Nature holidays and wildlife photography tours

2019

WILD ECHO
Welcome once again to our new brochure, featuring some of our tours for 2019. Without a doubt, the 30 years anniversary of the Birdfair is a fantastic milestone in the world of sustainable wildlife tourism and nature conservation. Wildecho formerly known as Spatia have been attending the Birdfair since 2004, this will be our 15th visit!

This year has been again good for us and the trips we have run have all been successful, even the butterfly ones, despite the unusually wet summer with almost two months of constant daily rain. Our new butterfly tour to Armenia worked brilliantly and the return to Turkey after a three year break was even better. We also had our first guests coming from Australia to small Bulgaria to see our snakes! and the wolves.

This of course motivates us to look and go further and further afield, so for next year we have again some new and really exiting offers. First is our trip to the Caribbean, aimed at seeing the nine species of endemic Amazon parrots that live there, we shall visit eight of the beautiful islands in order to observe these wonderful birds. I have been dreaming of this for over 20 years and the time to be with them has finally arrived. They are all special birds, half of them are really rare and endangered, the recent hurricanes showed just how vulnerable they are! Besides them, we will also see many of the endemic Caribbean birds. The other new destination is Kirgizstan, one of the least visited countries by birders on the planet. Our recce trip proved the potential of this destination and we are really looking forward to taking you with us on this ground-breaking expedition.

However, the most exciting new trip we have now is the one specially developed for the Birds of Paradise. It took a while to organize, but now we have a program that will give us an excellent chance of seeing 21 species and 1 subspecies of these fantastic birds in just 15 days, plus a 6 day extension that will bring another 5 species!

For the above three tours plus some others to Bulgaria, we will be working in cooperation with Ornitholidays, the original birdwatching company in the world, established back in 1964! We are very much looking forward to this!

Back to our home country of Bulgaria, where we have two new tours. The first is specially designed for photographers to focus on orchids and early butterflies some of which are usually missed on our other macro tours. We also have a new itinerary focusing on reptile and amphibian photography. This is in addition to our classical reptile and amphibian tour.

We hope you will enjoy our brochure and better still join us on some of our tours next year.

Please note that not all the tours are listed in the brochure. For the full program, please visit our website: www.wildechotours.com

Best regards,
Dobromir Domuschiev, Wild Echo Managing Director
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Above are all our tours shown by month as a year calendar. Those in bold are included in the brochure, while the rest can be found at our website – www.wildechotours.com

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The beautiful Caribbean islands with their fine sandy beaches and turquoise blue sea waters are a magnet for many people. But there are hidden treasures on these islands known only to a few people - the very beautiful Amazon parrots. Nowadays there are 9 species of endemic Amazons inhabiting 8 of the islands, and one of them - the Cuban amazon has 2 distinct subspecies found on smaller islands. Our tour will be focused on these beautiful and endangered birds, we shall see them in their native habitat and enjoy their behavior and beauty. We will also visit the conservation projects on most of the islands. We will also see the 2 endemic parakeets, plus a number of other introduced parrot species. For each of the Amazon species we will have 2 full days with them and the islands we visit have a total of 100 + other endemic bird species and we may see most of them. Sadly, there was once more Amazons species living on the Caribbean and at least 2, possibly 4 species of macaws. They are long gone now, due to persecution and habitat destruction. Beside the observation of the Amazons in the wild, and the other birds, we will have some lectures about the extinct species and more importantly on the conservation issues and the efforts to protect and save the existing Amazons. Their biology, ecology, history, survival and conservation will be discussed. We shall start at the south end of the Caribbean, on the island of St. Vincent.

**ITINERARY**

**DAY 1**
Depart Gatwick early morning on a BA flight, via Barbados and arrive St. Vincent at 20.50 p.m. local time. Overnight in Kingston for 3 nights.

**DAYS 2 and 3**
Watching St. Vincent Amazon, we try to see both color morphs in the wild and visit the conservation project and the aviaries with captive parrots.

**DAYS 4 and 5**
Half an hour flight to St. Lucia at 07.20 a.m -07.50 a.m. local time. Here we will accommodate for two nights. Observing the local Amazon and visit the conservation project. Free time and birding around.

**DAYS 6 to 8**
Flight to Dominica at 09.00 a.m.-09.40 a.m. local time. Stay overnight in a hotel near Portsmouth for 3 nights. We shall have three full days in search of the Imperial and the Red-necked Amazons at the Northern Forest Reserve; on the flanks of Morne Diablotin and Morne Trua Pitton. Visit the conservation projects. If time permits, we will go birding around or have a free time. Option for whaling excursion.

**DAYS 9 to 11**
Flight to Puerto Rico at 09.45 a.m. - arrival at 12.30 p.m. at San Juan airport. Overnight in a hotel near Luquillo Forest for three nights. Rest of the day and the next two full days we will be watching the endemic Amazon in the wild and visit the reintroduction project. If time permits go birding looking for the 17 endemic birds in Puerto Rico.

**DAYS 12 to 14**
Flight to Dominican Republic - 07.50 a.m. - 08.45 a.m. (Hispaniola island). Stay overnight in a hotel near Barahona for 3 nights. Watching the endemic Amazon and the Hispaniola Parakeet and looking for the other 30 endemic birds on the island.

**DAYS 15 to 17**
Flight to Kingstown, Jamaica - 14.00 - 16.40. Stay overnight in Green Castle Estate for three nights. Looking for the both Yellow-billed and Black-billed Amazons and the other endemics.

**DAY 18**
Flight to Cayman Islands 08.55 - 10.00. Here we will stay for a single night, but with enough time to enjoy the local subspecies of the Cuban Amazon (the only species with living subspecies).

**DAYS 19 to 21**
Flight to Cuba, Havana, at 12.45 - 13.45 local time. Drive to Zapata peninsula, the Cuban Amazon stronghold, where we stay for three nights. We have 2 full days to enjoy the beautiful Cuban Amazon as well as the Cuban parakeet and many other endemics.

**DAY 22**
Transfer to Havana airport and flight back home. Those who have after tour extension flight to the Bahamas and watch the Bahama Amazon.

**Ground price:** 5,580 EUR / £ 4,995
**Group size:** 10-16 + leader
**Single supplement:** 1280 EUR
**Deposit:** 600 EUR

The price includes:
ground transport, full board, accommodation, guide, entrance fees for all nature reserves.

The price does not include:
airfare, visa, travel insurance, hard drinks, beverages and all items of purely personal nature.
Bulgaria in Winter
Sunday 20th - Sunday 27th January 2019

Because of its mild winter, the Bulgarian Black Sea coast is a haunt for many birds, which winter here in their thousands. For several species Bulgaria is the best place to see them, especially during this time of the year. Foremost among them is the spectacular Red-breasted Goose. In January and February almost the whole world’s population is concentrated here. Other attractive species wintering in big numbers are the Pygmy Cormorant, the White-headed Duck and the Dalmatian Pelican. Additionally we have a good chance for real rarities, such as Lesser White-fronted Goose and Spotted Eagle. Even the Great Black-headed Gull is possible as we usually observe several birds every February around the Burgas wetlands. We expect well over 100 bird species in our checklist. This holiday will be on a relaxing pace, with only two hotels to be used.

ITINERARY

DAY 1 Arrival at Burgas airport and short transfer to our hotel, where we stay the next three nights.

DAYS 2 and 3 We spend both days exploring Burgas wetlands which are important Ramsar sites and IBAs. We will also visit some wetlands further south. Meanwhile we enjoy viewing species like Pygmy Cormorant, Dalmatian Pelican, White-headed Duck, Smew, Red-crested Pochard, Pintail, Spoonbill, White-tailed Eagle, Bittern etc. Great Black-headed Gull is also possible. Some early waders such as Sanderling, Black-tailed Godwit, Spotted Redshank and Curlew will be already arrived. The deciduous forests around the lakes can provide several species of woodpeckers – Grey-headed, Syrian, Middle and Lesser Spotted and other birds, such as Sombre Tit, Hawfinch, Cirl Bunting etc. The wetlands support a healthy population of Common Otters and the winter is the best time to see them out in the open.

DAY 4 After breakfast we head north, with several stops and lunch on the way. Gortitsa hills will provide opportunity for woodpeckers, including White-backed and Black plus other woodland birds. Late in the afternoon we reach Durankulak village where we will stay the next four nights.

DAYS 5 to 7 These days we will explore Durankulak and Shabla lakes, as well as the surrounding wheat fields where the geese feed. Beside our main goal – the Red-breasted Goose flocks, we will carefully check the White-fronted geese flocks as it may reward us with Lesser White-fronted Goose. Other birds will be Bean and Greylag geese, Black-necked and Red-necked grebes, Black-throated and Red-throated divers, Syrian Woodpecker, Rough-legged and Long-legged buzzards, Hen Harrier, White-tailed Eagle, Goshawk, Merlin, Peregrine and the powerful Saker Falcon. We also stand a good chance for the Spotted Eagle. Passerines will include Bearded Reedling, Moustached Warbler, Calandra and Crested larks, Yellowhammer, Corn Bunting, Hawfinch and many more. We will also visit some rocky areas in order to find the majestic Eagle Owl.

DAY 8 Three and a half hours transfer brings us to Burgas airport for your flight back home. Enroute, we shall have few more birding stops. Departure.

NOTE: This tour is also possible to start/end at Varna Airport! You may also consider our Red-breasted Geese weekend.

Ground price: 990 EUR / £ 885
Group size: 6-12 + leader
Single supplement: 150 EUR
Deposit: 300 EUR

Individuals: 3-5 + leader
Ground price: 1,080 EUR

The price includes:
ground transport, full board, accommodation, guide, entrance fees for all nature reserves.

The price does not include:
airfare, travel insurance, hard drinks, beverages and all items of purely personal nature.

www.wildechotours.com
This tour is specially prepared to show you the best of the Bulgarian birdlife under an optimal time schedule. You will arrive at Varna airport and thus our tour will start from the north Black sea coast where we will catch many of the northern migrants. After it we will drive down to the south sea coast to explore the wetlands here for more migrant and breeding birds. The second half of our tour will be spent into the mountains of south Bulgaria where the late breeders have already arrived. Our tour will end up at Vitosha Mountain, and your departure flight will be from Sofia airport. We are going to see more than 200 species, including some of the rarest European and Bulgarian specialties – Olive-tree and Paddy field warblers, Semi-collared Flycatcher, Isabelline and Pied wheatears, Wallcreeper, Black-headed Bunting, Long-legged Buzzard, Imperial eagle and the Levant Sparrowhawk. There will be plenty of opportunities to see butterflies, plants and magnificent scenery.

**ITINERARY**

**DAY 1** Arrival at Varna airport and transfer to Shabla lake. Next three nights we will accommodate in hotel next to the lake, an excellent location to explore the area next two days. If time permits birding around.

**DAY 2** Today we will explore both Durankulak and Shabla lakes at our leisure. Here we can see Paddyfield, Savi’s, Great Reed, Marsh, Reed, Cetti’s and other warblers, Caspian, marsh and Little terns, Purple Heron, Glossy Ibis, Ferruginous Duck, Squacco Heron, Lesser Grey Shrike, Bearded Reedling, waders, Garganey and many more. Forests around the lakes will provide Lesser Spotted and Syrian woodpeckers, Spotted and Red-breasted flycatchers, Hawfinch and Golden Oriole.

**DAY 3** We devote the day to the area around cape Kaliakra – the last remaining steppe habitat in Bulgaria. It is a place for Pied Wheatear, Roller, Short-toed and Calandra larks, Black-headed Bunting, Stone Curlew, Long-legged Buzzard and Shag. Here we can enjoy the last migrating Red-footed falcons, flying just around us. Despite a bit early in the season Rose-coloured starlings are also possible. At the end we will visit the nearby river valley where we have good chance for Eagle owls family. Back to Shabla for our last overnight here.

**DAY 4** After breakfast we head south. We will have several stops on the way mainly in forest habitat where we can see several species of woodpeckers as well as Semi-collared Flycatcher, Wood and Bonelli’s warblers, Booted and Lesser Spotted eagles, Short-toed Treecreeper, Middle Spotted Woodpecker, Hawfinch and many more. Overnight just outside of Burgas for the next four nights.

**DAYS 5 and 6** Both days we will explore the Burgas wetlands – Ramsar and IBA sites. Here we can observe Terek, Broad-billed, Wood, Marsh and Curlew sandpipers, Red-necked Phalarope, Little and Temminck’s stints, Spoonbills, Glossy Ibis, Dalmatian and White pelicans, Gull-billed, Black, White-winged and Whiskered terns, Mediterranean and Sanderling-billed gulls; Ruddy Shelduck, Little Bittern, Penduline Tit and Bearded Reedling, Oliviaeous Warbler, Black Stork and many more.

**DAY 7** We drive south to Strandja Mountain looking for woodpeckers – White-backed, Grey-headed, Middle and Lesser Spotted, as well as other woodland birds – treecreepers, Cirl Bunting, Hawfinch. Nightjar is also very possible. On our way we will visit coastal wetland for more waders, herons, terns, gulls, Pygmy Cormorant, White-tailed Eagle, Hobby, Garganey, Little Grebe and many others.

**DAY 8** Today we have long transfer to Eastern Rhodopi mountain. We will have one main stop on the way – the site is optimal for Olive-tree Warbler, Masked Shrike, Cirl Bunting, Calandra and Short-toed larks. Lesser Spotted Eagle, Egyptian Vulture and Black Stork are also here. Late in the evening we arrive in our hotel near the town of Krumovgrad, where we stay the next two nights.

**DAY 9** We will explore the nearby Krumovitsa river valley and here we will enjoy Rock Nuthatch, Orpheeian, Sardinian and Olive-tree warblers, Nightingale, Black Stork, Levant Sparrowhawk, Black-eared Wheatear (both western and eastern races), Wryneck, Roller, Rock and Blue Rock thrushes, Chukar and many others. Great Spotted Cuckoo is also possible. Late in the evening, after dinner we look for the tiny Scops Owl in the poplar trees around our hotel.

**DAY 10** After a breakfast we head west and after about four hours transfer we reach Trigrad gorge – a magnificent area, the best place for watching the Wallcreeper. We will have several stops on the way and once in the gorge we will look for the Wallcreeper. Late afternoon walk can provide Rock Bunting, Grey-headed Woodpecker, Bullfinch, Serin and Black Redstart. Overnight in family hotel in the village of Trigrad.

**DAY 11** We will spend the morning looking for the Wallcreepers in the gorge and other birds will be Alpine Swift, Grey Wagtail, Crag Martin, Dipper, Rock Bunting, Black Redstart, Honey Buzzard and Peregrine. Afterwards we drive north and reach hilly area next to the Rhodopi Mountain where we can see Imperial Eagle, Short-toed Eagle, Long-legged Buzzard, Stone Curlew, Isabelline Weather, Woodchat Shrike, Bee-eaters and many others. Late in the afternoon we drive to Vitosha mountain, right next to Sofia city, where we accommodate in a hotel situated on the mountain slopes.

**DAY 12** In the morning we will look around for Nutcracker, Ring Ouzel, Water Pipit, Pallid Swift and other birds and latter on we drive to Sofia Airport for your return flight. Departure.

**Ground price:** 1,350 EUR / £ 1,205

**Group size:** 6-12 + leader

**Single supplement:** 190 EUR

**Deposit:** 300 EUR

**Individuals:** 3-5 + leader

**Ground price:** 1,620 EUR

*The price includes:*
- ground transport, full board, accommodation, guide, entrance fees for all nature reserves.
- The price does not include: airfare, travel insurance, hard drinks, beverages and all items of purely personal nature.
This tour gives you the opportunity to see more than 140 bird species and to witness the spectacular autumn migration on the Black Sea coast. Along it is the second biggest migration route in Europe – Via Pontica. Every autumn more than 90,000 raptors, 30,000 pelicans, 240,000 storks as well as thousands of waders and passerines fly over this way to their wintering grounds. The Bulgarian Black Sea coast and especially its southern part is a “bottle-neck” for the migrating birds from all Eastern Europe, also Scandinavia and Russia. That’s why it is likely to see more than 10,000 storks, 3,000 pelicans or 2,000 Lesser Spotted eagles just in a single day. Our main observation points will be several wetlands along the Black Sea coast – designated as Ramsar sites and IBAs. The itineraries for both dates differ in way that the second tour will not visit the northern coats, but will explore only the Burgas wetlands and use just one hotel for the entire holiday. The other difference between them is that the first period is more suitable for waders, terns and storks, while the second period is characterized with more intensive raptor and passerine migration.

**ITINERARY**

**DAY 1** Arrival at Varna airport followed by one hour transfer to Shabla village where we will be based for the next three nights. Accommodation and if the time permits, short walk in the surroundings where we can see waders warblers, shrikes and buntings.

**DAY 2** Today we will explore Durankulak and Shabla lakes at our leisure – both are important step stones for all migrating species. Here we will see White and Dalmatian pelicans, Ferruginous Duck, Pygmy Cormorant, herons, terns, passerines, raptors and of course many waders – Marsh, Curlew, Wood and Broad-billed sandpipers, Red-necked Phalarope etc.

**DAY 3** This day will be devoted to the area of Kaliakra steppe reserve – the last remaining steppe habitat in Bulgaria. The steppe is lifted at more than 100 m above the sea, and the vertical cliffs create not only picturesque view, but also very favourable conditions for the soaring migrants – storks and pelicans, as well as raptors – Red-footed Falcon, Levant Sparrowhawk, Hobby, Lesser Spotted Eagle, Honey Buzzard and possibly all the harriers. Additionally, gulls and terns, as well as thousands of passerines follow the migration road. We will also catch local breeders like Stone Curlew, Calandra and Short-toed larks, Isabelline and Pied wheatears, Eagle Owl and many more.

**DAY 4** Today we move south. Our first stop will be at forest hill where we can see several species of woodpeckers – White-backed, Middle and Lesser Spotted woodpeckers, Short-toed Treecreeper and other woodland species. After a lunch here we continue south, visiting Pomorie Lake where numerous waders, terns and passerines rest and feed. In the evening we arrive in our hotel in Pomorie where we stay for the next four nights.

**DAYS 5 and 6** Both days we spend around Burgas wetlands. Here we will enjoy numerous migrating Lesser Spotted and Short-toed eagles, Red-footed falcons, Levant sparrowhawks, harriers, Hobbies, as well as White-tailed eagle and Osprey. The gulls include – Mediterranean, Slender-billed, Little and Yellow-legged, several species of terns and ducks will be also seen. These wetlands are real paradise for the waders, so a lot of species in considerable numbers will be also seen – including Terek, Broad-billed, Marsh and Curlew sandpipers, Red-necked Phalarope, Spotted Redshank, Temnick’s Stint and many more.

**DAY 7** Today we visit Strandja Mountain, as the deciduous forests here are excellent habitat for woodland birds. We expect to see White-backed, Middle Spotted, Lesser Spotted, Grey-headed, Black, Green, and Great Spotted woodpeckers. Other species may well include Red-breasted and Semi-collared flycatchers, Hawfinch, Hoopoe and Cirl Bunting. On the way we visit two more coastal wetlands for Pygmy Cormorant, Little Grebe, Squacco and Purple herons, Garganey, Teal and again many waders. Back to our hotel in Pomorie for the last night.

**DAY 8** Transfer to Varna airport with several stops for birding, depending on your return flight. Departure.

**Ground price:** 960 EUR / £ 860
**Group size:** 6-12 + leader
**Single supplement:** 140 EUR
**Deposit:** 300 EUR

- **Individuals:** 3-5 + leader
  - **Ground price:** 1,120 EUR

The price includes:
- ground transport, full board, accommodation, guide, entrance fees for all nature reserves.

The price does not include:
- airfare, travel insurance, hard drinks and all items of purely personal nature.
Birding Kyrgyzstan
Sunday 16th June – Thursday 27th June 2019

Kyrgyzstan has only recently opened to tourism and has preserved its natural and cultural heritage; it can be considered a new frontier for European birdwatchers. We will explore different habitats: green alpine valleys, marshes and semi-deserts. We will reach a pass at 4000 m a.s.l. we will sleep in yurts on a lake shore.

Each day we will look for the many different species that live in the country and its specialties - the White-browed Tit Warbler, the endemics of Kyrgyzstan and southwestern China; the restless Rufous-naped Tit; the colorful Eversmann’s and Blue-capped Redstart. Plus the typical inhabitants of high altitudes like Guldenstadt’s Redstart, Altai Accentor, Lammergeier, Himalayan Griffon and those of the arid areas like Syke’s Warbler and Hume’s Whitethroat. Night-time will be spent camping on a carpet of Edelweiss waiting for dawn and the song and then sight of the Himalayan Snowcock in the rocky peaks - a memory that will last forever.

The tour focuses mainly on birdwatching but we will have the chance to observe species like Gray Marmot, Tien Shan Ground Squirrel and Himalayan Ibex. Moreover, visiting the archeological site of Burana we will discover the ruins of an ancient culture settled along the Silk Road. A journey that will require a bit of flexibility but it will repay us by revealing step by step the uncontaminated beauties of this land a few steps from the sky.

ITINERARY

DAY 1  Arrive in Bishkek early in the morning. We first visit the fishing ponds north of Bishkek where we look for Clamorous Reed Warbler, Indian Oriole and the first Azure Tits. Transfer to the Ala-Archa National Park and stay overnight at Ala-Archa hotel for three nights.

DAYS 2 and 3 Both days we will explore the Ak-Sai Trail. Here, between Asian Spruce, Junipers and alpine meadows we will look for species like: White-tailed Rubythroat, White-browed Tit Warbler, White-winged Crossbill, Himalayan Griffon, Lammergeier, Eversmann’s Redstart and Blue-capped Redstart, while the Greenish warblers and Hume’s Leaf Warbler are abundant and easy to observe. In the afternoon we will go hiking along the River Trail looking for Ibisbill, Brown Dipper and Blue-whistling Thrush.

DAY 4 Transfer to the Burana Tower where in addition to the archaeological ruins we can shall see Long-tailed Shrike, Turkestan Shrike and Red-headed Bunting. Transfer to the Ashuu Guesthouse where we will have lunch and check in. In the afternoon visit to the nearby hills looking for Red Wheatear and Meadow Bunting. One night in the Ashuu guesthouse.

DAY 5 After breakfast we move to the northern shore of the Issik-Kul Lake, the second largest mountain lake in the world. Along the road we visit the spectacular Grigorievka and Semenkova gorges where Isabelline Wheatear and Red-fronted Serin can be seen in good numbers. Night in Karakol in a guesthouse managed by the Community Based Tourism Association.
DAY 6  After breakfast we move to Jari Saz. In the valley we can find Ibisbill, Red-fronted Serin, Goldenstidt’s Redstart, Plain Mountain Finch, White-winged Snowfinch, Hill Pigeon, Altai Accentor. Here we will spend our nights in tents, under the stars in the sky and within the Snow Leopard habitat.

DAY 7  We wake up at dawn and spend the first hours of light looking for the fascinating Himalayan Snowcock. Lunch in Karakol. In the afternoon visit to the ponds around Karakol. Night in a guesthouse.

DAY 8  After breakfast visit of Jeti Oguz and its beautiful scenery we can find Blue-whistling Thrush. Blue-capped Redstart, Black-throated Accentor, White-winged Crossbill and many other species. In the afternoon we visit the Kyzyl-Suu lagoon looking for the Rufous Bush Robin, a rare bird probably breeding in Kyrgyzstan. Later we spend a few hours in the Skazka gorge, a fascinating place with peculiar rocky formations, here Grey-necked Bunting and Pied Wheatear breed. Dinner and night at the Bel Tam yurt camp on the shore of the Issik-Kul lake.

DAY 9  Early start before breakfast and we move to Salt Lake where we can find, among other species, Syke’s Warbler and Hume’s Whitethroat. Then we have breakfast on the shore of the lake. Some time to wander around and take a swim. We have lunch at the guesthouse in Kochkor, followed by transfer to Song Kul lake where we will find the Horned Lark subspecies albigula and the beautiful Citrine Wagtail subspecies calcarata. Night in yurt camp.

DAY 10  Morning birding around the lake, then we move towards Naryn. Birding at the Papugai pass looking for Eversmann’s Redstart, Black-throated Accentor, Brown Accentor, White-tailed Rubythroat, Red-mantled Rosefinch and the ubiquitous Common Rosefinch. Transfer to Naryn, night at the Khan Tengri hotel.

DAY 11  Our last full day will be a long one, with early breakfast at 7am and then we move to Bishkek passing by the Eki-Naryn gorge. Here we will search for: Sulphur-bellied Warbler, Himalayan Vulture, Twite, Cinereous Vulture, Long-legged Buzzard, Black-throated Accentor and many more. Night in Bishkek.

DAY 12  We go to the Bishkek airport to take our flight back home bringing with us unforgettable memories of this wild expedition to one of the least visited countries on the planet.

Ground price: 2,450 EUR / £ 2,185
Group size: 6-12 + leader
Single supplement: 300 EUR
Deposit: 300 EUR

The price includes: 
ground transport, full board, accommodation, guide, entrance fees for all nature reserves.

The price does not include: 
airfare, visa, travel insurance, hard drinks, beverages and all items of purely personal nature.

www.wildechotours.com
For many people, New Guinea represents the ultimate birding goal. Certainly Sir David Attenborough regards this country as 'the greatest unclaimed prize in ornithological filming.' His classic programme about the splendours of the birds of paradise and bowerbirds has created a widespread public interest in experiencing New Guinea at first hand. Until recently, the island’s remoteness and lack of tourist infrastructure prevented this dream from becoming reality. Now, with the help of some well-located lodges, we can explore in comfort and safety the best Papuan habitats and their unique birdlife. We will divide our time between lowlands – Kiunga, and highland lodges (Kumul Lodge and Ambua Lodge) before finishing our tour in the capital Port Moresby.

This itinerary is specially prepared and should give us a wonderful opportunity to watch many species of birds of paradise, in fact 21 species and 1 subspecies.

We will also see a wide variety of pigeons and fruit-doves, parrots, cuckoo-shrikes, kingfishers and bowerbirds. Less familiar groups include fairy-wrens, whistlers, berrypeckers, butcherbirds and honeyeaters. We will also be able to observe some of Papua’s colorful people, with their distinctive tribal dress and customs.

**ITINERARY**

**DAY 1** Arrival at Port Moresby and transfer to the hotel for check-in and if time permit birding around the town in the afternoon, looking for the first species of BoP - the Glossy Manucode.

**DAY 2** Our day will begin with a very early departure for Variarata National Park, situated in the foothills above the city, looking for the Raggiana and Magnificent Riflebird paradise. En route to the park entrance, we will pass by the head of the notorious Kokoda Trail, where valiant efforts by Australian and local troops halted the Japanese march during the Second World War. The dry eucalypt forests that flank the quiet access road to Varirata provide superb birding and noisy screeches will reveal pairs of stunning Black-capped Lory and/or flocks of busy Coconut Lorikeet and Red-cheeked Parrot. Here we will find a mix of New Guinea endemics and species shared with Australia. Likely birds may include the attractive: White-shouldered Fairywren, Black Sunbird, White throated Honeyeater, White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike, Varied Triller, Lemon-bellied Flyrobin, Leaden Flycatcher, Brown Oriole, Spangled Drongo and noisy Hooded Butcherbird. We will also work hard to try and locate the scarce White-bellied Whistler.

Upon entering the park, we will spend the morning slowly walking the narrow trails that enter the moister evergreen hill forest. These well-marked trails wind through a variety of habitats with some excellent lookouts over Port Moresby and the coastline, providing a full day of new sights and sounds.

**DAYS 3 and 4** A short charter-flight takes us to Ambua Lodge, over intact forests and alpine grasslands. Western influences have only recently arrived in the area, and some of the local population, the Huli, still wear traditional dress and ceremonial wigs decorated with exotic plumes.

Ambua’s thatched chalets have commanding views over the Tari Valley. Seven species of bird of paradise (Black Sicklebill, Superb, Loria’s and Blue Birds of Paradise, Short-tailed Paradigalla, Lawes’ Parotia and Stephanie’s Astrapia) regularly come into the gardens. Common species include Black-billed Cuckoo-Dove, Large and Buff-faced Scrubwrens, Blue-grey Robin, Scater’s Whistler, Great Woodswallow, Mountain Peltops and Common Smoky Honeyeater. During our two full days here, we will walk along the road up to Tari Gap at different altitudes, looking for species such as: Brehm’s Tiger-Parrot, Papuan Lorikeet, Blue-capped Ifrita, Dimorphic Fantail, Bellford’s Melidectes and both Crested and Tit Berrypeckers. Again, birds of paradise will be a focus of our expeditions: King of Saxony Bird of Paradise, Ribbon-tailed Astrapia and Brown Sicklebill are usual above the lodge. If we are lucky and find some fruiting trees we may see Crested Bird of Paradise, Macgregor’s Bowerbird and Mid-mountain Berrypeckers coming to feed. Many other rarely seen mountain species are possible too, such as New Guinea Harpy Eagle or Painted Tiger-Parrot. One morning we will go down into the Tari Valley to attend a Huli sing-sing, a traditional and spectacular war-dance and a superb photo-opportunity. At these lower elevations we can look for Buff-tailed Sicklebill, Red-collared Myzomela, Marbled Honeyeater and Great Cuckoo-Dove. In the evenings the Papuan Boobooks should be calling near the restaurant.

**DAYS 5 to 7** Short domestic flight to Mount Hagen, in the Central Highlands. From here, a 90 minute drive brings us to Kumul Lodge, set at 2,800m just over the border in Enga Province, where we stay for three nights. The accommodation is simple and rustic, but you will love the setting – as you can relax in a comfortable chair and watch the well-stocked bird table laden with fruits and have your first close-up experience of birds of paradise! Notable visitors to the garden feeder are Brown Sicklebill and Ribbon-tailed Astrapia, Brehm’s Tiger-Parrot, and with luck the shy Bronze Ground Dove and Archbold’s Bowerbird. The photographic opportunities are wonderful. We also hope for: Plum-faced and Papuan Lorikeets, Regent, Brown-backed and Rufous-napped Whistlers, White-winged Robin and Mountain Firetail. We can walk the trails below the lodge and look for Lesser Melampitta, as well as Blue-capped Ifrita, a bird with a poisonous plumage. Excursions we can take from the lodge may enable us to find Lesser Bird of Paradise, Crested Satin Bird of Paradise, Brown Sicklebill, Torrent Flycatcher, Yellow-breasted Bowerbird and with luck Torrent-tark.

**DAY 8** Morning birding in Kama areas for Blue and Superb birds of paradise and afternoon transfer from Kumul to Highlander hotel where we stay for two nights.

**DAY 9** Early morning start to Bialya river where we will spend the day searching for Carol’s Parotia.

**DAYS 10 and 11** Again we will take short flight to Kiunga and at noon we will check-in hotel Kiunga where we stay two nights. The sparsely populated lowlands of southwestern Papua New Guinea around Kiunga are still one of the least disturbed areas in the country.

**Papua Lorikeet**
One of the highlights will be a visit to the mixed display ground of both Greater and Raggiana Birds of Paradise, we may also find some hybrids.

Other species might include: Grey-headed Goshawk, Red-flanked Lorikeet, Yellow-capped Pygmy-Parrot, Ivory-billed (or Greater Black), and Lesser Black Coucals, Obscure, Plain, Green-backed and Streak-headed Honeyeaters, Scrub Honeyeater (or Scrub White-eared Meliphaga), Meyer’s Friarbird and Trumpet Manucode. We shall also keep our ears open for the whistles of the Long-billed Cuckoo, looking for the gorgeous Emperor Fairy-Wren and try hard to entice a Blue Jewel-Babblers into view. If we are lucky we will find one or more of the less frequently recorded species, which include Orange-fronted Hanging Parrot, Buff-breasted Paradise Kingfisher, Black-eared Catbird (split from Spotted) and Ruby-throated Myzomela.

One full day we will devote to birding excursions to Kilometer 17 looking for King and Greater birds of paradise

DAY 12  We shall set off early in a small boat in order to explore the Fly and Elevala Rivers and their tributaries, spending one night at a very basic lodge deep in the depths of the swamp forest jungle surrounding the Elevala River. We shall be aiming to reach a display post of the forest jungle surrounding the Elevala River. We shall set off early in a small boat in order to explore the Fly and Elevala Rivers and their tributaries, spending one night at a very basic lodge deep in the depths of the swamp forest jungle surrounding the Elevala River.

As we move through the muddy river, hundreds of birds will beflexing their wings and voices and preparing for the new day. We can expect to see large numbers of Collared Imperial Pigeons, mixed with smaller numbers of Pinion Imperial Pigeons, as they erupt from the treetops as we pass by. Large flocks of Blyth’s Hornbills flap lazily from tree to tree and strange, spiky-crested Palm Cockatoos and Glossy-mantled Manucodes are a feature of the journey. Parrots are everywhere, especially Eucleus Parrots and Sulphur-crested Cockatoos. We shall be looking out for the Southern Crowned Pigeon, one of the largest and most mysterious pigeons in the world. It may take us some time to locate one, but we have a good chance of success and the sight of this incredible bird is one that will surely last a lifetime. Here we shall be on the lookout for the gorgeous King Bird of Paradise and we shall hope to find one of the staked-out males that are amazingly faithful to their display trees. Rarities such as White-bellied Pitoihi and the pretty Little Paradise Kingfisher occur in these swampy forests and among the bird parties we shall hope to find difficult species such as Hooded Monarch and Rufous Babblers. With luck we will also see Dusky Lory and Large Fig Parrot. Southern Casowary occurs but we would need to be very fortunate indeed were we to catch a glimpse of this shy creature.

DAY 13 Morning excursions around Kwatu Camp looking for Southern Crown Pigeon, Flame Bower Bird and Blih’s Honbill. In the afternoon we shall return to by boat to Kiunga for one more night.

DAY 14 Morning birding around the hotel and at noon we will board our return flight to Port Moresby where we stay the last night. Afternoon birding in the area for any species we might have missed - Crinkle-Collared Manucode, Trumpet Manucode and King BoP and Buff-breasted Paradise Kingfisher.

DAY 15 If time permits we will make some final birding in the area then head to the airport for our flight home. For those joining the extension the adventure continues.

EXTENSION

DAY 1  An internal flight will bring us at Normanby island. In the afternoon we will look for the Curl-crested Manucode bird of paradise - an endemic species for the island. Overnight at Normanby guest house for two nights.

DAY 2  Full day birding with main targets Goldie’s and Curl-crested Manucode birds of paradise, but also Purple-bellied Lori, Eastern Black-capped Lori, Channel-billed Cuckoo, Crimson Ground Dove, Black Sunbird, Nicobar Pigeon and many more.

DAY 3  Following early breakfast, we shall leave Normanby island by boat to Escape, Alotau and through Port Moresby continue to Lae where we will stay in a local hotel for one night.

DAY 4  Early morning transfer to Lae airport for a flight to Houn Peninsula. Here we will be looking for the Emperor bird of paradise which is an endemic species. Its display upside down is a privilege to observe. Overnight at Missionary’s home for two nights.

DAY 5  Full birding at Satop looking for the peninsula’s endemic species - Huon Poratia or Wahnes’s BOP, which cannot be found anywhere else in the world.

DAY 6  Transfer to Wasu airstrip for Lae/Port Moresby for a last overnight.

DAY 7  This morning will be at leisure until we transfer for the airport around midday. Departure.
Focused on the very first spring butterflies of Northern Greece, our main target is the beautiful and extremely local False Apollo. As it is only on the wing early in spring, our trip has been specially created to see the False Apollos in pristine condition and is unashamedly the main focus of this unique tour. We will of course seek out other spring fliers and they will enrich the trip further. During the tour we will visit various habitats, including; dry maquis, rocky places to meadows in a pine forest, riverbanks and an impressive gorge. Where we will also find other local and interesting species like both Eastern and Southern Festoons, Gruner’s Orange Tip, Eastern Greenish Black Tip, Powdered Brimstone, Cleopatra, Krueper’s Small White, Eastern Wood White, Small Bath White, Eastern Baton Blue, Eastern Dappled White, Nettle-tree Butterfly. There will also be the chance to enjoy a number of beautiful early Mediterranean flowers and many birds.

ITINERARY

DAY 1 Arrival at Thessaloniki airport (Greece) and transfer to our hotel, at Alexandroupoli for three nights. Accommodation and dinner.

DAYS 2 and 3 Both days we will explore the town surroundings, where False Apollo is found. Interestingly, one hundred years ago the Bulgarian entomologist Delcho Ilchev released twice 500 False Apollo caterpillars (raised in the Entomological station in Sofia) in this area. They were collected on the Kurudag, Gelibolu Peninsula in European Turkey, where now the species is probably extinct. Once found we shall have plenty of time to relax with them, watching and photographing them well and when ready, we shall look for some other early species that might have emerged already. Species to be seen here are Southern Festoon, possibly Eastern Festoon, Powdered Brimstone, Camberwell Beauty, Large Tortoiseshell, Eastern Dappled White, Southern Small White, Small Bath White and possibly Grecian Copper. We also have the option to visit Dadia National Park and Evros River where we can see a good number of birds including raptors.

DAY 4 Transfer to Xanthi with stops at a river valley not far from Komotini and at the foothills of Mt. Argo. Searching for Nettle-tree Butterfly, Green-underside Blue, Eastern Baton Blue, Grecian Copper, Gruner’s Orange Tip etc.

DAY 5 Visits to the impressive Nestos (Mesta) gorge and its surroundings where we will search for Krueper’s Small White, Eastern Wood White, Southern Comma, Cleopatra, both Festoons and Green Hairstreak.

DAYS 6 and 7 Transfer to Drama for two nights with some stops along Mesta River on the way. Explore the surroundings of Bozdag/ Falakro Mt for Eastern Greenish Black-tip, Gruener’s Small White, Eastern Dappled White, Eastern Bath White etc.

DAY 8 Transfer to Thessaloniki airport for your flight back home. Time permitting we will have stops along the way.

COST: 1,190 EUR / £1,060
Group size: 6-12 + leader

Single supplement: 170 EUR
Deposit: 300 EUR

Individuals: 3-5 + leader
Cost: 1,480 EUR

The price includes:
ground transport, full board, accommodation, guide, entrance fees for all nature reserves.

The price does not include:
airfare, travel insurance, hard drinks, beverages and all items of purely personal nature.
The butterfly fauna of Morocco is the richest and most diverse of all of North Africa. The number of species gradually increases from Egypt westward along the Mediterranean coast. The Moroccan fauna comprised 5 families, 66 genera and 135 species of butterflies. There are several endemic species here. For most Europeans, Morocco is a perfect link with Africa - in the north the landscape and habitats are similar to Andalucia, in the south is the Sahara where forms the border. Also the Moroccan dragonfly fauna of 58 species is very inviting, with a prevalence of Mediterranean species. During the tour we shall visit many different habitats: from desert oases, through cedar forests and humid fir/pine/oak forests, to high mountain zones which will allow us to find many local and interesting species like Spanish Festoon, Spanish Fritillary, Moroccan Orange-tip, Desert Orange-tip, Sooty Orange-tip, Scarce Green Striped White, Desert Swallowtail, Moroccan Copper, Donzel’s Silver-line, Allard’s Silver-line, Martin’s Blue, Allard’s Blue, Black-Eyed Blue, Lorquin’s Blue, African Babul Blue, Desert Babul Blue, African Grass Blue, Mediterranean Tiger Blue, Common Tiger Blue, Fatma’s Bavius Blue, Spotted Adonis Blue, Moroccan Hairstreak, Moroccan Marbled White, Dark Giant Grayling, African Greyling, Desert Fritillary. The tour allow not only to admire the beauty of the scenery, butterflies, dragonflies, flowers and other natural wonders, but also to enjoy the local Moroccan culture and cuisine, offering an unforgettable all-round experience.

**ITINERARY**

**DAY 1** Arrival at Fez (Tangiers) airport and transfer to our hotel, situated in Chefchauen for two nights. Accommodation and dinner.

**DAY 2** We will explore Rif Mountains, which receives more rainfall than any other region in Morocco. The slopes are covered in forests of Atlas cedar, cork oak and holm oak, as well as the only remaining forests of Moroccan fir. Species to be seen here are Spanish Festoon, Spanish Fritillary, Marsh Fritillary, Southern Scarc Swallowtail, Martin’s Blue, Black-Eyed Blue, Lorquin’s Blue, Spanish Marbled White, Spanish Gatekeeper, Dark Giant Grayling, Portuguese Dappled White, Provençal Fritillary, Vaucher’s Heath, Moroccan Pearly Heath and False Marbled Skipper.

**DAY 3** Transfer to Ifrane for four nights with stops on the way. Optional visit to the nearby Roman city at Volubilis – a unique frontier-post of the ancient Roman Empire listed in UNESCO World Heritage List.

**DAYS 4 to 6** We will explore Middle Atlas Mountains (including very rich Ifrane surroundings), which is primarily limestone. The jewel of the Middle Atlas is its Ifrane National Park, located in causee atlassian between Khenifra and Ifrane. We will visit different habitats - from dry limestone, rocky places to meadows in a cedar forest, riverbanks and lakes. Species to be seen here are Spanish Festoon, Moroccan Orange-tip, Sooty Orange-tip, Portuguese Dappled White, Greenish Black-tip, Donzel’s Silver-line, Allard’s Silver-line, Mediterranean Tiger Blue, Common Tiger Blue, Fatma’s Bavius Blue, Spotted Adonis Blue, Lorquin’s Blue, Moroccan Hairstreak, Provence Hairstreak, Chapman’s Green Hairstreak, Spanish Fritillary, Marsh Fritillary, Aetherie Fritillary, Southern Scarc Swallowtail, Moroccan Marbled White, Western Marbled White, Vaucher’s Heath, African Grayling, Cleopatra, False Mallow Skipper, Red-underwing Skipper, False Marbled Skipper, Sage Skipper, Rosy Grizzled Skipper.

**DAY 7** Transfer to Asni for three nights with stops at Kasba, Bzou & El Kelas des Srahrna. Searching for African Grass Blue, African Babul Blue, Mediterranean Tiger Blue, Common Tiger Blue, Spanish Marbled White, Allard’s Silver-line, Marsh Fritillary, Green-striped White, Western Dappled White etc. Asni is a small town in the foothills of the High Atlas Mountains near Marrakech, which is connected to Ikiss and Imil by picturesque roads.

**DAYS 8 and 9** Both days we will explore the High Atlas Mountains. The range includes Djebel Toubkal, which at 4,167 m is the highest in the range and lies in Toubkal National Park. This range serves as a weather system barrier in Morocco running east-west, separating the Sahara from the Mediterranean and continental zones to the north and west. The High Atlas with contrasting landscapes will remind visitors of Colorado, with its high plateau, its gorges and canyons, and its peaks sometimes splintered by erosion. We will visit different altitudinal zones - from valleys near Marrakesh and its surroundings to high mountain zone. Species to be seen here are Desert Orange-tip, Moroccan Copper, African Babul Blue, African Grass Blue, Moroccan Hairstreak, False Baton Blue, Black-Eyed Blue, Spotted Adonis Blue, Common Tiger Blue, Spanish Marbled White, Dark Giant Grayling, Vaucher’s Heath, Aetherie Fritillary, False Marbled Skipper, False Mallow Skipper, Rosy Grizzled Skipper, Red-underwing Skipper.

**DAY 10** Transfer to Tafraoute for three nights, visiting mountain pass Tizi n’Tout. Searching for Moroccan Orange-tip, Desert Orange-tip, Iolas Blue, Black-Eyed Blue, Common Tiger Blue, Provence Hairstreak, Spanish Festoon, Western Dappled White, Vaucher’s Heath, Spanish Marbled White, Moroccan Small Skipper, Mediterranean Skipper, Southern Scarc Swallowtail, Cleopatra etc. Tafraoute is a small town in the central part of the Anti Atlas Mountains.

**DAYS 11 and 12** Both days we will explore Anti Atlas mountains, which represents a desolate world of rocky outcrops and lunar landscapes where the contrasts are extreme. Most of the land is dry and barren, bordering to the south with Sahara desert. A number of wadis and seasonal rivers terminate in the deserts to the south of the mountains. Species to be seen here are Desert Swallowtail, Desert Fritillary, Greenish Black-tip, Scarce Green Striped White, Desert Babul, Silver-line, Moroccan Copper, Moroccan Hairstreak, Allard’s Blue, Mediterranean Tiger Blue, Common Tiger Blue, Fatma’s Bavius Blue, Spotted Adonis Blue, Moroccan Hairstreak, Moroccan Marbled White, Dark Giant Grayling, African Greyling, Desert Fritillary. The tour allow not only to admire the beauty of the scenery, butterflies, dragonflies, flowers and other natural wonders, but also to enjoy the local Moroccan culture and cuisine, offering an unforgettable all-round experience.

**GROUP SIZE**

- **Individuals:** 3-5 + leader
- **Group size:** 6-12 + leader

**COST: 2,320 EUR / £ 2,070**

**Deposit:** 300 EUR

**Single supplement:** 240 EUR

**Individuals:** 3-5 + leader

**Cost:** 2,790 EUR

The price includes: ground transport, full board, accommodation, guide, entrance fees for all nature reserves.

The price does not include: airfare, travel insurance, hard drinks, beverages, visa and all items of purely personal nature.
Armenia offers a unique mixture of European and Near Eastern butterfly species along with healthy populations of some very rare and decreasing species. During the tour we shall visit many different habitats, situated in spectacular natural scenery: from limestone gullies through high mountain meadows, riverbanks and forests to semi-desert habitats which will allow us to find very rare and local species, plus many others like: Anatolian Fiery Copper, Turkish Fiery Copper, Caucasian Turan Copper, Romanoff’s Vernal Copper, Pfeiffer’s Green Hairstreak, Sovinsky’s Green Hairstreak, Orange-banded Hairstreak, Hyrcanian Black Hairstreak, Odd-spot Blue, Pontic Blue, Diana Blue, Eastern Brown Argus, Loew’s Blue, Alpine Green Hairstreak, Damonides Blue, Hubert’s Blue, Alcedo Blue, Bosnian Blue, Turkish Blue, Gerhard’s Black Hairstreak, Freyer’s Fritillary, Persian Fritillary, Caucasian Spotted Fritillary, Transcaucasian Fritillary, Ionian Emperor, Amasian Satyr, Great Steppe Grayling, White-bordered Grayling, Orange Hermit, Eastern Orange Tip, Sooty Orange Tip, Saadi’s Heath, Alcides Skipper, Aegean Skipper, Inky Skipper, Persian Skipper, Pogge’s Skipper, Levantine Skipper, Tessellated Skipper, Reverdin’s Marbled Skipper, False Marbled Skipper, Southern Swallowtail, Anatolian Clouded Yellow, Christoph’s Clouded Yellow, Small Bath White and Bowden’s White. Armenia is the oldest Christian country and has a rich history with many medieval monuments and monasteries, situated in a dramatically beautiful landscape. The tour will not only allow you to admire the beauty of the scenery, butterflies, birds, flowers and other natural wonders, but also to enjoy the extraordinary Armenian friendly hospitality and delicious cuisine, offering an all-round experience. Our first tour in 2018 finished with 126 species of butterflies, which included only the second observation ever of Persian Blue in the country!

**ITINERARY**

**DAY 1** Arrival at Yerevan airport and transfer to our hotel, situated in the core of Khosrov forest state reserve for two nights. Accommodation and dinner.

**DAY 2** We will explore the core-zone of Khosrov forest state reserve visiting river valleys, hot humid and bushy areas close to more arid slopes and sparse juniper forests searching for: Anatolian Fiery Copper, Turkish Fiery Copper, Orange-banded Hairstreak, Romanoff’s Vernal Copper, Odd-spot Blue, Eastern Brown Argus, Loew’s Blue, Inky Skipper, Mediterranean Skipper, Hungarian Skipper, Alpine Green Hairstreak, Osiris Blue, Green-underside Blue, Zephir Blue, Amasian Satyr, Niobe Fritillary, Oriental Meadow Brown, Freyer’s Fritillary, Persian Fritillary, Ionian Emperor, Hungarian Glider, Southern White Admiral, Mountain Small White, Eastern Dappled White and Sooty Orange Tip.

**DAY 3** Transfer to Meghri for three nights with stops on the way near Areni, Sarnakunk and Tatev monastery. Searching for: Saadi’s Heath, Alcides Skipper, Persian Skipper, Gerhard’s Black Hairstreak, Bowden’s White, Balkan Marbled White, Swallowtail, Eastern Bath White, Acon Blue, Blue Argus, Sooty Copper, Amanda’s Blue, Adonis Blue, Caucasian Spotted Fritillary, Lesser Spotted Fritillary, Knapweed Fritillary, Brimstone and many others.

**DAY 4** We will explore Meghri surroundings, typical for semi-deserts of southern Armenia, but also includes some species that can be found only here in Armenia. This is the only place where the extremely rare Damonides Blue occurs. Other species include: Caucasian Turan Copper, Lesser Fiery Copper, Reverdin’s Marbled Skipper, Inky Skipper, Hyrcanian Black Hairstreak, Little Tiger Blue, Alcedo Blue, Cardinal, Saadi’s Heath, Eastern Grayling, Balkan Marbled White, Eastern Knapweed Fritillary, Southern Comma, Amasian Satyr, Anatolian Clouded Yellow, Powdered Brimstone and Krueper’s Small White. Birds: Black-eared Wheatear, Roller, Woodchat Shrike and Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin.

**DAY 5** We will explore Kuris and Shvanidzor surroundings, stony steppe area covered by thorny Goat’s Thorn bushes and scattered trees, an area under great Irano-turanian influence. Various Legumes providing wide variety of host-plants and nectar sources for butterflies. The only place in Armenia where very local Grass Jewel occurs. Other species include: Caucasian Spotted Fritillary, Yellow-banded Hairstreak, Blue Argus, Short-tailed Blue, Eastern Brown Argus, Meleager’s Blue, Eastern Wood White, Marbled Skipper, Ilex Hairstreak, Nettle-tree Butterfly, Large Tortoiseshell, Russian Heath, Esper’s and Balkan Marbled White, Thelephassa Grayling, Orange Hermit, Great Banded Grayling, Caucasian Turan Copper and Orange Banded Hairstreak. Birds: Orphean and Upcher’s Warblers, Black-headed Bunting and Pale Rock Sparrow.

**DAY 6** Transfer to Yeghegnadzor for four nights with stops on the way at Gyumorats and Tzav in Arevik National Park. The high-mountain steppe dominated by Sainfoin, the host-plant for some specific butterflies. Possible species:...
are: Pfeiffer’s Green Hairstreak, False Marbled Skipper, Firdussi’s Blue, Iolas Blue, Long-tailed Blue, Mazarine Blue, Dark Green Fritillary, High Brown Fritillary, Gerhard’s Black Hairstreak and Iolas Blue. Typical birds for this zone: Stonechat, Common Rosefinch, Radde’s Accentor and Ortolan Bunting.

DAY 7 We will explore Arpa Gorge, Vayk and Herher surroundings, a Mediterranean rocky area with bushes and scattered trees. Searching for: Caucasian Vernal Copper, Anatolian Fiery Copper, Small Bath White, Sooty Orange Tip, Eastern Orange Tip, Sooty Orange Tip and Clouded Apollo.

DAY 8 We will explore the impressive Nora-vank Gorge with the monastery and Arpi River valley - an arid rocky area with scattered bushes. In this amazing scenery, we will search for: Orange-banded Hairstreak, Romanoff’s Vernal Copper, Odd-spot Blue, Anatolian Fiery Copper, Levantine Skipper, Tussellated Skipper, Yellow-banded Skipper, Sandy Grizzled Skipper, Inky Skipper, Zephyr Blue, Swallowtail and Southern Swallowtail, Small Bath White, Mountain Small White, Krueper’s Small White, White Letter Hairstreak, Bavius Blue, Oisirs Blue, Green-underside Blue, Large Blue, Pontic Blue, Adonis Blue, Zephyr Blue, Persian Fritillary, Marsh Fritillary, Cardinal, Great Steppe Grayling, Oriental Meadow Brown, Hungarian Glider and Ionian Emperor.

DAY 9 We will spend the day in a nice river valley and high-mountain steppe area dominated by legume plants, such as Sainfoin and Goats’ Thorn, plus grasses. Searching for: Eastern Orange Tip, Dalmatian Ringlet, Orange-banded Hairstreak, Hyrcanian Black Hairstreak, Romanoff’s Vernal Copper, Great Steppe Grayling, Amasian Satyr, Saadi’s Heath, Marsh Fritillary, Woodland Ringlet, Odd-spot Blue, Pfeiffer’s Green Hairstreak, Pontic Blue, Christoph’s Clouded Yellow, Anatolian Clouded Yellow, Berger’s Clouded Yellow, Scarce Swallowtail, Swallowtail, Clouded Apollo, Hubert’s Blue, Firdussi’s Blue, Eastern Baton Blue, Yellow-legged Tortoiseshell, Pearly Heath, Russian Heath, Dusky Meadow Brown, Lesser Latitude Brown and Esper’s Marbled White. Along with some birds: like Crimson-winged Finch, Snake Eagle, Chukar and Siberian Stonechat.

DAY 10 Transfer for two nights to Tsapatagh, situated at Sevan Lake, with stops on the way at diverse zones of Vardenyats (Selim) Pass. In an amazing scenery of oromediterranean zone we will be searching for: Aegean Skipper, Inky Skipper, Oriental Marbled Skipper, Large Grizzled Skipper, Caucasian Vernal Copper, Anatolian Fiery Copper, Turkish Fiery Copper, Turkish Blue, Pfeiffer’s Green Hairstreak, Pontic Blue, Eastern Brown Argus, Odd-spot Blue, Eastern Orange Tip, Ionian Emperor, Persian Fritillary, Pale Clouded Yellow, Anatolian Clouded Yellow, Mountain Small White, Eastern Dappled White, Large Wall Brown, Southern Swallowtail, Southern Comma and Southern White Admiral.

DAY 11 We will explore Tsapatagh and Artanish surroundings. In a small river valley we will be seeing: Aegean Skipper, Marbled Skipper, Olive Skipper, Yellow-banded Skipper, Osiris Blue, Purple-shot Copper, Balkan Copper, Lesser Fiery Copper, Bosnian Blue, Large Blue, Alcon Blue, Idas Blue, Zephyr Blue, Caucasian Vernal Copper, Twin-spot Fritillary, Transcaucassian Fritillary, Freyer’s Tawny Rockbrown, Eastern Orange Tip and Mountain Small White.

DAY 12 Transfer to Aghveran for two nights, visiting Amberd River Valley (Orgov). In the fresh river valley we will be catching up with any species we may have missed so far. In a nicely wooded area near our hotel we will look for: Bosnian Blue, Genarius Argus, Green Hairstreak, Alcon Blue, Mazarine Blue, Eastern Baton Blue, Lesser Latitude Brown, Marsh Fritillary, Transcaucasian Fritillary, Caucasian Spotted Fritillary, Hungarian Glider, Clouded Apollo, Eastern Orange Tip and Anatolian Clouded Yellow.

DAY 13 We will explore Azat Canyon and Garni Temple of northern part of Khosrov forest state reserve searching for: Pogge’s Skipper, White-bordered Grayling, Anatolian Fiery Copper, Turkish Fiery Copper, Sooty Copper, Eastern Brown Argus, Loew’s Blue, Sandy Grizzled Skipper, Aegean Skipper, Hungarian Glider, Ionian Emperor, Orange-banded Hairstreak, Hyrcanian Black Hairstreak, Blue-spot Hairstreak, White Letter Hairstreak, Satyrion w-album, Romanoff’s Vernal Copper, Silver-washed Fritillary, Queen of Spain, Nettle-tree Butterfly, Southern White Admiral, Balkan Marbled White, Freyer’s Fritillary, Glanviella Fritillary, Spotted Fritillary, Knapweed Fritillary, Ionian Emperor, Hungarian Glider, Eastern Orange Tip, Sooty Orange Tip and Powdered Brimstone.

DAY 14 Transfer to Yerevan airport for your flight back home. Time permitting we will have few stops on the way.

Ground price: 2,240 EUR / £ 1,995
Group size: 6-12 + leader
Single supplement: 240 EUR
Deposit: 300 EUR

Individuals: 3-5 + leader
Ground price: 2,650 EUR

The price includes:
ground transport, full board, accommodation, guide, entrance fees for all nature reserves.
The price does not include: airfare, travel insurance, hard drinks, beverages and all items of purely personal nature.
Turkey is a huge country, situated on two continents, on the eastern edge of the Western Palearctic, and thus offering a great and spectacular butterfly diversity. Within the tour we will be focused on central, eastern Mediterranean and north-eastern regions. We are going to visit river valleys, semi-desert regions and high mountains (up to 3 000 m. a.s.l.) in order to get the local specialties.

Good number of other wildlife and plants will be also recorded as we will visit variable habitats.

**ITINERARY**

**DAY 1** Arrival at Adana airport and drive to Tasucu (about 2 hours), where we accommodate in the sea view hotel. Depending on the arrival time, there is a chance to explore surroundings of our hotel. Stay overnight for two nights.

**DAY 2** Early morning start to coastal region near Tasucu and Silifke. Here we will explore different sites for our primary species here - Pyrgmy Skipper, Sage Skipper, Millet Skipper, Agama Orange-banded Hairstreak, Needle's Argus, Isaurian False Argus, Oriental Furry Blue, Anatolian Furry Blue, Turkish Furry Blue, Anatolian Fiery Copper, Zafar's Skipper, Anatolian Fiery Copper, Isaurian False Argus, Oriental Onagro Blues, Melisse's Skipper, Reuven's Skipper, Isaurian False Argus, Morvan's Skipper, Atlas Blue, Gerhard's Black Hairstreak, Odd-spot Blue, Freyer's Tawny Rockbrown, Tawny Rockbrown, Peak White. Picnic lunch. Late in the afternoon we can explore the village surroundings. Back to Oz Safak Pension for our second night here.

**DAY 3** After an early breakfast and morning in Limonlu Gorge we shall head to the north Aladaglar region by crossing the Taurus Mountains. On the way we will have some stops, where we can catch up any species we may have missed, plus some others - Aegaean Skipper, Levantine Skipper, Anatolian Skipper, Reverdin's Marbled Skipper, Krueper's Small White, Iolas Blue, Long-tailed Blue, Bavius Blue, Anatolian Fiery Copper, Isaurian False Argus, Lebanese Adonis Blue, Lydian Tawny Rockbrown, Great Steppe Grayling, Great Sooty Satyr, Eastern Grayling, Samos Grayling, Southern Grayling, Nettle-tree Butterfly. The transfer itself is about 3 hours and upon arrival we accommodate in Oz Safak pension for two nights. In the late afternoon we will start to explore the nearby spectacular gorge and our walk shall produce mainly some local Blues. We shall enjoy our dinner, home made food, with sightseeing of Demirkazik Peak, and prepare ourselves for early start next morning.

**DAY 4** We will have an exceptional trip today in Aladaglar, ascend to about 2 000 m. a.s.l. When ready in the area, we start back with option for several stops on the way down which can produce Anatolian Green-underside Blue, Anatolian Fiery Copper, Actis Blue, Eastern Brown Argus, Geranium Argus, Isaurian False Argus, Bosnian Blue, Chelmos Blue, Lebanon Adonis Blue, Gerhard's Black Hairstreak, Odd-spot Blue, Freyer's Tawny Rockbrown, Tawny Rockbrown, Peak White. Picnic lunch. Late in the afternoon we can explore the village surroundings. Back to Oz Safak Pension for our second night here.

**DAY 5** Today we shall continue to drive north, heading to Göreme. The Göreme National Park (Göreme Milli Parklar in Turkish) was added to the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1985. In the afternoon we will explore rock formations and scrubby area around, where we will look for Persian Skipper, Mountain Small White, Iolas Blue, Alcedo Blue, Lebanese Anomalous Blue, Gerhard's Blue, Small Anatolian Blue, Persian Anomalous Blue, Turkish Furry Blue, Anatolian Chalk-hill Blue, Poseidon Blue, Wagner's Blue, Orange-banded Hairstreak, Nogel's Hairstreak, Great Steppe Grayling, Amasian Satyr, White-banded Grayling, Persian Furry Blue, Anatolian Clouded Yellow. Accommodation in Zara for one night.

**DAY 6** After early breakfast we will continue exploration of the region and in the afternoon we will head north-east to the town of Gurun - a fore post of semi-desert fauna. On the way we will make a brief stop at Mazikiran Pass. Accommodation for two nights.

**DAY 7** The whole day will explore surroundings of the town for Pogge's Skipper, Persian Skipper, Anatolian Green-underside Blue, Turkish Furry Blue, Bavius Blue, Gerhard's Black Hairstreak, Orange-banded Hairstreak, Orange Hermes, Anatolian Hermit, Great Steppe Grayling, Saadi's Heath, Staudinger's Steppe Brown, Wagner's Steppe Brown, Freyer's Tawny Rockbrown, Klug's Tawny Rockbrown, Amasian Satyr, Southern Swallowtail, Peak White, Sooty Orange Tip.

**DAY 8** After early breakfast we shall continue to drive north, heading to Sivas. Near the town we will visit Camlibel Pass, searching for Mountain Small White, Balkan Copper, Eastern Brown Argus, Gerhard's Blue, Pontic Blue, Chelmos Blue, Myrrha Blue, Lesser Latte Brown, Southern Grayling, White-banded Grayling, Anatolian Clouded Yellow. Accommodation in Zara for one night.

**DAY 9** After early breakfast we will head east to the town of Erzincan. Today we will visit two mountain passes on the way - Kızıldag Pass and Sakaltutan, where among many others we hope to see also Tesselated Skipper, Persian Skipper, Mediterranean Skipper, Alcedo Blue, Turkish Furry Blue, Mountain Green-veined White, Great Steppe Grayling, Persian Fritillary, White-banded Grayling. Accommodation for two nights.
Day 10  We will explore Munzur National Park: near Caglayan - a valley in Munzur Mountain ranges and Kolçekmezdağ Pass. First one is the only place during the tour, where is possible to find Levantine Silver-line and Large Silver-line. Other species for today: Gerhard’s Black Hairstreak, Rebel’s Hairstreak, Alcon Blue, Large Blue, Fiery Copper, Loew’s Blue, Zephyr Blue, Alpine Blue, Turkish Furry Blue, Poseidon Blue, Turkish Blue, Gerhard’s Blue, Persian Anomalous Blue, Mithridates, Bosnian Blue, Geranium Argus, Bowden’s White, Anatolian Hermit, Great Steppe Grayling, Eastern Grayling, Russian Heath, Chestnut Heath, Wagner’s Steppe Brown, Syrian Marbled White.

DAY 11 Transfer to Erzurum for one night stay. On the way will stop at Tanyeri and Kopdagi Pass. The main target species there are Pogge’s Skipper, New Skipper, Tessellated Skipper, Aegean Skipper, Lesser Fiery Copper, Rebel’s Hairstreak, Gerhard’s Blue, Dusky Large Blue, Fiery Copper, Bosnian Blue, Diana Blue, Hubert’s Blue, Eastern Baton Blue, Larger Anatolian Blue, Turkish Blue, Gerhard’s Black Hairstreak, Orange-banded Hairstreak, Odd-spot Blue, Syrian Marbled White, Anatolian Tawny Rockbrown, Small Bath White, Hewitson’s Ringlet, Marsh Fritillary, Eastern Orange Tip, Meneties’ Clouded Yellow, Bowden’s White, Peak White.

DAY 12 Transfer to Yusufeli, situated in Coruh Valley. In the morning will explore Palandoken Mountain, where we expect to see Large Blue, Balkan Copper, Fiery Copper, Eastern Brown Argus, Larger Anatolian Blue, Pontic Blue, Damon Blue, Firdussi’s Blue, Hubert’s Blue, Turkish Furry Blue, Nina’s Blue, Phyllis Blue, Tanker’s Blue, Gerhard’s Black Hairstreak, Rebel’s Hairstreak, Balkan Marbled White, Esper’s Marbled White, Caspian Satyr, Anatolian Clouded Yellow, Christoph’s Clouded Yellow, Meneties’ Clouded Yellow. On the way will cross Golyurt Pass, where will make some stops trying to find among the others Pfeiffer’s Green Hairstreak, Osiris Blue, Turkish Fiery Copper, Bosnian Blue, Large Anatolian Blue, Hi Blue, Eastern Baton Blue, Odd-spot Blue, Russian Heath, Yellow-legged Tortoiseshell, Southern Comma, White-banded Grayling, Anatolian Satyr, Eastern Orange Tip, Anatolian Clouded Yellow, Christoph’s Clouded Yellow, Bowden’s White, Mountain Small White.

DAY 13 Exploring Kackar Mountain - a real butterfly paradise. Here we expect to see Alcides Skipper, Inky Skipper, Anatolian Skipper, Tessellated Skipper, Aegean Skipper, Persian Skipper, Levantine Skipper, Anatolian Fiery Copper, Turkish Fiery Copper, Fiery Copper, Larger Anatolian Blue, Gerhard’s Blue, False Chalkhill Blue, Hopfler’s Blue, Hi Blue, Poseidon Blue, Gerhard’s Black Hairstreak, Eastern Grayling, Tree Grayling, Oriental Meadow Brown, Amnasion Satyr, Powdered Brimstone, Krueper’s Small White, Small Bath White, Southern Swallowtail.

DAY 14 Exploring Coruh Valley, where we expect to see Inky Skipper, Persian Skipper, Levantine Skipper, Nettle-tree Butterfly, Grass Jewel, Anatolian Fiery Copper, Turkish Fiery Copper, Fiery Copper, Larger Anatolian Blue, Gerhard’s Blue, False Chalkhill Blue, Hopfler’s Blue, Hi Blue, Poseidon Blue, Gerhard’s Black Hairstreak, Checkered Blue, Little Tiger Blue, Odd-spot Blue, Orange Hermit, Freyer’s Grayling, White-bordered Grayling, Ionian Emperor, Krueper’s Small White, Small Bath White, Southern Swallowtail. Farewell dinner and last overnight in Yusufeli/Erzurum.

DAY 15 Two hours of driving bring us to Erzurum airport, for our connection flight to Istanbul from where we fly back home.

Ground price: 2,240 EUR / £ 1,995
Group size: 6-12 + leader

Single supplement: 290 EUR
Deposit: 300 EUR
Individuals: 3-5 + leader
Ground price: 2,690 EUR

The price includes:
ground transport, full board, accommodation, guide, entrance fees for all nature reserves.

The price does not include:
airfare, visa, travel insurance, hard drinks, beverages and all items of purely personal nature.
Butterflies of the West Balkan – Bulgaria and Serbia
Monday 10th - Friday 21st June 2019

Our butterfly tour will take you to the beautiful scenery of the Balkan Mountains, covering different altitudes and vegetation zones. Our main target species are: Bog Fritillary, Freyer’s Fritillary, Violet Copper, Lesser Lattice Brown, Bulgarian Ringlet and False Comma. A good combination of rare and beautiful butterflies. Our route will take us along part of the border between Bulgaria and Serbia. The whole tour we will be located in the Stara Planina Mountains, known in both countries as the Balkan Range, the name given to the whole peninsula.

We expect to see a veritable feast of butterflies during the tour. More than a 120 species, including: Apollo, Clouded Apollo, Mountain Small White, Purple Emperor and both Lesser and Freyer’s Purple Emperors, Poplar Admiral, Common and Hungarian Gliders, Camberwell Beauty, Large Tortoiseshell, Balkan Copper, Lesser Fiery Copper, Blue-spot Hairstreak, Eastern Baton Blue, Chequered Blue, Large and Alcon Blue, Eros Blue, Ripart’s Anomalous Blue, Cardinal, Balkan Fritillary, Lesser Spotted Fritillary, Delattin’s Grayling, Almond-eyed Ringlet, Bright-eyed Ringlet, Ottoman Brassy Ringlet, Great Sooty Satyr, Lattice Brown, Eastern Large Heath, Russian Heath as well as Spinose, Hungarian Skipper, Yellow-banded and Safflower skippers. To name but a few!

In addition there will be dragonflies, birds, reptiles, amphibians and flowers, set against beautiful and variable habitats, all contributing to an excellent nature holiday.

It is our first tour that includes Serbia – a country with well-preserved nature and although not having many prominent highlights among the butterflies and the birds; it does offer a fine and rich biodiversity during the easy to moderate walks that we will make. Most of the hotels we stay at are located next to rich habitats, giving excellent opportunities for relaxed butterfly photography early in the mornings. This tour is ideal for butterfly enthusiasts and nature lovers at any level of experience.

**ITINERARY**

**DAY 1** Arrival at Sofia airport and short transfer to the small town of Dragoman, situated just northwest of Sofia, for a three-night stay. On the way we will visit the Aldomirovo marsh. Accommodation and dinner.

**DAYS 2 and 3** Both days will explore the Dragoman marsh and its surroundings – dry limestone hills, bushy and mountain areas. The limestone hills around are home for many butterflies to search for. We will also explore the Ponor Mountain, a part of the Balkan Range, looking for Balkan Copper, Large Copper, Russian Heath, Safflower Skipper, Weaver’s Fritillary, Eros Blue, Mountain Small White, Maleger’s Blue, and many more.

The marsh itself is a precious wetland, one of the three marshes in Europe on lime terrain. It has extensive reedbeds, home to birds such as all the European crakes, Blittern, Ferruginous Duck, Bearded Tit and many more. Other birds will include Sombre Tit, Long-legged Buzzard, Goshawk, Rock Thrush, Rock Bunting, Alpine Chough and many more, while the wet meadows are full of Coenecrates and Quails.

**DAY 4** Travel north to our next base – the small town of Chiprovtsi, famous for its traditional handmade carpets. Stay for three nights in a small family hotel. On the way we will explore some more limestone hills and meadows near Gintsi, the Petrohan pass and high mountain zone close to the border.

**DAY 5** Today we will drive with 4WD vehicle and walk towards the highest zone near to 2000 meters above the sea level. The day will be spent high up in the mountains looking for high altitude species and especially for the recently discovered, new species to Bulgaria - the Violet Copper. Other species to be seen Clouded Apollo, Eastern Large Heath, Mountain Argus, Bright-eyed Ringlet and Freyer’s Purple Emperor.

**DAY 6** Exploring some of the remote valleys at the footslopes of the mountain. Our pleasant walk will bring us many species of butterflies, including one of the holidays’ main target - the Freyer’s Fritillary and many others like Cardinal, Blue Argus, Geranium Argus, Chequered Blue, Amanda’s Blue.

**DAY 7** We will be entering Serbia today, through the recently opened new border crossing point. Drive to the mountain locality known as Babin Zub on the opposite side of the Stara planina, where we will spend the next two days. We will break the journey with a few stops on the way, looking for butterflies. Upon arrival, accommodation for three nights in local hotel ideally situated for exploring the area next two days.

**DAYS 8 and 9** Both days we will explore the surroundings of Babin Zub. Will spent time in some of the meadows up to the subalpine zone in the area, mountain bogs and rivers. Our main targets here are the very rare Bog Fritillary and the elusive False Comma, but we expect to see over a 50 species of butterfly in this pristine habitat – Balkan Copper, Eros Blue, Twin-spot Fritillary, Yellow Banded Skipper, Great Sooty Satyr, Almond-eyed Ringlet.

**DAY 10** Transfer to our next base situated in mountain woods above Pirot for a two-night stay. On the way we will explore a rocky river valley for a good variety of species, including large numbers of Apollo. Other species will include: Hungarian and Common Gliders, Freyer’s Fritillary, Zephyr Blue, Tufted Marbled Skipper.

**DAY 11** Day spent in some of the gullies and meadows in the limestone area SE of the town. Relaxing walks in this remote areas among beautiful sceneries and many butterflies: Purple Emperor, Lesser Purple Emperor, Delattin’s Grayling, Nickell’s Fritillary, Large Tortoiseshell, Ripart’s Anomalous Blue, Eastern Baton Blue, Spinose Skipper.

**DAY 12** Transfer to Sofia airport for the flight back home. Time permitting we will have few stops on the way.

**Ground price: 1,470 EUR / £ 1,310**

**Group size: 6-12 + leader**

**Single supplement: 195 EUR**

**Deposit: 300 EUR**

**Individuals: 3-5 + leader**

**Ground price: 1,680 EUR**

**The price includes:**
- ground transport, full board, accommodation, guide, entrance fees for all nature reserves.
- The price does not include:
  - airfare, travel insurance, hard drinks, beverages and all items of purely personal nature.
On the track of the wolf pack
Saturday 20th - Saturday 27th April 2019

The Grey Wolf is perhaps the most appealing and misunderstood animal in Europe. Being on the top of the food chain it enjoyed a privileged life for millions of years before meeting its match – the human. Seen as a beast to be feared, the wolf was quickly wiped out from most of the Western European countries. While in the East, for various reasons it managed to survive, experiencing worse and better days. Even in Bulgaria, some thirty years ago, the wolves’ population was lowered to as few as 100 individuals, mainly because of the widespread use of poison in the sixties. After its official ban, the law enforcement took place and the numbers have gradually increased, currently the population in spring is around 1200 animals. However, it is still hunted with no limits whatsoever; anyway, due to the lack of poison (which use was the real problem) it is now increasing. Even in Bulgaria, where the wolf has never been extinct, most of the people are ignorant of the importance of the wolf for the ecosystem and biodiversity or they simply deny acceptance of it. Things however are changing, not only in Bulgaria, but also in the whole of Europe. Although the changes are happening slowly, what better way to accelerate the situation is there, than with the growth of ecotourism. Captive wolves are one of the most photographed animals in Europe and this shows just how attractive to people the wolf now is. But photographing wolves in captivity is simple; the real challenge is to see one in the wild, let alone photograph one. Centuries of persecution have developed a deep rooted fear of humans and that, together with its sharp senses, natural intelligence, amazing mobility and shy nature, all contribute to making the wolf one of the most elusive creatures. For a number of years we have been trying to include the option to reliably see wolves into our program and finally we have succeeded. Last summer we built a hide, especially aimed at seeing them. It is situated in one of the best areas for the wolf in Bulgaria, and in order to maximize the chances to see them, it is designed to allow comfortable overnight stays. For a number of nights in the hide if needs be. During the last winter season, we tested the hide 9 times and the wolves have been in front of it for at least 5 of them. The best time to see the wolves is from October to May. The number of participants is restricted to four, so for private parties this tour can be run any time in that period. For our scheduled tour we have chosen the end of that period. It is the time when the hunting is long over, the wolves are relatively relaxed, but it is also a time when they are actively feeding their cubs, so the baits we put out for them are a very attractive source of food. Within the tour we will have two – two night stays in the hide, but we will also explore the surroundings for the wolves’ presence, signs and tracks of their activities. Most of the area is open mountain hills where we can have good visibilities at long distances. Our best chances of seeing the wolves however are from the hide.

ITINERARY

DAY 1 Arrival at Sofia airport and an hour and a half transfer will bring us at the area where we will spend the following week. We will first check in at a local hotel, followed by an exploration trip in the area – by 4x4 and walking, in order for you to get familiar with the site.

DAYS 2 to 7 After breakfast we will explore the area again and late afternoon we will enter the hide for our first overnight session. The hide is about 20 sq meters, including a proper toilet and small kitchen with a wood stove and gas heater. All the surfaces are made of wooden cladding to dampen down any sounds. There are beds, table and chairs, as well as shelves – all cozy and comfortable. The observation area in the hide is 4 x 4 meters. On two of the sides there are two large windows 180x50 cm (so four in total) each with stopsol mirror glass that allows you to watch and even photograph through it. We will spend at least two nights in a row here, even better three. The hide is spacious; temperatures should be very pleasant, so staying in the hide will not be tough work. However, preparing yourself for spending long hours in the hide, keeping a low profile and being very quiet - could have unforgettable prizes. The most likely time for the wolves to appear is the early morning, but of course they appear any time. All the participants, along with the leader ought to watch out together as much as possible, as there are not many signals that a wolf is approaching. There will be a long hours of nothing happening, but our efforts might be rewarded at any moment. There will not be many other animals around – a Golden Eagle also attracted by the bait, plus Ravens and may be a buzzard. If the wolves are around, there will be no Foxes, but a Wild Cat is possible, plus a Weasel which has its home near the hide. We will leave the hide in the late morning of day 4, and explore another part of the area, looking for wolves and signs and tracks of their activities. In the evening we will stay in the hotel, for a shower and meal in the restaurant. The next day we will further explore the area and in the evening we will enter the hide again, for another 2 nights stay, waiting for the wolves. On day 7 we will leave the hide at a chosen time. This depends on the success of the previous days. Afterwards, we will either further explore the area or if it is late, head to the hotel for our last overnight stay within the tour.

DAY 8 After breakfast, depending on the time of your departure flight, we can visit a wetland on the way to the airport, or have a sightseeing tour in Sofia. Departure.

Ground price: 1,220 EUR / £ 1,090
Group size: 2-4 + leader
Single supplement: 150 EUR
Deposit: 300 EUR

The price includes:
ground transport, full board, accommodation, guide, entrance fees for all nature reserves.
The price does not include:
aire, travel insurance, hard drinks and all items of purely personal nature.
Bulgaria has a uniquely high diversity of bats. Out of the 35 species found in Europe, 33 species are known to inhabit this country. There are several explanations for this great richness and abundance of bats, they are: the country’s transitional geographic position, the mosaic of habitats, the extensive farming activities in the semi-mountain regions, the high diversity of insects and last but not the least is the presence of over 5,400 caves. Our tour is a unique opportunity to learn and enjoy the secret world of the bats. The main focus of this tour is on the cave dwelling bats and their underground roosts in the Rhodopes Mountain. All bats are strictly protected by the national and international legislation. This status imposes many restrictions for their study and thus provides only limited but still rewarding opportunities to witness their spectacular swarming and foraging behaviour. In addition to our activities we will also enjoy lectures and power-point presentations on bats - the species, their distribution and biology, conservation, methods of researches etc. Each of the caves we will visit in the evenings is situated not more than 30 minutes from the hotel where we will be based. The sites we will visit are rich in wildlife, so we will have plenty of options to also see birds, insects and flora.

ITINERARY

DAY 1 Arrival at Sofia airport and transfer to Dobrostan ridge (about two and a half hours of driving). Accommodation and dinner, followed by 20 minutes transfer to a cave nearby. Observation of an emerging colony of Schreib- er’s and Long-fingered Bats.

DAY 2 AND 3 We will spend the day exploring mountain plateau (30 minutes of driving from the hotel) for its rich wildlife. Here we will visit a small show cave with few bats. In the evening we can observe an emerging colony of Greater and Lesser Mouse-eared Bats, Schreiber’s and Long-fingered Bats at the mouth of a cave. Back to the hotel for our second night here.

DAYS 4 AND 5 After breakfast we head to Eastern Rhodopes Mountain (two and a half hours of driving) and will have two nights stay near Madzharovo. On the way we will pay a visit to the Seven Caves karstic complex. On the rocks near Madzharovo we can observe a roost of a colony of the European free-tailed Bat. In the evening we can see emerging and foraging behaviour of: Daubenton’s Bat, Greater and Lesser Horseshoe Bat, Geoffroy’s Bat, Common and Pygmy Pipistrelle, Savi’s Pipistrelle Bat.

DAY 6 Today we drive to Trigrad gorge (four and a half hours of driving). It is a long drive but we have plenty of excellent options for stops on the way at suitable bats habitats. Accommodation for two nights in a small family hotel, in the village of Trigrad. After a dinner we will witness the spectacular emerging of thousands of Schreiber’s and Long-fingered Bats at the entrance of Devil’s Throat Cave (twenty minutes from our hotel). Foraging behaviour of Daubenton’s Bat, Long-fingered Bat and Whiskered Bats at a small pond near Trigrad.

DAYS 7 AND 8 During the day we will visit two spectacular show caves: Devil’s Throat and Yagodinska Peshtera caves. In the evening foraging behaviour of the Whiskered Bats, Lesser Noctule and possibly of the Giant Noct-

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: All activities will be held with minimum (if any!) impact to the bats. The Bulgarian Biodiversity Act prohibits all kind of direct disturbance of bats in Bulgaria without a permit issued by Ministry of Environment and Waters. The Protected Areas Act regulates the access to all important bat underground roosts. The caves to be visited can be changed depending on the occurrence/absence of bats. Foraging behaviour of at least five bat species during each of the evening walks is going to be observed.

EQUIPMENT: compact LED headlamp, long-range torch (optional), Bat detector and a recording device (optional), sturdy shoes/boots, warm clothes.

Ground price: 1,080 EUR / £ 965
Group size: 6-10 + leader
Single supplement: 125 EUR
Deposit: 300 EUR
Individuals: 3-5 + leader
Ground price: 1,300 EUR

The price includes:
ground transport, full board, accommodation, guide, entrance fees for all nature reserves.
No hidden extras.

The price does not include:
airfare, travel insurance, hard drinks, beverages and all items of purely personal nature.
Bulgaria boasts a healthy population of Golden eagles and more than 160 pairs inhabit its mountains. Our tour gives you the opportunity to take photos of these impressive raptors. From a distance of 25 to 35 meters you can photograph their natural behavior - feeding, preening and even mating without disturbing them. In the winter, when food is scarce, the eagles willingly visit the baits in front of our hides. The great advantages of Bulgaria when it comes to Golden Eagle photography are the various options for background, as well as light and perches. Here you will not only photograph the eagles in snow, but also on the ground, on junipers bushes, on mountain hay meadow or on a wooden branch properly situated by us. The light in Bulgaria, even in the winter, can be excellent for photography and in fact gives you opportunity to be creative even with difficult subjects like the Golden Eagle. There are also opportunities for flight shots of the eagles when they land and take off from the bait or the perches. We have been running this tour successfully for over 15 years now and have built up a number of hides giving various options for photography thus avoiding obstacles such as bad weather, no access due to a deep snow, recent disturbance etc. All of the hides are different in terms of setting, access, distance to the birds, perches, background etc. Every pair of Golden Eagles visiting the baits is also more or less different - some birds prefer to feed in the morning, others in the afternoon; occasionally some feed individually, more usually pairs come together. The same is true for the other species visiting the baits – one has a constant flock of 30 + Ravens, a Common Buzzard pair and few a Jays etc. We have also established few bird feeders around the hides and these are constantly visited by Hawfinch, Sombre Tit, Willow Tit, Brambling, Yellowhammer, Bullfinch, Goldfinch, Fieldfare, Jay and many more commoner species. Weasel is possible too.

The Grey Wolf is perhaps the most appealing and misunderstood animal in Europe. For a number of years, we have been trying to include the option to reliably see wolves into our program and finally we have succeeded. We built a hide, especially aimed at seeing them. It is situated in one of the best areas for the wolf in Bulgaria, and in order to maximize the chances to see them, it is designed to allow comfortable overnight stays.

The itinerary provided below is provisional in terms of sites and species that can be photographed, beside the Golden eagle of course which is the main target. If you are interested in that tour, please let us know what your preferences are as well as the period convenient for you, and we will be happy to suggest you what we think is the best option. This tour is possible from late October until the middle of March, and we have four scheduled tours, plus we can run a few tailor made ones.

**ITINERARY**

**DAY 1** Arrivial at Sofia airport and an hour and a half transfer will bring us at the area where we will spend the following week. We will first check in at a local hotel, followed by an exploration trip of the area - by 4x4 and walking, in order for you to get familiar with the site.

**DAYS 2 to 6** Early start so we can enter the hide in the dark. The hide has a proper toilet and small kitchen with a wood stove and gas heater. There are beds, table and chairs, as well as shelves - all very cozy and comfortable. On two of the sides there are two large windows 180x50 cm (with four openings in total). You can shoot through the glass or directly. The hide is spacious; temperatures should be low profile and being very quiet - you could have unforgettable prizes. Golden Eagles can come in any time of the day. If the Wolves are around, there will be no Foxes, but a Wild Cat is possible, plus a Weasel which has its home near the hide. We also have a passerines hide in the area so in case you have taken enough good photos of the eagles, or want to take a break, we can spend a day or two there.

**DAY 7** Morning session in the passerines hide or walk around for some portraits or landscape shots, followed by transfer to the airport.

**EQUIPMENT:** At least 300mm lens plus converter. Stable tripod is essential or only gimbals or other tripod head. Full frame and crop-sensor cameras with fast "frame per second" rate are the best for this trip. Teleconverters: 1.4x, 1.7x, 2x teleconverters are very useful. Batteries: At least one extra battery.

**EXTENSION:** The Golden eagle photo tour can be combined with a short extension trip for Dalmatian Pelican photography. Depends on the winter, there are several sites where we can do this in Bulgaria. Alternatively, the best site for that species is Lake Kerkini in Greece, just next to the Bulgarian border. Here we can also photograph Greater Flamingo, Pygmy Cormorant, Great White Egret etc. Best period is end of January and February when the pelican’s bills lower mandible turn into a bright red color. Within two to three days you can get excellent photos of the pelicans in breeding plumage - feeding, resting, flying etc. Please contact us if you are interested in that option.

**Ground price:** 1,550 EUR £ 1,385

4 photographers

Single supplement: 150 EUR

Deposit: 300 EUR

Individuals: 2-3 + leader

**Ground price:** 1,650 EUR

**The price includes:**

- ground transport, full board, accommodation, guide, entrance fees for all nature reserves.

**The price does not include:**

- airfare, travel insurance, hard drinks, beverages and all items of purely personal nature.
Bulgaria offers excellent photography opportunities due to its rich biodiversity and variety of habitats, with some 20 species of amphibians and 37 species of reptiles found here. Many of these species can be seen only in this part of the continent. The reason for this richness is the bio-geographical situation of the country, as well as well-preserved habitats. Within the nine days of the tour we expect to see most of the amphibian and the reptilian species. The period of our tour coincides with the beginning of all the species reproduction cycle and this gives us more chances to find them. Our tour will cover the three best areas for reptiles and amphibians in western Bulgaria.

We will have early starts and late evenings in order to take advantage of the best light - it is also the time when amphibians and reptilians are normally motionless and easier to photograph. During the early afternoons we may have siestas to rest, avoiding the harsh midday sun.

Our tour will start with a one night in Western Balkan Mountain close to Vratsa town. We will explore the area in Vrachanski Balkan Mountain where will take pictures of Fire Salamander, Northern Crested Newt, Green Toad, Agile Toad, Green Lizard and other species. On the second day we will visit the same spots for more early morning pictures. In late afternoon will travel to the town of Lom on the Danube river coast, where we will spend 1 night. On day 3 we will be looking for species such as Danube Crested Newt, Fire-bellied Toad, Common Spadefoot, Common Tree Frog, European Pond Terrapin, Northern Slow Worm and other low-land and river species. Late in the afternoon will drive to Sofia City with a few stops in karst region on the road for some reptiles. Over the next 3 days (2 nights), we will explore the habitats of Vitosha Mountain. We will be accommodated in a hotel at the base of the mountain. Here in Vitosha Mountain we will take pictures of some specialized and rare high mountain species - Fire Salamander, Common Frog, Slow Worm, Sand Lizard, Viviparous Lizard, Adder and Alpine Newt. Next we transfer to Kyustendil town. On day 6 we will explore Osogovo Mountain for a Fire Salamander, Alpine Newt, Common Newt, Balkan Crested Newt, Slow Worm, Sand Lizard, Green Lizard, Smooth Snake, Grass Snake, Aesculapian Snake. Then from day six to the end of the tour we will be in Kresna Gorge, SW Bulgaria. For four days there will be the opportunity to take pictures of many species in different situations - Syrian Spadefoot Toad, Yellow-bellied Toad, Stream Toad, Kotschy’s Gecko, Balkan Green Lizard, Erhard’s Wall Lizard, Worm Snake, Dahl’s Whip Snake, Leopard Snake, Four-lined Snake, Montpellier Snake, Cat Snake, Horn-nose Viper. We can also find both species of tortoises - Hermann’s and Spur-thighed, as well as the Balkan Terrapin.
**ITINERARY**

**DAY 1**  
Arrival at Sofia airport and transfer to town of Vratsa, about an hour and the half drive for one-night stay. If time permits, we will have an afternoon session close to the town. Will spent the night in near Vratsa.

**DAY 2**  
Early morning short drive will bring us to "Vrachanski Balkan" Nature Park. Here will take pictures of Northern Crested Newt, Fire Salamander, Green Toad, Agile Frog, Snake-eyed Skink, Green Lizard, Common Wall Lizard, Grass Snake. Late afternoon transfer to the town of Lom, situated on the Danube River, where we stay overnight.

**DAY 3**  
From very early morning we will explore river flows, canals and shore of the Danube River. In this time of the year there are many flooded agricultural areas in the region, where we can find many species. In this day will looking for good pictures of Danube Crested Newt, Fire-bellied Toad, Common Spadefoot, Green Toad, Common Tree Frog, Agile Frog, European Pond Terrapin, Northern Slow Worm and Bletched Snake. Late afternoon transfer to Sofia city for two nights, just outside. During the transfer we will make a few stops in karst region of Lakatnik for some species as Green Lizard, Common Wall Lizard, Large Whip Snake and Nose-horned Viper.

**DAY 4**  
Today we will explore the mountain plateau of Vitosha Mountain, at 2000 meters above the sea level, a short drive from the hotel. Here will take pictures of typical high mountain species as Fire Salamander, Common Frog, Slow Worm, Sand Lizard, Viviparus Lizard, Adder.

**DAY 5**  
Return to the plateau in the morning, then transfer to Kyustendil town close to Osogovo Mountain. If time permits we will explore suitable habitats around the town.

**DAY 6**  
Early morning session, taking pictures of Fire Salamander, Alpine Newt, Common Newt, Balkan Crested Newt, Slow Worm, Sand Lizard, Green Lizard, Balkan Lizard, Smooth Snake, Grass Snake, Aesculapian Snake. Late afternoon transfer to Kresna Gorge, about one and a half hours of driving. Accommodation for the next three nights.

**DAYS 7 and 8**  
Two full days will be spent exploring different sites in the area. We will visit various habitats - gorges, rocky and sandy terrains, big river valleys and small streams, wet meadows, small ponds and forest patches in order to find as many species as possible. We will have short transfers driving to the sites, but most of the time we will walk in search of reptiles and amphibians. Beside the common species, here we expect to find also some rare and species with limited distribution - Syrian Spadefoot Toad, Yellow-bellied Toad, Stream Toad, Kotschy’s Gecko, Balkan Green Lizard, Erhard’s Wall Lizard, Worm Snake, Dahl’s Whip Snake, Leopard Snake, Four-lined Snake, Montpellier Snake, Cat Snake, Horn-nose Viper. We can also find both species of tortoises - Hermann’s and Spur-thighed, as well as the Balkan Terrapin.

**DAY 9**  
Depending on your flight times, maybe a short walk in the surroundings. Two hours transfer to Sofia airport. Departure

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**Ground price:** 1,380 EUR / £ 1,230  
**Group size:** 4-6 + leader  
**Single supplement:** 205 EUR  
**Deposit:** 300 EUR  
**Individuals:** 2-3 + leader  
**Ground price:** 1,580 EUR

The price includes:  
- ground transport, full board, accommodation, guide, entrance fees for all nature reserves.

The price does not include:  
- airfare, travel insurance, hard drinks, beverages and all items of purely personal nature.

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www.wildechotours.com
Early spring photography – orchids, tulips and butterflies
Monday - 29th April – Tuesday 7th May 2019

This tour is focused on the very first spring orchids, tulips and butterflies in Bulgaria. During the tour we will visit various habitats (mountain meadows, lowland deciduous forest, scrub and bushes, rocky places to meadows, riverbanks and sea coast), giving us the opportunity to find local and interesting species like: Monkey Orchid, Lady Orchid, Pyramidal Orchid, Tulipa rhodopea, Iris reichenbachii, Pale-flowered Orchid, Pink Butterfly Orchid, Cephalanthera epipactoides, Helleborines, Tulipa thracica, Long-lipped Tongue Orchid, Sage-leaved Rock-Rose, Pink Rock-Rose, Ophrys reinholdii, Ophrys cornuta, Tulipa australis, Tulipa urumovii and many more. Beside the orchids and the tulips, which are our main focus, we shall also see and photograph some of the beautiful early butterflies we rarely photograph on our butterfly tours. These are Eastern Festoon, Southern Festoon, fresh swallowtails, Yellow-banded Skipper, Grecian Copper, Chequered Blue, Lattice Brown etc, as well as many other insects.

Sunlight at this time of the year in Bulgaria is good for photography all day, but we will still take full advantage of the early morning and late afternoon light.

ITINERARY

DAY 1  Arrival at Sofia airport and transfer to Dobrostan for two nights in a small family hotel.

DAY 2  Today we’ll explore the Dobrostan ridge. We’ll visit a limestone ridge above the St. Petka Maldaviska Monastery, along the path to St. Ilia Peak where we will looking for: Orchis simia (Monkey Orchid), Orchis purpurea (Lady Orchid), Orchis tridentata (Three-toothed Orchid), Anacamptis pyramidalis (Pyramidal Orchid), Ophrys mammosa, Tulipa rhodopea – a rare Bulgarian endemic Tulip, Iris reichenbachii – a Balkan endemic species.

Depending on time we can visit the area of Martsiganitsa chalet where can find: Dactylorhiza sambucina (White Helleborine), Dactylorhiza sambucina (Elder-flowered Orchid), Orchis tridentata (Three-toothed Orchid), Anacamptis pyramidalis, Iris suaveolens and Tulipa thracica – one of the rarest wild tulips in Bulgaria, a Balkan endemic, which natural range also includes Croatia, Greece and Turkey. Last stop just before Primorsko to see a beautiful population of Orchis purpurea. Two nights at small hotel near the Black sea.

DAY 3  All day transfer to Eastern Rhodopes, town of Ivailovgrad, next to the Turkish border. We shall have a few stops along the route for orchids, flowers and butterflies. Two nights in family hotel in Ivailovgrad.

DAY 4  Region of Ivailovgrad town is popular as an orchid’s paradise. Calcareous hill, secondary deciduous forest, shrubs and grassy places, river valleys, wet meadows and even more different habitats. Both days we will be looking for some of the rarest and beautiful orchid species: Orchis simia (Monkey Orchid), Orchis purpurea (Lady Orchid), Ophrys mammosa, Ophrys cornuta, Anacamptis pyramidalis (Pyramidal Orchid), Anacamptis papilionacea (Pink Butterfly Orchid), Anacamptis morio (Green-winged Orchid), Limodorum abortivum (Violet Limodore), Plataniathera chlorantha (Greater Butterfly-orchid), Himantoglossum calcaratum (not-flowering).

DAY 5  Today we shall visit the “Likana” protected area, declared for the protection of the only locality of Cephalanthera epipactoides. This orchid has oriental sub-Mediterranean distribution and is endemic to Greece, Bulgaria and Turkey. Other orchid species observed in the vicinity are: Cephalanthera longifolia (Narrow-leaved Hellebore), Cephalanthera damasonium (White Hellebore), Cephalanthera rubra (Red Hellebore, but may be not-flowering), Anacamptis papilionacea, Anacamptis pyramidalis, Limodorum abortivum, Himantoglossum calcaratum, Orchis purpurea, Ophrys cornuta, Ophrys mammosa and Ophrys apifera.

DAY 6  Long all-day transfer to the Black sea coast to town of Primorsko. Short stop along the road at the vicinity of Ustrenum village (marble quarry), Sakar Mountain looking for Anacamptis papilionacea, Ophrys cornuta, Orchis tridentata, Anacamptis morio, Iris sintenisii. Another stop near Arkutino lake for Anacamptis pyramidalis, Iris suaveolens and Tulipa thracica – one of the rarest wild tulips in Bulgaria, a Balkan endemic, which natural range also includes Croatia, Greece and Turkey. Last stop just before Primorsko to see a beautiful population of Orchis purpurea. Two nights at small hotel near the Black sea.

DAY 7  Short transfer will bring us in vicinity of Strandzha Mountain. First stop will be to “Silistar” protected area. Here we’ll looking for: Serapias vomeracea (Long-lipped Tongue Orchid), Anacamptis papilionacea (Pink Butterfly Orchid), Anacamptis morio (Green-winged Orchid), Verbascomugillator, Verbascum phoeniceum, Cistus salviifolius (Sage-leaved Rock-Rose), Cistus incanus (Pink Rock-Rose). Then a short trip to core part of the Strandzha Mountain to see mixed populations of Ophrys reinholdii and Ophrys cornuta (possibly hybrids between them).

DAY 8  Three hours transfer will bring us to the Eastern Balkan Mountain in “Sinite Kamani” Nature Park. Here we’ll take pictures of Anacamptis morio (Green-winged Orchid), Orchis simia (Monkey Orchid), Orchis purpurea (Lady Orchid), Orchis tridentata (Three-toothed Orchid), Cephalanthera damasonium (White Hellebore), Dactylorhiza sambucina

Anacamptis papilionacea
(Elder-flowered Orchid) and Orchis pinetorum. We will find the graceful Yellow Tulips Tulipa australis on mountain meadows and rocky places. Depending on the year, it is possible to see Tulipa urumovii in flowers. This wild tulip is among the most notable of Bulgarian endemics. Stay overnight near Sliven.

DAY 9  Early morning session, time permitting, followed by transfer to the airport.

Ground price: 1,380 EUR / £ 1,230
Group size: 4-6 + leader
Single supplement: 205 EUR
Deposit: 300 EUR

Individuals: 2-3 + leader
Ground price: 1,580 EUR

The price includes:
ground transport, full board, accommodation, guide, entrance fees for all nature reserves.
The price does not include:
airfare, travel insurance, hard drinks, beverages and all items of purely personal nature.
This bird and wildlife photography tour is focused on two of the most colorful European birds - the Roller and the Bee-eater. It coincides with the period when the birds will be forming the pairs, so we expect to witness a lot of activities - courtship, mating, food transfer, nest preparation etc. Our tour is designed for keen photographers who want to spend more time with their subject and get the maximum out of it, rather than chasing bigger numbers of species.

Belene is a small town based on Danube River in the central-north of Bulgarian. We will start our tour here with four nights in a small hotel with beautiful views to the river from your balcony, a swimming pool and tasty food. Twenty minutes driving from the hotel is a vertical loess wall, where a large Bee-eater colony and few pairs of Rollers breed. The whole area is also good for species such as: Little Owl, Red-backed and Lesser Grey Shrikes, Golden Oriole, Syrian Woodpecker and Black-headed Bunting - where they occur in good numbers. We shall use canvas hides at the waters edge to take photos of Whiskered Terns, Black-winged Stilt, Garganey, herons and egrets etc.

Further east is Vetren - a small village in north-east Bulgaria, again on the Danube River. This small, family run hotel is close to our main sites for photography - a vertical loess wall, which is an excellent nesting area again for our both target species, here we will take photos from a different perspective. There are two wooden hides suitable both for morning and evening sessions. The whole area is also good for species as: Hoopoe, Little Owl, Red-backed Shrike, Lesser Grey Shrike, Black-headed and Corn Buntings, Kingfisher and many more. There are also many pairs of Golden Orioles in the area and if a suitable nest is found we will take advantage of it. Golden Jackal is numerous here too and we can spend time with it, again from a very good hide. Right next to Vetren is Srebarna Lake Nature reserve - a UNESCO heritage site, with large number of wetland birds. Here we can photograph Penduline Tit, Little Bittern, Squacco Heron, possible terns, grebes, ducks and many more. Also nearby there is big colony of Souslicks – the European ground squirrels. These cute rodents are not so shy and we can take pictures from a close distance. Near to the pasture, there is a fountain where many birds come to drink and take a bath: Turtle Dove, Larks, Black-headed and Corn buntings, Black-headed Yellow Wagtail, Hoopoe, Green Woodpecker - plus swallows and martins coming to collect mud.

Overall, beside the main targets, we shall have plenty of opportunities for memorable photos and moments.

**ITINERARY**

**DAY 1** Arrival at Henri Coanda airport - Romania. Followed by three hours transfer that bring us to town of Belene, where we stay four nights. Arrival at Sofia airport is also an option. Depends on the arrival time we can make a short walk before dinner to get familiar with the area. At the dinner table we can discuss over the plan for next days and talk about the various opportunities we have.

**DAYS 2 to 4** We will start with our main target species - bee-eaters and rollers, best light for photography is between 06:00 and 10:00 in the morning and between 17:00-20:00 in afternoon, so we can turn back to hotel for lunch and have a short siesta before afternoon sessions. Once we have enough good pictures we shall take advantage of the other opportunities - Lesser Gray and Red-backed Shrikes, Golden Oriole and other farmland and wetland birds.

**DAY 5** Morning session in the area and option to organize a short trip to a near island with marshes where we have the chance to observe and photograph Red-necked Grebe, Ferruginous Duck, Purple Heron and many more. After lunch we will pack our luggage and drive to Vetren village. Transfer is three hours, accommodation for three nights and dinner.

**DAYS 6 and 7** These two days we will use two wooden hides for Bee-eaters, Rollers and Golden Jackal. The light and bird activity are the best for the morning session. There are possibilities for afternoon sessions around Srebarna Lake - a perfect place for wetland birds. It is your choice and we can choose camouflage hides or walking for some hand shots, because the area is a good for: Bitterns, Squacco Herons, egrets, swans, Ferruginous Duck, Pygmy Cormorants, grebes, Penduline Tits, Great Reed Warbler and more! Good opportunity for one afternoon session is the Suslick colony. These two days we will catch up with species we might have missed, including passerines like: Red-backed Shrike, Lesser Grey Shrike, Corn Bunting, Hoopoe, and Syrian Woodpecker.

**DAY 8** Breakfast and transfer to the airport for your flight back home. Departure.

**PHOTO EQUIPMENT:**

**LENSES:** Best combination for roller and bee-eaters are 300, 400, 500mm lenses on full frame or crop cameras. At the wetlands any lens from 300 to 800mm is good.

**TELECONVERTERS:** 1.4x, 1.7x, 2x teleconverters are very useful. You will need Tripods

**Rollers and Bee-eaters photography**

*Saturday 25th May - Saturday 1st June 2019*

Ground price: 1,350 EUR / £ 1,205

4-6 photographers

Single supplement: 120 EUR

Deposit: 300 EUR

Individuals: 2-3 + leader

**Ground price: 1,450 EUR**

The price includes:

- ground transport, full board, accommodation, guide, entrance fees for all nature reserves.

The price does not include:

- airfare, travel insurance, hard drinks, beverages and all items of purely personal nature.

www.wildechotours.com
Our classical butterflies and macro photography tour, that proved so popular and successful, brought excellent results and indeed few winners! But we have been running it for quite a few years now, and it is time for a change. This new itinerary comes as a result of so many of our guests requesting a new tour covering different sites and targeting different species. We will be visiting various sites in Rila and Pirin Mountains, most of them well above 1000 meters above the sea level, up to 2700 m a.s.l. Our targets will be the rare and beautiful butterflies, such as Purple Emperor, Cynthia's Fritillary, Shepherd Fritillary, Camberwell Beauty and Cardinal, but many other species will be seen and photographed - Apollo, Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary, Balkan and Large Coppers, Great Banded Grayling, Lesser Purple Emperor, Large Tortoiseshell, Southern White Admiral, Common Glider etc. Good number of dragonflies will be also seen. Orchids will be encountered too as well as many other Bulgarian and Balkan endemics, such as Aquilegia aurea. Insects will be numerous and we expect near a hundred species of butterflies to be encountered. Again, all the hotels we will use is a small, family run and offer good homemade food. The best advantage is that all of them are situated right next to meadows rich in flowers and insects, allowing early morning and evening sessions - the best time to get beautiful photos of butterflies and other insects. We will be seeing a variety of good birds and will enjoy some magnificent views from the mountain peaks.

ITINERARY

DAY 1 Arrival at Sofia airport and transfer (about two hours) to our hotel, situated near to the Rila monastery. Evening session in the rich meadow, 10 minutes from the hotel. Accommodation for two nights and dinner.

DAY 2 Explore the nearest river valley which is one of the best butterfly habitats in Bulgarian mature deciduous woodlands with fast flowing, pure mountain river and meadows along it. Full day here can provide fifty plus species of butterflies. Purple Emperor can be very abundant here and as they spend lot of time on the ground, there are many opportunities for very good shots. Other species will be Balkan Copper, Scarce Copper, Hungarian and Common Gliders, Yellow-banded Skipper, Eastern Bath White, Map Butterfly, Niobe Fritillary, Clouded Apollo, Chequered Skipper, various fritillaries and blues, and Camberwell Beauty is often seen here. Optional afternoon visit to the Rila monastery - the most visited cultural landmark in Bulgaria. There are few more meadows beyond the monastery where we will be looking for more opportunities and subjects.

DAY 3 After a morning session in the same valley we will drive further south, to Pirin Mountain, and stay near Gotse Delchev town for two nights. Several stops en-route will break the journey, which takes about two and a half hours. We will enjoy lunch at organic farm on the way, again, surrounded by meadows we will explore. We continue our travel south, and keep checking sites on the way. Accommodation, guide, entrance fees for all nature reserves.

DAY 4 We spend the day in the area and will drive up higher towards Orelke Peak. The nearly endemic, Higgins Anomalous Blue is found here, plus many other blues and fritillaries as well as Apollo, Mountain Argus, Great Sooty Satyr, Balkan Copper and many more.

DAY 5 We will return north today, but surrounding Rila from the east. Our next base is a small hotel at Undolite pass, where we stay for another two nights. En-route we will stop at several sites where we can find Purple and Freyer's Purple Emperor, Purple-shot Copper and many more.

DAY 6 We spend the day around Belmeken dam, at 2600 m a.s.l., and check the area for Bulgarian Ringerlet, Ottoman Brassy Ringerlet, Bright-eyed Ringerlet, Shepherds Fritillary, Balkan Fritillary, orchids etc.

DAY 7 Morning session in the surrounding meadows, then we drive to the northern slopes of Rila Mountain, where we will stay the last two nights of the tour. Few stops will provide more options Purple Emperor, Scarce Swallowtail, gatekeeper and many more. Early evening we will arrive at the village of Govedartsi, where we will be staying in a small family hotel. There are vast extensive meadows just outside the hotel.

DAY 8 Early morning session and after breakfast we will drive 15 minutes to get to the cabin lift that bring us high in the northern slopes of Rila Mountain at 2400 m a.s.l. Then we have about 3 km of moderate walk, on a wide dirt track as we need to reach 2600 m a.s.l. That walk is an option. If you do not fancy it, you can stay around the lift station where butterflies can also be seen, or spend the whole day just next to the hotel, exploring the meadows.

There are not many butterflies up there, but one of the most beautiful and rare butterflies in Europe - the Cynthia's Fritillary. It has a restricted range on the continent - occupying only the high Alps, but also the two highest ranges in Bulgaria - Rila and Pirin Mountains, starting from 2200 meters above the sea level. The subspecies found in Bulgaria is arguably the most beautiful, being brightly marked. Being rare, very local and its habitat not the easiest to access, it is one of the least seen butterflies in Europe. NoS Here we will also Dusky Grizzled Skipper, Dewy Ringlet, Nicholl's Ringlet and Eastern Large Heath etc. In the afternoon we shall explore the meadows behind our hotel for Brown Hairstreak, Nickler's Fritillary, Scarce Copper etc. Farewell dinner.

DAY 9 One hour of driving brings us to Sofia airport. Stop on the way for a Purple Emperor, Lesser Purple Emperor, Chequered Blue, Hungarian and Common Gliders, Purple-shot Hawk-moth catterpillar

Ground price: 1,090 EUR / £ 975 for 4-7 photographers for 2-3 photographers – 1,290 EUR

Single supplement: 130 EUR
Deposit: 250 EUR

The price includes:
ground transport, full board, accommodation, guide, entrance fees for all nature reserves.

The price does not include:
airfare, travel insurance, hard drinks, beverages and all items of purely personal nature.
**Our leaders**

**MARIO LANGOUROV**
Mario is entomologists working in the Bulgarian Academy of Science. Besides being an expert in butterflies and insects, he is also one of the best herpetologists. He speaks Italian, English and Russian; and has a broad knowledge of the Bulgarian history. His expertise and easy going personality and sense of humor all contribute to the butterflies, birdwatching and reptiles and amphibians tour he leads.

**BOGDAN BOEV**
Bogdan was professional basketball player while his hobby is the wildlife photography. He is however very professional in doing it and has an impressive portfolio of high quality images. As a sportsman, he is very disciplined and task orientated, but in the same time Bogdan takes a great care for the animal when he is photographing wildlife.

**DANIEL MITEV**
Daniel has more than 30 years of experience as ornithologist and conservationist. He has been leading birding tours since 2012. In the last 6 years he was closely involved in the conservation of the wintering population of the Red-breasted Goose in North-eastern Bulgaria, responsible for the field conservation activities. Daniel holds master’s degree in Veterinary Medicine. He has worked for six years in USA and has got a good experience with North American birds too.

**KOSTADIN VALCHEV**
Kostadin Valchev has a master degree from Wildlife Management Department of Forestry University Sofia. He has experience as a tour guide leading tours in Bulgaria as well as abroad. Kostadin has been involved in biodiversity conservation, species conservation and protected areas management and designation for more than 15 years. He works mainly with the large carnivores – Brown bear and the Wolf, but also the Balkan Chamois, Lynx, also the Capercaille. He knows very well the Bulgarian countryside, especially the mountainous areas.

**YORDAN KUTSAROV**
Yordan has always been interested in wildlife and became a keen birder while already in school. As a student he worked intensively as a volunteer for the return of Griffon vultures. His love of wetlands led him to work as manager of Srebarna Lake Nature Reserve, and then to restoration of wetlands along the Danube River. He has extensive knowledge about the nature of Bulgaria. He is among the authors of the Atlas of Breeding Birds in Bulgaria and Atlas of the European dragonflies and damselflies. Yordan leads groups for 10 years now, in nature history, birdwatching, dragonflies and butterflies.

**DOBROMIR DOMUSCHEV**
Dobromir is founder and owner of Wild Echo. He holds an MSc degree in economics and management from the Academy of Economics, Svishtov.

**PHOTO CREDITS:** Mario Langourov, Dobromir Domuschiev, Boyan Petrov, Georgi Krastev, Bogdan Boev, Irina Gerasimova, Geogi Gerdzhikov, Igor Maiorano, Tord Andreasson, Daniel Wakra.

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