

# France - Butterflies of La Brenne

## Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

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### Outline itinerary

- Day 1** Eurostar & TGV from London St. Pancras to Tours and drive La Brenne.
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- Day 2/5** La Brenne
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- Day 6** Drive Tours for TGV & Eurostar train for London St. Pancras
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### Departure Dates

June

### Focus

Butterflies and other wildlife

### Grading

A. Day walks only

### Dates and Prices

See Website (tour code FRA06) or brochure

### Highlights

- 97 butterfly species recorded, including many not found in the UK
- A wealth of blues, coppers, fritillaries & much more
- Great Peacock, nonpareils & wetland species in evening moth-trapping sessions
- Rarities such as Lulworth Skipper & Berger's Clouded Yellow
- Travel by train on a flight-free holiday!



Adonis Blue



Marbled Fritillary



La Brenne wetlands



*10% of the proceeds from this tour will be donated to Butterfly Conservation and invested directly in the conservation of British and European butterflies*



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**NB. Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather & other local considerations can necessitate some re-ordering of the programme during the course of the tour, though this will always be done to maximise best use of the time and weather conditions available.**

## Day 1

## Train to Tours

We will leave London St. Pancras during the morning on the Eurostar service, either to Lille or Paris (depending on schedules – please check with the Naturetrek office), changing stations and then board our TGV service down to Tours (Saint-Pierre-des-Corps), from where we have an hour and a half's drive to La Brenne.

## Day 2 – 5

## Mézières-en-Brenne

The Brenne lies in an area of central France south of the Loire, about fifty miles south-east of Tours and fifty miles east of Poitiers, and is home to our tour leader.

We will spend our four days exploring the varying habitats of the Brenne. The Brenne doesn't cover a large area and as our hotel is well placed, close to Chérine national nature reserve and many of the more interesting butterfly sites, we will spend little time driving; most of our time will be spent in the field with the butterflies. There is no set programme as the locations for each day will depend on weather, our target species and more importantly access agreements – Naturetrek have special and unique permission to take groups onto private parts of the Chérine reserve and a very interesting private estate.



La Brenne wetlands

A typical day will start with a continental breakfast. After breakfast we will sally forth to our first destination. Each day we'll visit a particular area, looking for special species, whilst at the same time taking time to appreciate species that are quite common here but either rare or absent from Britain. These include Pearly



Southern White Admiral

Heath, Swallowtail, Scarce Swallowtail, Sooty Copper and Short-tailed Blue. In fact some very interesting species are quite common and widespread here and we might hope to find the following species on every day: Map, Great Banded Grayling, Camberwell Beauty, Large Tortoiseshell and Marbled Fritillary.

One of the main sites is the extensive Lancosme forest some 10 kilometres to the east of our hotel. Although parts have been planted with the inevitable spruces and pines, large areas still have good stands of oak and it's

in here that we'll be looking for both Greater and Lesser Purple Emperor, White Admiral and Southern White Admiral and the bizarre Large Chequered Skipper. In an effort to increase our chances of finding butterflies we'll be putting down piles of horse manure in selected areas, watering them, then coming back after a few hours to see what they've attracted, who knows !

Sometime just after midday we'll take time out for lunch. Unless the weather is very unfavourable, rare at this time of the year in central France, we'll have a picnic lunch somewhere in a prime butterfly habitat. Picnics will be varied, quite substantial and somewhat French, with much of the choice being local produce and any special tastes catered for; typically paté, saucisson, tomatoes, salads, crispy bread, a selection of cheeses, fruit and some sort of dessert, all washed down with water, juices and a little French wine (vegetarians are well catered for).



Scarcie Swallowtail

The afternoons will be spent looking in a nearby area for species that we haven't seen in the morning, after which we'll return to our hotel around 6 o'clock with enough time for a wash and rest before the evening meal (our hotel is known locally for its fine cuisine).

On other days we'll visit the extensive natural meadows of a private estate just down the road from our hotel, visit a private part of an LPO reserve hoping to see Alcon Blue, spend a few hours at a working farm (that produces delicious goat's cheese) for a look at the farmer's colony of Large Blue and other species and walk through a limestone valley potentially full of Berger's Clouded Yellows and Adonis Blues.

Although not the very best time of year for birds, late June / early July is still very good and whilst out looking for butterflies we shall not ignore the birds, taking a little time out to admire the local Whiskered Terns, Black-necked Grebes, ever-present Red-backed Shrikes, Melodious Warblers and many other species rare or absent from Britain.



Moth trapping in La Brenne

On one or two nights we hope to do some moth trapping, with a Skinner trap lit at Chérine national nature reserve, a five minute drive from the hotel.

All in all it should be four full days in the field with up to 50 species of butterfly observed and some beautiful countryside, fine food and pleasant company between times.

## Day 6

## Train to London

Today we will have to pack and return to Tours to take the TGV/Eurostar service back to London St. Pancras, either via Paris or Lille, potentially arriving into London in the evening.

## Tour Grading

This tour is graded A, and will consist of day walks only and as such is suitable for any age and level of fitness. It is based at one hotel from where we will be taking day trips by minibus visiting the various sites looking for insects and other wildlife and taking a picnic lunch with us. There will be some gentle walking involved at most of the sites.

## Weather

Late June / Early July is generally warm, sunny and dry, but as with Britain, the weather can still be changeable. It is therefore wise to be prepared for all conditions from shorts and 'T' shirts to a light fleece.

## Daily schedule

We will typically take breakfast at about 8 a.m. and aim to leave our hotel no later than 9 a.m. for a full day in the field. We'll break the day to relax and enjoy a picnic lunch, which will be varied, but may include paté, terrine and cold meats as the main part, with lots of crusty French bread, together with olives, coleslaw, pickles and several sorts of cheese. To follow, fresh fruit, yogurts, and chocolate, all washed down with a glass of vin de table if required. We'll aim to return to our hotel at about 5.30 pm, depending on the weather and our success in the field. This should allow a little time at the end of each day to relax, shower and enjoy a drink before dinner. After dinner, for those with energy remaining, your leader will be keen to run through the wildlife seen during the day, and discuss findings with you before retiring to bed. There will also be opportunities for short walks early and late in the day for those who wish.

## Accommodation & meals

Accommodation for all five nights will be in rooms with private facilities. All meals from evening meal on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 6 are included, i.e. meals en route are not included.

## How to book your place

In order to book your place on this holiday, please give us a call on 01962 733051 with a credit or debit card, book online at [www.naturetrek.co.uk](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk), or alternatively complete and post the booking form at the back of our main Naturetrek brochure, together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday cost plus any room supplements if required. If you do not have a copy of the brochure, please call us on 01962 733051 or request one via our website. Please stipulate any special requirements, for example extension requests or connecting/regional flights, at the time of booking.

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