

NEW



UZBEKISTAN & TAJIKISTAN

Birds, History & Culture

May 22 - June 4



May 25: Early morning visit to the Jeyran Eco Centre, a governmental run project of some 21,000 hectares set up to manage a captive breeding programme for the endangered Goitered Gazelle, Przewalski Horse & Wild Ass, along with the Bukhara Urial. Birding for migrants along the “Canal”, may produce Black-headed or Citrine Wagtail, White-crowned Penduline-tit, Moustached or Clamorous Reed-warbler, whilst walking out into scrub to the salt lakes may well yield sightings of Black-bellied Sandgrouse, Asian Short-toed Lark & perhaps White-tailed Lapwing. Afternoon guided Tour of Bukhara including visiting a Silk Tea Room, with dinner in a lovely “Private” House to partake in “Plov”, the Central Asian staple diet, elevated to the status of religion in Uzbekistan!



Birding Areas & Highlights

Uzbekistan. the most developed of the “stans” with mountains, desert & steppe, boasting the World Heritage Sites of Bukhara & Samarkand. With visions of the Silk Road & desert caravans, genuinely hospitable people and famous for *plov*, the country typically epitomises the superb Central Asian experience.

Tajikistan. Safe, stable & scenically spectacular. For fans of big mountain scenery, Tajikistan ranks as the most exciting republic in Central Asia.

May 22: Depart Heathrow late morning with *Turkish Airlines* via Istanbul arriving:

May 23: Tashkent early morning, transferring directly to the *Beldersay Hotel* in the Chimgan Mountains set in the Ugam-Chatkal National park for overnight stay. A beautiful setting, with time to rest and also look out for the speciality montane birds such as White-winged Woodpecker, Long-legged Buzzard, Hume’s Leaf Warbler,

May 24: More birding in the mountains, before returning to Tashkent for flight to Bukhara for 3 nt. stay at the *Hotel Devon Begi*.

May 26: Today drive into the Kyzylkum Desert to search for *the* desert “speciality”, the curious Pander’s Ground Jay, along with Desert Finch, Daurian Shrike and other migrant raptors & passerines that can be found in the desert oases in Springtime.

May 27: Leisurely drive from Bukhara to Samarkand, passing vast sways of cotton fields, for 2-nt. stay at *Hotel Platan*. Afternoon guided Tour of Samarkand.

May 28: Morning drive through the Aman-Kutan Gorge to the very scenic Takhta-Karacha Mountain Pass and amongst the mountains, rocks & desert search for Eastern Rock Nuthatch along with Finsch's, Isabelline & Pied Wheatears, Chukar Partridge, Rock Bunting and raptors including Lammergeier & Griffon Vulture. In the afternoon further guided sightseeing Tour of Samarkand, visiting the fabulous Registan, indeed one of the most awesome sights in Central Asia.

May 29: Morning train to Tashkent and then drive to Uzbekistan-Tajikistan border crossing at "Oybek" and continuing to Khijand for overnight stay at the *Khujand-deluxe* Hotel.

May 30: Drive to Iskanderkul Lake, en route admiring the picturesque peaks of the Turkestan & Fann Mountains, stopping to look for Yellow-billed Chough & Red-fronted Serin. Afternoon arrival at our Guest-house on the shores of this mountain Lake, lying at an altitude of 2195 metres asl. and surrounded by the snow-capped Fann Mountains. Then birding the area to look for Bar-tailed Treecreeper, Brown Dipper, White-winged Grosbeak, Blue Whistling Thrush & Oriental Turtle Dove.

May 31: Early morning walk to a floodplain forest to search for Rusty-tailed Flycatcher, White-throated Dipper & White-capped Bunting, along with meadows of Central Asian orchids. Then drive to the village of Sarytag for 2-nt. stay at local Guest-house, situated in a beautiful valley where we shall look for Blyth's Rosefinch, Eastern Black Redstart & Blue Rock Thrush.



Jun 1: Early morning & late afternoon birding the area to search for White-tailed Rubythroat, Hume's Whitethroat, Sulphur-bellied Warbler and Masked Wagtail, with plenty of time to "relax" and enjoy the superb surroundings!

Jun 2: After breakfast, drive to Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan, en route passing through the Varzob Gorge and visiting the Varzob Botanical Gardens, looking for Streaked Laughing-thrush & Eurasian Golden Oriole. Upon arrival at Dushanbe, check in at the *Hotel Atlas* for 2-nt. stay.

Jun 3: Early morning departure to visit the Romit State Nature Reserve, en route stopping to search for Plumbeous Water Redstart. The Reserve's mountain slopes are forested with a mixture of birch, mulberry, wild fruit & nut trees, interspersed with meadows & mountain streams. Birds to look for should include Laughing Dove, Red-rumped Swallow, Greenish Warbler, Red-billed Chough, Indian Sparrow & Hawfinch.

Jun 4: Early morning departure flight from Dushanbe, via Istanbul, arriving mid afternoon at Heathrow.

Cost: £3295 (s/s £295)

Deposit: £500

B/L due: Feb. 22

Included in the cost: 12 nights accn. as described above on full dinner, bed & b/fast basis, all lunches, internal flight from Tashkent to Bukhara, train from Samarkand to Tashkent, all transportation, entrance fees to reserves & antiquities and full professional guidance (both birding & cultural) throughout.

Not included in the cost: International flights Heathrow /Tashkent & Dushanbe/Heathrow (approx £595), visas, tips/gratuities, travel insurance, drinks and personal items.

(NB: Cost based upon 8 pax min. with £1 = \$USD 1.20)

