

Akrotiri Peninsula - Episkopi Cliffs

This area is the southernmost tip of the island and it is among the main Important Bird Areas in Cyprus. In spring and winter large numbers of waterbirds congregate in this extensive area, including globally important numbers of Flamingos *Phoenicopterus roseus*, while in autumn large numbers of birds of prey are concentrated here, including globally important numbers of four raptors, such as Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*. This is the largest complex of wetlands in Cyprus, which in 2003 was declared a globally important wetland, in the framework of the Ramsar Convention.

District: Limassol (within British Sovereign Base Areas, open access, some military areas, well signposted)

Altitude: 0-100 m

Coordinates (the centre of the site): 34° 36.962'N 32° 57.592'E

Area Size: 7891 Hectares

Habitats: The seasonal Salt Lake is in the centre of the peninsula. In the area you can also find other wetlands, scrub, cliffs, sand dunes and agricultural areas.

Birds: Over **300** different bird species have been recorded here. The bird species for which the area is protected are the Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*, Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus*, Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*, Saker Falcon *Falco cherrug*, European Roller *Coracias garrulus*, Flamingo *Phoenicopterus roseus*, Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonora*, Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*, Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*, Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*, Eurasian Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus*, Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*, Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*, Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*, Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*, Common Crane *Grus grus*, Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola*, Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*, Demoiselle Crane *Grus virgo*, Black Francolin *Francolinus francolinus* and the Cyprus Warbler *Sylvia melanothorax*.



Μαυροφάλκονο / Red-footed Falcon



Ασπροσίχτινο / Pallid Harrier



Στεποζάνος / Saker Falcon



Ζάνος / Peregrine Falcon



Ασπρόγυπας / Egyptian Vulture



Γύπας / Griffon Vulture



Μαυρομάτης / Eleonora's Falcon



Κράγκα / European Roller



Other Fauna and Flora: On the Peninsula's coastline turtles lay their eggs throughout summer. In the Peninsula area, important mammalian species have been recorded, such as monk seals, dolphins and bats. From the hundreds of plant species found on the Peninsula, thirty are endangered and are included in the Cyprus Flora Red List.

Threats:

1. Loss, degradation and fragmentation of habitats as a result of tourism development, military, road and antennae facilities.
2. Disturbance from visitors that relates to the area's accessibility. Species that build their nests on the ground are especially vulnerable to disturbance by walkers, people walking dogs and vehicles. Opportunistic off road driving is of great concern for this area.
3. Another threat is the reduced water input as a result of the construction of the Kouris dam.

Did you know...?

1. At Episkopi Cliffs, the biggest Eurasian Griffon Vulture, *Gyps fulvus*, colony can be found. The Eurasian Griffon Vulture is the biggest bird found in Cyprus. It is a scavenger (eats only carrion) and it is mostly threatened by the use of poison baits in nature poisoning. Its population has declined dramatically, and despite a project for the strengthening of the population, unfortunately it is still not safe.
2. Akrotiri Peninsula was a separate island thousands of years ago.
3. The first evidence of human habitation in Cyprus can be found at Akrotiri Peninsula.

What else can you find in the area?

1. The Akrotiri Environmental Education Centre is worth a visit, since here you can learn about the unique biodiversity of the Peninsula, from the rare and endemic plants of the area to the *Monachus monachus* seal, but also the dwarf hippopotami and elephants that lived here almost 12.000 years ago. More information at: www.akrotirienviroment.com
2. Birdwatching hides at Akrotiri Marsh where you can enjoy this unique area that hosts rare fauna and flora species. Traditional Cyprus cows graze here, helping the vegetation management of the area. A project for the management and protection of the area has been implemented and you can learn more about it here: www.akrotirimarsh.org
3. The linear and easy nature trail of "Apollonas Ilatis", which is 2 kilometres long. The starting point is the archaeological site of the Temple of Apollonas Ilatis, at ancient Curium. The trail starts in a shrubbery of mastics, junipers and pine trees and ends on a peak with a panoramic view of the ancient settlement that is found on the opposite slope and Episkopi beach.
4. One of the most noteworthy archaeological sites of Cyprus can be found at the North-western part of the Peninsula:Curium. The Kolossi castle, one of the most important forts of Medieval Cyprus, can be found near the village of the same name.