

SPRING BUTTERFLY & FLOWER TOUR

19 - 30 MAY (Tour Code: BF)

Leaders: Nick Greatorex-Davies and Vladimir Trifonov

Price: £1,460 (Based on a group of 8 or more. A smaller group will incur a supplement)

EARLY BOOKING DISCOUNT: £50 PER PERSON IF BOOKED BY 30 SEPTEMBER 2017



This 12 day tour will take place in SE Bulgaria. Springtime is particularly beautiful with the fresh growth of wild flowers, trees in blossom and the air filled with birdsong, with much other wildlife of interest to be seen. However our primary focus will be butterflies and flowers, though we shall of course take note of other wildlife. We shall also run a moth trap.



Balkania Travel



We expect to see over 100 species of butterfly during the tour and numerous species of plant. Butterflies we expect to see include several species which are restricted to the Balkan Peninsula in Europe, many that are more widely distributed and also many that we are familiar with in the UK. Exactly what species we see will be affected by the season, whether early or late.

Bulgaria has a rich and diverse flora with over 4000 species recorded, including many endemic to the Balkan Peninsula and about 170 endemic to Bulgaria itself. Among many others we shall be looking for a range species endemic to, or characteristic of the Balkans including *Haberlea rhodopensis*, *Serapias vomeraceae*, *Verbascum bugilifolium* and *Calystegia soldanella*. We shall also note species that are food-plants to butterflies that we see.

The tour will cover three very different areas. Some of the species mentioned below will be seen in more than one area.

The first area we shall visit is Strandzha in the extreme SE of Bulgaria, an unspoilt region of hills, deciduous forests and river valleys. Though it borders the Black Sea it has a very low human population. Among the butterflies we shall be particularly looking for are Grecian and Lesser Fiery Coppers, Assman's Fritillary, Freyer's Fritillary, Eastern Knapweed Fritillary, Marsh Fritillary, Oriental Marbled Skipper and Large Chequered Skipper. Among the plant species we hope to see are *Geranium asphodeloides*, *Legousia speculum-veneris*, *Verbascum phoenicaceum* and *Sideritis montana*.

Then we shall move on to the beautiful Eastern Rhodopi Mountains, much of which consists of rocks of volcanic origin, and stay in the Arda River valley. This includes one of Europe's ten so-called re-wilding areas where natural ecosystem processes are being encouraged and restored. Particular target butterflies here include Eastern and Southern Festoons, Small Bath White, Krueper's Small White, Eastern Wood White, Large Copper, Sloe and Ilex Hairstreak, Little Tiger Blue, Chapman's Blue, Freyer's Purple Emperor, Southern White Admiral, Camberwell Beauty, Large Tortoiseshell, Southern Comma, Cardinal, Marsh Fritillary, Lesser Spotted Fritillary, Balkan Marbled White, Lattice Brown, Oriental Marbled Brown and Oberthur's Grizzled Skipper. Plant targets include *Inula aschersoniana*, *Trachelium rumelianum*, *Potentilla regis-borisii* and *Saxifraga graeca*.

Lastly we move on to the rich limestone areas of the Western Rhodopi Mountains. Here we shall be looking for such species as Clouded Apollo, Mountain Small White, Blue-spot Hairstreak, Blue Argus, Osiris Blue, Chequered Blue, Eastern Baton Blue, Iolas Blue, Zephyr Blue, Reverdin's Blue, Turquoise Blue, Hungarian Glider, Twin-spot Fritillary, Woodland Ringlet, Northern Wall Brown, Russian Heath, Yellow Banded Skipper and Tufted Marbled and Marbled Skippers. Plants we shall be hoping to see include *Fritillaria pontica*, *Dactylorhiza sambucina*, *Orchis pallens*, *Gymnadenia conopsea*, *Marrubium frivaldskianum* and *Campanula persicifolia*.

Since 2003 we have seen nearly 200 of the 216 butterfly species that occur in Bulgaria (over 150 in 2008), a list will be sent with your tickets, or in advance on request.

Nick Greatorex-Davies has been leading butterfly and moth tours for B-BS since 2003. From 1995 to 2006 Nick was co-ordinator of the Butterfly Monitoring Scheme based at the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology at Monks Wood, Cambridgeshire, where he worked for 36 years. From a young age his main natural history interest has been British Lepidoptera (including microlepidoptera), and in recent decades European butterflies, supplemented by a strong interest in botany.

Vladimir Trifonov is a knowledgeable and experienced botanist. He has a Master's Degree and his thesis was in the field of Botany and Conservation of the Environment. During the last 10 years he has taken part in monitoring plant species in the Eastern Rhodopi, the mapping of sites in Natura 2000 zones, research, conservation and monitoring of Griffon Vulture and Imperial Eagle. He has been an enthusiastic leader of natural history tours since 2009.

Butterfly nets and several 'pots' for the temporary retention of butterflies are highly recommended.

The tour provides numerous opportunities for photographing butterflies, plants and other wildlife.

We shall have at least one moth trap with us providing an extra dimension for those prepared to get up a little earlier! All confirmed records of butterflies, plants and moths will be passed on to the National Museum of Natural History, 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 if weather conditions make certain visits likely to be unrewarding, or to make the best of good opportunities presented at the time).

- Saturday 19 May:** Travel by scheduled flight from Luton to Burgas. Drive south to Primorsko on the Black Sea coast for a 3 night stay. Stops along the coast on the way.
- Sunday 20 May:** Day spent in wetland and woodland areas in the Primorsko area.
- Monday 21 May:** Day spent further south along the Black Sea coast visiting wetland areas at Sinemorets.
- Tuesday 22 May:** Travel from Primorsko to the Arda Valley in the Eastern Rhodopi for a 4 night stay. Stops on the way.
- Wednesday 23 May:** Day spent in the area not far from the hotel including walking up to the Oreshari Gorge.
- Thursday 24 May:** Day spent at several sites in the spectacular scenery near the small town of Madzharovo.
- Friday 25 May:** Day spent SW of the Arda valley near to the Greek border visiting sites near Kayaloba and Kirkovo.
- Saturday 26 May:** Travel to Cherven near Assenovgrad for a 3 night stay. Stops on the way.
- Sunday 27 May:** Day on the limestone Dobrostan plateau, a particularly rich area for butterflies.
- Monday 28 May:** Day spent in the Chepelare valley at Hvoyna and Siniakhan.
- Tuesday 29 May:** Return to Burgas for one night, stopping on the way.
- Wednesday 30 May:** Morning visit to wetlands near Burgas. Afternoon return flight to the UK.

Bulgaria 2018

OUR PRICE INCLUDES:

- Return scheduled flights from Luton to Burgas, subject to information and prices not available at the time of going to press.
- Airport taxes, baggage, seat reservation.
- 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 (£110).

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

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Further Information from Dr Annie Kay, B-BS Tours Organiser,
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