

Orchids, butterflies and birds in Valencia 11 – 17 May 2021

Itinerary

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

Day 1: Tuesday 11 May. Arrival to Valencia airport

Meet local leader Pau Lucio. By minibus from Valencia airport to Gandia marshes.

We will spend the rest of the day visiting a local reserve. This small but very well preserve reserve holds an interesting variety of birds. We will check the reeds looking for Savi's, Great reed and Moustached warblers. In addition, we should see a nice variety of Egrets and Herons, being Squacco and Purple heron abundant, and Little bittern common. You will be delighted with the song of the Nightingales, which breeds in the edges.

Turtle doves are scarce, but we will have chances of watching them today. Finally, we will keep an eye on dragonflies, Red-veined darter, Blue emperor, Green-eyed hawk and damselflies should be around.



Moustached warbler



Purple heron

Day 2: Wednesday 12 May. Butterfly reserve and micro-reserves for flora (short drive).

We will start the day by visiting a local butterfly reserve. We will walk up alongside botanically rich hillsides, which had been hit by serious fires in August 2018. This "new" habitat is home to nice flowers such as bright blue beautiful flax and aphyllantes (sometimes called blue grass-lily) mixed with white sage-leaved cistus, splashes of colour from mallow-leaved bindweed, the unusual yellow pea *Anthyllis cytisoides* and two species of *Dorycnium*.

Our first butterflies should include Wood white, Long-tailed blue and Lang's short-tailed blue, Large and Wall brown. Later, we will visit a couple of areas where we might find Pyramidal orchid, Bee orchid, Bug orchid and the stunning endemic *Lathyrus pulcher* a large, deep pink pea.

After having lunch at the picnic tables by the snow well, we will visit a micro reserve of flora. Here we will see one of Europe's scarcest plants, the pink *Silene diclinis*. Along the track, we will find other beautiful flowers like the Spanish Iris and the endemic *Dianthus saetabensis*. Spanish gatekeeper, Adoni's blue, Red-underwing skipper and Swallowtail will be some of the butterflies we will see today.

Regarding birds, we will visit a Bee-eater colony and we will look for Short-toed eagle, Golden oriole, Woodchat shrike and Melodious warbler among others. If we are lucky, we might encounter the harmless Mammoth wasp, the largest wasp in Europe!

Day 3: Thursday 13 May. Alicante Mountains (1 h 10 min drive)

Today we will visit the Baetic mountain range which stretches all the way from Sierra Nevada to the Alicante Mountains. This area holds some interesting butterflies: Spanish fritillary, Western marbled white, Knapweed fritillary, Provençal fritillary and Little blue among others. On the abandoned orchards we will find Lizard and Man orchids, and the endemic *Dictamnus hispanicus*, which is one the main plants used for centuries to prepare a local liqueur name "herbero".

We will scan the mountains slopes looking for Bonelli's warbler, Rock bunting, Red-billed chough and the scarce Orphean warbler. In the rocky areas, we will find Spanish rusty foxglove (*Digitalis obscura*), the endemic *Arenaria valentina* and nice patches of Field gladiolus (*Gladiolus italicus*) mixed with Red valerian (*Centranthus ruber*). With a bit of luck, we might even find Owl fly "Ascalaphidae" (*Libelloides baeticus*).



Spanish fritillary

On the way back, we will make a quick stop to see some ancient cave paintings dating 7000 years ago.

Day 4: Friday 14 May. Serra Mariola Natural Park (1:40-1:50 h drive)

The Sierra Mariola Natural Park is a popular destination for wildlife lovers. In our first stop, we will look for a nice Helleboline (*Epipactis kleinii*). On the surroundings, we might see Firecrest, Crested tit, Short-toed treecreeper and other forest birds, including the Iberian green woodpecker. Later, we will continue visiting different areas where we hope to see Southern scarce swallowtail, Berger's clouded yellow, Dingy skipper, Bath white, Dusky heath and Large wall brown among other species of butterflies.

We will keep eye on the sky as there are different raptors breeding in the area: Griffon vulture, Booted eagle, Short-toed eagle and Golden eagle.

We will keep looking for insects (oil beetles are common in the area) among the patches of *Sideritis*, *Phlomis* and Thyme. In addition, there will be Woodcock orchids and with a bit of luck we might find Early-spider orchids too.



Knapweed fritillary

Day 5: Saturday 15 May. Serpis Valley (1 h 10 min drive)

Today, we will follow the gorge of the Serpis river visiting different areas where we hope to add some interesting dragonflies. On our first stop, we will look for Long skimmer, White featherleg, Copper damselfly and the colourful Orange-winged dropwing. Then, we will climb up the Safor mountain, stopping to see some flowers and meadows where we might see some interesting insects such as Ascalaphids,

Carpenter Bee and butterflies such as Penoptes blue, Greylings, Small and Lulworth skipper. The edges along the tracks will be covered by Yellow wort (*Blackstonia perfoliate*), the lovely pink flower centaury (*Centaureum quadrifolium*) and Lavender cotton which attracts many insects.

The coniferous forest is home to Crested tits, Firecrest, Serins and other birds. In addition, we will check the rocky areas looking for reptiles, the beautiful Ocellated lizard, Large psammodromus and Iberian lizard are common.



Red-veined Darter

Day 6. Sunday 16 May. Vall D'Ebo and Vall de Gallinera (1 h)

These valleys hold some interesting flora-rich scrubland where we will look for butterflies. We might find the first Black satyr, Iberian marbled White, Cleopatra, Southern gatekeeper and Sedge skipper among others. Furthermore, there will be large pink snapdragons *Antirrhinum controversum* and many other Mediterranean plants, including Germanders (*Teucrium* sp), White horehound (*Marrubium vulgare*) Satureia, etc.

We will explore the gorges looking for Thekla lark, Rock sparrow and the stunning Black-eared wheatear. Around the villages, we might see the Blue-rock thrush singing from the buildings, along with Spotless starlings. In the abandon orchard we might find Corn and Cirl bunting, and the abundant Sardenian warbler.

There will be time to visit a small pond to look for some dragonflies: Blue hawker, Blue-tailed damselfly and Broad scarlet are usually around. In addition, we should see Swallowtail, Brimstone and Blue-spot hairstreak among many others butterfly species.

Day 7. Monday 17 May. Transfer to Valencia airport (1 h)

If times allows, we will spend some time in the Albufera Natural Park before transferring to the airport.



Cave paintings



Views from the hills



Bug orchid



Woodcock orchid



Cost

Overnight in the town of Villalonga, in a nice *Hotel Casa Babel* 18th century (<https://www.casababel.com/>). Dinner at the Hotel.

1100 € per person (minimum 3 people). Maximum group size 7 people.

- The cost includes transfer from/to Valencia airport
- Breakfast from day 2 to 7 and picnic lunch from day 1 to 6.
- Dinner: lovely local food. Drinks: only water is included.
- Transport and guiding
- 6 night accommodation in a beautiful rural hotel. Single supplement 160 €.
- Checklist

03/21