

SUMMER BUTTERFLY and MOTH TOUR

29 JUNE - 10 JULY (Tour Code: BGS)

Leaders: Martin White and Mitko Petrakiev

Price: £1,550 (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 popular 12-day tour to Bulgaria and Serbia follows the same itinerary as in the previous two years, but with slightly later dates than 2017. Firstly we shall visit NW Bulgaria, a relatively poor and largely unexplored region of Bulgaria. There are many extensively wooded valleys and unimproved meadows to the north towards the Danube, and to the south an area of fascinating rock formations covering almost 100 sq km. and further south a long limestone ridge of hills that proved very productive on previous visits.



Balkania Travel



The second part of the tour will be spent in the Stara Planina in Serbia (same name as in Bulgaria) a very species-rich area (166 species known). Finally we shall travel to the region of Kyustendil, SW of Sofia near the border with Serbia and Macedonia, where there are particularly species-rich limestone areas in the region of Zemen gorge.

The tour is designed to take in a variety of habitats from low to high altitudes to see a wide range of 130 – 140 different butterfly species.

We shall be looking for a few 'special' species including False Comma, Bog Fritillary, Freyer's Fritillary (which is widespread in NW Bulgaria and this part of Serbia). Some early species such as Spinose and Persian Skippers, both of which occur in some of the limestone areas we explore, may still be on the wing.

Other species seen on the tour should include many of the following: Eastern Festoon, Apollo, Clouded Apollo, Mountain Small White, Krueper's Small White, Eastern Wood White, Blue-spot Hairstreak, Osiris Blue, Eastern Baton Blue, Large Copper, Balkan Copper, Alcon Blue, Eastern Zephyr Blue, Chequered Blue, Reverdin's Blue, Blue Argus, Turquoise Blue, Iolas Blue, Lesser & Freyer's Purple Emperors, Southern White Admiral, Common & Hungarian Gliders, Yellow-legged Tortoiseshell, Cardinal, Niobe Fritillary, False Heath Fritillary, Lesser Spotted Fritillary, Assmann's Fritillary, Nickerl's Fritillary, Balkan Marbled White, Hermit, Great Sooty Satyr, Lattice Brown, Lesser Lattice Brown, Ottoman's Brassy Ringlet, Almond-eyed Ringlet, Woodland Ringlet, Russian Heath, Yellow-banded Skipper, Orbed Red Underwing Skipper, Marbled Skipper and Tufted Marbled Skipper, among many others.

Since 2003 we have seen nearly 200 of the 214 butterfly species that occur in Bulgaria (over 150 in 2008), a list will be sent approximately two weeks before departure, or in advance on request.

Some of the walks at higher altitudes may be of several kms so participants need to be reasonably fit. Those who think these walks might be beyond them 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 they 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, and participants are strongly advised to bring a whistle and a mobile phone (set to work in Bulgaria!) just in case they get separated from the main party and need to contact the tour leaders.

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.

Mitko Petrakiev is a tour leader and mountain guide with over ten years' experience. He is also qualified as a climbing instructor and for cave rescue and first aid. He is also a good birder.

Butterfly nets and several 'pots' for the temporary retention of butterflies are highly recommended. The tour provides numerous opportunities for photographing butterflies. 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 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).

- Friday 29 June:** Travel by scheduled flight from a London area airport to Sofia. (See note under Our Price Includes) Drive north to Belogradchik for a 4 night stay. We expect there will be time for a couple of short stops on the way.
- Saturday 30 June:** Day in the wooded valleys and meadows north of Belogradchik towards the River Danube.
- Sunday 1 July:** Day in the limestone area south of Belogradchik.
- Monday 2 July:** Day high on the lower slopes and valleys of Kom in the Western Stara Planina.
- Tuesday 3 July:** Travel south crossing into Serbia for a 4 night stay within the Stara Planina Nature Park. Short stops on the way.
- Wednesday 4 July:** Day exploring damp unimproved meadows in the vicinity of our hotel and, depending on time, further afield.
- Thursday 5 July:** Day exploring some of the limestone areas to the south of the Serbian Stara Planina.
- Friday 6 July:** Another day exploring limestone areas in the region.
- Saturday 7 July:** Travel back to Bulgaria and south to Kyustendil for a 2 night stay. Stops on the way.
- Sunday 8 July:** Day in a limestone valley adjacent to Zemen gorge (Zemen gorge itself is only accessible on foot or by train), this has proved to be exceptionally rich for butterflies on previous visits.
- Monday 9 July:** Return to Sofia for a one night stay. Stops on the way .
- Tuesday 10 July:** Return flights to the UK. Depending on flight times, we may have time in the morning to visit sites near Sofia in the Iskar river valley.

Bulgaria 2018

OUR PRICE INCLUDES:

- Return scheduled flights from a London area airport to Sofia. Heathrow, other London airports: Gatwick, Luton, Stansted and City and regional airports are possibilities, subject to scheduling 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 (Full board in Serbia).
- 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 (£120).

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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