

# Rock of ages

Explore art, archaeology and the legend of Aphrodite on a five-star stay in Cyprus, writes **Cathy Toogood**

"Shakespeare was inspired by the story in this mosaic," says our guide, Mary Patrokou, as she explains the tale of ill-fated lovers Pyramus and Thisbe depicted in tiny cream, sepia and mocha tiles in front of us. Whether the English playwright ever visited this Mediterranean isle is rather doubtful, but this artistic interpretation is Cypriot through and through. "Can you see one of the symbols of Cyprus, the mouflon (a wild sheep), in this hunting scene?" she adds.

We're marvelling at the mosaics in the Roman-era House of Dionysus, part of the Unesco-listed Archaeological Park of Kato Pafos. The mosaics, many of which illustrate stories from Greek and Roman mythology, are some of the best preserved in the world. That's partly because they lay untouched and untrodden for centuries until they were discovered by accident in 1962, by a local farmer ploughing his field.

"But there's a lot more to see in Paphos than just mosaics," says Mary. "You can't leave Paphos without seeing the archaeological sites and the well-preserved mosaics, but you must also enjoy the local way of life. Have a mezze, eat local food and try to eat where the locals do."

If that approach extends to staying in a Cypriot-owned resort too, there's even more reason for clients to visit since the opening

of Louis Hotels' Cali Resort & Spa in May, a new five-star adult-only hotel set near the soft sands of Coral Bay, where guests can complement culture-packed days exploring Paphos (a 20-minute drive away) with time by the pool or in the spa.

## APHRODITE BY APP

We start our tour of Paphos at the Tombs of the Kings, a set of coastal Hellenistic and Roman underground tombs. Once the burial sites of important officials and aristocrats, the well-preserved tomb three has monumental carved columns and dark passageways to explore, a spooky experience with just a handful of other visitors around.

The renowned birthplace of Aphrodite – the Petra tou Romiou rock formation (pictured) – is a busier site where, according to legend, the goddess of love and beauty was created from the sea foam, emerging standing on a scallop shell. Some say that if you swim three times in an anti-clockwise direction around Aphrodite's Rock, you will turn time back and feel younger. "I don't recommend it," Mary warns, pointing out the dangers involved.

Instead, we download the Aphrodite's Birthplace app and project a digital image of the goddess on to the spot where she was formed, then capture it in a photograph. Tell clients about ➤

PICTURE: Shutterstock/Sabine Klein



# DESTINATIONS

## GREECE & CYPRUS | PAPHOS

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### CALI RESORT & SPA

Relaxation is key in this adult-only five-star hotel set a 20-minute drive from the city of Paphos. The 47-metre freshwater outdoor pool is the jewel in its crown, where sunken loungers are coveted spots during the day and the poolside is the perfect backdrop for sunset snaps in the evening. Set in a quiet spot, it feels secluded but it's only 300 metres from the Blue Flag Coral Bay beach and its strip of shops, bars and restaurants. The 201 rooms have a muted grey colour scheme, dark wood floors and angular balconies, with statement wallpaper behind the beds. Unwind in the gym or the basement spa, with a sauna, steam room, indoor pool and three treatment rooms. Clients can choose between half-board or premium all-inclusive packages, eating in the main restaurant Aria, where a varied buffet is served at breakfast, lunch and dinner. Guests on an all-inclusive basis can dine at à la carte Japanese fusion restaurant Fiki once a week. Here, a selection of stir-fries, sushi, tempura and main courses are served in an outside area next to the pool.

[caliresortandspa.com](http://caliresortandspa.com)



Cathy Toogood by the pool



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Cabanas by the pool at Cali Resort & Spa; Coral Bay beach; Pyramus and Thisbe mosaic, House of Dionysus, Paphos PICTURES: Alexandros Ioannidis; Shutterstock/DedMityay, Sytilin Pavel



this app before a visit so they can download it in advance – it's a good way to encourage little ones to engage with some of the myths and legends that inhabit this ancient isle.

### ARTS AND EATS

On our way to 'eat where the locals do' with Mary (aka Muse Cafe Kitchen Bar, which has gorgeous views overlooking Paphos) we explore the streets of the Old Town, where open-air art includes installations by Peace2Peace. The group includes women from different backgrounds who create crochet artworks for display in public places. The Windspinners, which hangs over a covered walkway, is a colourful piece that showcases traditional techniques being passed from one generation to the next.

We stop at The Place, a craft centre where visitors can buy more authentic Cypriot products made on-site and even try making their own in workshops. We get a glimpse of a pottery class before admiring everything from jewellery made from silk cocoons and ceramics to local jams and 'spoon sweets' (preserved fruits and nuts).

### INSIDER insight



### VIKTORIA MOLNAR

guest relations manager, Cali Resort & Spa

- Recommend that clients visit the *Edro III* shipwreck and the Coral Bay Sea Caves. Both are about three miles north of the hotel and are excellent places to watch the sunset too.
- If guests don't want to rent a car to explore the area, there's a bus stop less than a five-minute walk from the hotel with services to Paphos town every 15 minutes.
- A good excursion to recommend is a Jeep safari to Akamas National Park, which can also include a boat trip to the Blue Lagoon and the Avakas Gorge.

### NORTH STAR

As a contrast to exploring the cultural treasures of Paphos, we head to Blue Lagoon bay on the Akamas Peninsula for a day of complete relaxation. The beauty spot is only accessible by boat or 4x4, so we opt to board a boat from the harbour town of Latchi.

It's a fantastic spot to swim or snorkel in the clear water before following Mary's advice and ordering a mezze at Y&P Fish Tavern, which overlooks the boats in Latchi harbour. With the turquoise

waters as a backdrop – just a stone's throw from the forested trails where Aphrodite and her lover Adonis were said to have met – it's a scene as timeless as the tales of the gods themselves. **TW**

### BOOK IT

EasyJet holidays offers seven nights' premium all-inclusive at the Cali Resort & Spa by Louis Hotels for £1,316. Price includes luggage, transfers and flights from Gatwick departing on October 17. [easyjet.com](http://easyjet.com)