



### Fact File: Springtime in Cyprus

**Distance:** 767km (477 miles) over eight days, with 15,750m elevation.

**Route:** An anti-clockwise route predominantly in and around the Troodos mountain range and the Paphos forest and hills.

**Conditions:** Generally warm and bright. Cooler at higher altitudes. Days two and three were very windy due to a Coptic storm. All on surfaced roads.

**Bike:** Giant road bike.

**Maps:** Strava and Google Maps on a phone, plus a National Geographic paper map of Cyprus.

**I'm glad I had...** Leg warmers. Both long- and short-sleeve jerseys.

**Next time I would...** Book accommodation as I go for greater flexibility. Daily checks on **booking.com** showed a range of options were available.

**Further info:** [cyclingcyprus.org](http://cyclingcyprus.org). Follow [joeliscycling](#) on Instagram.



there were 14 inhabitants; previously there had been 400. Dereliction is everywhere.

The southern face of the Paphos hills took me through acres of vineyards. There were row upon row of small, gnarled trunks ready to produce grapes for the Cypriot wine industry. I then passed Polemi, where the former British detention centre still stands as a reminder of colonial rule and of darker parts of our history.

Under early morning woodsmoke, three mouflon caught my eye. I was too slow to photograph them, so I convinced myself that being in the moment was more important than recording it.

The heart of Ezousa Valley is full of wineries and vineyards. Most gardens have fruit trees, and there are countless unpicked lemons. Springtime wildflowers were bursting into life. Workers meant to be fixing the roads were not. The group I passed were taking time out – lying down, chatting, drinking coffee and smoking. Maybe we could learn something from their relaxed attitude?

Towards Mount Olympus, I rode through Gerovasa-Trozena. There is little evidence of Gerovasa's existence. Trozena, although abandoned, is eerily intact. The church is still maintained while the village, stuck in time, is slowly decaying. I should have spent more time here but knew I had a 1,600m climb ahead, so I pushed on.

**Clockwise from top left:** The Troodos mountain range stretches across most of the western side of Cyprus. Joel on his road bike near home, sans luggage. Lemon trees, along with olives, almonds and pine trees, provide the background scents to Cyprus in the spring

### NEW JOURNEYS ON OLD ROADS

There is no easy way to ride up a mountain. My way was to attack double-figure gradients with energy, then take the gentler gradients at a comfier, more consistent pace. I also stopped for the odd Cypriot coffee, which I drank like an 18-year-old drinking shots: gulp, contorted face, move on.

More and more yellow gorse appeared. Pine trees closed in around me and black flies began ping-ponging off my helmet. I knew I was near the top. At 1,952m, Mount Olympus is Cyprus's highest peak. I didn't take the road up to the radar station at the summit, but pressed on.

I cycled downhill through villages such as Kyperounta, renowned for its healthy air, then Lagoudera. After that I sweated my way up to Madari, another peak, then dropped down into villages thick with almond blossom and fruit groves.

I followed a sign saying Zoopigi Old Road. Such roads aren't uncommon in Cyprus. They're the town/village road from once upon a time, and they're usually quiet, wriggly and surrounded by nature. Although tarmacked, they tend not to be maintained. Nevertheless, I'm always encouraged by these 'old road' signs.

Along the valley on the south of the Troodos range, I zipped through an area renowned for its fruit and vegetables. Kiosks exist in most villages, providing refreshments, while coffee shops are everywhere.

My final day began with a stunning, fiery red sunrise. At the top of Kionia, I chatted to a scout leader who was sending his troops on a hike. Then I found myself on familiar roads closer to home. It had been a great trip, showing me parts of Cyprus I'd never properly explored. It was a reminder that some of the best journeys can start and end at your own back door. ●

Orchids are abundant in Marathasa Valley

