

Famagusta (Mağusa) & the Karpas (Kırpaşa) Peninsula



The area around Famagusta (Mağusa) is shrouded in history. The wide sweep of Famagusta Bay and the sprawling flat Mesarya (Mesaoria) was home to three major settlements: the Bronze Age city of Ancient Enkomi (Alasia), which existed during the 17th century BC; the Mycenaean tombs from the 9th century BC, which support the description of a flourishing culture detailed in Homer's *Iliad*; and the illustrious kingdom of Salamis, which prospered in the 6th century BC. In Venetian times Famagusta was the wealthiest city in the eastern Mediterranean, with numerous opulent churches. After Cyprus' independence, it became the centre of all tourist activity, thanks to its golden, sandy beaches and the tourist resort town of Maraş (Varosia). Famagusta suffered the consequences of the '74 division, like all of Cyprus, but while other towns managed to either carry on with their business or invent a new 'identity' for themselves, Famagusta's former glory faded and it became a quiet, student town. Varosia was famously cut off and deserted, and its ghostly, gaping tower blocks still represent what is perhaps the deepest scar of the '74 division in many Cypriots' minds.

The Karpas (Kırpaşa) Peninsula stretches above Famagusta like a long finger pointing to the Asian mainland. It is the quietest, wildest and least developed part of the country, with the island's most fantastic beaches. Travellers seeking something truly different in Cyprus will love the Karpas. There is no electricity beyond the scattered village of Dipkarpaz (Rizokarpaso), the accommodation is mainly in simple wooden huts reminiscent of Thailand, wild donkeys roam the fields, endangered species of turtles lay their eggs in the beaches' warm sand, and the package tours are far, far away. At the tip of the peninsula is an Orthodox monastery that is dear to the Greek Cypriot population. Many make the twice-yearly pilgrimage from the Republic to the monastery; despite the politics of division on the island, this pilgrimage has allowed Cypriots from both sides of the Attila Line to mingle for a few hours every year.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Gaze at the Gothic arches of **Lala Mustafa Paşa Mosque** (p207) in Famagusta (Mağusa)
- Walk and admire the historical grounds of the kingdom of **Ancient Salamis** (p211)
- Drive the length of the isolated **Karpas (Kırpaşa) Peninsula** (p214) and reach the land's end
- Swim on **Golden Beach** (Nangomi Bay; p215), the island's most stunning beach
- Walk up to **Kantara Castle** (p216) and admire the view from the heights of the Kyrenia (Girne) Range



FAMAGUSTA (MAĞUSA)

ΑΜΜΟΧΩΣΤΟΣ

pop 30,000

The walled city of Famagusta (Gazimağusa or Mağusa in Turkish; Ammohostos in Greek) has the melancholy air of a once-glamorous queen who has been forgotten by her courtiers. The city's roller-coaster history could warrant such a description. In the late 13th century, Famagusta became the main trans-shipment point in the region, and the city gained immense wealth almost overnight. A lavish and decadent lifestyle bloomed; more jewels sparkled in Famagusta than in all of Europe's royal courts, provoking scorn from angry and pious (or perhaps envious) foreigners who criticised the loose morals of Famagusta's citizens. This criticism was answered with a stampede towards spirituality, and the building of a great number of churches in the city.

The great city declined sooner than you could say 'Famagusta'. Following a bad turn in which the Genoese took over the city in the 14th century, utter decay set in with a siege that is said to have had the Ottomans firing more than 100,000 cannonballs in order to defeat and conquer the shattered city. Under the Ottomans, Famagusta rotted like a tooth. The ruined buildings have never been repaired, and walking around the city today feels like being in a strange, post-war, Gothic time warp.

But Famagusta peaked once more. It became Cyprus' top tourist destination in the 1960s and '70s; the resort town of Varosia (Maraş in Turkish), next to Famagusta in the south, pulled thousands of sun-seeking tourists every year. But, with the island's division in 1974, the town turned into a 'border zone', and took on its current guise of a quiet, student province. Varosia, deserted by its Greek population in anticipation of Turkish Army troops, became a large 'buffer zone', harrowing and hollow, with gaping, dark windows on its many tower blocks.

Present-day Famagusta presents a sombre cityscape. From the top of the Venetian walls, it looks bombed out or unfinished. A day trip to Famagusta is not to be missed:

its crumbling beauty will remain in your memory. But, try basing yourself elsewhere, or else the city's crumbling hotel scene will remain in your memory too.

HISTORY

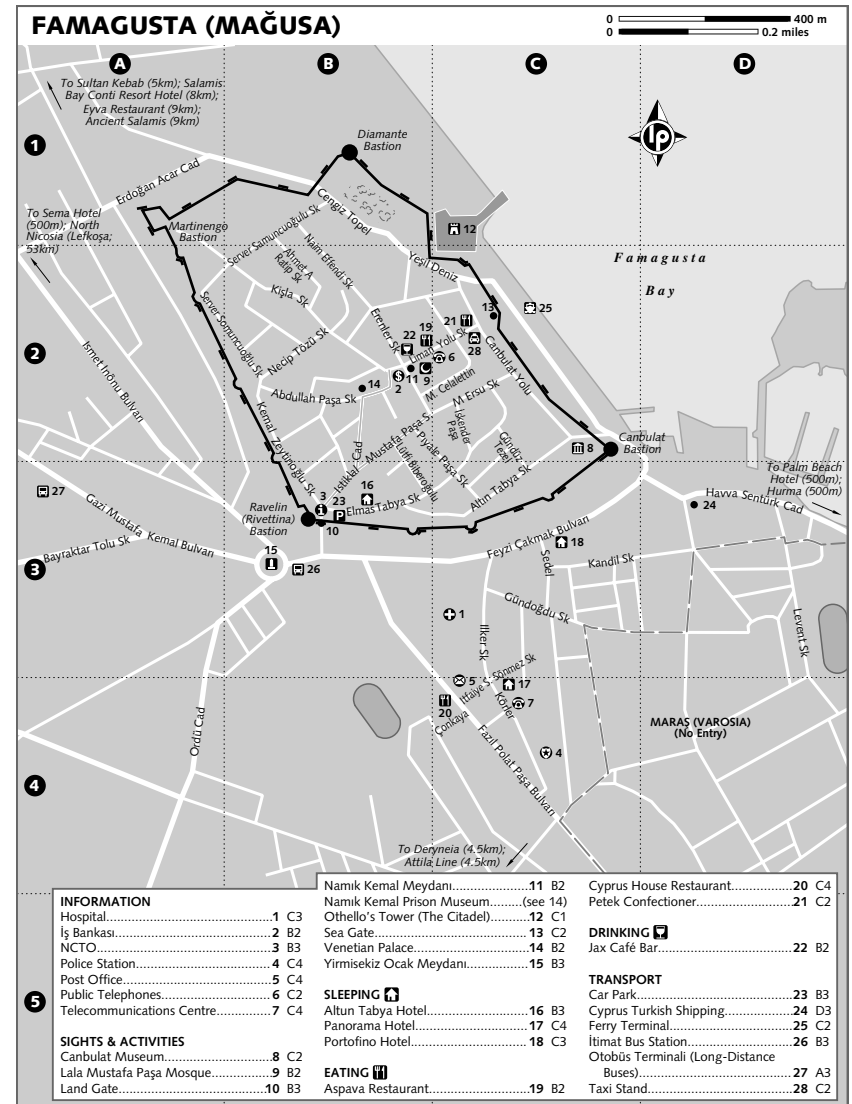
The current image of Famagusta is deeply connected to its past. The city was founded by Ptolemy Philadelphus of Egypt in the 3rd century BC. Its original Greek name was Ammohostos, which means 'buried in the sand'. The ramparts and harbour protect the town from indeed being buried in the sand, but the volatile landscape that surrounds the city, combined with Famagusta's current dilapidation, brings home the true origins of its name.

For a long time, Famagusta played second fiddle to the illustrious city kingdom of Salamis, standing just to the north. Despite an increase in population after the abandonment of Salamis in AD 648, Famagusta remained obscure and unimportant until the fall of Acre in 1291. At this point, the Christians fleeing the Holy Land took refuge in the city. From this sudden demographic boost, Famagusta grew exponentially and became one of the richest and most lavish cities in the eastern Mediterranean.

The fortunes of Famagusta took a tumble in 1372 when the Venetians and the Genoese had a dispute that resulted in the seizure of the town by the Genoese. This provoked an exodus of the city's wealthy and more illustrious citizens. Fortunes were never regained, even after the town was recaptured by the Venetians 117 years later. It was after this time that the huge walls and bastions were constructed, but even this belated measure did not prevent the capture of Famagusta by the Ottomans in 1571 following a bloody 10-month siege. Much of the damage caused during that siege is what you see today. The Turks have remained in residence in the Old Town – known as the Kaleici in Turkish – ever since.

ORIENTATION

Famagusta is not a difficult town to navigate, as the majority of your movements will be within or near the Old Town. Long-distance buses arrive at the Otobüs Terminali on Gazi Mustafa Kemal Bulvarı, on the west side of the Old Town. Minibuses and service taxis arrive at İtimat bus station, a



small parking lot 400m further southeast, just off Yirmisekiz Ocak Meydanı. This large square, capped by an enormous black statue of Atatürk, is the major landmark in the New Town and impossible to miss.

Across from Yirmisekiz Ocak Meydanı is the Land Gate, the easiest way into the Old Town. There is a handy car park just

to the right as you enter the Old Town via the Gate. İstiklal Caddesi is a pedestrian street and the main thoroughfare running through the Old Town to Namik Kemal Meydanı, the square in front of Lala Mustafa Paşa Mosque.

Arrivals by ferry from Turkey will dock at the port to the east of the Old Town.

Maps

The North Cyprus Tourism Organisation (NCTO) issues a free *City Plan of Gazimağusa* in English and Turkish. While it's lacking detail for the streets of the Old Town, it does give a good overall view of the city. Most of the main regional destinations are included on a smaller inset. You can get a copy from any NCTO office.

INFORMATION

Inside the Old Town, the İş Bankası on the main square opposite Lala Mustafa Paşa Mosque has an ATM. Money-exchange offices nearby on İstiklal Caddesi keep extended office hours.

Hospital (☎ 366 2876; Fazıl Polat Paşa Bulvarı) South of the Old Town.

North Cyprus Tourism Organisation (NCTO; ☎ 366 2864; İstiklal Caddesi; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Sat) Recently moved from the New Town to the White Tower within the city walls, at the Land Gate.

Police station (☎ 366 5310; İlker Körler Caddesi) Also south of the Old Town.

Post office (☎ 366 2250; Fazıl Polat Paşa Bulvarı) Not far from the telecommunications centre, south of the Old Town.

Telecommunications centre (☎ 366 5332; İlker S Körler) South of the Old Town. There is a clutch of phone-card telephones on Liman Yolu Sokak adjacent to the Lala Mustafa Paşa Mosque.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

From the top of Othello's Tower on the northeastern corner of the Venetian walls, Famagusta looks like a broken city. Its shattered churches and Gothic buildings punctuate the skyline, while low houses and winding streets make up the rest of this laid-back and crumbling sector of what was once Cyprus' most lavish and important city. A full day is recommended to take in the city leisurely on foot.

Venetian Walls

These impressive, sprawling defences define the extent of the Old Town. Colin Thubron, author of the last travelogue of the unified island, *Journey Into Cyprus*, mused over these walls, comparing them to Jerusalem's or Istanbul's. The walls' proportions (15m high and up to 8m thick in parts) are most certainly impressive. The walls hug the entire city protectively, and they were built to their present size by the Venetians in

the early 16th century for defence purposes. Despite their burly appearance, the walls failed to keep the Ottomans at bay, but they did manage to escape the havoc and damage wreaked within the city.

Like their counterparts in North Nicosia (Lefkoşa), the Old Town's walls were punctuated with 14 **bastions** around the roughly rectangular layout. While it is impossible to walk the length of the walls due to the military presence at various points, you can get a decent feel for them at the southern end near the **Land Gate** on the **Ravelin** (or Rivettina) Bastion. It was at this point that the Turks first breached the fortifications.

From the Ravelin Bastion the walls head northwards, passing four minor bastions, the **Diocare**, **Moratto** and **Pulaczara**, culminating in the steeply pitched **Martinengo** Bastion. This in turn leads seawards, passing the **Del Mezzo**, **Diamante** and **Signoria** Bastions, where it cedes into the impressive citadel, or Othello's Tower.

Further along, the **Sea Gate** on the eastern side originally opened directly to the sea. Today the wharfs of the modern port have extended the land bridge considerably. At the southeast extremity is the **Canbulat** Bastion, in which a Turkish hero, General Canbulat Bey, died in the siege of Famagusta. This corner of the walls now houses the Canbulat Museum (opposite) before looping back to the Land Gate via the **Composanto**, **Andruzzi** and **Santa Napa** Bastions.

Othello's Tower (The Citadel)

This **citadel** (Othello Kalesi; admission 6YTL; ☎ 9am-4.45pm) was built as an extension to the main walls of the Old Town on the northeast seaward side. Its name stems from a tenuous link with Shakespeare's *Othello*, which some think was set in Famagusta based on a stage instruction from the play: 'a seaport in Cyprus'. The Moor link may be a misunderstanding of the name of Cyprus' Venetian governor, Cristoforo Moro (r 1506-08), whose name means 'Moor'. In any case, the tower was constructed in the 12th century during Lusignan rule in order to protect the harbour and the Sea Gate entrance further south. In 1492, during the time of Venetian rule, the citadel was further reinforced by its transformation into an artillery stronghold in much the same way Kyrenia Castle was fortified.

Above the impressive entrance to the citadel you can spot the **Venetian Lion** inscribed with the name of the architect, Nicolò Foscarini. Yet another great name appears on Famagusta's 'celebrity list': it is said that Leonardo da Vinci gave advice on the refurbishment of the tower when he visited Cyprus in 1481.

The citadel consists of various towers and corridors leading to the artillery chambers, a large courtyard bordered on one side by a refectory and, above that, living quarters; both the refectory and the living quarters date back to the Lusignans. The courtyard has a stage for folkloric performances; on its far side is the Great Hall with beautiful vaults, whose sandstone walls are corroded by the salty sea air. There are ventilation shafts that look out onto the border ramparts, which lead to Lusignan corridors and sealed chambers. It's said that fortunes still lie hidden, buried forever by Venetian merchants in the face of the advancing Ottomans.

Other than wandering around the dusty corridors and the corroded sandstone walls, the main attraction is climbing up to the ramparts and enjoying the good views over the town, which are best sampled in the early morning or evening.

Lala Mustafa Paşa Mosque

This is the finest example of Lusignan Gothic architecture in all of Cyprus. It was built between 1298 and 1326, modelled on the Cathedral of Rheims in France, and it outshines its sister church in North Nicosia, the Church of Agia Sophia (now Selimiye Mosque, p176). It has been a **mosque** (freier Sokak; admission 4YTL; ☎ outside prayer times), or *camii* in Turkish, since the Ottoman invasion in 1571, and it dominates the skyline of the Old Town.

The Cathedral of Agios Nikolaos, as it was originally called, was the centrepiece of Famagusta's Lusignan heyday, and the last Lusignan king, Jacques II, and his infant son, Jacques III, were buried here. The church was damaged considerably during the Ottoman siege of Famagusta, when the twin towers of the church were destroyed. Afterwards, the Ottomans added a rather incongruous minaret, emptied the floor tombs, stripped the innards of all Christian accoutrements, and turned it into the Lala Mustafa Paşa mosque.

The west-facing façade is particularly impressive and easier to admire in totality now that the area in front of the mosque is a pedestrian zone. Three gracious portals point towards a six-paned window, which is decorated with a circular **rose**. The inside has been whitewashed in typical Islamic fashion, but the soaring Gothic architectural lines are easy to follow. Visits are allowed when prayers are not being conducted.

Venetian Palace & Namık Kemal Prison Museum

There is very little left of what was once a Venetian Palace in the area immediately to the west of Namık Kemal Meydanı. Known originally as the Palazzo del Provveditore, the palace now consists of some desultory cannon balls and a few arches supported by columns removed from Salamis. The one structure still standing is the former **prison** (admission 2YTL; ☎ 7.30am-2pm, also 3.30-6pm Mon) of Namık Kemal (1840-88) who was one of Turkey's best-known poets and playwrights. He was imprisoned here for six years after writing a play that was considered offensive to the sultan of the time. The square between the prison and the Lala Mustafa Paşa Mosque is named in his honour.

Canbulat Museum

The tomb of Canbulat Bey, who was an Ottoman hero, contains a small **museum** (Canbulat Yolu; admission 4YTL; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat) at the southeastern corner of the Venetian walls. During the siege of Famagusta, he ran his horse and himself into a gruesome protective device consisting of a wheel with spikes. He destroyed the device, himself and his horse in the process, thus precipitating the downfall of the then Venetian-held city.

The museum is a rather tired collection of cultural and historical artefacts, and a display detailing the 1974 campaign to liberate the Turkish enclave of the Old Town.

Maras (Varosia) Βαρόσια

The ghostly sight of the barricaded Maras district (known as Varosia in Greek) in southern Famagusta is one of this city's more haunting legacies, and is a lingering reminder of the dark days of 1974. Only a small part of the town is still inhabited, and the lights that still flicker do so alongside dark, deserted tower blocks. At some of the

windows of these buildings, you can catch a glimpse of the wind playing with a curtain – a remainder of what was once a residential town. Reports by UN forces and journalists who have been allowed in on occasion tell of light bulbs burning for years and uncleaned breakfast dishes, signs of a sudden departure from the apartment blocks.

Before '74, Maraş was a thriving community of Greeks, who also owned and ran most of the hotels in what was Famagusta's Riviera, overlooking some of the island's best resort beaches. Panic-stricken by Turkish advances into the North in July and August 1974, Maraş' residents fled in fear, taking with them little more than the clothes they wore. Most of them believed they would be returning within a few days when the emergency was over. As it happened, the Turkish army just walked in unimpeded and took an abandoned city. To this day, Maraş has remained empty.

Visitors cannot enter the area. Barbed wire fences and metal drums block the streets and prevent the passage of curious investigators. Rats, cats, snakes and weeds run the show now. Inside the town, hotels, shops and houses have remained untouched for 30 years. There are stories of a Toyota car dealership (or Alf Romeo, according to some reports) that apparently still has 1974 models, frozen in time, locked in the showroom windows. Nobody knows what has happened with the contents of Famagusta's Archaeological Museum, or whether the museum's collection is still on the premises.

Visitors with their own vehicles can drive down the western side of Maraş, alongside the fence, and peer in. Photography is forbidden. The perimeter road takes you almost as far as the Deryneia checkpoint, which, according to speculation, might open in the next few years.

Beaches

The best and most convenient beach in Famagusta is in front of Palm Beach Hotel (right), which nonguests can use as well. Look for the little 'To the Beach Club' sign south of the hotel, hard up against the Maraş barricades.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

The **International Famagusta Culture & Art Festival** (www.magusa.org/festival) takes place between

21 June and 12 July every year. The festival has a wide range of music (classical, jazz, world, hip-hop and reggae) by international and local artists, theatre, and something called 'the plastic arts'. Performances are staged at Namik Kemal Meydanı, Othello Tower and the Ancient Salamis amphitheatre.

SLEEPING

Famagusta's hotels are as dilapidated as its Gothic ruins. The following are some options, and aside from the ultra-swanky hotels (most of which are said to have been built for the purposes of money laundering), the level of comfort is low, and some of the prices too high.

Altun Tabya Hotel (☎ 366 5363; Altun Tabya Sokak; s/d UK£13/16; 🏠) Probably your best option (if you're on a budget) in terms of location and price, adding the fact that it has air-conditioning. It is on a noisy street, and the rooms are run-down, but each has its own bathroom, and breakfast is included in the price. It's inside the city walls: follow the signs from the Land Gate.

Palm Beach Hotel (☎ 366 2000; bilfer@management.emu.edu.tr; Deve Limanı; s/d UK£51/64; 🏠) If you want a good view of the Maraş closed zone, stay here. This was one of the few hotels to escape the sealing off of the ghost city immediately to the south, and is considered to be the best hotel in town. It has five stars, and decent, although by no means luxurious, rooms, as well as a hotel swimming pool. Its best feature is the sandy beach it is built on, which is just under your window. However, there have been reports from some travellers telling of shabbiness and things not working properly.

Portofino Hotel (☎ 366 4392; www.portofinohotel-cyprus.com; Fevzi Çakmak Bulvarı 9; r UK£35) The Italian song 'I found my love in Portofino' oozes out of the speakers when you look up this hotel on the Internet. But don't be fooled. You ain't gonna find your love in this Portofino. To the south of the Old Town, the only good thing about this place is the location. The rooms are spacious but very run-down, the bed sheets feel like plastic, the bathrooms are literally falling to pieces, and the breakfast is hurled at your table by a half-asleep waiter. It is also extremely overpriced, to say the least. Nevertheless, accommodation in Famagusta is scarce, and if you need a place to stay and the rest is all full, well... it'll do.

Sema Hotel (☎ 366 1222/1010; fax 366 1032; Gazi Mustafa Kemal Bulvarı; s/d UK£17/25; 🏠) A three-star modern block on the west side of the city, on the road out to North Nicosia. It has decent but unexceptional rooms with TVs and fridges, and there are two restaurants within the hotel. It's a fair distance from Famagusta's Old City and from any beach, so it's best if you have your own car.

Salamis Bay Conti Resort Hotel (☎ 378 8201; salamisbay@northcyprus.net; s/d UK£51/64; 🏠) Located 8km north of Famagusta, Salamis Bay is a luxurious five-star hotel with a large outdoor and indoor pool, an expansive sandy beach, bedrooms that you can swing several cats in, massage parlours, twinkling casinos and a Turkish bath. It's perfect if you're looking to stay in one place for a while and just relax in the sun. Rooms without a sea view are slightly cheaper.

Panorama Hotel (☎ 366 5880; fax 366 5990; İlker S Körlü; s/d UK£13/18) Another hotel that's only recommended as an emergency option. It is in a dark, run-down section of the New Town, close to the buffer zone, and is best reached by car. The owner is friendly, the 'reception' seems like a gathering place for men with moustaches watching the telly, and the rooms are pretty basic. Breakfast is not included in the room rate.

EATING

Eyva Restaurant (☎ 378 8235; Salamis Yolu; mains 12-15YTL; 🍴 dinner) Perfect for an evening-long dinner and music affair, traditional Cypriot style. It's best on weekends when live Greek and Turkish music gets going, and undoubtedly, a bit of dancing too. This is also a brilliant place to eat *kleftiko* (oven-baked lamb), freshly cooked and made to order, so you must order it a day in advance. The food and music spectacle costs 20YTL. To get here, take the road to Ancient Salamis; it's on your left at the Salamis junction.

Cyprus House Restaurant (☎ 366 4845; Fazıl Polat Paşa Bulvarı; mains 8 YTL; 🍴 dinner) An old mansion in the New Town, with a cool, shady dining area. The kebab dishes are highly recommended, and you might get a belly dancer thrown in for good measure. It's about 400m southeast of Yirmisekiz Ocak Meydanı.

Hurma (☎ 366 4624; Kemal Server Sokak 17; mains 12-16YTL; 🍴 dinner) A stylish restaurant in a hacienda-style house, with tall palm trees guarding the front, and a tranquil terrace at

the back where you eat and watch the sea – pure romance. The food is rather more *haute* than in most places, with things like *escargots* (snails), and fresh fish (25YTL to 30YTL) on the menu. This place is almost next door to the Palm Beach Hotel, which explains the prices.

Aspava Restaurant (☎ 366 6037; Liman Yolu Sokak 19; kebabs 10YTL; 🍴 lunch & dinner) Succulent shish kebabs wait to be grilled under the glass counter, but you can also opt for mixed grills (15YTL) or meze, of course. Food is served in a vine-covered garden, looking onto the square, and the service is friendly and attentive.

Petek Confectioner (☎ 366 7104; Yeşil Deniz Sokak 1; 'Petekburger' & Coke 5YTL; 🍴 10am-11pm) A temple to all things saccharine. Turkish Delight is stacked up in multicoloured spirals and circles, geometrical rows and columns. There are honey cakes, nut cakes, chocolate cakes and all sorts of cakes for you to dip into and try a piece. Petek also serves burgers, and has foreign papers (not daily). It's at the eastern end of Liman Yolu Sokak.

Sultan Kebab (☎ 365 1961; kebabs 7YTL; 🍴 24hrs) About 5km from Famagusta, on the road to Ancient Salamis, this place is nothing to look at, but the kebabs are a killer. It's open 24 hours and there are customers eating kebabs here around the clock. Try the *Adana* kebab (spiced lamb) and a pot of *ayran*, the local yoghurt drink.

DRINKING

Famagusta is pretty dead when it comes to drinking or entertainment. The road going past the university and towards Salamis is packed with bars and cafés that all look like each other.

For a drink amid the ruins, try is **Jax Café Bar** (☎ 0533 864 6724; 6 Erenler Sokak), a bar in an old vault, with a back garden and a relaxed atmosphere, in the Old City.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Boat

The ferries to Mersin in Turkey leave from the port east of the Old Town on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays at 9pm; the trip takes about 10 hours. One-way tickets cost 50YTL (students 37.5YTL) per person and 65YTL per car, including departure tax. The ticket agents is **Cyprus Turkish Shipping** (☎ 366 5786; cyppship@superonline.com; Bulent Ecevit Bulvarı).

Bus

The city's main bus station is **Otobüs Terminali** (Gazi Mustafa Kemal Bulvarı); services go to North Nicosia, Kyrenia (Girne) and Yenierenköy (Yiallousa) via Boğaz (Bogazi).

Minibuses for North Nicosia (2YTŁ, 45 minutes) depart frequently from the İtımata bus station on the south side of Yirmisekiz Ocak.

Also from here, minibuses for Kyrenia leave every half hour or so (2.50YTŁ, one hour).

GETTING AROUND

There are a couple of private taxi companies that operate in and around Famagusta. **Barış Taxis** (☎ 366 2349) operates a fleet of modern air-conditioned Mercedes taxis around the city and further afield.

Tariffs are generally fixed, but make sure you know the fare before accepting a ride. There's a taxi stand in the Old Town, near the Sea Gate.

There are no public buses within the city, but all the major sights and services are within walking distance anyway.

AROUND FAMAGUSTA

The sites around Famagusta are all around 9km to 10km north of the town. If you have a car, though, you can strike out further afield to the rarely visited northern Mesarya (Mesaoria) villages of Geçitkale (Lefkoniko) and İskele (Trikomo). You can also base yourself at any one of a scattering of hotels north of Famagusta, or at the little low-key resort of Boğaz.

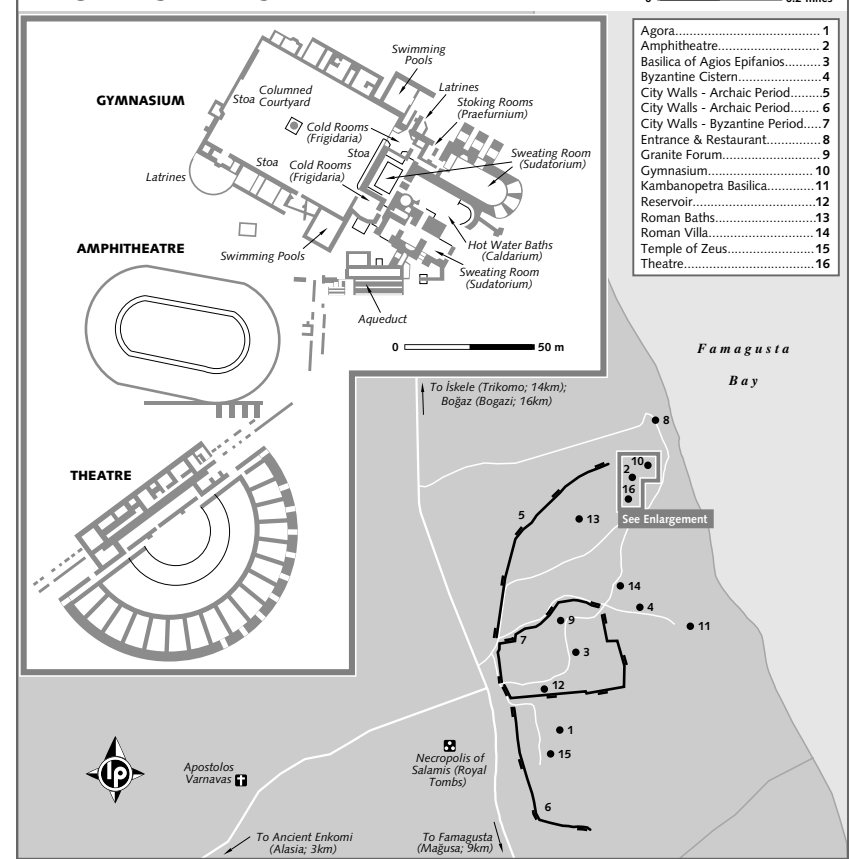
Beaches

A lovely beach stretches all the way along the Ancient Salamis site north of Famagusta, but the sea is frustratingly knee-deep for a rather long time. From Salamis onwards are some excellent beaches all the way to Boğaz.

Getting Around

The best thing to do, if you want to have some freedom and time to explore the sites around Famagusta (unless you have your own car, of course) is hire a taxi. All of the sites are close enough for taxi rides to be

ANCIENT SALAMIS



affordable. A return taxi from Famagusta to Ancient Salamis will cost about UK£8 (prices will be quoted in British pounds).

There are buses between Famagusta and Yenierenköy that stop at Boğaz and pass near Salamis, but taking them would limit your options a lot, especially because they stop running at 5pm. It is also quite inconvenient to be waiting for them in the evening on the busy Salamis road.

Cycling is also a good way to see the sites mentioned here. However, there is nowhere to rent cycles in Famagusta.

ANCIENT SALAMIS

One of the island's prime archaeological sites, **Ancient Salamis** (Salamis Harabeleri; admission 6YTŁ;

8am-7pm Jun-mid-Sep, 9am-1pm & 2-4.45pm mid-Sep-May) is not to be missed. It's extensive, and a minimum of half a day should be allowed for a visit. Take hats and bottles of water with you, as there's no shade within the site and the days can get very hot. Salamis is 9km north of Famagusta and is signposted (not very prominently) to the seaward side of the Famagusta-Boğaz highway.

Ancient Salamis was one of the city kingdoms of Cyprus. It was first mentioned on an Assyrian stele in 709 BC, where it was listed as paying a tribute to the Assyrian ruler Sargon II. Its period of major importance came during the 6th century BC under kings Evalthon and Evagoras when Salamis issued its own money and nurtured

a thriving philosophical and literary scene, with Greek poets as regular visitors to the royal court.

The Persians destroyed Salamis in 306 BC, and it was placed under Ptolemaic rule from 294 BC to 58 BC, when the Romans took control and the city flourished once again. For three centuries its fortunes waxed and waned, and in AD 350 the city was renamed Constantia and declared an episcopal see. Constantia suffered the same depredation of 7th- and 8th-century Arab raids as the rest of Cyprus, and remained largely abandoned and forgotten from that time onwards. Much of the stone from the ancient city was carted away to build Famagusta. Archaeological explorations of the ancient site started in 1880 and are still continuing.

Today, visitors can see a fair number of walls and columns, although you will need a map to make sense of the jumbled layout. Look out for the **gymnasium**, **portico** and the **pools** that served as an exercise ground, and were built close by the columned courtyard. They give an idea of the glory days of Salamis. The northerly portico is surrounded by headless statues, beheaded by Christian zealots who considered them symbols of pagan idolatry. The ones still standing here have survived various raids. Many have 'disappeared' since 1974, while some were taken as exhibits to Lefkosia's Cyprus Museum (p63).

The **baths**, a Byzantine renovation of Hellenistic and Roman predecessors east of the portico, have an interesting exposed under-floor heating system, and a fascinating **fresco** fragment of two faces, painted over the south entry. Two of the site's best **mosaics** can be seen in the south hall of the baths, one showing part of the story of Leda and the swan, and the other what appears to be a scene of Apollo and Artemis fighting the Niobids. Some think this may in fact be a battle scene between men and Amazons. Both date back to late 3rd or early 4th century AD.

The **theatre**, dating from the time of Augustus (31 BC–AD 14), held 15,000 spectators in its day. Earthquakes in the 4th century destroyed much of the theatre and its stone was removed for building projects elsewhere. Today it has been restored to some degree, and occasionally hosts summer events. The **Roman Villa**, originally a

two-storey structure south of the theatre, was made up of a reception hall and central inner courtyard with columned portico. The nearby **Kambanopetra Basilica** was built in the 4th century and consisted of a columned courtyard. An intricate **mosaic floor** is visible inside. The **Basilica of Agios Epifanios** was once the largest basilica in Cyprus and was built during the episcopacy of Epifanios (AD 386–403).

Do look out for snakes when you are walking around, particularly in the hot summer days. Since the site is rather deserted most of the time, and in parts quite wild, they tend to relax and sunbathe, frightening the walking visitor.

A sandy beach stretches along the site, and it is perfect for a dip after a hot day's exploring. There is also a handy restaurant for lunch. For accommodation, the Salamis Bay Conti Resort Hotel (p209) is nearby.

CHURCH OF APOSTOLOS VARNAVAS

This important Orthodox **church** (☎ 378 8331; church & museum admission 6YTL; ☞ 9am–7pm Jun–mid-Sep; 9am–1pm & 2–4.45pm mid-Sep–May) has had a privileged status in the hands of the Turks, who have kept an air of solemnity around it (and didn't destroy it). The Turks have been accused of a fair amount of desecration of Orthodox religious sites – and justifiably so in many cases – and many Greek Cypriots object to this church being turned into a museum. This bitterness is partly reinforced by the story of the three monks (and brothers), Barnabas, Stefanos and Khariton, who had lived in and governed the monastery from 1917. They tried to remain in the monastery after 1974, but left in 1976, unable to withstand alleged harassment by the Turkish authorities. They spent the rest of their days in the Stavrovouni Monastery (p151).

The church is dedicated to one of St Paul's good friends. Despite his name, Varnavas (Barnabas) was never an official apostle, but he is mentioned for his missionary work in the Acts of the Apostles in the Bible. He was born in Cyprus and carried out his missionary work here. The original church was built over the site of his tomb, which was discovered by Anthemios, the bishop of Constantia (Salamis), following a revelation in a dream. The current structure dates from the 18th century, though it does incorporate parts of the 5th-century original church.

The church today houses an **icon museum** and has a wide selection of well-preserved Orthodox icons, although none of them are particularly old. The oldest is called 'Herod's Banquet' and dates back to 1858.

There's also a small **archaeological museum** in the courtyard buildings, which contains an extensive selection of finds from Salamis and nearby Enkomi. It is also speculated that some of the contents from the Famagusta Archaeological Museum can be found in this collection, although this is, like many things in Cyprus, based on gossip and loose facts. The artefacts and the rooms are badly marked; clockwise from the entrance, the first room houses Bronze Age objects, the next has exhibits from the Venetian period, and there's a mixture of Ottoman and Classical periods in the final room. The most interesting exhibit is a statue of a woman holding a poppy, assumed to be the goddess Demeter.

The church is in the Mesarya hinterland, 9km northwest of Famagusta and close to Salamis. The church is well signposted off the Salamis road, and the turning is almost opposite the turning for Ancient Salamis.

NECROPOLIS OF SALAMIS

Commonly known as the **Royal Tombs** (Salamis Mezarlık Alanı; ☎ 378 8331; admission 5YTL; ☞ 9am–7pm), these are a scattering of 150 graves spread out over a wide area. This historic cemetery, dating back to the 7th and 8th centuries BC, confirms the account of Mycenaean tombs described by Homer in *The Iliad*. Kings and various other nobles were buried with all their favourite worldly goods, food and drink, even their favourite slaves, in order to make their afterlife a little easier. In one particularly gruesome reminder of this practice, two hapless horses were sacrificed after transporting a king to his tomb (No 79), where their agonised skeletons have been exposed to the public gaze. Most tombs have been looted over the years by unknown grave robbers, though at least three yielded enough treasure to make it to the Cyprus Museum in Lefkosia.

Further to the south and marked by a lone eucalyptus tree are the **Cellarka tombs**, also included in the admission price. These are smaller rock-cut tombs that were used for less noble members of the royal community. Each tomb has a flight of steps

leading down to the burial area in which the remains of the deceased were placed in stone urns pending their decomposition. After this, the bones were removed and the chambers reused.

The tombs are south of Salamis on the road to the Monastery of Apostolos Varnavas, and are prominently signposted.

ANCIENT ENKOMI (ALASIA)

ΕΓΚΩΜΗ (ΑΛΑΣΙΑ)

Heading further west from the Necropolis of Salamis, you will come across the Bronze Age city of **Ancient Enkomi** (Enkomi Ören Yeni; admission 5YTL; ☞ 9am–5pm), which dates back as far as 1800 BC. Most activity at the site, however, seems to have taken place during the Late Bronze Age period (1650–1050 BC) when Enkomi was a large copper-producing centre.

The name Alasia derives from Akkadian cuneiform slabs found in Tel el-Amarna in Egypt, in which the Pharaoh of the time received promises from the king of Alasia of copper in return for silver and other luxury items. Other textual evidence and a careful juxtaposition of data suggest that Alasia referred to either Cyprus as a whole or possibly just Enkomi itself.

The remains of the present site date from around 1200 BC and possibly beyond, when a rectangular grid layout was established and fine public buildings were erected. The arrival of the Mycenaean on the island at this time ensured the ultimate demise of Enkomi. Its inland harbour silted up, and it is thought that the last residents moved to the coast, where they founded Salamis.

The site is fairly extensive and requires a bit of walking to get around, but there is a helpful leaflet handed out at the ticket office with a map of the site and a compact review of its history.

ICON MUSEUM OF İSKELE

If you're heading up to Kantara Castle or cutting across the northern Mesarya plain back to North Nicosia from Boğaz, you can easily make a brief stop at the little crossroads village of İskele (Trikomo), birthplace of Greek EOKA leader Georgos Grivas. Here is the Panagia Theotokou, which has been converted into an **icon museum** (İskele İkon Müzesi; admission 4YTL; ☞ 9am–7pm) with a small collection of 12th-century to 15th-century

wall paintings and more recent icons from the 1950s and 1960s.

The building is a 12th-century single-sided domed church with arched recesses in the side walls. In the recesses you can see paintings of the **Virgin Mary of the Annunciation** as well as the **Prayer of Joachim & Anna**, who embrace each other as a girl peers curiously from behind a curtained window.

In the belfry outside the church, you can spot a marble inlay taken from the original iconostasis of the church.

The church is on the western edge of the village and is easy to spot.

BOĞAZ (BOGAZI) ΜΠΟΓΑΖΙ

Boğaz is a small fishing village about 24km north of Famagusta. It's the last beach halt before an excellent sealed road takes you inland to the Karpas (Kırpaşa) Peninsula proper. There is a little harbour, south of which is a stretch of developed beach with straw beach umbrellas and sun loungers for those few tourists on package holidays who base themselves in the low-key hotels in the village. For some reason, Russians seem to have taken a shine to Boğaz, and you are just as likely to hear Russian spoken in any of the beachside tavernas as you will hear German, as Germans make up the bulk of the remaining clientele.

Most of the hotels in Boğaz sit by the roadside, which makes them a little noisy, but the facilities are usually good.

Boğaz Hotel (☎ 371 2559; www.bogazhotel.com; r per person Jun–mid-Sep UK£21, mid-Sep–May UK£15; ♿ ♿) A comfortable three-star hotel with cream- and coffee-coloured rooms, a good-looking lounge with sofas, a small indoor pool that's good for children, and a Jacuzzi. At the time of research, an outdoor pool was being built by Boğaz Fish Restaurant, across the road. Rates include breakfast.

Exotic Hotel (☎ 371 2885; exoticmirillo@superonline.net; s/d UK£25/36; ♿ ♿) Entertainment is a top priority here, with a pool for adults and for kids, both equipped with water-splashed slides, and colourful playthings. There is live music in the evening, and table tennis, so you will never be bored here, that's for sure. It doesn't have the same beachside location as the Boğaz Hotel, but it is more modern and the rooms have satellite TV, minibar, phone and safe, and prices include breakfast.

Boğaz Fish Restaurant (☎ 371 2559 ext 103; fish dishes 20-25YTL) Part of the Boğaz Hotel, and about 200m down the road, this restaurant is popular with the tourists, so the food and the evening entertainment is mainly aimed at them. Fresh fish are caught daily, so try a fish shish or a nice portion of sea bass.

KARPAS (KIRPAŞA) PENINSULA

For travellers wanting to experience a different Cyprus, the uniqueness and beauty of the Karpas (also known as Karpasia and the Turkish version, Kırpaşa) Peninsula cannot be overrated. The 'end' of Cyprus really feels like the world's end, far from the urban and tourist bustle. Miles of rolling fields, endless beaches, wildlife, fantastic swimming, and accommodation that's as wonderful as it is basic: wooden huts on stilts facing the sea, with the sound of the waves lulling you to sleep. The sea seems bluer and clearer than anywhere else in Cyprus, and the curves of the coast lure you seductively. This is heaven for cyclists and rambblers. The wildflowers that burst into colour in the spring are mesmerising (see the boxed text, p45).

Hopefully, developers will not get their hands on this wild and scarcely populated region, a prospect wonderfully deterred by the lack of electricity anywhere past the small village of Dipkarpaz (Rizokarpaso). Travellers who stay in the Karpas often make do with oil lamps or lighting powered by generators. The government has turned the area into a vast nature reserve, which is the only way of preserving the colonies of turtles that nest on the broad expanse of its southern beaches.

Virtually untouched by the traumatic events of 1974, the Karpas remains unique in that it is one of the few places on the island where Turks and Greeks have continued to live alongside each other, particularly in the village of Dipkarpaz, although this is now home to only a score of elderly Greeks. The only other village of any size is Yenierenköy, with a small centre and a good tourist office, which was set up in the hope of generating a greater number of travellers to the region.

Twice a year, Greek Cypriot pilgrims from the South make the long trip to the tip of the 'panhandle' to visit the Monastery of Apostolos Andreas (p218); in return, Turkish Cypriots visit the Hala Sultan Tekkesi (p150).

Beaches

Golden Beach (Nangomi Bay) can be the sole purpose of a trip to the Karpas, it is so enchanting. The white sand dunes, the gentle curves of the beach, the sea so calm and clear, you may never want to leave, and who could blame you? There is no development, a wild donkey grazes here and there on the hills, and everyone who comes is after the same thing: peace. It is unlikely that Golden Beach is going to see any development in the future, since it is considered to be a nature reserve. This is good news for the turtles that nest here and on other beaches on the north side of the panhandle, and for fans of nature who like it just the way it is.

About 5km short of Zafer Burnu (Cape Apostolos Andreas), the beach sits on either side of a scrubby headland, and stretches for

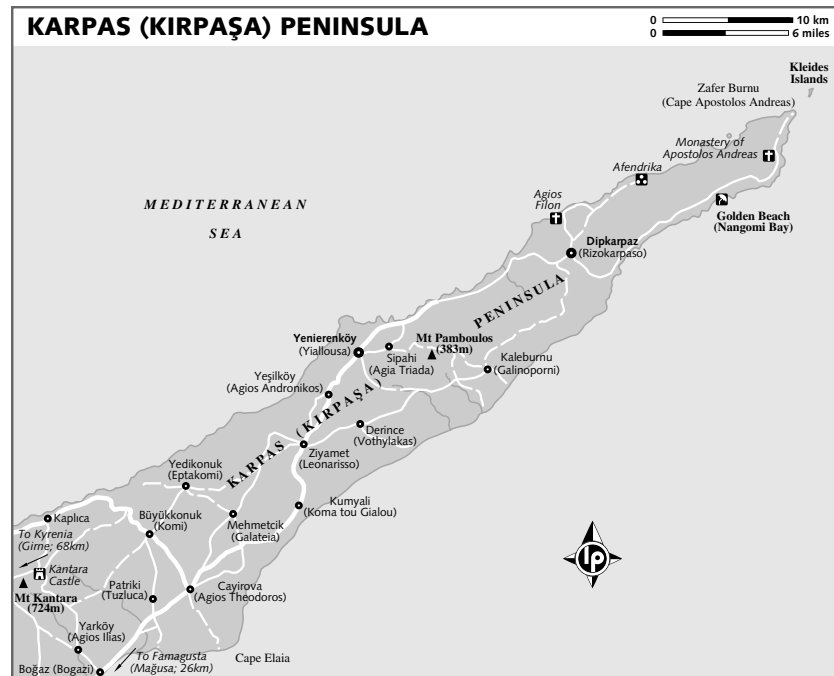
several kilometres. Reached by quite passable sand and dirt roads, there is a trio of beach restaurants with basic but comfortable huts for accommodation (see p218).

Another fantastic beach is the **Agios Filon Beach**, near the church and Oasis hotel and restaurant (see p218). This is a great place to catch the sunset, having seen the sunrise at Golden Beach, and is another turtle-hatching area.

Getting Around

The only public transport in the area is the bus from Famagusta to Yenierenköy. Your own transport is necessary to get around this region, unless you are prepared to pay for taxis. The main road into the peninsula is excellent, though signs to some of the sites are lacking in clarity and prominence. It is really worth spending a few days on the peninsula; the distances are quite long, and you will need to plan your time carefully if you want to visit all the sights, as well as get some swimming in.

There are a couple of hikes in the area; see p192 for more information.



KANTARA CASTLE

The best vantage point on the Karpas is from this Lusignan Gothic castle, one of three in Cyprus. **Kantara Castle** (Kantara Kalesi; admission 5YTL; ☎ 9am–7pm), is the furthest east, the lowest in elevation and the best preserved. You can see the sea on both sides of the peninsula and, on a clear day, the coast of Turkey or even Syria.

The castle's documented history dates back to 1191 when Richard the Lionheart seized it from Isaak Komninos, the Byzantine emperor of Cyprus. Kantara was used as a beacon station to communicate with Buffavento Castle to the east. Its significance faded in the 16th century when Venetian military strategists began to depend more on firepower than elevation for protection, and the ports of Famagusta, Larnaka and Kyrenia gained importance at the expense of the once-crucial mountain fortresses.

Today, you can see the quite well preserved northern section of the castle with towers and walls still resolutely standing. You enter the fortress by the outer entrance, which leads into a now rather overgrown **barbican**. Two squat towers, the **north tower** and the **south tower**, guard the inner

entrance where you enter the castle proper. Inside the castle you can make out the **garrison**, **latrines**, and a **cistern**.

The highest point of the castle complex is the **lookout tower**, from which flares would be lit to alert residents of castles to the west of any impending danger. At the south-western end, you can find more garrisons and the **postern gate**, used to catch would-be attackers by surprise.

You'll receive a useful map and potted history with your ticket, and you should allow an hour or so to make a relaxed tour and enjoy the views. Parents should keep small children under tight rein as there are some pretty serious unfenced drops, rough scrambling and uncapped holes to contend with. The view from the roof of the eastern tongue of the north tower is stupendous, but not for those suffering from vertigo – it is narrow and completely unfenced.

Kantara is best reached from Boğaz, and is at least a 45-minute drive. From Kaplıca on the coast, the ascent route is narrow but quite driveable, and there are regular passing places along the way. If coming from Kyrenia, allow at least 1½ hours for a comfortable drive. There is no public transport to the castle.

THE TALE OF TWO TURTLES

Turtles have been around on our planet for perhaps 200 million years, far longer than humans. There are eight species of turtles in the world, and two of these species live in the eastern Mediterranean.

The green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) and the loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*) have long lived in the Mediterranean basin and in particular on the island of Cyprus. It is estimated that the biggest population of the endangered green turtle lives in Cyprus, on both sides of the island, with a disproportionate number making the beaches of the north coast and the Karpas (Kirpaşa) Peninsula their favoured nesting grounds. The loggerhead turtle, classified 'vulnerable' by conservationists, also nests on these often pristine coastlines.

Gradual human encroachment into the turtles' territory means that the chances of survival of these lumbering marine animals has decreased over the years. Visitors to Cyprus' beaches should be aware that their presence at the wrong time (at night) disrupts the breeding cycle and contributes to the species' gradual disappearance.

In Northern Cyprus, Alagadı Beach 19km east of Kyrenia (Girne) is one of the turtles' prime breeding grounds. Golden Beach on the Karpas Peninsula and large sections of the vast Famagusta Bay are also popular breeding grounds, as is the largely untouched northern tract of the Karpas Peninsula.

When visiting a turtle beach, do so with caution and care. Some beaches such as Alagadı Beach are closed between dusk and dawn, and have the breeding areas staked out with protective cages. Place beach umbrellas as near to the water as possible to avoid crushing unhatched eggs. Do not use torches at night when hatchlings are emerging, and take only official 'turtle tours' if you are really keen to observe them.

Enjoy the turtles, but remember, they were here long before you.

YENIERENK Y (YIALLOUSA) ΓΙΑΛΛΟΥΣΑ

This is another village once populated by Greeks and now resettled with the former residents of Erenk y (Kokkina; p136) in the South's Tylliria region.

The local **tourist information office** (☎ 374 4984; ☎ 10am–6pm Jun–mid-Sep, 9am–1pm & 2–5pm mid-Sep–May) is run by an enthusiastic English-speaking host, who is happy to share his knowledge about the peninsula with the scarce visitors. A large wall map of the Karpas Peninsula shows the better-known sites, as well as a few that he has discovered himself. Ask about the large 'undiscovered' **cave tombs** between Avtepe (Elisi) and Kuruova (Koroveia), and the **sandstone caves** near Kaleburnu (Galinioporni).

The **Theresa Hotel** (☎ 374 4266; www.theresa-hotel.com; s/d UK€10/15) is a small seaside place with simple, neat rooms, all with balconies overlooking the sea, and spacious bathrooms. There is a sandy beach with parasols and loungers outside the hotel. It's 7km east of Yenierenk y, on the northern side of the Karpas. The hotel also has an in-house restaurant.

SIPAHİ (AGIA TRIADA) ΑΓΙΑ ΤΡΙΑΔΑ

The small and rather strung-out village of Sipahi (Agia Triada) is home to a tiny community of some 134 Karpas Greeks who, like their brethren in Dipkarpaz, cling tenuously to life on the peninsula despite the political odds. The village is also home to a rather well preserved set of mosaics in the now-ruined **Basilica of Agia Triada** (☎ 9am–5pm) dating from around the 5th century. Bizarrely, it is a bunch of small children who 'look after' the place now, and run after you with a bottle of water, which they pour over the mosaics to expose their colour. There is no entrance fee, but the little ones may still try to charge you, shouting the only thing they know in English: 'Tickets! Tickets!', until their older sister comes to shoo them away.

While little is left of the main structure, the basilica has extensive flooring, intricately patterned with abstract mosaics. Greek inscriptions at both the northern and southern ends of what was once the nave reveal that the church was financed partially by a certain deacon Iraklios and three other men, who did so in response to a personal vow.

The site is at the eastern end of the village and is best approached from the Dipkarpaz end of Sipahi.

DIPKARPAZ (RIZOKARPASO)

The remotest and largest village on the peninsula, Dipkarpaz is where the electricity fizzles out and the generators kick in. Here, a mosque and an Orthodox church sit side by side, although the church is a mute companion whose bell cannot be sounded. A Greek and a Turkish coffee shop ogle each other from across the street, and there are around 350 Greek Cypriots who still live in the village. A small shop and petrol station are the only real facilities. Dipkarpaz is now mainly populated by mainland Turks who work the land and live in poor conditions.

Despite, or perhaps because of its isolation, Dipkarpaz has two wonderful hotels: the Oasis at Ayfilon (see the boxed text, p218); and **Karpaz Arch Houses** (☎ 372 2009; www.archouses.com; r UK€30). About 500m from the centre of the village, the Arch Houses is in fact one large arch-house with 11 units, all with self-catering facilities, surrounding a green garden and a courtyard. The house is almost like a small community, with guests barbecuing outside their rooms, and the generally friendly atmosphere of a shared space. The beach is a few minutes' drive away.

AGIOS FILON & AFENDRIKA

Standing in silent sentinel on a rather deserted coastline, some 5km north of Dipkarpaz and right next to the Oasis hotel, is the well-preserved shell of **Agios Filon** (admission free; ☎ no set opening hours), a 12th-century church built over an earlier 5th-century Christian basilica. Abstract mosaics from the earlier basilica can be viewed outside the standing walls of the later church.

The site is that of **Carpasia**, an ancient place of some importance during the Hellenistic period and the Middle Ages. A **Roman harbour** was also situated here and the remains of the breakwater can be seen out to sea.

A further 7km eastwards will bring you to **Afendrika** (admission free; ☎ no set opening hours), a rather desultory site that was one of the six major cities of Cyprus in the 2nd century BC. What's left is a set of contiguous ruins comprising three churches – **Agios Georgios** from the 6th century, and **Panagia Hrysotissa** and **Panagia Asomatos** from around the 10th century. Nearby are a **necropolis** and the remains of a **citadel**.

MONASTERY OF APOSTOLOS ANDREAS

Twice a year, on 15 August and 30 November, coachloads of Greek Cypriots make the long trek to this **monastery** (admission free but donations accepted; ☒ no set opening hours), near the tip of the Karpas Peninsula.

Over the last 30 years, these were the only times when the Turkish Cypriot authorities allowed large numbers of Greeks to their side of the island, but nowadays, with eased border crossings, visiting is fairly straightforward. Nevertheless, the visit is undertaken with great fanfare and seriousness. The object of their pilgrimage is to visit this site where miracles reputedly take place.

The current main church dates from 1740, though additions were made in later years to the whole monastery complex. The monastery gained a reputation for miracles as far back as the time of St Andrew (the patron saint of sailors) who reputedly restored the sight of a ship's captain after arriving in Cyprus from Palestine. Attested miracles range from curing blindness, lameness and epilepsy to granting personal wishes. Before 1974, the monastery made a good living out of the pilgrims' votive offerings.

Today, with mass visits only twice a year, revenue is down and the monastery's fortunes look ever bleaker. It operates under the watchful eye of the Turkish Cypriot administration, with only a couple of Greek caretakers to look after the place, including a very old lady who cares for about fifty cats, all lounging outside the monastery.

In between pilgrimages, visitors may still come to the monastery during the day to be guided by one of the caretakers. Your contribution to the upkeep of the church will always be appreciated. There's a small market outside, selling cheap souvenirs.

ZAFER BURNU (CAPE APOSTOLOS ANDREAS)

A further 5km from the monastery, along a reasonable dirt road to the easternmost tip of Cyprus, the island ends (or begins) and drops off into (or rises from) the sea. You can gaze at the cluster of little rocky islets known collectively as the **Kleides** (Keys). If you have a 4WD, you can take a rough northern track from here back to Dipkarpaz, though the going can get rough in wet weather.

Most sleeping and eating places are on the expanse of Golden Beach (p215), ranging from basic to quite comfortable.

Blue Sea Hotel (☎ 372 2393; fax 372 2255; Dipkarpaz; s/d UK£10/15) Decorated like someone's house (it's actually the hotel owners' home), this is a nice place to stay, as an alternative to the more basic options. It's near Alagadı (Turtle) Beach, on the peninsula's south side, and is built on a rocky spur with ample shade from its shoreline trees. The hotel restaurant serves fresh fish caught by the hotel owner.

Seabird (☎ 372 2012; Apostolos Andreas; s/d UK£8/13) A kilometre or so past the Monastery of Apostolos Andreas is this get-away-from-it-all place, which is really more of a seasonal restaurant with a few basic rooms to rent.

THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Oasis at Ayfilon (☎ 0533 840 5082; www.oasishotelkarpas.com; s/d UK£18/24) As you're driving towards Dipkarpaz (Rizokarpaso), curious signs appear along the road, citron yellow and lime green in colour, with odd, poetic sentences like: 'Dine in the shadows of the whispering palms of ruined Carpasia', or 'Dawn zephyrs softly stroke the embers of the meltdown that was yesterday's sunset'. If you follow the world's only advert-by-poetry, taking the road going up on the left, past the mosque in Dipkarpaz, you'll get to Oasis. It's right next to the ruined church of Agios Filon (p217). Five luminous rooms overlook the sea. There's barely any decoration to speak of apart from a comfortable double bed, a mosquito net, and a small chest with an oil-lamp. The rooms are clean and minimalist, and look onto a small beach, and the bathrooms are shared, except for one room with an en suite. Perhaps the most memorable thing about Oasis, apart from the peaceful setting and the idyllic Agios Filon beach, is the Oasis restaurant. The fish in this place (15YTL per person), marinated in olive oil and grilled, is the best on the peninsula. The breakfast (included in the room price) is enormous, with toasted bread and haloumi (helimi), olives, tomatoes, cereals, jam, teas of all kinds, and so on. And at night, when the generators are switched off and the lights go out, the stars in the black sky shine like countless diamonds.

ORTHODOXY & ISLAM

While Turkish and Greek Cypriots may be separated by physical, human-induced barriers, they at least share the same God – even if they worship him via two different religions.

Cyprus is home to two major religious faiths: Eastern Orthodoxy and Sunni Islam. Much smaller religious communities such as the Maronites and the Jews also practise their faith on the island. Orthodoxy came to Cyprus with St Barnabas, companion and co-traveller of the apostle Paul in AD 45, while Islam arrived with the Ottoman conquerors in 1570.

Eastern Orthodoxy is a community of Christian churches that arose when the Greek-speaking Eastern section of the Latin-speaking Church split from Rome in what was known as the Great Schism in 1054. Orthodoxy means 'the right belief', and its adherents do not recognise the jurisdiction of the Catholic Pope. Instead, they recognise only the Patriarch of Constantinople as their leader. Other than dogmatic differences and an entrenched sense of separateness from Rome, the Eastern Orthodox Church is in many ways similar to the Catholic Church, and the two share some commonalities.

However, much of the Orthodox Church liturgy is steeped in tradition and conservatism, and little has changed since the schism. Church services are redolent with formality and ceremony, and often last up to three hours. Yet, at the same time, they are informal family affairs, with participants wandering in and out of the service at will, often exchanging small talk and gossip with other churchgoers. This is in stark contrast to the strict observances of behaviour in the Catholic Church, yet Catholicism has a more liberal approach to liturgy.

Islam is a monotheistic religion that came out of what is now Saudi Arabia in the early 7th century. The Arabic word 'Islam' means 'submission to God', and Muslims strive to submit their individual wills to the will of God alone. The religion of Islam was named in honour of its final prophet, Mohammed, after he was witness to a series of revelations about the one true God, Allah. These revelations are written up in the Islamic holy book, the Quran, and the dictates of the Quran constitute the basis for Islamic beliefs today.

Turkish Cypriots and mainland Turkish settlers in Northern Cyprus follow the Sunni branch of Islam, the traditional 'Orthodox' Islam that constitutes the majority in the Islamic world. However, Islamic life in Cyprus is far from the veiled world of Saudi Arabia or the strictures of Afghan Taliban Islam. Most Turkish Cypriots, while taking their religion seriously enough, are fairly liberal in the implementation of Islamic laws. Women dress much more freely than their Islamic sisters elsewhere, and alcohol is commonly available. Mosques can be seen in both Northern Cyprus and the Republic, while previously Christian churches have been recycled into mosques, a solution that is practical yet occasionally bizarre.

Clustered close to one another on Golden Beach are three low-key sets of wooden huts, where you can also set up your tent if you're camping. Inside the huts, you'll find double beds, mosquito nets and bathrooms. All have a laid-back cafeteria and restaurant, trees for shade, and the wonderful Golden Beach stretching for kilometres. Prices are the same for all three.

Hasan's Turtle Café & Restaurant (☎ 0533 864 1063; fax 372 2290; cabin s/d UK£6/12) is probably the best known and most remote of the cape's accommodation options. You'll find it signposted off the main road and located down a spiralling sandy track amid shady trees and sand dunes. Here, English-speaking Hasan Korkmaz, known in some quarters as the turtle man of Nangomi, runs seven

small huts and a generator-powered restaurant. Bring a torch and lots of books, and prepare to seriously chill out. Rates include breakfast.

Next to Hasan's are the other two of the trio. **Burhan's** (☎ 0533 864 1051; cabin s/d UK£6/12) has wooden bungalows with bathrooms, and **Golden Beach Bar & Restaurant** (☎ 372 2146; cabin s/d UK£6/12) is a kilometre or so further west, with similar services. Both are prominently signposted from the main road.

For a meal with a golden view, the Big Sand Restaurant camping and picnic corner, just before the Monastery of Apostolos Andreas, offers good views from high up overlooking the magnificent beach scene. Expect no more than reasonably priced meat and fish grills.

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