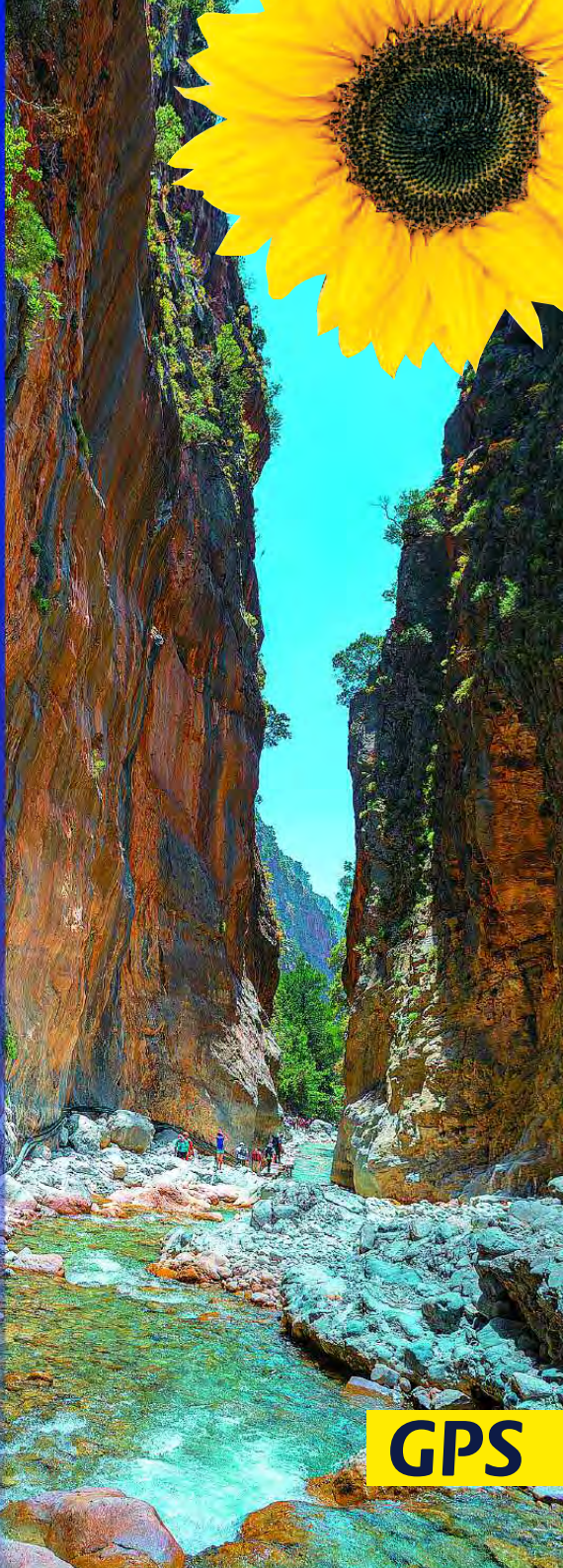


# Western Crete

55 long and short walks • 8 car tours



**GPS**

This is a sample from the  
PDF edition of  
*Landscapes of*  
**WESTERN**  
**CRETE**

---

*a countryside guide*

*Tenth edition*



*Jonnie Godfrey  
and  
Elizabeth Karslake*

This shorter sampler includes some of the introductory text, the introductions to each of the main sections (Picnicking, Car Touring and Walking) with an example of each. There is a total of 152 pages, plus two pull-out region maps, in the full book.



**SUNFLOWER BOOKS**



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*Beautiful stone-laid trail to Moni Katholikou and the sea (Walk 11)*





# Getting about

**Hiring a car** is certainly one of the best ways to get to know Crete. We hope that by giving you some good itineraries, you will be able to make the most of the island — and your car. Many of the tours we suggest will take you past the starting-and/or end-points of several walks. In fact, seeing the countryside from a car will encourage you, we hope, to go off the beaten track and into the hills with us, on foot.

**Taxis** are an alternative way to tour and, if shared, can be a reasonably-priced way to travel. Do agree a fare before setting out, if it's going to be an unmetred trip. If necessary, your holiday company's agent or representative will help you to find a driver who speaks English and who will be happy and proud to show off his island.

**Organised excursions** are good value; coaches eat up the kilometres while you sit back and watch it all go by.

One of the best ways of getting about is by **local bus**. Once you've done it for the first time, you'll realise it's economical, reliable and entertaining. You'll whizz along the highways and bumble through villages with a bus-eye view over the countryside. Use the local bus network to explore Western Crete economically.

The plans overleaf locate the bus stations in Hania and Rethimnon. Timetables for buses covering the western half of the island are on pages 149-150. A good website (in English) for Hania's urban buses is [chaniabus.gr](http://chaniabus.gr). *Note: Even if you have downloaded timetables from the web (see page 149), do pick up a current bus timetable at the station before you plan any excursions: the frequency of services changes with the seasons. For complete assurance, verify the times in advance by asking.*

If you are lucky, the officials at Hania bus station (where, incidentally, there is a left luggage facility) will tell you the number of the bus you want; arrive in good time, as buses leave promptly and sometimes even *earlier* than scheduled, particularly those that depart at the crack of dawn. Most tickets are bought at the depot before boarding, including those to Samaria (the 'Omalos' bus). If you *do* buy tickets on the bus, don't be confused if you get three per person for just one trip — they add up to the total. You can flag down buses en route, but they don't always stop. *Always* put your hand out, even at a bus stop.



## HANIA — KEY

- 1 Tourist information bureau
- 2 Tourist police (L Irakliou)
- 3 Greek Alpine Club (EOS)
- 4 Post office
- 5 Telephone and internet (Cosmote)
- 6 National Bank of Greece
- 7 Bank of Greece
- 8 🚏 for Akrotiri
- 9 🚏 for Akrotiri, Iraklion, Souda, Mournies and town routes
- 10 🚏 Bus station: for Alikianos, Aptera (beach), Hora Sfakion, Kalamaki, Kandanos, Kastelli-Kissamos, Lakki, Meskla, Omalos (Samaria), Paleohora, Plataniyas (beach), Platanos, Rethimnon, Sougia, Xiloskala (Samaria)
- 11 Stadium
- 12 Piraeus Bank
- 13 Public gardens and zoo
- 14 Market
- 15 Shiva bastion
- 16 Al Hammam (traditional baths)
- 17 Folklore museum
- 18 Maritime museum (Firka tower)
- 19 Venetian shipyards
- 20 Cathedral
- 21 Minaret
- 22 Taxi rank
- 23 Venetian lighthouse
- 24 Synagogue

# RETHIMNON



## RETHIMNON — KEY

- 1 Tourist information bureau
- 2 Post office
- 3 Bus station
- 4 Public beach
- 5 Youth hostel
- 6 Archaeological museum
- 7 Nerantzes mosque
- 8 Rimondi fountain
- 9 Nerantzes fountain
- 10 Venetian fortress
- 11 Venetian harbour
- 12 Museum (Venetian loggia)
- 13 Public gardens
- 14 Porta Guora
- 15 Stadium
- 16 Taxi rank
- 17 Telephone and internet (OTE)
- 18 Paleontological museum
- 19 National Bank of Greece
- 20 Lighthouse
- 21 Hospital





# Picnicking

Picnicking on Crete is not an organised affair. There are very few specially-provided sites; it's very much a case of pick your own olive tree and toss for the best view. Following is a selection of some good places to throw down a towel or a rug (it's unlikely to be wet, but it might well be prickly) and revel in the countryside. Don't forget the corkscrew ...

These picnic suggestions have been chosen for ease of access, and none involves too much climbing or lugging of provisions. We tell you how to get there (including waypoints so that you can set your satnav if you like) and how long a walk you'll have. Naturally, all these picnic strolls can be extended to make satisfying short walks.

Note that *picnic numbers correspond to walk numbers*: on the corresponding *walking* map the precise location of the picnic spot is shown on by the symbol **P**, printed in green. (The three suggestions prefixed 'CT' are specifically linked to the corresponding car tours.)

**All picnickers should read the Country code on page 13 and go quietly in the countryside.**

**1 Agia Lake** (*map page 51; photos on pages 52, 53*); *allow 5-30min on foot*  
🚗 Following Car tour 3, from Agia drive towards 'KIRTOMADOS' and park on the track to the lake, just beyond a bridge with iron railings

(35° 28.632'N, 23° 55.788'E). Now it's only 5min to a pleasant spot by the lake. For a longer walk, park on the main road in Agia (35° 28.346'N, 23° 55.854'E) and follow the Short walk on page 50.

*These pleasant hillsides below Polirinia are the setting for Picnic 14.*





**2 Kotsifou Gorge** (*map page 56, photo on page 55*); **allow about 40min on foot**

☞ Following Car tour 3, park in **Plakias** (35° 11.423'N, 24° 23.714'E). Follow Short walk 2 on page 54 to the GORGE and MILL.

**3 Diktamos Gorge** (*map pages 56-57, photo on page 58*); **allow 5-15min on foot**

☞ Follow Car tour 5. Coming downhill into **Katothori**, on a big U-bend to the right (by a miniature concrete church), take the road to the left. Continue 400m to a small square and park (35° 26.285'N, 24° 3.947'E). Then follow Walk 3, page 56 and either picnic at the small PICNIC SITE (under 5min) or in the GORGE itself (from about 15min).

**4 Kambi** (*map page 62*); **allow 10-30min on foot**

☞ Follow Car tour 5 and park in **Kambi** near the church (35° 25.078'N, 24° 4.178'E). Then follow Walk 4 (page 60) as far as the PICNIC AREA below on the right.

**6 Kournas Lake** (*map page 67, photos on pages 68-69*); **allow about 10min on foot**

☞ Nearing the end of Car tour 6 you pass **Lake Kournas**. Either park on the main road or drive down towards the lake (free parking). Just find a nice spot or use the map and notes for Walk 6 to stretch your legs.

**9 Rethimnon** (*map page 77*); **allow up to 5min on foot**

☞ Car tours 6, 7, and 8 take you to **Rethimnon**. From the town drive up towards the chapel of Profitis Ilias. To get there, head south uphill at the eastern side of town on the road to Roussospiti (Theotokopoulou Street). The chapel itself is inaccessible, but there is good picnicking to the left, just past the motorway, or a short way further

up, in the PINES — off a steep road just before the track to the chapel.

**10 Myli Gorge** (*map page 80, photos on pages 43 and 81*); **allow about 10min on foot**

☞ Car tours 6, 7, and 8 take you to **Rethimnon**. From there **Myli** and its gorge can be reached as a detour either via Roussospiti or via Perivolia (see the map on page 80; 35° 20.258'N, 24° 30.236'E). Follow Walk 10 on page 80 for as long as you like.

**14 Polirinia** (*map page 91, photo opposite*); **allow 20-25min on foot**

☞ Follow Car tour 1 and take the DETOUR TO **Polirinia**. Park near the taverna at the end of the road (35° 27.305'N, 23° 39.040'E) and use the map to walk south out of the village. Picnic just past the last houses.

**15 Katsomatados** (*map page 94, photo on page 94*); **allow under 10min on foot**

☞ Follow Car tour 1 to **Katsomatados**, 3km south of Topolia (35° 24.328'N, 23° 40.933'E). Then use notes on page 92 to picnic near the start of Walk 15.

**18 Sougia** (*map pages 100-101, photos on pages 89*); **allow about 10-15min on foot**

☞ Following Car tour 3, park in **Sougia** (35° 14.828'N, 23° 48.423'E). Use the notes for Walk 18 on page 101 to picnic in the GORGE.

**26 Imbros Gorge** (*map page 128, photo on page 129*); **allow about 20min on foot**

☞ Follow Car tour 6 to the ENTRANCE TO THE GORGE and park (35° 15.231'N, 24° 10.281'E). Then use notes on page 127 to start Walk 26. If you go far enough into the gorge, you may have to pay.

**28 Megalopotamos River** (*map page 136, photo below*) **allow under 5min on foot**

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☞ Follow Car tour 6 past **Asomatos**, to the arched **BRIDGE** over the Megalopotamos River (35° 10.441'N, 24° 27.958'E). Picnic here, or at the pools below it.

**29 Kaloidena Chapel** (*map page 140*); *allow 5min to 20min on foot*

☞ Follow Car tour 8 to **Ano Meros** and park (35° 11.237'N, 24° 39.659'E). Then follow the first 20min of Walk 29 (page 138) to the pretty chapel with its spring and picnic area. Or *drive* there: follow the road from Ano Meros towards **HORDAKI**, then turn right uphill at the brown signpost 'KALOIDENA MONASTERY'.

**32 Eleftherna** (*map page 148, photo on page 147*); *allow under 10min to 1h on foot*

☞ Drive from Rethimnon (Car tours 6, 7, 8) to **Archaia Eleftherna** (35° 19.416'N, 24° 40.590'E). Follow Walk 32 (page 146) to picnic at the **BYZANTINE TOWER** — or go as far as you like (the **HELLENISTIC BRIDGE**

reached in 1h is a particularly pleasant setting).

**CT4 Moni Gouverneto** (*touring map and map page 83*); *allow 5-10min on foot*

☞ Follow Car tour 4 to **Moni Gouverneto** (35° 35.075'N, 24° 8.406'E). There are good places on the hillside below the monastery, but little shade.

**CT6 Kourtaliotiko Gorge** (*touring map and map page 119*); *5min down on foot, 10min up*

☞ Follow Car tour 6 from **Asomatos** (page 31); park 600m along the gorge (35° 11.659'N, 24° 27.830'E), to picnic at the **Agios Nikolaos** chapel.

**CT8 Amari Valley** (*touring map*); *allow under 5min on foot*

☞ From the south side of the **Platys River** (125.5km on Car tour 8, page 40) take the slip road down to the **ARCHED BRIDGE** to picnic (35° 10.371'N, 24° 41.708'E).





# Touring

Crete is a very large island, and most visitors hire a car for some part of their stay to try to get to grips with it.

It pays to hire for a minimum of three days and, while you may find cheaper rates with smaller firms, remember that the larger companies offer the advantage of representation all over the island. Since it's likely that you'll want to cover a lot of ground, you'll be in a better position with a well-known company should anything go wrong.

For general touring covering the whole island, Sunflower recommends the **Michelin** map (1:140,000). To get off the beaten track, we have been using the 1:100,000 maps 'Central Crete' and 'Western Crete' published by **Terrain Cartography**, but *beware*: their 'smooth dirt road' is usually only suitable for 4WD! But we await publication of the **Tour & Trail** map for Western Crete at a scale of 1:40,000! Remember that your car hire contact will no doubt prohibit off-road driving and that **tyres** are *not* covered by insurance; you won't be charged for a simple puncture, but ruined tyres will have to be paid for! Be sure you understand the terms of the hire contract. Keep your hire contract, passport and driving licence with you at all times when out on the road. Take note of the hire company's telephone numbers (both office hours and *out of hours*), just in case. **Petrol** is widely available, but it is still a good idea to set out with plenty.

Our car touring notes are brief; they include little information readily available in standard guidebooks or the handouts you can obtain free from tourist offices and tourist information kiosks at home or on Crete. Instead, we've concentrated on the 'logistics' of touring: times and distances, road conditions, and giving clear directions where you might falter or be misled — for instance, by lack of signposting. Most of all, we emphasise possibilities for **walking** and **picnicking**. While some of the suggestions for short walks and picnics may not be suitable during a long car tour, you may find a landscape that you would like to explore at leisure another day. (Note that references in brackets at the top of a tour refer to walks and picnics that can be easily reached by *detouring* off the main route.)

**Our pull-out touring maps** are ideal for planning and in fact contain all the information you will need outside the towns. The tours have been written up with Hania as departure/return point, but can quite easily be joined from other centres. Plans of Hania and Rethimnon are on pages 8-9.

**SOME POINTS WORTH NOTING**

We cannot stress too strongly the advantage of taking with you a good guide to Crete's history and archaeological heritage; see page 6. Note also:

- **Allow plenty of time for visits;** our times for the tours include only very brief stops at viewpoints labelled (📍) in the notes.
- **Telephones** (should you need one) are located at most kiosks, at OTE (telephone exchanges) and in *cafeneions*. Many telephone boxes are card phones; buy cards at kiosks. Calls are metered.
- WC indicates **public toilets**; these are rare, but others are found in restaurants.
- Don't be flummoxed by **Greek road signs**; they are almost invariably followed by English ones.
- You are meant to cross a **solid white line near the edge of the road**, when someone wants to overtake. However, beware of slower vehicles, laden donkeys, bikes, etc ahead, when you round corners.
- Conversely, a **solid white line in the middle of the road** means NO OVERTAKING — despite the behaviour of motorists who appear not to notice it.
- **Do think** before you pull up to admire a view, if you are not at a viewpoint with parking; remember that other motorists cannot see round corners.
- Never throw **cigarette ends** out of the car.
- Come to a standstill at **stop signs**.
- The spelling of **village names** may vary. We have used the letter 'H' where an 'X' or 'CH' might be used locally; this is to aid pronunciation.

- In towns, only **park** your car where permitted.
- In villages it may be difficult to locate the **through road** which may be narrow and unsigned.
- **Priority signs** (red/black/white arrows) on narrow roads give priority to the *black* arrow.



- You will see many **shrines** beside the road (they vary from little boxes topped by a cross and filled with oil, a candle, icon or pictures to very elaborate miniature churches like the one shown above). They warn travellers that sometime in the past a fatal or near-fatal accident involving motor vehicles has occurred at that spot. **Drive carefully!**

Distances quoted are *cumulative kilometres* from Hania. A key to the symbols in the notes is on the touring map. Do note, however, that only the largest churches — or churches that are landmarks — have been highlighted, since every village has at least one church. The same can be said of tavernas or *cafeneions*; food and drink can be found almost anywhere.

**All motorists should read the Country code on page 13 and go quietly in the countryside. *Kalo taxithe!***



## Car tour 1: THE FAR WEST

**Hania • (Kastelli-Kissamos) • (Polirinia) • Vathi • Moni Chrisoskalitisas • (Elafonisi) • Elos • Topolia • Hania**

*164km/102mi; about 5 hours' driving; Exit B from Hania (town plan page 8). We use the old north coast road to begin, not the A90 highway. All roads are quite good.*

**Walks en route:** 1, (12), (13), (14), 15, 16, (19)

**Picnic suggestions** (see pages 10-13): (14 at Polirinia), 15 at Katsomatados

**W**estern Crete is renowned for its beautiful beaches, but this comes at the price of crowds arriving in coachloads. No doubt you will be urged to visit Balos, the mesmerising lagoon shown opposite: it's certainly worth seeing, but getting there by car or by boat is going to eat up most of a day. On this tour you have the option of visiting another gorgeous beach, equally crowded, before immersing yourself in the countryside on the return leg.

From 1866 Square, take Exit B (Skalidi, then Kissamou). There will be plenty of petrol stations along the north coast road, so fill up (🛢️) before turning off. Very shortly past the turning left to Theriso (1.2km) you come to a large Y-fork: be sure to keep straight on here for 'PLATANIAS', leaving the route to Omalos and the A90 national highway off to the left. Continue west on the old north coast road. All the beach-side villages on this route — **Galatas, Kalamaki, Glaros, Kato Stalos** (where Walk 1 begins and ends), **Agia Marina, Platanias** — have tavernas and rooms and apartments for rent (🏠🏠Δ✂️).

Cross the Keritis River (12km) and drive on (🛢️ 13.6km), flanked by orange groves and large patches of bamboo (🛢️ 15.5km). Soon the route passes through **Maleme** (16km 🏠✂️🛢️). The village saw violent activity during the Second World War; it was here that the Battle of Crete flared up. At 17km you pass the Mike Hotel on the right; the first turning left past the hotel, signposted to Vlacheronista, leads to the German War Graves (also signposted, in German and Greek.

Continue along the north coast, hemming the sea. You will see the Rodopou Peninsula (Walks 12 and 13) lunging out ahead in the middle distance. Drive through **Tavronitis** (19.5km ✂️🛢️). **Kamisiana** (20.5km ✂️) and **Rapaniana** (21km 🏠🏠 ✂️🛢️) flash by. On the far side of **Skoutelonas** (22km), look to the right, at the beginning of the peninsula, to see Moni Gonias (Walk 13). There is a wide three-way junction of roads at **Kolimbari** (where Walk 13 begins and ends). A turning right (signed to Afrata) goes into Kolimbari and to the Gonias Monastery — see them at leisure another day, or plan to do Walk 13.

Go sharp left at this junction, towards 'KISSAMOS', joining the A90 national highway after 1km, again heading west towards 'KISSAMOS'. After less than 4km you could turn off right for 'BEACH OF RAVDOUCHA' and then follow signs for 'RODOPOU' to get to Walk 12.

The main tour keeps to the A90. Soon, on the outskirts of Kissamos, the Gramvousa Peninsula is visible. The national highway passes through the centre of **Kastelli-Kissamos**★ (🏠🏠✂️🛢️M). The town is certainly worth visiting; it

has a pleasant atmosphere. But we suggest you come another day, when you will have time to combine a visit with a walk or a swim at Falasarna's beach.

*(Detour: As you drive through Kissamos, watch for a turn-off left to Polirinia at a junction with a central triangle, opposite a petrol station (37.5km 📍). If and when*

*A good track extends almost to the end of the Gramvousa Peninsula, from where you can walk down to the bleached white sand fringing the turquoise lagoon of Balos (it's a stiff climb back up). Balos has become even more famous than the Samaria Gorge these days... and even more crowded; this photo was taken early in the morning.*



## 18 Landscapes of Western Crete

you take this detour, you'll first pass a new church on the left and then continue inland, passing another sign for Polirinia at 39km. Go through Karfiana and Grigoriana before coming to Polirinia★ (44km **Π**✕). Drive to the end of the road



and park near the taverna. Walk 14 ends here; if you'd like to stretch your legs, you could follow some of the walk in reverse, to the pleasant spot for Picnic 14 seen on page 10.)

Beyond the Polirinia turn-off you pass a small harbour and then the Kissamos port (41km) — from where boats offer day trips to Balos. The Gramvousa Peninsula spreads before you directly to the right, a brown-grey mound disappearing into the sea. At 47.5km a road (rough for the last kilometre) leads down right to Falasarna★ (**Π**), where there is a good sandy beach — if you feel you have time for a swim. However, it will make your day very long to detour at this stage. If you decide to go for a swim, you could take the Elafonisi detour later in the day.

So keep up on the main road through **Platanos**, a long strung-out village. There's a good view back over the beach at 51km (**📷**); you can also see the tip of Falasarna. Then pass another good viewpoint





at 53km (🚗), over the Bay of Sfinari. In **Sfinari** (58km ✂) we turn away from the sea and head up into the hills. The road passes through the tiny hamlet of **Ano Sfinari** (60km) and winds along beside a ravine, rounding its end at 62km. South of **Kambos** (66km) the road has recently been widened and rebuilt with barriers protecting the sheer drops to the sea. It used to be really unnerving — particularly between Kambos and **Keramoti**, a village that juts out off the hillside. **Amigdalokefali** is set mostly below the road, and then you pass through **Simadi** (77km), **Papadiana** (79km) and **Kefali** (81km ✂).

Half a kilometre beyond Kefali, turn right on a road signposted to ‘ELAFONISI’ and drive down through tree-covered hillsides to **Vathi** (83km). Go through pretty, white-washed **Plokamiana** and, after turning left round the Bay of Stomio, by 90km you can at last see the bright-white monastery ahead rising in the distance. An ugly rash

of houses has sprung up at **Chrisoskalitisas** (91km ✂), just before the monastery★ itself (92km 🏰).

Having visited the church, you’re ready to start the return journey. But first, if you fancy a swim, take the route going right 0.5km past the monastery, signposted to Elafonisi. The lovely sandy beach with turquoise water is protected and created by the nearby Elafonisi Islands. Walk 19 can end at Elafonisi or the monastery.

Retracing the route from Chrisoskalitisas, turn right at 103.5km for ‘HANIA’. Past **Louhi** (106km) fork right for ‘ELOS’. **Elos** (108km ✂🚗) is a pretty village strung out amidst chestnut trees. Joining the Elos bypass road, turn right. Keep straight on at **Mili** (112km) and look out for any traffic coming in from the right (from Paleohora). Leave **Katsomatados** (Picnic 15; Walks 15 and 16) off to the right at 115.5km.

Soon you will have a wonderful view through the **Topolia Gorge**★ (116.5km 🚗). Just past this obvious viewpoint, there is a sign at the right of the road indicating the cave chapel of **Agia Sophia**★ (🏰) up on the hillside at the left. Go through the narrow tunnel in the gorge wall (watching out for walkers!), then continue through the pretty hillside village of **Topolia** (118.5km), where Walk 16 ends, and **Voulgaro** (121.5km 🚗), where Walk 15 ends.

Reaching the old coast road at **Kaloudiana** (126km 🏰), turn right for ‘HANIA’. At **Koleni** (129km) turn left for ‘NATIONAL ROAD’. Joining the A90 highway after 1km, make your way back to **Hania** (164km).

*Moni Chrisoskalitisas (far left) and Elafonisi — before the crowds arrive*







# Walking

Western Crete is certainly a walkers' paradise but, even if you aren't an avid walker, there are plenty of opportunities for gentle strolls and rambles in the depths of the countryside, where you will develop a real appreciation for this magnificent corner of Greece. So if you can't 'do Samaria', you *could* manage a good number of our walks.

The 'Landscapes' series is built around walks and excursions that can be made *in day trips* from your home base. So all the walks in this book were originally conceived as day excursions *accessible by bus* from Hania or Rethimnon. These days many people are keen to hire cars and would prefer circular walks. But the beautiful old donkey trails and mountain paths were built to take people and livestock from one place to another: they are all linear. One solution is to just walk part-way and return to your car. Another solution —where possible— is to walk from A to B and take a bus back to your car (or, to be on the safe side, drive to the end of the walk, leave your car there, and take a bus back to the start). Suitable walks (not necessarily circular) are indicated by a ☹ symbol in the Contents. It may be one of the *variations* of the main walk that is recommended: look for the 🚗 symbol under 'Access' (with waypoints for the walk start so that you can set your satnav).

Do consider combining some of the walks by spending a night or two away from your hotel, thus making a patchwork of mountain, gorge and coastal paths (see Walks 17-27 for instance). Just a word of caution: *never try to get from one walk to another on uncharted terrain!* Only link up walks by following paths described in these notes, shown on good maps, or by using roads or tracks; don't try to cross rough country (which might be dangerous) or private land (where you might not have the right of way).

The people you meet are very much a part of the landscape, countryside and essence of Crete. Do greet anyone you pass or see working in a field when you are out walking. Please don't — perhaps through your natural reserve — pretend they don't exist!

There are walks in this book for everyone.

**Beginners:** Start on the walks graded ● or ●, and check all the short and alternative walks. The picnic suggestions on pages 10-13 offer a large selection of very easy walks.

**Experienced walkers:** If you are accustomed to rough

terrain and are feeling fit, you should be able to enjoy all our walks. Many — especially those in gorges — require agility, and a couple will demand a head for heights as well. Take into account the season and weather conditions: don't attempt the more strenuous walks in high summer; protect yourself from the sun and carry ample water.

**Experts:** Head for the high mountains. Both the White Mountains and the Ida Range (Psiloritis) will be a great attraction for you (Walks 4, 20, 21, 31).

## Grading, waymarking, maps, GPS

We've tried to give you a quick overview of each walk's **grade** in the Contents. But many of our walks have shorter or alternative versions! In the Contents we've only had space to show the *lowest* grade of a *main* walk: for full details, including easier versions, see the walk itself. Here is a brief overview of the four gradings:

- very easy — more or less level (perhaps with a short climb to a viewpoint); good surfaces underfoot; easily followed
- easy-moderate — ascents/descents of no more than about 300-500m/1000-1800ft; good surfaces underfoot; easily followed
- moderate-strenuous — ascents/descents may be over 500m/1800ft; variable surfaces underfoot — you must be sure-footed and agile; possible route-finding problems in poor visibility
- expert — only suitable for very experienced hillwalkers with a head for heights; hazards may include landslides or balancing on ledges with no respite from constant exposure

Any of the above grades may be followed by:

- *danger* of vertigo; the walk demands a good head for heights

Assigning grades to walks is *very* subjective — and giving them a 'vertigo' rating even more so! Until you get used to Crete's terrain and know your 'vertigo tolerance', why not try walking with one of the many **guided groups**? Note also: should you wish to walk further afield, we suggest you contact the Alpine Club in Hania ([www.eoshanion.gr](http://www.eoshanion.gr); see plan on page 8) or the refuge at Kallergi (see the 'Short walk' on page 108 and the photos on pages 109 and 110).

It's always encouraging to see **waymarking** along the route. But, unless we specifically advise you to follow it, don't *rely* on waymarking. You will certainly be following parts of the 'E4' network of long-distance routes. These 'European Rambler Trails' are usually well waymarked with yellow paint and signposted with yellow and black triangular plaques. If a walk in this book has become part of the E4, we mention this and

*Right: a cool leafy glade — this is the church of Agios Antonios, where Walk 9 nears its end, just above Myli.*

the air, questioningly. It means ‘Where are you going?’, and quite a good answer is ‘Stah voo-na’, which means ‘to the mountains’.

## Organisation of the walks























The 32 main walks in this book are located in the parts of Western Crete most easily accessible by public transport, using Hania (or Rethimnon) as the base. We hope that even if you’re staying somewhere else in the west, most will be within range — especially if you’ve hired a car. (Although the walking notes show bus departures from Hania, you will find more complete timetables on pages 149-150, including Rethimnon, Kastelli-Kissamos, etc.)

The book is set out so that you can plan walks easily — depending on how far you want to go, your abilities and equipment — and what time you are willing to get up in the morning! You might begin by considering the fold-out touring map inside the back cover of the book. Here you can see at a glance the overall terrain, the road network, and the general location of the walks. Quickly flipping through the book, you’ll find that there’s at least one photograph for each walk.

Having selected one or two potential excursions from the map and the photographs, look over the planning information at the beginning of each walk description. Here you’ll find distance/hours, grade, equipment, and access. If the walk sounds beyond your ability or fitness, check to see if there’s a shorter or alternative version. We’ve tried to provide walking opportunities less demanding of agility wherever possible.

When you are on your walk, you will find that the text begins with a general introduction and then quickly turns to a detailed description of the route itself. As well as distances, *times* are given for reaching certain points in the walk. Once you’ve done one walk, you’ll be able to compare our very steady pace with your own; we hope you’ll find we’re in step, give or take! *Note that our times do not include any stops, so do allow for them.*

Below is a key to the symbols used on our large-scale walking maps.

 main road	 E4 long-distance hiking route	 start.waypoint
 secondary road	 church, monastery. chapel	 windmill.wind turbine
 4WD track	 cemetery.shrine	 pylon.aerial
 rough track	 factory	 picnic spot (see page 10)
 footpath	 bus stop.parking	 best views
 route of main walk and direction	 spring, tank etc	 page reference: map continuation
 alternative route	 ancient site	 watermill.cave
 other described walk		

## Walk 1: CIRCUIT VIA AGIA




Church at Stalos

**Distance:** 13.2km/8.2mi; 3h15min




**Grade:** ● straightforward walk on asphalt roads, with about 200m/650ft of ascents overall





**Equipment:** trainers, sunhat, picnic, water

**Picnic:** at Lake Agia

**Access:** any blue city  calling at

Kato Stalos (not in the Timetables, but every 5-10 minutes); journey time 10min

**Shorter walk: Kato Stalos to Agia** (7km/4.3mi; 2h10min). ● Grade, equipment, access as above. Follow the main walk to Agia; return to Hania by Omalos  (Timetable 3), Sougia  (Timetable 6), or blue town .

**Short walk: Agia — Lake Agia — Agia** (2km/1.2mi; 35min). ● Easy, level walk. Access:  or Omalos  (Timetable 3), Sougia  (Timetable 6), or blue town  to the Agia bus stop on the main road. Then walk east to the turning 'LAKE OF AGYIA' and turn left. Pass Agia church on the left (where motorists can park: 35° 28.509'N, 23° 55.812'E). Then turn right to the lake. Return the same way.

**Alternative walk: Agia to Plataniás** (7.5km/4.7mi; 2h). ● Easy, mostly level walking; access as *Short walk*; equipment/return as main walk. Follow the *Short walk* to the lake, then walk on to **Kirtomados** and pick up the main walk at the 2h-point, passing the **CHURCH** on your right.

Since we first walked here, much has been done to improve the lake at Agia as a recreational area (the new bridge shown overleaf is an example), but so far it has escaped the more commercialised fate of Lake Kournas (Walk 6). Agia's lake (actually a man-made reservoir) is a particularly good place to watch birds, a lovely quiet oasis overlooked by the church of Saints Constandinos and Eleni — hence the name Agia ('holy'). This walk is all along asphalt country roads, but it is a welcome respite from the urbanisation around the coast, and the views to the Levka Ori (White Mountains) are stunning.

**Start out at Kato Stalos** (●): take the road opposite the Tropicana Beach Resort (which *should* be signposted to STALOS). When it forks (10min; the national highway is visible up ahead) go left uphill, passing under the highway. At the

fork just past the highway, turn right towards PANO STALOS and follow the road across a small valley. Within a couple of minutes (15min) you will see on the left, across the valley, a lovely old house called **Metochi** (a). It is a classic example of the





Turkish style of the 1700s. To its right, beyond its garden, under two or three large trees, you may see a semi-circular hole in the wall. Water from the mountains, flowed through this hole into a stone pool. The water, having been used for washing clothes and people, was then drained into the valley to water the fruit trees.

Beyond a CEMETERY, keep up into the old village of **Stalós**, passing a few tavernas. In the village centre, opposite a *cafeneion*, continue straight ahead (a right turn would lead to the church shown

opposite). Bear left at the next Y-fork, leaving Stalós on a wide asphalted road, through olive groves. Ignore all turnings.

The road climbs gently away from the coast, levels out, then starts to descend. You pass the small church of **Profitis Iliás** up to the left (1); almost hidden by trees; **1h**). There is a fine panorama of countryside ahead as you continue along the road. Soon you may spot a church and graveyard below.

Before long you will see your destination down and across to your left. First of all a church comes into



*For Picnic 1 you can either find a quiet corner of the lake at Agia or sit by this attractive modern bridge*

view; then you'll see the lake in the distance. Round the next bend, Kirtomados comes into range. Pass the first house in **Kirtomados** and, at the second house (on your right), take a **CONCRETE TRACK** (2) left downhill between more houses. In the midst of the village, weave right and, at a junction of sorts (where there's a large mulberry tree on the left), turn left in front of a large old house with an arched wooden door. In 50m/yds, by a shady taverna on the right, turn left on the road. At the next **JUNCTION** (3), where there is a small shrine dedicated to **Agios Nektarios** off to the left of the signposts, follow the road round to the right.

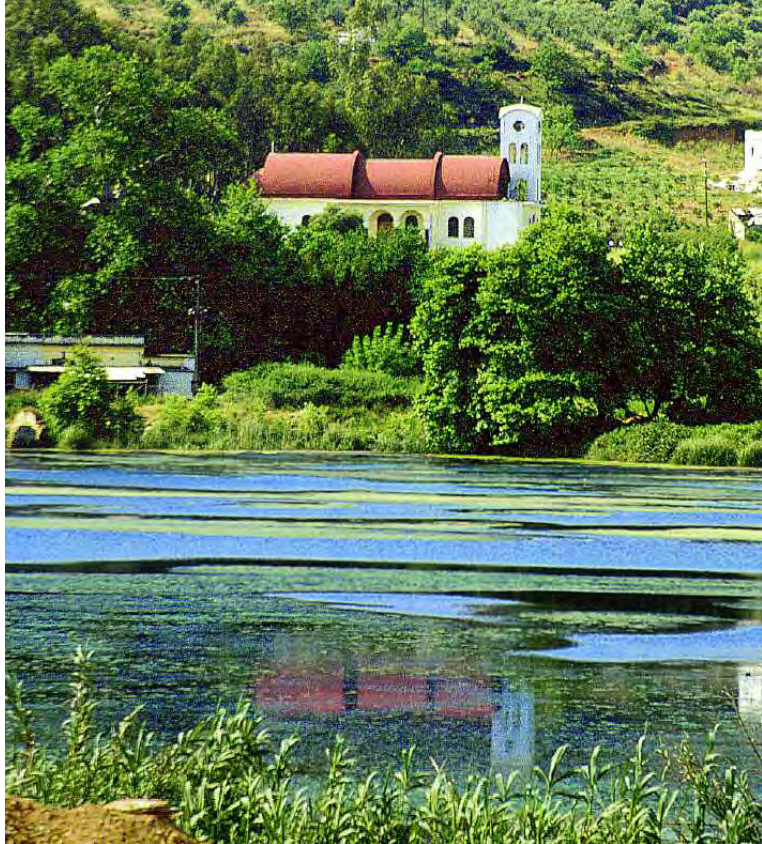
Some **1h45min** en route, just before a bridge, take a track going left. In two minutes you will be at the edge of the **LAKE** (4). This is a very pretty place to picnic, but there is also a tastefully-finished 'bird-watchers' café'. Look out for terrapins, too, basking on the rocks in summer.

*If you are doing the Shorter walk, from here head back to the road, go*

left and continue to the main Hania road at **Agia**; both the blue city buses and the country buses stop opposite the end of this road coming from Kirtomados.

For the main walk, return the way you came to **Kirtomados** (2h). Pass the concrete track you took on your approach and the **CHURCH**, both on your right. Fork left past the church and within 100m/yds pass a **WAR MEMORIAL** (5) on the right. Just 30m further on, at the edge of the village, turn right towards **PLATANIAS** (signposted in Greek, Πλατανιάς; straight on is signposted to Patelari.) There is a lovely view to the White Mountains on the left. Now just stay on this country road, ignoring any turnings.

The road starts to rise and you glimpse the **Patelari River** down to the left, through the trees. Five minutes later Patelari's two distinctive churches come into view on the left, across an orange grove. The road bends to the left and then right, and you can enjoy two to three minutes of plane tree-shade, with orange groves on the right. It is



*Quiet corner by the lake in Agia*

hard to believe that the hubbub of the coastal villages is so near.

Some 30 minutes from Kirto-mados (2h30min) you pass the tiny church of **Ag Georgios (6)** — known locally as ‘Drunk George’, almost hidden in bougainvillea. It’s usually locked. Then, five minutes later, you arrive at the lovely **DRAKIANA RIVERSIDE RESTAURANT** on the left — a gloriously shady riverside taverna, a perfect place for a leisurely pit stop.

Having relaxed and eaten some delicious home-cooked food, continue on the road. Ten minutes from the taverna (where the road curves left and there is a mass of water pipes on the right), leave the road: go straight ahead on a

**ROUGHISH TRACK (7)**, the surface of which varies. Ignoring a minor crossing track and then a track to the left, follow this main track to the top of the hill, where the sea comes into view. Then, at a Y-fork, head left downhill (8). Ignore another fork off left, join an asphalt road after 350m/yds and follow it to the left. Just 100m further on turn off right, to walk under the national highway. Then walk straight ahead past **PLATANIAS PARK** and the large **PRIMARY SCHOOL**. When the road divides 200m past the school, curve round to the left. A minute later, turn right; after 100m/yds you will meet the main coast road in **Platanias**. Turn right; the **BUS STOP (9; 3h15min)** is on your right.





# SUNFLOWER LANDSCAPES 'The hallowed blue books'

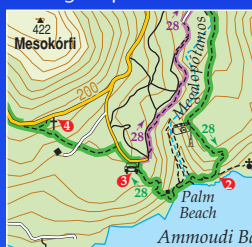
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## Western Crete Tenth edition

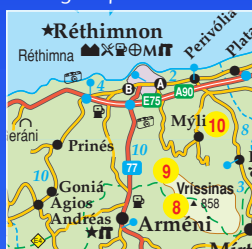
area covered by this book



walking map



touring map



Designed for those based anywhere in the west, this guide describes **walks** and **car tours** throughout Western Crete. For years it has been **the** guide for walkers, lured to Crete to 'do' the famous **Samaria Gorge**. But the book contains many other, less-frequented routes, not to be missed — from gentle strolls around lakes and chapels to high-level hikes in the White Mountains or fairly demanding coastal paths.

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