

## Southern Ghana

### West Africa's Butterfly Eden

#### A Greentours Itinerary

##### Day 1 Shangri-La

After touching down at Accra's international airport we'll make the ten minute journey to the excellent Airport View Hotel.

##### Days 2 – 5 Ankasa National Park

Our journey out of Accra takes us past the excellent Panbros Saltpans where Pied Kingfishers are truly abundant (and very approachable!) and Western Reef Herons dance in the shallows. You'll soon notice the wonderful names of the local shops - two of the best spotted last year were 'Eric Cantona's Straightening and Welding Shop' and 'Uncle Father's Nippy Spot!'

Ankasa is one of West Africa's most important National Parks. This magical place contains a bewildering variety of wildlife amongst some of the best-preserved Guinean Evergreen High Forest in Africa. We'll soon encounter a large number of butterfly species, even around the lodge. Mocker Swallowtail, Common White-banded Swallowtail, Cambridge Vagrant, Spica Dotted Border, Tropical Dotted Border, Common Indigo Ciliate Blue, Friar, Ornate Green Charaxes, Laodice Untailed Charaxes, Andromorph Palla, African Leaf Butterfly, Lilac Beauty, Auberger's Yellow Glider and the amazing Blood Red Glider will soon set the pulses racing! We'll see the attractive Dark Blue Pansy, various Fairy Hairstreaks, *Hypolycaena* species and the distinctive Guineafowl butterfly. Other common species are *Amauris niavius*, *Pseudoneptis bugandensis* African Blue Tiger and the Narrow-banded Green Swallowtail.

Ankasa is a haven for *Euphaedras*, one of the most beautiful genera of butterflies in Africa. Many species of these glorious insects are found here, their lovely iridescent greens, blues and purples only revealed when they open their wings in the dappled sunlight. The red, black and white wings of Edwards' Forester and the even brighter Eleus Forester contrast with the incredibly intricately patterned wings of Large True Forester and Crocker's Forester, both these species have yellow undersides strongly patterned with pink, green and black! The well-named Widespread Forester and the Ceres Forester both have blue upperwings whilst the Janetta Themis Forester both sides of its wings richly hued with greens, yellows and reds. The variety seems near endless especially when one is introduced to the smaller and slightly less flamboyant *Euriphenes* and *Bebearias*!

Mid mornings see the most activity among the butterflies. Drury's Emperors and various Sailors float past. The golden hues of the Lurid Glider are perhaps only surpassed in the shocking colour stakes by its cousin the Blood Red Cymothoe! The scarce Streaked Paradise Skipper is sure to be a highlight, so too the difficult to identify *Stemfferia*, these beautiful rich deep blue butterflies hand from twigs in typical Liptenid fashion.

## **Day 6**

### **Kakum National Park & Elmina**

We'll visit Kakum's famous Canopy Walkway. Troupes of Olive Colobus cavort boisterously above us. Mona Monkeys and the very pretty Lesser Spot-nosed Monkey are just two more out of seven species of primate at Kakum. Bird life is phenomenal both from the canopy walkway and along trails in the vicinity. Immaculate black and white Piping and Pied Hornbills are common in fruiting trees, and are often joined by huge Black-casqued Wattled Hornbills. The brilliant azure Blue Cuckoo-Shrike is surely one of West Africa's most glorious residents and Emerald Cuckoo, Superb Sunbird and Blue-throated Roller all add their dazzling brilliance to the show. Speckled Tinkerbirds, Hairy-breasted Barbets, Yellowbills and stunning Red-headed Malimbés are all common constituents of feeding parties. Gray's Malimbés and Cassin's Honeyguides accompany a confusing variety of Greenbuls in the undergrowth. African Grey Parrots can still be seen in good numbers, gathering briefly on bare branches as they fly from roost sites to their feeding grounds. Overhead soar Harrier-Hawk and Red-necked Buzzard whilst Great Sparrowhawks speed between the boughs in pursuit of Green Pigeons. The stunning brilliance of Mrs Verreaux's Sunbird, one of Africa's rarest, is just one of many sunbirds that feed at the large red flowers of African Tulip Trees.

Just to add a little culture we'll have an afternoon visit to the atmospheric fort at Elmina as well as the bustling local market! In the harbour we'll see lines of colourful hand-crafted fishing boats, some with attendant Long-tailed Cormorants.

## **Days 7 – 10**

### **Bobiri Forest Reserve**

En route to Bobiri we'll visit Antikwa and Aboabo, two areas of mixed habitat on the northern edge of Kakum and both provide marvellously varied butterfly and birdwatching experiences. Mongoose and Civet dung along the tracks attract many Charaxes. These powerful and fast-flying butterflies suddenly become tame and photographable when presented with such bounty! It often seems that every one is a different species too, for there are very many. Here we'll likely encounter *Charaxes etheocles*, *Charaxes pleione*, *Charaxes paphianus*, *Charaxes eupale*, *Charaxes zelica*, *Charaxes brutus*, *Charaxes anticlea*, *Charaxes cedraetis* and *Charaxes ameliae*. More swallowtails will be seen, namely *Papilio bromius*, *Papilio nireus*, and *Papilio menestheus*. African Beaks are especially abundant. The lovely 'mother-of-pearls', large fragile looking butterflies with pearly wings imbued with hints of pink or

purple are common and here include *Salamis parhassus*, *Salamis anacardii*, *Salamis cacta* and *Salamis cytora*. Among the many other species will be *Palla decius*, Orange Admiral, *Mycalasis evadne*, *Eurema desjardinsi*, *Pseudacraea lucretia*, *Acraea zetes*, and *Liptena xanthostola*. Sunbirds are many and varied and we'll also see the lovely Black Bee-eater, hopefully the Rosy Bee-eater and other fine birds include Black Spinetails, Brown-cheeked Hornbills, Sharpe's Apalis, Rufous-crowned Eremomela, Yellow-browed Camaroptera, Lemon-bellied Crombec and Fire-bellied Woodpecker.

In a continent full of places with long, long butterfly lists, Bobiri stands right at the head of the roll-call, for not only does in excess of five hundred species of butterfly, but in such a small reserve, you can actually see them! Expect to see at least a hundred species every day, and on some days this could approach one hundred and fifty! We will soon be admiring various Swallowtails, Swordtails, the African Map Butterfly, and some stunning blues. The last includes the beautiful *Iolais* genus which have several long tails, shimmering blue upper sides and orange striped undersides. *Euphaedras*, or Foresters, are relatives of our own peacock and tortoiseshell and, like those, are tremendously colourful butterflies. Bobiri is an amazing spot for these and we may see a dozen or more species in a single day, their complex patterns of red, orange, yellow, green and blue a delight to the eyes. Fast-flying Charaxes are almost as diverse with a mixture of black, green, orange and blue species, these often settling on carnivore dung along the trail! Three of the commonest are Western Red Charaxes, White-barred Charaxes and the Demon Charaxes. We are sure the sensational Lilac Beauty and the almost equally exquisite Blue Mother-of-Pearl will induce plenty of admiration. This is a rich site for Pierid butterflies with the lovely *Belenois calypso* and the sky-blue Cambridge Vagrant to the fore. The strangely named Morose Sailor glides along paths and the ochre-banded Soldier Commodore sips from puddle edges alongside *Papilio zenobia*. African Leaf Butterflies come to sip salts along the impressive and beautiful Blue Diadem and Blue-banded Salamis. Weavers, sunbirds and greenbuls frequent the roadside shrubbery and in the trees are Dwarf Black Hornbills, Red-fronted Parrots and abundant White-throated Bee-eaters.

Among the swallowtails are widespread Mocker Swallowtail, *Papilio nireus*, Citrus Swallowtail, as well as *Papilio sosia*, *Papilio cypraeofila*. Pierids are much in evidence, often massing along the edge of puddles, with Common and Forest Grass Yellows, Forest Caper White, *Mylothris poppea* and *Mylothris rhodope* forming the bulk of these little crowds. The wood whites *Leptosia alcesta* and *Leptosia hybrida* flutter weakly at the forest edge and *Nepheronia pharis* is attractively patterned. The African Beak, or Nettle-tree Butterfly, is often numerous. Large and impressive species include Square-winged Red Charaxes, Ussher's Palla, Gaudy Commodore, Variable Eggfly, Clouded Mother-of Pearl, Pied Piper, Incipient False Acraea, Common Pink Forester, and Western Musanga Acraea. Angular Glider and Lurid Glider are frequently seen and amongst the many sailor species we'll see *Neptis alta*, *Neptis puella*, *Neptis metanira*, *Neptis trigonophora* and *Neptis melicerta*. Skippers will not be

ignored as there are many fine species in this group too, notably Striped Policeman, Common Orange Sprite, Common Elfin, Bouvier's Elfin, Pearl-spotted Forest Nymph and White-banded Red-eye.

## **Days 11 – 14**

### **Wli, Amedzofe & the Akwapim Togo Ranges**

The last part of the tour takes us to the hill ranges that form the border between Togo and Ghana, the Akwapim Togo ranges. Rising east of huge Lake Volta this is a verdant region of rolling savannahs and forested hills dissected by fast running streams and rivers. There are abundant waterfalls and these are a good place to start looking for Akwapim's richly varied fauna. Salty earth will be alive with mud-puddling butterflies, here perhaps an even greater variety than at Bobiri. Even nearing the end of the tour we'll be treated to a continuous stream of new species. *Acraeas* are numerous, among them *Falcate Acraea*, *Orina Acraea*, *Jodutta Acraea*, *Bonasia Acraea*, and *Translucent Acraea*. We'll find the scarce black and yellow *Mesoxantha ethosea* and the strange *Anthene locuples*, a ciliate blue with an orange patch on each wing. There's African Map Butterfly, Golden Piper, Common Red Glider, *Sophus Forester*, and Green False *Acraea* among many others as well as *Uranothauma falckensteini*.

The uncommon Cassin's Hawk-Eagle soars along the ridges whilst along the narrow lanes we'll find Black Bee-eater and Black-winged Orioles. There are many more species of butterfly including such delights as Zenobia Swallowtail, Western Marble, Stately Bush Brown, African Palmfly, Common Themis Forester, Edward's Forester, Large Pathfinder, Angular Glider, Common Yellow Glider, Common Red Glider, Clouded Mother-of-Pearl, African Map, Orange Admiral, African Leaf, Roger's Large *Acraea*, White *Acraea*, Smoky Bematistes, and the enigmatically-named Clench's On-off! It will be hard to take time off to enjoy some colourful birds such as Red-headed Malimbos, Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher, and the lovely Western Bluebill.

Close to Wli the noisy Swamp Palm Greenbul provides the backing vocals to plenty of new butterflies that include the scarce *Hypolycaena kadiskos*. This is a special place for that unusual group of blues called Liptenids. These are fragile and often colourful or bizarrely marked species and at Bunso Common Red Pentila, Western Cream Pentila, Similar Yellow, Western Pierid Blue, and Powdered Epitolina, are numbered amongst the many species we'll likely encounter.

West African Goshawks soar over wooded glades where we'll find Blue-spotted Wood-dove and the iridescent Emerald Cuckoo. Cassin's Honeybird, Gabon Woodpecker, Buff-throated Sunbird, and Superb Sunbird flit through the canopy as Broad Green-banded Swallowtail, Drury's Emperor Swallowtail and Western Blue Beauty patrol quiet tracks through savannah and woodland. Fermenting fruit carefully placed near our lodge will attract Banded Forester and Ceres Forester, and under the trees are Yellow-banded Evening Brown, *Bicyclus maesseni*, Brown Pansy,

and Brilliant Nymph. Skippers are easily ignored in favour of more brilliant lepidoptera however the impressive Blue Policeman, Striped Policeman and White-banded Red-eye will ensure that doesn't happen here! Indeed insect life in general is hard to ignore as there's so many brilliantly-coloured grasshoppers, bugs and beetles! In the afternoon of Day 14 we'll return to Accra for our evening flight back to the UK.

## **Day 15**

### **Arrive UK/Europe**

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