



Kyrenia (Girne) & the North

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Best Places to Stay

- Bellapais Gardens (p212)
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Why Go?

Castles cling to craggy hilltops. Lonely churches peek out amid wild-flowered slopes. Fields of gnarled olive trees march across the coastline where the harbour town of Kyrenia, backed by the imposing silhouette of jagged mountain ranges, looks out towards the sea. This bite-sized region combines the best of Cyprus' natural charm with oodles of history.

Most visit for sun and sea holidays which has led to a flurry of less-than-pretty developments being flung up along the shore. Ignore the concrete-block oddities though and you'll find there's plenty left to explore. From Bellapais Abbey to the fairytale-fluff of St Hilarion Castle, there are ruins with million-dollar views galore.

This region is famed for its outdoor potential with hiking, turtle-spotting, orchid-hunting and bird watching on the agenda. The trails are under-promoted and gloriously quiet; a perfect incentive to get your walking shoes on and discover them before everyone else.

When to Go

- From February to April a vibrant palette of wildflowers and rare orchids bloom across Kyrenia's coastline, splashing the rolling fields with a paintbox of colours.
- April is also the prime hiking period with gloriously clear and warm weather nearly guaranteed.
- In May musicians and singers serenade crowds amid the Gothic arcades where Augustinian monks once trod at the Bellapais Music Festival.
- Turtle nesting season begins in June and continues through August.
- July and August's fierce humidity is the perfect time to take to the water. Hop on a gulet (Turkish wooden ship) and sail out of Kyrenia's harbour to catch a sea breeze.



Kyrenia (Girne) & the North Highlands

- 1 Climbing up onto the **Kyrenia Castle** (p163) ramparts before sitting back on the Old Harbour to watch sunset cast its golden glow across the Mediterranean.
- 2 Getting your literary-pilgrimage fix wandering the lanes of **Bellapais** (p171), then exploring the village's beautiful medieval abbey.
- 3 Reliving the golden days of hermit monks and shining armoured knights at **St Hilarion Castle** (p170).
- 4 Delving even further into history with a visit to **Ancient Vouni** (p178) and then taking the precarious curving road up the cliff to **Ancient Soloi** (p177).
- 5 Savouring bird's-eye views of the coast from the heights of **Burfiavento Castle** (p172).