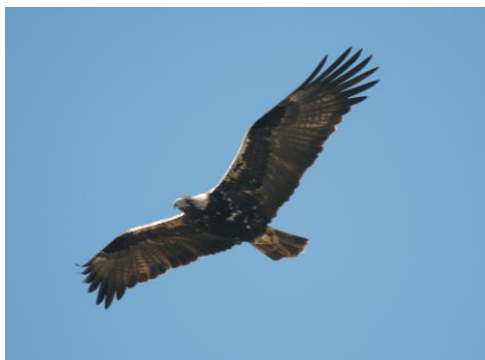


Valencia, Aragón and Madrid 8 – 18 November 2018

Itinerary

The order of the itinerary might change for weather conditions or other issues.

Day 1: Thursday 8 November. Arrival to Madrid-Barajas airport



The group arrives at 7:10. Meet local leader Pau Lucio. After having a quick breakfast, we will focus in seeing the Spanish Imperial Eagle, the Black Vulture and the Iberian Magpie. Other birds we might encounter today are the Iberian Green Woodpecker, Great-Spotted Woodpecker and the Lesser-spotted Woodpecker. Night near Madrid, probably in the Hotel Rincón de Traspalacio (to be confirmed). Diner at the Hotel.

<https://www.rincondetraspalacio.com>

Day 2: Friday 9 November. Madrid-Alquézar. (5 h)

After breakfast we will set off to the beautiful Sierra de Guara, land of gorges, cliffs and canyons beloved by many raptors. This pre-Pyrenean mountain chain holds a healthy population of Lammergeiers (12 pairs) and it is also an excellent place to see the stunning Wallcreeper. Although, we have 5 h driving, there will be time to make a stop in the reserve Barranco del río Dulce. Here, among the gorge we will look for Crag Martins, Blue Rock-Thrush and raptors. Deep in to the gorge, along the riparian vegetation there will be numerous small passerines to look for. After taking a stroll along the Peregrina path and having lunch (picnic) we will continue our journey to our accommodation in Alquézar. If times allows, we will make an attempt to see our first Lammergeier. Night in the medieval village of Alquézar. Hotel Villa de Alquézar <http://www.villadealquezar.com/> Diner in a local restaurant.

Day 3: Saturday 10 November. Sierra de Guara.



During our stay in Sierra de Guara we will visit a vulture feeding station which has been running for over 25 years. Seeing the Griffon's Vultures scavenging just few meters away from us, will be a once-in-a-life experience. In addition, we will visit impressive crags and cliffs in order to see one of our main targets, "la mariposa", the Wallcreeper.

We will make some stops in suitable areas where Lammergeiers and Golden Eagles might be seen. Overnight in Alquézar. Hotel Villa de Alquézar <http://www.villadealquezar.com/> Diner in a local restaurant.

Day 4: Sunday 11 November. Alquézar-Belchite-Gallocanta (3 h 40)



Today we will leave behind Sierra de Guara. Our first stop of the day will be the plains of Belchite where we hope to get few specialities such as Lesser Short-toed Lark, Pin-tailed and Black-bellied Sandgrouses. After lunch, we will set off to our accommodation in Gallocanta. After checking and before dinner, we will go to the lagoon to witness the arrival of thousands of Common Cranes to roost at dusk. Overnight in Gallocanta. Hostal las Grullas <http://hostallasgrullas.com/> Diner at the hotel.

Day 5: Monday 12 November. Gallocanta

We will spend all day locally, enjoying great views of Common cranes (40-50000 are recorded most of the years!!!), Red kites, Hen harriers and small farm birds like larks, Linnets and finches. After lunch, we will visit a gorge nearby where Golden Eagles, Sparrowhawks and Peregrine Falcons might be seen.

Furthermore, we might find some mammals like Wild Boar and Roe Deer. Overnight in Gallocanta. Hostal las Grullas <http://hostallasgrullas.com/> Diner at the hotel.

Day 6: Tuesday 13 November. Gallocanta-Gandia (3 h 10 min)

It will be our last day in Aragón Region and the first in Valencia. We will stop on the way in a mountainous area to look for Mistle Thrush, Redwings, Ring Ouzel, Firecrest and other forest species. After having lunch, we will get to our hotel in Gandia. If times allows before dinner, we can walk along the beach and harbour to look for terns and gulls. Overnight in Gandia, Hotel Gijón or Bayren Park. Dinner at the Hotel. (<https://www.hotelesrh.com/destino-gandia>).

Day 7: Wednesday 14 November. Pego marshes and Alicante Mountains (Short drive)

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. During the rest of the day we will explore the orchards and forest of the nearby valleys, looking for finches, thrushes, Sardinian Warblers and other common species. Overnight in Gandia, Hotel Gijón or Bayren Park (<https://www.hotelesrh.com/destino-gandia>). Dinner at the Hotel.

Day 8: Thursday 15 November. 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 and Red-knobbed Coots. In addition, a good numbers of wildfowl use the reserve to spend the winter: Shovelers, teals, Red-crested and Common Pochards among others. Besides, the noisy Western Purple Gallinule is one of the most abundant birds.

After lunch we will visit the salt pans of Santa Pola. The area is excellent for Slender-billed, Audouin's and Mediterranean Gulls. Osprey, Spoonbill and Great White Egret are relatively common species during winter. In addition, there is an impressive resident population of Greater Flamingos (few thousands) and wintering waders such as godwits, avocets, sandpipers, redshanks and plovers. Overnight in Gandia, Hotel Gijón or Bayren Park (<https://www.hotelesrh.com/destino-gandia>). Dinner at the Hotel.

Day 9: Friday 16 November. 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. Here some of the birds we might see are Short-toed Lark, Calandra Lark, Thekla Lark, Stock Dove, Stone-curlew, Great Bustard, Little 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 or the Ferruginous Duck among other wildfowl.

Black-necked Grebes, Red-crested Pochards and waders are also expected. Overnight in Gandia, Hotel Gijón or Bayren Park (<https://www.hotelesrh.com/destino-gandia>). For dinner we will have tapas in Gandia

Day 10: Saturday 17 November. Albufera de Valencia (1:00 h drive)



This large reserve (third largest wetland in Spain) has 14.000 ha of paddy fields 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 Chiffchaffs, Chaffinches, Bluethroats and pipits. We will also visit some ponds to add some shorebirds. To finish with energy this amazing trip in Spain, we will have a traditional lunch in a local restaurant. You could choose between two international valencian dishes: “*paella*” or “*fideuà*”. Overnight in Gandia, Hotel Gijón or Bayren Park (<https://www.hotelesrh.com/destino-gandia>). Dinner at the Hotel.

Day 11: Sunday 18 November. Transfer to Valencia airport / train station