This brief yet exciting extension to the Strait of Gibraltar in Spain is timed for the amazing Spring Migration, whereby thousands upon thousands of raptors and a huge array of other Eurasian species make the daily crossing from the African Continent back to their summer breeding grounds in Europe and Asia. Aside from marvelling at this incredible spectacle, some of the many highlights we can expect during our time in this immensely important flyby area include the Iberian endemic Spanish Imperial Eagle, visiting a newly established breeding colony of the Critically Endangered Northern Bald Ibis, an exhilarating sea cruise in search of seabirds and several species of whales and dolphins, and spending time at a colony of very confiding Lesser Kestrels in the port town of Tarifa.
THE TOUR AT A GLANCE…

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TOUR MAP

![Map of Spain showing the itinerary sites](image-url)
THE TOUR IN DETAIL...

Day 1: Arrival, Spring Migration and Sierra de la Plata. Our adventure begins with a group transfer from the Seville airport, from where we will immediately head to our conveniently situated hotel near Tarifa, with excellent views of the Strait of Gibraltar. We will have some time to settle down and rest after our flight before commencing our explorations. After the break, we will drive along the coast and head to Sierra de la Plata. This will likely produce our first raptors of the trip in the form of Black Kite, Booted and Short-toed Eagles, Egyptian Vulture, Montagu’s Harrier and/or Eurasian Sparrowhawk, all of which will be arriving back from Africa at this time of the year. Moving along the coast in order to fully enjoy the raptor migration from various vantage points will also afford us the chance for some dramatic views of the African coastline, a mere 14km (8.75 mi) away on the other side of the Strait.

Sierra de la Plata is a great location and also offers spectacular views of the Spanish coastline and Africa. Here we will look for Griffon Vulture (Eurasian Griffon), Egyptian Vulture, Short-toed Eagle, Iberian Woodpecker, Thekla Lark, Eurasian Crag Martin, Blue Rock Thrush and Sardinian Warbler.

Day 2: Los Lances, Barbate, Montenmedio and La Janda. This morning we will embark on a beach walk along Playa de los Lances near the town of Tarifa, where a network of small fields backing onto the dunes are great for open ground migrants, such as wheatears, pipits, larks and wagtails. Sandwich and Caspian Terns can often be found sitting on sandbars amongst the Audouin’s, Mediterranean, Lesser Black-backed and Yellow-legged Gulls. Among the waders, Grey, Common Ringed, Little Ringed and Kentish Plovers, Sanderling, Dunlin and Curlew Sandpiper are usually around, as well as flocks of European Bee-eater, Pallid Swift, Collared Pratincole, and Barn and Red-rumped Swallows. On the other side of the boardwalk, there are some open grass plains where Greater Short-toed Lark, Zitting Cisticola, European Stonechat, Common Linnet and Corn Bunting are common.

The nearby Barbate marshland is also good for Audouin’s Gull and various waders, as well as Caspian, Sandwich, Black and Little Terns, Great Egret, and Mediterranean and Slender-billed Gulls. Ringed, Little Ringed and Kentish Plover...
can also be seen here; while in the surrounding area, we can look for Calandra and Lesser Short-toed Larks, Black-eared Wheatear, Subalpine Warbler and Eurasian Stone-curlew. Thereafter we will visit the newly established breeding colony of Northern Bald Ibis that was created from captive-bred birds released into the wild, and which provides us with the very rare opportunity for up-close studies and photographs of these critically endangered birds without disturbing them.

After breaking for lunch, we will then explore the network of rice fields at La Janda, once one of the largest natural freshwater lagoons in Europe that has subsequently been drained and given over to agriculture. The area attracts huge numbers of both resident and migrants alike, and here we can expect to see Montagu’s and Western Marsh Harriers, White and Black Storks, Purple and Grey Herons, Black-crowned Night Heron, Western Cattle and Little Egret, Crested and Calandra Larks and Eurasian Reed Warbler. This rich birding region is often a magnet for early migrants and already the beautiful Montagu’s Harriers should be displaying. At this time of year, there’s even the chance for Little Bustard, and we will scan carefully for this sought-after species. Beyond the rice fields, an area of open country is great for large raptors; in fact, La Janda is among the most important dispersal areas for Bonelli’s Eagle and the Iberian endemic, Spanish Imperial Eagle.

**Day 3: Huerta Grande (Cork-oak Forest), Spring Migration and Whale Watching.** An early morning walk in the Cork Oak Forest at Huerta Grande should easily produce forest species such as Iberian Chiffchaff, Common Firecrest, Eurasian Wren and European Crested Tit, among others. Following a relaxing walk in the forest, we will then head once again to the raptor observatories in the Strait of Gibraltar, for further marvelling at the Spring migration. Due to the absence of thermals above the ocean, birds that would normally save their energy by soaring thanks to the ascending air currents instead have to flap and fight against the wind to make it safe and sound and continue their travels up north. Spending time at these observatories will give us the opportunity to view these splendid birds at eye level, as they struggle to reach the coast.

We will then break for lunch, after which we will embark on an exciting 2.5-hour whale watching trip off Tarifa. Sightings of Pilot Whales and both Bottlenose and Striped Dolphins are nearly guaranteed, with further possibilities including Sperm Whale, Orca, Fin Whale and Common Dolphin. As for seabirds, the most common species are Scopoli’s Shearwater, Northern
Gannet, Great Skua and Black Tern, though there is always the chance for additional possibilities. Once back in the port of Tarifa, we will visit a photogenic colony of very confiding Lesser Kestrels in the old part of the town – so best to ensure that you still have some power remaining in your camera batteries! Here we may also hear and see a small family group of Common Bulbul, an unusual species (to put it mildly) on this side of the Strait of Gibraltar, as Tarifa holds the only known European population, following the arrival of a pair a few years ago.

Day 4: Doñana National Park and Bonanza Salt Plants. The Bonanza Salt Plants and the outskirts of Doñana National Park are among the less-visited but most rewarding sites in the Doñana area. To visit this productive region, we will need to leave the hotel in the early morning in order to arrive at the best time of the day in terms of light and bird activity.

Near the mouth of the River Guadalquivir is the best place to look for the globally threatened and range-restricted White-headed Duck, as well as the uncommon Marbled Duck in the province of Cadiz. This is also an excellent place for waders, including Kentish Plover, Common Greenshank, Common Redshank, Ruff, Wood and Curlew Sandpipers, Black-tailed Godwit, Sanderling, Dunlin, Little Stint and Common Snipe. In addition, the saltpans here are our best place for seeing Lesser Short-toed Lark and Spectacled Warbler.

Some special raptors for the area are Western Osprey and the lovely Red Kite, as well as the possibility for Spanish Imperial Eagle that nests inside the national park. However, the most remarkable sight of the day will probably be the large numbers of Slender-billed Gull, Greater Flamingo and Eurasian Spoonbill that gather on occasions in the saltpans. There is also a chance for Caspian Tern, Purple Heron, Black Stork, Great Egret, Little Bittern and even though it is quite early in the season, we should keep our eyes open for the dainty Little Tern as well.

Day 5: Isla de Tarifa, Spring Migration & departure. After breakfast this morning at our hotel, we will head to the Island of Tarifa in the El Estrecho National Park. This is the southernmost tip of the European continent and an excellent lookout spot for sea-watching. Here we will view the Mediterranean Sea on the one side and the Atlantic Ocean on the other, with the African continent right in front of us. Tourist access here is restricted and has only recently
been permitted for a few private companies, with the result that we are likely to have the area largely to ourselves; aside perhaps from other birders. Some of the commoner seabirds that can viewed from the island include Scopoli’s and Balearic Shearwaters, Northern Gannet and Great Skua, though we will also keep our eyes peeled for anything rare and unusual, which at this time of year is always a possibility! Depending on the time of our departure, we might pay one last visit to the observatories and finish our trip enjoying further views of the raptor migration, before driving to the airport of Seville where the tour will conclude and we will make our respective ways home.

**FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:**

Tour dates, prices, single supplement rates, approximate flight costs and spaces available for this tour are displayed on our website. Please see under **IMPORTANT NOTES** below.

This includes:

- All meals from dinner on Day 1 to lunch on Day 5;
- Bottled water;
- All lodgings;
- Ground transportation;
- Reserve entrance fees;
- Extra activities as mentioned in the itinerary; and
- All guiding services (including tips for local guides and services).

The tour fee does not include:

- Visa fees;
- **ANY** flights;
- Any beverages except that stipulated above;
- Special gratuities;
- Telephone calls and
- Laundry and other items of a personal nature.

**Single Supplement:**

The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBL cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

**IMPORTANT NOTES:**

**a) Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is however fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing (usually 4 months before the tour.) The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates, which are also quoted in the respective fixed currency.**

**b) Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration a small party supplement will have to be charged.**

**c) Furthermore, these costs are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.**
d) Lastly, we may be forced to change or alter the itinerary and / or the designated Rockjumper leader/s at short or no notice due to unforeseen circumstances; please be aware that we will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.

**Tipping:**

As noted above, gratuities (drivers, hotel staff, restaurants etc.) are included on this tour. However, this does NOT include your Rockjumper leader/s. If, therefore, you feel that he/they have given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip them.

**Special Notes:**

- Keep in mind that we may very well change the order of days and locations on the itinerary depending on weather conditions at the time, in order to take advantage of the best opportunities for viewing the area’s many migrants. For instance, if the wind is really strong the migrants don’t cross The Strait, so we will then take the opportunity to visit some other areas included in the itinerary, heading back to the observatories once the wind drops and the birds commence with their crossing.
- It is important for the comfort of your fellow travellers that you do not over-pack. Kindly stick to 20kg (44 lb) for check in luggage and 8kg (+/-18 lb) for hand luggage.
- Fitness: this tour does not require a high level of fitness but participants should be in good general health. Should you have any physical limitations, please notify us in advance of departure. Accommodation throughout the trip is of a generally high standard and the hotels and resorts that we make use of are very comfortable. There is no camping on this trip.

**ARRIVAL and DEPARTURE DETAILS:**

This tour does not include ANY airfares. The tour will depart from Seville Airport on day 1 by midday, so kindly arrive in advance of this time or preferably arrive the day before. The tour will conclude by mid-afternoon in Seville Airport on day 5.

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your Tour Confirmation package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

**FLIGHTS:**

Seville International Airport, Seville (IATA: SVQ) is the main port of entry and exit for flights on this tour. It is well serviced by most of the world’s major airlines. Please DO NOT book any flights until you have consulted the Rockjumper office for confirmation on the status of the tour.