

STAGE TRIP - CENTRAL AND EASTERN CRETE EXPERIENCE WITH A CRETAN

Sunday: Welcome to Crete

Individual flight to Crete

Meals: Dinner

Accommodation: Hotel Petousis or similar

Monday: Zaros and Zaro's Lake

After leaving the city of Heraklion, the tour heads southwest on low-traffic secondary roads. We pass through small villages until we reach the village of Agia Varvara, the central point of Crete, at an altitude of 640m. We continue downhill, passing many impressive traditional mountain villages. In the village of Panasos we visit the oldest (3,000 years old) olive tree in Crete. We reach Zaros, an idyllic, typical village, which is famous and popular for its trout farming. The highest quality mineral water in Crete, "Zaros", is also bottled here. Lake Zaros, which invites you to enjoy culinary delicacies and take a walk in the shade of its trees, gives the place its typical character.

Route 56km Time 5 hrs Ascent 1110m Descent 710m

Meals: Breakfast, lunch / Accommodation: Idi Hotel, Zaros

Tuesday: South coast of Dyskos, through the Messara Plain

We start in a southerly direction and drive inland and through the fertile Messara plain, which provides a large part of the tasty vegetables on Greek and German markets. After 28km we reach the village of Vassiliki at the foot of the Asteroussia Mountains. Here begins a climb that takes us up a serpentine road to the fishing village of Lentas. Lentas comes from the name Leontas (lion) because the rock above the village shows the shape of a lion waiting for its mother, looking into the distance towards Africa. We drive past the village towards the west to the settlement of Dyskos.

Route 45km Time 5 hrs Ascent 640m Descent 930m

Meals: Breakfast, lunch / Accommodation: Mythos Apartments or similar

Wednesday: Choudetsi, a village with culture

Today we will be driven by minibus to the village of Krotos. From here we pass many typical villages at the foot of the Asteroussia Mountains, accompanied by fascinating views of parts of the fertile Messara plain. Most of the inhabitants of these villages are farmers, cattle breeders or beekeepers. Resting in the shade of the hundred-year-old plane tree at the Saint George Monastery, we enjoy the view and the hospitality of the monks of this monastery. From here, our destination is very close. In Choudetsi, the Irish musician Ross Daly organises international concerts of oriental music and song every year.

Route 50km Time 5 hrs Ascent 740m Descent 700m

Meals: Breakfast, lunch / Accommodation: Apartments Petronikolis

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EXPERIENCE WITH A CRETAN

Thursday: Through the ceramic centre of Crete to Mochos

The route from Choudetsi to Mochos leads through one of the most fertile regions of Crete. We are in an extraordinary wine region here. Green hills and countless vineyards characterise the landscape. First we visit the ceramic workshop of Kostas in the village of Thrapsanò and then we drive along and past the Aposelemis dam and reach the picturesque village of Avdou, where we take a break. We then head uphill towards Mochos, an idyllic village on the way to the impressive Lassithi plateau. In Mochos, the couple Varvara and Jorgos welcome us in their taverna "Odysseas" with homemade traditional delicacies.

Route 58km Time 5 hrs Ascent 540m Descent 1100m

Meals: Breakfast, lunch / Accommodation: Apartments Helen or similar

Friday: Lassithi, the highest plateau of Crete, birthplace of Zeus

From Mochos we cycle 12km uphill eastwards to the Lassithi plateau (830m). The attractions of the plateau are the windmills, the Zeus Cave, birthplace of the father of all the gods of Olympus, the extremely tasty vegetables and the aromatic potatoes and apples, to mention a few of them. The idyllic route and the wonderful view of the other side of the plateau as we drive towards the Cretan Sea are a delight. We cross a fascinating landscape and the descent of 20km compensates for all the effort.

Route 54km Time 5 hrs Ascent 920m Descent 1170m

Meals: Breakfast, lunch / Accommodation: Villa Minoas or similar

Saturday: Myrtos, the long beach west of the southernmost city in Europe

We start in a southerly direction and cross the southernmost mountains in Europe until we reach an altitude of 700m. From here we then look down on the southernmost city in Europe, Ierapetra. This is where most of the greenhouses in Greece are located. This route impresses and fascinates at the same time. We ride 24km uphill and cross the idyllic mountain villages of Prina, Kalamafka, Anatoli and Males. After 32km we take a break under the plane trees at the church of Agia Paraskevi. Here we enjoy the rushing spring water as a refreshing drink and the traditional cheese of the shepherd Theofilos. Then we head downhill to the coastal village of Myrtos, where the Libyan Sea invites us to swim.

Route 47km Time 5 hrs Ascent 900m Descent 900m

Meals: Breakfast, lunch / Accommodation: Hotel Petousis or similar

Sunday: Farewell to Crete

Drive to the airport and return flight home

Meals: Breakfast