

Bulgaria



2015



TOURS



BRITISH - BULGARIAN SOCIETY





Why go to Bulgaria?

Bulgaria has rich wildlife, wonderful mountain scenery, fine food and wine, several mentions on UNESCO's World Heritage List and a lively music and folklore scene. Our varied special interest tours reflect these many attractions.

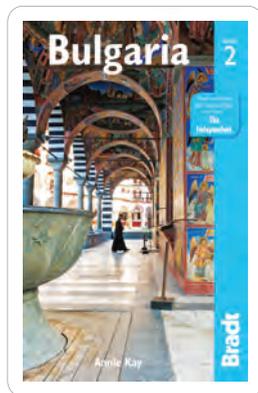
The abundant birdlife is due to Bulgaria's geographical position at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, where steppe, Continental and Mediterranean habitats meet. So although Bulgaria occupies only 1.1% of the territory of Europe, it is home to about 47% of its bird species. A spring tour will probably provide visitors with over 200 species.

Many of Europe's more spectacular butterflies are common or frequent in the right habitat, and Bulgaria's meadows, scrubby hillsides and wetlands provide many opportunities for their observation and photography. The British-Bulgarian Society (B-BS) is proud to have pioneered butterfly tours to Bulgaria.

Why travel on a B-BS tour to Bulgaria?

The B-BS, founded in 1952, has been running tours since the 1970s, and ran the first birdwatching tour in the early 1980s. We offer you the benefits of our long experience, expert leaders, competitive prices and a properly licensed and ATOL bonded tour operator, Balkania Travel Ltd.

The **ONLY** natural history tour specialists to Bulgaria with an office in London, UK landlines and mobiles, **AND** most important of all, **ATOL** bonding for your financial protection and security.



**Due for publication
June 2015**

TOURS CALENDAR 2015



Praise from participants!

"I am writing straightaway to thank you so much for your excellent organization. Everything went very smoothly, we relaxed and enjoyed the food and wine, and even did quite a lot of birdwatching! Our guide was great fun AND very knowledgeable. We hope to be back soon."

C.B. June 2014

"Our hotel was perfectly situated, nature on our doorstep! The food was varied and the wonderfully fresh salads and fruits simply delicious. I shall certainly recommend you to my friends. Thank you once again." A.B. June 2014

TAILOR MADE TOURS

Are you a party organiser? Do you have a good idea for a tour? Don't hesitate to ask us. We'll be happy to put it together for you! We have a wide experience of specialist tours, for small or large numbers, and long or short periods of time.

Recent topics have included butterfly photography, choral singing, wild flowers, moths, steam engines and archaeology.

NEW! Ask for our new supplement of Cultural Tours: Mummings Festival, Orthodox Easter Celebrations, Rose Festival, Bulgaria's Jewish Heritage and Thracian Treasure Hunt.

JANUARY

23.01 – 26.01 Mummings Folklore Festival Tour

FEBRUARY

08.02 – 15.02 Winter Wildfowl Tour

09.02 – 15.02 Valentine and Vine

APRIL

04.04 – 14.04 Orthodox Easter Celebrations and Traditions Tour

19.04 – 01.05 Bulgarian Mountains and Greek Wetlands Birdwatching Tour

MAY

03.05 – 10.05 *Birdwatch Magazine Reader Offer*
Migrants & Mountain Specialities Tour

10.05 – 22.05 Spring Butterfly and Moth Tour

24.05 – 31.05 Spring Natural History Tour
(Summer Half-term)

JUNE

03.06 – 08.06 Rose Festival Tour

21.06 – 29.06 Early Summer Butterfly & Moth Tour

JULY

28.06 – 10.07 Midsummer Butterfly and Moth Tour

AUGUST

06.08 - 13.08 The Great Koprivshitsa Folklore Festival

06.08 - 09.08 Koprivshitsa Festival on a budget!

SEPTEMBER

12.09 – 19.09 Autumn Migration Tour

20.09 – 26.09 Wine Vintage Tour

OCTOBER

04.10 – 12.10 Bulgaria's Jewish Heritage Tour

11.10 – 18.10 Thracian Treasure Hunt

TOURS 2015

All prices include flights, early booking essential



Winter Wildfowl Tour

8 – 15 February (Tour code: WW)

Leader: Tihomir Stefanov Price: £850

(Same price as for the last 3 years!)

Come on our regular "Wild Goose Chase" and look for Red-breasted and other wintering geese and ducks. Although wildfowl will be our main target, wintering birds on the Black Sea coast include a wide range of raptors, a good selection of woodpeckers, flocks of larks and, on the sea, mixed rafts of grebes and divers.

Valentine and Vine Tour

9 – 15 February (Tour Code: V.V)

Price: £850

The Bulgarians uniquely combine in their festive traditions St. Valentine's Day and the indigenous vine-growers' festival of Trifon Zarezan. Wine making and drinking have always been an inseparable part of the lifestyle of the Bulgarians. We visit the fertile Thracian plain, lively cities and little villages, ancient monuments on the UNESCO list of World Heritage sites, modern wineries and home cellars. We join the village celebrations in Brestovitsa, which aspires to a Guinness world record for the largest number of wine cellars per head of the population.

Bulgarian Mountains and Greek Wetlands 19 April – 1 May

(Tour Code: BMGW) **Leader: Assen Ignatov Price: £1,300**
Back by popular request and with several new areas of wetland to explore!

This tour combines the best of Bulgaria's southern mountains and some of the best birding areas in northern Greece. This is an opportunity to combine not only two countries in one tour, but two contrasting habitats. In Bulgaria the Pirin mountains will provide pine forest birds and in Greece there will be visits to wetlands including Kerkin lake, Axios river, lake Volvi and Langada and the Nestos and Evros deltas, the last is an important bottleneck for migratory birds.

BIRDWATCH READER OFFER

SPRING BIRDWATCHING TOUR

Migrants and Mountain Specialities

3 – 10 May (Optional extension until 13 May)

(Tour code: MMS) **Leader: Lyubo Profirov Price: £1,125**

Bulgaria's unique position where the Balkans meet the Black Sea, not far north of the border with Asia, makes it one of the Western Palearctic's foremost birding destinations. Few other locations in the continent can match its diversity of species and habitats, nor its spectacle of mass migration. Add to that such sought-after birds as the enigmatic Wallcreeper and a number of breeding species at the western edge of their breeding range, notably Pied Wheatear and Paddyfield Warbler, and its attraction becomes irresistible. This special spring tour is an opportunity to see the best of Bulgaria's birds at carefully selected sites, and at the height of spring migration.

Spring Butterfly and Moth Tour

10 – 22 May (Tour code: SBT)

Leaders: Nick Greatorex-Davies and Tihomir Stefanov Price: £1,350

On this 13 day tour in the stunning mountain scenery of SW Bulgaria and northern Greece we focus on spring butterfly species such as Southern Festoon, Gruner's Orange-tip, Eastern Greenish Black-tip, Iolas Blue, inky Skipper, Mediterranean Skipper and others. We expect to see a wide range of other butterfly species which will already be on the wing. Although this is primarily a butterfly tour, we shall also run at least one moth trap and take note of other wildlife that we see, for example at Kerkin lake in northern Greece, where we expect to see many birds.



Spring Natural History Tour 24 – 31 May (Tour code: SNH)

Leader: Assen Ignatov Price: £995

In half-term school holiday at clients' request!

This natural history tour visits many of the bird, butterfly and wild flower hotspots in the southern half of Bulgaria. On the tour you should see spectacular birds such as Wallcreeper, Black, Egyptian and Griffon Vultures and Imperial Eagle; endemic plants such as *Haberlea rhodopensis*; butterflies such as skippers, blues and fritillaries; and mammals such as Fallow Deer, reptiles, dragonflies and moths.

Early Summer Butterfly and Moth Tour 21 – 29 June (Tour code: ESBT)

Leaders: Martin White and Assen Ignatov Price: £1,150

This 9 day tour will start in southern Bulgaria in the beautiful eastern Rhodope mountains with a few days to explore the butterfly and flower-rich habitats of the Arda river valley. The next stay will be near Assenovgrad from where we shall explore the Chepelarska river valley and surrounding area in the western Rhodope mountains. We expect to see some of the more spectacular species such as Eastern Festoon, Freyer's purple Emperor, Swallowtail and Cardinal, as well as eastern European species such as Kruemper's Small White, Little Tiger Blue and Lattice Brown.

Midsummer Butterfly and Moth Tour 28 June – 10 July (Tour code: MBT)

Leaders: Nick Greatorex-Davies and Mitko Petrakiev

Price: £1,390

During the first two thirds of this 13 day tour we shall visit the Balkan mountains (Stara Planina) in northwest and central Bulgaria. During the last third of the tour we shall visit Rila mountains, concentrating on the northern side. July is the peak of the butterfly season and we expect to see in excess of 130 butterfly species, from lowland to high altitude species amidst stunning scenery. Some of the highlights should include Freyer's Purple Emperor, Poplar Admiral, both Common and Hungarian Glider, Cynthia's Fritillary, Bog Fritillary and Bulgarian Ringlet among many others. We shall also be running at least one moth trap.

The Great Koprivshitsa Folklore Festival Tour 6 – 13 August

(Tour code: KF) Leader: Cathy Meunier Price: TBC

Every five years the beautiful small mountain town of Koprivshitsa is host to a veritable feast of folklore - costumes, music, singing and dancing. The colourful performances take place on the hills above the town by day,

and in the evenings there are often impromptu performances in the cobbled streets and squares. It has been described as a cross between a pop festival and a medieval fair, certainly it's an experience not to be missed!

We begin with the three festive days in Koprivshitsa and then continue with a few relaxing days in Dobarsko, with further opportunities for dancing with local groups and dance tuition with Mitko Petrov. We also have a festival weekend only option.

The Great Koprivshitsa Folklore Festival on a budget! 6 – 9 August

(Tour code: KFB) Price: TBC

This is for just 3 nights during the festival, staying either in a hotel in a small nearby town or in hostel type accommodation in the centre of Koprivshitsa.

The prices include flights from the UK and transfers between Sofia airport and Koprivshitsa, and for the hotel stay daily return transfers to the festival. Arrangements without flights are also possible.

Autumn Migration Tour 12 – 19 September (Tour code: AM)

Leader: Assen Ignatov Price: £930

This one week tour visits the migration hotspots in the northern and southern Black sea coast. The Via Pontica migration is a truly remarkable spectacle.

Wine Vintage Tour 20 – 26 September

(Tour code: WV) Price: £870

Our tour takes place during the busiest time of the year for winemakers – the harvest or vintage. During the last 20 years the Bulgarian wine industry has made enormous strides away from the familiar 1990s mass market wines produced under the state monopoly. Huge investments have been poured into private young vineyards and new technology. A shift has taken place from supermarket exports to local presentation in own cellars and smart restaurants. Today the best wines of this famous wine land are in Bulgaria itself. Come on our tour at the most exciting time in the vine-growers' year and be among the first to witness the sea-change in Bulgaria's wine-making.

Our Tour Leaders



Nick Greatorex-Davies

has led our Butterfly Tours since 2003. From 1995 to 2006 Nick was co-ordinator of the Butterfly Monitoring Scheme at the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology at Monks Wood, Cambridgeshire. From a young age his main

natural history interest has been British Lepidoptera, and in recent decades European butterflies, supplemented by a strong interest in botany.



Peter Carty

is the National Trust's Countryside, Parkland and Garden Manager in South Shropshire. He worked as a warden for 26 years, in a variety of different areas including the Sefton Coast in Merseyside, Sandscap

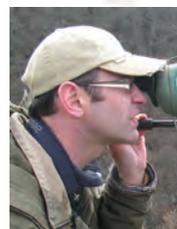
Haws in Cumbria, Aride Island in the Seychelles and Egilsay in Orkney. He is a keen birder and an enthusiastic observer of plants, reptiles, amphibians, dragonflies, butterflies and mammals.



Petar Iankov

is one of the best known experts on Bulgarian birds, and together with the British-Bulgarian Society, one of the pioneers of birdwatching tourism in Bulgaria. He was a founder member of the Bulgarian

Society for for the Protection of Birds in 1988, and was appointed President in 2008.



Assen Ignatov

works at the National Museum of Natural History in Sofia. He has worked with B-BS tours for many years. He is a very experienced and knowledgeable guide, as well as being a gifted artist

and excellent photographer.



Tihomir Stefanov

is currently working at the National Museum of Natural History in Sofia. His main research topic is taxonomy and phylogeny of the freshwater fish of Bulgaria, but he is also an enthusiastic all round naturalist and a

keen birdwatcher. He has led and co-led many tours for the B-BS.

Others in our team of specialist leaders include Mitko Petrakiev, Cathy Meunier and Vladimir Trifonov.



Charitable Donations

The British-Bulgarian Society's programme of special interest tours, which focus on birdwatching and natural history, produces an income which is given away to a variety of conservation and educational projects.

Since 2000 our tours have produced over £15,000 in donations to the **Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds**.

Green Balkans Green Balkans is another Bulgarian NGO which we have assisted with donations for information boards at Belozem and Matochina, and a meteorological station and a microscope for the Pomorie Visitor Centre. For 2014 our donation has been to provide nesting boxes for Shelducks.

Although these beautiful birds are still nesting in the saline lagoon of Pomorie, their small population needs the support of the environmentalists and bird lovers. Special artificial dens are being constructed and buried in the mud in order to support the successful nesting of Shelduck pairs. This year the nesting habitats will be improved and more dens will be constructed with the support of the British-Bulgarian Society to which Green Balkans NGO is extremely grateful.





Birds of a Feather

Like the British-Bulgarian Society, Balkania Travel holds Bulgaria dear to its heart. We are proud to have been the B-BS's main partner in the largest dedicated special interest programme to Bulgaria over the last 19 years.

CAA Licence ATOL 4465, IATA 91-2 7839 Bonded

We are based in the UK, always only a phone call away from you for assistance with any queries you may have about Bulgaria or your arrangements with us. We are the **ONLY** Bulgarian natural history tours specialist, licensed by the UK Civil Aviation Authority, comprehensively insured and fully bonded. There are no grey areas about our responsibility or commitment to you. We proudly aim for the highest level of satisfaction you can expect on your holiday.

Further information and detailed itineraries from Dr. Annie Kay, B-BS Tours Organiser,
Phone: 020 7237 7616

Email: annie.kay@btinternet.com

Web: www.b-bs.org.uk

Availability & Booking Forms from Ognian Avgarski, Balkania Travel:

Phone: 020 7536 9400

Email: ognian@balkaniatravel.com

Web: www.balkaniatravel.com

Sterling Prices, Best Value Available.

Flights and Tour Included,

Our ATOL licence and IATA accreditation allow us to

offer the tours in our brochure as complete packages, inclusive of flights and land arrangements as described in the tour itineraries. And like you, we like to think prices in Sterling. Our 2015 tours are therefore priced in Pounds and as ever, they represent the best value natural history tours to Bulgaria you will find anywhere. Ask for our Booking Form and Conditions.

Trade Wings Travel, wherever you wish to go bird watching (or not) fly there with us!

Being IATA (The International Air Transport Association) agents gives our Flight Department access to the best consolidated air fares anywhere in the world on any airline. Balkania Travel is now part of a larger organisation, including Trade Wings Travel (www.tradewingstravel.co.uk). Our expansion has enabled us to offer many worldwide destinations. Our tailor made travel services cover everything from bird watching in the Seychelles, Temple Tours in Cambodia, Whale Watching in New England to Gorilla trekking in Uganda. We are proud to work in partnership with some ground-breaking operators to offer expedition travel journeys, such as a Galapagos photography expedition and a cruise on the exclusive Orion MV2 to Borneo. Our unique itineraries allow us to offer our clients a memorable "once in a lifetime" experience.

Flights Department Phone: 020 8515 1140

Email: vania@balkaniatravel.com



Bird Island Seychelles

Booking forms and deposits to

Balkania Travel Ltd., Avanta Harrow,
79 College Road, Harrow-on-the-Hill, HA1 1BD



Balkania Travel

