

EARLY SUMMER BUTTERFLY TOUR

12 - 21 June 2010 (Tour code: EBT)

Leaders: Nick Greatorex-Davies and Mario Langurov

Price: £1,125 (Based on a group of 10 or more. A smaller group will incur a supplement).

This 10-day tour will be based in the Rhodope Mountains, initially around Madzharovo, our base for exploring the many unspoilt and butterfly and flower-rich habitats in the Arda River valley. The second base will be at Assenovgrad, near Plovdiv, where we shall explore the Chepelarska River valley and adjoining mountains.

The tour is designed for those who want to see a wide range of European butterfly species not found in Britain as well as many that are. We expect to see a range of the more spectacular species such as the Eastern Festoon, Apollo, Swallowtail and Scarce Swallowtail, Cardinal, Camberwell Beauty, Southern White Admiral and Freyer's Purple Emperor, as well as a range of eastern European species such as Krueper's Small White, Little Tiger Blue, Lattice Brown, Sandy Grizzled Skipper and Yellow-banded Skipper among others. Also many blues, fritillaries and other species.

The tour should be suitable for all ages, as no long walks are planned. On most days there will be plenty of time for leisurely observation of butterflies in their natural habitats. Participants should be aware that the weather can sometimes be hot (36°C or more).

Nick Greatorex-Davies has led the tour most years since 2003. From 1995 to 2006 Nick was co-ordinator of the UKs Butterfly Monitoring Scheme based at the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology at Monks Wood, Cambridgeshire, where he worked as an entomologist from 1974 to 2009. From a young age his main natural history interest has been British Lepidoptera (including more recently microlepidoptera), and in recent decades European butterflies, supplemented by a strong interest in botany.

Mario co-led the butterfly tours with Nick in 2008 and 2009. As a professional entomologist Mario is Associate Professor at the Institute of Zoology, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences in Sofia, where he has been involved in a variety of research projects since obtaining his PhD on scuttleflies in 2002. Mario has an excellent all-round knowledge of Bulgaria's natural history including a broad knowledge of other insect groups, reptiles, birds and plants.

Bulgaria's beautiful scenery, friendly people and excellent wine and food are additional highlights. The BBFS offers you the benefits of **over thirty years' experience** of organising tours to Bulgaria and excellent value. The accommodation is comfortable (and well situated for birdwatching!) but not luxurious. The holiday is on a Half-Board basis. For your **financial protection** our tour operators, **Balkania Travel Ltd.** are **ATOL bonded** in accordance with the Civil Aviation Authority's requirements. Our tour price includes a donation to Green Balkans. (www.greenbalkans.org) Final details and butterfly lists will be sent to participants with their tickets.

Projected itinerary (which may be subject to minor adjustments, particularly if weather conditions make certain visits likely to be unrewarding).

Saturday 12th June Travel by direct scheduled flight from Heathrow to Sofia. Drive south-east to Madzharovo in the eastern Rhodope Mountains for a four night stay. This is the longest drive of the tour, but there should be time for two or three short stops on the way to look for butterflies.

In Bulgaria a wide range of butterflies can be seen almost anywhere one stops!

Sunday 13th June Day in the Arda River valley near Madzharovo. We expect to see many butterfly species, including some of the following: Yellow-banded Skipper, Eastern Festoon, Swallowtail, Scarce Swallowtail, Black-veined White, Small Bath White, Purple-shot Copper, Green Underside Blue, Freyer's Purple Emperor and Lattice Brown among many others.

Monday 14th June Day at Studen Kladenets. Species we hope to see include Hungarian Skipper, Krueper's Small White, Eastern Baton Blue, Amanda's Blue, Southern White Admiral, Cardinal and Niobe Fritillary.

Tuesday 15th June Day in the area of Rogach and Zlatolist. We expect to see Eastern Bath White, Little Tiger Blue, Zephyr Blue, Knapweed Fritillary, Spotted and Lesser-spotted Fritillaries, Twin-spot Fritillary and Great Banded Grayling.

Wednesday 16th June Drive NW to Assenovgrad for a 4 night stay, with a few short observation stops on the way. Species might include Eastern Festoon, Swallowtail, Scarce Swallowtail, Eastern Wood White, Meleager's Blue, Nettle-tree Butterfly, Camberwell Beauty and Large Tortoiseshell.

Thursday 17th June Day at Dobrostan and near Assenovgrad. This beautiful limestone area hosts a wide range of species and those we can expect to see include Chequered Skipper, Apollo, Mountain Small White, Osiris Blue, Blue Argus, Turquoise Blue, Iolas Blue, Large Blue, Reverdin's Blue, Northern Wall Brown, Woodland Ringlet and Chestnut Heath among many others.

Friday 18th June Stops in the Chepalarska river valley. We have only passed through this valley on previous tours, but there are many interesting rocky limestone areas that will be productive for butterflies. We should see many species here.

Saturday 19th June Travel to Smolyan Lakes, for a range of species such as Balkan and Scarce Coppers, Nickerl's Fritillary, Twin-spot Fritillary, Woodland Ringlet and Chestnut Heath.

Sunday 20th June Return to Sofia with butterfly stops on the way at the limestone Besapara hills near Pazardzhik, and in the Iskar river valley near Dolni Passarel, not far from Sofia. We hope to see Berger's Clouded Yellow, Meleager's Blue, Chapman's Blue, Lesser and Freyer's Purple Emperors and Common and Hungarian Gliders. One night stay.

Monday 21st June Return flight to Heathrow.

OUR PRICES INCLUDE:

- Return scheduled flights from Heathrow to Sofia. (Connecting flights from other airports and/or overnight accommodation near airports can also be arranged for you at a supplement).
- Airport taxes.
- Half Board in small (often family run) hotels with en suite facilities on a twin bedded shared occupancy basis.
- Coach for transfers and excursions.
- Specialist British and Bulgarian leaders.
- All reserve entrance fees.

NOT INCLUDED:

- Lunches (about £4 or less).
- Travel Insurance (Compulsory). Balkania Travel can advise.
- Drinks and personal expenses such as gratuities.
- Single room supplement (£95).

NOTES: Tour participants and the leader may use butterfly nets in order to help identify butterflies, all of which are subsequently released where found.

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