



# Morocco in Autumn

## Northern Marshes, High Atlas & Atlantic Coast

Saturday 1 – Sunday 9 October 2011

(9 days)

Saturday 6 – Sunday 14 October 2012

(9 days)

*This wonderful autumn birdwatching trip amidst the marshes, mountains, forests and coasts of this amazing corner of Africa is just too good to miss!*



Picture flocks of White Storks soaring gracefully overhead on migration... flights of hundreds of Glossy Ibis... the challenge of sifting through twenty or more different species of wader... and encounters with the likes of Squacco Heron, Bonelli's Eagle, Purple Swamphen, Red-knobbed Coot and Common Bulbul... All these have regularly been seen on the first full day of our autumn Morocco tour! Later it may be the turn of Barbary Partridge, Marbled Duck, Barbary Falcon, Lesser Crested and Royal Terns, House Bunting, Bluethroat and Black-crowned Tchagra to set our pulses racing.

From Tangier we travel via the bird-rich estuaries and marshlands of northwest Morocco, inland to the beautiful Cork Oak woodlands and scrub-covered hills of the Zaïers. Continuing south to the grandeur of the High Atlas mountains and out along the rugged cliff-lined coast of Morocco's sunny southwest, this October tour offers some of the most exciting, varied and incredibly scenic autumn birding anywhere in the Western Palearctic.

Our extended itinerary concludes with two nights in Marrakech plus two in Agadir, so as to incorporate visits to the snow-capped peaks of the High Atlas and the glorious sea-cliffs and estuaries of southern Morocco's Atlantic shore. Here we will look for the endemic Levaillant's Woodpecker before driving up to more than 2500m above sea-level to enter the realm of Alpine Chough, 'Atlas' Shore Lark and the elusive 'African' Crimson-winged Finch.

To the west, the arid coastal strip is home to the dazzling Moussier's Redstart. The critically-endangered Bald Ibis, one of the world's rarest (and weirdest-looking!) birds, has its one remaining stronghold here too. For those that wish, there may be time for a brief sight-seeing trip to the bustling main square in Marrakech before we finish our journey at Agadir, with visits to two of the region's finest wetlands: the Oued Sous and Oued Massa. Wetland birds abound and we could encounter just about anything here, from Ruddy Shelduck and Black-winged Kite to Plain Martin and Laughing Dove.

Over the years, this tour has produced so many memorable highlights: from North Africa's relict

population of Marsh Owls leaving their daytime roost to quarter the swampy grassland, to cliff-top gatherings of supremely elegant Eleonora's Falcons performing breathtaking aerobatics right over our heads. With migrants on the move, Arnoud's excellent local contacts and the experience of some thirty Morocco tours behind us, this amazing tour is too good to miss!

### Outline Itinerary

**Day 1 :** Our holiday begins with an evening flight from London to Tangier. We'll be met on arrival and transfer to our hotel at Asilah, a short drive to the south of Tangier airport.

#### Overnight Asilah

**Day 2 :** After breakfast at our hotel, we board our coach and travel an hour or so down the coast to arrive at the wonderful Loukkos marshes.

In the afternoon we continue south to Merdja Zerga, with its famous Marsh Owls.

#### Overnight Moulay Bouselham

**Day 3 :** With its narrow, ribbon-like form, Lac de Sidi Bourhaba is one of the best spots in Morocco to see wintering ducks.

In the late afternoon, we head to the coastal cliffs at nearby Salé, where the elegant Eleonora's Falcon breeds.

#### Overnight Skhirat

**Day 4 :** Taking a picnic breakfast, a very early start is essential this morning if we are to stand any chance of finding what is now one of Morocco's rarest birds, the Double-spurred Francolin.

#### Overnight Skhirat

**Day 5 :** After breakfast we resume our journey to Marrakech and the High Atlas Mountains.

After dinner, we'll pay a sightseeing visit (optional) to the city's bustling main square, Djemaa el F'na – with its colourful array of jugglers, fire-eaters, snake charmers, water-sellers and fortune-tellers.

#### Overnight Marrakech

## TRIP DETAILS

**ACCOMMODATION :** Hotels in Morocco do vary but the overall standard on this tour is good, with all rooms en suite. Because the only flights to Tangier currently arrive there in the evening, we spend the first night at a hotel that lies within an easy drive of the airport, to give a more relaxed start to the tour.

**MEALS :** All included in the price. Dinner and breakfast at the hotels. Most lunches (and the occasional breakfast on this trip) will be picnics, but some meals taken at convenient restaurants along the way.

**WALKING :** Easy. Short walks over easy-moderate terrain. Maximum elevation: 2600-3000 metres in the High Atlas (for a few hours only). Sturdy waterproof walking shoes or lightweight boots with rugged, corrugated soles advised.

**GROUND TRANSPORT :** Coach/minibus with local driver.

**INSECTS :** Mosquitoes may be present in low numbers at some wetland spots, chiefly at dusk.

**PRINCIPAL LEADER :** Arnoud van den Berg

**NUMBERS :** Max. 14 clients

**PRICES :** 2011 – £ 1,895

2012 – £ 1,895

Single supps. : 2011 – £ 135

2012 – £ 135

Deposit : £ 300 per person

The prices are per person and include return scheduled flights London-Tangier and Agadir-London, all accommodation, meals, coach/minibus transport, all entry fees, tips and gratuities, airport taxes, map, bird checklist and services of the leader/s.

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

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

**Day 6 :** Our birding reaches a real high today as we drive from Marrakech on the plain, up to around 3000m in the beautiful High Atlas mountains.  
*Overnight Marrakech*

**Day 7 :** Leaving the dramatic scenery of the High Atlas Mountains behind, we reach the Atlantic coast once more to search for the critically endangered Northern Bald Ibis.  
*Overnight Agadir*

**Day 8 :** Our final day in Morocco will be spent at one of its finest wetland reserves, Oued Massa.  
*Overnight Agadir*

**Day 9 :** Our flight home departs Agadir today. Afternoon arrival in London, where our tour concludes.



The High Atlas – the view from Oukaimeden