

ALVARO'S ADVENTURES
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Spain 2022 – Raptors, migrants, Jamón y Vino.

April 18 - May 2, 2022 (Morocco extension to May 5)

Guided by Simon Tonkin and Niki Williamson



White Stork

Spain is known for its culture, history, food, wine, architecture, soccer, wonderful people, famous artists, and for countless other reasons of course. But few outside of the natural history world realize that it is also THE hotbed of biodiversity in Europe, and an area of endemism in other words a place where unique birds and wildlife

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are found. Endemism tends to be highest in islands and peninsulas, so recall that Spain is part of the Iberian Peninsula, and it begins to make sense. Distinctive climate regions within Spain have created specific habitats where regional specialties reside. It shows up best if you study insects and plants, but even in wide ranging mobile groups such as birds the exceptional nature of Spain is noticeable. With respects to regional specialties, the Spanish Imperial Eagle and Iberian Magpie come to mind, along with a myriad of species which can be seen here but not much farther north in Europe. In addition to the unique nature of Spain, is the reality that it is quite far south in Europe, and the closer to the equator of course, the more diversity you find. So, leaf through the pages of European Warblers, for example, in the guide and a very large number will be found breeding or migrating through Spain. Yes, abundance, diversity and uniqueness abound.

Key word, peninsula! Of course, a peninsula is defined as a bit of land surrounded in almost all sides by water. In Spain the waterbodies are the Atlantic Ocean to the West and Northwest, and the Mediterranean Sea to the South and Southeast. All of this water surrounding the Iberian Peninsula makes it a hotbed for migration. Particularly as the peninsula comes to a southward facing “point” at the Strait of Gibraltar, the narrowest part of the Mediterranean, and where this inland sea meets the open Atlantic. It is literally a skip and a jump from Africa to Europe here, and many birds use this relatively short over water crossing to move from one continent to the other, avoiding a much longer crossing over the wide part of the Mediterranean Sea. This concentrates birds, and in



Bull ring in Trujillo

along the southernmost coast of Europe as they have just finished a long crossing of very

particular it concentrates those which prefer not to fly over water, such as raptors. As these are also day migrants, if the right weather happens, we may see a nice movement and concentration of hawks moving north over the Strait of Gibraltar. As well, passerine migrants concentrate in various spots

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arid terrain, and finally they make it to the much moister habitats of Spain. Watching for these migrants will be one of the quests while we are along the Strait, and we shall have several days to look for the right conditions.

With migrants, the breeding species, and the variety of the sites we venture to, this promises to be a great birding trip to Spain. We have also minimized the driving so we get to spend more time in the field. For those of you thinking of extending the trip, we are going to be offering a short extension to northernmost Morocco.

So, what is the Jamón y Vino part of this tour? The idea is that this is primarily a birding trip, but we incorporate elements of culture, and local food. We will strive to taste some of the Jamón (Ham) that Extremadura is famous for, as well as a little bit of Vino of course. Although not a Birds and Wine trip as we do not visit vineyards, we may have a guided tasting and there will be wine with picnic lunches and dinner. Picnic lunches are a highlight, with many local cheeses, fruits, salads, Spanish Tortilla etc.



Rock Bunting



Honey Buzzard

The Birding Sites We Visit

Extremadura

Beautiful Extremadura remains one of Spain's most sparsely populated, unspoilt and under-visited areas, making it ideal for ecotourism. The region is traditionally known as a spring venue for birding and wildlife. In April and May, there is still migration happening, and other birds are on nesting areas and singing.

Extremadura boasts a wonderful variety of habitats ranging from mixed farming plains to open managed woodland pasture (Dehesa) where the famous Iberian pigs roam free-range, deep rocky valleys, irrigated lands, reservoirs and mountains. Added to this mix are the beautiful towns and villages that are steeped in history and great for wildlife in their own right.

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Specialty migratory birds like White-rumped Swift should have arrived, whilst resident steppe species like the Great Bustard, Little Bustard, Pin-tailed and Black-bellied Sandgrouse are findable. Although harder to see than in their wintering flocks, Stone Curlew are around. Everywhere will be migrant birds, arriving or having arrived from winter quarters in Africa. Gorgeous European Rollers, and European Bee-eater, or striking Great Spotted Cuckoo, along with harder to see and identify warblers of a variety of species. Meanwhile, at the world famous Monfragüe National Park, Red Deer may have their fawns, Griffon and Cinereous (Black) Vultures drift and there is a good chance for a local Golden or Iberian Imperial Eagles.

Doñana

With a fascinating range of habitats to visit, including Stone Pine woodland, reedbeds, rice paddies, open grassland and heathland, freshwater pools and coastal sand dunes and of course the famous marshes, it's no wonder Coto Doñana attracts such a fantastic variety of birds. We'll take you to explore these habitats from our base in El Rocío, a lovely village that overlooks the lagoon, river and marshlands of the Doñana. Its narrow sandy streets will make it feel like you've just walked into a scene from the TV show Bonanza!

We will also enter the interior of the park by 4×4 and explore areas normally closed to the public, where, along with a vast array of wetland bird species and Spanish Imperial Eagle, we will keep our fingers crossed for views of the stunning Iberian Lynx. Finally we will visit friends managing traditional salt pans in the bay of Cadiz to see gulls and shorebirds (waders as the English call them), Greater Flamingoes and Ospreys. Some of the birds we may find here include: Greater Flamingos, Eurasian Spoonbills, White-headed Duck, Marbled Duck, Red-knobbed Coot, Spanish Imperial Eagle, Booted and Short-toed Eagles, Osprey, Black-crowned Night Heron, Little Bittern, Purple Heron, Glossy Ibis, Eurasian Spoonbill, Western (Purple) Swamphen, White Storks, Lesser and Greater Short-toed Lark, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Little Stint, Curlew Sandpiper, Black-winged Stilt, Audouin's and Slender-billed Gulls, Gull-billed and Caspian Terns.

Andalusia

This southernmost province of Spain is perhaps best known for its fantastic tapas, passionate discussions, and welcoming people. However, it is also the most biodiverse region not only in Spain but the whole of Europe. Because of its strategic position at the gateway of two continents, the land here has changed hands countless times in history between the ruling forces of Europe and North Africa, so the culture here is a fascinating blend of Mediterranean and Moroccan. The flora and fauna here too provide tantalizing glimpses of nature from across the waters, and from a migratory bird's perspective it is quite simply the center of the world!

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The Strait of Gibraltar

The Strait of Gibraltar is just 14 km (approx. 9 miles) wide and provides migrant birds with an ideal crossing point of the Mediterranean. Soaring birds are able to make use



Male Lesser Kestrel

of the thermals which form over the Rock of Gibraltar and the Moroccan peak of Jebel Musa to gain height to help them on a treacherous part of their journey. This fluky combination of geography and geology means a helping hand for birds and quite simply spectacular birding for us! We will visit the very best places to watch as an estimated 250,000 raptors pass over the area, as well

as untold thousands of other journeying passerines and seabirds. This incredible natural phenomenon will be happening all around us, meaning you can sit back with a nice cold beer and simply enjoy these unforgettable scenes. A boat trip into the Straits itself will let you get close and personal with the many cetacean species that can be found in spring, such as Common, Bottlenose & Striped Dolphins and Long-finned Pilot Whale – even Fin, Sperm Whales and Orca are possible here. There will also be time to explore the local area in and around Tarifa, where we'll indulge in some fantastic urban birding around the Old Town, and visit some superb wetland, farmland and woodland areas. A massive migration event is in progress at this time of year, as birds journey north. We hope to see several species of raptor including Griffon Vultures, Egyptian Vultures, Bonelli's Eagles and Spanish Imperial Eagles alongside a season's worth of tens of thousands of migrating raptors including Honey Buzzards, Black Kites, Short-toed and Booted Eagles, interspersed with flocks of White and Black Storks and European Bee-eaters. Resident Spanish specialties include Firecrest, Short-toed Treecreeper, Crested Tit and Northern Bald Ibis. Visits to wetlands should yield a host of waders including Kentish Plover, Sanderling, Little Stint and Collared Pratincole, as well as star birds like Western (Purple) Swamphen, Eurasian Spoonbill and Greater Flamingo. Our boat trip could give us views of Cory's and Scopoli's (considered a subspecies of the Cory's) shearwaters as well as the above-mentioned cetaceans.



Pied Avocet

About the Physical Requirements & Pace

This is not a difficult tour, all at a birding pace, not a hiker's pace. We are not venturing on any long hikes, and will maintain our birding to shorter walks, and sometimes stationary points as we watch for raptor migration. Birding will be from good trails, and roadsides, we do not expect any walks with intense elevation gain. However, Spain has its fair share of hills and valleys, so some gradient on trails is to be expected. The tour is a three-part trip, with no more than 3.5hr driving between locations (but broken with birding opportunities en route) and will take in the best of Spain's wildlife from the Plains of Extremadura, the wetlands of famous Doñana to the spectacular migration event in the Straits of Gibraltar. We will take a short boat trip into the Strait of Gibraltar, if you

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are particularly prone to seasickness you may want to take precautions. We do not expect the trip to be that taxing, as it is only a few hours in duration.

Hotels are comfortable, clean and some are especially attractive and appealing. We will try to stay at independently run hotels, with a focus on nature tourism, and typically outside of cities or towns. The exceptions will be the hotels near the airports on the arrival and departure, if you arrive early or require an overnight stay. Spain is classically known for extremely late dinners. This has changed somewhat in recent years, particularly so in hotels catering to tourists. Still, you may need to adjust to a dinner time later than you would eat in North America. Note that on most days we will be having picnic lunches. These tend to be a mix of local cheese and prepared meats (jamon – the various local hams), as well as vegetarian options such as “tortilla” which is based on potatoes and vegetables, nothing like a Mexican tortilla. We will have salad and beer and wine is going to be available throughout the trip. This is a good food and wine trip!



European Griffon



Itinerary for Spain 2022

April 18, 22. Day 1 – ARRIVAL AND ON TO EXTREMADURA. Arrive in Madrid by mid-morning and transfer to Extremadura staying with our good friends Paco and Pilar at Las Canteras, a rural and very bird rich lodge. A birder's favorite. Here, there will be opportunities to experience tasting sessions of the region's excellent wines, narrated by a local expert, alongside outstanding feasts prepared from local produce. En route we will pay a visit to Arrocampo Reservoir for a chance of reedbed species like Purple Heron and Western (Purple) Swampheaven, with chances for Penduline Tit and Bluethroat. We may also pop into the nearby mixed woodland for birds like Short-toed Treecreeper. We will explore the plains, pastures and woodlands right outside our accommodation and hopefully encounter our first Iberian Magpies, Eurasian Hoopoes and Great Spotted Cuckoos amongst the Corn Buntings, Calandra, Crested and Thekla Larks. Night at Las Canteras.

April 19, 22. Day 2 – SANTA MARTA DE MAGASCA. Today we explore the famous plains and river valleys of Santa Marta de Magasca to get an introduction to landscape and scenery. Here is the heartland of Extremadura's most special birds - Great and Little Bustards, Pin-tailed and Black-bellied Sandgrouse, Rock Petronia, European Roller, European Bee-eater, Spanish Sparrow, Corn Bunting and five different lark species. Night at Las Canteras.

April 20, 22. Day 3 – MONFRAGÜE NATIONAL PARK - EXTREMADURA. A day spent in the iconic Monfragüe National Park: a superb site for raptors such as including Griffon, Egyptian and Black Vultures, Spanish Imperial, Bonelli's and Golden Eagle. The woodlands may allow us to see species such as Hawfinch, Firecrest, Crested Tit, Blue Rock Thrush and Dartford Warbler as well as roaming Red Deer and Wild Boar. We may stay out until dusk for the chance of Eurasian Eagle Owl. Night at Las Canteras.

April 21, 22. Day 4 – TRUJILLO. We will start the day visiting the plains south of Trujillo for more bustards and other steppe birds. The nearby reservoir of Alcollarín offers great birding in a beautiful setting, and we will explore its banks looking for European Bee-eaters, Gull-billed Terns, Black-necked Grebes, Red-rumped Swallows, White and Black Storks, Bonelli's Eagle, Western Osprey, and a host of waders and ducks.

Later in the afternoon/early evening we will pay a visit to the gorgeous medieval town of Trujillo, where we can indulge in a little "urban birding" while we explore its ancient streets, made famous even more famous by the series "Game of Thrones." The town is a great place to see Lesser Kestrel, numbers of Spotless Starling and with luck and if we stay out late Eagle Owl is a possibility. Night at Las Canteras.

April 22, 22. Day 5 – TRANSFER TO DOÑANA. We make our transfer to our new base at El Rocío by road, taking time out from the 3-4-hour journey to enjoy glimpses of larks,

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pipits and Hoopoes. Time permitting, we will use our morning to visit one last section of Extremadura's glorious plains, enjoying the early chorus of lark song and maybe some last views of plains specialties. We will make a visit to the historic city of Mérida, the capital city of Extremadura, home of the longest surviving Roman bridge in the world. It straddles the Guadiana River in the heart of the city and from here we can look out for Western (Purple) Swampheens, Penduline Tits and other riverine specialties! Lunch will be south of Mérida at Alange reservoir, where we will scout for Black Wheatear, Rock Bunting and hopefully find Bonelli's Eagle.

After arrival at our traditional-style accommodation in El Rocío, we'll hopefully have time for a first exploration of the splendid lagoon on whose shores the village is perched. The 'Madre de las Marismas', at this time of year might be teeming with Greater Flamingoes, waders and numerous other waterbirds. However, the village of El Rocío itself will also beckon, especially to wannabe cowboys and -girls! Its sandy streets are still to this day lined with hitching posts for horses and lovely, white-washed buildings, giving the feel of a sleepy Wild West town, and you're sure to want to indulge in some urban birding and enjoy its laid back, slow-paced feel. Accommodation at Palacio Doñana, dinner at Restaurante Toruño

April 23 - 24, 22. Day 6 – 7 – DOÑANA. To make the absolute best of local weather conditions and bird movements, the itinerary during our stay remains flexible. However, you can expect the following activities to make your stay a memorable one. In the numerous local marshes, ponds and flooded channels, we'll see many Greater Flamingos, Eurasian Spoonbills, Black-winged Stilts and Glossy Ibis, and visit the best areas to look for Little Bittern and the beautiful Marbled Duck. We hope to visit the fish ponds at Dehesa de Abajo where an amazing number and variety of wetland species could be present. We will also look for some of the region's specialties, like Western (Purple) Swampheens and Red-knobbed (Crested) Coot. We will look out for Gull-billed, Black and Whiskered Terns, Purple Herons, Black-headed Great Crested and Little Grebes, Black-crowned Night Herons and raptors such as Red and Black Kites, Short-eared Owls and the stunning Black-winged Kite. Adjacent rice paddies hold not only a great array of wetland species but also some of Spain's resident "exotics" such as Common Waxbill and Golden Bishop.

A day will also be spent visiting the marshland and salt pans to the east of the mouth of the Guadalquivir. Here we'll be looking for large numbers of Greater Flamingos, as well as Caspian and Gull-billed Terns. A wide variety of waders use the lagoons to rest up and gather their strength on migration. These should include such species as Curlew Sandpiper, Little Stint, Spotted Redshank, Sanderling, and Pied Avocet or maybe even Marsh Sandpiper or Temminck's Stint. This is also one of the best sites in southern Spain for the beautiful Slender-billed Gull which often gather here in quite large numbers. Nearby the Laguna del Tarelo is a noted site for the rare and local White-headed Duck.

The Stone Pine woodlands are home to roving flocks of Iberian Magpies plus Hoopoes, Crested Tits and Lesser Spotted Woodpecker. We will also look for the Lesser Short-toed Lark, migrant warblers and perhaps European Bee-eaters. We'll take a 4 x 4

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vehicle into the Coto del Rey at the northern edge of the reserve, where we'll explore a mixture of marshes and woodland. This area holds the densest populations of raptors in the Coto Doñana. Both Red and Black kites are common as are Booted Eagles and Common Buzzard. The soaring flocks of Griffon Vultures are often joined by Short-toed Eagles, Western Marsh Harriers and Northern Goshawks and we should find one of the pairs of the Spanish Imperial Eagles which breed in the Coto del Rey area. We will also have local knowledge and skill to help us look for the beautiful Iberian Lynx and these two factors combined with a dash of luck could well give us views of this Critically Endangered and enigmatic cat. Accommodation at Palacio Doñana, dinner at Restaurante Toruño

April 25, 22. Day 8 – DOÑANA TO THE STRAIT OF GIBRALTAR. Today we will transfer from Doñana to the Straits of Gibraltar. En route we will stop in the bay of Cadiz where we'll spend some time with friends who manage and encourage traditional salt extraction which provide a variety of conditions for migratory waders, gulls and terns. On their salt pans we can expect to encounter large numbers of breeding Kentish Plovers, Pied Avocets and Little Terns, and we will also be on the look-out for species such as Glossy Ibis, Greater Flamingo and Western Osprey. For those who wish to, there will be a chance to have a go at traditional salt extraction yourself and try some of the salt on a specially prepared picnic, as well as some other local specialties such as tortillita de camarones, delicious fritters made with tiny shrimps straight out of the salt pans! We'll then continue our journey to the Straits, stopping to take into account birding opportunities en route. We will overnight in our third and final base, the beautiful eco-lodge of Huerta Grande, where dinner will be provided.

April 26, 22. Day 9 – STRAIT OF GIBRALTAR. Our base at the beautiful eco-lodge of Huerta Grande is ideal for watching the migration as it is located between two natural parks in the hills above the Straits of Gibraltar, amongst lush Cork Oak forest. We should witness many hundreds of migratory birds making the crossing to their wintering grounds in Africa, including Egyptian Vultures, Short-toed and Booted Eagles, Honey Buzzards, Black Kites and both Black and White Storks. We'll visit the headquarters of our partnership conservation organization, Fundacion Migres, where we'll receive a brief but fascinating talk, introducing the phenomenon of migration across the Straits, and their monitoring and research work in this area. From here we can continue to a nearby watchpoint affording spectacular views of the North Coast of Africa, and hopefully a stream of crossing raptors, which of course is weather dependent. Overnight at Huerta Grande where dinner will be provided.

April 27, 22. Day 10 – BOATING THE STRAIT OF GIBRALTAR. We will take a boat excursion, weather permitting, into the Strait to witness the seabird passage and cetaceans. We will be on the lookout for Cory's and Balearic Shearwaters and European Storm Petrel among other species, plus the three species of resident dolphin (Common, Bottlenose and Striped) and the resident pods of Long-finned Pilot Whale. Once back on

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dry land, we will have a go at some urban birding around the old town of Tarifa where we can encounter Common Bulbul and breeding Lesser Kestrels. We'll enjoy a picnic lunch in the old town square where, simply by looking up we'll be able to see migrating raptors and storks crossing over this historic town. Overnight at Huerta Grande.

28, 22. Day 11 – BIRDING TARIFA AND THE STRAIT. We'll spend the morning at Los Lances nature reserve, a small area of intertidal habitat on Tarifa beach. On the short walk across low intensity farmland, we may see Crested Lark, Tawny Pipit, Short-toed Lark, Yellow Wagtails and Corn Bunting. A boardwalk takes us out to a hide, from where we can look across the lagoons to see birds including Common Ringed and Kentish Plover, Sanderling and Little Stint. There's a decent chance of visiting Osprey here too, and seabirds can include Sandwich and Caspian Terns, and the once extremely rare Audouin's Gull. Migratory movement is completely dependent on wind strength and direction. Overnight at Huerta Grande.

April 29, 22. Day 12 – STRAIT AND NORTHERN BALD IBIS. Today, alongside more raptor-watching at sites with stunning views across the Straits to North Africa, we'll make a visit to nearby Barbate salt pans. This area offers a fantastic selection of waders which change every day, as well as some real stars like Eurasian Spoonbill, Greater Flamingo and Western Osprey. Also close by is the town of Vejer de la Frontera, where a successful reintroduction program of the Critically Endangered Northern Bald Ibis took place in 2008. From thirty pairs, the birds now number around 78 pairs, and we should be able to see these engaging and quirky birds at their nesting colony or grazing on surrounding farmland. Overnight at Huerta Grande.

April 30, 22. Day 13 – LA JANDA AND MIGRANTS. Today we'll visit the farmland and wetlands of La Janda. The huge area of low intensity farmland was once a vast wetland on a par with Doñana in terms of its ecological importance. It's long since been drained for agriculture, but amongst the rice fields and managed pools and ditches, some real wetland gems remain, hinting at its former natural glory. Amongst many hundreds of White Stork and Glossy Ibis, here we should see many waders, wildfowl and raptors, such as Western (Purple) Swamphen, Western Marsh Harrier, Black-shouldered Kite as well as a chance of Spanish Imperial Eagle and Bonelli's Eagle whilst the farmland areas should yield Spanish Sparrow and Calandra Lark. Overnight at Huerta Grande.

May 1, 22. Day 14 – LOS ALCORNALES. Our last full day in Spain we'll take time to explore our rich local surroundings in the Los Alcornacales natural park. This is the biggest cork oak forest in Europe and especially unique in the way that it gathers moisture coming in off the ocean to create a warm Mediterranean cloud forest. As well as some adorable local avian specialties in the form of Western Bonelli's Warbler, Firecrest, Crested Tit, Hawfinch and Short-toed Treecreeper, almost anything can turn up here during migration.

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There are also a host of interesting, rare plants to see here, such as the quasi-endemic carnivorous plant *Drosophyllum lusitanicum*, which occurs only here and in some areas of Portugal. We will also have a look at the high rocky cliffs of Sierra de la Plata, here amongst the eerie screeching of the resident Griffon Vulture colony, mountain goodies such as Blue Rock Thrush, Crag Martin, and Rock Bunting are all likely to be encountered. If we should again find ourselves in the midst of the raptor migration, and will take our final chance to sit back and relax with a picnic and a glass of wine at a raptor watchpoint as the spectacular birds drift overhead. Overnight at Huerta Grande.

May 2, 22. Day 15 – DEPARTURE. Today sadly our trip comes to an end, and it's time to make our own migratory journey back home. Flights back from Malaga.

POST TOUR – MOROCCO

***** NOTE ***** as of November 2021 we are still unclear on whether entry to Morocco by ferry will be possible by spring. This is not covid related, more of a political issue between the two countries. If Morocco is unavailable to us, an extension to the mountain area of Ronda in Spain will be offered as a replacement. We should know these details by early in 2022 we expect.

Starting from Huerta Grande. A three day, two-night extension to sample some of the birding, food and culture of Morocco. You are already here, so why not?

May 2, 22. Day 15 – FERRY TO MOROCCO. Early morning, we make our own crossing – to northern Morocco by ferry – before beginning our exploration of the African side of the Straits, visiting a variety of coastal and inland sites. This afternoon we will visit the estuary of Merdja Zerga, a sweeping wetland on Morocco's Atlantic coast south of Tangiers. Here we'll take a boat trip on a traditional fishing boat out onto the lagoon itself. We will look for Lesser Crested, Whiskered, Gull-billed, Caspian and Little Terns and enjoy waders probing the mud in their thousands, amongst them Greenshanks, Spotted Redshanks, Whimbrels and Avocets. We'll stay until dusk, for then we have a chance of seeing the extremely rare Moroccan Marsh Owl. Our first night will be in the historic city of Larache, where breeding Little Swift and Pallid Swift will whizz overhead, and Common Bulbul and House Bunting should be encountered.

May 3, 22. Day 16 – MOROCCO. In the morning we'll visit the fantastic wetlands at Loukkos, another protected site. Here we'll look for Moustached Warbler, Brown-throated Martin, Red-knobbed Coot, and Marbled Duck. Next, we head to the delightful blue city of Chefchaouen. This ancient city at the edge of Talassamtane National Park gives spectacular views of the Rif Mountains. En route we will spend time in the Forest of Bouhachem where we will look out for Levillant's Green Woodpecker, African

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Chaffinch, African Blue Tit, Atlas Pied Flycatcher, and with luck, get a glimpse of one of the area's troupes of Barbary Macaques. Night in Chefchaouen.

May 4, 22. Day 17 – RETURN TO SPAIN. The Talassamtane mountain range offers brilliant and easily accessible mountain birding with several species of raptor likely to be encountered such as Atlas Long-legged Buzzards, Peregrine Falcons and Bonelli's Eagles amongst raptors migrating through the mountain ranges. Smaller jewels to be found come in the form of the stunning Moussier's Redstart and Black Wheatear whilst Blue Rock Thrushes are frequently encountered. This morning we will journey high up the mountain in 4x4 vehicles to experience these delights for ourselves! After a picnic lunch we will embark on our homeward journey, looking for cetaceans and seabirds from the ferry before arriving back at Huerta Grande for dinner.

May 5, 22. Day 18 – DEPARTURE. Today sadly our trip comes to an end, and it's time to make our own migratory journey back home. Flights back from Malaga.

Your Guides

Niki Williamson Niki was given a YOC (Young Ornithologist Club) membership for her 6th birthday and has loved nature ever since. Somehow, Niki has managed to remain a member of the RSPB Wildlife Explorers under 9's to this day and has found her intellectual level in the Rookie cartoons. Describing herself as a professional tree-hugger, Niki worked and volunteered for the RSPB for 12 years, managing habitats, brandishing chainsaws with varying levels of threat to limbs (her own and others) and honing her birding skills in some of the best wetland, upland and coastal habitats in the UK. In recent years, she had the pleasure of working with nature-friendly farmers to make the countryside a better place for wildlife. She headed up RSPB's Eastern England farmland advisory team which, together with the other partners in Operation Turtle Dove, is working to ensure a future for this iconic bird. Niki is one of the original members of team peanut – a crack troop of A-team style conservationists looking at ways in which West African peanut growers can not only provide peanuts for your bird food but also provide habitats for struggling migratory species including Turtle Doves through Fair to Nature accreditation.

Simon Tonkin was raised in Plymouth, UK and legend has it he was found on a rubbish tip being raised by Gulls. Truth is, he was engaged in general vandalism, even piracy but only when not birding rubbish tips, sewage outfalls and fish factories. It all started when, at nine years old, his enthrallment with the natural world led him to sneak out with his father's massive binoculars at first light, returning home many hours after dark covered in estuarine mud and other indescribable detritus, to face the music! Fulfilling a boyhood dream, Simon has worked for the RSPB full-time for many years; the first projects he

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was involved in were to protect breeding Hen Harriers and Bee-eaters in the North of England. Simon has lectured in ornithology, specializing in a variety of subjects including bird ethology, migration and bird populations. He has worked in farmland bird conservation for the last 15 years and recently worked at the RSPB's headquarters in Sandy. Simon has conducted research on Corn Bunting crop nest site selection and on the seed palatability of farmland granivores. He also co-launched Operation Turtle Dove, coordinating efforts in the UK and internationally to save the species from extirpation. Simon has worked as the Conservation Manager for Conservation Grade, working on ground-breaking and exciting conservation projects in Spain, Portugal, Central America, Morocco, Senegal and the Gambia and is widely travelled in these countries, being particularly familiar with their avifauna, lepidoptera and mammalian species. Simon now spends his time in Spain working on a variety of conservation projects, or tour leading and developing the eco-lodge of Huerta Grande

Financial Information

FEE: \$4950 from Madrid.

Note – tour ends in Malaga.

DEPOSIT: \$500 per person.

FINAL PAYMENT DUE: Jan 8, 2022

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$700.

LIMIT: 12.

MOROCCO EXTENSION:

FEE: \$1350 (Single supplement \$120)

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Additional Information

DOCUMENTS: A current passport valid for at least three months after your departure date is necessary for US citizens to enter Spain. You require a return air ticket as well. Your passport must have at least one blank page for the stamp. No visa is necessary if you are staying less than 90 days. If you are not a US citizen, please check with the Spanish consulate nearest you for entry requirements. Information about consulates and entry requirements is generally available online or phone or e-mail Alvaro's Adventures and we can look this up. *** COVID 19 – currently one is required to be vaccinated to enter Spain. One also needs to be tested before returning to the US. This can be a home test where an online observer guides you. By spring these requirements may change ****

AIR ARRANGEMENTS: Please plan to arrive in Madrid by morning of April 18, 2022, as we begin our drive to the west mid-morning of the 18th. Arriving a day early to rest up and avoid the stress of missed connections is always recommended and we can arrange extra nights for you. Please schedule to leave Spain on May 2, from Malaga,

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unless you are going on the extension (May 5 if on the extension). Do consult with us, if you think timing may be an issue, if you have a very early morning flight, and we can work through the options. Be sure to check with Alvaro's Adventures to confirm that the flights you have chosen will work with our itinerary and to confirm that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. Once purchased, most airline tickets are non-refundable and carry a penalty to change. We are not responsible for these fees.

TOUR INCLUSIONS/EXCLUSIONS: The tour fee is \$4950 for one person in double occupancy from Madrid, Spain. It includes all lodging from Day 1 through Day 14, all meals from lunch on Day 1 through breakfast on Day 15, all ground transportation, entrance fees, tips for baggage handling and meal service, and the guide services of the tour leaders. Alcoholic beverages and items of a personal nature are not included. The above fees do not include your airfare to and from Spain, internal airfare, airport taxes, visa fees, optional tips to local drivers, phone calls, laundry, or other items of a personal nature.

The single supplement for the tour is \$700. If you do not have a roommate but wish to share, we will try to pair you with a roommate from the tour; but if none is available, you will be billed for the single supplement. Our tour fees are based on double occupancy; one-half the cost of a double room is priced into the tour fee.

TOUR REGISTRATION: To register for this tour, complete the enclosed Registration/Release and Indemnity form and return it with a **deposit of \$500** per person. If registering by phone, a deposit and the Release and Indemnity form must be received within fourteen days, or the space will be released. **Full payment** of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to departure, or **by Jan 8, 2022. We will bill you for the final payment at either 120 days or when the tour has reached sufficient subscription to operate, whichever date comes later.** Since the cost of your trip insurance and airline tickets is generally non-refundable, please do not finalize these purchases until you have received final billing for the tour or have been advised that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate by your tour manager.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Refund of deposit and payment, less \$100 handling fee, will be made if cancellation is received up to 120 days before departure. If cancellation occurs between 119 and 70 days before the departure date, 50% of the tour fee is refundable. Thereafter, all deposits and payments are not refundable.

This policy only applies to payments made to Alvaro's Adventures for tour (and any services included in those fees). Airline tickets not included in the tour fee and purchased separately often carry penalties for cancellation or change or are sometimes totally non-refundable. Additionally, if you take out trip insurance the cost of the

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insurance is not refundable so it is best to purchase the policy just prior to making full payment for the tour or at the time you purchase airline tickets, depending upon the airlines restrictions.

The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute another guide for the original one. Where this is necessary, notification will be given to tour members, and they will have the right to cancel their participation and receive a full refund.

Alvaro's Adventures is a Registered Seller of Travel in the State of California (CST # 2105497). Registration as a seller of travel does not constitute approval by the State of California. This ensures your right to a prompt refund: Upon cancellation of the transportation or travel services, where the passenger is not at fault and has not canceled in violation of any terms and conditions previously clearly and conspicuously disclosed and agreed to by the passenger, all sums paid to the seller of travel for services not provided will be promptly paid to the passenger, unless the passenger advises the seller of travel in writing, after cancellation. This provision does not apply where the seller of travel has remitted the payment to another registered wholesale seller of travel or a carrier, without obtaining a refund, and where the wholesaler or provider defaults in providing the agreed-upon transportation or service. In this situation, the seller of travel must provide the passenger with a written statement accompanied by bank records establishing the disbursement of the payment, and if disbursed to a wholesale seller of travel, proof of current registration of that wholesaler.

TRIP CANCELLATION & MEDICAL EMERGENCY INSURANCE: We strongly recommend you consider purchasing trip cancellation (including medical emergency) insurance to cover your investment in case of injury or illness to you or your family prior to or during a trip. Because we must remit early (and substantial) tour deposits to our suppliers, we cannot offer any refund when cancellation occurs within 70 days of departure, and only a partial refund from 70 to 89 days prior to departure (see CANCELLATION POLICY). In addition, the Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. US medical insurance plans seldom cover health costs incurred outside the United States unless supplemental coverage is purchased. Furthermore, US Medicare and Medicaid programs do not provide payment for medical services outside the United States.

When making a decision regarding health insurance, Americans should consider that many foreign doctors and hospitals require payment in cash prior to providing service and that a medical evacuation to the United States may cost well in excess of \$50,000. Uninsured travelers who require medical care overseas often face extreme

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difficulties. When consulting with your insurer prior to your trip, please ascertain whether payment will be made to the overseas healthcare provider or whether you will be reimbursed later for expenses that you incur.

RESPONSIBILITY: For and in consideration of the opportunity to participate in the tour, each tour participant and each parent or legal guardian of a tour participant who is under 18 agrees to release, indemnify, and hold harmless Alvaro's Adventures, its agents, servants, employees, shareholders, officers, directors, attorneys, and contractors as more fully set forth in the Release and Indemnity Agreement on the reverse side of the registration form. Alvaro's Adventures acts only as an agent for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, or other means, and assumes no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity caused by defect in such vehicles or for any reason whatsoever, including the acts, defaults, or bankruptcies of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. Alvaro's Adventures accepts no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. The tour participant shall bear all such losses and expenses. Alvaro's Adventures reserves the right to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. Alvaro's Adventures reserves the right to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely.

Participants should be in good health and should consult a physician before undertaking a tour. If you have questions about the physical requirements of a tour, please contact our office for further information. Participants should prepare for the tour by reading the detailed itinerary, and other pertinent matter provided by Alvaro's Adventures. Each participant is responsible for bringing appropriate clothing and equipment as recommended in our bulletins.

THE RECEIPT OF YOUR TOUR DEPOSIT SHALL BE DEEMED TO BE CONSENT TO THE ABOVE CONDITIONS. EACH TOUR PARTICIPANT AND EACH PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN OF A TOUR PARTICIPANT WHO IS UNDER 18 SHALL SIGN AND DELIVER THE RELEASE AND INDEMNITY AGREEMENT AT THE TIME OF REGISTRATION.

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