



Hungarianbirdwatching.com

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Exploring Hungary: Birds, Nature and Rural Life April, May, June, 2009

During this 7-days (6 nights) tour we will admire the architecture of Hungary's capital Budapest and will visit two smaller towns also famous of their beauty: Sárvár and Tata. We will also spend few days and nights in rural environments in small villages both in West-Hungary and on the Great Plain. We will visit four National Parks (Fertő-Hanság, Duna-Ipoly, Kiskunság and Hortobágy) offering us the opportunity to see a great variety of habitats and birds. During birding we try to see the most characteristics birds of Hungary, the Great Bustard, Saker, Imperial Eagle, Great White Egret, White Stork as well as other species like woodpeckers, bee-eaters and kingfisher. Hungary is famous about its spas, so we won't miss to try out a thermal bath during our tour. And of course we will taste prize-winning Hungarian wines and will enjoy the Hungarian cuisine in a csárda "czarda".

Day 1

Our tour will start in **Budapest** at the airport, where we pick you up. We will drive you to the hotel equipped with good quality rooms where you will be accommodated for the first night. After some refreshment we will start our Budapest sightseeing tour. Since our time will be limited we will visit the "must-see" sights of Budapest the *Buda Castle, Matthias Church, Basilica, Parliament, Heroes Square* and the *City Park*.



Building of Parliament



Buda Castle



Matthias Ch.



Basilica



Heroes Square



City Park



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In the *evening* we will have our dinner. During this dinner we will discuss the program of the following days allowing us to fine-tune it based on the information of the most recent programs, weather condition and your comments and ideas. After dinner we will see **Budapest by night**. Budapest at night is one of the most beautiful cities so by car we will drive through the *Andrassy promenade* and the *Chain Bridge*, go up to the Gellért Hill and have an overlook at the city. From there we will drive to the pension at around 10pm.



Buda Castle



Chain Bridge



Vajdahunyad Castle

Day 2

On *the second day* after breakfast we will drive to **Lake Fertő**, a large saline lake situated on the Austrian-Hungarian border. The Hungarian part of the lake (an area of 75 km²), is 88% covered by reedbeds (*Phragmites*), and adjacent mesophile and wet saline grasslands. In this area we will spend two nights in a small village called **Sarród**.



Lake Fertő

We will be accommodated either in a newly renovated pension or in *Heron Castle*, which is the Headquarter of Fertő-Hanság National Park.



Sarród

After lunch we will go for **birding** and spend the *afternoon* by spotting waterfowls. We will see Great White Egrets and Grey Herons. Ducks, shorebirds, gulls and the variety of raptor species even increases the spectacle. (Great White Egret is a symbolic bird of Lake Fertő and the Hungarian nature conservation, since it almost died out in the 19th century. But thanks to the work of the “Egret Guards” who were guarding Egrets and Egret nests by guns its population started to grow.) During our birding in the reedbeds the songs of Moustached Warblers, Bluethroat and Savi’s Warblers can be also heard.



Great White Egret



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In the *evening* we will drive to **Fertőszéplak**, or Fertőboz where we will have our dinner in a Csárda (czarda). The Csárda is a typical Hungarian village restaurant wick served as restaurant, pub, meeting point and dance hall for villages folks. (Here comes the name of the dance czardas) In the csárda we will taste some traditional Hungarian foods and some local redwines.

Day 3

Morning we will start the day with **birdwatching** at Lake Fertő, and this time we will go to other areas of the lake in order to see or hear new species. After a few hours birding from Lake Fertő we will drive to **Hanság**. Hanság is a poorly-drained flood-plain, once together with Fertő it was Hungary's biggest marshland. This beautiful region, divided into wet meadows, alder woods and open water areas, ensures an excellent habitat for several raptor species, song- and water birds. If we are lucky we can see Great Bustard, on a specially handled, protected area. (We also try to spot Great Bustard on the Kiskunság).



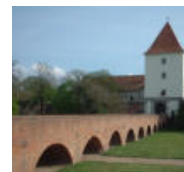
Great Bustard

We will have our sandwich lunch in this area and continue birding. We will see White Storks and passing through small villages we can see how these birds live together with humans and build nests on the chimneys. If we are fortunate, beside many other species we can see here Lesser Grey Shrike and Red Kite as well.



Lesser Grey Shrike

In the late *afternoon* we will drive to **Sárvár** a small town in Transdanubia, which has a very nice castle and park. After having a short walk around the castle, we will drive to the **thermal bath** of Sárvár. We will relax in the warm thermal water and leave the bath in the evening hours.



Sárvár Castle

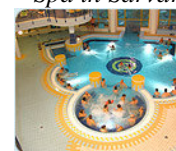


Spa in Sárvár

In the *evening* if our pension has the facility and the weather is nice we will make our traditional Hungarian food the Rablohus (Robber's meat). It's actually meat, onion, potato, bacon roasted on a spit.



Spa in Sárvár



Spa in Sárvár



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Day 4

After breakfast we will drive to our next destination **Tata**. Tata is Baroque little town, that surrounds the picturesque and protected Ramsar area, the Old Lake. We will spend two days and two nights here before going to Kiskunság.

We will be **birding** in the soft wood groves of Lake Öreg of Tata where we have the opportunity to see different woodpeckers. Six woodpecker species are living in this grove and we hope we can see Great-, Middle- and Lesser-Spotted, Syrian and if we are very lucky Black Woodpeckers. In the parks surrounding the Old Lake we can see and hear a lot of songbirds and thrushes. On the lake we can spot different herons, ducks and other waterfowls and try to find Kingfisher which is nesting at the lake.

In the **second part of the** day we will go to Ferenccmajor 8 km from Tata where 13 fishponds located adjacent and give the birds an excellent habitat. Mostly water birds can be observed like Bitterns, Herons and ducks. But we should find Stonechat, Whinchat, Barred Warbler, Grasshopper Warbler, Savi's Warbler, maybe Bearded Reedling, Penduline Tit, Corn Bunting. Raptors can be found like Marsh Harrier, Short-toed Eagle and sometimes White-tailed Eagle. In late afternoon and in the **evening** we will walk in the oldtown of Tata and will see some beautiful buildings. We will have our dinner in a friendly restaurant.



Tata



Black Woodpecker



Grey Heron



Watermill in Tata

Day 5

The **whole day** we will devote to **Raptors** and spend all the day in nature. The **Gerecse Mountain** is of fossil origin and despite of its small area approximately hundred bird species are nesting and living here. The variety of habitats (forests, shrublands, grasslands, agricultural areas) offer good conditions for biodiversity. If the weather is favorable, we can see and hear up to 10 raptor species within only a few hours. If everything goes well among the raptor species we will see *Imperial Eagle* and *Saker* in their natural habitats.



Saker



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In the *evening* we will visit one of Hungary's most famous cellar the Hilltop Cellar in **Neszmély**, a small village not far from Tata.. The wines of this cellar won several prizes both in Hungary and abroad and in 2004 it was the “**Wine-cellar of the year**” and also won the “Excellent wine-cellar of Hungary” award. Upon tasting the famous Hilltop wines, you will understand why we have visited this cellar.



*Neszmély,
Hilltop Cellar*

Day 6

In the *morning* we will drive to **Kiskunság** to visit the National Park. We will stay overnight in a small village of the Kiskunság. Kiskunság like Hortobágy is a big “Pusta” (steppe) with grasslands, saline lakes and in certain areas quicksand. During our morning **birding** we try to find Great Bustard (if we could not see this wonderful bird in Hanság). During this walk we can also see different raptor species.



Kiskunság

In the *afternoon* we continue on our way to the biggest alkali lake of Hungary, called Kelemen-szék. Here we can experience a wide variety of breeding and migrating waterfowls, including unique species like Avocet, Kentish Plover, Mediterranean Gull and many goose and duck species.



Kelemen-szék

In late afternoon or in the *evening* (according to the schedule), we will see a so-called **Pusta program**, which usually contains an acrobatic horse-herd (Hungarian cowboy) show. Though it's quite commercialized, the clothes of the horse-herds and the horses are beautiful. After the show we will have our last dinner in a Csárda.



Pusta program



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Day 7

This is our last day and we don't want to miss the most famous Hungarian landscape the **Hortobágy**. By far Hortobágy is the most marketed Pusta and rural environment in Hungary and it has an extensive tourism. In order to get there we get up early *morning* and drive to Hortobágy. In Hortobágy we will have some 5 hours and will see the most famous tourist attractions like the 9-arch bridge, the Pusta, and Hortobágy the village.



Gray Cattles at Hortobágy



9-hole bridge



Shepherds Statue



Shed



Folklor program

We envisage to leave around noon and come back to Budapest at around 6pm.

Disclaimer

We cannot guarantee good birding weather and cannot guarantee that all the birds or any of the specific birds listed in our itinerary can be observed. We take no responsibility for any damages, lost or injuries during the trip, so please arrange proper insurance. Some programs may change due to unfavorable weather conditions or unforeseen reasons.

Weather

The weather in this season is unpredictable. It can be can be sunny and warm, but cold and rainy as well. So please be prepared for rain showers, and take raincoats and waterproof shoes or boots with you.