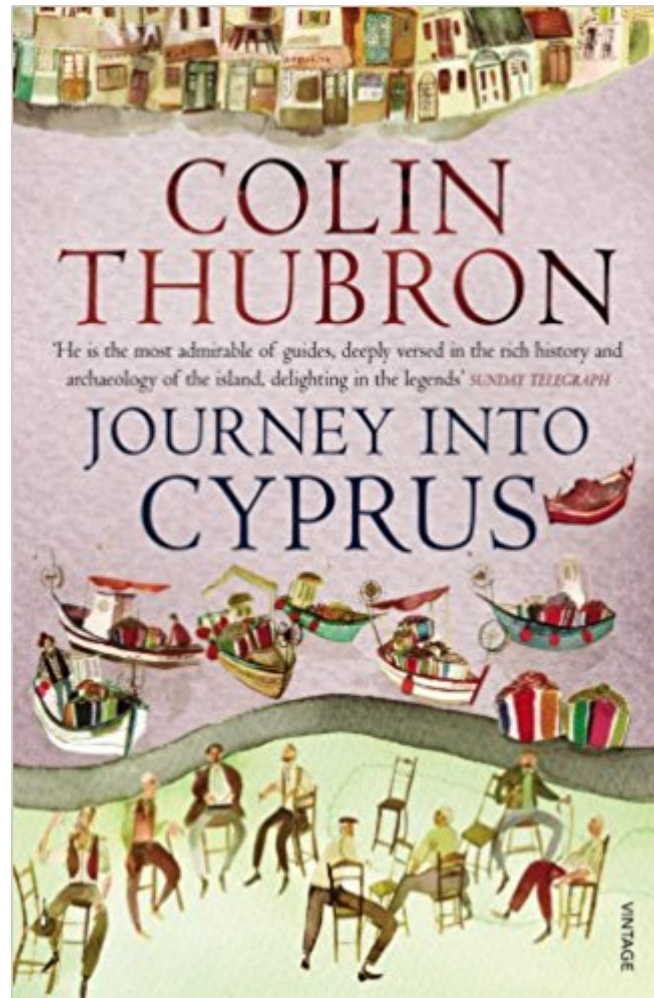




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# Journey Into Cyprus



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## Synopsis

Beautifully packaged reissue of Colin Thubron's classic which bring the whole of his backlist into Vintage, "The people, their history and the beauty of an island on the brink of tragedy." This is the account of a unique journey -- a six-hundred-mile trek on foot around Cyprus in the last year of the island's peace. Colin Thubron intertwines myth, history and personal anecdote in a quest from which the characters and places, architecture and landscape all spring vividly to the reader's eye.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Thubron writes very well indeed... He carries with him the talisman of erudition combined with intuition" Sunday Times "Thubron knows the real Cypriots... He evinces a never unsympathetic observation and a respect for the incongruous that put him in the category of Kinglake and Edward Lear" Daily Telegraph "Purchased by blistered and bleeding feet, this picture is extraordinarily detailed and vivid... An accomplished linguist and historian, his passionate concern for antiquity in all its aspects - mythological, architectural, conceptual - lends weight and warmth to every chapter" Financial Times "Colin Thubron is in a class of his own" Scotsman "Most memorable and full of insight" Lawrence Durrell

COLIN THUBRON is an acknowledged master of travel writing, and the winner of many prizes and awards. His first writing was about the Middle East -- Damascus, Lebanon and Cyprus. In 1982 he travelled into the Soviet Union in an ancient Morris Marina, pursued by the KGB, a journey he recorded in *Among the Russians*. From these early experiences developed his classic travel books:

Behind the Wall (winner of the Hawthornden Prize and the Thomas Cook Travel Award), The Lost Heart of Asia, In Siberia (Prix Bouvier) and Shadow of the Silk Road (all available in Vintage). In 2010 Colin Thubron became President the Royal Society of Literature.

My interest in this book was due to my being a young boy in Cyprus - although a foreigner - at the same time that the author was taking his long trek through the island. Cyprus was a wonderful place to be then, full of interesting things to see and experience, and intensely beautiful. Thubron describes it all in a masterful and profoundly evocative way. Although memories have faded, I can remember some of the places he writes about, and well recognize the atmosphere. He has taken it to the limit, going places where foreigners would not normally go and experiencing the island in a rather extreme way. He is at his best in a great tribute to a beautiful island, layered with cultures, histories, landscapes. I left on a RAF Hercules in 1974, as Turkey was busy invading the island, and never went back. I am sure I would never recognize the place now and know it has changed for the worse. As Thubron comments in hindsight, he has visited Cyprus in its heyday.

Not his best but interesting. A little dated to give an up to date description of present day Cyprus

Journey Into Cyprus by Colin Thubron is nothing less than essential reading for anyone with even the slightest interest in the island. Travel writing this may be, but the book does much more than merely traverse the landscape or pass by places of interest. Crucially, Journey Into Cyprus is not just a journey through Cyprus, since, by the end, the reader feels that the experience has provided more exposure than mere tourism, as if we ourselves have experienced these thoughts first hand. Colin Thubron's journey was largely on foot. It wasn't unbroken, but it did traverse Cyprus from east to west and north to south. There are occasional trips by road, but overall the text itself communicates the slow pace of the author's progress via its attention to illuminating detail alongside observation and reflection. The text even seems to have periods of rest written in, so delightfully does it capture those moments when the author paused by the roadside to sit on a stone and muse, reflect or read, or was waylaid by local custom in a coffee shop. Like all good travel writing, Journey Into Cyprus constantly communicates a sense of place. The landscape unfolds via succinct observations that paint the view. But, throughout, both the visitor's intrusion and the local's residence remain clear, their relative status unchallenged. These are foreigner's eyes, for sure, but they are opened at every turn by local invitation,

information and hospitality. But there is also history here. The name, Cyprus, itself derives from a word for copper, the metal whose mining formed the basis of the island's niche in the classical global economy. Colin Thubron's description of the copper mines - the relics and the still working - in the Troodos mountains are fascinating. If the island's name might have derived from economic activity, it is in the sphere of religion that Cyprus makes its biggest impression, and those religions are also here within these pages, described in detail, and referred to repeatedly since their significance is on-going. For two thousand years Cyprus followed the cult of Aphrodite. She, like the island itself, was never satisfied with just one relationship. She regularly moved on to another, with the apparently inevitable offspring from each encounter living a life of its own either as a mortal or as a god. And so it has remained with the island itself, where a culture of ancient Greece everywhere rendered modern by the presence of the Greek language, but in a version that Cypriots seem to have made entirely their own. There was a long flirtation with Rome, which produced palaces and theatres, decorated with mosaics that still adorn the excavated sites on the Paphos shoreline. A long and on-going marriage to Byzantium spawned the continuing dominance of the Orthodox Church in the island's life. There are over five thousand churches and monasteries and they form an integral part of southern Cypriot culture and politics. The Lusignan period may not be as well known, but it lasted more than three centuries and involved rule by French-speaking Knights of St John. They paused on their way home from the Holy Land after they had been kicked out after the Crusades. They ruled and taxed, but island culture and local tradition continued, almost in its own sphere and according to its own rules, in spite of their power. A short Venetian period saw the island exploited for the city state's commercial gain. Trade routes had to be secured. And then, in 1570, the Ottomans arrived and stayed for three hundred years, changing the nature of the debate by introducing their own religion and Turkish culture. A brief British period left Cyprus with a second language, English, which to this day allows Colin Thubron and others the illusion that communication and its associated illusion of participation are easy. And now, of course, there is partition, a Turkish north and a Greek south, the constant gap across the fence mediated by United Nations for nations not united. All this and more is in *Journey Into Cyprus* by Colin Thubron. But alongside the wayside reflections and the appreciation of landscape, there is a real glimpse into a culture born of history but expressed in this time and place as the author's journey progresses. There are anecdotes, comical moments and occasional threats along the way. The only disappointment comes when, abruptly, the journey comes to its end as the author approaches the eastern extremity of the island's tapering peninsula in the north. But then,

that it is the beauty of travel. It has to be experienced for what it is and when it happens, because at its end it is the next trip that beckons. By writing it down, however, Colin Thubron allows all of us the luxury of experiencing everything for ourselves and then the possibility of repeating it.

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