

WILDLIFE TRAVEL

26th April– 3rd May 2017 (1 week)

LESVOS

easy birding & natural history



"Everywhere was fantastic.
None of the places
disappointed"

Lesvos 2014

A week of easy birding during the spring migration on the beautiful island of Lesvos in the Aegean Sea.

From the **pleasant fishing harbour** of Skala Kalloni we will explore the lovely island of Lesvos, one of the largest in the Aegean. The island is now famous for its birdlife and we have timed this holiday to catch the best of the **spring migration and the arrival of many birds that will breed on the island.** We should enjoy pleasant temperatures and quiet walks before the majority of tourists arrive. The trip is an **ideal introduction to birds and birdsong** for those who want some easy birding at an ideal time of year.

Our hotel is within walking distance of the Kalloni wetlands which contain the prime birding spots on the island, often with large numbers of waders, herons and terns. Birds that can be found in the marshes and salt pans here include glossy ibis, black and white stork, greater flamingo, purple and squacco heron, great white egret, avocet, black-winged stilt, ruff, wood sandpiper, Kentish plover, stone curlew and whiskered, gull-billed and white-winged terns.

During the week we will be visiting many parts of the island to look for the special birds such as Achladeri woodlands for Kruper's nuthatch, Kavaki for Ruppell's warbler and the west of the island for rock nuthatch and both cinereous and ortolan buntings. We will also spend time at a raptor watch point with possibility of seeing short-toed eagle, long-legged buzzard, marsh and Montagu's harriers, red-footed falcon and peregrine. On our walks there should be middle spotted woodpecker, roller, bee-eater, golden oriole and Cretzchmar's and black-headed buntings. Nightingale, corn bunting, serin and crested lark are all common. There will also be time to see and enjoy the other wildlife to be found on the island.



Price
£1565

Single Room Supplement
£120

Full/Half board

Day 1 flight to Mytilini
Day 2 Kalloni marshes
Day 3 Kalloni salt pans
Day 4 west of island
Day 5 north of island
Day 6 south of island
Day 7 local walks
Day 8 return to UK

Leaders
Mike Russell
& 2nd leader TBA

easy birding,
natural history

Wildlife and culture holidays



Our profits are donated to **The Wildlife Trusts**



Lesvos is still an **undiscovered island** for many, despite being the third largest in Greece and close to the Turkish mainland. It is relatively undeveloped and retains its rural culture, interspersed with a few attractive towns and villages. Our search for birds and other wildlife will take us to some interesting landscapes and historical sites and we will also have an opportunity to sample local tavernas for lunch.



There is also plenty of other wildlife to see and we won't be ignoring the several orchids and other spring flowers in bloom and we should see many dragonflies, butterflies, frogs and lizards and also spur-thighed tortoise and Balkan terrapin. The whole island is now a Geopark due to its unique geology and we will visit the petrified forest area whilst exploring for birds.



Above: Ruppell's warbler, headland near Molyvos looking across to Turkey, whiskered tern, Kalloni salt pans
Below: Malemi Hotel, black-headed bunting, eastern festoon, little owl, cistus flower

Accommodation, meals and transport

The Malemi Hotel is well situated in the 'birding capital' of Skala Kalloni. A family run hotel, it has been catering for bird watching groups for many years after being the first to highlight the wonderful birdlife to be found locally. The hotel is surrounded by gardens and is only a few seconds walk from a small, quiet beach. All rooms are en suite. Evening meals will be at the hotel and we will have picnic lunches on most days. On others, lunch can be taken at local tavernas (not included). We will travel by small coach.



Health and fitness

On the first day we will be walking for much of the day, but on relatively flat ground. On other days, most walks are much shorter and none of the walking is strenuous. On some mornings we will start early but the pace will generally be relaxed with time to enjoy the surroundings and take photos as well as look at the birds. All excursions are optional.

Front: Skala Kalloni, bee-eater, black-winged stilts, Cretzschmar's bunting

ITINERARY

The itinerary will be flexible depending on the best locations at the time for the birds and other local factors. The order of the visits may change.

Day 1 Wed 26 We fly to Mytilini, the main town on Lesbos, from where we transfer to Skala Kalloni (approx 1.5 hours), stopping en route for some birdwatching and to stretch the legs. After checking in, we will have a short walk to the nearby beach if time allows, before our evening meal.

Day 2 Thur 27 We spend the day exploring the marshes and river to the east of Skala Kalloni. Walking from the hotel, we will be looking for herons and waders in the small pools and also for any migrant songbirds that have stopped off to feed in the channels and grassland. Reaching the river, we will have views over the river mouth and also along the main channel. Picnic lunch and possible coffee stop on the way back. Optional evening walk.

Day 3 Fri 28 We drive to the Kalloni salt pans and then walk around the channels and marshes towards the Alykes wetlands and the beach. We then drive a little inland to Metochi Lake (surroundings are good for shrikes) and check out the Potamia River area on the way back.

Day 4 Sat 29 Excursion to the west of the island to look for birds of the dryer habitats, including the area of the Petrified Forest site and the hills around Ipsilou Monastery.

Day 5 Sun 30 We drive north to coastal headlands (Kavaki) to look for Ruppell's and subalpine warblers and also visit the hillside village of Petri for a walk on the terraces, which are good for butterflies and flowers as well as birds. Lunch in a local taverna and possible afternoon coffee/ice cream at the attractive harbour at Molyvos. On the return, we will stop at a 'watchpoint' to look for raptors.

Day 6 Mon 1 Excursion to the south of the island near Agiassos on the slopes of Mount Olympus to explore the olive terraces and chestnut woods. On the return we will stop at Achladeri woods to look for Kruper's nuthatch.

Day 7 Tue 2 We revisit the local marshes and visit other local sites depending on the locations of the birds. Time for a beachside drink and a final evening walk.

Day 8 Wed 3 A relaxing morning before heading home.



Leaders

Mike Russell is a Director of Wildlife Travel and worked for Sussex Wildlife Trust since 1985, having only recently retired. Originally Manager at their headquarters, then Head of Public Awareness and Education his last role was as Head of Adult Learning. With a life-long interest in birds he has sought to encourage and enthuse others to become involved in conservation. Mike has led many wildlife holidays for Wildlife Travel since 2001 to destinations including Costa Rica, the Galapagos Islands, the Pantanal in Brazil, and also to several around the Mediterranean including Lesvos. Depending on group numbers, he will be joined by a second leader (TBA).

Weather

At this time of year the weather is usually sunny but not too hot. There may be some cooler weather and some rain.

Eco tourism

The demand by visitors such as ourselves, for areas managed for natural history and as a resource for real 'eco tourism' is vitally important for preserving the biodiversity of the island.

Flights

Group flights are with Aegean Airlines, via Athens. Unfortunately there are no other flight options until later in the summer.

- 26th depart London Heathrow 12.15, arrive Athens 17.50
depart Athens 21.00, arrive Mytilini 21.50
- 3rd depart Mytilini 13.10, arrive Athens 14.05
depart Athens 19.10, arrive London Heathrow 21.10



TO BOOK

Contact us to check availability and reserve a place. Complete the Booking Form and send to Sunvil Holidays (CAA-ATOL Licence 808, ABTA V6218), our tour operator, with your deposit. All details about booking are given in the Booking Pack.

DEPOSIT £500 PER PERSON, BALANCE DUE BY 25/01/2017 SEE GENERAL INFORMATION LEAFLET ON HOW TO BOOK

INCLUDED: Return flight from UK to Lesvos. Local transport as specified in itinerary. 7 nights accommodation, breakfast & evening meals. 5 picnic lunches. Services of leaders.

NOT INCLUDED: 2 lunches. Refreshments. Entrances (optional). Gratuities. Insurance.

Photos above: etrified forest area, citrine wagtail, glossy ibis on Kalloni Marsh, spur-thighed tortoise

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