

# WILDLIFE TRAVEL



9th -17th May 2020 (9 days)

## THE DANUBE DELTA

Cruise in Europe's largest wilderness

"a special and beautiful place  
with great birds"

"open boat trips... stunning"

Danube Delta 2019

**One of the very few holidays to include a week on a 'floating hotel', exploring the spectacular wildlife of the Romanian Danube Delta.**

At the end of a 1,700 mile long journey across Europe, the great Danube River reaches the Black Sea. Here, the river splits into numerous channels and canals, creating the second largest delta on the continent. Vast expanses of swamps and forests, as well as a scattering of lakes surrounded by thick reedbeds, provide a perfect sanctuary for over 300 species of birds, many year round residents; others summer breeders or spring and autumn migrants.

In the Delta, we stay on a very comfortable 'travelling' houseboat, which as well as being equipped with all the 'mod cons' we might need, also has a lovely open deck for bird-watching and relaxing in the open air. Roller, Black Woodpecker, Bee-eater, Golden Oriole and White-tailed Eagle can all be seen from the houseboat, as well as fly-pasts of pelicans and ibis. Elsewhere, it should be possible to see Paddyfield Warbler and Great Black-headed Gull, as well as huge numbers of herons and terns.

As well as enjoying the wildlife, we will learn much about the **local conservation** projects and how the lives of many of the people of the Delta, many living in remote fishing villages, are an integral part of the wetland ecosystem. We are delighted to be returning to the Delta, a favourite Wildlife Travel destination for over a decade. The holiday is aimed at providing a unique visit to **one of the last remaining wilderness areas of Europe**. Our local guides are experienced ecologists - their natural history expertise, together with that of our leader, will enable anyone with a general wildlife interest to enjoy this tour as well as those with a more specific interest in birds.



**Price**  
£1895

**Single Room Supplement**  
£250

**Full board**

- Day 1** flight to Bucharest
- Day 2** travel to Danube Delta inc Babadag Forest
- Day 3-8** Danube Delta inc Sfantu Gheorghe Sacalin Island
- Day 9** return to UK

**Leaders**

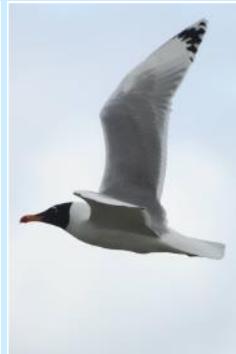
Charlie Rugeroni  
and local guides

**Group size**

min 7, max 14

birds, natural history,  
seven nights aboard  
'floating hotel'

**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** After arrival in Bucharest we **transfer to our hotel** in Amara, approximately two hours away. We should arrive at our hotel in plenty of time to settle in and have a brief introduction to the holiday before dinner.

**Day 2** An early morning exploration of the nearby lakes will give us our first introduction to the wetland birdlife of Romania, with Little Bittern and Ferruginous Duck likely to be seen. After breakfast, we travel eastwards, stopping along the way to visit the **Babadag forest**, home to **wild flowers** including Peony, Lady Orchid and Monkey Orchid amongst others. Our next port of call will be the salt lakes around Murighiol, where we may catch up with our first Ruddy Shelduck or Pygmy Cormorant. Finally we join our houseboat *Kingfisher*, our home for the next seven nights.

**Day 3** Today we will have a leisurely cruise to **Sfantu Gheorghe**, one of the most beautiful fishing villages in the Danube Delta. From the deck of the boat we will see many of the typical birds of the delta such as egrets, pelicans, herons, Bee-eater, Roller and the ever present Marsh Harriers, the peace only disturbed by the occasional **White-tailed Eagle** hunting overhead. We will keep our eyes peeled for the beautiful Great Black-headed Gulls, a speciality of the area. After arriving in Sfantu Gheorghe in the early afternoon we will visit the village to see the local houses in the Ukrainian style.

**Day 4** We explore the local area around Sfantu Gheorghe by small boat, including the sandy Sahalin Island, an important bird reserve, at the mouth of the **Black Sea**, home to Moustached Warbler, **Fire-bellied Toad** and **Golden Jackal**. After lunch, we will walk around the Sfantu Gheorghe area, to look for a variety of migrating waders, Lesser Grey Shrike, Bearded Tit and Eastern Olivaceous Warbler. The beach is home to the **Steppe Runner**, a large lizard that only reaches Europe in this corner of Romania.

**Day 5** After an early morning bird walk around Sfantu Gheorghe, we will have a leisurely day on the boat, travelling towards the Dunavat channel, in the company of Whiskered Terns and egrets along the way, giving us the choice of birding from the upper deck or simply indulging in a siesta!

**Day 6** The day will be spent exploring some of the more remote areas of the Delta: fingers



crossed today will give us excellent opportunities for catching up with some of the shyer animals of the Delta - **Wild Boar** or even **Golden Jackal** will be looked for, as well as birds such as **Paddyfield Warbler** and other north-bound migrants.

**Day 7** After breakfast, we transfer to the small boats for a trip to the lakes around the main channel. The reeds will be alive with the song of birds, including **Great Reed, Sedge** and **Savi's warblers**. After lunch back onboard, we travel on to Uzlina.

**Day 8** Today our explorations may take us to the shallow lagoons hidden amongst the reeds where hundreds of pairs of **Whiskered Tern** nest amongst the lily pads and Red-necked Grebes and Red-crested Pochard make their homes. After another bird-packed day, we will relax with a glass (or two) of wine and a farewell dinner on board.

**Day 9** After a leisurely breakfast, we bid farewell to the boat and head back towards Bucharest, stopping along the way for one last spot of birdwatching before we finally return to Bucharest for our onward journeys home.

## Life in the Delta

In the heart of the Delta there are a **myriad of marshes, reedbeds, lakes and water channels** holding an amazing number of breeding birds as well as frogs, snakes, otters, dragonflies, butterflies, small mammals and a rich plant community. Traditionally, the majority of people who live in the Delta have earned their living from fishing. The Delta contains **the world's largest area of reedbed** and almost 400 freshwater lakes. It is Europe's richest location for birds but remains relatively undeveloped as far as tourism is concerned. There are also areas of sandy, dry ground that are covered with woodland. Mature willow trees are an exceptional feature. Also in the area covered by the **Biosphere Reserve** are dry steppes and open dunes. The Danube splits into three main channels before it enters the Black Sea -the Sulina, Chilia and Sfantu Gheorghe Channels. The Sulina Channel is the shortest route to the Sea and carries most of the traffic. Our journey takes us along the southernmost channel, the Sfantu Gheorghe, which is the **most attractive** of the three and probably the oldest. It meanders gently to the village that shares its name. This is a fishing village and small port, very isolated and surrounded by dunes, woodlands and marshes, adjacent to the Black Sea. Many of the villages in the Delta were settled by **Ukrainians and other, previously 'Russian', peoples** and the houses and other buildings reflect the continued presence of these cultures.

## Leader and Guides

**Charlie Rugeroni** is a landscape and garden designer who has led many previous Wildlife Travel holidays, from Wiltshire to Costa Rica, via Gibraltar, the Vercors, Morocco and Romania, as well as previous visits to the Danube Delta. Our local guides, **EuroDelta Travel**, know the Delta intimately - their company specialises in tours of the Delta and they have direct links with local landowners and conservationists, They have organised and led our previous trips to the area and we are very pleased to be travelling with them again.



## Accommodation, meals and weather

Our first night will be spent in the **Hotel Diamant** in Amara, half way between Bucharest and the Delta. On the delta, our home is a very comfortable boat, each cabin having an en-suite 'bathroom' (shower/w.c). The nine cabins are all on the same deck, 'outside' (i.e. with a window) and have twin or double beds (not bunks). It is very pleasant to sit on the viewing/sun deck of the boat as we travel down the waterways looking at the wildlife from the comfort of our own 'home'.



Our meals will be a mixture of **Romanian and International dishes**, with an emphasis on local cuisine. Most of the fresh food is organic and produced locally, including meat and fish. The weather should be pleasant, mostly warm, even hot, although rain is possible, as is cooler weather. We will not be walking long in the sun. There is no major problem from mosquitoes at this time of year in the Delta.



## Fitness

You will need to be able to climb in and out of small boats, sometimes directly onto the bank. We will spend quite a bit of time sitting in the small boats (not all have back supports). As this tour involves considerable moving around in boats, it may not be suitable for people with limited mobility.



## Flights

The group flight is with British Airways from London Heathrow as follows:

9th May            depart Heathrow 13.50, arrive Bucharest 19.10  
17th May           depart Bucharest 17.55, arrive Heathrow 19.25

Romania is two hours ahead of UK time.

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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 £750 PER PERSON, BALANCE DUE BY 08/02/2020**

**INCLUDED:** Return flights from London Heathrow to Bucharest, including all airport taxes. Local transport on excursions as specified in the itinerary. Eight nights accommodation, full board basis. Services of leaders and guides.

**NOT INCLUDED:** Refreshments. Entrance fees for optional sightseeing (eg museums). Gratuities. Travel insurance.

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