for seeing Lesser Short-toed Lark and Spectacled Warbler.

Some special raptors for the area are Western Osprey and the lovely Red Kite, as well as the possibility for Spanish Imperial Eagle that nests inside the national park. However, the most remarkable sight of the day will probably be the large numbers of Slender-billed Gull, Greater Flamingo and Eurasian Spoonbill that gather on occasions in the saltpans. There is also a chance for Caspian Tern, Purple Heron, Black Stork, Great Egret, Little Bittern and even though it is quite early in the season, we should keep our eyes open for the dainty Little Tern as well. Depending on how much time we have, we may also bird some of the locations mentioned on day 2.



Western Swamphen by Rob Williams

We'll spend the night in the small city of Sanlúcar de Barrameda, perfectly situated next to Doñana National Park.

Days 2 & 3: Sanlucar & Doñana National Park. Today we will bird a number of sites within the Doñana National Park complex and surrounds. The acres and acres of marshland on the mouth of the Rio Guadalquivir form one of the largest wetland complexes in Europe with much of the area protected within the Doñana National Park. The national park was established in 1969 and is recognized



White-headed Duck by Rob Williams

as a Ramsar Convention "Wetland of International Importance," an Audubon "Important Bird Area" (IBA), and a UNESCO "World Heritage Site" with a site list of no less than 300 bird species. The park harbours several species that are rare or absent in much of Western Europe and we will seek out notable species like White-headed Duck, Marbled Duck, Eurasian Spoonbill, Greater Flamingo, Western Swamphen, Yellow-legged Gull, the rare Ferruginous Duck, Red-necked Nightjar, and the lovely Iberian Magpie. More common breeding species here include Squacco and Purple Herons, Red-crested Pochard, Booted Eagle, Pied Avocet, Short-toed and Lesser Short-toed Larks, Common Nightingale, and European Serin. The flooded fields attract a variety of migrating shorebirds that could include Ruff, Sanderling and Black-tailed Godwit. The national park is vast and some sections are difficult to access, but we will bird the most productive sites by following dirt tracks around the marshy areas, moving further inland to bird areas of cork oaks and umbrella pines. The wilderness at the heart of the park is home to a variety of mammals, including Red Fox, Red Deer, Fallow Deer, endemic Iberian Hare, European Rabbit and Wild Boar.

In the evenings, we'll venture out after dark to look for the Red-necked Nightjar, which is relatively common here. Doñana is also one of the last refuges for the Iberian Lynx, one of the most threatened cats in the world.

Day 4: Doñana NP to Monfragüe. After some birding in the morning to look for any species we may still be missing, we will start heading towards Monfragüe. As we journey north, the route passes through unspoiled countryside where the unique dehesa, a magnificent park-like habitat of cork and evergreen oaks dominates and this habitat is frequented by Melodious, Dartford, Sardinian, Subalpine, and shy Western Orphean Warblers. The entire Extremadura region is fantastic for raptors with a dozen species possible and we will keep an eye to the sky for Red and Black Kites, Common Buzzard, Short-toed Snake, Booted, and Spanish Imperial Eagles, Peregrine Falcon, Common Kestrel, and plenty of Cinereous and Griffon Vultures. Along the way, we will stop at the Alange Reservoir looking for Alpine and Pallid Swifts, Eurasian Crag Martin, Thekla's and Wood Larks, Blue Rock Thrush, Black



Red-necked Nightjar by Jonathan Rossouw

Redstart, Black Wheatear, Rock Sparrow and Rock Bunting.

Day 5: Monfragüe National Park. The Monfragüe National Park, covering 18,000 hectares, was protected as a Natural Park from 1979 but only recently declared a National Park in 2007. There is an additional 11,700-hectare buffer zone, culminating in a vast area that is rich in wildlife. This fabulous region of mountains, gorges, forest and woodland holds Spain's major breeding sites for the rare Spanish Imperial Eagle and during our stay here, we will hope for daily sightings of this impressive species. The area is also home to the world's largest breeding colony of Cinereous Vulture. These huge birds are often visible throughout the region and can often be seen attending to goat or sheep carcasses, along with the more numerous Griffon Vulture.



White-throated Dipper by Rob Williams

Other birds that we'll be searching for during our time here include Black Stork, the impressive Eurasian Eagle-Owl, Bonelli's Eagle, smartly plumaged Iberian Magpie, Black-winged Kite, European Roller, Eurasian Golden Oriole, Great Spotted Cuckoo, Red-rumped Swallow, Pallid Swift, Sardinian and Spectacled Warblers, and Ortolan Bunting. The liquid calls of stunningly plumaged European Bee-eaters will no doubt attract our attention to these newly arrived flocks from their wintering grounds in Africa.

Day 6: Trujillo to Gredos. This morning we will have time to visit the ancient, fortified town of Trujillo where Lesser Kestrels are often seen perched on buildings during the day. We'll then make our way to towards the Sierra de Gredos, birding the many farms and tracks en route. We have good chances for various lark species, including Calandra, Thekla's, Crested and Greater Short-toed Larks. The area also holds good numbers of Pin-tailed and Black-bellied Sandgrouse, best seen as they commute between water holes and feeding sites, as well as populations of Great and Little Bustards. Other species we seek on these vast steppes include Great Spotted Cuckoo, Iberian Grey Shrike, Northern Raven, Black-eared Wheatear, and Corn Bunting, while Eurasian Stone-curlews are present in small numbers. The edge habitats in these steppes are home to



Great Bustard by Ignacio Yufera

Eurasian Hoopoe and Spanish Sparrow. We will also increase our raptor tally here with Montagu's and possibly Hen Harriers, and Little Owl. The open landscape and great number of birds will make for a very enjoyable and productive day.



Dupont's Lark by Rob Williams

Day 7: Gredos area. We have a full day to enjoy the cooler temperatures and many new bird species to be found in the Sierra de Gredos. The dramatic Pico Almanzor and verdant pine forests serve as a splendid backdrop as we search for Iberian Green Woodpecker, Western Bonelli's Warbler, Eurasian Nuthatch, Goldcrest, Northern Wheatear, Rock and Cirl Buntings, Dunnock and Citril Finch. At higher elevations White-throated Dipper, Grey Wagtail, European Crested Tit, European Pied Flycatcher and Red Crossbill are possible. In alpine meadows breeding species include Western Yellow Wagtails and Ortolan Buntings and thickly vegetated hillsides are home to the rare Bluethroat. The highest reaches of the beautiful Reserva Natural de Gredos, play host to Golden Eagle, Water Pipit and the distinctive Common Rock Thrush. The park also harbours several large mammals, including Red Fox and the rare, spectacular, Spanish Ibex.

Day 8: Gredos to Pamplona via Navarre. We will spend more time around Gredos this morning searching for any species we may have missed so far, before making our way to Navarre. Here we will focus on one of the main targets of the site, the elusive and scarce Dupont's Lark that breeds in the area. This is a very range-restricted bird so we will try our best to find this enigmatic species and we will carefully listen for its distinctive song among the more numerous Calandra, Wood, Thekla's and Crested Larks.



Iberian Chiffchaff by Rob Williams

Day 9: Pamplona to Hecho Valley. Today we will travel to higher Pyrenean mountain passes at 1,800 - 2,100m (6 - 7,000ft) elevations, amidst spectacular scenery. Targets at these heights, from just below the tree line to the open alpine zone above, include the very attractive Red Kite, Alpine Accentor, Ring Ouzel, Citril Finch, Water Pipit, Eurasian Crag Martin, Yellowhammer, Red-billed and Alpine Choughs and, depending on weather conditions and snow cover, perhaps a chance encounter with White-winged Snowfinch. At



Bearded Vulture by Adam Riley

higher elevations the rocky summits host breeding Bearded Vultures. In the afternoon, after getting our first morning of birding in the Pyrenees, we will traverse the Hecho Valley. We arrive by early evening at our welcoming hotel.

Day 10: Hecho Valley. The Hecho Valley near the village of Siresa holds a variety of habitats. Our hotel here is near a picturesque village close to prime birding sites. One of our main targets is the unique Wallcreeper. This stunning crimson, grey and black species is a regular breeding bird in the deep, rocky gorges just minutes away from our accommodation, and we have several sites to try for this gem. Other target species at these mid-elevations are Alpine Swift, Black Woodpecker, Blue and Common Rock Thrushes, Eurasian Treecreeper, Red-backed Shrike, European Crested Tit and Mistle Thrush. This whole area is prime raptor country with more chances for Bearded Vulture along with Golden, Short-toed Snake and Booted Eagles, many Eurasian Griffons and migrating European Honey Buzzards.

Day 11: Hecho Valley to Ordesa National Park. We have another full morning in the Hecho Valley allowing us to search for any species we may be missing. After another exciting morning amidst stunning landscapes, we shall continue east towards the small village of Torla, gateway of Ordesa National Park.



Wallcreeper by Ray Wilson

Day 12: Ordesa National Park area. The community of Torla sits in the glacial valley of the River Ara and is surrounded by stupendous mountains. It offers access to the Ordesa Valley and Ordesa National Park. The world-famous Ordesa National Park was one of the first declared in Spain and the park protects large swaths of raging rivers, waterfalls, gorges, vertical rock faces, coniferous and deciduous woodland, and mountain pastures. Trails and paths



Alpine Accentor by Clayton Burne

offer chances to seek additional high elevation species that we may have missed at earlier sites. Here we will again seek Alpine Accentor, Red-billed and Alpine Choughs, White-throated Dipper, Grey Wagtail, Water Pipit, Alpine Swift, Citril Finch, Black Woodpecker and the fabulous Wallcreeper, plus with great luck White-winged Snowfinch.

Day 13: Ordesa to Lleida. After we enjoy the fine vistas of the magnificent mountain scenery one last time we will travel south out of the mountains towards the city of Lleida. Along the way we will make several birding stops. We have many options, including some great alternative sites for species still missing on our lists, or to obtain better views for anyone who may have missed out earlier. We can also visit further mountain areas if necessary, as well as some very scenic cliffs where we have a good possibility for Black Wheatear. We will, in addition, call in to wetland reserves for chances of Black Tern, Eurasian Bittern, Bearded Reedling and Common Kingfisher.

Day 14: Lleida to Barcelona. The arid areas around the town of Lleida represent the largest, non-irrigated lowlands in the Ebro Valley. Many species typical of the Spanish steppes are at their easternmost limits here and we have a full day to explore the varied habitats. While the area is relatively quiet in summer and winter, during the spring it erupts with life and species like Great Spotted Cuckoo, European Roller and Little Bustard reach some of their highest densities here. We will seek any species we may have missed earlier in the tour and species typical of the open steppe habitats include Black Kites, Montagu's Harrier, Lesser Kestrel, Eurasian Hobby, Pin-tailed and Black-bellied Sandgrouse, Calandra Lark, Black Wheatear, Sardinian Warbler and Red-footed Falcon is possible as a passage migrant. The area will also offer us another chance to study the diversity of larks found in Spain. The riparian copses could hold Eurasian Penduline Tit and even Lesser Grey Shrikes occur. Although the shrike population here is small, a captive breeding project is currently carried out to reinforce its numbers. Black-winged Kites are recent colonists and breed in small numbers.



Bonelli's Eagle by Rob Williams

This afternoon we leave the open plains and head east to the Mediterranean coast and the bustling



Spectacled Warbler by David Hoddinott

and historic city of Barcelona. Common Kestrel, European Serin, Black Redstart, Barn Swallow, Eurasian Magpie and Common and Little Swifts may all be seen in the vicinity of our accommodations. We will spend the night in a hotel near the airport.

Day 15: Delta del Llobregat & final departure. We will visit our final birding site this morning, the Delta del Llobregat on the outskirts of Barcelona. Although the reserve here is relatively small and surrounded by the city, a system of short walking trails and well-placed hides offer access to productive wetland habitats. The area can be teeming with waterfowl, including Common Shelduck, Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, Mallard, Green-winged Teal, Red-crested and Common Pochards. A variety of terns, gulls (Mediterranean and Audouin's) and shorebirds are also present. Migrants can include Black-winged Stilt, Pied Avocet, Eurasian Oystercatcher, Grey Plover, European Golden Plover, Northern Lapwing, Kentish, Common Ringed and Little Ringed Plovers, Black-tailed Godwit, Ruff, Curlew Sandpiper, Dunlin, Little Stint, Common Snipe, Common and Green Sandpipers, Spotted and Common Redshank, Common Greenshank, Wood Sandpiper and even Moustached Warbler and Collared Pratincole are possible.



Bearded Reedling by Rob Williams

We will also have another chance for the active Eurasian Penduline Tit, which shares the reedbeds with Fan-tailed, Great Reed and Cetti's Warblers here. With luck and patience, we may glimpse Little Bittern and Water Rail. Time and weather permitting a sea-watch nearby could produce distant views of Scopoli's and Balearic Shearwaters. After what is sure to be a productive final birding session, we will transfer to the airport where the tour ends.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:

Tour dates, prices, single supplement rates, approximate flight costs and spaces available for this tour are displayed on our website. Please see under IMPORTANT NOTES below.

This includes:

- All meals from lunch on day 1 to breakfast on day 15;
- water supplied with picnics and wine with evening meals;
- All lodgings;
- Ground transportation;
- Reserve entrance fees;
- Extra activities as mentioned in the itinerary; and
- All guiding services (including tips for local guides and services).

The tour fee does not include:

- Visa fees;
- **ANY** flights;
- Any beverages except that stipulated above;
- Special gratuities;
- Telephone calls and
- Laundry and 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.

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/s. If, therefore, you feel that he/they have given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip them.

Special Notes:

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

- Fitness: This Birding Spain tour does not require a high level of fitness but participants should be in good general health. Should you have any physical limitations, please notify us in advance of departure.
- Some hiking, particularly in the mountainous areas is involved. These are easy hikes on clean trails, but they can take a few hours on occasions. These will be done in an easy and comfortable pace, as we will be birding along the route.
- Accommodation throughout the trip is of a generally high standard and the hotels and resorts that we make use of are very comfortable. There is no camping on this trip.

ARRIVAL and DEPARTURE DETAILS:

This tour **does not** include any airfares. The tour will depart from **Seville** on day 1 by no later than **09:00**, so kindly arrive in advance of this time on this day, or preferably arrive the day before. The tour will conclude in around mid-day at Barcelona International Airport (IATA: BCN) on day 15.

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:

Seville Airport (IATA: SVQ) and Barcelona International Airport (IATA: BCN) are the main ports of entry and departure for international flights into and out of Spain and are well serviced by most of the world's major airlines. **Please DO NOT book any flights until you have consulted the Rockjumper office for confirmation on the status of the tour.**