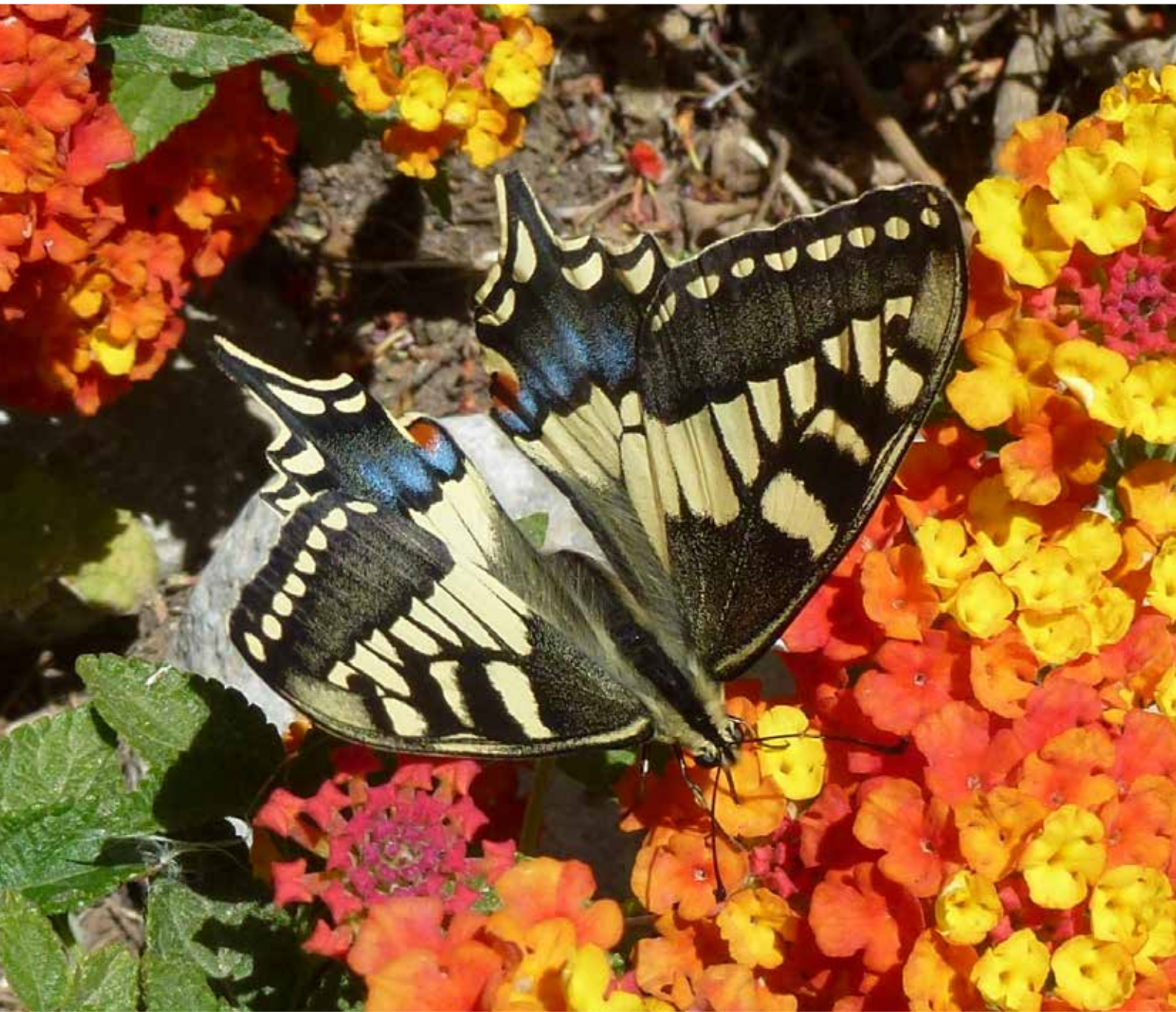




# Honeyguide

WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS 2017



Helping you enjoy wildlife



Helping to protect wildlife



# Honeyguide

## CONTENTS & CALENDAR

### EUROPE

**Tarifa & Morocco**  
27 February – 7 March 2017 ..... page 4

**Fuerteventura**  
11 – 17 March 2017 ..... page 5

**Extremadura**  
14 – 22 March 2017 ..... page 6

**Crete**  
18 – 25 April 2017 ..... page 7

**Poland**  
13 – 21 May 2017 ..... page 8

**La Mancha**  
16 – 23 May 2017 ..... page 9

**Slovenia**  
18 – 25 May 2017 ..... page 10

**Cévennes**  
31 May – 8 June ..... page 11

**Estonia**  
4 – 11 June ..... page 12

**Danube Delta**  
10 – 17 June 2017 ..... page 13

**French Pyrenees**  
5 – 12 September 2017 ..... page 14

**Algarve and Alentejo**  
4 – 11 November 2017 ..... page 15

### AFRICA

**South Africa: Drakensberg Mountains and Zululand** 26 January – 10 February 2017.  
Information on [www.honeyguide.co.uk](http://www.honeyguide.co.uk)

**South Africa's Southwest Cape**  
8 - 23 November 2017 ..... page 16

**Booking form** ..... page 18

**Booking details** ..... inside back cover

### More information

In this brochure we give 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](http://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 2016), we have raised £108,000 for conservation projects, mostly in Europe.

The Honeyguide Wildlife Trust Limited was registered as a charity in June 2004, registered

## WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS

36 Thunder Lane, Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich NR7 0PX  
Telephone: 01603 300552

[www.honeyguide.co.uk](http://www.honeyguide.co.uk) E-mail: [chris@honeyguide.co.uk](mailto:chris@honeyguide.co.uk)

## Holidays for the year 2017

### Welcome to the 27th season of Honeyguide Wildlife Holidays.

Our annual brochure is always a focus for finalising the holiday programme: dates to decide, new holidays to try, others to adapt or to rest.

Three holidays are new in 2017, at least to some extent. Our Tarifa holiday returns to Huerta Grande but this year includes three days and nights in Morocco on the other side of the Strait of Gibraltar.

Slovenia is a new holiday for Honeyguide. Some Honeyguiders have visited Lake Cerknica, where we are based, from Italy or Istria. Staying there is a chance to explore a different part of Paul Tout's local patch.

La Mancha, Spain ran in October 2014. In 2017 we return in spring, with local leader Pau Lucio again on the team.

Fuerteventura, the Cévennes, Danube Delta, the French Pyrenees, Algarve & Alentejo and South Africa's SW Cape all come back to the Honeyguide programme. Extremadura returns to spring after autumn and winter visits.

Just three holidays are much the same as 2016: Crete, Poland and Estonia, encouraged by early 'pencil' bookings. Estonia first ran – and was fully booked – in 2016, where the bear-watching hide – and the bears! – were enjoyed by the whole group over two nights.

For Poland, there is an additional incentive to run again in 2017, namely the present threats to increase logging in the famous Białowieza forest. It's timely to wave the flag for wildlife tourism here.

Your contributions through our holidays and the Honeyguide Wildlife Charitable Trust continue to help nature conservation projects everywhere we go.

The brochure is planned at a time when flight schedules for much of next year are not yet out. Some changes and other options may be possible, and we are happy to discuss practicalities of flights that work from where you live.

We'd hoped to include Brazil's famous Pantanal wetland in this brochure, having floated the idea earlier this year. But details couldn't be firmed up before the brochure deadline. Please keep an eye on [www.honeyguide.co.uk](http://www.honeyguide.co.uk) for this and other updates.

I hope you can join us on a wildlife holiday in 2017.

*Chris Durdin*

Chris Durdin  
August 2016



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.

charity number 1104606. The object of the charity, in summary, is "To help conserve... the natural environment and wildlife".

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, SPEA 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.

# Your leadership team 2017



**Chris Durdin**, this year leading in **Extremadura, Crete, La Mancha** and the **French Pyrenees**, 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. Chris is the co-author of a book about Norfolk's cranes and runs regular guided walks on his local patch, Norfolk Wildlife Trust's Thorpe Marshes nature reserve. He's also a qualified soccer coach, for one son's under 14 year group. As a naturalist, Chris is an all rounder.

## Tarifa & Morocco

**Simon Tonkin** has worked as an RSPB conservation officer for many years, specialising in the challenging job of stopping the decline of farmland wildlife. He also lectures in ornithology and regularly leads wildlife holidays.

**Niki Williamson** was a warden at the RSPB's Ouse Washes nature reserve, then worked on projects for helping farmland birds in the Fens and subsequently managed the RSPB Eastern England's farm wildlife advisory team. Both are in the process of becoming full-time nature guides based at Huerta Grande.

## 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 a book about the wildlife and history of the island called *A Walk through Fuerteventura*.

## Extremadura, Crete and French Pyrenees

**Chris Durdin** – see above. Co-leaders will depend on group size and diaries; it may be **Martin Kelsey** in Extremadura.

## Poland

**Artur Wiatr** is a wildlife enthusiast involved in nature protection and ecotourism development within the Biebrza River valley. He works both for the Biebrza National Park and since 1998 as a holiday leader. He's a licensed guide and is co-author of a pocket guidebook on Biebrza National Park.

## La Mancha

**Pau Lucio** lives near Valencia and runs a wildlife tour company, Birdwatching Spain. Pau is our local expert and guide for our holidays in Valencia and La Mancha. He is involved in conservation projects on bird migration and the importance of Spanish coastal wetlands for species such as moustached and Savi's warblers. Pau spent nine months at the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust at Slimbridge. He also works at a nature reserve where he guides visitors through the forest and marshes. **Chris Durdin** – see above.

## Slovenia

**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.

## Cévennes

**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 our regular leaders in the Cévennes.

## Estonia

**Ivan Nethercoat** is training & interpretation manager for the RSPB. He is a regular and well-travelled Honeyguide leader, including holidays in the Balearics, Estonia and French Pyrenees. His degree, many moons ago, was in photography, and he is very happy to help any photographers in the group. He will be co-leading with **Rein Kuresoo** and colleagues from our Estonian hosts, NaTourEst.

## 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.

## 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

**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. The Southwest Cape is his local patch.

## Carbon offsets

Realistically, most of our travellers will fly. Air travel makes only a small fraction of the UK's greenhouse gas emissions at present, but that fraction is growing. Recognising this, Honeyguide has included carbon offsets in the price of our holidays since 2007 and was one of the first travel companies to do so.

It's a challenge to find carbon offsets projects that achieve the 'gold standard' in terms of measuring carbon savings while also contributing to nature conservation – both are priorities for us. We have bought carbon credits that will help protect tropical forest in and near the Gola Rainforest National Park in Sierra Leone. The project is managed by the RSPB's International Department, with local partners.

For more information see [www.honeyguide.co.uk](http://www.honeyguide.co.uk).



Simon Tonkin



Niki Williamson



David Collins



Artur Wiatr



Pau Lucio



Paul Tout



Rachel Hamilton



Robin Hamilton



Ivan Nethercoat



Rein Kuresoo



Rob Macklin



Domingos Leitão



Martin Kelsey



Geoff Crane

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.

Price: £1,500 per person in twin room for eight nights (Monday to Tuesday)

Single room supplement: £120

En suite facilities

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

Deposit: £300

Maximum number (two leaders): 14

Leaders: Simon Tonkin and Niki Williamson

27 February – 7 March 2017

# Tarifa and Morocco



## Birdwatching on two continents

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.

On this holiday we will also be leaving Andalusia for three nights in Morocco. The Strait may be just 16 kilometres wide but, for wildlife and humans, it is a significant step. After crossing to Africa, we meet the aromas of spicy street food and mint tea, and familiar European birds become the African blue tit and Maghreb magpie. Other specialities include the stunning Moussier's redstart and Levaillant's woodpecker.

Bird migration is also a feature where the two great continents of Europe and Africa converge. 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.

### Andalusia

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 and there's often a Caspian tern with the Sandwich terns.

The northern bald ibis is one of the rarest birds in the world. 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.

Signs of spring will include the first martins and swallows, including red-rumped. White storks increasingly overwinter in the Iberian peninsula, but are also early migrants. Many hoopoes also stay year-round, and great spotted cuckoos and Iberian chiffchaffs will be arriving.

### Morocco

We make our own crossing, to northern Morocco by ferry, then begin our exploration of the African side of the Strait. Here we visit a variety of coastal and inland sites including Talassemtane National Park in the Rif Mountains.

Merja Zerga is a sweeping wetland on Morocco's Atlantic coast. It is famous among birders as the last known winter haunt of the legendary slender-billed curlew, a bird now sadly presumed extinct. None have been seen here since 1995, but the drawings of those who journeyed here in the early 1990s can still be seen in the cherished bird log on display in a quiet estuary-side café.

Despite the curlews' demise, Merja Zerga remains one of several magnificent wildlife sites on Morocco's coastline. Here a variety of terns stop to feed and breed, while waders feed in their thousands, among them greenshank, spotted redshank, whimbrel and avocets.

On quiet backwaters, red-knobbed coots and both white-headed and marbled ducks may usually be found more readily than in Spain. We'll stay until dusk for the best chance of seeing a hunting African marsh owl.



Marsh owl

Wild Barbary macaques live mainly in mountain ranges in north-west Africa and are the only macaques found outside Asia. We will spend time in the Forest of Bouhachem in the Rif Mountains where there is a small population.

In Spain 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.

Three nights in Morocco include two in the extraordinary city of Chefchaouen where buildings are in various shades of blue.

### 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 birthwort and – though not yet in flower – Lusitanian sundew, an unusual and very local carnivorous flower.



Lusitanian sundew *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, Moroccan orange-tip, Cleopatra and the monarchs resident in the area, plus migrants such as clouded yellow, painted lady and green-striped white.

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

### 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.



Griffon vulture



Barbary nut iris



Chefchaouen

11 – 17 March 2017

# 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.

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.

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.



Houbara bustard



## 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.

Price: £1,400 per person in twin room for six nights (Saturday to Friday)

Single room supplement: £200

En suite facilities

Scheduled easyJet flights from London Gatwick and a range of regional options – please ask.

Deposit: £300

Maximum number (one leader): 7

Leader: David Collins

*Euphorbia canariensis*



Barbary ground squirrel



Cream-coloured courser

SUPPORTING



SEO/BirdLife

More information visit [www.honeyguide.co.uk](http://www.honeyguide.co.uk) 5

14 – 22 March 2017

# Extremadura



## Wild central Spain

Extremadura is one of the few remaining truly wild areas of Spain and, indeed, Europe. The region is renowned for its amazing variety of birds of prey, especially in Monfragüe National Park, and special species such as the bustards and larks to be found on the rolling plains of the Spanish steppes.

The plains around Trujillo and Cáceres form part of the great Spanish steppes with their fascinating assemblage of birds. Here we will search for great bustards performing their incredible breeding display; if we are lucky, an astonishing ritual in which the male turns himself into the appearance of a huge white pom-pom of feathers. Other steppe birds in this area are little bustards, stone-curlews and both pin-tailed and black-bellied sandgrouse. Crested and calandra larks are also found in the plains. Another speciality is Spanish sparrow, a rather local bird in Spain despite its name.

We will explore Monfragüe National Park, some 25 miles north of Trujillo. This is one of the most outstanding areas for seeing birds of prey in a country which is itself probably the best for raptors in Europe.

We stay at the charming Finca Santa Marta, a granite-built olive oil mill converted into a country inn, situated in the countryside south of Trujillo.

### Flowers

Patches of white Spanish broom and pink storksills bring colour to fields close to Trujillo. Miniature daffodils include delicate hoop petticoat and angel's tears narcissi. Early orchids, such as conical, champagne and naked man orchids, irises and lupins are flowering.

### Birds

As well as those already mentioned, we should see a selection of the following: Montagu's harrier, red, black and black-shouldered kites, peregrine, raven, hoopoe, blue rock thrush, little owl, southern grey shrike, red-rumped swallow, woodlark, Sardinian warbler, cirl and corn buntings, spotless starling and great spotted cuckoo.

### Other wildlife

Spain is western Europe's stronghold for wild mammals, including genet, mongoose and lynx, but these are mainly secretive or nocturnal. Stripe-necked terrapins and Iberian wall lizards are more obvious.



Lesser kestrels



Tozo river



Angel's tears

It has the core Spanish population of black vultures, which breed here along with griffon and Egyptian vultures.

Eagles are well represented here with Spanish imperial, Bonelli's, golden, short-toed and booted. From the various viewpoints, which make fine vantage points for raptor-watching, other species that can be seen include black stork, chough and rock bunting.

The lower valleys approaching Monfragüe hold good stands of holm oak woodland, the 'dehesa' or wood pasture that is such a distinctive feature of Extremadura. The dehesa is famous for the wintering cranes, most of which leave in February, but here also are 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.

### Itinerary

Excursions will include visits to the Monfragüe National Park, including places such as Peña Falcon and the Tiétar cliffs; the holm oak dehesa region; and exploration of the plains around Trujillo and Cáceres. We will also visit the wonderful old town of Trujillo with its striking central square and white storks and lesser kestrels.

### Conservation project

Traditional low intensity farming, especially non-irrigated 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 great priority for the Sociedad Española de Ornitología (Spanish Ornithological Society / BirdLife Spain).

SUPPORTING



18 – 25 April 2017

# 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 will sample Minoan ruins at Phaestos.

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

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.



Freshwater crab

### Excursions

As well as local walks, our minibus trips this week include visits to Moní Préveli, Kourtaliótiko and Kotsiphou 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



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

This includes taverna evening meals plus picnics or a taverna lunch

En suite facilities

EasyJet flights Gatwick to Heraklion

Deposit: £300

Maximum number (two leaders): 14

Main leader: Chris Durdin



Little bittern



Orchis boryi - Spili



Plakias Bay

Price: £1,490 per person in twin room for eight nights (Saturday to Sunday)

Single room supplement: £120

En suite facilities

Scheduled Wizz Air flights  
London Luton – Warsaw

Deposit: £300

Maximum number (two leaders): 14

Main leader: Artur Wiatr

13 – 21 May 2017

# Poland

## Biebrza Marshes and Białowieża Forest



Biebrza Marshes form a formidable but beautiful barrier between solid land in northeast Poland and Belarus. The primeval Białowieża Forest also lies along that same international border, and together they form one of Europe's greatest natural experiences.

The River Biebrza consists of some 100 miles of meanders and ox-bows within its basin of about 3,000 square miles. Winter is long-lasting, while summers are short and rich. Floods of unpredictable length can last into early summer.

These produce habitats ranging from swampy, impenetrable forest, much beloved by breeding cranes and black storks, to huge grasslands, covered with millions of marsh marigolds in spring with nearby water hosting many breeding marsh terns. The area supports many of the 50,000 pairs of white storks that breed in Poland. The evening murmuring of fire-bellied toads is one of the more memorable sounds, especially if accompanied by the bugling of cranes and the rasping of corncrakes.

Białowieża too has its wetlands but is most admired for the majesty of its forest. Here, famously, several hundred European bison roam. Beavers abound – *Bobra* in Polish, which was the original name of Biebrza – and are sometimes even seen from the bridge in the village of Białowieża.

One piece of the forest that once covered much of central Europe, Białowieża was originally preserved for private hunting by Polish kings and Russian Tsars. Modern protection is a National Park and UNESCO World Heritage Site. Mixed oak, lime and hornbeam is the commonest of the six main forest types in the Polish part of Białowieża; in Belarus there is more coniferous forest. Never felled, with giant trees and large amounts dead wood, both standing and fallen, this unruly wilderness seems to invite architectural similes.

Thrush nightingale, great reed warbler and white-spotted bluethroat arrive early and sing delightfully often from exposed positions. Soon they are joined by scarlet rosetfinch, red-breasted flycatcher, aquatic, river and barred warblers together with the fluting golden oriole. Raptors such as white-tailed eagle and Montagu's harrier show frequently, while penduline tits bring extra delight by building much-admired nests. Eight species of woodpecker are present in Białowieża forest, including black and white-backed. Their holes provide homes to flycatchers, starlings and pygmy owls. Other woodland birds include lesser spotted eagle, nutcracker and hazel hen; red-backed shrikes can be common in surrounding fields and meadows.

### Mammals

As everywhere, mammals can be difficult to see, though in Biebrza and Białowieża the chance of sightings are quite good. Elks can usually be seen grazing or loping in the marsh. Wild boars may be surprisingly obvious; there are many hares, but no rabbits. Pine marten is possible, as are red squirrels. Tarpan or Konik horses, now frequent inhabitants of British nature reserves, are being bred to revive a species close to the original wild horse of Europe.

### Other wildlife

Marsh, edible and green tree frogs join the fire-bellied and grey toads in suitable wetlands. Dragonflies are not numerous in May but include Siberian winter and white-legged damselflies. Among early butterflies, Camberwell beauty and large tortoiseshell are popular with British visitors.

### Plants

Biebrza holds a multitude of water-loving plants such as water soldier, sundew, yellow marsh saxifrage and a range of marsh orchids. Trees are much admired in Białowieża with certain individuals famous for their size. On the woodland floor there are hepatica, anemones, lungwort, sweet woodruff and carpets of ransoms. A curious mix of northern, alpine and eastern species can include long-leaved speedwell, bastard balm, spiked rampion and, we hope, lady's slipper orchid.

### Itinerary

Five nights at Biebrza marshes, moving to Białowieża for the remaining three nights of the holiday. In Białowieża we will stay in the village, close to the Tsar's Palace Park. In Biebrza we stay close to Goniadz, surrounded by meadows and woods.

### Conservation Project

The Workshop of Living Architecture runs environmental projects in and near Biebrza Marshes. This includes building new nesting platforms for white storks, often in response to storm damage or roof renovation, or simply to replace old nests.



White-winged black tern



Lady's slipper orchids



Białowieża forest

Cathedral-like in the more spacious parts, it is dense in others. For many the highlight of any visit is to enjoy a walk with a local expert guide in this ancient forest.

### Birds

Spring brings strutting hordes of ruffs to the marshes together with dancing brigades of white-winged and black terns.



16 – 23 May 2017

# La Mancha

## Nature in the land of Don Quixote

La Mancha may lack the fame of other parts of Spain when it comes to natural history, but with the right local knowledge there is a great range of wildlife in one of the least known areas of the country. Honeyguide has already visited in autumn: this is our first time in spring, so there is much to discover.

There are two main focuses of this holiday, with two holiday bases. The first is La Mancha Húmeda, the second the limestone hills of the Serranía de Cuenca Natural Park.

### La Mancha Húmeda

Las Tablas de Daimiel National Park is a chain of wetlands at the confluence of the rivers Guadiana and Gigüela, the core of the Biosphere Reserve of La Mancha Húmeda. There's a superbly restored watermill and a mix of water bodies, flooded valleys and reedbeds, with good access for visitors. Wildlife management includes breeding and reintroducing wildfowl, especially marbled ducks. There is an interesting breeding colony of egrets, night herons and spoonbills on the tamarisks. Great reed warbler, penduline and bearded tits hold an important population in the park. In nearby farmland, rollers are frequently seen.

Another day, another wetland: the shallow lagoon at Alcázar de San Juan is alive with waders, ducks, herons and greater flamingos.

Farmland near Belmonte has many interesting birds, including hoopoe, bee-eaters, Thekla larks and rock sparrow. There are great bustards, too, but they are elusive. We will visit – from a distance – an eagle owl nest in use in recent years.

Our base for three nights is the Hospedería Real La Beltraneja. This is in Belmonte, which has two places not to be missed. The restored Belmonte Castle is where 'El Cid' was filmed and is steeped in history, ancient and modern. On a nearby hilltop are the windmills that feature in the story of the travels and eccentricities of Don Quixote.

### Serranía de Cuenca Natural Park

The rugged hills of the Serranía de Cuenca offer a marked contrast. Juniper, berberis and Montpellier maple show we're on limestone, with its characteristic rich mix of flowers. These may include the endemic snapdragon *Antirrhinum pulverulentum* and orchids such as narrow-leaved and red helleborine and the local *Orchis cazorlensis*. The Serranía has a near-endemic butterwort *Pinguicula mundi*.

Griffon and Egyptian vultures, booted and short-toed eagles are common and there are coughts, for example at the viewpoint called Ventana del Diablo, the Devil's Window. The Laguna de Uña is an attractive reed-fringed lake with wetland birds alongside deciduous woodland with firecrest and short-toed treecreeper. Higher, pines predominate, with the prospect of groups of 'chipping' crossbills and Iberian chiffchaffs. There are pretty mountain villages and walks with waterfalls.

The most dramatic feature is Los Callejones de Las Majadas, an astonishing collection of mushroom-like limestone towers and pavements worn into



shape by rainwater through the ages, the Natural Park's showpiece of geomorphology. Physically, it's impressive and the limestone labyrinth's rock faces support plants more typical of the Pyrenees, such as a rock-clinging dwarf buckthorn *Rhamnus pumilus*; creeping globularia, amelanchier and Pyrenean toadflax.

Our base for four nights here is the Hotel El Tablazo in Villalba de la Sierra, which has an adjacent fishing lake that is regularly visited by otters. Bird life includes melodious warbler, black-eared wheatear and black redstart.

### Birds

In addition to those mentioned above: white storks, black-necked grebe, white-headed duck, red-crested pochard, squacco and purple herons, little bittern, purple swamp-hen, black-winged stilt, little owl, lesser kestrel, whiskered and gull-billed tern, crested lark, golden oriole, a range of warblers, crested tit, woodchat and Iberian grey shrike, spotless starling, rock bunting, alpine swift and more.

### Other wildlife

Butterflies could include Moroccan orange-tip, clouded yellows, black-veined white, Cleopatra, long-tailed and Adonis blues. We'll look for dragonflies around the wetlands; and Iberian wall and ocellated lizards should be in good numbers.

### Conservation project

Pau's ringing group Grupo de Anillamiento Pit-Roig runs bird ringing stations in Valencia. The group is studying the survival rate and dispersion of moustached warbler. Data loggers placed on Savi's and reed warblers are tracking their migratory movements, provided they can be trapped again and the data downloaded. Support pays for nets and other ringing equipment.

SUPPORTING



Left: Alpine swift Above: *Orchis cazorlensis*



Don Quixote's windmills



Las Tablas de Damiel National Park

More information visit [www.honeyguide.co.uk](http://www.honeyguide.co.uk) 9

18 – 25 May 2017

# Slovenia



## The Karst, Lake Cerknica and the Dinaric Alps

Vast wet meadows cut once a year for hay; forests of beech and fir; summertime fieldfares; the noise of crakes mixing with the booming of bitterns and the reeling of Savi's warblers.

These are all features of south-western Slovenia. It's an area of rapid biogeographical transition from the heat and drought of the Mediterranean to the relative cool and humidity of Central and Eastern Europe in spring. The limestone massif of the Karst adds to the variety. The Dinaric Alps rise to 1300m and to almost 1800m on Mount Snežnik.



Lake Cerknica

Lake Cerknica, where we are based, is a Special Protection Area and Regional Park. Covering over 3,000 hectares, it is a vast turlough or temporary lake that rises and falls with the input of groundwaters from the surrounding limestone basin. Water levels usually fall as spring proceeds but levels can remain high into June in some years (such as 2016).

Much of the lake bed consists of hay meadows. These are used by breeding corncrakes, spotted and little crakes. Black and white storks, the local pair of white-tailed eagles and large numbers of herons, bitterns and egrets use flooded areas for feeding on the stocks of fish and amphibians. Calm evenings are the time to hear those crakes, bitterns and Savi's warblers. Barred warblers and red-backed shrikes hold territories in patches of drier ground.

But the lake is not the only element and the area is characterised by its diversity of landscape and wildlife. Just to the south, at Bloška Planota, is one of the largest and most intact peat bogs of Slovenia, a rare habitat this far south and with a great range of plants, butterflies and dragonflies.

With much of the country's land in the hands of the Church and landed aristocracy until 1945, forests have survived across vast swathes of Slovenia and cover more than half of the country, especially in upland areas. Notrajska Regional Park, some 22,200 hectares, includes areas of old forest with many species of birds, animals and plants associated with them.

Our holiday base is Logar Farm in the village of Žerovnica in farmland close to the lake.

### Birds

Lake Cerknica is an important stopover and breeding site for many migrant birds. These include marsh terns, a range of waders, red-footed falcons and Montagu's harriers, all of them often over-summering. Breeding birds around the lake include whinchats and tree pipits. One of the last species to arrive is the scarlet rosefinch, at the western limit of its distribution.



*Iris sibirica*

Villages are home to large numbers of birds including scops owls, black redstarts, spotted flycatchers and serins. Fieldfares are common and often outnumber blackbirds. There are nine species of woodpecker in the area and these will be a target on the holiday. The Balkan subspecies of the Ural owl *macrourus* is present in the forest as well as pygmy and Tengmalm's owls.

### Mammals

Though difficult to see, otters, polecats and beech marten are all present around the lake. A visit will be made to a brown bear feeding site so the chance of a sighting is quite good. Red and roe deer are common, easiest to see in the late evening and early morning.

### Other wildlife

Marsh frogs are abundant at the lake, together with vast numbers of common toads. Fire salamanders are found in the forests with alpine salamanders in colder areas. Short-toed eagles feed on the many grass snakes and Aesculapian snakes around the lake. Butterflies in the meadows around the lake include large numbers of marsh fritillaries and mazarine blues; Camberwell beauty and large tortoiseshell are found in forest clearings and close to the villages.

### Plants

A botanical feature of the holiday is the tail-end of the displays of spring flowers in the beech woodlands, including various hellebores, asarabacca, blue-eyed Mary and haquetia. The summer show of grassland orchids such as Adriatic lizard, green-winged, burnt-tip and bog orchid will be underway in the splendid hay meadows in the Karst.

### Conservation project

BirdLife Slovenia (DOPPS) runs survey and conservation work for priority birds within the Notrajska Park including corncrake, little crake, spotted crake and the two woodpeckers closely associated with ancient forests, white-backed and three-toed. They also train student naturalists at a summer camp.



Ural owl

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

Single room supplement: £120

Up to 7 rooms. En suite facilities

Scheduled Ryanair flights London Stansted to Trieste

Deposit: £300

Maximum number (two leaders): 14

Main leader: Paul Tout



Red-footed falcon



Lizard orchid *Himantoglossum adriaticum*



Marsh fritillary

31 May – 8 June 2017

# The Cévennes

## Causses and gorges in a little-known corner of France

The southernmost outpost of the Massif Central, before it plunges down into the Mediterranean heat of the Languedoc plain, is the vast limestone plateau of the Grands Causses. Monstrous movements of the earth's surface cracked this slab into sections, and water poured into the cracks, forming deep, dramatic gorges.

The largest of these carries the Tarn, one of France's most famous and spectacular rivers. Smaller rivers, the Jonte and the Dourbie, flow into the Tarn and the ancient town of Millau, near their confluence, is now famous for its magnificent bridge, the Millau Viaduct. Enchanting villages of honey-coloured stone are scattered in strategic positions on hillsides and beside rivers, each with its Romanesque church; the Knights Templar had strongholds in the area.

To the east of the Grands Causses, limestone gives way to schist and granite hills, culminating in the peaks of Mont Aigoual (1567 m) and Mont Lozère (1702 m). This is the true Cévennes, made famous some 130 years ago when the youthful Robert Louis Stevenson narrated his 'Travels with a Donkey'. The whole area is now recognised for its landscape and natural history as the Parc Regional Naturel des Grands Causses and the Parc National des Cévennes.

Ancient landscapes are entwined with cultural history. On the steppe-like plateaux of the Grands Causses, the characteristic small brown sheep, the brebis, have been fundamental to agriculture for many centuries. The sheep are milked for what many consider to be the finest cheese in the world – Roquefort. The cuisine is rich and inventive. The sweet, flavourful meat of the brebis and Roquefort cheese often play a part: you can have Roquefort in every course! Aligot, a dish of soft cheese and potato, devised by shepherds to prepare far from home, is not to be missed.

For many years, a railway transported people and produce across the Causse. The line itself is long defunct but several railway buildings remain along the old track. Above Nant, up on the Causse du Larzac, the Gare aux Ânes, the 'donkey station', renowned for many years as a restaurant, is a perfect base for Honeyguide.

### Birds

If there is an iconic bird of the region, it is the griffon vulture, thanks to a highly successful reintroduction programme. Craggy cliffs of the gorges also provide nesting sites for choughs and golden eagles. The open, rocky cause landscape offers productive feeding for short-toed eagles, harriers, shrikes and wheatears. Woodlands and scrub echo to the song of nightingales, joined at nightfall by churring nightjars. Around villages, the song of serins and black redstarts may be heard, and the air is alive with swifts and crag martins.

### Flowers

Nothing can outdo limestone for the richness of its flora. Grassland is white and yellow with rockroses and fragrant underfoot with wild thymes. Roadside scree are pink and blue with rock soapwort, fairy foxglove, flax and aphyllanthes. On granites and

schists we find saxifrages and cinquefoils; in the rich meadows, wild tulips and narcissi.

There are orchids too, a wide range of species, some in great profusion: carpets of lesser butterfly orchids among feather grass, banks of early purple and elder-flowered orchids on damp streambanks.



Lady, monkey, man and military orchids are abundant (and hybridising!). There are two endemic Ophrys species.

### Other wildlife

European beavers have been successfully reintroduced into the river Dourbie, close to our base. A herd of the rare Przewalski's horses has been established on the Causse Méjean, in a habitat akin to their native steppes. Reptiles are abundant: green and wall lizards and harmless viperine and grass snakes. We may hear the bell-like call of midwife toads at night. The open scrub and grassland of the cause is rich in butterflies and other insects.

### Itinerary

We have limestone and granite to explore, three rivers with their magnificent gorges and several causses, each with its own individuality. There are flower-rich grasslands, pine, oak and sweet chestnut woods, rocky cliffs and scree and tumbling rivers. We shall drive to the top of Mont Aigoual, visit the Templar village of la Couvertorade, the Roquefort Caves and the famous Aven Armand – a beautiful cavern big enough to accommodate Notre Dame Cathedral. A good look at the Millau Viaduct is a must and lunch one day at the best local ferme auberge is on the schedule.

### Conservation Project

Conservation contributions from this holiday support work to protect the vultures and other wildlife of the Grands Causses. La Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux (LPO, the French Bird Protection League) runs a programme of habitat management in partnership with landowners, combined with research, survey and education.



Price: £1,500 per person in twin room for eight nights (Wednesday to Thursday)

Single room supplement: £200 (two only)

En suite facilities

Scheduled easyJet flights London Gatwick to Montpellier

Deposit: £300

Maximum number (two leaders): 14

Leaders: Robin and Rachel Hamilton

Cantobre village



Black-veined white butterfly



Griffon vulture

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

Single room supplement: £100

En suite facilities

Scheduled Ryanair flights London Stansted to Tallinn

Deposit: £300

Maximum number (two leaders): 14

Leaders: Rein Kuresoo from NaTourEst and Ivan Nethercoat

4 – 11 June 2017

# Estonia

## Flowers, mammals and birds

The most northerly of the Baltic states, Estonia has as much in common with Scandinavia as its neighbours to the south. It's a sophisticated, western-looking country that prides itself on its WiFi and internet use, and the end of the Soviet era in 1991 feels distant.

More importantly, Estonia has an attractive mix of wildlife habitats including grassland, hay meadows, pine forest and coast, plus the chance to see mammals, including brown bear.

The botanical richness may come as a surprise for a country as far north as the Orkneys. Thin soils over limestone bedrock support flower-rich swards mixed with juniper scrub. Elsewhere, wooded meadows are a special habitat: orchids, meadow rattle and cow-wheats in hay pastures under old oak trees.

The gentle coastline of the Baltic features strongly. Its scarcely tidal and semi-saline conditions sometimes makes it seem more like a large lake, with mute swans and freshwater ducks like gadwalls and tufted ducks as well as eiders, mergansers and Arctic terns. Inland, cranes are a routine part of the scene, small groups in fields or their evocative bugling calls alongside cuckoos and skylarks.

Seeing bears on this holiday is more than likely, thanks to a hide run by our hosts, NaTourEst. This option is overnight: an early evening arrival, bunk beds and sleeping bags for rest and an early morning departure. The rewards can also include wild boar, raccoon dogs and red squirrel.

Our accommodation on this two-centre holiday is in former manor houses, and wildlife close to home is a lovely feature of these, including calling corncrakes.

### Itinerary

The western part of our itinerary (three nights) is in and around Matsalu National Park. It includes a visit to Haapsalu where the town lake has nesting Slavonian grebes, and an evening boat trip where we hope to see beavers and, with luck, an elk.

East of Tallinn, our focus is on Lahemaa National Park (four nights), much of which is forest of

Scots pine and spruce. Here and there, on old stumps or the woodland floor, are the tiny blooms of twinflowers. This unusual member of the honeysuckle family is a northern speciality, often growing alongside May lily. Our itinerary includes a boardwalk into taiga – an expanse of peatland with pools and scattered pines. This subarctic habitat has breeding waders and a distinctive flora.

A visit to Tallinn is also planned, if flight times make it practical.

### Birds

Easterly species like scarlet rosefinch, Blyth's reed warbler and thrush nightingale are frequent; spotted flycatchers are common, like England from decades ago. On our recce trip, a lake where we stayed had broods of both goldeneye and goosander. Wood warblers are common and wheatears and redstarts can be garden birds. A little effort (or luck) in woodland can turn up red-breasted and pied flycatchers and woodpeckers, including three-toed and black. There is a good chance of white-tailed eagles, little gulls and Caspian tern.

### Flowers

Flowers rare in the UK include spiked speedwell, greater burnet saxifrage and lady's slipper orchids, the last in big clumps in open woodland. Taiga plants include dwarf birch, bog rosemary, Labrador tea and cloudberry.

### Mammals

As well as mammals at the bear hide, we hope for a chance sighting of a pine marten or an elk – the latter surprisingly elusive, given their size.

### Conservation project

The Estonian Fund for Nature (WWF Estonia) runs volunteer camps to restore natural habitats. A current project is on wet meadows for black stork conservation.



Brown bear



Slavonian grebe



Twinflower



Erratic boulders on the coast of Lahemaa National Park

SUPPORTING



ELF

10 – 17 June 2017

# 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 naturalists' 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 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'.



Approaching Letea Island in the Delta



### 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

### 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.

Price: £1,550 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, 17 – 21 June, including brown bear watching: £500 per person, single supplement £60

Leaders: Ibis team, with a local guide from Ibis in the Carpathians



Brown bear, a highlight of the Carpathians



White pelicans

### 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 – sometimes a leader for Honeyguide groups – and the SOR representative in the delta.

SUPPORTING



Spoonbills

More information visit [www.honeyguide.co.uk](http://www.honeyguide.co.uk) 13

5 – 12 September 2017

## French Pyrenees



### Stunning scenery and mountain wildlife

For a combination of mountain views, flowers, butterflies and birds, the Pyrenees take 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 lusher, greener and the emphasis of this holiday is 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.

That most thrilling of birds, the lammergeier, is as easy to see here as anywhere; other birds of prey include griffon vultures, golden eagles and red kites. There are wallcreepers, though typically they are elusive. Red-billed and alpine choughs feed in the high meadows.

September also brings a flow of migrants. Countless numbers of birds are moving south and many rest and feed in Pyrenean valleys before crossing the high peaks. Weather conditions and luck will play their part in what we see: warblers, flycatchers and hirundines are the likeliest. Butterflies include Camberwell beauty, Queen-of-Spain fritillary and swallowtail, plus a selection of graylings, ringlets, blues, fritillaries and others.

Autumn flowering specialities include merendera, which can be common, and autumn crocus. High mountain pastures still have colour with later flowers such as Pyrenean thistle and purple and yellow monkshoods. We'll search screes and short turf for alpine toadflax and gentians. Damp patches have grass-of-Parnassus and yellow mountain saxifrage.

It's a good time of year to look for two specialised 'herptiles' of the area. Watercourses can hold Pyrenean brook newts and Pyrenean rock lizards scuttle around on rocks in the higher pastures.

He was leading the fight against the Moors and was trying to smash his magical sword Durandel to save it from enemy hands.



Marmot

### Birds

Highlights, in addition to those mentioned above, could include short-toed eagle, peregrine, black woodpecker, crag martin, water pipit, black-bellied dipper, crested tit and crossbill.



Rock bunting

### 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 Tentés, 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 the local population of the casseur 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.



Cardabelle



Lammergeier



Grass-of-Parnassus

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

4 – 11 November 2017

# 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.



Black-winged stilt

## 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-curler. 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 (four nights), located outside the village of Alte, surrounded by small fields and Mediterranean scrub, and Hotel Mira Sagres in the village of Vila do Bispo (three nights).

## Conservation project

Sociedade Portuguesa para o Estudo das Aves (SPEA, BirdLife in Portugal) will receive our donation. Domingos will advise on a project for funding nearer the time of the holiday.



Price: £1,350 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 São Vicente

More information visit [www.honeyguide.co.uk](http://www.honeyguide.co.uk) 15

Price: £3,900 per person in twin room for 13 nights in South Africa, plus two overnight travel days (Wednesday to Thursday)

£3,800 for bookings received during 2016

Single room supplement: £300

En suite facilities

Scheduled flights London to Cape Town

Deposit: £500

Maximum number (two leaders): 14

Main leader: Geoff Crane

8 – 23 November 2017

## South Africa's SW Cape

Unique birds, a profusion of flowers and spectacular scenery  
...not to mention the mammals, reptiles, insects and amphibians!



From the moment you arrive at Cape Town by air, the sheer beauty of the Cape strikes you. The spectacular Table Mountain and its adjacent hills dominate the landscape. Numerous bays and shallow lagoons add to this idyllic scene.

Spring in the South Western Cape offers the visiting naturalist the spectacle of masses of flowers of a bewildering variety – Cape daisies, proteas, heathers and many more – collectively known as the Cape Floral Kingdom. It's the breeding season for local birds, which are joined by 'wintering' birds from the north. Around the coast, southern right whales gather in favoured bays, joining Cape fur seals and seabirds.

The holiday is based on two centres, the Cape Town area (eight nights) and Hermanus (five nights).

### Cape Town area

Coastal species should include Cape gannet, kelp gull, swift tern, Cape, white-breasted and crowned cormorants, African black oystercatcher and white-fronted plover. Troops of chacma baboons are often encountered on roadsides and bontebok, Cape mountain zebra, eland and red hartebeest can be found at the Cape of Good Hope.

At Boulders we will visit the African penguin colony for an eyeball-to-eyeball encounter with this threatened species. Coastal fynbos scrub holds malachite and orange-breasted sunbirds, fiscal flycatcher and Cape siskin. Other frequent birds might include Cape robin-chat, Karoo prinia, grey-backed cisticola and southern boubou.

Kirstenbosch botanical gardens is one of the best-known gardens in the world. Situated on the slopes of the spectacular Table Mountain, it specialises in the indigenous flora of South Africa. Sunbirds abound and Cape sugarbirds can be seen. Cape francolin and helmeted guineafowl are often found among the colourful flowerbeds.

The plateau on Table Mountain affords amazing views when the 'table cloth' of cloud is not down. Rock hyraxes, small mammals related to elephants, can be seen here, while rock agamas, Cape crag lizards and Cape girdled lizards sun themselves on the rocks.

The West Coast National Park to the north of Cape Town is noted for its large coastal lagoon, holding many thousands of wading birds including large numbers of little stints, curlew and marsh sandpipers, Kittlitz's, white-fronted and chestnut-banded plovers. Greater flamingos may be mixed with South African shelducks. Birds of prey can include African marsh harrier, African fish eagle, black-shouldered kite and the handsome black harrier, a speciality of the park.

Strandfontein water treatment plant, Rietvlei and Rondevlei nature reserves offer excellent opportunities to get to grips with waterbirds, including black-necked grebes, various ducks, purple gallinules and pied kingfishers. Reedbed and pools at Rondevlei have African sedge warblers, several heron and egret species,

sacred ibis, African darter, reed cormorant and malachite kingfisher.

Set in the heart of the Cape Winelands, Paarl Mountain Reserve and Paarl Bird Sanctuary offer a mixture of wetland and mountain birdwatching. Higher ground and scrub hold interesting species such as ground woodpecker, jackal buzzard and protea canary. Wetlands hold little bittern, African spoonbill, black-crowned night heron, water dikkop, black crane and white-backed duck, along with red bishops and white-throated swallows.

### The Hermanus area

Hermanus is one of the best places in the world to watch whales close to land, southern right whales especially. At Cape Agulhas, the southern most tip of Africa, seabirds could include the tiny Damara tern.



Whale watching at Hermanus

Harold Porter Botanical Garden may turn up new bird species such as black eagle and the stunning paradise flycatcher. Scrub holds Victorin's warbler, a speciality of the area. Like many of our stops on this holiday, Harold Porter boasts an excellent tearoom. Nearby, we will stop to look for the enigmatic Cape rockjumper.

The Overberg farmlands and adjacent coastal areas are the haunt of South Africa's national bird, the blue crane, as well as being good country for raptors, such as jackal buzzard, martial eagle and secretary bird, and bustards.



Cape dwarf chameleon

### Conservation project

The second South African Bird Atlas Project (SABAP2) is one of the most intensive monitoring programmes ever undertaken in South Africa. Huge 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.



Orange-breasted sunbird



King protea



Cape mountain zebra





African penguins



Cape rockjumper



Pin-tailed whydah



Cape Agulhas

More information visit [www.honeyguide.co.uk](http://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
- often 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](http://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. Alternatively, from [www.honeyguide.co.uk](http://www.honeyguide.co.uk) you can download, complete and email a 'form field PDF' version of this booking form.

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). There is a medical report form on [www.honeyguide.co.uk](http://www.honeyguide.co.uk).

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

A REPLACEMENT BROCHURE WILL BE SENT WITH YOUR BOOKING CONFIRMATION. PAYMENTS BY CREDIT, CHARGE OR DEBIT CARDS CANNOT BE TAKEN.

# Honeyguide booking details



**How to book:** a booking is made when the completed booking form (a photocopy or emailed PDF or 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. There is additional advice on passports for South Africa and Morocco in our Holiday Information for these destinations.

**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](http://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](mailto:enquiries@globaltravelinsurance.co.uk)  
Web: [www.globaltravelinsurance.co.uk](http://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: swallowtail on lantana in Crete (Chris Durdin)

Back cover: bee-eater (Barry Madden)

**Other photos by:**

David Collins

Geoff Crane

Helen Crowder

Chris Durdin

Steve Fletcher

Chris Gibson

Robin & Rachel Hamilton

Carol Leigh (Firecrest Photography)

Pau Lucio

Chris Knights

Barry Madden

Rob May

Ivan Nethercoat

Daniel Petrescu

Ray Purser

Kevin Simmonds

Domen Stanič

Roger Tidman

Simon Tonkin

Paul Tout

Artur Wiatr



Honeyguide Wildlife Holidays, 36 Thunder Lane,  
Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich NR7 0PX

Telephone: 01603 300552

e-mail: [chris@honeyguide.co.uk](mailto:chris@honeyguide.co.uk) [www.honeyguide.co.uk](http://www.honeyguide.co.uk)

