

Cyprus
Did you
know that...



ΓΡΑΦΕΙΟ ΤΥΠΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΠΛΗΡΟΦΟΡΙΩΝ
PRESS AND INFORMATION OFFICE



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*Did you
know that...*

*Did you
know that...*

*Cyprus is known as
Aphrodite's birthplace?*



Aphrodite's mythical birthplace
“Petra tou Romiou” is an interesting geological
formation of huge rocks along one of the most
beautiful coastlines of the island, located on the
southwest coast of Pafos district.

According to a legend, the ancient
Greek goddess of Love and Beauty –
Aphrodite – was born here from
the white foam produced by
the severed genitals of Uranus
(Heaven), after his son Cronus
threw them into the sea.





*Did you
know that...*

*Cyprus is the third largest
island of the Mediterranean
after Sicily and Sardinia?*

One can drive from the easternmost part of the island to the westernmost one in less than four hours.

Area: 9,251 km² (3,572 sq miles)

Capital: Lefkosia (Nicosia)

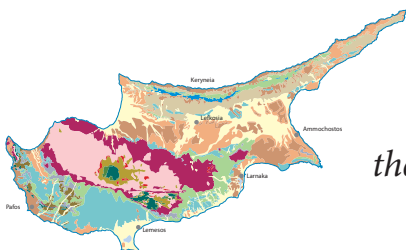
Population: 1.17 million

Official languages: Greek and Turkish

Currency: euro







*Did you
know that...*

*the highest peak of
the Troodos Mountain
Range is the bottom
of an ancient ocean
called Tythes?*

The Troodos mountain range is an ophiolite, a term used to describe a group of igneous rocks which make up the oceanic crust.

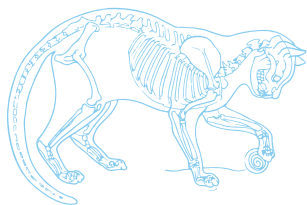
Troodos is part of a very ancient section of oceanic crust which was uplifted to its present position due to the collision of the African and Eurasian Tectonic Plates and the subduction of the former beneath the latter. It is considered the most complete and best-studied ophiolite in the world.

Due to its global uniqueness, Troodos acts as an incomparable magnet for the many foreign universities that visit it regularly for the purposes of scientific research and education.





*Did you
know that...*



*Cypriots had pets in
antiquity?*

Shillourokampos cat is the oldest known pet cat from a burial dating to 9,500 B.C.

The carefully interred remains of a human and a cat were found buried with 24 seashells, polished stones, and other decorative artifacts in a 9,500-year-old grave site on the Mediterranean island of Cyprus.

This finding from the Neolithic village of Shillourokambos predates early Egyptian art depicting cats by 4,000 years or more.

According to researchers, this joint burial indicates a strong association between human and cat and that the feline is possibly the world's oldest known pet cat.







*Did you
know that...*

*Cyprus was the first nation to
include its map on its flag?*

The flag and the emblem of the Republic of Cyprus are the artwork of the Turkish Cypriot artist İsmet Güney (1923-2009) who won the design competition in 1960.

The design was chosen by Makarios III, the then President of the Republic of Cyprus, with the consent of Fazıl Küçük, the then Vice President.

The flag came into use for the first time on August 16th 1960 when Cyprus was proclaimed an independent state.

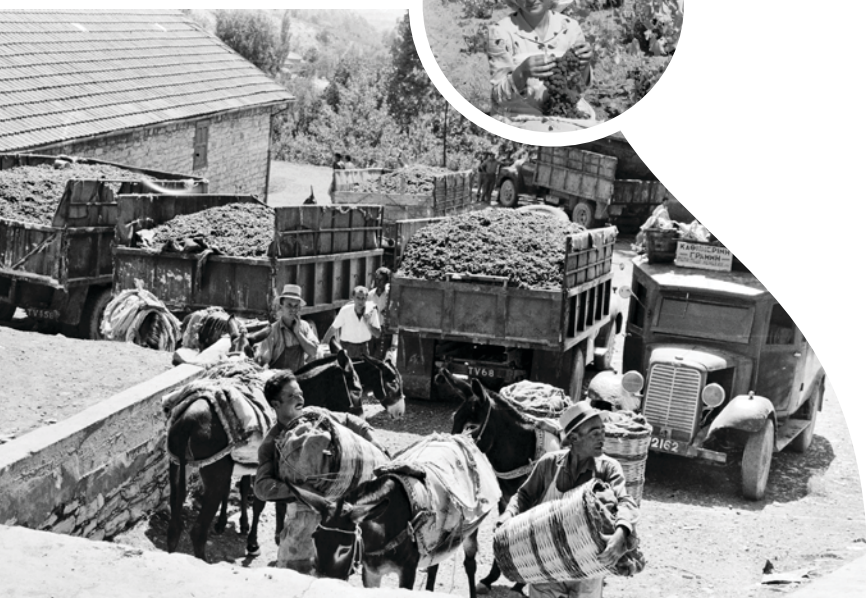
The flag features on a white background the shape of the island in a copper colour, referring to the rich copper ores of the island. Below the shape of the island two olive branches represent peace.

KIBRIS CUMHURİYETİ BAYRAĞI
KIBRIS SİLÜETİ = BAKIR RENK
YESİL ZEYTİN DAKI



1460
İSHET GÜNEY







*Did you
know that...*

*Cyprus has produced
wine since antiquity?*

According to tradition, people in Cyprus are considered the earliest wine producers in the world. The history of winemaking on the island can be traced back nearly 5,500 years.

In 2005, a team of Italian archaeologists concluded that some Chalcolithic wine jars which were discovered in the ancient site of Erimi, Cyprus, in the 1930s contained tartaric acid, a basic ingredient of wine. This provided conclusive proof that those 5,500-year old recipients were used for wine and that the first wines in the Mediterranean region were produced in Cyprus, long before the Pafos mosaics were made depicting Dionysus, the god of wine.

Homer praises Cypriot wines, while in many Greek works Cyprus is mentioned as “evinos”, meaning good wine producer. Around 800 B.C. the Greek poet Hesiod named cypriot wine as the Cypriot Manna, food from heaven. 4,000 years ago ancient Greeks drank wine during festivals celebrating the goddess of Love and Beauty, Aphrodite. Evripides called the wine used the “Cypriot Nama”, synonymous with the nectar of the Gods.

*Did you
know that...*

*Lazarus came to Cyprus after his
resurrection and became the first
bishop of Larnaka?*

Lazarus left Bethany after his resurrection and came to Cyprus because *“the chief priests decided to kill Lazarus as well (as Jesus), since it was on his account that many of the Jews were leaving them and believing in Jesus.”*

According to an ancient Cypriot tradition Lazarus arrived in Kition, Cyprus, where he was met later by the Apostles Paul and Barnabas on their missionary journey through Cyprus and was ordained by them as the first Bishop of Kition.

The church of Saint Lazarus we see today, dating back to the 9th and early 10th century, is in fact the third church built upon this site, where Lazarus had been buried. The church was known throughout the Christian world and was a necessary stop of the pilgrimage journeys to the Holy Land.

In 890, a tomb was found in Larnaka bearing the inscription *“Lazarus, four days dead, friend of Christ.”* Emperor Leo the Wise of Byzantium had Lazarus’ remains transferred to Constantinople in 898. In recompense Emperor Leo had the Church of Saint Lazarus erected over Lazarus’ tomb in the late 9th to early 10th centuries.



*Did you
know that...*

*Richard the Lionheart
named the Cyprus Commandaria
“the wine of kings and the king of wines?”*

Commandaria is an amber-coloured sweet dessert Cypriot wine made from sun-dried grapes of the indigenous varieties of Xynisteri (white) and Mavro (red). Its production dates back to the 12th century.

Commandaria was served at the wedding of King Richard the Lion-heart to Berengaria of Navarre that took place in the Cypriot city of Lemesos (Limassol) in 1191; it was during the wedding that King Richard pronounced Commandaria “the wine of kings and the king of wines”.

Richard sold the island to the Knights Templar who kept their military headquarters at Kolossi, Cyprus, named “La Grande Commanderie”.

When the Knights Templar began producing large quantities of the wine for export to European royal courts and for supplying pilgrims en route to the holy lands, the wine assumed the name of the region (Commanderie/commandaria). Thus it has the distinction of being the world’s oldest named wine still in production. In recognition of its long tradition, it holds a “Protected Designation of Origin”.

A legend says it that in the 13th century King Philip Augustus of France held the first ever wine tasting competition. The event, branded The Battle of the Wines (fr. La Bataille des Vins), was recorded in a notable French poem written by Henry d'Andeli in 1224. The competition, which included wines from all over Europe and France, was won by a sweet wine from Cyprus, commandaria, and was awarded the supreme title of "Apostle of wines that shines like a real star!"

Another legend says that the Ottoman Sultan Selim II invaded the island just to acquire commandaria.



Cyprus
very old
Commandaria



*Did you
know that...*

*the Hala Sultan Tekke in Cyprus
is one of the most important
holy places for Muslims?*

In the 7th century the Arabs attacked Cyprus under Mu'awyah, the emir of Syria. Umm Haram was the sister of the Prophet's foster mother – but also the wife of the head of the Muslim Navy Ubadah bin Saamit – and she volunteered to accompany him in the perilous journey.

When the Muslims disembarked, Umm Haram's horse suddenly got frightened and jumped violently causing Umm Haram to fall off and die as a result of her injuries. Umm Haram was buried on the very spot and a Mosque was built by the Ottomans, adjacent to her grave, in her honour. Hundreds of Muslims visit her grave every year.









*Did you
know that...*

*Cyprus has 10 Byzantine churches
listed in the World Heritage sites of
UNESCO?*



The Troodos mountain region of Cyprus hosts one of the largest groups of churches and monasteries of the former Byzantine Empire.

The ten monuments included on the World Heritage List, all richly decorated with wall paintings, provide an overview of Byzantine and post-Byzantine painting in Cyprus and bear testimony to the variety of artistic influences affecting Cyprus over a period of 500 years.





*Did you
know that...*

*the church of Panagia
Angeloktisti has mosaics dating
back to the 6th century?*

The church of Panagia Angeloktisti was built in the 11th century on the ruins of a 5th century early Christian basilica. According to a local tradition, the residents of ancient Kition, Cyprus, moved inland in order to protect themselves from the Arab invasions. They decided to build a church in honour of Virgin Mary (Panagia). While building the church, they realised that the foundations had moved to a different location overnight. After this miracle had occurred, the villagers changed the location of the church and noticed that an army of angels was coming down at night to build it; hence the name “Angeloktisti”, built by Angels.

The interior of the church is decorated with significant frescoes of the 13th century, icons dated to various periods as well as the famous mosaic of Panagia Angeloktisti. The mosaic is considered to be one of the most significant and elaborate wall mosaics of early Christian art, dating back to the 6th century. It depicts Virgin Mary standing, holding baby Jesus in her left arm, with the Archangels Michael and Gabriel on either side.



*Did you
know that...*

*the Cesnola Collection of Cypriot
antiquities at the Metropolitan Museum
of Art of New York was one of the first
acquisitions by the Museum?*

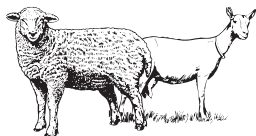


It was the purchase of the collection of Cypriot antiquities illegally exported in 1872 by Luigi Palma di Cesnola that established the reputation of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York as a major Museum of classical antiquities. Soon after the acquisition, Cesnola became its first director.





*Did you
know that...*



halloumi is the national cheese of Cyprus?

The island's most famous cheese – halloumi – is a delicious and versatile product that has a distinctive texture. It is fantastic both cold and cooked (grilled or fried). In fact, it is unlikely that you will not encounter this cheese on your visit to the island, whether it is in a sandwich, as part of a traditional “meze” or at breakfast!

This white, semi-hard cheese, a protected designation of origin (PDO) product, has been produced on the island for centuries. It is traditionally prepared with a precise quantity of goat or sheep's milk (mainly by the villages that produce it) in order to qualify as authentic halloumi. It can also be made with cow's milk (more commonly by the larger dairies), or even a mix of all three milks. Mint is often added to this salty cheese.



The oldest written reference to halloumi as “CALUMI” exists in a code containing five manuscripts of Cyprus and kept in the library of the CORRER Municipal Museum in Venice.



*Did you
know that...*

*the national flower
of Cyprus is the
Cyclamen cyprium?*

The *Cyclamen cyprium* Kotchy belongs to the family of Primulaceae and was first discovered by the Austrian botanologist Theodor Kotchy (1813-1860), who visited Cyprus with his colleague Franz Unger (1800-1870) and published in 1865 in Vienna a book called *The Island of Cyprus*.



The Cypriot cyclamen is a local endemic plant found in various types of ecosystems in Akamas, Stavros tis Psokas, Panagra, St. Hilarion, Agios Ambrosios etc.



The flowers of this cyclamen have a delicate smell and appear usually in the autumn, before the leaves. The plant appears from September to January. The botanical Congress of April 1966 declared the Cypriot Cyclamen as the national flower of Cyprus.







*Did you
know that...*

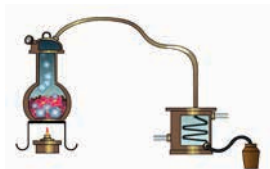
*Cyprus has more than
twenty rare species
of orchids?*

Cyprus has more than 45 species of orchids, 4 of which are endemic. *Ophrys Kotschy* (Melissaki in Greek) is an endemic orchid, listed as a priority species and widely found on the island. *O. Kotschy* usually forms small colonies of less than 50 plants. The whole population amounts to at least 2000 individual plants. Most of the *O. Kotschy* locations occur close to inhabited areas and some of them have already been extinct due to land development, thus decreasing the species geographical distribution.



In Greek mythology, Orchis was the son of an ugly nymph and a satyr. During the festive events that were taking place in honour of Bacchus, he committed sacrilege by attempting to rape a priestess. His punishment was to be savaged by wild animals. His grieving father prayed to the Gods to show compassion for him and they turned him into a frail and humble flower, the orchid.

*Did you
know that...*



*the rosewater of Cyprus is
amongst the purest one can find?*

Rose water is the distillate from the whole flower of the Damascene Rose, more commonly known as the Damask Rose. Rose water production has been carried out in Cyprus since the old days in the villages of Troodos, mainly in Agros village. It was sold during fairs and usually exchanged for other products that could not be produced in the area.

The roses are collected early morning and their petals are placed directly into a distiller. The derived steam passes through a cold tube, is liquified and collected. The rose water is stored away in dark-colored glass containers and kept away from sunlight.



Rose water is widely used in Cypriot cuisine, mainly in the making of sweets, such as baklavas, kateifi or rice pudding.



Rosa Damascena



*Did you
know that...*

*Cyprus has an average of
over 300 sunny days per year?*

Cyprus enjoys an intense Mediterranean climate, with long dry summers from mid-May to mid-October, and mild winters from December to February, which are separated by short autumn and spring seasons.

The island enjoys abundant sunshine, even in December and January. There is an average of six hours of bright sunshine per day, whilst during the six “summer” months, there is an average of 11.5 hours of bright sunshine per day.

The summer is a season of high temperatures with cloudless skies, but the sea breeze creates a pleasant atmosphere in the coastal areas.



*Did you
know that...*



the beaches in Cyprus have
the cleanest waters of the
Mediterranean Sea?



Cyprus boasts 76 Blue Flag beaches –
a world-renowned eco-label awarded to
beaches and marinas across the globe that
meet its standards as regards water quality,
safety and access for all. It is also crowned
“Cleanest Bathing Waters in Europe”, with a
consistent 100% score, year after year.







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