

Coastal Crete

Hotel-to-hotel  independent walking

- Magnificent coastal paths, rocky coves, deserted sandy beaches
- Spectacular White Mountains; stunning Samaria Gorge; incredible sunsets
- Astonishingly colorful wild flowers; rare birds of prey
- Exceptionally friendly hotels, waterfront meals; excellent value for money
- Totally unspoiled corner of Crete; every visitor still a novelty



This independent walking holiday explores the most remote south-west corner of Crete. There are often no roads within miles and most of the local commuting is done by boat! Often there is no one else around. You'll find deep, cool gorges blanketed with flowers and aromatic herbs; ancient mountain tracks used only by shepherds and donkeys; lush vineyards, olive-studded hills and hidden coves for swimming. You explore the lush Samaria gorge, the longest in Europe, home to golden eagles, lammergeiers and buzzards and blanketed with colorful Cretan rock lettuce and aubretia. And you walk past an extraordinary Saracen fortresses in the foothills of the White Mountains.

But we love this region most of all for the people and the hotels. Every visitor is still a novelty and everyone wants to talk to you; it often turns into charades! In Omalos you might well be shown around their cheese farm and get to sample some of their special jellied cheese (delicious served with honey!), and in Agia Roumeli the Pension Farangi is run by two brothers, both jolly Samaritans with typical Sfakian beards; one catches the fish and tends to the sheep, the other looks after the guests! All the hotels have excellent private facilities and dinner is often served on a balmy terrace, beneath a spectacular Mediterranean sunset and to the gentle lapping of the shoreline below.



COASTAL CRETE | DAY BY DAY

Day 1 Arrive in Crete

We meet you at the airport and take you (20 mins) to your hotel on the old Venetian harbour in Hania.

Day 2 Heart of the White Mountains 6km/4mi/3hr or 13km/8mi/4.5hr

After a spectacular ride to the Omalos Plateau, you walk through a blazing profusion of anemones, orchids and bright pink tulips. As you climb southwards into the high mountains there are dramatic views of Mount Gingilos. Watch out for the majestic lammergeier vultures which still haunt the area. There's a great picnic spot just above the Samaria Gorge with spectacular views into the heart of the White mountains.

Day 3 Samaria Gorge 15km/9mi/5.5hr

Today's walk is simply breathtaking. We give you a lift to the top of the Samaria Gorge, at 18km/11mi the longest in Europe. From here you wend your way down through woods, crossing streams and passing tiny chapels to the Iron Gates, where you can almost touch each side of the cliff towering above you. Falcons circle above and crag martins dive dramatically as you emerge into the breathtaking setting of Agia Roumeli, 200m directly above the bay. You spend the next two nights here.

Day 4 Exploring Agia Roumeli

Today's optional walk takes in two old Turkish fortresses above the town where there are many tavernas for a tasty lunch. In the afternoon, relax on the beach, and enjoy a swim in the clear crystal waters.

Day 5 Agia Roumeli to Phenix 16km/10mi/5hr

Today's walk follows the most remote part of the Cretan coastline. There are no roads within miles and you have the whole area to yourselves. You start out along the long graceful beaches, perhaps with a quick dip, until you reach the 13C St Paul's chapel, where the Apostle supposedly first arrived in Crete. After lunch in Stamati's friendly taverna, the path undulates and meanders through the heavenly scent of carob trees and Calabrian pines, across pebbly beaches and into secret rocky coves. Lovely views into crystal clear turquoise pools as you descend into the beautiful fishing village of Phenix.

Day 6 Exploring Phenix

Today you might like just to relax in the sun in one of the many idyllic little coves or follow a circular walk up to the base of the dramatic Aradhena gorge. This path zigzags through olive terraces and wild pear trees to the verdant bed of the gorge itself. Be sure to drop in on our friends at the 'Little Paradise' hotel in Likos (the name is very 'quaint' but it actually is!) It's run by four brothers who together fish, cook, serve food and tend to the sheep. It really does have a fun atmosphere.

Day 7 Phenix to Hania 9km/6mi/3.5hr

You may want to take the coastal path up to the ruined Turkish fortress of Loutro before continuing through lovely endemic green asphodels to idyllic Sweetwater Beach, so-called because of the fresh spring water that bubbles just under the surface. A swim and leisurely picnic and then a beautiful walk, the air heavy with the scent of aromatic wild herbs, along the breathtaking and deserted coastline to the old port of Hora Sfakion. The drive to Hania still leaves time to explore the delightful old Venetian quarter before your final dinner.

Day 8 Return home



"We shall not forget our 50th anniversary week. It was exciting, challenging and we could not have asked for anything better. Many thanks."

Mr B P Hoon

Dates and Prices

Departs selected Tuesdays Tour Only

2012 departures

May 8, Oct 16	\$2,563
May 15, Oct 9	\$2,563
May 22, Sep 25, Oct 2	\$2,563
May 29, Sep 11, 18	\$2,579

Singles: Add \$42 per night (5 nights will be in a single room; 2 nights will be sole occupancy of a double room). Additional supplement for solo travelers, please inquire for prices.

Child: This holiday is unsuitable for children under 12.

Room upgrade: Prices from \$64 per person, per night, based on 2 sharing.

Holiday type: Independent walking, hotel-to-hotel, no minimum group size, however airport and luggage transfers are subject to at least 2 people (in total) booked on each departure.

Departs: Selected Tuesdays from May 8 to Oct 16.

Duration: 8 days (7 nights).

Meals: Continental breakfast, 1 picnic and 5 evening meals.

Other details: For "What your holiday price includes," see "Holiday Planning" section pp 48-51.

Tailor-made travel choices

Nearest Arrival Airport: Hania Souda Airport

Flights can be arranged from most US/CANADA airports, with connecting transfers as required, prices and details on request.

The above prices include our standard transfers: Hania Souda Airport at 13:15, (transfer to hotel, 20 mins, provided). **Return:** Hania Souda Airport by 12:15 (transfer provided).

Tour only: Transfers included from Hania Souda airport at 13:15, and back to Hania Souda airport departing hotel at 11:45.

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COASTAL CRETE | WHERE YOU STAY



Hotel Porto Veneziano

★★★

Hania

Days 1+7



Exari Hotel

★★

Omalos



Hotel Farangi

★★

Agia Roumeli

Days 3+4



The Old Phoenix

★★

Phenix

Day 5+6

For extra nights we recommend Hania.

COASTAL CRETE | WALKING DETAILS



The walking is on good paths however as they are stony and uneven underfoot, ankle-supported walking boots are essential. You do need to be a reasonably fit and confident walker as the terrain (and, at times, heat) make this a slightly more demanding holiday than the distances might suggest.

