

Wolf-watching in Spain

Naturetrek Tour Report

7th – 11th October 2025



Iberian Wolves



Iberian Wolves



A stakeout at the hotspot



European Wildcat

Tour report by Byron Palacios



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Tour participants: Byron Palacios and Tino García (leaders) with nine Naturetrek clients

Day 1

Tuesday 7th October

Stansted to Santander – Salinas de Pisuerga – Monasterio

We arrived in a sunny Santander in time. After gathering our group together, we soon met up with Tino, who greeted us all. We soon loaded the vehicles with our luggage and started our drive to the village of Salinas de Pisuerga, a journey which took ninety minutes. We eventually arrived at our lovely lodge, where we were allocated to our comfortable rooms. We enjoyed some delicious picnic lunch in the sunshine in the lovely grounds of our lodge. After lunch, we hit the road and drove to the valley of Monasterio, where we took a walk along a dirt track. It was very productive: Rock Bunting, Black Redstart, Raven, Griffon Vultures and a very obliging Blue Rock Thrush, a super rare bird in this part of Spain (first ever record). Towards the end of the afternoon, we managed to spot a Wildcat meandering through the meadows!

After an enjoyable time, we returned to our lodge for some drinks, the checklist and our first dinner together at La Cantina.

Day 2

Wednesday 8th October

Valdecebollas – Cervera de Pisuerga – Castillería Valley

We started today very early in the morning with breakfast followed by a thirty-five-minute drive into Montaña Palentina Natural Park, to the hotspot known as Valdecebollas. The morning was fresh on arrival, and we set ourselves up and got ready. The rutting Red Deer were loud and numerous, calling from nearly every corner of the valley; we had a clear view of the valley, with a hint of light from the early sunrise. We then spotted some activity: two young Iberian Wolves were found lying on the ground and right in an open meadow! A third one joined the other two, right out in the open, and tried playing with the others: it was great. They kept appearing and disappearing from view, like ghosts. We eventually had great views in the last hour of our session; we had been so lucky to see them on our very first morning!

Cold and a bit fidgety, we left the area mid-morning and drove to Cervera de Pisuerga, where a coffee break was welcomed by all. Under good sunshine, we drove north towards the Castillería Valley, making a little diversion through Rabanal de los Caballeros. Here, we made a dedicated scan, which produced some interesting birds, such as Cirl Bunting, Black Redstarts, Woodlarks, Spotless Starling, Iberian Grey Shrike and a nice kettle of Griffon Vultures. After this, we continued driving into the Castillería Valley, making a stop in the hamlet of Verdeña, where we set up our picnic lunch. After this, we drove along the valley, seeing a beautiful Wildcat briefly from our vans; unfortunately it soon walked into an area of dead ground. Not disappointed and still positive, we drove to the middle of the valley, and found another Wildcat! This time, we managed to find a spot from where we could all get fantastic views of this beautiful and sought-after mammal.

Happy after such a fantastic day, we drove back to the lodge for a cool beer, followed by a break to get ready for our checklist and delicious dinner in La Cantina.

Day 3

Thursday 9th October

Valdecebollas – Cervera de Pisuerga – Tremaya – Camasobres

We had a second very early start and made the drive to Valdecebollas once again. This morning was windy and rather cold, despite the breathtaking sunset. But our pack of Iberian Wolves were a bit quiet this morning, and not as visible as they had been the day before. Some of us managed to get glimpses of them as they moved among the bushes. The wind was consistent, but we managed to see a nice group of three Cantabrian Chamois on top of a rocky mountain, looking rather nervous as a pair of Golden Eagles was soaring nearby.

It was a good morning despite the lack of good views of “lobos”, and it was time for a hot drink, so we called in at Cervera de Pisuerga for our usual coffee break. After that, we drove north towards the Piedrasluengas Pass (1535m), but the mist and dark clouds made us to reroute to the area of Tremaya, where we enjoyed watching Rock Sparrows, Red-billed Choughs, Sparrowhawk and Griffon Vultures, among others. Lunchtime was around the corner, so we drove to the village of Camasobres where we enjoyed of another delicious lunch brought to us by Tino. We also had great views of Northern Goshawk, Common Kestrels, Black Redstarts and others.

After lunch, we explored the tracks above the village and walked among the edge of oak woodland, Spanish broom areas, heathland and meadows. We managed to see some Rock Buntings, Dartford Warbler, Long-tailed Tits, Iberian Grey Shrike and, to our surprise, a very distant Iberian Wolf.

After a wonderful day, we walked back towards the village and then boarded our 4x4s to return to our lodge for a break. We all gathered again later on for some drinks, the checklist and a well-deserved and delicious dinner.

Day 4

Friday 10th October

Valdecebollas – Cervera de Pisuerga – Valsadornín – Perapertú – Monasterio

After another very early breakfast, we drove back to our usual hot spot for another early morning search. We scanned the valley, finding beautiful Red Deer stags, Mistle Thrush and Dartford Warblers calling and flitting around, among others. It was another windy and cold morning, which didn't really help us in our search; some of us had very brief views of Iberian Wolves. After over two hours of scanning, we drove to Cervera de Pisuerga for our usual coffee break, followed by a nice drive towards the village of Valsadornín, where we enjoyed a lovely walk under the warm sun. We managed to see Red Fox, Sparrowhawk, Raven, Serins, Blackcaps, Black Redstar, Spotted Flycatchers and a Middle Spotted Woodpecker. We found a nice spot to enjoy our picnic lunch, with some Iberian Green and Middle Spotted Woodpeckers calling around us.

After lunch, we drove along the narrow tracks, finding another Wildcat hunting along one of the adjacent meadows; we had good but brief views of this beautiful individual. We then made a last stop and walked along the Perapertú-Monasterio track, which produced three European Bison and a good array of butterflies and birds.

At the end of the afternoon, happy and satisfied, we headed back to our lodge for a break, drinks, the checklist and a delicious dinner.

Day 5

Saturday 11th October

Valdecebollas – Cervera de Pisuerga – Santander airport

This was our very last early start: we wanted to search for more Iberian Wolves before we headed to the airport in Santander. It was a beautiful morning, with no wind. We got to our usual spot and, with the light still poor, we managed to spot our first Wolf of the morning. The sun came up eventually and revealed two more members of the pack. Then they suddenly played the ghost game with us, and disappeared. And about twenty minutes later, a wolf-howling chorus was heard: it was absolutely fantastic. Our hearts were beating faster and our chests were pounding at such an amazing sound and experience. It was a very rare one: this was only my third wolf-howling experience in twenty years of watching these creatures. It was absolutely and truly amazing.

After this wonderful experience, we drove to Cervera de Pisuerga for our usual coffee break, and then to our hotel. We had time to pack up our luggage and left this beautiful spot behind; we headed to Santander airport to catch our flight back to the UK.

We had enjoyed a fantastic experience: we had managed to pack in so much wonderful wildlife in just a few days. Exploring this very remote and very poorly-known area of Spain was an eye-opening experience which enhanced our passion for wildlife even more, all in great company and with delicious local food that surpassed our expectations. The beautiful landscape where the mysterious Iberian Wolf and other creatures live must be preserved, and excursions like this one contribute enormously to the local economy and thus the wolves' survival.

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Species lists

Mammals

I = introduced		October 2025				
Common name	Scientific name	7	8	9	10	11
Red Deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
European Bison	<i>Bison bonasus</i>					
Cantabrian Chamois	<i>Rupicapra parva</i>			3		
Wild Boar	<i>Sus scrofa</i>					✓
European Wildcat	<i>Felis silvestris</i>	2	5	1	1	
Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>		2	1	3	✓
Iberian Wolf	<i>Canis lupus signatus</i>		3	1		3

Birds (H = Heard only)

		October 2025				
Common name	Scientific name	7	8	9	10	11
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>			✓	✓	✓
Red-legged Partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>	✓	H	✓		
European Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>				✓	✓
Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia "feral"</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>			✓		✓
Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>			✓		✓
Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>					✓
Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>					✓
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>		✓	✓		✓
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>					✓
Western Cattle Egret	<i>Ardea ibis</i>					✓
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Griffon Vulture	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>			✓		
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>			✓		
Eurasian Goshawk	<i>Astur gentilis</i>			✓		
Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Western Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>				✓	
Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>				H	H
Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>		✓	✓	✓	
Middle Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocoptes medius</i>				✓	
Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	✓	✓	H	✓	✓
Iberian Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus sharpei</i>		✓			H
Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Iberian Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius meridionalis</i>		✓	✓		
Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Red-billed Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>		H	✓	H	✓
Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Crested Tit	<i>Lophophanes cristatus</i>					✓
Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓

Common name	Scientific name	October 2025				
		7	8	9	10	11
Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓
Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>			✓		
Eurasian Crag Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>	✓	✓			
Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>				H	H
Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓
Dartford Warbler	<i>Curruca undata</i>		H	✓		
Common Firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapilla</i>		H	H		
Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	✓	H	H	H	H
Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>		✓	H	H	✓
Short-toed Treecreeper	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>	✓		H		
Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</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>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Common Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>	✓			✓	
Blue Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>	✓				
European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
White-throated Dipper	<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Rock Sparrow	<i>Petronia petronia</i>	✓		✓	✓	
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
Western Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>		✓			
Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Water Pipit	<i>Anthus spinoletta</i>				✓	H
Eurasian Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>			✓		
European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	✓	✓	✓		
European Serin	<i>Serinus serinus</i>			✓	✓	
Rock Bunting	<i>Emberiza cia</i>	✓	✓		✓	
Cirl Bunting	<i>Emberiza cirlus</i>		✓	✓	✓	

Amphibians & reptiles

Common name	Scientific name
Iberian Water Frog	<i>Pelophylax perezi</i>
Common Wall Lizard	<i>Podarcis muralis</i>
Spanish Wall Lizard	<i>Podarcis hispanicus</i>

Butterflies

Common name	Scientific name
Common Brimstone	<i>Gonepteryx rhamni</i>
Berger's Clouded Yellow	<i>Colias alfacariensis</i>
Clouded Yellow	<i>Colias croceus</i>
Large White	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>
Small Copper	<i>Lycaena phlaeas</i>
Long-tailed Blue	<i>Lampides boeticus</i>
Silver-studded Blue	<i>Plebejus argus</i>
Adonis Blue	<i>Polyommatus bellargus</i>
Peacock Butterfly	<i>Aglais io</i>
Speckled Wood	<i>Pararge aegeria</i>
Common Grayling	<i>Hipparchia semele</i>
Southern Gatekeeper	<i>Pyronia cecilia</i>

Moths

Common name	Scientific name
Hummingbird Hawk-moth	<i>Macroglossum stellatarum</i>
Chalk Burnet	<i>Zygaena fausta</i>

Other insects

Common name	Scientific name
Praying Mantis	<i>Mantis religiosa</i>
Great Green Bush Cricket	<i>Tettigonia viridissima</i>
Blue-winged Grasshopper	<i>Oedipoda caerulescens</i>
Asian Hornet	<i>Vespa velutina</i>