

Spain – Total Eclipse and Migration Spectacular 2027

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Outline itinerary

Day 1	Fly Gibraltar, transfer Zahara delos Atunes
Day 2/3	Birding/wildlife excursions around Tarifa
Day 4	Eclipse Day
Day 5/7	Birding/wildlife excursions around Tarifa
Day 8	Fly London

Departs

August 2027

Focus

Total solar eclipse, birds & other wildlife

Grading

A. A standard wildlife tour, including boat trip and gentle wildlife walks

Dates and Prices

See website (tour code ESP73)

Highlights

- The spectacular majesty of a total solar eclipse
- Autumn raptor migration in full swing: thousands of White Storks and Black Kites crossing The Straits of Gibraltar
- Northern Bald Ibis, Slender-billed and Audouin's Gull, Greater Flamingoes and an array of waders
- White-headed Duck, Marbled Duck, Red-knobbed Coot, Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin all possible
- Boat trip for Long-finned Pilot Whales, Common, Striped and Bottlenose Dolphins and (with luck) Orca and Sperm or Fin Whales



Total eclipse of the Sun



Long-finned Pilot Whales



Montagu's Harrier



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

What happens at an avian migratory bottleneck, during the early peak of the autumn raptor migration, when it turns to night-time in the morning? On this trip we will have the chance to find out! At 10.45am on August 2nd 2027, this is something you can experience as part of a week of fantastic and varied birding!

Because of its strategic position at the gateway of two continents, Andalucía is a unique blend of the European and the African. This southernmost Spanish province is the most biodiverse region not only in Spain, but in the whole of Europe, so our eclipse-watching will set against a background of superb species in intertidal, wetland, farmland, woodland and urban habitats, accompanied by fantastic food, beautiful scenery and welcoming people!

At this time of year, the return to Africa has already begun for many species, and we will already be in peak migration for White Storks and Black Kites; often, many thousands per day can be observed gathering height in huge flocks, before soaring away towards the imposing Moroccan coastline. We can hope for many more raptor species besides: Griffon and Egyptian Vultures, Booted, Bonelli's and Short-toed Snake Eagles (and possibly Spanish Imperial Eagles) and Lesser Kestrels.



Resident Spanish specialities include Firecrest, Hawfinch, Short-toed Treecreeper, Crested Tit, Rock Bunting, Blue Rock Thrush and Northern Bald Ibis. Visits to wetlands should yield a host of waders including Kentish Plover, Sanderling, Little Stint and Collared Pratincole, as well as star birds like White-headed Duck, Marbled Duck, Red-knobbed Coot and Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin.

This time of year is also superb on the sea, and on our boat trip we can hope for views of Long-finned Pilot Whales, Common, Striped and Bottlenose Dolphins, and with luck even Orca, or Sperm or Fin Whale. Possible seabirds include Cory's, Scopoli's and Balearic Shearwaters, Wilson's Storm-petrels and more.

NB. Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. However, local wind and 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 a cetacean-watching trip on this tour, but please bear in mind that these trips are entirely dependent on the weather (and wind).

Day 1

Fly Gibraltar

We begin with a flight to Gibraltar, from where we will transfer to our delightful hotel just west of Tarifa. In the early evening, there'll be chance to explore local surroundings of our hotel and enjoy our first taste of the birdwatching that will feature throughout the tour.

Day 2

Soaring bird Migration

Given the right weather, any day here can witness spectacular movements of soaring birds, and this is a particularly good time of year for both numbers and diversity of species. Within sight of the town of Tarifa, there are several excellent migration watchpoints, and our expert local guides will be on hand to make sure we pick the right one for the wind strength and direction.

As soon as warm thermals begin to rise, from mid-morning onwards, there are always birds on the move overhead, and we will spend many happy hours watching one of the best migration spectacles that Europe has to offer. The numbers of Black Kites and White Storks peak around now. Several other species of raptor are also numerous, including Booted and Short-toed Snake Eagles, Marsh and Montagu's Harriers, Egyptian and Griffon Vultures, Lesser Kestrel, Eurasian Sparrowhawk and Osprey. The first of the Honey Buzzards should be moving through, and both Bonelli's and Spanish Imperial Eagle can be encountered. But the species list is less important than the sheer spectacle!



Day 3

Laguna de Medina and La Janda

Today, seasonal weather conditions permitting, we'll head over to the freshwater lagoon of Laguna de Medina. Once a hunting lake, this area is now better-protected and is known for its selection of wildfowl, including Marbled Ducks, Red-crested Pochards and Black-necked Grebes. Overhead we'll look for Gull-billed and Whiskered Terns, and in the surrounding reeds and scrub, we'll search for Isabelline (Western Olivaceous) Warbler, Great Reed Warbler, Nightingale and Turtle Dove.

We'll take our picnic lunch in a shady woodland, where Spanish Speckled Wood, Monarch and Two-tailed Pasha Butterflies can be found, as well as Pied and Spotted Flycatchers, Western Bonelli's Warblers and Golden Oriole.



Our way home will be across the farmland and wetlands of La Janda, a huge area of low-intensity farmland, once a vast wetland on a par with Coto Doñana in terms of its ecological importance. It's long since been drained for agriculture, but among the newly-wetted rice fields and managed pools and ditches, some real wetland gems remain, hinting at its former natural glory. Among White Storks and Glossy Ibises, we should see waders, wildfowl and raptors such as Purple (Western) Swamphen, Marsh Harrier and Black-winged Kite. There's also a chance of

Spanish Imperial and Bonelli's Eagle, while the farmland areas should yield Calandra and Crested Larks, Spanish Sparrow, Iberian Yellow Wagtail and Corn Bunting.

Day 4

On the day of the solar eclipse, the roads and the best viewing sites may well be busy, so we envisage an early start and a drive to our selected viewing location to be set up in plenty of time. We will have folding seats for your use, but you may wish to bring an umbrella to shield yourself from the sun. This will be a morning event and, as the Sun climbs in the sky, the eclipse will begin at 9.40am, when the Moon appears to touch the Sun, a moment called 'first contact'.

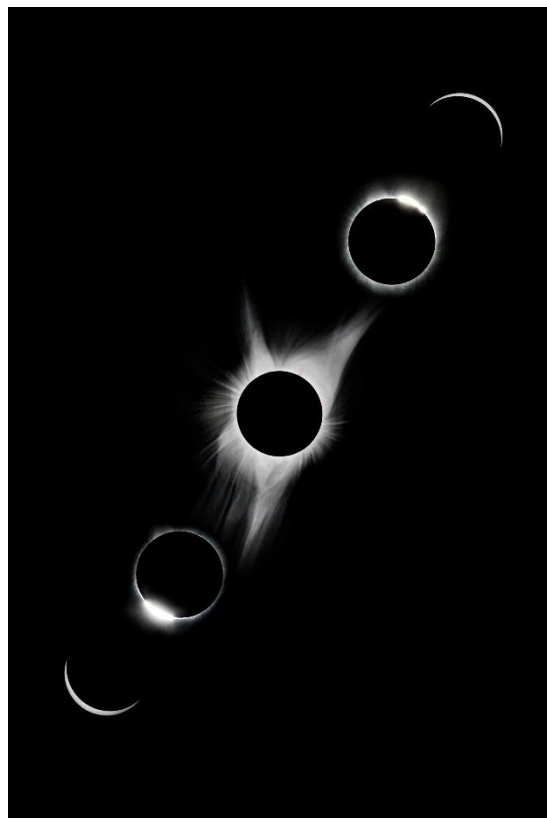
Over the course of the next hour, the Moon will appear to take a progressively larger 'bite' out of the Sun until, at 10.45am, we will approach totality, with the spectacular phenomenon known as 'the diamond ring'. The Moon's disc will now be seen against the Sun's atmosphere, with a final ray of sunlight appearing at its edge like a bright jewel.

Once the final ray of sunlight disappears, we will have a total eclipse at last, and for the first time we will see the pearly-white streamers of the Sun's outer atmosphere, the corona.

These are only visible during a total eclipse. We may also see solar prominences, flame-like extensions of the Sun's atmosphere, which are more common when the Sun is in a period of high activity. During totality, the surrounding landscape is often bathed in a strange mixture of colours. The sky may appear a rich bluey-purple, while around the horizon we may see yellows and oranges, reminiscent of sunsets.

All too soon, our four minutes and thirty-eight seconds of totality will come to an end, with another spectacular diamond ring event as the Sun emerges from behind the Moon. We will continue to watch

Eclipse Day



the partial stages of the eclipse until its end about an hour later. The eclipse timing details above apply to the clifftops above Tarifa, one of our possible viewing sites. Timings would vary very slightly were we to view from alternative locations.

During this unique celestial morning, if the conditions are right, we should be positioned on the coast to catch impressive flocks of migrating White Storks and Black Kites beginning their southerly migration to their sub-Saharan wintering grounds, and to observe their behaviour in the face of a locally unprecedented eclipse! Local experience is very important in choosing the right spot: your experienced local guides will judge this carefully, and make sure that we are in the best possible place to enjoy the migration and the eclipse alike!

Day 5

Cádiz Bay area

Today we'll make an early start to the ancient salt pans and other habitats of Cádiz Bay area. Little Swift is another typically African species, better known in the souks and medinas of Morocco. But for this tiny *Apus* species, The Straits have proved no barrier, and we will visit a coastal breeding site near Cadiz to enjoy their aerial antics.

Cádiz Bay is also home to some exceptional coastal marshes and sensitively-managed salt pans. We will take time to explore the creeks and lagoons of this very special area. At this time of year, the southerly migration will already have begun for many waders, and we can hope to see Sanderling, Dunlin, Little Stint, Curlew Sandpiper, and Bar- and Black-tailed Godwits passing through, among the breeding Gull-billed, Caspian and Little Terns, and Common Ringed and Kentish Plovers.



Collared Plover

Some glorious gulls should be encountered, such as Slender-billed Gull and the once extremely rare Audouin's Gull. We should also get views of Spoonbill, Greater Flamingo and Osprey. While in this area, we will also explore freshwater lagoons, looking for White-headed and Marbled Ducks, Red-knobbed Coot, Squacco and Purple Herons, Little Bittern and more. Among the crops and scrub of the nearby wildlife-friendly vineyards, we'll look out for Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin, whose Spanish breeding stronghold is in this area.

Day 6

The Straits of Gibraltar

Weather permitting, today we will take a boat trip out into The Straits, to enjoy 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, or even a pod of Orcas!

Once back on dry land, we will visit the Old Town of Tarifa, where we might encounter Common Bulbul and breeding Lesser Kestrels among the picturesque streets. Time permitting, we may head up to the high rocky cliffs of Sierra de la Plata where we can enjoy the low swooping and eerie screeching of the resident Eurasian Griffon Vultures at their colony.



Among the hundred or so pairs of these huge birds, we will look out for the nest of the endangered Egyptian Vulture, and hope to see one of the area's breeding Bonelli's Eagles passing by, and perhaps more Alpine Swifts. There is also a good chance of encountering a Rüppell's Vulture. This vagrant from sub-Saharan Africa is an increasingly regular visitor to the area, and in recent years an individual has even attempted to pair with a Eurasian Griffon Vulture. Montane specialities such as Blue Rock Thrush, Western Black-eared Wheatear and Rock Bunting are all likely to be encountered.

Day 7

Marismas de Barbate

Today, we'll make a visit to the nearby Marismas de Barbate. This area hosts an impressive breeding colony of Collared Pratincoles, plus Kentish Plovers, Black-winged Stilts, Little Terns and Avocets, as well as offering a fantastic selection of waders which change every day, and could include Curlew Sandpiper and Little Stint. Greater Flamingoes and Spoonbills are always a welcome sight, and the surrounding low-intensity farmland is a haven for passerines including Woodchat Shrikes, Tawny Pipits, Iberian Yellow Wagtails and Greater Short-toed Larks.

We'll take our picnic of delicious sustainably-grown local produce in the Breñas de Barbate, where we may encounter Hoopoe, Iberian Green Woodpecker and woodland specialities such as Short-toed Treecreepes, Crested Tit, Hawfinch and Red Crossbill.

We'll head back via the village of La Barca de Vejer, where a colony of Critically Endangered Northern Bald Ibises has established itself, an offshoot of the nearby reintroduction scheme. From thirty pairs, the birds now number around eighty, and we hope to see these engaging and quirky birds at their colony or nearby.



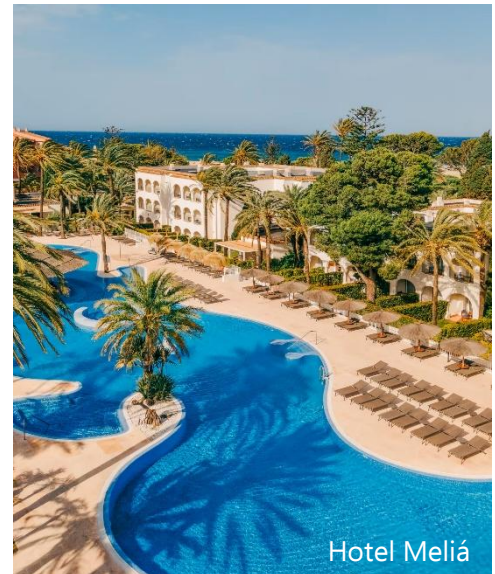
Day 8

Fly UK

Today our trip comes to an end, and it will be time to travel back to the UK, with memories of a spectacular celestial event and extraordinary Andalusian wildlife!

Tour grading & focus

This single-centre tour will be based at Hotel Meliá for all seven nights, a comfortable hotel with a pool situated in Zahara delos Atunes, west of Tarifa. The tour focuses on the total solar eclipse, migration-watching, short walks birdwatching in natural habitat, and, weather permitting a dolphin/whale-watching boat trip. 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 likely to be a relaxed tour as we are unlikely to cover more than 3-4 miles on foot during the course of a day.



Daily schedule

A typical day will begin with a leisurely breakfast from around 8.00am, with departure from the hotel at approximately 9.00am. The exceptions will be the day of the eclipse and the day of our planned visit to Cádiz Bay, when an earlier start will be required. Typically, we return to the hotel by around 6.00pm, giving you plenty of time to relax before dinner at around 8.00pm. Picnic lunches will be taken in the field each day, usually at around 1.00pm rather than the local Spanish lunchtime, which is much later!

Each day's itinerary and timing will be fairly flexible and depend very much on the weather and the vagaries of migrating birds. Our priority is to see as much wildlife as possible without having to work too hard for it!

Weather

During August the temperature will be hot, ranging from the low to high 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 wind 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, 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.