

## The Holy Monastery of Saint Nicholas of the Cats

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*"It is wonderful to see them, for nearly all are maimed by the snakes: one has lost a nose, another an ear; the skin of one is torn, another is lame: one is blind of one eye, another of both. And it is a strange thing that at the hour for their food, at the sound of a bell, they collect at the monastery and when they have eaten enough, at the sound of that same bell, they all depart together to go fight the snakes." - The Venetian Francesco Suriano (1484)*

The Monastery of Saint Nicholas of the Cats is regarded as a sacred cat haven in Cyprus, as it's name has been linked to felines for almost 2,000 years.

The original monastery was built in 327 AD, by Kalokeros, the governor of Cyprus appointed by Constantine the Great, and patronised by Saint Helen, the mother of Constantine the Great. At that time, a terrible drought affected the whole of Cyprus, and the entire island was overrun with poisonous snakes which made building the monastery a dangerous affair. Many of the inhabitants left their homes and moved off the island, for fear of the snakes, but Saint Helen came up with a solution to the plague - she ordered 1,000 cats to be shipped in from Egypt and Palestine to fight the reptiles. ([περισσότερα...](#))