

# Activities Adventure



Region of Crete  
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Crete is a heaven for nature lovers and those combining adventure and fun on their vacation. The island offers a variety of activities and opportunities for exploring nature and promises a unique and unforgettable experience for those who decide to explore it.

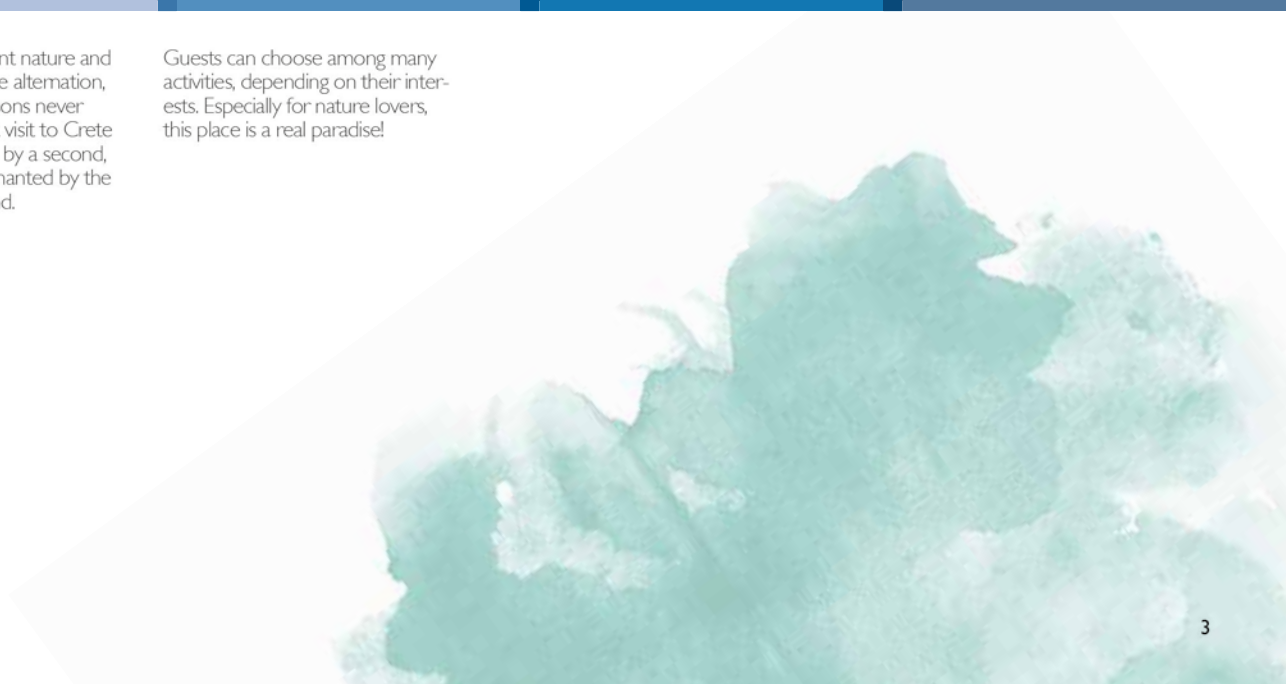






With its magnificent nature and constant landscape alternation, Crete of four seasons never gets boring. A first visit to Crete is usually followed by a second, as visitors are enchanted by the beauty of the island.

Guests can choose among many activities, depending on their interests. Especially for nature lovers, this place is a real paradise!





Hiking, canyoning, climbing, scuba diving, horse riding, caving, trekking, skiing, mountain climbing, parasailing, windsurfing, and kite surf are some of the activities that Crete offers. All those are combined with a great variety of lodging options; from small family hotels or agritourism cottages to luxurious all inclusive hotels.





### Breaking the waves

Windsurfing and kitesurfing are the two most popular wave sports in Crete. In recent years fans of a new form of sport, stand up paddle (SUP), have increased. During winter days, the most adventurous take up surfing.

Kouremenos bay, next to Palekastro, is definitely the king of windsurfing resorts in Crete and one of the most famous spots in Greece. Here, lovers of surfing and kite-surf will find all they need; strong winds and equipment to

rent. A little northern, at the base of Cape Sidero, you will find the most talented athletes of the sport at the secluded beach of Tenta. Other windsurfing locations in Crete include Falasama, Elafonisi, Kedrodasos, Stavros, Elounda, Amoudara in Heraklion and Hersonissos.

One of the most important sites for wave sailing in Greece is the rocky bay Papadiokambos, also known as Faneromeni, a few miles west of Sitia.



### Diving

Crete retains its rugged terrain below sea surface, forming imposing abysses, caves and reefs. Furthermore, numerous shipwrecks and airplane carcasses are scattered around Crete, a reminder of the island's history.

Guests of Crete have the opportunity to escape to the magical underwater world by choosing among a large number of diving clubs. Besides diving, visitors can explore coasts through snorkeling or participate in fishing trips or bottom-glass boat excursions.







### Chania

Souda Bay and the rocky coastline from Kalyves to Georgioupolis are home to spectacular diving sites with many caves and rocky abysses. Among them stands out the underwater cave of Elephants, which took its name after the petrified bones of elephants that are still at the bottom. Other famous diving sites are the shores around Cape Spatha and the Peninsula Gramvousa.

### Rethymnon

Almost all diving schools offer diving excursions to Skinaria beach by Plakias. Indeed, the seabed at Skinaria is one of the most impressive on the island, with thriving sea life and horizontal visibility exceeding 40 meters. Additionally, the rocky coast between Skaleta and Geropotamos in northern Rethymnon is full of caves and is ideal for underwater exploration.



### Heraklion

In Heraklion, the areas preferred by the diving schools are located in the area of Ahlada, west of Heraklion. Diving centers are based on the beaches of Ligaria and Mononaftis. Several diving schools also operate at Hersonissos and Malia, usually offering diving excursions to the island of Dia.

### Lassithi

The diving spots of Lassithi include the town of Agios Nikolaos, the island of Agii Pantas and Voulisma beach. At the wild shores of Cape Sidero, visitors can admire possibly the richest seabed of Crete, while trips are organized to Dionysades islets from Sitia. Around Ierapetra, scuba diving schools frequently visit the rock of Agia Fotia. The ancient submerged settlements of Koufonisi, Itanos and Elounda are also very interesting places to explore while snorkeling.







### Conquering Deep Blue

The options for exploring the coasts of the island are endless. There are daily boat services to many of the most famous remote beaches, such as Balos, Preveli and Agia Roumeli. Visitors can also take trips to the islands of Chrissi, Gavdos, Dia and Koufonisi.

Those looking for more options or seclusion could rent a motor or sailing vessel from the marinas of Agios Nikolaos, Heraklion, Rethymnon and Chania and at almost all smaller harbors of the island. Indeed, there are many people combining vacation in Crete with a trip to the magical island of Santorini.

In recent years, the number of visitors who prefer to explore the rugged coastline and the beautiful beaches with canoe kayak has increased. Several companies rent equipment or provide lessons for kayaking.

Moreover, at most organized beaches, many companies offer various water sport options such as water skiing, pedaling, aqua-board, jet skiing and parasailing. Lastly, all well-organized beaches host beach volley and beach soccer courts.









### Trekking and Climbing

The best way to explore Crete is to walk off the beaten track, follow ancient paths, enjoy the wonderful scents of herbs in the canyons, climb on the tops of the highest mountains and gaze at the deep blue Cretan and Libyan Sea on the horizon.

The E4 European Long Distance Path involves a large network of trails with special cultural, natural and historical value. It is marked by the European Ramblers Association and crosses the island, from Kissamos to Zakros. Hikers have the opportunity to explore a wide range of landscapes of great diversity. Apart from the E4 trekking path, there are plenty of options for majestic mapped routes.

Many travel agencies offer packages for trekking on the island and there are many hiking and mountaineering clubs. Important mountain races are also organized, such as Psiloritis Race and the Marathon of Samaria.



### Caves

The existence of numerous caves is inextricably linked to the rugged topography of Crete.

Crete has more than 4.500 mapped caves and sinkholes, available to each experienced speleologist who wants to enjoy their rich decoration and fauna.

The geological importance of Crete is indicated by the numerous international caving missions for the discovery of unexplored caves and sinkholes. Internationally famous precipices are Gourgouthakas (the deepest in Greece with a depth of -1.208m), Leon (with a depth of -1.110m) and more. Areas that host a large number of caves, ideal for cavers, include mount Stroumboulas by Heraklion, the Geopark of Sitia, the Geopark of Psiloritis and Melidoni area at the White Mountains.

On the island, many speleological clubs offer their research and educational contribution. All clubs together constitute the most active speleological community in Greece.







### **Canyoning and Climbing**

In the rugged terrain of Crete, rivers meet large faults and steep descents during their course through the canyons, forming hundreds of small and high waterfalls.

Crossing gorges of Crete with high waterfalls is possible only by using technical equipment. Appropriate training in canyoneering techniques can be offered by specialist companies on the island.

The most popular technical canyons of Crete include the imposing gorge Ha, Tsoutsouras, Kalami, the gorge of Arvi (which after an 80m high fall turns into a dark underground river) and many more.





Apart from canyoning, several clubs and certified instructors deal with climbing. Every weekend numerous athletes combine an excursion in the nature with their favorite sport. Some well-known climbing sites are Agiofarago, Voulismeno Aloni, Therisso, Kalathas Stavros, Plakias, Malia, Kria Vrissi, Latzimas, Kofinas, Agios Nikolaos and more.

**Tip**  
**Aradena gorge hosts the second highest bridge in Europe (138m high), which is used for bungee jumping!**







### Adrenaline at ...heights

The island of Icarus and Daedalus is home to several companies and clubs that organize contests or offer lessons and equipment for air sports.

Crete is full of steep slopes, ideal for mountain sports associated with the wind, such as paragliding or paramotor. The area of Avdou by Hersonissos is one of the most popular paragliding spots.

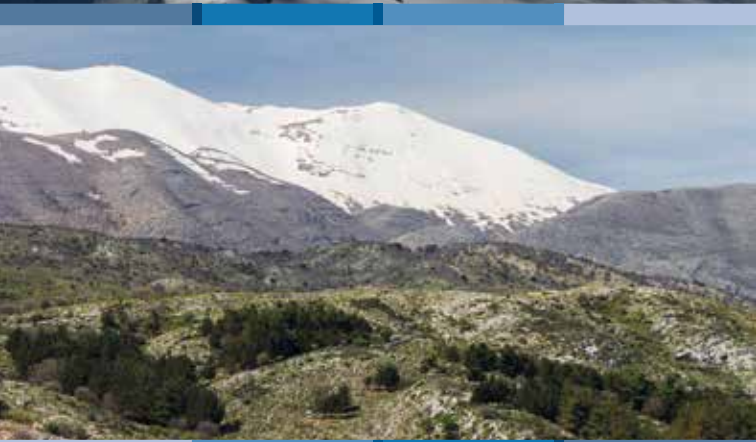


All major airports of Crete house certified air-sport clubs that provide seminars and small aircrafts to rent. There are also many clubs for aircraft modelling that organize astonishing demonstrations.

For extreme athletes, there are various skydiving schools with experienced instructors. The schools operate at some airports of the island, such as Timbaki.







### **Snow Sports**

Apart from Cretans, most visitors ignore that the snowy peaks of the Cretan mountains in winter are ideal for snow sports.

All mountaineering clubs on the island organize courses and training sessions related to snow mountaineering, especially in the ranges of White Mountains and Psiloritis. Mountaineering is usually combined with a stay in one of the many mountain shelters.



Ski mountaineering, an exciting winter sport that combines trekking on snow-covered surfaces with skiing, attracts an increasing number of fans. Many Cretans climb up the whitewashed mountains and descend slopes on skis or snowboard.

Snow-kiting is a relatively new winter sport, which has spread rapidly around the world. The sport is similar to water-based kiteboarding, yet with the footwear used in snowboarding or skiing. Crete is an

ideal destination and champions of the sport were excited to do kiteboarding around the white peaks with the blue sea in the background.





### **Nature Activities**

Crete offers a very wide range of options for experiences that will follow the visitor forever, most of which are related to nature. Horseback riding is one of the most common activities in Crete. The island has a long tradition in using horses in everyday life. Even today, many Cretans own a Cretan horse (georgalidiko), a breed perfectly adapted to the rugged terrains of Crete, and take part in competitions and shows. On the island there are many riding clubs and associations, while companies offer riding courses or excursions.







Wetlands of Crete are shelters for a large number of plants and animal species. They are crucial for the conservation of biodiversity on the island. During fall and especially in spring, visitors can observe migratory birds in the numerous watch towers placed at most wetlands. Watchtowers have also been installed in mountainous areas with a large array of predator species.

Agritourism units and specialized tourist agencies offer seminars for gathering herbs, snails, mushrooms and truffles in the countryside. Similarly, they organize tours for acquainting visitors with traditional rural occupations, such as the cultivation of olive or vine, production of honey and more.







### **Off-road exploration**

The rugged terrain of Crete is a paradise for lovers of off-road exploration. Driving in dirt tracks, on the edge of steep slopes with breathtaking sea views, is a unique experience.

The island is home to an increasing number of companies offering four-wheel drive excursions in the most amazing places of the island. Crossing mountains on motor-bikes is also a very popular activity of local motor clubs.

Cycling, either off-road or on asphalt-paved roads, is also a wonderful way to explore the hinterland. Many companies and cycling clubs operate in this sector. The Cycling Tour of Crete is one of the most famous cycling events and attracts many visitors from all over the globe.





### Sport Tourism

Visitors of Crete can practice some of their favorite sports or be introduced to new ones. Every year, navy clubs organize open-sea sailing races such as J24, Regatta and Laser. Moreover, modern basketball and soccer courts host international matches. Associations of martial arts host world class events. Athletics, marathon and trail running are also very common.





Apart from common sports, for which facilities are available all over the island, there are less known sports to practice. Paintball is very popular in major cities. Similarly, there are shooting, archery and fencing clubs. Towns and some hotels house bowling centers that

organize national and international tournaments. There are also many tracks for kart and unmanned vehicles. A 9-hole golf course operates in Elounda, while the 18-hole course at Hersonissos is soon expected to re-operate.

**Tip**  
*Crete hosts 4 large water parks!*

