

ITINERARY

**HUNGARY & ROMANIA: THE BEST OF EASTERN EUROPE**

*April 20 - May 6, 2024*



*The Common Kingfisher is indeed quite abundant in the Danube Delta, but this lovely female, seen on a previous tour, shows that they do not deserve the epithet "common". Photograph by participant Joshua Horner.*

We include here information for those interested in the 2024 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

*These additional materials will be made available to those who register for the tour:*

- 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 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

**H**ungary 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 at Baia, our gateway to the Danube Delta and Black Sea coast... then 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 tour begins in Bucharest, the capital of Romania, but we will soon be on our way to Baia – our gate-way to the Danube Delta. As water levels and birds visiting them vary from year to year, we will plan our three days in this incomparable area visiting the very best accessible lagoons, canals, reedbeds, and shallow-fringed wetlands. We expect to 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 Dobrogea region Eurasian Hoopoe, European Bee-eater, European Roller, Calandra Lark, Tawny Pipit, and a variety of flycatchers, wheatears, warblers, shrikes, and buntings should all be found. In Transylvania, we'll visit the volcanic Carpathian Mountains, where at Mount Hargita (the sacred peak of the local Hungarian-speaking Secler 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 Coltesti, 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.



*The Danube Delta hosts a healthy population of breeding Pygmy Cormorants. Photograph by participant Joshua Horner.*

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 Dracula's Castle, a Transylvanian village (for the Szekler Gates), and a Fortified Church.**



We want to be sure you are on the right tour! Below is a description of the physical requirements of the tour. If you are concerned about the difficulty, please contact us about this and be sure to fully explain your concerns. We want to make sure you have a wonderful time with us, so if you are uncomfortable with the requirements, just let us know and we can help you find a better fitting tour! Field Guides will not charge you a change or cancellation fee if you opt out within 10 days of depositing.

## Physical requirements of this tour

- **TRAILS & WALKING:** Moderate amounts of rather easy walking (up to 3 miles per day), some of it on roads, some along lakeshores, or on good trails. Most walking is on flat ground except in the Carpathian and Apuseni mountains, where we may make two somewhat steep but slow walks of about 2 miles. In the Carpathian Mountains there's a chance we'll be walking on snow.
- **POTENTIAL CHALLENGES:** We cover much ground on this tour, though most of the longer drives are on good roads. To access more remote birding areas, a few drives involve travel on bumpy dirt roads. Participants should be able to step up 10 inches into and out of our vehicles (mini-buses or vans). We live aboard a stable houseboat ("floating hotel") for 3 nights of this tour.
- **PACE:** After breakfast (typically at 6:30 a.m., or sometimes around 9:00 a.m. after early birding) we will bird until lunch time. We occasionally have picnic lunches to extend our time in the field (or when traveling). After lunch, we may continue birding, have an after-lunch break, or continue traveling on to our next destination.
- **ELEVATION:** Sea level to about 6900 feet in the Carpathian Mountains.
- **WEATHER:** Temperatures will range from the high 50s F at night to low 80s during the day (cooler in the highlands). Note: when traveling on the small open boat on narrow channels in the Danube Delta the wind-chill can be very cold. You'll definitely need a warm hat, jacket, and gloves. The main 'floating hotel' where we eat and sleep is nicely heated. Rain showers are a possibility.
- **VEHICLE SEATING:** So that each participant has equal opportunity during our travel, we employ a seat rotation system on all tours. Participants will need to be flexible enough to maneuver to the back of the vehicle on occasion. Those who experience motion sickness will need to bring adequate medication for the duration of the tour, as we are not able to reserve forward seats for medical conditions.
- **BATHROOM BREAKS:** Participants must be prepared to make comfort stops in nature for some of this tour, although there will be opportunities to use bathrooms in gas stations from time to time.
- **OPTING OUT:** Where we are staying multiple days in the same lodging, participants can easily opt to sit out a day or sometimes a half-day. This will not be possible on days when we are changing locations.

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 the guide.



*We'll watch for Imperial Eagles when we visit the grasslands of Hungary. Photograph by participant Jan Shaw.*



## 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.

**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.



*White Storks are common nesting birds in the villages we'll pass through. Photograph by participant Jan Shaw.*

## Itinerary for Hungary & Romania: The Best of Eastern Europe

**Day 1, Sat, 20 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, 21 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 6:00 p.m.** We will have a brief orientation followed by a welcome dinner. Night at Moxa Hotel, Bucharest.

**Day 3, Mon, 22 Apr. To the Danube Delta, via the Babadag and Dobrodgea areas.** After breakfast, we'll drive for about five hours towards Baia, our base for the next three nights. We'll be birding along the way in 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 a 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 are inhabited by Red-backed Shrike, Woodlark, and if we are lucky, Ortolan Bunting. We expect to be out for the whole day, arriving at the Hotel Mondial around 6:00 p.m.

**Days 4-5, Tue-Wed, 23-24 Apr. Exploring the Danube Delta and Black Sea coast.** From our base at the Hotel Mondial, we will have at least two full days to explore the accessible parts of the Danube Delta, and also visit the Black Sea coast. As the water-levels and birds visiting this enormous area vary annually, we will seek local knowledge and then access the most productive areas – often using our vehicles and then on foot, but also in small boats as we visit a variety of lakes, canals, lagoons and muddy wetland fringes. 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.

The marshes are home to 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. At the Black Sea coast itself, we'll check amongst the numerous Caspian Gulls for the far lesser numbers of Mediterranean Gull which sometimes occur here.

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. Both nights at Hotel Mondial.



*The Collared Pratincole is an elegant shorebird that breeds in the marshes along the Black Sea Coast.  
Photograph by participant Sid England.*

**Day 6, Thu, 25 Apr. Vadu Marshes, the Black Sea coast, and back to Bucharest.** This morning we'll drive a short way north to the village of Vadu where we'll check the breeding White Storks, which sometimes have Spanish Sparrows also breeding in the undersides of their nests. We'll then have the whole morning to visit to the nearby marshes, with large numbers of migrant shorebirds and waterfowl, and breeding colonies of Pied Avocet, Collared Pratincole and Common Tern. After lunch we will return to Bucharest, about a 3-hour drive. Night at Moxa Hotel. Bucharest.

**Day 7, Fri, 26 Apr. To Dracula's Castle and the Carpathian Mountains.** Today we leave Bucharest and the lowlands, as we drive north through the foothills and passes of the southern Carpathian mountains – the historical Transylvanian home of the Secler, Saxon, and Romanian people. Our first planned stop is Dracula's Castle (more correctly known as Bran Castle). This is of course, a very touristy attraction, but our past groups have enjoyed it, and not to visit here would

be a bit like going to Paris and not seeing the Eiffel Tower. In the afternoon we will arrive in Brasov, hopefully with some free time to wander the streets of this attractive medieval city. Night at Coroana Brasovului, Brasov.



*In the Carpathian Mountains, we'll see a number of castles, and have a chance to visit Bran Castle, reputed to be the home of Dracula. Photograph by participant Jan Shaw.*

**Day 8, Sat, 27 Apr. Homorod Valley, Sinpaul Fishponds, and Odorheiu Secuiesc.** After breakfast, we'll continue along the Homorod Valley – a flyway for Lesser Spotted Eagle, and perhaps seeing our first Common Ravens, or Northern and Lesser Gray shrikes which sometimes perch along the farm fences here. We will also visit a small park in Odorheiu Secuiesc city, hopefully finding Lesser Spotted and Syrian woodpeckers, Eurasian Nuthatch, the striking Collared Flycatcher, European Serin, and European Scops-Owl. Night at Odorheiu Secuiesc.

**Day 9, Sun, 28 Apr. To the Bicaz Gorge and Liben Pass.** Today we'll drive for about two hours to the largest and deepest gorge in Romania, Bicaz Gorge, with walls over one hundred 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 Odorheiu Secuiesc, we'll walk through an area of pine forest at Liben Gap — an 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 as on Day 8.

**Day 10, Mon, 29 Apr. Mt. Hargita.** This morning, we'll drive through the scenic Ivo Valley to Mt. Hargita, the sacred peak of the local Secler people. It takes about one and a half hours to our first stop, a track through pine and spruce forests. Eurasian Pygmy-Owl is a possibility, as are Eurasian Three-toed Woodpecker, 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. Night as on days 8 and 9.

**Day 11, Tue, 30 Apr. To Sighisoara Forest and the Apuseni Mountains.** Today we head to the western part of Romania, but first we will stop for birding in the magnificent old oak forests Sighisoara. Although birding in this habitat can be slow, it is excellent for woodpeckers, warblers, flycatchers, tits and finches – including the elusive Hawfinch. 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. A stop in a gorge shortly before this attractive village could produce Eurasian Crag Martin, Red-rumped Swallow, and the elusive Rock Bunting. Night at Szekelyko Kuria Mansion, Coltesti.



**Day 12, Wed, 1 May. The Apuseni Mountains.** 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, and have lunch in Rimetea village (known for its traditional houses). We'll also bird a nearby rocky gorge searching for Golden Eagle, Eurasian Sparrowhawk, Stock Dove, Alpine Swift, Peregrine Falcon, Woodlark, Wood Warbler, Greater Whitethroat, Black Redstart, and Rufous-tailed Rock-Thrush. Night at Szekelyko Kuria Mansion, Coltesti.

**Day 13, Thu, 2 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, 3 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.



*Finding the spectacular Black Woodpecker is one of our goals when we visit Kiskunsag National Park.  
Photograph by participant Jan Shaw.*

**Day 15, Sat, 4 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, 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, 5 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, 6 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, Madagascar, India, and all our Hungary & Romania tours to date. He is currently living in a mud-and-cow-dung mansion near Mt. Kenya.

*"Our second Field Guides tour was with **Terry Stevenson**, and we signed up for this third one with you because Terry was leading it, as he was so terrific in Africa. This was an outstanding experience, as with our other Field Guides tours. Terry and **Lajos Nemeth-Bóka** and all additional local guides were excellent. Everything on the tour was well planned..." C.K., Hungary & Romania*

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: \$7,925 from Bucharest and departing Budapest**

**DEPOSIT: \$800** per person

**FINAL PAYMENT DUE: October 23, 2023**

**SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$1200 (single rooms may be limited).**

**LIMIT: 12**

**All participants will be required to confirm they will have completed a full COVID vaccination course at least two weeks prior to the tour (which includes a booster for those eligible to have one).** Note too, that many travel destinations may still require proof of vaccination for entry to bypass testing delays or quarantine, and that entry requirements for a destination can change at any time. Proof of a booster shot, too, may be a requirement for some travel destinations.

## Other Things You Need to Know

**TOUR MANAGER:** The manager for this tour is Nicole Cannon. Nicole 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 have private bathrooms. You will find all our accommodations are comfortable and well located, making for excellent bases to explore and bird the surrounding areas. In Bucharest the Hotel Moxa is a modern boutique hotel well located for seeing the attractions of central Bucharest.

The Hotel Mondial in Baia is our base for the Danube Delta. It is a 4-star air-conditioned modern-style hotel in the town of Baia – a great location for our birding in the Danube Delta and the Black Sea coast. In Brasov we stay at the Hotel Coroana Brasovului, it is in a quiet street and without 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. In Odorheiu Secuisc, there are several nice hotels, but due to many being renovated we will choose a suitable one nearer the time. Szekelyko Kuria at Coltesti 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 we will stay in Kemences Pension, where the pleasant rooms are spread over three floors without an elevator, therefore we suggest you bring a small overnight bag for our one night stay here. 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 (for example, the Hotel Kemences) where the rooms can only be reached by walking 2 or 3 flights of stairs.

**Note 2:** WIFI 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.

**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 Hotel Varkert Orion 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 doing pre- or post- city tours, it is vital that you bring your passport while doing the tour. If not, you will not be allowed in to parliament and some other government-controlled areas.

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 21.** At the tour's end, **departures can be made for the evening of Day 16, Sunday, May 5.**

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 (like the Hotel Kemences, for example) 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 **\$7,925** 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 **\$1200**. 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, please contact us at [fieldguides.com/contact-us/](https://fieldguides.com/contact-us/).

Our office will be in touch with you by email by the next business day (Mon-Fri) with instructions on how to complete our new electronic registration form and medical questionnaire. (We are no longer accepting the paper version.)

Please mail your **deposit of \$800** per person, or see [fieldguides.com/payment-options/](https://fieldguides.com/payment-options/) for our Payment Options. **Full payment** of the tour fee is due 180 days prior to departure, or **by October 23, 2023**. **We will bill you for the final payment at either 180 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 180 days before departure. If cancellation occurs between 179 and 90 days before the departure date, 50% of the tour fee is refundable. Thereafter, all deposits and payments are not refundable and non-transferable.

Our cancellation policy only applies to payments made to Field Guides for tour (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 that 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 airline's restrictions.

The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure. In most such cases, full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. Note this exception, however: If you have been advised pre-tour that there is a non-refundable portion of your tour fee no matter the reason for Field Guides cancellation of the tour, that portion will not be refunded. 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 MANDATORY that you have insurance** from your arrival at the airport in Bucharest until your departure at the airport in Budapest – including any time spent doing pre- or post- tour extensions.

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, you acknowledge and agree that we will not issue a refund when cancellation occurs outside of our cancellation policy as published in the itinerary (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 information from us 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, and emergency medical transportation. If you purchase the insurance prior to, or within 24 hours of making final payment for the tour, and cover all non-refundable parts of the trip (including any non-refundable flights and in some cases, other arrangements), pre-existing conditions are covered. You may purchase your CSA policy on-line by visiting our website at <https://fieldguides.com/trip-cancellation-insurance/> and clicking the link to CSA. The CSA webpage also includes a contact number.

**Currently we are unable to offer CSA insurance policies to residents of New York and Hawaii.** We have had clients provide positive feedback after acquiring insurance thru InsureMyTrip (<https://www.insuremytrip.com/>) in the past, and would suggest that company as an alternative. When purchasing insurance with a company other than CSA, you will want to understand whether the timing of your purchase will affect coverage before paying your first deposit. Insurance purchase requirements can vary from company to company, and such requirements could limit your options if you do not look into this until making your final payment for your tour. Please let us know if you have any questions about this.

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 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. You acknowledge and agree that Field Guides Incorporated is not responsible 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.

NCP 7/2020

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

Revised 5/18/19TS

**Revised Oct/1/23TS, NC**

**FINAL Rev for rom24 TS 1 Oct 23**