

PORTUGAL



"Migration is in full swing in autumn in southern Portugal, with raptors, storks and a myriad of songbirds pouring south to get to Africa. Anything could turn up. I have had species such as Rüppell's Vulture and Western Reef Egret previously."
Duncan Macdonald

Dates Sun 27 Sep - Sun 4 Oct 2020
Price £2,750
Deposit £525 Single Supp £450

Leaders Duncan Macdonald and Julian Sykes

Flights EasyJet, scheduled, Speedy Boarding and extra legroom included
Outbound: Morning, Gatwick-Faro
Inbound: Afternoon, Faro-Gatwick

Weather A little rain could be encountered but generally warm and dry. Cooler in the evenings and early mornings. A sunhat is essential (10°-25°C)

Walking Most will be on flat tracks and paths with lots of stopping and scanning. In the mountains, tracks to summits are steep but short. 2-4km per day

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

Insects Mosquitos may be encountered, unlikely to be a nuisance but bring repellent

Accom Twin and single rooms all ensuite

Group 12

Just some of what we hope to see:

Red-crested Pochard	Bonelli's Eagle
Black-necked Grebe	Honey Buzzard
Cory's Shearwater	Black-winged Kite
Great Shearwater	Purple Swamphen
Balearic Shearwater	Great Bustard
European Storm Petrel	Little Bustard
Wilson's Storm Petrel	Black-winged Stilt
Little Bittern	Audouin's Gull
White Stork	Black-bellied Sandgrouse
Black Stork	Thekla Lark
Spoonbill	Calandra Lark
Greater Flamingo	Bluethroat
Egyptian Vulture	Blue Rock Thrush
Spanish Imperial Eagle	Iberian Grey Shrike
Short-toed Eagle	Azure-winged Magpie

The very best of southern Portugal at the height of autumn migration with raptors, storks, seabirds, sunshine and a whole lot more.

- Wonderful warm autumn sunshine in the Algarve
- Fantastic wetlands of the Rio Formosa for herons, flamingos, spoonbills and more
- Raptors including Black-winged Kite, Bonelli's Eagle and Spanish Imperial Eagle
- Migration hotspots for raptors, passerines and shorebirds
- Boat trip for shearwaters, petrels, other seabirds and cetaceans
- The Alentejo steppe for Great and Little Bustards
- Chance of Two-tailed Pasha – what a butterfly!

Our flight from London takes us to Faro. From here it is a short journey to our hotel near Tavira. The hotel is situated in the heart of the Rio Formosa Natural Park and if time allows, we shall do some initial birding around the hotel.

2-3 The Algarve in autumn is warm and welcoming and provides some of the best birding in Europe. The Rio Formosa Natural Park stretches over 50km east to west and protects the Formosa estuary. Here the lagoons, marshes, channels and salt workings provide superb habitat for Greater Flamingo, Spoonbill, Cattle and Little Egrets, Black-winged Stilt and Kentish Plovers. At Quinto do Lago Purple Swamphen skulk through the reeds and sometimes out on to the golf course! Among the more common Shoveler we could find Red-crested Pochard or Ferruginous Duck.



The Rio Formosa's mixture of scrub, sand dune and water provides lots of opportunities of cover for migrating songbirds. Bluethroat can be found here if we are lucky and more common species such as Whinchat, Pied Flycatcher and Common Redstart can be more obvious. Audouin's and Slender-billed Gulls are found among the Yellow-legged Gulls. At this time of year noisy groups of the endemic Iberian (Azure-winged) Magpie are obvious and will be a real highlight for many.

The rolling steppe grasslands of the Alentejo, to the north of the Algarve, are an extension of the Spanish province of Extremadura. The sky here is huge and we shall explore this wonderful area for both Great and Little Bustards that are here in good numbers. Here we shall also hope to find Calandra and Thekla Lark and Iberian Grey Shrike. We shall be keeping a close eye on the sky for





"There will be so many highlights it will be hard to choose our favourites. The boat trip from Sagres will score highly, I am sure, especially if the Great and Cory's Shearwaters, as well as Wilson's Storm Petrels perform! Add to this the warmth of the Portuguese and the relaxed pace, we just won't want to come home." Duncan Macdonald

raptors in the hope of Black-winged Kite, Spanish Imperial Eagle and Red Kite that all hunt over the plains. Griffon Vultures can drift over and if we are really lucky maybe a Black Vulture from the Extremadura population just across the border in Spain.

4-7 We leave the eastern Algarve and head west towards the port of Sagres, our base for the rest of the tour. Sagres sits in the southwestern corner of Portugal and is the perfect location from which to explore the surroundings at this time of peak migration.

We shall spend a day inland around the village of Monchique. Here the hills rise to the summit of Fóia, the highest mountain in the Algarve at 902m. We shall explore the surrounding mixed forest for species such as Firecrest, Short-toed Treecreeper, Dartford Warbler and, if we are lucky, Rock Bunting. Above we could find soaring Goshawk and Hobby and Honey Buzzards heading south. Roads lead to the summits of both Fóia and nearby Picotta, from which the views over the Algarve to the sea are to be savoured. On a warm day these summits can be good places to find both Swallowtail and the rare Two-tailed Pasha.

The southwestern tip of Europe finishes at Cabo de São Vicente. This headland is a great migration hotspot and we shall look out to sea for passing shearwaters and other seabirds. The point also acts as a beacon for migrating raptors and passerines that are heading south to Africa.



We shall look for migrating raptors and just about anything is possible, but Booted Eagle, Griffon Vulture, Honey Buzzard and Short-toed Eagle are all likely, with Hen and Montagu's Harrier, Sparrowhawk and Kestrel all possible. We have had Eleonora's Falcon and Spanish Imperial Eagle here in the past. Watching visible migration is a fantastic experience. Given the right conditions the passerines can fill the surrounding scrub. Crested Tit are to be found in the conifer stands, Sardinian Warblers scold from bushes and Hoopoes pick around the field edges.

Around the cape itself Blue Rock Thrush, Black Redstart and Red-billed Cough are resident, but headlands at migration times can drag in just about anything. If we haven't seen Little Bustard in the western Algarve, the area here is another opportunity. We could find species such as Tawny Pipit, Red-backed Shrike, Short-toed Lark and raptors are not the only large-winged birds to be migrating. Black Stork is possible and Portugal is the best place in Europe to see White Stork.

One of the highlights will be the half day boat trip from Sagres. With luck on our side we could encounter Cory's, Great, Sooty and Balearic Shearwaters, along with European Storm Petrel, Gannets and other seabirds. We shall hope for maybe Common or Bottlenose Dolphins and if luck is shining on us then perhaps even Wilson's Storm Petrel.

8 If time permits we shall enjoy some final birding on our way to Faro to catch our flight.



Outline Itinerary

- Day 1** Fly London to Faro and transfer to eastern Algarve
3 nights at Hotel Vila Gale Albarora
- Days 2-3** Exploration of the wetlands of the eastern Algarve, including Castro Marim and a day in the southern Alentejo
- Days 4-7** Transfer west to Sagres and exploration of wetlands, coast and Cabo de São Vicente of eastern Algarve including half day boat trip from Sagres
4 nights at Memmo Baleeira Hotel
- Day 8** Return to Faro for our flight back to London

John Hamilton: Azure-winged Magpie
Stephen Batt: White Stork
Booke A Miller: Little Bustard
Duncan Macdonald: Blue Rock Thrush, Quinta do Lago
Adam Moan: Great Bustard