

Directory

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ACCOMMODATION

Crete has a wide range of places to stay to suit every taste and budget, from cheap, ultra-basic rooms and well-equipped self-catering studios to traditional village houses and super-luxury resorts. Crete still offers good value accommodation compared to other islands, with the south and the inland villages being significantly cheaper than the north coast. Outside July and August you can pretty much turn up and find accommodation, but booking is advisable at the peak of summer.

PRACTICALITIES

- Use the metric system for weights and measures (see inside front cover for conversion formulas).
- Plug your electrical appliances into a two-pin adaptor before plugging into the electricity supply (220V AC, 50Hz).
- The main English-language newspapers in Greece are the weekly *Athens News* and the eight-page English-language section of the Greek daily *Kathimerini*, published with the *International Herald Tribune*.
- The English and German newspaper *Cretasummer* is published monthly during the summer in Rethymno. The monthly magazine *Kreta* is on sale in a variety of languages. *Frappe* is published in Hania in German and English. Crete's e-zine *Stigmes* (www.stigmes.gr) is also worth a look. *Crete Gazette* is a free monthly newsletter distributed at various outlets and is also available online (www.cretegazette.com).
- You can often pick up CNN and the BBC on free-to-air TV, and cable is available at many hotels.
- Greece uses the PAL video system, which is incompatible with the North American and Japanese NTSC system.

The industry is subject to strict price controls. By law, a notice must be displayed in every room (usually behind the door) stating the category and the maximum price they can charge that season. Generally the prices quoted in this book are these official high-season rates (or the higher end of what you are likely to pay, as many places never charge the official rates), but outside the peak July and August period there is often plenty of room for negotiation, especially for longer stays. Spring and autumn are good times to test your bargaining skills.

A mandatory charge of 20% extra is levied if an extra bed is put into a room.

Some domatia owners charge extra for air-conditioning. This is only permissible if the total price is not higher than the advertised maximum (which should include air-con).

Rip-offs do occasionally occur so, if you suspect you've been exploited, report it to either the tourist police or regular police.

Many accommodation proprietors will want to keep your passport during your stay. However, this is not a compulsory requirement – they only need it to take down the details.

Camping

There are only about a dozen or so camping grounds in Crete. Most are privately run, very few are open outside the summer high season, and the quality is patchy. Most have an attached taverna and some more upmarket complexes have pools and their own caravans and tents for hire.

The **Panhellenic Camping Association** ([@](http://www.panhellenic-camping-union.gr)/fax 21036 21560; www.panhellenic-camping-union.gr; Solonos 102, Athens) website has lists of their member camp sites and facilities. A free booklet on Camping in Greece is also published annually by the Greek national tourist office, Ellinikos Organismos Tourismou (EOT) – known abroad as the Greek National Tourism Organisation (GNTO).

Camping fees are highest from mid-June to the end of August. Most camping grounds charge from €4 to €6 per adult. Children under 12 are normally charged half price and students get a discount. There's no charge for children aged under four. Tent sites cost from €3 to €6 per night, depending on size. Caravan sites start at around €8.

Between May and mid-September it is warm enough to sleep out under the stars, although you will still need a lightweight sleeping bag to counter the pre-dawn chill. It's a good idea to have a foam pad to lie on and a waterproof cover to protect your sleeping bag.

Free (wild) camping is illegal, but the law is not always strictly enforced and some areas are more tolerant and renowned for it, especially along the south coast. It is wise to ask around.

Domatia

Domatia are the Greek equivalent of the British B&B, minus the breakfast. Once upon a time domatia (also called *pensions*) comprised

little more than spare rooms in the family home that were rented out to travellers, which made for very cheap holidays. Nowadays most are purpose built, and simple (and cheap) older-style basic lodgings are becoming rarer as many have been upgraded into 'studios' and come complete with well-equipped kitchenettes, TVs and air-con. They remain a popular option for budget travellers and are often far more appealing (and sometimes better equipped) than many bland, impersonal midrange hotels.

Domatia are rated under a 'key' system, which determines what owners can charge. Standards of cleanliness are generally high. The décor runs the gamut from cool grey marble floors, coordinated pine furniture, pretty lace curtains and tasteful pictures on the walls, to outright spartan.

Expect to pay from €20 to €30 for a single, and €30 to €50 for a double, depending on facilities, the season and how long you plan to stay.

Some domatia have solar-heated water, which means hot water is not guaranteed, though this is rarely a problem. Most operate only between April and October.

Hostels

There are official youth hostels in Rethymno, Plakias and Iraklio, as well as a few hotels operating as unofficial hostels. The Rethymno and Plakias hostels are well-run and sociable places, with decent facilities.

Hostel rates vary from €7 to €15 and you don't have to be a member to stay in any of them.

Hotels & Resorts

Crete has some of the best resort hotels in Greece, including some elite spa-hotel developments, but standards vary dramatically. While most of the top hotels are world class and have all the expected amenities, some midrange hotels are little better than domatia. There are some smart boutique-style hotels in the major cities, while Hania and Rethymno have many atmospheric guesthouses in superbly restored Venetian mansions or historic buildings.

The official classification system in Greece has changed from the old letter grading (A–E, plus L for deluxe categories) to a more international star-rating system with much higher standards. What might have qualified as an