

Birds and migrants of Southern Morocco

Although Morocco is mainly known for tourism, it is one of the best birding areas in North Africa and holds many sought after Western Palearctic species that cannot be readily found elsewhere. Our tour takes us into the Atlas Mountains, across high altitude plateaux to the Anti Atlas Mountains, south into the Sahara Desert and west to the Atlantic coast.

Day 1: We leave London and fly to Marrakech, arriving in the late morning. From Marrakech we travel to Oukaimeden, checking the Ourika Valley for Barbary Partridge, Red-rumped Swallow, White-throated Dipper and Hawfinch. Two-night stay at the ski village of Oukaimeden.

Day 2: Today we explore the forests and mountain regions around Oukaimeden. In the village itself we should encounter Alpine Accentor, Atlas Horned Lark, Black Redstart, Rock Petronia, Red-billed and Yellow-billed Choughs. A walk in the mountains may reveal Black Wheatear, Blue Rock Thrush, African Crimson-winged Finch and Seebohm's Wheatear. In the afternoon, we visit orchards and juniper forests for Levaillant's Woodpecker, Western Subalpine Warbler, Firecrest, African Blue Tit, and the North African races of Common Chaffinch and the recently split Moroccan Wagtail.

Day 3: Today we leave Oukaimeden and cross the High Atlas Mountains. Our first stop in the Tawha Forest is a reliable area for the North African race of Long-legged Buzzard and Booted Eagle. On the descent towards Ouarzazate, we start to find White-tailed Wheatears and, with luck, the localised Maghreb Wheatear and Saharan Scrub Warbler. Transfer to Boulmane Dades for a two-night stay.

Day 4: An early start as we visit the Plateau d'Anved, a large area of stony desert interspersed with areas used for agriculture and farm buildings. The plateau is an important region for desert species - Cream-coloured Courser, Black-bellied

Dates

Thursday March 21st - Sunday
March 31st 2019

Leaders: Mohamed Zaki and Simon Papps
Group size: 8
Birds: 170-200

Sandgrouse, Greater and Lesser Short-toed, Desert, Hoopoe, Thick-billed, Thekla and Temminck's Larks. Wheatears in the area include Desert and Red-rumped. In the afternoon, we return to Boulmane Dades and explore an oasis adjacent to the Dades River for migrants.

Day 5: From Boulmane Dades we head towards the impressive Todra Gorge where the steep valley sides attract Bonelli's Eagle, Blue Rock Thrush and Eurasian Crag Martins. As we travel south the scenery changes to a distinct desert habitat. One area with a spring often attracts Spectacled Warbler and family parties of Trumpeter Finches. After passing through the desert town of Erfoud, we check in at an auberge situated within the Sahara Desert for two nights.

Day 6: We leave the auberge this morning and continue into the true Sahara. Our main objective is to locate Houbara Bustard, Spotted Sandgrouse and African Desert Warblers. Adjacent to the desert are several villages and seasonal lagoons, the former attracting Brown-necked Ravens and Desert Sparrows. Stands of acacia trees attract numerous migrants here - Black-eared Wheatear, Tawny Pipit,



Cream-coloured Courser

Photo: Simon Papps

Western Bonelli's and Western Olivaceous Warblers. We end the day at Mgouna Lake, an important area for Greater Flamingo, Black-winged Stilt, Pied Avocet, Black-tailed Godwit and, possibly, lingering winter ducks. Later in the evening we try for Egyptian Nightjar, which occasionally occurs in the auberge grounds.

Day 7: An early start this morning as we head towards Ouarzazate via the town of Rossini. The many oases here attract migrants, Fulvous Babbler and a small population of Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters. Beyond Rossini we re-enter the desert and visit a cliff face for Desert Eagle Owl and the localised Brown-necked Raven. Overnight stay in Ouarzazate.

Day 8: The Iriri Valley is our first birding stop and is an important area for raptors and migrants. Raptors regularly seen include Lanner Falcon, Eurasian Hobby, Bonelli's Eagle, Marsh and Montagu's Harriers. Our journey eventually takes us towards the Souss Valley where we may find Black-shouldered Kite, Common Quail, Maghreb Lark, Western Yellow Wagtail and the near endemic Maghreb Magpie. Transfer to Taroudant for an overnight stay where the city walls harbour colonies of Pallid and Little Swifts.

Day 9: We revisit the Souss Valley and check a hillside for roosting Red-necked Nightjars, Eurasian Thick-knee and migrants using the olive trees. Afterwards, we head northwards along the coast towards Tamri, an area famous for

Northern Bald Ibis. In the afternoon, we visit the Souss River in Agadir, an excellent stop-over point for Collared Pratincole, Kentish Plover, migrant shorebirds, gulls and terns. Overnight stay in Agadir.

Day 10: An early start this morning as we head to Oued Massa, an important wetland south of Agadir. The walk adjacent to Oued Massa may produce Purple and Squacco Herons, Glossy Ibis, Eurasian Spoonbill, Marbled Duck and a wide range of northward-bound waders. Bushes and scrub attract Black-crowned Tchagra, Eurasian Wryneck and migrant warblers.

Day 11: This morning we do some local birding if time allows before transferring to the airport for our flight back to the UK.

Prices

Ground Price: £1,995
 Single room: £130
 Deposit: £200
 *Air Fare: £275

This holiday is fully inclusive of accommodation and meals, transport and permit fees, guidance, tips and taxes.

Not included: insurance, drinks and items of a personal nature.

**Please refer to our terms and conditions relating to flights*