

HOLIDAYS HIGHLIGHTS

It has been my second trip to the wonderful Canaries Islands, a great opportunity to visit other less-known places to put together an itinerary we will run next year in late winter 2019.

Day 1 - 30/03/18 Valencia-Tenerife Sur

After a late flight from Valencia to Tenerife Sur Airport, Pau and Virginia head off with the rented car straight to the Rural Hotel in Güímar to rest and be ready for this new adventure!

Day 2 - 31/03/18 El Teide and Erjos



At dawn, we are soon woken up by the songs and calls of the numerous birds that live in the hotel's orchards. Among the avocados, Atlantic Canaries build their nests and the endemic Canary Islands chiffchaffs sing and flick their wings displaying. After a nice breakfast, we are off to the Canary pine forest near the Orotava to look for some endemic forest birds. Soon, we bump into a distinctive local form of Common Chaffinch *F. c. tintillon*. We continue walking for 10-15 minutes to get away from the crowds who are enjoying barbecues, a popular pastime in Easter. Near a stream, we find two Tenerife (African) Blue Tit *C. t. teneriffae*, a Tenerife Kinglet and a Common darter dragonfly.

Later we drive towards the impressive Teide. No wonder that this National Park gets 4 million visitors per year!!! It is an impressive volcanic landscape with different lava formations each few hundred meters. As we have the picnic, numerous Tenerife Lizards get closer and closer to us, hoping to be fed by tourists. We continue our journey towards the Parador to find there our first of many Berthelot's pipits, and also the endemic subspecies of Common Buzzard *B. b. insularum*. From a viewpoint, we see another Macaronesia endemic, the Plain Swift.

Finally, our last visit of the day is in the pools of Erjos. We don't see many birds, probably because there are dogs swimming in the pools. We just add Common coots and Barbary partridge, but some interesting and nice flowers make worth the stop: *Argyranthemum frutescens*, *Bituminaria bituminosa*, *Mercurialis annuus*, Canary Samphire (*Astydamia latifolia*), *Aeonium canariense* and *Euphorbia aphylla*. Regarding dragonflies, Blue emperor and Red-veined darter are seen.

Day 3 - 01/04/18 El Teide, viewpoint and Punta de Teno



During our pre-breakfast walk around the orchard, we find a beautiful Stripeless tree frog resting in a pond, a Broad scarlet dragonfly, a Canary Speckled Wood and a Turtle dove perched on the top of the stem of an *Agave americana*.

Our first stop of the day is for the endemic Blue chaffinch at Las Lajas. Soon, we get an approachable beautiful male. Then, we drive for 45 minutes to a well-known viewpoint for the endemic pigeons on the West coast. The downside of this place is the constant traffic along the TF-5 but it is a reliable place for Laurel Pigeon. After 15 minutes, we get a distant bird flying over the vegetation.

The next stop is a small patch of laurel forest where we find two distant Bolle's pigeons and some interesting laurel forest plants: *Echium giganteum*, *Silene gallica* and *Limonium fruticans*.

Today's final destination is Punta de Teno. Due to access restrictions, we have to take a bus to reach this rocky lava habitat known as 'malpaís'. It is midday and temperature is quite high (25°C) and this might be the reason why it is so quiet. Nevertheless, we manage to see in the scope a distant group of 50 or so Cory's Shearwaters. Regarding plants, some remarkable species are *Reichardia crystalina*, *Monanthes laxiflora* and *Euphorbia canariensis*.

Our rural hotel is not serving dinner today due to some improvement works, so we head off to El Puertito to have some excellent Canary food: *almogrote* (goat cheese with red pepper), fish and *papas* with *mojo picón*. Around the harbour, we find Whimbrel, Grey Wagtail, and Turnstone.

Day 4 - 02/04/18 Anaga, Los Rodeos, and flight to Fuerteventura

Today is our last day in Tenerife as the plan is to take a flight to Fuerteventura during the evening.



After breakfast, we drive North to the Anaga area and as nearly always happen there, the laurel forest is cover by clouds. This is the wettest area in Tenerife, the trade winds ('*vientos alisios*') blow from the sea carrying moisture. Nevertheless, we walk along an interesting path covered by Azores Laurel, Canary Strawberry Tree, and Tree Heather, watching our first Canary Islands Robin. Later, we drive down towards the sunny coast for some more plants and birds. Along the path, we find a Sardinian Warbler as well as a nice variety of flowers and endemic plants: the stunning Canary Bell flower, Dragon-tree, *Echium leucophaeum*, *Lavandula buchii*, the beautiful *Echium simplex*, *Limonium arborescent*, *Monanthes wildpretii* and *Lotus dumentorum*.

After lunch, we set off to Los Rodeos, near the airport, to see some fine patches of *Gladiolus italicus*. Corn buntings sing from the fences and we try to locate unsuccessfully a Quail.

Around 7:20 pm we board to the plain and 50 minutes later we land in a completely different landscape in Fuerteventura. After getting our rental car, we head off to the Hotel.

Day 5 - 03/04/18 La Antigua, Los Molinos and West coast



Once we have breakfast, we visit a pool near La Antigua. This green area is a magnet for both resident and migrant birds. As soon as we arrive, we find Ruddy shelducks, the local race of Great grey shrike *L. e. koenigi* and a Little ringed plover. Among the grass, Pau finds a bird that turns out to be a Wryneck. Most of the sightings of this uncommon migrant are recorded in the Eastern islands (Lanzarote and Fuerteventura) which are closer to the African coast.

On the sky, we find a 'Guirre' local name for the endemic race of Egyptian vulture *N. p. majorensis*. There are around 65 breeding pairs in Fuerteventura and a total population of 300 birds. This amazing raptor is recovering from a near extinction in the 80's. One of the main differences from their European cousins is that the Fuerteventura ones do not migrate during winter, thus they can be found all year around.

On the way back to the car, five Black-bellied Sandgrouses fly off scared by the presence of a Common Buzzard.

Our next stop is near Los Molinos. There, we find a confident group of Spanish sparrows carrying damselflies on the bill. We also get to see Greenshank, Common Sandpiper, Northern Wheatear, and our first Barbary Falcon. In addition, there were a couple of Lesser emperors mating, Blue-tailed damselflies, and several Atlantic Lizards. We decide to drive few kilometres to have the picnic and while Virginia enjoys great sea views, Pau plays hide-and-seek with a Spectacle warbler and a Barbary squirrel. This mammal was brought in 1965 from Sidi ifni (Morocco) and since then, they have multiplied causing conservation problems. After lunch and coffee, we head North to our next stop. Our next new species is a group of three lovely Colour-creamed Courser and after a bit of search, Virginia spots a fantastic and globally threatened Houbara bustard, probably the most wanted and highly prized species in this area. A walk around the area proves to be a good decision as we got an excellent view of a perched Barbary Falcon and two Red-billed Tropicbirds, a species which is breeding in the islands since a few years ago.

Our last stop is in Vallebrón, where we get the endemic Fuerteventura stonechat. Later, we have a pleasant dinner with Toni and Julio, two good friends who are involved in the 'Guirre' conservation project.

Day 6 - 04/04/18 Salinas, Río Palmas, and East coast



Today is our last full day in these wonderful islands, so we start visiting the Salinas and adding Sandwich tern. In the nearby ‘*barranco*’ there are some plants adapted to salty soils such as Canary island Tamarisk, *Atriplex semilunaris*, *Suaeda vera* and also *Asphodelus tenuifolius*.

Following, we drive to Río Palmas where we see Epaulet skimmer dragonflies and Laughing dove, a recent coloniser on the island from continental Africa. Sadly, we find a death Barn Owl in the stream. However, the big surprise came later when Pau spotted two Ring Ouzels feeding on dates, a local rarity in the island.

We decide to drive to La Pájara for having lunch but before that, we make a quick stop in the viewpoint where we see a very tame Raven (*C. c. tingitanus*).

To finish the day, we visit a goat pen with a drinking trough which is a fantastic area for Trumpeter Finches. In just 1 hour we recorded above 50 birds drinking and feeding in the surroundings. There are very nice males with its bright orange-red bill, grey head and pink breast and rump. In the surroundings rocks, we also see a couple of Fuerteventura stonechats.

Day 7 - 05/04/18 Fuerteventura-Madrid

Our last day in the island is to finish packing and driving to the airport to take the plain to Madrid, where we will visit the ”dehesa” and the Guadarrama mountains for some specialities.

SPECIES LIST

Birds (75 species)

Ruddy Shelduck

Pintail

Barbary partridge

Quail

Cory’s shearwater

Gannet

Cormorant

Night Heron

Little Egret

Cattle Egret

Grey Heron

Egyptian Vulture '*Guirre*'

Common Buzzard

Kestrel

Barbary Falcon

Moorhen

Coot

Houbara bustard

Black-winged Stilt

Cream-coloured Courser

Little ringed plover

Turnstone

Common sandpiper

Greenshank

Whimbrel

Yellow-legged Gull

Sandwich tern

Black-bellied Sandgrouse

Rock dove

Laurel pigeon

Bolle's pigeon

Collared dove

Turtle dove

Laughing dove

Monk parakeet

Ring-rose parakeet

Barn Owl (death)

Plain Swift

Hoopoe

Bee-eater

Great Spotted Woodpecker

Wryneck

Short-toed Lark

Barn Swallow

House martin

Berthelot's pipit

White wagtail

Grey wagtail

Northern Wheatear

Fuerteventura stonechat

Blackbird

Ring Ouzel

Blackcap

Sardinian warbler

Spectacled warbler

Common chiffchaff

Canary Islands chiffchaff

Canary Islands Robin

Tenerife Kinglet

Fuerteventura African blue tit

Tenerife African blue tit

Great Grey shrike

Magpie

Raven

Spotless starling

House sparrow

Spanish sparrow

Chaffinch

Linnet

Goldfinch

Atlantic Canary

Trumpeter finch

Corn bunting

Red-billed Tropicbird

-

Butterfly list

Small white

Canary Islands large white

Clouded yellow

Canary brimstone

Canary speckled wood

Painted lady

Canary blue

Greenish black-tip

-

Dragonfly list

Epaulet skimmer

Blue emperor

Lesser emperor

Blue-tailed damselfly

Broad scarlet

Red-veined darter

-

Reptiles and amphibians

Stripeless Tree Frog

Tenerife Lizard

Atlantic Lizard

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Mammals

Barbary squirrel

Rabbit

Algerian hedgehog (death)

Please, visit our [website](#) and find the next trip to the Canary islands.