



Photo: Iberian Imperial Eagle, by Steve Lane

Week-long Birdwatching Programme in Portugal

Lisbon Estuaries, Alentejo and Algarve

Birds & Nature Tours Portugal

Overview

Portugal possesses a fantastic diversity of habitats and consequently of birds in a relatively small area, so the birding programmes designed by Birds & Nature Tours enable you to visit several species rich areas without needing to travel long distances.

In practical terms, you will find within half an hour's drive from Lisbon city centre and its International Airport the Tagus Estuary and the Sado Estuary Nature Reserves. These two remarkable protected wetland areas have extensive bird lists that include Greater Flamingo, White Stork, Glossy Ibis, Squacco and Purple Herons, Black-winged Kite, Little Bustard, Collared Pratincole, Pallid Swift, Bluethroat, Iberian Chiffchaff, Iberian Grey and Woodchat Shrikes, Spotless Starling, Rock Sparrow and European Serin and an excellent selection of ducks, waders, gulls and terns.

A further one hour's drive takes you to other complementary biotopes and consequently new bird species in the Alentejo. Here, you will visit both the rolling plains of Castro Verde (the home of Great Bustard, Montagu's Harrier, Lesser Kestrel, Black-bellied Sandgrouse, Great Spotted Cuckoo, European Roller, Calandra Lark, Rufous Bush Robin, Black-eared Wheatear, etc...) and the bluffs and hills of the Guadiana Valley Nature Park, noted for species like Iberian Imperial, Golden and Bonelli's Eagles, Eurasian Black and Griffon Vultures, Black Stork, Eurasian Eagle Owl, White-rumped Swift, Iberian Green Woodpecker, Eurasian Crag Martin, Red-rumped Swallow, Blue Rock Thrush, Golden Oriole and Rock Bunting.

After exploring these Alentejo biotopes, a further 45 minute drive takes you to the Algarve, a Portuguese region rich in protected wetland areas situated on a major fly-way for migrants from Africa and notable in particular for waders and passerines. Some of the places you will visit, namely the Ria Formosa Nature Park and the Castro Marim Nature Reserve, are unique in Portugal as sites for rare and highly localised species, like Audouin's and Slender-billed Gulls and Lesser Short-toed Lark. Other places you will experience are excellent spots for getting close views of scarce species like Purple Swamphen and Little Bittern. Red-necked Nightjar, Eurasian Hoopoe, European Bee-eater, Sardinian and Spectacled Warblers and Iberian Magpie are particularly abundant here.

Itinerary

Day 1 – Transfer from Lisbon Airport (or from your Lisbon hotel). Travel to the Hotel Quinta da Praia das Fontes (Alcochete) or Hotel do Sado (Setúbal). Visit several areas and a variety of habitats within the Tagus Estuary Nature Reserve, including the inter-tidal mudflats and salt marshes of Hortas, the salt pans of Atalaya, Ribeira das Enguias and Samouco and the Barroca d'Alva rice fields and pastures. Overnight stay at the Hotel Quinta da Praia das Fontes or Hotel do Sado.

Day 2 – Visit other interesting sites of the Tagus Estuary Nature Reserve, including the open fields, rice fields, reed beds, lagoons, inter-tidal mudflats and salt marshes of the Ponta da Erva area and the cork oak woodlands of Pancas. During the breeding season, we visit a heronry on the Tagus river. Overnight stay at the Hotel Quinta da Praia das Fontes or Hotel do Sado.

Day 3 – Travel to the Hotel Museu (Mértola) or Casa de Campo da Herdade da Apariça (Castro Verde), in the Alentejo region. Visit the great Castro Verde rolling plains. Overnight stay at the Hotel Museu or Casa de Campo da Herdade da Apariça.

Day 4 – Visit the bluffs and hills of the Guadiana Valley Nature Park, including the Mértola, Mina de São Domingos and Alcaria Ruiva areas. Overnight stay at the Hotel Museu or Casa de Campo da Herdade da Apariça.

Day 5 – Visit other interesting areas of the great Castro Verde rolling plains and of the Guadiana valley. Overnight stay at the Hotel Museu or Casa de Campo da Herdade da Apariça.

Day 6 – Travel to the Hotel Vila Galé Albacora or Hotel Monte do Álamo (Tavira), in the Algarve region. Visit the complex of canals, saline flats and salt pans of the Castro Marim Nature Reserve and of the Tavira area (Ria Formosa Nature Park). Overnight stay at the Hotel Vila Galé Albacora or Hotel Monte do Álamo.

Day 7 – Visit several habitats such as dunes, open water, inter-tidal mudflats, salt marshes, salt pans, reed beds, lagoons and pine woods of other areas of the Ria Formosa Nature Park (Quinta do Lago and Ludo). Visit the Salgados lagoon. Overnight stay at the Hotel Vila Galé Albacora or Hotel Monte do Álamo.

Day 8 – Return to Lisbon, visiting on the way the inter-tidal mudflats, salt marshes and rice fields of Comporta and Carrasqueira (Sado Estuary Nature Reserve). Cross the river Sado by ferry, with a good chance of seeing small pods of Bottle-nosed Dolphins. Transfer to Lisbon Airport for return flight (or to your Lisbon hotel).

Note: the above itinerary starts and ends in Lisbon, but it is also possible to adjust the itinerary to a different starting point, namely Faro in the Algarve. You can even arrive in one city and depart from the other if you wish.

Prices

2.060 euros per person (2 people). Price include guide fees, transfer from/to the airport/hotel, ground transport (in vehicles with air-conditioning), accommodation (including breakfast), free use of optical equipment (quality binoculars and telescopes) and field guides, bird list, entrance fees to private or protected areas, participant's accident insurance and VAT. Single supplement: 220 euros. Not included are flights, meals and items of a personal nature. Meals in selected restaurants can be included if you wish. Please note the price per person will be reduced as the number of participants increases.

For enquiries, please contact us:

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