



MORE INFO



Birding Aragon Series

STEPPE AND WETLANDS OF THE EBRO VALLEY

North Spain

Purposed Dates

October 2023 - March 2024

Duration

8 days / 7 nights

Group size

Min 4 / Max 8

From **1.750 €**

Ind. Sup. **150€**

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ARAGON

If we were to choose one word to describe our region, it would be **diversity**. The fact that Aragon spans the central part of the Ebro Valley and extends from the French border to the Iberian system, means that a number of diverse environments can be enjoyed within each 100 km range.

The landscape changes drastically in short distances, ranging from 3,000 meter peaks in the **Pyrenees** to the arid semi-desert lowlands of the **Ebro river basin**, passing through Mediterranean ecosystems as we move towards the **Iberian range** in the south.



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



The proposed journey was designed to make the most of the land around the **Ebro River depression**, going from the **vast steppes** at the heart of the region and crossing through the **Iberian mountainous system** to the characteristic wetlands of the **Ebro Delta**, Spain's broadest river mouth.

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.



Visited Areas: Gallocanta Lagoon Nature Reserve, Belchite and El Planeron steppe bird reserves, Caspe and Mequienza reservoirs.

Iberian System and the Ebro Delta

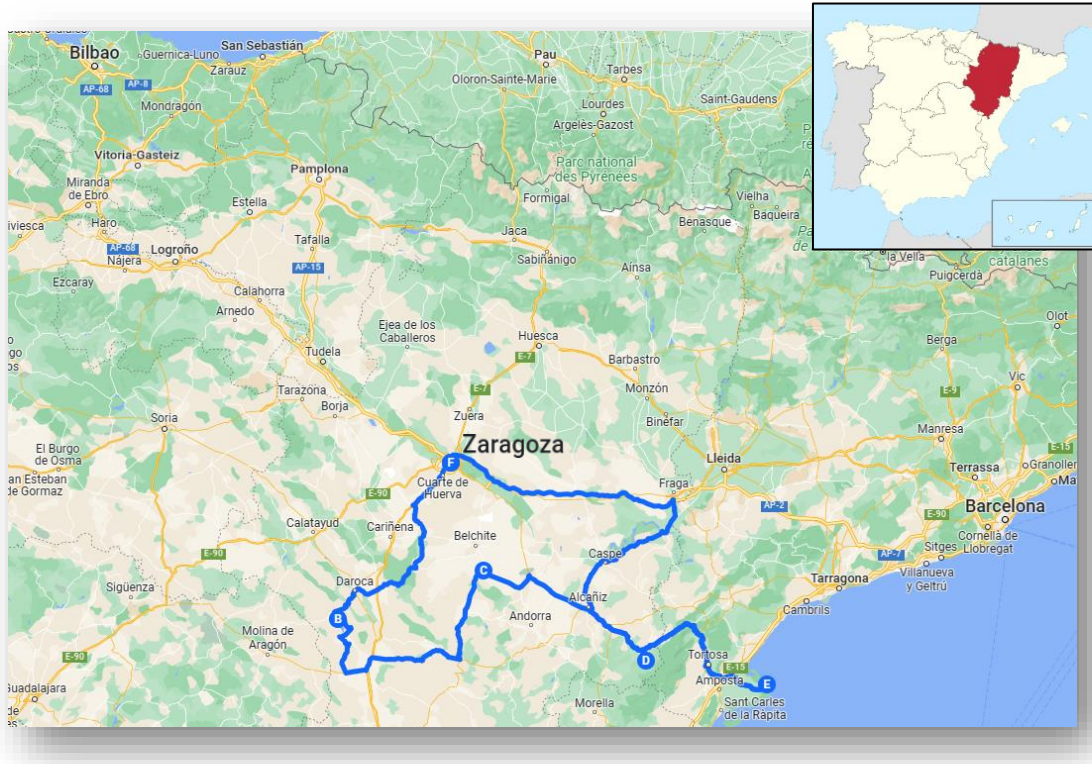
The Iberian system is a series of mountain chains ranging from moderate altitudes to lower Mediterranean areas with low human population densities. It includes summits and high moors at altitudes of over 1000 metres, endorheic lakes, conifer and oak forests and many river cliffs. It's the last obstacle the Ebro must overcome before reaching the Mediterranean Sea and forming its magnificent delta.



Visited Areas: Maestrazgo mountain range, Ebro Delta natural reserve



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.



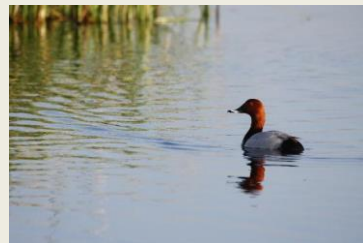
Days 2. Gallocanta Lagoon Natural Reserve

Gallocanta is a natural paradise for bird and nature lovers. 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 reed beds 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-Winged 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.

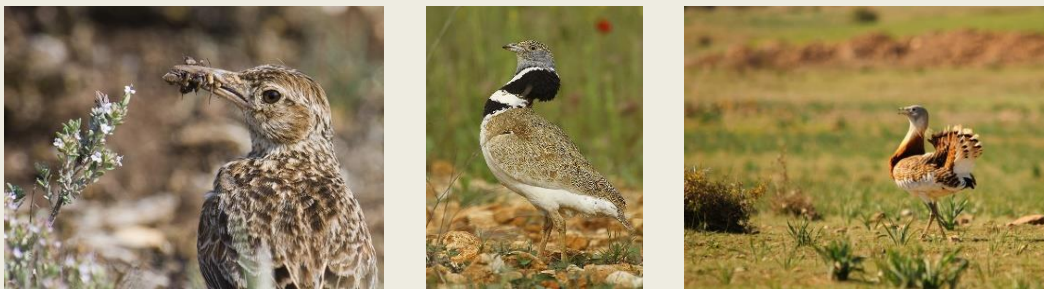
Days 3-4. Ebro Basin steppes of Belchite and "El Planeron."

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 type in northern Spain.



This windswept, arid land of dusty, red, scrub-covered plains and eroded plateaux, more reminiscent of Morocco or Afghanistan than of 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.

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 5-6. Iberian system and the Ebro Delta

The route crosses one of the most important endorheic groups of the Iberian Peninsula. An unique territory in which we can observe a **great diversity and quantity of steppes species, raptors and waders**. On our journey west, we find the Pena reservoir, an especially interesting point for observing summer species, such as red-rumped swallows, a variety of raptors, and other **rock dwellers**.



On our second day in the area, we focus on the Ebro Delta Natural Park ecological reserve. Covering an area of approximately 320 square kilometres, it encompasses the delta region formed by the Ebro River as it flows into the Mediterranean Sea. The park boasts a **diverse range of habitats, including lagoons, salt marshes, beaches, and paddy fields**, providing a haven for numerous plant and animal species. The park's breath-taking landscapes, rich biodiversity, and vital ecological role make it a treasured natural gem for birdwatchers.

Habitats: Varied. Riverside forest, canyons and rocks, steppes and agricultural mosaics, wetlands and saline lagoon complexes, salt marshes, beaches, paddy fields, dunes, and riparian forests.



Special Interest Species: Greater Flamingo, Audouin's Gull, Collared Pratincole, Little Tern, Purple Heron, Marsh Harrier, Kentish Plover.

Day 7. "The Aragon Sea" and return to Zaragoza

On the last day, on our way north to Zaragoza, we traverse the lower section of the Ebro River, visiting varied habitats **from brackish lagoons, reservoirs and gypsum fluvial escarpments and coppices**. Starting from the ancient endorheic saltwater lagoon of Chipriana we follow the river course to the Mequinenza reservoir (also known as "Mar de Aragón"). The route offers the chance to observe significant populations of water birds, with impressive **flocks of ducks, herons, grebes, and gulls**, among others.



Habitats Riverside forests, pine forests, Mediterranean scrub, salty lagoons and reservoirs, and gypsum cliffs.



Special Interest Species: Black-Necked Grebe, Black-Footed Plover, White Jar. Other Birds Of Interest Are The Stilt, The Red Duck, The Yellow-Legged Gull, The Marsh Harrier Or The Common Coot.

Day 8. 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 Wi-Fi 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 broad patio outside. 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 Wi-Fi, 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.



La Fabrica del Solfa - Iberian System and Delta del Ebro

The hotel "La Fábrica del Solfa" adheres to the "slow travel" philosophy, a relaxed form of travel centred on enjoying the landscape, the local food and the cultural heritage. The pillars of slow travel concept are the conservation of the environment, the emphasis on traditional gastronomy, unconventional destinations, singular accommodation options, a wealth of heritage and an overriding emphasis on quality. Modern and comfortable, each of the eight rooms (without television) is named after one of the paper mills that once flourished by the river.



✓ 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. There is an excellent rail service linking Zaragoza and 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 "[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.

