

Go Slow ... in Southern Cyprus

Naturetrek 'Go Slow' Tour Itinerary

Outline itinerary

Day 1	Fly Paphos.
Day 2/3	Bird & botanical excursions from Paphos
Day 4/7	Bird & botanical excursions from Latchi
Day 8	Fly London.

Departs

March.

Focus

Birds, plants and other wildlife.

Grading

Grade A. Gentle day walks only.

Dates and Prices

See www.naturetrek.co.uk (tour code CYP05) or the current Naturetrek brochure.

Highlights

- A slow-paced, two centre wildlife holiday based in comfortable hotels
- Enjoy the beautiful Akamas Peninsula National Park
- Black Francolin, Rüppell's Warbler, Masked Shrike and endemics including Cyprus Warbler and Cyprus Wheatear all possible
- Botanical highlights include numerous orchids and Cyprus endemics
- Direct flights and just a short transfer to our comfortable base
- Time to relax and enjoy the area
- Led by expert naturalist guides



From top: Cyprus Warbler, Black Francolin, *Orchis italica* (David Watson)



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Introduction

Our programme of 'Go Slow' Naturetrek holidays aims to allow you time to enjoy the natural world at a more leisurely pace, and with a great deal more leisure time, than on a conventional Naturetrek holiday. This 'Go Slow' tour offers a relaxing week of birding and botanising on the Mediterranean island of Cyprus, which is usually bathed in warm spring sunshine during this season. We will initially be based for three nights in the historic town of Paphos, before moving to the small coastal village of Latchi, close to the beautiful Akamas Peninsula National Park on the western side of the island (split between 2 hotels to minimise the amount of time driving). From here we will head out each day on gentle natural history walks in search of migrant birds, flowers and a variety of other wildlife. Highlights may include Black Francolin, Rüppell's Warbler, Masked Shrike and the endemic Cyprus Warbler, plus orchids such as Tongue and Bee Orchids. At the end of each day there will be time to relax back at the hotel or go for a gentle stroll near the hotel or along the beach.



Cyprus Wheatear (Andy Harding)

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 Paphos

We depart from London's Gatwick Airport early this morning on board a direct flight to the town of Paphos, located on Cyprus's western extremity. We are due to arrive into Paphos in the early afternoon, from where we will the short distance to our first base, stopping on the way to explore a nearby beach. Whilst in Paphos, each of our evening meals will be at a local taverna, which is around a 10 minute stroll from our hotel.

Days 2 – 3

Excursions from Paphos

We will enjoy a leisurely breakfast each morning before embarking on our day's excursion, stopping to enjoy lunch, and returning to our hotel in the mid to late-afternoon most days, leaving plenty of time to relax or explore the picturesque surroundings. During these next two days we will explore the archaeological areas of Paphos, which are also excellent areas to see migrating birds and other wildlife. 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 in important archaeological sites. The coastal scrub around Paphos lighthouse it is also one of the best areas on the island for grounded migrants and as we

explore the site we need to keep our eyes open for Woodchat Shrike, Tawny Pipit, Short-toed Lark, Rüppell's Warbler, Ortolan and Cretzschmar's Buntings, Wryneck and several wheatear species. During our stay in Paphos we will also make a trip to the Akrotiri peninsula and associated Fasouri Marsh to see a range of waterbirds.

Day 4

Pegeia Forest

Today we transfer from Paphos just an hour or so north to our second base where we will stay for the remainder of our holiday. For the next 4 nights we will be staying at the comfortable Aphrodite Beach Hotel close to the 'Baths of Aphrodite', an attractive natural pool where the goddess of love was fabled to bath. We will spend much of our time here exploring the coastline, reservoirs and other habitats of the beautiful Akamas Peninsula, all within easy striking distance of our hotel, as well as a day into the Troodos Mountains. We will take our time transferring north, however, and on the way we plan to visit the Pegeia Forest, where we will enjoy a gentle walk through the lowland juniper and pine woodlands in search of an interesting range of orchids such as *Anacamptis syriaca*, *Ophrys levantina*, *Ophrys elegans* and *Serapias aphrodite*. Several species of *Cistus* should also be in flower, including *Cistus mospeliensis*, *Cistus salviifolius* and *Cistus creticus*. We will also stop by the rock pools where the semi-aquatic vegetation will be of special interest! The little coastal harbour of Agios Georgios is also of special interest as migrating birds often make landfall here, so it is well worth a visit before continuing on to the Aphrodite Beach Hotel.

Days 5 – 7

Excursions from Latchi

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 eastern-most 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. Black Francolin and Chukar both nest in the fields around our hotel and with a bit of perseverance we will hope for a glimpse of both, along with the likes of Corn Bunting, Woodchat Shrike, Spanish Sparrow and perhaps a migrant Collared Flycatcher. Overhead, we will keep an eye out for raptors which might include Long-legged Buzzard and Booted Eagle. The field near our hotel should be a mass of colour by late March, dotted with



Masked Shrike

Chrysanthemum coronaria, the red *Papaver rhoeas* and the pink *Gladiolus italicus*. We will also hope to see the blue *Anchusa azurea* as well as more orchids such as *Ophrys flavomarginata*.

We will keep the itinerary for the next couple of days flexible to take account of such factors as the weather, recent wildlife sightings and the advice of our guides. We intend to spend one day driving the short distance to the nearby botanical gardens at the Baths of Aphrodite. Here we will visit the gardens which hold a delightful collection of plants representative of the Cypriot flora, as well as the endemic *Bosea cypria*. The path then winds its way along dramatic high cliffs and through cool forests composed of *Pinus brutia* and *Arbutus andrachne* (Eastern Strawberry Tree). We can expect to see Turban Buttercup (*Ranunculus asiaticus*) along with masses of *Cyclamen presicum*, whilst a variety of bulbs should be in flower including *Bellevallia nivalis* and *Bellevallia trifoliata*. We will make a special effort to locate the endemic Cyprus Warbler, and may also see such birds as Cyprus Wheatear and migrants such as Eastern Bonelli's and Rüppell's Warblers, Isabelline Wheatear and Wryneck. The endemic Paphos Blue butterfly is also common along the trail, along with Cleopatra.



The coastal walk from the Baths of Aphrodite

On a clear day we will leave the coast behind and travel a little further afield before ascending into the Troodos Mountains for a visit to Stavros tis Psokas and the Pafos Forest. Here the pine forests have an understory of *Arbutus andrachne* and the endemic Golden Oak (*Quercus alnifolia*), home to a few different birds, including the endemic Cypriot races of Coal Tit (*Parus ater Cypriotes*) and Eurasian Jay (*Garrulus glandarius glaszneri*). At the forest station we will also see the endangered



Paphos Blue (Geoff Vowles)

Cyprus subspecies of Mouflon (which has been reared as part of a release programme). Then, as we slowly venture higher, we are sure to find numerous botanical highlights including *Orchis troodi*, *Dactylorhiza romana*, *Arabis purpurea*, and *Turritis laxa*.

The Cypriot countryside should be looking at its best by now, awash with colourful flowers, and so during our stay we will explore the hedgerows and olive groves in search of *Rubia tenuifolia*, *Cynoglossum creticum*, several helianthemums

and a wide variety of other spring flowers. We hope to find a few more orchids too, including Naked Man Orchid (*Orchis italica*).

On our final day we are likely to enjoy a gentle walk from Smygies into the village of Neo Chorio. The path slopes gently downhill and we will take our time, looking for bird and botanical highlights as we go, including a few new orchids including *Ophrys lapethica* and other plants such as the endemic *Onosma fruticosa*, *Funaria arabica* and *Lithodora hispidula*.

Day 8

Transfer Paphos; fly London

After a final breakfast we will transfer back to Paphos. Our flight is usually scheduled to depart early afternoon, which should allow time to explore a few more sites, or revisit our favourites, along the way.

Tour grading

Grade A - We will use our own small coach to travel around the island and reach the areas in which we will be walking. Most walks are within a short drive of our hotel, and over easy terrain, taken at a slow pace. We expect to walk an average of 2 to 3 miles per day. Please just note that some footpaths can be uneven and rocky in places.

Focus

Primarily plants and birds, plus other natural history and a little culture.

Weather

Cyprus usually enjoys a mild and sunny climate in March, with an average daytime high of 14-15°C, although 19-20°C is also quite common. Early mornings and evenings will be cooler, and the occasional cooler, wet spell can affect the island from time to time so it will be wise to include some warm clothes for such eventualities.

Food & accommodation

This is a two centre holiday and all meals are included in the cost of the holiday (though please note that we generally fly with EasyJet direct to Paphos where in-flight meals are not provided). We stay in the Axiothea Hotel in Paphos for the first three nights, and then the Aphrodite Beach Hotel in Latchi (just to the west of Polis on the north coast of the Akamas Peninsula) for latter four nights of the holiday. All rooms have air conditioning, private bathrooms, free Wi-Fi and hairdryers provided on request.



Coastal views from the Aphrodite Beach Hotel

Flights

For this tour we fly directly to Paphos from London's Gatwick Airport with EasyJet. 23kg of hold luggage is included with your airline ticket. Upgrades for speedy boarding, extra cabin bags and specific seat choices can easily be accommodated on request. Please contact the Naturetrek office for availability and prices.

Regional flights are often available from Edinburgh, Manchester, Birmingham and Bristol. As these flights often arrive after the Gatwick flight you may need to pay for a private transfer for the short distance to our first hotel (which we can organise) or to fly out a day early. A flight supplement may apply; please contact the Naturetrek office for further details.

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 a place on this holiday, you will need to read the Naturetrek terms and conditions in the back of our brochure or on our website, and then book either online at www.naturetrek.co.uk, by calling us on 01962 733051, or by completing and returning the booking form in the brochure together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday cost. If you do not have a copy of this brochure, please call us on 01962 733051.

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