



Crete's experts

excursions





EXCURSIONS

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Dear Guests

We would like to extend our warmest welcome to all of you who have chosen to come to Crete –all newcomers and regular visitors who return to admire its beauties and explore its secrets.

Crete is the fifth largest island of the Mediterranean and the most southern part of Europe. Its landscape is ideal for explorations, its crystal sea for pleasure and coolness and its cultural monuments for a journey through time. A cultural and artistic cross-roads, Crete is considered to be the amalgam of cultures that consists its multifaceted personality and its unique aura. Come to explore this exquisite island with [Touring Club](#)!

[Touring Club](#) is a sightseeing and tour company that organizes excursions all over Crete. It was established by local travel agents, with the aim to offer the best possible travelling solutions. After over 25 years of experience in travelling, fully aware of the needs and the requirements of every visitor, with a profound understanding of the tourist industry and granted knowledge for any well-known or undisclosed point of this marvelous island, we are able to offer:

Superb service:

Modern fully air-conditioned coaches, reliable boats for your voyages, experienced drivers, professional tour guides, cordial and helpful staff in all our selected offices.

Low prices:

Our competitive prices are the result of coordinated efforts and long term associations, so as to be able to offer group prices to individual travelers. Although our prices are low, the quality of our services remains superior.

Come along with Touring Club to get to know every niche of our gorgeous island and discover your own Crete!

Trust Touring Club for a unique vacation!



01

SPINALONGA ELOUNDA AG. NIKOLAOS WITH BBQ



This excursion is a trip back in time, since it carries the sensation and the feel of another era...

Driving along the North East coast through the gorge of St George, we reach the small fishing village of Elounda, the location of the BBC television series "Who pays the Ferryman". Today [Elounda](#) is a popular holiday resort, often visited by VIPs for the luxurious beach resorts, situated in the area. From there, we take the boat that gets us to the small island of [Spinalonga](#). The history and the culture of the island of [Spinalonga](#) became one with human tragedy in the course of time. This small isle carries within the history of Ancient Greece, as it served as a natural guard for the ancient city of [Olous](#); the history of the Saracens as a hide-out for their pirates; the history of Venetians as their fortress; the history of Turks as their settlement.

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

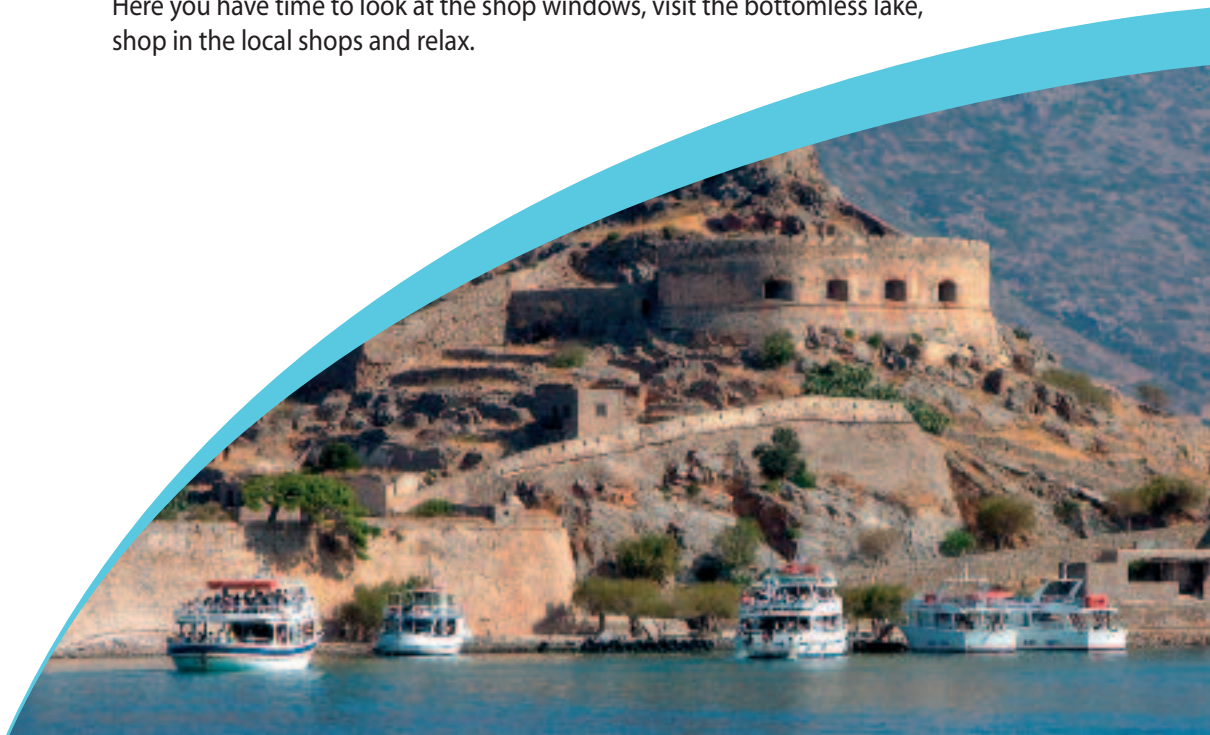
- Elounda - a small fishing village on the shores of the bay of Mirabello
- Spinalonga island - guided tour around the Venetian fortress
- Kolokitha bay - swimming, sunbathing and barbeque lunch
- Aghios Nikolaos - a picturesque town with a bottomless lake

After our guided tour of the island, we proceed to the small sandy pirate bay of Kolokitha, where the boat will be anchored. Here you have plenty of time for swimming at the crystal clear waters, tasting the BBQ served on board.

We then return to [Elounda](#), where we take our bus for our last stop, the picturesque town of [Aghios Nikolaos](#).



Here you have time to look at the shop windows, visit the bottomless lake, shop in the local shops and relax.





02

SAMARIA GORGE



Come with us to explore [Samaria](#) Gorge, the most majestic gorge in Europe and get ready to live a unique experience!

Our adventure starts very early in the morning and our first stop is near Rethimnon, where we get breakfast before moving on to [Omalos](#) Plateau. The walk starts from [Xiloskalo](#), where we enter this vast canyon of 18 klm that is considered to be the longest in Europe. We usually need 6-7 hours to cross the rocky gorge down to the shore.

The path follows the route of the ancient river Taras. On the way, we can see the caves that formed a natural shelter for the Cretans in war times and now they are the natural habitat of the well-known wild goats, or kri-kri.

Halfway we come across the village of Santa Maria, currently abandoned.

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

- Skaleta
- Omalos plateau
- Xiloskalo
- Samaria Gorge
- "Iron Doors" pass
- Agia Roumeli - lunch stop and time for swimming
- Chora Sfakion

Three kilometers prior to our exiting this majestic gorge, we reach the Iron Gates (Sideroportes), the narrowest spot of the route, just a few meters wide, but 300 meters high. A bit later we arrive in the small fishing village of Agia [Roumeli](#), where we have quite a long time to lunch and get a refreshing swim in the



Libyan Sea, before boarding the ship that leads us back along the coast to the village of [Sfakia](#).
Hiking shoes, sunscreen, a hat, sunglasses, an extra pair of socks, swimsuit and a light jacket are essential.



LASSITHI PLATEAU & THE PALACE OF KNOSSOS



Our first stop is at the historical Monastery of [Kera Kardiotissa](#), a monastery inhabited and run by nuns, which is located in an idyllic landscape. Here you can admire the miraculous icon of Virgin Mary, plenty of frescoes and a variety of other icons, dating back to the 14th century.

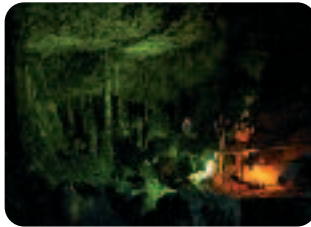
Then, we head to the [Lassithi Plateau](#), which is situated 850m higher than the sea level. It is surrounded by the Dikti Mountains and 18 quaint villages, which still retain the atmosphere of another era. You can admire the remaining famous windmills and the Venetian ditches, the drainage system of the plateau. Here you can visit the [Dicteon Cave](#), which is said to have been the place where Zeus, the father of the Greek ancient gods, was born. The most famous village of the plateau is the village of [Psychro](#), where we have our next stop.

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

- Kera kardiotissa - monastery dedicated to Virgin Mary
- Dicti cave - birthplace of Zeus ◦ Psychro - traditional potters' factory
- Tzermiado - traditional Cretan gastronomy (lunch stop)
- Knossos - guided tour around the impressive Minoan palace

Tzermiado, the capital of the villages on the plateau, will amaze you with its natural beauty, its breathtaking views and its traditional architecture. Here you can take pictures of the wonderful landscape, rest for a while and enjoy your lunch in one of the local taverns.

We end up to **Knossos**, the landmark of Crete; the place where myth meets history. Knossos was the capital of the Minoan state which was the first European



civilization. Here you will have a guided tour and you will learn about King Minos, his daughter Ariadne, and of course, the mythical Minotaur that lived in a maze, the so-called Labyrinth. The marvelous architectural plan of Daedalus, the rare and luxurious materials, the advanced techniques of construction, the elaborate drainage system and the size of the palace make it one of the most amazing sights on the island.





04

CHRISSI ISLAND



Are you ready for adventure?

Do you want to feel, for a while, like a modern castaway, stranded on a desert island? Then come along to the island of **Chrissi**!

Our adventure starts in the beautiful city of **Ierapetra**, which is located on the southern coast of the island. From here, a short boat trip takes us to the secluded island of **Chrissi**. During the journey, we are often accompanied by yellow-legged gulls and dolphins that enjoy the magic of the Libyan Sea, until we finally drop anchor to the "Island", as the locals are used to calling it.

Chrissi is a secluded, isolated, almost tropical island on the most southern end of Crete. Due to its unparalleled beauty and its unique ecosystem, it is under the protection of Natura 2000 Networking Programme, as a wildlife refuge and an "area of intense natural beauty".

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

- Libyan sea - dolphin spotting
- The unique “Lebanon” cedar tree forest on Chrissi Island
- “Golden Beach”- the fossilized shell beach
with the white sand and the crystal clear water

The pristine beaches, the myriads of shell fossils on volcanic rocks - remnants of the time that the island was sunk in the sea, limpets and corals, the shallow crystal clear waters, the cedar forest, the fine reddish sand with the mosses and lichens, the old salt marsh, the Roman carved tombs, the small church



of [St. Nicolas](#) and the peacefulness of this unique ecosystem are bound to steal your heart and make you daydream.

So, if you wish to get away from the hustle and bustle of the civilization, even for a single day, if you want to swim, to explore, to relax under the scorching sun, [come to Chrissi with us!](#)





05

GRAMVOUSA BALOS



An exquisite excursion is the one to [Gramvousa](#) and [Balos](#). Driving to the west of the island, we make our first stop near Rethimnon, where we have some time for coffee or breakfast. Then we head for [Kissamos](#), where we set out for our trip. The first things we admire is a vast cave –most likely an ancient shipyard-, the sea turtles and the dolphins. We also witness an impressive geological phenomenon: the simultaneous lifting and sinking of the two sides of the island, where its western side rises up to 6-9 meters above the sea level. We disembark at the island of [Gramvousa](#), which is also known as the “[Pirates’ Island](#)”, as it used to be a hiding place for the rebels of the island, where we are instantly blown away by the natural beauty of the place!

The broader area of [Gramvousa](#) forms one of the most significant hydro-biotopes

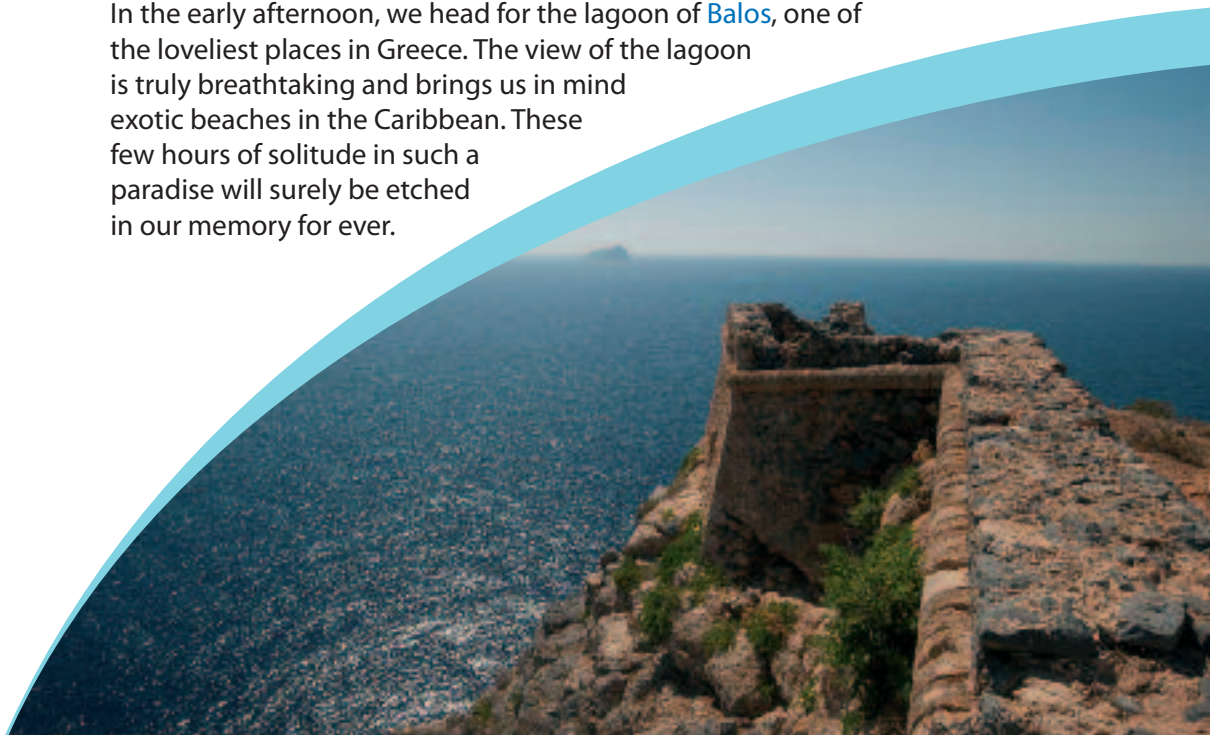
TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

- Kissamos port or "Kavonissi"
 - Gramvoussa - the pirate island with its Venetian castle
 - Balos - the magnificent beach of "blue lagoon"
- meeting place of three seas

of the Eastern Mediterranean, since here we can encounter over 100 bird species and 400 plant species. After our exploration of the area, we have plenty of time to enjoy our swim at the gorgeous beach with the wonderful colors, take a few shots of the famous shipwreck of the island or have lunch aboard (optional).



In the early afternoon, we head for the lagoon of [Balos](#), one of the loveliest places in Greece. The view of the lagoon is truly breathtaking and brings us in mind exotic beaches in the Caribbean. These few hours of solitude in such a paradise will surely be etched in our memory for ever.





06

ELAFONISSI



This is an excursion you do not want to miss! Up to the south-westernmost point of the island, in one of the most spectacular and unexpected locations on the island is where we will spend the day.

[Elafonissi](#) is a place of exceptional natural beauty, something between an island and a peninsula, as you have to walk through the sea to reach it, and it is included in the Natura 2000 Protection Program. Once occupied by pirates, today it is a very popular destination for day trippers who flood there to experience the unique feeling of being in a faraway lagoon, whilst having a Mediterranean holiday.

[Elafonissi](#) is a paradise on earth – a heaven of unparalleled beauty. It is covered with sand dunes, low trees, bushes, sand lilies and junipers.

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

- Elafonissi – a tropical-like isle in the southwest of Crete

You can get there on foot from the beach, by passing through shallow aquamarine and turquoise waters. The white and pink sand made of thousands of broken seashells, the limpid, blue-green waters, the little coves and the secluded tiny beaches remind the travelers of a paradise lost. Take a swim in the warm tropical waters and relax under the hot summer sun!





07

WEST CRETE



This excursion brings us to West Crete and our first stop in [Chania](#), the most ravishing city of Crete. It was an important Minoan city and the “mother of the Cretan cities”, according to ancient writers. The city is divided in the Old City, with the gorgeous harbor and the New City, beyond its Venetian fortifications. The Old City is one of the most beautiful cities in the Mediterranean and is called “Venice of the East”. We can admire samples of all the civilizations that have passed from here: archaeological Minoan sites, Turkish minarets and mosques, Muslim neighborhoods, Venetian fortresses, dockyards, fountains, squares, arches, mansions, Loggia and the Lighthouse. We can enjoy our lunch at the picturesque harbor or visit the famous Agora (Market), which houses traditional little shops and taverns. Here we can buy souvenirs or leather goods in very good prices.

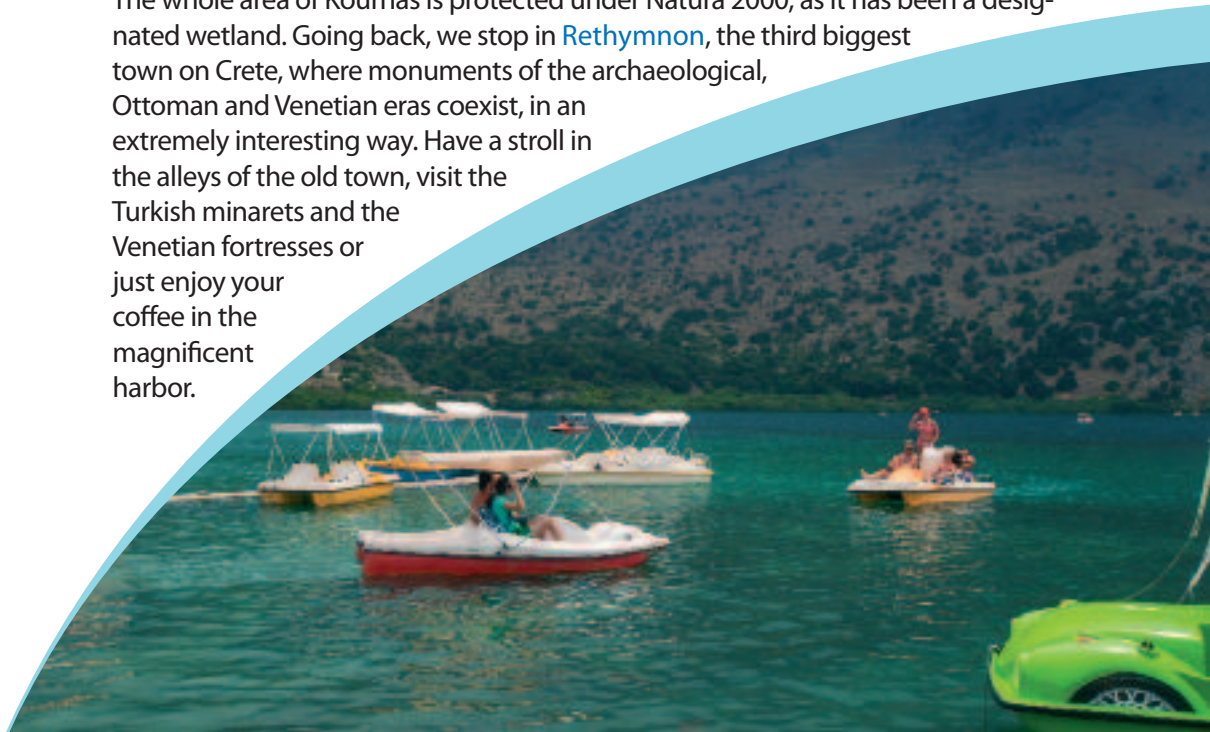
TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

- Chania - the former capital of Crete
- Kournas Lake – the only freshwater ecosystem on Crete
- Rethymnon town - a colorful mixture of Turkish and Venetian architecture

Leaving this extraordinary city, we arrive at the quaint [Kournas Lake](#), a beautiful habitat with natural freshwater, one of a kind on Crete. Lush greenery, steep cavities between hills, rare species of fish and birds, like eels, moorhens and two-color turtles, make Kournas the ideal place to enjoy a swim before our lunch or an early afternoon walk.



The whole area of Kournas is protected under Natura 2000, as it has been a designated wetland. Going back, we stop in [Rethymnon](#), the third biggest town on Crete, where monuments of the archaeological, Ottoman and Venetian eras coexist, in an extremely interesting way. Have a stroll in the alleys of the old town, visit the Turkish minarets and the Venetian fortresses or just enjoy your coffee in the magnificent harbor.



KNOSSOS MUSEUM HERAKLION



The most famous landmark of Crete, [Knossos](#), is the absolute “must” for everybody who decides to spend their vacation on our beautiful island. On one of the most impressive archaeological sites in Greece, we find the center of one of the most powerful civilizations of the ancient world and through the excavations, the legends and the history of the place we learn about its settlers: the Minoan people, the rulers of the Mediterranean.

With its small palace, the room of murals, the royal tombs and the royal mansion, Knossos is probably the most significant token of a civilization that left such marks in history that can never be erased. The intricate structure of the palace corridors gave it the name Labyrinth, where, according to the myth, the legendary [Minotaur](#) used to live. The marvelous architectural plan, the use of rare and luxurious materials, the advanced techniques

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

- Knossos - guided tour around the impressive Minoan palace
- Wine tasting
- The newly renovated Archaeological Museum
- Heraklion town center

of construction and drainage system and the massive size of the palace of Knossos make it, even today, the most amazing sight on Crete.

Leaving this wonderful palace behind us, we stop for a while in a [local winery](#), to taste the exquisite quality of its special blends of wine.



We return to the city to visit the newly renovated [Archaeological Museum](#), which exhibits traditional architecture and preserves exquisite and valuable ethnographic and historical material from the ancient period of Cretan history. A stroll in the city of Heraklion will end up a perfect day –shopping in its modern stores, enjoying our coffee or lunch in one of its many restaurants or just exploring its superb medieval buildings.



LASSITHI PLATEAU



We start our exploration by visiting the magnificent monastery of [Panagia Kera](#), which played a major role and suffered significant damage during the Cretan Revolt. A splendid monument of architecture and iconography, it operates as a nunnery and it gathers pilgrims from all over Crete.

Our second stop is the magnificent [Monastery of Vidiani](#), dedicated to Zoodochos Pigi (Spring of Life). It was abandoned until the mid 19th century, when it was restored with great diligence. Today it is a hermitage, housing a small natural history museum as well.

Our next stopover is the [Dictean Cave](#), a cave of mystic atmosphere, impressively adorned by large columns, stalactites and stalagmites. According to mythology, the Dictean Cave was the birthplace of Zeus, the father of gods, and also the place he was worshipped. Moving downhill, we come across the village [Psychro](#), a famous pottery centre.

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

- Monastery of Kera Kardiotissa
- Monastery of Vidiani
- Dicti cave - birthplace of Zeus
- Cronion cave
- Psychro - traditional potters' factory
- Tzermiado - traditional Cretan gastronomy (lunch stop)

Even today there are lots of pottery workshops, where we can watch the skilful craftsmen make beautiful ceramic pots. A legendary cave, the [Cronion Cave](#), is our next stop. Cronus, Zeus' father, used to live there before Zeus' mother moved him to the [Dictean Cave](#) to rescue him from his father's rage. The cave is said to be guarded by a giant dragon and no one is allowed to enter.



It is a cave of great archaeological value, as it was used as a dwelling, a burying site and a place for worship. Our wandering ends by visiting [Tzermiado](#), the capital of the Plateau. Here we can enjoy our lunch and the hospitality of the locals, in the middle of a beautiful and attractive environment.





10

SOUTH CRETE

M T W T F S S

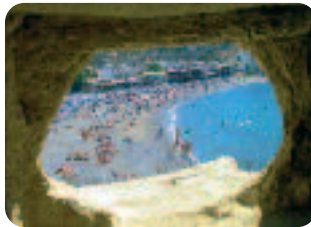


This time we set out for the south of Crete. Our first stop is the ancient city of **Gortys**, one of the most significant ancient cities of Crete and one of the largest archaeological sites of Greece. You will be fascinated by St. Titus' Church, the Chamber of the Law Code, the Odeon and the natural beauty of the landscape: the square with the everlasting gnarled olive trees and the evergreen plane tree, where Zeus and Europe had their wedding ceremony. Leaving the majestic site of **Gortys**, we head towards the **Odigitria Monastery**, dedicated to Virgin Mary, run and inhabited by monks. It was built during the 14th century and is one of the most historical monasteries on Crete, with a vast land property. It was named after the most famous miraculous icon in the Byzantine Empire. Initially built as a fortress, it still preserves some parts of its original walls.

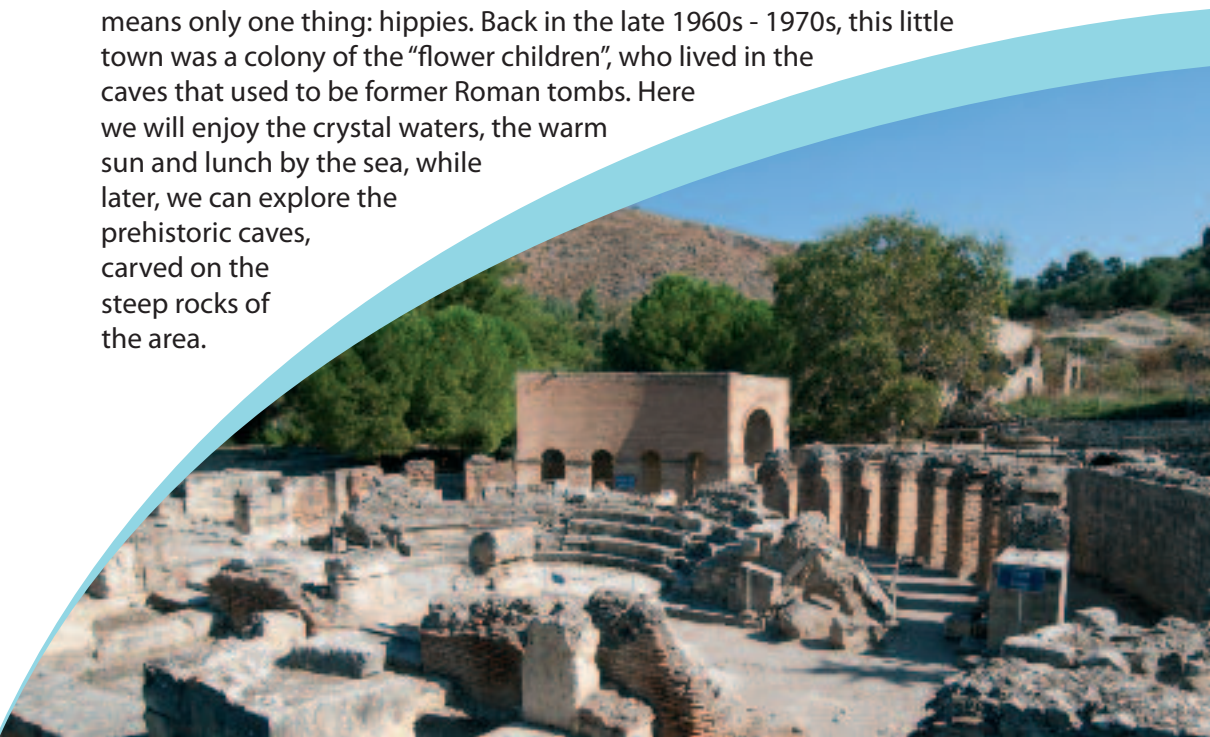
TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

- Gortys - the Roman capital of Crete
- Moni Odigitrias Monastery
- Matala beach - the famous “Hippies” community

After a short journey through traditional villages, we reach the famous beach of [Matala](#). This is the place where Zeus, having taken the form of a bull, swam ashore with Europa on his back before dragging her off to Gortys. Both the Minoans and the Romans used the place as their harbor. Nevertheless, for most people, Matala



means only one thing: hippies. Back in the late 1960s - 1970s, this little town was a colony of the “flower children”, who lived in the caves that used to be former Roman tombs. Here we will enjoy the crystal waters, the warm sun and lunch by the sea, while later, we can explore the prehistoric caves, carved on the steep rocks of the area.





11

SATURDAY MARKET HERAKLION CITY TOUR & CRETAQUARIUM



A different excursion for those who want to experience the island's everyday life. We start in the famous [Heraklion open-air market](#), where dozens of peddlers offer their merchandise in very good prices. After our walk in the bazaar, we will have the chance to get to know the city of [Heraklion](#). The Byzantium, the Ottoman Empire, the Venetian Rule have all left their marks on Heraklion. You can admire the imposing fortress of Koules at the harbor, the Venetian walls that surround the old city, you can sit at one of the many restaurants or coffee shops in the Lions' Square to enjoy your coffee or your lunch, or if you wish to, you will be able to visit one of the many city museums, the Municipal Library and the Art Gallery or one of the numerous byzantine churches. Grab your cameras and take shots of whatever you like most!

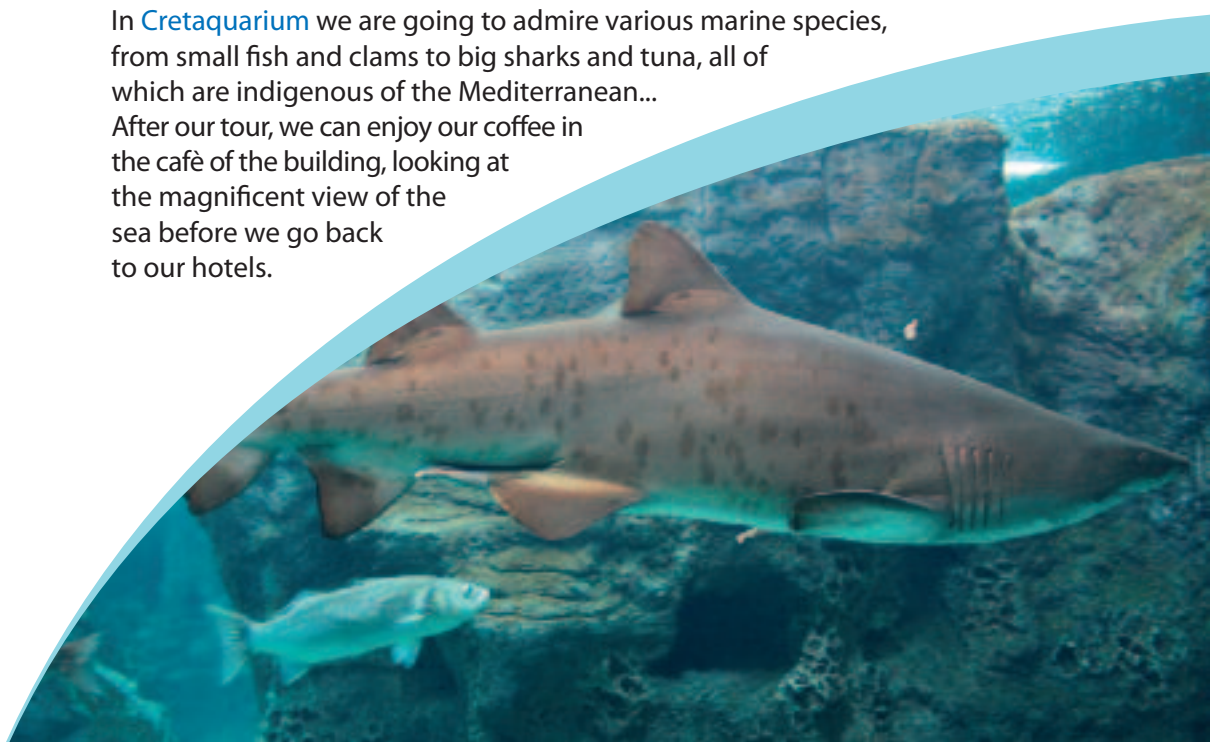
TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

- Saturday open-air street market
- **Heraklion city tour** - Liberty square, Morozini's fountain, Lion's square, Loggia monument, the fortress "La Roca al Mare", St Titus church
- Cretaquarium - explore the Mediterranean sea world

For those who wish to see something different, there is one more destination that you can choose for the rest of the day: the [Cretaquarium](#). Just a few kilometers away from [Heraklion](#), there is a compound that combines research with technology and education with recreation, the marine world of the Mediterranean.



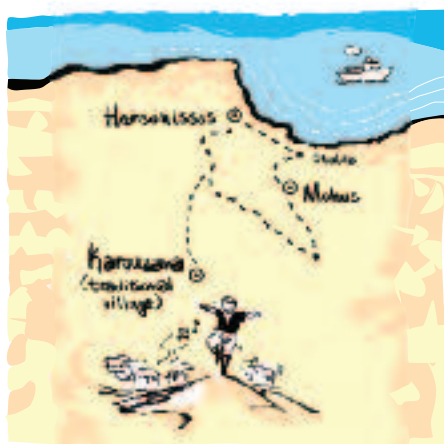
In [Cretaquarium](#) we are going to admire various marine species, from small fish and clams to big sharks and tuna, all of which are indigenous of the Mediterranean... After our tour, we can enjoy our coffee in the café of the building, looking at the magnificent view of the sea before we go back to our hotels.





12

CRETAN FOLKLORE NIGHTS



If you want to feel really like a true Cretan, you should learn to entertain yourselves as one of them! Come with us to the traditional village of [Karouzana](#) for a different night, under a majestic summer sky, a night dedicated to tradition, a night full of music, dance and beautiful scents.

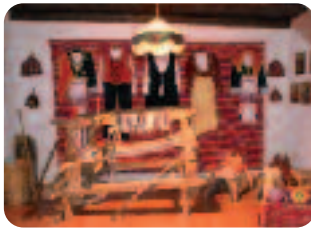
Reaching the ancient village, we have the chance to take a walk through this magnificent place, feel dizzy by the smell of the jasmine, be surprised by the locals' hospitality and treats and admire the traditional color of the area, which seems to have remained unspoiled by time.

At dusk, we are going to enjoy the traditional feast, taste the delicious dishes with the cheese, the honey, the rusk, the virgin olive oil, the meat and all the other products of the Cretan soil, get treated with the wine and the raki of the area, listen to the sound of the Cretan "lyra" and take delight

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

- Karouzana - ancient village lost in the heart of Crete
- Wine and Raki tasting
- Dinner buffet with free wine all night long
- Open air LIVE show with a great variety of Cretan and Greek folklore dances

in looking at the dancers, dressed in their traditional costumes, performing Cretan and Greek folk dances. At the end of the night we can also join the dancers, who will teach us the basic steps, so that we can also dance like modern Zorbas!



Get to know all of these just in one night! **We are sure that it will be etched in your mind and your memories forever and ever!**



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