

WILDLIFE TRAVEL

27th April to 1st May 2020 (5 days)

SUSSEX

Spring in southern England



NEW ITINERARY FOR 2020

This short break will introduce us to the beautiful county of Sussex and the best of its spring wildlife.

Our base for the week will be in the attractive village of Bramber nestling at the foot of the South Downs and centrally located for exploring the wildlife of the county.

During our explorations we will visit the important wetlands at **Amberley Wildbrooks** home to a huge array of plants, as well as interesting birds and invertebrates.

We will also take in an extensive area of **chalk grassland** at Castle Hill, home to a strong population of Early Spider-orchids. Exploration of some of the county's ancient woodland as well as the important heathland habitat at **Ashdown Forest** are also included.

Our visit wouldn't be complete without a visit to the **Knepp Wildland**, an interesting rewilding project in the heart of the county where we will find out more about the approach being used for conservation here and experience some of the growing number of species that are calling the estate home.

During some early mornings and evenings there will be opportunities for excursions to listen for the diverse repertoire of the Nightingale, as well as searching for foraging Barn Owls and bats, or listening to the dawn(ish) chorus, which is reaching its prime at this time of year.

The holiday has been designed to give us an opportunity to experience the diversity of Sussex's habitats and look for a good range of wild flowers, birds, butterflies and other wildlife along the way in the mid-spring.



Price
£785
Single Room Supplement
£165

Half board

- Day 1** arrive
- Day 2** Amberley, Kithurst Hill
- Day 3** Castle Hill, Loder Valley
- Day 4** Knepp Wildland, Ashdown Forest
- Day 5** depart

Leader
Laurie Jackson
(second leader tbc, dependent on group size)

Group size
min 4, max 13
spring birds, butterflies, orchids, Knepp Wildland

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.



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 27th April Our holiday starts in the village of Bramber where we will meet this evening at our hotel in time for an introduction to the holiday and our first dinner together. Depending on the weather, we will make a visit to a local nature reserve to listen for Nightingales.

Day 2 28th April Today we travel westwards to visit **Amberley Wildbrooks**. The Brooks are part of the Arun Valley Special Protection Area, an area of wet grassland crisscrossed by ditches and linked to the chalk springs of the South Downs that is important for its wintering wildfowl, breeding waders and rare ditch invertebrates. An **interesting array of wetland plants** can be found here including Marsh Cinquefoil, Flowering Rush, Greater Bladderwort and Cut-grass. The site is also important for dragonflies and we hope to see early species such as Hairy Dragonfly, Downy Emerald and Scarce Chaser hunting over the ditches. We will look out for birds with Sedge Warbler, Hobby, Cuckoo and perhaps even a quartering Hen Harrier among the possibilities, whilst the 'plop' of Water Vole could tantalise us as we walk alongside ditches.

We continue west to Rewell Wood where we hope to find **Pearl-bordered Fritillary** basking or feeding on Bugle at one of its only remaining Sussex strongholds following sustained conservation effort at the site. Our day will also include a visit to Kithurst Hill, one of the county's **premier butterfly sites**, giving us an opportunity to catch up with spring species such as Duke of Burgundy, Dinky Skipper, Green Hairstreak and Wall, and maybe even our first Small Blue of the year.

Following dinner, and weather permitting, we will take an (optional) evening stroll to nearby Beeding Brooks to look for Barn Owls and foraging bats.

Day 3 29th April Today we travel eastwards to **Castle Hill National Nature Reserve**, where along with fantastic views of the South Downs and recently arrived Wheatears and Whinchats, we will search for the petite **Early Spider-orchid** (and its pollinator the Buffish Mining Bee). The site is also home to one of the last remaining populations of the Wart-biter in the UK, and we will keep an eye out for early instars of these magnificent Orthoptera as we explore.



Our afternoon will be spent at the beautiful **Loder Valley** Nature Reserve, a favourite haunt of botanist Francis Rose. The reserve is part of Wakehurst Place with woodlands and wild flower meadows set around Ardingly Reservoir. The bluebells should be reaching their best and we will listen for Marsh Tit here, with a passing Hobby or Osprey always possible over the reservoir. The site is also good for Kingfisher and we will listen out for their piping calls whenever we are close to the water.

Day 4 30th April This morning we will have an earlier start, taking a short drive northwards to the **Knepp Wildland**. This exciting conservation project is using free-roaming grazing animals as part as a process-led approach to habitat restoration. At this time of year the migrant birds that call the burgeoning scrub habitat here home will have started streaming into Knepp, and we should find Lesser Whitethroat, Nightingale, Garden Warbler, Cuckoo and perhaps even an early arriving Turtle Dove. There will also be time to hear more about the rewilding project itself and to look for some of its key players, the herbivores, which include Tamworth pigs, Longhorn cattle, Exmoor ponies and Red Deer.

Our final afternoon will be spent at Old Lodge in the heart of the **Ashdown Forest**, part of the **High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty** and home to internationally important heathland habitat. Walking through the heathland and woodland we should find a different set of birds here, including Woodlark, Tree Pipit, Redstart and Dartford Warbler. We will also keep an eye out for Adders, which bask in the spring sunshine, and interesting plants and invertebrates.

Day 5 1st May One final breakfast, and an optional stroll back to Beeding Brooks to look for birds then it is time to bid farewell to Bramber, hopefully taking some good memories of the diverse spring wildlife of Sussex.

Accommodation, meals and travel

We will be based at the Old Tolgate Hotel in the village of Bramber site of an old staging post. All rooms are en-suite. Dinners are included in the price and we will buy packed lunches or visit tearooms for lunch during our daily expeditions.

Bramber is located near the A283, just to the east of the town of Steyning. If travelling by train we can arrange for a taxi from Shoreham-by-Sea or Hassocks (cost not included)

Our transport for this trip will be by a small 16-seater coach/minibus.

If you would like to **extend your stay** in Sussex, we can book extra nights accommodation at the hotel, and give advice on good places to visit.



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 has lived in Sussex since 2008 and previously worked for Sussex Wildlife Trust. She has worked as a guide at the Knepp Wildland Project for four years. Dependent on final group size, Laurie will be joined in Sussex by a second leader.



Weather

The English weather is of course anything but predictable. We should expect mild conditions, although colder, wetter weather is always possible. We will not walk for long in hot or adverse weather conditions. Evenings and early mornings may feel chillier.

Health and fitness

We will be **walking for much of the day**, each day, albeit at a slow pace and never covering any great distance. This includes areas of rougher ground and some slopes, and the ground at Amberley can be boggy. None of the walks are strenuous, but (light) walking boots are essential. In some locations 'facilities' are scarce! **You therefore need to have a reasonably good level of fitness.** There are likely to be steps at the hotel.



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 £350 PER PERSON
BALANCE DUE BY 27/01/2020

INCLUDED: Four nights' accommodation, half board basis. Local transport as specified in the itinerary. Services of leaders.

NOT INCLUDED: Travel to Bramber. Lunches, refreshments and drinks with meals. Entrance fees for optional tourist attractions. Gratuities. Travel insurance.

WILDLIFE TRAVEL

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Wildlife Travel Ltd. Reg. No 2237697; (for Registered Charity numbers, please contact us)*

Photos - Laurie Jackson, except where shown otherwise. **Front** (from top): Seaford Head, Spotted Flycatcher, Early Spider-orchid, Duke of Burgundy. **Inside** (left to right): Loder Valley, Sedge Warbler (Mike Symes), Tamworth pig at Knepp Wildland (Philip Precey), Dingy Skipper, Green-winged Orchid (Philip Precey), Sussex High Weald. Back (from top): Pearl-bordered Fritillary; Arun Valley.