

ROMANIA



"This wonderful holiday is full of variety and takes us to what must be one of the most spectacular birding sites in Europe, the unforgettable Danube Delta, which is just teeming with birds. All of which we can enjoy from the comfort of our floating hotel." Sally Nowell

Dates Fri 23 Aug- Sun 1 Sep 2024
 Price £4,665
 Deposit £930 Single Supp £300

Leaders Sally Nowell and Ecotours guide
 Flights British Airways, scheduled
 Outbound: Morning Heathrow - Bucharest
 Inbound: Afternoon, Bucharest - Heathrow
 Weather Should be very pleasant temperatures around 15°-30°C with a chance of showers, will be cooler in the mountains
 Walking Easy walking up to two miles on good tracks. The walk in Zarnesti Gorge is steadily uphill and rough in places
 Meals All included from dinner on Day 1 to lunch on Day 10
 Insects Mosquitos can be a nuisance, especially in the Delta so bring repellent
 Accom Twin and single ensuite rooms
 Group 12

Just some of what we hope to see:

Brown Bear	Levant Sparrowhawk
Dalmatian Pelican	Long-legged Buzzard
White Pelican	Grey-headed Woodpecker
Pygmy Cormorant	Syrian Woodpecker
Black Stork	Black Woodpecker
Great White Egret	Nutcracker
Purple Heron	Red-breasted Flycatcher
Squacco Heron	Sombre Tit
Little Bittern	Golden Oriole
Little Crane	Pied Wheatear
Ruddy Shelduck	Black-eared Wheatear
Ferruginous Duck	Isabelline Wheatear
Whiskered Tern	Caspian Tern
White-winged Tern	Pallas's Gull
Marsh Sandpiper	Red-necked Grebe
White-tailed Eagle	European Sauslik
Lesser Spotted Eagle	
Red-footed Falcon	
Hobby	

Enjoy autumn migration in the Carpathian Mountains and the Black Sea Coast. Stay on a 'floating hotel' in the Danube Delta, plus an exciting visit to a Brown Bear hide!

- Stunning location in the Carpathian Mountains near Zarnesti Gorge
- Raptors including Lesser Spotted Eagle, Red-footed Falcon, Levant Sparrowhawk
- Impressive Brown Bears from a comfortable, forest hide
- Enjoy views in spectacular Transylvania, including Dracula's spectacular cliff-top castle
- Chance of surprise migrants: Pallid Harrier, Marsh and Broad-billed Sandpipers
- Spectacular numbers of birds while exploring the mighty Danube Delta
- Pelicans, Pygmy Cormorant, Squacco Heron, Glossy Ibis and marsh terns

1-4 We meet our local guide at Bucharest airport and from here we travel to the beautiful Carpathian Mountains. Enroute we shall pass the highest mountain in Romania, Omul Peak. At over 8,000 metres it looms over the surrounding, forest-clad landscape. When we arrive at our hotel we can stretch our legs and acquaint ourselves with our bucolic rural surroundings, admire the views and catch up with some new birds!

As we start to explore the Carpathian landscape we'll have opportunities to look for Crag Martin, Black Redstart and raptors overhead. Our accommodation is perfectly positioned to explore the magnificent Zarnesti Gorge and the beautiful Stramba Valley, where we shall look for Honey Buzzard, Lesser-spotted Eagle, Red-backed Shrike, Nutcracker and Middle-spotted, Grey-headed and Black Woodpeckers.



One night, as dusk falls, we'll make an excursion for one of the real highlights of this holiday, our visit to a bear hide. The Brown Bears come to feed and we should get exceptional views and photo opportunities. Ravens and Red Fox are also attracted and very occasionally Wolf has been seen here.

As we drive around the Carpathian area we shall be looking out for Lesser-spotted Eagle, Marsh Harrier Falcon which use the pylons as perches. White Storks are starting their migration and lots of smaller birds are on the move too, so we never know just what we might bump into.

The surrounding unspoilt countryside is still farmed largely with horses and by hand. Red-backed Shrikes are everywhere and Bee-eaters swoop over the hedgerows, while wildflowers attract butterflies



"Driving through Romania is a total delight, up into mountains and down to the coast and then back in time, passing horse-drawn carts and stunning villages. Best of all however, we are there at migration time and bump into spectacular birds such as Red-footed Falcon, Lesser-spotted Eagle, Bee-eaters and Rollers." Sally Nowell



which can be in profusion at this time, including the magnificent Cardinal, glorious Clouded Yellow and Silver-washed Fritillary. This is the homeland of the bloody figure of Vlad Tepes, better known as "Count Dracula". The "Dracula Castle" was built in 1378 atop a cliff and had a strategic role in protecting the pass. We shall pass through the village below Bran Castle giving us a brief photo opportunity.

5-6 We travel down to the Black Sea coast, stopping on the way. The wetlands of Histria and Vadu offer fabulous birding with muddy pools, ponds, extensive reedbeds, steppe and sandy scrub attracting many species. Both White and Dalmatian Pelicans are often seen, plus a host of waders, including a chance of Broad-billed and Marsh Sandpiper. We shall search out the impressive Pallas's Gull here. Lesser Grey Shrike, Roller, Golden Oriole and Bee-eaters are likely and migrants may include Red-breasted Flycatcher, chats, warblers, wagtails and maybe a late Paddyfield Warbler.

Butterflies abound and we'll look out for European Sousek. The extensive salt marshes of Vadu may hold a fine selection of waders, gulls and terns and orchards in the small villages are perfect for Syrian Woodpecker. We have had great views of Red-footed Falcons here and other possible raptors include Short-toed and Booted Eagles, Long-legged Buzzard, Levant Sparrowhawk and with luck even Pallid Harrier!

7-9 We move on to the Danube Delta - a huge area of divided river channels, reedbeds, lakes and woodlands, where we are



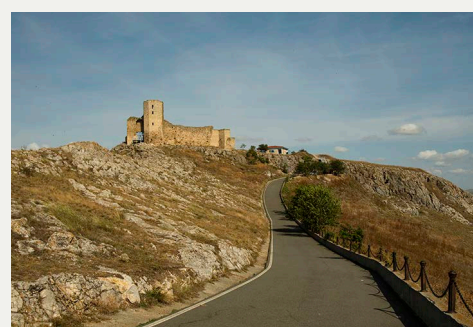
welcomed aboard our delightful floating hotel. This is relaxed birdwatching, with two full days on rich waterways in the heart of the Danube Delta!

Breakfast is served on board and each morning we leave our floating hotel on a small motor boat to explore the narrow channels and smaller lakes, or take a walk along the river bank. We shall seek Black-necked and Red-necked Grebes, Spoonbill, Great White Egrets, Purple Herons, Dalmatian and White Pelicans, Pygmy Cormorant, Squacco Heron, Glossy Ibis, Ferruginous Duck, Red-crested Pochard, Caspian Tern and Kingfisher.

In the reed edges we look for Bittern, Water Rail and Little Crake. Bearded and Penduline Tits call as we journey along the river accompanied by flocks of Whiskered Terns, with smaller numbers of White-winged and Black Terns possible.

The forests in the delta are good for Black Stork, White-tailed Eagle, Hobby and woodpeckers, with Grey-headed the most common, but Lesser Spotted and Black Woodpecker also likely. Red-footed Falcons are migrating through and Bee-eaters and Golden Oriole should still be around, as we spend some relaxing hours birding from the observation platform of our "hotel", enjoying the beauty of this huge wetland, with no roads and traffic. Dinner will be served on board, while enjoying a tranquil sunset. Bliss!

10 After breakfast we leave the boat and head towards Bucharest airport for our flight back to London.



Outline Itinerary

- Days 1-4 Flight from London to Bucharest, drive to our scenically located hotel. Birding in the Southern Carpathian Mountains and gorges including the beautiful Stramba valley, plus an evening visit to a bear watching hide
4 nights Villa Hermani, Zarnesti
- Days 5-6 Travel down to the Black Sea Coast birding on the way. Spend time at Histria and Vadu wetlands, where extensive reedbeds, steppe and sandy scrub attract many species
2 nights Hotel Mondial, Sinoe
- Days 7-9 Travel to the Danube Delta for wonderfully relaxed birding from our floating hotel amongst divided river channels, reedbeds, lake and woodlands
3 nights Floating Hotel
- Day 10 Return to Bucharest for our flight to the UK

Michael Pearcey: Brown Bears
Istvan Bartol: White Pelicans and Pygmy Cormorants, Enisala Castle
Stephen Batt: Lesser Spotted Eagle, Hobby
Sally Nowell: Floating hotel