

Preparing your trip to Crete: our top sites to visit



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By Floriane

Set course for Crete, the Greek island of surprises! With its heavenly beaches, rugged mountains and ancient ruins, Crete is a destination with something for every traveller. We've explored it twice, and one of these escapades took place in the snow! Yes, Crete can also reveal a completely different face in winter, as Matthieu discovered in the middle of February.

Here's our selection of **must-see sites** to help you plan your trip to Crete.

Explore Crete differently

Crete is an island rich in contrasts, where each region reveals a different facet. The lively north coast attracts lovers of culture and gastronomy. The wilder south coast appeals to travelers in search of authenticity.

For a unique experience, [discover the hidden treasures of Crete with Voyage Privé](#). These stays allow you to explore the island in a different way, away from the tourist trails. Stay in charming hotels, sample fine local cuisine and discover secret coves and mountain villages. Crete can be savored slowly, while enjoying the Mediterranean lifestyle.

Heraklion and Knossos Palace

Heraklion, the Cretan capital, is a must for anyone wishing to delve into the island's ancient history. This is where the Minoan adventure begins, with the famous Knossos Palace, just a few kilometers from the city center. This mythical site takes us back 4,000 years, to the heart of the legends of King Minos and the fearsome Minotaur.

The partially restored palace is one of Europe's most captivating archaeological sites. During our visit, we were blown away by the frescoes still visible and the sheer size of the site. It didn't take us long to imagine daily life in this ancient labyrinth.

The **Archaeological Museum of Heraklion** is a good complement, with its magnificent frescoes and period artefacts.

For a more in-depth visit, check out the [top archaeological sites](#) to explore in Greece and Crete, including Phaistos, Gortyne and Zakros.

Chania, Venetian charm and colorful alleyways

Head to the west of the island to discover [Chania](#) (Chania), in our opinion one of the most beautiful towns in Crete. Its old Venetian port, pastel-colored facades and flower-filled alleyways give it a real charm. We loved walking it, with no precise itinerary, just letting ourselves be carried away by the atmosphere.

The **covered market** is the perfect place to fill up on local flavors. From olive oil and cheeses to dried herbs and sweet treats, we tasted almost everything as we wandered from stall to stall.

Dream beaches: Balos, Elafonissi and Vai

It's hard to talk about Crete without mentioning **its breathtaking beaches**. Here's a small selection to help you make your choice:

- **Balos lagoon:** in the north-west of the island, we were dazzled by its crystal-clear waters and gradations of blue. The sand is almost unreal in its whiteness, and the setting, between sea and arid hills, seems straight out of a postcard. Access is not easy, with a rocky track and a 20-minute walk, but it's well worth the effort. *Admission €1 and parking €3 per day.*
- **Elafonissi beach,** further south, with its multitude of small beaches and coves, charmed us with its slightly pinkish sand and shallow waters, perfect for relaxing with the family or simply floating without moving. The atmosphere is softer here, especially at the end of the day. *Parking between €3 and €5 per day.*

- **Vai beach**, at the other end of the island, this time to the east, was a complete change of scenery. With its palm grove and turquoise waters, it reminded us of certain beaches in Martinique. It's the perfect place to spend a day swimming, napping in the shade and strolling to the viewpoint overlooking the beach. *Parking €3.5 per day, free parking available 150 m before the entrance.*

Our tips for preparing your trip to Crete

- **Ideal period:** between April and October, to enjoy the sun, warm sea and lively villages. In winter, the island is quieter and sometimes even snow-covered (yes, it's possible, we also had snow in Athens in January)!
- **Rent a car:** essential for exploring the island at your own pace. Some beaches and mountain villages are difficult to access without a vehicle. And that's what allows you to venture off the beaten track.
- **Choose local accommodation:** we recommend small family-run

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guesthouses, B&Bs or homestays. It's warmer, often more economical, and lets you discover a different side of Crete.

We wish you all the best for your trip to Crete! Whether you go for its dream beaches, authentic villages or sites steeped in history, this island is sure to surprise you. Take the time to discover it at your own pace and, above all, let yourself be carried away by the gentle Cretan way of life.

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