



## TOUR INFORMATION FOR PORTUGAL in spring

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

**ENTERING PORTUGAL:** 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 their nearest Portuguese Embassy 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:** Portugal'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:** Portuguese is the main language but English is widely spoken.

**CLIMATE:** We can expect mainly warm, sunny weather with average temperatures between 17°C and 24°C. Rain is possible throughout. The wind is very irregular and can vary between no wind on some days and moderate wind on others.

**PACE OF TOUR AND DAILY ROUTINE:** The tour is not a strenuous one: leisurely walking is the only physical requirement. The pace of the tour is a relaxed one and based around three different hotels. Our daily routine will largely be dependent on weather conditions. At the time of our tour it does not become light until 07.00 so we will have breakfast before departing for the day's main birdwatching excursion. Lunch will be taken in a roadside cafe or restaurant. We will return to our hotel in time to shower before going for dinner in nearby towns. Dinner is usually taken late in Portugal, between 20.00-20.30. Virtually all the walking is fairly easy and on good paths or tracks.

**HEALTH:** **It is essential that you contact your own doctor to obtain the latest information on the regions you are visiting.** Please contact your doctor well in advance of your tour's departure as some medication must be initiated weeks before the period of possible exposure.

It is recommended that you are up-to-date on routine vaccinations.

No specific immunisations are required, unless you are coming from areas where yellow fever is endemic. There is no malaria in Portugal. Minor intestinal problems are possible so we suggest bringing Imodium in case of an upset stomach.

Biting insects are not usually a problem on this tour but may be encountered. Insect repellent will provide adequate protection. Many brands use diethyltoluamide (DEET) which, while providing the best protection, can be corrosive and therefore require care when using. There are many 'natural' and less-harmful repellents available from various camping supply stores.

The sun may be strong and it is easy to become sunburnt so bring a few long-sleeve shirts and a broad-rimmed hat. On particularly hot days be sure to increase your intake of fluids. Tap water is generally safe to drink and bottled water will be available throughout the day, as required.

It may be difficult to obtain any special medication during the tour, so bring all you are likely to need.

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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:** Accommodation throughout the tour will be in hotels with private facilities available in all rooms. Two of the hotels we normally use for this trip have nice swimming pools.

**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. An international travel plug is useful and can be bought in most airport departure lounges. You may find the following website helpful: <http://www.power-plugs-sockets.com>.

**FOOD:** Breakfasts consist of the usual staple items e.g. coffee, tea, juice, cheese and bread. Lunch is normally taken in a cafe where the choices are limited to sandwiches with cheese or ham. The cakes and pastries are more varied and the leader will be happy to recommend! Evening meals are taken late in Portugal which allows us to make the most of the daylight hours for birding. Around Alcochete the seafood is recommended, inland the local pork and game is excellent. Local wine is excellent and the local leader will be able to give advice.

Sunbird 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, regretfully, 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 take supplemental food with them.

**DRINKS:** Bottled water, a soft drink or a beer (or wine if appropriate) are provided at meal times, 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.

**INTERNET AND MOBILE PHONE ACCESS:** Our hotels have good Wi-Fi connections. Mobile phone access is very good near our lodging locations but can be intermittent when in the field.

**FIELD 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 but changeable and sometimes cold, windy weather is also possible, so bring a warm jacket, gloves, pullovers etc. Rain is possible at any time, and adequate rainwear is advisable. Light footwear will be adequate most of the time.

**MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS:** Please bring the following:

Notebook and pencil	Alarm clock
Small rucksack or shoulder bag	Sunglasses and sunscreen
Personal medication	Insect repellent

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

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

Telescope and tripod  
Reference books  
Laser pointer

Small first-aid kit  
Maps  
Playback equipment

**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.

**PHOTOGRAPHY:** Scenery and memory shots will be plentiful and simple to obtain. Although there will be occasions when bird photography is possible, a birdwatching tour is not normally the best means of pursuing this aim. Bring all your film or memory cards with you as it may be difficult to find precisely what you need during the tour. Camera equipment should be packed in moisture and dust-proof bags, as a precaution. "Digiscoping" is perfectly compatible with the tour, though it is recommended you bring your own telescope as the leader's telescope is not available for this activity.

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.

**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 or 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.

**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.

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

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### **BIBLIOGRAPHY:**

Mullarney, Killian et al. *Collins Bird Guide. 2010.* HarperCollins. The 2nd 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. **Recommended.**

Note: An electronic version of the above field guide is available for download to mobile devices from Apple's "App Store. Search for "Collins Bird Guide."

**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