

ITINERARY

HUNGARY & ROMANIA: THE BEST OF EASTERN EUROPE

April 27- May 13, 2019



*The Hawfinch is a striking finch with a large conical bill; it looks similar to the North American grosbeaks. Romania holds a large population of these attractive birds, and we'll look for them near Odorheiu Secuiesc.
Photograph by guide Lajos Nemeth-Bóka.*

We include here information for those interested in the 2019 Field Guides Hungary & Romania: The Best of Eastern Europe tour:

- a general introduction to the tour
- a description of the birding areas to be visited on the tour
- an abbreviated daily itinerary with some indication of the nature of each day's birding outings

Those who register for the tour will be sent this additional material:

- an annotated list of the birds recorded on a last year's Field Guides trip to the area, with comments by guide(s) on notable species or sightings (may be downloaded from our web site)
- a detailed information bulletin with important logistical information and answers to questions regarding accommodations, air arrangements, clothing, currency, customs and immigration, documents, health precautions, and personal items
- a reference list
- a Field Guides checklist for preparing and keeping track of the birds we see on the tour
- after the conclusion of the tour, a list of birds seen on the tour

Hungary and Romania are two of Europe's richest countries for observing the wildlife of the "Old Continent." The list is long—close to 500 species of birds, 110 mammals, 1100 protected plants (with more than 70 orchids), about 4200 butterflies and moths, and 80 dragonflies—to mention but a few. This ancient fauna and flora is preserved in more than 500 nationally protected areas and over 2000 locally protected sites covering grasslands, fens, marshes, flood plains, mountains, forests, and pastures across the region. Dozens of areas have international importance (Ramsar, World Heritage, IUCN listed National Parks, UNESCO Biosphere Reserves, etc.). The pre-war explorations of Kirk Swann and Sir Peter Scott established these countries as two of Europe's most important areas for biodiversity—a kind of European terra incognita—a reputation that is still valid today. We will begin with a three night stay on board a floating hotel as we explore the Danube Delta, then visit the Black Sea coast...breathe the fresh air of coniferous woods in Count Dracula's Carpathian Mountains of Transylvania...sample the famous "Puszta" of Hungary...and gaze upon many magnificent birds.

Our trip to Hungary and Romania is a perfect blend of great birding while sampling the best habitats, scenery, and a few cultural highlights of this – The Best of Eastern Europe.

Our birding adventure begins in Bucharest, the capital of Romania. After driving to our “floating hotel” we will spend three days and nights aboard our houseboat as we bird our way through the reed beds, canals, and lagoons of the incomparable Danube Delta. Travelling in relaxed style we’ll see hundreds of waterbirds, including the endangered Dalmatian Pelican and Pygmy Cormorant among far larger numbers of ducks, herons, egrets, ibis, storks, gulls, and terns. Migrant eagles or falcons may fly overhead, while along the shores are feeding flocks of pratincoles, sandpipers, and plovers. At the Black Sea coast we’ll encounter many more waterbirds, while in the grasslands and woodlands of the Dobrodgea region Eurasian Hoopoe, European Bee-eater, European Roller, Calandra Lark, Tawny Pipit, and a variety of flycatchers, wheatears, warblers, shrikes, and buntings should be found. In Transylvania, we’ll visit the volcanic Carpathian Mountains, where at Mount Hargita (the sacred peak of the local Hungarian-speaking Szekler people) perhaps we’ll find Western Capercaillie, Eurasian Pygmy-Owl, Eurasian Jay, Eurasian Nutcracker, Goldcrest, Firecrest, and Ring Ousel. We’ll also spend time in another huge gorge with a good chance for White-throated Dipper, and the totally unique looking Wallcreeper!

In the magnificent limestone landscape near Trascau and in the giant Turda Gorge, we’ll look for several crag species like Alpine Swift, Eurasian Crag-Martin, Rufous-tailed Rock-Thrush, and Rock Bunting. Finally, we’ll travel west to Hungary and two of the region’s very best birding areas—across the steppes, through the woodlands, and along the lakeshores of Hortobagy and Kiskunsag we’ll find a wealth of birds, including Imperial Eagle, Red-footed and Saker falcons, and Great Bustard.



*Eurasian Pygmy-Owl is resident in the mountains of Romania.
We’ve found them on Mount Hargita on previous tours.
Photograph by participant David Woods.*

About the Physical Requirements & Pace: We have tried to offer (within a period of just over two weeks) what we consider to be some of Eastern Europe’s finest birding. However, Hungary and Romania comprise a vast region, and we are limited to visiting what we think are the most accessible and best birding areas within this time frame, while still giving us a chance to see virtually all the special birds which include Pygmy Cormorant, Dalmatian Pelican, Imperial Eagle, Levant Sparrowhawk, Great Bustard, Red-footed and Saker falcons, Black Woodpecker and Wallcreeper; perhaps 205 to 215 species in total.

Additionally, you may wish to add a few days at either end of the tour to see some of the historical/cultural sights of Bucharest or Budapest. Should you wish to do this we can arrange optional city tours (at an additional cost). During the actual birding tour we will have short cultural visits to the city of Brasov, Dracula’s Castle, a Transylvanian village (for the Szekler Gates), Viscri (for a Fortified Church), and the medieval city of Sighisoara.

The main birding begins with three days/nights on a travelling houseboat in the Danube Delta; all rooms have their own bathrooms—but please be aware that if you are a tall person, you may find the rooms and beds small. However, during our four tours to date everyone was very pleased, and many said our time on the houseboat was one of the main highlights of the whole tour. There is a dining room, bar, and viewing terrace.

Elsewhere we will travel in two minivans, each with a driver (and/or driver/guide). Most travel is on good paved roads and both vehicles will be in communication by walkie-talkie. From time to time we will travel on some bumpy dirt tracks as we access more out-of-the-way birding areas, but generally speaking the roads are very good. Be aware though that we are covering some large distances, the longest single drive is from Vadu Marshes (on the Black Sea coast) to Brasov which takes about 8 hours with stops for lunch and bathroom breaks. We also spend a good deal of time driving in the Babadag Hills, going from Desag to Coltesti, and on the day we cross from Romania in to Hungary (which may take about 7 hours depending on the time for the border crossing). Several of our longer days travelling are done so in order to visit birding areas along the way, so it’s not actually a huge distance we are covering, it’s more a mix of driving to an area and then birding – or covering a larger farm area to find just the right micro-habitat for perhaps thick-knees, larks, pipits, or wheatears. In total we expect to drive about 1400 miles (3250 kms).

Sampling local food is one of the great pleasures of international travel, and on this adventure there will be many opportunities to do so. Strict hygiene controls generally make for very safe eating in both countries. Breakfasts are often buffets with a wide selection of choices; lunch is usually pre-ordered local dishes at a small restaurant, or if the weather is suitable a picnic lunch in the field. Dinner is normally served in a local restaurant or at our hotel. Options for beverages include a wide variety of soft drinks, beers, wines, and spirits (alcohol is not included in the tour fee). Bottled water will be provided for you throughout the tour.

There are no planned strenuous hikes, and most walking will be done within about 1-2 miles of the vehicles over mostly easy to moderate terrain. The Danube Delta and Black Sea coast are at sea level, while the Dobrodgea region is only slightly above that. Hortobagy and Kiskunsag are also flat and at low altitude, so our only altitude walking will be restricted to our days in the Carpathian and Apuseni mountains (maximum approx. 6900 feet or 1800 meters) where we may make two reasonably steep slow walks of about two miles each way.

If you are uncertain about whether this tour is a good match for your abilities please don't hesitate to contact our office; if they cannot directly answer your queries, they will put you in touch with Terry.

About the Birding Areas



Danube Delta—River deltas form some of the world's richest habitats. In Europe, there are just a handful of them, but the Danube Delta is definitely the biggest and most inaccessible, making it a heaven for the birder. It is arguably Europe's most important wetland; fifty percent larger than the French Camargue, the Spanish Coto Donana, and the Austrian Neusediler Sea combined! Literally millions of migrating birds pass and stay in the Delta every year. The three main branches form an enormous triangle covering over 4350 km. And because of the enormous supply of alluvium, the area is

constantly under transformation, making the exact boundaries of this "map" rather unreliable. Only a small percentage of the total surface of the delta remains dry, the remainder consisting of marshes, dunes, floating reed islands, flooded forests, rivers, creeks, and lakes. Surprisingly, the delta is also permanently inhabited by people, mostly fishermen who have built small houses on the so-called "grinduri" (dry surfaces). They are Ukrainian by ethnicity, descendants of the "Old Believers," who left Russia during religious persecution in the 18th century. The Delta became a Biosphere Reserve in 1990 and is considered the third most important wetland in the world, after the Amazon and Nile.

Dobrodgea —An area of bare rock and short grassland steppe with oleanders and other semi-arid plants more reminiscent of the Holy Land than what is typically considered European. Geologically, it has some of the oldest forested ridges of Europe; particularly interesting to us are the hills and lowlands of the eastern craggy section. This outstanding birding area is the second largest flyway in Europe.

Carpathian Mountains—Flanked by spruce and beech forest and farmland, the Carpathians are one of Europe's most important regions for wildlife, with European Red Squirrel, Red Fox, Roe Deer, and around half of the entire continent's population of Brown Bear (although to see one would take a great deal of luck).

Apuseni Mountains—Hardly mentioned by name on the maps of Romania and bordering the Transylvanian basin, these mountains are distinctly different from the Carpathians – being mostly based on limestone adorned with gorges, caves, and micro-habitats that are home for hundreds of endemic plants and insects and crag-loving birds. This beautiful, rural, and rugged mountain range is dotted with tiny settlements of the local Hungarian and Romanian speaking Moc people, who continue to enjoy a secluded and traditional lifestyle in small thatched-roofed houses. During our two days in the area we will visit the most picturesque and rewarding eastern flanks, including Turda Gorge.

Hortobagy—“Puszta” means something like “Prairie” but is closer to the Asian Steppe. It is part of the Hungarian Great Plain with huge distances and horizons where the Fata Morgana enticed wondering travellers. It is one of the most colorful and famous regions of Hungary, a World Heritage National Park that was established in 1972. The first of its kind in Hungary, it preserves the unique Puszta habitat, together with the shimmering mirages of trees, church spires, and villages. This 82,000 hectare alkaline steppe lowland is a stopover point for thousands of migrating birds which feed peacefully among the herds of Hungarian Gray Cattle and swirl-horned Racka Sheep.

Kiskunsag—Kiskunsag National Park is probably the most “Hungarian” national park—if such a thing exists. Like Hortobagy, it is mostly grassland, yet the two parks are distinctly different, with Kiskunsag being more diverse—a mix of lakes, sandy dunes, dry forest, villages and farmland.

Itinerary for Hungary & Romania: The Best of Eastern Europe

Day 1, Sat, 27 Apr. Departure from the US. Participants joining the tour from the US will need to leave today in order to arrive in Bucharest on Day 2.

Day 2, Sun, 28 Apr. Arrival in Bucharest. Please plan your flight to arrive in Bucharest some time today. For those who provide flight information, we will arrange a transfer from the airport to the hotel. There are no birding activities planned for today, **but please meet your guides at reception at 6:30 p.m.** We will have a brief orientation followed by a welcome dinner. Night at Phoenicia Express Hotel, Bucharest.



*Our “floating hotel” in the Danube Delta is a great base.
Photograph by participant Jan Shaw.*

Days 3-5, Mon-Wed, 29 Apr - 1 May. The Danube Delta. After breakfast, we’ll drive for about five hours to the Danube Delta’s capital, Tulcea, and then board our floating hotel for the next three nights. By far the best way to explore the Delta is from one of these boats, equipped with a restaurant, open viewing terrace and bar, and rooms with private facilities. Travelling slowly along the canals, lakes, and lagoons, we’ll have countless opportunities to observe and photograph the fabulous birdlife. Every species of heron which breeds in Europe occurs here, including Great and Little bitterns, Purple and Squacco herons, Black-crowned Night-Heron, and Great and Little egrets. It’s also home to Pygmy Cormorant, Glossy Ibis, Great Crested, Eared, and Red-necked grebes, Red-crested and Common pochards, Garganey, Gadwall, Ferruginous Duck, Mute Swan, and

Greylag Geese. Great White Pelicans sometimes form large flocks across the sky, while Dalmatian Pelican, one of the most endangered birds in Europe, is much less common but around 200 pairs occur in the area. In the marshes are a variety of *Acrocephalus* warblers (including Savi’s, Marsh, and Great Reed) and the lovely Bearded Reedling. In the willows we’ll listen for the high calls of Eurasian Penduline-Tit, and in the woodlands Eurasian Golden-Oriole, Common Redstart, and the secretive Common Nightingale.

The numbers of migrants vary tremendously from year to year, but we should see Eurasian Hoopoe, European Bee-eater and European Roller—three of Europe’s most spectacular species. Many raptors are in evidence, with Eurasian Marsh-Harrier, Eurasian Hobby and Red-footed Falcon being most common, while White-tailed Eagle and Short-toed Snake-Eagle are less so. White Stork is common as a breeding bird in the villages, and the rarer Black Stork can sometimes be seen soaring over the old forests.

Although finding and observing the birdlife will be our main concern, there are other creatures that we can enjoy too, including Marsh and Edible frogs, Fire-bellied Toad, and Crested, Smooth, and Warty newts. If the weather is warm we should also see a large number of butterflies, including spectacular European and Scarce swallowtails, Red Admiral, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock Butterfly, Painted Ladies, Comma Butterfly, and a dozen or so species of colorful dragonflies. All nights on board our houseboat.

Day 6, Thu, 2 May. The Babadag and Dobrodgea area. After breakfast we'll leave our floating hotel and drive to the hills and dry oak woodlands near Babadag, with our first chances of Booted Eagle, Long-legged Buzzard, European Honey-buzzard, Levant Sparrowhawk, Syrian and Middle Spotted woodpeckers, and Sombre Tit. We'll then continue through an large area of farmland as we try to find Calandra and Greater Short-toed larks, and Tawny Pipit. European Souseliks—rather like small Prairie Dogs—are common, and the main food of Saker Falcon and Imperial Eagle. In the afternoon we'll stop at the small limestone gorge of Cheia Dobrodgea, where our target birds are several wheatears, including Northern, Pied, and Isabelline. The foothills and scrubby vegetation is inhabited by Red-backed Shrike, Woodlark, and if lucky Ortolan Bunting. We expect to be out for the whole day arriving at Mammaia at about 6 p.m. Night at La Scoica Hotel, Mammaia (a short way north of Constanta).



*We'll look for several wheatear species in the Dobrodgea region. The Northern Wheatear, shown here, is the most common, but we'll also watch for Pied and Isabelline Wheatears.
Photograph by guide Lajos Nemeth-Bóka.*

Day 7, Fri, 3 May. Vadu Marshes, the Black Sea coast, and on to Brasov. This morning we'll drive north (parallel to the Black Sea) and visit the Vadu Marshes. After checking the village, where White Storks sometimes have Spanish Sparrows breeding in the undersides of their nests, we'll then make a short visit to the marshes and breeding colonies of Pied Avocet, Collared Pratincole and Common Tern. Then, at the coast itself, we'll check amongst the numerous Caspian Gulls for the far lesser numbers of Mediterranean and Slender-billed gulls. Sadly though, we must soon be on our way, as today is one of our longest travel days, with a journey (including a few short stops) of about eight hours. We expect to arrive at the historic city of Brasov in the early evening. Night at Hotel Coroana Brasovului, Brasov.

Day 8, Sat, 4 May. To the Carpathians Mountains. Today we'll have time for a couple of cultural excursions as we visit Dracula's Castle (more correctly known as Bran Castle) and then have lunch in Viscri—a delightful Saxon Village with a Fortified Church. As we continue on in the afternoon, we pass along a flyway for Lesser Spotted Eagle and will perhaps see our first Common Ravens, and Northern and Lesser Gray shrikes that perch along the farm fences here. We will also visit a small park in Odorheiu Secuiesc hopefully finding Lesser Spotted and Syrian woodpeckers, Eurasian Nuthatch, the striking

Collared Flycatcher, European Serin, and European Scops-Owl. We'll then have dinner in a traditional restaurant at Odorheiu Secuiesc before making a short drive for a two night stay at our base near Desag. Night at Desag Pension.

Day 9, Sun, 5 May. Bicaz Gorge. Today we'll drive for about two hours to the largest and deepest gorge in Romania, Bicaz Gorge, with walls over 100 meters high. We will scan these mighty rock faces for Wallcreeper and then walk along a small rushing river—ideal habitat for White-throated Dipper and Gray Wagtail. As we return to Desag, we'll walk through an area of pine forest—excellent for Crested and Coal tits, and Firecrest. A nearby meadow and tree-lined hedgerows can be good for any number of migrants, including warblers, Red-breasted Flycatcher, Tree Pipit and Yellowhammer. Night at Desag Pension.

Day 10, Mon, 6 May. Mt. Hargita. This morning, we'll drive through the scenic Ivo Valley to Mt. Hargita, the sacred peak of the local Szeklers. It takes about an hour to our first stop, a track through pine and spruce forests. Eurasian Pygmy-Owl is a possibility, as are Eurasian Jay, Willow Tit, Eurasian Treecreeper, Dunnock, Red Crossbill, and Eurasian Siskin. There's even a very slight chance of Western Capercaillie, but we'd be extremely lucky to get even a quick view. We'll then continue to the higher slopes with spectacular views across the open mountainsides where Ring Ouzel, Fieldfare, Mistle Thrush and Water Pipit are common, and small valleys of woodland are seasonally home to Eurasian Nutcracker. After lunch we'll return by the same route, stopping to see the traditionally carved Szekler Gates as we drive north-west to the medieval city of Sighisoara. Night in Sighisoara.

Day 11, Tue, 7 May. To the Apuseni Mountains. Just outside the city are some magnificent old oak forests where we'll begin our birding today. Although birding in this habitat can be slow, it is excellent for woodpeckers, warblers, flycatchers, tits and finches – including the elusive Hawfinch. We'll also have time for a walk in the city itself, the best-preserved medieval/fortified Saxon town in Europe, with narrow winding streets and a 200-foot clock tower that watches over the main gate. In the afternoon we'll drive about 3 hours west to Coltesti—a different part of Transylvania at the eastern edge of the Apuseni Mountains. Night at Szekelyko Kuria Mansion, Coltesti.

Day 12, Wed, 8 May. Apuseni Mountains and Turda Gorge. While the Carpathian Mts. are volcanic, here in the Apuseni Mts. we'll be birding on limestone with a very different mix of birds. Starting near our hotel, we'll walk through this gorgeous landscape ascending to a 13th Century castle ruin, we'll have lunch in Rimetea village (known for its traditional houses), and we'll also visit Turda Gorge, one of the largest gorges in Romania and home to hundreds of endemic plants and insects. We'll be searching for Golden Eagle, Eurasian Sparrowhawk, Stock Dove, Alpine Swift, Peregrine Falcon, Woodlark, Eurasian Crag-Martin, Red-rumped Swallow, Wood Warbler, Greater Whitethroat, Black Redstart, Rufous-tailed Rock-Thrush, and Rock Bunting. Night at Szekelyko Kuria Mansion, Coltesti.

Day 13, Thu, 9 May. To Hungary. Today is largely a travel day as we cross the Bucin Pass and leave Transylvania behind. Our birding will depend on how we progress, but we will certainly make time to visit the Foldes Wetland – a haven for migrating waterfowl and shorebirds. Additionally, a colony of Red-footed Falcons breed here, with luck perhaps a Saker Falcon too, and our first chance for Moustached Warbler. Night in the Hortobagy area.

Day 14, Fri, 10 May. Hortobagy to Kiskunsag. This morning we'll bird the Hortobagy area, a mix of "Puszta" steppe, wetlands and grassland. Although a national park, many visitors are surprised they are in a park at all – there isn't a main entrance gate, or long lines of large fences. The area consists of mostly farmlands, small woodlands, and lakes. However these 'farms' are strictly controlled and are famous throughout Europe for demonstrating how well controlled and carefully managed areas can support wildlife and farming that exist side by side together. In addition to the migrant shorebirds, cranes, and geese (that stop off as a feeding point along their migration routes), there's an excellent area of woodland too, but depending on what species we've seen elsewhere on the tour, we'll need to be flexible, as much awaits us at Kiskunsag. Night at Sarlospuszta Club Hotel.



The Great Bustard will be one of our targets on the plains at Kiskunsag National Park. We've seen up to 25 of these amazing birds on previous tours! Photograph by guide Lajos Nemeth-Bóka.

Day 15, Sat, 11 May. Kiskunsag NP. We'll have the full day to bird Kiskunsag National Park, the European stronghold of Great Bustard. One of the local wardens will join us here and make sure we visit the best areas as we scan the plains and farmlands for these spectacular birds. Only a one-hour drive from Hungary's beautiful historic capital, Budapest, Kiskunsag is a fabulous birding area, with not only Great Bustards, but also Common Quail, Gray Partridge, Black Stork, Great Bittern, Imperial Eagle, Montagu's and Pallid harriers, Little Crake, Eurasian Thick-knee, Mediterranean Gull, Long-eared Owl, a colony of European Bee-eaters, Eurasian Wryneck, Black and Middle Spotted woodpeckers, Eurasian Golden Oriole, Crested Lark, Short-toed Treecreeper, Sedge, Marsh, Great Reed and Eurasian River warblers, a second

chance for Moustached Warbler, Common Nightingale, Red-throated Pipit, and Eurasian Linnet. We expect to be out most of the day, and after dinner we'll try for European Nightjar. Night at Sarlospuszta Club Hotel.

Day 16, Sun, 12 May. Kiskunsag to Budapest. We'll spend the morning birding around Kiskunsag, and then after a farewell lunch, we'll transfer to Budapest Airport for your international departure. *If you wish to spend an additional night and day in central Budapest for a City Tour, our office will be happy to assist you.*

Day 17, Mon, 13 May. Arrival home. If you're returning to the US, you should arrive today in time for your onward connections home. ***Please note that the tour begins in Bucharest and ends in Budapest.***

About Your Guides

Originally from England, **Terry Stevenson** has made Kenya his home since 1977. He is the senior author of the *Field Guide to the Birds of East Africa: Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi*—the only guide in the region to have a text and maps opposite plates format; it has recently been released as an app, with the added advantage of making it possible to hear many of the calls. He is also co-author of *Birds of the Horn of Africa: Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia and Socotra*. Published in 2009, this acclaimed guide is the only one to this region. He is a member of the East African Rarities Committee. On November 30, 1986, he set a new World Big Day record with 330 species *seen* in one day in Kenya, the record stands today.

One of Africa and India's foremost bird-tour guides, Terry has led numerous Field Guides tours across the African continent, in Madagascar, and in India. He is currently living in a mud-and-cow-dung mansion near Mt. Kenya.

Visit <https://fieldguides.com/guides> for Terry's complete tour schedule; just click on his photo.

Lajos Nemeth-Bóka (pronounced Layosh) is a proud native Hungarian who is widely regarded as the most-travelled wildlife expert of Eastern Europe. He started birding at the age of seven and then extended his field research to Romania, Slovenia, and Croatia in 1991, sometimes spending several weeks on bush-campings. Lajos also feels at home in Egypt, Ethiopia, and the Middle East, and has traveled to some of the remotest areas of Africa. (He met Terry at the top of a hill in Djibouti!) Apart from birds, he is one of Eastern Europe's foremost experts on mammals, butterflies, dragonflies, and other wildlife. He has been a member of 15 entomological expeditions in the Himalayas, Taiwan, and North Africa on which more than 200 species new to science were discovered. Lajos brings a wealth of experience and character to his job and will be outstanding as all-round facilitator on your trip.

Financial Information

FEE: \$6075 from Bucharest and departing Budapest

DEPOSIT: \$600 per person

FINAL PAYMENT DUE: December 28, 2018

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$1025 (single rooms are limited on the **Danube Delta Houseboat**)

LIMIT: 12

Other Things You Need to Know

TOUR MANAGER: The manager for this tour is Caroline Lewis. Caroline will be happy to assist you in preparing for the tour. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call her!

ACCOMMODATIONS: All accommodations on this tour (including the floating hotel in the Danube Delta) have private bathrooms and single room availability. You will find that they are all comfortable and well located, making for excellent bases to explore and bird the surrounding areas. However, please note, we are using the Phoenicia Express Hotel near Bucharest airport as a convenience for those only doing the main birding tour, and to avoid the city traffic jams on the day we leave for the Danube Delta. If you plan to come to Bucharest several days early for your own personal sightseeing, we recommend that you stay in a downtown hotel (Hotel Moxa is well located) and then join us on Day 2, Sunday, April 28 at 6:30 p.m. at the Phoenicia Express. If you are planning to join our organized city tour which begins at the Phoenicia

Express Hotel reception desk on Sunday, April 28, we suggest that you stay at the Phoenicia on the night of Saturday, April 27.

Phoenicia Express is a large modern hotel on the outer-ring road, located only 10 minutes away from Otopeni International Airport. A taxi to the city center takes about 15 minutes in good traffic, but can be as long as 60 minutes at rush hour. The Danube Delta houseboat is recently refurbished with small but comfortable cabins and bathrooms. All cabins are situated in the bottom of the boat, while the first floor is divided between a covered terrace and a mosquito-free, air conditioned social area and dining room. There is also a small bar available on the first floor. The upper deck is open and excellent for viewing the river and the giant reed beds. We will also use a smaller covered boat that will allow us to explore the Delta's smaller remote canals. At Mammaia (near Constanta) on the Black Sea coast, we will stay at La Scoica Hotel in order to be near to the Vadu Marshes for birding the following morning. This hotel has 'modern-style' large spacious rooms, which luckily are some distance from the very popular (and perhaps noisy) restaurant. The Hotel Coroana Brasovului is in a quiet street in Brasov, and is without a doubt the best-located hotel in this famous Saxon city. Another plus is, it's only ten minutes away from the Black Church and other major attractions. Desag Pension, near Mt. Harghita, is a small, simple, and also very nice hotel on the forest edge, with good birding all around. Szekelyko Kuria is probably the most beautiful hotel we'll use during the trip. It is located at the foot of a magnificent Szekler Rock overlooking gorgeous traditionally farmed countryside. All rooms are furnished with hand-painted furniture, and the staff serve guests in traditional costume.

In the Hortobagy area **there is a strong possibility of renovation work at our usual hotel**, therefore we are yet to finalize the exact property we will use. Sarlospuszta Club Hotel in Kiskunsag is a remote large hotel-complex situated near to the Great Bustard leks. It is popular with local people wanting a break from Budapest city life and provides horse riding and walking on over 6000 acres of open grass and woodland—great birding right in the garden too! Sarlospuszta is situated 38 miles from the airport and transfers are easy with few traffic issues. It's a perfect spot to finish the tour.

Note 1: we recommend you bring an overnight bag for one or two places where the rooms can only be reached by walking 2 or 3 flights of stairs.

Note 2: slow internet access is available at most of our hotels. It is fine for sending written text, but is sometimes unreliable and not suitable for sending/receiving large files and photographs. In the past, there has been no internet on the boat (days 3-5), or at Desag (days 8 and 9).

Pre-tour hotel: For those doing the pre-tour Bucharest City Tour, the Hotel Moxa is well located.

Post-tour hotel: For those doing the post-tour Budapest City Tour, we recommend The Best Western Hotel in Budapest, situated right below Castle Hill and Gellert Hill (Citadell). It is a classic BW Hotel in a quiet location only a block away from the Danube shore. All the attractions of Budapest are easily accessed from here.

Tippling for Pre- and Post- City tours: As our bird guides, Terry and Lajos, will not be on the city tours, they will not be able to tip either of the guides leading these excursions. Therefore, we would like to point out that if you enjoyed the experience it would be quite in order to tip those guides. The amount is entirely up to you, but somewhere around \$10 per person would be perfectly fine and appreciated.

DOCUMENTS: US citizens will need a passport valid for six months beyond the date of their return to enter Romania and Hungary. No visa is required for US, Canadian, Australian, or EU citizens. Both Hungary and Romania are full members of the EU. No vaccinations are required.

If you are not a US citizen, please check with the consulates nearest you for entry requirements. Information about consulates and entry requirements is generally available online or you can contact us and we will be happy to look this up for you. Passports should have an adequate number of blank pages for the entire journey. Some countries require a blank page for their stamp and as a precaution it is best to have one blank page per country you will visit or transit. Please make a copy to take with you in the event yours is lost or stolen. Please keep it separate from your actual passport!

AIR ARRANGEMENTS: *Please note that the tour begins in Bucharest and ends in Budapest.* Please plan your arrival into Bucharest, Romania in time to meet the group in the hotel lobby at 6:30 p.m. on Day 2, Sunday, April 28. At the tour's end, departures can be made for the evening of Day 16, Sunday, May 12.

Field Guides is a full service travel agency and your tour manager will be happy to assist you with flights to join this tour. Field Guides does not charge a service fee for these services to clients booking a tour. However, we understand

that tech-savvy clients often prefer to shop online or that you may wish to use mileage to purchase tickets. Regardless of which method you choose, your tour manager will be happy to provide assistance regarding ticket prices and schedules, along with rental cars and extra hotel nights as needed.

Please be sure to check with your tour manager prior to purchasing your ticket to make sure the flights you have chosen will work well with the tour itinerary and that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. Once purchased, most airline tickets are non-refundable and carry a penalty to change. Field Guides cannot be responsible for these fees.

Also, it is imperative that we receive a copy of your comprehensive flight itinerary—including any and all flights not covered in the tour fee—so that we may track you in the event of missed connections, delays, or other mishaps.

LUGGAGE: Please be aware that many airlines have recently modified their luggage policies and are charging additional fees for checked bags. Updates could easily occur before your departure, so you may wish to contact your airline to verify the policy. Additional charges for bags on any flights, whether these are covered by the tour fee or not, will be the client's responsibility.

Also please note: A couple of our hotels do not have elevators, and you may be booked on the second or third floors. Therefore, we suggest you bring a small bag that can be used for these single overnight stays, rather than struggle to carry your luggage at these places. (Please notify your Tour Manger if you need a room on the first floor. We will do our best to accommodate your request.)

TOUR INCLUSIONS/EXCLUSIONS: The **tour fee** is **\$6075** for one person in double occupancy from Bucharest. It includes all lodging from Day 2 through Day 15, all meals from dinner on Day 2 through lunch on Day 16, all ground transportation, entrance fees, and the guide services of the tour leader(s). Tipping at group meals and for drivers, porters, and local guides is included in your tour fee and will be handled for the group by your Field Guides leader(s). However, if you would like to recognize your Field Guides leader(s) or any local guide(s) for exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are optional and not expected. Please note: for those taking the optional pre- and post- tour City tours, tipping is not included, and if you enjoyed these 'extra' excursions it is perfectly in order for you to tip those guides.

The above fees do not include your airfare to Bucharest and from Budapest, airport taxes, any checked or carry-on baggage charges imposed by the airlines, any alcoholic beverages, optional tips to local drivers, phone calls, laundry, or other items of a personal nature.

The **single supplement** for the tour is **\$1025**. Note: singles are limited on the houseboat (days 3-5). If you do not have a roommate but wish to share, we will try to pair you with a roommate from the tour; but if none is available, you will be billed for the single supplement. Our tour fees are based on double occupancy; one-half the cost of a double room is priced into the tour fee. The single supplement is calculated by taking the actual cost of a single room and subtracting one-half the cost of a double room (plus any applicable taxes).

TOUR REGISTRATION: To register for this tour, complete the Registration/Release and Indemnity form and return it with a **deposit of \$600** per person. If registering by phone, a deposit must be received within fourteen days, or the space will be released. **Full payment** of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to departure, or **December 28, 2018**. **We will bill you for the final payment at either 120 days or when the tour has reached sufficient subscription to operate**, whichever date comes later. Since the cost of your trip insurance and airline tickets is generally non-refundable, please do not finalize these purchases until you have received final billing for the tour or have been advised that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate by your tour manager.

SMOKING: Almost all of our clients prefer a smoke-free environment. If you smoke, please be sensitive to the group and refrain from smoking at meals, and in proximity to the group on trails and elsewhere. Smoking in the minivans is forbidden.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Refund of deposit and payment, less \$100 handling fee, will be made if cancellation is received up to 120 days before departure. If cancellation occurs between 119 and 70 days before the departure date, 50% of the tour fee is refundable. Thereafter, all deposits and payments are not refundable.

This policy only applies to payments made to Field Guides for tour fees (and any services included in those fees). Airline tickets not included in the tour fee and purchased separately often carry penalties for cancellation or change, or are sometimes totally non-refundable. Additionally, if you take out trip insurance the cost of the insurance is not refundable so it is best to purchase the policy just prior to making full payment for the tour or at the time you purchase airline tickets, depending upon the airlines restrictions.

The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute in case of emergency another guide for the original one.

TRIP CANCELLATION & MEDICAL EMERGENCY INSURANCE: In order to comply with the requirements of our ground agent in both Hungary and Romania it is ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL that you have insurance from your arrival at the airport in Bucharest until your departure at the airport in Budapest, thank you.

We strongly recommend you consider purchasing trip cancellation (including medical emergency) insurance to cover your investment in case of injury or illness to you or your family prior to or during a trip. Because we must remit early (and substantial) tour deposits to our suppliers, we cannot offer any refund when cancellation occurs within 70 days of departure, and only a partial refund from 70 to 119 days prior to departure (see CANCELLATION POLICY). In addition, the Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. US medical insurance plans seldom cover health costs incurred outside the United States unless supplemental coverage is purchased. Furthermore, US Medicare and Medicaid programs do not provide payment for medical services outside the United States.

When making a decision regarding health insurance, Americans should consider that many foreign doctors and hospitals require payment in cash prior to providing service and that a medical evacuation to the United States may cost well in excess of \$50,000. Uninsured travelers who require medical care overseas often face extreme difficulties. When consulting with your insurer prior to your trip, please ascertain whether payment will be made to the overseas healthcare provider or whether you will be reimbursed later for expenses that you incur.

US citizens will receive from us a brochure regarding optional tour cancellation/emergency medical insurance. Our agent, CSA, will insure for trip cancellation and interruption, medical coverage, travel delay, baggage loss and delay, 24-hour accident protection, and emergency medical transportation. If you purchase the insurance when making final payment for the tour, and cover all non-refundable parts of the trip (including any non-refundable flights), pre-existing conditions are covered. The CSA brochure includes a contact number; you may also purchase your CSA policy on-line by visiting our website at <https://fieldguides.com/travelinsurance.html> and clicking the link to CSA. Please note, once the insurance is purchased it is non-refundable, so please check with your tour manager prior to making the purchase to assure the tour will operate as scheduled. Citizens of other countries are urged to consult their insurance broker.

RESPONSIBILITY: For and in consideration of the opportunity to participate in the tour, each tour participant and each parent or legal guardian of a tour participant who is under 18 agrees to release, indemnify, and hold harmless Field Guides Incorporated, its agents, servants, employees, shareholders, officers, directors, attorneys, and contractors as more fully set forth in the Release and Indemnity Agreement on the reverse side of the registration form. Field Guides Incorporated acts only as an agent for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, or other means, and assumes no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity caused by defect in such vehicles or for any reason whatsoever, including the acts, defaults, or bankruptcies of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. Field Guides Incorporated accepts no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. The tour participant shall bear all such losses and expenses. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely.

Participants should be in good health and should consult a physician before undertaking a tour. If you have questions about the physical requirements of a tour, please contact our office for further information. Participants should prepare for the tour by reading the detailed itinerary, the information bulletin, and other pertinent matter provided by Field Guides. Each participant is responsible for bringing appropriate clothing and equipment as recommended in our bulletins.

THE RECEIPT OF YOUR TOUR DEPOSIT SHALL BE DEEMED TO BE CONSENT TO THE ABOVE CONDITIONS. EACH TOUR PARTICIPANT AND EACH PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN OF A TOUR PARTICIPANT WHO IS UNDER 18 SHALL SIGN AND DELIVER THE RELEASE AND INDEMNITY AGREEMENT AT THE TIME OF REGISTRATION.

Revised 5/17/18TS; 7/18 peg