

**Bulgarian Bird Photography Tour: 12<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> June 2024**

**Cost: £1300 per person. Deposit: £200**

**Maximum Number: 3**



**Itinerary**

**Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> / Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> June – First Day**

Advised flights are from Luton with Wizz Air, arriving in Varna at 02:55 on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup>. I will meet you at the airport, then a taxi transfer of around 20 minutes to a Varna Hotel. This is our stop over hotel for one (short) night.

**Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> June**

After breakfast we travel to Arkovna (approximately 1 hour 15 minutes). There may be 2 vehicles, in which case you will have a choice of who to go with, including myself. Lunch, followed by our first photo session.

**Friday 14<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> June**

We will be using wooden tower hides on the property, and nearby, each day. (**See the Photography Hide section below** for more information). We will split into different groups in the hides (I will divide my time between everyone).

We will also visit 2 reflection / drinking pools close to another village (travel time approximately 40 minutes).

Our plan is to have an early morning photography session then return to the hotel in the middle of the day where we take lunch. We then return for a second session in the afternoon / evening,

followed by an evening meal. Should the weather be very overcast we may stay out all day in which case we will have food at the property or a packed lunch.

At the hide owner's property you have access to hot running water and a toilet. We will also be able to make you a tea / coffee!

### **Monday 17<sup>th</sup> June – Last Day**

We have our last hide session in the morning before returning to the hotel for lunch. After lunch we leave at approximately 3.00pm and travel back to Varna for return flights to UK.

### **Photography Hides**

The majority of hides are on the hide-owner's property. We use three wooden Tower Hides of different heights; there is also the possibility of using a fourth tower hide. Three of the Tower Hides are within the property, whilst the Hillside Hide is approximately 10 minutes walk away. The hides use lens sleeves for photography, with one way glass to see out of the hide.

- Oriole Hide (2 photographers) – a small tower hide situated at the right height to photograph birds in the small trees.
- Treetop Hide (3 photographers) – this is a tall tower hide (around 10 metres high) with a drinking pool. There is also the extra option to shoot into the surrounding trees.
- Hillside Tower Hide (maximum 4 photographers) – the original hide: three floors, situated near a Walnut tree. The perches here are often used by various birds for singing.
- Pop-up Hides – depending on opportunities we may set up temporary hides nearby.
- (Garden Tower Hide (3 photographers) – this may be used as an extra hide depending on nearby activity).
- One session will be spend at two reflection / drinking pools (2 photographers in each hide) approximately 40 minutes away.

Each year can vary in which birds are the most photographable and are breeding nearby. Our main target birds are: **Golden Oriole, Black headed Bunting, Red backed Shrike, Corn Bunting, Wryneck, Syrian Woodpecker, Green Woodpecker, Hawfinch, Jay, Sombre Tit, Great spotted Woodpecker.**

Other possible species include: **Woodchat Shrike, Cuckoo, Turtle Dove, Hoopoe, Middle spotted Woodpecker, Ortolan Bunting, Lesser grey Shrike, Woodlark, Crested Lark, Whitethroat, Linnet,**

Western yellow Wagtail, Nightingale, Yellowhammer. **Please note**, we can consider use of brief calls to lure in certain birds, although this should be done sparingly. We can discuss this as a group.

### Non-hide Photography

- Photography from a vehicle – we will use a vehicle to photograph singing birds near the roadside. This is the best way to approach Black headed Bunting, Corn Bunting and Shrikes.
- We will spend a session concentrating **on insects and macro**, making use of the wildflower meadows and the amazing variety of insect life.

**Other Wildlife you may see or hear:** Nightjar, Little Owl, Scops Owl, Red Squirrel, Tree Frogs, Lizards, Moths, Shield Bugs, and many Butterflies!

### Equipment Required

Ideally lenses from 400mm – 600mm will cover you. Extenders are worth bringing if you have them. Tripods are required for the main hides and also for any pop-up hides. It does not matter if you are using a DSLR or Mirrorless camera.

### Climate & Mosquitoes / Insects

June in Bulgaria tends to be quite hot – often around 30 degrees. We'll mostly be in hides but do bring a cap and some sunscreen. Mosquitoes can sometimes be in wooded areas, although they are not bad around the property. Mosquito repellent is highly advised – consider Picaradin which is an alternative to DEET; Avon Skin So Soft Spray can also help. Insect repellent clothing is one of the best defences. Personally, I believe taking garlic tablets a couple of weeks before hand can also reduce the impact.!

Please bring long pants and long sleeve tops. In some places it is best to tuck trousers into socks – we ask you to check for any ticks after each photo session.

Bulgaria is very rich in insects, so **if you are allergic in any way to insect bites please let me know.**

### Intensity

There is very little walking involved; most hides are in the garden of the property. The hillside tower hide is further – around ten minutes away with a fairly steep slope towards the hide, but not extreme. We will be up early, around sunrise and finish our days around 8.30pm, but there is plenty of flexibility to get more rest in the middle of the day.

## **Accommodation**

For our main accommodation we stay in a mid-range Bulgarian hotel, close to the hides. There is little English spoken here but we get by, largely using Google Translate etc. Our hotel will provide quality Bulgarian food (menus are in English). Rooms are simple, basic and clean. There is free WiFi and satellite TV. Please note there is no air conditioning in rooms but they rarely get extremely hot. Staff are not available between 11pm and 7am.

We have a one night stop-over in Varna. This will be at a higher quality hotel with 24 hour reception. Breakfast will be provided.

## **Food**

Breakfast will be a packed lunch which we will take to the hides - this will likely be sandwiches and fruit. Lunch will either be in the hotel restaurant or a packed lunch. We will have extra food at the hide-owner's property so there will always be something for you (we can provide tea and coffee also). We have a main meal in the evening which will be taken at our hotel. Restaurant meals will be up to a value of approximately 18 Bulgarian Lev, plus one drink.

## **Transport**

During the tour I will transport you between the hotel and the hides – a short journey, around 10 minutes. Your airport transfers will be in a large car or mini-bus. You will have plenty of room in the vehicle.

## **Health & Safety**

We take this very seriously. The hides are professionally built structures, with concrete at their foundations. Some of the steps can be quite steep so there will always be one of us to ensure you enter and exit safely. Please let me know if you have any physical difficulties.

If you feel you have any other health issues, or take medication that could impact on the trip then please let me know beforehand. This information will be dealt with confidentially.

### Included in the Cost

5 nights accommodation; use of hides; all meals (up to afternoon of last day), airport transfers; any tuition required by me. **Additional costs: flights;** any extra food and drinks; insurance. Plus any personal extras.

### Payment

A deposit is paid via preferred **Bank Transfer**, Cheque or Paypal. Please contact me to pay the **balance** either by **cheque** or **bank transfer**.

### Insurance

You must have adequate **travel insurance** as in the **Terms & Conditions**. Please also ensure your camera equipment is insured.

### Bad Weather

Bad weather is likely to be short-lived in Bulgaria. If we are forced to stay indoors then we will use the time to review our images and discuss technique. I'm always happy to help with any camera settings and menus.

### Time Difference

Please note: there is a 2 hour time difference - Bulgaria is **2 hours ahead** of the UK.

### Exchange Rates (as of July 2023)

£1 GBP = 2.28 Bulgarian Lev

\$1 USD = 1.77 Bulgarian Lev

€1 Euro = 1.95 Bulgarian Lev



**Further questions:**

If you have any further questions on any aspect of the tour please don't hesitate to get in touch by email: [paul@naturephotographycourses.co.uk](mailto:paul@naturephotographycourses.co.uk) or by phone +44(0)7759485791