

Go Slow in Corfu

Naturetrek Itinerary

Outline itinerary

Day 1	Fly Corfu and transfer to hotel
Day 2	Korrison Lagoon
Day 3	Lefkimmi Saltpans & Airport Lagoon
Day 4	Ropa Valley
Day 5	Free day (Old City visits)
Day 6	Mountain Pantokratoras
Day 7	Butrint National Park in Albania
Day 8	Depart

Departs

May–June and August–September

Focus

Birds and other natural history with some culture

Grading

Grade A. Easy walks.

Dates and Prices

See website (tour code GRC22).

Highlights

- Enjoy a great variety of birds and different habitats.
- Visit Albania for a day and the famous Butrint Archeological Site.
- Enjoy a day of leisure with options to visit the Old City of Corfu
- Lovely beach side hotel and single centre holiday led by expert naturalists.



Corfu, Western Rock Nuthatch and Greater Flamingo



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N.B. 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.

Introduction and Summary

The picturesque Greek island of Corfu sits in the crystal-clear waters of the Ionian Sea and is renowned for its rugged, mountainous landscape and beautiful beaches. Despite being only 65 kilometres long by 30 kilometres across (at its widest point), Corfu is home to a wonderful variety of wildlife and boasts a bird list of over 300 species, plus 34 species of reptiles and amphibians, and a great range of butterflies and orchids.

During this single-centre holiday, based within a stone's throw of Gouvia Beach on Corfu's east coast, we will visit a range of sites across the island in search of a host of special birds and other wildlife. At the Lefkimmi Salt Pans, Airport Lagoon and Korission Lagoon we will enjoy flocks of Greater Flamingoes, plus Black-Winged Stilt, Stone-curlew, Kentish Plover and Rosy Starling. Dalmatian Pelican and Olive-tree Warbler are possible too. The Ropa Valley, in central Corfu, may hold Woodchat, Red-backed Shrike and Lesser Grey Shrike and is also favoured by hunting raptors such as Montagu's Harrier and Red-footed Falcon. We also hope to find the near-endemic Epirus Water Frog here. On another day, we will head into the mountains and explore the slopes of Mount Pantokrator which, at 906 metres, is the highest point on the island. Here, under clear blue skies and with southern Albania visible in the distance, we will look for Western Rock Nuthatch, Blue and Common Rock Thrushes, along with Eastern Orphean Warbler and Ortolan Bunting. This 'Go Slow' holiday will be conducted at a relaxed pace and a day of leisure with options to stay at the beach or visit the Old City of Corfu will be given.

We will end the holiday with a boat trip across the Straits of Corfu to neighboring Albania, where we will enjoy the wildlife and archaeology of Butrint National Park. Golden Oriole, Wryneck and Bee-eater are all likely here and we will search for the rare Marginated Tortoise too. In addition, in the old ruins are almost always present the European Pond Terrapin and the Balkan Terrapin, together with the Epirus Water Frog and Balkan's Frog. Furthermore, the boat trip from Corfu to Saranda and back will enable us to see Scopoli's Shearwater as well. This will be a fitting finale to our slow-paced, but wildlife-rich, week, but those wishing to prolong their holiday are welcome to combine our 'Albania in Autumn' or 'Albania in Spring' holidays (ALB01 and ALB03) with Corfu which dovetails seamlessly afterwards.

Day 1

Arrive Corfu and transfer to hotel.

Today we shall arrive at Corfu airport. Depending on the time of arrival, we may be able to enjoy some birding close to the airport at Katakalous lagoon. This is a brackish water lagoon connected with the sea through a broad channel of around half a km and creates some very good habitat for a range of herons and waders in particular.

Day 2

Korrision Lagoon

Korrision Lagoon is an excellent site for watching many wetland species such the Greater Flamingo, Black-Winged Stilt, Kentish Plover, Ringed Plover, Marsh Sandpiper, Green Sandpiper and other waders. In addition, in the sandy stripe dividing the lagoon with the sea it is possible to see Scopoli's Shearwater. The vegetated sand dunes host a number of passerine species such as Spotted Flycatcher, Woodchat and Red-backed Shrike among others.



Black-winged stilt

This site is interesting also for butterflies and dragonflies with a variety of species occurring there.

We will spend the whole day in this area, visiting both the north and southern corners and also the sea-side for watching the shearwaters.

Day 3

Lefkimmi Saltpans and Airport Lagoon

Lefkimmi Salt Pans was built in the 15th century and has been maintained and exploited ever since. This habitat represents one of the best birding destinations in Corfu, particularly for water birds. Here we may enjoy flocks of Greater Flamingo which can be found here year-round and other interesting species are common, such as Black-winged Stilt, Avocet, Little Tern, Stone Curlew, Kentish Plover and various other species of wader. In addition, from time to time it is also possible to see impressive Dalmatian Pelicans here. This area is also very interesting for passerine species such as Olive-tree Warbler, Crested Lark and Short-toed Lark, while raptors may include Osprey, Marsh and Hen Harrier, or possibly, Red-footed Falcons. At least one pair of Barn Owl is also breeding here.



Kentish Plover

The airport lagoon, will be visited on the way back to the hotel. It is small wetland but rich in water bird diversity. Here apart from waders there are more chances to see few species of ducks such as Garganey and Teal and Kingfishers are often common here.

Day 4 Ropa Valley – Angelokastro – North-Eastern Corfu

The Ropa Valley offers great opportunities for enjoying a host of species of drier habitats. Some water birds are also attracted to the area as there are several ponds here. This is a great place for shrikes with Woodchat, Red-backed and Lesser Grey Shrike possible and larks may include Crested, Short-toed and, Calandra. Yellow and White Wagtails can be enjoyed and we may find Spotted and Collared Flycatcher in this area. In the scrub areas and low bushes warblers may be found and can include Common Whitethroat, Lesser Whitethroat and Sardinian Warbler. During the day we will hope to encounter some raptors with Marsh and Montagu's Harriers, Common Kestrel and Red-Footed Falcon all possible.

Of course, throughout the holiday we will be enjoying everything we find and here is the place to find the near-endemic Epirus Water Frog (*Pelophylax epiroticus*) and it can be very good for other amphibians and reptiles.

From the Ropa valley we will drive to Angelokastro and here we may find Crag Martin, Eastern Black-Eared Wheatear and enjoy one of the most beautiful landscapes that Corfu offers from a high point. After Angelokastro, we will drive to the hotel from the north-eastern site of Corfu to enjoy all the amazing landscapes that the island offers.



Eastern Black-eared Wheatear

Day 5 Free Leisure Day – options to go to the beach or Old City

Today we will experience the true 'Go Slow' style as the group can choose to relax at the hotel beach or visit the Old City of Corfu. Everyone is free to choose their favourite option. For the city tour, the transport will be organised with one drive to the city and two pick-ups later in the day to return to the hotel. This is in order to enable everyone to spend the amount of time they wish, exploring the city. Lunch will be organised at the hotel restaurant but for those who would like to have lunch in the city are free to do so of course.

Day 6 Mountain Pantokratoras

Pantokratoras Represents the highest mountain in Corfu. The peak of this mountain is found at 906m ASL and offers fantastic views of the whole island of Corfu and even southern Albania (the area of Butrint National Park). The area is interesting for several species of birds such as Northern Wheatear, Eastern Black-eared Wheatear, Western Rock Nuthatch, Blue Rock Thrush, Common Rock Thrush, Rock Partridge, Eastern Orphean Warbler, Redstart, Black Redstart, Ortolan Bunting, Short-toed Eagle, and many others

We will spend the whole day here taking relaxed walks and explorations and get back in the afternoon to the hotel.

Day 7

Butrint National Park in Albania

Today will be another exciting day as we take the ferry across to Albania! Taking around 40 minutes, on arrival we shall go on to explore the UNESCO archaeological site at Butrint.

Butrint is a National Park that includes a very well-preserved archaeological area, a lovely area of Mediterranean maquis, and also has a lake that is connected to the Ionian Sea by a natural channel. The excavations and studies have proved that during the VII and the VI centuries BC, Butrint was a proto-urban center and by the V century BC Butrint had the full form of an ancient city.

This is a fascinating place and one of the highlights of a visit to southern Albania and we shall explore this site and learn about its history. As well as the historical interest, this site can be very rewarding for the

naturalist too with species such as the Golden Oriole, Wryneck, Turtle Dove, European Bee-eater, Red-throated Pipit and many other species of birds to be found. In addition, Butrint is known to be the most diversity rich site in Albania for herpetofauna, and amongst other species, one main target here will be the Marginated Tortoise (*Testudo marginata*) that is found natively only in Greece and southern Albania. In addition, in the old ruins are almost always present the European Pond Terrapin (*Emys orbicularis*) and the Balkan Terrapin (*Mauremys rivulata*), together with the Epirus Water



Marginated Tortoise

Frog (*Pelophylax epeiroticus*) and Balkan's Frog (*Pelophylax kurtmuelleri*). Furthermore, the boat trip from Corfu to Saranda and back will enable us to see Scopoli's Shearwater as well.

We shall then return to Corfu via the ferry once more.

Day 8

Depart

With our final explorations complete we will reach the airport in good time for our flight back to the UK.

Grading

Grade A. As a "Go Slow" tour, we will not be taking on any demanding walks and moving at a slow and relaxed pace. We will take some walks but not more than 2-3 km at a time and limiting any hills and steeper walks. All walks will be at a gentle pace.

Food and accommodation

All food and accommodation are included in the price of this holiday. We will be staying at the Iliada Beach Hotel in Gouvia Bay. We are very close to the beach here and well located to explore the island. Dinners will be eaten at the hotel restaurant and will be based on typical Greek cuisine. Lunches will be at local restaurants with possibly some light picnics too.

Flights and Extensions

Our standard group flights will be from either London Heathrow or Gatwick to Corfu on a direct service. Regional flights may also be possible. Should you wish to extend your stay in Corfu please let us know on booking.

Seasons

We will run this tour in the spring/early summer and also in late summer/early autumn. Whichever time of year you chose to visit, a wonderful array of species will be enjoyed and the itinerary gives a reflection of what can be seen across these seasons. In May/June breeding will be in full swing and although some migration may still be on going, there will be less birds on the move. In August to early September for the autumn visit, the breeding birds will still be possible to see before they move south and at this time we may see migrants already passing through the island. Whether it is spring or autumn, we are sure to enjoy a great range of superb birds, butterflies, reptiles and wildflowers (earlier is better) and of course the wonderful scenery and beaches. If you have any further questions on the seasons please do ask.

Linking it with an Albania holiday

This holiday will fit with our Albania in Spring (ALB01) and Albania in Autumn (ALB03) holiday. For those that wish to be away for two weeks.

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 flights, at the time of booking.



Butrint Archaeological Site