

# The Island of Cyprus

## Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

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### Outline itinerary

<b>Day 1</b>	Fly Larnaca
<b>Day 2</b>	Larnaca
<b>Day 3/5</b>	Paphos
<b>Day 6/7</b>	Akamas Peninsula
<b>Day 8</b>	Fly London

### Departs

March/April

### Focus

Birds and plants

### Grading

Grade A/B. Day walks only, and usually straightforward.

### Dates and Prices

Visit [www.naturetrek.co.uk](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk) (tour code CYP02) or see the current Naturetrek brochure.

### Highlights:

- Around 140 species of bird typically recorded including Cyprus Wheatear, Cyprus Warbler & Masked Shrike
- Timed for the beginning of spring bird migration. Look for Rüppell's Warbler, Isabelline Wheatear, Wryneck & Hoopoe.
- A number of late-flowering orchids, including Pyramidal and Tongue Orchids
- Migrating waders such as Marsh Sandpiper
- Led by expert naturalist guides
- Can be combined with our 'Spring in North Cyprus' holiday



Images from top: Masked Shrike, Cyprus Warbler, *Orchis anatolica*



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## Itinerary

*Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather & other local considerations can necessitate some re-ordering of the programme during the course of the tour, though this will always be done to maximise best use of the time and weather conditions available.*

### Day 1

### Fly Larnaca and overnight

We leave from London's Gatwick Airport this afternoon onboard a direct flight to the town of Larnaca located on Cyprus's southern coast. Arriving late this evening, we will transfer directly from the airport to a comfortable hotel in the town.

### Day 2

### Larnaca

The Larnaca Salt Lake is on the outskirts of the town and from our base we are ideally situated to explore the numerous rich habitats, all within a short drive. We will therefore spend our first day in Cyprus looking for a wide range of waterbirds including the likes of Kentish Plover, Sandpiper, Marsh Harrier, and Yellow-legged, Little and Armenian Gulls. The nearby Kiti reservoir can also be good for birds if it holds sufficient water, and Kingfisher is often seen here. The sewage works and nearby beach are also a magnet for birds and make an interesting habitats for flowers too!

### Day 3

### Paphos

Today we transfer to our next base in Paphos, stopping along the way to explore the Akrotiri Salt Lake and associated Fasouri Marsh. The Akrotiri Salt Lake is the largest inland body of water on the island, and home to a variety of waders and other waterbirds. More than 50% of the lake is less than 30 centimetres deep, creating an ideal habitat for such species as Marsh Sandpiper, Wood Sandpiper, Curlew Sandpiper, Little and Temminck's Stints and Collared Pratincole. All three 'marsh terns' (Black, White-winged and Whiskered) can be seen hawking for insects over the water's



Whiskered Tern

surface, whilst flocks of Greater Flamingos feed in the shallows alongside plenty of Avocets and Black-winged Stilts. Pallid Harrier and Red-footed Falcon are regular visitors and the adjacent dry *Salicornia* scrub is home to breeding Spectacled Warbler, Cyprus Warbler, Cyprus Wheatear and Black Francolin, and also attracts plenty of migrants such as Red-throated Pipit, Isabelline Wheatear and various races of Yellow Wagtail.

The nearby Phassouri reedbed and Zakaki Marsh are also worth visiting, as they attract a wide variety to migrant birds to bolster the resident species which include Night Heron, Little Bittern,

Squacco Heron and Glossy Ibis. Great Reed Warblers sing noisily from the reedbeds and there's even a chance of finding a skulking Baillon's or Little Crake.

In addition to plants characteristic of saltmarsh, the drier ground at Akrotiri should hopefully produce several species of orchids including *Anacamptis pyramidalis* and Bug Orchid (*Orchis coriophora* ssp. *fragrans*). Amongst other plants here are Southern Red Bartsia (*Parentucellia latifolia*), *Anthemis tricolor*, an endemic chamomile, together with species of cistus and the related endemic Rock-rose *Helianthemum obtusifolium*. We spend the next three nights at a comfortable hotel in Paphos, and will enjoy each of our evening meals at a local taverna, which is around a 10 minute stroll from our hotel.

## Day 4

## Paphos

This morning we will explore the wetlands around the Asprokemmos Reservoir. Along with breeding Cyprus Warblers and Cretzschmar's Bunting, we will be on the look for a range of other species including Chuckar Partridge, Isabelline Wheatear, Marsh Harrier, European Bee-eater, Woodchat Shrike, Great Spotted Cuckoo and Black Francolin. By casting our eyes down as well as up we should see an interesting variety of plants including *Orchis coriophora*, *Onopordum cyprium* and *Scabiosa prolifera*.



Poppies and Crown Daisies, Paphos archaeological site

In the afternoon we will visit Paphos archaeological site for a cultural visit. Paphos was founded by the Trojan hero Agapinor and became the capital of Cyprus during the Roman period. The town is included in the UNESCO list of cultural and national treasures and the whole surrounding area is rich with important archaeological sites. Floor mosaics in the House of Dionysius are special attractions... and the coastal scrub around Paphos lighthouse is worth a look for grounded migrants! Woodchat Shrike, Tawny Pipit, Short-toed Lark, Thrush Nightingale, Rüppell's Warbler, Ortolan Bunting, Wryneck and several wheatear species are regular here and migrants are often seen coming in off the sea. Finally, before heading back to our hotel, we will visit Cape Depanum, a short drive to the north of Paphos which juts out into the Mediterranean creating another great trap for migrants.

## Day 5

## Diarizos Valley and Troodos

Today we will enjoy a complete contrast of habitat. Driving through a patchwork of vineyards and old settlements, we eventually reach the summit of Mount Olympus at 1,951 metres. If the weather is clear it is possible to see beyond the sweeping sandy bay of Morphu to the mountains of the northern range. A number of endemic flowers will attract our attention as Ravens cavort overhead.



We will walk along a selection of trails hoping to see Cyprus races of Crossbill, Short-toed Treecreeper, Coal Tit and Jay. Although it is too early for many of the endemic species found at high altitude, we can still hope to see a few early flowering species such as *Arabis purpurea* and *Ranunculus cadmicus* var *cyprius*, both of which are endemic.



Golden Oriole

Later, we descend to explore the lower hills below Mount Olympus, where birds and plants characteristic of vineyards and farmland will be found amongst a landscape of tiny fields, stone walls and scattered olive groves. Here, the weathering of the sedimentary rocks (chalks, marls etc.) have created productive calcium-rich soils and consequently most of the island's vineyards, carob and olive groves are found here. Cretzschmar's Bunting, Olivaceous Warbler and Masked Shrike, and possibly Golden Oriole are all

possible in the olive groves. After a full day of birding and botanising we will return to Paphos for our final night in the town.

## Days 6 – 7

## Polis

After a final early morning revisiting some of the best migrant traps around Paphos, we will head north to the our final base in the small town of Polis on the unspoilt north coast of the Akamas Peninsula, approximately 35 kilometres north of Paphos. Polis lies where the ancient kingdom of Marion once stood, an important commercial centre in the Classical and Hellenistic times. Our friendly family-run hotel is located on a beautiful site right on the coast and not far from the Baths of Aphrodite.

On the way there we will visit the little harbour at Agios Georgios, a site where migrants make landfall. The following day we will spend much of our time here exploring the beautiful Akamas Peninsula near our hotel. This is an area of outstanding natural beauty and has largely escaped the development that has blighted other regions of coastal Cyprus. According to legend, Akamas took its name from the Greek mythological hero of the same name, the son of Theseus, who came to Cyprus after the Trojan War and founded Akamantis. The area lies at the easternmost point of three major European floral zones and is therefore extremely botanically rich, including 35 endemic species together with a wide variety of other flora and fauna.

During our time in Polis we will be sure to include a coastal walk from the Baths of Aphrodite in search of birds and flowers. Species to look out for include Cyprus, Spectacled and Sardinian Warblers, Chukar,



Crocus Cyprius (endemic)

Crag Martin, Woodchat Shrike, European Bee-eater and Hoopoe, plus Turban Buttercup (*Ranunculus asiaticus*), and depending on the season a variety of interesting orchids. We will be based in Polis for the final 2 nights of our holiday.

## Day 8

## Fly London

We should have time this morning to take one final short walk near our hotel before returning to Paphos to check-in for our early afternoon flight to London Gatwick, arriving back into the UK in the early evening.

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## Tour grading

We will use our own minibus to travel around the island, and reach the areas in which we will be walking. This is a holiday of short, leisurely walks over generally firm ground. No luggage needs to be carried apart from field equipment such as binoculars etc. and a bottle of drink. All coastal walks are short, and punctuated with many stops. Mountain walks are on easy trails mostly following contours, so they are not steep or strenuous. Most walks are circular and therefore optional.

## Weather

We can expect a great deal of sunshine and temperatures on the coast will most likely be 20-25°C. It will be cooler in the mountains, and we will travel up to areas where snow is often still present in patches. At this time of year, cold and wet spells can affect the island and it will be wise to include some warmer clothes for such eventualities.

## Food & accommodation

This is a three-centre holiday. For the first 2 nights of the tour we will stay in a comfortable hotel in the coastal town of Larnaca whilst we explore the nearby birding sites. The following 3 nights will be spend in Paphos, where we enjoy our evening meals in a nearby taverna. We will then travel to Polis near the Baths of Aphrodite on the north coast of the Akamas Peninsula for the final 2 nights. Rooms in all three hotels have private facilities and all breakfasts and evening meals are included in the price of the holiday.

**Please note lunches are not included in the tour cost.** For our lunches, we mainly visit one of the numerous bakeries to by a sandwich or Cypriot pie, although we may sometimes visit one of the local tavernas, allowing those who wish to sample Cypriot cuisine to do so. Excellent bread, local cheeses, salads and fruit can be purchased locally. Please allow about £60-£70 for this.

## Tour Focus

We will enjoy the resident and migrant birds and interesting local botany along with other aspects of natural history and a little culture.

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## Your Safety & Security

Risks to your safety and security are an unavoidable aspect of all travel and the best current advice on such risks is provided for you by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. In order to assess and protect against any risks in your chosen destination, it is essential that you refer to the Foreign Office website – <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/cyprus> regularly prior to travel.

## How to book your place

In order to book your place on this holiday, please give us a call on 01962 733051 with a credit or debit card, book online at [www.naturetrek.co.uk](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk), or alternatively complete and post the booking form at the back of our main Naturetrek brochure, together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday cost plus any room supplements if required. If you do not have a copy of the brochure, please call us on 01962 733051 or request one via our website. Please stipulate any special requirements, for example extension requests or connecting/regional flights, at the time of booking.

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