

Late summer in the Balkans

Every autumn thousands of birds perform their annual migration and follow the Black Sea coast southwards towards their wintering grounds in the Middle East and Africa. Every year thousands of storks, pelicans, birds of prey and passerines make this journey. During late August we should record in excess of 150 species of birds including Broad-billed and Marsh Sandpipers, Temminck's Stint, Red-necked Phalarope, European Bee-eater, Eurasian Hoopoe, European Roller, Golden Oriole, Caspian Tern, Pied Wheatear, Pallid and Montagu's Harriers, Levant Sparrowhawk, Long-legged Buzzard, Lesser Spotted, Booted and Short-toed Eagles and concentrations of Red-footed Falcons.

Day 1: Fly to Bucharest, the capital of Romania, and transfer to the village of Vetren which is situated on the banks of the Danube. Our accommodation is at the Pelican Birding Lodge for one night.

Day 2: Today we visit the nature reserve of Srebarna where we should see Dalmatian Pelican and Pygmy Cormorant. The surrounding hills act as a good migration point with previous visits recording European Bee-eater, Eurasian Hoopoe, European Roller, Golden Oriole and raptors including the uncommon Levant Sparrowhawk, Long-legged Buzzard, Lesser Spotted Eagle, Booted Eagle, Short-toed Eagle, Red-footed Falcon and many other species. Later in the afternoon we head towards the small Black Sea town of Kavarna which is our base for the next three nights.

Day 3: Being at the coast we visit Kaliakra which has a steppe-like habitat and a rocky coast and cliffs making it a natural area for migrating birds. White Pelican, Black Stork, Marsh, Hen, Montagu's and Pallid Harriers are all possible. Other visible migrants may include Glossy Ibis. On the steppe habitat itself we should record Eurasian Skylark and Calandra Lark. Nearby a canyon with dead trees and adjacent cliffs sometimes holds Eurasian Eagle Owl and a wide range of woodpeckers including Lesser Spotted and Syrian.

Day 4: Today we visit Lake Durankulak. A large sandy beach separates the lake from the sea. The lake is one of the most important wetlands for migrating and breeding

Dates

Saturday August 25th - Saturday September 1st 2018

Leader: Mark Finn and local guides

Group Size: 8

Birds: 140-180

birds. The reedbeds should produce Bearded Reedling, European Penduline Tit, Great Reed, European Reed, Sedge and on occasions Paddyfield Warblers, Common Kingfisher, a mix of marsh terns including White-winged, Black and Whiskered, Little Gull and a good selection of ducks including Ferruginous. At the nearby coast we may find Caspian and Mediterranean Gulls and offshore Black-necked and Red-necked Grebes. In the surrounding countryside we hope to find Lesser Grey, Red-backed and Woodchat Shrikes and flocks of migrant European Bee-eaters. Shabla Marsh is close by and a reliable area in late August for migrating Red-necked Phalaropes.

Day 5: Today we travel towards the southern part of the Black Sea coast. Our journey takes us across the Stara Planina Mountains, which sweep down towards the sea. On the upper reaches of Stara Planina there are oak forests attracting most of Europe's woodpecker species – Great, Middle and Lesser Spotted, Green- and Grey-headed Woodpeckers, Black Woodpecker and Short-toed Treecreeper. Later in the afternoon, we arrive at Pomorie for a three-night stay.



White-tailed Eagle *Photo: R.Tsvetkov*

Days 6-7: On one morning we start by visiting the local salt works. The salt pans are a magnet for waders, terns and gulls with previous visits producing views of Pied Avocet, Black-necked Stilt, Marsh, Wood and Green Sandpipers, Spotted Redshank, Little Stint and Grey Plover to name a few. Gulls are mainly Caspian although careful scanning may reveal Slender-billed Gull or a Great Black-headed Gull. Terns can be numerous including Caspian, Sandwich and Common plus the three marsh terns. Bourgas lakes and their surroundings can be very rewarding at migration times. If the winds are favourable we should see White Pelicans and many raptors including Honey Buzzard, Common Buzzard and maybe rarer species in Steppe and Greater Spotted Eagles and Saker Falcon. Passerine migration can be exceptional with falls of wagtails, pipits and larks.

Day 8: Today we head back towards

Bucharest for our late afternoon flights back to the UK.

Prices

Ground Price: £1,395
 Single room: £70
 Deposit: £150
 *Air Fare: £300

This holiday is fully inclusive of accommodation and meals, transport, guidance and taxes.

Not included: drinks, insurance, items of a personal nature, air passenger duty taxes, excess baggage and fuel surcharges.

**Please refer to our terms and conditions relating to flights*