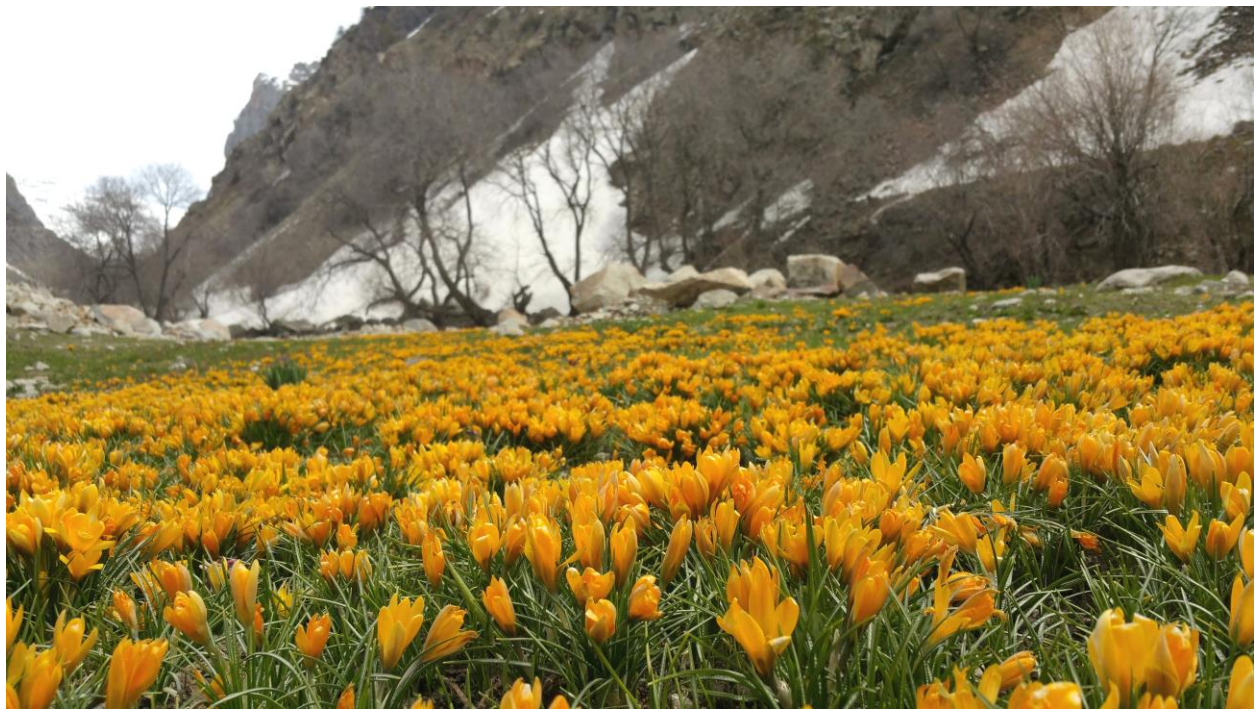


Spring Flowers of Tajikistan & Uzbekistan

April 2 – 13 (15) 2025

A Greentours trip for the North American Rock Garden Society. Images courtesy of Oron Peri.

What a fantastic way to start a holiday – five million *Iris bucharica* stretching for miles in dense drifts of yellow blooms along the Karatag Valley. Eight fantastic Juno Irises and eight Tulip species are the cream of an amazing array of bulbous species that cover the spectacular mountains and steppes of Tajikistan and nearby parts of Uzbekistan. There will be regular sightings of those avian indicators of montane splendour, Lammergeier, Wallcreeper and Himalayan Griffons. We'll also be able to enjoy a full day exploring the incomparable blue-tiled mosques and palaces of magical Samarkand. Above Dushanbe you are soon amongst flowers. Hillsides are covered in pink-centred white *Anemone tschernjaewii*, brilliant scarlet *Anemone bucharica*, *Iris vicaria*, pale lilac *Fritillaria bucharica*, *Scilla vvedenskii* and extra-large flowered black and pink *Corydalis popovii*. On the Ansob Pass we'll find *Tulipa praestans* while dense carpets of golden yellow *Crocus korolkovii* produce bands of gold stretching from the road into spectacular high snowy mountains. *Tulipa korolkowii* and *Tulipa micheliana* join elegant *Corydalis maracandica* and a lovely *Corydalis* with flowers an extraordinary mix of cherry-red, gold and pink. Famous Chimgan has *Corydalis darvasica*, *Tulipa tschimganica*, *Tulipa kaufmanniana* and *Fritillaria severovii*, and nearby mountains are home to *Iris tubergeniana*, abundant *Gymnospermium albertii* and pretty pink *Fritillaria stenantha*. Pale lilac *Iris magnifica* blooms among the granite boulders of Amankutan alongside the huge glossy goblets of *Tulipa fosterana*, dark pink *Primula fedtschenkoi* and the fine purple, blue and yellow *Iris warleyensis*.



Day 1 April 2nd

To Tajikistan

Arrive Dushanbe.

Day 2 April 3rd

Dushanbe and the *Iris bucharica* valley at Karatag

After breakfast we'll start the tour with a true spectacle. An Iris wonderland! Climbing out of the city it won't take us long to reach the Karatag, or Black Mountain, where we'll pass some fine *Astragalus* species before the valley becomes covered in mile after mile of *Iris bucharica*. The landscape is peppered with dense stands and drifts of them, there are literally millions. We'll be hard-pressed not to notice the abundant *Anemone petiolulosa*, groups of *Fritillaria bucharica* and the very rare *Eremurus albertii*.



Day 3 April 4th

Romit

Today we'll head east out of Dushanbe, soon finding our first *Iris vicaria*, the blooms a subtle combination of white with lilac markings (on some) and egg-yolk yellow. These grow on a slope with striking deep purple *Bellevalia turkestanica*. It is high enough here for the Wallcreepers to be found

feeding on roadside banks. *Anemone tschernjaewi* and *Scilla vvedenskii* are found amongst stunning clusters of extra-large flowered *Corydalis popovii*, with long slender pink spurs and deepest purple outer perianths.

This is an important site for the local 'crown imperial' *Fritillaria eduardii* with populations scattered throughout the area. It is a handsome plant and makes an impressive show. Under the trees are masses of *Corydalis popovii*. A little further on we'll find lots of *Crocus korolkovii* and plenty of lovely *Iris rosenbachiana* growing on steep banks.

Day 4 April 5th

Ansob Pass

Today we'll visit Iskender Kul, a large alpine lake north of Dushanbe. To get there we have to cross the wonderful high Ansob Pass. On the way up we'll see the fine goblets of *Tulipa praestans*. The pass is magical, a snowy wonderland with multiple peaks and ridges all swathed in the white stuff. A distinct band of gold is formed by a simply stunning dense carpet of thousands of golden-yellow *Crocus korolkovii* that stretches across an area of flat turf with the snowy peaks as a backdrop, a magical scene.

Towards Iskender we pass through multicoloured hills and amazing rock strata, the slopes plunging steeply and the ragged peaks capped by snow. Apricot blossom will be at its peak around the tiny villages and looks wonderful against the mountain backdrops. We'll picnic by the lake where amongst the spectacular scenery we'll see various Rosefinch species before returning to those fabulous *Crocus* colonies on the pass on the way back to Dushanbe.

Day 5 April 6th

Nurek

Brilliant scarlet cut-leaved *Anemone bucharica* is found growing with *Anemone tschernjaewii* around a reservoir that supplies Dushanbe with water. The surrounding hillsides have a rich flora amongst purple-pink wild *Cercis griffithii* trees that mix with an impressive bulky yellow-green fennel, quite a combination of colours. *Iris bucharica* is numerous, and makes a fine photographic subject with a tremendous wall of snowy peaks stretching across the skyline. With luck we'll encounter the rare plum-coloured *Iris stolonifera*.



Day 6 April 7th

To Uzbekistan and Shakrisabz

The long white-tipped spine of the magnificent Zerashan Mountains run alongside the road as we drive the hour to the border with Uzbekistan. Across the border we first find flat agricultural lands, before entering amazing convoluted multicoloured, multi-stratified hills tilted at improbable angles, with sloping flat-topped snowy crests in the distance. Egyptian Vultures are common and we'll see occasional Booted Eagles.

Soon the red glow of tulips will bring us to a halt. These are *Tulipa micheliana* with red-stripped leaves and flowers with a large triangular gold-edged black blotch at the base of each tepal and black anthers. Nearby is the brilliant red *Tulipa korolkowii* with small yellow anthers scattered about the scree and rocks. The blue starry bells of *Ixiolirion tataricum* will also be enjoyed. Then we'll head on to pretty Shakhrisabz and its blue-domed mosque.

Day 7 April 8th

Amarkutan

An hour from Shakhrisabz will see as at the start of the Amankutan Pass. We'll soon see our first impressive pale lilac *Iris magnifica*, growing among large granite boulders and on loose slopes with a bulky fennel and flowering *Amygdalus* bushes. Here and there are a few bright red *Tulipa fosterana*, and big hairy yellow flowered *Astragalus seversovii*. Just a little further up the pass is a colony of the stunning *Iris warleyensis*. These are real beauties, and we'll spend plenty of time amongst them.

Upwards we'll find snow patches where lovely *Primula fedtschenkoi* blooms with *Corydalis maracandica*. This is a beautiful *Corydalis* and here is another, with cherry-red lower half the lip edged with gold and a broad virtually erect pink spur. This may be a form of *Corydalis ledebouriana* but if it is, it is certainly a very beautiful form. Tiny *Gagea gageoides* is abundant and by snow we'll see a colony of purple-striped white *Colchicum kesselringii* amid *Anemone petiolulosa*. *Tulipa turkestanica* is common alongside the road and by yet more snow patches are *Crocus korolkovii*, *Eranthis longistipitatus* and the golden-yellow stars of *Tulipa hissarica*.



Day 8 April 9th

Samarkand

We'll spend a day visiting the wonderful sights of Samarkand with stunning blue-domed mosques, blue-tiled mausoleums, yet more blue-domed mosques, amazingly decorated interiors (much of it made with paper mache!) and after lunch at a Turkish café, we'll visit the remains of Ulugbek's observatory.

Days 9 & 10 April 10th & 11th

Beldersay

Heading into the hills again we'll soon stop for a fine population of tall bronze and green-belled *Fritillaria severzovii*. Scattered among them are *Solenanthus circinnatus*, *Scilla puschkinoides* and a more normal-looking form of *Corydalis ledebouriana*. A handful of yellow *Iris tubergeniana* bloom amongst masses of *Gymnospermium albertii*. We'll find many pretty *Fritillaria stenantha* in perfect pink flower amongst a fine spring show of flowers. Siberian Rubythroats flit from one gnarled juniper to another as we admire little *Crocus alatavicus* blooming close to snow.

Beldersay has abundant *Tulipa biflora* as well as some *Tulipa kaufmanniana*, a handsome species with bicoloured red and yellow flowers. Higher are carpets of tiny *Gagea minutiflora* that stretch across the hills mixed with two larger species. Rock Buntings are common up here and we'll undoubtedly flush a Chukar or two as we enjoy a fantastic population of *Colchicum luteum* with hundreds scattered across the slope all the way down from the top to the bottom, with some fine twins and triplets. The rare *Iris pseudocapnoides* adds creamy blooms to the show.



Day 11 April 12th

The Chimgan Valley and to Tashkent

The Chimgan Valley is smothered in *Tulipa turkestanica* whilst scree slopes have a dazzling mixed population of *Tulipa tschimganica* with red, orange and yellow forms. The tulips continue with red

Tulipa kaufmanniana and then to areas of familiar bicoloured forms. Alongside these are magnificent stands of *Fritillaria severzovii*, many violets, and screes full of *Anemone petiolulosa*. North-facing slopes have many *Colchicum luteum* at times mixed with *Crocus alatavicus* and by now familiar *Corydalis ledebouriana*, *Gymnospermium albertii* and then the bristly-stamened spires of *Solenanthus circinnatus*. Rufous-naped Tits buzz around the junipers as we move into limestone areas. Here are lovely groups of the delicate *Corydalis darvasica* and a yellow cushion-forming brassica. From the ridge are fine views of the Tien Shan and Chimgan Peak. There are impressive stands of *Astragalus severzovii* as we drive on towards Tashkent.

Day 12 April 13th

depart Tashkent



Bukhara Extension

Days 12 & 13 April 13th & 14th

A chance to see this famed city, with its superb mosques and madresehs. We'll fly into Bukhara and back, returning to Tashkent during the evening of Day 13.

Day 14 April 15th

depart Tashkent

Included in the price

Ground transport, accommodation and all meals. Services of the leaders. Please note: visas, drinks, tips, visas and items of a personal nature including travel insurance, are not included. Flower and bird checklists are available.

Accommodations

We start with five nights at the Hotel Taj Palace in Dushanbe. On a tree-lined avenue, this hotel has a little of the old Soviet style to it, however it has recently been refurbished and is now very comfortable with large rooms. We then move to Uzbekistan and a night in Shakrisabz at the Hotel Orient, again with large air-conditioned rooms. In Samarkand we've two nights at the Malika Classic. In a quiet area a twenty minute walk from the central square, this is a very nice hotel with modern wooden-panelled rooms. We move back into the mountains to the Beldersay, a big ski hotel whose comfortable rooms have good views of the impressive countryside. Our last, rather short, night is at the Hotel Rovshan in Tashkent before an early morning trip to the airport.

Walking

For the most part easy. Walks of up to three or four miles each day, occasionally longer. Sometimes on steep slopes. Sturdy footwear strongly suggested.

Climate

Variable. Anything from cold to warm, or even hot in Samarkand. We can expect plenty of sunny weather, but should also be prepared for some rain or even the possibility of snow!

Information Related Registration, Payments, and Cancellation

You must be a NARGS member to register. If you need to renew your membership or to join the Society, please do so via the NARGS website (www.nargs.org).

The cost for the main tour is \$5475 USD per person based on double occupancy; single occupancy \$6200 USD. For the Bukhara Extension, the additional cost is \$820 USD per person based on double occupancy; single occupancy \$900 USD. Registration will be on a first come, first serve basis. Your space is not guaranteed until a deposit is paid. The deposit is \$1000 USD.

Before submitting your deposit, use the "Contact Us" form on the website to confirm space availability. You will receive an email **confirming space availability and a link to the Google Registration Form.** Guests traveling together must EACH fill in a Google Registration Form.

Cancellation

Cancellation requests must be submitted in writing to NARGS by the person making the reservation. Cancellations after deposit is paid but prior to the final payment due date will forfeit 50% of deposit. Failure to submit final payment by due date will result in forfeiting 100% of deposit. Cancellations after final payment is made but more than 30 days before start of the tour will forfeit 50% of tour cost. No reimbursements or credits will be given for cancellations within 30 days of start of tour unless another person can be found to fill the space. Each registrant is urged to obtain private trip insurance to cover any exigencies requiring cancellation. If the tour is cancelled by NARGS for any reason, all payments minus banking fees and incurred expenses will be refunded to registered participants. If the tour is cancelled by NARGS, any person who had previously cancelled will not be entitled to this refund.

Information Related to Insurance, Waivers, and Public Health Requirements

Insurance

The tour price does not include insurance to cover costs associated with medical treatment, repatriation, flight cancellations, baggage loss, travel interruptions, cancellation fees, or other expenses. Each registrant is urged to assess their personal situation and to obtain private insurance to cover these costs if needed.

Waiver of Liability

By submitting a tour deposit, you are acknowledging that you are aware of the risks associated with travel and that you will not hold NARGS or others associated with the tour responsible for any delays; changes in itinerary, staffing, or accommodations; injuries, illnesses, or deaths; or any circumstances beyond the control of NARGS.

Public Health Requirements

All participants must comply with public health requirements for international travel in their country of residence and in the tour host country. During the tour, participants may be in close contact with other participants and the general public. To the extent possible, participants should comply with U.S. and local public health guidelines, and must comply with all local public health requirements. If you do not feel well during the tour, let the tour guide know. The guide will assist in locating medical services, but these services may be distant and less extensive than those available at home. Each participant will be individually responsible for paying the cost for these services and associated transportation.

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