

# Go Slow ... in Andalucia

## Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

---

### Outline itinerary

<b>Day 1</b>	Fly Gibraltar, transfer Vejer
<b>Day 2-6</b>	Daily wildlife excursions, The Straits area
<b>Day 7</b>	Fly London

### Departs

September

### Focus

Autumn bird migration, whales and dolphins

### Grading

A. A Go Slow wildlife tour with a boat trip and gentle wildlife walks

### Dates and Prices

See website (tour code ESP46)

### Highlights

- Single-centre tour based between the beautiful old towns of Tarifa and Vejer de la Frontera.
- Experience thousands of migrating raptors and storks in comfort.
- Common, Bottlenose & Striped Dolphins plus Long-finned Pilot Whale
- Long-finned Pilot Whales and three species of dolphin and maybe even migrating Sperm Whales close by on a boat trip into the Straits
- Tranquil accommodation at a traditional Spanish *cortijo* surrounded by pastureland and fruit trees.
- Sample superb local *tapas* and enjoy our legendary picnics in the sun!



Short-toed Eagle



Long-finned Pilot Whales



Rock of Gibraltar



Naturetrek

Mingledown Barn

Wolf's Lane

Chawton

Alton

Hampshire

GU34 3HJ

UK

T: +44 (0)1962 733051

E: [info@naturetrek.co.uk](mailto:info@naturetrek.co.uk)

W: [www.naturetrek.co.uk](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk)



---

## Introduction

On this 'Go Slow' tour we focus on viewing eagles and storks passing through the migratory bottleneck of the Straits of Gibraltar. We will stay at the delightful rural farmhouse of Cortijo el Indiviso, from where we will make leisurely day excursions all within easy reach of our base to explore the variety of wetland habitats within very close proximity. We will have plenty of time to relax, walk in the extensive pastures and grounds at our lodgings, or simply relax by the pool surrounded by the peaceful sounds of the Mediterranean countryside.

This southernmost province of Spain is perhaps best known for its tasty *tapas*, passionate discussions, and welcoming people. However, it is also the most biodiverse region not only in Spain but the whole of Europe.

Because of its strategic position at the gateway of two continents, the land here has changed hands countless times in history between the ruling forces of Europe and North Africa, so the culture here is a fascinating blend of Mediterranean and Moroccan. The flora and fauna here too provide tantalising glimpses of nature from across the waters, and from a migratory bird's perspective it is quite simply the centre of the world!



The Straits of Gibraltar are just 14 km wide and provide migrant birds with an ideal crossing point of the Mediterranean. Soaring birds are able to make use of the thermals which form over the Rock of Gibraltar and the Moroccan peak of Jebel Musa to gain height to help them on a treacherous part of their journey.

This combination of geography and geology means a helping hand for birds and quite simply spectacular birding for us! We will visit the very best places to watch as an estimated 250,000 raptors pass over the area, as well as untold thousands of other journeying passerines and seabirds.



This incredible natural phenomenon will be happening all around us, meaning you can sit back with a nice cold beer and simply enjoy these unforgettable scenes.

A relaxed boat trip into the Straits itself will let you get close and personal with the many cetacean species that can be found in spring and autumn, such as Common, Bottlenose & Striped Dolphins and Long-finned Pilot Whale – even Fin, Sperm Whales and Orca are possible here.

There will also be time to explore the local area in and around Tarifa Old Town, where we'll indulge in some fantastic local *tapas*, and visit some superb wetland, farmland and woodland areas.

A massive migration event is in progress at this time of year, as birds journey south to winter. We hope to see several species of raptor including Griffon Vultures, Egyptian Vultures, Bonelli's Eagles and Spanish Imperial Eagles alongside tens of thousands of migrating raptors such as Honey Buzzards, Black Kites, Short-toed and Booted Eagles, interspersed with huge flocks of White and Black Storks and European Bee-eaters. Resident Spanish specialties include Firecrest, Short-toed Treecreeper and Crested Tit. We will also look for the reintroduced Northern Bald Ibis, a Critically Endangered species whose population has increased in this area of Spain after a successful reintroduction programme. Visits to wetlands should yield a host of waders including Kentish Plover, Sanderling, Little Stint and Collared Pratincole, as well as star birds like Purple Swamphen, Eurasian Spoonbill and Greater Flamingo.



Bald Ibis

Our boat trip should give us views of Cory's and Scopoli's Shearwaters as well as Long-finned Pilot Whales, Common and Striped Dolphins and possibly Sperm Whale.

**NB. Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather and 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. We aim to have at least one whale-watching trip on this tour, but please bear in mind that these trips are entirely dependent on the weather (and wind). We have never yet failed to offer at least one whale watch.**

## Day 1

## Arrive Gibraltar and transfer to Cortijo el Indiviso

We begin with a flight to Gibraltar, from where we transfer the short distance to Cortijo el Indiviso, our delightful rural farmhouse accommodation near Vejer de la Frontera.



Migrating White Storks

Set amongst sweeping pasturelands and fruit and olive trees, this traditional *cortijo* is home not only to a menagerie of well-cared-for animals, but also to much local wildlife, including Woodchat Shrikes, Spotted Flycatchers and Common Nightingales.

After a welcoming lunch or afternoon tea, we'll take the afternoon to settle in to our lodgings and explore our local woodland surroundings on a leisurely stroll.

We may even be lucky enough to get a visit from some of the local Northern Bald Ibis! This Critically Endangered bird breeds nearby since its successful reintroduction and often drops in to feed on the insect-rich pastures of the *cortijo*.

## Day 2

## Boat excursion into straits

We will take a relaxing boat trip, weather permitting, into the Straits to enjoy the seabird passage and look for cetaceans. We will be on the lookout for Cory's, Scopoli's and Balearic Shearwaters and Wilson's Storm Petrel among other species, plus the three species of resident dolphin (Common, Bottlenose and Striped) and the resident pods of Long-finned Pilot Whale. We may even be lucky enough to find larger, migratory whales, such as Fin or Sperm.



Common Dolphin

Once back on dry land, we will take time to visit the picturesque Old Town of Tarifa, where we can encounter Common Bulbul and breeding Lesser Kestrels among the myriad of quirky local shops and *tapas* bars. We'll enjoy a leisurely *tapas* lunch in the main square where, simply by looking up, we'll be able to see migrating raptors and storks crossing over this historic town.

## Day 3

## Los Lances

We'll spend the morning at Los Lances nature reserve, a small area of intertidal habitat on Tarifa beach. On the short walk across low intensity farmland, we may see Crested Lark, Tawny Pipit, Short-toed Lark, Yellow Wagtails and Corn Bunting. A boardwalk takes us out to a hide, from where we can look across the lagoons to see birds including Common Ringed and Kentish Plover, Sanderling and Little Stint. There's a decent chance of visiting Osprey here too, and seabirds can include Sandwich and Caspian Terns, and the once extremely rare Audouin's Gull.

Migratory movement is completely dependent on wind strength and direction. Depending on whether birds are crossing or gathering inland waiting for their moment, this afternoon will be spent at one of several local raptor watchpoints, making the absolute most of whatever the conditions bring us and relaxing in the sun whilst watching this natural phenomenon.

We will again return to our hotel to have dinner.

## Day 4

## Barbate salt pans

Today, alongside more raptor-watching at sites with stunning views across the Straits to North Africa, we'll make a visit to nearby Barbate salt pans. This area offers a fantastic selection of waders which change every day, as well as some real eye-catchers like Eurasian Spoonbill, Greater Flamingo and Western Osprey.

Also close by is the town of Vejer de la Frontera, where a successful reintroduction programme of the critically endangered Northern Bald Ibis took place in 2008. From thirty pairs, the birds now number around 78 pairs, and we should be able to see these engaging and quirky birds feeding on nearby pastureland.



For those that wish, there should also be chance to explore the ancient frontier town of Vejer and indulge in the spectacular views and architecture whilst enjoying a drink or ice cream.

## Day 5

## La Janda

Today we'll visit the farmland and wetlands of La Janda. The huge area of low intensity farmland was once a vast wetland on a par with Doñana in terms of its ecological importance. It was drained for agriculture as recently as the 1960s, but amongst the rice fields and managed pools and ditches, some real wetland gems remain, hinting at a return to its former glory.

Amongst many hundreds of White Stork and Glossy Ibis, here we should see many waders, wildfowl and raptors, such as Purple Swamphen, Marsh Harrier and Black-winged Kite as well as a chance of Spanish Imperial Eagle and Bonelli's Eagle whilst the farmland areas should yield Spanish Sparrow and Calandra Lark.



Purple Swamphen

## Day 6

## Los Alcornocales

On our last full day in Spain, we'll take time to explore the rich surroundings in the Los Alcornocales Natural Park. This is the biggest cork oak forest in Europe and especially unique in the way that it gathers moisture coming in off the ocean to create a warm Mediterranean cloud forest. As well as some adorable local avian specialities in the form of Western Bonelli's Warbler, Firecrest, Crested Tit, Hawfinch and Short-toed Treecreeper, almost anything can turn up here during autumn migration, as passerines collect amongst the trees to gather strength for their southwards crossing of The Straits.

There is also a host of interesting rare plants to see here, such as the quasi-endemic carnivorous plant *Drosophyllum lusitanicum*, which occurs only here and in some areas of Portugal and northern Morocco.

We will also have a look at the high rocky cliffs of Sierra de la Plata. Here, amongst the eerie screeching of the resident Griffon Vulture colony, mountain specialities such as Blue Rock Thrush, Crag Martin, and Rock Bunting are all likely to be encountered. We should again find ourselves in the midst of the Autumn raptor migration, and will take our final chance to sit back and relax with a picnic and a glass of wine as the spectacular birds drift overhead.



Blue Rock Thrush

## Day 7

## Fly London

Today sadly our trip comes to an end, and it's time to make our own migratory journey back to the UK from Gibraltar airport but not before relaxing on the airport terrace with fabulous views of the rock monolith as you watch your plane land!

## Tour grading & focus

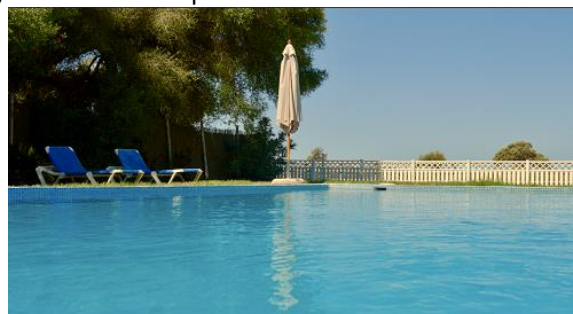
This single-centre tour will be based at Cortijo el Indiviso for all six nights, a comfortable rural house with a pool situated between Tarifa and Vejer de la Frontera.

The tour focuses on short walks, birdwatching and, weather permitting dolphin/whale-watching boat trips. Although we will not be going out if the sea is rough, it is worth bearing in mind the possibility of sea-sickness, even in calm conditions.

In terms of physical exertion, this is a relaxed tour and we are unlikely to cover more than 1 mile on foot during the course of a day. The main theme is to spend time lazing in the sun, watching migrating birds of prey!

As with other Naturetrek Go Slow holidays, what we're aiming to offer here is as many of the following as possible:

- Single centre
- Direct flights
- Comfortable hotel with pool
- Leisurely paced walks on gentle terrain
- Expert leaders, as ever, with more time for interpretation, guidance and explanation
- A maximum of 6 hours in the field each day
- Morning and afternoon comfort stops
- No long drives
- Back in time for afternoon tea
- All excursions optional
- All-inclusive cost
- Feel free to relax, read, potter, swim, paint or whatever!



## Daily schedule

This will be fairly flexible, with breakfast generally being available from 8am ready for a 9am departure from the accommodation. A picnic lunch will then be taken in the field, with further exploration in the afternoon but returning in time for afternoon tea! Optional excursions will be available for those that wish to do a little more before dinner. Activities depend very much on the weather and wind conditions, the vagaries of migrating birds, and individual wishes.

Our priority is to see as much wildlife as possible without having to work too hard for it!

## Flights

For this tour we will be taking a direct lunchtime flight from London Heathrow to Gibraltar, returning in the early evening. Regional flights may be possible – please state your preference at the time of booking.

## Weather

This part of Europe generally has quite reliable weather. By mid-September temperatures will have calmed a little from the blazing heat of mid-summer and we should enjoy daily temperatures between the mid-20s and low 30s °C.

The easterly *levante* and westerly *poniente* winds are very much a part of life in The Straits, and what make bird-watching here so exciting! The wind can be strong, but of course your guides know the absolute best and most comfortable places to be whatever the conditions! Rainfall is fairly infrequent, although the *poniente* can bring rain in from the Atlantic at times.

## Food and accommodation

All food and accommodation is included in the price of this holiday.

## 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](http://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.