



NATURE & TERROIR

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Portugal - Birding & Stargazing in rural Alentejo

Prix - **2095.00€** Dates - 21/11 au 27/11/22 Guide -

Summary

Alentejo, the hinterland "beyond the Tagus River," is one of Europe's quiet areas, with a low human population amidst miles and miles of rolling arable plains, dotted with small villages with whitewashed houses, with here and there cork oak and olive groves. With negligible air pollution, the area is so famous for its dark skies that it was declared the world's first ever "Starlight Tourism Destination". On this holiday we spend four nights in Alqueva Dark Sky Reserve and make several visits to the local observatory. At this time of the year Alentejo also holds many ornithological delights, not least flocks of Great and Little Bustards, Cranes and Black-bellied Sandgrouse, as well as a range of raptors. As a bonus, we also spend a day birding the internationally important Tagus Estuary, with 120,000 wintering birds such as Avocets and Flamingos.

Responsible destination

Carine

Présente du lundi au vendredi de 10h à 17h





Dates & Prix

2095.00€

21st Nov 2021 - 27th Nov 2022 - 2095€

What's Included?

- Flights

- Accommodation:

A two-centre holiday. Two nights in a hotel near the Tagus estuary and four nights in a very comfortable hotel in the Dark Sky Reserve. All rooms with private facilities.

- Food:

All food included in the price.



Journalier

A special tour combining birding and astronomy
 Four nights staying in Alqueva Dark Sky Reserve, the first ever declared "Starlight Tourism Destination"
 Several evenings at local observatory
 Great birding by day in rolling plains and copses
 Good chance of Cranes, Bustards, Eagles and other specialities
 Day at Tagus Estuary, internationally renowned for wetland birds
 Visit local potteries and vineyards

Day 1: Fly to Lisbon
 Day 2: Tagus Estuary
 Day 3: Evora plus Stargazing
 Day 4/6: Alentejo - Birds, Villages and Stars
 Day 7: Drive to Lisbon, Fly UK

Introduction

Starting at the Tagus estuary, on the outskirts of the capital, we have a day of birdwatching at one of Portugal's most important sites for wintering waders and wildfowl. Heading across the plains of the Alentejo we reach an environment where nature reigns and small villages dot the landscape. The Alentejo region is characterised by rolling hills covered with Olive, Holm and Cork Oak woodland – a landscape known in Portugal as Montado.

During the week we will make several evening visits to the observatory located within the Dark Sky Alqueva reserve and, with astronomical guides, you will have the chance to learn and become familiar with the winter constellations. Telescopes will enable you to view planets, star clusters, nebulae and galaxies.

Days 1/2

Lisbon

We begin our holiday with a flight from the UK to Lisbon. Arriving at the capital, we will drive across the River Tagus on Vasco de Gama bridge which, at over seventeen kilometres, is the longest bridge in Europe.

Once settled into our lodge on the south bank of the estuary we will explore the marshes and reedbeds in search of wintering birds such as Greater Flamingo, Avocet and Black-winged Stilt. Despite being surrounded by urban areas, it is one of the largest estuaries in Europe and supports many different types of habitats such as the Montado, salt pans, rice fields and mudflats. It shouldn't take long for us to see large groups of Black-tailed Godwit, Glossy Ibis and Kentish Plover.

On day two we will continue to enjoy the birdwatching around the Tagus estuary and also the Montado that surrounds our base where we may encounter the splendid Iberian Azure-winged Magpie (*Cyanopica cooki*), a species that has recently been split from the Asian Azure-winged Magpie (*Cyanopica cyani*). These slender birds move around in small family groups in the winter. Other species that we can find here are Iberian Grey Shrike, Marsh and Hen Harrier, Hoopoe and White Stork.

Days 3 - 6

Alentejo

Driving across the country we will enter the picturesque region of the Alentejo, we will arrive at our accommodation in the early afternoon. The Herdade D Pedro is set in a remote and peaceful corner of the Alentejo surrounded by rolling hills and farmland with cattle. Across the valley lies the small hilltop town of Terena whose thirteenth century castle can be seen from our residence. This idyllic spot is a magical place to enjoy walks in the Montado by day and extremely dark skies at night.

The skies in this part of Portugal are very dark and enjoy cloud-free nights on an average of 280 days each year.

On the first evening our astronomer, in conjunction with 'Dark Sky Alqueva', will set the scene by introducing you to the winter constellations and viewing with portable astronomical telescopes at our lodge. On later nights in the tour we will drive to the observatory near Alqueva where a range of permanently mounted telescopes will be trained on astronomical objects such as stars, planets, nebulae and galaxies.

At different times of year and at different hours of the night the stars and planets move around the sky so no two departures will have the same evening views. In November 2021 the planet Venus will be in the evening sky along with the planets Jupiter and Saturn. The Milky Way will arch overhead.

In February 2022 the beautiful winter constellation including Orion, Gemini, Taurus and Auriga will be in the Southern part of the sky with many open clusters and nebulae. The objective will be to show everyone the celestial highlights and explain some of the science behind the objects we look at.

During our days we will explore the surrounding area inspired by the wide-open views, superb birding and the many quaint villages. Making various stops and short walks during the days we will enjoy a wealth of bird species which will hopefully include Black-shouldered Kite, Spanish Imperial Eagle, Cinereous Vulture, Common Crane, Great Bustard, Red-legged Partridge, Stone Curlew, Black-bellied Sandgrouse, Crested and Calandra Lark, Iberian Grey Shrike, Spanish Sparrow and countless Corn Buntings. Little Bustards are a possibility but their numbers have decreased on the Iberian peninsula in the last few years.

Layers of history are in evidence in this attractive but little visited region. Prehistoric stone-circles through to forts, castles and cathedrals are a product of settlements, religion and conflicts with the Moors and the Spanish. Perhaps the most spectacular is the fortified village of Monsaraz perched high above the plains and Lake Alqueva. Here the narrow streets are

lined with irregular white-washed cottages surrounded by a city wall and a castle dating to 1310.

During our time in the Alentejo we will visit Herdade do Esporao, with around 700 acres of vineyards and olive groves, with over 40 grape varieties. You will have a guided tour of the cellars and wineries in this eco friendly vineyard, where the aim is to reduce the impact on the environment and re-use and recycle the bottles and packaging are as sustainable as possible. You will enjoy a wine tasting of 3 of the fabulous wines produced at the vineyard.

Day 7

London

Regretfully we must make our way back to Lisbon for our return flight.



Quelques photos...



Envie d'en voir plus ?

Visitez la fiche voyage sur notre site web www.nature-terroir.com



Formalités

Comment s'inscrire ?

- 1° Remplissez notre formulaire en ligne www.nature-terroir.com/inscription
- 2° Attendez votre confirmation d'inscription et versez l'acompte
- Ou remplissez notre formulaire papier (demandez notre formulaire papier par mail ou en nous téléphonant)

Besoin d'infos ?

Contactez la responsable destination par mail ou par téléphone.

Responsable destination

Carine

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