



Morocco: Atlas Mountains & Edge of the Sahara Deserts:

1 – 8 December 2018

Itinerary

Day 1: Marrakech - High Atlas Mountains - Oukaimeden

Meet and welcome you at Marrakech airport or hotel in Marrakech, we will drive up into the High Atlas Mountains and visit Oukaimeden (2600m). As we drive along the cultivated fields, we should find a good mix of resident species such as Southern Grey Shrike, Little Owl, Sardinian Warbler, Spotless Starling, Moroccan Magpie, Moussier's Redstart and House Bunting. Slightly higher up, among the rocky slopes, we will search for Blue Rock Thrush and the endemic Levaillant's Green Woodpecker. When we reach the ski resort at Oukaimeden, we will check the snowline for the handsome African Crimson-winged Finch. Other species here include Rock Sparrow, Alpine Chough, Black Wheatear and Atlas Horned Lark.

Dinner and accommodation at the Atlas Mountains.

Day 2: High Atlas Mountains - Ouarzazate - Boumalne du Dades

After an early breakfast we leave the mountains behind, perhaps pausing again en route for Levaillant's Green Woodpecker. From the flat plains of Marrakech we turn back uphill, and drive to Boumalne du Dades via the Tizi-n-Tichka pass (2260 meters), a spectacular and long drive. On the Pass we'll try for yet another endemic "Tristram's Warbler". This species has very specific habitat requirements away from its wintering grounds and not always easy to find. As the road climbs into the hills, we may start to see some raptors such as Long-legged Buzzard and Bonelli's Eagle both possible. Before reaching Boumalne du Dades we'll stop in Amerzgane to look for the rare Wheatear "Maghreb Wheatear".

Dinner and accommodation in Boumalne du Dades.

Day 3 : Boumalne du Dades - Tagdilt Track

Today we will start very early, to head to the Tagdilt Track. This is without doubt one of the top areas for birding in the Southern of Morocco. Excellent



chances exist for seeing Red-rumped Wheatear, Thekla Lark, Trumpeter Finch, Hoopoe Lark, Temminck's Lark, Short-toed Lark and with luck the highly nomadic Thick-billed Lark. If the heat allows, we will dedicate most of our day to exploring this area, then we visit a rocky canyon searching for Maghreb Wheatear, Desert Lark and our first chance of "GAYUIN" Pharaoh Eagle Owl where the people live in caves here with flocks of sheep and goats.

Dinner and accommodation in Boumalne du Dades.

Day 4 : Boumalne du Dades - Todra Gorges - Goulmima - Merzouga

First we visit a Todra gorge for Tristram's Warbler, Black Wheatear, Blue Rock-thrush, Rock Dove, Crag Martin and possible Bonelli's Eagle! Next we travel eastwards and stop at a scrubby wadi to see the the streaked scrub warbler, maybe also rewarded with Thick-billed Lark and Trumpeter Finch. Finally after another exciting stop we arrive at our Desert Hotel for two nights.

Dinner and accommodation in Merzouga.

Day 5 : Merzouga - Erg Chebbi Dunes - Rissani

Today we will dedicate the whole day to exploring the sandy dunes and the nearby stony desert of Erg Chebbi - the largest dune system in Morocco by 4x4 vehicles. Target birds; Brown-necked Raven, Hoopoe Lark, Desert Sparrow, African Desert Warbler, Desert Lark, Bar-tailed Lark, Fulvous Babbler, Spotted Sandgrouse, Crowned Sandgrouse, Lanner Falcon, Desert Wheatear and White crowned Wheatear.

Dinner and accommodation in Merzouga.

Day 6 : Merzouga - Tazzarine - Draa Valley - Anti Atlas Mountains - Ouarzazate

Transfer day from Merzouga to Ouarzazate. Drive through the Anti-Atlas Mountains, a series of rocky hills, cliffs and deep gorges of volcanic formations. Roadside birding could produce plenty of White-crowned Wheatear and Southern Grey Shrike. Before reaching our hotel in Ouarzazate we'll stop to explore the Barrage at Mansour Eddahbi. Here we have the



chance of seeing Marbled Duck, Ruddy Shelduck, Black winged Stilts and Maghreb Lark, as well as Cormorants and Herons and a selection of waders.

Dinner and accommodation in Ouarzazate.

Day 7: Ouarzazate - Kasbah Ait Benhaddou - High Atlas Mountains - Marrakech

A long journey back from Ouarzazate to Marrakech. We will drive through the High Atlas Mountains, stopping at the scenic and impressive Tizi 'n' Tichka Pass (2260 Meters) to admire its fabulous geological rock formations, We will do some birding stops in the road. Late in the afternoon we arrive to Marrakech. Free evening to visit the old quarter of Marrakech and the impressive Jema-el-fna square which is an unbelievable experience for any visitor - snake charmers, water sellers and spice stalls plus the charm of bargaining in the Souk (OPTIONAL).

Dinner and accommodation in Marrakech.

Day 8: Marrakech - Airport

If time allows some more birding in the Marrakech area, then transfer to the airport where the trip ends.

Target birds for this birding tour: Pharaoh Eagle Owl, Marbled Duck, Long-legged Buzzard, Bonelli's Eagle, Lanner Falcon, Cream-coloured Courser, Spotted Sandgrouse, Crowned Sandgrouse, Laughing Dove, Little Swift, Levillant's Green Woodpecker, Desert Lark, Bar-tailed Lark, Thick-billed Lark, Hoopoe Lark, Desert Wheatear, Desert Sparrow, Red-rumped Wheatear, Maghreb Wheatear, White-crowned Wheatear, Scrub Warbler, Tristram's Warbler, African Desert Warbler, Common Bulbul, Fulvous Babbler, Alpine Chough, Brown-necked Raven, Trumpeter Finch, African Crimson-winged Finch, House Bunting, Temminck's Lark, Atlas Horned Lark, Moussier's redstart...etc!



Tour duration: 08 days / 07 nights

Group size: Minimum 6 and maximum 10 guests

Cost: 1140 Euros per person

Price includes:

- * Comfortable transport in minivan of 8 seats
- * 07 Nights hotel accommodation (**half board**).
- * Guiding services and general assistance
- * Day trip in 4x4 vehicles in the Sahara Deserts (day 5)

Price excludes:

- * International airfare
- * Lunches and drinks
- * Travel insurance
- * Items of a personal nature and tips

Tour starting/ending: Airport or hotel in Marrakech, Morocco