



Understand Cyprus

CYPRUS TODAY 214

Since the rejection of reunification via referendums, the island has moved forward, but is prosperity more important than partition?

HISTORY 216

From the development of ancient city kingdoms to modern times, the island has been a much-sought-after possession.

THE CYPRIOT WAY OF LIFE 229

The national identity, though complicated by history ancient and recent, nonetheless binds the people in their everyday lives.

CYPRUS' NATURAL ENVIRONMENT 232

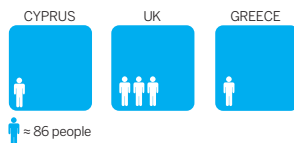
Mountains, plains, sand and sea: Cyprus' unique flora, fauna, geography and geology is laid out before you.

THE ARTS 237

Artistic highs here include exquisite modern icons, entertaining puppet theatres and lacework as fine as a spider's web.



population per sq km



Cyprus Today

Peace Talks, the Never-Ending Cycle?

Since its division in 1974, talks to reunite Cyprus have taken place sporadically with little success. They were revived in 2008, when the Republic's president Demetris Christofias promised to work with the then Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat, generating over 100 meetings. Their attempts at camaraderie, aimed at creating a 'climate of peace', began to worry officials on the Turkish mainland. The situation was quickly blunted when the pro-Turkish Dervis Eroglu came to power in 2010.

Since then the usual rhetoric regarding talks with UN mediators has continued. It is unclear how long the current talks will last, as time limits are generously imposed and repeatedly disregarded. Often they merely lead to the agreement to agree on another round of talks.

Meanwhile, problems locally (particularly economic) are overlooked while the best minds concentrate on the more difficult, and perennial issues, of resolving power sharing and land ownership. With the current leaders at odds ideologically, the ability to devise a peace proposal that's acceptable to all is becoming increasingly difficult.

As such, most Cypriots are not very optimistic that there will be a solution anytime soon. Many had hoped Cyprus' EU membership would increase the chances of reunification, but, sadly, it seems to have only muddied the waters, with the bigger EU nations weighing in on the debate.

The EU & the Economy

EU succession (2004) has changed the landscape in a variety of areas. The common practice of the relaxed application of laws and fines for things like parking on pavements, not wearing helmets on motorbikes, or seatbelts in cars, are now enforced, when they were once met with a simple '*dembirasi*' (doesn't matter).

- » Population: 1,120,489 (285,000 estimated Northern Cyprus)
- » Area: 9251 sq km (3355 sq km Northern Cyprus)
- » GDP: Republic of Cyprus US\$22.18 billion; Northern Cyprus US\$4.4 billion

Dos & Don'ts

- » Cypriots love to talk on mobile phones and not use indicators while driving. Make eye contact at intersections before you pull out.
- » Be tactful when discussing politics, division and the Green Line.

- » If you're invited out for a meal, the bill is paid by the host and not split. Offer to contribute, knowing you'll most likely be scoffed at.
- » Don't praise possessions or good fortune too much, as many Cypriots believe this attracts envy and the 'evil eye'.

Top Books

- The Island that Everybody Wanted** (Marina Christofides & Eleni Lambrou) A history.
- A Traveller's History of Cyprus** (Tim Boatswain) A concise history.
- The Cyprus Conspiracy** (Brendan O'Malley & Ian Craig) Events leading to the invasion.

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