



# Bulgaria in Autumn

The 'Secret Flyway'

Friday 16 – Friday 23 September 2011  
Friday 21 – Friday 28 September 2012

(8 days)  
(8 days)

*An exciting, great value 8-day birdwatching tour during the peak season for birds of prey, pelicans and passerines migrating along Bulgaria's busy Black Sea corridor! Join us for some really terrific autumn birding – without the crowds!*



Corncrake on the hotel balcony... Lesser Spotted Eagles all but brushing our noses with their wing-tips right outside the bedrooms... a party of Black Storks passing by at eye level as we breakfast in the restaurant... a male Pallid Harrier ghosting in from the sea at extremely close range... 'falls' of Golden Orioles, Red-breasted Flycatchers and Icterine Warblers... a flock of 1200 roosting White Pelicans... up to twenty different species of birds of prey. These are just some of the highlights from our previous autumn tours to Bulgaria's Black Sea coast.

The annual migration of tens of thousands of birds of prey and storks across the Bosphorus in neighbouring Turkey has long been famous as one of the great European bird spectacles. But the fact that the majority of these birds – plus countless thousands of storks, pelicans, herons and other migrants – must first travel south through coastal Bulgaria was inexplicably overlooked by travelling birdwatchers until as recently as the late-1990s.

As with migration anywhere, the make up and number of birds moving can vary enormously from day to day. But our tour is timed to run during the period when the spectacle of autumn migration along this 'secret flyway' is typically around its peak. And with direct flights now available to Varna on Bulgaria's Black Sea coast, we should arrive right in the thick of the action.

By happy coincidence, some of Europe's most important wetlands are also to be found nearby. The coastal saltpans, freshwater lakes and reedbeds hold an impressive array of specialities, with White and Dalmatian Pelicans, Pygmy Cormorant, Little Crane, Broad-billed and Marsh Sandpipers, Bluethroat and Penduline Tit among those we've seen before.

To the north, the limestone steppe of Cape Kaliakra is attractive to migrant wheatears, warblers, flycatchers and shrikes. Being so little visited we have good chances here of finding something really special ourselves. Eagle Owls and Pied Wheatears have stolen the show in the past, and the forests just inland of the coast can be outstanding for woodpeckers.

Why not join us for an exciting week, revelling in the annual movement of birds of prey, pelicans, storks and innumerable passerine migrants that stream south along Bulgaria's Black Sea coast every autumn? The prospect is irresistible!

## Outline Itinerary

**Please note:** Due to flight schedule changes since our brochure went to press, the dates for our 2011 autumn tour to Bulgaria: The Secret Flyway have changed. The new dates are Fri 16-Fri 23 September 2011, as correctly shown above (and not Tue 20-Tue 27 September, as appears in our 2011 brochure).

For convenience and ease of travel, our tour is based around the (very limited!) direct flights between London Gatwick and Varna. Schedules subject to possible change by the airline. If outbound and/or return flight times change, it may be necessary to swap the above itinerary around, visiting Pomorie (Bourgas) first and then Kavarna - but the places visited and birds to be seen will be the same.

**Day 1:** We catch a flight from London direct to Varna, where our local guide will be waiting to welcome us. Transfer north (just over an hour's drive) along Bulgaria's Black Sea coast to our first hotel, near Kavarna.  
*Overnight Kavarna*

**Days 2 - 4:** Set on a hillside overlooking the sea, our hotel is perfectly situated. Migrants follow the valley and, if conditions are right, the daylight hours can see birds of prey and storks passing right by us at eye-level! At night, the hotel's lights act as a beacon to nocturnal avian travellers.

Having made a thorough check first thing to see what's new, we will head to Lake Durankulak, a mainly brackish lake that lies just six kilometres from the border with Romania. Not far away, the sheer, scrub-topped limestone cliffs of Cape Kaliakra are equally attractive to passerine migrants and act as bottle-necks to southbound raptors and other large soaring birds.  
*Three nights Kavarna*

**Day 5:** Tearing ourselves away from the fascinating wildlife of the Dobruja region, we head south along the coast to our second hotel, at Pomorie (near Burgas). The journey will take us through an ever-changing landscape, past sprawling seaside resorts with extensive beaches, along rockier stretches with cliffs and through well-wooded valleys that are a haven for birds. Despite the rather dreary sound of its name, in fine weather we'll find that the "Black Sea" is actually a bright azure blue, its shores

## TRIP DETAILS

**ACCOMMODATION:** Two-centre tour based at typically modest but comfortable Bulgarian tourist hotels, well-situated for the best autumn birding. All rooms en suite.

**MEALS:** All included in the price. Breakfasts and dinners at the hotels. Lunches will usually be picnics.

**WALKING:** Easy. Short walks (up to approx 2 miles), on mainly good trails over easy-moderate terrain. Sturdy walking shoes or lightweight boots recommended.

**GROUND TRANSPORT:** By coach with local driver (minibus with small group)

**LEADERS:** Robin Chittenden & local guides

**NUMBERS:** Max. 14 clients

**PRICES:** 2011: £ 1,395  
2012: £ 1,450

**Single supps.:** 2011: £ 95  
2012: £ 95

**Deposit:** £ 300 per person

The price is per person, and is fully inclusive of return scheduled flights London Gatwick-Varna, all accommodation, meals, coach transport (minibus with small group), tips, airport taxes, map, bird checklist and services of the leader/s.

The price excludes travel insurance, drinks and other personal expenses.

**These trips will be operated in conjunction with Limosa Holidays.**

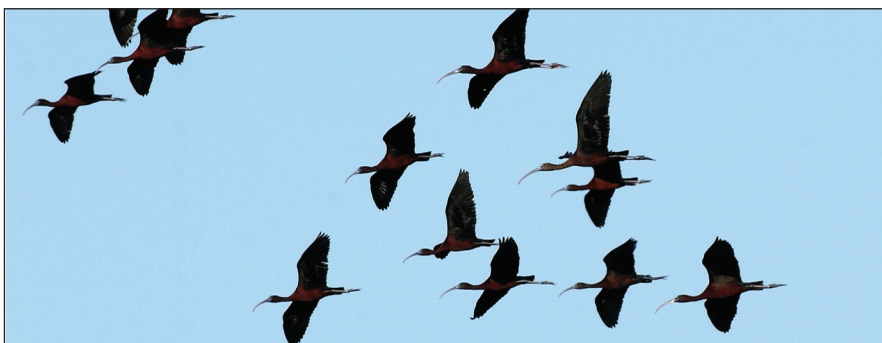
etched with bays of brilliant white sand.

Migration could bring us to a halt more or less anywhere today and we'll stop to explore some fine deciduous woodland near Goritza. Cape Emine is another headland that acts as a real migrant trap.  
*Overnight Pomorie*

**Days 6 - 7:** Burgas is a large town on Bulgaria's Black Sea coast – but there just happens to be a major bird of prey migration route right overhead! The second half of September generally sees peak passage as columns of birds stream southward. The make up and number of birds moving will, of course, vary from day to day, but that such a prospect should have been largely overlooked by travelling birdwatchers until now is surprising – even more so when one realises that some of Europe's major wetlands also lie nearby.

In fact, Bulgaria's most celebrated migration watch-point – Lake Atanassovo – lies within an easy drive of our hotel. Despite being so close to town, the lake boasts a wealth of bird life.  
*Two nights Pomorie*

**Day 8:** If flight times permit, we'll enjoy some final birding on our way north from Burgas to Varna this morning, prior to catching our flight back to London.



Glossy Ibis (Photo: Rebecca Nason)

**Know before you book!: For travel health advice, please refer to: [www.nathnac.org](http://www.nathnac.org)**

EUROPE, NORTH AFRICA & MIDDLE EAST