

Cilento

Wildlife at Leisure

A Greentours Itinerary

Day 1 To Cilento

We'll land at Naples Airport and drive south passing the lovely Sorrento Peninsula before reaching the wild coastal mountains of Cilento. Olive groves close by our quiet rural hotel will already be alive with colourful anemones. Wands of ivory *Bellevalia romana* emerge from the anemone throng and there's much *Cerintho major*. Paths wander through maquis replete with flowering Tree Heather with an understory of *Prasium majus* and a rich variety of flowers including *Allium roseum* and the last blooms of the unusual Widow Iris *Hermodactylus tuberosus*.

Days 2 & 3 Cilento Mountains & Palinuri

Three east-west mountain ridges form the backbone of the spectacular landscapes of Cilento. The stunning landscapes and the cultural history combine to justify Cilento's status as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Cilento and Vallo di Diano National Park protects much of this sublime landscape – it is Italy's second largest national park. The mountains are impressive. Monte Bulgheria reaches over 4000 feet above sea-level before dropping precipitously to the deep blue Tyrrhenian Coast. White cliffs hug beautiful crescents of sand, unreachable by anything but boat.

Virgil's Aeneid recounts how Palinurus, the helmsman of the Trojan Aeneas's ship was singled out for sacrifice off this coast to ensure the safe passage of all on board, he was drugged by the god of sleep and thrown overboard and the beach of Cilento took his body. Today, one of the Europe's most unusual and beautiful Primula's honours Palinurus's name. Decorating the coastal cliffs above those same beaches *Primula palinuri* is perhaps one of Europe's most unusual wild flowers. Large umbels of bright yellow flowers top a rosette of large lime green leaves in cracks in the cliff, an arresting and beautiful site. It has an extremely restricted distribution in coastal areas of the Southern Tyrrhenian Sea. A fantastically architectural mini-forest of *Euphorbia dendroides* cloaks the slopes and drapes from the cliffs.

And there are orchids. Particularly prevalent in the area is *Dactylorhiza romana*, but there are many bee orchids too including Bumble-Bee Orchid, Early Spider Orchid and the lovely *Ophrys exaltata*.

Quiet lanes through the higher mountains offer wonderful views down to brilliant blue Tyrrhenian Sea. Here amongst lovely open woodlands of Turkey Oaks, Beech, Downy Oaks, Manna Ash, Hornbeam and Sweet Chestnut we can find plentiful *Helleborus*

foetidus as well as *Anemone hortensis* and *Romulea bulbocodium*. Stands of *Viburnum tinus* are smothered in white blooms, making for a perfect picture with the green and grey mountain slopes and the cobalt sea below. Golden Eagle is a rare resident of these mountains though they'll be obvious in the skies at this season and we can also see Rock Partridge which is still tolerably common in the area.

Day 4

A Secret Place!

We'll take a boat trip from Marina di Camerota along this most scenic of coasts to a secret place where we'll see the very best displays of the *Primula* along with the rare *Fritillaria messanensis* subspecies *gracilis*, a recently described form which is known from only three sites. Tufts of white *Iberis semperflorens* are a fine sight amongst the strawberry trees. At this season you can see the strawberry trees in fruit and in flower!

Day 5

Departure (or on to Sicily!)

This morning there'll be a final chance to wander the flowery olive groves around the hotel before departing.

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 to Greentours, 8 Eliot Close, Armitage, Rugeley, WS15 4UP, UK. Tel +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 and bird checklists are available.