



Lemesos & the South Coast

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Why Go?

The physical heartland of the Republic, Lemesos and the south coast is one of Cyprus' most diverse regions, encompassing archaeological remains, beaches, a lively nightlife and the verdant proximity of the Troödos mountains.

The second-largest town in Cyprus, Lemesos is an increasingly sophisticated city, fast gaining a reputation for its exciting and innovative restaurants. The luxurious, long-awaited marina is due to open in 2013 and the historic centre has plenty of atmosphere, with pedestrian shopping streets that are only truly busy when the cruise ships disgorge their passengers.

Among the region's important archaeological sites, Ancient Kourion is the most impressive, perched on a bluff overlooking the azure waters of Episkopi Bay and significant for its role in the spread of Christianity throughout the island.

The area makes a great central base for visitors wishing to explore Cyprus away from the well-trodden tourist trail of Pafos and Agia Napa.

Best Places to Eat

- » Dino Art Cafe (p53)
- » Noodle House (p54)
- » Syrian Arab Friendship Club (p54)
- » Il Gusto (p63)

Best Places to Stay

- » Chrielka (p200)
- » Curium Palace (p200)
- » Apokryfo (p201)
- » Bunch of Grapes Inn (p201)

When to Go

Springtime is an ideal season here, when the Troödos mountains are blanketed with a dazzle of wildflowers and the sun can still be warm enough for beach days. The height of the holiday season is July and August, so beaches are crowded. Summer is also festival time, with lots going on, culminating in the International Music Festival and the Wine Festival, both taking place in Lemesos in September. The late-autumn and winter months are the wettest, with more changeable weather and varying temperatures, as well as snow on the highest Troödos peaks.

LEMESOS (LIMASSOL)

POP 228,780

Lemesos, still known to many as Limassol (Limasol in Turkish), is one of Cyprus' most underrated cities. Modelled on what seems to be an American seaside cityscape, the long stretch that is Lemesos has its busy main road running across the entire city, with cafes, shops, restaurants and general life going on to the north, while a long, popular beach is lapped by the Mediterranean to the south.

The historic old town, the former Turkish area, has undergone a tasteful revamp with an extensive pedestrian zone now surrounding the castle, studded with a wide range of eating and drinking choices, from traditional tavernas and coffee shops to sophisticated restaurants and designer-style bars. As part of the overall urban project (that includes the new marina), the waterfront here is similarly being enhanced with more green spaces and an expansive new promenade.

Lemesos has a gritty yet cosmopolitan individuality. Cyprus' international business centre, the city is also at the heart of one of the island's richest areas for exploration, with archaeological remains, beaches and the verdant mountains of the Troödos region all within easy reach.

History

In 1191 the crusader king, Richard the Lionheart, put Lemesos on the map when he defeated the then ruler of Cyprus, Isaak Komninus, and took Cyprus and Lemesos for himself.

The city prospered for more than 200 years with a succession of Knights Hospitaller and Templar as its rulers until earthquakes, marauding Genoese (1373) and Saracens (1426) reduced Lemesos' fortunes to virtually zero. The city was still creating a bad impression in the mid-20th century: Lawrence Durrell, writing in 1952 in *Bitter Lemons of Cyprus*, noted upon arrival in Lemesos that '...we berthed towards sunrise in a gloomy and featureless roadstead, before a town whose desolate silhouette suggested that of a tin-mining village in the Andes'.

Lemesos grew up quickly following the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974, replacing Famagusta (Mağusa) as the nation's main port. It also needed to expand to keep up with the Republic's growing tourist

ROAD DISTANCES (KM)

Pissouri	32			
Petra tou Romiou	37	8		
Ancient Amathous	43	36	51	
Governor's Beach	59	61	66	15
	Vouni	Pissouri	Petra tou Romiou	Ancient Amathous

boom. Originally comprising what is today known as the old town, radiating out from the historic fishing port, Lemesos has outgrown its original geographic limits to now encompass a sprawling tourist suburb. Signposted as the 'tourist centre', this is a riotous confusion of hotels, bars and restaurants, and you could be excused for forgetting that the sea is there at all.

👁 Sights & Activities

Most of the main sights are within walking distance of the old port. The principal shopping artery is Agiou Andreou, one street back from the waterfront. Beach lovers will have to head west out of town, where several popular beach resorts are strung along the coast. Less commercialised, more attractive beaches are located further west, including Kourion, Melanda and Avdimou.

DON'T MISS

MEDIEVAL MUSEUM

In order to fully appreciate the castle, don't miss its **Medieval Museum** (adult €3.40; ☎9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm Sun). The building is an intriguing collection of vaults and air shafts, and the museum's interior is divided into a series of rooms and chambers on varying levels. All have thematic displays of Byzantine and medieval objects, including Ottoman pottery, gold religious objects, tombstones, suits of armour and weapons. In the Grand Hall, to the right and on a lower level as you enter, there are displays of black-and-white photos of Byzantine sites all over Cyprus. Climb up to a rooftop terrace for sweeping views over the city.

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