

GREECE · BEACHES · ISLANDS · HIKING · HISTORY · FOOD

 Crete

Greece's largest island packs Minoan palaces, Venetian harbour towns, the Samaria Gorge and some of the country's best beaches into one long, mountainous strip about four hours from London. The season runs April to October: May, June, September and October give hot days without peak heat, crowds and school-holiday prices.

 Read the UK government's travel advice for Greece and entry requirements before you go.

 COUNTRY Greece	 BEST TIME May–Jun, Sep–Oct	 FLIGHT FROM LONDON 4h direct ~£150–£450 return	 DAILY BUDGET £55–£250 ££ Moderate
 WARMEST MONTH July (30°C)	 SEA TEMPERATURE 16–26°C coolest–warmest	 TIME ZONE Athens +2h vs UK now	 CURRENCY Euro £1 ≈ €1.19

Crete is about 260 km long, so most visitors choose one end rather than trying to see it all. The west, around Chania and Rethymno, has the prettiest old towns, the White Mountains, the Samaria Gorge and the lagoon beaches of Balos and Elafonisi. The centre, near Heraklion airport, has Knossos and the big resorts of Hersonissos and Malia, known for families and nightlife. The east, around Elounda and Agios Nikolaos, is where the luxury hotels cluster. The south coast is wilder and quieter, reached over the mountains. The sea is warm enough for most from late May to late October, and many resort hotels close in winter.

Highlights

1

HISTORY

Knossos

The largest Bronze Age site on Crete and centre of the Minoan civilisation, partly reconstructed in bold colour by Arthur Evans in the early 20th century. Arrive at opening, and pair it with the frescoes at Heraklion's Archaeological Museum.

2

ADVENTURE

Samaria Gorge

A 16 km descent from the White Mountains to the Libyan Sea at Agia Roumeli, through a national park and the narrow Iron Gates. It is open roughly May to October; allow five to seven hours, then return by ferry.

3

ARCHITECTURE

Chania's Venetian harbour

A curving harbour lined with tall Venetian houses, a domed Ottoman mosque and an old lighthouse at the end of the breakwater. The lanes of Splantzia and the former Jewish quarter behind it are best in the evening.

4

BEACH

Balos lagoon

Shallow turquoise water and pale sand at the tip of the Gramvousa peninsula, reached by boat from Kissamos or by a rough track and a steep walk down. Arrive early or late to miss the midday boat crowds.

5

HISTORY

Spinalonga

A Venetian fortress island in the Gulf of Mirabello, used as a leper colony until 1957 and made famous in Britain by Victoria Hislop's novel *The Island*. Short boat trips run from Plaka, Elounda and Agios Nikolaos.

Where to stay

WHERE TO STAY

Chania

Atmospheric harbour town with excellent food and easy trips to Balos, Elafonisi and Samaria; suits couples and independent travellers who will hire a car.

WHERE TO STAY

Rethymno

A Venetian and Ottoman old town beside a long sandy beach, midway along the north coast; suits families wanting town and beach together.

WHERE TO STAY

Hersonissos and Malia

Big, busy resorts east of Heraklion with plenty of all-inclusives, water parks and late bars; suits families on packages and groups after nightlife.

WHERE TO STAY

Elounda

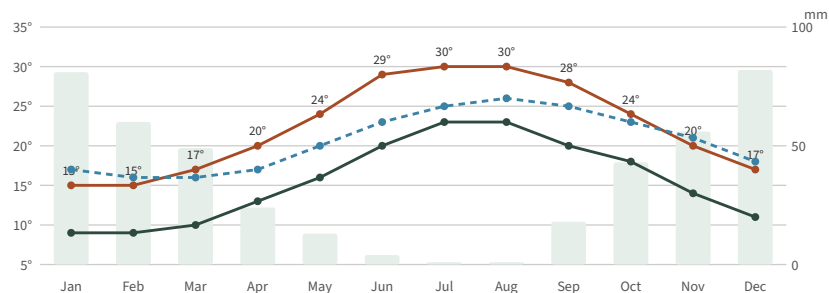
A quiet bay of five-star resorts with private beaches and boat trips to Spinalonga; suits couples and families with a bigger budget.

When to go to Crete

Best time: **May–Jun, Sep–Oct.**

**Average climate in Heraklion**

— High °C
 — Low °C
 — Sea °C
 ■ Rain (mm)

**How much does Crete cost?**

SHOESTRING

£55

per person / day
≈ €65.47

MID-RANGE

£120

per person / day
≈ €143

COMFORTABLE

£250

per person / day
≈ €298

Per person per day excluding flights. Return flights from London typically cost £150 off-peak and £450 in school holidays.

Visas & entry for Crete

Shown for a British passport.

No visa needed

You can travel without a visa to the Schengen area, which includes Greece, for up to 90 days in any 180-day period without a visa. This applies if you travel: as a tourist; to visit family or friends; to attend business meetings, cultural or sports events; for short-term studies or training.

The requirements for working in Greece are different. If you are a touring creative, see details about the Uniform (Schengen) visa.

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

Health & vaccinations

See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

Tetanus

SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

Bat Lyssavirus

YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

No yellow fever certificate is required to enter.

MALARIA

No malaria risk

Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

Public holidays in Greece

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

Wed 28 Oct 2026	Ohi Day
Fri 25 Dec 2026	Christmas Day
Sat 26 Dec 2026	Glorifying Mother of God
Fri 1 Jan 2027	New Year's Day
Wed 6 Jan 2027	Epiphany
Mon 15 Mar 2027	Green Monday
Thu 25 Mar 2027	Independence Day
Fri 30 Apr 2027	Good Friday

Sat 1 May 2027	Labour Day
Mon 3 May 2027	Easter Monday
Tue 4 May 2027	Labour Day (observed)
Mon 21 Jun 2027	Pentecost Monday
Sun 15 Aug 2027	Dormition of the Mother of God

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

Know before you go

Distances are bigger than the map suggests: Chania to Agios Nikolaos is around three hours by car. Fly into Chania for the west and Heraklion for the centre and east.

The Samaria Gorge closes on days of high wind or bad weather, so keep a spare day. Start early from the top near Omalos, carry plenty of water and wear proper walking shoes.

Plugs, money, phrases, emergency numbers and more: see our Greece guide.

Visa, health and safety rules change. Before you book or travel, check the FCDO travel advice (gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) and TravelHealthPro (travelhealthpro.org.uk). Costs are estimates. © 2026 Pick My Trip.