



Honeyguide

W I L D L I F E H O L I D A Y S 2 0 1 8



Helping you enjoy wildlife



Helping to protect wildlife



Honeyguide

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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 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 2017), we have raised £117,000 for conservation projects, mostly in Europe.

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

WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS

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Holidays for the year 2018

Welcome to the 28th season of Honeyguide Wildlife Holidays.

Regular 'Honeyguiders' and those finding us through word of mouth make up many of our wildlife holiday groups. But our groups are very inclusive and those new to Honeyguide soon feel at home.

So, what can you expect if you are thinking of trying a Honeyguide holiday for the first time? Good birdwatching, of course, but combined with our strong emphasis on mixed natural history. The wildlife balance varies from place to place and that should be clear from the holiday pages in this brochure and our website. If in doubt, please phone for a chat.

In the contents & calendar (left) regular readers will notice many changes in the next Honeyguide programme. Most of these are holidays returning after a break. In Europe that's true for Valencia, Menorca, the Dordogne, Istria, the Camargue, Bulgaria's Western Rhodopes and Madeira.

Farther afield in Southern Africa our annual link with Geoff Crane is to return to Namibia. If you'd like to visit southern Africa at other times with Geoff's guidance that can be arranged – a small group is ideal. Additional groups elsewhere are possible and we'll be happy to talk about that.

Also south of the Sahara is a new destination, to the Gambia. This is with Simon & Niki, our leaders in Tarifa & Morocco in 2017, taking advantage of their many visits there and local links.

Fuerteventura, Crete and Poland are much as in 2017, in all cases because of interest from Honeyguiders. Several people are already 'pencilled in' for these holidays, and for others.

Flights noted are best guesses, as generally schedules for next year are not out. We are happy to see if there are suitable flights from an airport near you.

Additional holidays may get added to the programme on www.honeyguide.co.uk which, as ever, has up to date information, such as new flight options, plus holiday reports, additional photos, nature notes and more.

Our conservation donations go from strength to strength, now more than £117,000, boosted by Gift Aid through the Honeyguide Wildlife Charitable Trust.

I hope you can join us on a wildlife holiday in 2018.

Chris Durdin

Chris Durdin
August 2017



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.

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 2018



Chris Durdin, this year leading in **Valencia, Crete** and the **Dordogne**, 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. He has written a book about Norfolk's cranes and leads regular walks on his local wildlife trust nature reserve. He's also a qualified soccer coach, for one son's under 15 year group. As a naturalist, Chris is an all-rounder.

Valencia

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

Fuerteventura

David Collins is an environmental consultant. He has led various Honeyguide wildlife holidays in the past, but his first love is Fuerteventura. He is co-author of *A Birdwatchers' Guide to the Canary Islands* and a book about the wildlife and history of the island called *A Walk through Fuerteventura*.

Menorca

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

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. **Chris Durdin** – see above.

Dordogne

Chris Durdin – see above.

Poland

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

Istria

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.

Latvia

Gaidis Grandāns's study subject is owl migration, and Gaidis met the last Honeyguide group through his work with the Latvian Owl Research Society, which this holiday supports. He is interested in

plants in addition to his knowledge of birds and involvement with bird ringing and owl study. **David Collins** – see Fuerteventura.

Camargue

Robin Hamilton has a wide knowledge of western and central Europe and its wildlife, especially birds. He worked for many years for English Nature. **Rachel Hamilton** spent her working life teaching natural history and conservation with the Field Studies Council and at Otley College in Suffolk. She is an enthusiastic all-round naturalist, though her first interest is botany. Robin and Rachel, both of whom are experienced wildlife leaders and keen linguists, are our regular leaders in the Camargue.

Bulgaria

Vlado Trifonov is the botanist from our hosts Neophron, the Bulgarian authority on the threatened *Lilium rhodopaeum*, and Honeyguide's regular co-leader in Bulgaria. **Chris Gibson** – see Menorca.

Madeira

Catarina Fagundes and **Hugo Romano** run Maderia Wind Birds, a small company specialising in observing the endemic and indigenous species of birds and plants on the island, and jointly lead all our groups on the island. The company embraces the principles of sustainable tourism, contributing to the conservation and interpretation of the natural heritage of Madeira's archipelago.

Namibia

Geoff Crane is the man behind Crane's Cape Tours & Travel, both local leaders and ground agents for Honeyguide in southern Africa. An experienced guide himself, he co-leads all Honeyguide's holidays in southern Africa.

Gambia

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 and specialising in leading tours all along the East Atlantic Flyway.

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.



Pau Lucio



David Collins



Chris Gibson



Ivan Nethercoat



Artur Wiatr



Paul Tout



Rachel Hamilton



Robin Hamilton



Gaidis Grandāns



Geoff Crane



Catarina Fagundes



Hugo Romano



Niki Williamson



Simon Tonkin

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.

8 – 15 March 2018

Valencia



Birdwatching and orchids in eastern Spain

Valencia remains a little undiscovered region for British naturalists, but it offers an attractive mix of birdwatching and early season orchids. Honeyguide's local leader, Pau Lucio, lives near Valencia and his local knowledge will guide us to protected areas and wildlife hotspots in marshes, mountains, fields and steppes among the developed coast and intensive arable elsewhere.

Paddy fields, a huge 14,000 hectares, are the third largest wetland in Spain. Flooded in winter, we arrive after the end of the shooting season as the area begins to dry. In early March there are just a few fields with water that can be packed with birds. Our previous group found large numbers of greater flamingos, some 500 glossy ibises, numerous egrets and quartering marsh harriers. Elsewhere there's a daytime roost of night herons.

Waders will be here and also at the salt pans of Santa Pola, which are especially good for gulls, notably slender-billed. Audouin's gulls are plentiful in Gandía's harbour, where shearwaters follow fishing boats.

The Natural Park of El Fondo is a man-made reservoir with some 70 breeding pairs of the globally-threatened white-headed duck, numerous black-necked grebes, a few introduced red-knobbed coots and perhaps marbled ducks. Another interesting species is the rare greater spotted eagle, which uses the reserve as winter ground. This eastern European species is now a regular wintering bird in this part of coastal Spain. There aren't many of them and the chances of seeing it are probably less than 50:50 (we were lucky in 2016); there's no better area to search.

A fourth wetland type, with reedbeds, is Pego Marshes. This is one of the many small wetlands spread along the Mediterranean coast that play a vital role for many migrants as re-fuelling places. From mid-February to June, a ringing group carries out an intensive ringing project to study the effect of climate change on resident and migrant warblers. We will attend a ringing session where we hope to see one of the resident moustached warblers and wintering species such as reed bunting, penduline tit, bluethroat, kingfisher or Cetti's warbler.

Away from the coast there is a variety of varied habitats, including botanical reserves, cork oak and the gorge of the Monnegre River. This is a moon-like

The steppes of East Albacete is a Special Protection Area in neighbouring La Mancha region with traditional farming. Here some of the birds we hope to see are calandra larks, great bustards, corn bunting, rock sparrow, sandgrouse and raptors. Temporary lagoons scattered among the steppes have wildfowl, especially red-crested pochards, and waders including black-winged stilts.

Our base is the rural hotel Font Salada set in orange groves, near the Pego Marshes Natural Park and just one kilometre from the coast.

Birds

Spring comes early to coastal Spain, and we expect to see early migrants such as swallows, martins and passage waders. Scrub has Dartford and Sardinian warblers. Elsewhere we hope to see Bonelli's eagle, red-billed croucher, crested tit, short-toed treecreeper and firecrest. There's a chance of wintering alpine accentor.

Orchids

Abandoned orchards and mini-nature reserves hold a range of orchids, including giant, mirror, sombre bee, woodcock and sawfly. Remarkably, there are two regular hybrids of these in this area: *Ophrys x castroviejoi* is a newly described cross between mirror and sawfly orchids and *Ophrys x pielteri* is a cross between woodcock and sawfly orchids. The local *Ophrys lucentina* is here too. A Spanish version of early purple orchid, *Orchis olbiensis*, is common.

Other wildlife

We hope for warm weather to bring out a few early butterflies such as western dappled blue, Moroccan orange-tip and Lang's short-tailed blue. Several flowers are called *valentina* or *lucentina* which means they are named after Valencia: the sandwort *Silene valentina* is endemic to the area and the scorpion vetch *Coronilla valentina* more widespread. One of the rarest species is the pink *Silene diclinis*.



Moroccan orange-tip

Itinerary

Two days are very local, in and near Pego Marshes. Two days have longer journeys, to El Fondo Natural Park and into La Mancha to Albacete. The other days have more typical travel times.

Conservation project

Our leader 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. SUPPORTING Data loggers placed on Savi's and reed warblers are tracking their migratory movements. Support pays for nets and other ringing equipment.



Price: £1,190 per person in twin or double room for seven nights (Thursday to Thursday)

Single room supplement: £120

En suite facilities

Scheduled easyJet flights London Gatwick to Valencia

Deposit: £300

Maximum number (two leaders): 14

Leaders: Pau Lucio and Chris Durdin



Glossy ibises



Ophrys lucentina



Steppe and lagoon at Albacete

landscape with birds such as blue rock thrush, rock bunting, black redstart, crag martins and maybe early breeders such as red-rumped swallow.

17 – 23 March 2018

Fuerteventura

Special birds on an unusual island

The Canary Islands, with their near perfect climate, are a major holiday destination.

However, for those who know where to look, away from the sun-seekers, the islands also offer plenty of interest to wildlife lovers. In particular, there is a range of birds and plants found nowhere else.

The outstanding island from a birdwatcher's point of view is Fuerteventura. Although the range of birds is quite low, the quality is high. It is the only home of the Canary Island chat, which has one of the most restricted ranges of any European bird and a total population of just a few hundred.

Fuerteventura's wide semi-desert landscapes and barren mountains are home to a number of desert birds. Fuerteventura is probably the best place in the world to see houbara bustard. Our leader is an expert on the houbara, and we have an excellent chance of seeing this rare and elusive species. Other desert birds include the delightful and sometimes very tame cream-coloured courser, black-bellied sandgrouse and trumpeter finch.

We will also visit the two small wetlands on the island where we can expect to see noisy flocks of ruddy shelducks. Waders are likely to include black-winged stilts and Kentish plovers, and there is a chance of seeing the endemic plain swift. With luck, we may chance upon a Barbary falcon, several pairs of which now nest on the island.

In the central mountains there are stunted pine forests where the lovely song of the canary is heard, and African blue tits hunt for caterpillars.

There are oases of greenery where hoopoes are often common, and at this time of year such places attract a range of migrant passerines. The endemic Berthelot's pipits are common, and if migration conditions are right almost anything is possible.

The wild coastline at Cotillo offers the chance to see shorebirds, and at dusk large numbers of Cory's shearwaters close to shore.

This holiday will be of particular interest to birdwatchers, but the unusual flora and butterflies are bound to distract us from time to time.

We stay at the Oasis Casa Vieja Hotel near La Oliva, inland and away from the coastal holiday resorts.

Birds

Those above plus Egyptian vulture, Barbary partridge, pallid swift, Spanish sparrow, spectacled warbler, lesser short-toed lark and possibly laughing dove. Migrants could include bee-eater, red-rumped swallow and woodchat shrike.



Houbara bustard



Flowers

Fuerteventura has a range of desert plants including interesting succulents. Depending on the intensity of winter rains, we will also see a range of Mediterranean and North African annuals. Some are unique to Fuerteventura or are found only in the eastern Canary Islands and adjacent African coast.



These include woody spurges, limoniums and a delicate bugloss. On the Jandía peninsula we may see the very rare cactus-like Jandía spurge or the Medusa's-head bindweed.

Insects

The number of species is quite low but, as with the birds, the quality is high. Greenish black-tip and green-striped white are the commonest butterflies, and we will hope to see tiny African grass blues and the magnificent African tiger and monarch. Dragonflies could include Saharan blue-tailed damselfly, lesser emperor and scarlet darter.

Other wildlife

Barbary ground squirrels are common and sometimes very tame. There are endemic species of lizard and gecko.

Itinerary

Daily excursions will be tailored to suit conditions, but will include visits to Cotillo, Los Molinos Reservoir, the central mountains, fields at La Oliva, Catalina Garcia Lagoon and the Jandía peninsula. We will aim to visit a variety of places each day, so will make good use of the minibus, but there will be some leisurely walking each day too.

Conservation project

Conserving the scarce houbara bustard is a priority for the Spanish Ornithological Society / BirdLife Spain, which runs a nature reserve on Fuerteventura. Elsewhere, especially through signing, SEO tries to minimise disturbance to breeding birds.

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

Single room supplement: £200

En suite facilities

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

Deposit: £300

Maximum number (one leader): 7

Leader: David Collins

Euphorbia canariensis



Barbary ground squirrel



Cream-coloured courser

SUPPORTING



SEO/BirdLife

More information visit www.honeyguide.co.uk 5

13 – 20 April 2018

Discovering Menorca



A relaxed wildlife holiday on this quiet Mediterranean island

Menorca provides the perfect setting to see birds typical of the Mediterranean. A small island, a little over 30 miles long and 13 miles wide, its quiet, unhurried atmosphere complements a relaxing birdwatching holiday.

All parts of the island can be reached easily and quickly so most of the holiday can be spent in the field enjoying an array of birds among masses of flowers. It all has a charm rarely equalled elsewhere in Europe today.

While small, the island holds a great variety of habitats. The rugged coasts are spectacular and off-islands provide nest sites for the scarce Audouin's gull. Any view of the surrounding sea may reveal Cory's or Mediterranean shearwaters. Lagoons and fresh water lakes hold a variety of waders including black-winged stilts, plus egrets, herons and even the occasional flamingo.

The open countryside is full of birds. Thekla and short-toed larks and hoopoes sing from dry stone walls; stone-curlews skulk in rocky fields, woodchat shrikes, ravens and tawny pipits are often seen and quail heard.

There is never a dull moment as the sky seems frequently full of birds of prey. Menorca holds concentrations of booted eagles, Egyptian vultures and red kites.

In spring the island provides a stepping stone for birds migrating across the Mediterranean – so anything can turn up. Resident birds include blue rock thrushes, stonechats, moustached and Sardinian warblers.

Pastures, coastal rocks and sand dunes provide a range of attractive wild flowers such as mirror orchids and small tongue orchids can be abundant.

Other wildlife includes huge Egyptian grasshoppers and, in wetter areas, stripeless tree frogs and terrapins

History

The island's varied history shows well in architecture and archaeology. In the cities, a mix of architectural design reflects the result of dominance by Romans, Moslems and British.

Strange stone monoliths, known locally as Torres, date from around 1000 BC. Of later origin are mounds of rock called Talaiots. Access to these monuments is easy and they are often good places to see wildlife.



Mirror orchid

Itinerary

Excursions should include Fornells harbour and the cape and lighthouse at Cavallaria; the hill of Monte Toro; Punta Prima; Cap Favàritx; Algendar Gorge; Mahón harbour; Son Bou reedbed and dunes; the salt pans at Mongofre Nou; the seasonal wetland at Tirant; plus various short excursions or local walks.

Conservation project

The Grup Balear d'Ornitologia i Defensa de la Naturalesa (GOB – the Balearic Ornithological Group) is an active local organisation working to protect the Balearic Islands from overdevelopment. A current project is 'Agronatural Farms', promoting and encouraging wildlife-friendly farming on the island.



Hermann's tortoise



Audouin's gulls



Menorcan olive wood gates

17 – 24 April 2018

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 archeological 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.



Cretan festoon

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

This includes taverna evening meals plus picnics or a taverna lunch

En suite facilities

EasyJet flights Gatwick or Manchester to Heraklion

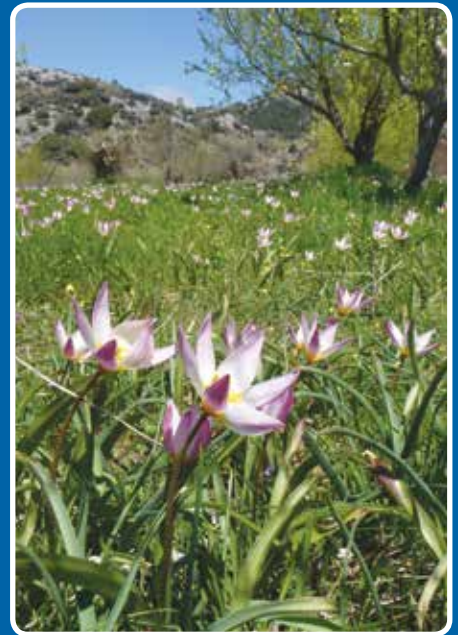
Deposit: £300

Maximum number (two leaders): 14

Leaders: Chris Durdin and Ivan Nethercoat



Little bittern at Ayia Reservoir



Tulipa bakeri on Omalós Plateau



Plakias Bay

More information visit www.honeyguide.co.uk 7

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

Single room supplement (two only): £150.

En suite facilities

Scheduled flights to Bergerac, probably with Ryanair from Stansted or Flybe from Southampton. Flights from other UK airports may also be possible.

Deposit: £300

Maximum number: 12

Leader: Chris Durdin

10 – 17 May 2018

Dordogne

A taste of the good life

The department of the Dordogne in south-west France is justly famous for its pretty villages, cave paintings, elegant towns and landscapes of river valleys and quiet countryside. Less discovered is the wildlife: a charming mix of flowers, birds and butterflies.



View near Castang



Knapweed fritillary on pyramidal orchid



Woodcock orchid

Orchids are the most striking natural asset: up to 25 species can be found. Half of these are around our base at Castang. Birds on the doorstep include cirl bunting, firecrest, melodious warbler, woodlark and both common and black redstarts.

Castang

Castang is a hamlet close to the Dordogne river above the village of Le Coux et Bigaroque, not far from St Cyprien. Cathy and Keith Parker are our hosts; Cathy is from Montcaret, a little farther west along the Dordogne valley, and Keith is from England. The house was once a Perigordian tobacco farm of great character and charm, parts of which are thought to be more than 400 years old. The farmhouse, together with its complex of converted barns, provides comfortable accommodation around a sunny terraced courtyard. Dinner, after a leisurely aperitif, is one of Castang's great features. Five courses of the best of the region's cuisine, from soup to dessert, accompanied by local wines, are prepared and cooked by Cathy.

Castang's large meadow has many hundreds of green-winged orchids along with tongue and pyramidal orchids. Loose-flowered orchids grow where the meadow gets damper down the hill, close to where golden orioles can be heard and, with a little luck, seen. Beyond the orchid field, the area is a mix of meadows, cropped land and woods, cut by the wide river valleys of the Vézère and Dordogne.

Flowers

Lady, man, burnt-tip, fly, woodcock, narrow-leaved helleborine and greater butterfly are among the orchids, and two great surprises this far north are sombre bee orchid and long-lipped serapias. Meadows thick with yellow rattle, banks with meadow clary, tassel hyacinth, milkwort and a range of cranesbills, flaxes and rockroses are just a few of some 250 plant species. Shrubs include dogwood, fly honeysuckle and Montpellier maple.

Birds

Serins, Bonelli's warblers, short-toed treecreepers and hoopoes are all found around Castang or close to home. Black kites and buzzards are the most frequently seen birds of prey; hobbies are also likely.

Other wildlife

Butterflies on the wing in mid-May include scarce and common swallowtails, black-veined and wood whites, Cleopatra, Glanville fritillary, green hairstreak, southern white admiral and small blue. Elegant yellow and black ascalaphids – something between a lacewing and an ant-lion – hunt over meadows. Other invertebrates include violet carpenter bee and hummingbird hawkmoth. After dark, a short walk away, midwife toads are carrying their eggs.



Midwife toad

Itinerary

Two days will be on walks around Castang. Three days will be gentle walks a little farther afield, combined with visits to the village of Limeuil, at the confluence of the Vézère and Dordogne rivers, and a morning on market day in the town of Le Bugue. Our cave walk includes an optional visit to the crystal cathedral cavern of the Gouffre de Proumeyssac.

The Dordogne is justly famous for its prehistory, paintings and etchings especially, notably at Les Eyzies. We will arrange a suitable visit one morning, though exact plans are not certain, as our favourite site of Font De Gaume is restricting access. At Roque St Christophe there is an opportunity to see how troglodytes once lived, and it's an excellent site for meadow and woodland flowers and butterflies, plus peregrines and crag martins.

Conservation project

The holiday supports the 'Refuges LPO' project of La Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux (French Bird Protection League). LPO has set up a network of no-hunting sanctuaries throughout France and is battling French hunters to prevent an extension of the shooting season into the spring. In recent years the focus of 'Refuges LPO' has been more on encouraging management for wildlife on land in private ownership - what in the UK we might call making a back garden nature reserve.

SUPPORTING



Poland

Biebrza Marshes and Białowieża Forest

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

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

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

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

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

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

Birds

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

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



Mammals

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

Other wildlife

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

Plants

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

Itinerary

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

Conservation Project

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

SUPPORTING



Price: £1,550 per person in twin room for eight nights (Saturday to Sunday)

Single room supplement: £130

En suite facilities

Scheduled Wizz Air flights
London Luton – Warsaw

Deposit: £300

Maximum number: 14

Main leader: Artur Wiatr



White-winged black tern



Lady's slipper orchids



Białowieża forest

15 – 22 May 2018

Istria

A week in peninsula Istria (Croatia)

At the crossroads of the Balkans, Central Europe and the Mediterranean, Istria has a fascinating history, geology, flora and fauna. In a relatively small area (about 4000 km²) one passes from a rocky coastline and a strip of Mediterranean scrub and woodland through areas of low-intensity agriculture rich in wild flowers and farmland birds.

Away from the coast, the land rises to 1000m or more above sea level with broad submontane grasslands, limestone gorges and splendid beechwoods. Beyond the Limski Kanal, a fjord-like inlet that separates northern and southern Istria, climatic conditions are similar to those found farther south in Greece and southern Italy.

The limestone mountains of the interior are still wild and sparsely populated by Albanian and Romanian communities brought in as colonists by the Austrians and Venetians during the Middle Ages, following depopulation caused by outbreaks of the plague. As elsewhere in the flower-rich Karst, limestone areas are peppered with remarkable dolinas (swallow-holes) where the roofs of caves have collapsed, leaving hollows with their own micro-climate with a curious mixture of alpine, western European, Balkan and Mediterranean flowers.

Birds

Mediterranean birds are well represented with subalpine and Sardinian warblers, bee-eaters, hoopoes and alpine swifts. Scops owls are abundant. Black-headed bunting is near the north-western edge of its distribution, and fieldfare at its southern limit. Limestone cliffs and gorges are breeding grounds for blue rock thrush, eagle owl and several pairs of golden eagles. The forests have honey buzzards and goshawks and interesting woodpeckers: black, lesser spotted and grey-headed are at our base. Griffon vultures from nearby colonies on the island of Cres often put in an appearance. Wetlands are rather scarce and isolated, but there are a few such as Il Palù south of Rovigno, along the river Mirna close to the hotel and the large salinas at Sečovlje on the border between Slovenia and Croatia.

Flowers

Istria's flora is a fascinating mix of Mediterranean, Balkan, subalpine and northern communities. Mediterranean maquis dominates the coast including myrtle, various species of cistus, wild sage, evergreen oak and tree heath along with terebinth and mastic trees, though the composition of the community varies greatly with geology.

Moving away from the coast, and up in terms of altitude, average annual temperatures drop rapidly, allowing the appearance of northern, subalpine and even a few true alpine species.

The grasslands of upper Istria are notable for their floral displays in April and May. Fields and verges are awash with orchids, especially green-winged in purple swathes set among cow-wheat, rattle and occasional round-headed orchids.



Other wildlife

Butterflies abound throughout Istria. In May, large tortoiseshell, black-veined white and swallowtails are present, along with a range of blues and fritillaries. Mediterranean Istria has a wide range of other wildlife including Hermann's tortoise and the ophisaurus, Europe's largest lizard, not unlike a giant slow-worm. Inland, the cooler and heavily forested Upper Istria has few human inhabitants and is home to wolves, lynx and brown bear.

Istarske Toplice

All of this is less than ninety minutes from, for Honeyguide, our rather untypical base at the modern Hotel Mirna at the spa of Istarske Toplice. Perfectly located in central-northern Istria, in Croatia, it is close to the Slovenian border and about 40 minutes from Italy. Its extensive grounds are alongside the river Mirna oakwoods, fought over by the Venetians and Austrians for their timber and notable for their white truffle production. The rare Tommasini's sandwort grows here, above the holiday complex, one of just six known sites. The area is also rich in bird life and perfect for early morning walks.

The large hotel pool, fitness room, sauna and massage facilities will be available to participants who fancy a swim before dinner or a day spent in the hotel just enjoying the facilities.



Ascalaphus macaronicus

Itinerary

Two or three days will be spent on local walks in the varied landscape around the hotel, mixed with a visit to the nearby coastal salinas at Sečovlje. We will also visit the extreme southern tip of Istria, Punta Prematura and Kamenjak, with its Mediterranean flora and fauna, the seas around which support the Adriatic's only known (and tiny) colony of the critically-endangered monk seal. Trips will include visits to Mt Taiano and Mt Učka for alpine flowers and birds including rock partridge and ortolan bunting.

Conservation project

BirdLife Slovenia (DOPPS) – the northern part of Istria is in Slovenia – is working hard to protect natural areas, especially wetlands. It also runs projects for endangered species, in particular roller and the globally threatened corncrake and lesser kestrel.

SUPPORTING



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

Single room supplement: £120

En suite facilities

Scheduled Ryanair flights Stansted to Trieste or possibly Pula

Deposit: £300

Maximum number: 14

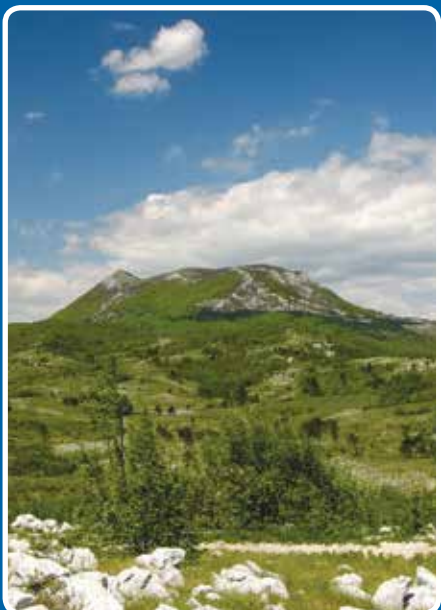
Main leader: Paul Tout



Blue rock thrush



Green-winged orchids



Mt Učka

20 – 27 May 2018

Latvia

Migration on the Baltic coast

Tucked away on the Baltic coast is, for British naturalists, the largely undiscovered country of Latvia. It offers an attractive mixture: partly Scandinavian in feel, partly eastern and partly continental, with the wildlife reflecting this mix.

Latvia, the middle of the three Baltic countries, is bigger than a glance at the map might suggest. This two-centre holiday concentrates on an area west of the capital city of Riga. It takes in two national parks, leading to Latvia's north-west tip at Kolka Cape.

Our visit in May is to coincide both with the arrival of summer visitors and for migration along the coast, especially of birds of prey and passerines. It is also well-timed for woodland flowers.

Kemer National Park

Though the majority of the Kemer National Park is forest, wetlands are probably the main draw for naturalists. On the extensive Dunduri meadows, grazed by Konik ponies and Heck cattle, there are likely to be whooper swans, cranes and white storks; black storks are present, but scarcer. Birds of prey should include lesser spotted eagles, and there is every chance of a hunting white-tailed eagle. Damp scrub can have river warbler, marsh warbler and scarlet rosefinch.

An area of flooded woodland is particularly attractive to woodpeckers, including white-backed, lesser spotted and three-toed.

From the nature trail and birdwatching tower at Lake Kanieris, reedbeds stretch as far as the eye can see, providing a home for Savi's and great reed warblers. There's a huge cormorant colony in distant trees. Red-necked and black-necked grebes may be on open water areas, often with black and white-winged black terns. There are marsh harriers, as you'd expect, probably with an osprey or white-tailed eagle.

Kolka Cape

At Latvia's north-western tip, the Slitere National Park surrounds the village and cape of Kolka. Much of the National Park has a northern feel with forest of pine, spruce and birch, interspersed with bogs that hold cranes and breeding green sandpipers. One woodland spot has greenish warblers, one of Europe's trickiest leaf warblers to locate. There are capercaillie and black grouse, too, but you need luck to see these.

Much of Kolka Cape is more open, with meadows and scattered houses. Nearby, Scots pine trees, felled by a gale, still litter the beach, and have been left as they protect the coast. It's this area, jutting out where the Baltic meets the Gulf of Riga, that is most known for visible migration. Predicting this is risky, but Honeyguide's visits have coincided with steady movements of honey buzzards, many sparrowhawks, red-backed shrikes, hawfinches, short-eared owls, scores of yellow wagtails, golden orioles and more. Out at sea, eiders and scoters gather, perhaps with a summer plumage black-throated diver.



Honey buzzard



Birds

Those noted above plus great white egret, black woodpecker, wryneck, black redstart, whinchat, redwing, icterine warbler, wood warbler, pied flycatcher, siskin, plus various migrant warblers, waders and wildfowl.



Riga

Flowers

Lady's smock and marsh marigold are common in damp areas, and other wetland flowers include bogbean, in fen pools, and birdseye primrose. Bird cherry is abundant. Woodland has lily-of-the-valley, hepatica, wood sorrel and wood anemone, plus the unusual chickweed wintergreen, a member of the primrose family found mainly in northern pine forests.

Itinerary

Three nights in the Kemer National Park area, and four nights at Kolka. As well as wildlife watching, we plan a visit to the Ventspils International Radio Astronomy Centre and to allow time to see the beautiful city of Riga on the final day, if flight times make it practical.

Conservation project

The Latvian Owl Research Society is a new NGO, established in 2013. Its research, education and protection work includes creating nest boxes and tracking pygmy owls in Kemer National Park.

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

Single room supplement: £200

En suite facilities

Flights: to be decided, depending on schedules. Previous groups have flown on scheduled flights to Riga with Wizz Air from London Luton or Ryanair from London Stansted. Flights from some regional airports may be possible.

Deposit: £300

Maximum number: 14

Leaders: Gaidis Grandāns and David Collins



Red-backed shrike



Wild pansy *Viola tricolor*



Kolka roadside bog

More information visit www.honeyguide.co.uk 11

22 – 29 May 2018

The Camargue



Flamingos and more in Mediterranean France

The wild and beautiful marshes of the Camargue cover a huge area of the Rhône delta in the south of France. At its heart lies the Étang de Vaccarès, a vast lagoon surrounded by marshes and dunes. Here we find not only a profusion of wildlife but also herds of 'wild' bulls and long-maned white horses, so characteristic of the area and an intrinsic part of the local culture.

Upstream of our hotel, the river Gardon plunges between wooded hillsides under the famous Roman aqueduct, the Pont du Gard. Above and under its arches alpine swifts and crag martins hunt for insects. Searching among the fine stonework, with tiny plants clinging to the crevices, we might find rock sparrows, and paths above the river not only give excellent views of the aqueduct itself but also a range of plants typical of the maquis and garrigue and the riverine forest is the home of golden orioles.

To the west of the Camargue proper lies the Petite Camargue. Although on a less grand scale, it too has its specialities. Species-rich *Salicornia* marshes – the salt-steppes – support a small breeding population of spectacled warblers and the islands in some of the larger étangs hold gull-billed terns and slender-billed gulls.

An enormous heronry is established in the heart of the reserve at Scamandre providing an extraordinary and memorable close encounter with these iconic birds. Close to les Saintes Maries de la Mer, well known for its gypsy association, tracks along the beach or beside the shore of the étangs afford views over the sea and the lagoons, just the place for terns and gulls, as well as close-up views of black-winged stilts and flamingos and rewarding foraging for botanists.

We stay at the Hôtel des Granges, a family-run hotel on the edge of Arles.

Birds

As well as those already mentioned, we should see a selection of the following: white stork, glossy ibis, red-crested pochard, Kentish plover, Mediterranean gull, whiskered tern, short-toed lark, great reed and Cetti's warblers, firecrest and hoopoe.

Itinerary

We shall spend three days in and around the wetlands and marshes of the Camargue and Petite Camargue, a day in each of la Crau, les Baux and the Alpilles, and half a day in the area around the Pont du Gard. There will be an opportunity to explore one of the famous and fascinating local towns: Beaucaire, Tarascon or Arles, with museums and information centres to visit and some shopping time in les Baux and St Martin du Crau.

Conservation project

Conservation contributions from this holiday support work to protect the lesser kestrel. La Crau, where we visit, is its French stronghold in France. La Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux (LPO, the French Bird Protection League) has installed nestboxes on the roof of a sheepfold. By encouraging birds to nest here, LPO is reducing the level of predation observed in ground-nesting lesser kestrels.



Greater flamingos



Black-winged stilt



Scarlet darter

Despite the pressure from tourism, the marshes are still of international importance for their wildlife. There are sights at every turn: great flocks of flamingos, a host of heron and egret species, hawking bee-eaters, ever-present marsh harriers, all set against a mosaic of botanically rich and intriguing wetland habitats.

Where marshland gives way to flooded rice fields, breeding colonies of black-winged stilts occur and collared pratincoles hawk after insects. Many black kites and the occasional short-toed eagle hunt the drier edges, breeding areas for tawny pipits and crested larks, rich areas for flowers, butterflies and dragonflies.

East of the Camargue lies the stony 'desert' of la Crau, originally a former flood-plain of the Durance river. The ancient tradition of seasonal grazing and transhumance has produced a unique stony herb-rich grassland, breeding habitat for little bustards and pin-tailed sandgrouse while the traditional farm buildings are homes for lesser kestrel. The scents of herbs and the calls of stone-curlews make for a memorable experience.

Farmland to the north – with wild flowers, nightingales, fan-tailed warblers, rollers – gives way to the limestone chain of hills, les Alpilles. Cirl buntings and blue rock thrushes may be found on the rocky slopes around the fortified hilltop town of les Baux. Alpine swifts whirl overhead and walking through the fragrant scrub provides wonderful views over the Rhône delta and a chance of soaring Egyptian vultures and Bonelli's eagles. The limestone hills provide a treasure-house of plants, butterflies can be bewilderingly abundant and the little town, sensitively restored and interpreted for the tourist, is a rich source of local crafts and tasteful souvenirs.

20 – 27 June 2018

Bulgaria's Western Rhodopes

Wallcreepers, lilies and more

Few countries can rival Bulgaria's scenic splendour and diverse nature. The country's most valuable natural features are protected in three national parks, twelve nature parks and numerous wildlife and nature refuges.

The higher plants number about 3,500 species, including more than 400 Bulgarian and Balkan endemics and nearly 70 species of orchids. Bulgaria boasts the richest dragonfly and butterfly fauna in Europe.

This holiday concentrates on the mountains, meadows and gorges of the Western Rhodopes. The Rhodope Mountains are in southern Bulgaria, close to the border with Greece.

The mountains' pine-clad slopes are occasionally cut by rivers winding through deep gorges, one of which is the magnificent Trigrad Gorge. Its limestone cliffs are known for their wallcreepers. It's probably one of the easiest places in Europe to see this sometimes elusive bird, constantly flicking its crimson-and-black wings while investigating rocky nooks for food.

In Trigrad Gorge we can enjoy birds like peregrine, alpine swift, crag martin, red-rumped swallow and dipper. Elsewhere in the forests, crags and mountain meadows of the Western Rhodopes we hope to find black woodpecker, alpine and pallid swifts, nutcracker, sombre tit, red-backed shrike and rock bunting.

The cultural heritage and traditions of Bulgaria include magnificent architecture from the 18th and 19th centuries in many towns and villages. Ancient icons, breath-taking murals and superb woodcarvings preserved in monasteries and churches, form just a part of the religious, historic and cultural wealth.

Other traditions include the tasty Bulgarian cuisine, salads especially, good local wines and, in our experience, a warm welcome in the mountain village of Yagodina. Here we are based at the family-run Hotel Yagodina, well located for walks around the village.

Flowers

Low intensity agriculture means that the Western Rhodopes have retained vast swathes of beautiful grasslands, with a dazzling array of wild flowers, a mixture of familiar species and local specialities.

In the gorges especially, there are several endemic species, one of the best known being *Haberlea rhodopensis*, which is related to African violets. Others endemics include *Valeriana montana*, Rhodope sandwort *Arenaria rhodoaea*, a bellflower *Campanula orphanidea* and the saxifrage *Saxifraga sibirnyi*.

There are four geum species, two foxgloves, three wintergreens, an unusual bugle *Ajuga lazmanii*, St Bernard's lily and many orchids – just a few names from so many in a rich and varied area for a botanist.



Perhaps the star species is the Rhodope lily, found only here and in nearby Greece. It's in flower-rich high mountain meadows, along with corncrakes and swarms of marsh fritillaries and other butterflies.

Butterflies

The bewildering variety – 72 species on a previous visit – includes many local or unusual species: Balkan zephyr blue, Balkan copper, powdered brimstone and poplar admiral. These mingle with butterflies found more widely in mainland Europe, such as spotted, Queen-of-Spain and Glanville fritillaries, Apollo, chestnut heath, Idas blue and more.



Pennant-winged ant-lion *Nemoptera sinuata*



Trigrad Gorge

Other wildlife

Red squirrel, pine marten and wild cat are found in the mountains, plus souslik in the lowlands. Agile frog and fire salamander occur. Among a big range of dragonflies, moths and other invertebrates, one of the most spectacular is the pennant-winged ant-lion.

Conservation project

The Rhodope lily *Lilium rhodopaeum* is a very scarce flower of the Western Rhodopes. It's found on just a handful of sites in Bulgaria and just over the border in Greece, about half of which have no official protection. Our local leader, Vlado, is the Bulgarian authority on this spectacular endemic, and with our help leads on its monitoring and conservation.



Wallcreeper



Lilium rhodopaeum

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

Single room supplement: £100

En suite facilities

Scheduled Ryanair flights, London Stansted to Plovdiv

Deposit: £300

Maximum number: 14

Leaders: Vladimir Trifonov and Chris Gibson

9 – 16 October 2018

Madeira

Pearl of the Atlantic

Madeira's scenic contrast between sea and mountains, tropical gardens and equable year-round temperatures – around 17°C in winter – make it a tempting holiday destination, especially in the British winter. For naturalists, the isolation of this Portuguese archipelago, some 500 kilometres west of the African coast, brings special wildlife including many species found only here.

The scenery is striking, with cliffs and mountains rising to more than 1800 metres squeezed into an island of only 741 km². Old irrigation channels, known as levadas, with their side paths are excellent – and fairly flat – ways to get to know Madeira and its cultural and natural heritage, like the laurel forest. The green forest contrasts with the blue ocean – where there is a chance to observe some cetaceans.

The rural hotel where we stay, Hotel Rural A Quinta, is near Santo da Serra in the northeast of the island. It's close to the airport but away from the main tourist areas around Funchal.

Flora

The main focus of this trip for flora will be the laurel forest, a UNESCO World Heritage site, with its endemic trees, shrubs, ferns, mosses and lichens. This forest is so named due to the dominance of trees from the laurel family, such as bay laurel, fetid laurel, Madeira mahogany and the Canary laurel. A few native flowers should be flowering in October, including Madeira marigold, though many will just be in leaf. Away from the laurel forest, the range of flowers from around the world is interesting, such as bird-of-paradise, agapanthus and king protea – these all from South Africa – among many exotic trees and shrubs.

Birds

Two birds occur only on Madeira, trocáz pigeon and Madeira firecrest, and we aim to find these.



Local subspecies around at the time we are in Madeira include Berthelot's pipit *Anthus bertelotti madeirensis*, Madeira chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs madeirensis*, grey wagtail *Motacilla cinerea schmitzi* and rock sparrow *Petronia petronia madeirensis*. Other birds include plain swift, canary, spectacled warbler, waxbills and migrants such as waders. Bird density is low in Madeira and local knowledge to find these specialities is essential.



Cory's shearwater

Other wildlife

A sea trip offers the chance to see Cory's shearwaters and Fea's petrels close to Madeira Wind Birds' boat. There is also a chance of cetaceans, for which short-finned pilot whales are the most likely. The endemic Madeira wall lizard is abundant.

Butterflies are also interesting and easy to see with endemic species Madeira grayling *Hipparchia madeirensis* and Madeiran speckled wood *Pararge xiphia*, plus sub-species like Madeira small copper *Lycaena phlaeas phlaeoides*. Indian red admiral, long-tailed blue and the beautiful monarch butterfly also breed on the island.

Itinerary

Our days out visit a range of landscapes and protected areas throughout Madeira. Some days combine gentle walking with bird and flora watching; others will be mainly by minibus stopping at hot spots. A sea trip on the eastern side of the island shows us Madeira from the sea and its maritime species. There will also be a free day with an opportunity to visit the celebrated tropical gardens in Funchal.

Conservation Project

Europe's rarest breeding seabird and once thought to be extinct, the Zino's Petrel or freira is endemic to Madeira. The Freira Conservation Project (FCP), founded in 1986, is a group of people and institutions working on the conservation of Zino's petrels, especially by controlling its main predator, the rat. The FCP has overseen a steady increase in numbers nesting in the central massif of Madeira. We will not see them as they can only be seen between April and August.

Frank Zino, the son of Alec Zino who rediscovered the bird and named it as a separate species, is the FCP's president and will meet us for a brief talk about Zino's petrels.

SUPPORTING



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

Single room supplement: £160

En suite facilities.

Scheduled easyJet flights London Gatwick to Funchal. Other options are likely to be possible.

Deposit: £300

Maximum number: 12, minimum 4

Leaders: Catarina Fagundes and Hugo Romano



Madeira firecrest



Monarch on pride-of-Madeira



São Jorge lighthouse and village, near Santana, northeast Madeira

11 – 26 November 2018

Namibia

Including Etosha National Park and the Skeleton Coast

Namibia is a land of contrasts. It's dominated by the deserts of the Namib and Kalahari, with dramatic landscapes of brick-red dunes and craggy hills. Yet Namibia also boasts some of Africa's richest densities of wildlife. There are huge coastal seal colonies and lagoons rich in waders, flamingos and pelicans, and the Etosha National Park has concentrations of mammals and birds considered by many to be the continent's finest.

Windhoek and its Botanical Gardens offer a gentle introduction to the former German colony of South-west Africa – which has been independent from South Africa since 1990. Special birds here include Monteiro's hornbill, rockrunner and swallow-tailed bee-eater.

Waterberg

The Waterberg is a spectacular sandstone massif in the central region of the country. This is the only breeding site of the Cape vulture in Namibia, with a vulture feeding scheme. The Waterberg Plateau Park has the country's breeding programme for Namibia's endangered large mammals. There are sizeable numbers of black and white rhino within the park, as well as roan and sable antelope and buffalo.

Walks here include fig forests and reedbeds and are excellent for birds such as Ruppell's parrot and Bradfield's hornbill. On the sandstone cliffs a variety of rock-loving species include familiar chat, Verreaux's eagle, African hawk-eagle and short-toed rock-thrush. The bush below the cliffs is good for hornbills, woodpeckers, francolins, Swainson's spurfowl, pririt batis, golden-breasted bunting and much more.

Etosha National Park

Etosha National Park is one of Africa's greatest wildlife parks and it holds some 380 bird species. Centered on the vast expanse of the Etosha Pan, the park is a sanctuary to the largest population of the western sub-species of the black rhino. White rhino, elephants, black-faced impala, lions and a profusion of other mammals can be seen.

The camp itself holds sociable weaver colonies and the associated pygmy falcon. Birds more typical of drier habitats are the southern pied babbler and crimson-breasted shrike. Waterholes attract many seedeaters, including violet-eared waxbill and cut-throat finch. Impressive numbers of double-banded sandgrouse come to drink shortly after dusk. At night, rufous-cheeked nightjars hunt in the lights.

Games drives at sunrise help to get the best from the area. Birds that we will be searching for include secretarybird, kori and Ludwig's bustards, yellow-throated sandgrouse and Bennett's woodpecker. Several Kalahari-associated species occur this far west including the barred wren-warbler, Marico flycatcher and shaft-tailed whydah. Caspian plover, blue crane and crimson-breasted shrike are other sought-after birds.

But it's far from hard work: camps have swimming pools, restaurants, gift shops and large flood-lit waterholes that attract a steady procession of wildlife during the night.



Skeleton Coast

The famous Skeleton Coast – so named because of the many shipwrecks – holds the Cape fur seal colony at Cape Cross, the largest in the southern hemisphere and home to about 200,000 seals in peak season. Walvis Bay lagoon is regarded as one of the most important wetlands along the



Dunes at Sossusvlei

west coast of southern Africa, both for the large numbers of resident species and for the vast numbers of both intra-African and Palearctic migrants. The area also has strange seaside settlements and lichen fields on the gravel plains of Vlokosbaken.

Sossusvlei / Namib-Naukluft National Park

At Sossusvlei, where the dunes can reach 220 metres, large camel thorn trees, dead for want of water, still stand 900 years later. The sweeping dunes, along with gravel plains and river valleys, give opportunities for photographers. It is also a fascinating insight into a world of reptiles, birds and insects living among the sand dunes – all uniquely adapted to desert survival.

We venture deeper into the desert of the massive Namib-Naukluft National Park via the Swakop River valley and the Moon Landscape, formed over 460 million years. 1,500 year-old welwitschias, lithops, hoodias and mist-gathering lichens are unforgettably strange.

Geologically, this area is of great significance: from countless small-scale mine works of hand-hewn tourmaline and rose quartz to the largest open-cast uranium mine in the world.

This holiday includes more travelling and holiday bases (eight) than a typical Honeyguide holiday, though the journeys have stops with much wildlife and landscape to absorb.

Conservation project

The second South African Bird Atlas Project (SABAP2) is one of the most intensive monitoring programmes ever undertaken across southern Africa (including Namibia). 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.



Price: £4,400 per person in twin room for 13 nights, plus travelling overnight twice (Sunday to Monday).

Single room supplement: £400

En suite facilities

Flights: Scheduled flights, London Heathrow to Windhoek via Johannesburg, either with SAA or BA/SAA.

Deposit: £500

Minimum of 3, maximum (two leaders): 14
Main leader: Geoff Crane



Giraffes



Waterhole at Etosha NP

More information visit www.honeyguide.co.uk 15

Price: £2,600 per person in twin/double room for ten nights (Monday to Thursday)

Single room supplement: £100

En suite facilities

Scheduled Thomas Cook Airlines flights from London Gatwick to Banjul.

Deposit: £500

Maximum number (two leaders): 12

Leaders: Simon Tonkin and Niki Williamson

3 – 13 December 2018

The Gambia

Birding West Africa with a smile

This tiny, friendly West African gem has long been a favourite with birders, and with good reason. As the gleaming Gambia River bends gently inland to form its welcoming 'grin', it provides access to teeming habitats ranging from coastal creeks to mangrove swamps to freshwater lakes, with species-rich Sahelian scrubland in between.

Occupying about the area of Norfolk and Suffolk combined, this small, accessible country embraces the shores of the languid Gambia River, which flows through its very heart before emptying into the Atlantic Ocean. Extensive protected areas interspersed with low-key traditional agriculture make for a welcoming wildlife haven, rich in eye-poppingly colourful flora and fauna.

Appealing, hospitable and easy to visit, this simply amazing birding destination provides an ideal introduction to sub-Saharan Africa, with raptors galore and a myriad of colourful and exciting target species. Bursting with life and culture, it is well-deserving of its nickname of 'Africa's Smiling Coast', not just for its geographical appearance, but also because of the genuinely warm welcome waiting for you here.

The Coast (4 nights)

Tanji Bird Reserve is made up of mangroves, dry woodland, vegetated dunes and coastal lagoons. With this range of habitats it's no wonder that over 300 bird species have been recorded here. Exploring from our eco-lodge accommodation within the park, we'll hope to see black-headed heron, white-fronted plover, Caspian and royal tern, and grey-headed and slender-billed gulls.

The coastal town of Tanji offers culture and wildlife spectacles combined, with superb up-close views of sea- and shore-birds fighting over fish discards at the lively local fish market, where fisherman barter loudly over the catch of the day from their colourfully-painted wooden fishing boats.

Tiny **Abuko Nature Reserve** was The Gambia's first protected area and is a veritable treasure chest of natural riches. Among the oil palms and *Anthocleista*, hardwoods such as mahogany and African teak remain unharmed.

Among them live vervet, red colobus and patas monkeys, not to mention a stunning array of birds such as green and violet turaco, African paradise flycatchers, palm nut vultures and giant kingfishers. In the pools lurk Nile and dwarf crocodiles.

Tendaba Safari Camp (4 nights)

The dense red and black mangrove swamps and mollusc-rich muddy banks of the **Bao Bolong River** are protected under the Ramsar convention from the northern border of The Gambia right to its scenic estuarine culmination where it joins the Gambia River.

From our base at Tendaba Safari camp on the opposite shore, we will explore the reserve's mysterious steamy creeks by boat, getting us up close to avian A-listers such as African finfoot, African blue flycatcher, malachite, pied and

black-breasted kingfisher, goliath heron, African darter and spur-winged lapwing as well as experiencing the prehistoric sounds (and smells!) of egret and cormorant colonies.

Hides around the watering holes of **Kiang West National Park** will bring us up close to laughing doves, speckled wood doves and maybe even wintering European turtle doves. They can also bring views of some of the park's mammalian residents such as bushbucks, warhogs, and with extreme luck some of the park's reclusive wildcats such as serval or caracal.



Black-billed wood dove

Janjanbureh and around (2 nights)

Further inland, amongst Sahelian scrub and savannah grasslands, we'll meet a whole host of other bird species. Flowering and fruiting trees, such as *Pterocarpus erinaceus*, red acacia and the iconic baobab, provide a real focal point for wildlife. Here we'll look for bearded barbet, exclamatory paradise whyda, white-fronted black-chat, white-throated, little, blue-cheeked, red-throated and northern carmine bee-eater. We'll also search for the enigmatic Abyssinian ground hornbill, one of the most long-lived of all birds. At dusk we may be lucky enough to see Senegal thick-knees and long-tailed and standard-winged nightjars.

For lovers of raptors, simply looking up will bring a constant stream of delights. The diversity of raptor species in The Gambia is truly phenomenal, with over sixty birds of prey including spectacular creatures like bateleur, dark chanting goshawk, shikra, African harrier hawk, Verreaux's eagle owl and Pel's fishing owl to name just a few.



Little bee-eater

Conservation project

West African Bird Study Association (WABSA) was formed by Gambian youths to support and lobby for bird study and environmental protection, which play a vital role in sustainable development of the country. Awareness work includes bird study clubs in schools and a recent project is the restoration of a coastal mangrove forest.



Abyssian roller



Bearded barbet



Red colobus monkey



Honeyguide

Wildlife Holidays proudly supporting Butterfly Conservation



Butterfly Conservation

Saving butterflies, moths and our environment

Butterflies and moths are struggling because their habitat is being destroyed. Five butterfly species and more than 60 different moths have already become extinct in the UK. Butterfly Conservation saves butterflies and moths, by improving landscapes and creating a better environment for us all.

Help Save Butterflies

Butterfly Conservation is offering half-price membership to readers of the Honeyguide brochure. Join by Direct Debit at www.butterfly-conservation.org and use the promotional code HONEY to enjoy your first year's membership from just £1.50 a month. You'll receive a welcome pack full of fascinating information about butterflies and moths; including when and where to spot different species, colourful postcards, a copy of Butterfly magazine, a directory of nature reserves and a guide to gardening for butterflies and moths.

Sign up to *All Aflutter* – Butterfly Conservation's free monthly email newsletter – to discover how to help butterflies in your garden, learn to identify butterflies, moths and the best places to look for them and find out how Butterfly Conservation saves endangered species.



(above) Small Tortoiseshell (below left to right) Brimstone, Silver-studded Blue, Narrow-bordered Bee Hawk-moths, Glanville Fritillary



Butterfly Conservation, Manor Yard, East Lulworth, Wareham, Dorset BH20 5QP Tel: 01929 400209
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www.butterfly-conservation.org

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.

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 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 Africa) before departure.

Holiday insurance company and policy number (details can be sent later, if you prefer): _____

Passport number(s), issue dates and expiry dates: _____

Title	Forenames*	Surnames	Date of birth
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

*As written on your passport. Please note or underline what you like to be known as, if different from the first name

Address: _____

Postcode _____

Telephone _____ Mobile _____ E-mail _____

Next of kin/home contact point in case of emergency (name & tel. no.) _____

Any special requirements (eg dietary). There is a medical report form on www.honeyguide.co.uk.

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.

.....
.....
.....

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 Africa) deposit is payable by cheque or bank transfer with the booking, with the remainder due eight weeks before departure (12 weeks for Africa). Payments by credit, debit or charge cards cannot be taken.

Cancellation by you: if you have to cancel, please telephone as soon as possible and confirm in writing. The cancellation will take effect from when it is received in writing. The scale of cancellation charges below is calculated by the time period before departure.

More than eight weeks	deposit only
5-8 weeks	30% of total price
2-5 weeks	60% of total price
1-14 days; on or after departure date	100% of total price

Travel insurance should cover you (less any excess) for cancellation charges if circumstances are beyond your control, such as ill health, and more than simply a change of mind.

Cancellation by us: in the unlikely event of this happening your money will be refunded in full. A decision to cancel would normally be made at the time of reminders for the remainder of payment, i.e. eight weeks before departure.

Single rooms and supplements: we don't like single room supplements but sometimes they can't be avoided, and we pass on the extra that the single room costs us. If you are willing to share but we don't find someone to share with you, you pay only half of any single supplement. Because we have often chosen small, community-based accommodation, single rooms may not always be available. It often helps to talk it through with us at an early stage.

Information: including detailed itinerary, information on books, maps, shopping, weather etc will be supplied as part of the package for enquirers or will be sent after booking. Previous holiday reports are available for most holidays.



Honeyguide enamel badges
free from the Honeyguide office.

Flights: flights noted in the holiday details were the likeliest when the brochure went to print. However many summer schedules were not then out. Which airlines fly to where, and on what days, are increasingly prone to change; this may affect the flights and occasionally the dates for some holidays. Flights from other UK airports are sometimes possible: please contact the Honeyguide office. Boarding passes or booking references will be sent 1-2 weeks before departure.

We use scheduled services and cannot be held responsible for any departure delays. We are not in a position to state the aircraft type to be used.

Changes to the programme: should circumstances beyond our control make significant changes to the programme necessary we will consult you to see if these are acceptable to you.

Holiday leaders: we do our best to keep the leader named for the holiday, but we reserve the right to replace him or her in the event of illness or some other reason. When two leaders are listed, one may not accompany the holiday if there are not enough participants.

Group size: very occasionally if there is one place available on a holiday and a couple wishes to book we may go over the group size stated. The minimum is usually four.

Overnight accommodation and parking near the airport: we often cannot avoid flights that mean an overnight stay for many participants. We may be able to advise on a hotel and/or parking. If staying overnight, please consider if you wish to have an extra day on your travel insurance.

Extending your holiday: for some holidays it is possible to arrive early or stay on. Please contact the Honeyguide office for details.

Passport: a valid full passport is essential. There is additional advice on passports for Africa in our Holiday Information for these destinations.

Brochure: a spare brochure (more if you wish) will be sent with every booking.

Our price commitment: the prices of our holidays are fixed – there are no surcharges.

What the price includes: flights, airport taxes, carbon offsets, all travel and excursions, services of your holiday leader(s) and your conservation contribution are included in the holiday price. Also included are accommodation and meals – breakfast, packed lunch and evening meal, normally inclusive of wine.

What the price excludes: insurance and personal spending.

Smoking: most Honeyguiders are non-smokers. Anyone who smokes is expected to ensure this does not affect others in the group, including in the field. There is no smoking in transport, in our accommodation and at meals.

Tips and gratuities: all services in the itinerary are covered. You may wish to leave a 'thank-you' for room or restaurant staff at the end of your stay. We may organise a collection if service has been particularly good.

ATOL terms and conditions: these T&Cs, with respect to Honeyguide's Air Travel Operator's Licence, are those that apply to all ATOL holders, as follows:

"Your Financial Protection: when you buy an ATOL protected flight or flight inclusive holiday from us you will receive an ATOL Certificate. This lists what is financially protected, where you can get information on what this means for you and who to contact if things go wrong."

"We, or the suppliers identified on your ATOL Certificate, will provide you with the services listed on the ATOL Certificate (or a suitable alternative). In some cases, where neither we nor the supplier are able to do so for reasons of insolvency, an alternative ATOL holder may provide you with the services you have bought or a suitable alternative (at no extra cost to you). You agree to accept that in those circumstances the alternative ATOL holder will perform those obligations and you agree to pay any money outstanding to be paid by you under your contract to that alternative ATOL holder. However, you also agree that in some cases it will not be possible to appoint an alternative ATOL holder, in which case you will be entitled to make a claim under the ATOL scheme (or your credit card issuer where applicable)."

"If we, or the suppliers identified on your ATOL certificate, are unable to provide the services listed (or a suitable alternative, through an alternative ATOL holder or otherwise) for reasons of insolvency, the Trustees of the Air Travel Trust may make a payment to (or confer a benefit on) you under the ATOL scheme. You agree that in return for such a payment or benefit you assign absolutely to those Trustees any claims which you have or may have arising out of or relating to the non-provision of the services, including any claim against us, the travel agent (or your credit card issuer where applicable). You also agree that any such claims may be re-assigned to another body, if that other body has paid sums you have claimed under the ATOL scheme."

Travel Insurance

Honeyguide Wildlife Holidays acts as an Introducer Appointed Representative for the purposes of your travel insurance, appointed by Global Travel Insurance Services Ltd who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Services Authority and whose status can be checked on the FSA Register by visiting www.fsa.gov.uk/register or by contacting the FSA on 0845 606 1234.

Contact details:
Global Travel Insurance Services Ltd,
The Turret, 25 Farncombe Road
Worthing, West Sussex
BN11 2AY
Telephone: 01903 235042
Fax: 01903 229389
Email: enquiries@globaltravelinsurance.co.uk
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: Caspian terns by Simon Tonkin
Back cover: wood sandpiper by Ivan Nethercoat

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