



code: VBG 0025

**Duration:** 8 days

**Departures dates 2017/2018:** every day

**Group size:** min. 2

**Price:** 2-3 pax 870 € per person; for 4 or more - 790 €/person/adult & child

**Dobrudzha** is blessed with a distinctive avifauna and beautiful nature formations. On this wonderful birdwatching tour we visit the top birding locations along the Black Sea Coast. April and May bring a wide array of migrant passerines, raptors, and shorebirds resulting in a bird diversity that is truly overwhelming. We will have a full week to explore a paradise for birdwatchers – the Black Sea coast and add new species to our lists. Our route covers the wetlands, steppes and dramatic cliffs of the South and North Bulgarian Black Sea coast, which are some of the most bird-rich areas in Europe.

**Highlights** of our tour are: Alpine Swift, Barred Warbler, Bearded Tit, Black Tern, Black-headed Bunting, Calandra Lark, Caspian Tern, Collared Pratincole, Dalmatian Pelican, Eagle Owl, Ferruginous Duck, Grey-headed Woodpecker, Isabelline Wheatear, Kentish Plover, Lesser Grey Shrike, Levant Sparrowhawk, Little Bittern, Olivaceous Warbler, Olive-tree Warbler, Paddyfield Warbler, Pied Wheatear, Pygmy Cormorant, Red-crested Pochard, Red-necked Grebe, Roller, Ruddy Shelduck, Semi-collared Flycatcher, Short-toed Lark, Sombre Tit, Sombre Tit, Syrian Woodpecker, Tawny Pipit, Whiskered Tern, Yellow Wagtail and many other species.

### **Day 1. Arrival**

Arrival at Sofia/ Plovdiv/ Bourgas airport. Transfer to the town of Balchik on the Northern Black Sea Coast for overnight.

### **Day 2. Balchik – Yailata – Bolata – Kaliakra Cape**

Early in the morning we leave Balchik and drive for a short trip around the village of Kamen Briag where we find the ancient tombs in the archeological and nature reserve Yailata. Yailata is a true phenomenon of natural beauty. Barring the presence of migratory birds it is a true birding hotspot. Here we enjoy different bird species: Black-headed Bunting, Calandra Lark, Hoopoe, Pied Wheatear, Short-toed Lark, Tawny Pipit. After the amazing cliffs of Yailata we proceed further to the rocky cape of Kaliakra. Kaliakra is a reddish crag rearing 70 m above the sea level. Along the shore are ruined fortifications and the headland is covered in evocative ruins, dating from the Middle Ages. You may occasionally see dolphins frolicking off the coast here. Kaliakra Reserve covers part of the cape. It was founded in order to preserve the diverse world of birds. We dedicate rest of the day to the steppes and cliffs of Kaliakra. The place hosts Alpine Swift, Black-headed Bunting, Calandra Lark, Eagle Owl, European Shag, Isabelline Wheatear, Levant Sparrowhawk, Long-legged Buzzard, Olive-tree Warbler, Pied Wheatear, Rock Thrush, Roller, Rose-coloured Starling, Short-toed Lark, Tawny Pipit. In the evening we go back to the hotel in Balchik.

### **Day 3. Balchik – Durankulak and Shabla lakes**

Today we travel to Durankoulak and Shabla lakes – wetlands of international importance,

where over 80 bird species can be seen. We start with Durankulak lake and its birds (Barred Warbler, Bee-eater, Bittern, Calandra Lark, Collared Pratincole, Ferruginous Duck, Little Bittern, Paddyfield Warbler, Purple Heron, Pygmy Cormorant, Red-necked Grebe, Ruddy Shelduck, Stone Curlew, Syrian Woodpecker etc). After that the wetlands by the town of Shabla will be visited. Our list with species will be elongated with many interesting birds – waterfowl and waders primarily (like Pygmy Cormorants, Bewick's Swans, Tufted Ducks, Smews, Goldeneyes, Bitterns, Sanderlings, Knots , Pygmy Cormorant, Ferruginous Duck, Ruddy Shelduck, Red-backed Shrike, Red-crested Pochard, Red-footed Falcon, Red-necked Grebe, Calandra Lark, Black-winged Stilt, Curlew Sandpiper, Marsh Sandpiper, Bee-eater, Roller, Hoopoe, Lesser Grey Shrike etc.).

### **Day 4. Lake Durankulak**

Today we head to Durankulak lake again – one of few places in Europe where the Paddyfield Wrblers can be seen breeding. Durankulak and Shabla lakes are wintering places for the world population of Red-breasted Goose. At this time of the season we will observe Bearded Tit, Bittern and Little Bittern, Ferruginous Duck, Marsh, Moustached Warbler, Purple Heron, Pygmy Cormorant, Red-crested Pochard, Red-necked Grebe, Ruddy Shelduck, Whiskered and Black Terns. We will also go for birdwatching on the steppes around the lake. The steppes and its surroundings hold Barred Warbler, Bee-Eater and Roller, Calandra and Short-toed Larks, Collared Pratincole, Mediterranean Shearwater, Mediterranean race of European Shag, Peregrine Falcon, Red-footed Falcon, Rose-coloured Starling, Stone Curlew, Syrian Woodpecker etc. If we are lucky we will observe the Pallid Harrier which is a very rare bird on the steppe.

### **Day 5. Balchik – Silistra, Srebarna lake**

After a trip through the fields of Dobroudzha we reach Srebarna Biosphere Reserve by the Danube River around noon. The wetland is the earthly paradise for birds, being also the most prominent reserve in Bulgaria. Nineteenth-century traveller Felix Kanitz called Lake Srebarna “the Eldorado of wading birds”. The lake and the expanse of reedy marshland around it provide 90 species of wildfowl (including 70 different types of heron) with a secure habitat. We go for Bee-Eaters, Dalmatian Pelicans, Ferruginous Ducks, Glossy Ibis and Pygmy Cormorants, Greylag geese, Hoopoes, King Fishers, Little and Great Egrets, Little Bittern, Night and Purple Herons, Penduline and Bearded Tits, Pygmy Cormorants, Red-necked and Black-necked Grebes, Rollers, Savi's and River Warblers, Spoonbills, Squacco and Night Herons, Whiskered Terns and many more. Foraging White-tailed Eagles, Black Kites and Levant Sparrowhawks are the perfect addition to this community, complemented also by Ortolan Buntings, Penduline Tits,

Golden Orioles and Red-backed Shrikes. Overnight in Balchik.

### **Day 6 Balchik - Goritsa - Cape Emine - Bourgas – Atanasovsko lake**

In the morning we say good bye to the Northern Black Sea coast. We travel further to South Bulgaria. On the way we visit Cape Emine and make a stop at Goritsa and its oak forests situated in the Eastern part of the Balkan mountain. The biggest attraction of this site is the Semi-collared Flycatcher. The species list there will include also Syrian, Lesser Spotted and Middle Spotted Eagle, Woodpeckers – Middle spotted and Grey-headed, Golden Orioles, Spotted Flycatchers etc. Further on we will explore the most interesting among the wetlands by Bourgas – the hyperhaline Atanasovsko Lake. The salt pans here are still functioning and attract a phenomenal range of birds. The area is one of Bulgaria`s richest bird locations - well known for its regular sightings of Slender-billed Curlew (Avocet, Bearded Reedling, Black-winged Stilt, Caspian Tern, Collared Pratincole, Dalmatian Pelican, Eastern Olivaceous Warble, Ferruginous Duck, Gull-billed Tern, Kentish Plover, Little Bittern, Little Tern, Marsh Harrier, Mediterranean Gull, Penduline Tit, Pygmy Cormorant, Ruddy, Shelduck, Slender-billed Gull, Squacco Heron, White Pelican etc.). Overnight in the area.

### **Day 7. Bourgas – Mandra and Poda lakes**

Mandra and Poda lakes offers a delight of a whole new complex of species. The two lakes include salt pans, freshwater lagoons, marshes and semi-steppes. Some 250 bird species have been found in the region of Mandra lake, including a few globally endangered species such as the Pygmy Cormorant, the Dalmatian Pelican, the Red-breasted Goose, the White-headed Duck and the Corncrake numbering up to 10 calling males. In these important nesting places typical breeders are Great Cormorants, Night, Squacco and Purple Herons, Little Egrets, Spoonbills, Glossy Ibises, White-tailed Eagle, Yellow-legged Gulls, Little Terns, Collared Pratincoles and many wader species. Migrating or resting Pygmy Cormorants, White and Dalmatian Pelicans, Whiskered Terns, Slender-billed and Mediterranean Gulls are very likely to be observed. It is possible to enjoy also rare species like Slender-billed Curlews, Citrine Wagtails etc.

### **Day 8. Departure**

Transfer to the airport and departure.

**What's included:**

- ✓ Accommodation at 3\*\*\* family hotels and guesthouses with en-suite facilities; We use as much as possible cozy places with pleasant and friendly atmosphere, not far away from the nature
  
- ✓ Halfboard – breakfast and dinners – often prepared by our hosts. The delicious traditional Bulgarian cuisine and the generous hospitality are part of the atmosphere of an unforgettable journey. Ordering lunchpacks on spot at average price of 4/5 EUR per person is also possible
  
- ✓ All entrances to parks and reserves.
  
- ✓ English speaking professional birdwatching guide
  
- ✓ All transport
  
- ✓ Transfers to/from Sofia/ Bourgas/ Varna or Plovdiv airport
  
- ✓ VAT and all local taxes. **OBS! The price of the tour for 2-3 people is 870 EUR per person; for 4 or more - 790 Euro/person!**

**What's not included:**

✓ Tipping

✓ Meals and drinks not included above

✓ Insurances

✓ Flight tickets

✓ Maps (could be requested in advance when booking the tour)

**Other expenses (non-compulsory):**

✓ Single room supplement - 120 EUR

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