

GREECE: THE ISLAND OF CRETE

8-day / 7-night one-hotel based at Kolimbari GUIDED walking tour with a choice of walks daily



Discover the dramatic landscape and rich history of Crete, Greece's largest island, from your base at a luxurious resort at the western end of the island. Kolimbari, the nearest settlement to our hotel at Spillia Village, is a quiet harbourside fishing town, still relatively untouched by tourism. Beyond Kolimbari the rocky, wild Rodopos and Gramvousa peninsulas jut north into the sea. Over a third of Crete's inhabitants live in the towns of Heraklion, Chania and Rethymnon. The rest of the island is sparsely populated, with unspoilt villages and isolated hamlets.

Walk in beautiful foothills and along stunning coastline; discover ancient Minoan heritage; complete the dramatic Samaria Gorge walk; and follow shepherds' trails through olive groves to sleepy hillside villages.

Cost from: **\$3190** per person twin-share Single room supplement from \$620

2024 Departures: 27 April, 4, 11, 21 May, 14, 21, 28 September, 5, 12 October

Tour includes: 7 nights in comfortable hotel accommodation with ensuite bathrooms, 7 breakfasts, 7 dinners, experienced walks leader offering a choice of 2 guided walks on 5 days, all transport to and from the daily walks.

Not Included: Meals and drinks not mentioned, personal expenses, transport and/or excursions on your free day. Transfers from and to Chania airport, at set times, can be pre-booked at extra cost, which we recommend.

Accommodation: Spillia Village is a luxury 4-star traditional hotel, nestled into the landscape surrounded by citrus orchards and olive oil groves 3km inland from the traditional Cretan village of Kolimbari. Originally an olive oil pressing plant, this family-owned hotel has been lovingly restored using local stone and wood. The hotel has 30 comfortable en-suite rooms, all with air conditioning, two swimming pools and a gym, sauna and hamam.



Call OUTDOOR TRAVEL on 1800 331 582 for details or reservations

Trip Grading: Walk moderate to longer distances sometimes on rugged paths with sections of rough and undulating or steeper terrain. Easier walks 8-11km with up to 390m of ascent and 600m descent in a day; harder walks 11-18km with up to 630m of ascent or 1200m of descent in a day

A typical European centre-based walking holiday offers a choice of up to two guided walks each day. You choose the walk which best suits your interest and fitness level. The routes are selected by the walk leaders and are subject to change at their discretion.

Suggested itinerary:

Day 1: Arrival day. Plan to arrive at Spillia Village in time for dinner (ask about transfers from Chania airport.)

Day 2: Rodopos Peninsula. This rocky peninsula covered with scrub is important for the passage of migratory and breeding birds including raptors such as eagles, vultures and falcons. We explore the spine of the peninsula on old goat paths and quiet dirt tracks, passing olive groves. On the easier walk there is the chance to visit the Gonias monastery, one of the best preserved monasteries on Crete.

Day 3: Sirikari and Polyrinia. We focus on the rural interior of the island. Our route descends steeply into the deep gorge of Sirikari, then passes abandoned dwellings on a rocky path beneath high cliffs where eagles and vultures nest. At the end of the gorge we ascend to the ancient village of Polyrinia where we can either finish the walk or continue along a ridge with great views then descend to the coast at Kissamos.

Day 4: Samaria Gorge. The deep and dramatic 16km-long Samaria Gorge descends from the Omalos Plateau to the sea at Aghia Roumeli and is an iconic walk of Crete. Alternatively walk from Imbros, high in the White Mountains, and descend the narrow Imbros Gorge. We finish in Choria Sfakion, the capital of the region.

Day 5: Free day. Relax by the pool or on the beach, or explore the charming Venetian city of Chania, a bustling contrast to the calm of the Cretan countryside. The old town is a maze of narrow streets lined with shops, bars and restaurants. Its harbour is a busy working area with many boats and ferries, and with cafés lining the waterfront. Other interesting sights in Chania are the Venetian defences and the indoor market.

Day 6: Milia and Topolia. We follow shepherds' trails through olive groves and beautiful wild countryside to sleepy hillside villages. The small village of Milia was used as a hideout by Cretan Resistance fighters during WWII and was then abandoned. In the 1990s the village's buildings were restored using traditional techniques and local stone and timber. It is now an eco-retreat in the mountains and has wonderful views of the surrounding forested slopes. Milia's taverna is a great spot to stop for a refreshing house-made lemonade or perhaps lunch.

Day 7: Snowy mountain villages. Lefka Ori or the White Mountains occupy the centre of West Crete and are the main feature of the region. We follow quiet roads and shepherds' tracks with dramatic views of mountain villages in the distance, then, after a typical Greek meze-style lunch in a *taverna* we walk through orange trees and wooded valleys to Meskla.

Day 8: Departure Day. Tour arrangements end after breakfast at the hotel. Transfers to Chania airport are available at set times for extra cost - ask when making a reservation.



Contact Outdoor Travel for more details and reservations:

- Call Toll free 1800 331 582 or (03) 57551743 or Fax (03) 57501020
- Email: info@outdoortravel.com.au
- Web: <http://www.outdoortravel.com.au>
- Mail: Outdoor Travel Pty Ltd, PO Box 286, Bright, VIC 3741, Australia