

Autumn Plants of the Peloponnese

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Outline itinerary

Day 1	Fly Athens; transfer Mykines
Day 2	Transfer Gythio
Day 3 – 7	Botanical excursions from Gythio
Day 8	Fly London

Departs

Late October

Focus

Autumn flowering bulbs plus other flowers and wildlife

Grading

Easy day walks, but some are steep and on rocky terrain.

Dates and Prices

Visit www.naturetrek.co.uk (tour code GRC07) or see the current Naturetrek brochure.

Highlights:

- Spectacular scenery with a wealth of flora and other wildlife
- Breathtaking displays of autumn-flowering geophytes, including cyclamen, crocus, colchicum, daffodils and snowdrop
- Attractive villages and fishing ports
- Archaeological sites of Ancient Mycenae, Monemvasia and Mystras
- Guided by a Naturetrek botanist



Crocus goulimyi, Crocus niveus, Sternbergia lutea



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Introduction

The Peloponnese is the peninsula which forms the southernmost part of mainland Greece, and is joined to the rest of the country by the 6 kilometre isthmus of Corinth. It is a region of spectacular scenery, dominated by high mountains, fertile plains and river valleys, and surrounded by a long and rugged coastline. The area is steeped in legend and mythology and richly endowed with familiar names from history and archaeological sites from the Mycenaean period of the Late Bronze Age through to the Byzantine era and the later occupation by the Ottomans.

The more rugged terrain remains, largely, uncultivated and supports a rich and diverse flora in a wide range of habitats. Forests of Fir and Pine encircle the high mountains, which are truly alpine in character, retaining snow cover, over a long period. Below these, the landscape is dominated by a mixture of evergreen and deciduous woodland, dense, thorny maquis and shrubby phrygana, on the thin, limestone soils. With its mild Mediterranean climate of hot dry



Taygetos mountains

summers and cool, wet winters, the Peloponnese offers exceptional opportunities for a diverse rural economy. Olives are grown on a vast scale along with grapes, citrus and other fruits and vegetables. Those plants that have adapted to survive the relentless heat from June to September, in a state of dormancy, burst back into growth with the onset of cooler conditions and the first rains. Some will grow throughout the winter months and flower in spring but our tour is timed to coincide with a diversity of autumn-flowering geophytes, which provide one of the best displays in Europe.

Itinerary

NB. Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather & other local considerations can necessitate some re-ordering of the programme during the course of the tour, though this will always be done to maximise best use of the time and weather conditions available.

Day 1

Fly Athens, transfer Mykines

We fly from London Heathrow on a scheduled flight to Athens. After boarding our minibus, we make a journey of around two hours to our hotel in Mykines, in the eastern Peloponnese, where we will spend our first night. If time permits, we will break our journey to view the Corinth Canal and look for our first autumn flowers.

Day 2

Gythio

After a leisurely breakfast, we will visit Ancient Mycenae, one of the most impressive archaeological sites in Greece. For the rest of the day, we will enjoy the autumnal colours of the diverse landscape, through which we are travelling and make roadside stops to focus on the autumn bulbs and other flora, that we will encounter, enroute. We expect to arrive in Gythio, in the late afternoon.



Narcissus obsoletus

Day 3 – 7 Gythio



Colchicum parlatoris

Our base for the next five nights will be a comfortable hotel, overlooking the harbour, in the pleasant port of Gythio. The weather in this part of Greece is typically still warm and sunny, at this time of year, allowing us to soak up the last rays of the European sun for the year, enjoy full days botanising, and dine out on delicious local food, al fresco, in some of the many tavernas.

We will explore the stark landscapes of the Mani and Malea, peninsulas, in search of the special plants of the area, never far from the blue waters of the Aegean Sea. As well

as the common white *Crocus boryi*, we expect to find breathtaking displays of the two locally endemic crocuses, the mauve-purple *Crocus goulimyi*, and *Crocus niveus*, which sports large white or pale lilac flowers with deep yellow throats. Shady woodland is home to the scented *Cyclamen hederifolium* subsp. *crassifolium*, and in open rocky areas, *Cyclamen graecum* is abundant, alongside yellow *Sternbergia lutea*, several species of *Colchicum* and the diminutive *Narcissus obsoletus*. By contrast, we will spend a day visiting the thickly forested Taygetos Mountains, where, nestled alongside cool and shady streams, we will see the widespread *Cyclamen hederifolium* subsp. *hederifolium* and the delightful blooms of *Galanthus reginae-olgae*.

Throughout the area, many intriguing old villages and ruins are steeped in centuries of history and mythology, and we will take time to explore the Byzantine towns of Monemvasia and Mystras.

Day 8

Fly London

We leave Gythio soon after breakfast, and journey back to Athens for our return to London, after a week of superb botanising in the Peloponnese.

Tour grading

Easy day walks, but some are steep and on rocky terrain.

Focus

The primary focus of the holiday will be to provide an appreciation of the area's outstanding autumn-flowering bulbs, other flowers and other wildlife.

Food & accommodation included in the price.

Accommodation will be in comfortable tourist class hotels with private facilities in each room. Breakfasts and lunches are included in the holiday cost along with an evening meal in Mykines. Evening meals in local tavernas are not included. We would recommend allowing around £100 for these.

Weather

It is usually sunny and warm, with daily temperatures of up to a maximum of 25°C. But, as this is the transition period into winter, cooler conditions, with showers of rain are always possible.

How to book your place

In order to book your place on this holiday, please give us a call on 01962 733051 with a credit or debit card, book online at www.naturetrek.co.uk, or alternatively complete and post the booking form at the back of our main Naturetrek brochure, together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday cost plus any room supplements if required. If you do not have a copy of the brochure, please call us on 01962 733051 or request one via our website.

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