

Sweden's Butterflies

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

2010

Outline itinerary

Day 1 Fly Västerås and transfer Svartådalen.

Day 2/3 Svartådalen and Uppland.

Day 4 Strängnäs and Trosa.

Day 5 Omberg and Lake Vättern; the Eremitage.

Day 6 Svartådalen.

Day 7 Transfer Västerås and fly London.

Dates

Thursday 8th July – Wednesday 14th July 2010

Cost

£1,295 (Stansted/Stansted); £1,195 (Land-only)

Single room supplement

£40

Grading

A/B. Gentle day walks only

Focus

Primarily butterflies; but also birds and other natural history



Poplar Admiral



Large Blue

Images by Daniel Green



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Introduction

On this 7-day holiday we will look at the butterflies of central Sweden during high summer, hoping to encounter a fascinating mixture of both Scandinavian and Eastern European species, some of which have become increasingly rare during recent years. Several species are found here at their southern-most limits and, in this part of Scandinavia where north meets south, there might even still be new discoveries to make, for only recently have populations of Large Blue, Chequered Blue and Duke of Burgundy Fritillary been discovered here. Amongst the well-established species, highlights will include such charismatic butterflies as Apollo, Clouded Apollo, Camberwell Beauty, Poplar Admiral and Woodland Brown. If the weather is favourable, it should be possible to see 60 species of butterfly on this trip (more than the total number of species occurring in the UK), amongst them 11 species of blues and 13 species of fritillaries! Additionally, although Sweden's moths are not well known, we will run a moth trap on some nights to see what we can find. We will also enjoy any birds, mammals and other aspects of natural history encountered. Indeed, although mammals are not the main focus on this holiday, some are likely to be seen on our excursions. Amongst the commoner species are Moose, Roe Deer, Red Deer, Red Fox, Red Squirrel and both Brown and Mountain Hare; however, such species as Lynx, Wolf, Wild Boar, Beaver and Pine Marten also occur in the area, although they are rarely seen.

We begin our holiday with a direct flight to Västerås, and an hour's drive north to Svartådalén (the Black River Valley), in the county of Västmanland. Svartådalén is an open, agricultural landscape well endowed with lakes, woodlands and wetlands that lie either side of the meandering Black River. Well known for its birds (such species as Common Crane, White-tailed Eagle, Honey Buzzard and Common Rosefinch may all be seen here), Svartådalén is also home to a wealth of butterflies. Around its wetlands we will look for Purple-edged Coppers and a variety of fritillaries, including False Heath, Lesser Marbled and Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary. These, and such other species of fritillary as Cranberry, Silver-washed, High Brown and Dark Green, may also be found amongst the area's coniferous forests and along the flower-filled verges of traffic-free, graveled roads. Here the beautiful Poplar Admiral, attracted to wayside puddles, may oblige the photographers amongst us, and we will look out for Scarce Copper, Arran Brown and Moorland Clouded Yellow, amongst others.

On one day we will drive to the adjacent coastal region of Uppland, on the Baltic coast, some two hours away. Here an impressive diversity of Scandinavian butterfly species may be found, including Large Grizzled Skipper, whilst up to ten species of 'blues' can be seen in one day, including Geranium and Silvery Blue and Northern Brown Argus. We also have the chance of seeing Broad-bordered Bee Hawkmoths hovering like tiny hummingbirds above the flowers around us. This should be a rewarding day for identifying, photographing and enjoying butterflies.

Next we will drive to Strängnäs in Södermanland, a rewarding site in a lovely position where we will picnic at an Iron-age Viking burial site that sits atop a ridge, commanding fine views of the rolling countryside round about. Formerly a major tourist attraction, this all changed recently when entomologists discovered previously unknown populations of Large Blue and other species here. We will look for the blues, and such other species as Purple-edged and Scarce Copper, plus some of the burnet moth species, before driving on to the small and picturesque town of Trosa, a splendid community of colourful wooden houses built along a seaside canal in the early 1900s. The region, and an offshore Baltic island which we may visit, are the stronghold in Sweden of the Apollo butterfly. We will look for these fine butterflies during our stay, plus such species as Silver-spotted Skipper.

Moving on, we next visit the ancient, open oak forests of Östergötland, to the west of Trosa, where the endangered Woodland Brown butterfly has its mainland stronghold. We will spend the night at a unique forest eco-lodge, The Eremitage, a tranquil setting from which we can explore the slopes of Omberg, a hill that stands above Lake Vättern and supports an abundance of flowers, including some orchids, and plenty of butterflies.

Finally, we return to Svartådalen; to its forests, mires and bogs, where we will look for any species we may previously have missed, whilst based at an interesting 300-year-old spa hotel in Sätra Brunn.

Itinerary

NB. The itinerary outlined above offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather & other local considerations can necessitate some re-ordering of the programme during the course of the tour. Any such changes will always be done to maximise the best use of time and weather conditions available.

Day 1

Thursday

Sätra Brunn, Svartådalen (Black River Valley)

We depart London Stansted during the late morning on a direct, two-hour Ryanair flight to Västerås airport, near Stockholm; a small airport with a tiny, sparkling and uncongested terminal which is unlikely to take too long to clear! Arriving in the mid afternoon, our small group will be met by our English-speaking Swedish tour leader, Daniel Green, and transfer slowly to Svartådalen (the Black River Valley), about an hour's drive to the north on the open and remarkably traffic-free roads that make Sweden such a relaxing and peaceful country in which to travel. En route you will stop for drinks and sandwiches in a forest clearing that attracts plenty of butterflies to its grassy meadows. Here we may also find clusters of Silver-studded Blues on the gravel approach road.

Later in the afternoon we will acquaint ourselves with the grasslands and wetlands of Svartådalen, where we will enjoy an afternoon walk to look for Purple-edged Coppers and False Heath Fritillaries. We can also expect to encounter many other species of butterflies such as Lesser Marbled and Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary.

Finally we arrive in the small village of Sätra Brunn where we will settle into our base, the Sätra Brunn Spa and Conference Hotel. This is a most interesting establishment; an old and historic spa hotel that was recently rescued from obscurity by a consortium of philanthropic and entrepreneurial businessmen. The hotel consists of over a hundred red-painted wooden cottages and houses, set in a large park where mature trees attract a wealth of woodland birds and butterflies. It also has a renowned spa facility, with hot pools both inside and outside!

If the weather conditions are right we may run a moth trap in the hotel grounds tonight. Plenty of species have been seen in the area.

Day 2

Friday

Sätra Brunn, Svartådalen (Black River Valley)

Svartådalen, situated in the lowlands of central Sweden, is comprised of attractive farmland studded with pretty little villages of bright, red-painted wooden farmhouses surrounded by lush oak and conifer forests, lakes and

wetlands that lie amongst meadows and pasturelands grazed, unintensively, by cattle and sheep. Black-throated Divers, Common Cranes, White-tailed Eagles, Ospreys and Black Terns are amongst the bird species that characterise the wetlands; whilst Honey Buzzards and Goshawks, and such passerines as Red-backed Shrike, Icterine Warbler, Thrush Nightingale, Common Rosefinch and Ortolan Bunting breed commonly.

After breakfast this morning, we will head out into the surrounding countryside as early as we can in order to spend the day exploring the valley's many rich butterfly habitats, notably in the coniferous forests and around the area's small lakes. The region's gravel roads, lined with flowering plants, also attract many butterflies and, with practically no traffic, they can be easily explored. For example, the large and very beautiful Poplar Admiral frequently alights beside any muddy puddles in the roads, offering excellent photo opportunities.

We will pass the middle of the day enjoying a relaxing picnic lunch beside a small lake frequented by Black-throated Divers. Numerous fritillaries can be seen in this same area and we have a chance of seeing up to nine different fritillary species here, including Heath, Cranberry, Small Pearl-bordered, Pearl-bordered, Silver-washed, High Brown, Dark Green and Lesser Marbled Fritillary.

After lunch we will continue northwards to boglands in the pineforest-dominated Bergslagen area, where our target species are Baltic Grayling, Large Heath, Northern Grizzled Skipper, Friggas Fritillary and Moorland Clouded Yellow. Several of these northern species are at the southern extent of their ranges here, and we will do well to find them. Indeed, as the butterflies of this area are not well documented, we must approach our task with an adventurous spirit.

We return to Sättra Brunn for dinner and our second night at the Sättra Brunn Spa and Conference Hotel.

Day 3

Saturday

Uppland (from Sättra Brunn)

Today we will focus on the coastal region of Uppland, a two-hour drive from Sättra Brunn. Here we have the chance to see up to ten species of blues in a single day, amongst them Geranium and Silvery Blue, and Northern Brown Argus. The area holds a very good variety of Scandinavian butterfly species generally, including Large Grizzled Skipper, Black-veined White and False Heath Fritillary; we also have the chance of finding Broad-bordered Bee Hawkmoths as they hover like tiny hummingbirds over the flowers about us.

Once again we'll enjoy a picnic lunch in the field and, at the end of a full day's butterfly-watching, we will return to Sättra Brunn for dinner. There may even be time for a relaxing hour in the hotel's hot pool and sauna!

Day 4

Sunday

Strängnäs & Trosa

We depart Sättra Brunn after breakfast this morning and drive to the Strängnäs area, about two hours away. Here we will specifically focus on finding the Large Blue. We will enjoy our usual picnic lunch at a Viking burial site that occupies a ridge offering beautiful views over the countryside and plenty of butterflies, amongst them Purple-edged and Scarce Coppers, plus two to three species of burnet moth.

A little further south, around the picturesque small town of Trosa, we find the mainland stronghold of the impressively large and beautiful Apollo butterfly. We will spend the afternoon looking for this species, and such others as the locally common Meadow Brown and Silver-spotted Skipper.

Tonight we will dine and overnight in Trosa, and take the opportunity to take part in and enjoy the streetlife in this pretty little town by the canal, with its colourfully painted wooden houses, every second one of which seems to have a bar, restaurant or open-air café!

Day 5

Monday

Långmaren, Östergötland & The Eremitage

After breakfast at our Trosa hotel, we will spend the first part of the day at an excellent site in Långmaren, a traditional Swedish farming landscape with plenty of butterflies including Niobe Fritillary, Scarce Copper and 3 species of burnet moths. Apollos are also occasionally seen here. This is also the core area for one of Sweden's rarest insects, the Rattle Grasshopper (*Psophus stridulus*), a big, black grasshopper with red wings that produces a drumming display sound!

After lunch we continue west towards Östergötland, where we will wander in a beautiful, ancient open oak forest, the habitat of the rare, eastern Woodland Brown which has its mainland stronghold in Sweden here.

We spend the night at a very special lodge, consisting of beautiful, wooden cottages, each individually designed, and situated in the clearing of an open deciduous forest. This is a great place to run a moth trap overnight if the weather is good.

Day 6

Tuesday

Omberg, Lake Vättern & Svartådalen (Sätra Brunn)

We allow ourselves a slow start in these beautiful surroundings, enabling us to fully appreciate the butterflies and flowers here. Alternatively, you may like simply to stroll down to the lake and have a morning swim! This is Swedish right-to-roam-countryside, as indigenous and unspoilt as it comes.

After this relaxing start, we set off to enjoy the scenic surroundings of Omberg, a ridge overlooking the large Lake Vättern, an area rich in both orchid and butterfly species.

After lunch we will drive northwards, back to Svartådalen, and once again we will stay at the the Sätra Brunn Spa and Conference Hotel, and later this afternoon there will be time either to stroll in the extensive parkland surrounding the hotel, or to enjoy the Sätra Brunn spa!

Day 7

Wednesday

Svartådalen (Sätra Brunn)

We will spend this last day further exploring the forests and wetlands of the Black River Valley, hoping to see any species that we may have missed on our earlier explorations of the region, as well as the special butterflies

that we'd like to see again, such as Poplar Admirals, Scarce and Purple-edged Coppers, Heath and False Heath Fritillaries, and many more!

After lunch at Sättra Brunn, it is time to pack and drag ourselves away from this peaceful spot in order to make the short drive back to Västerås airport for the direct late-afternoon flight with Ryanair back to London Stansted.

Grading

Grade A/B. This holiday will involve regular but gentle countryside walks over generally easy terrain.

Focus

Primarily butterflies; but also birds and other natural history encountered.

Weather

The weather and temperatures are comparable with what you would expect in southern England at the same season, although more sunshine and warmer temperatures can generally be expected.

Clothing

Please inspect the separate clothing list that will be sent to you on booking. Please note that Ryanair have a strict weight limit of 15 kg per person on hold luggage (10kg per person for hand baggage)! Additional weight can be 'bought' at the airport at check-in for £12.00 (15 Euro) per kilo.

Food & accommodation

All food and accommodation is included in the price of this holiday. We will be staying in an interesting selection of typically Scandinavian establishments, including a sprawling 300-year-old spa facility, a pleasant town hotel in Trosa, and a modern forest 'eco-lodge'. The latter has shared facilities; at the others they are en-suite.

How to book your place

In order to book your place on this tour, you will need to read the Naturetrek booking conditions carefully and then complete and return a booking form, together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday cost. If you wish to take out insurance with us please also include this with your booking. Should you have any questions about the tour, please call us on 01962 733051.

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