



CRETE SELF-GUIDED

Bike tours on Greece's largest island

EAST TO WEST - HERAKLEION TO HANIA

The East-West route starts in either Tzermiado or Herakleion in the east and ends in Hania in the west. Choose this route if after the bike tour you want to take one-day hikes in the Samaria Gorge or Imbros Gorge or a multi-day hiking tour along the car-free Libyan Sea coast. Hania is the most convenient departure point for these hikes with a local guide or self-guided.

DESCRIPTION

With its breathtaking mountains and seascapes, Crete is a dynamic destination for cyclists accustomed to ascents. As Europe's most southern terrain, Crete makes a desirable cycling destination during winter months when colder temperatures prevail in the rest of Europe.

Due to its extensive road network Crete offers a variety of overnight destinations and cycling road choices, not simply the standard routes we have posted in the East to West or West to East itineraries. We work with you to choose the optimum route for your travel schedule and cycling ability.

Crete was the first civilization on European soil with its ancient Minoan palace cities that you can bike to, such as, Knossos, Phaestos or Malia. There are unheralded ruins of equal interest, such as the mysterious Armeni Minoan cemetery and Fourni in Arhanes. Crete is celebrated for its indigenous cuisine that epitomizes the healthy Mediterranean diet. Look in the Extras tab about signing up for a Cretan cooking class or wine tasting, an ancient tradition extending back to the Minoan era. There are wineries to visit throughout the island.

Before or after your self-guided tour, we recommend booking the [Athens Add-on](#) that immerses you in the culture of Athens and the Attica region with exciting activities.

DETAILS

Dates:	Choose your dates
Duration:	7 Nights 8 Days (starts in Arhanes, ends in Hania) OR 9 Nights, 10 Days (starts in Tzermiado, ends in Hania) Possible to add or subtract days; minimum 5 nights
Add-ons:	Yes, Libyan Sea Coast Hiking tour, Athens Day Tours
Arrival City:	Athens or Hania
Arrival transfer:	Herakleion (8 days), Tzermiado (10 days)
Tour Start Point:	Athens (ferry), Herakleion or Tzermiado
Tour End Point:	Hania
Minimum Age:	18
Total Mileage:	453 km, 281 miles for 10 day standard route. Mileage depends on optional routes sought and itinerary destinations.
Highest Elevation:	890 meters, 2920 feet (Tzermiado)
Rating:	Advanced

ITINERARY – EAST TO WEST

Itinerary East to West

Below is our standard East-West itinerary, but it can be adjusted to add or subtract days or substitute overnight destinations, as these examples indicate: Opt for an 8 day tour by starting in Arhanes instead of Tzermiado. Split in half the long 94 km, 58 mile route from Rethymno to Hania on Day 10 by staying in the lovely traditional town of Vamos. The same can be done for the Zaros-Rethymno route by an overnight in Spili, a town beloved for its Venetian-era fountain with 19 lion heads. Overnight in Zaros two nights in order to bike the second day in the south and visit the Matala caves, Minoan Phaestos and Roman Gortyna ruins. Consider overnight in Axos with engaging agro-tourism activities at Enagron. Lots of possibilities!

If you travel to Crete by sea via an overnight ferry from Piraeus (Athens' port), you will travel with the bikes. If you travel to Crete by air or by sea from a port other than Piraeus, the bikes we will be waiting for you in Crete. On your arrival, you will be met by a CycleGreece agent. Depending on your itinerary, you will either start biking to your first destination from the port or airport, or you will be transferred to your hotel. Leave your luggage in the hotel and it will be transferred to your next destination.

Day 1: Tzermiado

The Lassithi Plateau, one of the highest farming areas in Greece, once had 20,000 windmills which only a generation or so ago were still in use, which gives you an idea of how traditional this region is. Today's ride calls for an ascent of 2283 feet 695 meters to the plateau. **30 km, 18.60 miles**. Consider a **14 km, 8.60 miles** detour on the flat coastal road to the Minoan palace city of Malia.

Day 2: Tzermiado

Make a grand loop of the plateau, stopping at Lassinthos Eco Village and at Diktion Cave to marvel at the gigantic stalactites and stalagmites. Cretans believe Zeus was born in this cave. **25 km, 15 miles** If you did not visit Malia yesterday, consider doing so today if you are up for an almost 3,000 foot descent/ascent to the coast. Stop for lunch in Krasi, known for fresh drinking water springs. **54 km, 32 miles**

Day 3: Arhanes

Head west, over mountain ridges, cycling on back roads with goats and donkeys. Listen for the cheery sound of their bells. En route make an optional 4 km detour to the Nikos Katzantzakis Museum, home of the author of Zorba the Greek. In Arhanes, you will admire the traditional architecture of the "arhontiko," the preserved old villas. Located only 15 km south of Herakleion, Arhanes is famous for its local cuisine and wines. See the Extras tab for a cooking class and wine tasting. **44 km, 27 miles**

Day 4: Arhanes

Bike a back road to reach Knossos, the capital of the peaceful Minoan Empire. Admire King Minos' throne; a replica was made for the chief judge at the International Court of Justice in The Hague. **25 km 15 miles** To avoid Herakleion's urban traffic, we recommend taking a taxi or bus from Knossos to Herakleion Archaeology Museum with its famed Minoan frescos and the enigmatic Phaestos disc. There's likely time for an afternoon Arhanes loop **24.50 km, 15 miles**

Day 5: Zaros

Today you will plunge into the interior of central Crete to Zaros located in the Psiloritis Mountains at 1394 feet 425 meters. Zaros is known for its bottled mineral water, fresh trout and the E4 (European) hiking path. En route don't miss the Monumental Olive Tree at Panasos. Optional afternoon hike in the Rouvas Gorge. **55.52 km, 34.50 miles**

If you opt to spend a second night in Zaros, the next day an inviting bike ride awaits you to the Matala caves, Minoan Phaestos and the Roman ruins of Gortyna. **78.50 km, 48 miles**

Day 6: Rethymno

Back country roads, lots of climbing, breathtaking scenery characterizes today's ride. The day's final destination is Crete's best kept secret, Rethymno, a Venetian era city with an Ottoman overlay. You must visit the Fortezza, the grand Venetian-era fort overlooking the city. **77.20km, 48 miles**

Instead of biking Zaros to Rethymno on Day 6, if you want to linger in the mountainous countryside instead of the city, you can opt to bike Zaros to Spili to enjoy its fountain of water spewing from the mouths of 19 lions heads. Continue the next day Spili to Rethymno.

Day 7: Rethymno

A bike ride into the low portions of the Psiloritis Mountains. Visit Melidoni Cave and learn its poignant history. Lunch on the seacoast at Panormos. Stroll Rethymno's car-free alley-like streets or along its fourteen kilometer sandy beach. **67.70 km, 42 miles**

Day 8: Hania

The ride to Hania passes the Minoan cemetery at Armeni with its fascinating tombs of unknown origin. Halfway en route is the gorgeous sea at Giorgiopoli (Georgetown). The final leg entails a climb over Malaxa village at 1500 feet high. **78 km, 48.50 miles**

Instead of biking Rethymno to Hania on Day 8, if you want a shorter "smell the roses" tour and an overnight in a traditional village, you can opt to bike Rethymno to Vamos and continue the next day to Hania. This option allows a detour to Ancient Aptaera and Koules Fortress.

Day 9: Hania

Ascend from sea level to 1860 feet through the enchanting Therissos Gorge road. On the way back stop at a family winery for lunch, or visit a delightful botanical park created by two brothers when their cherished olive fields burned down. Stroll Hania's beautiful harbor with Venetian architecture. Take time for shopping in Hania – handmade knives or gold jewelry. **51 km, 31.60 miles**

Day 10: Departure

There are daily flights from Hania to Athens Airport, including ones that leave early enough to enable you to make a connecting flight home. Overnight ferries to Piraeus depart at 9:00 pm. Leave your bikes and gear at the hotel.

Cost in euros based on double occupancy

1-2 riders

10 days 2850 euros per person
8 days 2220 euros per person

3 riders

10 Days – 2700 euros per person
8 Days – 2100 euros per person

4 riders

10 Days – 2580 euros per person
8 Days – 2010 euros per person

Single Supplement

10 Days – 900 euros per person
8 Days – 750 euros per person

The above costs are based on the standard itinerary. Cost may vary if itinerary varies.

See [daily exchange rates](#)

TOUR INCLUSIONS

Accommodations: 3-4 star hotels, primarily family owned and operated, ranging from boutique hotels to seaside upscale hotels. Tasteful, clean, air-conditioned, private bath, abundant hospitality, comfort. All accommodations are standard doubles with option for upgrade. All accommodations serve breakfast, usually buffet style. Tour prices are based on double occupancy. See [Accommodations tab](#) to request more info about tour's hotel.

Arrival Transfer: West to East, no transfer needed if arrive by port or airport. CycleGreece agents meets you to take your luggage. If arrive by port from Piraeus, the bikes are with you and start first day's ride from the port to the hotel. If arrive by airport, bikes are

delivered to you at the airport from where you start first day's ride to the hotel. Option to transfer on Day 1 directly to hotel.

Departure transfer: Transfer arranged for any itinerary to port or airport.

Luggage transfers: All luggage transfers based on itineraries listed (cost may change depending if transfers change)

Bikes: Specialized road bike or hybrid bike. Triple chain ring, 27 gears. Road bike has carbon fiber fork. Hybrids have front suspension. **Electric bike or carbon Tarmac bike** are available as an upgrade on request. Regular pedals or toe clips on request. You are welcome to bring your own clip-in pedals and shoes. See **Our Bikes** and **Our Gear**

Bike gear: 2 water bottles, helmet, handlebar pouch, odometer, lock, rear rack on request. For hygienic purposes we encourage you to bring your own helmet.

Bike tools: hand pump, patch kit, tire irons, spare tube, multi-tool. One set per group.

Meals: Breakfasts are included at each hotel.

Cue sheets and cue sheet holders turn by turn directions plus distance/elevation profiles

Bike Routes Options: (1) RideWithGPS tour routes to upload to your iPhone or Android with voice narration – bring your own bike mount (2) GPX tracks to download to your device – bring your own bike mount (3) we provide you a Garmin Oregon 450 GPS device with programmed routes, no narration, plus bike mount.

Maps of the region

Mobile phone: one per couple with 10 euros phone card. One phone per group.

Trip packet: useful and interesting information about the region, including recommended places to eat

CycleGreece jersey: short sleeved, rear pockets, locally made

CycleGreece lite backpack: 17" x 13", 43cm x 33cm

Gratuities, tips and VAT taxes

TOUR EXCLUSIONS

- International airfare to/from Greece
- Arrivals to or departures from Crete
- All meals except breakfasts
- Private licensed guide at Knossos
- Additional GPS device, 50 euros per device
- Travel insurance

TAKE NOTE

- Participants are required to sign our **Waiver**
- Participants are required to agree to the **Booking Agreement**
- Travel Insurance is required as a condition for participation in a CycleGreece tour

See the website for more details about ACCOMMODATIONS, EXTRAS, ADD-ONS, MAP and BOOKING AGREEMENT

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