

## CreteCarHire: Discover the best Archaeological places in Crete

Crete claimed by many Greeks to be the most authentic of the islands, is by far the largest. It stretches 256km (159 miles) east to west and is between 11 and 56km (7 and 35 miles) wide. A massive mountainous backbone dominates, with peaks stretching skywards to over 2400 metres (7,874 ft). In the north the mountainous slope more gently, producing fertile plains, while in the south they plunge precipitously into the sea. Crete is called Megalonissos - the Great island - is what the Cretans call their home. Great can certainly be applied to the Minoan civilization, the first in Europe and one with which Crete is inexorably entwined. With two major airports, Crete cannot be classified as undiscovered, but through its size and scale it manages to contain the crowds and to please visitors with widely divergent tastes. While a car is essential for discovering the best of the island, car hire is, fortunately comparatively inexpensive. Phaestos Minoan palace

Phaestos was the second most important palace city of Minoan Crete. Of all the Minoan sites, Phaestos (fes-tos) has the most awe-inspiring location, with all-embracing views of the Mesara Plain and Mt Ida. The layout of the palace is identical to Knossos, with rooms arranged around a central court.

In contrast to Knossos, Phaestos has yielded very few frescoes. It seems the palace walls were mostly covered with a layer of white gypsum; there has been no reconstruction. Like the other palatial period complexes, this one had an old palace that was destroyed at the end of the Middle Minoan period. Unlike the other sites, parts of this old palace have been excavated and its ruins are partially super-imposed upon the new palace.

The entrance to the new palace is by the 15m/49ft-wide Grand Staircase. The stairs lead to the west side of the Central Court. The best-preserved parts of the palace complex are the reception rooms and private apartments to the north of the Central Court; excavations continue here.

This section was entered by an imposing portal with half columns at either side, the lower parts of which are still in situ. Unlike the Minoan freestanding columns, these do not taper at the base. The celebrated Phaestos disc was found in a building to the north of the palace. The disc is in Iraklio's Archaeological Museum. Heraklion city is in the middle of island Crete. Iraklio is having some of the most interesting sightseeing places. Heraklion airport is only 4km far from the city centre, surrounded from many tourist resorts. Athenscars-Crete is having a car hire agency in the centre of Heraklion city. Car rental in Heraklion is necessary in order to visit all the beautiful places of Crete. Crete car hire is making car hire offers and special car rental deals in Crete. Athenscars-crete is having many branch offices, Hersonisos car rental, Malia car hire, Stalis car hire, Gouves car hire, Ammoudara car rental, Heraklion airport car rental etc. The Palace of Knossos is 7km far from the city centre, one of the most attractive remains - ruins of Minoan civilization. The Knossos palace was found from the great English archaeologist Arthur Evans (later knighted). He worked at the palace over a period of 35 years, though by 1903 most of the site had been uncovered. Its location and its remains show the way of life 3500-4500 years before. Among the 1300 rooms of the main palace were both the sacred and the commercial: lustral baths for holy ceremonies: store rooms for agricultural products: workshops for metallurgy and stone cutting. Nearby are the Royal Villa and the Little Palace. The remains of Minoan civilization in Gortys, 40km far from Heraklion, the palace of Phaestos in South Crete are places you have to visit. The museum of Heraklion, located in the centre of the city, Freedom Square is exhibiting the items found in Knossos and other archaeological places in Crete. The Venetian Harbour Castle, built when the Venetians were on the island, is one of the most attractive castles in the Mediterranean. Athenscars-Crete is making great car hire. Crete low season offers, you can request for car rental in Crete via e-mail or telephone us in :00302810821424.00302810220680.

Car Rental In Chania-Crete: Chania, is Crete's second city and its capital until 1971. Chania city is located at the west north part of Crete island. Chania is claimed to be one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world. Its jewel is the boat-free outer Venetian harbour. Mosque of Hassan Pasha, Firkas sea Fortress are still-standing. The Archaeological museum occupies the church of the Franciscan Friary, one of the best preserved and largest Venetian churches. The church of Aghios Nikolaos, after various architectural and religious conversions, displays both a minaret and a campanile.

Athenscars-crete is having a branch car hire agency in Chania and low season offers. Car hire in Chania is a good option in order to visit the beauties of west Crete. Car rental in Paleochora, Car rental in Georgiopolis, Rent a car in Chania airport. In the new town of Chania, rent a car and visit the lofty glass-roofed cruciform market, opened by Venizelos in 1913. Those with a sense of history will visit Mournies and Theriso, Villages south of Hania. Car rental in Chania and visit Akrotiri, a limestone peninsula stretching northeastwards from Chania, is full of interest. Hire a car in Chania and visit the Commonwealth Cemetery, where British and Commonwealth troops killed during the 1941 Battle of Crete are buried. Equal honour is given to three times that number of Germans who are buried in the well-tended cemetery at Maleme.

Further out of the Akrotiri is the Monastery of Aghia Triadha, 5 minutes from the Gouverneto monastery and half an hour downhill driving till Katholiko monastery.

Rent a car in Chania and drive West from Chania, where the road hugs the coast, passing through busy small resorts, before arriving at the Kolymbari village. Car rental in Chania is useful to drive further west of Chania to Kissamos and Kastelli village, with its wide broad beach. Turn left at Platanos and keep on driving with the Chania hire car till south west. Rent a car in Chania provides a visit to Elafonisi, bordering a shallow lagoon. This is one of the best spots on the

whole island for beach lovers.

Around the corner to the southwest Chania, lies Paleohora, a self-contained resort that has a ruined castle and sand beaches. Occasional boats leave for Gavdhos island, Europe's southernmost point. Keep on driving the Car hire in Chania and you will meet Hora Sfakion (Sfakia) as the home of Sfakians, who epitomize the independent Cretans.

Samaria Gorge is the most exciting and spectacular adventure which Crete offers the average visitor is a walk through the Gorge of Samaria, at 18km or 11ml, one of the longest in Europe. Inside the Gorge exist Xyloskalo area, where the walk starts, Afendis Christos, Portes, and ends down to Aghia Roumeli and the church of Panaghia.

Athenscars-crete is operating 24 hours everyday at all airports of Crete, Chania airport car hire

The Origin of the City's Name

Scholars have been trying for years to analyse the etymology of the name "Hania," and to decide on the time when the name was changed from "Kythonia" to "Hania". The new name is first met as "Cania" in the document "Sexteriorum Cretensiu in Militias divisio" in 1211. Then the name "Canea" is mentioned in the document which relinquishes the Chania area to the Venicians in 1252. As for the change of the name from "Kythonia" to "Hania", the most convincing point of view is that of Prof. N. Platonas, who associates it with the existence of a big village "Alhania", named after the God "Valhanos" (Vulcan). The Sarasin Arabs found this name easier to use but confused it with their own word "Al Hanim" (the Inn). After the departure of the Arabs, the syllable "Al", probably taken to be the Arab article "Al" (the), was dropped when the name was translated into the Greek "Hania" and the Latin "Canea".

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Rethymnon prides itself on being Crete's intellectual capital, still possesses an intact old town with a small picturesque Venetian harbour. Rethymnon city is located west of Crete. Rethymno city is 65km far from Heraklion city and 65km far from Chania city. Car rental in Rethymno is necessary in order to explore the beauties of island Crete. Rethymno area has some of the most beautiful and attractive places of Crete to visit like Fortetsa castle, west of the Venetian harbour, from where excellent views may be enjoyed. Car rental in Rethymnon gives you the chance to visit Agia Galini, one of the most quiet places on Crete, surrounded with a wonderful beach, apartments, hotels and friendly local people, fresh fish. Rent a car in Plakias, a small village south of Rethymnon, with one of the most famous beaches on Crete. Moni Preveli is a fantastic place, a beach, a river going in the sea, a monastery and a relaxing atmosphere opposite the Libyan African sea. Athenscars-Crete is recommending you to drive on the mountain of Psiloritis, through small villages and visit the Monastery of Arcadi, which is open all year. Car rental in Crete, car rental in Rethymno is cheap and easy. Athenscars-crete is offering special discounted rates all year round. For request or car hire reservation confirm with an e-mail please.

The archaeological site of Knossos is sited 5 km southeast of the city of Iraklion.

There is evidence that this location was inhabited during the neolithic times (6000 B.C.). On the ruins of the neolithic settlement was built the first Minoan palace (1900 B.C.) where the dynasty of Minos ruled.

This was destroyed in 1700 B.C. and a new palace built in its place.

The palace covered an area of 21,000sq.m, it was multi-storeyed and had an intricate plan. Due to this fact the Palace is connected with thrilling legends, such as the myth of the Labyrinth with the Minotaur.

Between 1.700-1.450 BC, the Minoan civilisation was at its peak and Knossos was the most important city-state. During these years the city was destroyed twice by earthquakes (1.600 BC, 1.450 BC) and rebuilt.

The city of Knossos had 100.000 citizens and it continued to be an important city-state until the early Byzantine period.

Knossos gave birth to famous men like Hersifron and his son Metagenis, whose creation was the temple of Artemis in Efesos, the Artemisio, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

The site was discovered in 1878 by Minos Kalokairinos. The excavations in Knossos begun in 1.900 A.D. by the English archaeologist Sir Arthur Evans (1851- 1941) and his team, and they continued for 35 years.

The most important findings of the city of Knossos are:

The Great Palace.

The Great Palace covered an area of 20.000 sq. meters and had 1.400 rooms.

Every section of the Palace had a specific use. In the west side of the Palace were the chambers of the ceremonies, of the administration and of the public storehouse. The Throne room is also located here.

To the west of the Throne room was the great west Court of the Palace and the theatre, where all the ceremonies and gatherings took place. The East side of the Palace, had more floors, verandas and official rooms with wonderful frescos, and was the side of the Palace where the Queen had her private chambers.

The entrance to the Palace today is through the West Court. The West Entrance leads to the Corridor of Procession. Its walls were decorated with a fresco depicting a procession, which today is exhibited in the Archaeological Museum of Heraklion. To the left of the corridor is the Propylaeum of the Palace, where the huge double horns - a holy symbol of the Minoan religion - are located. A staircase leads to the Central Court, where the Throne room is sited, and another

one to the upper floor. There are various rooms on the same level with the Throne, like the Antechamber, the Pillar crypt, the room of the Tall Jar and the Treasure room of the High priest, were various precious objects, now exhibited at the Iraklion museum, were found.

Near the south west corner of the Court a road leads to the Corridor of the Procession where the famous fresco of the "Prince of the Lillies" was found. The original is displayed in the Iraklion museum, and a copy located in its place..

#### The Little Palace.

It is located west of the Great Palace and is the second bigger building of Knossos. In one of its chambers was found the wonderful Bull's Head made of steatite, which is exhibited in the Archaeological Museum of Heraklion.

#### The Royal Villa.

It is located northeast of the Great Palace and it is considered part of it. A magnificent jar was found here, with papyrus in relief.

#### The House of the High Priest .

This building is considered to be the House of the High Priest due to the stone altar that was found there. The altar is surrounded with double axes stands.

#### The Caravan Serai.

It is located opposite to the Great Palace and it was the official entrance to the palace. It served as public baths with running water, where the traveller or visitor of Knossos should bath before visiting the King.

#### The Royal Temple Tomb-Sanctuary.

It is located south of the Palace and it is considered to have belonged to one of the Last Minoan Kings. Chronology of Minoan Crete

2600 BCE EM I Pre-Palace period EM II EM III MM Ia 2000 BCE MM Ib Old Palace period MM IIa MM IIb 1700 BCE MM IIIa New Palace period MM IIIb LM Ia LM Ib LM II 1400 BCE LM IIIa Post Palace period LM IIIb LM IIIc 1100 BCE Sub-Minoan

On Friday 23 March 1900 at 11 a.m. Arthur Evans began his excavation of Knossos. Although he was not the first to excavate at the site, that honour belongs to a Greek appropriately called Minos Kalokairinos in 1878, it was to be Evans who uncovered the Knossos Palace and brought to light a hitherto unknown civilisation -- possibly the oldest in Europe. The basic excavation of the site took four years and for the rest of his life Evans continued working on the site, reconstructing and building, often in an attempt to preserve the remains from the weather to which they had been exposed for the first time in 3,500 years.

Evans designated the building at Knossos a palace and named the civilisation that had built it the Minoans, after King Minos of Greek mythology. Since then the actual function of the building and of the other palaces has been questioned and new interpretations advanced. Alternative views consider the four large palaces of Minoan Crete to be temples or administrative centres or both, and in one interpretation, Knossos is seen as a necropolis -- a huge burial site to which only a small band of priests and embalmers had access. Here, following convention, the name Palace is used throughout.

Evans, like all of us, was a product of his time, and his time was Victorian England. He was an amateur archaeologist as were many archaeologists at the time. Only wealthy men of leisure could afford to carry out the kind of archaeological dig that Evans carried out at Knossos and professional archaeologists received even less government support than they do now. We are fortunate that Evans was a rather better archaeologist than many of his generation, thanks in part to his father, himself an amateur archaeologist. No less important, he had the support of an excellent team of British archaeologists including Theodore Fyfe and Duncan Mackenzie as well as talented Greeks including the Cypriot Gregorios Antoniou and the Cretan Emmanouel Akoumianakis, known as Manolaki, who much later was killed fighting the Germans in the Battle of Crete.

Mackenzie, in particular, was to play a crucial role in the excavations as he kept daybooks in which he recorded all the developments at the excavation site. He probably had the most scientific approach of any archaeologist working in the Aegean at that time. Sadly he later suffered from severe mental illness which rendered him incapable of working.

Although much criticism has been levelled at Evans in the intervening 100 years for the way in which he rebuilt parts of Knossos, matters might have been worse still if Heinrich Schliemann had succeeded in buying the site of Knossos. The story goes that if the Turk who was selling the land had not exaggerated the number of olive trees included in the sale and thereby incensed the businessman in Schliemann then he and not Evans would have been the owner of the site and Knossos might have been excavated in the same insensitive way that Schliemann excavated Troy.

Given Evans' background in the wealthy middle class of Victorian England it is not surprising that he superimposed an image of British monarchical society onto Minoan society. Evans identified Knossos as a palace and then set about

identifying the various rooms used by the Kings and Queens of the Minoans. He also rebuilt large parts of the site. In some cases this was clearly unavoidable. The great staircase, for example, would have collapsed onto the workmen on the site if action had not been taken to restore it.

It is perhaps a fruitless task to criticise from the position of today's scientific approach to archaeology what Evans did then. We should be grateful that he was willing to sink so much of his personal fortune into the excavations at Knossos and devote the rest of his long life to the study of the Minoans. We don't have to accept everything he said about that civilisation -- a further 60 years of excavations have taken place since Evans' death. But Evans provided the basis on which all further study of Minoan society has been based.