

MEDITERRANEAN PLANTS AND GARDENS TOUR – 2019

A 10-day tour

Date	Daily Programme	Evening
THURS 7 Feb	Arrive at King Shaka Airport in Durban (usual arrival from the UK via Johannesburg is about 2pm). Drive from the coast to Underberg in the southern Drakensberg (about a 2.5hr drive). Collection from King Shaka International Airport, Durban. Please arrive by 2.30pm at the latest. Travel by Mercedes bus Underberg, a village on the edge of the Maloti Drakensberg World Heritage Park (about 3 hours drive).	Cedar Gardens B&B
FRI 8 Feb	Transfer to 4 x 4 vehicles and drive up the world famous Sani Pass, staying just over the border in Lesotho at a little lodge on the edge of the escarpment with amazing views and wonderful atmosphere (2850m). Almost all the plants on the summit in Lesotho are endemic to the mountain kingdom – and, with the Drakensberg plants seen on the slow road up the Pass - parents to many plants found in northern hemisphere gardens. Weather permitting, we will drive on, after unpacking at the Lodge, to the top of Black Mountain Pass, at 3240m, further inland into Lesotho.	Sani Mountain Lodge
SAT 9 Feb	Take a slow walk and drive down the Sani Pass, taking more time to look at the plants, especially along the top 800m on the zig-zags where there is amazing diversity of species. Spend the night back at Cedar Gardens in Underberg.	Cedar gardens
SUN 10 Feb	Drive to Giants Castle Game Reserve in the Northern Drakensberg, through the mistbelt grasslands and farmlands. The camp is set at about 1600m, looking up at the 3000m escarpment. The chalets are thatched, set in natural gardens with great birdlife and some wildlife.	Giants Castle Rest Camp
MON 11 Feb	Take the contour walk to Main Caves where there is a guided tour of Bushman/San rock art. En route, the grasslands can be full of flowers. You are walking through <i>Protea</i> woodland, and into montane forest around the cave (a large overhang). The walk returns along a beautiful rushing mountain stream.	Giants Castle
TUES 12 Feb	Drive to Cavern Berg Resort (about 2 hours). The Cavern is a comfortable, family-run hotel (recently celebrated 75 years) set into the foothills of the northern Drakensberg, adjacent to the World Heritage site Royal Natal National Park game reserve. Also thatched, it has many walks and trails through nearly 3000 ha of natural mountains.	Cavern Berg Resort

Date	Daily Programme	Evening
WED 13 Feb	Either enjoy some of the Cavern walks or spend the day at Royal Natal National Park, famous for the Amphitheatre – an iconic scenic spot where you look up at the 1000m drop of basalt. Walk part of the way on the Tugela Gorge walk to enjoy the views and the flowers.	Cavern
THURS 14 Feb	Travel 2 hours to Witsieshoek, a small inn run by the local community in collaboration with a Peace Parks (trans-frontier) company, set at 2400m, with spectacular views of the Amphitheatre and a lovely wildflower meadow of Drakensberg flowers in front of the chalets. Walk or drive to explore the area.	Witsieshoek
FRI 15 Feb	The inn is situated 13km from the Sentinel car park. From the car park we follow the path towards the Sentinel Peak and the summit of the Amphitheatre. This is one of the great destinations for alpine plants in southern Africa. We do not attempt to hike to the summit itself, there is too much to see and photograph en route. The views are spectacular, but mist can be a feature. A slow drive back down to Witsieshoek also provides wonderful plants and views.	Witsieshoek
SAT 16 Feb	Drive to Johannesburg (to O R Tambo international airport, or to a hotel, depending on the needs of the group. Allow 5 hours for the drive, including stops. We can also drive back to Durban but it will take about an hour longer.	

BOTANICAL INFORMATION:

Early February is an excellent time to visit Sani Pass and the Drakensberg. Sani Pass is one of the wonders of southern Africa, for amongst other things, the extraordinary range of plants - this valley has the greatest diversity of plant life anywhere in the Drakensberg. Summer in the mountains is orchid season and hopefully we will find some in full bloom. We might see up to 4 species of the endemic genus *Glumicalyx*. The wonderful *Euryops acraeus* with silver leaves draped over the basalt should be covered in bright yellow daisy flowers. We might catch *Moraea alticola*, a mountain top special, growing up to 1m tall. Once on the summit of the escarpment at Sani Top Chalet we can expect masses of *Rhodohypoxis* carpeting the damp rocky places. In the Black Mountains we will find little *Zaluzianskya* endemics, *Jamesbrittenia lesutica*, a delightful white flowering shrublet found only in this part of Lesotho, and *Gladiolus saundersii* should be out with its large red and white flowers. Almost every plant found above the basalt is endemic to this high mountain region of Southern Africa, found there and nowhere else! Some of the flowering plants we may encounter include the following:

Acalypha punctata
Aristea cognate
Berkheya rosulata
Cycnium racemosa
Dierama dracomontium

Ajuca ophrydis
*Asclepias humilis**
Brunsvigia radulosa
Cyrthanthus breviflorus
*Erica algida**

*Albuca humilis**
Aster perfoliatus
Cerastium arabisoides
Dianthus basuticus
Eucomis humilis

Albuca fastigiata
Barleria monticola
Chrysocoma ciliata
Diascia barberae
Euphorbia epicyparissias

Euphorbia clavaroides
Geranium multisectum
*Gnidia compacta**
Helichrysum chionosphaerum
Helichrysum pilosellum
*Heliophila Formosa**
Ledebouria cf L. ovalis
Moraea robusta
*Psammotropha obtusa**
Rhodohypoxis baurii
Sebaea thomasi
Stachys aethiopica
*Urginea macrocentra**
Xerophyta viscosa

Felicia muricata
Geranium wakkerstroomianum
Greyia sutherlandii
*Helichrysum confertum**
*Helichrysum sessilioides**
Indigofera sp
Lithospermum papillosum
Muraltia flanagani
Ranunculus baurii
Scabiosa columbaria
Senecio barbatus
Sutherlandia Montana
Valeriana capensis
Zaluzianskya ovata

Felicia rosulata
Gladiolus longicollis
Hebenstretia cooperi
*Helichrysum marginatum**
Helichrysum trilineatum
*Jamesbrittenia pristisepala**
Lobelia flaccida
*Nemesia caerulea**
Raphionacme sp
*Schizoglossum montanum**
Senecio glaberrimus
Trachyandra saltii
Wahlenbergia cuspidate

Gazania krebsiana
*Glumicalyx goseloides**
Helichrysum aureum
Helichrysum montanum
Helichrysum vernum
Kniphofia thodei
*Melianthus villosus**
Polygala ohlendorffiana
*Relhania acerosa**
Scilla natalensis
Senecio rhomboideus
Tulbaghia acutiloba
Watsonia lepida

* *EMR Endemic*

YOUR GUIDE:

Elsa Pooley has an intimate knowledge of the flora of the region and has written the definitive book on the flora of the region. She regularly leads international tours. She is in demand as a designer of indigenous gardens in Southern Africa and is making a significant difference to the way private landowners lay out their properties using local plants.

WHAT TO BRING:

The days will be warm to hot (over 30°C) but the evenings and nights will be cool (down to 15°C). There may be afternoon thunderstorms and there could be heavy mist. You will need a hat, suntan lotion (block-out), lip-ice, a light raincoat, a jacket or windbreaker and stout shoes. There is very limited cellular telephone reception on Sani Pass or in Lesotho.