

# Casa Siempre, Spain 1st-5th September 2007

by Les Harrison

My wife Sandra, and myself decided to pay another visit to her brother in Spain, we arrived at Barcelona Reus airport on the 1st of September and would return to England on the 5th. After a comfortable flight from Stanstead, taking 1hour 40 minutes, where we were picked up by Ian, Sandra's brother, a further 40 minutes found us at Casa Siempre once again.

Casa Siempre is situated on the east side of the village of Tivenys which is just northwest of Tortosa in the Taragona region, Spain. The property runs down to the banks of the river Ebro with the Ebro Delta not too far away. To the south you have the El's Port mountain range with more mountains to the north.



The Ebro & El's Port Mountains

Casa Siempre is a working fruit farm and Bed and Breakfast run by Ian and Lyn, an English couple who moved to Spain three years ago. Accommodation is in a beautifully renovated casita.

After our arrival we were treated to some refreshments; while finishing a cool drink, I was taking in the stunning scenery and noticed a large raptor soaring over the El's Port mountains. It didn't take long to set up the scope and tripod and to locate the bird, although it was some distance away I could still pick out enough detail to identify it as a **Griffon Vulture** soaring with four others.



Hoopoe

Over the following days I would be treated to several new birds in and around Casa Siempre. The most numerous birds were **Serins**, followed by **House & Tree Sparrow**. **Hoopoes** were calling constantly, **Sardinian Warblers** were vocal but skulking, Bee Eaters could be seen hawking insects over the river Ebro with **Whiskered Terns** drifting by.



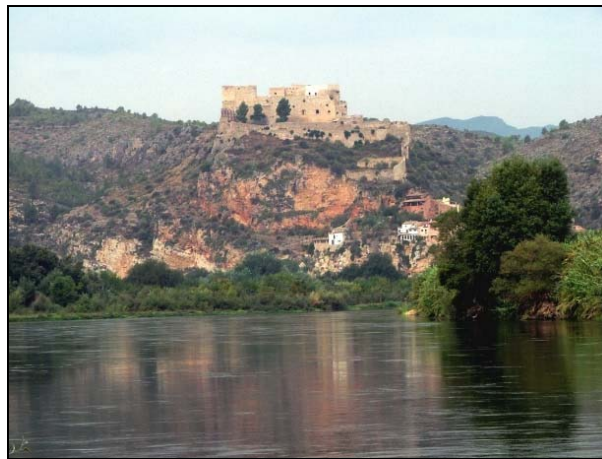
Bee-eater

**Golden Oriole** breed in the area and can be seen in and around the orchards, **Cirl buntings**, **Spotted Flycatcher**, **Pied Flycatchers** could be seen on a regular basis with **Cetti's Warblers** calling constantly. **Spotless Starling** can also be seen alongside common **Starling**. There was also a confiding juvenile **Woodchat Shrike** keeping me entertained throughout our stay.



Woodchat Shrike

There didn't seem to be many raptors around this trip, which was a little disappointing. **Kestrel, Sparrowhawk, Buzzard** and, what I thought to be a **Short-toed Eagle** on a pylon, were the other birds of prey that I saw.



Castle De Miravet & River Ebro.

We had enjoyed a trip in late march to Casa Siempre and had some large movements of birds of prey including **Spotted Eagle, Short-toed Eagles, Black Kites, Buzzards, Sparrowhawks, Ospreys, Kestrels** and always **Griffon Vultures** soaring over the El's Port mountains. There were a lot of raptors that I could not put any ID to, (I need more practice, it seems I will just have to go back). Also to be seen in the area are, **Blue Rock Thrush, Crag Martin**, which breed in a disused cement factory just to west of Tivenys, **Calandra** and **Thekla Lark** are also possible in and around the orange and olive groves a short drive into the mountains to the north of Casa Siempre.



Blue Rock Thrush

There are a couple of 'Where to watch birds' guides, covering this area, the one I have is, "Where to watch birds in North & East Spain" by Michael Rebane. I've yet to birdwatch the Ebro Delta in a serious manner, something that I will have to put right.



Funky Grasshopper species!



Moorish Gecko

It goes without saying that a hire car is needed but do bear in mind that many of the local mountain roads are only gravel, quite uneven and one car's width so a four wheeled drive would not go amiss!

With stunning scenery and some amazing birdlife right on the doorstep, plus a nice tan, there wasn't a lot more I could ask for.

I should add that my dear wife enjoyed her stay, gaining a tan whilst reading by the swimming pool. We also found time to take in some of the local history, the village of Tivenys has a thriving pottery – there are many caves in the nearby mountains which had been used in the Spanish Civil War which can be explored – the town of Tortosa (15 mins drive away) has many historical buildings including a beautiful cathedral.

Info at [www.casasiempre.net](http://www.casasiempre.net)

Les and Sandra Harrison. Essex England.

<b>Species List:</b>
Cormorant
Night Heron
Squaco Heron
Little Egret
Great White Egret
Grey Heron
Mallard
Black Kite
Sparrowhawk
Griffon Vulture
Common Buzzard
Lesser Spotted Eagle
Short-Toed Eagle
Osprey
Common Kestrel
Hobby
Moorhen
Coot
Black-Winged Stilt
Little Ringed Plover
Common Sandpiper
Black Headed Gull
Lesser Black-Backed Gull
Yellow-Legged Gull
Black Tern
Whiskered Tern
Stock Dove
Woode Pigeon
Turtle Dove
Swift
Alpine Swift
Common Kingfisher
European Bee-Eater
Hoopoe

Wryneck
Green Woodpecker
Skylark
Thekla Lark
Sand Martin
Crag Martin
Swallow
House Martin
Tawny Pipit
Meadow Pipit
Pied Wagtail
White Wagtail
Grey Wagtail
Wren
Nightingale
Black Redstart
Blue Rock Thrush
Blackbird
Cetti's Warbler
Melodious Warbler
Sardinian Warbler
Garden Warbler
Blackcap
Wood Warbler
Chiffchaff
Spotted Flycatcher
Pied Flycatcher
Blue Tit
Great Tit
Eurasian Treecreeper
Golden Oriole
European Jay
Carrion Crow
Magpie
Raven
Starling
Spotless Starling
House Sparrow
Tree Sparrow
Serine
Greenfinch
Goldfinch
Linnet
Cirl Bunting

