



# A Guide to Birdwatching Holidays

Catalonia **is** nature



# LEGEND

## SYMBOLS



Information Centre



Bird observation point



Itinerary



## HABITATS



Wetlands



Rice fields



Forests



Shrubs and grasslands



Agricultural areas



Non-irrigated arable land



Open areas, bare rock



Pastures



Beach and dunes

**R** Resident  
**N** Breeding  
**M** Migrant  
**H** Winter visitor

**\*\*\*\*** Very abundant

**\*\*\*** Abundant

**\*\*** Common

**\*** Scarce

# **CATALONIA**

## **A guide to birdwatching holidays**



 **Generalitat de Catalunya**  
Government of Catalonia

Consorci Turisme de Catalunya  
Departament d'Innovació, Universitats i Empresa



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## Discovering a country through its birds

As a country, Catalonia is small in size but large in geographical diversity. Lying between the Pyrenees and the Mediterranean Sea, Catalonia forms a triangle in the north-eastern corner of the Iberian Peninsula covering around 32,000 km<sup>2</sup> and is Iberia's most biogeographically varied region. With just over seven million inhabitants, Catalonia is today a modern European country that still retains a vivid sense of its own history, language and culture.

### A broad range of different habitats

Within a radius of 200 km around the Catalan capital of Barcelona lies a broad diversity of habitats ranging from coastal wetlands and deciduous and coniferous subalpine forests in the Pyrenees, to inland pseudo-steppes and coastal Mediterranean scrub. Distances are manageable and this sheer variety of different environments guarantees a vast diversity of bird species. Many birds reach the northernmost point of their breeding ranges in Catalonia, while winter is a season for influxes of birds from more northern climes searching for milder weather conditions. In addition, Catalonia lies on one of Europe's most important migration flyways and spring and au-

turn sees the arrival of many exceptional birds on passage.

### Great species richness

Catalonia lies at the junction of the great Eurosiberian and Mediterranean biogeographical regions that dominate most of Europe and as such is home to a significant floral and faunal diversity, which is further enriched by the presence of both coastal and Pyrenean habitats. In all, 395 species of birds have been recorded from Catalonia, of which 232 breed. The best totals in the last four European bird marathons –organised in Spain by SEO/Birdlife– have all been achieved in Catalonia, the only region of Europe in which over 200 species have ever been recorded in one 24-hour period.

Catalonia is home to the world's most important colony of Audouin's Gulls and good access make it one of the best places in Europe for species such as Lammergeier, Little Bustard, Bonelli's Eagle, Lesser Grey Shrike, Wallcreeper, Snowfinch and Citril Finch. In winter, a large proportion of the total world population of the Balearic Shearwater feeds offshore between the Llobregat and Ebro Deltas.

All these factors, along with the excellent road network and increas-

ing numbers of international flights to and from airports such as Barcelona, Girona-Costa Brava and Reus-Costa Daurada, make Catalonia a highly attractive region for foreign birdwatchers – easy to get to and with a lot on offer.

### A rich cultural heritage

Aside from this natural heritage, Catalonia also boasts a significant cultural heritage that attracts visitors from all over the world to view the vestiges of its long history. The most outstanding attractions include a number of UNESCO World Heritage Sites: cave paintings from Mediterranean culture at Uldecona, Montblanc and El Cogul, the remains of the Greek/Roman settlement at Empúries, the Roman legacy in Tarragona, the Romanesque churches in the Boí Valley, the Cistercian monastery of Poblet, the Palau de la Música and Sant Pau hospital in Barcelona (designed by the Modernist architect Domènech i Montaner) and six buildings by Gaudí (La Pedrera, El Palau Güell, Casa Batlló, Casa Vicens and the façade and crypt of the Sagrada Família). Likewise, there are the traditional festivities of La Patum in Berga, declared part of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO. These universal riches are superbly complemented by the work of artists such as Dalí, Miró, Picasso and Tàpies.

### Catalan cuisine, an additional incentive

Catalan cuisine owes its prestige to a blend of traditional and innovative gastronomic styles: side-by-side with the traditional healthy Mediterranean diet, based on popular know-how and recipes, we find chefs working in the avant-garde of world culinary trends.

The physical diversity present in the country's landscapes is reflected in the richness and variety of its cuisine: in upland and inland areas meats of all sorts, dairy products, fresh vege-

Observation point at the Delta de l'Ebre nature reserve

© R. López-Monné





Main birdwatching areas

tables, game and fowl, and wild mushrooms predominate, whilst nearer the coast, fish and shellfish are the order of the day, often accompanied by rice, fresh vegetables and salads.

Today's vineyards are the direct descendants of the small-scale wine production, once common throughout Catalonia, which dates back many centuries. Today, the quality of Catalan wines is widely recognised and in all there are 11 recognised wine-producing regions (known as *denominació d'origen*: Penedès, Tarragona,

Terra Alta, Conca de Barberà, Costers del Segre, Empordà-Costa Brava, Priorat, Alella, Pla de Bages, Montsant and Catalunya. Catalan *cava*, a sparkling wine produced using the *champenoise* method, is one of the country's main exports and is largely produced in the *comarques* (counties) of El Penedès.

Birdwatchers as nature-lovers travel the world largely in search of birds: Catalonia, however, offers not only this possibility, but also the chance to dis-

cover a country at the same time and to enjoy its culture, cuisine and its people.

Enjoy your stay!

# Ebro Delta

## Catalonia's ornithological paradise

The Ebro Delta is one of Europe's great birdwatching sites. It is one of the most important wetlands in the western Mediterranean and the mixture of sea, river and underground waters guarantee important levels of biological diversity. The Ebro Delta Natural Park offers visitors facilities and services that make observation of the sheer number of birds and bird species present in the delta a truly gratifying experience.



Aerial view of the Ebro Delta

© M. Cebolla

This great river delta of over 320 km<sup>2</sup>, formed where the river Ebro forks during the final few kilometres of its journey to the sea, is the most important wetland in Catalonia and one of the most significant in the whole of the Mediterranean.

The vast flatness of the deltaic plain, presided over from afar by the imposing mountains of Els Ports, has its own

personality. Away from the coast, the landscape is dominated by large tracts of rice paddies whose personality varies with the seasons — ochre-tinted in winter, flooded in spring and verdant green in summer. The coast itself is littered with large lagoons, salt marshes, dunes and sand-flats, whilst small stands of riparian woodland still line the river and its main channels.

The Ebro Delta is famous world-over as a site of great natural and ornithological interest: the world's largest colony of Audouin's Gulls shares the stage with one of the most important populations of the Mediterranean subspecies *witherbyi* of Reed Bunting and the second largest Iberian colonies of both Greater Flamingo and Glossy Ibis .



Audouin's Gull

© M. Cebolla

## When to visit

Any time of the year is good for bird-watching in the Ebro Delta. Breeding birds can be found in spring and summer, whilst spring and autumn are the best times for finding birds on passage. At the end of autumn, large numbers of wintering birds begin to arrive, above all many thousands of wildfowl, Cormorants and waders.

## Spring

In April, Balearic Shearwaters are still around offshore, best seen from the Alfacada beach or the Trabucador sand spit. Great Bitterns show themselves at dusk at the Canal Vell lagoon, Riet Vell or between the Alfacada and L'Illa de Buda (especially from the observation tower) and around the Pont del Través observation point. This later site is excellent for viewing good numbers of herons and the sizeable concentrations of duck (above all, Red-crested Pochard) that build up here.

Once into April and May, Little Bitterns are easy to see in the reed-beds of Canal Vell and L'Encanyissada or in

nearby reedy canals. A good spot is the cycle lane that circumnavigates the western and northern part of the Tancada lagoon. Other species such as Night, Squacco and Purple Herons can appear almost anywhere. In recent years a solid breeding nucleus of Great White Egrets has developed and in spring over a hundred of these herons can be found scattered around the delta, above all on L'Illa de Buda and El Garxal. It is worth mentioning also the regular presence of a couple of Western Reef Herons (or hybrids between this species and Little Egret) around the Tancada lagoon or between this lagoon and El Trabucador. Other species to be found in this area include Eurasian Spoonbill, migrating storks, Glossy Ibis (between L'Illa de Buda and L'Alfacada) and Greater Flamingo.

Amongst the raptors, some of the most interesting spring species include Montagu's Harrier hunting around the fields known as Erms de Casablanca and Short-toed Eagle and Black Kites on migration almost anywhere in the delta.

The rice paddies and lagoon edges hold Spotted Crakes, as well as,

occasionally, Little and Baillon's Crakes. Purple Swamp-hens are common at L'Illa de Buda, Canal Vell, Riet Vell and L'Encanyissada, where they are best seen in the afternoon. In recent years Red-knobbed Coots introduced from wetlands in Valencia have been seen regularly, above all at the Canal Vell lagoon from the observation point at Pont del Través.

Species of wader such as Avocet, Black-winged Stilt and Collared Pratincole can be found almost anywhere

## OUTSTANDING BIRDS

Balearic Shearwater (H)\*\*  
 Little Bittern (N)\*\*  
 Squacco Heron (N)\*\*  
 Purple Heron (N)\*\*  
 Purple Swamp-hen (R)\*\*  
 Audouin's Gull (M)\*\*  
 Lesser Crested Tern (M)\*  
 Red-necked Nightjar (M)\*\*  
 Savi's Warbler (N)\*\*  
 Moustached Warbler (H)\*



in the delta: try the roads through the fields around the Tancada lagoon or in the area known as El Nen Perdut near Riuramar. Temminck's Stint is regular in the flooded rice paddies and Marsh Sandpiper can be found at El Garxal and El Goleró.

Rare species of wader that turn up regularly include Pectoral Sandpiper in the ride paddies or at El Goleró, Broad-billed Sandpiper in the shallow bays and Terek Sandpiper at El Goleró.

Slender-billed and Audouin's Gulls are common throughout the delta: the

former is easy to find at El Goleró and El Trabacador, whilst the latter frequents the beaches and flooded rice paddies. The commonest terns – Gull-billed, Sandwich, Common and Little – are to be found at El Fangar, where a couple of pairs of Lesser Crested Terns regularly breed and can be seen from May into summer. Whiskered Terns are common along the delta's canals and rice paddies.

Scops Owls are common in the holiday-home complexes of Riuramar and Els Eucaliptus; likewise, Barn Owls

are not rare and are easy to spot on nocturnal expeditions by car (south from Sant Jaume d'Enveja) or in towns such as Deltebre and Poblenou, where they can be seen flying over the rooftops. Red-necked Nightjars are also easy to locate in the evening or at night on the road from L'Ampolla to the Marquesa beach and on the Camí de l'Inglés (a dirt track) between Amposta and Sant Carles de la Ràpita.

Breeding passerines include Lesser Short-toed and Short-toed Larks behind El Garxal in the fields next to La Tancada, Cetti's Warbler along the

river or at Les Olles lagoon and Zitting Cisticola and Savi's Warbler at Canal Vell or from the observation point at Pont del Través. Great Reed Warbler, Sardinian Warbler (in orchards and scrub), Penduline Tit (anywhere with trees) and Spotless Starling are all fairly frequent. Migrants include Red-rumped Swallow (anywhere), Black-eared Wheatear, Tawny and Red-throated Pipits in the fields around La Tancada, Melodious and Subalpine Warblers and Woodchat Shrike.

### Autumn

Aside from the species already mentioned as present in spring, autumn is the best time for finding migrants. Of most interest are the large groups of wader that frequent El Goleró and the bays of El Fangar and El Garxal. In this season gull and tern numbers increase as juveniles disperse throughout the delta and between August and October all the delta's gulls and terns can be found loafing on the beaches. Nevertheless, the best option is to walk out to the beaches around the lighthouse of El Fangar for all the delta's terns and almost all of its gulls. Night time in autumn –even more so than in spring- is a good time for finding Red-necked Nightjars on the roads and tracks mentioned above.



Savi's Warbler

© O. Alamy

Good numbers of many different species of passerines appear, above all in the fields around La Tancada, anywhere with a little scrub or a few trees around the rice paddies and around the holiday homes in Riumar and Els Eucaliptus. Bluethroats are easily found along the canals and lagoon margins.

Autumn is a good time for vagrant waders and in recent years Greater Sand Plover, Pacific and American

Golden Plovers, Lesser Yellowlegs and Spotted Sandpiper have been recorded.

### Winter

Aside from many common European birds, the delta is also temporarily a home to an array of less common species. A small flock of Richard's Pipits (between one and four birds) have wintered since 2001 in the fields around La Tancada, while elsewhere in the delta winter sees the arrival of numerous Water Pipits and regular Little Bittern, Squacco Heron, Scops Owl (on L'Illa de Buda and other wooded areas), Great Northern Diver, Booted Eagle, Bluethroat, Moustached Warbler (try the flooded reedbeds and the wooden walkway at Les Olles) and Dartford Warbler in scrubby areas (El Goleró). A good place for enjoying the large concentrations of ducks that build up is the observation point at Pont del Través and the Alfacs bay.

Rice paddies

© M. Cebolla



## Nearby areas with other species

If you stay for more than a few days you may want to explore the nearby mountains, where Bonelli's Eagle, Blue Rock Thrush, Orphean Warbler and Cirl Bunting all breed. It is also worth heading for the fishing port of L'Ametlla de Mar in the afternoon when the fishing trawlers return to port accompanied by thousands of gulls and Balearic and Levantine Shearwaters.

## Recommendations

- In summer and autumn mosquito repellent and sun cream are essential.
- Given the myriad of roads and tracks that criss-cross the delta, we recommend the use of one of the maps provided by the information centres.
- Drive carefully and avoid accidents with animals.
- Some tracks and roads may become impracticable or impassable after storms.
- Special regulations apply in protected areas.



Roman aqueduct in Tarragona.

© J.M. Borrero

## Discover the area

The history, culture and economy of the **Terres de l'Ebre**, as this southernmost part of Catalonia is known, have always revolved around the river Ebro. Here, the Ibers and then both the Romans and Arabs laid down roots and so it is not surprising that the pass of time and the intermixing of so many cultural influences have left their mark on the region in the form of an important cultural legacy. The following are

some of the most interesting sites in the region.

If you enjoy visiting historical remains, the archaeological remains of the Roman city of **Tarraco** lying within the modern-day city of **Tarragona** (declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site) are a must.

**Tortosa** is the delta's capital and has a noteworthy Gothic and Renaissance old quarter. If you are there in the second fortnight of July, be sure to participate in the **Festa del Renaixement** (Renaissance Festival), in which almost 4,000 participants recreate the city's past splendour.

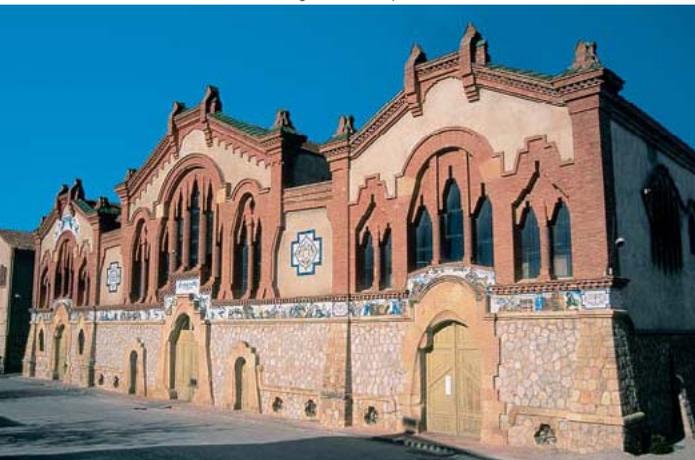
The city of **Reus**, a dynamic commercial and economic centre, boasts an exceptional Modernist architectural legacy in the form of work by Domènec i Montaner, including the Institut Pere Mata and the Casa Navàs. In the recently inaugurated **Gaudí Centre** in Reus one may also discover the work of another world famous architect, Antoni Gaudí, one of Reus's most illustrious sons.

Inland, a cultural trail –**La Ruta del Cister**– visits the Cistercian monasteries of **Santes Creus** and **Poblet**, the latter another UNESCO World Heritage Site and still with an active community of Benedictine monks.

The *comarques* of **El Priorat** and **Terra Alta** are characterised by their traditional agricultural systems and

Olive mill and cellar of the agricultural cooperative of el Pinell de Brai

© Georama



### How to get there

The Ebro Delta is 79 km from Reus-Costa Daurada Airport and 174 km from Barcelona.

Access from Barcelona:

🚗 Motorway AP-7 Barcelona-València.

Junction 39 (L'Ampolla-Ei Perelló) for the northern half of the delta.

Junctions 40 (L'Aldea) and 41 (Amposta) for the southern half of the delta.

🚌 The bus company HIFE (Tel. 902 119 814) runs a regular service from Barcelona to Tortosa. From Tortosa, other buses run by the same company link to the towns in the delta itself.

🚆 Line Ca1 RENFE (Barcelona-Tarragona-Tortosa). From Tortosa, private vehicle or HIFE bus.

### Infrastructure and services

Within the Ebro Delta Natural Park there are eight hides and eight observation points, all freely accessible. There are a further five hides and two observation points, all private, in the Natural Park.

♿ The Deltebre Ecomuseum is accessible by wheelchair-users and is adapted for blind people. Most of the itineraries are possible in wheelchairs and some of the observation points have access ramps.



In the northern half:

#### Ecomuseum and information centre

Doctor Martí Buera, 22

43580 Deltebre

Tel. 977 489 679

Opening times: open all year round Monday-Saturday from 10.00 to 14.00 and 15.00 to 19.00; Sundays and public holidays from 10.00 to 14.00.

Next to the Ecomuseum there is an environmental education centre and a **documentation centre**, which is open Monday-Friday from 09.00 to 14.00.

In the southern half:

#### Casa de Fusta. Information centre and ornithological museum

Partida de la Cuixota

43870 Poblenuu del Delta (Amposta)

Tel. 977 261 022

Opening times: open all year round Monday-Saturday from 10.00 to 14.00 and 15.00 to 19.00; Sundays and public holidays from 10.00 to 14.00. La Casa de Fusta next to the L'Encanyissada is one of the best-known buildings in the delta. The ornithological museum houses an important collection of local birds.  
pndeltaebre.dmah@gencat.net  
www.parcscatalunya.net

#### Riet Vell Natural Reserve

Tel. 616 290 246

www.rietvell.org

The Riet Vell Natural Reserve is a sustainable development project run by SEO/BirdLife that promotes research, conservation and awareness and environmental education programmes in the Ebro Delta. Open all year.

#### Picampall – Terres de l'Ebre Ornithological Association

Tel. 661 167 951

www.picampall.org

- The information centres all offer guiding services for birdwatchers wanting to get to know the delta and its birds.

vineyards. **Wine lovers** should not fail to visit an area whose **denominacions d'origen** are recognised the world over as producers of robust high quality wines with a high alcohol content.

The **Costa Daurada** with its shallow seas and fine golden sands (hence its name) is a popular coastal area with tourist towns such as Salou, famous for its proximity to the Port Aventura

theme park - an added incentive to visit the area for those travelling with families.

# Aiguamolls de l'Empordà

## birdwatching made easy

The Aiguamolls de l'Empordà Natural Park has some of the best birdwatching facilities in the whole of the Iberian Peninsula: itineraries designed for each different habitat, hides, observation points and bird information updated on a daily basis in the park information centre. This relatively small reserve contains a large number of habitats that include salt marshes with rush- and reed-beds, saltwort scrub, freshwater lagoons, riparian forest, meadows, Mediterranean scrub, beaches, a shallow bay and former rice paddies transformed into damp grazing pastures. The geographical situation of these aiguamolls (marshes) ensure that at the peak of the migration season a large number of birds and bird species –above all, passerines– pass through this Natural Park.



General view

© J. Bas

Most of the *aiguamolls* is flat and a number of easy and relaxing walking itineraries, suitable for all types of birdwatchers, cross the park. The marked routes skirt the coastal lagoons through areas of reed-bed, salt marsh, riparian forest and a few areas of low scrub. The Mediterranean

mountains with open cork-oak forests and tracts of scrub that surround the *aiguamolls* are home to a number of breeding birds not found in the park itself.

There is thus a great diversity of species on offer in quite a small area; moreover, this is one of the few plac-

es in the Iberian Peninsula for seeing Levantine and Balearic Shearwaters, Little Crane, Red-throated Pipit and Red-footed Falcon.

## When to visit

This wetland is especially recommendable during migration periods in the months of April-May and September-November. In winter there are large concentrations of duck, along with small groups of geese, Greater Flamingos and Common Cranes in the lagoons.

## Spring

April is a good birdwatching month as both the first spring migrants and the last winter visitors can be found. From the beach of Castelló d'Empúries look for both Levantine and Balearic Shearwaters, while if you manage to coincide with one of the periodical pelagic trips that depart from the port of Roses, Cory's Shearwater and European Storm-petrel are also a possibility. Great Bitterns can be found on the itinerary to El Matar, while at the same time the Great Bitterns that breed at L'Estany de Palau are already booming. Purple and Night Herons are seen all around the park, and the breeding season of the White Storks, one of the park's main attractions, is already well underway and the sound of their bill-clattering can be heard from the park's main information centre at El Cortalet. Black Storks are a rare but regular passage migrant and Glossy Ibis, present from the end of winter, gather in small groups in places such as L'Estany de Palau. Flocks of duck –above all, Common Teal, Garganey, Northern Shoveler and Mallards, with the occasional Red-crested Pochard- are still present and are visible from the hides at and near El Cortalet and along the itinerary that leads to the beach.

Between the end of March and into April a few Pallid Harriers are observed every year and Spotted (quite common), Little (a few each year) or Baiton's (more irregularly) Crakes are a distinct possibility. Purple Swamphens are resident and quite abundant and the best place to see them is the marshy fields at El Matar. It is also worth checking out these flooded fields for Temminck's Stint and Marsh



Little Crake

© J. Sagardia

Sandpiper, amongst other waders, whilst in the fields around Can Comes Stone-curlew are not uncommon. The riparian woodlands that line the park's canals are home to the scarce and local Lesser Spotted Woodpecker and Scops Owls can be heard calling even by day. In some years Great Spotted Cuckoos parasite the Magpies' nests in the pinewood at Torroelles. Red-rumped Swallows can turn up anywhere in the area when there is active passage of hirundines, and Cetti's and Sardinian Warblers and Zitting Cisticola are common in all the appropriate habitats.

May sees groups of Red-throated Pipit pass through El Matar, Red-footed Falcons and Rollers around the lagoon at Vilaüt, and White-winged Black Terns over almost any water body.

It is worth pointing out that in recent years there have been regular sightings of Black-shouldered Kite in spring and summer nearby in the area around the villages of Garriguella and

Delfià; likewise, almost every year some vagrant wader turns up, along with species such as Citrine Wagtail and Collared Flycatcher .

## OUTSTANDING BIRDS

Levantine Shearwater (H)\*  
 Balearic Shearwater (H)\*\*  
 Great Bittern (R)\*  
 Purple Heron (N)\*\*  
 Red-footed Falcon (M)\*  
 Purple Swamp-hen (R)\*\*  
 Roller (N)\*  
 Red-throated Pipit (M)\*  
 Moustached Warbler (H)\*  
 Bearded Tit (H)\*



### Autumn

Aside from the species already mentioned for spring, autumn provides a better opportunity to find migrant species. Pectoral Sandpipers are recorded annually at least once or twice, above all at El Matar. Family groups of Red-legged Partridge are easy to find in the fields around Castelló d'Empúries and Vilaüt, while on days of strong migration many species of passerine can be found in the riparian woodland on the Cortalet itinerary and in the cork oaks around Vilaüt and Mornau.

### Winter

Winter sees the arrival of many common species from northern Europe, as well as the regular presence of one or two Richard's Pipits in the fields and open areas around Can Comes and the occasional Great Northern Diver in the Bay of Roses. This is also the best time to see Moustached Warbler and Bearded Tit, the latter above all in the area around L'Estany de Palau. Other winter visitors that are somewhat easier to find include Booted



Eagle, immature Bonelli's Eagles, which in some years winter around L'Estany de La Rogera, and numerous Water Pipits that are easy to see at El Matar. There are also good concentrations of ducks on some of the lagoons (El Cortalet is an excellent place for wildfowl), as well as good numbers of Balearic Shearwater

mixed in with a few Levantine Shearwaters, Black-throated Diver and Razorbill off the beaches of Castelló in the Bay of Roses.

Levantine Shearwater

© J. Bécares



### How to get there

The Aiguamolls de l'Empordà are 61 km from Girona-Costa Brava Airport and 147 km from Barcelona.

Access from Barcelona:

🚗 Motorway AP-7 Barcelona-La Jonquera. Junction 4 (Figueres). Take road signposted to Roses as far as Castelló d'Empúries.

🚌 The bus company Sarfa (Tel. 902 302 025) runs regular buses from Barcelona to Figueres. From Figueres, the same company runs local services to Castelló d'Empúries. The Cortalet information centre is 2 km from Castelló d'Empúries.

🚆 Line Ca2 RENFE (Barcelona-Girona-Figueres-Portbou). From Figueres, private car or bus to reach the Natural Park.

### Infrastructure and services

In the Aiguamolls de l'Empordà Natural Park there are 14 hides and five observation points.

♿ There are a number of hides adapted for wheelchair users and wheelchairs can be borrowed from the Cortalet information centre. The centre and its permanent exhibitions are fully accessible in wheelchairs.

### 📄 El Cortalet information centre

Ctra. de Sant Pere Pescador a Castelló d'Empúries, km 13

17486 Castelló d'Empúries

Tel. 972 454 222

Opening times: all year from 09.30 to 14.00 and 16.30 to 19.00.

pnaiguamolls.dmah@gencat.net

www.parcscatalunya.net

- El Cortalet has a documentation centre, temporary and permanent exhibitions and provides a guiding service. Marked bicycle paths cross the Natural Park.

## Nearby areas with other species

Visitors who stay for a few days might consider a visit to the nearby mountains of Serra de l'Albera, where they should look out for Short-toed Eagle, Tawny Pipit, Black-eared Wheatear, Orphean and Dartford Warblers and Orotolan, Cirl and Rock Buntings.

## Recommendations

- In summer and autumn be sure to apply mosquito repellent.
- Large groups or those with special needs should contact the park before visiting.

## Discover the area

The Aiguamolls de l'Empordà are very near another area of birdwatching interest, the Cap de Creus Natural Park. Both areas lie within L'Alt Empordà, the most northerly *comarca* in Catalonia, better known as part of the **Costa Brava**. The name *brava* refers to the abrupt cliffs that protect the numerous coves that dot this coastline; nevertheless, there are parts of the Costa Brava such as the **Bay of Roses** and the long beach at

**Pals** where the coastal morphology is much gentler.

The Costa Brava has always been a target for tourists, since the first artists 'discovered' it at the beginning of the twentieth century and the Barcelonan bourgeoisie adopted it as a favourite site for their second homes. Tourism is the mainstay of the local economy and infrastructures and tourist services are thus well developed.

A few miles south of the Aiguamolls de l'Empordà near the town of L'Escala lie the extraordinary **archaeological remains of Empúries**. On this beach over 2,500 years ago the Greeks first set foot in the Iberian Peninsula and founded a colony they named *Emporion* – 'market' in Greek –, which was later to become the *Emporiae* of the Romans. Thus, it was on this privileged site on the Mediterranean that the Hellenisation and Romanisation of the Peninsula began. A walk through these perfectly signposted ruins of this archaeological park, which also has excellent facilities and information services, is highly recommendable.

A visit to the city of **Girona** is equally recommendable. A stroll through the old cathedral and **Jewish quarter** is an unforgettable experience. The well-

preserved narrow streets are full of classy small shops, art galleries and artists' studios.

The cultural calendar of the Costa Brava and the towns in the adjoining hinterland include the internationally famous **music festivals at Cap Roig, Porta Ferrada (Sant Feliu de Guíxols), Torroella de Montgrí and Peralada**.

As in other coastal *comarques* in Catalonia, the fish- and shellfish-based local cuisine is an additional attraction that visitors should not fail to try. The **suquet de peix**, a fish and lobster stew, and many varieties of rice dishes are just some of the local culinary delights impregnated with the finest flavours of the Mediterranean.

# Estany d'Ivars

## wetland and steppe birds

L'Estany d'Ivars i Vila-Sana is a large lagoon lying in the heart of the Lleida cereal plain. Recently restored, this lagoon is home to many of the typical wetland species found in southern Europe; moreover, the dry fields surrounding the lagoon (or just a few kilometres away) provide an excellent opportunity to search for some of the steppe birds that, with a few exceptions, are found only in the Iberian Peninsula in Europe. This combination of habitats makes it possible to see a large number of bird species in and around Ivars in a very short space of time.



General view

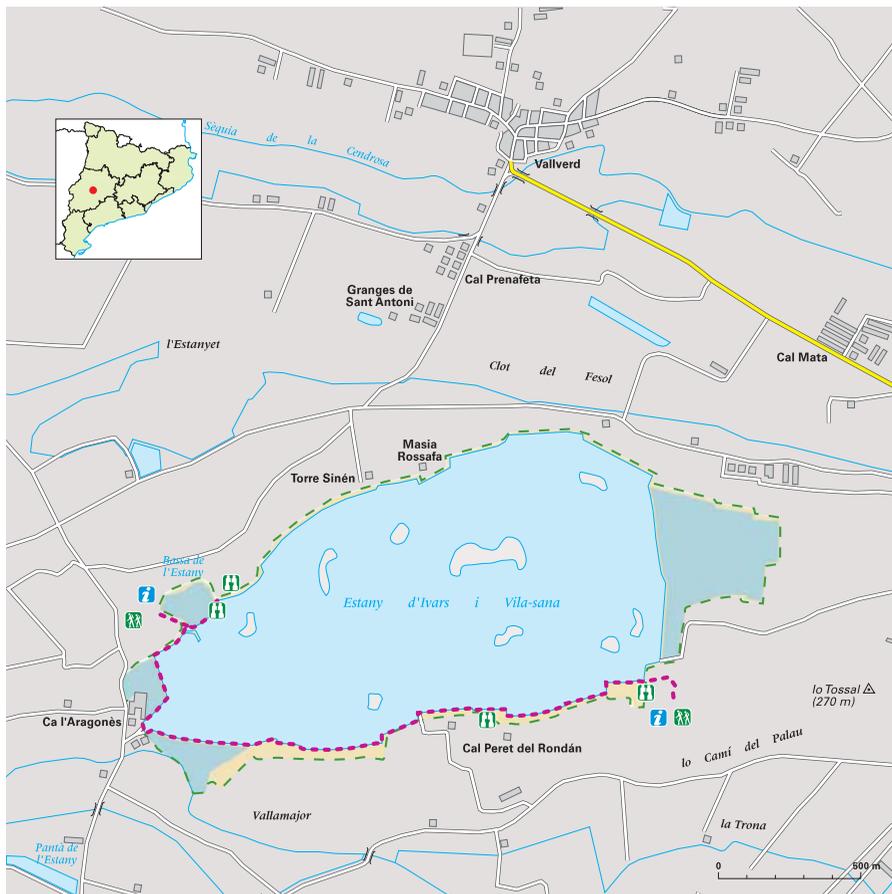
© J.Bas

The lagoon lies in an inwardly draining basin, two-kilometres long and one wide. In the middle there is a good growth of aquatic vegetation (reeds and rushes) and a number of small islets with trees. The itinerary that circles the lagoon passes by three hides and an observation platform. Away from the lagoon, the cultivated fields

(irrigated or otherwise) hold the typical birds of these habitats. Just 7 km away lie the dry plains of Belianes, an excellent representation of the pseudo-steppe habitats that were once so typical of central Catalonia and an area with an exceptionally interesting flora.

The lagoon provides easy observation of a number of wetland spe-

cies only found in southern Europe, albeit in small numbers. It's a good idea to combine a visit to Ivars with a visit to the area of Belianes, where a group of steppe species that are generally very scarce in Europe can be found.



## When to visit

Ivars is especially interesting during migration periods (late spring and autumn). In summer it is also worth visiting the cereal steppe around Bellanes and, a little further afield, around Alfés and Mas de Melons, above all in the early morning.

## Spring-summer

At the end of March and beginning of April the remaining wintering birds mix with the first spring migrants, including Black-winged Stilts, one of the few waders that breed in the lagoon. Also visible are the Little Bitterns that breed

in small number here and Great Reed Warblers, easily observed from the hide at the beginning of the main itinerary.

A number of pairs of Montagu's Harriers breed within a few kilometres of the lagoon; it is also easy to see Red-necked Nightjars in the evening sitting on the tracks that cross the driest areas of the zone or flying around the lagoon itself. Amongst the passerines, Cetti's Warbler and Zitting Cisticola are abundant and there are a few pairs of Penduline Tits, which breed in the poplar trees in the vicinity of the lagoon.

Amongst the resident species, once the breeding season is over it is

not difficult to track down Purple Swamp-hens, a species that has colonised the lagoon and which is expected to increase in number in the coming years.

As spring draws to a close in early June, families of Purple Swamp-hens parade in front of the viewing points, the young birds being led by their parents. This is also a good time to enjoy the spectacle offered by the Black-headed Gulls, whose colony here is one of the largest in Catalonia. It is thought that Mediterranean Gulls have bred within this gull colony.

In the fields around the lagoon you will come across species such as White Stork, which breed in the bell-



Little Bustard

© J.Bas

towers of the nearby villages, and Spotless Starling, abundant in the irrigated and non-irrigated fields and around the lagoon itself.

Other species present in the area include Red-legged Partridge, Melodious Warbler and Woodchat Shrike: look for them in the field margins or anywhere there are a few trees or tall scrub.

Resident species of interest here include Red-legged Partridge, Stock Dove, Sardinian Warbler and Southern Grey Shrike.

Both migration periods bring a number of scarce species including Red-footed Falcon to the area.

It is well worth completing a birding visit to Ivars and Belianes by

heading for the cereal steppes of Alfés-Castellidans and Alfarràs-Alguaire. Here you should come across breeding species such as Short-toed Eagle, Pin-tailed Sandgrouse, Short-toed Lark, Tawny Pipit, Black and Black-eared Wheatears, Lesser Grey Shrike, Blue Rock Thrush and Rock Sparrow, some of which basically

## Nearby areas with other species

From the month of May onwards a visit to the cereal steppe around the village of Belianes, just 7 km from the lagoon at Ivars, will enable you to observe interesting species such as Lesser Kestrel, Hobby, Little Bustard, Great Spotted Cuckoo, Roller, European Bee-eaters and good numbers of both Thekla and Calandra Larks (in winter look too for Calandra Lark in the fields around the lagoon at Ivars).

## OUTSTANDING BIRDS

Little Bittern (N)*	Ivars
Purple Heron (N)*	Ivars
Montagu's Harrier (N)*	Belianes
Lesser Kestrel (N)**	Belianes
Little Bustard (R)**	Belianes
Purple Swamp-hen (R)*	Ivars
Red-necked Nightjar (N)**	Ivars-Belianes
Roller (N)**	Belianes
Calandra Lark (R)****	Belianes
Thekla Lark (R)****	Belianes



Black Wheatear

© J.Bas



Black-bellied Sandgrouse

© J.Bas

breed here and nowhere else in the whole of Catalonia. Winter brings Golden and Bonelli's Eagles, Dartford Warbler and Rock Bunting to the area. Most of these species can be found in the area around Alfarràs and Alguaire, along with Black-bellied Sandgrouse in its only breeding location in Catalonia.

## Discover the area

Ivars and Belaines lie in the heart of the **Terres de Lleida**, a vast plain lying at the foot of the Pyrenees watered by the river Segre, a tributary of the river Ebro. Lleida -the capital of this interior region of Catalonia- and its hinterland lie off the traditional tourist circuits, a fact probably more attributable to their distance from the coast and other popular tourist destinations than any inherent lack of interesting or visitable towns.

On reaching the city of **Lleida**, the first thing that strikes you is the unmistakable silhouette of the old cathedral of La Seu Vella, erected on the site of an Arab fortress (*suda*) on an imposing bluff on the right-bank of the river Segre. This primitive cathedral dates from the thirteenth-fourteenth centuries and was in fact built on the site of an Arab mosque.

Its superb bell-tower (70 m) rises up from one end of the cloister and towers over the river and old city centre of Lleida lying at its feet. It is worth strolling through the bustling old town and soaking up a bit of the atmosphere of the small squares and narrow streets, full of corner-shops and interesting buildings such as the New Cathedral, *La Paeria* (town hall) and the La Panera art centre, well known for its innovative and unpredictable exhibitions.

Nearby towns such as **Cervera**, **Balaguer**, **Ponts** and **Tàrraga** also provide a taste of the reality and character of the region. Elsewhere, there are many **walled villages** and **castles**, whose stone walls are testimony to a past in which these lands were the frontier between the Christian- and Moorish-held territories. One of the

### How to get there

The village of Ivars is 39 km from the city of Lleida and 132 km from Barcelona.

Access from Barcelona:

🚗 Motorway AP-2 Barcelona-Lleida. Junction 496 Bellpuig-Ivars.

🚌 The bus company Alsina Graells (Tel. 902 330 400) runs a regular bus service between Barcelona and Lleida that stops in the village of Bellpuig. The lagoon is 9 km from Bellpuig and a taxi is needed to reach it.

🚆 Line Ca4 RENFE (Barcelona-Manresa-Lleida). From Lleida, a car or bus (Alsina Graells) to Bellpuig.

### Infrastructure and services

The lagoon has an observation point and three hides.

♿ The whole itinerary is ideal for wheelchair users.

📍 There is a small information point in the lagoon car-park

Opening hours: Wednesday to Friday 09.00 to 12.30 and 17.00 to 19.00. Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays from 10.00 to 14.00 and 17.00 to 19.00. Closed on Mondays and Tuesdays.

For more information:

Consortium of L'Estany d'Ivars i Vila-Sana  
Consell Comarcal del Pla d'Urgell

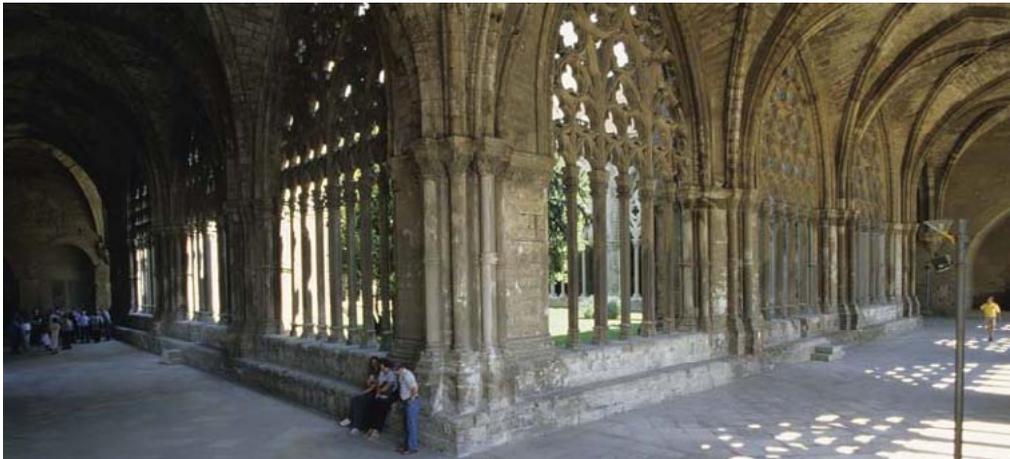
Av. Prat de la Riba, 1

25230 Mollerussa

Tel 973 711 313

turisme@plaugell.org

www.plaugell.org/estany



The cloister of the Seu Vella, Lleida

© A. F. Selbach

most outstanding of these castles is that of **Gardeny**, which today houses a Templars Interpretation Centre in a building that in the twelfth century was

one of this military order's most important fortresses.

Theatre-lovers who head to Ivars at the beginning of September may also

wish to visit the **Fira de Teatre al Carrer** in **Tàrraga**, a street-theatre festival that sees over 100,000 spectators and 800 artists pack into this small city.

# Els Ports

## a land of raptors and small Mediterranean passerines

Els Ports Natural Park is an abrupt mountainous massif where the vagaries of the climate provide for splendid and highly diverse forest cover that includes stands of northern trees species such as beech and deciduous oaks. The birdlife of these mountains is equally diverse and includes a mix of rock-loving, Mediterranean and more northerly species.



View from Horta

© M. Cebolla

This imposing massif is characterised by the contrast between its summits and abrupt slopes, which reach well over 1,000 m and peak at 1,442 m (Mt Caro), and the surrounding plains. Vertical faces and rock needles guard narrow gorges and defiles, where it is often easy to spot Iberian Ibex. The vegetation consists mainly of extensive forests of black, Scots and Alep-

po pines and holm oak, with deciduous forests confined to the more humid parts of these mountains.

Birdwatchers will be thrilled by the great variety of raptors (vultures, eagles and falcons) and forest and scrub-loving passerines that frequent the area. The proximity of the Ebro Delta -extending at your feet from the heights of the Ports- allows both sites

to be visited during just a few days' stay in the area.



### OUTSTANDING BIRDS

Egyptian Vulture (N)\*  
 Griffon Vulture (R)\*\*  
 Bonelli's Eagle (R)\*\*  
 Scops Owl (N)\*\*  
 Pallid Swift (N)\*\*  
 Alpine Swift (N)\*  
 Alpine Accentor (H)\*  
 Black-eared Wheatear (N)\*\*  
 Orphean Warbler (N)\*\*  
 Black Wheatear (R)\*\*

### Winter

Winter regularly brings small numbers of Alpine Accentor to a few of the Ports' highest peaks, while Wallcreepers turn up every year in some of the highest and shadiest gullies.

The best chance of seeing these species is to follow the itinerary that starts at Mas de Barberans and heads up a narrow valley –El Barranc de la Galera– into an area with some of the best preserved upland forests in the whole of the massif (and then return by the same route). Another option is to head for the village of Arnes on the western side of the massif and visit a



Orphean Warbler

© M. Cebolla

dramatic gorge known as Els Estrets d'Arnes. These two routes should enable you to see almost all the species mentioned above, although for some species an additional effort to get up into the higher parts of Els Ports may be necessary.

### Recommendations

- Given the abrupt nature of the terrain, do not leave the signposted paths.
- Find out whether forest tracks are passable as they can become impractical after heavy rain.

Griffon Vulture

© O. Alamy



### How to get there

Els Ports (Horta de Sant Joan) are 96 km from Reus-Costa Daurada Airport and 203 km from Barcelona.

Access from Barcelona:

🚗 Motorway AP-7 Barcelona-València. Junction 34 (Reus). N-420 to Gandesa and then T-334 to Horta de Sant Joan.

🚌 The bus company HIFE (Tel. 902 119 814) runs a regular service from Barcelona to Tortosa. From Tortosa, local buses run by the same company head for the different towns and villages in Els Ports.

🚗 Line Ca1 RENFE (Barcelona-Tarragona-Tortosa). From Tortosa, private vehicle or HIFE bus for the diffe-

rent towns and villages in Els Ports.

### Infrastructure and services

#### 📍 Els Ports Ecomuseum

c. Picasso, 18  
43596 Horta de Sant Joan  
Tel. 977 435 686

Opening times: from 15 June to 15 September, open every day from 09.30 to 13.30 and from 16.00 to 19.30. The rest of the year, open from 11.00 to 13.30 (except Mondays).

ecomuseu@elsports.org  
www.parcscatalunya.net

## Discover the area

Els Port Natural Park is geographically very close to the Ebro Delta, but a world apart in terms of their morphology and character: the combination of the two sites –the interior mountains and the plains of the delta- make for a very attractive ornithological holiday.

The natural gateway to Els Ports is the town of **Horta de Sant Joan**, where the Ports' Ecomuseum will provide wide-ranging information on the area. A stroll around the old town cen-

tre can include a visit to the **Picasso Centre**: the artist's comment that "all I ever learnt about art I learnt in Horta", speaks for itself. The months the young Picasso spent in Horta at the end of the nineteenth century were vital for his artistic development.

The scattered villages of the area are small and relatively untouched: **Arnes, Paüls** and **Mas de Barberans** barely have a thousand inhabitants each, but provide welcoming rural accommodation and local food for

those who want to stay close to Els Ports.

We also recommend a tour of the neighbouring *comarca* of **La Terra Alta**. Often forgotten by tourists, this area provides visitors with a number of surprises such as **La Ruta de la Pau** (the Peace Route) that visits some of the sites of the Battle of the Ebro, the final and definitive battle of the Spanish Civil War.

Gastronomes should not fail to visit the **Modernist cooperatives** in Gandesa and El Pinell de Brai, true temples to local **wines** and **olive oils**, the two mainstays of the local economy.

The Picasso Centre in Horta de Sant Joan

© M. Raurich



# Cap de Creus

## birds of sea and rock

The Cap de Creus Natural Park lies in the extreme north-east of Catalonia and consists of a large rocky peninsula protruding into the Mediterranean between the towns of Llançà and Roses replete with numerous coves and headlands, as well as the rocky ridges running inland as far as La Serra de Verdera. Its position jutting out into the Mediterranean Sea makes this maritime/terrestrial protected area an excellent site for seawatching, above all during migration periods. Indeed, bird migration is of great interest throughout the whole peninsula and, in particular, in the surrounding mountains after days of strong winds.



Panoramic view of Sant Pere de Rodes

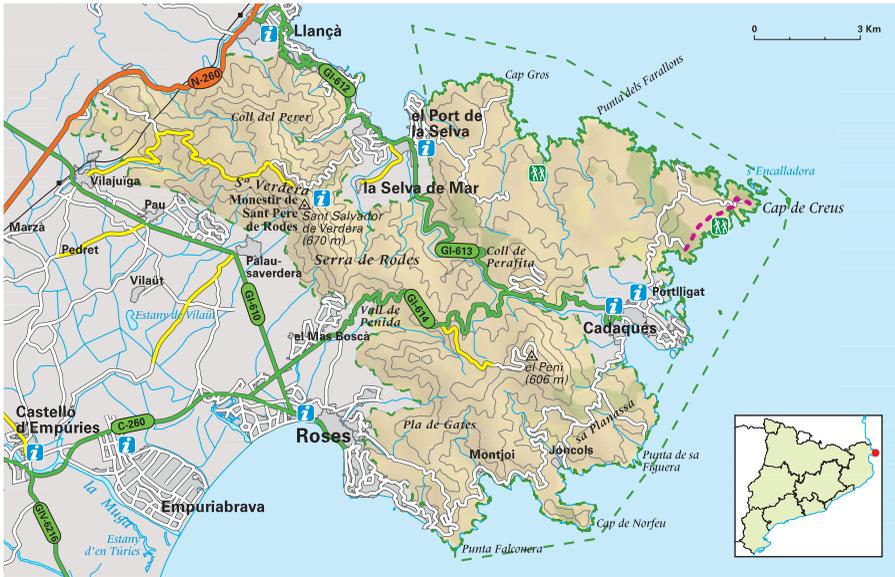
© O. Alamy

Cap de Creus represents the final, eastern-most flourish of the Pyrenees where the final peaks of this mountain chain plunge into the Mediterranean. Geologically fascinating, the most complete series of metamorphic rocks anywhere in Catalonia can be found here, whilst on a more aesthetic note, the results of millennia of folding and erosive processes has produced a series of spectacular natural

rock sculptures. The area's vegetation is determined by relief features, the regular strong northerly wind known as La Tramontana, which in many places hinders the vertical growth of any forest formation, and the environmental salinity of coastal areas. Most of the area is dominated by Mediterranean scrub formations and rock-loving plants, above all in coastal areas. Over the years forest fires have greatly

affected the vegetation, although there are a few stands of pines and cork oaks in places.

Cap de Creus is an excellent place for seawatching and for observing large numbers of birds on days of heavy migration; as well, a number of Mediterranean specialities such as Pallid Swift, Orphean and Spectacled Warbler, Black-eared Wheatear and Bonelli's Eagle are also found in the area.



## When to visit

The most interesting times to visit are during migration periods and/or in late spring (when the summer visitors have arrived) and autumn. Nevertheless, winter still provides for interesting birdwatching.

## Spring-summer

The first trans-Saharan migrants including Short-toed Eagle and Woodchat Shrike begin to arrive from late-March onwards, a period when the final winter visitors such as Alpine Accentors around Sant Pere de Rodes and Sant Salvador de Verdera, and seabirds including Levantine Shearwater (this is one of the best places to see this species in Catalonia), are still to be found in the area. This shearwater can be found in hundred-strong flocks mixed in with Balearic Shearwaters until May-June; both species then become much scarcer during the summer.

Most of the summer visitors arrive during April, a month in which Cory's Shearwaters (above all off Cap de Creus itself and Cap Norfeu), Europ-

ean Storm-petrel and both Arctic and Pomarine Skuas can be found, along with good numbers of wintering Great Skua, Razorbill and Northern Gannet.

Inland, by April resident species such as Eagle Owl and Bonelli's Eagle are well into their breeding seasons, whilst other raptors such as Lesser Kestrel, most of which breed in the area around El Pení, do not return to the area until the end of April. Other species that arrive during April include Pallid Swift (easy to find in the towns of Port de la Selva, Cadaqués and Roses), Alpine Swift, Short-toed Lark (regular but scarce breeder in the area of Pla de Gates), Thekla Lark (common resident in scrubby areas such as La Serra Verdera and, above all, Sa Planassa), Crag Martin and Red-rumped Swallow (about 30 breeding pairs, best looked-for in Port de la Selva, La Vall de Penida and Mas Boscà). Tawny Pipits can be observed in the area of Pla de Gates from mid-April onwards along with Black-eared Wheatear and Rock Thrush, or elsewhere with the abundant Blue Rock Thrush. Regular migrants include Sub-alpine Warbler, common in April and May but not yet confirmed as a breed-

ing species in the area, and Orphean Warbler, common, above all between Llançà and El Coll del Perer, where many males can be heard singing in unison in early May. Spectacled Warblers, on the other hand, return in March and can be found at Pla de Gates. Dartford and Sardinian Warblers are resident and are common in any area with scrub; also found in the area are Southern Grey Shrike and Rock Sparrow.

## OUTSTANDING BIRDS

Balearic Shearwater (M)\*\*  
 Levantine Shearwater (M)\*\*  
 Bonelli's Eagle (R)\*  
 Red-legged Partridge (R)\*\*  
 Pallid Swift (N)\*\*  
 Thekla Lark (R)\*\*\*  
 Red-rumped Swallow (N)\*\*  
 Black-eared Wheatear (N)\*\*  
 Orphean Warbler (N)\*\*\*  
 Spectacled Warbler (N)\*



Spectacled Warbler

© P. Feliu

### Autumn

Aside from the migrant species mentioned above, autumn is also the time to look out for Eleonora's Falcons (from July-September), Booted Eagles, Black Kites and good numbers of passerines on mountain passes (*colls*) and

from Cap de Creus itself on days of heavy migration.

### Winter

Of most interest are the regular presence of small groups of Alpine Accentors from November onwards in the area around Sant Pere de Rodes and

Sant Salvador de Verdera and, somewhat more irregularly, Wallcreepers on Cap Norfeu.

## Recommendations

- Remember that the fierce northerly wind (La Tramontana) can at times make birdwatching extremely difficult.

## Discover the area

Aside from its natural beauty, Cap de Creus also provide visitors with a chance to contemplate an extraordinary assortment of historical artefacts dating from the Neolithic period right up to the modern artistic treasures of Surrealism.

One of the best-preserved **prehistoric dolmens** is that of Creu de Cobertella near **Roses**, a town that also boasts a splendid **Ciutadella** replete with the legacy of Greek, Roman, medieval and renaissance epochs.

In Cap de Creus surrealism means **Salvador Dalí** and the town of **Cadaqués**, where from the 1920s onwards the artist was visited by other great exponents of surrealist art such as Éluard, Magritte, Duchamp and Buñuel. In the small bay of **Portlligat** just north of Cadaqués, you can visit the house -in reality, a group of fisherman's shacks- that Dalí and his wife Gala decorated and lived in during their frequent stays. The result is a labyrinthine structure composed of minute, irregular spaces that were the painter's studio and this eccentric couple's living quarters.

Cap de Creus is also home to the Monastery of **Sant Pere de Rodes**, the starting point of the Santiago pilgrimage trail, an extraordinary monument dating back to the first years of Catalan Romanesque art. Placed high up on a mountainside, the monastery and its surroundings offer wonderful views over the sea and the rugged coastline. The monastery has been carefully restored and houses the Natural Park information centre, where you can find out details of all the cul-



Red-rumped Swallow

© S. Solé

### How to get there

Cap de Creus (Port de la Selva) is 81 km from Girona-Costa Brava Airport and 167 km from Barcelona.

Access from Barcelona:

🚗 Motorway AP-7 Barcelona-La Jonquera. Junction 4 (Figueres). N-260 to Llançà and then road to Port de la Selva and up to Monastery of Sant Pere de Rodes.

🚌 The bus company Sarfa (Tel. 902 302 025) runs a regular service from Barcelona to Figueres and Llançà. The Natural Park information centre in the Monastery of Sant Pere de Rodes is 8 km from Llançà and can be reached by taxi or on foot.

🚆 Line Ca2 RENFE (Barcelona-Figueres). From Figueres, private vehicle to Llançà.

### Infrastructure and services

#### 📍 Natural Park information centre

Palau de l'Abat. Monastery of Sant Pere de Rodes  
17489 El Port de la Selva

Tel. 972 193 191

Opening times: open all year from 10.00 to 14.00 and from 16.00 to 19.00 (closed in the afternoon on Sundays and public holidays from 1 October to 30 May).

pncapdecreus.dmah@gencat.net

www.parcscatalunya.net



The Dalí Museum

© A. F. Selbach

tural and other events taking place in the area; in the summer, it is used on an irregular basis for concerts.

On the road down from the monastery the road passes through the village of **Vilajuïga** –a name that recalls its Jewish past- *en route* to **Peralada**. This village has a splendid

medieval centre, as well as a number of wine cellars producing wines from the local *denominació d'origen* and a castle, where the prestigious **International Music Festival** is held every summer.

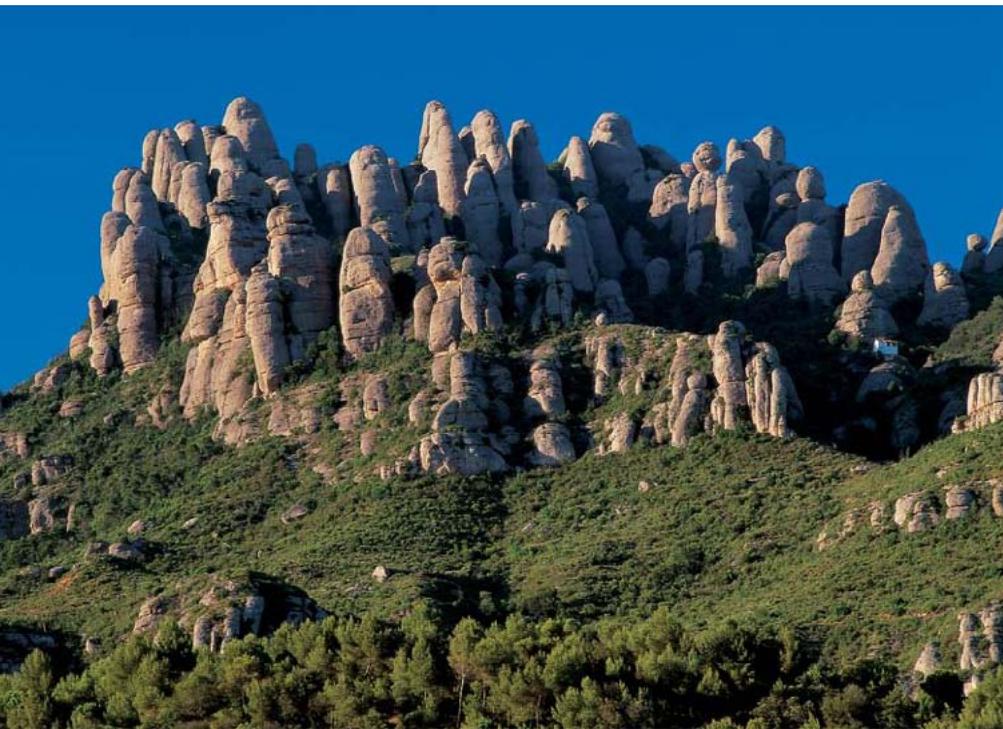
Cap de Creus lies in the *comarca* of L'Alt Empordà, whose most impor-

tant town is Figueres. This lively town is home to one of Catalonia's most visited museums, the **Dalí Theatre-Museum**, which provides visitors with a chance to explore the universe created by this always surprising artist.

# Montserrat

## a mountain of vertical cliffs and forests rising from the plains

The massif of Montserrat –literally, ‘the jagged mountain’- is famous for its abrupt relief with a plethora of sheer cliffs and pinnacles. The combination of these vertical rock walls, broken by the holm oak and pine forests that creep vertiginously up the many clefts and fissures, and the surrounding agricultural plains, provides birdwatchers with the opportunity to observe rock-loving species of birds and many Mediterranean species more at home in scrub and open areas.



Montserrat

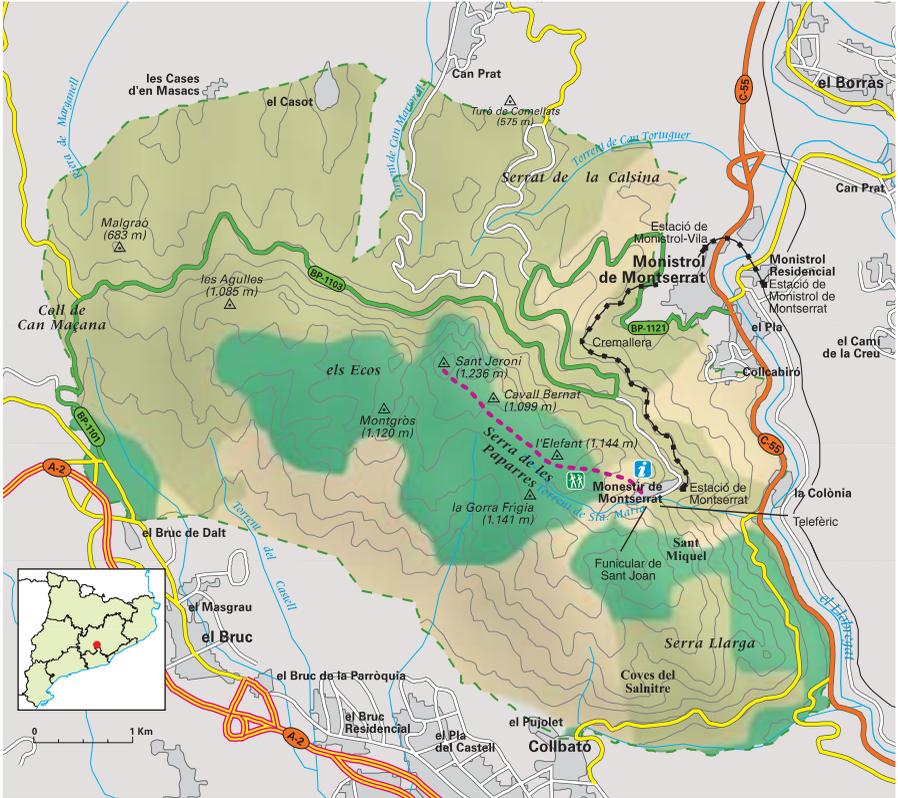
© O. Alamy

The singular silhouette of the teeth-like pinnacles that form the complex silhouette of this mountain rises abruptly from out of a flat agricultural landscape. Although the highest point of Montserrat reaches just 1,236 m, the flatness of the surrounding countryside accentuates the verticality of the mountain as it rises up in a mass

of confused and evocative rocky pinnacles.

Birdwatchers will find here a mix of species at home in rocky areas, some of which are rare in Europe, and many of the typical Mediterranean species that frequent the region's fields and woods. Thus, this is a good site for finding in close proximity

Bonelli's Eagle, Alpine Accentor, Blue Rock Thrush, Wallcreeper, Rock Sparrow, Sardinian and Melodious Warblers, Southern Grey and Woodchat Shrikes and Red-legged Partridge .



**When to visit**

Spring and summer are especially interesting, although winter is the best time of year for seeing the cliff-loving winter visitors.

**Spring-summer**

Montserrat is best visited towards the end of April when the resident species' breeding season is under full swing -some of the earliest breeders such as the Eagle Owl will already have chicks by this time- and once all of the mountain's summer visitors have arrived.

In the holm oak forests at the base of the mountain and in any pine or oak forest in the valleys Bonelli's Warbler is frequent and shares habitat with resident species such as Sardinian

Warbler, Firecrest and Short-toed Treecreeper. Species such as Scops Owl and Golden Oriole are easier to hear than to see. High up in the massif—for example in La Vall del Torrent de Santa Maria and beneath the ridge of La Serra de les Paparres- Peregrine Falcons and Bonelli's Eagles fly overhead.

In mid-May at the foot of the mountain amongst a mosaic of fields and copses, Melodious Warblers are not uncommon; birdwatchers should look out for Southern Grey and Woodchat Shrikes, the latter locally common in open pine woodland and on the edges of burnt areas. In cultivated areas with farm buildings—the haunt of groups of finches and sparrows- look out for Rock Sparrows and groups of Red-legged Partridge.

One of other specialities of the area is Black Wheatear — a few pairs breed locally between the town of Monistrol de Montserrat and Sant

**OUTSTANDING BIRDS**

- Bonelli's Eagle (R)\*
- Red-legged Partridge (R)\*\*
- Alpine Swift (N)\*\*\*
- Alpine Accentor (H)\*
- Black Wheatear (R)\*
- Melodious Warbler (N)\*\*\*
- Wallcreeper (H)\*
- Southern Grey Shrike (R)\*\*
- Woodchat Shrike (N)\*\*\*
- Rock Sparrow (R)\*\*\*



Wallcreeper

© E. Hüttenmoser

Salvador de les Espases, and near Collbató on the southern side of the mountain.

### Winter

Winter is the time to search for Alpine Accentors, which turn up in small groups in the highest part of the massif, and Wallcreeper, a regular but scarce winter visitor that it is much more difficult to find.

### Recommendations

- Take care to not leave the marked paths for your own safety and to avoid damaging the natural vegetation.

### Discover the area

Montserrat is not only a Natural Park, but also an important **symbol of Catalan identity** and a focus of Catalan culture and spirituality.

The **Benedictine monastery** was founded in 1025 in this strange and beautiful site and since the twelfth century people have come from far and wide to worship 'La Moreneta', a wooden carved virgin and Patron of Catalonia. The resident monks work intensely in many **aspects of culture** that include an important publishing house — the first ever printing press in Catalonia was set up in Montserrat in 1499 and since then the production of books has not ceased.

Montserrat is also home to **one of the oldest children's choirs in Europe**. Fifty boys sing in the Escolania choir and sing the *Salve* and *Virelai* every day in honour of the Virgin of Montserrat.

In the Museum of Montserrat works by El Greco, Caravaggio, Picasso and Dalí can be admired, along with a formidable archaeological collection of objects from the Holy Land.

The audiovisual 'Montserrat endsins' (Inside Montserrat) provides an agreeable introduction to the history and life of the monastery and to the most interesting corners of the massif.



Bonelli's Eagle

© J. Bas

### How to get there

Montserrat is 60 km from Barcelona.

Access from Barcelona:

- 🚗 Motorways A-2 and A-18. Junction Montserrat.
- 🚌 The bus company Julià (Tel. 934 904 000) runs a regular service from Barcelona to Montserrat.
- 🚆 Line R5 FGC (Ferrocarrils de la Generalitat de Catalunya) from Plaça d'Espanya in Barcelona to Monistrol, from where you can take a cable car (Aeri de Montserrat) up to the Monastery.

The 'Tot Montserrat' travel-pass covers transport and other services and makes access to the area straightforward.

### Infrastructure and services

📍 The **Natural Park Information Centre** (belonging to the Board of the Mountain of Montserrat (the park's governing body) is next to the Hotel Abad Cisneros. Tel. 938 284 007

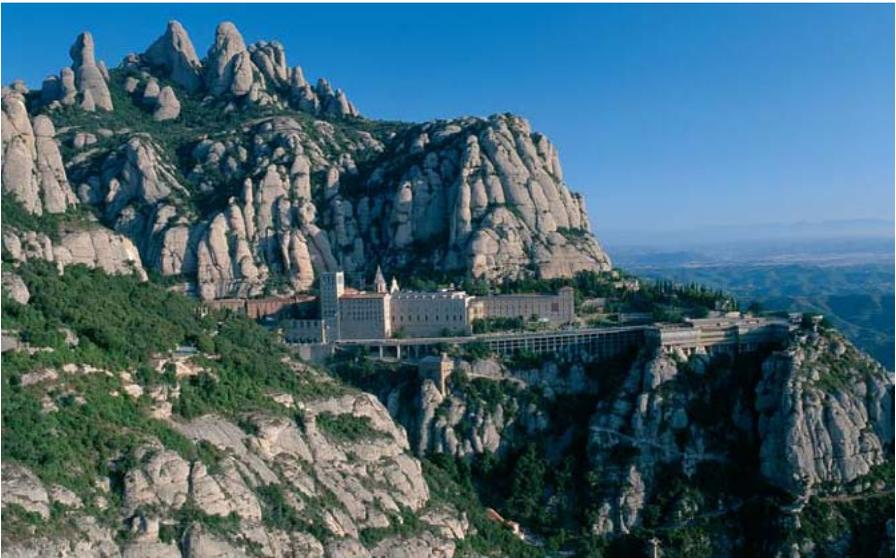
Opening times: Monday to Friday from 09.00 to 14.00.  
 pnmontserrat.dmah@gencat.net  
 www.parcscatalunya.net

The **Montserrat Reservation and Information Centre** is opposite the rack-and-pinion train station.

Tel. 938 777 701

Opening times: every day of the year from 09.00 to 19.00h.

informacio@larsa-montserrat.com  
 www.montserrat-visita.com



The Monastery of Montserrat

© J.M. Borrero

The trail to the Holy Cave (La Cova Santa) and the climb up to the **hermitages** of Sant Joan and Sant Jeroni are ideal walks for those who wish to enjoy the marvellous views from the main ridge of the massif. Whilst for those who don't want to walk quite so far, the rack-and-pinion railways take

you abruptly up the cliff faces to the main ridge.

The hotel in the main Montserrat complex and the cells that provide cheap but comfortable accommodation give birdwatchers the opportunity to spend a number of days in this unique site.

Close to Montserrat, in the town of Sant Fruitós de Bages, stands the monastery of Sant Benet, an ancient seat of the Benedictines, acquired in the XIX century by the family of the painter Ramon Casas. Today it is a fascinating museum and not to be missed.

## Aigüestortes i Estany de Sant Maurici high-mountain birdlife in the heart of the Pyrenees

The Aigüestortes National Park protects one of the best conserved parts of the Pyrenees in Catalonia. Both alpine and subalpine flora and fauna can be found and include birds such as Lammergeier, Griffon and Egyptian Vultures, Tengmalm's Owl, Ring Ouzel, Citril Finch and both Yellow-billed and Red-billed Choughs, some of the most sought-after species by birdwatchers. This high mountain landscape offers visitors the opportunity to birdwatch in coniferous and riparian forests, alpine pastures and rocky screes, all characteristic habitats of the highest Pyrenean landscapes.



View of Llac de Sant Maurici

© J.M. Borrero

The characteristic image of Aigüestortes is one of jagged peaks reaching up to 3,000 m, accompanied by dozens of mountain streams, waterfalls and bogs. The giant calcareous spires of the two Encantats that rise up from Llac de Sant Maurici are the symbol of the park and its glaciated relief features. The main vegetation types consist of mountain and Scots pine, European silver-fir and beech

forests, as well as a number of very humid mixed forests, uncommon in the Pyrenees, where beech, birch and aspen grow side-by-side.

Birdwatchers will find in Aigüestortes Pyrenean bird communities that within the Palaearctic essentially only exist in mountainous regions such as the Alps, Caucasus and a number of high mountain chains in Turkey and the Balkans. In the space of just a few

days birdwatchers can hope to come across many of the high mountain species that are absent from most of Europe that include forest, rock-loving and alpine species.



## When to visit

Best at the end of spring and in summer.

## Spring-summer

Many different walks and treks are possible in this National Park. One of the best begins in the car-park beneath the lake of Estany de Cavallers and climbs up through the forests and pastures that surround many of the Park's glacial lakes. From here it is possible to climb to one of the nearby summits, some of which top the 3,000 m mark, as you head towards Estany Negre and the Joan Ventosa i Calvell mountain hut, where you can stay overnight and thus spend more than one day in the area.

Right from the beginning of the walk you should keep your eyes open for raptors such as Lammergeier, Griffon Vulture and Golden Eagle that fly around the highest peaks here and elsewhere in the National Park, even

in areas with human presence (near the mountain huts, for example). The mountain pine and fir forests above 1,800 m hold pairs of Tengmalm's Owls and they can be heard at dusk and at night during early spring — actually seeing them, however, is often a different question when large amounts of snow remain on the ground during early spring. Nevertheless, just occasionally you might be able to locate one of these owls by its call in a dead pine even at the end of spring or in early summer.

Commoner species you might find at any point of the walk include Red-billed and Yellow-billed Choughs, often seen in large flocks around the highest mountains and occasionally present around some of the mountain huts. Around the lakes you should come across many Water Piptits, whilst in rocky areas with vertical cliff faces, Rock Thrush is a distinct possibility. Citril Finch is another of the specialties of the area and groups of these birds are common in and around

mountain pine forests; Ring Ouzels too breed in the highest mountain pine forests, although after the breeding season is over (and depending on food availability), they can be seen in a number of different habitats at lower altitudes or even in alpine pastures. Finally, Rock Buntings are found almost anywhere in the area.

## OUTSTANDING BIRDS

Lammergeier (R)\*\*  
 Griffon Vulture (R)\*\*  
 Golden Eagle (R)\*\*  
 Tengmalm's Owl (R)\*  
 Ring Ouzel (N)\*\*  
 Rock Thrush (N)\*  
 Wallcreeper (R)\*  
 Yellow-billed Chough (R)\*\*\*  
 Citril Finch (R)\*\*\*  
 Snowfinch (R)\*



Tengmalm's Owl

© J. Bas

In the highest parts of this route – which should only be undertaken with the appropriate equipment and if you are in good physical condition- it is worth looking for Snowfinch, a rare and very local breeder in this part of the Pyrenees that is in fact best searched for in winter. Likewise at al-

titude Ptarmigan are present, while during the second half of August and beginning of September small groups of Dotterel pass through on migration.

Summer and autumn are good seasons for finding the scarce Wallcreepers around L'Estany de Cavallers,

the peak of Pic de Peguera and elsewhere.

### **Winter**

The main attraction of winter in the area is the chance to see flocks of Snowfinch, for example along the road

at the mountain pass of Port de la Bonaigua or near inhabited areas such as Muntanyó d'Espot. Even so, this species usually lives in remote areas and so it is essential to be well equipped for high-level terrain if you head off in search of this species.

### Nearby areas of interest

In the eastern part of the National Park lies the fir forest of La Mata de València, where species such as Tengmalm's Owl, Woodcock and Northern Goshawk maintain good breeding densities: access from the village of Esterrí d'Àneu.

Another interesting site is the well-conserved beech forest at the southern entrance to the Vielha road tunnel, where it is not difficult to see species such as Black Woodpecker, Eurasian Treecreeper and Marsh Tit in summer, with large groups of Bram-



Snowfinch

© J. Bas



Alpine Accentor

© J.M. Borrero



Sant Climent de Tatull

### How to get there

The village of Esport is 215 km from Lleida and 265 km from Barcelona, while Boí is 152 km from Lleida and 299 km from Barcelona.

Access from Barcelona:

🚗 To Esport: C-16 via the Cadí tunnel to Bellver de Cerdanya; N-260 to Sort and then C-13 to the turn-off to Esport.

To Boí: Motorway A-2 to Lleida; C-13 to La Pobla de Segur; N-260 to El Pont de Suert and then L-500 to Boí.

🚌 To Esport: the company Alsina Graells (Tel. 902 330 400) runs buses through the villages of Esterrí d'Àneu and Guingueta d'Àneu, from where you can telephone the village of Esport for a taxi (tel. 973 624 105).

To Boí: the company Alsina Graells (tel. 902 330 400) runs buses to Vielha through El Pont de Suert, where you should change to the bus belonging to the same company that runs to Boí.

### Infrastructure and services

#### 📍 National Park Centre in Esport

C/Prat del Guarda, 4

25597 Esport

Tel. 973 624 036

Opening times: open all year from 09.00 to 13.00 and 15.30 to 19.00 (from 1 October to 31 March, closed on Sundays and public holidays in the afternoon).

#### National Park Centre in Boí

C/de les Graieres, 2

25597 Boí

Tel. 973 696 189

Opening times: open all year from 09.00 to 13.00 and 15.30 to 19.00 (from 1 October to 31 March, closed on Sundays and public holidays in the afternoon).

info.aiguestortes@oapn.mma.es

www.reddeparquesnacionales.mma.es

pnaiguestortes.dmah@gencat.net

www.parcscatalunya.net

blings present in winter in years in which this species migrates into the Iberian Peninsula in good numbers.

## Recommendations

- Care must be taken during hikes in the high mountains: check forecasts for bad weather and avalanche warnings, and bear in mind that for most of the year snow and freezing temperatures make access into higher areas difficult.
- National Park regulations must be respected at all times.

## Discover the area

The area around the National Park and this sector of the Pyrenees in general has many other attractions for visitors that include numerous small mountain villages, ski stations, spas, adventure sports facilities and fishing.

We recommend above all that you visit the **Vall de Boí**, a valley that is well known in artistic circles as the home to a magnificent **collection of Romanesque churches** that have been declared by UNESCO as a **World Heritage Site**. The purity of their lines and consistency of style –

Lombardy Romanesque from the eleventh and twelfth centuries—make these churches some of the most beautiful anywhere in the Pyrenees. Today most of the wall paintings that once decorated their interiors have been removed to the National Museum of Catalan Art in Barcelona (MNAC), although many have facsimiles that have been repainted *in situ*. In all there are eight churches and one small hermitage, of which the churches of Sant Climent and Santa Maria de Taüll—both with slender square bell towers and exceptional murals—are the best known. The villages of Boí, Barruera, Erill la Vall, Cardet, Coll and Durro all possess churches that are a part of this important historical artistic heritage. The Romanesque Interpretation Centre in Erill la Vall provides guided visits.

In the far north-east of the Catalan Pyrenees lies the valley of **Val d'Aran**, which, unlike the other Catalan Pyrenean valleys, is Atlantic in character and runs northwards down to the plains of Aquitaine in France. Linked to Catalonia since the Middle Ages, this small region conserves its own language—Aranese—and a distinct cuisine (for example, *olla aranesa*, a meaty stew), which is heavily influ-

enced by its proximity to Gascony in France (*pâtés* and *civets*—blood-thickened stews) and the availability of local products such as trout and many types of wild mushrooms and fruits.

For **adventure-sports** lovers, the ideal centre is Sort on the Noguera Pallaresa river, the capital of the *comarca* of Pallars Sobirà and **one of the best sites in Europe for white-water canoeing and rafting**.

# Cadí-Moixeró

## alpine birds from the very road

Strictly speaking, the Cadí-Moixeró Natural Park lies within the pre-Pyrenees, although it is still home to a good number of Pyrenean species of bird that are absent from much of Europe. The great advantage this area has over other Pyrenean sites is that two roads (the road from Bagà to Coll de Pal and the road to Coll de la Creueta) wind up high into the domain of the subalpine pastures. From these roads –and even from your vehicles– it is easy to reach areas of mountain and Scots pine, high-level grazing and rocky outcrops where some of the Pyrenees' most sought-after species –Lammergeier, Yellow-billed Chough, Alpine Accentor and Snowfinch- can be found.



The Cadí Range

© Georama

The landscape of this Natural Park is one of the most spectacular in Catalonia. The imposing cliffs of La Serra del Cadí-Moixeró run east-west for over 30 km and peak the altitude of Puig de la Canal Baridana (2,648 m), a sharp contrast with the valley bottoms to the south that lie at just 900 m. Also to the south rises the best-known mountain of the area,

Pedraforca, whose name reflects its particular fork-shaped silhouette.

The attractiveness of the area to birdwatchers is due to the number of true alpine species that can be seen relatively well and easily here — even from the very roads that cross the area. This too is one of the best places in Catalonia to see Snowfinch in winter –groups of up to 500 birds–

and other birds such as Citril Finch, Lammergeier and Rock Thrush that are the target of many foreign bird-watchers.



Rock Bunting

© O. Alamy

## When to visit

The best time to visit is undoubtedly spring-summer and in autumn. A few of the special mountain species, though, can still be found in winter.

## Spring-summer

The itinerary we recommend here starts on the road from the village of Bagà to the mountain hut (*xalet*) at Coll de Pal and then continues in the immediate vicinity. An alternative is to visit sites on the northern side of the massif such as the silver-fir forest near the village of Riu in the *comarca* of La Cerdanya for species such as Tengmalm's Owl and Eurasian Treecreeper or, in winter, the road that crosses Coll de la Creueta and runs on toward the ski-town of La Molina.

From the end of winter and into early spring Tengmalm's Owls call

from the highest mountain pine forests and, in particular, from the Riu fir forest (which can be reached from the village via track that climbs towards Les Penyes Altes del Moixeró): diurnal raptors include Lammergeier, which may appear around the Xalet de Coll de Pal almost at any moment (but above all at midday) and other large raptors such as Griffon Vulture and Golden Eagle. Grey Partridges breed on Puigllançada and they are most often seen in groups in the autumn (October) along the path from Coll de la Creueta to the summit of Puigllançada.

Other common species in the mountain pine forests of the area above 1,700 m include Citril Finch (abundant in summer), Ring Ouzel (common in summer and even more so in autumn), Rock Bunting (common almost everywhere) and both Red-billed and Yellow-billed Choughs, which are abundant in the high reach-

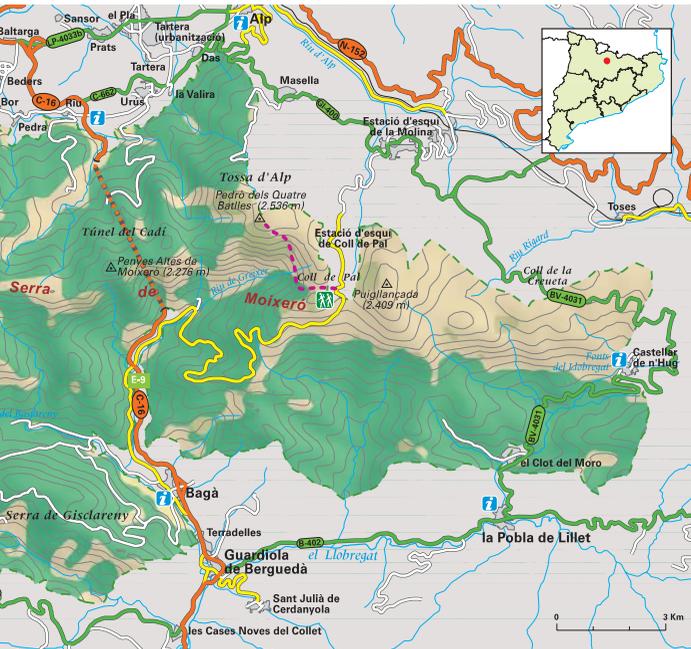
es along the road to Coll de Pal. Rock Thrushes are found in and around rock outcrops in the highest parts of the massif, although they are most easily spotted from the road between Castellar de n'Hug and La Molina, and above all at Coll de la Creueta.

## OUTSTANDING BIRDS

Lammergeier (R)\*\*  
 Griffon Vulture (R)\*\*  
 Tengmalm's Owl (R)\*  
 Alpine Accentor (H)\*  
 Ring Ouzel (N)\*\*  
 Rock Thrush (N)\*  
 Wallcreeper (M)\*  
 Yellow-billed Chough (R)\*\*\*  
 Citril Finch (N)\*\*\*  
 Snowfinch (H)\*



Rock Thrush



Yellow-billed Chough

© O. Alamaný



Wallcreeper breed in the area, above all on the north-facing slopes of the main ridge and on the nearby massif of Pedraforca, although they are inevitably very difficult to find. Proper climbing equipment is needed if you attempt to find this species here. Nevertheless, in autumn the species can sometimes be found on some of the cliffs next to road from Bagà to Coll de Pal; also during autumn, Alpine Accentors frequent the rocks underneath the main road that goes to the Cadi Tunnel.

### Winter

At Coll de la Creueta it is easy to find Alpine Accentor (even from the car!) and, depending on the severity of the winter, sometimes even hundred-strong groups of Snowfinches.

### Nearby area of interest

The mountains of Puigpedrós near the village of Meranges (La Cerdanya) hold a number of pairs of Ptarmigan and are also one of the few sites in the Iberian Peninsula where Dotterel have been proved to breed.

### Recommendations

- Care must be taken during hikes in the high mountains: check forecasts for bad weather and avalanche warnings, and bear in mind that for most of the year snow and freezing temperatures make access into higher areas difficult.
- Natural Park regulations must be respected at all times.

### Discover the area

The Cadi-Moixeró Natural Park covers an area of over 400 km<sup>2</sup> and lies where the *comarques* of El Berguedà, La Cerdanya and L'Alt Urgell meet. It is one of the most popular walking areas in Catalonia due to the presence of the instantly recognisable mountain of El Pedraforca and El Camí



Citril Finch

© O. Alamaný

dels Bons Homes. This long-distance footpath recreates the routes taken by Cathar refugees (the Good Men) during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries as they fled from persecution and the Inquisition. It can be walked or ridden and links the Sanctuary of Queralt near Berga with the castle of Montsegur in the Ariège region in France.

Good communications link the towns of Berga and Puigcerdà to the Cadí-Moixeró massif. The opening of the Cadí tunnel 1984 provided a long-awaited link between the *comarques* of El Berguedà and La Cerdanya.

Visitors to the area will quickly realise that stunning landscapes are but part of the attractiveness of these mountains. Some of the oldest of all Catalan traditions are well maintained here: **Berga**, for example, is well known for the spectacular festivities of **La Patum** that have been celebrated for centuries during Corpus Christi. In 2005 La Patum was declared a



View of Cadí from El Querfordat

© J.M. Borrero

### How to get there

The town of Bagà is 128 km from Barcelona.

Access from Barcelona:

🚗 Road C-58 to Terrassa; then C-16 to Manresa, Berga and Bagà (Cadí tunnel).

🚌 The bus company Alsina Graells (Tel. 902 330 400) runs a regular service between Barcelona and Andorra that stops in Bagà.

### Infrastructure and services

#### 📍 Natural Park information Centre

C/de la Vinya, 1

08695 Bagà

Tel. 938 244 151

Opening times: all year Monday to Friday from 09.00 to 13.30 and 15.30 to 19.00; Weekends and public holidays from 09.00 to 13.00 and 16.00 to 18.30 h.  
 pncaidmoixero.dmah@gencat.net  
 www.parcscatalunya.net

- The information centre organise guided walks, temporary exhibitions, courses, talks and workshops on wildlife-related issues.



The Patum festival

© Magma

Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO.

The small town of **Bagà** is the natural gateway to La Serra del Cadí and home to another curious traditional popular festivity, the Fia-Faia: on Christmas night a series of large torches are lit in the arched town square amidst ritual music and dances.

The Cadí tunnel connects Bagà to the broad open spaces of the plain of La Cerdanya, once an important medieval countdom. In 1659 at the Treaty of the Pyrenees the kingdoms of France and Spain decided to partition the region, but left the town of **Llívia** as small enclave of Spanish territory completely surrounded by France; this

town is today famous for having the **oldest pharmacy in Europe**.

[www.elbergueda.cat](http://www.elbergueda.cat)  
[www.turismetotal.org](http://www.turismetotal.org)  
[www.costabrava.org](http://www.costabrava.org)  
[www.lleidatur.com](http://www.lleidatur.com)  
[www.catalunyaturisme.com](http://www.catalunyaturisme.com)

## Mont-rebei i la Terreta a haven for vultures

The Mont-rebei gorge in La Serra del Montsec consists of a narrow canyon whose immense cliffs look down on the river Noguera Ribagorçana; to the south the gorge opens out into a vast amphitheatre framed by sheer, imposing cliff-faces. This itinerary passes through the gorge and provides access to cliffs that are a haven for typical Pyrenean rock-loving birds — Red-billed Chough, Wallcreeper and a number of cliff-breeding raptors. Further north lies La Terreta, an area dotted with thirty hamlets belonging to the municipality of Tremp (at over 300 km<sup>2</sup>, the largest in Catalonia), the capital of the comarca of El Pallars Jussà. In La Terreta all four European vulture species can be seen here in a day, along with many other Mediterranean and/or cliff-loving species including a number of different warblers.



The Mont-rebei gorge from the path



Griffon Vulture

© J. Bas

The Mont-rebei gorge is unsullied by road, rail or power lines and the only way to visit the whole of this spectacular natural feature is to walk a rather vertiginous path hewn out of the bare rock. La Fundació Territori i Paisatge, an NGO created under the auspices of the environmental protection programme of the Caixa Catalunya savings bank, owns 600 ha of land in and around this natural wonder and nature reserve; its conservation is thus assured. The area around the gorge and in the La Terreta is dominated by Mediterranean vegetation, although in some shadier areas more Eurosiberian vegetation takes a foothold. At mid-altitude deciduous oak forest and, above all, Scots pine, forests develop, while in sunnier areas Mediterranean holm oaks are dominant trees. Not so far away there are a number of large reservoirs with riparian and aquatic vegetation.

You are all but guaranteed views of Lammergeier and Griffon and Egyptian Vultures, while in recent years observations of Black Vultures have become ever more frequent. La Terreta also boasts excellent facilities for viewing the local vultures. The

two itineraries described here provide, moreover, the chance to catch up with typical southern European species of birds such as Blue Rock Thrush, Southern Grey Shrike and Subalpine, Orphean, Dartford and Bonelli's Warblers.

### When to visit

In spring or autumn; in summer, high temperatures mean that it is best to birdwatch above all in the early hours of the morning. In winter, temperatures plummet and the summer visitors are long gone.

### Spring

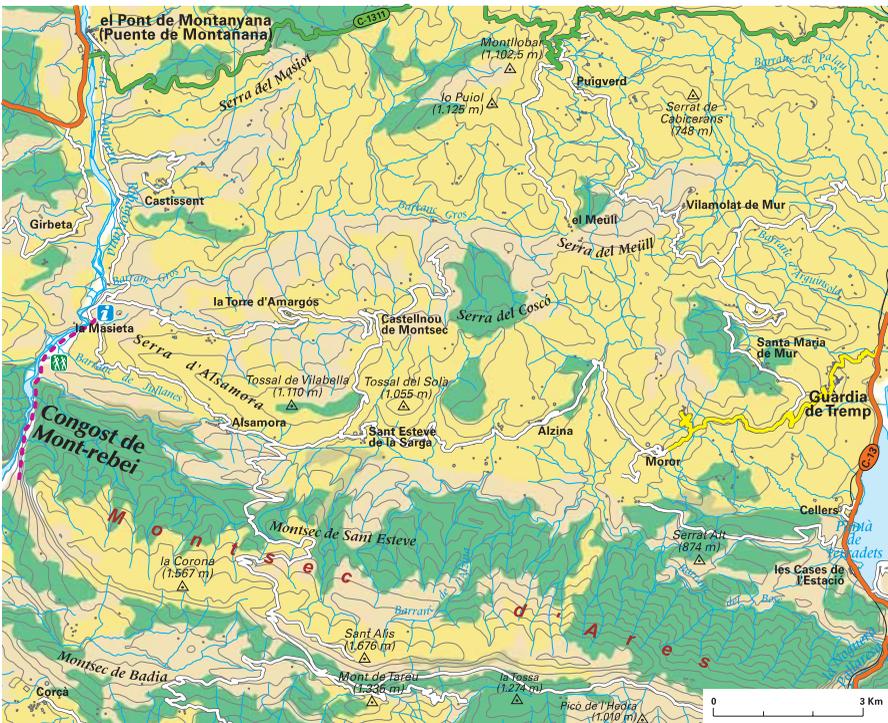
To fully cover the area, you should try both of the itineraries described here. The first passes through the immense Mont-rebei gorge on the eastern side of the Noguera Ribagorçana river, while the other takes you to La Terreta on roads that approach the Serra de Castellet and Serra de Sant Gervàs.

The walk through Mont-rebei begins at a small car-park known as La Masieta. Between here and the sus-

pension bridge you will have the chance to come across a number of interesting birds such as Egyptian Vulture, Short-toed Eagle, European Bee-eater, Golden Oriole and Bonelli's and Orphean Warblers. Further on as you reach the gorge itself (and all through it), keep an eye out for Alpine Swift, Crag Martin, Blue Rock Thrush and Red-billed Chough. Up high look for Griffon and Egyptian Vultures, Lammergeier, Golden Eagle and Peregrine Falcon. As the gorge opens out and

### OUTSTANDING BIRDS

Lammergeier (R)\*\*  
 Griffon Vulture (R)\*\*  
 Egyptian Vulture (N)\*\*  
 Booted Eagle (N)\*\*  
 Short-toed Eagle (N)\*\*  
 Blue Rock Thrush (R)\*\*  
 Wallcreeper (M)\*  
 Subalpine Warbler (N)\*\*\*  
 Orphean Warbler (N)\*\*\*  
 Rock Bunting (R)\*\*\*





Egyptian Vulture

© O. Alamy

the path leaves the rock face, look out for Mediterranean species such as Woodchat Shrike, Dartford Warbler and Rock Bunting.

The itinerary through La Terreta provides good views of large numbers of Griffon Vultures, as well as Egyptian Vulture. In the interpretation centre (El Casal dels Voltors) live links to two cameras show how the vultures feed. Other species that might turn up

during this itinerary include Red and Black Kites, Short-toed Eagle, Stock Dove, Tawny Pipit, Rock and Blue Rock Thrushes, Melodious, Dartford, Sub-alpine and Sardinian Warblers, Rock Sparrow and Rock Bunting.

### Autumn

Aside from the many resident species, this is a good time to look for Wall-

creepers in the Mont-rebei and La Terreta, for example on the large limestone cliffs near Sopeira.

## Recommendations

- Be sure to be prepared for high temperatures (take water!) in summer.

## Discover the area

The peaceful medieval centre of the town of **Tremp**, capital of the *comarca* of El Pallars Jussà, is a reflection of the excellent quality of life in this area. The generous variety of natural areas that surround Tremp were once, however, the frontier between Christian and Moorish domains, as the numerous **castles** that dominate the area illustrate: a guided visit to the castles of Mur, Llordà, Sant Gervàs or Orcau, all dating back to the beginning of the eleventh century, is an exciting trip back in time. We also recommend that you also visit the Parc Cretaci, where the paleontological remains of some of the last dinosaurs to roam the earth can be admired.

Lammergeier

© J.M. Borrero



### How to get there

La Terreta (Tremp) is 86 km from the city of Lleida and 188 km from Barcelona.

Access from Barcelona:

🚗 Motorway AP-2 (Barcelona-Lleida); C-13 to Tremp and then C-1311 to Pont de Montanyana.

🚌 The bus company Alsina Graells (Tel. 902 330 400) runs services from Lleida to Vielha that pass through Pont de Muntanyana and Tremp. From here, on foot from Pont de Muntanyana or by private vehicle from Tremp to the Mont-rebei gorge.

### Infrastructure and services

In the Casal dels Voltors, the vulture interpretation centre, the life of the vultures of the area can be contemplated through the lens of the cameras placed near a nest and the feeding station. Expert explanations from the centre's staff.

### 📍 Casal dels Voltors

Torre de Tamúrcia (Tremp)

Tel. 610 851 196

terreta@ajuntamentdetrem.cat

www.ajuntamentdetrem.cat

www.lapetjada.com

There is also a small information point at the car-park for Mont-rebei.

Opening times: weekends and public holidays from 10.00 to 17.00.

For more information:

Fundació Territori i Paisatge

Obra Social de Caixa Catalunya

Tel. 902 400 973

fundtip@fundtip.com

www.caixacatalunya.es/territoriipaisatge

**Adventure sports** are also a possibility here and birdwatchers can try their hands at water sports (on any of the area's numerous reservoirs), climbing, caving, fishing and hang-gliding. Traditional local crafts are alive and well in many of the small villages of La Terreta and numerous **artisans and craftsmen** have set up their workshops here.

Getting to know the **local cuisine** –which will delight even the most demanding of palates- is one of the

pleasures that you must be sure not to miss: game stews, wild mushrooms, cold meats and homemade cheeses are just some of the staples of traditional *palleresca* cooking and, washed down with quality wines and oils, provide a veritable feast each time you sit down to dine.

Nearby towns such as **La Pobla de Segur** and **El Pont de Suert**, as well as the interesting village of **Ager**, are also worth a visit. If you are in the area on the first Sunday in July you

will have the chance to witness one of the most curious of all Pyrenean festivities, the **Baixada dels Raiers**, a celebration and re-enactment of the tradition of transporting timber down from the Pyrenees on the rough waters of the river Noguera Pallaresa. This homage to the *raiers*, the raftsmen who steered their wooden rafts downstream, ends with dinner and dancing to which all are invited.

Bread and tomato

© P. Pons



# Vall de Núria

## bird-rich high mountains and forests

The valley of Núria is only accessible by rack-and-pinion railway from the town of Ribes de Freser or on foot along paths through subalpine pastures and screes that have been hiked by generations upon generations of Catalan walkers. A combination of paths and a whole day's hike will allow birdwatchers to enjoy the high mountain environments of this sector of the Pyrenees and catch up with some of its most representative bird species.



Panorama of Vall de Núria

© O. Alamy

The majestic peak of Puigmal (2.910 m), the highest in the eastern Pyrenees, and a circ of other high peaks -Noufonts, Nou Creus and Finestrelles- rise high above the glaciated valley of Núria and its sanctuary. The climb up to these summits can be tackled from Fontalba along paths that pass through mountain pine forests and over screes. Lower down, between Ribes de Freser and the vil-

lage of Queralbs, mixed deciduous forests with a smattering of Eurosiberian tree species –oaks, beech and ash- are the order of the day. Riparian forests and the cliffs of Roques de Totlomon and the south face of the peak of Torreneules complete the variety of habitats present.

The whole area is of interest to birdwatchers due to the presence of high-mountain species and the pos-

sibilities for attractive walks in a true high-altitude Pyrenean environment. Birdwatching and walking can be combined by walking up to Sanctuary and catching the rack-and-pinion train back to Ribes de Freser, or by catching the train to and from the Sanctuary to conserve your energy for the climb to the high summits.





Ring Ouzel

© O. Alamy

that head up to the surrounding peaks. A good choice is to head for Pic de l'Àliga, a large mountain hut/youth hostel, from where a path takes you towards Roques de Totlomón. Here, look for Lammergeier, as well as Wallcreeper in the autumn and large numbers of both Choughs.

### Winter

Around the sanctuary itself or on the southern flanks of Puigmal it is possible to find flocks of Snowfinch of up to a hundred birds during the coldest winters.

### Other nearby areas of interest

The western side of Puigmal can be tackled along a good track (suitable for cars) that climbs to the Planoles mountain hut and then on to one of the main ridges. Here amongst the mountain pine forests on the way up towards Puigmal listen out for Tengmalm's Owl; Pla de Gorrablanç, also on the route, is one of the few places in Catalonia where Dotterel occasionally breed.

### Recommendation

- Care must be taken during hikes in the high mountains: check forecasts

for bad weather and avalanche warnings, and bear in mind that for most of the year snow and freezing temperatures make access into the mountains difficult.

### Discover the area

The Sanctuary of Núria (1,960 m) has for long been a popular destination for pilgrims and other worshippers who come to venerate the Virgin of Núria (a common girl's name in Catalonia).

The Sanctuary is set within a small **ski station** (7 km of runs, 10 runs in total) with a 3-star hotel and apartments for families and small groups. An artificial lake built in 1956 adds variety to the landscape and is used

### OUTSTANDING BIRDS

Lammergeier (R)\*\*  
 Griffon Vulture (R)\*\*  
 Ptarmigan (R)\*\*  
 Tengmalm's Owl (R)\*  
 Water Pipit (N)\*\*\*\*  
 Rock Thrush (N)\*\*  
 Wallcreeper (M)\*  
 Citril Finch (N)\*\*\*  
 Snowfinch (H)\*\*  
 Rock Bunting (R)\*\*\*

Red-billed Chough

© J. Bas



### How to get there

Ribes de Freser is 98 km from Girona-Costa Brava Airport and 118 km from Barcelona.

Access from Barcelona:

🚗 Motorway AP-7 (Barcelona-La Jonquera). Junction 2 (Vic-Puigcerdà).

C-17 to Ripoll and then N-152 to Ribes de Freser.

🚆 Line L3 RENFE (Barcelona-Puigcerdà) to Ribes de Freser and then change to Núria rack-and-pinion railway.

### Infrastructure and services

📍 **Vall de Núria information office**  
(next to sanctuary)

Estació de Muntanya Vall de Núria  
17534 Queralbs

Tel. 972 732 020

Reservations: tel. 972 732 030

Opening times: open every day of the year from 08.30 to 18.00.

valldenuria@valldenuria.cat

www.valldenuria.cat

for rowing. Nature-lovers who want to explore further can sleep in one of the four mountain huts in the area.

1931 saw the inauguration of the **rack-and-pinion railway** which unites Ribes de Freser and Núria. Even today it is the only form of transport that can reach the Sanctuary: there are no roads or track and this is one of the secrets of the silence that reigns in this valley.

Really it is only on days such as 8 September, when the festivities of the

Mare de Déu de Núria are held, that large numbers of people make the journey up to the Sanctuary; on this day tradition demands that local people and visitors alike dance the Sardana, the Catalan national dance.

Núria lies in the *comarca* of El Ripollès, an area with many other attractions for visitors. Small villages such as Queralbs, Planoles and Ventolà still preserve their **rural mountain charm** and there are many establishments offering rural accom-

modation and a number of good restaurants that delight with their local cuisine.

If you are interested in Romanesque art, then there is plenty to interest you: aside from the small village churches that are often still used for worship, a must are the monasteries of **Santa Maria de Ripoll** and **Sant Joan de les Abadesses**. The façade and cloister at Ripoll and the sculptures at Sant Joan are veritable master works of their kind.

Culinary specialities include the local cold cuts and in the autumn **wild mushrooms**, perhaps the most gratifying way of sampling the aromas of the forests that cover much of the area.



The rack railway, the only form of transport to Núria, climbs over 1,000 m on its 12.5 km journey to the sanctuary at Núria

© N. Cañas

www.costabrava.org  
www.catalunyaturisme.org

# Delta del Llobregat

## ornithological rarities in Barcelona's backyard

The Reserves Naturals de Remolar-Filipines i de la Ricarda-Ca l'Arana protect the remaining wetlands of the Llobregat Delta, and most of the lagoons, beaches and marshes are well-equipped with hides and observation points. However, the outstanding feature of this wetland is that it lies right next to the city of Barcelona and, above all, its airport, which in fact forms part of the delta. It is thus a must for birdwatchers who want to combine a visit to the sites and monuments of Barcelona with the possibility of adding new bird species to their lists. It is one of the sites where most rare birds are found each year in Catalonia, above all during passage periods.



View from the bird hide at Bassa dels Pollancrecs

© J. Orta

The Llobregat Delta is totally flat and is today covered by an assortment of cultivated land, small stands of riparian forest, coastal pinewoods, marshes, lagoons and beaches with dune vegetation that are home to breeding species such as the Kentish Plover.

Its proximity to the city of Barcelona makes a morning visit perfectly possible and allows birdwatchers to

then spend the afternoon in the city. On the other hand, if you have already travelled around Catalonia you can spend the last few hours of your stay before going to the airport in this singular spot. Here you will find species such as Balearic Shearwater, Little Bittern, Little Crane and Moustached Warbler that are generally difficult to see in Europe, and, with a little luck -

even during a quick visit- perhaps one of the large number of rare Nearctic and Asian species of birds that have been observed in the delta by the reserve staff.



Moustached Warbler

© F. López

## When to visit

Any time of year is interesting, but above all spring and winter.

## Spring

We recommend a spring visit to the hides and observations points in the Remolar Natural Reserve that command excellent views of the marshes and where there is also good access to the beach for seawatching.

At the end of March there are still a number of Moustached Warblers around and during this time of year males sing all day and are easy to find. As well, the end of March regularly brings Little and Spotted Crakes and, on occasions, even Baillon's Crake, that in some years has been seen from the bridge that crosses the Canal de la Vidala.

Purple Swamp-hen can be seen from any of the hides, although it is scarce and a bit of searching is needed. Likewise, the Great Bittern, which winters in the reserve, can be observed with a bit of luck in March.

From the beach seawatching will bring good concentrations of Balearic Shearwater, with the occasional Levantine Shearwater mixed in, as well as Razorbills, Gannets and Arctic and Great Skuas, and Pomarine Skuas in April. Mediterranean and Little Gulls are also fairly frequent. Early spring is also a good time for Great Spotted Cuckoo, regular in the Delta in spring. Summer visitors such as Little Bittern and Squacco and Purple Herons begin to arrive during April, while Audouin's Gulls can be seen from the hides and also on the beach amongst the groups of Yellow-legged Gulls and in other areas of the delta such as Cal Tet and Ca l'Arana. Some of the waders such as Collared Pratincole that breed in small numbers in the Delta should be looked for in the area of Cal Tet from the Sabogal hide. Scops Owls are fairly abundant in the Delta and by April are singing from the stands of pines and poplars. Amongst the passerines, April sees a few Red-rumped Swallow passing through, wintering Crag Martins – easy to see in the Remolar reserve – and the last of the wintering Blue-throats.

### Winter

Large numbers of Levantine Shearwaters can be seen on occasions from the viewing point on the beach next to La Riera de Sant Climent.

### Nearby areas of interest

Next to the marina of Port Ginesta, just south of the Delta and reachable along the Castelldefels dual-carriageway, towers Roca Falconera, a huge cliff with Shag, Peregrine Falcon, Pallid Swift, Black Wheatear and Blue Rock Thrush.

### Recommendations

- If you intend to visit as part of a group or need special attention, please get in touch with the information centres in advance.



Balearic Shearwater

© M. Cebolla

- In summer and part of the spring and autumn we recommend that you use mosquito repellent.

### Discover the area

**Barcelona**, the capital of Catalonia, has become in recent years one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world.

A number of reasons can explain this phenomenon: beaches just 10 minutes from the Gothic quarter, the Modernist architectural heritage including the master works of Gaudi,

### OUTSTANDING BIRDS

Balearic Shearwater (H)\*\*\*  
 Little Bittern (N)\*\*\*  
 Squacco Heron (N)\*\*  
 Purple Heron (N)\*\*  
 Little Crake (M)\*  
 Purple Swamp-hen (R)\*  
 Audouin's Gull (M)\*\*\*  
 Great Spotted Cuckoo (M)\*  
 Scops Owl (N)\*\*\*  
 Moustached Warbler (H)\*\*



Les Filipines salt marsh

© J. Bas



Cable car crossing the port of Barcelona

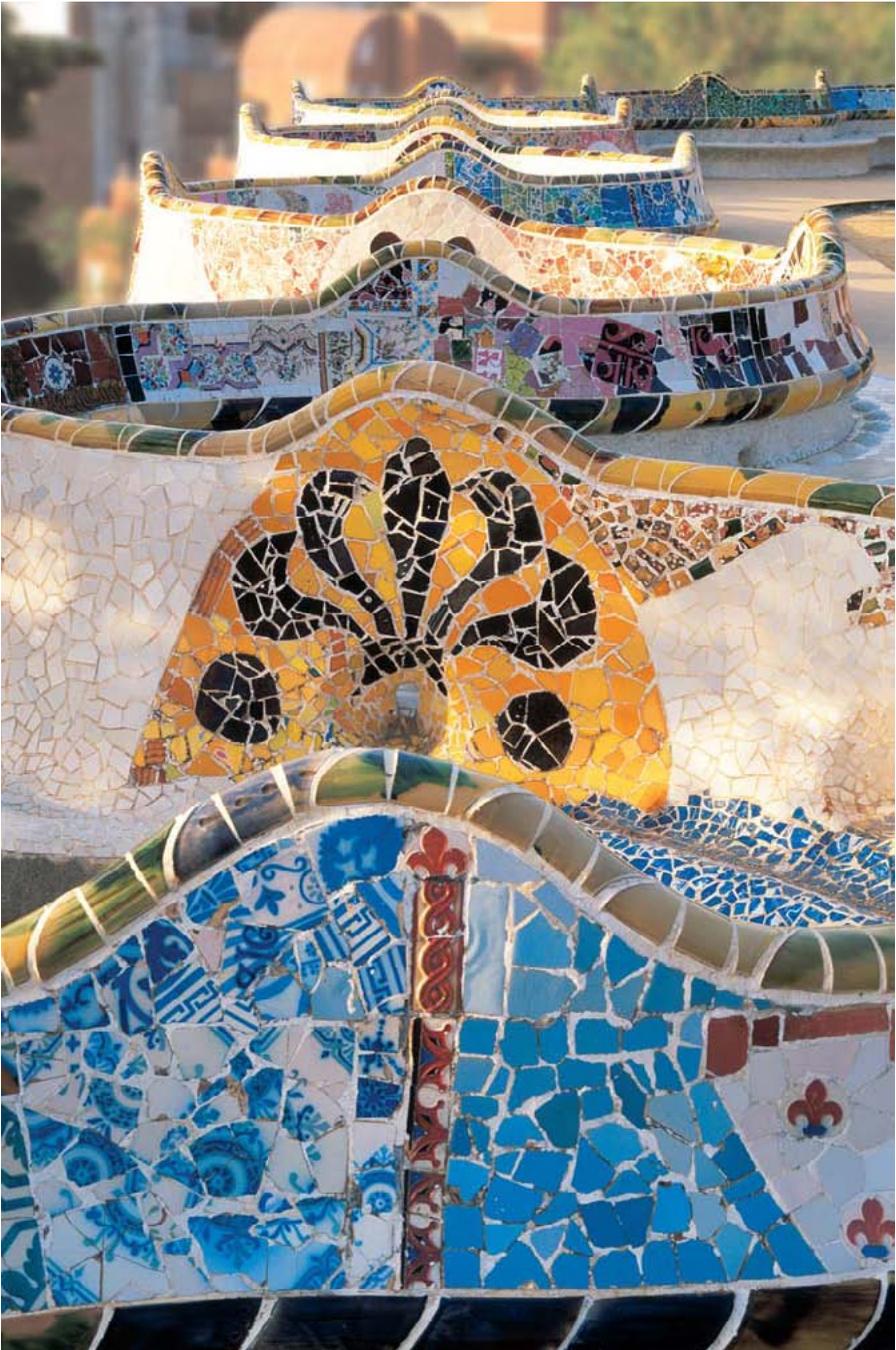
© A. F. Selbach

and the quality of the city's infrastructures and services. Nevertheless, beyond these quantifiable factors lies another more intangible reason to explain the city's success – its *ambience* and character.

We recommend that you wander through the city's streets and squares and enjoy its beaches and monuments: alternatively, shop in its many small family-run businesses or have a snack in one of the bars of the old town as a means of getting an insight into this captivating city.

Of the many activities on offer, here are just a few possibilities to get you in the mood:

- stroll through the **Gothic quarter** in the heart of the old city. On Sunday mornings in front of the Cathedral local people dance the traditional Sardana to the sound of the 11-piece *cobla* or orchestra.
- go for a cruise in a sail-boat from one of the city's **beaches** or in one of the traditional boats that ply the waters of the Port of Barcelona.
- attend a concert in the **Palau de la Música Catalana**, a wonderful Modernist concert-hall constructed



Bench in the Park Güell, Barcelona

### How to get there

The Delta is 2 km from Barcelona-El Prat Airport and 12 km from the city centre.

Access from Barcelona:

 C-31 Castelldefels dual-carriageway towards the Airport.

 The buses L94 and L95 run from Ronda Universitat in Barcelona.

### Infrastructure and services

In all in the reserves in the Llobregat Delta there are five hides and seven viewing points.

 The hides are suitable for wheelchair users.

### Remolar-Filipines Information Centre

Castelldefels dual carriageway (C-31), km 188

08840 Viladecans

Tel. 936 586 761

Opening times: open all year from 09.00 to 17.30.

[rndeltallobregat.dmah@gencat.net](mailto:rndeltallobregat.dmah@gencat.net)

[www.parcscdecatalunya.net](http://www.parcscdecatalunya.net)

- The **Remolar-Filipines** reserves are open midweek from 09.00 to 17.00 (from 1 June to 15 September from 09.00 to 15.00) and from 09.00 to 18.00 at weekends.

- In the information centre you will find news on the latest birds, as well as advice and printed information.

There is also a shop where you can hire binoculars.

- The Consortium for the Protection and Management of the Natural Areas of the Llobregat Delta organises hour-long free guided visits every Sunday morning. Guided visits must be booked in advance.

For more information:

[www.gencat.net/mediamb/rndelta/cdl1900.htm](http://www.gencat.net/mediamb/rndelta/cdl1900.htm)

[www.pantomaket.com/usuarios/vistavui/index.html](http://www.pantomaket.com/usuarios/vistavui/index.html)

by Lluís Domènech i Montaner that has been declared a World Heritage Site. This architect also designed the Ciutadella Park, home to the City's Natural History Museum and its zoological collection.

– visit the surprising and unique works of **Gaudí**. His most ambitious work, La **Sagrada Família**, although not yet finished, is the undisputed symbol of the city and reflection of its dreams and aspirations.

– climb the mountain of **Tibidabo** for wonderful views of the city at your feet. If you are with young children, the fun park on the top of the mountain is an added reason for visiting.

– discover the Romanesque murals conserved in the **MNAC** — the National Museum of Catalan Art. Due to its size and quality, this collection is considered as unique in the world.

– visit the **Joan Miró Foundation** in the Montjuïc Park, where this inter-

nationally famous artist's work is on display in a white, spacious building designed by his close friend, the architect Josep Lluís Sert.

– or look and listen for the many **bird species** that breed in the city, such as the parakeets that breed in the Ciutadella Park, Passeig de Colom and in the central promenade of Avinguda Diagonal, the street that bisects Barcelona from the hills to the sea.

**A**

Accentor, Alpine 24, 27, 28, 30, 31,  
32, 40, 41, 43, 52  
Avocet 7

**B**

Bee-eater, European 19, 23, 47  
Bittern, Great 7, 13, 56  
Bittern, Little 7, 9, 18, 19, 55, 57  
Bluethroat 9, 57  
Brambling 39  
Bunting, Cirl 10, 16, 23  
Bunting, Ortolan 16  
Bunting, Reed 6  
Bunting, Rock 16, 20, 23, 35, 41,  
47, 49, 52, 53  
Bustard, Little 4, 19

**C**

Cough, Red-billed 34, 35, 41, 46,  
47, 52, 53  
Cough, Yellow-billed 34, 35, 40, 41,  
52, 53  
Cisticola, Zitting 9, 13, 18  
Coot, Red-knobbed 7  
Crake, Baillon's 7, 13, 56  
Crake, Little 7, 12, 13, 55, 56, 57  
Crake, Spotted 7, 13, 56  
Crane, Common 13  
Cuckoo, Great Spotted 13, 19, 57

**D**

Dipper 52  
Diver, Black-throated 15  
Diver, Great Northern 9, 15  
Dotterel 36, 43, 53  
Dove, Stock 19, 49

**E**

Eagle, Bonelli's 4, 10, 15, 20, 23, 24,  
26, 27, 30, 31  
Eagle, Booted 9, 15, 28, 47  
Eagle, Golden 20, 23, 35, 41, 47, 52  
Eagle, Short-toed 7, 16, 19, 27, 47,  
49  
Egret, Great White 7  
Egret, Little 7

**F**

Falcon, Eleonora's 28  
Falcon, Peregrine 31, 47, 57  
Falcon, Red-footed 12, 13, 19  
Finch, Citril 4, 34, 35, 40, 41, 52, 53  
Firecrest 31  
Flamingo, Greater 6, 7, 13  
Flycatcher, Collared 13

**G**

Gannet, Northern 27, 57  
Garganey 13  
Goshawk, Northern 37  
Gull, Audouin's 4, 6, 7, 8, 57  
Gull, Black-headed 18  
Gull, Little 57  
Gull, Mediterranean 18, 57  
Gull, Slender-billed 8  
Gull, Yellow-legged 57

**H**

Harrier, Montagu's 7, 18, 19  
Harrier, Pallid 13  
Heron, Night 7, 13  
Heron, Purple 7, 13, 19, 57  
Heron, Squacco 7, 9, 57  
Heron, Western Reef 7  
Hobby 19  
Hoopoe 23

**I**

Ibis, Glossy 6, 7, 13

**K**

Kestrel, Lesser 19, 27  
Kite, Black 7, 28, 49  
Kite, Black-shouldered 13  
Kite, Red 49

**L**

Lammergeier 4, 34, 35, 40, 41, 47,  
52, 53  
Lark, Calandra 19  
Lark, Lesser Short-toed 8  
Lark, Short-toed 8, 19, 27  
Lark, Thekla 19, 23, 27

**M**

Magpie 13  
Mallard 13  
Martin, Crag 23, 27, 47, 52, 57

**N**

Nightjar, Red-necked 7, 8, 9, 18, 19

**O**

Oriole, Golden 31, 47  
Ouzel, Ring 34, 35, 41, 52  
Owl, Barn 8  
Owl, Eagle 27, 31  
Owl, Little 23  
Owl, Scops 8, 9, 13, 23, 24, 31, 57  
Owl, Tengmalm's 34, 35, 37, 41, 53

**P**

Partridge, Grey 41

Partridge, Red-legged 15, 19, 27, 30,  
31  
Pipit, Red-throated 9, 12, 13  
Pipit, Richard's 9, 15  
Pipit, Tawny 9, 16, 19, 23, 27, 49  
Pipit, Water 9, 15, 35, 52, 53  
Plover, American Golden 9  
Plover, Greater Sand 9  
Plover, Kentish 55  
Plover, Pacific Golden 9  
Pochard, Red-crested 7, 13  
Pratincole, Collared 7, 57  
Ptarmigan 36, 43, 52, 53

**R**

Razorbill 12, 27, 57  
Redstart, Black 52  
Roller, European 13, 19

**S**

Sandgrouse, Black-bellied 20  
Sandgrouse, Pin-tailed 19  
Sandpiper, Broad-billed 8  
Sandpiper, Marsh 8, 13  
Sandpiper, Pectoral 8, 15  
Sandpiper, Spotted 9  
Sandpiper, Terek 8  
Shag 57  
Shearwater, Balearic 4, 7, 12, 13, 15,  
27, 55, 57  
Shearwater, Cory's 13, 27  
Shearwater, Levantine 10, 12, 13, 15,  
27, 57  
Shoveler, Northern 13  
Shrike, Lesser Grey 4, 19  
Shrike, Southern Grey 19, 27, 30, 31,  
47  
Shrike, Woodchat 9, 19, 23, 27, 30,  
31, 49  
Skua, Arctic 27, 57  
Skua, Great 27, 57  
Skua, Pomarine 27, 57  
Snowfinch 4, 35, 36, 40, 41, 43, 53  
Sparrow, Rock 19, 23, 27, 30, 31,  
49  
Spoonbill, Eurasian 7  
Starling, Spotless 9, 19, 23  
Stilt, Black-winged 7, 18  
Stint, Temminck's 8, 13  
Stone-curlew 13  
Stork, Black 13  
Stork, White 7, 13, 18  
Storm-petrel, European 13, 27  
Swallow, Red-rumped 9, 27, 57  
Swamp-hen, Purple 7, 13, 18, 19,  
56, 57  
Swift, Alpine 23, 24, 27, 31, 47

Swift, Pallid 24, 26, 27, 57

## T

Teal, Common 13

Tern, Common 8

Tern, Gull-billed 8

Tern, Lesser Crested 7, 8

Tern, Little 8

Tern, Sandwich 8

Tern, Whiskered 8

Tern, White-winged Black 13

Thrush, Blue Rock 10, 19, 23, 27,  
30, 47, 49, 57

Thrush, Rock 27, 35, 40, 41, 49, 52,  
53

Tit, Bearded 13, 15

Tit, Marsh 37, 52

Tit, Penduline 9, 18

Treecreeper, Eurasian 37, 41

Treecreeper, Short-toed 31

## V

Vulture, Black 47

Vulture, Egyptian 23, 24, 34, 47, 49

Vulture, Griffon 23, 24, 34, 35, 41,  
47, 49, 52, 53

## W

Wagtail, Citrine 13

Wallcreeper 4, 24, 28, 30, 31, 32,  
35, 36, 41, 43, 46, 47, 49, 53

Warbler, Bonelli's 31, 47

Warbler, Cetti's 9, 13, 18

Warbler, Dartford 9, 16, 20, 23, 49,  
27, 47

Warbler, Great Reed 9, 18

Warbler, Melodious 9, 19, 23, 30, 31,  
49

Warbler, Moustached 7, 9, 13, 15,  
55, 56, 57

Warbler, Sardinian 9, 13, 19, 23, 27,  
30, 31, 49

Warbler, Savi's 7, 9

Warbler, Spectacled 26, 27

Warbler, Subalpine 9, 27, 47, 49

Warbler, Western Orphean 10, 16, 23,  
24, 26, 27, 47

Wheatear, Black 19, 23, 24, 31, 57

Wheatear, Black-eared 9, 16, 19, 23,  
24, 26, 27

Woodcock 37

Woodpecker, Black 37

Woodpecker, Lesser Spotted 13

## Y

Yellowlegs, Lesser 9

# Ethical code for birdwatchers

**The object of publishing this ethical code<sup>1</sup> is to ensure that birdwatchers behave in a respectful fashion. Birds are living creatures that are very sensitive to human activities and it is essential that their welfare is respected at all times, along with that of all other forms of wildlife, the environment and other people.**

**Thus, it is vital that you take into account the following considerations when you are birdwatching.**

**1** Promote birds' welfare and the conservation of the environment:

- Avoid disturbing birds in any way. Putting up a bird in order to see it better, or to film or record it, is totally unjustifiable and may in fact cause it harm.
- During the breeding period be especially watchful. Keep your distance from nests, breeding colonies and roosting, mating and feeding sites. Long periods of observation or photographic stake-outs should be done from a hide, car or from well-hidden places that will not disturb birds.
- Birds resting during long-distant migrations are especially sensitive to disturbance. Remember that if they allow you to approach it is probably because they are exhausted and lack energy to flee. Allow them to rest and feed in peace.
- In all habitats, stick to paths, tracks and roads, thereby minimising damage or disturbance.
- Try not to make any noise that might disturb birds and/or other birdwatchers.
- Do not use bird-song recordings or other means of attracting birds in visited areas, in the case of threatened species or during the breeding season.
- Leave the areas you visit as you found them, if not even better.
- The finding of nests of rare or threatened species must be communicated to local conservation and/or scientific bodies.<sup>2</sup>

**2** Respect the law and other people's rights:

- Most wild areas are private property even if there are no signs that say so. If

you come across gates and fences near inhabited buildings, ask permission from owners to enter.

- Respect the laws and regulations regarding access and the use of tracks, roads and other public areas.
  - Inform the appropriate authorities of any harm being carried out to birds and their habitats.<sup>3</sup>
  - Be courteous and friendly with people you meet when you are birdwatching to help generate a positive attitude towards birdwatchers.
- 3** Safeguard the security of feeding and drinking stations and nest-boxes:
- If you have a garden with bird feeders, check that they are clean and that the water in bird baths is of an acceptable quality.
  - Ensure that there are no dogs or cats nearby that might disturb the birds.
  - Clean nest-boxes and feeding stations every year after use.

**4** Write down your observations:

- Many of your observations will be of great scientific interest. We encourage you thus to communicate all interesting observations to the competent bodies.<sup>4</sup>
- The observations of birds considered to be rare in Spain have to be ratified by the SEO/BirdLife, whilst the birds considered to be rare in Catalonia have to be ratified by the Catalan Bird Committee (ICO).<sup>5</sup>

**5** Group observation requires additional precautions:

- Respect the interests, rights and skills of the other members of the group and share your knowledge, information and experience. Be especially considerate with inexperienced observers.
- If you detect a case of inappropriate behaviour, evaluate the situation and intervene if you think it is necessary. If conflict should arise, contact the appropriate authorities.
- Guides and group leaders must behave impeccably and set an example for all the group.
- Smaller groups minimise environmental impacts.

- All group members must be informed of the relevant regulations and restriction in the areas you enter, above all, for example, the impossibility of using recorded calls to attract species.
- Share these guidelines with the rest of the group.

**6** Contribute to sustainable tourism:

- Whenever possible, choose accommodation in establishments with environmental certification.
- Use local products from organic agriculture and stock-raising.
- Use public transport whenever possible or vehicles incorporating pollution-reduction technology.
- Calculate the environmental impact of your trip and try and think how you could reduce it in the future.<sup>6</sup>
- Help the conservation of important habitats for birds by supporting regional and local environmental groups and NGOs.

Help spread word of this ethical code by putting it into practice

<sup>1</sup> This code is an adaptation of that used by the American Birding Association and the Ethical Birdwatching Code used in Navarre.

<sup>2</sup> It is best to get in touch with the Environment Department of the Catalan Government: tel. 935 674 200, <http://mediambient.gencat.net>

<sup>3</sup> Phone the local ranger service: tel. 935 740 036

<sup>4</sup> We would be grateful if all observations of rarities were passed on to the Catalan Institute of Ornithology (ICO), [www.ornitologia.org](http://www.ornitologia.org), [ico@ornitologia.org](mailto:ico@ornitologia.org), tel 934 587 893

<sup>5</sup> See the species lists on the following web pages: SEO/BirdLife ([www.seo.org](http://www.seo.org)) and ICO ([www.ornitologia.org/monitoratge/cac.htm](http://www.ornitologia.org/monitoratge/cac.htm)). Detailed descriptions of observations can be sent to the SEO/BirdLife Rarities Committee: [rarezas@seo.org](mailto:rarezas@seo.org) or to CAC: [cac@ornitologia.org](mailto:cac@ornitologia.org)

<sup>6</sup> You can compensate for your CO<sub>2</sub> at [www.ceroco2.org](http://www.ceroco2.org)

## Other protected areas



	Area of ornithological interest	Number on map	Tourist board	Information
Wetlands	<b>Aiguabarreig</b>	1	Terres de Lleida	<a href="http://www.aiguabarreig.cat">www.aiguabarreig.cat</a>
	<b>Reserva Natural de Sebes</b>	2	Terres de l'Ebre	<a href="http://www.reservanaturalsebes.org">www.reservanaturalsebes.org</a>
	<b>Clot de la Unilla</b>	3	Terres de Lleida	<a href="http://www.accionatura.org">www.accionatura.org</a>
	<b>Espai Natural d'Utxesa</b>	4	Terres de Lleida	<a href="http://www.utxesa.com">www.utxesa.com</a>
	<b>Estany de Sils</b>	5	Costa Brava	<a href="http://www.accionatura.org">www.accionatura.org</a>
	<b>Basses d'en Coll</b>	6	Costa Brava	<a href="http://www.bassesdencoll.com">www.bassesdencoll.com</a>
Mediterranean landscapes	<b>Parc Natural de la Zona Volcànica de la Garrotxa</b>	7	Pirineus-Prepirineus	<a href="http://www.parcdecatalunya.net">www.parcdecatalunya.net</a>
	<b>Espai Natural de les Guilleries-Savassona</b>	8	Catalunya Central	<a href="http://www.diba.es/parcsn">www.diba.es/parcsn</a>
	<b>Parc Natural del Montsant</b>	9	Costa Daurada	<a href="http://www.parcdecatalunya.net">www.parcdecatalunya.net</a>
	<b>Parc Natural del Montseny</b>	10	Catalunya Central	<a href="http://www.diba.es/parcsn">www.diba.es/parcsn</a> <a href="http://www.parcdecatalunya.net">www.parcdecatalunya.net</a>
	<b>Parc Natural de Sant Llorenç del Munt i l'Obac</b>	11	Catalunya Central	<a href="http://www.diba.es/parcsn">www.diba.es/parcsn</a> <a href="http://www.parcdecatalunya.net">www.parcdecatalunya.net</a>
	<b>Parc del Castell de Montesquiú</b>	12	Catalunya Central	<a href="http://www.diba.es/parcsn">www.diba.es/parcsn</a>
	<b>Parc del Montnegre i el Corredor</b>	13	Costa de Barcelone-Maresme	<a href="http://www.diba.es/parcsn">www.diba.es/parcsn</a>
	<b>Parc de la Serralada Litoral</b>	14	Costa de Barcelone-Maresme	<a href="http://www.diba.es/parcsn">www.diba.es/parcsn</a>
	<b>Parc de la Serralada de Marina</b>	15	Costa de Barcelona-Maresme	<a href="http://www.diba.es/parcsn">www.diba.es/parcsn</a>
	<b>Parc del Garraf</b>	16	Costa de Garraf	<a href="http://www.diba.es/parcsn">www.diba.es/parcsn</a>
	<b>Parc d'Olèrdola</b>	17	Costa de Garraf	<a href="http://www.diba.es/parcsn">www.diba.es/parcsn</a>
	<b>Parc del Foix</b>	18	Costa de Garraf	<a href="http://www.diba.es/parcsn">www.diba.es/parcsn</a>
	<b>Reserva marina de les Illes Medes</b>	19	Costa Brava	<a href="http://www.parcdecatalunya.net">www.parcdecatalunya.net</a>
	<b>Mas de Melons-Alfés</b>	20	Terres de Lleida	<a href="http://www.lleidatur.com">www.lleidatur.com</a>
	<b>Espai d'Interès Natural Tamarit-Punta de la Móra</b>	21	Costa Daurada	<a href="http://www.depana.org/puntadelamora">www.depana.org/puntadelamora</a>
Pyrenees and pre-Pyrenees	<b>Parc Natural de l'Alt Pirineu</b>	22	Pirineus	<a href="http://www.parcdecatalunya.net">www.parcdecatalunya.net</a>
	<b>Paratge Natural de l'Albera</b>	23	Costa Brava	<a href="http://www.parcdecatalunya.net">www.parcdecatalunya.net</a>
	<b>Parc Territorial Col·legats-Terradets</b>	24	Terres de Lleida	<a href="http://www.lleidatur.com">www.lleidatur.com</a>
	<b>Muntanya d'Alinyà</b>	25	Terres de Lleida	<a href="http://www.caixacatalunya.es/territoriipaisatge">www.caixacatalunya.es/territoriipaisatge</a>
Around Barcelona	<b>Parc de Collserola</b>	26	Barcelona	<a href="http://www.parccollserola.net">www.parccollserola.net</a>

## Ornithological bodies

### ICO – Catalan Institute of Ornithology

Created in 1975 and dedicated to the study of bird biology and migration.  
Tel. 934 587 893  
ico@ornitologia.org  
www.ornitologia.org

### Catalan ornithological information web page (SIOC)

www.ornitologia.org/icoinfo

### Catalan ornithological maps web page (SCOC)

www.ornitologia.org/scoc

### On-line atlas of Catalan breeding birds

www.ornitologia.org/monitoratgeatles.htm  
http://oslo.geodata.es/ftp/ocells

### SEO/BirdLife

Spanish representative of BirdLife International created in 1954 with the aim of protecting birds and their habitats, and to carry out monitoring, conservation and awareness campaigns and projects.  
Tel. 932 892 284  
catalunya@seo.org  
www.seo.org

### Acciónnatura

Created in 1997 to protect, improve and restore natural ecosystems.  
Tel. 932 373 802  
info@accionnatura.org  
www.accionnatura.org

### Fundació Territori i Paisatge

Created by the Caixa Catalunya savings bank in 1997 as part of their environmental work, the main aims of this foundation include the conservation of the natural heritage and environmental education. It owns a number of ecologically very important areas of land.  
Tel: 902 400 973  
fundtip@fundtip.com  
www.caixacatalunya.es/territoriipaisatge

### Barcelona University

The Department of Animal Biology in the Biology Faculty carries out ornithological education and research projects.  
Tel. 934 021 439  
dept-biologia-animal@ub.edu  
www.ub.edu/bioani

### Catalan biodiversity database

(Barcelona University and the Catalan Ministry of the Environment):  
http://biodiver.bio.ub.es/biocat

### Lleida Ornithological Tourism Office

Tel: 973 780 009 / 609 410 334  
info@birding.cat  
www.birding.cat

### Other interesting web pages:

www.rarebirdspain.net  
www.reservoirbirds.com  
www.birdingcatalonia.com

## Services of ornithological tourism

### Club de Turisme Actiu \* Affiliated businesses:

#### Alt Empordà Turisme

Catamaran trips for seabirds off Cap de Creus and visits to Aiguamolls de l'Empordà.  
Tels. 972 514 431 / 972 672 414  
info@empordaturisme.com  
www.empordaturisme.com

#### Delta Turístic & Rent

Guiding and environmental outdoor activities in and around the Ebro Delta.  
Tel. 977 460 839  
info@deltaturistic.com  
www.deltaturistic.com

#### Empordà Interest Travel

Made-to-measure birdwatching programmes. Specialists in the Empordà region.  
Tel. 972 302 132  
info@eittravel.com  
www.eittravel.com

#### Makà Ecoturism

4x4 tours anywhere in Catalonia for birdwatchers.  
Tel. 670 400 506  
info@makaecoturism.com  
www.makaecoturism.com

#### Natura & Aventura

Guiding and environmental outdoor activities in and around the Ebro Delta.  
Tels. 977 742 987 / 646 598 324  
naturavtra@larapita.com  
www.naturayaventura.com

\* The **Club de Turisme Actiu de Turisme de Catalunya** is an association of businesses and institutions working to promote and commercialise outdoor activities linked to the natural world.

www.turismedecatalunya.com/turismeactiu

**Arabogues**

Guiding and outdoor activities in Els Ports.  
Tels. 647 909 047 / 636 014 036  
correu@arabogues.com  
www.arabogues.com

**Audouin Birding Tours**

Guiding and made-to-measure bird-watching trips in the Ebro region and throughout Catalonia.  
Tel. 649 286 086  
cristian@audouinbirding.com  
www.audouinbirding.com

**Catalan Bird Tours**

Guiding and made-to-measure programmes for birdwatchers throughout Catalonia.  
Tel. 636 271 695  
s.christopher@telefonica.net  
www.catalanbirdtours.com

**Ecologia i Natura**

Guiding and environmental outdoor activities in and around the Ebro Delta.  
Tel. 977 742 900  
aventura@ecologiainatura.com  
www.ecologiainatura.com

**Gubiana dels Ports**

Guiding and environmental outdoor activities in and around Els Ports  
Tels. 977 474 887 / 637 085 052  
caro@gubiana.com  
www.gubiana.com

**Guies del Port, serveis turístics**

Guiding and environmental outdoor activities in and around Els Ports.  
Tels. 977 435 515 / 676 308 021  
guiesdelport@yahoo.es  
www.elsports.org

**L'Aiguabarreig**

Reservations for wildlife tourism in and around L'Aiguabarreig.  
Tel. 973 780 009  
birding@aiguabarreig.cat  
www.aiguabarreig.cat

**Mediterrània – Centre d'Iniciatives Ecològiques**

Workshops and made-to-measure programmes for birdwatchers on the Costa Daurada.  
Tel. 977 551 300  
info@mediterrania-cie.org  
www.mediterrania-cie.org

**Mike Lockwood**

Guiding and environmental activities in La Garrotxa and throughout Catalonia.  
Tels. 972 590 327 / 661 956 939  
mike@walkingcatalonia.net  
www.walkingcatalonia.net

**Pedrenca**

Guiding and environmental outdoor activities in and around the Serra de Montsant.  
Tel. 690 251 295  
pedrenca@pedrenca.com  
www.pedrenca.com

**Entities and Tourist Boards**

Consortium for the promotion of tourism on the Maresme coast  
www.costadelmaresme.org

Barcelona Provincial Council  
www.turismetotal.org

Costa Brava Girona Tourist Board  
www.costabrava.org  
Lleida Tourist Board  
www.lleidatur.com

Tarragona Tourist Board  
www.costadaurada.info  
www.terresdelebre.org

Val d'Aran Tourist Board  
www.torisme.aran.org

Barcelona Tourist Board  
www.barcelonaturisme.cat

ACAV – Catalan Association of Travel Agents  
www.acav.net

ARAC – Catalan Association of Inbound Tour Operators  
www.aracat.com

**Catalan Tourism Promotion Centres (CPT)**

CATALAN TOURIST BOARD  
Pg. de Gràcia 105, 3r  
08008 Barcelona  
Tel. 934 849 900  
www.catalunyatourism.com

CPT Madrid  
turisme.blanquerna@gencat.cat

CPT Germany, Frankfurt  
info@katalonien-tourismus.de

CPT Italy, Milan  
info@catalogna-turismo.it

CPT China, Beijing  
ct.li@gencat.cat

CPT Benelux, Brussels  
info@catalunya-turisme.org

CPT United Kingdom and Ireland, London  
catalonia@catalantouristboard.co.uk

CPT France, Paris  
media@tourismedelacatalogne.fr  
promotion@tourismedelacatalogne.fr  
p-casaperpinya@gencat.net  
(Perpignan)

CPT Scandinavia, Helsinki  
ctb@wtc.fi

CPT Eastern Europe, Moscow  
jose@rosmail.ru

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acciònatura  
[www.accionatura.org](http://www.accionatura.org)

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# Les Planes de Son

centre de natura i desenvolupament sostenible dels Pirineus

*Activitats i vacances a la natura per a tothom*

Les Planes de Son, Son (Alt Àneu, Pallars Sobirà) Pirineus de Lleida  
Informació i reserves 902 400 973 [www.caixacatalunya.es/territoriipaisatge](http://www.caixacatalunya.es/territoriipaisatge)



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