

PREDATORS OF SOUTH EAST SPAIN



"This Southern Spanish holiday has it all, with a mouth-watering bird and mammal list outwith our two major target species, the rare and nocturnal European Genet and the much rarer and thankfully diurnal big cat, Iberian Lynx. Add to that the possibilities of Lammergeier, Greater Spotted Eagle and Great Bustard, how can you resist!" Julian Sykes

Dates Wed 16 - Thu 24 Jan 2019
 Price £1,995
 Deposit £400 Single Supp £200

Leader Julian Sykes

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

Weather The weather will be mixed (0°-20°C). Expect sun, showers and possibly snow, with cold winds on high exposed plains

Walking Varied, from wide tracks, to forest paths. Walking boots are recommended

Meals All included from lunch on Day 1 to lunch on Day 9

Insects Not anticipated this early in the season

Accom Twin and single rooms all ensuite

Group 7

Just some of what we hope to see:

Iberian Lynx	Lammergeier
Genet	Black Vulture
Spanish Ibx	Purple Swamphen
Otter	Great Bustard
Mouflon	Slender-billed Gull
Black-necked Grebe	Black-bellied Sandgrouse
Glossy Ibis	Pin-tailed Sandgrouse
Greater Flamingo	Iberian Green Woodpecker
White-headed Duck	Calandra Lark
Golden Eagle	Bluethroat
Spanish Imperial Eagle	Rock Sparrow
Booted Eagle	Rock Bunting

Julian Sykes: Genet, Iberian Lynx, Great Bustards, Glossy Ibis, Mouflon, Greater Spotted Eagle
 Duncan Macdonald: Lammergeier

Raptors, bustards, sandgrouse, waterbirds, mammals, along with a night time vigil for Genet, plus morning and evening searches for the rare endemic cat - Iberian Lynx

- Night visit to the mountain forest looking for Genet
- Sierra de Cazorla for Lammergeier, Spanish Ibx and Red Squirrel
- Beautiful remote hotels in a variety of habitats
- Steppe specialities: Great Bustard, Black-bellied and Pin-tailed Sandgrouse
- Glossy Ibis, Purple Swamphen, Greater Flamingo, Bluethroat
- Chance of the world's rarest cat - Iberian Lynx
- Spanish Imperial, Golden and Booted, plus chance of Greater Spotted Eagle

After a morning flight into Alicante we'll spend the afternoon in the Santa Pola area, visiting the salt pans and the excellent wetland of El Hondo. Waterbirds such as Greater Flamingo, Slender-billed Gull and Purple Swamphen are here, plus raptors which include Booted Eagle, Marsh Harrier and Osprey, but the real prize is one of the few Greater Spotted Eagles that over-winter here. Late afternoon we head inland to our charming rural base for the next three nights.

wildfowl and waders. This area always tends to produce a surprise or two, with Black Stork being a regular winter visitor, along with Common Crane and Ferruginous Duck - you never know!

The next day will be spent on the Albacete Plains, where we hope to have a fabulous time getting close views of Great Bustard, along with chances of Black-bellied and Pin-tailed Sandgrouse, plus flocks of Calandra Larks, Rock Sparrows and Corn Buntings. With all these birds you are never too far from a patrolling raptor, with Merlin, Hen Harrier, or our first Golden Eagle being a distinct possibility.

2-3 The next two days are very different, with the highlight being an evening visit to the Muela de Cortes National Reserve, for the incredibly elusive and nocturnal Genet. The earlier part of the day will be spent around the nearby Albufera d'Valencia - a huge wetland with vast numbers of waterbirds and wildfowl, including Glossy Ibis, Great White Egret,

4-5 Today we head south into Northern Andalucia, passing through some prime plains habitat and with luck could find more roadside steppe species such as bustards, sandgrouse and larks. We continue over the mountains of the regional northern border of



"I really look forward to getting back to my adopted corner of Spain in January, to beat the 'Winter Blues' of the U.K. The climate can be lovely and to feel the warmth of the midday sun as we are searching these fantastic areas is so uplifting and a real pleasure to be part of. This climate is also conducive to flowers blooming, butterflies appearing, reptiles basking and amphibians vocalising, which enhances any wildlife tour." Julian Sykes



Andalucia and on to our hotel near the Sierra de Cazorla.

The next morning will be spent exploring the mountain Reserve and with our limited time, we hope to see one of their famous Lammergeiers, part of a very successful re-introduction several years ago. We shall climb the mountain roads to Rambla Seca - a dramatic place where the weather and cattle grazing mould the vegetation and landscape.

Birds of prey cruise the limestone ridges, where lots of Griffon Vultures patrol. Golden Eagle and Peregrine might join them and there's always the chance of a Lammergeier, which now breeds here after 30 years' absence! We shall also stop at known watchpoints to look for Spanish Ibeax that can be found picking their way with ease over the treacherous rocks and scree slopes.

6-8 After breakfast we drive to the Sierra de Andujar, which is arguably the best place in the world to see the incredibly rare Iberian Lynx. Our timing will ensure we have our first try for this exquisite mammal that afternoon, in the mountains of this wonderful Reserve.

The next two days will be spent exploring the Sierra, a contrasting Regional Park, with some of the best representations of true Mediterranean Forest still surviving in Europe. The area forms part of the Sierra Morena Mountains and has a landscape of hills and mountains formed from granite, quartz and slate, which is bordered by two rivers - the Jandula and the Yeguas. Only 400

or so Iberian Lynx remain in the wild, so we shall spend every early morning and late afternoon searching for this secretive animal from strategic watchpoints.

The rest of the time will be spent walking and driving the roads and tracks within the Reserve, along with time to relax in the afternoon around the hotel before our evening vigil. This Natural Park is also home to the rare and magnificent Spanish Imperial Eagle, along with many other raptors including Golden Eagle, Goshawk and Black and Griffon Vultures.

The tranquil rivers, separating a series of reservoirs with dramatic dam walls, that attract Rock Sparrow, Blue Rock Thrush and Crag Martin, with Otters fishing the river below, will be in marked contrast to the lush vegetation of the rest of the trip. Everywhere we look there will be Firecrests, Iberian Magpies, Nuthatches, Short-toed Treecreepers and Crested Tits. If time allows, we shall even take a drive up to the Santuario Virgen de la Cabeza - a dramatic and historic building that's perched on top of a mountain in the centre of the Reserve.

9 On our final morning there could be another opportunity to go out early to look for Lynx. However, after breakfast we shall load the minibus and drive to Malaga, possibly stopping enroute, before our flight home.



Outline Itinerary

- Day 1 Fly to Alicante.
Exploration of El Hondo Reserve
3 nights at Casas de Benali, Valencia
- Days 2-3 An exploration of Albufera d'Valencia wetlands and the Albacete Plains.
Evening visit to Muela de Cortes Natural Reserve
- Day 4 Transfer to Andalucia
1 night at Sans Julian Hotel Rural
- Day 5 Exploration of the Sierra de Cazorla before transferring to the Sierra de Andujar
4 nights at La Caracola Hotel Rural
- Days 6-8 Exploration of the Sierra early morning and late evening for Iberian Lynx
- Day 9 Transfer to Malaga for flight home

