

Butterflies of Dorset

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Itinerary

- Day 1** Meet at our accommodation in West Knighton, Dorchester
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- Days 2/3** Lulworth Cove, Portland Bill, Alners Gorse & other sites
-
- Day 4** West Knighton; depart
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Departs

6th July 2021

Focus

Butterflies and other forms of natural history

Grading

Grade A. Easy to moderate walks, all taken at a slow pace, and mostly on easy paths and flat ground. See grading section.

Dates and Prices

See www.naturetrek.co.uk (tour code GBR 77)

Highlights

- Lulworth Skippers and Grayling along Dorset's picturesque coastline
- Silver-studded Blues on chalk hillsides
- White-letter Hairstreaks
- Possibility of Purple Emperor
- Orchids at various locations



Images from top: Lulworth Skipper, White-letter Hairstreak & Silver-studded Blues.



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Introduction

Dorset's coastline is unique in that it supports one of the most range-restricted species in the British Isles. The Lulworth Skipper, once found in the neighbouring county of Devon, is now endemic to Dorset, ranging from Portland Bill in the west of its range, east to Durlston Head. Thankfully, it has a long flight period ranging from the end of May, all the way to the end of August, allowing plenty of time to link in this species with other sought-after butterflies close-by.



This tour within the butterfly series will see us at many butterfly hotspots within Dorset.

A range of blue butterflies will be on the wing, including the heathland specialist, the Silver-studded Blue. Although this species favours acidic heathlands, there are also locations where it survives on chalk hillsides, and we will aim to search these two habitat-types. White-letter Hairstreak is also a difficult species to come by, only coming down to nectar for short periods during the day. Some colonies are thought to have been completely overlooked due to their living high up in elm trees in inaccessible areas. With so many highlights on offer, we will hope for good weather as we search far and wide for the mid-summer species.

The length of this tour makes allowance for the unpredictable British summer weather, where on wet and cooler days, butterflies will be inactive, and finding any species could well prove difficult. There is, however, plenty of other natural history to find along the way, with the likes of the rare Bog Orchid, several species of birds, and a range of wildflowers.

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

Arrive at Dorchester

Your tour leader(s) will meet you in the bar/lounge area at The New Inn, West Knighton from 3pm where we will have an introductory talk outlining the program for the holiday, including the wildlife we will hope to see. We will then enjoy a lovely dinner in the evening before retiring to bed.

Day 2

Lulworth Cove

Today, we will drive to the Dorset coastline to enjoy the spectacular scenery of Lulworth Cove and the surrounding countryside. Of course, it is not just the geology we will be admiring, as hopefully the butterflies will be in abundance, especially the skippers of the area, namely the Small Skipper and Lulworth Skipper. These two are difficult to distinguish from each other, therefore, close and prolonged views will be needed to ensure we have identified each correctly. Other species to look out for will be Marbled White, Comma and the possibility of Clouded Yellow. Many birds will be patrolling the coastline, mainly gulls, though offshore we can hope to see Gannets and Fulmars.

After a wonderful picnic-lunch overlooking the dramatic coastline, a nearby chalk hillside can produce large numbers of Silver-studded Blues. This is usually a heathland specialist in the UK but survives at this site in good numbers. It is surprisingly rare on chalk in this country compared to its populations on the continent, where they exist throughout a range of habitats stretching all across Europe. The reasons for this range restriction in the UK is certainly a mystery but we will again ensure our time is dedicated to finding this butterfly.



Day 3

North Dorset

We will travel north with the expectation of finding more excellent butterflies, that could possibly include the Purple Emperor, however this species is yet to develop a stronghold anywhere in Dorset. There should be though plenty of Silver-washed Fritillaries, White Admirals and Ringlets to admire as we walk the woodland rides.



We will aim to spend most of the day either within or close to the woodland to maximise our species list.

Day 4

Alners Gorse

On our last day, we will search a single Butterfly Conservation (Alners Gorse) reserve in the heart of Dorset that a good number of Elm trees, and this is home to the rare White-letter Hairstreak. Although they spend most of their day in the canopy of the elms, they do come down to nectar on flowers such as bramble on occasions when they will be easier to locate. Despite their inactivity in the treetops, the guide will do their best to not only spot an individual.

This will provide a fitting end to this butterfly trip, where we hope to have achieved some excellent sightings of many species of butterfly!

Tour Grading & focus

For the most part, walking will be on flat ground, though at times, a few steep hills will have to be negotiated. Distances covered each day will not range any more than two miles.

Butterflies will be our main focus during this short break, though birds, dragonflies and orchids, will not be ignored.

Weather, clothing & equipment

We will hope for warm, sunny days, but do come prepared for all eventualities on this tour! Therefore, warm clothing and footwear, waterproofs and sun cream should all be packed.

Food and accommodation included in the price

Breakfast and evening meals are included in the holiday cost beginning with the evening meal on Day 1 and finishing with breakfast on Day 4. Accommodation will be in comfortable twin and double, all of which are en-suite within reach of the key wildlife sites which we will be visiting during this tour. The drives each day shall be between thirty and ninety minutes. Lunches, daytime snacks and drinks are not included in the cost of this tour, and we will stop at local pubs or cafes for lunch and comfort breaks each day.

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 a 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.

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