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Ultental and Sextener Dolomites from 11 till 18 July 2009.

Destination of this years ISU excursion was South Tyrol in the north of Italy.

South Tyrol, a large cultural landscape between the Alps and the Mediterranean, has a great deal to offer the visitor, including a lovely landscape, cosy villages and cities certainly worth seeing, countless cultural monuments, castles, mansions, churches and – what especially interests the ISU-members – a rich plant World. We spend the first days of the trip in the Ultental Valley, which is part of the Ortler Alps. During the second half of the trip we were in Toblach at the foot of the Sextener Dolomites. So we have seen two entirely different landscapes and two very different areas in botanical terms.

Mrs. Irene Senfter led the excursion. She is a committed botanist who had meticulously prepared for it in the summer of 2008. Ten ISU-members from Belgium, Italy, Sweden, Suisse and the Netherlands had an exciting trip. The weather was sunny and dry till the last evening, so we could do all the trips of the program.



We started on Saturday evening in St. Nikolaus in the Ultental Valley, near Lana. Sunday morning we went to Oberstoan-Höfen (1.671 m) and hiked to Kaserfeldalm, through a spruce and larch forest, along the way encountering tall forb communities.



In the beginning we found for example *Pinguicula vulgaris*, *Saxifraga stellaris*, *Phyteuma orbiculare*, *Campanula barbata*.

More higher, *Trifolium alpinum*, *Vaccinum uliginosum*, *Pseudorchis alpina*, *Homogyne alpina*, *Arnica Montana*, *Viola montana*, *Geum montana*, *Gentiana acaulis*.

On the top were were sitting on *Anemone apennina alpina*, *Ranunculus kuepferi*, *Aster alpines* and a lot more beautiful flowering plants.

The second day we went to Weissbrunn, at the far end of the Ultental Valley. We hiked to the H ochster H utte on the Gr unsee, a reservoir, at an altitude of 2561 m. We walked again in an area with acid soils. Dwarf shrubflora with rust-red alpenrose (*Rhododendron ferrugineum*) and dwarf juniper (*Juniperus communis ssp. alpina*) as well as the fields of alpine sedge and mat grass below the Grimsee.



It was a fabulous trip along snow. There were the snow just was gone we saw *Ranunculus glacialis*, *Loiselureia procumbens*, *Gentiana verna*, *Primula hirsute* and *Soldanella pusilla*. We went through wet meadows (alms) and saw a lot of *Veratrum album*.

The first two day we stayed in the acid mountains, the last three days we hiked in the more alcic (lime) soils.

We left on Tuesday Hotel Ortler with its fantastic meals and we went in our cars to Toblach, to Hotel Rosengarten. On our way we visited the Labyrinth Garden in Tschermms, near Lana. The garden is a part of a vineyard. The owners like to stimulate the visitors sense. So there was a labyrinth in the lawn and a maze of ten sorts of grapes.



After an excellent lunch we visited the two perennial nurseries of Andrea and Regina Hofer in Tschötsch. It is a nice nursery with a big assortment of perennials. They cultivate most of themselves. On the balcony of the Hofer - residence we had to taste Enzian schnapps and other drinks that they also make themselves. After all these we went to our hotel in the dramatic looking Dolomites.

On Wednesday we were driving to Bad Moos near Sexten (1350m), from where we hiked through the Fiscalina Valley with its famous larch meadows, an old form of agricultural use. We saw *Lilium martagon* and *L. bulbiferum*, *Dactylorrhiza fuchsia*, *Lystra ovata* and *Colchicum autumnale* with capsules. We hiked to the Talschlusshütte (1530m) and we had a view of the rockfaces of the "Sextner Sundial".

If we found an unknown plant than took Irene immediately one of here thick flora's and sitting op her knees she look for it.



We saw *Dryas octopetala*, *Tolfieldia calyculata*, *Gymnadenia conopsea*, *Paris quadrifolia*, *Crepis aurea* and a lot more. Wonderfull, so many different sort of plants. During the lunch we had our only shower of rain.



Thursday the 16th we went to the Messner Mountain Museum at Monte Rite. We passed Cortina d'Ampezzo and in Cibiana di Cadore in the province of Belluno we were going by foot to the top of the mountain. The museum is housed by an old military fortress and distinguishes itself not only with e a collection of paintings and articles related to the Dolomite Mountains, but also with its very special views of the Dolomites from the windows of the fortress. We found *Lathyrus occidentalis*, the two lily's, *Valeriana Montana*, *Phyteuma spicatum*, etc.

On Friday we took the transit bus through the Höhlenstein Valley to the Auronzohütte (2320m) in the province of Belluno for the hiking trip around the foot of the Tre Crine. When you look at the rocks you even don't think that there are plants, but we saw a lot of the flora of the Dolomite fell fields. We saw *Armeria*, *Gentiana verna* and sometimes a lot of *Papaver rhaeticum* and *Dryas octopetala*, and the pink flowers of *Potentilla nitida*. Here was also some snow. Just when the snow thawed you can find *Soldanella alpina*. We found them; wonderful.

In the afternoon there came very dark clouds. We went to the hotel for our last dinner with a fabulous dessert. There was a lot of rain and thunderstorm. End of a very nice botanical excursion.

We had very fine days, we saw and learned a lot of alpine plants and their surroundings, we took a lot of pictures and we had an fantastic guide.

It was my first botanic excursion with the ISU and I hope not the last.

On behalf of Mona Holmberg, Ulf Strindberg, Richard Nordström and Jonas Bengtson from Sweden, Andres and Margrith Altwegg from Suisse, Andreas Hofer, Regina Fischner and guide Irene Senfter from Italy and Jo Bogaerts from Belgium,

Alice de Boer-Slingerland from The Netherlands.