

EXPLORE!

Tour Notes



Walking in Crete (CR 2015)



TOUR DURATION
8
DAYS



Tour Style: Classic
Tour Comfort: Standard

Tour Type: Small Groups
Trek Grade: Moderate

tour Code: CR

Tour Highlights - Walking in Crete

- ✓ Omalos Plateau - Beautiful walks in the White Mountains.
- ✓ Samaria Gorge - Hike through Europe's longest gorge.
- ✓ Ayia Roumeli - Scenic ferry journey along the coast.
- ✓ Loutro - Traffic free traditional coastal village.
- ✓ Preveli - Cliff-top monastery.
- ✓ Zaros - Beautiful gorge walk in the Idi Mountains.

Tour Essentials

Accommodation: 6 nights Standard Hotel

Included Meals: 7 breakfasts, 0 lunches, 0 dinners

Start Point: Join tour: Khania

End Point: Tour ends: Heraklion Airport

Maximum Altitude on Trek (m): 1400

Transport: Bus, Taxi, Ferry

Countries: Greece

Walking in Crete

On this holiday we explore the coastal and mountain villages of Crete. We discover isolated beaches, secluded coves and impressive canyons. We walk in the White Mountains, hike through the Samaria and Zaros Gorges and experience rural Cretan hospitality.



Suitability

We've given each of our tours a comfort rating and a tour pace, walking or cycling grade to give you a general idea about the level of activity on each tour and the standard of accommodation you will be staying in at the end of your day's adventure.

Often you'll stay in different styles of accommodation during your tour; so we make an average rating across the entire tour. For more information on where you'll stay each night, please refer to the day by day tour itinerary.

Tour Comfort: Standard

Our mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en-suite facilities.

Tour Style: Classic

Packed with adventure, these tours offer inspiring destinations and authentic travel experiences at a reasonable price. Using all kinds of transport and accommodation, we'll take you off the beaten track to discover the true heart of the people and places you visit.

Trek Grade: Moderate

For those who are fit and active, these moderate walks are normally on good paths and tracks at low altitude. Days may include some fairly demanding ascents and descents, so previous experience is preferable but not essential.

Your tour itinerary

Tour itinerary notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested.

Your Tour Leader

A Tour Leader is an integral part of any Explore tour and your tour will be led by one of our experienced tour leaders who have been handpicked and expertly trained. We believe that our Tour Leaders are the key to the success of our tours; they are passionate travellers who are bursting with first-hand local knowledge which they love to share. Your tour Leader will also take care of all the planning and



organisation throughout your journey. Their passionate approach will make this tour fun and inspiring, bringing the destination to life whether you're travelling alone or with others.

DAY 1 Join tour Khania

Arrive Khania and check-in at our hotel. Khania is a beautiful old Venetian walled town, with a bustling harbour and lively tavernas - A great place to start your introduction to Crete.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** None

DAY 2 Walking tour of Khania; drive to Omalos Plateau

This morning we will take a walking tour around Khania. We will walk around the harbour and through the winding back streets, home to the traditional cobblers who make the very traditional Cretan leather boots. This afternoon we take a bus up the winding roads to the Omalos Plateau (1082m). This wild plateau is situated in the middle of the massive White Mountains, poised on the edge of a titanic split in the rock and the gateway to the longest and perhaps most beautiful ravine in Europe, the Samaria Gorge. The isolation of the plateau made it an historic refuge for Cretan revolutionaries against the Turks.

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 3 Optional walks in the White Mountains

We spend the day exploring the peaks and plateau of the White Mountains on foot, with walks available to suit all abilities. A challenging optional walk is to the summit of the mighty Mount Gingilos (2080m, about 7-8 hours walking) for spectacular views of the north and south coasts. Alternatively, ascend to the refuge at Kallergi mountain. You can enjoy lunch at the refuge and take in the wonderful views (about 3-4 hours walk).

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 4 Hike Samaria Gorge; ferry to Loutro

Today we walk through this spectacular gorge. To make the complete 15km descent to the fishing village of Ayia Roumeli may take anywhere from 6 to 8 hours. We follow a steep zig-zag path, some 760m down into the gorge itself, past high cypress trees and many different alpine shrubs - and if we're very lucky, we may catch a glimpse of the wild Cretan Ibex (Kri Kri) leaping from ledge to ledge. In midsummer, the river dries to a trickle, but there are still stretches of water to be crossed with handy stepping stones. After walking for roughly 3 hours from the entrance at Xiliskalo, we stop at the now uninhabited village of Samaria, where the Venetian Church of Holy Mary with its old Byzantine mosaics and inscription over the front door can be seen. Now the gorge really starts to close in around us, and the river often disappears underground. After passing below the Church of Apendis Christos, we hike through the narrowest part, the sidheroportes (the 'iron gates', only 4 metres wide, but over 350m high), and continue along the rocky riverbed into the small village of Ayia Roumeli. Depending on the departure time of our ferry to Loutro, there may be time for a refreshing swim in the Libyan Sea.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 5 Exploring Loutro

This quaint seashore village, perched on craggy rocks and nestled in a cove, affords an opportunity to experience life in a less accessible part of the island. Most houses are the very traditional white with blue shutters providing a harmony of architecture. We'll spend the day here, perhaps taking a walk along the coast or inland, swimming or simply relaxing. An optional boat trip by water taxi can often be arranged to Marmara or Finix beach. Alternatively, you may prefer something more active such as a full day or half day walk behind the village, up to the historic village of Anopolis or perhaps down the Aradena Gorge enjoying spectacular views of the coast en route. In the evening you may care to try the delicious fresh seafood caught by local fishermen.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 6 Morning relaxing; ferry to Khora Sfakion; drive to Zaros

Today we get the ferry along the coast to Khora Sfakion. A pleasant coastal village with a few hundred inhabitants and an old reputation as a lair of brigands, smugglers and pirates. The Sfakians cherish their independence and see themselves as Sfakians first, Cretans second and Greeks third! As a rallying point for revolutionaries, there are many sea caves in the area which were used as great hiding places during disputes. We then journey by bus to Zaros in the rugged Idi Mountains. We'll pause en route at Preveli cliff-top monastery. Perched high above the sea, its fame was capped in World War Two when the monks sheltered allied troops who were stranded on the island after the Battle of Crete and helped them to escape from the beaches nearby. The views from here are magnificent. We also break the journey for a short while in the pretty Greek village of Spili. We plan to arrive in the village of Zaros in the early evening.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available



Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 7 Hiking Zaros Gorge

Deep in the heart of Crete are the Idi Mountains. This region is very scenic and is particularly noted for its spring waters, which are bottled and sold throughout the island. Our primary reason for visiting Zaros is to walk in the surrounding mountains, and we set off after breakfast to explore the dramatic Rouvas Gorge. Local vehicles take us to a steep rough track from where we'll descend the dramatic 5km long gorge on foot (about 3-4 hours walk) enjoying spectacular views of the Psiloritis range as we go. The afternoon is left free for you to explore the surrounding area. Located in a peaceful setting overlooking the Koutsoulidi valley, this is an ideal spot to relax.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available



Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 8 Drive to Heraklion airport where tour ends

We leave Zaros today to drive to Heraklion airport where tour ends.



Included Meals: Breakfast

Accommodation and Meals

Food & Drink

Included meals: 7 breakfasts, 0 lunches, 0 dinners included in the price of this tour. Please be prepared to pay for non-included meals. Please note that costs for drinks and meals can vary depending on location.

Budgeting for your Tour

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the tour price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Food

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Greece

Lunch £: 14.00

Dinner £: 18.00

Drink

The prices for drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive.

Greece

Bottle of Beer £: 3.50

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Water £: 0.90

Other Sightseeing & Activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations.

Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Optional Excursions

Loutro - Water taxi to nearby beaches €4.

Sea Kayaking - €5.

Cooking Lesson - €12.

Tipping - Tour Leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Tipping - Local Crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognised part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

Foreign Exchange

Greece

ATM Availability: Cash can be drawn from ATMs from all types of cards in most areas in Greece, including the islands.

Credit Card Acceptance: In major restaurants.

Travellers Cheques: Banking hours may make exchanging Travellers Cheques more difficult.

Local Currency: Euro

Recommended Currency for Exchange: GBP Sterling or US Dollars, cash.

Where to Exchange: We recommend that you change any currency into Euros prior to arrival. Bureau de Change are generally only found in major cities and large airports

Joining your Tour

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found on our website at www.explore.co.uk, in the tour specific dates and prices section.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer. For more information please refer to <https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers>.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer please refer to <https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers>.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Important Information

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of joining any of our tours that you must have valid travel insurance. It must indicate that you have cover for (at least) medical expenses and emergency repatriation in the event of illness or injury. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling in England and Scotland. We also strongly recommend your policy includes curtailment, personal effects and cancellation protection as all deposits paid are non-refundable. You will also need to ensure your travel policy covers you for all activities you intend to do whilst on tour.

We are delighted to include FREE travel insurance **for all qualifying customers** who book an Explore trip from 01 January 2015.

For more information about Travel insurance and to check whether you are eligible to receive free cover, please visit www.explore.co.uk/insurance. Explore Worldwide Ltd are an Appointed Representative of Campbell Irvine Limited, who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. The registration number can be checked by visiting the the FCA's website www.fca.gov.uk or by contacting them on 0800 111 6768.

Visa Information

Greece: Visas are not required by UK, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens. Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

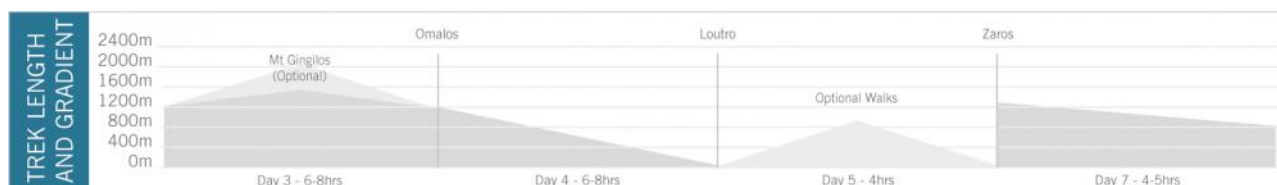
All visa information is subject to change. You should confirm all visa related questions with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

Vaccinations & Protection

Greece

Nothing compulsory but we recommend protection against tetanus and polio. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure.

Preparing for your Tour



Maximum Altitude on Trek (m)

1400

Trekking Details

We walk for 4 days for between 4 and 8 hours each day (including one optional day). We generally trek on mountain trails with some occasional short, steep ascents.

Walking Boots

Well worn, sturdy walking boots with good ankle support are essential for the walks.

Climate

Greece

Greece has predominantly hot, dry summers, May - October with temperatures reaching into the mid thirties in July and August. May and October themselves can be less predictable and may have some rain and cooler evenings. Wild flowers bloom in April and May adding much colour to the trails. At the beginning and end of the season the villages tend to be very quiet. Seasonal weather patterns can be unpredictable. Up to date information on the weather worldwide can be found by following the BBC weather link on this page.

Clothing

Light clothes suitable for walking in warm weather are recommended. However early and late in the season (May/June/September/October) also bring warm clothing in case of drops in temperature or the odd shower. In high places like Omalos nights can be cold, so a fleece jacket is a good thing to have at any time of year.

Equipment

Bring a personal water bottle (at least 2l capacity) and sun protection for use during the walks. You may find a trekking pole useful over the downhill sections. You may also wish to take a swimming costume and towel.

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Footwear

Please bring sandals and trainers for relaxing in the evenings.

Luggage: On Tour

One main piece of baggage and daypack. Remember you are expected to carry your own luggage so don't overload yourself. A daysac for use during day walks is essential (your main luggage will be transported by support vehicle whilst on the walks). Therefore, please use a soft bag for ease of packing.

Luggage allowance on tour: 20kg

General Information

Country details

Greece

Population: 11,305,118

Size of Country: 131,990 sq km

Major Language: Greek

Religion: Orthodox

Time Difference to GMT: +2

Electric Supply & Plugs

Greece

2 Pin Round

Why Choose Explore

We've been creating award-winning pioneering adventure holidays for over 30 years, earning the trust of thousands of delighted customers, who feel safe in our hands. Our tour leaders have expert local knowledge and our tours are designed to take you off the beaten track to see the most exotic, inspiring and dramatic places in the world.

- With over 30 years' experience, we are passionate about what we do.
- Pioneering small group adventures, self-guided, private journeys & tailor-made holidays.
- Award winning tour leaders who you can trust.
- Responsible travel is and always has been one of the driving principles of Explore.

Our adventure holidays are full of exciting things to see and do, exploring in small groups travelling by bus, boat, plane, rickshaw, camel, elephant, or any number of unusual forms of transport. Often you will stay in family run hotels and village houses and enjoy authentic local cuisine. In this way, it's easy to discover the true heart of the people and the place you travel to – and make some new friends along the way. Each tour is uniquely different, so please feel free to browse through our tours to see what may whet your appetite.

Our commitment to the environment

We are passionate about sustainable travel and work hard to create tours where your holiday delivers real benefits to the local communities. We minimise our impact by travelling in small groups, respecting local cultures and traditions, reducing waste and offsetting 100% of the CO2 from our flights.

When you travel with Explore, you are directly contributing to local economies and helping empower the people you meet. We currently support a range of charities and good causes, including: Toilet Twinning (helping to flush away poverty), Lone Buffalo Foundation (a community project based in Laos providing creative skills for young people), Dekamer (a turtle rescue centre in Turkey) and Kids Saving the Rainforest (a wildlife rescue centre in Costa Rica supported through the LATA foundation). We also care passionately about the world's wildlife. We are patrons of the Born Free Organisation and Friends of Conservation.

Cool Earth

Explore are proud to support Cool Earth in their effort to reduce global carbon dioxide levels through the prevention of deforestation in the South America rainforest. Cool Earth focus on areas in immediate danger of deforestation, supporting local communities to be forest guardians. To date 350,000 acres of rainforest has been protected. Saving rainforest also protects rare animals and plants, allows local forest communities to maintain their way of life, and protects a major source of oxygen and fresh water. When you travel on an Explore holiday we make a donation to Cool Earth that exceeds the impact of our customers flights each year.

Earth Matters

- [The Travel Foundation](#)

Explore are active members and supporters of the Travel Foundation which has established a variety of sustainable tourism projects in destinations and works with industry to improve practice. Visit their website www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk

- [Tourism Concern](#)

Explore support the work of Tourism Concern who campaign for fairly and ethically traded tourism, and are part of its Ethical Tour Operator Group www.tourismconcern.org.uk

- For further information on responsible travel go to <http://www.explore.co.uk/ResponsibleTourism/>
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Know before you go

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Advice follow the link at <http://www.explore.co.uk/essential-travel-information/travel-resources/travel-safety>

Booking Your Holiday

Peace of mind - book with confidence

You can book your Explore holiday with confidence, as all monies paid to us for your trip are fully protected. Explore is a fully bonded tour operator licensed by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and by ABTOT.

The air holiday packages (Tours including flights) that we advertise are ATOL protected, since we hold an Air Travel Organiser's Licence granted by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is ATOL 2595. In addition, As a member of the Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust Limited (ABTOT), Explore has provided a bond to meet the requirements of the Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992. Please note that packages booked outside the UK are only protected when purchased directly with Explore.

Reserving your place

To reserve your place on this tour you will need to check availability on the Explore website or through our dedicated call centre based in the UK where you can. Our tours can fill up quickly so you are advised to book as early as possible. If your chosen date is 'Available' or 'Guaranteed' we will be able to provisionally hold you a space for up to 48 hours.

For Self-Guided holidays and Private Journeys simply choose your date of travel and let us know so we can confirm all ground services.

The easiest way to confirm your booking is through our website. When you are ready to book, we normally require a 10% non-refundable deposit, but for some holidays this may be more to cover such items as permit fees, internal flights or other non-refundable services. If your travel starts within 60 days of booking, full payment will be required at the time of booking

100% No Surcharge Guarantee

The price paid for our holidays is no longer subject to change. Once booked and confirmed we will guarantee the price you pay will not increase, whatever the circumstances. You will not be approached to pay fuel surcharges unlike the vast majority of other adventure tour operators. The price guarantee applies to all new bookings departing between 1st January 2014 and 31st December 2015.

Tour Itinerary Versions

Itinerary details may vary depending on departure date and alternative itineraries for this tour may exist. Please refer to the dates and prices page on our website to check which itinerary operates on each departure date.

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes.

Please note: 2015 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 2015. 2016/17 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 2016.

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