

Morocco

Atlas & deserts

March 26 - April 4, 2021

Itinerary

Day 1 / March 26: 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 / March 27: 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 the stony deserts around Ouarzazate where, if time allows, we will do some birding before arriving to the lovely Hotel Dar Chamaa (Ouarzazate).

Day 3 / March 28: 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 Maghreb Lark, Little Owl, White-crowned Wheatear, Blue-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 / March 29: 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-coloured 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 / March 30: 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 / March 31: 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 1: 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).

Day 8 / April 2: 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 3: 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 Seebohm'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 4: 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 facilities: **€ 1.470**

Single Supplement: **€ 220**

Group size: Min. 10 – Max. 14 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

1. PAYMENTS

Reservations on our Morocco tour (Cod.SBNT2021/2) running between March 26 and April 4, 2021 require a booking form and a deposit of € 500 in order to guarantee your place. This first payment must be sent to us by bank transfer or credit/debit card as soon as we approve your booking request in writing. We cannot accept as valid any request until we have received and acknowledged the deposit as above.

Balance payment for the tour (including single supplement if applicable) must be sent to us before Wednesday December 26, 2020. Both payments can be done either by bank transfer or by credit / debit card through the secure online system available on our web site. If you decide to send the money via bank transfer our details are as follows:

Holder: Spainbirds Nature Tours S.L.

Bank: Openbank

Address: Avda. De Cantabria, s/n

28660 - Bohadilla del Monte

Madrid

SPAIN

IBAN: ES55 0073 0100 56 0471764400

SWIFT / BIC: OPENESMM

When making your payment, we recommend you include both the name and code number of the tour. All payments made by clients should be confirmed to Spainbirds Nature Tours either by email to info@spainbirds.com or by sending a text to the following mobile number: 00 34 687 83 77 19.

Please note that all payments to Spainbirds Nature Tours should be in Euros.

2. PERSONAL DETAILS AND PASSPORT

Travelers must advise any personal details required by Spainbirds Nature Tours to confirm their reservation, particularly important being name and surname exactly as shown on their passports in order to avoid any problem when we purchase group flight tickets.

IMPORTANT NOTICE: Travelers flying into Morocco must have their passport in order and it must have an expiry date of at least 6 months after the return date of the tour. European Union, UK and USA citizens don't require a VISA to get into Morocco. However we recommend you check with the embassy of Morocco in your country to get any information about possible extra documents. This would particularly apply to UK travelers after 31st December 2020.

To assist Spainbirds in their organization of the tour, we ask travelers to advise if they are following a particular medical treatment, whether they have any allergies (especially food allergies), or if they have any specific diet requirements that we should know in advance.

3. TRAVEL INSURANCE

It is highly advisable to take out a personal travel and medical insurance policy before leaving your country. Please let us know the name of your company insurance before travelling. In addition we strongly recommend you have your own insurance for your optical equipment (binoculars, camera etc.). 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 this may not be enough to cover certain personal circumstances or specific items.

4. CANCELLATIONS AND REFUNDS

Penalties and refunds if a cancellation is made by the client:

Any cancellation must be firstly reported by email or any other written form as a letter to our office address (see Contact Us section).

a) If the cancellation is made before December 26, 2020 we will refund 75% of the deposit paid. The remaining 25% will be used to cover any expenses related to change or cancellation of flight tickets or any deposits paid to ground agents, local guides or hotels.

b) If the cancellation is made between December 26, 2020 and February 24, 2021 (both days inclusive) we will refund the balance but the client will forfeit the entire deposit meaning 500 Euros for this specific Morocco tour.

c) If the cancellation is made between February 25, 2021 and March 26, 2021 (including a no-show in the meeting point the same day that the trip starts) the client will forfeit the total amount paid to Spainbirds Nature Tours including any supplement or extras arranged previously related to this tour.

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 within the following fourteen days after the cancellation has been communicated. The client will also assume any expense related to possible bank commissions applied in the process.

Since the main objective of the penalties noted above is to guarantee the smooth functioning of this tour without affecting other clients or Spainbirds organization of the tour, we refund in full the amount paid if we are able to replace on time the cancelled place, excluding any expenses purely related to the nature of this change and any airline conditions, if the flight has been booked by Spainbirds

Cancellation made by Spainbirds Nature Tours:

We reserve the right to cancel any tour for which there are insufficient reservations - always before February 24, 2021. In case of such cancellation, all deposits and other payments will be automatically refunded in full to our clients.

If the cancellation of the tour is confirmed after February 24, 2021, Spainbirds Nature Tours will refund in full within the following 7 days the total amount paid by the client AND will compensate the client as follows below:

- a) A compensation equivalent to 10% of the total cost of the tour if cancellation is made between February 25 and March 6 2021.
- b) A compensation equivalent to 15% of the total cost of the tour if cancellation is made between March 7 and March 26, 2021.

Spainbirds Nature Tours will not compensate to the client in the following cases:

- a) When the cancellation is made because the number of reservations is under the minimum required to run the tour as shown on our web site about this tour (spainbirds.com/en). In such case our travel agency reserves the right to cancel a tour and we will inform the client in writing of the cancellation of the tour before February 24, 2021.
- b) When the cancellation is made due to reasons of force majeure, which would be acts, events or circumstances which could not have been anticipated and which would be beyond the control of the organizer.

5. FLIGHTS SCHEDULE FROM MADRID (IBERIA)

Marzo 26, 2021 / IB8818 Madrid 15:55 h. - Marrakech 18:00 h.

April 4, 2021 / IB8819 Marrakech 20:15 h. Madrid 23:10 h.

The price of the package holiday includes return international flights from Madrid. Other existing alternatives from other airports might not be an option since prices given by the airline company usually depends on the number of reservations previously requested by Spainbirds Nature Tours. However, if you are planning to fly from your home country or any other different airport from Spain, please let us know by email in advance for us to consider your enquiry.

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