

Crocus of the Taurus Mountains

An Alpine Garden Society Tour

A Greentours Itinerary

A staggering twenty-eight species of Crocus are on the agenda for this tour alongside many other early flowering bulbs. Recent discoveries form a major component of this Crocus extravaganza, in no small part due to the explorations of your two Turkish leaders who have explored this rich region for several years bringing a number of new and often distinctive and beautiful species to light.

Day 1

Arrive Antalya. Transfer to Alanya

Our flights will arrive into Antalya in the evening and we'll make the short transfer from the airport eastwards to quiet Alanya.

Day 2

Sarveliler and the Taşeli Mountains

We'll start our exploration of the region's Crocuses fittingly with the newly-described *Crocus yaseminiæ* named after your principal guide on this tour! Also decorating the Taşeli Mountains are widespread *Crocus graveolens* and *Crocus roseviolaceus*, one of the most strikingly coloured species in the region. We hope to find the first flowers of *Iris stenophylla* here. In the afternoon we'll descend to the edge of the Pamphylian Plain where we'll look for the early flowering *Iris pamphylica* amongst Mediterranean macchie.

Day 3

Akseki: Gündoğmuş & Alacabel

Once into Akseki we'll settle into the Ali Pasha Lodge, around a thousand metres up in Geyik Dağları range of the Taurus Mountains. This is rural Turkey at its finest! As snow recedes in spring the mountain meadows green up and a profusion of flowers bloom. Blue *Scillas*, pink *Colchicums* and yellow *Gageas* all rush to flower and set seed between the snows and the grazing teeth. Amongst these we'll see our first *Crocus chrysanthus* and *Crocus isauricus* of the tour. Around Gündoğmuş we'll see *Crocus henrickii* amid small clusters of pale pink *Colchicum szovitsii* growing with the superficially similar *Colchicum triphyllum*.

Day 4

Akseki: Gembos Yayla

Below Gembos Yayla there is a special show in prospect as two species of Crocus burst forth in flashes of brilliant colour. Egg-yolk yellow *Crocus gembosii* and purple-

striped blue *Crocus mavii*. They've hybridised extensively resulting in a kaleidoscopic array of colours with all intermediate forms on show. You can photograph ten plants next to each other and not one will be the same as its neighbour! Add carpets of bright yellow *Eranthis hyemalis* and blue *Anemone blanda* to the profusion of crocuses and the effect is mesmerising. One should not forget the landscapes too, for the Taurus are exceptionally beautiful with high craggy peaks covered in snow, and made that much more photogenic with a stately Cedar of Lebanon in the foreground. The ground flora includes *Corydalis wendelboi* and no less than four species of *Colchicum* should be in flower, *burtii*, *psaridis*, *szovitsii* and *triphyllum*! *Galanthus nivalis* subspecies *cilicicus* should still be in flower and higher up we may catch the earliest flowers of *Galanthus elwesii*, a plant that has been a major conservation success story in the area. Chukar will be flushed from time to time and we'll encounter both Shore Larks and Snow Finches.

Days 5 & 6

Pamphylia

On the way to Antalya we'll stop off in an isolated spot in the mountains where we'll find some very interesting Crocuses, one similar to *Crocus tauri* and the other currently un-named. Heading down to the Mediterranean shores towards Antalya we'll stop en route where rare *Iris masia* blooms in an old graveyard. Here *Aristolochia lycica* leaves will already be up and providing food for Eastern Festoons and False Apollos, both already on the wing. The next day we'll spend in the mountains directly above the city where we've some real beauties on the agenda. There's delicate *Crocus antalyensis* subsp. *antalyensis*, butter-yellow *Crocus danfordiae*, and beautiful *Crocus ziyeretensis*.

Day 7

Tahtalı Mountain

Tiny *Crocus minutus* and creamy *Crocus sarichinarensis* decorate Tahtalı Mountain where they grow with the blue stars of *Scilla bifolia* and *Corydalis*. Lower down there will be *Iris unguicularis* and *Tulipa orphanidae* and plenty of orchids. South-western Turkey has a very diverse orchid flora and many of them flower much earlier than their European counterparts, so mid-March is a good time to see them here. We'll look for orchids such as *Ophrys heterochila*, *Ophrys argolica* subspecies *lucis* and the elegant *Ophrys climacis*. There will be the option to take an hour's walk up the Lycian Trail to see the newly-described *Fritillaria asumaniae*, and there will be *Anemone coronaria* and *Arisarum vulgare* on the way.

Day 8

Kas & Asas Mountain

Around Kas we'll find white to pale lilac-blue *Crocus lyciotauricus*, and here also is *Crocus brickellii*, named after Christopher Brickell, well-known to many of you as

author, gardener and botanist. The former grows in shady Cedar of Lebanon Forests in the mountains above the town and with them will be some impressive groups of *Paeonia mascula* and the red goblets of *Tulipa armena* subspecies *lycia*, as well as stands of *Galanthus elwesii*. In the mountains above Kalkan we'll find the gorgeous, large, and very rare, lilac-blue to deep violet-blue *Crocus calanthus*.

Days 9 & 10

Baba Dağı and Çameli

We're sure to enjoy the newly-discovered elegant *Crocus heilbronniorum* populating rocky scrub where Cylcamens mix with abundant yellow *Crocus danfordiae*. Two special bulbs we'll encounter on Baba Dağı are *Fritillaria forbesii* and *Scilla forbesii*. If our timing is good we'll find the white blooms of *Sternbergia candida*, *Crocus rechingeri* too. Towards Çameli we'll encounter *Crocus antalyensis* amongst plentiful *Fritillaria carica*, and hopefully amongst them will be the local *Crocus atospermus*

Days 11 – 14

Elmalı: Ak Dağı and the Beydağları

The parallel ranges of the Ak Dağı and the Beydağları either side of the fertile Elmalı basin are home to very many lovely Crocuses. *Crocus beydaglarensis* is named for these mountains, but others grow here too including *Crocus akdagensis* blooming in open pine forests and *Crocus salurdagensis* on high mountain steppes, both these two often flowering with pale yellow forms of *Crocus danfordiae*. *Crocus xanthosus* with its striking deep yellow-orange throat is named for the old Lycian capital Xanthos which is not far away.

After spending some time training our lenses on the pastel tones of *Crocus oreogenus* our attention may turn to other choice bulbs that pepper this rich slopes with dots of colour in the spring. Enigmatic *Fritillaria serpenticola* is a delight and the unusual *Muscari macrocarpum* will intrigue both for its colour and its incredible scent. We'll see clumps of *Iris unguicularis* as well as *Colchicum triphyllum*, *Anemone blanda*, giant clumps of *Aubrieta canescens* and both *Fritillaria pinardii* and *Fritillaria kittaniae*, the former in huge drifts, the latter in little colonies, the delicately striped green and grey-brown bells hard to see even at close range!

Two species here are named after well-known botanists – there's *Crocus bowlesianus* whose white to soft lilac tepals are intensively veined or feathered outside, and the stunning pure ice-blue *Crocus baytopiorum* named after the Turkish Botanical Professor Turhan Baytop. With so many Crocus species on show it'll be hard to find time to enjoy the varied early spring flora this marvelous area hosts. Summer pastures in these mountains will be at their floriferous best as spring brings a flush of colour to the whitest of limestones. Peeking out of crevices are deep purple *Romulea tempskyana* and plentiful pink *Orchis sezikana*. We'll see fabulous pink *Anthemis rosea*, the large yellow daisies of *Doronicum orientale*, and the only recently

described *Corydalis pashei*. The unusual brown-tipped ivory flowers of *Muscari muscarimi* emit a delicate yet powerful scent, these blooming with blue and white *Vicia cypria*, *Alkanna tubulosa*, two species of *Scilla*, and the lovely mat-forming *Viola crassifolia*.

Day 14

Antalya area

On the way back to Antalya we'll stop off to see *Crocus fleschieri*, a most striking species with a brilliant reddish style whilst *Crocus katrancensis* decorates montane steppes with its uniformly soft bluish lilac goblets.

Day 15

Departure

It is just a short drive to the airport for our nine o'clock departure.

Call 01298 83563 or visit www.greentours.co.uk for the latest trip report from previous trips to the Taurus Mountains to see Crocuses. If you would like to ask about any other aspect of this holiday, please call 01298 83563 or email us at enquiries@greentours.co.uk.

To Book a on this Holiday please fill in the booking form which you can download from www.greentours.co.uk (also found in the Greentours brochure) and post/fax to Greentours, PO Box 148, Buxton SK17 1BE, UK. Tel/Fax +44 (0)1298 83563. After booking your place you'll receive a confirmation letter and a detailed information pack will be dispatched twelve weeks prior to departure. Flower, mammal and bird checklists are available.