

KAZAKHSTAN Endemics & Specials
4-days Birdwatching Tour with *Miksture*
- Taukum Desert & Turenga Forest



This is a 4-days Kazakhstan" journey that provides excellent birding. Miksture/Michael knows thoroughly the locations and the birds of course. We have done this tour for many years, and we continue to improve and keep the route updated, so our clients get the best logistic and itinerary. Our team provides good meals, and we always make the journey as comfortable and smooth as possible. We don't make any compromises, however we always make priority not to flush and frighten the birds. This is birding where you can expect to get some of the most sought-after Kazakhstan birds at a fair price, cool and safety pace. Southern Kazakhstan is known as an essential destination for anyone with a serious interest in Palearctic birds, and this journey providing the opportunity to see a surprisingly high concentration of Central Asian specialties. In addition there is a great selection of species present in Southern Europe and South Siberia – and of course, the endemic species and subspecies. No doubt - on this tour, we will watch some of the remarkable Central Asian bird species and the bird list will be impressive.

We have designed the tour to maximize the experience of staying outside as much possible. Its active tours where we will make relaxed hikes in the pristine nature, and there is time enough to dwell in each traveler's special interest. We always respect and try to help and support each traveler's special wishes and projects – e.g. photographing, studying certain species. You can use the day according your wishes, and we will do our best to help in that way.

We can offer a tailor-made bird watching tour according to the season, the time you have and the area of interest. If you have more time, it is highly recommended to expand your route, e.g. with northern Kazakhstans famous steppe-birds, or with 2 days extra to cover the mountainspecies too (please have a look at our program suggestions).

We operate the tours from our base in Bishkek, but we easily can pick you up in Almaty or finish the tour in Almaty.

We specialize in guidance for individuals as well for groups – always with a personal touch.

Costs depend of number of participants, route and service. Pls contact Miksture for a non-obligatory quote!

Guiding by Michael Westerbjerg Andersen

Miksture's owner Michael Westerbjerg Andersen is by profession Biologist, specialized in Birds and Nature Conservation and his lifelong passion for birds led him to work in the travel business to all seven continents during his studies. Michael's home is in Bishkek - the capital of Kyrgyzstan where at the moment he is making a full-time career in the expedition travel industry in Central Asia. Currently writing two books about the birds of Kyrgyzstan – and in prep. a book about the Snow Leopard. Since 1993 he has guided wildlife expeditions in Central Asia. Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan is his prime destinations. He is widely acclaimed as one of the world's leading experts in Central Asian birds and his specialty: The mythic Snow Leopard. Michael has seen Snow Leopard more times than average Human Beings, and being asked "how many?" the reply is: "I don't count anymore." He has an infectious curiosity and passion for these aspects of natural history - is an REAL expedition leader, and this serves him in good stead as he leads travelers on expeditions in the Central Asian landscapes, where he constantly scouts new destinations for Miksture in the region. Michael speaks Danish (his native language), English, German, French, Russian, Swedish and Norwegian. Knows and understand Spanish (speak poor...).

Tour start: In Bishkek or Almaty and finish Bishkek or Almaty

Recommended time of year: April - August

Prior departure Miksture mail a detailed list of birds. We look forward to show you some of the most beautiful parts of this magnificent country. Please don't hesitate to contact us!

We welcome any remarks and dialogue.

Miksture Expeditions

Keyspecies – some of the species expected to be seen during Miksture Kazakhstan tour...

Dalmatian Pelican, Black Stork, Black Kite ssp lineatus, Pallid Harrier, Shikra, Long-legged Buzzard, Steppe Eagle, Eastern Imperial Eagle, Saker Falcon, Macqueen's Bustard, Demoiselle Crane, Greater Sand Plover, Caspian Plover, Sociable Lapwing (rare), Terek Sandpiper, Heuglin's Gull, White-winged Black Tern, Black-bellied Sandgrouse, Pin-tailed Sandgrouse, Pallas's Sandgrouse, Yellow-eyed Stock Dove, Oriental Turtle Dove, Striated Scops Owl, European Bee-eater, European Roller, White-winged Woodpecker, Bimaculated Lark, Pale Sand Martin, Citrine Wagtail, Rufous Bush Robin, Common Nightingale ssp hafizi,, Siberian Stonechat, Isabelline Wheatear, Pied Wheatear, Desert Wheatear, Paddyfield Warbler, Blyth's Reed Warbler, Clamorous Reed Warbler, Sykes's Warbler, Asian Desert Warbler, Azure Tit, Turkestan Tit, White-crowned Penduline Tit, Black-headed Penduline Tit, Turkestan Shrike, Long-tailed Shrike, Lesser Grey Shrike, Steppe Grey Shrike, Rose-coloured Starling, Saxaul Sparrow, House Sparrow ssp bactrianus, Desert Finch, Grey-necked Bunting, Eastern Rock Nuthatch, Rock Sparrow, Red-headed Bunting, etc

Prior departure Miksture mail a detailed list of birds. Meanwhile the numbers and species of birds seen during this tour can be studied for same places in reports found at www.travellingbirder.com or at our Miksture website: www.miksture.com



ITENIARY:

Day 1. Departure Bishkek or Almaty; transfer to Konchengel, Taukom Desert. Night in tents

Day 2. Konchengel Turenga Forest. Night in tents

Day 3. Turenga Forest – Desert-area – Turenga Forest. Night in tents

Day 4. Turenga Forest – Almaty/Bishkek via Quapchagai. Tour concludes.

Day-to-day program

Miksture always try to make the journey according to program, but sometimes it can be necessary to change routes, and order of the locations. Miksture always try to optimize the birding hence we can add extra locations or change locations. Before departure Miksture mail an updated program. Please note following meals provided during the days. B (Breakfast), L (Lunch) and D (Dinner)

Day 1. Bishkek – Taukum Desert

After early morning departure we drive to Kazakhstan. Our goal is the endless semi-desert plain of Taukum. Impressing numbers of raptors along the road: Booted Eagle, Black-eared Kite, Steppe Eagle and Long-legged Buzzard. At our campsite there is an interesting selection of semi-desert birds: Demoiselle Crane, Little Ringed Plover, Black-bellied Sandgrouse, Pin-tailed Sandgrouse (rare), Common Pratincole (Collared Pratincole), Greater Sandplover, European Nightjar, Hoopoe, plenty of larks a.o. both species of short-toed larks and even White-winged Lark, Indian Sparrow, more species of wheatears, Asian Desert Warbler, Spanish Sparrow, Red-headed Bunting, etc. This is one of the strongholds of Houbara Bustards. Less common but quite possible are species like: Caspian Plover, Blue-cheeked Bee-eater, Saker, Pallas Sandgrouse etc. Night in tents – arranged by our team of course. BLD.

Kazakhstan is a giant country – ornithologically too. There is lots of habitats and to maximize our birding we visit as many habitats as possible. More than 500 species has been seen in Kazakhstan. In the SE corner of Kazakhstan there is mountains.

Day 2. Taukum Desert – Turenga Forest

Early morning observations and breakfast. Then we drive (150km) to the regions special forest-type, the endemic Turenga Forest with its rare birds. The species list for this area includes some of the most sought after birds in Central Asia: White-winged Woodpecker, Eversmann's Dove (Yellow-eyed Pigeon [F: Eastern Stock Pigeon]), Saxaul Sparrow and Turkestan Tit. There are several other interesting species in the Turenga Forest: Sykes warbler, Shikra, Short-toed Eagle, European Scops Owls, Pallid Scops Owl, European Bee-eater, European Roller, Little Ringed Plover, Shikra, Steppe Grey Shrike, Booted eagle, White-tailed Eagle, Lesser Whitethroat - two subspecies are possible: S.c.minula (sometimes treated as separate species: Desert Lesser Whitethroat) and the more rare S.c.althaea (Hume's Lesser Whitethroat), etc. Night in tents (BLD)

Day 3. Turenga Forest – Desert area – (Turenga Forest)

After breakfast we drive westwards in search of desert birds. We might return to the Turenga Forest in the evening; depends on the weather and birds – but we are flexible, so we might make camp in the desert at a waterhole that attracts lots of birds. Sykes Warbler, Desert Finch, Saxaul Sparrow, Turkestan Tit, Blue-cheeked Bee-eater, European Bee-eater, European Roller, Booted Eagle, Eastern Imperial Eagle, Pallas Sandgrouse, Shikra, Steppe Grey Shrike, Lesser Grey Shrike, Asian Desert Warbler, Desert Wheatear, Dalmatian Pelican, Black-eared Kite, Pied Wheatear, Isabelline Wheatear, Black-bellied Sandgrouse, Rufous Scrub Robin, Masked Wagtail, Little Owl, Yellow Wagtail ssp feldegg, Tawny Pipit, Crested Lark, etc. Night in tents or

Day 4. Transfer to Bishkek via Quapchagai

We return via north shore of Ili River and make a birding stop on a location where tens of thousands Rose-colored Starlings breeds! Its also excellent for eastern Rock Nuthatch, Lesser Kestrel, Barbary Falcon, Red-headed Bunting, Rock Martin, Red-rumped Swallow, Calander Lark,

Lesser Grey Shrike, Greenfinch (Turkestan ssp), Starling ssp poltaratskyi, European Roller, Pied Wheatear, Rock Bunting, Blue Rock Thrush (ssp pandoo), Grey-necked Bunting, Horned Lark, Isabelline Wheatear, Tawny Pipit, Rufous-tailed Thrush, Chukar, Booted Eagle, Rock Petronia, etc
It's a long days drive and we arrive to Bishkek late evening. BLD

Mammals

Though its birds we go for, there is an excellent range of mammals to be seen in the region, and good bird sites usually is good places for other animals... During the years we have seen a long list of mammals (and insects, butterflies, flowers, etc): Wolf, Deer, Wild Pigs, Ibex, Persian Gazelles, Tolai Hare, Goitered Gazelle, Great Gerbil, Red Pika, Corsac Fox, Red Squirrel, Ground Squirrel, etc.

This is a fairly brisk journey and participants should tolerate and be ready for hiking (easy!), long days transportation in vehicles less comfortable etc The activity level is adjusted so it fit all clients, and everyone can enjoy this journey. There is certain flexibility, so individual wishes and pace can be respected. We don't climb mountains or endure tough levels of activity, but this is birding and participants should be ready getting up early – and participants should be ready to endure changing climatic conditions. We visit deserts, semi-deserts, etc when this is said, it should be stressed that Miksture and my team are very experienced in handling these tours. We know the areas and the conditions. We are well prepared, and make sure the participants achieve the best possible comfort – tasty, healthy and enough food! And comfortable accommodation whenever it's possible. There will be nights in tents because no other possibilities are present, but its solely an advantage as we are close or right in the centre of the best birding sites. Our vehicles are comfortable. and our drivers always sober and experienced. So please bear this in mind and be patient if the breakfast on the guesthouse are served ten minutes later than agreed, or the breakfast served is different than at home... etc.



What to bring...?

Note that only the most basic medical facilities exist away from Almaty: all participants must accept the full implications of this, but we are of course capable handling most incidences and our team is well educated and experts in moving in mountainous conditions. However, anyone in general good health and reasonably fit should find that acclimatization is achieved within a few days of arrival, ensuring full enjoyment of this exciting journey.

VISA: A visa is needed entering Kazakhstan; this we will inform about prior departure – special permits relating to our itinerary are secured for us locally prior to our arrival.

LUGGAGE

Please bring soft luggage if at all possible (i.e. lockable bag, strong nylon or canvas bags rather than hard suitcases, which are for more difficult to pack into the vehicles and take up more room). In addition take a small to medium sized rucksack which should be carried as cabin baggage. Pack photographic equipment, binos and things of this sort in your rucksack for the journey.

CLOTHING

You will be outside most days unless you request to stay at base for any reason, so it is essential to be properly kitted out. At the same time, try to travel as lightly as possible; leave superfluous clothing etc at home. It will be both cool and warm. However, clothing needs to cater for these fluctuating needs. The season is predominantly dry in southern Kazakhstan. Essential equipment: Warm jacket! Rainproof jacket;

good shoes; hat; sun glasses; sunscreen lotion & ditto lip balm. There is few opportunities to do any washing); torch and towel. However prior departure we will provide informative and plentiful information about this matters. Other good equipment: Small everyday ruck-sack, Kleenex tissues or wet wipes.

ACCOMMODATION We might be under canvas most if not all nights or MAYBE one night in simple covered accommodation. You will need to bring a good sleeping bag (can be rented, please contact Michael prior departure). Karrimot, are provided; though if you prefer you need to bring the more modern self inflated Thermo rest' mattress.

MEALS: The food is very delicious here in Central Asia. When we are in the field we bring our own kitchen team who serve three meals a day: Good, healthy and delicious food! We provide mineral water during all tour, and serve tea and coffee to all meals. When possible and wished we make tea and coffee-breaks.

ELECTRICITY: If you need to recharge batteries we are able to bring a generator, but in general: Charge prior departure.

MEDICAL: Vaccinations. None are compulsory. It is recommended that you protect yourself against tetanus. If you use any medicament, you have an adequate supply to last for the trip; they will be difficult, if not impossible to purchase. Bring: Simple pain killer (e.g. Paracetamol), Lip salve, and travel sickness pills if required, 1-2 toilet rolls, Sun screen with a high protection factor (e.g. 25 sun block is recommended) and sunglasses. If you are prone to diarrhoea then Lomotil or Imodium and Dioralyte or Rehydrat may be useful.

TIPPING: is generally welcomed!

SPENDING MONEY: Kazakhstan's currency is no use outside the country. Exchange is possible only in the cities! Travellers cheques, Standard bank cards such as ACCES5, MASTERCARD, VISA and AMERICAN EXPRESS can usually not be used outside big cities.

Bird Photography: Opportunities are excellent!

Prior departure Miksture mail a detailed list of birds possible to be seen on the tour.

Price include: Guiding by Miksture/Michael Westerbjerg Andersen • Local (English, German, French or Russian-speaking) driver and interpreter • Transportation according program • All accommodation mentioned in the program • All food during the tour • All permits • Services of Miksture • Local entrees and fees according day-to-day program

Price does NOT include: Other transportation not mentioned in the program • Alcoholic beverage at meals • Arrangements not mentioned in the program • Tips to drivers and interpreter • Travel insurance – mandatory! • Money for own expenses – actually very little needed • Visa to Kazakhstan • Visa support, e.g. Letter of Invitation • Anything strictly personal (e.g. laundry, phone calls, snacks).

Single room: Single tent: Is available for anyone not sharing, and we make it without extra surcharge.

Sleeping bags and karimats: It's possible to rent these items, please contact Miksture for further info.

Welcome!

Miksture/Michael Westerbjerg Andersen

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Miksture provide information about travelling in the region and specific ornithological information. My team and I can be hired for birding in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Southern Siberia and Western China. We are able to "tailor-make" the journey according your wishes – destinations & species as well as duration. It's possible to book me as leader or co-leader for your journey in the region. We use our own vehicles, own gear – tents, kitchen-team, etc. Everything to increase your birding experience and your safety. In addition our prices are reasonable for everyone. We have an excellent team by whom I have travelled and worked together with for more than ten years. They are some of my very best friends and in combination; we know thoroughly the areas and the birds. Usually we arrange tours for 4-16 pax – best group's size for birding is 5-12 participants; but we are flexible. Fair prices, security, honesty and great birding are keywords – try us! Please contact me for further information. Programs can be studied on our websites. You are welcome to contact me for further information and I welcome any remarks and dialogue.

Miksture was established with the purpose of encourage and combine Eco-tourism and biological scientific research in Central Asia; mainly Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. The approach of combining Eco-tourism and Nature Conservation is in many ways opposite activities, but in Kyrgyzstan we have done it without severe compromises for the visitors and the environment. Our tours are the result of friendship and strange ideas and our carefully planned itineraries and intensive approach have since 1994 given those who travel with us an unusually experience.

Miksture is an independent company, established and owned by Michael Westerbjerg Andersen. You will always be in contact with Michael when you contact us. All itineraries are accompanied by the staff of local agencies that possesses the knowledge and experience to make the tour wholly successful. We know the areas thoroughly and take pride in showing those who travel the local hotspots, confidently coping with any problems that may arise and so greatly increasing the chance that everything will run smoothly. Leading a tour in Europe or North America is one thing, leading one in Central Asia where logistical problems are a fact of life is quite another! Where practicable and necessary we obtain the assistance of local leaders who have both an intimate knowledge of their home areas and the ability to look after the group to the required standard.

