



CRETE SELF-GUIDED

Bike tours on Greece's largest island

WEST TO EAST - HANIA TO HERAKLEION

The West-East route starts in Hania in the west and ends in Herakleion in the east. Choose this route if you want to go to Santorini after the bike tour because only Herakleion has boats to Santorini. In high season there is also air service. Although the West-East rides cover the same terrain as the East-West rides, the ascents are a bit harder when biking eastward.

EAST TO WEST – HERAKLEION TO HANIA

The East-West route starts in Herakleion in the east and ends in Hania in the west. Choose this route if after the bike tour you want to take a one-day hike 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.

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: Historic Central Athens bike tour (90% traffic free), Acropolis & Acropolis Museum with professional guide, Temple of Poseidon coastal cycling, Attica wine tasting, Temple of Artemis.

DETAILS

Dates	choose your dates
Duration	9 nights, 10 days for standard route. Possible to add or subtract days; minimum 5 nights
Add-ons	yes, Libyan Sea Coast Hiking tour, Athens Day Tours – see Add-On tab
Arrival City	Athens or Herakleion or Hania
Arrival transfer	yes, depending on Itinerary. For Athens, see Extras tab
Tour Start Point	Athens or Herakleion or Hania
Tour End Point	Athens or Herakleion or 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. See Rating System

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 Katantzakis 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 Giorgiopolis (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.

ITINERARY - WEST TO EAST

Below is our standard West to East itinerary, but it can be adjusted to add or subtract days or substitute overnight destinations, as these examples indicate: Opt for additional cycling days with an overnight in charming little Vamos located between Hania and Rethymno. In Vamos, you can experience a traditional Cretan cooking class.. Or spend two nights in Zaros and on the second day, cycle a loop to Roman ruins, the Minoan palace city of Phaestos and seaside Matala made famous by Joni Mitchell in her song Cary. Consider overnight in Axos with engaging agro-tourism activities at Enagron.

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 with a CycleGreece agent. Leave your luggage in the hotels and it will be transferred to your next destination.

Day 1: Hania

On arrival by air or sea, a CycleGreece agent meets you with your bikes. You are in the area of Akrotiri peninsula, so go cycle there! Descend the stone step path to Catholikon, an abandoned monastery. After exploring Akrotiri, take a back road route to enter the city of Hania. Stroll Hania's beautiful harbor with Venetian architecture. Roam the car-free old city and its Jewish quarter with finely preserved synagogue. **56 km, 35 miles** , (13 km shorter when arriving by air)

Day 2: Hania

Ascend from sea level to 1860 feet through the enchanting Therissos Gorge road. On the return route stop at a family winery for lunch and wine tasting, or visit a delightful botanical park created by two brothers when their cherished olive fields burned down. Take time for shopping in Hania for handmade knives and gold jewelry. **51 km, 31.60 miles**

Day 3: Rethymno

The halfway point en route to Rethymno is the seaside town of Giorgiopoli (Georgetown) whose most alluring feature is its beautiful beach. If you have time, you might want to take a dip. Start swooning when you reach the old car-free city of Rethymno with its dreamy Venetian-Ottoman appearance. Be sure to walk up to the towering Fortezza fortress. **78 km, 48.50 miles**

Instead of biking Hania to Rethymno on Day 3, if you want a shorter "smell the roses" tour and an overnight in a traditional village, you can opt to bike Hania to Vamos and continue the next day to Rethymno. This option allows a detour to Ancient Aptaera and Koules Fortress.

Day 4: Rethymno

A bike loop in the lower hills of the Psiloritis Mountains. Visit Melidoni Cave and learn its poignant history. Visit a family owned olive oil farm for olive oil tastings. Visit the ceramics village of Margarites, one of four centers in Crete practicing ancient pottery techniques. Visit a Mycenae-style tomb. Lunch on the seacoast at Panormos. **67.70 km, 42 miles**

Day 5: Zaros

Back country roads, lots of climbing, breathtaking scenery characterizes today's ride. Very little traffic as you head upward and inward into the Psiloritis Mountain region — don't miss the Monumental Olive Tree in Panasos. This day's climbing is the specific case where the East to West route is easier. There likely won't be enough time today to take an hour hike in the Rouvas Gorge, but consider it before you set off tomorrow. **77.20km, 48 miles**

Instead of biking Rethymno to Zaros on Day 5, if you want to split up the mileage and visit Spili to enjoy its fountain with water spewing from the mouths of 19 lions heads, you can opt to bike Rethymno to Spili. Continue the next day Spili to Zaros.

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: Arhanes

After so much climbing, it is now time to descend into lower terrain. Head for Arhanes, a town anyone with taste and class will admire, especially its 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. **49.50 km 30.80 miles**

Day 7: Arhanes

Bike a back road to reach Knossos, the capital of the peace 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** by bike but 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**

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Head east, 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 Katantzakis Museum, home of the author of Zorba the Greek. Tzermiado is the largest village on the Lassithi Plateau, one of the highest farming areas in Greece that once had 20,000 windmills, in use only a generation or so ago. **44 km, 27 miles**

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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 Consider visiting the Minoan palace city of Malia, 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 10: Departure

A thrilling descent of 2283 feet 695 meters from the mountainous Lassithi region to the coastal areas near Herakleion. A CycleGreece agent meets you at the end of the ride to transfer you to either your Herakelion hotel or the airport or the port, depending on your itinerary. Leave the bikes with the agent.

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 accommodations

Arrival Transfer: East to West Day 1 transfer from Herakleion to bike start point (Hersonissos) to Tzermiado. Option to transfer on Day 1 directly to hotel on any itinerary.

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.

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

Maps of the region

Trip packet: useful and interesting information about the region

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 – see Extras tab
- Additional GPS device, 50 euros per device

- Travel insurance – see [Extras tab](#)

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

CYCLEGREECE

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