

(1) Natural Reserve of Dunas de São Jacinto > (2) Paul do Taipal > (3) International Tagus Natural Park > (4) Natural Park of Serra de São Mamede > (5) Sierra de San Pedro Special Area of Conservation > (6) Llanos de Alcántara, Brozas and Llanos de Cáceres > (7) National Park of Monfragüe > (8) Orellana Reservoir > (9) Cornalvo Reservoir > (10) Los Canchales > (11) Sierra Grande de Hornachos Natural Space > (12) Matachel Valley SCI > (13) Natural Park of Sudoeste Alentejano e Costa Vicentina > (14) Natural Reserve of Lagoas de Santo André e da Sancha > (15) Natural Reserve of Estuário do Sado > (16) Lagoa Dos Patos

## BIRDING ROUTE



You'll start this route off in the **Natural Reserve of Dunas de São Jacinto (1)**, on the tidal river Aveiro. This is one of the best conserved reserves in Europe, featuring alternating pine groves, lagoons and a magnificent heron nesting site.

A bit further inland, in the Bajo Mondego district near Coimbra is **Paul do Taipal (2)**, an important Special Protection Area (SPA) for white-winged ducks, purple herons, little egrets, spoonbills and purple swamphens.

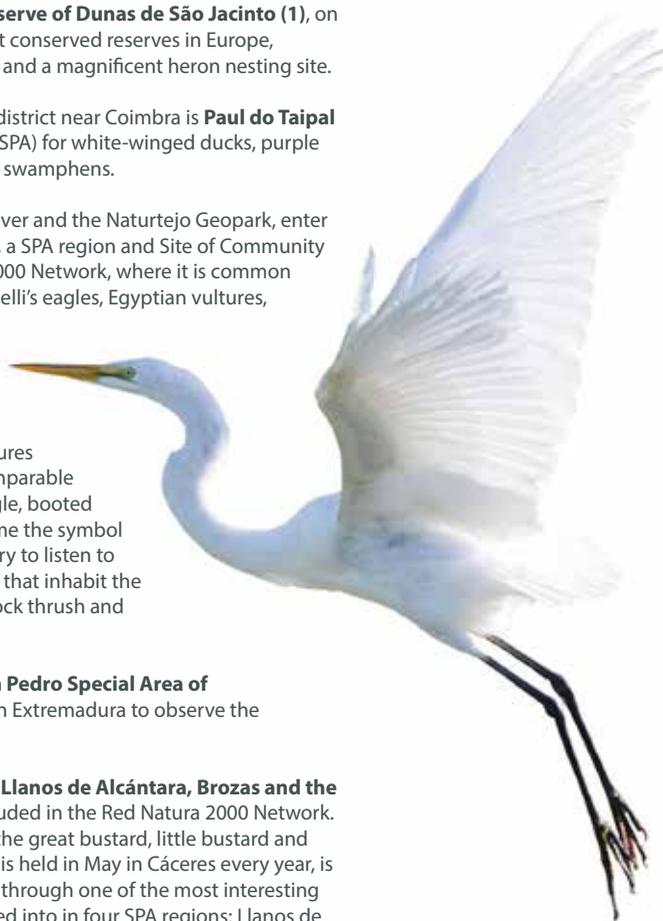
On the border demarcated by the Tagus River and the Naturtejo Geopark, enter the **International Tagus Natural Park (3)**, a SPA region and Site of Community Importance (SCI) included in the Natura 2000 Network, where it is common to spot the silhouettes of black storks, Bonelli's eagles, Egyptian vultures, Cinereous vultures and Golden eagles.

Now head south, in Portugal, to the **Natural Park of Serra de São Mamede (4)**, close to Portalegre. It is a natural habitat for Griffon vultures, cinereous vultures and black storks and is also home to incomparable eagles, including the short-toed snake eagle, booted eagle and Bonelli's eagle, which has become the symbol of the Park. In spring, it is an absolute luxury to listen to the song of the cuckoo. Other rare species that inhabit the region are: the common kingfisher, blue rock thrush and Eurasian blackcap.

Back in Spain, you'll find the **Sierra de San Pedro Special Area of Conservation (5)**, one of the best places in Extremadura to observe the Spanish imperial eagle.

In the same region, you'll come across the **Llanos de Alcántara, Brozas and the Llanos de Cáceres (6)**, which are also included in the Red Natura 2000 Network. Here you can spot steppe birds including the great bustard, little bustard and Montagu's harrier. The Bird Festival, which is held in May in Cáceres every year, is extremely interesting. The route now runs through one of the most interesting areas, ornithologically speaking. It is divided into in four SPA regions: Llanos de Cáceres y Sierra de Fuentes, Magasca, Riberos del Almonte and Trujillo, home to a large colony of lesser kestrels.

Continue east toward the **National Park of Monfragüe (7)**. The park's iconic birds are the cinereous vulture and the Spanish imperial eagle. From the Salto del Gitano you can observe the park's largest concentration of Griffon vultures, Egyptian vultures, golden eagles and black storks. The views alone from the 12<sup>th</sup> century Arab-origin



castle are stunning. The Cañada Real Trujillana will take you to Villarreal de San Carlos, which celebrates the International Ornithological Tourism Fair (FIO per its Spanish acronym) between February and March.

Drive down to the **Orellana Reservoir (8)**, which is included on the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance due to the value of its habitats and specifically due to it being a wintering site for cranes. During the winter months it is possible to view more than 20,000 specimens of these birds.

Toward the west, near Mérida, is the **Cornalvo Reservoir (9)**, where you can spot Montagu's harrier, the black-winged kite, the Eurasian stone curlew and the little bustard. Next stop after Aljucén is **Los Canchales (10)**, a wetland of International Importance that contains islands where colonial birds such as the collared pratincole and the common gull-billed tern nest.

The **Sierra Grande de Hornachos Natural Space (11)** is another favourite, top rate ornithology destination. The Griffon vulture, the Bonelli's eagle and the golden eagle all nest among these rocky peaks. The nearby **Matachel Valley SCI (12)** is a place where you can once again gaze upon the Spanish imperial eagle as it soars through the sky. You may also be lucky enough to spot a specimen of the recently introduced Iberian lynx during your journey.

Now head toward the Alentejo coast and the **Natural Park of Sudoeste Alentejano e Costa Vicentina (13)**.

Then navigate up to the **Natural Reserve of Lagoas de Santo André e da Sancha (14)**, one of Portugal's most ornithological important coastal lake systems. It is the ideal habitat for the reproduction of threatened water birds and is a frequent stopover site along their migratory routes. It also offers a winter refuge for thousands of birds native to northern and central Europe. Here you can watch purple herons, flamingos and ospreys.

You'll finish the route at the **Natural Reserve of Estuário do Sado (15)**, in Alcácer do Sal, one of the largest wetlands in the entire country, and in which you can see grey herons, western marsh harriers, rough-legged hawks and Eurasian coots. And lastly, pay a visit to **Lagoa Dos Patos (16)** on the Alentejo Plains, a breeding ground for the collared pratincole.