

NOMANSLAND TOUR 1 – 11 May 2010

(Tour code: NM) **Leader: Assen Ignatov**

Price: £985 (Based on a group of nine or more, a smaller group will incur a supplement).

This new tour was inspired by a Natural World television programme revealing the astonishing wealth of wildlife in all the former Iron Curtain border zones. Bulgaria was featured in the programme, and this tour will visit some of those areas which were for so long undisturbed. The route takes you towards Bulgaria's southern borders with Macedonia and Greece, and includes a day excursion to an interesting wetland in Greece, and continues in the south of Bulgaria in areas which, given the few border crossings, are still peaceful and unspoilt. On the return drive to Sofia there will be an interesting visit to a rescue centre for injured birds.

Our tour leader, Assen Ignatov, is a very experienced and knowledgeable guide. He is also a gifted artist and excellent photographer.

Bulgaria's beautiful scenery, friendly people and excellent wine and food are additional highlights. The BBFS offers you the benefits of **over thirty years' experience** of organising tours to Bulgaria. **Balkania Travel Ltd. are ATOL bonded** in accordance with the Civil Aviation Authority's requirements.

Hotels are comfortable (and well situated for birdwatching!) but not luxurious. The holiday is on a Half-Board basis. Final details and bird lists will be sent to participants with their tickets. Our tour price includes a donation to the Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds or other Bulgarian conservation organisation.

Projected Itinerary (which may be subject to adjustment)

Saturday 1 May Flight from Heathrow to Sofia. Drive south through the Struma valley to Melnik, Bulgaria's smallest town for a 4 night stay. Some birdwatching stops on the way, possible birds include Orphean, Barred and Olive-tree Warblers, Woodchat Shrike, Raven, Rock Nuthatch and Blue Rock Thrush.

Sunday 2 May Visits to Rozhen Monastery, Rupite (the crater of an extinct volcano) and Hotovo. Possible birds include Long-legged Buzzard, Levant Sparrowhawk, Great Reed and Cetti's Warblers, Bee-eater, Hoopoe, Rock Sparrow.

Monday 3 May Day excursion to Kerkini Lake in Greece, looking for storks, Dalmatian Pelican, Pygmy Cormorant, Spoonbill, terns, birds of prey including Lesser Spotted Eagle, Red-footed Falcon, Cetti's and Savi's Warblers, Penduline Tit.

Tuesday 4 May Day excursion to Hursovo, Katuntsi and Slavyanka mountains, for endemic plants, Grey-headed and Black Woodpecker, Wood Lark, Goshawk and Sparrowhawk.

Wednesday 5 May Local birding around Melnik, then drive to Gotse Delchev for a one night stay, looking for pine forest birds, Rock Thrush, Red-rumped Swallow, Nutcracker and Rock Bunting.

Thursday 6 May Drive east to Trigrad for a one night stay. Possible birds include Wallcreeper, Serin, Dipper, Peregrine Falcon and Alpine Swift.

Friday 7 May Drive east to Madzharovo for a three night stay, with birdwatching stops on the way.

Saturday 8 May Visit to Dolna Kula for Black Stork, Rock Nuthatch, Blue Rock Thrush, Little Ringed Plover, Levant Sparrowhawk and Stone Curlew.

Sunday 9 May Visit to Studen Kladenets and the vulture feeding centre, hoping for Griffon, Egyptian and possibly Black Vultures, and many other raptors like Black Kite and Short-toed Eagle. Birding around Madzharovo, possible birds: Hoopoe, wheatears, warblers, Hawfinch and Golden Eagle.

Monday 10 May Drive north to Stara Zagora with birdwatching stops along the way. Visit the Bird Rescue Centre run by Green Balkans. This is one of the charities supported by the BBFS. (www.greenbalkans.org) Continue to Koprivshitsa, possible birds include Isabelline Wheatear and even Imperial Eagle. Farewell Dinner and overnight stay.

Tuesday 11 May Return to Sofia for flight to UK.

OUR PRICES INCLUDE:

- Return scheduled flights from Heathrow to Sofia. (Connecting flights from other airports and/or overnight accommodation near airports can also be arranged for you at a supplement).
- Half Board.
- Accommodation in small (often family-run) hotels with en suite facilities on a twin bedded shared occupancy basis.
- Airport Taxes.
- Coach for transfers and excursions.
- Specialist Bulgarian leader.
- Donation to Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds or other Bulgarian conservation organisation.
- All reserve entrance fees.

NOT INCLUDED:

- Lunches (about £4 or less).
- Travel Insurance (compulsory). Balkania Travel

can advise.

- Drinks and personal expenses such as gratuities.
- Single room supplement (£90).

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