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WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS

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Eastern Hungary, a Paradise for Butterflies, Birds and Mayflies

13–21 June 2027



I'm teaming up with Ecotours Wildlife for an awesome inspiring wildlife experience in their own back yard. There's fabulous birds and butterflies as well as one of the world's greatest wildlife spectacles. We've timed the trip to give the best chance of witnessing the mass emergence of millions of mayflies, an unforgettable experience we'll be on the river in the midst of shimmering clouds of dancing insects!

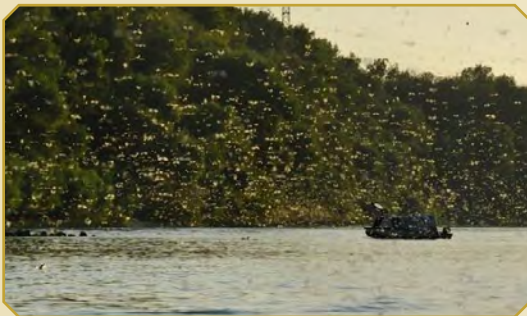


Facts

- » 9 days
- » start and finish in Budapest
- » 3 bases

Optional programmes

- » Wine tasting in an old wine cellar
- » Visit to one of the most amazing dripstone caves of Europe in Aggtelek



Highlights

- » visiting 4 National Parks
- » up to 100 butterfly species possible
- » wide variety of habitats, wildflowers, birds and other wildlife

Accommodation

- » 3 nights at Aggtelek National Park
- » 2 nights at Bükk National Park
- » 3 nights Kiskunság National Park



Itinerary



DAY 1

Upon arrival at **Budapest Airport**, we drive north-east heading towards **Aggtelek National Park** stopping on route to look for Eastern Imperial Eagle and other roadside birds.



DAYS 2-3

We explore a wide range of habitats from very dry hillsides to wet valleys. We walk across the village of **Jósvafő** along a crystal-clear stream reaching a wet meadow set between drier hillsides. "Clouds of butterflies" often gather along the stream and key species include Purple-shot and Scarce Copper, Mountain Alcon and Chequered Blue.

South of Jósvafő we look for Safflower and Orbed Red-underwing Skipper, Eastern Short-tailed, Osiris, Mountain Alcon, Large and Chapman's Blue. Another area a bit further east is home to Hungarian Glider.

In a valley close to Aggtelek village all nine Hairstreaks of Hungary occur and there is also a long list of Blues including Chapman's and Turquoise. Woodland Brown, Glanville, Knapweed, Spotted and Lesser Spotted Fritillary are all common, together with Silver-studded Blue, Marbled White and Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary.

The spectacular **Baradla** dripstone cave system, a world heritage site, is also worth a visit. Other wildlife includes Fire Salamanders, and a good array of birds including Black, White-backed, Grey-headed, Middle and Lesser Spotted woodpeckers, Ural Owl, Corncrake, Turtle Dove, Red-backed Shrike, Barred and River Warbler.



DAYS 4-5

After breakfast we are heading south-west to **Bükk National Park**, stopping en route to search for Purple Emperor and a good selection of fritillaries and blues. Our family-run guesthouse is situated at the foot of the Bükk Hills on the edge of a picturesque village. It has the best food in the area and offers tasty local wine.

During our stay here we visit the humid **Hór Valley** set among rolling hills covered with oak and beech woodlands. Fritillaries abound along the gravel road with Silver-washed, High Brown, Niobe, Marbled, Nickerl's and Heath Fritillary recorded. White Admiral, Common Glider, Lesser Purple Emperor and Great-banded Grayling can also be found perched along the roadside. Small, Chestnut and Pearly Heath are common. The valley is also home to rich birdlife including White-backed and Black Woodpecker, Collared Flycatcher, hawfinch and Rock Bunting.



A nearby pasture woodland is another site worth visiting, where we look for Lesser Fiery Copper, Berger's Clouded Yellow and a good selection of Blues. Bee-eaters nest in the sand banks and raptors circle above the meadows, while Middle Spotted Woodpeckers are drumming on the old oaks.

The heart of the **Bükk Hills** is a famous karst plateau. The area proves attractive to hilltoppers such as Common and Scarce Swallowtails, and we might find a late Clouded Apollo.



DAY 6

We leave the Bükk Hills and drive south. We will be on high alert waiting for news about the mayflies. If they started swarming, we may adjust the itinerary and leave immediately to the Tisza River. If the mayflies are not active, we can explore **Little Hortobágy**, a beautiful flat steppe area resembling its larger cousin further south-east. It is blessed with an amazing variety of birds, with breeding Eastern Imperial Eagle, Red-footed and Saker Falcon, Roller, Lesser Grey Shrike and Golden Oriole. There are also many butterfly species to be found here such as Eastern Bath White, Eastern Pale Clouded Yellow, Large Copper, Grizzled Skipper and Knapweed Fritillary.

In the afternoon we shall arrive to our last hotel near Hungary's second largest river, the Tisza.



DAYS 7-8



Hopefully the weather will be on our side, and the Tisza mayflies (*Palingenia longicauda*) have started swarming along the river. These remarkable insects spend 3 years in the riverside mud as larvae and emerge in June to mate and die within a day. During the mass swarming tens of thousands of these insects are flying low above the river looking for a mate. Fish and birds are using the opportunity to feed on the mayflies creating a very intense spectacle.

Along River Tisza there are nice floodplain forests, seasonal lakes and marshes that we shall also explore. The wildlife is very rich with Marsh and Agile Frogs, Fire-bellied Toad, Grass and Dice Snakes, damselflies and dragonflies living along the river. Birds include Pygmy Cormorant, Squacco Heron, Spoonbill, White-tailed Eagle, Kingfisher, Golden Oriole, River, Savi's and Great Reed Warbler, Collared Flycatcher. If we venture away from the river we may find Saker and Red-footed Falcon, Roller, Bee-eater, Hoopoe, Red-backed and Lesser Grey Shrike and many other species.



DAY 9

We head back to Budapest for our flight home.



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