

# Spain - Realm of the Iberian Lynx

Naturetrek Tour Report

13th – 18th January 2026



Iberian Lynxes



Iberian Lynx



Spanish Ibex



Spanish Imperial Eagle

Tour report by Byron Palacios



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Tour participants: Byron Palacios (leader) with five Naturetrek clients

## Day 1

Tuesday 13th January

### London Gatwick – Seville airport – El Rocío

Our flight left Gatwick Airport on time, arriving in Seville airport in the early evening. After going through airport formalities, we jumped in our van and drove to El Rocío, checked into our comfortable hotel, and went to the restaurant to enjoy a delicious dinner. After a good time getting to know each other over dinner, we retired to our rooms for a restful first night, looking forward to our first excursion the following day!

## Day 2

Wednesday 14th January

### Doñana National Park (Royal Track – Coto del Rey – Valverde visitor centre)

We started just before dawn and drove towards the entrance of Doñana National Park: a sudden shape caught our eyes. An Iberian Lynx! This lovely male was clearly hunting among the open grassland, and this allowed us to get fantastic views of this lovely cat! It all came as a shock because we weren't really ready for this very early Lynx sighting; nevertheless, we were all over the moon with this amazing encounter!

After this fabulous Lynx shock, we continued into the core area of Doñana National Park, driving along the Raya Real (Royal Track) under a promising sunny sky. The first Iberian Magpies and Red Deer started to show, as well as many Rabbits. We checked along the sandy tracks for traces of Iberian Lynx, with no results. We continued exploring the park, finding a pair of Little Owls perched on top of a pile of tree stumps. We also saw lots of Stonechats, Goldfinches, Grey Herons, and a juvenile Spanish Imperial Eagle perched on a tree in the distance.

After this first two hours of the morning, we took a nice walk in the Coto del Rey area. The weather was still good and we enjoyed our walk, which produced beautiful birds such as White Stork, Woodlark, Stonechat, Black Redstart, a fidgety Zitting Cisticola and wintering Common Cranes. We also found large flocks of Lapwings and Golden Plovers wintering in this area together, alongside a nice flock of Eurasian Stone-curlews. Towards midday, and feeling a bit peckish, we drove back to El Rocío to enjoy a local lunch and a break afterwards. Some of us took a quick scan over the marshes behind the hotel, which produced Greater Flamingoes, Spoonbills, Shovelers, Black-winged Stilt, Greylag Geese and Glossy Ibis, among others.

In the afternoon, we jumped in our 4x4 vehicle again and drove back into the National Park, this time going further afield towards the open *marisma* area (seasonally flooded heathland). We had a great array of birds here, such as Great, Little and Cattle Egrets, Thekla's Lark, White Wagtail, Common Kestrel and Cranes. We found a large group of Greater Flamingoes, Shovelers, Red-crested Pochards, Spoonbills and lots more Great Egrets and Grey Herons, among others. We also made a quick stop at the Valverde visitor centre, which produced Spanish Sparrows, Western Swamphen and Marsh Harrier, and more besides. Super happy after a very productive day, we drove back to our hotel, from where we enjoyed watching a beautiful sunset from the marsh edge. We then retired to our rooms to get ready for celebration drinks and dinner!

**Day 3****Thursday 15th January****Doñana National Park (Royal Track – Dehesa de Abajo) – Andújar**

After an early breakfast, we went back to Doñana National Park, driving along the Raya Real (Royal Track) in our 4x4. It was a very misty morning which limited visibility, and we couldn't really see much during the first hour out there. We took a little walk among beautiful Iberian forest, enjoying the many Cork Oaks quite closely, as well as a few daffodils (*Narcissus papyraceus*) which were already in flower. After a great excursion, we returned to our hotel to collect our belongings and set off towards Andújar.

We made a stop at Dehesa de Abajo to do some birding along the way; this produced two pairs of the rare Marbled Duck, alongside other birds such as Marsh Harrier, Black-winged Stilt, Black-necked Grebe, Red-crested and Common Pochards, and a pair of the very unusual Ringed Teal (a South American species, so doubtless escapes from a collection). After this delightful stop, we found a nice picnic area near Aznalcázar, where we enjoyed our delicious picnic lunch.

After lunch, we started our long drive to Andújar, dealing with heavy traffic through Seville and a technical stop in Córdoba, arriving at our hotel in the mountains just in time to get our rooms and to get ready for some local drinks and a superb dinner.

**Day 4****Friday 16th January****Andújar Natural Park (El Encinarejo – River Jándula – Los Escoriales)**

After breakfast, we drove to the lower valley of the River Jándula, where we took a exploratory walk in light rain; despite the weather, the area looked pristine and full of peaceful sounds from the wildlife. We had great views of Hawfinches, saw lots of Iberian Magpies, Spotless Starlings and Short-toed Treecreeper, and had wonderful close views of an Otter! We then went to the old dam, where we managed to see another Otter from the bridge, performing beautifully. After a great morning, we drove back to our lodge to have a delicious lunch.

The weather improved after lunch, so we decided to drive to the upper valley, the area known as Los Escoriales. We arrived there just in time to have a look around a good portion of this lovely valley; we had two kettles of mostly Griffon Vultures, with the odd Cinereous Vultures and Spanish Imperial Eagle among them. The weather was dry and the sun was out, but a chilly wind was blowing from the north; the light was fading, so we drove back to our lodge to take a break before gathering together again for local drinks and dinner.

**Day 5****Saturday 17th January****Andújar Natural Park (La Lancha dam – Los Escoriales)**

After another day with overcast skies, and heavy mist covering the mountains and both valleys, we ventured down the upper valley of the River Jándula, exploring a spot known as La Lancha. We took a walk along the dam, which produced great views of Spanish Ibex, Griffon and Cinereous Vultures and Blue Rock Thrush, and we saw Crag

Martins flying around. The rain arrived again, so we drove back to our lodge for lunch, before driving back to Los Escoriales pretty much straight after lunch.

The weather had improved dramatically and the valley was clear; as soon as we arrived in the area, we were told by an old friend that two Lynxes had been spotted! And there were they: two beautiful Iberian Lynxes walking along the ravines, very relaxed and right in front of our eyes: what a superb moment! They were both females, a mother and her year-old cub; they were playful and licking each other. They sat there for a good twenty minutes. We enjoyed watching every single detail of them: their fur patterns, ears, faces. It was just superb! They eventually stood up again and walked over the different ravines and trails, showing themselves very well while crossing open areas. They even attempted to catch a rabbit in front of us! Later on, they disappeared in the deeper ravines of the valley. We were absolutely over the moon with excitement, trying to digest what we just witnessed!

Very happy and still amazed, we started to drive back to our lodge to have some well-deserved celebration drinks. We retired to our rooms for a break, and came back to the restaurant for more drinks and dinner, which we all enjoyed a great deal, as always!

## Day 6

Sunday 18th January

### Virgen de la Cabeza Sanctuary – Carmona – Seville airport

It was a beautiful sunny morning across the whole valley and the Sierra de Andújar. After a very relaxed breakfast, we drove further afield to the Virgen de la Cabeza Sanctuary, from where we had terrific views of the different valleys, including the one where we had had terrific views of the Iberian Lynxes the previous night! We enjoyed this very interesting historic landmark. After this, we drove straight downhill and reached the motorway, eventually heading in the Seville direction. We made a stop in the town of Carmona, where we enjoyed this beautiful Roman village and its architecture. After a nice stroll through the town, we drove to Seville, making a lunch stop in the early afternoon. We then finished up at the airport, where the flight back home was on time.

We had had a fantastic time enjoying the wonders of two beautiful areas, both being the last refuges of the fabulous Iberian Lynx, which was once on the verge of extinction! The efforts made to bring it back have been successful, but they bring more challenges for the species and conservationists, who are still learning about the ecology of the species. For those, like ourselves, who've had the privilege of seeing them in the wild, the question remains in our minds as to how this and other species of endangered felines around the world will cope in the future. The huge challenge and responsibility to do our best to protect them, and make their habitat sustainable for their preservation is in our hands, so that generations to come may continue to enjoy this legacy! Hasta pronto, Spain!

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## Species lists

Birds (H=heard only)

N = near-endemic	Common name	Scientific name	January 2026				
			14	15	16	17	18
	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	✓	✓	✓		
	Egyptian Goose	<i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>		✓	✓		
	Ringed Teal (escape)	<i>Callonetta leucophrys</i>		✓			
	Northern Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>	✓	✓			
	Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>		✓			
	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓
	Marbled Duck	<i>Marmaronetta angustirostris</i>		✓			
	Red-crested Pochard	<i>Netta rufina</i>	✓	✓			
	Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>		✓			
	Red-legged Partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>				✓	✓
	Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>					✓
	Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>		H			
	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	✓	✓	✓		
	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	✓	✓	✓		
	Western Swamphen	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>	✓				
	Common Crane	<i>Grus grus</i>	✓				
	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	✓	✓	✓		
	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	✓				
	Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>			✓		
	Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>	✓				
	Eurasian Stone-curlew	<i>Burhinus oedicnemus</i>	✓				
	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	✓	✓			
	European Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	✓				
	Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	✓	✓			
	Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	✓				
	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	✓				
	Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>			✓		
	Black Stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>			✓		
	White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	✓	✓			✓
	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>	✓				
	Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	✓	✓			
	Little Bittern	<i>Botaurus minutus</i>				✓	
	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	✓	✓			
	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	✓	✓			
	Western Cattle Egret	<i>Ardea ibis</i>	✓	✓			✓
	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	✓	✓			
	Cinereous Vulture	<i>Aegypius monachus</i>				✓	
	Griffon Vulture	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>				✓	✓
	Spanish Imperial Eagle - N	<i>Aquila adalberti</i>	✓		✓	✓	
	Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>					✓
	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>					✓
	Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	✓	✓			✓
	Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>					✓
	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓

Common name	Scientific name	January 2026				
		14	15	16	17	18
Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>	✓				
Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>				H	
Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	H		✓	✓	
Iberian Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus sharpei</i>			✓	H	
Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	✓	✓			✓
Iberian Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius meridionalis</i>				✓	
Iberian Magpie - N	<i>Cyanopica cooki</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Red-billed Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>				✓	
Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	✓	✓			
Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>	✓				
Eurasian Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>					✓
Thekla's Lark	<i>Galerida theklae</i>	✓		H		
Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>					✓
Eurasian Crag Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>			✓	✓	
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	✓	✓			
Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	H	H	H		
Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>				✓	
Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>				✓	
Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Zitting Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>	✓				
Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>			✓	✓	✓
Sardinian Warbler	<i>Curruca melanocephala</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Dartford Warbler	<i>Curruca undata</i>				H	
Common Firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapilla</i>				✓	
Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>				✓	
Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>		H	H		
Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>				✓	
Short-toed Treecreeper	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>				✓	
Spotless Starling	<i>Sturnus unicolor</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>				✓	
Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	✓				
Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Blue Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>					✓
European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>	✓	✓			
Spanish Sparrow	<i>Passer hispaniolensis</i>	✓	✓			
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓
Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>				✓	
White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	✓				
Eurasian Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>				✓	✓
European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>					✓
Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>	✓				
European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	✓	✓			
European Serin	<i>Serinus serinus</i>	✓			✓	
Corn Bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>	✓				

N = near-endemic		January 2026				
Common name	Scientific name	14	15	16	17	18
Rock Bunting	<i>Emberiza cia</i>				H	

## Mammals

N = near-endemic		January 2026				
Common name	Scientific name	14	15	16	17	18
European Rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Iberian Lynx - N	<i>Lynx pardinus</i>	1			2	
Red Deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Fallow Deer	<i>Dama dama</i>			✓	✓	
Spanish Ibex	<i>Capra pyrenaica</i>				✓	
Eurasian Otter	<i>Lutra lutra</i>			2		
Red Squirrel	<i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>				1	