

Central Spain

Wetlands, plains and mountains

April 17 - 23, 2021

Itinerary

Day 1 / April 17: Madrid airport - Wetlands of La Mancha - Ciudad Real

Meet and welcome at Madrid airport before we transfer to Ciudad Real (Castilla La Mancha region). We'll do the first birding on route in the area known as "La Mancha Húmeda", a vast flat region containing some important Ramsar wetlands. We should find here amongst many others Greater Flamingo, Red-crested Pochard, White-headed Duck, Collared Pratincole, Purple Heron, Black-necked Grebe, Black-winged Stilt and Avocet amongst many others. Accommodation and dinner at Hotel Guadiana located in the town of Ciudad Real.

Day 2 / April 18: Ciudad Real - Campo de Calatrava plains - Calatrava Castle

Today we will explore the plains of the Important Bird Area of Campo de Calatrava, an extension of wheat fields where the "big 5" of the steppe habitats occur: Great and Little Bustards, Black-bellied and Pin-tailed Sandgrouse and Stone Curlew. In the cliffs around the Calatrava castle we should be able to find Black Wheatear, Blue-Rock Thrush, Rock Bunting and Hawfinch. This is also a good spot for both Bonelli's and Golden Eagles. In the evening travel back to Ciudad Real for a meal and accommodation in the Hotel Guadiana.

Day 3 / April 19: Ciudad Real - Las Tablas National Park - El Vicario Reservoir

Today we will travel towards the town of Daimiel where we will dedicate our time to birds in the Tablas de Daimiel National Park and the nearby Navaseca lagoon. Excellent chances for Penduline and Bearded Tit, White-headed Duck, Water Rail, Purple Swamp Hen, Red-crested Pochard and Ferruginous Duck (with at least 9 different individuals present in the last seasons). Before heading back to our base in Ciudad Real we will explore the Vicario reservoir where a good selection of herons and egrets are usually recorded in Spring including Squacco Heron, Purple Heron, Little Bittern, Great, Cattle and Little Egrets and sometimes Glossy Ibis. Dinner and accommodation at our hotel in Ciudad Real.

Day 4 / April 20: Ciudad Real - Alcudia Valley

South of Ciudad Real lies a vast and beautiful valley surrounded by two massive rock formations. This is the Alcudia Valley, a natural (in good part) grassland habitat used generation after generation in the Winter months for feeding the livestock coming from the northern regions of Spain. The place is still being used by hundreds of "merinas" sheep after their "trashumancia" (Spanish word to describe the ancient journeys made since medieval times by animals and shepherds). This is a realm for vultures! And we will have good chances to see all three species present in Central Spain: Griffon, Eurasian Black and Egyptian. Other interesting raptors present here are Bonelli's and Spanish Imperial Eagles, Black Kites and Lesser Kestrel. After a full day exploring the "sierras" and plains of the Alcudia Valley we will return to our hotel in Ciudad Real.

Day 5 / April 21: Ciudad Real - Guadarrama Mountains N.P.

Breakfast at our hotel and drive towards the mountains of Madrid, a journey of about 2,5 hours. It is quite surprising to experience the wide variety of these mountains placed only under 50 km from Madrid's city centre. We will be looking for beautiful and usually shies Citril Finches, the winged gem of this National Park. Other species of special interest for birders are Crested Tit, Firecrest, Goldcrest, Red Crossbill and Iberian Pied Flycatcher. Depending on our timing we might dedicate some time to find further down in the valley near our hotel Dipper, Grey Wagtail, Bonelli's Warbler and Cirl Bunting. Dinner and accommodation in the charming little hotel of Luces del Poniente.

Day 6 / April 22: Guadarrama Mountains - Hoces del Duratón N.P.

After a morning birding up in the mountains of Madrid where we might find Honey Buzzard, Short-toed Eagle and Red Kite as new birds for us, with chances for Western Orphean Warbler and nesting Red-backed Shrikes, we will drive straight to the surroundings of the Hoces del Duratón Natural Park where we will try to find one of the rarest birds in Europe, the elusive Dupont's Lark. The only places in Europe where this species still survive are all in Spain, and the rocky thyme fields around Sepúlveda are one of its best sanctuaries. The difficulty to observe this bird gained it the name of "el diablo" (the devil!) amongst the birders from all over the world. Besides the Dupont's Lark these fields are also suitable to see Spectacled and Dartford Warbler, Black-eared Wheatear and Red-Billed Chough. Dinner and accommodation at Hotel Puerta de Sepúlveda, placed in the charming town under the same name.

Day 7 / April 23: Hoces del Duratón N.P. - Madrid

The plan for our last day will depend on how successful was our Dupont's Lark hunting the previous evening! So we might start very early in order to get new chances for this very interesting bird. The surrounding hills and sierras provide as well excellent birding opportunities where we could see Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush and Ortolan Bunting, two species mostly relate to higher elevations which find here a suitable habitat to breed. After lunch we will drive back to Madrid in order to arrive to our hotel / or airport to avoid its terrible evening traffic, where this tour ends

This itinerary might change according weather conditions or at discretion of our guide

PRICES:

Per person sharing in twin / doubled-room with private facilities: **€ 1.475**

Single Supplement: **€ 295**

Group size: Min. 4 – Max. 7 travelers plus our guide

The price includes:

- * Ground transport from Madrid airport in modern, fully seat-belted, air conditioned 9-seat vehicle
- * 6 Nights accommodation with en suite bathroom (4 in Ciudad Real, 1 in Guadarrama mountains and 1 in Sepulveda)
- * All meals inc breakfast, fantastic “tapas-rationes” lunches and evening meals + red wine in a moderate consumption
- * Services of professional birding guide
- * Basic travel insurance
- * Bird checklist (revised edition 2016)
- * All taxes

The price doesn't include:

- * Air fare (Easyjet, Ryanair & other companies operate daily flights from several UK airports)
- * Extra drinks and other items of a personal nature

Number of travelers:

The minimum number of travellers on each trip is 4 and the usual maximum number is 7 plus the guide or 14 with two guides.

Travel:

Because other birding tours normally carry the cost of the airfare and are not necessarily the cheapest, *Spainbirds Nature Tours* asks the customer to book the flights independently to Madrid, Málaga, Seville, Santander or any other specified airport where the trip starts and ends. This gives you the customer, greater flexibility in terms of choosing the flight and return leg of your journey home (flights and/or other means of transport) specific airport departures, times to suit you, special offers and carrier companies. *Spainbirds Nature Tours* is a licensed tour operator (CICMA 2517) which is allowed to book flights for our clients, please don't hesitate to letting us know if you prefer that we book your airline tickets for you. The meeting point for customers will be the corresponding local airport depending on the trip selected.

Ground transport:

We always use comfortable, modern air conditioned minibus or people carrier. All our vehicles comply with the current EU safety legislation. Notice please that we don't charge any fee to transport people, and our incomes are applied as a trip organizer and wildlife guide services but never as professional drivers.

Accommodation & food:

Accommodation is carefully chosen by *Spainbirds Nature Tours* to offer the customer a good quality standard of hotel or fully equipped country inn next to the birding areas. We ensure that all rooms are en suite and price includes usually full board (breakfast, picnic lunch and evening meal + red wine & water unless other board conditions are applied). For those who require a single room they will have to pay the corresponding supplement, which will depend on the chosen itinerary shown in the tours section of our web site or current brochure.

Dates:

Since the groups are usually small, the journey dates may occasionally be fine tuned to meet the needs of all interested parties but will never be changed if the flights have been already booked.

Insurance:

It is highly advisable to take out a personal insurance policy before leaving your country. Please let us know the name of your company insurance before travelling. For information of all travellers *Spainbirds Nature Tours* has its own civil liability insurance through **REALE SEGUROS, policy number 1331100001899/0**, covering damages to third parties to a maximum of 1,800,000 Euros. As travel agency licensed by the Spanish Tourism Board all our clients will be traveling covered by a *basic travel insurance*, but which might not be enough to cover certain personal or items damages.

In addition to your personal Travel & Medical Insurance, do bring (and carry with you when out and about) your up to date European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) – they only last 5 years! If you still have one of the older forms (E111) then it needs to be changed to this new card.

Note for UK travelers: You do not have to pay for an EHIC, which can be obtained or renewed free of charge by calling 0300 3301350 or applying on-line at www.ehic.org.uk. This is a secure site that diverts to the correct page within the main NHS.UK website. The cards are valid for five years, after which they can be renewed, again, free of charge. Please notice that the new Brexit situation will make to all cards expire after December 31, 2020!!!

How to book a tour to Spain:

To book our services you need to make a written confirmation by letter or email or fill our booking form available on our web site, plus paying **€ 450 as deposit** for all the Spain tours. Deposits for our overseas expeditions are showed in the literature related to every tour.

The rest shall be paid to *Spainbirds Nature Tours* by wire transfer or credit card, **at the latest 60 days** before the journey starts. The price includes guide services, accommodation, all meals, ground transport and fuel. Customers are entitled to cancel their bookings at any moment, but on the following terms:

1. If the cancellation is made between booking and 60 days before the start of the trip they will forfeit the deposit or, if preferred, it will be kept for future tours run by *Spainbirds Nature Tours* **with an expiration date of ONE year**.
2. If the cancellation is made between 59 and 31 days before the start of the journey they will forfeit **50%** (where the deposit would be also included) of the total amount paid to *Spainbirds Nature Tours*.
3. If the cancellation is made within 30 days of the start of the journey they will forfeit **100%** of the total paid. Any breach of the above instalments or unjustified delays in paying them will automatically lead to cancellation of the booking, the above mentioned rules then being applied. The post-cancellation sum of money to be reimbursed will be sent by wire transfer. All amounts paid must be done by bank transfer to our account on OPENBANK (details will be sent to you once you confirm booking).

If you agree these booking conditions please then fill and send us your **booking form**.

** Every of our overseas tours has its own booking conditions since all international and domestic flights are usually included in the price. If you are interested to fly from your home country and not meeting the group in Spain please let the office know this issue to find the most suitable alternative for both sides. You will be able to find our terms and conditions for the overseas tours in the pdf file linked in the literature of every tour.*

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