



La Nature – Wild Flora 12th – 17th April 2010

Itinerary

Monday 12th April You will be met at your airport or station of arrival (see getting here) and taken to the Hotel La Bastide in Cabezac. Alternatively, if you are arriving by car, you will be given instructions on how to reach the hotel. The hotel is situated adjacent to a wine domaine in the heart of the Minervois region. It provides a high standard of comfort and decor and has a restaurant and swimming pool. Dinner at the hotel.

Tuesday 13th April You will be picked up from the hotel and taken to Les Ecuries conference centre in Cesseroas for a general introduction to the programme and a briefing on the variety of local habitats and what you can expect to see. After a buffet lunch at Les Ecuries, we shall drive north of Cesseroas for a walk in the Montagne Noire. As one gains altitude, climate and vegetation change and are no longer “Mediterranean” and it is fascinating to observe these changes and remark on the different flora. The walk will include a particularly interesting area of upland (700m) grassland on limestone, where a microhabitat contains many Mediterranean species such as Anthyllis, Teucrium, Iberis, bulbs and orchids. Evening free.

Wednesday 14th April This morning’s walk is close to the village of Assignan, near St Chinian. The route will include areas of limestone (basic soil) and areas of schist or acid soil and will allow us to compare the types of vegetation found on each soil type. Plants we can expect to see on the acid soils include Strawberry trees, tree heather, Montpellier Cistus and Lavandula stoechas with species such as Cistus albidus, Quercus ilex and many others on the limy soils. Lunch at Le Faitout restaurant in Berlou and in the afternoon we will take another stroll allowing us to further investigate local flora on acid soils. Evening free.

Thursday 15th April Today we will take a whole day’s walk over the Massif de la Clape (stone in local dialect), in the Parc naturel regional de la Narbonnaise, with a picnic lunch. This area was an island in Roman times and is now a protected site with a particularly rich and varied flora and fauna. As the area is nearer to the coast the flora should be more advanced, allowing us to see different species in bloom such as the later flowering orchids and the stunning blue Narbonne flax, as well as plants such as Cneorum tricocum and Pistacia lentiscus which are more often seen nearer the coast. Dinner at La Distillerie restaurant in St. Marcel.

Friday 16th April Our final walk will be over an area of limestone causses near the village of Minerve. We shall expect to see Mediterranean aromatics such as thyme and lavender, evergreen shrubs such as Cistus, Rhamnus, Quercus as well as bulbs such as tiny narcissus and irises and some orchids. We will also walk along a section of the River Briant and be able to observe species which grow in this more humid environment. Lunch will be at the Restaurant Le Chantavent in Minerve before returning to Les Ecuries for a final debriefing and a tasting of the excellent wines of the Minervois. Evening free.

Saturday 17th April Breakfast and transfer to your railway station or airport.



Price € 895

Single room supplement € 225

If you wish to pay in a currency other than euros, the exchange rate for the cost of the holiday will be fixed at the rate on the day of booking.

For reference: <http://markets.ft.com/markets/currencies.asp>