

# Kaş

## Wildlife at Leisure

### A Greentours Itinerary

#### Day 1

##### To Antalya and Elmali's Orchard Valley

After arriving in Antalya we'll journey up into the mountains to a long wide valley famed throughout Turkey for its apple orchards. Up here it will still be early spring and the apples will only just be coming into flower. We'll settle into our comfortable hotel in Elmali for a two night stay.

#### Day 2

##### Ak Dağı

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, where fresh cold water still flows strongly from melting snows before plunging down an impressive waterfall. Here rocks are decorated with the large blue saucers of *Omphalodes luciliae* and the vast cushions of *Aubrietia* would make any English gardener purple with envy. Snow will still be plentiful on the mountain and by it a wonderful snowmelt flora. The little brown bells of *Fritillaria pinardii* are everywhere and there are Grape Hyacinths and yellow Stars of Bethlehem as well as *Corydalis*. Green Hairsreaks and False Apollos fly about the highly scented white and brown wands of strange *Muscari racemosa*. We'll find the lovely *Fritillaria crassifolia* whose large bells are tessellated green and brown. On dry ridges there are delicate crucifers of great beauty and the gorgeous white and blue *Muscari bourgaei*. Snowfinches feed around snowpatches where abundant *Merendera attica* and *Scilla bifolia* bloom and Red-fronted Serins, Finch'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.

#### Day 3

##### Sinekçibeli Pass

We'll explore the high Sinekçibeli Pass where Eastern Festoons, Powdered Brimstones and False Apollos still fly. Stately Oriental Plane Trees line the stream courses and among them we shall look for Redstarts and Woodpeckers, while under the surrounding Calabrian Pines and Cedars we'll find Violet Bird's Nest Orchid and the beautifully patterned *Ophrys reinholdi*. On the highest ground blue *Anemone blanda* produces a fine display and a highlight will be the fabulous yellow bells of *Fritillaria carica* atop a small hill above our picnic site. The valley below is often full of migrants especially Redstarts and various Flycatchers.

Heading coastwards we'll stop for a population of the local speciality *Fritillaria kitanae*, whose blooms are stiped olive, grey and yellow. Further down we'll reach a gorgeous woodland of *Quercus macrolopis*, the trees home to Kruper's and

European Nuthatches, and Middle Spotted Woodpeckers too. Here yet another Fritillary puts in an appearance, the rather larger *Fritillaria acmopetala* growing with a few scarlet Anemones for company. A further stop will be for the rare *Erica bocquetii* blooming long the roadside. In the end we'll have to descend to Kaş where we'll stay for the rest of the tour. Kaş is a veritable playground for the naturalist with 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 it makes the perfect base for a wildlife at leisure tour.

Kaş 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 4**

##### **Andriake, Kekova and the Islands**

Andriake's wetland though small has a huge list of birds and we'll see a range of waders, egrets and herons, ducks, and migrant passerines. Spoonbills and Great White Egrets lounge by the roadside and Spur-winged Plovers, Spotted Redshank, Ruff and Black-winged Stilts are much in evidence. Water Rails call from the reeds whilst dunes behind the shore offer shelter to passerine migrants that will likely include Isabelline Wheatears, Woodchat and Masked Shrikes. The dune flora is striking with a colourful pastiche of Silenes, Helianthemums, medicagos, lotuses, stocks and rare *Anchusa aggregata*.

From the harbour here we'll take a boat trip through the islands off Kekova marvelling at the underwater archaeology and the glorious scenery. We'll no doubt see a goodly number of Green Turtles and maybe a loggerhead or two. Audouin's Gulls are a regular sight and we'll see the uncommon Mediterranean race of Shag. We'll have a couple of chances to snorkel from the boat. The marine life is very good in this part of Turkey, indeed Kaş is the favoured destination for Istanbul's divers. Fish are abundant and include many colourful Wrasse as well as the elegant Cornetfish. If you are lucky you may catch a glimpse of a Yellow-spotted Mediterranean Moray Eel, or an Octopus, which are common in Kaş's waters. Squid often hover close to the boats' mooring ropes...

#### **Day 5**

##### **Kasaba and the Demre Canyon**

Kaş has perhaps the richest orchid flora in Turkey and though we'll be too late for the early flowers we'll still see many fine species especially in the hills just inland around Kasaba. Pine woods have large populations of both Spurred Helleborine and Violet Limodore, the former a large-flowered helleborine which grows in floriferous lumps, the latter a tall orchid with large purple blooms. Bee orchids are tremendously varied and we'll see *Ophrys lyciensis*, *Ophrys phaseliana*, and even the *chlorantha* form of

Bee Orchid. There's also some fine forms of *Orchis fragrans* and Kaş very own endemic bee orchid, the distinctive and impressive *Ophrys lycia*.

Starred Agamas are common and we can look for Caecilians under rocks, and we've a good chance of finding a Glass Lizard or a Montpellier Snake. Ahatli though a dry area, is rich in birdlife with typically species being Cirl Bunting, Black-eared Wheatear, Syrian Woodpecker, Woodchat Shrike, Rollers and European Bee-eaters, which are particularly common.

Lesser Spotted and Middle Spotted Woodpeckers frequent the riverine trees along the river that has formed the Demre Canyon. Dragon Arums make a spectacular sight. Here's we'll find butterflies mud-puddling and visiting *Origanum* which flowers prolifically in the area attracting species such as Loew's Blue, Mazarine Blue, Long-tailed Blue and many hairstreaks whilst Lesser Lattice Brown perch on the fissured bark of the *Quercus macrolepis*.

## Day 6

### Kaş's Cedar Forest

Just a few kilometres as the Eleonora's Falcon flies the land rises sharply to over a thousand metres and here we'll wander in cool Cedar Forests where Irises still bloom alongside the newly described *Campanula aktasii*, lovely *Silene cryptogramma* and the delicate foxglove *Digitalis carica*. Cute Krüper's Nuthatches work the outer branches of the cedars – they are common here. Overhead are Short-toed Eagles, Long-legged Buzzards and Goshawks and in the cedars there are various Woodpeckers, Goldcrests and Coal Tits. Everywhere there are Star-of-Bethlehems including the green and white striped *Ornithogalum nutans*, *Aristolochia hirta* Asphodels, Tassel Hyacinths and, of course, Anatolian Orchids. The deep red goblets of *Tulipa armena* subspecies *lycica* will be in full flower amongst an intriguing population of *Iris germanica*, here in as natural a setting as you could wish. *Orchis anatolica* is plentiful and we'll find both Monkey Orchid and Reinhold's Bee Orchid. A highlight will be a plentiful *Paeonia mascula* in bloom.

## Day 7

### Patara

The coastal road westwards from Kaş takes us along a very unspoilt coast where thousand metre mountains plunge directly into the sea. We'll pass one of Turkey's most iconic beaches, Kaputaş, where an improbably narrow and deep gorge reaches the sea via an improbably scenic beach. We'll stop awhile to see the *Asphodeline lutea* and the rare Cretan Cabbage, whilst above Rock Nuthatches and Blue Rock Thrushes will be seen. Ibex spend the night just above the road on these cliffs but usually move off soon after first light...

We'll visit nearby Patara, where the ruins of an ancient city will hold our attention for a while, especially so now that the reconstruction of the ancient Lycian Lighthouse has completed. The site too is rich in flora, and especially butterflies – it will already feel more like summer here. Behind Turkey's longest beach is a vast area of duneland

and marshy delta. This is a superb birdwatching area with many a rarity being found and from our perspective will give us a chance of seeing many migrants such as Shrikes, Bee-eaters, and an abundance of warblers. Great Spotted Cuckoos breed in the sparse woodlands and if there's water in the large shallow lagoons we can expect large flocks of herons, egrets and waders. The duneland flora is also quite different from anything we will have seen with lots of pretty little annuals flowering in the damp sands.

## **Day 8**

### **Departure from Dalaman**

You'll no doubt have had chance to explore the garrigue around the hotel that is rich in flowers and loaded with aromatic herbs attracting butterflies such as Southern and Scarce Swallowtails, Blue-spot, Ilex and Sloe Hairstreaks and the strikingly brilliant Loew's Blue. Green Turtles swim just offshore of the hotel and are common in these coastal waters. Red-rumped Swallows scythe through the air whilst Yellow-vented Bulbuls and Rüppell's Warblers nest in the shrubberies around the hotel, and Spur-thighed Tortoises graze amid the many flowers. In spring a beautiful insect, the Thread Lacewing, *Nemoptera sinuata*, emerges among these flowers, looking something like a cross between a dragonfly and a butterfly with long-tailed cream and black wings.

And then it will time to head to Dalaman Airport for our departure...

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