

# **WALKING IN CYPRUS**

**44 WALKS IN THE SOUTH AND THE NORTH**



### About the Author

Nike and Jacint met many years ago on a long coach journey as they both travelled into the unknown to build a new life in a different country. It wasn't long before they became inseparable. Travelling quickly emerged as their favourite activity: they had their first walking holiday in Madeira in 2008 and now wherever they go they try to find the best trails. When they first visited Cyprus they were mesmerised by the diverse scenery, but discovered that information about trails was difficult to find and walking maps were not available. Having collected the best routes, they want to share their passion for walking on this fascinating island with others.

Nike went to journalism school and Jacint is a keen photographer. In 2016 they moved from London to Surrey where they can enjoy the countryside and hills.

# **WALKING IN CYPRUS**

**44 WALKS IN THE SOUTH AND THE NORTH**

**by Nike Werstroh and Jacint Mig**

**CICERONE**

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*In memory of Nike's Grandma, who would have been  
proud to see this book.*

### Acknowledgements

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### Updates to this Guide

While every effort is made by our authors to ensure the accuracy of guidebooks as they go to print, changes can occur during the lifetime of an edition. Any updates that we know of for this guide will be on the Cicerone website ([www.cicerone.co.uk/837/updates](http://www.cicerone.co.uk/837/updates)), so please check before planning your trip. We also advise that you check information about such things as transport, accommodation and shops locally. Even rights of way can be altered over time.

The route maps in this guide are derived from publicly-available data, databases and crowd-sourced data. As such they have not been through the detailed checking procedures that would generally be applied to a published map from an official mapping agency, although naturally we have reviewed them closely in the light of local knowledge as part of the preparation of this guide.

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*Front cover:* View of the Madari ridge from Mnimata Piskopon Trail (Walk 13)

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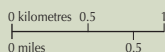
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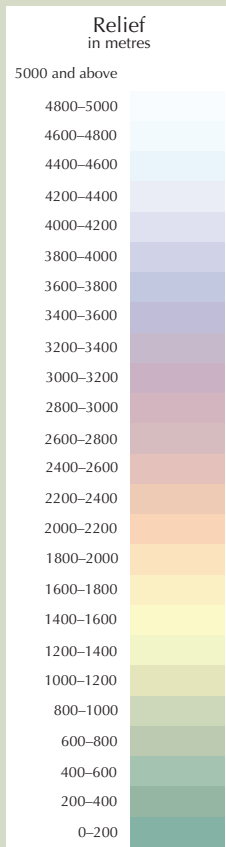
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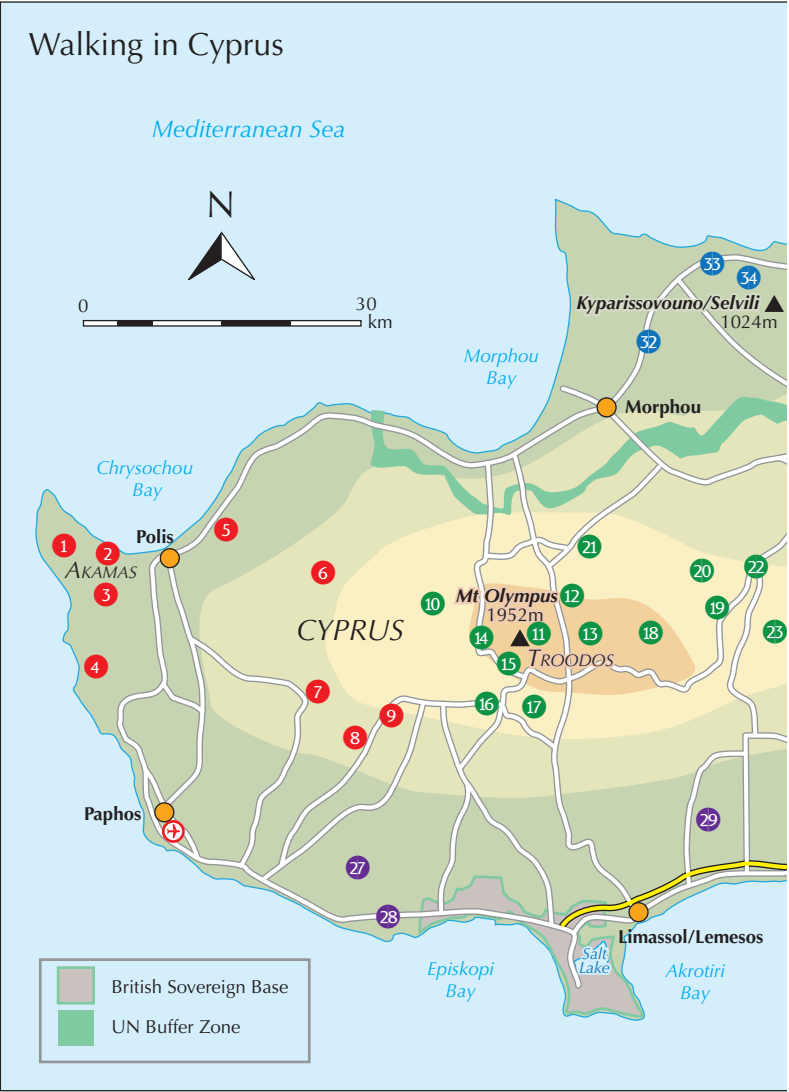
### GPX files

GPX files for all routes can be downloaded free at [www.cicerone.co.uk/837/GPX](http://www.cicerone.co.uk/837/GPX)

Contour lines are drawn at 25m intervals and highlighted at 100m intervals.



# Walking in Cyprus









*The narrowest section of the Avakas gorge (Walk 4)*

## INTRODUCTION

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According to legend, the goddess of love and beauty, Aphrodite, was born in Cyprus. Her birthplace, Petra tou Romiou – the famous rock formation near Paphos/Baf – rising from the turquoise sea, attracts many tourists every day. Admiring the striking sea stack from the pebbly beach in the early hours before the coachloads of noisy tourists arrive, you can see why a goddess of beauty would rise from the sea on that very spot. Cyprus has a strong connection with Greek mythology, and today places of interest and even walking trails bear the names of mythological figures.

The scenery changes from the rugged coastline of the Akamas

Peninsula, washed with turquoise water, to the wildflower-carpeted meadows and pine-covered slopes of Troodos; across the cultivated Mesaoria Plains to the narrow, serene Kyrenia/Beşparmak mountains. The Kyrenia range leads to the Karpaz/Karpas Peninsula, which is like an outstretched arm pointing towards Turkey.

Sunshine, a Mediterranean climate and golden beaches with crystal-clear waters have attracted tourists for many years. But walkers – who prefer to leave the hustle of seaside towns, noisy taverns and the busy archaeological sites behind – have only just started to discover

*Aphrodite's birthplace, Petra tou Romiou*



*The Profitis Elias chapel among the vineyards near Pano Panagia (Walk 7)*



Cyprus' outstanding walking trails. The sound of waves crashing against the rocks and the smell of seawater accompany the walker on sunny coastal trails, while birdsong entertains them as they walk through the dramatic Avakas Gorge on the Akamas Peninsula. Hikers might spot shy mouflon (a type of wild sheep) hopping skilfully on the steep slopes in Paphos Forest and the wild donkeys staring curiously at people on the Karpaz/Karpass Peninsula.

In the centre of the island, in the Troodos mountains, zigzagging footpaths lead to small, hidden churches and Byzantine monasteries – many of which are on the UNESCO World Heritage List for their unique architecture and colourful frescos. Winding nature trails on pine-covered slopes with stunning views give walkers the

opportunity to admire the beauty of these mountains.

Meanwhile, with castles proudly perched on rocks and mysterious monasteries in the shade of mighty trees, the thin, dramatic Kyrenia mountain range stretches across almost the entire length of Northern Cyprus.

In every season the island has its own magic to share with visitors. In some winters, snow covers the mountain peaks of Troodos, and Cyprus has Europe's most southerly ski resort. In spring, streams grow wider and colourful wildflowers carpet the meadows, while in the peak of summer the hazy air is filled with the chirping of cicadas. In autumn, families gather together to harvest grapes that grow on sunny slopes. At any time of the year elderly people are often found

gossiping in front of their homes on the narrow streets of peaceful villages.

After a day spent exploring the trails, walkers might enjoy a well-deserved dinner in a rustic restaurant in one of the seaside towns or villages. Cypriot cuisine is strongly related to Greek and Turkish cuisine but with a local twist; fresh vegetables, olives, halloumi cheese, meat, fish and Greek yoghurt are among the ingredients common to traditional Cypriot food. Wine is a necessary accompaniment for local dishes, and in Cyprus people have been making it for thousands of years. Commandaria, the sweet dessert wine, is believed to be the oldest named wine in the world: it was served at the wedding of Richard the Lionheart in Limassol and the king was so impressed that he pronounced Commandaria ‘the wine of kings and the king of wines’.

Due to its location, the island played a significant role in trading from around 3000BC and through the medieval centuries. It has belonged to different empires in its eventful past, with numerous artefacts and remains of ancient buildings around the island attesting to its diverse culture and troubled history. However, unlike other Mediterranean islands, it is not only the distant past that has left its legacy: after the island gained independence in 1960, tensions between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities grew, resulting in an eventual coup by the Greek Cypriots and an invasion by Turkey. The UN-controlled buffer

zone (known as the ‘Green Line’) that runs like a long scar across the island, dividing its inhabitants, demonstrates that the recent past is still affecting the lives of many in Cyprus. This, as well as the island’s earlier history, is described further in ‘Brief history’.

However, while Cyprus may be politically divided, the amazing scenery can be enjoyed on both sides of the island regardless of political views. Cypriots – whether they speak Greek or Turkish, attend church or mosque – greet visitors with a friendly welcome on both sides of the Green Line.

#### **LOCATION AND GEOGRAPHY**

Cyprus, surrounded by three continents, lies in the north eastern corner of the Mediterranean Sea. It is only 74km south of Turkey, about 100km from Syria and approximately 800km from mainland Greece. The island is 240km long and 100km wide at its widest point. It is the third largest island in the Mediterranean Sea, from which it rose millions of years ago.

The foundation rocks of Cyprus were once part of the oceanic crust of the Tethys Ocean and as such weren’t connected to any continental plate. In the late Miocene period, the African Plate levered the floor of the Tethys Ocean, causing Cyprus to emerge. The Troodos mountains were once part of the ocean bed and today they form the best-preserved example of ocean floor on the Earth’s surface.



Here geologists can study the prehistoric sea floor.

Cyprus's two mountain ranges – the Troodos and the Kyrenia mountains – dominate its landscape. Troodos, located in the middle of the island, is mainly formed of igneous rock with its lower slopes covered by chalk. The Kyrenia, running across nearly the entire northern part of the island, consists of limestone and marble. About two million years ago the Kyrenia and Troodos mountains were islands; the land was constantly rising and the area between the two mountain ranges became the Mesaoria Plain.

### PLANTS AND FLOWERS

There are approximately 1800 identified plant species on the island, of which around 140 are endemic. Some of the endemic plants' habitats are restricted to specific areas such as the Troodos mountains or the Akamas Peninsula.

Calabrian pine (*Pinus brutia*) forest, which thrives from sea level to an altitude of 1400m, covers the slopes of the Troodos and Kyrenia mountains and part of the Akamas Peninsula.

In Troodos the golden oak (*Quercus alnifolia*) appears at around 700m and the black pine (*Pinus nigra*) grows at higher altitudes. The Cyprus cedar (*Cedrus brevifolia*) can only be found in the Paphos Forest – especially around Trypilos Mountain. Cypress, juniper, alder and plane trees are quite common on the island.

The carob tree (*Ceratonia siliqua*) is typical to the Mediterranean region and has been used in many different ways since ancient times. It can be found growing in the wild but is widely cultivated for its edible pods. The word 'carat' – the unit used to measure the purity of gold – is derived from the Greek word *keration* as the pods' small seeds were used to measure gold in ancient times.

Colourful wildflowers begin to bloom from late February and the meadows can be carpeted with flowers well into May. Walking is the best way to observe the flowers, and even

*The Italian orchid (Orchis italica) – or as it is commonly known, the 'naked man orchid' – is native to the Mediterranean region*



without specialist knowledge you can admire the extensive colours. Rock roses – their colours ranging from white and yellow to pink – often cover the hillsides.

The Kyrenia mountains are home to many wildflowers, including orchids. The greatest number of wild orchids appear in March and April. More than 30 species of orchid can be found in Cyprus, in places ranging from shady forest floors to rocky hillsides. The Cyprus bee orchid and the Lapithos bee orchid are endemic.

The island's national flower, the Cyprus cyclamen (*Cyclamen cyprium*), which blooms pink or white, flowers in the early autumn in moist forests. The dark-coloured, protected Cyprus tulip (*Tulipa cypria*) grows in the Akamas Peninsula, the Kormakitis/Kormacit Peninsula and in some parts of the Kyrenia range. The St Hilarion cabbage (*Brassica hilarionis*) can be found mainly in Northern Cyprus, especially near St Hilarion Castle (Walk 36).

Typical plants and flowers are labelled on most nature trails in Southern Cyprus, so walkers can learn to recognise them.

## WILDLIFE

There are 21 known species of mammal on the island. Only the luckiest walkers will spot the biggest of these – the shy Cypriot mouflon – hopping on the steep slopes in the less busy areas of the Paphos Forest and the

mountains of Troodos. There is, however, a mouflon enclosure at Stavros Tis Psokas in Paphos Forest, providing an opportunity to see these endemic animals.

Mouflon once populated the mountains of Cyprus in greater numbers, but by the middle of the 20th century hunting had decreased this population significantly. Then in 1939 the whole Paphos Forest was designated a Game Protected Area, and today it is also a Special Protected Area; thanks to these great efforts to protect the mouflon and their habitat, their numbers have increased to a satisfactory level.

Further north, dark-coloured wild donkeys inhabit the Karpaz/Karpass Peninsula. These animals are descendants of the domesticated donkeys abandoned by people who were displaced by political conflict in the 1970s (see 'Brief history').

Two bird species – the Cyprus warbler and Cyprus wheatear – are only found in Cyprus, and there is a conservation project in place to protect the endangered Griffon vulture.

Due to its geographic location, Cyprus is an important stopping place for migrating birds, and is therefore a great place for birdwatching. Unfortunately, despite the activity being outlawed in 1974, many birds are illegally trapped, killed and served as a delicacy in some restaurants.

Some of the sandy beaches on the island are important hatching places for the green turtle and the loggerhead

## WALK 1

### *Aphrodite Trail, Akamas Peninsula*

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>Start/Finish</b>   | Bath of Aphrodite (N35.05610, E32.34589)   |
| <b>Distance</b>       | 7.5km (4½ miles)   |
| <b>Ascent/Descent</b> | 500m/500m  |
| <b>Grade</b>          | 2  |
| <b>Time</b>           | 3hr  |
| <b>Refreshments</b>   | Restaurant and bar at start point  |
| <b>Access</b>         | Road signs are easy to follow from Paphos and Polis.<br>Regular buses from Polis. Parking available. |

This is one of the most popular and well-known nature trails on the Akamas Peninsula. Coachloads of tourists visit the Bath of Aphrodite, but not all of them follow the goddess' footsteps all the way along this scenic circular trail. It is a moderately easy walk with gentle but stony uphill sections populated by juniper trees, with a steep descent giving excellent views to the Akamas Peninsula.

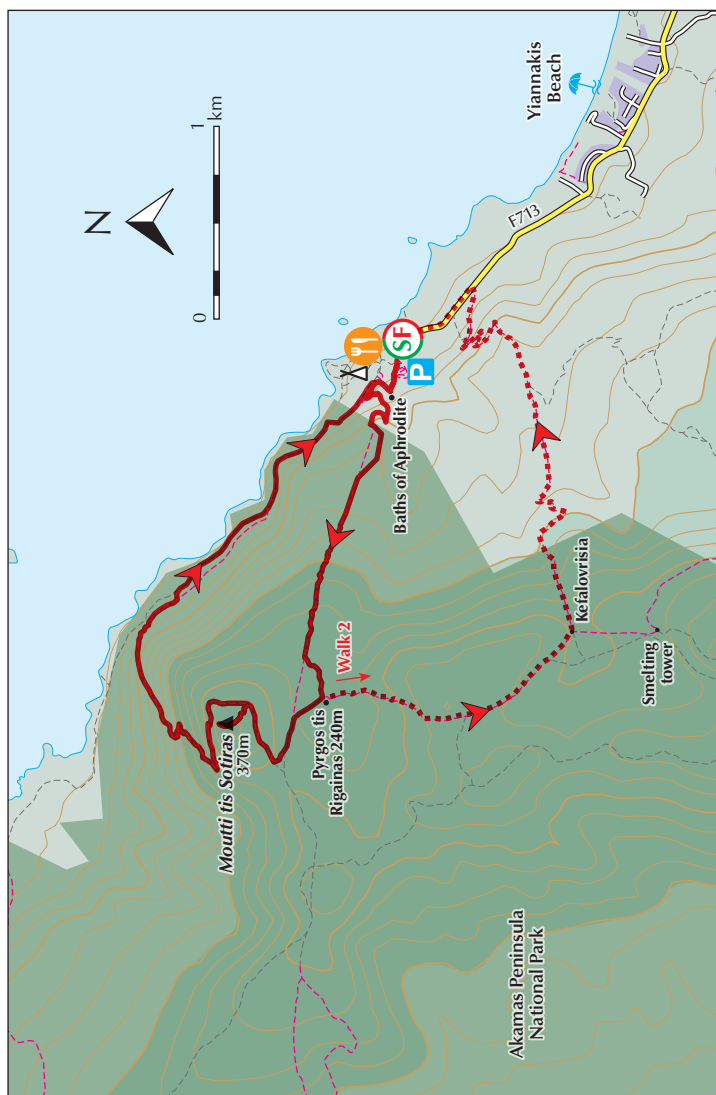
During the walk you can learn to recognise some of the plants of Cyprus, as many trees and flowers are labelled. The route is signposted with iron arrows and there are benches at the best viewpoints along the way.

There is a car park and a restaurant just outside of the Botanical Garden. Go through the gate – closing it behind you as the sign requests – and then walk on the paved path which leads to the **Bath of Aphrodite**.

The **Bath of Aphrodite** is a small pool of water where a sign confirms that 'the Goddess of love and beauty used to bathe in the small pool of this natural grotto'. The pool area is usually very busy with people posing in front of the dripping water.

From the Bath, continue on the path marked 'Nature Trail'. When this paved path ends, exit through a gate then a few metres later turn left where a sign says 'Aphrodite





and Adonis Trail'. The two trails run together for the first 2.5km, starting from the information board. ►

Start walking slightly uphill on a stony path with occasional glimpses of the sea. Keep on the winding, well-trodden path, ignoring a narrow path on the right

According to legend, this trail was used by Aphrodite to walk back to her tower after bathing in the pool.

### APHRODITE

There are two legends that link Aphrodite's name to Cyprus; her birth and the time spent with her lover, Adonis. According to legend, the goddess of love and beauty rose from the sea near Paphos after Cronos cut off Uranus' genitals and threw them into the water. Aphrodite was married to Hephaestus but had many lovers, the most famous of which was Adonis. Myrrha – who was to be Adonis' mother – was cursed by Aphrodite to fall in love with her own father, King Cinyras of Cyprus. When Cinyras found out that he'd been tricked, the pregnant Myrrha was banished. She changed into a myrrh tree and the baby was born from that tree. Aphrodite took baby Adonis to Persephone (goddess of the underworld), but she returned when Adonis was a grown, handsome man. Aphrodite and Persephone both wanted to keep Adonis. Zeus dictated that Adonis would spend one third of the year with Aphrodite, one third of the year with Persephone and could decide for himself with whom he would spend the rest of the year. He chose to spend it with Aphrodite.



*The path gives an excellent view of Chrysochou Bay*

Look for the  
ruins of the tower  
down below.

and noting the labelled trees and shrubs. As the path turns away from the sea the horizon fills with white limestones and pine-dotted hillsides.

Around the 1km mark the path levels out a bit and runs between thorny gorses. A few hundred metres later it crawls uphill again, and you find yourself walking on giant limestones before reaching a steeper section with some big stone steps. You are soon rewarded with views to the sea, and the path straightens again before climbing uphill for a short section after the 2km mark.

Ahead is the peak of Moutti tis Sotiras in the distance, but keep on the track gently turning away from the mountain. About 50min into the walk you arrive at a junction with a giant oak tree, a fountain and the ruins of **Pyrgos tis Rigainas** (Tower of the Queen). The trail divides here; the Aphrodite Trail continues to the right and the Adonis Trail to the left. Both are clearly marked.

Turn right on the Aphrodite Trail and follow the wide dirt road, occasionally marked with an 'E4', then turn right onto an iron arrow-marked path. Follow this marked path running parallel to a dirt road for a while. When you emerge at a wide dirt road, continue uphill with glimpses of the surrounding hills and sea. ◀

At the end of the dirt road the path splits. To the left is a 5min walk to **Moutti tis Sotiras'** rocky peak, where a magnificent panorama of the Akamas Peninsula can be enjoyed. Take this, soak up the views and then retrace your steps to the junction with the iron arrow and continue to the left.

Soon the narrow path runs downhill with views to the sea and with towering rocks on the left. Iron arrows occasionally indicate the clearly visible path. Zigzag steeply downhill between wild thyme and thorny bushes for about 40min, and when you reach the dirt road turn right, towards 'Aphrodite Bath'. This road also has E4 signs.

Walk for about 20min on the dirt road with views to the rugged coastline and the hillside. Soon after you spot the caravans in the campsite, turn right where the sign shows 'Aphrodite Bath' and walk back to the pool and then to the **car park**.