

# Lemesos & the South Coast



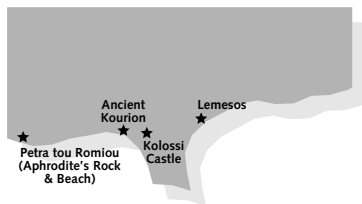
The physical heartland of the island, Lemesos and the south coast is one of Cyprus' richest areas for archaeological remains. In this region, there are also a dozen beaches to sprawl your limbs on; you can tap into the city's club scene and spend sleepless nights; or you can tuck into some sophisticated cuisine that just might ruin your beach-body. The Lemesos area shelters the country's second-biggest city and its main port, which also makes Lemesos an economic centre of the Republic of Cyprus. In addition, it holds one of the most important military bases in the whole of the Mediterranean region. The Troödos Massif meets the sea and presents its villages like offerings for tourists to explore. And tourists there are many; so many that sometimes you forget quite where you are. But fear not, there is also tranquillity to be found.

The most impressive and important archaeological site in the area is Ancient Kourion, perched on a bluff overlooking the azure waters of Episkopi Bay, west of Lemesos, which was significant for its role in the spread of Christianity throughout the island. Ancient Amathous, to the east of Lemesos, was one of Cyprus' four original city kingdoms. Richard the Lionheart first set foot in Cyprus in the 12th century – perhaps the island's first British colonist – and liked the country so much he kept it for himself. The English are still here, and occupy the whole of the Akrotiri Peninsula, where housing estates more reminiscent of England's home counties than the eastern Mediterranean are not uncommon.

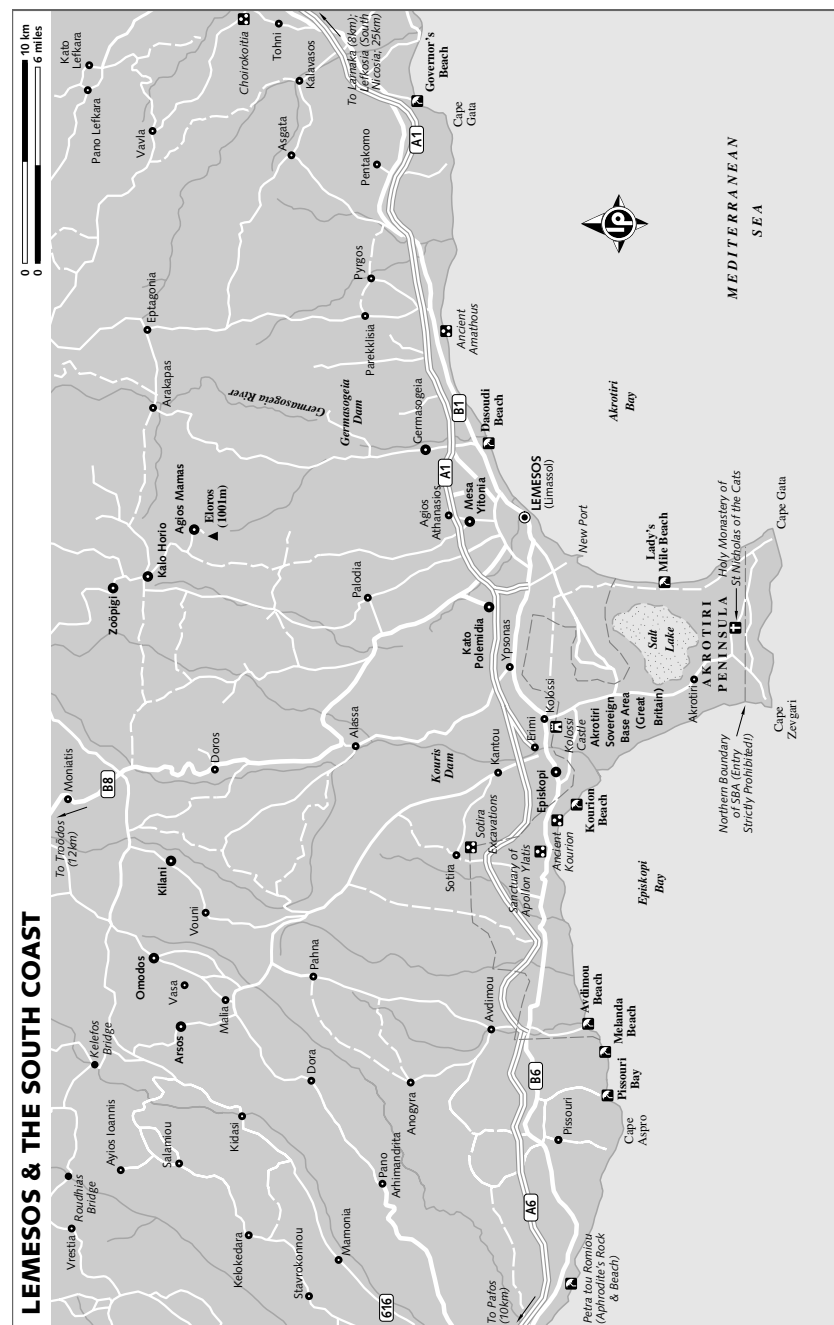
The area makes a great base for visitors wishing to be in easy reach of all of Cyprus. Take your time to explore its many facets.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Stroll around Lemesos' renovated Old City, a much underrated part of town, and visit **Lemesos Medieval Castle & Museum** (p84), the scene of a 12th-century wedding between Richard the Lionheart and Berengaria
- Enjoy an evening concert or play in the amphitheatre at **Ancient Kourion** (p94)
- Discover the roots of Commandaria, a sweet wine first produced by the Knights Hospitaller, at **Kolossi Castle** (p96)
- Swim and picnic at **Petra tou Romiou** (Aphrodite's Rock & Beach; p93), the spot where, apparently, the goddess Aphrodite emerged from the sea
- Eat in one of Lemesos' **Old City restaurants** (p88), and spend an evening at **Notes Studio** (p90) dancing to bouzouki music



## LEMESOS & THE SOUTH COAST



# LEMESOS

## ΛΕΜΕΣΟΣ LIMASOL

pop 94,600

Lemesos, still known to many as Limassol (Limasol in Turkish), is one of Cyprus' most underrated cities. Modelled on what seems to be an American seaside cityscape, the long stretch that is Lemesos has its busy main road running across the entire city, with cafés, shops, restaurants and general life going on to the north, while a long, mediocre but popular beach is lapped by the Mediterranean to the south.

There are two parts to Lemesos: the Old City, a much-renovated, historic part of town with stylish cafés, restaurants, shops and bars around the Old Fishing Harbour and the former Turkish quarter; and the tourist area (also known as Potamos Germasogeias), a rather abysmal stretch of town around 3km to the east of the Old City.

The second-biggest city in the country, Lemesos has several reputations: 'the city that never sleeps' is one, and the cliché is thanks to the tourist area's exuberant nightlife, rivalled only by that of Agia Napa; another is 'sex town', with the many 'cabarets' (basically brothels) that dot the area around the Rialto Theatre, recently reclaimed from the pimps and rebranded for respectable theatre-goers. Some see Lemesos mainly as an industrial and commercial centre with little to recommend it. But if you like a city that's rough around the edges, with great places to eat and drink, plus several spots for beach parties and fantastic sights, then pay a visit to Lemesos.

## HISTORY

Little is known about the early history of Lemesos; its neighbours, first Amathous and later Kourion, stole the limelight in the early days of civilisation in the area. In 1191, the crusader king Richard the Lionheart put Lemesos on the map when he arrived to rescue his sister and his fiancée, who had both been shipwrecked, and then mistreated by the ruler of Cyprus, Isaak Komninus. Richard defeated Komninus in battle and took Cyprus and Lemesos for himself. The city prospered for more than 200 years with a succession of Knights

Hospitaller and Templar as its rulers until earthquakes, marauding Genoese (1373) and Saracens (1426) reduced Lemesos' fortunes to virtually zero. The city was still creating a bad impression in the mid-20th century: Lawrence Durrell, writing in 1952 in *Bitter Lemons of Cyprus*, noted upon arrival in Lemesos that '...we berthed towards sunrise in a gloomy and featureless roadstead, before a town whose desolate silhouette suggested that of a tin-mining village in the Andes'.

Lemesos grew up quickly following the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974, as it was required to replace Famagusta (Mağusa) as the nation's main port. It was also obliged to shoulder the mantle of the tourist boom in the Republic. Originally comprising what is today known as the Old City, radiating out from the Old Fishing Harbour, Lemesos has outgrown its original geographic limits to now encompass a sprawling tourist suburb. The tourist centre is a riotous confusion of bars and restaurants, and you could be excused for forgetting that the sea is there at all.

## ORIENTATION

Lemesos is a highly walkable city. The road that stretches along the city's length has a good, well-lit walking and cycling path on the beach side. Lemesos' Old City is fairly compact, but the New City now extends for 12km east along the seafront, encompassing the main tourist centre. Buses and taxis arrive within a short distance of each other in the Old City; the New Port, where all ships dock, is about 3km to the southwest. There are handy car parks all along the waterfront.

## INFORMATION

### Bookshops

**Anna's Book Swap** (☎ 2559 0093; 28 Oktovriou) A fantastic little bookshop based on the ingenious idea of 'recycling' your books. You buy the first one at full price, and once you've read it and come back to return it, you get 40% towards the price of the second book. It's located by the Ermes Olympia department store.

**Kyriakou Bookshop** (☎ 2574 7555; Griva Digeni) A good bookshop; the best in town for English language bestsellers (all those beach-reads), with an exhaustive section on Cyprus-related titles.

**Marilyn's Book Swap** (☎ 9941 6823; Kitiou Kyprianou 51) The sister bookshop to Anna's Book Swap, functioning on the same principle.

## Emergency

In case of emergency, call ☎ 199 or ☎ 122.

**Police station** (cnr Griva Digeni & Omirou) On the Lefkosia road.

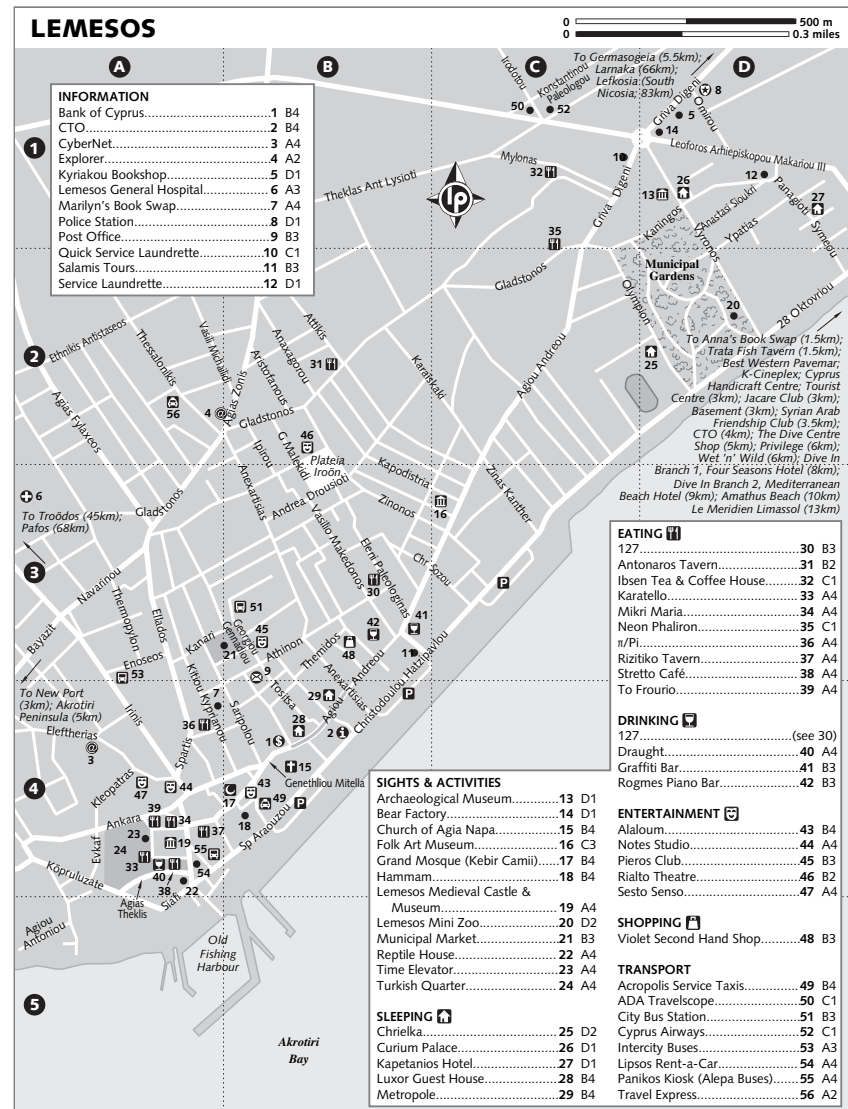
## Internet Access

**CyberNet** (Eleftherias 79; per hr CY£2; ☎ 1-11pm Mon-Fri, 10am-11pm Sat & Sun) A convenient Old City location.

**Explorer** (Agias Zonis; per hr CY£2; ☎ 10am-11pm Sat & Sun) Another Old City Internet café.

## Laundry

There are at least four laundrettes scattered around Lemesos. Costs range from CY£2 for a DIY service to CY£4 for a service wash done by the laundry staff. The two most central:



**Quick Service Laundrette** (☎ 2558 7056; Griva Digeni 145)

**Service Laundrette** (Anastasi Sioukri 20) Near the Curium Palace hotel.

## Medical Services

**Lemesos General Hospital** (☎ 2533 0777; Arhie-piskopou Leontiou I) Situated 1km northwest of the Old Fishing Harbour.

**Night pharmacy assistance** (☎ 1415)

## Money

You can change money on arrival at the New Port, but there are plenty of banks around the centre of the Old City and in the tourist centre equipped with ATMs for cash withdrawals.

**Bank of Cyprus** (cnr Saripolou & Agiou Andrea) Probably the most convenient bank in the Old City.

## Post

**Post office** (Kitiou Kyprianou) The main post office is centrally located in the Old City, a block north of the pedestrian zone. Poste restante mail is also held here.

## Tourist Information

**Cyprus Tourism Organisation** (CTO) (☎ 8.15am-2.30pm & 4-6.15pm Wed, Thu & Sat-Mon Jun-Aug) town centre (☎ 2557 1868; fax 2574 6596; cnr Nikolaidi & Spyrou Araouzou); tourist centre (☎ 2532 3211; fax 2531 3451; Georgiou 1, 22a) Has many branches in Lemesos. Opening hours outside of summer are subject to change.

## Travel Agencies

**ADA Travelscope** (☎ 2534 3111; evie@travelscope.com.cy; Konstantinou Paleologou 25b) Not far from the Archaeological Museum; offers a wide variety of services and can book discounted airline tickets for most destinations.

**Salamis Tours** (☎ 2535 5555; fax 2536 4410; Salamis House, 28 Oktovriou) Maintains its head office here, close to the CTO, and issues tickets to transport your vehicle to Greece or Israel.

## DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

We don't recommend visiting any of the city's 'cabarets', but if you do decide to go, keep in mind the stories of being charged several hundred pounds for a couple of beers at the end of a night. And woe betide those who refuse to pay.

## SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

### Lemesos Medieval Castle & Museum

The city's most popular tourist attraction is **Lemesos Medieval Castle** (Irinis; grounds admission free;

☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm Sun), and its alluring gardens, on the west side of the Old City, are a shady haven in the summer heat. The structure, built in the 14th century over the remains of a Byzantine castle, has been used and plundered by many throughout Cyprus' exciting history. The Venetians vandalised it; the Ottomans gave it a face-lift for military use; and the Brits used it as a prison during their colonial rule. According to history and legend, Richard the Lionheart married Berengaria in the chapel of the original castle in 1191, where he also crowned himself King of Cyprus and his wife Queen of England. The chapel and Byzantine castle have long since gone, and in their place now stands the current structure.

Although the castle doesn't really look like a massively grandiose structure from the outside, it's worth going inside and exploring. The gardens hide an old **olive oil press** that dates from the 7th to 9th centuries. The oil press is based on a simplified version of a Hellenistic and Roman trapetum, a mill that uses only one millstone.

In order to appreciate the castle, don't miss the **Medieval Museum** (☎ 2533 0419; admission CY€1; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm Sun). The museum building is an intriguing collection of vaults and air shafts, and its artefacts, transferred from the original Lefkosia Medieval Museum in 1974, are often fascinating. The museum's interior is divided into a series of rooms and chambers on varying levels. All have thematic displays of Byzantine and medieval objects, including Ottoman pottery, gold religious objects, tombstones, suits of armour and weapons. In the Grand Hall, to the right and on a lower level as you enter, there is a good display of black-and-white photos of Byzantine sites all over Cyprus. Climb up to a rooftop terrace, where you can get good views over the city.

### Archaeological Museum

The city's **Archaeological Museum** (☎ 2533 0157; cnr Vyronos & Kaniogos; admission CY€0.75; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm Sun) has a largish collection of pottery, and a collection of items dating from Neolithic and Chalcolithic times (primarily of shards and implements for domestic use) through to Mycenaean pottery. A multitude of terracotta figures exhibited are thought to be the remains of votive offerings. There is a display of classical pottery, jewellery

and oil lamps, as well as curiously modern-looking glass bottles and vials. Although it pales in comparison to Lefkosia's Cyprus Museum (p63), it's worth a browse; and if you've been doing nothing but sunbathing and clubbing for a week, the museum offers a nice, refreshing change of scene.

### Folk Art Museum

Lemesos has a somewhat mediocre **Folk Art Museum** (☎ 2536 2303; Agiou Andreou 253; admission CY€0.50; ☎ 8.30am-1.30pm Mon-Fri, 3-5.30pm Mon-Wed & Fri, 4-6.30pm Mon-Wed & Fri Jun-mid-Sep), which is housed in an old mansion not far from the city centre. It has displays of woodwork, traditional dress, jewellery and household utensils. There is a guidebook for sale at the ticket desk, which is the only thing that explains what you're looking at.

### Grand Mosque

Set in the midst of the old Turkish quarter, the **Grand Mosque** (Kebir Camii; Genethliou Mitella) is surrounded by palms almost as tall as its minaret. It is used by the remaining Turkish Cypriot population and Muslims from the Middle East who live in Lemesos. As with any mosque, visitors are requested to dress conservatively, leave shoes by the door and avoid visiting at prayer times. There are no fixed opening hours – if the gate is open, step inside the courtyard and take a look.

### Hammam

This tiny **hammam** (☎ 9947 4251; Loutron 3; steam bath & sauna/massage CY€5; ☎ 2-10pm) is located near the mosque. It isn't really a tourist site, and visitors are not encouraged to go in and 'have a look', since many count on privacy when going in for a steam bath. Don't go there expecting any luxury; it's a back-to-basics place where people go to relax. Keep in mind that all sessions are mixed. Also on offer are full-body massages, shiatsu, Swedish massage, Indian head massage, and anti-stress massages for CY€10.

## LEMESOS FOR CHILDREN

### Time Elevator

You'll see lots of advertisements for the **Time Elevator** (☎ 2576 2828; fax 2576 2829; Vasilissis 1; adult/child CY€7/CY€5; ☎ 10am-8pm) in Lemesos, which is slightly worrying, but also symptomatic of the kind of lightweight approach to the island's history and culture by many a

package tourist, at whom this kind of thing is ultimately aimed. But the history of Cyprus, from 8500 BC to AD 1974 compressed into 40 minutes, is great if you're trying to force some history on your kids. You get water, wind and lots of jostling, so much so that it's recommended that pregnant women and sufferers of motion sickness should watch the show from static seats. Shows start on the hour.

### Wet 'n' Wild

As Lemesos' reputation as a 'good time gal' has to be maintained to compete with that of its younger sister, Agia Napa, so too Lemesos has to have a crazy water theme park. It actually has three, but **Wet 'n' Wild** (☎ 2531 8000; www.wetnwild.com.cy; 13 yrs & over/2-12 yrs/under 2 yrs CY€12.50/6.25/free; ☎ 10am-6pm Apr-Oct) is particularly special. It's in the middle of the tourist centre, and is set back a few hundred metres from the beachfront. There are raft rides, inner-tube rides, body flumes, speed slides, a 'lazy river', wave pool, activity pool, kiddies' pool and 'wet bubble'. And if that doesn't get your kids to sleep like logs at night, we don't know what will.

If you are coming to Lemesos by car, exit at the Mouhtagiaka exit (junction 23) on the A1 motorway. There's no public transport to get here.

### Bear Factory

Nothing to do with either the sea or Cyprus, but always guaranteed to make the little ones drool, are teddy bears. And here, at the **Bear Factory** (☎ 2534 1040; Leoforos Arhiepiskopou Makariou III; ☎ 8.30am-1pm & 4-7pm Mon, Tue, Thu, Fri, 8.30am-2pm Wed & Sat May-Sep, 8.30am-5.30pm Mon, Tue, Thu, Fri, 8.30am-2pm Wed & Sat Oct-Apr), children can choose the kind of teddy bear they want. They can choose the 'skin' or the softness of the material, how hard or soft the bear's 'insides' are, and even a 'heart'. Oh, and they can implant sound devices too. Then they get to choose its name, and watch it being sewn up, so they can feel the bear is truly their creation. And they get to take it away in its very own box, with, wait for it, a birth certificate! (Parents note: all major credit cards are accepted, so no wrangling.)

### Lemesos Mini Zoo & Reptile House

Also good for kiddies, although slightly small is the **Lemesos Mini Zoo** (Municipal Gardens;

## GOING UNDER: THE BEST DIVES IN CYPRUS

What's an islander to do with all that water? Well, dive in it, of course. If you love discovering remains, rocks or shipwrecks at the bottom of the sea, Cyprus is a perfect spot for a varied and interesting choice of dives. Either Larnaka or Lemesos is a good base for diving.

The prime location is the shipwreck of the **Zenobia**, rated as one of the world's top-ten diving wrecks. Situated off the coast of Larnaka, this sunken cargo ship is almost completely the same as it was when it sank in 1980. You have to be a qualified diver to go to the depths of 17m to 43m. The ship is around 200m long and still has its cargo on board. The fish have made the wreck their home, and you'll see beautiful creatures such as giant tuna, barracuda, amberjack and eel swimming in and out of the Zenobia's nooks and crannies.

Another fascinating shipwreck is the site of the **Vera K** in Pafos (10m below sea level), which touched bottom in the 1970s. It has since been used as a military practice target; and its two arches have served as a romantic background for underwater photography.

Officially called the Helicopter Wreck, a British Army Air Corps helicopter wreck is an attraction for divers off the coast of Larnaka. Located 16m below sea level, this place is a magnet for creatures like octopus, jack and groper.

A more recent wreck is **M/Y Diana** in Lemesos, a 50ft Russian yacht, discovered in 1996. It was found sitting upright on the seabed, 21m below sea level. Apart from being used as a training spot for divers for wreck and night dives, the yacht is home to elegant sea creatures like large squid.

The **Pharses II** wreck in Lemesos (21m below sea level) is so busy with marine life that you might witness some sea rage on this cargo ship. The wreck is around 1000 tonne in weight and is intact. It rests on its starboard, and entry is strictly supervised.

But it's not all shipwrecks under the sea. The Cypriot Mediterranean hides some beautiful underwater caves such as the Big Country (23m below sea level), a multilevel cave site near Lemesos, and Akrotiri Fish Reserve (9m below sea level), a dive ideal for the inexperienced but enthusiastic, also near Lemesos. You can hand-feed lovely fish, like groper, eel, sea bass, and sometimes octopus too. But if you love octopus, go to the obviously named Octopus Reef in Larnaka (10m below sea level), where schools of the multilimbed creatures relax in the water.

For serious divers, Mushroom Rocks (50m below sea level) offers a real challenge, as well as large-fish sighting. The name comes from the mushroom-shaped rock, growing from the sea floor near Larnaka. And for those who want to see some underwater ancient history, the **Amphorae Reef** in Pafos (5 to 10m below sea level) is the perfect place. There is an abundance of pottery lying around in the shadow of a massive ship beached on the reef, shed by this and other similar unfortunates.

If you're a qualified diver, you'll know what to do. But if you're in Cyprus on holiday and want to try it out, check out the island's best known diving company **Dive-In** (www.dive-in.com.cy), which has branches in Larnaka, Lemesos and Pafos.

Try-dives (in a pool) usually cost around CY£20 to CY£25. Internationally recognised PADI courses teach you the basics of diving in open water. They last around five days and cost between CY£180 and CY£190.

## TOURS

To stretch your legs, there are three different types of walk in Lemesos, all organised by the CTO. They're free, but it's wise to book in the high season.

'A Stroll in Neapolis, Nemesos, Limassol', at 10am on Mondays, takes you around Lemesos' historic centre, its monuments, craft shops, markets and traditional shops. As a bonus, local gossip from (some of) the CTO guides is thrown in.

At 10am every second Wednesday from October to April, 'Germasogeia: A Village Blessed by Water' goes to, you guessed it, Germasogeia village, where the water theme is covered by a visit to the village dam. You also get to see the village itself, its architecture and street life.

'Discover the Natural Environment of Germasogeia', at 10am every second Wednesday from October to April, is a walk in the hills (a bit of fitness required), following a nature trail laid out by the Forestry Department.

## FESTIVALS & EVENTS

The **Lemesos Wine Festival** is an orgy of (obviously) wine, wine and wine. Held in the Municipal Gardens annually from 30 August to 11 September, it's a chance to sample cheap and also more expensive local wines. As you might predict, the festival is extremely popular with young, fun-seeking tourists, who use the opportunity to get completely sloshed. Nevertheless, the atmosphere in the city is good during the festival: there's Cypriot food, traditional music and dancing, and, did we mention wine?

Lemesos is the only town in Cyprus with a full-blown carnival atmosphere, enjoyed particularly by the little ones. The 11-day **Lemesos Carnival**, held 50 days before Easter, starts with the 'King Carnival' entering town, escorted by a motley parade.

There is a children's carnival parade, and the festivities close with a fancy-dress explosion. Watch out Rio, Lemesos Carnival is on the loose!

## SLEEPING

The good news is that there are plenty of hotels in Lemesos. The bad news is that they are all along a 9km tourist strip to the northeast of the Old City, and are often crowded and overpriced. The Old City doesn't feature many high-quality establishments, but hotels in this area are more used to walk-in travellers and are likely to have rooms vacant.

## Budget & Midrange

The cheapest hotels are clustered in the Old City, to the east of the castle.

**Luxor Guest House** (☎ 2536 2265; Agiou Andreou 101; s/d CY£6/12) This place is like a dinosaur surrounded by modern animals, but in

a good way. The Luxor is the only truly budget place in the city, and possibly in the country. The rooms are airy and spacious, with painted wood-board ceilings and little balconies. The bathrooms are mostly shared, and there are no cooking facilities apart from a small breakfast kitchen. This dying breed of budget accommodation may soon be altogether extinct, since the owner, who complains of a serious lack of independent travellers, is thinking of converting the place and raising the prices as early as 2006.

**Metropole** (☎ 2536 2686; Ifigenias 6; s/d CY£17/22) Once a little more budget-oriented, the Metropole became a three-star general after a refurbishment in 2004. It's a comfortable place with a rather classic décor where navy bed quilts match the curtains. The bathrooms are en suite. The hotel's location is supercentral, so it's a pretty good choice if you want to be in the Old City.

**Kapetanos Hotel** (☎ 2558 6266; kapetdev@spider.net.com.cy; Panagioti Symeou 6; unrenovated s/d CY£30/38; renovated s/d CY£34.50/42.50; 🍷 🍷) A three-star hotel in a tall building, this place has cheaper older rooms, which are decent enough, and new, renovated ones, which feel a bit more comfortable. All rooms have phones, minibars, satellite TV and balconies, and there is a small swimming pool downstairs too. The Kapetanos is a little beyond the zoo on the east side of the Old City, but still within reasonable walking distance.

**Curium Palace** (☎ 2536 3121; www.luxuryhotels.oftheworld.co.uk/Europe/Cyprus/hotels/curium-palace.asp; Vyronos 2; s/d CY£48/62; 🍷 🍷) This four-star establishment is a gleaming white marble palace that looks down on a weary traveller and up at a groomed, designer-luggage-laden one. An extremely comfortable, almost luxurious hotel, with a large restaurant terrace, pool and a swish evening bar. Rich Russians seem to like this place, and many package-tourists come here for their bit of lavishness. Opposite the Municipal Gardens.

**Best Western Pavemar** (☎ 2532 4535; fax 2558 7711; 28 Oktovriou; s/d CY£48/67; 🍷 🍷) On the edge of the tourist centre and handy for checking out both sides of town, the Pavemar is not a stylish or interesting place, and has slightly cheap-looking décor. But there is a pool and a nice roof terrace on the building's top floor, where an evening drink comes with a good view of the sunset.

admission CY£0.50; 🕒 9am-noon & 3-7pm May-Sep, 9am-6.30pm Oct-Apr), which has not much more than a sweaty giraffe and some cheeky cheetahs.

You may also want to take your kids, if they like blood and gore, to the **Reptile House** (☎ 2537 2779; admission CY£1.50; 🕒 9am-6pm) situated on the roundabout in the Old Fishing Harbour, where numerous thick-skinned creatures are kept, and squeaking mice are fed to snakes for dinner.

**Chrielka** (☎ 2535 8366; www.chrielka.com.cy; Olym-pion 7; 2-person ste CY£48-65; ♿ ♻️) This place is great if you'd like to self-cater and stay in a decent place. The 33 apartments vary in size and level of 'luxury', but all are tastefully decorated, with a balcony, kitchenette and satellite TV. There's a guest pool, and the location is central, with some apartments overlooking the Municipal Gardens.

### Top End

Lemesos' plush hotels are located at the far northeastern end of the tourist centre. Discounts of between 30% and 40% apply at both these hotels out of season.

**Amathus Beach Hotel** (☎ 2532 1152; www.amathushotel.com; per person s/d CY£119/158) This is a super-duper lavish place, where that 'bit' of extra cash is well worth spending. For a start, why not exchange your restaurant buffet breakfast for a lazy breakfast in bed. Smell the roses on the desk in your room, and head for a spa treatment that you'll probably never want to finish. Have dinner on your balcony, and watch the endless Mediterranean and the stars that'll be looking down at you from above. Sunbathe and swim on the smooth, sandy beach. And if you do all this during low season (swapping the sea-swimming with indoor-pool swimming) and you do it as a couple, you get almost 50% off.

### THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

**127** (☎ 2534 3990; Eleni Paleologinas 5; salad/sandwich CY£4.50/2.50) In a country of meze and meat-eaters, 127 is a place with a serious difference. Vintage furniture adorns the three rooms inside, with comfy old sofas and rugged leather armchairs, and bowling pins sit on the 'mantelpiece'. Exposed-brick walls provide the backdrop, and some are painted in mossy greens, raspberry pinks and melon yellows. There is a lovely large garden for lunch or dinner. And the food is all about salads. But don't go expecting a bit of rocket or lettuce and a slice of tomato. The people in this place know how to make a salad (and how to make your mouth water): the seafood salad is swamped with succulent prawns, thin slices of salmon and bits of squid, all drizzled with balsamic vinegar that really brings out the taste.

**Le Meridien Limassol** (☎ 2586 2000; www.limeridien-cyprus.com; s/d CY£168/371.50; ♿ ♻️ ♻️) This is another luxury giant, a little more kitsch than the Amathus, and a little more expensive, with grottos and fountains spurting water in the large pools. There's a range of room choices, from standard to 'Jacuzzi cabanas' (where you can sit in your Jacuzzi and watch the world from the window next to you) to presidential suites offering masses of opulence, to two-bedroom Citrus Garden Villas housing up to seven people where extravagance will be coming out of your ears. Le Meridien also has special luxury rooms for disabled travellers.

### EATING Restaurants

As always, meze rules. Eating in Lemesos offers variety and quality with a modern touch, particularly in the Old City. The restored Old Carob Mill next to the fort has several restaurants (as well as housing the Time Elevator, p85) and bars, all of which are top-notch places to eat and are very popular with Lemesians.

**Karatello** (☎ 2582 0464; Vasilissis 1; specialities CY£2.50-5; ♻️ dinner) The tall ceilings of the old mill and the massive space inside gives Karatello a stylish, modern look that goes with the interesting cuisine. Dishes that stand out in tastiness are rabbit in yoghurt and lemon sauce, seasonal greens baked with feta cheese, and a delicious and neatly served *kleftiko* (oven-baked lamb or goat). The menu has little boxes where you tick off your order and hand it over to your waiter.

**Trata Fish Tavern** (☎ 2558 6600; Ioanni Tompazi 4; fish meze CY£10; ♻️ dinner) Arguably one of Lemesos' best fish restaurants, Trata is choc-a-bloc every night with people wanting some of those fish meze. The décor is minimal and the place looks like an unassuming family restaurant. Booking is advisable on weekdays and essential on weekends. Close to the Ermes Olympia department store and the Holiday Inn hotel.

**Mikri Maria** (☎ 2535 7679; Agkuras 3; meze per person CY£7, fresh fish from CY£6; ♻️ dinner) This is the quintessential Cypriot taverna with home cooking and fresh food. The guitars on the walls make it look like an Andalusian tapas place where the flamenco dancers might jump out and do a quick dance as you eat.

**Syrian Arab Friendship Club** (SAFC; ☎ 2532 8838; Iliados 3; meze CY£8; ♻️ lunch & dinner) Sister of the Lefkosia restaurant (p71) and just as good, the SAFC is a delight to all lovers of Arab cuisine that's rich with chick peas, beans, herbs, spices, grilled and marinated meats and sweet desserts. And here the meze will blow your tastebuds. A nargileh (Middle Eastern water pipe) after eating is a superb treat, and, if you're lucky, you may get to have a belly dancer flex her abdominals at you.

**To Frourio** (☎ 2535 9332; Tsanakali 18; mains CY£3-8; ♻️ Mon-Sat) Priding itself on its setting in an 18th-century historically listed building opposite the castle, To Frourio is popular and a little on the touristy side, but decent. There are meat and vegetarian dishes (such as tasty, aubergine-laden vegetarian lasagne), as well as both variations of meze.

**Antonaros Tavern** (☎ 2537 7808; Attikis 1; meze CY£6-6.50; ♻️ evenings Mon-Sat) For a no-frills, genuinely Cypriot, local-style evening meal. Only *mezedes* are served here. Choose from a wide range of dishes such as snails and mussels as well as fish (CY£11 to CY£20 per kilogram). The handwritten notes on the wall are Greek philosophical sayings.

**Rizitiko Tavern** (☎ 2534 8769; Izamiou 4-8; mains CY£3.50-5; ♻️ dinner) This is an excellent, low-key establishment, tucked away by the mosque, which spills out onto the narrow street at night. The *afelia* (pork cooked in red wine and coriander seeds) and *kleftiko* are homemade quality and worth every cent.

**Neon Phaliron** (☎ 2536 5768; Gladstonos 135; mains CY£7-9; ♻️ 10am-4pm & 6.30pm-midnight, closed Wed & Sun) A high-class gourmet dining option that specialises in Mediterranean-European fare, such as marinated salmon kebabs (CY£6.50) and stuffed mushrooms (CY£4), and an extensive wine cellar for committed oenophiles. Neon Phaliron is popular with Cyprus' posh dinner crowd.

### Cafés

The following cafes are open from 10am to 11pm.

**Stretto Café** (☎ 2582 0465; Vasilissis) Cafés in Lemesos don't come any more fashionable than this. Part of the Old Carob Mill, it has tall ceilings and comfy sofas, beautiful people in real life and on TV. Sounds intimidating? Fear not, the atmosphere is good and relaxed, and its icy frappé on a hot day will make you come back for more.

**Ibsen Tea & Coffee House** (☎ 2534 0714; Mylonas 6) A café dedicated to the dark Norwegian playwright in the middle of sex-town Lemesos? The name is enough to make you want to try this place out. And lovely things you'll find too, such as Norwegian coffee and waffles.

**n/Pi** (☎ 2534 1944; Kitiou Kyprianou 27; snacks CY£2-3) A relaxed, jazzy café with a small, cosy garden in the back where you can lounge during the day, or come after dinner for a sharp drink.

### DRINKING

Time to test out that 'party town' theory.

Most places in Lemesos are quiet until at least 10pm. We've avoided making specific bar recommendations on the tourist strip, where a conglomeration of pubs with names such as the Blu Bar, Downunder, Leprechaun, West End, Lucky, Full Monty and Woody's makes you feel that you've been there before. And it was bad enough the first time.

These are great bars in the Old City.

**Rogmes Piano Bar** (☎ 2534 1010; Agiou Andreou 197) A highly praised bouzouki bar. It has a mad, wonderful tempo on weekend nights when the musicians stay and play as loud and as late as the crowd wants it, like in the good old days. Book a table on Saturdays when the locals pour inside for singing and dancing 'til dawn.

**Graffiti Bar** (Agiou Andreou 238) Silky drops hang over cushioned sofas in a very Middle Eastern style. Nargileh smoke billows over the cocktail-drinking customers, and the garden where all this happens is behind an old mansion that the becomes the bar's location during the winter months.

**Draught** (☎ 2582 0470; Vasilissis) Yet another listing in the Old Carob Mill complex, this time a bar. The Carob Mill people seem to know what they're doing, don't they? Once ultra-fashionable, Draught is a bit less maniacally sought after now. That means it's a pleasant place to have a drink, while it still has a nice buzz; it gets really busy only on weekends. Massive copper vats line the wall, where the decent in-house ale is brewed.

**127** (☎ 2534 3990; Eleni Paleologinas 5) Although many come for the food (opposite), just as many come to lounge on the sofas and drink long cocktails while playing a game of backgammon, or just smooching in the darker areas of the lovely back garden.

## ENTERTAINMENT

### Nightclubs

**Notes Studio** (☎ 2534 4344; cnr Irinis & Eleftherias 5; admission CY£15) If you're serious about experiencing Cyprus (or at least the Greek part), then a bouzouki club is a must. And what great fun it is too. Notes Studio specialises in live performances, bringing over Greek performers, who hurl themselves about (and you, if you let them) until dawn. It's your chance to try yourself at *Zorba the Greek* dancing, but beware: strong thighs are necessary. Your first drink is included in the admission price.

**Sesto Senso** (☎ 2587 9080; Eleftherias 45) The in-est place in town, where the crowd is so beautiful and admiring of itself, it finds it hard to dance. The décor is also beautiful, and the drinks are expensive (which is not so beautiful), but if you want to see who's in and what it's all about, check this place out. If they let you in, that is. Aside from the whole looks thing, the sounds in this place are the best in town if you like good dance music.

**Basement** (☎ 2587 3380; Potamos Germasogeias) A predominantly young crowd hangs out in this small, busy club, where a be-young-and-beautiful dress code applies.

**Privilege** (☎ 2563 4040; Loura) Near the five-star St Raphael Resort, at the far eastern end of the tourist centre; an indoor and outdoor club with various bars and dance areas. The music mix is Greek and European chart sounds.

### Gay & Lesbian Venues

**Alaloum** (☎ 2536 9726; Loutron 1) Situated near the hammam in a renovated old mansion, this is the town's oldest and favourite gay club. Gay, lesbian, bi: everyone parties hard and stays up very, very late.

**Jacare** (☎ 2532 0635; Popiland 67, Georgiou, Potamos Germasogeias) Right in the middle of the tourist area; popular with a relaxed, young gay crowd.

**Pieros Club** (☎ 9989 5737; Georgiou Gennadiou 10) If you are up for a more mixed crowd, although still predominantly gay, with a good atmosphere, check out this club.

### Cinemas

**K-Cineplex** (☎ 2543 1955; www.kcineplex.com; Ariadnis 8, Mouttagiakaja; ⏰ 5-10.30pm) As in Lefkosia and Larnaka, the cinema scene in Lemesos

is now dominated by the multiscreen K-Cineplex, which features many new-release movies. It's in the middle of the tourist centre and is best reached by taxi. See the website for current showings.

### SHOPPING

Most of Lemesos' clothes, shoes and appliance shops are clustered along the pedestrianised street of Agiou Andreou in central Lemesos, but also filter out through most of the backstreets of this area. Some fun places to spend a bit of your holiday dosh:

**Cyprus Handicraft Centre** (☎ 2530 5118; Themidos 25; ⏰ 8.30am-1pm & 4-7pm Mon, Tue, Thu, Fri, 8.30am-2pm Wed & Sat May-Sep, 8.30am-5.30pm Mon, Tue, Thu, Fri, 8.30am-2pm Wed & Sat Oct-Apr) As in other cities across Cyprus, this government-sponsored centre is the best place for getting your traditional handmade stuff. You can be sure you're not being ripped off and that what you buy won't fall apart as soon as you take it home.

**Violet Second Hand Shop** (☎ 2574 6748; Salaminos 10; ⏰ 10am-2pm & 4-7pm Mon-Sat) A great place for clothes and jewellery, with possibilities for finding some interesting Cypriot vintage pieces.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

#### Air

The office of **Cyprus Airways** (☎ 2537 3787; www.cyprusairways.com; Leoforos Arhiepiskopou Makariou III 203) is a 20-minute walk northeast of the main CTO office. Lemesos is more or less equidistant from Pafos and Larnaka airports. Service or private taxis are the only way to reach either and will charge you CY£5.10.

### Boat

#### CRUISES

Expensive two- and three-day cruises depart from Lemesos all year. They go to Haifa (Israel), Port Said (Egypt), a selection of Greek islands, and sometimes (in summer) to Lebanon. You can book at any travel agency, but you cannot use these cruises to exit Cyprus, unless you decide to jump ship (see p234).

### INTERNATIONAL FERRY

In late 2001, international passenger-ferry services from Cyprus to Israel and Greece were suspended indefinitely, which has

made it impossible to enter the Republic of Cyprus by ferry. Travellers bringing in a vehicle to Cyprus must now send their vehicle independently by ship and fly to Cyprus to collect it (see p238).

### Bus

**Intercity Buses** (☎ 2266 5814; cnr Enoseos & Irinis) runs frequent daily services to Lefkosia (CY£1.50, 1 hour) from its bus stop north of the castle.

Intercity Buses also has services to Larnaka (CY£1.70, 45 minutes) from the Old Fishing Harbour or from outside the CTO. Both **Alepa** (☎ 9962 5027) and **Nea Amoroza** (☎ 2693 6822) have daily buses to Pafos (CY£2, 45 minutes). Alepa leaves from the Panikos kiosk on the promenade, while Nea Amoroza leaves from the Old Fishing Harbour.

There is a bus to Platres (CY£2.50, 1 hour) that leaves from the Municipal Market every day at 9.30am.

### Service Taxi

**Travel & Express** (☎ 7777 7474; Thessalonikis 21) has regular service taxis to Lefkosia (CY£4.50, one hour 30 minutes), Larnaka (CY£3.50, one hour) and Pafos (CY£3.50, one hour). Another taxi option is **Acropolis Service Taxis** (☎ 2536 6766; Spyrou Araouzou 65), which departs regularly for the same destinations.

### GETTING AROUND

The city bus station is located on Georgiou Gennadiou, close to the municipal market. Bus 1 goes to the port; buses 16 and 17 to Kolossi; and bus 30 runs northeast along the seafront and passes not far from the entrance to Ancient Amathous. The CTO gives out a useful timetable of urban bus routes.

Buses also run at 10am, 11am and 1pm from the castle to Ancient Kourion and its beach, via Episkopi (return CY£1.60, 30 minutes). Return times are 11.50am and 2.50pm. From April to October, there's a daily Governor's Beach bus (return CY£2, 20 minutes) that leaves from the Old Fishing Harbour at 9.50am, making stops at about 23 locations along the seafront, with the last one being at Le Meridien hotel. The bus returns at 4.30pm.

**Lipos Rent-a-Car** (☎ 2536 5295; cnr Richard & Berengaria 6), opposite the castle, is the only car-rental place in the Old City. The tourist centre has many more rental agencies.

## AROUND LEMESOS

For travellers, there's lots to do and see in the area around Lemesos, such as excellent beaches that beckon tan seekers and ancient ruins galore for lovers of history.

### Getting There & Around

You really need to have your own transport to explore this area. Other than Ancient Kourion, Episkopi and Ancient Amathous, which are linked to Lemesos by daily public buses, and Governor's Beach, which is served by a daily private bus, reaching any of the other places described in this section is going to require hired transport or expensive taxis. Cycling in and around Lemesos is fairly easy once you have cleared the confines of the city, where traffic is intense. The terrain is reasonably flat, until you encounter the first slopes of the Troödos Massif.

### BEACHES

Lemesos' city beaches are popular enough and decent for a quick swim. But if you'd like to lounge on a nice beach all day, with a little privacy thrown in, you'll have to move out of town where you can stretch out on sand and pebble.

### Lady's Mile Beach

This shadeless 7km stretch of hard-packed sand and pebble is the town's closest beach. Named after a horse owned by a former colonial governor who exercised his mare on the beach, it runs south beyond Lemesos' New Port along the eastern side of the British-controlled Akrotiri Peninsula. There is a rather awful power station at its eastern end; the beach (and the view) get better the further south you go. On summer weekends, the citizens of Lemesos flock here in large numbers to relax in the rather shallow waters. A couple of beach taverns serve the crowds and provide some respite from an otherwise barren beachscape. Bring your own shade if you plan to sit on the beach all day. Getting here requires your own transport.

### Governor's Beach

Lemesos' tourist appeal starts 30km east of the city, at Governor's Beach. With a private bus serving the area from Lemesos (see left), many decide to spend their day chilling out

(or, more appropriately, baking) on the several coves of dark sand, contrasted by the white chalk cliffs behind them. There are a couple of restaurants here and at least one place to stay, though the overall ambience is slightly marred by the sight of the large Vasilikos power station looming 3km to the west. Beach techno parties are frequent during the summer here, so keep an eye out for leaflets advertising such events across the island.

Campers can hole up here at **Governor's Beach Camping** (☎/fax 2563 2878; tent & 1 person CY£2.50). The site is OK, but is more attuned to caravanners than to campers.

### Kourion Beach

This is a lovely beach of grey sand and small pebbles, with waves soaking the sand. The area is windy and attracts windsurfers and other wind-dependent sportspeople, as well as the general public, who come here for the stunning lack of visual clutter or buildings. Kourion Beach is around 17km west of Lemesos, within the British Sovereign Base Area (SBA), which is partly responsible for the lack of development in this pocket of the island. The beach can be reached by public transport from Lemesos (p91), although the locals like to drive their cars and 4WDs practically up to the water's edge. There is no shade, apart from the escape offered by several tavernas. The eastern end of the beach (prominently marked) is unsafe for swimming, so head for the western end. This beach is best combined with your trip to Ancient Kourion (p94).

### Avdimou Beach

The closest thing to a deserted beach in this part of the island is Avdimou. As you park your car (which is the only means of getting here), a massive sign warns those inclined to nudism that there will be a heavy punishment if they even think of stripping here. As things go, this is a good indication that hardly anyone comes to this place, and that the beach is a peaceful and quiet one. Like most other beaches in Cyprus, it has no shade, and is a combination of small pebbles and sand. The sea is not as choppy as at Kourion Beach and, with a good umbrella, this is the place for super-relaxation.

**Kyrenia Beach Restaurant** (☎ 2521 1717; mains CY£2.50-3) is the only place to eat on the beach,

with a wooden terrace and friendly service. A refreshing snack of haloumi (helimi), olives, tomatoes and bread is always a treat.

### Melanda Beach

This small, narrow sand and pebble beach is close to Avdimou, but accessible only by turning inland and looking for the signposted turn-off. Due to its exposed position, there is often a fair amount of seaweed. There are windsurfers, banana rides and even jet skis here. Like Avdimou Beach, it is favoured by RAF personnel.

### Pissouri Bay & Village

As you leave the peaceful and deserted beaches of the Akrotiri Peninsula, you enter the package-tourist area, where the Pissouri Bay resort, 10km west of Avdimou, has jet skis, surfing, banana rides and other entertaining sea activities. At the western end of the bay, you can rest under the shade of olive trees.

If you choose to stay by the sea, **Kotzias Hotel** (☎ 2522 1014; fax 2522 2449; 1/2-bedroom apt CY£26/32) rents spacious apartments five minutes from the beach.

If you are travelling by car and you fancy staying somewhere with a bit more character, go to Pissouri village and stay at the **Bunch of Grapes Inn** (☎ 2522 1275; Ioannou Erotokritou 9; d CY£27). Formerly run by an English owner who apparently repelled customers with his snootiness, the inn has now been taken over by a friendly Cypriot family. This old mansion, once the home of a wealthy Pissourian, was built around 200 years ago, and was rediscovered and renovated by a Dutch man some thirty years ago. It has served as an inn since. Its nine basic rooms (doubles only; no air-conditioning, fans only) have stained-glass windows, and look out onto the wooden porch. If you don't choose to stay here, then try at least to visit the restaurant, open from noon to 3pm and 5.30pm to 10pm. Under the thick shade of figs, lindens and planes, you can eat things like crispy roast duck in apricot brandy sauce (CY£7.95). Cypriots flock here from all over the island to sample the Bunch of Grapes' menu.

Down by the beach, the best place to eat is **Limanaki** (☎ 2522 1288; ☎ 11-12.15am Tue-Sun, 6.30pm-12.15am Mon; mains CY£7-9), which was once a taverna, and before that a carob mill. People

from Pafos and Lemesos come here to eat. The restaurant is famous for its homemade curries, and more elaborate Middle Eastern dishes such as lamb cubes cooked in yoghurt sauce and garnished with dry mint and pine nuts, served with basmati rice.

**Symposio** (☎ 2522 1158; grills CY£4-6) is slap-bang on the beach and is a popular spot with the tourists taking a lunch break from sunbathing. The moussaka (meat or vegetarian) is a favourite.

### Petra tou Romiou (Aphrodite's Rock & Beach)

Possibly the most famous and mythical beach in Cyprus, Aphrodite's Beach is most certainly one of the island's most beautiful. Driving along the old B6 road from Lemesos to Pafos (a highly recommended journey), you'll stop in awe as you see the vast indigo expanse of the Mediterranean beneath the intense blue of the cloudless summer sky, the white rock and the beach that curls around it. The view from the road is stunning. The two upright rocks look as if they might just walk out of the water. Mysteriously, swimmers sit on top of them, making the less-acrobatic wonder how they've managed to climb all the way up. The sea here is cool and fresh, and the beach is wonderful for a picnic and a day of semisolitude.

The name of the place in Greek, Petra tou Romiou (Rock of the Greeks), has nothing to do with Aphrodite, but alludes to the Greek folk hero, Digenis Akritas. He apparently used to hurl large rocks, like the ones here, at his enemies. The actual rock that he is supposed to have thrown is the westernmost one and not the others that seem to be somehow split down the middle. All are equally beautiful.

The reason the spot is called the 'Rock of Aphrodite' in English is because legend has it that Aphrodite, ancient patron goddess of Cyprus, emerged from the sea at this point in a surge of sea foam before, no doubt, going off to entertain some lovers. The same thing is claimed by the residents of the island of Kythira in Greece. But who's to say she didn't do it in two places? She was a goddess, after all.

Most visitors either stop when they are driving and have a swim, or come for the spectacular **sunset**, best seen from either the **tourist pavilion**, or from a roadside car park

about 1.5km further east. Skip any kind of eating at the tourist pavilion cafeteria, where you will be charged extortionate amounts for awful snacks. Bring your own food and have a picnic instead. An underground tunnel leads from the cafeteria and car park to the beach on the other side of the road.

### ANCIENT AMATHOUS

This archaeological site, about 11km east of Lemesos, belies its original importance. **Ancient Amathous** (admission CY£0.75; ☎ 9am-7.30pm Jul-Aug, 9am-5pm Sep-Jun) was one of Cyprus' original four kingdoms (the others were Salamis, Pafos and Soloi). Legend has it that the city was founded by Kinyras, the son of Pafos. It is also said that Kinyras introduced the cult of Aphrodite to Cyprus (see the boxed text, p132). Founded about 1000 BC, the city had an unbroken history of settlement until about the 14th century AD, despite depredation at the hands of Corsairs during the 7th and 8th centuries. In 1191, when Richard the Lionheart appeared on the scene, the city was already on the decline. Since its harbour was silted up, King Richard was obliged to disembark on the beach to claim the once proud and wealthy city. He promptly applied the royal *coup de grâce* by destroying it, and Amathous was no more.

It is rather difficult to understand the site without visual guidance, since much of the stone and marble has long been looted and carted away for other building projects. Most of Amathous' best treasures were removed by the infamous American consul of Larnaka, Luigi Palma de Cesnola (see also p145). As you enter the site, there is an explanatory pedestal with a schematic map of the area. This will help you to understand how the city was originally laid out. Excavations only started in earnest in 1980. To date, the two main visible features are an **early Christian basilica** in the so-called lower city, and the remains of a sanctuary to Aphrodite on the **acropolis** immediately behind the lower city.

The full extent of the ancient city has yet to be discovered. Excavations are made difficult by the considerable growth of tourist hotels on both sides of the site. The remains of the **ancient harbour** have been found offshore. Occasional free summer concerts are held within the grounds of Amathous. Look for posters at the site or check with the CTO in Lemesos.

If you're travelling by public transport, local buses 6 and 30 from Lemesos will drop you off around 800m from the entrance.

## EPISKOPI

pop 3110

One of the main reasons for visiting the village of Episkopi, 14km west of Lemesos, is the **Kourion Museum** (☎ 2593 2453; admission CY€0.75; ☎ 9am-2.30pm Mon-Fri, 3-5pm Thu Sep-Jun). The collection mainly comprises terracotta objects from Ancient Kourion and the Sanctuary of Apollon Ylatis, and is housed in what used to be the private residence of archaeologist George McFadden. The museum is signposted off the Lemesos-Kourion road, as well as in Episkopi itself.

If you decide to stay in Episkopi, **Antony's Garden House** (☎ 2593 2502; www.agrotourism.com.cy/DestinationMgr/Property\_Card.aspx?HotelID=15; r per person CY€15-25; 🍷) is a wonderful little agrotourism hotel built around a cool, leafy garden. There are beautiful double rooms and a self-contained studio. It is relatively easy to find, as it's well signposted from the Lemesos side of Episkopi.

The owner of Antony's Garden House (and he should know) recommends the **Old Stables** (☎ 2593 5568; kleftiko CY€4.50; 🍷 evenings Mon-Sat). The *kleftiko* is tender and juicy, and the *mezedes* are good. Takeaway is also available. It's out on the Lemesos-Pafos road opposite the Mobil petrol station.

Episkopi is served by bus from Lemesos (see p91).

## ANCIENT KOURION

Defiantly perched on the hillside overlooking the sea, **Ancient Kourion** (☎ 2599 5048; admission CY€1; ☎ 8am-7.30pm Jul & Aug, 7.30am-5pm Sep-Jun) is a spectacular site whether you're an archaeology lover or not. It attracts lots of visitors every day, so if you want to view it with a modicum of peace and quiet, come early in the morning or late in the afternoon, although buses with groups often arrive in the afternoons, when the really hot part of the day is done. If you want to take photographs, mornings and afternoons are better anyway. Ancient Kourion is close to two other attractions in the immediate vicinity, the Sanctuary of Apollon Ylatis (p96) and Kolossi Castle (p96). All three can be visited in the same day; as a cooling break, incorporate a swim at Kourion

Beach (p92), spread out temptingly below the ancient site of Kourion itself.

Ancient Kourion was most likely founded in Neolithic times, probably because of its strategic position high on a bluff overlooking the sea. It became a permanent settlement in about the 13th century BC, when Mycenaean colonisers established themselves here.

The settlement also prospered under the Ptolemies and Romans. A pre-Christian cult of Apollo was active among the inhabitants of Kourion in Roman times, as documented by the nearby Sanctuary of Apollon Ylatis. Christianity eventually supplanted Apollo and, despite the disastrous earthquakes in the region, an **early Christian basilica** was built in the 5th century AD, testifying to the ongoing influence of Christianity on Kourion by this time. Pirate raids 200 years later severely compromised the viability of the now-Christian bishopric; the Bishop of Kourion was obliged to move his base to a new settlement at nearby Episkopi (meaning 'bishopric' in Greek). Kourion declined as a settlement from that point on and was not rediscovered until tentative excavations at the site began in 1876.

The early Christian basilica displays all the hallmarks of an early church, with foundations clearly showing the existence of a narthex, diakonikon (a storage area for agricultural products used by priests and monks), various rooms, baptistry and atrium. Some floor mosaics are also visible among the remains.

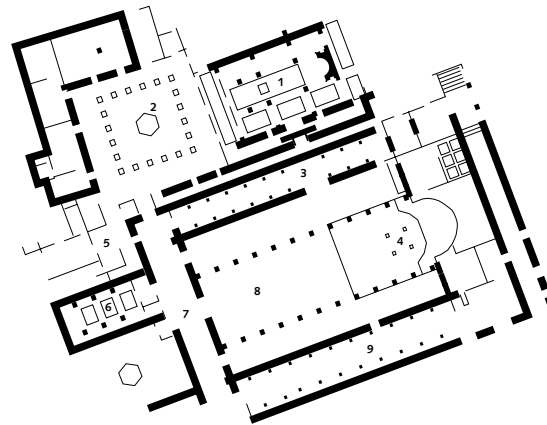
The site is dominated by its magnificent **amphitheatre**. This is a reconstruction of a smaller theatre that existed on the same site, high on the hill overlooking the sea, which was destroyed by earthquakes during the 3rd century AD. Nevertheless, it gives a good idea of how it would have been at its peak. Today it's used for cultural events such as plays and music concerts by Cypriot and visiting Greek singers and bands.

Nearby is the **Annexe of Eustolios**, probably a private residence dating from the 5th century. Its colourful, Christian-influenced mosaic floors are well preserved, and make a mention of the builder Eustolios and the decidedly non-Christian patron Apollo. Look for the Christian motifs of cross-shaped ornaments and fish.

Northwest is the **House of the Gladiators**, so called because of two fairly well-preserved

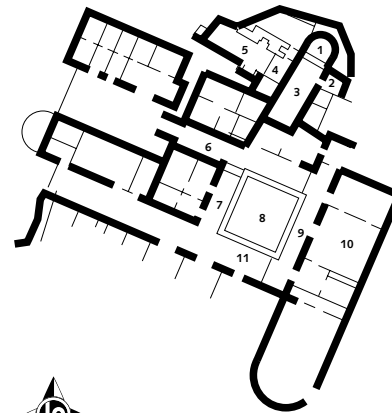
## ANCIENT KOURION

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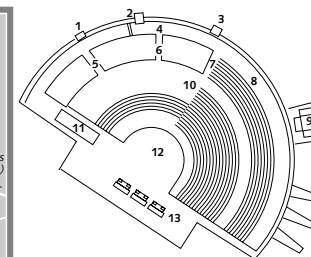
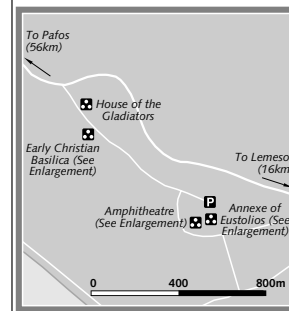
### EARLY CHRISTIAN BASILICA

Baptistry.....	1
Atrium.....	2
Catechumena.....	3
Chancel.....	4
Bishop's House.....	5
Diakonikon.....	6
Narthex.....	7
Nave.....	8
Catechumena.....	9



### ANNEXE OF EUSTOLIOS

Frigidarium.....	1
Frigidarium.....	2
Central Room of Baths.....	3
Tepidarium.....	4
Calidarium.....	5
Entrance Vestibule.....	6
Portico with Mosaics.....	7
Garden Court.....	8
Portico with Mosaics.....	9
Triclinium.....	10
Portico with Mosaics.....	11



### AMPHITHEATRE

Entrance.....	1
Entrance.....	2
Entrance.....	3
Vaulted Corridor.....	4
Corridor into Auditorium.....	5
Corridor into Auditorium.....	6
Colonnade.....	7
Stair Tower.....	8
Auditorium Seating.....	10
Side Entrance.....	11
Orchestra.....	12
Scene Building Area.....	13
Buttresses.....	14



floor mosaics depicting gladiators in combat dress. Two of these gladiators, Hellenikos and Margaritis, are depicted practising with weapons.

## SANCTUARY OF APOLLON YLATIS

About 2km west of Kourion's main entrance and prominently signposted off the highway is the **Sanctuary of Apollon Ylatis** (☎ 2599 5049; admission CY€0.75; 🕒 9am-7.30pm May-Sep, 9am-5.30pm Oct-Apr), which is part of the larger site of Kourion. The precinct was established in the 8th century BC in honour of Apollo, who was considered god of the woods (*ylatis* means 'of the woods' in Greek). The once woody site now has far less vegetation, but retains a good scattering of remains that give a reasonable idea of the layout of the original sanctuary. The remnants that you see are Roman structures that were levelled by a large earthquake in AD 365.

Kourion's **main sanctuary** has been partly restored; the beautiful, imposing standing columns mark the extent of the restoration. Also discernible are the **priests' quarters**, a **palaestra** (sports arena) and **baths** for the athletes, and a rather depleted **stadium** 500m to the east, which once seated up to 6000 spectators.

## KOLOSSI CASTLE

Less of a castle and more a fortified tower house, **Kolossi Castle** (☎ 2593 4907; admission CY€0.75; 🕒 9am-7.30pm Jul-Aug, 9am-5pm Sep-Jun) perches incongruously between the vineyards and houses of the village of the same name. It is an interesting reminder of the rule of the Knights of St John in the 13th century, who started producing wine and processing sugar cane at a commandery that stood on this land. The famous Cypriot wine, Commandaria, took its name from here. However, the Mameluke raids of 1425-26 compromised the knights' prosperity and no doubt damaged the infrastructure. The current structure dates from 1454 and was probably built over the older fortified building.

Kolossi Castle is accessible by a short drawbridge that was originally defended by a machicolation (a parapet for protecting the castle) high above, through which defenders would pour molten lead or boiling oil on the heads of unwanted visitors. Upon entering, you come across two large chambers, one with an unusually large fireplace and a spiral

staircase that leads to another two chambers on the second level. The chambers are empty, so it is hard to imagine what they would have been like in their heyday. The only tangible remains of occupation is a mural of the crucifixion in the first-level main chamber. The spiral staircase leads to the roof, where the battlements, restored in 1933, lend a final touch.

To the east of the castle is an outbuilding, now called the **sugar factory**, where cane was processed into sugar.

## AKROTIRI PENINSULA Akrotiri Sovereign Base Area

Cyprus' past is full of stories of colonisers, raiders and armies generally coveting the small island's strategic position. So when Cyprus finally and belatedly received its independence from colonial administration in 1960, Britain negotiated terms that saw the newly formed Republic of Cyprus ceding 158 sq km (99 sq miles) of its territory to its former colonial master. This territory, now known as the Sovereign Base Areas (SBAs), is used for military purposes by the British, who have a couple of well-established and solidly entrenched garrisons on the two SBAs in Cyprus. A large chunk of these areas occupies the Akrotiri Peninsula, immediately southwest of Lemesos, while the border of the Akrotiri SBA territory runs as far west as Avdimou Beach (p92).

The only indication that you are on 'foreign soil' is the odd sight of British SBA police, who patrol the territory in special police vehicles. So, if you are booked for any traffic infringement while driving in the area, you'll be booked by British military police. To the immediate west of the peninsula, along the old Lemesos-Pafos road, you will come across green playing fields, cricket pitches and housing estates more reminiscent of Leicester than Lemesos.

The lower half of the peninsula is out of bounds since it is a closed **military base**, complete with its own large airfield. The village of **Akrotiri** itself is the only true settlement within the SBA (borders were set in order to exclude most settlements); its only substantial claim to fame is that its inhabitants are accorded the privilege of dual citizenship. British military personnel often eat here at the several tavernas; they may be seen on their days off riding flashy

mountain bikes and tackling the dirt tracks surrounding the large salt lake in the middle of the peninsula.

The area's only real sights are the **Fassouri plantations**, a large swath of citrus groves across the north of the peninsula, interwoven with long, straight stretches of road overhung by tall cypress trees. They create wonderfully cool and refreshing corridors after the aridity of the southern peninsula.

## Holy Monastery of St Nicholas of the Cats

A wonderful and bizarre story lies behind the name of this place. The monastery and its original little church were founded in AD 327 by the first Byzantine governor of Cyprus, Kalokeros, and patronised by St Helena, mother of Constantine the Great. At the time, the Akrotiri Peninsula and indeed the whole of Cyprus was in the grip of a severe drought and was overrun with poisonous snakes, so building a monastery was fraught with practical difficulties. A large shipment

of cats was therefore brought in from Egypt and Palestine to combat the reptilian threat. A bell would call the cats to meals, and the furry warriors would then be dispatched to fight the snakes. A Venetian monk visiting the monastery described them all as maimed, one missing a nose, another an ear, and some were completely blind as a result of their selfless battles.

The peninsula was in fact known for a time as 'Cat Peninsula' before reverting to plain 'Peninsula'. There is a little renovated church that dates from the 13th century and a sprawling monastery building that received a much-needed refurbishment in 1983. The many cats that you'll find snoozing in the shade of the monastery colonnades far outnumber the four solitary sisters who now look after the monastery.

Positioned on the edge of the salt lake with its back to the SBA fence, it can be reached by a good dirt road from Akrotiri or via a not-so-obvious route west from Lady's Mile Beach.

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