

Butterflies of Hungary

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Outline itinerary

Day 1	Fly Budapest and transfer to Aggtelek National Park.
Day 2/4	Aggtelek National Park.
Day 5/7	Bükk National Park.
Day 8	Fly London.

Departs

June

Focus

Butterflies and other wildlife.

Grading

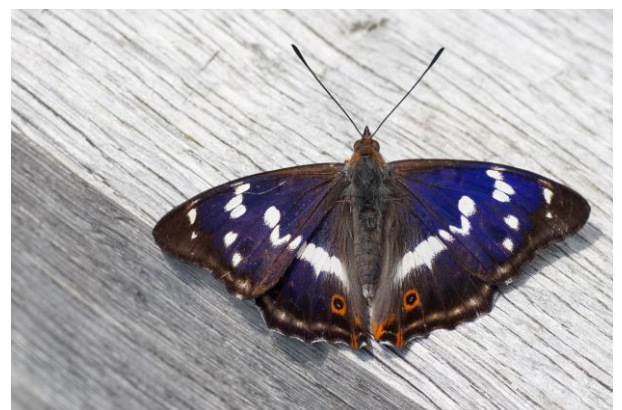
A. Easy day walks.

Dates and prices

Visit www.naturetrek.co.uk (tour code HUN02) or see the current Naturetrek brochure.

Highlights

- Around 80 species of butterfly typically recorded.
- Explore Aggtelek National Park in search of Ilex Hairstreak, Reverdin's Blue & Map.
- Look for Pallas's Fritillary, Hungarian Glider, Lesser Purple & Purple Emperor in the scenic Bükk Hills.
- Enjoy Hungary's varied birdlife including Imperial Eagle, Black Woodpecker & Barred Warbler.
- Opportunity to extend your tour in Budapest, Hungary's vibrant capital city.
- Led by expert naturalist guides.



From top: Large Coppers, Hungarian Glider, Purple Emperor



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.

Introduction

Hungary has long been established as one of Europe top birdwatching destinations, but this beautiful landlocked country, at the heart of the continent, is less well known for its other wildlife treasures, in particular its butterflies. Although modern farming practises are on the increase, many areas still farm using a variety of low intensity, wildlife friendly, techniques unchanged for generations. As a result butterflies still flourish and dancing clouds of these colourful sprites are still a common sight over flower-filled meadows and sunny woodland glades. Approximately 150 species are to be found here, almost 3 times the number which live in the UK, and Hungary is sure to become a favourite with the lepidopterists amongst us as it already has become with the ornithologists.

Day 1

Fly Budapest

We depart London on a morning flight to Budapest, the beautiful capital city of Hungary. Upon arrival we will meet our local guide and transfer by road to Aggtelek National Park which nestles along the Hungarian-Slovakian border around 4 hours from the capital. We will break the journey with stops for both butterflies, wildlife and refreshments and plan to arrive at our simple hotel in the evening, our base for the first 4-nights of the tour.

Days 2 - 4

Aggtelek National Park

Aggtelek National Park lies within one of Hungary's most scenic regions dotted with quiet villages, rolling meadows mown by hand, strip-fields ploughed by hand and horse, deciduous woods, rocky hill-steppe and grassy limestone karst pavement scattered with scrub and juniper bushes. Sites we will visit include the wet-meadows and pastures that lie by the River Bódva, the "Devil's Ploughland" (a limestone pavement), the Menes Valley and the Aggtelek Plateau, formed from the calcareous deposits of a shallow sea which covered the area 230 million years ago. We now have three full days in which to fully explore this area, rich as it is in wildlife, history and folklore.

The low intensity agriculture and a wonderfully diverse range of habitats creates ideal conditions for an equally diverse range of butterflies. There are numerous skippers, blues, coppers and fritillaries to be found including Twin Spot and Marbled Fritillaries. Enigmatic Purple and Lesser Emperors are real possibilities, so too are even rarer and localised specialities such as Woodland Brown, Hungarian and Common Gliders and the beautiful Poplar Admiral (if we are very lucky).



Purple-shot Copper



Pearly Heath

The dramatic Scarce Swallowtail and more familiar species such as Orange-tip, Green Hairstreak, Silver-studded Blue, Comma, Pearl-bordered Fritillaries and Heath Fritillaries are actually quite common. Other sought after species to look out for include Berger's Clouded Yellow, Black-veined White, Black Hairstreak, Large, Scarce and Purple-shot Coppers, Chequered and Green-underside Blues, Map, Woodland Ringlet and Pearly and Chestnut Heaths to name but a few. We will run a moth trip one evening to see what species might find here which could include Common Pink-barred, Poplar Kitten and Tawny Prominent, and across the week we could see up to 150 different moth species.

For those interested in birds then a glance skyward may reveal a passing raptor such as Marsh Harrier, Sparrowhawk and Common Buzzard, whilst nearer to ground level the bushes, scrub and woodlands hold Red-backed Shrike, Barred Warbler, Hawfinch, Golden Oriole and Collared Flycatcher.

Days 5 – 7

Bükk National Park

Today we must leave Aggtelek and drive to the Bükk Hills, via the central plateau, visiting important butterfly sites en route. The journey from Aggtelek to the Bükk Hills is only an hour or so direct, but our meandering route, with plenty of stops, will take us much of the day to complete. We will be based for the next 3-nights in a comfortable hotel in the small town of Noszvaj.

The Bükk is an upland area comprised mainly of forested hills which, in effect, are the foothills of the Carpathian Mountains, some 37,000 hectares in extent. The region was given national park status in 1976 in order to protect its geological, archaeological, historical, floral and faunal treasures. The hills rise gently from 300 metres above sea level to a maximum height of only 960 metres and as such no strenuous walks will be necessary to full explore this wonderful area.

Most of our time will be spent in the southern Bükk, where we will explore the mixed hornbeam-oak forests, old beech woods, oak-dotted pastures, rocky dolomite-limestone slopes and hand managed vineyards that together create such a diverse patchwork of habitats. These habitats are in turn home to a wealth of animal and plantlife. In particular Bükk is especially good for butterflies. Over the flower-laden slopes and woodland glades fly dramatic species such as Swallowtail and Queen of Spain Fritillary. Amid a plethora of other interesting



Mazarine Blue

species are the more challenging blues which may include Mazarine Blue and the diminutive Eastern Short-tailed Blue, plus Sloe and Blue-spot Hairstreaks. Woodland specialities we hope to see include Wood White, Large Wall Brown and Large Tortoiseshell.

The Bükk's fine old beech-woods are home to Hungarian Glider. The Great Hungarian Steppe begins at the foot of the Bükk and we are sure to spend time here too visiting the grasslands and wetlands in search of additional species not found at higher altitudes. Here we will search for various clouded yellows, including Pale, Eastern Pale and Clouded Yellows, an extremely challenging family of butterflies that will test our identification skills to the limit. Eastern Bath and Mallow Skipper are also possible out on the steppes, whilst other more familiar species to look out for include Common Blue, Painted Lady



Mallow Skipper

and Large Skipper. Additionally, events such as the dazzling spectacle of large gatherings of various 'mud puddling' butterflies at your feet are sure to add to our enjoyment of the holiday. For those with an interest in dragonflies Beautiful Demoiselle, Southern and Small Emerald Damselflies, Blue-tailed Damselfly, Migrant Hawker, White-tailed Skimmer, Broad-bodied Chaser and various others may also be seen.

The Bükk National Park is also a wonderful area for birds. Over the woodlands soar a wide range of raptors including Eastern Imperial, Short-toed and Lesser Spotted Eagles, Goshawk and Honey Buzzard whilst in the forests themselves we will be on the look out for a variety of woodpeckers such as Black, White-backed, Middle Spotted and Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers. Turtle Doves and Serins are also a common sight.

On each day we will take a picnic lunch out in the field to eat at a scenic spot and return to our hotel in Noszvaj for an evening meal. We will also run a moth trap here one evening when we might see species such as Oak and Eyed Hawkmoth and Peach Blossom.

Day 8

Fly London

This morning we should have time for a final couple of hours of in the field in this superb region before the three hour drive back to Budapest Airport in time to catch our flight back to London

Tour grading

This tour is graded A, consisting of day walks only. We will travel to each site by minibus, then take leisurely walks to explore the area, generally over easy terrain, although some paths can be rough in places. The holiday is therefore suitable for anyone who enjoys walking in the countryside and is of an 'average' level of fitness.

Focus

The main focus of this holiday will be Hungary's abundant and varied butterflies although birds, dragonflies, moths and other wildlife will also be enjoyed.

Food & accommodation included in the price

All food and accommodation are included in the price of this holiday. The first hotel will be close to Aggtelek National Park for four nights, although accommodation in the area is limited, so it is possible that we might stay just the other side of the border in the Slovakian town of Turňa nad Bodvou. The second hotel of the tour for Bükk National Park is in the village of Noszvaj and is very good quality. All rooms have private facilities.

Please note: Should you wish to see more of Hungary's beautiful capital city, we would recommend you extend your stay at the beginning or end of the holiday. Please enquire at the time of booking.

Your Safety & Security

Risks to your safety and security are an unavoidable aspect of all travel and the best current advice on such risks is provided for you by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. In order to assess and protect against any risks in your chosen destination, it is essential that you refer to the Foreign Office website – <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/hungary> regularly prior to travel.

How to book your place

In order to book a place on this holiday, you will need to read our main Naturetrek brochure and complete and return the enclosed booking form together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday cost. If you do not have a copy of this brochure, please call us now on 01962 733051. Alternatively, you are welcome to book on the internet by visiting www.naturetrek.co.uk, or telephone us and make a booking with a credit or debit card.

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