

# WILDLIFE TRAVEL



18th to 25th June 2018 (8 days)

## WEST CARPATHIANS

### Butterflies and natural history of Central Europe

"Martin extremely good, a real bonus"

White Carpathians  
2012

**A leisurely introduction to the butterflies and other wildlife of Mitteleuropa, exploring two contrasting but equally wildlife-rich areas.**

The Carpathians form the backbone of Eastern Europe, curving eastward in an arc from Slovakia through Ukraine to Romania. The **White Carpathians** are shared between the Czech Republic and Slovakia - much of the area is protected within a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and is famed for its **patchwork of flower-rich meadows and extensive mixed forests**. It is not surprising that this is **one of the best areas in Europe for butterflies**. Flowers are also abundant here and local meadows are amongst the richest in Europe.

From here we travel southwards, skirting the High Tatras on our way to spend three nights on the sun-dried southern slopes of the Slovak Karst and Aggtelek National Park in Hungary; the largest area of **karst limestone** north of the Alps. Just on the margins of the Pannonian basin, the rich limestone flora is represented by several eastern elements - the flagship being the local endemic Turna Golden Drop, which we will look for whilst visiting the ruins of the 13th century Turna Castle, looking out across the **Hungarian plains**.

The tour is designed to visit some of the best butterfly areas, looking at the wealth of flowers that we shall encounter on the way, and not ignoring other wildlife either. Summer time before harvesting crops is always an **idyllic season** in Central Europe. Amongst the possible highlights of our journey, we will search for the much sought-after Poplar Admiral, the first Apollo may have emerged higher up, and we will enjoy a variety of skippers and blues, fritillaries and heaths, hairstreaks and coppers.



**Price**  
£1595

**Single Room Supplement**  
£100

**Full board**

- Day 1** arrival Vienna  
Zahorie Sands
- Day 2** Czech W Carpathians
- Day 3** Slovak W Carpathians
- Day 5** Morava river valley
- Day 4** High Tatras
- Day 6** Slovak Karst
- Day 7** Aggtelek
- Day 8** Cerova Hills  
return to UK

**Leaders**  
Graham Bellamy,  
with Martin Hrouzek

butterflies, mountain  
natural history

**Wildlife and culture holidays**



our profits are donated to the **Wildlife Trusts**



## ITINERARY

**Please note that the itinerary may be changed to suit the weather or other practicalities or at the discretion of the leaders.**

**Day 1, 18th June** Our flights take us to Vienna, from where we travel north to the White Carpathians. After dinner, if the weather is good, we will try to run the moth trap in the hotel garden - species likely to be trapped are **Orache**, **Rosy** and **Scarce Footman** or hawk moths including **Poplar Hawk-moth**.

**Days 2-4, 19th-21st June** The White Carpathians form a 96-kilometre long ridge of hills on the border between the Czech Republic and Slovakia and rise to a maximum elevation of 1,000 metres. Famed for its patchwork of large, flower-filled meadows dotted with solitary limes and oaks and extensive mixed forests, it is not surprising that this is one of the best areas for butterflies in Europe.

Our targets are mainly the larger reserves to the south. We can expect Twin-spot Fritillary, a June-flying species living here on the northwestern edge of distribution. Also Lesser Marbled Fritillary has healthy populations in these protected areas. We hope to find an early flying Large Chequered Skipper that should be accompanied by Chequered Skipper, Real's Wood White, Scarce Copper, Purple, Black and Blue-spot Hairstreaks, High Brown and Glanville Fritillaries or Alcon and Chapman's Blue. We will also search hard for the two butterfly highlights of the area - Woodland Brown and **Poplar Admiral**.

Many attractive flowers should be in flower, especially the magnificent lousewort *Pedicularis exaltata* whose single Czech locality is in these mountains. Local **meadows rank amongst the richest in Central Europe**. We will pick out Grassy-leaved and Variegated Iris, Mountain Germander, Cross Gentian and Crested Cow-wheat among many others. Orchids could include Globe-flowered, Greater and Lesser Butterfly, Military and Burnt, as well as the endemic *Ophrys holubyana*.

The nearby Vah River Valley and the **low dolomitic hills** to the east offer another interesting area to explore. Amongst the diverse flora is the endemic pink *Dianthus lumnitzeri*, while more butterflies include Assmann's Fritillary, Eastern Pale Clouded Yellow, Turquoise, Chequered and Eastern Baton Blues, Woodland Grayling and Safflower Skipper.

Additionally, on dikes along the River Vah, we will try to use pheromones to lure some of the local clearwing moths, the Dusky Clearwing being the most interesting of them.

**Day 5, 22nd June** We bid farewell to the White Carpathians and set off across Slovakia towards the Karst region of the south, making several stops along the way.

Our first stop of the day will be higher up in the White Carpathians, where we should be rewarded by sightings of very first **Apollos** flying gracefully above meadows. This place also has a population of Mountain Green-veined White which together with Large Blue, Eastern Baton Blue and Geranium Argus we will hope to locate.



Onwards, we will stop amongst the mires of the Tatras Mountains. Here several butterflies thrive including our target **Scarce Heath** and False Heath Fritillaries. Flower highlights should include the magnificent **Moor King** *Pedicularis sceptrum-carolinum*.

**Days 6-7, 23rd-24th June** From our base in the **Slovak Karst National Park**, we will explore the surrounding karstic habitat, an open, rolling landscape of limestone pavement, low hills and small woodlands. This is a dry, sunny region which has much in common with the adjacent plains of Hungary and the plant community here displays a correspondingly 'steppic' character. Chief among the specialities are the locally endemic **Turna Golden Drop** *Onosma tornensis*, the local race of Alpine Aster and *Astragalus vesicarius albidus*, while other colourful and localised species could include Variegated and Stemless Irises, Austrian Dragonhead *Dracocephalum austriacum*, Downy Woundwort, Lady Orchid and the bellflower *Campanula sibirica*.

The Slovak Karst was formerly less wooded than today but still provides good conditions for many species, some of which prefer light forests and forest fringes. We will be looking for Woodland and Great Banded Grayling, White Admiral, Common and Hungarian Gliders as they hawk gracefully along the woodland edges. A host of fritillaries may include Silver-washed, Niobe and Lesser Spotted and perhaps the great prize, **Pallas's Fritillary**. The blues will provide a challenge for even the most expert lepidopterists amongst us, with Eastern Baton, Chequered, Large, Osiris, Alcon and Chapman's Blues amongst the bewildering possibilities Purple-shot Copper, Safflower Skipper and the endangered and declining **Woodland Brown** are other great species we hope to find.

**Day 8, 25th June** Our final breakfast and then it is time to head towards Budapest, making yet more roadside stops along the way as time allows, including a stop at Cerova Vrchočina, where we will look for **Lesser Fiery Copper**. Then it will be time to cross the border and arrive at Budapest airport in time for our afternoon flight home.

## Accommodation, meals, transport and weather

We will be staying at two small hotels during our holiday. All rooms are en-suite. We will travel by small coach or minibus.

The holiday is full board, with all the meals provided during the stay a mixture of **local and International dishes**. We will take picnic lunches with us every day. Requests for special diets can be accommodated.

At this time of year the weather is usually sunny and warm (mid to late 20s°). However, as with everywhere the weather is no longer entirely predictable, and there could well be some both hotter or cooler weather, or rain (perhaps heavy). There can be strong sun especially on higher slopes and sun protection is needed.

**Photos.** Front: *Ascalaphus libelluloides*, Purple-shot Copper, *Melampyrum nemorosum*, Apollo. Page 2: Lesser Purple Emperor, *Digitalis grandiflora*, *Veronica austriaca*, *Melampyrum arvense*. Page 3: Scarce Heath, Poplar Admiral, Reverdin's Blue. Back: *Pedicularis exaltata*, Meleager's Blue, *Clematis recta*



## Leader and Guides

Our leader for this trip will be **Graham Bellamy**. Formerly Reserve Manager for the Wildlife Trust in Bedfordshire, Graham is an all round naturalist who has led previous holidays for Wildlife Travel to France and The Burren. The local guide for this trip is **Martin Hrouzek**, an expert naturalist with a particular fondness for butterflies. Martin has many years' experience leading wildlife tours through Central Europe, including Wildlife Travel's previous visit to the West Carpathians; his home patch.

Between them, our leaders will provide you with an introduction to the butterflies, wild flowers and other wildlife of the area and will ensure that you have a relaxing and enjoyable holiday.



## Flights

The group flights will be from London Luton airport, flying out to Vienna with Easyjet and then returning from Budapest with Wizz Air.

18th June depart Luton 07.15, arrive Vienna 10.40  
25th June depart Budapest 18.40, arrive Luton 20.15

It is also possible to fly with British Airways from London Heathrow.

The countries we will visit during this trip (Austria, Slovakia, Czechia and Hungary) are all 1 hour ahead of the UK.



## Passport and visas

If you hold an EU passport, you do not need a visa to travel to Austria, Slovakia, Czechia and Hungary. If you do not have an EU passport, please check with your local consulate.

## Fitness

You should have a good level of fitness to get the most out of the planned activities on this holiday. While the walking is generally easy and we won't be covering any great distances, there will obviously be some hilly areas and uneven, wet or rocky ground for which good walking boots are essential.



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## TO BOOK

Contact us to check availability and reserve a place. Complete the Booking Form and send to Sunvil Holidays (CAA-ATOL Licence 808, ABTA V6218), our tour operator, with your deposit. All details about booking are given in the Booking Pack.

**DEPOSIT £500 PER PERSON,  
BALANCE DUE BY 19/03/2018**

**INCLUDED:** Return flight from Luton. Local transport for transfers and excursions as specified in the itinerary. Seven night's accommodation, full board basis. Services of guides.

**NOT INCLUDED:** Refreshments. Drinks with evening meals. Entrance fees for optional sightseeing. Gratuities. Travel insurance.

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## WILDLIFE TRAVEL

**The Manor House, Broad Street,  
Great Cambourne, Cambridge CB23 6DH**

Tel: 01954 713575      email: [wildlifetravel@wildlifebcn.org](mailto:wildlifetravel@wildlifebcn.org)

**[www.wildlife-travel.co.uk](http://www.wildlife-travel.co.uk)**



*Directors: Christine Donnelly, Brian Eversham, Philip Precey, Michael Russell, Dr Tim Upson  
Wildlife Travel Ltd. Reg. No 2237697; (for Registered Charity numbers, please contact us)*