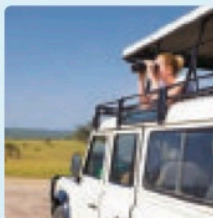
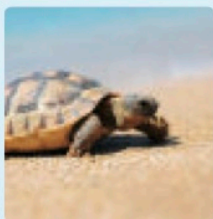


Northern Cyprus

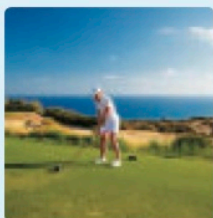
- 'emerging' destination - cultural treasures -



Jeep safari
Suggest an off-road adventure high in the Kyrenia mountains for amazing views, hidden castles, villages and monasteries with stops for traditional Cypriot hospitality along the way.



See the wildlife
Northern Cyprus is famous for its wild donkeys and rare sea turtles that return every year to lay their eggs on the region's remote beaches. June is best for viewing the hatching season.



Hitting the range
The Korineum golf course on the north coast is an 18-hole championship course of rolling fairways and greens, sea and mountain views. There's an adjoining beach resort with pool, spa and sports academy.



The full Turkish
Recommend the newly-renovated Buyuk Han for a traditional Turkish hamman where you sweat it off in the hot room for an hour before a vigorous rub down on a huge stone slab.



Harbour nights
For special experiences suggest a romantic dinner for two by the harbourfront in the ancient city of Kyrenia with a cruise around the harbour for impressive views of the castle lit up at night.

"No trip to northern Cyprus would be complete without a visit to the fairytale St Hilarion Castle said to have been the inspiration behind Walt Disney's film *Snow White*"

Cut off from the rest of the world for more than 40 years after splitting with its southern neighbour, northern Cyprus remains one of the Mediterranean's best-kept secrets, says Alex Wright.

Unrecognised as a country in its own right by the international community after separating from the Republic of Cyprus in 1974, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus – or Northern Cyprus as it's more commonly known – is one of the Med's last truly unsung holiday destinations.

Its rich history and culture, unspoilt natural beauty, friendly people, delicious food and close proximity to mainland Europe, not to mention an average of 340 days of sunshine a year, make it a must-see for intrepid travellers.

To learn more about this divided state's turbulent past, visitors should start by crossing the border at one of two checkpoints in Nicosia, the world's last remaining divided capital. The contrast between the two sides couldn't be greater – on the south there is Starbucks, McDonald's, KFC and Next, but a few yards further north and it feels like you've stepped onto another continent with tea shops, hammams and stalls selling Turkish Delight.

The most interesting part is the Old City, enclosed within imposing 16th-century Venetian walls. Visitors enter through the Girne Gate and can follow a painted blue line that snakes around the city, stopping at all the major sights.

Among the main attractions are



Salamis

the magnificent Selimiye Mosque (formerly St Sophia Cathedral), the city's architecturally most important monument, with its ornate triple-portalled porch and colossal high west window.

For a bit of retail therapy at the end of the day, the Bandabulya (Municipal Market), has stalls selling fruit and veg, clothing and traditional Cypriot arts and crafts.

STUFF OF LEGENDS

No trip to Northern Cyprus would be complete without a visit to the fairytale St Hilarion Castle in the far north of the region. According to popular belief, the castle is said to have been the inspiration behind Walt Disney's film *Snow White*.

It certainly has a magical feel to it with its hidden rooms, tunnels and crumbling towers with magnificent views of Kyrenia's dramatic coastline below.

Local folklore has it that the castle once boasted 101 rooms, the last of which led to a secret garden belonging to the fairy queen and anyone who stumbled upon it would be seduced and put into a deep sleep.

Just below, on the road west, is the sleepy village of Bellapais, where Lawrence Durrell wrote his novel *Bitter Lemons of Cyprus* in the 1950s.



Tasty baklava