

Romania

Danube Delta

Saturday 02 September – Saturday 09 September 2017

Leaders: Paul Rogers and local guides

2017 Cost **£1,899** single room supplement **£120**



The Danube Delta is the second largest in Europe after the Volga. It is a vast wilderness area visited only by fishermen and a few tourists. Our tour is based mainly at a new lodge situated near to the Ukrainian border, and in an area that can only be reached by boat. The rooms are large and well-appointed, the food good and the staff very friendly. The lodge is set in its own grounds of over 1,000 hectares of pools, reedbeds, sandy tracks, tamarisk thickets and riverine woods. It is a wildlife haven and there are numerous photographic hides which can also be used by those keen to take a few close-up photographs. We visit at a time when the return migration is in full swing and we should see literally hundreds, if not thousands, of pelicans, ducks, herons, egrets and waders. The real beauty of this visit is the solitude of the area, as we shall be the only people staying here for this week and will have the whole area to ourselves. At night there is virtually no light pollution so the night sky is beautiful. We can walk the trails, use the hides and we shall make various excursions, either by van or by boat. There are also some special mammals here with Wild Cat, Golden Jackal and Otter being amongst the best. Throughout the tour we will have the guidance of an ornithologist who lives at the lodge during the peak visiting times. It is truly still one of the last wilderness areas in Europe, but with a luxury lodge!

ITINERARY

Day 1

We take a morning flight from London to Bucharest where we arrive after midday. We check into our smart new hotel and then take an excursion to a local park where, amongst the interesting exhibits of old houses taken from all over Romania, we can search the woodlands and lakeside for resident and migrant species. We hope to find both Syrian and Middle Spotted Woodpeckers, Common Redstart, Spotted Flycatchers and Wood Warblers. Later, we return to the hotel for dinner and an overnight stay.

Days 2 to 7

We have an early breakfast and leave through the bustle of the Bucharest traffic for Tulcea. En route we can stop at an area of steppe where we would

hope to find Susliks, the small ground squirrels that are the prey for Long-legged Buzzard. Here we may also find Lesser Grey and Red-backed Shrikes, Northern and Isabelline Wheatears and European Rollers and European Bee-eaters. We arrive into Tulcea and take a high speed water taxi on the Danube heading towards our lodge, coming close to the Ukrainian border. After about 90 minutes we arrive at our wharf. It is impossible to get here by road, so we are now in an almost wilderness area, with thousands of acres of the Danube Delta and the Black Sea coast nearby.

Our new lodge is set amidst old fish ponds, abandoned after the fall of Ceausescu, but now a wildlife haven. Here the owner, with the help of our agents, has fashioned a private reserve, with drinking pools and photographic hides. There are miles of safe tracks to walk along and watch the

birds and wildlife from and we will be the only group here, so we have over 1,000 hectares of pools and reedbeds all to ourselves!

During our time here we can make a number of excursions, but many will be on foot wandering along the banks looking at the pools and muddy expanses, as there will be much to see. We can find both White and Dalmatian Pelicans here, Pygmy Cormorants, Eurasian Spoonbill, Glossy Ibis, Great, Little and Cattle Egrets, Grey, Purple and Squacco Herons, Little and Great Bitterns, as well as Green, Wood and Marsh Sandpipers, Little and Temminck's Stints, Black-tailed Godwit, Spotted Redshank and much more besides. Western Marsh Harriers are common, at least one pair of magnificent White-tailed Eagles is in residence and there should be a passage of Osprey and perhaps Eurasian Honey Buzzards.



Dalmatian Pelican

Penduline Tit



White Storks nests are obvious on pylons and posts around the pools and we would hope to find them, as well as a few Black Storks, feeding nearby. There is also the chance of crakes, with Spotted, Little and Baillon's all possible.

The sandy tracks are good feeding areas for Eurasian Hoopoes, and we would hope that we will still find good numbers of European Rollers and European Bee-eaters about. The reedbeds should be alive with noisy family groups of Bearded Reedlings and Penduline Tits. There will also be migrant warblers and we should look for Great Reed, Eurasian Reed, Moustached, Paddyfield and Sedge Warblers. The local woodlands can hold Black Woodpeckers as well as Great, Middle and Lesser Spotted. There may also be Eurasian Wrynecks still present as well as Icterine and Barred Warblers.

During our time here we take two boat trips, one into the many enormous lakes of the delta itself, to try and give you some idea of the vast scale of this wilderness area. We should have close encounters with White and Dalmatian Pelicans, Ferruginous Duck and Red-necked and Black-necked Grebes. There should also still be some marsh terns present. Another boat trip takes us out of the river mouth and into the Black Sea itself,

where we may witness some Little Gull migration as well as seeing large numbers of Caspian Gulls.

Inland from the sea are saltings and sand dunes, where we may find Pied Avocet, Black-winged Stilt, Collared Pratincole, Woodlark and maybe a lingering Red-footed Falcon or Eurasian Hobby.

Let us not forget some of the mammals we may find here. During the day it is possible to see Otters and at night we can take drives with spotlights to look for Wildcat, Muskrat, Badger and Golden Jackals. Of course, if there are some photographers in the group, they might wish to use the photographic hides – these have reflective windows and you have the chance to photograph the jackals, Bearded Reedling, Pygmy Cormorant and many other birds coming to the drinking pool, or reedbed hide. Add to this numerous butterflies and dragonflies and you have six days that will be full of wildlife in a setting away from it all. You will not hear any motorways and probably not even any planes

Day 8

We leave the hotel after an early breakfast and retrace our steps back to Bucharest before catching our return flight and arriving into London in the afternoon.

Wild Cat



Outline Itinerary

Day 1 Fly to Bucharest
Days 2-7 Danube Delta
Day 8 Depart Bucharest

Party Size

Maximum of 12 clients.

Accommodation

Comfortable accommodation in twin/double and single rooms, with private facilities.

Transport

By minibuses driven by the leaders.

Includes

All flights, meals, accommodation, transport, services of the leaders, VAT, airport taxes and tips.

Gradings

-  Good
-  150
-  Mainly warm
-  Low
-  Normal
-  Relaxed
-  Good
-  Easy
-  Scheduled

White-tailed Eagle

