

Spain: Extremadura, Doñana and Sierra de Gredos

April 28 - May 12, 2025

(14 nights, 13 full days)

Leader: Stefan Schlick

Fee: \$3,350 Single Supplement: \$650

Includes: lodging, transportation, guiding, park fees

Excludes: food, tips

Overview:

Without a doubt, Spain is the best place in Europe to bird. Birds will be everywhere and singing in spring as our timing is perfect. We should even be able to witness the trailing end of migration. Spain has a large number of specialty birds, most of which we will be looking for.

Combine the fabulous birding with the excellent food, an amazing scenery and the ease of logistics and you have an amazing trip that you wouldn't want to miss!

The weather can still be pretty cold and rainy but should generally be decent. Don't expect really hot days just yet. Bad pests (bugs and such) are generally not to be expected.



April 28: Assemble in Madrid

After our flights arrive, we will assemble near the airport and meet for dinner at the hotel. Typically, flights from the U.S. will arrive earlyish in the day, but we will stay in Madrid close to the airport, so that we can get an early start the next day.

April 29: Transfer to Extremadura, Arrocampo Reservoir

Our first stop will be Arrocampo Reservoir, a superb wetland where you can spend several hours at. Targets there will be Savi's Warbler, Little Bittern, Great Reed Warbler, Penduline Tit and Purple Swamphen.

It will just be a short drive from Arrocamp to Trujillo, so we will be able to make a couple more stops before we call it a day. Targets for the afternoon include Iberian Magpie and Hoopoe. Overnight near Trujillo for the next 6 nights.

April 30: Monfrague National Park, Serradilla



Today we will be visiting Monfrague National Park. Griffon, Cinereous and Egyptian Vultures will be easy to see at Salta de Gitano, one of the main vista points of the park. Rock Sparrow and Black Redstart are usually around and a pair of Black Stork nest there as well.

We will hit various viewpoints in the park trying for Dartford, Subalpine and Western Orphean Warbler and Cirl Bunting.

After lunch at Villarreal de San Carlos, we will head over to Seradilla to look for Bonelli's Eagle which is always a little bit of a longshot.

One of the viewpoints in the park typically hosts a pair of Imperial Eagle. Eagle Owl occurs nearby as well, so will likely return at sunset on another day.

May 1: Trujillo and Caceres Plains

On our first day in the plains we will target both Great and Little Bustard, Calandra and Greater Short-toed Lark and Black-bellied and Pin-tailed Sandgrouse. The steppe birds are often not easy to find, so we are trying for them in several areas during the trip. European Bee-eater and Spanish Sparrow are normally easy to see. We will also visit the best area in Extremadura for European Roller. Little Owl is around, but they will also take some time to find. Corn Bunting, one of my personal favorites, will be abundant.





Raptors are possible at any time, with Montagu's Harrier patrolling the steppes, Short-toed and Booted Eagle high overhead and all 3 vultures are again possible.

May 2: Arrocampo Reservoir, Jerte Valley

On the way to the Jerte Valley, we will again swing by Arrocampo Wetlands. Being there early ensures that we get a second stab at singing birds we may have missed on our first day.

In the Jerte Valley, we will look for Lesser Spotted Woodpecker and Honey Buzzard near La Garganta de los Infiernos. White-throated Dipper breeds along the creek and we will also be in the right habitat for Spectacled Warbler. We will then climb to mid level elevations near the tree line working on woodland birds before making our way back to the hotel.

May 3: Campo Lugar, Embalse de Sierra Brava, Vega Altas

Campo Lugar is another great little road for steppe species. Common Quail can be heard there in the morning as well. The Embalse de Sierra Brava may have a few waterfowl remaining, but Great Crested Grebe should be present.

Depending on how dry Vega Altas is we may not stay for a long time there. Gull-billed Tern should be there regardless working the fields. Common Waxbill is usually reliable there. The pond at Moheda Alta can have some interesting shorebirds and waterfowl. Spoonbills are possible there.



May 4: Jaraicejo, around Trujillo

The morning hours we will spend in the scrub uphill from Jaraicejo where the main target is Spectacled Warbler. Dartford Warbler, Iberian Gray and Woodchat Shrike should also be present. Red-legged Partridge also likes the area.



Great Spotted Cuckoo will be our target for the next couple hours. There are a few spots we can try for this odd species that parasitizes Eurasian Magpies.

Valdesalor Reservoir can be a good spot for shorebirds, but also Egyptian Goose and a variety of other species.

In Trujillo itself we will look for Lesser Kestrel. Later in the evening we can try for Scops Owl in Trujillo as well, but we need to wait until it gets dark.

May 5: La Serena, Sierra de Tiros, transfer to Doñana

On the way down to Doñana National Park, we will have one final shot at all the prairie species at the superb La Serena. This is probably the largest uncultivated area in Europe, with high populations of Montagu's Harriers, sandgrouse and bustards.

The final area to hit for the day is the cute Sierra de Tiros. Black Wheatear is possible in the town of Benquerencia de la Serena. Also present in the rockscape of the cliffs are Blue Rock Thrush, Alpine Swift and Red-billed Chough.



Then we will have to drive for just over 3 hours to get to the Doñana. Overnight will be in El Rocio for 2 nights.

May 6: Doñana National Park

We will spend the whole day at Doñana National Park, one of the major wetlands in Europe and a UNESCO biosphere reserve. A half day tour with a park guide will take us through a variety of different habitats. We will finally see the coast with its gulls and terns. Slender-billed Gull will be a major target, among the more common species of gulls. Greater Flamingos may be possible as well. If

there is sufficient water, we should see a full set wading birds including Squacco Heron, Glossy Ibis and a few shorebird species as well.

At night we will try for Red-necked Nightjar nearby. Tawny Owl is usually also around. Overnight at El Rocio.

May 7: Doñana National Park, Brazo del Este

We have another morning at the Doñana before we have to move to the other side of the Rio Guadaquivir. Western Olivaceous Warbler and Iberian Chiffchaff will be on the plate for the morning. The drive over will take us back through Seville.

In the afternoon we will stop at a superb wetland called Brazo del Este on the east side of the river. We will look for marsh terns, Purple and Squacco Heron and Yellow-crowned Bishop. Nearby is also a small pond that can be interesting to check, the Laguna de la Mejorada.



Overnight near Sanlucar for 2 nights.

May 8: Salinas de Bonanza and Chipiona

The Salinas de Bonanza are a great place for shorebirds, gulls and waterfowl. Our main targets there however will be Marbled Teal and White-headed Duck, both generally hard to find anywhere else in Europe. The area has a lot of potential for unusual birds, so who knows what we will find.

At Chipiona will do a seawatch and then look for Little Swift, as there is a small colony near the harbor.

May 9: Transfer to Sierra de Gredos

Most of the day will be spent in the vehicles, as we will be driving from Andalucia to the Sierra de Gredos. The sierra will be our only access to high elevations during the trip.

This includes the pinewoods at around 4000-5000ft and the area above tree line called Platforma at over 6000ft.

We will be making a couple of shorter stops en route but hope to arrive in time to finish the day in the cool temperatures of a pleasant sierra evening. Overnight on the north side of the Sierra de Gredos for 3 nights.



May 10: Sierra de Gredos (lower elevations)

We will spend a lot of time near the Parador de Gredos looking for Citril Finch today. Also in the surrounding pinewoods are Western Bonelli's Warbler, Crested and Coal Tit, Gray Wagtail, Red Crossbill, Wood Lark and Pied Flycatcher.

On this day will also catch up with a lot of the regular central European garden birds which only occur in Spain at higher elevations. Among them are European Robin, Common Chaffinch, Wren,

Long-tailed Tit, Firecrest and Eurasian Nuthatch. We will also watch for the Iberian subspecies of Green Woodpecker.

May 11: Sierra de Gredos (higher elevations)

In the higher elevations of the sierra, called the Platforma, we will be looking for the beautiful Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush, Bluethroat, Dunnock, Tawny Pipit and Northern Wheatear. The wailing song of the Ortolan Bunting can also be heard; the poor birds are still being eaten in southern France as a delicacy. We will be spending several hours up there; this will involve an about 3.5mi hike into the staggering beauty of the Iberian rockscape that you don't want to miss. Iberian Ibex should show up for us somewhere here.

May 12: Flights back to the US

We only have a 2-hour drive left to Madrid airport. It's time to say goodbye to beautiful Spain and head home to the U.S.