

# Crete

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## TRAVEL GUIDE



Oliver's Travels

— YOUR GREAT ESCAPE —

With castaway beaches, warm shallow lagoons, rugged mountain landscapes and atmospheric harbour-side towns, Crete has everything you could wish for in a Greek island. But natural beauty and unspoilt charm aren't its only draws. The birthplace of Zeus has an incredible history, showcased in world-famous archaeological sites and in museums stuffed with antiquities. There are wildlife-rich gorges to roam on foot and hidden churches, tiny hamlets and secluded beaches to be discovered by bike. Out on the water, boats carry snorkellers and swimmers to idyllic coves and bays. Foodies are sorted too, with traditional, rustic tavernas and mountainside vineyards, all ripe for exploring.

## CRETE 101

<b>CURRENCY</b>	EURO	<b>TIME ZONE</b>	GMT
<b>ELECTRICAL</b>	TWO PIN	<b>HIGHEST TEMP.</b>	26° C
<b>LANGUAGE</b>	GREEK	<b>LOWEST TEMP.</b>	11° C
<b>EMERGENCY</b>	100	<b>PEAK SEASON</b>	MAY - SEP





## TRANSPORT TALK



### BY WHEELS

Hiring a car from the airport is best done in advance. Alternatively, try renting a car from a Cretan company near your hotel; car hire prices from local companies are often cheaper. Small vehicles are preferable, as village streets tend to be on the narrow side.



### BY BIKE

If you're willing to tackle Crete's mountainous terrain, cycling is a great way to take in the scenic surroundings. Bikes can be hired all over the island.



### BY TAXI

Taxis in Crete are good value and drivers are used to long distance journeys, so if you want to day trip to somewhere that isn't serviced by regular buses, you can arrange for a cab to pick you up.



### BY WATER

A handful of ferry companies offer return services to Crete's more secluded beaches. When a ferry isn't available, arranging a trip with a local fisherman is usually pretty straightforward.



### BY AIR

Crete has two international airports [Heraklion](#), which has direct flights from the UK and [Chania International](#), which also flies to the UK.



### BY BUS OR TRAIN

An hourly bus service links all of Crete's main towns and resorts along the north coast, while less frequent buses run to remote villages and the towns in the south.

# HIDDEN GEMS AND ACTIVITIES

## Loutro

**Loutro** is a typical Cretan fishing village: it has a small beach, a pretty bay and a string of traditional tavernas. There are no roads and no cars. If you want to see Loutro, the only way in is on the ferry. The lack of access has prevented any mass tourism, so there are no huge hotels or crowded restaurants. Days here are all about relaxing countryside walks and quiet time on the beach.

## Zakros

The tiny off-the-beaten track hamlet of **Zakros** in eastern Crete is home to little more than a pebble beach and, impressively, the Minoan Palace of Zakros, which dates from between 1600 and 1450 BC.

## Gavdos

**Gavdos**, Crete's largest offshore island, is about as far from civilisation as you can get. Luxurious it isn't, but if you're looking for an isolated beach and a quiet place to cook your fishing catch, this is the place to come.



## Elafonissi

**Elafonissi** didn't earn its nickname, the Caribbean in Crete, for nothing. White and pink sand swirls around warm, clear waters in this pretty lagoon, making it one of the nicest beaches in Crete.

## Ideon and Diktaean Caves

Two different mountain caves claim to be the birthplace of Zeus, the **Ideon Cave** and the **Dikteon**. If you can manage the steep walk to the entrance of Dikteon, near Psyhro, it's well worth a look. According to legend, a newborn Zeus was hidden from his father here. A dark staircase descends through stalactites into the 2000-square-metre cave, where there is evidence of cult worship from the Minoan period.

- ★ Hidden Gems
- ★ Picks for Kids
- ★ Best Activities
- ★ Foodie Delights



## TOP PICKS FOR KIDS

### Get on the road



The [Hellas Bike](#) company goes one step further too, offering family tours with fun challenges for kids to complete along the way. They're experts in family days out, with child-friendly routes led by experienced guides on mostly flat surfaces.



### Make a splash



If there is one thing kids love more than being on holiday, it's being at a waterpark, so combining the two is always a winner. [Acqua Plus](#) has been open for two decades and was the first waterpark to use wristbands for unlimited sliding.



### Learn to fish



Salty sea breezes and panoramic ocean vistas make boat trips with [Nostos Cruises](#) the ultimate kids' adventure in Crete. Throw in the thrill of their first catch and you've got a recipe for the perfect family day out.



### Meet the birds



Youngsters with a thing for animals can meet some of the world's most unusual and endangered creatures at [Amazonas Park](#) and get a handle on the risks they face out in the wild. Meet and greet with the birds while learning about the rainforests.



### Dive for octopus



Waterbabies and non-swimmers alike are enchanted by boat trips skippered by [Captain Nick](#), who has been taking families on nautical adventures in Crete for a quarter of a century. Don't worry though, the creatures come to no harm



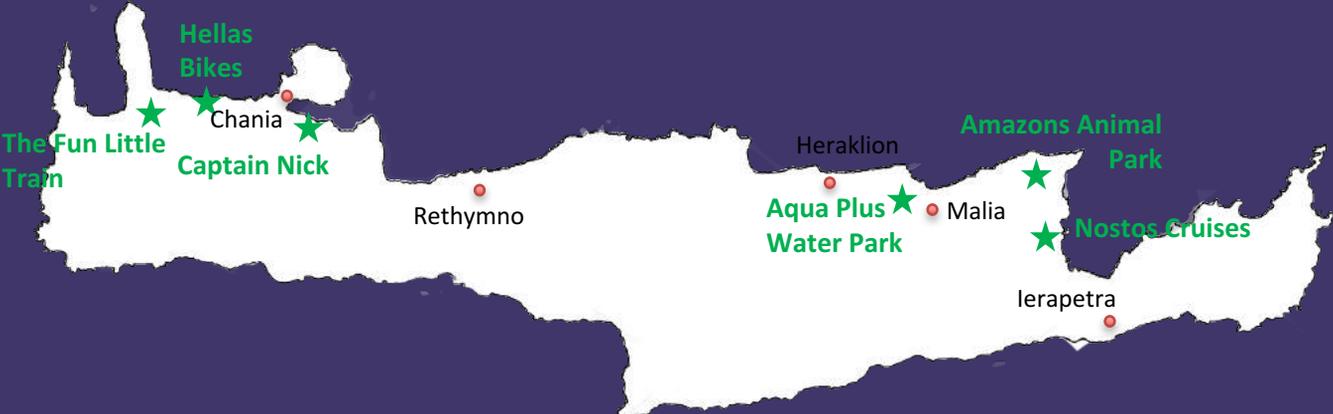
### Take a ride



Crete's rugged landscapes and charming coastal villages are some of the island's strongest assets, but it's safe to say most kids won't be terribly interested in taking in the scenery. That is of course, until they're checking it out from a carriage on the Little [Fun Train](#)



# MAP IT OUT: WHERE TO FIND THE BEST FOR KIDS





## CROWD-PLEASERS: BEST ACTIVITIES

### Step back in time



[Elissos Tours](#) gives you knowledge of the Minoan culture, ancient history and Greek mythology. bespoke tours of the island, helping guests really get to grips with the history and culture of Greece. These tours can be tailored to exactly match your interests.



### Eat like a local



It has been said that a Cretan diet is key to a long and healthy life. There are two liquids at the heart of this island's cuisine: wine and olive oil. On the [Eco Crete tour](#), the sacred pair are explored (and tasted) at great length.



### Take a workshop



If you're looking for a creative way to escape the sun for a few hours, classes with the [EA Ceramic Studio](#) might be just the ticket. This working studio produces fabulous handcrafted pottery and ceramics inspired by ancient techniques and designs.



### Go off road



Crete may be famed for its idyllic beach scenes, but [Safari Club](#) is on a mission to showcase the raw natural beauty found away from the water's edge. Sign up for a day in one of the Club's Land Rover Defenders for an off-road adventure into the heart of 'real Crete'.



### Discover hidden gems



Only so much of Crete's breathtaking landscape can be uncovered on foot or by car. Experience the full power of its beauty by mountain bike with the team at [Cycling Crete](#). These tour guides are home-grown Cretans and avid cyclists, who have explored every inch of the island.



### Learn to cook



Fussy eaters and foodies alike will be inspired by the cooking classes at [Vamos Village](#), where expert local cook Mrs. Koula gives the lowdown on traditional Cretan cuisine and even shares tidbits from her family's secret recipes.



# MAP IT OUT: WHERE TO FIND THE BEST FOR GROUPS





## BEST FOODIE DELIGHTS



### Palazzo Almare

With an atmospheric al fresco dining area overlooking Chania's old harbour, [Palazzo Almare](#) is as popular for its position as it is for its food. The kitchen at this fine-dining waterside only uses high-quality, locally sourced ingredients for every dish.



### Olive Oil Experience



Everyone knows Greek olive oil is the best in the world, but not everybody knows how it's made. Now you can find out, at the oil-making HQ of Cretan brand [Terra Creta](#). Guided tours walk you through every stage of the process,



### Manousakis Winery

To road-test some of Crete's finest wine, head to the hills of Vatulakkos, where you'll find the winery behind the award-winning Nostos brand. The [Manousakis Winery](#) has been producing 100 per cent organic wines in this serene Cretan village for two decades.



### Athens Walking Tours Food Tour



Foodies can get to grips with Cretan cuisine and enjoy a bonus history lesson on this [walking food tour of Chania](#). Specialties, traditions and delicacies will all be revealed as you stop off at handpicked locations tucked away in Chania's alleyways.



### Dishes to try

make the most of the amazing **local olive oil** and **fresh produce**, and cook up a storm! You should also make sure to try as much **local cheese** as you can. If you're eating out, make sure to try **lamb with stamnagathi**, a locally grown green veggie that's become pretty popular recently.

### Vintage Routes Crete



The tours led by [Vintage Routes](#) don't just require an interest in food and drink; you'll need a pretty good appetite too. Wine tours from this upmarket tour company include wine tasting and fine dining, and exploring both the oldest and most award-winning wineries on the island.



# MAP IT OUT: WHERE TO FIND THE BEST FOR FOODIES

Athens Walking  
Food Tours

Palazzo  
Almoro

Olive Oil  
Experience

Chania  
Manousakis  
Winery

Rethymno

Vintage Routes Crete

Heraklion

Malia

Ierapetra





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Our extensive [blog](#), Oliver's Journal has got tons of information and inspiration on locations across Europe and the Caribbean. It's a one-stop shop for family-friendly holiday fun, the best group activities, foodie finds and a good dose of adventure. If you found this travel guide useful, (we hope you did!), you can find a whole host more on the blog, too!

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