

## Itinera Mediterranea

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At the meeting of the Commission for Floristic Investigation of OPTIMA held in Istanbul in September 1986, the desirability of promoting the collaborative botanical explorations of the Mediterranean Region was discussed. It was felt that the best way to develop this exploration was the organization of a series of annual international expeditions, each centered on a Mediterranean country, which were to be placed under the sponsorship of OPTIMA, and were to be named "Itinera Mediterranea". In a seminar organized in Sevilla in May 1987 the organizational details of such expeditions were discussed and established.

The participants of the meeting held in Istanbul and Sevilla agreed that these expeditions were to be coordinated by the Secretary of the Commission for Floristic Investigation (the author of the present note), and that the first three expeditions would take place in Spain in 1988, with B. Valdés and S. Talavera as local organizers; in Israel in 1989, with A. Danin as local organizer, and Sicily — S Italy — in 1990, with F. M. Raimondo as local organizer.

The aims, organizational structures, costing policy, collecting procedures and publication arrangements have been described elsewhere in detail (Valdés 1988a, 1988b), and can be summarized as follows:

1. The aims of the "Itinera" are: to study and collect plants from poorly known areas; to enable young Mediterranean botanists to gain field experience from senior botanists; and mainly, to increase the herbarium collections of Mediterranean plants in different centres, with priority to the Conservatoire et Jardin botaniques, Genève, and to the Dipartimento di Scienze botaniche, Università di Palermo, in order to implement the to-be Herbarium Mediterraneum (see Di Martino & Raimondo 1988).
2. The organizational structures include a central institution (the Conservatoire et Jardin botaniques, Genève), one permanent organizer (the Secretary of the Commission for Floristic Investigation), a second institution responsible for publications and labelling (the Dipartimento di Scienze botaniche, Palermo), up to three local organizers for each expedition, who arrange the itineraries in collaboration with the permanent organizer, and 12 participants, of which six are senior and six are junior botanists.
3. Each expedition lasts about three weeks, including a preparatory seminar to inform the participants on the geology, ecology, floristics, etc, of the selected area, and a closing seminar to prepare a report on the expedition and to discuss the distribution of duplicate material. Both seminars are open to botanists from the host country which can, in this way, establish contacts with the visiting botanists.

4. The total number of participants will not exceed 15: up to 3 local organizers, plus 6 senior and 6 junior participants. Applications must be accompanied by the appropriate questionnaires, which are mailed by the local organizers to all OPTIMA members. If the number of applications exceeds the number of places available, participants are selected among the applicants by the Executive Council of OPTIMA upon advice of the Commission for Floristic Investigation, preference being given to applicants from peri-Mediterranean countries. As a rule, there will not be more than one participant from any one country except the host country. Participation in two consecutive "Itinera" is not normally possible, but the local organizers of each expedition are entitled to appoint one senior and one junior botanist to one of the next "Itinera".
5. The "Itinera" are self-supporting, the cost being borne by the participants. However, upon application, OPTIMA grants a contribution of SF 300 to each junior botanist whose participation depends on such a complement to the funds they may obtain from their own countries. Two thirds of the total cost of each expedition are borne in equal parts by the six senior participants and the remaining third by the junior participants.
6. Details of the collecting policy and division of labour are decided by the members of each expedition. As a rule, protected plants and rare endemics are not collected. At least 4 basic sets of herbarium material are collected: one for Genève, the central institution; one for Palermo, to implement the *Herbarium Mediterraneum*; one for the institute of the permanent organizer, (presently the Department of Plant Biology and Ecology, Sevilla), and one (or sometimes two) for the institution of the local organizers. The latter institution receives the first complete set, including unicate specimens, as it is understood that it is locally that these specimens are more valuable for research purposes.
7. After the distribution of the material to the different centres, and once the plants have been identified, herbarium labels are provided by the *Herbarium Mediterraneum* in Palermo.
8. The results of each Iter Mediterraneum are published annually by the *Herbarium Mediterraneum* in the series *Bocconea*, which is to include these results, along with monographic works on the Flora and Vegetation of the Mediterranean area. For each expedition the results will include the itinerary, a list of the plant material collected, and any particular scientific data resulting from the expedition.

## References

- Di Martino, A. & Raimondo, F. M. 1988: L'"Herbarium Mediterraneum" de l'OPTIMA à Palerme: un projet. — OPTIMA Newsletter 20-24: 47-49.
- Valdés, B. 1988: The Itinera Mediterranea. — OPTIMA Newsletter 20-24: 44-46.
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