WILDLIFE WORLDWIDE
TRAVEL
EXPERIENCE
CONSERVE

Tour Report
Pelicans of Lake Kerkini
9 – 13 January 2026

Dalmatian pelican



Dalmatian pelican



Dalmatian pelican



Dalmatian pelican



Compiled by Sean Weekly

Friday 9 January 2026

Day 1

After dropping off the first group at the airport and saying our farewells, we had just over an hour to wait before the arrival of the next group. Everything was running on time, which is always a good start. One guest arrived a little earlier on a different flight and joined us without any trouble. He's a good friend of mine, and, as it happens, lives just around the corner from me back home, so it was great to catch up properly over a coffee while we waited for the rest of the group.

Before long, the eagle had well and truly landed. The remaining guests arrived safely, all smiles, and even better with all their luggage in tow. No missing bags this trip, which always feels like a small victory.

With everyone accounted for, we loaded up the Land Rovers and set off on the two-hour drive to Kerkini, heading back toward the lake where the next chapter of our adventure would begin. As the miles rolled by, the excitement quietly built, thoughts already turning to early mornings, calm water, and the unmistakable presence of Dalmatian pelicans on the tranquil waters of Lake Kerkini.

We arrived at the hotel in good time and were welcomed with some lovely local Greek appetisers, just enough to keep everyone going before dinner later in the evening. After that, it was time to get everyone checked into their rooms.

With a couple of hours free, guests had time to unwind, stretch their legs, and settle in properly before we reconvened at 7 pm for dinner. More Greek food followed, warm, comforting, and very much appreciated after a day of travel.

After dinner, once everyone had started to get to know one another, I gave a short presentation of pelican images to help set the tone and offer some inspiration for the days ahead. It was a relaxed way to ease into the trip, giving everyone a sense of what we'd be aiming for out on the lake.

With an early alarm waiting for us in the morning, it wasn't long before we all turned in for the night, rested, settled, and ready to begin another Kerkini adventure at first light.

Saturday 10 January 2026

Day 2

The first morning with Group Two began with our now-familiar 6:30 am start, gathering in the hotel lounge for the essential first coffee of the day. The early alarm was still fresh in everyone's minds, but the mood was upbeat and quietly excited, that feeling of knowing you're about to head out onto the lake for the first time.

With coffee doing its job, we made the short drive down to Kerkini harbour and climbed aboard our traditional wooden fishing boat, which would soon become our floating base for the days ahead. Captain George was waiting for us, and as we pushed off, the weather made its intentions very clear. Thick clouds sat low over the lake, and before long the rain set in, not a light drizzle, but steady, persistent rain that stayed with us for most of the morning. It wasn't exactly gentle conditions, especially for those experiencing Kerkini for the first time.

Despite the weather, it didn't take long before the pelicans made their appearance. One by one they gathered around the boat, clearly hopeful that breakfast might be on offer. Their curiosity quickly turned the quiet lake into a hive of activity, and cameras came out almost immediately, rain covers on, hoods up, and everyone settled into the challenge.

I reminded the group that this first session was about easing into things. No pressure, no overthinking, just enjoying the experience and adapting to the conditions. For newcomers, working from a rocking boat in persistent rain added an extra layer of difficulty, but everyone took it in their stride. The technical

side would come later; for now, it was about observing the birds, understanding their behaviour, and getting comfortable on the water.



The light was slow to build through the heavy cloud, so we focused on portraits for much of the morning, keeping low to the water and making the most of the soft, muted light. These conditions are far more forgiving, and they allow everyone to concentrate on timing and composition without fighting harsh contrast.



Find out more about our Pelicans of Lake Kerkini trip or contact us

01962 302086 sales@wildlifeworldwide.com www.wildlifeworldwide.com

As the morning went on, the light lifted just enough for us to begin experimenting with some in-flight images. Even with the rain continuing to fall, the soft, even lighting worked beautifully, with no harsh shadows, just clean tones and subtle detail. A challenging first session, especially for those new to Kerkini, but a rewarding and memorable way to begin the group's time on the lake.





The afternoon session came around quickly, and before long we were heading back to the harbour to board the boat once again. The original plan had been to try a shoreline feed, but the rain had other ideas. With the ground waterlogged and conditions far from comfortable, spending the afternoon on the shore simply wasn't practical. The best option was to return to the lake and make the most of what the weather would allow.

Conditions were very much a continuation of the morning, damp, grey, and slightly murky, but the weather did nothing to dampen the bird activity or the group's enthusiasm. Pelicans were still moving well, giving plenty of opportunities to practice flight shots and refine timing, something that would pay dividends when conditions improved later in the trip.

One unexpected bonus of the rain was the atmosphere it created. Low clouds clung to the surrounding mountains, rolling across the landscape and forming beautifully soft, moody backdrops for our images. Every now and then, the cloud lifted just enough to reveal fleeting glimpses of the Kerkini mountain peaks, adding depth and drama to the scenes unfolding in front of us.



The afternoon became another solid session focused largely on birds in flight, building confidence, learning how the pelicans move, and getting comfortable reacting quickly from the boat. Even in challenging conditions, the lake continued to offer moments worth capturing.



Before we knew it, the light began to fade and the sun disappeared behind the thick cloud. With rain still falling and the day drawing to a close, we headed back toward the harbour and on to the hotel, ready to dry off, warm up, and regroup for dinner, tired, satisfied, and already looking ahead to what the next day might bring.

Sunday 11 January 2026

Day 3

Another early morning rolled around, and by now the routine was well established. A familiar 6:30 am start, sleepy faces gathering in the lounge, and that first much-needed coffee setting everyone in motion for the day ahead. Despite the early hour, there was still plenty of anticipation; each morning on the lake brings something different, regardless of the weather.

Once caffeinated and layered up, we headed down to the harbour and boarded the boat, ready to head back out onto the water. As we pushed away from the jetty, it became clear that this morning would be much like the last, thick, grey cloud hanging low over the lake, muting the landscape and swallowing any chance of a sunrise. The light was flat and murky, with the lake taking on a calm, monochrome feel.

While a colourful sunrise would have been welcome, the conditions were far from wasted. The pelicans were active and quickly began following the boat, giving us plenty of opportunities to work on in-flight photography. These kinds of mornings are invaluable for practice: soft light, no harsh contrast, and consistent conditions that allow everyone to focus on technique, timing, and tracking.

We spent the morning deliberately working through flight sequences, encouraging repetition and experimentation. Practising in challenging, less-than-perfect conditions is what really builds confidence, so when the light and weather finally align, everyone is ready to take full advantage of it. The steady pace of the session allowed people to settle into a rhythm, refining their approach with each pass of the birds.



After a productive and unhurried morning on the water, we gradually made our way back toward the harbour. There was no rush, just time to reflect on the morning, review a few images, and enjoy the quiet atmosphere of the lake as the day slowly woke up around us.

Back at the hotel, breakfast awaited, warm, comforting, and very welcome after the early start. The group gathered around the tables, sharing stories from the morning session, comparing images, and enjoying the chance to relax before the next part of the day.

The afternoon session saw us heading back down to the harbour once again, ready to see what the lake had in store for us next. For the first time on this trip, the weather really felt like it was on our side. Skies were mostly clear, visibility was excellent, and the mountains stood proudly in the distance. That said, the wind had decided to make an appearance, with gusts pushing up to around 16 mph, enough to make life a little more interesting.

Strong winds always make things trickier, both for us and for the pelicans. Flying becomes far more effort for the birds, and they tend to keep a low profile, so finding them took some work. We pushed further north across the lake, closer to their roosting areas, hoping to locate a group that would be willing to stick with us.

Eventually, patience paid off. We found a small group of pelicans that stayed with the boat, giving us the perfect opportunity to slow things down. With the weather finally showing its best side, we focused heavily on portraits, something we hadn't really been able to do properly yet with the backdrop. The Kerkini mountains were fully on display now, and as the afternoon progressed, the background slowly began to change colour as the sun dropped lower in the sky.



Portrait after portrait, the scene kept improving. Subtle shifts in light added warmth and depth, and the mountains behind the birds became richer and more dramatic with each passing minute. It was one of those sessions where everything builds quietly, without you really noticing until you stop and look back at what you've captured.

Once we'd worked the pelican portraits thoroughly, we decided to make our way toward the western side of the lake for a shore feed session. However, the wind had other ideas. The chop on the water was intense, and crossing the lake took far longer than expected. By the time we reached the other side, the light had moved on, and there simply wasn't enough time to begin the feed safely or effectively.

Rather than force it, we stayed exactly where we were, and once again, Kerkini delivered. Looking north toward the mountains, the light began to do something truly special. Low-lying mist started to form, wrapping itself around the ridges and valleys, slowly revealing layer after layer of the landscape. As the sun dipped below the horizon, the mist caught the remaining light and transformed into an extraordinary palette of blues, pinks, oranges, and purples.



It was honestly some of the best scenery I've seen here in many years of visiting. The mist added an almost otherworldly depth, creating a backdrop that felt endless. We stayed low to the water, using the rugged landscape behind us to give the scene the respect it deserved, shooting quietly as the colours deepened and shifted.

Eventually, the cameras came down. There was a moment when everyone simply stepped back to take it all in, no shooting, no talking, just enjoying what we'd just witnessed. Even after the light had completely gone, the atmosphere lingered.

With huge smiles all round, we made the 30-minute journey back to the harbour, fully aware we'd just experienced one of those evenings that stays with you long after the trip ends.

Back at the hotel, everyone had about 30 minutes to quickly turn themselves around before we reconvened for a Masters of Light presentation and practical workshop. With the forecast looking very promising for the following morning, calm winds, clear skies, and the potential for a beautiful sunrise, it felt like the perfect time to dive deeper into understanding highlights, shadows, and how thoughtful use of light can elevate images from average to something truly creative.

After the workshop, it was time for dinner, followed by a much-needed rest. Guests drifted back to their rooms, still quietly buzzing from the evening, replaying those colours and moments in their minds, a truly unforgettable Kerkini night.

Monday 12 January 2026

Day 4

Another early alarm followed by the now well-rehearsed routine: sleepy faces, quiet conversations, and that first essential coffee in the hotel lounge bringing everyone gently back to life. This morning, however, had a sharper edge to it, the coldest of the trip so far, with a *feels-like temperature of around -*

4°C. Gloves were non-negotiable, and those extra layers were much needed.

Once caffeinated and layered up, we headed down to the harbour and boarded the boat, pushing out onto the lake under what initially looked like a very promising forecast. Clear skies overhead suggested we might finally be in for one of those classic Kerkini sunrises everyone had been waiting for.

Annoyingly, and very much in true Kerkini fashion, a stubborn bank of cloud sat right on the horizon. So while the sun did rise, it never quite broke through in the way we'd hoped. No golden light, no dramatic "fire birds" as the guests had begun calling it. A little disappointing, perhaps, but far from a wasted morning.

What we did get was something far subtler and arguably just as beautiful. Soft pink and arctic blue tones crept across the sky and reflected gently onto the mountains, bathing the landscape in a calm, almost polar feel. The light was delicate and even, and it created a stunning backdrop for portraits.

Pelicans began to gather around the boat as we drifted quietly on the lake. With the group now comfortable working in these conditions, the morning settled into a relaxed, focused session. We concentrated on portraits, keeping things simple and clean, letting the colours and soft light do the heavy lifting.



Find out more about our Pelicans of Lake Kerkini trip or contact us

01962 302086 sales@wildlifeworldwide.com www.wildlifeworldwide.com

The low cloud clung to the higher ground, adding depth and layers to the scene, while the pastel colours behind the birds slowly shifted as the morning progressed. It was one of those sessions where patience paid off: subtle changes, small moments, and thoughtful shooting.

Eventually, as the cold started to creep in and the light became too harsh, we turned back toward the harbour. The journey back was unhurried, with plenty of quiet reflection and the occasional glance at images on camera screens, a few nods and smiles confirming it had been a worthwhile morning.

Back at the hotel, breakfast was waiting, warm, comforting, and very much appreciated after the cold start. An omelette had never tasted so good. The group gathered around the tables, thawing out, chatting through the morning's highlights, and easing into the day ahead, content, well-fed, and ready to see what Kerkini would deliver next.

After breakfast and a much-needed warm-up, everyone had a bit of downtime before the afternoon session. Batteries were charged, memory cards emptied, and a few favourite shots from the morning were already being proudly shared around. Before long, it was time to layer up again and head back down to the harbour for round two.

The conditions felt very different from the morning. The bitter cold had eased off a little, and while it was still crisp, it was far more pleasant to be out on the water. The sky had finally cleared properly, giving us the best visibility we'd had all trip, and spirits were high as we pushed back out onto the lake.

The plan was to try for a shoreline feeding session, however, Kerkini had other ideas. The lake level was higher than usual, and despite giving it a few good attempts, there was just nowhere safe to land the boat. We tried, we assessed, we tried again… and then accepted defeat. Sometimes the lake wins, and today was one of those days.

So, Plan B it was. We headed back out onto the lake and made our way north to look for pelicans. Numbers were lower than in the mornings, which is pretty normal, but the birds we did find decided to stick with us, always a good sign. That allowed us to slow things right down and really enjoy the session.

With the sun now lower in the sky, the light started to warm up nicely, and for the first time we had the mountains fully visible and looking fantastic. We spent most of the afternoon concentrating on portraits, playing with angles and compositions, and making the most of those clean mountain backdrops.



Every now and then, a pelican would take off or glide past the boat, giving us the odd chance for a flight shot, but there was no chasing or pressure. It was a relaxed, enjoyable session, and it was clear everyone was starting to feel far more confident working from the boat.

As the afternoon rolled on, the light softened and began to fade, and with the chill slowly creeping back in, we made our way back toward the harbour. Another solid session in the bag.

Back at the hotel, the evening followed our now well-established routine: relax, review a few images, enjoy dinner, and swap stories from the day. Another Kerkini day done, and with clear skies finally appearing, hopes were quietly rising that tomorrow might be *the* morning.

Wednesday 14 January 2026

Day 5

The final morning boat trip arrived… and for once, nobody complained about the alarm. In fact, people were up surprisingly quickly, coffee in hand, with that quiet feeling that *today might be the day*. Cameras were checked (and re-checked), batteries swapped, and there was a definite buzz around the breakfast table.
The moment we stepped outside, we knew this morning was different.
Clear skies. Not a cloud where it mattered. Hardly any wind. The lake looked calm and glassy, and the light was already starting to build. After the last few days, it honestly felt like Kerkini was about to make it up to us.

We headed straight down to the harbour and boarded the boat, pushing out onto the lake just as the sun began to rise. And finally… there it was. The sunrise we'd all been waiting for. Proper golden light spilling across the water, lighting up the mountains and turning everything warm and glowing. The much-talked-about *"fire birds"* morning had arrived.

To make it even better, there were gorgeous lenticular clouds hanging near the mountains, perfectly

placed, like they'd been ordered specially for the occasion. At this point it felt like everything from the last few days, the cold starts, the grey mornings, the patience, had all built up to this one session.

Then the pelicans arrived, right on cue. Gliding across the water, circling the boat, flying straight through that beautiful light like they knew exactly what they were doing. Honestly, it was one of those moments where you're almost laughing behind the camera because it's just *that* good.



We took things slow, making the most of every pass. Portraits glowing in the early light, flight shots cutting through warm tones, reflections on the water, it was all happening at once. The mountains shifted through golds and pinks, the lenticular clouds held on just long enough to keep things interesting, and the pelicans kept delivering.

There wasn't much talking on the boat. Just shutters going, the odd quiet "wow", and a few big grins being exchanged. Everyone knew this was something special.



Eventually, as the sun climbed higher and the light began to soften, the moment naturally faded. Cameras came down, and we took a bit of time just to enjoy being there, because sometimes you really do need to stop shooting and take it all in.
With full memory cards and even fuller smiles, we turned back toward the harbour. A perfect final session, and the best possible way to wrap up our time on the lake.

Kerkini had well and truly saved the best until last.





Find out more about our Pelicans of Lake Kerkini trip or contact us

01962 302086 sales@wildlifeworldwide.com www.wildlifeworldwide.com

Sign up to our e-news
Sign up to our e-news to find out more about our tours, events, late availability, offers and tour reports at https://www.wildlifeworldwide.com/subscribe

Find out more about our Pelicans of Lake Kerkini trip or contact us

01962 302086 sales@wildlifeworldwide.com www.wildlifeworldwide.com