



Chania, Crete

Wildflowers, Wine and History in Crete

17 – 22 April 2023

'I especially loved the wildflowers... this was a wonderfully orchestrated tour.'

Lorraine Casey, 2022 Crete tour



Jon Baines
tours



Visiting Crete is a sensory adventure filled with the scents of rosemary, thyme, sage, lavender, and chamomile. An island brimming with beautiful flowers and stunning landscapes, there are around 2,000 species of plants, about 10% of them endemic to Crete. The peak explosion of wildflowers occurs from March to May, when wild orchids and tulips are joined by chamomile, poppies, anemones, iris, field gladiolus and much more.

Crete's natural beauty is equalled only by the richness of its history. The island is the birthplace of the first advanced society on European soil, the Minoans, who ruled some 4000 years ago. At the crossroads of three continents, Crete has been occupied by consecutive invaders. Evidence of this long history can be seen in Chania, where mighty fortresses preside over labyrinthine lanes and beautifully restored Renaissance mansions rub rafters with mosques and Turkish bathhouses.

In Crete, 'locavore' is not a trend but a way of life. Rural tavernas often produce their own meat, cheese, olive oil, raki and wine, and catch their own seafood. Explore Crete's rich botany, its ancient and modern history, its beautiful landscapes and delicious food and wine, and learn how all of these intertwine.

There is an optional extension with a day trip to the idyllic fishing hamlet of Loutro after the tour.

A street in Chania

Tour Leaders

Valerie and Clive have spent their working lives in education at all levels, with adults and children across the age range. They have lived and worked abroad and have travelled extensively. Since retiring, they have lived in Crete, building a house and garden on a wild and windy hillside. In her capacity as the Branch Head of the Mediterranean Garden Society on Crete, Valerie organises a variety of events on the island and hosts visitors to her garden from as far afield as Australia and California. Clive, as a tour leader, has led groups of walkers on Crete, mainland Greece and other islands. Both have joined previous Jon Baines Tours trips and enjoyed the cultural, historical and local emphasis that is at the heart of the philosophy of the company, along with the camaraderie of fellow tour members. The tour on Crete will emulate



this, including the delights of Cretan cuisine, and follows the successful 2022 tour.

'Clive and Val were excellent.'
Bernard Lamb, Crete 2022 tour

Knossos Palace





Tulipa doerfleri (endemic wild tulips)

Itinerary 17 – 22 April 2023

B = Breakfast **L** = Lunch **D** = Dinner

Day 1: Chania (Mon, 17 April) **D**

Pm: Arrival and transfer to the Porto Veneziano Hotel.

Eve: A brief background on the tour. Welcome dinner with tastings of local wine.

Day 2: Chania (Tues, 18 April) **B D** Landscapes, food and wine of Crete

Am: Explore Chania's old town on a walking tour with Clive. See the city's impressive 14th-century harbour and 16th-century lighthouse and synagogue. Learn of Crete's Egyptian, Venetian, Ottoman and more recent influences walking the narrow streets, with free time for lunch.

Pm: Drive out to the foothills of the White Mountains and visit the Botanical Park of Crete. The park is spread over 20 hectares with microclimate, allowing a wide range of plants and wildlife to thrive including fruit trees, herbs, medicinal and ornamental plants. Meet with the

owners and learn how Crete's history and landscapes influenced its cuisine and wine. There will be time to explore the park with an expert in Mediterranean plants.

Eve: Learn about the food and wine of Crete. See a cooking demonstration (with the option to take part). A wine specialist will talk about the endemic Cretan grapes grown in the park, with the opportunity to sample the different wines they produce. Enjoy dinner at the park's restaurant where all ingredients are locally sourced, including those grown on site.

Day 3: Chania (Wed, 19 April) **B L** Minoans and Crete's classical history

Am: Drive to Heraklion and visit the world-renowned Bronze Age Palace of Knossos with a specialist guide.

Pm: Following lunch visit the Heraklion Archaeological Museum which includes important finds from the island, including the Phaistos Disc and Minoan frescoes. Dinner is at leisure but Clive and Val will be happy to accompany people to a local taverna.

Day 4: Chania (Thurs, 20 April)

B L

Wildflowers and the Real Crete

Am: An early start to visit the Arkadi Monastery. Drive up to the Plateau of Gious Kampos and see its endemic wild tulips, wild orchids and a host of other wildflowers.*

Pm: Spend some time at the attractive village of Spili and have lunch at a local taverna. Drive west along the southern coast and stop at Frangokasteli, where there are options to have a drink or swim from a lovely sandy beach. Return through the White Mountains to Chania

Day 5: Chania (Fri, 21 April)

B L D

The Battle of Crete

Am: With a specialist guide take part in a tour tracing Operation Mercury (the German Invasion of Crete) and learn of the Australian, New Zealand, British and German soldiers at the Battle of Crete. Visit Hill 107 in Maleme, the German war cemetery, airfield and bridge of Tavronitis. Onto Galatas village and the small museum, Greek-New Zealand memorial and ANZAC memorial.

Pm: Visit Manousaki Winery for a light lunch with tastings of Cretan wine. Back to the hotel via the Allied cemetery.

Eve: Farewell dinner at Salis, which grows most of its own produce and uses local, seasonal ingredients, with tastings of local wine.

Day 6: Chania (Sat, 22 April)

B

Am: Depart Chania or join the extension to Loutro.

* As a general note, there can be no guarantee about precise flowering times. All itineraries are subject to change according to local conditions.



A taverna in Chania



The sleepy town of Loutro

Post-Tour Extension – Loutro

Loutro is the perfect day trip from Chania. This tiny, whitewashed village sits snug in an amphitheatre enclosed by the imposing White Mountains, overlooking a sparkling blue and green bay. Time slows in this fishing village, which feels untouched by the passing of years. There's no bank, ATM or post office, but there is a warm welcome in a magical setting and mouth-watering local food served right on the waterfront.

Savour tzatziki, fried courgettes, octopus, squid, red mullet, swordfish, fresh greens, salad and souvlaki over some local tsikoudia. Or, perhaps, stir yourself to walk amongst stunning landscapes and visit beautiful beaches.

'Delicious and varied Cretan food and very drinkable wine. The seafood was so fresh.'

Lorraine Casey, 2022 Crete tour

Itinerary: 22 – 23 April 2023

Day 6: Chania (Saturday, 22 April) B

Am: Depart Chania for the southern coast and the town of Hora Skafion. Transfer by boat to the charming, remote town of Loutro; accessible only by water.

Pm: Relax and at leisure in Loutro. Return to Chania later in the afternoon.

Day 7: Chania (Sunday, 23 April) B

Am: Depart Chania.



Island life in Crete



The Hotel Porto Veneziano

Hotel Porto Veneziano

'It was a lovely hotel with very friendly staff and an excellent breakfast menu. I would stay there again.'

Brian Gennery, 2022 Crete tour

Fronting Chania's glorious Venetian harbour, Porto Veneziano Hotel offers romantic views and an attractive bar and café. Superbly run, this comfortable hotel is an excellent base from which to explore Chania's history and delights.

Economy Single Rooms are 12 square metres. They come with a Japanese style queen-size bed, wardrobe, en suite bathroom, hair dryer and a private balcony. All rooms have views of the flower filled patio, while the rooms on the third floor have views of the blue sea.

Classic Double Rooms are 15 square metres and come with a double king-size bed or with two single beds, wardrobe, private balcony, en suite bathroom, and hair dryer.

Room Upgrades. All rooms only available upon request.

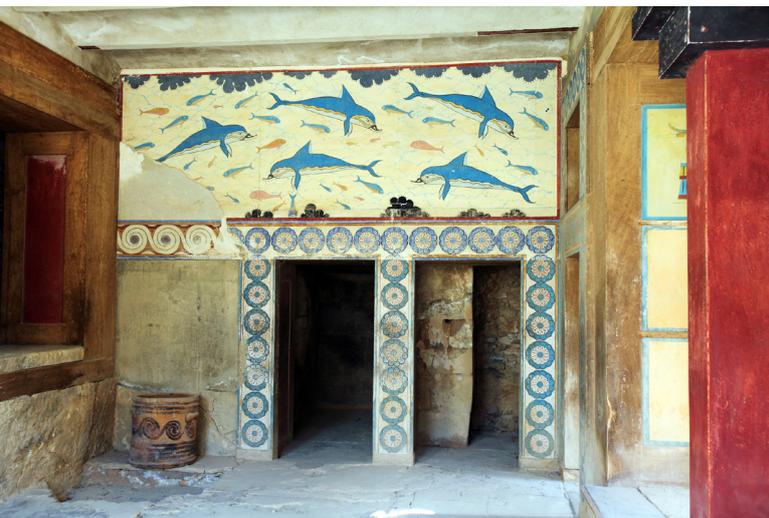
Sea View Classic are as Classic Doubles, as well as views of the sea and of the famous Egyptian Lighthouse. Additional cost per room for the five nights **USD \$254**

Junior Sea View Suites are 32 square metres and consist of a bedroom and a living room and a double balcony with sea views. Additional cost per room for the five nights **USD \$462**

Superior Sea View Suites are located at the corner of the hotel, These spacious suites (42 square metres) offer an amazing panoramic view of the old town and the Venetian port, Lefka Ori Mountains and the Cretan Sea. Each suite has a separate spacious living room. Additional cost per room for the five nights **USD \$694**



The Egyptian lighthouse



Wildflowers in full bloom (top); Sample the wines of Crete; Frescoes at Knossos Palace; The local resistance during the Battle of Crete (above)

The cost of the tour is USD \$2,016 per person sharing

The cost of the tour with a room to yourself (economy single room) is USD \$2,262

The cost of the tour with a room to yourself (double classic as single) is USD \$2,358

The cost includes:

- Five nights' accommodation at the medium grade Porto Veneziano. Hotel based on a twin or double classic room.
- Tour leaders Val and Clive Whittington
- Specialist local guides and speakers on days 2, 3 and 5
- Comprehensive briefing notes
- All breakfasts, dinners with wine on days 1, 2 and 5, lunches on days 3, 4 and 5
- All internal transport including the ferry
- A full programme of cultural visits
- All admission fees and tips

Cost excludes:

- International flights and arrival airport transfer
- All personal extras such as portage, laundry, inoculation fees, and drinks
- All optional excursions, tours and visits
- Travel insurance
- Visas, if applicable

Additional cost for the extension to Loutro is USD \$361 pp sharing

The cost with a room to yourself (economy single room) USD \$411

The cost with a room to yourself (double classic as single) USD \$428

The cost includes:

- One nights' accommodation at the medium grade Porto Veneziano Hotel based on a twin or double classic room
- Tour leaders Val and Clive Whittington
- All breakfasts, one dinner and one lunch
- All internal transport
- All admission fees and tips

About Us

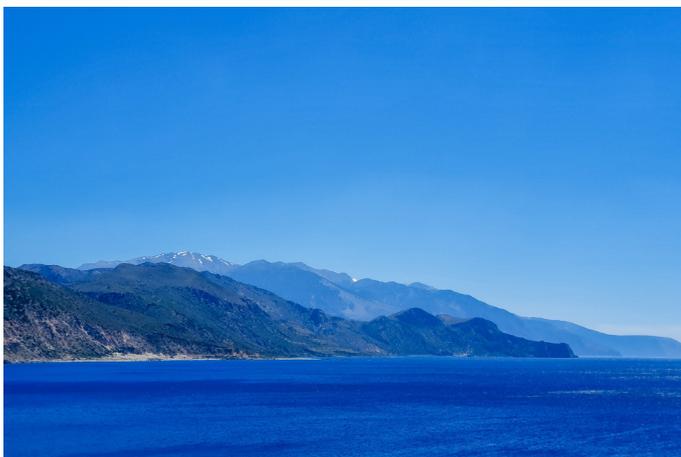
To travel with us is to dig below the surface, revealing the deeper destination. Of course, you will visit the great historical sites; marvel at the wonders of architecture and engineering; be moved by the riches of culture and art; and experience the most spectacular landscapes in the world. What we also do is make sure that you see the country as it is today, giving you privileged access that independent travel and other tour companies rarely get close to. We give you a variety of experiences, from the sublime to the humble, in the company of intelligent, curious, like-minded people. And while we can be worthy, we also make sure that you have a lot of fun.

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In the botanical garden (top); Blue vistas of Crete;
A flower-filled street in Chania (above)



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