



Kyrenia (Girne) & the Northern Coast

Includes »

Kyrenia (Girne).....	161
Around Kyrenia & the Ranges.....	167
St Hilarion Castle.....	169
Bellapais (Beylerbeyi)	170
Lapta (Lapithos)	174
The Northwest	174
Koruçam (Kormakitis) Peninsula.....	175
Morfou (Güzelyurt)	176
Lefke (Lefka)	176
Ancient Soloi.....	177
Ancient Vouni	178

Why Go?

Centred on the beautiful vista of its old-world harbour, its wild-flowered slopes and imposing mountain range, Kyrenia is one of the island's most intriguing towns.

The ruins of its 12th-century abbey and surrounding gothic castles have even, according to legend, been the inspiration for fairytales.

The area's enchanting effect on visitors is well known. It was a favourite haunt of colonial civil servants, who flocked here after retiring from service to the British Empire. Lawrence Durrell, who made his home here, turned the region into a literary starlet when he wrote about it in *Bitter Lemons of Cyprus*.

Kyrenia's north coast is now fast changing. Vast olive fields, old village houses and natural habitats are making way for new developments and infrastructure such as tourist towns and roadways. Although this has taken a toll on some of the region's natural beauty, there is still plenty to enjoy along its coast.

Best Places to Eat

- » Kyrenia Tavern (p165)
- » Anı (p166)
- » Kybele (p171)
- » Stone Arch (p165)
- » No.14 (p165)

Best Places to Stay

- » White Pearl Hotel (p210)
- » Club Z (p210)
- » Lapida (p210)
- » Sempati (p211)
- » Bellapais Monastery Village (p211)

When to Go

From February to March vibrant wildflowers and rare orchids bloom across Kyrenia's mountain range, contrasting with its Gothic ruins. May takes on a musical flavour with the Bellapais Music Festival, set against the backdrop of the abbey and its stunning arches.

During June and July, discover the historic castles of the North, before heading to the coast and cooling off at Kyrenia's sandy beaches. In September and October strong winds send you skyward as you paraglide from the heights of the Pentadaktylos mountains, with their unforgettable views of the coast.

KYRENIA (GIRNE)

POP 22,000

With its impressive Byzantine castle and horseshoe-shaped Old Harbour, gentle waters, fishing boats and high buildings (formerly carob warehouses), it's easy to understand why this picturesque town is the centre of tourism in the North.

The harbour now bustles with bars, restaurants, cafes, boat-excursion touters, and waiters speaking in broken English and beckoning you into their restaurants. It's a far cry from the expectations of barefoot fishermen joyfully pulling nets onto wooden boats with the old castle as a backdrop. Only a 30-minute drive from the capital Lefkosia/North Nicosia, this is where North Nicosians come for good restaurants and nightlife. It is also home to one of the largest British expat settlements on the island, complete with church and community centre. Kyrenia is lively, and its busy coast has more hotels, restaurants and bars (in one spot) than anywhere else in the North.

History

Once one of the ancient city-kingdoms of Cyprus, Kyrenia was founded by Mycenaean Greeks around 1200 BC. From this point Kyrenia's history is, in essence, the history of its castle. Little more is known about the town until the castle's construction by the Byzantines in the 7th century to ward off continuing Arab raids.

In 1191 the castle was captured by Richard the Lionheart of England, on his way to Jerusalem and a third crusade. The castle was then used as both a residence and prison. It was sold to the Knights Templar and then gifted to Guy de Lusignan when he became king of Cyprus.

In the 14th century the Venetians extended the castle and built the bulbous sea-facing fortifications still seen today. During Ottoman rule, changes to the castle were again made, while Kyrenia itself functioned primarily as the island's only northern port.

Kyrenia has long since given up this role, as the Old Harbour's size and depth only allow it to service tourist crafts, fishing boats and the small yachts commonly found in its cluttered quays. Two kilometres to the east of Kyrenia, there is now a large purpose-built harbour created to receive commercial and passenger ships from Turkey.

During British rule, the town became a favourite with retiring (ex-colonial) British

ROAD DISTANCES (KM)

Bellapais (Beylerbeyi)	83				
Lapta (Lapithos)	51	32			
Koruçam (Kormakitis)	77	6	26		
Lefke (Lefka)	26	109	77	103	
	Morfu (Güzelyurt)	Bellapais (Beylerbeyi)	Lapta (Lapithos)	Koruçam (Kormakitis)	

civil servants. When Turkey invaded Cyprus in 1974, it used the beaches to the west of Kyrenia as the prime location for landing its army. Almost all Greek Cypriots and many British retirees fled.

Now, 37 years later, Kyrenia supports a growing tourist industry, mainly from Britain, Germany and Turkey.

Sights

While Kyrenia is spread out over a wide area, the central Old Town (tourist area) is fairly compact. Taxis and minibuses arrive at and depart from Ecevit Caddesi and stop near the main square, **Belediye Meydanı**, which is 200m south of the Old Harbour. To the west of Belediye Meydanı runs Ziya Rızıkı Caddesi, where you will find shops and banks. Mustafa Çatay Caddesi runs southeast from Belediye Meydanı to the New Harbour, at which ferries to and from Turkey dock.

Kyrenia Castle

HISTORICAL SITE, MUSEUM

(Girne Kalesi; adult/child 12/3YTL; ☀9am-7pm Jun-mid-Sep, 9am-4pm mid-Sep-May) The shielding Kyrenia Castle is the dominant feature of the charming Old Harbour. Its convoluted history has made it an interesting architectural and cultural mix.

Built by the Byzantines, possibly over the remains of an earlier Roman fort, the castle staved off many attacks, including the Ottoman invasion of 1570 – at least until the Venetian occupants surrendered it in the wake of Nicosia (Lefkosia) being overrun.

A large rectangular structure, it includes a cistern, dungeon, chapel, gallery and museum, guarded by four fortified bastions, one on each corner.

You can enter the castle via the stone bridge over the former moat, which leads to the small 12th-century Byzantine **Chapel of St George**. Its broken mosaics and Corinthian columns, originally outside the walls,

© Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd. To make it easier for you to use, access to this chapter is not digitally restricted. In return, we think it's fair to ask you to use it for personal, non-commercial purposes only. In other words, please don't upload this chapter to a peer-to-peer site, mass email it to everyone you know, or resell it. See the terms and conditions on our site for a longer way of saying the above - 'Do the right thing with our content.'