

Country Walks

for the best in nordic walking, guided walks and weekends away

Cyprus: Aphrodite's Island, Easy 'B' Grade

28 February - 7 March 2009

7 March - 14 March 2009

Eight days on Aphrodite's Island, where an expansive sea melts into azure skies. Our walks take you through beautiful landscapes of extraordinary contrasts, from spectacular mountain tops to secluded valleys, from archaeological sites to traditional villages with an unspoilt coastline never far away.

Climate: *Splendidly Mediterranean with almost constant sunshine throughout the year. Cyprus is at its best for walking in early March when the countryside is a blaze of floral colour, the sun is not too hot and there is still snow on Mount Olympus..*

Our base: *Polis is a small town of much character with stone buildings, ornate doorways and a pedestrian centre of colourful shops, tavernas and restaurants. It is situated on the north-western coast of Cyprus in a beautiful region of hills, valleys, harbours and rocky shores, less than one hour's drive from Paphos.*

Hotel: *The Natura Beach is in a superb location overlooking the sea yet only a 15-minute walk from the centre of Polis. It is family-run and friendly and the food is fresh, with organic orange juice, honey and other produce straight from the hotel's gardens. Fresh salads are plentiful. The hotel is set in gardens surrounded by orchards and olive groves with extensive lawns leading down to the sea. All rooms are double or twin en-suite and have a balcony or terrace from which to admire the coastal or mountain views. Our allocation of rooms includes 10 sea-facing and 8 for single occupancy. Other facilities include an outdoor pool, a tennis court, small gym, sauna and mountain bike hire.*

Holiday Price: *£573 This includes coach transfers to and from Paphos Airport, coach transport to and from the walks, two full-day excursions by coach to the Troodos Mountains and to Paphos, boat trip, hotel accommodation, all meals including 4 taverna lunches and 2 picnics excluding lunch on the last day, entrance fees and services of two leaders throughout. Excluded: flights, insurance, drinks and items of a personal nature. Single Supplement: £51; Seaview Supplement: £63 per room. These prices have been based on a current exchange rate of 1.173 euros to the pound. We will absorb any rate increases up to 5%; any increases above 5% will incur a surcharge.*

Flights: A choice of EasyJet or British Airways, both with a flight time of 4.5 hours, latest details currently as follows:

EasyJet

(<<http://www.easyJet.com/EN/Book/index.asp>>) Sat 28 Feb dep London Gatwick 1055, arr. Paphos 1725 - £72.99 Sat 7 Mar dep Paphos 1810, arr. London Gatwick 2100 - £39.99

Sat 7 Mar dep London Gatwick 1055, arr. Paphos 1725 - £87.99 Sat 14 Mar dep Paphos 1810, arr. London Gatwick 2100 - £49.99

British Airways (<http://www.britishairways.com/travel/fx/public/en_gb>)

Sat 28 Feb dep London Gatwick 1050, arr. Paphos 1720 - £92.00 Sat 7 Mar dep Paphos 1815, arr. London Gatwick 2100 - £92.00 Sat 7 Mar dep London Gatwick 1050, arr. Paphos 1720 - £92.00 Sat 14 Mar dep Paphos 1815, arr. London Gatwick 2100 - £92.00

Itinerary

Saturday

Depart Paphos airport by coach for an hour's drive to Polis, arriving at our hotel in time for an informal Welcome Meeting, an opportunity to meet your fellow guests before dinner.

Sunday

Polis, Laatchi & Fontana Amoroza. (7 miles: easy, no gradients) Walking straight from our hotel past olive, lemon and orange groves to ancient Polis. After coffee at our favourite taverna, we head for the sea past eucalyptus and acacia trees to the picturesque harbour at Laatchi, known throughout Cyprus for its fresh fish. A taverna lunch, then an exciting boat trip along the dramatic coastline to Fontana Amoroza, the best approach to this wild uninhabited part of the peninsula, a world away from the crowded coastal areas so often associated with Southern Cyprus. A wonderful walk with amazing views: birdsong, butterflies, tiny lizards and flowers too numerous to mention. What more could one ask for? Finally relax with a drink on a terrace overlooking an azure sea before our coach takes us on the short journey back to our hotel.

Monday

Mount Olympus & Kykkos Monastery (5 miles: easy mountain path, no gradients, some snow covered paths likely) An early start by coach to the spectacular Troodos, a mountain wonderland of lofty peaks and shady valleys. Today is packed with variety and scenic landscapes: we visit Stavros for an encounter with the famous Moufflon, endemic wild sheep of Cyprus, before arriving at Kykkos, the most celebrated of all the monasteries in Cyprus. Then a brief visit to the Byzantine Church of the Archangel Michael, a World Heritage Site, and on to the Artemis Trail, just below the summit of Mt Olympus at 2,000 metres. Although the highest point in Cyprus, still snow-covered, the walk is easy, almost entirely flat, with spectacular views over surrounding countryside. After a taverna lunch at Foini, a traditional village nestling in the heart of the Troodos, we resume our journey by coach through fertile valleys, breaking the journey at Omodos, one of the most picturesque villages in Cyprus to explore cobbled streets and perhaps sample its arts and crafts, lace-making and wine!

Tuesday

Smigies, Prygos tis Rigenas & Orchids of the Akamas (7 miles: moderate; fairly steep ascent to start, easy walking to finish) Accompanied by our host, Dr Christos Georgiades, we explore the outstanding flora of the Akamas Peninsular, following part of the Aphrodite Trail to hidden corners unknown to most where a huge variety of wild orchids grow. Dr Georgiades is the leading authority on the orchids of Cyprus and during our stay he will further enlighten us with an illustrated talk on the flora and fauna of this beautiful island. In the spring there is a riotous blossoming of poppies, anemones, cyclamen, iris, gladioli, tulips and crown daisies with approximately 50 species of orchid. Today's route will take us to the rocky limestone summit of Pissouromoutti; from here the views over the southern coast and the Akamas Forest are spectacular. After a picnic lunch, we cross a grassy plateau dotted with cypress and carob trees, visiting the tiny church of Agios Minas, before reaching journey's end at the traditional village of Neo Chorio. A long refreshing drink before our coach returns us to Polis.

Wednesday

Paphos (approx 3 miles: easy) By coach via the scenic route to the monumental Tombs of the Kings, carved out of the rock in the third century BC. A one-hour visit followed by coffee at the luxurious Elysium Hotel - our treat! Refreshed we continue on foot to explore the Archaeological Park, another World Heritage Site, admiring on the way crocuses and a mass of wild flowers. Then there's the Odeion and the Agora and the celebrated mosaics dating from the second century AD but amazingly full of vibrancy today. We enjoy a selection of traditional 'mezedes' together at one of the best Tavernas in town before visiting the medieval fort and harbour at Kato Paphos. We have allowed some free time for you to further explore the Archaeological Park or harbour or simply enjoy an icecream before meeting our coach for the return to Polis.

Thursday

Lara Bay & Agios Georgios (8 or 9 miles: very easy, no ascents) Our coach drops us at Ineia where after a brief visit to its tiny museum we descend very gradually towards the sea; the views of the Lara Peninsula ahead are magnificent. Following a taverna lunch at Lara Bay, untouched and quite unspoilt, we visit the turtle beach and walk beside the sea on paths lined with gorse, through olive groves and banana plantations, just the sound of birdsong and scent of wild flowers for company, magnificent views of the Akamas ridge on one side, the sea on the other. On to the tiny fishing port of Agios Georgios tis Pegeias to visit the church, enjoy a drink from the terrace and watch the sun setting over the the quiet harbour. Our coach can access the sea at Talextra, thereby reducing the route by about a miie or so.

Friday

The Baths of Aphrodite & the Best of the Akamas (6 miles: moderate) From the Baths of Aphrodite (where according to legend, the goddess frolicked with her lovers) to Pyrgos tis Rigenas, we follow the Adonis nature trail, gradually ascending through a forest of carob, juniper, pine and rock rose. On walk you are likely to see the wild tulip as well as the crocus and orchid and a host of other wild flowers. We stop at the ruins of the mediaeval Queen's Tower before a gradual ascent to Moutti tis Sotiras summit. We picnic perched high above Chrysochou Bay with spectacular views across to Turkey on a clear day. A narrow zigzag path takes us down to the awaiting taverna and a refreshing drink overlooking the crystal clear waters of the bay as we reflect on the week's wonders. (An alternative path avoids the steep descent). Return by coach.

Saturday

A final relaxing day together with late afternoon coach transfer to Paphos Airport for our flight to Gatwick.