SPAIN

GENERAL INFORMATION



Black-winged Kite *is an attractive species which we are likely to find hunting over steppe grassland and farmland during our Spain birdwatching tours.*

TOUR OUTLINE

We have two exciting set departure birdwatching tours in Spain, and we can also organize custom bird or photography tours to the country. Our **Spain: Spring Birding Extravaganza** birding tour commences in Seville and ends in Madrid and during the 11-day itinerary we cover a large proportion of the southern part of the country, and take in a huge range of habitats and a vast number of resident and migrant species, this is western European birding at its best. During fall, we run our shorter (10-day) **Spain: Birding Andalusia in Fall** tour, which focusses on the excellent region of Andalusia. This tour connects with lots of exciting resident species and, as in the spring tour, our fall tour is also great for migrants and the incredible spectacle of visible migration. Both tours offer stunning landscapes, plenty of culture, and excellent food and drink (including exquisite wines!).

PASSPORT AND VISA

If you are a US citizen and join our Spain birding tours you do not require a visa (assuming you are not extending your stay in the country before/after to over 90 days). Please refer to the details here and keep an eye on this website in the lead up to your tour. Passports must be valid for a minimum of at least three months beyond the length of your stay in Spain, preferably six months, and you should ensure that there is at least one totally blank page within your passport.

Spain is part of the Schengen area, therefore UK citizens are able to visit the country for up to 90 days in any period of 180 days and do not require a visa for this. Passports for UK citizens must be valid for a period of at least three months beyond the day that you depart from Spain. The same applies if you are continuing onto another Schengen area country. An important note for UK citizens it that the three months referred to above must be within ten years of the issue date of the passport. Please see further details on Spain entry requirements provided by the UK Government website here.

If you are arriving in Spain from anywhere else in the world, please refer to the specific government requirements of the departure country in question.

We recommend bringing a photocopy of your passport that can be given to your tour leader or kept in a different location from your actual passport in the case of damage to, or loss of, the original.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

Travel insurance is incredibly important for all tours. We recommend as strongly as we can that you purchase tour cancellation insurance as detailed in the Terms and Conditions on the tour booking form. Your government will usually recommend you have suitable insurance too. Travel insurance is vitally important to protect yourself in the case of accidents, death, medical issues, illness, loss of valuables and luggage, and travel interruptions or delays.

HEALTH AND PESTS

The United States' Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website outlines health issues to be aware of on a visit to Spain, here. The United Kingdom's "Travel Health Pro"

website is a great resource for travelers from the UK. Their information for those planning on visiting Spain can be found here. Please consult your doctor regarding any vaccine requirements and see the advice of your own government.

All travelers should be up to date with routine vaccination courses and boosters (e.g. Chickenpox (Varicella), Diphtheria-Tetanus-Pertussis, Flu (Influenza), Measles-Mumps-Rubella (MMR), and Polio for example, others may also be recommended, please check your government recommendations and requirements). Some travelers may require Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, and Measles immunization if they have underlying health conditions. Please update yourself on the Covid-19 vaccination entry requirements because these are evolving all of the time.

We recommend bringing insect repellent and cream for reducing itchiness of bites for some of the areas we visit during the tour. Malaria is not present in Spain, though Leishmaniasis, Dengue, and Zika have been recorded from sand fly and mosquito bites.

Sunscreen (rated SPF 30 or higher) should be used, and a hat should be worn to protect from the powerful rays of the sun, with sunglasses to help prevent glare. We recommend drinking plenty of water to maintain hydration. To help the environment and reduce the amount of plastic we use, we would be grateful if you could bring your own reusable water bottle.

Furthermore, please check the "Dangerous Animals" section below.

MEDICAL CONDITIONS

Please make sure that you are covered with medical insurance in case of an emergency while on our Spain tours. Without insurance the cost of medical care can be extremely high. Please let us know when you book these tours if you have any medical conditions that you think we should know about (including, but not limited to, allergies, heart conditions, epilepsy, long-term illnesses etc., or anything that might impact you during the tour, such as anything that may hinder your walking ability). This information will enable us to better aid you and for us to pass on to anyone else that may need that information in case of emergency.

CURRENCY

As for much of Europe, Spain uses the Euro (€) currency, this comes in notes of 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200, and 500 Euro denominations. For lower denominations, Euro coins are used, for €1 and €2 values. Below €1, the currency is known as Euro cents and is only available in coin form. Visa and Mastercard are widely accepted across Spain, including for drawing cash from ATMs, though bank charges may apply.

It will be possible to exchange or draw money at the airport upon your arrival (both of our Spain tours start in Seville) and drawing money in the various towns and cities we pass through during the tour will also be possible. Cash is always useful for personal purchases and gratuities.

ELECTRICITY

230 volt (V) and frequency of 50 hertz (Hz), two-pronged round sockets are used throughout Spain. Adaptors are needed for overseas appliances. Plugs of Type F and Type C fit most sockets

in Spain. Additional information and photos of these plug sockets can be found here.

COMMUNICATIONS

We expect that cell (mobile) phone coverage should be available across most of the tour routes and most of the hotels will have Wi-Fi. Note that roaming charges might apply depending on your phone contract.

DAILY ACTIVITIES, PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS, AND TOUR PACE

The primary focus of our Spain birdwatching tours is finding the specific target birds of the regions that we visit. We will be making several early morning starts, and we will occasionally take breakfast after a morning birding session and mealtimes will remain flexible and fit around our birding activities.

Further specific information on each tour can be found on the tour-specific information documents.

SPECIES RECORDING (BIRD LISTS AND ANIMAL LISTS)

At the beginning of your Spain tour we will provide you with a printed detailed daily itinerary and your tour leader will go through this document with you on the first evening of the tour. Ahead of the tour we will also email you a PDF version of this document. The itinerary includes diary pages so you can write down each birding location visited, should you wish. At the back of the itinerary document we include the latest International Ornithological Congress (IOC) taxonomy bird list and International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) mammal, reptile, and amphibian lists to keep a record of what we find on the tour.

Each evening of the tour we go through the list of birds and other animals recorded during the day. Although this activity is optional, we do recommend it as a useful way of keeping track of your sightings and remembering what you've seen!

Our Birding Ecotours tour leaders maintain eBird checklists from all group birding activities during a tour. These lists can be shared to all tour participants who use eBird, just let us know your eBird user details at the beginning of the tour.

On completion of the tour, we will email you a PDF copy of an illustrated trip report in diary format, this will also include a complete bird and animal checklist. Any interesting photos taken by the tour leader will also be added to our Flickr page in a trip report gallery where you will be able to view and download them for yourselves.

TRANSPORTATION AND SEAT ROTATION

During our Spain tours, your local guide will be driving you in a comfortable vehicle such as a 9-seater Renault Traffic or Mercedes Vito minibus.

We maintain a seat rotation policy on all our small-group set departure tours, this will ensure everybody has equal opportunities within the vehicle throughout the tour. Motion sickness will

not excuse anyone from our seat rotation policy. If you are prone to having motion sickness (we will be on windy roads in the mountains for example) you should ensure you bring the necessary medication. Everyone should be fit and flexible enough to maneuver to the back of the vehicle. Tour participants should also be mindful of the extra equipment they bring into the general seating area of the vehicle (rather than the luggage section) and should ensure they do not clog up general thoroughfare or extra seats with camera equipment, tripods, etc. from a comfort and health and safety point of view.

WHAT TO BRING: CLOTHING

As with all of our tours focused on birding, casual dress is fine, and actually recommended. We find that loose, lightweight field clothing is best while birding. Shorts/trousers and T-shirts can be suitable, although it is worth considering the possible insect issues, mentioned above. Warm clothing will be needed for time in the mountains and for early morning birding sessions (e.g. the very early start for the **Dupont's Lark** and possibly other mornings), with a warm fleece a good choice. A pair of long pants (trousers) or a long skirt, and a long-sleeved shirt should be included to help protect against the sun, insects and if you feel the cold.

Rain is possible at any time on either of our Spain tours so a small umbrella and waterproof gear can be useful. We are likely to experience plenty of sunny days during the tours and so sunglasses, sunhat, and sunblock (with a rating of SPF 30 or higher) are useful. Swimwear can be brought as there are pools at some of the hotels.

We always recommend lightweight walking boots for when out on foot to give extra ankle support while walking, especially in mountain areas where ground may be rough. You might like to consider sandals/trainers (tennis shoes) for use in the vehicles and when moving between your room and restaurant in the hotels and lodges.

WHAT TO BRING: OTHER ITEMS

Do not forget: Binoculars, telescope (our guide/tour leader will have a scope though extra scopes can come in useful at times), camera, flashlight (torch), batteries (for electronic equipment and chargers for the re-chargeable batteries, if required), converter plug set if needed and plug adaptors, field guide(s) – see below for recommended guides for birds and other flora and fauna, and daypacks.

Other important items to remember include prescription drugs (also bring the generic names for these drugs), toiletries, prescription glasses (and a spare pair), insect repellent, sunscreen and sunglasses, alarm clock, and money pouch, along with key documents, cash, passport, proof of vaccinations (and photocopies of vaccination record – e.g. your Covid-19 passport or equivalent and copies of these), your travel or health insurance cards – photocopies of which can be carried by the tour leader in case of emergency, credit cards – see info above, US Dollars can be changed to Euros if you prefer not to simply draw from ATM's, cash for drinks, gifts, gratuities, items of a personal nature etc. not included within the tour cost.

Bringing two colored pens (e.g. black and green biros) and a 12 inch (30 centimeter) ruler will help massively when we compile the bird and animal lists each evening. The use of different color pens and a ruler makes it easier to work on the list.

LUGGAGE

Please pack as lightly as possible for the tour as there will be limited space for luggage in the vehicle. We recommend medium, soft-sided duffle bags rather than hard sided suitcases. Please bring a daypack for daily use for storing items such as water bottles, field guides, camera, and snacks, etc.

DANGEROUS ANIMALS

Like much of Europe, Spain has a low risk of harm from wild animals, and we are unlikely to come across any/many of those that are considered dangerous (some have very restricted ranges and we will not be within those on either of our Spain tours). However, it is worth being aware of potentially dangerous animals that do occur, such as **Pine Processionary Caterpillar**, **Megarian** (Mediterranean) **Banded Centipede**, **Mediterranean** (European) **Black Widow** spider, **Wolf Spider** sp., **Brown Recluse** spider, **Eastern Montpellier Snake**, (European) **Asp Viper**, **Seoane's Viper**, **Lataste's** (Snub-nosed) **Viper**, **European Adder** (European Common Viper), **Yellow** (Mediterranean) **Scorpion**, **European** (European Yellow-tailed) **Scorpion**, **Tiger Mosquito**, wasps, the **Spanish Fly**, **Blue Shark**, **Portuguese man o' war**, **Wild Boar**, **Grey** (Iberian) **Wolf**, **Iberian Lynx**, and **Brown Bear**.

CRIME

Spain is considered a safe place to travel however, as with anywhere, it is advisable to take care and remain cautious and observant for the unexpected, especially in busy cities and at airports where there are many people around. When in hotels please use safety/lock boxes (where provided) for storing valuables such as passports, cash, etc.

LANGUAGE

Spanish (Castilian) is the national and official language of Spain and is spoken by a large majority (99%) of Spaniards as a first or second language. Co-official languages of Spain include Catalan, Valencian, Galician, Aranese, and Basque and these are used in their respective regions of Spain. Asturleonese and Aragonese are recognized but not official languages. English is also widely spoken in urban areas. Our local guide will help translate if needed.

BOOKS

Recommended field guide for our Spain tours:

Collins Bird Guide: The Most Complete Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe – Lars Svensson (2010), HarperCollins (this book is published by Princeton in the United States). The Collins Bird Guide is also downloadable as an app on Apple and Android phone/computer systems. This is the guide we recommend for this, and all of our European bird tours. We have put together a blog post here on field guides.

Other bird books of note:

Aves de España – Eduardo de Juana and Juan M Varela Simó.(2016), Lynx Edicions. (Spanish Version).

Birds of Spain – Eduardo de Juana and Juan M Varela Simó.(2017), Lynx Edicions. (English Version).

Europe's Birds: An Identification Guide – Andy Swash *et al*. (2021), WILD Guides.

Flight Identification of Raptors of Europe, North Africa and the Middle East – Dick Forsman (2016), Helm.

Flight Identification of European Seabirds – Anders Blomdahl*et al.* (2007), Helm.

Seabirds of Spain and Portugal/Las Aves Marinas de España y Portugal: PenínsulaIbérica, Islas Baleares, Canaries, Azores y Madeira – Andrew M Paterson (1997), Lynx Edicions. (Spanish with extensive English abstracts).

Other field guides and specific interest books:

Field Guide to the Amphibians and Reptiles of Britain and Europe – Jeroen Speybroeck*et al.* (2016), Bloomsbury Publishing.

Mammals of Europe, North Africa and the Middle East – Stéphane Aulagnier*et al.* (2009), Bloomsbury Publishing.

Europe's Sea Mammals: Including the Azores, Madeira, the Canary Islands and Cape Verde – A Field Guide to the Whales, Dolphins, Porpoises and Seals – Robert Still *et al.* (2019), Princeton University Press.

Collins Butterfly Guide: The Most Complete Field Guide to the Butterflies of Britain and Europe – Tom Tolman (2009), HarperCollins.

Field Guide to the Dragonflies of Britain and Europe – Klaas-Douwe B Dijkstra *et al.* (2020), Bloomsbury Publishing.

A Photographic Guide to Insects of Southern Europe and the Mediterranean – Paul D Brock (2017), NatureBureau.

Wild Plants of Southern Spain: A guide to the Native Plants of Andalucia – Tony Hall (2017), Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

Atlas Ilustrado de Árboles de España (Illustrated Atlas of the Trees of Spain) – Isabel Ortiz (Ed.). (2006), SusaetaEdiciones, S.A.

Orchids of Central Spain (Cuenca Province): A Field Guide–Agustín Coronado Martínez and Eduardo Soto Pérez (2019), Jolube Consultor y Editor Botánico y Ambiental.

SOUND RECORDINGS

Songs and calls of the birds of Spain can be listened to and downloaded from the excellent xeno-canto website.

USEFUL APPS AND WEBSITES

Aves Vox– this app allows you to download bird songs and calls from xeno-canto to your phone.

eBird – this website/app contains a wealth of information; you can explore the sites we will visit on the tour to find birds that you 'need' or would like to see. You can explore photo, video, and sound galleries for practically every species in the world through The Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Macaulay Library. If you subscribe to Birds of the World, you can get further detailed information of the life histories and all kinds of useful information, this is an incredible resource and pulls information from the Macaulay Library, eBird, and The Internet Bird Collection. You can also keep checklists of your bird sightings very easily using the eBird app and this is a great way to keep track of your world bird list.

Merlin – this app can help you identify birds by sight (from images) and sound (from recordings) and is a useful tool to aid identification.

IOC World Bird List – this website contains all the latest details on taxonomic revisions and updates. You can read about newly discovered and described species, splits (creation of a new species) and lumps (deletion of a species) of existing species, and loads of other important and interesting information.

Lonely Planet – a huge resource on places of interest around the world. If you are interested in, or planning to, extend your stay in the country before or after your tour, this guide will help you find some must-see places.



Rock Bunting *is a common and attractive resident in Spain.*