

WILDLIFE TRAVEL

17th to 24th May 2020 (one week)

DORDOGNE

Spring wildlife of south-west France (by train)



NEW
ITINERARY
FOR 2020

A week enjoying the wildlife of the woodlands, river valleys and limestone plateaux of the Dordogne in the heart of south-west France.

Our travels will take us through the wide valleys of the Dordogne and Vézère Rivers with opportunities to explore their diverse woodlands, wetlands, and of course the flower-rich limestone plateaux of the 'causses'.

Their dry stony soils and warm climate gives the causses an interesting **Mediterranean feel** and we can expect to find a fantastic range of plants including a good selection of orchids. The causses support an **abundance of butterflies**, providing plenty of opportunity to get to grips with various blues, fritillaries and skippers, along with other interesting species such as the Ocellated Lizard.

Passing through the river valleys clad in oak woodland we will see outcrops of high, sculpted limestone cliffs, providing dramatic views along with opportunities to spot birds such as Alpine Swifts, Crag Martins and Ravens.

As well as time on the causses, we will visit the wetlands at Tourbières de Vendoire, an important area of damp meadows and peat bog, with a rich dragonfly community. We will also spend a day in the Forêt de la Bessède, which is largely on acidic sandy soils providing a different habitat with an interesting mix of Sweet Chestnut, pine and oak.

Our trip will also give us the opportunity to enjoy some of the region's beautiful villages, along with an opportunity to visit the bustling Le Bugue farmers' market.

This holiday will appeal to anyone who wishes to enjoy **pleasant walks** filled with wildlife, plus there is the bonus of **travelling by train** rather than having to fly.



Price
£1,865

Single Room Supplement
£185

Full board

- Day 1** train to Bordeaux
- Day 2** Causse de Terrasson
- Day 3** Campagne, Les Eyzies
- Day 4** Tourbières de Vendoire, Plateau d'Argentine
- Day 5** Forêt de la Bessède
- Day 6** Cingle de Trémolat
- Day 7** Causse de Daglan
- Day 8** return to London

Leaders

Laurie Jackson and
Kelly Thomas

Group size
min 6, max 11

flowers, butterflies,
birds, flight-free holiday



Wildlife and culture holidays



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



FOCUS OF INTEREST

This holiday has a very general natural history focus including birds, plants and other wildlife. Other aspects such as landscape and geology, habitats and ecology are also sometimes included - the topics covered are described in this leaflet. Cultural highlights are included as on most of our holidays.



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 After travelling to Bordeaux by train, our bus takes us to the market town of **Le Bugue** (c 2.5 hrs) on the Vézère River where we will arrive in time for a late dinner.

Day 2 This morning we set off northwards through the valley of the Vézère River for our first introduction to the region's limestone grasslands at **Causse de Terrasson**. We will explore two areas to get a feel for the mix of scrubby woodland and flowery grassland that characterise the Dordogne. We should find a good range of wild flowers such as the delicate *Campanula erinus*, *Teucrium montanum* and a nice selection of orchids including Man Orchid and Burnt-tip Orchid.

The grassland here is also great for butterfly spotting: we hope to see Cleopatra, Duke of Burgundy and, with a little luck, freshly-emerged Blue-spot Hairstreaks, amongst others.

Day 3 Following breakfast there will be time to visit the vibrant Le Bugue market before we head to the nearby village of **Campagne**. Walking through the gardens of the chateau with singing Redstart, Serin and Firecrest, we will look out for dragonflies and damselflies including Small Red-eyed Damselfly before taking a walk through the nearby woodland. Short-toed Treecreepers may be spotted along with woodpeckers, and we can hope to find orchids including Red Helleborine, Violet Limadore, Greater Butterfly Orchid and Fly Orchid. This afternoon we will visit Les Eyzies to explore its streets nestled under dramatic rock formations.

Day 4 A longer drive today takes us to the interesting wetlands at **Tourbières de Vendoire**, which includes important peat bog habitat. We will walk through the reserve exploring its damp meadows and ponds home to a wide range of dragonflies such as the distinctive Orange-spotted Emerald and impressive Pronged Clubtail. The notes of Nightingales and Golden Orioles drift through the air, whilst Cetti's Warblers periodically issue their explosive song from deep in the vegetation.

We will spend our afternoon exploring the **Plateau d'Argentine**. Melodious Warbler and Tree Pipits sing from the scrub and the limestone grassland bordering the airstrip here is rich in wild flowers with the diminutive *Carthamus mitissimus* and an array of orchids including Green-winged, Woodcock and Pyramidal Orchid. We should see plenty of butterflies here along with the attractive but restless Chalk Burnet moth.



Day 5 We travel south to **Forêt de la Bessède** in an area of sandstone. Among many possibilities we hope to find Tongue Orchid, Marsh Helleborine, Fragrant Orchid and more within the open woodland here. Dartford Warblers sing their scratchy song in forest clearings, and we will listen out for the calls of Middle Spotted Woodpecker and the gentle purr of Turtle Doves as we walk.

Day 6 Heading west this morning, we take a longer walk through the woodland and meadows of **Cingle de Trémolat**, enjoying superb views over the Dordogne. In amongst the wooded areas we will listen for the calls of Crested Tits, while a variety of fritillaries and blues join Berger's Clouded Yellow and Swallowtail over the flowery grassland. Our walk finishes in the village of Trémolat where there will be time to visit the 12th Century church or explore the cobbled streets before retracing our steps. We will make a stop in the beautiful village of Limeuil on our way back to Le Bugue.

Day 7 Today we travel south to the grasslands and oak woodlands of **Causse de Daglan** and **la Vallée du Céou**. Walking through scrubby grassland we will listen out for the scratchy song of Western Subalpine Warbler as we enjoy more rich limestone flora. We will stop for lunch at a peaceful restaurant in the heart of la Vallée du Céou before exploring a nearby 'orchid reserve', home to more than 20 species.

Day 8 After breakfast we set off back to Bordeaux and our train home.

Accommodation, meals and transport

We stay at Le Cygne in the attractive market town of Le Bugue. The hotel is comfortable and **all rooms have en-suite facilities**. We will have breakfast and evening meals at the hotel restaurant, with picnic lunches provided by the hotel and lunch in a restaurant on Day 7. We will ensure that our travelling is as comfortable as possible, using a minibus/small coach that will enable us to travel on the smaller country roads for our excursions.

Weather

The weather in the Dordogne should be pleasantly warm at this time of year, although rain is always a possibility, as is cooler weather.

Health and fitness

On several days we are walking for much of the day, albeit at a relatively slow, relaxed pace, with plenty of time to enjoy the surroundings as well as stopping to enjoy the wildlife along the way. The walks are between 2 and 5 miles, with some rougher ground and some slopes, both up and down, although none of the walks are strenuous. Walking boots are essential. If you are a slower walker, please contact us to discuss whether any of the walks will be a problem for you.

There will be stairs in the hotel, without a lift, as well as steps up and down into the vehicle and on to the train. You must be able to lift your own luggage on and off of the trains.



Leaders

Laurie Jackson is an excellent all-round naturalist and experienced Wildlife Travel leader who joined our team in 2013. She has led many of our trips in recent years from Bulgaria and Morocco, to Svalbard and Chile.

Laurie will be joined by **Kelly Thomas**, a professional ecologist who co-led our December 2018 holiday to Morocco.

Laurie and Kelly visited the Dordogne in 2019 to plan this new Wildlife Travel itinerary.



Passport and visas

If you hold an EU passport you do not currently need a visa to travel to France. Your passport should be valid for the proposed duration of your stay, you do not need any additional period of validity on your passport beyond this. Should we leave the EU without a deal in place before May 2020, you should have at least six months left on your passport from your date of arrival.



Group travel

We will travel by train on this holiday. Train timetables for 2020 are not yet released, but the timings are likely to be similar to 2019, as follows:

17th May depart London St Pancras 10.24, arrive Paris Gare du Nord 13.47,
 depart Paris Montparnasse 14.47, arrive Bordeaux St Jean 16.56

24th May depart Bordeaux St Jean 12.04, arrive Paris Montparnasse 14.13
 depart Paris Gare du Nord 16.13, arrive London St Pancras 17.39

France is one hour ahead of the UK

If you prefer to make your own travel arrangements, you can book the holiday without the travel. You would need to meet the group at Bordeaux St Jean or at the hotel in Le Bugue. There are flights available with Easyjet from several UK airports. Contact us for details of the price reduction.

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 16/02/2020

INCLUDED: Return train travel from London St Pancras to Bordeaux. Local transport on excursions as specified in the itinerary. Seven nights' accommodation, full board basis. Services of leaders and guides.

NOT INCLUDED: Refreshments. Entrance fees for optional sightseeing (e.g. museums). Gratuities. Travel insurance.

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