
Travel Guide Heraklion

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Quick view

Heraklion - a brief overview

The Greek port city of Heraklion (Greek: Irákleio) is the capital of the island of Crete. With approximately 200,000 residents, it is also the largest city on the island. Admittedly, Heraklion is more of a necessary layover than a final destination for most vacationers on Crete; they quickly travel on to the beaches on this popular island. Until a few years ago, this was completely understandable, as terrible traffic and a skyline of utilitarian buildings made Heraklion a mostly unattractive place to stay. But the city planners learned their lesson: Traffic-calming measures in some areas and complete driving bans in others have turned the city into a pleasant and relaxing destination, where visitors can stroll along the harbor boardwalk, enjoying the view of the Koulés Fortress, and stop at a taverna for refreshments.

One of the main sights in the city center is the Platia Eleftherios, where Crete's most important archaeological museum is also located. The exhibits here include relics of the Minoan culture and archaeological finds from places like Knossós, Festós and Agía Triáda.

Today, Heraklion is a modern metropolis and university city with exciting nightlife and a good selection of shopping options, museums and cultural events. And Heraklion is still the jumping-off point for beach vacations, particularly in the eastern part of Crete. The most beautiful beaches around Ágios Nikólaos and the southern coast near Ierápetra are easy to reach from Heraklion via the excellent road and rail network.



Greece

General Information

Country overview

The rich cultural heritage of Greece and its natural beauty make the country a popular travel destination. Every year, it welcomes around 25 million visitors to its archaeological sites and museums, its mountains and beaches. Throughout the country, visitors will find archaeological evidence of millennia-old civilization, such as the Acropolis in Athens, the early Christian and Byzantine buildings in Thessaloniki, the ancient city of Epidaurus or the ruins of Olympia. There are a total of 17 UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Greece.

Swimming and hiking, shopping and surfing – in Greece, you can do it all in one trip.

Greece has been a member of the European Union since 1981, and the country has been using the euro as its currency since 2001.

Geography

Greece is located in southeastern Europe and shares borders with Albania, North Macedonia, Bulgaria and Turkey. The eastern part of the country is on the Aegean Sea, and the western part on the Ionian Sea.

Greece consists of the mainland, the peninsula of Peloponnesus, and the Greek islands, which comprise approximately one fifth of the country's territory.

The islands include Rhodes and Crete, the northern Aegean islands like Limnos, Lesbos, Chios and Samos, as well as the Cyclades islands such as Mykonos, Naxos and Paros.

Greece's highest peaks are the Pindus Mountains (2,637 m) and Olympus (2917 m).

General knowledge

Key facts

Population: 10.7 million (2018)

Capital: Athens

Language

Modern Greek. English and German – and sometimes French and Italian – are also spoken in the regions frequented by tourists.

Currency

Euro (EUR; symbol: €) = 100 cents. Notes are in denominations of €500, €200, €100, €50, €20, €10 and €5. Coins are in denominations of €2, €1, €0.50, €0.20, €0.10, €0.05, €0.02 and €0.01.

Electricity

230 volts AC, 50 Hz. Round two-pin plugs are used.

Public holidays

Listed below are the public holidays for the period January 2020 to December 2021.

2020

New Year's Day: 1 January 2020
Epiphany: 6 January 2020
Start of orthodox Lent: 2 March 2020
Independence Day: 25 March 2020
Orthodox Good Friday: 17 April 2020
Orthodox Easter Sunday: 19 April 2020
Orthodox Easter Monday: 20 April 2020
Labour Day: 1 May 2020
Orthodox Whit Sunday: 7 June 2020
Orthodox Whit Monday: 8 June 2020
Assumption: 15 August 2020
Ochi Day: 28 October 2020
Christmas: 25 and 26 December 2020

2021

New Year's Day: 1 January 2021
Epiphany: 6 January 2021
Start of orthodox Lent: 15 March 2021
Independence Day: 25 March 2021
Orthodox Good Friday: 30 April 2021
Orthodox Easter Sunday: 2 May 2021
Orthodox Easter Monday: 3 May 2021
Labour Day: 1 May 2021
Orthodox Whit Sunday: 20 June 2021
Orthodox Whit Monday: 21 June 2021
Assumption: 15 August 2021
Ochi Day: 28 October 2021

Christmas: 25 and 26 December 2021

All information subject to change.



Traveler etiquette

How to fit in

Social Conventions

Greeks are proud, have a real sense of their own traditions, and are very hospitable. Children, in particular, are always welcomed with open arms. The Greek Orthodox church is quite influential, especially in rural areas. Casual clothing is acceptable almost everywhere, but even in the hot summer months, it is inappropriate to wear swimwear to a restaurant. Instead, visitors should at least wear a t-shirt and pants, or other light summer clothing. Clothing that fully covers the body is expected when visiting monasteries or churches.

Smoking

Smoking is prohibited on public transportation and in all public buildings, including cafés, bars and restaurants.

Tipping

A ten-percent tip is customary at restaurants, and it can generally be left on the table. Taxi bills should be rounded up. The cleaning staff at hotels always appreciate a small tip on the day guests check out.



Health

Health

Main emergency number: 112

Food & drink

The tap water is generally chlorinated and relatively clean, but drinking it may still cause mild digestive issues as travelers acclimate. For this reason, bottled water is recommended for the first few days of your stay; it is available everywhere. When buying bottled water, ensure that the original packaging has not been opened.

Other risks

There is the risk of contracting Lyme disease from ticks from April to October throughout Crete, especially near grasses, shrubs and undergrowth. The risk can be minimized by wearing clothing that covers the skin and by using insect repellent.

Warnings regarding tick-borne encephalitis are mainly issued for the region west of Thessaloniki. However, the risk of contracting this tick-borne disease is low. A preventative vaccine is recommended for people who will be working or participating in recreational activities in endemic regions where they would be exposed to ticks. If you are bitten by a tick and have concerns, seek medical attention.

Cases of hepatitis A and hepatitis B occur on Crete. A vaccination to protect against hepatitis A is generally advisable. For longer visits or visits involving close contact with the local population, or with children and young people, the hepatitis B vaccine is recommended.

Kala-azar, which is transmitted by mosquitoes, primarily occurs in the south and on

the islands (including Crete). The risk can be minimized by wearing clothing that covers the skin and by using insect repellent.

Isolated cases of Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever occur in the northeast. The disease is usually transmitted by ticks; it can be transmitted from person to person when there is close contact or in a medical care situation. Tourists are at low risk. Due to the risk of other tick-borne diseases, however, it is strongly recommended that visitors wear the appropriate gear (repellent, sturdy shoes, long pants, etc.) to protect themselves from tick bites during outdoor activities. Additionally, ticks should be immediately removed with an appropriate tool (tick-removal tweezers).

Isolated cases of leishmaniasis, a parasitic infection transmitted by the sand fly, occur on the Greek mainland, the Ionian Islands and Crete. The risk can be minimized by wearing clothing that covers the skin and by using insect repellent.

There are occasional epidemic outbreaks of meningococcal meningitis. To protect themselves, visitors should be vaccinated and avoid large crowds. Children and young people, in particular, should be vaccinated. The meningitis vaccine is recommended for certain groups of people (children, young people, students) if they are planning a longer stay. Travelers should consult their doctor regarding which vaccines are necessary and recommended for their destination.

West Nile fever occurs in northern Greece. Effective protection against mosquitoes is recommended.



Phone calls & Internet

Phone calls & Internet

Telephone

Country code: +30

Mobile telephony and Internet

Since June 2017, EU citizens traveling within the EU, and also in Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein have been able to use their cell phones and surf the Net without incurring any extra charges: In other words, customers pay the same price for phone calls, text messages and data volume as they do at home. Restrictions do apply to the constant use of SIM cards abroad, however, and caps may be set on data packages.

For full details, contact your mobile telephony provider in your country. Travelers using a SIM card from a non-EU state do not benefit from the new arrangement.

Free Internet access via Wi-Fi is possible in many busy tourist spots. When using public Wi-Fi networks, it is a wise precaution to ensure encryption of all passwords, credit card details and banking TANs entered. Use of a VPN app or security software to check the safety of a hotspot is recommended.



Top 10 sights

Top Ten Sights in Heraklion

Koulés Fortress

Heraklion harbor and the Koulés Fortress were built by the Venetians. The Venetian coat of arms with the Lion of St. Mark is still visible on the external walls, and archaeological finds are displayed indoors. The walkway along the battlements is particularly beautiful and offers a breathtaking view of the harbor.

71202 Heraklion
Greece

Opening times:
Vary, closed on Tuesdays

odysseus.culture.gr/h/2/eh255.jsp?obj_id=7228

Palace of Knossós

The Palace of Knossós, one of the largest Minoan palaces, is said to have been the former seat of King Minos. And today, you can see more than just the 3,000-year-old walls. Parts of the labyrinth complex that were reconstructed in the early 20th century under the supervision of British archaeologist Arthur Evans are also open to visitors. Critics refer to it as an “archaeological Disneyland” because of the imaginative interpretation of the excavations and the uncertain archaeological evidence upon which the reconstruction was based. However, this makes the complex all the more intriguing to visit, and it is highly recommended, even for laypeople.

Knossos
71409 Heraklion
Greece
Tel.: +30-2810/23 19 40

Opening times:
Every day: 8:00 am – 8:00 pm (April 1 –
January 6)
8:00 am – 5:00 pm (January 7 – March
31)

odysseus.culture.gr/h/3/eh351.jsp?obj_id=2369

Morosíni Fountain

The Morosíni Fountain at Platia Venizelou is one of Heraklion’s landmarks. The fountain was donated to the city in 1628 by the Venetian governor Morosíni. It has eight basins adorned with mythological figures, mythical creatures and sea dwellers. The upper basin is supported by four lions, earning it the nickname “lion fountain.”

Platia Venizelou
71202 Heraklion
Greece

Agios Markos (Saint Mark’s Basilica)

The Basilica Agios Markos was constructed in 1239, making it the oldest Venetian religious building in the city. The building was used as a mosque for several centuries before being converted into an event and exhibition space. Today, it is home to the municipal art gallery, which hosts rotating exhibitions of primarily modern Greek artists.

El. Venizelou Square
71202 Heraklion
Greece
Tel.: +30-2810/39 92 28

Opening times:
Every day: 09:00 am – 1:00 pm and
6:00 pm – 9:00 pm

Archaeological Museum

The Archaeological Museum in Heraklion houses the most important collection of antiquities in Greece, after the National Museum in Athens. Relics of the Minoan

culture that are up to 7,000 years old can be viewed in the 20 rooms of the exhibit, which are laid out in chronological order. A complete renovation of the museum was completed in 2014, and the new exhibition vividly presents archaeological finds from sites like Knossos, Festós and Agía Triáda and explains them in terms that all visitors can understand.

<p>Xanthoudiou 1 71202 Heraklion Greece</p>	<p>Opening hours (vary by season, closed on public holidays): Monday, Wednesday – Sunday: 8:00 am – 8:00 pm Tuesday: 10:00 am – 8:00 pm</p>
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Crete Natural History Museum

The Natural History Museum teaches visitors about the natural landscape of the eastern Mediterranean. The modern exhibits consist primarily of enormous dioramas. There are also aquariums and terrariums full of living creatures. One major draw is the earthquake simulator in the basement, where visitors can experience seismic events of different strengths.

<p>Sofokli Venizelou Avenue 712 02 Heraklion Greece Tel.: +30-2810/32 43 66</p>	<p>Opening times: Monday – Friday, 9:00 am – 9:00 pm Saturday – Sunday: 10:00 am – 9:00 pm</p>
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www.nhmc.uoc.gr/en

CretAquarium

Visitors to the CretAquarium experience Crete's underwater world. The aquariums are home to groupers, red coral, spiny lobsters, rays, turtles and even sharks. It's also a fantastic experience for families with small children, because the tanks are set up so that the little ones can see everything too. A nice restaurant is also part of the complex.

<p>Former American base at Gournes 71003 Heraklion Greece Tel.: +30-2810/33 77 88</p>	<p>Opening times Every day: 09:30 am – 7:00 pm (April 1 – October 31) Every day: 9:30 am – 4:00 pm (November 1 – March 31)</p>
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www.cretaquarium.gr/

Samaria Gorge

A trip to Samaria Gorge is the highlight of any Crete vacation. For experienced hikers, there's an 18-kilometer route between vertical rock faces up to 600 meters high. And if that seems too ambitious, a good alternative is the four-kilometer walk from Agia Roumeli to the "iron gate," the Sideroportes, which is the narrowest passage in the gorge. An information hotline with weather conditions and current opening hours is available at tel.: +30--2821/06 71 79.

<p>Between Omalos and Agia Roumeli Crete Greece</p>	<p>Opening hours (May 1 to October 31): Every day: 7:00 am – 3:00 pm</p>
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Karteros Beach

The Bay of Karteros, with its white sandy beaches and crystal-clear water, is located approximately seven kilometers east of Heraklion. Most of the visitors here are Greek, but tourists are equally welcome, of course. There's a beach bar, a number of tavernas, and shops and restaurants in town – it's a great place for a day trip.

71500 Karteros
Greece

Douloufakis Winery

Alongside olives, wine is one of the most important agricultural products in Crete. The grapes are often grown on family farms, and the families press the wine themselves. The Douloufakis Winery in Dafnes is one of these traditional farms, and it's the perfect place for visitors who want to experience the process first-hand. The town is a 15-minute drive from Heraklion. Visits and wine-tastings must be booked in advance, but short-notice bookings are also accepted.

70011 Dafnes Heraklion
Greece
Tel.: +30-2810/79 20 17

Opening times:
Monday – Friday: 10:00 am – 3:30 pm,
closed on Saturdays, Sundays and
public holidays

[www.cretanwines.gr/en/contact-m-en/c
ontact-d...](http://www.cretanwines.gr/en/contact-m-en/contact-d...)



Shopping Shopping in Heraklion

Key Areas

The main shopping promenades in Heraklion are Odós 1866, the market street selling food and other everyday items, and the busy Dikenossinis and Kalokerinou streets, which are both lined with boutiques. Odós Dédalou and the streets around the Morosíni Fountain are car-free, making them the perfect place to stroll and shop for clothing and shoes.

Markets

Every day is market day on Odós 1866 and its side streets. In addition to fruit, vegetables, meat and fish, the shops here naturally offer sheep's milk cheese, herbs, olive oil and raki. Awnings span the entire road, like a Middle Eastern bazaar. Farmers markets are held in other parts of Heraklion, too: On Mondays, there is one on Petlempouri, and on Fridays and Saturdays, there is one on Georgiou Petrakogiorgi.

Shopping centers

Many shoppers in Heraklion head to the little shops in the city center to meet their day-to-day needs, but the city also has a modern shopping center. Talos Plaza is the largest shopping center on Crete, with shops selling fashion and accessories, as well as restaurants and a movie theater.



Restaurants Restaurants in Heraklion

Greek cuisine and all its mediterranean diversity is represented here in Crete's capital city: from simple tavernas serving classics like moussaka and Greek salad to upscale restaurants offering modern interpretations of Greek meat and fish dishes. Cretan wines are the beverage of choice, served with local olives and sheep and goat cheese, often in the form of mezedákia, the Greek version of Middle Eastern mezze.

Swell

Swell is a top spot for gourmets. It offers a relaxed, elegant atmosphere directly on the water, with expert service and a menu that truly does justice to the delicate Mediterranean flavors of Cretan cuisine. A large selection of Cretan wines is also available.

Kokkini Hani
71202 Heraklion
Greece

Category: Luxury

7 Thalasses

7 Thalasses (English: The Seven Seas) is a restaurant that primarily serves fish and seafood dishes. The meals are both a culinary and visual delight, and the restaurant itself is also a feast for the eyes: It has a wonderful, imaginatively designed garden. Here's a tip: The Cretan white wines are a true revelation.

Iraklitou & Iroditou
71101 Heraklion
Greece

Category: Luxury

Tapas Bar 50-50

The colorful bar is an especially popular meeting spot for young people; it serves traditional Greek cuisine with an international flair. A large selection of tapas is also available. The good location near the central marketplace makes the restaurant a great jumping-off point for nighttime partiers.

20 Odos 1866
71201 Heraklion
Greece

Category: Moderate

Avli

Avli is a family-owned and -operated restaurant mainly frequented by locals, who usually follow the chef's recommendations when ordering. It serves traditional Greek cuisine. The picturesque courtyard is a quiet, shady place to sit.

Smyrnis 31
71201 Heraklion
Greece

Category: Moderate

Merastri

Merastri offers an excellent selection of high-quality Greek dishes. The homemade pasta and the fava – pureed peas with olive oil and onion rings – are especially popular.

Chrisostomou 17
71306 Heraklion
Greece

Category: Moderate



Nightlife

Nightlife in Heraklion

Heraklion has the largest variety of tavernas, bars and clubs on Crete. Visitors will find that music is being played everywhere, whether Greek lyre, shepherd's pipe or even rock. In summer, concerts are held in the streets and squares. The hot spots for nightlife include the area between Platía Eleftheria and the Morosíni Fountain in the historic quarter and the area around the Platía Korái.

Swing Thing

This bar and café is located across from the Venetian Loggia. Naturally, swing is at the top of the agenda here, although the music selection isn't strictly limited to the classics of that genre. Guests enjoy the quality of the cocktails and the expertise and friendliness of the staff.

Arkoleontos 13
71202 Heraklion
Greece

Wets & Drys Speakeasy Bar

This bar is decorated like a speakeasy, an American bar from the prohibition era of the 1920s and 30s. Then as now, here as there, the bartender mainly pours hard liquor. The bar is known for its excellent cocktails, including a few award-winning creations.

Korai 1-15
712 02 Heraklion
Greece

Pagopoieion

Pagopoieion used to be a cold storage facility – and its name means “ice house” in English. The carefully restored building preserves the charm of the old industrial architecture and is home to a restaurant with a bar. It hosts regular cultural events such as art exhibits, readings and small concerts.

Plateia Agiou Titou 1
71202 Heraklion
Greece

Xalavro Open Bar

Where most people saw nothing but a ruin, the founders of Xalavro Open Bar saw an opportunity to try out a bold new dining concept. Their motto is: Outdoors is the new indoors. Since 2013, this unusual open-air location has become a popular spot for young people to meet for coffee, music or a drink.

Milatou 10
71202 Heraklion

Greece

The Bitters Bar

The name says it all: This bar's specialty is bitters, mixed drinks that are made with alcoholic preparations of herbs and spices. Pure sophistication! For guests who find bitters too adventurous, the menu also offers less exotic items such as wine or beer.

Idis 25
71202 Heraklion
Greece



Calendar of events Calendar of events

Apokriés

The Orthodox Christians also mark carnival by throwing one last enormous party before the 40-day fasting period that precedes Easter. By tradition, the largest carnival celebration is held with parades and a street festival in Rethymno, approximately 80 kilometers east of Heraklion.

March 2 - 4, 2020

Location: Rethymno

Orthodox Holy Week

Easter is the most important Orthodox Christian religious festival, so Holy Week and Easter are also marked with elaborate ceremonies and celebrations on Crete. Processions are held beginning on Good Friday, and Easter Sunday is generally celebrated with family.

April 13 - 20, 2020

Location: All over Crete

Festival of Fishing

The Agia Galini cultural association organizes the Festival of Fishing at the harbor every year around Whitsuntide. It gives visitors the opportunity to experience a traditional Greek festival, including culinary specialties. Every Whit Monday, the fishermen take visitors out onto the sea in their boats.

June 2020

Location: Agia Galini

Kalokairi

The Kalokairi cultural festival is held in Heraklion every year between July and September. The program includes theater, comedy, concerts, open-air films and dance performances. Here's a tip for travelers who don't speak Greek: The open-air movie theater in the Bethlehem Bastion shows foreign films (with Greek subtitles).

July to September 2020

Location: All over Heraklion

Ágios Titos

The Ágios Titos Basilica is home to a holy relic: the skull of Saint Titus, the patron saint of Crete. Every year on August 25, Saint Titus' Day, it is carried through Heraklion in a grand procession.

August 25, 2020

Location: Ágios Titos Basilica, Heraklion



Hotels Hotels in Heraklion

Although most people don't come to Crete to spend their time in Heraklion, the city has a good selection of hotels in all price categories and comfort levels. From luxury hotels to a basic room for the night, from business hotels to resorts, you'll find whatever you're looking for in and around Heraklion. Heraklion isn't very big, so you can stay in a room overlooking the beautiful harbor and still be close to downtown.

ibis Styles Heraklion Central Hotel

This modern hotel is located in the center of Heraklion, right next to all the major sights. It offers spacious, air-conditioned rooms with comfortable beds, and many of the rooms also have a harbor view. It has a restaurant, a bar and a supervised underground parking garage.

Koroneou 26
& Agiou Titou Street
71202 Heraklion
Greece

Category: Luxury

Iraklion Hotel

This family-owned and -operated three-star hotel offers bright rooms with modern furnishings and air conditioning, as well as a lounge with a bar and a reception desk that is staffed 24/7. It is located just five minutes from the harbor.

Kalokerinou 128
71202 Heraklion
Greece

Category: Moderate

Atrion Hotel

The centrally located Atrion Hotel has elegant, air-conditioned rooms with balconies, many of which offer a partial ocean view. The hotel is right next to the harbor boardwalk.

I. Chronaki Street 9
71202 Heraklion
Greece

Category: Moderate

Marin Dream Hotel

The rooms in this hotel feature a sleek, streamlined design. The rooftop restaurant with a gorgeous view of the Koules Fortress is a major plus.

Epimenidou Str. 46
71202 Heraklion
Greece

Category: Moderate

El Greco Hotel

If you're looking for a simple, modern room in the heart of the city, this is the hotel for you. El Greco's main selling points are its location and its excellent value.

1821 Street 4
71201 Heraklion
Greece

Category: Budget



GEO tip Preveli Beach

powered by **GEO**

From Preveli village to palm-lined Preveli Beach

Preveli Bay is on the southern coast of Crete, in the Libyan Sea. The path to the beach from Preveli village and monastery follows the course of the Megalopótamos River. There are two trails down to the beach, and on both, pools and narrow passes regularly pose hikers with obstacles to be overcome. The less adventurous way to visit this gorgeous palm beach is by taking a boat tour from Plakia or Agia Galini.

Mehr auf GEO.de

<https://www.geo.de/reisen/top-ten/21277-bstr-die-schoensten-inseln-griechenlands>