



ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE OF KOURION

CYPRUS TOURISM ORGANISATION

First Unit: LOCATION

The town of Limassol had the chance to be developed between two important ancient city-kingdoms of Cyprus: Amathus, east and Kourion, west. So, take direction towards the village of Episkopi in the district of Limassol, west of which, within a distance of approximately four kilometers, in front of you, comes into view the hill that accepted to accommodate for many centuries, one of the most important city-kingdoms of the island founded by the Achaean Greeks. They arrived here from the Aegean region at around 1200 B.C., but Cyprus was a familiar area to them, as earlier was accommodating, for almost 2 centuries, the Mycenaean merchants who were searching for its precious copper. Today, Kourion is one of the most important archaeological sites of the island, visited by thousands of local and foreign tourists every year.

The Department of Antiquities has recently proceeded to the creation of an archaeological park in order to protect, and at the same time, unify the most significant monuments of Kourion. At the entrance, you will find the custodian's office, where you can purchase the entrance ticket to visit all monuments of the archaeological site.

Then, the road leads you to the parking place situated at the north-eastern end of the hill, where you will start your tour with the two most important monuments: the Greco-roman Theatre and the House of Eustolios.

Passing by the main entrance of an especially arranged reception hall where a bookshop operates, a coffee shop and restrooms, the path will lead you to the theatre. Before proceeding to the theatre's entrance, stop for a while to see the sea from afar. The view is breathtaking. From that point on, the strolling of the eyes is starting together with the strolling of the mind and soul. Scenery of boundless beauty is unfolding before you with the blue azure of the sea, shining under the golden rays of the sun, contrasting with all kinds of golden-greenish colours of the earth. And one thing is evident:

«The ancient Greeks knew how to choose the locations where they were going to build their cities».

Imagine them, approaching the south eastern coasts of the island with their small boats. They must have seen from further away the large bay with the sandy beach, where they could easily

pull out their boats, as well as the abrupt steep hills, which would provide sufficient safety to the ancient inhabitants of that site. The hill of the acropolis where we are now is especially impressive, almost vertical on its three sides; fortification works and all public buildings of Kourion have been erected on it. So, they were looking for a good location with sea-view, which in opposition to our needs of today, it was not only a matter of luxury but an imperative necessity for safety, since they could have seen the enemy from far away and be protected.

Certainly, location was not the only element of choosing the site, but as you may notice by yourselves, in front of you stretches out a huge valley and surrounding fields are particularly fertile for cultivation. At that time, possibly much more than today, people had a huge need of fertile soil, since their community mainly relied on earth and its produce.

The River Kourris, which leads out into the Kourion / Episkopi bay, is another prevailing element of the scenery in the wider area. The river, which is one of the biggest of the island, was of great importance for the inhabitants of the region since they were using its water for irrigation and water supply.

The combination of all these geophysical elements of the region made it almost ideal for founding the city. Nevertheless, in archaeological topography, the area of Kourion is one of the richest in archaeological sites on the entire island.

Second Unit: FOUNDATION / HISTORY

...and these Kourians [inhabitants of Kourion] are calling themselves colonists from Argives...

That is what Herodotus is saying in his fifth book of Stories (E, 113). He states, namely, that the Kourians considered themselves as descendants of Argive (Achaean) colonists.

And Strabon is writing as well, in the geographical description of Cyprus (14, 683):

...then the city of Kourion, which had a port, was built by Argives...

Even though it must be considered that Kourion was founded by Achaean colonists and was organised by them into a city-kingdom after the massive colonisation of the island during the 12th-11th century B.C., however, there isn't any ancient tradition that has been preserved referring by name to a Greek hero as founder of the city, in opposition to many other ancient cities of Cyprus like Salamis, Aipeia, Chytroi, Idalion.

Nevertheless, a similar tradition has been preserved by Stephanos Byzantios, who refers us once again on the fifth book of Herodotus, where it is mentioned that:

«Kourion, the city of Cyprus, founded by Koureus, son of Kinyras»

Kourion has been named after its founder, who was Koureus, the son of the mythical king of Pafos Kinyras. This tradition, which connects Kourion with the son of Kinyras, does not appear to be irrelevant to the very ancient relations between the city of Kourion, and more generally the Kingdom of Kourion, with the neighbouring city of Pafos and the Kingdom of Pafos.

The first written reference to ancient cities of Cyprus is to be found in the Egyptian inscription, engraved on the walls of a Temple in Medinet Habu during the reign of King Ramses III (1198/1167 B.C.), and dating to the first quarter of the 12th century B.C.. It refers a total of 8 Cypriot cities; one of them is read as Kir... and has been identified as Kourion, but its complete name has not been recovered.

The famous golden scepter of Kourion, discovered in a royal tomb in Kaloriziki and dating from the beginning of the 11th century B.C., constitutes important evidence that the city-kingdom was already founded. This scepter, exposed in the Cyprus Museum, is of outstanding craftsmanship. It has a height of 16,5 cm with an enamelled sphere on top and two falcons on it. On the other hand, it is one of the rare treasures of the Cyprus Museum, belonging to the exceptional species of Mycenaean art. Among the exceptional samples of Mycenaean art many terracotta potteries are included, bronze items and micro-craftsmanship objects of the 13th-

12th centuries B.C., discovered in tombs in the wider region of Kourion, which proves the installation of Mycenaeans here and the relations of the region with the Mycenaean civilisation, since the Late Bronze Age.

Certainly, a most reliable reference for the city is to be found in the Tribute List of Sargon (673/72), where King Damasus of Kourion (Kuri) is included in the list of ancient Cypriot Kings under Assyrian domination.

In fact, the most ancient remains of a settlement in the wider region of Kourion date from the Neolithic Period (4500 - 3900 B.C.). On the same hill where Kourion is situated, there are remains dating from the end of the Classical Period, mostly of the Hellenistic (325-50 B.C.) and mainly of the Roman (50 - 330 A.D.) and Early Christian times (330 – end of 7th century A.D.). It seems that the location of Kourion during the Late Bronze Age, mentioned in the foundation legend regarding the Argives, was situated in the area of Erimi, where the remains of a part of a big settlement, which must have been the predecessor of Kourion, have recently come to light.

First excavation surveys in various parts of the city site and surroundings of Kourion, which clearly had an amateurish and treasure-hunting orientated character, were undertaken in 1873 by the renowned Luigi Palma di Cesnola. The famous «treasure of Kourion» is included among the numerous movable finds originating from these superficial and irresponsible surveys, and nowadays, they are decorating the rooms of the Metropolitan Museum of New York. Cesnola claims that this treasure, which consists of precious and invaluable jewels of different types and dates, was discovered near the theatre of Kourion.

Nevertheless, systematic excavations in Kourion were started in 1933 by the Pennsylvania University Museum and were carried out, with some interruptions, until 1954. In 1964, the Department of Antiquities started its excavation survey on the site. Between 1974-1979 the American Mission of the Dumbarton Oaks Centre for Byzantine Studies undertook the excavations of the Bishop's Palaeochristian Basilica. The American Mission of Walters Art Gallery and the Universities of Missouri and Maryland excavated Kourion hill during the period of 1980-1983.

Third Unit: THE THEATRE

«Tell me, ye Muses, under whom, beneath what chiefs of royal or of humble note stood forth the embattled Greeks the host at large; ».

If you also wish to experience few moments of the life in Kourion city, just like then, thousands of years ago, the only thing you have to do is watch on a summer night, a theatre performance of an ancient tragedy, here at the theatre. We guarantee you that this experience will be unique.

The path leads you to the south edge of the hill where the famous and very well preserved theatre of the town has been preserved. The search for locations with good acoustics led the Greeks on the slope of the hill. Most of the times, the ancient theatres were set up on slopes of hills and hewn in a rock; the theatre of Kourion is also following this rule.

We remind you that the ancient Greek theatre is one of the few architectural shapes that were not surpassed throughout history; on the contrary, it responded to the new needs and passing through the centuries, it is still alive today. Thus, two and a half millenia after it has been discovered in Athens, theatres are still being built across the universe, copying more or less the ancient Greek model.

Just like in all ancient Greek theatres, three parts of the theatre can be distinguished, that is the auditorium, the orchestra and the skene.

Auditorium was the space for the spectators. In the auditorium, there were rows of seats that could provide accommodation up to 3,500 spectators. Access to the auditorium is being given through passages and gangways. The auditorium is usually divided into passages, which serve

the movement of spectators. The passage here was dividing the rows of seats in two-thirds of the auditorium's way up.

Around the back side of the theatre there was a corridor, which was connected with the passage through five gangways. The gangways between the auditorium and the skene lead to the orchestra. These passages were also used for the processions during the official ceremonies.

Above the uppermost seats there was a colonnade encircling the auditorium and shaping a portico above the vaulted corridor.

Between the auditorium and the scene lies the orchestra, which is the space where the choir was moving during the performances. The choir was a vital element of performances; it was the group that supported through singing and dancing the protagonists. The orchestra is semi-circular and was closed on the sea-side by the scene-building.

The scene, the space where actors were performing, was a high stone-made building. This part of the theatre was a very important element, as it was the most visible part for the spectators. It was usually representing the straight-front of a temple or a palace, though the scene-building, was changing every time depending on the types of performances. Each period destroyed the previous structure of the scene. Only the foundations of the scene have been preserved to present.

The original theatre, built in the 2nd century B.C., was smaller, while during the 2nd century A.D. it was enlarged to its present shape. Archaeological research has proved the continuous use of the theatre for many centuries, through the Hellenistic and Roman period.

When in the 2nd century A.D. the theatre was enlarged to its present dimensions, the scene-building was remodelled as well, with imposing marble columns and cornices, of which some fragments may be seen south, near the ruins. The sides of the theatre were supported by three huge buttresses, built with large rectangular stones.

The next important change of the theatre occurred towards the end of the 2nd – early 3rd century A.D. with some remodelling like the addition of a metal grill, in order to stage the popular spectacle of the time, hunters pursuing wild animals. The three lower rows of seats were removed and a metal grill was provided along the top of the arena wall, so as to place the nearest spectators at a safe distance from the orchestra, which at that time was the arena. Even now, the gangway at the lowest part of the auditorium, which was used as a refuge for the hunters when they were not engaged in the arena with the animals, is still to be seen.

Towards the end of the 3rd century, the arena was reconverted into a proper theatre, and the lowest rows of seats, roughly cut and laid, belong to this reconstruction. In the 4th century, the theatre appears to be abandoned, and since then it has suffered serious destructions from the abstraction of building material out of its massive walls.

The auditorium of the theatre was reconstructed by the Department of Antiquities in 1961. After its reconstruction, the theatre is used for cultural events. Its famous acoustics has not lost its quality. See by yourself. Stand in the centre of the orchestra, sing, recite something and hear the echo of your voice. The sound, crystal clear, reaches up to the highest rows of seats, due to the marvellous adaptation of the theatre with the landscape, since the slope of the hill functions as a resonator although the theatre is used today each summer for performances of ancient drama and other cultural events, just like all Hellenistic theatres in ancient Greece, the Kourion theatre was used for the ancient tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides but also for the comedies of Aristophanes.

Nevertheless, do not forget that the ancient Greek theatre is born in the rural feasts for the honour of god Dionysus and is connected with the religious worship of the god. Dionysus was a

god who has been incorporated into the Greek customs, and dominated, acquiring partisans, feasts and his own song, the "Dithyramb". The roots of drama and theatre more generally, are placed into this choral chant.

The first theatrical groups were then created with the volunteers who were disguised as goats by using the sediment of must ("trygia"), and were dancing by singing the "Dithyramb", which was hymning the life and triumphs of Dionysus.

However drama continued its evolutionary course, reaching culmination with Thespi s' inspiration in the middle of the 6th century. Thespis joined the choir wearing a mask and instead of singing, he began to recite and reply in a repeated rhythm. This new idea became popular in Attica and constituted the landmark in the later theatrical history of Europe.

Fourth Unit: THE HOUSE OF EUSTOLIOS

«Eustolios the Kourian, having seen that his fellow citizens were in abject misery, he did not forget the city of his ancestors, but first having presented the baths to the city, he was then taking care of Kourion as once did Phoebus (Apollo) and built a cool refuge sheltered from the winds ».

How do we know all these? But of course from the inscriptions on the mosaic floors that cover the biggest part of the building. The name of the owner of the house, Eustolios, as well as his Christian identity is revealed through these inscriptions.

And although it appears that the building was first erected as a private palatial house, after the laying of the mosaic floors and the construction of the baths, it was transformed into a public place of recreation, a kind of club.

Having first visited the theatre and proceeding higher on the slope, in an also dominating position on the south-eastern edge of the hill, we find the remains of an equally important

monument of this ancient city, the House of Eustolios. It is a monumental house, that dates from the end of the 4th - beginning of the 5th century A.D.. It consists of more than 35 rooms, which are concentrated around two interior courtyards, and a bathing establishment of small dimensions. The building in its present shape was erected after the destruction of the theatre. Of particular interest are the mosaic floors that cover the biggest part of the building, which were completed in the early years of the 5th century A.D., when Christianity was already well established in the city.

We proceed towards the entrance of the house which was on the western side. The servants' quarters were on the left and just next to them the entrance vestibule was located. Through this vestibule, the house-holder continues for 15 centuries receiving and welcoming the visitors through the inscription on the mosaic floor, which inscribes " ENTER THE RESIDENCE IN GOOD FAITH AND JOY".

The vestibule connects the forecourt with the central courtyard which consisted of a garden, a small fountain and a fish-pond. It is surrounded by porticoes, the colonnaded courtyard, which was also covered with mosaic floors. Around the peristyle, that is in the reception and public use areas, are preserved the most important mosaic floors. Following the walkway that was made recently by the Department of Antiquities and proceeding towards the most south-eastern part of the site, we find in front of us, maybe the most significant room of the house due to the mosaic composition of its floor. The great importance of these mosaics lies in its deeper symbolic meaning and in the connection of the building with the new veneration, Christianity, which is indicated through the inscription we read in ancient Greek:

IN PLACE OF BIG STONES AND SOLID IRON,

GLEAMING BRONZE AND EVEN ADAMANT,

THIS HOUSE IS GIRT BY THE MUCH VENERATED SIGNS OF CHRIST.

The house-holder reminds us that all these buildings here were not supported neither on big stones, neither on solid iron, on blond copper, nor on this diamond, but only on the very blessed symbols of Christ.

The coloured decorative shapes on the floor depict symbols of early Christian times, like the fish, the partridge, the peacock etc. On the other hand, in its southern wing, a fourth fragmentary inscription reminded those who frequented the building that this was THE HOUSE OF REVERENCE, PRUDENCE AND [PIETY].

In the same complex of rooms and proceeding more north in order to go higher towards the baths, we find the inscription which indicates the public use of the building, its connection with Christianity and the name of the owner.

EUSTOLIOS, HAVING SEEN THAT THE KOURIANS, ALTHOUGH PREVIOUSLY VERY WEALTHY, WERE IN ABJECT MISERY, DID NOT FORGET THE CITY OF HIS ANCESTORS BUT FIRST HAVING PRESENTED THE BATHS TO OUR CITY, HE WAS THEN TAKING CARE OF KOURION AS ONCE DID PHOEBUS (APOLLO) AND BUILT THIS COOL REFUGE SHELTERED FROM THE WINDS

The inscription refers to the donator Eustolios the Kourian, having seen that his fellow citizens were in abject misery, did not forget the city of his ancestors, but first having presented the baths to the city, he was then taking care of Kourion as once did Phoebus (Apollo) and built a cool refuge sheltered from the winds. As we may notice the same inscription is also mentioning APOLLO (PHOEBUS) as the previous protector of Kourion.

The Roman Baths:

Continuing more to the north, the steps lead to the highest level of the house, where the baths were located. Proceed to the most northern corridor and stand so as to see the sea opposite you. The mosaic floor of a big room, which was part of the bathing complex, is unfolding in front of you.

Public baths were a development of culture that was presented in the Greek space during the classical times and responded to a necessity that resulted from the growth of urban life and the rational organisation of cities. The society was requesting henceforth, the creation of buildings for exercising, for body cleansing and mind exercising. Do not forget the famous phrase that our ancestors professed, "A healthy mind in a healthy body". However, in addition to their important role in physical and mental health, the baths constituted in all times a centre for meeting and socialising, a place for communication and amusement.

The architectural development of baths begins, therefore, in Greece in the 5th century; it is being crystallised in the 4th century B.C. and continues permanently up to the 1st century B.C., when they were progressively replaced by the Roman Hot Baths.

But how were the baths functioning?

In their most simplified form, the Roman baths included in a row, the room of cold bath, the room of lukewarm bath and the room of hot bath.

The first room in the row, the dressing room (apodyterium) and the cold bath (frigidarium), had a double role. Here, the visitors changed their clothes and took their cold bath. It was the best decorated room, which also functioned as a reception hall, since the bathers entered from here into the bathing establishment as such, and they stayed here after having their bath to socialise.

The mosaic floor of the room has four representations in panels, the two are decorated with purely geometric patterns, one has a central picture with a partridge and the fourth, in the northern wing, contains the only iconographic ornament in the entire complex. The bust of a young woman is depicted in a medallion with plait motifs, holding an object in her right hand that seems to be a standard measure. Actually, it is almost exactly the length of a late Roman foot. And, according to the inscription in ancient Greek again, we read “ KTISIS”, that is the personification of CREATION, the Creation of the World.

Off this central room to the north and east there were cisterns /swimming-pools with cold water, and before each, was a shallow basin for foot-bath. The cold bath resulted after the advising of physicians, who recommended the cold bath, due to the great benefits it contributed to the well-being

The room for the lukewarm bath (tepidarium) was situated west of the cold bath. The bather's sojourn in this place helped the body to be progressively adapted from the low temperature of the dressing room and cold bath, to that of the next one, the hot bath and vice-versa.

The hot bath (caldarium) was located west of the lukewarm bath and was the final destination of the bather, who could also have a steam bath here, due to the humidity of the room.

Today the only remains of the lukewarm and hot bath are the hypocausts. As their name implies, they are usually low and underground spaces underneath the floors of bathing rooms, where hot boiling gases produced by the fire which was burning in the firing chamber (prae-furnium) were circulating. Floors were higher and supported on serried brick pillars, so as to resist high temperatures. Walls were heated by clay pipes or clay flat tiles fixed in the walls leaving free space for the circulation of the air.

We also see the firing chambers/the hearths, whence the hot air was carried through the hypocausts and up, through special flues, and through the space left between the walls and the facing of ceramic tiles.

The operation of baths required large quantities of water, which originated from the cisterns and wells, but the solution for the water supply of the baths was given through the construction of big aqueducts. The water was stored in a higher cistern and was carried through pipes in the various parts of the bathing establishment.

The sewerage system through clay pipes which ran through the baths was also advanced. The water that was poured on the floors rolled to the lavatories which were situated near the baths.

As we have mentioned, hot baths constituted important sanitary and recreation centres, carrying out a significant role in the functioning of society. In these places, the citizens socialised, exchanged opinions, and spread the news of the day. At the same time, the politicians shaped suitable conditions for the guidance of citizens and the growth of propaganda.

For the construction and maintenance of the Hot Baths, contributed the emperor and other powerful leading figures, the city, the upper class, noblemen that claimed some high office and tried to become popular and ensure their election in a high office.

The human relation with water is mysterious, almost metaphysical, and is due to the cleansing power, the purifying attributes that has the water. It is not accidental that the Christian baptistery originates from the roman bath, the frigidarium.

Don't you believe that current spas ("Sanitas Per Aqua" / hydrotherapy) is the modern development which maintains, to a large extent, the ancients' philosophy for the value of bath?

Fifth Unit: THE EARLY CHRISTIAN BASILICA

Having first visited the Theatre and the House of Eustolios, it does not mean that your acquaintance with the entire archaeological site of Kourion is completed. Coming out of the baths area and proceeding to the west, the path leads you to the central site of the acropolis, where important monuments of the Hellenistic, Roman and early Christian periods are concentrated.

The remains of a large complex of an early Christian three-aisled basilica date to the early Christian period. This was the Cathedral Church of Kourion which dates from the beginning of the 5th century, while the 6th century some changes were made with the laying of new mosaic floors with marble.

These remains lie in the southern part of the central area of the acropolis of Kourion. The Department of Antiquities has placed, on a higher spot the site's plan to be consulted for a better understanding and your orientation within the site.

As you most probably know, in ancient times, Cyprus was an important centre of worship of goddess Aphrodite, the goddess of love. Her temple was situated in Palaipafos, (current Kouklja) and pilgrims from all around Cyprus and the ancient world were coming here. Despite the strong worship of the goddess, Cyprus became very early, one of the first centres of Christianity. Apostles Paul and Barnabas travelled to Cyprus and put the foundations of the new religion.

The dominance of Christianity in entire Cyprus was final, by the 5th century. The construction of a significant number of early Christian basilicas constitutes one of the most characteristic signs for the important political and social changes which were brought by the spread of

Christianity as the official religion of the state, but also for the new role which this new age was holding in store for the Institution of the Church.

It is a fact that all religions, from antiquity up to present, are closely connected to the significance and presence of the Temple, which plays an outstanding role in their functioning. It is also known, that temples are among the most important building monuments of humankind.

So, the growth of Christianity was such that old and small temples did not serve any longer the worshipping needs of pilgrims. Therefore, big temples started being built on the entire island. These are the famous early Christian basilicas, which were huge long edifices, with their interior being divided into aisles in rows of columns which lead east to an apse.

Certainly, you must be wondering as well, why these temples are called basilicas?

The basilica was the public building which was used in ancient Rome as a place for public meetings, commercial transactions but also as courts. Since the 4th century, the basilica is being adapted to the worshipping needs of Christians and will constitute for many centuries the major architectural type of ecclesiastical building, both in the East and in the West. Romans took this type of edifice from the Greeks. Such building was the "Vassileios Stoa" (meaning "Royal portico") in Athens, which was named like this in order to honour the governing king ("Vassileas" in greek). The basilica was also named after him. Christians called these temples basilicas, because Christ, the King was venerated in there.

You enter the monument through an antechamber with two granite columns, on the north-eastern side. To the right of this entrance, there is a small chapel where probably offerings were deposited. In this chapel a mosaic fragment was found, depicting three standing figures on approximately one third of the natural size. Two of the figures are badly destroyed, while the other one is in better condition and depicts an archangel holding a sceptre. These mosaics date from the 6th A.D. and decorate the Museum of Kourion which is situated in the village of Episkopi.

Through this antechamber/lobby you enter in a long paved corridor, the northern wing of catechumena, and then to the narthex. Catechumena were the space where the teaching and conversion of followers in the dogmas and mysteries of the Church were held.

Through the narthex, which lies west of the temple, you enter into the temple through three doors. The Temple consists of three aisles, the nave, that is to say the central aisle, the northern and the southern aisle, and the Sanctuary. The three aisles are separated between them with colonnades, in two rows of 12 marble columns. Above the capitals of the columns, there were wooden beams which supported a second floor of aisles, and then a wooden steep-pitched roof in the centre, inclining above the sides of the aisles. This type of roof gave the name to the category of the so called Wooden Roof Early Christian Basilicas, in which belongs this temple as well.

The floors were paved with marble mosaics known as opus sectile. Opus sectile (work with small paving-stones) is a way of making decoration works, where by suitably matching cut thin pieces of multicoloured stone, marble, emerald and glass, the shaping of pictures or drawings on the walls, floors and other flat surfaces is being achieved. In opposition to the technique of mosaics, where the uniform-monochrome pieces are placed in such a way so as to shape a drawing, the fragments of Opus Sectile are not uniform; they are much bigger and can constitute a big part of a drawing. This technique, which was developed during the roman period, was very costly and was only used in buildings, temples and residences (palaces) of high ranked persons, where mosaics and pieces of art were insufficient.

In its western part, the basilica was connected through the narthex with a building complex, which included the diaconicon, where offerings by the believers were deposited, and eventually, the Bishop's Palace, the Bishopric. North of the basilica was the atrium and the baptistery which had the shape of a small three-aisled basilica with narthex. In this small basilica the Christenings of the enlightened were held.

This basilica, like many others on the island, was destroyed in the mid-7th century A.D. due to the Arab raids.

Sixth Unit: OTHER MONUMENTS

The strolling around in the central site of the city is not finishing with the early Christian basilica. Continuing westwards you will also find:

The Roman Forum

In its current form, it is a building of the beginnings of the 3rd century A.D., with additions of the early Christian period. A huge building stood before at a central spot of the forum, which was in use from the end of the 4th century A.D. to the end of the Hellenistic period. The Roman Forum was flanked on its two sides with colonnaded Stoaes. In its north-western wing, an imposing complex of buildings was incorporated, which includes bathing establishments and the Nymphaeum, dating at least to the 1st century A.D. These buildings have undergone several transformations and additions throughout the years.

The Nymphaeum

The Nymphaeum is one of the biggest and the most impressive monuments in its kind in the entire Mediterranean space. It was dedicated to the Nymphs, the protectors of water. It consisted of an enormous central edifice, constructed with big hewn limestone blocks, which is divided in three parts:

- The south-eastern part, being a big apsidal room that constituted the holy place, where most probably the rituals to honour the Nymphs were held,
- The central part,
- And the north-western part which consisted by apsed fountains and cisterns adorned with scallop-shells and marble statues.

It was built in the 1st century A.D. and after successive destructions, remodelling and additions, was completely deserted in the mid-7th century A.D., during the Arab raids period.

The House of Achilles

Today, only a part of the house is saved in the south-western section of the hill, next to the old Limassol-Pafos road. This is a roman residence of the 4th century A.D. with a central colonnaded courtyard. Many of its rooms are decorated with mosaic floors. The most interesting among them is the mosaic that depicts the scene where Achilles reveals his identity to Odysseus, who is disguised as a merchant, in the courtyard of the king of Skyros, Lykomedes. The excavators assume that this space was used for the reception of distinguished visitors.

The House of Gladiators

This is a roman house dating to the 3rd century A.D. and is situated few metres east of the "House of Achilles". This house has a central courtyard, which is surrounded by galleries and rooms of various uses. This building was destroyed by the earthquakes that affected Kourion in the 4th century A.D. . The house took its name from the mosaic representations of the gladiators that adorned the central courtyard. Today two representations are saved. The first depicts a drill of gladiators, while the second appears to represent a fight. The unarmed figure dressed in rich civilian clothes represented in the centre is the referee of the duel. Of particular interest is the fact that on both panels are saved the names of protagonists.