

# EXTREMADURA



"The Spanish steppes are magical in spring with the flower-studded plains hosting Great Bustards displaying and Montagu's Harriers sky-dancing - all to the soundtrack of Calandra and Crested Lark in song flight. With the spring sun on your face, all is well with the world!" Darren Rees

Dates Sat 1 - Sat 8 Apr 2023  
Price £2,295  
Deposit £455 Single Supp £200

Leaders Darren Rees and Julian Sykes  
Flights EasyJet, scheduled, Speedy Boarding and extra legroom included  
Outbound: Morning, Gatwick-Madrid  
Inbound: Afternoon, Madrid-Gatwick  
Other UK airports may be available  
Weather Variable in spring, a mixture of sun and showers (12°-25°C)  
– can be cool on the plains  
Walking Some short easy walks on level ground  
Meals All included from lunch on Day 1 to lunch on Day 8. Simple, interesting Spanish fare at the hotel and at local restaurants  
Insects Unlikely to be a problem  
Accom Double, twin and single rooms all ensuite  
Group 12

## Just some of what we hope to see:

White Stork	Purple Swamphen
Black Stork	Eagle Owl
Spanish Imperial Eagle	Scop's Owl
Short-toed Eagle	Little Bustard
Bonelli's Eagle	Great Bustard
Black-shouldered Kite	Black-bellied Sandgrouse
Montagu's Harrier	Pin-tailed Sandgrouse
Lesser Kestrel	Bee-eater
Black Vulture	Roller
Griffon Vulture	Hoopoe

The best place for birds of prey in Western Europe  
- Griffon colonies and five breeding eagle species, as well as displaying bustards, sandgrouse and other special birds.

- Over twenty years' experience and 45 tours, we know this place well!
- Early Spring for Great and Little Bustards displaying
- Three vulture, three kite and five eagle species possible
- Difficult-to-see birds such as Eagle Owl and sandgrouse
- White Storks and Lesser Kestrels over medieval Trujillo
- Lovely accommodation, with welcoming hosts and traditional Spanish fare
- Fabulous wetlands with a wealth of waterbirds

Extremadura is one of the least developed yet most spectacular provinces in Spain. After our flight to Madrid we'll make our way to our base at Hotel Rural Soterraña, Madroñera. This charming, traditional style accommodation is the ideal base to explore the Extremadura region and our hosts will be very welcoming.

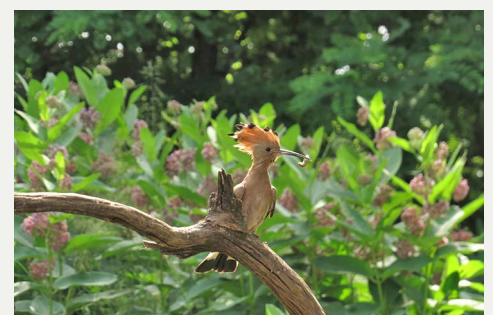
We are in the perfect location and there will be plenty to enjoy near our hotel, with White Stork, Black Kite, Hoopoe, Bee-eater, Sardinian Warbler, Iberian Grey Shrike and immaculate Azure-winged Magpies. Scops Owl might be calling at night.

**2-7** The rolling open country of Extremadura is a favourite place to watch birds in spring and this is the time of peak activity amongst the aristocratic Great Bustards that strut across the plains. We shall witness one of the most

spectacular bird displays on earth, as huge males literally turn themselves inside out in an attempt to attract a mate! Smaller Little Bustard males prefer blowing raspberries and nodding their heads to attract their females.

On Caceres Plain, relic areas of steppeland can be covered in a delightful carpet of small flowers, while the air above is thick with the sound of Calandra and Crested Larks. Rocky outcrops hide Stone Curlews and Little Owls; flocks of Black-bellied and Pin-tailed Sandgrouse chase around the skyline and elegant Montagu's Harriers move back to their breeding grounds. Watching their graceful sky-dancing display will be a tour highlight.

Birds of prey are a big part of the wildlife spectacle and both kites and vultures seem to be always





*"For the bird-of-prey enthusiast look no further: kites everywhere; sky-dancing Montagu's Harriers; squadrons of vultures circling above their rugged cliff colonies and all five species of eagle, including the rarest eagle in the world - Spanish Imperial Eagle. All against a backdrop of towering cliffs and rolling Dehesa – perfect." Darren Rees*

on the wing. Magical Monfrague National Park is one of Europe's finest raptor hot-spots and its mix of wooded hillsides and deep rocky gorges is home to all five species of Spanish eagles: powerful Golden; smaller Booted; hovering Short-toed; scarce Bonelli's and the critically endangered Spanish Imperial.

Rare Black Vultures nest in good numbers and at precipitous Pena Falcon rock, there is a colony of Griffon Vultures, with many on ledges tending young, while others soar overhead amongst Egyptian Vulture, Peregrine and the unusual Black Stork. Smaller birds are welcome co-stars: Crag Martin, Hawfinch, Blue Rock Thrush, Black Redstart, Subalpine Warbler and Rock Bunting. Here, we'll also make a special dusk visit as the vultures return to roost and the Nightingales start their evening chorus, where we'll hope to see charismatic Eagle Owl – fingers crossed!

Rich wetlands in this region, such as Embalse de Arrocampo and Embalse de Alcollarin, are havens for aquatic wildlife. Marsh Harriers drift over reedbeds where we could find Purple Heron, Little Bittern, Purple Swampphen and Savi's, Cetti's and Great Reed Warblers. Gull-billed Terns fly over water dotted with grebes and rimmed with egrets and occasional Spoonbills. The area is also home for one of Europe's rare breeding birds– sensational Black-shouldered Kites hunt over surrounding fields and woodland edge.

We'll visit medieval Trujillo, with its delightful narrow streets, charming old churches and busy Plaza Major. White Storks nest on many of the towers, newly arrived Pallid Swifts chase around the sky and at the town's bullring we can watch Lesser Kestrels and Spotless Starlings going in and out of the red-tiled roof. The rice fields in the south are also worth exploring, another different habitat attracting interesting species: small populations of Red Avadavat and Common Waxbill work the field margins; vivid blue Rollers and buoyant Collared Pratincoles (half tern, half wader) are found here, along with Little Ringed Plover and Tree and Spanish Sparrows.

All the while, in the land that time forgot, Corn Buntings sing from every perch, Woodlarks give their melodic song, Dartford Warblers and Woodchat Shrikes chatter in the bushes and Red-rumped Swallows dash by.....sadly so will our time here!

**8** Time allowing, we'll birdwatch on the final morning, before returning to Madrid for our flight back to the UK.



### Outline Itinerary

- Day 1** Fly to Madrid  
3 hour transfer to Madroñera  
7 nights Hotel Rural Soterraña
- Days 2-7** Birdwatching and wildlife exploration of the steppes, woodlands, wetlands and mountain regions of one of Spain's premier birding locations, including Monfrague National Park, Embalse de Arrocampo and Caceres Plain
- Day 8** Transfer to Madrid for flight to Gatwick

**Brooke Miller:** Little Bustard, Azure-winged Magpies, Spanish Imperial Eagle and Griffon Vulture  
**Sally Dowden:** Trujillo  
**Roy Atkins:** Hoopoe, Roller  
**Simon Eaves:** Great Bustards

