



code: VBG 0024

Duration: 8 days

Departure dates 2017/2018: every day

Group size: min. 2

Price: 2-3 pax 740 € per person; for 4 or more - 620 €/person/adult & child

A **spectacular** tour to the wetlands of the globally endangered Red-breasted Goose.

Our tour will take you to the coastal regions of **Eastern Bulgaria** where we find the wintering grounds of thousands of wild geese. The large lakes of **Northeastern Bulgaria**

– Durankulak and Shabla house almost the whole population of the world's wintering

Red-breasted Geese

Observing thousands of geese taking off early in the morning from the lakes is a truly overwhelming experience for the dedicated birder. The magnificent view of flocks of thousands of geese is the main theme of our winter tour. The wetlands of the Bulgarian Black Sea coast - hyperhaline shallow lagoons, lakes, river mouths and flooded meadows are traditional hotspots for birding during this time of the year and while enjoying the tour we are also going to search for many other species, because the sites we are visiting are places where huge numbers of waterfowls gather to spend the winter.

Of course our main target is the **Red-breasted Goose**, but there is a good chance to see flocks of **White-fronted Geese** and it is also a matter of luck to register the rare Lesser White-fronted Goose. Hopefully we will add many other species to our list - **Pygmy**

Cormorants, Dalmatian Pelicans

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and

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White-headed Ducks

, various species of ducks, shorebirds, gulls, herons and egrets, grebes, waders and raptors (represented by

White-tailed, and Spotted Eagles, Rough-legged and Long-legged Buzzards, Marsh and Hen Harriers, Merlin, Peregrine).

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Day 1. Arrival

Arrival at Varna (which is the nearest airport), Bourgas airport or Sofia/ Plovdiv. Transfer to the town of Balchik on the Northern Black Sea Coast for first overnight.

Day 2. Shabla

Early in the morning we head to the coastal fields of Dobrudzha region – the main roosts of the geese. We will watch the morning “take-off” of the geese spreading over the inland fields to feed in the winter crop. Later in the day time we will explore the fields where the geese graze in the daytime. Checking the flocks gives us the chance to spot and identify rare species like the Lesser White-fronted Goose. Spending our time around the lakes of Shabla we expect to see other waterfowls and sea birds like Great Egret, Rough-legged Buzzard, Black-necked Grebe, Yellow-legged and Pallas's Gulls, Pochard, Red-crested Pochard, Red-breasted Merganser, Barnacle Goose, Bean Goose etc.

Day 3. Dourankoulak

This morning we head to Dourankoulak lake in order to enjoy another stunning take-off – an amazing view which attracts birdwatchers from all over Europe. We will add many other interesting species to our list. The White-tailed Eagle, Long-legged Buzzard, Rough-Legged Buzzard, Peregrin and Merlin, Great Bittern are common winter residents here. After the visit of Dourankoulak lake we visit again the wetlands around Shabla. Here we have good chances to spot Greater Spotted Eagle, Saker and Pallas`s Gull. We hope to see waterfowl and waders primarily (like White-tailed Eagle, Pygmy Cormorants, Bewick's Swans, Tufted Ducks, Smews, Goldeneyes, Bitterns, Sanderlings, Knots etc.).

Day 4.Kaliakra

Today we will explore Cape Kaliakra – dramatic cliffs which raise up to 100 m above the sea. This is a place, where we expect to see interesting like European Shag (Mediterranean race), Eagle Owl, Black-throated Diver, possibly Great and Little Bustards etc.). We will also explore the steppe area which hosts species like Calandra Lark, Merlins, long-legged Buzzards, Rough-legged Buzzard, Syrian Woodpecker.

Day 5. Bourgas

This morning we say good bye to the Northern Sea Coast and start our tour to the South. En route we have a stop at Goritsa forest where Woodpeckers are well represented (Grey-headed, Black, Syrian, Lesser-spotted and Middle Spotted). Other residents of these oak forests are Short-toed Treecreeper, Hawfinch, Sombre Tit. Our aim today are the lakes around the city of Bourgas. Here we expect to see one of the wonderful attractions of the lakes – the flocks of Pygmy Cormorants and Dalmatian Pelicans. At one of the lakes winter large concentrations of White-headed Ducks.

Day 6-7. Atanasovsko and Bourgas lakes; Poda lagoon

Birdwatching around the wetlands of Bourgas. We will have trips around the hyperhaline shallow coastal lagoons. These are some of the best places to watch common wintering birds like Dalmatian Pelicans, Pygmy Cormorants, Bitterns, Great Egrets, Black-necked Grebe, Whooper and Bewick's Swans, White-headed Ducks, Shelducks, White-tailed Eagles, Bearded Reedling, Mediterranean Gull, Pallas's Gulls and plenty of waders and waterfowl.

If the weather allows us we shall also travel up to the mountain of Strandja, where we have good opportunity to see White-backed and passerines like Bearded Tit, Crested and Calandra Larks, Great Grey Shrike and Pine Bunting.

Day 8. Departure

Transfer to the airport (Varna, Bourgas, Plovdiv or Sofia) for departure.

What's included:

- ✓ Accommodation at 3*** family run 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.

- ✓ Breakfast – 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 740 EUR per person; for 4 or more - 620 Euro/person**
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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 - 100 EUR

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