

Go Slow ... in Southern Cyprus

Naturetrek 'Go Slow' Tour Itinerary

Outline itinerary

Day 1 Fly Paphos.

Day 2/7 Bird & botanical excursions from Latchi.

Day 8 Fly London.

Departs

March.

Focus

Birds, plants and other wildlife.

Grading

Grade A. Gentle day walks only.

Dates and Prices

See www.naturetrek.co.uk (tour code CYP05) or the current Naturetrek brochure.

Highlights

- A slow-paced, single centre wildlife holiday based in a comfortable beachfront hotel
- Enjoy the beautiful Akamas Peninsula National Park
- Black Francolin, Rüppell's Warbler, Masked Shrike and endemics including Cyprus Warbler and Cyprus Wheatear all possible
- Botanical highlights include numerous orchids and Cyprus endemics
- Direct flights and just a short transfer to our comfortable base
- Time to relax and enjoy the area
- Led by expert naturalist guides



From top: Cyprus Warbler, Black Francolin, *Orchis italica* (David Watson)



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Introduction

Our programme of 'Go Slow' Naturetrek holidays aims to allow you time to enjoy the natural world at a more leisurely pace, and with a great deal more leisure time, than on a conventional Naturetrek holiday. This 'Go Slow' tour offers a relaxing week of birding and botanising on the Mediterranean island of Cyprus, which is usually bathed in warm spring sunshine during this season. We will be based for seven nights in the small coastal village of Latchi, close to the beautiful Akamas Peninsula National Park on the western side of the island. From here we will head out each day on gentle natural history walks in search of migrant birds, flowers and a variety of other wildlife, breaking with a taverna lunch or a picnic in a scenic spot. Highlights may include Black Francolin, Rüppell's Warbler, Masked Shrike and the endemic Cyprus Warbler, plus orchids such as Monkey Orchid and Cyprus Bee Orchid. At the end of each day there will be time to relax back at the hotel, stroll along the beach or explore Latchi's picturesque harbour and excellent tavernas.



Cyprus Wheatear (Andy Harding)

Itinerary

Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather & 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 and transfer to Latchi

We depart from London's Gatwick Airport early this morning on board a direct flight to the town of Paphos, located on Cyprus's western extremity. We are due to arrive into Paphos in the early afternoon, from where we will drive an hour or so to our base, close to the small coastal town of Latchi, located on the beautiful Akamas Peninsula.

We will be based throughout our stay in Cyprus at the comfortable Aphrodite Beach Hotel close to the 'Baths of Aphrodite', an attractive natural pool where the goddess of love was fabled to bath. We will spend much of our time here exploring the coastline, reservoirs and other habitats of the beautiful Akamas Peninsula, all within easy striking distance of our hotel. 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 eastern-most 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.

Day 2 – 7

Excursions from Latchi

We will enjoy a leisurely breakfast each morning before embarking on our day's excursion, stopping to enjoy a delicious picnic or taverna lunch, or returning to our hotel to eat during the middle of the day. We expect to return to the Aphrodite Beach Hotel in the mid-afternoon most days, leaving plenty of time to relax, enjoy the beach or explore the picturesque surroundings.

We will keep the itinerary for the week flexible to take account of such factors as the weather, recent wildlife sightings and the advice of our guides. We are likely to begin our exploration of the region, however, by driving the short distance to the nearby botanical gardens at the Baths of Aphrodite. Here we will visit the gardens which hold a delightful collection of plants representative of the Cypriot flora, as well as the endemic *Bosea cypria*. The path then winds its way along dramatic high cliffs and through cool forests composed of *Pinus brutia* and



The coastal walk from the Baths of Aphrodite

Arbutus andrachne (Eastern Strawberry Tree). We can expect to see Turban Buttercup (*Ranunculus asiaticus*) along with masses of *Cyclamen presicum*, whilst a variety of bulbs should be in flower including *Bellevalia nivalis* and *Bellevalia trifoliata*. We will make a special effort to locate the endemic Cyprus Warbler, and may also see such birds as Cyprus Wheatear and migrants such as Eastern Bonelli's and Rüppell's Warblers, Isabelline Wheatear and Wryneck. The endemic Paphos Blue butterfly is also common along the trail, along with Cleopatra.



Paphos Blue (Geoff Vowles)

On another day we will visit the Pegeia Forest, where we will enjoy a gentle walk through the lowland juniper and pine woodlands in search of an interesting range of orchids such as *Anacamptis syriaca*, *Ophrys levantina*, *Ophrys elegans* and *Serapias aphrodite*. Several species of *Cistus* should also be in flower, including *Cistus mospeliensis*, *Cistus salviifolius* and *Cistus creticus*. We will also stop by the rock pools where the semi-aquatic vegetation will be of special interest!

The Cypriot countryside should be looking at its best by now, awash with colourful flowers, and so during our stay we will travel the 20 kilometres or so inland to Milou. Here we will explore the hedgerows and olive groves in search of *Rubia tenuifolia*, *Cynoglossum creticum*, several helianthemums and a wide variety of other spring flower. We hope to find a few more orchids too, including Naked Man Orchid (*Orchis italica*).

On a clear day we will leave the coast behind and travel a little further afield before ascending into the Troodos Mountains for a visit to Stavros tis Psokas and the Pafos Forest. Here the pine forests have an understory of *Arbutus andrachne* and the endemic Golden Oak (*Quercus alnifolia*), home to a few different birds, including the endemic Cypriot race of Coal Tit (*Parus ater Cypriotes*) and the beautiful Masked Shrike. At the forest station we will also see the endangered Cyprus subspecies of Mouflon (which has been reared as part of a release programme). Then, as we slowly venture higher, we are sure to find numerous botanical highlights including *Orchis troodi*, *Dactylorhiza romana*, *Arabis purpurea*, and *Turritis laxa*.

We will break the week with a very relaxing, minibus-free day and focus our time on the area immediately around our hotel. Black Francolin and Chukar both nest in the fields around our hotel and with a bit of perseverance we will hope for a glimpse of both, along with the likes of Corn Bunting, Woodchat Shrike, Spanish Sparrow and perhaps a migrant Collared Flycatcher. Overhead, we will keep an eye out for raptors which might include Long-legged Buzzard and Booted Eagle. The field near our hotel should be a mass of colour by late March, dotted with *Chrysanthemum coronaria*, the red *Papaver rhoeas* and the pink *Gladiolus italicus*. We will also hope to see the blue *Anchusa azurea* as well as more orchids such as *Ophrys flavomarginata*.



Masked Shrike

On our final day we are likely to enjoy a gentle walk from Smygies into the village of Neo Chorio. The path slopes gently downhill and we will take our time, looking for bird and botanical highlights as we go, including a few new orchids including *Ophrys lapethica* and other plants such as the endemic *Onosma fruticosum*, *Funaria arabica* and *Lithodora hispidula*. On reaching Neo Chorio we will visit a local taverna for our final lunch together, and enjoy celebrating the week's sightings with a few glasses of local Cypriot wine!

Day 8

Transfer Paphos; fly London

After a final breakfast we will transfer back to Paphos. Our flight is usually scheduled to depart in the mid-afternoon, which should allow time to explore the Paphos archaeological area. 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 in important archaeological sites. The coastal scrub around Paphos lighthouse it is also one of the best areas on the island for grounded migrants and as we explore the site we need to keep our eyes open for Woodchat Shrike, Tawny Pipit, Short-toed Lark, Rüppell's Warbler, Ortolan and Cretzschmar's Buntings, Wryneck and several wheatear species. Finally, we will return to the airport in time to check-in for our afternoon flight back to London's Gatwick Airport, arriving back into the UK at around 1700 hours.

Tour grading

Grade A - We will use our own minibus to travel around the island and reach the areas in which we will be walking. Most walks are within a short drive of our hotel, and over easy terrain, taken at a slow pace. We expect to walk an average of 2 to 3 miles per day. Please just note that some footpaths can be uneven and rocky in places.

Focus

Primarily plants and birds, plus other natural history and a little culture.

Weather

Cyprus usually enjoys a mild and sunny climate in March, with an average daytime high of 14-15°C, although 19-20°C is also quite common. Early mornings and evenings will be cooler, and the occasional cooler, wet spell can affect the island from time to time so it will be wise to include some warm clothes for such eventualities.

Food & accommodation

This is a single centre holiday and all meals are included in the cost of the holiday (though please note that we generally fly with EasyJet direct to Paphos where in-flight meals are not provided). We stay in the Aphrodite Beach Hotel in Latchi for the duration of the holiday, just to the west of Polis on the north coast of the Akamas Peninsula. All rooms have air conditioning, private bathrooms, free Wi-Fi and hairdryers provided.



Coastal views from the Aphrodite Beach Hotel

Flights

For this tour we fly directly to Paphos from London's Gatwick Airport with EasyJet. 20kg of hold luggage is included with your airline ticket and seat requests (window / aisle, emergency exit seats, front row, etc.) can easily be accommodated on request. Please contact the Naturetrek office for availability and prices.

EasyJet also flies to Paphos from Manchester, though please note that this flight arrives into Paphos later than the London Gatwick flight and so anyone choosing this route would need to fly to Paphos one day early in order to be there in time to meet the group, or make their own way to Latchi on arrival by taxi (at their own expense). Thomson also operates a charter flight from Manchester to Paphos, though once again this flight arrives into Paphos later than the London flight. A flight supplement may apply; please contact the Naturetrek office for further details.

How to book your place

In order to book your place on this holiday, please give us a call on 01962 733051 with a credit or debit card, book online at www.naturetrek.co.uk, or alternatively complete and post the booking form at the back of our main Naturetrek brochure, together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday cost plus any room supplements if required. If you do not have a copy of the brochure, please call us on 01962 733051 or request one via our website.

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