



Wild poppies in the mountains of Crete

A Cambridge Alumni Private Tour Wildflowers, Wine and History in Crete 18 – 24 April 2027

‘Outstanding. Really enjoyed all trips – especially botanical gardens, winery and river walk. Hugely appreciate the care that went into planning the itinerary – it was brilliant.’

Lisa Roberts, Wildflowers, Wine & History in Crete, April '25



Level 3
MODERATE





A street in Chania

Visiting Crete is a sensory adventure filled with the scents of rosemary, thyme, sage, lavender, and chamomile. An island brimming with beautiful flowers and stunning landscapes, there are around 2,000 species of plants, of which about 10% are endemic to Crete. The peak explosion of wildflowers occurs from March to May, when wild orchids and tulips are joined by chamomile, poppies, anemones, iris, field gladiolus, and much more, in bloom.

Crete's natural beauty is equalled only by the richness of its history. The island is the birthplace of the ancient Minoans, who ruled some 4,000 years ago. At the crossroads of three continents, Crete has been occupied by consecutive invaders. Evidence of this long history can be seen in Chania, where mighty fortresses preside over labyrinthine lanes and beautifully restored Renaissance mansions rub rafters with mosques and Turkish bathhouses.

In Crete, 'locavore' is not a trend but a way of life. Rural tavernas often produce their own meat, cheese, olive oil, raki and wine, and catch their own seafood. Explore Crete's rich botany, its ancient and modern history, its beautiful landscapes and delicious food and wine, and learn how all of these intertwine.

This journey has been organised for the University of Cambridge alumni and their friends and family. This tour is also open to alumni of Oxford University and their friends and family.

'A wonderful trip with an amazing range and mixture of visits.'

Paul Roberts, Wildflowers, Wine & History in Crete, April '25

Tour Leaders

Gillian Winter (British) and **Doug Langmead** (Australian) met while working in the Middle East, Gillian in teaching English as a foreign language and Doug in architecture and landscaping on large projects. Music brought them together, as Doug gave lifts to members of a choir Gillian sang with. They both enjoy choral music and are currently rehearsing Handel's Messiah for a performance in the Royal Albert Hall, London.

Gillian has lived in or visited Crete on and off since 2002, settling permanently once she retired. Doug has been living and working in the Middle East since 1979: he has a management consultancy in Dubai and is currently working with Emaar in Egypt, from where he visits Crete frequently. They both enjoy exploring Crete, spending their time hiking, reading, learning about Crete and its history, and dining out. They are members of the Mediterranean Garden Society, headquartered in Athens, learning about regional gardening techniques



and participating in visits to various private and public gardens as well as monthly zoom talks. They are enthusiastic about sharing their love of Crete with visitors.

'Gillian and Doug were fabulous leaders who made you feel comfortable, explained things and kept you informed.'

Pat Schajermann, Wildflowers, Wine & History in Crete, April '25

Knossos Palace





Tulipa doerfleri (endemic wild tulips)

Itinerary 18 – 24 April 2027

B = Breakfast **L** = Lunch **D** = Dinner

6 nights Chania, Crete

Day 1: Chania (Sun, 18 April) **D**

Pm: Arrive and transfer to Porto Veneziano Hotel.

Eve: Listen to a brief background on the tour, followed by a welcome dinner.

and wine in Crete. Enjoy a late lunch at the park's restaurant, where all the ingredients are either locally sourced or grown on-site.

Eve: At leisure

Day 2: Chania (Mon, 19 April) **B L** **Landscapes, Food and Wine of Crete**

Am: Following a short history briefing set out to explore Chania's old town on a **walking tour**. See the city's impressive 14th-century harbour and the 16th-century lighthouse. Learn about Crete's many influences, spanning Byzantine, Venetian, Ottoman and more.

Pm: Drive out to the foothills of the White Mountains and visit the **Botanical Park** of Crete, which spreads over 20 hectares. Its microclimate allows a wide range of plants and wildlife to thrive, including fruit trees, herbs, medicinal and ornamental plants. Meet with the owners of the park and learn about the history, landscapes and cuisine of Crete. See a **cooking demonstration**, learning about food

Day 3: Chania (Tues, 20 April) **B L** **Minoans and Crete's Classical History**

Am: Drive to Heraklion and visit the world-renowned **Bronze Age Palace of Knossos**, accompanied by a specialist guide. Visit the **Heraklion Archaeological Museum** which includes important finds from the island, including the Phaistos Disc and Minoan frescoes.

Pm: Enjoy a light lunch at a local taverna before returning to Chania.

Day 4: Chania (Wed, 21 April) **B L** **Wildflowers and the Real Crete**

Am: Discover the natural beauty and charm of rural Crete on a walk around orange groves in **Stylos** to see the springs and river which supply the Samaria table water.

Continue to **Kefalas** for a walk around the olive groves, taking in the serene landscapes and where you can expect to see wild native tulips, lupins, dwarf iris, anemones, and dragon lilies.

Pm: Lunch in Meterizi taverna in Kefalas village. Return to the hotel.

Day 5: Chania (Thur, 22 April) B L

The Battle of Crete

Am: Accompanied by a specialist guide, visit **Souda Bay war cemetery** and take part in a **tour tracing Operation Mercury** (the German Invasion of Crete). Learn about the role of Australian, New Zealand, British and German soldiers at the Battle of Crete. Continue to the Maleme area to visit see historical **Tavronitis Bridge, Hill 107** and the **German War Cemetery**.

Pm: Wine tasting and a light Lunch at **Manousakis winery**. Return to Chania and at leisure.

Day 6: Chania (Fri, 23 April) B D

Bridging the Gap, Greeks and Romans (and Wildflowers).

Am/Pm: At leisure to explore Chania further. Some walkable highlights include the **Chania Archaeological Museum, the Maritime Museum, the Synagogue or the Kipos cafe** which was once a private mansion and has a lovely garden with some impressive old trees. Alternatively spend a relaxing day on the beach or take to the water and enjoy a boat trip. If you wish to venture further afield travel along the coast to the **archaeological site at Apta** to see the impressive Roman cisterns, ruins of Roman bath houses and a newly excavated theatre. It is also a wonderful site for wildflowers.

Eve: Farewell dinner at Ta Neoria.

Day 7: Chania (Sat, 24 April) B

Am: Depart Chania after breakfast.

*NB: There can be no guarantee about precise flowering times. All itineraries are subject to change according to local conditions.



A taverna in Chania



The Hotel Porto Veneziano

Hotel Porto Veneziano

Fronting Chania's glorious Venetian harbour, Porto Veneziano offers romantic views with an attractive bar and café. Superbly run, this comfortable hotel is an excellent base from which to explore Chania's history and delights.



The Egyptian lighthouse

'Porto Veneziano – great location, friendly service and very good breakfast.'

Janet Farran, Wildflowers, Wine & History in Crete, April 25

'(Hotel) food fantastic – variety and quantity. Staff welcoming and customer service a high standard. Room comfortable. Best was the pillows!'

Juliet Weeramanthri, Wildflowers, Wine & History in Crete, April 25

THIS TOUR IS CLASSED AS:

Level 3 | Moderate



Regular walking at destinations, extended standing and /or increased travel distances. Good fitness is required.



Wildflowers in full bloom (top); Sample the wines of Crete; Chania; The local resistance during the Battle of Crete (above)

The cost of the tour is £1,990 per person sharing

The cost of the tour with a room to yourself is £2,354

The cost includes:

- Six nights' accommodation at the medium grade Hotel Porto Veneziano Hotel, based on a twin or double classic room.
- Tour leaders Gillian Winter and Doug Langmead
- A full programme of cultural visits
- All admission fees and tips
- Specialist local guides and speakers as indicated
- Comprehensive briefing notes
- Meals as specified
- All internal transport

The tour cost excludes:

- International flights and airport transfers
- All personal extras such as portage, laundry, inoculation fees, and drinks
- All optional excursions, tours and visits
- Travel insurance
- Visas, if applicable

This tour is open to the University of Cambridge alumni and Oxford University alumni, and their friends and family.

“All excursions were interesting and enjoyable. Excellent hotel. Meals very good and plentiful. Much fun for one and all.”

Jean Thomas, Wildflowers, Wine & History in Crete, 2024

About Us

To travel with us is to dig below the surface, revealing the deeper destination. Of course, you will visit the great historical sites; marvel at the wonders of architecture and engineering; be moved by the riches of culture and art; and experience the most spectacular landscapes in the world. We also ensure that you see the country as it is today, giving you privileged access that independent travel and other tour companies rarely get close to.

From the sublime to the humble, we provide a variety of experiences in the company of intelligent, curious, like-minded people. And while we can be worthy, we also make sure that you have a lot of fun!

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ATOL

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For all other holidays, we have arranged a TOPP insurance policy to protect customers' prepayments in the unlikely event of our financial failure. A copy of the policy is available on request. Please see our [booking conditions](#) for further information.

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In the botanical garden (top); Blue vistas of Crete;
A flower-filled street in Chania (above)



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TOURS**

