

# Provence at Christmas

Naturetrek Tour Report

20th – 27th December 2025

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Alpine Accentor



Golden Eagle



Glossy Ibises



Red Fox

Tour report by Glyn Evans  
Photos by Glyn Evans, Joanna Stynes and Cliff Spooner

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Tour participants: Glyn Evans and Simon Dicks (leaders) with 14 Naturetrek clients

## Summary

Provence is a place which holds an abundance of wildlife. While some places are rather less replete with wildlife in the winter, this trip provides a good mix of diversity of habitats within a relatively short drive from Arles, where this year the tour was based in the quaint city centre setting of the Hotel de l'Amphithéâtre. While early morning walks were not really an option, on short days and where wild space required a drive out of the city, the hotel and surroundings made for a relaxing environment in which to start the day.

The Camargue, of course, featured some amazing wetland and associated habitats, which act as a magnet for birds and other wildlife, and when you add the unique and spectacular plains of La Crau and the breathtaking scenes at and from Mont Ventoux, you are guaranteed to go home with some memorable moments.

## Day 1

**Saturday 20th December**

### Travel day

Everything went swimmingly well, with all the clients positioned on time. Only the plane was late, taking off some fifty minutes late and unable to make up time. Van hire was particularly slow, and a navigation of the labyrinth of ancient streets in Arles meant that dinner was fully ninety minutes later than the (admittedly ambitious) estimated time of 7.30pm. Never mind. We had the first of three scheduled evening meals at L'Escaladou, which was of very good quality and came with a warm welcome. Tired heads and full bellies hit the sack after 11.00pm, so we agreed a later, Sunday-hours start time of 9.30am on our first full day.

## Day 2

**Sunday 21st December**

### Vigueirat Nature Reserve

The supermarket also had Sunday opening hours, so Simon and I had a "strategy meeting" in the car park for twenty-five minutes and then leaned on the door for a twenty-minute trolley dash. The forecast had been dire for the day, but the latest update was for better conditions in the morning. The reserve had a couple of little thatched places on the trail where we could shelter from any showers, so we decided to head for Vigueirat via the scenic route close to the river.

We scooped up the clients at 9.30am and escorted them to the nearby parking at Rue Vauban. As we reached the bottom of the street, a couple of female-type Black Redstarts were playing around on the roadside, giving great close views of their quivering rufous tails. We were soon crossing the mighty river and heading out of town, where flocks of finches and buntings started to appear in the hedges and fields: Corn Buntings, Goldfinches, Chaffinches and Yellowhammers, and also Skylarks. Then, we had our first sighting of Cranes, with the first threesome of trumpeting giants. More Cranes were heard in the fields, hidden from view by the embankment of the drain, but as we approach Vigueirat, we saw a few more in the air. Raptors came in the form mainly of Common Buzzards, but also Marsh Harriers and a single flapping male Sparrowhawk. Male Stonechats were on bushes beside the track.

Blue skies even showed briefly as we parked at Vigueirat, where we the only vehicle! But Google said they'd be open... A gent rolled up in a small hatchback and leaned over to say that the boardwalks might be slippery: no kidding! A Red Fox showed close as we entered the reserve. The office was shut, so that meant there would be no entry fee. There was an early showing of Greater Flamingoes, Shoveler, Gadwall and Coots, but no Coypu in the early stages. We heard a Cetti's Warbler, scolding us in the margins.

Further round, at last, a Coypu fed close to us, apparently oblivious to our presence. One client got some super close-up, front-on photos. A Kingfisher was heard and then seen at the first hide, commuting both ways past a delighted audience. A trio of Coypus roosted close to us on a tuft of marsh grass, in improving light. Water Pipits were seen in the air, calling, but not on the lagoons. Chiffchaffs, were quite numerous in trees, bushes and marsh grass. A decent flock of about thirty-five Black-tailed Godwits sped through the reserve, without stopping. More Cranes were seen, and then a large, distant flock of flying coathangers (Glossy Ibises to you and me) appeared low over the tree line beyond the lagoon. Two Great Egrets floated in with languid wingbeats.

The second hide gave good close views of hunting Marsh Harriers, disturbing Gadwall, Mallard and Teal. There were also four Little Grebes diving out of harm's way. A Little Egret perched on a fence post close to the hide, pointing the way back to base. A more determined scan of the lagoon eventually revealed a drake Pintail on a bund two blocks over from our hide.

We got back at around 1.00pm for lunch, just as the rain restarted. We began setting out the food on a picnic table with an inadequate parasol, until a staff member suggested we might take cover in the barn, where two large, horsedrawn carriages with bench seats were parked. Salubrious it was not, but biblical it could have been. We laid out the picnic precariously on the perimeter seat, with only one end of a bread baton falling to the ground. The diddy little Red Fox we had seen earlier was clearly an emboldened and experienced scavenger; initially it paces around us in a wide radius, but then nipped in for proffered morsels, offering amazing photo-opportunities for multi-tasking diners.

The afternoon session was something of a washout, but with White Storks and loads of Cattle Egrets seen on the cruise around the Camargue. With little prospect of the rain easing up, and in gloomy conditions, we set the coordinates for Arles, which we reached at around 4.00pm, with a welcome opportunity for many to catch forty winks.

## Day 3

## Monday 22nd December

### Les Baux

The forecast was similarly damp for today, but was on a trajectory of improvement. Thus, a mainly cloudy, blustery day with rain forecast for late afternoon gave us a window of time to give the cliffs under Les Baux de Provence a good couple of scans for the diminutive but charismatic Wallcreeper, while leaving the possibility of a short dusk vigil for the Eagle-Owls. All was agreed with the clients, but it was an aspirational itinerary, and we had our fingers crossed. We arrived back from the Monoprix trolley dash replete with picnic goodies, and were soon at the upper car park behind Les Baux, ready to take the path below the cliffs to crane our necks for signs of fluttering maroon birds clinging to the rock face.

By the time we set off, the breeze had picked up, so the exposed rock faces were not for faint-hearted avian critters. A male Sparrowhawk hung high over us, riding the updraught, and later appeared again further down the track. The scrub at the bottom of the cliffs had very little to offer, with the occasional “hueet” of Chiffchaffs but little else to cheer in the outward tramp, other than a “tacking” Blackcap which briefly crossed the path. The Blue Rock Thrushes had seemingly also wimped out of an appearance. We got as far as the bend in the path where it drops away, such that the cliff face is out of view. There was no sign of a Wallcreeper, so we edged back to the car park by 11.40am. It was too early for lunch, so we had a good scan of the cliffs and scrub, finding more Blackcaps and a couple of skulking Sardinian Warblers issuing their machine-gun calls. Kestrels displayed some nice aerial poses with some darting, writhing manoeuvres, and there was a Greenfinch to keep the bird count going, but in truth, this had been a quiet session, so lunch came early. Simon and I retreated for another unproductive scan of the cliffs and buildings.

After lunch, we had the possibility of repeating the walk below the cliff. The nooks and crannies in these cliffs gave plenty of opportunities for a feeding Wallcreeper to go unnoticed for several minutes, particularly in blustery conditions. With needs for coffee or retail therapy all deemed less than urgent, we again did the walk, but sadly saw nothing to add except a pair of Ravens which gave some aerial displays at eye level. The theory was floated that perhaps some of the birds might have preferred the leeward side of the city, where the wind was less fierce.

We wasted no time in getting to the other side of town out of the wind, with forty minutes to explore the town and some of its shops and perhaps, some of the bird life which may have decided that the shelter of the old city was a better option than the exposed cliffs. Signs were that this may indeed have been the case, as a pair of Crag Martins flew around the back of the city just above the tree line as we parked. Black Redstarts lined the steep paths up to the plateau, which each of us visited at some point, to enjoy amazing views.

The wind was still extremely keen, so looking for Firecrests in the shrubs around the top was a slightly forlorn task, and when rain then threatened, some of us retired for coffee and waffles. The rain didn't last long, so we emerged with time to spare before the 4.15pm rendezvous at the vans. Before long, we came across two clients with their cameras trained on something on the steps of a chapel. It was an Alpine Accentor, which they had been watching and photographing for the last twenty minutes! Better still, the uplighter at the base of the staircase illuminated the bird in otherwise dull light, adding some lovely context to some of the back-of-camera shots that they showed us. The bird stayed close to the area even when disturbed, probably as a result of the light having attracted insects, but soon it was time to return to the vans, taking in more Blackcaps and the odd Black Redstart from the steps.

It was now quite grey and rain again threatened, but there was enough time for a quick stop further down the road at a place where Eagle-Owls are known to breed, and have previously been seen on this tour. By the time we parked, it was raining steadily, so Simon and I strolled down the track to a vantage point to wait and see if the owls would start to call before dusk, and if the rain was going to stop. The previous year, an impressive murmuration of several hundred thousand Starlings had been some consolation for not seeing the owls, but this time there were no Starlings and the rain started to get heavier. Recognising that there was some reluctance to leave a warm, dry van, we made for home to give everyone an hour to relax, before another splendid dinner at L'Escaladou.

## Day 4

## Tuesday 23rd December

### Parc Ornithologique, Pont de Gau

The forecast for today, to our relief, was dry from around 10.00am, by which time we'd be at the nature reserve at Pont de Gau. The previous year, we had found a lovely shallow wetland on the way there, just off the beaten track. Hopefully, we'd come across it again this year. As we threaded through the various fields, with various levels of flooding, finches and buntings lined the hedgerows and fields, with a couple Sparrowhawks seen along the way. Then the road started to look unfamiliar, so we retraced our steps to a crossroads a couple of kilometres back, and eventually found the wetland, with a few Cranes seen in flight on the way.

The rain had eased and the breeze was light, so we got out for a walk. Marsh Harriers, Common Snipes and Greater Flamingoes were all seen, and Curlews and Water Rails were heard calling. A couple of Dunlins were heard and then seen with some of the fleeing Common Snipe, which were almost permanently on guard against marauding harriers. A brief view of a Moustached Warbler disappearing into roadside brambles was all we could manage on this visit, but then we had a nice surprise when two wintering Whiskered Terns gave us a flyover. A third bird was later seen hunting around the duck hunters' station. Two Kingfishers were seen bulleting along the ditch, plus a Water Rail briefly running for cover.

As we walked back to the vans, three Western Swamphens broke cover from the marshy vegetation and gave good views in the open. A large flock of Glossy Ibises appeared in flight at the far end of the causeway as we drove away, and a mixed flock of buntings and finches had a few Tree Sparrows in among them. Then, on the way to the Parc, I drove past twelve Black Storks without registering them, and then lost Simon from radio range: he had clocked them with his delighted clients! I knew exactly where they had been seen, so would keep any eye out on the way back so that my "team" might claw back the sighting. Black Stork is a rare wintering species here.

We reached the Parc Ornithologique de Pont du Gau at 11.30am, with time for a decent walkabout before lunch. Soon after entry, we enjoyed great views of both Firecrest and Goldcrest, enabling us to observe the key differences between Europe's two smallest birds. The ninety-minute stroll around the lagoons had flamingoes everywhere, in boisterous conference, rotating their heads as though watching a table tennis match. Little and Cattle Egrets loafed around the islands in front of the patio area, behind which a captive male European Eagle-Owl stared at us from his aviary. Further round the lagoons, working anticlockwise, we saw a tight flock of Black-winged Stilts roosting with Avocets on a small islet by a tree stump. Coypus were seen regularly, of course, and so were Kingfishers. During lunch, a small flock of Shovelers joined the party.

Lunch was a more comfortable affair this day, with picnic tables and ample seating for a relaxing lunch, in decent weather and in good light. One client photographed a passing dark heron; later inspection of the image revealed it not to be a Bittern as suspected, but a juvenile Black-crowned Night Heron.

After lunch, we walked over the bridge and looped around the larger lagoon, with larger numbers of Shovelers, Teal and Avocets seen. A brief stop at an inadequately-sized hide was followed by a sighting of a Red Swamp Crayfish with young clutching its underside, its claws raised in aggressive defiance. It did not retreat at all, despite the brief attention of the paparazzi.

More Avocets and the odd Chiffchaff kept us interested on the way around the lagoon, and a Hoopoe flew past on the home straight, but with dark clouds looming we missed out most of the hides to make sure we didn't get drenched; a couple of thunderclaps hastened us all the more. Nevertheless, obliquely-lit flamingoes against a dark grey sky made for a spectacular sight. Three Greylag Geese were the only ones seen on the tour. We made it back to the vans, dry and with some relief. As we headed home, we passed five of the Black Storks our van had earlier missed, only a few kilometres out of Pont du Gau. Then the rain came and we didn't stop again at the wetland, saving ten minutes by taking a more direct route back to Arles.

## Day 5

## Wednesday 24th December

### Camargue and Pont du Gard

We took the (very) scenic route to the wetlands on another blustery day. The windy conditions made the magical mystery tour less than ideal, but our "detour" gave us encounters with first a Merlin, which flew across the vans and then settled in a field some 250m away, and then a male Hen Harrier, which flew briefly alongside us, using a hedge as windbreak, but unfortunately on the wrong side for us to get an uninterrupted view. As we retraced our tracks to try and pick up the correct route, two Red Kites flew low over a village, giving close glimpses. Then, at last, we found the wetland, with a few Cranes seen on the way. Sadly, the blustery conditions meant that any small birds were hunkering down. A couple of Kingfishers hurried along the drains and a Moustached Warbler dashed into cover. A couple of Chiffchaffs were heard above the wind, and seen briefly clinging to the reeds. Marsh Harriers were understandably flying very low. Everything else, it seemed, was taking cover.

The drive to Pont du Gard would require an hour, and the forecast was for afternoon sunshine, which would at least illuminate the bridge should anything decide to creep around its south-facing masonry. So we made an early break for it. The place was pretty much deserted as we drove over the speed bumps on the tree-lined approach to the car park, and only a couple of other vehicles were present when we arrived. By now, there were four bags of goodies, which we carried to the picnic tables, a fair walk toward the bridge. Help was very much appreciated. Putting down the table cloth was in itself a trial against a howling wind, so a suggestion that we use a low, concrete "altar" in a sheltered position was accepted. A generous lunch was consumed at leisure, with many people buying warm drinks from the café and finding places to shelter from the breeze. Goldfinches clung on to young maples, twittering bravely.

Our hopes of finding Wallcreeper hinged on the sun warming up the face of the bridge and the breeze abating to some extent. It was blowing up river, meaning that the sunny side of the bridge was indeed leeward. Crag Martins were evident as the group crossed the bridge to a vantage point on the path, looking obliquely back at the face of the bridge. At least a dozen of them were seen at roost some way above us from the west bank, where the majority of the group settled in for a vigil. After a few minutes, I crossed back to view from the other side, with radios on for alerts. But it was all very quiet. After a forty-five-minute spell with only a couple of Cormorants to add, I returned to the group, who were scoping a very smart adult male Kestrel perched on an eroded ledge in the masonry, with guano whitewash suggesting this was a favourite vantage point. Blue and Great Tits were added to the day list, but the lack of action otherwise led me to suggest a focused vigil of forty more minutes, by which time the cold conditions might start to take their toll on some. During this time, toward the end of the spell, a pair of Ravens drifted down river, but that was that.

The disappointment of missing a key species of this trip was handled with good grace. We arrived back at the hotel promising a more action-packed day in the Camargue the following day, with calmer weather forecast. Our five-course meal at Plaza la Paillotte was arguably the best of the trip, but all the meals were of excellent quality: thanks to Hannah at Naturetrek HQ for organising them.

## Day 6

Thursday 25th December

### Camargue tour, featuring L'Etang de Vaccares

With no attempt to find the wetland whatsoever, we took a more direct route to Etang de Vaccares, seeing a few Cranes on the way plus the usual smattering of Common Buzzards and Marsh Harriers. The Cranes gave good views, being closer to the vans and in good light, and this time with some decent flocks numbering twenty to fifty.

We stopped off at farm track where some wet ground had a quite few birds milling around. We pulled over and crossed the drain on a firm track to look across the fields. Cranes flew around in all directions, and there was a quadrophonic murmur of trumpeting calls all around. There was a flock of Glossy Ibises some way off, occasionally taking flight when disturbed by Marsh Harriers and a Sparrowhawk, but it wasn't easy to determine how many birds there were. Snipe, Curlew, Lapwing and Dunlin were all noted, plus Green Sandpiper, all attracted by the watery state of the fields. It felt worth lingering, just to take in the spectacle of the quantity and diversity of birds. House Sparrows chirrupped loudly in a huge flock just back down the road. Everywhere we looked, something was happening. After yesterday's sparse offerings, we stayed to drink in the spectacle, but eventually reembarked, only to find a glimpse through the very next gap in the hedge revealed an unhindered view of the ibis flock, which we eventually estimated at 1150 birds! When at last disturbed for a final time, they took to the air together and entertained us with a murmuration.

Before we got to the lake, we glimpsed another field ahead of us with a large flock of Cranes which, helpfully, allowed us to pull off the road and observe them from behind the cover of a line of trees with a low hedge. There were also four Black Storks in one corner of the field, including one obvious brownish juvenile.

Soon after, the watery views of Vaccares came into view, where we found a shallow spot where there were Coots and grebes, which we stopped to inspect. Eventually, we found eight Black-necked Grebes, quite close to the edge, if not in great light, plus eight Red-breasted Mergansers much further out. An immature Slender-billed Gull flew past at speed, and was seen by some of the group. The breeze by now was keen, if not necessarily uncomfortable, so it was with some relief that I refound the spot at which we had had last year's Christmas lunch, behind a pumping station by a bend in the road, with sluiced wetlands looking quite full all around.

The picnic was augmented with some nice goodies from the deli, and some decent bottles of wine, all served up from the boot of one of the vans. Cettis Warbler, Chiffchaff, Black Redstart, Stonechat and Kingfisher featured during this sunny break. We moved on after a generous hour.

Birds continued to appear in numbers. A Common Sandpiper posed for photos in a roadside puddle. A lovely white-headed Common Buzzard was snapped through a narrow gap in the reeds, and a decent flock of pristine White Storks was seen with more Cranes. As we lingered to enjoy them, three Marsh Harriers hunted at close quarters over the lush green field.

Another flooded field prompted a stop as a small, statuesque wader some way across proved to be a Wood Sandpiper, which stayed so still that pointing it out with the use of the radios proved challenging. The only option left was to gamble by getting out of the van and using the scope. But so diminutive was the bird that no-one noticed it sneaking away while I set up scope. Pah!

Salina de Giraud was as far as we intended to go. It was full of water, but not full of birds. On other occasions, I am sure it would have been heaving, but we weren't too disappointed as we had seen plenty of birds on the meandering tour thus far. Our slow cruise home required one significant stop on a straight stretch of road, where a flock of Lapwings had a few Golden Plover mixed in. We then noticed that the field we had already passed had another six hundred, all lit beautifully by the warm late afternoon light. Despite the road being quite wide and ramrod straight, we were given a mouthful of abuse by a van driver for stopping. I wished him a very nice day in return.

Our Christmas Say dinner was beautifully prepared by the Hostellerie des Arenes and gratefully celebrated; we said farewell to two clients, whose taxi was booked for 7.00am the next morning.

## Day 7

Friday 26th December

### Mont Ventoux

A fine albeit cold day was forecast. It was not too windy low down, but how would it be at around 1500m? We made a prompt departure from Arles, having experienced a beautiful rainbow framing the town just after sunrise, waving away the last rain of the week.

The journey to Mont Ventoux was the longest of the tour. A stop at a track just ten minutes from the Chalet Reynard café, which had been under snow last year, was blocked off, so the alternative uphill trudge, parallel with the road, was unproductive, save for a lovely, pristine Golden Ear fungus.

We arrived at the café, where we immediately had coffee and used the facilities, hoping to garner enough goodwill for our request to use their empty, outdoor picnic tables for our lunch, despite notices advising otherwise. After enjoying beverages and other facilities, we had a sixty-minute tramp up the tree-lined trail from the café. Early on, could we could just hear Crested Tits trilling around the trees above us, but then a flock of ten Citril Finches flew past us, prompting an urgent shout. But they didn't settle in view, despite Simon scaling the slope above the path for a scan.

The track was not smooth (mainly compacted scree), but we went some way up, leaving some behind at their chosen level of comfort, but as we got as far as we could go, Simon shouted "raptor!". A splendid immature Griffon Vulture loomed large and cruised past us, close enough for us to see its gun-metal grey bill. Within seconds, another passed over slightly higher, with both birds reappearing a couple of minutes later, having climbed high on a thermal.

More Crested Tits were seen on the way back, creeping through the pines without being particularly showy, but we got back down in time for the scheduled 1.00pm lunch. As we had just about finishing preparing the same, a



raptor shout went up again, this time resulting in two majestic immature Golden Eagles looming overhead, soaring with classic upturned fingers on long wings, their white tail bases and wing flashes nicely lit.

After lunch, we drove as far as we could to the closed barrier, with a plan to walk as far as we could before returning in ninety minutes. This was a generally quiet hike, with plenty of time to view the misty, layered relief of the landscape stretching all the way to the sea. The Griffons appeared again, further up, but we never quite got as far as the “bald patch” at the peak of the mountain. Sadly, no more Citril Finches were seen in the pines, and last year’s White-winged Snowfinches were not evident, but we did eventually coax out a Crested Tit for a very showy display, with a Coal Tit in the neighbouring pine not being so obliging.

After a few days of less-than-ideal weather, I think we maxed out on enjoying bright sunshine, to the extent that we agreed to roll over the checklist meeting until tomorrow’s breakfast.

## Day 8

Saturday 27th December

### La Crau

Warnings of decreasing access points to the plains were heeded, so the plan was, after dropping off one client at Arles rail station, to take the route past Etang des Aulnes to the little car park on the western edge of the plain. Admittedly, the lake is some distance from the track, but a brief stop there revealed only distant Cormorants on the lake, and small flocks of Little and Cattle Egrets on the field the other side of the track. It was still quite cool when we arrived at the car park, but with cloudless skies and a light breeze, hopes were that we might even see some butterflies emerge if it warmed up.

Almost immediately, Stonechats on sentry duty showed on the bushes near the car park, and the puny, squeaking calls of Meadow Pipits were heard. The plan was to walk the straight track out into the middle of the plain and back again, using the remaining three hours until lunchtime and having a relaxed trundle to the airport afterwards.

The good and bad of great big open spaces is that nothing hinders the view, except great distance and perhaps, heat haze. The latter wouldn’t apply for some while at least, such that Skylarks were easily identified without any doubt or suspicion of their being Calandras or Greater Short-toed, unfortunately. A Hoopoe flew along the hedge before we got too far, and another fly-by was close enough for good views. A cruising Merlin darted low across the plain and into the woodland, and at last, Simon and I simultaneously called out the first of two Iberian Grey Shrikes working around a distant barn, giving everyone reasonable scope views.

Then came a moment of excitement when a group of six birds flying in single file were identified as Pin-tailed Sandgrouse. Directions were called out as they disappeared behind a tree and never emerged. Later, a flock of twenty or so flew at even greater distance, with very few clients able to pick them up, but the biggest flock of fifty plus birds wheeled around for some while in a patch of blue sky between banks of light, wispy cloud, still at great distance and almost disappearing as they banked around. We might have hoped for closer views, but were unlucky.

An unseen raptor put up a mixed flock of birds, from which a single Golden Plover emerged, calling a few times as it flew away. Linnets bounced around, feeding on the thistles, and the odd Greenfinch flew through. Meadow Pipits and Skylarks regularly erupted and settled. Kestrels loafed and occasionally hovered. We had walked about

a kilometre out from the vans with occasional stops and scans, and enjoyed of up to half a dozen Iberian Grey Shrikes.

The stroll back to the vans added nothing new (all the shrikes had gone to ground) but as we approached the car park, the first Clouded Yellow butterfly flitted through, followed shortly after by a very tatty Painted Lady, and then a Western Bath White. Eventually, the Bath White allowed itself to be admired at close quarters, as did a Clouded Yellow. During lunch, there was a flypast from a male Merlin, albeit at some distance from the diners, and a Marsh Frog was calling from the ditch, where a single Corn Bunting posed for a photo.

A large wheelie bin was first emptied of rain water and then filled with whatever uneaten food could not be smuggled through the airport, with a brilliant effort made to finish the huge stash of bananas we had accumulated, before we took the southern route to the airport, adding Shag and Mediterranean Gull to the trip list, before arriving at Marseilles to the disappointing news that the flight to Heathrow was delayed by over an hour! One client had to wait considerably longer for his night flight to Stansted, but everyone managed to get home as planned.

This was a great, fun trip with a really good group of clients, whose resilience to weather challenges and occasional attitudes from some locals was admirable. All the meals in the three restaurants were of marvellous quality; a key feature of this festive tour. We had been rewarded with some spectacular sightings of some magnificent avian spectacles, and eventually enjoyed shirtsleeve weather on the last day. There is always a reason to return to lovely places like Provence, the biggest of which was the missing Wallcreeper. But there were also some nice surprises too, with Whiskered Terns and Black Storks, and Griffon Vulture and Golden Eagle on day six adding to the spectacular vista across southern France.

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## Species lists

Birds (H = Heard only)

Common name	Scientific name	December 2025						
		21	22	23	24	25	26	27
Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>			✓				
Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓		
Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>				✓	✓		
Northern Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>	✓		✓				
Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>	✓		✓				
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓		
Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	✓						
Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	✓		✓		H		
Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>					✓		
Common Pheasant - I	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>			✓	✓	✓		
Pin-tailed Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles alchata</i>							✓
Rock Dove / Feral Pigeon	<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		H				H
Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	✓		✓				H
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>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	✓		✓		✓		
European Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>					✓		✓
Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	✓		✓		✓		✓
Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>			✓		✓		
Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	✓						
Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>			✓	✓	✓		
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>					✓		
Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>			✓				
Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>				✓	✓		
Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>					✓		
Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>					✓		
Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>			✓		✓		
Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>			✓				
Slender-billed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus genei</i>					✓		
Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	✓				✓	✓	
Mediterranean Gull	<i>Ichthyaeetus melanocephalus</i>							✓
Common Gull	<i>Larus canus</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>	✓				✓		✓
European Shag	<i>Gulosus aristotelis</i>							✓
Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>	✓		✓		✓		
Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>				✓			

Common name	Scientific name	December 2025						
		21	22	23	24	25	26	27
Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</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>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Griffon Vulture	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>						✓	
Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>						✓	
Bonelli's Eagle	<i>Aquila fasciata</i>						✓	
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Eurasian Goshawk	<i>Astur gentilis</i>							✓
Hen Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>				✓	✓		
Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>				✓			
Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>			✓				✓
Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	✓						
European Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>	H						
Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</i>				✓	✓		✓
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>			✓	✓			
Iberian Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius meridionalis</i>							✓
Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>						✓	
Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Western Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	✓						
Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>		✓		✓	✓	✓	
Coal Tit	<i>Parus ater</i>						✓	
Crested Tit	<i>Lophophanes cristatus</i>						✓	
Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>				✓		✓	
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	✓		✓	✓		✓	
Eurasian Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>				✓			✓
Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>					✓		
Eurasian Crag Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne rupestris</i>		✓		✓			
Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	✓		✓	✓			
Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
Moustached Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus melanopogon</i>			✓	✓			
Zitting Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>			✓				
Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>		✓		H	H	H	
Sardinian Warbler	<i>Curruca melanocephala</i>		✓	✓		✓		
Dartford Warbler	<i>Curruca undata</i>					✓		
Common Firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapilla</i>			✓				
Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>			✓	H			
Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</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>	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Rock Sparrow	<i>Petronia petronia</i>	H						

Common name	Scientific name	December 2025						
		21	22	23	24	25	26	27
Eurasian Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>				✓			
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Alpine Accentor	<i>Prunella collaris</i>		✓					
White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>			✓		✓		
Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>							✓
Water Pipit	<i>Anthus spinoletta</i>	✓						
Eurasian Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	✓	✓			✓	✓	
European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>		✓					✓
Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>					✓		✓
European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓		
Citril Finch	<i>Carduelis citrinella</i>						✓	
Corn Bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓
Common Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>				✓	✓		

## Mammals

I= introduced	
Common name	Scientific name
Coypu - I	<i>Myocastor coypus</i>
Wild Boar (dead)	<i>Sus scrofa</i>
Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>

## Butterflies

Common name	Scientific name
Clouded Yellow	<i>Colias croceus</i>
Western Bath White	<i>Pontia daplidice</i>
Painted Lady	<i>Vanessa cardui</i>
Red Admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>

## Crustaceans

I= introduced	
Common name	Scientific name
Red Swamp Crayfish - I	<i>Procambarus clarkii</i>