



Kyrenia (Girne) & the North

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Why Go?

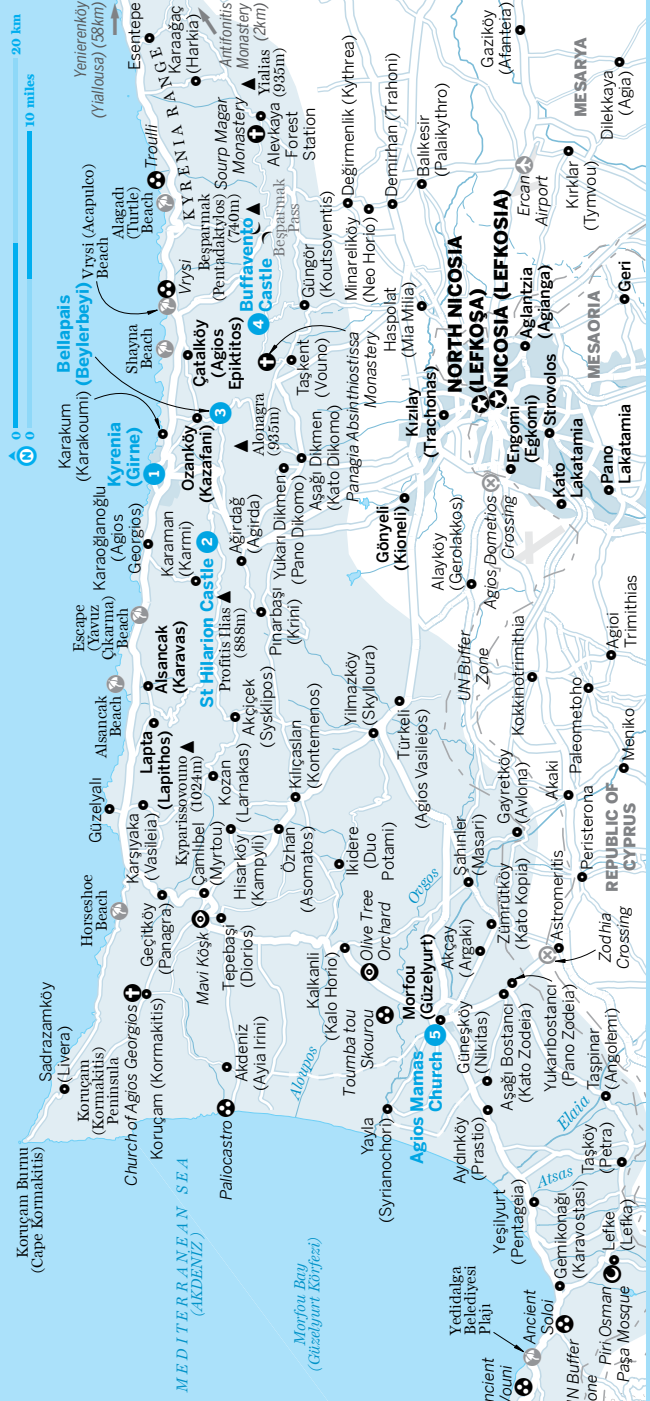
Castles cling to craggy hilltops. Lonely churches peek out amid wild-flowered slopes. Fields of gnarled olive trees march across the coastline where the harbour town of Kyrenia (Girne), backed by the imposing silhouette of jagged mountain ranges, looks out towards the sea. This bite-sized region combines 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 and you'll find there's plenty left to explore. From Bellapais Abbey to the fairy-tale-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 underpromoted and gloriously quiet; a perfect incentive to get your walking shoes on and discover them before everyone else does.

When to Go

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



Kyrenia (Girne) & the North Highlights

- 1 Kyrenia (p185)** Climbing up onto the Byzantine castle's ramparts before sitting back in the Old Harbour area to watch sunset.
- 2 St Hilarion Castle (p192)** Reliving the golden days of hermit monks and shining-armoured knights amid the towers of a castle fit for a fairy tale.
- 3 Bellapais Abbey (p197)** Getting your literary-pilgrimage fix exploring this medieval abbey and wandering the quiet lanes of Bellapais (Beylerbeyi) village.
- 4 Buffavento Castle (p193)** Savouring bird's-eye views of the coast from the crumbled remnants of this castle.
- 5 Agios Mamas Orthodox Church (p202)** Filling up on fresco-frippery at Northern Cyprus' best-preserved church.