



Eagles & Pelicans

Photographic tour with tour leader Mark Sisson

6th - 14th January 2027

Trip Overview

Group size:

The trip accommodates a maximum of 6 guests.

This includes:

Airport transfers, accommodation, local transportation, all meals.

Cost excludes:

International flights to Thessaloniki and returning from Sofia, sundry items, alcohol and personal travel insurance.

Accommodation:

We will be staying in a small and comfortable guest house typical of the region at both of our bases with breakfast and dinner supplemented by a packed lunch. All rooms are on a single basis.

Level of fitness:

There is a walk across potentially rough and remote terrain to get to the Golden Eagle hide but this is only around 5 - 10 minutes. Days in the hide could be a good 8 hours or so in duration and potentially on the cold side too so you need to be prepared for this in terms of expectation. There are short walks around the lake in order to get in position for the Pelicans, and the option to go out on the lake in a small fishing boat for a different setting/style of shot.

LEVEL 3



Trip Overview

We have been running trips to this south-east corner of Europe for many years now and are pleased to offer this excellent winter combination once again as it combines two of the regions undoubted winter highlights. Bulgaria's mountain ranges in winter offer a harsh but dramatic beauty, and this is best personified by the raptors to be found here. We will have the opportunity to work from a purpose hide in the Rhodope Mountains in the south of the country which will give us the opportunity for some dramatic photographic encounters with the powerful and majestic Golden Eagle along with other raptors including Griffon Vulture, Black Vulture and White-tailed Eagle.

The Dalmatian Pelicans of Lake Kerkini in northern Greece receive plenty of dramatic photographic coverage, and with good reason too as they are a stunning species offering bags of variety in terms of portfolio building. At this time of the year, they are at their most colourful with the males in full beak and throat colour - add in some snow on the surrounding hills and that lovely winter light and the chance to immerse yourself in all things Pelican. You will need the full array of lenses for opportunities on the shore, in flight across the water as well as from the boat with the local fishermen who will take us out each day for a full two days of photography that completes a photographically jam-packed week and truly diverse trip.



Itinerary

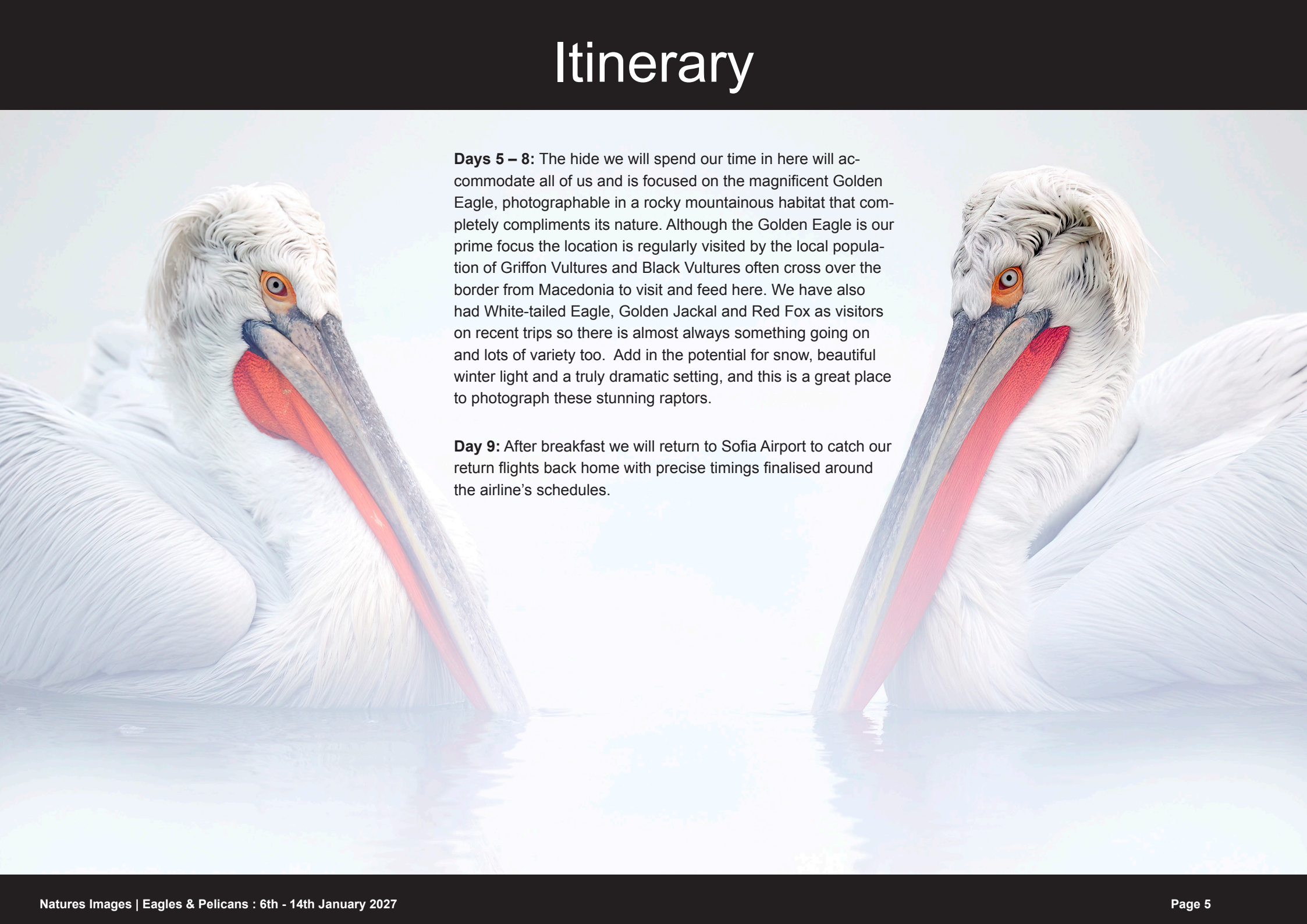


Day 1: Travel to Thessaloniki airport after which we will transfer to our base near to the shores of Lake Kerkini. If time and light allows, we will try to have a first look at the Pelicans as we arrive and will then settle down for dinner and discuss the plans for the following days.

Days 2 - 3: The format for these 2 days will be similar, with flexibility to ensure we maximise our coverage of the main target, the beautiful Dalmatian pelicans. They will be at their vibrant best as the breeding season approaches, and this is the best time of year to photograph this stunning bird. Lake Kerkini has an established resident population and offers a stunning setting as well. We will have the chance for close-up portraits, wide-angle group shots, swimming, flying, and the chance to take to the water with one of the local fishermen to ensure a wide portfolio of images in a jam-packed couple of days. There's plenty to work on each day before returning to our hotel for a well-deserved evening meal and the chance to look at the day's images.

Day 4: After a final morning with the Pelicans and with some possible photographic stops as we go, we will today cross the border into Bulgaria and head to the small town of Majorovo in the heart of the Eastern Rhodope mountains, which will be our new base for the rest of the trip.

Itinerary

A large background image showing two pelicans in water. The pelicans have white feathers, long dark beaks with a prominent red gular sac, and orange eyes. They are facing each other, with their heads slightly lowered. The water is calm and reflects the light.

Days 5 – 8: The hide we will spend our time in here will accommodate all of us and is focused on the magnificent Golden Eagle, photographable in a rocky mountainous habitat that completely compliments its nature. Although the Golden Eagle is our prime focus the location is regularly visited by the local population of Griffon Vultures and Black Vultures often cross over the border from Macedonia to visit and feed here. We have also had White-tailed Eagle, Golden Jackal and Red Fox as visitors on recent trips so there is almost always something going on and lots of variety too. Add in the potential for snow, beautiful winter light and a truly dramatic setting, and this is a great place to photograph these stunning raptors.

Day 9: After breakfast we will return to Sofia Airport to catch our return flights back home with precise timings finalised around the airline's schedules.

Things to bring



Our accommodation is clean and comfortable and typical of the Balkans and north Greece respectively. Please let me know if you have any special dietary requirements. In terms of clothing, you'll obviously need warm and weatherproof clothing as we'll be working at altitude in potentially snowy conditions at some sites; generally, the weather is clear, sunny, and cold with expectation of snow. The following are very much recommended - a good pair of strong waterproof walking boots, good waterproof over trousers (lined ones are the best as they'll keep you warmer especially with a normal pair of trousers and some thermal leggings underneath). For the top half it's very much a question of having several layers so you can adjust as the day unfolds - I tend to go for a thermal layer, fleece, down jacket and then my waterproof coat with a spare fleece at hand. A good hat, some fingerless mittens and then some warm waterproof gloves to go over the top (the former so that when you come to photograph your fingers can still work the camera) should round the piece off.

Camera equipment

In terms of camera kit, you'll need the full array of your lens kit for this trip – the longest lens you have (400mm would be my recommendation/choice) and then some supplementary lenses for other opportunities such as a 24-70mm for wide angle images and even a super wide fish-eye lens can make for some really dramatic pictures as the Pelicans feed and then an intermediate zoom (70-200mm or 100-500mm) a converter for increased flexibility too. You'll get the chance to decide what you want/need for each session, so you won't be burdening yourself with it all of the time either. Tripods are recommended for the shore-based photography and necessary of the hides, but you will be doing plenty of handheld work in the boat too. Bring plenty of compact flash cards with you because you will take a lot of images.

If you don't have a telephoto long lens or something like this, it is worth exploring hiring one for the trip. Have a look at The Flash Centre <https://theflashcentre.com/pages/tabbed-rental> and give Kevin a call on 0121 327 9220 and say you are going on a Natures Images trip.



Useful Contact Information

My contact number for the build up to and for the duration of the trip is:

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Please don't hesitate to contact me even if you think it is a minor question, I am here to help.



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