

We are organizing three excursions for the guests of our wedding.



Thursday, June 23rd (Half-day guided tour)

We will go north of Protaras to Famagusta. Famagusta is a city on the east coast of Cyprus. During the Middle Ages (especially under the maritime republics of Genoa and Venice), Famagusta was Cyprus' most important port city and a gateway to trade with the ports of the Levant, from where the Silk Road merchants carried their goods to Western Europe. We will cross into the Turkish side (bring your passports), drive to Famagusta. We will visit the Othello Castle in the old town (the modern part of the city has been occupied by Turkish army since 1974 and is currently an abandoned city), and then North of Famagusta, the ancient city of Salamis.



Othello Castle

Othello Castle was built in the 14th century by the Lusignans (who ruled the Kingdom of Cyprus) to protect the port against possible enemy attacks. It was also used as the main entrance to Famagusta. It used to be called "impenetrable fortress" due to it being nearly impossible to attack because of very deep ditches surrounding it.

After Cyprus was sold to the Republic of Venice, the castle's square towers were replaced with circular ones to suit more modern artillery. After these modifications, a relief of the Lion of St. Mark was engraved above the castle's main entrance. The name of Captain Nicolo Foscari, who directed the alterations to the castle, and the date 1492 are inscribed near the relief. Apparently, Leonardo da Vinci advised the refurbishment in 1481. The castle gets its name from Shakespeare's famous play *Othello*, which is set in this harbor town of Cyprus.



The gymnasium at Salamis

Salamis (Ancient Greek: Σαλαμίς, Modern Greek: Σαλαμίνα) is an ancient Greek city-state on the east coast of Cyprus, at the mouth of the river Pedieos. According to legend, the founder of Salamis was Teucer, son of Telamon, king of the Greek island of Salamis, who could not return home after the Trojan war because he had failed to avenge his brother Ajax.

Monday, June 27 (Full day)

We will drive south-west to Larnaca and continue on to Limassol. We will visit Kolossi castle and Kourion. We will have lunch by the beach and a swim (optional) at Kourion. Then, we will head further west and north to the Birthplace of Aphrodite and from there to Paphos, the most western city of the Island and have dinner at the old harbor.



Kolossi Castle

Kolossi Castle is a medieval castle built during the 13th century by the Knights Templar, not long after the island was conquered by the Crusaders. Although Kolossi Castle was once an important military stronghold, this function has long since been lost. On the other hand, the castle was also a notable economic center, due to the fertile agricultural land and wineries around it and is still famous for its produce and wines. The best-known of these is the Commandaria, a dessert wine from Cyprus regarded to be one of the oldest manufactured wines in the world.



Kourion City

This ancient city dates back to the 8th century BC when an ancient monument was built and dedicated to god Apollo Hylates, protector of the forests (hylates = lumberer). Inscriptions that have been found here show that Apollo was worshipped as the protector of Kourion and his worship continued until the 4th century AD.

Aphrodite's Rock/Petra tou Romiou



According to one legend, this rock is the site of the birth of the goddess Aphrodite, perhaps owing to the foaming waters around the rock fragments, and for this reason it is known as *Aphrodite's Rock*. The present name Petra tou Romiou ("Rock of the Greek") associates the place with the exploits of the hero Basil as told in the *Digenes Akritas*. Basil was half-Byzantine (East Roman or Romios) and half-Arabic, hence the name Digenes (two-blood/genes). Legend says that the Christian Basil hurled a huge rock from the Troodos Mountains to keep off the invading Saracens, which referred to Muslims, primarily of Arab origin, but also of Turkic and Persian/Iranic origin.

Paphos Fort and Harbor



Tuesday, June 28 (Full day)

We will travel to Nicosia, the capital of Cyprus, where we will walk the old streets, see the medieval fortification walls, do some souvenir shopping, have coffee and sweets.



Nicosia (Lefkosia in Greek, meaning “White State”) is today a vibrant modern city with a very long history dating back in antiquity, known as Ledra, who according to Greek mythology was a siren, one of the daughters of Acheloos and Melpomene. The city was a kingdom in the 7th century BC, that later came successively under the control of the Byzantines (330–1191), the Lusignan kings (1192–1489), the Venetians (1489–1571), the Turks (1571–1878), and the British (1878–1960). The city’s walled fortifications, originally erected by the Lusignan kings and later rebuilt by the Venetians, are still largely intact, and are among the best preserved Renaissance fortifications in the Eastern Mediterranean.



Later in the day, we will take a short trip (~70 km from Nicosia) to the beautiful Troodos mountains and visit the picturesque village of Kalopanayotis, with its cobblestone streets and footpaths, chapels and churches, dating back to pre-Christian ages, famous at that period for its sulphide mineral springs, dedicated to the Greek god Asklepios (*Asclepius*, god of medicine). We will have lunch here, after which we will visit the Kykkos monastery, the richest and most lavish monastery in Cyprus, founded around the end of the 11th century by the Byzantine emperor Alexios Komnenos (1081–1118), where the original icon of the Virgin Mother painted by Apostle Luke is kept. The icon is never looked at, and its top half remains hidden behind a

protective covering as it is said that whoever looks at it will be blinded. The last person to have seen the icon is the Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria Gerasimos, in 1669.



