

Portugal

PORTUGAL BIRDING TOURS
LIMOSA HOLIDAYS | TOUR INFO PACK

The Algarve in Autumn

2022 **Monday 26th September - Monday 3rd October (8 days)**

Two-centre, small-group tour with Fernando Enrique Navarrete



Great Shearwater is one of the species we hope to find on our pelagic boat trip © Chris Collins

Limosa's autumn birdwatching tour to the Algarve in southern Portugal offers an incredible mix of experiences including the migration hotspot of Cape St Vincent, a half-day pelagic boat trip that can be excellent for seabirds, plus a day in the fabulous Alentejo steppe looking for Great and Little Bustards. The seabirding can be excellent in autumn and our recent tour highlights have included Sooty, Great, Cory's and Balearic Shearwaters, Wilson's Storm Petrel and Grey Phalarope, whilst ashore we have seen Spanish Imperial Eagle, Iberian Magpie and Bluethroat. Over the years, our groups have also found a surprising number of unexpected rarities including Rüppell's Vulture and Portugal's first Booted Warbler!

Highlights

- Easy and enjoyable autumn birding in Portugal's sunny Algarve
- Cape St. Vincent for migrant raptors and passerines plus Blue Rock Thrush and Red-billed Chough
- Alentejo steppe in search of Black-winged Kite, Great and Little Bustards, White Stork, sandgrouse and larks
- Regional specialities include Western Swamphen, Audouin's Gull, Iberian Magpie and Iberian Grey Shrike
- Pelagic boat trip for shearwaters, petrels, skuas and other seabirds
- Two-tailed Pasha and Monarch among possible autumn butterflies
- Small group tour with a maximum of 12 participants
- Expertly led by Limosa's resident, English-speaking Iberian specialist Fernando Enrique Navarrete

What's Included?

- Limosa Tour Leader
- 7 nights accommodation in Portugal, at two good and comfortable 4-star hotels with one in the eastern Algarve and the other in the west
- All main meals and drinking water provided
- Minibus transport
- Half-day seabird pelagic boat trip off Sagres
- All excursions, entry fees, permits
- All tour-based tips and taxes
- Limosa checklist of birds

Outline Itinerary

Day 1

Fly to Faro. Transfer east to our first hotel. Night Tavira

Days 2-3

Eastern Algarve: Coastal wetlands and a day trip to the Alentejo steppe. Two further nights in Tavira

Days 4-7

Western Algarve: west to Cape St. Vincent plus pelagic boat trip. Sagres (4 nights)

Day 8

Return to Faro and fly to the UK



Bluethroat © Arnoud van den Berg, Limosa

Tour Overview

Lying at the far southwestern tip of mainland Europe and within striking distance of the African coast, the cliffs and wetlands of Portugal's beautiful Algarve region are a natural focus for birds migrating between the two continents. The area is arguably at its best for birding in late September and early October with seabirds moving off the coast and waterfowl, waders, birds of prey and migrant passerines following the Atlantic shore south to Cape St Vincent and Ponta de Sagres. 'Turning the corner', they then head east along the coast of the Algarve, funneling towards the Strait of Gibraltar which is the shortest sea crossing between the two great continents.

Our autumn birdwatching tour to Portugal begins with a flight to Faro and an easy drive east to our first hotel at Tavira. We spend three nights here, staying at an excellent four-star hotel close to the Ria Formosa Natural Park.

Tavira gives access to the best of the Algarve's wetland reserves, the threatened Lagoa dos Salgados, and the barrier islands and inlets of the Ria Formosa. Greater Flamingo, Little Bittern, Audouin's and Slender-billed Gulls, Bluethroat and Common Waxbill are regularly present in autumn, alongside Little and Western Cattle Egrets, Black-winged Stilt, Kentish Plover and many other wetland birds.

During our stay in the eastern Algarve, we will also enjoy one longer day out, travelling inland to Mértola to sample the very different birdlife of Portugal's fabulous Alentejo region which is the westernmost extension of Spain's more famous grasslands of Extremadura. The rolling Alentejo steppe is home to many Iberian specialities, including Great and Little Bustards, Black-winged Kite and Iberian Grey Shrike.

For the second part of our holiday, we head west crossing the Algarve, to another excellent hotel overlooking the harbour at Sagres, at the extreme southwestern corner of mainland Europe.

In autumn, the magnificent sea-cliffs of Cape St. Vincent are a magnet to migrants and these are virtually on our doorstep here.

Blue Rock Thrush and Red-billed Chough are resident and our past October visits have really 'turned up trumps' seeing everything from Black Stork and Booted Eagle to Tawny Pipit and Rosy Starling. Our 2015 group even found a vagrant Booted Warbler at Cape St Vincent which was the first record for Portugal!

One highlight of our recent tours has been a pelagic boat trip out from Sagres. Our October 2019 trip produced Cory's and Balearic Shearwaters, along with European Storm Petrels, Northern Gannets and Great, Arctic and Pomarine Skuas but we have also found Wilson's Storm-petrel and Great Shearwater.

With its appealing winter climate, the Algarve has long been a popular destination for British holidaymakers but this is a trip that will take you behind the more familiar tourist façade to a land where White Stork, Western Swamphen and the endemic Iberian (Azure-winged) Magpie offer the prospect of a truly memorable birdwatching holiday.



We will look for Little Bustard on our day trip to the Alentejo region of Portugal © Fernando Enrique Navarrete

Limosa has been operating birdwatching tours to southern Portugal since 1996 and our October 2022 trip will be our 21st visit there.

Guide **Fernando Enrique Navarrete** led our autumn 2018 tour to the Algarve and lives near Seville in southwest Spain within easy drive of the Portuguese border and knows this region very well. Join him for another wonderful week of autumn birding on Portugal's sunny south coast!

Daily Itinerary

Day 1

FLIGHT TO FARO AND TRANSFER TO TAVIRA

Our autumn birdwatching tour to Portugal begins with a flight to Faro and then a short transfer east to our hotel, close to the coast near Tavira.

Situated right on the doorstep of the Ria Formosa Natural Park in Portugal's popular eastern Algarve region, the comfortable four-star *Ozadi Tavira Hotel* will be our base for the first three nights of the holiday. Depending upon flight schedules, there may be time to enjoy our first Portuguese birding close to the hotel this afternoon. *Night Tavira*

Days 2 - 3

ALGARVE WETLANDS AND ALENTEJO STEPPE

The Algarve's varied landscape and appealing climate give added zest to a week of first-class autumn birding and one which has a definite 'Mediterranean' flavour even though we are, of course, on Europe's Atlantic coast!

Over these two days, we will explore the Algarve's premier coastal wetlands, ranging from the bird-rich Lagoa dos Salgados and Quinto do

Lago in the west, to the islands and inlets of the Ria Formosa in the east. Spotless Starlings and Serins frequent the villages, Cattle Egrets are a common sight in the fields and Little Egrets and Western Swamphens stalk the reedbeds at favoured coastal wetlands. An early October visit may also produce something scarcer, such as Little Bittern, Squacco Heron, Ferruginous Duck or Red-crested Pochard and over the years, our groups more unusual 'finds' have included Glossy Ibis, Spotted Crake, Lesser Yellowlegs and Pectoral Sandpiper.

Stretching for more than 50 km along the coast (from Tavira in the east to Ancao in the west), the Ria Formosa can be a terrific spot for birds in autumn and this linear natural park safeguards almost the entire Formosa estuary. Comprising a narrow strip of land separated from the sea by a barrier of protective sand dunes, a labyrinth of lagoons and sandy islands, mudflats, marshes and canals lie behind and this is where Greater Flamingoes, Black-winged Stilts and Kentish Plover find a home, along with Audouin's, Slender-billed and Yellow-legged Gulls.



Sooty Shearwater © Chris Collins



Western Swampphen (previously known as Purple Swampphen) is one of the special species we hope to find © Fernando Enrique Navarrete

Belts of fringing pine trees and scrub harbour Sardinian Warblers and endemic Iberian Magpies and we could also find passage migrants such as Whinchat, Common Redstart and Pied Flycatcher. Our autumn tours have often been lucky to find Bluethroat here previously.

North of the Algarve, the grasslands of Portugal’s superb Alentejo region are the westernmost extension of Spain’s Extremaduran steppe. This sparsely populated plain is a major stronghold for Great and Little Bustards, although the post-breeding flocks can sometimes be tricky to find amidst the seemingly endless fields! White Storks breed here and at times, it seems just about every roadside telegraph pole is adorned with a nest.

Iberian Grey Shrikes perch on roadside wires and we will also listen out for the tell-tale ‘chuckling’ of Black-bellied Sandgrouse as they scurry across the autumnal grasslands and it is here that we have our best chances of finding Calandra and Thekla Larks, as well as the scarce Black-winged Kite. *Two further nights Tavira*

Days 4 - 7

MONCHIQUE, CAPE ST VINCENT AND SAGRES PELAGIC BOAT TRIP

Having explored the Algarve’s principal wetland sites, we leave Tavira and travel west along the coast to reach our second hotel at Sagres.

We spend four nights here staying at the stylish *Memmo Baleeira*, a contemporary four-star hotel overlooking the harbour and with magnificent ocean views. In autumn, the cliffs of nearby Cape St Vincent (just 10 minutes drive from our hotel) are a major migration hotspot.

As we travel west, we may make a short diversion into the hills inland of the coast. The wooded hillsides around the upland village of Monchique hold Dartford Warbler, Black Redstart, Crested Tit, Firecrest and Short-toed Treecreeper. Cirl Buntings inhabit the sunnier south-facing slopes and higher still, we can check a couple of spots for Rock Bunting, a scarce and localised bird in these parts.

At this time of year, there is always the chance we could encounter the odd migrant with Ring Ouzel, Common Redstart, Spotted Flycatcher and Garden Warbler among the species we have seen here previously.

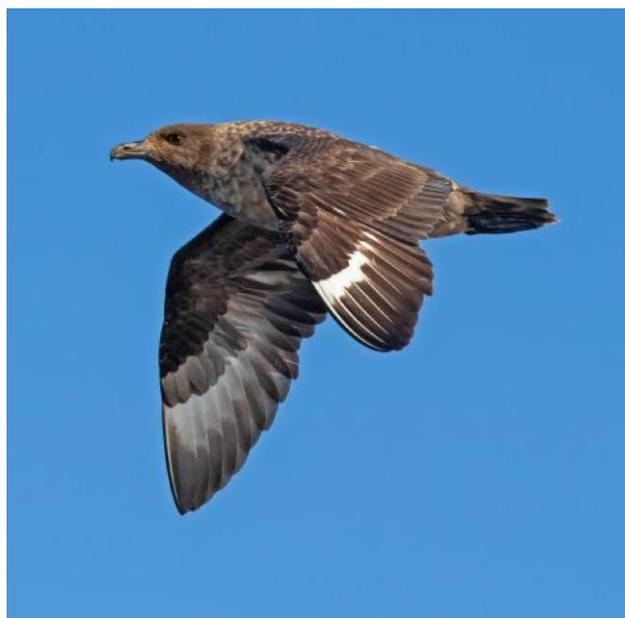
If time allows, we will continue up to the summit of Foia which at 998m (3250 feet) is the highest point in the Algarve and where there are impressive panoramic views back down to the coast.

The port of Sagres is very close to our hotel and during the 15th century 'Henry the Navigator' chose this as the location for his famous school of navigation, which produced such nautical alumni as Ferdinand Magellan and Vasco da Gama, legendary Portuguese explorers whose impact on the world is still felt today. Although we won't be embarking on such great voyages of discovery ourselves, if conditions are suitable during our stay, we will enjoy either a morning or afternoon pelagic boat trip in search of seabirds off the spectacular coast.

In early autumn, good numbers of shearwaters congregate out to sea beyond the cliffs and, with any luck, it won't be long before we spot our first Cory's Shearwater beside the boat! The presence of trawlers can attract flocks of Yellow-legged Gulls and plunge-diving Gannets, which



Wilson's Storm Petrel – all the way from Antarctica yet possible in the Algarve © Chris Collins



A Great Skua flies over our boat © Fernando Enrique, Limosa

in turn lure passing Great Skuas looking to steal an easy meal. Over the last few years, our boat trips have found Cory's, Great, Sooty and Balearic Shearwaters, Wilson's and European Storm Petrels, Grey Phalarope and 3 species of skua. The discovery of a lone Scopoli's Shearwater on our 2010 tour was the first record for Portugal, while on another trip a pod of 100 Common Dolphins raced alongside our boat and it was thrilling to see them jumping in the air as they swam through the crystal blue water. Though we can't, of course, guarantee to find all these species on every trip, we do have good chances of seeing exciting seabirds and cetaceans close to our boat.

Sitting at the extreme southwestern tip of Europe, a visit to Cape St Vincent is a 'must' in autumn. Blue Rock Thrush, Black Redstart and Red-billed Chough are resident on the rugged sea-cliffs and early October sees peak numbers of birds of prey moving through southwest Portugal and the jutting Cape acts as a focal point for these.



Introduced from Africa, Black-headed Weaver is an unexpected surprise on this tour! © Fernando Enrique Navarrete

In recent years, our tours have encountered up to 14 different species of raptor, including Black Kite, Egyptian and Griffon Vultures, Hobby and Short-toed, Booted and Bonelli’s Eagles. If conditions are right, falls of passerine migrants can also occur bringing warblers, chats, wheatears and flycatchers.

Like any European headland worth its salt, an autumn visit is enhanced by the prospect of stumbling across the unexpected. Each year will be different but surprises from our many previous visits here have included Pallid Harrier, a melanistic Montagu’s Harrier, Red-footed and Eleonora’s Falcons, Little Bustard, Black Stork, Hoopoe, Wryneck, Short-toed Lark, Spectacled Warbler, Iberian Chiffchaff, Tawny Pipit and juvenile Rosy Starling. Rarest of all, our October 2015 group found and photographed a Booted Warbler which was the first record for Portugal!

Although primarily a birdwatching tour, this holiday has much to offer those with a more general wildlife interest. Iberian Hare, Moorish Gecko, Large Psammotromus, Mediterranean Chameleon and Iberian Marsh Frog, along with

several species of Praying Mantis and late-flying dragonflies are among the many other fascinating creatures recorded by our groups. On more than one occasion, we have even been lucky to find the exquisite Two-tailed Pasha and migrant Monarch butterflies. *Four nights Sagres*

Day 8

DRIVE TO FARO, FLY TO UK

If flight schedules permit, we will enjoy some final birding in the Algarve as we make our way back to Faro, although we can't promise to find anything quite so rare or unexpected as the Rüppell's Vulture seen by one of our previous October groups!

Fly from Faro to the UK, where our autumn birdwatching tour to Portugal concludes.

Trip Information

Group Size Max 12 participants and 2 leaders depending on group size

Birds 140-165 species

Other Wildlife

Good general wildlife interest including some nice autumn butterflies and dragonflies. We have occasionally seen Two-tailed Pasha and the migratory North American Monarch.

Accommodation 7 nights accommodation in Portugal at two comfortable 4-star hotels with three nights at Tavira in eastern Algarve and four nights at Sagres in western Algarve. All rooms have private facilities and the hotels have swimming pools.

Meals All main meals are included in the tour price commencing with dinner on Day 1 and concluding with lunch on Day 8 (meal plan can sometimes vary according to flights). Breakfasts and most evening meals will be at our hotel. Lunches will usually be picnics but we may ring the changes with lunch at a local cafe.

Walking Easy. Short walks. Comfortable walking shoes are recommended.

Weather The Algarve enjoys a “Mediterranean” climate which is tempered by the Atlantic. In early October, it is typically warm and sunny, with daytime temperatures ranging between 14-23C (57-74F). It can be misty first thing in the morning and occasionally cool and windy, especially at the coast. Some rainfall is possible but this rarely lasts for long at this time of year.

Flights Due to the pandemic, it is proving extremely difficult to predict future flight prices and schedules, especially when a trip is scheduled for beyond the period when flights can be booked. As a result, we have taken the decision to price our holidays as excluding all international flights.

To keep the process as simple as possible for our clients, however, we are now working closely with an agent from Travel Counsellors who will be able to advise you on which flights we are recommending for each holiday and he will be able to book these for you.

Faro is a popular holiday destination and, depending on airline schedules, it may also be possible to fly from a number of regional airports such as Manchester, Bristol or Liverpool.

[In the event any regional flight doesn't fit with the group's flight, our first hotel is situated about 27 miles (40 minutes) from the airport by taxi, and the second hotel about 75 miles (90 mins via the motorway) from the airport by taxi.]

Ground Transport By minibus.

Boat Trip We will take either a morning or afternoon pelagic boat trip off Sagres to look for shearwaters, storm-petrels and other seabirds.

We travel in a 7.5m RIB powered by 250Hp 4 stroke Honda engines, with improved fuel efficiency and reduced emissions. Each boat holds 12 seated passengers (jockey style seats with life vests for all) and two crew. The trip usually lasts approx. 2-4 hours and depending on final party size, our group usually has exclusive use of the boat.

This trip is subject to availability of the experienced local operator and is also weather permitting but we haven't had to miss out yet! A refund will be made in the event the boat doesn't run but please note that no refunds are possible in the event you decide to opt out of the boat trip as costs are fixed.

Photos Chances of some good opportunistic bird photography on this tour including seabirds and cetaceans from the boat.



Short-toed Snake-Eagle © Fernando Enrique Navarrete

Tour Cost

2022 (8-day tour):

Land only cost: £1995

Deposit: £500

Single Supp: £495

Cost includes

- Limosa Tour Leader (with a second guide if the group size warrants this)
- 7 nights accommodation in Portugal
- All main meals and drinking water provided
- Minibus transport
- Pelagic boat trip off Sagres
- All excursions, entry fees, permits
- All tour-based tips and taxes
- Limosa checklist of birds

Cost excludes

International flights, insurance, drinks, airport/in-flight meals and snacks and other items of a personal nature.

About Your Guides

Fernando Enrique Navarrete Fernando is our resident Spanish expert bird tour guide, all-round naturalist and biologist whose home is at Algeciras overlooking the Strait of Gibraltar.

As a child, he was fascinated by the flocks of raptors that formed above his home and being born in the Strait, Europe's most important bird migration route, helped shape his love of birds and nature. At 18, Fernando became one of the youngest bird-ringers in Spain, while his eagerness to learn about more and more species led him to travel widely in Europe, Africa, Asia and Central America.

He has also worked on projects with Montagu's Harriers, Lesser Kestrels, Griffon Vultures and White Storks as well as studying the effects of wind farms on birds.

Spanish is Fernando's first language but his command of English is excellent and he is a delight to travel with, earning rave reviews from participants. He leads our tours to Guatemala, as well as those across Spain. Having lived and worked in north, central and southern Spain, he knows the birds of all these regions exceptionally well.

A second Limosa guide (TBA) will be added assuming the group size warrants this.

What You Say

"Both leaders were outstanding - charming, helpful and very patient. Fernando's bird spotting was unbelievable!"

LB, Portugal - Algarve tour

"Both guides absolutely first class and also good company. Very knowledgeable about flora and fauna, as well as birds"

ST, Portugal - Algarve tour

"This tour more than met expectations in terms of the quality of hotels, food and the relaxed pace. The birding highlight for me was the Sagres pelagic. We were fortunate to enjoy ideal weather and sea conditions and close encounters with Dolphins. At Tavira it was good to have quality birding so close to the hotel."

RD, Portugal - Algarve tour

"Great Bustard right next to the vehicle, and the boat trip with Common Dolphins and Great Shearwaters was superb."

ET, Portugal - Algarve tour

How To Enquire

Due to the considerable uncertainty created by the pandemic, Limosa Holidays are not currently accepting bookings for any trips, however, you are welcome to contact us either by email or phone to register your interest in any of our holidays.

Whilst some tour companies may be willing to take a deposit from you and say a trip is a “confirmed departure”, our approach is going to be to wait a little longer as we consider this both honest and realistic.

Once we are confident that the trip can run, we will be in touch to confirm your place and ask for a deposit.

We do encourage you to register your interest as we are expecting considerable demand, once the consensus is that it is safe to travel again.

Any Questions

Please do not hesitate to contact us by email or phone. Our office is generally open from 09:30-17:30 but you are welcome to contact us outside these times too. We are happy to take calls in the evening and at weekends but if no one is available the call will go to our answerphone.

Thank you for your interest in our tours. We do hope that you will be able to join us once the pandemic is over and we look forward to hearing from you.