

Birding in Valencia in Winter

15 – 20 December 2021

Itinerary

The order of the itinerary might change for weather conditions or other issues.
For other dates, please contact us at info@birdwatchingspain.net

Day 1: Wednesday 15 December. Arrival to Valencia airport

Meet local leader Pau Lucio. By minibus from Valencia airport to Albufera de Valencia Natural Park and accommodation (1h) at our hotel in Gandia Beach.



This large reserve (third largest wetland in Spain) has 14.000 ha of paddyfields that are flooded for the hunting season (October to mid-February), after which the farmers dry out the fields to plant rice in May. This huge flooded area attracts many wintering raptors (marsh harriers, booted eagles and common buzzards) and gulls (audouin's, yellow-legged, black-headed and lesser black-backed). On the reeds and farmland we will find plenty of purple gallinule, little egrets, bluethroats

and water pipits among other birds. We will also visit some ponds to add some shorebirds such as kentish plovers, black-winged stilts, green and wood sandpipers. Overnight in Gandia beach, [Hotel Riviera](#). Dinner at the Hotel.

Day 2: Thursday 16 December. El Fondo Natural Park and Salinas de Santa Pola (1hr 30 min).



We will start the day by visiting the Natural Park of El Fondo. This man-made reservoir holds over 70 breeding pairs of the globally threatened white-headed ducks, a few red-knobbed coots and it is probably the best place in Europe for watching marbled ducks (just few of them overwinter). In addition, a good number of wildfowl use the reserve to spend the winter: shovellers, teals, red-crested and common pochards. Besides, little bittern, osprey and hen harrier use the marshes as

wintering grounds. We will take the opportunity to look for a very special and rare bird, the great spotted eagle.

After lunch we will visit the salt pans of Santa Pola. The area is excellent for slender-billed, audouin's and mediterranean gulls. Pallid swift, marsh harrier, spoonbill and

great white egret are relatively common species during autumn. In addition, there is an impressive resident population of greater flamingos (few thousands) and wintering waders: godwits, avocets, sandpipers, redshanks, plovers, etc. Overnight and dinner at the Hotel.

Day 3: Friday 17 December. Pego marshes and Alicante Mountains

Pego marshes are one of the many small wetlands spread along the Mediterranean coast. They play a vital role for many migrants as re-fuelling places. We will look for some resident birds such as moustached warbler and glossy ibis. In addition, some of the wintering species we might see are skylarks, reed bunting, penduline tit, bluethroat, kingfisher and cetti's warbler. The rest of the day we will be exploring the highest mountains of Alicante looking for ring ouzels, hawfinches, griffon's vultures and other raptors. Overnight in Gandia beach. Dinner at the Hotel.

Day 4: Saturday 18 December. The steppes and wetlands of East Albacete (1:40-1:50 h drive)



Today, we will head inland to the steppes of East Albacete. This Special Protection Area is a good area for birding because traditional farming is still in use. The contrast of colours makes it a special place for landscape photos. Here some of the birds we might see are lesser short-toed lark, calandra lark, thekla lark, stock dove, stone-curlew, great bustard, corn bunting, rock sparrow, black-bellied and pin-tailed sandgrouse and little owl. Furthermore, there are temporary lagoons (depending if rains after summer) scattered among the steppes where we will look for the endangered white-headed duck among other wildfowl. Black-necked grebes, red-crested pochards and waders are also expected. Overnight in Gandia.

Day 5: Sunday 19 December. South Alicante (1 h 30 min)

During our last full day, we will visit the semidesert habitat in South Alicante. Here we hope to see species such as bonelli's eagle, black wheatear, blue rock thrush and warblers. The rest of the day, we will visit other areas to add species we haven't seen on the previous days. In addition, today we might see our first Balearic and cory's shearwaters, and gannets. Overnight in Gandia.



Day 6: Monday 20 December. Transfer to Valencia airport

If times allows, we can spend some time looking for alpine accentors and visiting private reserves in the Albufera before taking you to Valencia airport.



Cost

870 € per person (minimum 2 people). Maximum group size 7 people.

- The cost includes transfer from/to Valencia airport (From Alicante airport could be arranged)
- Breakfast from day 2 to 6 and picnic lunch from day 1 to 6.
- Dinner: buffet with many options to choose. **Drinks are not included.**
- Transport and guiding
- 5-night accommodation in a double room at Hotel Riviera. 3-star hotel. Single supplement 130 €.
- Check-list

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