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ROAD**YOUR COMPLETE DESTINATION GUIDE
In-depth reviews, detailed listings
and insider tips **Accommodation** p175PAGE
249**SURVIVAL
GUIDE**VITAL PRACTICAL INFORMATION TO
HELP YOU HAVE A SMOOTH TRIP

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THIS EDITION WRITTEN AND RESEARCHED BY

Andrea Schulte-Peevers
Chris Deliso, Des Hannigan



Look out for these icons:



Our author's
recommendation



A green or
sustainable option



No payment
required

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MEDITERRANEAN

SEA

Hania Old Town

Drift around this historic harbour town (p41)

Rethymno Old Quarter

Experience the romance of a Renaissance town (p80)

SEA OF CRETE

HANIA

RETHYMNO

Samaria Gorge

Trek to the sea amid soaring cliffs (p53)

Elafonisi

Caribbean meets Crete on this remote beach (p73)

Preveli Monastery & Beach

Monastery meets iconic palm beach (p98)

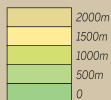
Southern Crete by Boat

Discover hidden coves and secluded beaches (p60)

MEDITERRANEAN SEA

Top Experiences >

ELEVATION



ROAD DISTANCES (km)

Note: Distances are approximate

Hania	142					
Agios Nikolaos	69	209				
Rethymno	85	57	152			
Plakias	123	95	198	39		
Sitia	142	282	73	227	265	
Matala	69	148	138	91	79	211
	Iraklio	Hania	Agios Nikolaos	Rethymno	Plakias	Sitia

Archaeological Museum

Marvel at treasures from ancient worlds (p111)

Palace of Knossos

Walk in the footsteps of the Minoans (p124)

Spinalonga Island

Visit the leper colony turned tourist attraction (p160)

Vai Beach

Kick back under palm trees (p166)



Lasithi Plateau

Visit the mythical birthplace of Zeus (p161)

Agios Nikolaos

Explore this pretty and sophisticated city (p152)



OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Melbourne, London and Oakland, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

OUR WRITERS



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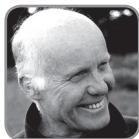
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itineraries

Whether you've got six days or 60, these itineraries provide a starting point for the trip of a lifetime. Want more inspiration? Head online to lonelyplanet.com/thorntree to chat with other travellers.



Two Weeks Essential Crete

Bookended by two great cities, this route is a roller-coaster of natural and sightseeing treasures. Spend a few days in **Iraklio** checking out the superb museums before heading to the **Palace of Knossos**, and enjoying the fruits of the **Iraklio Wine Country**. Next, stake out a base near Matala to combine trips to Roman **Gortyna**, the Minoan palaces of **Phaestos** and **Agia Triada** and the outstanding museum at **Vori** with swimming at **Kommos** and **Kalamaki** beaches.

Travelling west, lunch in **Spili** en route to **Moni Preveli** and picture-postcard **Preveli Beach** before steering north to soulful **Rethymno**. Spend two days wandering this Venetian maze and another few exploring the countryside, perhaps steering towards **Moni Arkadiou**, the pottery village of **Margarites** or the mountain village of **Argyroupoli**.

Head west via **Vryses** to **Hania**, your next base. When you've had your fill of this historic beauty, take the early bus to **Samaria Gorge** and trek to **Agia Roumeli** for the boat to **Loutro**. Next morning, take the boat to **Hora Sfakion** and bus back to Hania.



10 Days Central to West Crete

This trip presents you with the mother lode of soul-stirring attractions, including the unspoiled southern coast, higgledy-piggledy mountain villages and spirit-lifting culture in Crete's two most attractive towns. Kick off your trip in **Iraklio**, taking in the archaeological museum and imposing fortress, before steering west to quaint **Anogia**, where ancient traditions thrive at the foot of Mt Psiloritis. Continue west via the pottery village of Margarites to **Moni Arkadiou**, site of one of the bloodiest moments in Crete's struggle for independence from the Turks. Spend the next day in stately **Rethymno**, taking your sweet time ambling around its bewitching mix of Turkish and Venetian buildings serenaded by a lordly 16th-century fortress.

From Rethymno push on to the south coast, where the lively beach town of **Plakias** makes an ideal base for exploring nearby secluded beaches, including palm-studded **Preveli Beach**, stunningly located at the mouth of a rugged gorge.

Heading west, make a pit stop at the seaside fortress of **Frangokastello** before plunging on to **Hora Sfakion**, where you can hop on a boat and explore the remote villages along this beautiful stretch of coast. Continue north from Hora Sfakion via a steep road towards the Lefka Ori (White Mountains) and make time for a hike through spectacular **Imbros Gorge**. Push on to the north coast and linger a night or two in **Hania**, with its beautiful harbour, grand fortress, ambience-packed old town and interesting museums. It's also a good base for visiting the **Akrotiri Peninsula**, which has some fine monasteries and the famous beach at Stavros, where the key dance scene in *Zorba the Greek* was filmed.

Hania also makes a good launch pad for exploring the far western reaches of Crete. Take the circular route southwest via Kolymbari and the Innahorion villages to the westernmost tip of the island at **Elafonisi**, which beckons with pink-shimmering sandy beaches. Pushing back north via the coastal road, make a detour to the **Gramvousa Peninsula**, accented by the spectacular lagoonlike beach at Balos.

Returning back to Iraklio via Hania, consider making a quick detour to the springs of **Argyroupoli** before taking the coastal road east of Rethymno via peaceful Panormo and busy Bali.



One Week Eastern Crete

Go ahead, indulge in a few days of hedonistic resort life on the beach, in the bars and at the buffet. But when you're ready to tear yourself away, there's an entire world of discoveries waiting for you, and all can be done as easy day trips by car. Gorgeous scenery is the ticket on the **Lasithi Plateau**, high on the upper decks of the Dikti mountains, where wind power once drove the sails of thousands of windmills. Or simply lose yourself along the winding roads north of **Myrtos**, where bare mountains crowned with coxcombs of rock rise from green woods. If you're keen on history, drop by **Milatos Cave**, site of a vicious 1823 massacre of villagers by Turkish besiegers, yet which today is a serene and absorbing corner of rural Crete. To satisfy artistic cravings, steer towards the **Church of Panagia Kera** near Kritsa for a feast of fabulous frescoes. Archaeology fans can indulge their passion at the Late Minoan site of **Gournia**. Key sites on the eastern coast are the palace of **Kato Zakros** and the **Valley of the Dead**, where the awesome landscape overwhelms the human element.

One Week Around Iraklio

Iraklio is the perfect base from which to access many of Crete's most famous sights and relaxation spots, even without your own vehicle. Crete's largest city itself beckons with top-notch museums, a Venetian fortress, a colourful street market, lively nightlife and some excellent dining. Once you've had your urban fill, hop on a bus for the quick ride to the **Palace of Knossos** for a 3D introduction to Minoan society, then apply what you've learned on a visit to the **Palace of Malia** on another day. Culture overdose? Commune with aquatic creatures at the state-of-the-art **Cretaquarium**, near Gournes, or keep cool while whooshing down the slides at **Acqua Plus** or **Water City** water parks. Nearby, you can get a glimpse of traditional Cretan life at the kooky open-air **Lychnostatis Museum**. If you have your own wheels, designate a driver and spend a day sampling the local vintages of the **Iraklio Wine Country**, with stops at the Nikos Kazantzakis Museum in **Myrtia** and the moody Minoan vestiges in **Arhanes**. Adventurous types could steer towards spooky **Skotino Cave** – bring a torch.

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