

# WILDLIFE TRAVEL

20th-31st March 2018 (12 days)

## SOUTHERN MOROCCO

Easy birding and natural history: coast, desert and mountains



"the Atlas Kasbah is fabulous!"

"stunning scenery"  
Morocco 2014

### A birding exploration of the varied habitats of southern Morocco.

This holiday will be **our 12th visit** to southern Morocco, but the first tour to explore further into the eastern desert.

March is a very pleasant time to visit Morocco, with good weather, large numbers of **migrating birds** heading northwards to Europe and plenty of plants in flower, both on the coast and in the mountains.

We will start our tour on the Atlantic Coast, seeking out local specialties, including House Bunting, Moussier's Redstart, Black-crowned Tchagra and, with luck, the critically endangered **Northern Bald Ibis**. We will visit the Sous Massa National Park where, as well as a variety of birds, we will also look for several species of antelope that have been reintroduced here, including Addax, Dorcas Gazelle and the graceful **Scimitar-horned Oryx**.

Heading inland we will pass through the argan forest of the Sous Valley to the arid rocky steppe of the Tagdilt Track, home to **larks and wheatears**, Cream-coloured Courser and various sandgrouse.

We will explore rock gorges in search of Pharaoh Eagle Owl, Maghreb Wheatear and the endearing Gundi, before reaching the stony desert of the Tafilalt and the magnificent **sand dunes of Erg Chebbi**, home to some true desert specialties including Desert Sparrows and Egyptian Nightjar.

Finally, we will head up to the **High Atlas**, near the snow line, where we hope to find African Crimson-winged Finches and Atlas Horned Lark.



**Price**  
£1975

**Single Room Supplement**  
£210

#### Full board

- Day 1** flight to Agadir
- Day 2** Atlantic Coast
- Day 3** Sous Massa NP
- Day 4** travel to Taroudant
- Day 5** Ouarzazate
- Day 6** Boumalne des Dades
- Day 7** Tagildt Track
- Day 8/9** Merzouga
- Day 10** Ouarzazate
- Day 11** High Atlas, Tiz'n'Tichka
- Day 12** Oukaimeden  
ening flight to UK

#### Leaders

Mike Russell  
and Philip Precey

Atlantic coast, High  
Atlas mountains and  
the eastern desert

Wildlife and culture holidays



Our profits are donated to the **Wildlife Trusts**



## ITINERARY

**Please note that the itinerary may be changed to suit the weather or other practicalities or at the discretion of the leaders.**

**Day 1 Tue 20th** Flight to Agadir and transfer to the Atlas Kasbah (c30 minutes). After lunch, we will explore the countryside around the hotel, meeting our first North African specialities, with Common Bulbul and House Bunting both common around the hotel and Moussier's Redstart in the Argan trees. o/n Atlas Kasbah

**Day 2 Wed 21st** This morning we head to the Atlantic coast, travelling up to Cap Rhir and Oued Tamri, where we hope to see the critically endangered **Northern Bald Ibis**. This coastline is also well known for its unique communities of succulent Euphorbias, and we will stop to explore this interesting habitat, hoping to find Spectacled Warbler and Black Wheatear along with endemic geckos and interesting plants. We end the day at the old Kasbah of Agadir, with views over the city. o/n Atlas Kasbah

**Day 3 Thu 22nd** We head to the famous **Sous Massa National Park** where we learn about the important conservation work going on here, the 're-wilding' of a variety of Saharan antelopes including Dorcas Gazelle, **Scimitar-horned Oryx** and Addax, and the Red-necked Ostrich, all of which have become extinct across much of their range due to overhunting. We will visit the area where these animals have been reintroduced, enjoying close encounters along the way. We spend the afternoon at Oued Massa, hoping to hear the fluting song of **Black-crowned Tchagra** and with luck we should track down this handsome bush-shrike. o/n Atlas Kasbah

**Day 4 Fri 23rd** We start today with a visit to the river-mouth at Oued Sous, where **flamingos** gather on the estuary and feed alongside various waders, gulls and terns. From here we strike inland, travelling through the famous argan forests of the Sous valley, keeping our eyes open for Black-winged Kite and Fulvous Babbler along the way as we head towards Oulad Berhil, where we spend the night. o/n L'Aganier d'Or

**Day 5 Sat 24th** We continue our journey eastwards, travelling through increasingly arid, **rocky landscapes** as we head towards Ouarzazate. Along the way we will start to see White-crowned and Desert Wheatears and a variety of larks along the roadside, and keep our eyes open for Barbary Falcon, Lanner and Long-legged Buzzard. We will explore one particular area for the rare Maghreb (Mourning) Wheatear. o/n Pension Dar Amouddou

**Day 6 Sun 25th** Our morning will start with a visit to the nearby **Ouarzazate Reservoir**, of importance as the only large and permanent body of water in the sub-desert areas south of the central High Atlas. Various migrants rest here on their journey northwards, and could include a variety of terns, waders, herons and wildfowl, hopefully including Marbled Ducks. From here we travel eastwards to **Boumalne des Dades**: if we have time we may travel up the Dades Gorge, where Rock Bunting and Black Wheatear nest and the endearing Gundi, a guinea-pig-like rodent sunbathes on the boulders. o/n Soleil Bleu.

**Day 7 Mon 26th** This morning we will explore the famous **Tagdilt Track**, an area famous



including Thick-billed, Hoopoe, Desert, Lesser Short-toed and Temminck's Horned Larks, Red-rumped Wheatear, Trumpeter Finch, Cream-coloured Courser and several species of sandgrouse. Burrows in the steppe are home to abundant Fat Sand Rat. Nearby we will check cliff faces for a chance to find **Pharaoh Eagle Owl** at its roost site. As the day warms up, we get back on the road and head further eastwards, finally arriving in the **desert proper of the Tafilat**, at Merzouga. o/n Auberge Derkaoua

**Days 8 & 9 Tue 27th/Wed 28th** We will spend two days exploring the Tafilat, taking a four-wheel drive 'safari' one day in search of some of the **special birds of the desert**: Egyptian Nightjar, Houbara Bustard and **Desert Sparrow**, as well as Spotted Sandgrouse, Bar-tailed Desert Lark, African Desert Warbler and Scrub Warbler. We will visit the magnificent sand dunes of the **Erg Chebbi** and explore the palm groves and inn gardens in search of migrant birds, perhaps including Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters. In some years, a large wetland forms at the base of the dunes, where flamingos, storks and various ducks and waders can be found, a bizarre sight out here in the desert. o/n Auberge Derkaoua

**Day 10 Thu 29th** A travel day: we head back to Ouarzazate. o/n Pension Dar Amouddou

**Day 11 Fri 30th** Up until now we have been south of the High Atlas: today we cross the mountains, via the Tiz n Tichka pass at an altitude of 2260 metres. From these heady heights we drop back down into the plains near Marrakech, before climbing again up towards the ski resort of Oukaimeden. o/n Chez Juju

**Day 12 Sat 31st** An early start will take us in search of one of the stars of the mountains, flocks of **African Crimson-winged Finches** that feed around the base of the Oukaimeden ski lifts. Atlas Horned Lark and both Alpine and Red-billed Chough should also be found here, and we may be lucky and find an early returning Seebohm's Wheatear. Nearby we will look for Levaillant's Woodpecker. After lunch, we leave the high mountains and head down to Marrakech in time for our evening flights home.

## Accommodation, meals and transport

Our hotels and guesthouses will have en-suite accommodation: dinner and breakfast will be taken in the hotels, with lunches a mixture of picnics and 'sit down' meals in hotels and local restaurants. We will travel by minibus. Our excursions in Sous Massa National Park and into the desert beyond Merzouga will be by comfortable four-wheel drive vehicles.

## Weather

At this time of year the weather is usually sunny but not too hot. If we do get hotter weather we will adapt the itinerary as much as possible. There may be some cooler weather, particularly up in the mountains where there may even be some snow.

## Passport and visas

If you hold a British passport, you do not need a visa to travel to Morocco. If you do not have a UK passport, please check with your local consulate. Your passport will need to be valid for at least six months after your entry into Morocco.



## Leaders

**Mike Russell** is a Director of Wildlife Travel who has led many birdwatching and wildlife holidays for Wildlife Travel since 2001 to destinations including Costa Rica, the Galapagos Islands, the Danube Delta, and Spain. **Philip Precey** is a Director of Wildlife Travel and has led many of our trips in recent years, including co-leading seven of our visits to Morocco since 2013. Our leaders will ensure you enjoy all aspects of the wildlife we encounter.

Our driver and local guide is Mohammed Belfakir, who has helped us with all our recent trips to Morocco.

## Health and fitness

Please see the General Information leaflet for health and fitness requirements. This is not a strenuous holiday. The main fitness considerations are likely to be the heat and the long distances travelled (by bus). There will be some walking, including on sand dunes/sandy beaches, and on rocky/uneven tracks, sometimes gently uphill. We will adapt our walking to the weather but we will no doubt be walking in the sun on some days, albeit not for very long walks. The hotel rooms may be on the first or second floor, with no lift available.

## Flights

Group flights are with Easyjet from Gatwick to Agadir, and then returning from Marrakech to Gatwick

20th March depart London Gatwick 07.10, arrive Agadir 11.05

31st March depart Marrakech 21.00, arrive Gatwick 01.30

Morocco local time is the same as in the UK.



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## TO BOOK

Contact us to check availability and reserve a place. Complete the Booking Form and send to Sunvil Holidays (CAA-ATOL Licence 808, ABTA V6218), our tour operator, with your deposit. All details about booking are given in the Booking Pack.

**DEPOSIT £500 PER PERSON, BALANCE DUE BY 19/12/2017**  
**SEE GENERAL INFORMATION LEAFLET ON HOW TO BOOK**

**INCLUDED:** Return flight from UK to Morocco. Local transport as specified in itinerary. 11 nights accommodation, all meals from lunch on day 1 to lunch on day 12. Services of leaders and guide. **NOT INCLUDED:** Refreshments. Gratuities. Insurance. Dinner day 12.

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## WILDLIFE TRAVEL

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Wildlife Travel Ltd. Reg. No 2237697; (for Registered Charity numbers, please contact us)*

**Front** (clockwise): Erg Chebbi dunes, Moussier's Redstart, Addax, Thick-billed Lark, gardens at Atlas Kasbah **Inside** (left to right): scenery near Ouarzazate, Scimitar-horned Oryx, African Crimson-winged Finch, Northern Bald Ibis, Black-crowned Tchagra and Desert Wheatear **Above:** Hotel Atlas Kasbah, lake near Merzouga, palmery near Merzouga.