Spain

Southern Birds, Wildlife & Culture (Relaxed)



Greater Flamingo by Daniel Danckwerts

Spain is one of Europe's finest wildlife destinations, combining exceptional birding with dramatic landscapes, historic towns, excellent food and a wonderfully varied countryside. This relaxed journey through Andalucía and Extremadura is designed to showcase the very best of southern Spain at an unhurried pace, blending rewarding birding and wildlife experiences with culture, scenery and distinctive regional character. Along the way, we enjoy a broad range of habitats, from wetlands and coastal plains to mountain landscapes, open steppe and Mediterranean woodland.

We begin around Ronda, one of Andalucía's famous White Villages, before visiting the flamingo-rich wetlands of Fuente de Piedra and the limestone landscapes of the Serranía de Ronda. From here we continue to Tarifa and the Strait of Gibraltar, where seabirds, migrating raptors, shorebirds and Northern Bald Ibis are among the many possibilities. Our time here is complemented by opportunities to explore the historic town, enjoy the surrounding coastal scenery and take a private boat trip into the Strait.

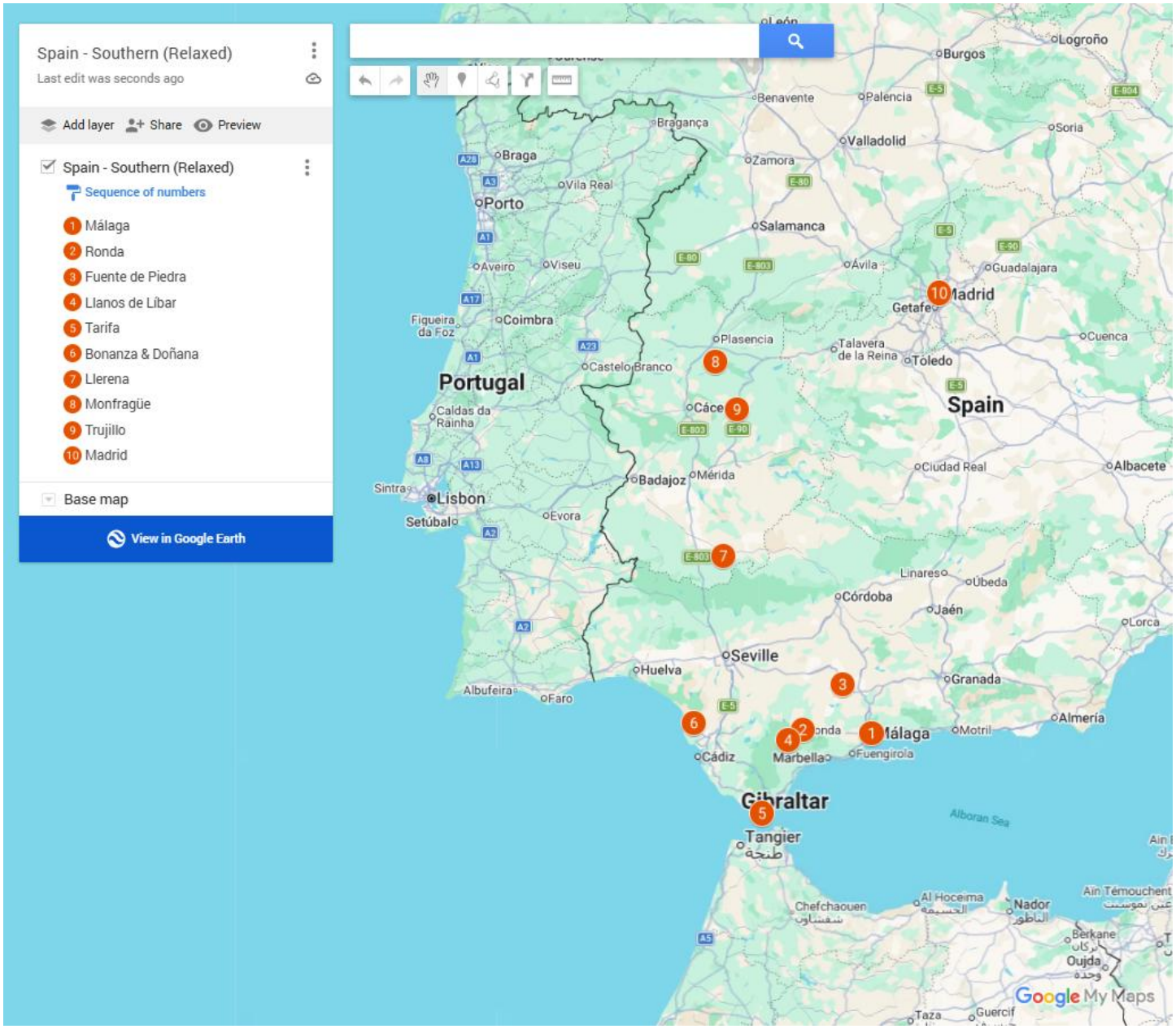
Our journey then takes us to the vast wetlands of Doñana, one of Spain's most celebrated natural areas, where marshes, lagoons, salt pans and Mediterranean woodland support White-headed and Marbled Ducks, Greater

Flamingo, Eurasian Spoonbill, Iberian Magpie and numerous other wetland species. The diversity of habitats here ensures a constantly changing selection of birds and wildlife.

Continuing north into Extremadura, we explore open steppes, rugged sierras and traditional dehesa countryside, home to some of Spain's most iconic birds and mammals. A private 4x4 safari offers the possibility of Iberian Lynx, while Spanish Imperial, Golden and Bonelli's Eagles are among the region's standout raptors. We finish in Monfragüe National Park, one of Europe's great raptor strongholds, before visiting the productive wetlands of Arrocampo and historic Trujillo.

Itinerary & Map

Day 1	**Arrival in Málaga, transfer to Ronda**
Day 2	**Fuente de Piedra & evening Flamenco show**
Day 3	**Llanos de Líbar to Tarifa**
Days 4 & 5	**Tarifa & surrounds, whale & pelagic boat trip**
Day 6	**Tarifa to Bonanza & Doñana**
Days 7 & 8	**Doñana**
Day 9	**Doñana to Llerena**
Day 10	**Llerena – Iberian Lynx & the big eagles of Spain**
Day 11	**Llerena to Monfragüe**
Day 12	**Monfragüe – premier raptor viewing**
Day 13	**Monfragüe & Trujillo**
Day 14	**Monfragüe to Madrid & final departure**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Birding sites in detail

Ronda. Set dramatically above the deep gorge of the Guadalevín River, Ronda provides a superb introduction to Andalucía. Its atmospheric old quarter, white washed historic buildings (Pueblos Blancos) and spectacular Puente Nuevo make it one of southern Spain's most memorable towns.



White-headed Duck by Rob Williams

The cliffs and open country surrounding Ronda also allow us to begin birding without venturing far from our accommodation. Lesser Kestrels and Red-billed Choughs breed around the impressive gorge, while Griffon Vulture and Peregrine Falcon may patrol overhead. The cliffs and surrounding countryside also offer chances for Eurasian Crag Martin, Blue Rock Thrush, Black Redstart, European Serin and Sardinian Warbler. A relaxed exploration on foot gives us time to appreciate both the wildlife and this beautifully situated historic town.

On one evening we will enjoy one of Andalucía's most celebrated cultural traditions with a live flamenco performance. This distinctly Andalusian tradition combines guitar, song and dance, making for a memorable evening and a fitting addition to our time in this historic town.

Fuente de Piedra. One of inland Andalucía's great wetlands, Fuente de Piedra is a vast, shallow saline lagoon surrounded by olive groves and agricultural land. It is particularly renowned for its impressive numbers of Greater Flamingos, which gather here to breed when water conditions are favourable and can create one of southern Spain's great wildlife spectacles.



Lesser Kestrel by Rob Williams

The lagoon and its surrounding shallow pools and margins also support an excellent variety of waterfowl, shorebirds, gulls and terns. Depending on seasonal conditions, we may encounter White-headed Duck, Black-necked Grebe, Pied Avocet, Black-winged Stilt, Kentish Plover and numerous migrant waders, while Gull-billed Tern and Western Marsh Harrier are further possibilities. The surrounding reeds, scrub and agricultural land may produce Cetti's Warbler, Zitting

Cisticola, Spanish Sparrow, Crested and Calandra Larks and, as spring progresses, Greater Short-toed Lark. Well-positioned viewpoints allow much of the birding to be undertaken comfortably.



Northern Bald Ibis pair at the breeding colony by Yeray Seminario

Llanos de Líbar & the Serranía de Ronda. The limestone mountains surrounding Ronda provide a complete change of habitat. Around the Llanos de Líbar, broad valleys, rocky slopes, pasture and Mediterranean woodland create a spectacular setting for a leisurely morning in the field.

Here we will search for Spanish Ibex among the rugged slopes, while characteristic birds may include Black Wheatear, Blue Rock Thrush, Rock Sparrow, Rock Bunting, Thekla's Lark and Black Redstart. The scrub and woodland support an excellent selection of Mediterranean warblers, with Sardinian, Dartford, Spectacled, Western Subalpine and Western Orphean Warblers all possible. Raptors are regularly seen overhead, including Bonelli's and Golden Eagles, and the dramatic mountain scenery is very much part of the experience. We will concentrate on the more accessible sections of this beautiful area before continuing towards Tarifa.

Tarifa & the Strait of Gibraltar. The Strait of Gibraltar is one of Europe's great birding locations. Here the Mediterranean meets the Atlantic, while only a narrow stretch of sea separates Europe from North Africa. This geography funnels huge numbers of migrating birds through the region and creates an exceptional combination of coastal, marine, farmland and Mediterranean woodland habitats.

We have time to explore the area, allowing weather and local conditions to dictate exactly how we use our time. Sites such as Los Lances, Barbate Marshes and La Janda may produce Collared Pratincole, Greater Short-



Egyptian Vulture by Yeray Seminario

toed and Calandra Larks, Zitting Cisticola, Spanish Sparrow, Woodchat Shrike and a wide selection of shorebirds and open-country species. Reed-lined channels may hold Cetti's and Eurasian Reed Warblers, while the surrounding cork-oak woodland provides opportunities for Iberian Chiffchaff and other Mediterranean passerines. Northern Bald Ibis is an important regional target, while Booted Eagle, Short-toed Snake Eagle, Black-winged Kite and Egyptian Vulture among the raptors that may be encountered on migration.



Short-toed Snake Eagle by Rob Williams

A private boat excursion adds another dimension, with the possibility of dolphins, whales and seabirds in the Strait. Our extended stay also allows time to explore Tarifa itself, including its attractive old town, medieval ramparts and narrow streets, as well as enjoying a relaxed wine tasting and dinner.

Bonanza, Sanlúcar & the Guadalquivir Estuary. The Bonanza salt pans, close to the mouth of the Guadalquivir River, provide some of the finest wetland birding in the wider Doñana region. Shallow pans, channels and mudflats attract impressive numbers of shorebirds, gulls, terns and flamingos, often allowing excellent views in open conditions.

White-headed and Marbled Ducks are important targets, while possible shorebirds include Kentish Plover, Ruff, Black-tailed Godwit, Curlew Sandpiper, Little Stint, Sanderling and Common Greenshank. Greater Flamingo, Eurasian Spoonbill and Slender-billed Gull may occur in impressive numbers, while Mediterranean Short-toed Lark and Spectacled Warbler are additional possibilities. Around nearby Chipiona we will also look for Little Swift, which has one of its most important European colonies here.



Marbled Duck by Rob Williams

Depending on conditions, nearby Sanlúcar de Barrameda and Chipiona also provide opportunities for coastal species before we continue into the Doñana region.

Doñana. Few European wetlands possess the reputation of Doñana. At the mouth of the Guadalquivir River, an enormous mosaic of marshland, shallow lagoons, dunes, scrub, pine forest and cork-

oak woodland forms one of the continent's most important refuges for wetland birds and migrants.

We have ample time to explore different parts of this extensive region rather than attempting to cover everything in a single long day. Among our principal targets are White-headed and Marbled Ducks and Iberian Magpie. Depending on water levels and seasonal conditions, we may also encounter Purple and Squacco Herons, Red-crested Pochard, Pied Avocet, Western Marsh Harrier and Booted Eagle. The reedbeds, scrub and woodland provide opportunities for smaller species such as Cetti's and Sardinian Warblers, Iberian Chiffchaff and Common Nightingale, while spring passage may produce Willow Warbler, Common Redstart, Whinchat and various other migrant passerines.



Blue Rock Thrush by David Hoddinott

The woodland sections provide a very different birding experience from the open marshes, while established tracks and observation areas allow productive birding without demanding walking.

El Rocío. On the eastern edge of Doñana lies the extraordinary village of El Rocío, famous throughout Spain for its annual pilgrimage. Sandy streets, whitewashed buildings and its imposing church overlook the extensive marsh, allowing local culture and wildlife to meet quite literally at the edge of town.

Depending on water levels, the marsh can hold an impressive variety of waterbirds immediately in front of the village. Nearby areas provide access to reedbeds, pine woodland and Mediterranean scrub, where Cetti's Warbler, Zitting Cisticola, Spanish Sparrow and Iberian Magpie may accompany the more conspicuous herons, waterfowl and raptors.



Dartford Warbler by Clayton Burne

Rather than treating El Rocío simply as another birding stop, we will also take time to enjoy the atmosphere and distinctive Andalusian character of the village.

Llerena & Sierra Grande de Hornachos. Moving north into Extremadura, Llerena provides our base for exploring the varied countryside surrounding Hornachos, where rocky ridges rise dramatically above open farmland, Mediterranean scrub and dehesa.

The Sierra Grande de Hornachos is particularly productive for raptors, with possibilities including Bonelli's, Golden



Iberian Lynx by Javi Elorriaga

and Short-toed Snake Eagles. Black and Western Black-eared Wheatears, Blue Rock Thrush, Rock Sparrow, Rock Bunting, Hawfinch and European Serin may also be encountered, while Mediterranean scrub supports Sardinian, Dartford and Western Subalpine Warblers. Common Nightingale is another characteristic voice of the spring countryside.

Hornachos itself adds considerable historical interest, allowing us to combine a scenic town visit with gentle birding around the surrounding crags rather than structuring the day around prolonged searches for individual species.



Pin-tailed Sandgrouse by David Hoddinott

Llerena Private Wildlife Safari. A private 4x4 wildlife safari in the Llerena region provides one of the tour's key wildlife experiences. Travelling through extensive dehesa, Mediterranean woodland and open countryside allows us to cover a broad area comfortably and with very little walking.

Iberian Lynx is the headline mammal and one we will devote appropriate time to searching for, although sightings of this elusive wild cat can never be guaranteed. The area also provides opportunities for three of Spain's great eagles: Spanish Imperial, Golden and Bonelli's. Iberian Magpie, Common Hoopoe, Woodchat

Shrike, Spanish Sparrow and Corn Bunting are among the characteristic birds of the surrounding dehesa and open countryside.



Little Bustard by Rob Williams

Extremadura Steppes & Campo Lugar. As we travel north towards Monfragüe, we cross some of Extremadura's superb steppe country. Broad cereal fields, rough pasture and gently rolling plains support a dramatically different bird community from the wetlands and mountains encountered earlier in the tour.

Our main targets include Great and Little Bustards, Pin-tailed Sandgrouse and Calandra Lark. Other possibilities include Black-bellied Sandgrouse, Great Spotted Cuckoo, Spanish Sparrow, Iberian Grey Shrike and Montagu's Harrier. The open fields and roadside margins also support Crested, Thekla's and Greater Short-toed Larks, Corn Bunting, European Stonechat and, with luck, Tawny Pipit and Woodchat Shrike.

Much of the birding is undertaken from quiet roads and well-chosen stops, providing excellent viewing opportunities without requiring lengthy walks.

Monfragüe National Park. Monfragüe National Park is among Spain's most celebrated birding destinations and one of the finest raptor-watching locations in Europe. Rugged ridges, wooded slopes, river valleys and extensive dehesa support an outstanding concentration of large birds of prey.

Spanish Imperial Eagle is one of the park's star attractions, while Griffon, Cinereous and Egyptian Vultures, Black Stork, Golden Eagle and numerous other raptors may all be encountered. Famous viewpoints such as Salto del Gitano and Portilla del Tiétar allow superb views across dramatic cliffs and river valleys, where Blue Rock Thrush, Rock Sparrow and Rock Bunting may also be found. Away from the cliffs, Mediterranean woodland and scrub support Iberian Magpie, Short-toed Treecreeper, Woodchat Shrike and an excellent selection of warblers.



Bearded Reedling by Clayton Burne

As we are based here for several nights, there is no need to rush between sites. We can revisit productive viewpoints, explore different habitats and take breaks during quieter periods of the day.

Arrocampo. The Arrocampo Reservoir, near Saucedilla, adds a highly productive reedbed wetland to our time in Extremadura. Extensive

stands of emergent vegetation and open water provide habitat for a suite of species quite different from those associated with nearby Monfragüe.

Little Bittern, Purple and Squacco Herons, Water Rail and Purple Swamphen are among the wetland possibilities, while the extensive reedbeds support an excellent selection of smaller marsh birds. Bearded Reedling is an important local target, joined by Eurasian Penduline Tit, Savi's and Cetti's Warblers, while Common Reed and Great Reed Warblers become increasingly conspicuous as spring advances. Zitting Cisticola occurs around the more open margins, and passage can occasionally produce crakes and other scarce wetland migrants.



Little Bittern by Yeray Seminario

A series of viewing areas provides access to the reedbeds and open water, and our birding can easily be adapted according to how much walking the group wishes to undertake.

Trujillo. We conclude our exploration of Extremadura with time in the historic town of Trujillo. Its impressive Plaza Mayor is surrounded by churches, palaces and historic buildings, while the older quarter climbs towards the medieval castle overlooking the surrounding countryside.

Birding is never entirely absent, with Lesser Kestrels regularly associated with the historic buildings and a variety of other birds occurring around the town and surrounding open country. However, our visit is deliberately broader in focus, providing time to explore one of Extremadura's most attractive towns before enjoying a special final tour dinner.

Tour Grading & Key

Overall Ease		Easy to moderate. Suitable for all birding & wildlife interest levels.
Birding Ease		Mostly easy & undemanding. Much of the birding is in open habitats or from roads, viewpoints. Some species may require patient scanning.
Accommodation		Comfortable to very comfortable.
Walking / Trails		Mostly short walks on good tracks, paths and town streets, with some uneven or rocky terrain in the Ronda mountains. No strenuous hiking is planned.
Vehicles / Roads		Mostly good-quality sealed roads, with some unsealed tracks & a private 4x4 wildlife excursion. Transfer days are generally easy & broken up with birding stops.
Photography		Excellent opportunities for birds, mammals, landscapes & historic architecture, although this is not a dedicated photographic tour.
Annoyances		Variable spring weather. Strong winds around Tarifa may occasionally affect migration viewing or boat excursions; rain & bright sunny conditions are both 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 breakfast on day 14;
- Bottled water;
- All lodgings;
- Ground transportation;
- Private boat excursion in the Strait of Gibraltar, weather permitting;
- Reserve entrance fees and permits;
- Flamenco show in Ronda;
- Tips (including local guides, drivers and hotels);
- Extra activities as mentioned in the itinerary;

Tour exclusions:

- Visa fees;
- ANY flights;
- Any beverages (ie: mini-bar charges at hotels etc);
- Optional excursions;
- Special gratuities;
- 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 (drivers, hotel staff, restaurants etc.) are included on this tour. However, this does NOT include your Rockjumper leader/s. If you feel that they have given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip them at your discretion.

- **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 notice 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.**

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.

- 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 high standard and the hotels and resorts that we make use of are very comfortable. There is no camping on this trip.
- Most walks on this tour are short and undertaken at an easy pace. The majority of our birding is from roads, viewpoints and established paths. Some uneven or rocky terrain may be encountered around Ronda and the Serranía de Ronda, but no strenuous or prolonged hiking is planned.

Arrival and Departure Details

The tour begins at Málaga International Airport on day 1, from where we will transfer to Ronda. The tour concludes at Madrid-Barajas International Airport on day 14 following our transfer from Monfragüe.

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.

Málaga-Costa del Sol Airport (IATA: AGP) is the arrival airport for this tour, while Adolfo Suárez Madrid-Barajas Airport (IATA: MAD) is the departure airport.

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.