



PETEN TRAVELS

TRAVEL BEYOND THE ORDINARY

AN ADVENTURE OF ORCHIDS & WILD FLOWERS

(9 nights, 10 days)



A wealth of orchids and flowers in the lakes and mountains of Northern Turkey

This tour provides a unique opportunity to explore rural Turkey in search of orchids and wild flowers. Travelling east out of Istanbul the tour visits Lake Abant, a freshwater lake set high in the mountains. This whole area is renowned for its flora and fauna. Next destination is colourful Safranbolu, the home of the saffron crocus, and a living museum. After this the tour moves on to the village of Daday before reaching its final destination at Kastamonu. Breathtaking flower filled meadows paint the countryside along the way with vivid splashes of colour. Orchids are found in the woods, in the meadows and often by the roadside. Ancient villages and countryside traditions encountered almost daily enrich the tour leaving indelible memories to take home.

Brian and Eileen lived in Turkey for many months while researching Landscapes walking guides for Sunflower Books. They came to love the Turkish way of life and have returned many times since. Both are very experienced tour guides and Brian a field botanist. Brian & Eileen have a special knowledge of the orchid flora.

Day 1 Istanbul

Special category (4-star) hotel

Guests are met by a Peten Travels staff member at Atatürk Airport and are then taken to the hotel and assisted through check-in. Group participants meet each other and staff with a welcome drink before sitting down to dinner. **(D)**

Day 2 Abant

Büyük Abant Hotel (5-star)

After enjoying our breakfast we leave the city for the countryside, driving 275 kilometers (170 miles) eastwards to densely forested Bolu (approximately half way between Istanbul and Ankara) and then travel on 55 kilometers southwest to Lake Abant (alt. 1500 meters). On the way we stop at Gölköy to see our first orchids, the delightful bee orchid, *Ophrys apifera* and the tall elegant *Cephalanthera damasonium*. Amongst the flowers here we often find one of the love-in-a-mist species, *Nigella elata*. Lake Abant and its environs are lush and beautiful and we appreciate the high quality accommodation along its shores. We check into our hotel and enjoy our lake view rooms before meeting again for dinner. (B, L, D)

Day 3 Abant

Büyük Abant Hotel (5-star)

Lake Abant is famous for its flora and natural surroundings. We spend the day exploring the area around the lake with a side trip over the hills to the nearby village of Mudurnu. There is a curious *Arum euxinum* to see as well as *Fritillaria pontica*, *Muscari armeniacum*, a newly discovered allium, *Allium nerimanianum*, with an unusual fragrant smell and orchids including the saprophytic *Limadorum abortivum* and perhaps one or more dactylorhiza species. (B, L, D)

Day 4 Safranbolu

Gülevi (Rose Mansion)

After enjoying a breakfast eaten in an area of pristine and robust air, we continue our journey into the heart of the Black Sea Mountains to reach **Safranbolu**. On the way the bus is called to a halt whenever we see a meadow glowing with flowers or a promising habitat. We stop at **Bulak village** before we check into the Rose Mansion, one of the finest of the old Turkish houses of Safranbolu. Safranbolu derives its fame from the saffron crocus, *Crocus sativus*, which is grown here on a massive scale. It is also a museum-town with some of the most beautiful surviving examples of traditional Turkish civil architecture. Wandering its narrow streets in the afternoon, expect to see strings of orchid corms hanging outside certain shops. These dried corms are used to make salep, a centuries old traditional drink believed to have powerful properties as an aphrodisiac. The practice of collecting wild orchids is now banned. (B, L, D)

Day 5 Daday

İksir Resort (4-star)

Leaving Safranbolu, we head for the large village of Daday for our next two nights. It is not unusual along this route to see fields glowing vibrant red with the Mediterranean poppy, *Papaver rhoeas*, or subtly blue from *Consolida orientalis* and every such field brings the bus to an instant stop for photographs. Lunch in Daday is usually taken at its famous Pide saloon where the pides are so enormous many settle for half portions! This is a great area for orchids so the afternoon will be spent searching the local meadows where we can hope to find the long-horned bee orchid, *Ophrys oestifera*, *Orchis tridentata*, *O. coriophora*, *Cephalanthera rubra*, the frog orchid, *Coeloglossum viride* and others. (B, L, D)

Day 6 Daday

İksir Resort (4-star)

From Daday we enjoy an excursion northwards to visit Ballıdağ, the “Honey Mountain”, on the way to Azdavay and Pınarbaşı before circling back to Daday. This whole area is good for flowers and here we might find the butterfly orchid, *Platanthera chlorantha*, along with other eye-catching species. Look out for *Primula vulgaris* up the mountain, gladiolus in the field, the paradise lilly, *Anthericum liliago* or the curious *Dictamnus albus*, sometimes called the burning bush because the whole plant is covered with a flammable substance with a fragrant smell. One of the wild roses of this area is the elegant *Rosa pimpinellifolia*. (B, L, D)

Day 7 Kastamonu

Uğurlu Konaklari (special category hotel, renovated mansion)

Leaving our hotel after breakfast we make our way to Kastamonu. On the way there will be a stop at **Kasabaköy** to visit the wooden **Mosque of Mahmut Bey**, an altogether unlikely masterpiece for this out-of-the way rural backwater. It was built in 1366 by an otherwise unknown Mahmut Bey. Amazingly, no nails were used in the construction. The village itself is an old village with many houses built in the traditional way from wood and adobe bricks. Amongst the meadow flowers the tragopogons, known as goats beard or Johnny go to bed by noon, has a number of representatives in Turkey and one we often encounter is *Tragopogon coloratus* but there will be others.

We plan to take lunch in Kastamonu, check in to our hotel for a two night stop then visit the places of interest in the town, the castle and the clock tower, and perhaps take in some shopping. (B, L, D)

Day 8 Kastamonu

Uğurlu Konaklari

After breakfast we set out for Ilgaz Mountain which is used as a ski resort in winter. Here there is a whole wealth of new flowers found while wandering along the high level tracks, including *Primula auriculata*, the pale yellow orchid of high pastures, *Orchis pallens*, *Fritillaria pinardii*, *Orchis purpurea*, *Iris kerneriana*, *Gentiana verna sp pontica* and *Corydalis solida*. Much of the day will be spent enjoying the high mountain but there will be stops en-route whenever the flowers demand it.

(B, L, D)

Day 9 Istanbul

Special category (4-star) hotel

We take the TK 2737 flight from Kastamonu departing at 11:55 and arrive at 13:05 Istanbul

Once back to our hotel we prepare for our farewell dinner to be held at an exclusive restaurant. (B, Farewell dinner)

Day 10 Return flight

All guests are transferred to Istanbul Atatürk International Airport to meet their return connections. (B)

IMPORTANT NOTE: Picking or collecting the natural *Orchidaceae* is strictly prohibited.

Tour price

€3450 Euro per person based on double occupancy (twin /double bed)
€480 Euro single room supplement

What is included in this price?

- Specialists leadership and local tour guide
- Accommodation and meals as indicated in the itinerary (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner)
- Admission fees to all national parks
- All ground transportation by a/c, modern mini / midi bus with fridge, reclining seats, wide windows.
- Individual arrival and departure airport transfers
- Meticulously prepared tour folder with maps and information to help participant get the most from the tour
- Domestic flight fare from Sinop to Istanbul
- Parking fares, tolled highways, local taxes
- Gratuities to hotel& restaurant, driver, guide and baggage handling
- Entrance fees to all sites in Istanbul

What's not included?

- International return air travel
- Insurance of any kind
- Excess baggage charges, airport taxes, passport or visa fees.
- Personal expenses such as beverages, laundry, room service, communication charges...

Because of the unpredictable nature of the weather and the flower season, the itinerary for this holiday will be flexible to allow us to react to local conditions. We will however make time to visit all the major habitats in the locality. Lunch will be a mixture of village houses, picnic lunches and small town restaurants again, depending on weather conditions. Many of the excursions will involve walking, often uphill, so a walking fitness of 6/7 miles daily is recommended.

Peten Travels reserves the right to change hotel accommodations if required. Please note that any changes are usually UPGRADES and are also at NO additional cost. Also domestic flight is subject to change.

AN ISTANBUL EXTENSION TOUR TO PRECEDE THIS TOUR IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST.