

# Orchids of Cyprus

Mariposa Nature Tours trip report    2<sup>nd</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> March 2025

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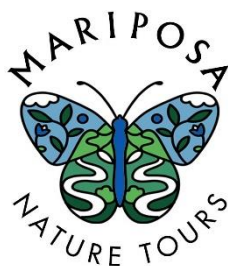
Tour leaders Jon Dunn & Dr Richard Bate

Trip report by Jon Dunn

Images kindly shared by our guests

(Images above kindly shared by guests, clockwise from top left: *Orchis punctulata* © Ian;

*Ophrys alasiatica* © Jenny; *Dactylorhiza romana* © Rosie; *Ophrys kotschyi* © Glenys)



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## Introduction

Nestling in the far east of the Mediterranean, Cyprus is a fabulous orchid-hunting destination in the early spring, enjoying reliably pleasant weather and sporting a good range of orchid species, including some endemics and near-endemics, and other species at the very edge of their global range, just creeping into Europe.

With a comfortable and friendly hotel as our base for the week in the heart of orchid country, and with one of our leaders having arrived a few days earlier to check on the state of play this flowering-season, we were all set for a productive tour. Joining leaders Jon & Richard were Rosie, Graham, Jenny & Ian, Tony, Wendy & Howard, Glenys & Stephen, Beth & Doug, and Janice.

What follows is a daily diary account of the week, a detailed checklist, and galleries of images kindly provided by guests.

## Arrivals Day, 2<sup>nd</sup> March

Arrivals day is always a bit of a chore whenever one travels, but we were delighted that today all went smoothly and without any hitches. Some guests had elected to arrive in Cyprus in the days preceding today and, for those who were flying in on the day, all flights arrived on time around lunchtime.



*Ophrys flavomarginata* © Jenny

The airport in Paphos is small, well-organised, and extremely efficient – just the way we like it! By mid-afternoon we were all on the road and heading towards our comfortable hotel on the edge of the Akama National Forest Park. Once there and checked in, and when we'd had a chance to freshen up, we walked a hundred yards behind the hotel to enjoy our first orchids of the week in what light remained of the day – a bankside covered in *Ophrys flavomarginata*, a relatively large-flowered and well-marked *Ophrys* bee orchid with which we would become most familiar in the coming days, so ubiquitous was it to prove on the island!

After our introductory talk, outlining what we might expect during the course of the week, we had our first dinner and went to bed to dream of the orchids that lay ahead of us.

## Day 1, 3<sup>rd</sup> March

Our first full day in Cyprus dawned clear-skied and with the promise of sunshine throughout the day. Those who wandered outside the hotel to check out the local *Ophrys flavomarginata* bore witness to a heavy overnight dew – perfect conditions to bring on the orchids in the days to come!

Those *Ophrys flavomarginata* were in fine fettle, with some beautiful fresh and large-flowered examples of their kind to be seen. Scattered through them were our first yellow-flowered *Ophrys sicula*. Amongst this jostle of bee orchids lurked a couple of pleasant surprises – a wildly aberrant *flavomarginata* with no discernible lip whatsoever, just a jostle of green sepals with faint traces of brown pigmentation; and a possible candidate for a hybrid *flavomarginata* x *sicula*, showing intermediate characters suggestive of some parental shenanigans, but evading confident determination one way or another – a salutary lesson in the shades of grey that stalk hybrid *Ophrys*!

After breakfast we drove a very short distance to the head of a trail we would walk today, stretching our legs in leisurely fashion after a travel day to get to Cyprus. We soon found the first of a great many more *Ophrys flavomarginata* we would see in the course of the day and, scattered among them, our first delicately-hued *Anacamptis syriaca*. We were off to a good start!

More followed as we wandered our way through ruderal fields – *Anacamptis collina*, mostly faded as one would expect with this earlier flowering species, but with some fine specimens of their kind to follow as the day progressed; another strange *flavomarginata*, this time with two lips on one inflorescence; and two new *Ophrys* in quick succession – *Ophrys astarte*, allowing some enlightening debate about where *flavomarginata* ended and *astarte* began(!), and *Ophrys elegans*, a fine find by Beth.



Anacamptis syriaca © Jenny



Orchis punctulata © Ian

As we headed inland, Richard spotted the first of the day's many *Ophrys mammosa*, a typically statuesque plant on the verges of the track we were following. By late morning, we arrived at the junction of several tracks that wound inland in different directions. Here Jon suggested areas that would prove fruitful in which to explore, and we set off determined to reconvene at lunchtime with a fine haul of sightings.

Simultaneously, Glenys and Graham found our first examples of one of the main targets of the week's orchid-hunting – magnificent, large spikes of *Orchis punctulata*, its yellow flowers burnished with rich chestnut filigree. These were greatly admired – and, by the end of the day, we would have counted over 150 examples of this glorious European rarity!

Many enormous Giant Orchid *Himantoglossum robertianum* were to be seen scattered over the hillside terraces here, displaying a fine range of flower colours from deep bruised violet to apple green and white. Keen eyes paid close attention to every '*Ophrys mammosa*' we encountered, and soon enough we'd found first of all green-eyed *Ophrys morio*, the first found by Rosie; and, in due course, golden-fringed *Ophrys alasiatica* too. These cryptic taxa rewarded our close attention.

Butterflies were on the wing, with at least a dozen male Paphos Blue encountered in the course of the two hours we spent before lunchtime exploring this biologically rich area. Those keen on their herps were busily notching up species, with Snake-eyed and Troodos Lizard both seen; Budak's Skink and Kotschy's Gecko; the recently-split Cyprus Rock Agama *Laudakia cypriaca*; a Black Whip Snake found by Rosie; and a substantial Blunt-nosed Viper found by Jon. Seven species in one day was highly satisfying.



Blunt-nosed Viper © Tony

Our homeward-bound walk was packed with more orchidaceous delights – still more *Orchis punctulata*, some growing alongside drifts of showy *Cyclamen persica*; yet more drifts of *Ophrys mammosa*; and in a final flourish, a gem-like *Ophrys orientalis* spotted by Glenys.



At the close of the day, we'd seen a dozen species, an excellent start to the week's orchid-hunting account, and fine taster of the days to come.

## Day 2, 4<sup>th</sup> March



*Epipactis veratrifolia* © Jon

Today would be a longer day, but one with great promise on the orchid front. We set off straight after breakfast for the drive down to the southwest corner of the island, with a host of new orchids on our minds. The road system in Cyprus is of excellent quality, so the journey passed smoothly and uneventfully, and soon enough we had stopped at our first, albeit brief, site of the day.

Here on a roadside cutting we found a dozen examples of *Epipactis veratrifolia*, one of which was just starting to flower, to our delight. This *Epipactis* orchid is found in Europe only on Cyprus and, even there, is usually a midsummer-flowering species at higher altitudes. This lone colony, nearer to sea level, in the south of the island, and on a chalk face with a steady supply of water trickling down it, is highly anomalous in flowering considerably earlier. With Richard having checked in the days before the group's arrival to ensure we had a flowering plant, we could be reasonably confident of what we'd find here. Having duly admired the sole flowering example of *Epipactis veratrifolia* in Europe, we moved on from this sensitive roadside site to somewhere we could all wander more freely.

Down on the very shores of the salt lake at Akrotiri we were able to take our time and spend an hour in the company of, arguably, the most



*Ophrys kotschyi* © Rosie

totemic orchid of all that's to be found on Cyprus, the island's glorious endemic bee orchid, *Ophrys kotschyi*. As we all know, many of the *Ophrys* orchids are extremely visually arresting, but *O. kotschyi* takes matters to an extreme level – fresh flowers have almost black and white lips, with strongly contrasting markings. Not only that, the flowers are large, and elegantly proportioned – this is an orchid with serious stage presence, and one that no visiting orchid-hunter would want to miss during their time on the island. We found several dozen plants in this area, all newly flowering, and many sporting multiple flowers on each flower spike. Also present here were some fine examples of vigorous

*Ophrys sicula*, and some faded *Ophrys flavomarginata*.

A couple of miles away, and away from the brackish shore of the lagoon, we spent some time in the midst of a burgeoning colony of another new *Ophrys* for the week, the delicately patterned and coloured *Ophrys levantina*. These delightful orchids grew here in some profusion and, in their midst, harboured a surprise – a fine *trollii* 'wasp orchid' variation, an uncommonly encountered genetic aberration in *Ophrys* that results in their flowers losing their usual markings and form, reducing them to a vespid form quite unlike their normal type-appearance.



*Ophrys kotschyi* © Glenys



*Ophrys levantina* var. *trollii* © Jon



Orchis sezikiana © Jenny

From here, a short 20 minute drive inland brought us to our lunch-site – the first of three stops we would make during the afternoon, all in dry, phrygana-type habitat. At first glance, we could be forgiven for wondering why we would stop here – pulling off the road, the layby in which we parked was disappointingly strewn with rubbish, making a mockery of the stern sign we parked besides exhorting Cypriots not to fly-tip here. Jon however was at pains to reassure the group that, moving away from the road, the unspoilt habitat beyond harboured orchids. Sure enough, as we filtered into the landscape, the finds began to mount up. Hiding amongst the dry scrubby shrubs here were *Anacamptis syriaca* and *Ophrys flavomarginata*, our near-constant companions this week; and more keenly sought orchids besides.

In quick succession Jon and Richard found examples of *Ophrys astarte* and *Ophrys morio* respectively, the latter proving particularly well-received. Nearby, between us we found further *Ophrys mammosa*, *O. elegans* and just one faded example of *O. orientalis* – the fine plant Glenys had found the previous day now really proving its worth to us!

Five minutes' drive up the road brought us to a slightly more verdant area where, no sooner had we stepped out of the vehicles, Rosie drew our attention to some delicate orchids hiding in the grass – our first *Orchis sezikiana*. Moving through a mosaic of grazed meadows where *Romulea tempskyana* and crocuses distracted us momentarily, we explored the orchid delights of another arid hillside – and this was to prove most productive.

Jon, Glenys and Howard formed the advance party, with a lovely *alba* form of *Anacamptis syriaca* only briefly distracting them before Glenys's sharp eyes found our first *Ophrys iricolor* of the week. Here on Cyprus this large-flowered orchid seems to be found in its very finest form, with enormous and intense blue areas on the flowers. Nearby, Jon found several examples of our first *Ophrys israelitica*, a rather less showy orchid altogether!



Ophrys iricolor © Graham

With the rest of the group joining the advance party on the hillside, the finds quickly mounted up, with more lovely *O. iricolor* being much appreciated, and some fine, fresh examples of *Anacamptis collina* also seen. Even as we turned to leave, Wendy spotted yet another new species for the week –



Ophrys lapethica © Jenny

a small but distinctive example of *Ophrys lapethica*. *Lapethica* is a localised near-endemic with colourful flowers, so one that's always a pleasure to encounter – and Richard had a final treat up his sleeve for us on our homebound journey in that regard, for in the days beforehand he had discovered a roadside site that boasted several dozen *O. lapethica* flower spikes in excellent condition.

These striking orchids proved very popular indeed with the photographers, and it was a well-satisfied group of orchid-hunters who drove towards a beautiful sunset on their way back to the hotel. Our evening checklist revealed that we had now seen 19 species of orchids in the space of the first two days and, in their number, we could now include some truly iconic species seen both in good numbers and fine condition.

### Day 3, 5<sup>th</sup> March

Today proved to be a little cooler than the preceding days, with a brisk north-easterly wind blowing all day, and some clouds curdling in the sky in the afternoon. Not that any of this daunted us – the wind made plant photography a little more challenging, but happily where we spent the day boasted many thousands of orchids, and we were usually able to find a desired plant in a sheltered spot!

We spent the entire day exploring the forested area of the Akamas Peninsula. Here the pine forests support a rich orchid flora, in addition to many other notable plants of interest – we were barely out of the vehicles before we'd seen the curious endemic thyme *Thymus integer*, with its long trumpet shaped flowers. The rich scent of this plant hung heavily in the air when we were down at ground level with our cameras and hand lenses.



Orchids were immediately apparent even as we arrived – many *Anacamptis syriaca* were flowering on the forest floor, with white *alba* forms regularly found in their number. We soon found the first of several pale yellow Roman Orchid *Dactylorhiza romana* – these were just coming into bloom, and



were suggestive of some cool weather in the preceding weeks. We'd already seen the signs of this in the lack of flowering *Serapias* tongue orchids to date, and the impression was further borne out by our not finding a fully flowering Dense-flowered Orchid *Neotinea maculata* today – we came close though, with some plants seen with tall flower spikes that remained in bud.

We spent the morning uphill of our parking area, exploring the trackways and forested areas there.

Many male Paphos Blue butterflies were on the wing, undaunted by the wind, and some of us saw a female individual too – only the second of her kind we'd encountered thus far. On the more exposed rocky areas above the trees we found many delicate *Orchis sezikiana*, and one rather feeble *Orchis troodi*. Happily, just before lunch, Wendy discovered a particularly lush and impressive colony of the latter at a lower elevation, and after we'd had our picnic we all took the time to enjoy the sight of these statuesque and elegant flowers.

Before that though, we'd also been examining the contents of the many clearings that studded the woodland. Here we found plenty of *Ophrys levantina* and *Ophrys elegans*, and a hybrid of the two for good measure. Nearby were the first emergent *Ophrys aphrodite* – a later flowering species, these were understandably seen in smaller numbers.



After lunch we continued our exploration of the forest tracks downhill from the parking area – *Ophrys lapethica* studded the forest floor here, and it was in this area that Richard made the find of the day – a clear hybrid between *O. lapethica* and *O. elegans*. To the best of our knowledge this





particular hybrid hasn't been recorded before, so this was an exciting moment for us all, not to mention a striking and beautiful flower.

Lower down the track, passing more *Orchis sezikiana*, we found a bank smothered with *Ophrys israelitica* – it was fascinating to see how dark the flowers of these plants were compared to those of the plants we'd seen the previous day on the open, arid hillside in the south of the island. Different environments were allowing the plants to express themselves in different ways.

We finished the day at the coast with either ice creams or cold drinks – or both! – before returning to our hotel to examine the bulging contents of those camera memory cards.

### Day 4, 6<sup>th</sup> March

We set off inland on a somewhat less windy morning than had greeted us the day previously, on a circular inland route that would encompass three distinctive habitats – a dry, exposed phrygana hilltop; ruderal terraces, abandoned to cultivation some years ago; and an area of open woodland studded with open clearings comprising limestone pavement.

Our first stop was on a hilltop above Pegia, a site at which the orchid abundance of Cyprus was in full, exuberant display – we found 10 species in the space of little over an hour and a half wandering in a relatively compact area, all the meantime enjoying a spectacular view of the Cypriot coastline far below us. Inevitably, the first species we encountered was *Ophrys flavomarginata* – our ubiquitous daily friend here! – but this was soon followed by *Ophrys elegans*, and *Ophrys levantina*. The non-*Ophrys* orchids made a spirited challenge to this monopoly on our attention, with examples of *Anacamptis syriaca* and Giant Orchid *Himantoglossum robertianum* to be seen, but it was the bee orchids that were to win the day – we also found examples of *Ophrys morio*, *O. israelitica*, *O. sicula*, and *O. cinereophila* here.



The latter caused some conjecture and speculation amongst the leaders. One discrete patch of flowers, numbering several dozen plants growing in the cover of some low, thorny, shrubs, did not fit the usual appearance of *cinereophila*. Jon and Richard observed that, were these plants to be seen in the phrygana on Rhodes, they would not hesitate to call them *Ophrys parvula* – their flowers were particularly small, truncated, and dark, with clean, thin lime-green edges to the almost black labellum. This would be all very well on Rhodes, but here on Cyprus, where to the best of our knowledge *parvula* had never been recorded, these plants were distinctly out of place. Presumably these were just a local ecotype of *cinereophila*, adapted to their location and/or pollinator.



The site had another pleasant surprise in store for us, when Janice spotted a hyperchromic example of *Ophrys flavomarginata*, with arrestingly dark bronze-tinged green sepals. This was a plant to admire at length, and a group effort ensured that everyone who wanted to take images had the plant sheltered from the wind and, if so desired, shaded from the bright sunlight.

We moved on to our second site of the day, some 40 minutes inland, where we were to spend the remainder of the morning exploring a large terrace on another hillside near Pentalica. The site holds *Ophrys kotschyi*, though at this elevation they proved not to be in flower yet, but we had ample compensation for their absence in the vast abundance of *Ophrys alasiatica* we found here – hundreds of flowering plants, many with wonderfully exaggerated golden fringes to their labella. There were also a handful of *Ophrys mammosa* present here, for useful comparative purposes. Richard added a new species to our flowering orchid tally in the form of a newly emergent Naked Man Orchid *Orchis italica*, while Rosie discovered a wildly aberrant *Ophrys* with so divergent a flower that no clear determination could be made of what species it belonged to.



*Ophrys mammosa* © Jenny



*Ophrys aphrodite* © Graham

From here we drove back towards Pegia, a rather tiresome 40 minute drive as we passed through the suburbs of Paphos and hit every traffic light on red, adding some minutes to our journey. That journey was well worth it though, for our afternoon site was to prove to be a peach.

For starters, we had picnic tables and an actual toilet block on hand for our lunch break! Both are a considerable luxury for the orchid hunter in the great outdoors in the Mediterranean! Better than that, the surrounding forest was brimming with orchids... We walked a loop through the forest, exploring the many small clearings off the easy, level trail we were following.

Each clearing held orchids – a great many *Anacamptis syriaca*, in typical purple hues, but also pale rose-pink, and pure white; and a profusion of *Ophrys levantina* and *Ophrys elegans*. We were pleased to find a handful more *Ophrys aphrodite*, further burnishing our daily total. Jenny and Tony discovered what might be the largest Giant Orchid ever seen, an enormous specimen with show-quality glossy leaves and a flower spike that towered a couple of feet above ground level.

Towards the end of this circuit through the woods we found some particularly photogenic examples of *Ophrys elegans* and, scattered around them, more typical appearance *Ophrys cinereophila* – these made the plants of the morning all the more intriguing. Nearby, our return to the vehicles was disrupted by some confiding Cyprus Rock Agama *Laudakia cypriaca* that posed nicely for their portraits.



*Laudakia cypriaca* © Tony

## Day 5, 7<sup>th</sup> March

We took some time after breakfast this morning to check out the progress of the orchids on the small pasture behind our hotel – this would prove a useful sense check of how the flowering period had progressed since we arrived in Cyprus almost a week ago. This was an enlightening half hour, as it showed the flowering *Ophrys flavomarginata* had advanced considerably, as had the surrounding





grass, which was now considerably taller than it had been. Jon, quartering the back of the pasture in search of *Serapias*, found a small patch of *Ophrys mammosa*.

We made the short drive to a gently sloping hillside outside Neo Chorio that Richard had discovered on one of his recce visits in the area. His hard work ensured that we knew we should have a new species to look forward to here – the delicately coloured and intricately patterned *Ophrys umbilicata*.

It was not long before we were enjoying a small colony of these lovely orchids at the base of a grove of pine trees, though not before we'd been distracted by further *Ophrys mammosa*, many *Anacamptis syriaca*, and a

fine Common Yellow Scorpion *Buthus occidentalis*.

We walked a trackway up to the hilltop, with several jousting male Paphos Blue our companions. Here we found a great many more *Ophrys mammosa* in excellent condition, and another particularly photogenic scorpion who was duly admired.



The morning was passing most agreeably, and we decided to explore another extensive meadow system a few hundred yards further along the minor road that ran at the foot of the hillside before moving on to a new site for lunch. In the event, the orchids in this final meadow of the morning were so good we stayed on here for rather longer, making the most of the brilliant wildflowers we were finding. Itineraries, we think, need to be flexible to take into account local conditions and circumstances, and what we saw at this site demanded longer and closer attention!



Our first clue that this site was a special one came in highly serendipitous circumstances – during the opportunity we took for a group photo beneath an old carob tree. The meadow had clearly been ploughed, perhaps the previous year – not a

wholly unwelcome development, as many orchids love broken ground and prosper upon it in future years, with undisturbed orchids at the base of nearby trees and escarpments acting as a donor seedbank for the colonists. Jenny took the role of official team photographer, carefully composing the scene in her phone atop a camera bag, and dashing to join the assembled group beneath the tree.

It was Rosie's sharp eyes that noticed that we had all managed to avoid treading on a small flowering *Serapias* orchid in our midst! This proved to be the endemic Cypriot species, *Serapias aphrodite*, a most unexpected surprise. Our team photo concluded, we turned our attention to recording this welcome development, before spreading out to explore the meadow with renewed enthusiasm.

Sure enough, while we did not find any more *Serapias* in flower – the cool weeks of spring beforehand continuing to have delaying consequences for them – we did very well indeed for orchids of other kinds, in particular





Dactylorhiza romana © Rosie

*Ophrys*. A lovely colony of *Ophrys morio* were discovered, their green eyes coolly returning our appreciative gaze. It was Stephen, however, who really hit the jackpot at the edge of a rocky escarpment – he and Glenys found *Ophrys iricolor* and *O. cinereophila* growing almost side by side, with more *Ophrys umbilicata* mere feet away! As more orchid-hunting eyes were applied to this small area, more and more *Ophrys* turned up in it – *flavomarginata*, *sicula*, *morio*, *israelitica*... this really was a bee orchid wonderland.

Needless to say, we ended up having lunch here, having spent the entire morning exploring just a small section of this terrific hillside site. After lunch, we made a 45 minute drive to a very different habitat indeed, heading up into the pine-covered hills near the Gialia

Monastery. In the back of our minds was the possibility of finding a determined Dense-flowered Orchid *Neotinea maculata* in flower – but we knew there would be other species present here and, in particular, were hoping for a good display of the beautiful primrose-yellow flowered Roman Orchid *Dactylorhiza romana*.

To say they delivered would be something of an understatement, for after being stopped in our tracks by a drift of them high overhead on a cutting embankment, we went on to find a great many, more accessible, plants in full and exuberant bloom on the woodland floor. Here too we found more of the statuesque *Orchis troodi*, many hundreds more *Anacamptis syriaca* and, at last, a butterfly we'd been keeping an eye open for all week, but hadn't bumped into yet – several newly emerged and immaculate Eastern Festoon *Allanacstria cerisyi*.



Allanacstria cerisyi © Tony

We finished the day up at the ruins of the Gialia Monastery – this archaeological site, deep in the wooded hills, was quiet and peaceful, the calm only broken by the discovery by Richard of our first



Pelophylax cypriensis © Ian

frog of the week, a very showy Cyprus Water Frog *Pelophylax cypriensis*, an obliging creature (this is the frog, not Richard!) who posed beautifully for his admirers. Our return to the vehicles was further interrupted by a magnificent Cyprus Rock Agama, who also put on quite the display for us, initially posing on the ruins before climbing onto the trunk of a nearby tree, where he began a head-bobbing display to another agama higher up the trunk. All in all, today had been an excellent day with orchids aplenty, and other wildlife too.

### Day 6, 8<sup>th</sup> March

For our final full day in the field, our leaders had planned a grand finale that would see us spread our wings a little further afield, heading south and east across the island in search of lower elevations, warmer conditions and just perhaps some species a little more advanced than we'd hitherto encountered.





Their logic was impeccable, and our first roadside stop to stretch our legs as we headed towards Larnaca yielded, among other treasures some particularly fine examples of *Ophrys iricolor* – easily the best specimens of this magnificent orchid we'd seen to date. Those here in Cyprus seem to have more extensive and intensely-coloured blue mirrors on their lips, and this was showing to great advantage on these particular plants.

We pressed on southeast, and made our next stop on one side of a steep valley, parking at an abandoned farmstead a little way off-road. From here, a track followed the contours of the hillside, allowing us easy access on foot along the side of the valley. This transect was a slow and fruitful one. We began with more *Ophrys iricolor* and, very quickly,

followed this with the first fully blooming Naked Man Orchid *Orchis italica* of the week – as befits this proud species, it was duly much admired.

A little further along the track the valley's gradient became more gentle, and allowed us to explore easily a little uphill from our previous contour – we found many dozens of Naked Man Orchid in all stages from tight bud to exuberant bloom, and also some new *Ophrys* for the day – *O. astarte* and *O. lapethica* representing the scarcer species in their number, and still more *Ophrys alasiatica* gilding the site with their golden-fringed flowers.



As the morning wore on, we moved back towards Katodrys, exploring a long-abandoned small quarry site before lunch. Here the various iterations of *Ophrys mammosa* gave us some pause for thought. Classic *O. mammosa* was present, as was green-eyed *O. morio*. So far, so good, and we were on now familiar taxonomic terrain... However, the site was also renowned for holding examples of a further similar taxon known as *Ophrys herae* – and Richard soon spotted some flowering examples which matched their description – significantly smaller-flowered, spindly plants.

*Herae*, however, is a contentious creature – first described from Samos, opinion is divided as to the extent of its range – some authorities maintaining it is widespread in the Aegean; others that it's found in Samos alone; and some suggesting it's also in Western Türkiye. Within that spectrum of opinion reside the Cyprus plants, which are either *O. herae*, or not!



These intriguing plants duly examined, measured and photographed in some detail, we moved a couple of miles uphill to another abandoned quarry where we stopped for lunch. The effects of the advancing spring and warmer weather in this part of the island were apparent – Richard had been here a week ago, and found the area bristling with *Orchis punctulata* in fine condition, but they were mostly at the end of their flowering period now, just a week later. However, some fine fresh and unblemished yellow

examples did remain, and were well-received by us all.

Our final site for the day was within the shady open woodland of Delikipos Forest, where we spent a couple of hours wandering at leisure – with, of course, *Neotinea maculata* still very much in the back of our minds, but generally simply appreciative of a final wonderful display of orchids to round off



the week. The forest floor was studded with many examples of flowering *Anacamptis syriaca* and *Ophrys elegans*, some of the latter displaying some mild variation with extensive green areas present on their flowers. *Neotinea maculata* just wasn't coming out to play, with our best efforts still unrewarded by any flowers more advanced than in tight bud, but we did get see one final *Serapias* tongue orchid in bloom – with thanks to Richard who acted as an orchid midwife!



He'd found a *Serapias aphrodite* on the very verge of blossoming – after a little drink of water, and half an hour of bright torchlight and time spent within his cupped hands enjoying warm breath upon it, it opened its first flower of the year! This was next-level orchid-whispering, we all agreed!

Our journey back to the hotel passed quickly with much conversation and stories swapped and, once there, we gathered one final time for our orchid checklist in the evening, some of us hearing the Cyprus Scops Owl calling outside as we walked to the warm bar area before dinner.

### Departures Day, 9<sup>th</sup> March

With our homebound flights all being during the afternoon, we were treated to a leisurely start to the day, enjoying our final breakfast together sat outside on the hotel terrace in warm sunshine, overlooking the blue Mediterranean beyond. In due course we said our goodbyes to the friendly hotel staff, and set off for the easy drive back to Paphos. We arrived in good time, time enough to enjoy a coffee and to swap contact details before heading our respective ways, homeward bound with memory cards bulging with orchid images, and plenty of happy memories all our own of time spent enjoying the spring wildlife of this wonderful island in fine company. Old friendships had been renewed this week, and new ones forged.

Richard and Jon would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for their convivial company during the week – we were an excellent team, and everyone found fabulous plants (and beasties!) to share with one another. Particular thanks go to Rosie for compiling a list of other non-orchidaceous plants recorded during the week, included here in the trip report; to Wendy for deploying her bat detector to good effect; and to Tony for bringing his herpetological skills to bear during the week. We look forward to seeing you all again soon!

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ORCHIDS OF CYPRUS 2 <sup>nd</sup> -9 <sup>th</sup> MARCH 2025								
	Species name nf = not flowering. For the purposes of completeness, these are nonetheless included in the species totals	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
	<b>Anacamptis</b>							
1	<i>Anacamptis pyramidalis</i>							
2	<i>Anacamptis collina</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
3	<i>Anacamptis coriophora</i>							
4	<i>Anacamptis syriaca</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
5	<i>Anacamptis laxiflora</i>							
	<b>Himantoglossum</b>							
6	<i>Himantoglossum robertianum</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
	<b>Dactylorhiza</b>							
7	<i>Dactylorhiza romana</i>			✓		✓		
	<b>Neotinea</b>							
8	<i>Neotinea maculata</i>			nf		nf	nf	
	<b>Orchis</b>							
9	<i>Orchis italica</i>				✓	✓	✓	
10	<i>Orchis punctulata</i>	✓				nf	✓	
11	<i>Orchis sezikiana</i>		✓	✓				
12	<i>Orchis troodi</i>			✓		✓		
	<b>Ophrys: elegans group</b>							
13	<i>Ophrys elegans</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	<b>Ophrys: mammosa group</b>							
14	<i>Ophrys alasiatica</i>	✓			✓		✓	
15	<i>Ophrys mammosa</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
16	<i>Ophrys morio</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
	<b>Ophrys: umbilicata group</b>							
17	<i>Ophrys orientalis</i>	✓	✓					
18	<i>Ophrys astarte</i>	✓	✓				✓	
19	<i>Ophrys flavomarginata</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
20	<i>Ophrys kotschy</i>		✓		nf			
21	<i>Ophrys lapethica</i>		✓	✓			✓	
	<b>Ophrys: bornmuelleri group</b>							
22	<i>Ophrys aphrodite</i>			✓	✓			
23	<i>Ophrys levantina</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	<b>Ophrys: fusca group</b>							
24	<i>Ophrys cinereophila</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	
25	<i>Ophrys iricolor</i>		✓			✓	✓	
26	<i>Ophrys sicula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	<b>Ophrys: omegaifera group</b>							
27	<i>Ophrys israelitica</i>		✓	✓	✓		✓	
	<b>Epipactis</b>							
28	<i>Epipactis veratrifolia</i>		✓					
	<b>Serapias</b>							
29	<i>Serapias parviflora</i>							
30	<i>Serapias bergonii</i>							

	Species name	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
31	<i>Serapias aphrodite</i>					✓	✓	
32	<i>Serapias levantina</i>							
#	<i>Ophrys umbilicata</i>					✓		
#	<i>Ophrys herae</i>						✓	
#	<i>Spiranthes spiralis</i>			nf	nf	nf	nf	
	<b>Daily total:</b>	12	17	15	16	19	21	
	<b>Running total:</b>	12	19	25	26	28	29	
	<b>Presumed hybrids:</b>							
#	<i>Ophrys flavomarginata x sicula</i>	✓				✓		
#	<i>Ophrys elegans x levantina</i>			✓				
#	<i>Ophrys elegans x lapethica</i>			✓				
	<b>Miscellaneous flora &amp; fauna</b>							
	Paphos Blue <i>Glaucopteryx paphos</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓		
	Common Blue <i>Polyommatus icarus</i>	✓						
	Green Hairstreak <i>Callophrys rubi</i>					✓		
	Large White <i>Pieris brassicae</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Cleopatra <i>Gonepteryx cleopatra</i> ssp. <i>taurica</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Orange Tip <i>Anthocharis cardamines</i> ssp. <i>phoenissa</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Clouded Yellow <i>Colias crocea</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
	Swallowtail <i>Papilio machaon</i> ssp. <i>syriacus</i>		✓		✓		✓	
	Eastern Festoon <i>Allancastris cerisy</i> ssp. <i>cypria</i>					✓	✓	
	Painted Lady <i>Vanessa cardui</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Red Admiral <i>Vanessa atalanta</i>				✓	✓	✓	
	Hummingbird Hawkmoth <i>Macroglossum stellatarum</i>			✓				
	Common Yellow Scorpion <i>Buthus occitanus</i>					✓		
	Mediterranean Banded Centipede <i>Scolopendra cingulata</i>					✓		
	Oil Beetle <i>Meloe sp</i>					✓		
	Large Whip Snake <i>Dolichophis jugularis</i> ssp. <i>cypriacus</i>	✓						
	Blunt-nosed Viper <i>Macrovipera lebetinus</i>	✓						
	Budak's Skink <i>Ablepharus budaki</i>	✓				✓		
	Striped Skink <i>Heremites vittatus</i>					✓		
	Snake-eyed Lizard <i>Ophisops elegans</i> ssp. <i>schlueteri</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Troodos Rock Lizard <i>Phoenicolacerta troodica</i>	✓	✓					
	Kotschy's Gecko <i>Mediodactylus kotschy</i>	✓	✓					



	Species name	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
	Cyprus Rock Agama <i>Laudakia cypriaca</i>	✓			✓	✓		
	Cyprus Water Frog <i>Pelophylax cypriensis</i>					✓	✓	
	Kuhl's Pipistrelle <i>Pipistrellus kuhlii</i>	✓						
	Common Bent-wing Bat <i>Miniopterus schreibersii</i>	✓						
	Crested Lark <i>Galerida cristata</i>		✓					
	Greater Flamingo <i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>		✓					
	Zitting Cisticola <i>Cisticola juncidis</i>		✓					
	Black-winged Stilt <i>Himantopus himantopus</i>		✓					
	Caspian Tern <i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>			✓				
	Cyprus Scops Owl <i>Otus cyprius</i>						✓	
	<b>Amaryllidaceae</b>							
	<i>Allium neapolitanum</i> : Neapolitan garlic	✓						
	<b>Araceae (Arums)</b>							
	<i>Arisarum vulgare</i> : Friar’s-Cowl	✓						
	<b>Apiaceae (Umbels)</b>							
	<i>Ferula communis</i> : Giant fennel	✓						
	<i>Pimpinella cretica</i> : Cretan burnet saxifrage	✓						
	<i>Scandix pecten-veneris</i> : Shepherd’s needle	✓						
	<i>Zosima absinthifolia</i>							
	<b>Asparagaceae</b>							
	<i>Bellevalia trifolata</i> : Three-leaved hyacinth	✓						
	<i>Bellevalia nivalis</i> : Snow bellevalia	✓						
	<i>Muscari neglectum</i> : Grape hyacinth	✓						
	<i>Ornithogalum trichophyllum</i> : Filiform-leaved Star of Bethlehem	✓						
	<i>Ornithogalum umbellatum</i> : Star of Bethlehem	✓						
	<b>Asteraceae (Daisies)</b>							
	<i>Bellis sylvestris</i> : Field daisy	✓						
	<i>Calendula arvensis</i> : Field marigold	✓						
	<i>Tragopogon porrifolium</i> : Salsify	✓						

	<i>Helichrysum stoechas</i> : Shrubby everlasting	✓
<b>Brassicaceae</b>		
	<i>Alyssum akamasicum</i>	✓
	<i>Diplotaxis eruroides</i> : Wall rocket	✓
	<i>Erucaria hispanica</i> : Pink mustard	✓
	<i>Eruca vesicaria</i> : Rocket	✓
<b>Cistaceae</b>		
	<i>Cistus creticus</i> : Hoary rock rose	✓
	<i>Cistus parviflorus</i> : Sage-leaved cistus	✓
	<i>Fumana arabica</i> : Mediterranean rock rose	✓
<b>Fabiaceae (Legumes)</b>		
	<i>Anagris foetida</i> : Stinking bean trefoil	✓
	<i>Lathyrus cicera</i> : Red pea	✓
	<i>Lathyrus ochrus</i> : Winged vetchling	✓
	<i>Lathyrus palustris</i> : Wild pea	✓
	<i>Lotus corniculatus</i> : Birds-foot trefoil	✓
	<i>Lotus tetragonolobus</i> : Asparagus pea	✓
	<i>Medicago polymorpha</i> : Bur clover	✓
	<i>Trifolium clypeatum</i> : Shield clover	✓
	<i>Vicia lutea</i> : Yellow vetch	✓



## Galleries

All images that follow were kindly shared by tour participants



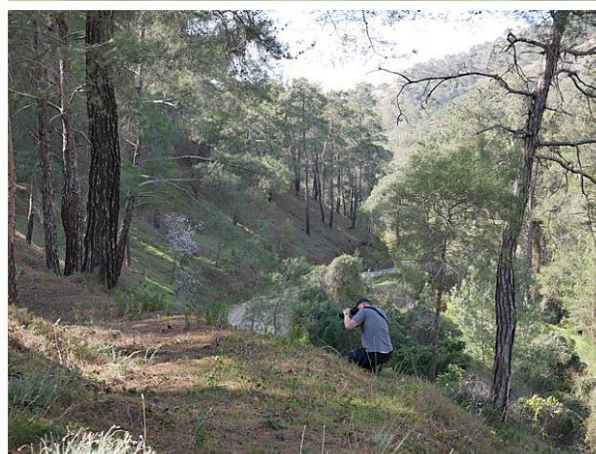
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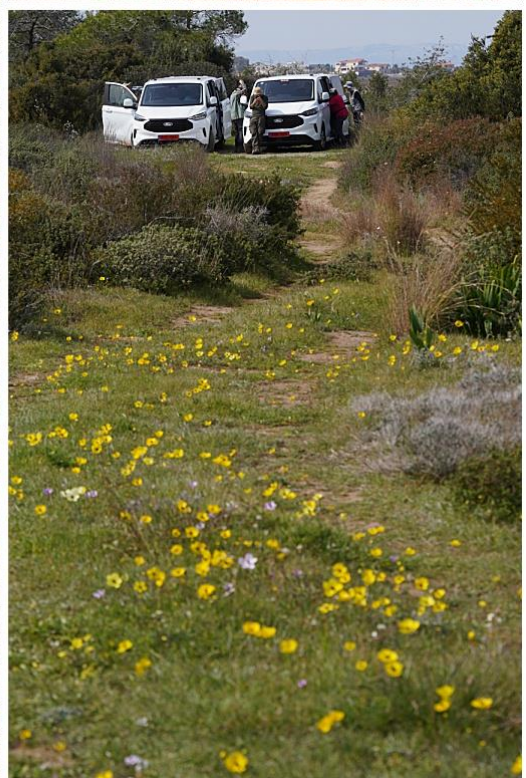


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[Orchids of Cyprus](#)

Alternatively, we have other orchid-hunting tours with remaining availability in 2026 that explore other wonderful areas of Europe!

[Orchids of the Gargano Peninsula](#)

[Late Spring Orchids of Sicily](#)