



AUSTRIA AND HUNGARY BIRDING ADVENTURE

12 - 23 MAY 2020



Western Capercaillie (photo Jari Peltomäki) is one of our targets on this trip.

This tour takes us through two great birding destinations at the heart of Europe, Austria and Hungary. The itinerary comprises uplands in Austria in the Alps and lowlands in the Hungarian plains. Our route takes us through many key Central European habitats and will allow us to observe a large number of bird species of this area, which include many species that rarely occur in the west of Europe. These include **Pygmy Cormorant, Ferruginous Duck, Saker Falcon, Eastern Imperial Eagle, Syrian** and **White-backed Woodpeckers** (among ten woodpecker species, for which, with luck, we have a fair chance to see them all), and **River** and **Barred Warblers**. Around 200 bird species can be expected.

In addition, both countries have rich histories, with some impressive architecture, which will be apparent as we travel through and explore them.

We will spend the nights in smaller guest houses in the best birding locations, rather than in big hotels in towns. All rooms are en-suite and the cuisine and wines are local.

Itinerary (12 days/11 nights)

Day 1: Arrival in Vienna, two-hour transfer to the Lower Alps (Austria)

We will meet at the Vienna International Airport at noon and then depart south-westwards for the forested mountains of Niederösterreich (Lower Austria), a journey of less than two hours. We will spend three nights in this scenic region and look for a range of alpine and forest birds.

Days 2 - 3: Birding the Lower Alps (Austria)

During these two days we will typically take short walks on trails in mixed deciduous-conifer forests. Target species will include **Crested, Willow, and Coal Tits, Eurasian Treecreeper, Common Firecrest, Goldcrest, Western Bonelli's and Wood Warblers, Tree Pipit, White-throated Dipper, Grey Wagtail, Stock Dove, Red Crossbill, and Spotted Nutcracker**. A range of **Woodpeckers** here includes **Black** (Europe's largest) and two much-sought forest species, **White-backed** and **Eurasian Three-toed**. With a little luck, and the knowledge of our local guide, we also hope to find **Eurasian Pygmy and Boreal Owls, Western Capercaillie, and Hazel Grouse**.

Days 4 - 5: Birding the Higher Alps (Austria)

Today and tomorrow we head further into the Alps, aiming to see birds of higher elevations. These famous mountains are very scenic with dense forests, craggy gorges and cliffs, rushing streams, flower-filled meadows and pastures, and impressive snow-topped peaks. In particular, we will look for **Alpine Chough, Alpine Accentor, Water Pipit, Ring Ouzel, Common Redpoll, Eurasian Siskin, and Golden Eagle**. These days will involve a few uphill walks, and the weather can be uncertain, but we will not rush and will not need climbing gear!

Days 6 - 7: Birding the Neusiedler See-Seewinkel and Fertő Hanság Cross-border National Park (Austria, Hungary)

Leaving the Alps, our next two days will be spent in the lowlands around the Neusiedler See-Seewinkel and Fertő Hanság Cross-Border National Park. The Austro-Hungarian border is typified by wetlands, pastures, and farmlands around the large Lake Neusiedl. Breeding shorebirds include **Kentish and Little Ringed Plovers, Black-tailed Godwit, Common Redshank, Pied Avocet, and Black-winged Stilt**. Waterbirds include **Little, Black-necked, and**

Great Crested Grebes and **Common** and **Red-crested Pochards**. Vast reedbeds are home to **Western Marsh Harrier**, **Eurasian** and **Little Bitterns**, **Purple Heron**, **Little** and **Great Egrets**, **Little Crake**, **Water Rail**, **Bearded Reedling**, **Eurasian Penduline Tit**, **Great Reed**, **Savi's**, **Sedge**, and **Moustached Warblers**, and **Common Reed Bunting**. Several villages host the huge nests of the photogenic **White Stork**. **Eurasian Hobby**, **European Honey Buzzard**, and **Black Kite** are among the raptors. Many birds are doing well here in what was formally a closed 'Iron Curtain' frontier area.

Day 8: Transfer to Kiskunság National Park (Hungary)

Today we drive east, crossing deep into Hungary. Our destination will be the Kiskunság National Park, a flat lowland of grasslands, farmlands, and wetlands that lies just east of the River Danube. This journey would take around three hours if done directly, but we will break the trip with numerous birding stops. We should pick up many roadside birds such as **European Turtle Dove**, **Common Cuckoo**, **Little Owl**, **European Bee-eater**, **European Serin**, **Black Redstart**, **White Wagtail**, **Red-backed Shrike**, **Common House Martin**, **Crested Lark**, **Common Nightingale**, **European Stonechat**, **Spotted Flycatcher**, **Corn Bunting**, and **Eurasian Golden Oriole**.

Day 9: Birding Kiskunság National Park (Hungary)

In Kiskunság a major target will be **Great Bustard**, a huge grassland species, probably among the world's heaviest flying bird, which is also Hungary's national bird. With a little luck we may even see males displaying. Another special bird here is **Red-footed Falcon**, which breeds in loose colonies. Other grassland birds include **Grey Partridge**, **Common Quail**, **Eurasian Stone-curlew**, **Collared Pratincole**, **Montagu's Harrier**, **Yellow-legged** and **Caspian Gulls**, **Common** and **Whiskered Terns**, **European Roller**, **Lesser Grey Shrike**, **Eurasian Hoopoe**, **Western Yellow Wagtail** (blue-headed subspecies), and **Tawny Pipit**. Around wetlands we will look for **Pygmy Cormorant**, **Eurasian Spoonbill**, **Squacco Heron**, **Ferruginous Duck**, **Garganey**, **White-tailed Eagle**, and **Bluethroat** (white-spotted subspecies) around wetlands. We will also visit sites for **Long-eared Owl** and **European Nightjar** at dusk.

Days 10 - 11: Birding Bükk Hills National Park (Hungary)

After the lowlands we now head for two hours toward the north-east to the forests of the pleasant, rolling Bükk Hills National Park. On the way we pass through areas where **Saker Falcon** and **Eastern Imperial Eagle** are both possible, two more special 'eastern' birds. In the Bükk Hills we will take several easy walks through woodlands, orchards, vineyards, and scrubland. Birds here include **Short-toed Treecreeper**, **Marsh Tit**, **Woodlark**, **Tree Pipit**, **Marsh**, **River**, and **Barred Warblers**, **Hawfinch**, **Yellowhammer**, and **Rock Bunting**, among others. Raptors include **Northern Goshawk** and **Short-toed Snake Eagle** and **Lesser Spotted Eagle**. The mainly deciduous forests here hold most European woodpeckers, **Middle Spotted Woodpecker** usually in oak woods and **Eurasian Wryneck** and **Syrian Woodpecker** often in orchards and village gardens. **Tawny Owl** and **Eurasian Scops Owl** are also possible.

Day 12: Two-hour transfer from Bükk Hills to Budapest Airport

Today we leave Bükk Hills and head back westwards to the Budapest airport, a two-hour road transfer, where the tour ends.

Please note that the itinerary cannot be guaranteed as it is only a rough guide and can be changed (usually slightly) due to factors such as availability of accommodation, updated information on the state of accommodation, roads, or birding sites, the discretion of the guides and other factors.

Duration: 12 days
Limit: 6 – 8
Date: 12 – 23 May 2020
Start: Vienna, Austria
End: Budapest, Hungary

Price: €4786 per person sharing, assuming 6-8 participants
Single supplement: €460

Price includes:

Meals
Accommodation
Guiding fees
Entrance fees
All transport while on tour
Bottled water throughout the tour

Price excludes:

International flights
Items of a personal nature, e.g. gifts
Drinks
Laundry
Personal insurance
Gratuities