

# Romania's Wild Frontier

## Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

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### Outline itinerary

- Day 1** Fly Bucharest & overnight.
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- Day 2/7** Ultima Frontiera, Danube Delta.
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- Day 8** Fly London.
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### Departs

April, May, August & September.

### Focus

Birds & other wildlife. Plus photography & dragonflies on specialist tours ROM08 & ROM09.

### Grading

Grade A. Easy day walks only.

### Dates and Prices

Visit [www.naturetrek.co.uk](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk) (tour code ROM07, ROM08 & ROM09).

### Highlights:

- Explore the wetlands & woodlands of the remote Ultima Frontiera reserve in the Danube Delta.
- Includes 6 nights in a comfortable lodge located within the heart of the private reserve.
- Explore the Danube Delta by boat, vehicle & on foot.
- Black, White-winged & Whiskered Terns.
- Mammals including Golden Jackal, Otter, Wildcat, Wild Boar & Raccoon Dog all possible.
- Syrian, Grey-headed & Black Woodpeckers.
- Roller, Hoopoe, Golden Oriole, Bee-eater & a variety of migrating waders.
- Eastern bird species such as Paddyfield Warbler & Broad-billed Sandpiper.
- Join a special dragonfly-focused tour in July.
- Specialist photography departures also available.
- Led by expert naturalist guides.



From top: Golden Jackal, Broad-billed Sandpiper & White Pelicans  
Photos courtesy of Ultima Frontiera and Shutterstock Ltd.



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## Introduction

In the far west of Europe's largest wetland, the magnificent Danube Delta, close to the border with Ukraine, lies a remote private reserve of some thousand hectares. Known as Ultima Frontiera, it protects an extensive complex of old fishponds, lakes and canals, vast reedbeds, floodplains and woodlands that all are easily accessed by the network of raised tracks that criss-cross the property. Here live a variety and abundance of wetland and woodland birds and mammals of which we can only dream in the UK. Amongst the highlights are such classic birds of the Danube Delta as White Pelican and the endangered Dalmatian Pelican, Pygmy Cormorants, White-tailed Eagles, Squacco Herons, Little Bitterns, Garganey and Red-crested Pochards, plus a wealth of other herons, egrets and passage waders. More elusive are the summer songsters of the reedbeds, amongst them noisy Great Reed Warblers, reeling Savi's Warblers, Moustached Warblers, and that eastern rarity, the Paddyfield Warbler. Penduline Tits may be seen amongst the willows at the fringes of these reedbeds, perhaps building or attending their exquisite nests. Waterside woodland belts hold woodpeckers, Golden Orioles, Thrush Nightingales, Bluethroats and the purring Turtle Doves, now sadly lost to so many of us in the UK.

Tucked within this wonderful mosaic of habitats lies Ultima Frontiera Lodge, our comfortable base for the following series of 8-day holidays, the majority of which will focus on the reserve's abundant birdlife. In addition, however, we are also offering a 'photography special' led by a skilled wildlife photographer which will make use of the property's numerous photography hides, and a July departure focusing on dragonflies led by dragonfly expert Nico Scatassi. All these tours include a 6-night stay at Ultima Frontiera Lodge, plenty of time to fully explore this wonderful area, both on land and by water, and enjoy its abundant birdlife and other natural history. For further details on dates and prices please refer to the Naturetrek website ([www.naturetrek.co.uk](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk)).



## Itinerary

**NB. Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather & other local considerations can necessitate some re-ordering of the programme during the course of the tour, though this will always be done to maximise best use of the time and weather conditions available.**

### Day 1

### Bucharest

We depart from London late morning on our 3-hour flight to Bucharest, the capital of Romania, arriving around 1600 hours. Here we will meet our local guide and transfer to our comfortable Bucharest hotel for the night.

## Day 2

## Ultima Frontiera, Danube Delta

This morning we will drive east through lowland Romania to the town of Tulcea, the gateway to the Danube Delta. The journey is likely to take us in the region of 4 hours (plus stops), but will be enlivened by an interesting variety of open country birds such as Lesser Grey Shrike, Bee-eater, Roller and perhaps a flock of migrating Red-footed Falcons. Our journey will also take us across remnants of steppe grassland and here we will pause briefly to look for Long-legged Buzzard, Isabelline Wheatear and European Sousek, the latter an endearing ground squirrel.



We are due into Tulcea early to mid-afternoon where we transfer to a fast water taxi for the 90 minute (80 kilometre) journey along willow-lined channels and past vast reedbeds to the Ultima Frontiera Reserve, tucked into the heart of the Danube Delta. From the landing jetty it is a 5 minute drive to the comfortable Ultima Frontiera Lodge, our base for the next 6 nights. After settling into our rooms there will be time for a quick explore near the lodge and a chance to enjoy some of the commoner, and more colourful, birds of the reserve including Hoopoe, Bee-eater, Roller and Golden Oriole.

## Day 3 - 7

## Ultima Frontiera, Danube Delta

We will spend the next 5 full days enjoying the abundant birdlife that lives in and around Ultima Frontiera, through a blend of walks, vehicular drives and boat trips. The reserve itself is a mix of freshwater lagoons, reedbeds, ponds and channels cut by a network of willow-lined raised tracks. The wetlands are dotted with areas of woodland and expanses of open ground, which together create a complex patchwork of habitats, home to an abundance of resident, breeding and migrant species. In addition to Paddyfield, Great Reed, Savi's and Moustached Warblers, Penduline Tits and lots of White Pelicans, the reserve is also home to breeding Bluethroat (of the white-spotted race), Little and Great Bitterns, Purple Heron, Pygmy Cormorant, White-tailed Eagle, lots of Marsh Harriers and the elusive Thrush Nightingale.



At the heart of Ultima Frontiera lies a modern and comfortable thatched lodge, built for visiting birders and wildlife photographers. Rollers, Hoopoes, Bee-eaters and Grey-headed Woodpeckers frequent its courtyard and surroundings, while Cuckoos - unbelievably abundant here - sing all day long. At night the chorus is provided by a variety of frogs and toads, punctuated by the howl of the Golden Jackals which are a highlight of any stay at here; this being one of the best places in Europe to observe a species more commonly encountered to the east, in Asia, or in Africa. Nearby lie ruins from a communist past, now reclaimed by nature as homes for Barn and Little Owls and Swallows.



At other times we will take a 4-wheel-drive safari, the best way in which to sample an even wider range of land-based habitats in the regions adjoining Ultima Frontiera. A visit to the nearby floodplains and salty steppes is likely to produce large numbers of waders, amongst them breeding Avocets and Black-winged Stilts, plus many regular and rare passage species - such as Ruff, Spotted Redshank, Curlew Sandpiper, Marsh Sandpiper, Temminck's Stint and Broad-billed Sandpiper - particularly in autumn. Ruddy Shelduck are common too, while overheard the aerial acrobatics of both Collared Pratincoles and Red-footed Falcons may be enjoyed, and both Lesser Grey and Red-backed Shrikes may be seen in adjacent scrub. A visit to such quaint, thatched Delta villages as Letea and Periprava, with their colourful, flower-filled gardens, is also to be recommended. Here, simple lifestyles that deal with isolation and the harsh extremes in climate through self-sufficiency are an eye-opener indeed. The horse and cart, by and large, still replaces the motorised vehicle, and old-fashioned, non-intensive farming practices ensure a

wealth of birds. Syrian Woodpeckers frequent these villages, with large flocks of Starlings which are joined in the early summer by Rose-coloured Starlings from the east. Nearby lies Letea Forest, a magnificent and extensive ancient deciduous forest that is set amongst sand dunes and holds a variety of birds of prey, including breeding Lesser Spotted and Booted Eagles, woodpeckers, flycatchers and an interesting flora.

No visit to Ultima Frontiera is complete without time spent exploring the remote willow-lined channels, vast reedbeds and great lakes of the Danube Delta that are easily accessed by motorboat from the reserve. In particular, boat excursions to the lakes of Merhei and Matita not only offer a tranquillity and sense of remoteness that is rare in Europe, but the breeding colonies of Whiskered and Black Terns, as well as of both Black-necked and Red-necked Grebes. In April and May it is also possible to encounter flocks of migrant White-winged Terns, a special sight indeed. On another day, a boat trip in the other direction will visit the Black Sea and an offshore island on which a large colony of Pallas's (Great Black-headed) Gulls may be enjoyed during the breeding season.



Mammals, too, are a highlight of Ultima Frontiera and the surrounding region, their viewing aided by the opportunity to join night-time spotlighting safaris. Golden Jackals are easily seen, but there is also an excellent chance of seeing such species as Wildcat, Otter, Wild Boar, Roe Deer and even Raccoon Dog, whilst Badger, Northern White-breasted Hedgehog and both Beech and Pine Marten are amongst others that are occasionally observed. Whilst notable, too, for its flora and for its wealth of reptiles and

amphibians, easily observed, such a habitat is inevitably also a haven for dragonflies and damselflies. Of these, over 30 species have been recorded, amongst them such specialties as Dark Spreadwing, River Clubtail and the rare Black Pennant. Those particularly interested in dragonflies should consider our special dragonfly departure in July (ROM09).

The exact programme for each of our days at Ultima Frontiera will be kept flexible and each day's activities and timings will be outlined by your guides the evening before. Group members are very welcome to join guided activities throughout their stay should they so wish, or can opt for a morning, afternoon (or longer) doing their own thing and exploring the reserve independently on foot or by one of the fleet of electric buggies that are stationed outside the main lodge building. These buggies enable visitors to explore the 30 kilometres of tracks linking habitats and viewing/photography hides (of which there are over 30) in a quiet and stealthy manner that is perfect for the keen birder, naturalist and wildlife photographer. They are truly a stroke of genius – simply the ideal way of enjoying this range of habitats that is so rich in birds and other wildlife. Of course, it is also possible to explore the reserve on foot, or by patiently waiting in a hide, perhaps for the perfect sighting of a Golden Jackal or White-tailed Eagle. However, with the buggies available, a combination of walking, hides and electric-powered exploration makes for the perfect self-guided interlude to the main group programme.



Of course, the exact mix of likely species of bird will depend on the time of year and season of the tour. For additional information on the species likely to be present on the various departure dates please call the Naturetrek office on 01962 733051 or email [info@naturetrek.co.uk](mailto:info@naturetrek.co.uk).

## Day 8

## Fly London

Today we must make the return journey back to Bucharest, by boat and then road but will try and break the journey wherever possible. Our return British Airways flight to London Heathrow departs mid-afternoon arriving around 1830 hours.

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## Weather

The climate in Romania is 'Continental' with hot summers and cold winters. Typical temperatures in the spring and autumn will be in the low to mid 20s°C, although cooler and wetter periods do blow through from time to time, especially in the early spring. It is likely to be hot in the summer months of July and August with midday temperatures climbing to the upper 20s to low 30s°C and the occasional thunderstorm.

## Tour grading

Grade A - Mostly easy walks of a couple of hours or so taken a leisurely pace. These holidays are suitable, therefore, for anyone with an 'average' level of fitness. Should you require additional information on the tour please give the Naturetrek office a call on 01962 733051 or email [info@naturetrek.co.uk](mailto:info@naturetrek.co.uk).

## Special departures

In addition to our standard birdwatching tours (ROM07) to Ultima Frontiera in the spring, summer and autumn, we will be offering a special photography departure (ROM08) in the spring led by one of Naturetrek's experienced wildlife photographers. On this tour you will be guided in the art of wildlife photography and have the opportunity

to use the network of photography hides that have been erected around the reserve for such species as Golden Jackal, Black Woodpecker and White-tailed Eagle. For those people particularly interested in dragonflies and damselflies we would recommend our 'Dragonfly Tour' (ROM09) which will have more of a focus on the reserve's diverse assemblage of odonata species.

## Food & accommodation

All food and accommodation are included in the price of this holiday from dinner on Day 1 to lunch on Day 8.

Ultima Frontiera Lodge features large, comfortable rooms with ensuite facilities, indoor (and outdoor) dining areas and complimentary WiFi. Single rooms are available at the supplement price outlined on our website.



## How to book your place!

In order to book a place on this holiday, you will need to read the Naturetrek terms and conditions in the back of our brochure or on our website, and then book either online at [www.naturetrek.co.uk](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk), by calling us on 01962 733051, or by completing and returning the booking form in the brochure together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday cost. If you do not have a copy of this brochure, please call us on 01962 733051.

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