



Crete  
Lassithi - Heraklion - Rethymno - Chania

a picture map is included



Medeat

# Gastronomy Routes and the culture of Flavours...

*"The gentle art of gastronomy is a friendly one... it surpasses the language barrier, creates new friendships among civilized people and warms the heart".*

*Samuel Chamberlain*

What is "Food Travel" or "Culinary Tourism"?  
Who can be described as a "Food Traveler" or "Gastro-Tourist"?

Nowadays, new tourism products are launched regularly: some are new venues for already existing interests while others are new products that address the demands of new niche-markets.

For others, as observed in culinary tourism, it is not so much a new product but rather a focus on recognizing something that already exists, refining and improving the pursuit and enjoyment of unique food and drink experiences, both far and near to us!

Many governments and local administration authorities throughout the world are turning to tourism initiatives not only to breathe new life into stagnating economies but also to address the grave problem of rural depopulation. Culinary tourism in rural settings holds promise as a potential springboard for rural economies to blossom...!

The transaction cooperation network "Gastronomy Routes and the Culture of Flavors" involves 18 Local Action Groups which originate from four Mediterranean countries, namely Italy, Greece, Portugal and Cyprus. The core and most crucial objective of the "Medeat" cooperation is to succeed in maintaining and promoting the historical, cultural and qualitative dimensions of local cuisine, in a way that also connects it to local industries, cultural events and supplementary tourist activities.

This gastronomic guide presents the most interesting gastronomic itineraries of the territory of Lassithi - Heraklion - Rethymno - Chania, in Crete, Greece, as well as practical information concerning the relative places to visit with local produce, food processing units, alternative accommodation premises and similar issues.

After all, as Charles Pierre Monselet once stated: "Gastronomy has been the joy of all peoples through the ages. It produces beauty and wit and goes hand in hand with goodness of heart and consideration of others."

Enjoy this journey with all your senses...!



## DEVELOPMENT AGENCY OF LASSITHI

The Lassithi Development Agency was founded in 1996 in the municipality of Agios Nikolaos and operating in the Prefecture of Lassithi. Shareholders are the Region of Crete, the four Municipalities of Lassithi, the Regional Association of Municipalities of Crete, in Lassithi Chamber of Commerce, the four Unions of Agricultural Cooperatives and the Lassithi Sitia Development Organisation.

Its main purpose is to design and implement projects and programs of local development and information and technical support to local actors and residents to utilize national and European development programs in support of comprehensive, balanced and sustainable development of Lassithi.

## HERAKLION DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Heraklion Development Agency is one of the most dynamic companies in Greece, based in Heraklion Archanes and operates throughout the Prefecture of Heraklion, Crete.

Founded in 1989 by local government, collective organizations of rural and business environment.

The accurate and on – time information, modern forms of communication, mobilization of human resources, promoting employment, economic progress, environment, culture, social solidarity, is not simple concepts but comprehensive, consistent and coherent framework of everyday involvement of the company.

## ORGANIZATION FOR DEVELOPMENT OF CRETE

The Organization for Development of Crete SA in Chania founded in June 2013 by the merger of Development Organizations Western and Eastern Crete (O.A.DY.K. & O.AN.A.K.). Its shareholders are the Greek Government, the Region of Crete, the Regional Association of Municipalities of Crete and the Agricultural Agricultural Cooperatives.

The Organization is supervised by the Ministry of Infrastructure, Transport and Networks and objectives - responsibilities include:

- The commitment, maintenance, operation, administration, management and exploitation of land reclamation and the development and exploitation of water resources and wastewater.
- The planning, design, construction, operation, management and supervision of the work of Northern Highway Crete (BOAK), the Southern Highway, Crete (NOAK) and the rest of the Trans-European Transport Network Crete.
- The planning, design, construction, commissioning, operation and management of any other transport infrastructure project or communications networks, Crete entrusted to it by the relevant applicable provisions of either the Greek government or by third parties.
- The development of all kinds of European Programmes - Bilateral Cooperation in the Region of Crete.





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## Welcome to Incredible Crete

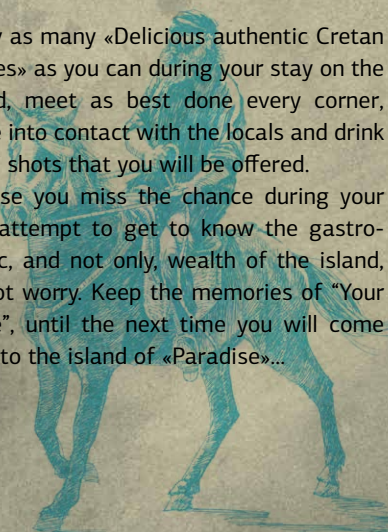
At the crossroads of three continents, Europe, Asia and Africa, in a landscape of rare beauty with steep mountains, fertile plains and sandy beaches, lies the island of Crete, the fifth largest island in the Mediterranean with a length of up to 257Km.

An island full of surprises and contrasts, which charms the visitor from the first moment with colorful landscapes, the authenticity of the settlements in the hinterland, the warmth and welcoming nature of the Cretans, the variety of products, the famous Minoan culture, unchanged folkways and excellent cuisine, formed the nucleus of the famous model of the Mediterranean diet.

The proposed Itineraries of the Guide - map you have in your hands, contain suggestions - exploring the hinterland of Crete, with main reference to flavours, local products, culture and sights one encounters along the island.

Enjoy as many «Delicious authentic Cretan Routes» as you can during your stay on the island, meet as best done every corner, come into contact with the locals and drink "raki" shots that you will be offered.

In case you miss the chance during your first attempt to get to know the gastronomic, and not only, wealth of the island, do not worry. Keep the memories of "Your Crete", until the next time you will come back to the island of «Paradise»...



## Routes at a glance:

### Lassithi

#### 1. Sea breeze and cool

**Agios Nikolaos – Kalo Chorio – Prina– Kroustas – Kritsa – Katharo – Lassithi – Potami – Zenia – Vrises – Limnes – Agios Nikolaos**

Starting from Ágios Nikólas, visitors may go on a 100 km trip and enjoy within 3-5 hours everything from temples, monasteries and museums to abandoned or traditional settlements (Límnas) and hang out with shepherds or hospitable honey producers on the Katharó Plateau. The best time of year to benefit from this route is summer, at which season you will have the opportunity to attend various events and fairs, such as the Cretan Wedding, the myzithra cheese pie festival, magerotskaliásmata and Moon Night (Forest Katharou), the eftázymo bread festival (Krousta) or the celebration of “Raki” (Limnes) or honey (Prina).

#### 2. The stone roads

**Agios Nikolaos-Elounda – Plaka-Vruchas – Selles – Skinias – Karidi – Dories – Fourni – Neapoli – Limnes – Agios Nikolaos**

The way to the fishing villages of Elounda and Plaka and the Spinalonga Island can easily be turned into a gastronomic journey by following this route. Swim in the incredibly clear waters of “Kolokytha” beach and try fresh fish, traditionally served (fish stew) or even “astakomakaraonada” (spaghetti with lobster) and complete with good and icy “Raki”, in one of the return picturesque vilages. Visitors that prefer relaxation and grooming have found for sure the most suitable Route, since they have countless options of high standards hotels and spa centres in the surrounding area.

#### 3. Mountain Tour

**3.a Agios Nikolaos – Kritsa – Katharo – Lassithi – Tzermiado – Kera – Krasi – Malia – Sisi – Milatos – Vrachasi – Latsida – Neapoli – Agios Nikolaos**

**3.b Agios Nikolaos – Lakonia – Zenia – Potami – Lasithi – Psychro – Kato Metochi – Kera – Krasi – Malia – Vrachasi – Neapoli – Agios Nikolaos**

The proposed route gives you the freedom to explore the Lassithi Plateau from both sides: by simply a walk in the villages or combining it with climbing, mountaineering, hiking or even biking. The truth is that in both cases

the visitor will taste the unique roast meat in the oven (ofto), “stacka” (butter from milk) with scrambled eggs and cheese pies “nerates” (made by water), while “Raki” here will be accompanied with local potatoes in the oven “ofti patata” and apples.

### Heraklion

#### 4. Minoan Paths

**Heraklion – Knossos – Archanes – Vathypetro – Peza – Choudetsi – Alagni – Melesses – Agies Paraskies – Peza – Mirtia – Skalani – Heraklion**

Starting from the city of Heraklion, meet the Roads of the King of Knossos, Minos and admire the Minoan civilization in many archaeological sites. Let your eye be lost in endless vineyards, follow the roads of wine and taste excellent wines accompanied by snails, “dolmades”, “ofto” meat and many other dishes. Make for sure a stop at the museum’s world-famous writer Nikos Kazantzakis in Myrtia village and the musical workshop Labyrinth in Choudetsi to experience traditional music of the world.

#### 5. The Blessed Land

**Heraklion – Knossos – Archanes – Vathypetro – Peza – Choudetsi – Alagni – Melesses – Agies Paraskies – Peza – Mirtia – Skalani – Heraklion**

Meet the many monasteries of the area of this itinerary with its unique architecture and unique views that they offer, as they are all built to very special positions. Scattered archaeological sites from various ages, will guide you to the past and the Islands’ history. Do not forget to try traditional sweets from women’s cooperatives in the region. Have a wonderful wine or raki, try local dishes, become one with the locals and let the sounds of the Cretan music to guide you in tradition.

#### 6. Seeking the experience

**Heraklion – Knossos – Archanes – Vathypetro – Peza – Choudetsi – Alagni – Melesses – Agies Paraskies – Peza – Mirtia – Skalani – Heraklion**

Starting from the tourist resort of Hersonissos, visit «Thalassocosmos» one of the biggest and most interesting aquariums in Europe. Move inland and discover the picturesque settlements. Try traditional sausages in Episkopi village and look up during Autumn a distillery for raki. Thrapsano, visit one of the many potteries and see the art of Minoan pottery to life. During summer seek to join





one of the many celebrations and festivals in Kastelli and the picturesque village Avdou.

## **Rethymno**

### *7. Looking for you in the south*

**Rethymno - Armenoi - Kournas - Plakias - Selia - Agios Ioannis - Mountros - Roustika - Ag. Konstantinos - Kato Valsamonero - Prines - Rethymno**

Starting off from the old city of Réthymno, a living monumental museum, and following the proposed route, visitors have the opportunity to admire archaeological sites and museums, temples and monasteries, wander around picturesque villages sporting a museum of Greek traditional costumes (Roústika), and cross ravines. The gourmands will have a chance to taste exquisite fish along the seaside, as well as oftó and local charcuterie, accompanied by organic beer or rakí.

## **Chania**

### *8. A walk on untrodden Mountains*

**Georgiupoli - Kournas - Argyroupoli - Asi Gonia - Kallikratis - Asfendou - Alikampos - Vrises - Georgiupoli**

A lake, rivers, streams everywhere, wetlands, platanus trees, windmills, ravines and ideal landscapes for horseback riding, hiking, paragliding and various sea activities is what is in store for you in this route. Your tour will come to an end only after you have tasted the world famous sfakianopites with locally produced honey and some yoghurt with spoon sweets (conserves), after a course of oftó and kreatótourta (meat cake).

### *9. Seeking the water*

**Vrises - Vamos - Gavalochori - Almyrida - Kalyves - Stilos - Ramni - Pemonia - Fres - Tzitzifes - Vrises**

Visitors who will choose this route are certainly those willing to indulge in traditional agrotourism activities in Vámos (barefoot grape pressing, olive picking, traditional cooking and Cretan dialect lessons) as well as take their best shot at more “hardcore” agricultural activities at rural fairs, such as kourés and kazanémata. One must definitely be in the mood for truly Cretan delicacies, such as bouréki, gamopílafo, kalitsoúnia and mountain hórta (greens).



## 1. Sea breeze and cool

### Lassithi

*Lassithi welcomes visitors by impressing them with its unparalleled natural beauty.*

*It is a place of sharp contrasts, entangled in a timeless play of the earth, the sea and the air.*

*Unique archaeological sites, breathtaking ravines and caves, magnificent plateaus, ancient paths, cultural and nature-lovers' routes, picturesque little villages.*

*Its sea world invites you to experience utter mystery and beauty.*

*Beautiful beaches and small fishing villages, with a deep sense of respect for the sea.*

*Human warmth, peace, hospitality and ancient traditions that still flourish in the hearts of the people, expressed through the local cultural events and Cretan cuisine.*

*Authentic tastes and fragrances, unique culinary experiences using high-quality local products and recipes that have been handed down from generation to generation.*

The starting point of this route is the city of **Ágios Nikólaos**. Take the North Road Axis of Crete (VOAK) southbound, and go up to Ammoudára and Vathý, where you may stop for a swim in their majestic beaches, while it is worth your time to visit the **wetland of Almyrós** (right after the town).

At a distance of 12 km from Ágios Nikólaos you will come across Kaló Chorió, where you may find hotels and apartments to let, giving you a chance to eat and rest.

There are beautiful beaches to swim at: you may choose among Karavostási, Ágios Panteleímonas (an ideal beach for windsurfing aficionados), Voúlisma (perfect for families with young children). Right after the village entrance, turn right to the Kaló Chorió - Metaxochóri provincial road.

After 6 km, you will reach the **village of Prína, renowned for its fragrant honey. Make a stop, have a taste and you are certain to buy some, as it is truly one of a kind!**

From here you will take the Ágios Nikólaos - Prína provincial road uphill, which will take you after approximately 25 minutes to **Króustas** where a stop is in order for a stroll around the village. Going downhill towards Ágios Nikólaos, in just under 4 km, you will come across the beautiful - unique, even - village of **Kritsá**.

Many interesting points that you should not miss during your stay in the village is a visit to the churches that are monuments of high interest, "Panagia Kera" as it is the reference point for thousands of visitors.

Nearby, just 3 km after, there is the ancient Lato, one of the most famous and best preserved ancient cities of Crete.

In the village there are several restaurants where you can taste the flavors of Lassithi with the multiple award winning premium quality olive Kritsa. If you wish to learn more about olive oil, you have only to visit the agricultural cooperative.

Before leaving the village drop by the workshop of women's cooperative to watch the preparation of traditional sweets such as "xirotigana" and cheese pies, but mainly to try.

If you love nature and adventure, you can cross the gorge of Kritsa.

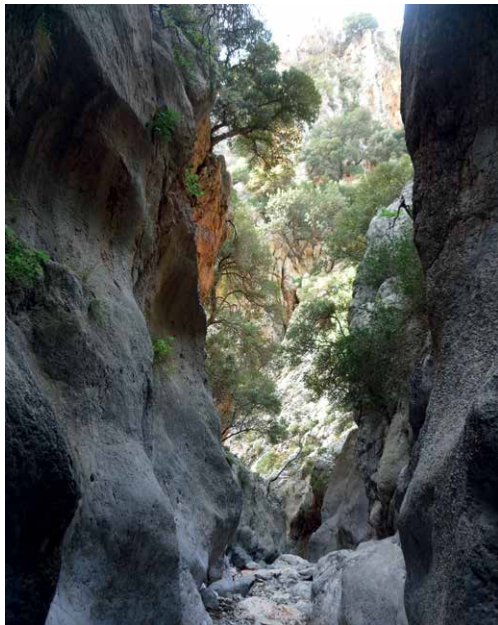


01.  
Church "Panagia Kera" in  
Kritsa village: Reference  
point for thousands of visi-  
tors in the area

02.  
The Gorge of Kritsa starts  
next to the homonymous vil-  
lage and ends in the village  
"Tapes". It's length is 13km  
and in some places the width  
reaches just one and a half  
meter.



01.



02.



From Kritsá you will go uphill and to the west, heading towards **Katharó** - truly a place like no other - with just a few houses and a handful of tavernas serving mainly local products.

Don't forget to sample the local cuisine: **oftó baby goat** or **lamb** and fresh **myzithra cheese**, produced by the herdsmen of Katharó. In wintertime they are only open on weekends.

If you are true nature lovers, you may take an excursion up to the Katharó Plateau, where you may see the rich variety of excavated midget hippopotamus bone fossils.

Leaving Katharó behind, head west and tread carefully towards the Lassíthi Plateau, and particularly the **Méssa Lassíthi**, that used to be renowned for its red sour apples that were transported to the Sultan in Constantinople.

Make a stop at **Moní Kroustallénia**, the religious centre of Lassíthi. Turn right and follow the Oropédio - Ágios Nikólaos provincial road. In approximately ten minutes, you will come across **Potámi**, literally buried in greenery. Make a stop to rest and admire the scenery.

Visit Panayía and let beauty sink in. Icy cold water wells, local products on the tables, tavernas, resting in the shade - or all of the above combined - will make you feel simply wonderful.

From this point onwards, the route goes downhill and crosses **Zénia**, where you may visit the ruins of an ancient city, as well as Atziganóspilios, one of the most notable caves in the prefecture of Lassíthi. Right after that, you pass by the settlements of Áno Amygdáli, Amygdáli and Drási to head northbound and reach **VrýsSES**, a beautiful village overlooking the Neápolis plains.

A bit further down the road, you will come across **Moní Kremastón**; it is really worthwhile to make a stop.

Going downhill, you pass by the beautiful villages of Choumeriáko and Nikithiánó to reach Límnes, one of the best-preserved villages located in the shade of ancient Dríros.

The route from **Límnes** takes an eastbound direction and after 10 km on either the old or the new national road, you come to **Ágios Nikólaos** - the end.

If you still have time left, you should definitely take a stroll by the lake and visit the **Ágios Nikólaos Archaeological Museum**, as well as the **Folklore Museum** that is housed in the ground floor of the old Port Authority building by the lake bridge.







### **03. Spinalonga**

*“Spinalonga” today is an uninhabited island, very popular tourist attraction in Crete.*

*In addition to the abandoned leper colony and the fortress, Spinalonga is known for its small beaches and shallow waters.*

*The island can easily be accessed from Plaka, Elounda and Agios Nikolaos. There is no accommodation on Spinalonga, meaning all tours last only a few hours. Boat trips from Elounda take approximately fifteen minutes while trips departing Agios Nikolaos can take almost an hour.*

## 2. The Stone Roads

The route starts from the city of Άγιος Νικόλαος and takes the Άγιος Νικόλαος - Elounda provincial road, and after approximately 10km leads you to Elounda, the world famous tourist resort that sports luxury hotels, countless tavernas, restaurants, traditional cafés, recreational areas and a natural landscape of incomparable beauty.

Heading east and leaving the channel behind, take the dirt road and go downhill on foot to reach the beach of Kolokytha with its green-blue waters; it is the destination of thousands of visitors. From Eloúnda go north and after 5km by the sea, you will reach the traditional fishing village of Pláka, where you shouldn't miss the chance to stop for food: fresh fish is on the menu. **Don't forget**

**to visit Spinalonga on a small boat either from Eloúnda or from Pláka. It is a visit that is definitely worth your while in more ways than one.**

For those who want to dedicate time to yourself can enjoy spa services, and if you love golf, you also have the opportunity to practice your hobby into a small eight-hole golf hotel in the area. In the taverns will find traditional Cretan dishes and fresh fish cooked in a special way. Remember that in July organized seafood nights with plenty of fish at the tables and the wine and "Raki" in abundance.

Going uphill and after a short while you will come across the settlement of Vrouchás and within less than 5km you will reach the next settlement, that of Sélles, where you should definitely see the renovated factory (an old oil press). Carry on and go through the settlements of Káto Louma and Epáno Louma, where you

may see windmills, old oil presses and cisterns.

Your next stop is Skiniás with its cobblestone beaches in Vlichádia and Άγιος Αντόνιος "Sfouggarás" -ideal for swimming and fishing.

The route continues westbound to Neápoli, while before Karydi you should stop and visit Moní Aretíou, the famous monastery that resembles a small fortified town. The tour will take you to an oil press, a wine press and a creamery. Going straight from Karydi, you will come up to Doriés with the monastery of Άγιος Κωνσταντίνος and Eléni that sports important works of high religious and artistic value. Moving on southbound, you will overlook Fourní. At the right turn, below the road, you are bound to be awestricken by the impressive mylótopos of Crete, with 13 mills in a row.

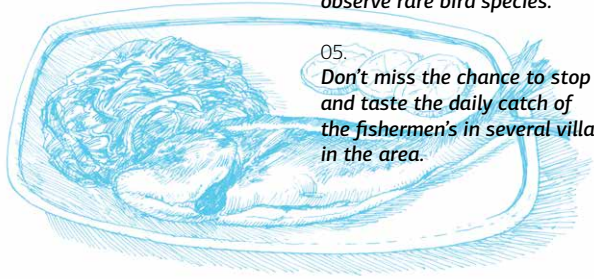
A visit to Αγία Άννα, Moní Kerapolitissas, Moní Kerámou and the small folklore museum is an absolute must. The route continues southbound and at a distance of approximately 5km, you will go pass the village of Nikithianó, where you may see old windmills and then carry on towards Neápoli with its old manors, the picturesque alleyways, the ottoman fountains, the municipal garden and the central square with the Great church. Don't forget to visit the Folklore Museum and the Neápoli archaeological collection, the house of Roussos Koundouros, as well as the archaeological site of Dríros at a mere 2km east of Neápoli.

Ask to be served soumáda, the local refreshment, browse the local shops for thyme honey, amygdalotá, dairy products, rakí and wine. The tavernas and rakí shops are all gathered around the square, where you will taste food and mezés of incomparable quality. Go back to Nikithianó and from there take the old Άγιος Νικόλαος - Heráklion national road to Άγιος Νικόλαος, the route's end point.



04.

*Along the road to Elounda village feel free to stop wherever suits your fancy for a photo opportunity and before you reach the settlement, make sure that you don't miss the salinas on your right, where you may observe rare bird species.*



05.

*Don't miss the chance to stop and taste the daily catch of the fishermen's in several villages in the area.*



04.



05.



### 3. Mountain Tour

The starting point of this route is the city of Άγιος Νικόλαος. Take the Άγιος Νικόλαος - **Kritsá** provincial road, and after approximately 10km you will come to the beautiful - unique, even - village of Kritsá (connection with Route 7). After reaching Kritsá, you have two options (Routes 9.1 and 9.2) to cross the Lassíthi Plateau:

- **3.a.** The route continues (driving slowly and carefully) towards the Lassíthi Plateau and more precisely Mésa Lassíthi, so keep to the right in order to cross Marmakéto and reach Tzermiádo, the largest village in the Lassíthi Plateau, where we propose that you make a stop at the Αγία Τριάδα parish church and the relic museum right next to it.

Don't forget to visit the important Trapéza cavern, also known as Krónion and the Níssimos Plateau. Continue on a westward course, cross the settlements of Lagós and Pinakianó and then go downhill; in approximately 5 km you will come to Kerá.

- **3.b** After passing Kritsá, head towards Lakónia. After crossing the settlements of Amýgdala, you will come to the village of Zénia. At a small distance from the village, you may visit the ruins of an ancient city, as well as Atziganópilios, one of the most noteworthy caverns of Lassíthi that you really shouldn't pass on the opportunity to see. Going uphill, you shall pass by Potámi (Mésa Potámi and Éxo Potámi), two villages built in the middle of verdant vegetation, both of exquisite beauty and fascinating history. Continuing your route, you come to the Lassíthi Plateau and make your first stop at Mésa Lassíthi; a short distance further, you will come to Moní Kroustallénia and then turn left towards Άγιος Κωνσταντίνος, Άγιος Γεώργιος and Avrakónte.

All the villages that you will come across on the Plateau are of unique beauty and you may visit them throughout the year. Stop wherever it suits your fancy, strike up a conversation with the locals, have a rakí with oftí potato on the side and buy local products (apples, pears, beans, potatoes, etc.).

From Avrakónte you go uphill to the majestic plateau of Limnákaros, from where the main hiking path starts, leading all the way up to the top of mount Aféndis. Our next stop is Psychró, an attractive village with a lot of water and an icy-cold fresh water fountain on the street.

**You shouldn't leave before visiting the world-renowned since ancient times worship cave of Diktéo Ándro that attracts thousands of visitors every year;** according to ancient Greek tradition, this is the birthplace of Zeus, the father of all Olympian Gods and his main place of worship. You may approach the cave by foot or by donkey on the well-maintained path.

The route carries on by going through the settlements of Ágios Charálampos and Káto Metóchi, where just outside the village you should make a stop at the restored Moní Vidianís, where you may also visit their small museum of natural history.

As your trip around the Plateau nears its end, you may turn left and, after a stop at Selí Ampéλου, enjoy the view of the sea.

Start making your way downhill and in approximately 5km you will come to Kerá with its breathtaking view overlooking the Avdós valley. You may stop at the historical Moní Kardiótissas to admire the impressive byzantine hagiographies.

Don't forget to taste the unparalleled roast meat at the village's tavernas, prepared in wood-burning stoves.

The route goes downhill to meet, with a detour to the right, the picturesque village of Krássi, where it is truly worthwhile to take a stroll down its streets and definitely have a coffee underneath the enormous monumental platanus tree that many a time lent its shade to the artistic genius of the great Cretan thinker Níkos Kazantzákis.

Leaving Krássi behind and after approximately 10km of exquisite view and unique natural surroundings, you will come to the tourist resort of Mália, where you definitely must visit the Mália complex of palaces, built according to the Knossós and Festós architectural style, at a distance of no more than 3km to the east of the settlement. Leaving Mália, follow the old Heráklion - Ágios Nikólaos national road and turn left at the signs to make a stop at Sísi, a picturesque little local fishing village or move just a bit further to the east towards yet another fishing village, Mílatos with many fish tavernas and ample accommodation.

At a nearby distance (3km), south-east bound, you will come to the historical Cave of Mílatos, where in 1823 about 200 Christians were martyred. Going uphill and making a small detour to the right, you will reach the most special and picturesque village of Vrachássi, where a brief tour around the settlement is a must. Continue on a south-eastern and cross the small settlement of Latsída (quite famous over the past years for its succulent souvláki). Our next stop is the city of Neápoli (connection with Route 8) and the route ends with your return to Ágios Nikólaos.





## 4. Minoan Paths

### Heraklion

*Heraklion is the capital city of Crete, the largest port and one of the most visited airports in the country with direct flights from many parts of the world. The prefecture of Heraklion has a unique natural environment, rich in contrasting landscapes and natural beauties.*

*The high mountains of Idi (west), of Diktis (east) and Asterousion (south), interspersed with low hills and large plains, such as the Messara, meet with the crowded sandy beaches of the north and the picturesque, untouched coves of the south.*

*Traditional villages in the hinterland of the county, with architectural beauty, combined with the natural landscape and farmland waiting to be discovered.*

*Walk the paths of King Minos and let the archaeological and historical sites turn you in historic and mythical times. Follow the roads of wine and enjoy exceptional quality Cretan wine with a long tradition. Meet the famous*

*Cretan diet and try as many local dishes as you can, based on olive oil, pulses, vegetables, herbs, local cheeses, charcuterie and much more... Do*

*not resist to a raki in a traditional café or tavern, accompanied by appetizers or sweets or by the sounds of a Cretan couplet "Mantinada".*

Starting from the city of Heráklion, head south to meet, on top of the Kefála hill, ancient Knossós, the largest and most brilliant centre of the Minoan civilisation, which should undoubtedly be the first stop for every visitor of the island.

After completing your tour of Knossós, head to the picturesque hamlet of Archánes, built at the foot of mount Yúchta, sporting traditional architecture and having been awarded a European Prize for its restoration works.

Walk the picturesque and labyrinthine alleyways; admire the remarkably well-preserved neoclassical buildings; visit the Archánes archaeological site, the Folklore Museum, the Museum of Cretan History and Tradition; the sculptor's workshop, the restored olive oil production factory, as well as the Church of the Virgin of Archánes, where you may admire on display religious icons and invaluable church vessels.

You may acquaint yourselves with the local cuisine by visiting one of the many traditional tavernas, while a stop at the women's cooperative offers itself for tasting and purchasing traditional delicacies, spoon sweets (conserves), jams, rusks, etc.

The route continues south and, at a distance of 5km from Archánes, you will come across the settlement of Vathýpetro and make a stop at the Minoan Mansion, where a wine press was discovered, alongside an olive press installation and pottery workshops.

Continuing your course to the south-east on the Knossós - Cháarakas provincial road, you come up to Choudétsi.

Near the village, you may visit the local winery and tavernas serving local culinary delights.

You should really make a stop at the very well-known and prolific "Labyrinth" Music Workshop that performs and promotes music from all over the world.

Moving just outside the settlement and crossing a verdant, 500m-long path, you discover, hidden in one of the sides of the Spiliótissa ravine, the monastery by the same name.

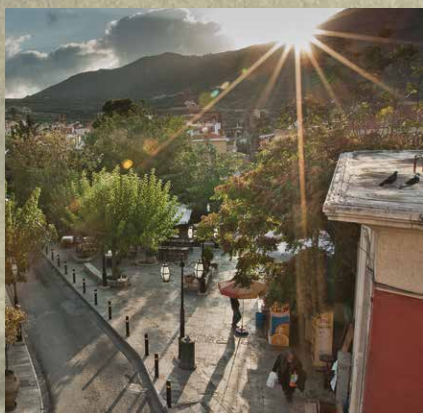
Your next stop is the Kalloní settlement, which is the base of the **Union of Agricultural Cooperatives of Pezá that produces exquisite quality olive oil and wine (PDO).**

There is also a museum that shows short films promoting the process of olive oil and wine production.





06.



07.



08.

06.

**Typical snails recipe:  
Snails “Savoro” with  
rosemary**

07.

**Archanes village: Archanes  
is a picturesque rural  
town of Heraklion with  
a history of 5,000 years,  
built 16 km southeast of  
Heraklion, in the foothills  
of Mount Giouchtas.**

**The passage of time has  
not altered the traditional  
architecture of Archanes  
and even, thanks to the  
exemplary regeneration,  
won a European Award for  
Restoration Village  
in 2000.**

08.

**In Choudetsi village don't  
miss the “Choudetsi Fes-  
tival” in Jyly and a visit  
to the “Labyrinth” Music  
Workshop that performs  
and promotes music from  
all over the world.**

Leaving Pezá, moving to the south and through the village of Melésses, you reach Alágni for a stop at yet another winery.

Your journey continues uphill to Melésses and Ágies Paraskiés until you reach Myrtiá, where everything bears testimony to the presence of the great Cretan littérateur Nikos Kazantzákis.

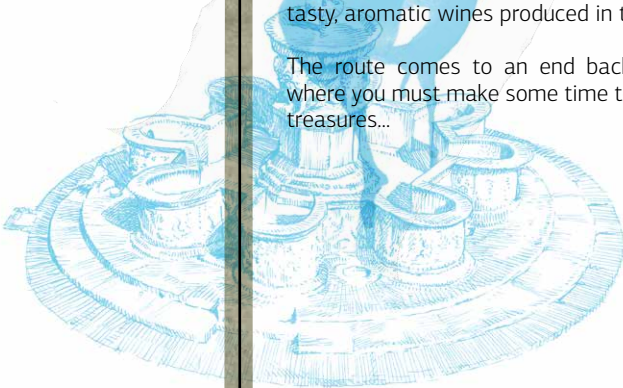
**You should definitely visit the Nikos Kazantzákis Museum, which is one of the very few literary museums in Greece.**

The village sports a traditional product workshop and we suggest that you have lunch here, as you will find many tavernas that offer well-prepared Cretan delicacies.

**You should try boubouristi chochlii (snails local recipe), the famous koukouvágia or dákos, the world renowned boiled Cretan gamopílafo, stamnagáthi, chortópita, dolmádes and, for dessert, fried myzíthra cheese pies with honey, accompanied by cool rakí.**

Completing your tour, you pass through one of the most traditional Cretan vineyards, and reach the village of Skaláni in order to visit yet another winery, while food lovers are presented with a variety of local traditional tavernas and gourmet restaurants to choose from, for a gastronomical journey across Crete, enjoying unique tastes and combining tasty, aromatic wines produced in the surrounding areas.

The route comes to an end back in the city of Heráklion, where you must make some time to visit its numerous cultural treasures...







**09. Are you a wine lover visiting Crete?**

*Do something different on your holiday.*

*Winemaking has been a tradition in Crete for the past 4000 years and is now more exciting than ever.*

*Discover the wine routes of Crete and enrich your gastronomic and tasting experiences.*



## 5. The Blessed Land

Starting from the city of Heráklion, follow the road to Kroussónas and make your first stop at Ágios Mýronas, a beautiful traditional village where the local women's rural cooperative gives you an opportunity to see and become acquainted with the way local delicacies and confectionery are prepared.

Carrying on southwards, you come across Káto Asítes where you may stop to rest at the church of Ágios Geórgios Gorgolaínis, in a lush location. If you'd like to experience the world of wine, visit the village winery and if your desire is to sample the local products and tastes, swing by the women's cooperative. Here you will find authentic Cretan food and traditional dishes, such as meat plates cooked in a wood-burning stove, pasta with anthótyro, sfougáto with hórta (greens), Cretan sausage, asitianés agnópites, etc. Going back on the Agía Varvára-Ágios Mýronas road, you reach Áno Asítes that sport several sights worth seeing, including the Nychteridóspilio (Bat-cave), one of the four most important caverns of Mount Psilorítis containing bat-nests and the imposing ravine of Ágios Charálampos, which is crossed by the E4 European Long Distance Path.

Continuing to the south-west, you will go through the village of Kerásia with its winery which you may visit and afterwards you will come across Veneráto, where it is worthwhile to visit the Palianí Monastery and its museum, where you may admire religious icons, sacred relics and books of great historical and archaeological value.

Carrying on to the north, you shall meet the village of Dafnés, which is celebrated for the production of high-quality wine (PDO), where you

may visit the local winery and learn everything about the wine-making procedure and taste delectable wines.

Moving on to the south, you will come across Ágios Thomás, an impressive mountain village, where it is worth your time to wander around and see the byzantine churches and their unique stone-carved winepresses. Leaving Ágios Thomás, head south-west, towards the village of Gérgeri and visit the small museum of natural history, the watermills and the local women's cooperative.

The course continues westwards towards Zarós, a settlement renowned for its waters and vegetation, with various agrotourism accommodation infrastructures that make a stop here for a hike almost imperative. Don't forget to visit the stunning lake Votómou, as well as the Roman Aqueduct ruins, located nearby.

Try the local specialty, which is none other than trout from the lake fish farms. If you'd like to wander in nature and walk, right next to the Zarós lake lies the entrance to the gorge of Ágios Nikólaos, which you will reach after approximately 1.5 hours of hiking on a well-organised path. Leaving Zarós and going on the Górtyna-Zarós provincial road, you will cross the villages of Ampelouzóos, Ágii Déka and Gagáles with their pasta factory and reach Górtyna, in order to visit the archaeological site.

Afterwards, head to Loures; cross the Ágios Thomás - Loures provincial road, go past the settlements of Kastélli, Voriás, Madé, Charáki and through the Melidonochóri - Moní Epanosífiou provincial road to reach Metaxochóri, where it's worth your while to visit the Epanosífis Monastery and have a rakí at one of the village's traditional cafés. After that, move on to the north, on the Knossós-Cháarakas provincial road, until you come to Choudétsi.

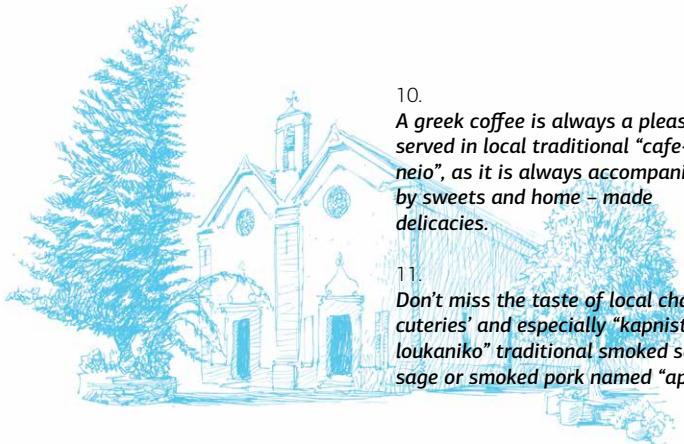




10.



11.



10.  
*A greek coffee is always a pleasure served in local traditional “cafe-neio”, as it is always accompanied by sweets and home - made delicacies.*

11.  
*Don't miss the taste of local charcuteries' and especially “kapnisto loukaniko” traditional smoked sausage or smoked pork named “apaki”*

## 6. Seeking the Experience

The starting point of this route is the tourist resort of Hersónissos. Follow the old Ágios Nikólaos - Heráklion national road and head for the seaside settlement of Goúves, where you may swim and engage in sea sports at the local beaches. Don't forget to visit the nearby "Thalassókosmos" (Sea World) in Goúrnes, one of the largest aquariums in Europe.

Following the Goúves - Kóxari provincial road, you will go through the Epáno Goúves and Skotinó settlements to visit the cavern of Agía Paraskeví, where tradition has it that the ancient Greek goddess Artemis was worshipped.

It is one of the most important worship caves in Crete, where you may enjoy the impressive stalagmite and stalactite formations. The route takes you south-east, past the settlements of Vóros and Harasó from where you may follow the Kaló Chorió - Galífa provincial road, through Galífa and on to Episkopí, a prominent agricultural centre in the area.

**You absolutely must make a stop and visit the impressive byzantine churches with their unique frescoes and the Ethnological Museum of War in Argyrákion.**

Episkopí offers itself for food and you shouldn't forget to taste their succulent hand-made sausages. Moving further south-east, on the Episkopí - Moní Agkaráthou provincial road, you will come to the Sgourokefáli settlement. Make a stop and visit Moní Agkaráthou, one of the most remarkable monasteries in Crete with a longstanding scholarly tradition.

Next, take the Vóni - Kastélli provincial road and head for Thrapsanó, one of the most important centres of traditional pottery on the island, where you will have the opportunity to visit the villages' pottery workshops and experience first-hand how ceramics are made, as well as acquire some clay vessels from the huge variety that they have to offer.

**If you are true nature lovers, you may visit Liváda, the beautiful little lake that is by now a well-established destination for bird-watchers, especially in the moving seasons of migratory birds.**

The course takes you to Kastamonítsa, where it is worth your while to make a stop and taste the succulent eftázymo bread, for which a festival is organised every August.





## **12. Thrapsano**

*The Minoans, inspired by the diversity of Cretan nature, used to transform the earth into fine quality ceramics.*

*At the same natural environment and the traces of Minoan tradition, today artisans create in Thrapsano village pottery masterpieces, continuing worthily the art of Minoan pottery.*





Move north-east and head for the Avdoú settlement, where you may visit the Agía Fotiní and Agía Ánna caverns, take a stroll in the settlement and see the byzantine churches.

For nature aficionados, there is the option to go on horseback riding or bicycle, while for the more adventurous who wish to admire the view from above, there is a paragliding and hand gliding launch.

If all this activity has made you hungry, you may find deliciously-cooked food at the village tavernas, while the beautiful traditional cafés offer themselves for relaxation.

Then you will move east and, after passing the village of Goniés, you take a left turn into the village of Mohós with the impressive central square and countless tavernas and traditional cafés -an ideal place to rest.

Continuing northbound, and before the route reaches the seaside settlement of Stalída, make a stop to gaze at the beach and marvel at the Cretan Sea. Stalída offers itself for swimming and other sea activities. You may also embark on a caique and visit the islet of Día.

The route nears its end through the traditional settlement of Koutouloufári that is ideal for a romantic walk down its picturesque cobblestone alleyways.

If your heart desires to sample Cretan delicacies, all you have to do is pick one of the village's many tavernas.

The route comes to an end back in Chersónisos, the well-organised northern beach tourist resort, where you may find tavernas, cafeterias, souvenir shops, accommodation, car and bike rentals, camping sites, etc.

If you are a golf lover, you may visit the Crete Golf Club with its 18-hole course for beginners and experienced players alike, while you may also go on horseback riding, go for a swim in one of the blue flag award-winning beaches, as well as take some time for wellness and relaxation at one of the local spas, etc.



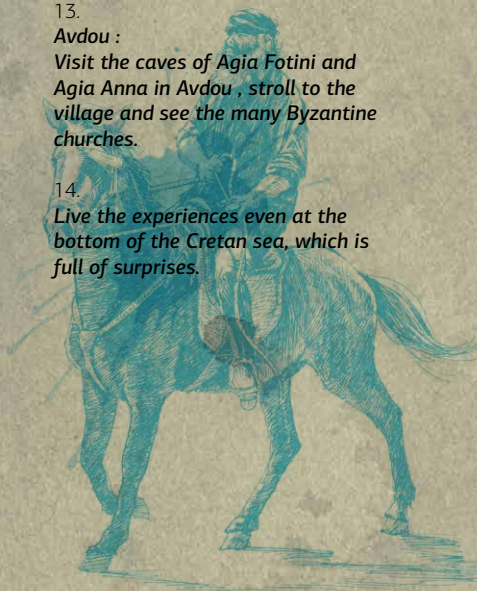
13.

**Avdou :**

*Visit the caves of Agia Fotini and Agia Anna in Avdou , stroll to the village and see the many Byzantine churches.*

14.

*Live the experiences even at the bottom of the Cretan sea, which is full of surprises.*



13.



14.

## 7. Looking for you in the South

### Rethymno

*Discover Rethymnon Psiloreitis, the highest mountain, and the deep blue sea, with numerous Byzantine churches and monasteries, with magical Venetian monuments, the best preserved Renaissance city in Greece, with its endless beaches, caves, canyons, the unique flora and fauna.*

*Visit the villages of Rethymno where fragrant the Cretan cuisine and hear the sounds of the Cretan lyra. Wherever you go, even in the most remote village, people will open the door, will offer you raki and will become your friends. "Rethymno is not a place to go, but a place to come back."*

The starting point of this route is the old city of Réthymno; after you exit the city, head south and take the road towards Tría Monastíria (the Three Monasteries) to lead you to the mainland.

Continuing on the same road and at a distance of approximately 8 km, you will see on your right a small sign pointing to a very important archaeological site: the late Minoan cemetery of Arméni. Carrying on for another few minutes, you will reach Arméni, a picturesque village where you may make a stop for coffee and rest.

From Arméni you may head south and after 5 km you can't miss the Rethymnian Brewery, sporting the first fresh organic beer in Greece. Continue your route on the Mélampes - Agía Galíni provincial road and in approximately 11 km you will come across the historical village of Koxaré right in the middle of a verdant sea of olive groves. It is worth your while to visit a local organic charcuterie shop and buy their high-quality products.

From Koxaré starts the Kourtaliótiko ravine that follows the course of the Kourtaliótis river and ends up in Préveli lake. Continue your route through the small settlements of Asómata, Lefkóyia and Kámpos before heading downhill to reach the seaside settlement of Plakiá. Take a rest and enjoy a relaxing swim in the crystal-clear water beaches of the area. Taste some really good local traditional food and accompany it with fine old wine.

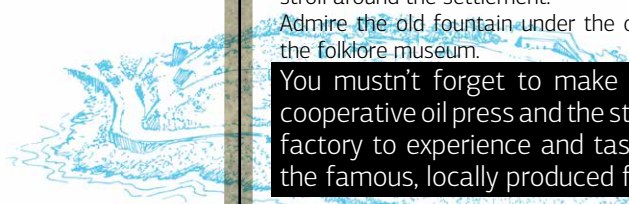
If you wish to escape crowded places and enjoy nature, you may opt for a horseback ride at the Free Riding Centre and take a short tour of the surrounding area.

Continue your route heading north and in almost 5 km you will come to Selliá, where you should really make time to take a stroll around the settlement.

Admire the old fountain under the old platanus tree and visit the folklore museum.

**You mustn't forget to make a stop at the model cooperative oil press and the state-of-the-art cheese factory to experience and taste local products and the famous, locally produced feta cheese.**

Leaving Selliá, you carry on to the north and cross the villages of Kánevos and Kalí Sykiá, where we propose a stop at the local winery to get to know a different aspect of Cretan wine. After approximately 13 km, you will come to Moúndros with its numerous beautiful alleyways.







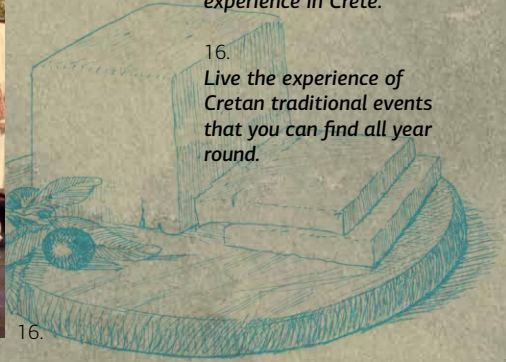
15.



16.

15.  
*“Antikristo”*: Lamp meat specialty that you must search in order to complete your gastronomic experience in Crete.

16.  
Live the experience of Cretan traditional events that you can find all year round.



The village sports the Venetian mansion and the impressive temples of Άγιος Νικόλαος and Άγιοι Ανάργυροι.

If you are true nature lovers, you will definitely have seek out near the western part of the village, the 1,500 metre-long Μούνδρος ravine, while further to the west you may visit the abandoned traditional settlement of Νισσί and wander around the ruined buildings.

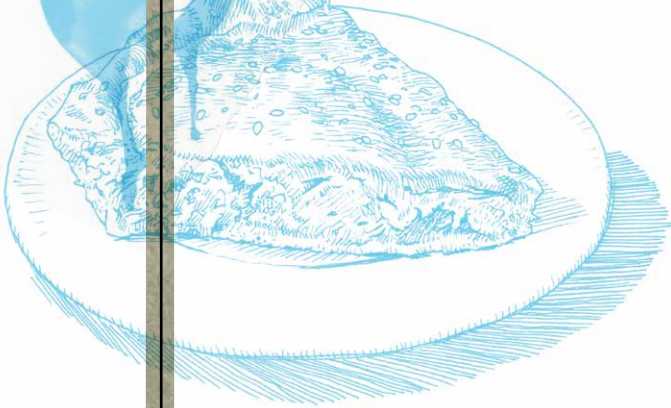
After Μούνδρος, continue on a northbound course and within no more than 5 minutes you will reach the next village, Ροústika, that existed even before Crete was occupied by the Venetians and still maintain their traditional character.

After Ροústika, you will come across Άγιος Κωνσταντίνος, where you will also find tavernas serving excellent food as well as a women's cooperative.


Carry on northbound and you will get to the village of Κάτο Βαλαμόνερο that tradition has it to be the most ancient in the whole of Crete. From here you head east until you reach Φραντζεσκιάνα Μετόχια and Γονιά and afterwards continue due north along the old Ρέθυμνο - Χανιά national road until you come across Πρινές.

**Make a stop there and walk its beautiful alleyways, ask people to point you in the direction of the Βεβογιάννης Mill and the traditional oil press.**

Exit Πρινές and head for Ρέθυμνο (8.2 km) where the pleasant trip around the inland of Ρέθυμνο will come to a most satisfying end.







## 17. **Stamnagathi**

For the Cretans, “stamnagathi” is the “King” of wild grasses and grows from the tops of the mountains of Crete to the end of the beaches. It is known from ancient times for its medical characteristics, that rank it as one of the best allies of the heart, the good health of the body, stimulates the immune system and act against cell oxidation and aging. You can consume it raw in salad or cooked or even raw with a little lemon as “meze for raki”.



## 8. A walk on untrodden Mountains

### Chania

*The visit to the villages of the inland of Chania is a rewarding experience, both for their landscape, and the special flavours.*

*Most of the villages are untouched by tourism and retain their traditional features, including the architecture and the old way of life.*

*Here, in these villages, the visitor will understand the specific characteristics of the Cretan people, and will enjoy the experience of hospitality and taste the Cretan cuisine.*

*The routes from one village to another in many cases are in their own attractions for visitors, since secondary roads crossing areas are particularly graphic and have infinite beauty, so they make driving there a charming experience.*

Starting point of this tour is the seaside hamlet of Georgioúpolis, built in an area with a lot of water, plenty of vegetation and an endless beach -perhaps the largest in the whole of Crete.

Enjoy a relaxing swim or indulge in various sea sports. If nature trekking is your game, all you have to do is go to the nearby horseback riding centre and get a horse for a short ride.

From Georgioúpolis you go south, over the national road bridge, and after a while you will get to the village of Kournás, where a stop is definitely in order.

**Walk downhill to the lake (it is the only natural lake on the island of Crete), which is worth visiting**

and from where you may rent pedalos, whereas if you want to enjoy the majestic view from above, your choice is to hand glide or paraglide from the launch site in the area.

Leaving Kournás behind, take the provincial road to Episkopí, go past the village of Fylakí and continue southbound towards Argyroúpolis, a village with lots of streams and of unique natural beauty, combined with traces of both ancient and more recent culture.

Look for the area where the springs of Agía Dýnami are located, a verdant place with streams flowing everywhere. In the past, there were numerous watermills used for grinding cereals and pressing olives; today there is but one. A little further on, you will come to the sources of the river Petrés, amidst and impressive scenery comprising centennial platanus trees.

The sights you simply can't afford to miss are the ancient necropolis, the Roman period mosaic and a tree that is several centuries old. You may also visit the unique churches in the village and finally make a stop at the Museum of Popular Art to admire exhibits such as tools, weapons, handicrafts, etc.

Continue going uphill on a westbound course and at a mere 8 km you will come across Así Goniá, a village of herdsmen at the foot of the Sfakianá Mountains. Leaving Así Goniá behind and continuing on a difficult yet impressive path uphill, you will have to travel approximately 11 km to come to Kallikrátis, a very beautiful village with traditional houses that is only





**18. Kournas**

*Make a stop at the village and wander around the streets, admire the old houses, stroll to the village square and sit in cafes for a raki while enjoying the view of the homonymous lake and the White Mountains.*

*Walk around to the unique natural lake of Crete, rent paddle boats for a ride, and if you want to enjoy the breathtaking landscape from above, you have to take a flight “para pent” gliding, that exists in the area.*



19.

**Argyroupolis**

Argyroupolis is a village with lots of gushing waters and waterfalls and unique natural beauty. At the same time full of ancient traces and modern culture. Look for the area's sources of Holy Power, a leafy part with water flowing from each point.

In the past there were several windmills from which only one survives today.

20.

**Kalitsounia**

The dish that during Christmas or Easter, is found in almost every Cretan table. Kalitsounia are the traditional cheese pies with ricotta and mint and you will find them in different variations across the island.

19.



20.



inhabited between the months of May and November. If you are nature aficionados, just outside the village you may find the 1 km-long ravine with the same name, through which you may walk.

Then you head west and at a close distance you will see the small village of Asféndos, with the homonymous cavern perched on a steep slope. This cave is of tremendous archaeological value, since in 1960 rock paintings were discovered, dating all the way back to the late Palaeolithic Age.

In the area you may also visit the (also homonymous) Asféndos Ravine. Continue your tour (now going downhill, towards Chaniá), go through the village of Petré and head north to meet Alíkambos, 11 km down the way. Just before entering the village, on your left, you will see an impressive winery that you may visit, after making the necessary arrangements with the owner, and taste local wines.

From Alíkambos, you take the Vrýses - Sfakiá provincial road towards the beautiful village of Vrýses, which is built in a valley full of trees, luxuriant vegetation and lots of streams. Here you should make a stop at the central square with the platanus trees and enjoy the scenery with the river and the ducks. There are but a few rooms to stay in, but the food here is a true delight, since you can enjoy it at one of the tavernas situated right next to the river. The village is famous for its dairy products.

**Try the local goat cheese and yoghurt (perhaps the most scrumptious you have ever had), well-known all over Crete for their distinctive taste.**

Furthermore, the village of Vrýses is by far the best place for you to sample one of the most characteristic dishes of Western Crete: the traditional Sfakianés pies with cheese and honey.

Continuing eastward, in about ten minutes you will be all the way back to Georgioúpolis, the starting point of this most impressive route.



## 9. Seeking the water

The starting point of this route is Kalýves, the tourist resort located at the entrance of Soúda Bay.

At the village you may enjoy the sea on the great sandy beach with the crystal-clear waters -ideal for sea sports aficionados. To the east of the settlement, you may seek the ancient city with the small fortress, known as "Bíkorno".

Leaving Kalýves, head east and at a distance of 5 km you will come across the other seaside village of Almyrída with its picturesque port and the fishing boats creating a truly idyllic scenery.

After Almyrída you continue uphill and after 4 km you come to the traditional settlement of Gavalochóri with a particularly interesting popular architecture. While walking around the settlement, don't forget to visit the village Historical - Folklore Museum with its rich exhibits related to popular life.

**You are definitely in for a visit at the village women's cooperative and admire handicrafts made using the traditional hand-made lace technique (kopanéli), similar examples of which you may find in the cities of Bruges, Belgium and Venice, Italy.**

After walking past the platanus tree square, follow the path uphill and the signs will lead you to the restored 17<sup>th</sup> century pre-industrial oil press.

Just a little more walking will get you to the so-called Gavalianá Pigádia, which are carved in rock and have stone semi-domes that act like shelters -it's a sight like no other.

If all this wandering around the village has made you hungry, you may stop for lunch at the picturesque square with the platanus tree and taste Cretan delicacies.

Continue your course eastbound, towards Vámos, a model agrotourism destination settlement. Leaving Vámos on a southbound direction, 6 km down the road you will meet the beautiful village of Vrýses. Here you may interpose the tour from Route 5.

From Vrýses you move west and will soon come across Tzitzifés, the birthplace of rizítko song. The village produces delicious dairy and livestock products.

Continue your tour northbound on the Vrýses - Néο Chorió provincial road, towards the rural village of Fre with its magnificent architecture, where the locals produce olive oil, wine and livestock products.

Right before the settlement, make a stop at the enchanting site of Loutró for a sip of crystal-clear cool water from the fountain and catch your breath underneath the centennial platanus trees.

Going uphill, towards the village, enjoy the scenic path that is brimming with olive trees and vines.

Walk the settlement's picturesque alleyways and narrow streets; admire the majestic church of Evangelístria (that has been declared a protected monument) with the icon of the Mother of Our Lord, painted by the Evangelist





## **21. Sarikopites**

The “turban” wearing traditional Cretans is the part of the Cretan costume that gave the name and the shape of the twisted pies Crete, the “sarikopites”.

Their characteristic, apart from their shape, is that they are made with sour cream cheese and they are eaten preferably with honey, while accompanying wonderful Raki.



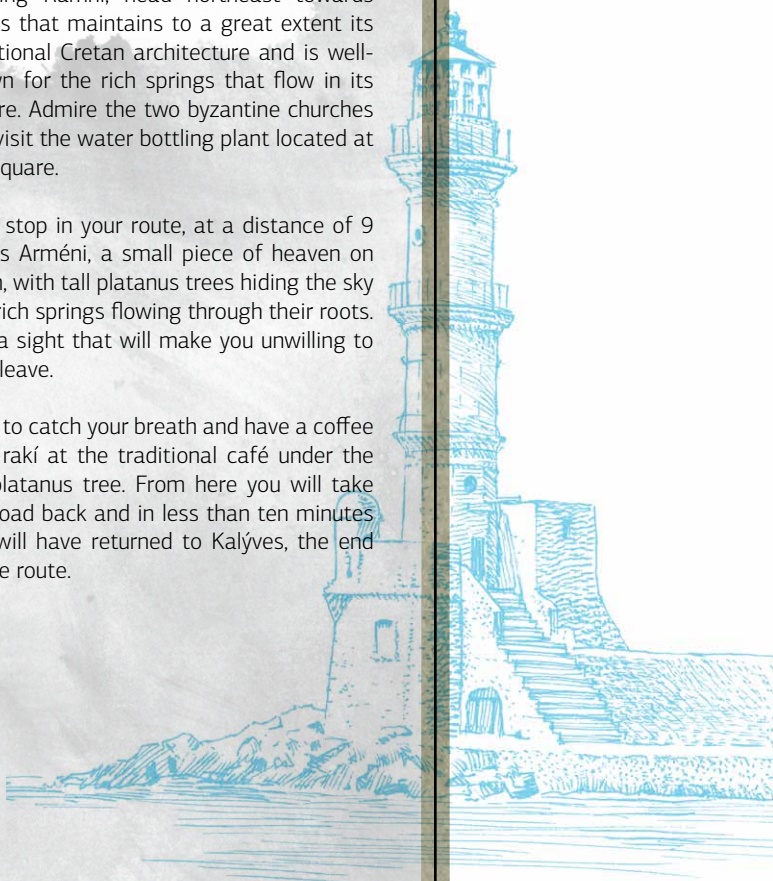
Luke; and visit other old churches as well. Make a stop at the renovated Manoúsakas Mansion that houses the Museum of Fre. After Fre, move northbound and cross the most beautiful villages of Pemónia and Paidochóri to continue on a westbound course, towards Ramní.

You may sit at the traditional cafés on the beautiful central square, have a coffee or a rakí and sample a traditional dish with local specialties such as kalitsoúnia, mountain hórta (greens), boiled meat with rice or chochlióús -to name but a few.

Leaving Ramní, head northeast towards Stýlos that maintains to a great extent its traditional Cretan architecture and is well-known for the rich springs that flow in its square. Admire the two byzantine churches and visit the water bottling plant located at the square.

Next stop in your route, at a distance of 9 km, is Arméni, a small piece of heaven on earth, with tall platanus trees hiding the sky and rich springs flowing through their roots. It is a sight that will make you unwilling to ever leave.

Stop to catch your breath and have a coffee or a rakí at the traditional café under the old platanus tree. From here you will take the road back and in less than ten minutes you will have returned to Kalýves, the end of the route.









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Gastronomy Routes and the  
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