

## Crete island (Southern Aegean Sea)



Crete is the largest, most populous and southernmost island of Greece, marking the boundary between Europe and Africa. It is also the fifth largest island in the Mediterranean Sea. All these make it an all year round destinations and one of the most popular in Greece.

With its diverse landscape, Crete has it all. Its majestic mountains, gorges and valleys covered with palm and cedar forests, olive trees, orange groves and vineyards, its old stone farmhouses, monasteries and villages perched on mountain ridges, its castles and chapels forgotten on steep slopes, have all lured travelers since time immemorial. Its shores, lined with forbidding rocks, are often inaccessible but there are also several inviting sandy or pebble beaches.

In Crete you can enjoy the traditional Cretan lifestyle and the exceptional local delicacies. Beyond sun, sea and sand, Crete is a quite distinct place well-known for its hospitality, warmth and joviality.

The capital and the largest city is Heraklion. The other cities of Crete are Chania, Rethymno, Ierapetra, Agios Nikolaos and Sitia, all located in the north side of the island except for Ierapetra which is found on the south side of Crete. The north side of the island, with all the main city ports is more developed.



Crete was once the center of the Minoan civilization (c. 2700–1420 BC), which is currently regarded as the earliest recorded civilization in Europe. There is a large number of archaeological sites which include the Minoan sites of Knossos and Phaistos, the classical site of Gortys.



There are a number of museums throughout Crete. The Heraklion Archaeological Museum displays most of the archaeological finds of the Minoan era. Visitors can enjoy private tours through the straits of the old town of Chania and its Venetian fortifications, the scenic countryside and the unspoiled villages.



Today, the island's tourism infrastructure caters to all tastes, including a very wide range of accommodation. The island's facilities take in large luxury hotels with their complete facilities, swimming pools, sports and recreation, smaller family-owned apartments, camping facilities and others.

Crete straddles two climatic zones, the Mediterranean and the North African, mainly falling within the former. There is no "best time" to visit Crete in general, as it depends on what someone is looking for. If someone wants to experience among other things the Greek summer, sun and sea, the best months to travel to Crete are from May to October, with June, July, August and September being ideal for swimming in the island's beautiful beaches. During July and August the island is the most crowded and

has the hottest weather. For those who would like to focus on the cultural and local life of the island but are prepared to risk some rainy, windy days and an unstable and colder weather with less tourists, November to April is a great period, with December to February being the coldest months.

Visitors can reach the island via two international airports in Heraklion and Chania and a smaller airport in Sitia in only 55 minutes or by boat to the main ports of Heraklion, Chania, Rethimno, Agios Nikolaos and Sitia (9 hours). Crete can be combined with an island hopping itinerary, including Santorini and Rhodes and of course Athens.



**Crete Photo Gallery:** <https://www.fantasy.gr/crete-photo-gallery.zip>

