

BULGARIAN MOUNTAINS and GREEK WETLANDS

15 - 24 April 2017 (Tour code: BMGW)

Leader: Assen Ignatov.

PRICE: £1,200 (Based on a group of six or more, a smaller group will incur a supplement).



This is an opportunity to combine not only two countries in one tour, but two contrasting habitats. In Bulgaria the Pirin mountains will provide pine forest birds and in Greece there will be visits to wetlands including Kerkin lake, Axios river, lakes Volvi and Langada and the Nestos and Evros deltas, the last is an important bottleneck for migratory birds.

Our Bulgarian tour leader, Assen Ignatov, works for the National Museum of Natural History. (www.nmnhs.com) He is a very experienced and knowledgeable guide, as well as being a gifted artist and excellent photographer.

Bulgaria's beautiful scenery, friendly people and excellent wine and food are additional highlights. The B-BS offers you the benefits of nearly forty years' experience of organizing tours to Bulgaria. For your financial protection our tour operators for twenty years, Balkania Travel Ltd. are licensed by the UK Civil Aviation Authority, ATOL 4465 and bonded by the International Air Transport Association, IATA number 91-2 7839. Hotels are comfortable (and well situated for birdwatching!) but not luxurious.

The holiday is on a Half-Board basis. Final details and bird lists will be sent to participants approximately two weeks before departure.

Projected Itinerary (which may be subject to adjustment)

Saturday 15 April Flight from Heathrow to Sofia. Drive south through the Struma valley to Melnik, Bulgaria's smallest town, for a two night stay. Some birdwatching stops on the way. Possible birds at Kresna gorge include Subalpine, Orphean, Barred and Olive-tree Warblers and Woodchat Shrike. At Ilindentsi hills you may see Raven, Rock Nuthatch and Blue Rock Thrush.

Sunday 16 April Visit to Rozhen monastery, Rupite (the crater of an extinct volcano) and Hotovo. Possible birds today include Long-legged Buzzard, Levant Sparrowhawk, Great Reed Warbler, Cetti's Warbler, Bee-eater, Hoopoe, Rock Sparrow and possibly Rock Nuthatch.

Monday 17 April Drive to Greece for a two night stay in the area of Veria. Stop at Kerkini lake, where you may see storks, Dalmatian Pelican, Pygmy Cormorant, Spoonbill, terns, birds of prey including Osprey and Lesser Spotted Eagle, Red-footed Falcon, Cetti's and Savi's Warblers, Penduline Tit.

Tuesday 18 April Visit the west side of Termaikos gulf including Kalohori lagoon (Little Stint, Curlew Sandpiper,

Broad-billed Sandpiper, Stone Curlew), Axios river (Purple Heron, Pygmy Cormorant, Collared Pratincole) and Gallikos estuary looking for Terek Sandpiper and Zitting Cisticola.

Wednesday 19 April Drive east to Keramoti for a two night stay. A stop at Koronia and Volvi lake – Black-tailed Godwit, White-tailed Eagle and Short-toed Eagle, Golden and Booted Eagles, Ferruginous Duck. Afternoon drive to one of the biggest bird sites in Northern Greece – the Nestos river delta.

Thursday 20 April Explore the area of Nestos Delta looking for waterfowl, waders, terns, gulls and shearwaters. Possible birds – Spur-winged Lapwing, Collared Pratincole, Dalmatian Pelican, Ferruginous Duck, Lesser Grey Shrike, Subalpine Warbler, Masked Shrike and Levant Sparrowhawk.

Friday 21 April Visit to Nestos Gorge for Gull and Ortolan Buntings, Rock Nuthatch, Orphean Warbler, Alpine Swifts. At Portolagos lagoon possible birds are Stone Curlew, Flamingo, Little Crake and Little Bittern; at Vistonida Lake: Black, Whiskered and White-winged Terns, Gull-billed and Sandwich Terns, Night Heron. Three night stay in Tihero.

Saturday 22 April Visit to the Evros Delta – one of the best birding spots in Northern Greece an important bottleneck for migratory birds in spring and autumn. Possible birds – Spur-winged Lapwing, Glossy Ibis, Collared Pratincole, Masked Shrike, Great Spotted Cuckoo.

Sunday 23 April A day at Dadia Forest, one of the richest places for raptors (36 species) in Europe. Today we hope to see Black, Griffon and Egyptian Vultures, Booted and Golden Eagles, Red-footed Falcon and buzzards. Other possible birds – Bonelli's, Subalpine and Orphean Warblers, Sombre Tit.

Monday 24 April Drive to Koprivshtitsa in Bulgaria via Svilengrad for the final overnight with stops for birding. Possible birds Isabelline Wheatear and Imperial Eagle.

Tuesday 25 April Transfer to Sofia airport for return flight.

OUR PRICE INCLUDES:

- Return scheduled flights from Heathrow to Sofia with all taxes and charges.
- Half Board.
- Accommodation in small, friendly (often family-run) hotels with en suite facilities on a twin-bedded shared occupancy basis.
- Coach for transfers and excursions.
- Specialist Bulgarian leader.
- Donation to Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds or other Bulgarian conservation organization.
- All reserve entrance fees.

NOT INCLUDED:

- Lunches (about £3 - £4).
- Travel Insurance (compulsory). Balkania Travel can advise.
- Drinks and personal expenses such as gratuities.
- Single room supplement (£110).

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