

History

Situated at the maritime crossroads of the eastern Mediterranean basin, Cyprus has a rich and varied history. Many invaders, settlers and immigrants have come here over the centuries, and the island has seen Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Lusignans, Genoese, Venetians, Ottomans, British and Turks seek to take a part of Cyprus for themselves.

Cypriots, whether Greek or Turkish, are proud of their nation and feel a strong sense of national identity. The division of their island in 1974 is viewed by many as a temporary setback, and Cypriots look to the day when Cyprus will be a united island once again.

NEOLITHIC & CHALCOLITHIC CYPRUS

The first evidence of human habitation in Cyprus can be traced back to the Aceramic Neolithic period around 10,000 BC, with the discovery of manmade artefacts at the site of Akrotiri Aetokremnou, on the Akrotiri Peninsula on Cyprus' southern coast. These people may have brought about the extinction of the Pleistocene-era pygmy hippopotamus and dwarf elephant. By 8000 BC, domesticated animals such as cattle, pigs, sheep and goats had been introduced to Cyprus by agropastoralists from the Levantine mainland. This group laid the foundations for the development of the distinctively Cypriot culture best represented at the Aceramic Neolithic settlement of Choirokoitia (p152). Choirokoitia was an enclosed village built on the side of a hill in the southern part of the island in the 6th millennium BC. Its inhabitants lived in well-built round houses made of stone, and produced stone tools and containers. Other settlements from this period have been found scattered throughout Cyprus and show evidence of contact outside the island, such as the import of obsidian from Anatolia (in modern Turkey). There is a gap in the archaeological record dating from when Choirokoitia was abandoned; the next signs of activity on the site are vases made from clay, which date from the 5th millennium BC.

The Ceramic Neolithic period saw a new pattern of settlement emerge; its material culture was typified by the site of Sotira Teppes near the south coast, which has yielded abstractly painted ceramic artefacts. Copper began to be used in the 4th millennium BC and ushered in the Chalcolithic period. Among this era's most noteworthy artistic achievements was the production of cross-shaped human figurines made from microlite, a local Cypriot stone. Around 2500 BC, a new wave of immigrants, believed to be from Anatolia, brought with them new technologies and styles, and started the island's transition to the Bronze Age.

THE BRONZE AGE

Implements of copper progressively replaced the old stone repertory and led to the development of the abundant copper deposits in the Troödos Massif. At the end of the Early Bronze Age (2300 BC to 1950 BC), bronze objects were cast using imported tin. Contacts with the outside world were otherwise few, but imaginative pottery designs flourished,

drawing conspicuously on the human and animal life in and around the villages.

The Middle Bronze Age (1950 BC to 1650 BC) marked an essential continuation of the material culture of the preceding period, with the reintroduction of painted pottery on a regional basis. Settlements tended to keep to the foothills and plains, and archaeological records suggest a largely agrarian community. The first evidence of sustained copper mining comes from the start of this period; by its end, Cyprus had already begun its trading relationships with the Aegean, western Asia and Egypt, as attested by the island's pottery exports.

The Late Bronze Age (1650 BC to 1050 BC) is considered to be one of the most important periods in Cyprus' cultural and historical development. Extensive foreign trade with Egypt and islands in the Aegean Sea characterised the era. Most importantly, writing in the form of a linear script known as Cypro-Minoan was adapted from Crete. Fine jewellery, ivory carvings and delicate pottery were produced during this time and, from around 1400 BC, there was a notable increase in the amount of Mycenaean pottery imported from mainland Greece.

During the Late Bronze Age, new towns were established around the coast, and overseas trade in pottery containers and, later, copper ingots, expanded. Cyprus enjoyed an unprecedented level of prosperity that was accompanied by the movement of foreign goods and people into the island. Around 1200 BC, the first Greek-speaking settlers arrived as part of the Sea Peoples (aggressive seafarers), causing the disruption of existing Cypriot communities. This led to the emergence of the city kingdoms of the Iron Age.

ARCHAIC & CLASSICAL CYPRUS

The first Greek settlers established a series of city kingdoms at Kourion, Pafos, Marion (now Polis), Soloi, Lapithos, Tamassos and Salamis. Two more were later established at Kition and Amathous. These kingdoms enjoyed a period of advancement and increasing prosperity from 750 BC to 475 BC, spectacularly demonstrated by finds at the Royal Tombs near Salamis (p213). These extensive tombs contained sumptuous examples of wealth, and closely matched Homer's description of Mycenaean burials in *The Iliad*.

During this time, Cyprus was ruled in turn by Assyrians, Egyptians and Persians as the fortunes of these various empires waxed and waned.

Cyprus' Classical Age coincides with that of mainland Greece (475–325 BC), and during this period Cypriot art came under strong Attic influence. Zenon of Kition, the founder of the Stoic philosophy movement, was born during this time in Cyprus. Evagoras, king of Salamis, maintained strong links with the Hellenic mainland and extended Greek influence over most of the island, despite Persian hegemony. However, he was finally overcome by the Persians in 381 BC and assassinated seven years later. His death effectively ended the Classical Age.

HELLENISTIC & ROMAN CYPRUS

After his victory over the last Persian ruler, Darius III, at Issus in 333 BC, Alexander the Great took control of the city kingdoms of Cyprus and

www.ancientcyprus.ac.uk is the best site for dabbling in archaeology. Amateur or expert, you'll find plenty of resources here to aid your research of Cyprus' ancient history.

If you love ancient Cypriot pottery and sculpture, such as you will see displayed in museums and copied by artists, get more info at www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk.

For a thorough list of Cyprus' archaeological digs past and present, go to www.ancientneareast.net/cyprus.html.

TIMELINE 10,000–3800 BC

First settlements in Cyprus, including Choirokoitia

3800–1200 BC

Chalcolithic period and Bronze Age settlers

1200–1000 BC

Salamis, Kourion and Pafos flourish

850–750 BC

Phoenician renaissance; the Assyrians, the first of a series of conquerors, control Cyprus

LOST ATLANTIS DISCOVERED?

The Utopian civilisation of Atlantis was described by Plato in 400 BC as 'an island larger than Libya and Asia put together'. The myth describes a powerful nation, destroyed by Zeus for its corruption, which disappeared in a flood some 11,600 years ago. The puzzle of whether Atlantis ever existed, and if it did, how it really perished, has never been resolved. But whatever the answer, Atlantis has bewitched the minds of philosophers and scientists for centuries, and has been 'rediscovered' no less than 47 times.

Over the years, Atlantis has been placed on the edge of a Bolivian volcano, under the Arabian desert sands, in the fourth dimension, or in the Bermuda Triangle. And the last time it showed up was off the coast of Cyprus.

An American researcher, Robert Sarmast, has claimed with certainty that this time, Atlantis has been found for real. His team spent six days surveying an area off the east coast of Cyprus using the latest sonar technologies to create images of the sea bed a mile underwater. He is convinced that he has found evidence of manmade structures submerged in the sea. The findings are said to match 60 specific points mentioned by Plato, such as the city's temples, represented on the site by two mile-long straight walls, and two stream beds.

Sarmast has been obsessed with Atlantis from a young age but has no academic qualifications to substantiate his claims; after ten years spent studying the various accounts of the lost city, he believes that his knowledge is enough. Scientists and philosophers dispute his theories, pointing out that Cyprus is not mentioned in any of the stories relating to Atlantis. However, no-one is sure.

Many other claims have been put forward over the years: in the 1970s, a Soviet Institute of Oceanography decided it had discovered the lost city near Gibraltar; in 1998, a British team claimed that Atlantis lay off the Cornish coast; in 2004, Gibraltar was a candidate for the second time; and in 2005, a Swedish geographer tried to convince the world that Ireland was Atlantis. And those are just a few of the theories – many more are surely still to come.

ushered in a new era. While essentially giving the kingdoms autonomy, he refuted their right to make coins. When Alexander died in 323 BC, Cyprus was ceded to Ptolemy I of Egypt who further suppressed the city kingdoms, eventually causing the last king of Salamis, Nikokreon, to commit suicide. For 250 years Cyprus remained a Ptolemaic colony, languishing under the rule of an appointed governor general.

Cyprus was annexed by the expanding Roman Empire in 58 BC. Oration and writer Cicero was one of Cyprus' first proconsuls. Despite being briefly given to Cleopatra VII of Egypt and subsequently handed back to Roman control, Cyprus enjoyed some 600 years of relative peace and prosperity under Roman rule. Many public buildings and roads date from this time; noteworthy among them were the theatre at Kourion, the colonnaded gymnasium at Salamis and the Sanctuary of Apollon Ylatis.

It was during this period, in around AD 45, that Christianity made its early appearance on the island. Barnabas (later to become St Barnabas; Agios Varnavas in Greek), a native of Salamis, accompanied the apostle Paul and preached on Cyprus. Among his first converts was Sergius Paulus, the Roman proconsul.

Christianity flourished on the island and, by the time of Constantine the Great, paganism had almost completely been supplanted in Cyprus by Christianity.

THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE

In 395, the Roman Empire was divided. Its eastern variant, the Byzantine Empire, was based in Constantinople and retained hegemony over Cyprus. However, Cyprus kept a considerable degree of ecclesiastical autonomy from Constantinople; in 488, the archbishop was granted the right to carry a sceptre instead of an archbishop's crosier, as well as the authority to write his signature in imperial purple ink. The practice continues to this day.

The expansion of Islam in the 7th century had profound effects on Cyprus, with a series of disastrous Arab raids starting in 647 causing great depredation and suffering. Salamis was sacked and never recovered, Kourion declined, and coastal settlers moved inland to escape the repeated warring and pillaging. In 688, a sort of truce was called when Justinian II and the Arab caliph Abd-al-Malik signed an agreement for the joint rule of Cyprus. This agreement lasted until 965 when Emperor Nikiforos Fokas regained Cyprus completely for the Byzantines.

LUSIGNAN, GENOESE & VENETIAN CYPRUS

Byzantine rule might well have continued had renegade governor Isaak Komninos not decided to proclaim himself emperor of Cyprus, and in 1191 take on the might of the crusader king Richard the Lionheart of England. Richard took possession of Cyprus and subsequently sold it to the Knights Templar. They were unable to afford the upkeep and in turn sold it to the dispossessed king of Jerusalem, Guy de Lusignan.

The new French-speaking lord of Cyprus established a lengthy dynasty that brought mixed fortunes to the island. He invited Christian families who had lost property in the Holy Land to settle in Cyprus, and for some time these settlers involved themselves in the affairs of the diminished territories that still belonged to the kingdom of Jerusalem. This proved an economic strain on Cyprus until the neighbouring kingdom finally collapsed with the fall of Acre (Akko) in 1291.

For a hundred years or so thereafter, Cyprus enjoyed a period of immense wealth and prosperity, with current-day Famagusta (Mağusa) the centre of unrivalled commercial activity and trade. Many fine buildings and churches were completed during this period, some of which are still visible in North Nicosia (Lefkoşa), Bellapais (Beylerbeyi) and Famagusta. Cyprus' prosperity reached its zenith under King Peter I (r 1359–69), who mounted an unsuccessful crusade in 1365 that only managed to achieve the sacking of Alexandria.

In the meantime, Orthodox Greeks, while nominally free to practise their religion independently, were becoming more and more restless at their obligation to pay homage to a Latin (Roman Catholic) ecclesiastical administration. Many Greek clerics retreated to the mountains and quietly and unobtrusively built simple churches and monasteries. They decorated their buildings with some of the finest frescoes ever painted in the Orthodox world (p100).

The fortunes of the Lusignans were to take a turn for the worse after the accession to power of Peter I's son and heir, Peter II. Eyeing Cyprus' wealth and strategic position as entrepôt, Genoa and Venice jostled for control. This led to Genoa seizing Famagusta, which it held for the next

Aphrodite Cyprus: Goddess of Love – The Mythology of Cyprus by Stass Paraskos examines the legacy of the island's patron goddess through a variety of themes, such as Aphrodite's birth, children and husband, and the Trojan war.

The citizens of Famagusta (Mağusa) were once so rich and so debauched that one merchant ground up a diamond to season a dish, in front of all his guests.

568–525 BC

Egyptian emperor Amasis rules Cyprus

525–333 BC

Persians occupy the island under King Cyrus

333 BC–AD 58

Hellenistic rule; Greek national dress and architecture are adopted

58–395

The Romans take over from the Greeks and build amphitheatres, baths and temples

100 years. The fortunes of both Famagusta and Cyprus itself declined as a result. The last Lusignan king was James II (r 1460–73). He managed to expel the Genoese from Famagusta and married a Venetian noblewoman, Caterina Cornaro, who succeeded James, and became Queen of Cyprus and the last royal personage of the Lusignan dynasty. Under pressure, she ceded Cyprus to Venice.

The Venetians ruled Cyprus from 1489 to 1571, but their control was characterised by indifference and torpor. Corruption and inefficiency marked the administration, and the Greek peasantry fared no better under their new overlords than under the previous regime. In the meantime, the Ottoman Empire was expanding. In anticipation of attack from the north, the Venetians fortified Lefkosia with immense circular walls and built massive fortifications around Famagusta. Neither measures held back the Ottoman onslaught and, in 1570, Lefkosia was conquered. Almost a year later, after a long siege, Famagusta was taken by the Ottomans.

THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

The newly arrived Ottomans suppressed the Latin Church and restored the Orthodox hierarchy. The peasantry, who had suffered under a feudal tenancy system, were given land. Taxes were initially reduced but later increased, often arbitrarily, with the Orthodox archbishop responsible for their collection. Some 20,000 Turks were settled on Cyprus following its capture, but the island was not high in the priorities of the ruling sultans.

Indolence, corruption and sloth marked the Ottoman rule, and dissent was frequently put down by oppression. In 1821, the Orthodox archbishop was hanged on suspicion of supporting the growing Greek revolution in mainland Greece.

BRITISH RULE

Ottoman rule lasted 300 years, until another foreign power sought influence in the region. In 1878, Turkey and Britain signed an agreement whereby Turkey would retain sovereignty of the languishing colony, while Britain would shoulder the responsibility for administering the island. Britain's aim was to secure a strategic outpost in the Middle East from where it could monitor military and commercial movements in the Levant and the Caucasus. As part of the agreement, Britain would protect the sultan's Asian territories from threat by Russia.

However, in 1914, the parties were at war so Britain assumed outright sovereignty of Cyprus. Turkey's recognition of the annexation of its territory was not ratified until the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, under which it also regularised territorial claims with the newly independent Greece.

British control of Cyprus was initially welcomed by its mostly Greek population, since it was assumed that Britain would ultimately work with the Greeks to achieve enosis, or union with Greece. Turkish Cypriots, though, were less than enthusiastic at the prospect. The British had offered to unite Cyprus with Greece as early as 1915 on condition that Greece fulfilled its treaty obligations towards Serbia when it was attacked by Bulgaria. The Greek government refused and the offer was never repeated again.

Pro-enosis riots broke out in 1931, but it wasn't until the 1950s that the enosis movement really began to gather steam. Energy was generated by a Cypriot lieutenant colonel, Georgos 'Digenis' Grivas, who founded the Ethniki Organosi tou Kypriakou Agona (EOKA; National Organisation for the Cypriot Struggle). Between 1955 and 1958, EOKA launched a series of covert attacks on the British administration and military, and on anyone else who was seen as being against enosis. The British came up with various proposals for limited home rule, but all were rejected. The 17% minority Turkish Cypriots became increasingly alarmed at the prospect of being forcibly incorporated into Greece.

The respective governments in Greece and Turkey began to take an active interest in developments in Cyprus and, as Greek Cypriots called for enosis, the Turkish Cypriots demanded either retrocession to Turkey, or *taksim* (partition). In 1959, Greek Cypriot ethnarch and religious leader Archbishop Makarios III and Turkish Cypriot leader Faisal Küçük met in Zurich with Greek and Turkish leaders, as well as representatives of the British government. They came to ratify a previously agreed plan whereby independence would be granted to Cyprus under conditions that would satisfy all sides.

The British were to retain two bases and a number of other military sites as part of the agreement. Cyprus would not enter into a political or economic union with Turkey or Greece, nor agree to be partitioned. Political power was to be shared on a proportional basis, although with less than 20% of the total population, the Turkish Cypriots were granted 30% of civil service positions, 33% of seats in the House of Representatives and 40% of positions in the army.

Ominously, Britain, Turkey and Greece were to be named as 'guarantor powers', which gave any of the three nations the right to intervene in the affairs of Cyprus should it be believed that the terms of the independence agreement were being breached in any way.

THE REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

The birth of the new and independent Republic of Cyprus was realised on 16 August 1960. Transition from colony to an independent nation was not without growing pains, and sporadic violence and agitation continued. The unrest culminated when Greek Cypriots proposed amendments threatening power-sharing arrangements, resulting in Turkish Cypriot withdrawal from government. Serious sectarian violence broke out in 1963, further dividing the Greek and Turkish communities. The UN sent a peacekeeping force to the island in 1964 to support British troops manning the so-called 'Green Line' dividing Lefkosia. The Turkish Cypriots retreated to ghettos and enclaves as a means of protecting themselves against Greek harassment and aggression.

The Cold War was at its peak and Cyprus' strategic value as a radar listening post became vitally important to the British and to the militarily stronger Americans. Both nations relied on Cyprus in order to monitor Soviet nuclear-missile testing in central Asia. The British maintained an air-force garrison on the Akrotiri base that included a nuclear arsenal.

Archbishop Makarios III, then president of Cyprus, played an increasingly risky game of political nonalignment while seeking arms and

A frisky film from 1979, *Emmanuelle: Queen of Sados*, possibly inspired by Aphrodite's exploits, was filmed at the Amathus Beach Hotel in Lemesos and at that famous aphrodisiac location, Larnaka airport.

The French poet Arthur Rimbaud visited Cyprus in 1878 and worked at a quarry in Larnaka for six months.

support from communist nations such as the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia. He also covertly supported further calls for enosis with Greece. As the communist party gained support, Turkey and Turkish Cypriots became increasingly uneasy at the thought of a possible communist-dominated government in Cyprus. The Americans and their British allies felt concern at the possibility of another Cuban crisis – this time in the Mediterranean.

The discussions on the possibility of segregating the two communities began to take on a greater tempo. In 1967, a coup in Greece installed a right-wing military junta. Its relations with Cyprus cooled while the US cosied up to the more accommodating colonels in Athens. Because of his many diplomatic manoeuvres with the Soviets, Makarios' Cyprus became a less and less desirable option for both the Greeks and the Americans. In July 1974, a CIA-sponsored and Greek-organised coup took place in Cyprus with the intention of eliminating Makarios and installing a more pro-Western government.

On 15 July, a detachment of the National Guard, led by officers from mainland Greece, launched a coup aimed at assassinating Makarios and establishing enosis. They laid waste to the presidential palace, but Makarios narrowly escaped. A former EOKA member, Nikos Sampson, was proclaimed president of Cyprus. Five days later, Turkish forces landed at present-day Kyrenia (Girne) to overturn Sampson's government. Despite vigorous resistance, the Turks were successful in establishing a bridgehead around Kyrenia and linking it with the Turkish sector of North Nicosia (Lefkoşa).

On 23 July 1974, Greece's junta fell and was replaced by a democratic government under Konstantinos Karamanlis. At the same time, Sampson was replaced in Cyprus by Glafkos Clerides, the president of the House of Representatives. The three guarantor powers, Britain, Greece and Turkey, as required by the treaty, met for discussions in Geneva, but it proved impossible to halt the Turkish advance until 16 August. By that time Turkey controlled the northern 37% of the island. In December, Makarios returned to resume the presidency. Cyprus was divided.

TAKSIM

The 1974 division of Cyprus has continued to this day. While the arrival of the Turkish army was seen as a godsend by harried and harassed Turkish Cypriots, it was viewed as an enormous disaster by the 200,000 Greek Cypriots who then lived in the northern third of Cyprus. Many were caught up in the onslaught and killed; most were evacuated or fled south to what remained of the Republic of Cyprus. Similarly, some 100,000 Turkish Cypriots from the Republic of Cyprus fled, or were forcibly evacuated, to Northern Cyprus.

The economic cost to the island and lack of stability brought about with division, and the number of refugees this caused, was enormous. The now-truncated Greek Republic of Cyprus was deprived of some of its best land, two major towns, its lucrative citrus industry and the bulk of its tourist infrastructure.

While the forced division of Cyprus served certain short-term military and political purposes, and Turkish Cypriots received protection from

RAUF DENKTAŞ: PORTRAIT OF A RENEGADE

Viewed as the bane of Cypriot society by Greeks and saviour of the nation by many Turks, Rauf Denktaş used to, and still does, provoke strong feelings among Cypriots. Before he stepped down as president of the self-proclaimed independent republic in 2005, this one-time lawyer was matched in resilience and political longevity by few neighbouring Middle Eastern political leaders. He used charisma and stubbornness to lead the Turkish Cypriot community from well before the forced division of Cyprus in 1974. Until Mehmet Ali Talat beat him in the 2005 election, he had been leader for 31 years.

Mercurial in character, Denktaş was born near Pafos on the island's southern coast and trained as a barrister in London before commencing his long political career. As leader of the Turkish Communal Chamber from 1960, he was in and out of the spotlight – and trouble – until 1974, when he became leader of the partitioned Turkish Cypriots.

Denktaş was known for his persistence and perceived intransigence in seeking a solution for reuniting Cyprus. He dodged and wove, teased and tested the will of both the Republic of Cyprus' political leadership and that of the intermediary nations or organisations who vainly attempted to broker numerous peace deals.

His drive to seek a mutually acceptable solution to the political impasse was compromised by an obdurate steadfastness and unwillingness to deviate from the long-held party line. At thrice-weekly talks held in the UN buffer zone during the spring and summer of 2002, Denktaş refused to concede any ground from the entrenched position of his party and his Turkish-mainland backers who prefer a bizonal, bicomunal state with a large degree of autonomy and separation between the two communities. These talks sputtered on into 2003 without any progress.

In 2003, lead by motives still questioned by many leaders, particularly in the South, Denktaş made a surprise announcement that he would ease border crossings between the two parts of the island, with immediate effect. This decision, however politically 'suspicious', marked a major point in Cyprus' history; Denktaş' failure to get re-elected two years later indicated the possibility that, despite how entrenched things may sometimes seem in Cyprus, they might still change.

Turkey, the final result was ultimately a Pyrrhic victory for the Turks. Makarios escaped assassination by the coup plotters, the military junta collapsed and the desire for enosis dissipated, as Cyprus became preoccupied with its internal problems.

The declaration of a Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC; KKTC in Turkish) by President Rauf Denktaş in 1983 was recognised by no nation other than Turkey. The Cold War came to an end in 1991, by which time half the population of native Turkish Cypriots had fled the island for the UK, Canada and Australia.

CYPRUS TODAY

The Greek Cypriots quickly regrouped and put their energies into rebuilding their shattered nation. Within a few years the economy was on the mend, and the Republic of Cyprus continues to enjoy international recognition as the sole legitimate representative of Cyprus. The economy is booming: the Cyprus Stock Exchange opened in mid-1999 and initially absorbed vast amounts of private funds. Later, the stock exchange took a nose dive and many Cypriots lost huge amounts of money. Tourism is generally buoyant, though 2002 saw a downward trend sparking some concern in the industry.

The Cyprus Conspiracy by Brendan O'Malley and Ian Craig details the role of the British, the CIA, Makarios and the junta colonels of Greece in the events in Cyprus from the 1950s up to 1974.

Under the Stars is a Cypriot road movie from 2001 about two Greek Cypriots whose lives have been torn apart by the Turkish invasion of the island in 1974.

1571

The Ottoman Empire takes over Cyprus

1878

Britain takes over from Turkey as the island's administrator and annexes Cyprus formally in 1914

1955–1960

EOKA begins guerrilla warfare against the British; Makarios becomes the first president of independent Cyprus

1963–1964

Intercommunal fighting after Makarios' proposals of constitutional changes; Turks retreat into enclaves; UN peacekeeping force arrives

A GREEN LIGHT ON THE GREEN LINE: THE FIRST CYPRIOT CROSSINGS

It all happened in a matter of hours. On 23 April 2003, Rauf Denktaş, then leader of the Turkish Cypriots, made the surprise announcement that the Green Line (the boundary separating Greek Cypriot Lefkosia from Turkish Cypriot North Nicosia) would open that day for all Cypriots to cross from 9am to midnight. The Greek Cypriot government, gobsmailed by the news, was silent. No-one knew how the Cypriot people would react and what the consequences of this decision would be. Would there be riots or civil unrest? After all, no-one had crossed the Green Line for 29 years, except for the occasional diplomat or at times of emergency. Many still had friends, relatives and homes they missed on the 'other side'.

Starting with a few eager early-morning visitors, the checkpoints swelled with thousands of people over the coming days. Crossing over to the South, the Turkish Cypriots were enchanted by the comparative wealth of the smart shops and restaurants on Lefkosia's glitzy Leoforos Arhiepiskopou Makariou III (Makarios Ave). Greek Cypriots wandered through the run-down streets of North Nicosia, surprised at the way time had stood still over the last thirty years. Friends and families met, and many tears were shed. Greeks and Turks visited their former homes and were welcomed by the current inhabitants, reportedly inviting them in for coffee and sending them home with presents of citrus fruit and flowers. The two peoples treated each other with studied civility and kindness, and, three years after the checkpoints' opening, no major incidents have been reported.

It is estimated that more than 28,000 people, equivalent to 35% of Cyprus' entire population, crossed in the first two weeks. Allegedly, 25,000 Turkish Cypriots applied for a Cypriot passport in 2003 alone. Many Turkish Cypriots now cross the line every day, on their way to work in the southern part of the island. Serdar Denktaş, the son of Rauf and the man behind the realisation of the border opening, dubbed the events 'a quiet revolution'. Many compared it to the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, minus the dramatic knocking down of the buffer zone, an event some eagerly await.

The crossing frenzy subsided slightly in the following years, and the attitude to crossing has normalised. However, many report a sense of disappointment that nothing more has been done off the back of the initial enthusiasm, and that the lack of any real solution simply confirms the island's existing separation and status quo. With the reshuffles in European and world politics over the next ten years, it remains to be seen what the future of Cyprus will be, and whether the dividing line will be truly erased once and for all.

Known by most foreigners simply as 'Northern Cyprus' and by Greeks as the 'Occupied Territories' (*ta katehomena*), the northern segment of Cyprus as a separate entity defies logic; despite international economic sanctions, it continues to survive and develop, supported largely by its client and sponsor nation, Turkey.

Talks to reunite Cyprus have taken place sporadically since 1974 but little ground has been gained, with both sides presenting an entrenched and uncompromising point of view. The UN has maintained peace along the Green Line since 1964; in 1974, it was called on to patrol and monitor the cease-fire line, now called the Attila Line, the border that runs the entire length of the island.

When Cyprus and Turkey were seeking entry to the EU, the leaders of both the South and the North had thrice-weekly talks during the spring and summer of 2002 aimed at reunification, but talks became bogged down in the fine print. The first real changes in the relations between the

two communities started in April 2003, after a surprise announcement by Rauf Denktaş stated a decision to 'amend travel' and allow Cypriots from both sides to visit the opposing parts of the island, so long as they returned home by the end of the day. Since then, four checkpoints have been opened along the border, and visiting time has been extended to up to three months.

During this period Kofi Annan, the UN secretary-general, tried to broker an agreement that would allow a referendum on reunification, which was rejected by a vast majority of Greek Cypriots (nearly 76%) and endorsed by more than half of Turkish Cypriots (65%). While Turkey's application for admission to the EU was deferred in January 2003, Cyprus' application (with or without the North) was approved and the southern Republic of Cyprus alone became a part of the EU in May 2004.

The following April, the 30-year Turkish Cypriot leader, Rauf Denktaş, lost the presidential elections to his prime minister Mehmet Ali Talat. Talat, a more modern leader and head of the centre-left Cumhuriyetçi Türk Partisi (CTP; Republican Turkish Party), is a supporter of unification and was vocal in his support of Kofi Annan's plan.

Cyprus' relationship with Turkey is also looking to improve following the commencement of the formal talks on Turkey's EU admission, which started in 2005 and are predicted to go on for ten years. Turkey's controversial EU entry rests on several conditions, one of which is its eventual recognition of the Republic of Cyprus. It remains to be seen how the Cyprus problem will be solved after this.

Echoes from the Dead Zone: Across the Cyprus Divide by Yiannis Papadakis is about the author's journey from the Greek to the Turkish side of the border, and the overcoming of prejudices and finding understanding.

1974

Greek military junta organises a coup against Makarios; Turkish army invades/intervenes, taking over the northern third of Cyprus

1983

Turks unilaterally proclaim the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

2003

Borders open for the first time in 30 years

2004

UN referendum for reunification, rejected by the Greeks, endorsed by the Turks; the Republic of Cyprus joins the EU

The Culture

THE NATIONAL PSYCHE

The Cypriot character has been moulded by the many different nations who have coveted, fought for and possessed the island over the centuries. And it's because of this history that Cypriot identity is as divided as the country itself. Although politics play an important part in every Cypriot's life and the scars of 1974 are still very much alive in the people's minds, a peaceful mentality was evident when borders opened in 2003 and Cypriot Greeks and Turks met each other again for the first time in 30 years. Despite the political and emotional difficulties of the long division, the Cypriot people were kind and civil to each other.

The Cyprus problem (*kypriako* in Greek) is an issue that all Cypriots have grown up with and lived with on either side of the Green Line, and the bitterness that they feel in relation to this subject cannot be overestimated. In that light, and while politics are discussed widely on both sides of the Green Line, the Cyprus problem is a very sensitive issue – particularly for Greek Cypriots – and one that travellers should approach with tact and understanding.

Both Greek and Turkish Cypriots can be quite frank and forthright in discussing the issue, but it's better to let them take the lead rather than initiate a discussion yourself. Considering the internal divisions, it is then surprising to know that Cyprus' inhabitants see themselves as Cypriot first and Greek or Turkish second.

Since 1974, there has been a creeping Turkification of the North. Greek place names have been converted to Turkish so that anyone familiar with the pre-partition names may find it difficult to find their way around the North without a Turkish-language map. Greek road signs and wall signs of any description have completely disappeared and visitors cannot help but feel that they are in a region of Turkey.

Likewise, there has been a near-total Hellenisation of the South. Even the former city names of Nicosia, Limassol and Paphos have been officially changed to their Greek versions, something that may catch out the unaware traveller. Other than in the UN-controlled village of Pyla (p168), where one can see Turkish and Greek Cypriots still living together, there are few signs of the Turkish language or culture anywhere in the South.

While British domination was understandably rejected by Cypriots in the late 1950s, there is still a lingering 'Britishness' about Cyprus in both the North and the South, such as neighbours who'll call each other up on the phone before popping over for a coffee, a custom not usually practised in other Mediterranean countries.

There are a number of second-generation Cypriots who grew up in foreign countries (many of them in the UK) and who are now returning to live on the island. They are generally regarded as semiforeigners by the locals and often find themselves struggling to fit in.

Greek Cypriots are very traditional and protective of their 'national purity' and many *xeni* (foreigners) who have married locals and stayed on the island report a long and difficult 'initiation' into the family and local community. Despite this, Cypriots are a friendly and welcoming people who will show kindness to strangers.

Cypriot men on both sides of the Green Line are the face of machismo: hairy and often moustachioed (especially the older generations), they drive their cars fast, wear their chains gold, comb their hair back, and

The Internet has opened all kinds of possibilities for dialogue, one of them being www.talkcyprus.org/forum, a website for Cypriots to discuss their country's political situation online.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

The issue of place names is a thorny one in Cyprus, pregnant with political, cultural and linguistic overtones and potential pitfalls. To avoid treading on too many peoples' toes, we have adopted a few ground rules to make navigating this maze a little easier.

In general, we have adopted a bilingual approach to towns and villages that were once bi-communal, and a trilingual approach where some towns had Anglicised versions of their name. In Northern Cyprus (referred to throughout this book as 'the North'), we list major tourist towns by the Anglicised names, followed by their Turkish and Greek names, while villages are listed by their Turkish name followed by the Greek name. This occurs out of a need to assist travellers to navigate Turkish-language destination signs rather than to make a political statement. Without this knowledge, and with Greek-only place names in our guide, navigating Northern Cyprus would be totally unfeasible. Thus Kyrenia is known as Girne in Turkish and Keryneia in Greek, Famagusta as Mağusa in Turkish and Ammohostos in Greek.

In the Republic of Cyprus (referred to throughout this book as 'the South'), we have used the new, approved Hellenised place names for cities and towns. Thus, South Nicosia is known as Lefkosia; Paphos as Pafos and Larnaca as Larnaka. Road signs these days tend to use the new names, though you will occasionally see the old names on older signs.

For the Republic, we list Greek versions of names as well as the Anglicised and Turkish ones, where appropriate. Thus Pafos is known also as Baf in Turkish, Limassol as Lemesos in Greek and Limasol in Turkish. While we acknowledge the Turkish Cypriots' right to call a town or village by a Turkish name, this can lead to problems for a publication such as this guide where many of the former Greek villages of Northern Cyprus are still known internationally by their Greek names and are still shown as such on many maps.

The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus has never been recognised by any other authority than itself and Turkey. It is not Lonely Planet's intent to 'recognise' states as such and thus confer implied legality on them, but to describe a given situation as fairly as possible and allow readers to reach their own conclusions. In this book we refer to Northern Cyprus as the territory currently occupied by the Turkish military, and to the Republic of Cyprus as the territory not occupied by the Turkish army.

love to think that women (particularly Western women) adore them. So, if you're a woman travelling alone in Cyprus, keep in mind that you'll get plenty of male attention, and from all generations.

LIFESTYLE

The Cypriot standard of living has rocketed in the last five to ten years, and particularly so in the Republic. Years of tourist interest have resulted in lucrative land sales, development opportunities and a general rise in wealth. Compared to the Cyprus of the 1950s when most people immigrated to the West to try and earn a living, this wealth has given the country a standard of living that matches most European countries, and, frankly, exceeds some too. In fact, Cyprus has the third-highest standard of living in the Mediterranean. Once a country of immigrants, the island has become an attractive destination for many people from the developing world and poorer countries of the EU who move here seeking work. A live-in nanny seems to be the national 'must-have', with an influx of people from Southeast Asia aiming specifically for this calling. Eastern Europeans and Russians are mainly employed as catering staff in tourist destinations. This has meant that seeds of cosmopolitanism have been planted in this formerly homogenous society.

Northern Cyprus, on the other hand, has a much lower standard of living than the Republic, with a GDP roughly one-third of the South. Despite this, the Turkish Cypriot economy grew by 2.6% in 2004, fuelled

by the construction and education sectors, along with the increased employment of Turkish Cypriots in the Republic of Cyprus.

Although many mainland Turks come to Northern Cyprus to work, the North is heavily dependent on financial transfers from Ankara – around US\$300 million a year. Tourist development has increased since the borders have opened, yet there is a danger that too much growth can ultimately work against the North, as the island overdevelops and loses its individuality.

The Cypriot reputation for hospitality is well known. Although this is waning slightly, you may be still be invited into a stranger's home for coffee, a meal or even to spend the night. In case you are invited by a host who is poor, it is considered offensive to offer money. The most acceptable way of saying thank you is through a gift, perhaps to a child in

GETTING HITCHED IN CYPRUS

Maybe it's the dreary weather and the strong likelihood of a rainy wedding day that's behind the Brits' desire to get loved up, pop the question, and tie the knot somewhere in Cyprus. So many of them get married on the island that the American Express Travel Weddings and Honeymoons League 2005 named Cyprus the second most popular place in the world for getting married; the island is ranked sixth for honeymoons. The UK-based First Choice and Thomson travel agencies have also rated it as their top wedding destination.

Some seem to think that the spirit of Aphrodite has a little to do with it. After all, the goddess did emerge from sea foam (think Bo Derek in *10*, minus the braids) and entertained lovers left, right and centre, leaving behind her an amorous scent that has continued to intoxicate paramours ever since. But Cyprus' history as a wedding nest was officially begun by Richard the Lionheart who married his wife Berengaria at Lemesos fortress in the 12th century.

It's no surprise that the Brits love Cyprus so much: the prices are low, the weather is excellent and wedding regulations are easy. If you're thinking of getting hitched in the Republic of Cyprus, here's what you have to do: when you arrive, apply in person to the marriage officer of the relevant region with your passport and birth certificate, and fill in a Notice of Marriage form. Then, make a declaration under oath in front of the marriage officer, stating that you know of no legal impediment to your marriage, supported by documents proving you're not a serial bigamist; if you're divorced or widowed, you need to show the appropriate papers. If you don't have any papers to prove your marital status, the Cypriots are pretty flexible; you just have to sign a legal declaration stating that you are definitely, cross-your-heart-and-hope-to-die, single. The cost of making this application is UK£75.

Once all that is complete, you can get married anytime between 15 days and three months later. Note that if you miss the three-month limit, you'll have to apply all over again. However, if you want to get married quickly, simply pay UK£165 and you can have your big day 48 to 72 hours later.

A number of hotels have built chapels on site to make the procedure as hassle-free as possible, while the reception often takes place in the hotel itself. The superluxurious Anassa Hotel in Polis (see the boxed text *Spa Life*, p125), where even the Beckhams have holidayed, is a place where you can have a glitz-a-tastic wedding; then there is the Elysium in Pafos, the Columbia Beach Resort in Pissouri, the Palm Beach in Larnaka and the Amathus Beach hotel in Lemesos (p88), all of which are four-star establishments at least. There are numerous online wedding agencies such as the **Wedding Company** (www.the-weddingcompany.com) or **Weddings in Cyprus** (www.wedding.cyprus-hotels.org.uk) that help organise the whole shebang, from the hors d'oeuvre to the wedding band.

There's only one glitch in this beautiful scene: an apparent shortage of priests. A solitary priest covered the entire area of Agia Napa and Protaras in 2004; despite interventions by the Cyprus Tourism Organisation, the church seems reluctant to part with its pastors.

the family (particularly if you happen to have a Nintendo Playstation III handy). A similar situation arises if you go out for a meal with Cypriots; the bill is not shared as in Western European countries, but paid by the host. But do offer to pay in any case.

The contrast between a Cypriot home in a village and one in an urban area can be astounding. The city dwellers, particularly those in Lefkosia (South Nicosia), put their suits on, get their 'skinny lattes to go' and rush down the street in pursuit of prosperity and career. Youngsters hang out in bars and clubs and covet designer items displayed in tempting shop windows; restaurants, bars and clubs are the modern churches of these trendy, classy urbanites. In the villages, the local *kafeneio* (coffee shop) is packed with men of all generations – from boys, usually serving the customers, to middle-aged men on their way to work, to old men. They all sit in the shade of the vine leaves, and the action centres around pairs playing backgammon. Haloumi (helimi), tomatoes, olives, coffee and ouzo are consumed, and many cigarettes are smoked while dice are thrown and backgammon positions are counted in whispers. Come lunchtime, only the echo of chatter and lingering cigarette smoke remain; the men have stampeded home, where the wife has prepared a nice pot of *fasioli* (beans) and tomatoes.

While you may occasionally see two men holding hands on the Turkish side of the island (and this is normal in many Asian countries), homosexuality is largely frowned upon in the traditional parts of Cyprus. Cities like Lefkosia, Lemesos and Pafos have several gay bars and clubs, and the atmosphere in these places is more relaxed; however, it is never advisable to be too obvious, since macho attitudes are prevalent.

Despite its overt Western outlook, Cyprus is steeped in traditional customs. Name days, weddings and funerals have great significance. Weddings are highly festive occasions, with dancing, feasting and drinking sometimes continuing for days. In Cypriot villages, it is common for the whole village to be invited to the wedding.

A favourite Cypriot pastime is having a *souvla* (barbecue or spit-roast) on the beach. There's a joke that the Cypriot's favourite vehicle (and in fact the best-selling one) is a pick-up truck, because twenty chairs, a table and the entire barbecue set can be stacked on the back of it when the family goes out on the weekend. And indeed, the smoke and the smell of delicious food often tickle one's nostrils on Cypriot beaches.

Cypriots are a little more formal in their interpersonal relations than their mainland brethren. People are commonly addressed with a title, such as Mr (*kyrie* before the person's name in Greek; *bey* after the name in Turkish) or Mrs (*kyria* in Greek; *hanım* in Turkish); the use of first names alone is considered too familiar. Appointments are usually kept to the agreed time, and in small towns it is not unusual for villagers to phone each other before visiting even if they live next door to each other.

You may have come to Cyprus for sun, sand and sea, but if you want to bare all other than on a designated nude beach, remember that Cyprus is a traditional country, so take care not to offend the locals.

POPULATION

Cyprus is primarily made up of Greek and Turkish Cypriots who together constitute a total population of 780,133. The Greeks are descendants of the early settlers who intermingled with the indigenous population around 1100 BC and subsequent settlers who came to Cyprus up to the 16th century AD. The Turkish Cypriots are descendants from Ottoman

'A favourite Cypriot pastime is having a *souvla* (barbecue or spit-roast) on the beach'

settlers who first arrived in Cyprus in 1570 following the Ottoman conquest of the island.

Around 18% of the population is Turkish Cypriot; immigrants from mainland Turkey since 1974 are thought to make up to about 50% of that total. A large number of Cypriots left the island as refugees in 1974, but many have since chosen to return home permanently.

Most Cypriots in the Republic of Cyprus speak English and many road signs are in Greek and English. In Northern Cyprus, this is not the case outside the tourist areas and you'll have to brush up on your Turkish. In both areas, the spelling of place and street names varies enormously.

The division of Cyprus in 1974 made the country's population more or less ethnically 'clean': the southern, Greek part of the island is populated by the Greeks, and the northern, Turkish side is mainly Turkish. But things are never that simple. Although Greek Cypriots in particular demonstrate preservationist tendencies when it comes to Greek national purity, Cypriot society is more cosmopolitan than one may think. The wealth acquired through tourist development has moved Cypriot life several steps up, and tourism provides employment for an average of 37,000 people a year, or 13% of the general workforce, many of them immigrants.

There has been a large influx of Russians to the island, particularly in some parts of Lemesos and Pafos. The question, and for some the 'problem', of the Pontian Greeks (ethnic Greeks from Russia who have the right to Cypriot and Greek nationality) has become a sensitive social issue on the island. Complaints of racism and discrimination can be heard from the Pontians, many of whom struggle with unemployment and poverty, while the Cypriots complain of disruptive and socially problematic behaviour from the Pontians.

A dominant socio-political problem in Cyprus is the status and the future of the large minority of mainland Turks, who have gradually settled on the island since 1974.

TURKISH SETTLERS: THE ELEPHANT IN CYPRUS' LIVING ROOM

The easing of border crossings in 2003 brought the Cyprus problem, and its solution, into the international public eye once again. As Greeks and Turks crossed and continue to cross the Green Line, the mainland Turkish settlers (or naturalised Turkish Cypriots, depending on your view) have been left on the fringes of the discussions and hopes for the island's reunification. The *Turkiyeli*, as they are known in Northern Cyprus, have also been physically left out of the recent changes since they are unable to cross over the Green Line, as the Greek Cypriots don't recognise the validity of their documents.

Arriving in gradual waves from mainland Turkey since 1974 as population boosters introduced by Denktaş, the settlers were given Greek Cypriot properties, mainly in rural, deprived areas undesirable to Turkish Cypriots. The number of settlers is one of the most debated and politically manipulated issues in Cyprus – the Greek Cypriots claim there are 119,000 on the island, whereas independent researchers in the North put the figure down to 50,000.

Although many of the settlers married Turkish Cypriots and some have grandchildren on the island, they are largely rejected and looked down upon by Turkish Cypriots, particularly the middle classes; as is often the case with discrimination, the settlers get the blame for increases in crime rates and social problems.

There is hardly any public debate on the issue of the Turkish settlers, and their identity and future represent the elephant in Cyprus' living room. Aside from throwing statistics at each other, governments on both sides of the Green Line have given no indication on how they intend to approach the future and status of these people.

RELIGION

About 78% of Cypriots belong to the Greek Orthodox Church, 18% are Muslims and the remaining 4% are Maronite, Armenian Apostolic and other Christian denominations. These days, the Muslims live mainly in the North and the Greek Orthodox in the South. The Maronites have traditionally been centred on the village of Koruçam (Kormakitis) in the North, and there are small non-Orthodox Christian communities on both sides of the border.

Greek Cypriots are more pious than their Turkish Cypriot counterparts, and church visits are a regular thing; even McDonald's offers special Lent dishes during Easter week. The presence of the Orthodox Church is strong both in politics and ordinary life, and the Orthodox Christians are by and large intolerant towards most non-Christians, particularly Muslims. The Greek year is centred on the festivals of the church calendar. Most Greeks, when they have a problem, will go into a church and light a candle to the saint they feel is most likely to help. Sunday afternoons are popular times for visiting monasteries, and the frescoed Byzantine churches in the Troödos Massif are often packed with elderly weekend pilgrims.

Turkish Cypriots are generally more secular and can often be heard complaining of their Turkish mainland brethren being 'too religious'. They are mostly Sunni Muslims and, while religion plays an important part in Turkish Cypriot culture, the more conservative Islamic culture seen elsewhere in the Middle East and in rural Turkey is not so obvious in Cyprus. Alcohol, for example, is widely available and frequently consumed by Turkish Cypriots and women dress more casually than their Turkish mainland counterparts. A large number of Orthodox churches in the North were destroyed by the Turks and Turkish Cypriots in the wake of the 1974 partition.

WOMEN IN CYPRUS

While traditional ideas about women die hard in Cypriot villages, where women mainly stay at home, cook and look after the house and the family, women in the cities are dressed up to highest fashion standards, frequent the beaches in skimpy bikinis, work, and go out. The pressure to look good and 'look after yourself' (which involves a lot of designer-label wearing) is perhaps as present as the traditional pressure to be able to cook and keep the house clean and tidy.

Sexual liberation and education may have given Cypriot women a certain degree of freedom and independence, but there is still a long way to go when it comes to combating the occupational segregation of the sexes. In 2001, Cyprus came second on a list of the worst places in Europe for women's pay discrimination, after Portugal.

During the same year, women occupied around 10% of positions in the public sector, and there were no female ministers in the Cypriot government. Things are looking up, however, and it was expected that women's participation in all political spheres would count at 30% by the end of 2005.

The traditional ideas of women as 'mother' or 'sex object' are still dominant on both sides of the Green Line. Running a 'cabaret' (brothel) is a lucrative business, and women-trafficking is a serious problem. The feminist movement never really took off in Cyprus, but there is a strong women's movement for peace and reunification of the island, run by women from both sides of the Green Line and fronted by an NGO called **Hands Across the Divide** (www.handsacrossthedivide.org).

As in many Middle Eastern countries, people in Cyprus believe in the 'evil eye'. Avoid praising things too much, as this attracts envy and the 'evil eye'.

An NGO project entitled 'Take Our Daughters to Work' (www.amade-mondiale.org) tackled gender inequality in Cyprus in 2000 and 2003, by taking 500 girls, aged from nine to 15 to work for a day in traditionally male jobs.

ARTS Literature

Cyprus has produced a sprinkling of literary illuminati, and the literature scene is actively promoted and encouraged by the government of the Republic, with competitions and accompanying awards organised annually. However, little Cypriot literature is available in translation and, where it is available, its circulation is limited and usually restricted to Cyprus. Home-grown talent of the 20th century includes Loukis Akritas (1932–65), who made his mark mainly in Greece as a journalist and writer, and later championed the cause of Cypriot independence through letters, rather than violence. His works include novels, plays, short stories and essays.

Theodosios Pierides (1908–67), who wrote actively from 1928 onwards, is one of Cyprus' national and most respected poets. His *Cypriot Symphony* is considered to be the 'finest most powerful epic written by a Greek poet about Cyprus', according to contemporary and fellow poet Tefkros Anthias (1903–68). Anthias himself was excommunicated by the Orthodox Church and internally exiled by the British administration in 1931 for his poetry collection *The Second Coming*. He was arrested during the liberation struggle of 1955–59 and imprisoned. While in prison he wrote a collection of poems called *The Diary of the CDP*, which was published in 1956.

The North supports a small but healthy literary scene with more than 30 'name' personages. Nese Yasin (1959–) is a writer, journalist and poet, and a founding member of a movement known as the '74 Generation Poetry Movement. This was a postdivision literary wave of writers that sought inspiration from the climate generated after Cyprus was divided. Her poems have been translated and published in magazines, newspapers, anthologies and books in Cyprus, Turkey, Greece, Yugoslavia, Hungary, the Netherlands, Germany and the UK.

Hakki Yuçel (1952–) is a poet, literary researcher and eye specialist. His poems and essays have been published in magazines and newspapers in Cyprus, Turkey, the UK and Hungary. He is one of the leading members of the '74 Generation Poetry Movement and has been active in the promotion of Cypriot culture and literature in Turkey.

Music

Greek Cypriots have tended to follow the musical preferences of mainland Greece. Conversely, Cyprus has also produced some of its own home-grown musicians who have made successful careers in Greece as well as in their homeland.

The bouzouki, which you will hear all over Cyprus, is a mandolin-like instrument similar to the Turkish *saz* and *baglama*. It's one of the main instruments of *rembetika* music – the Greek equivalent of American blues. The name *rembetika* may come from the Turkish word *rembet*, which means outlaw. Opinions differ as to the origins of *rembetika*, but it is probably a hybrid of several different types of music. One source was the music that emerged in the 1870s in the 'low-life' cafés, called *tekedes* (hashish dens), in urban areas and especially around ports such as Pireus in Greece. Another source was the Arabo-Persian music played in sophisticated Middle Eastern *amanedes* (music cafés) in the 19th century. *Rembetika* was originally popularised in Greece by the refugees from Asia Minor and was subsequently brought to Cyprus.

Today's music scene in Cyprus is a mix of old and new, traditional and modern. Young Greek Cypriots are as happy with *rembetika* or *demotic* (folk) songs as they are with contemporary Greek rock music. One artist

to look out for is Pelagia Kyriakou and in particular her contribution to two albums known as *Paralimnitika 1 & 2*, a superb collection of Cypriot *demotic* songs from the beginning of the 19th century, sung in Cypriot dialect. Mihalis Violaris is an exponent of folk and modern songs who was especially popular during the 1970s and '80s. Two songs he made famous (which you'll inevitably hear somewhere in Cyprus) are 'Ta Rialia' (Money) and 'Tyllirkotissa' (Girl from Tylliria), again sung in Cypriot dialect.

Of the more modern singers, Anna Vissi sings contemporary Greek music and has appeared on albums released by top Greek singer Georgos Dalaras, as well as producing her own albums. Alkinoös Ioannides is a young Lefkosian who sings emotional ballads of his own composition that occasionally border on rap and rock, and has released three excellent albums. His first, *O Dromos o Hronos kai o Ponos* (The Road, the Time and the Pain), is worth picking up for an introduction to the music of this talented Cypriot.

Georgos Dalaras, while not a Cypriot, has devoted much time and energy to the Cypriot cause. His album *Es Gin Enaliam Kypron* (To Sea-Girt Cyprus) is a poignant tribute to the trials and tribulations of modern-day Cyprus, set to the music of Cypriot composer Mihalis Hristodoulidis. Finally, Cypriot singer and lyricist Evagoras Karageorgis has produced some excellent music. His work is best represented on a fine album that is little known outside Cyprus called *Topi se Hroma Loulaki* (Places Painted in Violet), which is definitely worth seeking out. It's a nostalgic and painful look at the lost villages of Northern Cyprus sung in a mixture of Cypriot dialect and standard Greek accompanied by traditional and contemporary instruments.

In the North, musical trends tend to mirror those of mainland Turkey. However, Greek music is still admired and quietly listened to on radio broadcasts from the South (radio thankfully knows no boundaries), and both cultures share a remarkable overlap in sounds and instrumentation. Among Turkish Cypriot musical personalities, Yiltan Taşçi has made something of a name for himself locally, and helped create and play in such bands as Golgeler, Ozgurler, Kalender5 and Letul. Taşçi's first recording, *Bana Seviyorum De*, came out in March 1995 and contains seven songs that he composed and performed.

Germany-based French horn player Turgay Hilmi is originally from Northern Cyprus but now plies his trade playing classical music with renowned orchestras, such as the Nuremberg Chamber Orchestra, and contemporary material with his brass quintet. He visits Cyprus whenever he can and in 1998 participated in the first performance of the opera *Othello* in Cyprus at the Bellapais Music Festival (p195).

Lovers of jazz will have to keep their ears to the grapevine for possible jazz venues or festivals. The Paradise Jazz Festival near Polis (p136) is held in September, but you will be hard-pressed to find anything similar in the North.

Painting & Sculpture

In the Republic of Cyprus, painting enjoys a healthy patronage. One of the more famous exponents of the art neither runs a gallery nor participates in art festivals. He is Father Kallinikos Stavrovounis, the aged priest of Stavrovouni Monastery (p151), situated between the cities of Lefkosia and Lemesos. Father Kallinikos is regarded as the most superb contemporary icon painter of the Orthodox Church. Icons are made to order and the money received is ploughed back into the Orthodox Church for the upkeep of the Stavrovouni and other monasteries.

For a taste of Cypriot folk music, go to www.zyperm.com, where you can listen online.

Tim Boatwain's *A Traveller's History of Cyprus* is an excellent source of concise and structured history and a useful read for anyone heading to the island.

Athos Agapitos is a contemporary Greek Cypriot painter who was born in Lefkosia in 1957. His art portfolio runs the gamut from realism and naive painting to expressionism in more recent years. His work was exhibited at the Florence Biennale of International Contemporary Art in 1999.

Among the foremost sculptors is Fylaktis Ieridis, whose talent finds its most natural expression in bronze. He has been commissioned to complete several busts and reliefs for monuments to local heroes.

Folk Art

Cyprus has particularly well-developed folk-art traditions, with lace and basketry prominent among items produced. Lefkara lace, from the village of the same name in the southern Troödos foothills (p152), is one of Cyprus' most famous folk-art export commodities. Large, woven bread baskets are on sale all over Cyprus and are characterised by their intricate and multicoloured patterns.

The Cyprus Handicraft Service (CHS) in the South has been instrumental in promoting and preserving these arts that, without this support, may well have taken the road to oblivion like folk arts in other industrialising nations. The service runs shops in the major towns and sells the wares of the artists that it supports, such as *sendoukia* (ornate bridal chests). The town of Lapta (Lapithos) in the North used to be the island's centre for *sendoukia*-making but the industry has taken a downturn following the events of 1974.

Pottery

Well-made and often highly decorative pottery is produced in Cyprus and is worth seeking out. You can hardly miss the enormous *pitharia* (earthenware storage jars), which are often used as decorative plant pots outside rural houses. Originally used for storing water, oil or wine, they have fallen victim to more convenient methods of storage and packaging. Their sheer size and volume, though, render them all but impossible to take home. The village of Kornos, between Lemesos and Larnaka, is still an active pottery-making community, as is the Pafos region; in Pafos town, you will find shops selling all kinds of multicoloured, functional and decorative pottery pieces.

Cinema

In Cyprus, cinema is a relatively recent phenomenon – hardly surprising given the turbulent and disruptive nature of recent Cypriot history. At the end of the 1940s, the British colonial government started to train Cypriot film makers in the Colonial Film Unit. With the impetus created by the arrival of TV in 1957, the first home-grown cinema productions began. These were mainly documentaries, and the first independent production was entitled *Roots*. The Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation sponsored most productions over the next two decades, with a 1963 production by Ninos Fenwick Mikellidis called *Cyprus, Ordained to Me* winning a prize at the Karlovy Vary Festival in then Czechoslovakia. George Lanitis' film *Communication* won first prize for a short foreign film at the Thessaloniki Festival in 1970.

Further prizes were awarded in 1985 to Cypriot film makers Hristos Siopahas, at the Moscow Film Festival for his film *The Descent of the Nine*, and Andreas Pantazis, at the Thessaloniki Film Festival for his depiction of the Turkish invasion of Cyprus entitled *The Rape of Aphrodite*. The two film makers were honoured 10 years later at the Thessaloniki Film Festival for their works *The Wing of the Fly* (by Siopahas) and *The Slaughter of the Cock* (by Pantazis), both dealing with the invasion of Cyprus.

The upsurge in film production in the South since 1974 is due primarily to newly found support from the state, which is keen to assist young film directors. Since 1983, an enlightenment committee has been particularly active in the area of cinematography with a view to projecting the Cypriot problem to a wider international audience.

The North does not support a domestic film-making scene; its cinematographic culture is supplied entirely from mainland Turkey.

Several films were produced in 2003 and 2004, in the run-up to the UN referendum, dealing with the division of Cyprus. Some of them raised the hackles of the Cypriot governments on both sides of the Green Line, as well as those of the governments on the Greek and Turkish mainlands.

Camur (Mud), in 2003, was hailed as the first 'united Cypriot' film. Directed by Derviş Zaim, a Turkish Cypriot and produced by Panicos Chrysanthou, a Greek Cypriot, this dark comedy takes place near the Green Line, where black mud in a saltwater lake is thought to have unique healing properties. The film deals with four Turkish friends who are coming to terms with their memories of the partition.

The second film Zaim and Chrysanthou made together is *Parallel Trips* (2004), a documentary that explores the legacy of massacres committed by the Greeks and the Turks on both sides of the island.

Elias Demetriou's *Living Together Separately* (2003) is a humorous documentary recording life in Pyla, the small village in the military zone where Turks and Greeks have continued to live together despite the partition.

Which Cyprus? (2004) by Rüstem Batum is a powerful film of stories about people travelling to 'the other side' and presents the views of politicians, peace activists, journalists and clergymen.

Equally popular on both sides of the border, cinemas abound in Cyprus. Movies are usually shown in the original language with subtitles in Greek or Turkish. Tickets cost about 2YTL in the North and CY£3 in the South.

Theatre

Theatre in the South is a flourishing industry, with the Theatre Workshop of the University of Cyprus (thepak) very active in the performance of works written by Greeks and Cypriots.

The biannual Kypria Festival hosts performances from a variety of domestic theatre groups. The Cyprus Theatre Organisation performed Aristophanes' *Peace* and the Eleftheria Theatre of Cyprus presented Euripides' *Phoenician Women* at the 2004 Kypria Festival.

Theatre in the North can be said to have started with the arrival of the Ottomans in 1570 and with the importation from the Turkish mainland of the Karagöz puppet shadow theatre. This theatre tradition is shared by the Greeks, who call it Karagiozis. Theatre in the contemporary sense started on the island with British influence after 1878, but only really took off after independence in 1960, when amateur theatre groups were established in most Turkish Cypriot communities.

Independence also saw the flourishing of a new generation of playwrights, such as Hilmi Özen, Üner Ulutug and Ayla Haşmat. In 1964, the Department of Education provided the Atatürk İlkokulu salon for the use of the Turkish Cypriot Theatre, now called the Turkish Cypriot State Theatre, which is still active and successful.

Going to the theatre is certainly popular among Cypriots, however unless you speak Greek or Turkish, the entertainment value is likely to be limited. Check local newspapers or look out for street posters advertising performances that may appeal.

'Films dealing with the division of Cyprus raised the hackles of the Cypriot governments on both sides of the Green Line'

Fashion designer Hussein Chalayan, controversial British artist Tracey Emin, and musicians George Michael (Giorgos Panayiotou) and Cat Stevens (Stephanos Georgiou) all have Cypriot origins.

Dance

The origin of Cypriot folk dancing dates back centuries. It may even be said to be related to shamanist ceremonies and early religious and incantational worship. There are references to Cypriot dances in Homer's works, and one of these, the *syrtos*, is depicted on ancient Greek vases. Many Greek folk dances, including the *syrtos*, are performed in a circular formation; in ancient times, dancers formed a circle in order to seal themselves off from evil influences.

Different regional characteristics may be noticed. In the Republic, musical and dance traditions follow those of mainland Greece to some degree. There is of course a wide range of indigenous Cypriot dances that are only seen these days at folk festivals or specially staged dance performances. The most famous of these is the *kartzilamas*, in effect a suite of up to five different dances that usually ends with the more familiar *syrtos* or *zeimbekikos*. Cypriot dances are commonly 'confronted pair' dances of two couples, or vigorous solo men's dances in which the dancer holds an object such as a sickle, a knife, a sieve or a tumbler. Shows at popular tourist restaurants frequently feature a dance called *datsia* where the dancer balances a stack of glasses full of wine on a sieve. Another is a contrived dance in which diners are invited to try to light the tail – usually a rolled-up newspaper – of the solo male dancer who will attempt to dance and bob his way out of being set alight.

Dances in the North share very similar patterns of development and execution to those in the South, the only real difference being the names. Thus the *kartzilamas* is the North's *karşılama* and the *tsifteteli* is the *ciftetelli*. In addition there is the *testi*, the *kozan*, and the *kaşikli oyunları*, a dance performed with wooden spoons. However, it is unlikely you will come across much Turkish dancing, unless you happen upon sporadic summer folk festivals at either Kyrenia (Girne) or Famagusta (Mağusa), or the harvest festivals that occasionally take place in country towns and villages. Restaurants with floor shows are most likely your best opportunity to sample some of the northern variants of Cypriot dancing.

'In ancient times, dancers formed a circle in order to seal themselves off from evil influences'

Environment

THE LAND

The saucerpan shape of Cyprus reflects its geology. In the North, a 100km-long mountain chain, known as the Kyrenia (Girne) Range, runs more or less parallel to the northern coastline. It is the southernmost range of the great Alpine-Himalayan chain in the eastern Mediterranean and is made up of thrust masses of Mesozoic limestone.

South of the Kyrenia Range lies a vast plain known as the Mesaoria (Mesarya in Turkish). It stretches from Morfou (Güzelyurt) in the west to Famagusta (Mağusa) in the east. The divided capital Lefkosa/North Nicosia lies more or less in the middle of the plain. The Mesaoria is the island's principal grain-growing area. Around half of its 188,385 hectares are irrigated; the remainder is given over to dryland farming.

The south of the island is dominated by the Troödos Massif, a vast, bulky mountain range towered over by Mt Olympus (1952m). To the east is a small, lower plateau where most of the South's tourist industry is now based.

The Troödos Massif is made up of igneous rock and was originally formed from molten rock beneath the deep ocean that once separated the continents of Eurasia and Afro-Arabia. Since antiquity the mountain range has been known to be particularly rich in minerals, with abundant resources of copper and asbestos. Other natural resources include chromite, gypsum and iron pyrite. Marble has also been mined here for several thousand years.

WILDLIFE

Animals

Birds travelling between Africa and Europe use Cyprus as a stepping stone on their migratory path. Bird-watchers have an excellent window onto both more exotic migratory species and local birds such as griffon vultures, falcons and kestrels.

The island's mammals include fruit bats, foxes, hares and hedgehogs. There are a few snake species and, although you are unlikely to cross their paths, it is worth noting that the Montpellier snake and blunt-nosed viper are poisonous and can inflict nasty bites. Lizards are the most obvious of Cyprus' fauna species and they are everywhere. Don't be afraid of the pretty geckos in your hotel room; they come out at night to feed on insects.

For the best choice of rural accommodation in sustainable, traditional houses, visit www.agrotourism.com.cy.

A handy field companion is *Butterflies of Cyprus* by John Eddie and Wayne Jarvis. This comprehensive guide is available quite cheaply in paperback.

RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL

Some might argue that hoteliers and tourist operators have not acted responsibly in the race to develop (in the South at least). However, there is no reason for travellers to behave in the same way.

Travelling light, lean and green is the way to go. Water is scarce in this country so use it sparingly, even in a big hotel. Ordinary Cypriots at home may be on water rations if a drought is biting. Take your rubbish with you when you have finished hiking the Troödos Massif or the Akamas and Karpas (Kırpaşa) Peninsulas. Locals take pride in their countryside so follow their example. Don't pick the wildflowers in spring; others may want to enjoy them too. Spread your spending money around, and support small businesses and local artists. Visit village tavernas, not just hotel restaurants. Get to know Cyprus – not just the facilities at your hotel.

ENDANGERED SPECIES

The moufflon is Cyprus' best-known endangered species. Widespread shooting by farmers and hobby hunters over the years has reduced the numbers of this indigenous wild sheep drastically and now they are rarely, if ever, spotted wild in the Pafos Forest. A small herd is kept under protection at the Stavros tis Psokas forest station in the Pafos Forest. It is estimated that from near-extinction in the early part of the 20th century, the current moufflon population is around 10,000 (see p137 for more information).

Green and loggerhead turtles breed and live on the beaches. These endangered animals enjoy some protection in Cyprus; conservation programmes in the North and the South are in place to ensure their continuing survival (see the boxed text, p216).

Another endangered species is the monk seal, which can be spotted off parts of the coast.

Plants

The diversity of Cyprus' flora is not immediately obvious to first-time visitors. In summer the island is arid, but spring sees an explosion of colour from its endemic flora, particularly its wildflowers. The island is home to some 1800 species and subspecies of plants, of which about 7% are indigenous to Cyprus. Plants can be found in the five major habitats that characterise Cyprus' flora profile: pine forests, *garigue* and maquis (two types of thick scrubby underbrush found in the Mediterranean), rocky areas, coastal areas and wetlands. The main places for endemic or indigenous plant species are the Troödos Massif and its western extension (the Pafos Forest), the Karpas (Kırpaşa) Peninsula and the northern coastal strip, and the southern strip of the Cape Greco Peninsula in the southeast.

About 45 species of orchids are found in Cyprus and one of these, Kotschy's bee orchid, is unique to the island. Cyprus boasts some 130 endemic plants of which 45 are found only on the high slopes of the Troödos Massif. A further 19 endemic species are found only in Northern Cyprus, with Casey's larkspur perhaps the rarest plant on the whole island. For more information see opposite.

The country's flora profile is a result of the catastrophic ice ages when much of the flora of northern and central Europe was covered in ice sheets and glaciers, while the Mediterranean basin escaped unscathed, providing a haven for the further evolution of plant life. As an island, Cyprus became rich in endemic flora and home to a large number of varied species that are typical of the Mediterranean area as a whole.

The best time to see Cyprus' wildflowers is in early spring (February and March) when most of the species enjoy a short period of blossoming and take advantage of the usually moist climate at this time of the year. There is a second period in late autumn (October and November) when flowers can also be enjoyed.

During the arid summer months only a few hardy flowers, found chiefly in the mountain regions, and colourful thistles on the Mesaoria plains provide any relief from what can seem like a botanical desert to the untrained eye.

NATIONAL PARKS & RESERVES

The previously neglected topic of the island's national parks is now receiving some serious attention. In the South, the areas under study for inclusion as national parks include the Akamas Peninsula, the Akrotiri

Cypriot hunters love shooting, and attempts by environmentalists to get a restriction on killing migratory birds have all been unsuccessful.

For fuller coverage of wildlife, the colourful photo guide *Collins Complete Mediterranean Wildlife* by Paul Sterry probably has the most comprehensive information on the region.

BLUFF YOUR WAY TO FLOWER SPOTTING

In order to get the best out of flower spotting, enthusiasts will need to spend plenty of time trekking and searching carefully, since many species are limited to small geographical areas, sometimes to only a few hundred square metres. So arm yourselves with patience and good eyesight.

Orchids are the most popular wildflowers for enthusiasts. The one endemic orchid, Kotschy's bee orchid, is an exquisite species, looking much like a bee both in its shape and patterning. It is fairly rare yet can be found in a variety of habitats all over the island. The Troödos helleborine, while not endemic, grows mainly on the slopes of Mt Olympus. Other orchid varieties include the slender, pink Troödos Anatolian orchid, the cone-shaped pyramidal orchid, the giant orchid and the colourful woodcock orchid.

The delicate white and yellow Cyprus crocus, from the iris family, is an endangered species protected by law and is generally found at high altitudes in the Troödos Massif. The delicate, dark-red Cyprus tulip is another rare species protected by law and is today restricted to the Akamas Peninsula, the Koruçam (Kormakitis) Peninsula and parts of the Besparmak (Pentadaktylos) Range. A member of the borage family is the endemic Troödos golden drop, a small, yellow, bell-shaped flower appearing in leafy clusters. This endangered species is confined to the highest peaks of the Troödos Massif.

In the North, the unlikely sounding St Hilarion cabbage is found mainly on rocky outcrops near St Hilarion Castle. This large endemic cabbage flower grows to 1m in height and has spikes of creamy white flowers. Also found near St Hilarion is Casey's larkspur, a late-flowering species that carries a dozen or more deep-violet, long-spurred flowers atop a slender stem. Its habitat is limited to the northern extremity of one small rocky peak 1.5km southwest of St Hilarion.

While it is only possible to scratch the surface here, there are some good publications available for the seriously botanically minded. When looking for wildflowers, travel light and on foot. Only take photos of the flowers you spot; leave the flowers themselves, as their existence may be tenuous at best. Other people will no doubt want to enjoy their beauty as well.

Salt Lake and Fassouri Marsh, and the Platys Valley. Two forest nature reserves have already been established at Tripilos (including Cedar Valley) and at Troödos. There is one marine reserve, the Lara Toxeftra Reserve on the west coast, which was established to protect marine turtles and their nesting beaches. There are also six national forest parks that have been set up in recent years.

In the North, plans are afoot to declare the far eastern section of the Karpas Peninsula as a nature reserve. Marine turtles nest on beaches on the northern and southern sides of the peninsula.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Like most modern nations today, Cyprus is feeling the pinch in matters relating to urban encroachment, water and air pollution, erosion and deforestation. Significant urban encroachment took place in the South after 1974, when vast hotel complexes were built in pristine or sparsely populated coastal areas, particularly near Lemesos and Agia Napa. While many would argue that the saturation point has been reached, new hotel complexes are still being built to soak up more of the tourist dollar. These complexes use up considerable amounts of energy and, in particular, water, which is in permanent short supply.

In the North, where authorities have not yet experienced the advantages and disadvantages of mass tourism, there's been the chance to monitor encroachment more carefully. In some large areas, notably the Karpas Peninsula, large-scale development is now banned.

To find out whether the beach outside your hotel is clean and safe, go to www.blueflag.org.

THE ODD CAROB

The carob (*Ceratonia siliqua*) is a leguminous evergreen tree native to the coastal regions of the Mediterranean basin. It grows in abundance in Cyprus and was once one of the island's most valuable crops. Its dark green leaves are quite distinctive and the trees can often be found interspersed with the lighter green olive trees along Cyprus' north coast.

The long beanlike pods are not used directly for human consumption, though you can eat the dark-brown dried pods raw – they taste rather like chocolate. They are instead used to produce seed gums and kibble (fruit pulp without seeds). Many products are also made from kibble for human consumption including sweets, biscuits and drinks. The kernels are made into a carob-bean gum and germ meal. The gum from the seeds is used in the food-processing industries in soups, sauces and a large range of manufactured dairy products.

Carobs are polygamous: they can have either a male flower, a female flower or flowers can be hermaphrodite (both male and female). Stop and examine these odd trees and their curious fruit as you drive around the island. Eat a pod or two if you're bold enough.

Overall, authorities on both sides of the border are now belatedly taking a more cautious approach to conservation issues, and there are small but active conservationist groups making waves in the country. As a visitor, be aware that the tourist presence does have an impact on the country and, wherever possible, make sure that your presence is as unobtrusive as possible (see p43).

Food & Drink

One of the best things about Cyprus is its cuisine. The Cypriots love their food; they enjoy it and take it very seriously. Celebrations are never without an army of little plates crowding the long tables. There are endless meze, fresh fish, flavoursome vegetables and fruit dripping with juice. It would be limiting to say that Cypriot food is a combination of Greek and Turkish cuisine only (although these are big mama and papa). Middle Eastern influences are powerful here, the flavours of Syria and Lebanon hard to miss, and the Armenian community, long-present in Cyprus, has added its own touches. And don't forget the Brits. Although they're not renowned for their indigenous cuisine, the British have influenced many restaurant menus in Cyprus, with an English breakfast snuggling up comfortably next to a Cypriot one.

STAPLES & SPECIALITIES

Cypriots generally eat three meals a day, but dinner time is real food time. Breakfast is a combination of olives, grilled or fresh haloumi (in Greek; helimi in Turkish) cheese, bread and tomatoes, and a coffee of course. It's a wonderful combination to start your day.

Lunch is usually eaten at home, and a Cypriot's larder is filled with pulses and grains, which are often eaten as part of this meal. *Pilaf* (cracked wheat, steamed together with fried onions and chicken stock, and served with plain yoghurt) is common at lunchtime, accompanied by meat and vegetables. For a meat-free lunch, *louvia me lahana* (greens cooked with black-eyed beans and served with olive oil and fresh lemon juice) is fantastic. In spring, when the young vines show their sturdy green leaves, the Cypriots pick them and roll them around meat and rice, and cook them in tomato sauce, or just plain, for a dish called *koupepia*. If you like stuffed vegetables, then you'll be in heaven here, with *yemista* (stuffed courgettes) or *dolmades* (stuffed vine leaves). Tomatoes, onions, courgettes, peppers, aubergines and marrows: everything is subject to stuffing. *Melintzanes yiahi* is a mouthwatering bake of aubergines, garlic and fresh tomatoes. The famous *spanakopitta* is a combination of spinach, feta cheese and eggs, wrapped or layered in paper-thin filo pastry.

A more complicated but equally scrumptious dish that you might be able to try in a Cypriot home is *tava*, a lamb and beef casserole, cooked with tomatoes, onions, potatoes and cumin, and named after the earthenware pots in which it is cooked. Another highlight is *stifado*, a real treat

For a thorough rundown of Cypriot cuisine go to www.cyprus.com, where you can learn how to make Turkish or Greek coffee, step by step.

THE UBIQUITOUS HALOUMI

A Cypriot house without a round moon of haloumi (in Greek; helimi in Turkish) in its fridge is like a church without a crucifix. Officially recognised by the EU as a traditional Cypriot product, and therefore only made in Cyprus, haloumi will feature in most of your meals as an integral part or as a side dish. It's made from goat's or sheep's milk, or a combination of the two, which has been soaked in brine and mint. It's stored in a straw container and matured until it reaches its rubbery texture and mild flavour. You can eat haloumi raw, with olives and tomatoes, or set its taste off against a slice of cool watermelon in the summer. It's particularly delicious when grilled, with some tomato-soaked bread, or in a hot pitta bread, peeking out from underneath a mountain of salad. The Cypriots use haloumi in soups and pasta dishes, or scrambled with eggs for a big breakfast. So, get your chef's hat on and see what you can do with this wonder-cheese.

If you've always wanted to make your own haloumi (helimi) cheese, check out the recipes on www.gourmetsleuth.com/recipe_halloumi_cheese.

for the tastebuds: this rich stew, made with beef or rabbit, is cooked with lots of onions and simmered in vinegar and wine. If you're lucky enough to know Cypriots who have a traditional sealed oven in their garden, you might get to try *ofto kleftiko*. For this dish, the meat, usually lamb, comes out juicy and tender, swimming in its own delicious fat. A more basic version of this is *ofto*, a simple meat and vegetable roast.

If you get a chance, try homemade soup. *Trahana* is a mixture of cracked wheat and yoghurt, and *avgolemono* is chicken-stock soup, thickened with egg plus a bit of lemon for tanginess.

In the North, you'll most likely eat in a *meyhane* (tavern), the no-frills Turkish eatery. The real Turkish culinary expertise lies in kebabs, most of which are made from lamb, although there are also chicken and fish variations. Kebabs are usually wrapped in a flat bread with salad, and accompanied by a cool *ayran*, a salty refreshing yoghurt drink. There are doner kebabs, ubiquitous in Western kebab shops. *Urfa* kebab comes with lots of onions and black pepper, while *Adana*, one of the most delicious of kebabs is slightly hot, with spicy red

TRAVEL YOUR TASTEBUDS: EATING MEZE IN CYPRUS

Prepare yourself for an assault by food: a pleasant assault, an exercise in overeating, a sampling and gorging on around thirty different dishes. The small plates may look unthreatening, but they keep on coming, promising a night of indigestion laced with wonderful memories of the delicious contents of meze.

The word meze is short for *mezedes* or 'little delicacies', and is shared by the Greeks and Turks equally. Meze is almost never served for one: two is the minimum, and three's never a crowd but the beginning of a beautiful feast. Try to dine in a larger group, since sharing meze is as integral to the experience of eating it as the variety of the dishes themselves. All the shoving and pushing, passing this and passing that, shouting across the table for more tahini or bread is a true bonding experience that Cypriots share many nights a week.

Think of eating meze as a boxing match, although not painful at all, but extremely enjoyable. In fact, let's take the boxing analogy in relation to the match's rounds. Because that's how the food arrives.

Round one: the waiter brings shiny olives, a salad and fresh bread, along with tahini, taramasalata, *talatouri* (tzatziki) and hummus for dipping. Pace yourself, go easy on the bread, suck on an olive or two, and crunch on a salad leaf.

Round two: the vegetables. Some are garnished with lemon, some are raw, a few are pickled, or brought with haloumi (in Greek; helimi in Turkish) cheese. The sausages, and Cyprus' own *lountza* (smoked loin of pork), follow behind. Again, eat the veggies, sample a coin of sausage and a strip of cheese, but remember, a bite of each will suffice because the biggies are still to come.

Round three: roll up your sleeves, the meat is here (this doesn't apply for vegetarians, who may be able to order vegetarian meze). A meat meze is a parade of lamb, chicken, beef, pork, souvlaki (char-grilled lamb), *kleftiko* (oven-baked lamb), and *sheftalia* (a kind of spiced, grilled sausage), meatballs, smoked meat, and so on. If you're having fish meze, then expect everything from sea bass to red mullet, prawns and octopus, and of course, *calamare* (squid).

By round four you should already be near knock-out time, and the waiter approaching with fresh fruit and pastries will positively start looking like an enemy of your gut. Assess the situation carefully, and if possible, try some prickly pears – they are a real delicacy.

Be sure not to have any lunch before you go for a meze dinner. Pace yourself and eat slowly or *sigá-sigá*, as the Cypriots would say.

Taste the dishes, smell them, feel their texture, for there is a lot of food here and you don't want things to end before they've even started, with a full belly and no space for the mains. As with every good meal, a nice wine is recommended, so choose a good bottle and *kali orexi – bon appétit!*

pepper. There is also *şiş köfte*, which is meat barbecued on a flat skewer, and *Adana köfte*.

The Turks have also perfected the art of *patlıcan* (aubergine) dishes, and, like the Greek Cypriots, they love dolmades. The Turkish variant of dolma is meatless and is stuffed with rice, currants and pine nuts.

Cypriot desserts carry in them the rich flavours of Turkey and the Middle East. *Kandaifi* (in Greek; *kadaif* in Turkish) are strands of sugary pastry wound into a roll. *Mahalepi* (in Greek; *muhallebi* in Turkish) is an aromatic Middle Eastern rice pudding sprinkled with rose-water and pistachios. Then there is *galatopourekó* (a sweet, sticky pastry) and *rizogalo* (a simple rice pudding). Despite these sweet delights, fruit is the most common Cypriot dessert on both parts of the island.

But there's one treat that's reserved for dinner alone: meze (see the boxed text, opposite). This Cypriot speciality is unforgettable, as much for its flavours as for the sheer volume of food that crowds your table. Dishes in the North and the South are very similar, with a few local variants to make things interesting. A Turkish addition to the meze menu is *börek* (pastry parcels; either rolled up like cigarettes and known as *sigara böreği*, or cut into triangles like Indian samosas).

DRINKS

Nonalcoholic Drinks

Greek or Turkish coffee should be 'hot as hell, dark as night, bitter as poison or sweet as love' according to aficionados. When you order your coffee, you will be asked how you like it: *glykos* (in Greek), *çok şekerli* (in Turkish) is with sugar (sweet as love); *metrios* (in Greek), *orta* (in Turkish) is medium-sweet; *sketos* (in Greek), *şekersiz* (in Turkish) is unsweetened (bitter as poison).

The younger generations prefer frappé (iced instant coffee), which is seriously popular and really quite refreshing as a pick-me-up on a hot day.

Alcoholic Drinks

Drinking alcohol in the dedicated pub sense – as in the UK or Australia, for example – is generally unknown in Cyprus. Alcohol is normally taken with food or at least meze. Local beer comes in two brands: Cypriot-made KEO, and Danish-inspired but Cypriot-brewed Carlsberg. Other beers, while available, are normally more expensive. In the North you will commonly find Efes or Gold Fassl beer. While they are nominally Muslims, many Turkish Cypriots either drink alcohol or are quite happy to let others enjoy it freely.

Rakı (Turkish) or *zivania* (Greek) is the local firewater made from distilling the leftovers of the grape crushing. It is strong, so beware. It goes well as an apéritif, with meze or any other food. Wine is popular on both sides of Cyprus.

Commandaria from Kolossi, near Lemesos, is Cyprus' most famous export fortified wine; its popularity dates back to the time of the crusades.

CELEBRATIONS

Religious festivals play an important part in Cypriot life and food is prepared to fit and symbolise various parts of the festivities. For Greek Cypriots, celebrations or large family meals are usually accompanied by a *souvla*: large chunks of lamb, flavoured with fresh herbs, threaded onto a spit and grilled over charcoal. Easter is the most important of Greek

Meze Cooking by Sarah Maxwell, praised by gourmets all over the Mediterranean, contains recipes for more than 100 different meze dishes.

Orthodox festivities, so the days preceding and during Easter are filled with food-related activities. The 40 days of Lent are the best time for eating vegetarian food, and Easter Sunday brings dishes such as cheese pies and salads. But the lamb, after so many meatless days, steals the show. Orthodox followers also fast for 40 days before Christmas; then on Christmas Day they slaughter and roast a piglet.

The Muslims in the Turkish Cypriot North also fast, then eat a lot during their religious festivities. During the month of Ramadan (Ramazan in Turkish), observing Muslims eat nothing and drink nothing from sunrise to sunset, but as soon as the cannon announces the İftar (the breaking of the fast), tons of food are brought to the table, and eating commences and goes on into the night. It's a sociable occasion and mealtimes are shared with friends, family and neighbours.

The last three days of Ramadan are called Bayramı, of which there are two 'types': Şeker Bayramı (Sweets Holiday) and Kurban Bayramı (Sacrifice Holiday). The latter, marking İbrahim's near-sacrifice of his son İsmael, is the charitable holiday, with the head of the household (who can afford to) sacrificing a cow or sheep. The meat is then given to the poor, as well as family and neighbours.

Bayramı is a time for home visits. Plenty of sweets are served, the best and most popular of which is baklava.

WHERE TO EAT & DRINK

The taverna is where Cypriots go to eat if they don't eat at home, and there is one in every Cypriot town and village. A taverna can be a no-frills village eatery, or a more upmarket restaurant with a traditional leaning. The *psistaria* specialises in souvlaki (char-grilled lamb), and the *psarotaverna* mainly has fish. The Greek word for restaurant is *estiatorio* although every restaurant in Cyprus has an English 'restaurant' sign on it and a menu in English. *Meyhanes* are Turkish taverns where you can eat meze, meat, fish and anything else, and drink lots of *raki*. In the North, *lokanta* is an informal restaurant and a *restoran* is a more upmarket version, and again English-language signs are everywhere. *Hazır yemek* ('ready food') restaurants specialise in dishes that have been prepared in advance and kept warm in steam trays; these dishes are best eaten earlier in the day when they're fresh. You'll see signs for *kebabçı* (kebab shops) and *ocakbaşı* (fireside kebab shops) where you can watch your kebab being prepared.

The *kafeneio* is central to any self-respecting Greek Cypriot village's existence. Traditionally, *kafeneia* serve coffee and little snacks of haloumi, tomatoes and olives, and they are only frequented by (older) men.

In the North, *pastanes* (patisseries) sell sugary treats, such as biscuits (*kuru pasta*; dry pastry) and cakes and sweet, sweet baklavas (*yaş pasta*; moist pastry). Beware of the difference between *pasta* (pastry) and *makarna* (noodles).

Quick Eats

Traditional fast food in Cyprus is the kebab, or souvlaki. Meat is barbecued, stuffed into a pitta or rolled in a flat bread and accompanied with a big salad, which is garnished with lemon juice. Also, like in most places in the world, Western fast-food chains are mushrooming on the island.

VEGETARIANS & VEGANS

Food for vegetarians is rarely marketed as such. Even restaurants catering primarily for tourists may not make traditional (vegetarian) dishes.

Geroskipou village (just east of Pafos) broke the world record for the largest slab of Turkish delight in 2004, beating the Australian 1997 world record of 2.349 tons with a slab weighing in at 2.543 tons.

CYPRUS' TOP FIVE

- Seven St Georges' Tavern, Pafos (p126) – everything you eat and drink in this place is grown, dried or pickled organically by the owner
- Tziellari, Lefkosia (South Nicosia; p70) – an atmospheric spot with traditional dancing, meze and Cypriot brandy
- 127, Lemesos (p88) – visit this place for a salad you won't forget
- Oasis at Ayfilon Restaurant, Dipkarpaz (Rizokarpaso; p218) – follow the world's only advert-by-poetry to the best fish on the Karpas (Kırpaşa) Peninsula
- İdris ustanın yeri, Kyrenia (Girne; p190) – try this workers' eatery for simple and delicious food

Instead, you can choose dishes made from vegetables or pulses, which will more often than not appear on restaurant menus anyway. Vegetarian meze is available in some restaurants, and vegetarian moussaka is a popular dish on the menu.

EATING WITH KIDS

Children will have a great time eating in Cyprus, as the majority of establishments, and Cypriots in general, are child-friendly. In fact, most waiters and waitresses will probably run around and entertain your children, and you'll just have to hope that nothing gets broken. Menus are generally the same for adults and children, although some restaurants have a children's menu aimed at tourists, with chips and burgers (and fishfingers) as their options.

For more information on travelling with children, see p224.

HABITS & CUSTOMS

The Cypriots eat their lunch around two or three in the afternoon. Most shops and restaurants close after 2pm, when the proprietors go home and have their lunch and a snooze. Dinner is eaten rather late and over a few hours, and restaurants get pretty full after 9pm or 10pm.

Eating out is very popular in Cyprus, and with all the meze, it's a lot of fun.

EAT YOUR WORDS

Want to know a doner from a kebab, or a souvlaki from a *gyros*? Get behind the cuisine scene, by getting to know the language. For pronunciation details see p247.

Useful Phrases

GREEK

Do you have a menu in English?

Έχετε το μενού στα αγγλικά; e-he-te to me-nu stang-gli-ka

I'd like ...

Θα ήθελα ... tha i-the-la ...

Please bring the bill.

Το λογαριασμό, παρακαλώ. to lo-ghar-ya-zmo, pa-ra-ka-lo

I'm a vegetarian.

Είμαι χορτοφάγος. i-me khor-to-fa-gos

I don't eat meat or dairy products.

Δε τρώω κρέας ή γαλακτοκομικά προϊόντα. dhe tro-o kre-as i gha-la-kto-ko-mi-ka pro-i-on-da

If you're a vegetarian and you love Greek cuisine, try out Diane Kochikas' *Greek Vegetarian Encyclopaedia* for a meatless menu.

TURKISH**I'd like the menu (in English), please.***(İngilizce) Menüyi istiyorum
lütfen.**(een-gee-leez-je) me-new-yew ees-tee-yo-room
lewt-fen***The bill, please.***Hesap lütfen.**he-sap lewt-fen***Do you have any dishes without meat?***Etsiz yemek yemekleriniz var mı?**et-seez ye-mek-le-ree-nee-z var muh***I'm allergic to ...***... allerjim var.**... a-ler-zheem var***dairy produce***Süt ürünlerine* *sewt ew-rewn-le-ree-ne***eggs***Yumurtaya* *yoo-moor-ta-ya***nuts***Çerezlere* *che-rez-le-re***seafood***Deniz ürünlerine* *de-nee-z ew-rewn-le-ree-ne***Food Glossary****GREEK****Staples**

αλάτι	<i>a-la-ti</i>	salt
αυγά	<i>a-vgha</i>	eggs
βούτυρο	<i>vu-ti-ro</i>	butter
γάλα	<i>gha-la</i>	milk
ελαιόλαδο	<i>e-le-o-la-dho</i>	olive oil
ελιές	<i>e-lyes</i>	olives
ζάχαρη	<i>za-kha-ri</i>	sugar
μέλι	<i>me-li</i>	honey
ξύδι	<i>ksi-dhi</i>	vinegar
πιπέρι	<i>pi-pe-ri</i>	pepper
τυρί	<i>ti-ri</i>	cheese
ψωμί	<i>pso-mi</i>	bread

Meat, Fish & Seafood

αρβί	<i>ar-ni</i>	lamb
αστακός	<i>a-sta-kos</i>	lobster
βοδινό	<i>vo-dhi-no</i>	beef
γαρίδες	<i>gha-ri-dhes</i>	prawns
καλαμάρι	<i>ka-la-ma-ri</i>	squid
κατσικάκι	<i>ka-tsi-ka-ki</i>	kid (goat)
κέφαλος	<i>ke-fa-los</i>	grey mullet
κολιός	<i>ko-li-os</i>	mackerel
κοτόπουλο	<i>ko-to-pu-lo</i>	chicken
λαγός	<i>la-ghos</i>	hare
μαρίδες	<i>ma-ri-dhes</i>	whitebait
μοσχάρι	<i>mo-sha-ri</i>	veal
μπαρμπούνια	<i>bar-bu-nya</i>	red mullet
μύδια	<i>mi-di-a</i>	mussels
σαρδέλες	<i>sar-dhe-les</i>	sardines
φαγρι/λιθρίνι/ μελανούρι	<i>fa-ghri/li-thri-ni/ me-la-nu-ri</i>	sea bream
χοιρινό	<i>hyi-ri-no</i>	pork
χταπόδι	<i>kh-ta-po-dhi</i>	octopus

Fruit & Vegetables

καρότο	<i>ka-ro-to</i>	carrot
κρεμμύδια	<i>kre-mi-dhi-a</i>	onions
λεμόνι	<i>le-mo-ni</i>	lemon
μελιτζάνες	<i>me-li-dza-nes</i>	aubergine (eggplant)
μήλο	<i>mi-lo</i>	apple
ντομάτα	<i>do-ma-ta</i>	tomato
πατάτες	<i>pa-ta-tes</i>	potatoes
πιπεριές	<i>pi-per-yez</i>	peppers
πορτοκάλι	<i>por-to-ka-li</i>	orange
ροδάκινο	<i>ro-dha-ki-no</i>	peach
σκόρδο	<i>skor-dho</i>	garlic
σπανάκι	<i>spa-na-ki</i>	spinach
σπαράγγια	<i>spa-rang-gi-a</i>	asparagus
σταφύλια	<i>sta-fi-li-a</i>	grapes
φράουλα	<i>fra-u-la</i>	strawberry

Drinks

καφές	<i>ka-fes</i>	coffee
κρασί	<i>kra-si</i>	wine
(κόκκινο/άσπρο)	<i>(ko-ki-no/a-spro)</i>	(red/white)
μπύρα	<i>bi-ra</i>	beer
νερό	<i>ne-ro</i>	water
τσάι	<i>tsa-i</i>	tea

TURKISH**Staples**

çorba	<i>chor-ba</i>	soup
ekmek	<i>ek-mek</i>	bread
pirinç/pilav	<i>pee-reench/pee-lav</i>	rice
yoğurt	<i>yo-oort</i>	yoghurt

Meat, Fish & Seafood

ahtapot	<i>ah-ta-pot</i>	octopus
alabalık	<i>a-la-ba-luhk</i>	trout
barbunya	<i>bar-boon-ya</i>	red mullet
çiğەر	<i>jee-er</i>	liver
çipura	<i>jee-poo-ra</i>	sea bream
hamsi	<i>ham-see</i>	anchovy
istakoz	<i>ees-ta-koz</i>	lobster
kalkan	<i>kal-kan</i>	turbot
karides	<i>ka-ree-des</i>	shrimp
levrek	<i>lev-rek</i>	sea bass
midye	<i>meed-ye</i>	mussels
palamut	<i>pa-la-moot</i>	mackerel
piliç/tavuk	<i>pee-leech/ta-vook</i>	chicken
sardalya	<i>sar-dal-ya</i>	sardine
ton balığı	<i>ton ba-luh-uh</i>	tuna

Fruit & Vegetables

bamya	<i>bam-ya</i>	okra
biber	<i>bee-ber</i>	pepper
domates	<i>do-ma-tes</i>	tomato
elma	<i>el-ma</i>	apple
karpuz	<i>kar-pooz</i>	watermelon

kavun	<i>ka-voon</i>	cantaloupe melon
kayısı	<i>ka-yuh-suh</i>	apricot
kiraz	<i>kee-raz</i>	cherry
kuru fasulye	<i>koo-roo fa-sool-ye</i>	white beans
muz	<i>mooz</i>	banana
patates	<i>pa-ta-tes</i>	potato
portakal	<i>por-ta-kal</i>	orange
salata	<i>sa-la-ta</i>	salad
salatalık	<i>sa-la-ta-luhk</i>	cucumber
soğan	<i>so-an</i>	onion
taze fasulye	<i>ta-ze fa-sool-ye</i>	green beans
zeytin	<i>zay-teen</i>	olive

Drinks

bira	<i>bee-ra</i>	beer
buz	<i>booz</i>	ice
maden suyu	<i>ma-den soo-yoo</i>	mineral water
meyve suyu	<i>may-ve soo-yoo</i>	fruit juice
şarap	<i>sha-rap</i>	wine
su	<i>soo</i>	water
süt	<i>sewt</i>	milk