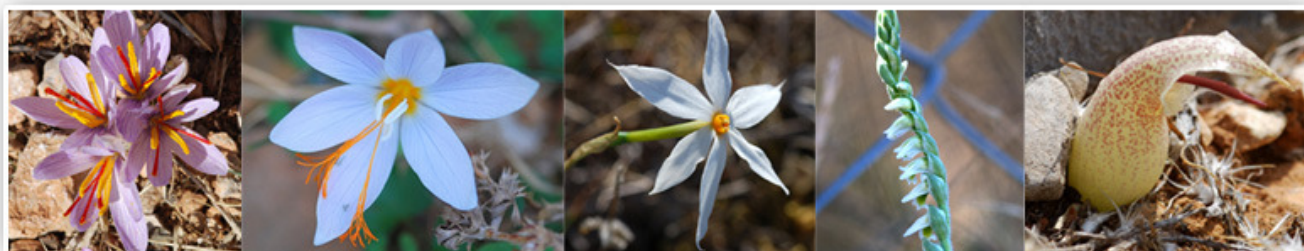


FLOWERS OF CRETE

AUTUMN FLOWERING BULBS TRIP 2010



Itinerary

Tuesday 5th October

Guests will be collected from the airport and taken to their accommodation to settle in. Accommodation is on a self-catering basis at The Olive Press at Kritsa www.olivepress.centerall.com. Evening welcome to Elounda 'get together' at The Lotus Eaters Restaurant, Elounda. <http://www.lotus-eaters.com>

Wednesday 6th October

After a not too early breakfast, we get together to take a short drive high into the mountains above Aghios Nikolaos to the Katharo Plateau, stopping on the way at certain spots where we are sure to find something of interest. Look out for colchicum and crocus, especially the rare endemic *C. oreocreticus* once we reach the plateau. A leisurely lunch can be taken at Zerbas taverna, where there is a chance to look through Steve Lenton's catalogue of The Flowers of Katharo and to talk to Flowers of Crete supporter Yiannis, who has lived here all his life. Expect to find *Sternbergia greuteriana*, *Colchicum cretense*, *Crocus oreocreticus*, *Scilla autumnalis*.

Thursday 7th October

Milatos, Mohos and Lassithi Plateau – An earlier start and a slightly longer drive will take us along the coast to Milatos to find the rare *Colchicum cupanii*, *Crocus tournefortii* and many, many other delightful flowering bulbs. Then we turn inland and climb to the charming mountain village of Mohos, stopping to admire *Sternbergia*, crocus, colchicum and narcissus on the way. We will spend time on the Lassithi plateau for botanising, photography and maybe some sketching and take a slight detour to the foot of Karfi before returning to base for the evening. Expect to find *Colchicum cupanii*, *Crocus boryi*, *Crocus laevigatus*.

Friday 8th October

Plaka and North Coast – Another short drive will take us to the famous fishing village of Plaka, with stunning views across the water to Spinalonga Island, setting for Victoria Hislop's best selling novel, *The Island*. In the hills above Elounda there are many wonderful flowers to be found: Further round the

coast we will visit a little known gorge where, depending on the autumn rains, we should find *Narcissus tazetta* and two varieties of *Biarum*. Expect to find *Narcissus serotinus*, *Narcissus tazetta*, *Biarum davisii* sps. *Davisii*, *Crocus tournefortii*. *Spiranthes spiralis*.

Saturday 9th October

Today we will drive to the eastern tip of Crete to visit Cavo Sidero and the Palm Forest of Vai. The flora of this part of the island is different from anything we have yet seen and we may be lucky enough to find some elusive crocus amongst many other wonderful discoveries. On the way back we will stop in Mochlos to take dinner overlooking the island of Psira, site of a Minoan lighthouse and archaeological digs. The fish restaurants here are famous for their fish stews. A chance to find *Arisarum vulgare*, *Colchicum macrophyllum*, *Sternbergia sicula*.

Sunday 10th October

A chance to draw breath and relax, taking time to explore the villages of Pano Elounda or Kritsa. Transport will be available for those wishing to visit Aghios Nikolaos.

Monday 11th October

A visit to the east of the island would not be complete without a trip to Orino and Thripti Mountains. These areas are renowned for their orchids in spring, but in autumn they are bright with countless flowers, including *Crocus*, *Colchicum* and *Sternbergia*. Expect to find *Sternbergia lutea*, *Colchicum pusillum*, *Allium tardans*.

Tuesday 12th October

After breakfast we will leave our accommodation to travel west to the stunningly beautiful Rouvas Gorge, where the flora changes once more and there are new discoveries to be made. We will stay overnight in simple accommodation in Plakias, where we will be given a warm welcome.

Wednesday 13th October

From Plakias we will travel the short distance to Spili. This picturesque village is famous throughout the world for its flowers and walks. There is plenty to do and see, so today is a free day with a chance to get together in the evening at one of the wonderful traditional tavernas. We will be staying at the basic but comfortable Green Hotel in the centre of the village, which despite its central location, is quiet and restful. Expect to find *Cyclamen graecum*, *Crocus cartwrightianus*.

Thursday 14th October

Climbing into the mountains above Spili we will explore the wonderful meadows looking for new species and admiring the superb scenery. Lunch will be taken at a traditional taverna which specialises in Cretan products based on the cherries for which the area is famous. The sweet cheese pies with cherry syrup have to be tasted to be believed. The surrounding forests are rich with wildlife and flora. We will leave Spili mid afternoon to take a drive

into the White Mountains and to find our accommodation, which will be in 'rent room' accommodation in one of the lovely tavernas of the area.

Friday 15th October

After an early breakfast, we will continue to travel west through the White Mountains, stopping in the leafy village of Elos, famous for its chestnut festival and broad leafed forests for lunch. As we travel we will stop from time to time to botanize and to enjoy the ever changing scenery. We will spend the night at the world famous Milia Eco Village www.milia.gr/english.html - an inspired and award winning renovation of a previously deserted village set high in the mountains in an idyllic setting. We will share a traditional meal together in the wonderfully atmospheric restaurant. Expect to find the endemic *Cyclamen confusum*, formerly *C. hederifolium* ssp *confusum*. Plus many examples of *Sternbergia*, *Crocus* and *Colchicum*.

Saturday 16th October

Leaving the mountains, we will drive south along the west coast to the furthest tip, stopping at the fabulous Elafonissi beach, home to many endemic species. There will be time for many stops to botanize on the journey to and from Elafonissi.

Sunday 17th October

From Milia we will drive to the relative sophistication of the Venetian Old Town of Hania, where we will stay at the family run Hotel Amphora www.amphora.gr/ overlooking the Venetian lighthouse and the Turkish Mosque. A leisurely drive, we will have many stops to find *Cyclamen hederifolium* ssp. *confusum*, now re-classified as a Cretan endemic *Cyclamen confusum* – the only endemic Cretan cyclamen to bloom in autumn. Dinner will be taken at Tamam one of the liveliest and delicious places to eat on Crete.

Monday 18th October

A short drive from Hania will take us to Kolymbari and the Rhodopou peninsula – a must for any botanist during the autumn months. We can expect to see *Cyclamen graecum* ssp *graecum* and ssp *candicum*, *Crocus cartwrightianus* and many *Colchicum* and *Sternbergia*. The last night will be spent together at the quirky Well of the Turk restaurant, which is one of the best and most interesting restaurants in Hania Old Town. A second night at Amphora Hotel.

Tuesday 19th October

After a 'Farewell' breakfast at the hotel, guests will depart for the airport – either Hania or Heraklion. Hania airport is approximately 30 mins from the hotel. Heraklion airport is around 2 ½ hours from Hania.

INFORMATION

Cost of the 2 week holiday is **£1,200**. In some cases there will be a small supplement for single room occupancy. The cost of the holiday includes all guide accompanied trips and transfers, and accommodation, including breakfast and lunch. It does not include flights and evening meals or independently ordered drinks, telephone calls charged to rooms, or travel insurance. A group discount may be available for groups consisting of over 10 people. In some cases, it is possible to book only one of the two weeks and all trips are subject to the organisers obtaining a minimum of three bookings.