

## 1. Akamas Peninsula -National Park

The Akamas peninsula occupies the westernmost tip of Cyprus covering an area of 17,000 hectares approximately, 7,000 hectares of which are State Forests and the rest 10,000 hectares are private properties and some government owned land.

It is a unique unspoilt area, with remarkably diverse features in vegetation, wildlife, geology, beautiful landscapes and coasts, and with a rich historical and cultural heritage.

The variety of landscape and vegetation and the relatively unspoilt state of the countryside and villages make it a real delight for walkers and naturalists.

For all these reasons, the Akamas peninsula constitutes a pole of attraction and interest for scientists (ecologists, biologists, botanists, etc) nature lovers, investors and the public, in general.

The state is promoting the declaration of the Akamas Peninsula into a National Park, with main component, the State forests of the peninsula.



Panoramic view of a part of Akamas peninsula

## 2. Natural features

### (a) Flora

The flora can be divided into two categories. The forest flora, which is mainly natural and covers the forested regions and the vegetation which covers private agricultural land.

The forest vegetation consists mainly of the Phoenician juniper (*Juniperus phoenicia*) and the Brutia pine (*Pinus brutia*). Many shrubs, such as the Lentisk (*Pistacia lentiscus*), the Strawberry tree (*Arbutus drachne*), the wild Carob tree (*Ceratonia siliqua*), the wild Olive tree (*Olea europaea*), the Terebinth (*Pistacia terebinthus*), the Kermes oak (*Quercus coccifera*), the Laurel (*Laurus nobilis*), the Myrtle (*Myrtus communis*), the Maple (*Acer obtusifolium*) etc, and an abundance of phrygana and annual plants compose a rich dense vegetation which covers the landscape almost completely.

The presence of the endemic plants such as the Tulipa cypria, the Alyssum



Orchis (*Neotinea maculata*)



Cyclamen (*Cyclamen cypricum*)



Tulip (*Tulipa cypria*)



Cyclamen (*Cyclamen persicum*)

Akamassicum, the *Bosea cypria*, the *Ballota integrifolia*, the *Salvia cypria*, the *Centaurea Akamantis*, the *Centaurea veneris*, the *Phlomis cypria* var. *occidentalis*, e.t.c, the huge variety of orchids as the *Dactylorhiza romana*, the *Ophrys apifera*, the *Orchis coriophora* and the *Neotinea maculata* and the varied forms of the maquis vegetation, with the stands of Brutia pine render the Akamas forest a rare biotope of immense ecological and scientific value. Relatively unexplored remains the marine flora.

The private agricultural land is covered mainly with vines, carob trees, olive trees, and almond trees, and seasonally with cereals and leguminous plants.

The variety of flora of the Akamas Peninsula is important and very interesting with a large number of plant species. Roughly, 530 species of plants have been identified so far, of which 36 are endemic and 23 are rare or very rare.

### (b) Fauna

The fauna of the peninsula is less known compared to the flora, because unfortunately no scientific study has been carried out on



Vulture (*Gyps fulvus*)

this subject so far. The information available is based on simple observations according to which, 168 species of birds, 12 species of mammals, 20 species of reptiles, 16 species of hymenoptera and coleoptera have been sighted in the area. The partridges, the wood pigeons, the wild pigeons, the turtledoves, the falcons and the thrushes, the foxes, the hares, the hedgehogs, the mice and the snakes are present more often. Two species of marine turtle, the green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) and the common turtle (*Caretta caretta*) that are very rare worldwide and are protected, are reproduced in the coasts of Akamas.

### (c) Geology

The Geology of the area presents a variety of sedimentary rocks as the limestones, the sandstones and the chalks. There are also certain igneous rocks such as the Basalt with Olivine and the Enstantanitis.

The mixture of the above rocks with diabase rocks and serpentine creates conditions of growth of very rare



«Koufaes» gorge

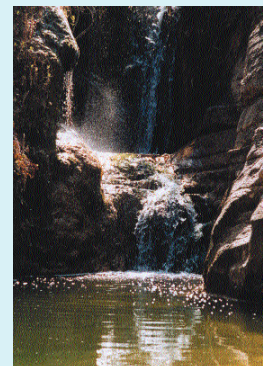
plants in an enormous variety of ecotopes. The Akamas Peninsula presents a condensed concentration of many geomorphologic characteristics such as plateaux, small plains and torrents, narrow deep valleys, caves, important gorges, sandy and rocky beaches in astonishing shapes, marine caves and islets.

The wide range of geological formations along with the topography of the area results in different microclimates, the impact of which is reflected through the variety of plant communities, the large number of plant species and particularly, the number of endemic species.

## 3. Cultural features

### (a) Archaeology-History and Mythology

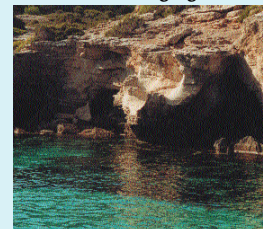
The uniqueness of the Akamas Peninsula is not only due to its natural beauty but also to its cultural background. The area is rich in Greek history and mythology going back 3.000 years, which the walker encounters with almost every step. The prevailing peace and tranquility, interwoven with the history, tradition and legend encountered in the area, creates a climate of ancient mysticism for the traveler.



Mavrokolymbos springs



«Avakas» gorge



Sea caves

Archaeological surveys, conducted periodically by the Department of Antiquities and other scholars and institutions, shed some light on various periods of the history of Cyprus, from the Neolithic period to the present. This area was inhabited for the first time during the Neolithic period. A major Neolithic settlement was located at the locality of Ayios Mamas in the village area of Androlikou. The site has a commanding position over the Petratis River and is situated near a spring and several natural caves.

Two smaller Neolithic or Chalcolithic sites were also recorded in the region. One of them is situated south of the Spileos tou Garilli and the other at the locality Dhyo Potami near the Baths of Aphrodite. No sites from the Bronze Age down to the Classical period have been recorded so far. The region was inhabited more extensively during the Hellenistic and Roman periods (settlements, cemeteries). Such sites have been located at the localities of Pampelon, Potrypetos and Agnades near Neochorio. Another site which was inhabited from Roman to Medieval times was located in the area of Agios Konon. Similar sites have also been recorded at the localities Laonari tis Farconias, Psintrou and Exosirondes.

During the Byzantine period the region was heavily populated, and had a large number of churches, most of them lying in ruins along with the remains of nearby settlements.

Some of these churches are: Agios Minas, Agios Konon, Agios Georghios, another Agios Georghios, Agios Sergios, Agios Epiphantos, Agios Nikolaos, a ruined church at the locality of Psintrou, the ruined church at Prastio and the rock-cut chapel at Cape Arnaouti.

The ruins of a large Manor House or Abbey at the locality Pyrgos (Pyrgos tis Rigaenas), provide evidence of habitation during the Frankish and later periods.

In the area south of Neochorio and Androlikou at the Pafos-Pegia boundaries important archaeological remains have been discovered at Agios Georghios in the Pegia area and on the islet of Geronisos, dating back to the classical and later periods.

In the same area there are many churches and chapels dating back to the Byzantine and later periods. The most important of these are: Agios Minas in Neochorio, Agios Ioannis, east of Androlikou, Agios Georghios, west of Inia, Agia Afendrika and Evangelistria in Inia, Chryseleousa at Kritou Terra, the church of Pano Arodhes, Panagia Chrysospilotissa near Pano Arodhes, Panagia Evangelistria in Kathikas, the church of Panagia in Pegia, the churches of Panagia ton Zalajon, Agia Paraskevi, Profitis Elias and Panagia Agridotissa west of Pegia village.

It is believed, according to other versions, that the area was named after the Greek mythological hero Akamas, son of Theseus and Fedra, who came to Cyprus after the Trojan War and founded Akamantis.

The romantic localities of the area such as the famous Baths of Aphrodite, "Pyrgos tis Rigaenas", "Fontana Amorozza" and "Smygies", are associated with the Goddess of Love, Aphrodite, and her lover Adonis. Although in some legends the Goddess Aphrodite and Adonis are substituted for Regina and Dhigenis (the Medieval Queen and the Byzantine hero) respectively, the legends are the same. Many regions were named after several features and events of ancient Greek and Cyprus mythology and culture.

The Baths of Aphrodite are located between Polis and Cape Arnaoutis offering a magnificent view over the Chrysochou bay. The historian Hogarth referred to this area as the most beautiful on the island.



## (b) Villages of Akamas

The traditional villages of Akamas are attractive in their cohesive composition and plasticity of texture. These villages are characterized by the homogeneity of the materials used and their plasticity is achieved by the close composition of primary geometric buildings. The Akamas villages are worth protecting and preserving.

The surviving building methods are a blend of Greek, Roman, Byzantine or Middle Eastern techniques accumulated over many centuries.

The use of indigenous materials in their natural state resulted in a balanced harmonization between buildings and the landscape. The end result is a series of very attractive villages hidden in the barren Homeric landscape of Akamas.

## 4. State Forests, management, facilities

### (a) State forests

The Forests of Akamas are, according to the forest legislation, "Main State Forests", and administratively they come under the Paphos Forest Division.

These Forests are: -

- ▶ The Akamas Forest which covers an area of approximately 5,700 hectares and extends from Lara bay, Neon Chorion and the Baths of Aphrodite up to the Cape of Arnaoutis.
- ▶ The Pegia Forest, that covers an area of approximately 1,300 hectares and extends from the village Pegia up to the Lara bay.
- ▶ The Meletis Forest, a small forest covering an area of approximately 19 hectares, near Saint Georgios Pegias.

### (b) Management

The main activities of the Department of Forests are focused on the protection of natural environment in general, against various enemies mainly fires, illegal grazing and illegal felling. It promotes at the same time, several recreation projects for the public such as picnic sites, nature trails etc, within the framework of plans for a National Park.

The Akamas peninsula with its huge variety of rare ecotopes and flora and fauna species has been proposed for inclusion in the "Natura 2000" network. The inclusion of the peninsula in the European Ecological network and its classification as a special protected area is unquestionably an important step towards the conservation and protection of its biodiversity and natural beauty. The State undertakes the responsibility of taking special measures to avoid the destruction and downgrading of ecotopes and the disturbance of the living environment of its fauna species.

### (c) Protection against fires

The Akamas peninsula constitutes a unique environment and should enjoy the necessary protection against fires. In this respect:

- Daily patrols by forest officials are carried out during the whole summer.
- Roads and fire traces are opened up and maintained.
- Water tanks are built and
- Hydrants along waterlines are installed, so that water can be supplied to fire engines in case of a fire.



«Piana» fire lookout station

The establishment and operation of a fire look out station on the highest part of the Akamas Forest ("Piana") helps in the detection and immediate reporting of fires to the fire fighting forces, stationed at Drousia Forest Station.

The establishment of an automatic fire detection system constitutes a significant innovation in

the field of protection against fires. The system consists of two observatories placed at strategic points. They are equipped with infrared and TV cameras and communicate with an operation centre. The system operates on a 24-hour basis and detects fires smaller than 1sq.m, from a distance of 10 km.

### (d) Recreation

The need for recreation is becoming increasingly important in all contemporary societies. The Akamas area is an alternative to stressful every day routine. The relatively unspoiled state of the area, the diverse vegetation, wildlife, landscape, geology, and the rich historical and cultural heritage combine to give the area the right atmosphere for mental and physical relaxation.

The Department of Forests in collaboration with the Cyprus Tourism Organisation, established five nature trails of a total length of about 25 kilometres, aimed at giving the visitors the opportunity to become acquainted with the flora, the fauna and the environment of the region in general.

#### These trails are:

	Name	Length	Time of Course	Type
1	Aphrodite	7,5 Km	4,0 hours	Circular
2	Adonis	7,5 Km	4,0 hours	Circular
3	Smygies (short way)	2,5 Km	1,5 hours	Circular
4	Smygies (long way)	5,0 Km	3,0 hours	Circular
5	Pissouromouti	3,0 Km	2,0 hours	Circular

In the locality "Smygies" near Neon Chorion village a picnic site of the same name has been set up which can accommodate 600 persons.

## 5. Protection of Marine Life area

The coastal region of Lara-Toxeftra which is located in the south-western side of the Akamas peninsula, 15 km from the city of Pafos, in an area of 650 ha (100 ha land and 550 ha sea) has been declared in 1990, under the Forest Protection Law 8/90 into a Marine and Coastal Reserve. This aims at safeguarding the protection of marine turtles (*Chelonia mydas* and *Caretta caretta*) that give birth and hatch their eggs in the sandy beach. The regulations regarding this region prohibit camping, the use of umbrellas and

sunbeds, the presence of people in the region in the evenings, the use of cars on the beach, the entry and mooring of boats in the gulf and fishing, except with fishing rods. The Department of Fishery and Marine Research from 1st June up to the 30th September each year installs a station for the control and protection of nests and hatching of young turtles. Each year 6,000-8,000 young turtles are released into the sea.

## 6. Information

For additional information or observations and suggestions please contact the Stavros Psokas Forest Station, tel. 26991850, 26991854, and 26991858, or the Headquarters of the Forestry Department in Nicosia, tel. 22819466/67/68.

### Visitors' DO'S and DONT'S

- The lighting of fire anywhere in the forest as well as along roads or in squares is prohibited.
- The lighting of fire is permitted only for cooking purposes, and only in the barbecues of the picnic and camping-sites.
- Before leaving, make sure that you have put out the fire that you have lit in the barbecue completely and that children are not playing with matches in the forest. Also avoid throwing away matches or cigarettes.
- Do not litter the forest. Before you leave you must collect all your rubbish and place it in the rubbish bins. If no rubbish bins are available or if they are full, take your rubbish with you: do not leave it out of the rubbish bins.
- Do not disturb forest animals and birds.
- Avoid cutting branches or shoots from plants and do not uproot plants or carve trees.
- Avoid causing any damage to the recreation site and facilities.
- Avoid unnecessary or undue noise and respect other visitors' need for enjoying a quiet environment.
- Avoid smoking or eating when walking along nature trails.



MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE,  
NATURAL RESOURCES  
AND ENVIRONMENT  
FORESTRY DEPARTMENT  
www.moa.gov.cy/forest

# Akamas Peninsula:

A unique region of Cyprus

