



## TOUR INFORMATION FOR SPAIN – the Grand Tour

*These notes are designed to help you prepare for your tour. Please read carefully.*

**ENTERING SPAIN:** United Kingdom citizens will need a passport which is valid for six months beyond the intended length of stay. A visa is not required. Citizens of other nations should contact the nearest Spanish Consulate for entry requirements.

It is always a good idea to take a photocopy of your passport and air ticket with you when travelling abroad. They can prove invaluable in helping you get replacements if your originals are lost or stolen. Obviously you should keep the photocopies in a separate bag to the originals.

**CURRENCY:** Spain's currency is the Euro. Euros can be obtained from your local bank (if given advance notice) and from exchange facilities at the airport. As the tour price includes all travel, hotel and main meal costs, you need bring only enough Euros to cover gifts, snacks, or other purchases of a purely personal nature.

**LANGUAGE:** Spanish is the main language but English is widely spoken.

**CLIMATE:** Temperatures will typically range from possibly as low as 0°C in the early mornings to as high as 30°C during the day. Sunshine should be plentiful but rain is possible throughout. The Pyrenees and plains around central Spain are often very windy, very cold and exposed so warm, winter clothing is recommended there. Snow is still possible in the mountains.

**PACE OF TOUR AND DAILY ROUTINE:** This is a fairly relaxed tour but does include several long drives (between 5-6 hours, usually with some birding en route). On most days we will have breakfast before heading out for the day. Lunch is often in the form of a packed lunch or sometimes in a café en route to our next birding location. There are plenty of stops for tea, coffee or a cold drink. We usually return to the hotel at around 19.00 in time to shower and do a checklist. Dinner is taken late in Spain with several of our hotels not serving before 20.30.

Virtually all the walking is fairly easy and on good paths or tracks. There are a couple of longer walks of about 2km each, and the best site for Wallcreeper involves a couple of slightly steeper sections where a walking stick can be useful. Most birdwatching is done within a short distance of our vehicle.

**HEALTH:** It is essential that you contact your own doctor to obtain the latest information on the region you are visiting.

The tour is not a strenuous one: leisurely walking, occasionally over moderately rough or steep terrain, is the only physical requirement. Day flying mosquitoes can be a problem in some areas, so bring an insect repellent. It may be impossible to obtain any special medications during the tour, so bring all you are likely to need with you. You are advised not to drink the tap water at the hotel, primarily because of its high mineral content.

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For further information on health advice refer to the Medical Advisory Services for Travellers Abroad website [www.masta-travel-health.com](http://www.masta-travel-health.com)

**ACCOMMODATION:** The tour stays at various hotels all of which have en-suite facilities. Some also have balconies and many have good views of the Spanish countryside with birdwatching right on the doorstep.

**FOOD:** Breakfasts are quite varied but with the usual staple items e.g. coffee, tea, juice and toast at most of the hotels. The further inland we travel the more local delicacies such as cheese and smoked meats appear on the breakfast menu. Lunch will usually be a picnic (provided by our hotels), which will include a selection of freshly made sandwiches and fruit. Evening meals are taken late in Spain (usually 20.30-21.00) which allows us to make the most of the daylight hours for birding.

Our tours are all-inclusive and no refunds can be issued for any tour meals participants choose to miss. While we will try to do all we can to accommodate the requirements of all participants, please note that we cannot guarantee all causes of food allergies can be avoided at every destination. Many restaurants offer set menus and are unable to accommodate all special requests within a group. Thus, participants with significant food allergies or special dietary needs should bring appropriate foods with them for those times when their needs can, regrettably, not be accommodated. Our tours are carefully scheduled to ensure the best possible birding experience and although the leaders will do all they can to make sure the group eats at a reasonable time, sometimes early or late lunches and/or evening meals cannot be avoided. Any participants who need to eat at specific times may need to bring supplemental food with them.

**DRINKS:** Bottled water, a soft drink or a beer (or wine if appropriate) are provided at meals, as is coffee or tea. In addition we keep a supply of bottled water on the tour vehicles. Bottled or filtered water may also be provided in some rooms where we stay.

**LAUNDRY:** Laundry facilities are not provided by all the hotels but may be available at hotels where we stay for more than one night.

**ELECTRICITY:** Electricity is 220V AC but outlets require a standard European plug-adaptor that can best be described as one with double round-prong plugs. Such adaptors are readily available for sale in the airport shops.

**CLOTHING:** Mainly warm and sunny weather is usual at this time of year so light clothing (including long-sleeved garments and a suitable hat for protection from the sun) are the main requirements. However, changeable and sometimes very cold, windy weather is also possible, **so bring a warm jacket, hat, gloves, pullovers etc.** Mornings near Sepulveda can be especially cold. Rain is possible at any time, and adequate rainwear is advisable, snow is also possible on the first day. Light footwear will be adequate most of the time, but occasional longer walks require comfortable walking shoes or boots.

**MISCELLANEOUS EQUIPMENT:** Please bring the following:

Notebook and pen

Small rucksack or day pack

Insect repellent

Alarm clock

Sunglasses and sunscreen

Personal medication

**Optional:** Telescope and tripod (recommended if you have them), spare binoculars and spare spectacles (in case of loss or damage), field guide .

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**Note:** The most effective insect repellents are those containing at least 35% of the active ingredient diethyltoluamide (DEET). The higher the percentage, the greater the effectiveness. However, care must be taken to avoid getting the repellent on to optical equipment as it dissolves rubber and plastic and can damage coated lenses. A less effective alternative that is not corrosive is Mosi-guard, produced by MASTA. This is available from many high street chemists.

**LUGGAGE:** Our Final Information document, which will be sent to you approximately three weeks before departure, will give details about baggage weight and size restrictions imposed by the airline used for this tour.

If possible, please bring your luggage in soft-sided bags or cases (rather than large hard 'Samsonite'-type suitcases) as these pack more easily into our vehicles during the tour. Please note that on many tours there are no porters to carry your luggage so please ensure that **no bag is so heavy that you are unable to lift and carry it yourself**. As a general rule, in addition to using your luggage labels, it is a good idea to fix identification to the *inside* of each piece of luggage.

**LEADER'S EQUIPMENT:** The leader will provide the following:

Telescope and tripod for group use  
Field guides

Basic First-aid kit  
Reference books

**PHOTOGRAPHY:** Scenery and memory shots will be plentiful and simple to obtain. Memory cards may be difficult to obtain and will certainly be more expensive than at home so you should bring with you all that you expect to need. Camera equipment should be packed in moisture and dust-proof bags as a precaution. If you wish to 'digiscope' please ensure that you bring your own telescope.

There will be plenty of opportunities to take photos of birds, mammals and scenery and the leaders will do all they can to accommodate anyone wishing to take photographs. However, if you are a serious photographer please bear in mind that this is first and foremost a birdwatching tour. Please do not allow your photographic desires to conflict with other participants' birdwatching activities.

**TRAVEL INSURANCE:** Travel insurance is essential and we insist that you take out suitable cover as soon as your tour is booked. If you are bringing expensive optical equipment or other valuable items, please make sure they are also adequately insured on your home contents policy, as most travel insurance policies do not cover very expensive individual items. You may wish to consult your insurance broker regarding coverage. Please also ensure that your policy covers you in the event of a medical emergency, cancellation of a trip or severe delays. Medical costs abroad can often be extremely expensive. Please note that Sunbird is not liable for any medical or repatriation costs resulting from injury or illness during a tour or for covering any costs resulting from a flight delay such as extra hotel accommodation.

If you wish, insurance can be arranged by Helen Fisher, Bullerwell Independent Insurance Brokers, 13 Goldington Road, Bedford, MK40 3JY. Tel: 01234-866964. Please contact Helen for a quote and she will send the schedule directly to you.

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**TRANSPORT:** Transportation will be by minibus driven by the leader. The leader will arrange a seating rotation. Participants should be able to ride in any seat in tour vehicles.

**SMOKING:** Smoking and vaping is not allowed in the vehicles or when the group is gathered for meals, checklists etc. If you are sharing a room with a non-smoker, please do not smoke in the room. If you smoke in the field, we ask that you do so well away and downwind from the group if possible.

**TIPPING:** All tour-based tips are included in the tour price. These include tips to local guides, drivers, hotel porters, and waiters and waitresses when we have group meals together in restaurants. You only need to pay tips for personal services such as room service or drinks from the bar.

### **BIBLIOGRAPHY:**

Mullarney, Killian et al. *Collins Bird Guide*. 2010. HarperCollins. The 2<sup>nd</sup> edition is the latest, most up-to-date and portable field guide to the birds of Europe. This book has quickly become established as the standard field guide for the region. **Highly recommended.**

Forsman D. *The raptors of Europe and the Middle East*. An authoritative guide including all the raptors we may see.

### **Flowers:**

Grey-Wilson, C. & Blamey, M. *Mediterranean Wild Flowers*. 1993. A new book covering over 2500 species with information on flowers, foliage, fruit, habitat, flowering season and distribution.

### **Mammals:**

Macdonald, D and C Barret. 1993. *A Field Guide to the Mammals of Britain and Europe*. Harper Collins. The latest and best field guide to mammals of the region.

**FINAL INFORMATION:** Final information with instructions for meeting the group, hotel address, etc. and your air tickets will be sent to you about three weeks before the tour starts. Other news will be communicated as necessary. If you have any questions about any aspect of the tour, please contact us.