

Chios

A Greentours Itinerary

Day 1

To Chios and Kampos

An evening arrival will mean that the island's spectacular scenery will not be apparent until morning though the lights of Çesme sparkle across the few miles of water that separate Turkey from Chios. Just ten minutes drive will see us settling in to the Voulamandis House set amongst the citrus groves of upmarket Kampos.

Day 2

Emporios & Kato Fana

It is now hard to find unspoilt coastal habitats in the Mediterranean though Chios has rather a lot, a legacy of the desire of the rich shipping families that run the island to keep the worst aspects of modern tourism at bay. At Kato Fana garrigue-cloaked valleys descend to a little bay with a sand bar across its mouth. On limestone hillsides above Apollo Faneos Temple is the gorgeous yellow and maroon *Iris suaveolens*. As Red-backed Shrikes and Cretzschmarr's Buntings call from Junipers and Strawberry Trees we'll be finding the first of around thirty species of bee orchid. There's recently discovered *Ophrys calypsus*, hopefully the first blooms of the near-endemic *Ophrys homeri*, *Ophrys leucophthalma*, and yet another addition to the island's orchid flora, discovered on the Greentours trip in 2007, *Ophrys mesaritica*. Sawfly Orchid and Rainbow Ophrys are two particularly photogenic species but we are sure that it will be the bizarre hairy flowers of the brown and blue *Ophrys regis-ferdinandii* which will command most attention this morning. Pink Anatolian Orchids mix with yellow *Ophrys sicula* on the headlands that enclose Kato Fana's beautiful bay. Rare *Orchis punctulata*, rediscovered on Chios by our group last year, flowers here with *Bellevalia trifoliata*, large-flowered *Ornithogalum pedicellare* and the delicate red *Tulipa undulatifolia*.

Days 3 & 7

The Mastihohoria & The Southern Headlands: Cape Pirgos, Eko Knoll, Kalamoti & Olympi

The limestone hills and small fertile plains of southern Chios have long produced the best mastic in the Mediterranean. In the 17th and 18th centuries demand from the Ottoman's of Istanbul made the island rich. When the islanders decided to withhold their product 30,000 Ottoman's descended upon Chios and made them regret it! The only villages spared are now known as the Mastihohoria. The guidebooks tell you that petroleum substitutes caused the bottom to fall out of the mastic market so it will come as a surprise to see a considerable acreage of gnarled old trees still being cared for. Mastic has again become popular in the markets of Eastern Asia. We'll

spend two days exploring the orchid-rich countryside amongst these villages and there'll be an opportunity to enjoy their distinctive almost middle-eastern character. Near quaint Olimpi are numerous Green-winged and Pink Butterfly Orchids and we'll find various coloured Anemones, white Asphodels, and Barbary Nuts as well as a host of Bee Orchids. *Ophrys umbilicata* and redder-sepal'd *Ophrys minutula* are both common as is *Ophrys attaviria*. There's *Ophrys mammosa*, recently described *Ophrys lindia* and if you want to learn the differences between *Ophrys leucadica*, *blitopertha* and *cinereophila* then this is the place.

Audouin's Gulls and both Cory's and Yelkouan Shearwaters ply the waters off the southern cape and from a high vantage point at Vroulidhia we'll likely see Common Dolphins. The volcanic black pebble beaches of Emporios have a fine coastal flora and those who don't mind going underground can visit the fantastic stalactite-laden caves near Olimpi.

Day 4

Nea Moni, Anavatos and Elinta Bay

Our first taste of the scenic west coast will come at Elinta Bay where a fabulous show of lustrous maroon and red Horseshoe Ophrys of both the normal and large-lipped *labiosa* form flower amid impressive stands of frilly pink *Orchis italica*. The strange dutchman's pipe *Aristolochia hirta* is the foodplant of Eastern Festoon and we'll look for the lovely False Apollo as Green Lizards and Erhard's Wall Lizards scurry for cover. For lunch we'll visit beautiful Lithe Bay where a little taverna does some of the freshest tastiest fish in the Aegean. A marsh offers shelter to migrant birds and behind are limestone slopes with plenty of confusing '*Ophrys fusca*' types along with *Ophrys basilissa* and a lovely show of *Iris suaveolens*, Grape Hyacinths and pretty *Lathyrus clymenum*.

We'll explore the World Heritage site at Néa Moní. Founded by a Byzantine Emperor in the 11th century it became one of the Aegean's most powerful monasteries. Sacked by the Ottoman's in 1822 and damaged by an Earthquake it has been comprehensively and sympathetically restored. Home to some of the world's finest mosaics Néa Moní now ranks as one of Greece's top World Heritage sites. The partially wooded hillsides and fields below host a wonderful display of *Cyclamen persicum* and several tulips including *Tulipas agenensis*, *praecox*, and just a few of the delicate little *clusiana*.

We'll have great views of the citadel at Anavatos, set amidst rugged limestone hills, as we walk to the hill-top village of Anavatos village. Increasing numbers of *Asphodeline lutea* line the path. This is a great area for the weird *Ophrys Regis-ferdinandii* which can be abundant and there'll be a good smattering of *Ophrys sicula* and *Ophrys orphanidea* too. The range of forms of *Orchis anatolica* beggars belief.

Day 5

Mount Pelineon & Marmaro Marsh

Chios's highest mountain looks, from a distance, to be almost devoid of vegetation. At closer range we'll find the pale grey limestone dotted with marvellous flowers. The exquisite yellow *Fritillaria pelinea* is found nowhere else in the world. Chocolate-lined golden *Crocus olivieri* flowers with fabulous bright scarlet *Anemone pavonina*. The pretty deep purple *Romulea linarsii* grows in limestone crevices with Rustyback Fern and *Ornithogalum fimbriatum* whilst on higher slopes we can find *Corydalis solida*, *Scilla biflora*, *Thlaspi bulbosum* and no less than four species of *Gagea*. Queen of Spain Fritillaries flutter across rocky knolls where we'll encounter rare *Ophrys dodekanensis* and furry *Ophrys omegaifera* whilst in woodlands *Orchis provincialis* blooms prolifically.

We'll spend the afternoon walking amongst the marshes and small fields that run back up the valley behind Kardamyla. A wonderful array of wetland plants harbour dragonflies and damselflies including several Darters and three Emperor species. This is an excellent birding site. Little Crakes are quite easy to see and can be approached down to a few metres. Baillon's Crakes are less common. Sometimes European Bittern and Great Snipe are seen and there are plenty of warblers to sort through.

Day 6

Kampia Gorge

Later we'll walk down a spectacular gorge that descends from Kampia to the sea. Golden Orioles and flycatchers are common along the tree-lined river which also hosts a marvellous variety of odonata including *Cordulegaster insignis* and *Onychogomphus forcipatus*. We will inspect the 'Castro' at the top of the gorge - an ancient fortress perched on top of a rocky pinnacle with the later addition of a pretty church on top. Spotted rock rose (*Tuberaria guttata*) and *Ptilostemon chamaepeuce* decorate the rocks. Alongside the path are abundant *Lupinus* - both *angustifolius* and *varius* - combining pleasingly with *Chrysanthemum segetum* whose striking yellow blooms look more intense than usual against the blue of the Lupins. Descending we'll spot the bright acid-green umbellifer *Ferulago humilis* and among the butterflies, which are usually varied and common in this gorge are False Apollos and endemic Chios Meadow browns.

Day 8

Return to the UK

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