



BEACHES OF CRETE



RETHYMNO BEACH



The sandy beach of Rethymno is located just 1km east of the city centre, next to the Venetian port. It's a lovely beach with golden sand and crystal clear shallow waters, very well organized and close to all amenities of the city.

It is actually the western end of the vast 13km long beachfront of Rethymno Gulf, which stretches east all the way to Skaleta. The vast beach is always busy, but never seems crowded. If you wish so, you will certainly find a place where you can stay remote. Along the beach runs the city's seafront road, Eleftheriou Venizelou Str., which is ideal for evening walking.

It is needless to say that on the beach you will find services such as umbrellas, lifeguard, beach bars, showers, changing rooms, water sports, etc. But what you really should know is that the well-known sea turtle caretta caretta lays its eggs on the beach. Thus, do not get surprised if you meet signs that have marked with ropes, eggs have been found there and are protected. The Rethymno Gulf is one of the three most important places for the seaturtle in Greece, bearing more than 400 nests every year.



EPISKOPI-PETRES

The beach Episkopi is located 45km east of Chania and 14km west of Rethymnon, in a fertile valley with lowlands. It takes its name from the nearby village, Episkopi, located 2km southern. Almost no-one Greek knows this place, but everybody knows the family Vardinoyannis, originating from here. This is one of the richest families in Greece.



The beach is bounded on the west by the river Mouselas and west by the river that runs in the gorge of Petres, next to Zourida bridge. It is a long beach, 3.5km long, which is sandy, shallow and mostly wavy, like most beaches of Northern Crete. There can be some sea weeds on the beach but not really much. It is very well organized, since there are many hotels, restaurants, taverns, bars and all the amenities one could need. In the western part of the beach you can find places with lifeguards, showers, changing rooms, umbrellas, snack bars, water sports, etc. However, given its large size, you can certainly find a quiet spot,



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especially in the eastern part. Lastly, at the beginning of the beach on the east side there is an opportunity for naturism.

The main road that connects Rethymno and Chania runs just next to the beach, parallel to it. Thus access is very easy, either by car or by bus. There are frequent bus services to/from Chania and Rethymno cities.

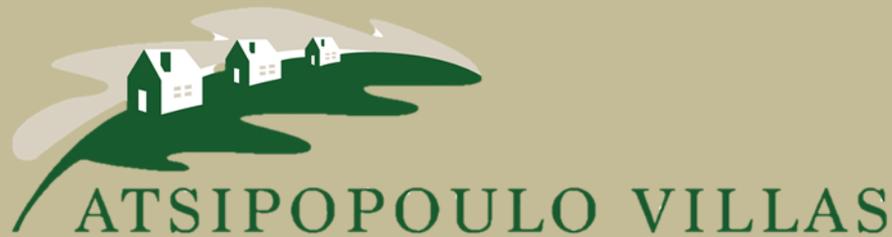


You can stay in the region or the village of Episkopi. Then you could visit the neighboring village of Argiroupolis, with its springs and lush vegetation. Moreover, Lake Kournas is also located in close proximity. In Greek language, Episkopi means Diocese. Indeed, the village was the Diocese of the area during the Byzantine Period. The old Episcopal church of St. Nicholas is, unfortunately, destroyed.

BALI BEACH



The seaside resort of Bali is located in a large gulf, 30km east of Rethymno and 43km west of Heraklion. Next to the village passes the National Road linking Heraklion and Rethymno, making Bali accessible from any part of the island. It is ideal for family and romantic holidays. Bali has four beaches, which are formed in sandy coves with nice greenish waters. The



beaches are almost always calm, since the direction of Bali is western. They all are suitable for children and well organized. Moreover, water is cool because of the several springs that carry fresh water into the sea.

BALOS LAGOON

The famous lagoon of Balos is located approximately 56km northwest of Chania and 17km northwest of Kissamos, formed between the Cape Gramvousa and the small Cape Tigani and below the range of Platiskinos. Balos is surely the mostly photographed beach in Crete, a very favorite subject of all tourist guides for Greece. It is no coincidence that Prince Charles and Princess Diana visited Balos with their private yacht many years ago.



Balos is famous for its turquoise waters, the wild natural beauty and the beautiful exotic scenery. During the summer, Balos is visited by thousands of people, who arrive mostly by the ferries running from Kissamos port. If you do not like crowds, you'd better avoid to visit the beach in July and August. Also, a perfect idea is to arrive at Balos in the morning, before the boats arrive from Kissamos. These few hours of remoteness in such a heavenly place will remain etched in your memory forever.



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The lagoon of Balos has white sand and exotic white, vivid blue and turquoise waters. The sea is very shallow and warm, ideal for young children. In many places the sand has a lovely pinkish color, because of millions of crushed shells. Beyond the rocks at the boundaries of the lagoon, the water is deeper and colder, ideal for a snorkeling. The lagoon and the wider area, with rare species of

flora and fauna, are protected under the Natura 2000 program. Eleonora falcons, shags and cormorants nest in the caves of the area. Moreover, the area is a shelter for the protected monk seal and the sea turtle caretta caretta. Despite the protection, a primitive café and umbrellas have appeared on the beach in recent years. You can buy water from there and from the bars of the ferries.

PREVELI PALM BEACH

Preveli is located about 35km south of Rethymno and 10km east of Plakias. Beach of Preveli, also known as Lake Preveli or Phoenix, is located at the exit of the imposing Kourtaliotikos Gorge, where the Great River (Megas Potamos) is flowing.





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It is certainly the most famous beach in southern Crete, accepting thousands of visitors every summer. During the 60s and 70s, it was a favorite destination for hippies. On the banks of the Grand River there is a large colony of Theophrastus palm trees, which give the region a sense of an African landscape. The river, forming a large lake, 500m long, before emptying into the sea, has water all year round. You can walk along the river, under the shade of palm trees and other trees, and start ascending in the beautiful canyon. You can swim in the cold ponds formed in the gorge. A big fire in 2010 burnt almost everything of this paradise, but paradoxically the palmgrove recovered most of its damage.



At the exit of the river, a sandy beach with pebbles and sand is formed, with sea water being very cool due to the river. In the eastern part of the beach, there is a beautiful rock reminding of a mast. It is poorly organized because the area is protected, without any umbrellas, but with a few restaurants and snack bars nearby. Moreover, you could rent pedal boats for a ride in the river.

STEFANOU BEACH-SEITAN LIMANIA



Stefanou beach is located near the position of Seitan Limania (i.e. satan harbours), 22km northeast of Chania and 2km east of the village Chordaki, at the east side of Akrotiri Cape. The wider area is named Seitan Limania, after the wild landscape, the steep cliffs and the



strong sea streams which are very dangerous. Here are situated three parallel narrow coves, well protected from the waves.

In the middle of this wild landscape, it is not expected to see something tranquil. However,



in the northern cove a tiny fantastic beach is shaped, with deep azure waters, namely the beach of Stefanou. The beach has fine pebbles and sand, transferred there from the nearby quarry through the canyon Diplohahalo. On the right and the left sides of the cove, huge marble rocks are standing high to protect the beach from the bad weather. It is quite unknown to most people, even the residents of Chania. This paradise is mostly known to the

lucky residents of Chordaki village, who struggle to keep it safe, beautiful and clean. Therefore, please respect this place and keep it clean.

ELAFONISI AND KEDRODASOS



Elafonisi is located 76km west of Chania and 5km south of Chrysoskalitisa Monastery, in the southwesternmost point of Crete. Elafonisi is an oblong, which often "breaks" in two parts by water giving the impression of being a separate island. Elafonisi is a Natura 2000



protected area. The island is full of dunes with sand lilies and jupiners (like-cedars trees). The endangered turtles careta careta and several rare animals nest on the island and it is strictly forbidden to remove any plants, animals and sand from the area.

Exotic beaches with white sand and turquoise waters, reminding of the Caribbean, are formed on either sides of the peninsula. The sand is pinkish in many places, taking its color from thousands of broken shells. Near the “breaking” point of the peninsula, the water does not exceed 1m, creating a small lagoon, ideal for children. You can easily cross the lagoon in order to reach the “island”, having your staff with you, because the water is very shallow there.

The eastern side of the beach, in front of the lagoon, is well organized and has the most people. There are umbrellas, showers, lifeguards, snack bars and changing rooms. Also, near the beach there is a huge area for parking and, even further, a few rooms to let. Opposedly, the beaches on either sides of the island are less crowded and are the most beautiful, with amazing azure colors. If you want to stay completely secluded or nude, you can walk along the peninsula until you find a quiet cove that you like! There are always many coves available for naturists.



You can come by car (1.5 hours) or by bus from Chania. The road to Elafonisi is narrow and full of turns, but the beauty of the landscape is stunning. Moreover there are many options for accommodation and meals available at Chrisoskalitissa village, 5km north.

Kedrodasos (i.e. cedar forest) is an amazing beach, located 76km southwest of Chania and 1km east of the famous Elafonissi lagoon. The beach is filled with juniper trees (mistakenly confused with cedars) and sanddunes, reminding of tropical Lebanese beaches. These are the small twisted junipers (juniper species are *Juniperus oxycedrus* subsp. *macrocarpa* and *Juniperus phoenicea*). If you ever visit the beach, you should note that the trees are very fragile and need respect.



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The cedar grove covers a big area of about 110 acres and is a magnificent place. It is a wonderful choice for camping and a favorite beach for naturists. It is a very nice beach with white sand and some smooth and flat rocks in places. Fortunately, there are no facilities nearby, making this secluded beach, one of the latest untouched paradises in Europe. Moreover,

since the beach is secluded, you should keep it clean and not littered.



The beach is protected to some point from the winds that usually blow in the neighboring Elafonissos. The European path E4 crosses the beach (there are yellow and black signs on the way).

TRIOPETRA

Triopetra is located about 52km south of Rethymno and 13km southeast of the village Akoumia, at the foot of the mountain Siderotas and next to dense green olive groves. It can be accessed by car, through the paved roads that start from Akoumia or Sachtouria. It is the



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central part of the vast beachfront, called Akoumiani Gialia, i.e Akoumian Beach. This is named like this because the wider area of Triopetra was once the winter “refuges” of Akoumia village residents, who had built small cottages to spend the night near their lands. Today, the lucky Akoumians have repaired the cottages near the stunning beach.



Triopetra consists mainly of two beaches, which are separated by a small peninsula. At the edge of the peninsula, in the sea, three majestic rocks rise. Triopetra is named after these rocks, since it means “Three Rocks”.

The first beach, known as Small Triopetra (or Koumado), is located in a closed sandy and rocky bay, south of the three rocks. In its southern edges Akoumianos River empties, which separates it from the magical beach of St. Paul Sandhills. On the beach there are a few rooms and taverns, and umbrellas are offered. Here is the small harbor of the area, in the southeast part of the beach, called Stomio. 1km northeast of this beach, you can visit the

amazing chapel of Prophet Elias, on a high hill, overlooking Triopetra area.



The main beach of Triopetra, West Triopetra (or Chatzi), is formed west of the rocks and extends to the west for several kilometers. The beach has beautiful coarse sand and beautiful water colors. Its west-orientation makes it vulnerable to the western winds, but also famous for its



fantastic sunsets. The east part of the beach is organized with taverns, rooms and umbrellas, but never seems crowded. There is a small river, with fresh water all year round. Camping is not allowed on the beach, but there is a stunning big cave with shape Δ near the three rocks, where you can find shade. The west part of Triopetra is not organised. There is a dirt road that runs along the beach and heads to the next beach, called Ligres.

AMOUDI

Ammoudi is a beach complex located 32km south of Rethymno and 4km east of Plakias. To get here, you have to drive by paved road from the village Lefkogia.

The paved road leads to the first beach of the area, Ammoudi. The beach is slightly organized, with umbrellas and some taverns and rooms nearby. Moreover, in Amoudi you can find a scuba diving centre. Amoudi has thick white sand and rocky seabed, ideal for diving and snorkeling, and the waters have a bright green color. Next to the beach there are many tamarisk trees, under which you can find shade and camp.



West of Ammoudi starts a dirt road that leads to Damnoni and passes next to towering cliffs and imposing rocks. Just 200m west of Ammoudi, along the dirt road, you will find a parking plateau that has unrestricted view to Damnoni. Right there, on your left hand, you will see a spectacular miniature sandy beach, with turquoise waters and a characteristic rock in the sea. The beach is shaped between two little oblong rocks. The beach is named Klisidi and is an ideal choice when no people are there (quite rare).



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Next to Klisidi, you will meet the amazing nudist beach of Small Ammoudi or Ammoudaki. The turquoise waters and spectacular white coarse sand, make this small beach popular destination for nudists. Moreover, on the beach there is a small canteen, which also provides umbrellas and sunbeds. At the west side of the beach, you can swim till a marine cave, where the sun rays make the color of the water vivid blue. The seabed is sandy and

you can step there. At the other end, there is an under water hole that connects Ammoudaki with Klisidi. So you can get from one beach to another only with a splash! To reach the beaches of Ammoudi on foot, you can walk east of Damnoni, till you meet Ammoudaki.



LOUTRO

Loutro is a small seaside village situated approximately 71 km south of Chania, at the end of Cape Mouri. It is believed that this was the site of the ancient city of Phoenix and was the ancient port of Anopolis. Later, it became a winter port for Chora Sfakion, due to the fact that the enclosed bay and the small island at its entrance create a natural harbor where ships can be safe even in very bad weather.



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You can stay at Loutro and use it as a base for visiting surrounding beaches, either by taxi boat, canoe or on foot. You can visit the majestic beach of Glyka Nera east of the village. Moreover, you can canoe or walk till the adjacent unorganized pebbly beaches of Timios Stavros and Pervolaki that are located 1km east of the village, just before Glyka Nera. However, if you want to stay at Loutro, the small beach in front of Loutro and the longer beach right after the east end of the village, called Keramos, are a very good choice, especially when wind from South is strong. The beaches are pebbly, well-organised and the water is always calm and has an amazing deep blue and green color. Moreover, you could visit the closeby beaches of Likos, Finikas and Marmara. There is a boat that leaves every day to Marmara and Glyka Nera.

Loutro is a place for those people who want something different. A small picturesque fishing village in south west Crete, not yet spoilt by mass tourism. For example there are no big



hotels with swimming pools. There are no overcrowded streets, restaurants and beaches, there are no cars!

The only access is by boat or as you wish, by foot (1.5 hour hard trekking from Chora Sfakion). There are daily routes to/from Chora Sfakion, Sougia, Gavdos island, Paleochora and Agia Roumeli.