



TRUJILLO, HEART OF THE BIRDING!

Extremadura is shaking off its old image of being a desolate, unknown and barren region, which travellers passed through, rather than lingered in to explore. Today the rich cultural and historic heritage, vast and varied unspoilt landscapes and globally famous gastronomy have become reasons enough for attracting visitors from elsewhere in Spain and from across the world in search of authenticity.

In the heart of Extremadura is Trujillo with one of the finest main squares in Spain, an imposing Moorish fort built atop a massive granite outcrop and medieval palaces, each with rich stories to tell. Trujillo is the home of the world famous national cheese festival bringing together cheese producers and cheese-lovers from far afield.

But for a certain type of visitor, Extremadura and Trujillo in particular have been long recognised as one of the most important destinations in Europe. Birdwatchers from all over the world visit the

region every year. The very same reasons that give Extremadura its wider appeal, make it one of the most important areas for bird conservation in Europe, with globally important populations of some species such as the Great Bustard and Black Vulture. The traditional farming practices, low human population density and varied landscapes provide a haven for birds which elsewhere have either disappeared altogether or are much harder to observe.

A good road system and availability of information about where to see birds in Extremadura, make



the region an ideal one for birdwatchers travelling independently rather than in organised groups. Indeed a recent survey showed that the vast majority of birders who come to Extremadura make their own arrangements. In recognition of this the Extremadura Tourist Board has initiated a Birding in Extremadura Club (www.birdinginextremadura.com), which brings together information about the best places to stay and local guides to hire, to make it even easier for tourists to design their own trips. Nature guides in Extremadura have formed an association Guidex (www.guidextremadura.com), which will also help the visitor contact the most experienced guides to hire if required.

There are many places to explore in Extremadura, so thinking about one's base is important. Trujillo is the preferred centre for most birdwatchers and proudly bears its slogan: Trujillo, Heart of birding.

Trujillo is considered the best base in Extremadura for birders for many reasons. Within easy reach of Trujillo are all of the main habitats that birdwatchers

will want to visit in order to see the special birds without spending too much time travelling. Trujillo is surrounded by open plains, home for Great and Little Bustards, Pin-tailed and Black-bellied Sandgrouse and many birds of prey. It is just half an hour from the Monfragüe National Park, one of the best places in the world to see breeding raptors, it is within easy reach of the famous Arrocampo reservoir, the beautiful Villuercas mountains as well as the rice fields of the Guadiana basin, home for tens of thousands of wintering Common Cranes. Indeed Trujillo itself is of international importance for birds, being one of the few urban Special Protection Areas for birds in the European Union, thanks to its thriving colonies of Lesser Kestrels and White Storks. There is nothing more enjoyable than sitting in the Main Square enjoying a drink in one of the cafes and watching the wheeling packs of Common and Pallid Swifts, the gentle gliding Lesser Kestrels, listening to the bill-clacking of the White Storks, and watching vultures and eagles drifting high overhead.

There are a number of specialised accommodation for birdwatchers in rural guesthouses (Casas Rurales) and small hotels around Trujillo and local birding guides available to offer their services to ensure the visitors gets the most out of their holiday. **Trujillo, Heart of Birding is especially promoted by Trujillo's birding ambassadors Martin Kelsey and Claudia Camacho (who run a guesthouse for birdwatchers and birding services www.birdinginextremadura.com and www.casaruralelrecuerdo.com) and Jesús Porras (a widely acclaimed local guide www.iberian-nature.com).**