



Lasithi Λασιθί

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Why Go?

Head east from Iraklio past the resorts of Malia and Hersonisos and you enter a more relaxed Cretan world that is never short of surprises.

Looking for a charming resort town with cool after-dark ambience? None better than Lasithi's main tourist draw of Agios Nikolaos. Ancient sites and culture? Lasithi has Minoan and Mycenaean sites aplenty, while local museums are crammed with enthralling artefacts. For outdoor action and spectacular landscapes head inland to the Lasithi Plateau or tackle one of the region's more accessible gorge walks, such as the dramatic Valley of the Dead at Kato Zakros.

Added value comes with such unique attractions as the historic monastery of Toplou and Vai's famous palm-lined beach, while scores of towns and villages maintain a rich undertow of Cretan history and spirit. All of this is underpinned by a choice of accommodation and some of Crete's finest tavernas and restaurants.

Best Places to Eat

- » Oceanis (p159)
- » Migomis (p153)
- » Ta Kochilia (p163)
- » Balcony (p165)
- » Napoleon (p171)

Best Places to Stay

- » Stella's Traditional Apartments (p198)
- » Argoulas (p196)
- » Villa Olga (p195)
- » Aspros Potamos (p198)
- » Lato Hotel (p195)

When to Go

Travel to Lasithi in the springtime to catch the colour burst of wildflowers in the mountains (and to enjoy the calm before the crowds of summer).

From June to August the beaches are at their best, and high summer is the time to come for glorious days, warm nights and a dose of Cretan culture at Agios Nikolaos' Lato Cultural Festival.

September and October bring slightly cooler weather – perfect for exploring mountain tops or hiking the region's gorges.

Getting Around

Roads between main centres and larger resorts throughout Lasithi are good. Minor surfaced roads are adequate, but always watch out for potholes. Driving on unsurfaced roads is not advised unless with off-road vehicles and full insurance.

Most larger villages and resorts can be reached by bus from Agios Nikolaos, Sitia and Ierapetra. The best way of finding up-to-date information is from the bus stations themselves. Many villages only have early morning and midday services during school terms. Popular tourist destinations have a summer service only.

You can rent cars, bikes and scooters from main centres and from most resorts in summer.

THREE PERFECT DAYS

Day One

From Agios Nikolaos it's a short drive along the Kritsa road to the **Church of the Panagia Kera** where there's a feast of fabulous 13th-century frescoes. Then drop back two thousand years at the nearby Hellenistic-Dorian site of **Lato**. Head back to **Kritsa**, weave your way past the needlework sellers, and wander the old town. Then reflect on a day of astonishing island history and culture while dining at one of Agios Nikolaos' archetypal **Cretan restaurants**.

Day Two

A reading of the romantic novel *To Nisi* (The Island; see boxed text, p158) will lead you to the compelling island of **Spinalonga**, the one-time leper colony where the novel and its television series are set. You can get there by boat from Agios Nikolaos, Elounda or Plaka. Before you go, a visit to Agios Nikolaos' delightful **Folk Museum** conjures up a sense of time and place regarding the older Crete portrayed in the book. Finish the day at Elounda's **Oceanis** restaurant for Cretan cuisine.

Day Three

From Sitia head for **Moni Toplou**, one of Crete's outstanding monasteries. Continue to Palekastro and on to **Kato Zakros** for some Minoan magic at the remains of an ancient palace. Take a stroll into the awesome **Valley of the Dead**, and then drive back through rugged mountains to Sitia for a gourmet evening at the colourful **Balcony** restaurant.

Accommodation

For sleeping options throughout this region, please see the Accommodation chapter (p175).

DON'T MISS

Lasithi's ancient sites include the haunting Minoan settlements of Gournia (p162) and Kato Zakros (p168) and the smaller ruins of Pyrgos (p174) and Itanos (p167). Lato (p157), a Dorian foundation, is equally compelling.

Best Beaches

- » Almyros (p153)
- » Vaī (p166)
- » Xerokambos (p169)
- » Itanos (p167)
- » Hiona (p167)

Best Small Resorts

- » Mohlos (p163)
- » Myrtos (p173)
- » Kato Zakros (p168)
- » Koutsouras (p173)
- » Palekastro (p167)

Resources

- » www.lasithitourism.com
- » www.agiosnikolaos.gr
- » www.sitia.gr
- » www.ierapetra.gr