

Datça

Wildlife at Leisure

A Greentours Itinerary

Day 1 To Dalaman and Datça

After arriving in Dalaman we'll journey north for an hour through pomegranate and orange orchards before spending another hour reaching the lovely little town of Datça close to the end of a ruggedly beautiful peninsula. The latter part of the journey will open our eyes to the geography of this narrow arm of land that sticks far west into the Aegean. Turquoise-blue seas lay either side of multi-hued hills and mountains that are sometimes bare (but don't be fooled...) sometimes with forest with open pine woods, and sometimes covered in a richly aromatic and very flowery shrubbery. After reaching the town we'll settle into our comfortable little hotel for a five night stay.

Day 2 Boz Dağı

The wild Datça Peninsula is barely 80 kilometres from the modern tourist resorts around Marmaris yet it has managed to remain largely unspoilt and undeveloped into the 21st century. Much of the peninsula is protected as a national park that was set up more than fifty years ago initially to protect the last Western Anatolian population of Leopard. None have been seen for around fifteen years now however there are still Brown Bears and Wolves here and very many Ibex. We'll surely see the latter – posing on the limestone ramparts of Boz Dağı. This high mountain has impressive cliffs on which breed various raptors including Bonelli's Eagles, Peregrine and Lanner Falcon, and the northern slopes, almost completely uninhabited are clothed in some of the richest lushest maquis in Turkey. Ruppell's Warblers and Bonelli's Warblers are everywhere.

Ferula communis makes an immediately impressive contribution to a roadside flora that includes three *Convolvulus* species – *althaeoides*, *scammonia* and *elegantissimus* - these providing more than just a splash of colour. Amongst *Satureja* and *Coridothymus* bloom lovely *Gladiolus anatolicus* and lots of *Orchis anatolica*. There are plenty of other orchids too with helleborines, Violet Limodores, Giant Orchids, and a number of lovely bee orchids such as *Ophrys lyciensis* and *Ophrys heterochila*.

Day 3 Murdala and Mersincik

It would be difficult to find a flowerier place in the entire Mediterranean than Murdala and Mersincik close to the end of the Datça Peninsula. For much of the year these mountains are forbiddingly barren-looking but in April and May they erupt into spectacular bloom in April and May. The combination of multi-hued *Cistus*

bushes, bushes of blue *Lithodora*, neat mounds of flowering Euphorbias, and a variety of lovely Campanulas and Venus Looking-glasses is mind-boggling. Looking closer there's so much more. The gorgeous deep pink-lilac *Iberis pruitii* grows on bare tracks looking like someone's dropped packets of sweets as they've walked, and there's little mounds of the very woolly *Convolvulus compactus*. Orchids are everywhere, in particular bee orchids, and Datça has many species of them – *Ophrys candica*, *Ophrys minoa*, *Ophrys episcopalis* and *Ophrys ferrum-equinum* subspecies *mandalyana* are some of the finest. The north side of Boz Dagi has some spectacular scenery with the limestone pinnacles and cliffs dropping quickly to the sea through a particularly luxuriant maquis vegetation with unusually large strawberry trees, laurels and Phillyreas.

Day 4

Emecik Mountain and the 'Caracal' Forests

Serapias cordigera showers the open pinewoods with deep brick-coloured blooms and here they occur in unusual forms too with flowers sometimes wholly or partly lime-green. These same pinewoods are home to a population of Caracal – we'll go and look in the evening though chances are very slim, however we've a very good chance of seeing Wild Boar, Stone Marten and several owl species – Barn, Tawny, Long-eared and Scop's Owls are all likely. There's also a very nice flora under the trees with plants such as *Fritillaria forbesii* and *Allium subhirsutum*. Nearby is one of the very few remaining populations of the palm *Phoenix theophrasti* and there are also small pockets of emerald-green Liquidambar forests where we'll find Irises and see birds such Green and Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Woodchat Shrikes and Golden Orioles.

Day 5

Knidos

Just thirty-five kilometres from Datça lies the remarkable archaeological site of Knidos. The location is in itself superb, the ancient city perched at the tip of the peninsula with just a square kilometre of land beyond that houses the famous lighthouse. The ancient settlement, one of the most important in Caria, had two harbours one facing northwest, the other southeast, and these just metres apart! Knidos is famed as the home of Praxiteles whose sculptures include the famous naked statue of Aphrodite. The amphitheatre is also quite special.

As we approach the garrigue is loaded with aromatic herbs attracting butterflies such as Southern and Scarce Swallowtails, Blue-spot and Ilex Hairstreaks and the strikingly brilliant Loew's Blue. Red-rumped Swallows scythe through the air, Sardinian Warblers nest in the shrubberies, 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. Starred Agamas are common and we've a good chance of finding a Glass Lizard or a Montpellier Snake. Typical birds at the end of the peninsula are Cirl Bunting, Black-eared Wheatear, Syrian Woodpecker, Woodchat Shrike, Roller and European Bee-eater, the latter can

be particularly common if we get the right week during migration. Dragon Arums make a spectacular sight. Here's we'll find butterflies visiting Origanum which flowers prolifically in the area attracting species such as Mazarine Blue, Long-tailed Blue and many hairstreaks whilst Lesser Lattice Brown perch on the fissured bark of the *Quercus aucheri*.

At Knidos itself Cory's Shearwaters and Audouin's Gulls are offshore along with Bottle-nosed Dolphins. There's a fine littoral flora and above the immediate coastal zone we can find *Allium hirtovaginum* and sweetly-scented *Muscari macrocarpum*.

Day 6

Via Çetibeli & Honaz Dağı to Pamukkale

Leaving the Datça peninsula we'll stop en route amid the pinewoods of Çetibeli to enjoy the plentiful orchids there before heading to the heights of Honaz Dağı, an impressive mountain at over 8350 feet (2570m) and which has a very different flora and fauna to that of the Datça Peninsula. The northern slopes have woodlands that wouldn't look out of place much further north with a mix of trees such as Limes, Sweet Chestnuts, Hazel and Maples. Higher slopes have much juniper with clumps of *Acantholimon* and *Astragalus* and some very nice flowers such as *Daphne oleoides*, the unusual yellow *Moltkia aurea*, and clumps of yellow *Iris suaveolens*. Finsch's Wheatears and Cretzschmarr's Buntings are amongst a birdlife redolent of areas further east. Short-toed Eagles circle overhead and Woodlarks sing from the junipers.

Day 7

Pamukkale

Pamukkale needs little introduction, images of the fabulous aquamarine travertine terraces that cascade down the mountainside near Denizli are featured everywhere that talks of Turkey. The terraces are visible from very many kilometres away and look very much like a giant petrified waterfall, and are even more beautiful up close. The ancient Greco-Roman city of Hierapolis was built above the remarkable terraces. You can even bathe in the mineral-rich waters in the ancient city. Pamukkale is one of the most popular tourist sites in Turkey but most visitors make the long drive from the coast so don't arrive until lunchtime so we can enjoy the site in the quieter morning before heading out into the hinterland to look for flora and fauna in the afternoon.

Day 8

Departure from Dalaman

We'll have a last chance to see the wildlife on the slopes around Pamukkale village before heading off to the airport after breakfast.

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.

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