Portugal

Southern Birds & History in Spring (Relaxed)



Great Bustards by Pedro Marques

Portugal offers a fantastic diversity of habitats and bird species within a relatively small area. Within just a half-hour's drive from Lisbon city centre and its international airport, we'll find the Tagus Estuary and the Sado Estuary Natural Reserves. These two remarkable protected wetland areas boast extensive bird lists that include the likes of Little Bustard, Bluethroat, Dartford, Savi's and Melodious Warblers, Iberian Chiffchaff, Iberian Grey and Woodchat Shrikes, Greater Flamingo, White Stork, Eurasian Spoonbill, Glossy Ibis, Squacco and Purple Herons, Booted Eagle, Black-winged Kite, Collared Pratincole, Pallid Swift, Spotless Starling, Rock Sparrow, European Serin, Cirl Bunting, and an excellent selection of ducks, waders, gulls, and terns.

An hour south, we'll reach Alentejo and visit both the rolling plains of Castro Verde (home to Great Bustard and, Red Kite), and the bluffs and hills of the Guadiana Valley Natural Park, noted for species such as Black Stork, Spanish Imperial Eagle and Iberian Green Woodpecker.

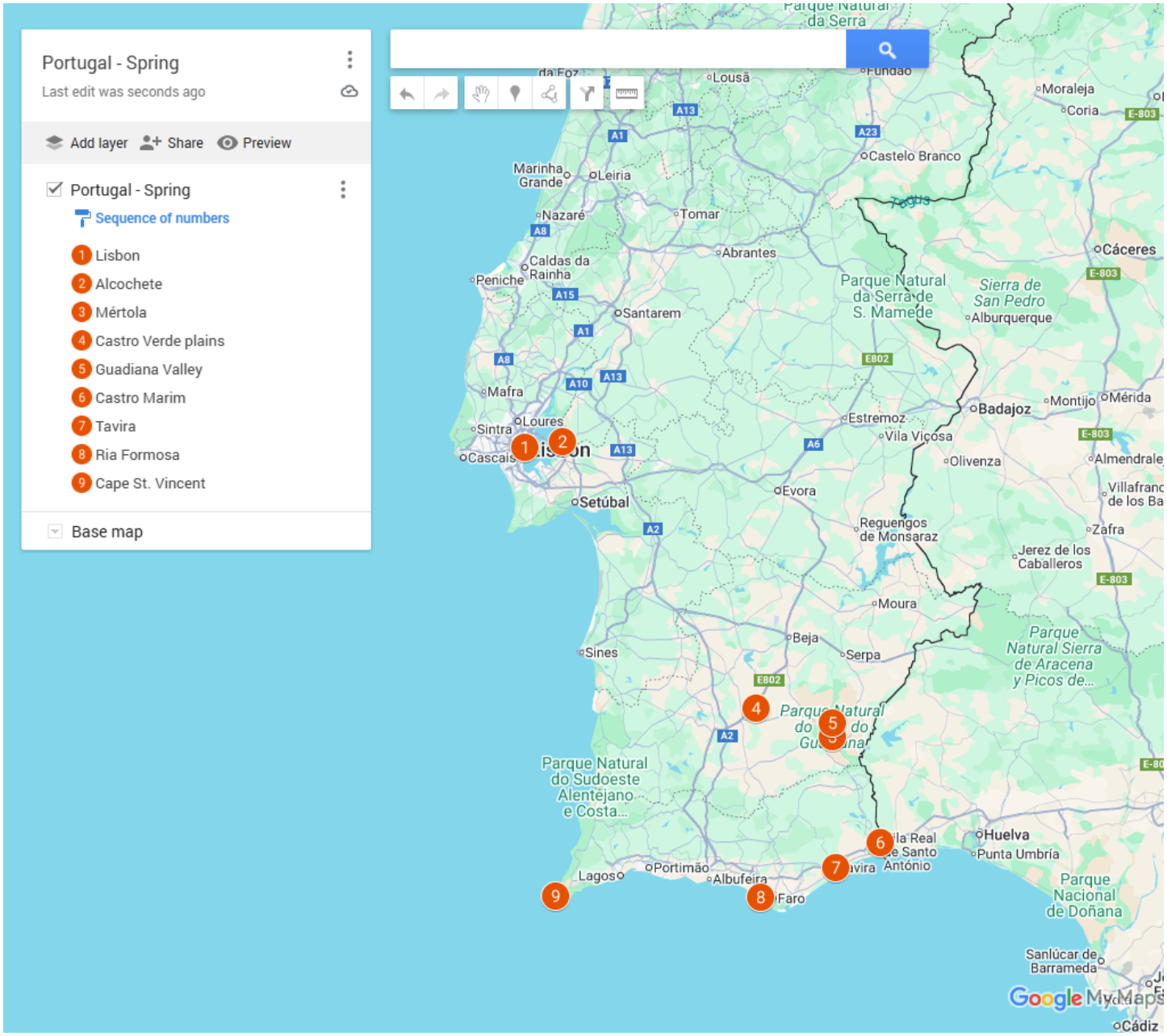
After departing Alentejo, we'll drive another 45-minute south to the Algarve, a region rich in protected wetlands, situated along a major migratory flyway from Africa and especially notable for waders and passerines. Some of the sites we will visit, such as the Ria Formosa Natural Park and the Castro Marim Natural Reserve, are unique in Portugal for hosting rare and highly localized species like Audouin's and Slender-billed Gulls and

Mediterranean Short-toed Lark. These sites also offer excellent opportunities for close views of scarce species such as Little Bittern and Western Swamphen, Red-necked Nightjar, Sardinian and Spectacled Warblers, and Iberian Magpie, which are particularly abundant here. The cliffs and shores at Cape St. Vincent should also provide an excellent opportunity to observe a wide range of seabird species.

All this birding activity is complemented by visits to some of Portugal's most interesting historical and cultural sites in Évora, Mértola, Sagres, and Lisbon. In fact, the country's rich cultural heritage is on display throughout our entire route. At various times, we'll be joined by qualified historians who will guide us through the historic districts of Évora, Mértola, and Lisbon, where we'll wander along winding streets and through historic plazas and squares en route to castles, cathedrals, museums, Roman ruins, and scenic promenades. We'll also have numerous opportunities to sample Portugal's many culinary delights and excellent wines.

Itinerary & Map

Day 1	**Lisbon to Alcochete; Tagus Estuary Nature Reserve**
Day 2	**Tagus Estuary Natural Reserve**
Day 3	**Tagus Estuary Natural Reserve & Sado Estuary Natural Reserve**
Day 4	**Alcochete to Mértola; Castro Verde plains & Évora**
Day 5	**Guadiana Valley Natural Park**
Day 6	**Castro Verde plains & Évora**
Day 7	**Guadiana Valley Natural Park & Mértola archaeological sites**
Day 8	**Mértola to Tavira via Castro Marim Natural Reserve**
Day 9	**Ria Formosa Natural Park**
Day 10	**Cape St. Vincent & Sagres; Salgados lagoon**
Day 11	**Tavira to Lisbon via Comporta & Carrasqueira**
Day 12	**Historical tour of Lisbon & final departure**


Portugal - Spring
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Portugal - Spring
Sequence of numbers
1 Lisbon
2 Alcochete
3 Mértola
4 Castro Verde plains
5 Guadiana Valley
6 Castro Marim
7 Tavira
8 Ria Formosa
9 Cape St. Vincent
Base map
Parque Natural da Serra
Lousã
Fundão
Moraleja
Coria
Castelo Branco
Marinha Grande
Leiria
Nazaré
Tomar
Abrantes
Caldas da Rainha
Peniche
Santarem
Parque Natural da Serra de S. Mamede
Sierra de San Pedro
Alburquerque
Cáceres
Mafra
Loures
Sintra
Cascais
Setúbal
Estremoz
Vila Viçosa
Badajoz
Montijo
Mérida
Olivenza
Almendrale
Evora
Reguengos de Monsaraz
Zafra
Jerez de los Caballeros
Moura
Beja
Serpa
Sines
Parque Natural Sierra de Aracena y Picos de...
Parque Natural do Sudoeste Alentejano e Costa...
Lagos
Portimão
Albufeira
Faro
Huelva
Punta Umbría
Parque Nacional de Doñana
Sanlúcar de Barrameda
Cádiz
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Birding sites in detail

Tagus Estuary Natural Reserve & Sado Estuary Natural Reserve. We'll spend time birding several areas and a variety of habitats within the Tagus Estuary Natural Reserve, including the intertidal mudflats and salt marshes of Hortas, the salt pans of Atalaya, Ribeira das Enguias, and Samouco, as well as the rice fields of Barroca d'Alva and the surrounding pastures.

We'll also explore the Cork Oak woodlands of Pancas, and visit the salt pans and intertidal mudflats of Mitrena, Mourisca, and Zambujal along the north bank of the river within the Sado Estuary Natural Reserve.

These two remarkable, protected wetland areas host extensive bird lists, including: Greater Flamingo, White Stork, Eurasian Spoonbill, Glossy Ibis, Greylag Geese, Squacco Heron, Black-winged Kite, Western Swamphen, Little Bustard, Little Owl, Bluethroat, Iberian Grey Shrike, Spotless Starling, Crested Tit, Rock Sparrow, European Serin, Cirl Bunting and an excellent selection of ducks, waders, gulls and terns.



Iberian Green Woodpecker by Stephan Lorenz

Évora. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, Évora is one of Portugal's most historically rich cities, featuring archaeological remains from Roman, medieval, and even earlier prehistoric periods. We will be guided by a historian who will interpret these fascinating archaeological sites.

Guadiana Valley Natural Park. We'll explore the bluffs and hills of the Guadiana Valley Natural Park, including the areas of Mértola, Canais, Mina de São Domingos, and Alcaria Ruiva. Species of note that we may find today include Griffon and Cinereous Vultures, Spanish Imperial, Golden, Bonelli's and Short-toed Snake Eagles, Iberian Green Woodpecker, Eurasian Eagle-Owl, Eurasian Crag Martin, Eurasian Red-rumped Swallow, Eurasian Oriole, Dartford Warbler, Iberian Magpie, Blue Rock Thrush, Long-tailed Tit, Spanish Sparrow, Hawfinch and Rock Bunting.



Bluethroat by Clayton Burne

Castro Verde plains. Located in southern Alentejo, near Mértola, the Castro Verde plains are extensive rolling landscapes that support species such as Great Bustard, Red Kite, Lesser Kestrel, Eurasian Stone-curlew, Northern Lapwing, Montague's Harrier, European Bee-eater, European Roller, Black-bellied Sandgrouse, Great Spotted Cuckoo and Calandra Lark.

Mértola archaeological site. Guided by a historian, we will explore the archaeological remains of Mértola, a town of great historical significance due to its Roman and Moorish heritage.

We'll also visit other highlights of this protected area, including Pulo do Lobo gorge, Álvares, and São João dos Caldeireiros.



Audouin's Gull by David Hoddinott

Ria Formosa Natural Park & Castro Marim Nature Reserve. Located in the Algarve, we'll spend time in both Ria Formosa Natural Park and the Castro Marim Nature Reserve. This diverse area of dunes, open water, intertidal mudflats, salt marshes, salt pans, reed beds, lagoons, and pine woods is a key site for rare and highly localized species such as Audouin's Gull, Slender-billed Gull, and Mediterranean Short-toed Lark.

These habitats are also excellent for viewing scarce species such as Little Bittern, while Little Owl, Eurasian Hoopoe, and Common Kingfisher are particularly abundant.



Red Kite by Clayton Burne

Cape St. Vincent. The cliffs and shoreline at Cape St. Vincent offer excellent seabird viewing, and the chance to see localized species such as the Red-billed Chough.

Lisbon. We'll explore the city of Lisbon, including its main squares and avenues, the Baixa (downtown area), several hilltop districts, the Castle of São Jorge, and the cathedral.

In Belém, the historic district from which Portuguese explorers set sail, we'll visit the Monument to the Discoveries and two UNESCO World Heritage Sites: the Tower of Belém and the Jerónimos Monastery.

Tour Grading & Key

Overall Ease		Suitable for all birding / wildlife interest levels.
Birding Ease		Undemanding. Most species provide good visuals in open conditions.
Accommodation		Comfortable.
Walking / Trails		Mostly short walks on flat ground, with some areas of uneven/rocky ground.
Vehicles / Roads		Good quality sealed roads & unsealed dirt roads. Some long drives broken up with birding stops.
Photography		Worthwhile to good.
Annoyances		Some bright sunny days, rain is possible.

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 lunch on day 12;
- All lodgings;
- Ground transportation;
- Bottled water;
- Wine with some dinners;
- Reserve and historical site entrance fees;
- Professional historian guides in Évora, Mértola and Lisbon;
- Conservation fees for a local conservation Project in the Guadiana Valley Natural Park;
- Bottled water;
- Local bird guiding services;

Tour exclusions:

- Visa fees;
- ANY flights;
- Beverages (including mini-bar charges at hotels);
- Optional excursions;
- Special gratuities & tips (including local guides, drivers and hotels);
- 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.

- **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.**

- It is important for the comfort of your fellow travellers that you do not over-pack. Kindly stick to 18kg (40 lb) for check in luggage and 8kg (+-18 lb) for hand luggage.
- Fitness: This 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.
- Accommodation throughout the trip is of a generally good standard and the hotels and resorts that we make use of are comfortable.

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 departs from our Lisbon hotel on the morning of day 1 with a group transfer to Alcochete. Do ensure that you arrive the previous day. The tour will conclude at Humberto Delgado Airport in the afternoon of day 12.

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.

Humberto Delgado Airport (IATA: LIS) is the main port of entry for international flights for this 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.