

WILDLIFE TRAVEL

30th June to 5th July 2024 (6 days)

SUSSEX

High summer in southern England

"leaders knowledge of the area and the wildlife was fantastic.

we saw a fantastic range of species and habitats."
Sussex 2023

This short break takes us from rolling chalk downland to the heath, bog and woodland of Ashdown Forest, in search of wild flowers, butterflies and dragonflies.

Our base for the holiday will be the village of Buxted, ideally located in the picturesque High Weald of East Sussex.

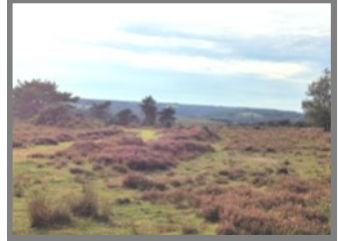
Our explorations take us to the important heathland of **Ashdown Forest**, home to rare plants and insects, along with a fantastic assemblage of birds including Common Redstarts, Dartford Warblers and Woodlarks.

We will also visit the South Downs National Park, which at this time of year should be full of colour from the rich **chalk grassland** flora. On the coast, we visit Seaford Head, with stunning views of the iconic white cliffs of the **Seven Sisters**, before walking through the saltmarshes of nearby Cuckmere Haven.

During a visit to the vegetated shingle at Shoreham Beach we will look for specialist plants including some exciting local rarities, as well as the Wall Lizards found here.

Our holiday 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, and experience some of the growing number of species that are calling the estate home; all during the height of **Purple Emperor** season.

This 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.



Price
£1,255

Single Room Supplement
£255

Full board

Day 1 arrive
Day 2 Seaford Head
Day 3 South Downs
Day 4 Knepp Wildland, Shoreham Beach
Day 5 Ashdown Forest
Day 6 depart

Leader

Michael Blencowe and Laurie Jackson

Group size
min 4, max 14

summer butterflies, wild flowers, dragonflies, Knepp Wildland



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 Our holiday starts in the East Sussex village of Buxted where we will meet at our hotel in time for an introduction to the holiday and our first dinner together.

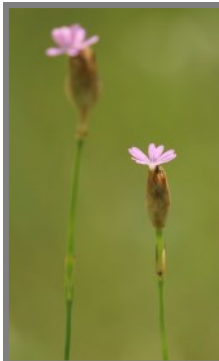
Day 2 This morning we travel south toward the **South Downs National Park** and the iconic chalk cliffs of the Seven Sisters. We start our day at Seaford Head, which forms part of the Seaford to Beachy Head Site of Special Scientific Interest. Whilst we will be focusing our attention on the chalk grassland, the area is also important for its coastal and marine habitats, which include large areas of chalk foreshore. We should see good displays of wild flowers including Musk Mallow *Malva moschata*, Common Centaury *Centaureum erythraea* and Thrift *Armeria maritima*, along with a range of summer butterflies that should be on the wing. Kittiwakes and Fulmar nest on the cliffs here, and amongst the scrub we should spot Linnets, Stonechats and a selection of warblers. We gradually descend into the Cuckmere Valley, where plants such as Greater Sea-spurrey *Spegularia media*, Sea Aster *Aster tripolium* and Common Sea Lavender *Limonium vulgare* grow in the intertidal habitats alongside the River Cuckmere. Walking alongside the river towards the end of our walk, we will look out for waders, probing the mud for morsels.

Day 3 We explore a different side of the National Park today as we take a walk that leads us to Lullington Heath, home to **one of the largest extents of chalk heath habitat in Britain**. The chalk and acidic deposits here produce an interesting mix of plants including heathers and Tormentil *Potentilla erecta*, alongside typical chalk grassland species. The scrub at the site is important for birds such as Yellowhammer and Linnet. We will be out in the Downs most of the day and walking around four miles, enjoying views over Friston Forest and out to the sea.

Day 4 This morning we head west, to **Knepp Wildland**, an exciting conservation project that is using free-roaming grazing animals as part of a process-led approach to habitat restoration. At this time of year the migrant birds that call the burgeoning scrubland here home will have streamed into Knepp, and we should find Lesser Whitethroats, Garden Warblers, Whitethroats and Blackcaps aplenty, hopefully alongside Turtle Dove and Nightingale.

There will be plenty of time to hear more about the rewilding project itself and to look for some of its key players; the herbivores, which include rootling Tamworth pigs, Longhorn cattle, Exmoor ponies and Red Deer. Our visit falls during Purple Emperor season, and we will spend some time searching the treetops for this magnificent butterfly.

Before returning towards Buxted, we will have a small detour to explore the **vegetated shingle** at Shoreham Beach. We should find a range of specialist plants of this habitat including Biting Stonecrop *Sedum acre*, Yellow Horned-poppy *Glaucium flavum* and Sea Kale *Crambe maritima*, along with some local rarities. We will also be on the look out for



Wall Lizard, which has one of its three Sussex colonies here.

Day 5 Our attentions today turn to the **High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty** as we explore the internationally important heathland of **Ashdown Forest**. Walking through the heath and woodland we should find birds including Woodlark, Tree Pipit, Common Redstart, Siskin and the perky little Dartford Warbler. Around the pools and flushes of the wetter areas, we will keep an eye out for some of the special dragonflies and damselflies found in the forest, including Small Red Damselfly, Brilliant Emerald, Keeled Skimmer, Golden Ringed Dragonfly and Black Darter. There should be plenty of interesting plants to spot, with Bog Asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum*, Ivy-leaved Bellflower *Wahlenbergia hederacea* and Round-leaved Sundew *Drosera rotundifolia* amongst our targets, and maybe even Adders or Common Lizards basking in the sunshine.

Day 6 One final breakfast, then it is time to bid farewell to Buxted, hopefully taking some good memories of the diverse summer wildlife of Sussex.

Accommodation, meals and travel

We will be based at the Buxted Inn in the village of Buxted. All rooms are en-suite. Dinners are included in the price and will be taken at the hotel. We will take packed lunches on our daily expeditions.

Buxted is located on the A272, a couple of kilometres east of the town of Uckfield. Buxted train station is a short walk from the hotel, with direct trains from London Bridge.

Our transport for this trip will be by small 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.

Health and fitness

We will be **walking for much of the day**, each day, albeit at a relatively slow pace. The day walks are mostly circular walks between 3 and 4 miles, which includes areas of rougher ground and some slopes, both up and down. **You therefore need to have a reasonably good level of fitness.** Walking boots (e.g. lightweight) are essential. The pace will be relaxed, with plenty of time to enjoy the surroundings and take photos as well as enjoy the wildlife along the way. In some locations 'facilities' are scarce! There are likely to be steps at the hotel.



Leaders

Michael Blencowe is an expert naturalist, writer and wildlife guide, who joined Wildlife Travel in 2023. Michael has helped thousands of people to explore and appreciate wildlife and has unique insight into the best wildlife sites in Sussex.

Dependent on the final group size, Michael will be joined by **Laurie Jackson**. Laurie has lived in Sussex since 2008 and will be familiar to many as an experienced Wildlife Travel leader, who joined our team in 2013.

Weather

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

COVID-19 security

We will ask travellers to take a COVID-19 antigen (lateral flow) test prior to joining the trip, and to wear face coverings in indoor public spaces, including while on the bus.



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 PER PERSON £350,
BALANCE DUE BY 31/04/2024**

INCLUDED: Five nights' accommodation, full board basis (dinner day 1 to breakfast day 6). Local transport as specified in the itinerary. Services of leaders.

NOT INCLUDED: Travel to Buxted. Refreshments and drinks with meals. Entrance fees for optional tourist attractions. Gratuities. Travel insurance. Covid tests and associated costs

WILDLIFE TRAVEL

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

Photos (Laurie Jackson, Kelly Thomas, Philip Precey): **front** (clockwise from top): Ashdown Forest, Seven Sisters, Pyramidal Orchid, Purple Emperor. **Page 2** (from left): Dark-green Fritillary, Childing Pink, Tamworth Pig. **Page 3** (from top): Yellow Horned Poppy, Ivy-leaved Bellflower, Round-headed Rampion. **Back:** Ringed Plover, Stonechat.

A trip report from our 2023 Sussex holiday can be found on our website, with a gallery of photos from our previous visits on our Flickr pages.