

Cyprus General Information

Contributed by Cyprus-Estates.Net
 Saturday, 13 October 2007
 Last Updated Saturday, 13 October 2007

Cyprus is situated in the north Eastern basin of the Mediterranean Sea at the crossroads of Europe, Asia and Africa. This strategic location of the island has played an important role in its development into a financial and tourist centre. With an area of 9251m², Cyprus is the largest island in the Mediterranean, after Sicily and Sardinia. The population of Cyprus (end of 2001 was 793.100) with 80% of the population being Greek Cypriots, 11% Turkish Cypriots, 8% Foreign residents and 1% other small minorities.

Κυπριακ® Δημοκρατ̄α
 Kypriakí Dimokratía (Greek)
 Kıbrıs Cumhuriyeti (Turkish)
 Republic of Cyprus
 Cyprus Flag Cyprus Coat of Arms

Population in towns:

- Nicosia 190.000 (Capital)
- Limassol 149.000 (main commercial port)
- Larnaca 66.000 (commercial port + main international airport)
- Paphos 37.000 (second international airport)

The towns of Ammochostos (Famagusta) and Kyrenia in the eastern and northern parts of the island respectively, are currently under the illegal occupation of the Turkish army.

Telecommunications

Cyprus is among the most developed countries in the world with an automatic telephone connection with over 200 countries. The national network uses high technology such as digital switching and transmission systems and fibre optic cables and ranks third in the world regarding quality and technology.

A telephone call within any of the districts in Cyprus costs 0,82 cent/minute (£1=100 cent). International calls start from 3 cent/minute (ex.UK) depending on the country and the time of the call. The islands postage rate is 10 cent for a letter up to 20gr, whilst air mail rates for letters are 30 cent to neighbouring countries, Europe, most of the Middle East and North-East Africa. In addition to the normal postage rate, an 1 cent "refugee stamp" must be affixed to all letters, postcards and printed matter, irrespective of their destination.

Climate

Cyprus has a Mediterranean climate with hot dry summers from June to September and rather variable winters from November to March. The autumn and spring seasons are therefore short and of a rapid change.

Residence Permit

Foreign Persons (other than E.U. citizens) who have purchased property and are retiring in Cyprus can apply to obtain this permit. The granting of the permit is based upon the living level of foreign income available to support oneself and this includes pensions and income from investments or otherwise. A proof of an annual income of CY£12,000 is usually considered satisfactory for two retired persons. A foreigner can apply for a Cyprus Passport after 7 years in Cyprus, (E.U. directive for foreign personnel). After five years of permanent stay and/or working in Cyprus the Directive states that a foreigner cannot be expelled but has the right to stay in Cyprus and on the end of the 7th year can apply for the Cyprus nationality.

Banking Standards

The banking system in Cyprus is modeled on the British System. The banks have many convenient branches that are very efficient, modern and well equipped with the latest technology. Foreign persons retiring to Cyprus may open a local and or an external deposit account without difficulty. International banks have branches throughout the island and furthermore, major credit cards, such as those within the Visa and Europay networks, are widely used in Cyprus.

Most local Banks provide finance for foreigners in any currency when acquiring real estate. The usual requirement is 25% own contribution and up to 25 years repayment. - Usual charge = libor + 1.50% - 2% p.a.

Property Finance

Property loans (in a number of currencies) can be obtained for the following purposes:

- (a) Purchase of a house
- (b) Land for Housing Purposes
- (c) Renovation / Restoration / additions to property
- (d) Holiday Homes
- (e) Professional Property (offices / shops)

The loans are usually guaranteed by:

- (i) Mortgage on property.
- (ii) Insurance on property
- (iii) Life insurance on the client
- (iv) Personal guarantees

ı Insurance on the property can be based on the reducing balance of loan balance so that the premium is reduced as the loan is paid

ı The loan period is up to 25 years (could be extended to 30 years)

ı The interest rate is based on the basic rate of interest, which is set up by the Central Bank of Cyprus (present rate 4.50%) plus 1.50%-2% placed by the Bank.

ı The loan can be based on a fixed rate for certain years (2-4 years) or on a floating rate which changes every time the Cyprus Central Bank changes the rate downwards or upwards.

ı The loan can be free from instalments (payment of the interest only) for a period of two years (in some cases for up to 10 years).

ı The loan is payable within the stated period (up to 25 years) or when the client reaches the age of 65 years old, whichever comes first. Further details can be obtained from all the banks but our Office can arrange property finance as well.

Legal System

The legal system in Cyprus is mainly based upon the British Legal System. The Cyprus Land Registry is probably one of the most advanced and reliable systems in the world. Purchasers of property in Cyprus will therefore be far more secure, with regard to their title deeds, than they might be in another country. Furthermore, legal fees/costs are very reasonable and are way lower than in other European countries.

Educational Care

There are both junior and secondary schools of high standards catering for English, Armenian, French and Arabic speaking pupils. There is a Greek speaking Cyprus University and a number of English speaking private colleges of high standards covering a wide spectrum of professions. These colleges are related to UK and USA universities and graduates of 2-3 years courses in these colleges can easily enrol with the UK/USA related universities. Fees in such colleges are in the range of C£2.000 - C£4.000 per annum depending on the college and the course attended.

Health Care

Health care in Cyprus is inexpensive, since every town has its own Government hospital, where fees are very low. However, for those who prefer private treatment there are a number of private clinics with competent specialist physicians in all fields. Government statistics showed that there is a doctor for every 370 persons, a dentist for every 1.100, a nurse for every 215 and a hospital bed for every 215 persons. A doctor's visit costs about C£15-C£20 and X-rays from C£20. Inexpensive Private Medical Insurance is also available. Cyprus residents, whether Cypriots or not, can have a private medical insurance starting from C£142 per annum.

The "standard option" covers public sector clinics and hospitals only whereas the "comprehensive option insurance" includes the covering of expenses of private medical services and medicine. The plans differ mainly in respect of the maximum coverage they provide. Plan A covers up to C£600.000 pa, Plan B up to C£35.000 pa and plan C up to C£12.000 pa. E.U. citizens are considered as locals since 5/2004. This implies enjoying the same benefits in health care as the Cypriots, i.e practically free health care subject to certain conditions.

Car Driving

Visitors in Cyprus may drive using a valid international driving licence or their National driving licence, provided it is valid for the particular class of vehicle they want to drive. If a foreigner wishes to get a Cyprus driving licence then he must convert his national licence to a Cypriot one or take the driving test.

A Cyprus driving licence will cost C£35 for a lifetime. Hiring an ordinary saloon car costs about C£25-35 per day including full cover insurance during the summer season and £15- C£20/day during the rest of the year. Four lane motorways

connect all towns and the airports and two lane, good surfaced roads connect all towns and villages. Visitors can bring their cars to Cyprus for a period of three months provided the car has a valid registration in its country. Attention must be paid to the fact that driving in Cyprus is on the left side of the road with cars being right-wheeled.

Crime Rate

Cyprus enjoys a very low crime rate in comparison with other competitive Mediterranean countries such as Spain and Italy. According to Interpol Statistics, Cyprus' crime rate is only at the rate of 6% to that of the UK, 8% of Germany, 30% of Portugal and Spain, 5% of Sweden, 12% of Norway, etc.