

## **EARLY SUMMER BUTTERFLIES & MOTHS**

1 - 12 JUNE (Tour Code: **BM**)

Leaders: Nick Greatorex-Davies and Zdravko Kolev

Price: £1,475 (Based on a group of 8 or more. A smaller group will incur a supplement)

**EARLY BOOKING DISCOUNT: £50 PER PERSON IF BOOKED BY 30TH SEPTEMBER 2018**



**Common Glider, near Sofia, Bulgaria, July 2013**

Early June is a glorious time to be in Bulgaria. The air will still be filled with birdsong, trees will be in full leaf but beautifully fresh and green, and the meadows will be full of insects, flowers and their scents. The tour is designed to take in a variety of habitats along the western side of Bulgaria in order for us to see a wide range of species, including spring species still on the wing, as well as many summer species. We expect to see well over 100 species during the tour.



Balkania Travel



The first part of the tour will be spent in SW Bulgaria in the area associated with the Struma River valley from the Greek border to Kresna gorge, an area particularly rich for butterflies. The second part of the tour will be spent in W Bulgaria based in Kyustendil from where we will explore rich limestone valleys associated with the Zemen gorge as well as the lower slopes of the Osogovska Planina towards the border with Macedonia. Finally we will travel further north to explore the karst limestone foothills of the Western Stara Planina as well as some of the slopes of the W Stara Planina itself before returning to Sofia for the last night.

We shall be looking for a few 'special' species including Scarce Tortoiseshell, False Comma, Freyer's Fritillary, and Inky, Persian and Spinose Skippers. It is possible we may also find Violet Copper and Bog Fritillary in the Western Stara Planina.

Depending on the season (how early or late) we expect to see most of the following species (among many other more common species): Eastern Festoon, Southern Festoon, Clouded Apollo, Krueper's Small White, Balkan Clouded Yellow, Eastern Wood White, Large Copper, Lesser Fiery Copper, Balkan Copper, Little Tiger Blue, Eastern Short-tailed Blue, Osiris Blue, Chequered Blue, Eastern Baton Blue, Zephyr Blue, Reverdin's Blue, Blue Argus, Anomalous Blue, Turquoise Blue, Eros Blue, Freyer's Purple Emperor, Lesser Purple Emperor, Poplar Admiral, Southern White Admiral, Hungarian Glider, Common Glider, Yellow-legged Tortoiseshell, False Comma, Southern Comma, Cardinal, Eastern Knapweed Fritillary, Nickerl's Fritillary, Assmann's Fritillary, False Heath Fritillary, Balkan Marbled White, White-banded Grayling, Great Sooty Satyr, Oriental Meadow Brown, Russian Heath, Lesser Lattice Brown, Persian Skipper, Sandy Grizzled Skipper, Yellow-banded Skipper, Oriental Marbled Skipper, Inky Skipper, Mediterranean Skipper, Pigmy Skipper.

Since 2003 we have seen 200 of the 212 butterfly species that are currently known to occur in Bulgaria (we saw over 150 in 2008), a list will be sent approximately two weeks before departure, or in advance on request.

Most of the sites will be easy to access and walk to from the bus, but a few walks may be several kilometres long. To do these participants will need to be reasonably fit. Those who think any walk might be beyond them (e.g. in the Western Stara Planina), can either come part of the way (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 scenery). Good walking boots, with waterproofs and warm clothing to hand, are essential for those going on longer walks, and participants are strongly advised to bring a whistle and a mobile phone just in case they get separated from the main party and need to contact the tour leaders.

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 as an ecologist and an entomologist for 36 years (specialising in Lepidoptera (including micro-lepidoptera), and the identification of plants).

Zdravko Kolev is a Bulgarian zoologist with a degree in ecology and biology from Finland, an expert on butterflies of the Balkans and Europe, and an avid educator, having authored the website "The Butterflies of Bulgaria" and carried out the first steps in setting up a much-needed butterfly monitoring scheme in Bulgaria. He is an Associate of the National Museum of Natural History, and is credited with the discovery of two butterflies new to science as well as as nearly 10 species new to Bulgaria and 3 to Northern Europe.

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 over 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 over 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 1 June

Travel by scheduled flight from Heathrow to Sofia. Drive south to Melnik for a four night stay. One or two butterfly stops on the way.

### Sunday 2 June

Day spent near the Greek border visiting the area known as the 'Marble Quarry' near Petrovo and the hills and valleys near Chuchuligovo and Novo Hodzhovo.

### Monday 3 June

Day spent in the Struma valley in the area of Rupite, visits including the volcanic ridge of Kozhuh.

### Tuesday 4 June

Visit sites in the western foothills of the Pirin mountains including Ilidentsi, and on the return to Melnik, Harsovo.

### Wednesday 5 June

Day spent visiting several sites in the Kresna gorge area before travelling on to Kyustendil in west Bulgaria for a three night stay.

### Thursday 6 June

Day spent in the butterfly-rich hills and valleys in the Zemen gorge area.

### Friday 7 June

Visit to the Osogovka Planina (mountains) near the border of Bulgaria with Macedonia.

### Saturday 8 June

Travel to limestone hills on the south and southwest side of Vitosha Mountain, near Sofia, before travelling north to Dragoman for a three night stay.

### Sunday 9 June

Day in the karst limestone hills near Dragoman and the foothills of the Western Stara Planina.

### Monday 10 June

Day spent in the mountains of the Western Stara Planina near Petrohan Pass. If the weather is very good we may go to the slopes below Kom (the highest peak of Western Stara Planina, 2,016m).

### Tuesday 11 June

Day in the karst limestone hills at Buchin Prohod before travelling back to Sofia for a one night stay.

### Wednesday 12 June

Morning visit near Kokalyane in the Iskar valley before travelling to Sofia Airport for the return flight to the UK.

# BULGARIA 2019

## OUR PRICE INCLUDES:

- Return scheduled flights from Heathrow to Sofia, 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.
- 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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