

Perfect Paphos

Cyprus remains ideal for clients looking to soak up some ancient history and short-haul sun. **David Golledge** rediscovers his love for the island

Strolling along Paphos's winding seafront, with the Mediterranean shimmering in the afternoon sunshine and the scent of pine trees in the warm air, it's tough to imagine I'd waved goodbye to a frosty British winter just hours earlier.

It feels likely that destinations closer to home, such as Cyprus, will benefit in 2022 from an increase in consumer appetite – among both holidaymakers hungry to make up for lost time and those wanting to ease back in gently by rediscovering old favourites. Having visited as a child, the island felt familiar – with plenty of reminders of home, even down to driving on the left.

But Cyprus attracted visitors long before it was associated with Britain. The island's rich history, as a crossroads in the Med, is very much on show in the centre of Paphos, which as a former capital felt like a vast historic site with a bustling town attached. I paid a visit to the World Heritage Archaeological Site, just off the harbour, and found its incredibly well-preserved mosaics gave a fascinating glimpse of how previous civilisations lived. And farther along the coast, the Tombs of the Kings were at one time the seafront resting place of ancient Cypriot nobility rather than royalty,

but felt no less impressive for the fact, being carved from solid rock. Clambering down those steep, sturdy steps and peering round the tombs felt like walking onto the set of an Indiana Jones film.

OLD MEETS NEW

While Paphos's ancient delights are easily accessible, those venturing a little farther out will be richly rewarded too. An hour's drive east is the Kourion Archaeological site: home to a huge amphitheatre, originally built in 2BC with space for 3,500 people, but more recently restored for open-air performances. A climb up the stone blocks offers a great view of the coastline, but that's not their only benefit – these hefty steps create impressive acoustics, with many visitors choosing to test them out by belting out a few tunes on the stage.

After my cultural exploits, a cool beer felt like the obvious choice. Aphrodite's Rock Microbrewery, in the Tsada Hills just outside Paphos, is named after the local spot where, according to legend, the Greek goddess of love and beauty emerged from the sea. Billing itself as one of a kind on the island, the tree-lined ➤

LATEST RESTRICTIONS

The trip featured took place before the emergence of the Omicron variant and additional restrictions for travel to Cyprus. From January 6-31, all travellers over the age of 12, regardless of vaccination status, must present a negative PCR test result, taken up to 72 hours before departure, upon arrival in Cyprus. Passengers must take another PCR test on arrival in Cyprus and isolate in their hotel until the results arrive (usually within three hours) and will be given self-tests to administer for the first five days of their holiday. On day three, travellers are expected to take a rapid test at a mobile unit. For more info, see: cyprusflightpass.gov.cy

DESTINATIONS

GREECE & CYPRUS | PAPHOS



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Paphos Castle; David Golledge; Tombs of the Kings PICTURES: Shutterstock/Fotogrin, kirill_makarov

courtyard bar and restaurant attracts locals and tourists to sample its beers and ciders brewed on site. A selection of five small glasses are a great way to test out new brews, my favourite being the zesty Sundowner Pale Ale. The food offering includes craft burgers and sourdough pizzas, plus packages can include transport from hotels and an open bar.

STAY IN STYLE

And for those who like to return to a certain level of comfort after a day of historical exploration, culture and craft beer, Cyprus has plenty of plush hotels to choose from. Guests at the 239-room Louis Imperial Beach Hotel, are greeted on arrival in a spacious, light-filled lobby. Rooms are simple, spotlessly clean and decorated in muted tones, while main buffet restaurant Amorosa has been recently renovated and caters to its mature British clientele with a different themed cuisine each night.

Those seeking something a little different should head to the more

“The Ivi Mare’s Mirrors Bar is a sophisticated spot for watching the sun go down

intimate Japanese fusion restaurant for pan-Asian dishes, including bento boxes bursting with fresh flavours, or the recently opened craft burger restaurant.

The hotel’s bar is plush and popular, with nightly entertainment such as live music and quizzes. And as my visit was in November, I was grateful for the sizeable indoor pool, complete with spa options.

For clients looking for something a little hipper, arriving at the adult-only King Jason hotel feels like strolling into an urban club lounge, with its collection of inviting, sumptuous sofas. Outside things are just as chilled, with an impressive four pools – including

one made up entirely of whirlpools and featuring an underwater exercise bike and treadmill.

LOYAL GUESTS

Pre-pandemic, this 127-studio and suite property was exclusive to the UK market, although its manager Thomas explained that while British arrivals remained dominant, the hotel has made efforts to widen its appeal. “We couldn’t open last year because the UK was in lockdown, but this year we aim to stay open,” he told me determinedly, adding that the loyalty shown by a high rate of returning guests did allow the property to reopen relatively early.

Its sister hotel, The Ivi Mare, is also adult-only, yet a different proposition. The 148-room seafront

LIMASSOL LOWDOWN

Nicosia may be the island’s capital, but Limassol (*pictured*) is home to its wealth. There’s a buzz in the air, in this place where old and new mesh together, with the city’s Old Town and Port rubbing shoulders with a swanky marina filled with superyachts, complemented by waterfront bars and restaurants. Farther along the promenade, the 204-room Royal Apollonia hotel has a cosmopolitan feel, attracting an international crowd. Immediately on arrival there are impressive views of its sizeable pool terrace and the sparkling Med beyond.



hotel is still gleaming having opened in May 2019. It has a boutique feel over its six floors, the sleek decor complemented by quirky design features and plenty of greenery. The equally stylish Palettes buffet restaurant spills outside and enjoys a prime location in front of the sizeable pool, set within minutely manicured gardens. The Ivi Mare’s Mirrors Bar, overlooking the coast, is a sophisticated spot for watching the sun go down with a cocktail in hand.

Looking out over the shimmering seas again, it became easy to understand why Cyprus has drawn visitors time and again. Views befitting the Greek goddess of beauty, a rich history and cosmopolitan cities on the water make Cyprus a truly enticing option. **TW**

BOOK IT

Mercury Holidays offers seven nights’ all-inclusive at the Louis Imperial Beach Hotel from £751 including flights and transfers, based on a May 2022 departure from Stansted. [mercuryholidays.co.uk](https://www.mercuryholidays.co.uk)