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Nov/Dec 2025

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Owner/operator Thanos Hotels & Resorts  
Architect Eraclis Papachristou  
Interior design Maria Neophytou  
Keys 10

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THANOS HOTELS & RESORTS

# AMYTH OF NICOSIA

## CYPRUS

Amid Nicosia's energetic blend of cultures, this hotel's minimalist design quietly celebrates the grace of its historic bones

WORDS BY KAREN BAMFORD

Who doesn't love a city break? I relish an opportunity to immerse myself in a spot of art and culture while enjoying fine dining and all the mod-cons of a luxury hotel. Usually, the only disappointments are the hordes of other tourists and the fact that

almost everyone you know has already "discovered" Rome, Seville, Porto – and any other cultural hotspot you care to mention.

Nicosia is a little more unexpected. The underexplored capital of Cyprus is divided by a UN-controlled buffer zone that separates the North side of the island from the South. This so-called green line separates Turkish and Greek Cypriots, and visitors must show passports to cross from one side to the other.

If this is starting to sound a bit too edgy, fear not! Both sides of this enthralling city can now be explored from the comfort of its first luxury boutique hotel. Thanos Hotels and Resorts opened Amyth of Nicosia earlier this year to offer an ideal base for a weekend break, or an add-on to a beach holiday at one of the family-run group's ►



other hotels dotted across the island – Anassa, Almyra and Annabelle.

I took the second option, flying into Larnaca, a 45-minute taxi ride from the Amyth, where I stayed for two nights, followed by a two-and-a-half-hour drive south to relax at Anassa for a couple of nights before flying out of Paphos.

Set within Nicosia's medieval Venetian Walls, on the Greek-speaking southern side of the city, the Amyth stands out on an otherwise unremarkable street thanks to the double-fronted mansion's freshly whitewashed walls, honey-coloured sandstone quoins and lintels and muted blue shutters. The listed villa was built in the early 1900s and enjoyed a previous life as a school. Thankfully, original architectural details such as soaring, decorative ceilings and tiled floors have survived the ravages of time and children's eager feet.

In reimagining the villa as a boutique hotel, local interior designer Maria Neophytou and architect Eraclis Papachristou resisted the temptation to pile on glamour. Stepping into the cool hallway, the tone is set, modernist simplicity meeting Cypriot heritage. A sleek black leather chaise sits atop the lobby's original patterned floor tiles, while the check-in desk is tucked discretely out of sight around a corner.

There are just ten guestrooms – three on the ground floor, six on the first floor and one in a pedimented extension on the roof that is reached by a curvaceous staircase. This romantic one-bedroom suite, like the hotel's two-bedroom suite, has a private terrace with gorgeous views stretching over both the old and new town.

The heart of the hotel is its courtyard shaded by olive trees where elevated Cypriot dishes are skilfully prepared and served in generous portions. It's the perfect place to enjoy a slow breakfast, lunch or dinner, sitting comfortably in an oversized mid-century-style chair with plump cushions woven in traditional designs and neutral colours.

Woven textiles are the hotel's most obvious nod to Cyprus's craft heritage, and these have been added subtly in muted tones. There are textured cushions in the bedrooms of the same gentle blue as the painted ceilings and tall padded headboards, and corridors feature carpets woven in geometric patterns.

During my stay, a large artwork by textile artist Teresa Georgallis was hung in the dining room. Inspired by the interior architecture of the hotel, the woven interlace patterns echo the shapes, shadows and structural outlines found within the space.

"Woven interlace designs bridge the gap between traditional craftsmanship and contemporary design, making the space feel both timeless and modern. The



interplay of light and shadow on the patterns further accentuates the geometric nature of the designs, embellishing the space with tactile richness," said Teresa, who used cotton cord hand dyed with local red clay to create the piece.

As well as through design, art is another way Thanos like to weave local culture into the guest experience. Teresa's store and studio, Threading Stories, is a short walk from the Amyth, where, as part of the hotel's programming I enjoyed a weaving workshop under her guidance.

The greatest benefit of staying at the Amyth is that Nicosia's cultural attractions and are on its doorstep. It's an easy stroll to Venetian, Byzantine and Ottoman landmarks, museums, bars and restaurants. I also walked to the pedestrian border crossing point at Ledra Street for a brief visit to the Turkish side of the city.

Then I was ready for some serious pampering, which is laid on with glorious splendour at Anassa on the tranquil west coast of Cyprus. Designed like a traditional Cypriot village with ▶ 166 low-rise rooms,



suites and residences, the hotel is probably best known for its award-winning spa where I had a relaxing massage. Not a gym-user myself, I've noticed that hotel gyms are rarely used, not so at Anassa, where people were working out whenever I passed. I headed for the saltwater hydro pool instead. There's also a large indoor pool, outdoor spa pool, relaxation rooms and more.

Bedrooms and suites at Anassa, redesigned by Joelle Pleot, are the ultimate in refined Mediterranean chic, with luxurious silks and linens, nautical blues and understated taupes. There are four restaurants, each offering a different style of dining and décor, but all exceptional.

This was one city break that gave me plenty to talk about afterwards. **S**