

Mallorca – A Birdwatching Tour for Beginners

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Outline itinerary

Day 1 Fly Palma; transfer Puerto Pollensa

Day 2/7 Excursions to the Boquer Valley, S'Albufera Marsh, Tramuntana Mountains, Formentor Peninsula, Salinas de Levante and Cuber Reservoir, from our hotel base near Puerto Pollensa

Day 8 Fly UK

Departs

April

Focus

Birds

Grading

A traditional birding tour with easy walking.
Grade A

Dates & Prices

See website (tour code ESP32) or brochure

Highlights

- Superb, relaxed Mediterranean birding with time learn about the birds
- Cinereous Vulture, Audouin's Gull, Balearic Warb & Eleonora's Falcon
- Time to identify and enjoy butterflies & dragonfl
- A comfortable hotel - with superb swimming pool close to all the main birding sites



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NB. Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather & other local considerations can necessitate some re-ordering of the programme during the course of the tour, though this will always be done to maximise best use of the time and weather conditions available.

Introduction

On all of our 'Beginners Birdwatching' holidays, we provide a high level of instruction from our top leaders. These tours are undertaken at a relaxed pace and are suitable for the complete novice, as well as those with some knowledge who would benefit from 'brushing it up' or learning more. As is typical with Naturetrek tours, there will be an emphasis on enjoying our surroundings and other wildlife, as well as the birdlife. Questions will be very much encouraged, with emphasis placed on participants being able to see, enjoy and identify every bird well for themselves, whether common or rare.

Mallorca is an ideal destination for a first visit to the Mediterranean and will introduce you to a wide range of birds typical to the region, along with some of the island's specialties. The beauty of Mallorca lies in the fact that it contains a wide range of different habitats all in close proximity to one another; ranging from mountains that rise to over 1,000 metres, to the third largest freshwater marsh in the Mediterranean. This enables all the best birding spots to be covered from the one base without the need to change hotels or having to cover vast distances by transport, thus allowing more time in the field actually birdwatching. Indeed, it is even possible to cover both the mountains and marshlands in the same day!

Due to its relative isolation from the Spanish mainland, Mallorca hosts over 30 species of endemic plants including a relic from the ice age, *Hypericum balearicum*. Orchids are also well represented on the island and although the prime time for these is a little earlier in the spring, we can expect to see a good variety of species in flower. Butterflies are also numerous with such species as Swallowtail, Cleopatra and a variety of 'blues' and 'whites' present.

All of our daily outings on this tour are optional, and our hotel has an excellent outdoor swimming pool and other activities should you want a day off from the natural history exploration.

Day 1

UK - Puerto Pollensa

We leave Britain and fly direct to Palma, Mallorca from where we transfer to our hotel located on Pollensa



Marsh Harrier

Bay between the small resort of Puerto Pollensa and the historic old town of Alcudia. The picturesque Pollensa Bay is in the north-east of the island and well away from the typical brash resorts often associated with Mallorca. Our hotel backs onto S'Albufereta Marsh and has its own hide overlooking the marsh. Should time allow after checking in, we will take an orientation walk around the hotel's extensive grounds and visit the private hide to acclimatise ourselves and get to know some of the typical birds of the

Mediterranean region. Species may include Cetti's and Sardinian Warblers, Zitting Cisticola and Serin as well as Marsh Harrier, Little Egret and a selection of waders.

Day 2

Puerto Pollensa – Bocquer Valley

The hotel hide offers a superb opportunity for those who want to watch the marsh and its birds either before breakfast or after dinner. As we are in the spring migration window, sightings often differ every morning and evening.

After breakfast we take an all-day walk in the Bocquer Valley, a spectacular rocky valley leading to Mallorca's north coast and one of the best known birding spots on the island. Here we will hopefully get to know Hoopoe, 'Balearic' Woodchat Shrike, Blue Rock Thrush, Wryneck, Rock Dove, Cirl Bunting and any migrants that are passing through this spectacular valley. If we are really lucky we might find a Balearic Warbler. We may also get our first sighting of Eleonora's Falcon busily surveying the breeding cliffs after having just returned from their winter headquarters in Madagascar.



Cirl Bunting

The vegetation of the Bocquer Valley is typical Mediterranean dry garrigue with pin-cushion plants as well as Dwarf Fan Palm; the only native palm in Europe.

Should we have time after our visit to the valley, we will visit the southern end of S'Albufereta Marsh. The parking area contains the remains of an old Roman quarry which has created a habitat not unlike a limestone pavement, and holds a wide variety of plants which will hopefully include a few late orchids. We will visit some elevated positions giving a view into the marsh waterways and there should be plenty of herons and egrets to see, together with a selection of waders including Kentish and Little Ringed Plovers and Black-winged Stilt.

Day 3

Puerto Pollensa – S'Albufera Reserve

Today we visit S'Albufera, the third largest marsh in the Mediterranean and a newly designated 'Parc



Purple Heron

Natural'. A British company attempted to drain the marsh in the 1860's; luckily for wildlife this attempt failed and it left behind a legacy of 400 kilometres of channels and canals, plus 50 kilometres of tracks, making this one of the easiest marshes to birdwatch. We will spend most of the day here, visiting the hides and walking some of the tracks in this impressive wetland which covers over

2,000 hectares. We will look for typical marsh species such as Purple Heron, Little Egret, Cattle Egret and Marsh Harrier together with waders and passerines such as Great Reed Warbler. Nightingales can be heard around the Information Centre area and they are often seen in the open. The Parc is home to the Moustached Warbler of which there are some 1,000 to 4,000 pairs, the greatest density anywhere in its range. There are also populations of Western Swamphen and Red-knobbed Coot, and we will be hoping to see these impressive birds.

The marsh itself can be rather a desert as far as flowers go, being basically a mono-culture of cladium and phragmites reeds. However, it does have a good selection of flowers on some of the drier areas, as well as colonies of the very rare Loose-flowered Orchid (*ssp. palustris*).

Day 4

Puerto Pollensa – Cuber and Lluc

The Tramuntana Mountains and Cuber Reservoir are on every birdwatcher's itinerary when visiting Mallorca and today we will travel up into these spectacular mountains (if the weather allows). They are composed mainly of limestone and reach heights of nearly 1,500 metres with a total of 37 peaks over 1,000 metres, two of which are higher than Ben Nevis. This area is the home to the rare Cinereous Vulture and we hope to catch views of these spectacular birds with a wingspan of about three metres.

We will take the road out of Puerto Pollensa which, after Pollensa town itself, winds slowly up into the mountains giving splendid views round every corner. We shall drive straight to Cuber Reservoir where we stand our best chance of seeing Cinereous Vulture. We also hope to see such species as Tawny Pipit and Spectacled Warbler, although both are difficult if it is at all windy. However, the views are always spectacular and we also have the chance of seeing additional raptors such as Griffon Vulture, Booted Eagle, Osprey, Peregrine Falcon and Red Kite.

After our picnic lunch in the high mountains, we will descend to a slightly lower level and visit Lluc Monastery. We will walk around the Jardin Botanico (Botanical Garden) which provides an interesting habitat for numerous bird species, and there will be an opportunity to visit the monastery itself.

Day 5

Puerto Pollensa – Formentor

Today we visit the Formentor Peninsular, the north-eastern extension of the Tramuntana range. Here there are yet more spectacular views, this time coastal, and there will be plenty of time to admire them as we look for Scopoli's and Balearic Shearwaters, Eleonora's Falcon and more migrants. We may also catch sight of a dolphin in the seas around the lighthouse.

We will stop at Casas Vellas on our way back from the Formentor lighthouse. This is a small agricultural area of fig and olive trees and vines set in the pine woods and an absolute magnet for migrants on their way north, as well as home to the Balearic sub-species of



Bee-eaters

Crossbill and Firecrest. At this time of year Bee-eaters are passing through the island and Casas Vellas gives us an excellent chance of seeing these colourful birds on migration.

We will picnic nearby before heading to the Albercutx viewpoint where stunning views of both Puerto Pollensa and the Formentor Peninsular are found. Here Blue Rock Thrush, Crag Martin and Black Redstart may be seen, together with the occasional passage of migrating raptors over the nearby ridge.

If time permits after leaving the peninsular we will visit a recently renovated area at the northern end of S'Albufereta Marsh. A short walk through an area rich in wild flowers should provide an opportunity to see numerous butterflies and dragonflies, and we will check the two pools for herons, egrets and waders, and the surrounding tamarisk for passerines.

Day 6

Puerto Pollensa – southern Mallorca

The south of the island is much flatter and generally hotter than the north. Today we will be heading south to visit the Salinas de Levante, an extensive area of worked and disused salt pans. This is a prime stopping-off site for waders and terns on their way north, and a haven for resident breeding birds such as Black-winged Stilt and Kentish Plover.



Greater Flamingo

On the way we will stop along a country lane between Manacor and Felanitx to check the surrounding farmland. We will be looking for both Thekla and Short-toed Larks, and we may also find Hoopoe and perhaps Stone-curlew.

We will continue to the salinas and have a walk overlooking the salt pans before our picnic lunch. We will hope to get views of Greater Flamingo, Avocet and any other wading birds and terns that happen to be there. Our lunch spot will be overlooking the pans, and in the fig trees behind we may see European Turtle Dove.

After lunch we head a little further south to the Cabo de Salinas, the extreme southerly point of the island. The vegetation here is pristine garrigue and maquis and often holds migrants. We shall spend some time sea-watching from the beach to look for any passing Scopoli's and Balearic Shearwaters, and there may also be Audouin's Gulls present. All three species breed on the nearby archipelago of Cabrera.

Day 7

Puerto Pollensa – southern S'Albufera

On our final full day we visit the southern end of S'Albufera Reserve. This area provides an alternative habitat to that visited earlier in the week and we hope to see new species. It also gives us the possibility of catching up with any target species previously missed.

Our first stop will be at the old disused salt pans where we hope to get close views of a number of wader species, and the rare Marbled Duck may also be present. We will walk along a track through the reeds and

have another opportunity to see Moustached Warbler in the surrounding reedbeds. At the end of the track is an old sand quarry area where Bee-eaters are usually present.

Afterwards, we will drive round to the Depuradora (waterworks) where the elevated lookout platform provides excellent views over the man-made water areas. Here wildfowl, waders and terns will be our target, together with the numerous flowers and butterflies that flourish here.

We will take advantage of the lookout stairway to provide seating for our picnic lunch before taking a stroll towards the reserve's Lone Pine' area. Here further sightings of Western Swamphen and Purple Heron are anticipated, together with any small migrants that may be present in the pines. Hoopoe usually breeds nearby giving us the opportunity to observe them at close quarters. Again flowers are plentiful in this location, with Bug Orchid and Loose-flowered Orchid usually in bloom. Butterflies and dragonflies are not to be outdone and are also well represented.



Black-winged Stilt

After a very enthralling day, we return to the hotel a little earlier than normal to allow everyone time to relax and carry out their packing in preparation tomorrow's flight home.

Day 8

Puerto Pollensa – Fly UK

Today is departure day. If time allows before we have to leave for the airport we will have one last look over S'Albufereta Marsh to look at the birds and flowers typical of this beautiful Mediterranean island.

Tour Grading

This tour is graded A and will consist of day walks only and as such is suitable for any age and level of fitness. It is based at one hotel near Puerto Pollensa in the north-east of the island, close to the best birdwatching sites. From here we will be taking day trips by minibus, visiting the various sites looking for birds and other wildlife, and taking a picnic lunch with us. We will embark on at least one trip to the south of the island which is the first landfall for birds on spring migration. We shall be out on one or two evenings looking for, or at least trying to hear, Scops Owl. We will also try to locate bats of which there are many species on the island. We may be able to identify some using a Bat Detector. There will be some gentle walking involved at most of the sites.

Weather

Late April is generally warm and sunny but the weather can still be changeable. It is therefore wise to be prepared for all conditions from shorts and 'T' shirts to pullover and waterproofs. The daily itinerary may

be changed round not only to allow for weather but also to take advantage of any unusual bird sightings that often happen at this time of year during migration.

Food & accommodation

All food and accommodation is included in the price of this holiday. Our hotel is located a couple of kilometres outside Puerto Pollensa on Pollensa Bay. A regular bus service runs from Alcudia to Puerto Pollensa with a stop outside the hotel. There is a bird hide overlooking S'Albufereta Marsh accessible to hotel guests from the grounds. There are three swimming pools and a number of tennis courts available to hotel residents. Breakfast and evening meals are buffet service with an excellent wide range of Spanish and international fayre including vegetarian options. On most evenings there is entertainment in the lounge adjacent to the hotel reception.

Regional Departures

Palma is a popular holiday destination and subject to confirmation we hope to be able to offer direct flights from a wide selection of regional airports including Gatwick, Stansted, Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds/Bradford and Newcastle. Contact us for details, or make your preference known upon booking. Depending on flight times from regional airports you may have some spare time in Palma at either end of the tour, or you may prefer to take a taxi to/from the hotel. This costs about 60 euros each way although there is a bus for 15 euros also.

How to book your place

In order to book your place on this holiday, please give us a call on 01962 733051 with a credit or debit card, book online at www.naturetrek.co.uk, or alternatively complete and post the booking form at the back of our main Naturetrek brochure, together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday cost plus any room supplements if required. If you do not have a copy of the brochure, please call us on 01962 733051 or request one via our website. Please stipulate any special requirements, for example extension requests or connecting/regional flights, at the time of booking.