

# The Island of Cyprus

## Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

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### Outline itinerary

|                |                                  |
|----------------|----------------------------------|
| <b>Day 1</b>   | Fly Paphos.                      |
| <b>Day 2/3</b> | Paphos.                          |
| <b>Day 4/5</b> | Polis.                           |
| <b>Day 6/7</b> | Pano Platres, Troodos Mountains. |
| <b>Day 8</b>   | Fly London.                      |

### Departs

March and April

### Focus

Birds and plants

### Grading

Day walks only. Grade A/B. Usually straightforward

### Dates and Prices

Visit [www.naturetrek.co.uk](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk) (tour code CYP02) or see the current Naturetrek brochure

### Highlights:

- A 3-centre wildlife holiday focusing on birds and flowers.
- A wide variety of orchids possible including the endemic Cyprus Bee Orchid.
- Around 140 species of bird typically recorded including Cyprus Wheatear, Cyprus Warbler & Masked Shrike.
- Timed for the peak of spring bird migration. Look for Rüppell's Warbler, Isabelline Wheatear & Wryneck.
- Migrating waders such as Marsh Sandpiper.
- Explore the Troodos Mountains from Pano Platres.
- This tour can be combined with our 'Spring in North Cyprus' holiday
- Led by expert naturalist guides.



From top: Masked Shrike, Cyprus Warbler, *Orchis anatolica*.



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**N.B.** Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather and other local considerations can necessitate some re-ordering of the programme during the course of the tour, though this will always be done to maximise best use of the time and weather conditions available.

## Day 1

## Fly Paphos & overnight

We leave from London's Gatwick Airport around 0700 hours this morning onboard an Easyjet direct flight into the town of Paphos, located on Cyprus's western extremity. We are due into Paphos Airport early in the afternoon from where we will transfer to a comfortable hotel in the town and then head out for a few hours to look for our first birds and flowers.

## Day 2

## Paphos

This morning we will explore the wetlands around the Asprokemmos Reservoir. Water usually collects in a series of small pools near the outflow and these are magnets for migrating waders, hirundines and warblers in an otherwise arid landscape. Along with our first breeding Cyprus Warblers and Cretzschmar's Bunting, we will be on the look for a range of other species including Night Heron, Great Reed Warbler, Isabelline Wheatear, Marsh Harrier, European Bee-eater, Woodchat Shrike, Great Spotted Cuckoo and Black Francolin. By casting our eyes down as well as up we should see an interesting variety of plants including *Orchis coriophora*, *Onopordum cypricum* and *Scabiosa prolifera*.

In the afternoon we will visit Paphos archaeological site, for a cultural visit. Paphos was founded by the Trojan hero Agapinor and became the capital of Cyprus during the Roman period. The town is included in the UNESCO list of cultural and national treasures and the whole surrounding area is rich with important archaeological sites. Floor mosaics in the House of Dionysius are special attractions and the coastal scrub around Paphos lighthouse is worth a look for grounded migrants. Woodchat Shrike, Tawny Pipit, Short-toed Lark, Thrush Nightingale, Rüppell's Warbler, Ortolan Bunting, Wryneck and several wheatear species are regular here and migrants are often seen coming in off the sea. Finally, before heading back to our hotel, we will visit Cape Depanum, a short drive to the north of Paphos which juts out into the Mediterranean creating another great trap for migrants.

## Day 3

## Paphos

After checking the local migrant hotspots around Paphos once again we will spend the morning exploring the Akrotiri Peninsula to the south-east. Here we will search the muddy margins of the Limassol Salt Lake (also known as the Akrotiri Salt Lake), the largest inland body of water on the island, for a variety of waders and other waterbirds. More than 50% of the lake is less than 30 centimetres deep creating a magnet for such species as Marsh Sandpiper, Wood Sandpiper, Curlew Sandpiper, Little and Temminck's Stints and Collared Pratincole. All three 'marsh terns' (Black, White-winged and Whiskered) can be seen hawking for insects over the waters surface whilst flocks of Greater Flamingos feed in the shallows alongside plenty of Avocets and Black-winged Stilts. Pallid Harrier and Red-footed Falcon are regular and the adjacent dry Salicornia scrub is home to breeding Spectacled Warbler, Cyprus Warbler, Cyprus Wheatear and Black Francolin, but also attracts plenty of migrants such as Red-throated Pipit, Isabelline Wheatear and various races of Yellow Wagtail.

The nearby Phassouri reedbed and Zakaki Marsh are also worth visiting. These areas also attract a wide variety of migrant birds to bolster the resident species which include Night Heron, Little Bittern, Squacco Heron and Glossy Ibis. Great Reed Warblers sing noisily from the reedbeds and there's even a chance of finding a skulking Baillon's or Little Crake.

In addition to plants characteristic of saltmarsh, the drier ground at Akrotiri should hopefully produce several species of orchids including *Anacamptis pyramidalis*, Bug Orchid (*Orchis coriophora* ssp. *fragrans*) and *Ophrys bornmuelleri*. Amongst other plants here are Southern Red Bartsia (*Parentucellia latifolia*), *Anthemis tricolor* an endemic chamomile, together with species of cistus and the related endemic Rock-rose *Helianthemum obtusifolius*.

After a full day of birding and botanising we will return to Paphos for our final night in the town. Enroute we will stop at Kensington Cliffs, the last remaining breeding area for Griffon Vultures on the island and a regular site for Alpine Swift. If we are very lucky we may also see an early returning Eleonora's Falcon here!

## Day 4 & 5

## Polis

After a final early morning revisiting some of the best migrant traps around Paphos, we will head north to our second base in the small town of Polis on the unspoilt north coast of the Akamas Peninsula, approximately 35 kilometres north of Paphos. Polis lies where the ancient kingdom of Marion once stood, an important commercial centre in the Classical and Hellenistic times. Our friendly family-run hotel is located on a beautiful site right on the coast and not far from the Baths of Aphrodite.

We will spend much of our time here exploring the beautiful Akamas Peninsula near our hotel. This is an area of outstanding natural beauty and has largely escaped the development that has blighted other regions of coastal Cyprus. According to legend, Akamas took its name from the Greek mythological hero of the same name, the son of Theseus, who came to Cyprus after the Trojan War and founded Akamantis. The area lies at the easternmost point of three major European floral zones and is therefore extremely botanically rich, including 35 endemic species together with a wide variety of other flora and fauna.

Our program will include a coastal walk from the Baths of Aphrodite in search of birds and flowers. Species to look out for include Cyprus, Spectacled and Sardinian Warblers, Chukar, Crag Martin, Woodchat Shrike, European Bee-eater and Hoopoe, plus Turban Buttercup (*Ranunculus asiaticus*), and a variety of interesting orchids. We will be based in Polis for 2 nights.

## Day 6

## Paphos Forest, overnight Platres

Today we will explore the western edge of the Paphos Forest, where the endemic oak (*Quercus infectoria*) dominates and the endemic race of Coal Tit is common. We will search the edges of the arable fields for their botanical highlights, then moving up into less disturbed areas where we will hope to see the endemic Anatolian orchid. On the way up we will also stop at the little Byzantine Museum in Peristerona to see some of the cultural heritage of the area. As per previous days, migrant birds can be expected anywhere and, as well as the species listed above, we will be on the lookout for Great Spotted Cuckoo and Montagu's and Pallid Harriers.

Other species to look out for include *Arabis purpurea* and our first Cyprus Cedars (*Cedrus brevifolia*). Later this afternoon we will make our way to the mountain village of Pano Platres to a comfortable family run hotel for the final 2 nights of the tour. Pano Platres is situated on the edge of the forest on the southern slopes of the Troodos Mountains, home to a unique flora, together with a wide range of birds such as Masked Shrike, Cyprus Warbler and Scops Owl.

## Day 7

## Pano Platres, Troodos Mountains

Today we have a complete contrast of habitat. Driving through a patchwork of vineyards and old settlements we eventually reach the summit of Mount Olympus at 1,951 metres. If the weather is clear it is possible to see beyond the sweeping sandy bay of Morphu to the mountains of the northern range. A number of endemic flowers will attract our attention as Ravens cavort overhead. We will walk along a selection of trails hoping to see Cyprus races of Crossbill, Short-toed Treecreeper, Coal Tit and Jay. Although it is too early for many of the endemic species found at high altitude, we can still hope to see a few early flowering species such as *Arabis purpurea* and *Ranunculus cadmicus* var *cyprius*, both of which are endemic.

Later, we descend lower for our picnic lunch and to explore the lower hills below Mount Olympus, where characteristic birds and plants of vineyards and farmland will be found amongst a landscape of tiny fields, stone walls and scattered olive groves. Here the weathering of the sedimentary rocks (chalks, marls etc.) have created productive calcium-rich soils and consequently most of the island's vineyards, carob and olive groves are found here. We will look for Cretzschmar's Bunting, Olivaceous Warbler and Masked Shrike, with the chance of Golden Orioles in the olive groves. We will end our walk in the attractive village of Omodhos, where traditional Cypriot houses and crafts are on view from where we return to Pano Platres for our final night in Cyprus.

## Day 8

## Fly London

We should have time this morning to take one final short walk near our hotel before returning to Paphos to check-in for our early afternoon Easyjet flight to London Gatwick, arriving back into the UK around 1700 hours.

**Please note that this tour can be combined with our 'Spring in North Cyprus' holiday. Please call the Naturetrek office on 01962 733051 for additional information.**

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## Tour grading

We will use our own minibus to travel around the island, and reach the areas in which we will be walking. Essentially this is a holiday of short, leisurely walks over generally firm ground. No luggage needs to be carried apart from field equipment such as binoculars etc. and a bottle of drink. All coastal walks are short, and punctuated with many stops. Mountain walks are on easy trails mostly following contours, so they are not steep or strenuous. Most walks are circular and therefore optional. A pair of comfortable, good quality, training shoes or lightweight walking shoes are all that's required for this tour.

## Weather

We can expect a great deal of sunshine and temperatures on the coast will most likely be 20-25°C. It will be cooler in the mountains, and we will travel up to areas where snow is often still present in patches. At this time of year, cold and wet spells can affect the island and it will be wise to include some warm clothes for such eventualities.

## Food & accommodation

This is a three-centre holiday. For the first 3 nights of the tour we will be staying in a comfortable hotel in the coastal town of Paphos whilst we explore the nearby birding sites and the Akrotiri Peninsular to the southeast. We will then travel to Polis near the Baths of Aphrodite on the north coast of the Akamas Peninsula for the following 2 nights. Finally, we move to a comfortable hotel in the mountain village of Pano Platres for our final 2 nights on the island. Rooms in all three hotels have private facilities and all breakfasts and evening meals are included in the price of the holiday.

**Please note lunches are not included in the tour cost.** Lunches will mainly be picnics, although we may sometimes visit one of the local tavernas, allowing those who wish to sample Cypriot cuisine to do so. Excellent bread, local cheeses, salads and fruit can be purchased locally. Please allow about £60-£70 for this.

NB - Although late March/early April is a great time for birds and flowers, it is before Cyprus's main tourism season and not all hotels are open at this time. Likewise, hotels open the previous year may decide to open later the following year. As such, a degree of flexibility is required when arranging hotels in Cyprus and so exact details will be confirmed in your 'Final Joining Instructions' sent out approximately 2 weeks before the tour. Should you wish further details before this please give the Naturetrek office a call on 01962 733051 or e-mail [info@naturetrek.co.uk](mailto:info@naturetrek.co.uk).

## Bird & plant lists

Where available these are automatically provided on booking, and will gladly be sent to you before, if you wish for a more detailed preview. Past tour reports can be viewed online at [www.naturetrek.co.uk](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk).

## How to book your place

In order to book a place on this holiday, you will need to read our main Naturetrek brochure and complete and return the enclosed booking form together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday cost. If you do not have a copy of this brochure, please call us now on 01962 733051. Alternatively, you are very welcome to book online at [www.naturetrek.co.uk](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk), or telephone us and make a booking with a credit or debit card.

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