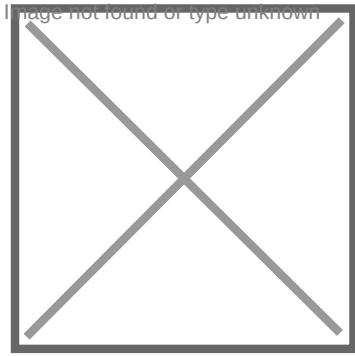


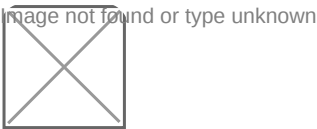


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Spring Flowers of Western Andalucia

Prix: **2010€**

Dates: **du 22 Mar 2023 au 29 Mar 2023**

Guide:

Descriptif

Our base for this 8-day botanical holiday is a peaceful country hotel, surrounded by nature and far away from the hustle and bustle of modern life. It is a green, sustainable and very comfortable base, offering a relaxed atmosphere to the benefit of our small groups. Timed to coincide with the peak of the early spring flowers, we will make daily excursions to explore the wide variety of habitats in the Natural Park of Sierra de Grazelema (within which the hotel is located), the Sierra de Pinar and, a little to the south-east, the Sierra de las Nieves. Join us for some early season sunshine and the study of a very special flora amidst stunning scenery.

Andalucía lies at one of the world's great crossroads, where Europe meets Africa and the Mediterranean joins the Atlantic. Here, across the Strait of Gibraltar, a constant ebb and flow of species has occurred over the Ice Ages to endow Andalucía with a great diversity of flora, fauna and human culture. Today, over 2,300 vascular plant species representing 140 families are found here, of which one third are endemic to the region. Egyptian Mongoose, Genet and several butterfly species, all with essentially African distributions, also occur. Further, the climate of Andalucía during the late Ice Age, being milder than in areas to the north, permitted the development of early human populations in the region. Indeed today many traces of their presence remain, notably in some impressive cave paintings. A succession of civilisations then followed. The Phoenicians and Greeks set up trading colonies and were followed by the Carthaginians, Romans and eventually the Moors, who brought with them high civilisation and Islam, and left behind a rich architectural legacy.

Andalucía is further blessed by a fascinating diversity of geology, landscape and climate, from the gentle sun-drenched sandstone hills above the narrow coastal plain to the dramatic, jagged limestone peaks of the Serrania de Ronda. Deep river valleys and spectacular gorges dissect the area and, scattered about them are characteristic Andalusian villages, the dazzling whitewashed walls of all their houses and the Arab design of their narrow winding streets reflecting the long Muslim domination of the area. Best of all for the botanist, the landscape is surprisingly green in this well-watered part of southern Spain and little influenced by modern farming practices.

We begin our tour with a flight to Málaga. We then drive north, through orange groves and vineyards, before climbing onto the scenic ridge-top route towards Ronda, with its constantly unfolding views of mountains and wooded valleys. Our base for the week is a beautiful traditional farmhouse, lovingly converted to provide comfortable accommodation and a relaxed atmosphere for the exclusive benefit of small groups. Situated just north-east of Ronda, it is set amongst its own vineyards and olive groves, and provides a perfect base for our week-long exploration of the area.

We have timed our holiday to coincide with the peak of the early spring flowers and will make daily excursions to explore the wide variety of the region's habitats in search of their special plants and birds.

Close to Ronda lies Grazelema, arguably the most perfect of the Pueblos Blancos (white mountain villages), where Hemingway wrote part of 'For Whom the Bell Tolls' and Oleg Polunin based himself whilst writing 'Flowers of South-west Europe'. The Natural Park of Sierra de Grazelema is one of Andalucía's foremost protected areas, and was declared a 'Biosphere Reserve' by UNESCO in 1977. The largest stand of the rare Spanish Fir (*Abies pinsapo*) occurs here, on the high limestone ridge of the Sierra del Pinar, whilst the grasslands, rocks and screes support a diversity of orchids and local populations of daffodils, *Narcissus* spp. Shaded rocks and cliffs are home to several saxifrages, the spectacular endemic crucifer, *Biscutella frutescens*, and the endemic *Centaurea clementei*. On other excursions, we will travel through the largest woodlands of Cork Oak (*Quercus suber*) in Europe, watch Griffon Vultures soaring

overhead, and visit the Cueva de la Pileta with its stunning stalactites, stalagmites and perplexing Palaeolithic paintings, leaving time to visit Ronda, in its spectacular cliff-top setting, high above its famous gorge.

The Sierra de las Nieves, a little way to the south, offer a complete contrast. Here, the maquis-covered lower slopes rise to open woodland, where *Paenonia broteroi* and *Paenonia coriacea* flourish. Higher up, we will walk amongst the Spanish Firs where, in early spring, the ground is carpeted with the large-flowered *Narcissus hispanicus*. Spanish Ibex range freely over the summits and Golden Eagle, Chough, Alpine Accentor and Crossbill are amongst the breeding birds of the park. From such heights the views over the Strait of Gibraltar and the Rif Mountains in Morocco are quite tremendous.

Further east, in the Baetic Cordillera, the forces of nature have created bizarre landscapes of eroded rocks. Above El Chorro, the Rio Guadalhorce has carved a dramatic defile through the sandstones, and today hosts a complex of hydroelectric dams. Around these the dense oak woodland and deep valleys provide a mosaic of habitats full of both plants and birds.

Our final highlight of the holiday will be a visit to El Torcal de Antequera which represents a dramatically eroded karst rising to over 1,300 metres. The fluted spires and bastions of gleaming white limestone that rise from the bright green turf form a surreal landscape and are home to such exciting endemic species as the pale blue toadflax, *Linaria antequera*, and the deep blue bearded iris, *Iris subbiflora*.

Responsible Destination

Contacteur Carine

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Présente du lundi au vendredi de 09h à 18h et le samedi de 09h à 17h.

Dates & Prix

Prix : **2010** euros par personne

Supplément single: **220** euros

du 15 Mar 2023 au 22 Mar 2023

Durée: **8 jours / 7 nuits**

du 22 Mar 2023 au 29 Mar 2023

Durée: **8 jours / 7 nuits**

Ce prix comprend

Flights FROM LONDON

Accommodation:

A charming, family-run converted farmhouse, all rooms with private facilities.

Food:

All food included in the price.

Journalier

Infos pratiques

Easy/moderate day walks only.

Quelques photos...

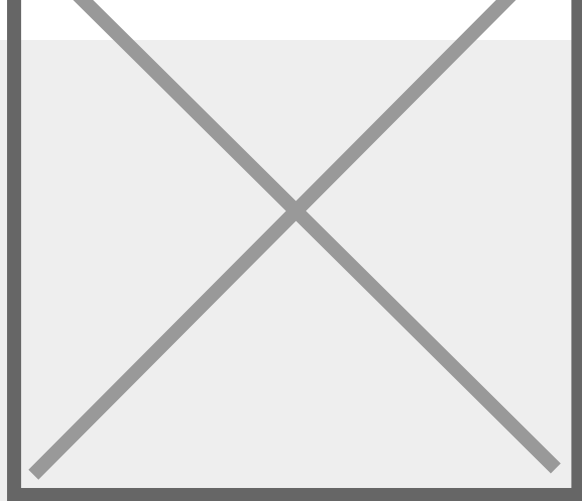
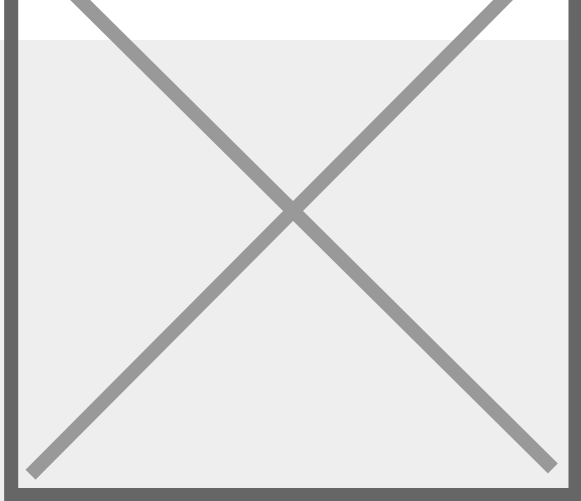


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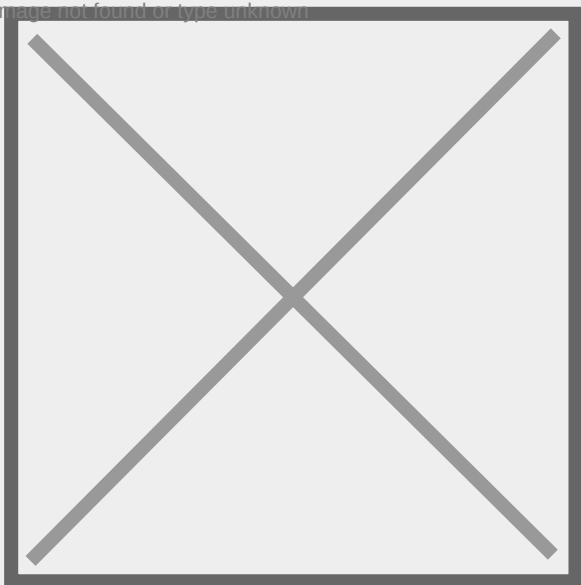


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