

Danube Birding Adventure

21.05-31.05.2013.

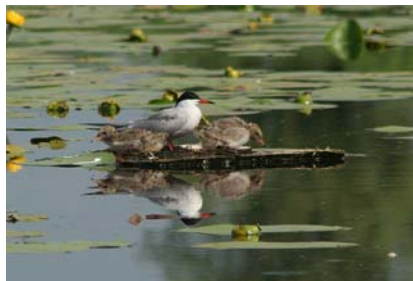
11 days/10 nights

Price: approx. 1015 £ (or 1290 EUR)

Supplement for single room: 107 £ (or 135 EUR)

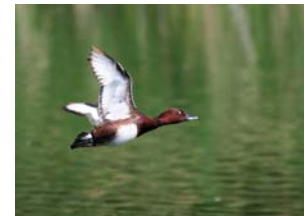
Minimum 16 persons for realization

Take a Danube Birding Adventure from Vilково in the delta to Belgrade in the middle reaches. This unique and exclusive tour covers five countries along the Danube: Moldova, Ukraine, Romania, Bulgaria and Serbia. It is organised by two highly experienced companies, Salix Nature Tours in Odessa and Magelan in Novi Sad, both of which are members of the Danube Competence Centre. On this trip, among stunning landscapes and wild places, you can expect to see a wealth of birds, including specialities like Dalmatian Pelican, Pygmy Cormorant, Black Stork, Ferruginous Duck, Great Black-headed Gull, Levant Sparrowhawk, River Warbler and Sombre Tit. Not to mention an abundance of plants, butterflies, dragonflies and other wildlife. In addition, you will enjoy the wide range of hospitable local cultures, and indulge the cuisines and wines!



Tuesday 21st May 2013. (distance: 170 km)

Arrival in Chisinau, transfer to Cahul. The adventure will begin with arrival in Chisinau - the capital of Moldova. From here we will proceed southwest across the rolling countryside of woodlands and meadows to Cahul, situated on the east side of the River Prut floodplain. On the way we can expect to see birds such as crested lark, hoopoe, bee-eater and lesser grey shrike. We will stay overnight in Cahul.

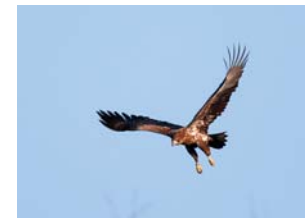


Wednesday 22nd of May 2013. Lower Prut Reserve, Bolgrad steppe, Izmail (Distance: 130 km)

We will leave the hotel at 08.00 to drive south along the Prut floodplain, much of which is nature reserve, and Lake Beleu itself is listed as a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention. We will enjoy views of the meandering river, flanked by riverine forest of willow, poplar, alder and oak. There are also spectacular cliffs of alluvial sediments. We should see our first White Pelicans here, along with a good range of herons and waders. Black Storks and Lesser Spotted Eagles are regular visitors. Golden Orioles, Collared Flycatchers and Thrush Nightingales are found in the woodlands. We will have a picnic lunch at Beleu, and then head inland across the steppe zone through Vulcanesti to the Ukraine border at Bolgrad. This town, founded by Bulgarian settlers, lies at the apex of Lake Yalpug - Ukraine's largest natural freshwater lake. We will drive along part of its western shore, where species like Red-footed Falcon, Tawny Pipit, Eastern Olivaceous Warbler, Pied Wheatear and Ortolan Bunting can be found. Then we will proceed to the historic town of Izmail for the night.



Thursday 23th of May 2013, Danube Delta, Izmail (Distance: 180 km)



Our excursion today will cover the Danube floodplain between Izmail and the Black Sea coast to the east, passing through a mosaic of woodlands, meadows, fish ponds, rice paddies and reedbeds where we can expect to find a good range of waders, woodpeckers and warblers. There are some low White Stork nests that support mixed colonies of House, Tree and Spanish Sparrows. We are heading for the historic old town of Vilkovo - the "Little Venice" of Ukraine, founded by "Old Believers" in the late 18th Century. We will take a trip into the Kilia part of the Danube Delta, aboard our



locally-built "chaika" and alight on the coast at "0" kilometre where the river enters the sea. The shallow waters and sand bars here provide rich feeding grounds for a large number and variety of waterbirds, including White Pelicans, Spoonbills and Pygmy

Cormorants. With luck, we might see a White-tailed Eagle or a Great Black-headed Gull. There will be an abundance of aquatic plants such as water chestnut, water soldier, white and yellow water lilies and mare's tail. We will have a meal at the riverside Salix gardens, featuring traditionally cooked fresh fish and local "Novak" wine. We return to Izmail for the night.



Friday 24th of May 2013, Izmail, Danube Lakes, Macin Mountains, Tulcea (Distance: 120 km)

In the morning we will investigate the vast marshes and meadows of lakes Yalpug and Kugurlui (a wetland of international importance) lying just west of Izmail. These areas support a huge number of waterbirds including Black-necked Grebe, Little Bittern, Squacco Heron, Glossy Ibis, Ferruginous Duck, Red-crested Pochard, White-winged, Whiskered and Black Terns, and Penduline Tits. Overhead we can enjoy spectacular soaring birds like White (and perhaps Black) Storks, White-tailed Eagle, Booted Eagle, Long-legged Buzzard and Honey Buzzard as they cross the Danube. We will also see a large colony of spotted susliks. In the afternoon we will cross the borders of Moldova and Romania at Giurgiulesti, and take a ferry across the Danube at Galati. Here we will enter the Macin Mountains National Park, part of Europe's oldest mountain system. The low relief (maximum height just over 450 m) and round slopes reflect the erosion since they were formed in the late Palaeozoic some 380 to 280 million years ago. The woodlands here support birds such as Levant Sparrowhawk, Sombre Tit and Hawfinch. We will spend the night in Tulcea.

Saturday 25th of May 2013, Tulcea - Danube Delta and Babadag; Silistra (Distance: 280 km)

From Tulcea, we will explore the lower Danube floodplain beside the old St George branch of the river. We will explore a range of wetlands and meadows reaching the Ottoman era fort at Enisala. Birds here include colonies of Mediterranean Gull, Black-winged Stilt and Collared Pratincole, while migrating parties of Red-Throated Pipits forage in the grass. After lunch we will have a walk in the lime and oak woods of Babadag Forest. Then we will cross the undulating Dogbrogea plateau, heading upstream along the Danube, to the Bulgarian town of Silistra to spend the night.



Sunday 26th of May 2013, Silistra - Srbarna, Kalimok-Brashlyan, Ruse (Distance: 130 km)

Today we will drive upstream along the Danube, visiting the Srbarna Biosphere Reserve and Kalimok Brashlyan nature reserve. Srbarna is most famous for holding the most important colony of Dalmatian Pelicans on the Danube outside the delta, but it also has an impressive range of other birds breeding there. The Danube floodplain at Kalimok-Brashlyan has recently been restored and is a good place to find Red-necked Grebe, River Warbler and Barred Warbler. We will spend the night in the elegant town of Ruse.



Monday 27th of May 2013, Ruse - Rusinsky Lom – Bistret (Distance: 300 km)

Close to Ruse is the Rusinsky Lom Nature Park, a deep and sinuous gorge, which contains a number of outstanding historic sites, including rock churches designated under the World Heritage Convention. It is also important for birds like Black Stork, Egyptian Vulture, and Eagle Owl, while Red-rumped Swallows breed in the cliffs and under bridges. We will spend much of the day here before heading over the Danube again, to Bistret in Romania for the night.



Tuesday 28 May 2013, Bistret Lake - Serbia (Djerdap National Park)(Distance: 220 km)

We will spend the morning birding around Bistret Lake, a Ramsar Site which holds a good population of Great Bitterns, Spoonbills and herons, and where the muddy shores attract waders like Black-Tailed Godwit, Wood Sandpiper and Ruff in their splendid breeding plumage. From here we cross our final frontier into Serbia to spend the rest of the day in Djerdap National Park. The Djerdap Gorge or Iron Gate, stretches for



about 100 km along the right bank of Danube. It includes a narrow strip of forested hills that are about 2-8 km wide at an altitude ranging from 50 to 800 meters. The dominant characteristic features include limestone cliffs and mixed deciduous woodland. This National Park is well known for its exceptional wealth and diversity of flora, fauna, geomorphologic objects and

cultural monuments from various historical periods. Mala Vrbica is a mosaic wetland of former fishponds, extensive reed-beds and pastures east of Djerdap National Park. Mala Vrbica fishponds are great place to see plenty of Whiskered and Common Terns, Little Bitterns, Ferruginous Duck, Bee-eaters and Sand Martins, while woodlands and cliffs of Djerdap Gorge can bring Golden and Short-toed Eagles, Alpine Swift, Middle and Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers, Golden Oriole, and various other woodland species. Night in private accommodation in Donji Milanovac where dinner will be served.



Wednesday 29th of May 2013, Deliblato Sands and Labudovo Okno wetlands (Distance 220 km)

Today we continue to explore Danube upstream to Deliblato Sands and Labudovo Okno. Nature Reserve Deliblato Sands is a unique wilderness: a large sandy region comprising 33,000 ha of grassland, farmland and mixed forest. It is bordered by the Danube, Tamis and Karas rivers and is home to a rich flora and fauna. It's famed for its high degree of endemism including many unique plants and insects. The Danube sandbanks house the largest Central European Sand Martin breeding colony with up



to 18,000 pairs present! There will be a good chance to see some rare birds of prey like. White-tailed Eagle, Short-toed Eagle, Booted Eagle, Long-legged Buzzard, and Saker Falcon, but also Turtle Dove, Bee-eater, Hoopoe, Crested Lark, Tawny Pipit, Sand Martin, Northern Wheatear, Black Redstart, Red-backed Shrike, Lesser Grey Shrike, Golden Oriole. Wetlands around Labudovo Okno are harboring large Pygmy Cormorant, Night Heron, Squacco Heron and Little Egret colonies. Accommodation in 3* hotel in Kovačica.

Thursday 30th of May 2013, Fruska Gora (National Park) (distance 220 km)

Fruska Gora is a National Park with a picturesque ridge of hills that extend 78km along Danube. In prehistoric times, the hills were an island in the Pannonian Sea that covered the whole of northern Serbia. They also have a rich cultural history: no fewer than 16 orthodox monasteries are located here and traditional farmsteads (Salas) provide a hearty and homely welcome to visitors. The hills contain a variety of habitats including mixed forest, grazed steppe, farmland and meadows. Here you can see Imperial Eagle, Honey Buzzard, Goshawk, Scops and Little Owl, Hoopoe, Bee-eater, Crested Lark, Tawny Pipit, Tree Pipit, Black-headed Yellow Wagtail, Black Woodpecker, Syrian Woodpecker, Middle Spotted Woodpecker, Collared Flycatcher, Marsh Tit, Short-toed Treecreeper, Red-backed Shrike, Golden Oriole, Serin, Hawfinch, Cirl Bunting, Ortolan Bunting, Black-headed Bunting and Corn Bunting. Option, dinner in Novi Sad. Overnight stay in Belgrade.

Friday 31th of May 2013, Belgrade (Distance 20 km)

After breakfast, departure from Belgrade.



Price includes:

- Transfer per program
- Accommodation with bed and breakfast in hotel and in private accommodation
- 9 x dinners
- 8 x package lunch
- 1 x lunch
- Entrance tickets in Nature Reserves
- Bird local guide
- Boat ride

Price doesn't include:

- Flight to/from Belgrade
- Beverage during meals
- Other costs not mentioned in the program