

THE ROSE GARDENS NATURE WALKS

TUESDAY KARAMAN, ILGAZ & MALATYA (4.9miles/7.8km)

You are picked up from your hotel for a pleasant walk which will take us through the three mountain villages under the escarpment of the Kyrenia Mountain chain. We drive up to Karaman at 840m. Karaman village is charming, with tight narrow streets and alleys with picturesque houses and open spaces. Following the exchanges of population in 1974 the TRNC Ministry of Tourism took over the village, only allowing leases to be sold to foreigners. There are very strict rules covering development; for example solar panels and ugly roof water tank structures are not allowed.



This has preserved the character of the quaint higgledy-piggledy houses nestled into the hillside with a profusion of wonderfully mature gardens, making for an utterly charming village, much visited by tourists. As we leave the village heading west we overlook the expanse of greenery on the lower slopes with the coastal plane in the distance. These slopes here were decimated in the fire in 1995, which destroyed extensive forested areas over a three day period. Though there is new growth there is lack of mature trees. The trail is almost all downhill with rugged and impressive mountains to our left.



Ahead of us to the west there is an impressive

vista of interleaved pinnacles, ridges and the whole continuation of the mountain range. This part has the highest peak of the whole northern mountain chain at Selvilitepe,, at 1024 m. Here are see some of the aerials which formed part of the Cold War listening stations, I am not sure if they are still in use but certainly some of them are now being used by the local TV station. We soon overlook Ilgaz as we wind down to the village with its abandoned Orthodox church, before heading to the local village taverna for lunch on the vine bedecked terrace.



It would be tempting to while away the afternoon in the dappled shade provided by the vines, but after lunch we continue our walk. We follow the road down for a while before heading down into one of the numerous step sided ravines, carved deep into the countryside by centuries of rain – not too much of that now!

This area is untouched and unspoilt, with prolific birdlife and wild flowers in the spring, the air heavy with the scent of wild sage and pine. We soon enter the little village of Malatya where the gradual renovation of some of its charming old houses is slowly transforming this into another pretty village.

The hills above have been terraced. Some of the terracing is very old, where maybe thousands of years ago little ledges were formed for a few olive trees and other plantings. The British Colonial period saw further terracing which is much more conspicuous, forming lines across the hillsides. This was in part a water conservation measure to slow the rain wash-off, allowing it to soak into the ground; tree planting was then undertaken to provide ground cover to reduce the evaporative loss. This has not been that successful as decades later the planted trees are still very stunted. Interestingly all this was done not in a time of water shortage, but as colonial concern for good practice.

We pass down through the lower village, still far above the twinkling azure Mediterranean far below. In this area there is a mix of traditional houses and new developments, interspersed with olive groves, which are still in the main tended by the owners. In the autumn families turn up for olive harvesting; very much a traditional family event, involving the spreading of large sheets on the ground before picking and beating the olives off the trees. We continue down through an area with an interesting two part cemetery, half being Turkish Cypriot with massive marble graves, all well tended with evidence of fresh flowers laid; and next to it the sadly neglected Orthodox cemetery with rows of Orthodox crosses. A short walk further we arrive in Alsañak from where you will be picked up to return to your hotel.

