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Double S Travel Worldchoice - Celebrating Twenty Three Years of service to residents and businesses in the South Bedfordshire area 1985 – 2008

The Greek Island of Crete

The most southerly of the Greek islands, Crete lies in the SE Mediterranean, 200 mls off the N coast of Africa.

It is the largest Greek island, 160 mls from E to W and 35 mls from N to S.

It is a place of contrasting landscapes, with tall rugged mountains, deep gorges, lush countryside and both rocky and sandy coastlines.

Most of the tourist resorts are on the N coast served by 2 airports: Heraklion, 2 mls E of the capital city of the same name, feeds the old-established resorts in the E of the island like Aghios Nikolaos and Hersonissos; the other, 9 mls E of the major town of Chania, serves the third of the large towns, Rethymnon, as well as the host of newer, developing resorts on the W half of the coast.

A main highway links the major towns along the N coast but roads inland are less good.

Lots of beaches offer good bathing, particularly in the NW and E at Malia.

Aghios Nikolaos 2½ miles from N to S and 1 mile from E to W, probably Crete's best-known and longest-established tourist resort, but it still has a life of its own as a working port for fishing and shipping as well as boasting a busy yacht marina.

Despite the inroads made by tourism, it remains a picturesque resort and the lakeside area – joined to the harbour by a small bridge – is a particular hive of activity, lined as it is with lively cafes and dining terraces.

Market/Suitability Those seeking a busy holiday with an abundance of restaurants and nightlife. Not for anyone looking for a quiet retreat.

Location: On the NE coast, on the E side of the island, on the scenic Gulf of Mirabello. 6 mls S of the village of Elounda. 40 mls SE of Heraklion airport.

Position: Clustered around and between the harbour and the so-called "bottomless" lake, which juts into the town and is linked to the sea by a narrow canal. The coast road skirts the town with impressive, rugged mountains rising behind and olive groves carving a passage through to the S coast.

Accommodation Very good choice of hotels in all classes; some holiday complexes on the road to Elounda. Many self-catering establishments throughout town.

Beach Most areas offer a rocky shoreline but there are 2 small, fairly uninspiring town beach areas of grey sand and pebbles; sun loungers and umbrellas are

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available and each beach has a beachfront taverna or bar (nothing actually on the beach, as this is illegal). A better bet is the village and beach of Kalo Horio, 8 mls S, although there is a small and busy beach 2 mls S at Amoudara. Swimming is generally considered safe.

Shopping Shoppers will enjoy the many boutiques and other establishments selling local handicrafts and souvenirs, such as leather goods, ceramics and jewellery. Plenty of supermarkets and minimarkets. Weekly market.

Entertainment Daytime: beach- and water-based activities, including water-skiing, sailing and windsurfing; swimming pool; minigolf; walking in surrounding countryside; archaeological and folk-art museums.

Nightlife: a plentiful choice of lively bars and nightclubs provide entertainment throughout the night, with the harbour as the main focus.

Eating Out Almost limitless choice, from tavernas serving local specialities to international cuisine at romantic waterside restaurants; even Indian and Chinese options.

Public Transport A regular bus service to the village of Elounda, 6 mls away, and regular services to most other parts of the island from the bus station.

Local Excursions Half day: Venetian fortress on island of Spinalonga, a one-time leper colony; boat trips to Elounda; fishing town of Sitia; palm-tree beach at Vai. Full day: Minoan sites, including Knossos Palace and Heraklion Museum; Lassithi Plateau, with its traditional villages and windmills; Phaestos Palace and the Roman city of Gortys; historic towns/resorts of Chania and Rethymnon; Samaria Gorge (long day).

[Heraklion N.Kazantzakis \(HER\)](#)

Bali

A former fishing village measuring no more than $\frac{3}{4}$ ml by $\frac{1}{4}$ ml, Bali has now developed to become a sprawling mass of pretty, colourful holiday properties. It boasts no fewer than 4 small sandy beaches, a busy harbour and plenty of entertainment from dance clubs to traditional tavernas – yet still manages to remain relatively peaceful.

Market/Suitability Budget to mid-market tourists mainly in the younger age group and families. Beach-lovers of many nationalities, including British, German, Dutch, Italian and French. The hilly terrain makes it unsuitable for those with severe walking difficulties. Location: Centrally placed on the N coast. 19 mls E of Rethymnon. 30 mls NW of Heraklion and 34 mls NW of Heraklion airport. 55 mls SE of Chania and its airport.

Position: On a rugged coastline, $1\frac{1}{2}$ mls from the main coast highway, overlooking several pretty bays and beaches with Mt Kouloukonas as a backdrop.

Accommodation A mix of large, swish hotels, some more basic properties, self-catering apartments and a few room-only establishments.

Beach 4 beaches of fine, grey sand with small pebbles, 2 of which are sheltered by the harbour jetty; the others are wider and offer water sports. The sea is generally calm and good for swimming, so the beaches are often crowded, especially at weekends and late afternoon when many locals appear.

Shopping Plenty of minimarkets, souvenir shops and the occasional jewellery or gift shop scattered the length of the resort; bakery. Money-exchange facilities abound. For more serious shopping, try Rethymnon or Heraklion.

Entertainment Daytime: beach- and water-based activities, including scuba diving, jet-skiing, pedaloos, sailing and paragliding; walking; mountain biking.

Nightlife: choice of dance clubs, tavernas and music bars.

Eating Out Many bars and tavernas offering local food including freshly caught fish; several tea shops and ice-cream parlours.

Public Transport Buses stop on the main coast highway, outside the village, going to Rethymnon or Heraklion; half-hourly service up to 9.30 pm. Radio taxis readily available. Plenty of car-hire outlets.

Local Excursions Half day: 17th-century monastery on slopes of Mt Kouloukonas. Full day: boat trips to various destinations around the island, including express boat to Rethymnon market (twice weekly) and to sea caves and village of Panormos; fishing trips; Lassithi Plateau and countryside tour; ancient Minoan palace of Knossos; Samaria Gorge; historic towns/resorts of Chania, Heraklion and Rethymnon; tour of S island. Evening: Greek night.

General Description of Chania

Built on the site of an ancient Minoan city and the capital of Crete until the 1970s, Chania is the island's second largest town with a resident population of around 140,000; its main centre measures about 2 mls by 1½ mls with sprawling residential suburbs rising uphill to the rear of town. Generally hailed as one of the most charming Cretan resorts, it has a rich history encompassing Byzantine, Arabian, Venetian and Turkish occupations. This inheritance is reflected in many of the buildings in the Old Town, which fans out along the sea front N of the cruciform-shaped market hall and is loosely divided into Venetian, Turkish and Jewish quarters. Here you can find medieval structures, mosques and minarets alongside later colonial or neoclassical architecture. A Venetian/Egyptian lighthouse guards the entrance to the long, picturesque harbour with its abundance of fine restaurants and cafes – a focal point for visitors from morning to late into the evening.

Market/Suitability

Suits most groups and ages, particularly those seeking a genuine taste of the Cretan way of life and its history as well as relaxation, superb scenery, sun and sea. A good base from which to undertake individual travel, with your own means of transport.

Location/Contact

Location: Situated on the NW coast of Crete. 42 mls NW of Rethymnon. 10 mls W of Chania airport; 90 mls NW of Heraklion airport.

Position: On the Gulf, and in the prefecture, of Chania, surrounded by countryside and some of the island's most fertile agricultural land, with the stunning grandeur of the White Mountains (Lefka Ori) as a backdrop; the mountains have snow on the upper reaches for half the year.

Accommodation

A good choice of hotels, with the larger cross-section of hotels and self-catering apartments found in the resort areas outside and mainly W of town.

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Beach

A few small sandy bays just W of the town centre, then mainly long stretches of sand and pebble running for many miles. They offer generally good bathing and are easily reached by the coastal bus service. Hotels and apartment blocks have their own sunbeds and parasols, and usually a snack bar which is open to the public. A few hotels have low-key water sports such as pedaloos and windsurfing.

Shopping

Many small supermarkets and food stores as well as the main municipal market hall and an old Turkish marketplace, both offering a wide range of goods including local produce. Halidon Street is home to the more touristy shops, while the larger hotels offer quality jewellery and clothing. For leather goods, including the famous high-legged boots, make your way to Odos Skridlof ("Leather Lane") to watch the leather workers in action.

Entertainment

Daytime: exploring the town, including naval and archaeological museums, city archives, mosques, Greek Orthodox churches and old Venetian ramparts and arsenals; walking in the public gardens or around the harbour to the lighthouse; beach, swimming and water sports (windsurfing, sailing, water-skiing) in the villages W of town; tennis; hiking; cycling; water park.

Nightlife: a few discos, bars and many restaurants with live music, the liveliest area being around the harbour front; a couple of cinemas; open-air theatre.

Eating Out

Spoilt for choice, from the harbour fish specialists to local tavernas and hotel-based options.

Public Transport

Good local bus services from the town in most directions.

Local Excursions

Half day: the Akrotiri Peninsula to see the tomb of famous Cretan leader Eleftherios Venizelos and numerous interesting monasteries; Allied war cemetery at Souda Bay; traditional Cretan evenings in nearby village. Full day: Samaria Gorge; ancient Minoan palace of Knossos and Heraklion archaeological museum; Lassithi Plateau with its traditional villages and windmills; E Crete, including charming resort of Aghios Nikolaos and Venetian fortress at Spinalonga.

General Description of Elounda

Once a small fishing village, Elounda still retains a certain charm, offering an appealing mixture of old and new. The village itself measures a compact $\frac{3}{4}$ ml by $\frac{1}{4}$ ml but the development of suburbs around this central core gives it a total area of around 4 mls by 1 ml. The resort's main features are an attractive harbour surrounded by cafes and bars where you can sit and watch the world go by, and a somewhat crowded, noisy town square with a busy car park catering to the many day visitors. Demand for ever more lively nightlife has led to an increase in discos, disco pubs and other venues playing loud music into the small hours.

Market/Suitability

Something here for everyone, including walkers and snorkellers. Suits a wide range of budgets.

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Location/Contact

Location: In E Crete, in the N of the Prefecture of Lassithi. 6 mls N of Aghios Nikolaos. 42 mls E of Heraklion and its airport.

Position: Facing E/NE on Elounda Bay, opposite Spinalonga Peninsula, with an island of the same name off the N tip; the peninsula is linked to the mainland by a narrow causeway. Located in an area of outstanding natural beauty which sustained tourist development has failed to spoil.

Accommodation From the finest de luxe hotels and fully equipped complexes to basic self-catering establishments and B&Bs, all found within 1 to 2 mls of the centre.

Beach

Small, man-made, coarse sandy beach on the edge of town and a small central patch, but beaches are not one of the resort's strong points. Other small areas can be found along the coast, but it is mainly a pebbly, rocky coastline. Nevertheless, bathing is good and most water sports are available. The nearby sunken Greco-Roman city of Olous is a regular pull for snorkelling enthusiasts. The peninsula provides some attractive, secluded coves with crystal-clear water.

Shopping

Local shops sell everyday provisions such as food and toiletries; plenty of souvenir shops and a smattering of smart jewellery outlets. 1 or 2 expensive boutiques at the larger hotels but Aghios Nikolaos is a better bet for a wider choice.

Entertainment

Daytime: water sports and sunbathing; local boat trips; archaeological sites; good walking trails.

Nightlife: sophisticated evening dining and dancing at the luxury hotels; number of discos, bars and abundance of tavernas hosting Greek music and dancing evenings; other establishments catering for more international tastes.

Eating Out

Any number of local-style tavernas for a relaxing and satisfying evening out; hotels provide menus for a more international palate. Also a supply of eateries providing more basic food for the less adventurous.

Public Transport

Hourly buses to Aghios Nikolaos; local taxis and many car- or bike-hire outlets.

Local Excursions

Half day: boat cruises and fishing trips; Venetian fortress on Spinalonga Island, a former leper colony; Aghios Nikolaos. **Full day:** Minoan palace of Knossos and Heraklion archaeological museum; coastal town of Sitia and nearby Vai Beach, famous for its palm forest; mountain village of Fiesta; Samaria Gorge (long day).

General Description of Gouves

Measuring 2 mls E to W and 1 ml N to S, Gouves (or Kato Gouves, as it is more accurately known) is a friendly, relaxed resort with little going on, which developed – and is still developing – purely for tourism. It mainly comprises groups of accommodation set among rugged farmland, with the holiday action mostly centred along one main street full of friendly bar and taverna owners trying to reel you in. If

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you're looking for culture, you won't find it here, although there are some pleasant walks in open farmland just 2 mins' walk from the main strip. 2 mls inland lies the original old village of Gouves with a church and a few restaurants and bars.

Market/Suitability

Couples and families of all ages and most budgets. The nightlife isn't as lively as neighbouring resorts so head elsewhere if you want to party into the wee hours.

Location/Contact

Location: On the N coast, 12 mls E of Heraklion and the airport.

Position: On the coast, just off the national highway. Surrounded by scrubland with impressive mountains climbing up behind.

Dialling Code: 28970

Accommodation

Good mixture of most classes of hotel as well as economy self catering.

Beach

Good stretches of coarse sand with some rocky areas. Most water-sports facilities are available at the hotels, along with sunbeds and sun umbrellas for hire. No concessions on the beach itself (it is illegal) but plenty of restaurants and bars in vicinity. It is generally considered safe for swimming with lifeguards on some beaches.

Shopping

Hotel shops, small supermarkets, some boutiques and many souvenir establishments. Hersonissos offers greater variety; Heraklion for the serious shopper.

Entertainment

Daytime: lazing by the pool or on the beach; water sports.

Nightlife: a number of local tavernas and bars; hotel entertainment.

Eating Out

Selection of tavernas and restaurants offering local cuisine; hotels for international menus.

Public Transport

A minitrain trundles around the resort. Frequent bus service to Heraklion and Aghios Nikolaos. Local taxis. Car and bike hire available throughout resort.

Local Excursions

Half day: archaeological museum in Heraklion and Minoan Palace of Knossos; Malia and its archaeological sites. Full day: boat trip to Santorini; Spinalonga Island; Lassithi Plateau; Aghios Nikolaos; Chania with its magnificent Venetian architecture; Ottoman-influenced Rethymnon. 1/2 days: Samaria Gorge.

General Description of Hani Kokini

The first in a number of rather scruffy villages with the main road running through them, becoming busy and bustling during the tourist season. Measuring 3 mls by a maximum of $\frac{3}{4}$ ml, it feels very friendly in comparison to some neighbouring resorts

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but pretty bland in terms of culture and traditional atmosphere. It makes a good central touring base.

Market/Suitability

For those wishing to be near the major resorts but still have access to quieter beaches and holidaymakers happy simply to laze around hotel pools. An good base for exploring in most directions.

Location/Contact

Location: On the central N coast, 8 mls E of Heraklion. 6 mls E of the airport.

Position: Close to the sea on the old coast road, now bypassed by a national highway farther inland. Rugged mountains with rather wild countryside where not developed.

Dialling Code: 2810

Accommodation

Good mixture of different-class hotels and self-catering establishments.

Beach

Good sand and shingle for long stretches, with hoteliers or restaurateurs providing a row or two of sun loungers on sandy stretches. No other concessions although promenade restaurants and bars ensure that seating is as close to the beach as possible. Minimal water sports, usually nonmotorised such as canoeing, windsurfing and surfboards.

Shopping

Many local stores and souvenir shops. Heraklion is just a bus ride away for serious shopping.

Entertainment

Daytime: the local area is steeped in Minoan history and sites; other than that, swimming and lazing around the pool or on the beach; water sports.

Nightlife: some discos and tavernas with local entertainment; hotels usually offer traditional Greek nights.

Eating Out

Many tavernas and restaurants for local and international food. Short taxi ride to Heraklion for special Greek musical evenings.

Public Transport

Frequent bus service to the city and neighbouring resorts. Plenty of cheap taxis. Car- and bike-hire.

Local Excursions

Half day: archaeological museum in Heraklion and Minoan Palace of Knossos; Malia and its archaeological sites. Full day: boat trip to Santorini; Spinalonga island; Lassithi Plateau; Aghios Nikolaos; Chania with its magnificent Venetian architecture; Ottoman-influenced Rethymnon. 1 or 2 days: Samaria Gorge.

General Description of Hersonissos

Measuring 2¼ mls by 1¼ mls, Hersonissos is a real mixed bag of a resort, comprising numerous villages and rural areas lumped together with a substantial and busy town that forms the main resort centre. The main town is basically a modern development and although there are no tower blocks, its historic past – as evidenced by a scattering of small ancient ruins – is largely lost from view. Nowadays the focus is a substantial harbour area with numerous bar/eateries on a busy raised waterfront stretching along most of the resort's length; periodically there are steps down to small unimpressive beaches. Just inland is the long, lively central commercial area where a good selection of bars, shops, tour agencies, restaurants and nightlife flanks the main road that continues to be busy despite the addition of a bypass to take most heavy vehicles and some of the traffic. The town straggles E before virtually merging with the more focused neighbouring resort of Stalis. The resort also encompasses the traditional villages of Koutouloufari, Piskopiano and Old Hersonissos, which sit 1 ml or so inland on the hillside overlooking the main town. These are much quieter and more picturesque despite modest modern development causing them to slowly merge and presumably one day become a single entity. To the W of the main resort are large areas of low hills and open farmland dotted with small tourist accommodation blocks and several large hotels; beyond lies the more substantial village of Analipsi. Most accommodation here is well-removed from commercial amenities and local alternatives can be limited. These more rural locations tend to have access to substantial though less developed beaches – only those associated with larger hotels have more facilities.

Market/Suitability

A mixed resort offering a catch-all holiday cocktail and no particularly outstanding attributes. The main resort is a busy town with an attractive waterfront and a healthy nightlife, bringing young and more mature guests side by side. Less suited to beach connoisseurs or those looking for a traditional town. The outlying hill villages and W coastal agricultural areas suit more independent holidaymakers seeking a quieter, less commercial environment. Predominant nationalities are German and Scandinavian and it is very popular with Irish visitors.

Location/Contact

Location: On Crete's N coast, 17 mls E of Heraklion and 23 mls NW of Aghios Nikolaos. 16 mls E of Heraklion airport.

Position: On the NE-facing shore of a large bay, stretching both sides of the busy main coast road and filling a narrow coastal plain that rises to the foothills of the Dikti Mountains, where several small villages overlook the resort. To the W lies a wider undulating agricultural area with small fields, polythene greenhouses, olive groves, a scattering of tourist accommodation and the large village of Analipsi. The resort's E fringes virtually run into the neighbouring resort of Stalis.

Accommodation

A wide choice of apartments, from the absolute basics to attractive modern developments, but all reflect the simplicity characteristic of Greece. A good selection of hotels, from a few small and homely places to large, dated B&B tourist establishments and a handful of superior options offering varying degrees of comfort and luxury.

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Beach

The town beaches of the main resort are small and tend to get crowded in high season, making the poolside a better option for those staying in the main resort. The only reasonable central option is slightly W of the harbour and a good trek from most accommodation. Farther W are good-sized, undeveloped stretches of coarse sand, which, while serviceable, do not match the stereotypical image of pristine tourist beaches; these tend to be more appealing when adjacent to larger hotels, which provide loungers and sun shades and frequently lifeguards. Much of the coastline is rocky, with sunbathers perched just above the water or on tiny pockets of sand flanked by boulders; some of the sandy beaches have a rocky sea entry. No development is allowed on beaches so amenities and refreshments are provided by hotels and bars at the roadside.

Shopping

Good supply of minimarkets and bakeries. A wide range of souvenir shops offer everything from tacky plastic trinkets and T-shirts to quality locally produced crafts and artwork. Locally produced leather is good value, as is Cretan pottery and crochet work. Numerous shops offer herbs, spices and foodstuffs produced and gathered in the mountains.

Entertainment

Daytime: topping up the tan by the pool or on the shore; open-air museum of traditional Cretan life; full range of water sports, from scuba diving to para-sailing; hill walking; self-drive tours of local villages.

Nightlife: bars and restaurants along the raised waterfront while the main road and side streets are also busy with eateries, watering holes, games arcades and shops that stay open until late at night; reasonable selection of nightclubs and bars, some with live music, offer entertainment into the early hours and beyond.

Eating Out

Wide selection of mid-range taverna-style restaurants serving traditional fare, pizza and pasta dishes. Local and international fast-food joints. Local fish is widely available, with a couple of speciality restaurants. Dining tends to be relaxed and casual, with formal dining limited to a few small a la carte options in the larger hotels. Ethnic options include Chinese, Indian, Mexican and Lebanese restaurants.

Public Transport

Frequent bus service along the main road connects all the resorts along this stretch of coast with Heraklion and Aghios Nikolaos; no connections from outlying areas to the main service. A daytime minitrain makes circuits of the resort, taking in the hill villages behind the resort, but it does not offer an efficient means of transport. Taxis are readily available and relatively cheap. Car and (considerably more dangerous) motorbike or quad-bike hire is possible.

Local Excursions

Full day: boat trips including neighbouring island of Santorini or Spinalonga Island; trips to archaeological sites, including impressive Minoan palace at Knossos combined with Heraklion Archaeological Museum; Lassithi Plateau, with its picturesque Greek-style windmills and small traditional Cretan villages; general tour of W end of island; jeep safaris; mountain-bike tours; water parks; walking trips through Samaria Gorge (could stretch to 2 days).

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General Description of Ligaria

A tiny picturesque resort much used by the local population of nearby Heraklion. Rather a one-horse village comprising little more than a row of bars and tavernas along the beachfront and couple of minimarkets. Very quiet with sunbathing and swimming the main activities – or inactivities. The nearest bank or exchange facilities are at Aghia Pelaghia.

Market/Suitability

Fine for beach-lovers, sun-worshippers and walkers of any age interested in relaxing in a secluded resort with no nightlife whatsoever. Popular with many nationalities including Greek, German, Scandinavian, Dutch and British. Definitely not for party animals.

Location/Contact

Location: On the N coast 9½ mls W of Heraklion, 12½ mls W of Heraklion airport. 1¾ mls E of the larger resort of Aghia Pelaghia.

Position: On a scenic inlet surrounded by rugged hills covered in olive groves and farmland. A steep drop down from the main highway.

Accommodation

Dominated by one huge all-inclusive property (with own beach) over a mile from the resort. Some apartments and rooms in the village by the beach.

Beach

The resort has its own shingle beach with sunbeds and parasols to rent. The clear water of the sheltered bay is shallow at one end and deep with a steep drop at the other. Popular with locals so it can be crowded at weekends and in the late afternoon.

Shopping

None to speak of although a couple of minimarkets supply essential groceries and beachwear. The nearest shops are in Aghia Pelaghia; serious shopping in Heraklion.

Entertainment

Daytime: limited to beach activities or walking in the surrounding countryside.

Nightlife: romantic evenings in tavernas or bars along the water's edge. The main hotel has an entertainments programme.

Eating Out

Quite a number of tavernas and bars along the beach but not enough to try a different one every night for a fortnight. Reasonably priced but all have similar local offerings on the menu.

Public Transport

A bus service runs along the main road W to Rethymnon and E to Heraklion. Car hire can be arranged at the main hotel or by tour representatives. Taxis are bookable by telephone.

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Local Excursions

Full day: Knossos; Santorini; Samaria Gorge; Boat trips to Spinalonga Island (a former leper colony); Rethymnon & Chania shopping; Lassithi plateau & country tour; horse riding; Water City water park; mountain biking.

General Description of Malia

Measuring 1¾ mls from E to W and 1¼ mls from N to S, and split by a busy main road, the original old village of Malia lies inland to the S with the sprawling, highly commercialised resort in the N, towards the beach. Most holidaymakers choose to stay in the resort area, although there are a few traditional pensions in the village. It's a tightly packed, 24-hr party town, with a plethora of bars, restaurants, fast-food outlets and nightclubs. The main "strip" is the best part of 1 ml long, leading down from the main high street to the sea front. Everything is in English.

Market/Suitability

Young singles, couples, families – all fun/sun seekers who want a full-on party town at a value price. In high season it appeals mainly to rowdy British youngsters – anyone over 22 is likely to feel old.

Location/Contact

Location: On the N coast. 4 mls E of Hersonissos. 5 mls W of Sissi. 20 mls E of Heraklion airport.

Position: On the coast with the main road running through it; part of a sprawling holiday area that has grown to incorporate the neighbouring resorts of Stalis and Hersonissos. Some patches of undeveloped scrubland dotted around. Overlooked by the impressive Dikti mountain range to the S.

Accommodation

Across the range from small, simple taverna rooms to studio blocks, with most categories of hotel represented.

Beach

Long, sandy but uninspiring beach packed with sun umbrellas and loungers, and lined with hotels and bars, many playing loud music. Swimming in the sea is safe but there is a strong undertow during windy weather. Choice of water sports from jet-skiing, water-skiing, paragliding, parasailing and pedaloes. No private beaches – all open to the public.

Shopping

Unlimited choice from cheap and cheerful souvenirs to expensive ceramics and Cretan weaving. Range covers boutiques, jewellery shops, more than enough minimarkets, food and liquor stores, and ice-cream parlours.

Entertainment

Daytime: beach, beach, beach.

Nightlife: seemingly endless supply of pubs, bars and discos along the "strip".

Eating Out

Numerous tavernas, bars and fast-food joints, including McDonalds, as well as a handful of more upmarket restaurants; there's even a couple of curry houses. The old village boasts a number of quaint, attractive restaurants serving traditional Greek food.

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Public Transport

Frequent bus services to Heraklion, Aghios Nikolaos and other destinations. Local taxis are plentiful, as are car- and bike-rental establishments.

Local Excursions

Half day: ancient site of Palace of Malia; horse riding. Full day: Minoan Palace of Knossos; Heraklion Archaeological Museum; Plateau of Lassithi; Aghios Nikolaos; Spinalonga island; Sitia and Vai, a palm beach; water park at Anopolis; boat trips (from Heraklion). 1 or 2 days: Samaria Gorge.

General Description of Plakias

A compact fishing village of predominantly white, low-rise buildings, Plakias has the air of an attractive – if remote – oasis, surrounded by an abundance of flora, fauna and mountain scenery. The main trade is fairly low-key tourism followed by agriculture. Measuring around ½ ml from E to W, it boasts a small harbour and a beachfront main street lined with tavernas and bars, with the rest of the village fanning out into the foothills beyond and much of the accommodation located outside the centre. Fairly busy during the daytime with visitors from the N coast resorts, it quietens down again by evening.

Market/Suitability

Couples, families, walkers and nature-lovers; middle and budget-conscious market. Not really suitable as a touring base or for those seeking energetic nightlife.

Location/Contact

Location: On the W half of the S coast. 20 mls S of Rethymnon. 70 mls SW of Heraklion and its airport. 60 mls SE of Chania and its airport. On the E side of a sweeping bay, backed by high mountains.

Accommodation

Limited to a small number of average hotels and apartments. Rooms in private houses; youth hostel; camping site.

Beach

A good stretch of sand and pebble in front of the village, stretching S for around ¾ ml; some small, sandy bays within walking distance to the E (Damnoni Beach with a good range of water sports and Amoudi Beach for naturists) and W (Souda Beach). Fairly good for swimming, although the sea can be rough at times. Sunbeds and umbrellas for hire; selection of bars and eateries.

Shopping

Food stores and supermarkets; local village shops providing craft wares, tourist souvenirs and beach requisites; post office, money exchange, bakery, car hire and cash point.

Entertainment

Daytime: beach- and water-based activities such as windsurfing, sailing, snorkelling, jet-skiing, canoeing, pedaloes and scuba diving; cycling; walking, including nature

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Runner-up, Corporatechoice Business Travel Agent of the Year 2005,

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trails; bird-watching; exploring nearby archaeological sites.

Nightlife: some bars (including music bars) and 2 discos but entertainment is mainly found at the hotels.

Eating Out

Around 25 restaurants and tavernas, offering mainly traditional Greek cuisine as well as grills and fish.

Public Transport

Bus service to Rethymnon (5 times a day; last bus 6.30 pm). A local minitrain runs between nearby villages, stopping at the beaches (summer only). A boat service operates from the harbour to neighbouring beaches. Taxis available. Car and bike hire.

Local Excursions

Half day: exploring the traditional S-coast and inland villages; scenic mountain trips.

Full day: Samaria Gorge; historic towns/resorts of Rethymnon and Chania; ancient Minoan palace of Knossos and Heraklion archaeological museum; various boat trips.

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Entertainment

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Half day: exploring the traditional S-coast and inland villages; scenic mountain trips.

Full day: Samaria Gorge; historic towns/resorts of Rethymnon and Chania; ancient Minoan palace of Knossos and Heraklion archaeological museum; various boat trips.

General Description of Rethymnon

A university town, and the island's third largest, it is thought of locally as the intellectual centre of Crete. A place fashioned by a history of turbulent upheaval, it offers an interesting mixture of ancient and modern, meeting the demands of today's tourism with charm and elegance. The old town, measuring a compact $\frac{3}{4}$ ml E to W and $\frac{1}{2}$ ml N to S, shows signs of its Venetian inheritance in its stone archways and fountains but principally in the remains of an extensive 16th-century fortress, which dominates the area and looks out over the bustling waterfront with its palm-lined promenade and bright, multicoloured boats. There is also a definite Eastern flavour – a legacy of the Turkish occupation of the island – with 3 mosques, including the Neratzes Mosque with its towering minaret, and the wooden Turkish balconies on many of the houses. Beyond the centre, tourist development has extended along the coast on both sides of the town, particularly to the E, where it has incorporated smaller village resort areas.

Market/Suitability

Something for most visitors, whether seeking history and culture, top-of-the-range luxury or basic accommodation and the beach. A good base for exploring W Crete.

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Location/Contact

Location: About midway along Crete's N coast. 12 mls E of Georgioupolis. 50 mls W of Heraklion and its airport. 40 mls SE of Chania and its airport.

Position: Faces N on a promontory jutting into a small bay. The fertile Amari Valley and Nida Plateau stretch out behind, with olive groves, forests and agricultural plastic greenhouses, and the town is bounded by the rocky mountains which characterise the region.

Accommodation

Very good choice of hotels in all classes, along with some holiday complexes and apartments.

Beach

Long, curved stretches of good, wide sand and some shingle, fronting the promenade and stretching for around 12 mls to the E of town; said to be some of the best in Crete, bathing is good and generally safe with most water sports available. Beaches have plenty of loungers and parasols, and usually a public-access snack bar provided by beachfront hotels and apartment blocks. A rocky coastline to the W with some strong currents.

Shopping

A good selection in the old town including food stores, leather and jewellery outlets, and local craft shops, all crowded together on narrow streets; more modern outlets on the main high street and in hotels. An open-air market on Mon and Thurs.

Entertainment

Daytime: beach- and water-based activities including water-skiing, diving and windsurfing; exploring the town, taking in the fortress, mosques, churches and archaeological museum. A wine festival is held at the City Park every July.

Nightlife: good selection of bars (some with music), tavernas, discos and bouzouki nightclubs, concentrated at the harbour and in the old town; cinemas.

Eating Out

Good restaurants with excellent (but not always cheap) seafood around the harbour. Many local-style tavernas and restaurants at the hotels.

Public Transport

Frequent bus services to neighbouring resorts, Chania, Heraklion and Aghios Nikolaos, which makes exploring relatively simple. A minitrain runs around Platanes and town-centre seafront areas. Ferries to mainland Greece and some smaller islands. Many car- and bike-hire outlets.

Local Excursions

Half day: 16th-century Arkadi Monastery; hikes, biking and climbing in surrounding mountains; Cretan village evenings; beach barbecues. Full day: boat trips to Greek mainland and various nearby islands; ancient Minoan palace of Knossos and Heraklion archaeological museum; historic town/resort of Chania; Lassithi Plateau with its traditional villages and windmills; E Crete including picturesque resort of Aghios Nikolaos and island fortress of Spinalonga; Samaria Gorge.

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General Description of Sissi

Once a fishing village only really accessible by boat, Sissi is now a fairly laid-back, quiet tourist resort measuring ½ ml from N to S and 2 mls E to W along the coast. It has a quaint, slow air very different from the rather manic neighbouring resort of Malia. The main focal points are the centrally placed church and a compact, attractive harbourside fronted by cafes and bars.

Market/Suitability

Mainly suits those who want to avoid the larger resorts without being too remote; caters for the budget conscious as well as those seeking some luxury.

Recommended for families, couples and anyone not wanting to be in close proximity to rowdy teenagers. Popular with Greek holidaymakers.

Location/Contact

Location: On the N coast, 3 mls E of Malia. 24 mls E of Heraklion and the airport.

Position: Hidden 2 mls down the hill from the main highway. Mainly hilly, agricultural countryside with mountains behind.

Accommodation

Predominantly middle-of-the-road, self-catering establishments and some first-class hotels.

Beach

Mainly rocky shoreline. Exceptions are a 20-yd harbourside beach with a bar and, 700 yds E of the church, a small, pleasant and well-kept sandy bay with a beach bar/snack bar. Nearest larger beaches are at Malia. The sea is generally considered safe for swimming.

Shopping

Most needs are catered for in terms of food and souvenirs, although there is nothing out of the ordinary.

Entertainment

Daytime: swimming, snorkelling and walking.

Nightlife: bars, tavernas and the occasional organised Greek evening.

Eating Out

Local tavernas and hotel restaurants.

Public Transport

Regular buses to the main resorts in high season from the bus station, ¾ ml away.

Proliferation of bike- and car-hire establishments.

Local Excursions

Half day: ancient site of Palace of Malia. Full day: Minoan Palace of Knossos; Heraklion Archaeological Museum; Plateau of Lassithi; Aghios Nikolaos; Spinalonga island; Sitia and Vai, a palm beach; water park at Anopolis; boat trips (from Heraklion). 1/2 days: Samaria Gorge.

General Description of Stalis

Measuring roughly 2¼ mls by ¾ ml, Stalis (also known as Stalida) is one of numerous resorts that have sprung up along the coast between the major towns of Heraklion and Aghios Nikolaos. In the past decade or so, relentless development has seen what was once a village in its own right become an extension of neighbouring Malia, so that the two are now largely indistinguishable and constitute a sprawling mass of hotels, apartments, bars, shops and other commercial tourist pulls. The only evidence of traditional Crete is a small church, which also serves as the central reference point in the property reports here. The commercial area typifies most Mediterranean beach resorts with a host of minimarkets and open-sided bar/restaurants lining the beach front; a small spur of shops midway along links the beach road to the main coastal highway. Apartments and hotels that aren't within the main commercial strip are in narrow side streets or widely scattered around the fringes of the village and surrounded by small crop fields. A line of accommodation also runs along the main highway where the bustle of the resort is swapped for traffic noise. Overall, Stalis is a balanced resort offering reasonable beaches, plenty of shops, bars and eateries and a modest nightlife, which all combine to satisfy those wishing to avoid the excesses of neighbouring Malia and the sprawling town resort of Hersonissos without having to resort to remote, undeveloped areas.

Market/Suitability

Most sun- and sea-lovers or pool loungers should be happy here; only dedicated nightclub ravers may be disappointed. Young, old, couples and families are well catered for, as are all purses. The village also makes a good base from which to explore.

Location/Contact

Location: On Crete's long N coast, adjacent to the resort of Malia. 3 mls SE of the larger resort of Hersonissos. 18 mls E of Heraklion and the airport.

Position: On the NE-facing shore of a narrow coastal plain, with the rocky Dikti Mountains rising just inland. Marking the boundary between the two is the coastal highway, running along the back of the resort.

Accommodation

Mainly self-catering studios and apartments in small, simple establishments. A selection of modest low- to mid-range hotels and a couple of quality options in the general area.

Beach

Several reasonable, sandy beaches divided by small, rocky areas – by Greek standards these are good beaches. Many of the beach access points are small alleys, often incorporated into neighbouring bar and restaurant properties. Sun loungers and shades available.

Shopping

Minimarkets cater for most everyday requirements, and carry beach paraphernalia and some souvenirs. Small arts and crafts shops specialising in locally made items offer less tacky souvenirs, jewellery, clothes and local produce. For more extensive shopping needs, it may be necessary to visit neighbouring Hersonissos or make a trip to Heraklion.

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Entertainment

Daytime: beach life is the usual order of the day.

Nightlife: numerous bars and restaurants and a few discos; most accommodations offer "Greek nights" or barbecue evenings roughly once a week in high season.

Eating Out

Snack food and mid-range, taverna-style restaurants are readily available with menus and dishes from several European countries. There are also a few more upmarket restaurants, usually found in the better hotels.

Public Transport

Frequent buses run along the main highway that links all the N-coast towns between Heraklion and Aghios Nikolaos. Taxis are readily available and cheap. A minitrain also makes circuits of the resort and links to Malia. Car hire is readily available. Motorbikes and mopeds – considerably more dangerous modes of transport – are also widely available for hire.

Local Excursions

Full day: boat trips including neighbouring island of Santorini or Spinalonga Island; trips to archaeological sites, including impressive Minoan palace at Knossos combined with Heraklion Archaeological Museum; Lassithi Plateau, with its picturesque Greek-style windmills and small traditional Cretan villages; general tour of W end of island; jeep safaris, mountain-bike tours, scuba-diving and water parks; walking trips through Samaria Gorge (could stretch to 2 days).

General

Exciting news! We have been nominated as Travel Agent of the Year 2009!

We have now been nominated every year since 2005.

Exchange Rates

	This week	Last week	1000 costs
Euro	1.2046	1.2426	£830
Dollar	1.5103	1.6740	£662

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