France
The Cévennes

2014 Tuesday 1st – Tuesday 8th July
LEADER  Brian Small as principal guide

NEW for 2014! An 8-day, single-centre tour exploring the bird and butterfly rich landscape of the Cévennes, part of the Grandes Causses, in southeastern France. In a beautiful region made famous by the Knights Templar and its abandoned villages, the rolling limestone plateaux are characterised by whispering grasses, chestnut forests, deep cut gorges, and rocky granitic peaks such as Mt. Lozère. The Cévennes make a wonderful destination for a summer wildlife holiday: Rock Thrush, Citril Finch, Ortolan Bunting, harriers, shrikes and vultures await - as do The Hermit, Furry and Turquoise Blues, Great Sooty Satyr, Esper’s Marbled White and various fritillaries amongst a wealth of butterflies.

- NEW! Summer birds and butterflies in the beautiful Cévennes National Park
- Rock Thrush, Citril Finch and Crag Martin among breeding upland birds
- Vultures include Griffon, Black and the chance of Egyptian, too
- Up to 4 species of shrike: Red-backed, Woodchat, Great Grey and Southern Grey
- A host of butterflies: The Hermit, Furry Blue and Great Sooty Satyr possible
- Easy-paced walks amidst lovely French countryside
- Single-centre tour based at one lovely rural hotel for the whole week
- Expertly led by Limosa's Brian Small, making his 4th visit to the Cévennes
Tour Overview

A visit to the Cévennes in summer offers a perfect balance of birds and butterflies - of which there are plenty to enjoy! Breeding birds should be busy feeding young, or singing ready for their second broods; and butterflies are beginning to emerge in larger numbers as the temperatures warm up. In many ways, the amazing landscape of the region is at its most attractive: for many visitors, the wonderful views and the beautiful walks alone are reason enough to visit. But there are also many fabulous birds, butterflies and dragonflies to find and watch, which all make this a special trip - and certainly one to savour!

Part of the Massif Central, the Cévennes and Grandes Causses is a region of France that is typified by rolling limestone plateaux deeply incised by fast-moving rivers such as the Tarn, Jonte and Dourbie, creating fine gorges and lush riverbeds. The granite peaks of Mont Lozère and Mont Aigoual add variety as they rise above the karst landscape, creating montane bogs and rich meadows that are home to Rock Thrush and perhaps Water Pipit and Citril Finch. Abandoned villages and menhirs (standing stones) scatter the landscape, and occasional caves - such as Aven Armand, with its huge cavern filled with stalagmites and stalactites of a myriad of shapes and sizes - are things not to be missed or forgotten.

From our base at a lovely hotel near the town of Florac (centrally situated to allow a good number of the varied sites of the region to be visited), we will radiate out to see as much of the landscape and wildlife as possible. On the feathergrass steppe of the limestone Causses of Méjean, Noir and Larzac, we will search for a great variety of species: regularly occurring birds such as Woodchat and Red-backed Shrikes perch on wires and bushes; Hen and Montagu’s Harriers waft across the fields; Red-billed Choughs scour the grass for insects; Rock Sparrows breed in the old and abandoned buildings; and Rock Thrushes should have young hidden in crevices in rocky areas on Causse Méjean. Cirl and Corn Buntings are relatively common here, but we have a chance to find Ortolan Bunting too, a much more localised summer resident.

Majestic rocky cliffs of the gorges of the Tarn, Jonte and Dourbie rise steeply above forests of oak and chestnut, and are home to more of the region's special birds. Vultures perch on them or dramatically drift past their breeding cliffs in the morning, seeking to gain lift before they drift across the plateaux. Most will be Griffons, but Black and Egyptian Vultures are also possible. Peregrines and Ravens call and fly out from the crags, as Alpine Swifts and Crag Martins cruise by and Rock Buntings jingle.

With the Cévennes' famous chestnut forests and clear streams in the valleys, and pine and beech woods on the schist and granite uplands, the area is also rich in woodland birds. Black Woodpecker, Ring Ouzel, Crested Tit and Hawfinch are all possibilities, as is the ‘difficult’ Middle Spotted Woodpecker - the latter surely Europe's most attractive woodpecker and always a delight to see. Green and Great Spotted are numerous and, with luck, we will come across the elusive, sparrow-sized Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, too.

The myriad attractive butterflies that haunt the Cévennes in summer are also very special. We will spend time looking for some of the many fritillaries, including Knapweed or Provencal; blues like Adonis, Alcon or Furry; the localised (in France) Esper’s Marbled White; graylings such as Rock or Woodland; Great Sooty Satyr and various ringlets. Then there are the region's dragonflies, with good chances of seeing species such as Small Pincertail, Western Demoiselle, and Sombre and Common Goldenrings, as well as Dainty Bluet and Small Bluetail.

Although this exciting summer tour is new to our programme in 2014, guide Brian Small is no stranger to the Cévennes National Park and this will be his fourth visit to this fantastic region. Make sure you pack your camera!
Outline Itinerary

Day 1:  Fly London-Montpellier. Drive north to Cocurès (7 nts)
Days 2-7: Birdwatching in the Cévennes National Park and Causses region
Day 8: Morning Cocurès. Return to Montpellier, fly London

Daily Itinerary

Day 1
TO MONTPELLIER & THE CÉVENNES NATIONAL PARK
We fly from London to Montpellier. From here we transfer north, climbing up into the Massif Central and the lovely Cévennes National Park. Our hotel is close to the River Tarn, not far from the centrally-situated village of Florac, and you can just glimpse Mont Lozère in the distance. Time permitting, we might take a stroll down to the bridge and check for Dippers and Grey Wagtails. Night Cocurès.

Days 2 – 7
EXPLORING THE CAUSSES, MONTS LOZÈRE & AIGOUAL, AND FORESTS
Taking a different route, we will radiate out each day to cover as much of the region as possible - though some sites are certainly worth more than one visit. Most drives will be relatively short, with frequent stops for walking and exploration, although on one or two days we might reach Millau, where we will admire the new and monumental viaduct that passes south from the tops of the plateaux or even Bee-eaters, or perhaps the Cirque de Navacelle.

The gorges of the rivers Tarn, Jonte and Dourbie cut deep into the limestone and we will visit them all. In summer, Alpine Swifts scythe across the cliffs where we may find Blue Rock Thrush and Rock Thrush, along with Cirl and Rock Buntings. Near Meyreuis, there has been a vulture protection and reintroduction scheme, where we will watch mighty Griffons and hope for Black and Egyptian Vultures, too. Golden and Booted Eagles also find the cliffs to their liking. The warm, sunny valleys also provide a haven for many butterfly species.

On the Causses of Méjean or Larzac themselves, amongst the bushes and open fields of this wonderful landscape, we have great chances of finding several species: conversational Red-billed Choughs wheel over the fields, and the nasal call of the Rock Sparrow is another frequently heard sound. With luck, we will find the more localised Ortolan Bunting and Rock Thrush, and this is excellent country for shrikes. Red-backed and Woodchat are likely, but we may find Southern Grey and possibly Great Grey Shrikes, too – the Cévennes being one of the few places where the two species meet. Hen and Montagu’s Harriers drift across the fields, and amongst the more numerous Common Buzzards frequently to be seen soaring in the sky we will hope for Short-toed Eagle.

At Aven Armand, we will take a visit into one of the largest natural caves of the region. Following a short descent by train, we will wonder at its cavern filled with amazing rock formations, built over millennia by the action of water on the limestone. Around the edge of the car park, we shall search for one or two special butterflies, including the vittatus race of Furry Blue, and check stony areas for a variety of graylings – The Hermit has been seen near here in the past.

The higher, granite peaks of Monts Lozère and Aigoual rise to almost 1700m, offer a different range of habitats, including upland bogs and mires. We will walk the slopes of both, searching for Citril Finch, Ring Ouzel, perhaps another pastel-blue and orange Rock Thrush or a flock of chipping Crossbills.
upland meadows host a variety of skippers, clouded yellows, blues and ringlets, while the ancient *menhirs* or standing stones in certain areas hint at the age of the human habitation of the region.

The Cevennes boast some fine woodland, and its forests of chestnut, oak, pine and beech are home to yet more birds. Crested Tit will be high on the list here, as are the woodpeckers such as Black and Middle Spotted. Short-toed Treecreepers might be found and, with a great deal of luck, perhaps a Golden Oriole or two. The rivers and streambeds harbour some wonderful dragonflies, and the woods can hold orchids, such as Lesser Butterfly and Small White, plus a number of helleborine’s including Tremol’s.

**Day 8**  
**RETURN TO MONTPELLIER, FLY LONDON**  
Depending on flight times, we should have time to enjoy a final morning in the Tarn valley of the Cévennes before returning to Montpellier and catching our flight back to London.

**Trip Information**

**Group Limit**  
12 participants & 2 leaders

**Birds**  80-110 species  
**Butterflies**  50-60 species

**Accommodation**  
We will be based at a super hotel in the village of Cocurès (near Florac), right at the heart of the Cévennes National Park. All rooms are en suite.

**Meals**  
All main meals are included in the tour price. Breakfasts and dinners will be taken at the hotel. Lunches will be picnics and/or in auberges to sample the local cuisine or ‘terroir’.

**Walking**  
Easy walking, with lots of time to explore as we look for birds, butterflies, dragonflies and flowers. The scenery in the Cévennes National Park is beautiful, and our location perfect for easy, relaxed birding and butterfly watching, with much of it possible on foot. Stout walking shoes or lightweight boots with good, corrugated soles for grip.

**Weather**  
In early July, the weather in the Cévennes is typically warm-hot and sunny, with daytime temperatures in the range of 20-30°C (68-80°F). Rainfall is low at this season, but occasional showers possible.

**Flights**  
We use the scheduled services of Easyjet or similar, from London Gatwick to the local airport at Montpellier.

**Ground Transport**  
By minibus.

**Photos**  
Good incidental photographic opportunities, especially butterflies and flowers. Some great scenery, too.

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Tour Cost
2014 (8 days): £1645 (inc flights from London)
Land only cost: £1525
Deposit: £300
Single Supp: £175

Cost includes
Return flights London Gatwick-Montpellier, accommodation, main meals, minibus transport, incidental tips, admissions, map, bird checklist and services of the leader/s.

Cost excludes
Insurance, drinks & other items of a personal nature.

About Your Guide
Brian Small  Brian lives in Suffolk with his wife and their teenage son. A teacher for 11 years, he now works full time for Limosa, guiding tours and as Operations and Media Manager in the Limosa office. He has travelled widely around the globe and is the inspiration behind a growing number of Limosa tours, including France: the Cevennes, Portugal and Madeira, Kuwait, India for Tigers, and Brazil. Brian is also an accomplished bird artist and his current artwork projects include work on major new guides to birds in Brazil and various parts of Africa. Happily, he has lately recovered from a previous affliction that saw him sifting through gull flocks on the local pig fields (something of a solitary occupation we’re told!) and he now concentrates on his local patch at Southwold, on the Suffolk coast, where he searches especially for migrants. Brimming with infectious enthusiasm, Brian has been guiding our tours since 2002 and quickly acquired his own Limosa fan club. He regularly joins us on our guided BirdWalks in Norfolk and Suffolk. Our 2014 tour to will be Brian's fourth visit to the Cévennes, an area he was first taken to by his father – a Professor of geography!

A second Limosa guide (tba) will be added as tour size warrants.

Limosa Loyalty Discount
We are proud of the number of loyal customers who travel regularly with us. As our way of saying ‘thank you’, we offer a Frequent Travel Discount. Under the scheme, everyone who takes four trips with us is entitled to claim a 5% discount on their fifth trip*1. Alternatively, you can opt to save your discounts up and carry them forward to claim a 10% discount on your 10th trip. The choice is yours, but please remember to request your discount at time of booking!

*1 Please note: This offer applies to the basic tour cost only and excludes certain commission-based trips, extras such as additional flights, private extensions and cancellations. Discounts cannot be given in lieu of tour deposits or off the cost of single room supplements.

How to Book
You can make a booking by one of three easy methods, but if you experience any problems, please feel free to contact the office. Be sure to read our Booking Conditions and General Information found at the back of our current brochure or on our website - www.limosaholidays.co.uk/booking-conditions/

Book Online: You can book swiftly and securely online via our website: www.limosaholidays.co.uk/booking/
Book by Post: Our brochures contain a Booking Form, but you can also download a copy from our website - www.limosaholidays.co.uk/booking/. Please complete both sides of the form, remembering to sign and date the section at the bottom of the second page. Send this to us, together with the appropriate Booking Deposit (see below).

Telephone bookings: Telephone bookings will be accepted on a provisional basis to allow time for your Booking Form and deposit to reach us by mail. We will hold provisional reservations for up to 14 days pending receipt of booking form, after which time any unconfirmed space will be released.

Payments
Deposits: The amount of deposit per person is shown above. We accept payment by cheque (drawn on a UK bank in GB Pounds Sterling), by BACS or internet banking (please ask us for our bank details), and by debit card. We also accept most major credit cards (not AmEx).

Final Balance: Full payment of the balance is due not later than 12 weeks prior to departure (occasionally longer in the case of some tours such as cruises or those involving rail travel). We will send you an invoice at about this time indicating the balance. We accept payment for final balances by cheque or debit card. Payment of the balance can also be by credit card with a 2% commission charge for the latter (see below). Please ask for our bank details if you prefer to transfer your payment direct to our bank account.

Card Charges: Due to escalating credit card charges we are unable to absorb the cost of these. We will not charge for payment of the initial booking deposit (amount as indicated in the Tour Cost section, above), but will make a 2% commission charge on any balances or subsequent payments (e.g. interim flight deposits) paid by credit card. We do not charge commission on payments made by debit card or by cheque or direct to bank.

Late Bookings: In order for us to guarantee your airline seats, hotels etc., full payment is required at time of booking for all late bookings (i.e. bookings made within 12 weeks of departure).

When to Book
This is one of the most Frequently Asked Questions - the short answer is as early as possible! Accommodation and flights are much more easily secured well in advance and there is nothing more frustrating than to know that on paper space is still available on the tour but that hotels and/or flights are full. To encourage early booking therefore, we are pleased to offer an Early Booking Discount - see our current brochure or website for details.

Our tours are limited to small group sizes, so they can fill up quickly - sometimes even before our new brochure comes out! It's not unusual to find trips are fully booked around four to six months in advance. Single rooms in particular can often be in short supply and among the first to go, so do try to plan well ahead if you definitely require one of these.

Last-minute bookings: We inevitably receive a few unexpected late cancellations over the course of a season so it is always worth enquiring about vacancies on any tour - even for those departing in just a few weeks time!

Any questions? Call us on: +44 (0) 1692 580623 | 580624 • www.limosaholidays.co.uk
Other Things You Need To Know

Passports & Visas
All participants must be in possession of a valid passport. For UK passport holders, your passport must be valid for the proposed duration of your stay.

Although no additional period of validity beyond this is required, when travelling anywhere overseas we always recommend that your passport has a minimum of 6 months left to run after your intended date of return home in case of unforeseen delay.

* VISA NOT REQUIRED by UK passport holders.
(Holder of non-UK passports should contact their nearest French embassy or consulate to enquire whether or not they require a visa. If a visa is required, you need to apply locally. If the embassy or consulate requires you to provide a letter confirming that you are booked on an all-inclusive tour, please contact our office and we will be happy to provide one.)

Health & Vaccinations
Compulsory vaccinations: None. Recommended vaccinations: For travel everywhere (even within the UK), we recommend you check you are up-to-date with protection against tetanus, polio and hepatitis A.

The above information, together with that contained within our Travel Information sheets (sent to everyone who books), outlines health requirements for this tour. Please note that these details are given for guidance only - and are only for certain diseases - and you must consult your doctor in good time prior to travel as to what immunisations (if any) are needed for your chosen holiday.

For full and up-to-date health information we urge everyone to consult The National Travel Health Network and Centre (NaTHNaC) website www.nathnac.org/travel/ prior to booking any overseas holiday. NaTHNaC is funded by the UK Government’s Health Protection Agency and provides health information for both health professionals and travellers, with information compiled by its own clinical and scientific team. You can search for your individual country requirements, which are updated regularly.

Your Safety & Travel Advice
An unavoidable aspect of travelling abroad nowadays is the threat it may pose to your safety and security. The UK’s Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) encourages British nationals to be better prepared for their overseas trips with a view to avoiding common travelling traumas, risks and dangers. In order for you to assess and protect against any risks in your chosen destination it is strongly recommended that you refer to the relevant FCO Travel Advice - www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice - both prior to booking and regularly before you travel.

It is standard Limosa policy for our office to send a copy of the relevant FCO Travel Advice about the tour to all participants along with their Final Letter (2-4 weeks prior to the trip).

Further useful information on visas, health, etc., can be found at the World Travel Guide website: www.worldtravelguide.net/destinations

*Know Before You Go* - staying safe and healthy abroad - is a travel safety campaign run by the FCO, and another useful resource. Go to: www.gov.uk/knowbeforeyougo
Travel Insurance
Good travel insurance is essential before setting off on any overseas trip. In common with all responsible tour operators, it is a condition of booking that all clients are fully and adequately insured before travelling overseas with us.

Your travel insurance should cover against cancellation, curtailment, missed departure, delay, personal accident, death, loss of baggage and valuables (see note below), personal liability and legal expenses. Most importantly, your insurance must cover you fully in respect of medical care and repatriation should you become too ill to continue with the tour, including the cost of emergency evacuation by helicopter or air ambulance should this be necessary. Note that passenger liability insurance covering the transportation that we hire, particularly in Third World countries, may be inadequate; it is therefore important that your insurance cover includes sufficient provision for your dependents in the event of an accident.

We recommend that you obtain travel insurance as soon as possible after booking your holiday to ensure you are protected right from the word go in the event of unexpected cancellation prior to departure due to accident or illness. You must inform your insurers of any pre-existing medical conditions (including those of persons not necessarily travelling but upon whom your holiday may depend) that may require treatment during a period of overseas travel or might cause you to cancel the trip.

Once you have arranged your insurance, please be sure to send us the following essential details: name and contact details of your insurance provider, your policy number, expiry date and your insurers 24hr Emergency Assistance number.

Important Things to Note!
Be aware that Travel Insurance does not normally provide sufficient cover for valuable optical equipment, which is often best protected under your own household insurance policy. If in doubt ask your insurers for advice prior to travel.

Most travel insurance policies limit the amount of cover, typically up to a maximum tour cost of £5000 per person. If the tour you are booking exceeds this amount, additional cover can usually be provided upon payment of additional premium. We recommend all travellers check their individual policy limit to ensure the full cost of their holiday is covered.

Arranging Your Insurance: due to UK Government legislation, under Financial Services Authority (FSA) regulations, we are not allowed to offer or recommend travel related insurance to customers. Premiums can vary widely according to your age, needs, health, choice of destination and other factors, while many people nowadays have Annual Travel Insurance cover. For these reasons, we leave you free to shop around and pick your own policy, one best suited to your own individual needs.

General Information

www.limosaholidays.co.uk
Our website gives easy access to detailed tour itineraries (Tour Info Packs), trip reports, trip photos and the latest Limosa News.

Special Diets & Other Requests
We pass on all such requests to the airlines, hotels and other suppliers, and do our best to ensure (but of course cannot guarantee) that your needs will be met. Please be sure to tell us about these (in as much detail as possible) at the time of booking, to allow good time to make the necessary arrangements.
Smoking
Almost all of our clients prefer a smoke-free environment. For the enjoyment and comfort of all, we ask that smokers refrain from smoking in proximity to the group and respect our NO SMOKING policy in the vehicle, at meal times and when watching wildlife.

Any Questions?
If you have any questions at any time, you’ll find our office staff friendly, efficient, approachable - and just a phone call away, eager to assist you in every way. Our office is open 09.00-17.00 hrs Mon-Fri, and can also be reached by fax and email. In the event we are unable to take your call, please leave a message on our answerphone (24 hrs) and our office will contact you as soon as we can.

Thank you for your interest in our tours. We do hope that you will be able to join us - and we look forward to hearing from you again!

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