

TRAVEL

4 
HOURS IN...

INNSBRUCK,
AUSTRIA

WHERE TO STAY

Soak in 16th century architecture with modern day luxury at the **Schwarzer Adler**, all surrounded by an exquisite Alpine backdrop. Ensure to take a dip in the sky pool for some pleasurable R&R. schwarzeradler.com



WHERE TO GO

Fill your lungs with Austria's super clean air and go **e-biking** across the stunning mountainous terrain, where you'll cycle effortlessly through waterfall mists and hear the bells of the healthy Alpine cows. austria.info



WHERE TO DRINK

Go full circle at **360°**, a stylish, circular glass salon with views over the city, where you can crack open a bottle or two of the locally produced wines, specially made for the bar. 360-grad.at



WHERE TO EAT

Sit back and devour the cuisine at the best restaurant in town, **Sitzwohl**, located in a former primary school with its own bar and deli. Have the prosciutto-wrapped pheasant and red cabbage. restaurantsitzwohl.at



CYPRUS CHILL

Alex Wright soaks up the lazy, tourist-free atmosphere in North Cyprus, the Med country that time forgot



Most of what you see has been untouched for the last 40 years because of our political situation," says my guide Yusuf, gesturing to the ruins behind him. "The embargo imposed on us by the international community after the country divided in 1974 has meant that we have been unable to excavate any of this site."

St Hilarion Castle is the jewel in the crown of northern Cyprus, perched high in the mountains overlooking the ancient city of Kyrenia. Its lofty position provided a strategic lookout for the Crusader kings who conquered the island nine centuries ago, and today it offers spectacular views of the surrounding countryside and the Mediterranean coastline below.

Its scattered remains, gradually eroded by the elements over time, sit on top of a huge limestone bluff that rises straight up out of the ground to meet the clear blue sky above. The fragments of Gothic windows and turrets dotted around the site hint at the country's rich cultural past.

It is divided into three parts and linked by a series of steep staircases: the lowest being the servants' quarters, the middle for the church and clergy, and the top reserved for the royal family.

Yusuf explains that there are still parts of the castle that are unexcavated and new ruins potentially waiting to be discovered. "Who knows what we may find here, one day," he says. "Given northern Cyprus' long and proud history, I wouldn't be surprised if, in the future, we unearthed something of real significance."

Visitor footsteps have visibly eroded much of the castle over time, but efforts have been made to preserve what's left. To give you an idea what life was like all those years ago, a scene has been recreated using waxwork knights in one room, while metal handrails have been erected in the more precarious parts of the castle for safety.

Climbing up to the highest point, Prince John's Tower, a welcoming cool breeze percolates around the castle. I need it; after a few flights I am breathless.

St Hilarion is said to be the inspiration for Walt Disney's film *Snow White* and it's not hard to see why, with its windy staircases and window where the queen used to sit and survey her kingdom. Unfortunately for the bodyguards of Prince John of Antioch, there was a less than fairy tale ending. After being suspected of plotting to assassinate the prince, they were summoned to the top of the tower, where they

Main: Kyrenia Castle. Above left-right: Karpas Peninsula; Bellapais Abbey; Karpas beach. Below: Hilarion Castle



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NEED TO KNOW

Alex Wright was a guest of **GoNorthCyprus** and stayed at the **Pia Bella hotel**. Rooms for two people are from £44 per night, half-board, in the winter, and from £68 per day in summer. For more information or reservations contact 0800 612 6600, email info@gonorthcyprus.com or visit gonorthcyprus.com. Lunch at the **Oasis Restaurant** is from £13 per head. For more information email info@oasishotelkarpas.com or visit oasishotelkarpas.com. Car hire is from £10 per day in winter, and from £19 per day in summer. For more information visit pacific-rentals.com



were thrown to their deaths.

Safely back on terra firma, 10 miles away is the village of Bellapais, situated between Kyrenia and the capital Nicosia, where Lawrence Durrell wrote his novel *Bitter Lemons of Cyprus* in the 1950s. Here, narrow lanes of red-roofed houses give way to orange trees scattered among the grounds of the ancient abbey that overlooks the Med's inviting coastline.

The pace of life is strictly pedestrian here. Locals sit in doorways whiling away the hours playing backgammon, chatting and sipping Turkish coffee. You can almost imagine Durrell sitting under a tree in the main square on a hot summer's day penning his latest volume.

To get some further insight into what rural Cyprus is like, the next day I venture out to the Karpas Peninsula, on the north-east tip; a 50-mile expanse of remote countryside scattered with villages, monasteries and beaches. After making the long drive and steep ascent to Kantara Castle at the gateway of the peninsula for a 360-degree view of the region, it's time for lunch so I take the long and winding road back down towards the Oasis Restaurant at Ayios Filon Beach, just beyond Dipkarpaz, the island's most northerly

village.

The sparse landscape is striking, nestled above a small sandy cove, with the poppy-spattered ruins of Agios Filon Church on one side and the remote shoreline on the other; the only sounds are the waves crashing on the shore. Finding a table overlooking the beach, with the place almost deserted, I order the catch of the day and a glass of the local red, and soak up the atmosphere.

A few miles up the coast is Golden Beach, my final destination. The beach is empty, save for a few circling sea birds. On the way, I pass rustic huts with hammocks gently swaying in the breeze and follow a winding broad walk beyond the sand dunes that run all the way out to sea.

For a moment I stand completely still and survey my surrounds, breathing in the fresh sea air. This harsh yet captivating landscape hints at a Mediterranean before the tourist invasion of the 70s and 80s. It's a world away from the clubbing scene of Ayia Napa a hundred miles south.

Now part of a national park and a prime turtle-nesting ground, its shallow waters are just the spot for lying motionless for a few moments and drifting off into another world untouched by time.



THE LONG WEEKEND

GRAND HOTEL TREMEZZO LAKE COMO, ITALY

Ajay Teli takes a dive into these placid blue waters

FIRST IMPRESSIONS: If you're hoping to catch a glimpse of Mr and Mrs George Clooney, who were married here, you're probably better off at home with a DVD. But if you want rolling views of Lake Como, fine hospitality, delicious food and a whole lot of lakeside, there's no better place in Italy than here. As the morning mist clears, you're woken by the gentle ripples of the lake and blinded by the glimmer of the sun's reflections on the water.

THE HOTEL: Located in the very heart of Lake Como, the Grand Hotel Tremezzo sits on the Azaleas Riviera and offers the best views of the lake and Bellagio, the pearl of Lake Como. For hundreds of years the hotel has been a destination for the discerning international traveller, combining the heritage of great European culture with the modern concepts of luxury. It has a new spa, plenty of pools and landscaped gardens that will leave you feeling euphoric in mind and spirit.

WHERE TO EAT: You can eat at the first ever fondue restaurant to open on Lake Como, which is part of the hotel complex, or venture a little further afield by hopping on a rather impressive period Venetian motor launch boat (or "Ruy") to glide in complete sophistication to the nearby island of Isola Comacina, once the site of a Roman fort and medieval settlement. Jump on to dry land and meander your way up the narrow lane to Locanda dell'Isola, a family-run restaurant that's been going strong since 1947, all thanks to the owner Benvenuto, who muddles ritual with tradition. Theatre is



TOP TIP
Take a very short hike up the hotel's lush park trail, where you'll enjoy serene panoramic views, get bucket loads of fresh air and see the hotel's mascot, Bobo the teddy bear

big here, with every meal having its own ceremony to banish a curse allegedly laid on the island in 1169 by the Bishop of Como. Expect simple, hearty and generous platefuls of delicious food. Oh, and lots of wine.

WHAT TO DO: Take the short ferry ride (I prefer the Ruy, but it depends on how much you want to spend and how cool you want to look) across to the other side of the Lake to Bellagio. Suspended like a pendant on the promontory where the lake's western and eastern arms split and head south, the beauty of this town will surprise you. It's a maze of steep stone staircases, red-roofed and green-shuttered buildings, dark cypress groves and pretty little gardens. Wander out of the old town to Punta Spartivento and gaze up to the Alps for some stunning views. Get yourself lost in this pocket-sized town and stumble upon hamlets such as Pescallo, a small one-time fishing port, and Romanesque churches built in the 12th century by master builders from Como.

NEED TO KNOW: This sophisticated hotspot gets booked up super-fast. Book with [Classic Collection holidays](http://ClassicCollection.co.uk), classic-collection.co.uk, for a three-night break at Grand Hotel Tremezzo, Lake Como from £1,164 per person in September, based on two adults sharing a prestige park view room on a bed & breakfast basis, and includes return flights from London City to Milan Linate and private transfers. The lake views are magnificent, but chances are they will have already gone, but it's worth trying your luck.