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This Often-overlooked European Island Is the Perfect Year-round Destination — With More Than 300 Days of Sunshine Each Year

How to plan the perfect trip to the sun-splashed island of Cyprus, according to local experts.

By [Lindsay Cohn](#) | Published on January 13, 2024



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While travelers flock to Mediterranean hot spots like Santorini and Capri, those same sun-seekers all too often seem to overlook less obvious vacation destinations in the region, like the dreamy island of Cyprus.

Originally settled by Mycenaean Greeks, the island nation offers archaeological sites, delicious traditional cuisine, and stunning scenery. More than just a summer standout, it enjoys consistently pleasant weather and more than 300 days of sunshine each year. That means ample time to catch some rays on the sandy beaches, [swim in the clear water](#), and hit the scenic hiking trails. Plus, this under-the-radar gem's low-key status translates to fewer crowds and lower rates (yes, even in the summer).

Read on for tips from local experts on how to plan a perfect trip to Cyprus.

TOP 5 CAN'T MISS

- Soak up the sunshine on the nation's sandy beaches.
- Eat delicious Cypriot specialties like halloumi cheese and moussaka.
- Step into the past with a visit to Kourion archaeological site.
- Explore the charming villages in the Troodos Mountains.
- Stay in swish style at an oceanfront resort.



PHOTO: COURTESY OF MARRIOTT

Best Hotels and Resorts

Parklane, a Luxury Collection Resort & Spa, Limassol

A favorite of discerning travelers, [Parklane, a Luxury Collection Resort & Spa, Limassol](#) provides an array of accommodations — from rooms to suites to luxury villas — plus tons of amenities. The hardest decision you'll have to make while staying at the property is whether to relax by one of the outdoor pools or the sandy beach.

Anassa Hotel

[Anassa Hotel](#) gives off vacation sanctuary vibes thanks to a serene hillside setting, sweeping vistas, and a secluded beach. The spa offers an indoor pool surrounded by Roman columns, saunas, steam baths, and tranquility-inducing signature treatments. Not just prime for relaxation but also romance, it's a splendid option for a couples getaway or a honeymoon.

Columbia Beach Resort

[Columbia Beach Resort](#), a member of Small Luxury Hotels of the World, merges many of the most captivating aspects of Cyprus. Situated on a beach overlooking Pissouri Bay, the five-star property shows off traditional Cypriot architecture, an infinity pool, gourmet dining, and a wonderful spa.

Amara

Set in the coastal enclave of Agios Tychon, [Amara](#) feels like the backdrop of a fabulous vacation. With two lauded, upscale restaurants — Matsuhisa and Ristorante Locatelli — exclusive suites featuring private pools and ocean views, and a sublime spa, it's virtually impossible to leave.

Almyra Hotel

Spread across eight acres of gardens on the coast of Paphos, [Almyra Hotel](#) is a contemporary boutique resort. Tailor-made for couples, it also welcomes families with open arms. However, parents may want to book a babysitter to fully bliss out with marine-based rituals at the spa.

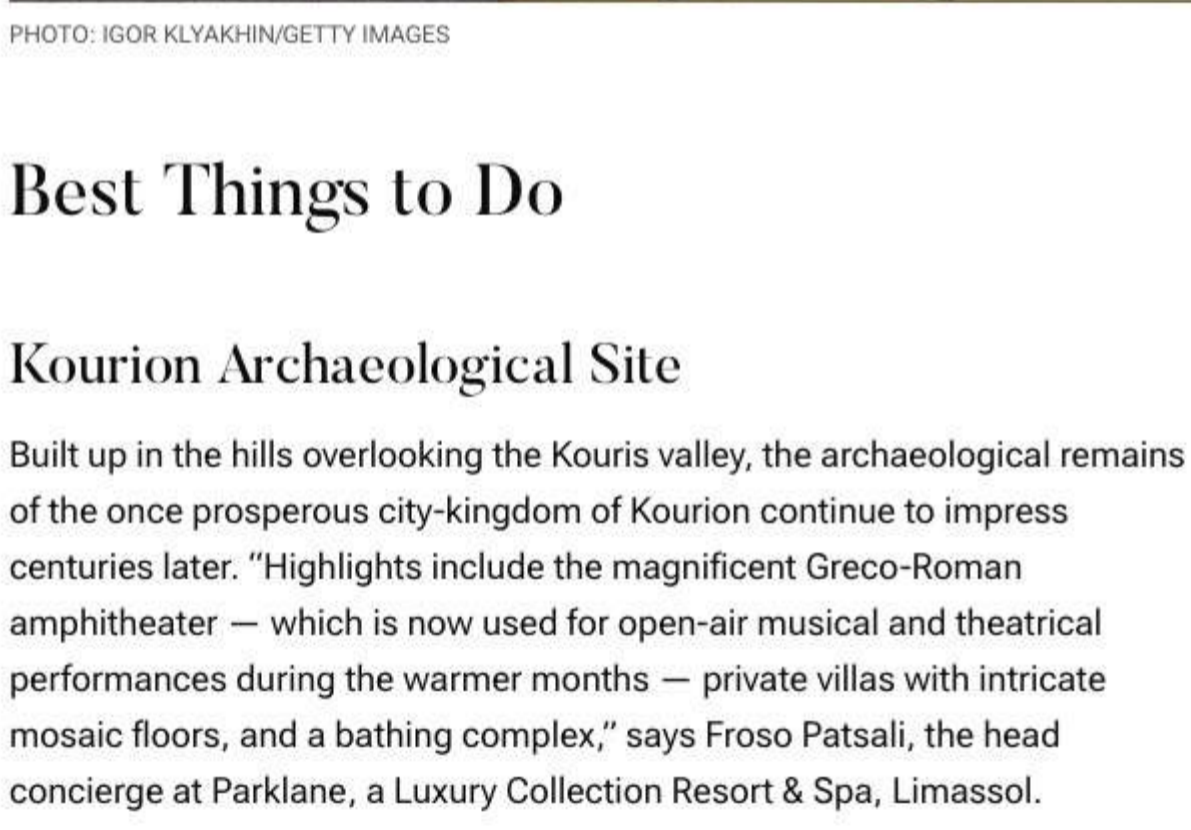


PHOTO: IGOR KLYAKHIN/GETTY IMAGES

Best Things to Do

Kourion Archaeological Site

Built up in the hills overlooking the Kouris valley, the archaeological remains of the once powerful city-kingdom of Kourion continue to impress centuries later. "Highlights include the magnificent Greco-Roman amphitheater — which is now used for open-air musical and theatrical performances during the warmer months — private villas with intricate mosaic floors, and a bathing complex," says Froso Patsali, the head concierge at Parklane, a Luxury Collection Resort & Spa, Limassol.

Petra tou Romiou (Aphrodite's Rock)

"Legend has it that Aphrodite was born from the foams at Petra Tou Romiou, commonly known as Aphrodite's Rock," says Cyprus-based ToursByLocals guide [Sirin Suha](#). "Not only is the area steeped in mythology, it's also very beautiful and a popular tourist location."

Kykkos Monastery

"Perched in the mountainous Marathasa Valley, Kykkos Monastery, which was founded at the end of the 11th century by Byzantine emperor Alexios I Komnenos and dedicated to Panagia (the Virgin Mary), is one of the wealthiest and most photogenic religious sites on the island," explains Patsali. Visitors can admire the stonework, arches, and frescoes and sip zivania, a Cypriot pumice brandy produced right on the premises.

Nissi Beach

While Cyprus boasts many gorgeous beaches, Nissi Beach in Ayia Napa looks like a postcard with its crystal-clear waters and white sand. Thanks to the pleasant climate, visitors can swim, sunbathe, stroll along the shore, and enjoy sunset cocktails at the many lively bars and tavernas virtually all year.

Troodos Mountains

The Troodos Mountains are known for charming villages and UNESCO-listed painted churches. The region is also home to many wineries that keep centuries-old viticulture traditions alive. Pro tip: If you plan to do a few tours and tastings, be sure to prearrange transportation for the day.



PHOTO: ANDRII MARUSHCHYNETS/GETTY IMAGES

Best Restaurants

Meze Taverna

One of the top-rated restaurants in Limassol, [Meze Taverna](#) is a small, family-run operation that earns rave reviews from diners for traditional dishes that follow recipes passed down through the generations. It's also a special place to experience warm Cypriot hospitality.

Pyxida Fish Tavern

What could be better than fresh fish, a crisp glass of local white wine, and views of Limassol Marina? Not much, and that's exactly what you can expect when dining at [Pyxida Fish Tavern](#). The light, airy space and professional service are also deserving of attention.

Estiatorio Evroulla

Tucked away in Nicosia — a complex city and the last divided capital in the world — sits [Estiatorio Evroulla](#), a casual eatery that serves some of the best no-fuss local food on the island (think: kebabs, Greek salad, and crispy fries), all for a reasonable price. It's the perfect quick, easy, and affordable lunch spot.

Laona Restaurant

[Laona Restaurant](#) is a tiny treasure in the Old Town of Paphos. Tables spill out from the taverna onto the cobble sidewalk, giving passersby a front-row view of the homemade Cypriot dishes like rabbit stifado and moussaka, which patrons happily devour for lunch and dinner.

Estia

When you're looking along the marina in Paphos and want something memorable for dinner, pop into [Estia](#) (or better yet, have the foresight to make a reservation ahead of time). The menu spotlights traditional Greek cuisine, with octopus and chicken skewers served alongside pita and tzatziki as some of the homemade standouts.

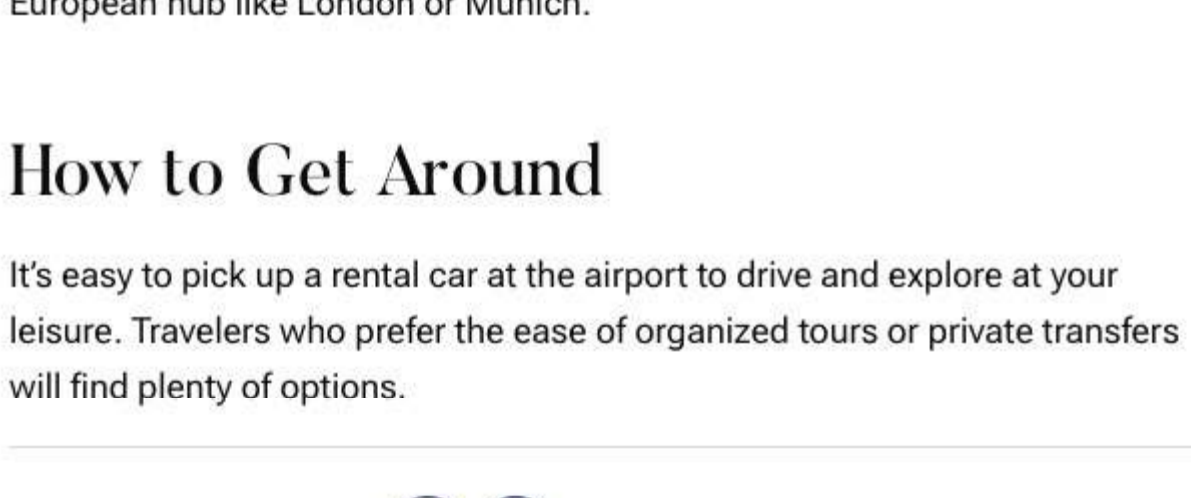


PHOTO: GATSY/GETTY IMAGES

Best Time to Visit

Cyprus is a year-round destination, though it's worth noting tourism (like the temperature) surges in the summer. To avoid the heat and crowds, consider planning a trip in May, June, September, or October. You'll get to experience the wonders of swimming in the clear, blue Mediterranean water as well as the many hiking and cycling trails.

How to Get There

Travelers fly into either Paphos International Airport or Larnaca International Airport. Coming from the U.S., it's essential to transfer through a larger European hub like London or Munich.

How to Get Around

It's easy to pick up a rental car at the airport to drive and explore at your leisure. Travelers who prefer the ease of organized tours or private transfers will find plenty of options.

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