

GROUP TOUR PROGRAMME

Crete in Depth

Rethymnon · Chania · Samaria Gorge · Knossos · Malia · Lassithi · Zakros · Agios Nikolaos

DURATION	GROUP SIZE	REGION	BEST SEASON	TOUR THEME
12 Days · 11 Nights	**10+ Pax**	**Crete**	**May–Oct**	**Minoan Crete**

Twelve days, two hotel bases, one island seen properly. Crete in Depth is built for groups who want time rather than mileage: six nights in Venetian Rethymnon for the west – Chania, Arkadi Monastery and the walk through the Samaria Gorge to the Libyan Sea – then five nights in Agios Nikolaos for the Minoan east, from Knossos and Malia to the town of Gournia and the palace at Zakros. Only one hotel change in twelve days, two free days placed where groups need them, and every long drive followed by a short one. BenLeToni Tours has handled groups across Greece since 1992 – this programme is tailored for travel agencies and tour operators.

Made for your planning

Every day has a notes field, and the planning sheet on the last page collects what we need for a tailored proposal. Type into this PDF on screen or print it and write on it – then send it back to us.

Tour Route



Included In Our Offer

INCLUDED IN YOUR PROGRAMME

- ✓ 11 nights accommodation – 6 in Rethymnon, 5 in Agios Nikolaos – in 3- and 4-star hotels (5-star on request)
- ✓ Breakfast and dinner daily
- ✓ Private air-conditioned coach throughout the full itinerary
- ✓ Licensed guide for the entire programme
- ✓ All entrance fees to the sites and museums listed in the itinerary, incl. the Samaria National Park
- ✓ Boat Agia Roumeli – Chora Sfakion
- ✓ Airport transfers on arrival and departure days
- ✓ 24/7 local support contact during your group's stay in Greece

NOT INCLUDED

- International flights
- Travel insurance
- Personal expenses and gratuities
- Single room supplements (available on request)
- Optional excursions not listed in the itinerary (e.g. Spinalonga)
- Climate resilience fee, payable locally at the hotels

Full Programme

YOUR NOTES

1

Arrival in Crete — Rethymnon

Arrival at Heraklion airport, where your BenLeToni guide meets the group. Transfer to Rethymnon (about 1 hour 15 minutes). Short briefing on the programme, then welcome dinner at the hotel. Overnight Rethymnon.

2

Rethymnon — Arkadi Monastery

Walking tour of Rethymnon's old town, where Venetian palazzi and Ottoman minarets stand side by side: the Venetian harbour and lighthouse, the Rimondi Fountain and the Fortezza above the town. In the afternoon, Arkadi Monastery – the symbol of the Cretan uprising of 1866. Overnight Rethymnon.

3

Chania

Drive to Chania (about 1 hour). Guided walk through the old town: the Venetian harbour with its lighthouse, the Küçük Hasan Mosque on the waterfront – the first mosque built in Crete after the Ottoman conquest – and the lanes of the former Venetian and Jewish quarters. Free time in the old town before returning to Rethymnon. Overnight Rethymnon.

4

Samaria Gorge

Early departure to the Omalos plateau (about 2 hours). From 1,230 metres the group walks down the Samaria Gorge – about 16 km and 5 to 7 hours – through the Samaria National Park to the sea at Agia Roumeli. Boat along the south coast to Chora Sfakion, where the coach is waiting for the drive back. If the Forest Service closes Samaria that day, the group walks the shorter Imbros Gorge instead. Overnight Rethymnon.

5

Rethymnon at leisure

A free day to recover from Samaria: the beach, the old town, or simply the hotel. Overnight Rethymnon.

6

Knossos — Heraklion Archaeological Museum

Drive to Knossos, the largest of the Minoan palaces and the seat of King Minos in myth – the setting of the Labyrinth, the Minotaur, Daedalus and Icarus. Guided tour of the palace excavated by Sir Arthur Evans. Then the Heraklion Archaeological Museum, home of the original Minoan frescoes and finds. Overnight Rethymnon.

7

Malia — Agios Nikolaos

Check out and drive east. Visit the Minoan palace of Malia, the third largest on Crete, set near the sea on the old road between central and eastern Crete. Continue to Agios Nikolaos on the Gulf of Mirabello – your base for the next five nights. Overnight Agios Nikolaos.

YOUR NOTES

8

Lassithi Plateau — Dikteon Cave

Morning visit to the Kera Kardiotissa monastery and its Byzantine frescoes. Up to the Lassithi Plateau, at about 840 metres one of the highest permanently farmed plains in the Mediterranean. At Psychro, the Dikteon Cave – birthplace of Zeus according to myth, full of stalactites and stalagmites. Last stop: the folklore museum in Agios Georgios. Overnight Agios Nikolaos.

9

Sitia — Toplou Monastery — Zakros

The far east of Crete. Sitia and its harbour, then the fortified Toplou Monastery with its 33-metre bell tower, standing alone in a dry, open landscape. Continue to the Zakros Gorge, the “Valley of the Dead”, named after the Minoan burial caves in its cliffs, which runs down to Kato Zakros and the Minoan palace by the sea. Overnight Agios Nikolaos.

10

Gournia — Ierapetra

Gournia, the best-preserved Minoan town on Crete: cobbled lanes, some 50 houses and a small palace – the clearest picture anywhere of daily life in the Bronze Age. Continue to Ierapetra on the Libyan Sea, Europe’s southernmost town, for a stroll along the seafront. Overnight Agios Nikolaos.

11

Agios Nikolaos at leisure

A free day. Optional boat trip to Spinalonga, the Venetian island fortress off Elounda. Overnight Agios Nikolaos.

12

Departure

Transfer to Heraklion airport (about 1 hour) for departure.

YOUR NOTES

Useful Information

Best time to travel

May to October. The Samaria Gorge is open in this season only, and the Forest Service closes it on days of strong wind or rain. Outside the season, or whenever Samaria is closed, the group walks the shorter Imbros Gorge instead.

Group size

Minimum group size for this programme is 10 passengers. Coaches and guides are planned around the size of your group.

Dress code

Modest dress is required at Arkadi, Kera Kardiotissa and Toplou – covered shoulders and knees for all visitors. We advise all groups of this requirement in advance.

Walking difficulty

Moderate, with one demanding day. The Samaria Gorge is about 16 km downhill on a stony path – participants need good fitness, hiking shoes and water. The path to the Dikteon Cave is steep and uneven. Participants who skip Samaria get an alternative programme for the day.

Hotel category

Two bases, one hotel change. The programme uses a mix of 3- and 4-star hotels in Rethymnon and Agios Nikolaos, selected for location and group handling. 5-star hotels are available on request.

Customisation

The programme can be shortened to 8 or 10 days, run without Samaria for groups who prefer a lighter pace, or extended with Phaistos and Gortys in the south, Spinalonga or a winery visit. Arrival in Chania and departure from Heraklion is also possible.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is the Samaria Gorge walk suitable for everyone in our group?

Not necessarily. The walk is about 16 km and takes 5 to 7 hours on a stony downhill path. Fit walkers with proper shoes manage it well; participants who prefer not to walk get an alternative programme for the day and rejoin the group in the evening.

What happens if the Samaria Gorge is closed on the day?

The Forest Service can close the gorge at short notice because of wind or rain. We then swap Samaria with the free day or the group walks the Imbros Gorge instead – about 8 km, near Chora Sfakion. You are informed before any change is made.

Which airport should our group fly into?

Heraklion for both arrival and departure fits the standard programme. Arrival in Chania also works and saves the first transfer time – tell us your flight options and we will adapt the first and last day.

Do we need licensed guides at the archaeological sites?

Yes. Licensed guides are required at the major archaeological sites in Greece, including Knossos and Malia. BenLeToni Tours arranges all guides as part of the programme – multilingual guides are available in German, English, French, Italian, Spanish, Dutch and Japanese.

Can the programme be shortened?

Yes. An 8-day version keeps Knossos, Chania and the Minoan east; a 10-day version keeps Samaria. Contact us with your dates and we will send a tailored proposal.

Planning sheet

Fill in what you already know and send this page to contact@benletoni-tours.gr. We reply with a tailored proposal within 48 hours.

AGENCY / TOUR OPERATOR

CONTACT PERSON

EMAIL

PHONE

GROUP NAME / CLIENT

TRAVEL DATES

NUMBER OF GUESTS

ROOMS: DOUBLE / TWIN / SINGLE

ARRIVAL FLIGHT

DEPARTURE FLIGHT

GUIDE LANGUAGE

HOTEL CATEGORY

☐ 3-star ☐ 4-star ☐ 5-star

CHANGES TO THE PROGRAMME

SPECIAL REQUESTS (DIET, MOBILITY, CELEBRATIONS)

We look forward to welcoming your group to Greece.

CONTACT
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