

# WILDLIFE TRAVEL



23rd-30th December 2026 (1 week)

## CYPRUS

### wildlife and wild flowers at Christmas

"we enjoyed it enormously"

"leaders were very knowledgeable... I always felt confident I was being looked after well"

**Cyprus Christmas 2023**

From our base in a friendly, family-run hotel on the Akamas peninsula, out on the western end of the island, we will explore the surrounding hillsides, fields and meadows in search of late 'autumn' bulbs, the earliest of the islands' many orchids and other interesting wild flowers, along with the resident bird life of the area.

We will be staying in the comfortable and friendly Aphrodite Beach hotel, situated right on the beach on the Akamas Peninsula, not far from Polis, looking out over Chrysochou Bay. From here we will explore the local area, looking for 'autumn' flowering bulbs including *Narcissus tazetta* and some lovely endemics: *Crocus veneris*, *Colchicum pusillum* and *Hyacinthella milingenii* alongside the first of the 'spring' flowers, with splashes of colour from *Anemone coronaria*, *Cyclamen persicum* and the first of the island's many orchids: *Anacamptis collina* and *Ophrys israelitica*.

Whilst paying plenty of attention to the wonderful wild flowers, we won't be missing out on the other wildlife this island has to offer. Resident birdlife includes Bonelli's Eagle, Chukar and Black Francolin, with winter visitors to the island including two regional specialities: Finsch's Wheatear and Greater Sand-plover both travel from the high Anatolian plateau to spend their winter in select spots. Sunny spells should reveal the local herptiles, including the endemic Troodos Wall Lizard.

Cyprus has a rich history, and we will spend time at a variety of historical sites including the Paphos World Heritage Site on the Paphos Peninsula.

We first visited Cyprus way back in 1991, and have been back more than 30 times since... we are looking forward to returning to Aphrodite's island for a relaxing festive escape.



#### Price

£2,045

#### Single Room Supplement

£155

#### Full board

<b>Day 1</b>	flight to Paphos
<b>Day 2</b>	Paphos
<b>Day 3</b>	Baths of Aphrodite
<b>Day 4</b>	Pegeia Forest
<b>Day 5</b>	Latchi
<b>Day 6</b>	Paphos
<b>Day 7</b>	Smygies
<b>Day 8</b>	return to UK

#### Leaders

Laurie Jackson and Michael Blencowe

#### Group size

min 4, max 14

winter bulbs, wild flowers, ancient sites



## ITINERARY

**The itinerary may change to suit practicalities or at the discretion of the leaders.**

**Day 1 23rd Dec** An afternoon flight takes us to Paphos, from where we transfer to our hotel (c.1hr 30mins), arriving in time for a drink by the fire before bed.

**Day 2 24th Dec** Today our attention will turn to the history of the island, visiting several sites around Paphos.

We start with a visit to the monastery of **Ayios Neophytos**, the grotto retreat where the hermit St Neophytos made his home and famous for its Byzantine frescoes. From here we move to the **Tombs of the Kings**, dating back to the Ptolemite Cypriot Kingdoms, where we will find interesting coast-loving plants and migrant birds among the archaeology. Finally, we will spend our afternoon on the Paphos Peninsula, part of the **Paphos World Heritage Site**, with 'houses' of **Roman mosaics**. Aside from the well preserved mosaics, this site is also known as a birding hot spot, and after soaking up the history we will check to see what birds we can track down, including perhaps Greater Sand-plover.

**Day 3 25th Dec** After breakfast, taken on the terrace overlooking the sea, we walk along the coast from the hotel to the **Baths of Aphrodite** and onwards, towards **Fontana Amorosa**. The field edges and track sides should feature colourful annuals and we may find the first flowers of *Cyclamen persicum* growing in the rockier areas, perhaps with late flowering *Muscari parviflorum* or Autumn Squill *Prospero autumnale*.

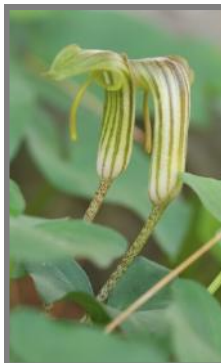
The scenery is breath-taking, with high cliffs dropping down to the sea. Sunny spots should hold some of the island's resident butterflies, with Clouded Yellow, Painted Lady and the large Plain Tiger all likely to be on the wing, while lizards scuttle about in the undergrowth, including Snake-eyed Lacertid and the endemic Troodos Wall Lizard. Chukar and Black Francolin are two shy gamebirds of the area, which we are more likely to hear than spot.

**Day 4 26th Dec** Today we will explore the Pegeia Forest, on the west side of the Akamas. The shallow soils here support one of the best preserved forests of Calabrian Pine and Phoenician Juniper, forming a scattered canopy beneath which we will find an interesting variety of plants of this habitat. We will look for *Romulea tempskyana*, the winter-flowering *Ranunculus bullatus* and, depending on the season, we may be lucky and catch the last of the Autumn Lady's Tresses *Spiranthes spiralis*, or the endemic *Colchicum pusillum*.

We will also inspect some interesting seasonal rock pools where local rarities can be found, including the diminutive Least Adder's-tongue *Ophioglossum lusitanicum*. Reptiles could include Starred Agama, the tiny Snake-eyed Skink or even European Chameleon.

On our way home, we will visit the Byzantine ruins of Agios Georgios tis Pegeias and look for the endemic *Taraxacum aphrogenes*, an autumn-flowering dandelion.

**Day 5 27th Dec** Sticking closer to home, we walk across the local hillsides, where we hope to find more of the island's interesting winter flowers, amongst which should feature



a couple of species of Narcissus and perhaps the first flowers of Crown Anemone *Anemone coronaria*.

**Day 6 28th Dec** We head back to the Paphos area today, stopping first near Agia Varvara where we hope to find Finsch's Wheatear in the dry hills. We will also visit Mandria beach to look for interesting coastal plants.

**Day 7 29th Dec** Today we drive up to the ridge in the heart of the Akamas. We will start our walk among the pines on the ridge running along the centre of the peninsula, with views over to the west side, where we will look for some of the plants endemic to the serpentine rocks of the area. We will walk down through the pine forest into the olive and carob groves. Bulbs we may come across during the day may include the endemic *Hyacinthella millingenii* and perhaps the first 'spring' orchids of the year, *Anacamptis collina* or *Ophrys israelitica*.

After a stop for a lunch and a coffee in the village of Neo Chorio, a leisurely walk downhill will take us back to the hotel.

**Day 8 30th Dec** We will have a relaxed day, retracing some of our steps from earlier in the week and exploring some of the habitats close to the hotel, before we must bid fond farewell to the Aphrodite Beach and head back to Paphos for our evening flights homeward.

## Accommodation and meals, travel and weather

The **Aphrodite Beach Hotel** is a wonderfully welcoming family-run hotel, located on a beautiful coastline. Meals, using fresh local produce, are taken in the lovely **dining room overlooking the bay**. Breakfasts can be taken on the terrace. Lunches will be mostly picnic packed lunches provided by the hotel: we will have one taverna lunch in the village of Neo Chorio (Day 7). All meals are included in the holiday price (breakfast Day 2 to a picnic dinner Day 8).

Local travel will be by small coach.

The weather should be pleasant, perhaps even still hot down near the coast. In general we should expect warm, sunny weather. Showers and colder conditions are always possible.

## Health and fitness

On most days, we are **walking for much of the day**, albeit at a relatively slow pace. The longest walk (Day 7) will be just over 7km, mostly downhill. It is necessary to walk on **rougher ground and up some (gentle) slopes**, although **none of the walking is strenuous**. Good (light) walking boots are essential. All excursions are optional.



## Leaders

**Laurie Jackson** is a Director of Wildlife Travel, an excellent naturalist and professional ecologist, who will be familiar to our travellers, having led almost 50 of our holidays since 2013. This will be Laurie's fifth visit to Cyprus. Laurie will be joined by **Michael Blencowe**, and expert naturalist, writer and wildlife guide, who joined Wildlife Travel in 2023.

## Flights

The group flights are with Easyjet from London Gatwick, as follows:

23rd December      depart London Gatwick 12.55, arrive Paphos 19.25  
30th December      depart Paphos 20.20 arrive London Gatwick 23.20

It is also possible to fly direct from Manchester, Stansted, Edinburgh and Bristol. For those flying from other airports, we can arrange individual transfers to or from the hotel.

## Passport and Entry Requirements

Your passport must be issued less than 10 years before the date you enter the country and valid for at least 3 months after the day you plan to leave.

If you hold a British passport, you can travel to Cyprus for up to 90 days in total in any 180-day period without a visa: Cyprus is not part of the Schengen area, and visits to Cyprus do not count towards your 90-day visa-free limit in the Schengen area.

From late 2026 (exact date yet to be confirmed), UK passport holders will need to apply for the ETIAS European Travel Authorisation to visit Schengen countries. This must be applied for online prior to travel. Once granted, your ETIAS will be valid for 3 years.

For up-to-date information, check [www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/cyprus](http://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/cyprus)

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## TO BOOK

Contact us to check availability and reserve a place. Complete the Booking Form and send to Sunvil Holidays (CAA-ATOL Licence 808, ABTA V6218), our tour operator, with your deposit. All details about booking are given in the Booking Pack.

**DEPOSIT £450 PER PERSON, SECOND INSTALMENT ON  
CONFIRMATION OF HOLIDAY £400 (to cover committed costs)  
BALANCE DUE BY 23/09/2026**

**INCLUDED:** Return flight London (Gatwick) to Cyprus, as above. Local transport as specified in itinerary. Seven night's accommodation, all meals from breakfast day 2 to picnic dinner day 8. Services of leaders. **NOT INCLUDED:** Drinks with evening meal and refreshments. Gratuities. Travel insurance. ETIAS and associated costs. Entrance fees to archaeological sites (c€10 in total).

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## WILDLIFE TRAVEL

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**Photos: front** (clockwise from top): Agios Georgios harbour, *Anemone coronaria*, *Narcissus tazetta*, *Anacamptis collina*, Paphos headland archaeological site.

**Page 2** (from left): Paphos mosaics, Cyprus Warbler, *Arisarum vulgare*, Akamas coastline. **Page 3** (from top): *Romulea tempkyana*, Greater Sand-plover, *Crocus veneris*, Paphos lighthouse.

All photos taken on previous Wildlife Travel trips to Cyprus. Trip reports from our previous Cyprus holidays can be found on our website.