

THE ROSEGARDEN NATURE WALKS

THURSDAY **AKDENIZ BEACH** (4.4 miles/7.6 km)

You are picked up from your hotel for our walk which today starts at Akdeniz, a small village on a slightly elevated slope looking out over Guzelyurt Bay. The sandy nine mile beach running north to south provides a pleasant walk on sand, dune and through the coastal area.

The going is very easy and the sea laps at our feet as we stroll along the beach. The beach here is sand and gravel and the sea is sandy and shallow for a long way out. Across the bay we can see the magnificent Troodos Mountains to the southwest,



rising to Mount Olympos at 6500ft/1980m. Guzelyurt at the southern end of the beach is the best citrus growing area of Cyprus. On the north end of the beach there is an area where pumice floated in from the eruption of Stromboli in about 1500 BC. This pumice was mined, or more correctly collected, and processed on the beach, from whence it was shipped out to off shore boats for transportation to Europe as recently as 1930. There are remains of the buildings associated with this pumice processing, though now they are reduced to just the foundations. In this area part of the beach is composed entirely of shells and a short walk inland from here brings us to the remains of Neolithic settlements where pottery shards still lie on the ground. As we stroll along the beach with a dune area to the left between the little

coastal escarpment and the shore. The dunes are well covered with hardy shrubs, all slightly bent and stunted from the onshore, salt laden prevailing wind. There is a lot of mimosa growing here, and in the flowering season this huge expanse of bright yellow blossom is most attractive.



Mimosa, not an endemic species, was introduced in colonial times and has become well established, obviously liking the local conditions. Cape Coruçam, the northern tip of the island, a short distance north of us, is popular with bird watchers, as it has many migrating birds passing through. This is also a place where rabbits can be seen. Rabbits are certainly fairly rare, but more common here than the rest of the island. Just off the beach we enter sand dunes and it is in this



area that fossilised bones can be found, including the bones of dwarf hippos, and other long extinct animals which roamed here millions of years ago. We cross a couple of small sandy ravines, heading from inland through the dunes towards the sea and the still damp areas give rise to clumps of dense bamboo, again providing excellent habitat for the birdlife. There is limited agriculture here and a surprising grapefruit orchard surrounded by bamboo lies to our right. We proceed inland somewhat before heading up onto the small sandstone cliffs, overlooking the azure Mediterranean with as backdrop the Troodos Mountains. The top of the coastal sandstone cliffs is arid, dry and sparsely vegetated, and has not really had a chance to regrow following a very dry year in 2008. Many of the hardy shrubs have succumbed to the drought conditions, and yet, following a good soaking the area will spring to life again, demonstrating the resilience of nature. We follow the trail, returning to our starting point, for our return to the hotel.

