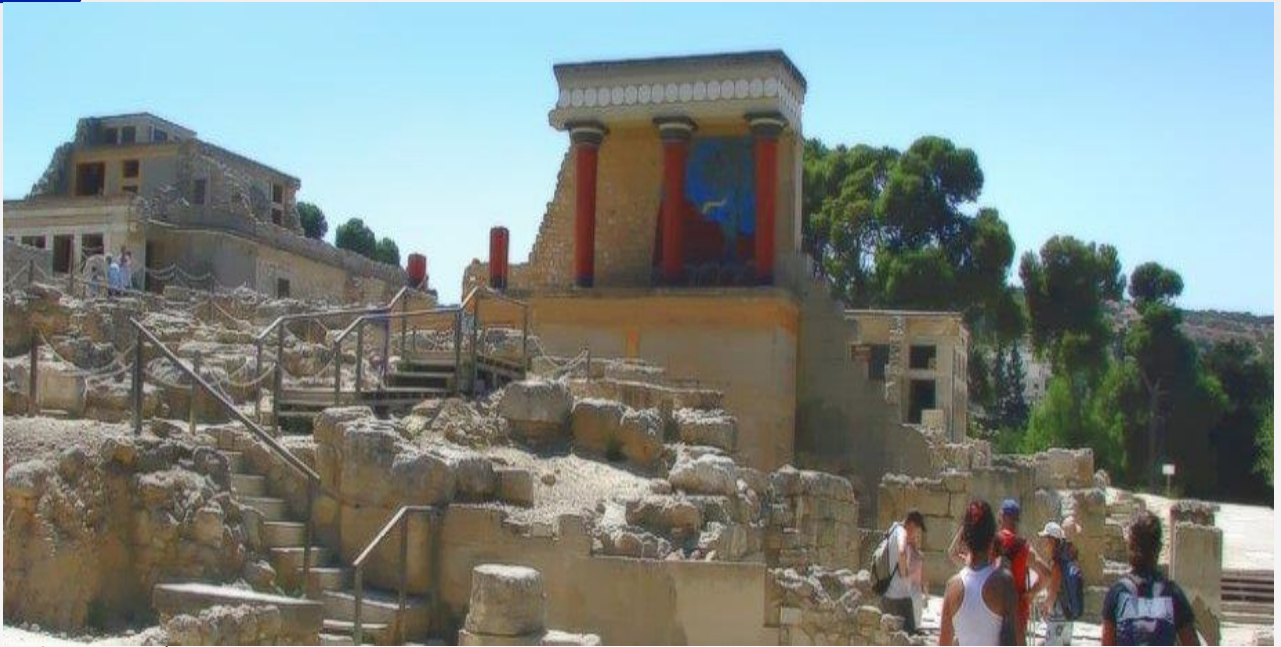


SIGHTSEEING IN CRETA

A QUICK GUIDE TO INTERESTING PLACES WORTH VISIT

SUMMER 2020

KNOSSOS



The archaeological site of Knossos (Κνωσός GR: Κνωσός) is sited 5 km southeast of the city of Iraklion. There is evidence that this location was inhabited during the neolithic times (6000 B.C.). On the ruins of the neolithic settlement was built the first Minoan palace (1900 B.C.) where the dynasty of **Minos** ruled. This was destroyed in 1700 B.C and a new palace built in its place. The palace covered an area of 22,000sq.m, it was multi- storeyed and had an intricate plan. Due to this fact the Palace is connected with thrilling legends, such as the myth of the Labyrinth with the Minotaur.

Between 1.700-1.450 BC, the Minoan civilization was at its peak and Knossos was the most important city-state. During these years the city was destroyed twice by earthquakes (1.600 BC, 1.450 BC) and rebuilt. The city of Knossos had 100.000 citizens and it continued to be an important city-state until the early Byzantine period.

Knossos gave birth to famous men like Hersifron and his son Metagenis, whose creation was the temple of Artemis in Efesos, the Artemisio, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

THE MINOAN PALACE AND CITY OF MALIA



The **Minoan Palace and the archaeological site of Malia** are located 3 km East of the town of Malia. From the architectural point of view the Palace of Malia is the third- largest of the Minoan Palaces and is considered the most "provincial" of them.

It covered an area of 7,500 sq.m. and according to tradition the third son of Zeus and Europa, **Sarpedon**, brother of the legendary **king Minos**, ruled here.

The Palace had two floors and its entrance is from the western paved Court, through a procession passage. It is a building with a central court, loggia, theatre, sanctuaries, Royal quarters, workshops and magazines. North of the western court is the hypostyle crypt, discovered recently, and protected from the weather conditions by a modern roof. The large underground room, whose ceiling was supported by columns, is considered as a council chamber for the political deliberations of the local lords, separated from the dwelling quarters and the official buildings. Its a forebear of the classical Greek Prytaneion, which had a similar function.

CRETAQUARIUM



One of the largest and most modern aquariums in Europe, CretAquarium was founded and operates as part of the HCMR. It is geographically located on the north-western part of the former American Base of Gournes, where together with the premises of the research institutions of HCMR forms THALASSOKOSMOS - the largest centre for marine science and promotion of the Mediterranean sea world.

Each visitor has the opportunity to see the sea inhabitants of the Mediterranean, to learn, be charmed by them and contribute towards its sustainable future. At CretAquarium, the attractions become knowledge and experiences raise questions.

NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM



The Natural History Museum of Crete (NHMC) demonstrates with an impressive manner the natural environment of eastern Mediterranean area with special emphasis on Greece and Crete. The exhibition is located at Sofokli Venizelou Avenue in Heraklion.

The Mega-Dioramas consist the biggest part of the Museum's exhibition. These are realistic representation of ecosystems found in the Eastern Mediterranean region.

An educational seismic table (earthquake simulator) is now operating at the Museum offering visitors the opportunity to learn about earthquakes and experience, in a safe environment, real earthquakes.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM



The Heraklion Archaeological Museum is one of the largest and most important museums in Greece, and among the most important museums in Europe. It houses representative artefacts from all the periods of Cretan prehistory and history, covering a chronological span of over 5,500 years from the Neolithic period to Roman times. The important Minoan collection contains unique examples of Minoan art, many of them true masterpieces. The Heraklion Museum is rightly considered as the museum of Minoan culture par excellence worldwide.

It is a Special Regional Service of the Ministry of Culture and its purpose is to acquire, safeguard, conserve, record, study, publish, display and promote Cretan artefacts from the Prehistoric to the Late Roman periods. The museum organizes temporary exhibitions in Greece and abroad, collaborates with scientific and scholarly institutions, and houses a variety of cultural events.

LYCHNOSTATIS OPEN-AIR MUSEUM



The Museum "Lychnostatis" is an autonomous private foundation, operating since July 1992. In March 1994, the Association of Members of the Museum was established, to support the museum's future initiatives and obtain sponsorships and grants. Two more bodies, a Scientific Committee and an Organizing Committee, composed by academics, artists and businessmen, provide valuable advice in the museum's development.

Built thoroughly with the prevalent raw materials (stone-wood-clay), under the creative architectural improvising of the founder, it possess an aesthetic quality unique in the area. No bulldozers, excavators or other mechanical means have been used in the construction. The collections are broad in scope, from agricultural implements to embroideries and from herbs to rhymes. The approach is by no means intellectual; all exhibits are left to speak for themselves, and visitors are allowed to touch objects and encouraged to smell and taste the various plants, fruits and products of the museum. Compatible to this both emotional and hospitable atmosphere, it is the museum's policy to welcome with a free admission all visitors who come for a second visit. Free guided tours are available every hour in English, German, Dutch (also French on request) to provide accurate information to the large number of tourists who visit the museum.

HISTORICAL MUSEUM OF CRETE



From its beginnings, the Historical Museum of Crete has been animated by a pioneering spirit. Successive extensions to the museum and recent re-displays, using contemporary perceptions in museology and new media applications, have contributed to creating a lively, up-to-date, visitor-friendly museum. The HMC now offers a composite view of Cretan history and art from the early Christian centuries to the 20th century. Temporary exhibitions cover a wide span, ranging from Byzantine to modern art, showcasing key literary figures in Greece (Elytis, Kazantzakis), and presenting major historical events from the late 19th century to the Second World War. At the same time, our educational programs are constantly being enriched. Offered free of charge, they are a creative source of knowledge relating to the Museum's permanent collections and temporary exhibitions. Lectures, symposia, film shows and book presentations held in the amphitheatre add to activities at the Historical Museum of Crete, rendering it an outgoing, multi-faceted cultural organization.

BASILICA OF SAN MARCO (Municipal Gallery)



A temple dedicated to the **patron saint** of Venice, St. Marco, could not be missing from the Venetian-occupied Heraklion. Situated right across lions' square (Morosini fountain), the Basilica now houses the **Municipal Art Gallery**. This is where the official ceremonies of the Venetian administration were held, and where the **Venetian nobles** were buried in sarcophagus. The palace of the Venetian **Duke** was located opposite to the Basilica, but only parts of it are preserved, buried within modern establishments, shops and cafes. Its construction started in **1239** and went through various phases until its final renovation in **1956**. During the Turkish period it was converted to a **Mosque** and the bell tower was replaced with a **minaret**. Unfortunately, many valuable frescoes and Christian tombs were destroyed during this period. Later, it housed a... **movie theatre** and then a storage area.

Today it is restored in its initial form (three aisles with two lines of pillars) and houses **art exhibitions** and various cultural events, such as classical or jazz music **concerts**. If you are lucky, you might encounter the **Heraklion Philharmonic** in its courtyard rehearsing covers of popular music pieces... from Lady Gaga to Michael Jackson!

Throughout the day, and especially at nights, the stairs of the Basilica become a favorite **hangout of the youth**, who sit there drinking beers or eating souvlaki, watching the crowds pass by. This activity also has a long tradition in the city of Heraklion!

LIONS' SQUARE (FONTANA DI MOROSINI)



The **Lions in Heraklion** is the square of the **Fontana Morosini**, the ornate Venetian fountain with four lions with water gushing from their mouths. The Fontana Morosini is in Eleftheriou Venizelou Square in the center of Heraklion, but the inhabitants of the city never use the official name, usually referring to it as the Lions Square or the Lions for short

The **Fontana Morosini** was the work of the Provveditore Generale (Superintendent) Francesco Morosini and the engineers Zorzi Corner, Raffaello Monnani and Francesco Basilicata. It was constructed to bring unlimited drinking water to thirsty Heraklion

The basin of the fountain stands on a circular base and is composed of eight lobes. The lobes of the fountain are decorated with scenes from Greek mythology carved in relief, mainly Tritons, dolphins and nymphs, mythical water beings. At the center of each lobe were the coats of arms of the Doge, the Duke, the Councilors and Morosini himself.

At the center of the fountain, on a high octagonal pedestal, sit four proud lions with water flowing from their mouths. The lion is not an animal usually found on fountains, as it is not connected to water, but in this case it was used as the symbol of Venetian power.

At the top of the fountain was a colossal marble statue of Poseidon with his trident, the masterpiece of a local artist. The statue is now lost, and we do not know when it was removed or destroyed.

Today the fountain has been restored to its original condition, by decision of the Municipal Council in 1900.

KOULE



The "Castello a Mare" is a fortress located at the entrance of the old port of Heraklion. It was built by the Republic of Venice in the early 16th century, and is still in good condition today.

The site of Castello a Mare was possibly first fortified by the Arabs in the 9th or 10th centuries. By the Byzantine period, a tower known as *Castellum Communis* stood on the site. In 1303, the tower was destroyed in an earthquake but was repaired.

The fortress has been restored, and it is now open to the public. Art exhibitions and cultural activities are occasionally held at the fort. The fortress is made up of two parts: a high rectangular section, and a slightly lower semi-elliptical section. Its walls are up to 8.7m thick at some places, and it has three entrances. The fort has two levels, with a total of 26 rooms, which were originally used as barracks, a prison, storage rooms, a water reservoir, a church, a mill and a bakery.

A lighthouse tower is located on the northern part of the fort.

OLD MARKET



The street name (1866 Street) refers to one of the most important Cretan risings to overthrow the Turkish yoke. The same is true of the parallel 1821 Street (on your right hand). The Heraklion central market is lined with shops selling souvenirs, cheap clothes and shoes, fruit and vegetables, herbs and spices, cheese and meat, along with small cafés and tavernas.

The roads running at right angles to left and right of the market contain yet more shops, supermarkets, a bank and an indoor car park. Near the top of the market, on Karterou Street, are the fishmongers with their stalls full of fish, crying their wares. At the end of the market - or the start if you're coming from Kornarou Square - are two major Heraklion monuments: the Venetian Bembo fountain and the neighboring café, which was once the Sebil (charity fountain) of Haci Ibrahim Agha.

SAMARIA GORGE



The gorge of Samaria is the second most visited tourist attraction on Crete (following the Minoan palace of Knossos) and by far the most popular walk. More than a quarter million people walk through the gorge every year from May to October. In winter the gorge is closed to visitors due to danger posed by water and falling stones.

The Samaria gorge is the longest one in Europe. It is an area of stunning natural beauty. Rare flora and fauna have survived in this area and are protected. The mountains that have formed it are wild, high and steep. One will pass through forests of ancient cypresses and pines and descend between vertical cliffs. The path starts from Xyloskalo (near Omalos) in the White Mountains at an altitude of 1230 meters and comes to an end at the village of Agia Roumeli at the Libyan sea. Walking through the gorge usually takes anything from 3 to 5 hours (excluding the breaks).

If you would like to avoid the crowds, you could choose to start your walk towards the middle of the day. This way you could reach Agia Roumeli in the evening, having enjoyed the gorge all to yourself. You could spend the night in Agia Roumeli and then have a wonderful day at the beach before you leave.

Nevertheless beware: the Samaria gorge is not just an easy stroll. The path is 16km long and although it is maintained and in good condition, it is quite stony and also steep at times. If you are not used to this type of exercise you may find it pretty heavy going and will certainly feel your legs for days afterwards.

SPINALONGA



The island of **Spinalonga**, officially known as **Kalydon**, is located in the Gulf of Elounda in north-eastern Crete, in Lasithi, next to the town of Plaka. The island is further assigned to the area of Kalydon. It is near the Spinalonga peninsula ("large Spinalonga") – which often causes confusion as the same name is used for both. The official Greek name of the island today is Kalydon.

Originally, Spinalonga was not an island – it was part of the island of Crete. During Venetian occupation the island was carved out of the coast for defense purposes and a fort was built there.

During Venetian rule, salt was harvested from salt pans around the island. The island has also been used as a leper colony.

According to Venetian documents, the name of the island originated in the Greek expression στην Ελούντα *stin Elounda* (meaning "to Elounda"). The Venetians could not understand the expression so they familiarized it using their own language, and called it *spina* "thorn" *lunga* "long", an expression that was also maintained by the locals. The Venetians were inspired for this expression by the name of an island near Venice called by the same name and which is known today as the island of Giudecca.

Today, the uninhabited island is a popular tourist attraction in Crete. In addition to the abandoned leper colony and the fortress, Spinalonga is known for its small pebble beaches and shallow waters. The island can easily be accessed from Plaka, Elounda and Agios Nikolaos. Tourist boats depart from all three towns on a daily basis (every 30 minutes from Elounda). There is no accommodation on Spinalonga, meaning all tours last only a few hours. Boat trips from Elounda take approximately 25 minutes while trips departing Agios Nikolaos can take almost an hour.

DIKTAEON ANDRON



Psychro Cave is an ancient Minoan sacred cave in Lasithi plateau in the Lasithi district of eastern Crete. Psychro is associated with the **Diktaean Cave**, one of the putative sites of the birth of Zeus; other legends place it as the Idaean Cave on Mount Ida. According to Hesiod, *Theogony* 477, Rhea gave birth to Zeus in a cave of Mount Aegaeon, near Lyttos; since the late nineteenth century the cave above the modern village of Psychro has been identified with this sanctuary.

The **Dictaeon cave** is famous in Greek mythology as the place where Amalthea, nurtured the infant Zeus with her goat's milk. The archaeology attests to the site's long use as a place of cult worship. The nurse of Zeus, who was charged by Rhea to raise the infant Zeus in secret here, to protect him from his father Cronus (Krónos) is also called the nymph Adrasteia in some contexts. It is one of a number of caves believed to have been the birthplace or hiding place of Zeus. The mountains, of which the cave are part, are known in Crete as Dikte.

CHRISSI ISLAND



Chrissi (meaning 'Golden'), or Gaidouronisi (meaning 'donkey island') lies 15 kms south of Ierapetra.

It is protected as an "area of intense natural beauty". The island has the largest naturally formed *Cedar* forest in Europe.

Visitors will be impressed by the colors of the rocks (reddish brown, greenish gray and black). The larger part of the island is covered by sand. On the flat areas the ground is relatively solid and consists of fine reddish sand, mainly covered by moss and lichens. At the areas where there are sand dunes, the sand is yellow and coarse. The sand is mainly supported by the complex underground roots of the cedars and their leaves, which actually touch the ground.