

What better mix than birding and wine tasting in the south of France?

I finally heeded multiple requests to organise a spring trip combining bird watching and wine tasting - not that I took much persuading as these are two activities I find almost equally enjoyable! We hosted the first edition of the tour, **Spring birding and wine in the Mediterranean** in May 2017, and a good time was had by all. Everyone succeeded in getting good views of a wide range of birds, including **most of the emblematic Mediterranean species** as well as tasting a range of wines from three quite different wineries. Our accommodation was charming, the food delicious and the weather was sunny and suitably warm for most of the week.



Having **Bill Oddie** with us for the trip was an unexpected bonus, his unique combination of humour and excellent birding skills keeping us on our toes! Bill was with us courtesy of **Birdwatch magazine** (thank you Dominic and Martine!), to cover the trip as an introduction to this new Mediterranean birding destination - [Birdwatching Narbonnaise](#). You can read the resulting article in the “**World of Birds**” supplement in the **January edition of Birdwatch**, (read a copy of the article [here](#)) .

With some interesting bird watching and some equally interesting wines (Fitou, Corbières and Côtes du Languedoc being the main appellations), not to mention Cathar castles, the medieval city of Carcassonne, Fontfroide abbey, the many delightful Languedoc villages, and a highly popular coastline, the area really does have a great deal to offer. But whereas the wines, castles and beaches all have long established reputations, **the exceptionally rich natural history of this part of the world, has until recently been a well kept secret!**

A wide diversity of habitats in a small area



Birding around the former salt pans at Gruissan

The trip is centred on the **Narbonnaise regional park**, established in 2003 to protect and promote an area of 700 square kilometres on the western edge of the Mediterranean biodiversity hotspot (one of 35 in the world). The park encompasses **an incredible diversity of habitats** from a string of Mediterranean coastal lagoons, across vineyard covered plains and up into the craggy limestone hills of the Corbières Maritimes. Such varied habitats are home, for all or some of the year, to a wide range of species, from eagles (*Golden, Bonelli, Short-toed, Booted*) and warblers (*Sardinian, Subalpine, Orphean, Dartford*), to waders and shorebirds (*Greater flamingo, Black-winged stilt, Kentish plover, White stork, Purple heron, Purple gallinule*) and a colourful collection of summer visitors (*Bee-eater, Roller, Golden oriole, Woodchat shrike, Great spotted cuckoo*), to mention but a

few!



Eagle owl, Short-toed eagle, Flamingo and European bee-eater can all be seen quite easily.

The Languedoc remains the world's largest wine producing area

Geography, sun, wind and latitude naturally all contribute to the excellent birdwatching, but also to the excellent wines... with the dry climate keeping the vines healthy and the many sunny days increasing the sugar levels in the grapes. Not surprising then, that **the Languedoc-Roussillon remains the largest wine producing area in the world**. And vineyards make for good birdwatching, with the trellis posts providing perches galore! *Black-eared wheatear, Hoopoe, Woodchat shrike and Roller* can all be commonly seen in the vineyards.



Birdwatching in the vineyards

A touch of luxury at a new boutique hotel in Leucate

For more information about Birding Languedoc's activities please go to
www.birdinglanguedoc.org

This year we are adding a touch of luxury to the **2018 Spring birding and wine trip**, which will be hosted at a gorgeous new boutique hotel in Leucate, the [19-21, Un amour d'hôtel](#), (where they have a special wine tasting cellar and an excellent chef!).



Luxury accommodation in a relaxed atmosphere at the 19-21 boutique hotel in Leucate.

Good food, good wine and good birdwatching - a really great combination!

So [enquire here](#) if you would like to join us for the next edition of this trip...

A bientôt!

This is what one participant had to say about the trip in May 2017:

*"A great group of people to spend a week with in a relaxed atmosphere.
All round knowledge of birds, butterflies, plants and local history was excellent.
The three wine tasting events were all very enjoyable and made a pleasurable
break from bird watching."* P.Russell