



VILLA THRILLER: String of hotel homes and private beach paradise



POOL CUE: Fun time for Mickey and kids



DIP TOP: Coastline's great for snorkeling



GET AWAY FROM IT ALL

BY **MICKY BURKE**

IT WAS certainly the white facade that made this place so for a family holiday.

A villa in Cyprus with whitewashed walls hand-moulded by a sculptor next to a pool of cool blue will set against the backdrop of a palm-tree-speckled private Mediterranean beach.

And Andreas Limbroudis don't stop when he built ours. Along came more and more, stretching along the coastline of Ayia Thekla like a string of pearls in the baking sun. Arrive at this place after a three-and-a-half-hour flight, and just one look at it is enough to start the chit-chat process long before the first cork has been popped.

Even our children, Leo, 14, and 11-year-old Chloe were impressed by the size factor as they toured the three-bedroom villa's spacious rooms before plunging into the leisure of inviting shimmering blue outside.

Paradise

And the combination of pool plus a beach with excellent snorkelling less than 30 seconds away was enough to make it difficult to wrinkle them out of their paradise.

If that wasn't enough, the fact that Andreas—who lives at the end of his string of pearls—had the foresight to install a/d made it a home from home as the kids were able to relax poolside and exercise bragging rights to mates back home from the laptop in the shade. In the distance, as we lepped up the peaceful surroundings, by the skyline of

GETTING THERE

THOMSON offers seven night self-catering at the Thalessea Villas in Limassol, for a family of two adults and two children from £2,715.

The price is based on a departure from Gatwick on October 4 and includes return flights, villa accommodation, car hire and all taxes and charges.

For more information, or to book, visit your local travel agent, go to www.thomson.co.uk or call 0871 331 3235.

For more information on Cyprus, see www.visitcyprus.com

clubbers' paradise Ayia Napa—but we were well away from it in our family haven. And we had the perfect base to explore the island home of the goddess Aphrodite. One thought-provoking trip we took on the advice of Andreas—was to the closed 'great boat' of Fafanaga. He used to live there and was forced to flee his home, along with thousands of Greek Cypriots, when the 1974 invasion by Turkey split the island.

Now it remains empty and frozen in time—and across the border, through broomcrops, you can see shell holes in ballistics just as they were left more than 30 years ago.

Cyprus is certainly the place to escape an English summer. The sunshine is well to wait, so much so that locals we came across struggled to remember the last time they had to run for shelter from the rain. In fact the island averages only 40 days of



NIC NACS: Nicosia is brimming with shops and restaurants

of rain a year, whereas at home we only seem to get 40 days of sun. Temperatures stay in the high 30s in summer so mid-July timing is the best time to go. If the heat gets too much, a couple of hours' drive sees you up in the cooler air and breathtaking scenery of the Troodos mountains. The highest peak, at 1,952m is Mount Olympus and in the winter it manages to become a small, all-resort—though it's hard to imagine any snow ever surviving long on this island.

Want more bustle? Then try Nicosia. It's the world's last divided capital city, sliced through the middle by the Green Line—a frontier complete with barbed wire and watch towers—which separates

regarded mainly by locals, the atmosphere was wonderful.

You can head a family of four for just over £20. And here is, inevitably, cheaper than in Britain.

Nights were mainly spent eating outside in the balmy Kalamaria garden before retreating to the air-conditioned villa for booze and card games followed by a good night's sleep in very comfortable beds.

We even plucked up the courage to go into Ayia Napa—but only in the hours of daylight of course.

Despite its reputation as a rowdy city resort, there are plenty of decent restaurants on offer in the town. And it's fairly quiet at lunchtime.

Peaceful

But, like Crete, it's wise to leave the ball well before midnight when any family atmosphere the resort might have goes punch-drunk.

The clubbers' presence—and the huge amounts of money that it spends—what has turned Ayia Napa from a quiet fishing village to what it is today.

But the town's authorities want to change its image to attract more families and the police have cracked down on opening hours and the inevitable festivals that answer for a 'let's hot many legends'.

Back in Ayia Thekla, however, all was peaceful night after night after the night—until the first signal of the morning in the glass-smooth water. The white say to start the day.