



In this 8-day itinerary, we will visit two of the best and well-known wildlife destinations in Europe: Extremadura and Coto de Doñana.

A birding visit to Extremadura in late winter offers a great opportunity to explore this wonderful region. Many of the resident birds are much easier to see in winter than in any other season. For instance, raptors such as Bonelli's and Spanish Imperial Eagle will display, and the low grass will make easier to find some of the targets on the steppes. Besides, the temperatures are relatively mild in February, and we shall witness large concentrations of wildfowl and Common Cranes (thousands!!!). In addition, we should get some early migrants such as Black Kites, Pallid Swift, Lesser Kestrel and Great Spotted Cuckoo.

During our 4-night stay in Extremadura, we will be based in a delightful country house located in the middle of the steppes, where we will search on winter flocks of Great and Little Bustard. We will be literally surrounded by White Storks; 40 pair nests have been recorded in the surroundings of the rural hotel.

On 5th day, we will departure to Coto de Doñana. We will be based in the quaint village of El Rocío. With its sandy streets, the town looks like a film set from a spaghetti western. This is a place like no other in southern Spain. The following days, we will explore the National Park of Doñana and we will also visit the Odiel Marshes.

Flights

There are plenty of options. For instance, Easyjet flies 4 times a day from London Gatwick to Madrid and once a day to Seville airport.

In order to reduce driving, **the arrival will be in Madrid airport, and the departure from Seville airport.**

Food

All included in the price from lunch on day 1 to breakfast on day 8. In Extremadura, dinner will be in a restaurant in the medieval town of Trujillo, just 10 minutes' drive from our accommodation and it will consist of traditional Spanish meals (starter, main course and dessert) with local wine. Our picnic lunch will be prepared everyday by the rural hotel.

In Doñana, dinner will be in a local restaurant located right in front of the hotel.

Accommodation

In both locations, we will stay in a beautifully restored and comfortable country house in delightful surroundings. All rooms are provided with private facilities.

Cost

1350 € per person in double room (160 € single supplement).

Minimum 4 guests and maximum 7 guests.



Itinerary

Day 1. Sunday Feb 24th. Arrival to Madrid airport-Trujillo



Your local guide will be waiting for you at the airport. On arrival we will drive southwest for about three hours towards the medieval town of Trujillo. Depending on the flight times, we may stop for a leg stretch and do some birding at Arrocampo Reservoir where Purple Gallinule, Spoonbill, Black-winged Kite and Bluethroat are found. Finally, we will set off to our accommodation in a rural hotel.

Day 2. Monday Feb 25th. Steppes and Vegas Altas



After breakfast we will set off to the steppes of Madrigalejo to look for Little and Great Bustards (the world's heaviest flying bird) as well as for different species of larks. The Extremadura Steppes are some of the richest and least disturbed grassland habitats in Europe and hold great number of specialities.

We will continue visiting the paddy fields and *dehesas* of Vegas Altas where numerous (thousands) of Common Cranes feed on. We will enjoy watching the unforgettable evening spectacle of Common Cranes roosting in flocks of 10,000-strong. In addition, we hope to see a nice variety of wintering waders and wildfowl around the paddy fields and dams. We should see Black-necked Grebe, Little, Cattle and Great White Egret, among many others species.

Day 3. Tuesday Feb 26th. Monfragüe National Park



Monfragüe is an incredibly beautiful area packed with raptors. We will take a walk to the top of the castle for an eye to eye view of soaring raptors. From this high vantage point you usually can see a nice variety of raptor species as well as Black Storks as they take advantage of the thermals, a truly breath-taking sight! We will stop in some specific places to see top raptor species such as Spanish Imperial Eagle, Black Vulture and Bonelli's Eagle among other species. Along the rivers and dams, we shall keep an eye for otters and in

the forest, we will look for Iberian Magpies, Woodlarks Firecrest, Lesser and Iberian Green Woodpecker. At this time of the year, we might find early summer visitors such as Egyptian Vultures and Short-toed Eagles.

Day 4. Wednesday Feb 27th. Los Llanos Plains

Around these well-preserved steppes we will look for Golden Plovers, Stone Curlews, Calandra and Thekla Larks. Spanish Sparrows are pretty common as well as Corn Buntings and Hoopoes. Other species we might find in this habitat are Black-bellied and Pin-tailed Sandgrouses,



Iberian Grey Shrikes, Little Owl and, Spotless Starlings and Red-rumped Swallow which will have just arrived to breed.

In good weather conditions we might see some amphibians and reptiles such as Stripeless Tree Frog, Spanish Terrapin and Large Psammodromus.

Day 5. Thursday Feb 28th. Trujillo-El Rocío

After early breakfast, we will load the minibuses and set off towards Coto de Doñana. The transfer will take a bit more than 3 hours, but we will make some stops for leg stretching. We will spend the rest of the day birding in the marshes of El Rocío which holds a nice variety of wildfowl.

Day 6. Friday March 1st. Odiel Marshes and South area of Doñana

Today we will visit the coastal marshes of Odiel. This Natural Park is an important stop over and wintering ground for numerous Waders, Gulls and Ospreys. Greater Flamingos and Spoonbills feed on the swallow salt pans. After lunch, we will drive back to El Rocío to visit one of the visitor centres of the national park.

Day 7. Saturday March 2nd. North area of Doñana



Today will be birding in the heart of the park. In order to get to this isolated area, we will have to spend some time driving around tracks. All this effort will pay off with stunning birds. We should see Black-winged Kites, Glossy Ibis (hundreds) and Black Storks among other birds. We will keep an eye on the wintering Long-eared and Barn Owls that winter in the area. Furthermore, we will visit a couple of nature reserves where usually White-headed Duck, Ferruginous and Red-crested Pochard are found.

Day 8. Sunday March 3rd Transfer to Seville airport

Sadly, this will be the last day of the birding trip to two of the top wildlife destinations in Europe. Your guide will take you to Seville airport which is located approx. 1 h from the accommodation.