

Portugal: Birding & Culture | Trip Report

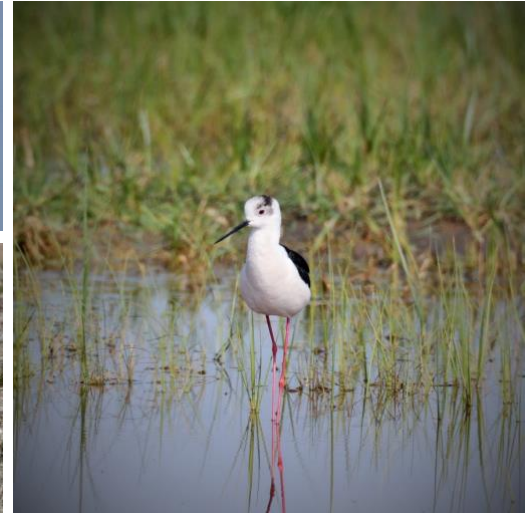
Oct. 12-24, 2022 | by Gerard Gorman



With Naturalist Journeys' guide Gerard Gorman, local guides Bruno Martins, Jaime Sousa, and João Tavares, and participants Brian, Buck, Cecilia, Deb, Joan, Joanne, Leo, Lori, Mary, Noel, Philip, and Susan.



This was a fantastic tour around a beautiful, charming, and friendly country. Portugal is typified by diverse scenery and wildlife habitats that include coastal lagoons, freshwater wetlands, reedbeds, rice fields, olive groves, old cork oak woodlands, scrubland, river gorges, farmlands, grasslands, and the Atlantic Ocean. Our itinerary took in all these environments as we visited the best sites in the south of the country. We travelled across three areas - the tidal estuary of the River Tagus, the plains of the Alentejo, and the Algarve and its coastline and sea. Many of the rural settlements where we took breaks and ate lunches were peaceful and quaint. That pace of life suited us well. The provincial towns we visited, and the capital Lisbon, are steeped in culture and history, which is not surprising when one learns that Lisbon was first settled by the Phoenicians in 1200 BC, which makes it around four centuries older than Rome! Now that is a fascinating factoid! We observed a varied assortment of fabulous bird species – eagles, vultures, owls, shorebirds, wildfowl, songbirds, seabirds, and the Eurasian Hoopoe and the colorful Kingfisher, two favorites. Other wonderful wildlife experienced included pods of Common Dolphins by right by our boat, close views of Fallow Deer and a curious Wild Boar and Eurasian Otter active in broad daylight. On the cultural side of things, we visited the Neolithic site of Almendres Cromlech where stone structures that were erected by people between 5000 and 4000 BCE stand in formation. The towns of Évora and Mértola, and the capital city Lisbon, were all remarkable places, too. Our hotels were all well-located and comfortable and the cuisine and wines of a high standard. And, as we always seem to do on Naturalist Journeys tours, we also had lots of fun! Overall, this was a superb trip with an eager and cheerful group!



Wed., Oct. 12

Arrivals | Lisbon Airport to Alcochete

It was to be a sunny and successful day. It began when our local guide Bruno Martins took the early arrivals in our group to the nearby Salinas do Samouco (Samouco salt pans). This former salt production complex was established in the 13th century and was once the main source of salt in all Portugal. Incredible. Today, it is a protected site run by a foundation, for both its cultural and natural values. It is just one of the many conservation initiatives that exist in Portugal. Birds were abundant, with Greater Flamingos, and a host of shorebirds such as Black-winged Stilt, Pied Avocet, Northern Lapwing, Common Ringed Plover, Ruff, Curlew Sandpiper, Dunlin, Little Stint, Spotted Redshank and Common Redshank all seen. Scrubby areas had Sardinian Warblers and Spotless Starlings (an Iberian endemic) where common. A great start! Once everyone had arrived, we met in the late afternoon in the lovely hotel garden of our accommodation, the Quinta da Praia das Fontes, a characterful, former manor house in Alcochete, a small historic town by the River Tagus (aka Tejo) estuary. We were just twenty-one miles from the capital city of Lisbon via the impressive Vasco da Gama Bridge, which at over ten miles long it is the longest in western Europe, and in a perfect place to start our tour. We briefly introduced ourselves and discussed our plans for the days to come and then ran through the checklist of the first day's sightings. A total forty-seven bird species had been recorded, which was a good indication of the things to come. We then took a pleasant short walk around the harbor to a small, traditional fish restaurant for dinner. It was authentic. Everyone chose the fresh catches – seabream, seabass, cuttlefish, for example – which was to be a theme at our meals throughout the tour. There were always fresh salads, vegetarian options and delicious, often irresistible, desserts. Local white and red wines were on-the-house, which proved popular! We talked about the highlights of our first day and then announced our plans for the morrow. It was already clear that this was going to be a terrific trip.

Thurs., Oct. 13

Alcochete | Birding Barroca d'Alva, Atalaya Ranch & Pancas

Breakfast was at 7.30 am, and we were away at 8.30. Another warm, bright day began with us driving to sites around the Tagus Estuary, much of which is protected as the Tagus Estuary Nature Reserve. We did not have to drive far to see great birds in its diverse habitats which include mudflats, salt marshes, salt pans, rice fields, reedbeds, woodlands and the open river itself. We pulled in at a small stone bridge over a canal, soon seeing Common and Green Sandpipers, and the delightfully named Zitting Cisticola. A Water Rail called, squealing like pig. Common Kingfisher (that name does not really do this little azure jewel justice) teased us several times by rapidly flying by and then perching out of sight (we would catch up with perched ones later). Eurasian Marsh-Harriers and Eurasian Kestrels both hunted close by. There were also Common Waxbills and Yellow-crowned



Bishops, including bright males of the latter species, both not native but still notable. We saw our first White Storks, standing on huge nests on high-voltage power pylons, though at this time of year the birds were not breeding. Next, was a visit to a private ranch, the Quinta da Atalaya, where the owners, who are bird and birder friendly, raise horses and cattle. It was easy walking here around the pastures and ponds. Feeding Greater Flamingos were quite close and there were Northern Shovelers, Little Grebes, Eurasian Coots, Black-winged Stilts, Common Snipe and Eurasian Spoonbills. An Osprey was perched on one of the buildings. Western Yellow and Pied Wagtails, Meadow Pipits and two Hoopoes were all seen in a cattle pasture, the wagtails often looking for insects between the hooves of the livestock, along with Cattle Egrets.

We drove back to Alcochete for lunch in a café and after a short break set off again for the afternoon. We drove to Pancas, an open woodland of pines and old cork woods, the latter are often great habitats for wildlife as they are not intensively managed. We learned that a cork oak has an average lifespan of over two hundred years and that the first harvesting of the cork bark is done when the tree is around 25 years old. Subsequent stripping is done at intervals of at least nine years. Young, black bulls stood amongst the trees. These striking animals are raised for bullfighting, but we learned that in Portugal, unlike in Spain, the bull is fought, but not killed. We saw Common Chiffchaffs, Eurasian Nuthatches, a Spotted Flycatcher, a Eurasian Jay, gregarious Iberian Magpies, a brief Eurasian Sparrowhawk and several Common Buzzards. But the star bird was three Bonelli's Eagles. Bruno had not expected to see this raptor here and the views were good, even he showed his excitement. At around 5pm we visited the Companhia das Lezírias wine estate. The signature wines here are named Tyto alba, which is the scientific name of the Barn Owl, in recognition of it being a keystone species that illustrates the quality of the wildlife habitats in and around the vineyards. Yes, another conservation initiative that we would hear of and support by our visit. We did not actually see a Barn Owl here (except for ones on the wine bottle labels) but we found droppings and pellets below their roosting spots. Thus, this wine tasting event fell under the "culture" part of the itinerary and was mentioned as a highlight by Philip and Deb. Back in Alcochete, dinner was in another local, traditional restaurant, just a short, pleasant walk from our cozy accommodation.



Fri., Oct. 14

Alcochete | Almendres Cromlech | Évora | Castro Verde Mértola

We were joined today by João Tavares, who soon proved to be another exceptional local guide. There was another change, too, the sunny weather had disappeared. Indeed, it was overcast and foggy, but not for long, by mid-morning the sun was out again. We left Alcochete and the Tagus estuary area and headed east on highway 4 and then on a minor road to the southeast. We put in a “comfort stop” and met local cultural guide Veronika who first took us to the Almendres Cromlech megalithic standing stones. It was sobering to learn that these granite monoliths have been dated to the sixth millennium BC. Bird wise, some of us saw Short-toed Treecreeper here. Next up was the historical town of Évora. We visited several sites on a pleasant walk including the ruins of a Roman Temple, Veronika telling us much about the significance of each place. Lunch was al fresco in the main square. We were impressed, and amused, by our delightful server, who was friendly and “bossy” (in an enjoyable way!) at the same time. As we ate, Eurasian Jackdaws (small members of the crow family) flew around the church tower and a kettle of White Storks swirled in the blue sky high above. The town was bustling, with both locals and tourists, and there was a sense that something was going to happen. After a little free time, when some of us bought souvenirs, others sampled ice creams, and as we prepared to leave, a colorful festival with competing brass bands began. In the town of Castro Verde, we watched three Long-eared Owls that were roosting by day in a line of “Pepper trees” (*Schinus mole*). This ornamental tree is native to South America and isn’t actually a true pepper. We got stunning close views of these impressive owls, which were relaxed and not perturbed by our presence at all. We then drove through the rolling steppes and farmlands of the Alentejo region, soon seeing some new birds for our trips such as Red-legged Partridge, Griffon Vulture, Hen Harrier, Common Raven, Corn Bunting and Iberian Gray Shrike, whilst Red Kites, European Stonechats and Northern Wheatears began to be more common. We arrived in Mértola, a town steeped in heritage, in the late afternoon. We would stay in our hotel, which stood high above the River Guadiana, for four nights. We walked to a nearby restaurant for dinner which was, as we had come to expect, terrific.

Sat., Oct. 15

Mértola | Corte Pequena | Corvos | Mina de São Domingos

Before setting off for the day, we watched Eurasian Crag-Martins flying over the River Guadiana below us, getting great eye-level views of birds that often need some upward neck-stretching. Close to town we stopped



on a country road when our driver saw a Great Spotted Woodpecker on a wooden utility pole (Pedro spotted several birds during the trip). We got out of the bus and quickly found this to be a birdy spot with a Wood Lark singing and Firecrest, Crested and Great Tits, Dartford Warbler, Long-tailed Tits, all moving in the roadside trees. We then took a good gravel farm road. Red-legged Partridges were almost everywhere, and a Wild Boar ran in the direction of the bus, only stopping when it realized we were there. It was a good sighting because, although common, these pigs can be secretive and challenging to observe as they are usually only active at dawn and dusk. We also saw Red and Fallow Deer, and a herd of Mouflon, too. Mouflons are big sheep, the males with impressive robust horns, which are not native to Portugal, but to mountains in the Middle East. They were introduced for hunting, as they have been to many European countries. We waited and scanned the skies, soon seeing two Spanish Eagles, two Golden Eagles (and adult and a juvenile) and several Red Kites. Our friendly driver Pedro reversed down the tracks to save us an uphill walk back. Undeniably, he saved us several long walks during the trip by driving us expertly into the areas we wanted to explore. We had seen Crested Larks on every day so far, but now we were in a region where the remarkably similar Thekla Lark also occurred, and we spent some time familiarizing ourselves with the differences. Lunch in a village restaurant was excellent. Not a touristy place at all, full of locals, families out for their Sunday meal. In the afternoon there were a few showers, but it was still warm, and things became a little slower, but we still saw several Eurasian Hoopoes, Iberian Magpies, Iberian Gray Shrikes sitting on wires and bushes and soaring Griffon Vultures. In a park in the village of Mina de São Domingos, we found some of the now usual bird, Common Wood-Pigeon, Eurasian Kestrel, Carrion Crow, Spotless Starling and Common Chiffchaff, but also a Pied Flycatcher which was obviously a bird moving through the area on migration. Our final stop today was by the River Guadiana opposite our hotel. Here a Great Tit was singing “teacher, teacher, teacher,” Crag Martins zoomed back and forth, and we added another species to our trip list, Rock Sparrow, many of which were roosting on the bridge over the Guadiana. Back at the hotel we met at 6.30 to do our check list, before having dinner at 7.30 in another great local place with a fine selection of local, traditional dishes, fine wines, and lovely staff.

Sun., Oct. 16

Mértola | Castro Verde area | Alvares

Once again, as we went to breakfast, we watched the Eurasian Crag-Martins swirling around, and some even clinging to the walls of the adjacent buildings. We drove through the rolling landscapes again, stopping and walking on easy farm tracks. It was good lark terrain with Crested, Thekla and Calandra all seen. Our main



targets, however, were Great Bustards and Black-bellied Sandgrouse. The Alentejo region is the best in Portugal for these two grassland and steppe dwelling birds. As we drove up one farm road, two huge birds were spotted flying in the distance, Great Bustards! We hurried towards the direction they had gone in but could not relocate them. A short walk up a rise gave took us to a low hill and a panorama of the area. A small lake below held good numbers of ducks, egrets, some shorebirds, including Common Greenshank and, interestingly, a group of Greater Flamingos, which were far from the saline, coastal habitats where they usually occurred. As we were watching these birds, someone called out that a mammal was swimming in the water. It was a Eurasian Otter! It even came out of the lake and ran along the shoreline. A wonderful observation, particularly as this aquatic carnivore is usually very secretive and generally nocturnal. Joanne and Philip later said this Otter was their “mammal highlight” of the trip.

As we left this area, we saw a dozen or so Black-bellied Sandgrouse in flight. We tracked them, saw where they landed and got views in our telescopes. Success. At another spot, Pedro pointed out a Little Owl, our first, sitting on a pile of rocks. We continued our search for Great Bustards and finally found five in a field of crops. They were not close, but still unmistakable, especially as we were on high ground looking down towards them. European Rabbits, which we had seen on some previous days, we often seen today, the open grassy terrain with light soils that are easy to burrow into obviously being ideal. This familiar species is native to the Iberian Peninsula, those found commonly elsewhere in Europe and across the world, are introduced. We also saw our first reptile of the trip today, Mediterranean Turtles, which were piled up on top of each other in what Joan termed a “tower.”

Mon., Oct. 17 Exploring Mértola | Birding Castro Verde | Nossa Senhora de Aracelis

This morning the focus was to be on the rich cultural history of Mértola. Nevertheless, we first squeezed a little natural history in, along the Guadiana riverbank, seeing a Common Kingfisher, Black Redstarts, a party of Long-tailed Tits and by the time we had reached the slate and stone arches of the River Tower (Torre do Rio) we had seen four hirundine species: Eurasian Crag-Martin, Common House-Martin, Barn Swallow and Red-rumped Swallow. The defensive abutments of the River Tower, some extending into the river itself, are thought to date from the second century. This edifice was declared a National Monument in 1910. We went up to the imposing



castle (built in the early Christian era, on existing earlier structures, and then modified many times since). The views from the high, old, town walls were impressive. Truth be told, there are so many ancient things to see in Mértola, from Roman, Christian, Islamic, and other cultures, that we could not fit them all in. But with the help of another passionate, knowledgeable and welcoming local guide, who took us through the often-narrow streets with whitewashed house, we were treated to a very good overview.

We visited the Main Church (Igreja Matriz) which was, as evident from its architecture, formally a Muslim temple from the 12th century, Roman ruins (there were some classic mosaics depicting animals) the remains of Muslim family dwellings, the Castle Keep (Torre de Menagem), constructed in 1292, and the Islamic Museum with artifacts old and new. It is challenging to imagine a place that could be more suitable for a European Birding and Culture tour. Brimming with antiquity and heritage, we had lunch and then set off to look for more birds and other wildlife in the hinterland of the town. A key bird which we had not yet seen was Cinereous Vulture, so we focused on looking for that. As we did so, we saw Red Kites and Common Buzzards. Then a kettle of about thirty Eurasian Griffon Vultures was spotted ahead of us, so we drove that way and got out of the bus. As soon as we did so, a huge, square-winged bird soared over us, and then another. Cinereous Vultures! They were so close we could even see their yellowish feet, a good identification feature. Our final stop was at Nossa Senhora de Aracelis, a hill with a chapel that gives spectacular views over the plains. In the evening, as we walked to dinner, Turkish Geckos were seen under the lights on the walls of house. On the way back João rescued a Natterjack Toad from a cat. It had been yet another momentous day, a winning combination of culture and wildlife.

Tues., Oct. 18

**Mértola | Castro Marim | Aldeia Nova | Santa Luzia
Salinas | Tavira**

We left Mértola after breakfast, heading south towards Beja and then on to our next base in Tavira in the Algarve. As usual, we put in rest/coffee and birding stops on the way. A very birdy location was just after Castro



Marim, at the Salinas do Cerro, salt pans, near Castro Marim in the very south-east corner of the Algarve close to the Spanish border. We quickly found a new trip bird here on one of the ponds, six Common Shelducks. There were other ducks, too, our first Caspian Terns and an excellent selection of shorebirds, including a Red Knot and over a hundred Pied Avocets. As we left, a Eurasian Wryneck was spotted briefly in a tree. At Aldeia Nova, a reed-fringed lake set amongst pinewoods, we found males and females of three new duck species for the trip. With their big orange heads and scarlet bills, the Red-crested Pochard drakes were stunning, and the Common Pochards and three Ferruginous Ducks (a rare bird hereabouts) were also good-lookers. Western Swamphe showed well here, too. As we looked at some Iberian Magpies, an Iberian Green Woodpecker called and then dashed through the pines. A little later it appeared again, flying over the lake and revealing its bright yellow rump. At the next salt pan system, Salinas de Santa Luzia, gulls came to the fore.

We saw our first Slender-billed and Audouin's Gulls, as well as a few Black-headed, Mediterranean, Yellow-legged and many Lesser Black-backed Gulls. In addition to the birds, West African Fiddler Crabs at their burrows in a muddy canal bank proved popular, too. As their name suggests, these crabs are more commonly found in Africa. We arrived at our next hotel, on the coast outside Tavira, in suitable time to rest and recuperate before dinner. This time it was a sumptuous buffet with an array of goodies. Leo went straight for the sea fish, grilled to order, Joanne was particularly delighted with the selection of cheeses, while Joan admitted that she couldn't resist the ice creams.

Wed., Oct. 19 Tavira | Quinta do Lago | Lagoa de São Lourenço | Faro

It was a little rainy this morning, but not enough to stop us. In fact, it was good that the area was getting some precipitation as relieve from a long drought was needed. We visited Quinto do Lago, a "posh" residential estate with golf courses near Almancil, a well-known birding location. We immediately got our best view of a Eurasian Wryneck and watched a Eurasian Hoopoe walking and feeding on a lawn. The first bird seen as we approached the waterfront was a beautifully plumaged European Golden-Plover. Next was a Whimbrel. The resort lake (Lagoa de São Lourenço) is maintained for wildlife and is overlooked by a convenient (especially when it is raining) two-tier blind. From here we got close views of Little Grebes and some new trip birds, around ten Gadwall, a magnificent male Eurasian Wigeon and a Great Crested Grebe. Some got a glimpse of a Little Bittern in the reeds. A particularly good bird here was a White-winged Tern, a rarity in the region, which flew back and forth, at times quite close. After many days of mostly just hearing them (these skulkers can be surprisingly loud for such a small bird) we got decent views of a Cetti's Warbler. Mediterranean Turtles were also here, in the water and basking on vegetation, as well as non-native, invasive, Red-eared Slider Turtles. As we left this



excellent site, parties of Iberian Magpies showed well in the pines. In the afternoon we went to a small urban park where João said a Tawny Owl regularly roosted. The first birds we saw here were two Peacocks (more correctly Peafowl), but we wouldn't count them, and didn't on our evening checklist session, as they were clearly "ornamental," although still magnificent birds. Then, sure enough, there it was as "promised," the owl perched high up in a tree. We were able to get it in our telescopes and everyone had good views as it sleepily looked down at us. Wonderful, indeed, which owl isn't. And it was a "lifer" for most, too. As we left, we had splendid views of two Gray Wagtails flying around and fighting. On we went, not rushing, but not wasting time, either. An Osprey was seen in flight as we approached our next stop, the local sewage plant. There were many ducks on the pungent ponds, but we were soon rained off. We hurried back to the bus, doing our best to get the mud off our boots before boarding. Back at the hotel, we ran through the checklist 7pm and then enjoyed another excellent buffet dinner. It was clear that no one was going to go home from the trip having lost weight! We retired sooner than usual as we would be getting up early the next day.

Thurs., Oct. 20 Tavira | Sagres | Porto da Baleenia | Vale Santo

This morning promised to be special, we were going on a pelagic birding trip out into the Atlantic! We set off early, taking a boxed breakfast with us and stopping for coffee. We took road 125 to the very southwest of Portugal, in fact, the headland here Cabo de São Vicente is the south westernmost tip of mainland Europe. Our destination was Sagres, to be exact to the Porto da Baleeira. The weather was perfect, no rain, no high winds and the sea was calm. As we waited a Black Redstart sang from a building, a Blue Rock Thrush was seen on the top of the cliff that towered above the dock, and a European Shag was spotted sitting on the harbor wall. After putting on lifejackets climbed into a long zodiac type craft. We were taken out by two young ladies, a pilot and a marine biologist. We soon saw several Northern Gannets, in various plumages. But after a short way out, the crew realized that they had left a bucket of chum (a malodorous mix of fish remains and other scraps of sea life) behind on the dockside. We returned, picked it up, and set off again. It did not take long after dumping the chum into the water for the birds to arrive. Wilson's, Leach's and European Storm-Petrels, daintily floated above



the waves. Several Cory's and Great Shearwaters came close, often landing on the water, and a single Sooty Shearwater later rushed in to join them. Just when we thought that would be it, it wasn't, as a huge Great Skua approached and flew over. It was all simply tremendous.

Another memorable part of our trip out into the Atlantic was the appearance of pods of Common Dolphins. These magnificent marine mammals swam, dived and leapt all around us, sometimes right by and under the boat. They were so agile that it was hard to say how many there were, perhaps a hundred. Everyone was enthralled by the exhibition and Lori, Brian, Deb, Susan and Cecilia, all said later that it was one of the highlights of our whole journey. Lunch was in a nice Italian place in town. As we left the eatery, it started to rain again, heavily. Moving on a short way, we stopped on the nearby peninsula. It stopped raining and a rainbow appeared. Our first bird here was a Little Owl (always popular and we would see three today) on the roof of a ruined stone building. On a short walk we saw European Golden-Plovers, compared Crested and Thekla Larks once again, and found a charm (what a perfect collective noun that is) of European Goldfinches. We boarded the bus to head back, but soon disembarked again to check two raptors sat on utility poles in our telescopes. There was a Eurasian Kestrel and two Peregrine Falcons. Before dinner we went through our checklist before enjoying the fine range of dishes in the hotel restaurant again.

Fri., Oct. 21

Tavira | Salinas do Forte do Rato | Vilamoura | Drive to Lisbon

Today we would leave the Algarve and drive northwards to Lisbon. But we were in no great rush, so first we went to the coast near Tavira, to the Salinas do Forte do Rato. Although our journey was nearing its end, we quickly found two new birds on the trip, namely Eurasian Oystercatcher (about six) and a lone Bar-tailed Godwit. We also got good repeat views of others, like Kentish and Common Ringed Plovers, Ruddy Turnstones, Little Stint and Common Redshank. All seen well through our scopes. As we watched these birds, a Brown Rat was spotted running across the track a couple of times. Moving on, we stopped at a reedbed near Vilamoura seeing several White Storks. Next up was a stop at the Parque Ambiental de Vilamoura, where we walked for a while and saw a new raptor for the trip, Booted Eagle. This small eagle comes in two color forms, dark and pale, and we saw both. First a brief dark individual and later a pale bird which we saw better as it flew quite close. We



were surprised to see a Monarch Butterfly - this American species has colonized parts of Portugal, remarkably surviving by finding new food plants as milkweed is absent.

As we approached Lisbon a heavy rainstorm arrived, but fortunately we were travelling on the bus. In fact, there had clearly been rain over the previous days in this area as some fields had standing water where White Storks, Glossy Ibises, egrets, and gulls were feeding in flocks. We reached Lisbon in suitable time and checked into our charming and comfortable boutique hotel, formerly an 18th century townhouse. We freshened up, met to complete our checklist, and then went to dinner. This evening it was in a fascinating little restaurant two streets away. All of the dishes on the menu were inspired by the cuisines of the countries where the Portuguese had settled, such as Brazil, Timor-Leste, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique and Goa in India.

Sat., Oct. 22 **Exploring Lisbon**

We were joined today by Maria, who would guide us by bus and on foot around the capital. She was extremely knowledgeable and eager to tell us about the culture and history of Lisbon. We strolled through the narrow streets of the old town, taking in the architecture, imposing monuments, and photographing the colorful tiled buildings (the latter particularly impressed Leo). We ordered lunch on a restaurant terrace, but quickly had to go inside as it started to rain heavily. One of the most notable places we visited was the church of Igreja de Santa Maria de Belém in the Jeronimos Monastery, a UNESCO World Heritage site, which has beautiful stained-glass windows and the tomb of the great explorer Vasco da Gama. Later we visited the Belem district and its Padrão dos Descobrimentos (the Monument to the Discoveries) on the waterfront. Rose-ringed Parakeets, an introduced species, were in the park here. In the evening we had our last supper together in another fine restaurant, a place by the river in Lisbon that specialized in fish and seafood.



There had been many highlights during our stay in Portugal, and we tried to summarize them. Everyone chose a favorite bird, another animal and a cultural or culinary thing. The 'results' were as follows: Lori chose the Little Owls, the dolphins and the Lisbon Monument to the Discoveries, especially the mosaic tiled map on the ground, Brian the Storm Petrels, the dolphins and the Mértola ruins, Joan the Griffon Vultures, Mediterranean Turtles riding piggyback and the archaeological site at Mértola, Susan the Spanish Eagles, the dolphins and the Mértola ruins, Buck the Great Skua, Fallow Deer and the Monument to the Discoveries, Leo the Oystercatchers, Mouflon and the various tiled buildings, Joanne the Goldfinches, the Otter and the tasty cheeses, Philip the Bonelli's Eagle, the Otter and the winery visit, Deb the Long-eared Owls, the dolphins and also the winery, Mary the Shelduck, the Wild Boar being chased and the city guides and their tours, Noel the Kingfishers, the Wild Boar and the Mértola sites, and Cecilia the Kingfishers and Hoopoes, the dolphins and also the Mértola sites. As for João and myself we most enjoyed the pelagic boat trip and the shearwaters and petrels we saw. Finally, after our last supper together, we said goodbye to our knowledgeable local guide João and superb driver Pedro. It had been a hugely enjoyable trip! A huge thank you to all involved.



Sun., Oct. 23 Departures

Today we all departed, at various times in the morning, for Lisbon Airport and our flights home.

Photo Credits: Group Photo (Gerard Gorman - GG), Greater Flamingo (Debbie Ellinger - DE), Spotted Flycatcher (DE), Crested Lark (DE), Black-winged Stilt (GG), Group Photo (GG), Blue Boat (DE), Black-tailed Godwits (DE), White Storks (DE), Group Ride (DE), Greater Flamingo (DE), Huawei (GG), Long-eared Owl (GG), Cattle (DE), Red & Fallow Deer (DE), Group Birdwatching (DE), Little Owl (DE), All Geared Up! (DE), Lounging (DE), Iberian Magpie (DE), Eurasian Spoonbill (DE), Yellow-legged Gull (GG), Kingfisher Photobomb! (DE), Group at bird mural (GG), Common Dolphin (DE), Great Shearwater (DE), Northern Gannet (DE), Cory's Shearwater (GG), Scenic (Cecilia Capestany - CC), New Friends (DE), Great Views (DE), Portugal at night (CC)