



MORE INFO



## Birding Aragon Series

# ARAGON GRAND BIRDING TOUR

North Spain

### Purposed Dates

May - June 2024

### Duration

12 days / 11 nights

### Group size

Min 4 / Max 8

From **2.700 €**

Ind. Sup. 200€

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## ARAGON

If we had to choose one word to summarise our region, it would be "**diversity**". The fact that Aragon occupies the central part of the Ebro Valley, ranging from the French border to the Iberian system, means plenty of environments can be enjoyed within just a 100 km range.

The landscape changes drastically in short lengths, ranging from 3,000 meters high peaks in the **Pyrenees** to the arid to semi-desert lowlands of the **Ebro river basin** or more Mediterranean-like ecosystems as we move towards the **Iberian chain** down south.



The Birding Aragon itineraries consist of a series of organised trips **designed by and for birdwatching enthusiasts**. All the accommodation and guides involved in the trip belong to the Birding Aragon Association and share a passion and respect for nature that all experienced birdwatchers require during an observation trip.



The proposed journey manages to comfortably cover **the most representative areas** of our region. Each of them is strikingly singular in terms of nature...

## Steppes and Wetlands of The Ebro Basin

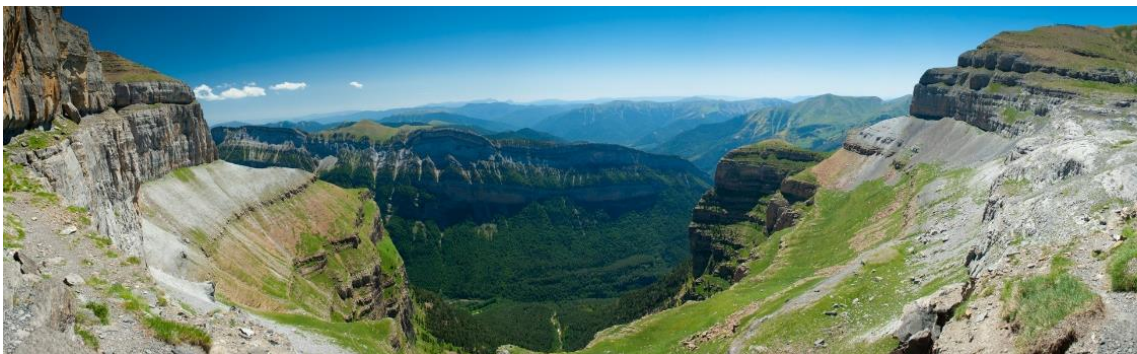
The central part of Aragon, known as the Ebro Basin, has very peculiar geographical and climatic characteristics. It is made up of large flat areas at low altitudes above sea level, and has low rainfall, a prevalence of dry winds and significant temperature contrasts between winter and summer.



**Areas Visited:** Gallocanta Lagoon Nature Reserve, Belchite and El Planeron steppe birds reserves, Los Monegros desert and Bardenas Reales.

## Central Pyrenees

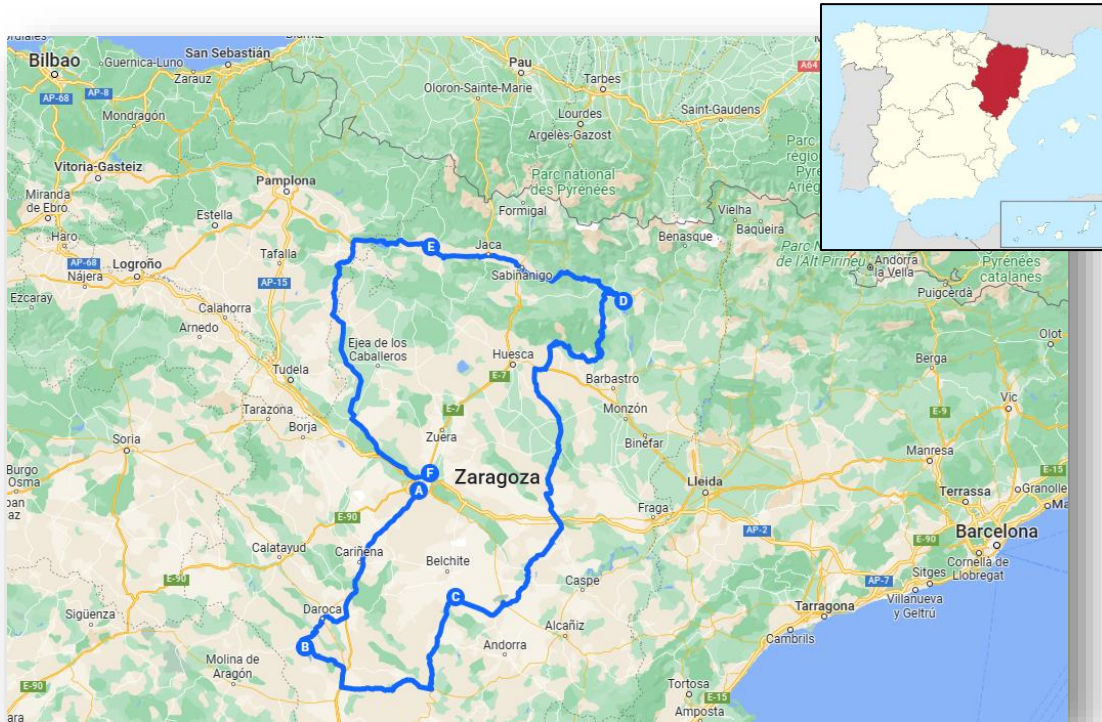
Exuberant and conspicuous, the alpine peaks and vast extensions of woodland give way to the **unique geological formations** found in the lower plains making this landscape one of the most geographically varied and abundantly bio-diverse natural reserves. Large areas of this region are protected as a result of the **great variety of species which are rare or even absent from the rest of Europe.**



**Areas Visited:** Sierra y Cañones de Guara Natural Park, Ordesa and Monte Perdido National Park, Posets-Maladeta Natural park, Los Mallos de Riglos Natural monument.



## Route layout



## Itinerary

### Day 1. Transfer to Gallocanta Lagoon and trip presentation.

Reception at Zaragoza airport and train station followed by a 1h 20' private transfer to our first accommodation at Gallocanta lagoon. A presentation is given by Birding Aragon on the next days' trips, followed (flight-times allowing) by some free time to check out the area before dinner.



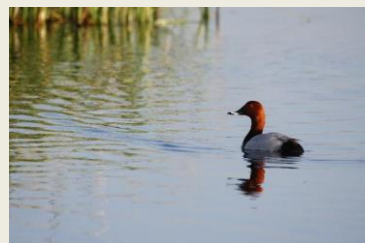
### Days 2-3. Gallocanta Lagoon Natural Reserve

Gallocanta is a natural paradise for bird and nature observers. At an altitude of more than 1,000 metres above sea level, it is one of the main salty wetland areas in western Europe. Gallocanta lagoon **serves as an important migration stopover point in the Western Palearctic Ecozone on the Common Crane migration routes**, and during the time of permanent water levels in winter, it is also possible to see some of the largest populations of **Ferruginous Duck and Red-Crested Pochard** in Spain.



Recently, the reedbeds of the lagoon have been declared of international importance due to the presence of a population of one of the most endangered small birds in Europe: **the Aquatic Warbler**. The second-largest colony of **Great Bustards** can also be found near the lagoon.

**Habitats:** Arable plains, steppes with natural vegetation, gallery forests, Mediterranean shrubland, lagoons and reservoirs, limestone cliffs.



**Special Interest Species:** Black Stork, Black Kite, Egyptian Vulture, Short-Toed Eagle, Northern Harrier, Montagu's Harrier, Golden Eagle, Lesser Kestrel, Peregrine Falcon, Little Bustard, Great Bustard, Eurasian Stone-Curlew, Black-Bellied Sandgrouse, Dupont's Lark.

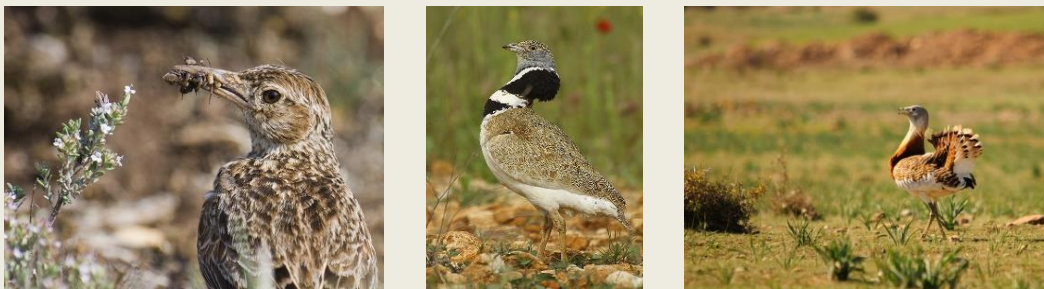
## Days 4-5. Ebro Basin steppes of Belchite and "El Planeron."

Lecera and Belchite represent exceptional examples of steppe areas. Forty thousand hectares of steppe landscape, including the 645-hectare El Planerón nature reserve, make this the best habitat of its kind in northern Spain.



This windswept, arid land of dusty, red, scrub-covered plains and eroded plateaux, more reminiscent of Morocco or Afghanistan than western Europe, holds large percentages of the Spanish populations of **pin-tailed sandgrouse**, **black-bellied sandgrouse**, **lesser short-toed lark** and the elusive and enigmatic **Dupont's lark**. In terms of heritage, the remains of the old town of Belchite are one of the most striking vestiges of the 1936 – 1939 Civil War in Spain.

**Habitats:** The best-preserved steppe vegetation in the Ebro Valley, plains with arable fields and river cliffs.



**Special Interest Species:** Black Kite, Egyptian Vulture, Short-Toed Eagle, Northern Harrier, Montagu's Harrier, Golden Eagle, Lesser Kestrel, Peregrine Falcon, Little Bustard, Great Bustard, Eurasian Stone-Curlew, Black-Bellied Sandgrouse, Pin-Tailed Sandgrouse, Eurasian Eagle-Owl, Dupont's Lark, Common Redstart, Whinchat, Common Rock Thrush, Dartford Warbler, Subalpine Warbler, Wood Warbler, European Pied Flycatcher, Southern Grey Shrike.

## Day 6. Monegros Desert, Sariñena Lagoon and Sierra de Guara Natural Park

On the way north through the largest steppe desert in Europe, we will visit some key wildlife areas including Sastago and Sariñena Lagoons, which play an essential role as a resting and feeding area for **over 100,000 birds** during annual migrations.



Further north, the spectacular environment of the Sierra de Guara range is revealed in the fantastic landscapes sculpted by water erosion. Its famous **canyons are narrow and deep ravines** where rivers, whose waters have a striking turquoise colour, meander forming impressive waterfalls, siphons and caves. The steep rocky walls are exceptional places for large birds such as the **Griffon Vulture**, the **Golden Eagle** or the **Bearded Vulture** to establish their nests. It is also possible to see wild boar, fox, wildcat, doormouse and pine marten.

**Habitats:** Arable crop plains, natural steppes, riparian forests, pine forests and Mediterranean scrub, paddy fields, lagoons and reservoirs, mosaics of rainfed and holm oak crops, forest and Mediterranean scrub, rock faces.



**Special Interest Species:** Common Shelduck, Grey Partridge, Squacco Heron, Black Stork, European Honey Buzzard, Bearded Vulture, Egyptian Vulture, Short-Toed Eagle, Montagu's Harrier, Golden Eagle, Booted Eagle, Bonelli's Eagle, Lesser Kestrel, Peregrine Falcon, Baillon's Crake, Eurasian Stone-Curlew, Eurasian Eagle-Owl, Common Rock Thrush, Blue Rock Thrush, Dartford Warbler, Subalpine Warbler, Bearded Reedling, Eurasian Penduline Tit, Red-Backed Shrike, Hawfinch.



## Days 7-8. Central Pyrenees. Ordesa and Posets-Maladeta Natural Parks.

From the 3,000 metre summits to the lower mountain ranges that connect with the plains, we can find a number of birds of great interest. In the next two days, we focus on exploring two of the most representative protected areas of the Pyrenees and, without a shadow of doubt, some of the best places in the world to observe the majestic **Bearded Vulture** along with **Griffon and Egyptian Vultures** in their natural habitat, the National Park of Ordesa and Monte Perdido, and Natural Park of Posets-Maladeta.



A highly diverse fauna shelters within this massive natural area. Marmots, easy to detect by their sharp whistles, wild boar and chamois are the largest and easiest mammals to observe, but it is also a great habitat for Pyrenean newts and vipers.

**Habitats:** Mixed and Coniferous forests, mountain pastures, limestone cliffs and peaks.



**Special Interest Species:** Rock Ptarmigan, Western Capercaillie, Grey Partridge, Bearded Vulture, Egyptian Vulture, Short-Toed Eagle, Golden Eagle, Booted Eagle, Eurasian Woodcock, Alpine Swift, Alpine Accentor, Common Rock Thrush, Ring Ouzel, Wallcreeper, Eurasian Treecreeper, Red-Backed Shrike, Alpine Chough, White-Winged Snowfinch, Citril Finch.

## Days 9-10. Western valleys and the Foothills of the Pyrenees

Our next destination will bring us to the foot of The Natural Park of the Western Valleys located in the northwest corner of the Aragonese Pyrenees. Our stay in the small village of **Berdun** offers the perfect starting point for our next southward journey.



**Los Mallos de Riglos** Natural Monument will be the next highlight on our way. These massive, ochre limestone conglomerates, rising to 300 metres in height, serve as protection for **birds of prey** who nest and breed in the many hollows and crevasses.

**Habitats:** Atlantic forests, mountain pastures, limestone cliffs and summits, a mosaic of rainfed and holm oak crops, forest and Mediterranean scrub and rock cuts.



**Special Interest Species:** Rock Ptarmigan, Western Capercaillie, Grey Partridge, European Honey Buzzard, Bearded Vulture, Egyptian Vulture, Short-Toed Eagle, Northern Harrier, Golden Eagle, Booted Eagle, Bonelli's Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Eurasian Eagle-Owl, Alpine Swift, Alpine Accentor, Common Rock Thrush, Blue Rock Thrush, Ring Ouzel, Dartford Warbler, Subalpine Warbler, Wallcreeper, Red-Backed Shrike, White-Winged Snowfinch, Citril Finch, Hawfinch.

## Day 11. Bardenas Reales and return to Zaragoza

Throughout the last day of our route south to Zaragoza, we will be surrounded by the Bardenas Reales badlands where the soils of clay, chalk and sandstone have been eroded by the elements, creating **surprising shapes, canyons, plateaus, tabular structures and isolated hills**. The fauna and flora in this **UNESCO Biosphere Reserve** are more typical of the African continent than of northern Iberia.



**Habitats:** Paddy fields, reedbeds, lagoons and reservoirs, pine forests and scrubland



**Special Interest Species:** Common Shelduck, Eurasian Bittern, Little Bittern, Squacco Heron, Black Stork, European Honey Buzzard, Northern Harrier, Bearded Reedling, Eurasian Penduline Tit.

## Day 12. Final day and farewell

After a relaxed breakfast at our accommodation in Zaragoza, it's time to make our way home. If return schedules allow, there will be time for one last walk along the Ebro riverbanks in the morning. Zaragoza airport and train station transfer will be provided if required.

## Accommodation

### Allucant Guesthouse - Gallocanta Lagoon

Just a stone's throw away from the shores of the Gallocanta lagoon, Allucant is a welcoming rural guesthouse perfect for those birdwatchers planning to explore its surrounding habitat. Different types of rooms are available, but the six double rooms with bathrooms are separate from the shared rooms, guaranteeing peace and quiet during busy periods.

This charming accommodation offers its guests the best of the region's home cooking, a small bar, a library specialised in nature with free wifi and a spacious garden with private parking space.



### Rincon del Cierzo Country Hotel - Belchite Steppes

Rustic hotel with ten double rooms, all different in style. The rooms overlook a lovely, /road outside patio. Next to the rooms is the lounge cellar with a barbecue area for preparing lunches and dinners.

Named after characteristic local bird species, the rooms have full ensuite bathrooms, free wifi, TV, heating and A/C, hair dryer and amenities. A covered pool with a garden area is available for guests to enjoy, and the accommodation counts with a private parking area.



### **O'Chardinet Guesthouse - Central Pyrenees**

O Chardinet is a newly refurbished 17th century barn, carefully renovated following strict bio-construction criteria. The five guest rooms are rustic and sober, simple but also elegant and modern, where stone, wood and soft natural dyes provide a warm and welcoming environment.

Share your experiences and anecdotes of the day with the owners and hosts over dinner as you enjoy a glass of Somontano wine, a dish of vegetables from their organic garden, lamb with mint and honey and some of their own chocolate ice-cream with blackberry sauce.



### **Casa Sarasa Guesthouse - Western Pyrenees**

Casa Sarasa is a family-run business located in Berdún, a medieval village at the foot of the Aragonese Pyrenees. This comfortable guesthouse can host up to 24 people. Guests staying at Casa Sarasa are not only within easy reach of the unique alpine landscapes of the Natural Park of the Western Valleys but also of the Mediterranean foothills.

Berdún and its surroundings are renowned for being a popular destination for birdwatching since the early 1970s, with the possibility of spotting over 120 different bird species in a week, particularly during the best birdwatching periods in May and June.



## The tour includes

- ✓ Accommodation in a double room with a private bathroom for single or double use.
- ✓ All meals included. Picnic lunches are prepared in-house when needed.
- ✓ Transport and transfers to and from Zaragoza airport and train station.
- ✓ English-speaking local guides.
- ✓ Entry tickets to all the attractions visited.
- ✓ Welcome pack: Cloth bag, bento picnic box and a refillable aluminium bottle.

### What's not included

- ✗ International flights.
- ✗ Travel insurance.
- ✗ Last day dinner in Zaragoza
- ✗ Additional drinks, tips, and any other personal expenses.

## Packing list

- ✓ Personal First Aid Supplies: Sunscreen/Lipbalm, painkillers, blister kit, clearly labelled prescribed medicines, spare contact lenses or glasses.
- ✓ Documentation: Passport, additional ID, Cash
- ✓ Clothing guideline: Rain gear, warm jacket, long & short-sleeved tops, hiking trousers & shorts, cap/hat, medium weight comfortable hiking boots, casual shoes, good walking socks, light gloves and hat for cold weather.
- ✓ Equipment: Sunglasses, folding sticks or trekking poles.
- ✓ Additional equipment: AC adaptor, camera, light binoculars, hand-washing soap (laundry available if needed).

## How to get there

The tour price includes the transport from/to Zaragoza airport and Zaragoza Delicias Train Station with a dedicated driver. Zaragoza has excellent high-speed rail connections with Barcelona or Madrid and Ryanair operates flights between London Stansted and Zaragoza on a regular basis.



## How to book

### 1. Make your booking

Once you find your Experience and verify that you understand and agree to our booking conditions, please choose one of the following ways to make your booking:

- Click on "[continue to booking form](#)" and complete your details online.
- Email us or use our contact form to let us know your details.
- On the phone: Call us on +44 784 336 68 46 if you call from the UK or +34 669 962 970 when calling from the EU

### 2. Secure your reservation

Once you have chosen your desired holiday and are happy with our proposition, we will ask you to pay the correspondent deposit of 10% of the total amount of the booking to secure your reservation.

### 3. Full travelling information

Before we are all set up, a complete booking form will be sent to gather essential details about you and the people you travel with, so we can do our best to make everything run smoothly during your trip. (Such as dietary requirements, any medical conditions or your actual travel insurance cover).

### 4. Booking confirmation

No later than two working days, we will send the final confirmation of your holiday and provide you with all the relevant information about your trip as appropriate, as well as the outstanding amount to be paid before the correspondent cut-off date.

### 5. Balance payment

From this moment on, we require full payment six weeks before departure. If you make your booking within six weeks of the starting date, the total amount will be needed to proceed with the reservation.

## ENQUIRE

Should you need to extend your stay before or after the trip, please let us know.



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