

Hungary in Summer

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Outline itinerary

Day 1	Fly Budapest and transfer to Kiskunság National Park.
Day 2/3	Kiskunság National Park.
Day 4	Hortobágy National Park.
Day 5/7	Bükk National Park.
Day 8	Fly London.



Departs
August.

Focus
Birds, plants, reptiles, butterflies and dragonflies.

Grading
Grade A. Easy day walks only.

Dates and prices
Visit www.naturetrek.co.uk (tour code HUN04) or see the current Naturetrek brochure.



Highlights:

- Explore three of Hungary's best national parks
- Woodpeckers, raptors & butterflies in the Bükk Hills
- Waterbirds & steppe species in the Hortobágy
- Great Bustard, Imperial Eagle & Bee-eater amongst avian highlights
- Around 140 species of bird and 40 species of butterfly typically recorded
- Hungarian wines to sample including the 'Bull's Blood'
- Extend your holiday with time in Budapest
- Expert guidance from a British Naturetrek naturalist & local guides



From top: European Bee-eater, Large Copper & Great Bustard. Images courtesy of Shutterstock Images & Alex McLennen



Naturetrek Wolf's Lane Chawton Alton Hampshire GU34 3HJ England
T: +44 (0)1962 733051 **F:** +44 (0)1962 736426
E: info@naturetrek.co.uk **W:** www.naturetrek.co.uk

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

Kiskunság National Park

We depart London's Heathrow Airport on an early morning flight to Budapest, the Hungarian capital. After arriving at Budapest Ferenc Liszt Airport we meet our local guide and driver, and head southwards towards the Kiskunság National Park, a journey of around an hour and a half. As we head to our first hotel we will make roadside stops for birds, which should include our first White Storks and perhaps Roller and Lesser Grey Shrike on wires or tops of bushes. Upon arrival there should be time before dinner for a local birding walk. We will spend our first 2 nights in a pleasant hotel with an excellent restaurant serving traditional Magyar dishes.

Please note: There is unlikely to be time to explore Budapest on this holiday. Should you wish to see a little more of Hungary's beautiful capital city we would recommend you extend your stay at the end, or beginning, of the holiday (please call the Naturetrek office on 01962 733051 for more information on extensions).

Day 2 - 3

Kiskunság National Park

We have two full days to explore the excellent Kiskunság region, a flat plain between the Danube and Tisza rivers. This region offers us a fantastic range of habitats to explore, including grasslands (puszta), sandy dune-like hills, farmlands, marshes, gravel-pits, reedbeds, woodlands and fishponds. Although we are sure to see a range of migrant birds that start to move through this region in August, we will be especially on the look out for two of Hungary's rarer resident species, the magnificent Saker (which is featured on the 50 Forint coin), and the Great Bustard, Hungary's national bird. These huge birds are notoriously shy, but the Kiskunság with its traditional farming techniques, supports a good population and we stand an excellent chance of encountering this spectacular species, the heaviest of all the world's flying birds! Syrian Woodpecker can be found in many villages and Hoopoes out in the sandy areas, whilst the grasslands and marshes hold such species as Stone Curlew, Black-winged Stilt, Ruff, Kentish Plover, Collared Pratincole and Mediterranean Gull. Great Egret and Purple Heron are also quite common, whilst amphibians to look out for include Fire-bellied Toad, Common Spadefoot Toad and European Tree Frog. There is also a rich flora of these sandy and saline soils to explore, plus a wide variety of butterflies such as Glanville Fritillary, Oberthur's Grizzled Skipper, Chestnut Heath and Lesser Fiery Copper. Late in the afternoon we will return to our hotel for a third night.

Days 4

Hortobágy National Park

Next we move east to the Hortobágy National Park, without doubt one of Europe's foremost wildlife areas. We have 2 nights here in the small town of Tiszafured from where we will make a short journey by road into the heart of the National Park. This will give us another opportunity to look for the magnificent Great Bustard, plus Saker Falcon, Long-legged Buzzard, Tawny Pipit and other species we would have first seen in the Kiskunság

National Park at the start of the tour. En route we will probably encounter a herd of the huge and ancient breed of Hungarian Grey Cattle along with flocks of Racka Sheep tended by shepherds and their small Puli dogs.

We are also sure to spend plenty of time exploring the mosaic of reed-fringed fish ponds that dot the Hortobágy. This is prime wetland habitat, the water systems being dotted with islands and large expanses of phragmites reedbeds. Not surprisingly, this fantastic area holds a rich and diverse bird-life; indeed it is one of the most important sites in central Europe. The marshes hold good numbers of breeding herons and egrets, such as Spoonbills, Great and Little Egrets, Squacco Heron, Little Bittern, Bittern and Glossy Ibis. The rare Pygmy Cormorant also breeds here in good numbers, whilst other species to look out for include Red-necked Grebe, Penduline Tit, Bearded Tit, Great Reed Warbler and Whiskered Tern. By early-August the southbound migration of waders will be in full swing and the ponds should hold a variety of species including Spotted Redshank, Ruff, Green and Wood Sandpipers and perhaps if fortunate Temminck's Stint. This internationally important area has, over the years, turned up numerous rarities so along with the above a few surprises will no doubt be in store. On a smaller scale we will also search for butterflies such as Idas Blue, Map and Eastern Pale Clouded Yellow, along with a wealth of dragonflies such as Blue-tailed Damselfly, Migrant Hawker, White-tailed Skimmer and Southern and Red-veined Darters.

We plan to pack a picnic lunch to eat in a scenic spot before returning to our hotel in Tiszafured for dinner and the daily log.

Day 5

Bükk National Park

We leave the flat plains of the Hortobágy this morning for the gentle forested hills and meadows of the Bükk National Park. Our route will take us through the Heves Grasslands where we will keep our eyes open for such birds as Saker Falcon, Red-footed Falcon and Montagu's Harrier. Butterflies should include Eastern Bath White, Chapman's Blue and Sooty Copper.

Following a picnic lunch we will complete the drive to the scenic Bükk Hills. Our comfortable hotel is situated just outside the small village of Noszvaj and we are sure to spend some time exploring its pleasant surroundings in search of a few local birds such as Black and Great Spotted Woodpecker, Black Redstart, Golden Oriole and Serin.

Days 6 - 7

Bükk National Park

For the next two days we will undertake a series of leisurely walks in the Bükk Hills, especially the pastures, clearings and broad-leaved forests around the Hor Valley. The Bükk is an upland area comprised mainly of forested hills which, in effect, are the foothills of the Carpathian Mountains. 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 all create such a diverse patchwork of habitats. These habitats are in turn home to a wealth of animal and plantlife. In

particular the area is especially good for butterflies. Over the flower-laden slopes fly dramatic species such as Swallowtail and Scarce Swallowtail, plus Map Butterfly, Wood White, Woodland Grayling, False Grayling, Scarce Copper, Sooty Copper, Short-tailed Blue, Chalk-hill Blue, Sliver-washed Fritillary, Queen of Spain Fritillary, Violet Fritillary, Dryad and Chestnut Heath, whilst the various clouded yellows will test identification skills to the limit. This is also a wonderful area for birds. Over the woodlands soar a wide range of raptors including Eastern Imperial Eagle, Lesser Spotted Eagle, Goshawk and Honey Buzzard whilst in the forests themselves we will be on the look out for a variety of woodpeckers such as Black, Grey-headed, Syrian, Middle Spotted and Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers.

Once again we will take a picnic lunch out in the field each day to eat at a scenic spot and return to our comfortable hotel in Noszvaj for an evening meal.

Day 8

London

This morning we will drive back to Budapest (around 3 hours) in time to catch our early-afternoon 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.

Optional extensions

For those of you wishing to see more of the beautiful city of Budapest we would be happy to arrange a couple of nights accommodation in the Hungarian capital at the end of the tour. We would recommend the Hotel Victoria which is a 4-star hotel situated on the River Danube and only a few minutes walk from the Castle District. A twin room at the Hotel Victoria is around £70 per person per night (bed and breakfast). Please call us for more details and a confirmed price.

Food & accommodation included in the price

All food and accommodation are included in the price of this holiday. All rooms have private facilities and single occupancy is available at the single supplement price.

Bird, Mammal & Butterfly lists

Where available these are automatically provided on booking, and will gladly be sent to you before, if you wish for a more detailed preview.

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 the Naturetrek terms and conditions in the back of our brochure or on our website, and then book either online at www.naturetrek.co.uk, by calling us on 01962 733051, or by completing and returning the booking form in the brochure together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday cost. If you do not have a copy of this brochure, please call us on 01962 733051.

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