

WILDLIFE TRAVEL



11th to 18th May 2026 (1 week)

THE DORDOGNE

spring wildlife by train

"a super trip... thanks
for an excellent week"

"Jason was great"

Dordogne 2025

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 good selection of orchids and other plants at this time of year. Our visit falls during the busy bird breeding season with Golden Oriole, Turtle Dove and Nightingale joining the soundtrack here. The causses support an **abundance of butterflies**, hopefully providing the chance to get to grips with various blues, fritillaries and skippers.

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 Griffon Vultures, Crag Martins, Ravens or a passing Booted Eagle.

As well as time on the causses, we will visit the wetlands at Tourbières de Vendôire, an important area of damp meadows and peat bog, with a rich dragonfly community, which will be starting to emerge. We will also spend time in the Forêt de la Bessède, largely on acidic sandy soils providing a different habitat, and in the wetlands of the Beune Valley.

Our trip will also give us the opportunity to enjoy some of the region's beautiful scenery, and attractive villages and towns, and will appeal to anyone who wishes to enjoy pleasant walks filled with spring wildlife, with the bonus of travelling by train.



Price

£2,320

Single Room Supplement

£225

Full board

Day 1 train to Bergerac
Day 2 Campagne, Les Eyzies
Day 3 Causse de Terrasson
Day 4 Forêt de la Bessède
Day 5 Tourbières de Vendôire
Day 6 Cingle de Trémolat
Day 7 Causse de Daglan
Day 8 return to London

Leaders

Phil Saunders and Jason
Mitchell

Group size

min 4, max 7

mixed natural history,
flight-free holiday



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 Périgueux by train, we will meet Jason for the drive to the market town of **Le Bugue** (c. 1hr) on the Vézère River, arriving in time for a late dinner.

Day 2 Our holiday starts with a visit to the nearby village of **Campagne**. Walking through the gardens of its château, with singing Redstart, Serin and Firecrest, we will look out for dragonflies and damselflies before taking a walk through the nearby woodland. Short-toed Treecreepers may be spotted, and we can hope to find orchids including Red Helleborine, Lady Orchid, Greater Butterfly Orchid and Fly Orchid.

After lunch we travel south to **Forêt de la Bessède** in an area of sandstone. Among many possibilities we hope to find Tongue Orchid, 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 3 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** and explore the mix of scrubby woodland and flowery grassland that characterise this part of the Dordogne. We should find a good range of wild flowers including the delicate *Campanula erinus*, *Teucrium montanum* and *Helianthemum apenninum*, and orchids such as Man Orchid and Burnt-tip Orchid.

The grassland here is also great for butterfly spotting: we hope to see Cleopatra, Spotted Fritillary and, with a little luck, freshly-emerged Blue-spot Hairstreaks, amongst other spring species.

Day 4 A longer drive today takes us to the interesting wetlands at **Tourbières de Vendoire**. We will walk through the reserve exploring its damp meadows and ponds home to a wide range of dragonflies. The notes of Nightingales and Golden Orioles drift through the air, whilst Cetti's Warblers explosive song can be heard from deep in the vegetation.

We will spend our afternoon on 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 Orchid, Woodcock Orchid and Pyramidal Orchid. We hope to see plenty of butterflies here along with attractive burnet moths and owlflies.

Day 5 We spend our day in one of the area's most important wetlands: the **Vallée de la Beune**, where we will visit meadows and marshes in search of more wildflowers and dragonflies such as Four-spot Chaser and Keeled Skimmer. There should also be time this afternoon to visit **Les Eyzies** with its streets nestled under dramatic rock formations.



Day 6 Heading west this morning, we walk through the woodland and meadows of **Cingle de Trémolat**, enjoying superb views over the Dordogne. Glanville Fritillaries and Mazarine Blues join Pearly Heath and Swallowtail over the flowery grassland. We will visit the village of Trémolat with its 12th Century church and cobbled streets before visiting another orchid-rich grassland. Depending on time, we will also make a stop in the beautiful village of Limeuil with the opportunity to visit the Jardins Panoramiques de Limeuil.

Day 7 Our day starts with a visit to the wonderful Saint Cyprien market before we continue south to the grasslands and oak woodlands of **Causse de Daglan**. A longer walk will take us gradually downhill, listening out for the scratchy song of Western Subalpine Warbler as we enjoy more rich limestone flora.

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

Health and Fitness

On most days, we are out and about for much of the day, albeit walking a relatively slow pace and making several stops each day. It is necessary to walk on some rougher ground but none of the walking strenuous. 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 stopping to enjoy the wildlife along the way.

You must be able to carry your own luggage between, on and off of the trains. The rooms at the hotel are upstairs, with no lift.

If you are a slow walker, please contact us to discuss whether any of the walks will be a problem for you.

Accommodation, meals, transport and weather

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 dinner at a local restaurant on Day 7. Lunches will be picnic-style and may be followed by a visit to a café.

Transport will be in a comfortable, nine-seater minivan.

The weather should be dry, with temperatures in the low 20s, although considerably cooler, showery weather is always possible.



Leaders

Dr Phil Saunders is an excellent all-round naturalist who joined Wildlife Travel team in 2018. He has led many of our trips, including visits to the Vercors in France, and his enthusiasm for all aspects of natural history, together with his keenness to share this knowledge with others will ensure that you enjoy a wonderful holiday. Our local guide for this holiday is **Jason Mitchell**. He has worked for the RSPB and Kent Wildlife Trust, where he shared his passion for 'things with wings' - birds, butterflies and dragonflies. Since then Jason and his family have moved to France and he is well-established as a nature guide.

Group Travel

Train schedules for summer 2026 are not yet released, but should be similar to 2025, as follows. France is one hour ahead of UK:

11th May: depart London St Pancras 10.24, arrive Paris Gare du Nord 13.58
depart Paris Montparnasse 16.05, arrive Bordeaux 18.16
depart Bordeaux 19.00, arrive Périgueux 20.10
18th May: depart Périgueux 10.05, arrive Bordeaux 11.31
depart Bordeaux 12.12, arrive Paris Montparnasse 14.30
depart Paris Gare du Nord 17.02, arrive London St Pancras 18.30

Passport and Entry Requirements

Your passport must be issued less than 10 years before the date you enter the country and valid for at least 3 months after the day you plan to leave.

If you hold a British passport, you are able to travel to the Schengen area (including France) for up to 90 days in total in any 180-day period without a visa. From 2026 (exact date yet to be confirmed), UK passport holders will need to apply for the ETIAS European Travel Authorisation to visit Schengen countries. This must be applied for online prior to travel. Once granted, your ETIAS will be valid for 3 years. For up-to-date information, check www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/france

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, SECOND INSTALMENT ON
CONFIRMATION OF HOLIDAY £400 (to cover committed costs)
BALANCE DUE 09/02/2026**

INCLUDED: Return train travel from London St Pancras, local transport and entry fees on excursions as specified in the itinerary. Seven nights' accommodation, all meals from dinner day 1 to picnic lunch day 8. Services of leaders and guides.

NOT INCLUDED: Refreshments. Gratuities. Travel insurance. ETIAS costs.

WILDLIFE TRAVEL

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

Tel: 01954 713575 email: wildlifetravel@wildlifebcn.org

www.wildlife-travel.co.uk



*Directors: Brian Eversham, Laurie Jackson, Philip Precey, Michael Russell, Tim Upson
Wildlife Travel Ltd is registered in England & Wales, no. 2237697. c/o Azets, Westpoint, Lynch Wood PE2 6FZ*

Photos: front (clockwise from top): Owly Sulphur, Pyramidal Orchids, Spotted Fritillary, Condat. **Page 2** (from left): *Carthamus mitissimus*, Chalk Burnet, Firecrest. **Page 3** (from top): Monkey Orchid, Spreading Bellflower, orchids at Les Farges, Tourbières de Vendôire.

A trip report from our 2025 visit to the Dordogne can be found on our website.