



BIRDS OF ARAGON REGION

- **Birds of Aragon**

The fact that Aragon occupies the central part of the Ebro Valley, from the French border to the Sistema Iberico mountain range, means that a variety of environments can be enjoyed within 100 km, from alpine pasture lands to steppes, and from the latter to Moncayo and the mountain ranges in Teruel. Many different species of birds can be seen as a result of this diversity of habitats, a very low population density in 90% of the territory and relatively good conservation.

According to the Atlas of breeding birds in Aragon (Sampietro et al.), between 203 and 205 species regularly nest here, and about 15 more do so irregularly, plus a few more which were added once the Atlas had been published. Of the 366 Iberian species, 257 are considered to be breeding, so it can be said that Aragon is home to 80% of Iberian breeding birds.

The following birds can be found, based on their characteristics and habitats:



- **The Pyrenees**

Birds of great interest can be found from the 3,000 meter high peaks to the mountain ranges that connect with the plains. A great diversity of forest types and the abundance of crags and abrupt ravines make it possible for some species to be a common sight here, while they are rare or even absent elsewhere in Europe.

The most recommended areas largely coincide with the network of protected areas: Valles Occidentales Natural Park, Ordesa and Monte Perdido National Park, Posets-Maladeta Natural Park and Sierra y Cañones de Guara Natural Park.

Main ornithologically interesting species of birds: Lammergeier, griffon vulture, Egyptian vulture, golden eagle, Bonelli's eagle, short-toed eagle, booted eagle, red kite, black kite, Northern goshawk, Eurasian sparrowhawk, peregrine falcon, capercaillie, rock ptarmigan, grey partridge, Tengmalm's owl, black woodpecker, white-backed woodpecker, snow finch, Alpine accentor, wallcreeper, ring ouzel, rock thrush, citril finch, red-backed shrike, yellowhammer, ortolan bunting, Alpine chough and chough



- **Sistema Iberico mountain range**

A set of mountain ranges, from low mountain areas to fully Mediterranean ones, with low population density. Coniferous and oaks forests, bundance of river gorges. There are also steppes around Teruel city.

Main ornithologically interesting species of birds: Dupond's lark, Black bellied sand grouse, Griffon vulture, Egyptian vulture, golden eagle, Bonelli's eagle, short-toed eagle, booted eagle, red kite, Northern goshawk, Eurasian sparrowhawk, peregrine falcon, alpine accentor, scops owl, Nightjar, rock thrush, blue rock thrush, red-backed shrike, citril finch, firecrest, ortolan, Rock and Cirl bunting, Golden oriole, Ring ouzel, and almost all the warbler species.

- **The Ebro Basin**

A set of steppe and cereal areas dotted with various types of wetland, with some species of unique birds, which are very rare elsewhere in the country and unique in Europe.

Waterfowl. Those species of different genres which are linked to water in one way or another: rivers, reservoirs, ponds, reedbeds, rice fields, etc. Although Aragon is not especially relevant in the country in terms of number and diversity of waterfowl, this is by far the best known and most widely studied group of birds since they are easy to watch.

The most significant wetland areas in Aragon are: Gallocanta Lagoon, Cañizar, the reservoirs and irrigated land in Cinco Villas, the Sotonera reservoir, La Unilla in Candanos, the Saladas salt lagoons in Chiprana, Bajo Ebro and Sariñena.

Main ornithologically interesting species of birds: Little grebe, black-necked grebe, great crested grebe, cormorant, grey heron, bittern, little egret, cattle egret, purple heron, night heron, squacco heron, little bittern, greylag goose, shelduck, red-crested pochard, garganey, marsh harrier, purple gallinule, Baillon's crake, Kentish plover, black-headed gull, yellow-legged gull and gull-billed tern.

Steppe birds. The central part of Aragon, known as the Ebro Basin, has peculiar geographical and climatic characteristics, with large flat areas at low altitude over sea level, low rainfall, prevalence of dry wind (cierzo) and a large temperature contrast between winter and summer. The most typical areas are Campo de Belchite, Los Monegros, the areas surrounding Zaragoza, the



Gallocanta basin, and Bajo Cinca.



Main ornithologically interesting species of birds: Montagu's harrier, lesser kestrel, great bustard, little bustard, stone curlew, dotterel, black-bellied sandgrouse, pin-tailed sandgrouse, little owl, short-eared owl, roller, bee-eater, Dupont's lark, calandra lark, greater short-toed lark, lesser short-toed lark, Thekla lark, tawny pipit, black-eared wheatear, black wheatear, spectacled warbler, rock sparrow and chough

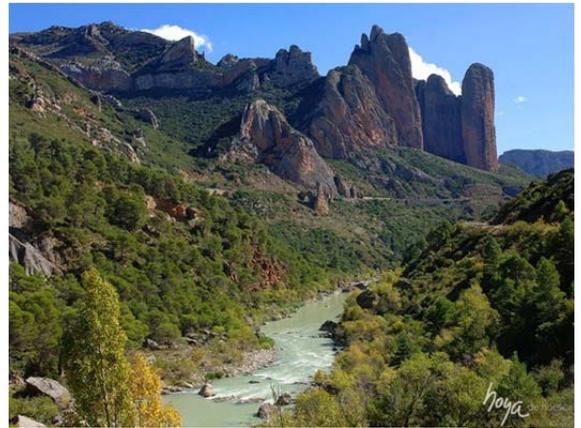
Birding Tour Itinerary.

Day 1, 2 and 3th

Arrive to **Zaragoza Airport**

Transfer to **the Pirinees.**

Stop on the way at **Los Mallos de Riglos.** *These vertical walls, rising to 300 metres in height, close to the village and the Gállego river, are limestone conglomerates formed in the Tertiary era. Later on they were eroded by water, rain and wind to form the walls you can see today; these are reddish in colour because of the iron minerals and clay they contain and are quite spectacular at sundown. The Riglos Synclines include the following crags: the Puro, Pisón, Visera and Firé. Riglos and its ridged cliff formations are a paradise for climbers. They are internationally famous amongst climbing enthusiasts. They are also a paradise for birds of prey who nest and breed in the many hollows in the ridges. These birds, mainly protected birds of prey, can be seen flying over the territory.*



Deapart to **Parque Nacional de Ordesa y Monte Perdido.** *The National Park is part of the Pyrenees and Monte Perdido National Park which was declared a World Heritage site in 1997 by the UNESCO. Since 1977, a part of the park has also been inside the Ordesa-Viñamala Biosphere Reserve. It is an incredibly beautiful place with a landscape of towering summits. It has a wide variety of ecosystems with both an Atlantic and Mediterranean influence, which is what gives it such a rich and diverse flora and fauna. The scenery is dominated by the great massif of Monte Perdido (3,355 m), with the peaks of the Tres Sorores branching out into the valleys of Ordesa, Pineta, Añisclo and Escuaín.*





Visit the **Cañones del Guara**. The Guara Sierra and Canyons form a spot between two climates which mark different vegetation: dry to the south and luxuriant to the north. The Reserve extends to cover part of the townships of Abiego, Adahuesca, Aínsa-Sobrarbe, Alquézar, Arguis, Bárcabo, Bierge, Boltaña, Caldearenas, Casbas de Huesca, Colungo, Huesca, Loporzano, Nueno and Sabiñánigo. Its heights go from the 430 metres of the River Alcanadre to the 2,077 of Tozal de Guara. The surrounding area is of a karstic nature, full of caves, hills, abysses and canyons. The climate is halfway between the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, due to its location in between the Pyrenees and the Ebro valley. This marks the differences between the vegetation of the south, drier and with abundant pine groves, and of the north, where there are luxuriant species such as beech trees. Four main rivers cross the Sierra, creating the characteristic canyons: el Alcanadre, el Guatzalema, el Vero and el Mascun.



Visit to **Alquezar**. Rich cultural heritage set in stunning natural surroundings. Alquézar is in the province of Huesca, in the foothills of the Pyrenees, within the Sierra y Cañones de Guara Nature Reserve. It is the perfect place for sports like canyoning, hiking, horse riding, and mountain biking. This village also has examples of rock art at the Vero River Cultural Park, designated World Heritage. Also outstanding are its castle, the Santa María la Mayor collegiate church (the region's most visited monument) with its cloister of Romanesque capitals and its organ, along with many shrines. It is also well worth a trip to the Casa Fabián Ethnological Museum, to get to know the history of this village and the Somontano region, known for its excellent wines.



Transfer to **Laguna Sariñena**. A few kilometers from Villanueva de Sigena you can find "La Laguna" of Sariñena which is one of the largest lagoons in Spain and which offers the best conditions for observing waterfowl in Aragón. The past 15 years have seen more than 200 species of birds. Those sighted include: the great crested grebe, cormorant, cattle egret, heron, purple heron, large egret, mallard, pintail, marsh harrier, osprey, etc. Sariñena Lagoon is the destination for some 12,000 birds that winter there. It plays an important role as a resting and feeding area for over 100,000 birds included in the flyway. Furthermore, the location of the Lagoon in the north of Monegros, makes it possible to find birds that live in the dry plains, for example, the marsh harrier, red kite, sparrowhawk, booted eagle,



kestrel, peregrine falcon, common crane, little bustard, Eurasian Stone-curlew, Alpine Swift, Bee-eater, hoopoe, Southern Grey Shrike etc.

Day 4 and 5

Transfer to **Monegrillos – Farlete**. *The fields of junipers in Monegrillo and Farlete (much like the African savannah), the Retuerta in Pina (like the primordial forest formerly in the Monegros) and the saltwater areas in the Sástago-Bujaraloz complex (declared a RAMSAR site for their international relevance) comprise the heart of the most important and unique natural zone in Aragón. It is home to the last remaining steppe birds in danger of extinction such as the great bustard and the lesser kestrel; here, they continue to breed and it is fairly easy to spot them. In spring large numbers of little bustards live up an unforgettable day in the countryside. In particular, in the Retuerta in Pina, it is possible to see quite regularly the Montagu's harrier - which also breeds here.*



Transfer to **Laguna de Gallocanta**.

Gallocanta lagoon is in a large valley and it is characterised by its salinity. It is the most important and the largest salt lagoon in Europe and it is the most important migration point in the Western Palaearctic Ecozone on the route of the crane, for which it has been named a RAMSAR site - the highest category for protection and world renown. The area is subject to serious water fluctuation; during the time of a permanent water level, it is possible to also see some of the largest winter populations of the ferruginous duck and redcrested pochard in Spain. Recently, the reedbeds of the lagoon have been established as being of international importance due to the presence of a population of the most endangered small bird in Europe: the aquatic warbler. For our viewing pleasure, the second largest colony of great bustards can be found nearby the lagoon.



Day 6 and 7

Transfer to **Laguna del Cañizar**

Transfer to **Laguna del Cañizar** and the área around the **City of Teruel**.

The Cañizar Lagoon was one of the largest freshwater wetlands in Spain and is in the process of recovery. Their water levels fluctuate and therefore have great deal of influence in the birds you can find in it during different times of the year, especially in the time of reproduction. During the autumn / winter seasons, the lagoon concentrates a great density of raptors who find food and shelter between the reeds, the poplars and the surrounding fields of cultivation.





Transfer to **Sierras de Gúdar y Javalambre**. **Sierra de Gudar** mountain range is located at the eastern end of the Iberian System and the Sierra de Noguera is its easternmost prolongation. The Sierra Mayabona is another subrange of the Sierra de Gúdar. Its summits are usually covered in snow in the winter and the 1710 m high Cabezo de las Cruces is one of the highest peaks of the Land of Valencia.



Mora de Rubielos is the most important town in this mountainous zone. The range is named after the town of Gúdar. Valdelinares, also a village in the area, is the highest town in Aragon. **The Sierra de Jalambre** mountain range is located at the eastern end of the Iberian System and the Sierra del Toro its ESE prolongation. Its highest point is Javalambre (2,020 m). Its summits are usually covered in snow in the winter and the 1,839 m high Cerro Calderón or Alto de las Barracas is the highest peak of the Land of Valencia. Aramón Javalambre is a small ski resort in the range with 12.2 km of ski trails.

Come back to **Zaragoza Airport**