

CROATIA

September 6th to 16th 2019



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AIRPORT PARKING £64.79 Stansted Airport Official Long Stay Car Park, via Skypark secure for 10 days.

FLIGHTS RYANAIR. £238.00 in total for the two of us.

We paid for one seat including 30 kilos baggage at £160.50 and one seat without any baggage allowance at £77.50. We also used the Ryanair app to check in 48 hours before departure which also saved fees.

6th Sept **STN 06.25** - 09.40 RJK ** This flight diverted to Trieste in Italy due to strong winds at Rijeka.

16th Sept **RJK 10.55** - 12.10 STN

CAR HIRE SIXT at Rijeka Airport through www.moneysavingexpert.com was £78 for 10 days.

We had read about the many scams in Croatia from car rental companies and were ready for them !

However, this company at this airport were fine and even had to give us an upgrade as the smaller car that we had booked was unavailable.

Check the internet reviews before booking and get an excess car hire policy for a fraction of the price of the car hire company excess insurance payments on the internet.

We use www.insurance4carhire.com

LITERATURE

Internet Trip reports.

ebird

SOUND RECORDINGS

Collins bird Guide app and on Xeno canto

EQUIPMENT

OPTICS.

LEICA 10x32 BN

KOWA TSN-883 Scope

TE-17W 30X Wide angle lens.

CAMERAS / LENSES ETC.

SONY CYBERSHOT 10.1 megapixel DSC-N2.

CANON EOS 5D Mk III.

CANON 400mm EF f5.6 L USM

CANON extender EF 1.4X II

B+W 77mm MRC Clear UV Haze (010) Filter

Remote Control RC-201

MANFROTTO R190 CX4 PRO tripod with fluid head.

Trip in general

We wanted a cheap, hot weather holiday for the wife (and a little something for myself in the form of Rock Partridge). After talking to Brian Gee & Fay Enright, who had been to Pag Island the year before, it sounded like one of the easiest places to connect with Rock Partridge as it was at sea level. A quick confirmation with ebird showed several good spots to check on Pag island and another one right by Rijeka Airport. The weather was hot and sunny for the most part, with only a few showers and light winds...a perfect place for the other half !

We travelled around to Pag and back along the coastal road which was in very good condition with plenty of viewpoints and a few nice towns to stop and eat.

We booked two night stays at five locations using Booking.com which worked out well as out of season the places were getting cheaper. Most of our bookings were self-contained apartments which we made good use of, cooking our own meals. The local restaurants were very expensive with little choice (often junk or fast food) and not always good quality. The birding was pretty poor, and although this was essentially a holiday for the wife I was surprised at the lack of birds when wandering the countryside. Migration was hardly noticeable and common birds worryingly sparse. Photography was also difficult as the birds were incredibly wary. Maybe spring is a better time to visit Croatia ?

Still, this worked out to be a very nice, wife-friendly holiday and I managed a difficult Western Palearctic endemic.

Itinerary

Sept 6th Flight left on time but couldn't land at Rijeka and touched down at Trieste in Italy. We then had to wait nearly four hours for a coach to arrive to take us the 3 hours to Rijeka Airport. Luckily the SIXT car hire there was fast and efficient and we were soon away to our apartment in **Jadranovo at the Apartment Vives £85 / 2 nights.**



7th Up early, driving the short distance to the Voz peninsular on the north side of Krk Island over the toll bidge (39 HRK paid one way only going onto the island). Walked around the eastern two-thirds of the area all morning only getting flushed flight views of 2 Rock Partridges. Rest of the day with the wife.

8th Up early and set off in the car to **Pag to stay at the Apatments Feniks £52/ 2 nights.**

Took a leisurely drive down the coastal road checking out Malo Blato and Veliko as we neared Pag.

Went for an evening recce along the track heading north-west from Malo Blato and found 3+ an hour before dusk.



9th Up and away by 6am back to the same Rock Partridge spot as the night before for a mornings birding.

Drove back to Pag and rest of the day with the wife.

10th Transferred to the **Lokunja B&B £62/ 2 nights inc breakfast**, then spent the rest of the day around the north end of Pag Island. Did an evenings walk around the Malo Blato track with Helen.

11th Malo Blato track again early morning and then rest of the day with the wife.

12th All day on a boat trip then drove on to stay at **Starigrad at the Apartments Marija £53/ 2 nights.**

13th At dawn I drove for an hours birding along a road to the NW of Starigrad and then collected the wife ant went in to Palenka NP and walked up the valley till it levelled out and back. Drove to Zadar town for the afternoon.

14th Drove on to Serj to stay at the **Guest House Angela £44/ 2 nights.**

15th All day around Serj with the wife.

16th Early morning drive back to Rijeka Airport for the 10.55 flight home.

Systematic List



1. **Rock Partridge** *Alectoris graeca*

2, Sept 7th Voz in flight flushed from the rocky, grassy ridge area (see map).

3+, Sept 8th Pag island from the track heading NW from Malo Blato (see map).

13+, Sept 9th Pag at the same site, including at least 8 juvs feeding all morning.

26+, Sept 10th Pag with 6+ at the same site and 20+ by the start of the track near the tarmac road.

These birds were all very wary even when approached in the car.

Heard calling just after dawn which was the best way of locating a bird just before they hopped up onto a wall for a few minutes. They could also disappear instantly upon dropping into the long grass.

2. Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*
2, Malo Blato.
3. Common Pochard *Aythya farina*
6, Malo Blato.
4. Northern Shoveler *Spatula clypeata*
2, Malo Blato.
5. Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*
2, Malo Blato.
6. Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*
1, Malo Blato.
7. Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*
6+, Malo Blato.
8. Rock Dove *Columba livia*
9. Eurasian Collared-dove *Streptopelia decaocto*
10. Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba*
2, Krk bridge.
1, Pag.
11. Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus*
6+ Pag
Common in Zadar.
12. Common Coot *Fulica atra*
C20 Malo Blato.
13. Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*
Common around Malo Blato.
14. Great White Egret *Ardea alba*
2 Malo Blato.
15. Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*
A few at Malo Blato and the Pag area.
16. Pygmy Cormorant *Microcarbo pygmaeus*
20+ Malo Blato
1 Pag
17. European Shag *Gulosus aristotelis*
Common along coastal waters.
18. Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*
Common along coastal waters.
19. Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*
Heard only at Malo Blato.
20. Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*
5, Malo Blato.

21. Red Knot *Calidris canutus*
2 north of Pag.
22. Dunlin *Calidris alpina*
1 Malo Blato
3 north of Pag.
23. Little Stint *Calidris minuta*
Juv north of Pag.
24. Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*
1 flying over Voz.
25. Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*
3 Pag.
26. Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*
1 north of Pag.
27. Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*
Ad Pag.
28. Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis*
Common, especially at Malo Blato.
29. Little Owl *Athene noctua*
1 Malo Veliko.
30. Eurasian Eagle-owl *Bubo bubo*
1-2 heard, Sept 13th from the apartment Marija balcony at Starigrad.



31. Short-toed Snake-eagle *Circaetus gallicus*
2-3 Pag around Malo Blato and 1 from the hotel balcony at Serj.
32. Western Marsh-harrier *Circus aeruginosus*
2 at Malo Blato.
33. Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*
Ad male and a juv at Malo Blato.

34. Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*
1 Pag.
35. Eurasian Buzzard *Buteo buteo*
1 Palenka.
36. Common Hoopoe *Upupa epops*
Up to 10 in the Malo Blato area.
37. European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*
Quite a few heard only but 5 seen at Malo Blato.
38. Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*
3, Pag.
39. Eurasian Wren *Jynx torquilla*
1 north of Pag.
40. Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*
Fairly common around the Malo Blato area.
41. Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*
Ad at Voz.
42. Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*
10+ noted in all.
43. Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator*
Imm at Malo Blato and 3 north of Pag.
44. Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius*
4+ Voz.
45. Common Raven *Corvus corax*
1, Pag.
46. Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*
Hoodies seen frequently.
47. Great Tit *Parus major*
A few at Palenka.
48. Crested Lark *Galerida cristata*
Up to 4 at Pag.
49. Northern House Martin *Delichon urbicum*
A few around Pag mainly.
50. Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*
Common at Pag, few elsewhere.
51. Eurasian Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris*
A few at Palenka.
52. Collared Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*
A few at Malo Blato.

53. Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*
C 10 in the Pag area.
54. Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala*
Heard near Palenka.
55. Eurasian Nuthatch *Sitta europaea*
Heard at Palenka.
56. Western Rock Nuthatch *Sitta neumayer*
2, Palenka.
57. Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*
Common around Malo Blato.
58. Eurasian Blackbird *Turdus merula*
A few in the towns.
59. Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*
Up to 10 around Pag.
60. Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*
A few around Pag.
61. Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica*
A few in the dry areas.
62. Common Firecrest *Regulus ignicapilla*
1 at Serj.
63. House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*
Common in towns.
64. Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris*
Quite common in the dryer areas.
65. Western Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*
A few north of Pag and at Malo Blato.
66. Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*
1, Pag.
67. White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*
Several noted.
68. Common Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*
A few at Jadranovo.
69. Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*
3, Jadranovo.
70. European Greenfinch *Chloris chloris*
2, Jadranovo.
71. Common Linnet *Linaria cannabina*.
Several noted

- 72. Red Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*
Heard Palenka.
- 73. European Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*
Several noted.
- 74. Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus*
Noted at Voz and Serj.

NEW SPECIES

Species in **RED** are not currently split by HBW Alive. **BOLD UPPERCASE** are Endemics.

- 1. Rock Partridge** *Alectoris graeca*