

MIDSUMMER BUTTERFLY AND MOTH TOUR

14 - 23 July 2017 (Tour Code: BT3)

Leaders: Martin White and Assen Ignatov

Price: £1,300 (Based on a group of 10 or more. A smaller group will incur a supplement).

Early Booking Discount: £50 per person if booked by the end of August 2016.

The stunning mountain scenery of southern Bulgaria and the adjacent part of northern Greece includes some of the best butterfly sites in Europe so, unsurprisingly, they are home to some of the rarest and most localized species. This ten day tour is designed to give access to these sites and species. We hope to see Cynthia's Fritillary, Poplar Admiral, Bosnian Blue, Dil's Grayling, the endemic Nicholl's and Bulgarian Ringlets and Dusky Grizzled Skipper.



Graylings and Blues could prove a dominant theme, with Balkan, Delattin's, Eastern Rock and Freyer's Grayling and Grecian and Higgin's Anomalous Blue all in our sights, along with Macedonian Chalkhill, Falakron and False Eros Blue. Swallowtail, Scarce Swallowtail, Apollo and Southern Comma, Sooty, Balkan and Scarce Coppers, Hairstreaks, numerous Fritillaries, Woodland and Bright-eyed Ringlets and many Skippers can also be expected amongst a supporting cast of around 150 species expected on the tour.

Martin White has successfully led butterfly and moth tours for the B-BS since 2015. A butterfly and moth enthusiast from an early age, he has been active with the South Wales Branch of Butterfly Conservation for the past 25 years. He spends part of each summer in Europe chasing butterflies, usually in the company of small groups of botanists, birders and wildlife photographers as well as other butterfly enthusiasts. Apart from Bulgaria, Martin has also spent time in adjacent countries such as Greece and Turkey. As a result, in addition to the butterflies, he has developed an extensive familiarity with the moths, micro-moths, flowers and birds of the region.

Our Bulgarian leader, Assen Ignatov, works for the National Museum of Natural History. He is a very experienced and knowledgeable guide, as well as being a gifted artist and excellent photographer.

Some of the walks at higher altitudes may be of several kms so you need to be reasonably fit, but if you prefer you can either come part of the way (mountain walks will normally be linear rather than circular) or remain near to where the bus is parked (where you should still be able to see many butterflies and enjoy the mountain scenery). Good walking boots, with waterproofs and warm clothing to hand, are essential for those going up high in the event of the weather deteriorating. It is essential that participants have a mobile phone in case of emergency. A whistle is also highly recommended.

Butterfly nets and 'pots' for the temporary retention of butterflies are highly recommended. There will be plenty of time and opportunity for photographing butterflies. Although the primary focus of the tour will be butterflies we shall also look out for dayflying moths and run a moth trap at our hotels.

All confirmed records of butterflies and moths will be passed on to the National Museum of Natural History in Sofia.

Bulgaria's beautiful scenery, friendly people and excellent wine and food are additional highlights. The B-BS offers you the benefits of its nearly forty years' experience of organizing tours to Bulgaria. Our tour price includes a donation to a Bulgarian conservation organization. For your financial protection our tour operators for twenty years, Balkania Travel Ltd. are licensed by the UK Civil Aviation Authority, ATOL 4465 and bonded by the International Air Transport Association, IATA number 91-2 7839.

Hotels are comfortable (and conveniently situated!) but not luxurious. Final details and butterfly and moth lists will be sent to participants approximately two weeks before departure.

Projected Itinerary (which may be subject to adjustment, particularly if weather conditions may make certain visits likely to be unrewarding).

Friday 14 July Travel by scheduled flight from Heathrow to Sofia, and drive to Gotse Delchev in the southern Pirin mountains for a two night stay. This is the longest drive of the tour, but there should be time for at least one butterfly stop.

Saturday 15 July Today we travel to the top of Orelek Peak, an area of open limestone habitat.

Sunday 16 July A day spent around Slavyanka Mountain, an exceptionally rich area for butterflies. Later in the afternoon we shall cross the border to spend three nights at Volakas in northern Greece,

Monday 17 July Today we shall drive almost to the top of Mount Phalakron.

Tuesday 18 July This morning we visit Petroussa with its chapel and amphitheatre carved into the limestone gorge beside the village. Our afternoon site is at Panorama.

Wednesday 19 July Today we shall travel to our hotel in Melnik in southern Bulgaria for a three night stay, making a number of stops along the way.

Thursday 20 July Today we shall visit in the caldera of a volcano. The 'hot springs' at Rupite are the last stirrings of the heat below ground. Sulphurous pools attract tourists to bathe and play host to numerous dragonflies.

Friday 21 July Today will be spent at two of Bulgaria's most notable butterfly localities: Kresna Gorge and Kresna Hill.

Saturday 22 July A cable car will whisk us from a lower altitude to a very high altitude in the Kartala Rila Alpine Park. Late in the afternoon we shall travel to our final hotel in Sofia area.

Sunday 23 July Our early afternoon departure should give us time for a morning visit to a site in the Iskar valley.

OUR PRICE INCLUDES:

- Return scheduled flights from Heathrow to Sofia.
- Airport taxes.
- Accommodation in small (often family-run) hotels with en suite facilities on a twin bedded shared occupancy basis.
- Half board.
- Coach for transfers and excursions.
- Specialist British and Bulgarian leaders.

NOT INCLUDED:

- Travel Insurance (Compulsory). Balkania Travel can advise.
- Drinks and personal expenses such as gratuities.
- Lunches (picnics purchased locally at start of the day) £3 -£4.
- Single room supplement (£100).

NOTE: Butterfly nets may be used to help identify butterflies, all of which are released where found.

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