

WILDLIFE TRAVEL



8th to 15th September 2018 (8 days)

Bulgaria

easy birding on the Black Sea coast

"the lakes were
amazing...
so many waders!"

"numerous superb
sightings"

Bulgaria 2015

An 'easy birdwatching' tour, focusing on the southbound migrants of the Black Sea coast.

The Black Sea flyway, known as the Via Pontica, is **one of the busiest migration routes in Europe**, rivalling those of Gibraltar and the Bosphorus, as the birds of northern Europe are funnelled through the bottle-neck between the coast and the mountains, on their way south.

We start around the **Bourgas wetlands**. Here one of the great attractions should be the huge flocks of pelicans that roost on the lakes during their migration. The shallows of Atanasovsko Lake attract a good variety of waders, with Broad-billed or Marsh Sandpipers a strong possibility. We spend a morning at Dyulinksi Pass, a superb watchpoint at the end of the Eastern Balkan Range from where we hope to observe the **migration of raptors** and other soaring birds - White and Black Storks; Lesser Spotted, Booted and Short-toed Eagles; Levant Sparrowhawk, Honey Buzzard Red-footed Falcon, and four harrier species may all pass overhead.

The second part of our holiday is spent in **coastal Dobroudzha**, exploring the remnant steppe grasslands and dramatic cliffs of Cape Kaliakra, home to breeding Calandra Lark and Pied Wheatear, with migrant larks, pipits, chats and shrikes. The area is also home to the highest density of Wild Cats in Europe, an exciting possibility on any visit.

Nearby, the great lakes of Durankulak and Shabla attract mixed flocks of Whiskered and Black Terns. Amongst the wildfowl and water birds we should be able to pick out Ferruginous Duck and Pygmy Cormorant; the surrounding bushes may hold migrating warblers, flycatchers, shrikes and chats, alongside resident Syrian Woodpecker.



Price
£1,545

Single Room Supplement
£95

Full board

- Day 1** flight to Bourgas
- Day 2** Bourgas wetlands
- Day 3** Dyulinksi Pass
- Day 4** Bourgas wetlands
- Day 5** Black Sea coast
- Day 6** Cape Kaliakra
- Day 7** Shabla, Durankula
- Day 8** return to UK

Leaders

Laurie Jackson
and local guides

among the busiest and
least known migration
routes in Europe

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, 8th September Our flight takes us to Bourgas on the Black Sea coast from where we transfer to our hotel in nearby Sozopol.

Days 2-4, 9th-11th September For the next three days we will explore the Bourgas area, paying particular attention to its internationally important wetlands. The city of Bourgas sits at the head of three large but very different lakes.

Atanasovsko Lake lies to the north of the city, made up of a series of shallow pans still in use for salt production. The shallow water attracts **large numbers of wading birds**, with Avocet and Black-winged Stilt both common breeders, but migrants could include both Marsh and Broad-billed Sandpiper together with Red-necked Phalarope. Gulls and terns also gather here, giving us the chance to differentiate between Black-headed, Slender-billed, Mediterranean and Little Gulls.

Bourgas Lake reaches right into the city itself - fringed with reedbeds and shallows, this lake is home to large numbers of breeding herons and egrets, as well as being the favourite local feeding ground for White and Dalmatian Pelicans, which can often be seen side by side. Lake Mandara lies to the south of Bourgas and is the deepest - migrating flocks of pelicans often stop off here to roost, while at least one pair of White-tailed Eagles is resident in the area. During our time around Bourgas we will also visit the nearby **Poda Visitor Centre**, managed by the BSPB and funded by Neophron (our local guides in Bulgaria). Here Marsh Harriers quarter the reedbeds, and we may have the chance to find Pygmy Cormorant among the many gathered Cormorants.

For a change from the wetlands, we will spend a day at Dyulinski Pass migration watch point - the Eastern Balkan range that runs across Bulgaria concentrates the migrating raptors and other birds trying to head south, and forces them into the famous Via Pontica bottle-neck. In the right conditions, this can be **one of the most impressive visual migrations in Europe** - we can hope to see Lesser Spotted, Booted and Short-toed Eagles, harriers, buzzards and falcons, storks and pelicans, sometimes in very large numbers.

Day 5, 12th September A travelling day takes us north towards Varna. Along the way we will make several stops, including a visit to the salt pans of Pomorie Lake, where we should find plenty of waders to keep us entertained.

Later on our journey we will pass the oak woodlands of Goritsa, home to Grey-headed Woodpecker, Hawfinch and the occasional Wild Boar. Our home for the next three nights is Kavarna.

Days 6-7, 13th-14th September The next part of our holiday is spent in the north of the



country, in the flat lands of coastal Dobrouzha.

We will spend some time exploring **Cape Kaliakra** and the nearby steppe, an area famous for its displays of spring flowers - at this time of year the flowers may be over, but bird specialities should include Pied Wheatear, Calandra Lark and perhaps Stone Curlew, while migrant flycatchers, chats, shrikes and warblers are passing through the bushes. Offshore both Black-necked Grebe and Black-throated Diver will be arriving for the winter, while Yelkouan Shearwaters pass by and there is a good chance of Bottle-nosed Dolphin or Harbour Porpoise. It is also worth remembering that this area has **one of the highest densities of Wild Cat in Europe**, and you have a very realistic chance of catching a glimpse of one hunting over the steppe.

We will also visit two interesting wetlands, **Lakes Durankulak and Shabla**. Interesting birds of the area could include Red-footed Falcon, Pygmy Cormorant and Ferruginous Duck while the surrounding woods and fields are home to Syrian Woodpecker. Resident and wintering raptors may include Long-legged Buzzard, Short-eared Owl or even the secretive Eagle Owl or rare Saker Falcon.

Day 8, 15th September Our time in Bulgaria has come to an end, and after breakfast we have to head south again, to Bourgas and our flights home.

Accommodation, meals, transport and weather

We will be staying at good three-star local hotels, all with en-suite accommodation. The holiday is full board, with the meals provided during the stay a mixture of **Balkan and International dishes**, with an emphasis on local cuisine. Requests for special diets can be accommodated. We will travel by small coach or minibus.

At this time of year the weather is usually sunny but not too hot. However, as with everywhere the weather is no longer entirely predictable, and there may be some cooler weather, rain or wind.

Focus of interest

This holiday is suitable for anyone with an all round interest in natural history, although the impressive migration of a great range of birds will be the main focus, with plenty of Balkan specialities promised.

Fitness

You should have a good level of fitness to get the most out of the planned activities on this holiday. While the walking is generally easy and we won't be covering any great distances, there will be some hilly, uneven or rocky areas for which good walking boots are essential.



Leader and Guides

Laurie Jackson is an all round naturalist who has led many Wildlife Travel holidays, from Norfolk to Lesvos, Svalbard and the Vercors, including our most recent visits to Bulgaria and Transylvania. Her knowledge of, and enthusiasm for, all aspects of natural history, and her keenness to share this with others will help to ensure that you enjoy a wonderful holiday.

We are pleased to be working with local guides from **Neophron** - a company with direct links to local conservation that we have worked with on our previous visits to Bulgaria.

Between them, our leaders will provide you with an excellent introduction to the wildlife of Bulgaria during the exciting autumn bird migration season, and ensure you have a relaxing and enjoyable holiday.

Flights

The group flights will be from London Gatwick with Thomas Cook.

8th Sept depart London Gatwick 07.15, arrive Bourgas 12.45
15th Sept depart Bourgas 14.10, arrive London Gatwick 15.40

Bulgaria is two hours ahead of the UK.

Passport and visas

If you hold an EU passport, you do not need a visa to travel to Bulgaria. If you do not have an EU passport, please check with your local consulate.



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 £700 PER PERSON,
BALANCE DUE BY 09/06/2018**

INCLUDED: Return flight from London Gatwick. Local transport for transfers and excursions as specified in the itinerary. Seven nights' accommodation, full board basis. Services of guides.

NOT INCLUDED: Refreshments. Drinks with evening meals. Entrance fees for optional sightseeing. Gratuities. Travel insurance.

WILDLIFE TRAVEL

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