

## **BULGARIAN MOUNTAINS and GREEK WETLANDS**

Leader: Assen Ignatov

10-20 April

PRICE: £1,880

(Based on a group of 8, a smaller group may incur a supplement).



This is an opportunity to combine not only two countries in one tour, but two contrasting habitats. In Bulgaria the Pirin mountains will provide pine forest birds and in Greece there will be visits to wetlands including Kerkini lake, Axios river, lakes Volvi and Langada and the Nestos and Evros deltas, the last is an important bottleneck for migratory birds.

Our Bulgarian tour leader, Assen Ignatov, works for the National Museum of Natural History ([www.nmnhs.com](http://www.nmnhs.com)). He is a very experienced and knowledgeable guide, as well as being a gifted artist and excellent photographer.

Bulgaria's beautiful scenery, friendly people and excellent wine and food are additional highlights. The B-BS offers you the benefits of over forty years' experience of organizing tours to Bulgaria. For your financial protection our tour operators for over twenty-five years, Balkania Travel Ltd. are licensed by the UK Civil Aviation Authority, ATOL 4465 and bonded by the International Air Transport Association, IATA number 91-2 7839. Hotels are comfortable (and well situated for birdwatching!) but not luxurious.

The holiday is on a Half-Board basis. Final details and bird lists will be sent to participants approximately two weeks before departure.

### **Projected Itinerary (which may be subject to adjustment)**

**Monday 10 April** Flight from Heathrow to Sofia.

Drive south through the Struma valley to Melnik, Bulgaria's smallest town, for a two night stay. Some birdwatching stops on the way. Possible birds at Kresna gorge include Subalpine, Orphean, Barred and Olive-tree Warblers and Woodchat Shrike. At Ilindentsi hills you may see Raven, Rock Nuthatch and Blue Rock Thrush.

**Tuesday 11 April** Visit to Rozhen monastery, Rupite (the crater of an extinct volcano) and Hotovo. Possible birds today include Long-legged Buzzard, Levant Sparrowhawk, Great Reed Warbler, Cetti's Warbler, Bee-eater, Hoopoe, Rock Sparrow and possibly Rock Nuthatch.

**Wednesday 12 April** Drive to Greece for a two night stay in the area of Veria. Stop at Kerkini lake, where you may see storks, Dalmatian Pelican, Pygmy Cormorant, Spoonbill, terns, birds of prey including Osprey and Lesser Spotted Eagle, Red-footed Falcon, Cetti's and Savi's Warblers, Penduline Tit.

**Thursday 13 April** Visit the west side of Termaikos gulf including Kalohori lagoon (Little Stint, Curlew Sandpiper, Broad-billed Sandpiper, Stone Curlew), Axios river (Purple Heron, Pygmy Cormorant, Collared Pratincole) and Gallikos estuary looking for Terek Sandpiper and Zitting Cisticola.

**Friday 14 April** Drive east to Keramoti for a two night stay. A stop at Koronia and Volvi lake – Black-tailed Godwit, White-tailed Eagle and Short-toed Eagle, Golden and Booted Eagles, Ferruginous Duck. Afternoon drive to one of the biggest bird sites in Northern Greece – the Nestos river delta.

**Saturday 15 April** Explore the area of Nestos Delta looking for waterfowl, waders, terns, gulls and shearwaters. Possible birds – Spur-winged Lapwing, Collared Pratincole, Dalmatian Pelican, Ferruginous Duck, Lesser Grey Shrike, Subalpine Warbler, Masked Shrike and Levant Sparrowhawk.

**Sunday 16 April** Drive from Nestos to Dadia for a two night stay. Visit to Nestos Gorge for Cirl and Ortolan Buntings, Rock Nuthatch, Orphean Warbler, Alpine Swifts. At Portolagos lagoon possible birds are Stone Curlew, Flamingo, Little Crake and Little Bittern; at Vistonida Lake: Black, Whiskered and White-winged Terns, Gull-billed and Sandwich Terns, Night Heron.

**Monday 17 April** Visit to the Evros Delta – one of the best birding spots in Northern Greece an important bottleneck for migratory birds in spring and autumn. Possible birds – Spur-winged Lapwing, Glossy Ibis, Collared Pratincole, Masked Shrike, Great Spotted Cuckoo.

**Tuesday 18 April** A day at Dadia Forest, one of the richest places for raptors (36 species) in Europe. Today we hope to see Black, Griffon and Egyptian Vultures, Booted and Golden Eagles, Red-footed Falcon and buzzards. Other possible birds – Bonelli's, Subalpine and Orphean Warblers, Sombre Tit. Late afternoon drive back to Bulgaria for a one night stay at Ivailovgrad.

**Wednesday 19 April** Visit the area around Ivailovgrad and then drive to Madjarovo looking for Honey Buzzard, Lesser Spotted Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Griffon and Egyptian Vultures, Black Kite, Rock and Ortolan Buntings, Barred Warbler, Black-headed Wagtail and Hawfinch. Travel to Plovdiv for the final night.

**Thursday 20 April** Transfer to Sofia airport for return flight.

# BULGARIA 2023

## OUR PRICE INCLUDES:

- Return scheduled flights from Heathrow to Sofia with all taxes and charges.
- Half Board.
- Accommodation in small, friendly (often family-run) hotels with en suite facilities on a twin-bedded shared occupancy basis.
- Coach for transfers and excursions.
- Specialist Bulgarian leader.
- Donation to Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds or other Bulgarian conservation organization.
- All reserve entrance fees.

## NOT INCLUDED:

- Lunches (about £4 - £5)
- Travel Insurance (compulsory). Balkania Travel can advise.
- Drinks and personal expenses such as gratuities.
- Single room supplement (£175)

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Further information from Dr Annie Kay, B-BS Tours Organiser.

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