

WILDLIFE TRAVEL

23rd – 31st May 2025 (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
£2,290

Single Room Supplement
£350

Full board

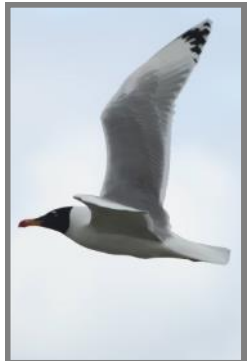
- Day 1** flight to Bucharest
Day 2 travel to Danube Delta inc Babadag Forest
Day 3-8 Danube Delta inc Sfantu Gheorghe Sacalin Island
Day 9 return to UK

Leaders

Laurie Jackson and
Mike Russell

Group size
min 4, max 14

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



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 23rd May 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 24th May 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 Wild Peony and several orchids. Our next stop will be the salt lakes around Murighiol, before we join our houseboat **Kingfisher** nearby, our home for the next seven nights.

Day 3 25th May Today we will have a leisurely cruise to **Sfantu Gheorghe**, one of the most beautiful fishing villages in the Danube Delta.

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 previously 'Russian' peoples and the houses and other buildings reflect the continued presence of these cultures.

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 26th May We explore the local area around Sfantu Gheorghe by small boat, including the sandy Sahalin Island, at the mouth of the **Black Sea**, home to White Pelicans and **Fire-bellied Toad**. After lunch, we will walk around the Sfantu Gheorghe area, looking for migrating waders, Lesser Grey Shrike, and Eastern Olivaceous Warbler. The beach is home to the **Steppe Runner**, a lizard that only reaches Europe in this corner of Romania.

Day 5, 27th May. 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 28th May 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 29th May This morning, 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, we travel on to Uzlina.

Day 8 30th May 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 of wine and a farewell dinner on board.

Day 9 31st May 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 journey home.

Accommodation and meals

Our first night is spent in the **Hotel Diamant** in Amara. On the delta, our home is the **Kingfisher**, a comfortable house boat, with panoramic views from the dining room and the viewing/sun deck, from where we will watch the wildlife along the waterways as we travel between moorings. The nine cabins are all on the same deck, with twin or double beds, ensuite shower room/WC and a window. On our way to/from the Delta, we will travel by small coach.

Our meals will be a mixture of **Romanian and International dishes**, with an emphasis on local cuisine, including local game (boar and goose) and plenty of local fish.

Weather

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.

Health and 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. The longest walk will be about 3 miles, over flat terrain.



Leaders

Laurie Jackson is an excellent all-round naturalist, Wildlife Travel Director and experienced tour leader who has led more than 40 of our holidays in recent years, including 5 previous visits to Romania. **Mike Russell** is a Director of Wildlife Travel and popular leader who has led many birdwatching and wildlife holidays for us since 2001 to destinations including three previous visits to the Danube Delta.

Our local guides, **EuroDelta Travel**, know the Delta intimately. They have organised and led our previous trips to the area and we are pleased to be travelling with them again.

Flights

Group flights are with British Airways from London Heathrow to Bucharest.

23rd May depart London Heathrow 09.15, arrive Bucharest Otopeni 14.30

31st May depart Bucharest Otopeni 15.30, arrive London Heathrow 16.55

Romania is two hours ahead of UK time.

Passport and Entry Requirements

Your passport must be issued less than 10 years before the date you enter the country (check the 'date of issue') and valid for at least 3 months after the day you plan to leave (check the 'expiry date').

If you hold a British passport, you are able to travel to Romania for up to 90 days in total in any 180-day period without a visa.

From 'mid 2025' (exact date yet to be confirmed), UK passport holders will need to apply for the ETIAS European Travel Authorisation to visit Schengen countries. This must be applied for online prior to travel. Once granted, your ETIAS will be valid for 3 years.

For up-to-date information, check www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/romania

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 £900 PER PERSON, BALANCE DUE BY 22/02/2025

INCLUDED: Return flights from London (Heathrow) to Bucharest, as above. Local transport on excursions as specified in the itinerary. Eight nights accommodation, all meals dinner day 1 to lunch day 9. Services of leaders and guides.

NOT INCLUDED: Refreshments. Gratuities. Travel insurance. ETIAS and associated costs.

WILDLIFE TRAVEL

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Photos: front (clockwise from top): Squacco Heron, Pallas's Gull, European Roller, Paddyfield Warbler, Danube Delta

Page 2 (from left): 'The Kingfisher', Dalmatian Pelican. **Page 3** (from top): Danube Delta, European Bee-eater, Marsh Frog, Scarce Chaser

Trip reports from our previous Danube Delta holidays can be found on our website.