

PYRENEES



"This week is not only about the stunning high Pyrenees, but also many other areas - from sub-alpine pasture, to the badlands and lowland agricultural fields, which are not as well known. All these areas are just as wonderful in their own way, with a fabulous diversity of wildlife. I cannot wait to return!"
Julian Sykes

Dates	Sat 16 - Sat 23 May 2026
Price	£2,755
Deposit	£550 Single Supp £200
Leaders	Julian Sykes and Simon Eaves
Flights	EasyJet, scheduled, Speedy Boarding included Outbound: Morning, Gatwick-Barcelona Inbound: Afternoon, Barcelona-Gatwick
Weather	Probably a mixture of sun and showers (10°-25°C), warmer in lowland area and can be cool in the mountains
Walking	There'll be some short easy walks on level paths, with one mountain walk climbing gradually over 1½ miles, including some stoney terrain A reasonable level of fitness is required
Meals	All included from lunch on Day 1 to lunch on Day 8 Simple traditional Pyrenean fare
Insects	Biting insects are not usually a problem apart from our optional night drive, so please bring repellent
Accom	Double, twin and single rooms all ensuite
Group	12
Just some of what we hope to see:	
Lammergeier	Rufous-tailed Rock
Short-toed Eagle	Thrush
Golden Eagle	Penduline Tit
Honey Buzzard	Red-backed Shrike
European Scops Owl	Rock Sparrow
Golden Oriole	Alpine Chough
European Bee-eater	Citril Finch
Black Woodpecker	Rock Bunting
Tawny Pipit	Alpine Marmot
Water Pipit	Southern Chamois
Calandra Lark	Southern Green Lizard
Black-eared Wheatear	Pyrenean Brook
Western Orphean	Salamander
Warbler	Lots of butterflies
Subalpine Warbler	and orchids

We are very proud of our Spanish Pyrenees holiday, having run this successful tour to this wonderful corner of Iberia for many years.

- Stunning hotel with great cuisine in the heart of the Hecho Valley
- Lammergeier patrol the ridges, along with Honey Buzzard and eagles
- Stunning scenery around every corner
- High mountain day with Alpine Marmot, Alpine Chough and Citril Finch
- Lowland day with wheatears, larks, buntings and more
- Incredible raptors every day, plus night excursion for owls and nightjar
- Reptiles, amphibians, butterflies and wonderful orchids too

Touching down at Barcelona, we can hardly wait to get to our hotel amidst meadows, forest and 2,000m mountain peaks dotted with snow. If time allows, we shall stop enroute at a fabulous wetland, where we should encounter our first Bee-eater, Nightingale and perhaps Penduline Tit. After a long but stunning journey we arrive at our fabulous hotel high in the Hecho Valley, where it's possible to see Lammergeier from the garden, along with Firecrest, Short-toed Treecreeper and Crested Tit!

2-7 One of our favourite days involves a drive to the Upper Hecho, where the remains of winter snows decorate the higher valley alpine meadows. Here, swirls of tumbling Alpine and Red-billed Chough can be seen and we're always watching out for Lammergeier, Griffon Vulture and Short-toed Eagle. Small herds of

Southern Chamois graze high up on the herb rich slopes, where Trumpet Gentian, Elder-flowered Orchid and Pyrenean Snowbell bloom. The limestone outcrops are home to Alpine Marmots, giving their shrill whistles and looking like shaggy carpets! This is also the place for the endemic Pyrenean Brook Salamander which reside in the glacial pools, rounding off an incredibly diverse outing.

Driving to high alpine passes, the snow-line is our quest and, in such places, around the fabulous stunted krummholz forest, there should be Common Crossbill and Ring Ouzel still singing from the treetops. It is higher still where we shall be seeking out specialised birds such as Alpine Accentor and Citril Finch, as we wander through delightful alpine meadows of flowers - all a short walk from the road.



"Our hotel isn't just a wonderful building with comfortable rooms, fabulous local cuisine and lovely hosts, it is also surrounded by jaw-dropping scenery and has its own incredible wildlife, either in the grounds or very nearby. I cannot think of anywhere better to start and end our day!" Julian Sykes



We'll show you vivid lowland colours too, where Bee-eater, Hoopoe and Golden Oriole add vibrant tones to the poplars and cornfields of the River Aragon and staple birds include Cirl Bunting, Spotless Starling, Crested Lark and Serin. Red and Black Kite are constantly in the skies - they become so familiar that you begin to hardly notice them, but look out for the occasional Booted Eagle amongst them.

Some of the farmland meadows and arid escarpments have Rock Sparrow, Tawny Pipit and Woodchat Shrike, whilst in lush areas Nightingale sing from damp scrub and Cetti's Warbler can be heard too. With Black-veined White and Scarce Swallowtail amongst the masses of butterflies on the wing, it's a little overwhelming after the sparse alpine meadows!

Griffon Vultures sail around San Juan de la Peña cliffs – sometimes so close that we can hear the wind whistling through their enormous flight feathers. Here, ancient monasteries peer out from the pines, where Short-toed Treecreeper, Crested Tit and Firecrest forage, with always the chance of a clarion-calling Black Woodpecker. In these beautiful mixed forests we'll search for these dramatic birds and Honey Buzzard may be on the wing. Common Crossbill can be found and Western Bonelli's Warbler sing.

We're close here to Riglos, a tiny white village at the foot of towering puddingstone pillars of rock, where Blue Rock Thrush and Egyptian and Griffon Vultures nest amidst the rock

climbers. We shall visit empty villages, where the surrounding scrubland holds Subalpine, Dartford and Melodious Warblers. Nightingale song fills the air, plus Western Orphean Warbler, Rock Thrush and Ortolan Bunting are all possible.

One day we shall head to a 'refugio' high above our hotel, where we hope to find Citril Finches picking seeds off the teasels or grit off the road. We then take a good walk through the beech and pine forest to a sheer cliff face, looking for the Holy Grail of this area - Wallcreeper! This 'crimson winged' beauty has proven difficult in recent years, but it will be a great experience. Lunch will be taken looking out over some of the most stunning views in the region, along with a chance of finding a Golden Eagle, or possibly Southern Chamois grazing on the distant crags. This grassy plateau is also a good place to find Green Lizard, which look resplendent at this time of year.

Add to all this an optional night drive to try and see European Eagle and Scops Owls, plus European Nightjar. We shall listen out for the 'peeping' of Midwife Toad and watch for Soprano's Pipitrelle from the roadside as night falls - even the journey back to the hotel could produce a Roe Deer or Red Fox.

8 We make the journey back to Barcelona and, depending on flight times, we may fit in some birding enroute.



Outline Itinerary

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| Day 1 | Fly to Barcelona, 3½-hour transfer to our charming hotel in the Hecho Valley
7 nights at Hotel Uson |
| Days 2-7 | Birdwatching and wildlife exploration of the mountains and woodlands of the local area, plus scrub of San Juan de la Peña and Riglos

Optional night drive for Scop's Owl and European Nightjar |
| Day 8 | Transfer to Barcelona for our flight to the UK |

Stephen Batt: Lammergeier

Julian Sykes: Landscape, Green Lizard

James Shooter: Citril Finch, Hotel Uson

Roy Atkins: Trumpet Gentian, Alpine Marmot

