



Wild Globe Travel Consultancy

Tailored Wildlife, Wilderness and Adventure Travel Across the Globe.

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SPAIN

Date - December 2011

Duration - 5 Days

Destinations

Malaga - Fuente de Piedra Lagoon - Cordoba - Sierra de Andujar Natural Park - El Torcal Nature Reserve

Trip Overview

A very short trip, mainly to see the critically endangered Iberian lynx and to try out a new guide, who I was hoping to use for a Spanish bear, wolf and lynx tour that I had been looking at for a while. Most of our tour would be centred around the Sierra de Andujar Natural Park in northern Andalucia, but we made a quick detour on the way to visit the Fuente de Piedra Lagoon, as my guide was a keen birder and wanted to show me the greater flamingos and common cranes. On our first afternoon we visited one of two main sites where the lynx are regularly observed, a stretch of road overlooking the Jandula River. Although we had no success in terms of the lynx, we did see our first red deer and the majority of the next three days were spent either in this area or at La Lancha, the second main lynx site and where we enjoyed most of our good fortune. We saw three lynx in all at La Lancha, with the sightings ranging from very close but fairly brief, to an extended view for over 30 minutes, but at distance. Our first sighting on day two was



the closest, but unfortunately the animal turned quickly and I was only able to photograph it walking away. Nevertheless, it was wonderful to see such a superb creature and it is always nice to find a main target species early in a trip, as it certainly takes the pressure off, for both the guest and the guide, and generally allows you to spend more time looking for and appreciating other wildlife. We had to wait until our final full day for our next encounter, as a lynx was spotted high among the rocks and we managed to get fairly decent views in the scope. It was still not a great sighting and by the final hour it did not look as if we were going to improve on it, until my guide spotted a large male walking along a trail on the hillside. This of course could have gone either way still, as the lynx was just as likely to slip into the dense undergrowth than continue walking towards

us in the open. Fortunately the gods were with us and the very relaxed cat spent more than half an hour strolling in the last sunlight of the day before sitting down to clean itself on a small ridge. Although this majestic animal was not close, we had a reasonable view with the naked eye and could make out every detail with the spotting scope. As the sun began to set on both this elegant feline and our trip, it was difficult not to reflect that we were watching the rarest cat on the planet, as there are less than 150 breeding adults remaining in the wild and unless steps are taken, future generations will not have the opportunity that I so thoroughly enjoyed that afternoon. Happily, there is some hope, as captive breeding programmes have already seen lynx released into the wild and it was also heartening to see how many locals visited the area during our stay, as they will be the ones who ultimately decide if this cat survives or not. When we were not looking for lynx we spent time searching the local areas for other wildlife. I was particularly hoping to find Eurasian otter and although we were not lucky with that animal, we did enjoy splendid views of red and fallow deer, European mouflon and wild boar. We also visited a local dam and discovered three bat species, schreiber's bent-winged bat, greater mouse-eared bat and a type of whiskered bat. The entire area appears to be a good one for wildlife and the bird life was exceptional. In just a few days my guide spotted almost 80 different species, including common buzzard, griffon and black vultures, Spanish imperial and golden eagles and my own personal favourite, a pair of extremely cute little owls, that certainly deserve the title of honorary mammals. On our last day, after having one more shot at lynx in the early morning, my guide suggested that we visit El Torcal Nature Reserve on the drive back to Malaga airport, as the reserve is home to a population of Spanish ibex. It was a good call, as we spent a couple of hours photographing a herd of more than 30 of these distinctive animals, to take our final mammal count to eight or eleven if you include the bats. It was a nice way to finish a perfect short break and, despite the fact that he is a birder at heart, I am hoping that my guide and I can put together a more in depth Spanish wildlife tour at some stage, as there are a lot of interesting species here and a great deal of potential for a fantastic trip.





No.	Species	Scientific Name	Notes
1	Iberian Lynx	<i>Lynx pardinus</i>	Three at La Lancha.
2	Fallow Deer	<i>Dama dama</i>	Several individuals and one fairly large herd.
3	Red Deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>	Several individuals and small herds.
4	Spanish Ibex	<i>Capra pyrenaica</i>	More than 30 at El Torcal Nature Reserve.
5	European Mouflon	<i>Ovis aries musimon ssp</i>	A herd of about 20 near the Los Escoriales ranch.
6	Wild Boar	<i>Sus scrofa</i>	Four on a hillside at La Lancha.
7	European Rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>	Several at both main lynx locations.
8	Western Mediterranean Mouse	<i>Mus spretus</i>	One at the Jandula River viewpoint.





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