

Monfrague, Trujillo and Steppes

This tour to Extremadura takes you to one of the premier sites for birds in Western Europe. Extremadura is a region of vast contrasts ranging from rugged mountains to miles of extensive steppes. Our main focus is observing several exceptional and rare species including Great Bustard, Spanish Imperial Eagle, Black-shouldered Kite, Black Stork, Eurasian Eagle Owl and Iberian Magpie. Other specialties include a wide range of *Sylvia* warblers and both Pin-tailed and Black-bellied Sandgrouse. Extremadura is a wonderful experience in springtime with fields of wild flowers and butterflies in addition to the dazzling array of birds. We visit Monfrague, Trujillo and the steppes of Serena, staying in hotels close to the best birdwatching localities.

■ Flights are available from many destinations in Europe. Please ensure you arrive in Madrid by 1300 hours on Day 1.

Day 1: Rendezvous at Madrid Airport. From Madrid we head in a westwards direction towards Extremadura, stopping at the attractive old town of Oropresa. The castle here has nesting White Stork, Lesser Kestrel and Crag Martins. We make a short exploration of the surrounding countryside with Corn Bunting, Crested Lark Bee-eater and Iberian Magpie among the expected species and we have a chance of our first Short-toed Eagle, Woodchat Shrike or perhaps Black-shouldered Kite. Transfer to our hotel near Trujillo for four nights.

Days 2-5: From our base near Trujillo we will head out each day to explore the wide variety of birding sites within striking distance. Monfrague has become justifiably famous for its spectacular concentrations of birds of prey. Most obvious are the incredible densities of Eurasian Griffon and Cinereous (Black) Vultures that congregate here and that can be observed at close range. Egyptian Vultures are less frequent but we still expect to see this species. Eagles occurring at Monfrague include regular pairs of Spanish Imperial and Bonelli's Eagles, with more frequent encounters with Booted Eagles likely. Black Stork nest here and we have a chance of seeing Eurasian Eagle Owl. The rocky slopes attract Rock Bunting and Blue Rock Thrush, whilst we search the whirling swift flocks for the

Dates

Saturday April 28th - Saturday May 5th 2018

Leader: Chris Bradshaw

Group Size: 8

Birds: 140-180

chance of White-rumped Swift.

The extensive Dehesas that characterise much of Extremadura are home to breeding Common Cuckoo, Wood Lark, Woodchat Shrike, Melodious Warbler, Eurasian Nuthatch and the Iberian subspecies of Long-tailed Tit. We will search for a variety of *Sylvia* warblers with Orphean, Subalpine, Dartford, Sardinian and Spectacled our main targets.

Much of this part of Spain is characterised by sweeping steppe-like grassland plains and it is in these habitats that we will search for Great and Little Bustards and Pin-tailed and Black-bellied Sandgrouse. Montagu's Harriers occur in good numbers in this region, whilst Short-toed Eagles, Great Spotted Cuckoo and European Rollers are among other species we hope to find.

We visit a couple of locally important wetland areas. The Arrocampo Reservoir is a good area for Black-shouldered and Red Kite, and an excellent area for waterbirds with Purple Heron, Little Bittern, Eurasian



Purple Heron *Photo: Roger Ridley*

Spoonbill, Marsh Harrier, Purple Swamphen, Gull-billed Tern, Common Kingfisher, Eurasian Penduline Tits and Savi's Warblers among the possibilities here. The Embalse de Allcollorin is a relatively new wetland formed by the construction of a dam and hosts an interesting selection of wetland species with Black-winged Stilt, Whiskered Tern and migrant waders such as Greenshank amongst a wide selection of possibilities.

Day 6: Today we leave the Trujillo area and head north towards Sierra de Gredos. We'll pass through Monfrague en route before heading up into the mountains where a patchwork of coniferous forests and alpine meadows await. We should arrive in the afternoon with time for an initial exploration.

Day 7: We spend the day exploring the area in search of Western Bonelli's Warbler, Iberian Green Woodpecker, Firecrest, Pied Flycatcher and Common Crossbill. Streams are home to Dippers

and Grey Wagtails, whilst in the higher elevations we seek out Bluethroat, Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush, Ortolan Bunting and Water Pipit.

Day 8: Transfer to Madrid Airport where the tour concludes mid-afternoon.

Prices

Ground Price: £1,795
 Single room: £150
 Deposit: £200
 *Air Fare: £120

This tour is fully inclusive of accommodation and meals, transport, park entrance fees and permits, guidance, tips and taxes.

Not included: drinks, insurance, and items of a personal nature.

**Please refer to our terms and conditions relating to flights*