

## Anatolia – A tour for the FRBGE

Anatolia's incredible ancient heritage and Turkey's vibrant modern culture will offer contrasting poles on which to hang a tapestry of brilliant flowers, and throughout, sublime landscapes.



**The Anatolian Heartland      May 12 – May 23      £2995 per person. Single Supplement £280**

We'll see a riotous show of colourful flowers amid Cappadocia's unique landscapes before moving to eastern edge of Anatolia to enjoy the world's most beautiful Irises. Besides these there are lovely tulips, fritillarias, orchids and a whole host of gorgeous blooms set against a memorable backdrop of Eastern Turkey's Lake Van the turquoise waters surrounded by immense snow-capped peaks. For the finale we return westwards to shores of the Sea of Marmora and green Yalova's special gardens.



## Itinerary

### Day 1 May 12<sup>th</sup>     Edinburgh to Kayseri

Our morning flight with Turkish Airlines takes us via Istanbul to the Central Anatolia city of Kayseri situated at the foot of 13,000 foot Erciyes Volcano, ancient Mount Argaeus. It'll be dark by the time we arrive, but the imposing snow-capped cone will still dominate the landscape as we head west for hardly more than an hour to our lovely hotel situated in the heart of Cappadocia's renowned landscapes.

Overnight Goreme Inn Hotel, Goreme



### Days 2 & 3 May 13<sup>th</sup> & 14<sup>th</sup>     Cappadocia

The marly steppe that erodes from Cappadocia's weird and wonderful landforms hosts all manner of colourful flowers: purple Gladioli, deep blue Bellevalias, chunky *Arnebia densiflora* and vibrant blue and pink Moltkia. There are red and orange poppies, some truly gorgeous *Onobrychis* species, brilliant blue cornflowers, blue fenugreeks, the very fine *Erysimum thrysoides* and swathes of pink and red *Wiedemannia orientalis*. Rollers, Bee-eaters, Black-headed Buntings and Hoopoes are the common birds here. We'll spend plenty of time exploring Cappadocia's famed landscapes and archaeological sites enjoying the scenery, culture and wildlife in equal measure. We'll visit the fabulous Bağlıdere Valley and the Outdoor Museum where we'll spend time wandering amongst the naturally sculptured pinnacles of rock in which people have hollowed dwellings for thousands of years. We'll also visit the underground city of Derinkuyu. Nearby we'll see immaculate Finsch's Wheatears and Crimson-winged Finches as well as the rather fantastical *Astragalus christianus* with its strange erect branched flowering heads. An afternoon spent in the Red Valley will quite literally illuminate us, for as the sun lowers in the sky the soils glow crimson in a magical landscape.



Under the shadow of the still snow-capped pinnacles of the Aladağ, the highest of the Taurean ranges, we'll find massed blue *Scilla sibirica taurica* and photograph the tubby yellow bells of *Fritillaria aurea* here in a wonderful mix of colours and shapes as they hybridise freely with *Fritillaria pinardii*. Radde's Accentors and Snowfinches are both very common and Ibex may be spotted on the high crags. Strange red-flowered *Biebersteiniana orphanidis* blooms with *Corydalis taurica* and *erdellii*, apricot and plum *Iris sari* and lovely *Muscari azureum*. The slopes of Erciyes volcano are dotted with pink *Colchicum*

*szovitsii* and golden *Crocus sieheanus* and yet another Iris, purple-lined yellow *Iris schachtii*.

Overnights Goreme Inn Hotel, Goreme

#### **Days 4 – 7 May 15<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup>      Lake Van**

We'll head north at breakfast time to Ankara Airport and thence a flight to the eastern borders of Anatolia.

Surrounded by snow-clad mountains beautiful Lake Van lies more than a mile above sea level. Kurdish herders and their families will be shearing their sheep, the women resplendent in their traditional costumes, and in an extinct volcano crater the black tented encampments of Bedouin nomads overlook a deep blue lake.



All this provides a marvellous backdrop for a breathtaking show of flowers. Perhaps a million powder-blue *Puschkinias* bloom all the way up the Karabet Pass and everywhere are meadows covered in a pink haze of Orchids and Primulas. Seven of the world's most beautiful Iris species can be seen in profusion. The amazingly large and elegant white and deep maroon flowers of *Iris iberica elegantissima* are only

bettered by the inky-blue veined standards and velvety orchid-like falls of rare *Iris paradoxa*. Deep cerise *Merendera kurdica*, bright mauve-pink *Tulipa humilis*, yellow, green, maroon or butterscotch Fritillarias and scarlet *Phelypaeas* make for an extraordinarily colourful show. Bee-eaters, Rollers and Hoopoes continue the colourful theme - these are some of Van's commonest birds!

Dwarf oak woodland shelters Red-backed and Masked Shrikes and a variety of butterflies including both Eastern and Grüner's Orange-tips and the intricately-patterned festoon *Zerynthia deyrollei*. The caterpillars of the festoon feed on *Aristolochia bottae* which is now in flower along with deliciously fragrant *Daphne oleoides kurdica* and bright pink-red *Lathyrus roseus*. The impressive blooms of *Paeonia mascula* flower with Kotschy's Helleborine, Komper's Orchid, *Dactylorhiza umbrosa*, *Orchis pseudolaxiflora*, yellow *Pedicularis comosa* and pink *Polygala major* make a fine show in damp roadside meadows.



On high passes we shall see Radde's Accentors and Imperial Eagles whilst by the lake's shore are flocks of Flamingoes and courting White-headed Ducks. The wonderful clarity of light makes this an excellent holiday for the photographer, not only for the flowers and landscapes but also some fine cultural sites such as the ancient Urartian citadel upon the 'Rock of Van' and the 'Tolkienesque' Kurdish Fortress at Hoşap, both in fantastic settings.

On the Güzeldere Pass we'll find *Iris pseudocaucasica* mixing with both white and the more common yellow form of recently named *Tulipa koyuncii* and with them blue *Bellevalia pycnantha* and the extremely rare *Bellevalia rixii*, found only here. Lemon-flowered stemless *Centaurea vanensis* grows on screes also inhabited by squat patches of yellow and red-eyed *Androsace villosa*. Queen of Spain and Glanville Fritillaries fly amongst beautiful *Gentiana verna* and *Corydalis narini*. Steppe near to Van has the lovely deep purple flowers of *Iris barnumae* blooming with both *Bellevalia longistyla* and *Bellevalia fominii*. Damp steppe beyond Erçek lake stretches into the distance covered in a pink haze from literally millions of *Orchis pseudolaxiflora*, yet another extraordinary botanical sight in a region thick with them!

Overnights Ronesans Hotel, Van

## **Day 8 May 19<sup>th</sup> Yalova: Karaca Arboretum**

A morning flight takes us back to Turkey's greatest city, Istanbul. We'll fly into Sabiha Gökçen Airport well into the Asian side of this huge metropolis and it won't take long to divest ourselves of the city and cross the bridge at the head of Sea of Marmara to the pleasant town of Yalova, famous for its hot springs and its green environment.

After lunch by the Marmara's shore we'll visit the first of two lovely and important gardens close to the town. Turkish businessman Hayrettin Karaca has since 1980 been populating the impressive Karaca Arboretum with trees and shrubs from around world. The thirteen and a half acres is a treasure-trove of amazing plants.



Overnight Hotel in Yalova

## **Days 9 May 20<sup>th</sup> Istanbul: Nezahat Gökyiğit Botanik Bahçe & Yalova**

We'll spend a morning at Riccardo Disperati's private nursery and garden design centre.

We'll visit the unique Topkapi Palace, an enormous complex that was the imperial residence of the Ottomans for almost four hundred years. Before heading to the very soul of Istanbul itself, the Sultanahmet where we'll settle into our cozy little hotel.



Overnight Turcoman Hotel, Sultanahmet, Istanbul

## **Day 10 May 21<sup>st</sup> Istanbul: Nezahat Gökyiğit Botanik Bahçe & City Tour**

In its Vision Statement the Nezahat Gökyiğit Botanik Bahçe aims high – it wants to become as famous as the legendary “Hanging Gardens of Babylon”. The garden was only began in 1995 in the unpromising surroundings of one of Istanbul’s largest and busiest motorway intersections. But thanks to the vision and energy of Professor Adil Güner, one of the Turkey’s very best botanists, the garden has already gone a long way to achieving its aims. Over 50,000 trees and shrubs have been planted in



this oasis of calm. The 32 hectares house a quite wonderful array of plants concentrating on Turkey’s very many endemic plants, especially some of the most beautiful of the country’s bulbs and it has one of the continent’s most important collections of oaks too. It is a hotbed of research and very many new species have been described by botanists working with Adil.

After a morning at the NBGG we’ll continue our exploration of Istanbul in earnest. It is a city chock-full of cultural heritage – ancient and modern. This afternoon we’ll visit the Dolmabahçe Palace and the Galata Tower as well as the Istiklal Caddesi, an elegant 1.4km pedestrian street and one of the most famous avenues in Turkey with all manner of interesting shops.

Overnight Turcoman Hotel, Sultanahmet, Istanbul

## **Day 11 May 22<sup>nd</sup> Istanbul’s Cultural Heritage**

Sitting side by side on the shores of the Bosphorus lie two beautiful monuments to Istanbul’s illustrious past, indeed the Blue Mosque itself is still very much in use. Just a few hundred metres away is the Hagi Sophia Mosque a building whose sheer elegance of design is mind-boggling. It was built in 537 so has seen an awful lot of changes in its time! We’ll have a chance to explore the famous spice market that lines little streets above the Golden Horn, and a visit to the Grand Bazaar will sharpen out haggling skills.

In the afternoon we’ll enjoy a meal at one of Istanbul’s famous restaurants before heading out to the quiet hills west of the airport to our pleasant little hotel overlooking the wooded valleys that lead down to the Black Sea

Overnight Durusu Club Hotel, Istanbul

## **Day 12 May 23<sup>rd</sup> Departure**

A morning flight takes us directly back to Edinburgh.

The price of this Holiday Edinburgh to Edinburgh is £2995 per person. Istanbul to Istanbul is £2695 per person. The single supplement is £280 per person. The deposit is £300 per person.

## **Leaders**

Ian Green and Yasemin Konuralp. Ian Green is the co-founder of Greentours and since graduating in Ecology, has led over one hundred and eighty holidays in various fields of natural history, and has organised many, many more. This has taken him to countries all over the world and has fine-tuned his knowledge of what it takes to lead a successful holiday. Although most holidays 'pick' their own leaders, Ian always has the difficult job of admitting that he can't lead all Greentours' holidays each year! Ian's interests and knowledge extend to most areas of the natural world. He is equally happy among the spring bulbs and alpine flowers of the Middle-eastern mountains, and the biodiverse forests, savannahs and mountains of Asia, Africa and the Neotropics and the great variety of mammals, birds and butterflies therein. Yasemin Konuralp studied music in a University in Ankara though much of her time there was spent climbing many of the highest mountains in Turkey. After teaching music for eight years she decided that she loved the mountains and the flowers more and has since dedicated her time to these twin passions working as a freelance professional tour guide. She enjoys gardening, photography and spending her time searching for wildflowers particularly in the mountains of Turkey. Her first book "Wildflowers of Turkey I - Bulbous Plants" was published in April 2013.

## **Included in the Price**

All flights. Transport, accommodation and all meals in Turkey. Services of the leaders.

## **Excluded from the Price**

Drinks, tips, and items of a personal nature, including insurance, are not included.

## **Walking**

Relaxed and easy. Up to two or three miles a day and always at a slow pace.

## **Accommodation**

We start with three nights at the excellent Goreme Inn Hotel. Set close to the centre of Göreme, in the heart of Cappadocia, the rooms are beautifully made and have the usual modern amenities. In Van we've four nights at the excellent modern Rönesans Hotel in Van. This is a four star hotel with lovely rooms and in an excellent position for us to enjoy Van's tea gardens in the evenings! Moving back west to the Istanbul region we'll have a night in a good quality hotel in Yalova before moving to the heart of Istanbul and the Sultanahmet where we'll stay for two nights in the

lovely Turcoman Hotel which overlooks the fabulous Blue Mosque. Our last night will be spent in the Durusu Club Hotel which lies in quiet countryside well outside the city and just fifteen minutes from Istanbul Airport. All rooms on this holiday have en suite WCs and showers/baths.

If you would like to ask about any aspect of this holiday, please call 01298 83563 or email us at [enquiries@greentours.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@greentours.co.uk)