

EARLY SUMMER BUTTERFLIES & FLOWERS

6 - 18 JUNE (Tour Code: BF)

Leaders: Nick Greatorex-Davies and Vladimir Trifonov

Price: £1,490 (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 2019



Eastern Festoon, Eastern Rhodopi Mountains, June 2013



Freyer's Purple Emperor, Eastern Rhodopi Mountains, June 2011



Haberlea Rhodopensis



Apollo, Western Rhodopi Mountains, Late May 2018

This 13 day (12 night) tour will take place in SE Bulgaria. Many butterfly species will be on the wing by now and many flowers will be at their peak, particularly at higher altitudes. The air will still be filled with birdsong and there will be 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 at least one moth trap.



We expect to see well 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, and how many, will be affected by the season, whether early or late, and by annual fluctuations in abundance of certain species.

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. We will note all species of interest but we shall be particularly looking for those species endemic to, or characteristic of Bulgaria and the Balkans. 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, Eastern Knapweed Fritillary, Marsh Fritillary, Oriental Marbled Skipper and Large Chequered Skipper, and possibly Freyer's Fritillary and late Southern Festoon. Among the plant species we hope to see are *Geranium asphodeloides*, *Legousia speculum-veneris*, *Sideritis montana* and *Linum capitatum*.

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 Festoon, Small Bath White, Krueper's Small White, Eastern Wood White, Large Copper, Little Tiger Blue, Chapman's Blue, Nettle-tree Butterfly, Freyer's Purple Emperor, Southern White Admiral, Camberwell Beauty, Large Tortoiseshell, Cardinal, Balkan *Marbled White*, *Lattice Brown*, *Oriental Marbled Brown* and *Sandy Grizzled Skipper*. Plant targets include *Haberlea rhodopensis*, *Inula aschersoniana*, *Verbascum humile* and *Astracantha thracica*.

Lastly we move on to the rich limestone areas of the Western Rhodopi Mountains. Here we shall be looking for such species as Apollo, 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 and Common Gliders, Twin-spot Fritillary, Woodland Ringlet, Northern Wall Brown, Russian Heath, Safflower Skipper, Chequered Skipper and Tufted Marbled and Marbled Skippers. Plants we shall be hoping to see include *Fritillaria pontica*, *Achillea clypeolata*, *Trachelium rumelianum* and *Gymnadenia conopsea*.

Since 2003 we have seen 203 of the 212 butterfly species that are currently known to occur in Bulgaria (over 150 in 2008), a list will be sent approximately two weeks before departure, 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 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 generally not luxurious. Final details and butterfly, plant, 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 6 June:** Travel by scheduled flight from Luton to Burgas. Drive south to Primorsko on the Black Sea coast for a 4-night stay.
- Sunday 7 June:** Day spent in wetland and woodland areas in the Primorsko area.
- Monday 8 June:** Day spent further south along the Black Sea coast visiting wetland areas at Sinemorets as well as other sites.
- Tuesday 9 June:** Day spent west of Primorsko, including near Krushevets, and maybe as far as Zvedets.
- Wednesday 10 June:** Travel from Primorsko to the Arda Valley in the Eastern Rhodopi for a 4-night stay. Stops on the way, likely stops including near Sredets and Topolovgrad.
- Thursday 11 June:** Day spent at several sites in the spectacular scenery near the small town of Madzharovo.
- Friday 12 June:** Day spent at sites in the Arda Valley including walking up to the Oreshari Gorge.
- Saturday 13 June:** Day spent SW of the Arda valley nearer to the Greek border.
- Sunday 14 June:** Travel to Cherven near Assenovgrad for a 3-night stay. Stops on the way.
- Monday 15 June:** Day on the limestone Dobrostan plateau, a particularly rich area for butterflies.
- Tuesday 16 June:** Day spent in the Chepelare valley including near Hvoyna and Sinia Han.
- Wednesday 17 June:** Return to Burgas for one night, stopping on the way.
- Thursday 18 June:** Morning departure driving north along the coast towards Varna with stops on the way before the return flight to Luton.

BULGARIA 2020

OUR PRICE INCLUDES:

- Return scheduled flights from Luton to Burgas, and return from Varna to Luton.
- Airport taxes, baggage, priority boarding, 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 (£140).

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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