

## EARLY SUMMER BUTTERFLY & MOTH TOUR

01 - 14 June 2024 (Tour Code: SBM)

Leaders: Nick Greatorex-Davies and Dimitar (Mitko) Petrakiev

Price: £2,150 (Based on a group of 7 or more, a smaller group may incur a supplement, see NOTE on Page 4)

***Early booking discount of £50 per person on bookings received by 30 September***



Scarce Fritillary, Suka Reka, NE Bulgaria, June 2018



Tesselated Skipper, Eastern Stara Planina, June 2018



Blue Argus, Rhodope Mountains, May 2018.



Grecian Copper, Strandzha, June 2016

This 13 day tour will take place in NE and SE Bulgaria. During the tour we expect to see well over 100 butterfly species, including several species largely, or wholly, restricted to these areas of Bulgaria. We will also take note of other wildlife that we see, including birds, herptiles and dragonflies.

We will visit three main areas, the first being the Ludogorie in the NE, a largely arable plateau of karst limestone. The plateau is intersected by numerous, mostly dry, river valleys, which are largely not agriculturally improved and are consequently rich in wildlife. It includes the Suha Reka, designated as a Prime Butterfly Area (PBA) and is where our hotel is located. Here we will be looking particularly for the Scarce Fritillary which is widespread in these often steep sided (cliffs up to 50m) valleys of woodland and herb-rich grassland. There are many other butterfly species to be seen here. We will also be visiting a site in the area hoping to find the Bavius Blue.

On 5th June we will move on to the Eastern part of the Stara Planina, also known as the Balkan Mountains. These mountains extend east to the Black Sea coast and west across Bulgaria and into Serbia. Here we will be particularly targeting Tessellated and Spinose Skippers. The part we will visit includes the beautiful Blue Rocks Nature Park (also a PBA) near the town of Sliven, an area where over 150 butterfly species have been recorded including Krueper's Small White, Grecian Anomalous Blue, Poplar Admiral, Balkan Marbled White and Sandy Grizzled Skipper.

On 10th June we will travel SE to an area known as Strandzha, the southern part of which has been designated as a Nature Park. We will stay at Primorsko on the Black Sea coast. Strandzha is an area of unspoilt hills with deciduous forest and river valleys with a low human population. Wetter flatter areas near the coast provide habitat for another of our target species, the Large Chequered Skipper. The area is also a hotspot for the Grecian Copper and Assman's Fritillary. We will also look for Freyer's Fritillary which still occurs in the area.

Among the many other butterfly species we hope (in most cases expect) to see are: Eastern Festoon, Clouded Apollo, Eastern Wood White, Large, Purple-shot and Lesser Fiery Coppers; many blues including: Chequered Blue, Eastern Baton Blue, Eastern and Provencal Short-tailed Blues, Blue Argus, Alcon Blue, Large Blue, Green Underside Blue, Reverdin's Blue, Meleager's Blue, Eros Blue and Turquoise Blue; Freyer's Purple Emperor, Purple Emperor, Southern White Admiral, Common Glider, Large Tortoiseshell, many fritillaries including Cardinal, Twin-spot, Lesser Marbled, Lesser Spotted and Marsh Fritillaries, Eastern Rock Grayling, Lattice Brown, and Yellow-banded, Hungarian Skipper and Oriental Marbled Skippers.

Since 2003 we have seen over 200 of the 213 butterfly species that occur in Bulgaria (over 150 in 2008, 149 in 2022), 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.

Dimiter (Mitko) Petrakiev is a tour leader and mountain guide with over fifteen years' experience of birdwatching, butterfly and other natural history tours. He is also qualified as a climbing instructor and for cave rescue and first aid. He has also led archaeological and cultural tours for the B-BS.

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

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 over twenty-five 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 Luton to Varna. Drive north to Kamentsi (SE of Silistra) in the Ludogorie area for a four-night stay. A short stop on the way.

**Sunday 2 June** Day spent in the Suha Reka (PBA) near the hotel and further afield, particularly targeting the Scarce Fritillary.

**Monday 3 June** A second day in the Suha Reka exploring other promising sites in the area.

**Tuesday 4 June** A day further west in the Ludogorie region visiting sites as far as Isperih.

**Wednesday 5 June** Travel to Kotel in the Eastern Stara Planina, for a five-night stay, travelling via Razgrad, stopping at sites on the way.

**Thursday 6 June** Day spent north of Kotel, near the village of Zheravna.

**Friday 7 June** Day spent near to Kotel in a nearby limestone gorge and near Kotel Pass.

**Saturday 8 June** Day spent in the area of the Blue Rocks Reserve (Sinite Kamani), just north of Sliven.

**Sunday 9 June** Day spent exploring other sites in the area for example near to the town of Shivachevo.

**Monday 10 June** Travel to Primorsko in SE Bulgaria for a four-night stay. Stops on the way.

**Tuesday 11 June** Day spent near the coast north of Primorsko at Alepu Marshes and Dyuni.

**Wednesday 12 June** Day spent near the Turkish border near Sinemorets.

**Thursday 13 June** Day spent inland of Primorsko visiting sites at Krushevets and elsewhere.

**Friday 14th June** Our final day to be spent visiting sites in SE Bulgaria, exactly where will depend on the success of the previous few days. Late afternoon we will drive to Burgas for our return flight to Luton.



NOTE: The price has been calculated for 7 participants. If fewer participants or if using a larger vehicle, price may be increased. If over 10 participants, price will be reduced for all booked.

#### OUR PRICE INCLUDES:

- Return scheduled flights from Luton to Varna, and Burgas to Luton.
- 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 (£250).

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

Published June 2023.



Further information from Dr Annie Kay, B-BS Tours Organiser.

Email: [annie.kaym1@gmail.com](mailto:annie.kaym1@gmail.com). [www.b-bs.org.uk](http://www.b-bs.org.uk)

Bookings forms and deposits by bank transfer or cards over the phone to Balkania Travel Ltd.,

c/o Ognian Avgarski, 63 Alphabet Square, London E3 3RT. Phone: 0207 536 9400,

Email: [ognian@balkaniatravel.com](mailto:ognian@balkaniatravel.com), visit our website [www.balkaniatravel.com](http://www.balkaniatravel.com)

(Registered office Conex House, 148 Field End Road, Eastcote, HA5 1RJ)

