

Morocco – Winter Sun Birding

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Outline itinerary

Day 1	Fly Agadir and transfer to hotel near Guelmim
Day 2 – 3	Day trips from Guelmim
Day 4	Transfer to Agadir
Day 5 – 7	Day trips from Agadir
Day 8	Inbound flights

Focus

Birds & other wildlife

Grading

Grade A. Short walks only but on uneven terrain

Dates and Prices

Visit www.naturetrek.co.uk (tour code MAR10) or see the current Naturetrek brochure

Highlights:

- A winter break with almost guaranteed winter sun
- Northern Bald Ibis in their original wild population
- Scarce desert specialties such as Streaked Scrub Warbler, Bar-tailed Lark, African Desert Warbler & Greater Hoopoe-lark
- Local specialties such as Black-crowned Tchagra and Plain Martin likely
- Desert-edge specialties such as Scrub Warbler, and mix of desert wheatears, larks and sandgrouse
- Possibility of re-introduced mammals
- Led by expert naturalist guides



From Top: Northern Bald Ibis, Moussier's Redstart & Greater Hoopoe Lark © Martin Pitt



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Introduction

Morocco is the most biodiverse country in North Africa, offering a unique blend of Mediterranean species, African fauna, and endemics found only in the Maghreb region. This two-centre holiday explores both the Atlantic coast and the edge of the Saharan depression, making the most of the winter season when resident birdlife is joined by migrants escaping the harsh European winter.

Our journey begins along the coast, where we'll focus on the rich wetlands and open plains of Souss-Massa National Park—home to the globally endangered Northern Bald Ibis. At this time of year, the estuaries and coastal habitats are teeming with life, hosting a wide variety of species that have travelled south for the season.

We'll then venture into the desert in search of the remarkable species that have adapted to thrive in this arid environment. In addition, we'll explore the nearby mountains to seek out some of the Atlas region's endemic birds.

The holiday begins with a flight to Agadir, followed by a series of day trips that take in a diverse range of habitats and elevations. This approach is designed to maximise our chances of encountering a broad spectrum of species, making for a rewarding and varied wildlife experience.



Thick-billed Lark © Chris Griffin

Itinerary

NB. Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. However, 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

Agadir to Guelmim

We're scheduled to depart from London on a morning flight to Agadir. Upon arrival, we'll collect our minibus and begin the journey to our hotel in Guelmim—a scenic drive that typically takes approximately three hours. As we head south, we'll keep a lookout for any interesting wildlife along the way, making the most of our first glimpses of Morocco's diverse landscapes.

Day 2 – 3

Guelmim

After breakfast, we'll travel approximately 30 km southwest of Guelmim to the artemisia-dotted sandy plains and gently rolling hills of a site known in birding circles as "Tan-Tan 100" (named after the nearby road marker). This area is renowned for its desert specialties, and we'll be on the lookout for species such as Desert Wheatear, Greater Hoopoe Lark, and, in the adjacent low hills, the elusive Streaked Scrub Warbler.

As we make our way between Tan-Tan 100 and Guelmim, we'll stop at several promising locations offering a variety of desert habitats. These may yield sightings of Trumpeter Finch, Desert Lark, Bar-tailed Lark, Spectacled Warbler, and Red-rumped Wheatear. Near Oued Sayed, just outside Guelmim, we'll also search for the sociable and charismatic Fulvous Babbler.



The following day, we'll head east towards Fask, exploring an area of small agricultural plots on the edge of the stony plain. Here, we'll target additional desert species, including White-crowned Wheatear and any larks we may have missed—particularly the enigmatic Thick-billed Lark, a key target for many birders. This area also offers good chances of encountering sandgrouse.

Even in winter, desert mammals and reptiles are possible. With luck, we may spot foxes, various rodents, and perhaps even the delightful North African Sengi, along with other fascinating species adapted to this arid environment.

Day 4

Transfer to Agadir

After an exciting few days exploring the desert, we'll begin our journey north as we transfer to our second hotel in Agadir. Along the way, we'll make a stop in a remarkable area of the national park where reintroduction efforts are underway. Here, species such as Scimitar-horned Oryx, Addax, Dorcas Gazelle, and Red-necked Ostrich are being released as part of an ambitious conservation programme.

This section of the reserve lies within an Argan forest, a unique habitat that also supports a variety of other wildlife. We'll keep an eye out for a relict population of African Ground Squirrels and the elusive Double-spurred Francolin, both of which are known to inhabit the surrounding area.

Day 5 – 7

Souss Massa National Park and the High Atlas

Based in Agadir, we're perfectly positioned to explore the nearby Souss-Massa National Park, established to protect the endangered Northern Bald Ibis. Our location also gives us access to a rich variety of coastal and upland habitats, including the endemic Argan forest.

One day, we'll head north from Agadir via Cap Rhir, at the western edge of the High Atlas Mountains. We'll spend time on the coastal plains, where Northern Bald Ibis often forage in flocks. Around 200 individuals are found in this northern sector of the park, and we'll focus our efforts near their breeding cliffs north of Tamri. This area also hosts a variety of wintering birds, including flocks of Audouin's Gull, which mix with other coastal species.



Black-crowned Tchagra © Chris Griffin

Another day will be dedicated to exploring the southern reaches of the park, around the town of Massa. We'll visit several key sites to maximise our species list, including the southern population of Northern Bald Ibis. The Massa River is a hotspot for wintering raptors such as Bonelli's Eagle, Osprey, and harriers. Two particularly special species—Black-crowned Tchagra and Plain Martin—have their only known outposts north of the Sahara here. The wetlands also attract Spoonbills, Flamingos, and a variety of herons,

while the duck species often include Ferruginous Duck, Marbled Teal, and groups of Ruddy Shelduck. Moussier's Redstarts are common, and other targets include Common Crane, Black-shouldered Kite, Barbary Partridge, and Bluethroat. The valley is also home to mammals such as the local subspecies of Red Fox, Wild Boar, and the elusive Northern Small-spotted Genet, all of which have been recorded on previous visits.

We'll also spend a day exploring the High Atlas foothills just north of Agadir, heading into the scenic Paradise Valley. Here, we'll search for localised species such as Levaillant's Woodpecker, African Blue Tit, and possibly a wintering Tristram's Warbler. Overhead, we'll watch for Long-legged Buzzard and Barbary Falcon.

Finally, we'll make a couple of visits to the Oued Souss estuary, just south of Agadir, to observe it at different tide levels. This estuary is excellent for wintering Osprey, and regularly hosts a diverse mix of waders and ducks. It also has a reputation for attracting vagrants from both sub-Saharan Africa and across the Atlantic—so surprises are always possible!

Day 8

Inbound flights

Depending on flight schedules, we should have time for a quick return to Oued Souss or another site near to the hotel. We will then transfer to Agadir airport for our return flight to London.

Tour grading

This tour is graded A, consisting of day walks only. We will travel to each site by minibus, then take leisurely walks to explore the area, which can be rough in places and much time will be spent in the field.

Food & accommodation included in the price

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. Accommodation will be comfortable hotels. Food is traditional Moroccan cuisine with a focus on seasonally available fare. Lunches will be picnics taken in the field.

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.