

FLOWERS OF CRETE

SPRING FLOWER FINDING TRIP

MARCH/APRIL 2011



Itinerary

Week One

Tuesday, 24th March

Guests will be met at Hania airport, before taking the scenic drive south-east to the award winning eco-village of Milia, where we will be spending two nights. This beautifully restored traditional village, set high in the mountains, is a haven of peace and tranquility. Once guests have settled in to their comfortable rooms, we will meet together in the village's taverna, for our evening meal. A great opportunity to discuss the trip and to get to know each other! <http://www.milia.gr/english.html>

Wednesday, 25th March

After breakfast at Milia, we will head south west to the remote beaches of Elafonisi and beyond, where we will discover many unusual and endemic species. On our journey back we will take short detours to the Monastery of Panagia Chrissoslalitissa to see the endemic palms, *P. theophrasti* and to the sandy beaches of Falasarna to look for the beautiful *Tulipa goulimy*. We will spend our second night at Milia.

Thursday, 26th March

Today will take a short drive to the north east, where we will explore the fertile areas around Topolia and the Deliana Gorge. This area is

famous for its cyclamen and broad-leafed woodlands. Our final night at Milia. Expect to find *O. heldreichii*, *O. episcopalis*, *O. lacteal*, *O. anatolica*.

Friday, 27th March

This morning we will be leaving Milia for the breathtaking drive to the Omalos Plateau and the head of the Samaria Gorge. After a time exploring the plateau we will be heading higher into the mountains on a walk to the Mountain Refuge of Kallergi, where we will be spending the night. (Guests unable to make the walk can be taken to the refuge by jeep) The scenery, flora and fauna here are truly spectacular and, although the refuge is basic, the experience it offers is unforgettable. We will be joined on this trip by members of the local mountaineering club www.eoshanion.gr who know the area well and can guide visitors to the most interesting and fascinating sites. This day has been designed for all abilities, from those who prefer to be driven, to those who want to explore the area on foot. Dinner will be provided at the refuge for both our guests and the mountaineers, so this evening is a unique opportunity to talk to local men and women who have wide and specialized knowledge. For those who feel that this day may be too 'adventurous', arrangements can be made for them to spend an extra day and night at Niriis Apartments near Hania. There is plenty there to see and do with wide sandy beaches to explore for native flora.

Saturday, 28th March

After a basic breakfast at the refuge, we will drive down to the coast, stopping for flower and scenery breaks, arriving at the small and quiet resort of Aghios Apostoli. Here we will stay at the family apartments at Hotel Niriis – www.niriis-hotel.gr This will be our base for exploring the White Mountains. After settling in, we will be taking a wonderful drive through secluded gorges and stunning vistas to the superb traditional taverna at Dracona. Wild flowers abound at this time of the year and there will be many opportunities to stop and explore.

Sunday, 29th March

Today is a free day, with time for exploring the sea shore or for travelling into Hania to visit the Venetian Harbour and to experience the unique atmosphere of this very special city.

Monday, 30th March

A full day today, with a visit to the Orthodox Academy of Kolymbari to meet with the Director of the New Museum of Cretan Flora and Botanic Gardens. After coffee at the Academy, we will drive onto the Rhodopou peninsula to spend the day botanizing and photographing. For those interested in painting and drawing, there will be an opportunity to record aspects of their visit in this amazing environment.

Tuesday, 31st March

For those leaving today, transport will be on hand to take them to Hania airport. For those booked for a second week, we will drive east to Spili, one of the most famous of orchid finding sites on the island. After settling into the comfortable and quiet Green Hotel, we will take a short drive to some of the orchid meadows above the town. Dinner will be taken at one of the many traditional tavernas in this picturesque village. Guests can expect to find many ophrys and orchids and perhaps, another of Crete's rare tulips, *Tulipa doerfleri*.

Wednesday, 1st April

A longer drive today will take us off road to the head of the Rouvas Gorge and its forests. This area is full of delightful views and a wealth of wild flowers. The area around the gorge is one of the few protected sites on the island, as it is home to many rare and beautiful orchids. A second night at the Green Hotel.

Thursday, 2nd April

From Spili, we will drive further east to the Aghios Nikolaos area with guests staying at the Olive Press Apartments in Kritsa. This beautifully restored old oil press is very welcoming and is within walking distance of the shops, restaurants and bars of the traditional village of Kritsa www.olivepress.centerall.com

En route there will be several stops at flora 'hot spots' for photography and botanizing, including a remote area around Mount Oxa where a number of species of orchid and ophrys can be found. We will also be visiting Plaka and Vrouhas to see a spectacular array of species, including Gortys ophrys, Butterfly orchids in their hundreds, Bee ophrys and many, many more. The views over Spinalonga islands are superb and the day will finish with a visit to one of the beach tavernas in Plaka for meze and raki. The taverna overlooks Spinalonga Island, setting for Victoria Hislop's best selling novel 'The Island'. Expect to

find *Ophrys cretica* ssp. *bicornuta*, *Ophrys creberrima*, *Ophrys phraganae*, *Orchis papilionacea* ssp. *heroica*, amongst many others.

Friday, 3rd April

From Kritsa we will be traveling further east to the mountains around Kavousi. This area of Thripti is also famous as one of the top flower finding sites in the east of the island. Combined with sensational views and lunch at a superb traditional taverna, this is definitely a day for finding a wide range of flowers and orchids. A second night at Kritsa.

Saturday, 4th April

After a gentle drive into the mountains we will arrive on the Katharo Plateau to experience wonderful and breathtaking views of the snow covered mountains and winding crystal streams. The flowers of the Katharo are stunning and besides orchids, we may be lucky enough to find wild tulips and fritillaries. Here there are meadows of the rare and endemic *Crocus sieberii* and *Scilla nana*. In this clear environment flowers abound and there will be plenty to see. Lunch will be taken at Yannis' taverna. Guests will have the opportunity to talk about his life and his love of nature. Yannis has lived in these mountains all his life. As a boy Yannis helped his father, who worked as a charcoal burner in the forests above Kritsa. This is a chance to experience and enjoy the reality of life on the island. Expect to find *Orchis lactea*, *Arum creticum*, *Cyclamen creticum*, *Fritillaria messanensis*, *Scilla nana* - amongst many other species. Third night at Kritsa.

Sunday, 5th April

From Kritsa we will travel over the mountains to the south coast. This road has some superb orchid sites and there will be an opportunity to find less common species, such as *O. fleischmanii*. On the descent to the south coast, we will visit the orchid rich areas around Kalamafka. We will take a late lunch on the beach in a tiny fishing village, overlooking the Libyan Sea. Fourth night at Kritsa.

Monday, 6th April

Another trip to the south coast, this time to the most southerly town in Europe, Ierapetra. We will spend an hour or so on the beach here botanizing and photographing, before heading to the south slopes of Kavousi and the orchid forests and meadows of Orino. The habitat

here is quite different and provides the opportunity to find a variety of orchids, ophrys and endemic species.

Tuesday, 7th April

The last day of the trip and a get-together over breakfast to share experiences and to swop contact details. Guests will be taken to Heraklion airport for their departure. (Please note guests booking for two weeks should book to Hania airport and from Heraklion airport)

Please Note:

Places are limited to a maximum of 9, so please book early to avoid disappointment.

Please contact Julia for further information.

Cost of first week: €1,100

Cost of second week: €950

Cost for two week holiday: €2,000

(A single supplement may apply - please check for further information)

Cost of holiday includes: bed & breakfast accommodation in character and traditional hotels and apartments, lunch, all travel costs on the island, including airport transfers, all trips accompanied by Julia Jones, Founder and President of 'Flowers of Crete'; information and advice, including flower identification. Welcome drink and farewell breakfast/coffee and cakes.

The cost of the holiday does not include international flights, dinner, international telephone calls from your hotel or beverages other than tea or coffee. Guests are advised to obtain their own travel insurance before their arrival.

The organisers reserve the right to change this itinerary depending on external circumstances, which are beyond their control.