

Orchids & other Wildlife of the Chilterns

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Outline Itinerary

- Day 1** Arrive; Bedfordshire Chilterns
Day 2 Southern Chilterns
Day 3 Final exploration; Depart

Departs

May

Focus

Flowers, Birds and general natural history

Grading

A/B is moderate – for anyone of any age used to some regular walking; some uphill slopes

Dates and Prices

See website (tour code GBR38) or brochure

Highlights

- Look for orchids such as Fly, Twayblade, Early Purple & Burnt-tip
- Seek the 'Orchis' species; Military, Man, Lady and Monkey Orchids, as well as the bizarre Lady x Monkey Orchid
- Early Marsh Orchid & Green-winged Orchid in wet meadows
- Abundant Red Kites across the chalk of the Chilterns
- Lapwing, Turtle Dove, Cuckoo, Hobby, Marsh Harrier, Curlew & Redshank among birds at Otmoor



Military Orchid



Monkey Orchid



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Introduction

Declared an “area of outstanding natural beauty” (AONB) 40 years ago and covering 324 square miles, the Chilterns are rated alongside some of our best known national parks including the Lake District and New Forest. The centre of the AONB is situated just 35 miles from Trafalgar Square, making it one of the easiest to access from the capital and a top tourist attraction. Although it has an abundance of tranquil



villages and imposing buildings to visit we will be concentrating on the natural wonders of the area, 20% of which is covered by woods and forests providing timber to a once thriving furniture industry. The AONB stretches from the Thames at Goring on its' southern boundary to Hitchin in Hertfordshire in the north.

Rare chalk streams meander here towards the mighty Thames, and orchids such as Military, Fly, Monkey and Lady will be sought together with Clustered Bellflower and many others.

Red Kites were first reintroduced into the Chilterns in 1989 and after a resounding success has been repeated in many other parts of the country. They will be a common sight on our wanderings

Itinerary

NB. 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

We will meet at 10.30 a.m. in the hotel car park and after discussing the programme for the next 3 days we will board our transport for our first days' exploration.

Today we will travel into Bedfordshire to visit a few key sites on the northern chalk, most notably Knocking Hoe to see the only population of Burnt Tip Orchid in the Chilterns. We may visit the castle mound at Totternhoe to take in the views and explore the slopes below in search of Man Orchid. Birds, butterflies and trees will also be noted during our forays.

Day 2



We travel to the southern edge of the Chilterns to visit Hartslock and other sites on the southern chalk. The close-cropped grass slopes of the downs are home to a splendid variety of chalk-loving flowers and butterflies, whilst the dark and impressive beech woodland, known as hangars, that cap the escarpment have their own specialties such as the mysterious Bird's-nest Orchid (which entirely lacks chlorophyll) and the White Helleborine. Our visit is timed in the hope of seeing some of the special orchids that the area is renowned for such as the Greater Butterfly, Fly,

Military, Monkey and even, if we are lucky, Lady. Lunch taken at a local pub.

Day 3

Today we will leave the Chilterns, and head to a reserve where we hope to see a good selection of birds which are drawn to this oasis of wetland in the centre of England. Birds may include such declining species as Turtle Dove and Grasshopper Warbler along with breeding waders and possibly Hobby. There will also be the chance to see wet meadow flora in total contrast to that seen in the dry chalkland hills of the Chilterns.



Lunch will again be at a local pub.

After further exploration we will return to the hotel and leave for home.

Clothing and Equipment

Binoculars would be useful and a camera for those interested in photographing the flowers. Stout shoes or walking boots are recommended. You should bring a fleece or coat as well as a light waterproof, in case of rain.

Accommodation & food

Accommodation will be in the comfortable bespoke Mercure Thame Lambert Hotel in the village of Aston Rowant at the foot of the Chiltern escarpment and close to the M40. The price is calculated on the basis of sharing a twin room, but a limited number may be available for single-occupancy at a supplementary cost.

Breakfast and evening meals are included in the tour price but lunches are **not** included.

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.