

It's Saturday!

# TRAVEL



OLD TOWN Paphos, Cyprus.

## Town like open-air museum

by Katie Hodge

FROM the moment I touched down in southern Cyprus, I was whisked into another realm.

Legend has it that Aphrodite, Greek goddess of beauty and love, was born on this Mediterranean island and, so the story goes, her continuing presence brings unremitting sunshine. It's not hard to believe.

On arrival, the first thing to hit me was the golden glow and blissful warmth which drew me through the airport throng.

I was staying in a junior suite at The Amathus, a hotel perched on the seafloor, and a stone's throw from the centre of old-town Paphos.

My room was palatial, with beautiful marble bathroom, minimalist Manhattan-style decor and a private, floodlit plunge-pool.

A welcoming bottle of champagne set the tone, and a sophisticated bunch of flowers brought some Cypriot warmth to the room, as did a colourful platter of canapes: a hint of indulgences to come.

I spent my first afternoon lazing by the pool along with a few of my fellow guests.

Paphos has a lot to offer, and whether you are there to bask in the sunshine or explore an island steeped in myth and tradition, you will want to venture out.

I began my days like any self-respecting goddess: indulgently. Breakfast on the sun-drenched terrace was, predictably, a feast from the heavens.

But gods must concern themselves with higher matters, and leaving gastronomic delights behind me, I made my way deeper into the ancient world.

Unesco has recently added the whole town of Paphos to its World Heritage list, and not without reason.

In what feels like an open-air museum, the immortal verses of ancient Greek playwrights still resonate.

Once the island's capital, Paphos is now famous for the remains of the Roman Governor's palace, with its strikingly well-preserved mosaics of times long past.

Wandering around these ruins opens a door into another world, bringing history sharply into focus and leaving the explorer feeling humbled.

My meanderings took me deeper into the ancient world, and through the mass of cultures and religions which have left their variously-shaped footprints.

Cyprus, the third-largest Mediterranean island, is at the crossroads of three continents. The geographical position has, since antiquity, played an important part in its turbulent history, while the influences of Africa, Asia and Europe abound.

●Katie was a guest of Amathus Beach Hotel, Paphos, and Sovereign Holidays. Sovereign reservations: 0871 664 0227. ●www.sovereign.com

# Warm welcome awaits at cosy traditional pub

WHERE else but Ireland could you visit a pub and end up on the first night of your stay drinking Guinness and dancing the Irish jig with the owners?

No, I didn't quite out-dance Riverdance's Michael Flatley. But heck, it wasn't half bad for a first attempt, fuelled by a couple of pints of the dark stuff.

One thing had led to another and all of a sudden I found myself with a drink in hand, leaping up and down in a rather valiant attempt to put that guy with the perm and lightning legs to shame. But after three pints, it was my wife and friends we were travelling with that I put to shame rather than the man himself! Oh well. I'll chalk it up to one of those holiday experiences.

We were booked in to Johnnie and Mags Hurley's An Seanachai restaurant and bar at Dungarven in Co. Waterford. To that, add their 12 holiday cottages, newly built within staggering distance of the pub.

We had arrived a couple of hours earlier but already felt at home.

It was cosy and homely, bordering on hotel-boutique chic.

And when you arrive, the Hurleys welcome you like one of the family rather than a paying guest. Both exude a gentle calm that seems to have seeped into every corner of the place.

Even the pub regulars — which you

IRELAND boasts one of the best-oiled tourist machines in the world, but there is more to the Emerald Isle than just hype and top notch marketing. As the new Swansea-Cork ferry was unveiled this week ahead of its first sailings next March, PETER SLEE has been finding out what treasures lie ahead for visitors . . .

can't help tripping over wherever you turn such is the popularity of the place — seem to have sweet natured personalities.

The two-and-a-half hour car journey to Dungarven from Rosslare had been a delight, with breathtakingly rugged scenery on

either side of the road. Then, finally, we arrived at An Seanachai. Each cottage grouped around an outdoor courtyard just 25 metres or so from the thatched pub itself. It couldn't have looked more Irish had it tried.

Dinner at the early 19th Century pub, beautifully cooked by Mags, was local fish, seared scallops, monkfish, lamb or steak, with her home-baked soda bread. We ate sitting in front of a roaring, giant log and turf fire in what was once the property's original kitchen. The home-cooked seafood chowder we started with was sensational. Tired and content, we drifted off to bed, impatient for another day to explore this magic country — fishing, hill walking, golf or pony-trekking, or a boat trip.

But any decision-making was taken

overlooking the sea below. A perfect place to prop up the bar, and enjoy the craic with a pint of Guinness.

The Hurleys rescued it from near-derection to reopen it in 2006, maintaining its traditional look in the process. The result is pretty much picture postcard perfect. Our cottage, which could have slept up to six, was a bit like staying at a friend's home without the staggering distance of a really great local.

Of course, there are lots of cottages to rent in this part of Ireland. But I doubt there are too many like those at An Seanachai that have a host and hostess ready to get that extra mile to make your stay such a memorable one.

As we said our farewells to

choice really is agonising. Two nights B&B and one night dinner, for 130 euros.

In a word: Dreamy!

●The Local, Dungarven Town This pub is the quintessential Irish boozie.

Packed to the rafters the night we called in, at the rear, a band playing a jig while we contented ourselves propped up at the bar drinking the dark stuff!

A great evening to remember.

●The Dungarven Golf Triangle One for golfers this, but offering excellent value. For 80 euro, you can play three courses for the price of two.

This Monday to Friday offer gives

FROM Roman battle sites to helping European orphans, Swansea director of charity Love and Care for Moldova Mervyn Cartwright, recalls some of the highs and lows from his holidaying past.



TRADITIONAL SOUNDS Enjoying the craic in Ireland.

## 6 things to do in South East Ireland

●The Tannery Restaurant, (tel: 00 353 58 45420), 10 Quay Street, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford.

Not devoted exclusively to fish, but celebrated chef-patron Paul Flynn presents a menu brimming with gutsy, modern seafood dishes.

Highlights of a menu which concentrates on highest quality ingredients include seared tuna with a dressing of creme fraiche and lime, and fillet of John Dory with a morel and parma ham cream. Stylish dining room, too in a building which dates back to the 1800s.

We opted for their Early Bird menu

at around 28 euros a head. Two courses and excellent value. Also worth investigating is its adjoining cookery school set alongside its own walled garden.

Newly-opened, it offers short courses under the tutelage of the man himself.

●Barrons Bakery In CapPoquin. Nestled in a little house in this tiny village, this is one of the last bakeries in Ireland to still use a traditional Scotch brick oven producing a bread with a unique taste, flavour and crust.

Worth trying are its famous Blah

rolls with a cup of tea. If that doesn't appeal, a few euros will buy you anything from carrot cake to scones, seed and butter loaves or buttermilk browns.

All very quaint.

●Waterford Museum Of Treasures, The Granary, Merchants Quay, Waterford, Tel: 051 304 500. Open: seven days a week.

The award-winning museum tells the thousand-year story of Ireland's oldest city and celebrates the ethnic, cultural and religious diversity of all.

The superb historic and archaeological collection ranging from Viking Age and medieval to the 20th Century is enlivened by fun interactive displays and sound guide

in six languages.

●Cliff House Hotel, ArdMore. The hotel is one of Ireland's standout restaurant hotels, offering crisp Irish classicism and a welcoming, rustic warmth. Notable design elements include a grass-covered roof naturally crafted into the cliff on the east wing from which the Cliff House takes its name.

The Cliff House's bedrooms offer sweeping vistas over the Irish sea. The meal we enjoyed here will go down as one of our best ever, offering up great interpretations of traditional Irish dishes.

One of those menus packed with so many good things that making a final

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HOMELY ACCOMMODATION The An Seanachai bar and restaurant at Dungarven, Co. Waterford.

Knockmealdown mountains. Our various journeys saw us stop off at Lismore via the picturesque Blackwater Valley; Kilkenny and its 12th Century castle, the world famous Waterford crystal centre (though sadly these days a shadow of its former glory), the bustling town of Clonmel — home to the South Tipperary Arts Centre — a string of beaches along the south east coast as well as the simplicity of mile upon mile of the brown turf of bogland.

Centre stage though was Dungarven itself, a thriving market town and medieval port which we really liked for its unspoiled, unhurried charm. That and the An Seanachai which sits on its outskirts

Johnnie and Mags, we were left with a compelling thought. However great a place is, it is the efforts of people like them to share it with visitors that really make it even more special. It's their attention to detail and the small things that set this place apart from others. They are the glue that makes traditional venues like this keep their place on the landscape when they could so easily disappear into history.

A couple on a mission to spread the word: The personification of everything a family-run local restaurant, bar and holiday venue should be, creating a benchmark place to stay in the process.

Dungarven is lucky to have them on its side.

## FACTFILE

WHERE TO STAY Peter Slee stayed at the An Seanachai bar and restaurant at Dungarven, Co. Waterford.

HOW MUCH? Mini break rates: 299 euros to include five nights bed & breakfast; three dinners and three rounds of golf. Based on min. four people. Other activities can be substituted for golf. web: www.seanachai.ie

HOW TO GET THERE He travelled with low fares ferry company Irish Ferries between Pembroke/Rosslare. Fares start from £69 one way for car and driver. www.irishferries.com or 08717 300 400.

## STAR DEALS

UK/IRELAND

JERSEY Flyjersey.com (0845 230 3240) offers four nights' B&B at three-star Merton Hotel commencing Sundays and Mondays on selected dates from £245 until Oct 19, flights ex-Gatwick and various reg airports (at supp), car hire and airport parking.

LONDON www.expedia.co.uk (0871 226 0808) offers two nights' B&B at the Strand Palace Hotel from Oct 2 from £270, based on two sharing a superior club double room.

POWYS/SNOWDONIA Four-star Lake Vyrnwy Hotel (01691 870 692) offers three nights' midweek break (Sun-Thurs) for £405 (saving £145) per couple, through Sept/Oct, incl five-course dinners and cream teas on first two afternoons.

CYPRUS First Choice (0871 200 4455) offers seven nights' self-catering at four-star resort from £220 (four sharing), saving £175, incl flights ex-Luton Oct 7.

SOUTHERN SARDINIA Sardinian Places (0845 330 2050) offers seven nights' self-catering in two-bedroom villa in south of island from Oct 3 from £1,163, saving £100 on brochure price. Flights/car hire extra.

IBIZA Interhome (020 8780 6629) offers seven nights' self-catering in villa sleeping eight just outside resort of Saint Joan de Labritja with large garden, pool and barbecue area. Total rental is £1,711, or £213.87 per person at full capacity.

LONG-HAUL JORDAN RED SEA VJW (0845 166 7035) offers seven nights' B&B at five-star Movenpick Tala Bay, incl Monarch flights ex-Gatwick from £545 on some departures in Oct/Nov, and from £495 dep Dec 1 & 9. Optional excursions incl Petra sights/eing £79, Dead Sea £63, Wadi Rum £59 and Neptune Submarine £27. VJW fixes Jordanian visa for UK passport holders.

GAMBIA Gambia Experience (0845 330 2087) offers seven nights' B&B at four-star hotel from £379, ex-Gatwick Oct 13, incl transfers. Ten-night stays £519, 14 nights £519.

PERU Collette Worldwide (0800 804 8700)



RELAXING Views over Lake Vyrnwy.

SHORT BREAKS

FLORIDA Bon Voyage (0800 316 0194) offers five nights' room-only at four-star Doubletree Hotel Universal Studios from £599 on depts to Oct 31, incl frequent fear pass to experience Halloween Horror Nights at Universal Studios Orlando theme park. Not suitable for under-13s.

ROME BA Holidays (0844 493 0758) offers three nights' B&B through Oct from £245, incl flights ex-Gatwick.

SHORT-HAUL SUN

LISBON Opodo (0870 243 3406) offers seven nights' room-only at four-star Novotel Lisboa from £1,059 for family of four, with flights ex-Heathrow Oct 16.

NORTH CYPRUS Direct Traveller (0845 409 1490) offers seven nights' B&B at Colony Hotel, Kyrenia, from £567, ex-Birmingham Oct 28.

ALGARVE Holiday Jewels (01293 533 338) offers seven nights' self-catering at three-star complex near Albufeira for £175, incl flights ex-Gatwick Oct 5.

ZANTE First Choice (0871 200 4455)



HOLIDAY DESTINATION Lisbon.

offers seven nights' self-catering at three-star resort from £229 (four sharing), saving £175, ex-Newcastle Oct 11.

TURKEY Club Med Palmiye (08453 676 767) offers seven nights' all-inclusive from Oct 9 in four-star resort near Antalya from £735 per adult, and £524 per child, including flights.



ANCIENT SIGHTS Petra, Jordan.

offers 14-day escorted tour from Nov 3 via Lima, Sacred Valley of Incas, Machu Picchu, Cuzco, Uros Floating Islands, Lake Titicaca, Paracas from £2,440, saving £350.

ANTIGUA Tropical Sky (0870 907 9600) offers seven nights' all-inclusive at Halcyon Cove by Rex Resorts on selected Nov depts ex-Gatwick from £649, with resort transfers.

BALL Seasons in Style (01244 202 000) offers seven nights' B&B at Karma Kandara between Oct 1-Dec 19 from £2,025, saving up to £460, incl BA flights.



SCENIC Lake Titicaca, Peru.

●CARDIFF is to have a direct link to Florida next summer thanks to the Scottish low fare airline flyglobespan. The web-based airline plans to launch a scheduled service from next May. They will fly every Wednesday from Cardiff direct to Orlando Sanford. Flight only prices from Cardiff to Sanford start from £170 per person.



HOLIDAY Mervyn Cartwright.

What was your best holiday? It was a holiday in Italy in a place called Passigno sul Trasimeno, on Lake Trasimene, in the centre of the country. The weather was glorious, the views spectacular, the scent of the flowers heady and the hire car worked just fine. I was able to visit the site of a battle I wrote about in a magazine — Carthaginians against Romans in the Punic wars. My wife was able to view the elderly ladies

making lace on one of the islands in the lake called Isola Maggiore. My son was able to run round everywhere and we all had a fabulous time.

And the best hotel you stayed in? We rarely stay in hotels but it was very romantic when we stayed in a hotel in Florence close to the Il Duomo.

What was your worst holiday? We

once bought a caravan holiday in a charity raffle. It was a bargain. The place, Borth, was lovely, the facilities good and the caravan was a nice place. But the weather was appalling — it poured with rain for the entire week. Venturing outside was a definite no-no. We went a few places in the car but it seemed to be wet everywhere.

The dafest thing you bought on holiday? I think it was when I



BEST HOTEL Mervyn stayed in a romantic hotel in Florence.

bought the services of a man in Las Vegas who claimed to be able to tell people's year and

month of birth. I thought I was onto a sure winner — he would pay me double my fee if he failed.

But he got it right! I still don't know how he did it. It must have been a trick and I fell for it!

What was your most memorable holiday moment? Not exactly a holiday moment, but when I went to a school in Moldova where our charity had delivered computers. Staff were on holiday but they had all turned up to say thanks. We went to the staff room where they had laid out food and drink. We had a wonderful meal and their thanks were overwhelming but the best moment came when they sang. It made me cry! As I said to the director of the school, if people were to ask my why I do this, then this song would be my answer.