

HUNGARY



"The sight and sound of thousands of Common Cranes coming to roost is breathtaking! Add to that a great selection of birds including Great Bustard, Imperial Eagle, Saker Falcon, a roost of Long-eared Owls and scarce geese and woodpeckers and this is an incredible trip!"
Roy Atkins

Dates 28 Oct - 4 Nov 2017
Price £1,995
Deposit £350 Single Supp £200

Leader Roy Atkins plus local guides

Flights British Airways, scheduled
Outbound: Morning, Heathrow - Budapest
Inbound: Afternoon, Budapest - Heathrow

Weather Temperatures likely to be around 10°-20°C, with sunshine and some rain likely

Walking Some short, easy walks, including one through woodland on a flat track and a slightly steeper walk to a quarry. Bring waterproof walking shoes or boots and layers of clothing

Meals All included from dinner on Day 1 to lunch on Day 8

Insects Insects are unlikely to be a problem, but bring some repellent just in case

Accom Comfortable accommodation in twin, double and single ensuite rooms. The first pension is more basic but well situated for our needs and the second is a charming hotel with very individual rooms and excellent food

Group 12

Just some of what we hope to see:

Common Crane	Black Woodpecker
White-tailed Eagle	Syrian Woodpecker
Eastern Imperial Eagle	Grey-headed Woodpecker
Saker Falcon	White-backed Woodpecker
Long-legged Buzzard	Hawfinch
Great Bustard	Alpine Accentor
Red-breasted Goose	Wallcreeper
Bean Goose	Penduline Tit
Ural Owl	Bearded Tit
Long-eared Owl	European Tree Frog
Pygmy Cormorant	Woolly Pig!
Ferruginous Duck	
Red-necked Grebe	

One of the world's great wildlife spectacles - the sight and sound of over 30,000 Common Cranes flying in to roost - plus raptors, woodpeckers, geese, owls and so much more!

- Wonderful sight of thousands of Common Cranes coming to roost
- Explore the famous Hortobagy National Park and beautiful Bukk Hills
- Eastern Imperial Eagle, Saker, Long-legged and Rough-legged Buzzards
- Local guide with expert knowledge of the area
- Up to eight species of woodpecker possible, including Syrian and White-backed
- Big goose flocks with chance of Red-breasted amongst the White-fronted Geese
- Astonishing roost of over 50 Long-eared Owls, plus Ural Owl in Bukk Hills!

After our flight to Budapest, we drive to our guesthouse near Hortobagy National Park.

2-4 Birding in the Hortobagy area is a thrilling mix of raptors, geese, waterbirds, bustards, woodpeckers and even owls ... but it will be the cranes that steal the show!

This vast National Park is a mosaic of wetlands, marshes, woodlands and fields, with an exciting range of species, but by coming at this time of year we get to see thousands of Common Cranes coming to roost in the fading light. As the sun sets the Cranes gather in fields nearby, before flying into the roosting sites in large flocks, their bugling calls echoing round as they drop into the shallow lakes where they spend the night. It is a wonderful experience - especially if there is a red sky, when the cranes' silhouettes look particularly beautiful and worth the trip just to see this!

However - the supporting cast is incredible! A great selection of habitats includes huge reed-fringed fishponds where Marsh Harriers hunt and Bearded and Penduline Tits can be found. On the open water and meadows we'll check through flocks of White-fronted Geese for Bean Geese and the rare Red-breasted Goose - on most trips we find two or three! A small flock of Lesser White-fronted Geese winter here too, but can be harder to find. The lakes are worth checking for Ferruginous Duck and Red-crested Pochard and there are always a few Great White Egret, Pygmy Cormorant and Yellow-legged Gulls amongst the Caspian Gulls. We'll keep an eye out for European Tree Frogs and we've found Fire-bellied Toads and European Pond Terrapins too.

The whole area is fabulous for birds of prey. Buzzards are everywhere but cold weather further



"By adding another day in the Bukk Hills, we have increased our chances of several birds, including Ural Owl and woodpeckers, with Middle and Lesser Spotted, Grey-headed, Black and with luck even White-backed Woodpecker all possible. If we are very lucky, Wallcreeper and Alpine Accentor may have already arrived for the winter." Roy Atkins



north may have already pushed Rough-legged Buzzards and Hen Harriers into the Hortobagy for the winter. We should see Eastern Imperial Eagle, Saker Falcon, Peregrine and Merlin, with a very slim chance of Greater Spotted Eagle. There is a small outlying population of Long-legged Buzzard here and White-tailed Eagles are common.

In an area of steppe country known as the Pusza, we shall look for Great Bustards. Syrian Woodpeckers frequent the orchards and village trees, Great Grey Shrike winter here and we shall visit a local village favoured by wintering Long-eared Owls! This remarkably ordinary place for some reason attracts up to a hundred Long-eared Owls in just a few trees and we have usually found more than fifty here in the past, with more near the park visitor centre. We'll get great views of them during daylight hours as they rest up, before heading out to hunt in the evening, a fantastic photo opportunity.

Then there are the Woolly Pigs! A short visit to a rare breeds park allows us to see some of the older breeds of farm animals, including these delightful pigs, plus Racka Sheep and the famous Hungarian Grey Cattle, with their incredibly long horns.

5-7 We move on to the Bukk Hills, pausing enroute to search out Saker Falcons and Imperial Eagles. Our delightful hotel has real charm, with every room different and fabulous food as well - especially breakfast which may be the best you'll find anywhere! Nestled



in a small village surrounded by wooded slopes, Middle Spotted Woodpecker are in the grounds and Black and Grey-headed Woodpeckers in surrounding woodlands.

Beautiful Beech woodlands nearby are good for Hawfinch, plus Short-toed Treecreeper, Marsh Tit and Nuthatch, with other birds including White-backed Woodpecker also possible. We'll look for lovely White-headed Long-tailed Tits and visit a quarry where Wallcreeper and Alpine Accentor winter - though they are just arriving at this time of year and their presence may depend on the weather in the mountains to the north. Meadows on the tops of the hills are hunting grounds for Ural Owl and we'll try for them at the end of the day.

8 We transfer back to Budapest where we take our return flight to London.



Outline Itinerary

- Day 1** Fly to Budapest then head to our accommodation near Hortobagy NP
4 nights Klara's Pension
- Days 2-4** Birding in the Hortobagy National Park area – large areas of steppe with many raptors, Great Bustard, plus large flocks of geese and Common Cranes. The cranes come to roost in the evenings at the extensive fishponds, where we shall also find wildfowl and waders. Also Long-eared Owl roosts!
- Day 5-7** Transfer to Bukk Hills looking for Saker and Imperial Eagle enroute to our delightful hotel. Full day birding in the forests for woodpeckers and other woodland species and large quarry in hope of wintering Wallcreeper.
3 nights Nomad Pension - Bukk NP
- Day 8** We travel back to Budapest. Depending on flight times we may include some birding enroute to the airport and our flight to London.

Mary Braddock: Cranes, Black Woodpecker
Roy Atkins: Penduline Tit
Balazs Szigeti: Eastern Imperial Eagle, Middle-spotted Woodpecker, Saker Falcon