

## Anassa: something healthy for all the family in Cyprus



**In Short:** Greek for 'queen', Anassa is a grande dame resort in western Cyprus modelled on a traditional Cypriot village. It's no longer the only building on this part of the coastline – but Anassa has its own stretch of beach and your feet get a hot stone massage every time you run across it. Plus it has more watersports than you can shake a stick at. There's a huge spa and, away from the outdoor pools, often the only sound you'll hear is of cooing birds and cicadas. Its strengths lie in the huge array of fitness and sport activities on offer and a programme of activities that appeals to a wide range of ages. It's a great place to bring families (everyone from tiny babies to the most truculent teen is catered for) – it's perfect for avoiding 'what are we going to do' squabbles. They also offer bespoke anything, designing a programme to suit your needs. If you want the 'om' factor, opt for low season – you can swim from mid April. *From €310 (£265) per night bed and breakfast. Scroll down for full costs.*

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**More on the sports & fitness activities:** The exhilarating and highly toning 5 day bespoke Flipper Camp allows you to choose from a wide range of watersports – from wind surfing to wakeboarding. Add in sessions of aqua yoga and aqua gym in the spa and top off with some excellent thalassotherapy treatments. It provides cross generational fun – teenagers love it – and stretches the muscles of all ages. Swimming Clinic focuses on improving your techniques and even videos your strokes so you can analyse what's going wrong. Extreme Challenge incorporates swimming, hiking, running and cycling under the watchful gaze of triathletes in the local nature reserve.



### CREATED BY

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Voltaire

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Aqua gym & aqua yoga are offered in the indoor pool

**More on the wellbeing activities:** The spa also hosts detox retreats, or you can choose your own tailor-made retreat, choosing everything from your treatments and menus to activities. Yoga classes (private and group) are usually held on terraces overlooking the sunrise or sunset, or inside in a studio if needed. Yoga is generic hatha, taught by a resident teacher Christine Francis – it's suitable for all levels, including complete beginners, though like most hotels and resorts that

offer yoga you wouldn't come here to expand your practice. Aqua yoga is pretty simple too by virtue of the fact that you're chest-deep in H2O. This is a busy family resort, so if you want the 'om' factor, opt for low season – you can swim from mid April. Ask for a peaceful room near the spa or a 'residence' and organise for spa dishes to be delivered to you by your private splash pool.

**More on the spa:** Thalassa Spa is large – set over 1,800 metres, with 18 treatment rooms (including seven dedicated to thalassotherapy) and 58 treatments on the menu. Despite its size, the staff members are super-attentive. We particularly liked Micheala's magic hands. There's a blissful seawater thermal pool – with underwater jets – overlooking a courtyard with fountain, and an 18 m swimming pool dazzling with natural light and overlooking a courtyard. There's also a hair salon, squash court, gym and 2 outdoor tennis courts. Parts of the spa feel a little tired, with treatment rooms a tad cramped, basic showers (no rains or jets or waterfalls) and just a plain and simple sauna and steam room – perfectly fine but not, say, your Corinthia-style glass-sided oligarchs' sauna.

**More on the family friendly activities:** If you don't have children, get some. Anassa is the queen of retreats when it comes to kids and a team of Mary Poppinses look after all ages. The creche doesn't have much natural daylight but the locally-themed murals are cool and there's a sweet nap room with multiple wooden cots. Globetrotters Club is for tinies aged four months to three years and they go swimming alongside a host of other activities. Adventurers Club caters for three to five year olds; Voyagers Club takes five to seven year olds and Pioneers Club handles eight to 13 year olds. All clubs have a packed programme of sports, games and activities hosted by expert 'Rangers'. Watersports are really strong and children can dive from age ten. Teen Club focuses around 'Escape', a dedicated teen hangout with pool, table tennis, air hockey, Wii and videos. There's a flexible programme of sports and activities – including water polo, volley ball, tennis lessons and beach BBQs.



The creche at Anassa

Room service will make freshly made organic pureed food, even taking care of allergies and kosher requirements. There are cookies and milk at bedtime. Anassa also offer Baby Go Lightly – delivering everything even the most exacting parent might need from strollers to nappies, sterilising units, baby foods and toys. They even provide baby bathrobes and junior slippers in the rooms. Naturally there is babysitting on tap (from E13 (£11) per hour).



The lobby's Liberate style staircase

**More on the inside:** The main hotel building is a cream dream with mosaic floors, lots of marble and a Liberate style double staircase. Upstairs there are light suffused monastic style cloisters and Moorish courtyards with tinkling water.

The lower category room interiors are simple – think Habitat by way of Provence – with lots of pastels, neutrals, marble flooring and Med ambience. The swankier residences have splashes of colour – blue

sofas and the like – and the odd Greek urn or classical bust. Interior designer Joelle Pleot was in charge, and nearly everything was custom made in Cyprus.

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**More on the bedrooms:** There are 169 rooms, all with balconies, including four villas or 'residences'. Suites range from junior up to presidential, such as the Anax suite – two bedrooms with balcony overlooking the sea and in the dome of the main building. Aphrodite (views of sunset and Akamas Peninsula) and Adonis (sunrise and the village) – both presidential – have Jacuzzis and big terraces. If you want to save cash, opt for a bedroom set back in the village – there are enough gorgeous spaces on the property that you'll only need your room for sleeping. If you really want to splash out, go for a residence like Alycone with unobstructed views of the sea and a private pool.



All of the three-bedroom suites like this one have a view across the bay

**More on the outside:** The property is akin to a Cypriot village with whitewashed walls, blue doors, wooden shutters – very Med. There's a chapel (where they hold weddings), a village square (for feasts and fairs), village houses plus the Anassa hotel itself, built like a Byzantine palace. It's all set in splendid gardens of bougainvillea, herbs and flowers stepping prettily down the hillside to the sea. A large palm fringed terrace overlooking the sea is perfect for drinks. There are three outdoor pools, including one for children.

**Other lovely stuff you can do:** Take a boat trip to Blue Lagoon (apparently the clearest water in Europe). St George's Island offers diving close to the hotel – you may see barracuda or octopus, even when snorkelling; and if you dive, you could see dolphin and turtles. The Baths of Aphrodite is a 3km cycle ride away – it's where Aphrodite bathed after having her wicked way with Adonis. The surrounding botanical gardens have enormous gum trees and the air is thickly scented with figs. You can cycle off-track along the rugged coast with just goats for company – and peek over the vertiginous hillside onto the azure sea: scenery doesn't get more spectacular than this.



Anassa's village square

**Food & Drink:** You're spoilt for choice with four restaurants, a swim up bar with underwater stools, a village square for fiestas, and a beach BBQ with flame torches. Helios does European/Med fine dining with long stemmed wine glasses, long stemmed flowers and black grand piano. Basiliko does good fusion food and is intimate – just 12 tables with ultra comfortable seating in the wine cellar. It's candlelit, with a cobbled floor, and doors opening onto the terrace (the lobster

sashimi, octopus sashimi and black cod are all great). Amphora offers an international buffet while Pelagos does good fresh fish, from just-caught red snapper to superb Octopus Stifado. Or just eat tiger prawns or grilled halloumi at the beach BBQ.

If you want spa food, the Amphora breakfast buffet offers everything from home made muesli to almond milk and nuts. Throughout the day, health conscious choices have the Anassa sun logo against them on the menu (gazpacho, grilled veg, seafood linguine, pan-fried red mullet for instance.) Or you can meet with the chef and he'll tailor a menu to suit you – from detox to weight loss.

**Fellow guests:** The majority of guests are British and Russian (often accompanied by bodyguards) plus a smattering of Cypriots and other Europeans. The retreats tend to lure extremists (triathletes and the like who relish the Iron Man location with must-cycle hills and adjoining sea) while everyone from grannies to toddlers with a mild sense of adventure get netted by Water Camp. It wouldn't suit the mega health nut – the focus is on holiday rather than serious retreat.



**What's queenly:** The extremely friendly but professional staff and its profound child-friendliness. The stunning location doesn't hurt either.

**What's lowly:** 4 euros for a 500ml bottle of water, and not even a free one by the bed seemed stingy (you'll drink at least four bottles a day in high season). Sometimes in high holiday season the noise reaches earplug level.

**Getting there:** It's 45 minutes from Paphos airport. Transfers cost from E65 (£55) depending on time of day.

**Costs:** A studio suite for two costs from €310 (£265) per night bed and breakfast in low season (October/November and May, excluding half term) to €580 (£495) in high season (August). Meanwhile Aether Residence – a three bedroom villa with pool (that can sleep nine people) costs €4,790 (£4,088) per night year round.

Spa treatments vary in cost. The Undaria Seaweed scrub costs E60 (£51). The Osea Sea of Life facial costs €149 (£127). The Four Greek Gods includes thalasso treatments, a facial, and breathing exercises and costs €275 (£234). A 5-day Flipper Camp costs €800 (£682) per person, based on four participating. A private yoga class costs €94 (£80). Babysitting costs from €13 (£11) per hour.

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A view of the Anassa resort