



**ARCHAEOLOGICAL PARK OF PAFOS**

REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS  
DEPUTY MINISTRY OF TOURISM

## Introduction

Go up the steps after the ticketing office, and you will see stretching out in front of you the region, where Nea Pafos was located during the ancient times.

According to Strabo and Pausanias, the city of Pafos was built for the first time in the 12th century B.C. after the end of the Trojan War by Agapinor, king of Tegea in Peloponnesus.

This tradition refers to Palaipafos, which was situated approximately 17 km from the current city of Pafos, in the village of Kouklia. The famous sanctuary, known around the entire ancient world, dedicated to the great Goddess of Cyprus that was identified as Aphrodite, goddess of love and beauty, was also located there.

Nea Pafos was founded at the end of the 4th century B.C. by king Nicocles, the last king of Pafos. Nicocles decided to build on this cape a new city, around a small bay that was about to become the port of the city. The city was built according to Hippodamian plan, with organised grid street-system and based on an urban plan with squares of buildings and well defined zones of commercial, public and residential use. It was protected by tall walls and covered an area of about 950.000 square meters. Nea Pafos became the economic and commercial centre of the kingdom, while Palaipafos remained the religious centre and seat of the king.

Later, during the 2nd century B.C. the Ptolemies transferred the capital of Cyprus to Pafos, because of the city's proximity to Alexandria and of its large port. This was used as a naval base but also for the trade and export to Egypt of the island's raw materials, mainly copper and timber.

In 58 B.C. Cyprus passes in the hands of Romans and Pafos remains the political and administrative centre of the island. The Roman proconsul resides here; the city acquires an even greater importance and honorary names like Augusta, Claudia and Flavia are given to it. The climax of its blooming is at the end of the 2nd - beginning of the 3rd century A.D. During that period rich public and private buildings are erected and many of their ruins have survived up to present, which you can see in this archaeological park.

The majestic public buildings of this period like the Agora, the Theatre, the Odeion, the Asklepieion and temples dedicated to various gods and emperors, the sewage system, the public baths testify the high standard of living of its residents. The libraries, the theatres and the Gymnasia also testify their high intellectual level.

The temple of Aphrodite in Palaipafos becomes the religious and intellectual centre of the island, as it is evolved in one of the biggest religious centres of the whole empire.

Christian places of worship make their appearance after the edict of religious freedom in the 4th century A.D. by Constantine the Great.

At the beginning of the 4th century A.D., Pafos was destroyed by earthquakes like other cities of Cyprus. The city was rebuilt; the capital however was transferred to Salamis that was named, henceforth, Constantia. Despite the fact that Pafos was reconstructed, became seat of a bishop and many churches were built there, it did not regain its old glamour.

A part of its old glory revived during the Byzantine period and later on, during the Lusignan period, when new fortification works and churches were built; its decline set in once more during the Venetian period and even more under the Ottoman domination.

The inhabitants abandoned the region around the port and built a new settlement in the plateau where the centre of the town is to be found today.

In the centuries that followed, its residents took from the area of Nea Pafos ready dressed stone blocks in order to build their houses. Thus, the entire wall structure was unfortunately destroyed, as well as the murals that decorated the walls.

Go up the steps after the ticketing office and you will see on your right hand side the Visitors Centre, where you will find information and publications on the archaeological park. Follow from there the pathway to the right and then turn left to find the House of Dionysus.

The sign that you see before entering the House, informs us that Nea Pafos is one of the monuments that belong to the World Heritage of UNESCO.

Apart from the various houses where the mosaics are to be found, excavations were carried out eastwards in the roman Odeion, the Asklepieion and the Agora. They date to the first half of the 2nd century.

### The House of Dionysus

This site was discovered by chance during levelling works. The discovery of broken pieces of tesserae led to more systematic excavations that brought to light a rich residence of the Roman period. Initially, it was considered as the palace of the Roman proconsul, due to its rich decoration. Later, however, after the discovery of the real palace in the same area and the finding of even more mosaics in the region, it became clear that this type of decoration was something usual in wealthy residences of this period. The mosaics belong to the last buildings that were erected here, on the ruins of older ones.

The building occupies an area of 2000 square meters, of which 556 are covered with mosaics. God Dionysus, god of wine, is often represented on the mosaic representations; thus, the site has been named the "House of Dionysus". It was built in the beginning of the 2nd century A.D. and was destroyed during the earthquakes of the 4th century. The impressive size of this residence that exceeds the 40 rooms, including 15 mosaic floors, testifies the high standard of living of the inhabitants during the roman period.

The atrium, the central courtyard, acted as the nucleus of the residence and the most important rooms were built around it. A colonnaded portico opened on all four sides of the atrium. The roofs sloped towards the centre aiming at collecting rainwater and directing it into a cistern underneath the atrium's floor. The residence also had a central drainage system, which was connected with the main drain that ran under the road.

There were rooms in the residence which were open to visitors, and decorated with impressive floor mosaics and murals. The bedrooms had simpler floors decorated with pebbles, while the kitchens, the workshops, baths and latrines were covered by tamped earth flooring.

Apart from the main atrium there were another two open courtyards and a pond for fish , (aquarium) covered with pink plaster, which you can see outside the covered space.

The subjects of mosaics, which covered all floors of communal use, originate from Greek mythology and they are all found in the original position in which they were discovered, except from the first one that represents the mythical monster Scylla.

The most ancient mosaics are geometric and made out of white, black or brown pebbles. The immediate next stage was the making of mosaics with cut rough stones and their perfection was succeeded with the use of tesserae cut in square. The mosaics were either colourful or black and white.

They were made by workshops, and most of the work was executed by apprentices while the master craftsman was making the main figure composition, which was the most difficult.

Once the craftsmen were levelling the ground where the mosaic was to be made, a mixture of small stones and thick lime mortar was laid. On top of this, a second layer from crashed stones and pottery fragments mixed with lime mortar was added, and above this, a fine layer of plaster. While the plaster was still wet, tesserae were laid in it. In order to make the mosaic more resistant, they rubbed the surface with marble dust, sand and lime. All tesserae are made out of local stones, of imported marble but also of glass of rare colours such as bright orange, blue, nuances of green, yellow and others. Each tessera measures about one cubic cm, except from the ones used for the human figures, which are smaller.

These representations were not the creation of a craftsman; they pre-existed as drawings and the householder could select the subjects they wished.

Many items of daily use have also been discovered in this site and are exhibited in the Archaeological Museum of Pafos.

On entering the House through the entrance, there is a mosaic to the left which is very different from the others. This originates from a Hellenistic residence of the end of the 4th century, which dated before the roman one and was found by chance in 1977, during the works for the construction of the shed. The spot where it was found was not accessible to the general public, and thus, it was transferred to the position that is found today.

On this mosaic we have the representation of a monster, Scylla, known to us via *Odyssey*. It is a monster that was the combination of a woman, a dog and a fish. Scylla was not always a monster but a beautiful woman, in whom Glafkos, a handsome young man, fell in love. She, however, did not respond to his feelings. For this reason, Glafkos sought the help of sorceress Circe, who was herself in love with him. Thus, instead of helping him, blinded by jealousy, she threw magic herbs in the bay where the young girl swam. When Scylla entered the water she was transformed into a monster that remained in the water for good, sinking the ships that passed by that spot.

Next to it, two dolphins are represented on a smaller panel and the whole composition is flanked by a frame with geometric patterns.

This mosaic is made with white, black and brown pebbles, a completely different technique from the other mosaics of the residence. It is one of the most ancient mosaics that have been discovered in Cyprus, as it was made towards the end of the 4th -beginning of the 3rd century B.C.

Exactly opposite, we see the first mosaic of the roman house. It represents Narcissus, son of River Cephisos and the Nymph Liriope, who was so beautiful that many boys and girls fell in love with him. Narcissus, however, was too proud to respond. One day while he was hunting he was seen by nymph Echo, who fell madly in love with him but he did not respond. She was despaired by his rejection and hid in the mountains and in the forests; she became thinner and thinner, until she vanished into thin air and only her voice remained. For this reason, Echo is heard by everyone but seen by no-one.

Gods in order to punish Narcissus for causing so much unhappiness, cursed him to be punished in the same way. Thus, one day when Narcissus sat on the bank of a lake, he saw his reflection in

the water and fell in love with himself. Brought to despair by these feelings he was worn and wasted away with love. Gods, however, felt pity for him and turned him into a flower that grows near the water, the narcissus.

In this panel, Narcissus admires himself in the water of the lake.

A part of this mosaic was destroyed during levelling works and thus a large section of the geometric pattern is modern.

Next to Narcissus, we see the mosaic of the four seasons, which as the previous one was badly damaged and restored. It consists of five panels, one on each corner and one in the centre. We recognise in them the personifications of four seasons: Summer in the upper left, crowned with ears of corn and a sickle in the hand. Spring in the upper right is crowned with flowers and holds a shepherd's crook. Autumn in the lower right holds a pruning knife and is crowned with leaves; winter is represented in the lower left as an old man with grey hair and beard. The figure in the middle represents most probably the personification of Time.

All panels are framed by a band of cubes in perspective, and in the outer frame there are two tablets with the inscription REJOICE on the one and IN THY SELF on the other. This type of inscriptions usually existed at the entrance of residences, which leads to the conclusion that this is also where the entrance of the house was located.

We proceed to the left, going up the wooden bridge; the largest room is unfolding in front of us, measuring 11.5 X 8.5 m. This room was the tablinum, a place which was used as a reception room but also as a dining room. The floor is decorated with a mosaic that includes vintage scenes in the centre. On its three sides, small shields known as peltae are depicted on a wide band with geometric patterns and further out, lay a geometric pattern based on the meander. Unfortunately, both bands on the western side were destroyed.

When the room was used for dining, guests were eating reclining on couches which were arranged like the letter U in the area where the band with peltae is located. In that way, all

guests were facing the centre, where there was most probably some kind of entertainment, perhaps dancers. The space left behind the couches remained free so that servants assisting the guests could circulate.

The big representation at the entrance of this room depicts the triumphal procession of Dionysus returning from an expedition to India. The god is seated on a chariot drawn by two panthers in the centre of the composition. His followers are on his left and right side: satyrs, Bacchantes, god Pan, who was half man and half goat with horns on the forehead, and two Indian slaves, recognisable by their dark skin.

On the left and right side of the triumph of Dionysus, there are two rather incongruous figures with the rest of the panel. These are the Dioskouroi, the twin brothers Castor and Pollux that were born from an egg after the union of their mother Leda with Zeus, who was disguised as a swan. The beautiful Helen of Troy came out from the second egg. The Dioskouroi were attributed with preventative and repellent evil powers; it was believed that they brought good fortune and for this reason they were placed here.

The central panel is a composition of vintage scenes with mainly vines laden with grapes, humans picking grapes but also other scenes from country life: birds, animals and a big peacock in the centre framed by a small winged Eros holding the peacock's tail.

Returning back and descending the bridge, we advance to the atrium, where we will see on the left four panels in a row.

The first one represents the story of Pyramos and Thisbe, two young persons that lived in Babylonia and were neighbours. As the families of the two youngsters were hostile to each other, they kept the love that united them secret. One evening they had agreed to meet under a



mulberry tree, by a spring. Thisbe, having her face hidden under a veil, arrived there first and while she waited, a lioness showed up with her mouth full of blood after killing an animal. Thisbe, frightened ran to hide herself into a nearby cave, however, in her rashness, she dropped the veil she was holding. The lioness took the veil and ripped it apart with blood left on it. Pyramos, on approaching and seeing the wild animal with the blood-stained veil of his beloved, believes that Thisbe is dead, and out of despair, he thrusts a knife into his side. When Thisbe comes back and sees Pyramos dead, unable to bear the pain she took his knife and follows her beloved to death.

This myth was saved by Ovid in "Metamorphoses" and gave the inspiration to Shakespeare for his plays "A Midsummer Night's Dream", and "Romeo and Juliet".

On this mosaic Thisbe is standing while Pyramos is represented half reclining. In the middle is the lioness having Thisbe's veil in her mouth. The names of the two young persons are written in Greek above them.

On the second panel, which is the largest of all four, we see the story of Icarios, an Athenian gardener who offered hospitality to Dionysus when the latter was visiting Athens. In return the god taught Icarios how to cultivate the vine and make wine out of its fruit, introducing in this way the viniculture to mankind. He warned him, however, to be careful with his wine. Icarios forgot the god's advice and while he was carrying his first vintage, he gave to two shepherds he met on the way to drink wine. They got drunk and believing that he poisoned them, they killed him. In the scene represented here, we see to the left god Dionysus with Nymph Akme, crowned with vine leaves drinking wine. In the centre Icarios is depicted and behind him, the ox with the cart loaded with leather flasks full of wine. To the right the shepherds are to be seen, drunk out of the wine they have consumed. The inscription above them defines them as THE FIRST WINE DRINKERS. Such inscriptions also exist above Icarios, god Dionysus and Akme.

The next panel depicts Neptune and Amymone. Amymone was one of the 50 daughters of king Danaos in Peloponnesus. Once, all springs in Argolis dried out and king Danaos sent his daughters to search for water. Amymone met a satyr on her way who tried to ravish her. She

was helped, however, by Neptune, god of waters. The god, charmed by her beauty, revealed to her the spring of Lerna, thus, bringing an end to the drought.

On the mosaic we see Neptune, trident in hand, advancing towards Amymone. In the middle, Eros holds a rectangular parasol in one hand and a torch in the other, while the metal jug in the centre symbolises the water.

The last panel illustrates the myth of Apollo and Daphne. Daphne was a Nymph, daughter of the River Peneus that had sworn eternal chastity. God Apollo, however, fell in love with her and after failing to convince her to consent voluntarily, he chased her. Daphne brought to despair asked her father to help her, and her feet immediately remained rooted on the ground, her body was transformed into a trunk and her hair and arms turned into branches and leaves. She was, thus, transformed into a tree, which remained the beloved tree of god Apollo.

Here we see the scene where Daphne is transformed into a tree laurel. Next to her is her father Peneus, reclining, and to the right, Apollo, with bow in hand, watching her with amazement.

At the end of the corridor, we see the mosaic with Phaedra and Hippolytos. Phaedra was the second spouse of the king of Athens Theseus, while Hippolytos was the son born from his first spouse Antiope. Phaedra fell in love with Hippolytos, and one day, while Theseus was away, she sent her stepson a love letter in which she confessed her love. Hippolytos did not respond to her feelings and she was frightened of the consequences of her action; when Theseus returned, she accused Hippolytos for what she had done, that is to say for sending her a letter in which he confessed his love to her. Theseus, outraged, asked God Neptune to punish his son and he sent a wild bull that frightened the horses of Hippolytos throwing him on the ground and killing him. After Hippolytos' death, stricken by remorse, Phaedra killed herself.

The scene we see here depicts Phaedra seated, while Hippolytos has in his hand the letter she sent him and seems embarrassed. On Phaedra's side, an Eros holds a burning torch, symbolising the passion burning in her heart. Equally important is the fact that Eros is depicted only on her side, thus showing that feelings were not mutual.

Proceeding to the left and then to the right, we will see a large room, decorated with a polychrome geometric pattern. Its decoration consists of two bands forming circles between them filled with objects and utensils of daily use like craters, jugs, trays and others. The intervals between them are decorated with a great variety of geometric motifs.

Further to the right, we find a beautiful mosaic that represents the rape of Ganymede. The panel's field consists of a combination of octagons and meanders. It represents the moment in which Zeus, in the form of an eagle, carries away young Ganymede and lifts him to the sky. Ganymede, was a shepherd from Troy who was considered as the most beautiful of all mortals. Therefore, Zeus decided to carry him away and bring him to Olympus where he became the cup-bearer of gods.

This mosaic is a copy of an older one, which was done for a different site. Thus, the mosaicist being obliged to adapt it in the dimensions of this spot had to trim the tips of the eagle's wings.

Turning to the right, we reach the atrium area, an area which as mentioned, was used as an internal courtyard and gave light into the house. The roof was sloping, just like today, aiming to collect rainwater, and through the gutters, to store it in underground cisterns.

Around the atrium, the floor is decorated with mosaics depicting hunting scenes.

Such scenes were the most beloved subject and particularly popular in northern Egypt, from where they spread in the entire Roman Empire. This also explains the variety of exotic beasts illustrated here, many of which are not indigenous to Cyprus. Of particular importance is the representation of the moufflon, the largest endemic animal of Cyprus.

Westwards of the atrium, we find the most plain of all mosaics of the house, which is in black and white and has a geometric pattern. The mosaics are also twice as large compared to the others. At this very spot, however, an important treasure was hidden, which was discovered during the construction works of the shed. About 2500 Ptolemaic coins were found in an amphora, which date to the period between 204 and 88 B.C., and this, is the most significant

treasure that was found in Cyprus. The coins were minted in Pafos, as a capital it had its own mint.

Next to the mosaic in black and white, there is a room with soil floor, and after that, a room with geometric design. Here, in four rows and four panels in each row, a different geometric pattern is represented each time. The wealth of colours and the complicated geometric patterns make these panels particularly impressive. These are rare for Eastern Mediterranean in contradiction to areas of today's France, where they were very common.

Right next to it, in a small room, there is a panel with an elaborate geometric pattern, and in the middle a peacock with its fully spread rich feathers. As we have mentioned earlier on, the intense colours on mosaics, like the blue in this case, are not stones but glass, which was probably manufactured in Pafos, as glass workshops have been discovered here.

#### The Villa of Theseus

We come out from the House of Dionysus and advance westwards, where at a distance of about 150 metres the ruins of a big building known as the Villa of Theseus are to be found.

Its palatial character, the size and luxury that existed in this building leads to the conclusion that it was the villa of the Roman proconsul of Cyprus. It was built at the end of the 3rd century A.D. and was destroyed by earthquakes in the 4th century A.D. After the earthquakes, it was rebuilt and was completely destroyed and abandoned during the Arab raids in the 7th century A.D.

It is the largest building of all known public buildings in the entire Roman Cyprus. It measures 120X80 m. and consists of more than 100 rooms, which are built in the four wings around a colonnaded open courtyard. In the eastern, western and northern wing the residential,

domestic, working and communal areas are located, while the official and ritual areas lay in the southern wing. Ruins of baths have been unearthed in the south-eastern part.

We find in the villa different building phases that are represented through finds, architectural parts and mosaics originating from the 3rd, 4th and 5th century A.D.

By advancing towards the modern wooden construction and going up to the left on the elevated section, we can have a general view of the baths, which are on the south-eastern corner of the building. Unlike other large baths, the bathers here did not have to follow a predetermined direction. The frigitarium, that is to say the cold room, is large and is located in the centre; it is decorated with a geometric mosaic. On the north side, there are two big basins for cold ablutions, which were lathered with marble slabs.

On the south side are the heated rooms of the baths. Hot air passed from the nearby fire chambers and heated the hypocaust floors of the moderately heated room, the steam bath and the warm bath. There were also changing rooms, latrines and rooms for anointing with essential oils. All rooms were decorated with mosaic floors, murals and marble revetment on the walls. The baths remained in use for a long period of time, and during their last years of operation, they were also used by the public.

We advance on the wooden corridor, where we will find to the left a big mosaic representation. The mythical scene of Theseus who kills the Minotaur is depicted on this composition. It is the most ancient mosaic of the 3rd century A.D.

The scene is represented in a circular space with Theseus as the central figure getting prepared to kill the Minotaur in the Labyrinth. Behind him is the personification of Labyrinth, in the form of an old man. Two feminine figures are depicted above them: Ariadne to the left, with the help of whom Theseus managed to come out from the Labyrinth and Crete to the right. The circular decoration around the composition depicts the figured representation of Labyrinth.

According to Greek mythology, Theseus was the son of king Aegeus and one of the heroes of Athens. Athenians had been compelled by Minos, king of Crete, to send every seven years as a tribute of subordination seven young boys and seven young girls, as prey to the Minotaur, who lived in his palace's Labyrinth. Theseus decided to travel with these young people to Crete, in order to kill the Minotaur and release his homeland from this painful tribute. King Aegeus, with pain in the soul, sent his son with the others, asking him to replace the black cloths of the boat with white ones upon his return, thus, giving a sign that he comes back alive. In Crete, Theseus managed to enter the Labyrinth, to kill the Minotaur and to come out safe, thanks to the thread given to him by Ariadne, the daughter of King Minos, who fell in love with him and decided to help him.

Theseus takes Ariadne with him and together with the other young people they sail back to Athens. They forget, however, to change the black sails on the boat and Aegeus, who gazes the sea every day waiting for his son to come back alive, seeing the black sails on the boat, believes that his child has been lost and throws himself into the sea, which ever since bears his name: the Aegean Sea.

This mosaic suffered damage occasionally and has been restored at the end of the 4th century A.D. This is also visible through the stylistic differences, like for instance the heads of Theseus and Crete, which recall the Byzantine style.

#### Achilles Mosaic

Advancing north of the mosaic of Theseus, up to the end of the wooden corridor, we reach the main room of the palace that was used by the Governor as an officiating space. The rear of the room, that had the shape of an apse, has a floor decorated with opus sectile, that is to say marble plates in different colours and shapes. The front of the room had a mosaic floor with panels. Only one of those is saved and well preserved, the representation of the birth of Achilles. Very few remains from the other three panels; they possibly depicted scenes from the

life of Achilles. The mosaic dates to the 5th century A.D. During that period, themes from the life of heroes of Greek mythology were particularly popular.

Achilles was the son of Peleus, king of Myrmidones, and Thetis, daughter of Nereus, god of the waters. When Achilles was born, his mother wanted to make him immortal by bathing the infant in the waters of Styx, which had miraculous qualities. The only vulnerable point in the body of Achilles remained his heel from where his mother held him. A wound received at that spot in the Trojan War caused his premature death.

On the mosaic, we have a static scene of the birth of the hero. His mother, Thetis reclines in the centre and to the left her husband Peleus is seated. On the left hand side, a nurse holds the infant and is preparing to give him his first bath, while behind Peleus the three Fates are depicted: Clotho, Atropos and Lachesis.

This representation strongly recalls the way with which are portrayed the Nativity and the first bath of Jesus Christ in the Byzantine and medieval churches.

### The House of Orpheus

At a small distance westwards of the Villa of Theseus, and after walking towards the sea at the edge of the archaeological site, you will find one more house known as the House of Orpheus. The building has the same architectural type as the House of Dionysus, that is to say an atrium, and many rooms built around it. There also existed baths here. It has been erected at the same period as the House of Dionysus, around the end of the 2nd century A.D.

Unfortunately, great damage was caused due to the removal of materials from the site. A part of the wall-structure survives on the eastern side, and several mural fragments that have been found in the region testify that the walls of the house were covered with wall-paintings.

Out of all the rooms that have been excavated, three of them have mosaic floors, while the rest have floors of beaten earth.

The rooms with mosaic floors are located in the northern part of the house. The first of them depicts Hercules and the Lion of Nemea, and above, Amazon with her horse.

Hercules is the best known hero of Greek mythology. He was famous for his superhuman powers and had to carry out Twelve Labours.

The first of these twelve labours was to kill the huge lion of Nemea, that was lacerating humans and animals, terrorising the population of the region, and the skin of which was impenetrable even with iron weapons.

When Hercules met the lion, he used his arrows but these were proved unable to kill it; he, thus, took his club and followed it in a cave which had two entrances. After closing one entrance with stones, he entered through the other one in order to find it.

Without using his club, he took the lion by the neck and with the superhuman power of his hands, he killed it. He then took the lion's skin to king Eurystheus as a proof of his labour.

The mosaic depicts to us the scene where Hercules is prepared to rush on the lion, after leaving his club on the floor.

In the second panel, we have an Amazon with her horse. The Amazons were a mythical population that lived in a country of their own and consisted entirely of women. They were daughters of Mars and Aphrodite. They mated once a year with men from neighbouring countries, and from the children born they only kept the girls. The boys, they either killed them or they returned them to their fathers. They were all trained in the use of bow so as to protect their country, and they were considered equal to male warriors for their bravery and ability.

One of the labours of Hercules was to take off the girdle worn by Hippolyte, queen of Amazons. Perhaps, this is also the reason that the two representations are found together.

The Amazon is represented here, wearing the Phrygian cap and having in her hand the characteristic double axe.



In the next large panel, we have Orpheus and the beasts, whose name was given to the house. Orpheus was the son of Iagros, king of Thrace, and muse Kalliopi. The myth says that god Apollo himself taught him music and gave him a lyre. Orpheus played the lyre so harmoniously and sang so gently, that no one could resist to his music. Even the wild beasts of the forest gathered around him to listen to him.

Orpheus was one of the Argonauts and after their expedition, he returned to Thrace, where he wandered in the forest playing music. There, he met nymph Eurydice, he loved her and married her. His happiness, however, did not last long. Eurydice, bitten by a snake died, leaving Orpheus inconsolable. His song was so sad that even the stones cracked. Gods, out of pity, allowed him to go down to Hades in order to find Eurydice again and bring her back. He enchanted with his music Cerberus, the horrible guardian of Hades, and Pluto bent due to the pain of his music. He, thus, accepted to let Eurydice leave under the condition that when they will leave Hades, Orpheus at the front and Eurydice behind, he must not look back to see her, not even once. Orpheus accepted the condition, however, he could not resist on the way, he looked back to see his beloved one, and thus, Eurydice returned again in the kingdom of Hades.

On the mosaic, we see Orpheus seated, his lyre in hand, and around him the enchanted beasts of the forest listening to him.

An inscription above informs us that it was made by Titus Gaius Restitutus, meaning the owner of the house and not the craftsman that made it. What is remarkable here is that although the name is Latin, it is written in Greek characters.

A third room in the south-east is covered with a single coloured mosaic made out of greenish grey tesserae. Its geometric pattern is exclusively traced out by the way the tesserae are set in the mortar and consists of octagons separated by squares. This type of mosaic is very unusual and rare; however, it was unfortunately very badly damaged as it lies just below the ground level.

Now follow the reverse way towards the exit so as to find the next house.

## The House of Aion

When coming out from the site of the Villa of Theseus, you will see in front of the entrance to the left, a covered complex with mosaics known as the House of Aion. These belonged to a building, which was located opposite the villa of the Roman proconsul. The precise plan of the building is unknown because excavations are still carried out. One of the walls of the house has been restored and includes a niche, where a statue probably existed. The largest room measuring 9X 7.5 m was the reception room and the dining room at the same time, and is decorated with mosaic representations from Greek mythology. The other rooms on the east and north have mosaics with geometric patterns. The walls of the house were covered with murals, part of which has been restored and exposed in the Archaeological Museum of Pafos.

The mosaics with mythological representations are made out of small tesserae measuring 2-5 mm, and cover a great spectrum of colours. They are of fine workmanship and craftsmen have achieved to render the volume and characteristics of the figures by using many hues.

The panel top right, represents the Epiphany of god Dionysus, a composition that recalls the Byzantine illustration of the birth of Jesus Christ. Newborn Dionysus sits on the lap of Hermes, while the three nymphs prepare his first bath. The three personifications of Theogonia, Nectar and Ambrosia are also depicted as well as Mount Nysa, and Tropheus, the future tutor of the newborn god. All figures are being referred by name on inscriptions in Greek.

The way that god Dionysus is represented here as the god of Wisdom and not as the god of wine and joy as it was used before, is particularly important, given the time period that these mosaics were made. These mosaics date from the beginning of the 4th century A.D., that is to say the period during which Christianity already begins to spread in Cyprus.

The nimbus around the head of baby Dionysus is also remarkable.

On the panel top left, we see the meeting of Leda, the beautiful queen of Sparta, with Zeus, who bedazzled by her beauty was transformed into a swan, in order to unite himself with her. After this union, Leda gave birth to two eggs. The twin brothers, Castor and Pollux were born out of one of them, and beautiful Helen of Troy was born out of the other.

On the panel, we see Leda getting prepared to take her bath in the River Eurotas, which is personified here as a fluvial god, while next to him is Lacedaemonia. Behind Leda are her followers, three young Spartan girls. The swan is depicted in front of her, which is unfortunately badly damaged.

In the central panel, we have two scenes, one taking place on the sea and the other on land.

Together they illustrate a beauty contest between Cassiopeia and the Nereids, Nymphs of the sea. Cassiopeia was the wife of Cepheus, king of Ethiopia, and famous for her beauty. In the scene on the sea, the Nereids Thetis, Doris and Galatea, the three most beautiful of Nereus' fifty daughters, deity of sea, are competing Cassiopeia in beauty. The winner of this contest is Cassiopeia that we see here crowned by Krisis, the personification of judgement. Aion, the rightful judge, the god of eternal time, who gave his name to this house, is in the middle.

Zeus and Athena watch the contest from above, while the Nereids are transported into the depths of the sea by Bythos and Pontos. All deities have nimbus around the head.

This story is rarely depicted. Only two other representations have been discovered, both of them in Syria.

Bottom right, we have the punishment of Marsyas by god Apollo. Marsyas was a satyr, who played flute so well that he was boasting being even better than God Apollo, god of music and patron of the Muses. Apollo, angry by the impertinence of Marsyas, challenged him to a contest between them with Muses as judges. Apollo was declared as the winner of the contest, who punished his opponent by condemning him to death.

On the panel, we see the god condemning his opponent while Marsyas is brought by two Scythians in order to be flayed alive. Plane is depicted next to Apollo as the personification of

the errant mind of Marsyas, while Olympus, pupil of Marsyas, leans on god's legs imploring him to be merciful.

The last panel bottom left depicts the Triumph of Dionysus in a completely different way than what we have seen in the House of Dionysus.

Here, we have a religious procession. Dionysus rides upon a cart driven by two centaurs. At the front there is a maenad, one of god's followers and next to her a small satyr holding a tray with fruits.

Tropheus, the tutor of Dionysus, mounted on a mule and a girl carrying a basket on her head followed them. The central part of the panel is unfortunately badly damaged. Only the torch of the torchbearer and the crossed legs of the god are preserved.

In contradiction to the procession in the House of Dionysus, here, we do not have any maenad in ecstasy nor drunken satyrs, but a serious religious procession.

In combination with the first panel where we have the Epiphany of Dionysus, we see that a new character is being given to this god, who previously was considered as the god of fun and joy. He is a wise god, who is represented as the saviour, bringing a new order to the world. Indeed, the music contest between Apollo and Marsyas, as well as the beauty contest between Cassiopeia and Nereids, show this competition between the old and the new order.

The mosaics were made in Cyprus at the beginning of the 4th century A.D. with the support of pagan aristocracy, in a period that Christianity starts, henceforth, being spread on the island. These representations appear to challenge the moral of Christianity, hoping that the old pagan religion will prevail the new, which expands threateningly.

The tour in the Archaeological Park of Pafos is completed with this impressive mosaic floor.