



Photo: Bluethroat, by Pedro Marques

## Week-long Birdwatching Programme in Southern Portugal

Lisbon Estuaries, Alentejo & Algarve

Birds & Nature Tours Portugal

### **Overview**

Portugal offers a fantastic diversity of habitats and consequently of birds in a relatively small area, so the birding programmes designed by Birds & Nature Tours Portugal 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, Eurasian Spoonbill, Glossy Ibis, Squacco and Purple Herons, Booted Eagle, Black-winged Kite, Little Bustard, Collared Pratincole, Pallid Swift, Bluethroat, Dartford, Savi's and Melodious Warblers, Iberian Chiffchaff, Iberian Grey and

Woodchat Shrikes, Spotless Starling, Rock Sparrow, European Serin, Cirl Bunting and an excellent selection of ducks, waders, gulls and terns.

A further one hour's drive takes you to 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, Common Crane, Red Kite, Montagu's Harrier, Lesser Kestrel, Stone Curlew, Black-bellied Sandgrouse, Great Spotted Cuckoo, European Roller, Calandra Lark, Tawny Pipit, Rufous Bush Robin, etc...) and the bluffs and hills of the Guadiana Valley Natural Park, noted for species like Black Stork, Iberian Imperial, Golden and Bonelli's Eagles, Eurasian Black and Griffon Vultures, Turtle Dove, Eurasian Eagle Owl, White-rumped Swift, Iberian Green Woodpecker, Eurasian Crag Martin, Red-rumped Swallow, Black-eared Wheatear, Blue Rock Thrush, Golden Oriole, Spanish Sparrow, Hawfinch and Rock Bunting.

After exploring these Alentejo biotopes, another short 45 minute drive takes you to the Algarve, a 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 Natural 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. These are also excellent spots for getting close views of scarce species like Little Bittern and Purple Swamphen. Little Owl, Red-necked Nightjar, Eurasian Hoopoe, Common Kingfisher, 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 Alcochete. 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, in Alcochete (or equivalent).

Day 2 – Visit other interesting sites and habitats in 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 river Tagus. Overnight stay at the Hotel Quinta da Praia das Fontes (or equivalent).

Day 3 – Travel to Mértola, in the Alentejo region. Visit the great Castro Verde rolling plains. Overnight stay at the Hotel Museu, in Mértola (or equivalent).

Day 4 – Visit the bluffs and hills of the Guadiana Valley Natural Park, including the Mértola, Mina de São Domingos and Alcaria Ruiva areas. Overnight stay at the Hotel Museu (or equivalent).

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 equivalent).

Day 6 – Travel to 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 Natural Park). Overnight stay at the Hotel Vila Galé Albacora, in Tavira (or equivalent).

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

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). Transfer to Lisbon Airport for return flight (or to your Lisbon hotel).

## **Price**

2,300 Euros per person (based on 2 people). Price includes guide fees, transfers from/to the airport/hotel, ground transport (in air-conditioned vehicles), accommodation (including breakfast), bottled water throughout the tour, 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: 260 Euros. Not included are flights, meals and items of a personal nature. Meals in selected restaurants can be included if you wish, as a supplement, at a fixed extra cost. Please note the price per person will be reduced as the number of participants increases.

## **Note**

This programme starts and ends in Lisbon, but it is also possible to adapt the itinerary to run from Faro, in the Algarve. You can even arrive in one city and depart from the other if you wish. If you need accommodation for the nights before and/or after the tour, we are happy to help. We suggest you discuss your flight details with us before booking your flights.

**For enquiries, please contact us:**

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