

Northern Cyprus: Questions and Answers

Political Situation and Crime in Cyprus

Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus is one of the safest places in the world to live in or to visit. There is no military presence to speak of and no conflict in the streets. Cypriots are very friendly, open and helpful people. On a personal level people in the South and North get on well with each other, some are even close friends. As this is a small island, the crime rate is almost nonexistent, and if you just act as if you were at home with the same precautions, you can feel as safe as at home, if not safer.

The financial crash in 2013 left the North completely unaffected. The country has one of the highest incomes per capita in the region.

Culture and language

As far as religion is concerned, most Cypriots are not strict Muslims. Many of the old Cypriots still have ancient British passports. Their culture is as influenced by the British as it is by the Turks. They drive on the left and usually you will find people that speak English. Even if you get unstuck in some of the small villages, you then just resign to good old fashioned sign language. The colonial influence shows in pretty much walks of life; the Cypriot women do not wear headscarves, and outside the mosques, there is no dress code. However, in the small village where a lot of the mainland Turks live, they hold on to their Turkish traditions.

Shopping

Since the country is still under economic embargo there are only Turkish or local products on offer. So there is no big emphasis on shopping, nobody will call after you as you walk down the street to offer you apple tea and call you into his or her shops. Local product and famous in Cyprus is the straw weaving and the crochet work of the village women as well as our local cheese the Helim, Halloumi as you might know it. Apart from that, you can buy cheap cigarettes and Raki and other local Spirits.

Climate

North Cyprus enjoys the benefits of the Mediterranean climate with long hot summers, short winters and little rain. The temperature during the conference is expected to be around 25-26 degrees Celsius and not much rain is expected. You may enjoy some swimming and sunbathing, so we recommend you to bring your swimming suits with you.

Getting there

Since 1974 isolated, North Cyprus is still not internationally recognized and therefore still suffers some problems especially as flights are concerned. For example, there are no direct flights to Ercan (ERC); all the planes are made to stop over in Turkey. The charter flights now get away with only a 45 minute stop-over, but why not use the chance to have a 2 or 3 day city-break in Istanbul which most of the time is possible without ticket price increase. On the other hand, you can fly in through the south where the closest airport would be Larnaca and from there you can then cross over into the North at Famagusta.

Border/crossing

The border crossing is now problem free, on showing your Passport it is recommended to fill out a little slip, which will then be stamped rather than your passport. There are few controls on the borders especially crossing from the South to the North. However, please do keep to international laws. On crossing from the North to the South, they sometimes check for alcohol and cigarettes, Helim as well as other foodstuff is one of the things you are not allowed to take across.

Currency

Official local currency in North Cyprus is the Turkish Lira (TL). However, every shop accepts Euros, GB Pounds, American Dollars and/or other major currencies. You may pay a shop or a taxi in any international currency and get the change back in Turkish Lira. Here are the current exchange rates for Turkish Lira (TL) 1 € = 2,80 TL 1 \$ = 2,25 TL 1 GBP = 3,55 TL.