Croatia, Slovenia & Austria

Bird Photo Tour

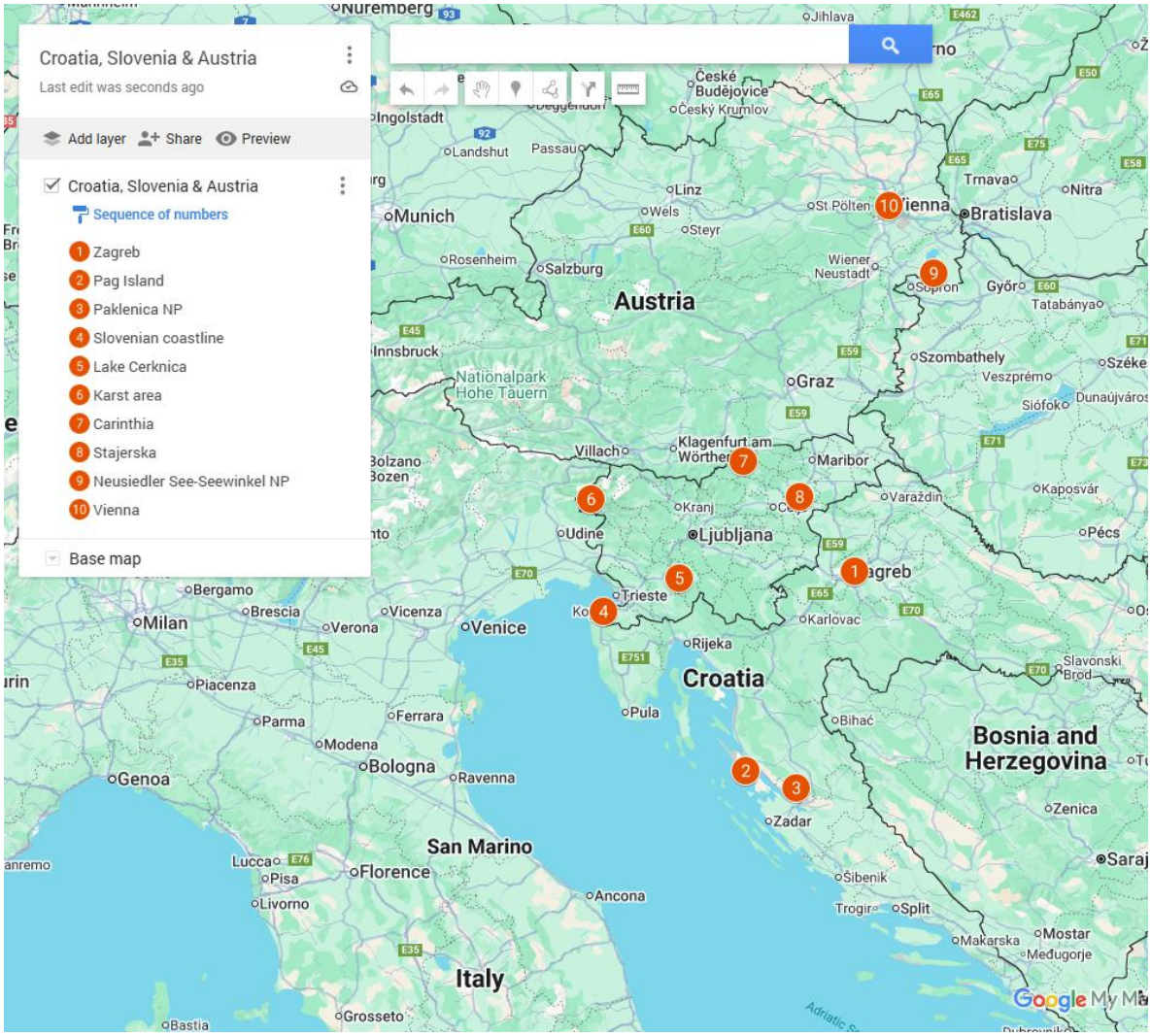


Alpine Accentor by Clayton Burne

Embark on a photographic odyssey through the diverse landscapes of Croatia, Slovenia and Austria! This tour begins on the starkly beautiful Pag Island, Croatia, searching for Rock Partridge against a lunar-like backdrop. Journey to the dramatic canyons of Paklenica National Park, home to the elusive Western Rock Nuthatch and Sombre Tit before exploring the revitalized Škocjanski Zatok Nature Reserve, a haven for Little Terns and Melodious Warblers. We'll then venture into the Slovenian Karst, seeking out Short-toed Snake Eagle and Alpine Swift before enjoying the natural wonder of Lake Cerknica, a haven for Corn Crakes and White-tailed Eagles. We'll ascend to higher altitudes in pursuit of Alpine Accentor and Wallcreeper before focusing on the forests of Koroška, where we'll stalk the magnificent Western Capercaillie and the elusive Ural Owl.

As the tours starts to wind down, we'll utilize specialized hides and drinking stations to capture images of Eurasian Hoopoe and European Bee-eater before venturing to the Hungarian borderlands, seeking out the iconic Great Bustard in its elaborate courtship displays. This region also offers prime habitat for Montagu's Harrier, Short-eared Owl, and the striking Syrian Woodpecker. Our tour will conclude at the renowned Neusiedler See-Seewinkel National Park, where we'll witness the spectacle of bird migration, with opportunities to photograph White-tailed and Eastern Imperial Eagles soaring amidst the Pannonian lakes. Get ready to capture frame-worthy moments against a backdrop of breathtaking scenery.

Itinerary & Map



Croatia, Slovenia & Austria Bird Photo Tour

Day 1	**Arrival in Zagreb, Croatia; transfer to Pag Island**
Day 2	**Pag Island**
Day 3	**Pag Island to Slovenia via Paklenica National Park**
Day 4	**Škocjanski Zatok Nature Reserve**
Day 5	**Lake Cerknica & Karst region**
Day 6	**Karst area**
Day 7	**Karst area to Carinthia**
Day 8	**Koroška – Carinthia area**
Day 9	**Carinthia to Štajerska**
Days 10 & 11	**Štajerska**
Day 12	**Štajerska to Neusiedler See-Seewinkel National Park, Austria**
Day 13	**Neusiedler See-Seewinkel National Park**
Day 14	**Final departure**

Highlights

- ***Excellent photographic opportunities for up to 80 European species.***
- ***Hides and drinking stations provide great opportunities for photographing Eurasian Hoopoe, European Bee-eater, Common Cuckoo, and Eurasian Wryneck.***
- ***Stalking and hide photography of the sought after Western Capercaillie, Black Woodpecker, Ural Owl and Eurasian Pygmy Owl.***
- ***Stunning mountain, coastal and forest scenery adds to the photographic appeal.***

Sites in detail

Pag Island. The barren, lunar like landscape is our backdrop to finding Rock Partridge, Montagu's Harrier, Blue Rock Thrush, Eurasian Stone-curlew, Calandra Lark, Black-eared Wheatear and more. The island also offers several freshwater bodies and saltpans where numerous water birds can be seen.



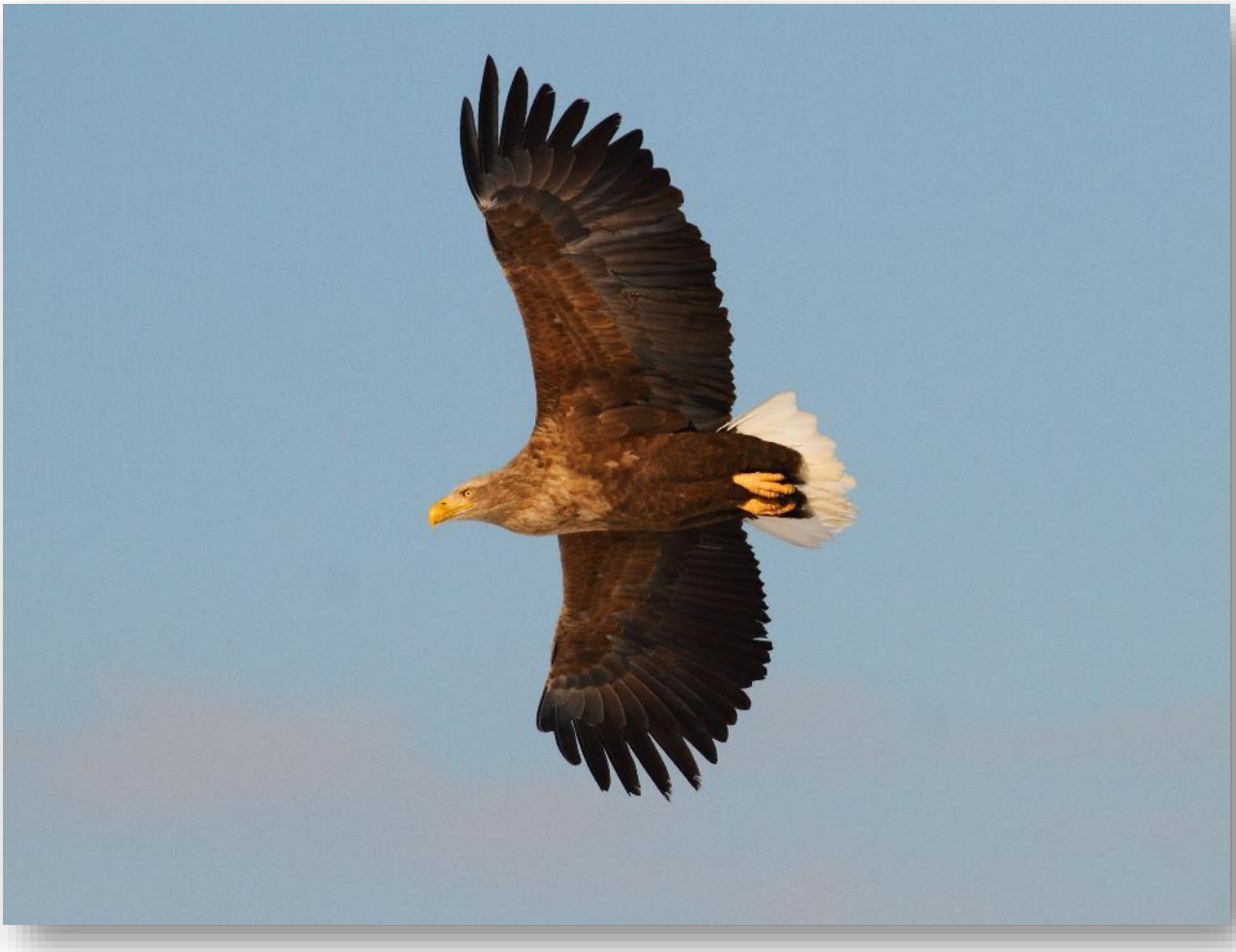
White-throated Dipper by Clayton Burne

Paklenica National Park. Nestled in the Velebit mountain range of northern Dalmatia, is renowned for its two stunning canyons: Mala (Small) and Velika (Big). The park boasts a rich variety of habitats, supporting diverse fauna. Over 230 bird species have been recorded, with 102 of them nesting within the park. During our visit, we will be looking for some of the park's iconic bird species, including Western Rock Nuthatch, Sombre Tit, and Eastern Orphean Warbler.

Škocjanski Zatok Nature Reserve. Škocjanski Zatok was once a bay connected to the Adriatic Sea. Over time, it evolved into a lagoon and eventually a brackish marsh. In the 20th century, human activities significantly degraded the area. However, thanks to extensive restoration efforts, it was declared a nature reserve in 1998 and has since become a thriving ecosystem.

This region of Slovenia is renowned for its pristine natural beauty, boasting a rich diversity of fauna and flora. It's worth noting that almost 40% of Slovenia is part of the Natura 2000 project, a network of protected areas across Europe, and a remarkable 60% of the country is covered by forests.

Škocjanski Zatok Nature Reserve is a true gem. A variety of brackish and freshwater habitats makes it a haven for wildlife, being especially renowned for its exceptional bird diversity. Since 2001, a remarkable 266 different bird species have been recorded within its 122.7 hectares. The birdlife varies throughout the year, with some species being resident breeders, others winter visitors, and some just passing through during their migration. Breeding birds hold a higher conservation value and are therefore of particular interest. Up to 50 species of breeding birds have been observed at the reserve, though the exact number fluctuates annually.



White-tailed Eagle by Glen Valentine

Within the reserve, we will be looking for Little Tern, Melodious and Cetti Warblers, Zitting Cisticola, Kentish Plover and Pied Avocet.

In the afternoons, we will venture into the Slovenian Karst region. Karst is a type of landscape where the dissolving of the bedrock has created sinkholes, sinking streams, caves, springs, and other characteristic features. Here we'll search for Short-toed Snake Eagle, Alpine Swift, Common Rock Thrush, Eurasian Golden Oriole, and more.

Lake Cerknica. Lake Cerknica is one of the largest intermittent lakes in Europe. It appears annually on the karst polje (plain), nestled between the Javorniki Hills and the Bloke Plateau on one side, and Mount Slivnica on the

other. During the dry season, the lake disappears, allowing for a variety of activities in the same area within a single year, such as paddling, fishing, hiking, and even grass mowing!

The lake typically remains on the Cerknica Plain for approximately eight months each year. While it usually covers a surface area of 20 km², it can reach up to 26 km² at its fullest. When full, Lake Cerknica becomes the largest lake in Slovenia.



Ural Owl by Glen Valentine

This unique environment provides a rich habitat for a variety of species. We will be on the lookout for birds like Corn Crake, Common Rosefinch, Black Stork, White-tailed Eagle, and Red-footed Falcon.

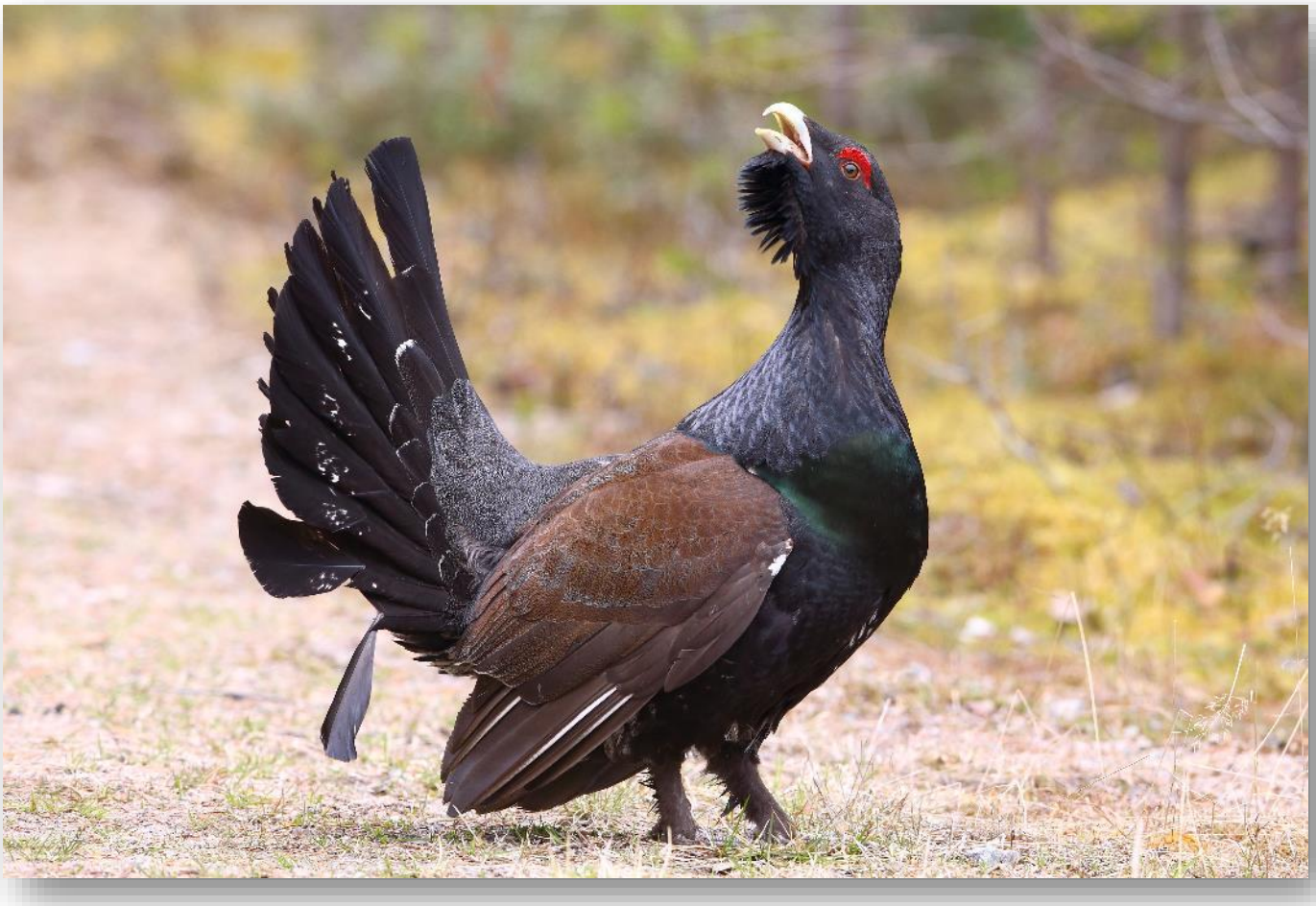
Karst area. The Karst area is known for its great culinary experience, and we will look to enjoy some of area's diversity. We'll head higher into the mountains here for Alpine Accentor, White-winged Snowfinch, Rock Ptarmigan, Golden Eagle and Wallcreeper. Time permitting, we'll also cross into nearby Italy where we may find Alpine Marmot and Alpine Ibex or Ring Ouzel.

Koroška – Carinthia area. he Carinthia region in Slovenia is a haven for bird photography and birding enthusiasts. Located in the north of Slovenia, bordering Austria, this region is renowned for its pristine mountain landscapes and expansive forests, crisscrossed by a network of mountain roads. The Meža Valley, nestled within this region, is particularly noteworthy for its diverse natural features, rich fauna and flora, unique local cuisine, and welcoming people. Here we'll have the opportunity to photograph many bird species, but we'll be targeting Western Capercaillie, Black Woodpecker, White-throated Dipper, Ural Owl and Eurasian Pygmy Owl. We'll be splitting out time between stalking photography and some hide photography.

Štajerska. Ormož, nestled in the Ljutomer region of northeastern Slovenia, is renowned for its gastronomy and rich winemaking tradition. This area boasts a history of viticulture that predates the Roman era. The Ljutomer-

Ormož Hills, with their sunny slopes and mineral-rich soil, provide ideal conditions for cultivating white wine grapes. Beyond the vineyards, the diverse landscape offers sanctuary to rare species and provides stunning photo opportunities.

We'll spend full days birding in the nearby Stajerska region, observing lowland species like the Collared Flycatcher, but also utilizing a variety of hides and drinking stations to enhance photographic opportunities for Eurasian Hoopoe, European Bee-eater, Common Cuckoo, Eurasian Wryneck, and European Green Woodpecker.



Western Capercaillie by Adam Riley

Neusiedler See-Seewinkel National Park. We'll spend the day birding the park area, which is rich in small Pannonian lakes teeming with water birds. With migration in full swing, expect the unexpected! This region offers a good chance to see both White-tailed and Eastern Imperial Eagles. We'll focus on migrating birds around the lakes, which can sometimes yield rare sightings at this time of year, including breeding Moustached Warbler.

If time and energy allow, we'll venture to several lakes and fishponds near the Hungarian border to search for the Great Bustard, currently in its prime courtship season. This area is also excellent for Montagu's Harrier, Short-eared Owl, and many other species. We'll also visit a nearby park known for its Syrian Woodpecker population.

Primary Photo Targets

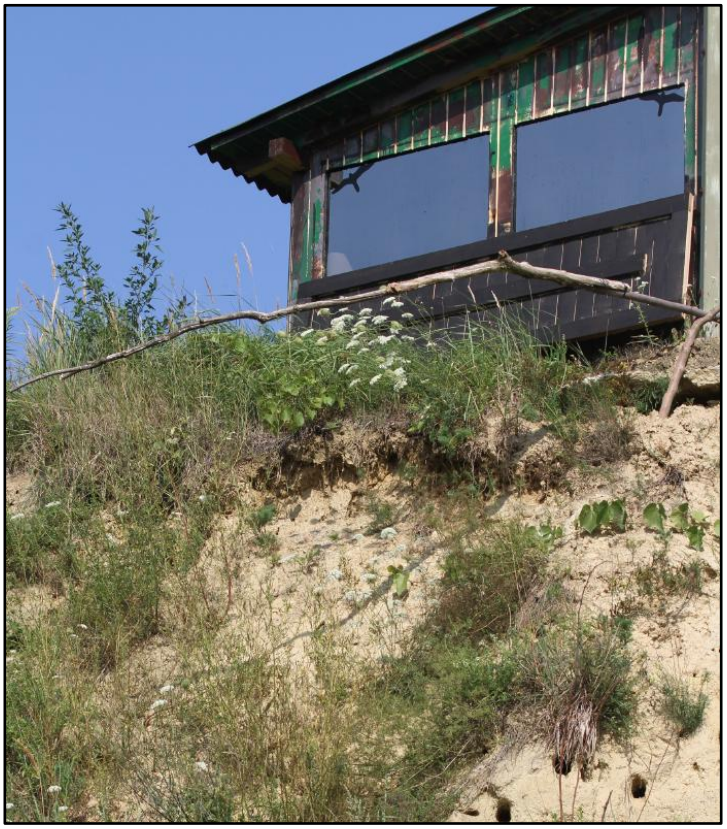
1.	**European Bee-eater**	**2.**	**Eurasian Hoopoe**
3.	**Common Cuckoo**	**4.**	**Red-backed Shrike**
5.	**European Green Woodpecker**	**6.**	**Black Woodpecker**
7.	**Common Redstart**	**8.**	**White-throated Dipper**
9.	**Eurasian Pygmy Owl**	**10.**	**Ural Owl**

Typical Hides used









Tour Grading & Key

Photography		Good to excellent. Several professionally built, well located hides & blinds. Some stalking & opportunist photography.
Overall Ease		Comfortable.
Accommodation		Comfortable with en suite facilities.
Walking / Trails		Mostly short walks on flat ground. Patches of marsh & wetland that may require a little wading. Mostly roadside birding at altitude.
Vehicles / Roads		Most good roads. Coastal roads & mountain passes are winding.
Birding Ease		Birding is undemanding. Primary focus is photography.
Annoyances		Mosquitoes may be present, but their presence & density are dependent on wetland conditions.

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 drinking water.
- All lodgings.
- All reserve entrance fees.
- All guiding services.
- Tips for local guides, drivers and services.

Tour exclusions:

- Visa fees.
- ANY flights.
- Any beverages (including 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 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.

- **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.**

- Rubber boots may be useful. To save space in your luggage, boots can be purchased in country rather.
- Do ensure that you bring your own tripods.
- As some of our time will be spent on, or near to floodplains, mosquitoes can be present. Repellent is advisable.
- Days spent in the mountains may be cold to very cold and/or windy. Do dress appropriately with warm layers and proper hiking boots.

- The days plan will be set out the previous evening and will depend on the expected weather, target species and logistical requirements. There will typically be two options.
  - A: An early start, returning to our lodge for late breakfast, midday rest and afternoon birding or photography.
  - B: Start with breakfast followed by a full day searching for different photographic and birding opportunities.

Bird Photo Tours

- Our Bird Photo Tours are a hybrid between our Classic birding tours and dedicated photographic tours. You don't have to be a professional photographer or have the biggest lens; this is for everyone with an interest in photography and birding. Whether you're using a bridge camera or the latest body and prime lens, our aims are the same.
- These tours are not aimed at seeing the most species possible on the route, rather taking time to photograph key targets and any other interesting species we may find. Naturally, the overall species list will be lower than a comparable birding focused tour.
- Unlike our normal Bird Photo tours, this tour does make use of several blinds, feeders and hide setups and we'll be spending many hours every day at the blinds and hides when available.
- These tours are suitable for photographers who prefer both extensive blind time and opportunistic photography.
- Our leaders will assist in helping everyone secure good photographic opportunities and advise as much as they can on camera setup. However, they are not professional photographic tour leaders.

Arrival and Departure Details

The tour departs Zagreb Airport on Day 1 with a group transfer to Pag Island. The tour will conclude mid-morning of day 14 at Vienna airport.

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.

Zagreb Franjo Tuđman Airport, Zagreb, Croatia (IATA: ZAG) is the main port of entry and Vienna Airport (IATA: VIE) is the main port of departure for international flights on 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.