European Destinations of Excellence EDEN

Cultural Tourism Orini Larnaka Cyprus





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THE EDEN PROJECT

The European Destinations of Excellence (EDEN) Project is carried out in the framework of the European programme COSME, which is co-funded by the European Commission – Tourism Unit. It is an initiative that promotes development models of sustainable tourism across Europe and focuses on annual national competitions that lead to the selection of a tourist 'destination of excellence' for each participating Member State. Through the selection of destinations, EDEN effectively achieves the objective of drawing attention to the values, diversity and common features of European tourist destinations and in parallel enhances the promotion of emerging European destinations, creating a platform for propagating correct practices throughout Europe and promotes networking among the selected destinations.

This European quest for excellence in tourism is developed around an annual theme, selected by the European Commission in association with the national tourism bodies. The main feature of the selected destinations is their commitment to social, cultural and environmental sustainability of tourism.

The initiative, in which 28 EU countries and EU candidate countries participate, aims to reward emerging, little-known destinations.

The EDEN initiative helps to spread the sustainable practices used by the European Destinations of Excellence and thus convert them to places of attraction for visitors all around the year.

The EDEN Initiative in Cyprus is managed by the Cyprus Tourism Organisation (CTO).



CYPRUS

Cyprus is the third largest island in the Mediterranean at the south-eastern corner of the European Union and is situated at the cultural, lingual and historic crossroads between Europe, Asia and Africa. An island rich in history and tradition, with a name established by Homer's time as it is mentioned both in the Iliad and the Odyssey.

Cyprus is also known as the Island of Aphrodite, as according to Greek Mythology, the Goddess Aphrodite (= born of the foam) was born near Venus Rock on the coast of Pafos, hence the adjective Cypris is ascribed to the Goddess.

The history of Cyprus begins with the first appearance of humans on the island about the 10th millennium B.C. while the first Achaeans settled in Cypriot ports in 1400 B.C. The geographical location of Cyprus played an important role in its troubled history as it became a reference point for many civilisations: Achaeans, Mycenaeans, Phoenicians, Assyrians, Egyptians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Crusaders, Franks, Venetians, Ottomans and British, each leaving behind visible signs all over the island. The island is an open museum: Neolithic settlements, ancient Greek and Roman theatres, mosaics, Byzantine and Latin churches and monasteries, Venetian walls, Byzantine castles, Ottoman mosques and colonial buildings.

Cyprus is composed of fertile plains, vineyards, endless beaches and high mountains, with the Troodos mountain range occupying the best part of the north west of the island. Fragrant pine forests and snowy mountain tops co-exist with the blue waters of the Mediterranean. The climate is Mediterranean with long, hot summers and mild sunny winters with low rainfall that permits touring of the island.

The biggest cities in Cyprus are the capital Lefkosia (Nicosia), Lemesos (Limassol) Larnaka and Pafos, while on the coastline the areas of Agia Napa, Paralimni and Polis Chrysochous have developed into popular tourist destinations. Many regions of Cyprus preserve the traditional way of life to this date, keeping alive their traditions and customs. Cypriot folk art (weaving, embroidery, woodcarving, pottery and silversmithing), Cypriot wines and cuisine are famous all over the world. Cypriots are famous for their friendliness while a great advantage for visitors is the convenience of communicating in English.

WELCOME TO ORINI LARNAKA

Welcome to Orini Larnaka! A region which is located northwest of the city of Larnaka and consists of 18 local authorities (17 communities and 1 municipality).

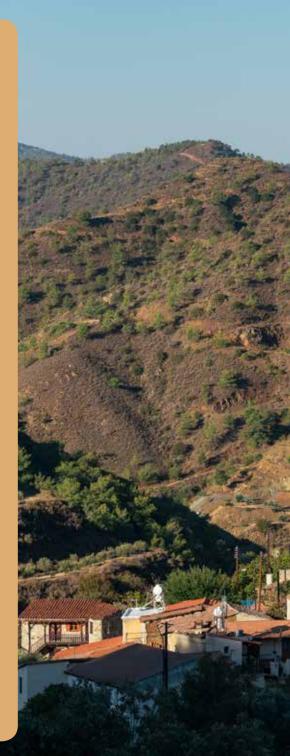
The Orini Larnaka region won first prize in the European Destinations of Excellence EDEN VIII competition themed 'Cultural Tourism', organised by the Cyprus Tourism Organisation, within the framework of the European Programme COSME 2016. The region has carved out a long historical and cultural journey of development and has been described as a cultural "mosaic" composed of some uniquely beautiful and interesting from a religious perspective churches, chapels and monasteries, some dating from the 12th century, archaeological sites and traditional settlements. It is worth noting the Neolithic settlements that have been discovered in the areas of Choirokitia and Kalavasos, which are preserved in a very good condition.

The region has kept its appearance and special characteristics unchanged through the passage of time, with almost all of the cores of the communities listed as traditional and with areas controlled by the Department of Antiquities.

Orini Larnaka is characterised by interspersed restored buildings and traditional houses, many of which have been converted into agrotourism accommodation. Today, the traditional villages of Orini Larnaka pulsate with life due to the collective efforts and love of their inhabitants.

Orini Larnaka is a cultural destination with its beginnings rooted in ancient times and leading up to today.

Let's get to know the place.



A PLACE WHICH OFFERS INNUMERABLE EXPERIENCES

The beautiful surroundings, in combination with the traditional architecture of the houses, afford a one of a kind experience to visitors. Each unique village provides many options for all kinds of preferences, enchanting the visitor with its majesty and nobility.

Agioi Vavatsinias

One of the most beautiful and picturesque villages of Cyprus. The houses, many of which are traditional, appear to be climbing up the hillsides. Visit the three-aisled, gabled village church, which is dedicated to Agioi Anargyroi, Agios Cosmas and Agios Damianos, built in 1871 over the ruins of an older church. The village is famous for its embroideries and the production of zivania. Here, many items of traditional Cypriot cuisine are prepared such as epsima, palouzes, soutzouko, kiofteri and sweet preserves. The passage of time has left behind an old wine-press to remind us of this old wine-making method.

Agios Theodoros

A scenic village of a particularly traditional character. The pretty wooden balconies, the beautiful gardens, the carved doorway stonework, the arched carved doors, lend the buildings an air of nobility. The village offers many attractions for visitors: the chapel of Panagia Astathkion, built in a Gothic style in the 16th century A.D. and the Venetian Watermill. The cultural development of the community is linked to the geography of the region and this is evident to visitors once they see the sights in combination with the landscape, the mountains, the gorges and the valley of the river Pentaschoinos.

Vavatsinia

Another village typical of Orini Larnaka which is situated in a dense pine forest, at a height of 840 metres above sea level. It was founded in the era of the Arab raids and named after the eponymous trees which grew in its surroundings, referring to mulberry trees in the Cypriot dialect. The quaint restaurants and tavernas offer traditional mezze, sweet preserves and their famous pourekia (fried pastries filled with halloumi or anari) as a dessert!

Vavla

It is one of the smallest in population villages of the region, a village-sanctuary for people with discerning tastes who love nature, tranquility and a healthy climate. Its unbelievable beauty will transfix visitors, making them longing to stay forever. Steep cobbled streets, imposing houses with ceramic-tiled roofs and their gardens, wooden doors with locks which are works of art. Points of interest are the restored old well and cistern, the Chapel of Panagia tis Agapis and the listed schoolhouse building.

Delikipos

It is a small village with few inhabitants situated about 5 kilometres west of Kornos village. It is a village covered in the greenery of the pine, olive and carob trees. Especially imposing are the centennial olive trees standing like sleepless guards at Delikipos for hundreds of years. According to the Cyprus historian Florio Voustronio in the middle of the 15th century A.D., specifically in 1461, Delikipos was subject to fiefdom. It also appears on Venetian maps. Point of interest: The church of Metamorfosis Soteros, built in 1726, evidenced by the inscription at the main entrance of the church, a cultural monument, maintained and protected by the Department of Antiquities.

Kalavasos

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Kalavasos is a community with a rich ancient history, linked to important copper ore mines. The community is situated about 40km northwest of the city of Larnaka, built along the west bank of the Vasilikos River and it reaches the Nicosia-Limassol highway up to the ancient Tenta settlement. Kalavasos and its surrounding area is linked to many significant archaeological sites, which relate to all the phases of Cypriot prehistoric and historic chronological periods. It is a community loaded with history immersed in the depths of past centuries. Here the past and the present have taken root and held on for centuries, in an extraordinary relationship. Points of interest: The Tenta Neolithic settlement, the metal mine, the Church of Panagia Titiotissa built in 1892, traditional buildings, agrotourism accommodation and a unique restored village square.

Kato Drys

Kato Drys is a beautiful village, at one time described as little Paris by various foreign travellers and visitors. It is in the western part of Orini Larnaka on an idyllic mountainside at the same height as the Lefkara area, 50 kilometres from the capital Lefkosia (Nicosia) and 38 kilometres from the other two cities, Larnaka and Lemesos (Limassol). Characteristic of the village are the houses in the center of the village built in a neoclassical style, indicating the prosperous and thriving times in the village's history. A point of interest is the Church of Panagia Eleousa (12th century A.D.) which was renovated by the Department of Antiquities.

Kornos

The picturesque village of Kornos, known for its pottery, is built in a hilly area, 27 km west of Larnaka and 25 km southwest of Nicosia. It is also famous for the production of excellent quality honey. An important attraction of the village is its church built in the gothic architectural style, dedicated to Agios Ioannis the Baptist, built at the beginning of the 19th century A.D. It is worth noting that one of the icons of the honoured saint dates back to 1734.

Kofinou

Kofinou is the largest village of the semi-mountainous region of Larnaka. Near the village is the Byzantine church of the Panagia of Kofinou and the monastery of the Panagia Galaktotrofousa. The ancient church of the Panagia of Kofinou is of special interest and dates back to the 11th century A.D.

Lagia or Lageia

Lagia is a small scenic village in an idyllic hilly area, with an average height of 380 metres above sea level. To the northwest, the village joins up with the village of Ora and to the east it joins the village of Vavla. Easiest access to the village is from the Lemesos – Lefkosia (Limassol – Nicosia) highway via the Choirokitia exit.

Kato Lefkara

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It is a community of rich tradition which preserves today the ethos and the boldness of a Cyprus which is flawless and authentic, of a living heritage and of folk tradition. Places of interest are the chapels of Archangelos Michail (Archangel Michael) (12th century A.D.), Agios Timotheos (15th century A.D.) and Agia Marina (18th century A.D.).

Pano Lefkara

The only municipality in Orini Larnaka. It is famous for its lace embroideries but also for its silversmithing. Visitors must not miss out on a visit to the Local Ethnological Museum of Traditional Embroidery and Silversmith Work, the Church of the Timios Stavros (Holy Cross) which dates from the 14th century A.D. and the various chapels of the area. Lefkaritiko Embroidery is included in UNESCO's Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Points of interest: the Handicraft Centre which houses exhibitions of Lefkaritiko lace embroidery and silversmithing.



Melini

The pretty village of Melini is another village in the region with a small population. Visitors can admire the local traditional architecture of the houses which are made of mudbricks and tour the narrow paved streets.

Odou

It is considered one of the most picturesque and traditional villages of Cyprus. It is built in the foothills of Troodos at 850 metres above sea level. Of significant interest is the little church of Agia Marina which was founded in 1777.

Ora

The village is built amongst mountain peaks affording a panoramic view to visitors. Quaint traditional houses, narrow streets and flowering gardens complete the beauty of the village.



Skarinou

Built on the mountain slopes, Skarinou maintains until this day its traditional character. Most of the houses are stone-built and the narrow cobbled streets lead to areas with panoramic views. Visitors will find that there is a large choice of agrotourism accommodation. The village is famous for its various traditional products such as donkey's milk, wine, oil, carob syrup, koulourakia (biscuits) and also the largest piece of Lefkaritiko lace embroidery which has won a place in the Guinness Book of World Records.

Tochni

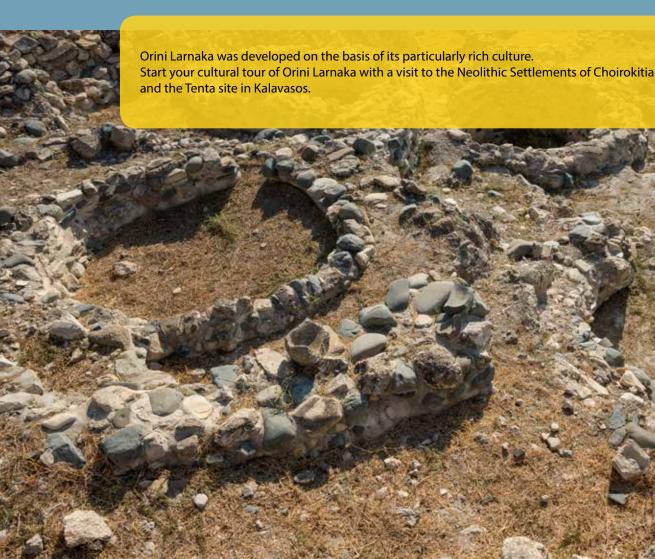
Tochni, with its traditional buildings, between Lemesos (Limassol) and Larnaka, is steeped in history and tradition since it is linked with Agia Eleni, on her visit to Cyprus from Jerusalem, on her way to Constantinople, with the relic of the Holy Cross.

Choirokitia

The picturesque village of Choirokitia is situated in a hilly region. It has become well - known due to the major archaeological discovery of a prehistoric settlement dating from the later phase of the Aceramic Neolithic period (around 7000 B.C.). In 1998 it was listed as a World Heritage Monument by UNESCO.

CULTURAL TOURISM

The civilisation of Cyprus spans about 90 centuries, according to the archaeological excavations carried out from time to time on the island. A variety of archaeological finds from the Neolithic period have generated huge archaeological interest. The cultural heritage of the island also includes Hellenistic and Roman monuments, Byzantine and Latin churches and monasteries, Frankish and Venetian forts and castles of the 12th - 16th centuries A.D., Muslim temples, architecture, folk art, visual arts and many other forms of culture.



Neolithic Settlement of Choirokitia

The archaeological site of Choirokitia has been listed as a Monument of World Cultural Heritage by UNESCO since 1998. It was discovered in 1934 and is dated around 7000 B.C. The settlement is built on a steep hillside and is situated on the bank of the River Maroni. Visitors can admire the way that the inhabitants' houses were built in that period: five such houses have been rebuilt in the same manner for educational purposes. The tombs discovered in the area are also exceptionally interesting.

"Tenta" Neolithic Settlement in Kalavasos

The Neolithic settlement of Tenta was discovered in 1947 and is another example of early permanent settlement of populations in Cyprus. The settlement dates back to the Aceramic Neolithic period (7000-5200 A.D.). The area is situated about 2.5km south of Kalavasos village, west of the River Vasilikos plain and is about 38km from Larnaka.

The museums in the region are of exceptional interest.

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Local Ethnological Museum of Traditional Embroidery and Silversmith Work (Lefkara)

The museum of Lefkara is maintained in the house of Patsalos which was purchased by the Department of Antiquities after its restoration and opened its doors to the public in 1988. The furnishing of the rooms creates the atmosphere of a typical Lefkara mansion. In other rooms on the upper floor traditional uniforms are exhibited, as are types of silversmith work and an interesting collection of Lefakritiko lace embroidery for which the village is famous around the world.

Handicraft Centre (Lefkara)

The Handicraft Centre in Lefkara was created with the aim of preserving, developing and continuing the Lefkara traditions in embroidery and silversmithing.





Local Rural Museum (Kato Drys)

The museum is housed in a traditional village house which is typical of the local architecture of the 19th century A.D. A visit to the museum gives the visitor a picture of the way of life of a farming family in that period.

Bee Museum (Kato Drys)

The museum presents the inhabitants' way of life and their occupations from the olden days until the invention of machines. Visitors may see the traditional method of honey production, how royal jelly is made, pollen and wax products. In Orini Larnaka you will find many churches, chapels and monasteries of much interest from both a religious and a historic point of view.

The Church of the Timios Stavros (Holy Cross) in Lefkara, which dates from the 14th century A.D. A special characteristic of the church is the wood-carved iconostasis which was crafted in 1760 A.D., with a secret hiding-place for the large gold-plated silver Cross which, according to folk-lore, contains wood from the Holy Cross. The folk-lore says that the Cross was brought to Pano Lefkara by Agia Eleni on her visit to Cyprus.

Church of the Metamorphosis of the Soteros

(Transfiguration of Our Saviour) in Lefkara, which was built in the 14th century A.D. In an imposing and prominent position in the southwest of Lefkara, is the church of the Metamorphosis of the Soteros known as Sotira (Saviour) which lends its name to the mountain itself. From the peak of Sotira, visitors can enjoy the amazing view which spreads out in front of them and extends towards all the points of the horizon.

Chapel of Archangelos Michail (Archangel Michael) in Kato Lefkara, which was built in the 12th century A.D., in stone in the Byzantine style and in the shape of the Cross.





- **Agios Timotheos** in Kato Lefkara, built in the 15th century A.D.
- **Agia Marina** in Odou, built in the 18th century A.D.
- Monastery of Agios Minas between the villages of Vavla and Kato Drys, which was founded during the Venetian rule.
- **The Panagia of Kofinou** which dates from the 12th century A.D.
- The Panagia of Astathkion in Agios Theodoros: Approximately 2 km to the east outside the village the chapel is built on a height and is dedicated to the Holy Virgin of Astathkion. According to one scenario the chapel got its name from the fertile land in which the chapel is located, which was rich in ears of wheat (astathkia). Another version states that the area was divided between people in various parts (stadiums) and was named Panagia Stadion but through paraphrasing it ended up being called "stathkion" and " astathkion". It is built in the Gothic architectural style and dates from the 16th century A.D. The interior of the chapel is entirely covered in frescoes which have, however, begun to deteriorate with the passage of time.

Other locations of historic interest:

- The Stone Bridge in Lefkara (River Syrkatis)
- The Old Drinking Fountain in Lagia which dates from 1709 and was one of 12 drinking fountains in existence at the time used to provide water to the village inhabitants.
- The Venetian Watermill at Agios Theodoros

TRADITION

Traditional professions and crafts

With the passage of time and technological advancement, many professions have been lost or are carried on by very few. However, the love of certain people for upholding tradition and customs in their daily lives has contributed positively to the preservation of these traditions and has formed a link between the generations.

As in many villages in Cyprus, in Orini Larnaka you may see inhabitants carrying on folkloric crafts and practicing them professionally.

In Pano and Kato Lefkara there are craftsmen:

- Of silversmithing who work the silver in the traditional manner of the hammer (forging). All types of ceremonial ecclesiastical items are made: oil lamp holder, icons, ecclesiastical symbolic items, crosses, bibles and of course the censers with designs of pears, apples, pinecones and stripes.
- Of the **Lefkaritiko embroidery**. The tradition of the embroidery at Lefkara goes back centuries and the embroideries are famous all over the world as "the Lefkaritiko Embroidery". According to local folk-lore, the history of the embroideries begins around the years 1191-1571, when the ladies of Lefkara were taught the art by some noble ladies who came from the west. According to the same source, in 1481, Leonardo Da Vinci visited Lefkara and took one of the embroideries to the Cathedral of Milan. A similar embroidery was given to the same cathedral on 19 October 1986, when the cathedral celebrated its 600 years.

From October 2010 it was entered in UNESCO's list of Intangible Cultural Heritage. Lefkaritiko Embroidery is also made in the surrounding communities.



Kornos is famous for the art of pottery, which is recognised globally having received many distinctions and prizes. The Kornos Pottery Co-Operative Company makes wine jars, plant pots, clay pots, censers, hives (the kind used in bee-keeping), clay pitchers, small clay ovens and decorative items with carved and embossed representations.

In **Choirokitia** we can find the **basket-weaving** craftsman.



Traditional products of Orini Larnaka

Each place makes its own traditional products which are connected with its culture. Orini Larnaka can be justifiably proud of its delicious traditional Cypriot products:

- Handmade pasta shaped with skewers or with the sklinitzi plant
- Tertzelouthkia (a type of pasta) with carob syrup.
- Sourdough bread and bread rolls.
- Sweet Pastries with honey and almonds.
- Sweet pastries with ground almonds.
- Pure honey.
- Dairy products (halloumi, trachanas and its famous yogurt).
- Products made from donkey's milk.
- By-products of grapes (raisins, soutzoukos, kiofteri, palouzes): while raisins are made of grapes, palouzes, kiofteri and soutzoukos are made with grape juice.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

The unique natural environment of Orini Larnaka has contributed to part of it being included in the list of protected areas of the "Natura 2000" Network.

Three rivers with habitats of the utmost environmental significance flow through the region. These are the rivers Vasilikos, Agios Minas and Pentaschoinos. The dams on the rivers, Vasiilikos, Dipotamos and Pentaschoinos are the most important environmental features of the region.

The region has a wide variety of natural habitats and abundant flora. There are 600 different plants, 42 of which are indigenous to Cyprus. For this reason, the "Environmental Information Center of Larnaka Mountainous Area" at Skarinou has been set up for the purpose of educating and informing visitors on environmental and cultural issues as well as promoting the region.

Nature Trails:

Choirokitia Nature Trail (linear)

Starting point: On the road to Choirokitia, immediately after the parking lot of the archaeological site, opposite the turning towards Tochni and the Church of Agios Fanourios and Agios Nectarios. Alternatively you can set off from the opposite direction, from the village towards the archaeological site.

Distance: 2 km, Duration: 45 minutes

Level of difficulty: 2

Points of interest: The archaeological site of Choirokitia, one of the most significant settlements of the Neolithic period which is listed as a World Cultural Heritage Site of UNESCO.



 "TOCHNI" Nature Trail (circular) Starting point: At Tochni Village with a circular route.

Distance: 2.8 km, Duration: 35 - 45 minutes

Level of difficulty: 2

Points of interest: Abundant flora and fauna of the area. The trail offers a varied scenery and panoramic views in combination with geomorphologic characteristics. It ends at the Church of "Agios Constantinos and Agia Eleni".

PICNIC SITES

- Kornos picnic site: It is situated about 2km south of Kornos village and is controlled by the Forestry Department. It is recommended for moments of absolute rest and relaxation since there are many pines, cypresses, eucalyptus trees, acacia trees and wild olives. Facilities include drinking water, tables and toilets. There are also designated areas for lighting up a barbecue.
- Odou picnic site: a small picnic site with 3-4 picnic tables. Even so, the landscape is one of unparalleled beauty. Visitors will enjoy the rich natural environment, which is full of plane trees and riverside vegetation and will relax as the only sounds they will hear are birdsong and the babbling of the river.
- Delikipos picnic site: a picnic site which belongs to the community and is situated at the edge of the village. A wonderful place for relaxation and tranquility under the pine trees. Facilities include drinking water, tables and toilets. There are also designated areas for lighting up a barbecue.
- 'Park of Cypriot Nature' at Skarinou: It is situated 1km outside the village and is ideal for relaxation. Within the park there is a kiosk with drinking water, children's swings and see-saws.



RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Wine lovers may follow Route 7, the Wine Route Orini Larnaka - Nicosia and discover the wine history of Cyprus by travelling across the agricultural areas of Larnaka and enjoy local wines at the wineries of the region.

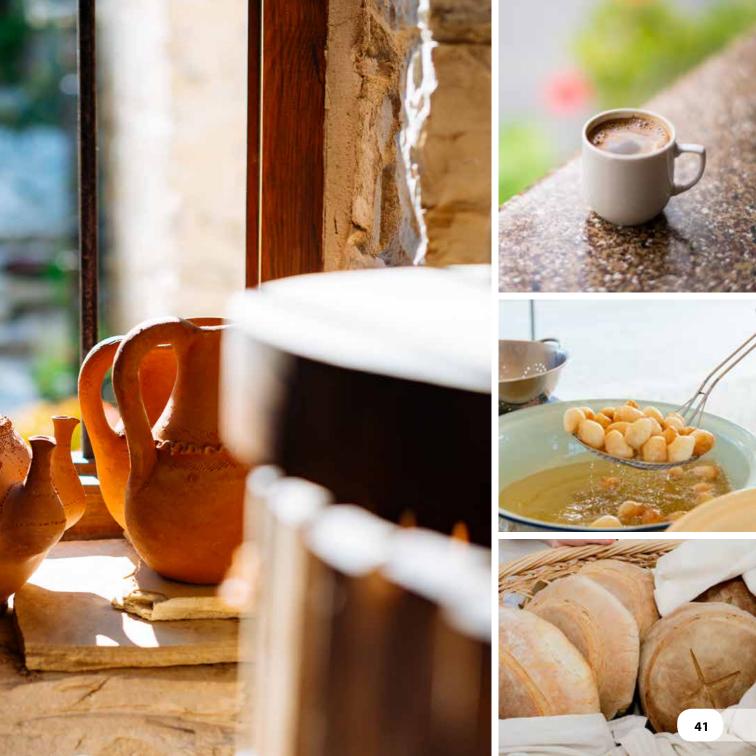
Orini Larnaka is also attractive for cycling and hiking enthusiasts.

More information on activities in the region can be found both on the website of the Cyprus Tourism Organisation **www.visitcyprus.com** and on the website of the Larnaka Tourism Board **http://larnakaregion.com**

FESTIVALS

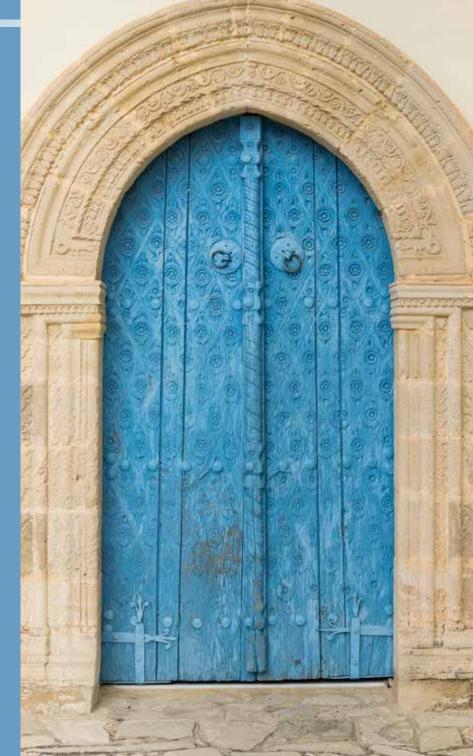
- European Heritage Days: the aim of this annual event is to enable the general public to be informed of and to appreciate architecture and its cultural heritage. During the day, historical and traditional places are open to the public. At the same time, on that day a plethora of other events are organised such as exhibitions, lectures, music and cultural events.
- Annual Festival of Traditional Culture (in a different community every year): the festival is dedicated to Cypriot traditions and culture. The visitors have the opportunity to get to know Cypriot tradition, in its various forms, customs and to taste traditional dishes.
- Spring Donkey Festival: The Donkey Festival in Skarinou attracts thousands of people from all over Cyprus. Its aim is for people to get to know the wonderful little donkeys and to try the traditional, handmade products.
- **Festival of Art and Culture** at Agios Theodoros.
- Lefkara Festival which aims to promote artistic creativity and the preservation of the cultural heritage of the area.
- Fengaros Festival (Kato Drys): the 3-day Fengaros Festival presents music bands and artists from various countries with great success.
- Tenta Cultural Festival in Kalavasos, with art exhibitions, guided tours of the Tenta Neolithic settlement as well as lectures.





YOU WILL NEED

- Information leaflets. Both the Cyprus Tourism Organisation and the communities in the Orini Larnaka region offer free tourist maps and leaflets for specific activities such as wine routes, cycling, nature trails etc.
- Shoes suitable for hiking.
- Hat, sunglasses, sunscreen lotion.
- Camera to capture forever the beautiful scenery and your experiences.
- Binoculars for observing wildlife.
- Mobile phone, for use in case of emergency.
- Full tank of petrol in the car.
- Raincoat during the winter days.







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