



Chania, Crete

Wildflowers, Wine and History in Crete

14 – 20 April 2024

'A very delightful Greek experience, which engaged all of our senses – taste, smell, sound, beauty.'

Suzanne Buttner, Wildflowers, Wine & History in Crete, April 2023



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, of which about 10% are 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, in bloom.

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 4,000 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.

A street in Chania

Tour Leaders

Valerie and Clive Whittington 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 previous successful tours to the island.



'Valerie's enthusiasm for her botanical knowledge was infectious, it was a delight.'

Sheila Bettridge, Crete 2023 tour

Knossos Palace





Tulipa doerfleri (endemic wild tulips)

Itinerary 14 – 20 April 2024

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

Day 1: Chania (Sun, 14 April) **D**

Pm: Arrive and transfer to Porto Veneziano Hotel.

Eve: Listen to a brief background on the tour followed by a welcome dinner.

Day 2: Chania (Mon, 15 April) **B D** Landscapes, Food and Wine of Crete

Am: Explore Chania's old town on a walking tour. See the city's impressive 14th-century harbour and the 16th-century lighthouse and synagogue. Learn about Crete's many influences, spanning Egyptian, Venetian, Ottoman and more.

Pm: Drive out to the foothills of the White Mountains and visit the Botanical Park of Crete, which spreads over 20 hectares. Its microclimate allows a wide range of plants and wildlife to thrive, including fruit trees, herbs, medicinal and ornamental plants. Meet with the owners of the park and learn about the history, landscapes and cuisine of Crete.

Eve: See a cooking demonstration, learning about food and wine in Crete. Enjoy dinner at the park's restaurant, where all

the ingredients are either locally sourced or grown on-site.

Day 3: Chania (Tues, 16 April) **B L** Minoans and Crete's Classical History

Am: Drive to Heraklion and visit the world-renowned Bronze Age Palace of Knossos, accompanied by a specialist guide. Visit the Heraklion Archaeological Museum which includes important finds from the island, including the Phaistos Disc and Minoan frescoes.

Pm: Enjoy lunch at a local taverna before returning to Chania.

Day 4: Chania (Wed, 17 April) **B** Bridging the Gap, Greeks and Romans (and Wildflowers). This day is at leisure OR join our optional morning and/or afternoon visits, at your own expense.

Am: **Optional excursion:** Travel along the coast to the archaeological site at Aptera, above Souda Bay. Visit impressive Roman cisterns, ruins of Roman bath houses, a newly excavated theatre and the monastery of Agios Ioannis Theologos, in

which there is an excellent presentation of the site of Aptaera. It is also a wonderful site for wildflowers.*

Pm: Return to the hotel and afternoon at leisure. Optional excursion: Visit the recently completed archaeological museum near the outskirts of Chania. Stroll back along the seafront and enjoy the late afternoon and evening at leisure to wander around the backstreets of Chania.

Day 5: Chania (Thurs, 18 April) B L L

Wildflowers and the Real Crete

Am: Drive up to Spili Plateau and see its wild tulips (endemic to Crete), wild orchids and a host of other wildflowers.

Pm: Spend time in the attractive village of Spili and have lunch at a typical taverna. Return to Chania via the castle of Frangokastello, where there will be time to wander and paddle on the sandy beach.

Day 6: Chania (Fri, 19 April) B L D D

Am: Accompanied by a specialist guide, take part in a tour tracing Operation Mercury (the German Invasion of Crete). Learn about the role of Australian, New Zealand, British and German soldiers at the Battle of Crete. Visit the German war cemetery, Hill 107 in Maleme, the airfield and Tavronitis Bridge. Continue on to Galatas village and its small museum, the Greek-New Zealand memorial and ANZAC memorial, and the Allied cemetery.

Pm: Visit a winery for a light lunch with tastings of Cretan wine. Return to Chania and at leisure.

Eve: Farewell dinner at Salis accompanied by Dourakis wines.

Day 7: Chania (Sat, 20 April) B

Am: Depart Chania after breakfast.

*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 Hotel Porto Veneziano

Hotel Porto Veneziano

'Hotel Porto Veneziano could not be faulted... no bad points. Clean and comfortable, kind and polite staff. Cretan breakfasts were fantastic!'

Magdalene Rogers, Crete, April 2023

Fronting Chania's glorious Venetian harbour, Porto Veneziano offers romantic views with 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, ensuite 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 Cretan blue sea.

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

Room upgrades available on request.

Sea View Classic are as Classic doubles with views of the sea and the famous Egyptian Lighthouse. Additional cost per room for the six nights is **\$220**.

Junior Sea View Suites are 32 square metres and consist of a bedroom with a living room and double balcony with sea views. Additional cost per room for the six nights is **\$887**.

Superior Sea View Suites are 42 square metres and 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 six nights is **\$1,203**.



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 \$2,226 per person sharing

The cost of the tour with a room to yourself (economy single room) is \$2,520

The cost of the tour with a room to yourself (double classic as single) is \$2,653

The cost includes:

- Six nights' accommodation at the medium grade Hotel Porto Veneziano based on a twin or double classic room.
- Tour leaders Valerie and Clive Whittington
- Specialist local guides and speakers on days 2, 3 and 6
- Comprehensive briefing notes
- All breakfasts, dinners with wine on days 1, 2 and 6, and lunches on days 3, 5 and 6
- All internal transport
- A full programme of cultural visits
- All admission fees and tips

Cost excludes:

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

'Cretan food was fresh and tasty. The number of courses – amazing.'

Valerie Watkins, Wildflowers, Wine & History of Crete, April 2023

About Us

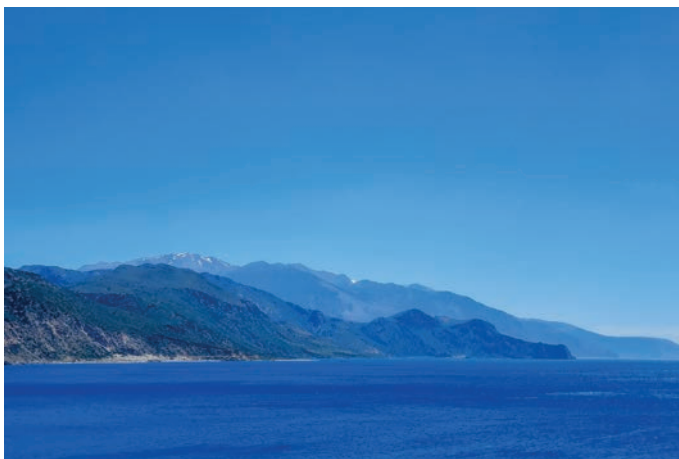
To travel with us is to dig below the surface, revealing the deeper destination. Of course, you will visit the great historical sites; marvel at the wonders of architecture and engineering; be moved by the riches of culture and art; and experience the most spectacular landscapes in the world. What we 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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