

WILDLIFE TRAVEL

1st to 8th May 2024 (1 week)

LESVOS

Spring in the Aegean

"fantastic flowers,
unspoilt countryside,
easy walking"

"hotel in excellent
location, food very good"

Lesvos 2023

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.

The island is justifiably famous for its birdlife, with local breeding specialities including Krüper's Nuthatch, Cinereous Bunting and Masked Shrike. We have timed this holiday to catch the best of the northwards **spring migration**, as well as the wonderful **carpets of spring flowers.**

During the week we will be visiting many parts of the island - 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.

Our home for the week is a family-run hotel in the coastal village of Skala Kalloni, serving delicious, hearty, home-cooked food, within walking distance of the Kalloni wetlands, some of the prime birding spots, a great base



Price

£1,995

Single Room Supplement

£150

Full board

- Day 1** flight to Mytilini
- Day 2** Skala Kalloni
- Day 3** Kalloni salt pans
- Day 4** Agiassos, Achladeri
- Day 5** Kavaki, Molyvos
- Day 6** Ipsilou, Sigri
- Day 7** Petri
- Day 8** return to UK

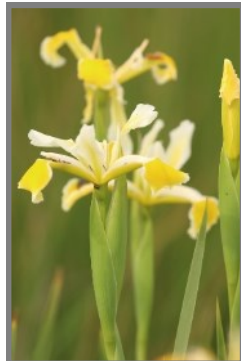
Leaders

Philip Precey
and
second leader tbc

Group size

min 4, max 12

relaxed birding,
spring flowers



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 Wednesday 1st May. Our flights take us to Mytilene, the main town on Lesbos, from where we transfer to Skala Kalloni (c 1.5 hours).

Day 2 Thursday 2nd May. Today will be spent exploring the countryside around Skala Kalloni. Walking out from the hotel, we amble through the lanes and fields, where we will familiarise ourselves with the local wild flowers of the pathsides, waterways and marshes.

Eastern Olivaceous Warblers sing from the tamarisk bushes, newly-arrived Bee-eaters hawk over head, Little Bittern and Squacco Heron feed along the river margins, and all sorts of migrant birds might turn up as they head north.

Day 3 Friday 3rd May. This morning we will visit the Kalloni salt pans, where Greater Flamingos feed alongside elegant Avocets and Black-winged Stilts, and (depending on the season) a variety of migrating waders and wildfowl, gulls and terns.

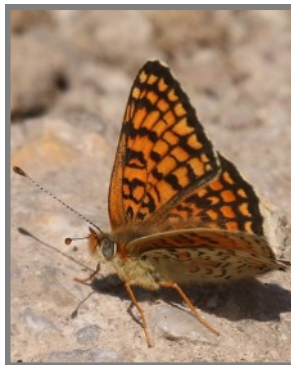
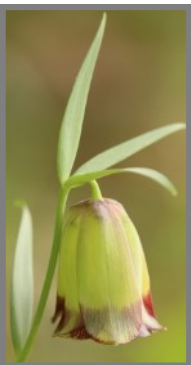
After lunch, we will drive a little inland to Metochi Lake where we will look for Balkan Terrapin and various dragonflies, and take a wander through the olive groves, checking for the lovely yellow *Iris orientalis* and the Hairy Birthwort *Aristolochia hirta*, while keeping our eyes out for Masked Shrike that nests in the older trees.

Day 4 Saturday 4th May. Today we travel around to the eastern side of the Gulf, where will visit the pine woodlands at Achladeri, home to Krüper's Nuthatch, a local speciality for which Lesbos is the only European outpost. From here we head up, through the town of Agiassos and onto the slopes of Mount Olympus. Here we will visit the beautiful sweet chestnut woods and limestone hillsides looking for many flowers including *Fritillaria pontica* 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 Sword-leaved Helleborine *Cephalanthera longifolia*, Toothed Orchids *Neotinea tridentata* and Holmboe's Butterfly Orchid *Platanthera holmboei*.

Day 5 Sunday 5th May. We head across to the north of the island, stopping first at Kavaki headland where various warblers hold territory amongst the attractive coastal vegetation, while Yelkouan Shearwaters feed offshore.

From here we will travel to the attractive fishing village of Molyvos, where we will have our lunch overlooking the fishing harbour, and have some time to explore the narrow lanes of this scenic old town.

Day 6 Monday 6th May. Today we head west, to explore the dryer habitats and volcanic landscape. We will visit the hillsides below Ipsilou Monastery, famous for another local speciality, Cinereous Bunting, which sings from the oak trees. Isabelline and Eastern Black-eared Wheatears feed on the rocky slopes, with the lovely pink *Crepis rubra*, *Euphorbia*



rigida and Large Venus's Looking-glass *Legousia pentagonia* amongst the floral highlights. At the coastal village of Sigri, we will visit the interesting geological museum, with its world class exhibits and Holy Orchid *Anacamptis sancta* in the garden!

Day 7 Tuesday 7th May. Today we head north again, for a gentle walk through the scenic village of Petri and out to explore the quiet lanes and hillside beyond the village, where Rock Nuthatch, Sombre Tit and Masked Shrike may all be found.

Day 8 Wednesday 8th May. After one last hearty breakfast it is time to bid farewell to Skala Kalloni and make the return journey back to Mytilene and our flights home.

Accommodation and meals, transport and weather

We will be staying in the **Malemi Hotel**: a welcoming, family-run hotel, surrounded by gardens and only a few minutes walk from the wetlands of Skala Kalloni (handy for those pre-breakfast bird walks). All rooms are en-suite. All meals are included in the holiday price (dinner day 1 to lunch day 8). Evening meals will be taken at the hotel and we will take picnic lunches most days, along with a 'sit down' taverna lunch at Molyvos on day 5.

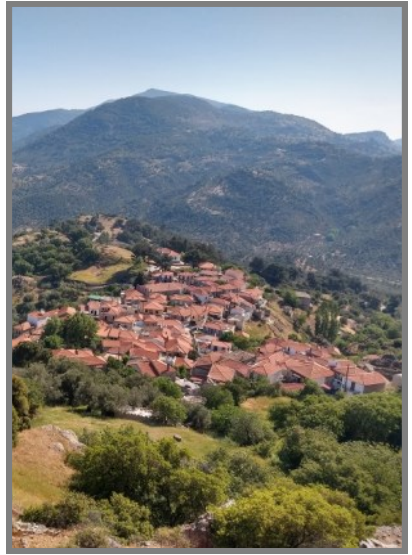
We will travel by small coach or minibus.

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.

Leaders

Philip Precey is a Director of Wildlife Travel and all-round naturalist, who has led more than 5 holidays for Wildlife Travel, including three previous visits to Lesvos.

Depending on final group size, Philip will be joined by a second Wildlife Travel leader.



Flights

The group flights will be from London Stansted with Jet2.

1st May depart London Stansted 06.00, arrive Mytilene 11.40

8th May depart Mytilene 12.30, arrive London Stansted 14.10

Lesvos is two hours ahead of the UK.

Passport and Entry Requirements

Please note that travel rules may be changed by either the UK or Greek government at any time. For up to date information, check www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/greece

Your passport must be issued less than 10 years before the date you enter the country (check the 'date of issue') and valid for at least 3 months after the day you plan to leave (check the 'expiry date').

If you hold a British passport, you can travel to the Schengen area, including Greece, for up to 90 days in total in any 180-day period without a visa.

From 2024 (exact date yet to be confirmed), UK passport holders will need to apply for the ETIAS European Travel Authorisation to visit Schengen countries. This must be applied for online prior to travel. Once granted, your ETIAS will be valid for 3 years.

Health and fitness

On most days, we are **walking for much of the day**, albeit at a relatively slow pace. The longest walk (Day 2) will be around 8km, on the flat. On other days it is necessary to walk on rougher ground and up/down some (gentle) slopes, although none of the walking is particularly strenuous. Good (light) walking boots are essential. All excursions are optional.

Up-to-date information on travel health can be found at travelhealthpro.org.uk

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 £650 PER PERSON, BALANCE DUE BY 30/01/2024

INCLUDED: Return flight from London Stansted to Lesvos, as above. Local transport as specified in itinerary. Seven nights' accommodation full board (dinner day 1 to lunch day 8, with picnic lunches). Services of leaders. **NOT INCLUDED:** Refreshments. Entrances (optional). Gratuities. Insurance. Covid tests and associated costs. ETIAS costs.

WILDLIFE TRAVEL

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

Photos: all photos taken on previous Wildlife Travel holidays. Front (clockwise from top): Molyvos harbour, Eastern Black-eared Wheatear, *Iris orientalis*, Masked Shrike, Holy Orchid.
Page 2 (from left): *Fritillaria pontica*, White-winged Black Tern, Aegean Fritillary, Cinereous Bunting.
Page 3 (from top): Lesvos scenery, Peacock Anemone, European Bee-eater, Temminck's Stint, Long-headed Poppy, Eastern Festoon.

A trip report from our 2023 visit to Lesvos can be found on our website.