

HISTORY

Up until 1963, North Nicosia, not surprisingly, shared much of the same history as its dismembered southern sector. For details of this period, see p57.

The capital was effectively divided into Greek and Turkish sectors in 1963, when violence against Turkish Cypriots by Ethniki Organosi tou Kypriakou Agona (EOKA; National Organisation for the Cypriot Struggle) insurgents forced them to retreat into safe enclaves or ghettos. The Green Line, as it has become known, was established when a British military commander divided up the city on a map with a green pen. The name has remained ever since. The Turkish military invasion of 1974, which most Turkish Cypriots saw as a rescue operation, formalised the division between the two halves of the city. A wary truce was brokered by the blue-bereted members of the UN peacekeeping forces, who had been guarding the Green Line since sectarian troubles broke out in 1963. It is now easy for visitors (and Cypriots) to cross over the border, but despite this, the city is still divided and its reunification looks far off.

ORIENTATION

The Old City is easy to navigate. If you get lost, head for the Venetian walls, which you can easily follow in order to reach the main point of reference, the Kyrenia Gate (Girne Kapısı in Turkish). Running south from the Kyrenia Gate is Girne Caddesi, which leads onto Atatürk Meydanı, the main square, identifiable by a large portrait of Kemal Atatürk. Around here you will find banks, shops and hotels. To the east of the square are the Korkut Effendi and Selimiye districts where most of North Nicosia's sights are found. To the immediate south, near the Green Line, is a small pedestrianised area with shops and restaurants. In the west of the Old City are the Karamanzade and Arabahmet districts.

The New City spreads some distance north from Kyrenia Gate, with Bedrettin Demirel Caddesi leading northwest to Kyrenia, and Gazeteci Kemal Aşik Caddesi leading northeast to Famagusta (Mağusa).

Visitors to North Nicosia will arrive to the west of the Old City via the Ledra Palace Hotel, at the UN-controlled checkpoint between Northern Cyprus and the Republic. From here it is a 10-minute walk to the Kyrenia Gate.

Maps

The North Cyprus Tourism Organisation (NCTO) produces a reasonably useful *City Plan of Lefkoşa* in both English and Turkish. These should be available at the Ledra Palace Hotel NCTO office. Otherwise you will have to ask at one of the NCTO offices in North Nicosia. Commercially produced maps of Cyprus available in your local bookshop at home sometimes have city maps that include North Nicosia. Maps of Lefkosia published by the Cyprus Tourism Organisation (CTO) in the South do not show street details for North Nicosia.

INFORMATION

Bookshops

Rüstem Kitabevi (☎ 228 3506; Girne Caddesi 22) One almost legendary for its organised chaos, this place has taken control of its stock and all is now neatly arranged on shelves. It is still, however, a well-supplied store, with old and new books, and many English-language reads, plus a rack of all kinds of magazines.

Emergency

For emergencies, call ☎ 155.

Police station (☎ 228 3311; Atatürk Meydanı)

Internet Access

Deep Net City (☎ 227 9669; Girne Caddesi 73; per hr 1YTL; ☎ 24hr) This is a central, busy Internet outlet.

Virus Net Internet Café (☎ 0533 868 8086; Osman Paşa Caddesi C35; per hr 1YTL; ☎ 24hr) A little less busy than Deep Net, this is a good alternative.

Laundry

London Dry Cleaners (☎ 227 8232; Abdi İpekçi Caddesi 30) Located in the New City, the London will do a service wash as well as dry-clean your clothes.

Medical Services

Burhan Nalbatanoğlu Devlet Hastahanesi (☎ 228 5441) North Nicosia's main hospital.

Poliklinik (☎ 227 3996; Gazeteci Kemal Aşik Caddesi) Where foreigners can seek medical treatment.

WHO WANTS TO BE A MILLIONAIRE?

The former millions of Turkish lira have had their zeroes knocked off, so now it's easier to count your dosh. Although some people may still quote prices in millions, the new currency is in daily use and the old notes are almost completely extinct.

THE ELUSIVE INSURANCE

Following the 2003 border-crossing changes, there has been a lot of talk of the North's car insurance, issued upon entry from the Republic. And after all this talk, things are clear as mud. If you ask about the insurance, you are likely to get numerous reactions and conflicting information. This is because the insurance 'law' concerning vehicles and drivers from the South is full of holes and open to interpretation (mainly by the North's police force).

When you enter the North by car (privately owned or rented) at any checkpoint, your own car insurance will no longer be valid, and you will have to purchase Turkish car insurance. It is third-party cover insurance, meaning that it covers anything up to CY£3000 worth of damage not caused by you. If you crash into someone or something, you will have to pay for the entire damage amount, and until you've coughed up the cash, you won't be able to leave the North.

If you're driving a rented car, keep in mind that, while the Republic's car-rental agencies have no objections against your taking rented cars to the North, it's up to you to decide whether this risk is worth taking, since establishing who is at fault in case of an accident can sometimes take a lot longer than one may think and be subject to many twists and turns.

The insurance prices are: CY£10 for one to three days for; CY£15 for one month; CY£20 for three months; CY£30 for six months; and CY£45 for one year.

Turkish-owned cars crossing into the South have to get the standard insurance, similar to that in other EU countries. The North's car-rental agencies did not allow taking rented cars into the Republic at the time of research.

Money

You can change your money into new Turkish lira (YTL) at any of the money-changing facilities just past the Ledra Palace Hotel passport-control booth. ATMs can be found at the **TC Ziraat Bankası** (Girne Caddesi) at the northern end of Girne Caddesi, or at the **Kıbrıs Vakıflar Bankası** (Atatürk Meydanı). Both change foreign currency, as do private-exchange offices nearby.

Post

Post office (Sarayönü Sokak) Just west of Atatürk Meydanı.

Telephone

There are public telephone booths scattered throughout the Old City, all of which use prepaid phonecards.

You can purchase phonecards from post offices.

Telecommunications office (Arif Salih Sokak; ☎ 8am-midnight) Situated in the New Town, west of the telecom tower.

Tourist Information

North Cyprus Tourism Organisation (NCTO; ☎ 227 9112; fax 228 5625; www.tourism.trnc.net) Kyrenia Gate (☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat); Ledra Palace Hotel crossing (☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 9am-2pm Sun); main office (Bedrettin Demirel Caddesi; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat) The NCTO has two convenient offices in the

city centre with maps and brochures on Northern Cyprus. If you don't find the information you want here, you can always make the 2km trek out to the main office. It's a long walk, so take a taxi from Kyrenia Gate (2YTL).

Travel Agencies

Birinci Turizm (☎ 228 3200; Girne Caddesi 158a) Issues ferry tickets to Turkey and airline tickets, and offers a range of other travel-related services.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

North Nicosia is a safe city at any time of the day, and you should feel no concern about walking the streets.

At night, the Old City can become rather quiet, and visitors may feel intimidated walking alone along dimly lit and sometimes narrow streets. It's best to avoid them if you feel uncomfortable. The areas abutting the Green Line look threatening, with large black-and-red signs that clearly forbid photography or trespassing in the buffer zone.

Do not take photographs on the Roccas (Kaytazağa) Bastion, at the western end of the Old City limits, where you can still look over into Greek Lefkosia. Despite the loosening of the border-crossing laws, the buffer zone is still a military area. Watchful soldiers stationed not so obviously on the bastion may accost you and even confiscate your camera.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Büyük Han & Kumarcılar Han

The **Büyük Han** (Great Inn; Arasta Sokak) is a wonderful example of Ottoman architecture and it's a rare surviving example of a medieval caravanserai. In the Ottoman world during the Middle Ages, travellers and traders could find accommodation at these *hans* (inns), as well as a place to stable their horses, trade their goods and socialise with fellow travellers.

The **Büyük Han** was built in 1572 by the first Ottoman governor of Cyprus, Musafir Pasha. Renovated in the recent years, it has once again become the centre of the Old City's bustle, with cafés, shops and traditional craft workshops housed in the 67 small cells that originally served as the inn's sleeping area. The central courtyard has in its middle a *mescit* (Islamic 'chapel'), and it is balanced on six pillars, over a *şadırvan* (ablutions fountain). This design is unique to this inn and only two others in Turkey.

Just to the north, on Agah Efendi Sokak, is the **Kumarcılar Han** (Gambler's Inn), a late-17th-century caravanserai, which worked in a similar way to the **Büyük Han**. It was closed for reconstruction at the time of research. Rumour has it that once it's been renovated, the building might once again become a place for gamblers. This would be no surprise considering the casino epidemic currently sweeping the North.

Belediye Pazarı (Municipal Market)

A fantastic place to check out local produce and local characters, the **market** (Belediye Pazarı; ☎ 6am-3pm Mon-Sat) bustles with action: bargaining is rife, sellers either shout out their offers to shoppers, or sleep on the counters amid piles of vegetables and fruit. There is also an area with souvenirs where you can find something to take home.

Büyük Hammam

The **Büyük Hammam** (Tarihi Büyük Hamam, Great Baths; ☎ 228 4462; İrfan Bey Sokak 9; ☎ 7.30am-10.30pm), in the process of being refurbished during this book's research, is a world-famous Turkish bath normally frequented by locals and tourists, both male and female. Stories of improper conduct on the part of the male-only masseurs made the news when two American tourists were allegedly molested in 2005, and soon after the hammam was

closed for renovation. The refurbishment makes many hope that this bath will follow in the steps of the Omeriye Hammam in Lefkosia (p65), which would make it a safer and more appealing option.

The entrance is via an ornate low door, sunk six feet below street level. The door was originally part of the 14th-century Church of St George of the Latins. Inside you are able to see a nail that marks the point where the waters of the Pedieos River (Kanlı Dere) rose and drowned about 3000 Lefkosians in 1330.

It was not possible to have a bath in the hammam during research time, but visitors were allowed in to have a look from 9am to 5pm; pay CY£1 or €1 to the burly builder by the door.

Bedesten

Another building being renovated as part of the 'Nicosia Master Plan', the ruined and usually locked **Bedesten** (St Nicholas of the English) was originally a small Byzantine church built in the 6th century and augmented in the 14th century by the Catholic church.

During the 82 years of Venetian rule it became the Church of the Orthodox Metropolitan. After the Ottomans took Lefkosia in 1570, the church was used as a grain store and as a general market, but was basically left to disintegrate.

Today you can peer through the fencing and still make out the layout of the original churches. Medieval tombstones from various parts of Cyprus are currently kept in a section of the **Bedesten**. The north doorway has some splendid-looking **coats of arms** originally belonging to noble Venetian families.

These families may have been supporters of the Orthodox Church, which was nonetheless allowed to continue about its business despite the Catholic dominance of religious life in Cyprus.

The complex, on Selimiye Meydanı, was up for restoration during our research, so access to the site was not possible.

Selimiye Mosque

North Nicosia's most prominent landmark, which is also clearly visible from the southern half of the city, is the **Selimiye Mosque** (Selimiye Camii; Selimiye Meydanı; admission free). This

strange-looking building, a cross between a French Gothic church and a mosque, has an interesting history. Work started on the church in 1209 and progressed slowly. Louis IX of France, on his way to the Crusades, stopped by in 1248 and gave the building process a much needed shot in the arm by offering the services of his retinue of artisans and builders. However, the church took another 78 years to complete and was finally consecrated in 1326 as the **Church of Agia Sofia**.

Up until 1570 the church suffered deprecation at the hands of the Genoese and the Mamelukes, and severe shakings from two earthquakes in 1491 and 1547. When the Ottomans arrived in 1570, they stripped the building of its Christian contents and added two minarets between which the Turkish Cypriot and Turkish flags now flutter.

The Gothic structure of the interior is still apparent despite Islamic overlays such as the whitewashed walls and columns, and the reorientation of the layout to align it with Mecca. Note the ornate west front with the three decorated doorways, each in a different style. Also look out for four **marble columns** relocated from Ancient Salamis and now placed in the apse off the main aisles.

Today the Selimiye Mosque is a working place of worship and you are able to go inside. Follow the usual etiquette when visiting a mosque: dress conservatively, take your shoes off, observe silence and don't take photos if prayers are in progress. The mosque has no set opening hours, but it's usually open during the day in the summer. Try to time your visit either just before or just after one of the five Muslim prayer sessions.

Library of Sultan Mahmut II

The **Library of Sultan Mahmut II** (Sultan II Mahmut Kütüphanesi; Selimiye Meydanı; ☎ 9am-2pm Jun-mid-Sep, 9am-1pm & 2-4.45pm mid-Sep-May) is housed in an octagonal building erected in 1829. It contains some 1700 books, and the interior is decorated with a calligraphic frieze in blue and gold. Some of the books are up to 700 years old and the more valuable tomes are displayed in special cases. The books were on loan to the National Archive Library of Cyprus during the time of research.

The same ticket also gives you access to the **Bedesten** and the **Lapidary Museum**.

Lapidary Museum

A visit to the **Lapidary Museum** (Taş Eserler Müzesi; Kirlizade Sokak; ☎ 9am-2pm Jun-mid-Sep, 9am-1pm & 2-4.45pm mid-Sep-May) is usually included in a visit to the Library of Sultan Mahmut II. This 15th-century building contains a varied collection of sarcophagi, shields, steles, columns, and a Gothic window rescued from a Lusignan palace that once stood near Atatürk Meydanı.

Haydarpasha Mosque

The **mosque** (Camii Haydarpasha; Kirlizade Sokak; admission free; ☎ 9am-1pm & 2.30-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) was originally built as the 14th-century Church of St Catherine, but now functions as an art gallery. It is the second most important Gothic structure in North Nicosia after the Selimiye Mosque. The sculptures, both inside and out, are quite ornate, sprouting gargoyles, dragons, shields and human heads.

Dervish Pasha Museum

This small **ethnographic museum** (Derviş Paşa Konağı; Beliş Paşa Sokak; admission 4.50YTL; ☎ 7.30am-2pm Jun-mid-Sep, 7.30am-1pm & 2-4.45pm mid-Sep-May) is housed in a 19th-century mansion. Built in 1807, it belonged to a wealthy Turkish Cypriot, Derviş Paşa, who published Cyprus' first Turkish-language newspaper. The house became an ethnographic museum in 1988. Household goods, including an old loom, glassware and ceramics, are displayed in former servants' quarters on the ground floor. Upstairs is a rich display of embroidered Turkish costumes and, in the far corner, a sumptuous *selamlık* (a retiring room for the owner of the mansion and his guests), replete with sofas and nargileh (Middle Eastern water pipes), and even some guests, in the form of eerie mannequins dressed up in suits.

Turkish Museum

The **Turkish Museum** (Mevlevi Tekke Müzesi; Girne Caddesi; admission 4.50YTL; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri May-Oct, 9am-1pm & 2-4.45pm Mon-Fri Nov-Apr) is a former 17th-century *tekke* (monastery) of the mystic Islamic sect known as the Mevlevi Order, or more familiarly, the Whirling Dervishes. Their spiritual philosophy, started in the Turkish town Konya, is based on the mystical branch of Islam called Sufism. Among the displays of the Dervishes are interesting

THE WHIRLING DERVISHES OF THE MEVLEVI ORDER

The founder of the Mevlevi Order was the poet Jelaluddin Mevlana, known in the West as Rumi, who was born in the 13th century. His most famous work is *Mathnawi*, a long poem that details Mevlana's teachings and understanding of the world, and emphasises the belief that an individual's soul is separated from the divine during one's earthly life; only God's love has the power to draw it back to its source. Rumi's teachings were also based on the belief that everything was created by God, so every creature was to be loved and respected. The order paid special attention to patience, modesty, unlimited tolerance, charity and positive reasoning. It forbade any expression or nurturing of anger, hierocracy and lies.

But most importantly, and shockingly to orthodox Muslims at that time, Rumi claimed that music was the way to transcend the mundane worries of life, and that one could connect with the divine through dancing, or indeed, whirling.

The slow, whirling trancelike dance of the Dervishes is called *sema*, and it is accompanied by the sound of the *ney* (reed flute), an instrument central to Rumi's idea of yearning for the divine. The sound of the *ney*, whose tonal range is equal to that of a human voice, is supposed to symbolise the soul's cry for God. The *oud* (Levantine lute) and *kudum* (paired drums) are the other instruments that accompany *sema*. During their dance, the Dervishes hold one palm upwards and the other downwards to symbolise humanity's position as a bridge between Heaven and Earth. The *sema* was performed exclusively as a spiritual exercise, and it was considered blasphemy to perform for money or show.

The Mevlevi Order flourished for 700 years in Turkish life and spread from Konya in Turkey to the Balkans and southeastern Europe, until they were banned in Turkey by Atatürk in 1925. Today the Dervishes perform in theatres all over the world, and it's possible to see their beautiful dance in most Western countries.

photographs of their dances in Nicosia in 1954. The most fascinating part of the museum is the former kitchen of the *tekke*, the centre of the hierarchical order in which the Dervishes lived and moved from 'interns' to achieving Dervish status. Each new intern would have to prove himself worthy by taking on the role of a kitchen servant for several years; at meal times, he would stand in the corner silently, watching out for subtle signals indicating the Dervishes' needs. Lifting a piece of bread indicated that the Dervish was thirsty and more water was needed.

The Turkish Museum also houses a room with the coffins of the 16 Mevlevi sheiks, and outside in the courtyard is a collection of Muslim tombstones.

Museum of Barbarism

Although the Turkish Cypriots may have removed the gruesome posters and photographs that used to greet arrivals at the Ledra Palace Hotel crossing, they have not forgotten the atrocities committed by Greek Cypriots and in particular EOKA thugs against the Turkish Cypriot community. The **Museum of Barbarism** (Barbarlık Müzesi; İrhan Sokak 2; admission 4.50YTL; ☎ 8am-2pm) is in a quiet

suburb to the west of the Old City and takes a bit of seeking out. On 24 December 1963, a mother and her children, along with a neighbour, were shot dead in their bath by EOKA gunmen. The bloodstained bath is retained as one of the exhibits in this rather macabre museum. There are other photo-documentary displays, particularly of Turkish Cypriots murdered in the villages of Agios Sozomenos and Agios Vasilios.

WALKING TOUR

Allow a leisurely two hours for this walk and extra time to see the sights.

Our self-paced walking tour is most conveniently started and finished at the **Ledra Palace Hotel crossing** (1; p63), especially if you are visiting North Nicosia on a day trip from the South. From the checkpoint, walk 100m and turn right onto Memduh Asar Sokak, and you will almost immediately cross into the Old City. Turn right along Zahra Sokak and walk past a line of old houses now undergoing renovation. These are the same houses that you can see from the Greek Cypriot side of the Ledra Palace Hotel crossing. Note the rusting oil barrels and gun placements on the Greek Cypriot

side. Further along to your right, enter the small Yiğitler Park that sits atop the **Roccas Bastion** (2; p63) and stare out through the fence down into Greek Cypriot Lefkosia. This is the only point along the whole of the Attila and Green Lines where Turkish and Greek Cypriots can eyeball each other at such close quarters.

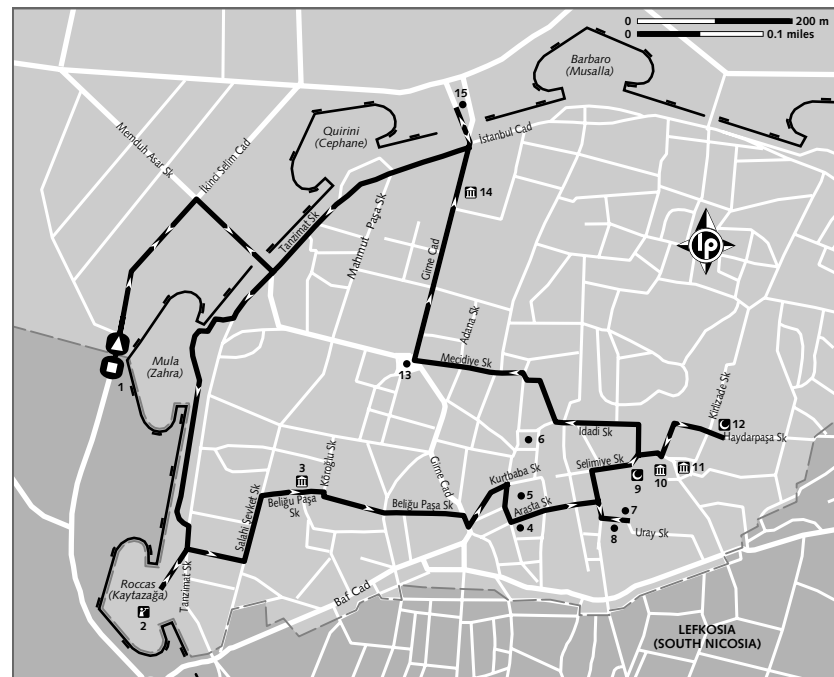
From the Roccas Bastion, head eastwards into the Old City along the narrow streets with tastefully restored houses of the Arabahmet neighbourhood. Make a left turn along Salahi Sevket Sokak, and then right into Beligü Paşa Sokak to visit the **Dervish Pasha Museum** (3; p177), a small ethnographical collection housed in an old Turkish mansion. Follow Beligü Paşa Sokak until it leads you into the pedestrianised zone in the centre of the city. Note the restaurants and cafés for lunch later. Follow Araştır

Sokak past the **Büyük Hammam** (4; p176) and detour to see the magnificent Turkish caravanserai, the **Büyük Han** (5; p176) and the nearby **Kumarçılar Han** (6; p176), under reconstruction. Continue a further 100m along Arasta Sokak until you arrive at the locked Ottoman bazaar called the **Bedesten** (7; p176), across the street from which is the municipal market, the **Belediye Pazarı** (8; p176). Hard to miss is the uncompleted former Lusignan cathedral of Agia Sofia, now the **Selimiye Mosque** (9; p176), incongruous with its soaring minarets added after the Ottoman conquest.

If you have time, seek out the **Library of Sultan Mahmut II** (10; p177) close by. Further east are the **Lapidary Museum** (11; p177) and **Haydarpaşa Mosque** (12; p177), which was originally the 14th-century church of St Catherine. Head westwards along İdadi and Mecidiye Sokak, and make for the main square of **Atatürk Meydanı** (13), from where it's a short stroll north along Girne Caddesi to the Mevlevi Tekke, originally home of the Whirling Dervishes (see opposite), but now the **Turkish Museum** (14; p177).

WALK FACTS

Start & Finish Ledra Palace Hotel crossing
Distance 4km



At the northern end of Girne Caddesi, you'll see **Kyrenia Gate (15)**, which was cut off from its protective walls when the British created a thoroughfare for traffic.

From Kyrenia Gate, it's a brisk 10-minute stroll inside the Venetian walls back to the Ledra Palace Hotel crossing, or to the pedestrian zone for lunch.

NORTH NICOSIA FOR CHILDREN

Considering the illustrious place of shadow theatre in the history of Cyprus, it's a surprise that the **Cyprus Turkish Shadow Theatre** (☎ 0542 850 3514; Büyük Han, Arasta Sokak) is the only place of its kind on the entire island. Shadow-puppet plays take place in the Büyük Han, but you will have to go there or call and inquire about details with Mehmet Ertuğ, the puppeteer.

If you fancy yourself as a bit of a Formula 1 whiz, go and pretend you are Michael Schumacher at **Zet Karting** (☎ 0533 866 6173; www.zetkarting.com; Lefkoşa-Güzelyurt Anayolu; 10-30YTL; ☎ 4pm-midnight Jun-mid-Sep, noon-8pm mid-Sep-Jun, closed Mon). Zet Karting has a large and very professional-looking series of circuits. You can rent carts from 10YTL for 10 minutes for the junior 300m course, 15YTL for the medium 900m course, or 30YTL for 10 minutes on the 1200m professional circuit. Unwind in the Z1 Bar or Z1 Cafeteria.

Zet Karting is just off the main roundabout on the road going out of North Nicosia. At the roundabout, take the turning to Güzelyurt (Morfou); it's on the left, after the Alaykoy turning.

SLEEPING

North Nicosia is terribly short of places to lay your head. The budget 'hotels' are around the Selimiye Mosque area and in the streets east of Girne Caddesi. They all have dorm-style rooms where a bed costs around UK£4 to UK£6, but they are pretty dire places with a bad reputation. We don't recommend any of them. Apart from that, there are only two hotels:

Saray (☎ 228 3115; saray@northcyprus.net; Atatürk Meydanı; s/d UK£27/41; ☎) The Saray, once a star on the Nicosia hotel scene, has a sense of faded glory about it. The rooms are spacious and resemble a '70s interiors ad, and the beds are soft and pretty uncomfortable for a price so high. It is right in the centre of the Old City, on Atatürk Meydanı, and is the city's best hotel and an unmissable landmark.

Royal Hotel (☎ 228 7621; ichangar@kkct.net; Gazeteci Kemal Aşık Caddesi; s/d UK£30/44; ☎) A much more upmarket place, it's popular with travellers on business. All rooms are fully serviced and have minibar, phone, satellite TV, and even a phone in the bathroom. There is also a swimming pool and a gym.

EATING

It's time to try those lovely kebabs. North Nicosia's eating scene is varied, with small kebab houses, *meyhane* (taverns), traditional restaurants, and chic, modern eateries. At the moment lunchtime eating is better than dinner, since there are more small kebab houses open offering a choice. At dinnertime the Old City gets very quiet and a little dark; so, apart from the two places we recommend, there are not that many options. There is a scattering of restaurants to the northwest of the Old City, usually hard to find and best reached by taxi; they are open evenings.

Old City

Boghjalian (☎ 228 0700; Salahi Şevket Sokak; meze around 10YTL; ☎ lunch & dinner) Housed in the former mansion of a wealthy Armenian, the Boghjalian is a quality restaurant and very popular in town. The set menu consists of either meze or mixed kebab. Food is served in a leafy courtyard. This place is almost always full for dinner and particularly for lunch, when visitors cross over from the South, especially as it's close to the Ledra Palace Hotel crossing point.

Sabor (☎ 228 8322; Selimiye Meydanı 29; mains 5YTL; ☎ lunch & dinner) Right next to Selimiye Mosque, this is decidedly North Nicosia's trendiest restaurant. Stylish wooden tables inside are surrounded by leather sofas in the lounge area; colourful lamps swing low; fashion photos adorn the walls. The large terrace is on the square, and on Wednesdays and Fridays there is live jazz piano music. Its excellent Italian and Spanish food is especially good for those days when you can't take another kebab, although there are oriental-style noodles too, and the prices are surprisingly low. The espresso and cappuccino are just right.

Konak (☎ 229 1210; Selimiye Meydanı 28; mains 10YTL; ☎ lunch & dinner) This traditional restaurant sits next to Sabor and is decorated in the

Ottoman style. It has a large garden, full of plants and flowers, and upstairs there is a wooden veranda and small coves for romantic dining. The food is eclectic: there is pasta, pizza, salads and kebabs, just take your pick.

Sedirhan Café (Büyük Han; mains 7YTL; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon, Wed, Fri, 9am-1am Tue & Thu, 9am-1pm Sat, closed Sun) This café is the best place to eat Turkish ravioli, while you admire the beauty of the Büyük Han (the Sedirhan is in its courtyard). You can also have a coffee or a beer, and eat some *börek* (meat or cheese rolled in thin pastry). On Tuesdays and Thursdays, the inn is a concert venue for (usually free) live music and the café stays open late.

Saray Roof (☎ 227 3115; Atatürk Meydanı; fixed-menu meals 12YTL; ☎ lunch & dinner) On the top of the Saray hotel, and commanding the best views of the city, this place is great for an evening cocktail. Unfortunately, the Turkish and 'European' food is unremarkable. The view is what you pay for, and you get to watch the city lights twinkle in the night.

For cheap kebabs on Girne Caddesi, the **Amasyali** (☎ 228 3294; Girne Caddesi 186; doner 1.50YTL; ☎ 9am-11pm) is open all day and does simple, tasty doner kebabs to eat in or take away. On the same street, the **Umutlar Restaurant** (☎ 227 3236; Girne Caddesi 51; kebabs 1.50YTL; ☎ 9am-11pm) is another kebab house for good food on the go.

In Araşta Sokak, opposite the Bedesten, is a shop that makes delicious halvah on the premises. Nearby is the **Belediye Pazarı** (☎ 6am-3pm Mon-Sat), a large, covered market selling fresh produce.

For coffee fetishists, the **Özerlat** (☎ 227 2351; Araşta Sokak 73; coffee 2.50YTL; ☎ 9am-6pm) has any kind of tea or coffee you can think of. A perfect place to take a break from a hard day's sightseeing.

New City

Unless you are staying in North Nicosia for a long time, or you decide to live here, you will rarely venture out into the frankly not very exciting eating scene in the New City. But if you do decide to go and boldly seek out where most tourists do not eat, try these places (all open for lunch and dinner):

Pasta Villa (☎ 228 4878; Mehmet Akif Caddesi 56; pasta dishes 7-10YTL) A self-service pasta restaurant that also does some OK pizza.

Pronto Bistro (☎ 228 6542; Mehmet Akif Caddesi; large pizza 8YTL) An eclectic option, located about 100m

north of the British High Commission, where you can eat pizza, Tex-Mex and even a few Chinese and Indian dishes.

Moyra (☎ 228 6800; Osman Paşa Caddesi 32; meals 14YTL) For some Cypriot steaks and kebabs.

Annibal (☎ 227 1835; Saraçoğlu Meydanı; kebabs 9-11YTL) Another kebab house that has good, simple food, just outside the walls on the northern side of the Old City.

ENTERTAINMENT

Turkish Cypriots will themselves admit that nightlife in their capital is not all that hot, at least in the Old City. The Mehmet Akif Caddesi is quite animated, although if you're looking for a bit more noise and fun, most people go to Kyrenia, 25km away. Many North Nicosians go out to restaurants or have fun at home, which is not much use for travellers. But all is not lost, with a few OK spots where the young while away their time.

A popular drinking area in the Old City is behind the Belediye Pazarı inside the restored old market building. Resembling a kind of warehouse, with tall ceilings and low-hanging lamps, the space has a pretty, modern look. There are several bars inside, and the rather young clientele is keen on the nargileh-sucking. It's lively and fun for a drink in the Old City.

The Büyük Han has live music on Tuesdays and Thursday evenings, in its central court.

Cinema Nostalgi Bar (☎ 227 7901; Kurtuluş Meydanı) On the northern side of town, this is perhaps the most popular of bars on North Nicosia's rock scene. Live music is on most evenings, but there is no cinema here – it's all in the name. The son of the North's Prime Minister, Mehmet Ali Talat, has been playing gigs here (he's a singer in a local rock band), so a bit of local celebrity spotting can be done too.

SHOPPING

The Büyük Han is the best place for a tourist to do some good shopping. Two places in particular are recommended:

Moniat Macun (☎ 229 0891; ☎ 9am-6pm) *Macun* is the art of fruit-preserving, and the lady who owns this shop has perfected that art. She preserves almost anything she comes across (so watch out), from exquisite green walnuts pickled while still raw, with a pungent, almost bitter taste; to the soft texture of melon and watermelon that melts in

SHOPPERS BEWARE

A word of warning: if you're visiting from the South and decide to go on a shopping spree in the North or vice versa, beware the Greek Cypriot customs regulations. You can't take more than 200 cigarettes and 1L of alcohol or wine, plus CY£80 worth of other goods across the North–South border. So don't go carpet-buying!

the mouth. You can try the preserves before you commit, but a lovely jar will be a tasty reminder of summer fruits during the cold days of winter. Moniat is on the ground floor, opposite the Sedirhan café.

Koza (☎ 9am–6pm) Cyprus' heritage of producing silk from silk worms and the once ubiquitous mulberry trees comes alive in this shop, where the owner, Munise, together with her elderly mother, hand-weaves the silk patterns. The patterns were traditionally used for picture frames, or simply as framed wall decorations themselves. Koza is on the 1st floor, above Moniat Macun.

GETTING THERE & AWAY**Air**

Ercan airport is about 14km east of North Nicosia and is linked to the city by an expressway. Many visitors to the North now fly to Larnaka airport, as the flights are direct and less subject to delays at Larnaka. There are scheduled flights to London and several destinations in Turkey. All charter flights operate from **Ercan** (Tymvou; ☎ 231 4703), although occasional flights are diverted to the military airport at **Geçitkale** (Lefkoniko; ☎ 227 9420), nearer to Famagusta, when Ercan is being serviced.

The two airlines serving Northern Cyprus are based in North Nicosia.

Cyprus Turkish Airlines (Kıbrıs Türk Hava Yolları, KTHY; ☎ 227 3820; www.kthy.net/kthyen/html; Bedrettin Demirel Caddesi)

Turkish Airlines (Türk Hava Yolları, THY; ☎ 227 1061; www.turkishairlines.com; Mehmet Akif Caddesi 32)

Bus

The long-distance bus station is on the corner of Atatürk Caddesi and Gazeteci Kemal Aşık Caddesi in the New Town. Buses to major towns leave from here. You may prefer the bus to the sometimes hair-raising rides in service taxis or *dolmuş* (minibuses).

Car & Motorcycle

Drivers and riders will enter North Nicosia via one of two main roads that lead directly to the Old City. If you come from Famagusta or Ercan airport, you will enter North Nicosia via Mustafa Ahmet Ruso Caddesi and then Gazeteci Kemal Aşık Caddesi. This road leads directly to Kyrenia Gate. Arriving from Kyrenia, you will enter North Nicosia via Tekin Yurdabay Caddesi and eventually Bedrettin Demirel Caddesi, which also leads towards Kyrenia Gate.

If you are entering North Nicosia from the Republic of Cyprus, the car crossing point is at Agios Dometios, west of the city. The easiest way into the Old City is to turn immediately right after passing the Ledra Palace Hotel crossing and enter via Memdah Asar Sokak. Turn left onto Tanzimat Sokak as soon as you cross the moat and you will reach Kyrenia Gate after about 200m.

Parking is usually not a problem, though finding a place in the Old City may get tricky if you arrive late in the morning on a working day. If you arrive early, you can easily park on Girne Caddesi.

Service Taxi & Minibus

Minibuses to local destinations and further afield start from various stations outside the Venetian walls, and also from the İtimat bus station, located just outside Kyrenia Gate. City destinations include Famagusta (1.50YTL, one hour) and Kyrenia (2.50YTL, 30 minutes). Service taxis also leave from the İtimat bus station.

GETTING AROUND To/From the Airport

Buses to Ercan airport leave from the office of **Cyprus Turkish Airlines** (☎ 227 1240; Bedrettin Demirel Caddesi). They depart two hours before any flight and cost 2YTL. A taxi from Kyrenia Gate to the airport will cost 16YTL.

Bus

While there are public buses in North Nicosia, they tend to mainly service the suburbs outside the Old City. They are only really useful if you need to get to the Cyprus Turkish Airlines office or the main NCTO office (both on Bedrettin Demirel Caddesi), or a hitching spot, on a shoestring traveller's budget. Buses leave from near Kyrenia Gate.

Car

For car hire, try **Budget Car Rental** (☎ 228 2711; www.budgetcyprus.com; İrfan Bey Sokak) or **Sun Rent-A-Car** (☎ 227 2303; fax 228 3700; www.sunrentacar.com; Abdi İpekçi Caddesi 10). If you are coming from the South, call ahead (see the boxed text, p231, for tips) and see if the company will meet you at the Ledra Palace Hotel crossing. Rates start at around UK£25 per day.

Taxi

There are plenty of taxi ranks in North Nicosia, though the most convenient and easiest to find is at Kyrenia Gate. A ride to anywhere in town should cost no more than 2YTL, though as a tourist you may be asked for more, say 2.50YTL. Above that, you are probably being ripped off. Ask the driver for the rate before getting into the taxi.

Among the more reliable taxi companies in North Nicosia are **Ankara Taxi** (☎ 227 1788),

Özner Taxi (☎ 227 4012), **Terminal Taxi** (☎ 228 4909) and **Yılmaz Taxi** (☎ 227 3036).

When you cross into North Nicosia from the South, you will almost certainly be approached by tourist cab drivers offering to take you on tours of the North. They would prefer to give you the full treatment for around CY£30 (although Cyprus pounds are not generally used in the North, Turkish taxis at crossing points will always quote prices in Cyprus pounds), but in practice you can ask to be taken to wherever you like, such as Kyrenia for the day, and pay less accordingly.

These drivers are not rapacious – though they are keen for your custom – and they will often act as unofficial and at times informative guides.

This is the best solution if you want a taste of the North without the hassles of driving yourself.

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