

Hike along the Libyan Sea in Crete, Greece

May 15 - 26, 2022

\$2,750* per person sharing twin/bath, \$440 single supplement;
Prelude in Athens: \$638 per person sharing twin/bath*

A few years ago, we fell in love with Crete, especially its wild western part. Steep cliffs rise



above lonely beaches with crystal clear water, white-washed churches and small villages dot the arid hillsides where the scent of pungent plants perfume the air. This trip offers a chance to spend time in historic **Chania**, visit the Minoan Palace in **Heraklion** where the Minotaur once roamed, and, best of all, hike part of the E4 long distance trail along Europe's southernmost coast facing the **Libyan Sea**. This is not for the faint of heart as some of the hikes are on exposed, steep trails, and we would

rate some of the hikes as strenuous.

*The estimated tour cost includes all accommodation in twin bedded rooms in hotels and pensions, breakfast and dinner daily, all transfers in Greece, luggage transfers from day 7 - 11, 2 leaders, taxes and service charges. Air transportation to and from Greece is not included.

For those who would like to visit Athens before our hike on Crete, an optional program is available (shown in italics).

Preliminary Itinerary

Sunday: Arrive at Athens airport. You are met at the airport and transferred by private car to a centrally located hotel.

Monday: Full day at leisure to explore Athens. (b)

Tuesday: Day at leisure in Athens. Evening private transfer to the pier in Pireaus and overnight ferry across the Aegean Sea. Twin bedded outside cabins with private shower/WC. (B)

Wednesday: Morning arrival in Heraklion, private transfer to our centrally hotel located. Join the group for dinner.

Day 1 - Sunday, May 15, 2022: arrive in **Heraklion**

Upon arrival in Heraklion, Crete, Ed & Helen meet you for the group transfer to our centrally located hotel. Welcome dinner.

Day 2 - Monday, May 16, 2022: in **Heraklion**



Morning guided visit of the Minoan Palace of Knossos and the archeological museum.

Knossos is the largest Bronze Age archeological site on Crete and has been called Europe's oldest city. According to legend, it was the seat of King Minos whose architect Daedalus built the Labyrinth with his son Ikarus to hold the Minotaur, a creature part man, part bull. Perhaps more to the point, the Minoan Bronze Age civilization was flourishing from c.3000 to c.1400 BC and it has been described as the earliest of its kind in Europe. Will Durant called the Minoans "the first link in the European chain." Afternoon at leisure.

We'll go out to have dinner Greek style. (B - D)

Day 3 - Tuesday, May 17, 2022: **Heraklion - Chania**



Morning bus transfer to Chania. This ancient city is known for its 14th-century Venetian harbor, narrow streets and waterfront restaurants. We're staying at a hotel near the harbor from where we can easily explore the town on our own, from the 16th-century lighthouse, to the Ottoman mosque, the Venetian fortress, and the picturesque narrow alleys. The town was named La Canea / Candy under the Venetians and one of its products, a sweet made of honey mixed with gelatine, beaten

egg white, almonds and nuts become known as, you guessed it: candy. (German speakers are familiar with a product called Kandiszucker, it has the same origin.)

Day 4 - Wednesday, May 18, 2022: Chania



Full day excursion visiting the monasteries of **Agia Triada** and **Gouverneto**. We'll take a walk down toward the sea to see **Katoliko monastery**, probably the oldest in Crete, hidden in a steep gorge above the sea and surrounded by caves once inhabited by hermits. Time and weather permitting, we may hike all the way down to the azure Mediterranean for a welcome, cool dip.

Day 5 - Thursday, May 19, 2022: Chania - Paleochora



Morning transfer to the south coast and the town of Paleochora located in a small peninsula. Afternoon excursion to **Elafonisi**, an oblong peninsula, which often breaks in two parts by water giving the impression of being a separate island. Elafonisi "island" is a Natura 2000 protected area. It is full of sand dunes with sea daffodils and junipers. Endangered loggerhead sea turtles and several other rare animals and plants find shelter on the island.

Day 6 - Friday, May 20, 2022: in Paleochora



Taxis bring us to up to the mountain village of **Azogires** from where we walk along the trail of the **99 Monks** down to the sea. Along the way we visit a Byzantine church, the small Anidri gorge, and the tranquil beach of Gialiskari. After an optional dip, we walk along the coast back to our hotel in Paleochora. 10 km / 6.2 mi: 3 - 4 h

Day 7 - Saturday, May 21, 2022: Paleochora - Sougia



Today's walk begins on a dirt track on the way out of Paleochora, and soon we'll be on a stunning coastal path. We stop for a picnic at ancient **Lissos**, once the port for the Dorian city of Elyros. In ancient times, people visited Lissos to bathe in its curing waters, and we may just want to do the same. In the afternoon, we walk through a narrow gorge to the seaside resort of Sougia. 15 km / 9.3 mi: 5 h

Day 8 – Sunday, May 22, 2022: **Sougia - Omalos Plateau**



Get ready for 2 impressive gorges, and hike from sea level up to 3000'! A well-made path leads through the **Irini Gorge** where the ascent is demanding but not too steep. The steeper but shorter **Figou Gorge** is more of a challenge that will be awarded by stunning views. The walk ends at the 'Agios Theodoros' chapel, where the hotel's minibus picks us up. The hotel is on the Omalos plain surrounded by the spectacular summits of the **White Mountains**. 21 km / 13 mi: 8 h

Day 9 - Monday, May 23, 2022: **Omalos Plateau - Agia Roumeli**

We walk through one of Europe's longest gorges: the **Samaria Gorge**. We either set out early or late to avoid the hordes of tourists arriving on busses. This way we have the gorge almost to ourselves. When we emerge onto the beach, we have time to splash in the sea. We spend the night in Agia Roumeli. 16 km / 10 mi: 6 h

Day 10 - Tuesday May 24, 2022: **Agia Roumeli - Loutro**



Leisurely walk along the coast. A fragrant pine forest provides shade along part of the way, and many beaches invite for a swim. Accommodation in Loutro, a fishing village than can only be reached by boat or on foot. 15 km / 9,3 mi: 5h

Day 11 - Wednesday, May 25, 2022: **Loutro - Chora Sfakion**

This is our last full day in Greece and you may want to forgo the scramble through another gorge and opt for the walk to **Ilingas Beach**, and hang out there for the rest of the day.



Those ready for another adventure start out early for the hike up to the tiny mountain village of **Livaniana**. From here we descend into the dramatic **Aradena gorge** that leads down to Marmara beach and across the Phoenix peninsula back to Loutro.

A 1 ½ afternoon walk along the coast brings us to our hotel on **Ilingas Beach** outside Chora Sfakion. 13.3 km / 8.3 mi: 5 ½ h

Day 12 - Thursday, May 26, 2022: **Chora Sfakion - Heraklion Airport**

Morning group transfer to Heraklion Airport.

Email your request for a reservation form to hiking@sunriseteam.com