

Atlas Mountains and deserts

April 5 - 14, 2024

25 Anniversary!
itinerary

Day 1 / April 5: Madrid (or alternative airport) - Marrakech

Meeting at Madrid airport for our evening flight to Marrakech. Once in the Imperial Town we will be met by our driver who will transfer us to the hotel. Dinner and accommodation at Hotel Boutique Dellarosa.

Day 2 / April 6: Marrakech - Tiz-in-Tichka - Ouarzazate

After a hopefully good night sleep and a buffet breakfast we will meet the group at the lobby of the hotel to commence the long journey (with some stops!) to Ouarzazate. Today we are crossing the High Atlas mountains through the Tizi-n-Tichka (the highest mountain pass in Northern Africa with its 2,260 m.a.s.l). Before we will try our luck for Levaillant's Green Woodpecker, African Blue Tit and the africana subspecies of Common Chaffinch. Further ahead we will newly stop to lunch and for some local birding where we might see Moussier's Redstart and Long-legged Buzzard as new birds for us. In the southern section of the Atlas Mountains the vegetation and soils turn into much drier, heading down towards de stony deserts around Ouarzazate where, if time allows, we will do some birding before arriving to the lovely Hotel Dar Chamaa (Ouarzazate).

Day 3 / April 7: Ouarzazate - Al Manssur reservoir - Boumalne Dades

Waking up with the song of the House Bunting is something very special! In the morning we will visit the Al Manssur reservoir where (drought permitting) we should add some new birds to our list. Ruddy Shelduck, Marbled Duck, Black-winged Stilt and Little Ringed Plover are usually possible around while in the surrounding fields we will have good chances for Mahgreb Lark, Little Owl, White-crowned Wheatear, Bue-headed Yellow Wagtail, Spectacled Warbler and Blue-cheeked Bee-eater. After a short break in a local cafe we will continue our journey towards Boumalne Dades. We usually dedicate some time before checking in at the hotel looking for Maghreb Wheatear and Lanner Falcon (also chances for Pharaoh Eagle Owl). Before sunset we will arrive to Hotel Ksar Sultan Dades where we will stay the following two nights.

Day 4 / April 8: Boumalne Dades - Tagdilt Track - Dades Gorges

Today we will start early heading to the well known Tagdilt Track before sunrise. This is with no doubt one of the top areas for birding in Morocco. Excellent chances for seeing Red-rumped Wheatear, Desert Wheatear, Trumpeter Finch, Hoopoe Lark, Temminck's Lark, Cream-co-

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loured Courser and Thick-billed Lark, which is usually quite nomadic being one of the main targets here. If the heat allows, we will dedicate most of our day exploring this area, with an afternoon trip to visit the Dades gorges where Bonelli's Eagle, Barbary Partridge and Tristram's Warbler breed. Dinner and accommodation once again at the atmospheric Hotel Ksar Sultan Dades.

Day 5 / April 9: Boumalne - Tohdra Gorge - Er Rachidia - Ziz Valley - Erfoud

After a quick morning visit to the dramatic Todhra Gorges (Bonelli's Eagle, Crag Martin, Blue Rock Thrush and House Bunting amongst others) we will take our lunch in our usual restaurant in Tinejdad. The birding in its grounds is sometimes very rewarding with chances for migrants such as Bereber Warbler, Common Redstart and Wryneck... a good spot to see our first Blue-checked Bee-eater of the trip. After lunch we will drive towards the town of Er Rachidia in order to try for Scrub Warblers, Cream-coloured Courser and Bar-tailed Desert Lark. The journey will then cross the fertile valley of the Ziz river and its wonderful Date Palm oasis. We will arrive Erfoud late in the evening to sort out rooms and a well deserved dinner. Accommodation at Hotel Chergui in Erfoud.

Day 6 / April 10: Erfoud - Erg Chebbi dunes (4x4 excursion)

Today we will dedicate the whole day exploring the sandy dunes and the nearby stony deserts of Erg Chebbi dunes in several 4x4 vehicles by the hand of the expert local knowledge of Hamid, who will show us some of the most sought-after birds of this part of the world. Egyptian Nightjar, Pharaoh Eagle Owl, Brown-necked Raven, Hoopoe Lark, Desert Sparrow, African Desert Warbler, Crowned and Spotted Sandgrouse and a selection of migrant passerines will be all possible. In addition, we might visit the Dajet Srj, better known as the Merzouga lake, where we could see Greater Flamingo, Ruddy Shelduck, Marbled Duck... this later visit will depend on how much water the lake will have since it is usually dry after periods with no rain. By the end of the day we will be transferred back to our hotel in Erfoud. Dinner and accommodation at Hotel Chergui in Erfoud.

Day 7 / April 11: Erfoud - Alnif - Agdz - Ouarzazate

The plan for this morning will highly depend on how well we did the previous day in the desert. So we might again try for some of the birds we missed... if any! So likely birding around Rissani where we might see Laughing Dove, Pharaoh Eagle Owl, Fulvous Babbler, Lanner Falcon, White-crowned Wheatear... then a long journey back to Ouarzazate with some stops in or near Alnif and then Agdz. Dinner and accommodation at Hotel Dar Chamaa (Ouarzazate).

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Day 8 / April 12: Ouarzazate - Aïd Benhaddou - L'Ourika Valley

If there is a famous Ksar (walled town in bereber) in Morocco this is Aït Ben Haddou. Our travelers would not forgive us not stopping to admire this wonder declared part of UNESCO World Heritage. Travelers will have some free time to visit on their own its narrow streets and wonderful adobe buildings or perhaps, will dedicate to do some shopping in their multiple souvenirs shops. After the time in the ksar (usually 1,5 hours visit) we will start our journey back to cross again the Atlas Mountains newly through the Tiz-n-Tichka pass. After our usual lunch in the restaurant Tichka we will start our journey down to turn into the wonderful L'Ourika valley, still in the foothills of the Atlas. We might dedicate time before dinner to bird in the grounds of our hotel where we might find Tristram's Warbler, Moussier's Redstart and Levillant's Green Woodpecker. Dinner and accommodation at Hotel Kasbah Aurocher (L'Ourika Valley).

Day 9 / April 13: L'Ourika Valley - Oukaimeden - riparian forests of Ourika river

We will dedicate our last full day in Morocco mainly to bird in the Atlas Mountains, and more precisely in the well-known Oukaimeden ski resort. This is the most reliable site in the country to see the hard-to-find African Crimson-winged Finch!. There are some other attractive species for us such as the rare Seeborn's Wheatear, Barbary Partridge, Horned Lark, Alpine and Red-billed Choughs plus a few Rock Sparrows... which is maybe the most ubiquitous species in Oukaimeden. Beautiful Moussier's Redstart and Mistle Thrush also breed here up in the mountains, while the extremely rare Lammergeier has been sometimes seen patrolling the nearby valleys. Said this, the birding here is just outstanding! After a lovely lunch down in L'Ourika we will dedicate the afternoon to visit the lower parts of the mountains looking for migrants in the riparian vegetation of the rivers traveling back to our hotel in order to finish our packing and enjoying our last dinner in this amazing country. Accommodation at Hotel Kasbah Aurocher.

Day 10 / April 14: L'Ourika Valley - Marrakech - Madrid

After an early breakfast at our hotel we will transfer to Marrakech (around 1 hour journey by road) having free time in the city for some sightseeing and then travel to the airport to catch our flight back to Madrid or any other alternative destination.

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

PRICES:

Per person sharing in twin / doubled-room with private faciiliies: **€ 1,795**

Single Supplement: **€ 230**

Group size: Min. 10 – Max. 12 travelers plus our guide

The price includes:

- * Flights Madrid - Marrakech & Marrakech - Madrid with Iberia (you might be allowed to book your own flights but please let us know in advance to be confirmed on our side)
- * Ground transport in modern, fully seat-belted, air conditioned 17-seat minibus
- * Transfer from Marrakech airport to our hotel on day 1 (if doing with the group)
- * Trip in 4x4 vehicles on the Merzouga & Erg Chebbi day
- * 9 Nights accommodation in four stars hotels with en suite bathroom
- * Half board basis from dinner on day 1 to breakfast on day 10 (buffets in evenings & breakfast)
- * Services of professional birding guide
- * Basic travel insurance (we highly recommend to arrange your own travel insurance)
- * Bird checklist
- * All taxes

The price doesn't include:

- * Lunches (we usually stop in local restaurants for lunch, the cost for these meals is around 10-15 € per person / per day)
- * Any 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 safely 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 **€ 500 as deposit** for all the Spain tours. Deposits for our overseas tours 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 90 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:

If the cancellation is made between booking and 90 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.

If the cancellation is made between 89 and 61 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.

If the cancellation is made within 60 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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