

## **SPRING BIRDING IN CENTRAL & NORTHERN SPAIN**

**April 22 – May 8, 2010**

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*In 1999 VENT's annual Spanish birding tour was updated by leader Peter Roberts, who devised the original itinerary in 1993, based on over 25 years of experience birding in Spain. The modified and improved itinerary incorporates important bird areas in Central Spain and additional important wetlands on the Mediterranean coast. Other changes have been made to add yet further exciting additional species, to making this an extremely comprehensive birding tour possibly including Red-knobbed Coot, White-headed Duck and Marbled Teal to an already very impressive tour list that stands at a total of 258 species and regularly exceeds 210 species per tour.*

*Spain has long been an extremely popular destination for European birders, offering as it does a wide range of typical Mediterranean habitats, along with easy, safe, and excellent birding. Many sites are in beautifully scenic settings featuring Romanesque architecture and ancient, fortified hilltop villages. Despite its appeal within Europe as a "sun and sand" holiday destination, much of interior Spain is very rural and way off the tourist trail. This is the finest region to sample a large array of southern European species and is especially good for raptors, with 23 species possible. Our very comprehensive itinerary is specially designed for American birders and provides a greater diversity of birds concentrating on three major and distinct habitats: the semi-arid steppes and cork-oak dehesas of central and northern Spain interior; the scenic Sierras and high, alpine Pyrenees to the north in Catalonia and Aragon; and the Ebro River delta wetlands and marshes on the Mediterranean coast. During spring, the many resident and breeding birds of this region are joined by migrants en route from Africa to breeding areas in the north and the Arctic.*

*Our first birding will be in the hills and cork-oak dehesas south of Madrid in the Monfragüe region. Our target species, which will not be found further north include Black Stork, Cinereous Vulture, Black-shouldered Kite, Great Spotted Cuckoo, Red-necked Nightjar, Red-rumped Swallow, Azure-winged Magpie, Spanish Sparrow, Pallid Swift, and, most importantly, Spanish Eagle—a recent split from the Imperial Eagle of Eastern Europe and the only full endemic species in Iberia.*

*The Ebro Delta, is one of Spain's largest rivers and one of the most important wetlands in Western Europe. The delta is a huge complex of easily watched coastal dunes, saline lagoons, fresh marshes, reedbeds, and rice fields. Some of the many highlights include large numbers of waterbirds: Red-crested Pochard, Great Crested and Little grebes, Water Rail, and seven species of breeding heron (Little Bittern, Purple and Squacco herons are common). The ten or more tern and gull species include abundant Slender-billed and Audouin's gulls both very localized Mediterranean birds. Shorebirds include a mix of breeding species such as Pied Avocet, Snowy Plover, Common Redshank, Black-winged Stilt, and Collared Pratincole. Migrants may include Wood Sandpiper, Spotted Redshank, Greenshank, and Eurasian Oystercatcher. Western Marsh-Harrier and Greater Flamingo are common here. Passerine specialties include typical marshland and coastal scrub birds: Zitting Cisticola, Savi's and Moustached warblers, and Great and Eurasian reed-warblers.*

*To the north, the Spanish steppes are a fast-disappearing habitat being lost to arable agriculture. Certain areas have been protected by international efforts and are now splendid reserves that we shall visit. It is a land of flat stony plains, mesas, scrubby river valleys, and maquis vegetation not unlike some semi-desert regions of the southwest U.S. Primary birding goals will be Great and Little bustards, Pin-tailed and Black-bellied sandgrouse, Montagu's Harrier, Red-legged Partridge, Little Owl, Lesser Kestrel, Eurasian Thick-knee, Spectacled Warbler, and eight species of lark, including the elusive Dupont's. White Storks are common, found nesting on village rooftops or precariously perched on ancient church spires.*

*The Pyrenees and the foothill sierras offer some of the most spectacular scenery of the tour. At lower elevations are unspoiled habitats of box scrub, olive groves, and stunted oak forest amidst impressive steep, deep limestone gorges and massifs of pink, red, and gray. Here are many classic Mediterranean species such as Eurasian Hoopoe; European Bee-eater; Woodchat Shrike; Black-eared and Black wheatears; European Serin; Cirl, Ortolan, and Rock buntings; plus many warbler species including Sardinian, Western Orphean, Subalpine, and Western Bonelli's. Here, too, is one of the greatest concentrations of raptors found anywhere in Europe, with 20 probable species. Eurasian Griffons are abundant, and just about guaranteed are Egyptian Vulture; Lammergeier; Golden, Booted, Bonelli's, and Short-toed eagles; and Red and Black kites: we've never failed yet! The area has magnificent, ancient fortified villages, massively built of stone with immense protecting walls. And there are old cathedrals, churches, monasteries, and castles dating back to the 12<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries, when Spain was divided into the separate states of Castile, Aragon, and Catalonia, and occupied in some areas by the Moors from Northern Africa.*

*At higher elevations are true alpine habitats of coniferous forests, fast-flowing streams, open, flower-rich meadows, and splendid craggy mountain peaks, some still snow-covered. Further specialties we hope for here are Alpine Accentor, Red-billed and Yellow-billed choughs, Ring Ouzel, White-throated Dipper, Gray Wagtail, Alpine Swift, Citril Finch, Black Woodpecker, and the fabulous Wallcreeper. If lucky, we may find White-winged Snowfinch, though this usually requires much more hiking.*

*We travel in spacious and comfortable self-drive minibuses allowing for maximum flexibility. Optional pre-breakfast birding and after-dark owling are offered for the keenest, while those who wish to relax at times may opt out without disrupting the schedule. Food is generally good and plentiful, and it is customary in Spain to provide wine free with the evening meal. Some accommodations are in small, clean, simple, family-run rural hotels, delightfully individual in pleasant and beautifully renovated ancient stone farmhouses, nestled in quiet, charming villages where Tawny Owl, Common Nightingale, Black Redstart, and Wood Lark sing outside our windows at night! Other accommodations are small, exclusive, and 4 star. All have private bathrooms.*

*This popular and quickly booked tour has been greatly enjoyed by previous participants. Some have appreciated it so much they've joined the tour for a second time. Your leaders, Peter Roberts and Alberto Bueno enthusiastically look forward to sharing with you the marvellous birds, spectacular scenery, and special magic of this splendid region of Europe. This tour does not require a great deal of walking or steep hiking to see the bulk of the birds, though there are opportunities for longer hikes for those who choose. We have plenty of time and a good client/leader ratio to ensure that just about everyone gets great views of most every bird! The highest altitudes involved are usually just 6,000 to 7,000 feet, but only for one to two days of the tour.*

**April 22-23, Days 1-2: US to Madrid.** You should plan your flights to arrive Madrid Barajas International Airport (airport code MAD), Spain by 10:00 a.m. on Day 2. After clearing customs and immigration, you will be met by your leaders and depart immediately for the Monfragüe region. En route there will be plenty of time for some great initial birding—finding many of the common species such as Spotless Starling and European Serin, and hopefully specialties such as Azure-winged Magpies and Spanish Eagle, before reaching the our hotel in the heart of the dehesas for a three-night stay.

NIGHT (Day 2): Hospedería Parque de Monfragüe, Torrejón El Rubio

**April 24-25, Days 3-4: Monfragüe Region.** We will have plenty of time here to check out the scenic sierras, dehesas, and woodlands for the specialties of the region: breeding Spanish Eagle, Black Stork, and Cinereous Vulture in particular. Other great birds we'll be searching for here are Azure-winged Magpie, Red-rumped Swallow, Pallid Swift, Spanish Sparrow, Black-shouldered Kite, European Roller, and Great Spotted Cuckoo, all species difficult or impossible to find further north. We will also make our first searches for Bonelli's Eagle, Great and Little bustards and have time to visit ancient historic, fortified towns such as Trujillo (good for Pallid Swift!). After dark we can venture out to look for Red-necked Nightjar and resident Barn Owls around the village.

NIGHTS: Hospedería Parque de Monfragüe, Torrejón El Rubio

**April 26, Day 5: Monfrague to Valencia.** Today we will set out northeast across the great open plains of La Mancha - Don Quixote's country. This is a vast open landscape of mixed agriculture and pasture (a last opportunity for more bustards) and isolated lagoons good for the local Bearded Reedling and a very good chance to find White-headed Duck, a globally threatened species with a limited world range. By early evening we'll arrive at our beautiful "bodega" hotel in the province of Valencia with European Scops-Owl and Rock Petronia, just outside our windows.

NIGHT: Hotel Rural Entrevinas, Valencia

**April 27, Day 6: To the Ebro Delta.** Today we will incorporate new sites for further special birds – Red-knobbed Coot and Marbled Teal (another globally threatened, range-restricted bird), plus a superb breeding colony of Mediterranean Gulls at Albufera de Valencia. We hope to take a short boat excursion on the lagoons where all these along with several species of terns should be breeding. On route to the Ebro Delta we hope to visit other unique coastal wetlands to show you another very localized species - Moustached Warbler along with colonies of Collared Pratincole. Arriving in the Ebro Delta, we will check into our superb hotel, a short walk from good birding sites.

NIGHT: Hotel Miami Mar, San Carlos de la Rápita

**April 28, Day 7: the Ebro Delta.** Our two days on the Ebro Delta exploring the varied coastal habitats will give a large boost of species seen on this tour without having to travel any great distances at all. The focus will be on waterfowl, herons, gulls, terns, shorebirds, and specialties of the reedbeds and marshes. Waterfowl should include Common Shelduck, Great Crested and Little grebes, and large numbers of bright Red-crested Pochards. Equally abundant are Greater Flamingos. There will be smaller counts of Gray, Purple, Black-crowned Night, and Squacco herons, Great and Little egrets, and Little Bittern. We will probably find one or two scarcer species such as Eurasian Spoonbill, Glossy Ibis, Water Rail, and Purple Swamphen. Western Marsh-Harriers can be a common sight over the extensive reedbeds where Reed Bunting, Great and Eurasian reed-warblers, Savi's and Moustached warblers, and Zitting Cisticolas sing. We should see breeding Common Redshank; Pied Avocet; Snowy Plover; Caspian, Little, Sandwich, Gull-billed, and Whiskered terns; Yellow-legged Gull and the attractive Slender-billed Gull. Migrants should be present—perhaps a Little Stint, Wood Sandpiper, Common Greenshank, Spotted Redshank, Eurasian Oystercatcher Ruff or Black-tailed Godwit.

NIGHT: Hotel Miami Mar, San Carlos de la Rápita

**April 29, Day 8: Ebro Delta to the Steppes.** As always, our approach to the daily itinerary is flexible and will reflect what species have been seen or still needed. We anticipate departing the Ebro after optional pre-breakfast birding, setting off inland towards the famous Monegros area of arid steppe. If we've not seen Bonelli's Eagle by now, we'll check other sites known to Alberto. We'll certainly have time to deviate into the labyrinth of farm tracks across the steppe and to look at the salt lakes for good chances of encountering various lark species, both sandgrouse, Eurasian Thick-knee and Tawny Pipit. By late afternoon we'll pass by Belchite where we may find time to pause at the old town which was bombed into dereliction in the Spanish Civil War and left as an eerie monument to the conflict. By early evening we will arrive at Fuendetodos, famous as the birth place of Goya and now amidst a burgeoning wine-growing area.

NIGHT: Hospederia El Capricho de Goya, Fuendetodos

**April 30, Day 9: Spanish Steppes.** We will spend a day in the steppe areas and preserves of Belchite, paying special attention to finding Dupont's, Calandra, Thekla, Lesser and Greater Short-toed larks; the bustards and sandgrouse; Lesser Kestrel; Little Owl; Long-eared Owl; Eurasian Thick-knee; Egyptian Vulture; Montagu's Harrier; Red-legged Partridge; Black-eared Wheatear; Southern Gray Shrike; Spectacled Warbler; and no doubt a whole host of other great birds. We will also bird along the Ebro River near Zaragoza for birds of the more lush and verdant river edge, such as Little Ringed Plover, Eurasian Wryneck, Eurasian Penduline Tit, Melodious and Cetti's warblers, Eurasian Golden Oriole, Eurasian Hobby and more. We have also found nesting Northern Goshawk and Eurasian Eagle-Owl in the area and have other good sites for the scarce Bonelli's Eagle.

NIGHT: Hospederia El Capricho de Goya, Fuendetodos

**May 1, Day 10: To the Pyrenees.** This will be a fairly leisurely day to drive north into the Pyrenees near Hecho. We have many options, great little stops and alternative sites for species still causing "gaps" in our list, or to obtain better views for anyone who may have missed out earlier. We will be looking out for Black Wheatear today and may call in to wetland reserves for a chance of Eared Grebe, Great Bittern, Bearded Reedling, or Common Kingfisher. We'll arrive by early evening at our welcoming hotel in the Pyrenees.

NIGHT: Hotel Castillo de Acher, Siresa

**May 2-3, Days 11-12: The High Pyrenees.** Two full days based in Siresa will give us optimum chance of finding alpine species. One day will be spent travelling to higher Pyrenean mountain passes at 6-7,000 feet elevation amidst spectacular scenery. Target species at these heights, from just below the tree-line to the open alpine zone, are Alpine Accentor, Ring Ouzel, Citril Finch, Eurasian Crag Martin, Water Pipit, Yellow-billed Chough, and depending on weather conditions and snow cover, perhaps a chance encounter with White-winged Snowfinch.

Our second day may be spent revisiting higher areas, staying lower in wooded regions, or travelling further west to different beautiful mountain habitats in search of new birds like Marsh Tit, Firecrest, Eurasian Bullfinch, Red Kite, Yellowhammer, Eurasian Jay, and Red Crossbill. The hotel is in a picturesque village close to prime birding sites, particularly for Wallcreeper. This stunning crimson, grey, and black beauty is a regular breeding bird in the deep, steep, rocky gorges just minutes away from our accommodation. Other target species at these mid-elevations are Black Woodpecker, Blue and Rufous-tailed rock thrushes, Crested Tit, White-throated Dipper, Gray Wagtail, and, of course excellent chances of Lammergeier!

NIGHTS: Hotel Castillo de Acher, Siresa

**May 4, Day 13: To the Sierra De Guara.** We have great flexibility today while making the easy transition from Siresa eastwards to Lecina, our base for the next three nights. Depending on which species may be missing, or of interest to us, we can stay longer in the Siresa area or go high into the Pyrenees again; or more directly towards the impressive grand red sandstone massifs of the Sierra De Guara. There may be time to combine birding with interesting historical monasteries or fortified villages in spectacular settings. Lecina is an idyllic, tiny and timeless

village, far up a winding dead-end Pyrenean road. Our accommodation is a beautifully converted ancient farmhouse, a little haven all to ourselves serving excellent food and wine.

NIGHT: Hostal La Choca, Lecina

**May 5-6, Days 14-15: Lecina and vicinity.** We'll have two full days based in Lecina with excellent birding literally on the doorstep. The varied habitats include precipitous gorges, box-scrub covered hillsides, patches of stunted oak forest, tiny green fields surrounded by ancient stone walls, and olive groves all creating a wonderful, picturesque mosaic and ensuring a fine variety of birds. A morning of gentle rambles on foot from our base will be welcome respite from the vehicles. The whole area is rich in typical southern European species, and we'll expect good sightings of many of the following: Subalpine, Dartford, Western Orphean, Sardinian and Western Bonelli's warblers; Cirl, Ortolan and Rock buntings; Common Nightingale; Woodlark; Woodchat Shrike; Short-toed Treecreeper; Firecrest; Eurasian Hoopoe; and European Serin. The region is phenomenal for raptors. It is difficult to look upwards and not see Eurasian Griffons soaring overhead! We often find Lammergeier here along with Black Kite and Golden, Short-toed, and Booted eagles along with occasional Eurasian Sparrowhawk, European Honey-Buzzard, and Northern Goshawk. Early risers will enjoy the opportunity to wander before breakfast and get to know the birds at their own pace. There are plenty of options during our stay, depending on birds seen and group wishes: a trek to the ancient cave-paintings is possible, or some well-earned downtime to soak up the fresh air and bird song at your leisure. We can visit some of the more spectacular gorge areas, where skies can be filled with raptors, and stand outside the front door of the hotel after dark and call in the resident Tawny Owl.

NIGHTS: Hostal La Choca, Lecina

**May 7, Day 16: To Barcelona.** We have to leave the Pyrenees today and head east to the Mediterranean coast and the bustling and historic city of Barcelona. Birding en route, we may seek out the localized Lesser Gray Shrike, check out Long-eared and Barn Owl nest sites and any other species still on our "want list". We stay in a hotel near the airport.

NIGHT: Hotel El Castell, Barcelona

**May 8, Day 17: Return to the US.** The tour ends today with a transfer to the Barcelona International Airport (airport code BCN) in time for flights departing any time today.

**EXTRA ARRANGEMENTS:** Should you wish to make arrangements to arrive early or extend your stay, please contact the VENT office at least two months prior to your departure date. We can very easily make hotel arrangements and often at our group rate, if we receive your request with enough advance time.

**TOUR SIZE:** The tour will be limited to 12 participants.

**TOUR LEADERS: Peter Roberts and Alberto Bueno.**

**Peter Roberts** is based in Britain, lives in the north of Scotland, and has been a keen naturalist since childhood in London. While birds remain his main interest, close contenders include whale-watching, the big game animals of Africa, snorkeling, and the study of insects. A varied, lifelong career has included conservation and wildlife-related work from nature reserve management and teaching wildlife field courses to ornithological survey and research, environmental consultancy, and work for the UK government's Department of the Environment. Wardening the bird-banding station on the Welsh island of Bardsey for seven years, and a year managing the Aldabra Research Station in the Indian Ocean stimulated a passion for seabirds and islands. His work has taken him to archipelagos worldwide from Antarctica, Falklands, Juan Fernandez, Galapagos, Hawaii, Seychelles, and São Tomé north to the Shetlands, Pribilofs, and Aleutians. Peter has an MSc in woodland invertebrate ecology and has published research on various subjects from the feeding ecology of fruit bats to bird migration, identification, and behavior, and to the ecology of seabirds and Red-billed Choughs. Tour-

leading for over 30 years has now become virtually full-time and resulted in travel to over 75 countries on all seven continents, concentrating in particular on the birds, history, and wildlife of Europe and Africa.

**Alberto Bueno** works as a naturalist for the regional government of Aragon. He is a keen, competent, and enthusiastic local Spanish birder who has co-led all of VENT's tours to Spain. Alberto knows many of the areas in which we travel intimately. He has all the necessary local knowledge and contacts to ensure that we have the very best chances of finding as many as possible of our most sought after birds. He is an invaluable asset to the tour.

**FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:** The fee for the tour is **\$5400** per person in double occupancy from Madrid, Spain and includes all meals beginning with lunch on Day 2 to dinner on Day 16, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation during the tour, gratuities, and guide services provided by the tour leader. The tour fee does not include airfare from your home to Madrid with return from Barcelona, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration, a small-party supplement may have to be charged.

The single supplement for the tour is **\$500**. You will be charged a single supplement if you desire single accommodations, or if you prefer to share but have no roommate and we cannot provide one for you.

**EXCHANGE RATE SURCHARGES:** In the erratic global financial markets of today, it is difficult to predict foreign currency exchange rates over the long term or at the time of operation of a tour or cruise departure. Tour prices are based upon the rate of exchange at the time of itinerary publication. If exchange rates change drastically, it may be necessary to implement a surcharge. If a surcharge is necessary, every effort will be made to minimize the amount. In many cases, these additional foreign exchange rate surcharges are passed to VENT by its vendors and suppliers.

**FUEL AND FUEL SURCHARGES:** In the uncertain, often volatile oil market of late, it is difficult – if not impossible – to predict fuel costs over the long term, and more specifically, at the time of operation of this departure. Our prices are based upon the prevailing fuel rates at the time of itinerary publication. While we will do everything possible to maintain our prices, if the fuel rates increase significantly, it may be necessary to institute a fuel surcharge.

**TOUR REGISTRATION:** To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The deposit for this tour is **\$500** per person. If you prefer to pay your deposit by check, your tour space will be held for 10 days to allow time for the VENT office to receive your deposit and completed registration form. If you prefer to pay your deposit using a credit card, your deposit must be made with MasterCard or Visa at the time of registration. The VENT registration form should then be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office. Full payment of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to the tour departure date.

**CANCELLATION POLICY:** Cancellation penalties and refunds are based on the following schedule: if cancellation is made 120 days or more before the tour departure date, a cancellation fee of **\$250** per person will be charged unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months, in which case the cancellation fee will be **\$100** per person. If cancellation is made fewer than 120 days before departure date, no refund is available. This policy and fee schedule also applies to pre-trip and post-trip extensions. ***We strongly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance for your protection.***

<u>If you cancel:</u>	<u>Your refund will be:</u>
120 days or more before departure date	Your deposit minus \$250*
Fewer than 120 days before departure date	No refund available

\*Unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months, in which case the cancellation fee will be \$100 per person.

**TRIP INSURANCE:** A brochure and application form for optional coverage for baggage, illness, and trip cancellation can be obtained through the VENT office. **We strongly recommend that you purchase trip cancellation insurance as soon as possible to protect yourself against losses due to accidents or illness.** VENT recommends *Travel Insured International* as our preferred insurance provider. Check with your insurance agent regarding coverage you may presently have via other insurance policies that may cover illness during your trip. **Waiver for pre-existing conditions is available; however, stipulations apply, usually requiring the purchase of the insurance soon after registering.** Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items such as work-related cancellation, medical upgrade, and a “Cancel for Any Reason” clause among others. Contact *Travel Insured International* prior to registration for details. Not all insurance providers provide the same levels of coverage. If you purchase insurance through a company other than *Travel Insured International*, please be advised that rules and stipulations may be different.

**Medical insurance which covers you for emergency evacuation/repatriation during the trip is also recommended for this tour.** This coverage is included in the Worldwide Trip Protector plan offered by *Travel Insured International*. A good website for information and acquisition of emergency evacuation/repatriation insurance is: [www.insuremytrip.com](http://www.insuremytrip.com).

**Victor Emanuel Nature Tours is not a participant in the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires certain sellers of travel to have a trust account or bond. This business has a bond issued by Travelers in the amount of \$50,000. CST #2014998-50.**

**AIR INFORMATION:** Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to make any domestic or international air travel arrangements from your home and return. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements.

**BAGGAGE:** We request participants limit their baggage to one medium-sized suitcase and one carry-on, if possible. Check with your airline for specific weight limits, as each airline is different.

**CLIMATE/CLOTHING:** Weather at this time of year may vary from hot, dry, and sunny to cooler (or, if unlucky, cold!) with some rain. Snow is possible in the high Pyrenees. Most of the time, light cotton clothes, t-shirts, and light walking shoes will be fine. However, for the evenings and at higher altitude, carry a light raincoat, a sweater, and an anorak. A sun hat and sunglasses are advisable, plus a light rucksack. Although there is no requirement for any long or arduous walking, you may wish to wander further off the trails, so a pair of walking shoes or boots is advisable as well as lighter shoes or trainers. Laundry services are available at some locations during the tour.

**CURRENCY:** Euros - €; Bring either a small amount of Euros with you or change money on arrival. There is access to ATMs during the tour. You may want a little cash for drinks and small items such as postcards and stamps.

**DOCUMENTS:** A passport valid for at least six months beyond your planned departure from Spain is required. Visas are not required for entry by United States citizens. Non-United States citizens should check with their consulate/embassy for instructions.

**EQUIPMENT:** Pack a pair of binoculars in good repair, along with a belt pack or day pack (good for carrying books, sunscreen, extra film, etc.). Your leaders will have a spotting scope; but if you have one and wish to bring it, please feel free to do so. Items such as toothpaste, soap, deodorant, cosmetics, sunscreen, sunglasses, etc. can be purchased in Spain.

**HEALTH PRECAUTIONS:** Spain is free of all the tropical diseases requiring inoculations, etc., as compared to more exotic destinations. There should be plenty of bottled water available, although tap water is considered safe. Bring sunscreen and perhaps a little mosquito repellent (though these are not usually a problem, especially at this time of year). Do not anticipate being at any great altitude. You will probably reach 7,000 feet to do some high Pyrenean birding, but will not be this high for very long.

Access to shops and pharmacies may be somewhat limited. If you are taking prescription medication or over-the-counter medicine, be sure to bring an ample supply that will allow you to get through the tour safely. Please consult your physician as necessary. Remember to pack all medication in your carry-on baggage, preferably in original containers or packaging. As airline baggage restrictions can change without warning, please check with your airline for procedures for packing medication. As standard travel precautions, you should always be up to date with tetanus shots, and strongly consider inoculations against Hepatitis types A and B.

In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travellers is the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta. The CDC operates a 24-hour recorded Travellers' Information Line 877-FYI-TRIP (394-8747) or you can check their website at [www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel). Canadian citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada: [www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/new\\_e.html](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/new_e.html) (click on travel health).

**MISC:**

Departure Tax - none  
Electricity - 220 volts, 50 cycles; round 2-pin plugs  
Language - Spanish (Castilian), Catalan, Galician and Basque  
Time - 6 hours ahead of Eastern Daylight Savings Time

**PHOTOGRAPHY:** There should be excellent scenic, cultural and historical shots, but bird photography may be limited. Bring all the film you think you will need, as it may not be easily obtained in the out-of-the-way places we will visit.

**SUGGESTED READING:** Our website, [www.ventbird.com](http://www.ventbird.com) offers an affiliated online store that carries a wide variety of items for birding and nature lovers, including over 6,000 books. A portion of the sales from this store benefits the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. You may also visit such other online stores such as [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com), and for those out-of-print or hard-to-find titles, [www.abebooks.com](http://www.abebooks.com) or [www.buteobooks.com](http://www.buteobooks.com) which specializes in ornithology books. Europe is well-covered with many adequate pocket-sized bird identification guides. Your tour leader has an extensive library on all aspects of natural history. If you are interested in a particular subject, please let VENT know prior to departure and your leader will bring along relevant guides.

**Birds:**

Svensson, Lars, Peter J. Grant, Killian Mullarney, and Dan Zetterstrom. *Birds of Europe*. Princeton University Press, 2000. This new field guide to the birds of Britain and Europe is receiving rave reviews! It is packed with 3500 color illustrations, masses of detail on identification, beautifully produced. *Highly recommended!*

Jonsson, Lars. *Birds of Europe with North Africa and the Middle East*. Princeton University Press, 1996 (Reissue edition). A good field guide with lovely illustrations.

Peterson, Guy Mountfort and P.A.D. Hollom. *A Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe*. Houghton Mifflin, 2001. Somewhat outdated.

**Flowers:**

Grey-Wilson, Christopher and Marjorie Blamey (illustrator). *The Alpine Flowers of Britain and Europe*. Norfolk: Jackdaw Books, 1985. Out of print: try [www.abebooks.com](http://www.abebooks.com).

Polunin, Oleg and B. E. Smythies. *Flowers of South-West Europe, a Field Guide*. Oxford University Press.

**TIPPING:** Tipping (restaurants, porters, drivers, local guides) is included on VENT tours. However, if you feel one or both of your VENT leaders or any local guides have given you exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are not expected and are entirely optional.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc. (VENT) and/or its Agents act only as agents for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT and its agents can accept no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will have to be borne by the passenger, as tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. The right is reserved to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute leaders on any tour. Where this is necessary, notification will be given to tour members. No refund will be made for any unused portion of the tour unless arrangements are made in sufficient time to avoid penalties. The prices of the tours are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect July 17, 2009 and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change therein. The right is reserved to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely. The airlines concerned and their agents and affiliates are not to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time passengers are not on board their aircraft. The passenger ticket in use by said airlines, when issued, shall constitute the sole contract between the airlines and the purchaser of these tickets and/or passenger. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for these tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airline Reporting Corporation.