

Crete, island of wonders

Trip code: CRELP0002

Self-guided hike

• Hiking • 12 days



Crete is an island of character, a rebellious island at times, but it opens its doors to you before you even knock. It is like its mountains, crisscrossed with spectacular gorges that tumble into the Libyan Sea, to tiny seaside towns where you will relax like in a dream. Crete is the quintessence of the alliance between sea and mountains, many of which exceed 2000 meters, especially in the massif of the White Mountains (Lefka Ori, in Greek) that our hike follows. In our program, the mountain,...

Highlights

1. A marvelous marriage between sea, mountain, and historical heritage
2. The gorges of Samaria, Agia Irini, and Aradena
3. Authentic welcome in a mountain inn and coastal villages

PROGRAMME

D1 Chania

From Chania airport transfer (included) to your hotel located in the center of the most beautiful city of Crete with the multiple influences of its architecture, inherited from the different occupations that Chania has known: Venetian and Ottoman. Chania is a particularly attractive, beautiful city. It is very pleasant to stroll in its alleys, on the port, or quite simply to spend the time on the terrace of a café.

Overnight in Chania.

Accommodation : Hotel

D2 Chania - Paleochora

You take the public bus to **Paleochora** (at your own expense, approx. 2 hours), a Cretan seaside village grouped together on a peninsula between two beautiful beaches. After settling in at the hotel, free day to enjoy the beautiful Cretan atmosphere and visit the village dominated by the few ruins of **Castello Selino**, erected in 1279 by the Venetians.

Overnight in Paleochora.

Accommodation : Hotel

D3 Elafonissi Beach

After a short transfer (not included) to **Krio beach**, your walk begins on a coastal path that takes you to the magical site of Elafonissi, passing the White Chapel of Agios Ioannis and Viena Beach. You will see some barrels of ancient columns, lying by the sea, and testifying to a past of several millennia. Arrival in **Elafonissi** in front of a **turquoise sea and pink sand** which makes it one of the most beautiful seaside places of Crete, therefore, very frequented in summer. Return by boat or regular bus (depending on the season) to Paleochora (not included).

Overnight in Paleochora.

Accommodation : Hotel

Main Itinerary :

D4 Paleochora - Sougia

Here is a beautiful hike that begins along the seaside, before reaching a plateau and descending to the ancient site of **Lissos**. Surprising and moving discovery of **Greek and Roman remains**, drowned in an islet of greenery and above a cove with emerald reflections, with a tiny port, only accessible by sea or on foot! After crossing a plateau, you will descend the small shaded **gorges of Selinou**, to reach the beautiful village of **Sougia**, and its beach lined with pleasant taverns.

Overnight in Sougia.

Accommodation : Hotel or Guesthouse / Studio

Main Itinerary : 15 km, 5 h, +220 m, -220 m

D5 Sougia - Pikkilassos - Sougia

Today you have the choice:

Coastal hike to the church of Agios Antonios and the site of **Pikilassos**, a small Cretan fishing village in a paradisiacal site and return to Sougia on foot or by water taxi (not included).

Instead, you can also very well, enjoy the beach and its taverns.

Overnight in Sougia.

Accommodation : Hotel or Guesthouse / Studio

Main Itinerary :

D6 The gorge of Agia Irini

After a transfer (not included) to the gorge of Agia Irini (5 km) or an additional 1h15mins walk, you go up the **gorge of Agia Irini** (entrance fee € 2 not included), more secret than this of Samaria but still very spectacular. The bed is green, planted with plane trees and oleanders, and the water runs over some portions sometimes until July. Transfer to the pastoral plateau of **Omalos** (not included, to be arranged with the hotel on-site).

Here you are in the mountains; the sea is far away...

You can also continue past the Agia Irini gorges, on foot, to Omalos. Add 2 hours of walking and 400 m of vertical drop.

Dinner and overnight in a hotel in Omalos.

Accommodation : Hotel

Main Itinerary : 10 km, 4 h 30, +500 m, -

D7 Ascent of Gingilos

At an altitude of nearly 2,000 meters, directly above the Samaria Gorge, Gingilos peak dominates the Omalos plateau, but also the Aegean Sea to the north and the Libyan to the south. Short transfer (included) at the start of the ascent which gradually reveals its most wonders. The end part is steep but superb! You can also stop at the pass before the final climb or opt for an easier hike up the mountain opposite, which stops at the Kallergi mountain hut, at 1650 m, and offers magnificent views of the Samaria Gorge. Return to Omalos on foot or by taxi (not included).

Dinner and overnight in a hotel in Omalos.

Accommodation : Hotel

Main Itinerary :

D8 Gorge of Samaria

Short transfer to **Xyloskalo** (included), to the entrance of the famous and very popular **Samaria Gorge**, that you will descend to the seaside, in the village of **Agia Roumeli**, to find the south coast. The Samaria Gorge is a colossal fault, 16 km long; it is a site **classified by Unesco**. Descending into what is one of the largest gorges in Europe is an unforgettable memory. Swimming on arrival in the Libyan Sea. Note: The gorge is open from 01/05 to 15/10. Entrance fee 5 € (not included)

Night in Agia Roumeli.

Important: Outside the opening period of the Samaria Gorge or due to inclement weather justifying the official closure of the Gorge, we offer the following program: you will be transferred early in the morning (inclusive, approx. 1 hour) to Sougia. You then take a ferry (at your expense, approx. 12 € / person, departure at 9:20 am, arrival at 10:00 am) to Agia Roumeli. You can then explore the surroundings (walks along the coast, stroll towards the gorge).

Night in a family guesthouse in Agia Roumeli.

Accommodation : Studio / Guesthouse

Main Itinerary : 18km, 5 to 6h, +1230m, -

D9 Agia Roumeli - marble beach - Loutro

This very beautiful coastal hike passes through the site of **Agios Pavlos** and its **12th-century** Byzantine chapel. It is here, according to legend, that the apostle Paul was thrown by the storm and baptized the first Christians in the West. At the end of the stage, you reach **Loutro**, an adorable village of white houses, isolated by the sea and backing onto the mountain. During your hike, you will have the opportunity to combine walking and swimming, especially at the end of the stage in the **turquoise waters of Likos** and its small beach with **white marble slabs**. From there, you have the possibility to reach Loutro by water taxi (not included).
Night in a hotel or guesthouse in Loutro.

Accommodation : Hotel or Guesthouse

Main Itinerary : 15 km, 4 to 5 h, +200 m, -200 m

D10 Gorge of Aradena

From Loutro, a magnificent path climbs up to the **Anapoli plateau** and its olive trees. It offers a **magnificent panorama** over the entire coast. In Anapoli, you can stop at a tavern, to enjoy the already "mountain" atmosphere of this locality. Return through the deep gorge of Aradena, where semi-wild goats live, before returning to Loutro. If you prefer a shorter walk, you can reach the lower part of the gorge through the village of **Livaniana**. You can also opt for a free day in Loutro: stroll and swim on the marble beach, visit the Venetian fort ... The place is really special.

Overnight in Loutro.

Accommodation : Hotel / Guesthouse

Long route :

Shorter route :

D11 Loutro - Chania

Depending on the boat schedule, free time on the beach before crossing to **Hora Sfakion** (not included), then regular bus to Chania or Heraklion (not included)

Night in a hotel in Chania.

Accommodation : Hotel

D12 End of stay

End of stay after breakfast. Depending on the time of the flight, free day then transfer to the airport (included).

Itinerary

We may sometimes have to modify the itinerary indicated: either at the level of the organization (a problem of overloaded accommodation, modification of the state of the ground, landslides, degraded trails, etc.) or weather conditions. These modifications are always made in your interest, for your safety, and for better comfort!

SOME PRECISIONS

Grade

Medium, no portage. You have to love walking and be in good shape. 3 to 6 hours of walking per day. The maximum vertical drop is downhill (1100m) in the Samaria gorges. The maximum uphill is the ascent of Gingilos, + 900m / -700m.

Luggage transport

You only carry a small backpack with your daily things, the picnic, and the groceries. You will have to transfer all of your luggage when traveling from/to the airport or the boat.

Group

From 2 people.

Duration

12 days / 11 nights

Travel documents

We take care of booking hotels and transporting your luggage. We provide you with a detailed map of the route, an explanatory "step by step". A complete travel file will be given to you, including, among other things, detailed maps, topo guide, a list of accommodation, and vouchers. Depending on the case, you will receive your file before departure, or you will find it at the first accommodation. There is no guide for this trip.

Accommodation / Catering

? Accommodation

In a 2 * comfort hotel, equipped apartment, or in a comfortable family pension in a 2-person room with bathroom. Possibility to book a single room according to availability, with supplement.

Government tax

A new government tax was put in place in 2018 by the government. This tax must be paid on-site, at the hotels. Its amount depends on the hotel category.

1 * and 2 * hotel: 0.50 € / room / night

3 * hotel: 1.50 € / room / night

4 * hotel: 3 € / room / night

5 * hotel: 4 € / room / night

? Catering

Breakfast included. Dinners at Omalos are included. It takes 10 to 20 euros for an evening meal. Local produce can be purchased for the picnic in all the villages. The local taverns are many and varied and it is a real pleasure to go find the one that suits you. Please let us know when registering any food allergy or special diet; we will do our best to adapt your meals.

Start / End

? Start

D1 to Chania Airport.

? End

The D12 to Chania Airport.

In case of arrival in Heraklion and late arrival at the airport, we suggest you spend the first night of the stay in Heraklion. Transfer from Heraklion airport to the hotel in Heraklion is included. On J2 you will have to go to Chania to take the bus to Paleochora. It is also possible to spend the night of D11 in Heraklion by taking a bus from Hora Sfakion to Chania (approx. € 8.50 / person) then a second bus between Chania and Heraklion (approx. € 16 / person).

Extend your trip

If you want to visit the Knossos site, near Heraklion, you can take a return flight from Heraklion: the return trip from Hora Sfakion is roughly the same in time in Chania or in Heraklion.

Access

? By plane

Flights are not included in the price and must be booked by you. You can book return flights to Heraklion, in which case the transfer to Chania is at your expense (approx. 2 hours 30 minutes).

Swimming

A number of our trips are suitable for swimming, during a stage or at the end of the day. It would be a shame not to enjoy. We stress, however, that you are the sole judges of the advisability of a swim; these swims are therefore done under your responsibility and at your own risk.

Photos

You take great photos! Do not hesitate to send us a CD, a USB key, a Dropbox or WeTransfer link of your best photos taken during your trip. The fact that you send us photos implies that you accept that your photos will be used free of charge on our various media (catalog, website, technical sheet, etc.).

Travel Blog

Do you want to share your best moments of the trip and share your experience with the hiking community? Send us your story and some photos illustrating your comments that we will publish for you on our blog.

DATES AND PRICES

Specify

Departure at your convenience.

Dates		2 persons	3 persons*	4 persons
From	To			
01/05/2021	31/05/2021	695 €	645 €	625 €
01/06/2021	30/09/2021	765 €	745 €	735 €
01/10/2021	15/10/2021	695 €	645 €	625 €

* Price for 3:

- 1 couple + 1 child under 15: price for 3 as indicated above, accommodation in a triple room
- 1 double + 1 single: price for 3 people as indicated above with the single room supplement

Prices include

- accommodation for 11 nights with breakfast
- dinners at Omalos
- baggage transport
- return transfers Chania airport - Chania city (or Heraklion airport - Heraklion city round trip)
- the transfer of Omalos at the start of the ascent of Gingilos on D7
- the transfer from Omalos to Xyloskalo on D8
- the transfer from Omalos to Sougia in case of closure of the Samaria Gorge
- the travel file

Prices do not include

- flights
- transfer between Heraklion and Chania (if arriving at Heraklion airport)
- the boat from Loutro to Hora Sfakion on D11
- boat transfers not included
- land transfers not included
- the regular bus from Hora Sfakion to Chania (or Heraklion)
- the drinks
- lunches and dinners (except dinners at Omalos)
- tourist taxes including government tax to be paid on site
- personal expenses
- site visits
- the insurance
- registration fees
- anything not indicated in "Prices include"

Options, extras and discounts

- low season single room supplement: 310 € / person
- single room supplement high season: 370 € / person
- private transfer from Heraklion airport to Chania one way (1 to 4 people): 205 € / taxi
- private transfer from Heraklion airport to Chania round trip (1 to 4 people): 395 € / taxi
- additional night in Chania in low season with breakfast double room / single room: 50 € / person, 70 € /

- person
- additional night in Chania in high season with breakfast double room / single room: 60 € / person, 80 € / person
 - additional night in Heraklion with breakfast, double room / single room: 50 € / person, 70 € / person

Your expenses on place

It is necessary to plan, (per person) for an evening meal approximately 10 to 20 euros, for a picnic from 10 to 15 euros; instead of the picnic you can also go to a small tavern and have a Greek dish or salad for 10 to 15 euros).

Entrance to the Samaria Gorge Park costs around 5 €.

Entrance to Agia Irini Gorge: around 2 €.

For public buses and optional transfers during the stay at your expense, count around 65 € / person. The boat between Loutro and Hora Sfakion costs around 6 € / person.

IN YOUR LUGGAGE

Equipment

To hike

- Mountain boots holding the ankle with a good notched sole, with a heel counter and good waterproofness
- Comfortable "special hiking" socks
- A polar fur
- Comfortable pants for walking (technical material that dries quickly)
- Shorts, t-shirts, and technical underwear (quickly drying material)
- A long-sleeved shirt (technical material that dries quickly)
- Walking poles (telescopic), very important to facilitate walking

Note: synthetic technical clothing is very efficient. New merino wool clothes have also appeared; they are very efficient and comfortable to wear, and have the advantage of not developing perspiration odors! (Icebreaker brand, Ruka, etc...).

Generally speaking, do not use cotton, which cools when wet.

For the midday picnic

- Plastic bowl, box, or plate
- Cutlery (spoon, fork, knife)
- Water bottle of 1.5 to 2L minimum (compulsory)

Against the sun and the rain

- Sunscreen (high protection) and sunglasses
- Hat, cap, or bob
- A rain cape or a "Goretex" and possibly Goretex pants

After the effort

- A pair of jogging-style sneakers for the evening
- Change of clothes and personal linen
- Kit and towel (mini)
- A swimsuit (it is often possible to swim)
- A mini-pharmacy: personal medicines, elastoplast, biogaze or "2nd skin", gauze, disinfectant, medicine for seasickness, arnica granules and aspirin in case of small injuries ... (quite a program! But reassure yourself) you, the pharmacy often comes back intact from your week of hiking)

Luggage

A small, comfortable 30 to 40 L backpack with a waist belt to carry your personal belongings and the picnic during the day

- A following baggage: a backpack, a travel bag in good condition, or a suitcase that is not too bulky. One piece of luggage per person; limited to 20kg

DETAILS

The country

Country: Greece (Hellenic Republic)

Capital: Athens

Formalities

? Papers

Travelers, minors included, must be in possession of a national identity card or passport (EU nationals).

? Health

Bring the European health insurance card, to ask your health insurance fund at least 15 days before departure. The sanitary conditions are similar to those in most European countries.

Weather

Hot and dry. The weather is fine in Crete. Thunderstorms are however possible. The frequent wind and the proximity to the sea temper the heat of the midday, during which we will avoid walking. In spring and fall, provide a little warmer equipment for the night.

Language

Speaking modern Greek is a definite asset for entering further into relations with a population that is willingly bonding. English is universally spoken. German less but widely in Crete.

Various

A word about Crete

On the borders of Europe and the East, facing Africa, Crete is mythical in more ways than one. In Greek mythology, Minos was born there, the fruit of the loves of Zeus and of beautiful Europe who had the good idea to doze off, at nap time, under a plane tree in Gortyna ...

A wild and mountainous island, Crete offers landscapes that are sometimes austere, bristling with rocky peaks white-hot by the sun and swept by the hot African winds. Isn't the south coast of Crete washed by the Libyan Sea? This very oriental aridity is attenuated by the immense opaque green mantle of the olive trees.

In valleys or on perched hills, Orthodox monasteries and white chapels go through the ages, in intact sites. There, beaches are revealed in their solitude of pebbles and sand. Not to mention the steep gorges among the most beautiful in Europe and the myriad of caves (nearly 3,000!).

It is enough to leave the tourist centers of Crete and to "cut" the road a little to quickly find the forgotten small valleys and the traditional mountain villages, with their "kafeneia" frequented by old wise men with mustaches. Treated with the famous "Cretan diet", the elders quietly sip their raki, giving us a taste for the time that passes slowly ...

So get into Cretan time, and explore this island which was one of the cradles of the Western world.

Source: <https://www.routard.com>