

Discover Heraklion, Crete¹

The capital of Crete is a modern city, fourth in importance in Greece. Economic and cultural hub of the island, it is one of the most popular tourist resorts in Greece.



According to mythology, Zeus brought Europa, the beautiful princess, here after kidnapping her from the court of the Phoenician king. Minos came from the union of Zeus with Europa.

A visit to its important Archaeological Museum which houses the largest collection of

Minoan art is mandatory. In addition, the Venetian rule of the island bequeathed to the city of Heraklion the Castle of Koules, a majestic building overlooking the port and the nearby Arsenal.

A few kilometers from Heraklion are four of the most important Minoan sites on the island: Knossos, home to the famous palace that housed Minos and the Minotaur, Phaistos, Malia and Agia Triada.

Also, very popular are the splendid beaches of the southern coast such as those near Metala, hidden among the tuff caves.

Geography

Endless dreamy beaches, Venetian old towns, castles and palm groves, wild gorges and unique archaeological sites, cosmopolitan resorts and traditional recipes that have never been left in the closet.

Nature

The Cretan nature is a treasure with thousands of different landscapes that you must discover and that takes time. The highest mountain of Crete has taken root deep in the soul of the Cretans. Countless local folk songs have been sung about its wild peaks, the rugged Cretans living in its villages, the way of life in the mountain pastures, the genuine Cretan soul that Psiloritis represents. Here, however, the past and the future coincide: in the Idea Cave of Psiloritis, Zeus himself found refuge and was raised, according to mythology. North of Heraklion is the small island of Dia, which has been declared a wild goat sanctuary.

Climate

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Although the island straddles the two climatic zones of both the Mediterranean and North African its climate is more typically Mediterranean being classified as temperate.

The summer temperatures are classically dry and hot with average



temperatures between high 20s to low 30s Celsius but can reach the high 30s to mid-40s and, depending on closeness to the sea, the humidity can be high in summertime.

Winters are usually fairly mild although, in the mountainous regions, snow is common and

temperatures can drop to abnormally low levels.

Snow can stay on the tops of the highest mountains for the whole year but it is very rare to have snow in the low-lying regions. The southern coast of the island which includes the Mesara Plain and the Asterousia Mountain range falls within the North African climatic zone and consequently has considerably more sun and higher temperatures all year round.

Free bicycle disposal

The Municipality of Heraklion has free bicycles for the citizens by borrowing from specific delivery and delivery points that have been created throughout the city. They are city-specific bikes with modern specifications that meet the European Standard EN14764 (Safety Requirements and Trekking and City Test Methods for Use on Public Roads) with the ability to be used by men and women and also equipped with a basket, lighting and security lock. The availability of bicycles for free use by citizens works for the public in the following places:

JESUS GATE, daily

KARAVOLAS, daily (in the summer months) from 12.30 to 20.30.

Information: 0030 2810-300755

Cultural sites

The archaeological site of Knossos and the archaeological site of Heraklion are among the most important institutions in the world and are worth seeing at least once in a lifetime. Festus, Gortyna, Agia Triada and many others make cultural visits interesting and varied. Added to this are historic centers,



monuments, churches and monasteries rich in history and charm. Traditional color in the unchanged villages of the hinterland for years where the sui generis Cretans respectfully maintain their traditions and their characteristic Cretan costume touches.

The Venetian walls of Heraklion

The mighty 13th century Venetian walls enclose the old port of Heraklion, offering the best view of the small fortified fortress of Koule. Paying more attention to this building you will see the Lion of St. Mark carved in the stone structure, above the main gate. This pattern of Venetian power is found in many monuments in northern Italy and the Eastern Mediterranean.

Municipal Art Gallery

The Municipal Art Gallery include in its possession a rich Collection of Works of Art which capture the evolution of artistic creation from the beginning of its foundation in Crete, to its most recent expressions. The original core of the works was created in parallel with the founding of the Municipality of Heraklion, enriched with donations from various artists, including works by renowned, recognized artists (Fanourakis, Markogiannakis, Tsarouchis, Vassiliou, Fasianos etc) to which a large market was added. Cretan painter, Domenikos Theotokopoulos, "The Baptism of Christ". Besides, Heraklion, during the Cretan Renaissance, created the famous school of Cretan Hagiography, which gave birth to worthy children, such as Dominikos Theotokopoulos, Damaskinos and so many others.

<http://www.heraklionartgallery.gr/>

Information: 0030 2813 409454, artgallery@heraklion.gr

Heraklion 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 singularly important Minoan collection contains unique examples of Minoan art, many of them true masterpieces. The Herakleion Museum is rightly considered as the museum of Minoan culture par excellence worldwide.

The museum, located in the town centre, was built between 1937 and 1940 by architect Patroklos Karantinos on a site previously occupied by the Roman Catholic monastery of Saint-Francis which was destroyed by earthquake in 1856. The museum's antiseismic building is an important example of modernist architecture and was awarded a Bauhaus commendation. The colours and construction materials, such as the veined polychrome marbles, recall certain Minoan wall-paintings which imitate marble revetment. The two-storeyed building has 27 galleries, a gallery for audio-visual displays, extensive modern laboratories, a cloakroom, a cafeteria and a museum shop that sells museum copies, books, postcards and slides.

The Herakleion Archaeological Museum 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.

Information: 0030 2810 279000

The Historical Museum of Crete

The Museum was founded by the Society of Cretan Historical Studies in 1953, housed in the Andreas and Maria Kalokerinos. Its aim is to preserve and showcase the cultural heritage of Crete from early Byzantine times to the modern era. This aim has been achieved gradually, by the collection, purchase and donation of artefacts, together with artefacts on long term loan from the Ministry of Culture. 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 programmes 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.

www.historical-museum.gr

Information: 0030 2810 283219, 0030 2810 288708, info@historical-museum.gr

Historical temples

Churches of the Byzantine time, of the Venetian period, as well as later ones are still preserved today, in different parts of the city, each one having its own history, denoting the deep religious belief of the people of Heraklion during their long history. Some of the churches, like the church of St. Marc is used today as an exhibition place, while in the church of St. Aikaterini of Sinai, art works of the Cretan school of iconography are exhibited along with ecclesiastical vessels, books, sacerdotal vestments and frescoes.

Tobacco Cutting Factory²

The tobacco-cutting factory is found in the area of Aghia Triadha and more specifically at the place where in the first half of the 17th century there was the Monastery of Panaghia Akrotiriani. Today the stone built wall that runs around it as well as the building itself are listed monuments. The tobacco factory was erected in the 19th century and it has got two floors and three wings roofed with tiles.



Italian School of Archaeology (Albert street)

It is one of the most stylish and interesting buildings of the Balkan architecture in the city. It was the house of the Turk Mirza Efendi and today it belongs to the Italian School of Archaeology. The building is characterized by architectural and morphological elements of Ottoman-Turkish and Neo-Classical architecture.

The Historical Museum

It has been characterized as a listed historical monument and work of art. It has two floors and it is an excellent example of Neoclassical architecture. On the south side of the building there is a courtyard that is enclosed by a wall of Neoclassical style. It was built on the site of an earlier mansion in 1870 with plans of L. Kantanzoglou. This then was burnt down and destroyed by the

² The information about the monuments that follow are drawn by [Latest Monuments | Latest Monuments | the city | Municipality of Heraklion](#). The Greek section on the buildings of the 19th. and 20th. century was written by: K.Koiladi, G.Kolyvakis, K.Lempidaki, N.Papadakis-Chourdakis and Ch. Tsompanaki. The co-ordinator: Ch.Tsompanaki. February 1994, Region of Crete, TEE-TAK. The text was summarised and translated into English by Kalliopi Nikolidaki.

Turks during the events of the 25th August 1898. It was rebuilt in 1903 with plans of K. Tsantiraki that were based on the earlier ones.



The building Efkafi (Evans street)

The building «Efkafi» belongs to the family Miliara and it is one of the first two public Turkish buildings that were built according to the principles of Neoclassical architecture in Heraklion. It was erected around 1878 to roof the Service of Efkafia which was a Turkish Public Service that had in its jurisdiction all the buildings that were offered to Philanthropic establishments. The building is exceptionally elegant and interesting, an example of the first applications of Neoclassicism in Heraklion, to which a lot of elements of the wide spread Balkan architecture were used.

Building of the family F. Chatzidaki (Zografou and Averof street)

It is an important building of later Neoclassicism. It has two floors with a basement and it is roofed with tiles. Its facade is carefully formed, while the other sides are rather undorned. Special attention was given to the formation of the middle part of the main facade, where both on the ground and on the first floor there is an architrave with Doric and Ionic columns accordingly, while its end is crowned by a pediment.

«Bon Marche» building of the family A. Polycrati, Ag. Minas 8 street

The well known «Bon Marche» is a private shop that belonged to the sons Housein and Moharem Litsardaki. It was erected in 1892 in Ag. Minas 8 street and it is a significant example of a Turkish building where elements from the Neoclassical and Balkan architecture have been successfully fused.

Building of the family Kalioraki in Sofokli Venizelou Avenue and Theotokopoulou street.

The building is a fine example of the late Neoclassicism and typical of the late Neoclassicism and typical of the city architecture of the first decades of the 20th century.

106 Plastira street

It is a very interesting stone built building with two floors and tiled roof of the late Neoclassicism and Eclectism. On the ground floor the openings are framed by ashlar masonry (stone curved columns). The entrance to the first floor is found at the side of the building.

Manor House of Behi-Sekeria of the family Skevos Blavaki (Apokoronou street)

It is a characteristic example of the balkan architecture with clear neoclassical influence. The size, the structure of the rooms, the variety of the forms of the other parts and the high aesthetic conception establish the building unique in Heraklion.

Building of the family Tsahaki (Thessalonikis street)

This house is one of the most stylish examples of the late «romantique» Neoclassicism. It was built in the first decade of the 20th. century by the architect D.Kyriakos. Especially interesting is the architectural solution with which the facades of the building have been formed which are laid out in a semi-circular way in the corner where the roads meet.



Building Mavraki, property of «Credit Bank» (7 Stylianou Giamalaki street)

An excellent example of the late Neoclassicism is the building known as «Mavraki House», property of the «Credit Bank». It was probably erected in the second decade of the 20th century in the neighbourhood Retzep Agha no. 167 street, which a little later was called Sfakion street. The first owner Zaharias Ieronymakis bequested it in 1921 to his son Heraklis Ieronymakis who sold it to Emmanouil Pantelakis. He in turn gave it as a dowry at his daughter to the lawyer S.Mavraki in 1948. The building has all the characteristics of the later Neoclassicism. The formation of the main facades is strictly symmetrical. The main architectural element, which is unique for Heraklion, is the dome like wooden structure of the building. Structures like these, called «Belvedere», were very usual in north Europe. While they were often used in city centres of central and north Greece (Athens, Thessaloniki, Patras) and in luxurious suburbs as Kifissia, they were however rarely found in southern Greece and in the islands.

The Chronaki House³

It is a remarkable building of the Balkan architecture with Neoclassical influences and a very interesting internal painted decoration. The arrangement of the rooms is complex, they are around open spaces or semi-open internal ones covered with pebbled floors. The ground floor is stone built as also are parts of the first floor while the rest is wooden. The wood becomes the main structural and morphological element of the whole construction. Especially important are the wooden elements too (ceiling, wardrobes, internal partitions) which are characteristic examples of the architecture and the aesthetic conception of this group of buildings.

³ the Greek text was written by Mrs. Eirini Vallindra - Schizaki, Architect of the Heraklion Municipality.

The building has been renovated by the Technical Service of the Town Hall (in collaboration with the local Ephorate which is responsible for the recent monuments) and it contains objects of art that appertain to its character and, at the same time, it houses a series of things that have a particular importance to the understanding of the whole cultural physiognomy of the city of Heraklion. Some of them are:

- a group of old furniture of Arab-Turkish origin,
- maps and sketches of the 17th and the 18th century,
- a collection of old cards with photos and scenes of the life of Heraklion in the first decades of 20th century,
- a complete copy of the judicial codes of the Turkish Archive of Heraklion

Byzantine Museum of St. Catherine

Wall paintings and frescoes. Artistic evolution in Crete ceased abruptly after the Venetian conquer in 1211, since the island became isolated from the artistic centers of the Byzantine Empire. In the period that followed local artisans remained focus to the archetypes of the past. Under these circumstances, the archaistic and usually provincial character of the Cretan wall-painting of the first period of the Venetian

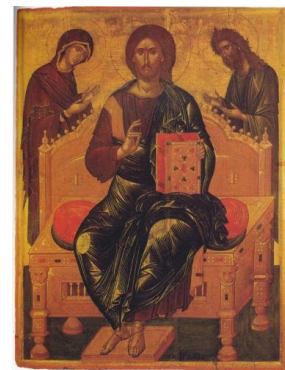


occupation is easily explicable. This style survived until the third decade of the 14th c., when the Cretan painting knew a new revival under the influence of the Palaiologan Renaissance.

The gradual penetration of this new tendency and its further evolution, eased by the immigration of Constantinopolitan artisans to

Crete due to the ottoman threat, led into an accession of the artistic level and formatted the specific character of the artistic vague that was described under the term "Cretan School of Painting". This high quality painting is encountered in a series of churches, usually related to educated clergymen or wealthy donors, from the end of the 14th and the beginning of the 15th c. onwards.

Icon painting in Crete. The adoption of the wooden iconostasis, which replaced the byzantine marble templon, favored the production of icons around the end of the 14th c. The new artistic air brought to Crete by the Constantinopolitan artists that immigrated to Candia and the influence of the Western art, which was favored by the Venetian presence in the island, the trade and the growth of a rich and well educated bourgeoisie, which supported the Fine Arts, helped the emergence of great painters such as



Angelos Akotantos, Andreas Rizzo, Theophanes, Michael Damaskenos and Dominikos Theotokopoulos (El Greco) as well as the creation of a specific artistic

language in the icon-painting, which was described under the term “Cretan School of Painting”.

Architecture and Sculpture. When Crete was conquered in 1211, Venice established in Candia (Heraklion) the administrative center of the island. The importance the Venetians gave to the city becomes evident by the fact that Candia was the first town they conquered and the last they abandoned to the hands of the Ottomans four hundred and fifty years later (1669), after a fierce resistance that lasted 21 years. The impressive economical, demographic and urban growth turned the small provincial byzantine port into one of the most important trade centers of the Mediterranean.

The predominance of the Venetian Democracy in Crete was not efficient enough to cut off the strong emotional bond between the locals and the Byzantine Empire, the only representative of the orthodoxy. The consistent efforts of Venice to enforce restrictions in religious matters amplified this anticipation. Nevertheless, the local society could not stay unaffected by the western cultural innovations imported by the conquerors.

After almost two centuries of revolution movements, the Cretans came to realize that the Venetian occupation was not to be defeated. The peaceful period that followed the “rebellion of St. Titus” (1363-1366) allowed the two sides to approach each other. Nevertheless, the persistence of Venice to impose a union between the Orthodox and the Catholic Church soon led into a new agitation. The consciousness of the common origin, language and religious dogma between the Cretans and the rest of the byzantine populations reinforced their resistance towards the assimilation.

The ideological guidance of Constantinople ceased to exist with the Fall of the Byzantine Empire in 1453. Though the memories stayed alive, soon it became obvious that Venetians and Cretans had to stand equally against the common enemy, the threat of the Ottoman Empire. Local population felt for the first time secure under the flag of Saint Marcus. Leaving behind all the differences, they managed to mingle western renovations with the byzantine tradition in a creative amalgam that was expressed in a unique way through the Cretan art and architecture.

www.iamk.gr.

Information: 0030 2810 336316

Natural History Museum of Crete, University of Crete

Knossou Ave., P.O. Box 2208, 71409 Heraklion

Information: 0030 2810-324366, sec@nhmc.uoc.gr

Exhibition Halls of Natural History Museum of Crete, University of Crete

Sofokli Venizelou Avenue Heraklion

Information: 0030 2810 282740, 0030 2810 393630, info@nhmc.uoc.gr

<https://www.nhmc.uoc.gr/en/museum/infrastructure/library>

Main Libraries

Hellenic Mediterranean University <https://lib.hmu.gr/en>

Natural history museum of Crete

<https://www.nhmc.uoc.gr/en/museum/infrastructure/library>

University of Crete <https://www.lib.uoc.gr/?lang=en>

Vikelaia www.vikelaia.gr

Useful sites

SearchCulture.gr

<https://www.visitacity.com/en/crete/>

<https://www.fodors.com/world/europe/greece/crete>

<https://www.heraklion.gr/en/culture/library/vikelaia-library.html>

<https://www.nhmc.uoc.gr/en/museum/infrastructure/library>

<https://www.originalcrete.gr/en/article/mousiko-ergastiri-laburinthos>

<https://www.travel.gr/en/experiences-ee/a-small-village-in-crete-also-known-as-kazantzakis-village/>

landofexperiences.gr

<https://www.heraklion.gr/en/>

destinationcrete.gr

www.vikelaia.gr