Spain

Strait of Gibraltar Migration Spectacle



Griffon Vulture by Yeray Seminario

Southern Spain hosts one of the greatest bird migration spectacles on the planet. At the narrow Strait of Gibraltar, only 14 kilometres (9 miles) separate Europe from Africa, creating a natural bottleneck through which millions of birds pass each year. During late September, the migration season is often at its peak, with vast numbers of raptors, storks, seabirds and passerines moving south towards their African wintering grounds. Few places in the world offer such opportunities to witness migration on this scale.

Our journey focuses on the diverse landscapes of Andalusia, from the internationally important wetlands of the Guadalquivir Valley and Doñana region to the dramatic cliffs and coastal habitats surrounding Tarifa, Europe's southernmost point. Along the way we will explore some of Spain's most productive birding areas in search of a remarkable array of species, including Spanish Imperial Eagle, Bonelli's Eagle, Black-winged Kite, White-headed Duck, Marbled Duck, Northern Bald Ibis, Little Swift and Greater Flamingo.

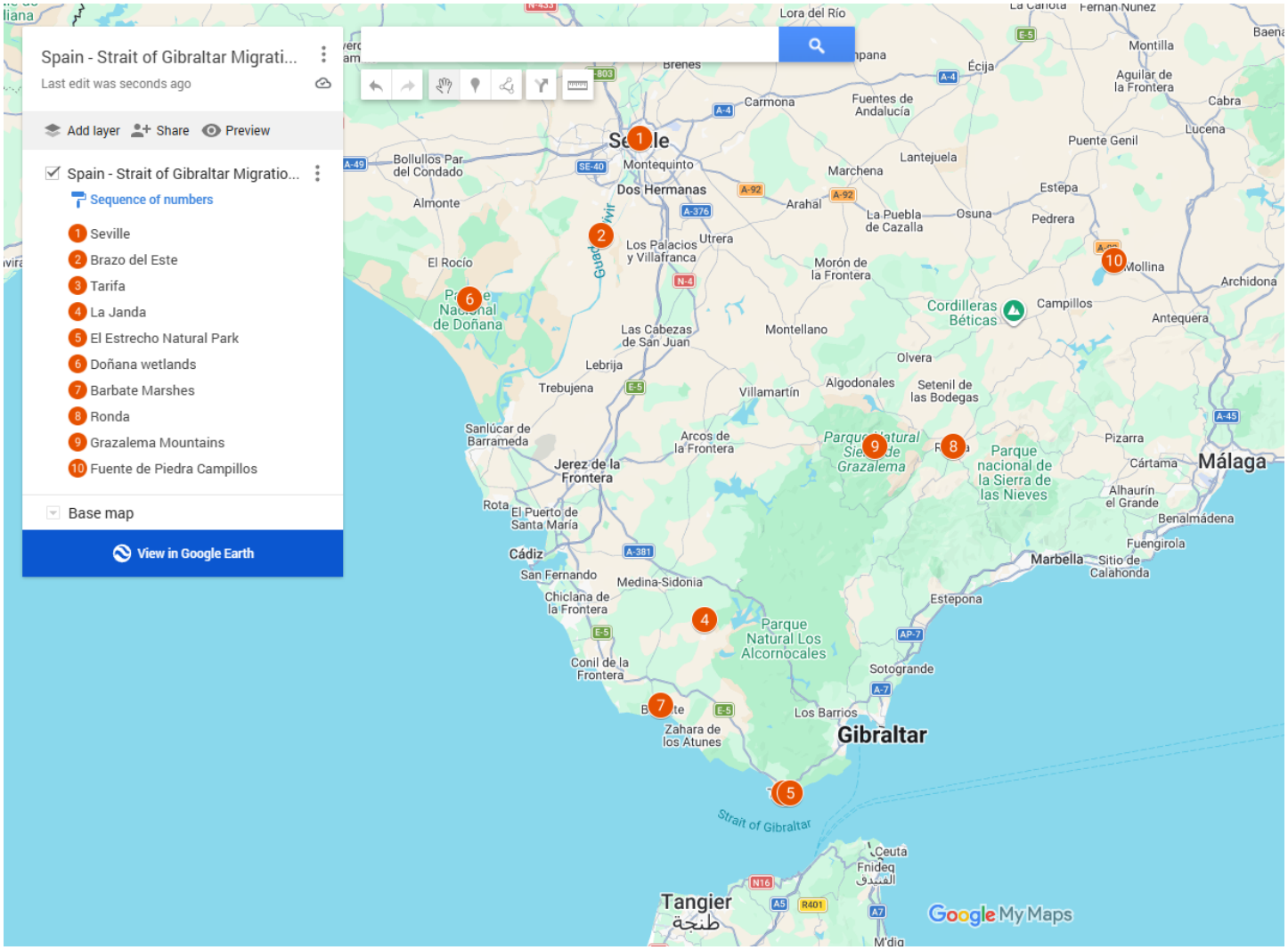
The waters of the Strait are equally rewarding, supporting an impressive variety of seabirds and marine mammals. Sea watching may produce Mediterranean (Balearic) and Scopoli's Shearwaters, Northern Gannet and skuas, while our whale-watching excursion offers opportunities to encounter several species of dolphins and whales in one of Europe's richest marine environments.

Migration remains the central theme throughout the tour. Weather permitting, we may witness breathtaking concentrations of soaring birds gathering above the hills overlooking the Strait before embarking on the crossing to Africa. Thousands of Black Kites, Short-toed Snake Eagles, Booted Eagles, storks and other migrants can fill the skies, creating one of the most memorable wildlife experiences Europe has to offer.

Combining spectacular migration, outstanding wetlands, dramatic mountain scenery and a wealth of Mediterranean specialities, this tour offers an unforgettable exploration of one of Europe's premier birding destinations.

Itinerary & Map

Day 1	**Arrive in Seville; transfer to Tarifa via Brazo del Este wetlands**
Day 2	**Raptor migration observatories & La Janda**
Day 3	**Sea watching & El Estrecho Natural Park**
Day 4	**Doñana wetlands**
Day 5	**Barbate Marshes, Northern Bald Ibis & whale watching**
Day 6	**Tarifa to Ronda & Grazalema Mountains**
Day 7	**Fuente de Piedra Campillos to Seville & final departure**


Spain - Strait of Gibraltar Migrati...
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Sequence of numbers
1 Seville
2 Brazo del Este
3 Tarifa
4 La Janda
5 El Estrecho Natural Park
6 Doñana wetlands
7 Barbate Marshes
8 Ronda
9 Grazalema Mountains
10 Fuente de Piedra Campillos
Base map
View in Google Earth
Lora del Río
Montilla
Écija
Carmona
Fuentes de Andalucía
Puente Genil
Lucena
Montequinto
Dos Hermanas
Marchena
Lantejuela
Estepa
Almonte
Arahal
La Puebla de Cazalla
Osuna
Pedrera
Los Palacios y Villafranca
Utrera
El Rocío
Morón de la Frontera
Mollina
Archidona
Cordilleras Béticas
Campillos
Antequera
Las Cabezas de San Juan
Montellano
Lebrija
Olvera
Trebujena
Villamartín
Algodonales
Setenil de las Bodegas
Sanlúcar de Barrameda
Arcos de la Frontera
Pizarra
Cártama
Málaga
Jerez de la Frontera
Parque nacional de la Sierra de las Nieves
Alhaurín el Grande
Rota
El Puerto de Santa María
Benalmádena
Fuengirola
Cádiz
Marbella
Sitio de Calahonda
San Fernando
Medina-Sidonia
Chiclana de la Frontera
Estepona
Parque Natural Los Alcornocales
Conil de la Frontera
Sotogrande
Los Barrios
Zahara de los Atunes
Gibraltar
Strait of Gibraltar
Ceuta
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Birding sites in detail



White-headed Duck by Rob Williams

Brazo del Este wetlands. Our first birding destination lies within the fertile Guadalquivir Valley, where the extensive wetlands of Brazo del Este provide a superb introduction to the birdlife of southern Spain. A network of reed-fringed channels, lagoons and agricultural wetlands supports an impressive diversity of waterbirds, including regional specialties such as White-headed Duck, Marbled Duck, Purple (Western) Swamphen and Glossy Ibis. Large flocks of Greater Flamingos often adorn the marshes, while migrating waders and raptors add further excitement during the autumn migration season. As one of Andalusia's premier wetland sites, Brazo del Este offers a fitting start to our exploration of southern Spain.

Raptor migration observatories & La Janda. The Strait of Gibraltar is one of the world's greatest migration bottlenecks, where vast numbers of soaring birds concentrate before making the crossing between Europe and Africa. During late September, migration is often in full swing, and favourable weather conditions can produce breathtaking movements involving thousands of raptors in a single day. Black Kite, Short-toed Snake Eagle, Booted Eagle, Egyptian Vulture, European Honey Buzzard, Eurasian Sparrowhawk and Western Marsh Harrier are all regular migrants, while impressive flocks of White Storks and the more sought-after Black Stork may also be encountered.

Complementing this spectacle is nearby La Janda, a vast former wetland now consisting of open farmland, marshy depressions and irrigation channels. This productive area is one of the best locations in Spain for some of the country's most sought-after raptors, including Spanish Imperial Eagle, Bonelli's Eagle and Black-winged Kite. The combination of resident specialties and spectacular migration makes this one of the highlights of the tour.



Short-toed Snake Eagle by Yeray Seminario

Sea watching & El Estrecho Natural Park. The meeting point of the Atlantic Ocean and Mediterranean Sea creates one of Europe's finest seawatching locations. Autumn seabird movements through the Strait can be particularly rewarding, and we



Southern Spain scenery and Africa on the other side of the Strait by Yeray Seminario

will spend time scanning the waters for Scopoli's and Mediterranean (Balearic) Shearwaters, Northern Gannet, Great Skua and Parasitic Jaeger, while other seabirds may appear depending on prevailing winds and sea conditions.

We will also explore the spectacular landscapes of El Estrecho (The Strait) Natural Park around Bolonia and Sierra de la Plata. Here, dramatic cliffs overlook the sea and provide magnificent views across to the mountains of Morocco. Griffon Vultures are a constant feature overhead, while Egyptian Vulture and the increasingly regular Rüppell's Vulture are both possible. Rocky slopes support characteristic Mediterranean species including Blue Rock Thrush, Thekla's Lark and Cirl Bunting.

Doñana wetlands. Few wetland systems in Europe rival the ecological importance of the greater Doñana region. Rather than concentrating solely on the heavily visited sections of the national park, we will explore a variety of productive habitats around the Guadalquivir estuary, including fish ponds, lagoons, saltworks, marshes and traditional agricultural landscapes.



Marbled Duck by Rob Williams

Late September is an excellent time to experience the area's remarkable bird diversity. Greater Flamingos, Glossy Ibises, herons, egrets, terns and migrant shorebirds can occur in impressive numbers, while White-headed Duck and Marbled Duck rank among our principal targets. The



Northern Bald Ibis pair at the breeding colony by Yeray Seminario

region is also home to Europe's only breeding population of Little Swift, providing another unique highlight of our time in southern Spain.

Barbate Marshes, Northern Bald Ibis & whale watching. The extensive saltpans and tidal marshes around Barbate support a rich variety of coastal birds and serve as an important stopover site for migrants moving along the Atlantic coast. Shorebirds are often abundant, while Greater Flamingos, gulls and terns make use of the productive wetlands. The surrounding open countryside may produce Eurasian Thick-knee, Tawny Pipit and Greater Short-toed Lark.

This region is also renowned for one of Europe's greatest conservation success stories. Following a successful reintroduction programme, Northern Bald Ibis once again breeds along the Cádiz coastline, providing one of the world's best opportunities to observe this remarkable and highly charismatic species.

During the afternoon, we will venture onto the waters of the Strait itself in search of the area's rich marine life. Resident Common, Bottlenose and Striped Dolphins are frequently encountered, while Long-finned Pilot Whale is regular. Depending on seasonal movements and sea conditions, Sperm Whale, Fin Whale and even Killer Whale are all possible.

Grazalema Mountains. The rugged limestone mountains of the Sierra de Grazalema provide a striking contrast to the wetlands and coastal habitats visited earlier in the tour. Deep gorges, towering cliffs and rocky slopes support an excellent selection of Mediterranean mountain birds, including Black Wheatear, Rock Sparrow and Rock Bunting, while Spanish Ibex is frequently encountered amongst the crags.

Raptors remain a feature of the landscape, with Griffon Vultures often soaring overhead and both Bonelli's and Golden Eagles possible. Migration continues even in the mountains, and passing raptors and other migrants can add unexpected excitement throughout the day.

The historic city of Ronda offers a spectacular setting in which to



Sperm Whale in the Strait by Yeray Seminario



Mediterranean Shearwater by Clayton Burne

conclude our mountain birding. The dramatic gorge and surrounding cliffs support Alpine Swift, Crag Martin, Peregrine Falcon and Red-billed Chough, all set against one of Andalusia's most iconic landscapes.

Fuente de Piedra Campillos. Our final birding destination takes us to the famous lagoon systems of Fuente de Piedra and Campillos. Fuente de Piedra is internationally recognised as one of Europe's most important breeding sites for Greater Flamingo, and although water levels vary considerably from year to year, the wetlands regularly support impressive numbers of flamingos, ducks, shorebirds and other waterbirds.

The surrounding Campillos lagoons add further variety, often attracting a diverse assortment of migrants during autumn passage. These productive wetlands provide an excellent final opportunity to enjoy Andalusia's remarkable birdlife before our return to Seville and the conclusion of the tour.



Juvenile Spanish Imperial Eagle & Western Jackdaws by Yeray Seminario

Tour Grading & Key

Overall Ease		Suitable for all birding / wildlife interest levels.
Birding Ease		Easy to moderate. Most birding takes place in open habitats. Some migration watching involves prolonged scanning from observation points and species can be distant at times.
Accommodation		Comfortable.
Walking / Trails		Easy to moderate. Most birding is from roadsides, tracks, observation points and short walking trails. Terrain is generally flat in the wetlands and coastal areas, with some uneven, rocky ground and moderate uphill walking in the Grazalema Mountains.
Vehicles / Roads		Excellent road network throughout. Most travel is on good quality paved roads, with occasional gravel and agricultural tracks.
Photography		Good to excellent. Open habitats, spectacular migration events, wetland concentrations and dramatic coastal scenery provide outstanding photographic opportunities.
Annoyances		Warm temperatures, strong winds in the Strait region and occasional rain are 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 lunch on day 1 to breakfast on day 7;
- All lodgings;
- Bottled water & wine on some evenings with meals;
- Ground and boat transportation;
- Reserve and historical site entrance fees;
- All local guiding services
- Tips for local guides, drivers and services.

Tour exclusions:

- Visa fees;
- ANY flights;
- Any beverages (**including bottled water** and mini-bar charges at hotels);
- 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 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 limit your luggage to approximately 18kg (40 lb) for checked baggage and 8kg (18 lb) for hand luggage.
- Fitness: This tour does not require a high level of fitness. Most birding is conducted from roadsides, tracks, observation points and short walking trails. Participants should be in good general health and comfortable walking moderate distances over occasionally uneven ground. Should you have any physical limitations, please notify us in advance of departure.
- Accommodation throughout the tour is of a good standard, with comfortable hotels located in convenient birding areas. There is no camping on this tour.
- Walking is generally easy to moderate, with most birding involving short walks on flat terrain. Some longer walks may be undertaken in the Grazalema Mountains and around Ronda, where trails can be uneven, rocky and occasionally steep in places. All walks will be conducted at a comfortable pace with frequent stops for birding.
- Weather conditions play a critical role in migration activity around the Strait of Gibraltar. To maximise birding opportunities, we may alter the order of certain excursions and birding locations during the tour. This flexibility allows us to take advantage of favourable migration conditions and optimise our chances of witnessing large movements of raptors, storks and other migrants crossing between Europe and Africa.

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 Seville on the morning of day 1 (do ensure you arrive the day before) and will conclude here by midday of day 7.

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.

Seville International Airport, Seville (IATA: SVQ) is the main port of entry and exit 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.