

Walking the White Mountains of Crete

Trip Code: CRE

Version: CRE Walking the White Mountains of Crete



WALK & TREK



GUIDED GROUP



MODERATE



HIGHLIGHTS

- Descend to the Mediterranean sea through the spectacular Samaria Gorge
- Reach the summit of Pachnes, the highest peak in the White Mountains of Crete
- Discover Crete's hidden coves on a stunning coastal walk from Agia Roumeli
- Stay in charming accommodation, enjoy Cretan cuisine and sip Ouzo in Greek tavernas

AT A GLANCE

- 6 days walking
- Max altitude 2453 metres
- Join at Chania

ACCOMMODATIONS & MEALS

- 7 Breakfasts
- 5 Lunches
- 7 Dinners
- 7 nights Hotel

[VIEW DATES, PRICES & BOOK YOUR HOLIDAY HERE](#)

Introduction

This Mediterranean walking holiday on the island of Crete offers a wonderful blend of high mountain scenery, picturesque coastal walking, traditional villages, and legendary Greek food and hospitality. Immerse yourself in the spellbinding beauty of the White Mountains, traverse the rugged terrain of the Samaria Gorge, and discover the hidden beaches along Crete's lesser-explored coast.

Starting from the mountain hamlet of Omalos, our first objective is to hike to the summit of Gingilos (1980m), a rocky peak offering spectacular views across the White Mountains and a bird's-eye perspective of our route for the following day. This route leads us down to the Mediterranean via the world-famous Samaria Gorge, a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. We then spend two nights in Agia Roumeli, a charming collection of traditional tavernas accessible only by walking or boat. Here, you have the option to relax on the beach or partake in a variety of day walking excursions.

Continuing along the sun-kissed shoreline and a stunning cliff-side pathway, our next day's walk in Crete takes us to Marmara beach and the delightful white-painted seaside village of Loutro. With a hotel base in Loutro, our trekking adventure ascends to Pachnes (2453m), the highest peak in the 'Lefka Ori' mountain range, before a circular hike via the impressive Aradena Gorge and the charming shepherd's village of Anopolis.

Is this holiday for you?

This walking holiday is designed to escape the main tourist hotspots of northern Crete and embrace the magic and tranquility of the quiet southern coastline. While we are sure to enjoy plenty of sun, experience isolated beaches, and sample superb Greek cooking, this holiday is first and foremost tailored for walkers. Our hikes include ascents to the rocky peak of Gingilos, as well as Pachnes, the highest mountain in the area. We anticipate an average of 5 to 7 hours of walking each day, with average ascents and descents of around 700 meters per day. The paths are generally well-maintained, but during the ascents of Gingilos and Pachnes, we will encounter open scree and traverse rocky terrain with no discernible track. This holiday is suitable for weekend hikers seeking tranquility and sun. Be prepared for a unique and authentic Greek experience!

Itinerary

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DAY 1

Meet at the group hotel in Omalos. Afternoon and evening transfers from Chania Airport are provided.

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Meals: **D**



Accommodation
Hotel

DAY 2

Walk to the top of Gingilos (1980m) from the head of the Samaria Gorge. Return to Omalos.

After breakfast, a 10-minute transfer takes us to the start of the famous trek down the Samaria Gorge. However, we will save the gorge walk for tomorrow. Today, our plan is to climb Gingilos (1980m), the impressive mountain that towers above. Following a rough but well-marked footpath, it's a steady climb for an hour and a half to a year-round spring. After a stop to refill our water bottles, a zigzag path leads to a rocky col, which offers views of the Libyan Sea to the south. Beyond the col, the path becomes slightly more challenging, with some short and easy sections of scrambling. Less than an hour from the col, we reach a rounded summit adorned with a prominent cairn. From here, breathtaking views extend across the entire White Mountains massif to distant Pachnes, the highest mountain in the range and our destination in a few days' time. Closer at hand, a rocky crest marks the true summit of Gingilos, just 5 meters higher than the cairned summit. It's an optional 15-minute scramble to reach this point. We return by the same route and spend a second night in Omalos.

Meals: **B L D**



Accommodation
Hotel



Ascent
1000M



Descent
1000M



Time
5 - 6 hrs walking



Distance
9KM

DAY 3

Descend through the Samaria Gorge to the isolated seaside settlement of Agia Roumeli.

We won't start too early this morning, aiming to avoid the crowds of tourists who arrive by bus from the resorts of the northern coast to walk down the extremely popular Samaria Gorge. This ravine is the longest in Europe and arguably the most spectacular. Our baggage is transported down to Sougia and then by ferry to Agia Roumeli, while we opt for a short transfer to Xiloskala (1250m), a viewpoint overlooking the gorge. Here, we relax in a cafe with a view of the descent path and then, in the late morning, we begin our walk. By this time, the area is usually deserted.

For the first 2km of the walk, we descend dramatically via a path leading to the bottom of the upper gorge. The peaks of Gingilos and Volakias tower above us like gigantic walls of rock, while the White Mountains extend to the east on our left-hand side. The small chapel of Agios Nikolaos, nestled among pines and cypresses, marks the beginning of a gentler descent, and soon we arrive at the old hamlet of Samaria. From here, the path winds its way, passing Saint Mary's Church, which bears the date 1379 over the doorway. We soon reach the narrowest part of the gorge, the famous 'Portes' (Gates). Here, the rock architecture is astounding, with walls soaring vertically upwards for 500 meters on either side of the path. The final few kilometers bring us to the welcome sight of Agia Roumeli and the Libyan Sea.

Arriving in the late afternoon, we find that the majority of people who have walked the gorge have already departed from Agia Roumeli by ferry, either heading westwards to Sougia or eastwards to Hora Sfakion. Once they're gone, Agia Roumeli returns to its tranquil self, nestled between wild mountains and the deep blue sea. This is the hidden Crete that most tourists never experience. While in Agia Roumeli, we stay at a comfortable hotel and enjoy our evening meals at the excellent Artemis Restaurant.

Meals: **B L D**



Accommodation
Hotel



Descent
1200M



Time
5 - 7 hrs walking






Distance
16KM

DAY 4

Free day at Agia Roumeli. Optional walks to a number of ancient Turkish forts.

Until the first walkers of the day make their way down the gorge, typically not until mid-afternoon, Agia Roumeli remains the perfect Cretan hideaway and an ideal spot to unwind. A small, clean, pebbly beach lies in front of the village, offering an excellent spot for swimming. Alternatively, a short walk to the east leads to an even quieter beach that stretches for miles. For those eager to engage in some exercise, there are various walking options available. The clearly visible Turkish fort above the village can be reached in 45 minutes, and a decent path to the north leads to the old settlement of Agia Roumeli, providing an easy 2-hour circuit. Longer walking options include the ascent to Papoura, a picturesque spot 900 meters (3000 feet) above the village. It involves a steep climb of 3 to 4 hours, but the rewards include stunning views of the coast, the mountains, and the Samaria Gorge from above. After the day's tourists have departed, we will enjoy a peaceful night at our hotel and have another opportunity to sample the famous Cretan cuisine at the Artemis Restaurant.

Meals: **B D**

	Accommodation Hotel		Ascent 300M		Descent 300M		Time 2 - 3 hrs walking		Distance 4KM
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DAY 5

Coastal walk through pine forest and via the chapel of Agios Pavlos to Loutro. Boat ride to Sfakia. Overnight in Sfakia.

The walk from Agia Roumeli to Loutro begins along a delightful coastal path. Departing Agia Roumeli in the cool of the early morning, we follow a way-marked path that meanders across beaches, through pine trees, and along cliffs. A pleasant spot for a break and a swim is at the small Byzantine church of Saint Paul, where it's said Saint Paul landed on Crete during his voyage to Greece. Adorned with murals, this historic church by the sea is engaged in a continual battle against the waves. Beyond the church, the path ascends above the beach and eventually leads out of the pine forest, continuing through a more barren area between the Libyan Sea and a barrier of cliffs to the beach of Marmara and the entrance of the Aradena Gorge. Here, we have another opportunity for a swim or a drink at the small beach cafe before continuing toward the Bay of Loutro. From there, a short boat ride will take us to Sfakia, where we will stay at a small, family-run hotel overlooking the sea.

Meals: **B L D**

	Accommodation Hotel		Ascent 700M		Descent 700M		Time 6 - 7 hrs walking		Distance 15KM
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DAY 6

Drive to the White Mountains and walk to the top of Pachnes (2453m). Return to Sfakia.

Today, we will hike to the top of Pachnes (2453m), the highest summit in the White Mountains. Despite being only 3 meters higher than Timios Stavros in the Ida Mountains, Pachnes is arguably the best mountain walk in Crete. While not technically difficult, Pachnes is rarely climbed due to the long day required for the summit trek. Additionally, logistical transport challenges associated with the ascent mean it is almost never offered as a guided route.

We begin by driving up to the mountain village of Anopolis and continuing for approximately 20 kilometers along a rough track to an altitude of 1950m. From there, we embark on our hike through the unique lunar landscape of Crete's high desert region, reaching the summit after 2 hours. On a clear day, the summit offers panoramic views extending over half the island. With a bit of luck, we may be accompanied by griffon and bearded vultures, and even golden eagles. After signing the summit book, we descend back to the drop-off point and return to Sfakia.

Meals: **B L D**

	Accommodation Hotel		Ascent 600M		Descent 600M		Time 5 hrs walking		Distance 9KM
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DAY 7

Walk via Marmara Beach and the Aradena Gorge to the shepherds village of Anopolis. Return to Sfakia.

Our final day's trekking is a circular route, commencing with a short boat ride to the beach at Marmara. From there, we venture inland into the impressive depths of the Aradena Gorge. Although not as vast as the Samaria Gorge, it boasts equal spectacle and tranquility. If anything, the underfoot conditions are slightly more challenging, with a series of easy scrambles across several rockfalls. It will take us 3 hours to reach the ancient village of Aradena, with the latter part of the walk featuring an intriguing (and ancient) paved pathway that zigzags out of the gorge. Upon arrival, we have the opportunity to explore the ruined village and hopefully enjoy refreshments at the kiosk cafe, offering a spectacular view of the gorge. Here, the gorge narrows to just 30 meters, spanned by a metal bridge offering breathtaking views into its depths.

From here, we hike across country, following an old cobbled road through the rugged fields of an impressive limestone plateau, until we reach the charming village of Anopolis. Here, we pause for lunch at a taverna. Afterward, we leisurely stroll to the clifftop chapel of Agia Katarini, an excellent vantage point for observing griffon vultures as they soar along the plateau's edge. We then descend on a rough track to Loutro and continue onward to Sfakia, with opportunities for a refreshing swim along the way. In the evening, we cap off our memorable holiday with a celebratory meal.

Meals: **B L D**

	Accommodation Hotel		Ascent 800M		Descent 800M		Time 6 - 7 hrs walking		Distance 17KM
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DAY 8

Departure day. A single timed transfer to Chania Airport is provided.

The holiday ends after breakfast. There will be a single timed transfer back to Chania Airport, a drive of around 2 hours.

Meals: **B**

Holiday Information

What's Included

- A professional and qualified tour leader
- Up to 2 Chania Airport transfers on Day 1 and 1 on Day 8
- All land transport required by the itinerary
- All accommodation as described
- Meals as described in the Meal Plan
- Samaria National Park fee
- Baggage transfers between overnight stops - by road or by boat

What's not Included

- Travel insurance
- Some meals as described in the Meal Plan
- Tips for local staff
- Miscellaneous expenses - drinks and souvenirs etc.

Joining Arrangements & Transfers

The group will meet at the group accommodation in Omalos.

There will be two timed transfers from Chania Airport to the group accommodation on Day 1 of the Land Only Itinerary. One meeting flights arriving 1330 and earlier and one meeting flights arriving at 1700 and earlier.

In Arrivals Hall A please look out for our KE representative with a KE signboard and/or your name.

On the last day of the Land Only itinerary, there will be a single group transfer back to Chania Airport. This transfer will arrive at the airport at approximately 1100.

Anyone may join the group transfers by prior arrangement. Travelling as a group or on public transport saves energy. If this is not practical, we can provide private transfers at an additional cost. Taxis are also available.

If your arrival flight does not allow you to take advantage of the timed transfers you will need to make your own way to Omalos. A taxi will cost approximately €95.

If you have spare time in Chania on Day 1 or Day 8 you may wish to spend time in Chania. It is possible to leave luggage at the central bus station (from where you can take a bus to/from the airport) while you explore.

Hotel contact details and an emergency number will be provided with your booking confirmation.

Meal Plan

All meals except 1 lunch (on the free day in Agia Roumeli) are included in the holiday price.

Food & Water

Water is drinkable from the taps on this holiday. Please fill your personal bottles for your day in the morning. We do not encourage the purchasing of single use plastic bottles.

Breakfasts are taken at the overnight hotel and consist of tea and coffee, cereals, bread, jam and the Greek speciality of yoghurt and honey. For lunch, the group will carry a few items to make up a picnic. This will usually be bread, cheese, tomatoes, cucumber, olives, ham or other dried meats, fruit and biscuits. It is generally too warm to carry chocolate, but we can make an exception on the high-level hike to Pachnes which is cooler. Dinner is again served at our overnight taverna and this is always local Cretan fare, with all produce sourced locally and usually some choice of meat. Lamb, moussaka, fresh vegetables, wonderful salads etc.. The dinners are a highlight of the trip. All meals are included.

Special Diets

Whilst we can cater for vegetarians, albeit sometimes with a more limited choice, we cannot always provide special diets. Due to the nature of some of the trips that we operate and the countries in which we operate them, it can be very hard (and sometimes impossible) to cater for a wide range of dietary choices and you may have to supplement your diet with food/snacks from home. If you have specific dietary requirements please do speak to our sales team and they will be able to advise you whether or not we will be able to offer your specific choice. Please note that we are unable to provide separate menus and cannot accept liability for any problems arising from special dietary requirements or intolerances.

Accommodation

We will spend 7 nights in small local hotels and tavernas. In Omalos we will sleep in simple rooms at small, family-run, accommodations where we will really experience the essence of life in rural Crete.

All accommodation is on a twin share basis. If you are travelling by yourself you will be paired with another single traveller of the same sex. A very limited number of single rooms are available for a supplementary cost. If you are planning to extend your holiday, additional nights are available on request.

Group Leader & Support Staff

The group will be led by a professional and qualified tour leader.

Altitude

This holiday does not involve any significant ascent to altitude and we would not expect any altitude issues with this trip.

Spending Money

Approximately £100 (or the equivalent in dollars or euros) should be allowed for miscellaneous expenses, drinks and souvenir purchases. We recommend that you carry your travel money in the form of euros currency, since there are not many money changing facilities once you leave Chania Airport. If you are intending to buy expensive souvenirs, you should budget accordingly. Also, if you expect to buy considerable quantities of soft drinks, wine or beer, you should make an allowance for this. Credit cards can be used in some places on this trip.

Baggage Allowance

For this holiday you should take one piece of luggage and a daypack. For international flights please check your baggage allowance with your airline.

Group Size & Holiday Status

For each holiday there is a minimum number of participants required to enable it to go ahead. Once the minimum number is reached, the trip status will change from 'Available' to 'Guaranteed to run'. You can check the trip status for each departure in 'Dates and Prices' table. Other than in exceptional circumstances, we will not cancel a trip once it has achieved this guaranteed to run status and so you are free to proceed with your international flight booking and other travel arrangements.

General Information

Passport & Visas

Europe

Your passport must meet 2 requirements. It must be:

- less than 10 years old on the day you enter (check the 'date of issue')
- valid for at least 3 months after the day you plan to leave (check the 'expiry date')

For the latest details on visiting countries within the EU or the European Economic Area (EEA), please check the UK Government website

The information that we provide is for UK passport holders. A passport with 6 months remaining validity at the end of your stay is generally required, and you should have at least 2 blank pages for each country that you visit.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the correct travel documents and visas for your holiday. Please ensure that you check for the latest advice before travel. For the most up to date information on entry requirements, please visit the [UK Government website](#).

Health & Vaccinations

If you have a severe allergy please inform the KE office before you travel. We will do all we can to help, but we cannot guarantee an allergy free environment on KE trips. You will need to carry your own treatment for the allergy with you, as 'adrenaline auto-injectors' are not carried as standard by KE leaders and staff. You should inform your leader on arrival of your allergy, and let them know where you keep your adrenaline pen.

Vaccinations

You should contact your doctor or travel clinic to check whether you require any specific vaccinations.

GHIC / Medical cover

UK residents should carry a free Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC). This entitles you to state provided medical treatment when you're visiting an EU country or Switzerland. This is not a substitute for medical travel insurance which is vital when travelling overseas.

Currency

The currency for part or all of this holiday is the Euro.

Preparing for your Holiday

Getting some additional exercise before coming on an active holiday makes a lot of sense. The fitter you are, after all, the more enjoyable you will find the experience.

You should be aerobically fit and comfortable with walking 3 to 6 hours for consecutive days. Hill walking, with a good amount of ascent and descent, is the best training. Running, cycling and swimming are also good for developing cardiovascular fitness and stamina.

Climate

The best time of year for hiking on Crete is in May, early June, September and October - when we have planned our trips. We can expect daytime temperatures to range between 20 and 30 degrees centigrade, dropping at night to 10 degrees centigrade in the mountains and 15 degrees centigrade on the coast. We are unlikely to experience any rain, as Crete enjoys one of the most favourable climates in the Mediterranean. It really is too hot to complete this itinerary comfortably during July and August.

Travel Aware

As a reputable tour operator, KE supports the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's '[Travel Aware](#)' campaign to enable British citizens to prepare for their journeys overseas. The 'Travel Aware' website provides a single, authoritative source of advice for all kinds of travellers and we recommend that prior to travel, all KE clients visit the official UK Government website at travelaware.campaign.gov.uk and read the FCDO Travel Advice for their chosen destination. North Americans can also check out the U.S. Department of State website: www.travel.state.gov for essential travel advice and tips.

KE treat the safety and security of all clients as the most important aspect of any trip we organise. We would not run any trip that we did not consider reasonably safe. Should the FCDO advise against travel for any reason, we will contact everyone booked to travel to discuss the situation. We receive regular updates direct from the FCDO and are in constant touch with our contacts on the ground. If you have any questions about government travel advice, please call our office.

Single Use Plastic

KE do not encourage the use of single use plastic items. We are ensuring that our agents all over the world are working together to reduce the problem and educate those around them. We are leading by example in our KE office by reducing our plastic use.

Books

- Crete - The White Mountains - Cicerone Guide by Lorraine Wilson
- The Rough Guide to Crete
- Lonely Planet. Crete
- Landscapes of Western Crete - Sunflower Guide

Maps

Topografische Bergwanderkarte - Anavasi. Samaria - Sougia. 11-13 Greece. 1:25,000

Great hiking map published by Anavasi. Covers the first part of the walk. 1:25,000 scale.

Travel Insurance

It is an essential condition of joining a holiday with KE Adventure Travel that you have a valid travel insurance policy to cover the cost of medical treatment and to protect the value of your holiday in the event of cancellation. When taking out insurance please ensure the policy you choose covers you for the activities and altitude included in your itinerary.

For appropriate insurance cover we recommend Campbell Irvine Direct. Please go to our [Travel Insurance](#) page for further information and to get a quote.

Please note that a paper copy of your travel insurance is required if you are travelling to Huaraz and the Huayhuash region.

Equipment Information

Equipment List

Please try to keep the weight of your baggage to a minimum. See the 'baggage allowance' section for further details.

You Should bring the following items:

- Hiking boots
- Gaiters (may be required on pre-summer trips)

- Socks
- Trekking trousers
- Lightweight waterproof overtrousers
- Underwear
- Baselayer shirts
- T-shirts and/or casual shirts
- Midlayer fleece top
- Warm fleece jacket
- Waterproof jacket
- Lightweight thermal gloves
- Warm hat
- Sunhat
- Sunglasses
- Daypack 25 to 30 litres capacity
- Sun protection (including for lips)
- Water bottles 1 Litre (x2) (we encourage re-filling water bottles rather than single use plastic)
- Washbag and toiletries
- Antibacterial handwash
- Headtorch - in case of power cuts)

- Basic First Aid Kit including: Antiseptic cream, throat lozenges, diarrhoea treatment (Imodium), painkillers, plasters and blister treatment, insect repellent, and re-hydration salts (Dioralite).

The following items are optional:

- Trainers or sandals
- Shorts
- Towel (for swimming)
- Swimwear
- Trekking poles
- Camera
- Spare laces
- Pen-knife (for picnic lunches)
- Reusable cloth bag for shopping (to avoid plastic bags)

Cotswold Outdoor



Many of the Equipment items listed above are available from [Cotswold Outdoor](#) - our '**Official Recommended Outdoor Retailer**'. When you book a holiday with KE you will receive 12.5% discount voucher from Cotswold Outdoor and other retailers.
[-> Find out more](#)

Land Only Information

The LAND ONLY dates and prices are for the itinerary joining at the group accommodation in Omalos. A single timed transfer is provided from Chania Airport to Omalos. The holiday ends in Sfakia. A single timed transfer from the group hotel in Sfakia to Chania Airport is provided.

Flight Inclusive Information

The FLIGHT INCLUSIVE dates and prices are based on UK flights from London to Chania. Outbound flights will depart from the UK in the morning arriving into Chania in the afternoon of the same day. Return flights will depart in the early afternoon of the last day of the itinerary, arriving in the UK later that same evening.

Why Choose KE

Why KE

Our itinerary is pretty hard to beat, combining all the walking highlights of unspoiled Western Crete, including a guided walk to summit Pachnes. We love how this adventure consistently surprises and delights travellers - the White Mountains are a true hidden gem and walker's paradise.

Please Note This document was downloaded on 20/05/2024 and the trip is subject to change