



Honeyguide

WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS 2015



Helping you enjoy wildlife



Helping to protect wildlife



Honeyguide

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More information

In this brochure we can give only a flavour of the holidays on offer. You are welcome without commitment to have a pack of information about any holiday, including a previous holiday report and itinerary. Holiday reports are also on www.honeyguide.co.uk

Honeyguide conservation programme

£40 of the price of your Honeyguide holiday goes to a conservation body, often the bird protection society of the host country, towards its current conservation work. The societies and projects we support are described under each holiday.

HONEYGUIDE CHARITABLE TRUST

A donation to a local conservation project has been part of the holiday price since the start of Honeyguide in 1991. To date (August 2014), we have raised £96,000 for conservation projects, mostly in Europe.

The Honeyguide Wildlife Trust Limited was registered as a charity in June 2004, registered charity number 1104606. The object of the charity, in summary, is "To help conserve... the natural environment and wildlife".

WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS

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Holidays for the year 2015

Welcome to the 25th season of Honeyguide Wildlife Holidays.

Yes, a quarter of a century. Goodness gracious.

These notes start with what doesn't change for 2015 in the Honeyguide programme – just five of the 13 holidays. Our first Latvia holiday was a great success and Bulgaria's Western Rhodopes repeats by popular demand: it's about half-full with 'pencil' bookings as I write. Tarifa & Gibraltar in March, Crete in April and the Danube Delta in early June are the others at their usual times.

Returning to the programme after a break are Fuerteventura, Istria and the Camargue. This year's South African holiday is the popular Kruger National Park and Geoff Crane also leads this year's new holiday for the brochure, to Namibia. This isn't entirely breaking new ground: four intrepid Honeyguiders went there in 2013 and now's a chance to follow their lead.

Our Extremadura holiday moves to February. We've done this before, as it combines a chance to see the overwintering cranes alongside resident birds and to enjoy early signs of spring. The French Pyrenees returns to its more usual time of June.

Other holidays may be added, which is partly up to you. If a group of friends fancied, say, a week with the Dordogne's orchids, or another Honeyguide destination in the archive section of www.honeyguide.co.uk, that may well be possible. Or we might add another holiday for the autumn (as we did with La Mancha in October 2014) – keep an eye on the website.

The website has a wealth of reference material, including holiday reports, news and photographs. Updates to the programme go online, of course. This brochure is written before most flight schedules are out for 2015; flights and dates sometimes change or there may be additional flights from airports near you.

The Honeyguide Wildlife Charitable Trust (see below) continues to thrive, with your help, and we'll soon reach the milestone of £100,000 donated to conservation projects linked to our holidays.

I hope you can join us on a wildlife holiday in 2015.

Chris Durdin

Chris Durdin
August 2014



The air holidays shown are ATOL Protected by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is ATOL 3253. ATOL protection extends primarily to customers who book and pay in the United Kingdom.



Our logo is a greater honeyguide (*Indicator indicator*), an African bird that guides people or honey badgers to bees' nests. Those guided and the bird then enjoy the honeycomb. Honeyguide wildlife holidays also have enthusiastic leaders to guide you to nature's best.

A benefit of being a charity is that, through Gift Aid, we can claim tax from HM Customs & Revenue against the contributions from Honeyguiders. This can raise an additional 25p in the pound, which brings in more than £1000 each year. This tops up the donations we make to the conservation projects linked to our holidays through LPO, SEO, HOS, SOR and others.

Trustees of the charitable trust are Helen Crowder, Malcolm Crowder OBE (secretary) and Chris Durdin (chairman).

We would be very grateful if everyone booking a holiday who is a UK taxpayer could complete the simple gift aid declaration on the booking form.

We also welcome additional donations or legacies through the Honeyguide charity.

We are very grateful to the Wildlife Outreach Network in Essex, which provided extra support for our projects for several years.

Your leadership team 2015



Chris Durdin, this year leading in **Extremadura, Tarifa and the French Pyrenees** (and possibly co-leading elsewhere), is the driving force behind Honeyguide, running

holidays since 1991. For many years he combined this with his work for the RSPB in Eastern England, often the Society's spokesman, but has been concentrating on Honeyguide full-time since 2009, alongside writing a book about Norfolk's cranes. He's also a qualified soccer coach, for one son's under 12 year group. As a naturalist, Chris is an all rounder.

Extremadura

Chris Durdin – see above

Tarifa & Gibraltar

Frank (Francisco) Vargas comes from near the Strait of Gibraltar and his family's farm is there. For several years he was the RSPB's Farmland Bird Recovery Officer in Essex, and now has various roles including teaching conservation in Athens.

Chris Durdin – see above.

Fuerteventura

David Collins is an environmental consultant. He has led various Honeyguide wildlife holidays in the past, but his first love is Fuerteventura. He is co-author of *A Birdwatchers' Guide to the Canary Islands* and recently published a book about the wildlife and history of the island called *A Walk through Fuerteventura*.

Crete

Tim Strudwick is the RSPB's Site Manager for the Mid Yare nature reserves in Norfolk – Strumpshaw Fen and nearby. Naturally, Tim knows his birds from his work, 40 years of birdwatching and leading for Honeyguide in Crete for the last three years. He's also a keen botanist and runs courses on sedges and rushes. Another expertise is in solitary bees and wasps, for which he is the Norfolk county recorder.

Istria

Paul Tout lives on the Italy/Slovenia border. Originally from Hertfordshire, until recently he managed a botanic garden and now works as a translator, tourist guide and naturalist. He's been a Honeyguide leader for many years in his local area and here in nearby Istria, and has a fund of knowledge about central-eastern Europe and its wildlife.

The Camargue

Robin Hamilton has a wide knowledge of western and central Europe and its wildlife, especially birds. He worked for many years for English Nature. **Rachel Hamilton** spent her working life teaching natural history and conservation with the Field Studies Council and at Otley College in Suffolk. She is an enthusiastic all round naturalist, though her first interest is botany. Robin and Rachel, both of whom are experienced wildlife leaders and keen linguists, are regular leaders in France.

Danube Delta

Our friends at **Ibis** provide local leaders, and our main leader is likely to be Florin Palade, Eugen Petrescu or Daniel Petrescu. Botanist Mihai Petrescu joins the group in Dobrogea.

French Pyrenees

Ivan Nethercoat is training & interpretation manager in the RSPB's People Engagement department at Sandy. He is a regular and well-travelled Honeyguide leader, including holidays in the Balearics, Crete and French Pyrenees. His degree, many moons ago, was in photography, and he is very happy to help any photographers in the group. **Chris Durdin** – see left.

Bulgaria

Chris Gibson is a marine conservation specialist for Natural England based in north Essex, an author of several wildlife books and has led many holidays for Honeyguide. He is an outstanding all rounder, from birds through flowers to moths, recognised as a 'naturalist of distinction' by the British Naturalists' Association.

Latvia

Karlis Millers is a birdwatching guide and ornithologist working with our hosts, Baltic Wildlife. Karlis also runs the Latvia Birds website, which tracks bird news across the country.

Rob Macklin – see Algarve & Alentejo.

Algarve & Alentejo

Domingos Leitão works for SPEA, the Portuguese BirdLife partner, and alongside this is a holiday leader in his home country. Honeyguiders have particularly enjoyed his ability to find reptiles and amphibians. **Rob Macklin** was the RSPB's area manager on the Suffolk coast, covering Minsmere and North Warren among several nature reserves. He now lives in Devon and uses his years of experience in nature conservation as an environmental consultant.

South Africa & Namibia

Geoff Crane is the man behind Crane's Cape Tours & Travel, both local leaders and ground agents for Honeyguide in South Africa. An experienced guide himself, he co-leads all Honeyguide's holidays in southern Africa.



Frank Vargas



David Collins



Tim Strudwick



Paul Tout



Rachel Hamilton



Robin Hamilton



Chris Gibson



Karlis Millers



Rob Macklin



Domingos Leitão



Ivan Nethercoat



Geoff Crane

Carbon offsets

Realistically, most of our travellers will fly. Air travel makes up only a small fraction of the UK's greenhouse gas emissions at present, but that fraction is growing. We have chosen Carbon Clear to offset our carbon emissions from holiday flights. Carbon Clear invests in projects that remove carbon dioxide from the air by replacing polluting technologies with clean ones, and planting native trees.

Honeyguide has included carbon offsets in the price of our holidays since 2007 and was one of the first travel companies to do so. For more information see www.honeyguide.co.uk



Our holidays have been designed with the general naturalist in mind. Beginners are especially welcome but all holidays offer much to the more experienced naturalist. Some holidays are loosely based on 'birdwatching without blinkers'; some are a mix of birds, flowers and other wildlife. Several holidays can be good for butterflies. Local history, culture and food play a part in every holiday.

The holidays lend themselves to anyone wishing to leave the organised programme to sketch, paint, write or just potter.

10 – 17 February 2015

Extremadura

Cranes and much more

Crane season in wild, central Spain runs from November to February. Some 100,000 cranes overwinter in the region, providing one of Europe's great wildlife spectacles.

The cranes feed on acorns in the 'dehesa' or wood pasture that is such a distinctive feature of Extremadura. They also feed in rice paddies and maize stubble fields, sometimes in groups, sometimes big flocks. And you can hear their evocative bugling: birds overhead or tucked out of sight in the holm oaks.

The cranes may be reason enough to travel to Extremadura in February, but there is much more. Other wintering birds include waterfowl and, on the steppes, flocks of golden plovers and lapwings, the latter *avefría* – cold bird – in Spanish.

Also on the steppes are impressive great bustards, often in small parties as the breeding season approaches. In the air, the sight of one of the world's heaviest flying birds is quite something. Other steppe birds include little bustards, stone-curlews and both pin-tailed and black-bellied sandgrouse.



White storks are bill-clapping on their huge nests. Lesser kestrels will be back along with other migrants such as great spotted cuckoo, martins and swallows.

We stay at the wonderful Finca Santa Marta, a granite-built olive oil mill converted into a country inn, situated in the countryside south of Trujillo. It's a great place to see azure-winged magpies, that amazing, colourful bird of the east with an outpost in Spain. One theory was that they originated from birds escaped during trade with China in earlier times, but proof that it is a relict population has recently come to light with the discovery of sub-fossil bones.

Birds

As well as those already mentioned, we should see a selection of the following: Bonelli's eagle, red and black-shouldered kites, peregrine, raven, hoopoe, blue rock thrush, little owl, southern grey shrike, woodlark, Dartford and Sardinian warblers, hawfinch, cirl and corn buntings, Tekla lark, spotless starling and rock sparrow.

Price: £1,430 per person in twin room for a full week (Tuesday to Tuesday)

Single room supplement: £200

En suite facilities

Scheduled easyJet flights Gatwick to Madrid.

Deposit: £300

Maximum number (two leaders): 14

Main leader: Chris Durdin



Lesser kestrels



Cranes



Angel's tears narcissus



Azure-winged magpie

Flowers

Ahead of Extremadura's fierce summer, the countryside is green, with wayside flowers such as Iberian milk-vetch and field marigolds. We will look for miniature daffodils: hoop petticoat and angel's tears narcissi.

Itinerary

We will visit the Crane Information Centre, dehesa and rice paddies at Moheda Alta. Other excursions will include visits to the Monfragüe Natural Park, including places such as Peña Falcón and the Tiétar cliffs; and exploration of the plains around Trujillo. We also spend a morning in the wonderful old town of Trujillo with its striking central square and breeding white storks and lesser kestrels.

Conservation project

Traditional low intensity farming, especially unirrigated arable farmland but also seasonal grazing, supports much of the special wildlife of Extremadura and can never be protected just by nature reserves. The conservation of the Spanish steppes and 'dehesa' wood pasture is a priority for the Sociedad Española de Ornitología (Spanish Ornithological Society / BirdLife Spain).



Tarifa and Gibraltar



Early spring in Andalucia

Within sight of the Strait of Gibraltar and north Africa, the winter in southern Spain is mild and spring starts early. Late wintering birds mingle with early migrants, and early flowers include regional specialities. Temperatures can be mild, adding to the easy conditions for a relaxed, early season wildlife holiday.

Wetlands – especially La Janda – support good numbers of wintering, passage and breeding birds. Among the waterbirds are herons, egrets, spoonbills and glossy ibises. Coastal birds include Audouin’s and slender-billed gulls, various waders and there’s often a Caspian tern with the Sandwich terns. Ducks can include the threatened white-headed duck, here in its core area in western Europe.

Another threatened bird, one of the rarest in the world, is the northern bald ibis, for many years reduced to one colony in Morocco and a few elusive birds in the Middle East. This area has a reintroduction programme that is going well, and this iconic species can be surprisingly easy to see. Northern European robins, song thrushes and black redstarts overwinter here, alongside any number of blackcaps and chiffchaffs. Farmland supports winter finch flocks, buntings and larks. Interesting residents include firecrests, short-toed treecreepers, crested and Thekla larks.

Signs of spring will include the first martins and swallows, including red-rumped. Birds of prey aren’t moving on the huge scale of the autumn migration, but there should be a steady trickle of griffon vultures, along with black kites, eagles and lesser kestrels. White storks increasingly overwinter in the Iberian peninsula, but are also early migrants. Many hoopoes also stay year-round, and great spotted cuckoos will be arriving.

We stay at Huerta Grande, situated inland from Tarifa, within the southern tip of the Natural Park of Los Alcornocales (the cork oak). Cork oak woodland is one of the key habitats of the area, and our base is in a narrow gorge or ‘canuto’, the year-round moisture conserving a sub-tropical habitat unique in Europe.

Gibraltar

We will also visit the British territory of Gibraltar. It’s famous for its Barbary macaques, the last wild population in Europe. By contrast, Barbary partridges are usually elusive; blue rock thrush and peregrine are more likely. The Rock is botanically rich, with local specialities including rock marigold, toothed lavender, Tangier fennel and the big blue cones of *Scilla peruviana*.

The area is known for its cetaceans and, weather permitting, the holiday will include a boat trip into Gibraltar Bay or the Strait to look for these. Dolphins and long-finned pilot whales are the likeliest species.

Flowers

Many flowers have adapted to take advantage of the mild winter, including asphodels, squills, Barbary nut irises, early Ophrys orchids, paperwhite narcissi and the strange-looking friar’s cowl. Local species include Andalusian *rhododendron Rhododendron ponticum baeticum* and Andalusian birthwort. It may not be in flower yet, but we will seek out *Drosophyllum lusitanicum*, an unusual and very local carnivorous flower that is related to sundews.



Drosophyllum lusitanicum

Other wildlife

Our base at Huerta Grande has stripeless tree frogs and Moorish geckos. Andalusian wall lizard is a local speciality. Early butterflies could include Spanish festoon, Cleopatra, Moroccan orange-tip and the monarchs resident in the area, plus migrants such as clouded yellow, painted lady and green-striped white.

Conservation project

The Ornithological Group of Estrecho (GOES), formed in 1982, studies and protects wild birds and their habitats. It operates a ringing station and here and elsewhere more than 90,000 birds have been ringed since 1983, both resident species such as white storks and the many migrants that rely on this route to and from Africa. Other work includes publications and school visits.



Price: £1,430 per person in twin room for a full week (Monday to Monday)

Single room supplement: £100

En suite facilities

Scheduled easyJet flights Gatwick to Gibraltar, or Monarch flights Manchester to Gibraltar.

Deposit: £300

Maximum number (two leaders): 14
Leaders: Frank Vargas and Chris Durdin



Griffon vulture



Barbary nut iris



Barbary macaque

Gibraltar

Price: £1,490 per person in twin room for a full week (Wednesday to Wednesday)

Single room supplement: £200

En suite facilities

Scheduled easyJet or Monarch flights from Birmingham, Bristol, Liverpool, London Gatwick or Manchester

Deposit: £300

Maximum number (one leader): 7
Leader: David Collins

18 – 25 March 2015

Fuerteventura

Special birds on an unusual island

The Canary Islands, with their near perfect climate, are a major holiday destination.

However, for those who know where to look, away from the sun-seekers, the islands also offer plenty of interest to wildlife lovers. In particular, there is a range of birds and plants found nowhere else.



There are oases of greenery where hoopoes are often common, and at this time of year such places attract a range of migrant passerines. The endemic Berthelot's pipits are common, and if migration conditions are right almost anything is possible.

The wild coastline at Cotillo offers the chance to see shorebirds, and at dusk large numbers of Cory's shearwaters close to shore.

This holiday will be of particular interest to birdwatchers, but the unusual flora and butterflies are bound to distract us from time to time.

We stay at the Oasis Casa Vieja Hotel near La Oliva, inland and away from the coastal holiday resorts.

Birds

Those above plus Egyptian vulture, Barbary partridge, pallid swift, Spanish sparrow, spectacled warbler, lesser short-toed lark and possibly laughing dove. Migrants could include bee-eater, red-rumped swallow and woodchat shrike.

Flowers

Fuerteventura has a range of desert plants including interesting succulents. Depending on the intensity of winter rains, we will also see a range of Mediterranean and North African annuals. Some are unique to Fuerteventura or are found only in the eastern Canary Islands and adjacent African coast. These include woody spurges, limoniums and a delicate bugloss. On the Jandia peninsula we may see the very rare cactus-like Jandia spurge or the Medusa's-head bindweed.

Insects

The number of species is quite low but, as with the birds, the quality is high. Greenish black-tip and green-striped white are the commonest butterflies, and we will hope to see tiny African grass blues and the magnificent African tiger and monarch. Dragonflies could include Saharan blue-tailed damselfly, lesser emperor and scarlet darter.

Other wildlife

Barbary ground squirrels are common and sometimes very tame. There are endemic species of lizard and gecko.

Itinerary

Daily excursions will be tailored to suit conditions, but will include visits to Cotillo, Los Molinos Reservoir, the central mountains, fields at La Oliva, Catalina Garcia Lagoon and the Jandia peninsula. We will aim to visit a variety of places each day, so will make good use of the minibus, but there will be some leisurely walking each day too.

Conservation project

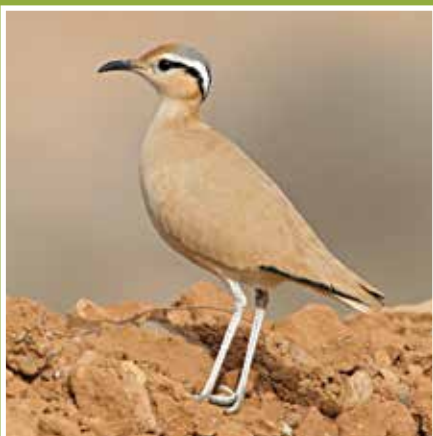
Conserving the scarce houbara bustard is a priority for the Spanish Ornithological Society / BirdLife Spain, which runs a nature reserve on Fuerteventura. Elsewhere, especially through signing, SEO tries to minimise disturbance to breeding birds.



Euphorbia canariensis



Barbary ground squirrel



Cream-coloured courser



Houbara bustard

The outstanding island from a birdwatcher's point of view is Fuerteventura. Although the range of birds is quite low, the quality is high. It is the only home of the Canary Island chat, which has one of the most restricted ranges of any European bird and a total population of just a few hundred.

Fuerteventura's wide semi-desert landscapes and barren mountains are home to a number of desert birds. Fuerteventura is probably the best place in the world to see houbara bustard. Our leader is an expert on the houbara, and we have an excellent chance of seeing this rare and elusive species. Other desert birds include the delightful and sometimes very tame cream-coloured courser, black-bellied sandgrouse and trumpeter finch.

We will also visit the two small wetlands on the island where we can expect to see noisy flocks of ruddy shelducks. Waders are likely to include black-winged stilts and Kentish plovers, and there is a chance of seeing the endemic plain swift. With luck, we may chance upon a Barbary falcon, several pairs of which now nest on the island.

In the central mountains there are stunted pine forests where the lovely song of the canary is heard, and African blue tits hunt for caterpillars.

14 – 21 April 2015

Crete



Island birds and flowers in the cradle of civilisation

Crete is a magical and mysterious island. Home of Europe's earliest civilisation, influenced by many nations, yet it retains its own identity and culture of which its people are justifiably proud.

The island's position in the Mediterranean has not only played a crucial role in its history but is an important migration route for birds on their way north in spring. Crete in April is free of crowds, the days can be warm and the hillsides are full of flowers.

This, the largest and most southerly of all the Greek islands, is dominated by a backbone of mountains through which cut many deep gorges. These are as spectacular as they are rich in wildlife, be it migrant birds, nesting vultures or endemic wild flowers.

Nature and history are difficult to separate on Crete, with wildlife close to important archaeological sites. We shall sample Minoan ruins at Phaestos and Ayia Triada.

We are based at the small and friendly Sophia Hotel in the small town of Plakias on the south coast. It is ideally placed for local walks and excursions and has an impressive backdrop of gorges and mountains.

Flowers

Crete's rich flora of 1600 native species includes 140 endemic to the island, such as Cretan cyclamen and Cretan ebony. In April many orchids are at their peak with Cretan bee, naked man, few-flowered, rainbow, four-spotted and bumblebee orchids among 20 or more species. Shrubs like Jerusalem sage and cistus contribute to colourful and aromatic hillsides.

Birds

The mountains and gorges of Crete are a stronghold for birds of prey, with the largest population of griffon vultures in Greece. Lammergeier, Bonelli's and golden eagles and buzzard all breed, as do crag martin, blue rock thrush, chough and raven. The hillsides and

scrub support both Sardinian and the much rarer Rüppell's warbler. At this time of year many birds pass through on migration, pausing especially at wetlands, however small. These might include red-footed falcon, alpine swift, bee-eater, squacco heron, little bittern and various waders and warblers.

Other wildlife

Even at this time of the year there are butterflies such as swallowtail, scarce swallowtail, Cleopatra and Cretan festoon. We often see freshwater crabs; reptiles can include Balkan (stripe-necked) terrapin and Balkan green lizard.

Excursions

As well as local walks, our minibus trips this week include visits to Moní Préveli, Kourtaliótiko and Kotsiphos Gorges, Frangokastello, Spili, Ayia reservoir and, probably, the mountain plateau at Omalos.

Conservation project

The lammergeier conservation project is run by the Hellenic Ornithological Society, BirdLife Greece. In south-east Europe, lammergeiers are now extinct in the Balkans and are only found on Crete. Alongside survey and monitoring, the long-term survival of Europe's rarest vulture is being tackled by site protection, food provision and the encouragement of traditional grazing systems.

SUPPORTING



Freshwater crab

Price: £1,390 per person in single or twin room, for a full week (Tuesday to Tuesday)

This includes taverna evening meals, with wine and coffee plus picnics or a taverna lunch.

En suite facilities

EasyJet flights, Gatwick to Heraklion

Deposit: £300

Maximum number: 14, with two leaders

Main leader: Tim Strudwick



Little bittern



Orchis boryi - Spili



Plakias Bay

Price: £1,550 per person in twin room for nine days (Wednesday to Thursday)

Single room supplement: £120

En suite facilities

Scheduled Ryanair flights Stansted to Trieste or Pula

Deposit: £300

Maximum number: 14

Main leader: Paul Tout

6 – 14 May 2015

Istria

Nine days in peninsula Istria (Croatia)

At the crossroads of the Balkans, Central Europe and the Mediterranean, Istria has a fascinating history, geology, flora and fauna. In a relatively small area (about 4000 km²) one passes from a rocky coastline and a strip of Mediterranean scrub and woodland through areas of low-intensity agriculture rich in wild flowers and farmland birds.

Away from the coast, the land rises to 1000m or more above sea level with broad submontane grasslands, limestone gorges and splendid beechwoods. Beyond the Limski Kanal, a fjord-like inlet that separates northern and southern Istria, climatic conditions are similar to those found farther south in Greece and southern Italy.

The limestone mountains of the interior are still wild and sparsely populated by Albanian and Romanian communities brought in as colonists by the Austrians and Venetians during the Middle Ages, following depopulation caused by outbreaks of the plague. As elsewhere in the flower-rich Karst, limestone areas are peppered with remarkable dolinas (swallow-holes) where the roofs of caves have collapsed, leaving hollows with their own micro-climate with a curious mixture of alpine, western European, Balkan and Mediterranean flowers.

Birds

Mediterranean birds are well represented with subalpine and Sardinian warblers, bee-eaters, hoopoes and alpine swifts. Scops owls are abundant. Black-headed bunting is near the north-western edge of its distribution, and fieldfare at its southern limit. Limestone cliffs and gorges are breeding grounds for blue rock thrush, eagle owl and several pairs of golden eagles. The forests have honey buzzards and goshawks and interesting woodpeckers: black, lesser spotted and grey-headed are at our base. Griffon vultures from nearby colonies on the island of Cres often put in an appearance. Wetlands are rather scarce and isolated, but there are a few such as Il Palù south of Rovigno, along the river Mirna close to the hotel and the large salinas at Sečovlje on the border between Slovenia and Croatia.

Flowers

Istria's flora is a fascinating mix of Mediterranean, Balkan, subalpine and northern communities. Mediterranean maquis dominates the coast including myrtle, various species of cistus, wild sage, evergreen oak and tree heath along with terebinth and mastic trees, though the composition of the community varies greatly with geology.

Moving away from the coast, and up in terms of altitude, average annual temperatures drop rapidly, allowing the appearance of northern, subalpine and even a few true alpine species.

The grasslands of upper Istria are notable for their floral displays in April and May. Fields and verges are awash with orchids, especially green-winged in purple swathes set among cow-wheat, rattle and occasional round-headed orchids.



Other wildlife

Butterflies abound throughout Istria. In May, large tortoiseshell, black-veined white and swallowtails are present, along with a range of blues and fritillaries. Mediterranean Istria has a wide range of other wildlife including Hermann's tortoise and the ophisaurus, Europe's largest lizard, not unlike a giant slow-worm. Inland, the cooler and heavily forested Upper Istria has few human inhabitants and is home to wolves, lynx and brown bear.

Istarske Toplice

All of this is less than ninety minutes from, for Honeyguide, our rather untypical base at the modern Hotel Mirna at the spa of Istarske Toplice. Perfectly located in central-northern Istria, in Croatia, it is close to the Slovenian border and about 40 minutes from Italy. Its extensive grounds are alongside the river Mirna oakwoods, fought over by the Venetians and Austrians for their timber and notable for their white truffle production. The rare Tommasini's sandwort grows here, above the holiday complex, one of just six known sites. The area is also rich in bird life and perfect for early morning walks.

The large hotel pool, fitness room, sauna and massage facilities will be available to participants who fancy a swim before dinner or a day spent in the hotel just enjoying the facilities.



Ascalaphus macaronicus

Itinerary

Two or three days will be spent on local walks in the varied landscape around the hotel, mixed with a visit to the nearby coastal salinas at Sečovlje. We will also visit the extreme southern tip of Istria, Punta Prematura and Kamenjak, with its Mediterranean flora and fauna, the seas around which support the Adriatic's only known (and tiny) colony of the critically-endangered monk seal. Trips will include visits to Mt Taiano and Mt Učka for alpine flowers and birds including rock partridge and ortolan bunting.

Conservation project

BirdLife Slovenia (DOPPS) – the northern part of Istria is in Slovenia – is working hard to protect natural areas, especially wetlands. It also runs projects for endangered species, in particular roller and the globally threatened corncrake and lesser kestrel.

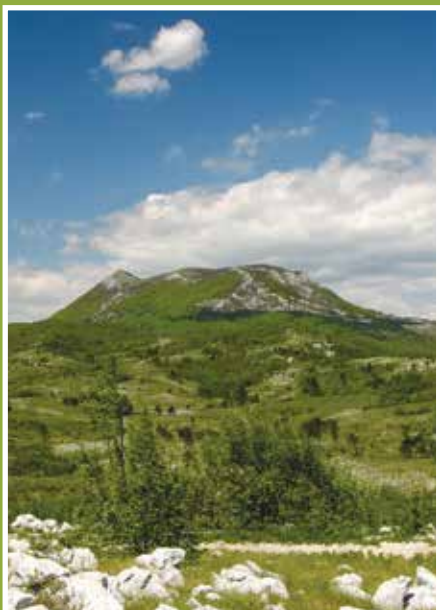
SUPPORTING



Blue rock thrush



Green-winged orchids



Mt Učka

13 – 20 May 2015

The Camargue

Flamingos and more in Mediterranean France

The wild and beautiful marshes of the Camargue cover a huge area of the Rhône delta in the south of France. At its heart lies the Étang de Vaccarès, a vast lagoon surrounded profusion of wildlife but also herds of 'wild' bulls and long-maned white horses, so characteristic of the area and a deep part of the local culture.

Despite the pressure from tourism, the marshes are still of international importance for their wildlife. There are sights at every turn: great flocks of flamingos, a host of heron and egret species, hawking bee-eaters, ever-present marsh harriers, all set against a mosaic of botanically rich and intriguing wetland habitats.

Where marshland gives way to flooded rice fields, breeding colonies of black-winged stilts occur and collared pratincoles hawk after insects. Many black kites and the occasional short-toed eagle hunt the drier edges, breeding areas for tawny pipits and crested larks, rich areas for flowers, butterflies and dragonflies.

East of the Camargue lies the stony 'desert' of la Crau, originally a former flood-plain of the Durance river. The ancient tradition of seasonal grazing and transhumance has produced a unique stony herb-rich grassland, breeding habitat for little bustards and pin-tailed sandgrouse while the traditional farm buildings are homes for lesser kestrel. The scents of herbs and the calls of stone-curlews make for a memorable experience.

Farmland to the north – with wild flowers, nightingales, fan-tailed warblers, rollers – gives way to the limestone chain of hills, les Alpilles. Cirl buntings and blue rock thrushes may be found on the rocky slopes around the fortified hilltop town of les Baux. Alpine swifts whirl overhead and walking through the fragrant scrub provides wonderful views over the Rhône delta and a chance of soaring Egyptian vultures and Bonelli's eagles. The limestone hills provide a treasure-house of plants, butterflies can be bewilderingly abundant and the little town, sensitively restored and interpreted for the tourist, is a rich source of local crafts and tasteful souvenirs.

Upstream of our hotel, the river Gardon plunges between wooded hillsides under the famous Roman aqueduct, the Pont du Gard. Above and under its arches alpine swifts and crag martins hunt for insects. Searching among the fine stonework, with tiny plants clinging to the crevices, we might find rock sparrows, and paths above the river not only give excellent views of the aqueduct itself but also a range of plants typical of the maquis and garrigue and the riverine forest is the home of golden orioles.

To the west of the Camargue proper lies the Petite Camargue. Although on a less grand scale, it too has its specialities. Species-rich *Salicornia* marshes – the salt-steppes – support a small breeding population of spectacled warblers and the islands in some of the larger étangs hold gull-billed terns and slender-billed gulls.



An enormous heronry is established in the heart of the reserve at Scamandre providing an extraordinary and memorable close encounter with these iconic birds. Close to les Saintes Maries de la Mer, well known for its gypsy association, tracks along the beach or beside the shore of the étangs afford views over the sea and the lagoons,



just the place for terns and gulls, as well as close-up views of black-winged stilts and flamingos and rewarding foraging for botanists.

We stay at the Hôtel Robinson, run by a French family on the edge of the pretty medieval town of Beaucaire. Noted for its hospitality and its excellent regional food and wine, the hotel is set in 10 hectares of beautiful wooded grounds extending up the flower-rich limestone hillside behind.

Birds

As well as those already mentioned, we should see a selection of the following: white stork, glossy ibis, red-crested pochard, Kentish plover, Mediterranean gull, whiskered tern, short-toed lark, great reed and Cetti's warblers, firecrest and hoopoe.

Itinerary

We shall spend three days in and around the wetlands and marshes of the Camargue and Petite Camargue, a day in each of la Crau, les Baux and the Alpilles, and half a day in the area around the Pont du Gard. There will be an opportunity to explore one of the famous and fascinating local towns: Beaucaire, Tarascon or Arles, with museums and information centres to visit and some shopping time in les Baux and St Martin du Crau.

Conservation project

Conservation contributions from this holiday support work to protect the lesser kestrel. La Crau, where we visit, is its French stronghold in France. La Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux (LPO, the French Bird Protection League) has installed nestboxes on the roof of a sheepfold. By encouraging birds to nest here, LPO is reducing the level of predation observed in ground-nesting lesser kestrels.



Price: £1,450 per person in twin or double room for a full week (Monday to Monday).

Single room supplement: £150

En suite facilities

Scheduled easyJet flights
London Gatwick to Montpellier

Deposit: £300

Maximum number: 14, with two leaders.

Leaders: Robin and Rachel Hamilton

Greater flamingos



Black-winged stilt



Scarlet darter

More information visit www.honeyguide.co.uk 9

20 – 27 May 2015

Latvia

Migration on the Baltic coast

Tucked away on the Baltic coast is, for British naturalists, the largely undiscovered country of Latvia. It offers an attractive mixture: partly Scandinavian in feel, partly eastern and partly continental, with the wildlife reflecting this mix.

Latvia, the middle of the three Baltic countries, is bigger than a glance at the map might suggest. This two-centre holiday concentrates on an area west of the capital city of Riga. It takes in two national parks, leading to Latvia's north-west tip at Kolka Cape.

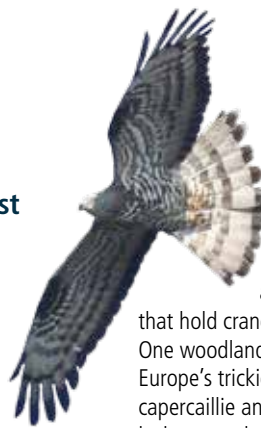
Our visit in May is to coincide both with the arrival of summer visitors and for migration along the coast, especially of birds of prey and passerines. It is also well-timed for woodland flowers.

Kemeru National Park

Though the majority of the Kemeru National Park is forest, wetlands are probably the main draw for naturalists. On the extensive Dunduri meadows, grazed by Konik ponies and Heck cattle, there are likely to be whooper swans, cranes and white storks; black storks are present, but scarcer. Birds of prey should include lesser spotted eagles, and there is every chance of a hunting white-tailed eagle. Damp scrub can have river warbler, marsh warbler and scarlet rosefinch.

An area of flooded woodland is particularly attractive to woodpeckers, including white-backed, lesser spotted and three-toed.

From the nature trail and birdwatching tower at Lake Kanieris, reedbeds stretch as far as the eye can see, providing a home for Savi's and great reed warblers. There's a huge cormorant colony in distant trees. Red-necked and black-necked grebes may be on open water areas, often with black and white-winged black terns. There are marsh harriers, as you'd expect, probably with an osprey or white-tailed eagle.



feel with forest of pine, spruce and birch, interspersed with bogs that hold cranes and breeding green sandpipers. One woodland spot has greenish warblers, one of Europe's trickiest leaf warblers to locate. There are capercaillie and black grouse, too, but you need luck to see these.

Much of Kolka Cape is more open, with meadows and scattered houses. Nearby, Scots pine trees, felled by a gale, still litter the beach, and have been left as they protect the coast. It's this area, jutting out where the Baltic meets the Gulf of Riga, that is most known for visible migration. Predicting this is risky, but Honeyguide's visits have coincided with steady movements of honey buzzards, many sparrowhawks, red-backed shrikes, hawfinches, short-eared owls, scores of yellow wagtails, golden orioles and more. Out at sea, eiders and scoters gather, perhaps with a summer plumage black-throated diver.

Birds

Those noted above plus great white egret, black woodpecker, wryneck, black redstart, whinchat, redwing, icterine warbler, wood warbler, pied flycatcher, siskin, plus various migrant warblers, waders and wildfowl.

Other wildlife

Elk is possible, but tricky; red squirrel is more likely. Raccoon dogs are an established alien species. There'll be a modest range of spring and migrant butterflies, and the prospect of large numbers of migrating dragonflies.



Riga

Flowers

Lady's smock and marsh marigold are common in damp areas, and other wetland flowers include bogbean, in fen pools, and birdseye primrose. Bird cherry is abundant. Woodland has lily-of-the-valley, hepatica, wood sorrel and wood anemone, plus the unusual chickweed wintergreen, a member of the primrose family found mainly in northern pine forests.

Itinerary

Three nights in the Kemeru National Park area, and four nights at Kolka. As well as wildlife watching, we plan a visit to the Ventspils International Radio Astronomy Centre and to allow time to see the beautiful city of Riga on the final day, if flight times make it practical.

Conservation project

The Latvian Owl Research Society is a new NGO, established in 2013. Its research, education and protection work includes creating nest boxes and tracking pygmy owls in Kemeru National Park.

Price: £1,530 per person in twin room for a full week (Wednesday to Wednesday)

Single room supplement: £200

En suite facilities

Scheduled Ryanair flights, London Stansted to Riga, or Air Baltic Gatwick to Riga

Deposit: £300

Maximum number: 12

Leaders: Karlis Millers and Rob Macklin



Red-backed shrike



Wild Pansy *Viola tricolor*



Kolka roadside bog

Kolka Cape

At Latvia's north-western tip, the Slitere National Park surrounds the village and cape of Kolka. Much of the National Park has a northern

6 – 13 June 2015

Danube Delta

A week in Europe's largest wetland

There is nowhere in Europe quite like the Danube Delta. Covering 2,200 square miles, the lion's share in Romania, the rest in the Ukraine, no naturalist's lifetime should be without the experience of visiting the delta.

Immense, important, breathtaking, threatened, beautiful; almost any superlative seems to fit some aspect of the Danube Delta.

For wetland birds, it is birdwatching made easy. Most famous are the pelicans, white and the globally threatened Dalmatian. Enjoy them as your boat drifts close to a flock on a lake; another day a flight of them catches you by surprise as they glide easily overhead.

The delta is as varied as it is spectacular. One hour you may be along riverine forest, with glossy ibises, egrets and sparkling blue kingfishers either side of you. Moving into an open area there may be lily-nesting whiskered terns alongside family parties of ferruginous ducks and red-necked grebes with youngsters clambering onto their backs. Then there are little bitterns disappearing into high reeds to the deep-throated sounds of great reed warblers or the distant buzz of a Savi's warbler.

The visit is timed for a combination of good weather and wetland birds at their most abundant and obvious. As well as true wetland birds, the land and wooded areas within the wetlands are rich with rollers, bee-eaters, golden orioles and woodpeckers, the last including black and grey-headed. Dragonflies bring hobbies and red-footed falcons in pursuit, and occasionally the vast form of a white-tailed eagle drifts through.

Much of this needs to be done by boat, or rather boats. This holiday is run in collaboration with Ibis Tours who are based in Tulcea, gateway to the delta. A delightful 'pontoon' – floating hotel – is our holiday base, usually combined with a hotel in Tulcea. The food is very good. From Tulcea, the pontoon is towed into the delta's core.

Some of the best areas for birds are in Dobrogea – the area round the edge of the delta. Lagoons with wildfowl and migrant waders and are best visited from here. Dry country birds include calandra and short-toed larks; raptors include long-legged buzzard. Scrub areas hold barred warbler and ortolan bunting; the villages have white storks and Syrian woodpeckers.

Our local guides know the area and its wildlife well. But equally important is their hospitality. As the Romanian Ministry of Tourism brochure rightly says, 'Come as a tourist, leave as a friend'.

Birds

Those above plus purple, squacco and night herons, great white and little egrets, spoonbill, pygmy cormorant, Syrian woodpecker, red-crested pochard, red-backed and lesser grey shrikes,

penduline and sombre tits, icterine warbler and, with luck and perseverance, paddyfield warbler.



Whiskered tern



White pelicans

Other wildlife

This is, primarily, a birdwatching holiday, but the flowers in Dobrogea are a fascinating mix of eastern and northern European and Mediterranean species. Trees include Caucasian and manna ashes, Cornelian cherry, oriental hornbeam and silver lime. Terrapins, frogs and butterflies add interest, and muskrat is a possibility in the delta.

Itinerary

We'll spend three days in Dobrogea exploring a mix of wet and dry land. The other three days will be in the heart of the delta, much of it by boat but with walks onto dry land.

Conservation project

The Romanian Ornithological Society is a small but active bird conservation society. Our contribution goes towards a group of young naturalists called Falco cherrug (the saker), which is run by Eugen Petrescu, who is both one of the Ibis team – quite often a leader for Honeyguide groups – and the SOR representative in the delta.

SUPPORTING



Brown bear, a highlight of the Carpathians



Spoonbills

Price: £1,490 per person in twin cabin for a full week (Saturday to Saturday).
Single cabin supplement: £150
En suite facilities
Scheduled Wizz Air flights, London Luton to Bucharest
Deposit: £300
Maximum number: 14
Optional three-day extension to the Carpathian Mountains, 13 – 17 June, including brown bear watching: £500 per person, single supplement £60
Leaders: Ibis team, with a local guide from Ibis in the Carpathians

16 – 23 June 2015

French Pyrenees



Stunning scenery and mountain wildlife

For a combination of mountain views, flowers, butterflies and birds, the Pyrenees takes some beating. Spectacular cirques, flower-filled meadows and soaring vultures; it lends itself to our mixed natural history style.

Many Honeyguiders know the Spanish Pyrenees: the French side is lush, greener and the emphasis of this holiday much more on the high Pyrenees. Access is easy to gentle walks or pottering in mountain pastures, up there with the isard – Pyrenean chamois – and marmots.

The short turf of mountain pastures has alpine plants including snowbells, trumpet and spring gentians, garland flower and birdseye primrose. In meadows, columbines, globe flowers and St Bernard's lily delight the eye. On walls, the delicate pink of fairy foxgloves is everywhere. Fragrant and elder-flowered orchids and narrow-leaved helleborine are likely, and there's a chance of black vanilla orchid. Familiar flowers in unfamiliar forms include a red kidney vetch and sheets of broad-leaved marsh orchid *Orchis majalis* subsp *alpestris*.

Snowfinch, both red-billed and alpine choughs, rock bunting and rock thrush are highly likely. That most thrilling of birds, the lammergeier, is as easy to see here as anywhere; other birds of prey include griffon and Egyptian vultures, golden eagles and red kites.

There are wallcreepers, though typically they are elusive. Butterflies include clouded apollo, Camberwell beauty and swallowtail, plus a wide selection of blues, fritillaries and others.

Watercourses can hold Pyrenean brook newts and Pyrenean rock lizards scuttle around on rocks in the higher pastures.

Our base is the Hotel La Brèche de Roland, in Gèdre, just north of Gavarnie. It's an attractive

Birds

Highlights, in addition to those mentioned above, could include short-toed eagle, peregrine, alpine swift, black woodpecker, woodlark, crag martin, water pipit, black-bellied dipper, crested tit, red-backed shrike and citril finch.



Rock bunting

Butterflies

Some of the more than 50 species seen in the area: apollo, black-veined white, Moroccan orange-tip, Cleopatra, clouded & mountain clouded yellows, green hairstreak, Adonis & Escher's blues, Queen-of-Spain and pearl-bordered fritillaries, large wall brown, Piedmont ringlet, pearly heath and red-underwing skipper.

Flowers

These are some of the most typical or striking of a long list: livelong saxifrage, mountain avens, entire-leaved primrose, rock-jasmine, ramonda, mountain thrift, large-flowered butterwort, Pyrenean rampion, spreading bellflower, alpine aster, Pyrenean snakeshead, Tofield's asphodel, St Bernard's lily, Pyrenean hyacinth and butterfly orchids.

Itinerary

The cirque of Gavarnie is rightly famous; it can be busy but that takes little away from its magnificence and wildlife interest. Other sites to be visited include the Barrage des Gloriettes, Saugué valley, Ossoue valley, Col de Tentès, Col du Tourmalet and Cirque de Troumouse.

Conservation project

The lammergeier, or bearded vulture, is Europe's scarcest bird of prey. Though never common, their decline prompted a partnership to tackle their protection and, as a result, numbers are now on the up. La Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux (LPO, the French Bird Protection League) is active here, with careful monitoring of local population of the *casqueur d'os* (bonebreaker), including tracking birds with radio transmitters; site protection in collaboration with other mountain users, such as climbers; and food provision in the breeding season.



Price: £1,450 per person in twin room for a full week (Tuesday to Tuesday)

Single room supplement: £160

En suite facilities

Scheduled Ryanair flights Stansted to Lourdes

Deposit: £300

Maximum number (two leaders): 14

Leaders: Chris Durdin and Ivan Nethercoat



Apollo butterfly



Lammergeier



Cirque de Gavarnie



Marmot

former 17th century family house in the village, looking out onto Brèche de Roland. The 'brèche' or breach is like a bite out of the top of the cirque, measuring 100m by 60m. Roland, nephew of Charlemagne, carved it, according to 11th century legend. He was leading the fight against the Moors and was trying to smash his magical sword Durandel to save it from enemy hands.

18 – 25 June 2015

Bulgaria's Western Rhodopes

Wallcreepers, lilies and more

Few countries can rival Bulgaria's scenic splendour and diverse nature. The country's most valuable natural features are protected in three national parks, twelve nature parks and numerous wildlife and nature refuges

The higher plants number about 3,500 species, including more than 400 Bulgarian and Balkan endemics and nearly 70 species of orchids. Bulgaria boasts the richest dragonfly and butterfly fauna in Europe.

This holiday concentrates on the mountains, meadows and gorges of the Western Rhodopes. The Rhodope Mountains are in southern Bulgaria, close to the border with Greece.

The mountains' pine-clad slopes are occasionally cut by rivers winding through deep gorges, one of which is the magnificent Trigrad Gorge. Its limestone cliffs are known for their wallcreepers. It's probably one of the easiest places in Europe to see this sometimes elusive bird, constantly flicking its crimson-and-black wings while investigating rocky nooks for food.

In Trigrad Gorge we can enjoy birds like peregrine, alpine swift, crag martin, red-rumped swallow and dipper. Elsewhere in the forests, crags and mountain meadows of the Western Rhodopes we hope to find black woodpecker, alpine and pallid swifts, nutcracker, sombre tit, red-backed shrike and rock bunting.

The cultural heritage and traditions of Bulgaria include magnificent architecture from the 18th and 19th centuries in many towns and villages. Ancient icons, breath-taking murals and superb woodcarvings preserved in monasteries and churches, form just a part of the religious, historic and cultural wealth.

Other traditions include the tasty Bulgarian cuisine, salads especially, good local wines and, in our experience, a warm welcome in the mountain village of Yagodina. Here we are based at the family-run Hotel Yagodina, well located for walks around the village.

Flowers

Low intensity agriculture means that the Western Rhodopes have retained vast swathes of beautiful grasslands, with a dazzling array of wild flowers, a mixture of familiar species and local specialities.

In the gorges especially, there are several endemic species, one of the best known being *Haberlea rhodopensis*, which is related to African violets. Others endemics include *Valeriana montana*, Rhodope sandwort *Arenaria rhodoea*, a bellflower *Campanula orphanidea* and the saxifrage *Saxifraga stribrnyi*.

There are four geum species, two foxgloves, three wintergreens, an unusual bugle *Ajuga lazmanii*, St Bernard's lily and many orchids – just a few

names from so many in a rich and varied area for a botanist.

Perhaps the star species is the Rhodope lily, found only here and in nearby Greece. It's in flower-rich high mountain meadows, along with corncrakes and swarms of marsh fritillaries and other butterflies.



Trigrad gorge

Butterflies

The bewildering variety – 72 species on a previous visit – includes many local or unusual species: Balkan zephyr blue, Balkan copper, powdered brimstone and poplar admiral. These mingle with butterflies found more widely in mainland Europe, such as spotted, Queen-of-Spain and Glanville fritillaries, Apollo, chestnut heath, Idas blue and more.



Pennant-winged ant-lion *Nemoptera sinuata*

Other wildlife

Red squirrel, pine marten and wild cat are found in the mountains, plus souslik in the lowlands. Agile frog and fire salamander occur. Among a big range of dragonflies, moths and other invertebrates, one of the most spectacular is the pennant-winged ant-lion.

Conservation project

The Rhodope lily *Lilium rhodopaeum* is a very scarce flower of the Western Rhodopes. It's found on just a handful of sites in Bulgaria and just over the border in Greece, about half of which have no official protection. Our local leader, Vlado, is the Bulgarian authority on this spectacular endemic, and with our help leads on its monitoring and conservation.

SUPPORTING



Price: £1,400 per person in twin room for a full week (Thursday to Thursday).

Single room supplement: £100

En suite facilities

Scheduled Ryanair flights, London Stansted to Plovdiv

Deposit: £300

Maximum number: 14

Leaders: Vladimir Trifonov and Chris Gibson



Wallcreeper



Lilium rhodopaeum

More information visit www.honeyguide.co.uk 13

7 – 22 October 2015

Kruger National Park

Two weeks of unparalleled bird and wildlife watching in South Africa



Price: £3,950 per person in twin room for 13 nights in South Africa, plus two overnight travel days (Wednesday to Thursday)

Single room supplement: £400

En suite facilities

Scheduled flights, London Heathrow to Johannesburg with SAA or BA

Deposit: £500

Minimum of 4, maximum (two leaders): 14

Main leader: Geoff Crane

Dramatic yet accessible, wild Africa yet people-friendly, the Kruger is one of the world's great National Parks.

The Kruger has the enviable reputation of having the highest recorded species diversity of wildlife in a game reserve in the whole of Africa. The park is a fantastic destination for birdwatchers, with 517 bird species having been recorded in the park to date. Of these, 253 are residents and 117 are non-breeding migrants.

Kori and black-bellied bustards, secretarybird and ostriches are some of the biggest and most obvious birds. The park is particularly rich in cuckoos (nine species), rollers (five species), hornbills (six species) and kingfishers (nine species). Large raptors encountered throughout the year include African harrier-hawk, bateleur, dark chanting goshawk and five vulture species: eagles include martial, Verreaux's and tawny plus African fish eagle, African hawk eagle, brown and black-chested snake eagles.

Everyone wishes to see the so-called 'big five' – lion, elephant, rhino, buffalo and leopard – but these are just the best known of the park's 147 species of mammals. African wild dog, cheetah, giraffe and spotted hyaena are just a few of the others. Yet the 'little five' – lion ant, elephant shrew, rhino beetle, buffalo weaver and leopard tortoise – are equally fascinating in their own way.

We will be visiting the park towards the end of the dry season. This will make viewing wildlife more rewarding as the vegetation is sparser and animals and birds are drawn to waterholes to drink. Hippopotamus, Nile crocodile and marsh terrapin are residents of dams, rivers and waterholes.

Waterbirds include goliath heron, saddle-billed stork, African openbill and yellow-billed stork.

rhino beetles, roosting bats, sun-basking reptiles and well camouflaged insects. All the camps have ponds or bird baths, which are worth spending time at during the heat of the day. On one occasion we were shown 117 different bird species by the camp gardener – before breakfast! There is also a large variety of mammals that can be seen within the camps: tree squirrel, banded and dwarf mongooses, bushbuck, baboons and vervet monkey, the last quick and cunning when food is in question.

Linked to game and birdwatching, we will be looking at the Kruger's six eco-systems: baobab sandveld, mopane scrub, lebombo knobthorn-marula bushveld, mixed acacia thicket, combretum-silver clusterleaf woodland on granite and riverine forest. Altogether the park has a recorded 1,982 species of plants. The trees and shrubs within the camps where we stay are labelled as are some of the more impressive trees in the park, making for easy identification.

In the park we are able to drive our own vehicles and some of the smaller roads take us off the beaten track. This gives us the chance to stop at any point to study wildlife at close quarters and makes for excellent photographic opportunities.

In addition, night drives afford the chance to see birds and mammals not normally found during the daylight hours. Careful observation with a spotting light can reveal owls and nocturnal ground birds such as coursers and thick-knees. We will also be on the look out for the nocturnal mammals, predators like lions, leopards, African wild cat, serval and caracal, as well as large-spotted genet, civet, porcupine, lesser bushbaby and pangolin.

The Kruger National Park, the Gonarezhou National Park in Zimbabwe and the Limpopo National Park in Mozambique have now been incorporated into the Greater Limpopo Transfrontier Park. The long term goal of this Park is to eventually open up a huge international park system, with no internal fences so that the wildlife can reinstate their ancient migration routes.

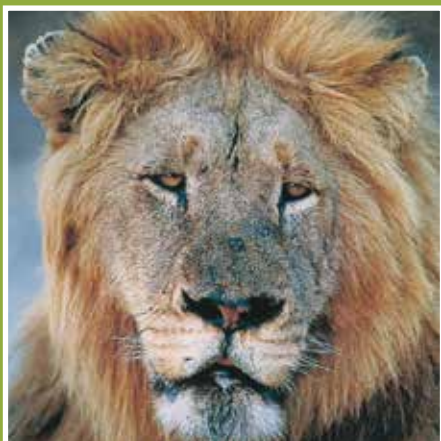
Over our two weeks in South Africa we stay in four rest camps within the Kruger National Park, plus a final night before departure, via the Paul Kruger gate and Mpumalanga, at the Misty Mountain Private Nature Reserve.

Conservation project

The second South African Bird Atlas Project (SABAP 2) is one of the most intensive monitoring programmes ever undertaken in South Africa. Many areas are difficult to access but critically need atlas work and ongoing monitoring work for BirdLife South Africa to understand the bird conservation challenges in these remote sites.



The established indigenous gardens in the rest camps play host to a multitude of smaller creatures. There are beautiful butterflies, huge



Lion



Above: crested barbet, below: cheetahs



31 October – 7 November 2015

Algarve & Alentejo



Autumn birds in south Portugal

Superb coastal wetlands, craggy cliffs and extensive plains: the south of Portugal offers first-class birdwatching in a comfortable climate.

Autumn sees an appealing mix of residents, winter visitors and migrant birds, some moving along the coast or towards their winter quarters in Africa.

This holiday, in Algarve and Alentejo, incorporates a mixture of wetlands, coastal cliffs, oak forest, dry grassland and hilly areas. Highlights could include Iberian specialities, like black-shouldered kite, great and little bustards, black-bellied sandgrouse and azure-winged magpie, plus plenty of other wildlife and beautiful landscapes.

By staying inland and on the protected west coast, we can enjoy the undeveloped Algarve, moving past the better known beaches and golf courses, and head into the extensive grasslands of the remote Alentejo.

Barrocal, coast and Alentejo

At Alte, birdwatching in the traditional farmland areas of the limestone Barrocal may yield short-toed and Bonelli's eagle, little owl, hoopoe and woodlark. The classified site of Rocha da Pena is a magnificent natural monument of great beauty. Scrub here may hold southern European birds such as southern grey shrikes, Dartford and Sardinian warblers, cirl and rock buntings, and blue rock thrush on the cliffs.

Migratory or late summer butterflies, like small copper, long-tailed and Lang's short-tailed blues and painted lady could still be on the wing. At nearby Benémola spring, one of the few permanent streams in the Algarve, we can look for seasonal dragonflies, like western willow spreadwing, epaulet skimmer and red-veined darter.

Castro Marim Nature Reserve, in the Guadiana estuary near the border with Spain, has extensive marshes and salinas. Waders should include black-winged stilt, avocet and Kentish plovers, plus many migrants from the Arctic. Other waterbirds likely are good numbers of greater flamingos, spoonbill and egrets, and late terns could include Caspian.

At Ria Formosa Nature Park, at Quinta do Lago, the mudflats and lagoons of the area have a variety of waterbirds including specialities like purple gallinule, little bittern and red-crested pochard. Other unusual wildlife, like fiddler crabs and European chameleon, can be seen.

Castro Verde Special Protection Area, in Alentejo, is the most important dry-grassland area in Portugal. During the day we explore the dry grasslands, which supports more than 1,000 great bustards. Birds of prey can be outstanding here, including griffon and black vultures, golden and Spanish imperial eagles. Other grassland birds include little bustard, black-bellied sandgrouse and stone-curlew. Larks include calandra and Thekla, and Spanish sparrows occur in flocks.

Atlantic Algarve

The second part of this holiday is based at Sagres in the far west of Algarve. Our route takes us via Salgados lagoon near Pêra. This small coastal lagoon can be crowded with migratory waterbirds. Moving west, Monchique is the highest mountain in Algarve, and the greener landscape will attract passerines, butterflies and dragonflies.

The peninsula of Sagres includes Cape São Vicente, the extreme south-western point of continental Europe, from which seabird passage could include shearwaters, gannets, skuas and terns. The scrub and grassland above the impressive sea cliffs hold passerines and counts show a concentration of migrant raptors, though you have to be lucky, in the right place at the right time, to see them.

A pelagic trip gives the chance for seabirds and dolphins. Autumn flowers can include Portuguese autumn crocus, autumn and sea squills and autumn snowflake. Our leader, Domingos, is especially good at finding reptiles and amphibians.

Our bases are the three-star Alte Hotel, located outside the village of Alte, surrounded by small fields and Mediterranean scrub, and Hotel Mira Sagres in the village of Vila do Bispo.

Conservation project

Sociedade Portuguesa para o Estudo das Aves (SPEA, BirdLife in Portugal) has a network of Important Bird Areas (IBAs) with local volunteers monitoring these and acting as 'caretakers'. In particular, with our help, SPEA is improving the annual bird monitoring on the protected west coast IBA.



Price: £1,330 per person in twin room for a full week (Saturday to Saturday)

Single room supplement: £180

En suite facilities

Probably easyJet flights, London Gatwick to Faro and options from other airports

Deposit: £300

Maximum number (two leaders): 14
Leaders: Domingos Leitão and Rob Macklin



Purple gallinule



Chameleon



Cape St Vincent

Price: £3,950 per person in twin room for 14 nights plus two travelling days (Saturday to Monday).

Single room supplement: £200

En suite facilities

Flights: Scheduled flights, London Heathrow to Windhoek via Johannesburg, either with SAA or BA/SAA.

Deposit: £500

Minimum of 3, maximum (two leaders): 14
Main leader: Geoff Crane

7 – 23 November 2015

Namibia

Including Etosha National Park and the Skeleton Coast



Namibia is a land of contrasts. It's dominated by the deserts of the Namib and Kalahari, with dramatic landscapes of brick-red dunes and craggy hills. Yet Namibia also boasts some of Africa's richest densities of wildlife. There are huge coastal seal colonies and lagoons rich in waders, flamingos and pelicans, and the Etosha National

for include secretarybird, kori and Ludwig's bustards, yellow-throated sandgrouse and Bennett's woodpecker. Several Kalahari-associated species occur this far west including the barred wren-warbler, Marico flycatcher and shaft-tailed whydah. Caspian plover, blue crane and crimson-breasted shrike are other sought-after birds.

But it's far from hard work: camps have swimming pools, restaurants, gift shops and large flood-lit waterholes that attract a steady procession of wildlife during the night.

Sossusvlei / Namib-Naukluft National Park

At Sossusvlei, where the dunes can reach 220 metres, large camel thorn trees, dead for want of water, still stand 900 years later. The sweeping dunes, along with gravel plains and river valleys, give opportunities for photographers. It is also a fascinating insight into a world of reptiles, birds and insects living among the sand dunes – all uniquely adapted to desert survival.

We venture deeper into the desert of the massive Namib-Naukluft National Park via the Swakop River valley and the Moon Landscape, formed over 460 million years. 1,500 year-old welwitschias, lithops, hoodias and mist-gathering lichens are unforgettably strange.

Geologically, this area is of great significance: from countless small-scale mine works of hand-hewn tourmaline and rose quartz to the largest open-cast uranium mine in the world.

Waterberg

The Waterberg is a spectacular sandstone massif in the central region of the country. This is the only breeding site of the Cape vulture in Namibia, with a vulture feeding scheme. The Waterberg Plateau Park has the country's breeding programme for Namibia's endangered large mammals. There are sizeable numbers of black and white rhino within the park, as well as roan and sable antelope and buffalo.

Walks here include fig forests and reedbeds and are excellent for birds such as Ruppell's parrot and Bradfield's hornbill. On the sandstone cliffs a variety of rock-loving species include familiar chat, Verreaux's eagle, African hawk-eagle and short-toed rock-thrush. The bush below the cliffs is good for hornbills, woodpeckers, francolins, Swainson's spurfowl, pririt batis, golden-breasted bunting and much more.

This holiday includes more travelling and holiday bases (seven) than a typical Honeyguide holiday, though the journeys have stops with much wildlife and landscape to absorb.

Conservation project

The second South African Bird Atlas Project (SABAP 2) is one of the most intensive monitoring programmes ever undertaken across southern Africa (including Namibia). Many areas are difficult to access but critically need atlas work and ongoing monitoring work for BirdLife South Africa to understand the bird conservation challenges in these remote sites.



Dunes at Sossusvlei



Giraffes



Waterhole at Etosha NP

Park has concentrations of mammals and birds considered by many to be the continent's finest.

Windhoek and its Botanical Gardens offer a gentle introduction to the former German colony of South-west Africa – which has been independent from South Africa since 1990. Special birds here include Monteiro's hornbill, rockrunner and chestnut weavers.

Skeleton Coast

The famous Skeleton Coast – so named because of the many shipwrecks – holds the Cape fur seal colony at Cape Cross, the largest in the southern hemisphere and home to about 200,000 seals in peak season. Walvis Bay lagoon is regarded as one of the most important wetlands along the west coast of southern Africa, both for the large numbers of resident species and for the vast numbers of both intra-African and Palaearctic migrants. The area also has strange seaside settlements and lichen fields on the gravel plains of Vloskasbaken.

Etosha National Park

Etosha National Park is one of Africa's greatest wildlife parks and it holds some 380 bird species. Centered on the vast expanse of the Etosha Pan, the park is a sanctuary to the largest population of the western sub-species of the black rhino. White rhino, elephants, black-faced impala, lions and a profusion of other mammals can be seen.

The camp itself holds sociable weaver colonies and the associated pygmy falcon. Birds more typical of drier habitats are the southern pied babbler and crimson-breasted shrike. Waterholes attract many seedeaters, including violet-eared waxbill and cut-throat finch. Impressive numbers of double-banded sandgrouse come to drink shortly after dusk. At night, marsh owls and rufous-cheeked nightjars hunt in the lights.

Games drives at sunrise help to get the best from the area. Birds that we will be searching



Cape fur seals



Lion



Flamingos



Kudu



Impala, reedbuck



Sociable weaver nests



Shipwreck on Namibia's Skeleton Coast

More information visit www.honeyguide.co.uk

Our holidays

- are all round natural history holidays, tailored to get the best out of the wildlife of each area
- go at a relaxed pace
- usually stay at one place
- include good, local food
- use the best of leaders, with extensive conservation knowledge, natural history skills, good experience of the local area and the right personal skills
- are designed to benefit you, wildlife and the local people whose services we use
- include a £40 contribution from each participant to wildlife conservation



Holidays for natural history societies, RSPB local groups or other groups can be arranged.

Visit: www.honeyguide.co.uk for holiday reports, photos and more.

Honeyguide Booking Form



Please use BLOCK CAPITALS and make cheques payable to Honeyguide Wildlife Holidays.

Please reserve _____ place(s) on your holiday to _____

I enclose / have sent by bank transfer _____ deposit(s) at £300 (£500 for South Africa) totalling: £ _____

Single room supplement(s): please book _____ single room(s) at extra each _____

I understand that the balance will become payable eight weeks (12 weeks for South Africa) before departure.

Holiday insurance company and policy number (details can be sent later, if you prefer): _____

Passport number(s), issue dates and expiry dates: _____

Title	Forenames*	Surnames	Date of birth
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

*As written on your passport. Please note or underline what you like to be known as, if different from the first name

Address:

Postcode _____

Telephone _____ Mobile _____ E-mail _____

Next of kin/home contact point in case of emergency (name & tel. no.) _____

Any special requirements (eg dietary) _____ Non-Smoker Smoker

Signed _____

Date _____

For couples, do you prefer twin beds a double bed or don't mind

The price of all Honeyguide holidays includes £40 earmarked for a local conservation project. We would be very grateful if everyone booking could complete the following conservation contribution consent and gift aid declaration.

Please complete sections 1 and 2

1. CONSENT FOR CONSERVATION CONTRIBUTION

We agree that Honeyguide Wildlife Trust Ltd (registered charity no. 1104606) may apply £40 from the cost of this holiday on behalf of each person named on the booking form, to be donated to a wildlife conservation project in the country to be visited.

PLEASE TICK BOX

Complete (a) or (b)

(a) Please print the name of each person on the booking form who qualifies to gift aid their contribution.

.....
.....
.....
Date.....

(b) If nobody on the booking form qualifies to gift aid their contribution, please tick this box.

2. GIFT AID DECLARATION

If you pay UK income tax or capital gains tax, Honeyguide Wildlife Trust Ltd can reclaim from HM Revenue & Customs an extra 25p on every £1 donated, helping your conservation contribution go further. To qualify you must pay at least as much UK tax for the year in which you donate as the amount we are able to reclaim on your donation – currently £10 on each £40 contribution.

If you are a UK taxpayer, please give us the opportunity of increasing your donation in this way.

giftaid it

Thank you

Please return to: Honeyguide Wildlife Holidays, 36 Thunder Lane, Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich NR7 0PX

Honeyguide booking details



How to book: a booking is made when the completed booking form (a photocopy or emailed scan is fine) plus deposit have been received and accepted by us. We are very happy to take telephone or email bookings, to be confirmed with the form plus deposit during the week following your call / email.

Deposit and payment: £300 per person (£500 for South Africa) deposit is payable by cheque or bank transfer with the booking, with the remainder due eight weeks before departure (12 weeks for South Africa). Payments by credit, debit or charge cards cannot be taken.

Cancellation by you: if you have to cancel, please telephone as soon as possible and confirm in writing. The cancellation will take effect from when it is received in writing. The scale of cancellation charges below is calculated by the time period before departure.

More than eight weeks	deposit only
5-8 weeks	30% of total price
2-5 weeks	60% of total price
1-14 days; on or after departure date	100% of total price

Travel insurance should cover you (less any excess) for cancellation charges if circumstances are beyond your control, such as ill health, and more than simply a change of mind.

Cancellation by us: in the unlikely event of this happening your money will be refunded in full. A decision to cancel would normally be made at the time of reminders for the remainder of payment, i.e. eight weeks before departure.

Single rooms and supplements: we don't like single room supplements but sometimes they can't be avoided, and we pass on the extra that the single room costs us. If you are willing to share but we don't find someone to share with you, you pay only half of any single supplement. Because we have often chosen small, community-based accommodation, single rooms may not always be available. It often helps to talk it through with us at an early stage.

Information: including detailed itinerary, information on books, maps, shopping, weather etc will be supplied as part of the package for enquirers or will be sent after booking. Previous holiday reports are available for most holidays.



Honeyguide enamel badges free from the Honeyguide office.

Flights: flights noted in the holiday details were the likeliest when the brochure went to print. However many summer schedules were not then out. Which airlines fly to where, and on what days, are increasingly prone to change; this may

affect the flights and occasionally the dates for some holidays. Flights from other UK airports are sometimes possible: please contact the Honeyguide office. Boarding passes or booking references will be sent 1-2 weeks before departure.

We use scheduled services and cannot be held responsible for any departure delays. We are not in a position to state the aircraft type to be used.

Changes to the programme: should circumstances beyond our control make significant changes to the programme necessary we will consult you to see if these are acceptable to you.

Holiday leaders: we do our best to keep the leader named for the holiday, but we reserve the right to replace him or her in the event of illness or some other reason. When two leaders are listed, one may not accompany the holiday if there are not enough participants.

Group size: very occasionally if there is one place available on a holiday and a couple wishes to book we may go over the group size stated. The minimum is usually four.

Overnight accommodation and parking near the airport: we often cannot avoid flights that mean an overnight stay for many participants. We may be able to advise on a hotel and/or parking. If staying overnight, please consider if you wish to have an extra day on your travel insurance.

Extending your holiday: for some holidays it is possible to arrive early or stay on. Please contact the Honeyguide office for details.

Passport: a valid full passport is essential.

Brochure: a spare brochure (more if you wish) will be sent with every booking.

Our price commitment: the prices of our holidays are fixed – there are no surcharges.

What the price includes: flights, airport taxes, carbon offsets, all travel and excursions, services of your holiday leader(s) and your conservation contribution are included in the holiday price. Also included are accommodation and meals – breakfast, packed lunch and evening meal, normally inclusive of wine.

What the price excludes: insurance and personal spending.

Smoking: most Honeyguiders are non-smokers. Anyone who smokes is expected to ensure this does not affect others in the group, including in the field. There is no smoking in transport, in our accommodation and at meals.

Tips and gratuities: all services in the itinerary are covered. You may wish to leave a 'thank-you' for room or restaurant staff at the end of your stay. We may organise a collection if service has been particularly good.

ATOL terms and conditions: these T&Cs, with respect to Honeyguide's Air Travel Operator's Licence, are those that apply to all ATOL holders, as follows:

Your Financial Protection: when you buy an ATOL protected flight or flight inclusive holiday from us you will receive an ATOL Certificate. This lists what is financially protected, where you can get information on what this means for you and who to contact if things go wrong.

We, or the suppliers identified on your ATOL Certificate, will provide you with the services listed on the ATOL Certificate (or a suitable alternative). In some cases, where neither we nor the supplier are able to do so for reasons of insolvency, an alternative ATOL holder may provide you with the services you have bought or a suitable alternative (at no extra cost to you). You agree to accept that in those circumstances the alternative ATOL holder will perform those obligations and you agree to pay any money outstanding to be paid by you under your contract to that alternative ATOL holder. However, you also agree that in some cases it will not be possible to appoint an alternative ATOL holder, in which case you will be entitled to make a claim under the ATOL scheme (or your credit card issuer where applicable).

If we, or the suppliers identified on your ATOL certificate, are unable to provide the services listed (or a suitable alternative, through an alternative ATOL holder or otherwise) for reasons of insolvency, the Trustees of the Air Travel Trust may make a payment to (or confer a benefit on) you under the ATOL scheme. You agree that in return for such a payment or benefit you assign absolutely to those Trustees any claims which you have or may have arising out of or relating to the non-provision of the services, including any claim against us, the travel agent (or your credit card issuer where applicable). You also agree that any such claims may be re-assigned to another body, if that other body has paid sums you have claimed under the ATOL scheme.

Travel Insurance

Honeyguide Wildlife Holidays acts as an Introducer Appointed Representative for the purposes of your travel insurance, appointed by Global Travel Insurance Services Ltd who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Services Authority and whose status can be checked on the FSA Register by visiting www.fsa.gov.uk/register or by contacting the FSA on 0845 606 1234.

Contact details:
Global Travel Insurance Services Ltd,
The Turret, 25 Farncombe Road
Worthing, West Sussex
BN11 2AY
Telephone: 01903 235042
Fax: 01903 229389
Email: enquiries@globaltravelinsurance.co.uk
Web: www.globaltravelinsurance.co.uk

You can go to our website where you can obtain a quotation and arrange the insurance online, or download an application form. Or we can send you an application form on booking enabling you to arrange this insurance.

Beyond providing this information, we are not allowed to assist you in any way in the arrangement of your travel insurance or give any advice.

Honeyguide wildlife holidays



Cover picture: Red-footed falcons (Gábor Orban)

Back cover: Danube Delta compilation. Whiskered terns (John Long), pied wheatear (Kate Dalziel), swallowtail (Susie Turner), lizard orchid *Himatoglossum jankae* and cardinal (Chris Durdin).

Other photos by:

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Geoff Crane
John Croft
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Chris Durdin
Steve Fletcher
Dimiter Georgiev
Chris Gibson
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Ivan Nethercoat
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Ray Purser
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Kevin Simmonds
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Roger Tidman
Paul Tout
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