

WILDLIFE TRAVEL



19th to 26th September 2020 (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 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.

The second part of our holiday is spent 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.



Price

£tbc

Single Room Supplement

£tbc

Full board

- Day 1** flight to Varna
- Day 2** Shabla, Cape Kaliakra
- Day 3** Durankulak
- Day 4** Dyulino Pass
- Day 5** Bourgas wetlands
- Day 6** Bourgas wetlands
- Day 7** Bourgas wetlands
- Day 8** return to UK

Leaders

Phil Saunders
and local guides

Group size

min 5, max 12

among the busiest and
least known migration
routes in Europe

Wildlife and culture holidays



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



FOCUS OF INTEREST

This is one of our 'Easy birding and wildlife' trips which means that the itinerary is based mainly on birds and/or other animals (rather than plants or general wildlife) and this also reflects the knowledge of the leaders and guides. However, as with all of our trips, the pace is comfortable with time to enjoy other aspects of the natural history, rather than rushing from one place to another for specific species.



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 Our flight takes us to Varna on the Black Sea coast from where we transfer to our hotel (~1.5 hours). Overnight Krapets (3 nights)

Days 2-3 Our holiday begins 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 and 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. Overnight Krapets.

Day 4 A travelling day takes us south towards Bourgas. Along the way we will pass the oak woodlands of Goritsa, home to Grey-headed Woodpecker, Hawfinch and the occasional Wild Boar. We will make several stops along the way as we pass over the Balkan Mountains to look for species such as Sombre Tit and Middle-spotted Woodpecker in the orchards. We will also visit the salt pans of Pomorie Lake, famous for its curative mud, where we should find plenty of waders to keep us entertained. Our home for the next four nights is Sarafovo.

Days 5-7 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.

The brackish Vaya Lake (Bourgas Lake) is Bulgaria's largest natural lake. Reaching right into the city itself - Vaya Lake is fringed with reedbeds and shallows. Home to large numbers of breeding herons and egrets, Vaya Lake is also the favourite local feeding ground for White and Dalmatian Pelicans, which can often be seen side by side. Lake Mandra, freshwater reservoir, lies to the south of Bourgas and is the deepest of its lakes. Migrating flocks of pelicans often stop off here to roost, while at least one pair of White-tailed Eagles is resident in the area. The banks in this area can be a good place for basking butterflies including Eastern Bath White, Mallow Skipper and Lang's Short-tailed Blue, as well as a good selection of dragonflies including the vibrant Scarlet Darter.

For a change from the wetlands, we will spend a day at Dyulino Pass migration watch point. At the eastern end of the Balkan Mountain range that runs across Bulgaria, the mountain pass 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. Overnight Sarafovo.

Day 8 Our time in Bulgaria has come to an end, and after breakfast we have to head north again towards Varna. We will visit some more interesting sites long the way including the ancient riverine forest at Kamchia, stalked by Red-breasted Flycatchers, and home to extensive sand dunes, before our evening 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.

Health and 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 (light weight) walking boots are essential.

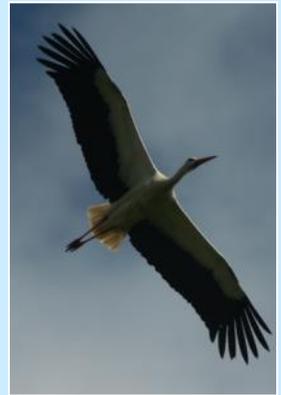


Leader and Guides

Phil Saunders is a professional ecologist and all-round naturalist based in Dorset, with a particular interest in birds and invertebrates. Phil has travelled widely through Europe and Asia, and previously worked on research projects on European Rollers in Cyprus and Macqueen's Bustards in Uzbekistan. Phil joined Wildlife Travel's leading team in 2018, and has led Wildlife Travel holidays to The Vercors, Devon and Norfolk.

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

Between them, our leader and guides will ensure you have a relaxing and enjoyable holiday during the exciting autumn bird migration season.



Flights

The group flights will be from London Gatwick with Easyjet.

19th Sept depart Gatwick 16.45, arrive Varna 22.15
26th Sept depart Varna 23.00, arrive Gatwick 00.40 (27th)

Bulgaria is two hours ahead of the UK.

Passport and visas

If you hold an EU passport, you do not currently need a visa to travel to Bulgaria. Your passport should be valid for the proposed duration of your stay; you do not need any additional period of validity on your passport beyond this.

Should we leave the EU without a deal in place before September 2020, you should have at least six months left on your passport from your date of arrival.



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 20/06/2020**

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

**The Manor House, Broad Street,
Great Cambourne, Cambridge CB23 6DH**

Tel: 01954 713575 email: wildlifetravel@wildlifebcn.org

www.wildlife-travel.co.uk



*Directors: Christine Donnelly, Brian Eversham, Philip Precey, Michael Russell, Dr Tim Upson
Wildlife Travel Ltd. Reg. No 2237697; (for Registered Charity numbers, please contact us)*