CRETE SELF-GUIDED

bike tours on Greece's largest island

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	7 nights/8 days OR 9 nights/10 days.
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	For 10 day tour: 307 km, 190 miles between destinations plus 461 km, 286 miles of optional routes within each destination. For 8 day tour: 213 km,132 miles between destinations plus 381 km, 236 miles of optional routes within each destination.
Highest Elevation	890 meters, 2920 feet (Tzermiado) or
Rating	Advanced - see **Rating System**

ITINERARY

Itinerary East to West

Below is the 10 day East-West itinerary starting in Tzermiado and 8 day East-West in red starting in Arhanes. The tour can be adjusted to add or subtract days or substitute overnight destinations, as these examples indicate: Opt to split in half the long 94 km, 58 mile route from Rethymno to Hania by staying at the sea in Georgiopoli or in traditional Vamos village. We strongly recommend opting to stay 2 nights in Hania -- Crete's most romantic city -- and cycle the next day up the utterly awesome Therisos Gorge. 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 will be waiting for you in Crete.

Day 1: Tzermiado -- starting point for 10 day tour

The Lassithi Plateau, one of the highest farming areas in Greece, once had 20,000 windmills which only several generations 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**. In the afternoon ride the short Lassithi Loop to get a feel of the plateau, stopping at Lassinthos Eco Village and at Diktion Cave. **25 km, 15 miles.**

Day 2: Tzermiado

Crete has four Minoan palace cities and one of them, Malia, lies south of Tzermiado at the sea. The famous Malia bee pendant seen in the Herakleion Archaeology Museum comes from this site. It is not a long ride, only **54 km, 32 miles** but it has a 3,000 foot descent/ascent to the coast. Stop for lunch in Krasi, known for fresh drinking water springs.

Day 3: Arhanes Start of 8 Day Tour, days are in red. Day 1: Arhanes

Cycle west, over mountain ridges on back roads with goats and donkeys. Listen for the cheery sound of their bells. En route to Arhanes 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. Arhanes See the Extras tab for a cooking class or wine tasting. **44 km, 27 miles**

For the 8 day tour, depending on your arrival time, the Arhanes Loop is a warm up ride through the region's wine country. Arhanes is known for its food and wine -- see Extras tab for a cooking class or wine tasting. Option for **short loop 24.50 km, 15 miles** or **long loop 46 km, 28.50 miles**.

Day 4 Day 2: 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 at taxi or bus from Knossos to Herakleion Archaeology Museum with its famed Minoan frescos and the enigmatic Phaestos disc.

Day 5 Day 3: Zaros

Today you 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**

Day 6 Day 4: Zaros

Descend south to the sea with many attractions in between. Stop at Gortys, Roman ruins regarded as Europe's first parliament. Across the street is an olive tree embedded with a Roman column. Swim at Matala beach, famous for its caves that hippies used to sleep in the 60s and 70s. Stop at Phaestos, one of four Minoan palace cities in Crete. **80 km, 49 miles** (option to bypass Matala for a shorter ride).

Day 7 Day 5: Rethymno

Back country roads, lots of climbing, breathtaking scenery characterizes on today's ride. The 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. Stroll Rethymno's car-free alley-like streets or along its fourteen kilometer sandy beach. **73.80 km, 45 miles**

Day 8 Day 6: Rethymno

A bike ride into the low portions of the Psiloritis Mountains. Option #1 Melidoni Cave Loop. Cycle up to Melidoni Cave and learn its tragic history. Lunch on the seacoast at Panormos Beach. **65.60 km, 40.70 miles** Option #2 Arkadi Loop. Cycle up to Arkadi Loop and learn the tragic history the people there suffered too. En route visit the Homer in Crete museum. Lunch at Margarites village known for its pottery shops using techniques from 2000 years ago. **64.40 km, 40 miles**

OPTION. Instead of biking Rethymno to Hania on Day 9/Day 7, add a day to your tour you by stopping halfway between the two cities to over night either at the seaside town of Georgiopoli or in the traditional village of Vamos. Adding an extra day also splits the 84 km ride in half.

Day 9 Day 7: 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). Also option to detour to Ancient Aptera and Kouli Fortresss. The final leg entails a climb over Malaxa village at 1500 feet high. **87 km, 54 miles**

Day 10 Day 8: 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.

OPTION Day 10 Day 8: Option for stay a second night in Hania.

Optional extra day cycling in 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**

COST & INCLUSIONS

Cost in euros based on double occupancy

1-2 riders	2450 euros per person
3-4 riders	2220 euros per person
Single Supplement	750 euros

The above costs are based on the two standard Itineraries (East-West, West-East). Cost may vary if Itinerary varies.

See **daily exchange rates**

TOUR INCLUSIONS

7 nights Accommodations: 3-4 star hotels, primarily family owned and operated, ranging from boutique restored mansions to harbor front 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: for East to West itinerary, Day 1 transfer from Herakleion to bike start point (Hersonissos) to Tzermiado) or to Arhanes. Option to transfer on Day 1 directly to hotel on any itinerary.

Luggage transfers: All luggage transfers based on selected itinerary (cost may change depending if itinerary changes)

Bikes: Specialized road bike. Triple chain ring, 27 gears, carbon fiber fork. Carbon bikes are available as an upgrade for 50 euros a day. Electric bikes are available as an upgrade for 50 euros a day. 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, lock, rear rack on request.

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

Color copies of Distance Elevation Profiles

Bike Routes: Options (1) RideWithGPS tour routes to upload to your iphone or Android with voice narration – bike mount on request (2) GPX tracks to download to your device – bring your own bike mount

Meals: Breakfasts are included at each hotel. Buffet dinner at hotel on Day 1.

Map of the region

Trip packet: useful and interesting information about the region

CycleGreece jersey: short sleeved, rear pockets, locally made

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

Gratuities, tips and 24% VAT taxes

TOUR EXCLUSIONS

- International airfare to/from Greece
- Arrivals to or departures from Crete
- Departure transfers to port or airport arranged for a fee
- All meals except breakfasts
- Private licensed guide at Knossos - see Extras tab
- Travel insurance – required to participate in a CycleGreece tour.

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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