

Kent's Summer Wildlife

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Itinerary

Day 1	Arrive at hotel near Dover
Day 2/3/4	Explore a variety of habitats searching for a wide variety of excellent wildlife
Day 5	Morning excursion; mid-afternoon departure

Departs

June

Focus

Birds, wildflowers, insects

Grading

A - All walking will be at a slow pace over undulating or flat ground.

Dates and Prices

See website: GBR300

- Orchids including Lizard, Man and possibly Monkey
- Rare dragonflies at Dungeness
- Visiting RSPB Dungeness & witnessing its amazing birdlife
- Heath Fritillary butterfly amongst over 20 species of butterfly
- A plethora of rare wildflowers
- Led by an expert all-round naturalist



Lizard Orchid, Heath Fritillary, Dungeness Point



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Introduction

The county of Kent is an exceptional county for wildlife viewing, none more so than in the summer months when the county is alive with a plethora of insects, birds and myriad rare wildflowers.

Over the four days, we will aim to vary each day, visiting a diversity of habitats, therefore maximising the number of species we are bound to encounter. The three key habitats, comprising woodland, sand dune and shingle will deliver many rare species of wildflower, including orchids, with the highlight being the superb Lizard Orchid – a species that flourishes along the East Kent coastline.

Concentrating this new holiday during the favoured weeks of the year, as well as wildflowers, breeding birds would have settled in too, and although now a rarity in the south-east of England, Turtle Dove is indeed a potential find on top off the numbers of warblers which are to be present; Yellow Wagtails will also be searched for in the more marshy habitats.

Lastly, Kent also has to offer a magnificent display of butterflies and dragonflies, and this tour is timed perfectly to coincide with the emergence of the rare Heath Fritillary butterfly and Lesser Emperor dragonfly! White Admiral should also be on the wing, and if it's an early season, Purple Hairstreak too. Other excellent Odonata species could include Red-veined Darter and maybe Dainty Damselfly – a recent coloniser to these parts!

Basing ourselves near the ancient town of Dover, we are perfectly positioned to cover all corners of Kent, restricting the amount of time in the vehicle and more time enjoying the wildlife. We will endeavour to have long days out in the field to maximise our sightings, whilst ensuring there is plenty of time to relax and enjoy the magnificent countryside.



Marquis of Granby

Itinerary

Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather & other local considerations can necessitate some re-ordering of the programme during the course of the tour, though this will always be done to maximise best use of the time and weather conditions available.

Day 1

Meet at our hotel near Dover

Your tour leader will meet you in the bar/lounge area of our lovely and recently renovated hotel near Dover in the late afternoon (6pm) where we will enjoy a drink and an introductory talk outlining the program for the next four days, and some of the wildlife we will hope to see, before enjoying our first meal together.

Day 2

Dungeness Point/RSPB Reserve

For our first outing we will head down to the RSPB reserve and surrounding habitat at Dungeness – well known nationally for its diverse birdlife. In all seasons, there is always something special to see or find here and as we navigate ourselves around the reserve we hope to come across some excellent birds. Breeding terns, gulls and Yellow Wagtails reside here, as well as plenty of Reed and Sedge Warblers.

Tree Sparrows are still hanging on in small numbers too.

After a gentle morning walk, which will also target the rare flora of the area, we will then head to the beach to what is so called, 'The Desert'. This unique landscape harbours an exceptional array of Odonata, and this tour should coincide with the flight season of the Lesser Emperor and Red-veined Darter, two continental species which now breed here! There is also the possibility of Large Conehead cricket... another continental species which now breeds on the estate. However, it will be the profusion of flora that we will focus on here, and your tour leader, who is botanically minded, will be able to show you a suite of species!

If we have time, we can explore other areas of the reserve... or perhaps have an ice cream on the beach, but we will make the most of day in whichever fashion.

We will head back to the hotel soon before it gets dark to have a relaxed evening and a lovely meal together, complete the checklist, before retiring to bed.



Lesser Emperor

Day 3

Woodlands

Today, after another fine breakfast, we will head to the north of the county to sample the ancient woodlands. On the journey, keep an eye out for Barn Owls and Common Buzzards either flying low over the adjacent fields or perched on the roadside wires.

Our main quarry this morning will be the Heath Fritillary butterfly. Due to major conservation efforts by Butterfly Conservation (one of Naturetrek's partners), the population of this rare butterfly has increased dramatically and is now the most common butterfly at its Kent site. There is always the possibility of other species, which may include White Admiral, Comma and perhaps Purple Hairstreak. Be also on the lookout for Beautiful Demoiselle which prefer woodland glades rather than waterbodies. A stroll around this impressive expanse of woodland should produce the likes of Nuthatch, Treecreeper, Blackcap, Garden Warbler and maybe all three species of woodpecker. Flora will include the typical woodland species, including the Heath Fritillary's foodplant, the Common Cow-wheat.



Turtle Dove

After lunch, we will concentrate on the orchids of this rich area at a different site. Depending on how the season is progressing, Monkey Orchid will hopefully still be in flower, as well as other downland species including Chalk Fragrant and Musk Orchids. Late Spider Orchid is also a possibility on this tour and with local knowledge we hope to see this most beautiful orchid. Turtle Dove, Yellowhammer, Garden Warbler, Lesser Whitethroat and Kestrel are all likely in this forest edge habitat. After a splendid day in the Kent countryside, we shall retire back to the hotel and sort through the checklist and dinner.



Musk Orchid

Day 4

East Kent Coastline

Today, we will head east towards the area of Sandwich and its environs. Skylarks and Meadow Pipits, as well as Common Whitethroats will be in plentiful supply.

The famous sand dunes, which are also famed in Links Golf, support a significant percentage of the UK population of Lizard Orchid. Mid-June is the prime time in which to see this robust species, and amongst their favoured and natural habitat, will allow some memorable photographic opportunities. Bee Orchids may also be in flower too.

Situated at the coast, we will endeavour to search for coastal birds, and although the typical wading birds will be in short supply, a look offshore may provide us with a number of tern species, particularly Little and Sandwich Terns.

As we move ever so slightly inland towards the bird observatory, we will again go in search of the area's famous Odonata. Just recently, the Dainty Damselfly – a very rare damselfly in the UK, but common on the continent – has been

located here and in large numbers. Although not guaranteed on this tour, we will certainly try and find one amongst the commoner Azure and Common Blue Damselflies! Emperors, Ruddy Darters and perhaps Southern Migrant Hawker will also be on the wing.

This will be another excellent day out in the field, before returning back to base for our last evening meal together.



Lizard Orchid

Day 5

Dover area

Today, we will be birding in the Dover area not too far away from the hotel. The harbour in summer can be a relatively productive site for viewing any passing seabirds, and Fulmars are indeed a possibility along the cliffs.

We will then walk the undercliff for the possibility of Rock Pipit and Peregrine. A good cliff-top walk should also see us find Linnets and various other passerines.

After lunch, we will slowly head back to the hotel, checking any other sites on the way, before arriving and bringing this holiday to a close.

Tour Grading & Focus

Grade A. There will be easy to moderate walking on this holiday, covering between four and six miles per day on generally undulating, but stable ground. The main focus will be all aspects of natural history.

Weather, Clothing & Equipment

The weather in June can be stunning with long days of prolonged sunshine and light winds. However, this is the UK, so we must expect the worst, so packing waterproof clothing may be necessary. Sun cream and sun hats, as well as long trousers and long-sleeved shirts to keep the insects/sunrays away are recommended.

Equipment – Binoculars & cameras are essential and/or recommended.

What's Included

Breakfasts and evening meals are included in the holiday cost, beginning with the evening meal on Day 1, and finishing with breakfast on Day 5. Accommodation will be at the Marquis of Granby at Alkham (near Dover) in double rooms; all en suite and with tea and coffee making facilities.

Lunches, and daytime snacks and drinks, are not included in the cost of this tour and you will be responsible for making your own way to and from the hotel or train station at the start and end of the tour. We will stop at a local café or shop/supermarket for lunch and a comfort break on all the days. You will need to bring any snacks or drinks that you want during the rest of the day with you as these are not provided.

Travelling by public transport?

If travelling by train, please head for Folkestone Central (pick-up and drop-off times to be arranged). Buses also pass through the village of Alkham, where the hotel is situated.

Extending Your Holiday

We are more than happy to book additional nights at the hotel for you on either a dinner, bed and breakfast, or bed and breakfast basis at additional cost. Please request this at the time of booking.

How to book your place

In order to book your place on this holiday, please give us a call on 01962 733051 with a credit or debit card, book online at www.naturetrek.co.uk, or alternatively complete and post the booking form at the back of our main Naturetrek brochure, together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday cost plus any room supplements if required. If you do not have a copy of the brochure, please call us on 01962 733051 or request one via our website. Please stipulate any special requirements, for example extension requests, at the time of booking.