



Lefkosa (Nicosia)

POP 213,500

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Best Places to Stay

- » Classic Hotel (p208)
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Why Go?

If you grow weary of the coast's sea and sunbed scene, and even if you don't, make sure you spend some time in the country's capital, Lefkosa (Nicosia), as it's known officially and to Greek speakers. It is an enticing city and is ideal for experiencing what modern Cyprus is all about. The ancient walls, traditional restaurants and a growing multicultural core effectively showcase the city's basic make-up. Almost everything of interest lies within the historic walls, where a labyrinth of narrow streets reveals churches, mosques and evocative, often crumbling, colonial-style buildings. The country's best museum is also here, housing an extensive archaeological collection.

The city has been labelled 'the last divided capital', a reality that, although still present, is slowly changing thanks to 24-hour checkpoint crossings into its Turkish northern half – Lefkoşa (North Nicosia).

When to Go

The best time of year to visit is during spring and autumn, when the weather is pleasantly warm, interrupted by only an occasional outbreak of rain. Easter can be an extra-special time here, with traditional parades and a generally festive atmosphere.

Avoid mid-summer when the capital is one of the hottest places on the island, albeit a dry heat, with temperatures generally hovering around the 36°C mark. Many restaurants and hotels also close their shutters in August to allow employees to substitute the relative cool of the coastal resorts for the hot, dusty capital.

LEFKOSIA (NICOSIA)

History

Lefkosia has always been the country's capital, mainly because the defences of the coastal cities were so weak and prone to attack. The city's position in the centre of a plain provided at least some protection against marauding invaders. Lefkosia

flourished during the Byzantine period. The Byzantines were followed by the Venetians who took command of the city in 1489 but failed dismally in repelling the Ottomans who took control in 1570. The city stagnated until the British arrived in 1878, which also marked the time that development started to spread beyond the city walls.



Lefkosia (Nicosia) Highlights

- 1 Exploring the emblematic and superbly preserved **Venetian walls** (p130) snaking around the Old City
- 2 Seeing both sides of Europe's last divided capital by striding out north at the **Ledra St pedestrian crossing** (p130)

- 3 Enjoying a barbecue at one of the shady **picnic grounds** (p147) around Kapoura
- 4 Spending a day of blissful self-pampering at the stylish **Omeriye Hammam** (p134)
- 5 People-watching, accompanied by an ice-cold

frothy frappé, at one of the terrace cafes on **Ledra St**

- 6 Joining one of the excellent **free guided walks** of the Old City organised by the tourist office (p135)
- 7 Exploring the cobbled backstreets of Mesaoria villages such as **Pera** (p147)

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