

# EUROPA NOSTRA CYPRUS: ISLAND OF APHRODITE

24-30 October, 2023

We are indebted to Androula Vassiliou, Vice-President of Europa Nostra, for the concept of this special tour for members. The coveted situation of Cyprus in the eastern Mediterranean has shaped centuries of civilisation. Greek temples, Roman mosaics, frescoed Byzantine churches, Crusader castles, Venetian fortifications and Ottoman houses reflect the history of this beautiful island.



*Kourion*

In **Nicosia**, seat of the Lusignan Kings, we will stay at the centrally-located MAP Boutique Hotel. Having settled in, we are promised a special private visit to the **Costas and Rita Severis Foundation**, located in Old Lefkosia, within the Venetian city's ancient walls. The Founder, Dr Rita Severis, will be our guide to this unique collection of views, historical costume and treasures, which charts the history of the island through the 18th to 20th centuries. This will be followed by dinner at a restaurant in the old quarter.

The next morning, we visit the important **Cyprus Museum**, whose collection spans the earliest human settlements from the 10th millennium BC to early Christianity. Next we will view the acclaimed collection of the **Leventis Museum**, tracing 6,000 years of the history and art of the capital, before walking up to the **Green Line** to contemplate contemporary history. Visits to the 18th century Ottoman **House of the Dragoman** and the **Turkish Baths** will be included. Later, we will see the rare early icons of the **Byzantine Museum**, and the ornate, frescoed **St John's Cathedral**. In the early evening we will drive to the old village of **Phikardou**, awarded a Europa Nostra medal in 1987, with dinner at a traditional tavern.

Heading into the wooded foothills of the **Troodos Mountains**, we will visit the small stone church of **Panagia Asinou**. A UNESCO World Heritage site, it contains some of the finest Byzantine murals on the island. We will travel on to the mountain village of **Kalopanayiotis** in the valley of the Setrachos river, to view the three-church complex of **Ioannis Lampadistis**, prior to lunch at scenic **Casale Panayiotis**. In the evening, we will enjoy a private visit of the **Leventis Gallery**, showcasing its Paris, Greek and Cypriot art collections, with the Director of the Leventis Foundation, Dr Loukia Hadjigavriel. The Foundation has generously invited members to dinner, with a talk by a distinguished speaker.



Nicosia



Kolossi Castle



Choirokoiitia

Friday is spent in the historic fortified port city of **Famagusta** in Northern Cyprus, with (inter alia) the famous **ancient walls** and the 14th century Lusignan **Othello tower**. Lunch will be in a local tavern. The evening is free to dine independently.

Leaving the capital, we travel south towards Paphos, mythical birthplace of Aphrodite, pausing at picturesque **Lefkara**, the 15th century convent of **Agios Minas** in the village of **Vavla** and at ancient **Choirokoiitia**, now a World Heritage Site. Members have been invited to a barbecue lunch at the Vassiliou residence at beautiful **Governor's Beach**, near Limassol. Medieval **Kolossi Castle**, a former crusader stronghold, and the spectacular site of the ancient city-kingdom of **Kourion**, are en route to the Elysium Hotel in Paphos, set on its own private beach.

Exploring the Hellenistic capital of **Paphos** on Sunday, we will be drawn to the mysterious rock-cut 'Tombs of the Kings'. We will also be shown the vivid Roman Mosaics, St Paul's Pillar and the Archaeological Museum as well as the frescoed Byzantine church of **Ayia Paraskevi** at Yeroskipou. After lunch at a fish restaurant on the harbour we will visit the secluded **Ayios Neophytos Monastery** before returning to the hotel for our farewell dinner.

On the last day, the beautiful mosaic apse in the church of **Panagia Angeloktisti**, the peaceful setting of the **Hala Sultan Tekke** mosque on the west bank of Larnaca's salt lake and the 9th century church of **Saint Lazarus** provide lasting memories of Cyprus.

**Price: €3,430**

**Single room supplement: €580**

The tour price includes accommodation at a first-class hotel in Nicosia (4 nights) and at a luxury hotel in Paphos (2 nights) - all meals except one dinner - ground transport by private coach - guides - entrance fees - taxes - and the services of a Specialtours tour organiser.

Tour Organiser: Joanna Worsley

The tour starts at Larnaca International airport at 15.00 on Tuesday 24 October and ends there by 16.00 on Monday 30 October.