Poland, Slovakia & Hungary

Birds of the Carpathians & Beyond (Relaxed)



White-winged Tern by Rob Williams

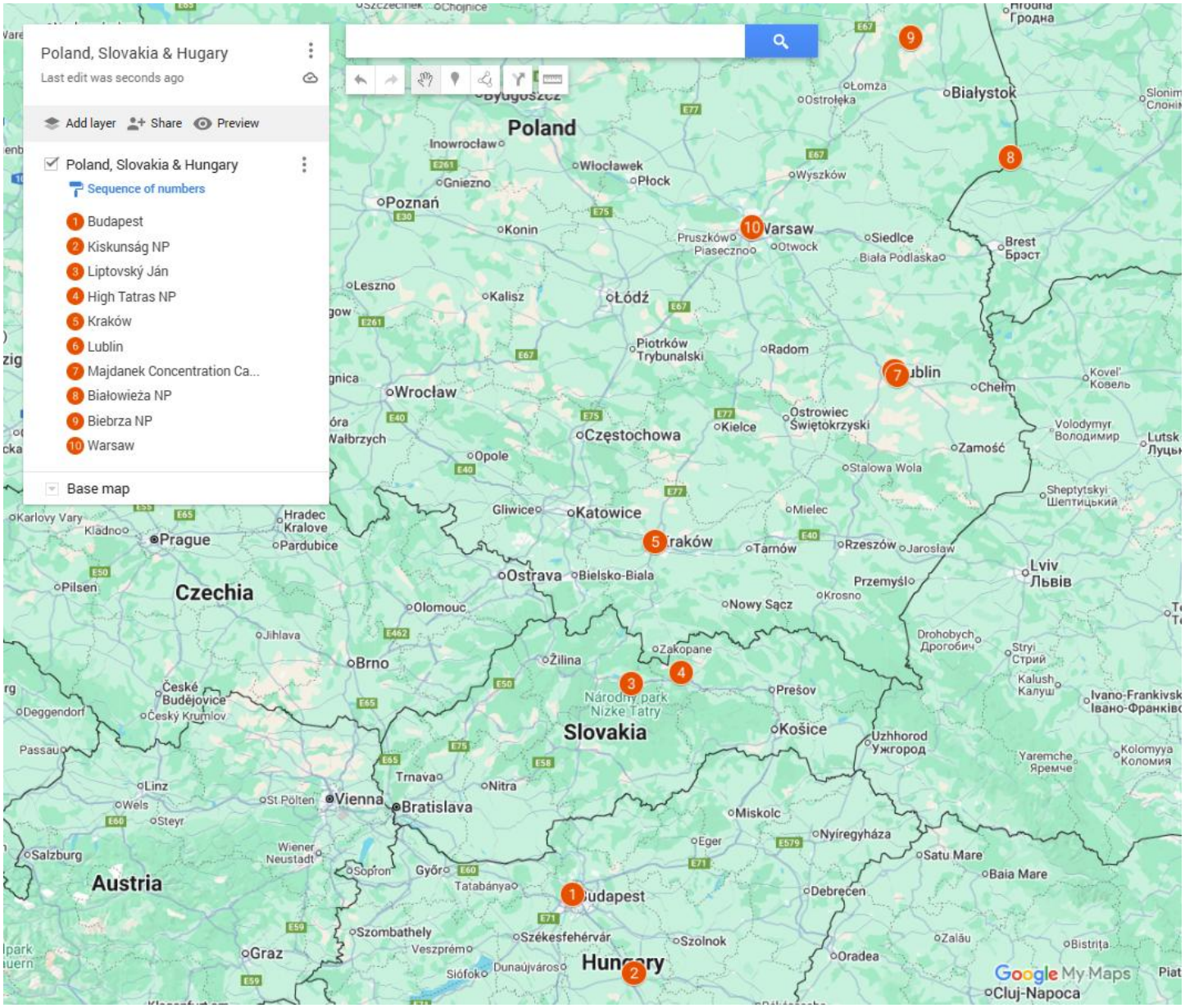
This unique journey through Hungary, Slovakia, and Poland blends outstanding birding with the rich natural and cultural heritage of Central Europe. Over two weeks we will explore an extraordinary range of habitats — from the sweeping steppes of Kiskunság National Park to the alpine forests of the High Tatras, and finally the ancient woodlands and vast wetlands of Poland's Białowieża and Biebrza National Parks.

The diversity of birds is remarkable: from the spectacular Great Bustards of Hungary's grasslands to elusive owls and woodpeckers in Slovakia's mountain forests, to the globally threatened Aquatic Warbler in Poland's fens. Raptors, storks, cranes, and a rich chorus of songbirds accompany us throughout. Mammals also feature, with opportunities to see European Bison in their last stronghold.

In addition to birding, we will enjoy glimpses of the region's cultural treasures, including medieval towns, castles, and the historic city of Kraków. Together, these experiences create a tour that is as rewarding for its landscapes and history as it is for its exceptional wildlife.

Itinerary & Map

Day 1	**Arrival in Budapest (Hungary)**
Day 2	**Budapest to Kiskunság National Park**
Days 3 to 5	**Kiskunság National Park**
Day 6	**Kiskunság National Park to Liptovský Ján (Slovakia)**
Days 7 & 8	**High Tatras National Park**
Day 9	**Liptovský Ján to Lublin via Kraków (Poland)**
Day 10	**Lublin to Białowieża National Park via Majdanek Concentration Camp**
Days 11 to 12	**Białowieża National Park**
Day 13	**Białowieża National Park to Biebrza National Park**
Days 14 & 15	**Biebrza National Park**
Day 16	**Biebrza National Park to Warsaw & final departure**


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Sequence of numbers
1 Budapest
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5 Kraków
6 Lublin
7 Majdanek Concentration Ca...
8 Białowieża NP
9 Biebrza NP
10 Warsaw
Base map
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Birding sites in detail



Eurasian Bittern by Clayton Burne

Kiskunság National Park. The park preserves extensive steppe habitats and supports one of Europe's largest populations of Great Bustards. Its alkaline lakes and seasonally flooded grasslands attract herons, egrets, ducks, and waders. Fishponds hold Eurasian and Little Bitterns, Purple Heron, Eurasian Spoonbill, Garganey, Red-crested Pochard, and Ferruginous Duck. White-tailed Eagle is often seen, while Western Marsh Harrier patrols the reed-fringed shores. These reedbeds also harbour Bearded Reedling, Eurasian Penduline Tit, Bluethroat, and warblers including the scarce Moustached Warbler.

Flooded meadows provide excellent habitat for breeding Northern Lapwing, Common Redshank, Black-tailed Godwit, Eurasian Curlew, Pied Avocet, Black-winged Stilt, Kentish and Little Ringed Plovers. Migrants include Ruff in breeding plumage, Temminck's and Little Stints, Dunlin, and both Curlew and Marsh Sandpipers.

In nearby agricultural fields we may find Collared Pratincoles in a small colony. The area is also a stronghold for Grey Partridge and Eurasian Stone-curlew. Gravel pits host Mediterranean and Black-headed Gulls, while the grasslands remain key display grounds for Great Bustards.

Raptors are well represented with Imperial Eagle, Saker and Red-footed Falcons, Montagu's Harrier, and the regularly seen Short-toed Eagle. Commoner species include European Roller, European Bee-eater, Common Hoopoe, Common Cuckoo, European Turtle Dove, Eurasian Skylark, European Stonechat, Western Yellow Wagtail, Red-backed Shrike, Tree Sparrow, and Corn Bunting.

If time allows, we may visit the Meadow Viper centre, where this rare reptile is bred and reintroduced to damp meadows.

Liptovský Ján. Our lodge lies at the entrance of a scenic valley, where White-throated Dipper and Grey Wagtail frequent the streams.

High Tatras National Park, Slovakia. We will explore forested mountain tracks in search of Ural and Pygmy Owls,



White-throated Dipper by Rob Williams



Hawfinch by Adam Riley

Golden Eagle, and a suite of woodpeckers: Black, Grey-headed, Three-toed, and White-backed. With luck we may encounter the elusive Boreal (Tengmalm's) Owl. Other highlights include Northern Nutcracker, Hazel Grouse, Ring Ouzel, Firecrest, Crested and Willow Tits, and Red Crossbill. These rugged valleys combine superb scenery with excellent birding.

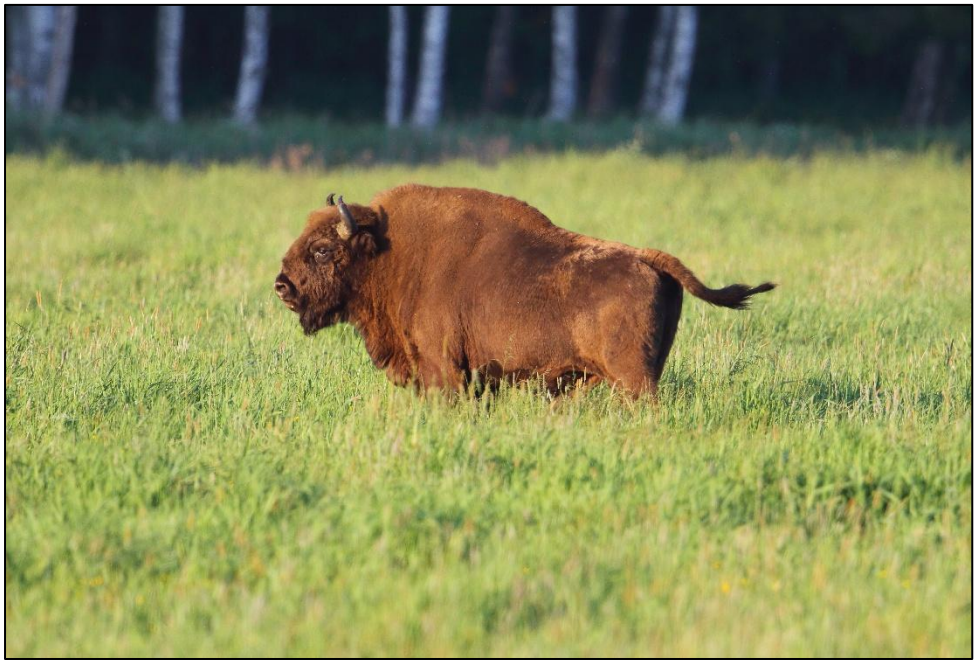
A nearby reservoir may yield Red-necked and Black-necked Grebes and Black-throated Diver during migration, along with other ducks and waders.

Liptovský Ján to Lublin. We may enjoy a short sightseeing stop in Kraków, one of Europe's most beautiful cities, and the former capital of Poland.

Majdanek Concentration Camp. Located outside Lublin, Majdanek offers a powerful and sobering insight into Europe's 20th-century history. Established by the Nazis in 1941, it functioned as both labour and extermination camp. Today it stands as one of the best-preserved Holocaust memorials. Walking through barracks, guard towers, gas chambers, and the mound of ashes left from the crematoria is deeply moving. The museum and memorial honour the victims while providing context to the atrocities committed here.

Białowieża National Park. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, Białowieża protects the last major remnant of Europe's primeval lowland forest and supports a strong population of European Bison, often seen at dawn or dusk.

Morning walks in parkland near our hotel may reveal Middle Spotted Woodpecker, Thrush Nightingale, Icterine Warbler, Black Redstart, Common Rosefinch, Hawfinch, and European Serin. Within the ancient woodland, we will search for a remarkable diversity of woodpeckers and flycatchers, while wetlands and meadows offer opportunities for Corncrake, Great Snipe, raptors, and storks.



European Bison by Adam Riley

A walk in the strict reserve can be very rewarding, with White-backed, Three-toed, Black, Middle Spotted, and Grey-headed Woodpeckers, together with Collared, Pied, and Red-breasted Flycatchers.

Open habitats hold breeding Fieldfare, River and Barred Warblers, Red-backed Shrike, and



Bearded Reedling by Adam Riley

Eurasian Wryneck. Corncrake is fairly common in wet meadows, and with luck we may glimpse one in the tall grass.

We will also have another chance for Hazel Grouse and Eurasian Pygmy Owl if missed in Slovakia. One evening we will walk to a wetland viewpoint to watch the lek of Great Snipe, one of Europe's most elusive and declining waders.

At Siemianówka reservoir we will search for Greater and Lesser Spotted Eagles, Black Stork, Whiskered and White-winged Terns, Common Crane, Citrine Wagtail, and Whinchat.

Białowieża to Biebrza National Park. On our way to Biebrza National Park we will stop at Dójliydy Fishponds to search for Red-necked and Black-necked Grebes, Eurasian Penduline Tit, Great Reed, Savi's and Marsh Warblers.

Biebrza National Park. Here we will explore some of the park's most exciting and diverse areas. From Goniądz we follow the high banks of the Biebrza River, where hundreds of songbirds, calling cranes, Black-tailed Godwit and other waterbirds are active in spring. We will look for Lesser and Greater Spotted Eagles, White-tailed Eagle, Montagu's Harrier, Hobby, White-winged, Whiskered and Black Terns, Black Stork, Hoopoe, Citrine Wagtail, Ortolan Bunting, Thrush Nightingale, Bluethroat, Common Rosefinch, and Penduline Tit.

We will also venture into the Southern Basin and Ławki Fen, home to the globally threatened Aquatic Warbler. Grasshopper and Sedge Warblers, and occasionally Short-eared Owl, are also possible.

The Middle Basin, with its flooded meadows and pastures, provides abundant feeding for waders, marsh terns, ducks, White Stork, and Common Crane. Raptors such as White-tailed Eagle, Western Marsh Harrier, and Lesser Spotted Eagle are occasionally seen. Reedbeds here support Bearded Reedling and Eurasian Bittern.



Aquatic Warbler by Adam Riley

Tour Grading & Key

Overall Ease		Suitable for all birding / wildlife interest levels.
Birding Ease		Moderate to undemanding. Most species provide good visuals in open conditions.
Accommodation		Comfortable, with good facilities throughout.
Walking / Trails		Easy to moderate. Most walks are on flat ground, paved or gravel tracks. A few longer hikes involve rougher ground and short inclines (optional).
Vehicles / Roads		Travel mostly on sealed roads of variable quality, some with potholes. Journeys can be long but are regularly broken with birding stops.
Photography		Worthwhile to good, with excellent opportunities for both landscapes and birds.
Annoyances		Some long days due to driving distances. Weather can be variable at this time of year, ranging from warm to mild, and occasionally cold at altitude.

Financial Arrangements and Important Notes

Tour dates, prices, single supplement, approximate flight costs and tour spaces are displayed on our website.

Tour inclusions:

- All meals from dinner on day 1 to breakfast on day 16;
- All lodgings;
- Drinking water on the vehicle;
- Ground transportation as noted in the itinerary;
- Reserve entrance fees;
- All guiding services

Tour exclusions:

- Visa fees;
- ANY flights;
- Any beverages (**including bottled water** and mini-bar charges at hotels);
- Optional excursions;
- Tips for local guides, drivers and services.
- Telephone calls, 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.

Tipping: As noted above, gratuities are NOT included on this tour. If you feel that your leader/s have given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip them at your discretion.

Our Relaxed series of tours are designed to focus on having an enjoyable holiday with a bird and wildlife focus. Where possible; we have reduced or removed long drives, single night stays and poor/rustic accommodation. We have also sought to reduce or remove difficult hikes, narrow/muddy trails and otherwise oppressive environmental conditions. Early starts and night birding are mostly optional, and we will not spend much time searching for difficult and/or skulking species. These tours are not suitable for hardcore birders and listers, or dedicated photographers.

- **Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is 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. The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates.**
- **Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registrations, a small group supplement will be offered to confirm the tour.**
- **Tour prices are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.**
- **The designated tour leader/s may be changed at short due to unforeseen circumstances.**
- **The itinerary is indicative only. Changes may need to be made to the order in which the tour is conducted, or some of the venues we visit closer to departure. We will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.**

- Since some longish drives are necessary to reach the best areas for birds and animals, and as space in the vehicles is limited, it is important for the comfort of your fellow travellers that you do not over-pack. Kindly stick to 20 kg (44lb) for check in luggage and 8kg (+-18lb) for hand luggage.
- The tour involves a few longer drives. Kiskunság National Park to Liptovský Ján = 5 to 6 hours, Liptovský Ján to Białowieża = 6 – 7 hours broken up with sightseeing in Kraków & Białowieża to Biebrza National Park = 4 hours, with birding stops en route.

Seasonal Timing & Weather Variability
This tour is scheduled to coincide with what has historically been the most productive period for birding in the region. However, weather patterns, including temperature, rainfall, snow cover, wind strength and wind direction, as well as broader environmental factors such as food availability, can significantly influence migration timing, breeding activity and bird distribution from year to year. In some seasons, key events such as migration peaks, breeding cycles or post-breeding dispersal may occur earlier or later than average, and the duration of these peak periods can be surprisingly brief. At migration bottlenecks in particular, prevailing wind conditions can have a major impact on the volume and diversity of birds moving through an area on any given day. While our itinerary is designed around long-term historical patterns and offers excellent birding prospects, no fixed-date tour can guarantee that it will coincide precisely with the absolute peak of every seasonal phenomenon. Guests whose primary objective is to experience a specific migration event or seasonal spectacle at its peak may wish to consider a Tailor-made Tour, where travel dates and locations can be adjusted closer to departure in response to prevailing conditions.

Arrival and Departure Details

The tour begins in the Budapest, the capital city of Hungary with a welcome group dinner at our lodge on day 1. The tour will conclude in Warsaw after breakfast on day 16.

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.

Sofia Vasil Levski Airport (IATA: SOF), Hungary is the main port of entry and Warsaw Chopin Airport (IATA: WAW), Poland, is main port of departure for the tour.

Visa requirements differ by country, nationality of the traveller and duration and purpose of your intended stay. It may be necessary to obtain a visa or an electronic travel authorization in advance of your travel. It is therefore vitally important that you check with your travel agent/consulate/embassy for exact visa requirements.

DO NOT book any flights until the Rockjumper Team have officially confirmed the tour.