

WILDLIFE TRAVEL

5th May - 12th May 2018 (1 week)

LESVOS



"Everywhere was fantastic.
None of the places
disappointed"

Lesvos 2014

Spring on an Aegean island

Carpets of flowers, olive groves and birding on the beautiful island of Lesvos in the Aegean Sea.

Lesvos is still an **undiscovered island** for many, despite being the third largest in Greece and close to the Turkish mainland. It is relatively undeveloped and retains its rural culture, interspersed with a few attractive towns and villages. In early May, the tourist season is only just beginning and there is a **pleasant, relaxed atmosphere at a time when the flowers and birds are at their best**. The countryside is covered in a colourful display of shrubs, perennials and annuals and the birdsong adds a delightful background to quiet walks through olive groves, meadows and woods or along the coast. Our search for the island's wildlife will take us to some interesting landscapes and historical sites and we will also have an opportunity to sample local tavernas for lunch.

From the **pleasant fishing harbour** of Skala Kalloni we will explore the lovely island of Lesvos, one of the largest in the Aegean. The island is justifiably famous for its birdlife and we have timed this holiday to catch the best of the northwards **spring migration** and the arrival of many birds that will breed on the island as well as the wonderful **carpets of spring flowers**.

During the week we will be visiting many parts of the island - visiting the rolling hills, pastures and rocky landscapes of the west and the sweet chestnut and pine woods of the southern mountains. We will explore the rivers, lagoons and reedbeds around Skala Kalloni, and the coastal 'shrublands' full of orchids and birdsong. Excursions will take us to a peaceful monastery set in a beautiful valley and to a partly deserted village with wonderful views of the coast.



Price
£1545

**Single Room
Supplement**
£100

Full/Half board

Day 1 flight to Mytilini
Day 2 Kalloni marshes
Day 3 north of island
Day 4 south of island
Day 5 Kalloni saltpans
Day 6 west of island
Day 7 north of island
Day 8 return to UK

Leaders

Laurie Jackson
and Philip Precey

easy birding, spring
flowers, general wildlife

Wildlife and culture holidays



Our profits are donated to the **Wildlife Trusts**



Our holiday is ideal for those who wish to explore the island for its natural history and enjoy relaxing walks through the pleasant countryside. We should enjoy pleasant temperatures and quiet walks before the majority of tourists arrive. The trip is an **ideal introduction to the flowers and birds of the eastern Mediterranean** as well as a chance to see some of the more **localised species**.

ITINERARY

Please note that the itinerary may be changed to suit the weather or other practicalities or at the discretion of the leaders.

Day 1 Saturday 5th May Our morning flights take us to Mytilini, the main town on Lesbos, from where we transfer to Skala Kalloni (c 1.5 hours). After settling into our rooms, we will take a short walk down to the small wetland behind the beach, where Black Stork and various herons stalk amongst the reeds and small parties of Wood Sandpipers probe the muddy edges, and there are some interesting coastal flowers growing in the sand.

Day 2 Sunday 6th May Our first full day on the island will be spent exploring the countryside around Skala Kalloni. Walking out from the hotel, we will first check the marshy rivermouth just west of the village where Eastern Olivaceous Warbler sing from the tamarisk bushes and various waders may be found feeding out on the mud. We will then amble through the lanes and fields west of the village, where we will familiarise ourselves with the local wild flowers of the pathsides, waterways and marshes. The 'East River' is a famous migrant trap, where Little Bittern and Squacco Heron feed, newly-arrived Bee-eaters hawk over head and all sorts of migrant birds might turn up, as they head north.

Day 3 Monday 7th May This morning we will drive across the island to the north coast, where we will spend some time at the Kavaki headland where, amongst the attractive coastal vegetation, Rüppell's, Eastern Orphean and Eastern Subalpine Warblers hold territory, while Yelkouan Shearwaters feed offshore. We will head to the attractive fishing village of Molyvos, where we will have a relaxing lunch in a taverna overlooking the harbour. We will have some free time to explore the cobbled lanes of this picturesque town, and enjoy the views from the hill top castle before it is time to head back to Skala Kalloni.

Day 4 Tuesday 8th May Our coach takes us around to the eastern side of the Gulf, where we will visit the pine woodlands at Achladeri, home to Krüper's Nuthatch, a real local speciality for which Lesbos is the only European outpost.

From here we travel through the town of **Agiossos** up onto the slopes of Mount Olympus. Here we will visit the beautiful **sweet chestnut woods** and limestone hillsides looking for many flowers including the endemic Hairy Birthwort, *Fritillaria theophrasti* and bright splashes of colour in the form of *Paeonia macula*, *Tulipa hageri* and the beautiful Peacock Anemone *Anemone pavonina*. We will look for **several species of orchids**, including Toothed and Provence Orchid, Sword-leaved Helleborine, Violet Limodore and the rare *Opherys reinholdi* and *Himantoglossum comperianum* (Comper's Orchid).



Day 5 Wednesday 9th May This morning we will turn our attention back to the wetlands, and visit the Kalloni salt pans, where large numbers of Greater Flamingos feed alongside elegant Avocets and Black-winged Stilts and large numbers of migrating waders and wildfowl, gulls and terns. In the wet fields we will look for *Iris orientalis*, a variety of different *Trifoliums* grow along the track sides alongside Holy Orchid and we will check under rocks for scorpions and the endearing little Worm Snake, a tiny little reptile that feeds exclusively on ants and termites.

After a taverna lunch back on the coast in Skala Kalloni, we will head inland to the olive groves of the Napi Valley, where we will look for two local specialities: Masked Shrike and Sombre Tit, as well as butterflies including Lesser Spotted Fritillary and Scarce Swallowtail.

Day 6 Thursday 10th May Today we head to the west of the island to look for wildlife of the dryer habitats. We will visit the hillsides below the Ipsilou Monastery, famous for another local speciality, Cinereous Bunting, which sings from the rocky slopes and oak trees, where various flycatchers and warblers feed up on their on their journey northwards, while birds of prey pass by. We will also visit the Petrified Forest, and the associated, very interesting, geological museum at the coastal village of Sigri.

Day 7 Friday 11th May Today we will visit the partly-deserted hillside village of Petri for a walk on the abandoned terraces, which are now good for a wide variety of wild flowers and butterflies. After lunch, we will visit the monastery at Limonos, where numerous small chapels are found in a beautiful, tranquil valley.

Day 8 Saturday 12th May After one last hearty breakfast it is time to bid farewell to the Malemi Hotel and make the return journey back to Mytilini and our flights home.

Accommodation, meals and transport

Our home for the week is the Malemi Hotel: a family run hotel, it has been catering for wildlife groups for many years after being the first to highlight the wonderful birdlife to be found locally. The hotel is surrounded by gardens and is only a few minutes walk from the wetlands of Skala Kalloni (handy for those pre-breakfast bird walks) and a quiet beach at the head of the Gulf of Kalloni. All rooms are en-suite. Evening meals will be at the hotel and we will have picnic lunches on most days. On others, lunch can be taken at local tavernas (not included). We will travel by small coach or minibus.

Health and fitness

Please see the General Information leaflet for health and fitness requirements. This is not a strenuous holiday: all excursions are optional and you can choose to spend more time in the hotel pool or around Skala Kallonis if you wish. On the first day we will be walking for much of the day, but on relatively flat ground. On other days, most walks are much shorter. The pace will generally be relaxed with time to enjoy the surroundings and take photos as well as watching the wildlife we find and looking for many wonderful flowers.



Leaders

Laurie Jackson is an all round naturalist who has led several Wildlife Travel holidays in the Mediterranean, including two of our previous trips to Lesvos. **Philip Precey** is a Director of Wildlife Travel and has led trips to many of our destinations, with several around the Mediterranean including Lesvos. Never far from his binoculars, Philip will help you to enjoy all aspects of the wildlife we encounter. Between them, our leaders will introduce you to the birds, flowers and other wildlife of the island and ensure you have a well organised and enjoyable trip.

Weather

At this time of year the weather is usually sunny but not too hot. There may be some cooler weather and some rain. We will adapt our walks and excursions accordingly.

Eco tourism

The demand by visitors such as ourselves, for areas managed for natural history and as a resource for real 'eco tourism' is vitally important for preserving the biodiversity of the island.

Flights

Group flights are with Thomas Cook Airlines.

5th depart London Gatwick 06.40, arrive Mytilini 12.35

12th depart Mytilini 13.35, arrive London Gatwick 15.25

Lesvos is two hours ahead of the UK.

Direct flights from Manchester (early departure) with Thomas Cook Airlines may also be possible or flights from London Heathrow via Athens with Aegean Airlines - contact us to. It is possible to extend your holiday if you wish.



TO BOOK

Contact us to check availability and reserve a place. Complete the Booking Form and send to Sunvil Holidays (CAA-ATOL Licence 808, ABTA V6218), our tour operator, with your deposit. All details about booking are given in the Booking Pack.

DEPOSIT £500 PER PERSON, BALANCE DUE BY 25/01/2018
SEE GENERAL INFORMATION LEAFLET ON HOW TO BOOK

INCLUDED: Return flight from UK to Lesvos. Local transport as specified in itinerary. 7 nights accommodation, breakfast, evening meals. 5 picnic lunches. Services of leaders.
NOT INCLUDED: Two lunches. Refreshments. Entrances (optional). Gratuities. Insurance.

WILDLIFE TRAVEL

**The Manor House, Broad Street,
Great Cambourne, Cambridge CB23 6DH**

Tel: 01954 713575 email: wildlifetravel@wildlifebcn.org

www.wildlife-travel.co.uk



*Directors: Christine Donnelly, Brian Eversham, Philip Precey, Michael Russell, Tim Upson
Wildlife Travel Ltd. Reg. No 2237697; (for Registered Charity numbers, please contact us)*

Front (clockwise): Molyvos harbour, Ruppell's Warbler, *Fritillaria theophrasti*, Squacco Heron, *Anacamptis sancta* **Back** (top to bottom): views near Ipsilou, *Aristolochia hirta* and *Ophrys reinholdii*. **Inside:** White-winged Black Tern, *Euphorbia rigida*, Lesser Spotted Fritillary, Caucasian Squirrel, *Anemone pavonina*, north coast scenery, *Serapias cordigera*