

Cyprus, Crete and Rhodes

Private Tour

Blue Dot Travel

Go somewhere different





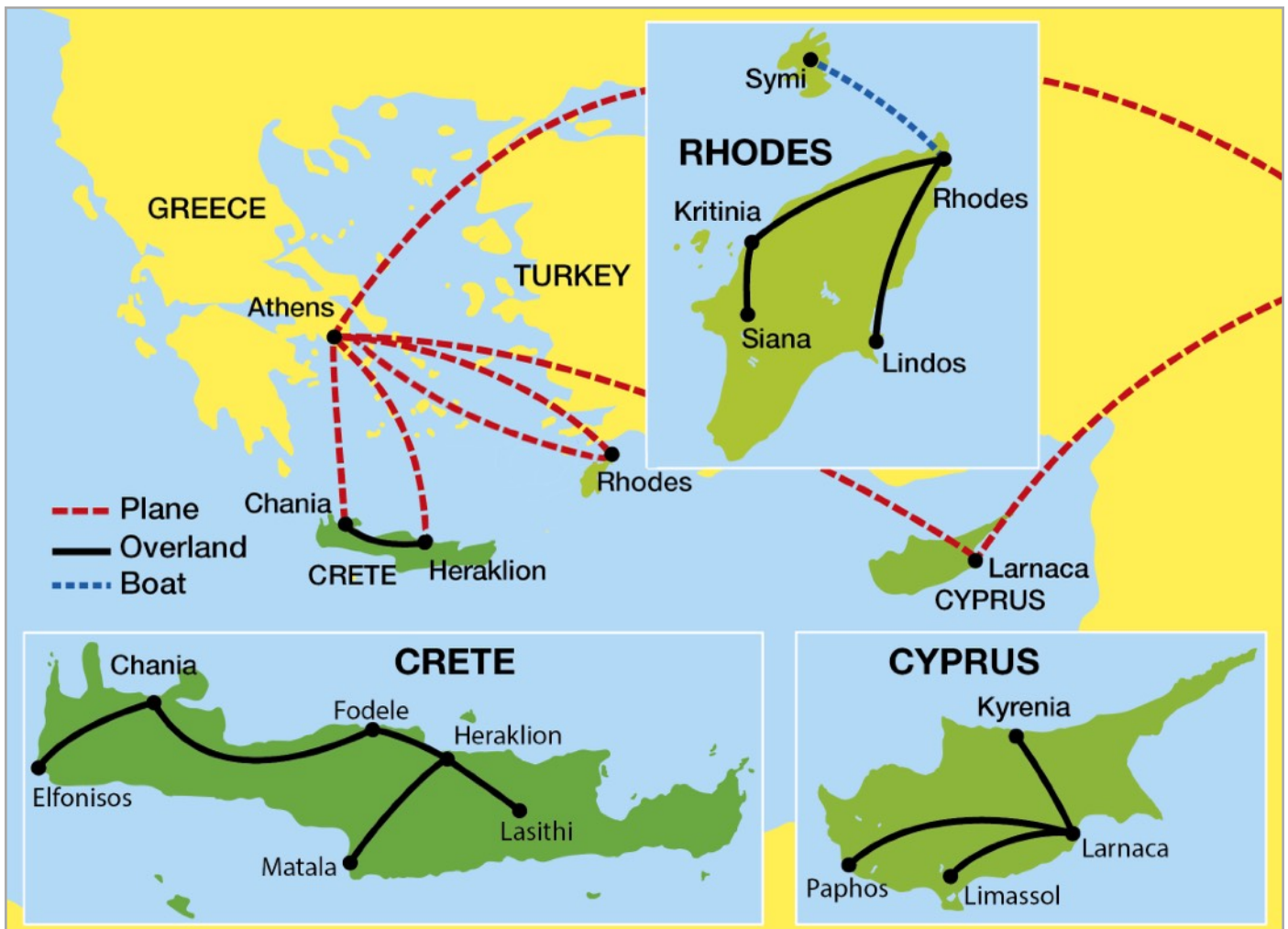
CYPRUS, CRETE AND RHODES

The story of Cyprus' tumultuous past is told through its historic sites, its Roman ruins, its multi-faceted museums and its dusty urban streets. This ease of accessibility is highlighted in Paphos, where one of the most important archaeological sites sprawls like an ancient theme park next to a tourist resort. Experience the intrinsically different Greek and Turkish societies of modern Cyprus with its fractured identity, a passionate people and culture, and beautiful landscape and lifestyle.

There is something undeniably artistic in the way the landscape of Crete unfolds, from the sun-drenched beaches in the north to rugged canyons spilling into the cove-studded south coast. In between the valleys, villages are cradled in the landscape and the gorges have a cave where Zeus was born. Crete's natural beauty is equalled only by the richness of its history. The island is the birthplace of the first advanced society on European soil, the Minoans, who ruled over much of the Aegean some 4,000 years ago. You'll find vestiges of this mysterious civilisation all over Crete, including the famous "Palace of Knossos" and the legend of the labyrinth of King Minos and the slaying of the Minotaur by Theseus to save the king's daughter, Ariadne. At the crossroads of three continents, Crete has been coveted and occupied by consecutive invaders.

History imbues the air in the old towns of Chania and Rethymno where a labyrinth of laneways, laid out by the Venetians, are lorded over by mighty fortresses and where gorgeously restored Renaissance mansions nestle beside mosques and Turkish bathhouses. In the end though, it is the people that create the most vivid memories. Crete's people champion their unforgettable unique culture, customs and time-honoured traditions.

Rhodes is rightly celebrated for the splendour of its medieval architecture and evocative old town and it is generally considered one of the most beautiful of the Greek Islands. The crusader Knights of St John (1309-1522) called Rhodes home after their expulsion from the Holy Land, and it is their legacy of massive castles and the old town that we enjoy today. Here, according to legend, stood the Colossos of Rhodes, a bronze statue of Helios, the Sun-God, erected in 290BC, standing astride the harbour entrance and one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.



**Day 1
DEPART AUSTRALIA**

Depart Australia for Larnaca. All flights to be advised.
Meals in flight.

**Day 2
LARNACA**

Arrival and group transfer (15-minute drive) to the Hotel Lvadhiotis (or similar) for check-in and rest after a long flight. In the afternoon our guide will meet the group at reception for an afternoon stroll around Larnaca. An official welcome dinner is at a local tavern, walking distance from the hotel. *D*

**Day 3
KYRENIA – NICOSIA**

Today, take a drive to the Turkish region of Northern Cyprus - occupied by Turkey since 1974. Passport required today and tomorrow as you are entering Turkish territory. We'll drive past the beautiful landscape of the Pentadaktylos, meaning 'Five Fingers,' mountain range. The first stop in the North is to Bellapais Abbey, situated in the village of Bellapais, considered one of the best-preserved examples of gothic architecture on the island and is built almost entirely out of local limestone. Then we'll explore the picturesque town of Kyrenia with its horseshoe-shaped harbour, its spectacular medieval castle and maze of narrow streets with exquisitely preserved stone houses. The most important monument

inside the town is the Kerynia Castle Museum which has, amongst other exhibits, a famous Shipwreck dating to circa 300 BC. From Kyrenia we'll next visit Nicosia ("Lefkosia"), the only divided capital city in the world. We enter the city by driving along the Green Line, the capital's dividing borderline, passing by the newly restored Famagusta Gate. We continue to the Archbishop's Palace to view St. John's Cathedral. Our tour continues to the picturesque old quarter of "Laiki Yitonia" where we'll have time for a walk around the charming winding alleyways lined with numerous traditional houses, shops and galleries. Dinner at a fish tavern. Overnight at Livadhiotis Hotel, Larnaca. *B/D*

**Day 4
FAMAGUSTA – SALAMIS – AYIA NAPA**

On the eastern side of the island lies the beautiful coastal town of Famagusta, trapped in a time-lock since the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974. We'll explore the old city medieval walls, the spectacular Gothic Cathedral of St. Nicholas, now operating as a mosque and the famous 'Othello's Tower'. Stroll through narrow streets, shop in the Bazaar and then we drive close to the 'Ghost Town', the sealed-off area of Famagusta. Together we will discover the historical background of Famagusta, with visits to the ancient capital Salamis, founded in 11th Century BC right after the Trojan War. Then visit the archaeological site which includes a beautiful ancient Greek theatre, Hellenistic theatres and Roman

Colonnades. Our last stop will be in Ayia Napa, one of the most well known resorts in the Mediterranean Sea. Around 1500 AD, a monastery was built around the cave, in honour of the Virgin Mary of Ayia Napa. Dinner is at a restaurant by Larnaca Promenade. Overnight at Livadhiotis Hotel, Larnaca (or similar). *B/D*



Day 5
KOLOSSI – KOURION –
PETRA TOU ROMIOU –
PANAYIA – PAPHOS

Today, our excursion will be all about history, legends and the spectacular views over some of the most beautiful parts of Cyprus. The first visit will be at the Crusader Castle of Kolossi, a fine example of military architecture. Then we stop at the ancient city of Kourion, where we'll see the famous Greco Roman theatre

and mosaics and enjoy the view that the Greeks and Romans had inside this amazing ancient city.

Archaeological evidence and historical sources depict Kourion as one of the most important ancient kingdoms of Cyprus. Our journey will continue past the Episkopi, British military base and then to Aphrodite's Rock, one of the island's most famous attractions. Here we will see the place where the Goddess of Love and Beauty was born from the foam of the sea. Then on to the stunning Chrysorrogiatissa Monastery, established in 1152. Lunch is at a family owned winery, Vouni Panagia. Our last stop is at Paphos, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Discover the remarkable history of this city, passing by the Catacombs of St. Solomoni, the Pillar of St. Paul, and the House of Dionysos. Check in to the hotel in Limassol for a three night stay. Dinner will be at a local restaurant in the old city. *B/L/D*



Day 6
THE BATHS OF APHRODITE – AKAMAS

Today's excursion is optional and more appropriate for the fitter amongst the group. (Importantly, this is only suitable for those fit enough to walk for a few hours through bushland and up and down hills. It is considered a light - medium trek). Those not joining have a day at leisure or may join the group but not do the walk. Those joining the trek will wind their way through beautiful forests, canyons, and deserted beaches. The Akamas peninsula, named after an Athenian warrior and son of Theseus, who arrived here after the Trojan war, is a unique area, both geologically and ecologically. It is also home to the Baths of Aphrodite. Legend has it that after swimming in the crystal clear waters of the bay, Aphrodite would bathe in the waters of a small grotto shaded by an old fig tree. According to mythology, this is where Adonis saw and fell in love with her while hunting in the Akamas forest. Dinner tonight is at a seafood restaurant. A picnic lunch box for the trekkers can be arranged (at own cost) if required. *B/D*

Day 7
KAKOPETRIA – KYKKOS – OMODHOS

After breakfast, we'll drive towards Troodos Mountains, the biggest mountain range in Cyprus, located in the

centre of the island. Troodos' highest peak is Mount Olympus at 1,952m and it is considered to be the green heart of the island. There are many famous mountain resorts, Byzantine monasteries and churches on mountain peaks, and nestling in its valleys are villages clinging to terraced hill slopes. Our first stop is at Kakopetria, a well-preserved village with traditional picturesque houses dating back to the 14th century AD. Following Kakopetria, we will experience one of the wealthiest monasteries in Cyprus, Kykkos. The Holy Monastery of the Virgin of Kykkos was founded around the end of the 11th century by the Byzantine emperor Alexios I Komnenos (1081 – 1118) and lies at an altitude of 1318m on the north west face of the Troodos Mountains. The day ends with a stop in another traditional village called Omodos, known as one of the best wine producing villages on the island. To top off our day, we'll step into a winery and learn the history of the island's winemakers. And of course, there'll be a chance to try and buy some while you're there! Dinner at the hotel in Limassol. *B/D*

Day 8
IN TRANSIT

Today we say goodbye to Cyprus and fly to Heraklion, Crete via Athens (flights to be advised).

Welcome to Crete!

On arrival into Heraklion, transfer to our hotel, The Astoria, where we will spend the next 4 nights. We will have a few free hours in the afternoon before dinner at Hotel Astoria (or similar). *B/D*



Day 9
HERAKLION CITY TOUR AND KNOSSOS

After breakfast we'll tour Heraklion city on foot. We'll visit the archaeological museum which has the most artefacts from the Minoan Period, second only to Athens. Housing the treasures of Knossos, Phaestos, Zakros and other sites in Crete,

it is a remarkable collection, ranging from Neolithic to Roman times. It is regarded as one of the most important museums in



Europe. Then we'll visit Peza Winery, a popular winery in Crete, south of Heraklion, before heading to Knossos Palace, centre of the great Minoan civilisation. Constant habitation for 9,000 years has brought about great changes to the natural environment, so it is interesting to imagine what the Minoan landscape was like. Dinner tonight is at a local restaurant. *B/D*

Day 10
THE LASSITHI PLAINS

Today we visit the Lassithi Plain famous for its 10,000 windmills built by Venetians to irrigate the fertile plateau. We'll visit the cave of Psychro, one of the 3,000 caves in Crete. According to legend, Zeus was born in the

impressive Dikteon Cave, dripping in stalagmites and stalactites. Our drive continues to the ancient city of Lato, the ruins of which are located approximately 3km from the small town of Kritsa. On the way back, stop in Aghios Nikolaos for a coffee break and a stroll through the town. Dinner at the hotel. **B/D**

Day 11 MATALA AND SURROUNDINGS

Today starts with a scenic tour to the south of Crete. We'll visit two famous sites: the Minoan Palace of Phaistos. Overlooking the Messara plain Phaistos is one of the most important archaeological sites in Crete. The first palace of Phaistos was built in circa 2000 BC. Its mythical founder was Minos himself and its first king was his brother Radamanthys. Then we'll visit Gortys, a Roman city famous for its "Law Stones". We'll also visit the amphitheatre and the church of St. Titus, the first Christian church on the island. Next, off to Matala where it may be possible to swim, weather permitting. The artificial caves in the cliff of the Matala Bay were created in the Neolithic Age and have had a varied history. Matala was the port of Phaistos during the Minoan period, occupied by the Gortynians in 220 BC, then became the port of Gortys in the Roman period. The caves were used as tombs in the 1st and 2nd centuries, later became a fishing village and were occupied by hippies in the 1960's. We finish our day at the beautiful monastery of Kaliviani. Dinner is at your leisure and own cost tonight. **B**



Day 12 HERAKLION AND RETHYMNO

We leave Heraklion and begin our drive along the west coast. We will enjoy a visit to the small

museum of the famous Medieval artist: El Greco (real name Domenikos Theotokopoulos, 1541 to 1614) who was born here. Then we will visit the town of Rethymno. We'll wander around its narrow lanes, admire the interesting mixture of Venetian and Turkish architecture, visit the new town with its variety of shops and cafe's and of course see the famous Venetian fortress. Our drive on the west coast will include the small village of Fodele, built in an area of orange groves. According to historians, this was the site of the ancient town of Astali, and it remains a central destination for visitors. We'll arrive at Chania late in the afternoon and check in to our the Hotel Kydon for dinner and overnight. **B/D**

Day 13 CHANIA CITY TOUR

We start our day with a walking tour. First stop after breakfast is to sample a tasty traditional specialty cream pie, which in Greek is known as "Bougatsa". Then we will visit the Orthodox Church in Chania near our hotel and the Archaeological Museum. The collections include Minoan artifacts from the city of Chania, prehistoric items from caves and many other historical discoveries. After this, we'll walk through the lovely old city and the

Venetian port. The Venetian, Turkish and Jewish quarters have well preserved buildings in narrow picturesque streets. After lunch (at your leisure) we will drive to the Souda Bay War Cemetery to learn the WWII history including Australia's involvement. We'll also stop by the lovely Braoudakis family shop to purchase local produce for those interested. Dinner at a local restaurant. Overnight at the Hotel Kydon. **B/D**

Day 14 APTERA AND RUINS

After breakfast we travel by coach to Akrotiri peninsula. We will visit the Monastery of Aghia Triada (the Holy Trinity) the biggest monastery



in Crete. The Monastery used to have a lot of precious items, which were destroyed or pillaged by the Ottomans during the Greek Revolution of 1821. We'll continue to the ruins of Aptera, founded in the 7th century BC, then to a farmhouse which has family made products for sale. Next we visit the small villages of Vrises - renowned for its goats cheese and yoghurt. After this drive to Georgioupolis, a beautiful village situated on the northern coast of Crete. With a backdrop of spectacular mountain scenery, it's a great place for a coffee. Return to the Hotel Kydon for dinner. **B/D**

Day 15 MALAXA AND ELAFONISO

After breakfast we are off to Malaxa which lies at the foot of the white mountains. We'll visit Vouves to see one of the oldest olive trees in the world still producing, said to be at least 2,000 years old. Finally we'll reach the final destination of Elafonisos for swimming and free time (pack your swimmers). Elafonisi is a small islet connected to the rest of Crete by a shallow reef that can be crossed when the sea is calm. This islet lies on the south-west corner of Crete. Return to The Hotel Kydon before heading out to a local restaurant for dinner. **B/D**

Day 16 TRANSFER TO RHODES

Today is free time to explore Chania at leisure before we depart for our flight to Rhodes via Athens in the afternoon.

Welcome to Rhodes!

On arrival on the island of Rhodes, transfer to the Best Western Hotel (or similar) where we will stay for the next 4 nights. **B/D**

Day 17 RHODES CITY TOUR AND FILERIMOS

After breakfast we'll explore the city of Rhodes, which was registered a UNESCO world heritage site in 1988. It is considered one of the most well-preserved and densely populated medieval European towns. A naval superpower of the Hellenistic epoch and a target for numerous conquerors, modern Rhodes is a cosmopolitan centre concealing lots of surprises. We'll



begin at the Acropolis of Rhodes, where the ancient Pythia Apollo Temple sits atop an archaeological reserve where the first Pythian Games took place. We'll explore the Odeum, which was a school for orators, and learn

about the Colossus of Rhodes, the gigantic statue named one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. At the harbour of Mandraki, we'll learn more about the history and construction of the statue, before our walking tour through the paved streets of the Old Town. We will pass the Grand Masters Palace, Hospital of Knights, Gothic buildings Byzantine churches, Turkish baths, Muslim mosques, and the beautiful town squares that are so much a part of everyday life. Finally, we will visit the ancient town of Ialysos and the hill of Filerimos with its medieval monastery. Dinner is at a local restaurant tonight. Overnight at Best Western. **B/D**

Day 18
WEST SIDE OF RHODES

Today we explore the island's west side starting with a visit to the small harbour of ancient Kamiros and The Castle of Kritinia with its ruins of St.Paul's church perched high above the sea. We will have lunch (included today) in the quaint village of Embona, high in the hills near the island's highest point, Mt Ataviros. We will visit the local winery of Embona to see how they produce the region's wines and taste the local produce. After this we'll travel to Siana for a stroll through the village and visit the Panteleimon Church. The local produce in Siana makes for great souvenirs and gifts. Dinner at your leisure and own cost tonight. Overnight at Best Western. **B/L**

 **Day 19**
EAST SIDE OF RHODES

Bring a torch and good walking shoes today! After breakfast, we'll head off for the East Coast, to visit the charming bays and beaches and small settlements on the island's eastern side. Lindos, established around 3,500 years ago, stretches out in an azure bay. Walking through the town, we'll take in the traditional architecture, cozy shady streets, mosaic paths and house yards. Situated at the top of a steep rock, The Acropolis of Lindos harmoniously combined the Temple of Athena Lindia, Byzantine church, Roman temple ruins, the medieval castle and a strong pinion wall encircling the complex. From the height of the Acropolis we can enjoy stupendous views of the sea and the mountains as well as St.Paul's bay. To enjoy a tour of the town or ascend Acropolis, you can procure the services

of a traditional Lindos taxi – more commonly known as a donkey - at a nominal cost. Today we will also explore the Seven Springs. According to legend, the water in these brooks is miraculous. You might want to walk through the tunnel built by the Italians during the war. It's more than 180m in length and only for those who like a challenge (and if you brought your torch). It leads to the shore of an artificial lake and is quite an adventure. Overnight at Best Western. Dinner is at a local restaurant. **B/D**

Day 20
SYMI ISLAND

We'll stay overnight, with dinner at a local restaurant, before heading back to Rhodes. Note: We suggest you just take a backpack with a change of clothes, your valuables and other essentials when staying on Symi Island. The Best Western will store our luggage and we will collect it on return prior to heading to the airport. **B/D**



Day 21
SYMI ISLAND – RHODES - ATHENS

This morning we'll depart on the 8.00am ferry for Rhodes arriving around 10.30. You'll have time to grab some lunch and collect your bags back at the hotel before transferring to the airport for an afternoon flight to Athens. On arrival to Athens we will transfer to the centrally located hotel for 1 night. Dinner is at your own leisure tonight, and your time in Athens is unguided. **B**

Day 22
ATHENS – DOHA – DEPARTURE

The morning is free before we transfer to the airport for our flight home at around lunchtime. **B/Meals in flight**

Day 23
Arrive home.



Icon indicates a day where there is **moderate physical exertion**. A basic level of fitness is required: eg. A trek over 'mostly flat' terrain or climbing several flights of steps without the support of handrails or elevators.



Icon indicates a day where there is a **particularly active section**. A good level of fitness is required: eg. A longer trek over non-groomed, uneven terrain, or ascending to reach a panorama. May also include exposure to higher altitude. An alternate activity may be offered if you choose to sit out an active section. Please call - we are happy to discuss each tour in more detail.