

WILDLIFE TRAVEL

19th to 26th March 2025 (1 week)

CYPRUS

Spring flowers and photography on Aphrodite's island

"orchid-oholic's glory at every step"

"we all enjoyed ourselves and laughed a lot."

Cyprus 2024

March is the best month to enjoy the abundant wild flowers of Cyprus, particularly the orchids, with just a handful of late- and early-flowering species being missed. There will also be a good selection of other flowers to enjoy, from colourful bulbs and herbaceous species to attractive shrubs, including endemics from various families. Whilst paying particular attention to the island's botany, we won't be missing out on the other wildlife Cyprus has to offer.

Our base is a pleasant family-run hotel on the coast on the Akamas Peninsula, not far from Polis, looking out over Chrysochou Bay. From here, we will explore the surrounding hillsides, fields and meadows in search of wild flowers, early spring butterflies and migrant birds which should be passing through in good numbers and variety at this time of year. Various warblers, wheatears and buntings could all be seen during the week, along with local specialities including both Cyprus Warbler and Cyprus Wheatear, endemic to the island. We will also look for the island's butterflies, amphibians and reptiles, with several species found only here including the Paphos Blue, Cypriot Water Frog and Troodos Wall Lizard.

Cyprus has a rich history, and we will spend time at a variety of historical sites including the Paphos World Heritage Site on the Paphos Peninsula.

Our leaders for this holiday are both excellent wildlife photographers, and there will be plenty of opportunities on this trip to learn more about how to get the most out of your camera. The island and its wildlife and scenery will provide an abundance of interesting photographic subjects, on which to practice new found skills.

We first visited Cyprus way back in 1991, and we are looking forward to returning to Aphrodite's island.



Price

£1895

Single Room Supplement

£145

Full board

Day 1	flight to Paphos
Day 2	Baths of Aphrodite
Day 3	Pegeia Forest
Day 4	Paphos
Day 5	Latchi
Day 6	Paphos
Day 8	Smygias
Day 9	return to UK

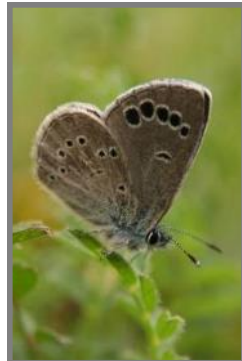
Leaders

Sarah Lambert
and James Lowen

Group size

min 4, max 14

spring birds, wild flowers,
ancient sites



ITINERARY

The itinerary may change to suit practicalities or at the discretion of the leaders.

Day 1 Our morning flight takes us to Paphos, from where we transfer to our hotel (c.1hr 30mins). After settling in, there will be time to relax at the hotel or take a local walk in the afternoon, before an introduction to our holiday over drinks before dinner.

Day 2 After breakfast, normally taken on the terrace overlooking the sea, we walk along the coast from the hotel to the small botanic garden at the **Baths of Aphrodite** and onwards, towards **Fontana Amorosa**. The field edges and track sides will be full of interesting wild flowers, including colourful annuals and spring bulbs, with an abundance of *Cyclamen persicum* and *Ranunculus asiaticus* growing in the rockier areas.

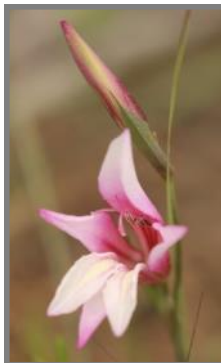
The scenery is breath-taking, with high cliffs dropping steeply down to the sea. The endemic Paphos Blue should be amongst the early spring butterflies, while lizards scuttle about in the undergrowth, including the endemic Troodos Wall Lizard. Bird migration should be well underway, and there should be newly-arrived migrants flitting about the bushes, including warblers, wheatears, chats and flycatchers.

Day 3 Today we will explore **Pegeia Forest** where, beneath the scattered canopy of Calabrian Pine and Phoenician Juniper, we should find an interesting variety of orchids: depending on the season we could find ten species, including *Ophrys fusciflora* subsp *levantina*, *O. argolica* subsp *elegans* and the delicate Dense-flowered Orchid *Neotinea maculata*. We will also inspect some interesting seasonal rock pools where local rarities can be found, including the diminutive Least Adder's-tongue *Ophioglossum lusitanicum*.

Day 4 Today our attention will turn to the history of the island, visiting several sites around Paphos. We start with a visit to the monastery of **Ayios Neophytos**, the grotto retreat where the hermit St Neophytos made his home and famous for its Byzantine frescoes. From here we move to the **Tombs of the Kings**, dating back to the Ptolemite Cypriot Kingdoms, where we will find interesting coast-loving plants and migrant birds among the archaeology. Finally, we will spend our afternoon on the Paphos Peninsula, part of the **Paphos World Heritage Site**, with 'houses' of **Roman mosaics**. Aside from the well preserved mosaics, this site is also known as a migrant hot spot, and after soaking up the history we will check to see what birds we can track down: almost anything is possible at this time of year, with Cretzschmar's Bunting, Eastern Black-eared Wheatear and Rüppell's Warbler all likely during the afternoon.

Day 5 A local day after our exertions yesterday. We will return to the intricacies of orchid identification during a walk across the local hillsides. Here, we hope to find bewildering tongue orchids, various *Ophrys* orchids, and the stately yellow spikes of *Orchis punctulata*.

Day 6 We head back to the Paphos area today, with birds on our mind. We will visit several sites, hoping to find various interesting migrants and local specialities, including Cyprus Wheatear and Cyprus Warbler, while enjoying the flowers we find along the way.



Day 7 Today we drive up to the ridge in the heart of the Akamas. Beneath the pines we will look for wild flowers, including more orchids, perhaps including *Ophrys umbilicata* subsp *lapethica*, *Orchis anatolica* subsp *troodi* and the lemon-yellow *Dactylorhiza romana*. A week is a long time during spring and it will be interesting to compare the plants with those we saw during our first days and to find out what new migrant birds have arrived. After a stop for lunch and a coffee in the village of Neo Chorio, a leisurely walk downhill will take us back to the hotel.

Day 8 After a last leisurely breakfast on the sunny patio, we must gather our things and bid fond farewell to the Aphrodite Beach and head home.

Accommodation, meals and travel

The **Aphrodite Beach Hotel** is a wonderfully welcoming family-run hotel, located on a beautiful coastline. We are catered full board, from dinner day 1 to lunch day 8. Meals, using fresh local produce, are taken in the lovely **dining room overlooking the bay**. Breakfasts can be taken on the terrace. Lunches will be mostly picnic packed lunches provided by the hotel: we will have one taverna lunch in the village of Neo Chorio (Day 7).

Local travel will be by small coach, with a driver.

Leaders

Our leader for this trip is **Sarah Lambert**, an expert botanist and keen photographer, with a good knowledge of other wildlife. After several years with English Nature she now works as a freelance ecologist based in Peterborough, undertaking habitat and plant surveys throughout England. Since 2012 she has been the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland recorder for South Lincolnshire. Sarah joined Wildlife Travel in 2019 and has led several of our holidays including two previous spring visits to Cyprus.

Depending on final group size, Sarah will be joined by **James Lowen**, expert photographer, naturalist and award-winning author. James is a frequent contributor to BBC Wildlife and author of several books, most notably the recent *Much Ado About Mothing*. James has led previous Wildlife Travel holidays to Morocco, Lesvos and Norfolk.

Health and fitness

On most days, we are **walking for much of the day**, albeit at a relatively slow pace. The longest walk (Day 7) will be just over 7km, mostly downhill. It is necessary to walk on **rougher ground and up some (gentle) slopes**, although **none of the walking is strenuous**. Good (light) walking boots are essential. All excursions are optional.



Group Travel

The group flights are with Easyjet from London Gatwick, as follows:

19th March Departs London Gatwick 07.10, arrives Paphos 13.40

26th March Departs Paphos 14.20 arrives London Gatwick 17.20

It is also possible to fly direct from Manchester, Stansted, Edinburgh and Bristol. For those flying from other airports, we can arrange individual transfers to or from the hotel. Contact us to discuss options.

Cyprus is two hours ahead of the UK.

Passport and Entry Requirements

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

If you hold a British passport, you can travel to Cyprus for up to 90 days in total in any 180-day period without a visa: Cyprus is not part of the Schengen area, and visits to Cyprus do not count towards your 90-day visa-free limit in the Schengen area.

From 2025 (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.

For up-to-date information, check www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/cyprus

Weather

The weather should be pleasant, even hot down near the coast. In general we should expect warm, sunny weather. Showers are unlikely but possible.

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 18/12/2024

INCLUDED: Return flight London (Gatwick) to Cyprus, as above. Local transport as specified in itinerary. Seven night's accommodation, all meals from dinner day 1 to lunch day 8. Services of leaders. **NOT INCLUDED:** Drinks with evening meal and refreshments. Gratuities. Travel insurance. ETIAS and associated costs. Entrance fees to archaeological sites (c€20 in total).

WILDLIFE TRAVEL

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Wildlife Travel Ltd. Reg. No 2237697; (for Registered Charity numbers, please contact us)*

Photos (all taken on previous Wildlife Travel holidays to Cyprus): front (clockwise from top): *Ophrys argolica* subsp *elegans*, Cyprus Warbler, Paphos Blue, *Orchis punctulata*, Paphos. **Page 2** (from left): Paphos mosaics, *Anacamptis morio* subsp *syriaca*, *Gladiolus triphyllus*, Cyprus Wheatear. **Page 3** (from top): *Ranunculus asiaticus*, *Cyclamen persicum*, Eastern Festoon, Paphos lighthouse.

A trip report from our recent Cyprus holidays can be found on our website.