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Tour Report
Iberian Lynx and Raptor Photography
26 April – 3 May 2026

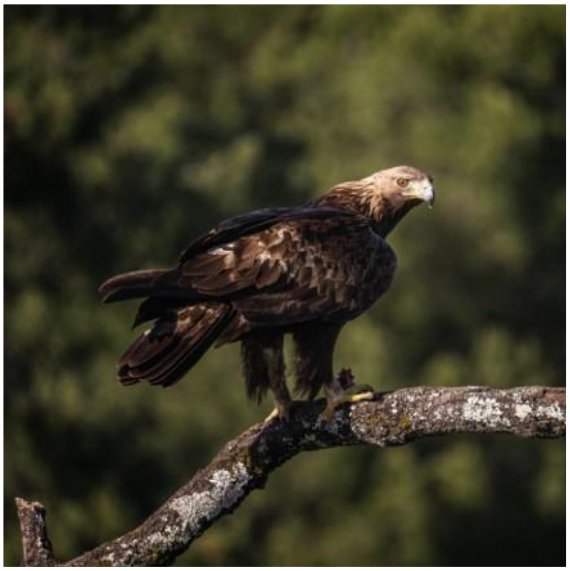
Bonelli's eagle



Griffon vulture



Golden eagle



Genet



Compiled by Sean Weekly

Sunday 26 April 2026

Day 1

If there is a better way to start a week than landing in blazing sunshine while everyone back home is probably still hunting for their jumper, we have yet to find it. After an early start from Gatwick, the group touched down in Málaga where our local guide was already waiting, full of energy and ready to herd us and our mountain of camera gear into the vehicle.

Once everything and everyone was accounted for, we rolled out of the city and into the Andalusian countryside. The drive in was a bit of a treat in itself. Endless olive groves stretched out in every direction, broken up by sleepy little villages that looked like they had not changed in decades. An hour had slipped by, and we stopped for a lovely lunch. After lunch the rest of the journey continued and before long we arrived in Adamuz, our home for the week and perfectly placed for the wild adventures ahead.

No time for easing in gently though. After a quick regroup, we headed straight up into the hills for our first session in the golden eagle hide. Expectations were high, spirits even higher, and it did not take long before things kicked off in spectacular fashion!

Our opening act was a female golden eagle who swept in and landed like she owned the place. Not long after, a red fox appeared on the scene, which led to an immediate disagreement between the two. And by disagreement, we mean a full-blown scrap. Not bad for the first 15 minutes. The light was brutally bright, the kind photographers love to complain about, but nobody cared because the action was outrageous. At one point, the eagle grabbed the fox by the head, which felt like a moment where everyone forgot to breathe.



The fox eventually made a quick exit, probably rethinking its life choices, while the eagle stayed put just long enough for shutters to go into overdrive before calmly picking up a meal and gliding off into the valley. According to our guide, she likely has two hungry chicks waiting, so that food run suddenly made a lot of sense.

Just as things began to settle, the male arrived, because apparently we were not done being spoiled. He landed ridiculously close, around eight to ten metres away, and casually tucked into his meal as if we were not all losing our minds behind the cameras.



After giving us plenty of time to enjoy the moment, he took off with food in his talons. The female made a brief return appearance as well, grabbing another bite before heading back towards the nest. All in all, not a bad way to kick things off. The group came out of the hide grinning, slightly stunned, and already wondering how on earth we were going to top that. One guest in particular was absolutely glowing, having just seen her very first golden eagle. Safe to say, she set the bar pretty high for all future bird sightings.







Monday 27 April 2026

Day 2

We began the day in a far more civilised fashion, with an 8 am start that felt almost luxurious after yesterday's early alarm. No rushing straight into the field this time. Instead, we wandered into a local café where breakfast was exactly what you would hope for in rural Spain. Fresh bread, generous amounts of marmalade, and proper café con leche that actually wakes you up instead of just pretending to.

Suitably fueled and a little more human, we set off towards the Bonelli's eagle hide, tucked deep within the dramatic landscape of Los Conventos. It is one of those places that makes you stop mid-sentence and just look around. Towering limestone cliffs rise on all sides, rugged and wild, with the kind of scenery that feels almost too cinematic to be real.

Now, honesty is important in these reports. The Bonelli's eagles did not exactly stick to the script. We had one bird perch briefly in a tree, giving us just enough time to get eyes on it before it lifted off and disappeared, clearly having more important things to do. And that, as it turned out, was our only proper visit from them at the feeding site.

But here is the thing about days like this. They rarely feel disappointing.

Although the eagles did not come into feed, we still enjoyed some really nice views. The Iberian magpies stepped up and decided to steal the show. Small flocks bounced around right in front of the hide, full of energy and absolutely refusing to sit still.



Their electric blue wings flashed in the sunlight as they darted back and forth, turning into a brilliant challenge for anyone trying to catch them mid-flight. Equal parts frustrating and entertaining, which is usually a sign you are photographing the right subject.

At times they sat beautifully among the spring wildflowers, which were in full show and added bursts of colour across the scene. It was one of those sessions where you keep your camera ready because anything could happen, even if the main stars are being a little unpredictable.



And just when you thought the sky could not get any better, griffon vultures drifted overhead, effortlessly riding the thermals. Their huge wingspans cast slow-moving shadows as they cruised past the cliffs, adding that extra bit of drama to an already stunning setting.

So, while the Bonellis may not have delivered the full performance we had hoped for, the afternoon still had plenty going for it. Incredible scenery, constant action from the supporting cast, and enough moments to keep everyone engaged. If anything, it just built the anticipation for another shot at them later in the trip.

While part of the group headed off to the passerine hide with high hopes of adding a third raptor to the trip list, the ever-elusive goshawk, the rest of us took a slightly more relaxed approach and settled in for lunch at a lovely local restaurant. It was a welcome pause in the day, good food, a chance to recharge, and a moment to sit back without a camera glued to our faces.

Later in the afternoon, a few of us decided to head out for a wander with intentions of trying a bit of macro photography. That was the plan anyway. In reality, the cameras stayed fairly quiet as we got sidetracked by easy conversation and a leisurely stroll through the sunshine. It turned into one of those simple but genuinely enjoyable sessions, chatting about photography, swapping stories, and generally putting the world to rights.

Eventually, we traded the idea of tiny subjects for something a little more exciting and made our way to another area within Los Conventos, this time in search of long-eared owlets. The setting was stunning once again, with carpets of wildflowers stretching out beneath young oak trees, creating a perfect backdrop.

It did not take long before our guide spotted one for us. A young owlet perched quietly on a branch, a small ball of fluff doing its best impression of a serious owl but mostly just looking completely adorable.



After enjoying our time with the long-eared owlet, we did not call it a day just yet. Instead, we carried on into the evening and made our way to the nocturnal hide, ready to swap golden light for darkness and see what the night had in store.

With cameras set and senses sharpened, we settled in with hopes of spotting some of the area's more secretive wildlife. On the target list were pine marten, red fox, and genet, a pretty exciting lineup if any of them decided to show themselves.

It turned into a fairly quiet session overall, the kind where patience really comes into play, but it still rewarded us with a few special moments. A genet made a handful of brief appearances, gliding through the shadows with that unmistakable sleek movement. Just quick glimpses, a flash of spots here and there, but more than enough to get everyone locked in and watching closely.





Then, just when we thought the day had finally run its course, the journey back delivered one last surprise. As we drove along the dark road close to midnight, two wild boars suddenly dashed across right in front of the van, giving us all a proper wake-up call and a brilliant final moment to end on.

By the time we got back, it was around 1 am, and bed was calling. From fluffy owlets to fleeting nocturnal encounters, it had been a long but thoroughly rewarding day, packed with lots of fun photography and nice encounters.

Tuesday 28 April 2026

Day 3

Day 3 kicked off in what can only be described as a slightly questionable life decision: a 6:30 am alarm after, let's be honest, barely scraping together five hours of sleep. The blame? 100% on last night's genet madness. Worth it? Also 100%. Functioning human? Debatable.

By 7 am we were assembled for breakfast, and I don't mind saying… that coffee hit like a spiritual experience. Possibly the best cup I've ever had. Or maybe I was just clinging to consciousness. Either way, it worked.

After breakfast we split into two groups: one heading to the imperial eagle hide, the other the clearly superior choice off to the Iberian lynx hide. I joined the lynx crew, full of optimism, blind faith, and probably too much caffeine.

We settled in… and waited… and waited… and waited some more. Just over five hours in total. And sadly, the lynx decided today was not their day for a public appearance. Rude. But, and it's a big but the hide was far from quiet.

The ever-entertaining Iberian magpies kept us company, bouncing around like they owned the place. A couple of hoopoes dropped in, always a crowd favourite with those ridiculous crests, and we even picked up a distant oriole, which added a nice splash of colour to the morning.
Then… things escalated.

Lurking by the drinking pool was a Horseshoe whip snake, a fast, agile, non-venomous predator found across the Iberian Peninsula. These snakes are known for their speed and sharp reflexes, usually hunting lizards and small mammals… but what we witnessed was on another level. Out of absolutely nowhere, it launched and *snatched a sparrow mid-air* as the bird came into land near the water.

No warning. Just pure, explosive precision.
Gone in a flash.

It was one of those moments that happens so quickly your brain barely processes it, and your camera is just… completely irrelevant. No photos, no proof, just that slightly stunned silence followed by a collective "did that actually just happen?!"

One of the wildest, most unique things I've ever seen. And probably a once-in-a-lifetime moment.
Eventually, we peeled ourselves away from the hide and headed to lunch for a much-needed reset. Our guide took us to his uncle's local restaurant, where we were treated to some genuinely great food and, crucially, more coffee. At this point, caffeine was less a drink and more a survival strategy.

After a couple of hours of downtime (translation: trying not to fall asleep in awkward places), we split the group again. Some went back for another shot at the lynx, while the rest of us headed off in search of a long-eared owlet.

And this turned into a proper game of "spot the fluff."

It took *ages*. Seriously, we were scanning every branch, every shadow, every suspicious-looking twig. Until one of our guests equipped, apparently, with superhero-level vision, casually found it.
Unbelievable spot.

The Long-eared owl owlet wasn't in quite as photogenic a position as the day before, but honestly, no one cared. Still an incredible sighting and a big win for the group.

Then it was time to head back to the nocturnal mammal hide.

And once again, the question on everyone's mind: where is the coffee?! We passed the time setting up and eating our packed dinners while watching a storm system roll across the distance. It looked dramatic, but safely *over there*. I remember thinking, "perfect — great atmosphere, but we've dodged it."
Reader, we had not dodged it.

The moment we got settled into the pop-up hides, the storm arrived with full theatrical commitment — strong winds, heavy rain, thunder, lightning… the lot. It was less "gentle weather event" and more "nature reminding us who's in charge."

And unsurprisingly, the wildlife took that as their cue to stay firmly tucked up in bed. No genets. No late-night action. Just us, slightly damp, slightly defeated, and very aware that nature doesn't always follow the script. Still… After a day that included a mid-air snake ambush, I don't think any of us were complaining too much.

Wednesday 29 April 2026

Day 4

The lynx… still playing hard to get

We were back at it first thing, returning to the Iberian lynx hide with a very familiar mix of optimism and stubborn determination. Five hours ahead of us, fresh memory cards ready to be filled, and that quiet belief that today might finally be the day. Cameras were set, lenses pointed, and every pair of eyes locked onto the landscape like seasoned professionals who definitely were not going to miss anything this time.
Fast forward five hours…

Still no lynx.

Not even a tail flick. Not a shadow. Not a suspicious rustle that we could wildly overanalyse. Just pure, uninterrupted anticipation. At this point the lynx was rapidly gaining mythical status, somewhere between a real animal and something we had collectively imagined earlier in the week.

Eventually, it was time to admit defeat for the morning and head off for lunch. We returned to our now regular spot, which by this stage felt like our unofficial headquarters. Good food, plenty of laughs, and a chance to reset. As always, the conversation quickly turned to "what we would do when the lynx shows up later," because optimism, much like our patience, was still hanging in there.

After a short break in the afternoon, we headed back out for round two. Same hide, same plan, same hopeful energy. A few more hours passed as we scanned every bush, rock, and patch of shadow, fully convinced at various points that we had cracked it.

We had not.

The Iberian lynx, clearly aware of our schedule, once again chose not to make an appearance. It is safe to say it was winning this particular game. Still, these days are all part of the experience. There is something oddly enjoyable about the shared anticipation, the quiet focus, and even the collective disbelief when nothing appears. It keeps the tension building nicely.

One thing is certain, though. When that lynx finally does show up, it is going to be absolute chaos in the best possible way. That evening, the whole group came together for dinner, and honestly, it turned into one of the funniest meals I have had in a very long time.

We got seated, menus in hand, and the usual pre dinner excitement kicked in. Orders were placed, and then came the waiting… which somehow felt longer than any five hour stint in the lynx hide. A few members of the group were absolutely starving at this point, watching every plate that passed by like it might be theirs.

Now, I had not eaten at this particular place yet, but the rest of the group had. And they had all given me the same warning… the portion sizes here were not messing around. We are talking serious food. The kind of meals that arrive with their own gravitational pull.

One guest took this information on board… sort of. Deciding they were only a bit peckish, they played it safe and ordered patatas bravas. A sensible choice. Light. Tapas. A modest little plate to take the edge off.

Or so they thought.

What arrived at the table was not a portion. It was an event.

Picture this… a plate the size of a small satellite dish, absolutely buried under a towering heap of potatoes. Not just a pile either, more like a carefully engineered potato mountain, stacked to heights that felt slightly irresponsible. I am fairly certain it had its own weather system at the top.
For a brief, hopeful moment, we all assumed it was for the table. Something to share. A generous starter. A communal experience.

Nope.

That was for one person. There was a pause. A lot of blinking. Someone may have laughed in disbelief. And then came the realisation that the chef, with full confidence, believed a single human being could tackle this beast solo.

To be fair, we all backed them. Encouragement was given. Moral support was strong. But deep down, we knew this was less "light snack" and more "challenge from a medieval feast."
Safe to say, nobody went to bed hungry that night.

Thursday 30 April 2026

Day 5

Bonelli's round two… and this time they showed up properly

After breakfast and the essential morning coffee, we made our way back to the Bonelli's eagle hide. There was definitely a bit of tiredness starting to creep in now, the kind where everyone's slightly quieter in the morning but still very much up for it. The excitement was still there, just running on slightly less sleep.

The conditions, though… absolutely spot on.

Los Conventos was looking incredible, with low clouds hanging over the landscape and softening everything. It created this beautiful, diffused light that photographers dream about. No harsh shadows, no blown highlights, just clean, even light across the cliffs and wildflower-covered ground. You could tell straight away this was going to be a good session if the birds played along.
We settled in, got comfortable, and waited.

For about an hour, it was a familiar story. Lots of scanning, a few hopeful moments, and plenty of entertainment from the ever-reliable Iberian magpies. They were back to their usual antics, darting around in front of the hide, showing off those flashes of blue and generally keeping everyone on their toes.

And then… finally… movement.

The first Bonelli's eagle came in and landed on the perch, instantly lifting the energy in the hide. Cameras were up in seconds, shutters going, everyone fully locked in. After our first session "blink and you miss it" appearance, this already felt like a win.

But it got better.

Not long after, a second eagle arrived and landed on a nearby rock. For a brief moment it looked settled, as if it might stay there, but clearly it was not impressed with its choice. After a bit of shifting about, it decided against it and lifted off again.



What followed was one of those moments you hope for but never quite expect.

It dropped down and landed right on the ground, surrounded by a blanket of wildflowers. Proper spring colour everywhere, soft light, and this stunning bird just standing there like it had been placed perfectly for us. It was one of those scenes that almost feels staged, but completely natural at the same time.



Safe to say, cameras went into overdrive.

This was exactly the kind of encounter we had been hoping for. Close, calm behaviour, beautiful surroundings, and enough time to really enjoy it rather than just grab a quick shot. Proper top-tier photography moments.

After the previous session, this felt like Bonelli's making it up to us in style.



After wrapping up at the hide, we packed everything up and began the journey north towards the legendary Monfragüe National Park in Extremadura. It is a fair old drive at around three and a half hours, but somehow it never really felt long. Spain has a habit of doing that. One minute you are chatting away and looking out at endless rolling hills and storks nesting on the telegraph pylons, the next you are passing tiny villages and wide open landscapes that seem to stretch on forever.

Eventually we arrived in Monfragüe, which is basically heaven for anyone remotely interested in birds of prey. The place is wild, dramatic, and absolutely packed with incredible habitat. The park sits between Plasencia, Trujillo, and Cáceres, where the Tajo and Tiétar rivers cut through the landscape, creating steep valleys, rocky cliffs, and forests of holm oak and cork trees. Even before you see any wildlife, the scenery alone is enough to keep you staring out the window.

Monfragüe is especially famous for its vultures, including one of the largest populations of black vultures anywhere in the world. Unfortunately for us, they clearly had other plans that day and seemed to be keeping a very low profile. Maybe enjoying a day off somewhere out of sight.

The griffon vultures, however, were far more cooperative, with lots flying overhead enjoying the warm thermals.

We had loads of them scattered across the sky, some perched proudly on the rocky ledges like

oversized gargoyles. Some sat perfectly still soaking up the late afternoon warmth. They were all just a bit too distant for some amazing photos; however, it was a spectacular place.

Nonetheless, we gave it our best shot and tried to get some in-flight images. This place is the kind of location where you can easily get carried away trying different compositions while pretending you totally meant to spend ten minutes photographing the same vulture.

Even in the distance there was always something to spot, with a few more exciting species appearing here and there across the landscape, including a peregrine falcon and imperial eagle. That night we checked into our hotel which is incredible a 5* star spot with an enormous room. In the evening we enjoyed a delicious meal at a local restaurant owned by one of Agustin's friends.



Friday 1 May 2026

Day 6

The morning started at a much gentler pace, which nobody seemed too upset about. We gathered downstairs at the hotel reception before driving to a cafe for breakfast, slowly coming back to life over strong coffee, fresh bread, olive oil, and the usual mix of sleepy conversation and camera chat. There is always that quiet buzz before a session too, especially when everyone knows the location ahead is meant to be something special.

We then loaded up the bags and set off, although thankfully not for long. Within a short drive, we were already pulling into what might have been one of the most beautiful hide locations of the entire trip.

And honestly, the scenery alone could have carried the morning.

The hide sat right on the edge of Monfragüe National Park, looking out across layers of distant mountains with huge open views in every direction. Wildflowers covered the ground around us, moving gently in the breeze and adding bursts of colour everywhere you looked. It had that perfect spring feeling to it, peaceful, fresh, and almost ridiculously photogenic before a single bird had even appeared.

Everyone took a moment just to stand and soak it in before heading inside. Cameras were being unpacked a little slower than usual, partly because there was no rush and partly because the backdrop itself already felt like part of the experience.

If the wildlife delivered even half as much as the setting, we knew we were in for a very good day.
The morning was spent inside one seriously impressive vulture hide, and from the moment things started happening, it was completely bonkers in the best possible way.

The whole setting looked like something lifted straight out of a wildlife film. Wildflowers stretched across the foreground, cliffs rose up in the distance, and vultures drifted overhead almost constantly. Even before the main action kicked off, there was noise everywhere, calls echoing from the rocks, shadows passing overhead, birds circling higher up on the thermals. It already felt alive.



Then the feeding frenzy began.

Griffon vultures started dropping in from all directions, and before long there were well over seventy of them on the ground. Huge birds, absolutely zero personal space, and all arriving with the subtlety of a falling wardrobe. Wings everywhere, birds barging past each other, constant squabbling and stamping around as everyone fought for position.





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And just to raise the stakes even further, several black vultures joined in too. Properly imposing birds when you see them up close, noticeably bigger, heavier, and carrying themselves like they own the place. Then came the bonus birds… three Egyptian vultures appeared amongst the chaos, which definitely got everyone excited. We also had regular fly-throughs from black kites and red kites, constantly adding more movement overhead.



For a while, it was complete madness photographically. So much action happening all at once that you barely knew where to point the camera. Every time you locked onto one bird, another massive set of wings would suddenly appear across the frame. Brilliant fun, slightly stressful, and exactly the kind of chaos wildlife photographers secretly love.

Eventually though, things began to settle down a bit. The birds relaxed, the constant shuffling eased off, and suddenly there were opportunities for some really lovely shots. Individual portraits, beautiful feather detail, intense eye contact, and those classic wide wing poses as birds landed and took off. Once the dust literally settled, the in-flight photography became especially good, with vultures sweeping low across the flowers and cliffs in gorgeous soft light.

One of those sessions where you walk out with aching camera arms, thousands of frames, and absolutely no idea where to even begin sorting through them later.





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After an unforgettable morning with the vultures, it was time to begin the long drive back down to Adamuz. Rather than taking the quickest route, we went the scenic way through Extremadura, which turned out to be a very good decision. The roads wound through endless rolling hills, open countryside, and tiny villages that seemed to appear out of nowhere before disappearing again just as quickly.

It is the sort of landscape that quietly grows on you the longer you look at it. Wide open spaces in every direction, dramatic skies, cork oak trees scattered across the hillsides, and absolutely no rush anywhere. Even after several busy days of photography, everyone still found themselves glued to the windows, taking it all in.

By the time we arrived back in Adamuz, there was just enough time for a short reset. Batteries on charge, a quick drink, maybe a brief moment of pretending we would get an early night… before heading straight back out again.

That evening we returned to the nocturnal hide, once again hoping for some good views of genets. Thankfully, this time we had a bit more luck on our side. A couple of genets paid us visits during the session, slipping quietly into view with that smooth, almost ghost-like movement they have.

They were not especially interested in hanging around for dinner, clearly not the hungriest visitors we have ever had, but they did give us a few really nice photographic opportunities before disappearing back into the darkness. Enough time for everyone to enjoy the moment without the usual panic of trying to grab a quick shot before they vanish.



Meanwhile, the other group spent their afternoon and evening back at the golden eagle hide. After a bit of waiting and plenty of scanning, they were rewarded with a single golden eagle coming in beautifully. Thankfully, this one was in a cooperative mood, perching up nicely and giving them some fantastic views and photo opportunities.

Not a bad way at all to round off another packed day in Spain. At this point the trip had fully settled into its rhythm… eat, photograph wildlife, laugh a lot, sleep slightly less than ideal, and repeat.

Saturday 2 May 2026

Day 7

We spent our final day back in the lynx hide, hoping for one last chance to see this incredible animal. Sadly, it wasn't to be, and we finished the day without a sighting.

It's certainly been a tough week for the Iberian lynx, with no sightings at all, but that hasn't dampened the trip. We've had some brilliant encounters with so many other species and enjoyed plenty of fantastic photographic opportunities along the way.

Sunday 3 May 2026

Day 8

Our final morning had arrived, and it was time to say goodbye to the beautiful Sierra Morena and begin our journey back to Gatwick.

Although the lynx had proved particularly elusive during our time here, the week had given us so much more to enjoy. We explored some stunning landscapes, photographed a brilliant variety of wildlife and shared plenty of laughs and memorable moments along the way.

That's the great thing about a wildlife tour: you never quite know what each day will bring. Some encounters come together perfectly, while others keep you waiting for another visit. Everyone embraced each opportunity, and the group remained in great spirits throughout.

It had been a fantastic week in a wonderful part of Spain, filled with good company, beautiful scenery and plenty of moments behind the camera. Now it was time to head home with full memory cards, some great stories and lots of fond memories from our time in the Sierra Morena.

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