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# THE ISLAND OF LOVE

Cindy L Bailey heads to Cyprus, a country drenched in rich culture, history and tradition





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Delicately located in the cool blue waters of the Mediterranean Sea, situated off the southern coast of Turkey and the western shore of Syria, you will find the beautiful island of Cyprus, the birthplace of the Greek goddess of love, Aphrodite. This small but perfectly formed island combines historical significance with breath-taking beauty and, blessed with pristine beaches in the summer and snow-covered mountains in the winter, ticks every box when it comes to being a fantastic holiday destination. Cyprus’ turbulent past means it is steeped in rich history, so whether you are fan of archaeology, ethnography or the Byzantine Empire, you will find something to interest you, from scores of fascinating museums to numerous historical sites ripe for exploring.

**WHERE TO STAY**

After being greeted at the Larnaca Airport by the friendly and expedient hotel transfer, we made our way cross-country to the south west side of the island to the idyllic harbour town of Paphos and the Annabelle. After a speedy and friendly check-in we were taken to our bright and spacious superior room with balcony and a magnificent sea view.

The five-star hotel has recently been privy to a multi-million dirham refurbishment. With its beautiful seafront location, fabulous dining venues, impressive entertainment programme and selection of pools – including a luxury infinity pool with rippling waterfalls and whirlpools – the Annabelle is one of the most alluring hotels in Cyprus. Cleverly designed to complement the Mediterranean landscape, the recent renovation has resulted in a modern space that embodies comfort and luxury. The 244 guest rooms are inviting and fresh thanks their warm, neutral tones and lavish amenities. We were awoken each morning to the soothing sound of waves lapping onto the shoreline, immediately putting us in a calm state of mind, ready for a hearty breakfast at the wonderful Fontana and prepping us for an adventurous day ahead. The hotel is ideally located on the fringe of one of the few sandy beaches available in Paphos, only 50 metres from the nearest shops and 150 metres from the resort centre, night life and Paphos old harbour.

**WHAT TO DO**

You either fall into one of the following two ▶



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**5-stars in Paphos:** The Annabelle is surrounded by local shops, tavernas and lively bars, making it the perfect base from which to explore this beautiful part of the island.





“Picturesque Paphos harbour with its medieval castle and local stalls with quaint little knick-knacks is just a 15 minute stroll from the hotel.”



► categories while on holiday: you're a sun lounging goddess or you're an adventure queen. Either way, you will quickly establish that you, Paphos and the Annabelle are a match made in heaven. You can take a load off and bask in the stunning views while enjoying a bit of reading (one of my favourite things to do on holiday) or venture out to the city and soak up Cyprus' rich history.

#### FOR THE LITTLE ONES

Parents rejoice! The Annabelle has a fabulous kids club – Explorers – which hosts numerous indoor and outdoor activities during the day in a separate and secure area of the hotel, all supervised by qualified staff. With learning traditional Cypriot dance moves, dinner parties, creating their own mosaics and more, there's so much fun stuff going on, you may want to join them. But if it's grown-up time you seek, then the club will make sure your brood have a blast while you get on with some serious relaxing, pester-free.

#### FOOD GLORIOUS, FOOD

It would be easy to stay in the hotel and never eat anywhere else in town, such is the vast choice of

dining locations in the Annabelle. Breakfast, lunch and dinner are served at the Fotana in buffet style with live cooking stations and buffet style theme nights. Half-board and full-board guests also have the choice of three other restaurants: Amorosa, which serves a rich seasonal three course set menu, Ouranos Lounge, a recent addition to the Annabelle, the modern rooftop restaurant and bar serves creative sharing plates with imaginative cocktails on the terrace. The views are spectacular, and Mediterraneo, offering traditional local Meze and giving you the chance to experience delicious local seafood flavours as well as the wonderful and renowned Cypriot hospitality.

#### RELAX

If you're determined to relax to the max, then a visit to the Ouranos Wellbeing Spa is a must. It has all the treatments you need from massages to facials and couples treatments. We took time out from lounging around the pool to enjoy the fabulous Heads in the Clouds massage. The plush, warm surroundings of the treatment room made it easy to unwind and enjoy the fabulous aromatherapy massage, complete with moisturising oils to help detoxify, stimulate and hydrate the body. Bliss!

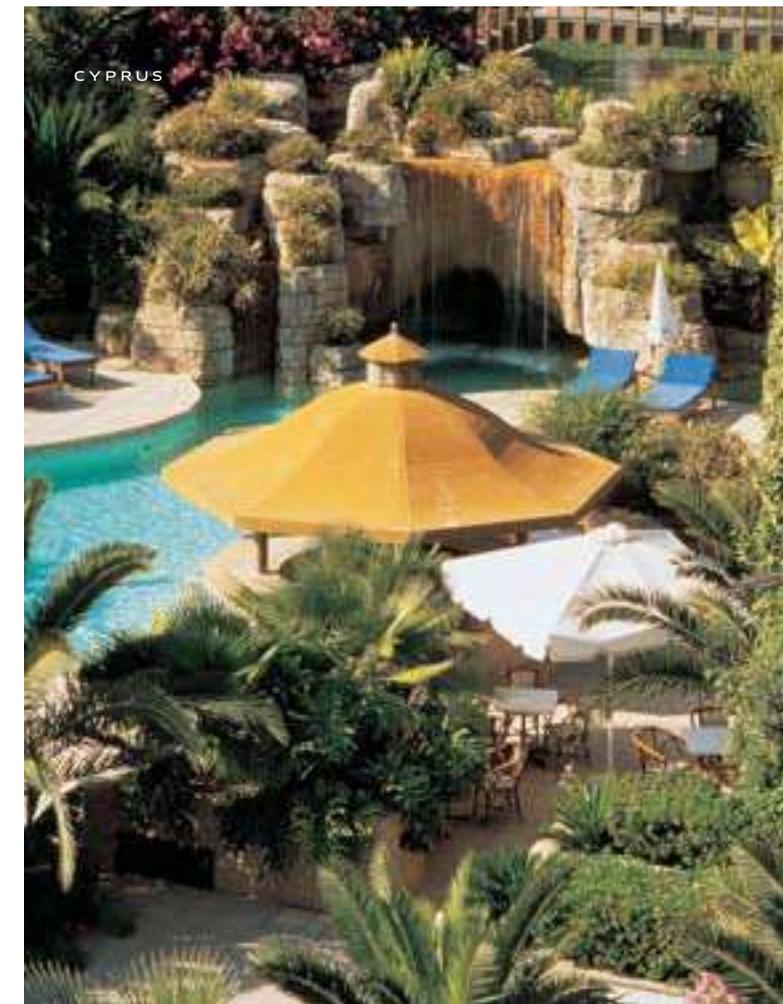
An indoor pool, sauna and gym complete this fabulous, heavenly haven.

#### MUST-SEE SIGHTS

If you can bear to tear yourself away from the sun lounger, then picturesque Paphos harbour with its medieval castle and local stalls with quaint little knick-knacks is just a 15 minute stroll from the hotel.

Of course, a trip to Cyprus wouldn't be complete without seeing the wonderment of Petra Tou Romiou, Aphrodite's birthplace, the Greek goddess of love and beauty. This fascinating geological formation of huge rocks is one of the most impressive natural sites on the island and is, according to legend, where Aphrodite rose from the waves and was then transported by shell to the rocks known as the 'Rock of Aphrodite' or Petra tou Romiou. In Greek, this means 'the Rock of the Greek' and is associated with the ►





**TOP FIVE MUST-DOS**

- Take a stroll down to the Paphos old harbour
- Visit the birthplace of Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love and beauty
- Bask in the history of the House of Gladiators at Kurion
- Dine at one of the many fabulous local tavernas to experience the local cuisine
- Make your way off the beaten track and explore Akamas, the largest area of undeveloped land in Cyprus

[www.annabelle.com.cy](http://www.annabelle.com.cy)

“A trip to the untouched Akamas peninsula in the west of the island offers plenty of Cypriot wildernesses.”



► Byzantine hero, Digenis Akritas, who kept the prowling Saracens at bay by heaving rocks into the sea to destroy the enemy's ships.

Another must for history buffs is Kourion, one of Cyprus' most iconic archaeological sites and privy to some of the most widespread Greco-Roman ruins in the world, from well-preserved mosaics, the fabulous House of Gladiators, public baths and the impressive Greco-Roman theatre.

If you want to explore the road less travelled and get an insight to what Cyprus was like before the tourist resorts, then a trip to the untouched Akamas peninsula in the west of the island offers plenty of Cypriot wildernesses, surrounded by the beautiful Aleppo pine trees. Akamas is the largest area of undeveloped land in Cyprus, and is worth exploring for a day to get a feel for the rural side of the island. Book a bike tour around the peninsula's rocky terrain for a day of adventure and discovery. 📍

