

## Five hikes on Cyprus North

Cyprus, an island that has been heavily divided for decades with a Turkish (north) and a Greek part (south).

Cyprus, the birthplace of Aphrodite, in Greek mythology the goddess of love, beauty and sexuality. Cyprus, the land where the love between Adonis and Aphrodite began - as well as all the divorce troubles afterwards -.

We walked five day-hikes in Cyprus in the Turkish-occupied northern part. With all the restrictions and peculiarities.



### **Divided country.**

Since 1974, Cyprus has been divided into the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and Greek-oriented Southern Cyprus. Between them runs a wide buffer zone, partly guarded by UN soldiers. Northern Cyprus is recognized worldwide only by Turkey. The international community considers it occupied territory. The Turkish military maintains a large military force in northern Cyprus. You will encounter it on hiking tours. "No entry," "military territory." So detour, in the favorable case. Or: back to where you started. Attempts to restore unity and peace to the island have all failed in the past decades. But then again...one of Aphrodite's lovers was Ares, the god of war. Arbiter of strife, bloodshed and..... expert at sowing discord.

### **How to get there and where to stay**

Let's face it: the destination Cyprus was not prompted by our fondness for and thorough knowledge of Greek mythology. Or to see for ourselves where Aphrodite was born from the foam of the sea lapping against a rock was born. The real reason was far more profane: an offer from an airline for a return Cyprus including seven days of lodging and breakfast for 210 euros per person.

We are not Hades.



**move on please**

### **Preparations**

"We'll score a good hiking map at the hotel," was our thought. Not so. Northern Cyprus is occupied territory and the Turks, apparently, have every interest in keeping as many things as possible secret from "the outside world". As was already the case with the Lycian Way, the multi-day hiking trail across the peninsula on Turkey's southern coast. In this part of Turkey by the way, more from an underappreciation of hiking. It was the English writer Kate Clow who not only designed and maintained the Lycian Way but also provided the first maps of the route.

At home we could only find maps of Cyprus from the 16-volume series of the Cyprus Kyrenia Mountain Trail Association, scale 1:60,000. Of these, the colored hiking trails are reasonably reliable, the other indications - such as buildings, landscape, elevations etc. - on the other hand, are not. Don't expect a reliable marking system along the way, either.

Which led to the decision to have us taken to a certain place in the morning and at the late afternoon back to the hotel. That became a cab (S-class Mercedes, 1977, according to an expert) with driver, a vintage car where with the necessary stacking, folding and tying 6 passengers in it.

The alternative: arrange lodging along the way. That turned out to be prohibitively expensive. (And we already had a hotel)



**Mediterranean sea view**

## Five hikes

In a beautiful hiking environment with its rather sparse hiking infrastructure, in the morning we sought out a recommended attraction as a hiking goal. Like the hike to the Tarihi Manastir of Sinai Monastery. A ruined monastery along the northern slopes of the Kyrenia Mountains. And then walk south back to Lapta, to the waiting Mercedes.

Or a climb to the St Hilarion Kalesi (castle), possibly via Karaman. With phenomenal views of the azure blue Mediterranean Sea. Inside the castle a maze of tunnels, narrow corridors, staircases and gardens. A cross-father's castle. After the end of the Crusader era in the Levant (1291), many fleeing Templars found refuge here. You could see it as defeated and draining crusader.

Or a hike to or from the beautifully situated abbey of Bellapais. The literal translation could be "beautiful landscape," but there is also evidence that the name is derived Abbey of Peace. There's always something like that. Anyway: a monastery ruin at altitude in an idyllic setting. Possibly combined with a visit to Girne (Kyrenia), a port town. The port is guarded by the castle of Girne. Girne is said to be the most beautiful town in northern Cyprus.

Where the Mercedes can pick you up again.

Would you like to walk once in the footsteps of Richard the Lionheart then you can by climbing to the Buffavento Castle. King Richard I of England would the castle in 1191 have visited. The castle, also called Castle of the Lion, is highest and smallest Crusader castle in the mountains, at 995 meters. Surely the size had not been correctly estimated.

## Justification

I assume that the readers of all our previous blogs on this medium felt better informed felt about the (im-)possibilities of the hikes described than the reader who by now has come to got here from this blog. Cyprus North is an occupied territory with its attendant restrictions. And that is reflected in this text. Still, I hope to have given an informative first impression of an interesting and fascinating hiking area.

And who knows, maybe one day there will be a Zeus who, as with Aphrodite, will be able to calm down the resulting emotions and conflicts resolutely and resolutely.



Buffavento castle



**Kyrenia mountains**

### **General route tips**

- If you fly to Cyprus, you will first land at an airport in Turkey. Direct flights are because of the recognition issues not allowed.
- You can purchase a (mandatory) visa upon arrival. Just a matter of spending money.
- Cyprus has a Mediterranean climate. Temperatures are around 25 to 30 degrees and above and in the winter months around 15 to 20 degrees.
- In northern Cyprus, payment is made in practice with the Turkish Lira but they mostly accept also the euro.
- Wild camping in North Cyprus is not officially allowed.
- When crossing first look to the right, then to the left. People drive on the left here. Legacy of the British rulers (1878 - 1960).



**Mount of five finger**



**on route**



**Sometimes just the road, asphalt**



**View Buffavento castle**



**footpath at height**



**Kyrenia**



**St. Hilarion castle**