Classic & Undiscovered Crete



Trip style:	Destination:	Walking Grade	Carbon Footprint:
Guided Walking Holidays	Greece & Greek Islands	4 & 6	1121kg CO2

HOLIDAY OVERVIEW

Greece's largest island rolls out over 600 miles of coastline dotted with palm-fringed sandy stretches, plus an impressive line-up of ancient ruins, whitewashed villages, and historic cities. There's also a wealth of wonderful walking trails that up the ante for epic scenery. Trek through the White Mountains for their eyebrow-arching views of soaring cliffs, wildflowers, and Cretan wild goats known as Kri Kri and discover the national park and UNESCO Biosphere Reserve that is Samaria Gorge. Stretching for over 9.94 miles (16km) it's one of the longest gorges in Europe.

WHAT YOU'LL LOVE

- Completing the dramatic Samaria Gorge walk
- Admiring beautiful foothills, stunning coastline, and ancient ruins
- Keeping your eyes peeled for rare wildlife
- Staying in an authentic Cretan village near Kolimbari
- Visiting the Venetian city of Chania on your free day

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Return flights from London Heathrow, including baggage and transfers
- A choice of 2 guided walks per day with local leaders (on walking days)

- 7 nights' accommodation in Kolimbari
- 7 breakfasts & 7 dinners
- All in-destination transport

ITINERARY - ITINERARY

Day 1 **Arrival Day**

Welcome to Hotel Spilia Village. Unpack and settle in.

Day 2 **Rodopos Peninsula**

Today both groups will visit Rodopos village with its narrow streets, stone houses and beautiful churches.

Option 1 - Rodopos

Distance: 6 miles (10km)

Total ascent: 300 feet (90m)

In summary: A short journey to a splendid viewpoint and then our walk starts via olive groves to Rodopos village. Quiet tracks take us back to Kolimbari and a chance to visit the monastery or beach before a taxi ride back to the hotel.

Highlight: The Gonias Monastery and museum, one of the best preserved monasteries on Crete.

Option 2 - Rodopos Peninsula

Distance: 8 miles (13km)

Total ascent: 1,400 feet (420m)

In summary: A short journey to the lovely village of Rodopos where we will make our way along old goat paths and quiet dirt tracks through this rocky spine of Rodopos Peninsula to our hotel.

Highlight: Mountain goat spotting, spy them scrambling over the rough, rocky terrain.

Day 3 **Sirikari and Polyrinia**

Our coach follows the coast road west from Kolimbari towards Kissamos and then drives inland to the rural interior of the island.

Option 1 - Sirikari Gorge & Polyrinia

Distance: 4 miles (6½km)

Total ascent: 300 feet (90m)

Total descent: 1,200 feet (360m)

In summary: Our walk descends steeply into the deep gorge of Sirikari. At the bottom we pass abandoned dwellings on a rocky path that goes beneath high cliffs, home to eagles and vultures. At the end of the gorge we ascend to the ancient village of Polyrinia where there is time to explore before meeting our coach.

Highlight: Sitting amongst the flowers on the terrace of the unique little teashop in Polyrinia and eating a freshly-baked cake – yum!

Option 2 - Sirikari Gorge, Polyrinia & Kissamou

Distance: 8 miles (13km)

Total ascent: 500 feet (150m)

Total descent: 2,000 feet (600m)

In summary: We follow the route of the easier group as far as Polyrinia. From here we continue along a wide open ridge with great views to reach the coast at the town of Kissamos.

Highlight: Stunning views of the turquoise Gulf of Kissamos and beyond to the Aegean Sea. When you reach it, take the chance to dip in a toe, or more, with a swim.

Day 4 South Coast Gorges

Today we offer a choice of the famous Samaria Gorge or the very attractive but shorter Imbros Gorge.

Option 1 - The Samaria Gorge

Distance: 10 miles (16km)

Total ascent: 100 feet (30m)

Total descent: 4,000 feet (1,200m)

In summary: An early start takes us to the top of the Samaria Gorge, high up in the White Mountains with dramatic scenery. This stunning gorge is 10 miles long and descends from the Omalos Plateau to the sea at Aghia Roumeli. We follow a good but rough trail with rest stations, water and basic toilet facilities. We should arrive at the bottom with time to enjoy a drink or a swim in the Libyan Sea before taking the afternoon ferry to Chorio Sfakion.

Highlight: The most famous part of the gorge is the stretch known as 'the Gates', where the sides close in to a narrow passage and soar up to a height of 980ft (300m).

Please note that the Samaria Gorge is at the high end of the HF Grade 3 level walk and guests must be in good health and steady on their feet to maintain a reasonable pace. Whilst the paths are rough, they are not steep or exposed, but this can be a tiring walk.

In April and late October, or at times of poor weather, the Samaria Gorge may be closed. In this case, a suitable alternative walk will be arranged by our knowledgeable local leaders.

Option 2 - The Imbros Gorge

Distance: 4½ miles (7km)

Total ascent: no ascent

Total descent: 2,000 feet (600m)

In summary: We drive to the little village of Imbros, high in the White Mountains. From here we head down the lovely, narrow Imbros Gorge which is usually very peaceful. Leaving the gorge we are met by our coach to make the short journey into the quaint little town of Chorio Sfakion, the capital of the region. As well as cafés and restaurants there is a pretty town beach and an opportunity to take the ferry to the remarkable resort of Loutro.

Highlight: Relax with a boat ride to the delightful resort of Loutro, a pretty blue and white village only accessible by boat.

Day 5 **Free Day**

Each week there is a free day when no guided walks are offered. This is an ideal opportunity to relax around the hotel, walk independently or visit local places of interest. The more popular options for your free day include:

Chania:

Many guests take the opportunity to visit the delightful Venetian city of Chania. The old town is a maze of narrow streets lined with shops, bars and restaurants. The centrepiece of the city is the main harbour, from where there are regular boat trips available. The cafés that line the harbour side are attractive places to have lunch and watch the world go by. Other interesting sights include the Venetian defences and the indoor market – a hive of bustle and activity with lots of local produce.

Spilia Village:

For a relaxing day you may prefer to spend time around the hotel and pool or perhaps a stroll in the olive groves or to ancient local churches.

Day 6 **Milia & Topolia**

Both walks visit the mountain village of Milia. This ancient village was abandoned in 1948 and then rebuilt using the traditional materials of timber and stone in the 1990s. As much of the original village as possible was preserved or recreated and the nearby gorge was reforested. It is now used as a mountain retreat and enjoys wonderful views of the surrounding forested slopes.

Option 1 - Milia & Topolia

Distance: 7 miles (11km)

Total ascent: 1,200 feet (360m)

In summary: We ascend steadily to Milia accompanied by great views. Here we may have the opportunity to enjoy lunch in a taverna before taking quiet tracks and lanes to Topolia.

Highlight: Stop at the taverna in Milia for refreshing home-made lemonade, or perhaps lunch, and soak up the magnificent view.

Option 2 - High Country around Milia

Distance: 9 miles (14½km)

Total ascent: 2,200 feet (660m)

In summary: We too start the day with a steady ascent to a pretty viewpoint above Milia. After a short refreshment we will continue to ascend through beautiful wild country to a wonderful plateau for lunch before making our way on good paths and quiet roads to Topolia to join the easier group.

Highlight: Enjoy the feeling of serenity as you explore this wild and beautiful area of Crete.

Day 7 **Snowy mountain villages**

Enjoy dramatic mountain views and the opportunity to enjoy a traditional taverna lunch.

Option 1 - Snowy Mountain Villages

Distance: 6 miles (9½km)

Total ascent: 500 feet (150m)

Total descent: 1,200 feet (360m)

In summary: From the historic village of Theriso we walk up to Zourva using a valley path or a quiet road with dramatic views of mountain villages in the distance. There will be a break with opportunity for a typical Greek lunch before turning down into a wooded valley and walking through orange trees into Meskla.

Highlight: Visit historic Theriso.

Option 2 - White Mountain Approaches

Distance: 7 miles (11km)

Total ascent: 800 feet (240m)

Total descent: 1,500 feet (450m)

In summary: From Theriso we follow shepherd's tracks further up into the White Mountains. We will need to take care on a short rocky descent that takes us around the head of the valley before walking briskly to Zourva where we join the easier group to break for lunch, then walk down to Meskla including a pretty little gorge.

Highlight: Meet our fellow walkers in charming Zourva.

Day 8 **Departure Day**

We hope to see you again soon.

DAILY WALK OPTIONS



Gentle walking grade 4

The most active Gentle grade, with longer walks, some ascent, and possible steps, stiles, or off-path uneven ground. Typically, 6-7 miles (10-12km) with around 1,000ft (300m) of ascent.



Moderate walking grade 6

Longer full day walks with more ascent and varied terrain. Good fitness and agility are needed. Typically, 9-10 miles (15-16km) with around 1,500ft (460m) of ascent.

ACCOMMODATION

Spilia Village - Crete

The family-owned Spilia Village hotel is a luxury 4-star resort surrounded by citrus orchards and olive groves just 3km from the charming village of Kolimbari. A former olive oil processing plant, it has been lovingly restored using local stone and wood and the original millstones of the plant are on display in reception. As for facilities, the hotel boasts free Wi-Fi throughout, two outdoor pools, and an excellent restaurant decked out in Venetian style.

Your evenings

The friendly atmosphere of our Guided Walking holidays continues into the evening.

We'll enjoy a leisurely meal and then you may also like to join your leader for an evening stroll, relax with a book in a quiet lounge or linger after dinner with a drink purchased from Reception.

FOOD & DRINK

Dining at Spilia Village

Our holidays at Spilia Village are on a half-board basis and include breakfast and evening meal.

Breakfast

A self-service buffet is available each morning including a wide range of options.

Lunch (payable locally)

Ingredients for your picnic lunch can be bought locally - there is a supermarket in the village which is 15-20 minutes' walk. On some walks it will be possible to eat in a local tavern; your leaders will advise. The hotel can also provide a packed lunch on request, which can be added to your bill.

Evening meal

Dinner is served in the traditional Taverna "Halara", an historic structure dating from the Venetian period. The Taverna at the hotel serves local style cuisine with ingredients sourced from local farms and villages. This will be buffet style on our arrival night, with a choice of two dishes per course on other evenings. One evening, we will also dine externally at a local restaurant to experience traditional cuisine, which will be a set menu.

Drinks

The hotel has a well-stocked bar serving beer, wine and spirits.

ROOMS

Your room at Spilia Village

Spilia Village has 30 comfortable en-suite rooms. All have free Wi-Fi, air conditioning, direct dial phones, two channel radio, satellite TV, mini bar, safe deposit box, laundry service, and hairdryer.

In common with most European hotels, tea and coffee making facilities are not available in the bedrooms; however hot drinks can be purchased from the bar/café. Twin rooms comprise one double bed and a day bed/sofa bed.

ABOUT YOUR STAY

Facilities at Spilia Village

Spilia Village has two outdoor swimming pools.

There is a pool bar, open during the daytime.

Internet access and Wi-Fi are free of charge.

TRAVEL DETAILS

Address

Spilia Village Hotel
Spilia Village
Kolimbari
Chania 73006

Tel: 0030 2824 083300

LOCAL AREA

Crete has about 600,000 inhabitants, of which over a third live in the towns of Heraklion, Chania and Rethymnon. The rest of the island is sparsely populated, with unspoilt villages and isolated hamlets. During this holiday we'll explore the western end of Crete in the province of Chania. Heading west from the city there is a flat coastal plain which has developed as a popular holiday destination. Here you'll find the resorts of Agia Marina, Platanias and Maleme. Further west is the village of Kolimbari, the nearest settlement to our hotel. Beyond Kolimbari the rocky and sparsely populated Rodopos and Gramvoussa peninsulas jut north into the sea and denote the end of the main tourist resorts.

Our base for the week is Spilia, a small hamlet 3km inland from Kolimbari. Kolimbari is a quiet fishing village with several good restaurants by the harbour and is still relatively untouched by tourism.

Chania

The bustling city of Chania presents quite a contrast to the calm of the Cretan countryside and is a fascinating destination for your free day. There is a good local bus service from Kolimbari. The bus runs every half hour and takes around 45 minutes to reach Chania. You'll arrive in Chania's busy main bus station from where the old town and harbour are within easy walking distance. The old town is a maze of narrow streets lined with shops, bars and restaurants. Though busy with tourists, Chania is also very much a working city. The centrepiece is the main harbour, from where there are regular boat trips available. The cafés that line the harbourside are an attractive place to take refreshments and watch the world go by. Other interesting sights in Chania are the Venetian defences and the indoor market – a hive of bustle and activity.

Car hire

Hire cars can be arranged through the hotel and are a good way of exploring further afield. You may want to head to the superb sandy beach at Elafanisi or the coastal town of Paleochora on the southwest corner of Crete.

Kolimbari

For a relaxing day you may prefer to spend time around the hotel pool or private beach. This is a shingle beach – be warned that the water shelves quite steeply. The hotel is on the outskirts of Kolimbari, which boasts a handful of shops as well as seafront open air restaurants.

Shops & facilities

There is a small shop in Spilia which sells a few basics for packed lunches. You will be given the opportunity to visit Kolimbari and its harbour bars, ATMs and shops during your vist.

VACCINATIONS & HEALTH

Vaccinations & health information

Before booking, you should check with your doctor to see whether any health precautions are needed for your trip. Health advice and requirements can change, so we recommend doing this in good time before travel.

As a general rule, travellers should ensure they are up to date with routine UK vaccinations and boosters, including, for example, MMR and diphtheria, tetanus and polio. Some countries may require you to have specific vaccinations such as Malaria, Rabies and Yellow Fever. Please check with your GP if you are unsure.

Please note that the use or possession of some common prescription or over-the-counter medicines is restricted or banned in certain countries. If you will be carrying medication, you should check with the relevant embassy or consulate before travelling. As an extra precaution, we recommend keeping medication in its original packaging, carrying a copy of your prescription, and, where possible, asking your pharmacist to provide the medication name in the language of the country you are visiting.

For further country-specific health advice, visit www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk or www.traveldoctor.co.uk. If you are travelling from outside the UK, please consult your own doctor and check local entry requirements.

PASSPORTS & VISAS

Passport & Visa information

This information is for those travelling with a full 'British Citizen' passport; for all other nationalities or passport holders, please check with your local consulate for advice.

Passport Requirements

This information applies to travellers holding a full British Citizen passport. Entry requirements vary by destination and can change at short notice. For most EU and worldwide destinations, passports must be valid for the entire duration of your stay. Some countries also require a minimum period of validity remaining on your passport (often up to 6 months beyond your return date), even if you are not staying that long.
We strongly recommend ensuring your passport has at least six months' validity remaining at the time of travel to avoid any issues.

If you hold a different type of British passport or a passport issued by another country, you must check the requirements with the relevant embassy, consulate, or official government website.

Visa Requirements

Visa rules depend on your nationality, destination, length of stay, and purpose of travel, and they can change frequently. It is your responsibility to check whether you require a visa before travelling.
British passport holders should check the latest entry, passport validity and visa requirements for their destination on the UK government's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) website:
https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Packing list

It's best to be prepared for all weather conditions. To make it easier, here is a list of items you should consider packing.

Essentials

- Walking boots
- Waterproof jacket
- Waterproof trousers
- Insulated jacket/top
- Walking clothing
- Walking socks (plus spares)
- Sunhat
- Gloves/mitts and warm hat
- Water bottle (minimum 2 litre capacity)
- Headtorch
- High-factor sunscreen (minimum SPF 30)
- Swimcap (compulsory in Itialian resorts)
- Sunglasses with a dark lens
- Rucksack (15-30 litres)
- Mobile phone
- Personal first aid kit (containing your medication, blister plasters, etc.)
- Passport
- Visa (if applicable)
- Copy of your travel insurance policy
- UK Global Health Insurance Card (**formerly known as EHIC**)

Recommended

- Collapsible walking poles
- Swimwear and travel towel
- Snacks
- Dry bags

- Rubbish bags
- Insect repellent

Optional extras

- Camera
- Sit mat
- Flask for hot drinks
- Durable lunch box
- Gaiters
- GPS device (excluding Bhutan, Georgia and India)

JOINING INSTRUCTIONS (WITH FLIGHTS)

With flights

Book your holiday 'with flights' and you can choose to depart from selected UK airports* to your destination. For latest flight times and prices please call us on 0203-974-8865 or email reservations@hfholidays.co.uk

If you choose to book your flights with us, we automatically include return transfers between the destination airport and hotel.

JOINING INSTRUCTIONS (WITHOUT FLIGHTS)

Without flights

If you are booking on a land-only basis, you can join the group transfer at an additional cost. To do so, your arrival and departure times must be in line with the scheduled group flight timings. Guests travelling at different times will need to arrange their own transfers. Please contact us before booking to discuss the available options and costs.

USEFUL INFORMATION

Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is a condition of booking. Therefore, if you have not already arranged insurance, it is imperative that you do so before you travel.

For more information about healthcare and its costs, please visit: https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/healthcare-abroad/

Drinking Water

Drinking Water

Standards for drinking water vary widely around the world. In many destinations, tap water may not be safe to drink, brush your teeth with, or use for making ice. Where advised, you should drink only bottled or treated water and ensure that bottle seals are intact before use. If bottled water is unavailable, water should be boiled or filtered.

Staying well hydrated is particularly important in hot climates and during active holidays. Carry water with you and drink regularly.

If you are unsure about local water safety, check official country-specific health advice before travel, or ask your accommodation or local guides for guidance once you arrive.

Language Information for Crete

The local language is Greek.

Telephone Code for Crete

If the international number you wish to call starts with a 0, you must drop the starting digit when dialling the number.
To dial a UK number 0044
To dial a Greek number 0030

LOCAL CURRENCY

The local currency is the Euro (€)

ELECTRICITY

Electricity information for Crete

220 Volt AC with round two pin plugs; you will need an adaptor for any appliances brought from the UK.

ATM AVAILABILITY

ATM availability for Crete

There are several ATM machines in nearby Kolimbari where you can obtain money.

TRIPNOTE VALIDITY

TRIP NOTE VALIDITY These Trip Notes are valid based on the date printed at the bottom of the page. They will occasionally be updated post booking and pre-departure. We will send you the latest trip notes prior to departure through a link in your pre departure documents or we can send you a copy in the post if preferred. In booking this trip you should be confident in your ability to participate in all activities described in these Trip Notes. If you have any doubt about your suitability you should call HF Holidays and ask to speak to one of the team about this itinerary. The information in these Trip Notes is given in good faith. Where differences exist between the Trip Notes and our current brochure, the Trip Notes supersede the brochure. All holidays can be subject to unexpected changes; so please be prepared to be flexible where necessary. At times, it may not be possible to follow the itinerary as planned due to weather conditions, political, physical or other factors. In these circumstances we will make the best possible alternative arrangements to maintain the integrity of the original itinerary.

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