

Cyprus, Whatever the Weather! By John Broadhurst.

We set off from home in glorious sun,
To Luton Airport we had a clear run:
But by the time we'd arrived there
The weather was no longer set fair.
A typical dull March day
In every way.

A point of interest at the start
As we past through the state of the art
Equipment at Luton Airport
Neither of us had given it any thought
Jeanette, being a conscientious wife
In my hand luggage had put a small knife
To cut up fruit it was meant
But very soon we did repent
As we red-handed were caught
In possession of the knife we'd brought
Fill in this form and when you arrive
Eurocypria Airways will strive
To meet you with your knife
We're sorry for the fuss but it could save a life.
Needless to say this was all in vain
For we never saw the knife again!
Otherwise Eurocypria Airways were very efficient,
With plenty to drink and the food quite sufficient.

Cyprus, so I was reliably told
Is a pleasant mixture of new and old.
This was evident the very first day,
From a Roman Stadium we viewed the motorway.
Which takes me on to think of the road.
Cyprus doesn't seem to have a highway code.
If I was really trying to be kind
I would say women drivers must be colour blind.
Because whether the lights be green or red
Lady drivers seem to press ahead,
Drifting into the on-coming flow,
I really honestly do not know
How we didn't see accidents galore
As considerations for others, they ignore.

The roads themselves vary from very good
To a dirt track leading through a wood.
A roads are fine with barriers and lines:
The B roads come in various kinds.

Some are great with plenty of space
Then suddenly changing to a near disgrace,
With a narrow width of tarmac,
And mud or gravel either side of the track.
The C roads, printed yellow on the map
Just have dirt filling the gap.
They are signposted like all the rest;
But they're only temporary, at best,
As they follow the contours of the land.
Somehow, somewhere they must have been planned
Or else they are the original routes
Used first by Cypriots in their boots.

Wherever we went, we were impressed
As these days, we'd never have guessed.
You are welcomed by this friendly race
And, most of all trusted, in every place.
From silversmiths to the Cypriot Bank
We were left alone, and to be frank
We could have made off with hundreds of pounds
Had we not been brought up on strictly moral grounds.

On the island there are lines and lines
Of now dormant ugly black grape vines
Which will later bear magnificent fruit
For wine which has no substitute.
For whether your tippie is sweet or dry
Cyprus wine is the brand to buy.

Day one we intended to find our way round,
With our feet firmly fixed on the ground.
We couldn't really go very far
As, on the first day, we had not booked the car.
We set off for the centre of Limassol
A strange mixture; we found it rather droll.
Old buildings in a dreadful state of repair,
Giving the impression there's no-one to care.
Leading to shops modern and new
Specially made so no traffic goes through.

Talking of traffic, as it comes to mind
Our hotel room, in the Pavemar, although easy to find,
Situated, as it was, on the very first floor,
At the top of the stairs was our bedroom door:
But sadly, this could not disguise
What, when we went to bed, came as quite a surprise.
Our window looked out onto the sea;
All very picturesque it seemed to me:
But between us and the sea there was a main road,
Designed the most patient person to goad,
Because the traffic never stopped day or night;
And even, with all the windows closed quite tight,
The noise kept us both awake
Whatever action we did take.
Otherwise the hotel was comfy and clean.
There was entertainment for all, to be seen;
Singing and dancing two nights a week.
The singing was English, the dancing was Greek.
Jeanette joined in with great gusto,
While I just watched and took a photo.
There was also Bingo and tasting the wine
The Bingo we missed, but the other was fine.
A Scottish lady, the Duchess, seemed full of mystery,
Until one evening she told us her life history.

But to return to day one, after our walk
We met in the games room for the 'Welcome' talk.
Mark, the rep. from Priceright.
We all hoped he'd shed some light
On where to go and what to see,
All seemed pretty clear to me.
Mark gave us a Cyprus map,
He really was an extremely nice chap.

For he ringed all the places where we should go,
And told us all we needed to know.

As we'd missed our dinner the previous night,
We were given a meal voucher so that we might
Make up for what we hadn't had;
The lunch menu wasn't all that bad;
As was all the other food,
Alcohol completing the party mood.

After lunch we set off to find
What the Romans left behind
At the Amathous, a site of antiquity:
But it was too far to walk, more's the pity.
By which time the wind arose,
The rain started, and we needed thicker clothes.
Back at the hotel of all we could think
Was making our way to the bar for a drink.

During the night was a tremendous storm
And as we looked out on Monday morn,
Everywhere was covered in brown
As an Egyptian sandstorm had hit the town.
We'd hired a car to take us about
A wise decision as the weather'd turned out,
For it seemed determined to spoil our fun
Soon after our holiday had begun.
A blue Nissan Micra was our car
Our first port of call was not very far.
The castle at Kolossi, with its square keep,
Where the Crusaders were said to sleep.
It appears they fostered the making of wines
As far back as mediaeval times.
When Richard the Lionheart was king
Married here in the North West wing.
Near Akrotiri, the British troop station
Is a huge salt lake, a rare bird destination.

At Kourion, an amphitheatre overlooking the sea
With other remains dating back to B.C.
We followed the road along the coast,
Making sure we made the most
Of all the wonders there to see,
Arriving at Paphos, just before three.
We could not face another ancient remain,
And, as it, by now, had again begun to rain,
We headed back on the motorway
Purchasing a pottery vase on the way.
Each evening waiting for dinner time
We ate popcorn, and drank the Cyprus wine.

The forecast for Tuesday was much the same,
Not very warm with plenty of rain.
Kato, means lower, Lefkara was our destination
To see the home-made silver manifestation.
The other claim to fame of this place
Was the beautiful delicate hand made lace.
But the silver was their main thing,
And Jeanette couldn't resist buying a ring.

To Pano, meaning upper, Lefkara we made our way
Wishing we'd come on a better day.
The rain
A pain.
Both of us glad that we were there;
But wishing we had the right clothes to wear.

As we entered each shop we knew without fail
The woman inside would tell the same tale.
'Every item that you see to hand
Was made down the road by my dear husband.'
But, not deterred by the incessant rain,
I bought a ring, and Jeanette a cross and chain.

As we tried to find our way back home,
Despite the advice that we should not roam;
We found ourselves on a lonely 'C' road
Miles from the nearest habitable abode:
Just a mud track which wound its way,
Where no sane person would want to stray.
A sheer cliff face to our right,
To the left, a drop to give anyone a fright.
Rock falls round each bend
Would we ever reach the end.
Then, quite suddenly, out of the blue
A huge road sign all bright and new.
From that we knew we were on the right track
It stopped us from turning back.

To the Agios Minas Monastery we made our way,
Hoping a visit we might pay.
What we found we'd never have guessed.
'Women in trousers are immodestly dressed.'
So we never saw what it was like inside,
Or what those monks felt they had to hide.
Instead we decided more culture to see,
For that Choirokoitia was the place to be.
A Neolithic Settlement no less
Which from the road, just looked a mess
Of stones, all piled on the side of a hill;
But closer inspection was quite a thrill.
An obvious pattern of houses were there,
Much history uncovered with the greatest of care.
Some huts had been recreated as new,
With wattle and daub, to make them true
To the original plan,
Copying new stone-age man.

On the first few nights the traffic kept us awake,
Early Wednesday morning the weather a new twist did take.
A thunderstorm lit up the sky,
So all we could do was quietly lie
And listen to the heavy rain
Our wishes for good weather were obviously in vain.

After breakfast despite the forecast rain
The Troodos mountains were our aim.
Hoping the weather would soon get better
Feeling, for Cyprus, it could hardly be wetter.

Only to find as we neared the height
What we'd experienced during the night
Had fallen in the mountains as snow,
And so to the top we were unable to go.
Apparently all night it had snowed and snowed,
So, by the time we arrived, it had blocked the road.
All that was left to do in the freeze
Was admire the beauty of the trees,

All laden with white powdery snow
So we took some photos, and decided to go

Back to the Hotel
So much to tell.
Marks and Spencer was to be a treat
We found it tucked away in a back street.
Unfortunately, it wasn't our lucky day:
It was closed, so we went away!

By the coming of Thursday morning dawn
The thrill of motoring was a little bit worn.
So, after some T.V. channel hopping
We decided to do some local shopping;
But first to avoid any chance of tedium
To Limmasol Castle home of the Cyprus Mediaeval Museum.
Unusual because of its many small rooms,
Some of which I think were used as tombs.

Just outside Limmasol at Amathous
Are the remains of yet another Roman house.
We paid the usual 75p
The fenced area for to see;
But up above, unannounced, we chanced to find
Much more of what they had left behind.
Mosaics, drains places to hide,
Tucked away on this lonely hillside.
Then further along the southern coast
A monastery called Agios Georgios.
A warning outside said 'Please don't leave your cat.'
For interest and excitement it was all pretty flat.
A huge courtyard, with a church in the middle,
What they did in the monastery still remains a riddle.
On Friday, as the sky still looked awfully pale,
So, we thought we'd try a nature trail.
One and half kilometres long,
For once we felt we couldn't go wrong.
And as it turned out we were right,
Even though the weather was not very bright.
We saw lots of beautiful wild flowers
Many were much the same as ours.
But earlier by far than they would be
Back at home in our own country.

The Snake House next,
Most would be vexed
To see the large venomous creatures,
With all their clearly marked individual features;
Kept in a tiny little pen,
Symbol of the cruelty of men.

More shopping for our pains
This time to purchase two silver chains.
One for To and one for Steven
To be fair they had to be even.
We found one that seemed just right,
We asked the assistant if she possibly might
Have another one exactly the same.
'What for,' back the answer came.
As she was unable to produce what we needed,
Further down the street we proceeded.
There in a dingy little shop,
Two the same, if one he could chop;
But first this scruffy Cypriot lad
Had to go and ask permission from his dad.
Leaving us alone with his silver and gold,
So easy for us to grab a hold
Of all this treasure and be on our way
Without ever bothering to pay.
They really are a trusting race,
Either that, or we've got an honest face.
And to be perfectly frank ,
It's exactly the same in the Cyprus Bank.
One man came and opened the door,
We looked around, but there weren't any more;
Only him, on his own:
Something at home they would not condone.
No barriers, glass or anything to stop
Us leaning over the counter and giving him the chop.
It's something since we've often discussed
That lovely warm feeling of trust.
Jeanette felt before we left this place
She ought to buy some of their world famous lace.
A tablecloth was what we needed,
So to all the shop assistants we heeded.
Hand made in Cyprus, or so we were told.
There is so much work and cheaply they're sold.
At last we made the difficult choice
Trying not to be put off by the woman's high pitched voice,
And the son who appeared pretty dumb;
'Cause for all of the prices, he had to ask his mum.

And so our holiday came to its close,
We came for warm weather and nearly froze.
It seemed, at the start, it would be such fun
To spend a week in the Cyprus sun.
But alas, instead our hopes were in vain
As we spent most of the week, in the pouring rain!
