

# Autumn Bulbs of Southwestern Turkey

## A Tour for the Alpine Garden Society

### A Greentours Itinerary

#### Day 1

##### Arrive Antalya and to the Gül Mountain Hotel

In the afternoon we'll drive along a scenic valley between the great peaks of Tahtalı Mountain (Olimpos National Park) and the Bey Dağları before arriving at the remarkably situated Gül Mountain Hotel high on a shoulder of Tahtalı Mountain. This very comfortable hotel enjoys stunning views down the Kemer Valley towards the Mediterranean, some four thousand feet below the hotel.

#### Day 2

##### Phaselis and the Kemer and Göynük Valleys

Descending the deep valleys that run steeply downhill towards Kemer we'll encounter widespread *Crocus cancellatus* amidst a variety of ferns and late blooming *Silenes* and *Dianthus*. As the gorge narrows Crag Martins wheel against the cliff faces and Dippers and Grey Wagtails fly along the river. On roadside banks are the bright pink star-like flowers of *Colchicum stevenii* and in an old olive grove the spiralled white flowers of Autumn Ladies Tresses. We'll lunch at Sundance on the coast where an idyllic river valley reaches the coast unspoilt thanks to the efforts of the conservation-minded owners. Ancient Phaselis sits on a headland at the end of the property and within we'll find a magnificent display of *Cyclamen graecum*, whilst the woods hold spidery *Colchicum decaisnei* and mauve *Scilla autumnalis*. This is a great spot for migrant birds and for butterflies with Pygmy and Mediterranean Skippers, Eastern Rock Grayling and the spectacular Two-tailed Pasha all typical 'late' species.

#### Day 3

##### Olimpos National Park and Tahtalı Mountain

We'll spend the entire day on Tahtalı Mountain exploring high forests and tiny hamlets set amidst ancient gnarled plane trees, some with girths of ten metres or more. Fantastic displays of the elegant snowdrop *Galanthus peshmeni* are found amongst these photogenic trees. *Colchicum dolichantherum*, their multiple flowers forming tight clumps, enjoys the woods at mid-levels but higher up we'll find the much more eye-catching and brightly coloured *Colchicum sanguicolle*. This rare species has large flowers of a deep pink with an ivory-white tube with a dark red 'sheath' at the base. We'll have a picnic amongst a massed display of these beauties on a col high on the mountain amidst gorgeous Cedar of Lebanon forest. A little streamlet winds through them, its sparkling waters providing moisture for a most striking form of *Crocus speciosus*, this with deep violet-blue goblets on 15cm long elegantly narrow tubes.

## Day 4

### Termessos and the Güver Canyon

The amphitheatre at Termessos has remarkable views from its position on a narrow col with the Mediterranean and the modern metropolis of Antalya spreading out three thousand feet below. It is easy to see why Alexander the Great didn't bother trying to breach this ancient Psidian city state's defences. As a national park Termessos has the added bonus of full protection from the ravages of goats and thus the limestone hillsides have some of the least spoilt and most diverse flora in south-western Turkey. As we walk up from the carpark we'll soon encounter abundant *Colchicum baytopiorum* in confusingly variable colour and form! Herds of Ibex have increased in recent years and have now become easier to see. Rock Nuthatches are common and we should look out for Middle Spotted Woodpecker and hopefully Wallcreeper, one or more of which has usually arrived for its winter sojourn by the time we visit. Deep canyons eroded through sedimentary rock on the edge of the Pamphylian plain host the lovely tessellated deep pink *Colchicum variegatum* and both *Cyclamen mirabile* and *Cyclamen graecum*.

In the afternoon we'll journey back up into the mountains to a long wide valley famed throughout Turkey for its apple orchards. En route we'll look for the lovely purple-red *dispathaceus* form of *Crocus pallasii* and we might also find ghostly *Crocus assumaniae*. In Elmali we'll settle into our comfortable hotel for a one night stay.

## Day 5

### Ak Dağı & Avlan

The highest mountain in the region, the imposing 3000m Ak Dağı has a road that will take us up to its serenely beautiful yaylas, summer pastures of bright green turf around small deep green lakes. The turf will still be green in the yaylas but the autumn will well and truly be governing the stoney slopes where we'll see many *Crocus cancellatus* and *Colchicum boissieri* will be in fine form. Red-fronted Serins, Finsch's Wheatears and Cretzschmarr's Buntings are amongst a birdlife redolent of areas further east. Alpine Accentors will still be in their winter flocks even at this season.

Heading downhill we'll stop to enjoy roadside banks with fine displays of the bizarre foot-long *Biarum pyrami* before descending to Kaş where we'll stay for the rest of the tour. Kaş has a wonderful range of flora and fauna, superb landscapes, fine marine life, and with the comforts of a very fine hotel and a wide choice of great restaurants to enjoy. The town itself is a lovely place, the narrow shops lined with tempting little shops, cafes, bars and restaurants as the town rises up from its picturesque harbour. Past the amphitheatre a road takes us out to the flower-filled Peninsula, now the domain of beautiful villas and hotels, yet only forty years ago this entire coast didn't have a single tarmac road!

## Day 6

### Kaş & Assos Mountain

Our lovely hotel nestles amongst garrigue rich in flowers and loaded with aromatic herbs attracting late butterflies. Pockets of pink erupt from crevices in the pure white limestone of Kaş's peninsula. Sometimes just a few bright stars and sometimes twenty, all backed by glossy green leaves. These the lovely *Colchicum stevenii*. *Cyclamen hederifolium* also decorates these rock gardens. The exquisite and incredibly rare *Crocus wattiorum* is a treasure indeed. It sends forth multiple purple-blue flowers, adorned with scarlet stigmas and yellow and black stamens, from crevices in limestone of purest white.

We'll head up into Kaş's Cedar Forests, a gorgeous place full of huge Cedars, gnarled old Oaks, and at this season red, bronze and yellow from the *Acer monspessulanum* and Smokebush. Dotting the forest edge will be the rich yellow goblets of *Sternbergia clusiana*, the impressive flowers erupting leafless from the dry ground. Careful searching under the cedars will reveal another *Sternbergia* though it is much less attractive than *clusiana* and difficult to spot, this the unusual *Sternbergia colchiciflora*. Clumps of *Colchicum balansae* line the roadside, and altogether more attractive are the large stars of tessellated *Colchicum variegatum*. *Crocus* are of course everywhere too, mostly *cancellatus*, but depending on how the season is going we might see a lot of the paler form of *Crocus mathewi* here too.

## Day 7

### Baba Mountain

En route to Fethiye and its big mountain we'll visit ancient Tlos which must have been a wonderful place to live in its heyday. The setting, like many other ancient sites in the region, is just wonderful. This extensive site has a lovely mosaic of vegetation with some choice autumn flowers including brilliant golden-yellow *Sternbergia lutea*, Turkey's only autumn flowering grape-hyacinth *Muscari parviflorum*, pink *Plumbagos* and yellow *Scolymus*.

Impressive Baba Mountain rises to over 6,000 feet. Though not the highest mountain in the region it is particularly impressive as on its western side it drops almost vertically into the sea. It has a most marvellous flora too with abundant *Colchicum boissieri* and *Crocus pallasii*, and it is here that we can find the gorgeous purple-centred ivory goblets of rare *Crocus mathewi*.

## Day 8

### Departure from Dalaman

Depending on flight times on Day we might have chance to further explore Baba Mountain, or the western slopes of serpentinite dominated Sandras Dağı, or even lovely Dalyan where we can find *Colchicum macrophyllum* too.

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