

Spring Flowers of Crete





Passports

Please ensure your 10-year British Passport is not out of date and is valid for a full six months beyond the duration of your visit. The name on your passport must match the name on your flight ticket/E-ticket, otherwise you may be refused boarding at the airport.

Visas

Visas are not required for Greece for citizens of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. For all other passport holders please check the visa requirements with the appropriate embassy.

Greek Consulate: 1A Holland Park, London W11 3TP. Tel: 020 7221 6467



Tickets

Included with this documentation is an e-ticket, which shows the reference number for your flight. EasyJet have now replaced their airport check-in desks with EasyJet Baggage Drop desks. **Therefore, you must check-in online and print out your boarding passes before travelling.** Checking in online also provides the opportunity for you to pre-book seats, if you wish, at an extra cost

Online check-in is available any time prior to travel using the reference number provided. Please see the enclosed e-ticket for more information or visit; www.easyjet.com

Please check that the details on your documentation are accurate and that all names are spelt correctly and match the names on your passport. Your flight ticket is non-transferable and non-refundable. No refund can be given for non-used portions.



Baggage Allowance

We advise that you stick to the baggage allowances advised. If your luggage is found to be heavier than the airlines specified baggage allowance the charges at the airport will be hefty.

With Easyjet your ticket includes one hold bag of up to 23kg plus one cabin bag no bigger than 56 x 45 x 25cm including handles, pockets and wheels.

For more information please visit www.easyjet.com

Labels

Please use the luggage labels provided. It is useful to have your home address located inside your suitcase should the label go astray.

Departure Tax

UK Flight Taxes are included in the price of your holiday.

Transfers

On arrival at Heraklion Airport please collect your luggage and exit the area and proceed until you are completely out of the building. You will find your Tour Manager situated just outside the arrivals building, holding a Travel Editions sign. The journey time is approximately one hour.

Special Requests

If you haven't already done so, please notify Travel Editions of any special requests as soon as possible to allow sufficient time to make the necessary arrangements.



Accommodation

Bio Suites, Rethymnon

The Bio Suites Hotel is a four-star hotel is within a short walk from the atmospheric back streets and narrow alleyways that characterise this fantastic old town and where you will find an excellent choice of tavernas, cafes and interesting small shops.

The hotel offers comfortable air-conditioned rooms, bath/shower, TV, telephone, wi-fi and hairdryer. The hotel facilities include a swimming pool

For more information visit the hotel website: <http://www.biohotel.gr/>

Dining

The standard of food in Greece is excellent and offers a remarkable variety of freshly prepared and very tasty dishes, many of which use locally grown products and locally produced olive oil.

In Greece, and particularly in Crete, the locals nearly always eat 'Mezedes' style. This generally means ordering several dishes, starters and/or main plates, whatever takes your fancy, to put in the middle of the table for all to share. It's a very sociable way to eat and a great way of tasting lots of different dishes! Don't be shy in the amount you order, or if you only find yourselves ordering starters – any combination is acceptable. The cost of a dinner for two with local wine and local dishes is approximately 35 – 40 Euros.

When ordering fish in Crete you will find the price on the menu relates to a cost per kilo. Don't be put off by this. You are expected to go into the kitchen, choose your fish and then it will be

weighed in front of you, so you know what you will pay.

Nearly all tavernas sell their own 'open' wine, known as village wine. It is something of an acquired taste but it goes well with the local food. The Greeks are very proud of their wine and nearly all Cretans make their own. The white is usually always very drinkable but the red varies quite a lot. If you are unsure you can always ask if you can try the wine before you agree to it. Prices of local 'village' wine are usually between 3 and 5 euros per half litre.

In Rethymnon there is a huge choice of tavernas and you will soon find your favourites as you wander the narrow lanes and sea front. The tavernas on the Venetian Harbour tend to be a little more expensive, but the little extra maybe worth it for the lovely position. Just be aware that on the harbour front the waiters do tend to 'hard-sell' the food, particularly fresh fish, so don't be brow beaten into ordering what they suggest rather than what you want.

Local drinks are ouzo, raki, metaxa and, of course, Greek wine. Raki is the local firewater! This is distilled from the residue of the grapes after making wine. You will probably find you come across this whether you want to or not, as it is very often served, complimentary, at the end of a meal.

Meals included in your holiday

A buffet breakfast is included daily and there will be one dinner and one lunch also included. The dinner will be on the first or second night of the tour and the lunch on the last day out of the tour.



Destination

Crete

Crete is a fascinating destination for a cultural and historic tour with its wealth of sights reflecting both its ancient Minoan culture, dating back some 3,000 years, as well as a more recent history. However, it also makes a fantastic choice for a nature tour. With the island's wonderful countryside and scenery; fertile regions of fruit trees, silver green olive groves, majestic mountains and superb coastline; the island is a botanical delight in spring, when flora abounds providing the flower enthusiast an opportunity to see something of the remarkable 1700 wild plants that can be found on this island.

Places of interest included in the tour:

Rethymnon

Our base for the week is the Venetian harbour town of Rethymnon where, from the moment you arrive, provides an insight into Crete's ancient past. This atmospheric town owes its character predominantly to its Venetian and Turkish history, which surfaces everywhere amongst its minarets, domes, fortifications and detailed historic architecture. Between flower-hunting you will have time to explore, at leisure, the maze of tiny backstreets where everyday life merges with the towns' vibrant history. Places of interest include the 16th century Venetian fortress, the pretty Venetian harbour with a 13th century lighthouse, the Archaeological museum and Folklore museum.

For more information about Rethymnon visit:

<http://www.rethymnon.biz/>

Aptera

Our past visits to this Roman and Hellenistic site have led us to expect a cornucopia of colour. Aptera sits in a spectacular rural position where nature, allowed to flourish by itself, becomes the most dominant feature in springtime but also here are the well-preserved remains of a large three vaulted Roman water cistern, a roman theatre and some wonderful views.

Armeni

The cemetery of Armeni, dating from the Minoan era, is a fascinating site with its large number of well-preserved rock-cut chamber tombs. It is also the main site on Crete of the Vallonia oak, which makes it a point of interest on our tour. We may also spot other floral interest at the site.

Aktounda

Our walk above the village of Aktounda, situated south of Rethymnon, can be exceptional for orchids (rainbow, Provence & monkey).

Omalos

The Plateau of Omalos is situated high amongst the White Mountains of western Crete and is the entry point to the infamous Samaria Gorge, reputed to be the longest gorge in Europe. It has a small settlement, which is occupied mainly by shepherds who rear their sheep on the plateau. We enjoy a spectacular drive to reach the plateau stopping enroute if something attracts our eye. At the plateau, we spend our time searching, predominately, for tulips and anemones.

Plakias and the Kotsifou Gorge

Crete has around 140 gorges on the island, mostly on the south of the island, which is where the seaside resort of Plakias is located and where we can find two of these gorges. Gorges often have their own distinct flora, with the cliffs or rock faces acting as a refuge for these species. Each rock face, ledge or crevice, whether in sun or shade, creates its own special micro habitat.

The Amari Valley and Gious Kampos

The Amari Valley remains one of the most untouched and fertile regions on Crete. The abundance of water here means it stays green and vegetated throughout the year. Dotted with tiny churches and traditional villages, this wonderful region has kept its authenticity and peacefulness. The Gious Kampos Plateau, a wonderfully rural flat plateau, where we botanise usually provides a broad variety of flora, including orchids, Tulips, Anemone and Turban buttercup. And, if we are lucky, we may spot fritillaries too.

Your Guide

Graham Kendall

Having studied at the Savill Gardens, Windsor and the Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh, Graham Kendall went on to be Head Gardener at three National Trust Properties before starting his own consultancy. In the 1970's he spent a year studying in Greece at a pioneering garden which combined native plants with plants from other Mediterranean-type climates. This kindled Graham's love of Greece's rich native flora. Numerous subsequent visits have only increased his fascination and knowledge.

Tour manager

Your tour manager will be on hand throughout the tour to ensure that everything operates according to plan. If you have any problems or questions, please see him/her immediately and they will do their utmost to resolve any issues.

Please note as this tour is very much dictated by the hands of nature, it is possible some of the sites mentioned may change if the flora is found to be better elsewhere. If appropriate, these decisions will be taken by the guide and tour manager during the tour.



The Basics

Climate – The weather in Greece at this time of year is likely to be pleasant, but evenings can be quite cool and there is the chance of the odd shower. Our best advice is to come prepared. Layers are useful as is a light rain jacket and small umbrella.

Time – GMT +3 hours (Summer time Apr-Oct); GMT + 2 (Standard time Nov-Mar). This means Greece is always 2 hours ahead of the UK.

Language – Greek

Religion – Greek Orthodox

Currency – Euro. €1 = 100 cents. Notes are in denominations of €500, 200, 100, 50, 20, 10 and 5. Coins are in denominations of €2 and 1, and 50, 20, 10, 5, 2 and 1 cents.

Banks – Cashpoints compatible with international banking networks are located in all towns and cities, as well as airports and other spots. Those banks that still exchange foreign currencies into local money will always charge a transaction fee, so withdrawing money from an ATM usually represents the most logical means of obtaining euros other than bringing euros with you from the UK.

Banks in Crete are open Monday to Friday 8am – 2pm. Rethymnon has a lot of ATM machines easily accessed in the town and you can use a UK debit card, using the same pin number you use in the UK, to withdraw cash. The instructions are in English. Just look for signs on ATM's for Delta or Cirrus.

Credit cards – Crete is very much a cash society, so credit cards are not widely accepted, however more places are accepting these nowadays but it is best to check first in restaurants and shops that they accept credit cards, if you wish to pay by card. Varying amounts of commission can be charged for credit card payments and you may like to check these with your credit card supplier before you travel. Hotels usually always accept credit cards.

Electricity – 220 volt, two-pin continental plug.

Drinking water – Tap water is safe to drink although you should check at the hotel if the bathroom water is safe to drink as it could be tank

water rather than mains water. Bottled water is readily available to buy in all local shops and very reasonably priced.

Shopping - There are plenty of mini-markets scattered throughout Rethymnon for any basic supplies you might need. Cretan olive oil, olives and local honey are all excellent produce if you are interested in taking a little bit of Crete home with you. You may see people advertising honey on the side of the road or in Kafenions, this will usually be their own home produce and is often the best and most pure you can buy.

Stamps - In most places you can purchase stamps at the same time you purchase postcards. This is much easier than trying to find a post office!

Plumbing - Unless there is information to the contrary please do not put toilet paper down the toilet. As you may know this is common practice in Greece due to the narrowness of the waste pipes. Please dispose of the paper in the bins provided, which will be regularly emptied by the hotel.

Telephones/mobiles – You should be able to use your mobile phone in Greece, depending on your operator and contract. If you are calling the UK from a mobile in Greece, you will need to prefix the number with the international dialling code 0044.

Tipping –To keep our tours affordable, we do not increase the tour price by adding in tips. However, in the tourism industry, there is a certain level of expectation that, when receiving a good service, one does award with a tip. Tour Managers, Representatives, Guides and Drivers appreciate a tip at the end of their involvement with the tour, but this is entirely at your discretion. We believe in allowing you to tip according to your level of satisfaction with their services.

Walking shoes – although we do not walk great distances most of the sites visited will be rocky underfoot, and sometimes damp, so we recommend that you take sturdy shoes which have good gripping soles.



Health

General Health Advice

We suggest you take a good supply of your own individual medicines with you and always keep some in your hand luggage in case you get delayed or your luggage goes astray. General-purpose supplies for bites, stings, or scratches, and your usual medication for headaches, or stomach upsets are always recommended. Oral re-hydration sachets are excellent for topping up salt and glucose levels.

Visit the NHS Fit for Travel website for more generally information specific to the country you are visiting – www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk

Doctor/Dentist/Chemist

Please talk to your tour manager if you are feeling unwell and they will organise for you to see a Doctor if necessary. There is normally a charge of about 60 Euros for calling out a doctor (or more, depending on the distance the doctor must travel) and there is also a charge to visit a Doctor.

Keep any receipts for insurance claims.



Hospital

The nearest hospital is in Rethymnon. Your tour manager/hotel reception will assist if you need to visit a hospital during your stay.

Keep any receipts for insurance claims.

Inoculations

No compulsory vaccinations are required for travel in Greece.

Pharmacies

Pharmacies throughout Greece are generally well-stocked and have knowledgeable staff who will, more often than not, speak good English. Pharmacists will often be able to give advice and medicine for minor ailments. Pharmacies are open Monday to Friday but not on Saturdays.



Insurance

European Health Insurance Card (EHIC)

It is essential to carry an EHIC card with you as this will assist you if you are admitted to a hospital in Greece.

The EHIC replaced the old E111 in 2006. Valid in all EEA countries, the card lets you get state healthcare at a reduced cost or sometimes for free. It will cover you for treatment that is needed to allow you to continue your stay until your planned return. It also covers the treatment of pre-existing medical conditions.

Please note that the EHIC is **not** an alternative to travel insurance. It will not cover any private medical healthcare or costs such as being flown back to the UK or lost or stolen property. Therefore, it is important to have both an EHIC and a valid private travel insurance policy. It is also important to note that each country's healthcare system is slightly different, so the EHIC might not cover everything that would be generally free on the NHS.

For more information about the EHIC please visit:

<https://www.ehic.org.uk>

Travel Insurance

We strongly recommend that you take out an appropriate travel insurance policy when you travel abroad. If you require medical assistance whilst abroad it is essential that you contact the emergency number of your insurance company to advise them of the situation. You will **NOT** be covered for any claim unless this procedure is carried out. Your insurance company will then decide on the best course of action whilst in resort.



Emergencies

Should an emergency arise, please call our offices on:

00 44 20 7251 0045 (Mon-Fri 0900-1700)

Outside to above office hours please contact our emergency staff on:

00 30 6977 465 892 (**the resort manager**) or

00 44 7899 796542 or

00 44 7831 133079 or

00 44 1235 850720

PLEASE USE THESE NUMBERS ONLY IN THE EVENT OF A GENUINE EMERGENCY.

If you are calling a Greek number from a UK mobile you should prefix the number with the Greek international dialling code 0030.

If you find that you are in need of consular assistance during your holiday:

British Vice Consulate Crete
Candia Tower
17 Thalita Street, Ag. Dimitrios Square
71 202 Heraklion
Crete Greece
Email: crete@fco.gov.uk
Tel: 0030 2810 224012

Open to the public - by appointment only

Tuesday to Thursday, 9am to 1pm

Please note that an appointment is not necessary for emergency cases requiring consular assistance.

Telephone enquiries - Monday to Friday, 8am to 3pm

In an emergency outside these hours please call the British Embassy Athens switchboard number: +30 210 7272600 and listen for instructions.

Travel Editions
3 Youngs Buildings, London, EC1V 9DB
Tel: 0207 251 0045
Email: tours@traveleditions.co.uk www.traveleditions.co.uk

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