



Authentic Cyprus.

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feel THE EXPERIENCE



REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS



CYPRUS TOURISM ORGANISATION

PROJECT CO-FINANCED
50% BY THE EUROPEAN
REGIONAL
DEVELOPMENT FUND





Thanks to its year-round sunshine, blue skies and warm waters, Cyprus enjoys an enviable reputation as one of the world's top sun, sea and sand holiday destinations.

But this delightful island has much more to offer.

Away from the tourist areas, the Cyprus countryside has a diverse wealth all of its own, including traditional villages, vineyards and wineries, tiny fresco-painted churches, remote monasteries and cool shady forests.

This is a nature-lovers paradise, where you can walk for hours without seeing another living soul. In springtime, fields of flowers stretch as far as the eye can see, and a ramble along a mountain path will suddenly reveal a tiny Byzantine chapel or a Venetian-built bridge that once formed part of an ancient trade route.

Around every corner is another surprise; a magnificent view; a rare sighting of the Cyprus moufflon; or a chance encounter with someone who will surprise you with their knowledge of your language and an invitation to join the family for a coffee.

In the villages, traditional values remain, while the true character of the Cypriot people shines through wherever you go - warm-hearted, friendly, family-orientated, and unbelievably hospitable.



Cultural Heritage

The ancient history of Cyprus tends to focus on great city kingdoms, emperors, conquerors and conflict. Yet farmers, herders, artisans and miners played an equal role in the chronicle and they laid down the foundations of the country's distinctive culture.

Manmade artefacts from as far back as 10,000 BC show that Stone Age Man inhabited the island when the pygmy hippopotamus and dwarf elephant were on earth.

By 6,800 BC, Neolithic Man was a skilled hunter, living in stone and clay huts. He shaped river pebbles to make axe heads and chisels. He also created patterned pottery bowls, clay sculpture and jewellery of steatite, shell and cornelian.

Domestic animals such as cattle, pigs, goats and sheep were introduced by pastoral immigrants from the Levantine mainland and the people started to cultivate crops, heralding the beginning of agriculture.

Arts and crafts started to evolve when the discovery of ochre and umber pigments in the Bronze Age enabled potters to decorate their ceramics with colour.

The discovery of copper around 3,000BC, changed life dramatically, as the metal became the source of immense wealth and triggered the development of trade with neighbouring countries.

The location of many of the copper mines prompted previously agrarian communities from their settlements in the foothills and plains to relocate to upland areas.

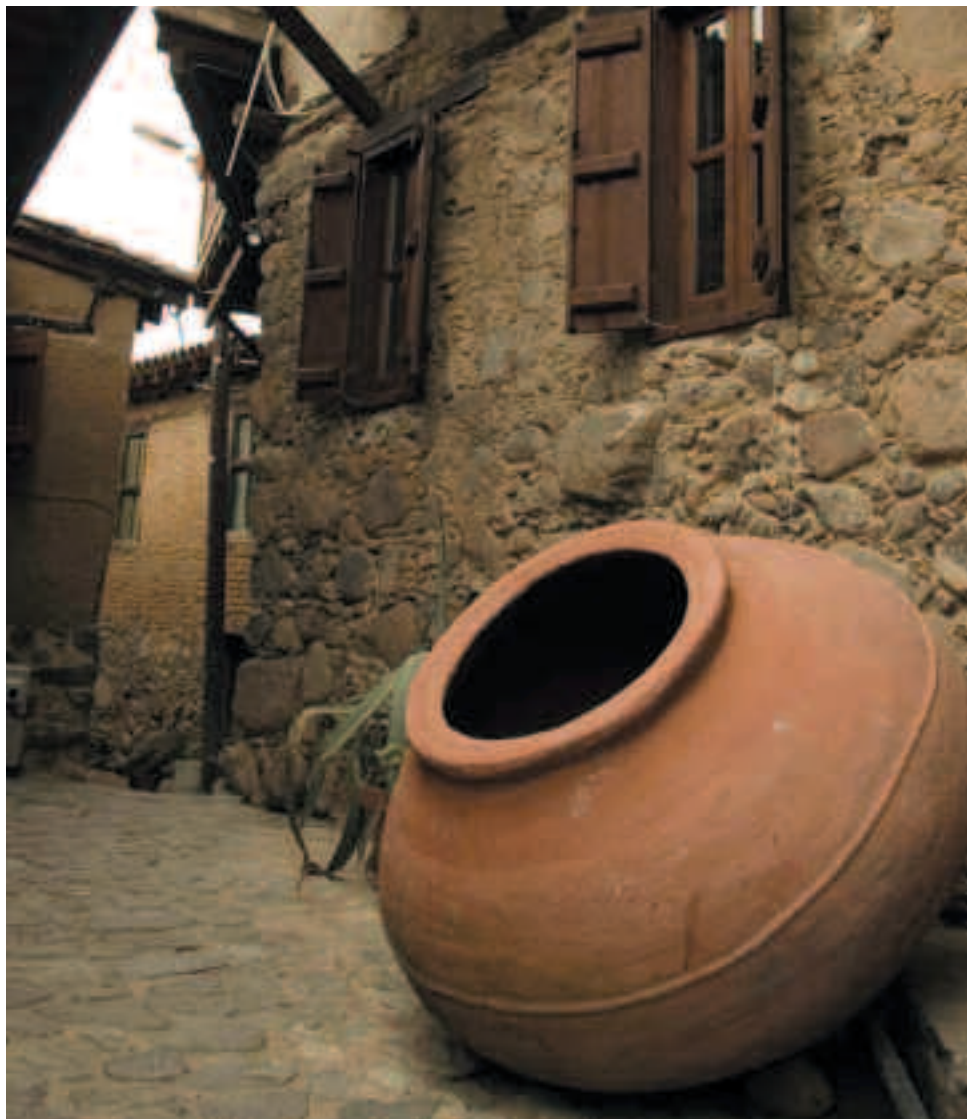
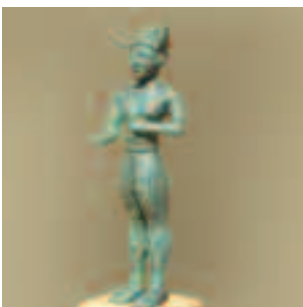
Around 1200BC, the arrival of Greek-speaking settlers caused great disruption and led to the emergence of the first of the city kingdoms of the Iron Age. The influence of Greek culture rapidly became evident in every aspect of Cypriot life.



Throughout the following centuries of foreign domination, everyday life in the more remote rural villages hardly changed until the beginning of the 20th century, when electricity and motorised transport arrived and the first paved roads were constructed.

Today, agriculture, including the wine industry, is still a fundamental part of the country's economy and Cypriot craftspeople continue their cultural traditions by creating pottery and weaving, lace and metalwork just as their ancestors did in ancient times.

During the Hellenistic period (4th century BC), copper mining was generating such wealth that Cyprus was able to supply Alexander the Great with a whole fleet of battleships. The value of the copper mining and export trade was the catalyst for the Romans taking possession of Cyprus in 58BC. Christianity also arrived in the first century AD and quickly spread to every corner of the island.





Nature

Geology

Cyprus has a diverse and fascinating landscape, ranging from cool, pine-clad mountains and lush river valleys to rolling hills and fertile plains.

The island was formed around seventy million years ago by the collision of the Euro-Asian and African tectonic plates.

By the Lower Miocene era, some twenty-five million years ago, the Troodos mountain range was an island, and the Mesaoria (central plain) and Pentadactylos range to the north were submerged under the sea.

The Pentadactylos Mountains began to emerge eleven million years ago at the end of the Miocene era, but the Mesaoria appeared much later, during the Pleistocene Age, a million years ago.

Today, the Troodos massif, a bulky range with the 1951m Mount Olympus (Chionistra) at its peak, dominates the south of the island. It consists of igneous rock and pillow lavas originally formed from molten rock. Its serpentine rocks contain rich deposits of copper, asbestos, chromites and iron pyrites. The area provides a unique opportunity for anyone interested in geology, because it is one of the rare places in the world where you can actually stand on the earth's mantle.



Flora & Fauna

Cyprus is home to a wide variety of herbaceous plants, some 130 of which are endemic. In the spring, there is a riotous blossoming of poppies, anemones, cyclamen, iris, gladioli, tulips and crown daisies. Approximately fifty species and subspecies of orchid are found, including several endemics.

Birds on the spring and autumn north-south migration use Cyprus as a stopping point and the two Salt Lakes (Larnaka and Akrotiri) offer a winter home to large flocks of greater flamingos (*Phoenicopterus ruber*). Nightingales, golden orioles, hoopoes, rollers and bee-eaters are among the visitors and residents include several endemic species, such as the Cyprus Warbler and the Cyprus Wheatear.

The endemic moufflon (*Ovis orientalis ophion*), a type of wild sheep, is considered by many to be Cyprus' national animal. At one time, these beautiful yet shy animals were hunted almost to extinction. Following a captive-breeding programme the species has been saved and today is located in and around the Pafos Forest. They are best seen in a reserve at the Stavros tis Psokas Forest Station, in the Troodos range.

Cyprus is also one of the few remaining nesting grounds for the endangered Green Turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) and the Loggerhead Turtle (*Caretta caretta*).

Although not a wild animal in danger of extinction, the Cyprus donkey has always been an important feature of rural life as both a form of transport and a beast of burden. Villagers from the remoter areas can still be seen riding and working with donkeys, and a Donkey Sanctuary is found at the village of Vouni.





Religion

Christianity gained an early foothold in Cyprus, when the Apostles Paul and Barnabas introduced the religion in the first century AD.

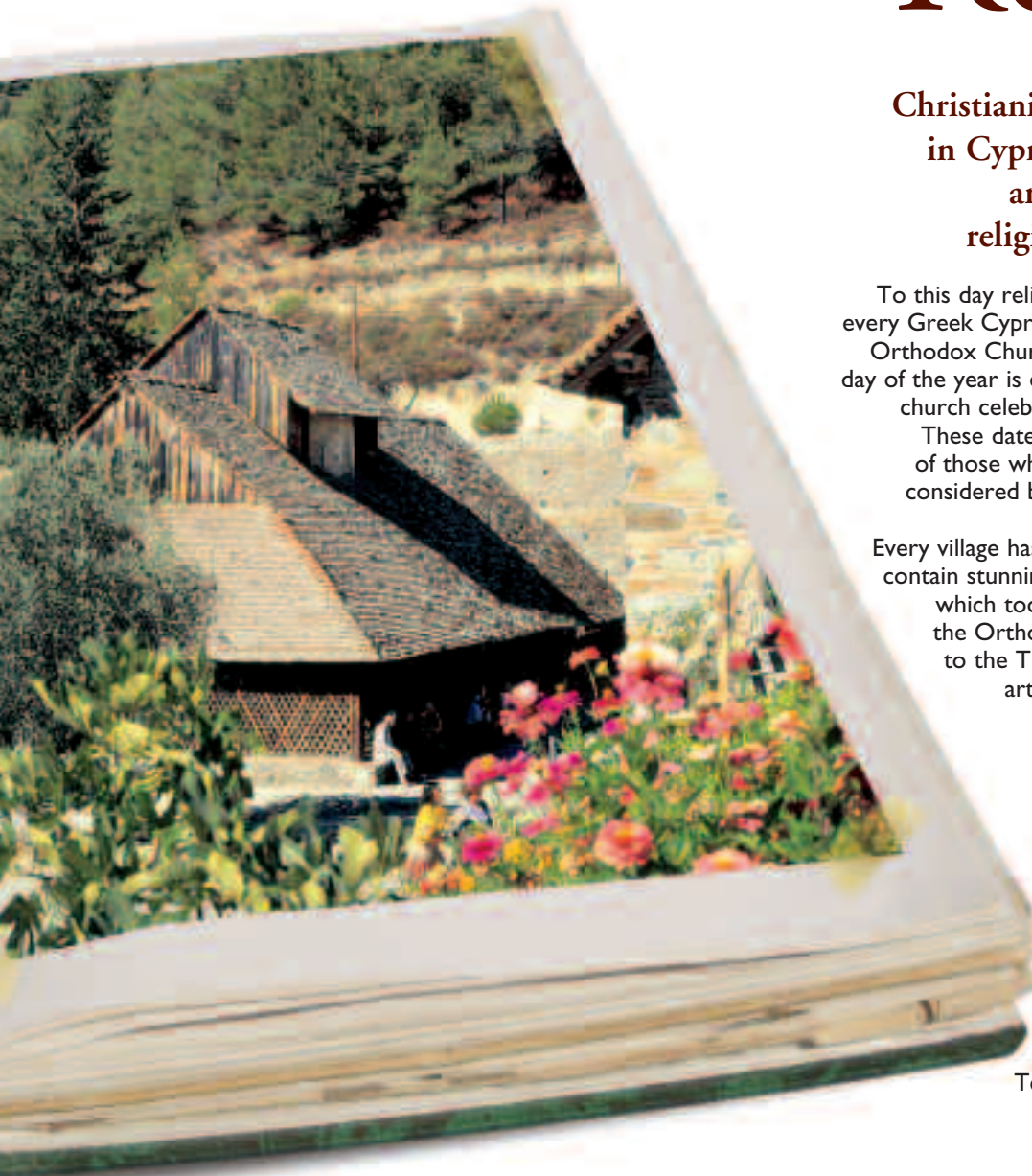
To this day religion is fundamental to the life of almost every Greek Cypriot, most of whom belong to the Greek Orthodox Church. According to Orthodox belief, each day of the year is dedicated to a particular saint and every church celebrates its saint's day with a fair (*panagiri*).

These dates are also celebrated as the 'name days' of those who bear the name of the particular saint, considered by locals more significant than birthdays.

Every village has one or more churches, many of which contain stunning icons. The Catholic Lusignan dynasty, which took control of Cyprus in 1197, repressed the Orthodox Church and many clergy withdrew to the Troodos Mountains. Here they employed artisans and masons to build and embellish ecclesiastical retreats.

Many of these churches were of similar design - about the size of a small barn, some with domes and some without. Because of the harsh winter climate, steeply pitched overhanging roofs were added to protect them from heavy snowfalls making their style unique in the world.

Inside them, fresco painters created vivid images in styles that reflected changing tastes and religious fashions. Ten of the finest examples are designated by UNESCO as World Heritage sites.





A series of carefully planned Religious Routes, co-funded by the European Union, are designed to portray the spiritual life of Cyprus through its Orthodox monasteries, churches, festivals and customs, as well as ecclesiastical museums and religious art.





Food & Wine

FOOD

Hospitality is a byword in Cyprus and *Kopiaste* in Greek means, "Come and enjoy our hospitality".

So, where better to try some local specialities than in rural Cyprus?

Much of the food eaten daily - olives, almonds, figs, beans, chickpeas, dates, herbs and honey - was known in Biblical times. It is said that carobs are the 'husks' from the parable of the prodigal son and the 'locusts' eaten by John the Baptist in the wilderness. The traditional Cypriot diet is a healthy one, based on vegetables, salad, pulses, wholemeal bread, fruit, olives and olive oil, cheeses and small quantities of meat.

The Vahkis Project promotes authentic traditional Cypriot cuisine at local tavernas.

The scheme is named after a famous Cypriot chef who lived in the city-kingdom of Kition around 300AD. Restaurants and tavernas have to meet strict criteria before they are awarded the Vahkis certificate.





WINE

Cyprus has a very long history of wine production and the island has fifteen indigenous varieties of grape. The wines of Cyprus are praised in the Song of Solomon, and the Greek poet Euripides wrote of vast pilgrimages to the island to taste the wine, or 'Cyprus Nama', as it was then known.

Legend tells us that the first mortal to learn the secret of making wine was Icaros, who learned the art from Dionysus, the god of wine himself. The scene can be seen today in a mosaic at the House of Dionysus at Kato Pafos. The words 'Be happy and drink well' were found on an inscription at the site and archaeological



evidence of viticulture and winemaking can be seen in museums around the island.

In the early 1980s, the government encouraged small wineries to open and there are now over forty, many of them in the vineyards themselves. These smaller wineries are represented by the Vacchus Regional Wineries' Association. At the same time, the island's four major wineries have opened regional wineries and created new marques to complement the existing classics. Many of the wineries welcome visitors for guided tours and tastings, and there is also The Cyprus Wine Museum at the village of Erimi.

Zivania is a traditional spirit that has been drunk in Cyprus for centuries. It is distilled from grapes with high acidity, which are crushed and the whole mass, called zivana, is fermented and then distilled.



Commandaria is the oldest name for a wine in the world. The name derives from the Grande Commanderie (feudal estate) of the Knights Hospitaller of St John of Jerusalem, an ecclesiastical military order headquartered at Kolossi. Commandaria is a dark sweet dessert wine made from grapes grown in an Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée area on the southern foothills of the Troodos Mountains.



Countryside Activities

The Cyprus countryside is a haven for a variety of activities due to varied landscape, climatic conditions, rich culture and the short distances within the various regions.

Hiking and rambling

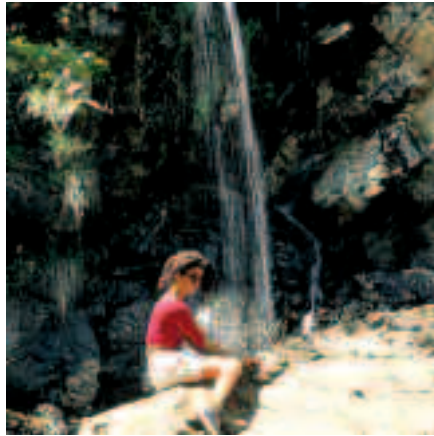
The Cyprus Tourism Organisation and the Forestry Department have created over seventy nature trails to help hikers and ramblers enjoy the island's hills and vales. The trails, which are designed to take in areas of outstanding natural beauty and cultural importance, are divided into three degrees of difficulty with two trails suitable for the disabled.

European E4 long distance path

It is now possible to walk the length of Europe, thanks to the European E4 long distance path. Starting in Gibraltar, the path traverses Spain, France, Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria and Greece; then it is a short air trip to Crete and on to Cyprus.

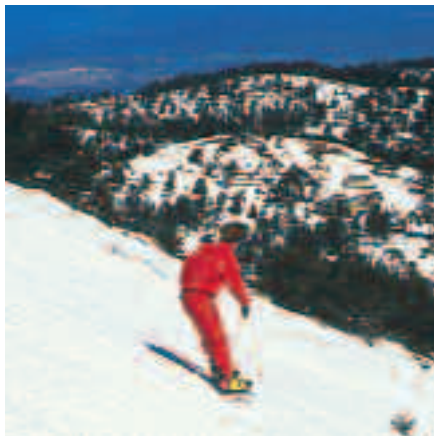
The Cyprus section, connects Larnaka and Pafos airports. Along the way, it passes through areas of outstanding natural beauty, places of ecological importance and historic and archaeological sites.

All the roads and tracks on the Cyprus route are well signposted and the Cyprus Tourism Organization has published a booklet splitting it into comfortable daily sections, with the distance and time needed to cover each one. It also gives useful information on the geology, flora, fauna and points of interest along each section of the route.



Cycling

If your ideal of travelling is to have the wind on your face, the sun on your back, the gentle crunch of tyres on gravel, the scent of pines around you and a glimpse of the sea sparkling in the distance, then cycling in Cyprus is for you. Almost all the tourist resorts have bicycles for hire and the guidebook *Cyprus Cycling Routes* can be picked up at any tourist information office. The guidebook covers the main routes connecting towns or regions and excursions within those regions. Each itinerary describes the route from point to point by altitude and the distance from the start point. Further options include a longer cycling route in the Troodos mountains and, for competitive cyclists, a number of major cycling events organised by the Cyprus Cycling Federation, a member of the International Cycling Union (ICU).



Horse riding

Riding is a different way of exploring the hidden secrets of the Cyprus landscape. Stables can be found all over the island, giving you the chance to enjoy the Akamas peninsula, the Cape Gkreko National Forest Park or the pine-scented Troodos Mountains on horseback. Riding allows you to enjoy nature at a slower pace, to hear the birdsong and watch the incredible colours of the last rays of the setting sun over sea or mountain. Riding can be enjoyed year-round and there is trekking and hacking for all levels of competence. The CTO has published a pamphlet *Horse Riding in Cyprus* and more information is available from the Cyprus Equestrian Federation.



Angling in the reservoirs of Cyprus is a popular pastime and twenty-one reservoirs provide excellent fresh-water fishing throughout the year. Seventeen species of fish are stocked, including trout, bass, carp, perch and roach. 'Catch and keep' is allowed at all but two sites, Polemedeia (Lemesos District) and Achna (Ammochostos District), which are 'catch and release' only. Anglers need a fishing licence, which can be easily obtained from the Department of Fisheries and Marine Research in Lefkosia or from the regional offices of the Fisheries Department.



Ornithology

Cyprus lies on one of the main migratory paths for bird species from Europe, Asia and Africa and there are many endemic species on the island. Winter is the time to enjoy spectacular flocks of flamingos and wildfowl at the Salt Lakes. High summer is a quiet time, as the number of breeding species is relatively small. Autumn is excellent for the passage of raptors, especially in September and October. The season also sees a massive movement of wildfowl, gulls and herons. It is in spring that Cyprus is truly glorious, as the number of birds passing seems inexhaustible. The spring migration is quite a long one, lasting from early March right through to late April.

BirdLife Cyprus (BLC) is an NGO that promotes the protection of birds and their habitats. BLC is an affiliate of BirdLife Europe and it runs birdwatching trips and a birdline, through which visitors can find out what is happening on the local scene.

Botany

In the heat of summer, visitors can be forgiven for thinking that Cyprus is bereft of flowers, as the dry rock-strewn hills show scant evidence that the island is home to an extraordinary variety of wildflowers and orchids, including around 130 endemic plants.

The best time to see Cyprus' wild flowers is in early spring, when most species enjoy a short period of blossoming and take advantage of the unusually moist climate.

Skiing and snowboarding

Mount Olympus, at the summit of the Troodos Mountains, is traditionally known as Chionistra 'the snowy one' and, in winter, it is covered with a layer of snow up to 3 metres deep. There is a brief but vigorous skiing and snowboarding season from December to March. There are four main runs ideal for novices, more practised skiers and for the experience ones. At Sun Valley and the North Face, there are six alpine-standard runs varying from 100 to 500 metres. There are also two langlauf (cross-country) trails at Sun Valley; one of eight kilometres and one of four, while snowboarding is growing in popularity. Visitors can hire equipment from the ski store at Sun Valley and tuition is available for skiers and snowboarders.







Rural Accommodation

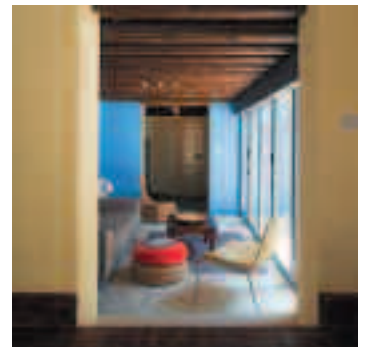
Anyone who prefers the charm of a quiet, rural environment to the hustle and bustle of a tourist resort can opt to stay at a traditional house in a village, in accommodation known in Cyprus as 'Agrotourism'.

These properties are renovated traditional village houses. All have modern kitchens and bathrooms and are furnished with rustic furniture and soft furnishings in traditional weave. Most of the houses have a garden, where you can enjoy such delights as lemons and oranges fresh from the tree, and many have a swimming pool too. You can enjoy the comfort of a house that will soon feel like home.

All the properties are licensed by the Cyprus Tourism Organization and are maintained under the umbrella of the Cyprus Agrotourism Company, an affiliate company of the CTO whose members are the property owners themselves.

Such properties are available year-round and are ideal for botanists, birdwatchers, cyclists and hikers.

Many of the larger villages also have small hotels, providing visitors with the option to spend more time exploring the island's delightful countryside.





For more information on the 15 rural routes ask for the Roural Tourism guide book from the CTO information offices.

The fire hazard

It is highly likely that fires would get started in the Cyprus countryside especially during the summer months when it gets parched and dry. Please be aware of the danger and avoid discarding cigarettes out of car windows, having barbecues in places not allowed or discarding glass bottles which can easily reflect the sun. If you do notice a fire or even smoke, please call 1407 immediately.

Driving

Driving is on the left, with priority from the right at roundabouts. The road layout and road signs follow the international system and distances and speeds are given in kilometres. Fairly good surfaced roads complying with international traffic requirements link the towns and the various villages. Four lane motorways connect the capital Lefkosia (or Nicosia) with the coastal towns of Lemesos (Limassol), Larnaka, Paphos and Agia Napa. Minor roads and forest roads are still largely unsurfaced but in good to fair condition. Appropriate care should be taken when using these roads especially during wet weather. Police will fine you for careless driving, not wearing a motorcycle helmet or a seatbelt and using a mobile phone while driving.

Driving licenses

Visitors in Cyprus can drive using a valid international driving license, or their national driving license, provided it is valid for the class of vehicle they wish to drive.

Cyprus weather

Cyprus enjoys an intense Mediterranean climate, with long, dry summers from mid-May to mid-October and with mild winters from December to February which are separated by short autumn and spring seasons. Summer is the season of high temperatures with cloudless skies but the sea breeze creates a pleasant atmosphere in the coastal areas. Winters are mild with some rain and snow on Troodos Mountains. In Cyprus there is abundant sunshine. Even in December and January there is an average of six hours of bright sunshine per day.

Clothing/Dress and Activities

April-May: Days are pleasantly warm, but temperatures may fall a bit at night.

- Medium-weight and summer apparel
- Excellent season for those who prefer to enjoy nature as the countryside is green and flowers are in blossom.

June-July-August: Warmest months of summer

- Very light weight summer clothing
- Ideal for swimming and all beach/water activities.

September - October: Warm days, cool October evenings

- Light weight apparel for the day and medium-weight for the evenings in October.

November: Pleasantly warm days

- Medium-weight apparel. Light woollies.
- Ideal weather for autumn travel. Lunches in the open-air still a delight. Sunbathing and even swimming can still be enjoyed, as well as most outdoor sports.

December-January:

- It may rain occasionally, yet the promise of glorious sunshine is still there.
- Winter clothing-not heavy coats though!
- Outdoor activities and excursions can be enjoyed.

February: The possibility of exceptionally warm days. Almond trees in blossom, occasional rain and mild day time temperatures are the harbingers of spring.

It can be quite cold however in the evenings.

- Winter apparel.
- Conditions are ideal for snow skiing on Troodos mountains

March: Moderating weather with plenty of sunshine and with nature at its best.

- Winter apparel with medium-weight wear.
- Most outdoor activities can be enjoyed and March is an excellent period for long country walks.

Safety in the sun

Avoid being in the sun between 11:00 -15:00 and always apply a suncream.

Religion

The dominant religion of Cyprus is Greek Orthodox. Visitors are welcomed in churches but must be properly dressed with long trousers for men and knee-high (or longer) skirts or trousers for women. At mosques you should leave your shoes off.

Petrol Stations

It is advisable to fill up before you leave towns. Petrol stations take electronic credit cards and have efficient and easy-to-work self-service pumps when the garage is closed. Petrol is sold by the litre and 15% VAT is included in all prices.

Pharmacies

These are in main towns only and are open during shop hours. Pharmacists are highly qualified and able to assist with many minor problems. The list of late-night openings is displayed in all pharmacy windows or you can find out about it on 90901433.

Photography

Please note that you are not allowed to take photographs near military camps or military installations, in museums where a special license is required by the appropriate authorities and in churches with mural paintings and icons, if 'flash' is required.

Wild flowers

Please do not pick the many endemic and rare wild flowers and herbs you will find in the Cyprus countryside.

Traffic accident

In case of a road traffic accident call the police (199). Your statements will be taken in English and read to you. Get the name and number of attending police officers. Liabilities are often agreed on the spot. Call your car hire company immediately.

Afternoon relax hours (Siesta)

Siesta time is still observed in most villages and shops might be closed between 13:00-15:00 (or some cases 16:00) during summer time.

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Authentic Cyprus.

Discover it...

in the yellow colour of daisies
in the small cyclamen on the rocks
in the songs of harvest flies and the sound
of the lutes
in the traditional desserts and red wine
in the small churches and trails
in people's smiles and their welcoming warmth.
In the place where thousands of new
experiences await you to feel them.



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