



## 12 things to do with kids in Cyprus

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By Jennifer Howze



Cyprus is a well-established destination for the party generation and new parents. But on a recent visit we discovered why it's great with slightly older children, with its outdoor sports, culture that's not restricted to museums and beautiful, rugged nature. Here, my must-do activities for any family visit to Cyprus.

## I. Explore the Akamas Peninsula

The Akamas Peninsula on the western tip of Cyprus is a place of unspoiled, beautiful nature (top picture). Forget the half-finished apartments and resorts on the drive from Paphos airport and set off on one of the nature trails around Akamas National Park. The Aphrodite trail starts just by the Baths of Aphrodite and winds along the coast, taking a path that looks down onto aquamarine lagoons of Chrysochou Bay and past fragrant sage and juniper, before heading inland. On the weekend we were there, the dirt path turned to mud after 30 minutes of walking — my husband and I wished we'd worn hiking boots like my daughter. The trail is also popular with mountain bikers and well-suited to children aged 5 and up (it's a bit challenging for anyone younger not in a sling or backpack). Bring a hat and possibly a rain cagoule for sudden showers.

TIP: Hit the Baths of Aphrodite early, before the coach tours arrive, then do the trail, stopping at the end to buy fruit from the local woman by the parking lot. For 3 euros, she loaded up a plastic bag that furnished us with fruit snacks for the rest of our stay.



**Buy mandoras from this woman, like we did**

## 2. Eat mandoras

Food is like luxury shopping these days — it seems you get all the same things everywhere. Ho-hum. That's why it's exciting to try mandoras, a cross between an orange and a clementine that's grown in Cyprus (**mandarin** and **orange**). They're a bit flatter and tangier than a clementine, and we found they're perfect to cut up and eat after a hike or swim.

### 3. Marvel at the Avakas Gorge

Marveling at the dramatic and breathtaking rock formations at this gorge was one of my favourite moments of the holiday. Around every corner is another spot for gorgeous photos or more rocks to clamber over, with light filtering atmospherically along the limestone faces. It's easy to go just beyond "the big rock" as our driver described it — a boulder suspended over the top opening of the gorge — and back within an hour, even if you stop-off by the creek to play pooh sticks.

TIP: Fancy a bit of botanical sleuthing? Hunt for the rare *centauria akamandis*, which blooms here in spring. We met a family eager to know if we'd seen the spiky purple blossoms. Wear sturdy slip-proof shoes — again, walking boots are the best — for hopping on slippery rocks or (ahem) accidentally dipping your foot in the water.



**The stunning Avakas Gorge is a highlight**



**Enjoying the pool at Anassa**

#### **4. Stay at The Anassa**

This Cypriot resort has a reputation for being the best place to stay in Cyprus, and the five-star resort does family-friendly in grand style. Its beach is a long sandy stretch with onsite watersports centre, the heated kids pool has its own box of pool toys (even the plunge

pools in the suites are heated), its kids club is run by luxury tour operator Scott Dunn. And oh the food! The casual Amphora restaurant has a changing daily themed buffet (Asian, Italian, Greek) and, while we were visiting, a children's entertainer toured the room, making balloon animals. Fancy grown-up time at the 2 upscale restaurants onsite? Book the kids into evening club where they can jump on the bouncy castle or dance at the informal disco.

TIP: Check out the themed dining when you check in and make reservations. The Cypriot evening includes local specialties, live music and dance performances!

*Anassa, [www.anassa.com.cy](http://www.anassa.com.cy), Paphos, 8840, Cyprus +357 26 888000*

### **5. Go out on a boat**

We thought the view out to sea from the Peninsula and the Anassa was beautiful. That is, until we took a sailing lesson and caught sight of the coastline from the water. You can rent a sailboat, take a waterskiing lesson, go windsurfing, parasailing, canoeing or even rent one of those motorboats with a little slide off the back for the kids (*wheee!*). Our instructor was encouraging, friendly and capable. Next time I'd like to book in an afternoon to sail over the Blue Lagoon and jump off the side into the turquoise water.

TIP: Bring a waterproof camera you can tie to your wrist or suit so you can capture the views from offshore. We loved how safety-conscious Latchi Beach Watersports was, plus they can lend you a wetsuit and booties when the water is chilly.

*Latchi Beach Watersports, [www.latchiwatersportscentre.com](http://www.latchiwatersportscentre.com), Locations at Latchi Marina and Anassa Beach, +357 26322095*



**Having a laugh in wetsuits before a sailing lesson**



**On our way down to secluded Lara Beach**

### **6. Visit Lara Beach**

This beach on the northwest shore is renowned for its turtle conservation projects to save the endangered loggerhead and green turtles. It's one of the few remaining nesting sites and is host to a couple of educational "huts" that bring the conservation project to life: no

multimedia bells and whistles — just text and pictures showing people devoted to preserving these animals.

TIP: Go during turtle-hatching season (July – September) to really experience the wonder of it.

### **7. Spend an afternoon on the waterfront in Paphos**

Start off an afternoon with lunch at my ideal Cypriot and Greek restaurant on the waterfront, [Ouzeri](#), open April to November. (It's just down the stairs from the Almyra hotel and part of it, where the smart money books a [Kyma suite](#), for stylish stays with sunset views.) Then walk along waterfront Poseidonos Avenue to the [Mosaics](#) — which are stunning and extensive. Continue on to end of the tip of the peninsula to take pictures at the Medieval Castle of Paphos, then stop at one of the many cafes on the way back for a drink, before having dinner at [Notios, the Japanese Mediterranean fusion restaurant at the Almyra hotel](#). (Our 11-year-old loved her food here.) Reserve a booth overlooking the water and watch the stars come out as you dine.

TIP: Time your walk to the castle to correspond with sundown for great pictures as the sun slips below the horizon.



**Celebrating the sunset in Paphos**



**A woman wading at Petra tou Romiou**

### **8. Drive down to Petra tou Romiou**

Aphrodite rose out of the sea here and glided onto shore in a seashell. [You've seen the Botticelli painting](#), now visit the real thing (under the goddess's Greek rather than Roman name). The striking rock formations are purported to have been thrown there by the Byzantine hero, Digenis Akritas. Come prepared to wade in the water. You'll be tempted to pocket a stack of the smooth, polished stones on the beach but we resisted (I was scandalised by one visitor leaving with a cluster of them clutched to her chest — please don't).

### **9. Do a performance at Kourion**

The noteworthy archaeological site of [Kourion](#) has at its centre a theatre originally built in the 2nd century B.C. It's recently restored and as demonstrated by a British man on our visit, it's got great acoustics, especially when you sing Suspicious Minds. A fun way to do something cultural.

## **10. Go quad biking**

The rugged terrain around the Akamas Peninsula beckons with its ups and downs. If you feel like getting out of the jeep, jump onto a quad bike for a sporty ride around. There are ample paths that wind around the area by Lara Beach and Akamas Peninsula National Park. Just pray for dry weather — if it gets too muddy, slippery paths make this activity dangerous.

## **12. Chrysoroyiatissa Monastery**

This monastery dates from the 12th century and is home to religious icons and treasures. [Thanos Michaelides](#), one of the family that owns the Anassa and 2 other hotels in the Thanos group, recommended this monastery in particular to visit. You could take his advice and try to talk the monk in charge into showing you his private collection of icons.

## **12. Take a jeep safari**

It's tempting as a tourist to hit the sights along the well-trodden path. It was only when we climbed into the jeep with our guide Big Mike and took off toward the village of Neo Chorio that we heard more about the life of regular Cypriots and saw beyond the guide book highlights. We booked our jeep safari through Anassa and this is the kind of tour you want: an animated, loquacious local ("You only want a 5-hour tour?" he said at one point, sounding flabbergasted and disappointed) who loves to tell the stories of his country.

TIP: Prepare for a fair share of bumps and jolts over unpaved roads.



**A fellow tourist singing at Kourion**



**A view of the road from the jeep safari**

*Disclosure: We visited Cyprus on a press trip organised by Thanos Hotels. Our accommodation, some meals and some excursions were provided complimentary or at a discount. All opinions are my own.*

<http://www.britmums.com/2015/05/12-things-to-do-with-kids-in-cyprus/>