



Honeyguide

W I L D L I F E H O L I D A Y S 2 0 1 9



Helping you enjoy wildlife



Helping to protect wildlife



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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

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

WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS

36 Thunder Lane, Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich NR7 0PX

Telephone: 01603 300552

www.honeyguide.co.uk E-mail: chris@honeyguide.co.uk

Holidays for the year 2019

Welcome to the 29th season of Honeyguide Wildlife Holidays.

There are two new destinations in our programme for 2019. Simon Tonkin and Niki Williamson introduce us to the Serranía de Ronda in Andalucía and they enthuse about the food there as much as the wildlife in our late winter though spring in southern Spain. Neighbours of mine across the road – who know Castang in the Dordogne – had previously suggested the hotel in Júzcar, so it bodes well.

Also new is the migration hotspot of Falsterbo in southern Sweden, timed in early September for the movement of birds of prey and others out of Scandinavia. Guide Christopher Hall is new to the team: he's run his own holidays for many years and is moving towards less admin and more time in the field with nature. I sympathise!

Amazingly Crete is the only holiday featuring in both 2018 and 2019 brochures. Crete is always popular as shown by two groups of 14 Honeyguiders in 2018.

Extremadura, Morocco (jointly with our friends in N&S Wildlife & Walking Holidays), La Mancha, Slovenia, the Danube Delta, French Pyrenees, Estonia and autumn's holiday in Portugal Algarve & Alentejo all return after a year or more's 'rest' from the programme.

Many Honeyguiders have met Pau Lucio in Valencia or La Mancha and he will be our local guide in the Picos de Europa as well as La Mancha. The Picos is a destination returning after a long gap, this time with Pau's itinerary.

Our annual holiday with Geoff Crane in South Africa re-visits the Garden Route with the addition of the Mountain Zebra National Park.

Other holidays may be running and appear on www.honeyguide.co.uk rather than in this brochure. One of these is the Camargue, cancelled in 2018 on account of an air traffic control strike and re-scheduled for May 2019. This holiday was fully subscribed as we went to print.

As usual this brochure is planned when not all flight schedules are known, so be aware that there could be changes or options from airports away from the London area. If in doubt, please get in touch.

Your contributions to conservation projects through the holidays and the Honeyguide Wildlife Charitable Trust continue to help wildlife everywhere that we go. We can all be proud of our running total of donations of more than £120,000.

I hope you can join us on a wildlife holiday in 2019.

Chris Durdin

Chris Durdin
August 2018



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.

Find us on  ...where there are many holiday photos to enjoy.

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 2018), we have raised £124,860 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".

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 2019



Chris Durdin, this year leading in **Extremadura, Crete, La Mancha** and the **Picos de Europa**, 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 has written a book about Norfolk's cranes and leads regular walks on his local wildlife trust nature reserve. He's also been involved in youth soccer for ten seasons, and is a barbershop singer. As a naturalist, Chris is an all rounder.

Serranía de Ronda

Simon Tonkin worked as an RSPB Senior Conservation Officer for many years, specialising in the challenging job of stopping the decline of farmland wildlife. He also lectures in ornithology and has been involved in developing 'fair to nature' food products. **Niki Williamson** was a warden at the RSPB's Ouse Washes nature reserve, then worked on projects helping farmland birds in the Fens and subsequently managed the RSPB Eastern England's farm wildlife advisory team. Both are now full-time nature guides, based in the Strait of Gibraltar.

Extremadura

Martin Kelsey is a regular leader for Honeyguide in Extremadura where he lives with his family, close to Finca Santa Marta. Martin's background in ecology includes a three-year study on marsh warblers. After three years in the Amazon rain forest with the British Ornithologists' Union, where he met his wife Claudia, he worked for BirdLife International. Martin's blog about birds in Extremadura is well worth following.

Chris Durdin – see above.

Morocco

Richard Hobbs and **Sally Ward** run Norfolk & Suffolk Wildlife and Walking Holidays, our partners in this joint holiday. Richard is an expert botanist. **Chris Gibson** has recently taken early retirement from Natural England where he was based in north Essex. He is 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, and recognised as a 'naturalist of distinction' by the British Naturalists' Association.

Crete

Chris Durdin – see above. **Rob Macklin** – see Algarve & Alentejo.

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 in nearby Istria, and has a fund of knowledge about central-eastern Europe and its wildlife. **Domen Stanic** is an Italian-Slovenian biologist discovering and enjoying wildlife in Slovenia and the Adriatic region. His fieldwork is mainly concentrated on birds and plants, but he has a wider interest in other local wildlife and nature. He is also an outstanding wildlife photographer and puts many of his photos and observations on his blog.

La Mancha and Picos de Europa

Pau Lucio lives near Valencia and runs a wildlife tour company called Birdwatching Spain. Locally he is involved in conservation projects on bird migration and the importance of Spanish coastal wetlands for species such as the 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. He is our regular guide in La Mancha but also spends time every year in the Picos de Europa.

Chris Durdin – see above.

Danube Delta

The main leader from our friends at **Ibis** on this holiday is from the Ibis team and is still to be decided. It may be Eugen Petrescu or Daniel Petrescu. Botanist Mihai Petrescu joins the group in Dobrogea. They all speak excellent English.

French Pyrenees

Chris Gibson – see Morocco

Estonia

Rein Kuresoo is our main leader from our hosts NaTourEst, and we may also be joined by others from NaTourEst on occasions. Rein is one of the leading naturalists in Estonia, and knows birds, flowers and ecology. He helped to establish the Estonian Fund for Nature: two national parks and several large protected areas were established in Estonia in 1991-95, proposed under his chairmanship. Rein has led bird, plant and general nature trips since 1989 and has written and illustrated books about nature and gardening, including several textbooks for schools.

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.

Falsterbo

Christopher Hall runs his own birdwatching company, New Horizons, though is planning to guide for others and leave the administrative roles behind; this partnership with Honeyguide is a step in that direction. Falsterbo is one of many birdwatching destinations he knows well and was our first choice as a joint project. His wildlife watching tours for a growing 'family' of loyal regulars means he has guided over 150 tours worldwide. He has also been a science teacher and run birdwatching evening classes.

Chris Durdin – see above.

Algarve & Alentejo

Rob Macklin was formerly 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. **Hugo Sampaio** is a Conservation Officer for SPEA (BirdLife Portugal) as was our co-leader in November 2017.

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 South Africa.



Niki Williamson



Simon Tonkin



Martin Kelsey



Pau Lucio



Richard Hobbs



Chris Gibson



Paul Tout



Domen Stanic



Ivan Nethercoat



Rein Kuresoo



Christopher Hall



Geoff Crane



Hugo Sampaio



Rob Macklin

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.

21 – 27 February 2019

Serranía de Ronda

Springtime in southern Spain – during our winter



Price: £1,450 per person in twin or double room for six nights (Thursday to Wednesday).

Single room supplement: £120

En suite facilities

Scheduled easyJet flights London Gatwick to Málaga

Deposit: £300

Maximum number (2 leaders): 14

Leaders: Simon Tonkin and Niki Williamson



Dartford warbler



Sombre bee orchid *Ophrys fusca*

Inland from Málaga, the hills of the Serranía de Ronda offer an attractive mix of white-washed villages, varied landscapes and wildlife. The area's rich history and gastronomic delights add to the appeal as a late winter destination – with spring well underway in Andalucía.

The Serranía de Ronda combines two areas. Rugged limestone cliffs in the Sierra de Grazalema have vulture colonies and a range of unusual plants, including the rare Spanish fir, within the Natural Park. Parts of the Sierra de las Nieves are snow-covered in winter, as the name suggests, and wild enough for Spanish ibex and mouflon, albeit rarely easy to see. Spanish daffodils grow here and at the edge of the tree line we have an introduction to black redstarts, firecrests, short-toed treecreepers, crested tits and the chance of a golden eagle.

We are also within range of steppes and wetlands. On the plains around Osuna we'll be looking for bustards with a supporting cast of big flocks of wintering skylarks, corn buntings, Spanish sparrows and calandra larks as well as Iberian grey shrike, Dartford warblers, wintering bluethroats, ravens and hoopoes. Rock formations and Osuna's striking architecture featured in Game of Thrones.

We spend a day in the wetlands at Fuente de Piedra, enjoying the spectacle of thousands of wintering common cranes moving around the farmland. Also there are black-winged kites and purple swamphens with avocets, black-winged stilts, stone-curlews, Kentish plovers among a variety of waders. As well as wintering shelducks, shovelers and teals we will look for red-crested pochards and white-headed ducks.

A leisurely day includes time spent in and around the historic city of Ronda. There are palaces, churches and a bullring though the dominant sight is the dramatic El Tajo gorge with its three bridges: one Roman, one Moorish and one 18th century. Birdwatchers may get distracted by crag martins and red-billed choughs and crossbills are possible in the town parks.

Gastronomic delights

Our base of Júzcar was one of the *pueblos blancos* – white villages – until painted blue for a Smurf film, and for now the town has voted to keep its new colour. The charming Hotel-Restaurant Bandolero offers comfort and stunning views of the surrounding mountains but it's the reputation of the food that is a special draw.

Chef Iván worked in top London restaurants before returning to his home area to run this business with his partner. Complementing this theme are Simon and Niki's picnics, also prepared with local ingredients including home-baked bread.

Birds

Birdwatching is the main focus on this holiday. As well as those noted above, wintering ring ouzel and hen harriers are possible here, as well as black wheatears, alpine accentors, rock buntings, Bonelli's eagles, blue rock thrushes, rock sparrows, Thekla and crested larks, girl buntings, hawfinches, dipper and grey wagtail. Swallows and martins add a springtime feel.

Flowers

We are here at the start of spring and early orchids are likely, such as giant orchid and sombre bee orchid. We expect paperwhite narcissi, irises and red-berry mistletoe plus more to be discovered.

Other wildlife

Bright days will bring out butterflies and lizards. It's a surprisingly good time for moths and our leaders plan to run a moth trap. Giant peacock moth is very possible and out in force at this time of year is the elegant-looking *Lemonia philopalus*.



Lemonia philopalus

Itinerary

As well as travel days the five full days will be a mountain birdwatching day, a wetlands day, Ronda and around, the plains, and a local day in and around local sweet chestnut and holm oak woods and elsewhere in the limestone Serranía de Ronda.

Conservation project

Migres monitors bird migration though the Strait of Gibraltar. A key role is measuring the impact of the many wind turbines in the area on migrant birds of prey. This includes advising on when to switch off turbines, when migration is heavy.

SUPPORTING



Ronda

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, girl 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.

Price: £1,600 per person in twin room for eight nights (Tuesday to Wednesday)

Single room supplement: £200

En suite facilities

Scheduled easyJet flights Gatwick to Madrid

Deposit: £300

Maximum number (two leaders): 14

Leaders: Martin Kelsey and Chris Durdin



Lesser kestrels



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



Tozo river



Angel's tears

Price: £1,400 per person in twin or double room for a full week (Friday to Friday), price does not include lunches.

Single room supplement: £130

En suite facilities

Scheduled easyJet flights London Gatwick to Agadir

Deposit: £300

Maximum number (2/3 leaders): 16

Leaders: Richard Hobbs and Sally Ward from N & S Wildlife & Walking Holidays and Chris Gibson

15 – 22 March 2019

Morocco

In the foothills of the Anti Atlas

Just a short distance inland from coastal Agadir – with its pallid and little swifts – even many garden birds are unfamiliar. There's a touch of glamour about Moussier's redstart, house bunting and bulbuls, all widespread here and easy to see where we stay.

Oued Massa and Oued Souss – part of the Souss-Massa National Park – are coastal wetlands with easy birdwatching. Waders, terns and passerines of many species pass through, and we are here at an ideal time for passage birds including wagtails, swallows and bee-eaters. Inevitably there are herons, spoonbills, egrets and probably flamingos. Black-crowned tchagra – a bush-shrike - is more African than Mediterranean: though it can be skulking and tricky to see, we know it's at our base of Atlas Kasbah.

Low cliffs support the last truly wild population of the northern bald ibis. One of Europe's rarest birds, intensive conservation efforts have brought it back from the brink of extinction.

Part of the attraction of Morocco is the cultural charm, such as flat-roofed Berber villages, herds of sheep and goats and a distinctive cuisine. These are all in evidence around our holiday base, the Atlas Kasbah Eco-lodge, which has a feel of a small castle with its towers and ramparts. It provides friendly and comfortable accommodation run by owners Hassan, a Berber, and his wife Hélène, who is French, providing employment for local people in the kitchen and garden. The food is good: gently spiced, with couscous, tagine and an excellent mix of meats and vegetables, often with a French twist. Mint tea is a local speciality. The eco-lodge – so named as it has strong environment values, such as using local produce, solar power and on-site water treatment – is situated in the Argan Biosphere Reserve, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The area is called the 'High Atlas' mountains, though here we are in low hills, only 20 minutes from Agadir but a useful distance away from more developed coastal areas where tourism is concentrated.

This holiday is run jointly with our friends in N & S Wildlife & Walking Holidays. Like Honeyguide they take it slowly and enjoy all types of wildlife. Richard is a very experienced botanist, and knows the Moroccan specialties that grow alongside more familiar Mediterranean flowers.

Birds

Those above plus laughing dove, hoopoe, short-toed eagle, Barbary falcon, ruddy shelduck, black and black-eared wheatears, Barbary partridge,



House bunting

woodchat and great grey shrikes, red-rumped swallow and spotless starling. The 'Maghreb' magpie *mauritanica* is distinctive with blue facial skin, and generally 'split' as a separate species.

The holiday is about enjoying the local birds and other wildlife, rather than travelling distances to see lots of Moroccan specialities.



Common bulbul

Flowers

Near the coast there are bright yellow broomrape-like *Cistanche phelypaea*, pink *Frankenia* and some astonishing large spurge, which at first glance appear to be large, prickly cacti. There are also more familiar families such as lavender, poppies and rockroses, alongside the knapweed-like *Volutaria maroccana* and the odd-looking *Periploca* – a milkweed relative. There are restharrow in pink and yellow, Moroccan toadflaxes and an endemic bugloss. Spring flowers can include *Dipcadi*, a brownish 'bluebell'.

Other wildlife

Barbary ground squirrel, Moorish tortoises, Saharan green frog. Butterflies could include greenish black-tip, false baton blue and common tiger blue.



Bald ibis

Conservation project

A team of wardens safeguards nesting and feeding areas of the critically endangered northern bald ibis. The work is run by GREPOM, a small NGO and the new BirdLife partner for Morocco, supported by SEO/BirdLife Spain.



Moussier's redstart



Common tiger blue



Cistanche phelypaea



Souss Estuary



Atlas Kasbah eco-lodge

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.



Ricotia, Kourtaliótiko Gorge

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. 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, possibly, the mountain plateau at Omalós.

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: £1,420 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

Scheduled easyJet flights Gatwick or Manchester to Heraklion

Deposit: £300

Maximum number (two leaders): 14

Leaders: Chris Durdin and Rob Macklin



Squacco heron



Dragon arum at Frangokastello



Plakias Bay

Price: £1,500 per person in a twin room for a full week (Tuesday to Tuesday)

Single room supplement: £120

Up to 7 rooms. En suite or private facilities

Scheduled Ryanair flights London Stansted to Trieste

Deposit: £300

Maximum number (two leaders): 14

Leaders: Paul Tout and Domen Stanic

14 – 21 May 2019

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.

SUPPORTING



Ural owl



Red-footed falcon



Lizard orchid *Himantoglossum adriaticum*



Marsh fritillary

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.

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 and red-crested pochards. 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, Tekla 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 choughs, 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 of 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, 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.



Red-crested pochards

Other wildlife

Butterflies could include Moroccan orange-tip, clouded yellow, 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



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

Single room supplement: £100

En suite facilities

Scheduled easyJet flights Gatwick to Valencia.

Deposit: £300

Maximum number (two leaders): 14

Leaders: Pau Lucio and Chris Durdin



Left above: Alpine swift Above: *Orchis cazorlensis*



Don Quixote's windmills

Las Tablas de Damiel National Park

More information visit www.honeyguide.co.uk 9

Price: £1,600 per person in twin cabin for a full week (Thursday to Thursday)

Single cabin supplement: £150

En suite facilities

Scheduled Ryanair flights London Stansted 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

6 – 13 June 2019

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

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'.



Brown bear, a highlight of the Carpathians



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



White pelicans



Spoonbills

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

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

SUPPORTING



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 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.

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.

Butterflies

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



Rock bunting

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 Tentes, 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



Cirque de Gavarnie

(LPO, the French Bird Protection League) is active here, with careful monitoring of 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.



Price: £1,550 per person in twin room for a full week (Friday to Friday)

Single room supplement: £180

En suite facilities

Scheduled Ryanair flights Stansted to Lourdes

Deposit: £300

Maximum number (two leaders): 14

Main leader: Chris Gibson



Apollo butterfly



Lammergeier



Marmot

Price: £1,550 per person in twin or double room for a full week (Saturday to Saturday)

Single room supplement: £120

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

8 – 15 June 2019

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

SUPPORTING



E L F

Erratic boulders on the coast of Lahemaa National Park



Picos de Europa

Mountain wildlife in stunning scenery

Imagine stepping back in time when meadows were full of flowers and butterflies, with traditional management for hay and livestock. Picture this with a backdrop of jagged limestone mountains and you have a feel for the glorious wildlife and landscape in this corner of northwest Spain.

Variety starts with the range of habitats, with a Mediterranean feel at lower levels to alpine rock-gardens, but dominated in between these by hay meadows known as some of the most diverse in Europe. Many of the 150 species of butterflies and 1500 plant species are strongly linked to the limestone, though high altitude acid peat bogs add to the variety.

Flowers

Orchids are often the first flowers studied – more than 20 species on Honeyguide's previous Picos visit. These orchids included lizard, frog, Provence, pale-flowered and the two colour forms of elder-flowered orchid, heart-flowered serapias and a local species of vanilla orchid. There is, of course, so much more: asphodels, rock-roses, pinks, saxifrages, globularias, gentians, the lovely 'three-birds' toadflax *Linaria triornithophora* – the list could go on.

Birds

Griffon vultures are the most numerous bird of prey, plus a few Egyptian vultures and an outside chance of seeing one of the reintroduced lammergeiers. Short-toed eagle, Montagu's harrier and honey buzzard are possible and black kites likely on several days. Higher areas have easy to see alpine choughs and a fair chance of finding alpine accentors, snowfinches and that most intriguing of birds, the wallcreeper. Rock bunting, red-backed and Iberian grey shrikes, rock sparrow, crag martin, Bonelli's warbler and bee-eater are more birds you wouldn't expect to see in the UK.



Snowfinch



Butterflies

If you like butterflies, the Picos de Europa will appeal. Chequered skipper, marsh fritillary and purple-edged copper are good-looking butterflies: Cleopatra, swallowtail, Provençal fritillary and black-eyed blue a few of the supporting cast. There's a huge range of moths, day- and night-flying, for anyone with interest and expertise, plus various interesting looking beetles, spiders and more.

Other wildlife

The Cantabrian chamois *Rupicapra pyrenaica parva* is the local subspecies of the Pyrenean chamois or isard, and is widespread, though not common, in craggy areas. With a little luck we might find a red squirrel or snow vole; wild cats and brown bears are present in the Picos but secretive. The most sought after reptile is Schreiber's green lizard and marbled newt is the star amphibian to look out for.

Pretty towns, rushing mountain rivers and some of the finest scenery in Europe give a charming context for the wildlife.

Holiday details

Our base is the Hotel Tierra de la Reina in the small town of Boca de Huérgano, where a Roman bridge over the River Esla is within walking distance. Excursions are a mix of local trips and drives to farther afield, including Puerto de las Señales mountain pass, Valle de Valdeón, a Spanish juniper forest, and by cable car to the high plateau at Fuente De.

Conservation project

Asociación Zerynthia is a small Spanish NGO dedicated to the study and conservation of butterflies and the places where they live and to promoting public interest in them. A current project in northern Spain is habitat restoration to encourage white-letter hairstreaks, including planting disease resistant elms, the larval food plant.



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

Single room supplement: £100

En suite facilities

Flights: Scheduled Ryanair flights Stansted to Santander

Deposit: £300

Maximum number (two leaders): 14

Leaders: Pau Lucio and Chris Durdin



Chamois



trumpet gentian



Picos de Europa

Price: £1400 per person in twin room for five nights (Sunday to Friday), price does not include lunches.

Single room supplement: £120

En suite facilities

Scheduled Ryanair flights from London Stansted to Copenhagen

Deposit: £300

Maximum number (two leaders): 14

Leaders: Christopher Hall and Chris Durdin

1 – 6 September 2019

Falsterbo, Sweden

Mass migration by the Baltic coast

Ranked number six in the top thirty birding sites in Europe, with over 350 species recorded, Falsterbo should be on everyone's radar. It has been estimated that around 500 million birds leave Scandinavia every autumn, and most of them pass through Falsterbo at the southern tip of Sweden, before crossing the Øresund to Denmark and far beyond.

Falsterbo is recognised as one of the top birding sites in Europe.



Falsterbo peninsula

This vast stream of migrants makes the Falsterbo peninsula one of the greatest bird migration watchpoints. Each autumn, literally thousands of passerines including larks, pipits, wagtails, hirundines, thrushes, warblers, flycatchers, finches and buntings pass through each day, providing an amazing spectacle. Among all this action we may find scarcer species such as wryneck, red-throated pipit, bluethroat, red-backed shrike, icterine warbler, nutcracker or Lapland bunting.

Spotted flycatcher and red-backed shrikes are two migrants we'd hope to find.

Bird of prey hotspot

Falsterbo is particularly famous for raptor migration. The numbers are staggering, with mixed flocks in the hundreds every day. Virtually every European raptor is regularly recorded here, including rarities such as spotted and lesser spotted eagles and pallid harrier.



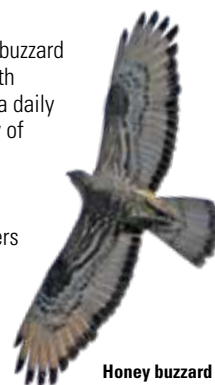
At the time of our visit honey buzzard numbers will be at a peak, with hundreds passing through on a daily basis, making a seasonal tally of around 5,000.

The coastal location gives opportunities to look for waders and seabirds.

Meanwhile, on or flying past the shoreline there can be wildfowl such as brent and barnacle geese and pintail.

Waders are likely to include grey and golden plovers, little stint, spotted redshank and wood sandpiper. On the sea we look out for eiders, velvet scoter and red-breasted merganser.

A little farther afield we can also look out for whooper swans, white-tailed and golden eagles, red kite, goshawk, white stork, common crane, Caspian tern, eagle owl, black woodpecker, marsh tit and hawfinch, so prepare for a remarkable birdwatching bonanza.



Honey buzzard



Velvet scoter

Itinerary

From Copenhagen airport, it is a fairly short drive across the famous Øresund Bridge into Sweden to the Hotel Norregård in the charming old village of Falsterbo, within easy reach of the 'action'. Over the next few days we shall witness the daily spectacle of mass migration from Nabben at the very tip of the peninsula, as well as exploring the local coastline, woods and heathland.

Two days are away from Falsterbo at Lake Krankesjön and Fyledalen nature reserve, the latter a wooded valley with a stream and meadows where fallow deer can be seen. At the end of this spectacular break we return across the bridge to Copenhagen airport for our flight home.

Holiday details

Five nights at our holiday base, the Hotel Norregård, which is located in the heart of the small village of Falsterbo. This family-run hotel is a former farm and has a reputation for good food sourced locally and seasonally.

Conservation project to be decided.

We are still looking into an appropriate recipient for the usual £40 per person of every holiday price that is earmarked for a conservation project.



Red-backed shrike



Spotted flycatcher



Falsterbo

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 specialties, 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, curl 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 specialties 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 support 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.



Red-veined darter

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.

Autumn flowers can include Portuguese autumn crocus, autumn and sea squills and autumn snowflake.

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



Cape São Vicente

Conservation project

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



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

Single room supplement: £180

En suite facilities

Probably easyJet flights London Luton to Faro and options from other airports

Deposit: £300

Maximum number (two leaders): 14

Leaders: Hugo Sampaio and Rob Macklin



Purple gallinule



Chameleon

Price: £4,900 per person in twin room for 13 nights plus two travelling days (Saturday to Sunday)

Single room supplement: £300

En suite facilities

Scheduled flights, London to Port Elizabeth via Johannesburg, probably with SAA

Deposit: £500

Number: minimum of 3, maximum 14

Main leader: Geoff Crane

25 January – 9 February 2020

South Africa's Garden Route

Plus big game in Mountain Zebra and Addo Elephant National Parks



The 'Garden Route': beautiful sweeping beaches and coastal wetlands on South Africa's south coast. It's the final destination of many migrating birds from Europe, where they mingle with African birds near whales and Cape fur seals by the shore.

Mountain Zebra National Park was established as a nature reserve for the threatened Cape mountain zebra, alongside a wide range of other wildlife.

The Addo Elephant National Park was set up to protect the last elephants and Cape buffalos in the southern part of South Africa. It now has all the mammals originally found here, plus some 200 bird species.

Together they make a superb combination of the best of South Africa's wildlife, set in an easy to explore and malaria-free area.

The holiday will be based in three centres, six nights in the Garden Route just outside Plettenberg Bay, three nights in Mountain Zebra National Park and four nights at the Addo Elephant National Park. Two further nights will be spent on overnight flights from the UK to Port Elizabeth via Johannesburg and back.

The Garden Route

Indigenous forests, a rugged coastline, wetlands, mountains, rivers and hidden coves hint at the range of wildlife to be enjoyed on the Garden Route.

The beautiful coastline of the Robberg Peninsula is a red sandstone promontory. Its rugged coastline with high cliffs is a favourite venue for naturalists. Southern right whales, dolphins, Cape fur seals and seabirds are seen from the cliff tops, while in among the coastal fynbos there are rock hyraxes and agama lizards. Archaeological digs are revealing interesting facts about the early inhabitants (700BC) of the peninsula.

Nature reserves have mighty Outeniqua yellowwood trees, as well as milkwood and many other indigenous trees and plants, plus many forest birds. Diepwalle Forest has the last few remaining forest elephants, though the chance of seeing one of these great animals is slim. Birds include Narina trogon, African emerald cuckoo, green wood hoopoe and Knysna woodpecker. Above the forest towards the Spitskop Peak we will be out of the forest and into fynbos, a chance to do some botanising.

On a leisurely boat trip up the Keurbooms River we look out for kingfishers, fish eagles and African darters, while the boat takes us into the forest. Much of the area is the Tsitsikamma National Park, where the indigenous forest and the Indian Ocean meet. Knysna turaco, Cape batis and chorister robin-chat are three of many forest birds.

Mountain Zebra National Park

Set up in the 1930s when mountain zebras were down to single figures, there are now several hundred in a fenced national park that has been extended several times since its start.

Mountain zebras – now routinely exported to boost or establish populations elsewhere in South Africa – are the flagship species for protecting much more. 'Game drives' bring the chance of a range of mammals: those found in the park include lion, cheetah, caracal, Cape buffalo, black rhino, eland, the endangered black wildebeest, red hartebeest, gemsbok and grey rhebok.

Larger birds can include blue crane, Verreaux's eagle and Cape vulture. Smaller birds to look out for are Layard's titbabbler, sickle-winged chat, Namaqua warbler, fairy flycatcher and pale-winged starling.

Addo Elephant National Park

The Addo Elephant National Park is renowned for its impressive herds of elephants, but with selective re-introductions now has the full spectrum of wildlife originally found in the area, including lion, black rhino, leopard and Cape buffalo, as well as spotted hyena, black-backed jackal, Burchell's zebra, eland, red hartebeest, warthog and kudu. Smaller mammals may be sighted with a little patience, including yellow mongoose and meerkats.

Raptors include pale chanting goshawk and jackal buzzard, and grassland has Denham's bustard, southern black korhaan, blue crane and secretary bird. Black-backed jackal, scrub hare and porcupine are best seen on a night drives, an optional extra, with luck along with owls, spotted thick-knees and nightjars. We take regular game drives within the park, but there is also a lot to see on foot around the accommodation.

A viewing deck and a ground level hide overlook an active water hole. This area, when floodlit at night, attracts water dikkip (like a stone-curlew) as well as mammals. There can be lesser honeyguide in the trees and lesser striped swallows around the accommodation. Another hide overlooks a pond, which is good for black crane, southern red bishop and weavers.

The Zuurberg Mountains are home to some fascinating plants. The Zuurberg cycad and the Zuurberg hunchback are two to look for. In the arid lands of the Karoo, birds, mammals and reptiles have adapted to the harsh climate.

Conservation project

The second South African Bird Atlas Project (SABAP2) 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.



Malchite kingfisher



Red bishop



Robberg Peninsula



Blue cranes



Cape weaver



Zuurberg cycad



Elephant



Cape mountain zebra



Mountain Zebra National Park

Honeyguide wildlife 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 for holiday reports, photos and more.

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 offset 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.

Honeyguide booking form



Please use **BLOCK CAPITALS** and make cheques payable to Honeyguide Wildlife Holidays. Alternatively, from 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 other information (eg dietary, prescription medicines).

For a medical report form, please ask or see 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)

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

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

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.....

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Date.....

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

☐

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 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.

Cancellation due to external events: if a holiday is cancelled due to events beyond our control, such as an air traffic control strike, your holiday cost will be refunded in full. However additional costs such as airport hotels, travel to the airport and travel insurance are not normally refundable. This is a plain English explanation and illustration of our 'force majeure' practice, whereby we cannot accept liability for events that we cannot reasonably foresee, including war, civil strife, natural or unnatural disasters, extreme weather conditions or the threat of any of these.

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.

Flights: flights noted in the holiday details were the likeliest when the brochure went to print. However many 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 in our Holiday Information.

Medicines: there are restrictions on some prescription medicines overseas. General advice is to take medicines in their original packaging and your prescription, sometimes also a letter from your doctor. Please check what applies in your case.

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 – unless otherwise noted, breakfast, packed lunch and evening meal, often 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,
59/61 Lyndhurst Road
Worthing
BN11 2DB
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: rock thrush by Domen Stanic.

Back cover: scarce swallowtail and (below) crown daisies, Crete.

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Domen Stanic
Dawn Stevens
Roger Tidman

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

Telephone: 01603 300552

e-mail: chris@honeyguide.co.uk www.honeyguide.co.uk

