

DETAILED ITINERARY

Red-breasted Goose Special Tour

Day 1. The journey time from Budapest airport to our hotel in the heart of the Hortobágy National Park is around three hours. We shall arrive in time for some initial exploration of the superb grassland and wetlands.

Day 2-4. At the end of October and the beginning of November the vast hordes of geese arrive to the Hortobágy from the north. They more or less substitute the Cranes which by this time moving south although a few thousand will certainly be around! During our three days stay, we will focus on seeing the vulnerable Red-breasted Goose and Lesser White-fronted Goose. If luck is on our side and we see them easily we will also have time to visit other type of habitats of the Hortobágy and in its close surroundings. All this takes place in the tranquil environment of the beautiful steppe landscape. In the large Greater White-fronted Geese flocks we will also have the chance to find Greyleg, Bernacle Goose and Taiga Bean Goose. At the various wetlands we will see White-tailed Eagles spread panic amongst the large gatherings of waterbirds, often causing them to take flight in huge swarming flocks. The rich rodent population of the grasslands supports a healthy number of predators. Among the many Common Buzzards we will see Rough-legged Buzzard, Peregrine Falcon, Merlin, Hen Harrier from the north and if we lucky a long staying Long-legged Buzzard can still be around. Best of all however is the magnificent Saker - surely Europe's most enigmatic falcon. If we really lucky even the scarce Greater Spotted Eagle can be seen. On the edge of the steppe on freshly cut alfalfa fields Great Bustards are gathering in post-breeding flocks by this time of the year. In the vast reed beds the calls of Bearded Tits can often be heard and usually they are easy to see as well. In November and March we also have the chance to see some wintering birds but their appearance is unpredictable. These could include Twite, Lapland Bunting and Snow Bunting. Fieldfares and Great Grey Shrikes are more common. One day we will visit a Long-eared Owl roost - sometimes over 100 of these splendid birds have arrived by November or still around in early March. Other species we may find include Great and Pygmy Cormorants, Great Bittern, Eurasian Wigeon, Gadwall, Common Teal, Mallard, Northern Pintail, Northern Showeler, Common Pochard, Water Rail, Common Moorhen, Eurasian Coot, Grey Plover, Northern Lapwing, Common Snipe, Black-headed, Common, Caspian and Yellow-legged Gulls and Common Kingfisher. If our time allows we will make a short visit to a nearby woodland where we have the chance to find Black, Green, Great Spotted, Lesser Spotted and Middle Spotted Woodpeckers.

Day 5. After our final birding on the Hortobágy steppe we will leave this remarkable area and return to Budapest airport along the edge of the northern foothills in time to catch an afternoon departure.



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