

# LEFKOŞA (Nicosia)

North Cyprus





# The Capital of Civilisations: LEFKOŞA

Within the Old City Walls of Lefkoşa (Nicosia) four civilizations have left their indelible footprints; the Lusignan, Venetian, Ottoman and British Periods can all be seen here, often within metres of one another and also within minutes of each other.

The overwhelming impression left by Lefkoşa is of a city from the Middle Ages. The city, which has witnessed the passing of several civilizations, auspicious events and great people, has succeeded in bringing the past into the present. Lefkoşa has played host to Lusignan royalty, noble Venetian merchants, and grand Ottoman families. The pride of Lefkoşa's great restored ancient buildings is the Büyük Han –The Great Khan. Set on two floors, the 68 room old travellers' khan now displays and sells traditional handicrafts of Cyprus. In the heart of Lefkoşa where Lusignan kings were crowned, is the St. Sophia Cathedral which was converted to a mosque after the conquest of Cyprus in 1571 after which it became known as the Selimiye Mosque. It was here that the conqueror of Cyprus, Lala Mustafa Pasha first performed the Friday prayers after the conquest. The Arabahmet district is the area where the Ottoman elites had their mansions whilst at Samanbahçe, the first ever attempt at social housing in Cyprus was carried out. Consisting of 72 buildings, Samanbahçe is a unique neighbourhood with very defined geometric narrow roads and units of one storey mud-brick houses with red tile roofs.

At the historical Sarayönü Square is the Venetian Column where the words, 'The people of this place see themselves not in terms of beauty and wealth but of uncorrupted belief', are inscribed in Latin.

This square was first called Konak Square then Sarayönü. At present it is called Atatürk Square. It has continued to be an important square since the Middle Ages. The Venetian column in the middle of the square, made up of grey granite, was brought from the ruins of Salamis to the courtyard of the Sarayönü Mosque as a symbol of the Venetian domination in the island. It was placed in its present place in 1915. On top of the 20 feet high column the British placed a copper globe to replace the lost St. Mark Lion (Venetian Lion). Around the column's base, coats of arms of the Venetian nobles are displayed. In the northern part of the square there is a fountain which was built during the Ottoman Period.

However, Lefkoşa isn't worth visiting for its historical treasures alone; it also has a wealth of cultural attractions, entertainment possibilities and natural attractions. In terms of biological diversity the banks of the Kanlıdere river, especially, provide a rich variety of flora. In fact, a survey of an area 12.5 kilometres in diameter, revealed 185 different plants belonging to 62 families. These also include four endemic species and sixteen rare plants. The most common tree found in Lefkoşa is the widely spread Eucalyptus tree. These were planted during the British Administration in order to drain the then widespread swamps in which malarial mosquitoes bred. Many gardens, too, display a multi-coloured and fragrant array of trees and flowers including bougainvillea, jasmine, date, orange and lemon and many others.



Ottoman – Lusignan House



Sarayönü/Atatürk Square

## The History of Lefkoşa

Prior to the founding of Lefkoşa there had been an Early Bronze Age (B.C.E. 2500) settlement to the south-west of the current city in the area around the Aghia Paraskevi and Aghia Omologia hills in a bend of the Pedhios (Kanlıdere) River. Archaeological excavations in this area have uncovered several graves and pieces of pottery. Lefkoşa has witnessed the passage of the Lusignans, Venetians, Ottomans and the British Periods and a great many artifacts of these civilizations and kingdoms, in addition to their architecture, have been passed down to us to attest to this rich culture and history.

In the 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E. south-west of today's Lefkoşa was the city-state known as Ledra or Ledrae, one of the twelve kingdoms of ancient Cyprus built by Achaeans after the end of the Trojan War. Remains of old Ledra today can be found in the Aghia Paraskevi hill in the south east of the city. At some time between B.C.E. 312-285 Leucus, or Lefkonas, son of the Egyptian King Ptolemy I moved the city to its current position and began to rebuild and extend it. Down through history Lefkoşa has been known by many names; - Ledra (Ledrae), Levkotheon, Kermia, Lefkon, Kallinikisis and Levkosia. The name by which foreigners know it today, Nicosia, is a corruption of 'Lefkosia' which, it is said, the Lusignans found difficult to pronounce. It was the Byzantines who first made Lefkoşa the capital of Cyprus. After the destruction of the then capital of Cyprus, Salamis by Arab raids in 647 A.D., the Byzantines moved the island's administrative seat to Lefkoşa, primarily for security reasons as the coastal towns frequently suffered from seaborne raids. Lefkoşa became the capital of the island around 965 A.D. and has remained thus ever since. Prior to this the Byzantines had different capitals; - first Paphos and then the new city of Constantia near Salamis. From the latter stages of the Byzantine Period when the city was first designated as the capital, Byzantine Kings, Knights Templar, Lusignan and Venetian nobles, Ottoman Governors and finally, the British Administration have all accepted Lefkoşa as the capital.

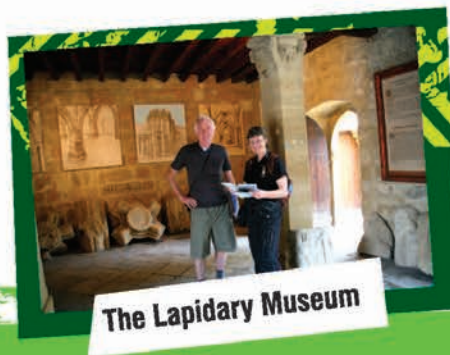
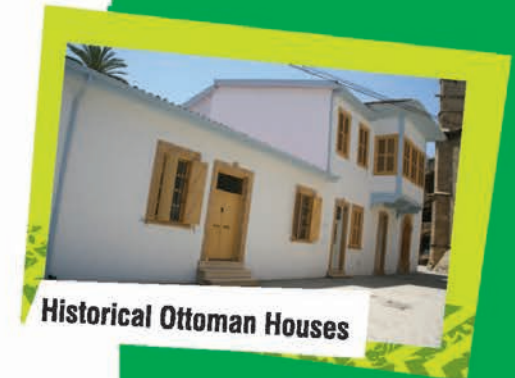
In Lefkoşa today, perhaps the most popular and important place to visit is the area known as 'Old Lefkoşa' that lies within the old city walls. The walls were begun in the Lusignan Period, but in 1567 Venetians built the new fortifications of Lefkoşa, 4.5 metres thick and which are well-preserved until today. The new walls took the shape of a star with eleven bastions. The design of the bastion is more suitable for artillery and better control for the defenders. The walls have three gates, to the north Proveditore (Girne - Kyrenia) Gate, to the west Domenico (Paphos) Gate and to the east Giuliano (Famagusta) Gate. The Pedhios (Kanlıdere) River used to flow through the Venetian walled city. In 1567 it was diverted into the newly built moat for strategic reasons, due to the expected Ottoman attack. The sole entry point to the historical walled city from the north, Girne Gate, now houses the Office of Tourism and Information. Just beyond it is the Mevlevi Tekke Museum built in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Now a museum, here the Whirling Dervishes, followers of mystic Sufism, provide performances of their unique homage to God.

They say the best way to get to know a city is on foot and it was most probably with Lefkoşa in mind that these words were first spoken. Every footstep in the old walled city reveals a pleasant or surprising aspect of its rich cultural fabric. Almost eight hundred years as the country's capital has left a host of sites that beg to be seen. The Girne Gate, the Mevlevi Tekke, Sarayönü Square and the Venetian Column, the Great Khan (Büyük Han) and the masterpiece of Gothic architecture, the Selimiye Mosque (the Cathedral of St. Sophia) all wait to startle and amaze the visitor to this most beautiful and enticing of capitals.



# Things to do in Lefkoşa

- Take a walk in the Old Walled City starting at the Girne Gate (Porta del Proveditore). Along the signposted route take in the Girne Gate, the Mevlevi Tekke, the Venetian Column, Arasta Street, the Great Khan, the Bedesten and the Selimiye Mosque.
- Get to know Cyprus history and culture at the Great Khan (Büyük Han), the most important Ottoman Period building in Lefkoşa. Now beautifully restored, it is a magnificent example of a 'han' - a travellers' khan, where the sleeping quarters and stables of history have been turned over to the artists and craftsmen of today's North Cyprus to exhibit traditional and modern Cyprus culture. But it's not only arts and crafts; you can also taste wonderful examples of traditional Cypriot cuisine here.
- The old Ottoman mansions of the Arabahmet neighbourhood with their traditional latticework bay windows (designed to let a woman lean out of the window without being seen by male neighbours or passersby) have been restored and one in particular, the Dervish Pasha Mansion, now houses the Ethnographic Museum. The carefully defined geometric narrow roads and red tile roofs of the low mud-brick houses at Samanbahçe, where Cyprus's the first ever attempt at social housing was carried out, provides both an enlightening and pleasant walk.
- Visit the largest, oldest and finest example of gothic architecture in Cyprus, the Lusignan Cathedral of St. Sophia where Lusignan kings were enthroned and which, since the Ottoman conquest of Cyprus in 1571, has been known as the Selimiye Mosque.
- Take the chance to simply visit, but better still, take part in some of the many activities which take place at various times of the year. In April there is the Yiğitler village Wild Artichoke (Gafgarit) Festival, in June the International TRNC Fair and in September you are welcome to attend the International North Cyprus Theatre Festival.



## Places to Visit in Lefkoşa

- Girne (Kyrenia) Gate, known in old times as the Porta Del Proveditore or the Governor's Gate and one of the three historic gateways to the old walled city
- The ancient Lefkoşa city walls
- The Mevlevi Tekke, home of Sufism in Cyprus, built in the 17th century and one of the Ottoman Period's most significant works
- See one of Lefkoşa's enduring symbols, the Venetian Column at Sarayönü (Atatürk Square)
- Visit the Great Khan (Büyük Han), which comprises 68 rooms and 10 shops, the most important Ottoman Period building in Lefkoşa, now restored and used by artists and craftsmen of North Cyprus to exhibit traditional and modern Cyprus culture
- The St. Sophia Cathedral (Selimiye Mosque), built by the Lusignans between 1208 and 1326; the finest example of French Gothic architecture in Cyprus
- The Bedesten (The Church of St. Nicholas)
- The Lapidary Museum
- The Arabahmet District
- The bow-windowed Ottoman mansions
- The Arabahmet Pasha Mosque
- The Bandabuliya (Municipal Market) and the Arasta Market
- The Armenian Church (St. Mary of Tartosa)
- The Büyük Hamam (Great Turkish Bath)
- The Gambler's Khan (Kumarcılar Hanı)



**Ottoman Coat of Arms  
Girne (Kyrenia) Gate**



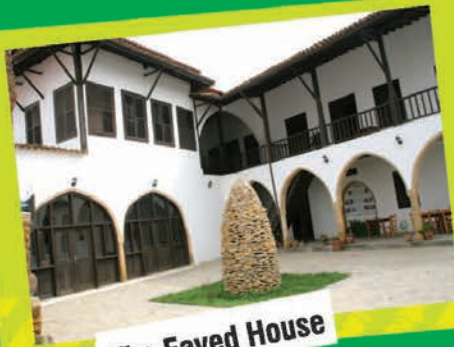
**The Arabahmet District**



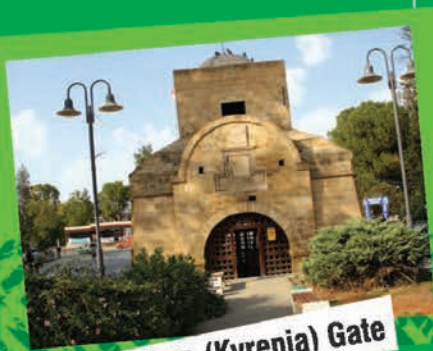
**The Arasta Market**



**The Church of St. Luke**



**The Eaved House**



**Girne (Kyrenia) Gate**

- British Colonial Period buildings
- The Samanbahçe District and houses
- The Cathedral of St. Catherine (Haydarpaşa Mosque)
- The Church of St. Luke (Ayios Lukas)
- The Eaved House
- The Ottoman - Lusignan House
- The 19<sup>th</sup> century Derviş Pasha Mansion, which now exhibits ethnographic works from recent history
- The Turunçlu (Fethiye) Mosque
- The İplik Pazarı Mosque, also known as the İplik Bazaar Mosque
- The Sarayönü Mosque
- The Museum of Barbarism

## Notes on the historical places

### **Girne (Kyrenia) Gate (Porta del Proveditore – The Governor's Gate)**

Girne Gate is one of the three gates in the Venetian wall which circles Old Lefkoşa and provides access to the city from the north. It is one of the city's primary entrance points. It takes its Italian name from the Venetian Governor and architect Francesco Barbaro. The domed room was added by the Ottomans during restoration work in 1821. The inscription on the north facing wall shows verses from the Koran. The south facing wall displays a marble plaque bearing the 'tughra'-coat-of-arms of Sultan Mahmut II and is dated from 1820/21.

## The Old City Walls

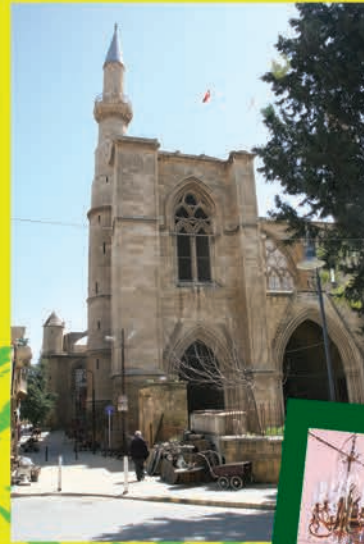
During the Renaissance era, the Venetians constructed great walls around cities threatened by the Ottoman Empire. Among the finest examples of these are the walled cities of Lefkoşa and Gazimağusa (Famagusta). In 1567 the Venetians began the construction of the new fortifications of Lefkoşa. The plan for the new walls was designed by the Venetian engineer, Gullio Savorgnano. Three miles in circumference, the new walls took the shape of a star with eleven bastions. The walls have three gates; to the north Girne Gate (Porta del Proveditore), to the west Paphos Gate (Porta Domenico), and to the east Famagusta Gate (Porta Guiliano). In order to construct the walls the Venetians demolished the old walls built by the Lusignans as well as other important buildings including the King's Palace, other private palaces and churches and monasteries of both Orthodox and Latin Christians. Noblemen of the time who contributed towards the construction, such as Rochas, Loredano and Barbaro, gave their names to the various bastions. Nonetheless, all these defensive efforts were in vain, for almost as soon as the construction of the walls was completed, Lefkoşa fell to the Ottomans.



## Selimiye Mosque (The Cathedral of St. Sophia)

The Cathedral of St. Sophia or, since the conquest in 1571, the Selimiye Mosque, is the largest and most splendid place of worship on the island of Cyprus and, at the same time, its most important work of gothic architecture. It is thought that the cathedral was constructed on the same spot as an earlier Byzantine church also known as St. Sophia. Construction was started in 1209 and on 5<sup>th</sup> August 1326 it was consecrated for worship. As the primary church in Cyprus it was the place where the coronation ceremonies of the Lusignan kings were performed. The cathedral was designed and built by French architects and masons and represents the finest example of the Frankish gothic style. The stone carving on the east door is particularly exceptional.

When the Ottomans conquered Lefkoşa on 9<sup>th</sup> September 1570 the cathedral had fallen into such disrepair that it was unusable as a place of worship. The Ottomans added a *mihrap*, (niche in a mosque wall indicating the direction of Mecca), a pulpit and a lectern and, calling it Ayasofya, converted it for use as a mosque. The first Friday prayer in Lefkoşa after the conquest occurred six days later on 15<sup>th</sup> September in this newly created mosque. The 49 metre tall minarets were added by order of Sultan Selim II dated 1<sup>st</sup> May 1572.



## Bedesten (The Church of St. Nicholas)

The Bedesten was originally a small Byzantine church built in the 6<sup>th</sup> century upon whose ruins the Lusignans constructed a larger church in the gothic style in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. During the years of Venetian rule it became the Church of the Orthodox Metropolitan and was known as the Church of St. Nicholas. The masonry on its northern entrance resembles the masonry on the west entrance of St Sophia Cathedral. In the early years of the Ottoman Period the church was dedicated to the holy Muslim cities of Medina and Mecca and was used as a textile market. Afterwards it was used variously as a grain store, flour market, and as a general market and storage, until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when it was abandoned and basically left to disintegrate. Recent years have seen extensive renovation funded by the EU and the TRNC's EVKAF religious foundation.



## The Lapidary Museum

Situated to the east of the Selimiye Mosque, the Lapidary Museum is housed in a Venetian style stone- built building constructed in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. It is believed that when built, it was in the courtyard of St Sophia Cathedral, and was used as guesthouse for pilgrims and travellers. During British colonial rule, many stone works from the mediaeval period were housed in this building. The collection was consequently catalogued and organized and turned into a Lapidary Museum though named, at that time, after its founder and director as the Jeffrey Museum. A unique carved stone window, in the Gothic style, now stands opposite the main entrance to the museum. This was moved from the Lusignan Palace in Sarayönü Square, when the British demolished it in 1901. Sadly, this is the only trace remaining of this Lusignan Palace. The museum was refurbished and opened to visitors in 2003. Other notable features in the museum are a sarcophagus belonging to the Dampierre family, the tombstone of Adam of Antioch, Marshall of Cyprus dated from the 13<sup>th</sup> century and a marble lion of St Mark, the symbol of the Venetians.



# Lefkoşa (Nicosia) District Map





### City Centre

The Old City Walls, Ledra Palace Border Crossing, Lokmacı Border Crossing, Girne Gate, the Mevlevi Tekke, Bedesten, Selimiye Mosque (The Cathedral of St. Sophia), the Samanbahçe District, the Arabahmet Pasha Mosque, the Lapidary Museum, The Great Khan (Büyük Han), Sarayönü Square, the Derviş Pasha Mansion, etc...

## The Great Khan (Büyük Han)

From the historical and architectural perspective, the Great Khan (Büyük Han) is not only one of Lefkoşa's most important Ottoman-Turkish works but also the whole of Cyprus's. An informative Ottoman document relating to the construction of the inn exists. According to the record, an imperial order dated 5<sup>th</sup> January 1577 was sent to the treasurer of Cyprus, and the judges of Lefkoşa and Gülnar that provides us with some information concerning shops which had been built by Sultan Selim as a part of his endowment that would financially support the Selimiye Mosque and that they had been demolished on the order of the Governor of the island and in their place a caravanserai or khan was built where the shops had stood. It was required that the caravanserai had to be purchased in the Sultan's name if the income was adequate but otherwise, the caravanserai had to be pulled down and his shops must be reconstructed exactly according to the old plan.

The khan is situated at the south western corner of the Asmaaltı Square, the traditional trading hub of Lefkoşa. It is the largest caravanserai in the whole of Cyprus. The khan is similar to other khans found in many Anatolian cities, and the Great Khan bears an especially strong resemblance to the Koza (Cocoon) Khan in Bursa, which was built around 1490. The khan was originally called 'The New khan', and later 'Alanyalılar's Khan' but became known as the Great Khan as a result of the comparison in size between this khan and the Kumarcılar Khan built nearby in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The square planned, two storey Great Khan consists of 68 rooms which opened to the vaulted galleries surrounding a square plan inner courtyard and 10 shops which open to the outside of the khan. Originally the ground floor rooms were used as shops and stables whilst the upper rooms were sleeping quarters for the travelers and merchants who stayed here. In the centre of the courtyard there is an Ottoman Mesjid standing on marble piers, with a fountain beneath it. The Great Khan underwent extensive renovations in the late 1990s and early 2000s and is now fully restored and used by artists and craftsmen and women of North Cyprus to exhibit traditional and modern Cyprus culture.



## The Venetian Column and Sarayönü (Atatürk) Square

In the year 1550, during the Venetian Period, a black granite column was brought from the ruins of Salamis and erected in front of the Carmelite Church which then stood where the Sarayönü Mosque now stands. The column which was to stand as a symbol of Venetian authority, had the Lion of St. Mark, the symbol of the Venetians, placed atop it. During the Ottoman Period, the column was demolished and in 1915, while at war with the Ottoman Empire, the column was re-erected by the British. They replaced the lost St Mark Lion with a bronze orb, and decorated the plinth with the dates of the demolishing and re-erection; - 1570 and 1915. The column is approximately six metres high and around its base were six coats of arms of Venetian noble families; however, one of them is now missing. During Ottoman times Sarayönü Square was frequently used for military ceremonies and as military headquarters. Similarly its name also changed several times until in March 1943, it was renamed 'Atatürk Square'. During the Ottoman Period, as well, the houses surrounding the square began to take on classical Ottoman features of clay tiled roofs, courtyards, eaved windows and latticed bay windows. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century during the British Administration the Ottoman governor's mansion, originally a Lusignan/Venetian palace, was demolished and the impressive Law Courts were constructed in its place. Many other fine colonial period buildings were also constructed around this time including a post office, a police station and a number of banks in the square. There is an Ottoman fountain in the north of the square. South west of the fountain is a platform that was built to celebrate the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953. The British Governor of the time announced the coronation from this platform.



## Büyük Hamam (The Great Turkish Bath)

The Büyük Hamam (Great Turkish Bath) is situated on İrfan Bey Street and is constructed in the classical Ottoman style. It was built with the aim of providing income for the Lala Mustafa Pasha Pious Foundation. The Hamam is built on the ruins of a 14<sup>th</sup> century Lusignan church, St George de Poulains and that building was partly used in its construction. Only the entrance of the church remains, and the carved arched relief bears similarities to the porch of the Bedesten. The entrance door and rooms of the bath are 2-3 metres below ground level due to the raising of the surrounding road level over the years. The baths consist of a changing room, and warm and cool sections. Light is provided by the glass-covered holes on the bell-shaped cupola.



## Kumarcılar Hanı(The Gamblers' Khan)

The Kumarcılar Hanı, also called the Gambler's Khan, is a cut stone asymmetrical building, quite small in dimension which lies to the north of Asmaaltı Square. It is one of only two surviving Ottoman khan in Cyprus. It is thought to have been constructed in the first quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century by Fuat Tüccarcıbaşı, brother of the proprietor of the Zaman newspaper, Derviş Pasha. Whilst it bears the typical features of the Ottoman city trading khans, it also carries indelible traces of the Venetian Period due to it having made use of the previous structure that existed on the site, perhaps the ruins of a monastery. Although it is known as the Gamblers' Khan, in the 1930 it became known as the 'Travelling Minstrels Khan' due to the fact that musicians who played at weddings and circumcision ceremonies taking place in Asmaaltı Square would wait for their customers there. As with this type of inn elsewhere, the upper floor was for sleeping quarters whilst the ground floor was for the stabling of animals and storage.



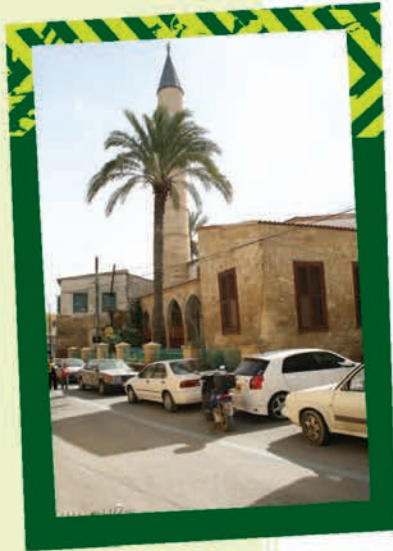
## The Derviş Pasha Mansion and Ethnographic Museum

The Derviş Pasha museum located within the old city walls in the historical Arabahmet area of Lefkoşa bears the characteristics of traditional Cypriot architecture. The owner was one of Lefkoşa's famed wealthy inhabitants, Tüccarcıbaşı Hadji Derviş Efendi, the editor of Zaman, the first Turkish newspaper in Cyprus which was published between the 25<sup>th</sup> December 1891 and 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1900. Just when the building was about to fall into total disrepair it was taken over by the state and, between 1978 and 1988, it was fully restored and designated as an ethnographic museum. Some of the rooms display items which show everyday Cypriot life, while others show how rooms of the day such as the main room, bridal room and dining hall, were decorated, furnished and used. The original date of construction is not known for certain, although a keystone above the entrance door on the street is dated as '1216 H(icri) which is the Islamic dating for the year 1801/02. The main room, which was a later addition, has a decorated ceiling which bears the date 1869. The mansion is built on two floors, the first in stone and the second in mud brick. The main room, which has an eaved extension overhanging the road, is constructed in the 'Baghdadi' style. The ground floor rooms open onto a colonnaded gallery surrounding the inner garden. Life for the inhabitants of the mansion generally took place on the upper floor, the lower floor being for storage and servants' quarters. The main room is particularly interesting in terms of its size, decoration, ceiling and its eaved roof.



## The Library of Sultan Mahmut II

Located near the east entrance of the Selimiye Mosque, opposite the Aziziye Gate and constructed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Library of Sultan Mahmut II is a fine example of classical Ottoman architecture, with its twin domed arcade and large domed room. It is the first official 'State Library' founded with government-citizen cooperation. Sultan Mahmut II (1808-1839) decreed that the Cyprus 'Vali' (Governor) of the time, Ali Ruhi Efendi should construct a library on a vacant plot to the east of the Selimiye Mosque and this was carried out in 1829. The interior walls of the library room are covered by a gold-coloured laudatory poem by the Cypriot poet Hoca Hilmi Efendi praising Sultan Mahmut for his efforts at modernising and emphasising the importance of the library to Cyprus. The poem was inscribed by the calligrapher Feyzi Dede on 48 separate wooden panels. Upon completion the building passed to the Evkaf (Pious Foundation) administration as a State Library. It is recorded that, of the 200 volumes of work that Sultan Mahmut II bestowed upon the library, some belonged to his father Abdülhamit I and some to other notable personages of the time. The books are mainly of religious subjects, and written in Arabic, Turkish and Persian. These extremely valuable manuscripts have been taken to the National Archives in Girne for preservation and research purposes.



## Turunçlu Mosque (Fethiye Mosque)

The Turunçlu Mosque, at the western end of Arasta Street, is in the İplik Pazan district and is constructed with cut stones. It was, in recent history, one of the mosques most frequented by the tradesmen of the nearby markets. The current mosque stands on the site of a previous masjid (small mosque) and above the doorway is an inscription detailing that the earlier mosque was demolished and the new one built by Seyit Mehmet Emin Agha, Ottoman Governor of Cyprus in 1825. In addition to the mosque, Mehmet Emin Agha also restored the Fethiye Children's School next to the mosque after which it was given the name 'Mekteb-i İrfan' or School of Enlightenment.

## Mevlevi Tekke and Museum

The Mevlevi Tekke is located immediately inside the Girne Gate. It is believed that the present mevlevihane is a continuation of previously established tekkes known as the Arabahmed Pasha and Ferhat Pasha Tekkes that were constructed in 1593. The current tekke was built on land donated by Emine Sultan Hatun in the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The Mevlevi order was founded by the Islamic mystic poet Celaleddin Rumi, known as Mevlana, in Konya in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The tekkes in Turkey were closed by decree in 1925, and the centre of the Mevlevi order moved from Konya to Aleppo in Syria. The British colonial administration on the island brought the next sheik for the Lefkoşa tekke from Aleppo, rather from Konya, but the death of Sheik Selim Dede of Damascus in 1954 ended an era in which the whirling dervishes had performed their sacred dance, the "sema", in the Mevlevihane. After remaining closed for a number of years, in 1963 it re-opened as 'The Turkish Cypriot Museum of Ethnography'. After extensive repairs, on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2002, the anniversary of Mevlana's passing, or 'union with the beloved' as death is known in the Sufi tradition, it became the Mevlana Museum. Now, every year on this anniversary, the "Şeb-i arûs" (Night of the Bride) ritual dance or 'sema' is performed. In the semahane- the auditorium where the sema is performed- is a *mihrab* (niche in a mosque wall indicating the direction of Mecca) and a wooden balcony where the musicians performed. Through the south west doorway of the semahane next to the mihrab one enters the chamber in which the tombs of 16 Mevlevi sheiks lie. This section which extends along Girne Street lies beneath six domes and the tombs therein are unmarked.



## The Cathedral of St. Catherine (the Haydarpasha/Aghas' Mosque)

The Haydarpasha Mosque was built in the gothic flamboyant style of southern France in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and is the finest example of this style in Cyprus. It is the most substantial Gothic monument in Lefkoşa after the Selimiye Mosque. Great buttresses which narrow as they rise flank its high and slender windows which are covered with geometric lattice stucco. The roofline is rimmed with gargoyles. The church has three entrances: the fine masonry of the gothic south entrance and the carvings of the Lusignan coats of arms on its frame are notable features. The west entrance is larger with motifs of roses and dragons carved on its lintel. The north entrance is comparatively plain with relief ornamentation in the pattern of a nude woman holding a fish, and dragon like effigies in relief. In the Ottoman Period a minaret, mihrap (niche in a mosque wall indicating the direction of Mecca), pulpit and screened loge for women were added and its name was changed alternatively to the Haydarpasha Mosque and then the Aghas' Mosque. The minaret in the south west corner of the mosque was the tallest minaret in Cyprus until 1931. However, as a result of a lightning strike it suffered damage and had to be demolished and another shorter one was constructed in its place, sadly in a style not in keeping with the original structure. In the 1950s it was used as a marriage and registration office. The mosque was restored between 1986 and 1991, and reopened as an exhibition gallery in 1994.



## Yenicami (The New Mosque)

The Yenicami or New Mosque is in the district of the same name. After the Ottoman conquest of Cyprus the 14<sup>th</sup> century gothic cathedral which stood here was changed into a mosque. It was used as a mosque until 1740 when, on the orders of Menteşzade Hacı İsmail Ağa, the first Ottoman chief Judge in Cyprus, the foundations were excavated in a hunt for hidden treasure, and this caused the mosque to collapse. A new mosque financed by Menteşzade was built just to the south west and this was the New Mosque. Very little of the original structure remains today and the original Ottoman minaret is in ruins. Above the arched door to the current mosque is a plaque dated 1316 H(icri) or 1899 in the western calendar. In the courtyard to the north of the mosque is a fine fountain. This had been demolished in 1970 but when the mosque was restored in 2003 it was reconstructed in its original form. Nearby, there are four old Turkish tombs belonging to the Menteşzade family and one belonging to an old Mufti of Cyprus, the poet Müftü Hilmi Efendi. The marble sarcophagus of Menteşzade Hacı İsmail Ağa himself, who was executed by the sultan for demolishing the original building, is just to the north east of Müftü Hilmi Efendi's tomb.



## Arabahmet Mosque

This mosque in the Arabahmet district is built in the classical Ottoman style. Arabahmet Pasha took part in the conquest of Cyprus and, after performing his duty as '*Beylerbeyi*' (Governor General) of Algeria he took up the same post in Cyprus. The mosque that bears his name was built in his honour. Arabahmet Pasha founded one of the first *waqfs* (pious foundations) in Cyprus. The mosque, like many others, was constructed on the site of an old Latin church in the late 16<sup>th</sup>, early 17<sup>th</sup> century and underwent restoration in 1845. It is one of only two examples of the dome-on-square plan in Cyprus. There is a fountain in its courtyard and a small graveyard containing up to 25 graves of Turkish notables with epitaphs and drawings. The fountain was built in 1902 in the place of its older water reservoir which had baroque arched niches. The mosque has an arched terrace and a dome six metres in diameter. Among the graves is that of Kamil Pasha, born in Lefkoşa in 1832, who rose four times to the rank of Grand Vizier in the Ottoman Empire. Kamil Pasha died in Lefkoşa in 1913 and was buried in the courtyard of the mosque. In 1927, Sir Ronald Storrs, the governor of Cyprus between 1926 and 1931, had a tomb made for Kamil Pasha and placed a panel bearing inscriptions in Turkish and English on it.



## İplik Bazaar Mosque (Mosque of Cyprus Tax-Receiver Hadji Ahmet Agha)

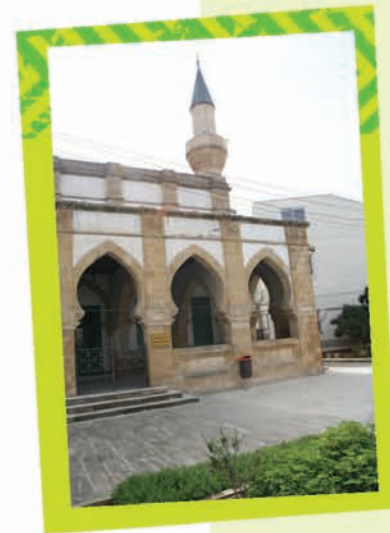
This is a small mosque situated on İplik Pazar Street. The İplik Pazari Mosque, sometimes called the İplik Bazaar Mosque is named after a cotton bazaar that was originally at this location during the Ottoman period. Most of what is known about this mosque is from two separate inscriptions above the entrance door. These indicate that the mosque was built in 1826 by the last of the Ottoman tax-receivers, Hadji Ahmet Agha after whom it is also sometimes known. Later its congregation outgrew the mosque and so it was demolished and in its place a larger mosque was constructed in 1899 by Mehmet Sadik, the director of the office of Evkaf, the trust fund for Islamic buildings in Cyprus.

The minaret, which is accessible from inside the mosque, is much older than the rest of the mosque. It is believed to have been originally from the Hadji Ahmet Agha Mosque, an earlier mosque on this site. It has a single balcony and a stone conical top built of cut stone, making it one of only two in Cyprus of this design.



## Sarayönü Mosque

The Sarayönü Mosque, situated at the south end of Atatürk Square, built from hewn stone in a classical Ottoman style was constructed by Ali Pasha between 1820 and 1824 on the site of an earlier Carmelite church dating back to 14<sup>th</sup> century period. Originally the church was converted into a mosque or used as a place of worship by the residents of the Governorship and as such was known as 'saray' – 'palace' or 'sarayönü' – 'palace front', then as 'Ali Pasha' but most widely as Ordu Önü Masjid, meaning Army Front Mosque. In January 1902 the mosque collapsed due to an earthquake and a new mosque was built designed in the Islamic North African style by the English architect, Fenton Atkinson. The central axis has a marble *mihrab* (niche in a mosque wall indicating the direction of Mecca) decorated with corbels (stalactites) and this is adorned with braids and cypresses in relief. The base of the pediment is inscribed with the hicri date of 1321 (1903). To the west of the mihrab is a marble *mimbar* (pulpit beside the mihrab reached by a long, straight flight of steps). The unadorned minaret on the south east corner of the mosque is believed to belong to the earlier mosque. In 1964 the mosque began to be used as a marriage and registration office but in recent years it was re-opened for worship as a mosque. In 1962, when its fountain was being demolished, a marble sarcophagus with inscriptions in Greek was uncovered.





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