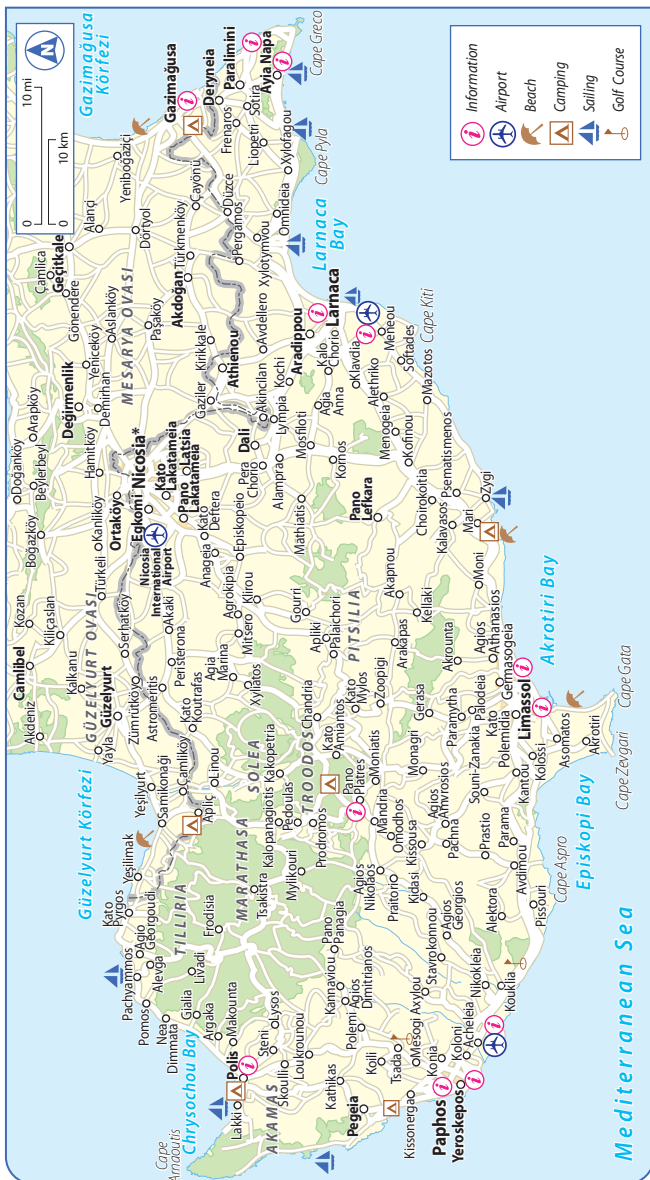


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## Strategies for Seeing the Island



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**T**he single most important thing to remember about Cyprus is that the tiniest scratch of the surface will reap great rewards. The tourist trail is well trodden here but there is so much to uncover to make the most of the rich cuisine, the archaeological sites, the beaches, mountains and countryside. You will need a car and an adventurous spirit. You will, without doubt, stray from your intended route but Cypriots are extremely hospitable and there will always be somebody willing to help with directions. See the journey as part of the Cypriot experience and your visit will be all the more rewarding.

### **Rule #1: Most visitors will need a car for independent travel**

Public transport on Cyprus is not suitable for touring; buses do not connect places in a way that's logical for a touring holiday and there are no trains. The road network is excellent and large towns linked by the motorways are mainly well signposted; a car also lets you reach spots local buses don't serve. If you intend to visit the Akamas Peninsula or drive off-road in the Troodos, you will need a four-wheel-drive as the dirt tracks are too much for a standard rental car. In the height of summer—June to September—a car with air conditioning is strongly recommended as the heat of the day is intense.

*Jeep safari in the Troodos.*

### **Rule #2: Time your visit**

June to September is the busiest and the hottest period. If you want to see the almond blossom, come in February. May is my favourite month; it's hot enough to swim in the sea but the island is still green from winter rains and the fields are scarlet with poppies. In October, you'll miss the summer crowds but still enjoy beach weather—and the Mediterranean should be warm enough for swimming. For golf, hiking and cycling, November and March are usually warm and clear.

### **Rule #3: Slow down to Cypriot time**

Cyprus has a hot climate and trying to pack too much in is exhausting.





*Take in the beautiful countryside.*

Build in coffee stops, lunch stops and swimming stops to make the heat more enjoyable. Take a siesta or beach break after lunch when some shops close. Accept the fact that things happen slower here and stopping to chat in a shop or restaurant is part of daily life.

#### **Rule #4: Don't be put off by long distances**

Nothing is more than 2 to 3 hours apart in Cyprus and the highways are rarely busy. Mountain roads are much slower and signposting in rural areas can be muddled—and is sometimes only in Greek—so a good map is essential (the tourist board maps are helpful and free but sometimes inaccurate). If you have time, take the coast roads instead of the highway, for example, from Paphos to Limassol or Limassol to Larnaca. They're empty and there are some tantalising views of the coastline.

#### **Rule #5: Use all your senses**

Don't just blast through Cyprus with

your air conditioning on; away from the busy coastal resorts, enjoy the full sensory experience. Pull off the road to look at the view from look-out points, turn off the engine and listen to the silence. Park outside villages and walk through them rather than driving, stopping for wine-tasting or coffee and a chat with the locals. Wherever you are in the hills, smell the wild herbs and listen to the sound of the wind in the pines.

#### **Rule #6: Mix & match accommodation**

Cyprus has some of the finest luxury resorts in the Mediterranean as well as a wide range of rural, stone-built houses that can be rented as part of the government's agrotourism initiative ([www.agrotourism.com.cy](http://www.agrotourism.com.cy)). Splash out on a golf and spa resort one day and stay in a mountain village the next. Vary where you eat, too; in the resorts, there are some excellent international restaurants as a break from the delicious but ubiquitous meze. ●