

THE EXPAT FOCUS GUIDE TO CYPRUS

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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Thank you for purchasing this Expat Focus guide to Cyprus. We hope you find it useful.

The guide can be read on screen but is probably of most use if printed out so that notes can be added with a pen or pencil.

After some general advice for new expats, the main section of this guide explores the issues which all prospective expats should think about when considering a move to Cyprus. The old adage about “planning to fail if you fail to plan” is never more true when applied to those moving abroad, especially if doing so for the first time. No one can guarantee that they will be able to move to another country successfully but with research and careful planning you can give yourself the best possible chance of doing so.

While reading this section, take the time to reflect on your own circumstances and think about how the issues discussed apply to you. Use the space on the right hand side of the page to jot down notes or reminders. It is important at this stage to be realistic about your own abilities – for example, if you are concerned about your foreign language skills be honest with yourself and make a note to that effect. Having read through the information in this section you should now be in a position to start planning in earnest.

The final section of the guide contains an up-to-date list of the most useful resources for expats. Spend some time reviewing these resources, there is a huge amount of useful information out there.

Feedback regarding this guide is very welcome and may be sent through the feedback form at www.expatsfocus.com/contact. We appreciate all comments and work hard to improve the guide every year.

Good luck with your move and enjoy your time abroad!

The Expat Focus Team

What is Expat Focus?

Started in June 2000, the Expat Focus website (www.expatsfocus.com) aims to make life easier for anyone moving or living abroad by being the most comprehensive information and support resource for expatriates on the Web today.

Expat Focus offers:

- Country and city guides written with the expat, not the tourist, in mind.
- Useful articles written for an expat audience covering a wide range of subjects.
- Friendly, lively forums and an email discussion list where members are made welcome and encouraged to become part of our community.
- A monthly email newsletter full of useful information and interesting articles.
- Financial advice provided by a range of expert, independent financial advisers ready to answer visitors' enquiries.

- Much more, including property listings for popular expat destinations, expat book reviews, expat blogs, etc.

WHY MOVE ABROAD?

People these days leave their home countries to live and work abroad for a wider variety of reasons than ever before. Ease of travel and communications, increased knowledge of foreign destinations and the development of a truly global economy have encouraged people of all ages and backgrounds to become expatriates.

The largest single category of expatriates from western countries is almost certainly those who are posted overseas by their existing employer on a temporary basis - the staff of large international organizations or the diplomatic staff of overseas embassies, for example. However, more and more people are now choosing to move independently to another country, for employment or retirement purposes or just to experience a different environment and way of life. The decision to move to a different country might be based on:

- Better quality of life
- Warmer climate
- Lower cost of living
- Availability of more rewarding employment
- Interest in a different culture
- A relationship

There are now many different types of expatriates: young single people or married couples, people who work overseas for short periods while their families remain at home, retired couples and families who relocate either on a temporary or permanent basis taking their children with them. There are also many expatriate families who, due to the nature of their work, move from one foreign posting to the next over a period of many years.

Despite the vast variation in the circumstances and backgrounds of today's expats, there are also many things that most expatriates have in common, not least the factors

that they will need to consider and deal with when making a move to a different country - both before and after arrival in their destination. This guide outlines these factors and discusses many of the most important issues facing expatriates and their families.

ADVICE FOR NEW EXPATS

Whether you are considering a temporary or permanent move to a different country it is important not to rush the decision making process, especially if you are taking your family with you. Not everyone is suited to expatriate life, although for many it will be a thoroughly enjoyable and life-enriching experience. In short, find out as much as you can about life in the country you plan to move to, and consider carefully whether it will suit you and your family.

Use the Internet to get as much information as you can about your chosen destination. Most countries have expatriate community websites with personal articles, blogs and lots of practical advice and information to help new expatriates settle in. You may also be able to find travel books, videos or CD-ROMs about the country you are thinking of moving to in your local library. Take the time to watch the videos or browse travel literature together as a family, and discuss the likely benefits of the new destination as well as any concerns that family members may have. If you are thinking of moving to a distant location, find out how easy and affordable it will be to make trips home, or for family and friends to visit you. You'll need to consider whether there are direct flights or not, and what the overall travelling time is likely to be, as well as the cost. Remember how stressful long-distance travel can be, particularly if you are travelling with young children.

If at all possible, visit the country you are planning to live in before making up your mind, but remember that daily life there will be very different from your experiences as a short-term visitor. Talk to other expatriates about their experiences, and ask them about the best and worst aspects of life there. Even if you don't have any existing expat contacts in the country, you will often find that expats tend to congregate in particular areas of town, or in favourite coffee bars or restaurants, where it may be easy to strike up a

conversation with them. Lessons learned at this stage, before you commit significant time and money, may be extremely valuable.

If your chosen country has few other foreign expatriates, consider whether you might feel isolated, or whether you will enjoy the experience of being the only foreigner(s) in the local community. Life can be very challenging if hardly anyone else speaks your language and the culture is radically different. Remember that if you go to a country with a large expatriate population you will have an almost ready-made social network, there will probably be international schools that your children can attend and you will be able to find familiar imported products. However, those living almost exclusively in large expatriate communities miss out on getting to know the locals and experiencing the native culture, often one of the most rewarding aspects of living in a different country.

Consider whether you are likely to fit into the culture of the country you are thinking of moving to, particularly if it is very different from your own. However, don't forget that when dealing with the intricacies of daily life, there can be major differences even between countries such as Britain and America – to the frustration of many trans-Atlantic settlers! If considering a move to a very different society, such as from a liberal western democracy to a Middle Eastern Islamic society, you will likely face huge cultural differences. For example, women may have less freedom of movement in such societies, and the consumption of alcohol may be prohibited or allowed only in private homes. Similarly, in some eastern countries such as China, the concepts of personal privacy and freedom do not exist as they do in the west. In becoming an expatriate, you will become much more conscious of the need to observe cultural norms and traditions, something that you probably would never thought about when living in your home country.

You and your family may be involved in various organisations or activities at home that might not be

available in your new country, including particular churches or other religious institutions. You should investigate what options are available in the new destination, and whether it would present any difficulties if you have to adapt your leisure, social or spiritual practices to the new environment.

It is important to research the year-round climate of your chosen destination, particularly if you have only ever visited during the summer holiday season. Life may be very different in the middle of winter, particular if the weather conditions are extreme. Take into account any environmental risks such as earthquakes or cyclones, and whether the level of risk would be a concern to you and your family. Try to find out whether there are other health hazards such as high pollution levels or high levels of pesticides in local produce. These may be a particular concern if you are travelling with children, or if family members suffer from respiratory conditions such as asthma.

If you are thinking of moving to a northern European country, consider whether the lack of sunshine, and the relatively short daylight hours in winter, would be a problem for you and your family – remembering that it is often dark by around 4.30 p.m. On the other hand, summer offers the benefit of long light evenings in these countries, although it may be too cool to want to stay outside for long. If considering a move to a country with a hot climate, find out how high the temperatures and levels of humidity actually are and consider what it will be like to live and work in such conditions, bearing in mind of course that you will probably have air-conditioning to help cool you down when inside.

What about the general environment of your chosen destination? If you are used to wide open spaces, will you be able to adapt to life in a densely populated city such as Singapore or Hong Kong? On the other hand, if you are moving from a city or town to a remote rural area, keep in mind that you will no longer have all the conveniences of supermarkets, corner shops and food delivery services readily available.

Consider your family circumstances and how these are likely to change within the next few years. If recently married, for example, do you plan to start a family, and if so, is there likely to be an acceptable standard of medical, educational and social support facilities available in your chosen destination? Will your family (still) be eligible for social security benefits and paid maternity/paternity leave?

Try to find out about the crime rate and personal security situation - in some countries petty crimes such as pick-pocketing and burglaries may be common, while in others there may even be a high risk of violent robbery or terrorist attacks. Consider whether the likely benefits of living in such a country outweigh the risks.

At a minimum, wherever you move you will find differences in the food, weather, social and business customs, and when the initial novelty wears off you might miss the familiarity of your own country and culture. Try to plan ahead for just such an eventuality and decide how you will react to feelings of homesickness and isolation.

If you are planning to retire abroad, find out as much as you can about what retired life is like in your chosen country, it is often very different from the life experienced by other expats. How will you occupy your time - are there facilities for you to pursue your chosen interests and leisure pursuits? Are there many other retired expatriates living there who you can make friends with? What are the medical facilities like? Will you be eligible for social security benefits? How will your pension be paid to you, and will you be taxed on any income from overseas?

Most importantly, start preparing for the move as early as possible. Make a checklist of everything you need to do and the documents you'll need. If you are being posted overseas by your employer, you might be lucky enough to enjoy the services of a relocation agency to assist you with the practicalities of moving, while others will have to deal with

everything by themselves. Whether or not you have professional assistance with your move there is no substitute for good planning and organisation on your own part and you will almost certainly benefit from the experience of learning about your new country in the process.

Be prepared for problems

Moving house within the same country is a stressful experience, a move overseas even more so. Complicating factors are a lack of familiarity with everyday customs and procedures, language barriers and mixed emotions about the move. Understand that things may not always go smoothly and that there will likely be unanticipated problems to deal with. Accept that people do things differently in other countries, and that the infuriating delay in processing your work permit, for example, is one aspect of the slow pace of life that might have attracted you to the country in the first place. Patience and a sense of humour will definitely help!

Always remember that, although it is important to research your chosen destination carefully, you won't know what it is really like to live there until you've actually made the move. You will need to give yourself at least a year or more in the destination to decide whether it is right for you and your family. Even if you plan to move there for good, keep your options open in case things don't work out and you return home.

CYPRUS – AN EXPATRIATE GUIDE

Overview

Capital: Nicosia

Population: 780,133 (July 2005 est.)

Languages: Greek, Turkish, English

Religions: Greek Orthodox 78%, Muslim 18%, Maronite, Armenian Apostolic, and other 4%

Currency: Greek Cypriot area: Cypriot pound (CYP); Turkish Cypriot area: Turkish lira (TRL)

Timezone: GMT+2

Cyprus is an island in the eastern Mediterranean Sea, south of Turkey. Formerly a British colony, it achieved independence in 1960.

Cyprus' landscape includes forest-covered mountain masses with the Messaoria Plain in the interior as well as rugged coastlines and sandy beaches. The central Troodos Mountains rise to almost 1950m (6400ft), and skiing is popular here in winter. The quaint, historical capital of Nicosia, which dates back to the bronze age, is located in the middle of the Messaoria. Limassol, in the south-east of the island, is the main port and a major tourist centre. Other major towns in the Republic of Cyprus include Paphos and Larnaca, also popular tourist locations.

Conflicts between the Greek Cypriot majority and the Turkish Cypriot minority in Cyprus have necessitated the deployment of UN peacekeeping forces on Cyprus since 1964. In 1983 the Turkish area to the north of the island declared itself the 'Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus', but only Turkey

recognizes this as an independent state. The island and the capital remains divided, with only the Greek Cypriot-controlled Republic of Cyprus, which joined the EU in 2004, being recognized internationally. The UN-patrolled 'Green Line' still divides the island. Despite the long-standing conflict, the political situation in Cyprus is relatively stable and civil disorder is very rare.

There are many UN-employed expatriates living in Cyprus, as well as the employees of foreign companies and self-employed consultants, many attracted by Cyprus' favourable off-shore business benefits. Northern Cyprus has long been a favoured location among British visitors and settlers, and is increasing in popularity as stability is maintained on the island and people become less concerned about buying property here. Northern Cyprus seems to be preferred over the Republic of Cyprus for settlement, due to a lower cost of living and more favourable climate.

Cyprus enjoys a relatively low crime rate, although petty thefts and burglaries are reported as being on the increase.

Climate & Weather

Cyprus has a Mediterranean climate, with mild winters and very hot, dry summers. Average daytime temperatures are 32 degrees C in summer, 16 degrees C in winter and 25 degrees C in spring and autumn. There are sunny days throughout the year, frequent rain showers between November and March, and droughts during the dry summer months. Maximum summer temperatures can exceed 40 degrees C inland. The island experiences some moderate earthquake activity.

Getting There

Cyprus is around five hours by air from London and eight hours from Washington DC. Foreigners are only allowed to enter Cyprus via Larnaca airport or Paphos Airport in the Republic of Cyprus. The Government has prohibited the use of airports in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus by foreigners entering and leaving Cyprus, and these are only used by Turkish airlines. It has been reported, however, that the policy of fining visitors for entering North Cyprus from Turkey is seldom enforced.

Larnaca International Airport and Paphos International Airport are served by over 30 airlines, including Cyprus Airways, the national carrier. There are direct flights between Cyprus and most countries in Europe and the Middle East.

Ferries operate regularly from the port of Limassol to Athens and to Israel, with some companies also operating direct routes to Rhodes, Patmos and Crete. Ferries also operate between the TRNC and Turkey, but visitors are only allowed to leave Cyprus on these if they also entered Cyprus direct from Turkey.

Speaking the Language

The vast majority of Cypriots speak English, and it is not usually necessary for expatriates to learn Greek or Turkish. For those who wish to learn Greek, there are many language schools and evening classes in the Republic.

Visas, Residency, Immigration & Documentation

Immigration and Visas

It is important to note that the Republic of Cyprus and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus have different immigration regulations.

The Republic of Cyprus is now a member of the EU and under community laws EU nationals have the right to enter the country with an identity card or valid passport and to seek work there. For non-EU nationals, employment permits have to be obtained before entering Cyprus. The nationals of many non-EU countries do not require a visa to enter the Republic of Cyprus for a stay not exceeding three months.

The TRNC is not a member of the EU, and although EU nationals do not require visas to enter North Cyprus as visitors, all foreign nationals are required to obtain a work permit before entering the country for the purpose of employment.

For full details of visa requirements for both the Republic of Cyprus and the TRNC see the relevant government websites. Visas for the TRNC can be obtained from Turkish embassies.

Employment and Residence Permits

All foreign nationals who wish to live and work in Cyprus, with the exception of those undertaking seasonal employment only, are required to apply for a Temporary Residence Employment Permit (TRE). EU nationals who arrive to seek work within the country must initially register with the Department of the Population and Migration Archive, or an office of the Aliens and Migration Service. Within three months of arrival, they are required to apply to the Population and Migration Archive for a residence permit.

Residence permits are usually granted easily to the foreign employees of off-shore companies based in Cyprus and to foreign consultants and their employees, in line with Cyprus' policy of encouraging foreign investment and promoting the country's advantages as an off-shore business location

For other foreign nationals wishing to work in Cyprus, employment permits can be harder to obtain as the employer will be required to demonstrate that there are no suitably qualified Cypriot citizens available for the post on offer. The employer is required to submit the TRE application to the Migration Officer at the Ministry of the Interior in Nicosia. The Migration Officer will seek advice from the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance regarding the labour market conditions and the employer's previous compliance with the work permit regulations before deciding whether to approve the application.

Along with the relevant application forms, when applying for a Temporary Residence Employment Permit you will be required to include 4 passport-sized photographs, evidence of residence in Cyprus, such as your contract of sale or rental agreement, documentation confirming that you have private medical insurance and bank statements or other documents showing that you have at least 30,000 Euros or the equivalent. Non-EU nationals may be required to submit additional documentation.

If you are retiring to Cyprus and do not intend to work there, you will need to apply to the Migration Officer for a 'Permit to settle in Cyprus permanently without working'.

Employment permits are usually issued for an initial two years, and are subsequently renewable every three years. Retirement permits are only issued for one year and have to be renewed annually, with evidence being provided that you continue to have sufficient finance to support yourself and any dependents.

Citizenship

To become a Cypriot citizen you have to be over 18 years old, have lived in Cyprus legally for at least 7 years, and have lived there continuously for at least one year prior to application. The documents required for the naturalisation application process include copies of your birth certificate and passport, a character certificate and two photographs. Applicants are also required to post in a Cypriot newspaper for two consecutive days their intention to apply for naturalisation.

Dependants

Dependants of foreign nationals working in Cyprus are also required to register with the Department of the Population and Migration Archive or with an office of the Aliens and Migration Service, showing evidence of their relationship to the employees, such as a marriage or birth certificate. The employee is also likely to be asked to provide evidence of adequate funds to support their dependants while in Cyprus.

Currency & Cost of Living

The official currency of the Republic of Cyprus is the Cyprus Pound, which is made up of 100 cents. Bank notes in the Republic are available in denominations of CYGBP20, CYGBP10, CYGBP5 and CYGBP1, while coins come in denominations of 1 cent, 2 cents, 5 cents, 10 cents, 20 cents and 50 cents. The Cyprus Pound is not traded internationally. In November 2005 CYPGBP1 was equivalent to US\$2.04, GBP1.17 and 1.74 Euros. The currency of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus is the Turkish lira.

There are major differences in the cost of living between the Republic of Cyprus (south) and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (north). The Republic of Cyprus is a relatively expensive expatriate location, with some expats complaining that virtually everything is very expensive, even compared with the US and the UK. However, local fruit, vegetables and other foodstuffs can be bought cheaply in season and if you have a modest lifestyle it is possible to live at low cost in Cyprus. For a meal in a restaurant or taverna with local wine you can expect to pay around CYGBP10 per person.

The cost of living in Northern Cyprus is very low, although gradually rising due to the influx of tourists and expatriate residents. Most things here are still very cheap to buy, with the exception of some imported foods and alcohol, cars and electrical goods. Foodstuffs are around half or less of their average prices in the UK. Property offers particularly good value for money in Northern Cyprus, with apartments starting at the equivalent of around GBP35,000 and 2 to 3 bedrooms villas with shared pools for around GBP100,000.

A 10% service charge is included on restaurant and hotel bills throughout the island. Tipping is not necessary, but it is customary to give taxi-drivers, porters etc. a small tip.

Foreign Currency - how to secure a favourable exchange rate

When emigrating, coming home or simply moving money around the world, making sure you secure a favourable exchange rate is one of the most important things you can do. An extra few minutes or so spent researching your options could save you thousands of pounds.

There are three simple ways in which you can save money:

1) Use a Currency broker. Currency brokers will generally provide superior exchange rates to the high street banks. The currency brokers have access to the interbank rate and do not have the high costs that the banks have. This means that they can usually offer better exchange rates.

2) Use a free Market Watch/Order Service: This allows you to tell your currency broker your target or budget exchange rate and they will ring you if that exchange rate level is reached. As the rate moves every few seconds, currency brokers can act as your eyes and ears on the market.

For example, you might ask your currency broker to ring you if they could offer you a Sterling Dollar rate of 1.85 for the date in the future that you want to move the funds.

3) Consider fixing the exchange rate in advance using a Forward Contract. If you know you need to convert/move funds in the future but don't yet have the money you can reserve a rate in advance using a Forward Contract. During this period, you are exposed to exchange rate movements and therefore, a forward contract is ideal if, for example, you have agreed to buy a house and want to fix the rate now but will not be making payment for a couple of months.

A forward contract is when you fix an exchange rate for a pre-agreed date in the future. You can fix a forward exchange rate for any period from 1 week up to 1 year in advance. There's no cost for a forward contract and no payment is made until the settlement date, except for a small

deposit of 2% to 10% depending on how far ahead you would like to fix the rate.

A "forward contract" is fixed at the "forward rate" which usually differs slightly from the "spot rate" (the rate for immediate transfer). The difference between the 2 rates is the "forward points". The Sterling Euro forward points, for example, are a straight arithmetic calculation of the difference in the interest rates between the UK and the Euro-zone. When UK interest rates are higher than Euro rates, the rate will go down slightly as you reserve further into the future. If UK rates were to fall below Euro rates, the rate would go up for a forward contract. This is most easily explained with 2 examples.

1) At the end of June 2005, UK interest rates were 4.75% and European rates were 2%. i.e. a difference of 2.75%. You could have fixed an immediate deal with a currency broker at 1.50. If you wanted to book a 1-year forward contract, i.e. fix the exchange rate for 24th June 2006, they would have reduced the exchange rate by approximately 2.75% (i.e. around 1.4588). Although the exchange rate appears worse, you can keep your pounds on deposit in the UK at 4.75% for a year whereas if you had transferred them to Europe immediately you would only receive 2% interest (or less). If you factor back in the extra interest you would be receiving in the UK, you are still converting at an effective rate of 1.50.

2) If you were buying in France, had signed the *Compromis* at the end of June 2005 and were due to pay the notaire a month later, you could have fixed a rate with a currency broker for the end of July at 1.4950. Although the rate could have gone up from here and you would still have converted at 1.4950, you would have been protected from the rate falling. In fact by the end of July 2005, the rate had fallen to 1.4350. On a €295,000 property the forward contract would have meant you paid £197,324.41. If you had waited and converted at the end of July, you would have paid £206,293.71 - almost £9,000 more!

Expat Focus is pleased to offer the services of one of the UK's leading foreign exchange providers (regulated by the UK Government's HM Customs & Excise) to expats worldwide. If you need advice, or would like to request a free, no-obligation quote, please use our enquiry form at <http://www.expatsfocus.com/expat-foreign-exchange-advice>

Banking

The Republic of Cyprus has a well developed banking system which is modelled on the British banking system. The Central Bank of Cyprus has responsibility for monetary and credit policy. In addition there are nine commercial banks and three specialist financial institutions. A number of foreign banks also have branches in Cyprus, including HSBC which now has branches in the north as well as the south of the island. The Bank of Cyprus, Laiki Bank and Hellenic Bank are the largest three commercial banks in Cyprus, with branches throughout the Republic.

Banking hours in the Republic of Cyprus are Monday to Friday from 8.15 a.m. to 12.30 p.m., with some banks in tourist areas also opening in the afternoons. The banking system is sophisticated and well-equipped with modern technology. It is relatively easy to transfer salaries, pensions and income from abroad into Cyprus.

Various Turkish and Turkish Cypriot banks operate in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. These are generally open from Monday to Friday between 8.00 a.m. and 12 noon and between 2.00 p.m. and 4.00 p.m.

Traveller's cheques and credit cards are generally acceptable in hotels, restaurants and larger shops in both the south and the north of the island.

Anyone resident in Cyprus can open a local bank account on providing evidence of their identity and any other documentation required by the specific bank. All banks are required by law to monitor overseas transactions and remittances to prevent money laundering, and there are limits on deposits of foreign currency within a calendar year without the prior approval of the Central Bank. Anyone entering or leaving Cyprus with 12,500 Euros or more must declare this to customs.

Taxation

Once you have obtained a Residence permit, you should register at the local income tax office as a Cyprus taxpayer. Anyone who lives in Cyprus for more than 183 days in the financial year is required to pay tax on any income generated in Cyprus or from overseas.

There are two separate tax schemes, one for employed people and the other for retirees. The progressive tax rates for working taxpayers are between 0% (for income of up to CYGBP10,000) and 30% (for income of CYGBP20,000 or more). Retired people benefit from very favourable tax rates, with a maximum of 5% on any income of CYGBP2,000 or more. In order to qualify for this, however, retired people are not allowed to undertake any paid employment.

Cyprus has double taxation agreements with many countries, including the UK.

No income tax is payable in Cyprus on other sources of income, including bank interest and dividends from shares, although they do incur a Cyprus Defence Levy tax of between 10% and 15% depending on the type of income.

Capital Gains Tax of 20% is payable on the sale of immovable property in Cyprus. No capital gains tax is payable on gains from investments. There is no longer any inheritance tax payable in Cyprus.

VAT at a rate of 10% used to be included in the price of all goods and services, except for certain items such as food, medicines and children's clothes and shoes. However, the VAT rate rose to 15% on many items when Cyprus joined the EU.

Insurance

If you need insurance advice, or would like to request a free, no-obligation quote, please use our enquiry form at <http://www.expatsfocus.com/expat-insurance-advice>

Healthcare & Medical Treatment

Cyprus has a good standard of health in both the south and the north of the country, and a very low rate of epidemic or infectious diseases throughout the island. No vaccinations are required for people entering Cyprus.

The Medical and Public Health Services department continually monitors the safety of local food and water supplies.

Healthcare in Cyprus is provided through the private and public sector. There are Government general hospitals in all the main cities, as well as a network of smaller hospitals, clinics and dispensaries throughout the country. There is also a large private health sector in urban areas, dominated by many individual doctors in private practice.

The standard of basic healthcare is good, with many doctors and dentists having trained overseas, but expats usually return to their home countries if they require major surgery or more sophisticated medical care. The National Health System in Cyprus provides free health care at the point of delivery for everyone, and free or discounted care for Cypriots on low incomes. Emergency treatment is provided free of charge to everyone, including foreign nationals, at the accident and emergency departments of Government hospitals, but any subsequent in-patient care must be paid for by those who do not qualify for free medical treatment.

Almost all brands of manufactured medicines are available in Cyprus, and pharmacies sell many prescription drugs over the counter.

Added March 2007 by Freddy:

Since the Republic of Cyprus joined the EU many things have changed allied to expats, not least medical care. British OAP's who are permanently resident on-island have the opportunity to claim free care using the E121. Also, for those who are permanent residents and retired, but NOT OAP's, they can claim free/partly free treatment using the E106. Entitlement to the E106 or E121 applies to those expats who are paying local Cypriot Tax. Queries must be directed to the Non-Resident Centre in Nottingham; all documentation must be 'totally completed' by their office, otherwise it will NOT be accepted by any Cypriot Medical Institution.

Social Security

The Republic of Cyprus has a comprehensive social security scheme, which is compulsory for everyone who is working in Cyprus as an employee or as a self-employed person.

The scheme covers sickness, maternity, disability and unemployment benefits, retirement pensions and an annual paid vacation fund.

Employees are required to contribute 16.6% of their earnings, and the self-employed 15.6% of their earnings to the social security fund. However, these contributions are split between the insured employee, their employer and the state in the case of employees, and between the insured and the state in the case of self-employed people.

Employment

It can be difficult for foreign nationals to be granted a permit to work in Cyprus, unless they are employed by a foreign company based there, or have specialist skills or qualifications such as teaching or nursing. Employment permits are only granted if no suitably qualified Cypriots are available. It is also necessary to be able to speak Greek to work in the Republic of Cyprus, or Turkish to work in the TRNC. Average wages are quite low, especially in the TRNC.

Many jobs in Cyprus are never advertised as the country is very family-oriented and most locals obtain employment through personal contacts. Foreign nationals may be able to find jobs through the advertisements in the English language newspapers, the Cyprus Mail and The Cyprus Weekly News, or through private employment agencies, some of which

specialise in particular sectors, such as hotels and catering, or technical professions.

EU citizens are also eligible to register with one of the Public Employment Service's District Labour Offices, submitting their passport, ID or alien's registration document and copies of educational certificates. The Public Employment Service will help to arrange interviews for jobs in Cyprus, but the arrangement will be terminated if the jobseeker refuses to attend an interview or turns down a job offer for no good reason.

Once a job offer has been made, the employer will need to apply to the Ministry of the Interior for an employment permit. A statement of recruitment will also be issued, setting out the details and duration of the post, and this must be stamped by the Department of Labour of the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance.

Renting Property

There is a wide variety of different types of accommodation to rent in Cyprus, including luxury villas with pools, modern apartments and houses with small gardens. Most real estate agents in Cyprus also operate as property rental agents. Many rental properties are furnished, often including satellite TV and stereos, while air-conditioning and heating usually come as standard. Utility bills are not usually covered by the rent and are payable by the tenant.

Typical monthly rental prices for property in Cyprus (north and south included), in GBP are:

1 bed flat GBP 454
2 bed flat GBP 927
2 bed house GBP 1039
3 bed flat GBP 834
3 bed house GBP 1949
4 bed house GBP 2834

(source: www.findaproperty.com)

Rental prices are generally cheaper in Northern Cyprus. Here, you can rent a modern air-conditioned villa with 2-3 bedrooms and use of a communal pool for around GBP500 per month upwards, or a more basic apartment for only GBP250 per month upwards.

Buying Property

Non-Cypriot nationals are allowed to buy a single property (or land to build a property) in Cyprus, so long as the land on which the property is located does not exceed 4,000 square metres in size.

Typical property prices, in (GB)GBP, are as follows, although it should be noted that prices are significantly cheaper in Northern Cyprus than in the south:

1 bed flat GBP60,503
2 bed flat GBP84,818
2 bed house GBP123,567
3 bed flat GBP101,397
3 bed house GBP176,799
4 bed house GBP270,061

(source: www.findaproperty.com).

Finance may be available from local and international banks, usually for up to 70% of the value of the property.

The procedure for buying property in Cyprus is as follows:

- Select a suitable property, agree a price with the owner (via the real estate agent if used) and pay a reservation fee via your solicitor.
- Solicitor draws up the contract.
- The contract is signed and a further deposit or the full outstanding amount is paid.
- Within 30 days of signing the contract, pay stamp duty of 1.5% per CYGBP1000, up to the value of CYGBP100,000, and 2% per CYGBP1000 on any amount above that, and property tax which is typically around CYGBP4,000 on a property costing CYGBP100,000.
- Once the contract is signed, solicitor applies to the Council of Ministers for approval for the title deeds to be transferred into your name.

The application to the Council of Ministers is a formality, as applications are seldom refused. The process may take many months, but there are no restrictions on taking ownership and living in the property while the application is being processed. The application to the Council of Ministers should include a bank reference, character reference, property purchase contract, documentation showing evidence of adequate funds to live in Cyprus, and a copy of your passport.

There is mixed advice on whether it is safe to buy land or property in Northern Cyprus. The region is currently being heavily promoted as a location for property investors and expatriates alike, with property here among the cheapest in the Mediterranean region. However, some potential buyers have been concerned by the recent case in which an expatriate couple were ordered by law to demolish their villa as it was built illegally on land owned by Greek Cypriots.

If considering buying property or land in Northern Cyprus, you might wish to ensure that it is covered by a title deed belonging to a Turkish Cypriot or foreign owner pre 1974, which will be recognised in international law. Many new properties are built on land which was nationalised after 1974, and these are guaranteed by the TRNC government.

Education & Schools

Education is compulsory for children from the age of 4 years and 8 months in the Republic of Cyprus. There are state and private schools available, with some private schools teaching in English. For expatriates, there are also a number of private International Schools, including the American International School of Cyprus, Highgate Primary and Secondary schools and Falcon. Some schools cater specifically for the children of the UN personnel residing in Cyprus.

The Cyprus Government also has a policy of ensuring that the children of EU citizens can continue with their education while they live in Cyprus. Intensive Greek language classes are provided for them, so that they can attend state schools, and training is also provided for teachers to assist them in teaching children whose first language is not Greek.

In Cyprus, children attend compulsory pre-school education from the age of 4 to 5, primary education from 5 to 11 and secondary education from 11 to 18. Cyprus then offers the University of Cyprus (established in 1989), private colleges and schools and state training institutions such as the Higher Technical Institute, the Forestry College, the Higher Hotel Institute and more.

There are no international schools in Northern Cyprus, but at Sunny Lane private school (primary and secondary) teaching is in English and Turkish, and the programme of education closely follows the British curriculum.

Utilities (Electricity, Gas, Water)

Electricity = 240V 50Hz, 5 amp or 13 amp square three-pin British-style plugs.

Communal maintenance charges are usually payable monthly or quarterly in advance, and are on average around CYGBP150 to CYGBP300 per year.

Water and electricity are metered in Cyprus and the charges are payable to the respective authorities, usually on a monthly basis or every two months. These can be paid by direct debit from a Cypriot bank account. The cost of utilities is very low in Cyprus - around CYGBP200 per year is typical. Many properties have solar water heating systems. Cyprus has no piped gas, but bottled gas is widely available in supermarkets and other shops for a few pounds per bottle.

Household rubbish is collected regularly by the local authorities, at an average cost per household of around CYGBP50 per year.

Communications (Telephone, Post, Internet, TV)

CYTA is the major provider of telecommunication services in Cyprus. Phone calls are fairly cheap, with reduced rates for local and international calls during off peak hours. Non-Cypriots can apply for a landline or a mobile line by applying at a CYTA office with their passport and evidence of residence in Cyprus. Tenants will be required to pay a refundable deposit, although members of the armed forces are exempt from this. Bills are payable monthly by cash, cheque or direct debit.

Public telephones which accept coins or phonecards can be found in all towns and tourist areas and many villages.

Cyprus has a number of Internet Service Providers (ISPs), and ISDN/ADSL access is available. A typical monthly charge for ADSL is CYGBP23 per month, plus voice call charges.

The postal service to and from Cyprus is fairly reliable, but post being sent to north Cyprus must be addressed to 'Mersin-10, Turkey' and not 'Northern Cyprus'. Airmail letters take a few days to reach western European countries.

Ten daily and five weekly newspapers are published in Cyprus, two of which are in the English language - the Cyprus Mail and the Cyprus News (weekly). Many UK, other European and Arabic newspapers can be bought in Cyprus a day or two after publication.

There are state-run as well as private TV and radio stations, and services from Greece and Turkey are also broadcast across the island. Most of the state broadcasting is in Greek or Turkish. There are daily programmes in English on the Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation's Radio 2. Many commercial radio stations broadcast in English.

There is a military cable/satellite TV package available, as well as other satellite services showing CNN, BBC, SKY etc.

Added 01/03/06 by Cemal:

"There are many internet providers in northern Cyprus. One of which is Extend broadband, offering a connection of up to 2meg with various plans to suit demand and pocket. With a solid backbone and a fiber optic connection to Turkey they are the best of the bunch. Their coverage is only in the kyrenia area at the moment but I'm told they are expanding to cover lefkosa and famagusta. The service is run by an expat ex-forces logistics expert so I doubt you will find the standard "but this is Cyprus" answer when you have an issue to be resolved".

Driving & Transport

Driving is on the left in Cyprus. The maximum speed limit on motorways is 100 kph (60 mph) and on other roads 50 kph (30 mph), unless a different speed limit is indicated.

The use of seat-belts for front seat passengers is compulsory. Children under the age of 5 are not allowed to sit in the front passenger seat, and those under 10 can only sit in the front if a child's seat belt is used.

The drink driving regulations are strictly enforced in Cyprus, with on the spot fines. The alcohol limit in breath is 39 mg per 100 ml, and in blood 90 mg per 100 ml.

Roads are fairly well maintained in and between the main towns, and there are four-lane motorways connecting Nicosia with Limassol and Larnaca. Rural roads are still largely unsurfaced but are generally in fair condition.

The standard of driving is fairly poor, and minor accidents are common. Local drivers often fail to indicate when pulling out in front of you, and are reportedly reluctant to stop at red traffic lights. There tends to be heavy traffic congestion in the centre of towns during the morning and evening rush hours.

Short-term visitors to Cyprus can drive on their own national licence or on an international licence. They must take out insurance with a company authorised to conduct motor insurance business in Cyprus.

To obtain a Cypriot driving licence, foreign nationals must either pass the Cypriot driving test or surrender their own domestic licence in exchange for a Cypriot licence. The Cypriot driving test consists of a short theory test of 5-6 questions, and a practical test of around half an hour.

There is a good network of buses and mini-buses operating within and between all Cyprus' main towns, as well as

shared taxi services on the same routes, which are reasonably priced. Taxi fares for non-shared services can be expensive, and meters are not generally fitted, so it is important to agree a fare before setting off. There are no rail services in Cyprus.

Visitors are allowed to travel between the North and the South of the country.

Leisure & Entertainment

Cyprus has a large number of restaurants, clubs and bars, especially in the main tourist centres, and there is a particularly lively beach party scene. Sailing, diving and water-sports are becoming increasingly popular. There are a large number of sites of historical and cultural interest around the country.

Many sports and leisure facilities are provided at the UN base in Nicosia, and within the city there are also a number of cinemas and a bowling alley. For children, there are several waterparks and go-cart tracks. Inland, the mountains offer pleasant walks, and skiing in winter. Where there are expatriate communities, particularly in Northern Cyprus, a wide range of social and sports clubs have developed to suit all ages. The Republic of Cyprus has a number of 18-hole golf courses.

There is a wide range of restaurants available, serving Greek, Turkish, French, Italian, Chinese, Indian, Lebanese Arabic, Thai and Mexican food, as well as American fast food.

Retiring & Pensions

Cyprus offers tax advantages for retired expatriates, with a flat rate of 5% on any income over CYGBP2,000. Double taxation agreements exist between Cyprus and many other countries, and if covered by one of these agreements pensions and bank interest can be paid without being taxed in the country of origin.

The relatively low cost of living, especially in the north of the country, makes Cyprus a very attractive location for people with an overseas pension or other income.

Taking Your Pets

The Republic of Cyprus is now a member of the Pet Travel Scheme which allows pet carnivores (dogs, cats and ferrets) from any of the countries covered by the scheme to enter Cyprus without quarantine provided they meet specified anti-rabies, blood sampling and anti-worm/anti-tick hygiene requirements (note: UK pets can enter Cyprus on the Pet Travel Scheme without the need for a rabies blood test. However, they will not be allowed back into the UK without quarantine.)

Northern Cyprus is not a member of the EU and is not covered by the Pet Travel Scheme. In order to bring pets into Northern Cyprus you need to obtain an import permit from the North Cyprus Veterinary Service. Cats and dogs must have a health certificate signed by an official government officer in their home country, and must be quarantined for six months on arrival in Northern Cyprus, after being vaccinated against rabies and treated for echinococcus and ectoparasites. Certain breeds of dog cannot be brought into Northern Cyprus.

Added March 2007 by Mrs J Hall:

Your outline advice on taking pets to Cyprus seems clear and straightforward, BUT there is no mention of possible hazards for animals once they are there.

My stepdaughter recently took her two cats to Cyprus, where they were poisoned within a couple of weeks. If it's general practice for anyone to put down poison (to keep strays down?) I would like to make other people aware.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Expat websites

Expat Focus - www.expatsfocus.com

Expatriate news, information and community

Expatica - www.expatica.com

News and information for expats in Europe

IHT At Home Abroad - www.iht.com/pages/athome/index.php

Articles and information for expats from the International Herald Tribune

ACA (American Citizens Abroad) - www.aca.ch

A nonprofit nonpartisan association dedicated to serving and defending the interests of individual US citizens living worldwide

Australians Abroad - www.australiansabroad.com

Information for Australian expatriates

BritishExpat - www.britishexpat.com

News, humour and information for Brits worldwide

BritishExpats – www.britishexpats.com

Another website for British expats

EscapeArtist - www.escapeartist.com

A wide variety of articles and information for prospective expats

ExpatExchange - www.expatexchange.com

Articles, information and a weekly newsletter

Tales from a Small Planet - www.talesmag.com

Articles, information and message boards for expats

Expat Expert - www.expatexpert.com

The website of expat author Robin Pascoe, well written articles and a blog

Family Life Abroad - www.familylifeabroad.com

Articles about expat life from freelance writer Stephanie Olsen

Foreign Wives Club - www.foreignwivesclub.com

An online community by and for women in bicultural marriages

Southern Cross Group - www.southern-cross-group.org

An international volunteer-run and independently funded advocacy and support organisation for Australian expats

Embassies and consulates

UK embassies, high commissions and consulates -

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1007029395231>

U.S. embassies, consulates, and diplomatic missions -

<http://usembassy.state.gov/>

New Zealand embassies, high commissions and representative offices - www.nzembassy.com

Travel information

UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office - www.fco.gov.uk

Travel advice and security updates for British citizens

US Department of State - www.state.gov/travelandbusiness/

Information and advice for US citizens travelling abroad

Australian Government Travel Advisory and Consular Assistance

Service - www.smarttraveller.gov.au

Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada - www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca

Canadian government website for Canadians travelling abroad

SafeTravel.govt.nz - www.safetravel.govt.nz

New Zealand government website for New Zealanders travelling abroad

World Wise – www.suzylamplugh.org/worldwise

Travel safety guidance from The Suzy Lamplugh Trust

World Health Organization - www.who.int

The United Nations specialized agency for health, website contains detailed health information for countries worldwide

Employment

Monster - www.monsterboard.com

Job vacancies in over thirty countries

The European Job Mobility Portal (EURES) - ec.europa.eu/eures/

Job vacancies in 29 European countries, CVs from interested candidates, what you need to know about living and working abroad and more

Education

COBISec - www.cobisec.org

Council of International Schools - www.cois.org

European Council of International Schools (ECIS) - www.ecis.org

The International Schools Association - www.isaschools.org

International Schools, The Database (ISTD) - www.international-schools.com

International Schools Services (ISS) - www.iss.edu

International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) - www.ibo.org

The National Association of British Schools in Country (NABSS) - www.nabss.org

Pets

Pet Travel Scheme (PETS) -

www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/quarantine/pets/index.htm

Pet Travel Scheme information from the UK's Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)