



LESVOS: Orchid & Wildflower extension

April 23 – April 26, 2026



Our wonderful Sunrise Birding group at Antissa windmill

Lesvos Spring Migration Magic Orchid & Wildflower tour extension- 2026

23rd April – 26th April

TOUR SUMMARY:

Preceding our *Lesvos Spring Migration Magic* tour and led by Paul Manning, the **Lesvos Orchid & Wildflower Extension** took us into the beautiful mountains of the island's Olympus range. Here, mountain streams wind through terraced fields of ancient olive groves, with an understory bursting with wildflowers. We also explored the more arid western side of the island, where highly specific habitats provide the ideal conditions for Yellow Rhododendron and the endemic Lesvos Bee Orchid.

Day 1

We began by winding our way into the Calabrian pine forests in the centre of the island, between Gera Bay and Kalloni Bay. Along the way, we stopped to admire a Spurred Helleborine growing among a stand of Violet Limodore.

Continuing upwards, we circled the western side of Mount Olympus towards Akraasi and Megalochori, pausing at the Ampeliko waterfall. Here, the geology changes dramatically, the ophiolite strata (home to Lesvos Alyssum) gives way abruptly to limestone-rich terrain. As if cut by a knife, the Calabrian Pine forest ends, replaced by hillsides of olive groves and oak woodland and we were soon admiring Cemetery Iris and a variety of orchids, including Pyramidal, Four-spotted, Reinhold's, and the amusingly named Naked Man orchid, alongside numerous species of Greek chamomile.

Ice creams were a welcome treat enroute to our lunch stop, overlooking the orange terracotta roofs of the small mountain town of Agiassos. From there, we climbed higher, where Aegean Tulips awaited. Nearby, we found Pontic Fritillary and a bank of Balkan Peonies just coming into flower.

Along the tracks, we encountered Green-winged and Provence Orchids, as well as Nodding Star-of-Bethlehem, Oriental Arum, and the large, brilliant yellow blooms of Leopard's Bane swaying in dappled light.

Day 2

The western landscape of the island is shaped by ancient, now-extinct volcanoes, slowly eroded over time. Vast pyroclastic flows within the UNESCO Petrified Forest Geopark are now covered in Spiny Burnet and the striking yellow Giant Fennel.

We initially headed south towards the boulder fields surrounding the Agra caldera. A climb to the volcano rim revealed that the road was, for once, in excellent condition, something Paul hadn't seen in years. Here, we found an isolated population of the rare and localised Virchov's Poppy,

with its distinctive black spots on the top of each petal along with the wild Orange Tulip, one of three tulip species found on Lesvos.

Descending back to the main road, we travelled through a dramatic landscape of volcanic domes, lava fumaroles, and dykes, eventually reaching the isolated limestone “window” around Antissa. Among the oak woodlands and olive groves, we searched for the island’s endemic Lesvos Bee orchid, along with Miniature and Monkey Orchids.

We enjoyed a panoramic lunch by the windmill at Antissa, overlooking the Cave of Orpheus and across the sea towards the Turkish mainland, with Troy lying not far up the coast.

In the afternoon, we explored secluded valleys where Dense-flowered Orchids had not quite gone to seed. Yellow Rhododendron and Royal Fern grew along the banks of bubbling streams, their beds shimmering in bronze and yellow tones from the volcanic minerals.

After passing our hotel and heading a short distance east, we spent the remainder of the afternoon wandering along *kalderimi* trails (ancient stone donkey tracks) where Paul explained the intricate details of identifying bee orchids and serapias species.

HIGHLIGHTS

Either for rarity value, excellent views or simply a group favourite.

Finding the rare poppy and rare orchid (*Roemeria virchowii* and *Cephalanthera epipactoides*)

Walking along trails lined with wildflowers on both sides

Learning from a knowledgeable and passionate guide, who was also a great host and conversationalist

Enjoying the lovely picnic lunches

The peaceful views and spectacular scenery sea, mountains, and quaint villages with sheep roaming freely, their bells chiming, and historic chapels scattered throughout

The incredible diversity and beauty of orchids, wildflowers, and herbs—an unforgettable experience

Paul’s extensive knowledge and enthusiasm. His passion for plants, birds, food, history, geology, and Lesvos itself was always evident. We shared great conversations and plenty of laughter



Homer's Bee Orchid (*Ophrys homeri*)



Orange Tulip (*Tulipa orphanidea*)



Pontic Fritillary (*Fritillaria pontica*)

FLORA LIST

English Name	Scientific Name
Aegean Alexander's	<i>Smyrniium creticum</i>
Aegean Tulip	<i>Tulipa aegenensis</i>
Balkan Paeony	<i>Paeonia mascula</i>
Barbary Nut Iris	<i>Iris Gynandriris sisyrrinchium</i>
Birdsfoot Trefoil	<i>Many species present</i>
Branched Asphodel	<i>Asphodelus ramosus</i>
Brass Buttons	<i>Cotula coronopifolia</i>
Cemetery Iris	<i>Iris albicans</i>
Coastal Viper's Bugloss	<i>Echium arenarium</i>
Common Borage	<i>Borago officinalis</i>
Common Dog Rose	<i>Rosa anina</i>
Common Field Poppy	<i>Papaver rhoeas</i>
Common Knapweed	<i>Centaurea nigra</i>
Common Mallow	<i>Malva sylvestris</i>
Common Navelwort	<i>Umbilicus ispanicum</i>
Common Rocket	<i>Eruca vesicaria</i>
Corn Camomile	<i>Anthmis arvenis</i>
Corn Marigold	<i>Glebionis segetum</i>
Cretan Rock-rose (Cistus)	<i>Cistus creticus</i>
Crimson Clover	<i>Trifolium incarnatum</i>
Crimson Pea	<i>Lathyrus clymenum</i>
Crown Anemone	<i>Anemone coronaria</i>
Dark Grape Hyacinth	<i>Muscari commutatum</i>
Dragon Arum	<i>Dracunculus vulgaris</i>
Eastern (Rock) Arum	<i>Arum rupicola</i>
Entire-leaved Scabious	<i>Knautia integrifolia</i>
Field Gladiolus	<i>Gladiolus italicus</i>
Field Sorrel	<i>Rulex acetosa</i>
Five-angled Venus' Looking Glass	<i>Legousia pentagonia</i>

French Lavender	<i>Lavendula stoechas</i>
Giant Fennel	<i>Ferula communis</i>
Giant Mullein	<i>Verbascum thapsus</i>
Greek Cyclamen	<i>Cyclamen hederifolium</i>
Greek Horehound	<i>Pseudodictamnus acetabulosus</i>
Greek Musk Thistle	<i>Carduus nutans ssp. taygeteus</i>
Greek Oregano	<i>Origanum onites</i>
Hairy Birthwort	<i>Aristolochia hirta</i>
Hairy-leaved Lupin	<i>Lupinus prunophilus</i>
Hairy Pink	<i>Kohlruschia dubia (veluntina)</i>
Hellenic Iris	<i>Iris hellenica</i>
Henbit Hemp-nettle	<i>Galeopsis tetrait</i>
Italian Catchfly	<i>Silene italica</i>
Leopard's Bane	<i>Doronicum orientale</i>
Lesvos Alyssum	<i>Alyssum lesbiacum</i>
Lyrate Bellflower	<i>Campanula lyrata</i>
Maritime (Spiny) Knapweed	<i>Centaurea spinosa</i>
Mediterranean Catchfly	<i>Silene colorata</i>
Mediterranean Hartwort	<i>Tordylium apulum</i>
Mediterranean Linseed	<i>Bellardia trixago</i>
Milk Thistle	<i>Silybum marianum</i>
Narrow-leaved Euphorbia (Spurge)	<i>Euphorbia rigida</i>
Narrow-leaved Lupin	<i>Lupinus angustifolius</i>
Nodding Star of Bethlehem	<i>Ornithogalum nutans</i>
Orange Tulip	<i>Tulipa orphanidea</i>
One-flowered Clover	<i>Trifolium uniflorum</i>
Pale Flax	<i>Linum bienne</i>
Pale Hollyhock	<i>Alcea biennis</i>
Peacock Anemone	<i>Anemone pavonina</i>
Pink Hawksbeard	<i>Crepis rubra</i>
Pontic Fritillary	<i>Fritillaria pontica</i>
Purple Clover	<i>Trifolium purpureum</i>

Purple Salsify	<i>Tragopogon porrifolius</i>
Rayless Camomile	<i>Anthemis rigida</i>
Red Cytinus	<i>Cytinus rubra</i>
Rough Poppy	<i>Roemeria sicula</i>
Round-leaved (Perforate) Alexander's	<i>Smyrniium perfoliatum</i>
Royal Fern	<i>Osmunda regalis</i>
Sage-leaved Rock-rose (Cistus)	<i>Cistus salviifolius</i>
Scarlet Pimpernel	<i>Lysimachia arvensis</i>
Scentless Curry-plant	<i>Helichrysum stowchas ssp. barrelieri</i>
Shining Cranesbill	<i>Geranium lucidum</i>
Short Pod Mustard	<i>Hirschfelda incana</i>
Spanish Broom	<i>Spartium junceum</i>
Spiny Burnet	<i>Sarcopoterium spinosum</i>
Spotted Rock-rose	<i>Tuberaria guttata</i>
Star Clover	<i>Trifolium stellatum</i>
Tassel Hyacinth	<i>Muscari comosum</i>
Virchow's Poppy	<i>Roemeria virchowii</i>
Wavy-leaved Mullein	<i>Verbascum sinuatum</i>
White Clover	<i>Trifolium repens</i>
Wild Pea	<i>Lathyrus annuus</i>
Wild Vetch	<i>Many species present</i>
Wild Vetchling	<i>Many species present</i>
Yellow Asphodel	<i>Asphodelus lutea</i>
Yellow Rhododendron	<i>Rhododendron luteum</i>
Almond	<i>Prunus amygdalus</i>
Almond-leaved Pear	<i>Pyrus spinosa</i>
Calabrian Pine	<i>Pinus brutia</i>
Common Fig	<i>Ficus carica</i>
Common Oleander	<i>Nerium oleander</i>
Common Quince	<i>Cydonia oblonga</i>

Downy Oak	<i>Quercus pubescens</i>
European Wild Cherry	<i>Prunus avium</i>
Hampe's Tamarisk	<i>Tamarix hampeana</i>
Judas Tree	<i>Cercis siliquastrum</i>
Kermes Oak	<i>Quercus coccifera</i>
Oriental Plane	<i>Platanus orientalis</i>
Stone Pine	<i>Pinus pinea</i>
Turpentine Tree	<i>Pistacia tereinthus</i>
Valonia Oak	<i>Quercus ithaurensis ssp. macrolepis</i>
White Mulberry	<i>Morus alba</i>
English Name (introduced)	Scientific Name
*Bermuda Buttercup	<i>Oxalis pes-capre</i>
*Indian Bead Tree	<i>Melia azedarach</i>
*Red Hottentot Fig	<i>Carpobrtus edulis</i>
*Wisteria	<i>Wisteria sinensis</i>
English Name (orchids)	Scientific Name
Sword-leaved Helleborine	<i>Cephalanthera longifolia</i>
Spurred Helleborine	<i>Cephalanthera epipactoides</i>
Violet Limodore	<i>Limodorum abortivum</i>
Holmboë's Butterfly (not in flower)	<i>Platanthera holmboei</i>
Small-flowered Tongue Orchid	<i>Serapias parviflora</i>
Plough-share Tongue Orchid	<i>Serapias vomeracea</i>
Pyramidal Orchid	<i>Anacamptis pyramidalis</i>
Green-winged Orchid	<i>Anacamptis morio subsp. caucasia</i>
Holy Orchid	<i>Anacamptis sancta</i>
Four-spotted Orchid	<i>Orchis quadripunctata</i>
Provence Orchid	<i>Orchis provincialis</i>
Monkey Orchid	<i>Orchis simia</i>
Naked Man Orchid	<i>Orchis italica</i>
Toothed Orchid	<i>Neotinia tridentata</i>
Dense-flowered Orchid (nearly gone to seed)	<i>Neotinia intacta</i>

Komper's Orchid (not in flower)	<i>Himantoglossum comperiana</i>
Ashy-loving Orchid	<i>Ophrys fusca subsp. cinerephila</i>
Sicilian Orchid	<i>Ophrys lutea subsp. sicula</i>
Lion-manned Orchid	<i>Ophrys tenthredinifera</i>
Carmel Orchid	<i>Ophrys umbilicata</i>
Attican Orchid	<i>Ophrys umbilicate subsp. attica</i>
Bull-headed Orchid	<i>Ophrys umbilicata subsp. bucephala</i>
Miniature Orchid	<i>Ophrys scolopax var. minutula</i>
Woodcock Orchid	<i>Ophrys scolopax subsp. cornuta</i>
Homer's Orchid	<i>Ophrys fuciflora ('homeri')</i>
Lesbos Orchid	<i>Ophrys argolica subsp. Lesbis</i>
Reinhold's Orchid	<i>Ophrys reinholdii</i>
Unclassified small horned Ophrys minutula – to be named	<i>Ophrys?</i>

