

VALENCIA



"Having lived in this region for well over 10 years, I love exploring and finding its wonderful and diverse wildlife, which offers so much. In recent years the Valencian government has invested in creating habitats and reserves – Pau and I will relish sharing these places and their inhabitants on this fabulous tour." Julian Sykes

Dates Sun 14 - Sun 21 April 2024
 Price £2,465
 Deposit £490 Single Supp £235

Leaders Julian Sykes and Pau Lucio
 Flights EasyJet, scheduled, Speedy Boarding and extra legroom included
 Outbound: Morning, Gatwick-Valencia
 Inbound: Afternoon, Valencia-Gatwick
 Weather Probably a temperature range of around 10°- 25°C and there is always a possibility of rain showers plus mornings and evenings will be cooler
 Walking There will be some short easy walks on level paths, slightly rockier and steeper in the mountains
 Meals All included from lunch on Day 1 to lunch on Day 8
 Insects Could be a problem in the wetter marsh areas and occasionally in the mountains, so bring repellent
 Accom Twin and single rooms all ensuite
 Casa Babel is a fabulous hotel in the small town of Villalonga, nestled under the La Safor mountains
 Group 12

Just some of what we hope to see:

Marbled Duck	Collared Pratincole
White-headed Duck	Slender-billed Gull
Greater Flamingo	Audouin's Gull
Bonelli's Eagle	Whiskered Tern
Montagu's Harrier	Great Spotted Cuckoo
Red-knobbed Coot	Roller
Purple Swamphen	Black Wheatear
Great Bustard	Moustached Warbler
Black-bellied Sandgrouse	Melodious Warbler
Pin-tailed Sandgrouse	Golden Oriole

A wonderful diverse and exciting tour to a region of Spain not normally associated with wildlife tourism. It has so much to offer, with coastal wetlands, inland plains, salt pans and more.

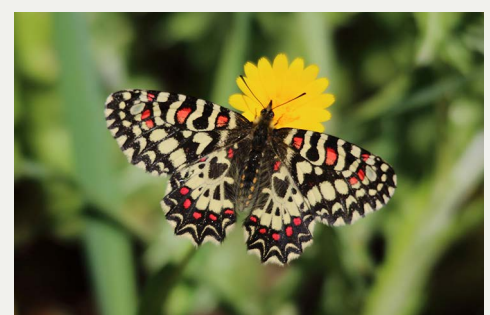
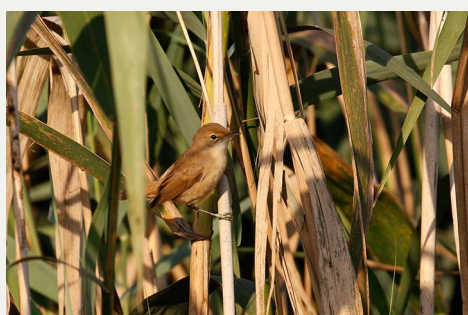
- Be surprised by the quality and diversity of this fabulous region
- Coastal wetlands for Red-knobbed Coot and Marbled and White-headed Duck
- A chance to join a local ringing group as they monitor migrant species
- Inland plains for bustards, sandgrouse, larks and raptors
- Karst limestone valleys for orchids, butterflies and Bee-eaters
- Expansive reedbeds with Moustached, Great Reed and Savi's Warblers
- A fabulous local hotel, which serves delicious Spanish cuisine!

After landing at Valencia Airport, we drive south to Villalonga and check into our traditional 19th century hotel, where your comfortable room for the week will be waiting. If time allows, we may visit a nearby marsh for an easy walk to see any breeding or migrant species that may be around. We shall be looking for Little and Cattle Egrets, Glossy Ibis, Squacco, Grey and Purple Herons and possibly Marsh Harrier.

2-7 Our week may begin with a pre-breakfast visit to a local reedbed looking for the resident Moustached Warblers, along with Savi's, Eurasian Reed and Great Reed Warblers plus plenty more. After breakfast we head to the coast, looking for Balearic Shearwater's, Mediterranean and Yellow-legged Gulls, Gannets and Sandwich Terns.

We continue south towards Denia and wind our way up to the very scenic Cabo de San Antoni, where we spend the remainder of the afternoon. This headland can be quite productive, with the likelihood of Pallid Swift, Blue Rock Thrush, Black Wheatear, Raven and possibly Peregrine Falcon. We shall also spend some time looking out to sea as there's always the chance of a passing Scopoli's Shearwater or Bottlenose Dolphin.

One day we head south towards the Alicante area, looking for its resident and breeding speciality species. We start at the 'Clot de Galvany' - a seasonal wetland with breeding White-headed Ducks, Purple Swamphens, Iberian Green Woodpeckers, Little Owl, Southern Grey Shrike and Dartford and Sardinian Warblers. Then it's on to the 'Santa Pola Salinas'. This large area





"April in Valencia can be incredibly rewarding with migrants moving north passing through in good numbers, with a surprise or two always on the cards. We could join the local ringing group as they monitor these migrant species to see some of these elusive reedbed warblers in the hand, along with the possibility of a Kingfisher or even a Little Bittern. I cannot wait to get back there again." Julian Sykes

of commercial salt pans holds several thousand Greater Flamingos, various species of gulls and terns, waders and wildfowl all year round. We'll then drive into the nearby Creviente hills, looking for Bonelli's Eagles with young, along with Black Wheatear, Blue Rock Thrush, Alpine Swift, Crag Martin, Thekla Larks and Red-billed Cough. After lunch we'll visit arguably the 'Valenciana Comunitat's' premier bird Reserve - 'El Hondo'. As well as some of the above species it also has breeding Red-knobbed Coot, Roller, Montagu's Harrier, Collared Pratincole and the gorgeous Marbled Duck.

One day we have a relaxed start, with a drive up into the mountains through the gorgeous Vall de Gallinera, hopefully seeing its resident pair of Golden Eagles, plus Crag Martin, Red-rumped Swallow, Golden Oriole, Wryneck, Cirl Bunting and Woodchat Shrike. We continue to the hills behind Alcoy, where we hope to see Griffon Vultures at close quarters and possibly Woodlark and Thekla Lark, Crested, Coal and Great Tit, Raven, Rock Bunting, Blue Rock Thrush and crossbills. This area is superb for orchids and butterflies, with potentials for Woodcock, Pyramidal and Yellow Bee Orchids plus Spanish Festoon, Adonis Blue, Southern Scarce Swallowtail and Spanish Marbled White.

We shall head north towards Valencia, to visit the wetland sites of the Albufera de Valencia. We drive to the extensive rice fields that surround Spain's second largest coastal freshwater lake - Albufera d'Valencia, where we hope to find many species

of heron and egret, plus Little, Common and Whiskered Terns, Little Ringed Plovers, Audouin's and Lesser Black-backed Gulls and Black-winged Stilts. We travel through Palomar (the home of Paella) and visit the small but excellent Reserve of Raco d'Olla. Here we shall enjoy near point blank views of nesting gulls and terns, including gorgeous pink Slender-billed Gulls doing their bizarre display. At this small Reserve there is always a chance of something rarer such as Elegant Tern, which has bred here for the past 12 years! The rest of the afternoon will be spent around the ricefields and coastline of this area before returning to Villalonga.

One day will be in total contrast to the others, with an early breakfast and drive into Castilla La Mancha. We head straight for the Albacete region, where our target species are Great and Little Bustard, Black-bellied and Pin-tailed Sandgrouse, Stone Curlew, Calandra, Crested and Short toed Larks and Rock and Tree Sparrows. Apart from our target species there is always a chance of other classic species during the breeding season such as Great Spotted Cuckoo, Black-eared and Northern Wheatear, Red and Black Kite, Common Buzzard, Marsh and Montagu's Harrier and the scarce Lesser Kestrel. This area is fantastic all year round, in Spring there are various flooded fields, which hold good numbers of birds making for a great day out.

8 This morning, after another leisurely breakfast we shall drive back to Valencia airport for our flight home.



Outline Itinerary

- Day 1 Arrive at Valencia Airport, transfer to our hotel in Villalonga, afternoon visit to local Reserve
7 nights Hotel Casa Babel
- Days 2-7 Varied daily itineraries visiting wetland sites along the Mediterranean coast both north and south; inland to Castilla La Mancha and an expansive steppe area; exploration of dramatic karst limestone valleys full of cherry and almond groves; plus seawatching
- Day 8 After breakfast we travel back to Valencia airport for our flight home

Julian Sykes: White-headed Duck, landscape, Great Bustard
Roy Atkins: Calandra Lark
Robin Mace: Savi's Warbler
Pau Lucio: Spanish Festoon, Yellow Bee Orchid

