

Mallorca - A Vegetarian/Vegan tour

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Outline itinerary

Day 1 Fly Palma; transfer Maria de la Salut

Day 2/7 Excursions to the Boquer Valley, S'Albufera Marsh, Tramuntana Mountains, Formentor Peninsula, Parc Natural de Son Real and Cuber Reservoir, from our hotel base near Maria de la Salut

Day 8 Fly UK



Departs

April / May

Focus

Birds



Grading

A traditional wildlife tour with easy walking.

Grade A

Dates & Prices

See website (tour code ESP63) or brochure



Highlights

- Superb, relaxed Mediterranean birding with time to look about the birds
- Cinereous Vulture, Audouin's Gull, Balearic Warbler, Eleonora's Falcon, Moustached Warbler
- Time to identify and enjoy butterflies & dragonflies
- An array of wildflowers in bloom including several orchids
- Lovely boutique hotel serving superb vegan food



Naturetrek

Mingledown Barn

Wolf's Lane

Chawton

Alton

Hampshire

GU34 3HJ

UK

T: +44 (0)1962 733051

E: info@naturetrek.co.uk

W: www.naturetrek.co.uk

Introduction

This 8-day holiday to Mallorca is undertaken at a relaxed pace and is suitable both for the novice naturalist and for those with more extensive experience. As is typical of Naturetrek tours, there will be an emphasis on enjoying our surroundings and the wider wildlife, not only the birdlife. Questions will be warmly encouraged, with a focus on ensuring that participants are 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, introducing you to a wide range of species typical of the region alongside several island specialities. One of Mallorca's great strengths as wildlife tour destination lies in the variety of habitats found in close proximity: from mountains rising to over 1,000 metres to the third-largest freshwater marsh in the Mediterranean. This allows us to visit all the best birding sites from a single base, without needing to change hotels or cover long distances by road, maximising time spent in the field. Remarkably, it is even possible to explore both the mountains and the marshes within the same day.

Thanks to its relative isolation from the Spanish mainland, Mallorca hosts over 30 endemic plant species, including the remarkable *Hypericum balearicum*, a relic of the Ice Age. Orchids are also well represented on the island. Although their absolute peak is earlier in the spring, we can still expect to find a good variety in flower during our visit. Butterflies are numerous too, with species such as Swallowtail, Cleopatra and a wide range of 'blues' and 'whites' typically encountered.

Our lovely boutique hotel is situated just 20 kilometres inland from the outstanding Parc Natural de s'Albufera de Mallorca marshes. Catering to a vegan clientele, it serves excellent dishes prepared from locally sourced produce and provides a peaceful and very comfortable base for the week.



Mallorca

Itinerary

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.

Day 1

UK – Maria de la Salut

We leave Britain and fly direct to Palma, Mallorca, from where we transfer to our hotel in Maria de la Salut in the north-east of the island, just inland from the picturesque Alcúdia Bay. Should time allow after checking in, we will take a short drive to S'Albufera for a relaxed introduction to Mallorca and an opportunity to familiarise ourselves with 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

Maria de la Salut – Bocquer Valley

After breakfast, we take an all-day walk in the Boquer Valley, a spectacular rocky valley leading to Mallorca's north coast and one of the best-known birding locations on the island. Here we will hopefully become familiar with species such as Hoopoe, the 'Balearic' Woodchat Shrike, Blue Rock Thrush, Wryneck, Rock Dove and Cirl Bunting, as well as any migrants passing through this dramatic landscape. With a little luck, we may even find a Balearic Warbler. This is also an excellent area for our first sightings of Eleonora's Falcon, which will be busily surveying the breeding cliffs after returning from their winter headquarters in Madagascar.



The vegetation of the Boquer Valley is typical Mediterranean dry garrigue, with cushion-forming shrubs and the Dwarf Fan Palm — the only native palm in Europe.

Should time allow after our visit to the valley, we will continue to the southern end of the S'Albufereta Marsh. The parking area incorporates the remains of an old Roman quarry, creating a habitat reminiscent of limestone pavement and supporting a wide variety of plants, including, with luck, a few late orchids. From several elevated viewpoints we will look into the marsh waterways, where there should be plenty of herons

and egrets, together with a selection of waders such as Kentish and Little Ringed Plovers and Black-winged Stilt.

Day 3

Maria de la Salut – S'Albufera Reserve



Moustached Warbler

Today we visit S'Albufera, the third-largest marsh in the Mediterranean and a newly designated Parc Natural. A British company attempted to drain the marsh in the 1860s; fortunately for wildlife, the attempt failed, leaving behind a legacy of 400 kilometres of channels and canals, plus 50 kilometres of tracks. This network now makes S'Albufera one of the easiest marshes in which to watch birds.

We will spend most of the day here, visiting the hides and walking some of the tracks through this impressive wetland, which covers more than 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 including Great Reed Warbler. Nightingales can often be heard around the Information Centre area and are frequently seen in the open.

The Parc is home to a healthy population of Moustached Warblers — some 1,000 to 4,000 pairs — the greatest density anywhere in the species' range. There are also populations of Western Swamphen and Red-knobbed Coot, and we will be hoping to see these impressive birds during our visit.

The marsh itself can appear rather barren in botanical terms, being largely a monoculture of Cladium and Phragmites reeds. However, some of the drier areas support a good variety of flowering plants, including colonies of the very rare Loose-flowered Orchid (*ssp. palustris*).

Day 4

Maria de la Salut – Cúber and Lluc

The Tramuntana Mountains and Cúber Reservoir are on every birdwatcher's itinerary when visiting Mallorca, and today we will travel up into these spectacular mountains (weather permitting). Composed predominantly of limestone, the range reaches heights of nearly 1,500 metres and includes 37 peaks over 1,000 metres, two of which are higher than Ben Nevis. This area is home to the rare Cinereous Vulture, and we hope to enjoy views of these magnificent birds, which boast a wingspan of around three metres.

The road winds slowly upwards, offering splendid views at every turn. We will head directly to the Cúber Reservoir, where we stand our best chance of seeing Cinereous Vulture. We also hope to encounter species such as Tawny Pipit and Spectacled Warbler, although both can be difficult to find in windy conditions.

Regardless of the weather, the scenery is always spectacular, and there is also the possibility of encountering additional raptors including 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 elevation to visit Lluc Monastery. Here we will explore the Jardin Botànic (Botanical Garden), which provides an interesting habitat for numerous bird species, and there will be an opportunity to visit the monastery itself.

Day 5

Maria de la Salut – Formentor

Today we visit the Formentor Peninsula, the north-eastern extension of the Tramuntana range. Here the coastal scenery is spectacular, and we will have plenty of time to admire the views as we look for Scopoli's and Balearic Shearwaters, Eleonora's Falcon and a variety of migrants. We may also catch sight of dolphins in the waters around the lighthouse.

On our return from the Formentor lighthouse, we will stop at Casas Vellas. This small agricultural area of fig and olive trees and vines, set among pine woods, is an absolute magnet for migrants heading north, and is also home to the Balearic subspecies of 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 enjoy a nearby picnic before heading up to the Albercutx viewpoint, where magnificent views over both Puerto Pollensa and the Formentor Peninsula await. Blue Rock Thrush, Crag Martin and Black Redstart may be seen here, together with the occasional passage of migrating raptors over the nearby ridge.

If time permits after leaving the peninsula, we will visit a recently restored area at the northern end of the S'Albufereta Marsh. A short walk through an area rich in wildflowers should offer opportunities to see numerous butterflies and dragonflies. We will also check the two pools for herons, egrets and waders, and the surrounding tamarisk for passerines.

Day 6

Maria de la Salut – Parc Natural de Son Real

The Son Real estate boasts approximately 2,000 metres of well-preserved coastline, predominantly rocky but interspersed with small sandy beaches and dunes. Here it is possible to spot Kentish Plovers and Audouin's and Yellow-legged Gulls, while shearwaters may be seen skimming the horizon. The vegetation is predominantly garrigue and pine, with heather, rosemary, wild olive, mastic and strawberry trees among the characteristic species. We will look for Woodchat Shrike, Hoopoe, Nightingale, flycatchers and a variety of warblers, especially the Balearic Warbler, an endemic species that breeds on the estate.



Several dragonfly species can be found in the irrigation channels near the museum, and butterflies may include Swallowtail, Clouded Yellow and Cleopatra.

Day 7

Maria de la Salut – Southern S'Albufera



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

Our first stop will be the old, disused salt pans, where we hope to enjoy close views of a number of wader species; the rare Marbled Duck may also be present. We will then walk along a track through the reeds, giving us another chance to see Moustached Warbler in the surrounding reedbeds. At the end of the track lies 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 pools. Here we will focus on wildfowl, waders and terns, together with the numerous flowers and butterflies that flourish in this area.

We will take advantage of the lookout stairway as seating for our picnic lunch before taking a stroll towards the reserve's 'Lone Pine' area. Here we anticipate further sightings of Western Swamphen and Purple Heron, together with any small migrants moving through the pines. Hoopoe usually breeds nearby, giving us the opportunity to observe them at close quarters. Flowers are again plentiful at this site, with Bug Orchid and Loose-flowered Orchid usually in bloom, and both butterflies and dragonflies are also well represented.

After a very rewarding day, we return to the hotel a little earlier than usual to allow time to relax and pack in preparation for tomorrow's flight home.

Day 8

Maria de la Salut – Fly UK

Today is departure day. If time allows before we have to leave for the airport we will have one last look around Maria de la Salut to look at the birds and flowers typical of this beautiful Mediterranean island.

Tour Grading

This tour is graded A and consists of day walks only, making it suitable for any age and level of fitness. It is based at a hotel in Maria de la Salut in the north-east of the island, close to the best birdwatching sites. From

here we will take day trips by minibus to explore a variety of locations, looking for birds and other wildlife, and we will take a picnic lunch with us each day.

On one or two evenings we will venture out in search of – or at least hoping to hear – Eurasian Scops Owl. We will also look for bats, of which there are many species on the island, and may be able to identify some using a bat detector. Gentle walking will be involved at most sites.

Weather

Late April is generally warm and sunny, but it would be prudent to be prepared for showers. It is therefore wise to be prepared for all conditions – from shorts and T-shirts to a pullover and waterproofs. The daily itinerary may be adjusted not only to allow for weather conditions but also to take advantage of any unusual bird sightings, which often occur at this time of year during migration.

Food & accommodation

All food and accommodation are included in the price of this holiday, starting with dinner on Day 1 and ending with breakfast on Day 8. Our hotel is located in the lovely village of Maria de la Salut in the north-east of the island, just inland from Alcúdia Bay. The hotel has a swimming pool available to guests, and you are welcome to take time out from the day's excursions if you would like a little relaxation. Breakfast and evening dinner are taken in the hotel's excellent vegan restaurant, where superb dishes are created using locally sourced produce. Lunches will be picnics taken in the field.

Regional Departures

Palma is a popular holiday destination and, subject to confirmation, we hope to offer direct flights from a wide selection of regional airports, including Gatwick, Stansted, Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds/Bradford and Newcastle. Please contact us for details, or indicate your preference when 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 or from the hotel.

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.

