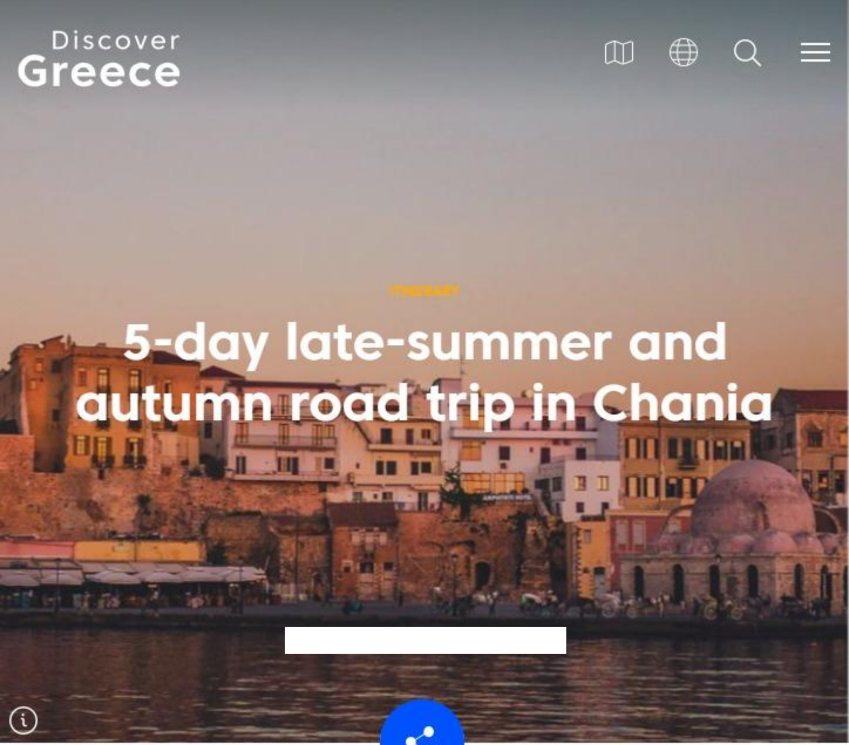


ITINERARY

5-day late-summer and autumn road trip in Chania

Prepare to embark on a season-extending road trip that allows the culture, food and traditions of Chania, as well as the best of the region's mountain and village life, to take centre stage.

Chania holds many of its most memorable experiences for its quieter months, when your journey becomes even more personal and highlights beyond the region's famous beaches can shine. From exploring the Old Town and immersing yourself in the famous olive oil, wine and raki traditions to learning how to cook like a local and going on an off-road excursion into the White Mountains, you'll discover what it means to live in this cherished part of Crete.

As an itinerary that's been ***road-tested by Discover Greece****, we've included the* *restaurants and experience providers that supported the journey – although there are, of course, plenty of alternatives out there. The itinerary is designed to be enjoyed best in late-summer or autumn (during the grape or olive harvests) but you can incorporate any part of it into your summer holiday in Chania and extend or adapt it around your interests.*

Start point - End point

Chania airport

Distance

370km

Means of transport

Airplane, Car, Foot

Duration

5 days

Highlights

Old Town Chania, farm-to-table dining, visiting a winery and raki distillery, olive picking, village life, Jeep safari in the White Mountains & a boat trip

DAY 1 • OVERVIEW

Chania town

20km **Airplane, Car, Foot** **2**

So much of Chania's soul is found in its old town, so this is the focus of your first day. Best of all, with the region's airport just 25mins away, you can get stuck in straight away.

Stop 1

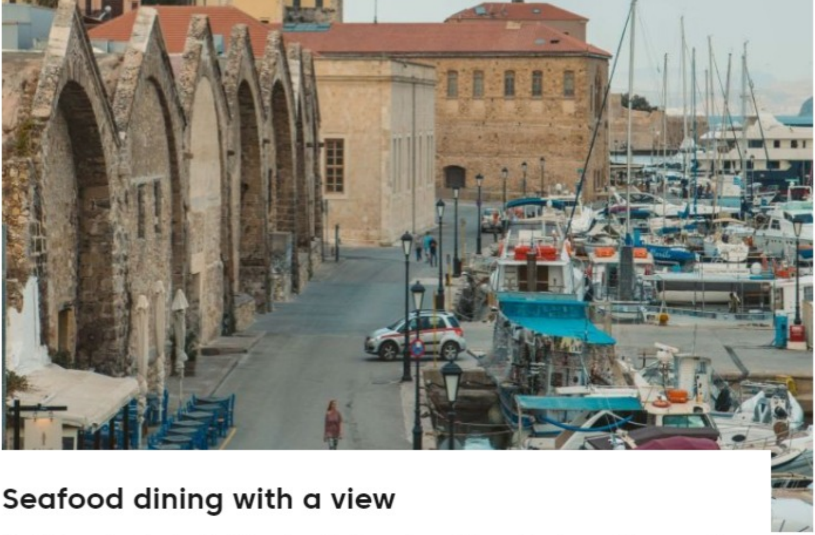
Walking tour of the Old Town

Walking tour of the Old Town

There's no better way to discover Chania than wandering its streets. Your first port of call is the Venetian Harbour, with its iconic lighthouse (rebuilt by the Egyptians in the 1830s) and the many-domed Ottoman-era Giali-Tzamisi Mosque. The fort you can see at one end is the 16th-century Firka Fortress. Other highlights are the Church of Agios Nikolaos and central market, as well as the Topana district (housing Greeks during the Ottoman years) and neighbouring Jewish quarter, still preserving original architecture and numerous historical buildings.

Stop 2

Seafood dining with a view



Seafood dining with a view

You'll be returning to the Venetian Harbour to eat throughout your itinerary. Our first experience of Chania's famous food is Apostolis restaurant, known for its incredibly fresh seafood and delicious assortment of local ingredients. Stuffed squid, shrimps and clams line up next to meat and vegetable-based dishes. The seven triangular-roofed brick buildings you can see from your outdoor table are the remains of the Venetian's famous ship-repair yards, or Neoria.

DAY 2 • OVERVIEW

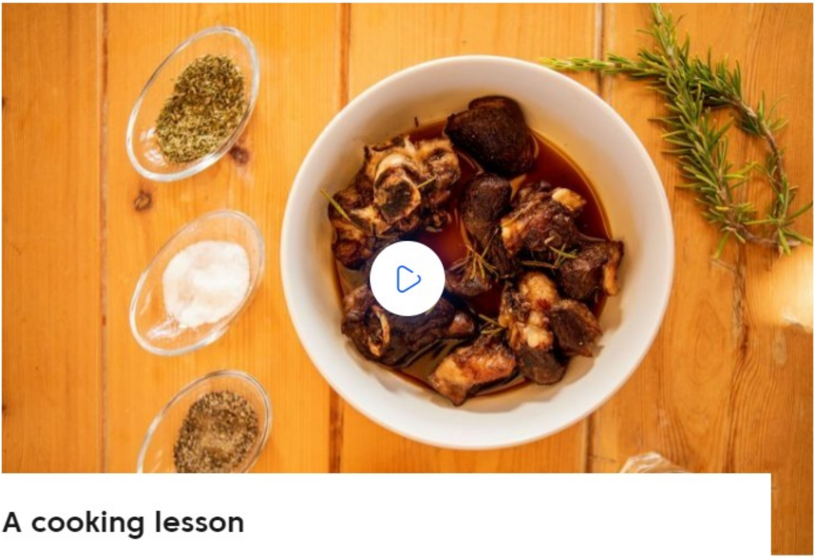
Cooking like a local & a winery

77 km Car, Foot 3

If you want to feel like a local in Chania, you need to learn how to eat and drink like one. So today is dedicated to two favourite local pastimes... cooking and wine. It's also an introduction to the Apokoronas villages, a collection of traditional settlements worth seeking out as an experience in its own right.

Stop 1

A cooking lesson



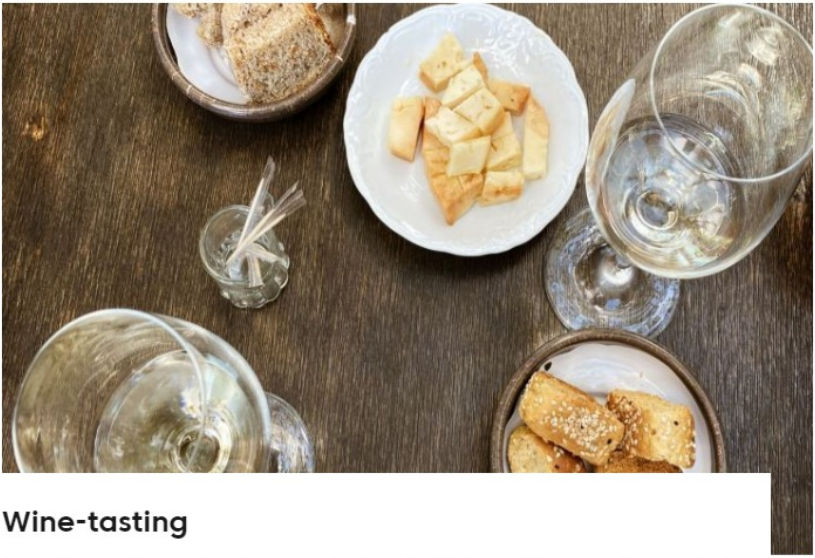
A cooking lesson

Our day starts at Olive Farm, in Litsarda, one of the Apokoronas villages. This small farm encompasses the principles of locally sourced, sustainable produce and offers cookery workshops in its outdoor kitchen. You'll learn how traditions are incorporated into everyday life while preparing dishes such as kleftiko (melt-in-your-mouth, slow-cooked lamb or goat with potatoes, carrots, tomatoes, peppers, courgettes and an assortment of aromatics picked from the farm's vegetable garden). You'll also be introduced to tirozouli, a white, tangy homemade cheese and other dairy products.

Take a culinary tour of Chania

Stop 2

Wine-tasting



Wine-tasting

From cheese, it's a natural progression to wine. Wine-making in Crete goes back 4,000 years and many of the indigenous grapes can be traced back centuries. Amongst the wineries you can visit is Dourakis, in Alikambos. You'll sample reds made with a blend of Syrah and Kotsifali grapes (deep-coloured and complex) and Carignan (a variety that thrives in the Mediterranean) as well as international stalwarts (Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot) and delicate whites from organically grown Vidiano and Malvasia. And you'll be especially impressed by how they pair with local cheeses... from yellow, piquant graviera to smooth-white myzithra and anthotiro. You'll also have the option of touring the vineyard in the surrounding area, especially enjoyable in late-summer when the grape harvest is in full swing.

Stop 3

The farm-to-table experience

The farm-to-table experience

Farm-to-table is the theme of dinner, too, as you return to the Venetian Harbour. Salis restaurant specialises in working with local producers as well as growing many of its own ingredients. Its dishes are traditional but at the same time inventive... much like the region and its people. There's also a great list of local wine labels, so you can put your newly acquired knowledge into practice.

DAY 3 • OVERVIEW

Olive oil & Raki

65 km   Car, Foot   3

You delve even deeper into the social fabric of Chania today through two products no self-respecting local household can be without... olive oil and raki. If you're lucky enough to visit in late-October or November (as we did), you can participate in the olive harvest. (Although the exact dates olives are picked depends on the weather and visiting an olive press is a privilege you can enjoy at any time of year.) Your afternoon is spent in a raki distillery.

Stop 1
Olive-picking

Olive-picking

Your day begins in the olive groves just outside the village of Tsivaras, at the Melissakis Olive Mill, picking olives. There are numerous olive presses in the Apokoronas villages, from small cold presses producing extra-virgin olive oil the old-fashioned way to state-of-the-art cold-extraction facilities, such as this one. What they have in common is that their produce contributes to the Protected Designation of Origin status of the area. The highlight is experiencing the olives you've picked being turned into smooth, golden, peppery olive oil ....a taste you'll never forget.

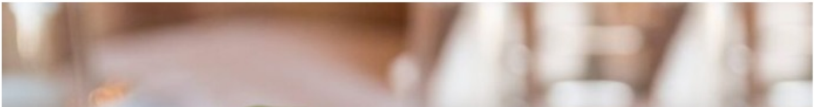
Stop 2
The rakokazana experience

The rakokazana experience

Your next stop is the Peroulakis Distillery, in Xirosterni, for an initiation into Chania's rakokazana (raki distillation) tradition. The best late-season grapes are turned into tsikoudia (as raki is known in Crete), 40% proof firewater as part of a community affair, with music, singing and food aplenty. The Peroulakis Distillery embodies that culture. You watch a traditional distillery being fired up and the pure, clear raki begin to flow as you sit down to a meal of stewed meat and Cretan wedding pilaf. Try the rakomelo, infused with honey and herbs and served as an appetiser or aperitif.

Stop 3

The authentic dining scene



The authentic dining scene

Back in the Old Town for the night, your gastronomic tour continues at Chrisostomos restaurant, with authentic Cretan flavours slow-cooked in a wood-fired oven and plenty more Cretan hospitality. Some suggestions are beef stifado (stewed with baby onions), synglino (cured pork) and anything with local vegetables (mushrooms, peppers, wild greens...). The olive oil you dunk your homemade bread into will take on a whole new meaning.

DAY 4 • OVERVIEW

Into the white mountains

62 km Car, Foot 2

There's a change of scene today as you head into the wild landscape of Crete's highest mountain range. As you're about to find out, the White Mountains are also home to villages and some of Chania's most hidden traditions.

Stop 1

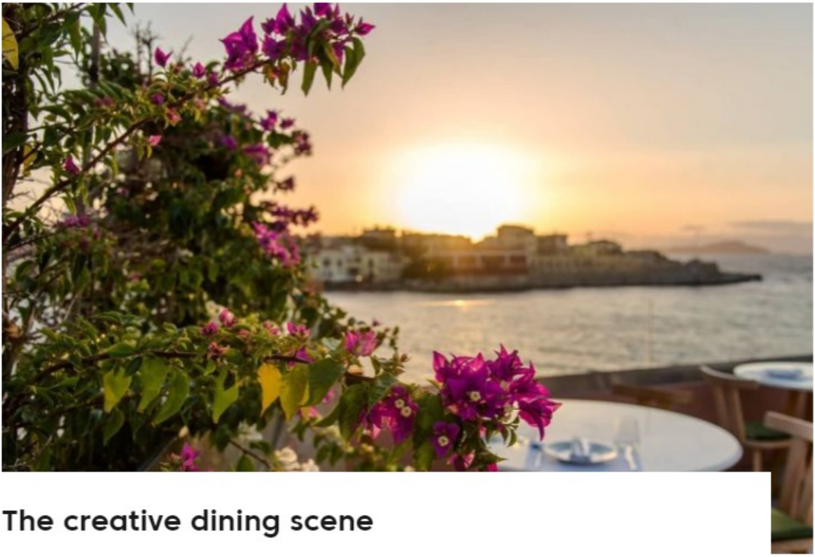
Jeep Safari in the White Mountains ⊖

Jeep Safari in the White Mountains

You shift gear with a 4x4 Jeep Safari into the Lefka Ori (as the White Mountains are known in Greek) with Uncharted Escapes. You'll pass villages and vineyards that have made their home in this rugged terrain and you'll learn all about the life of a shepherd by visiting a mitato – a round, stone-built hut, designed for protection against the strong winds and used to store cheese as it matures. The view from 1,400m up is sublime. Finally, you visit Theriso, a village synonymous with Eleftherios Venizelos, a revolutionary hero and one of Greece's first prime ministers. Venizelos' mother came from the village and it was here, in 1905, that he organised a Revolutionary Assembly that led to the independence of Crete and its union with Greece.

Stop 2

The creative dining scene ⊖



The creative dining scene

After a day in the mountains, it's back to the Venetian Harbour for dinner at Pallas, a restaurant specialising in giving traditional Cretan food a modern Mediterranean twist. From your outdoor table overlooking the harbour, the sight of the setting sun and the Egyptian lighthouse is something else.

DAY 5 • OVERVIEW

Sfakia

146 km Boat, Car, Foot 3

Your attention turns to the sea today as you head to the southern coastline for a boat trip. Depending on your time of visit and the weather conditions, you can look forward to wonderfully clear water, with swimming enjoyable until late-October

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Stop 1

A boat trip to Loutro

A boat trip to Loutro

The magic of taking a boat trip is that you can visit beaches that are inaccessible (or very difficult to reach) by car. Our day-trip was with Notos Mare Marine Adventures, heading west from Hora Sfakion towards Glyka Nera (a fabulous, isolated swimming spot that translates as Sweet Water) and on to Marmara beach. The only other way of getting here is to hike down the 6km ravine behind the beach. On the way back, you stop at Loutro, a village accessible only by sea, to enjoy a Greek coffee and traditional Sfakia pies.

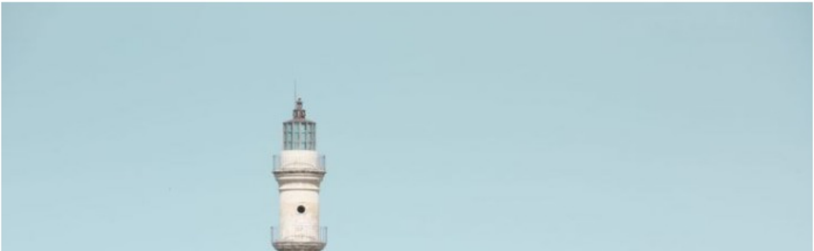
Stop 2
Hora Sfakion

Hora Sfakion

Returning to Hora Sfakion (the capital of the Sfakia region), you can look forward to an early dinner with fantastic seafood and local dishes at Livikon, a taverna right by the sea. The fish soup comes highly recommended. But before you sit down, pass by the Dourountous Bakery to stock up on Cretan kritsinia (seed-crusted, dried breadsticks) and paximadia (rusks), made from traditional recipes.

Stop 3

A short goodbye



A short goodbye

You'll be excused for not wanting your off-season Chania adventure to end. One tip is to extend your stay and walk the Samaria Gorge (one of Europe's iconic hikes) but there are plenty of outdoor activities that will tempt you. And you'll long to return for another taste of the olive oil and wine. Above all, it's the way the locals have made you feel that you'll remember most. But it's time's to catch your flight and say goodbye. For now.

Road-testing the itinerary for you

In road-testing the 5-day off-season road trip to Chania, we invited a team of German media to live the experience for themselves. Stay tuned for their verdict.

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