

ESCAPE BUSY BEACHES & EXPLORE

news

LOCALIKE New York is a new travel planning service, offering suggestions for things to do in the Big Apple. They include Nap York — a club that has just opened and which includes a meditation studio, eco-friendly napping pods and a recharge lounge with healthy food.

The service also recommends Glamping on Governors Island — in the middle of New York Bay. You get there on a five-minute ferry ride. From May 1, Collective Retreats will set up luxury tents, wellness activities and live music. The Broken Shaker — a New York outpost of Miami's hit cocktail bar — opens at The Freehand hotel in the Flatiron District. It will have a solarium-style main room and wraparound terrace that can be used for yoga classes. See localike-newyork.com



CASTLE'S HOT SHOW

UNCOVER England's greatest forgotten legend at Warwick Castle this August.

Dragon Slayer is an explosive new evening show, telling the tale of Guy of Warwick as he battles the beasts to win the heart of Princess Felice. There are fire jousts, equestrian acrobatics and stunts.

The final man-versus-dragon battle comes to life through a projection and light show on the castle's walls and ends with real flames and pyrotechnics. Dragon Slayer premieres on August 3, with eight shows scheduled throughout summer. Tickets start from £15pp or from £75pp with a three-course meal in the Great Hall and other VIP experiences. See warwick-castle.com/dragon-slayer

news

INTREPID Travel has just launched six new tours for solo parents and their children which don't include any supplements. Last year 16 per cent of Intrepid family bookings were single parents with their kids and the firm says demand is rising. They have designed trips in Costa Rica, Thailand, Northern India, Egypt, Vietnam and Morocco. The 15-day Costa Rica itinerary (from £2,235pp) includes a range of activities including white water rafting, horse riding, hiking to waterfalls and ziplines. You'll also glide through the waterways of Tortuguero National Park to find monkeys and turtles. See intrepidtravel.com/uk/theme/family



SHIP RAISES THE BAR

MARELLA Explorer 2 will be the first ship in the Marella Cruises fleet exclusively for adults. It will double the size of The Veranda — the premium sunbathing spot — and have 907 cabins, nearly 40 per cent with balconies.

It will also be all-inclusive as all the ships in the fleet change over to include food, drink and tips in the price. From May 2019 it will sail from Naples to the likes of Venice, Rome and Dubrovnik.

The Marella Explorer 2 will feature Kora La, Snack Shack and Surf and Turf. The new ship will also include bars Aperitif and Squid and Anchor.

A Champneys Spa will also be included, offering a variety of treatments. See tui.co.uk/cruise/

bargain

FANCY a week in Spain in a 4* hotel for less than £250? Love Holidays have room-only at the Mainare Playa Hotel in Fuengirola leaving Prestwick on April 25 from £241pp. Or head to the Canaries with a week B&B at the 5* Hotel Volcan Lanzarote in Playa Blanca from £483pp, leaving Edinburgh on May 7. In Greece you can get a week all-inclusive at the 4* Mareblue Beach Resort in Kassiopi, Corfu, from £430pp, leaving Edinburgh on May 12. A week B&B at the 5* Movenpick Ibn Battuta Gate Hotel in Jebel Ali, Dubai, is from £690pp, leaving Glasgow on May 15. See loveholidays.com or call 0203 870 6844.



ONE VINE DAY... winery, Tochni, Evelees pool and our Sarah enjoying a coffee. Main pic, Casale Panayiotis Hotel

LEGEND has it the goddess Aphrodite was born in the sparkling seas around Cyprus.

But it's not just the Mediterranean island's coastline that's stunning enough for a deity devoted to beauty. Head inland and there's a green oasis of unspoilt nature and spectacular scenery. And it's the perfect location for anyone who wants to escape the busy beach resorts and see the real Cyprus.

I spent three nights exploring the island's rural side and discovering traditional life away from the usual holiday hotspots. The Cypriot countryside is dotted with picturesque mountain villages, orchards filled with flowering fruit and nut trees and valleys shaded by towering cedars.

Forget high-rise holiday hotels, the best place to stay is in one of the old village houses which have been transformed into luxurious holiday accommodation.

Agrotourism — where visitors can experience rural life — is drawing in more and more holidaymakers who want to see another side of Cyprus away from its famous resorts. But rustic doesn't mean missing out on luxuries. Our first night was spent in the village of Tochni at the Evelees Country Houses.

The peaceful complex is made up of a group of self-catering apartments and studios around a swimming pool with incredible views.

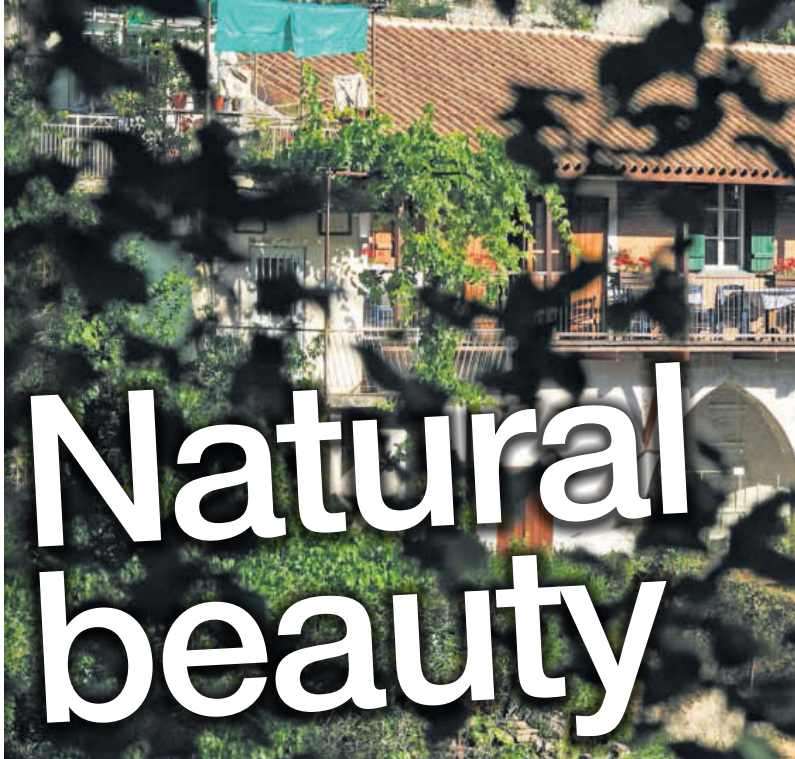
The charming rooms are a perfect mix of old and new with traditional beamed ceilings and wrought iron canopied beds, as well as bright modern kitchens kitted out without everything you could need.

One of the main attractions of any visit to Cyprus is the food, and even in a tiny village like Tochni you can taste a huge range of incredible local dishes.

We went to the Nostos tavern for a dinner of meze — a delicious selection of seemingly endless dishes of local specialities.

Something you'll find on almost every Cypriot menu is the local halloumi cheese and you can watch how it's made in the nearby village of Choirokittia.

There's also local spicy sausages you can only find on the



Natural beauty

GO: CYPRUS

STAYING THERE: Rooms at Filokypros Character Houses: Evelees Country House from approx £69 a night for a studio. See filokypros.com Rooms at Ambelikos Agrohôtel from approx £73 a night, add half-board from approx £13pp per day. See ambelikos.com Rooms at the Aphrodite Beach Hotel from approx £83 a night, add half-board from £14pp per day. See aphrodite-beachhotel.com **MORE INFO:** See visitcyprus.com



island as well as delicious souvlaki and addictive pitta bread with garlicky dips.

It's hard to choose a favourite but I loved the Cypriot moussaka made with thin slices of potato as well as slow-cooked lamb and aubergine.

Breakfast is an equally indulgent experience with Greek yoghurt so thick you can eat it with a fork, drizzled with honey and covered in fruit and nuts.

The best way to work up an appetite for such amazing

meals is to get out and discover the beautiful surroundings.

Some of the most dramatic and stunning scenery in Cyprus is found in the Troodos Mountains, which was where we headed next.

Winding roads take you up through the tree-covered hills with incredible views down the lush green valleys.

The village of Omodos is a favourite with visitors and I could have spent hours wandering its pretty streets. The

lanes are packed with shops selling local crafts including incredibly delicate handmade lace.

The village is most famous for a special type of bread, baked with yeast made from chickpeas, called arkatena. It's created at George's bakery, a shop packed with edible treasures like shoushoukos, a sweet made of nuts and grape juice, as well as shelves stacked high with their loaves and rolls.

After tasting the warm bread straight out of the oven I could see why people travelled from miles around to try it.

Higher up in the mountains is the village of Kalopanayiotis, home to the luxurious Casale Panayiotis hotel and Myrianthoussa Spa.

The village's future had once looked bleak as residents were forced to leave to find work in cities. But it was transformed by a huge restoration project to create the hotel — made up of 41 guest rooms spread across