

EARLY SUMMER BUTTERFLIES and MOTHS TOUR

14 June - 24 June 2026 (Tour code: BT1)

Leaders: Nick Greatorex-Davies and Mitko Petrakiev

Price: £2,200 (Based on a group of 8 or more. A smaller group will incur a supplement).



Apollo, Western Rhodopis, May 2018



Eastern Festoon, Eastern Rhodopis, June 2012



Freyer's Purple Emperor, NW Bulgaria, June 2019.



Little Tiger Blue, Eastern Rhodopis, June 2011

The first part of this 11-day tour will be in the beautiful Eastern Rhodope Mountains, much of which consist of rocks of volcanic origin, with some mountains rising to over 800m. The area is within one of Europe's ten so-called re-wilding areas where natural ecosystem processes are being encouraged and restored. We will be staying in the Arda River valley not far from Madzharovo, which will provide a base for exploring some of the many unspoilt butterfly and flower-rich habitats of the Arda River valley and adjoining areas. Target butterfly species here include Eastern Festoon, Small Bath White, Krueper's Small White, Little Tiger Blue, Escher's Blue, Freyer's Purple Emperor, Oriental Meadow Brown and Sandy Grizzled Skipper.

The second stage of the tour will be based in the Western Rhodope Mountains in butterfly-rich habitats associated with the Chepelarska River valley and adjacent marble limestone mountains. The mountains here are generally higher than in the Eastern Rhodopes, many peaks being well over 1000m high, and a couple of peaks over 2000m. Many of the mountains are clothed with forest, especially with native Norway Spruce. Unforested marble limestone areas and sub-alpine grasslands on more acid soils provide excellent habitats for many butterfly species. Here target species include Apollo, Balkan Copper, Iolas Blue, False Eros Blue, Blue Argus, Common & Hungarian Gliders, and Great Sooty Satyr.

During the tour we expect to see in the region of 120 to 130 butterfly species, including several species which are generally scarce and local in Bulgaria. We will also take note of other wildlife that we see, including moths, dragonflies, herptiles and of course birds.

Other butterfly species we expect see on the tour should include many of the following: Southern Small White, Mountain Small White, Eastern Wood White; many blues including Blue-spot & Black Hairstreaks, Large, Scarce and Lesser Fiery Coppers, Many blues such as Osiris, Green Underside, Large, Eastern Baton, Chequered, Eastern Zephyr, Reverdin's, Anomalous, Chapman's and Turquoise, blues, Geranium Argus, Purple, and Lesser Purple Emperors, Southern White Admiral, , Camberwell Beauty, Many fritillaries including, Cardinal, Niobe, Queen of Spain, Twin-spot, Nickerl's, Spotted and Lesser Spotted Fritillaries, Balkan Marbled White, Eastern Rock Grayling, Hermit, Lattice Brown, Woodland Ringlet, Bright-eyed Ringlet, Russian, Chestnut and Eastern Large Heaths, Northern Wall Brown, Yellow-banded, Safflower and Large Grizzled Skippers, Hungarian Skipper, Marbled and Tufted Marbled Skippers, Chequered Skipper, among many others.

Most of the walks will be in the vicinity of our bus, though some may be 2-3 kilometres in length. However the terrain is often stony and can be quite steep so come prepared with good walking boots and light waterproofs. 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.

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 more recently microlepidoptera), and in recent decades European butterflies, supplemented by a strong interest in botany.

Mitko Petrakiev is a tour leader and mountain guide with over fifteen years' experience. He is also qualified as a climbing instructor and for cave rescue and first aid. Butterflies and dragonflies are also a significant part of his expertise and he is also a very 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 over forty-five 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).*

Sunday 14 June Travel by scheduled flight from Heathrow to Sofia. Drive (about 3 hours) south east to the Arda River valley in the Eastern Rhodope Mountains for a four-night stay. We may have time for a short stop on the way.

Monday 15 June Day visiting several good butterfly sites in the Arda River valley, mostly within walking distance of our hotel.

Tuesday 16 June A second day in the Arda valley visiting sites near the town of Madzharovo.

Wednesday 17 June Visit sites south and east of our hotel including Studen Kladenets and sites towards Krumovgrad.

Thursday 18 June Travel west to Chepelare in the Western Rhodope Mountains. Short butterfly stops on the way.

Friday 19 June Day visiting sites in the Chepelarska River valley, including the limestone hills in the vicinity of Hvoyna and sub-alpine meadows near the town of Smolyan.

Saturday 20 June Day exploring the butterfly-rich limestone hills in the area of Dobrostan. This is a good area for the Apollo butterfly.

Sunday 21 June Day visiting sites in the area of Trigrad to the SW of Chepelare.

Monday 22 June Day visiting butterfly-rich marble limestone hills near the village of Zabardo.

Tuesday 23 June Travel back to Sofia for a one-night stay, with at least one good butterfly stop on the way.

Wednesday 24 June Morning visit to a good butterfly site near Sofia. Afternoon return flights to the UK.



OUR PRICE INCLUDES:

- Return scheduled flights from Heathrow to Sofia
- Airport taxes, checked baggage 23 kg, cabin baggage 10 kg.
- 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 (£130).

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

Published August 2026



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

Email: annie.kaym1@gmail.com. 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, visit our website www.balkaniatravel.com

