

TURKIYE KACKAR TRIP REPORT 2025

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tours



Day 1 20 July – Arrival and to Ikizdere

We all met up eventually at Rize and airport and drove onto the comfortable hotel-resort at Ridos, set among lush green hills, where we would be staying for the next four nights.

Day 2 21 July – Mor Yayla

The weather forecast was for rain, so we opted to spend the day on the drier side of the mountains where this was less likely. To do this we drove uphill past the dark green forests of *Picea orientalis* and *Fagus orientalis*, and where every slope was clothed thickly in greenery, then after passing through a long 14-kilometre tunnel exited in a quite different landscape that was noticeably drier with tints of brown and less green. The rainfall received by the Euxine-Colchic flora on the Black Sea slope quickly reduces and dissipates as its moves inland and the result is a much stronger influence of Irano-Turano steppe flora. Our route began to climb, and we stopped to sample the flora, immediately finding many plants in the rich rocky terrain. Drifts of *Melampyrum arvense* grew on the fringes of battered aspen woods, the silvery architectural form of *Eryngium giganteum* was hard to miss and around grew xxx, *Centaurea pulchella*, flowering rosettes of *Sempervivum minus*, *Teucrium orientalis*, *Pilosella hoppeana* and across the road we found *Acantholimon* xxxx, fine fresh spikes of *Orobanche* xxxx, masses more flowery drifts *Helichrysum plicatum* mixed with *Teucrium orientalis* and xxx. Bushes of *Rosa canina* were flowering along the road too. Driving on a flash of red caught our eye and we stopped to looked at *Papaver pseudo-orientale* that grew with *Centaurea* xxx, another species of *Orobanche* and a forest of *Cephalaria gigantea*. The meadows were brimming with colour, but it was impossible to stop everytime we saw something good and so went past the vast ranks of *Verbascum armenum*, *Campanula glomerata* and *Polygala anatolica* until we stopped on a bend for a slope with superb stands of *Centaurea macrocephala*. Alongside these was the intense blue of *Anchusa leptophylla*, fuzzy *Gypsophila elegans* and some lovely plants of *Scutellaria pontica* in perfect flower. An untimely squall had us running back to the vehicle, but it was short-lived, and we pushed onwards, descending to the village of Mor Yayla via big stands of *Epilobium angustifolia* and streams choked with *Alchemilla mollis*. The road then climbed again passing through a tract of overgrazed land where ridiculous numbers of sheep had been brought in for the summer and then much higher into



Eryngium giganteum & *Stipa arabica*

the alpine areas where we could see colour on the rocks and scree above.

After lunch we explored these slopes, though right next to us we found the handsome thistle, *Carduus lanuginosus* in flower, followed by *Vicia canescens*. On the rock terraces was a stunning display of *Stachys macrantha* in flowers, mixed with golden *Anthemis marshalliana*. Various other daisies were around including pink *Erigeron caucasicus*, it's smaller cousin *E. acer*, as well as xxx and xxx. Rocky crevices had the odd *Sedum pilosum* and the purple bells of *Campanula aucheri* were everywhere too. Progressing to the first scree there was a suite of umbels with xxx, xxx and hefty xxx all favouring this tough habitat. There was one other especial plant we were searching for that chose the habitat and making our way a bit higher we found it. Here the scree was laced with the pretty flowers of *Viola odontocalycina*, a localised endemic. With them grew the wonderful stemless thistle, *Jurinella moschus* and climbing further we found *Minuartia juniperina*, a neat bun of *Gypsophila nabelikii* and then we began to see cushions of *Silene pungens* and the creamy flowers of the latter were backed by intricately patterned reddish calyces. A bonus was a lovely short spike of *Delphinium* xxxx. Reaching the viewpoint there was a stunning and atmospheric vista of the seven lakes, some of the placid silver discs reflecting the worn and rugged mountains beyond. A quick check with binoculars revealed there were some good clumps of gentians down below, so we made our way down the stony track past big clumps of *Dracocephalum aucheri* to greener areas where there were even some remaining snow patches. Pretty mixed drifts of *Veronica gentianoides* and *Pedicularis pontica* covered the slopes just above the stunning intense blue clumps of *Gentiana verna* subsp. *pontica*. It was a gorgeous scene and repeated around other lakes too where we also found a lot more *Jurinella moschus*. Rumbles of thunder and spits of rain had us climbing back up and then more or less straight down the way we had come up.

In the end the rain came to nothing much as we made additional stops of the way back, first for the many spires of *Verbascum armenum*, then for a wet flush with *Dactylorhiza urvilleana* and some massive plants of *Angelica purpurascens* growing alongside a stream. The adjacent rocks and various goodies too with airy clumps of *Silene saxatilis*, trailing *Gypsophila* xxx and *Nepeta nuda*. There were two more excellent plant moments to come, starting with a magincal population of ghostly *Eryngium giganteum* that filled a lower slope among the graceful plumes of *Stipa*

Sedum sempervivum



arabica and *Melampyrum arvense*. The overcast light only added to the ambience and brought out all the details of this striking plant. Equally striking but in a different way was the vivid scarlet of succulent-like *Sedum sempervivum* which we found on a stony slope and there were dozens scattered across about.

That was to be the final say and from here we drove directly back having earned our dinner.

Day 3 22 July – Anzer Valley

It is claimed that the honey produced in the Anzer Valley is the most expensive in the world. True or not, the reason for the quality of the honey became obvious to us today as we experienced a remarkable and beautiful display of diverse flower meadows. It all began with a roadside stop for stands of *Telekia speciosa* mixed with *Campanula lactiflora* and *C. latifolia* as well as some immense umbels with both *Heracleum platytaenium* and even larger *H. trachycarpa*. Tall spikes of *Dactylorhiza urvilleana*, *Veronica anagallis-aquatica*, drifts of *Rhinanthus minor* and the dangling little trumpets of *Impatiens noli-tangere* added another layer. Another stop was for a rock bank with *Sedum spurium*, *S. stoloniferum* and *S. hispanica*, whilst the adjacent grassy meadow had lots of *Geranium ptilostemon* and *Lathyrus rosea*.

The road began to climb, and we vowed to push on, but it’s so difficult when there are so many lovely plants. A steep bank was thickly dressed in a mixture of *Geranium ibericum*, *Trifolium pannonicum* and the ever so abundant *Valeriana alliarifolia*, the latter spilling down below the road and creating a vast meadow of waving snow-white heads on tall stems. Punctuating this abundance were tall stems of *Linum hypericifolia* and looking closer within we could see *Campanula collina* and *C. aucheri*, *Euphrasia xxx* and green *Neottia ovata*. From here could see the valley open up and it was apparent the slope we were on was completely covered in hundreds of hectares of these stunning meadows. Unfortunately, the road was broken a bit further ahead so there was a bit of turning around and toing and froing to reach the next fantastic selection of plants. We began with some superb stands of tall *Delphinium huetianum* that grew with *Campanula latifolia*, the umbel xxxx and huge clumps of *Centaurea helenoides*. The fringed flowers of *Silene fimbriata* also grew nearby. Not much further along and the character of the meadow changed with plentiful golden *Inula orientalis*.



This had all been great but there was a floral treat to come that would knock it petals off. Pushing on and upwards we followed the rough road towards the deep cirque at the head of the valley and noticed as we went the slopes above had many orange poppies. It seemed a good place to stop for lunch and afterwards we began a wander up the slope. The further we went the better it got, and we reach an area of beguiling stony meadows with such a blaze and mix of colour it’s probably still burned in out retinas. In every direction there was a gorgeous scene, with drifts of *Onobrychis transcaucasica*, *Rhynchocorys stricta*, foamy *Gysophila elegans*, delicate *Bupleurum xxx* or *Stachys macrantha* all punctuated by clumps of orange *Papaver lateritium* swaying in the breeze. The poppies really made it special and whether backlit uphill or as the foreground the vast sweeping valley landscape beyond they brought it all to life. A gully held huge clumps of *Heracleum platytaenium* we even found a couple of late-flowering *Lilium poniticum* growing among the heavy boulder scree. It was mesmerising.

We had to move on, but it was only to other fabulous meadows. Much higher up we searched the scree for *Corydalis alpestris* and found the last few bluish flowers, but the slopes around were thickly dressed in fragrant *Coronilla orientalis* and *Hedysarum hedysaroidies*. Just below this, were masses of swaying pink drumsticks of *Polygonum bistorta* var. *carnea* mixed with *Geranium ibericum* and the occasional *Arnebia pulchra*, with wet flushes having the scarlet of *Geum coccineum*, *Swertia iberica* and plenty of *Centaurea nigrofimbria*. The odd *Gentiana pyrenaica* and *Anemone narcissiflora* were found too. Rumbling graders had us rushing for the vehicle to avoid getting either scooped up or stuck behind for miles, but in truth we had to move on from all this abundance. It’s no exaggeration that we could have spent several days in this valley. Retracing our route there were several stops on the way back in the now overcast light, stopping first for a bank of *Dianthus carmelitarum*, then some lovely powder blue discs of *Lomelosia caucasica* that grew near pretty drifts of *Linaria genistifolia* and especially pink forms of *Pimpinella rhodantha*, and particularly robust *Cephalaria gigantea*. Further on was *Silene armena*, the unusual spires of *Delphinium dasystachyum* (that are quite unlike its glamorous cousin we saw earlier on). A rock knoll had a good colony of *Campanula betulifolia* to complete a rich and diverse day among this genus and then there were final stops for stands of soft yellow *Alcea hohenackeri* with many narrow spikes of *Digitalis ferruginea* (with hundreds of small flowers per spike) and a plant of *Atropa belladonna* with *Phlomis russeliana* having the last word before we completed the final stretch back to the hotel.



Polygonum bistorta var. *carnea*

Day 4 23 July – Ovit Dagi

Our day began with another big display of *Papaver lateritium* as we drove up to the ragged peaks of Ovit Dagi. Once there we set off (in clear conditions) walking slowly across the huge expanse of alpine turf since there was so much to see. *Geranium cinereum* was sprinkled liberally across the ground its intense magenta flowers contrasting with tufts of white *Minuartia aizoides* and *Euphrasia* xxxxxx and as we progressed there was increasing numbers of *Gentiana pyrenaica*. Skipping over a stream with *Primula auriculata* there was a rocky edge with the most wonderful display of *Campanula saxifraga* subsp. *aucheri*. Indeed, this handsome plant was common on rocks for much of the walk with some stunning big patches of big blue bells. A few *Gentiana septemfida* were found in flower and an unusually large tuft of *G. pyrenaica* followed. Then, crossing over to a rocky slope above a tarn fringed with marshes there was the most amazing specimen of *Daphne glomerata* growing among lichen-encrusted boulders with several more nearby as well as both *Saxifraga sibirica* and taller (branched) *S. rotundifolia*. We continued to climb seeing more superb displays before reaching an area of small tarns nestled among the rock knolls. Below one we found flowering *Cirsium* xxxxx and as we crossed the landscape a few clumps of rather over *Primula longipes*. This had been a target plant, but it seemed as though the season was against for this one. We made our way over rock runs and up higher towards the last snow patch to where we eventually found what was probably the last decent specimen. There was a grand view from up here, but it also showed us the mists were fast approaching so we began our descent picking up *Erigeron caucasicus* and *Aster alpinus* on the way back to the vehicle.

For lunch we drove on to a side track and climbed a bit before finding a good flat spot. There were flowers all around, but they barely hinted at the afternoon excesses that were to come. Following the track up and around the flower-rich meadows clothed the slopes in a vast bowl of green, sliced through in places by ribbons of *Heracleum trachycarpa* that lined the many small streams. What was also remarkable was the diversity of meadow communities with the mix of flowers shifting with every turn of the slope. We began with a beguiling display of *Stachys macrantha* mixed with *Trifolium pannonicum* and the tall daisies, *Anthemis melanoloma* and *Aster caucasicus*. The streams that ran between the folds in the hill had their own mix and there were populations of the unusual *Pedicularis atropurpurea*, sometimes with *Anemone narcissiflora* and the last flowering *Rhododendron caucasicum* poised on



Daphne glomerata

steep slopes above late snowbanks. The adjacent meadow was a vulgar ballet of *Inula orientalis* and *Geranium psilostemon* punctuated by *Campanula latifolia* and the ever-present *Valeriana alliarifolia*. *Campanula latifolia* lined the track for a stretch joined here and there by clumps of golden *Senecio pseudo-orientalis*, which then became mingled with drifts of *Stachys macrantha* and *Inula orientalis* that swept downhill towards the mist shrouded valleys beyond. A few late *Lilium ponticum* were found on a bank which also had the white drumsticks of *Traunsteinera sphaerica* (and orchid that mimics scabiose). The landform eased and the finale was a slope plastered in countless *Stachys macrantha* and *Trifolium pannonicum*. Descending in stages with the vehicle we then stopped for lower slopes that were golden with countless *Helianthemum nummularifolium*, the yellow broken up by big mounds of *Minuartia circassica* and *Dianthus carmelitarum*. Other banks had plentiful *Hypericum pruinatum*, *Psoralea acaulis* xxxx and pretty *Scutellaria pontica* and we finished with a somewhat precipitous slope that was full of airy pink *Pimpinella rhodantha*.

By now we were numb, and our brains just couldn't cope with more colour!

Day 5 24 July – To Machahel

A transfer day to move us from the Kackar to the Kartal Mountains that line the border with Georgia in the furthest corner of the north-east. We were heading for a remote area and began with a straightforward if uninspiring drive along the coast with the Black Sea always to our left and green slopes to our right. It was the height of tea harvesting season with plenty of evidence of picking, packing and transporting, especially once we had turned inland and began to climb into the hills. Lunch was in a pleasant little restaurant with various regional specialities including the heart attack-inducing muhlama and some delicious jams and local honey.

The plants began shortly after lunch when we stopped for a grove of flowering *Rhododendron ungerinii* with many perfect trusses of white to soft pink flowers. Reaching a pass a side track then led past an interesting area of steep slopes with lush banks swathed in *Athyrium filix-femina* and *Dryopteris* xxx, together with daintier ferns such as *Blechnum trichomanes*. Hefty clumps of *Aruncus vulgaris* burst from the ferns and graceful grasses that smothered the cliffs, perhaps not a plant regularly considered a chasmophyte. In wetter seeps we found a colony of *Narthecium ossifraga* and *Dactylorhiza saccifera* was frequent all along the walk, with *Saxifraga cymbalaria* appearing here and there. There were also many woody plants including flowering *Rhododendron ponticum* and some fine oriental beech trees. Not far past the entrance to the track we then found a lone *Rhododendron luteum* in flower, its fragrant truss still fresh because it was growing next to



a large cooling snowbank. Big stands of *Campanula lactiflora* lined the road as we continued on our winding route into the thickly forested deep valleys, later picking up a small dirt road that rumbled up into higher to our spectacularly positioned accommodation above a deep valley in the pristine hills.

Day 6 25 July – Findikli Yaylasi

A beautiful dawn spread across the green hills first thing and the sun stayed with us for the first half of the morning as we followed a rough track ever upwards into the mountains, stopping from time to time for choice plants. The first time was for pretty *Hypericum bithynicum*, then a stunning small meadow comprised of *Geranium ptilostemon* and *Tanacetum macrophylla* with a perfectly placed single clump of golden-yellow *Telekia speciosa*. The former had been very common on the way up with some fine stands lining the road and the former stayed with us to the top. However, before we got there, we found a cliff with some superb *Saxifraga paniculata* with foamy masses of flowers and near these grew late-flowering *Petasites albus*. Some tight zig-zag bends got us higher into the spruce forests and rhododendron scrub with first extensive *Rhododendron ungeronii*, which yielded to great swathes of *R. caucasicum*. A flat tyre held us up for an hour but as is the way in this part of the world help is seldom far away and a passing minibus driver fixed everything.

Repaired we drove a little higher and found an area among the vast rhodo scrub with clearings and meadows. As we ate lunch, we caught sight of some lilies growing higher on the slope and this decided our destination after we'd eaten. There was a lot more than lilies to see, and we found good *Anemone narcissiflora*, *Scilla sibirica*, *Pedicularis atropurpurea*, *Doronicum xxxx* and *Trollius ranunculinus*. The *Lilium kesselringianum* were in great condition and some of us pushed on higher to a stand of a dozen good spikes of these waxy fragrant flowers as the mists began to swirl in below. Crossing through the rhodos after we reached a different gully with an abundance of *Pedicularis condensata* and many flowering shrubs of *Rhododendron caucasicum*. Looking closer there was also plenty of *Corydalis conorhiza* too.

We made several shorter stops on the return leg for the fine views of Caucasian forest clad mountains; for *Cirsium obvallatum* growing with *Vaccinium arctostaphylos*, *Gymnadenia conopsea* and *Ilex colchica*; for *Symphytum caucasicum*



Lilium kesselringianum

with impressive stands of *Aruncus vulgaris*; for nodding *Cirsium adjaricum*; for *Salvia glutinosa* growing with *Prenanthes purpurea* and lastly for more wonderfully positioned *Hypericum bithynicum*.

We arrived back in good time to enjoy some balcony time as the warm evening light illuminated the hills before dinner on the veranda.

Day 7 26 July – To Laset

There are invariably two ways of getting from A to B, and for today we could go the boring route on smooth tarmac or instead rumble and rattle over remote forest tracks with interesting plants. Despite the early morning rain having wet the ground Option B seemed the way to go so we drove down from our wonderfully positioned and pleasant pension enjoyed a brief dalliance with some asphalt during which we stopped for the arching stems of *Datisca cannabina* then having made it right up to the Turkish-Georgian border continued alongside it for a time, stopping for a quick look at the unusual and rather quirky wooden mosque in Camili. Shortly after this the plants began with xxxx growing on rocks with a yet another fine umbel, xxxx. The block track switched to stony dirt, and we then found a healthy clump of *Prenanthes cacalifolia* growing alongside *Dipsacus pilosus* and the increasingly large leaves of *Petasites hybridus* and *P. albus*. Elsewhere we found *Senecio nemoralis*. Whenever we met a large logging truck, we had the good fortune to be somewhere we could pull over, but in time we got above the tree line and open country though the thick mist meant we could see much. However, cresting the pass this suddenly dissipated, and we had a clear view of slopes swathed in *Rhododendron caucasicum* with big pathes of magenta *Geranium ptilostemon* in between. A well-placed little restaurant café was poised above a huge snow patch that filled a big gully into which plunged a waterfall, and we took lunch with this fine view.

Afterwards there was the chance to explore the slope leading down to the snow where we could see various rhodos in flower. There were some decent bushes of *Rhododendron luteum* with sweetly fragrant flowers and lots of fresh *R. caucasicum*, plus a third taxa which had larger trusses of pink flowers. The latter was close to the waterfall and snow where there also grew some very fresh clumps of *Primula auriculata* and *Dactylorhiza saccifera* in the *Alchemilla mollis* filled seeps. Making

Primula auriculata



our way back there was a wonderful flower-packed stretch with abundant *Geranium ptilostemon* (it was hard to get enough of this vibrant colour) growing with *Cirsium obvallatum* and the slender spires of *Verbascum xxx*.

Moving on the road descending to a small seasonal village below which we found a fine tall *Lilium kesselringianum* and growing with the ever-abundant *Alchemilla mollis* some fresh *Silene compacta*. Then there was a shrubbery with a few flowering *Rhododendron smirnovii* among the stands of *Abies nordmanniana*, followed by a superb roadside population of towering architectural *Seseli xxx* mound covered in *Silene compacta* followed and then area with the big yellow daisy, *Inula xxx* alongside *Orobanche lutea* and a great view along rushing river flanked by firs. Time was moving on and there was one last stop for the delightful creamy-bracted *Origanum rotundifolium* before we pushed on along the warm river valley with lots of *Paliurus spina-cristi* in fruit. Beyond lay the cooler forest-clad hills little Switzerland and our pleasant wooden bungalow accommodation with views back across the to Arsiyan Dagi.

Day 8 27 July - Arsiyan Dagi & Cam Gecidi

A day of two halves began with Arsiyan Mountain we could see from our balconies, stopping for drifts of *Xeranthemum annuum* sprinkled like pink stars across the rocky ground around angled forms of *Eryngium campestre*. Haystacks and bales stood in fields as signs of the busy harvest period as we climbed higher stopping next for a slope with many dark purple-blue *Delphinium flexuosum* alongside the towering forms of *Verbascum speciosum*. There were more delphiniums higher up too, this time growing with stands of *Geranium ptilostemon* and tall palest lilac-white spires of *Aconitum orientale* in grassy clearings among the dark green fir forests. Turning and around and crossing over to the green ridge of the Cam Gecidi we stopped only for a large drift of the pink form of *Melampyrum arvense*, pushing on to a fine view back across from whence we had come and the perfect picnic spot.

Below the viewpoint steep slopes had lots of meadow flowers with the now very familiar *Betonica macrantha* with *Geranium ibericum*, *Astrantia maxima* and *Bupleurum xxx*. On the higher slope above was lots of *Aruncus vulgaris*, more *Aconitum orientale*, flowering spikes of *Veratrum album* and a *Linum hypericifolium*



Aconitum nasutum

as we soaked up the fantastic big views. From here we crossed over the pass and then spent a long time exploring a different valley where white *Gentiana gelida* was common together with *Helichrysum xxx* and the tall grey-leaved *Tanacetum balsamita* grew in damper areas. Big stands of *Veratrum album* dominated some areas, whilst lower down this yielded to dense areas of *Filipendula ulmaria*. Perhaps the largest *Verbascum speciosum* specimens were nearby. One or two slender rich blue *Delphinium xxx* were found as we searched the area with small streams cutting through the pasture and it was alongside one of these that we found some pristine spikes of *Aconitum nasutum*. Scrambling up a steep bank past *Delphinium flexuosum* we then reached a rocky area where a few decent *Campanula crispa* clung tightly to the rocks. On the slope below were the ripening fruits of *Prangos ferulacea* close to the day's finale; many superb blue forms of *Eryngium giganteum* spread across the slope, the architectural forms mixing with hypericums and in one place wrapped around a spike of *Digitalis ferruginea*. Driving back there were sunset views of the mountain ridges from where we went straight onto another tasty dinner.

Day 10 28 July – To Kars

A contrasting day where we switched the lush highlands of the Black Sea for the high steppe of the east. The day began with a look at big stands of *Cephalaria gigantea* that dominated some meadows as well as the *Inula macrocephala* and *Lythrum salicaria* that filled the damper hollows. Then we ventured into the shadiest of fir forests to look for the enigmatic and mysterious ghost orchid, *Epigonium aphylla*. We found around ten of these peculiar saprophytes growing alongside two other plants with the same both lifestyles, namely another orchid *Neottia nidus-avis* and *Monotropa hypopitys*. The latter is a member of the Ericaceae and quite how this and rhododendron fit in the same family is remarkable). From here we continued up and over, stopping briefly for the extensive stands of *Centaurea glastifolia*. The landscape had now changed from forests and rocky peaks to vast rolling steppe lands punctuated by soft hills. There were still huge areas of meadowland, and the harvest was in full swing with various styles of machinery from the modern to the delightfully antiquated horse drawn. We stopped in an area with abundant *Lomelosia caucasica*, *Salvia verticillata*, *Cota tinctoria* (white form) and some decent *Linum hypericifolia*. It was warm but our lunch location had a pleasant breeze, and we managed to find some shade among the pines. Searching the rocky meadows afterwards there was a wealth of plants with flowery mounds of *Acantholimon xxx*, the pretty fimbriate



Epigonium aphyllum

flowers of *Dianthus crinitus*, *Centaurea pulcherimma*, *Allium xxx* and even finer *A. paniculatum* together with lots of *Sempervivum minus* on the rockier parts and a big clump of white *Campanula betulifolia*. The smaller *C. ledebouriana* grew nearby and we also found several pale-yellow *Aconitum anthora* as big apollo butterflies floated by in the breeze. There was also some fine scenery with views down into the greener gorge in one direction and the big expanse of Aktas Lake in the other.

Our route took as past a second big lake, Cildir, where the tall spires of *Alcea hohenackeri* were common and there was plenty of *Salvia nemorosa* and *Onobrychis radiata* too. Elegant flocks of white pelican flew past, almost floating in the air with wingbeats rippling through the flock and then we made a short stop for flowering *Echinops pungens* and *Eryngium campestre*. The intended short cut to get across the vast steppe plains took us via some small dirt roads with larks, harriers, buzzards and a quail flying out as we drove. The landscape seemed endless with scattered old volcanic cones and larger hills in the far distance. One of the latter was Mount Aragats in neighbouring Armenia, a 4090-metre volcano and our destination of Ani sat right on the border with only a narrow river gorge separating the two countries. An hour or so was spent exploring the site and its various churches, mosque and other ruins.

It was only forty minutes to Kars and our pleasant Russian era hotel, and our final delicious dinner was in the appropriately named Pushkin restaurant on a warm night in what is the coldest part of Turkiye in winter!

Day 10 29 July – Flights

All good things come to an end and our flower-filled journey ended today with flights back to the UK, where flower meadows and garden plants will never look quite the same again. Basak and I drove back to Rize via the flowery rockscapes around Cildir Lake stopping to photograph *Echinops pungens* growing with *Allium paniculatum*, *Salvia nemorosa* and *Campanula ledebouriana*, whilst a second stop was for *Stachys macrostachya*, *Dianthus recognitus* and a purple-leaved form of *Hylotelphium telephium*. It was a warm day and as we back to the greenery from the straw-coloured tones of the steppe, it then our route descended into a drier quasi-Mediterranean valley. Here it got warmer but that didn't stop us from time photographing stands of *Echinops orientalis* to complete the botany. Things cooled down on the Black Sea coast and we arrived to two happy boys and our house



Echinops pungens

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Geranium ptilostemon, *Tanacetum macrophyllum* & *Telekia speciosa*