

## Kaş & Dalyan

### 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 whitallii* 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, 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.

##### 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 a vast population of *Paeonia mascula* in bloom.

In the evening we'll 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 crytogramma* 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.

## **Day 7**

### **The Peninsula and Kaş's Coast**

Our lovely hotel nestles amongst garrigue 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.

We'll visit an ancient Lycian site with a fabulous view down to the sea. Hardly ever visited apart from the occasional shepherd it is a haven for wildlife. On the trackside banks are Violet Limodores and the fine large-flowered bee orchid *Ophrys episcopalis* and butterflies include Large Wall Browns and the Telmessian Meadow Brown.

## **Day 8**

### **Kaputaş, Patara & Xanthos & to Köyceğiz**

After a relaxed breakfast and perhaps a quick check around the hotel for migrants we'll depart westwards. It takes less than two hours to reach our next base in Köyceğiz but we've lots of nice stops on the way! The road west from Kaş is a good

one but for the first half an hour it wends its way along a very steep mountainous coast just above the sea. The scenery is fabulous and we'll stop at a particularly scenic spot by famous Kaputaş beach. Here waters have cut a gorge through two hundred metres of rock so narrow that you can touch both sides in places. Yellow Asphodelines and Cretan Cabbage are amongst a range of chasmophytes that bloom here whilst Crag Martins and Blue Rock Thrushes are the avian residents. Patara has the longest beach in Turkey and is part of a large protected area which encompasses the beach and the major archaeological site just inland. The coastal phrygana, beach and wetland around the ancient site is rich hunting ground for the naturalist with an impressive variety of flora and fauna. The ancient Lycian capital at Xanthos lies just a kilometre off our route and so we'll have the chance to spend a couple of hours at this UNESCO World Heritage site.

In the afternoon we'll journey north for an hour through pomegranate and orange orchards before reaching our base for the next three days, delightful Köyceğiz.

## Day 9

### **Köyceğiz – Hamitköy Marshes & Köyceğiz Liquidambar Forests**

We'll be able to see Hamitköy's marshes and liquidambar forests even from our hotel and it takes only a few minutes to drive out there. Masses of tall egg-yolk yellow *Iris xanthospuria* dominate the meadows here in a spectacular show with the tall fluffy paler wands of *Thalictrum flavum* for company. This is migrant bird heaven with an unimaginable variety of warblers, as well as Wryneck, and lots of Shrikes – Woodchat, Red-backed and Masked. The warblers include Eastern Orphean Warbler, Rüppell's Warbler, Lesser Whitethroats which can be abundant, Common Whitethroats, the occasional Subalpine Warbler, Wood Warblers, Icterine Warblers, Olivaceous Warblers, sometimes Olive Tree Warblers, and an assortment of 'reed' types including Marsh Warbler, Sedge Warbler, Reed Warbler and both Cetti's and Savi's Warblers. It is quite possible to see a dozen species of warbler here in a morning! Bee-eaters and Hoopoes will now be passing through and we'll enjoy the various forms of Yellow Wagtail, especially the local Black-headed one. This is the best area in southwest Turkey to find White-throated Kingfisher, several pairs breeding in the area.

The Lake Köyceğiz basin is home to one of the rarest habitats in Turkey, indeed anywhere in the Mediterranean. Some 90% of the world's *Liquidambar orientalis* is found within a few kilometres of the lake's shores and almost all the rest is scattered along streams in the area. Lianas, notably the Silk Vine and *Vitis sylvestris*, trail through the trees. Middle Spotted Woodpecker and Lesser Spotted Woodpecker are common and so too are Green Woodpeckers. Migrant Common Redstarts and Collared, Pied and even Semi-collared Flycatchers stop-off in these woodlands. The lovely Small Red-eye Damselfly favours well-vegetated pools within the woodland, and Lesser Emperor and Violet Dropwing perch on iris leaves. Marshy pools and reedbeds next to the Liquidambar woods are home to Eastern Willow Spreadwing and the rare Turkish Red Damselfly *Ceriagrion georgifreyi*.

## Day 10

## **The Mountains – Ağla, Sandros Mountain & Eagle Mountain Lake**

Inland of Lake Köyceğiz the mountains rise steeply behind the town. A road winds swiftly up to the yayla (summer village) of Ağla situated nine hundred metres above sea level where a small fast-flowing stream drops from the bare limestone slopes above. The village is a delight set amongst a streamside woodland of Calabrian Pine and Oriental Plane trees. The magical toy-trumpet calls of Krüper's Nuthatch resonate through the trees and we'll also see Sombre Tit, Green Woodpeckers, Short-toed Treecreepers and maybe even White-backed Woodpeckers here. Southern Commas, Great Banded Graylings and Nettle-Tree Butterflies are among a number of butterflies on the wing. Spurred Helleborines and the lovely deep red-pink '*rubra*' form of Violet Limodores are common under the trees. The open slopes above the village are full of flowers and often have small flocks of both Ortolan Bunting and Cretzschmar's Bunting, these swirling up as a Long-legged Buzzard passes overhead.

Later we'll head up onto the highest, almost alpine areas of Sandros Mountain where we'll look for Black Woodpeckers, Goshawk and Krüper's Nuthatch around a small lake where snow may still be lying and *Colchicums*, *Merendera attica*, *Crocuses* and *Gageas* are in bloom.

### **Day 11**

#### **Hamitköy Marshes and Tepearası Liquidambar Forests**

This morning we'll again explore Hamitköy's marshes, seeing what's stopped overnight – every day is different and the selection of migrants always intriguing. Whinchat and Stonechats can be common, and various Wheatears too. We'll keep an eye out for passing Harriers, Marsh are reasonably frequent but all of the Western Palearctic harriers pass through this area.

After lunch on the lake shore we'll drive coastwards towards Dalyan, our base for the rest of the holiday. Colourful cliffs beset with Lycian Rock Tombs dominate this pleasant little town, nestled against a bend in the Dalyan (ancient Calbys) River. Dalyan could hardly have more diverse habitats. Within a few kilometres are reedbeds, lakes, beaches, limestone maquis, pine forests, globally important Liquidambar Forests, mountains and cliffs. Not surprising then that Dalyan is so rich in wildlife.

Close to Dalyan we'll explore more Liquidambar Forest. The trees have exquisitely shaped leaves and a very rough bark which in some places in the forests is still tapped for the sap which has been used as an insect repellent by the locals for centuries. Horseshoe Ophrys and Yellow-Wort grow along the track edges while Southern White Admirals and Southern Swallowtails are a common sight cruising up and down these tracks. Hawfinches, Golden Orioles, Rollers and Syrian Woodpeckers also make these emerald-green woodlands their home.

For the next four days we will be staying at the excellent Dalyan Resort by the river in Dalyan. Like most of Dalyan the hotel is single storey, a result of enlightened low-impact development regulations imposed two decades ago by the local authorities. The well-equipped rooms are very comfortable and are spread through the grounds.

The restaurant produces great fare, and there's a good-sized swimming pool and even a hamam or Turkish bath and sauna. The centre of Dalyan is a ten-minute stroll, and an excellent place for a bit of Turkish carpet shopping!

## **Day 12**

### **Sulungur Lake, Dalyan Beach & The Turtle Protection Site**

Dalyan means 'fishery' in Turkish and not surprisingly water plays an important part in local life. There is a maze of channels downstream from the small town and the huge Köyceğiz Lake upstream, both surrounded by reedbeds and marshes. At this time of year the wetlands are very rich in birdlife as there are plenty of migrants about. We shall see Little Egrets, Squacco Herons, Spoonbills, Pygmy Cormorants and Little Bitterns passing through as well as small groups of waders and terns. Today we'll start by heading down to the coast, with the possibility of Red-footed Falcons on the wires, White Storks in the air, or maybe a Great Spotted Cuckoo or two in the small trees separating the pomegranate orchards. Sulungur Lake itself doesn't hold much birdlife, maybe the odd egret or two, but it's the cliffs behind that offer us the chance of seeing Rollers 'rolling' and Rock Nuthatches building their nests.

Long-legged Buzzard and Short-toed Eagles drift overhead as we visit Dalyan's four-kilometre long beach. Loggerhead Turtles will be just beginning their nesting season so the Turtle protection project will be in full swing. They keep the beach closed from dusk until eight in the morning. However the Loggerhead Turtles are of course there and we can see them basking in waters just off Dalyan's gently shelving sandy beach. There's plenty of migrants about as well sometimes including large flocks of Yellow Wagtails.

## **Day 13**

### **Kaunos Ruins and Ortaca's Canyons & some serpentinite!**

A walk past the famous Lycian rock tombs takes us to the ancient ruins at Kaunos. Along the track we can find the spectacular Dragon Arum and both Holy Orchid and *Ophrys sicula*. Butterflies are abundant with Eastern Festoon and Scarce Swallowtail prominent among them. At the ruins we will see Red-rumped Swallows and Rock Nuthatches nesting in the old walls and Balkan Green Lizard and Agama Lizards amid the many flowers. The Thread Lacewing, *Nemoptera sinuata*, emerges among these ruins, looking something like a cross between a dragonfly and a butterfly with long-tailed cream and black wings. Spur-thighed Tortoises munch their way through a rich herbage of bellflowers, campions and boraginaceae allowed to grow amongst the rocks of ancient temples, flushing up butterflies such as Blue-spotted Hairstreak and Loew's Blue.

We'll head inland a little in the afternoon to a convoluted landscape of limestone gorges and gravelly serpentinite ridges. This is botanically exceptional with many unusual plants. Prime amongst them are the red goblets of *Tulipa undulatifolia* and the strange green flowered *Fritillaria bithynica*.

## **Day 14**

## **Köyceğiz Lake and Hot Springs**

We'll use one of Dalyan's many boats to explore the river system and Lake Köyceğiz, a wonderfully relaxing trip, and with plenty of birds; Purple Herons, Squacco Herons and Great Egrets, Whiskered Terns and White-winged Black Terns, Black-winged Stilts and Pygmy Cormorants. We'll see groups of Little Egrets and Glossy Ibis migrating through as well as a good scattering of Marsh Harriers. Lesser Emperor Dragonflies and Slender and Small Skimmers race by, or perch on the boat's rails. The loud yet somehow somnolent croaking of Great Reed Warblers is sometimes joined by an orchestra of Marsh Frogs. We'll also hope to see the Nile Soft-shelled Turtles – over a metre long with extraordinary leathery shells and tube noses.

There are many thermal springs near Dalyan. These range from pools of warm aquamarine water, through mud baths to a large mosque-like building where you can alternate between cold lake water outside, and almost scalding sulphurous water inside! There will be a chance to visit both the big mud baths and the sulphurous hot pools, perhaps followed by ice creams under the shade of olive and pistachio trees, or you can look for migrant birds in the trees as Egyptian Vultures and Alpine Swifts fly overhead. The trees are often loaded with migrant birds including Eastern Orphee Warblers, Blackcaps, Common Whitethroats and Olivaceous Warblers. Crakes are occasionally spotted by secluded pools. The beautiful Indigo Dropwing visits these pools too.

### **Day 15 Departure**

As our return flight isn't until the evening we'll have a chance to catch up on whatever has eluded us this morning, or to concentrate on whatever has most interested us. Maybe a trip down to the beach to look again for turtles and migrant birds, or perhaps a boat trip up the river and into Lake Köyceğiz. Maybe it'll be the rare and lovely dragonflies of the Liquidambar woodlands that will draw us for a final visit, or perhaps we'd prefer to just go and relax by the hot springs, before enjoying a final slap-up meal in one of the many very good restaurants in Dalyan.

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