
CRETAN experience

- Stay at 4 different places Duration: 8 days / 7 nights
- Comfortable 3*** hotels Tour dates: All year round!
- Relaxed tour Theme: Cultural Roundtrip
- Professional tour guide Price: € (on request).- p.p.HB (price valid for a min. of 25 persons)

1st day: Arrival at Heraklion airport, and per comfortable coach transfer to hotel. Dinner in hotel.
Overnight in hotel in Heraklion area.

2nd day: During this tour you will be taken back 4000 years to the time of the oldest civilisation in Europe. In Heraklion you have a guided tour through the extraordinary **Archaeological Museum**, viewing the unique items from the Minoan culture. The **Palace of Knossos**, centre of the Minoan Civilisation, will leave you breathless as you wonder over the technology and facilities of that period.

After this fascinating tour, you will board the coach onto the vineyards area of Peza and Archanes. Driving through the island's hilly countryside filled, since 4000 years, with the olives orchards and vineyards. This famous wine-country south of Heraklion is there since the Minoan period. Visit a modern **winery**, video introduction to Cretan wine and olive oil production in former times and nowadays, and wine tasting.

The village of **Archanes**, just 10 km south of Knossos palace, is the municipality in the area. It is a market town nestled in the broad upland east of Mount Juchtas, the god Zeus has been immortalized in the profile you see etched against the clear blue Cretan skies. The village was in 2000 awarded by the EU for the fantastic renovations in old style. You will stop in this beautiful village with many restored sandstone houses from the Turkish period and an inviting square with high shady trees. It got an attractive place for the natives due to the good restaurants.

A late afternoon lunch in a selected tavern will be your first acquaintance with the healthy Cretan cuisine. After your break by coach to Saint Nicholas. Partly via the old national road; drive through authentic villages, and with breathtaking views on the Mirabello Gulf and the fishing village Elounda with exclusive, luxury hotels.

Overnight in hotel in Saint Nicholas area.

3rd day: From Saint Nicholas you travel to the white-washed mountain village **Kritsa**, in the famous church **Kera** you'll have the chance to marvel the Byzantine frescos. The drive along the Mirabello Gulf provides you spectacular panoramic views. On the way to Sitia visit the ruins of the Minoan town **Gournia**. **Sitia** is a small and pleasant coastal town, built in a semicircle on the western side of the bay. In this peaceful Mediterranean port free time to make a stroll in the alleys and on the small boulevard. The town built in the late Minoan period ceased to exist for two centuries (1651-1870). The present (since 1870) city Sitia is developing as one of the most important urban areas in Crete. Your tour continues and when approaching **Monastery Toplou** its size and high bell tower will impress you. In a guided tour through this medieval monastery you will get an insight to the surviving problems of the monks and the monastery's architecture, which has been destroyed several times by earthquakes, pirates, and the Turks. Driving further on, through the hilly, dry landscape with rocks and shrubs only, you come to **Vai**,

which deserves your attention while it is one of the nicest beaches in Greece and the only natural palm-forest in Europe. Across the island to south-eastern Crete, Ierapetra is the most southern town of Europe. You can take here a leisurely walk on the promenade or admire the blooming yards and patios in the picturesque neighbourhood Kato Meros where in each quarter cobbled streets are leading to a church, clean and perfectly preserved.

Dinner and overnight in hotel in Saint Nicholas area.

4th day: Departure from hotel with luggage. East to the vivid holiday resort Hersonissos offers **Lychnostatis open-air museum** an insight to authentic Cretan life. In a guided tour through the compound of Lychnostatis you will marvel the Cretan architecture, a restored wind mill, a trashing floor and work shops of weaving, ceramics, fragrance distillery and plant dyeing wool activities. A stroll in the garden shows the fruit trees, the bright coloured flowers and aromatic herbs. On your way to the Lassithi Plateau (850m) visit the **Kera Kardiotissa Nunnery**, a 14th century Monastery housing late Byzantine frescoes.

Continue by coach to the plateau for a beautiful drive through the fourteen-(14) villages which are located around the plain. A stop will be made outside the village **Psychro**, were a path is leading to the **Dicti Cave**. Going up a steep cobble path it is fifteen minutes on foot or by mule to the entrance of the cave, which is at an attitude of 1025m. The cave has several chambers with fine stalactites and stalagmites, and is also associated with the birth of Zeus (Jupiter).

In the main village, **Tzermiado**, you stop for a walk through the village, from east to west. This stroll is an opportunity to experience day to day life with its coffee-houses, grocery shops, and locals selling their products, such as pure olive oil, herbs and ceramics. At **Seli**, the gate to the **Lassithi Plateau** you can enjoy a truly fantastic view over the plain and walk up a cobble stone path to see the inside of an old stone grain mill. You leave the plain via the western approach and continue travelling to Zaros in the hearth of Crete, and the southern slopes of Mount Ida. The impressive mountain peaks are till the beginning of June covered with snow. The region is abundant with (melting)water and provides already since the Roman period the Messara area with water.

Next to the pound is a trout farm and you can walk up to the monastery Saint Nicholas, idyllic located at the entrance of the gorge leading to the forest of Rouvas. *Dinner in the hotel In Zaros and overnight.*

5th day: Also today departure with luggage. In the Messara plain are long stretched out olive groves and green houses. You visit particular interesting excavations dated from different periods: the old Greek Roman town **Gortys** and the Minoan palace **Phaestos**. Your tour guide takes you as well on a fascinating tour in the **nunnery Kalivianni** providing a shelter for girls. Continuing your journey on to the village of **Matala**, a former hippie village surrounded by rocks and caves. This place grew from fishing village into a small beach resort.

The last three nights of your roundtrip you overnight in Rethymnon, a town with a mixture of Venetian and Turkish influences, dominated by a Venetian Fortress. A walk through the charming old quarter shows Venetian and Turkish architecture in the harbour, arched doorways and stone staircases. The long sandy beach with palm-lined promenade completes this beautiful place.

Dinner & overnight in Rethymnon.

6th day: In the eastern foot of the **Lefka Ori** Mountains is the **Imbros Gorge**, 8 km long and on some places not even 2 ½ mtrs wide. You walk through cypresses and ilexes, but will see as well native herbs and shrubs. At the exit of the gorge is the village **Komitades**, where you can enjoy a truly fantastic panoramic view on the south coast. After your hike and noon break drive along the steep south coast to **Frangocastello**, with the Venetian fortress, and via the **Kotsifou Gorge** return to Rethymnon on the north coast.

Dinner and overnight in hotel in Rethymnon.

7th day: After breakfast drive on the **peninsula (Akrotiri)**, and stop at the **profitis Ilias** hill with the graves of **Venizelou** and from where a magnificent view over the Gulf and town of Chania. In **Chania** sightseeing tour by coach along monuments of ancient and modern ages, the Venetian Harbour and the municipal market hall. On foot you have the chance to see the old centre with its picturesque neighbourhoods. Drive to Rethymnon via **Vafes**, a small village on the foot of the White Mountains, you will enjoy a traditional Cretan fare well lunch in a tavern from where breathtaking views on the mountains. After lunch drive through the unexpected green forests of **Argiroupolis**, a different world, with springs and waterfalls. The endless green, crystal water, is the most characteristic of this beautiful village, which stands on an elevation (260m above sea level), built on top of the ruins of the ancient city of Lapa. A short walk in the beautiful countryside is a must enjoying panoramic views on the Gulf of Almyros. *Dinner and overnight in Rethymnon.*

8th day: Free time till departure transfer coach to Heraklion airport.

Not included:

- + Lunches
- + Beverages
- + Entrance fees, approx. €,00 per person
- + Tips
- + Supplement single room HB €,,-
- + Supplement high season €,,- per person HB (01.07. - 15.09.2010)

Minimum participants: 25 Persons

