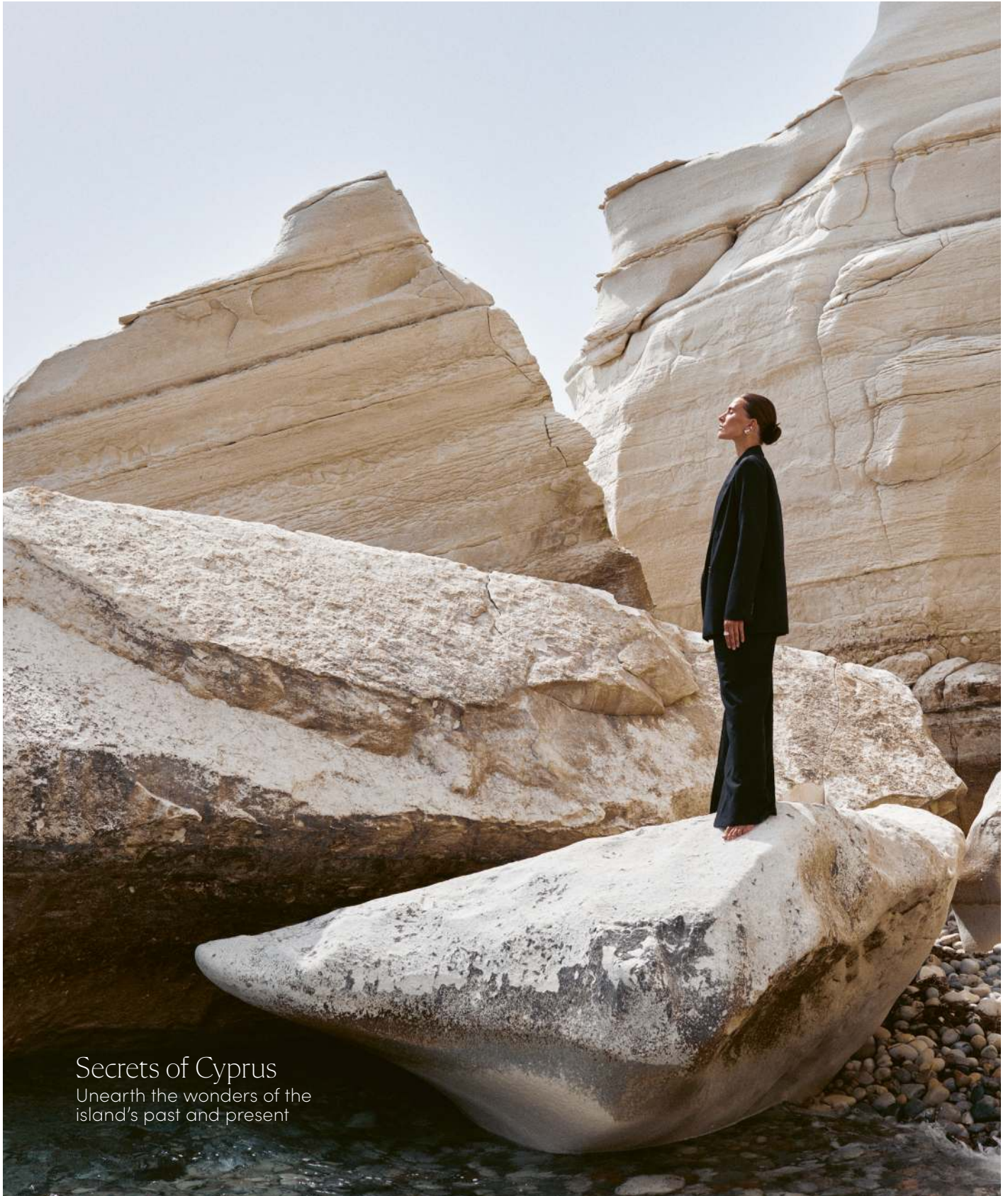


treasures

THE ANNUAL MAGAZINE OF AMARA, ELYSIUM & MEDITERRANEAN BEACH HOTEL • A STADEMOS PUBLICATION



Secrets of Cyprus
Unearth the wonders of the
island's past and present

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We create memories that last forever...

Welcome to the eleventh edition of *Treasures*. At Stademos Hotels Group, our vision has always been to create spaces where genuine hospitality meets thoughtful design and meaningful experiences. We believe true luxury is not only defined by surroundings, but by how people feel – welcomed, valued, and inspired.

Each of our properties reflects a distinct identity. AMARA represents contemporary elegance and innovation, ELYSIUM captures timeless grandeur rooted in heritage, while MEDITERRANEAN Beach Hotel embodies warmth, comfort, and authenticity. Together, they form a portfolio that speaks to diverse guests while maintaining a unified standard of excellence.

At the heart of everything we do are our people. Their dedication, passion, and attention to detail transform everyday moments into lasting memories. It is their commitment that elevates our vision into reality.

Looking ahead, we remain focused on evolving with purpose – embracing innovation, sustainability and ever-changing guest expectations while preserving the values that define us. What continues to inspire us is the ability of hospitality to connect people, cultures and stories in ways that truly matter.

As we move forward, we do so with gratitude, ambition, and an unwavering belief in the power of exceptional experiences. 🌟



Demos Demosthenous

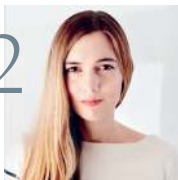


Elysium

This year the Elysium was recognised among the Top 100 Best Hotels globally at the TUI Global Hotel Awards. It has also claimed the World Travel Award for Cyprus's Leading Boutique Hotel, and ranked as the tenth Best Hotel in the World in Tripadvisor's Travelers' Choice Best of the Best Awards

DEMOS DEMOSTHENOUS
Managing Director, Stademos Hotels

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Sophy Grimshaw

Sophy is an experienced travel journalist who has written for international titles including *The Independent*, *The Sunday Times* and *British Airways' High Life* magazine. In this issue, she explores the best outdoor spots that Cyprus has to offer, from beaches to hikes.



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Ross Clarke

Ross is an award-winning writer and presenter with a passion for food and wine. He visits the AMARA hotel to meet restaurant manager and wine specialist Marco Spanu, and learn more about the vines, wines and wonders of Cyprus.

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Milly Kenny-Ryder

Milly is a renowned food and travel writer, photographer, and author of the *Weekend Journal* series. In this issue, she travels to Cyprus with her two young boys, to see what a difference a good kids' club can make to a family holiday.



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Melissa Hekkers

Melissa is a Belgian journalist and author, based in Nicosia. Her work is often featured in *Cyprus Mail*. She meets the architects, artists and design experts behind the extensive refurbishment of the Elysium hotel and gets to the heart of traditional Cypriot design.



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My Cyprus

From star ingredients to ancient wonders, chef **Giorgio Locatelli** selects the local island highlights of his home from home, Cyprus

The humble tomato

The Cypriots love their pasta. My favourite pasta dish is spaghetti with tomato sauce. The tomatoes would be picked fresh. I wouldn't even cook them – just dice them, sizzle them, and add a bit of olive oil and basil. Pop in a little of your spaghetti water and then the spaghetti. You could put in olives or anchovies. The quality of the sauce is always based on the quality of the tomato.



Coastal cities

Cyprus is incredibly underrated, and Limassol in particular is brilliant. It's the combination of warm sea, palm-lined promenades, beach life and dramatic sunsets. The coastal cities, like Limassol and Paphos, have magical evening views over the Mediterranean.



Seaside sip

Enjoy an authentic Italian digestivo of grappa on the sea view terrace at Ristorante Locatelli; Giorgio's restaurant serves three varieties. Take your time and watch the sun set slowly over the harbour



Cultural immersion

The unique thing about Cyprus is its ancient sites from Greek, Roman, Byzantine and medieval civilizations. In places like Kourion, Tombs of the Kings and Choirokoitia, you see evidence of thousands of years of history, all in one small island. Meanwhile, Nicosia is one of the world's last divided capitals.

Mediterranean produce

You can't impose a menu on the environment. You have to listen to it. In Cyprus, there's something about the Mediterranean cuisine that really fascinates me. You have a great influence from Arab cuisine, as well as all the fish of the Mediterranean – it's very special. We met with the fishermen and grew seeds down there for salads.

Ristorante Locatelli

AMARA hotel's location is one of the reasons that I took this restaurant. I came to Cyprus for the first time with my wife and we really liked the island. When the sun goes down, the view is fantastic. It's a beautiful building; a beautiful place. Every time I'm here and I look at my office, I think, 'I'm a very lucky man.'



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POSTCARDS

AMARA — ELYSIUM — MEDITERRANEAN BEACH HOTEL

The Blue Bar
terrace at
Mediterranean



Days end gently in Cyprus. Dusk lingers, allowing you to settle into the evening. Find a quiet spot and watch as the light slowly fades

June

The art of loukoumi – also known as **Cyprus Delight** – is celebrated in the pretty Foini village, in the Troodos Mountains (7 June). Immerse yourself in the fragrance of the **Cyherbia Lavender Festival** (20–21 June), with tours, workshops and a market. The renowned **Beefbar Cyprus** at AMARA celebrates its second anniversary this month; join us in raising a glass and try the beef ribeye ham with the signature Sauce Beefbar. Meanwhile, to our delight, culinary icon Chef Nobu pays a visit to **Matsuhisa Limassol**.



Cyprus's historic amphitheatres are brought to life by the International **Festival of Ancient Greek Drama** (8 July–1 August). World music, jazz and local bands combine at the **Windcraft Music Festival** (24–26 July), in the Solea Valley village of Katydata.

August

Lefkara's rich lace-making and silversmithing heritage is at the heart of its **Summer Festival** (14–24 August). Sample craft brews and street food at the lively **Paphos Beer Festival** (5–9 August). The **Fig & Halitzi Festival** in the seaside village of Kato Pyrgos is a must. And with the landscape in full bloom, there's no better time to experience the **Rooftop Bar at AMARA**.



November

Elite sailors compete in the **Regatta of Champions** (8–15 November), in Limassol. The traditional grape beverage **Zivania** sparks festivities in villages including Alona, Pedoulas and Pelendri.



POSTCARDS

December

Limassol's Rialto Theatre hosts the **Jazz & World Music Showcase**, with workshops, talks and shows (5–6 December), while **Christmas villages** spring up all over from 22 November. And from hot chocolate by the fire to Christmas Day feasts, take the stress out of the holiday and celebrate at one of our award-winning restaurants, including **Ristorante Bacco**, **Céleste** and **Beefbar Cyprus**.

January

Celebrate New Year's Eve with a Gala Dinner, hosted at **Céleste**, **Matsuhisa Limassol**, **Ristorante Locatelli**, **Beefbar Cyprus** and **Ristorante Bacco**. Epiphany, on 6 January, sees the frying of thousands of **loukoumades** (dough balls) across Cyprus. A **symphony orchestra** performs Hans Zimmer's music at theatres in Paphos and Limassol (22 and 23 January).

February

Who does romance better than the Italians? Absolutely no one, of course. Impress your Valentine by booking the special set menu at **Ristorante Locatelli** and fall in love all over again while sharing delicious homemade pasta. *Bellissimo*.



SAVE the DATE

Moments to treasure this year

September

The **Aphrodite Festival** (4–5 September) sees spectacular al fresco opera performances beside Paphos Castle. Autumn brings a series of wine harvest events, culminating in Limassol Municipal Park's **Wine Festival** (26 September–4 October) and a special **wine pairing** evening at Elysium.



October

Test your upper-body strength at the **Cyprus Rock Climbing Festival** (16–18 October) at Ineia Rocks. October's **olive tree festivals** spring up in multiple villages, with olive oil tastings, demonstrations and folk performances. Or head to the **AMARA spa** for a massage with local olive oil. To mark white truffle season, visit **Ristorante Locatelli** (AMARA) and **Ristorante Bacco** (Elysium) for a special truffle menu.



treasures

April

The cream of Mediterranean filmmaking comes to Limassol and Nicosia for the **Cyprus Film Days International Festival**. **Holy Week** (from 26 April) is marked by church services, processions and feasts of roasted lamb on Easter Sunday. Head to **Elysium** for a traditional Cypriot celebration.



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IMAGES: ALAMY, GETTY

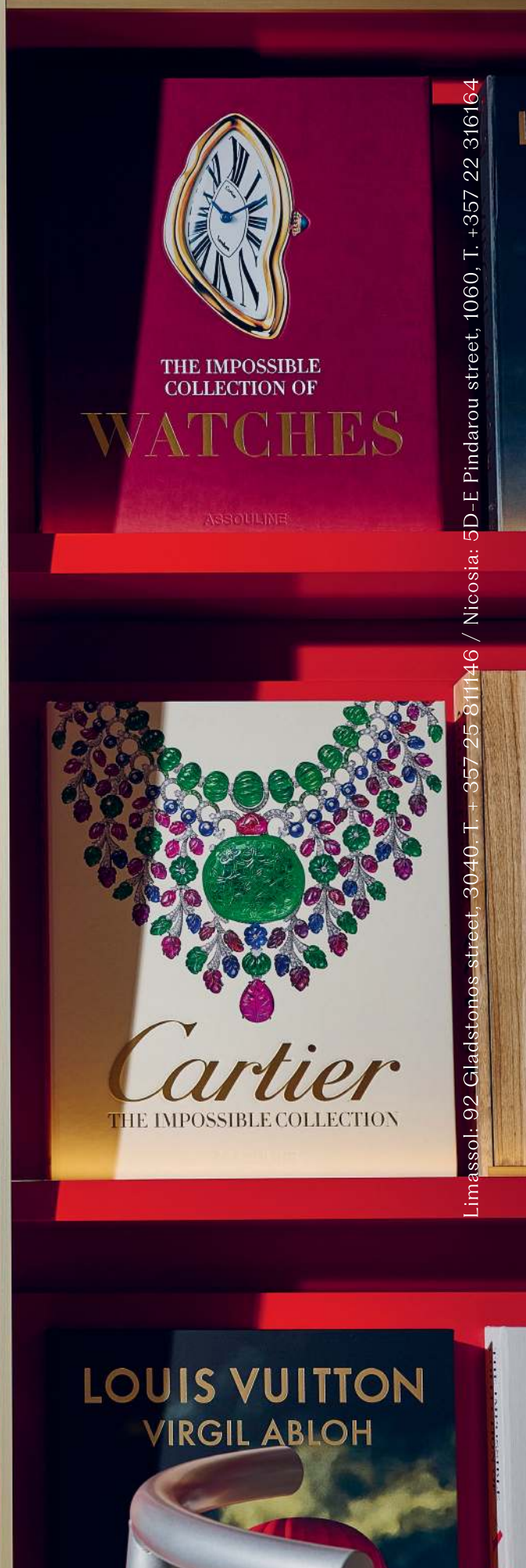
March

On 1 March, children traditionally twist a **martaki** bracelet to welcome spring. Grilled meat feasts are enjoyed on **Smoky Thursday** (4 March), followed by parades across the island. Later, on **Green Monday** (15 March), families gather for traditional music and dancing; join us at Nerea for a special local menu.



May

The village of Agros, in the Troodos Mountains, hosts a **Rose Festival**, with traditional music, dance and rose-infused souvenirs. And in a month of festivals, the village of Ora's **Bee Festival** celebrates the island's honey-makers, with music, beeswax treats and handicrafts.



Limassol: 92 Gladstonos street, 3040. T. + 357 25 811146 / Nicosia: 5D- E Pindarou street, 1060, T. + 357 22 316164

Hidden Gems

Take your cues from locals as they share their favourite aspects of the island

Lia Lapithi

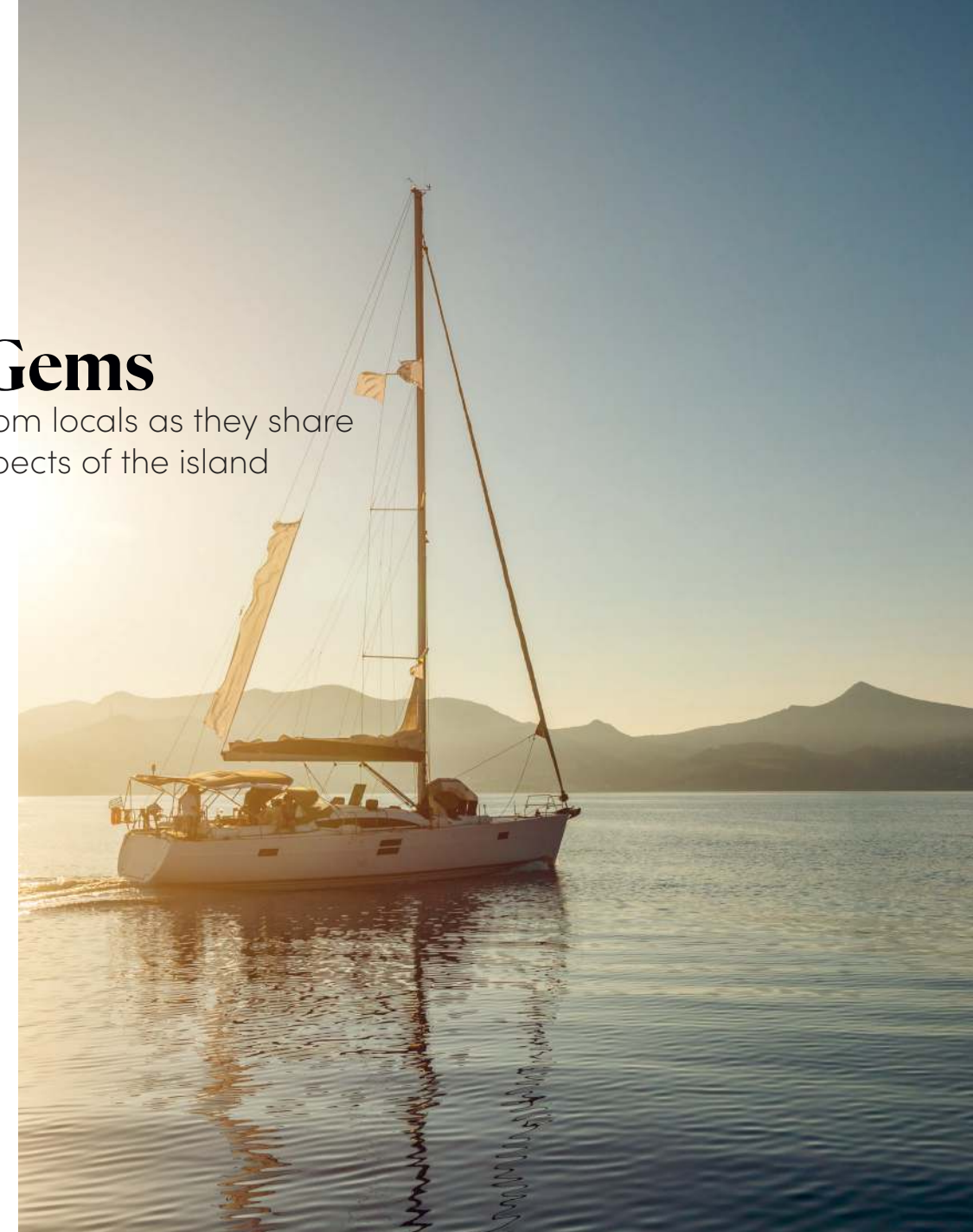
Contemporary artist

'What makes a good day?

Being anchored somewhere in the sea. I would tie a hammock on the boom and turn it outwards. Then pick up my heavy-duty fishing rod, engineered for fish over ten kilograms, although I'm still waiting for that big catch.

Finally I'll get sunburned and call it a day. Learning how to slow down: this is what makes a great day. All you need is the location and a sailboat (one can charter a boat from marinas across the island).'

lialapithi.com



The concierge team at AMARA has been awarded Les Clefs d'Or, so you'll receive the highest level of assistance with your Cyprus excursions

Evdoxia Paschalaki

Front Office Manager at Elysium

'Visit Lania Village – a small traditional wine village in the foothills of the Troodos Mountains, in the Limassol district. According to legend, the village was named after Lana, a daughter of the wine god Dionysus, and it remains one of Cyprus's historic grape-growing villages.'

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ISSUE N° 11

Tasos Nikou
Head chef at
Mediterranean
Beach Hotel

‘Cyprus reveals itself slowly, through the scent of wild herbs, the rhythm of the sea, and recipes passed from one generation to the next. Its beauty lies in simplicity, where the finest ingredients speak for themselves.’



Nora Nadjarian
Writer and poet

‘The Erma bookshop-café, in a hidden courtyard in the old town of Nicosia, is the perfect place to spend a calm afternoon. Chat, drink lemonade, read, or simply admire the bougainvillea.’
noranadjarian.com



IMAGES: CATHERINE FALLS COMMERCIAL/GETTY, MATINA TZOUNIERA, SONALI/UNSPLASH, BORIS SV/GETTY, HAMBIS PRINTMAKING MUSEUM, ALAMY

Stelana Kliris
Filmmaker

‘One of my favourite spots is Curium Beach, any time of the year. To make a day of it, you can also visit the archaeological sites and mosaics just above the beach. I also love walking through the old town of Nicosia. The Shacolas Tower gives you a great, 360-degree view of the city.’

The Kalidonia Trail starts close to the Psilo Dentro restaurant, outside the village of Pano Platres in the Troodos Mountains



Emmanouela Karaïskou
Bar Manager at Elysium

‘A hidden gem that you should definitely visit is Avakas Gorge in the Akamas area – it’s honestly one of the most beautiful places in Cyprus. Go in the morning, when it’s cooler. The hike is amazing: huge rock walls, little streams, and really wild nature vibes. Just wear proper shoes, because the path gets rocky and slippery in some parts.’



Savvas Konstantinidis
Room Service Manager at AMARA

‘The Kalidonia Trail takes you deep into the Cypriot mainland. Part of the European long-distance path E4, it starts from the area of the Psilo Dentro restaurant, all the way to the waterfalls, following the direction of a small river named Krios Potamos. Here, you can explore the unique nature of Cyprus, shaded under beautiful big pine trees. I would say the level of difficulty is around three out of ten.’

Michael Lipscombe
Executive chef at Elysium

‘The hidden gems are the incredible villages around Cyprus – all with their own rich history and producers, bespoke to each one. My favorite is Lofou in Limassol. It has beautiful cobbled streets and old stone houses, with wooden front doors that look like they hold so many stories. Another favourite is Drouseia, in Paphos. Its idyllic café has become the central point of the village for all the locals. The Cypriots are famous for their warmth and hospitality. They embrace you like family.’



Elysia Athanatos
Ceramist

‘Follow the sun, pick a destination and don’t be afraid to get lost! There are many places to recommend in Cyprus, but two come in mind: the Monastery of Saint John Lampadistis in Kalopanagiotis, where you can breathe in silence, and Stou Rousha, a restaurant in Kato Drys village, for a taste of Cypriot ravioli. And on the way, if you find a shepherd’s wife who makes fresh hot halloumi, try it! It’s the experience of a lifetime.’
athanatoselysia.com

Yiola Klitou
Actress

‘A visit to the Curium Ancient Theatre in Kourion is a must, especially if you haven’t seen an ancient amphitheatre in real life before. Make sure to go during the afternoon and enjoy the views. If you’re venturing to the capital, Nicosia, I’d also recommend the Hambis Printmaking Museum, combined with a coffee at the Erma bookshop-café in the old town.’
yiolaklitou.com



Paul Matthews
Returning Guest at Elysium

'The new coastal path in Paphos offers incredible views. We have seen it develop from a simple dirt track to the amazing construction it is today. It's perfect for early morning walks down to the harbour for a coffee to start the day. And in the evening, we enjoy slow sunset walks: watching everyone heading out for the evening, smartly dressed, with fragrances filling the air.'



Soulla
Agathocleous
Executive Housekeeper
at Mediterranean

'I would recommend visiting Aphrodite's Rock, the legendary birthplace of Aphrodite. With its crystal-clear waters and relaxed atmosphere, it is ideal for a romantic swim and offers a beautiful sunset, making it perfect for couples.'



Marlen Karletidou
Artist

'For the past four years, I've lived in Paphos. And I would definitely recommend a visit to the shop Carob King-Black Gold for their original, organic, carob syrup – handmade with passion and delicacy. You're always welcomed by the owners, Thymios and Christina, who encourage you to test the products and find your favourites.' marlenkarletidou.com



Louiza Kaimaki
Illustrator

'I like to go to Pachyamos beach (in Paphos). It's one of the last places that resembles the Cyprus of yesteryear. The name Pachyamos describes exactly what the beach is like: "thick sand". When you look to the sea, you see this vast blue colour that spreads out in front of you. I hope this place will always stay pure.' louizakaimaki.com

IMAGES: ALAMY, VIKTORIA KONDRATIUK/UNSPLASH, SERGEI GUSSEV/UNSPLASH, VICKY CHRISTOU

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CELEBRATING 20 YEARS

A Family Affair

Holidays are the perfect time to reconnect as a family, but how do we make sure everyone enjoys their break? Child-friendly teams and great kids' clubs are the answer

Words & Photos
MILLY
KENNY-RYDER

Going on holiday with kids is a steep learning curve. Just as you think you've cracked it, another regression hits and sends everything back into the unknown. For me, everything got easier when my youngest turned three. Suddenly the endless haul of nappies and snacks wasn't so necessary and we were freed from nap-orientated itineraries. Now, with an almost four and six-year-old, we have an element of carefree whimsy. Well, we can aim for that anyway.

Travelling regularly for work, with my kids in tow, has taught me valuable lessons. First and foremost, child-friendly hotels are essential. What I love about Stademos is that they're family-friendly and family-run – Cyprus born-and-bred for generations. It shows. All three of their hotels differ in size and style, but each prides itself on family-focused elements, such as kids' clubs that cater to multiple ages, babysitting, children's swimming pools and menus for smaller diners. Children are not so much tolerated as actively celebrated – a vital difference that all parents will appreciate.

At AMARA, the newest hotel of the group, the decor is sleek and modern, yet the welcome is warm. Being a foodie – much of my work centres on restaurant openings – I was impressed by the serious names on offer, from Locatelli's refined Italian cuisine to Japanese food by Chef Matsuhisa, of Nobu fame. There's also a branch of Beefbar: the chic Monte Carlo transplant only ever spotted in the best places.

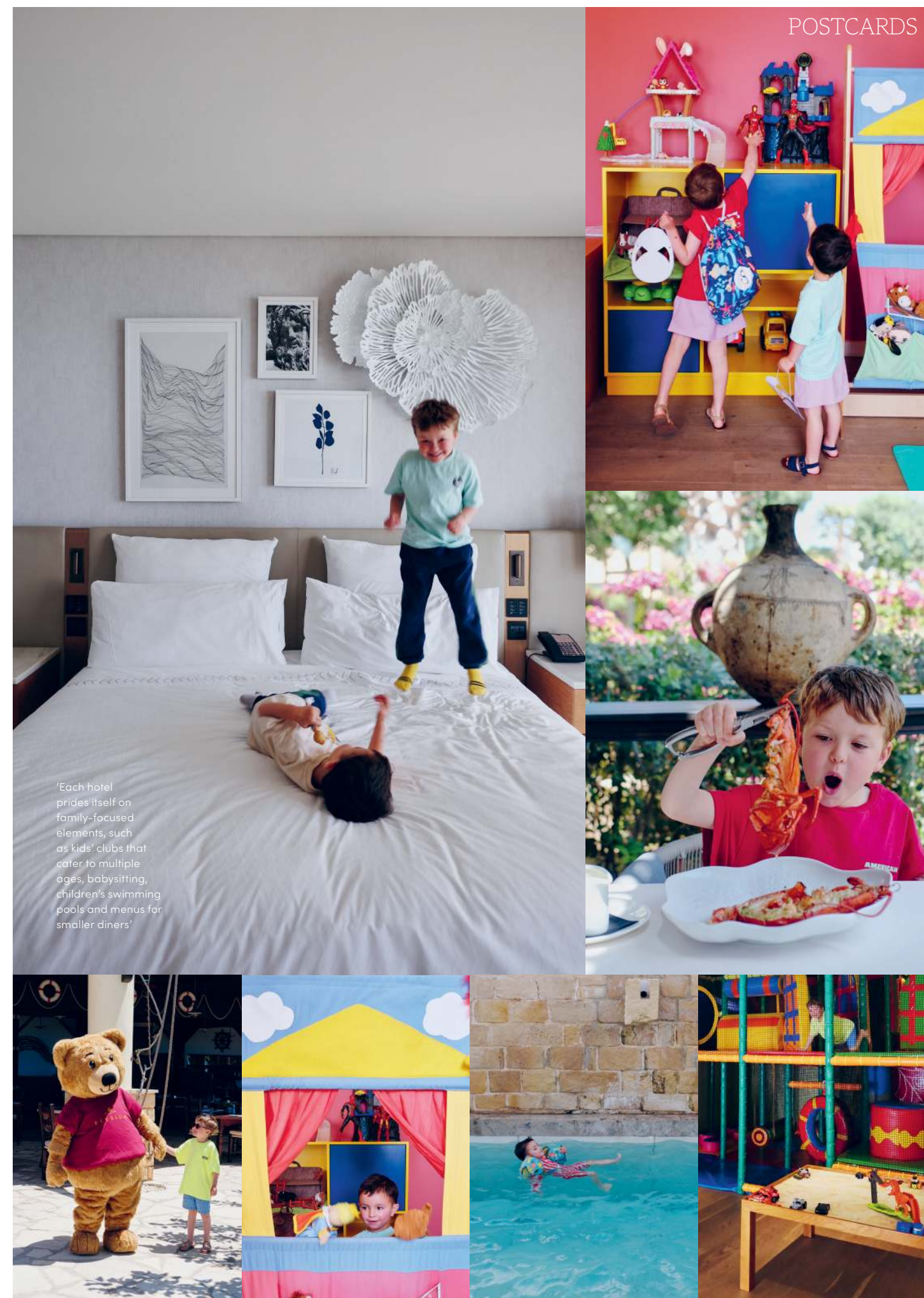
Amid this high-end environment, we were delighted by the enthusiasm and warmth of the

staff and chefs, across the board. Each restaurant had someone to explain to the children, with admirable seriousness, what a truffle is, or show them the cabinet of elaborate cakes. Colouring-in sheets were offered at every opportunity. At Matsuhisa, the boys loved their stylish bento boxes, with compartments offering steamed rice, salad and either black cod or grilled beef – good enough for the most discerning grown-up palate but thoughtfully tailored to a young foodie. How many three-year-olds can say they've been to – and enjoyed – Nobu?

The vast proportions at AMARA are great for young children. They love looking around the great building towering over them, and I feel less concerned about my kids causing annoyance when we're in spaces that aren't cramped.

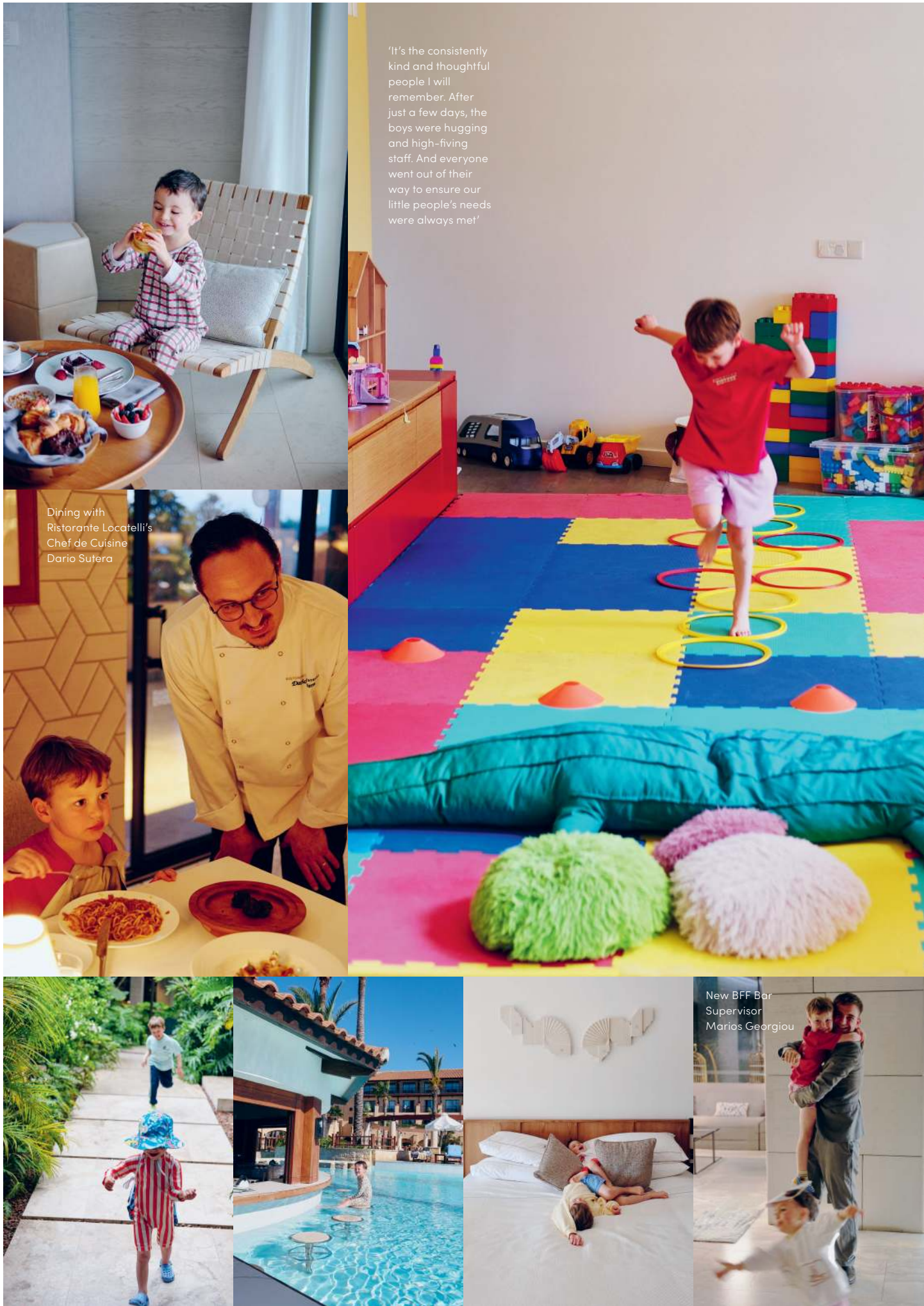
The Kids' Club at AMARA is suitably stylish and the decor artistic and fun. There are colourful cartoons on the walls, shelves full of canvas toy boxes overflowing with train tracks, and Duplo ready to be assembled. The staff are gentle and take the kids' lead. We returned on the first day to receive pretty painted stones. On the second, we learned the boys had introduced the staff to their favourite dancing video ('Danny Go!', in case you're wondering).

During our hour of freedom, we took a tour of a nearby archaeological site with the hotel's local historian, who was full of fascinating information. Wandering around a practically deserted market site that dates back three thousand years is something I absolutely would not have braved with my children. We walked



'Each hotel prides itself on family-focused elements, such as kids' clubs that cater to multiple ages, babysitting, children's swimming pools and menus for smaller diners'

POSTCARDS



On day two, we learned the boys had introduced the staff to their favourite dancing video, ‘Danny Go!’

among ancient pottery, Roman pillars and virtually unscathed historic drainage systems. (The site holds UNESCO World Heritage status and there's much more still to find beneath the earth.) It was wonderful to absorb local culture while feeling confident that the boys were having fun and being well looked after. We reconvened for lunch and shared stories over grilled lobster and chips at the Nerea restaurant.

Just a few minutes from the AMARA is its sister, the Mediterranean Beach Hotel. On a spectacular Blue Flag stretch, the hotel has a low-key, island life vibe. Its kids' club is homely: a bright patchwork floor bursts with retro toys, and an adorable Wendy house reminds me of happy summers in the garden. The club was a big hit with my boys. It's in a quiet corner of the hotel, it has indoor and outdoor play areas, and the staff create a really happy environment.

The main space is flooded with natural daylight, so the children benefit from the sunshine while being shaded from the rays. And unlike others we've visited in the past, the kids' area is bright and optimistic, meaning I suffered zero guilt leaving them to it while I headed to the pool with a book.

When I returned to collect them, I peeked through the window and saw staff eagerly joining in with every game: puppet shows for one of my boys; a hopscotch challenge for the other. And once they had exhausted the toy options, they gladly got involved in a creative range of arts and crafts, with finger painting, and mask and crown-making (they're still proudly wearing their crowns).

Of the three Stademos properties, Elysium is perhaps the most geared towards family travel. This palatial hotel near Paphos opened twenty-four years ago, but recently added twelve new duplex family suites. They're brilliantly laid out over two floors, with a private garden and pool, and every amenity adults and kids require: ultra-comfortable single beds for the boys, mini dressing gowns and slippers, and child-friendly toiletries. Upstairs, the open-plan bedroom, bathroom and vanity area are equipped with bath bombs, a pillow menu and a retractable TV.

All of these made it very difficult to pull ourselves away from the luxury of this home-away-from-home. But when we did venture out, the boys were overwhelmed by the range of fun on offer. For littler paddlers, the kids' pool and



**ANGEL'S KIDS CLUB
Mediterranean**

An outdoor playground – complete with paddling pool and colourful outdoor toys – ensures that children get plenty of sunshine and rest. For kids aged 3 to 12.



**KIDS' CLUB
AMARA**

From face painting and arts and crafts to dancing and cinema showings, children aged 4 to 12 will be spoiled for choice when it comes to daily activities at AMARA.



**ANGEL'S KIDS CLUB
Elysium**

Indoor soft play will tire even the most adventurous of children while keeping them out of the midday sun. You'll find plenty of puppets, dinosaurs and art supplies too.

playground were great to let off steam. My five-year-old was completely amazed by the water slide: big enough to be exciting but small enough to not worry parents.

Then there's 'Rachel's world', as I affectionately called it. Rachel is the kids' club supervisor and an absolute wonder of a woman, simply born to work with children. She curates unique spaces and oversees programmes for the little people. She even dresses up as Ely Bear, the hotel's mascot. I wouldn't be surprised if families come back to Elysium just to see her.

My two were most suited to the main Angel's Kids' Club (for children aged 3-12), complete with soft play structures, play kitchen and shop, cars, books, dinosaurs, building blocks and a craft table. This is totally complimentary for guests and requires no prior booking – a flexibility for which I felt very grateful. There's also an Angel's Crèche room (4-36 months), where children can be left for a few hours while parents enjoy precious time to recoup and relax (this requires pre-booking and carries a fee).

Next door, a games room is filled with arcade machines for teens, including pool tables, racing tracks and a toy grabber. And there's an unsupervised playroom for parents who want to play with their children in a dedicated space.

There's even babysitting on-site, should you wish to have a night off from your offspring to enjoy one of the hotel restaurants. Given the calibre of said eateries, I urge you to take the opportunity while you can.

The facilities are impressive across the group, but it's the consistently kind and thoughtful people that I will remember. After just a few days here, my boys were hugging and high-fiving staff. And everyone went out of their way to ensure our little people's needs were always met – from simple necessities like high chairs and colouring, to tending to the boys complex dietary requests and stream of unusual questions. Most importantly, the team made my life as a tired parent on holiday much easier – and sent me home feeling like I'd had a real rest. 🐻

Milly Kenny-Ryder is a food and travel editor. AMARA kids' club is open daily from 10:00 to 13:00 and 14:00 to 19:00.

Angel's Kids Club at Mediterranean is open daily from 10:00 to 13:00 and 14:00 to 17:00.

Angel's Kids Club at Elysium is open daily from April, 10.00-13.15 and 14.30-17.45

TRUE ROMANCE

Photography
THE KELLYS

Make your wedding an event to remember for all the best reasons. **Luciana Bellini** explores the dream destination of Cyprus



Every bride and groom has a different vision for their wedding. For some, it's tying the knot in a picture-perfect countryside church. For others, it's saying, 'I do,' in a marquee in the garden of a family home. But for those who really want to push the boat out and turn the day into a weekend – or even week – it's a destination wedding, filled with sun, sea and celebrations. And one of the most popular dream destinations is Cyprus.

Balmy weather, pristine beaches and almost year-round sunshine are major draws, but the appeal to loved-up couples is much more than that. 'Cyprus is special because it offers a romantic and relaxed atmosphere with beautiful Mediterranean views, natural beauty and warm hospitality,' says Haini Erdosi, wedding coordinator at Elysium. 'And its history as the birthplace of Aphrodite, the goddess of love, gives the island an even stronger romantic meaning. For me, this combination



IMAGES: THE KELLYS/WEDDINGPHOTOGRAPHYBYTHEKELLYS.COM



All images:
Phoebe and
Daniel's wedding
at Elysium



POSTCARDS

During traditional ceremonies, the priest places intricate, ribbon-connected crowns (*stefana*) on the heads of the bride and groom, symbolising their new union



makes Cyprus ideal for couples who want a wedding filled with beauty and emotion.'

Locals cite the warm, welcoming atmosphere as a reason why so many travel to marry there. 'Cyprus has a natural ability to bring people together,' says Andreas Spanos, restaurant and banquet manager at AMARA. 'From breathtaking sunsets and picturesque beaches to charming villages and rich cultural traditions, the island provides a romantic backdrop for every type of celebration. In addition, the long wedding season – from spring through late autumn – gives greater flexibility.'

The longer nature of a destination wedding provides an opportunity to spend time with each guest. 'Destination weddings bring together travel, celebration and meaningful shared experiences,' says Spanos. 'Guests often spend several days together, creating memories before and after the wedding itself.'

Each of the Stademos hotels has its own



Phoebe and Daniel's wedding at Elysium

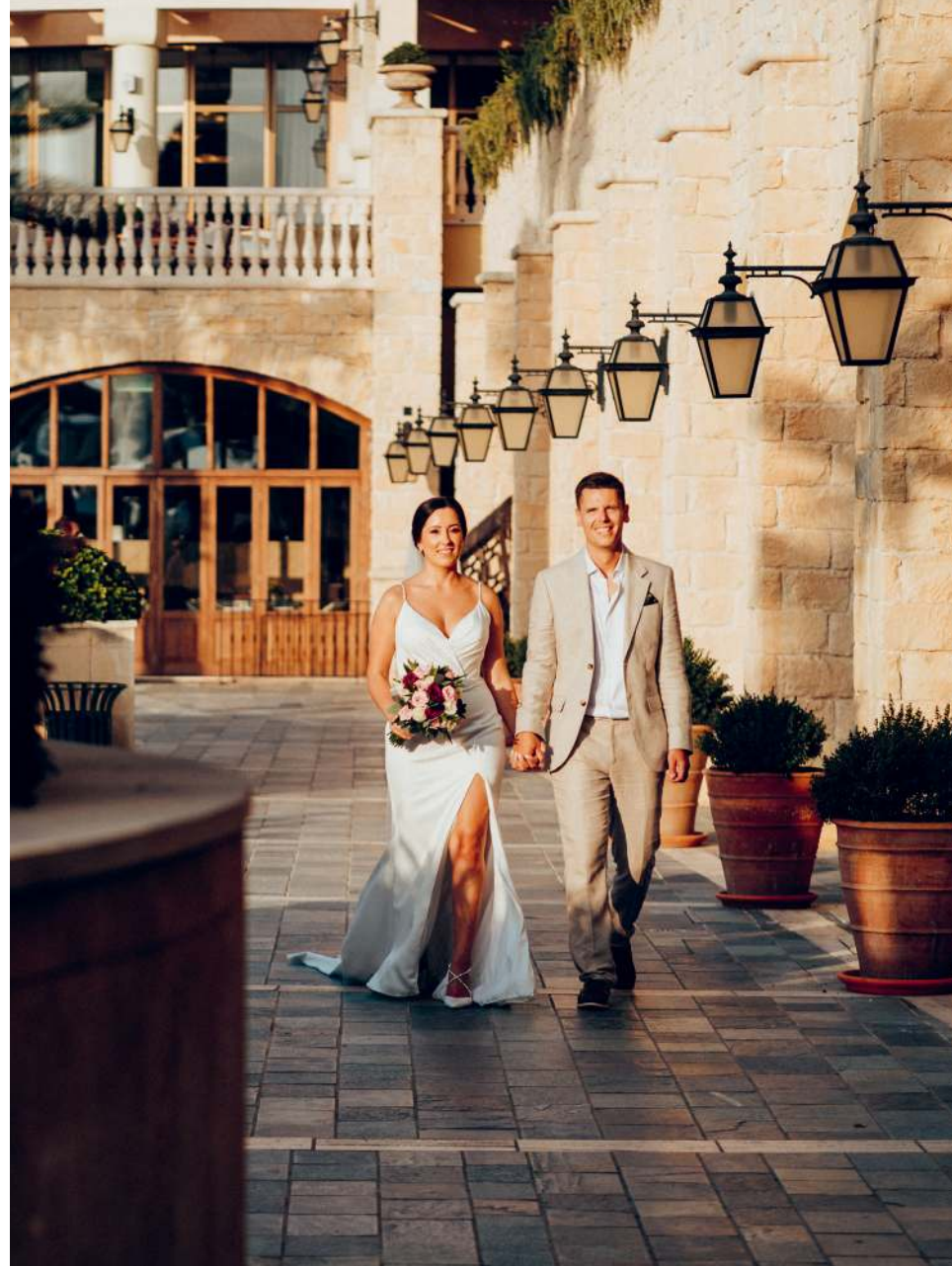


Your wedding, your way...



Crisp & cosmopolitan

At **AMARA**, sharp design and indoor-outdoor spaces suit a **cutting-edge wedding** with smart tailoring and modern bridal looks. Perks include an **in-house florist**, indoor parties until 2am, and the option of a **'floating' aisle** between two reflection ponds.



Romantic nostalgia

At Elysium, **authentic architecture**, candlelight and traditional spaces make for a classic style of wedding. A **Byzantine-style chapel** seats twenty guests, while the outdoor Mediterranean restaurant, **framed by trees**, has the feel of a village square.



Relaxed and rustic

At Mediterranean Beach Hotel, there's a **barefoot feel** to the flexible wedding arrangements, with mingling spaces suitable for forty to 120 guests, **sea views** at every turn, and plenty of **live performers** available, from acoustic duos to classical pianists.

Its history as the birthplace of Aphrodite, the goddess of love, gives the island an even stronger romantic meaning

charm and identity when it comes to destination weddings. The five-star Elysium is one of the most elegant options on the island. 'It offers a very special setting in Paphos, close to the beautiful coastline,' says Erdosi. 'The setting allows each wedding to feel refined without becoming too formal. Soft colours, flowers, candlelight, sea views and sunset moments work beautifully with the hotel's architecture and atmosphere.'

At AMARA in Limassol, weddings are sophisticated and modern. 'There's contemporary luxury, exceptional service and one of the most spectacular sea views in Cyprus,' says Spanos.

While at the nearby Mediterranean Beach Hotel, guests are drawn by a 'nothing is impossible' ethos. 'We have a dedicated, professional events team operating 24/7 to assist couples,' says food and beverage manager Sakis Ioannou. 'The picturesque venue is ideal for a Mediterranean-themed wedding.'

Culture and cuisine play a big role in grounding the events in their idyllic setting. Guests are often treated to Cypriot flavours across the days, from souvlaki (lamb kebab) and sheftalia (sausages wrapped in fat and barbecued) to slow-cooked lamb, fresh seafood and village salads. Two menu regulars stand out: halloumi and loukoumades (Greek doughnuts drenched in honey). 'Halloumi represents the authentic taste of Cyprus, while loukoumades add a warm, traditional sweet touch to the celebration,' says Erdosi. 'They are simple and strongly connected with Cypriot hospitality.'

For drinks and cocktails, classic options like Aperol spritzes, mojitos and martinis remain popular. But homegrown options add a fuller flavour of the island. 'For a local touch, many couples include Cypriot wines, particularly indigenous varieties such as Xynisteri and

maratheftiko,' says Spanos. 'Zivania (a traditional spirit distilled from local grapes) is offered as a traditional digestif and is always a talking point among international guests.'

Many brides and grooms like to incorporate the beauty of Cypriot culture into their big day. Traditional dances can be a key element, particularly the dance of the glasses: a male folk dance in which the performer balances a stack of glasses on their head or in their hands while undertaking complex, high-energy steps. A much-loved tradition across the island, it's always a highlight at Cypriot weddings.

Cultural touches aren't just for the wedding itself: couples often send their guests home with carefully chosen mementos. 'Wedding favours with Cypriot themes are very popular, such as the pomegranate for good luck, the evil eye for protection, the olive tree as a symbol of peace, and the statue of Pomos, which is connected with fertility,' says Erdosi. 'These details give the wedding a strong sense of place and make the celebration feel authentic.'

The experts agree that a wedding in Cyprus begins with appointing an experienced local planner who knows the destination inside out. 'Invest in a personal relationship with your wedding planner, because they're the one that can make it all happen,' says Sakis Ioannou. Haini Erdosi concurs: 'Trust your wedding planner, because they know what is realistic and what works at each venue.' Most importantly, says Spanos, 'Remember that a destination wedding is not only about the ceremony: it is about creating unforgettable memories with the people you love in a truly special setting.'

@lucianabellini. Luciana is a journalist and wedding expert based in London



POSTCARDS



Say 'I do'

AMARA Limassol

AMARA – named after *amarantos*, the ancient Greek word for 'everlasting' – is an idyllic place to get married. The sculpted spiral staircase, world-famous restaurants and seafront views will make it a day to remember.

amarahotel.com

Elysium Paphos

Romance and charm abound at this stunning hotel in Paphos. Ancient architecture and palatial design make the perfect backdrop for the day, and for your photography. Exotic gardens with waterfalls allow everyone to keep cool.

elysium-hotel.com

Mediterranean Beach Hotel Limassol

For a relaxed day with your closest friends and family, this hotel is hard to beat. Host your special day in lush landscaped gardens or in private spaces overlooking the golden-sand shoreline.

medbeach.com

DYNAMIC BY DESIGN

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5
YEAR
WARRANTY



LANDSCAPES

AMARA — ELYSIUM — MEDITERRANEAN

The heady romance
of Petra tou Romiou,
where the goddess
Aphrodite emerged
from the waves

Sometimes happiness is simply a
quiet moment. Take time to feel
your feet in the warm sand and
breathe in the sea air around you

IMAGE: JEWAD ALNABI/UNSPLASH

SHORE LEAVE

Words
SOPHY GRIMSHAW
and **KARI ROSENBERG**

From ruggedly romantic beaches and sheltered coves to churches dating back to the eleventh century, Cyprus has a spectacular variety of places to visit

Cyprus, it is said, 'is a place where the sea and sunlight become part of your soul'. There are so many unspoiled patches of nature, from the beaches – some of the best in the world – to walking trails and mountains waiting to be climbed in the golden sun and gentle Mediterranean breeze. You'll also find an abundance of traditional villages, churches and cultural centres to visit. Here are some of our favourite places to explore, from peaceful hidden coves and popular coastal hotspots to monasteries, cobbled-stone villages and tavernas.



01

Heady romance APHRODITE'S BEACH

Where else would the goddess of love be born? The natural romance and drama of a crescent of rugged beach between Paphos and Limassol lends itself perfectly to the myth. And a rock formation at sea – Petra tou Romiou ('Rock of the Greek') – marks where the goddess supposedly emerged from the waves. With sometimes choppy waters and a steep incline, the pretty beach isn't for paddling, but a head-clearing walk is a fine way to enjoy the literally legendary landscape.

IMAGE: IMAGEBROKER/ANNAREINERT/GETTY IMAGES



02

View from the top AVAKAS GORGE

Famed for its imposing limestone canyon, dramatic stream and wealth of wildlife, the Avakas Gorge is located about ten miles north-west of Paphos on the Akamas Peninsula and only half an hour's drive from the city centre. Hikers can choose between the short linear walk – the most popular route into the gorge's narrowest canyon – or the extended loop trail, if you're up for a challenge.

03

Chill out MAKRONISSOS BEACH

In Ayia Napa, this is essentially three coves that together form a wonderfully sheltered bay. With southeast-facing sands, its calm, warm waters are ideal for paddling, swimming and snorkelling.



IMAGES: NURPHOTO/CONTRIBUTOR; GETTY IMAGES; MLENNY; GETTY IMAGES; ALAMY; IVAN ROHOVCHENKO/UNESPLASH

06

Dive in BLUE LAGOON

More than one country lays claim to a blue lagoon. In Cyprus, it's a natural coastal bay with shallow, turquoise waters. The well-loved swimming and snorkelling destination, within the Akamas National Park, is supremely inviting and crystal-clear. And arriving by boat from Latchi Harbour or Paphos allows visitors to swim directly into the lagoon's warm waters.

04

A quiet life THE OLD KAKOPETRIA VILLAGE

An enchanting destination around ninety minutes from Paphos, the village of Kakopetria is beloved for its traditional architecture and breathtaking natural beauty. The preserved cobbled streets and stone houses offer a snapshot into Cyprus's rich cultural history. You will also find charming churches, such as the Church of Agios Nikolaos, as well as old stone bridges, watermills, and small taverns hidden among winding lanes.

05

See the green line DIVIDED CAPITAL OF NICOSIA

The world's last divided capital, the city of Nicosia is split between the Republic of Cyprus in the south and the self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in the north, partitioned by a United Nations-patrolled Green Line. Tourists can move freely between the two sides with a passport; the Ledra Street Crossing acts as the most popular gateway to exploring the Venetian-walled city, delicious culinary options and contrasting cultures.



07



**Wildlife paradise
LARA BEACH**

Lara Beach is protected because of its breeding loggerhead turtles, who return each year from late May to September. In August, you might glimpse hatchlings emerging. Take care not to disturb the turtles or their nests, and consult a local charity such as cyprusturtles.org for responsible ways to witness this natural wonder. There are no main, paved roads, so you'll need to arrange transport.



10

**Climb high
TROODOS MOUNTAINS**

Covering the rugged western and central expanse of Cyprus, this stunning mountain range is the largest on the island, reaching peaks of 1,952 metres at the majestic Mount Olympus. Known for its picturesque Byzantine monasteries and pine forests, the Troodos Mountains are a hugely important part of Cyprus's cultural heritage. While there, stop by the quaint village of Omodos to see lace-making and wineries – it's like stepping back in time.

08

**A moment of silence
HOLY MONASTERY OF THE VIRGIN MARY
OF KYKKOS**

In the solitude of the Marathasa Valley, the exquisite Kykkos monastery was founded around the end of the eleventh century. It's one of the wealthiest and most lavish monasteries in Cyprus. The region also benefits from ten painted churches, which are all UNESCO World Heritage sites. Around ninety minutes from Paphos and Limassol, the monastery holds religious fairs every year to mark the birth and dormition of the Virgin Mary.



09

**Sunsets to savour
AVDIMOU BAY**

Between Limassol and Paphos, this expanse of sand and pebbles is calm and quiet, with a seasonal taverna for fresh seafood. Southwest-facing, it's a perfect place to enjoy epic sunsets.

11

**Take a dip
ADONIS BATHS
WATERFALLS**



Located in Paphos itself, the scenic Adonis Baths waterfall is steeped in mythology: it's said to have been the preferred meeting place of Adonis and Aphrodite. Visitors can follow signs from Tala Village or Coral Bay to submerge in the ice-cold, natural spring pools. Many believe that swimming in the water makes women look younger and men stronger, while touching the statues of Adonis and Aphrodite will improve fertility and virility.

12

**Tucked away
GOVERNOR'S BEACH**

The sheltered bays and coves of Governor's Beach, close to Pentakomo village, make the invitingly clean and clear waters even calmer for bathers. In places, rock formations frame stunning views across the Mediterranean. A secluded location means that nudists are among those who come to relax in this ruggedly serene setting, far from the busiest beach bars. ☺



IMAGES: ELENA POPOVA/GETTY IMAGES; DADO DANIELA/GETTY IMAGES; ATHANASIOS GIOUMPASIS/CONTRIBUTOR, GETTY IMAGES; ALAMY

IMAGE: TANIA KEZHA

Swing Time

Paphos is a golfer's paradise year-round. Find out about four of its best courses

Words
ELSA-MARIA
HONECKER

Golfers see Cyprus differently. Civilian holiday-makers see beautiful Blue Flag beaches, picturesque villages boasting Byzantine monasteries and pretty little tavernas offering delicious local dishes. Golfers see 340 days of sunshine and quietly pack their tees. And so, over the past thirty years, this beautiful Mediterranean island has steadily developed into a serious golfing destination. The courses are well designed, flawlessly maintained and sufficiently varied to keep most golfers on their toes. Most recently the arrival of **Limassol Greens**: Cyprus's only championship golf destination within a city. Framed by landscaped greenery and Mediterranean views, it combines an 18-hole course, luxury residences and a contemporary clubhouse to create a compelling new chapter in Cyprus's golfing story.

However, at the heart of this boom remains Paphos, where four of Cyprus's premier championship courses are within easy driving distance of one another. Partners and families, don't despair: their proximity to Paphos's resorts means golfers can nip off for a quick nine or eighteen holes and be back to your hotel by lunchtime, ready for a mountain or beach excursion.

So why Paphos? It began in 1994 with the opening of the Tsada Golf Course, amid vineyards 500 metres above the town. A focal point of the area was the Stavros tis Minthis monastery: inspiration for the venue's new name, the **Minthis Golf Club**.

Anyone who plays this hilly course, designed by Donald Steel, will discover the charm of the local golfing world. Those who played in the early days remember the monks' chants, which lent the game an almost meditative tranquility. Today, the monastery is used principally for weddings, but the surrounding vineyards remain a sight to behold, especially in autumn.

All eighteen holes have been redesigned by Mackenzie & Ebert, known for their work on the British Open, and are spread across natural slopes with only twenty-eight bunkers but tricky greens. The signature hole is the island green on the fifteenth. And on the terrace of the clubhouse, awash with glass and natural stone, one can enjoy excellent cuisine and a stunning view across greens and vineyards to the Troodos Mountains.

Close to the Elysium hotel – where I recommend staying, because it's perfectly placed for great golfing and offers luxury to help you unwind after whatever the green throws at you – is **The Eléa Golf Club**. The island's flagship course, it's an eighteen-hole, par-71 championship affair, designed by golf hall-of-famer Nick Faldo. Bordered by ancient olive and carob trees, the course is set deep within the beautiful Mediterranean landscape. Sweeping sea views, untouched natural surroundings and a rocky coast ensure its sight-to-see credentials are as impeccable as its sporting ones.

The generous, wide fairways are partially dotted with deep pot bunkers in Faldo's signature style, and the stiff sea breeze can sometimes add to the challenge. Nevertheless, with tactical shots,

Over the past thirty years, this Mediterranean island has steadily developed into a serious golfing destination

IMAGES: COURTESY OF APHRODITE HILLS RESORT GOLF COURSE; COURTESY OF ELÉA GOLF CLUB; COURTESY OF LIMASSOL GREENS / PHOTOGRAPHER DAVID BÖLL



Those who played in the early days of Minthis Golf Club (left) remember the monks' chants, which lent the game an almost meditative tranquility

it's possible to score well. The twelfth hole – a par 5, measuring 561 metres, with a slight dogleg right – is a real test of skill and one of the longest holes on the island. And visible from afar, the imposing and luxurious clubhouse – with its wood-beamed restaurant and five terraces – towers above the golf course.

From the Eléa, it's a less than twenty-minute drive to **Columbia Secret Valley Golf** in the Kouklia Valley. This is near the ancient village of Kouklia and close to the Petra tou Romiou – also known as Aphrodite's Rock. According to Greek mythology, that's where the goddess herself emerged from the sea. Combined with the concealed greens, streams and dramatic terrain, this adds a touch of mythical glamour to the eighteen-hole course. Even the approach – through an avenue of vibrant bougainvillea, venerable cypress trees and ancient stone walls – raises expectations.

The course, known as one of the region's most challenging, underwent a complete redesign and reopened in 2013. Today, the eighteen holes wind through a narrow valley, offering diverse fairways from the highlands to the coast; predominantly straight, though with significant undulations and a few slopes. Floodlights on a three-hole loop allow for late play. The clubhouse, built in typical Cypriot style with wood and natural stone, is particularly idyllic, its balconies offering magnificent views across the valley.

On the edge of Paphos, just before you get to Limassol, you'll find the **Aphrodite Hills Resort Golf Course**. Located near what is believed to be Aphrodite's birthplace, this course isn't for the faint of heart. What makes it challenging is the design by the renowned Cabell B. Robinson, who laid out the championship course on two plateaus, separated by a deep ravine. The seventh hole is particularly celebrated: a spectacular par-3, spanning said ravine, it's considered one of the most impressive holes in Europe.

Single-digit handicappers might find the course breathtakingly beautiful, but it's more challenging for the average golfer; especially the adventurous drive up steep switchbacks to the seventh and eighth tees, and holes eleven, twelve and eighteen, with their deep bunkers and water hazards. A golf cart is recommended for navigating the many elevation changes, but each of the eighteen holes offers panoramic views of the sea or the Troodos Mountains. It's no wonder the six-kilometre course has established itself as a PGA National Cyprus event and hosts many professional tournaments. ● *Elsa is a golf writer and editor whose work has featured in Simply Golf, Golf Yearbook and Connoisseur Circle. For more information on golf packages at Elysium, visit elysium-hotel.com/golf or ask your concierge*

Elysium Golf Packages

The Elysium Golf Packages include green fees for various courses, with itineraries designed to meet every need. Guests can play two, three or all courses, depending on the duration of their stay.



Teeing off

All Golf Packages include car hire or taxi transfer to and from each course, plus green fees: three nights (two green fees), five nights (three green fees) or seven nights (four green fees).



The whole nine yards

Individual golfers enjoy exclusive privileges at Elysium, including welcome drinks and amenities, free golf bag storage space, the use of tennis courts, gym and sauna, a ten per cent discount on all spa treatments, a golf 'survival pack' for each game and complimentary daily laundry for golfing T-shirts, shorts and socks.



Birdie's delight

After a good game, Elysium golfing guests enjoy refreshing drinks at the Elysium Golfer's Corner. There, in a dedicated area of the Astria Bar, from 17:30 until 23:00, players unwind, relax and savour signature cocktails and selected local brandy, ouzo and zivania (available for an additional fee).

IMAGES: COURTESY OF MINTHIS GOLF CLUB

treasures

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WRITTEN

From honey-coloured villages to shaded courtyards, traditional Cypriot architecture is a rich tapestry woven by the island's people and traditions.

IN

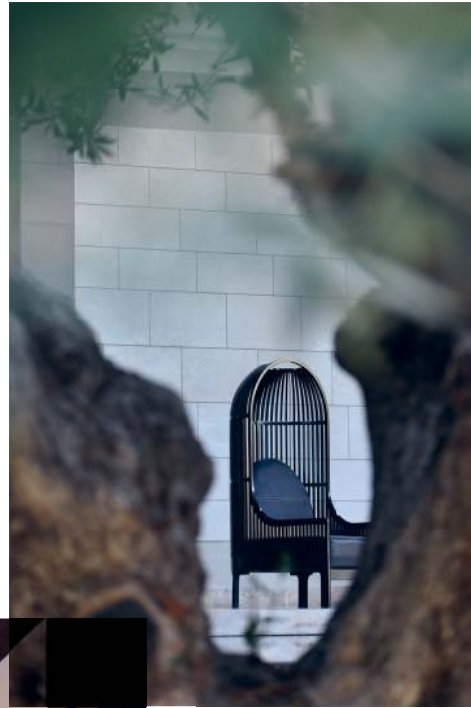
When designing AMARA and Elysium, architects stayed true to local materials, styles and traditions, to honour this heritage

STONE

Words
MELISSA
HEKKERS

LANDSCAPES





'The architecture has an intuitive relationship with the island's climate and culture. And its textures and materials – rough stone, hand-smoothed plaster, weathered wood – tell a story of time, touch and continuity'



'We emphasised sea views, olive trees, pergolas and indoor-outdoor transitions, to capture the spirit of Mediterranean life'



IMAGES: CARLSON/THREE LIONS/GETTY IMAGES; CENTRAL PRESS/STRINGER/GETTY IMAGES; COURTESY OF ELINA IOANNOU

Architecture in Cyprus is a rich tapestry, woven from the island's traditions and the many civilizations that have passed through it over the centuries. At the core lies a deeply practical style, born from the sun-drenched climate and crafted from local materials and rural customs.

This foundation absorbed influences from successive periods of rule: the domed churches and frescoed interiors of the Byzantine era; the elegant fortifications and Gothic elements of the Venetians; the courtyards and wooden detailing of Ottoman homes; and the neoclassical touches of the British colonial period.

All these layers blended into a unique architectural language. 'In Cyprus, the home was mostly what formed the local architecture,' says the curator behind the renovation of Elysium. It's a style born not of excess, but of wisdom: a quiet expression of restraint, resilience and adaptability.

From honey-coloured hillside villages to shaded courtyards behind modest facades, traditional Cypriot architecture seamlessly blends practicality and artistry. Arched doorways, wooden shutters and terracotta roof tiles aren't just decorative elements, but part of a living tradition shaped by generations of craftsmanship. Courtyards serve as the heart of a home, offering shade, privacy and a space for daily life. Thick stone walls keep interiors refreshingly cool during long Mediterranean summers. Windows filter light into soft, golden hues. Verandas, adorned with pergolas, invite the outside in, blurring the line between interior and landscape.

The architecture has an intuitive relationship with the island's climate and culture. And its textures and materials – rough stone, hand-smoothed plaster, weathered wood – tell a story of time, touch and continuity.

The design of Elysium and AMARA hotels exudes a sense of cultural and historical significance. Reinterpreting traditional Cypriot and Mediterranean elements through a contemporary lens, they are places where heritage is honoured, not replicated. 'Traditional Cypriot architecture was never about big spaces,' says one local architect. 'It was always humble.' This is echoed by Shawn Sullivan of Rockwell Group, the architects behind AMARA: 'One challenge was balancing the scale and expectations of an international hospitality destination with the intimacy and warmth of the local architecture. We focused on proportions, materials, light and the sequencing of spaces, to preserve that sense of place.'

'For example, the unobstructed views of the sea, the courtyard-inspired lobby and the use of natural textures and soft Mediterranean colours all help create an atmosphere that feels connected to Cyprus in an emotional and sensory way.'

For centuries, local craftsmen worked in harmony with their surroundings, using materials drawn from the land. Limestone, mud brick and timber birthed homes that breathe, remain cool and endured. Local architects maintain that connection to craft and geology by utilising locally sourced limestone, white stone, marble, rope details, ceramics and warm woods.

'Limestone was used in a lot of Cypriot homes,' notes one of the senior architects on Elysium. 'But it was used as a heavy, thick brick. We tried to use it with more depth, more texture. Traditional materials were repurposed and more modern materials were introduced, to bring the spaces to the present. We used wood, for example, but in a simple and minimalist way. And we introduced glass and metal with a bronze colouring, closer to earthy tones.'

At AMARA, says Sullivan, 'We emphasised sea views, olive trees, pergolas and indoor-outdoor transitions, to capture the spirit of Mediterranean life. And we combined monolithic classical forms with modern detailing and local craftsmanship.'

New suites at Elysium create a Cypriot home away from home by drawing on the connection between architecture and landscape. 'Many of these rooms have an external courtyard and a small swimming pool, which helped to achieve this "Cypriotness",' says

Q&A

Immortal and humble, stone seduced Cypriot artist Elina Ioannou

Born and based in Limassol, artist Elina Ioannou is a graduate of L'École Supérieure des Beaux-Arts de Montpellier. Her works range from drawing and photography to sculpture and installations, and can be seen in the new Garden Suites at Elysium.

Did you always want to be an artist?

It happened naturally. I never really decided on it. Sometimes I wonder if I could be anything else.

What's your studio like?

It's on the outskirts of Pyrgos village, in a dense Mediterranean garden next to my parents' house. It was, and still is, my father's studio. I'm a lucky inheritor. I've always spent time there.

Are there particular themes you explore?

The duality of humans and nature. In my latest explorations, I focus on the ways creatures adapt and survive within a barren landscape, reminding us that life is wiser than we are.

What drew you to sculpture?

Volume, space and texture have always fascinated me. Stone became an essential part of my work. I'm very grateful that this immortal and humble material seduced me. Sometimes the material decides and sometimes I do.

How does Cyprus inspire you?

What surrounds me becomes inspiration – the Mediterranean landscape, flora and fauna and ancient civilisations. I find meaning and beauty in everything. Across the story of humanity – which moves in recurring loops – our fundamental needs and deepest fears remain unchanged: love and death.

elinaioannou.com



'Volume, space and texture have always fascinated me,' says sculptor Elina Ioannou. 'Stone became an essential part of my work.'

says the lead curator. ‘The space you sleep and live in connects to the semi-open, airy space that leads you to the outside.’

Orange and cypress trees, bougainvilleas and aromatics in the Elysium’s gardens allude to locally rooted practices and illustrate how design can honour its environment and nurture a deep sense of place. ‘All these layers reflect the history and heritage of Cyprus.’

‘Connecting the resort to its authentic regional identity was extremely important because architecture in Cyprus is inseparable from its climate, history, craftsmanship and relationship to the sea,’ agrees Sullivan.

Elysium’s new suites host artwork by local sculptor Elina Ioannou. She uses the island’s stone to create art that references and complements Cyprus’s identity. ‘Stone was one of the first inhabitants,’ she observes. ‘For centuries, it was the main material used to build houses, churches, castles and public spaces.’



‘Stone was one of the first inhabitants,’ observes local sculptor Elina Ioannou. ‘For centuries, it was the main material used to build houses, churches, castles and public spaces.’



‘Architecture in Cyprus is inseparable from its climate, history, craftsmanship and relationship to the sea’

‘My father is one of the last stonemasons of Cyprus, and – along with his workshop and technique – I have inherited remnants from works he carried out over the years. These modern ruins, architectural details, fragmentary sculptures and fragments – all made of calcitic sandstone of the Pachna formation (*i.e. limestone*) – are remains of places, which I use to make assemblages.’

These three-dimensional creations translate the Cypriot cultural identity into a contemporary, refined aesthetic. And they remind us that architecture is about not just beautiful structures, but the people and climate that shaped them. ●

Melissa Hekkers is a journalist and author based in Nicosia, Cyprus @mycyprusmandala



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Secrets of the Earth

The story of Cyprus stretches back across civilisations, each leaving something behind. As archaeologists uncover fascinating ruins, we explore the history hidden beneath our feet

Words
RENATE RUGE



Above: a path to Tombs of the Kings, Paphos. Right: at AMARA spa are remnants of the ancient Greek settlement Amathus, one of Cyprus's royal cities, dating back to 4 BCE



Sunlight filters through the leaves of a pepper tree in a shaded square. Elderly men play backgammon as chic locals grab coffee on the cobbles of Paphos Old Town, amid independent art galleries and cafés. This old-meets-new picture illustrates how Cyprus is no longer simply a fly-and-flop destination but a treasure trove for culturally curious travellers.

Each discovery reshapes our understanding of Mediterranean history. Earlier this year, whilst dusting sand from the handle of a Rhodian wine amphora from around 117 BC, archaeologists led by Professor Ewdoksia Papuci-Władyka knew they'd found something special. Their game-changing find led to the unearthing of Paphos's oldest known Hellenistic residential building. Stone paving, ceramic water pipes and hundreds of decorative fragments – imported from Greek islands, the Black Sea and the Levant – confirmed how cosmopolitan Paphos has always been.

Cyprus's story stretches back even further, to Neolithic settlers building circular stone houses seven thousand years ago at Choirokoitia, and burying their dead beneath the floors. Bronze Age cylinder seals in Enkomi – on the island's eastern coast – are stamped with bulls and goddesses, and carry traces of ritual olive oil, speaking to a sophisticated religious world. In 2024, a University of Leicester survey rediscovered forty-six lost sites at Dhekélia in the southeast, spanning Bronze Age quarries to Byzantine graves. And in 2026, Bronze Age tombs emerged at Hala Sultan Tekke on the southern coast; a reminder that there are still tales to be told.

Driving through the countryside, you can imagine smoke filling the air as signal fires on mountain peaks warn of approaching Arabian ships. And with each excavation season, everything we think we know changes, as secrets from Mycenaean, Phoenician, Roman, Byzantine, Venetian and Ottoman civilisations, built atop one another, are uncovered.

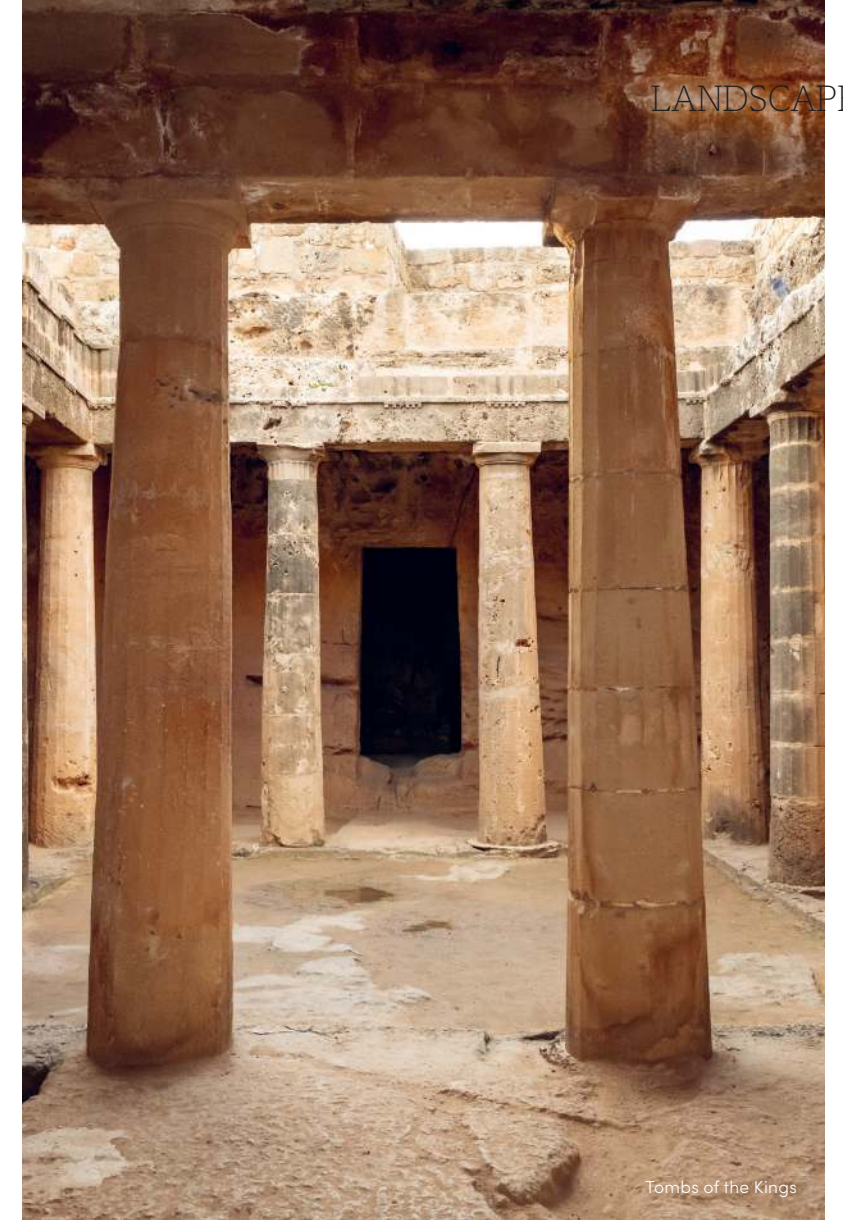
IMAGES: CATHERINE FALLS COMMERCIAL; GETTY IMAGES; JIMMY KENNY-RYDER



Sanctuary of Apollo Hylates



Kourion



Tombs of the Kings



A thousand stones

Artist George Kotsonis estimates that he used around 1,000 stones in his mosaic *The Bride and the Centaur at Elysium*, one of a series influenced by ancient Greek mythology. Each piece was meticulously cut and shaped to achieve the desired shadow and light. elysium-hotel.com

Six unmissable wonders

Thanks to the island's compact size, Cyprus visitors can enjoy multiple experiences in a day, from striking geological sites to magnificent sea caves.

Tombs of the Kings, Paphos

3rd century BCE to 3rd century CE

'Despite the grand title, the name is simply a tribute to opulence,' says guide Angela Eleftheriou. 'No kings were ever buried here.' Instead, these underground tombs – carved into rock – mark the final resting places of Paphos's wealthiest Hellenistic and Roman citizens. Traces of funeral feasts in animal bones and wine vessels suggest elaborate ceremonies honouring the dead. Doric columns, frescoed walls and courtyards of grand houses, preparing for comfort in afterlife, were abandoned when a great earthquake in the fourth century CE drove high-ranking officials to higher ground. The poor were left with what remained, burning bones to keep warm.

Shadowy chapters include the tale of American consul Luigi Palma di Cesnola looting antiquities and loading them onto two ships in the 1870s. One sank, lost forever. The other's cargo ended up at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

Tip: This UNESCO World Heritage Site is spectacular at golden hour, but take a torch for the deeper tombs.

Paphos Castle

Medieval, 965 CE onwards

Originally a Byzantine fort, rebuilt after the 1222 earthquake using salvaged Roman columns, Paphos's harbour castle was later a prison whose chambers bear graffiti in Latin, Greek and Arabic. Thirteenth-century fresco fragments attest to it once housing a chapel.

Venetian renovations added gunpowder stores; the Ottomans converted upper floors into living quarters; and a cistern fed by ceramic pipes spans multiple occupations, revealing how this small harbour fort was fiercely fought over.

Tip: Soak up Paphos Harbour views from the rooftop at sunset.

Palaepaphos

4th to 1st century BCE

The island's ancient capital and religious heart, Palaepaphos is home to the sanctuary of Aphrodite. The goddess has lured pilgrims

from across the Mediterranean for more than a thousand years. Crusader 'graffiti', scratched into walls by knights, charts centuries of visitors to the site in Kouklia Village.

Tip: Savour the conical cult stone of Aphrodite, one of the ancient world's most sacred objects.

Kourion ancient city-state

365 CE

An entire Roman city in the Limassol district was destroyed in an instant by a catastrophic earthquake that triggered a tsunami across the eastern Mediterranean. Hauntingly, the skeleton of a young woman clutching her child was found beneath masonry in the House of Eustolios. Intricate mosaic floors, gold coins and glassware also emerged from the rubble.

Tip: Enjoy a performance in the Greco-Roman theatre on balmy summer nights.

House of Dionysos and Paphos Mosaics

1st to 4th century CE

The finest Roman mosaic collection in the eastern Mediterranean was happened upon in 1962 by a farmer ploughing his field. Covering 2,000 square

When to visit

April to May and September to October are excellent times to travel: the weather's warm and clear, sites are uncrowded and the light is superb for photography. The main excavation season runs spring to early summer, and archaeologists are often on site, happy to share stories of discovery.

metres, the House of Dionysos – at the Paphos Archaeological Park – is home to breathtaking mythological scenes, including the god of wine's triumphal return from India and Greek tragedy with Phaedra and her stepson Hippolytus. Multispectral imaging reveals artist guidelines scratched beneath the designs, and new mosaics continue to emerge.

Tip: Arrive early, as these UNESCO World Heritage-rated floors need unhurried attention.

Sanctuary of Apollo Hylates

c.800 BCE to 400 CE

For a millennium, this sanctuary near Kourion attracted pilgrims who, seeking God's healing, left thousands of votive offerings of terracotta figurines and bronze statuettes. Egyptian scarabs and Phoenician glass confirm its reach along ancient trade routes. Geophysical surveys suggest much of the complex remains unexcavated; the next extraordinary discovery may lie just below the surface.

Tip: The colonnaded walkway is one of Cyprus's most photogenic ruins. Arrive early to see the light. 📸

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IMAGE DA-KUK VIA GETTY IMAGES

ISSUE N° 11

LANDSCAPES

RISING STARS

Cyprus is better known for bright skies than night skies. But a unique viewing position, optimum climate and growing astrophysics scene are putting it on the dark-sky map

One by one, the figures nestle on the plateau among the pines, setting up camping chairs and wrapping themselves in blankets. Fleeces are zipped, excited chatter is exchanged and flasks of hot tea are shared. As the twilight becomes darkness, then utter blackness, faces turn upwards. And then: the first needle of light, flashing sharp across the sky.

Stargazing may still be under the radar in Cyprus, but it's joining hiking, wild swimming and foraging as an outdoors obsession. Three ingredients have made the island a – forgive the wordplay – rising star on the global astrotourism scene: darkness, clarity and location.

'Our position – in the Eastern Mediterranean, at thirty-five degrees north latitude – makes it a great place to see classic northern hemisphere constellations,' explains Demetra Chasikou, an astro-guide with The Cyprus Planetarium in Nicosia. It's also far enough south to 'unlock' parts of the celestial sphere that you can't see from more northern parts of Europe, giving a more comprehensive picture of the night sky.

Next, clarity. Cyprus's famously mild and sunny climate – with an estimated three hundred clear days per year – means reliably unobstructed skies. Meanwhile, away from the cities, much of the island is rural, with minimal development and light pollution, as well as elevated areas for optimum viewing. 'Our compact size also means

Words
LUCY THACKRAY

Cyprus's famously mild climate means reliably unobstructed skies, with minimal development and light pollution, for optimum viewing

you can easily travel to this kind of area from a city or resort,' observes Chasikou.

Dark skies are a natural resource that destinations can use to their advantage. According to Forbes, current luxury hotel trends include 'bringing in resident astronomers, building private observatories, and adding glass ceilings above beds so guests can stargaze from under the covers'. The website dubbed astrotourism 'one of the most sought-after features in hospitality', while Outside Magazine hailed it 'the world's most surprising new luxury'.

While Cyprus's geography and latitude are unchanged since the time of ancient astronomers, astrotourism is a newer phenomenon. The island's planetarium (thecyprusplanetarium.com) – the largest in the Eastern Mediterranean – opened in 2023, followed by the Troodos Space Observatory in 2024. Its forerunner, Kition Observatory, has existed close to Larnaca since 2008.

Private tours are also expanding, with guides taking tourists out to the darkest, most remote peaks and peninsulas, giving talks on the cosmos and offering peeks through telescopes.

So where should you go to connect with the stars? The Troodos Mountains, with elevated

areas of around 1,500 metres, are popular for guided tours. An area called Amiantos has even been designated as an 'Astropark', with up to a thousand enthusiasts gathering to watch astronomical events. Parts of the coastline – including the Akamas and Karpaz peninsulas, in the west and northeast, respectively – have little to no development or artificial light. These require local knowledge, or a guide.

Mid-July to late August this year is an especially good time to stargaze. Visitors will be treated to a spectacular natural show: the arrival of the annual Perseid meteor shower. In 2026, this peaks around the second week of August, coinciding with Dekapentavgoustos, a national holiday.

We think of meteors as shooting stars. In fact, they're small pieces of debris cast off by comets (in the case of the Perseid shower, the comet known as Swift-Tuttle). As these pieces hurtle through the atmosphere, they heat up rapidly and create a glowing streak visible from Earth.

It's 'something people wait for each summer', enthuses astrophysicist Maria Enotiade. 'Groups such as astronomy clubs organise events. Other people go to remote camps, have hot drinks, talk with friends and play music as they watch the

meteors.' The meteor showers are special, she says, because they're easily seen with the naked eye – no professional equipment is required. This year, anticipation is higher than ever because the shower's peak will coincide with a new moon phase. That means extra clarity: the less moonlight, the better the visibility.

Naturally, events are cropping up to meet demand. The Cyprus Planetarium is hosting a viewing event at Amiantos Astropark, requiring 'warm clothing and good vibes' (cyproplan.com). At the Mediterranean Beach Hotel, on 12 August, guests and visitors can use telescope equipment and learn about uranography – the study of mapping the celestial sphere – on the poolside (medbeach.com).

But, as Maria Enotiade is keen to emphasise, stargazing is worth our while all year round. The planetarium will launch its own public tours in summer 2026, she says, taking full advantage of the reliable clarity and mild climate to introduce more visitors to the skyscape.

Cypriot authorities hope to preserve and finesse astrotourism centres on the island, and are aiming for a certified DarkSky reserve; a distinction held by European stargazing spots such as Germany's

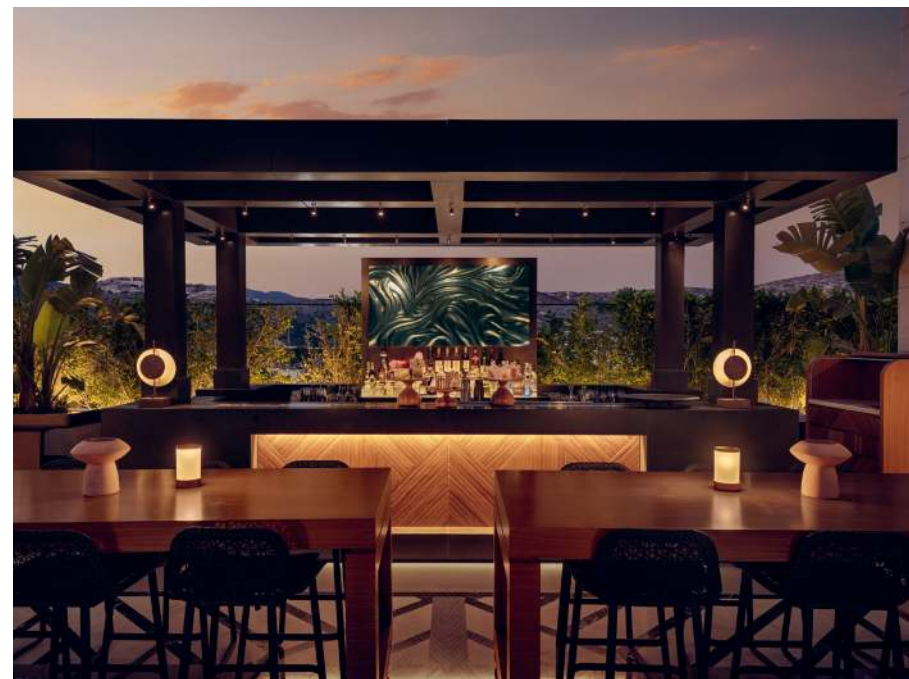
Bavarian Forest National Park and Pic du Midi in the Pyrénées. The area around Stavros tis Psokas, a river running through Paphos Forest, is one ongoing project. The aim is to reduce light pollution and win accreditation from DarkSky International, explains Demetra Chasikou.

As momentum builds, Cyprus's stargazing scene could prove to be the inspiration for a new generation of travellers. Astrotourism and astrophotography are two key interests of Gen Z, fuelled by TikTok trends and excited reporting on celestial events.

'We will have a couple of big astronomical events in 2027,' declares Maria Enotiade. 'A solar eclipse will be mostly visible from Egypt but with a good view here too. And there's a lunar eclipse in February. We're very excited.' She has loved watching the growing trend for astrophotography on the island, seeing the sharpness of starscapes captured from the best vantage points.

The best thing, says Chasikou, is that the heavens never appear the same twice. 'I may have already observed a galaxy, nebulae or the sun, but every time I look, they're different.' 🌌

@lucyalice24. Lucy is a travel journalist specialising in solo and independent travel



Make the most of the night sky with these events at Stademos

White Cuban Nights Elysium

'White Cuban Nights' – a celebration of live Cuban music – are held twice a month at Elysium in July and August. By the beach, overlooking the sea, guests are invited to dress in white for this vibrant summer experience. elysium-hotel.com

High hopes AMARA Rooftop Bar

There are some places where time loses its importance. The Rooftop Bar at AMARA is one such place. A sanctuary of uninterrupted sea views and elegant design, there is no better place to watch as the sun slowly sets and the balmy night settles in around you. amarahotel.com

Insider tip

Skip the starters at dinner and instead order a tapas platter to share at The AMARA Rooftop Bar. It's the ideal accompaniment for the bar's bespoke cocktails.

The big screen Cinema under the stars, Elysium

There's nothing like watching the big screen outside. At the al fresco Orpheus Amphitheatre in July and August, guests can enjoy classic films as the scent of fresh popcorn fills the air and bespoke cocktails are on hand. It's the perfect way to make the most of the long, warm nights. elysium-hotel.com

Get close to the cosmos The Cyprus Planetarium at Mediterranean

Experience the sights of the Perseid meteor shower this summer with guidance from experts at The Cyprus Planetarium. Join us on 12 August at the Mediterranean pool for one of the most exciting displays of the year. medbeach.com

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The WINE of KINGS

Head Sommelier of AMARA
Marco Spanu unveils the vines of Cyprus.
Writer **Ross Clarke** takes note

At the Paphos Archaeological Park is a house dedicated to Dionysos. In ornate floor tiles, from the second to fifth centuries AD, the Greek god of wine and viticulture is depicted so many times that the remains are called the House of Dionysos. Wine plays an important role in the history and culture of Cyprus, with the island laying claim to the world's oldest named variety: Commandaria, which traces its history to 800 BC. It's named after the headquarters of the Knights Templar – La Grande Commanderie – after their purchase of the island from English king and conqueror Richard the Lionheart.

Nearly a thousand years later, viticulture continues to thrive. Modern wineries reestablish native grapes and refine techniques to produce standout bottles. And one man who knows this story well is Marco Spanu, Head Sommelier of AMARA.

Ross Clarke: Cyprus has impressive winemaking credentials. What makes the island so special?

Marco Spanu: Cyprus has a wine history of more than five thousand years, making it one of the oldest wine-producing regions in the world. On top of that, it's one of the few countries that escaped the Phylloxera plague that devastated most of Europe's vines in the late nineteenth century, which means it has ancient and strong vines with lots of indigenous grape varieties. If you visit the vineyards, you'll find each producer is very proud of this history. They don't try to copy other people; they like to do things differently.

RC: And is the scene more boutique or booming?

MS: Winemaking is concentrated in two main areas: Paphos and Limassol. There are currently about forty producers. Most are small, family-run vineyards and wineries. What we're seeing is that the children of the winemakers are taking over the businesses and saying, 'Yes, let's follow tradition, but let's also learn more modern and experimental techniques.' You also see it in things like bottle labels. There's a cool one from Paphos called Vouni Panayia, whose labels look like paintings, which they do themselves.



Cyprus is home to Commandaria, the oldest named wine in the world. This rich, sweet wine dates back centuries and was praised by King Richard the Lionheart as the 'wine of kings and the king of wines'



IMAGES: JAAANUS JAGOMÁGI/UNSPASH

RC: Is there a big difference between Paphos and Limassol wines?

MS: It's less about the region and more about altitude. In Limassol, you have the slopes of the Troodos Mountains. The Paphos forest is also very high: more than a thousand metres. This tends to give the wines a crispness and acidity, and they are very mineral.

RC: Am I right in thinking that Xynisteri white wine has a reputation for freshness?

MS: That variety makes up about thirty per cent of the grapes grown on the island. It produces bright, fresh wines. You don't see lots of oak, although there are wineries trying longer oak aging. Cypriots love Cypriot wine and they favour it young and fresh.

RC: What other native grapes should we look out for?

MS: The main red grapes are Maratheftiko and Mavro. There's an interesting red that I really like called Yiannoudi. It's rich and juicy, a bit like a Syrah or Barbera, but production of it is quite low. Then there's Promara: a crisp, dry, lemony white. The one from Tsiakkas Winery is very nice. But my favourite is a white grape called Morokanella: it's very fruit-forward with a real sense of mature peach. Extremely pleasant to drink.

RC: You obviously have a passion for the wines of Cyprus, but 'Marco Spanu' doesn't sound very Cypriot.

MS: You're right! I'm originally from Sardinia in Italy. I lived for a few



years in London, which is where I started working with Ristorante Locatelli. When AMARA was opening, I came here as assistant restaurant manager. Then I spent a few years in the Bahamas, before coming back as manager. I'm also in charge of wine for the hotel, in terms of suppliers and wine lists. I've always been fascinated by wine: for me, it's fifty per cent of the dining experience. It's not just about tasting, but about the background story of the wine.

RC: How do you choose the wines for the restaurants?

MS: I look at the style of the restaurant and the food you serve. Having a sushi restaurant and serving Cabernet Franc is just not suitable. Because AMARA has different restaurants, we can serve many different wines. In Beefbar and Locatelli, we serve big French and Italian reds, and well-known brands like Château Margaux and Petrus. Then we have Nerea, the fish restaurant where the focus is on local and Greek whites, some Italian and easy-going whites, Rieslings, Gewürztraminer, bubbles. Did you know that sushi and cocktails are very popular? Although, for me, a nice Reisling with sushi is the one.

RC: Do local winemakers come knocking, or do you seek them out?

MS: Both. We do tastings, and they send us samples. Suppliers are very involved and hands-on. They organise tastings and training for the staff. They're so passionate about what they do.

RC: The wine list at Locatelli is impressive. How much Cypriot wine do you stock?

MS: Being an Italian restaurant, Locatelli is mainly focused on Italian wines. But we're always updating the list, and increasing the number of Cypriot wines and different producers. We need to update it often, because of the small production. And we have a lot of requests. Guests come to Cyprus to try local wines and I love having a conversation about what they like, such as Pinot Grigio, and giving them a local recommendation instead.

'I've always been fascinated by wine: for me, it's fifty per cent of the dining experience'

The island preserves unique, native grape varieties you won't find growing anywhere else, such as the white Xynisteri grape and the red Maratheftiko grape



RC: What's got you excited on the Cypriot wine scene right now?

MS: A very small winery called Makarounas. They grow Spourtiko: a local white variety that's very grassy, crisp and dry, with no oak. I just love it. Vlassides has the best-looking facilities. Their Artion is made with a blend of non-indigenous grapes and is really good; as is their Óroman, made with Yiannoudi. For me, the best rosé on the island right now is from Zambartas.

RC: And we can't talk about Cypriot wine without mentioning Commandaria.

MS: The wine of kings and the king of wines. It's a sweet wine made from Xynisteri and Mavro. You must be careful what you say about Commandaria if you visit Cyprus! It's very special. On the wine list I have one from Kyperounda Winery, which has hints of dates, dried fruits and raisins. It's perfect for the end of dinner, with dessert.

RC: How would you describe Cypriot wine to someone who knows nothing about it?

MS: Humble but surprising. 'Humble' because Cypriots don't compare their wine with any other. It's about quality, not quantity.

RC: Any fun wine plans in the pipeline?

MS: Tastings, with wines and a small bite. Maybe four or five wines, with a pairing for each, that people can sip and taste in a relaxed way.

RC: And finally, if you had to point us to one place in Cyprus, where would it be?

MS: The Troodos Mountains. Even in summer it's not too hot. The views are incredible. And you can visit lovely tavernas and wineries. @therossclarke. Ross Clarke is a travel writer and wine expert



The Wine List

Five local vintages to try and where to find them

100% Spourtiko

Makarounas Winery

THE WINE: a light and easy drinking white, with notes of lemon peel and apple – crisp and mineral on the palate, with a flinty and saline finish. PAIR WITH: Matsuhisa's yellowtail sashimi and jalapeño with yuzu.

Lefkada

Zambartas Rosé, Limassol

THE WINE: a fresh and medium-bodied rosé with notes of wild berries. PAIR WITH: Nerea's prawn saganaki, with tomato, garlic, ouzo and feta.

Yiannoudi

Selection Yannoudi, Dafermou

THE WINE: A rich and complex red, with notes of blackberries, chocolate and tobacco. Expect firm tannins and a long finish.

PAIR WITH: the homemade oxtail ravioli at Ristorante Locatelli.

Maratheftiko

Tsiakkas Winery, Vamvakada

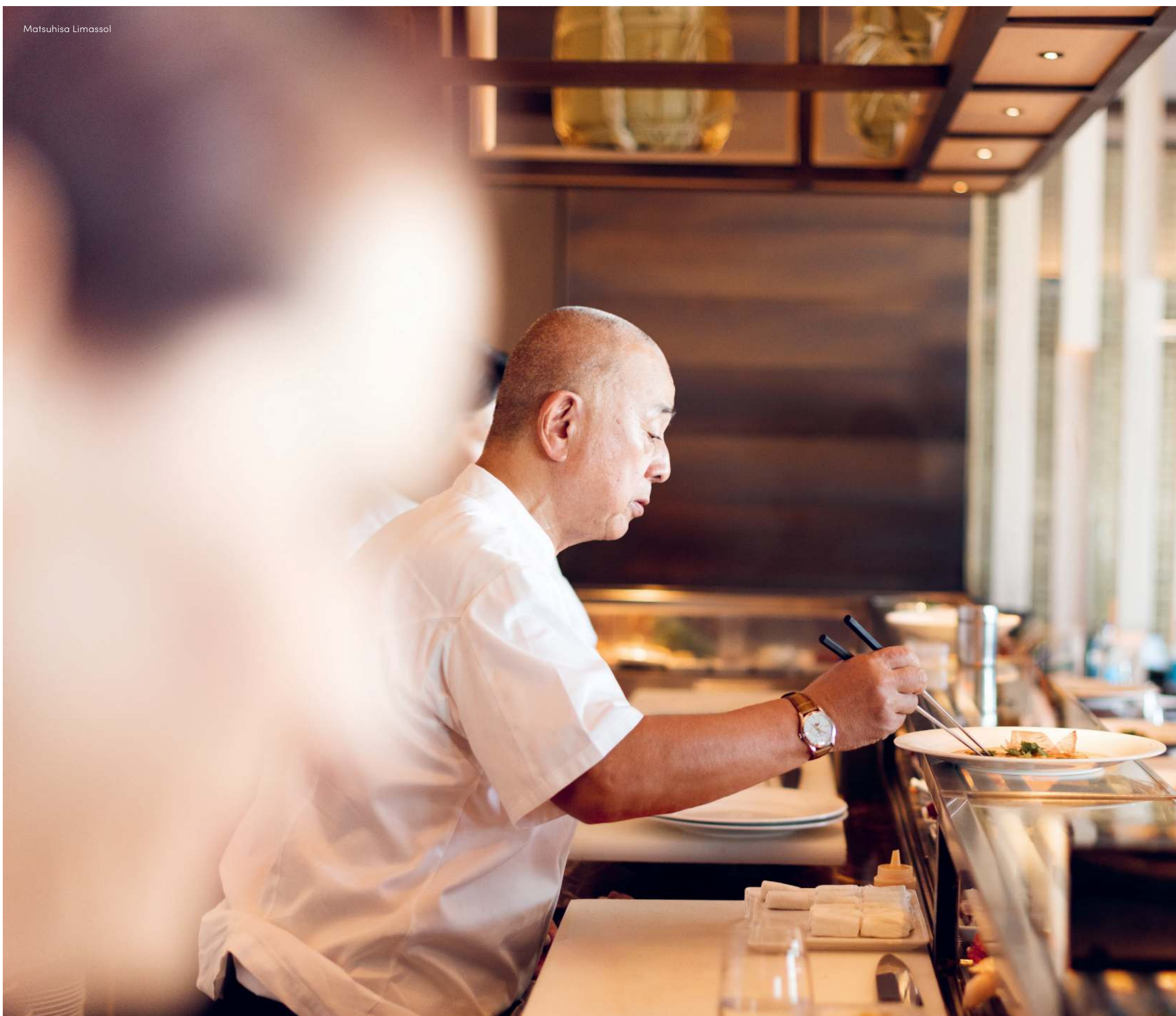
THE WINE: a medium-bodied red, made from an indigenous grape variety from the Pitsilia region. It offers complex aromas of red and black fruits, with delicate floral notes.

PAIR WITH: the roasted cannon of lamb at Ristorante Bacco.

Promara

AES Ambelis Winery

THE WINE: a crisp, highly aromatic white with notes of peach and lemon. PAIR WITH: this works beautifully with grilled fish or seafood.



'A sushi chef has to spot the best quality fresh fish instantly,' says restaurateur Nobu San, the legend behind AMARA's Matsuhisa Limassol.

Raw passion
Japanese food is synonymous with understated luxury, and exceptional skill and ingredients. **Ailis Brennan** explores what makes this cuisine so remarkable and why it remains at the forefront of fine dining

In Japan is a culture known as *shokunin*: a tradition of craftspeople who dedicate their lives to honing their knowledge of an art form, from sword smithing to ceramics. Nowhere is this more evident than in the sushi kitchen. There, chefs spend years undertaking everyday tasks – sweeping floors, washing dishes – before they are permitted to touch a single piece of fish. An apprentice can spend up to three years simply mastering how to wash, cook and perfectly season rice.

Respect for food, and dedication to its excellence, are felt at every level. Even casual restaurants are often highly specialised; experts in a specific technique or style such as yakitori (morsels of chicken, skewered and grilled), katsu (a sweet sauce with meat) or tempura (seafood or vegetables dipped in batter and deep-fried).

At the other end of the scale from casual fare, Japanese fine dining is simply unmatched. Tokyo has the most Michelin-starred restaurants of any city, with Kyoto and Osaka also in the top four (just behind Paris). With all aspects of food culture rising above and beyond, it's no surprise that Japanese cuisine carries an association with luxury among international diners. But while this reputation is founded in the nation's kitchens, its imprint on the global popular consciousness can be attributed largely to one man.

In 1987, Japanese-born chef Nobu Matsuhisa opened his self-titled restaurant Matsuhisa, a stone's throw from Beverly Hills. It had been a long road to get there, as laid out in the 2026 documentary, *Nobu*. But he soon gathered dedicated regulars, many of whom – unsurprisingly, given the location – were celebrities. And one notable decided that this was too good to keep to Hollywood alone.

It took Matsuhisa regular Robert De Niro several years to convince Nobu San to open a restaurant with him. But in 1994, the first Nobu opened its doors in New York's Tribeca. With star-power bathing the restaurant in the

Nobu's menu captured the imagination of those looking for a healthier way to indulge in culinary luxury



Matsuhisa Limassol

Nobu San's food is, by his own admission, simple. But in simplicity, there is nowhere to hide



MATSUHISA LIMASSOL AMARA

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Chef's table

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amarahotel.com



Chef Nobu Matsuhisa

spotlight, Japanese food became a sensation, and synonymous with sophistication. Nobu fused the food of his homeland with that of Peru; the yellowtail sashimi with jalapeño was a signature at the original Matsuhisa, and remains a favourite today. Meanwhile, his use of powerful umami flavours, seen in dishes such as the signature black miso cod, enticed the international palate.

Nobu's menu also captured the imagination of those looking for a healthier way to indulge in culinary luxury. Its founder's food is, by his own admission, simple. But in simplicity, there is nowhere to hide. It requires high quality ingredients and technical precision. Nobu's dedication to those ingredients and that precision taught the world that Japanese cooking was more than a luxury trend: it was inextricable from the principles of luxury itself. 'Sushi is something very exclusive,' he declared. 'It is not like a McDonald's, not like a hot dog, not like a French fry. It's very high-class cooking in Japan.'

Nobu has opened more than fifty restaurants worldwide – including Matsuhisa Limassol at AMARA – and become a globally recognised marker of quality. Its wider impact has been an appreciation of the true art of sushi: the awareness that every element of the meal has been curated, from the sourcing of sashimi-grade seafood ('A sushi chef has to spot the best quality fresh fish instantly,' says Nobu San) to the precise way in which the fish is sliced, to fully release its flavour.

At Matsuhisa, guests are invited to sit at the sushi bar, where they witness chefs in action. Nothing makes a better starter than watching a chef delicately slice a yellowtail fish or elegant salmon into paper-thin mouthfuls, then dressing it with spears of ginger, grated garlic and jalapeños, and a soy-yuzu sauce.

Sitting front row is also advised at O'Shin at Elysium, which showcases the best dishes from the five culinary regions of Asian cooking: China, Japan, Thailand, Vietnam and Korea. The dim sum and tempura are musts, but sushi often steals the show. Volcano Rolls – maki sushi rolls,

'Sushi is something very exclusive,' declared Chef Nobu San. 'It is not like a McDonald's, not like a hot dog, not like a French fry. It's very high-class cooking in Japan.'



Matsuhisa Limassol

filled with eel and avocado, and finished with a signature sauce – are among the popular orders.

Such is the appetite for – and understanding of – the craft that the global sushi market is valued at up to 20 billion US dollars. Japanese chefs are internationally recognised names. There are films on the subject, such as the aforementioned *Nobu*, and *Jiro Dreams of Sushi*, spotlighting three-Michelin-starred master Jiro Ono. *Iron Chef America*'s Masaharu Morimoto is a US TV heavyweight. Meanwhile, Masa Takayama and Endo Kazutoshi are among the most respected chefs working in New York and London today.

Japanese cuisine's customs and practices have also made an indelible mark on global fine dining via *kaiseki*: a multicourse meal with roots in sixteenth-century tea ceremonies (credited with inspiring the western tasting menu). Meanwhile, chefs practising *omakase* – translated as 'I leave it up to you' – eschew menus and instead prepare bespoke dishes. As in all Japanese restaurants, luxury is to be found in the deeply personal and respectful nature that underpins this extraordinary culture.

In Japan, diners say *itadakimasu* at the beginning of a meal, to honour the produce and work that went into it; then *gochisousama* afterwards, to express gratitude. Respect for ingredients, knowledge and work is integral to the culture. Engaging in *omakase* – which you can do at Matsuhisa – requires ultimate deference to the chef. There is, arguably, no cuisine in the world for which that deference is more richly deserved. 🍣

@ailis_brennan is a UK food expert and writer



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Your taste of Cyprus

Flavour Profile

Carob is a dark, honeyed pod, prized as the island's 'Black Gold'. As a flour or reduced to a syrup, it adds a rich, malty sweetness with an earthy edge

WHY IT'S SPECIAL

Known as the island's 'Black Gold', carob was once a huge part of the economy in Cyprus. Entire ports and warehouses were dedicated to exporting it across the world.

WHAT IT'S LIKE

Naturally sweet with a gently roasted flavour, carob is often compared to chocolate. But it has a more subtle, earthy taste.

HOW IT'S USED

Carob is often used as a healthy alternative in hot chocolate or baking. It also adds a unique accent to Middle Eastern-style marinades and spice rubs.

TRY IT...

In a pastelli – a Cyprus sweet treat made from carob syrup and seeds. Perfect for breakfast, alongside your morning coffee.

The old port district of Limassol still features warehouse architecture tied to the 'Black Gold' era of carob exports

IMAGES: BURCU ATALAY/TANKUT/GETTY; ALAMY

Recipe

Carob-glazed Troodos trout served with warm cauliflower salad and roasted chickpeas

by Elysium Executive Chef Michael Lipscombe

Ingredients

Serves 6
1 cauliflower
pinch of salt
25g butter
50g double cream
25g olive oil
3g ground cumin
200g chickpeas, drained
120g Greek yoghurt
15g lemon juice
5g Dijon mustard
5g maple syrup
3g garlic, finely chopped
5g dill, finely chopped
3g cumin seeds, crushed
6 boneless trout fillets
60g carob syrup



Method

Cauliflower purée: Remove the leaves of the cauliflower and cut in half. Slice half of the cauliflower fine. Place in a vacuum bag with salt and butter. Vacuum and steam for 20 minutes. Pour into blender and blend very well. Add the cream and season. Blend again until smooth, then pass through a chinois strainer. Cover with clingfilm and keep hot.

Roast cauliflower florets: Cut a quarter of the cauliflower into neat, small florets. Add a touch of olive oil. Season with salt and the ground cumin. Roast in the oven at 160°C for around 15 minutes. Once golden brown, remove from oven. Mix in the raw cauliflower pieces so they wilt slightly. Leave to cool.

Chopped cauliflower: Very finely slice the remaining quarter of cauliflower. Chop again until the cauliflower is more like couscous. Leave this raw.

Roasted chickpeas: Drain the chickpeas well. Drizzle with olive oil and a little salt. Roast at 170°C for 15 minutes.

Cumin yoghurt dressing: Mix the Greek yoghurt, lemon juice, Dijon mustard, maple syrup, garlic, dill and cumin seeds together. Mix the fine chopped cauliflower, roast cauliflower, cauliflower leaves and chickpeas together. Mix in the cumin yoghurt dressing. Serve at room temperature.

To serve: Season the trout and drizzle with oil. Place on a tray with greaseproof paper. Put in a preheated oven at 200°C for 6-7 minutes. Remove from the oven and brush on the carob syrup. Return to the oven for 1 minute. Place the cauliflower purée in the centre of a shallow serving bowl. Spread around with a back of a spoon. On one side of the bowl, on top of the purée, add the trout fillet. Place the warm cauliflower salad next to it.

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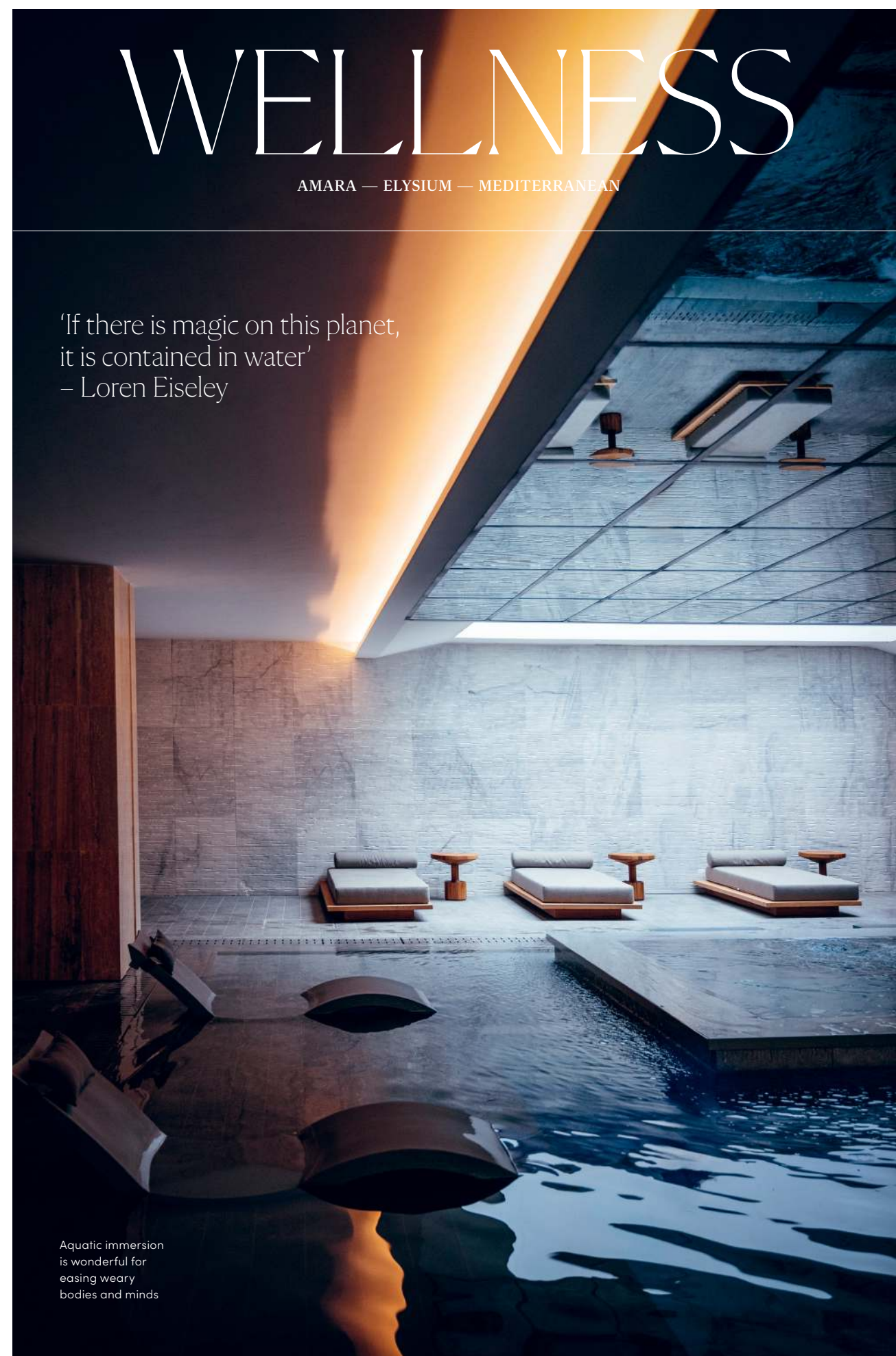


*Consumer test after application of Bain + Fondant + Oil, 104 consumers.

WELLNESS

AMARA — ELYSIUM — MEDITERRANEAN

'If there is magic on this planet,
it is contained in water'
— Loren Eiseley



Aquatic immersion
is wonderful for
easing weary
bodies and minds



Into THE

Water is proven to reduce stress, calm nerves and improve wellbeing – a phenomenon known as the ‘blue mind’. We talk to experts about the wonder that beckons from the waves

BLUE

Words
SOPHY
GRIMSHAW

IMAGE: JOUKE BOS

Water quiets all the noise, all the distractions, and connects you to your own thoughts

When we spend time in natural waters, we begin to notice subtle changes: tides shifting, migratory birds arriving, moon phases influencing the sea, changing temperatures and light across the seasons,' says author, surfer and marine social scientist Easkey Britton, PhD. 'Those observations gently draw us out of constant mental activity and back into embodied awareness. We become less driven by urgency and more attuned to rhythm and flow.'

Raised on the west coast of Ireland, Britton now works 'nomadically'. A clean-seas advocate, she has delivered a TED talk, was named an 'agent of change' by *Surfer* magazine, and has published the books *Ebb & Flow: Connect with the patterns and power of water* and *Saltwater in the Blood*.

'I often speak about "being more like water": becoming more adaptable, fluid and responsive, rather than constantly resisting life's changes,' she says. 'Water reminds us that softness is not weakness. It is another form of strength.'

Britton is one of many expert voices associated with the 'blue mind' movement, which shows that proximity to water can reduce stress, calm the nervous system, lower cortisol, improve mood and support mental wellbeing. 'Even simply looking at water can shift brain activity towards a more meditative, restorative state,' says Britton. Beyond the science, she says, water offers something many people feel they are missing in modern life: 'A sense of connection and perspective. Water draws us into the present moment.'

American marine biologist Dr Wallace J. Nichols popularised the term 'blue mind'. In a 2014 book of the same name, he championed the mental and physical health benefits of time spent in, on, looking at or listening to water: 'Water quiets all the noise, all

the distractions, and connects you to your own thoughts. We are beginning to learn that our brains are hardwired to react positively to water and that being near it can calm and connect us, increase innovation and insight, and even heal what's broken.'

Citing neuroscience and personal testimony from athletes, scientists and creatives, Nichols suggested that proximity to water can 'improve performance, increase calm, diminish anxiety, and increase professional success'. (Blue mind's contrasting state is 'red mind': the overstimulated anxiety familiar to anyone navigating a high-pressure working lifestyle, especially in an urban setting.)

A scientist, fundraiser for the conservation of sea turtles, and campaigner against plastic pollution, Nichols passed away in 2024. But his work – and that of others who explore and explain the many benefits of water – continues to gain momentum.

'It's something that many of us who enjoy sea swimming and open-air swimming might feel we know almost instinctively,' says Christopher Beanland, the author of books including 2020's *Lido: A dip into outdoor swimming pools*. 'You just feel better when you swim, and after you swim, or when you know you've got an open-water swim coming up. But the science of exactly *why* so many of us feel that way when we swim outdoors, I find really intriguing.'

The answer, in part, seems to be not only what water gives to us, but what it takes away, suggested Nichols. When we're in the sea, the pool or the lake, we're unlikely to be watching a screen, thumbing a smartphone, cursing the traffic, or failing to notice and connect with the present moment. For swimming in particular, the need to use our full body – without the pressure on joints exerted by other forms of cardio – calls for mindful engagement with the here and now.

Dine by the water's edge

PlusSea AMARA

Beachfront dining at its best. Chic yet cosy decor invites you to relax completely as you dine on fresh and vibrant food. Think tuna tartare, grilled lobster and spicy salmon tostadas.

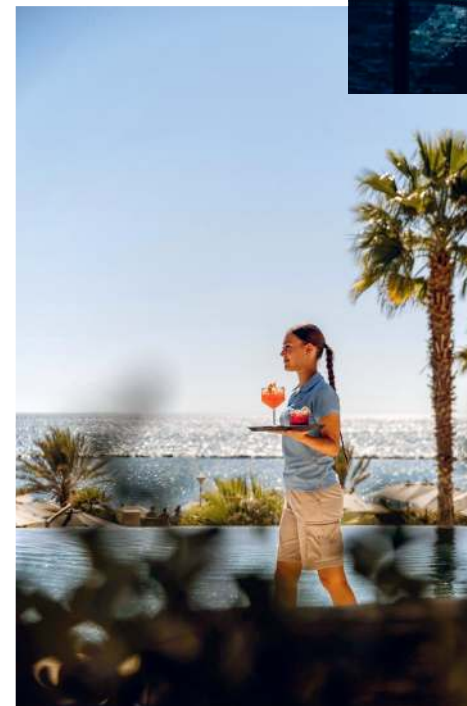
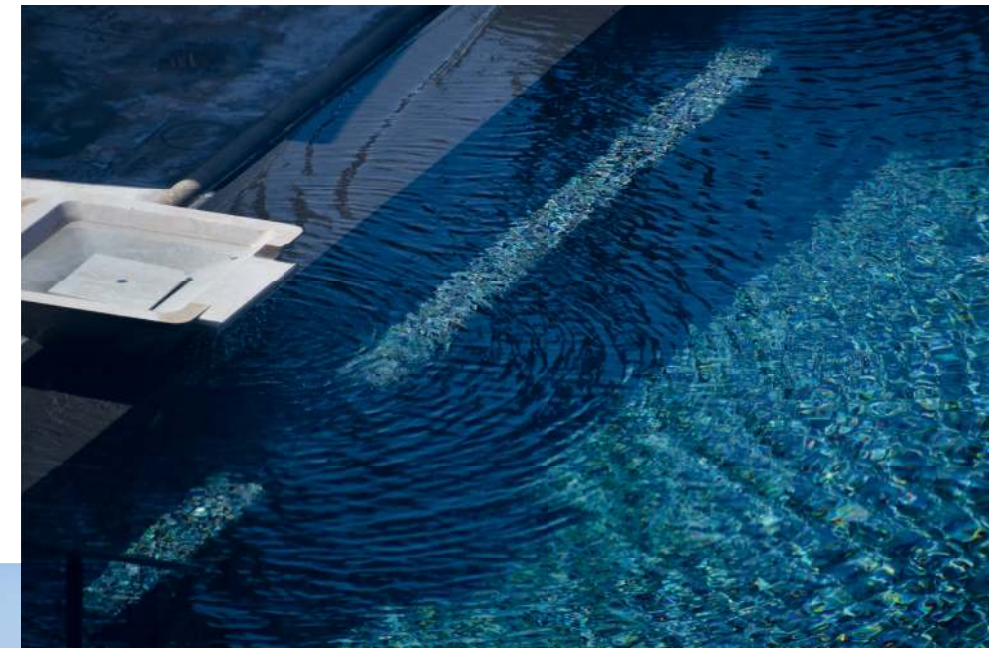
Nautica Bistro Mediterranean

Close enough to hear waves lapping, yet surrounded by lush climbing vines, Nautica is a place in which to linger. It specialises in fresh seafood and traditional meze, including local crispy feta and honey in filo.

O'Shin

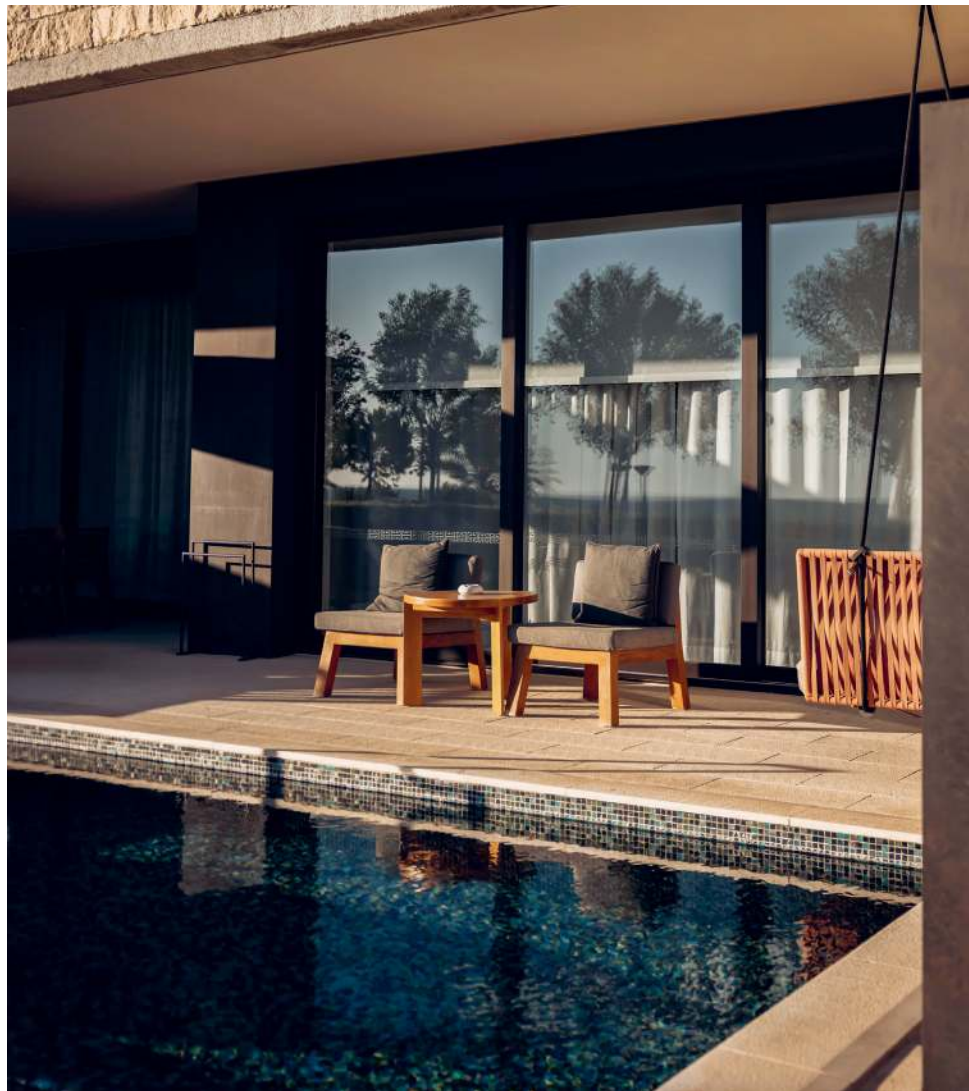
Elysium

At outdoor tables beside the pool, enjoy the tranquil sights and sounds of the water as you indulge in some of the island's best pan-Asian dishes, including maki rolls and black cod.



Research has grown in the decade since Nichols's *Blue Mind* book was published. A 2025 study of the benefits of sea swimming by a group of Swiss universities looked at data from nineteen countries. It concluded that open-water swimming is linked to higher wellbeing than its indoor equivalents. Many of the mental health benefits relate to the confidence boost and sense of achievement that open-water swimming can bring; the swimmer's sense 'of autonomy and competence'.

Recent years have seen much media focus on cold-water swimming. But Easkey points out that it's just one part of the 'blue mind' movement: 'Cold water immersion has understandably received a lot of attention because of its invigorating physiological effects – the stimulation of circulation, alertness, and the activation of the nervous system. For many people, it can create a strong sense of vitality and resilience.'



'When we're in the sea, the pool or the lake, we're unlikely to be watching a screen, thumbing a smartphone, cursing the traffic, or failing to notice and connect with the present moment'

Proximity to water can reduce stress, improve mood and support mental wellbeing

'But it's important not to reduce our relationship with water to extremes. Warm water environments can also be very therapeutic. Warm seas often allow for longer immersion, gentler movement, relaxation and sensory ease. They can feel deeply nurturing. For some, cold water creates transformation through challenge. For others, healing may come through comfort, buoyancy and calm.'

But whatever the temperature, we must be aware of the importance of the water we swim in. 'Healthy oceans are not a luxury,' says Britton. 'They are fundamental to planetary and human wellbeing.' Protecting sea turtles, reducing plastic pollution and respecting marine ecosystems are all essential; not only for biodiversity, but for maintaining the integrity of the coastline itself.

The most powerful thing, she suggests, is to foster an emotional connection with our seas. 'When people feel wonder and a relationship with marine life, conservation becomes personal rather than abstract.'



Yoga by the sea Add a layer of mindfulness to your practice with the gentle sounds and ripples of the Mediterranean as your soundtrack. Guests can join sunset yoga sessions twice a week on the beach at Elysium and experience the calm of the evening light as it disappears across the bay.



The Art of Gathering

At Clase Azul México, every gathering becomes a celebration of craftsmanship, tradition, and shared moments. Our iconic decanters are far more than vessels for exceptional tequila; they are handcrafted works of art created by Mexican artisans who transform their country's rich cultural heritage into unique and unforgettable pieces.

Each decanter is born from a meticulous process in which talent, patience, and human dedication are reflected in every detail. Upon its ceramic surface, artisans apply delicate brushstrokes and decorative elements that give each creation its own distinctive character, transforming it into a tangible expression of the spirit of Mexico.

Inspired by the landscapes, traditions, and cultural expressions of our country, these pieces accompany memorable moments around the table. Where conversation flows, experiences are shared, and lasting memories are made.

At Clase Azul México, we believe that true luxury resides in that which is created with time, meaning, and soul. Every decanter is a tribute to artisanal craftsmanship, an invitation to appreciate the beauty of detail, and a reminder that the most extraordinary experiences are born from human connection.

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The Fit Bit

Relaxation, rejuvenation and lasting wellbeing benefits await guests at the Aquum Health Spa.

Melissa Hekkers soaks it up

There's something transformative about stepping away from the routine. It's an opportunity to reset, recharge and reconnect with aspects of ourselves that often get overshadowed. And that includes reconnecting with movement, energy and overall wellbeing.

A mini-break or holiday can be the perfect opportunity to reignite your passion for sport and wellness – especially when the destination itself invites you to move. With year-round sunshine, diverse landscapes, alluring seas and a laid-back Mediterranean rhythm, Cyprus is ideal. Add the facilities of the Mediterranean Beach Hotel and its Aquum Health Spa and you're on your way. I'd envisioned my day at the spa as an indulgence that would set the mood for rejuvenation. I didn't realise it would also be an experience that I would take back home with me.

'Wellbeing for us is more than fitness,' says spa manager Maria Rigou. 'It's balance. Being happy, healthy and fit doesn't come by merely following a fitness programme. A healthy body brings a healthy mind.'

That's the philosophy Rigou and her team have established at Aquum: a holistic environment in which wellness is about balance. It combines exercise, treatments, nutrition, rest and emotional wellbeing into a single, seamless experience. Designed to restore both body and mind, its results extend far beyond the treatment and fitness rooms. Spa treatments go hand in hand with the gym and fitness classes. Swimming lessons offer

a pointer to a sustainable practice for the rest of one's life. An outdoor ping-pong table and giant chess board call for coordination and fun. And the kids' club makes sure parents can take the time out they deserve. Everything is linked. Nothing is coincidental.

'Diverse people come to the spa and fitness centre: different backgrounds and different ages,' says spa supervisor Kata Fekete, a qualified fitness instructor. 'Some people come to relax. Some come for recovery, and some to start a regime they can continue at home. We welcome pregnant women, tired mothers and overworked businesspeople.'

The classes offered – yoga, stretching, body shaping and Pilates, to name but a few – are safe for all, joint-friendly, and tailored to individual capabilities. 'I explain exactly what we're doing in each exercise,' says Fekete, 'and communicate where we're supposed to feel the movements, to make sure exercises are done properly.' Equally importantly, she explains and demonstrates exercises we can do at home, based on what we express on the mat.

I chose a combination of stretching and body shaping. As soon as Fekete discreetly mentioned that I was a 'silent sufferer', I knew she was

observing and tapping into my being. I don't express much when I exercise. But by the end of the class, Fekete had identified my strengths and weaknesses, and managed to get me to speak about my struggles when exercising. She cautiously pushed me to my limits, yet gave me a break at the right time. I left the spa's cosy fitness studio with exercises I was confident would awaken reflexes I need to develop flexibility.

'We encourage people to go to the gym to lift weights, but the classes are more personal,' explains Fekete. 'And it's the same for spa treatments: people fill in a medical form so that we get to know

Asana (postures) is one of yoga's 'eight limbs', which also include Pranayama (breathing), Dhyana (meditation) and Dharana (concentration)



IMAGE: URBAN VIA GETTY IMAGES

Keep it moving

At Mediterranean, you can create your very own health retreat



Sweat

The hotel gym is open 12 hours a day, with Technogym weight machines, free weights and cardiovascular equipment, as well as personal training services.



Stretch

Join in with scheduled yoga, Pilates and aqua aerobics sessions using the hotel timetable. (Private yoga, Pilates and swimming lessons available on request.)



Steam

Recovery is vital: the hydro-bath room, steam bath, sauna and Jacuzzi at Aquum will all help you unwind and decompress after a tough workout.



Fuel

Replenish yourself at restaurants such as the sea-view Nautica. Beneath a shady pergola, refreshing salads and grilled fish dishes will leave you glowing.



'Some people come to relax. Some come for recovery, and some to start a regime they can continue at home.'

'Green exercise' – activity in natural environments – is associated with reduced stress, improved mood and greater feelings of wellbeing

IMAGE: MYSTOCKIMAGES VIA GETTY IMAGES

them, and we personalise treatments according to that. We have personal contact with everyone who visits and we cooperate with our therapists. If a client comes in with a health issue looking for a spa treatment, we see if a fitness class can help. We want everyone to leave with something they can take back home with them. This is our main goal: to look at long-term wellbeing.'

The Mediterranean is one of Limassol's best established four-star hotels and embraces the island's hospitality culture. 'We're a family hotel,' affirms Rigou. 'We support people to feel balanced, recharged, healthier, happier

and relaxed during their holidays. And parents deserve that too. We change our classes according to seasons. In summer, we organise aqua aerobic classes in which the entire family can participate, and we have the kids' club and babysitting services so parents can take time out for themselves. Both children and parents can make the best of their time. This is very important to us. We want to give everybody a chance.'

Largely gone are the days when people would choose a destination in which to stay for two or three weeks. 'Back then, we could offer programmes where people took the time to indulge,' says Rigou. 'Now we focus on personal contact and make sure that what we introduce can be a start to a regime people can be inspired by, carrying a sense of wellbeing into their everyday life.'

As Rigou and Fekete lead me to the seafront promenade at the hotel's doorstep, they greet people along the way. I realise how personal their approach is and what a nice feeling it is to be seen, even if you're just there for a couple of days. 'The hotel has been around for over thirty years,' Rigou notes. 'We have a lot of repeat guests. We see people who used to come here with their children and now the children bring their kids. We see them grow.'

A forty-minute walk along the promenade beckons – a recommendation from Fekete. It's great to be outside, breathing in sea air. She suggests a steam bath to relax my muscles once I'm back. Aquum's algae cream wrap, which provides hydration and encourages toning, is also enticing.

'We believe in keeping active and growing this balanced mindset,' says Rigou. 'We want to show people how they can improve themselves. Some people may say they don't like to exercise, but if they get into it and start, they'll feel a difference in how they feel immediately.'

'Often, people don't know what they need, and we jump in to provide that. We treat people how we would like to be treated. And when guests tell us they come back because they feel good here, what's more important than that?'

Walking along the seafront, I think that, indeed, the hotel has everything you need to revitalise yourself in one place. All you need to do is make the most of it. One often forgets to look and listen to oneself. Aquum's got your back. 🌿 @mycypusmandala. Melissa Hekkers is a journalist and author based in Nicosia, Cyprus



WELLNESS

Treat yourself

**Cyprus
Ancient Ritual**
Best for relaxation

Using local ingredients
– organic olive oil,
crushed carob seeds
and warmed citrus
fruit – skin is gently
exfoliated, leaving it
bright, soft and smooth.

A full body massage
follows, using olive oil
infused with rosemary
and lemon.

€185 for 90 minutes

**Revitalising Cryo
Facial Organic
Pharmacy**

Best for rejuvenation

An invigorating
treatment designed to
lift and brighten. Ideal
for puffiness, cooling
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and collagen production
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of antioxidants and
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Organic Pharmacy
nourishes the skin.

€185 for 70 minutes

Hot Stone Massage

Best for revival

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treatment allows
the delicate transfer
of heat from basalt
volcanic stones to
tired muscles, offering
release and relaxation
when combined
with slow, soothing
massage strokes.

€140 for 60 minutes

Above: the
indoor pool at
AMARA Spa.
Right: a pause
by the pool



Ancient rituals

Reset amid tradition made modern at AMARA Spa

It's no surprise that the impressive, three-thousand-square-metre AMARA spa is a wellness destination in its own right. If you're lucky enough to be staying in the hotel itself, a visit should be mandatory. It was one of the highlights of my stay: stepping into this temple to wellness made me feel ten years lighter.

Above the ancient city ruins of Amathus – on Cyprus's southern coast, around seven miles east of Limassol – the spa cleverly incorporates elements of excavated walls, discovered during the hotel's construction. It makes for a beautifully striking focal point, adding a touch of history and a connection to an earlier, simpler time. I take a deep breath and think of the many thousands of people who have seen this very wall over the centuries. It's an oddly comforting thought.

As a parent of young children, a spa visit can sometimes feel like a hard-to-justify luxury. But with complimentary – and brilliant! – childcare, I feel completely at ease. The treatment menu is vast: everything from cryo facials – using

Organic Pharmacy products – and deep-tissue massages to mud wraps and green coffee body sculpting.

There's also a rather chic blow-dry salon and nail bar. Nice as it would be to leave looking polished to perfection, I plump for the signature Cyprus Ancient Ritual: ninety minutes of pure bliss. A rigorous scrub – using carob, sugar, coffee grounds and fresh grapefruit – leaves my skin plump and soft, before a full body massage using olive oil infused with local rosemary and lemon.

Afterwards, I head to the spa's vast open-air infinity pool, where a sunbed is perfectly positioned to make you feel like you're floating on water. For those who can't get enough of the sun, there's a beautiful garden with an adults-only infinity pool and sun terraces. I spend some time in the sauna and ice rooms before reluctantly heading back to the real world, promising to return as soon as possible. ☺

@millykr | To book the Cyprus Ancient Ritual at AMARA spa, visit amarahotel.com

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WHAT'S YOUR BEEFBAR ORDER?

I had pappardelle with Wagyu beef bolognese in Tribeca, and it was incredible. I haven't been to any of the European venues yet, as I was living in North America. But now that I've moved back to London, I can't wait to try them all.



WHAT INSPIRED YOUR BEEFBAR ILLUSTRATIONS?

Vintage travel posters – very European, decadent and stylised. It's the individual locations that define them. For Cyprus, I wanted to reflect the sunshine and palm trees; a peaceful and serene environment. It's all about capturing a moment – the interaction between the couple.

MOST MEMORABLE TRAVEL EXPERIENCE?

I've travelled to several Pride celebrations, because I love to draw on real people and particularly diverse LGBT+ characters in my illustrations. In 2017, I made a Pride sticker for Instagram, and Sydney's Pride festival turned it into a huge, sparkly parade float. So going there and seeing that was incredible.

IS THERE A DESTINATION THAT MOST SPARKED YOUR CREATIVITY?

I was in Mexico City for almost two years. Everything there is so vivid. Art is everywhere, the locals are super-creative, the architecture is incredible and the food is hard to beat. Then, recently, I visited Montreal and was so inspired. The Museum of Fine Arts (mbam.qc.ca) is well worth a visit.



To reserve a table at Beefbar Cyprus at AMARA, call +357 25 442222. To see more of Josh's work, visit joshmckenna.com

BeefBar's illustrator **Josh McKenna** shares his passion for food, travel and sketching the world

Q&A



WHAT ARE THE ESSENTIALS YOU NEVER TRAVEL WITHOUT?

I always take a real camera, so my photographs have more than just that iPhone look. Nothing fancy: just a point-and-shoot digital camera from around 2008. A good bag – I like a backpack, so I can fit everything in there. And, of course, my sketchbook, with a basic mechanical HB pencil, so I can sketch what I see. I'll do a quick jot of the scene around me in pencil; later, I'll flesh it out with charcoals, then take it to my iPad for a full colour illustration.

treasures

PRESS TO EXPLORE

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WHAT ELSE?

IMAGES: COURTESY OF JOSH MCKENNA; THE MICHAL AND RENATA HORNSTEIN PAVILION FOR PEACE, MONTREAL MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, PHOTO MMFA, DENIS FARLEY

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