

ONAR VILLAGE - THE KYRENIA WALKS

WEDNESDAY KANTARA VILLAGE & CASTLE (5.1 miles/8.2km)

Pick up from your hotel at 9.00 from where we take the coast road, which is interesting in itself. We pass miles of agricultural areas with hundreds of olive and carob groves. They are largely un-worked now, but give an insight into what was the typically Mediterranean life style. From the coastal planes we wend our way up the amazing new road to Kantara and we eventually gain the summit in Kantara Vil-



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perched on the ridge of the range. From here we have superb views of the Mediterranean to the North and over the Mesoria Plain to the South. We take refreshments at Kantara Guest House before starting our walk by heading over the ridge to the northern side of the escarpment. We look over the steep heavily wooded slopes spreading down to the coastal plain far below, with the little village of Kaplica nestled on the coast. Many different woodland birds flit to and fro and birds prey and the odd eagle soar overhead. All along the path there are profusions of flowers, especially rock roses, which add a splash of colour to our walk. Half way down to the coastal plain we can just see Ayios Nicolaos monastery, a rather pretty abandoned church in the woods. We continue to walk behind a head-land, until Kantara Castle comes into view, and what a

view! You cannot but admire its choice of location, at the end of the main mountain block, protected by a precipitous cliff. The chance of an assault on the castle would have been a very difficult undertaking. There was probably some previous stronghold here, predating the castle, as the perpetual problem of Arab coastal raiders seriously interrupted the otherwise easy pleasant lifestyle.



These raids were brutal; everyone was either taken into slavery or murdered, and all buildings and everything that could be destroyed, was.

This makes the idea of a look-out rather worthwhile. Kantara Castle is in line of sight with Buffavento Castle some 30 miles/49 km to the west. Likewise St Hilarion Castle was in line of sight of Buffavento (8.1 miles/11.9km), so the warning of impending raids could be passed on down the chain. This is a further reason for the settlements and habitation seldom being on the coastal plain, but rather up towards the foothills. We skirt under the castle and turn south to approach the castle from the southern side, and a short climb takes us up to the castle itself. From the castle we follow the track west, along what is part of the Kyrenia Mountain Trail. Though the upper slopes along which we walk are forested, below us to the south towards the central plain there is less



substantial forestry, which peters out as it becomes flatter. We pass a picnic site which is very popular with the Turkish Cypriots, who turn up with their huge extended families for barbecues and picnics at the weekends. We soon approach Kantara on the track which is now tarmaced, and pass behind houses perched on the edge overlooking the central plain of Cyprus. We enter the village square for some well deserved refreshments and lunch (included) on the vine bedecked terrace of Kantara Guest House, before the drive back to your hotel.

