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Nicosia offers a completely different experience from the popular coastal cities of Cyprus. Centrally located on the island, Nicosia serves as the administrative, political, financial and cultural capital of Cyprus. Nicosia may not have sandy beaches to offer, but its visitors are more than compensated by a wealth of cultural attractions that combine authentic Cypriot culture with modern European amenities.

Nicosia is an attractive, enticing city; ideal for experiencing what modern Cyprus is all about. There are great restaurants here, from traditional taverns with bouzouki players and generous portions of meze, to ultramodern, fashionable joints, where young Cypriots dance the night away.

The country's best museum is here, with its impressive archaeological collection. The Old City with its surrounding star-shaped fortifications is a labyrinth of narrow streets, teeming with churches, mosques and beautiful, often dilapidated colonial houses.

The New City outside the walls is in a constant state of development, with modern buildings and structures that add a distinctive European character and culture. The regional countryside of Nicosia is full of diverse attractions from all periods of Cyprus' ancient, medieval and recent history.



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Guided Walking Tours

The best way to experience all Nicosia's most important sights and landmarks is by walking. Nicosia Municipality in collaboration with the Cyprus Tourism Organization and the Cyprus Tourist Guides Association offers guided walking tours of the city.

Every Monday

Pallouriotissa and Kaimakli:

The Past Restored

Guided bus and walking tour.

Starting point: CTO Information Office in Laiki Geitonia

Time: 10:00

Free participation

Booking in advance is necessary

Every Thursday

Discover the old Nicosia and its walls
Walking tour.

Starting point: CTO Information Office in Laiki Geitonia

Time: 10:00

Free participation

For further information and bookings (for Monday tour) please contact
+357 22 674 264.

Attractions and Sightseeing

Whatever part of Nicosia you are staying in, there are sure to be plenty of good attractions close by.

An iconic symbol of the city, the **Venetian Walls** surround the Old City area and create a truly memorable image. The Venetian walls are a prime example of 16th century military architecture and when viewed from high above they seem to be shaped like a star. This renaissance fortification complex has a circumference of 3 miles, and contains eleven heart-shaped bastions named after the eleven families who donated funds towards the construction of the walls and the three gates.

The **Famagusta Gate** (or Porta Guiliana) stands on the easterly side of the walled city and is without question the most striking of the city's old gateway landmarks, being much photographed and admired by tourists. Today, the Famagusta Gate is much more than just a gateway and its structure functions as a venue for concerts and exhibitions, with a tunnel leading visitors through the ramparts and outside, to the moat which functions as a venue for outdoor concerts, theatre plays and other activities. The city's most westerly gateway, the Pafos Gate was formerly known by the Venetians as the Porta San Domenico and remains one of just three historical



entrances into Old Lefkosia. Historically, the **Pafos Gate** served as an arsenal warehouse for Nicosia during the Ottoman period and later as an important headquarters for the British Colonial police.

Laiki Geitonia literally translates as 'popular neighbourhood' and this is exactly what this attraction is. The Laiki Geitonia is the main tourist area in Nicosia, being located on the southerly side of the Old City. Due to its extreme popularity, the Laiki Geitonia is packed with restaurants, taverns, souvenir shops and similar attractions.

Situated on the Plateia (Square) Archiepiskopou Kyprianou and Venetian in appearance, the Archbishopric, the seat of the Cyprus Orthodox Church was actually constructed as recently as the early fifties. The **Archbishop's Palace** is a grand building and although only rarely open to the public, is certainly worth a look, particularly to see the bust of Archbishop Kyprianos outside, a religious leader executed by the Turks in 1821 and the statue of Archbishop Makarios the first president of the Republic of Cyprus.

Just beside the Archbishop's Palace, **Agios Ioannis (St John) Cathedral** was built by Archbishop Nikiforos in 1662 on the site of a 14th century Benedictine chapel dedicated to St John the Evangelist. It was turned into an Orthodox Monastery in

1426 when the Benedictine Order left the island and remained a monastery until the 18th century when Archbishop Sylvester converted it into a cathedral, establishing it as the seat of the Orthodox Archbishopric in Cyprus. It is a small-aisled church with Franco-Byzantine architectural elements. It is the only church in Nicosia in which the whole of the internal wall paintings have survived in their entirety. The four large icons on the icon screen were painted by the Cretan master, Ioannis Kornaros, in 1795 and 1797. Its 18th century wall paintings depict scenes from the Holy Bible and the discovery of the tomb of St Varnavas at Salamina.

Plateia Faneromenis, close to Ledra Street, is a popular hangout spot in the old city. Located in the centre of the square and dominating the area is the delightful Faneromeni Church, which stands on the site of an old Orthodox nunnery and is actually the largest church within the city walls. The **Faneromeni Church** was completed in 1872 and features an appealing mix of Byzantine, Latin and Neoclassical architecture. There are a number of religious attractions here such as the large silver cross and the icon of Virgin Mary said to be miraculous, although the Marble Mausoleum is a particular highlight. The most historical Byzantine church in the city, the **Panagia Chrysaliniotissa** was built



Archbishop's Palace

almost 600 years ago and is dedicated to none other than the Virgin Mary. Famed for its valuable religious paintings (icons) and artefacts, the Panagia Chrysaliniotissa is thought to have been commissioned at the request of Queen Helena Paleologos. The Panagia Chrysaliniotissa church is believed to be the oldest Byzantine church in Nicosia, said to have been built in 1450. It features some of the oldest and most rare religious icons in Cyprus. The nearby Chrysaliniotissa Crafts Centre is a complex of eight workshops situated around a central courtyard in the manner of a traditional inn. Here you can see traditional handcrafters at work and purchase some of their exquisite creations.

The [Omeriye Mosque](#) started its life as the Augustinian Church of St. Mary and is

known to originate from the 14th century. However, the church suffered at the hands of the marauding Ottomans and was subsequently reconstructed as this very charming mosque, since it is believed by many that the Omar, an acclaimed Muslim prophet, was interred here during the 7th century. The minaret of the Omeriye Mosque is especially striking and makes a prominent appearance on the skyline. Kykkos Monastery is located many miles outside of Nicosia, however it maintains a major presence in the city with the sizeable grounds it owns in the area of Engomi. Gathered over the centuries in the form of donations, the [Metochi Kykkou](#) as it is known is today a lovely garden open to the public and host to various events. For many years it was the first site for the Cyprus National Fair.

Museums and Galleries in Nicosia

As the Cypriot capital, Nicosia is home to some of the island's most significant museums.

The **Cyprus Archaeological Museum** is the biggest archaeological museum in the country. It is home to the richest and largest collection of Cypriot objects discovered on the island. Amongst the many highlights is a display of ancient terracotta figures originating from Agia Irini (to the north of Morfou). In total there are a staggering 2,000 of these terracotta figures and they are believed to date as far back as the 6th century BC. Also worth keeping an eye out for the statue of Aphrodite of Soloi, the bronze statue of Emperor Septimus Severus, and exquisite finds from the royal tombs of Salamis, such as a bed, two thrones and a bronze cauldron.

The **Archbishop Makarios III Foundation - Cultural Centre** located within the Archbishopric in the heart of old Nicosia consist of the Byzantine museum and the Art Galleries.

Byzantine Museum, contains the richest and most representative collection of Byzantine art of the island. About 230 icons dating from 9th to the 19th century, as well as typical products of the Byzantine

minor art of Cyprus, such as sacred vessels, vestments and books, are on display. The core of the collection consists of 48 icons, which come from churches all over Cyprus and from the "Synodikon" of the church of Panagia Phaneromeni, which initially was intended to house the Cyprus Byzantine Museum. They are exhibited in three large rooms in the basement of the Centre.

The **Art Galleries** are divided into four distinctive themes:

a) Paintings with religious and mythological subjects covering a wide range of European artistic creations from the late Renaissance to Romanticism.

b) 18th and 19th century paintings, engraving and maps, with emphasis on the Greek War of Independence.

c) Art works by Greek artists from the 19th and 20th century.

d) Representative works from 20th century Cypriot artists.

Standing on the Plateia (Square) Archiepiskopou Kyprianou and near to the Archbishop Makarios III Foundation, the **Ethnographic Museum** contains the most sizable collection of ethnography and folk art in the whole of Cyprus. The building which served as the Old Archbishopric was built in 1730 and was awarded the Europa Nostra prize for its exemplary renovation work of late Ottoman urban architecture.

Today it functions as a museum where a collection of artefacts from the Byzantine, Medieval and Ottoman era are displayed. Highlights include examples of exquisite lace work and embroidery, traditional Cypriot costumes, ceramics, folk art works, leather ware and basketry.

Just beside the Ethnographic Museum is the **National Struggle Museum**. The museum houses a collection of documents, pictures and items from the 1955-1959 period of Cyprus' National Struggle for independence.

The **Ethnological Museum**, housed in the 18th century mansion of Hatzigeorgakis Kornesios, dragoman of Cyprus who was executed by the Ottomans in 1809. Dragomans acted as liaisons between the Ottoman authorities and the occupied population. The **House of Hatzigeorgakis Kornesios** is the most important example of urban architecture of the last century of Ottoman period that survives in the old city. The architectural plan of the building in the form of a Greek Δ surrounds a central garden with a fountain and a private bathhouse (hammam) which is comprised of three rooms. On the ground floor the servants' quarters and the kitchen were situated. Roofed wooden stairs with a stone base lead to the entrance hall on the first floor from the courtyard. The official

reception room and the living areas communicated with this reception hall. The official reception room (the onda), at the end of the east wing, differs from the other rooms with its exceptional carved wooden, gilded and painted decoration, which liken it to other official reception rooms in many mansions of the Ottoman Empire. The Kornesios Mansion received the Europe Nostra award in 1988.

More than 500 coins are on display at the **Museum of Cypriot Coinage**, the only one of its kind on the island. Located on the grounds of the **Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation**, its exhibits range from the first coins issued by the Kingdom of Salamis during the 6th century BC up to the present day with the introduction of the euro in the Republic of Cyprus. The presentation follows the sequence of nine chronological periods and is accompanied by description of the coins. The Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation also hosts the **Museum of George and Nefeli Giabra Pierides**. It covers a wide range of the history and archaeology of Cyprus, from the Early Bronze Age (2500BC) to the end of the Mediaeval period (sixteenth century). Numbering more than 600 items, the collection is one of the most important private collections in Cyprus, possessing superb examples of Mycenaean pottery and a rich part of sculpture in limestone,

dating from the early 6th century BC.

The **Leventis Municipal Museum** is the only museum that presents a comprehensive history of the city's social development and the entrance is completely free of charge. Inside, the most historic exhibits are more than 4,000 years old and well preserved. There are traditional Cypriot costumes, household utensils, old books and various local relics, as well as a nice gift shop.

The **State Gallery of Contemporary Art** is home to a wonderful collection of Cypriot paintings and sculptures from the 20th century and today. It is housed in a beautifully restored mansion and entrance is free.

The **Loukia and Michael Zambellas Art Museum** in Kaimakli is a pioneer in its field, showcasing modern and contemporary art in Cyprus. For over forty years, the Zambellas have been collecting and supporting the work of Cypriot, Greek and foreign artists. The museum's massive collection of over 1000 works, from 1877 to the present, forms an impressive catalogue that has been listed in many museum libraries all over the world. Apart from its collection, the museum also organizes and hosts retrospective and thematic events, lectures and cultural events that celebrate modern art in Cyprus.

The **Cyprus Handicrafts Centre** houses workshops and an outlet for producing and selling traditional folk art such as pottery, basketry, copperware, wood-carving, embroideries, mosaics, traditional costumes and many other genuine Cypriot handicrafts.



House of Hatzigeorgakis Kornosios

Theatres & Arts

As Nicosia has expanded over the last decades, so has its status as a centre of culture in Cyprus. The recently completed **National Theatre**, impressive in size and architecture, is home to the Theatrical Organization of Cyprus (www.thoc.org.cy). World-class productions are held year-round on its three stages, with some plays featuring English supertitles, and has quickly become an important part of the capital's cultural life. **Theatro Ena**, near Famagusta Gate, is one of the most historic theatres in the city and still quite popular among the city's theatre lovers. The **Amphitheatre of the School of the Blind** in Strovolos is host to the popular International Festival of Ancient Greek Drama (www.cyprus-theatre-iti.org) which always attracts large crowds. Film buffs have the **Cyprus Film Days** (www.cyprusfilmdays.com) and the **Cyprus International Film Festival** (<http://cyiff.cineartfestival.eu>) to look forward to, with award-winning movies from all over the world, in English and Greek subtitles. **Summer Nights** in Nicosia and the Kypria International Festival (www.kypria.org.cy) feature prominently in the cultural calendar of the city, with musical concerts from famous Greek, Cypriot and international artists.

Modern Architecture

Over the centuries, Nicosia has been under the rule of many empires, whose cultures have left an indelible mark on the

city's landscape. Competing with its past, the modern era of Nicosia features new landmarks that aspire to add to the city's rich history and diverse character. **Plateia Eleftherias**, one of the city's most central hubs, is under complete reconstruction by world-famous architect Zaha Hadid with the aim of creating a modern landmark that links the areas within and outside the old city and moreover serves the dual purpose of practicality and aesthetics. The nearby **Tower 25**, designed by the internationally acclaimed architect Jean Nouvel, is Nicosia's tallest building and is already a distinctive feature in the city's skyline. Jean Nouvel has also designed the new **University of Cyprus Library**, a pioneering architectural feature, under construction at the moment, which set its sights on becoming a national research facility. Construction of the new Cyprus University campus and of the new National Theatre building add not only an air of modernity but play an important role in the educational and cultural life of Nicosia.

Gastronomy

Cypriot cuisine combines the rich flavours of the Middle East, the nutritional values of the Mediterranean cuisine and the timeless traditions of Greek cooking. Traditional tavernas, confectionaries and coffee shops can be found everywhere in the Old City, serving delicious dishes, sweets and "meze". For an even more authentic experience, you can find authentic tavernas serving traditional foods in any of the villages nearby Nicosia.



Nicosia Regional Attractions

Located almost at the centre of the island, Nicosia serves as a good base to investigate the island.

The deserted village of **Agios Sozomenos** between Geri and Potamia village is worth visiting for at least one attraction that has piqued the interest of many tourists - its beautiful Gothic church. The ruined **Agios Mamas Church** is particularly intriguing, since its arches were never actually completed. Just beside the ruins is the orthodox chapel of Agios Mamas, which is usually open for visitors. A virtual ghost village today, it exudes a titillating ambience and is a favourite spot for photographers and film makers.

Further south down the highway is **Ancient Idalion**, one of the most important ancient sites of Cyprus. Idalion was an ancient Greek city-state, founded by the Trojan war hero Chalcantor, that featured in the mythological story of Aphrodite and her lover Adonis. According to legend, Adonis was killed by the boar of Idalion and the red flowers that bloom there are thought to symbolize his death. Idalion was the first among seven city kingdoms listed on the Stele of Sargon (701 BC) and first among the 10 Cypriot kingdoms listed on the tablet of the Assyrian King Esarhaddon (680-669 BC). The ancient city was independent until it was conquered by the Kitians in 450 BC. There is also the **Idalion Museum** where artefacts are exhibited from

all the chronological phases of the history of Idalion, such as the Proto-Aeolic capitals which adorned the funerary monuments and the palace of Idalion, various coroplastic and glyptic art that produced works of art of superior quality and also a replica of the 2,500-year-old Idalion Tablet, which currently resides in the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris, which is the oldest, longest and richest testimony known of the written Cypriot dialect before it was replaced by the Greek alphabet.

Panagia Chrysospilitissa Church, on the road to Deftera village, is an early Christian period church built in the shape of a catacomb inside a cave and is dedicated to the "Lady of the Golden Cave". The frescoes have faded almost entirely with age, but the church is still active and is host to a large religious festival held annually on August 15, the day of the Dormition of the Virgin Mary.

Ancient Tamassos lies in central Cyprus and just under 20 km/12 miles to the south-west of Nicosia, close to Politiko village, where it is of particular archaeological significance. This historical city was once an affluent kingdom, with a never-ending supply of copper mines supplying much of its wealth. Mentioned by the goddess Athena in the epic poem entitled 'The Odyssey', Tamassos is a fairly obscure location and stands on a small hillside. However, its two tombs serve as a huge attraction and are said to date as far back as the 6th century BC, exhibiting some intri-



cate stone carvings. The remains of a citadel add further interest.
For entrance, contact +357 99 218 525.

Perfectly combined with a day trip to Ancient Tamassos, the **Monastery of Agios Irakleidos** is named after St. Irakleidos, an early bishop who began his life in Tamassos and is believed to have acted as an island guide to both St. Barnabas and St. Paul. The Monastery of Agios Irakleidos is an impressive attraction and in general, the majority of the monastic buildings date from the 18th century, although the church has origins in the 5th century. You can purchase local products and herbs from the shop located in the monastery.

If you are feeling the heat, then a day trip to the **Machairas Monastery** is recommended, since the climate here is noticeably cooler. Located on the foothills of the Troodos Massif and around 40km from Nicosia, the Machairas Monastery stands alongside Mount Kionia and has origins in the 12th century, when a local found a miraculous icon, one of the seventy icons painted by the Evangelist Luke portraying Virgin Mary. However, the building standing today is not quite that old and dates from the 19th century. The monastery is one of three Cyprus monasteries that is autonomous and remain under the Patriarch's jurisdiction. The monastery houses a collection of old books and manuscripts, icons and other religious artefacts. Close by, the Skordokefalos picnic spot is worth checking out as well as the picturesque villages of Fikardou, Gouri

and Lazanias.

On the eastern slopes of the Troodos Mountain range, the village, **Fikardou** is worth a visit. The village is an authentic, traditional mountain settlement which has preserved its 18th and 19th century architecture and appearance. The quaint village houses were constructed with local iron stone mixed with pebbles and limestone slabs to support mud brick structures and finally covered with slanted tile roofs. The almost entirely abandoned village has been declared an "Ancient Monument" and restored by the Department of Antiquities. It was awarded the Europa Nostra Prize in 1987. The only local tavern provides fresh traditional food where you can relax and enjoy the serene atmosphere.

Peristerona is a picturesque village on the Troodos Mountain, famous for its efforts to maintain the beauty and the traditions of Cyprus. In various locations around Peristerona there are many remarkable landmark churches, of which most famous of all is **St. Barnabas and Hilarion Church**, with five domes on the roof arranged in the shape of a cross, a feature only seen on one other church in the island. Churches such as Panagia Chryselousa constructed at the end of the 15th century with Byzantine and Gothic elements, Profitis Elias, Agios Constantinos, Agios Haralampos and the country church of Archangel Michael provide for a unique perspective of the village's history.



Nicosia Museums. Admission and Opening Hours

1	Ethnological Museum. The House of Hadjigeorgakis Kornosios	Admission €1.70
	■ 20 Patriarchou Grigoriou Street ■ Tel.: +357 22 305 316 ■ Tuesday - Friday: 8:30 - 17:30 Saturday: 9:30 - 15:30	
2	Museum of Ancient Idalion	Admission €1.70
	■ Idalion Village ■ Tel.: +357 22 444 818 ■ Monday - Friday: 8:30 -16:00	
3	Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation	Admission €1.70
	■ Museum of the George Nefeli Giabra Pierides Collection ■ Museum on the History of Cypriot Coinage	
	■ 86 - 90 Faneromenis Street ■ Tel.: +357 22 128 157 ■ Daily: 10:00 - 19:00 ■ www.boccf.org	
4	Museums of the Pancyprian Gymnasium	No Admission
	■ Ag. Ioannou & Thiseos Street ■ Tel. +357 22 466 014	
	■ Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday: 9:00 -15:30 Wednesday: 9:00 -17:00 Saturday: 9:00 -13:00	
5	Cyprus Archaeological Museum	Admission €3.40
	■ 1 Mouseiou Street ■ Tel.: +357 22 865 854 ■ Tuesday - Friday: 8:00 – 16:00 Saturday: 9:00 -16:00 Sunday:10:00 -13:00	
	■ www.mcw.com.cy	
6	Archbishop Makarios III Cultural Foundation - Byzantine Museum and Art Galleries	No Admission
	■ Plateia (Square) Archbishop Kyprianou ■ Tel.: +357 22 430 008 ■ Monday - Friday: 9:00 - 16:30 Saturday: 9:00 - 13:00	
	■ www.makariosfoundation.org.cy	
7	Ethnographic Museum	No Admission
	■ Plateia (Square) Archbishop Kyprianou ■ Tel.: +357 22 432 578 ■ Monday - Friday: 9:30 - 16:00 Saturday: 9:00 - 13:00	
	■ www.cypriotstudies.org	
8	National Struggle Museum	No Admission
	■ Plateia (Square) Archbishop Kyprianou ■ Tel.: +357 22 305 878 ■ Monday - Friday: 8:00 - 14:00 Thursday: 15:30 - 17:30 (not in July and August)	
9	Leventis Municipal Museum	No Admission
	■ 17 Ippokratous Street ■ Tel.: +357 22 661 475 ■ Tuesday -Sunday: 10:00 - 16:30 ■ www.leventismuseum.org.cy	
10	State Gallery of Contemporary Art	No Admission
	■ Stasinou Avenue & Kritis street ■ Tel.: +357 22 458 228 ■ Monday - Friday: 10:00 - 16:45 Saturday: 10:00 - 12:45	
11	Loukia and Michael Zambellas Art Museum	Admission €6.00 adults €4.00 students Children under 12 free
	■ 27 Archbishop Makarios II Avenue, Kaimakli ■ Tel.: +357 22 456 098 ■ Monday - Friday: 10:30 - 13:00, 16:00 - 19:00	
	■ www.zampelasart.com.cy Saturday: 10:00 - 19:00	
12	Cyprus Handicraft Center	No Admission
	■ 86, Athalassas Avenue ■ Tel.: +357 22 305 024 ■ Workshops: Monday - Friday: 7:30 - 15:00 ■ www.mcit.gov.cy	

**Nicosia Tourism Board has made every effort in the production of this publication for the inclusion of accurate and valid information at the time of print. It holds no responsibility for any future changes.*



Nicosia Tourism Board

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