

## Nicosia

### The 1000 Year Old Capital City In The Heart Of The Country

Lefkosia (Nicosia) lies roughly at the centre of the island, with a rich history that can be traced back to the Bronze Age. It only became Capital of the island in the 11th century AD. The Lusignians turned it into a magnificent city with a Royal Palace and over fifty churches. Nicosia has one unfortunate distinction - it is now Europe's only militarily divided city. It is also a constant reminder of the tragedy and injustice which Cyprus suffered in 1974. In the summer of that year Turkish troops, using the pretext of a coup orchestrated by the Greek junta against the Cyprus Government, invaded and occupied over a third of the island. Despite the efforts of the United Nations and repeated condemnation by the international community, that occupation continues to this day.

Today it blends its historic past brilliantly with the bustle of a modern city. The heart of the city, enclosed by 16th century Venetian walls, is dotted with museums, ancient churches and Mediaeval buildings preserving the nostalgic atmosphere of years past. Yet this old heart is split in two, leaving Nicosia the only Capital city to remain divided by force. The central Eleftheria Square links old Nicosia with the elegant modern city that has grown up outside the walls, where hotels, offices restaurants and gardens blend happily with the fine old houses and colonial buildings of this cosmopolitan city. PLACES

#### TO SEE - NICOSIA CYPRUS MUSEUM

Priceless and fascinating collection of Cypriot antiquities and art treasures from the Neolithic Age to the early Byzantine Period. Muscum Street Tel: 357 - 22 - 302189 **BYZANTINE MUSEUM AND ART GALLERIES**

Largest collection of icons on the island, covering the period from 9th to 18th century. The Art Galleries contain oil paintings, maps, lithographs etc.

Arch. Makarios III Foundation, Cultural Centre, within the Archbishopric, Arch. Kyprianos Square Tel: 357 - 22 - 456781 **FOLK ART MUSEUM**

Wide collection of Cypriot folk art of the 19th and early 20th century, including wood-carved objects, tapestry, embroidery, pottery, national costumes and hand-woven materials.

Within the Old Archbishopric, Arch. Kyprianos Square Tel: 357 - 22 - 463205 **NATIONAL STRUGGLE MUSEUM**

Documents, photos and other memorabilia of the 1955-1959 National Liberation Struggle. Near the Archbishopric, Arch. Kyprianos Square Tel: 357 - 22 - 302465 **HOUSE OF HADJIGEORGAKIS KORNESSIOS**

Originally a Venetian Building. It is probably the most important 18th century building in Nicosia. It was once the house of the Dragoman Hadjigeorgakis Kornessios. The house is being restored and will house the Cyprus Ethnographic Museum. Hadjigeorgakis Kornessios house has won the Europa Nostra award in 1988.

Patriarch Gregoriou Street near the Archbishopric **AYIOS IOANNIS CATHEDRAL**

Built by Archbishop Nikiforos in 1662, the recently restored 18th century wall paintings depict biblical scenes and the discovery of the tomb of Saint Barnabas at Salamis. Dedicated to Ayios Ioannis (Saint John). Within the Archbishopric, Arch. Kyprianos Square **FAMAGUSTA GATE**

The Venetian walls which completely encircle the old city have a circumference of 4.5 km and possess eleven heart-shaped bastions. There were only three entries to the city through gates, in the north, south and east. One of these gates, the Porta Giuliana, called the Famagusta Gate has been restored and is now the Nicosia Municipal Cultural Centre. The large imposing gate itself leads into a long passage with a central cupola, which cuts through the walls and comes out in the moat. On both sides are high, stonewalled guard-rooms. The restored passage and rooms are used for exhibitions, conferences, lectures and various performances. The old quarter of the town, close to the Famagusta Gate, is also being restored. Nikiforos Phokas Avenue Tel: 357 - 22 - 430877 **PHANEROMENI CHURCH**

Built in 1872 this used to be the largest church in Nicosia. The marble mausoleum to the east of the church contains the relics of the bishops and priests executed by the Turks in 1821.

Onassagoras street, within the old city. **OMERIYEH MOSQUE**

Near the Old Municipal Market within the walled city.

Converted into a mosque in 1571 by Mustapha Pasha, who believed that the original 14th century Augustinian church of St. Mary's, was built on the spot where prophet Omer rested when visiting Nicosia. Most of the original building was destroyed by Ottoman artillery. Engraved tombstones of the Lusignan period were used to re-floor the mosque. Remains of late Venetian building can be seen near the east end of the mosque.

Laiki Geitonia

East of Platea Eleftherias

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