



Romania

Danube Delta and Black Sea Coast

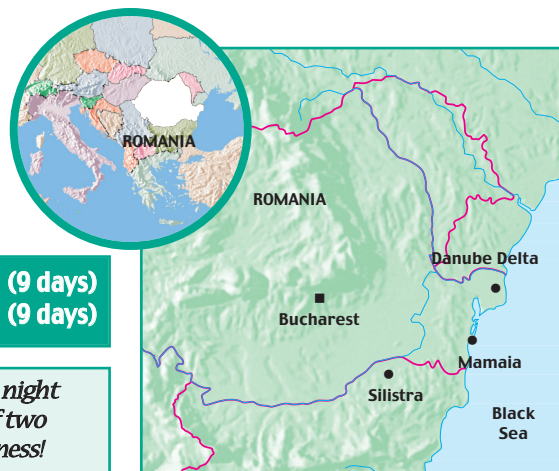
Saturday 5 – Sunday 13 May 2012

(9 days)

Saturday 8 – Sunday 16 September 2012

(9 days)

Our extended spring and autumn tours to Romania now include a fourth night aboard a superior hotel-boat exploring the Danube Delta – and a choice of two exciting and differing itineraries within Europe's greatest wetland wilderness!



For its serene beauty and richness of birds, the immense Danube Delta is perhaps Europe's greatest natural treasure. The largest reedbeds in the world are here and, from May through September, the Delta provides one of the world's major bird spectacles. It is worth coming to see the pelicans alone, as they plane across the skies like undulating ribbons of smoke.

Even today, this whole region remains difficult of access, for few roads threaten this peaceful haven. Indeed, much of our birding is possible only by water and the centrepiece of this wonderful holiday will be an exploration of the vast swamps aboard one of the Danube's unique 'hotel-boats'. Unlike many bird tours, we spend four nights afloat, using a superior vessel with all cabins en suite. Given the immense stands of reed, some towering fifteen feet or more above the water, the flat upper deck of our boat is often the only way to achieve elevated views of the Delta and its magnificent birdlife.

Whether your preference is for May or September, both are excellent months to visit Romania. The sheer number and variety of birds present then is impressive: colourful Rollers and Bee-eaters are frequent beside the roads, and the flights of White Pelicans in choreographed flocks above the Delta is a sight not to be missed.

Our spring cruise focuses on the sheltered lakes of the northern delta where most of the breeding takes place, while in autumn we head south to Sacaline, a sandy peninsula on the Black Sea coast and a superb place for migrants!

With our experienced local guide 'Zoli' Baczó, and the benefit of more than a dozen previous tours to eastern Romania behind us, why not join us for some of the best birding Europe has to offer!

Outline Itineraries

Please note: the itineraries for our spring and autumn cruises in the Danube delta are different.

Day 1 : We fly from London to Bucharest. We'll be met by our local guide and drive along the Danube river valley to our first hotel just across the border in neighbouring Bulgaria.
Overnight Siliistra

Day 2 : Arriving at the Black Sea coast in the late afternoon, we continue on to our hotel at Mamaia,

which will be our base for the next three nights.

Overnight Mamaia

Days 3 - 4 : Both spring and autumn can be outstanding for migrants along Romania's Black Sea coast and Mamaia is superbly placed to watch for these as they come in off the sea. Catch migration on the right day in this part of the world and we could be in for one of the most exciting birdwatching experiences in Europe!

After breakfast, our first port of call is a rocky valley with a mix of steppe and oak forest, with Pied Wheatear occurring here at the westernmost limit of its range. From here, we head to Histria, perhaps the richest birding location on the Black Sea Coast.
Two nights Mamaia

Day 5 : Leaving Mamaia, we pass through Dobrogea to reach the extensive deciduous forests of the northern part of the province.

On reaching the Danube delta this evening, we shall transfer for dinner tonight on board our hotel-boat (known locally as a 'ponton'). Our spring and autumn cruises follow different routes, with our ports of embarkation being Tulcea in May and Murighiol in September (please see separate cruise itineraries below).

Overnight on board our ponton in the Delta

Days 6 - 8 :

Spring Cruise (May)

Our May visit explores the northern part of the Delta, along the Sulina channel. The patchwork of lakes, channels, immense reedbeds and stands of willow here provide ideal breeding habitat for many birds. At this time of year, the breeding season for many typical Delta birds will be at its height.

Autumn Cruise (September)

Our September visit explores the southern part of the Delta, travelling along the Sfantu Gheorghe channel and focusing mainly on the mouth of the delta. The breeding season over, we should see large numbers of birds making their way south.

Our final night in the Delta will spent moored close to Tulcea or Murighiol, ready to disembark after breakfast next morning for the drive back to Bucharest.

Three nights on board our ponton in the Delta

TRIP DETAILS

ACCOMMODATION : We spend our first night at a 5-star hotel beside the Danube in Siliistra (which lies just across the border into Bulgaria); this breaks the long drive to the coast and offers some great birding nearby, making it an ideal stopover. At the coast, we use a good quality medium-grade tourist hotel, with all rooms en suite. In the Delta, we use a superior quality hotel boat (known locally as a 'ponton'), with all cabins en suite (see below).

MEALS : All included in the price. Food is good.

WALKING : Easy. Short walks at the coast. Most birding in the Delta must be done by boat, with only limited opportunity for occasional short walks where/when landing on terra firma is possible.

'HOTEL BOAT' : In the Delta, we spend four nights sleeping on board a three-storey 'hotel boat'. Known locally as a "ponton", a typical boat is equipped with small, twin bedded or double guest rooms (situated on the lower deck of the ponton), each with private facilities. A limited number of single occupancy rooms is usually available on board so please let us know as soon as possible if you wish to be assigned a single. Although not spacious or luxurious, the ponton we use offers clean and comfortable accommodation. Pontons do not have their own engine and so are towed behind a smaller launch. We will endeavour to explore a wide variety of habitats, using a combination of the ponton, small motor boat and occasionally (particularly if water levels are very low) rowing boats manned by the crew.

LEADERS :

May – Robin Chittenden & Zoltán Baczó
September – Peter Kennerley & Zoltán Baczó

NUMBERS :

Max. 14 clients

PRICE :

£ 1,795
Single supp.* : **£ 140**
Deposit : **£ 300** per person

The price per person includes return scheduled flights London-Bucharest, all meals and accommodation including four nights aboard 'hotel boat' within the Danube Delta, mid-coach or minibus transport, permit fees, admissions, tips, airport taxes, map, bird checklist & services of the leaders.

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

**A limited number of single rooms is available onboard the ponton ('hotel-boat'). Please let us know as soon as possible if you wish to be assigned a single room.*

Both trips will be operated in conjunction with Limosa Holidays.



Pelicans (Photo by tour participant Richard Swinbank)

Day 9 : After breakfast on board the ponton, we drive back towards Bucharest. Having paused to enjoy some final birding over a picnic lunch, we continue to the airport and catch the afternoon flight back to London.