

# WAY TO GO



Cyprus Today's Şirin Damdelen on a Segway



From left, Christoforos Oxinos, Panayiota Papaleyriacou, Şirin Damdelen and Susie Forster

## Cyprus Today reporter ŞIRIN DAMDELEN heads to South Nicosia to try out the innovative personal electric transportation — the Segway

WHIZZING through the wonders of the walled capital, through quaint alleys and by ancient sites, is truly a magical journey only a few minutes from our doorstep.

Sight-seeing never felt as much fun as it was on two wheels, smoothly gliding at a maximum speed of 20kph.

But it wasn't on a bicycle or scooter. Just a three-minute walk from the Lokmaci border crossing, Segway Station offers a 2.5-hour tour on a Segway — a battery powered vehicle that moves when you shift your weight and turns with a simple press of the handle bar.

Once you get on these mean machines, you will never want to walk again.

The venture was opened in 2011, by Andreas Theodotou and his brother Loizos after they were inspired when they saw it abroad.

"I saw a Segway tour in Munich and I wanted to bring the idea here," said Mr Theodotou.

"The tour includes most of what is worth visiting within the walls. People who live in Nicosia and come to the tour are surprised by what they don't know about.

"People love the Segway experience combined with sightseeing. Everybody is happy as it is fun," he said, adding three-quarters of visitors are foreign, including many expats from North Cyprus, Paphos and the British bases.

It doesn't seem surprising then that the company's South Nicosia tour was recently awarded five stars by review-based travel website TripAdvisor, and voted top out of four activities in the area in the TripAdvisor Popularity Index.

After a small training session with Mr Theodotou, in which the trickiest part was trying to balance on the Segway, we were soon off around town, following our tour guide Maria Iliia, from Greece.

Worth about £8,000 each, the Segways take 2.5 hours to charge. Each has a name and mine was "supernatural" — quite fitting as I felt like it was something out of a sci-fi film.

The first stop was a 17th-century Ottoman house, which belonged to Hadjigeorgakis Korneos, now an ethnological museum featuring a hamam (Turkish bath) and courtyard.

Next was the Archbishop's Palace, built in 1690, where current Archbishop Chrysostomos is based. It features statues of the late leader of the Republic of Cyprus, Archbishop Makarios as well as the Mercedes and Cadillac gifted to him by the Russian embassy and late US president Richard Nixon.

Some 3,000 icons lay in the neighbouring Byzantine museum.

Opposite sits the first school on the island, which is 200 years old and is now a music school.

Other highlights include craft workshops, a newly excavated medieval site, the Omerye mosque and hamam, the Ayois Antonios Church, the Famagusta Gate, and an ancient aqueduct.

I slowly got the hang of parking up against a wall to get off the vehicle, but I increasingly did not want to get off of it. It became easy to follow my natural body movements and at one point where there were no cars, near the UN buffer zone, Maria Iliia told us we could speed up, reaching our full speed limit which was not only satisfying but created a refreshing breeze in the summer heat.

Speed junkies may opt for the Trikkies, the latest addition to Segway Station, which reach 30kph.

Mr Theodotou added: "If it was possible, we would want to do a tour of the whole walled city."

Right, Christoforos Oxinos leads the group in a tour of the Old Town in South Nicosia



Panayiota Papaleyriacou, left, gets directions from Christoforos Oxinos



Owner of Segway Andreas Theodotou

### SEGWAY FACTS

THE Segway was invented by Dean Karnen in 2001, after he founded a company researching zero-emission transportation solutions using "dynamic stabilisation" technology in 1999.

In 2009, British entrepreneur James Heselden took over ownership of the company.

In 2010, the businessman died, aged 62, after plunging 30 feet from a cliff in West Yorkshire into the River Wharfe.

Police said a "Segway-style vehicle" was found at the scene.

Former US president George Bush hit the headlines in 2003 with an epic Segway failure, after falling off one at his family estate in Kennebunkport, Maine.

Journalist and TV personality Piers Morgan was quick to mock Mr Bush by running the headline, "You'd have to be an idiot to fall off, wouldn't you Mr President", in the Daily Mirror in 2003.

Some four years later karma came back to bite Mr Morgan after he fell off a 12mph Segway by Santa Monica Beach in California and broke three ribs. It came three days before he was due to appear as a judge on the grand final of reality show America's Got Talent.



Segways parked at various stops along the route Photos: Susie Forster

### SEGWAY TOURS OF SOUTH NICOSIA



Guide Maria Iliia

TOURS cost 44 euros per person. Segway Station is located at Αισχύλου (Aischylou) Street, Nicosia, which is a five-minute walk from the Lokmaci border crossing. Segway also organises parties, events and treasure hunts and now do tours at Protaras. Those wanting more information should visit [www.segwaystationcyprus.com](http://www.segwaystationcyprus.com).