

Cyprus:

Close to You . . . Close to Your Heart

By: Motaz Othman

Cyprus, the beautiful and historic island situated in the Mediterranean Sea, offers the visitor a rich heritage, natural beauty and the warmth hospitality of a generous people. The warm waters of the crystal blue sea continuously lap the golden shores, making the beaches and the island on the whole, one of the cleanest destinations within the touristic world.

The cities and villages as well as the holiday resorts, are set amidst a scenic backdrop of breathtaking natural beauty - tree-covered mountains leading down to paradise beaches. The favourable climate of Cyprus enjoys

sunshine for at least three hundred days of the year; the month of spring brings the island bursting forth with colour and the sweet aroma of native flowers, the clear skies of summer reflect in the warm sparkling sea. Autumn leaves transform the island into a golden bed full with strawberries and fruit of varying kinds, and in winter the snow covered mountains lend themselves as a refuge to a variety of birds on their pilgrimage south from the north.

Cyprus offers the guest peace and tranquility, happiness and calm. Once on the island you become an honourable guest of

its inhabitants, all seeking to welcome and serve you until the moment of your departure.

With the acceptance of a kind and generous invitation from the Cyprus Tourism Organization and Cyprus Airways, a number of journalist colleagues and myself accompanied by Mr. Awni Middeen (Sales manager of Cyprus Airways in Jordan), left Amman the Jordanian capital for Larnaka airport, aboard the Cyprus Airways airbus. Refreshed from being lavished with appetizers at the Royal Queen Alia Airport ➤

القرية السياحية في توشني
Tourist village in Tochni



City Tourism



مسجد الصحابية أم حرام (رض)
Mosque of "Um Heram

in Amman, the hour-long flight, where we were seated in the spacious and distinctive Apollo class, afforded us the further opportunity to relax and appreciate the high quality service provided by the airline.

After our arrival at Larnaka, we proceeded to board the specially arranged bus, which was to take us to the city of Limassol. The Hawaii Grand Hotel enhanced our stay on the island with its ideally located resort situated on Limassol Beach. Having digested a superb breakfast from the excellent buffet we headed for the city of Nicosia. We visited the Nicosia Museum, which houses numerous antiquities confirming the extensive history of the country, which dates back to more than 10,000 years. Receiving a lunch invitation from Mr. Stavros Kyprianou, the regional director of Cyprus Airways, we dined in the company of an old personal acquaintance Mr. Christos Moustras, the representative of the 'Cyprus Tourism Organization'.

Thereafter we toured the Nicosian markets, which are pedestrian only designated zones. They display and offer a richness and diversity of everything from Cypriot handicrafts to clothing, leather products and more, all at extremely reasonable prices. We later returned to Limassol to have dinner at the St Raphael resort on the beach, where Miss Farah Shammass, a Lebanese lady, received us. She is the daughter of the proprietor of the hotel showed us around the resort. Invigorated after the delicious meal we toured the streets of Limassol, which are humming and jostling with the life and smells of numerous restaurants and cafes. The Corniche road is probably the liveliest of these streets and is

bustling with tourists from all over the globe.

The following morning we visited the city of Pafos, stopping off on the way at the Fasouri Water Park, comprising of countless exciting water games, suitable for all age groups - but a treat especially suited for the children! A whole day could easily elapse at this attraction, without the slightest moment of boredom.

We then strolled along the golden sands of Aphrodite (the princess of love) Beach, before taking coffee at a large emerging tourism complex. 'Aphrodite Hills' is still in its constructional phase, but once completed, will comprise of vast golf courses, a 5-star hotel under the management of the Intercontinental group, a tourism village, tennis courts, health club and villas which are already on sale. This project is expected to have reached completion towards the end of 2004.

The city of Pafos accommodates one of the islands most luxurious resorts - the Elysium Beach Resort. It can be designed to meet the full touristic requirements and contains a health club, numerous swimming pools, appetizing restaurants, various grades of accommodation, as well as feature waterfalls and many other facilities.

Walking down the old city streets of Pafos, we arrived at the city port tourism club, where specially adapted boats offer sea cruises around the Mediterranean.

In the evening, we accepted dinner as guests of the Cyprus Tourism Organization. A traditional Cypriot restaurant feasted us with the island's finest cuisine, in an ambience enhanced by the local Greek

music. On the third day we headed for the Troodos Mountains, where the fresh air embraced us, and the trees gave us shelter.

Approaching the end of our stay, we finally visited Tochni, a quaint Cypriot village, which has been transformed to cater for tourists. The old houses have been converted to suit the requirement of an influx of visitors. This concept is termed as Suburban Tourism, and is where you spend your vacation inside the village and in the company of its villagers. A stay in these homes are characterized by their simplicity, however they give you an alternate and valuable insight into the traditional island



way of life and culture, and is an experience far removed from the 5-star hotels. Many such villages exist in Cyprus and afford the traveler a peaceful and relaxed stay at a very reasonable price.

To make our journey complete we visited an Islamic site - the Mosque of "Um Haram"- one of the female companions to the Prophet Muhammed (saws). Um Heram (ra) died in 649 A.D. (70 A.H.) and the mosque was built later in 1816 A.D., during the spread of Islam. Muslims visiting this island are advised and encouraged to visit this holy destination.

In the evening we made our way back to Larnaka airport and boarded our flight with Cyprus Airways back to the Jordanian capital, carrying with us enchanting memories of Cyprus. ■